

★★★ Poetry must be made by All: not by One Alone ★★★ Lautreamont ★★★



# THE



# COMMUNARD

★★★ The Revolution is Ecstasy : or it is Nothing --- Marx ★★★

## BEYOND CORONATION STREET

London, April 1971: It may not yet be common knowledge to the population of Notting Hill Gate and the Grove that they are already planned out of existence. The fact that people cannot get pads - or keep them - in this area is not only due to the fact that they are black, or long-haired or poor, but due to a carefully controlled scheme to rid the area of all such people and of any accommodation which would be suitable for them.

By 1984, if the Greater London Plan goes through - as it will unless the people affected by it unite against it - accommodation in the Gate and similar areas will either be well-to-do, middle-class, single-family, owner occupied houses or Council-run tower blocks. This pattern is already clearly visible in areas like Islington and its roots can be seen easily in the Gate/Grove area.

Evidence submitted by an environmentalist to the inquiry into the GLC's plan for Greater London states:

*"The upper and middle income groups ... will extend their holdings in some places by acquiring previously rented housing for owner-occupation....All these trends will combine to hasten the disappearance of privately rented property: it constitutes most of the houses to be demolished and virtually none of those likely to be built. London will therefore suffer a massive loss of older, cheaper, smaller rented dwellings. It will gain a lot of housing, mainly built for owner occupiers and council tenants." And the report adds: "It is particularly difficult to generalise about the people who live in the sort of housing that is disappearing, for variety is their most striking characteristic."*

Indeed! Those "disappearing people" are: poor working class, black people and us.

### Community Control

For these and other good reasons Community Control is going to be our key project over the next ten years. In fact, unless there is a real movement in that direction very soon, there will be no community left to control, and 1984 will have come home to roost on our doorstep.

Of course we are all given the illusion that we do already have control over our community through the ballot box at local elections. *This is a con*, an illusion. The 'official community' (complete with borough councils, mayors, aldermen etc) is nothing more than the go-between 'twixt the rulers and the ruled. It cons people into behaving themselves, through 'responsibility to the community', which obscures the fact that people really behave themselves because the state tells them to do so. And all the while the official community works to isolate people and destroy any real solidarity that might arise out of their common predicament. 'Community action' becomes 'integrating the individual into the community' (ie the state). All the values and outlook of the 'community' are those of the ruling class ("Yes, Deirdre, there are still classes"), and any set of values which runs counter to them is considered pathological or deviant.

A real community is something very different: in fact, the exact opposite of the official idea. In the official 'community' people have no control over any aspect of their daily lives. The real community only begins to develop as the official one is corroded by people gaining control over their resources, public services and amenities. Community is real only to the extent that people directly control their own lives. And that means everything - from housing and shops to parks and police.

### The First Task of the Workers' Councils is to Abolish Work

Before we go any further we should say that this sort of community control is the first step towards workers' seizure and control of industry which is, itself, the first step towards the total application of technology to eliminate scarcity, poverty,

boredom and the arch-enemy, work itself. It should be obvious to anyone of the least intelligence that technology, even as it exists now, makes all the great utopian schemes of the past possible. All that stands in the way is the most powerful, well-integrated repressive machine in the history of man.

What, you may ask, is the relationship between community control, workers' control and largely middle-class drop-outs? To explain this we have to risk offence to our readers and discuss briefly the nature of the British working class, also known as the proletariat. At the moment, the working class is split even within itself: blue- and white-collar workers on the one hand and dead-enders on the other. The higher-paid blue- and white-collar workers (car workers, technicians, etc) tend to be better-organised and more militant on the shop-floor: they are responsible for the majority of unofficial strikes.

But at home they tend to live in the total-isolation wards of suburbia, separated neatly behind their short-back-and-sides boxes. The dead-enders, forced into shitty work with high job turnover, high unemployment and low wages, are not militant at work precisely because their jobs are too grim to allow even that degree of involvement. But they are the people who live in the ghetto areas and slum districts - the Gate, the East End, Moss-side.

The white-collar militant returns from militant struggle to telly-ad scenario and the dead-ender from degraded labour to dying, garbage-infested neighbourhoods where 'urban decay' ceases to be a sociological term. And when authorities do get rid of slums it's only to replace them with strictly-controlled, concentration-camp high rises. In short, workers' control and community control are pursued at the moment by two different (and clearly separated) sectors of the working population - to the extent that they are pursued at all.

