

**the political
theory of the
student
movement**

***-notes for a marxist
critique***

march '71



The Political Theory of the Student Movement

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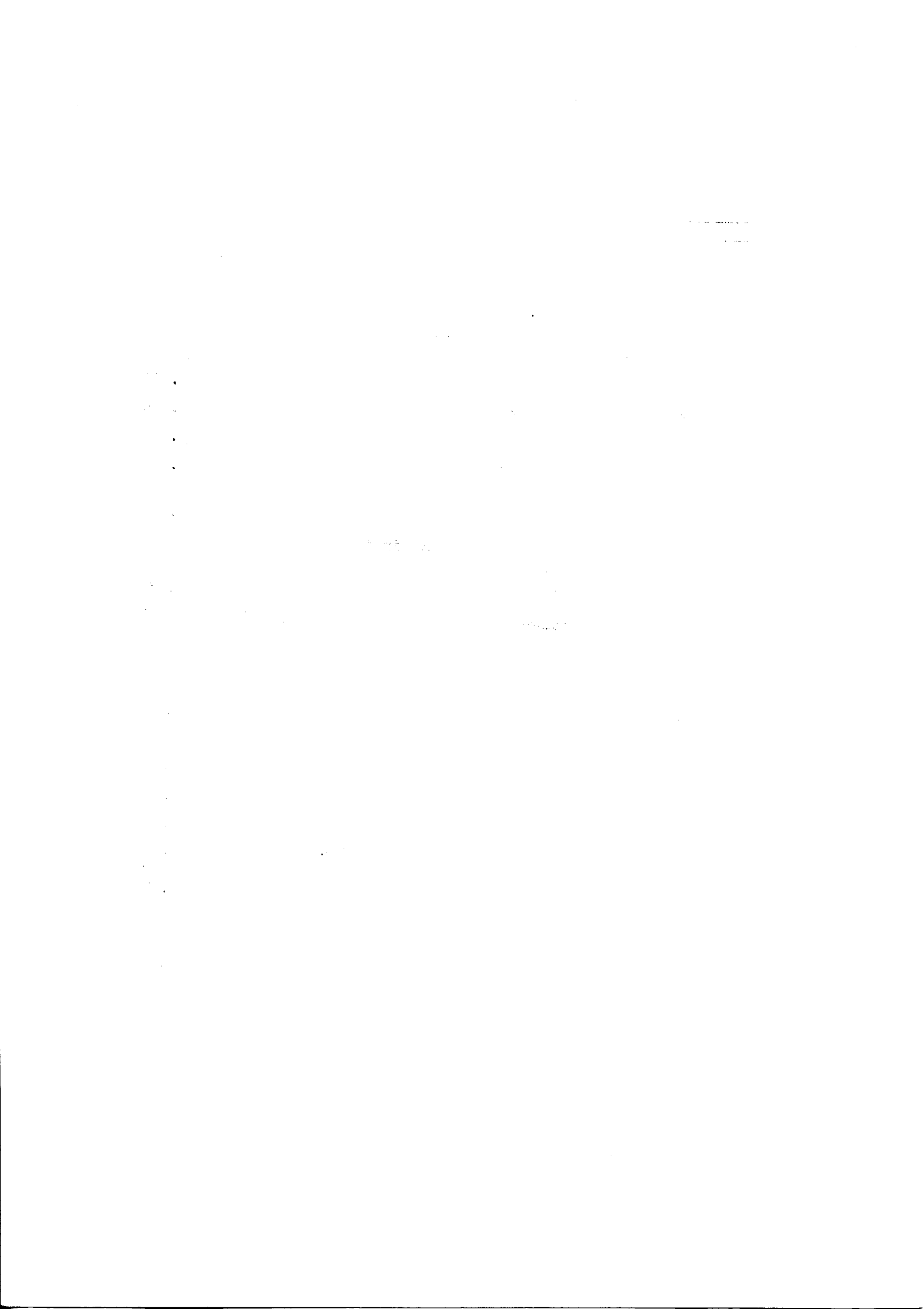
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Introduction

This work is loose, untidy, repetitive, but we hope that as working notes, the central theme will emerge. This theme is, quite simply, that the sects have been trampling marxism to death for too long and that they must be challenged by a direct approach to what is wrong with their thought, rather than by stepping over this thought and reproducing high level Euro-Marxism for a limited and pre-existing audience.

The document here has been produced by a small 'rump' group of RSSF, who in April last year decided to wind up what was left of the student movement's organisational existence. Instead of folding up completely - an alternative which was argued at the time - we decided it would be irresponsible to bury problems which were bound to reappear in predictable future attempts at an organised revolutionary politics among students, and felt that any new attempt to organise students should have before it the political knowledge to be wrenched from the RSSF experience.

Our commitment to continue work on students did not in any sense anticipate a positive evaluation of the student role in revolutionary politics, it stemmed from the view that previous basic positions were inadequate.

The comrades involved in this work were active at various levels in RSSF and were a part of the 'independent' mainstream of the organisation. Independent, here, and throughout the text, implies a politics involving sustained opposition to the positions and practices of the sects and other 'professionals', whose weight within the student movement appeared to be heavily misdirected. Our own politics emerge in the work that follows, though it is perhaps helpful to point out that through work our opposition to much of the politics of those involved in the student movement has become harder and clearer.

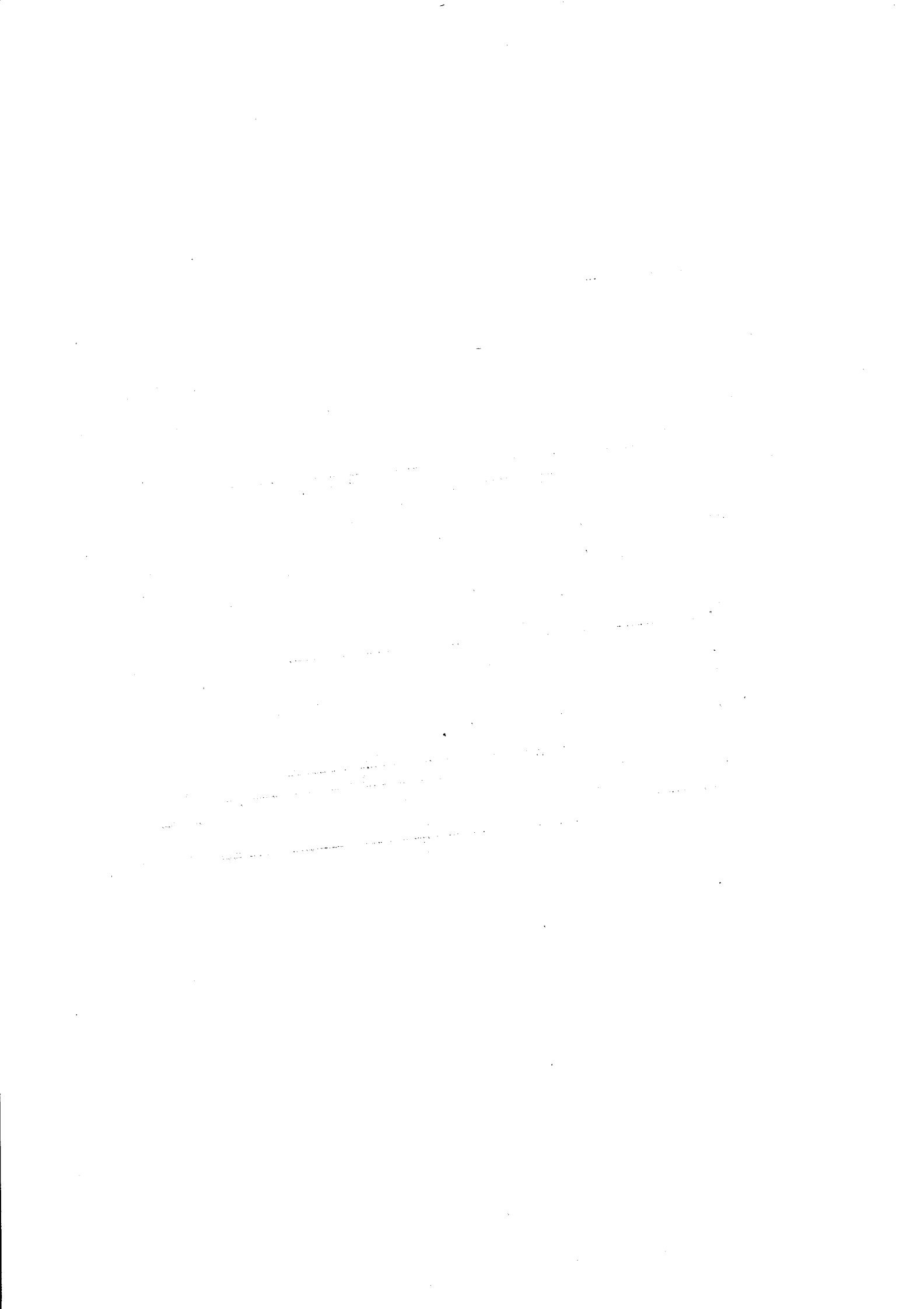
The first part of this document consists of critiques of texts which we regard as influential or representative within the student movement. These critiques stand in their own right, but from them, in the second section, we attempt a more formal theoretical investigation of the problems they suggested to us.

Our work has been a collective attempt to understand and evaluate the politics of a period dominated by action. We recognise that had RSSF been a maturer organisation this work would have been done in 1968 and 69; as it is, it represents an attempt to catch up on history. We welcome comments since our intention is to extend this project.

Introduction to Part 1

The following critiques deal with texts which we feel were influential in, or representative of, the student movement. In an attempt to discover the substance of the sects and others' thought in relation to students we have, where possible, used texts which were clearly produced by the group concerned for the movement, thus IS's position on students is examined through their Education, Capitalism and the Student Revolt, and NLR's position through their Red Base series of articles. Some of the groups involved in RSSF did not produce distinct statements on students and for their position we have had to refer to a selection of their literature. The **other** pieces examined here are significant because they represent attempts to describe and analyse the student revolt and to a large extent represent the indirect, formative influence on the movement.

1. Education, Capitalism and the Student Revolt by the International Socialism group.
2. The International Marxist Group.
3. Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).
4. Communist Party of Great Britain.
5. New Left Review's Red Basism.
6. Student Power, The Meaning of the Student Revolt, G. Stedman Jones.
7. Positions in Nairn's essay, The beginning of the End. Panther 68.
8. J. and M. Rowntree 'The Political Economy of Youth' or Youth as Class.
9. J. Cowley, The Strange Death of the Liberal University Socialist Register 69. a socialist academics viewpoint.



Education, Capitalism, and the Student Revolt. by the International Socialism group.

IS set themselves a rigorous task, asserting that other interpretations of the student revolt are wrong, that its real causes have to be understood, and that analysis, through theory, should guide meaningful political action,

' But neither has the left been particularly successful in coming to terms theoretically with the new student revolt. Its analysis has remained at the level of generalities that rarely guide meaningful action.' p.47

(underlinings by eds.)

Their opening section moreover suggests a penetrating and thorough political analysis, from which important conclusions will flow,

' Everyone, the ruling class included, must recognise the reality of the 'student revolution'. A revolutionary does not, however, bow down before facts- not even before the facts of revolt. The coming social revolution will be qualitatively different from anything the student movement has created.' p.3

We understood this to mean that IS would be taking a position on the student revolt. This objective, combined with others, seemed to be acceptable as long as the IS text lived up to the standards they set for themselves. It follows that we read this document looking for coherent political argument, looking for theory. We shall see how it lived up to examination.

The basic picture.

The overall scenario of the student revolt is stated quite clearly. Its essence is a changing capitalism, which induces changes in its educational system. The current phase of capitalism, technological capitalism (i) cannot rest content with the dual education system of the previous era of capitalism. In addition to elite training (universities) and mass education (schools, secondary education- traditional popular in IS's formula) a new stream of mass technocratic labour has to be trained by the educational system. Whereas the old system was for the inculcation of bourgeois values amongst the masses, and elite education was for the training of the mind, it appears that the current phase is for skilling up a new technological work force. (ii)

- (ii) Other terms such as 'modern', 'neocapitalist', etc. are used, but the model is 'technological capitalism' a formula which has a specific history in IS thought.
- (ii) It is interesting to note that the functions of the previous dual system are conceived in terms of their ideological functions, whereas the new stream is conceived purely in terms of its economic function. At a later point we shall note that one of the big weaknesses of the text is that there is no clear or full statement of the nature of the new stream education. We receive ample evidence of existence -which we are very dubious about- but little evidence of its nature, ideological character or social character. However more later, of the problems of the empty box.

The impact of changes in the educational system are expressed in terms of increasing personal anxiety and insecurity for the student. We quote,

'The first barrier to assimilation (for the modern student) is often uncertainty about his own capacity to achieve the qualifications at the end of the course'. p.42

Further,

'The origins of students largely determine the fact of their becoming students, in the first place. But it is their social destinies which more directly effect and explain their own consciousness.' p.41 (underlining by eds.)