Unlike the student leftists - the students of poverty at LSE are a perfect illustration of the poverty of students - we make no pretence of working in a factory. For us, therefore, community control must be the pressing demand. More so since freax and low-paid workers are being thrust together more and more, living in the same streets, subjected to the same pressures from the official world - police, psychiatrists, welfare workers, magistrates, filth and indifference - in areas like the Grove and the Gate.

Whether freax like the idea or not, nothing obscures what is really happening to them: their inevitable confrontations with the old world have only one effect - their proletarianisation.

The militant non-politicalness of most freax is quite an accurate summing up of the state of the British left, divided between various equally absurd ideologies - Leninism, Maoism, Castro-ism and so forth. Freax instinctively realise that political solutions designed for the factory floor are not relevant to their situation (and, in most cases, are not even relevant to the factory floor). The freak criticism that straight politics is largely masochistic bullshit and concerned more with manipu-

lation than with people is entirely fair. Likewise their refusal to work has an instinctive radicalism which escapes the understanding of many so-called militant leftists.

Some socialists (particularly *International Socialism & Solidarity*) have even invented an ideology of community control in which the community is treated merely as an extension of the factory, trying of course to capitalise on the peoples' militancy in support of their own under-hand schemings. To be sure community control and workers' control must eventually link together in a common fight (in fact community control is an earlier stage of workers' control) but this link will only be made by years of effort and cannot be made simply by pointing to the need for it.

First of all a few myths sown by the straight left - even in its more youthful forms - need uprooting.

### All Coppers Are Bastards?

The English police, as American tourists soon realise, are a unique institution: they combine in one body two different and opposed functions, which in other countries are performed by two different groups.

On the one hand they act as servants of the community - directing traffic, giving information, acting in emergencies, helping old ladies across the street. (The role fulfilled by the tourist police in Italy, the gendarmes in France and so on.) On the other hand they act as repressive servants of the state protecting private property and the interests of the ruling class. (For example, the carabinieri in Italy, the CRS in France, the National Guard in the United States.) This arrangement is very good at confusing people - many people talk about beautiful bobbies - "Gee, your policemen are jes' wunnerful" - and see only the helpful role, while 'revolutionists' spread wholesale and irrational hatred of all police in all situations which ignores completely their community role.

The difference is seen clearly when you compare the village copper with the London cops in whom the balance of the roles - particularly in poor areas - is different.

### Kill The Pigs?

The widely-popular slogan 'Kill the pigs', imported, like Coca Cola and paper-panties, from Amerika, sums up the confusion among leftists about violence. It is obvious that if community control ever becomes a reality, para-military attempts to 'restore order' will become more and more frequent and will be resisted by force. But this is still many years ahead in Britain and to fetishise and glamourise violence for its own sake and continually to provoke police violence when the struggle has barely begun is as absurd as its counterpart, total pacifism, and also as tactically ill-advised. The widespread use of the word 'macho' in the American Movement to put down those who worship irrational violence (probably as a sex substitute) is maybe one of the few American ideas worth importing.

As experiments in community control increase, the cops themselves are likely to be split between the two functions. After all, many of them do live in the communities they police. It may even be that some might refuse to take up arms against their community - as is happening in New York at present - and the police strike may be with us once again.

### The Myth Of The Street

The 'myth of the street' has persistently devoured the partisans of leftist orthodoxy in 'revolutionary situations' (for instance the barricade-psychology of the

Paris Commune) and must also be re-examined critically. The straight left sees the street not only as the focus and expression of direct action and solidarity, but also as an arena for revolution. This attitude seems to date from the period before the Labour Party and the trade unions institutionalised the working class movement, when the street was regarded as "a place where the unorganised poor could address the propertied class through the media of public riot and demonstration." To perpetuate this attitude now is pointless: except in high density ghetto areas the democratic function of the streets has been eliminated entirely. Streets nowadays are designed primarily for traffic and not for people. The idea that mass demonstrations, leading maybe to riots and street fighting, are the present revolutionary road to community control will have to be dropped.

### The Real Role Of The Street

What is essential is to rediscover the traditional role of the street, starting from the ghetto areas where, to some extent, it still exists. If people live in, play in, talk in and in fact use the street as a neighbourhood meeting place, then the street is effectively policed by the community itself, so the community functions of the police force can be taken over by the community and the official police squeezed out of the particular area. Later on the community will obviously have to face up to the repressive state function of the police, but that is quite a long way off as yet. So institutions like the corner shop and the local pub must be preserved by the community and, more important, the people who naturally inhabit the street - the kids, the skins, so-called delinquent gangs and freax - must get together and take seriously their crucial role in direct-democracy community control.

### Community Councils

This is still not enough because the policeman in the street isn't the only agent of state control within our communities. The state has many other institutions and agents in our midst - psychologists, social workers, rent officers etc - and to restrict our attention to the streets ignores all these. So a really effective community control movement must fight on the institutional as well as the street level, and for this the community needs to be politically mobilised. (Shrieks of horror from anarchists and hippies!) Here we come to the crucial problem: the forms of political organisation suitable for such a movement which will not lead back to all the old crap of parties, trades unions, bureaucrats and so on.

The answer to this has been worked out countless times in practice during scores of popular revolts this century in the form of factory and community councils, street committees, 'sections' or the original form of soviet, before the bolsheviks poisoned the word.

What all these different names mean in practice is that every street or block has its council, composed of all its inhabitants who communicate with the others not through their leaders but through delegates who are democratically elected and always replaceable (if the members don't like what they're saying), and moreover are elected for particular tasks and particular periods of time.

The real and positive radicalism in Paris during May 1968, for instance, was not the destruction, joyous though it doubtless was, but the experiments in direct democracy. The graffiti ("Power no longer has the power - we ripped it off") illustrates what the text books hide. During the long term occupation of the Odeon, delegates to the council had to

continued on page 16

# LES TEMPS DES CERISES (March 18 - May 28, 1871)

March 18, 1871 (Saturday): Germany has just concluded an Armistice with France (Franco-Prussian War 1870-1). Popular demonstrations spontaneously break out in the working class districts of Paris - Les Buttes, Chaumont, Montmartre, Belleville, and Père Lachaise - and genially prevent government regulars from moving 400 cannons and machine guns parked on the strategic heights. The cannons have been paid for largely by local subscriptions and the commune begins in the defence of local rights against infringements by centralised authority. The attempted removal of cannons is merely the latest in a long line of anti-popular measures by President Thiers and his government.

Women played a decisive role in the revolution; soldiers and civilians hugged each other in the streets; National Guard *Fédérés* and government regulars greeted each other with shouts of 'Vive La République' and up-turned rifles as gestures of revolutionary solidarity; officers were ignored; cannons - except for ten - were left; a dozen wounded; two notoriously vicious generals were executed by their troops; President Thiers fled by the back door.

The Central Committee of the *Fédérés* organised municipal services and planned elections in all twenty *arrondissements*. As soon as elections were finished, on March 26, it disbanded, declaring: "Do not forget that men chosen from among you, living your life and your experience, will serve you best."

The duly-elected Commune Council had ninety members, average age 38 (Thiers was in his seventies and the National Assembly [operating from Royal Versailles - a contributory factor in proletarian discontent leading to the commune] had an average age of 62). Delegates were artisans, craftsmen, labour-

It is recorded how Pavlov's laboratory was flooded with water and how all his carefully conditioned dogs were spontaneously freed from conditioning by the shock of the experience. On a human level, the same thing seems to have happened in Paris in 1871.

ers, artists, writers, radical professional men - they were all subject to immediate recall by the electorate. They proved totally committed to revolutionary, radical ideas (owing a lot to the 1789 revolution and the abortive revolutions of 1830 and 1848) and also to the egalitarian clubs and committees 'beneath' them. Nothing could budge their profound and developed mistrust of centralised authority.

"The most important social measure of the commune was its own existence in activity." - Marx.

"The spirit of all the dead generations weighs like a rock on the minds of the living." Marx

April 19, 1871 (Saturday): Declaration of the Commune Council: "Unity, such as has been imposed upon us up to now by empire, monarchy or parliaments, is merely unthinking, despotic, arbitrary, burdensome centralisation. Political unity, such as Paris wants, is the voluntary association of all local initiatives, the spontaneous and free concurrence of all individual energies towards a common end: the well-being, freedom, equality, security of all."