So far then, in general terms, we are told about educational change and student insecurity- which is rooted in achievement sociology and career mobility. On a schematic level at least it is possible to grasp the basic approach being used: but once this has been done real problems ~~emerge~~ emerge, thick and fast- just as soon as any attempt is made to follow the precise arguments which are put forward as substantiation and detail of the over-all picture. We felt the need to trace the precise arguments involved because the document becomes heavy with formal propositions as its substance is enlarged upon. Our style of underlining certain terms which are part of quotations follows from an attempt to pin down the meaning in the document. After an exposition and random remarks we will formulate our comments more systematically. We invite the reader to attempt to arrange some coherence below the surface level of IS's formal argumentational development.

The formal argument.

The key chapter for the 'causes' of the student revolt is chapter 4, The Conflict.

Here we are told,

'Yet the causes of this unrest, everywhere analysed, are nowhere explained'. p.47 para2.

and,

'But neither has the left been particularly successful...' quoted above.

We are then told about the 'basic cause',

'The basic cause of the student ~~upurge~~ upsurge is to be found in the one factor never focussed upon by the apologists of the status quo: the changing forms of manipulation required by the new capitalism. This is related to the changing function of the university (see Ch.2) and the changing position of the student population. It affects different sections of the student body differently. But associated with it are more general factors that affect all students. These are particularly important if a view of the long term possibilities is to be obtained.' (underlining by eds.)

The two 'more general factors' are the failure of reformism (Wilson etc.) and the fact that students are young and unusual in their concentration into an exclusively young section of society. (p.48) We are then told,

'These two factors, however, do not explain the student upsurge. They determine its form only.'

But despite this emphatic distinction no suggestion is given at all about the nature of the 'form' given to the upsurge by these general factors. We would politely suggest that the question of 'form' is itself formal- a cover for an inability to link up studentism with the supposed failure of reformism, in fact, a sad failure of political analysis. The other

factor mentioned - the exclusiveness of student communities - is self evident and hardly a penetrating insight.

However, these two general factors do not apparently rival in explanatory power what IS then state to be the 'underlying sources' of the upsurge. This reformulation of 'underlying sources' starts us off on a further stage of the argument,

'They do not locate the underlying sources of discontent and opposition to the status quo that students feel. To understand these it is necessary to look at the particular relations of different sections of the student body to capitalist society.'

p.49 (underlining by eds)

Before moving onto this section of the analysis it is useful to note that the stated problem of the IS text is changing: it is becoming an explanation of the social phenomenology of the upsurge, not quite the problematic specified earlier, i.e. IS are now looking at 'causes' as seen in 'student feelings'. This is the first step on the slippery slope to doing precisely what others are warned against, 'bowing down before the facts.'

When we came to the account of the different sections of the student body we find a simplistic breakdown of students into technologists, technocrats and humanities and arts students. About the first two groups we find little comment other than odd pieces of obvious description. For example, we find told that technologists work long hours, have most in common with manual workers, but have not yet been active. This is a peculiarly stunted analysis of a group which one would expect on prima facie grounds to be very intimately determined by the technological era of IS's capitalism!

Technocrats are described as ruling class servants in training, a category derived from a different breakdown of the student body which concerns what students become (social destiny) rather than the actual working experience of students, which is the primary emphasis of the description of technologists. If the category is derived from a 'social destiny' analysis, it is too narrow- where is the supposed old elite? Are technocrats the only students who become ruling class members or allies or servants? These questions require answers but receive none, and the basic objection we have remains: there is no explanatory treatment of the way that new forms of manipulations required by technological capitalism determine the consciousness of technocrats, technologists, or any other group.

Finally we come to the sector to which IS devotes the pivotal role, the arts and humanities students. The surprise here is that, without any warning, we find that arts and humanities students -a familiar, traditional category- become 'social science' students. At last! As expected, the hoary sociologist-as-rebel formula creeps out of the jungle of New Society sociology and para-marxist screed.

Let us attend the wisdom offered about this section of the student population. Firstly, a fact:

'It is this section of students that has above all been involved in the recent upsurge of militancy.'

p.49

Having established this IS once again attempt systematic argumentational development,

'To see why (this section has been the most active etc. eds.) we have first to look at the impact of the transition in the function of higher education.'

p.50 (underlining by eds.)

In order to appreciate fully the meaning of this central part of the text

we quote extensively on this the latest thematic statement.

'The history of capitalism is the history of the transformation of previously entrenched attitudes and interests under the impact of the developing needs of production. We attempted in Chapter 2 to portray the elements of such a change in the field of higher education. It is implicit in our argument that it is the liberal conceptions of academic freedom that suffer in the process.'

p. 50 (underlinings by eds.)

This welcome clarity of thesis has one virtue, despite the lapses of language and syntax and questionable categories which litter the text (is it production need or accumulation need which drives capitalism? is it implicit? etc.), it tells us that certain forms of manipulation have been replaced by the new forms necessary to technological capitalism. This is a start, though a positive formulation of the correlative forms of manipulation of the new system would have been very helpful.

After being introduced to the idea that academic freedom and disinterested scholarship are suffering (the word suffering involves a rather dangerous value judgement) we are invited to taste the living impact of the situation on students.

'A whole section of students is bewildered to find that what awaits them at the end of a long and arduous climb is not the kingdom of the mind they were promised. Increasingly what is demanded of them is not pure science and scholarship, free debate and critical thought, not an up to date and expanded version of the old university, (it does not matter whether this actually existed or not- it is what the students are taught to expect) but participation in or apologetics for the world of money, and militarism, poverty and police forces. Instead of being offered a chance to understand the world and society they themselves are subjected to a crude quantification; in place of an exploration of reality they get exams; although the institutions may still be described as 'communities of scholars' the atmosphere inside these comes to resemble more that of factories.'

The piece continues mentioning the personal experiences of Jude the Obscure (!), and stating that students find themselves 'alienated from the means of learning'- a fine metaphor!

Then in the next but one paragraph, we find the 'disenchanted student mass' in some cases seeking modes of acceptance of this situation in the non-academic sphere, indulging in activities which range 'from coffee bar discussions to drinking sessions and student rags'.

Then comes a further analytical refinement.

'The contradictions involved in this attempt to maintain the forms of an ideology, while transforming the situation that gave it content and meaning find their most extreme expression in that area of social life most deeply concerned with the elaboration and propagation of ideology; the sphere of higher education and in particular the 'humanities'. In general there is bound to be a sharp clash between old academic definitions that are often as not still used ... and the new functions. But usually the tensions that result are external to the subject matter of the study, they concern the use of the discipline, not its internal structure. In those areas of study concerned with the analysis and interpretation of life itself, however, this ideological tension has to be part of the subject matter.'

p.52 (underlining by eds.)

Then, a little later, yet another version of the impact of changing demands for higher education on students,

'The mass of the students gain no such benefits. The whole operation appears as quite external to any interests they themselves might have. It only serves to increase their general alienation and bewilderment. At best it can seem like a complex cross word puzzle.'
(sic! eds.)

Then we are told that Britain in particular -for no reason- it is supposed to be self evident- has those who are critical of existing society concentrated in one department, sociology. Later, on page 53 we find a hint of a real contradiction which perhaps has some substance - the university has to stimulate the freeplay and development of ideas whilst simultaneously restricting them.

So much then for an account of IS thought: except in all fairness, to state that 'increasing functionality' and 'vocationalism' are specified at various points as the characteristics of the new forms of manipulation.

What are we to make of this thought? Is there any coherence to its arguments? Is there any substance to its categories, and specification of what forces are in contradiction, what elements in the situation are opposed to each other, or allied with each other? Any sense of the political importance of the variety of 'tensions' mentioned? Any compatibility between numerous theses and analyses? Any truth in its historical account of educational ideologies? (iii) Are 'functionalism' and 'vocationalism' new manipulative forms hostile to academic freedom? Is there any link between descriptive accounts of ideological forces and the causal context, technological capitalism? And, finally, of course, any political assessment of the analysis presented, even any assessment which goes beyond the 'generalities' which they so contemptuously hold against other -unspecified- analyses of the student question? Not forgetting the original statement of IS refusal to follow inadequate interpretations and as revolutionaries not to 'bow down before the facts.' (iv)

(iii) They devote a considerable amount of attention to producing a history of the universities which is designed to show a steady reduction, over the centuries, of the independence of these institutions. The historical sketch starts with the idea of the ruling class in feudal/medieval times being utterly unconcerned and undemanding of the universities, finishing up with the (unproven) thesis that technological capitalism is directly in control of the universities. They even quantify control control-as 90% at one point!

The current destiny of the university we regard as unproven (see comment on technological capitalism as an empty box) while the intermediate stages of university history we regard as incorrect (surely the church universities were a direct part of the church state in medieval times.) The function of this farcical history is to support a classic sectarian/Trotskyist doctrine- the ever increasing tendency of capitalism to centralise, corporatise and realise its fascist/corporative essence. See p.51 of IS text.

(iv) See the quote in opening paragraph above.

Assessment

The basic referent of the text should have been technological capitalism and its correspondent ideological formation, but the absence of any substantial content in this model, leads IS into an erratic assembly of clashing theses, mechanical formulae and sociological heresies. Though we tried to interpret the 'technologism' model sympathetically, we found it hard to discover even a few glimmers of content. Its one direct expression in the text -technocratic mass labour- is really only a renaming of the science stream of students, an interpretation which is backed by the contrast of this group in a quite traditional manner with 'arts and humanities' students. The other category, technocratic students, concerns the post student role, not students qua students, which is supposed to be the main concern of the analysis. Even this category is little other than another version of traditional elite.

If the technological capitalism scenario has little to do with students as such, or even with their destinies in a new order of capitalism (mass technocratic labour becomes white collar labour at a later point in IS analysis, a highly traditional category) perhaps it is related to the new forms of manipulation so often referred to?

Here what we find as articulations of the new manipulations are, 'functionality' -a spurious sociological term, not a term referring to a new stage of capitalist ideological development, surely? - and 'vocationalism', a traditionalist and timid term, quite consonant with the educational systems of a laissez-faire or monopolistic period of capitalist development. (The other clues about technological capitalism's ideology are perhaps meant to reside in the 'erosion of liberal values' formulation, the bourgeoisie's supposed abandonment of liberal forms, and the pressure and suffering imposed on academic freedom and disinterested scholarship. There are several points here: the term academic freedom in IS usage refers to two separate factors, one being independence from the state of the university as an institution (see remarks on medieval universities etc.), and the other being formal and practical civil liberties and free debate within the universities. The latter is always subject to strains of course, but what is not established is that technological capitalism, and its supposedly centralising state, find themselves in contradiction to free debate any more or any differently to capitalism of any other period, and any of its institutions.)

Then take the idea of the traditional independence of the universities from the state. Is state guidance and policy now of any essentially different character to that of the late nineteenth century, when civic universities were founded for quite definite capitalist reasons, or to the subsequent redbrick expansion. Were these developments more independent of the state (and if so why and how), more purely governed by non-manipulative motives than the current phase of university and technical level expansion? Is there any evidence that the state's role has changed qualitatively since the era of monopoly capitalism? (v) Is there a technological state which involves a new period of capitalist development?

- (v) Even IS's position on capitalism is muddled. On p.51 they slip back into talking about 'monopoly capitalism' whilst elsewhere the present stage is definitely held to be one of technological capitalism.

IS's attempt to present a transition thesis, which is derived from the idea of a new period of capitalist development, falls down because the substance of the new situation towards which the change is directed is never made clear. Perhaps it doesn't really exist? Perhaps a period of change and transition from one period to another is really nothing to do with history, but rather a muddled attempt to rescue something like basic thinking from a fundamentally Durkheimian analysis of expectational frustration and anomie among students, an analysis of conflict without direction or substantive meaning. More of this later though.

The point made about unproven contradictions in the above sections has another key aspect. We have said that the forces involved in supposedly contradictory relations are not specified, and even where suggested in muddled forms are not valid forces for a marxist analysis. The point should be taken further. Is the IS text at any point really seeing the student upsurge and its causes and nature in marxist terms at all? Is the structure of causality one of the forces in contradiction which have different types of determination and modes of resolution? Or is the case really that IS have been unable to undertake the promised political assessment, and have substituted for the method appropriate to that objective a spurious problematic, a bourgeois problematic - seeking causes by the method of deepening approximation, basic cause, underlying cause, cause of form etc. In other words, isn't their problem a completely false problem?

A coherent political assessment is difficult for IS, because they draw on such a diverse range of inspirations and authorities for their analysis. For example, they draw on the language of Frankfurtian marxism and a piece of Korschian humanism, when they proclaim, 'the university is a structure of repression', or students, 'are alienated from the means of learning'. Other examples of this desperate catholicism are clear from a heavy reliance on the material of sociology lecture notes - Durheim or Runciman, or the pop sociology of New Society. This is an objectionable practice which when applied to the classics of marxism leaves one wondering what sort of philistinism prevents the faintest glimpse of the rigours of their claimed philosophy penetrating into IS's own work.

Their utter blindness to questions of methodology (properly speaking to questions of epistemology) stems from their inability to distinguish between bourgeois and marxist thought forms. This is seen most clearly in their dependence on Durkheimian notions of ~~Durkheimian~~ and conventional social mobility analysis. This is a little more than ironic, coming from a group who, for example, tell us in such scholarly style that in ideological disciplines like sociology the content and use of the disciplines is intertwined! Bullshit.

No wonder there is not even a passing gesture to class analysis in their text- unless we take it that their thesis on the determination of student consciousness by social destiny is meant to fall into this category. If this ~~is~~ the case, then it is strange that they should concern themselves with new forms of manipulation in ideology, and other ideas such as the repressive university, alienation from learning, conflict and anomie, all of which relate to the student qua student. Surely the whole problem is solved by a career mobility thesis?

Apparently IS don't think they have solved the problem of the nature of students by establishing their social destiny, since the bulk of their analysis concerns the frustrations and tensions and strains of being a student - sometimes of the arts and humanities, sometimes of sociology, and sometimes a student in general. (Never, interestingly, technical college or polytech students who, on the basis of a technological capitalism analysis would appear to be rather important.)

At one point the object of analysis is the self selected sociology student, wanting social change but not getting it; at another, students involved in ideology - haven't arts students always been in this position; at another point the concern is students worried about being assimilated successfully into the bourgeois order, at another students who are merely concerned with the narrower questions of careers; then there are presumably already politically orientated students disillusioned by the failure of reformism, then the recipients of a repressive essence in the university structure; then, at yet another point there are alienated beings suffering alienation from the means of learning. You name it, and somewhere, you'll find it!

The real cause of this catholicism of explanation, a mixture of formulae which are incompatible at the epistemological level, is the need to satisfy quite definite pre-existing political positions, which do not arise out of the formulations of present problems on students, which we understood ~~to be the~~ subject of the text.

The alienation analysis is obviously dragged in to justify the control demands which were the 'natural' expressions of the established student power politics, and to fit into IS's more widespread syndicalism, i.e. a class analysis based not on relations to the means of production, but authority relations along Weberian lines, see especially 'Who Controls', p.66.

The university as a structure of repression of repression comes from Frankfurtian sociology, with shades of Marcuse and a particular school of critical marxism. It meets the needs of fashion and helps give an impression of culture to IS; a similar purpose is displayed by the certain comments on Ricardo, Durheim and Hegel, and the pronouncement on science (p.17), 'for progress in science is dialectical or it is nothing.'

The sociology- student - as- rebel thesis comes in as a stop gap against any strategic thought. It is a reflection of the more general character of the text, which is purely empirist and descriptive, with scatterings of 'political lessons', whose propagandist function should have been quite secondary to the declared main purpose.

What should have been undertaken is a strategic analysis of the role and nature of the student upsurge which reaches into theory in order to establish political objectives (positions) which have an action basis. In other words, what we are led to expect from the opening comments of the text is precisely what is not obvious about the student sector. We might with some justification, expect some assessment of the prospects of sectors of the student body other than sociologists, some prognosis about the technological stream of students, some specification of the new forces in contradiction in technological capitalism. Sadly there is no strategic content of any worth. No development, for example, of the

career mobility thesis (social destiny) which might easily have led to valuable reflections about the prospects of a mature trade unionism for the mass of students, say.

In summary, the analysis studiously avoids its own declared political objectives, relies on a Durkheimian conception of social conflict resulting from expectational disjunctures and a Weberian class analysis (class relations are the product of authority relations). It lacks any grounding in marxist class doctrine, substitutes a bourgeois problematic (the causes) for its self proclaimed political objectives, mixes elements from incompatible analytical frameworks (student qua student versus student re future destiny) perverts the marxian concept of contradiction; and its correlation analysis (educational change-technological capitalism) relies on categories which are never given any content -- a depressing reminder of the 'empty boxes' problem perceived by the more astute of bourgeois social scientists in their own theory. Ultimately, the text assumes the character of a non-marxist, descriptive escape from the serious questions which we cannot believe were not understood by the authors.

International Marxist Group.

In assessing the political content of IMG's statements on students we were faced with the difficulty that IMG as such have not produced a succinct document on the sector. As a multi-level organisation within the Fourth International, The IMG's position on students appears in articles and documents of sub or related organisations whose connection with the parent group is not always clear. The following comments are therefore based not only on papers prepared by IMG for RSSF but also on articles in Black Dwarf (pre-split) and the Red Mole, and on the document presented to the first meeting of the IMG's youth vanguard group, the Spartacus League, in July 1970.

There are two general phases of IMG's approach to the question of students: the first, during the active life of RSSF, was based on a fairly conventional student power analysis: the second, seemingly a result of IMG's adoption as the British section of the Fourth International, is based on the notion of the 'youth vanguard'. The distinction between these phases is expressed less through a difference in analysis than through a change in organisational practice- during RSSF days IMG honoured the spirit of a united front, now, through a purpose built league it is attempting to hegemonise the student sector.

Phase I

Like other groups IMG moved into student politics without formulating a thorough position which could be held to irrespective of the short run rise and fall of activism. As a result their analysis is concerned to describe events, to catch up with events and agitate; it depends for its effect on asserted perceptions with little attempt at substantial explanation.

IMG's initial attempt to attribute causes to student activism led to the use of a few marxist analytical gestures in an economistic and simplistic explanation. We quote: a 'penny pinching' policy for education leads to, 'overcrowding of universities and colleges, meanness with grants and a thousand other things which make the life of a student so time wasting and irksome. It is this basic contradiction which makes the universities and colleges centres of discontent and tension.' (i)

It is odd that IMG do not try to relate the facts of student action to this theory. There is little evidence that students have been much concerned with economic stress, and as a causal explanation it is inadequate since there has been minimal unrest in the financially deprived lower half of the binary system. Student politics has, on the contrary, emerged in the elite and financially privileged universities. By asserting that students suffer from a 'basic contradiction' IMG try to claim students are in some way in a ~~parallel~~ position to the working class - who do of course suffer from a basic contradiction. From this they proceed to characterise the nature of students as trade unionist, and their struggles as defensive, and claim a completely unargued 'direction' for students who are claimed to 'long for unity with the working class'.

Why students should feel affinity for the working class is not clear, though for the purposes of IMG's economistic theory of student action it is useful. It appears that students are concerned with workers because in some

- (i) from a document presented to RSSF National Conference, March 1969. The economistic explanations of the kind outlined above reveal a reflexive guilt complex, as with the CPB(ML), about Oxbridge and the top universities, this leads to a phantasy about the polys etc. being working class!

ways they are similar to them (a simple university as factory explanation?) and that students are revolutionary in so far as they avoid the Stalinist and Labourist organisations of the working class. It would appear that the underlying purpose of this analysis is to claim that student politics is a correct area for a group to be active in, the correctness depending on the establishment of a direct connection between student militancy and the object of allreal political energy - the working class.

Unfortunately IMG do not indicate which features of a student militancy which they insist on describing as trade unionist, allow for the development of revolutionary politics. The workers' trade unionism is castigated as Stalinist and Labourist and is clearly not regarded as indicating a concern for revolution. The 'trade unionism' of students on the other hand, is free from such historical taints and can therefore apparently be mobilised for revolutionary activity. The workers of course are corrupted by their Stalinist and Labourist bureaucrats whereas students are potential cadres for vanguard leadership by IMG.

What IMG try to assert is that the trade unionist consciousness of students develops into a revolutionary consciousness which can be harnessed for the revolutionary struggle. They provide none of the substancial explanation which to be of any use this transformation merits. This is a pity since a key problem for revolutionaries is precisely, under what conditions conflict in capitalist society takes on a revolutionary character. Lenin points out that the task of revolutionaries is to understand and effect the transformation from primitive economic revolt to revolution, but he sees no necessary, automatic development involved in this. For IMG students have effected this crucial transformation, the group however do not appear to recognise the mystery to which they subscribe.

Phase II

In the second phase of their analysis of students - the Youth Vanguard- IMG attempt to suggest some content for the revolutionary aspect of student trade unionism.

The substance of the youth vanguard notion emerges most clearly in the Ben Said text published in Black Dwarf (ii). Ben Said presents a broader version of the youth vanguard than IMG's and his own concentration upon students would appear to sanction. In an unexplicit generational thesis the students are only a small section of a wide vanguard group. Other sections: blacks, newly unionised workers (! under their Stalinist and Labourist leadership), women - in England IMG stress Irish workers as well, are given the same importance as students though they are presumably vanguard for others reasons than youth, but the bulk of analysis of the vanguard is directed to the particular conditions which have caused student militancy. The relevance of these conditions to the rest of the vanguard is never explained.

Ben Said asserts that the university is the 'focal centre' of capitalist contradictions- involving the clash of the forces and relations of production. He specifies an economic, ideological and institutional crisis- all with overtones of the development of important crisis development.

It is apparently the Ben Said text (and others from continental branches of the Fourth International) which have influenced IMG's 'youth vanguard strategy'. IMG however, seem to have learned little from their association with the more sophisticated FI, so, their interpretation of the Manchester (spring 70) occupation stated,

'the Manchester occupation was part of a long term defensive struggle in the face of systematic attacks upon students and student militants ... it is a struggle to preserve the embryonic trade union consciousness which... turns students to a mass revolutionary youth movement'.

The youth vanguard element is simply tacked onto the standard and unhelpful comment, IMG having adopted the outer rationalisation of the youth vanguard position without attempting to ground it in their total position.

Though Ben Said is superficially quite impressive in comparison to IMG productions - especially the document that accompanied the founding of the Spartacus League - it is unargued and internally chaotic and contradictory. Major objections to it can be mentioned very briefly:

1. As referred to earlier, the youth vanguard itself is not a homogenous generation- the reasons given for its revolt relate only to students for whom key determinants like unemployment (cited as an explanation of the activity of other groups) are not motors to action. Why groups whose situation (and generation) are not student should be part of a vanguard section dominated by those within the education system requires considerable explanation.
2. The generational thesis is related to the East/West power balance in world politics but this is not extended with specification: in what way are all the elements of revolt, so many of them spontaneously active, aware of East/West power relations: why should a crisis of values strike this particular generation, and apparently mostly one group within this generation, and not others: what is the content of the crisis of values mentioned: why should it provoke revolutionary politics as opposed to other political reactions?
3. While the youth vanguard is revolutionary and a vanguard (whether temporary or permanent is not specified) the students are defined as being unable to transcend petit-bourgeois radicalism. This, despite being at the centre of a basic contradiction - the very location which makes them a vanguard in the first place!
4. Unstable spontaneous action is a principle feature of student (vanguard) action, yet it is a characteristic which is criticised heavily. The students are important precisely because they are prone to spontaneous action, yet condemned for the political error of spontaneism. When Ben Said rejects 'ultra leftist adventurism' and 'anarchic forms of action' he is confusing a student mass which is vanguard with a political vanguard. This is the result of his own original sleight of hand (one repeated by IMG) by which at one moment students are represented as a vanguard with no qualifications as to the political limitations of their activities, and at the next political leadership is firmly stated to belong to Fourth International organisations- the true vanguard.
5. The main problem then of this text (and of the FI position) is the nature of the vanguard as such. What emerges to explain the contradictory positions put forward is that the political problems of revolution will only be solved when the FI has created a powerful vanguard party. Until then, the youth vanguard, for all its inadequacies, must act as a vanguard. This tautologous developmentalism is the essence of sectarianism:

while attempting to offer exclusive explanations of the student question-putting up explanations in order, presumably, to be correct and scientific- the FI contradict their own 'scientifically' derived political conclusions, i.e. the youth vanguard is ultra left and adventurist. This is done to give the impression of principled politics (we haven't got a sufficient vanguard yet, so this one will have to do) and to claim a future political power (as if evaluating a force were necessarily to point it in the correct political direction (iii)).

6. In spite of lengthy explanations about why students are ideologically alienated from society the overwhelming impression given by Ben Said of the groups relevance to the revolutionary vanguard is that they are young. As youth they are ignorant of all the forces of Stalinism, Labourism, non-revolution; in the last analysis it is the ignorance of students which IMG and the Fourth International see as motivating them to revolution!

- (iii) When presented with this dilemma of analysis the usual response is to invoke the 'dialectic', a fig leaf which was once a precise and scientific term.

Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

The comments below refer in the main to the CPB(ML) document, Draft Action Programme and Analysis of the Student Movement.

The class analysis, student as petit-bourgeois, is the central point of the document. The contention is that students belong to an intermediate stratum and on the whole,

'face a contradiction as members of the petty bourgeoisie, a class that includes most students, teachers and intellectuals.'

It is asserted that,

'in the time of triumph of corporate monopoly capitalism ... the petit-bourgeoisie as an independent self employed class faces extinction.'