It wasn't polemical bullshit: it was the

### practical programme of the commune.

Most Commune gestures, despite the obvious confusion of academics, were totally understandable, then and now. Trees outside official buildings were replanted with roots in the air (radicalism from Latin *radix*, a root). Communards

"Every member of a Vigilance Committee belongs to the Party of Socialist Revolution. So he demands, and seeks by every possible means, the abolition of the privileges of the bourgeoisie, its destruction as controlling elite, and the political advent of the workers. In plain words, social equality! No more bosses! No more classes! He knows work is the sole basis of the social constitution: the entire work product belongs to the worker producing it."

(Popular placard from Paris, 1971.)

patrolled streets stripped of cobbles and planted with cereal crops, their bayonets impaling loaves of bread. The painter Courbet, intoxicated with the spirit of the streets, supervised the destruction of the infamous war memorial, the Vendôme Column. The sixteen year old Arthur Rimbaud ran wild in this utopia and later, in poems like *Les Mains de Jeanne Marie*, celebrated the magnificent women of the Commune, "grown pale, marvellous."

Fifty different journals were on sale in the kiosks: forty proved their lasting value when the government later suppressed them. Chruches were full every night - people discussed revolutionary tactics, education, atheism and the running of the

Commune. The barrell organs played the current hit, *Les Temps des Cerises*. Statues were wreathed in red cloth (Napoleon I's statue lost its head!). Prostitution vanished. Paris was a constant flux of creativity: a city given over to the permanent adventure of the popular game of revolution.

The council was in 'power' for eight weeks: all the while government troops tightened the siege. As provincial reinforcements for the Commune failed to materialise the liberals abandoned the Commune: it began to discover its true radicalism, with programmes for educational and social reform and workers' control. But each night the flashes of government shells got closer.

May 21, 1871 (Sunday): While most communards attended a concert in aid of

that began without serious violence was put down with customary ferocity. The communards executed seventy hostages during the last hours: during the *semaine sanglante*, government regulars slew 25,000 communards and as soon as 'civilisation' was restored government courts jailed, deported or killed a further 10,000, three quarters of them *Fédérés*.

May 25, 1871 (Thursday): Charles Delescluze, 62 year old ex-1848 Jacobin, realised that Belleville was about to fall. Wearing a top hat and the red sash of a 'councillor', he marched down Boulevard Voltaire at the head of the remaining rebels, then walked over the barricade and swaggered with the proud elegance of a free man, into the withering fire of government troops...

The novelist Flaubert, speaking on behalf of middle-aged, middle-class, middle-minded mediocrity, then as now, said: "The Commune was the last event of the Middle Ages. At any rate, let's hope it was the last."

One communard put a different view to his judges: "The Commune was an ecstasy: the death I now face at your hands is preferable to any way of life you can offer."

May 28, 1871 - March 18, 1971: The Commune died, but did not die. As the accompanying document makes still clearer it is part of our history; part of the unofficial history of mankind; one of the great fires illumining the long, dark nights of prehistory. The communards are our ancestors: we revenge them only by reliving their experience.

Louise Michel (*Groupe de la Vierge Rouge, Paris, March 18, 1971.*)

*Fédérés*' orphans at the Tuilleries, government regulars slipped into Paris through Porte St Cloud, undefended through oversight. The communards took to the barricades but never had a chance, despite heroic resistance: they were outnumbered, outweaponed and outmanoeuvred. The Germans, proving that even warring governments have more in common with each other than a government has with free men, obligingly blocked Paris' rear exits.

May 21 - May 28, 1871: The revolution



# FROM THE DUSTBINS OF HISTORY

**I**  
The traditional working class movement must be re-examined without illusions; particularly without illusions about its political and pseudo-theoretical heirs who have inherited only its failures. The apparent achievements of this movement (reformism, the installation of a state bureaucracy) are its failures; its apparent failures (the Commune, the revolt of the Asturias) its greatest achievements, for us now and for the future.