Unfortunately, it is not at all clear what such a decline of the petit-bourgeoisie might have to do with students since it does not answer the question, why should students be considered as petit-bourgeois: after all students, teachers and intellectuals are not self employed so why should they be included ~~into~~ the class of the self employed? Clearly, also, the CPB(ML) recognise no problem as regards the nature of the petit-bourgeoisie in relation to monopoly capitalism as distinct from nineteenth century capitalism, which is of course the source of their class references.

This mechanical conception of class analysis coexists with a predictable voluntarism which emerges clearly when the CPB(ML) attempt to deal concretely with student politics. They present the petit-bourgeoisie, and therefore students, as a class of individuals who have a choice to make about which side they will take in the class struggle. The problem with this analysis is that it is unable to deal with prominent political questions because its individual sociology is completely unreal: it cannot be applied to the student movement, it sidesteps the question of the political character of the student mass, and is a somewhat strange account of the process of cadre formation, which the CPB(ML) assert as a strategic goal.

Some attempt is made to overcome the worst shortcomings of a crude class analysis by introducing a distinction between progressive and reactionary aspects of 'the petit-bourgeois contradiction', however, no substantial examples are given from student politics to enable us to judge the usefulness of such a distinction. Without examples, or an assessment of the reactionary or progressive aspects of contradictions faced by the petit-bourgeoisie it is anyway quite impossible for the CPB(ML) to take a position on the basic question, 'Are students friends or enemies of the people?' Their apparent reluctance to deal with questions of the nature of the student mass is presumably why the group put so much stress on the mystifying notion of the individual (petit-bourgeois) student.

The mechanical character of the class analysis used also appears when the CPB(ML) talk about political objectives for students. They recommend the taking of a 'proletarian line' and work in the service of, 'the interests of the revolutionary working class'. Both these recommendations beg the question of the 'correct line'- what is it, what political decisions are taken in the light of it, etc.- and beg the question (a rather more basic one) of the political character of the working class, which is asserted to be clearly revolutionary. This absurd rhetoric has at least the merit of being internally coherent - in that the CPB(ML) seem unable at any point in their analysis to see the differences between trade union and revolutionary struggles. We quote,

'the English working class struggle for better pay and against the

Mussolini-style, corporatist White Paper conditioned the student movements' awareness of the working class struggle for socialism.'

Petit-bourgeois and bourgeois students are described as facing a contradiction between the ideology of higher education and its reality: the practice which follows this analysis is the familiar practice of 'exposure'. However, although the CPB(ML) Action Programme is based on 'exposure' demands the contradiction from which these demands are supposedly derived (ideology/reality), is hardly mentioned in the text. Rather, emphasis is placed on what appears to be personal crises with regard to mobility and expectations- the 'promises and aroused expectations' which imperialism cannot fulfill for bourgeois and petit-bourgeois students. There is also mention of the problems faced by working class students, the 'intense personal contradictions' faced by students who are forced to reject their class in order to be successful. Such 'expectations' and 'personal contradictions' are amply covered in bourgeois sociology and the CPB(ML) does not attempt to explain how their contradictions differ from the bourgeois problem.

At the other extreme to personal contradictions is the supposed crisis of extinction faced by the petit-bourgeoisie, this too is referred to as a contradiction. They are asserted to be in the process of being squeezed by monopoly capitalism and this is put forward as an 'objective' background condition to the student revolt.

The concept, 'monopoly capitalist corporatist state', is used throughout the analysis but is not explained. An explanation would however seem to be necessary since there is a fusion of two classical concepts- monopoly capitalism, a specific stage of capitalism, and corporatism, a specific ruling class strategy used to integrate sections of the working class when it threatens capitalism - the fusion here is confusing and merely to present the concept as an integrated tendency does not say why the CPB(ML) consider this particular theory of capitalism useful.

They argue that the key contradiction within the university is the need for monopoly capitalism to expand higher education (a result of inter-imperialist competition) and its corresponding inability to finance expansion due to the imperialist financial crisis. To cover this assertion they must explain why it is that the 'luxurious' campuses - Essex, Sussex, etc., - have been the most active politically and not the deprived polys and techs.

The contradiction they specify is even more questionable since the CPB(ML) stress that English universities are elitist institutions - more so than those in the States and Europe- and yet somehow,

'students are becoming conscious of the strings, what imperialism demands of them in return. They are becoming conscious that they are asked to exploit and manage the labour of others'.

It is not convincingly explained why the elite should be the first to realise that university education is elitist- nor why the elite should fight elitism.

One of the document's principle weaknesses is that it contains a mixture of analysis and rhetoric which makes it difficult to understand who the document is intended for. At some points it is aimed at CPB(ML) cadres or potential cadres, to whom the rhetoric is surely no revelation, while at other times it is aimed at the student masses, in which case the political programme for cadres which it includes is misplaced. The function

of the analysis is merely to ~~rein~~force preexisting political postures. No problems are recognised or posed. In the context of such poverty it is not suprising that the action programme presented contains nothing. It would be regarded as unexceptionable by most of the 'misleaders'-the term used by the CPB(ML) to describe other political groups- involved in the student movement.

18.

[Faint, illegible text]

Communist Party of Great Britain.

As a party with a definite historical existence (as opposed to a claim for party status) the CPBG is in certain ways quite distinct from the other organisations considered in this document.

The full ramifications of the CP's position as a section of a large and powerful international party cannot be gone into here, but two aspects of its party situation need to be borne in mind in connection with its attitude to the 'student movement': firstly, the CP's fraternal relations, particularly with the European communist parties (PCI, PCF) have undoubtedly created difficulties for its policy toward and understanding of student politics in this country, and secondly, as the only organisation left of the Labour Party with a significant working class following and base, the CP's position on students has ipso facto some importance. Whereas most of the groups are concerned with a largely student membership the CP as a multi-sectional party has had both the responsibility and the opportunity to present explanations of student politics beyond a student audience.

The experience of the European Communist Parties with organised student political militancy as well as loosely directed student mobilisations preceeded any similar experience for the British CP. With the emergence of a 'student movement' in this country the CP had both to react to a situation already incorporated into the policies of its fraternal parties, and to a movement which was in some respects manifestly different from that on the continent. The explanation of the CP's policy towards students is obviously only to be found in its overall political position, but a contributory cause of much of its misinterpretation of student politics in Britain has been a tendency (or an intention) to draw from the experience of the European parties, reinforcing statements from the PCF etc. rather than taking a close look at the 'lesser' student movement nearer home.

The CP has no theoretical explanation for the emergence of student militancy, instead it resorts to notions of a phenomenon resulting from an increased moral concern on the part of youth and doesn't seek political explanations which might inform policy towards the student sector.

Most of the CP's pronouncements on students are concerned to support an aspect of student activity - action of a mass nature for democratisation of the college structure etc.- whilst condemning much of its real content as 'ultra left'. The CP's own policy of following events, leading consensual confrontations (as at Manchester) and organisational tailism (i) is seen as nurturing the majority of students into support for socialist politics.

- (i) The CP backed initiative of the Radical Students' Alliance was a ginger group for NUS. It never existed except as a 'shadow' union and effectively disappeared on the formation of RSSF - the events of May rendering 'radical' politics impotent in an appeal to students. With the development of a revolutionary focus for student politics and a change in NUS leadership from right to centre, the CP returned exclusively to the NUS and student unionism- backing reform against confused revolutionism.

Presumably CP strategy towards NUS is directed at extensive influence or control, but it is difficult to see how the practical politics of such an influence would differ from those of Jack Straw. Straw anyway

Whilst stating that,

'one of the most heartening things about the student struggle of today is that it sees beyond the immediate demands (to do with reform in the university or college) and aspires to a fundamental change in society itself'. (Comment 15th. Feb. 1969)

the CP is highly critical of any attempts by students to organise for this change. On the whole it sees such attempts as threatening the aims of the student movement, aims which must be presumed to be confined to reforms of the educational structure since the CP does not present any further reaching strategy for the student sector. Certainly (in common with most of the groups) the CP formulates a stagist notion of student involvement, participation in college based struggles leading the student to extend an awareness arrived at in student politics into society as a whole- the students 'take their place' in the struggle for socialism having apparently gone through the familiar 'raising of consciousness' - but there is no explanation as to why students should move from concern over democracy within an institution to concern for the formation of a socialist state.

The CP's notion of the importance of the 'ultra-left' groups IS, IMG etc. within student politics is wildly inaccurate. Virtually all student action is seen by some CP writers as directed by the 'ultra left' groups, who are supposedly putting forward ludicrously vanguardist tactics to an ignorant and only tentatively active student mass. In fact, until Spring 1970 the 'ultra' groups were seldom of great importance in localised student mobilisations (except the LSE) and their more prominent role of late (e.g. IMG, Spring term Oxford 70) probably reflects the 'stage' of the movement, a turning from mass mobilisations into problems of direction, strength etc., rather than a clear desire by students for a particular political leadership. The characterisation of the groups as 'ultra' on the part of the CP bears little relation to the role they have in fact played; in specific situations the groups have, objectively, often been the section of political students most concerned not to get involved in 'ultra' tactics and it is frequently these groups who attack non-aligned militants as ultra leftists whilst they themselves attempt to hold the struggle at a high point of participation and consensus. This, at the risk of taking the leadership in fundamentally liberal mobilisations.

In the student sector as elsewhere the CP counterposes to the policy of the groups a policy of unity, unity behind a programme of demands acceptable to all 'progressive elements'. In Ultra Leftism (Betty Reid, CP pamphlet) this policy is justified by an appeal to the experience of the fight against fascism, imperialism seemingly being regarded as fascism in a new guise. Even if the 'Imperialist Crisis' were seen to warrant popular front defensism of the kind used against fascism it doesn't appear

- (i) cont. derived his influence via, and for the benefit of, the university authorities: would they necessarily confer the same opportunity or influence to the Communist Party?

that the CP have a clear liberal bourgeois democratic ally for such a struggle. What is meant by such a policy at the present time is presumably the alliance of a social democratic party -the Labour Party- and a parliamentary socialist party -the Communist Party- an alliance which needs to be justified outside reference to classic strategy.

Within the student sector the CP's policy means operation within the NUS and the student unions, following rather than leading manifestations of militancy.

One specific strategy for student activity -Red Bases- has been harshly criticised by the CP (ii). In common with the politics of the groups, though emerging as a strategy in clear opposition to the groups, Red Basism is attacked as 'extremist'. Whatever the limitations or possibilities of this strategy (see section on Red Bases) it was an attempt to formulate revolutionary activity for students in a situation where working class politics are revolutionary in neither content nor aim. By taking the idea of Red Bases to refer to a strategy for physically taking and holding the universities against the opposition of the state, the CP attempts to discredit non-ouvrierist student activity in much the same way as it discredits the ouvrierist recruitment strategy of, particularly, the Trotskyist groups. Any student activity which falls outside a progressive unionism is seemingly irresponsible and incorrect. The fact that student mobilisations quickly pass beyond unionist demands, (indeed it would seem that to a large extent student actions are no longer concerned with strictly internal demands, anti-racism etc. having emerged more prominently) allows the CP to make the assumption that students are likely to be led away from the correct area of their struggle by the experienced, organised groups. They do not consider, publicly at least, that the real content of student politics may be non-unionist and more concerned with the possibility of revolution (however vaguely this is formulated) than with improved democracy for colleges and better educational facilities- aims which would not be at all inconceivable given a slight leftward shift in current ideas of social organisation.

Students as a block, as a mass, are regarded as underprivileged and a relevant group for CP attention; however, the CP's opportunity to recruit from student revolutionaries (independently of specific political difficulties) is obviously jaundiced by its experience with intellectuals. Its past embarrassing troubles with intellectuals must make it cautious of recruitment as an obvious strategy towards the sector.

(ii) Comment 15th. Feb. 1969. Woddis.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author details the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both primary and secondary research techniques. The primary research involved direct observation and interviews with key stakeholders, while secondary research was conducted through a review of existing literature and reports.

The third section presents the findings of the study. It highlights several key trends and patterns observed in the data. These findings are supported by statistical analysis and are presented in a clear and concise manner. The author also discusses the implications of these findings for the industry and for future research.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the main points and a list of references. The author expresses their appreciation for the support and assistance provided by the research team and the funding organization. The references list the key sources used in the study, providing a clear path for further exploration of the topic.

NLR's Red Basism. NLR 53, Jan 1969

Besides backing the Red Base line, the three major articles in the NLR were designed to persuade readers that the student struggle arena was important, that its mass character and general political orientation meant a significant breakthrough into revolutionary politics. Most other groups were defensive rather than expansive about the student sector. In general terms, the strategic task being performed in this group of articles comes under the heading of struggle reinforcement. Politically, the resort to an explicit Marxist analysis, with the overall reference being to Marxist-Leninism, meant that the pieces were clearly in opposition to un-Marxist interpretations, and to pure agitational reinforcements that did not delve deeply into theory and classic traditions for their roots. In a further sense, expressed more clearly in articles specifically for RSSF and speeches at conferences, the underlying position of NLR was for - at minimum - a relatively autonomous development of the student sector, as opposed to the ouvrierist line which was imposed on studentism by the classic groups (i).

The Red Base came across in only sketchy terms, in the article written by Blackburn under the alias of James Wilcox. The other two articles in NLR contain useful attempts to theorise what was already happening in the sector and build its significance, but little was offered that had independent value as strategy, theory or practice. Some practice formulations were useful, namely, mass democracy, the mass line, and references to dual power, but these were never expressed in positive terms. The centre of the pieces is Red Basism.

Barnett talks about counter centres, Fernbach talks about culturally and politically liberated zones, while Blackburn attempts to argue some theory behind Red Basism.

Blackburn tries to force a distinction between Trotskyism's classic practice of raising demands and raising consciousness, and the Red Base concept which involves the institutionalisation of intermediate forms of power. He talks about the consciousness raisers as 'new style reformists', but the reference is a polite term for the basic practice of the various sectarian groups whose dependence on raising consciousness we have explored elsewhere. Red Bases, being institutions, can develop as 'embryos of a new social order' and involve 'new and superior organising principles for social relations' - according to Blackburn. The basic point seems to be that Red Bases can provide 'pivotal power centres', a stress which is much in advance of merely working on consciousness in abstract. He goes further by pointing out that a concrete scenario for political struggle and political life permits in its internal life real people to develop from their complex positions by virtue of being involved in actively changing and running their own power base. The fault of the consciousness raisers, according to Blackburn, is that they seem to assume a steady and stable progression of consciousness amongst the masses from low to high etc., when his view is that masses have always had a mixed consciousness, composed of respect and fear for the existing order combined with a deep hate and rejection of it. In this perception he seems to be arguing for unadulterated

(i) It is interesting to note that there was no clear and prominent statement of a thesis which was generated by the NLR group, namely, that the student sector could become the vehicle for the generation of a previously absent Marxist culture and revolutionary tradition in Britain.

vanguardism, as well as for a form of practice that goes into power struggles, rather than remaining at the level of pointing out lessons to the masses.

This was a welcome attempt at theory, but its fault is that its direct application to the student movement as it had developed so far, or as it could develop, was never argued in any substance. The piece was a cockshye, justified by the defensism and poverty of the interpretations of other groups. But the actual forms of power that could be developed within Red Basism were never explored, no attempt was made to discuss dual power strategy one of the most obvious extensions of Red Basism, one which is discussed in Vittorio Rieser's article in ISJ which started the Red Bases idea off.

Barnett's article is mainly on tactics as such and does have some novelty as a theorization of politization through struggle, in opposition to notions of politics which work conciousness alone. He stresses the role of victory and defeat, but avoids questions of current goals (ii) by talking usefully, no doubt, about the enemies tactics and strategy, implying that what was needed was just to defeat the enemy. In a certain sense there was an overstretching of the military metaphor. Achieving majorities by the 'mass line' and 'being on the offensive' are fine as imperatives, but the work of the analyst and theorist is to spell out what all this means in plain concrete terms. What emerges from this concept of Red Basism is that its meaning as applied to a particular battle field and its classic meaning as fundamental political strategy are very different, see section on Strategy .

Fernbach's piece raises basic issues in approaching the question of the political nature of students from a Mao formulation- are the students friends or enemies of the people. The other pieces assume 'friend' if not 'super-friend' at the outset. This paper stands out for its emphasis on the role of ideology- or the superstructure in general- in advanced capitalism, as well as calling for the development of cadres. Both of these ideas are obviously fruitful but their substance is unclear.

(ii) Barnett's discussion on the NUS, though intelligent, was off centre since the NUS and NUSism were not even within the most catholic spectrum of current goals, let alone of those who supported Red Bases.

From 'Student Power', 'The meaning of the student revolt'. G.S.Jones.

This article is an introduction to the whole book* and attempts to discuss problems which are covered more fully elsewhere in the text. Hence it appears schematic and is not a comprehensive analysis of the student situation.

Introduction

There is a necessity to review the nature of the new student revolt which has developed throughout the world in the past few years: 'They are today a new social force of incalculable significance'.

Theories on 'The nature of Students'

The theories which attempt to analyse the students as a class are reductionist, according to Jones. He quotes Alain Tourraine, who uses the analogy of the rise of working class consciousness at the onset of the Industrial Revolution. As the new industrial workers began to realise their class nature they began to join together in angry 'expressive' rebellion, formulating utopian ideals but with no organised recognisable goals before them. Consequently this was a fragmented movement. Jones refutes this interpretation with two arguments:

1. Students do not constitute a class because unlike workers theirs is not a like situation but a transient one, and their destination is not the working class.
2. Universities do not hold political power, but are used as instruments of power by industry and the State.

Althusser's distinction between the dominant contradiction and the determinate contradiction is very important and should be studied in greater detail. Jones says of students and the working class (p29):

'If students have, for the present, become perhaps the most obvious focus of subversion in the west, it is not because they have stepped into the shoes of an obsolete proletariat.'

Causes of the Student Revolt

Jones postulates three schematic causes of student revolt, only the first two, however, are worthy of any detailed analysis.

1. There is a contradiction between what the student is taught and what the universities profess to teach. The student is presented with a fragmented ideology; he is expected to be critical in his own field but not to expand criticism beyond it, ie. the emergence of sociology, which is used for manipulation but contains the 'danger' of encouraging true critical analysis. In his notes Jones quotes Gramsci's distinction between 'organic' and 'traditional' intellectuals, or functional and classical intellectuals. Jones says that functional intellectuals are the 'technicians of production, consumption and consent'. The universities still uphold the liberal ideas of education, but most students take jobs which contradict this ideal.

These are in general the sociological causes of student unrest.

2. The political causes stem from the ending of the Cold War. In the Cold War period the 'free' western, capitalist world was able to obscure its own repressive nature under the threat of totalitarian repression.

This false dichotomy was exposed by students at the onset of anti-imperialist in Vietnam, Africa etc.

3. General cultural causes are also referred to, the generation gap and accelerated technological advances.

Reasons for specific developments in Britain

The numbers of the student population have risen greatly. Before the Second World War they were never above 70,000. By 1965/66 the number had risen to 300,000. A relative increase in buildings and staff has never been achieved, and grants have not kept pace with the rising cost of living. Students are no longer a professional elite. Jones goes on to consider why the student revolt in Britain has not had a revolutionary character like France or America. He postulates the NLR thesis that Britain has no revolutionary intellectual tradition. Consequently British students have no theoretical analysis to turn to and develop. This is certainly true but the important unanswered question is, why is this the case? Why has it not developed out of recent events?

Jones also makes the (dubious) claim that it is working class youth, and not students, who have led the field in important, liberating cultural developments- dress, mores etc. Jones seems to think that the Grosvenor Square demonstrations have played an important new role in British student politics. Finally he argues the need to develop a thorough analysis of the development of post-war Britain in order to establish a theoretical perspective on students and their future role in important struggles.

Demands the students should be making

These five points -given below- appear haphazard and do not seem to have arisen from the argument above. Jones assumes that allegiance to working-class struggles should be made, but he does not examine how this can happen.

(He seems to think that students can provide a theoretical basis for the labour movement in relation to an engagement in mass struggle). The demands given have no political framework, nor does he analyse under what concrete conditions they could be made, nor their political implications- are they reformist or revolutionary demands for example?

Finally, though his hard political positions detract from a key role for students, Jones surface comments are clearly more supportive than he would admit.

He sets out the following five areas:

- Abolition of the special legal situation of students, expressed in the 'in loco parentis' formula.
- Defence of grants and democratization of access into higher education, no discrimination in class access to higher education and abolition of discrimination against women.
- Construct a mass movement on demands for internal democracy of four functional groups in universities, students, researchers, teachers and technical staff.
- Democratic control over the content of courses.
- Link students to the struggles of the industrial working class.

Positions in Nairn's essay, 'The Beginning of the End', Panther 68

Nairn's essay stands out for two reasons. Firstly, he researches his thesis and interpretation back into a complex Marxism. Secondly, his text is about the decisive conjuncture, France (May 1968), which brought the student question into the bigger question of socialist revolution. Though most texts are, of course, by revolutionaries for revolutionaries, about whether students are revolutionary, few dare to dwell with adequate weight on the crucial and novel role of students in this enormous break in revolutionary prospects. In a sense, Nairn's text comes closest to the aspirations which attended RSSF's birth: on the other hand, though it was not connected at all clearly with the May events, it is doubtful if RSSF would have had the term 'revolutionary' included in its name if it had been set up prior to May. This accidental conjuncture perhaps explains an ambivalence in much of the writing and discussion about RSSF- particularly by the groups, who were formed considerably prior to the student period, and of course, the May events.

Nairn's theses divide up fairly neatly into four sections which are summarised and assessed separately.

The Nature of Capitalism

Nairn shares the view of many theorists of the students revolt that capitalism has changed, and that we need a different model to that of classic, orthodox Marxism to get anywhere in analysis. He argues that the contradictions of advanced capitalism, often referred to as neocapitalism, are qualitatively different to those of classic capitalism. It is implied that the absence of familiar class-war patterns, the lack of overt economic crisis, and any clear build up in class struggle are the revolt signals relevant to the classic capitalism model- their absence invites revisions of a basic nature. Nairn asserts that advanced capitalism is characterised by a development of the forces of production to the stage of post-scarcity on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the point where mental production, and a mental surplus, are the defining features of the system. The typical, and crucial commodity of capitalism is now the commodity of consciousness. The contradictions which are central are concerned with the area of mental production. These are somehow, 'qualitatively different'. What this means is that universities become the nerve centres of a system whose further development depends on the production of consciousness as a commodity.

What Nairn is doing is trying to explain in systematic terms, why students should be a vanguard. He goes for the view that this role is much more than accidental: it is the expression of the high point of capitalist development. Inside the old society the seeds of the new are now actually present, such that the societal basis for a transformation of capitalism has a real existence- the class does not have to be wrenched into history by the party, if one dare use this extreme version for the purposes of explanation. We came to the view that the thesis on the domination of mental forces of production could be seen either as an expression of, or a parallel development to, a peak level of socialisation of the forces of production.

Nairn draws on Marcuse, whose absence in other analyses is not without interest, as proof or corroboration of advanced capitalism's changed nature, What seems to be suggested is that the bourgeoisie have hit new problems which require a one dimensional, material consumptionist ideology, pre -

cisely because the era of scarcity is over in the advanced capitalist world, and the material possibility is now present for social freedom. If capitalism permitted the development of social man beyond scarcity dominated man, it would invite its own transformation. Or, the essence of capitalism being class freedom, mass freedom cannot be allowed to develop- this seems to be the nub of the interpretation of Marcuse's work.

Nairn's theses presented us with considerable difficulty, not least because he does not cross reference his theses to pre-existing work, eg. Mallet and Gorz on the new working class. The essay takes the form of 'theoretical imagination in power'. The concept of mental production is the centre of the analysis. Section 5 on 'New Contradictions' is the key text.

Neocapitalism's essence is the embodiment of the mental production of planners, technicians, product designers, manipulators and organisers into base production to the extent that the traditional category 'material commodity' is seen as missing out this crucial force. These mental products, in our view, require close specification so that one knows whether material goods now embody mental production. In Nairn's terms, the universities- which are immencely social institutions- produce and distribute mental production, and the surplus from their exploitation is the driving force permitting further accumulation for capitalism. This much can be extracted, but Nairn does not explore the issue fully. The conclusion he draws is that this basically social production is in contradiction to the fragmentation and alienation imposed by capitalist society. His quotes from the Grundrisse are tantalising, but only allusive, rather than final or definitive.

Our basic criticism of his key contradiction is that it is not substantiated, not expressed in concrete terms, not applied to students or to the working class, or even to the most obvious group, the new working class. We are also concerned that concepts from Marx's political theory of the economic system of capitalism seem to occur outside the realms of specific economic analysis. For example, the term surplus which is used widely, is a loose formulation, a revised formula put forward by Sweezy et al. Marx's conception is surplus value. One asks how surplus value is extracted from the mental production of students. This of course then raises the question: are students actually mental producers as such?

Nor does this analysis deal with the expression of the new situation in terms that permit any strategic prescriptions, or any clear position on the politics of the traditional working class and its status as a vanguard class. Is Nairn suggesting that the working class in France came out as the result of the contradiction developing or being unlocked, between the concrete possibility of freedom and capitalism's suppression of this? How do the system contradictions get expressed? Is the student vanguard more than a small motor- a chronological vanguard, which is what he implies?

While we see little analytical value coming from the attempts of Mandel and IS to discover youth unemployment rising prior to May, in the former case, and a rising strike pattern for a number of previous years in the latter's case, Nairn's work demands concreteness if it is to take on political weight.