**II**  
The Commune was the biggest rave-up of the nineteenth century. Underlying it was the Communards' conviction that they had become masters of their own history, not on the level of 'governmental politics' but on the level of everyday life. Look, for example, at the games they played with their weapons, that is to say the games they played with their power. It is in this sense that we understand Marx's remark that "the most important social measure of the Commune was its own existence in activity".

**III**  
Engels' "Study the Paris Commune - that was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" should also be taken perfectly seriously because it reveals what the dictatorship of the proletariat is not - the 57 varieties of dictatorship over the proletariat in the name of the proletariat.

**IV**  
Everyone can make perfectly justified criticism of the Commune's incoherence, its obvious lack of a system. But just as the problem of political systems seems to us today to be more complex than it did to the abusive heirs of the bolshevik-type system, so it is high time the Commune was studied not only as a superseded form of revolutionary primitivism whose mistakes have been left behind, but as a positive experiment whose whole truth has not been discovered, let alone fulfilled, to this day.

**V**  
The Commune was leaderless, at a time when the idea of leaders being essential was undisputed within the proletarian movement. This idea is, paradoxically, the reason for both its successes and its failures. The Commune's official commentators are incompetent (at least if compared to Marx, Lenin or even Blanqui). But, in retrospect, it is the 'irresponsible acts; the 'outrages' of '71 which are precisely those to be demanded of the revolutionary movement now and in future, even though most of them were forced to be purely destructive. The best known example was the Communard who, in the last hours, discovered a bourgeois, acting suspiciously, who insisted that he'd never had anything at all to do with politics: "That is precisely why I'm going to kill you".

**VI**  
The general arming of the masses was crucially important, both practically and symbolically, throughout the Commune. For the most part, the right to impose popular will, by force if necessary, was not surrendered to specialist groups. The counterpoint to this exemplary autonomy and independence of armed groups was lack of adequate co-ordination. Neither in attack nor in defense did the Communards reach real military efficiency. But do not forget that the Spanish Revolution was lost, as ultimately was the Spanish Civil War itself, in the name of transforming autonomous groups into a 'republican army'. (We believe that the contradiction between autonomy and co-ordination depends largely on the level reached by technology).

**VII**  
To date, the Commune is the only realisation of a revolutionary urbanism - attacking, on the spot, the petrified symbols of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, denying the innocence of a single monument. Those who equate such activity with the nihilism of vandals or the irresponsibility of petrol-bombers, must be forced to say exactly what they think is valuable in present-day society - it'll probably turn out to be the whole crock o' shit. "All space is already occupied by the enemy.... The appearance of authentic urbanism will be marked by creating the absence of occupation in a number of areas. What we call construction starts there. The idea is made clear by the modern concept (in physics) of "positive void". (Unitary Urbanism: Vaneigem, Kotanyi, 1961)

**VIII**  
The Commune floundered less to the force of weaponry than to the force of habit: the most shocking instance was the refusal to use cannons to rip off the French National Bank which remained throughout a pro - Versailles enclave, protected by a few rifles and the myths of property and theft. Other ideological habits were equally disastrous - the resurrection of jacobinism, the defeatists strategy of barricades, a throwback to '48, and soon.

**IX**  
The Commune shows clearly how the defenders of the old world benefit from the complicity of the revolutionaries - particularly those who think the revolution - at one point or another. That point comes where they think alike. In this way the old world retains strongholds (ideology, language, morality, sensibility) within the developing new world: it uses them to re-capture territory it has lost. (Only active thought, natural to a revolutionary proletariat, escapes it forever: the Cour des Comptes (public records office) went up in flames. The real 'fifth column' is in the minds of the revolutionaries.

**X**  
The tale of the arsonists who, during the last days of the Commune, went to destroy Notre Dame, only to find it defended by an armed battalion of communard artists, is revealing: a fine example of direct democracy and an example of problems before the workers' councils which are still unresolved. Were these solid artists right to defend the cathedral in the name of eternal, aesthetic values (in the last analysis, in the name of museum culture) when others wanted nothing more on that day than to express themselves, to make this demolition job a symbol of their complete defiance to a society which was about to consign their whole lives to oblivion and silence? The artists, acting as specialists, already found themselves in conflict with an extremist action in the struggle against alienation. The Communards must be reproached for not replying to the totalitarian terror of power with the sum total of their weapons. Everything indicates that the arsonists, the poets who, at that moment, expressed the poetry in suspense throughout the Commune, were eliminated. All the unfulfilled actions of the commune allow various aborted acts to become 'atrocities' and memories to be censored. The remark that "those who make half a revolution only dig their own graves", also explains the silence of Saint-Just.