This is a basic difficulty, which is seen clearly in his political views (see below). Though obviously highly abstract theory is not designed to

explain a specific conjuncture, his notion of the permanent, structural crisis of advanced capitalism should presumably be articulable in terms of signals and evidence outside a specific crisis.

Further, the thesis which is a corollary of the immanence of social transformation within advanced capitalism demands attention. This is the 'closeness of means and ends' thesis, which comes in usefully as a support for the touch of sponteneist politics advocated by Nairn. It seems to us that the notion of a dramatically diminished gap between political ends and means (party, primitive socialist accuration etc.) needs to be spelt out clearly. One can see how it supports the May events as 'surprise' and sudden events, but even setting this aside, since it is only a minor factor, the basic thesis is unsubstantiated though it is central to the view of students as an organically vanguard force.

The nature of students

Much of this section is obvious from the above analysis, but a closer look is worth while. Nairn asserts fully that students are a vanguard, and the most radical block in advanced capitalism. At the same time as they are a vanguard by virtue of the development of the forces of production to the stage of mental production etc., they are a vanguard as a generation. They are the first post-scarcity generation, for whom material exigency is not dominant. They are politically the first perfect generation of capitalism in that they can actually live the myth of individually free bourgeois man since its preconditions are present (material preconditions that is). He seems to be suggesting that in earlier stages of history bourgeois ideology, individualism and freedom, were in contradiction with the unfreedom of capitalists within their system (laissez-fairism is controlled by the system not actors within it etc.). This ideology is now opposed to the actual practice of domination of the bourgeoisie through alienation, fragmentation, and anti-social individualism. For the students, individualism is now a collective and social possibility. This generation, then, at an objective watershed of capitalist development, experiences and produces a new subjectivity. Comment is given below on this new subjectivity.

Nairn's rejection of some of the standard attempts at explanation of the student revolt i.e. bad conditions, is welcome, while his assertion that students are mental workers is of course fairly common now, even if it is absent from British student theory. We felt uneasy about the extension of the systemic analysis to cover young workers, though some adjustments can be made with reference to the generational thesis. The question of mental production is more difficult to deal with. It is interesting that Nairn does not explicitly talk about an intelligent/idiot contradiction.

The role of students

Here we concentrate on the vanguard role. Nairn argues that the political role of students (in France 68) was an altered version of Lenin's model of the vanguard party; it was the students mass, the young intellectuals who led the revolt, who were the movement, having the catalist and leader role that the old style Leninist, ouvrierist sects had adopted against history. He argues that the young intellectuals turned to the workers at a certain point, 'naturally', so to speak, rather than as a result of doctrine. The closeness of the students and the young workers to history is what makes their role crucial. It follows for Nairn that theory and doctrine must remain close and alive to reality. He uses Gramscian categories to argue that the

students are no longer traditional intellectuals, but the organic intellectuals of a mature capitalism which rests on forces of mental production for its prospect of further accumulation.

The thesis of political vanguard revolt is based on his theoretical analysis of capitalism, this asserts that the students as alienated, young, organic intellectual workers revolted against capitalism in their own right, not as leaders and cadres. We would suggest that their turning to the workers, and the presence of young workers, inside the same analysis, requires much closer substantiation. Nairn does attempt to cover the basic point about the French revolt not being able to become a successful seizure of state power, but he does this just by assertion- *ex nihilo*.

Nairn sets out to argue the vanguard role of the student bloc primarily because other interpretations ascribed a purely mechanical accidental role to students. The most common version of the 'mechanical role' approach sees students, almost accidentally, triggering off a traditional socialist/working class revolt which had nothing to do with the students' own initial protests. But by arguing a vanguard nature for the student bloc in very full, assertive terms, Nairn invites the criticism that the vanguard failed, a point which can be extended into a total criticism of the vanguard thesis. After all, it can be argued, there is no hard evidence presented by Nairn to justify the replacement of the classic Leninist doctrine and practice of the vanguard party with a piece of spectacular sociology (students as vanguard) in which students had a role, but no will, direction, or plan to seize state power. Nairn tries to anticipate this sort of criticism by pointing out that the May events could not have been a successful seizure of state power anyhow. In other words, the level of Nairn's argument about the vanguard role of students is not meant to be a tactical/military assessment of the events on a day to day basis.

The day to day approach (a wrong decision is a 'betrayal' etc.) is associated with traditional sectarians, who cannot see the bigger interpretive problems posed by May. Much of Nairn's orientation is designed to attack the careful defensism of these groups, and their dogmatic interpretations of Lenin's doctrine of the vanguard party, both of which coalesce into a complete refusal of any significant political role for students. Though we sympathize with Nairn's objectives, we are critical of the ease with which he rejects the Leninist definition of vanguard practice and the loose formulae with which he argues the vanguard role of the student bloc.

Student Practice

Nairn argues that action and activism are the key historical features of the student vanguard. He argues that action has been the deficiency factor in socialism prior to May. In terms of prescriptions for practice, he argues that theory has been running behind history, and has got to catch up: in other words he rejects the impulse felt by the sectarians and other tight groupings subscribing to classic doctrines to squeeze the May history into pre-existing doctrines. Rather, their old doctrines should be squeezed by new doctrines. He talks about the students creating a new subjectivity, which is composed of freedom and unity, which have traditionally been in opposition to each other and about collectivist activist practice. A more substantial analysis of the content- in political terms- of this subjectivity is required. One point Nairn makes about the absence of traditional style leaders who are replaced by chairmen, goes little further than either applauding ad hocery, or noting an anti-authoritarian impulse, which looks slender if any political formation other than a protest formation is en-

visaged. Nairn quotes Marx at length on the nature of sectarianism, being to stress differences much more than common doctrines. He says the sects were blinded by traditional doctrine, ouvrierism was a major blockage. The specific history is important, and Nairn himself should have gone into it more closely. The most heretical formulation is (page 136) that a strong dose of anarchism and anarchist sentiments and ideas are necessary if a revolt of the May kind is to get very far. This position is justified by the reference back to the maturity of capitalism and the consequent closeness of means and ends. This seems to us to perhaps be a legitimate comment on France as a unique event, but as a generalisation on practice, we reject it, particularly since its full implications for the problems of counter-revolution, for the exercise of state power etc., are all unexplored, and perhaps unexplorable- these are after all, basic questions for any revolutionary politics.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both primary and secondary data collection techniques. The analysis focuses on identifying trends and patterns over time, which is crucial for making informed decisions.

The final part of the report provides a detailed breakdown of the findings. It includes several tables and charts that illustrate the key results. The data shows a significant increase in sales volume over the period, which is attributed to several factors discussed in the text.

J. and M. Rowntree, 'The Political Economy of Youth' or 'Youth as a Class'.*

Since the 'Political Economy of Youth' came out in 1968 it has been incorporated in various simplified forms into many of the SDS USA analyses- RYMI, RYMII, Weatherman. However, the article merits attention not mainly because of its post facto influence but because it is one of the few serious attempts at applying basic theory to either youth or students.

The Rowntrees use the theoretical framework developed by Baran and Sweezy in Monopoly Capital, to attempt a 'radical' class analysis of the US today. They argue that capitalism in this era is dominated by the large corporation which is a price setter; this enables capitalism to maintain its rate of profit, against Marx predictive trend of a falling rate of profit, and moves the key contradiction into the field of surplus absorption, i.e. the problem of under consumption.

According to the Rowntrees Baran and Sweezy,

"do not ferret out the new class formations embedded in the economic system they analyse. Thus, although they remain 'revolutionaries', they do not reveal the motor of social change in the United States."

(p4)

Through the post-war changes in the US economy the previously explosive sector of heavy industry has given way to the present explosive sectors of education and the military. It is interesting that the Rowntrees don't mention the concept 'aristocracy of labour' but this would seem to be what they have in mind when they suggest that the skilled, highly unionised sectors of white manual workers have a privileged position within American imperialism which leads them to have pro-imperialist politics. They locate the present youth revolt as simply a manifestation of the originary contradiction in capitalism (i) i.e. that between Labour and Capital. Citing statistics of the expansion of the education and defense industries and of the percentage of youth 'employed' in these sectors. They go on to state that,

'First, the economy is dominated by the defense and education industries; second, these two industries are particularly adapted to the task of absorbing surplus manpower in the economy; finally, this surplus manpower is young and economically exploited.'

It is these two industries,

'that embody the most acute and potentially explosive contradictions in the present economic system'.

(p6)

What then makes a dominant or key sector in the economy for the Rowntrees? There seem to be two criteria: the sector is one which absorbs surplus manpower and in which labour is exploited. In reply to the objection that other sectors are also exploited later followers of the Rowntrees have introduced the concept of 'super-exploitation'. As youth is super-exploited it means (apart from the obvious, that they are more exploited than some others) that the young have neither short nor long term economic

* In ISJ 25 February 1968. Also available as a short pamphlet.

(i) Godelier, System, Structure and Contradiction in Capital, Socialist Register 1967.

interests in imperialism. Those who are just normally exploited in the USA today- the traditional white working class, have short term economic interests in imperialism. The clearest statement of this analysis is to be found in the Weatherman document.

The Rowntrees application of the terms surplus and exploitation raise quite basic questions. Their use of 'surplus' concept seems to suggest that the reason for the education/military complex is simply to absorb the surplus, or at least that this reason is prior to any other, and secondly, that the importance of the function of the two sectors for capitalism directly transfers itself onto the politics of the occupants of those sectors. Marx's usage certainly does not confuse the functions of parts of the system with their expressions in history and politics. These are separate levels, surely.

Their suggestion that students and soldiers are exploited because of 'foregone income' has nothing to do with the classic concept of exploitation. Firstly there is no classical entrepreneur- the state as capitalist needs to be argued- and secondly the specific expression of exploitation the Rowntrees use-'foregone income'- gets into the difficulty of suggesting that if students and soldiers were working elsewhere they would be paid more and presumably be less exploited. The problem here is that a low wage earner can be (often is in fact) less exploited than a high wage earner. In other words, exploitation is not to do with comparative wages, but comparative rates of surplus value, which are quite different. The Rowntrees seem to be talking about poverty levels, or immiseration, not exploitation.

The analysis also stresses the newness of youth as a class (by reference to manpower statistics and the growth of the military and educational sectors) but doesn't cover the objection that all they are noting is a horizontal extension of a youth exploitation which has always been present- e.g. apprentices, child labour etc., which if applied rigorously would mean that there had probably always been a 'youth class', and that its current revolt must be explained in more precise terms: its existence and its current behaviour are quite separate objects of study.

There is a second empirical objection, which concerns the composition of the youth class. How do the Rowntrees deal with the well established fact that middle and upper income students have led the revolt, not the most 'exploited' poor students? Also, are other sections of the youth class moving? Are the blacks moving as youth, or, as we suspect, as blacks? While at a grander level, is there any truth in the notion that the most exploited sections of capitalist society are a political vanguard.

This specific class analysis is entirely limited to the US and can by no means be extended to either Western Europe or say Japan- something that might be desired of an analysis of the 'youth revolt' since it has similar manifestation in many parts of the world.

When the Rowntrees move away from their specifically economic analysis and proceed to discuss class formation they put forward a 'new' contradiction - the relations of the developmental forces of production to the relations of production:

'Friedenberg sees, but cannot interpret, the transformation of the school from a bourgeois institution fostering the bourgeois ideal of maturity (self direction etc.) to a socialised work place that exists to build docile workers and simultaneously promotes proletarian consciousness... When education becomes seen as an 'investment in human capital' and the school becomes a factory producing workers and technologists, the rationalisation of the

purposes of schooling shifts from that of serving non market or social class interests to serving the market or economic class interests. It therefore cease serving individual capitalists and their families only to begin serving the capitalists as a class (or capitalism as a system)'. (p21)

Is the above obscure assertion about new developments in the school dependent on the change from elite to mass education? If so, the fact is that these took place in the 1920's and 30's not in the 50's and 60's. And is it then that this new development in education can necessarily only be resolved through socialism? For this is not at all apparent when the Rowntrees state that,

'if youth should refuse to submit to their exploitation in the army and the schools, refuse to accept their lengthened childhood and demand equal treatment (eds. emphasis), the system would face a mortal threat.' (p23)

In the discussion about the 'transformation of the school' there appear to be two strands to the argument:

1. implicit in the new production of technologists is the intelligent/ idiot contradiction more fully specified elsewhere (Gorz)- the technologists must be taught to learn and to think and then the damage is done.
2. there is the production of 'proletarian consciousness',- is this some form of collectivisation of the classroom due to new teaching methods or is it something to do with the transition from elite to mass education? The fact of the new youth culture which is collective and social need not be denied even if one does not accept that it was produced in the schools alone, more weight could be put on the historical conjuncture and the crisis of imperialism for example.

The Rowntrees use the word alienation in what appears to be two quite distinct senses:

1. as connected with some human essence.
2. as simple lack of self determination, particularly of one's labour power, Labour is alienating in the first sense when it is 'lacking in human meaning' and in the second sense when the 'human links between labour and the product of labour' are severed.