**XI**  
The theoretician, who surveys everything with the novelist's God-Like omniscience, can very easily prove that the Commune was foredoomed to failure, that its extension was impossible. But don't forget that for those who lived through it, that extension, that transcendence, was there.

**XII**  
The audacity and inventiveness of the Commune cannot be assessed in relation to our time but only in relation to the political, intellectual and moral attitudes of its own time, in relation to the solidarity or all the idiocies to which it put a match. So, considering the solidarity of idiocies today (left or right), one can assess the audacity and inventiveness one might reasonably expect from a comparable explosion now.

**XIII**  
The 'class war', of which the Commune was one episode, is still with us (although its superficial characteristics have changed considerably). As to the matter of "making the Commune's unconscious tendencies conscious" (Engels), the last word is still to be said.

**XIV**  
For the best part of 30 years in France, left-wing Christians and Stalinists (remembering the Anti-Nazi front) have agreed to accentuate the Commune as an expression of national disarray, of wounded patriotism, of the "people petitioning someone to govern them well" (along the lines of current Stalinist 'policy'), after finally despairing of the deficiencies of the bourgeois right wing. To demolish the Holy Writ it's only necessary to examine the role played by foreigners who came to fight for the Commune: it was above all the inevitable test of strength towards which every action in Europe by "our party" (Marx) had been leading, since 1848.

Debord, Kotanyi, Vaneigem.

(Wallposter issued Paris 1962, by L'Internationale Situationniste)





★continued from page 13  
report back to their 'electorate' every 24 hours: if their reports were unsatisfactory they were re-called. The workers' factory-occupation-committees operated on similar principles.

In fact this form of organisation could be the basis of a whole new society in which hierarchy and specialisation are eliminated forever, and the use of the latest methods of electronic communication (eg TV) could make the real participation of everyone in the running of their affairs possible. This form of organisation is naturally poison to left-wing political parties and trade unions who have a vested interest in the maintenance of their own power, and preferably its extension. In fact throughout the last hundred years such organisations, side by side with the old rulers, have crushed direct democracy wherever it has emerged. It's also poison to the more woolly-minded sorts of anarchist who refuse to face up to the problems of organisation in any form - like virgins threatened with rape. (The real anarchists in Spain chose exactly this form of organisation - eg the Durutti Column and the factory and community councils in Barcelona.) The nucleus of this sort of organisation is already springing up in various tenants' organisations and these eventually have to co-ordinate with the movements of the street people.

One of the few large scale movements in Britain to consider these problems at all was the Committee of 100. When it decentralised early in 1962, it understood

clearly, for all its other myopias, that the community was the real base for change. (The early militant community actions in Interzone A were often instigated by members of Committee of 100 working groups, the most active being based in West London.) Also the Committee of 100's attempts to deal structurally and organisationally with the problems of direct democracy should be re-examined. The radicalism of the Committee of 100 was not in its opposition to nuclear war (very few people actually support nuclear war) but just such attempts to make real democracy work. Ideas for street councils were still-born, largely because the movement collapsed before it could catch up with the thinking of its more advanced adherents, but the idea still remains to be tried here. Likewise the 'convenor system', through which five people phoned five people each, each of whom phoned a further five and so on, is an immediately workable information system which might serve as an initial model for direct communication.

And it should be made entirely clear, once and for all, that community control is not traditional politics and has nothing whatever to do with ideology or its cousin, masochism, whatever the defenders of leftist 'purity' may say. Community control pre-supposes the emergence of an alchemical unity between us all: the mystical project without the must and made collective. The very minimum demand is for a new kind of human activity, based on the almost total leisure now made possible by mechanisation and automation - a new culture corresponding to human desires, not simply masking their frustration. Anything less than a complete transformation of the whole nature of human experience, an alternative use of life, is less than enough. What would a revolutionary society be like? An endless passion, an endless adventure, an endless banquet. There will, as Marx observed, be no one left to judge our actions, for we shall have eaten the judges. Dick Pountain, Charles Radcliffe, David Robins

## REGGIO CALABRIA CONTROLLED BY PEOPLE



Burning Belfast Bus with tear gas shells in Reggio Calabria

**Reggio Calabria, Italy, April 1971:** Although almost totally ignored by the press here, the people of Reggio Calabria continue their remarkable struggle against the Italian State. Represented as 'a regional squabble', (which it was to start with) or by the more hysterical sectors of the press as a 'fascist popular revolt', it is in fact a brand new chapter in the ongoing story of the Italian revolution.

For three months the people of this town have held out against the governments' paramilitary siege, defended their own hard-won freedom, several times opening fire on the police and barricading themselves with high tension wires. While Prime Minister Colombo congratulates himself on his moderation in dealing with the situation, the reality escapes. The truth is that the State has been quite powerless to re-impose its control without wholesale extermination of the people. On the one hand the Communist Party appeal to "more responsible people among the majority", while on the other, the government asks for "responsibility and a sense of duty". As for 'fascism', the fascists themselves have a burnt-down HQ to blame on the people and the fascist paper lays it down fair and square: "It's the revolt of an entire population against the State".

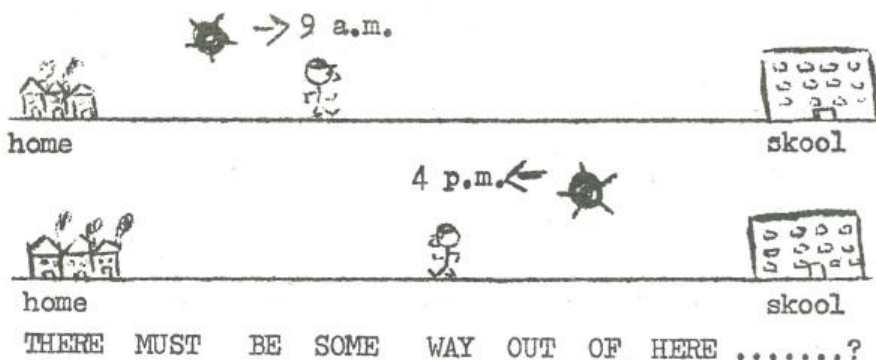
### Communist Party Unpopular at Popular Party

Hardly surprising that all over Italy Communist Party members are mass-burning their membership cards: the CP's lies about Reggio gain ever-increasing disbelief. The Italian Situationists captured the general attitude: "Stalinists... you may be able to swallow Reggio but you sure as hell can't digest it."

The State too is quite clear about the situation, whatever it may be saying. Labour Minister Donat Cattin proposed that the Italian union-police, severely depressed by their troubles, be replaced by real work-police. At least then the Maoists will have nothing left to envy about China where the army forces workers to work.

For all its defects... the fascist agents provocateurs, though no more active than in other parts of Italy, have worked in collusion with the cops to good effect on occasion... Reggio represents a significant step. It not only stripped local officials of their power: it also forced the State to drop its pose as the guardian of right. There is just one real State law: its own survival. And the State has, in Reggio, been forced to drop the hypocrisy of legality and to accept, through its use of force, the power of the people. In Reggio Calabria, a lot of masks have been discarded.

## SKOOLS LIBERATION



The concept of radical action in school by schoolkids themselves is not new. There has been a 'schools movement' in this country for nearly two years. Why has it failed to achieve any lasting success in working class schools?

The main reason has simply been that the movement is almost totally middle-class dominated. Most recruitment and action has occurred in grammar and public schools. There has simply been little or no action in secondary modern schools. The schools movement has developed therefore along similar lines as the 'student movement', using the same language, concepts and tactics as their older brothers. There has been no attempt at relating the struggle in middle-class schools (such as grammar schools) are almost totally cut off from any community, and therefore any struggle is bound to be somewhat isolated. In fact in middle-class areas there is nowhere near as much cohesiveness and revolutionary potential as there is in a working class community.

On the other hand in secondary moderns and other working class schools there is an immediate and total link with the surrounding community. Most structures the kids adopt in school (the school gang) are linked directly to the community structures (the street gang). The boys and girls themselves feel that real life begins in the streets after school, and that school is some place where you are forced to waste time. So to attempt to tell these kids (as the SAU does) to organise themselves in school and to demand democratic control, is comparable to telling prisoners to organise themselves and demand democratic control of their prison; all they are interested in is escaping.