In their history and assessment of youth culture and youth politics the Rowntrees make it very clear that the present anti-imperialism did not spring fully fledged from any 'proletarian consciousness' or the youth class struggling for itself.

'Let us recall the recent history of youth politics. The passivity of the 1950's was broken by the non violent civil rights movement. Civil rights sit-ins spread rapidly from their southern origins, and the tactic was adapted to other issues, such as peace and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. But, although youth were using this effective new tactic, they were still participating in traditional liberal issue politics'...' The compulsive anti-historical, anti-ideological attitude of the classic New Left led many to confuse the political problems that they were trying to solve with the economic problems that gave rise to them.'

(our underlinings-eds.) (p25-26)

But what led the youth to discover problems to solve? The original struggles were not for themselves, were not for the youth class, but for civil rights, peace etc. Are we left once again with a contradiction between ideology and the reality which led to struggles and the transcendence of the original problematic?

While considering as the 'most explosive sector' of the working class, the Rowntrees, in their history of the movement, effectively undercut themselves by laying emphasis on the development from liberal issue politics to class politics. While asserting youth as class they do not demonstrate either the essential class-consciousness or trade-union consciousness of youth but rather merely assert its presence in the new youth culture. Similarly, no reason is given as to why the expression of a contradiction should come solely or mainly in the sectors used to solve it (contradiction of the surplus expressed in military and education). Although far from vulgar, the Rowntrees analysis appears to be an attempt to give importance to youth as youth (students as students, soldiers as soldiers) within traditional marxist categories without facing any of the problems of marxist theory. They give importance to youth as youth etc. without discussing or asserting problems of relative autonomy.

Cowley seeks to 'explore the possibility' that a student movement had been born in Britain during 1968-69. He accords strategic importance to the phenomenon of 'student movements':

'What is historically distinctive about the student movements of today is their involvement, centrally, in politically contesting the established university structure and practice. This political contestation on a global scale is emerging during a decade of rapid and spectacular growth in higher education in the advanced capitalist nations.'

In a tentative and confused fashion, Cowley follows Nairn in arguing that the further development of the forces of production- in particular in the means of production of knowledge and ideology- have brought about, within the capitalist mode of production, a new configuration of class forces in which mental production and intellectual workers play an increasingly significant role. Cowley suggests that contemporary developments in Britain's economic and educational structures represent early stages in the emergence of 'organised capitalism' which bring with them new contradictions involving a substantive irrationality in the 'intellectual division of labour'. Manifestations of these contradictions include: the growing 'vocationalist' emphasis in higher education courses with their implicitly one-dimensional ideological content; together with the elitist 'character training' provided by the autonomous sector (Public Schools and Oxbridge); the rapid restructuring of educational opportunities serving the technical and managerial manpower requirements of the developing economic order under the guise of egalitarian reform; and the failure to provide enough resources (buildings, teachers) to sustain the overall expansion of the education system at standards of comfort and efficiency acceptable to either academics or students. These discrepancies are seized upon by students, who desire a greater degree of control over their own technical and intellectual formation than the system allows them. Some of these students feel sufficiently aggrieved to find collective means of expressing their trade union, reformist and utopian criticisms of existing courses and administrative structures.

'Initially this contradiction is experienced by the student, individually and collectively (sic), as an inadequate educational preparation for the position he hopes to achieve in production. The student very often sees the problem as being caused by the immediate economic squeeze and a general lag in educational adaptation and reform in a period of college expansion and general technological advance... This corporate awareness contains within it the possibility of, and tends towards, a general social awareness, because the quality of educational practice and the responsiveness of college administrators are problems that ultimately cannot be separated from the organisation of the productive process in which the technical possibilities for individual creativity and intellectual mastery contradict the political organisation of the factory. Capitalist social relations of production impose their logic throughout the society, and the specialisation of industry is a fetter on technological progress itself because it crushes the practical imagination.'

In this passage Cowley reveals himself a fundamentalist Marxist relying heavily on the metaphor of the factory, the extension of rigidities in the class structure to equivalent rigidities in the behaviour of bureaucrats,

and a simple base-superstructure model in which the requirements of 'industry' pervade educational institutions and shackle human development. The clear implication is that organised capitalism within Britain provides already the objective conditions for social revolution- an assertion any Trotskyist would be happy to endorse. He proceeds to the 'Leninist' corollary. Corporatist critical consciousness and desires for reform contain implicitly a potential societal critique, a potential contestation of the whole structure of political power in Britain:

'Tomorrow, organised, the students could represent a social group, not a class it must be emphasised, but a collectivity in movement, questioning the society for which they are being prepared...'

Such a dynamically critical collectivity would teach, by example, school pupils and factory workers to organise for offense against all authority structures. Cowley is confident that students will be mobilised because he cannot identify any 'organising principle or rationale' to replace those of gentlemen (the liberal professions) and craftsmen which are being eroded by the system's demand for technical and managerial cadres with an uncritical attitude to their social function. He believes that the demand for economically efficient output from higher education will be implemented by government sponsored bureaucratic control of admissions, course administration, teaching tasks and work loads and rewards to teachers and students, because the free market cannot determine directly the operation of the universities and colleges. He notes that social science students at Essex, Hull and LSE were quick to respond to the rationalisation of higher education (but have their institutions been rationalised?- Eds) by raising reformist demands premised on the 'traditional social and cultural forms of college life' for 'academic community and academic freedom'. They perceive a 'gap' between technocratic preparation and the 'traditional liberal notion of the development of the individual'. Social conditions in the university lead the students to perceive the absence of these liberal objectives for higher education while administrators impose an empty ideology asserting their continuing relevance. This tendency to ideological divergence between students' and administrators' concepts of the actual functions of the university threaten a breakdown in the process of legitimising the capitalist social order via the socialisation and training of professional and managerial workers. Cowley sees the most progressive institutions as most vulnerable to the collective expression of reformist/corporatist demands from students because here the students have been encouraged to question not only authorities but the authority of prevailing definitions of social relations. Thus reformism digs its own grave; for when the students begin to perceive the societal role of their university 'they find they are excluded from the prevailing definition'.

Cowley briefly turns to the academic staff, and finds that their 'corporate consciousness' is directly opposed to that of the students: even the radical lecturers have already betrayed academic freedom and the community in return for tenure, career prospects and research facilities. In their haste to conceal or rationalise their betrayal, they fail to perceive the historical necessity of the student revolt against the authority in which they participate and legitimize. They are unable to compromise with the students' demands for control over their life and work and so relapse into confusion, loss of confidence, perhaps a grudging conservatism. Meanwhile the students proceed towards their societal confrontation.

Cowley is very cautious in evaluating the events of 1968 and early 1969 in terms of his overall scenario: he (rightly) remarks on the

tenuousness of the RSSF alliance ('a transitional grouping of disparate radical tendencies') and the trade union militancy of art students which keeps them isolated from university militants. He specifies the overcoming of interinstitutional stratification as the primary organisational and political task of the emerging student movement, a necessary precondition for any advance towards a student-worker alliance. He foresees a battle for the 'political allegiance (to what? Eds) of the mass of the students' including 'apprentices still engaged in studying at night school and on day release' which will be a pivotal struggle for the political development of the whole sector.

Finally, he observes that there is a hierarchical and autocratic structure to all teacher pupil relationships in education as at presently constituted, which must be broken if students are to break from ideological, political and social subordination to the bourgeoisie. Here he implicitly equates 'liberation from oppressive social relations and conventions' with libertarian denunciations of 'authority', with self-expression, deviance and pop culture: 'pop music and art, colourful styles of dress, drugs and sexual casualness' reveal a 'deep concern with personal self-expression' etc. Thus Cowley moves from a neo-Marxist analysis of organised capitalism's development of the forces of production, to an old fashioned marxist emphasis on the wastefulness, ineffectiveness and redundancy of bourgeois-dominated social organisation of production, to a libertarian enconium on the direct attack method of personal liberation from 'repressive' social relations and 'conventions'. In the background of the article a residual loyalty to the capitalist/working class dichotomy is suggested: students are not a social class, the binary system reflects class divisions etc.

Although the article is articulate and apparently an analytical presentation it resolves into:

- a) an impotent endorsement of what students have done so far
- b) an optimistic prophecy that collective political action by an organised student movement will play a major part in demystifying and delegitimising bourgeois social order
- c) a tautological specification that students must overcome institutional fragmentation, moral atomisation and political sectarianism in order to get from a) to b).

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The third section details the statistical analysis performed on the collected data. It describes the use of descriptive statistics to summarize the data and inferential statistics to test hypotheses. The results of these analyses are presented in a clear and concise manner, highlighting the key findings of the study.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the findings and their implications. It discusses the limitations of the study and suggests areas for future research. The author expresses confidence in the reliability of the data and the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Introduction to Part 2

As we wrote the individual critiques of the previous section we learned the method of trying to get at the basic categories, the lynch-pins of the various analyses. In this section, we set out as component parts of a method for arriving at a position, some of the main categories used. In many cases the uses of the same classic term are quite different, while cross reference helps to see a clearer version of some of the problems.

The components we selected are:

1. approaches to a position through class analysis.
2. the role of models of capitalism.
3. the formal meanings and the substantive meanings attributed to the concept 'consciousness'.
4. the formal and substantive meanings attributed to the concept of 'contradiction'.
5. the problem of students as intellectuals.
6. the processes of politics, e.g. strategy.



Class as a Component.

All the groups use the concept 'class' very loosely (i) and it is usually external to their analysis of students (IS), or it is used in a crude mechanical, economistic fashion (CPB(ML)) which has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism. IMG is the only group that makes no pretence of carrying out a class analysis- and a class analysis is certainly something they don't produce.

The underlying fault with the texts referred to is that none of them see any distinction between the terms 'working class' and 'proletariat'. (ii) This is an important cause of the distorted analysis which the sects offer. To uncritically interchange 'working class', a socio-economic term, for the 'proletariat', a political category, means that none of the sects can talk in terms of political alliances between distinct class fractions; that is, they cannot discuss the class composition of the proletariat. (iii) It is the absence of this distinction which generates the pedantic new/old working class/proletariat debate and which specifically explains why the CPB(ML) degenerate into voluntarism.

- (i) There is no simple, single definition of class in Marx's work. The following is amongst the better brief formulations:
- 'Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in an historically determined system of social production, by their relation ... to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour ...'
- Lenin. A Great Beginning, Selected Works vol.3 Moscow 1967, p.213, quoted by O. Kuusinen, Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism Moscow 1961 p.184.
- (ii) This is one formulation of the distinction which probably has unfortunate Lukacsian overtones. An alternative would be that between 'the people', in Mao's sense, and the 'industrial proletariat', or indeed any of the classes which constitute 'the people'. But see Lenin Two Tactics of Social Democracy,
- 'The degree of Russia's economic development .. and the degree of class consciousness and organisation of the broad mass of the proletariat .. make the immediate and complete emancipation of the working class impossible.'
- Selected Works, vol.1 p.467
also, Selected Works vol.1 p.491 on 'the people'.
- (iii) For the sects, because they see no distinction between working class and proletariat, the question as to the class composition of the proletariat is, of course, meaningless. Clearly they have not understood the nature of the class alliance which was essential for the success of the Chinese revolution, nor its theoretical importance, i.e. its importance for theory.

The problem 'what class are students?' is in fact avoided as a direct question by all but one of the groups, but their politics/economics confusion forces them into one of two positions.

For IS and the CPGB students are implicitly placed as part of the working class/proletariat (iv), and for the CPB(ML) students are placed as petit-bourgeois (v). IMG avoid the question of the class position of students -and any marxist analysis- by talking about 'youth radicalisation'. The Rowntrees see students as part of a new (youth) vanguard, a conclusion which is the result of a completely mechanistic application of non-marxist economic categories. Nairn however, has a rather more complex analysis. His view of students as 'new vanguard' is not simply the result of an analysis of the economics of the student situation but of a conjunctural analysis as well. It is recognition of this level of analysis and its importance which leads Fernbach to ask whether students in contemporary Britain form part of the 'people' or part of the 'enemy'. (vi)

Students as working class.

For IS, membership of the proletariat- their term is working class- is determined by being 'paid in wages' and 'entirely separated from real control both in their own immediate occupation and in society at large' (vii). Implicitly therefore students are seen as part of the working class, but, in the same way that student politics are seen as a consequence of their future, so the question of the class position of students as such is avoided by only discussing the relationship to the mode of production that students will have as administrators, lawyers, teachers, scientists and whatever, i.e. when students stop being students.