This reaction is correct. School - all it teaches, and all it stands for - is totally irrelevant to them. It offers them nothing they want or need. Our aim (the same as theirs) should be to destroy it. The only education they want (or indeed need) is offered by the community.

Thus on the question of strategy the Schools Action Union has failed. They are equally mistaken on the question of tactics.

Rather than ignore the 'gang' structure which is basic in the working class kids and communities, one must work through the gang in the community. One must not use it, but rather join it. This action must extend to after school institutions such as the youth club and dance hall. By implication the struggle must carry over into the field of the apprentice and young worker.

The present schools' organisation is totally inadequate for this work (or play?). It is a centralised, middle-class organisation, which ignores the community. It talks in the abstract rather than in the immediate.

All that is needed as an alternative is an information flow between the various groups/gangs which are operating in the schools and communities.

Any action in secondary moderns should aim not at making them democratic but at using their total irrelevancy to destroy them, while at the same time developing the struggle in the community. This struggle and the accompanying growth of new structures will replace the irrelevant educational system.

(This leaflet was produced by pupils at a North London Comprehensive School.)

## FREEDOM NOT A GIFT FROM CAPTAIN FINK APRIL FOOLS?

The hippies have become victims of their own ideology. In the rejection of the grand spectacle - Hollywood/Madison Ave /America - they have accepted a spectacle no less destructive, one which substitutes synthetic play for real life, while at the same time they have become tools of those against whom they have supposedly rebelled. They have been added to the rostrum of 'stars' who entertain the corpse of the bourgeoisie, a corpse which seeks to remake the world in its own image.

Baby, you haven't dropped out - you've been forced out because this goddamn system is rotten. But what they will never allow is for us to remake our lives, because that will signal their end: they must instead attempt to either recoup our revolt by making it into a spectacle which reaffirms their vitality while it drains ours or they will seek to crush us. And we must fight either. The one by refusing to 'play their games' while real life is denied, the other by open struggle. 'If they want to play Nazis, we ain't going to play Jews.' And so our struggle crosses that of the blacks and together we can tear this shit down.

The American Indian was forced onto reservations (concentration camps) he did not retire there to smoke and groove. Life cannot be limited to a 'reserve' specified by those who seek to control us. We must decide where and when we will live, play or die, otherwise our freedom is a lie. Black Mask, New York City, 1967.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**AIM TO LIVE**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Dialogue between anarchist terrorist and policeman - Paris 1890:  
Cop: I arrest you in the name of law and order!  
Terrorist (drawing gun and shooting): And I suppress you in the name of liberty!  
\*\*\*\*\*

Berkeley, California, April 6.  
The April Coalition today won five seats (out of nine) and a black mayor (Mi Wideman) on Berkeley City Council. It has earned considerable publicity with its programme for community control of cops and housing. The more seasoned political observers are openly sceptical about the victory - no one seems at all sure that the Coalition will go through with either plan and they themselves seem less than clear about the exact nature of the control proposed. Even if they do push these 'reforms', the critics argue, there is no chance of the necessary state ratification. "If you put a politician in power over you, watch your throat." - Groucho Marx  
The coalition worked to power through a massive voter-registration drive among the poor, the blacks and the drop-outs. Part of their success is doubtless due to the huge escalation of cop-atrocity in the city. Berkeley has three times as many cops (if you include the campus cops) as the other Bay cities - Oakland and San Francisco. (Even without campus cops there are twice as many). Community control of cops is therefore an extremely attractive proposition; whether there can be real community control imposed politically (rather than by the direct power of the community) is still open to considerable doubt.

"You can't impose community control politically: the community must seize it" - Harpo Marx  
There are many aspects of the Berkeley situation which are not clear at this stage: it would, for example, be hard to say what direct relevance the Coalition has to movements with similar 'popular-front reformist' aims in Britain. It may be - as many Coalitionists claim - that such activity is at least as relevant as molotov cocktails. That remains, along with much else, to be seen. We hope to be able to say more about this essentially fragmented political attempt to change life in Berkeley in the next issue.