- (iv) This implicit location of students as working class/proletarian is distinct from the 'analysis' offered by both IS and CPGB of the role that the majority of graduates will perform. Both posit the importance of graduates in the system of commodity production. (see IS's Education, Capitalism and the Student Revolt p.9. and Marxism Today Sept. 70p.271)
- (v) CPB(ML) part IV section 42 in particular of the Draft Action Programme.
- (vi) NLR 53, p.37
- (vii) IS document p.43 and 9. We take the point about 'payment in wages' to refer to those whose source of income is other than rent or dividends, and not to be a distinction between salary and wage earners. To concentrate on the question of 'control' is abstract anti-authoritarianism, a form of ahistorical moralism, humanism. Often this position results from a psychologistic interpretation of alienation, i.e. 'people are alienated, and must control their own lives if they are to feel better'.

Whereas, for IS, the confusion of levels of analysis and the lack of analytical distinction between working class/proletariat, is manifest in their attempt to assess the political nature of students solely on the basis of their future economic position (viii), the same confusion appears in reverse in an article by Alan Hunt in *Marxism Today* (ix). The beginning of the article is very encouraging since it starts by rejecting the oversimplified view that society can be divided solely between the working class and the capitalist class (x), and argues that any deeper analysis must rest on the application of a Marxist-Leninist concept of class. Hunt defines class 'as an aggregate of people sharing a common relation to the mode of production'. He continues, 'these different relationships to the means of production reflect themselves in a variety of ways: in the type of work done, in the way in which income is acquired, and with respect to the acquisition and use of property'. (xi) But he proceeds to reduce the criteria of membership of the working class to those who 'sell their labour and are exploited in the realisation of surplus value' (xii) and on this basis demonstrates that the lower income range- the vast majority- of the so called 'middle class' are, 'members of the working class properly defined'. (xiii)

This conclusion and the consequent return to the two class model initially rejected depends on ignoring 'the type of work done', and on the ambivalent fashion in which the concepts of productive/unproductive labour and mental labour are dealt with.

- (viii) For IS only economics can explain, see p.49 of their text. This economism is nothing new among 'vulgar marxists' but such teleologism is unusual.
- (ix) *Marxism Today* June 1970. Class Structure in Britain Today.
- the reference here to 'realisation of surplus value' is probably a technical error on the part of Hunt and should read 'production of surplus value'. see above.
- (x) Hunt p. 167
- (xi) Hunt p.167 of Lenin quoted from *A Great Beginning*.
It is unfortunate that the terminology of 'reflection' is used since it suggests a relationship distinct from these 'reflections', but surely, to specify the type of work done, the way in which income is acquired etc., is to specify that relationship. Also to introduce the problem in this way makes it unclear as to whether the list of 'reflections' is open ended or not.
- (xii) p. 170
- (xiii) p.171.

Assuming that this return to a simplified structure of employers/employees* is intentional, then perhaps its origins (even if not conscious ones) may be sought in a two class model at a political level- anti-imperialist alliances etc. But when Marx writes of 'two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat', he is not referring to homogenous economic categories (landowners etc.) Marx point is not just that class structure is simplified in the epoch of the bourgeoisie: but,

'The epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms'.
(our underlinings- xiv)

Students as New Proletariat.

The Rowntrees claim to use the economic theories of Baran and Sweezy but go beyond Baran and Sweezy and,

'ferret out the new class formations embedded in the system they (Baran and Sweezy) analyse'... 'to reveal the motor of social change in the US today' (xv)

But they define class by a non-marxist notion of exploitation. Youth in general, and students in particular, are exploited because of the income they lose (foregone income) through not working as high wage employees on the production line. This has nothing to do with the marxist concept of exploitation, calculated from surplus value and wages: it has its roots in a theory of an 'average wage'. This means that the rate of exploitation is then proportional to the distance below this mean, resulting in an anarchic, non-structural conception of class unrelated to the structural economic facts of surplus value, exploitation etc.

Nairn appears to engage in a fundamental re-write of marxism. He identifies modern capitalism as being in the era of post-scarcity (or rather potential post scarcity), a situation in which consciousness becomes the crucial product. He attempts to situate a new element in the economic base of society- the production of consciousness as a commodity. (xvi) His fundamental innovation and basic class category for dealing with students is that of 'mental producer'. Because he does not relate his category of mental producer to the traditional 'mental labourer', it is impossible to know what distinction, if any, there is intended to be between the two. This problem relates to the question discussed in the section on Nairn, namely, whether his 'consciousness' is a distinct product or is consciousness

* cf. Phil Goodwin in Marxism Today, Higher Education in Capitalist Society Sept. 1970 p. 271

(xiv) Manifesto of the Communist Party. Marx-Engels Selected Works (one volume) p.36

(xv) Rowntree p.4 (in pamphlet version)

(xvi) Nairn, The Beginning of the End the clearest statement he makes is on page 166.

embodied in material production to the extent that mental labour is expended in the process of production of any material product. Until this question is resolved, and the nature of Nairn's mental producers made much clearer, it is extremely difficult to specify the class nature of his 'new vanguard', and hence to see Nairn's analysis as a radical transformation of the traditional model rather than a new presentation of that model. *

If the concept of mental production is adopted however, then we are led to question Nairn's assessment of the role of the PCF in May 1968 as 'betrayal'. (xvii)

Nairn specifies two processes of production, one mental the other material. Those involved in material production, the French working class, have a party - the PCF. Those involved in mental production have no party (and according to Nairn need none) they have as their vanguard the students. The problem here is the nature of an alliance between these forces. What was 'betrayed' was an alliance as yet unformed - strictly, unformable since the different consciousness of students and working class represent different stages in the development of capitalism.

Students as Petit-Bourgeois

Students as some form of intermediate strata is the approach used in many of the documents presented to RSSF by the groups and others. It is used in a fashion that tends to avoid and obscure the lack of any structural analysis of modern Britain. The CPB(ML) also try to avoid the above and obscure their own theoretical poverty by transferring to present day Britain the analysis Marx made of nineteenth century Britain and France, and Engels of sixteenth and nineteenth century Germany. (!)

Although in the CPB(ML) document there are a number of apposite statements on the inadequacies of other groups their own assessments amount to phrasemongering quite frequently.

The profoundly misleading nature of the CPB(ML) analysis of students is clearly demonstrated by the fact that they use the term 'petit-bourgeois' in its classic reference, namely the class of 'independent self-employed producers' and that this is regarded as including 'students, teachers and intellectuals'. The place of the latter group within the petit-bourgeois class is simply asserted. Instead of arguing the inclusion of people who are not obviously petit-bourgeois at all within the petit-bourgeois class, the CPB(ML) hide behind quotes torn from their historical context to justify this inclusion. For instance they quote Lenin (xviii) who warns against an economistic interpretation of the term proletariat, and refers to the relationship between the occurrence of petit-bourgeois deviations

*'new vanguard' the separation of mental producers as a distinct class.

(xvii) Nairn p.125

(xviii) CPB(ML) document, section 53

within the revolutionary parties, and the presence in the ranks of the proletariat (understood as employees) of sections of small producers who have been bankrupted. The CPB(ML) use this statement to justify the claim that the politics of such groups as 'intellectuals, technicians etc' are petit-bourgeois. This claim rests on the identification of technicians and others as small producers i.e. classically petit-bourgeois. The fundamental point then, the class nature, the relationship to the mode of production, of such groups remains assertion.

Having identified students as petit-bourgeois the CPB(ML) conclude, 'that it is of utmost importance to distinguish ... between the progressive (and reactionary) aspects of petit-bourgeois opposition to monopoly capital ... and proto-proletarian tendencies.' (xx)

But because they never concretely deal with the situation of the petit-bourgeois in the era of imperialism (i.e. the monopoly stage of capitalism), the CPB(ML) never refer to the struggle which the petit-bourgeois as a class are engaged in, consequently it is difficult to see how they can identify the progressive and reactionary aspects of that struggle. Instead, they move from identifying students as petit-bourgeois to identifying the petit-bourgeois with students, and the different tendencies within student politics with different aspects of the petit-bourgeois struggle against monopoly capitalism. It is a truism to state the importance of recognising the progressive and revolutionary potential of any anti-capitalist struggle. But it ^{takes} us no further (even backwards) if the only criteria offered for judging the political importance of 'petit-bourgeois' students is membership or non-membership of the CPB(ML). Membership denotes revolutionary potential of course.

Summary and General Points

Different emphasis is placed on the class background and class future of students by the various texts, but only Nairn (and to a lesser extent (xxi) Fernbach) consider the situation of students as such, not transient etc. When the groups do touch on the problem as one of the nature of students as students they frequently resort to the concept of an 'elite'. Whilst this is not a marxist category it does have a specific referent in bourgeois sociology (this is not to suggest that the groups necessarily understand its bourgeois application) and it is used in the analysis of power relationships- not as some of the texts suggest- a descriptive term to apply to any numerical minority. Though none of the groups would refer to the unemployed as an elite (xxii), the term is applied to students because they are a minority of their age group etc. Such an application is probably another manifestation of their misdirected anti-intellectualism.

(xx) CPB(ML) document section 50.

(xxi) Obviously the Rowntrees consider students as students but their analysis is not an application of marxism- see above.

(xxii) CPB(ML) document para. 39. IS on students p.33.

Some of the groups, IS in particular, have involved themselves in the academic debate about new/old working class. The frame of reference of this debate is a distorted development from the continent where 'new working class' has been used to refer specifically to high skilled technical workers, not white collar workers as the term is understood in this country. In Britain white collar workers are traditionally associated with clerical and administrative workers. Any analysis of the class nature of administrative and clerical workers must consider the productive/unproductive labour distinction and a precise specification of this distinction- only the CP (Hunt's article) explicitly refer to this problem.

When attempting to locate students in the class structure many analyses refer to students as part of an 'intermediate strata'. Classically this term is a residual category, arising in a situation where the problem was to discover the main characteristics of the major political forces in laissez faire capitalist society. Intermediacy is often associated with transience- students are only students for three years or so- transience becomes a means of dodging class as an issue for students despite the fact that of course students are not transient, individual students are transient. The class status of the working class is not in question because some of its members are upwardly socially mobile therefore transience cannot alone determine the non-class nature of students.

All the texts, except the CPB(ML) suggest that there have been changes in mode of production (e.g. monopolisation, development of the forces of production etc.) so it is not unreasonable to investigate changes in the occupational structure. Under capitalism there have always been some members of the work force involved in mental labour but the increased proportion of the total labour force involved in mental labour in the current period may conceal a changed role, economic, political or ideological, for this group. They may even constitute a distinct class. However, an investigation into changed occupational structure, particularly when centred on students is directed precisely at the situation which exists on the boundaries of the proletariat. In this type of analysis the category of 'intermediate strata' has no application.

50.

A Variety of Capitalisms.

A variety of capitalisms litter the pages of the texts, some familiar, others more novel. They range from technological capitalism and administrative imperialism, through a spate of modernities, neo-capitalism, modern capitalism, advanced capitalism- to the grand CPB(ML) formula- the monopoly capitalist corporatist state and imperialism. Their variety led us to ask if they have any real meaning, and their prominence in analysis - in some cases- led us to ask why new formula capitalisms should crop up in texts on students.

Generally the explanation of the varieties of capitalisms lies in the treatment of the student question as primarily a new question, requiring new doctrines or adaptations, and applications of traditional doctrines which superficially do not fit or have obvious relevance. In a situation where a major political event or fact does not fit immediately into orthodox doctrine, it is a classic gesture to look for some prominent feature of basic capitalist development which will serve to 'explain' the event and locate it: even if an actual political assessment is relatively separate. (i) Lenin's work on Imperialism is a case in point. It illustrates the way in which a fundamental revision of the orthodox model of capitalism is the means to the solution of a problem which appeared to be 'purely political'. His dispute with Kautsky over attitudes to World War I was resolved through a theorisation of monopoly developments.

If only the elementary forms of this classic method had been adopted by the groups and others the student question might now be a lot clearer. What we found when we looked at the many capitalisms mentioned in connection with students was that in most cases the new formula was simply a rhetorical backdrop to wordage on students. The specific contents of the formulae- which have to be interpolated to extract even primitive points- are confused and undeveloped to the point where, in an extreme case, IS put all the argumants for students being seen as the new skilled labour force for their 'technological capitalism', a labour force vital to monopoly capitalisms which compete through technology, but shy away from the obvious. At no point do they disclaim the obvious analysis, by admitting difficulties or qualifications, thereby leaving the reader to take their comments at face value. They call students an intermediate grouping on the quite minor excuse that they are transitional, and their class decided by the jobs in which they finish up. (ii)

- (i) Most marginal social blocks, those other than the two basic classes, have a complex range of political possibilities open to them, orienting to one or other of the basic classes. Most texts seem to have treated students, from the outset, as one of these marginal groups, even though their political conclusions can completely reverse the starting problem's definition.
- (ii) There might be an interesting if prosaic argument about students as apprentices: but apprentices were never intermediate. You can't leap over basic categories with minor ones which only apply within the basic one.

Some of the texts go for 'models' of capitalism-as we have called the new varieties and formulae- which are basically modern referring to the post war world, to a current phase or period. These texts are especially those of IS, the Rowntrees and Nairn.

Contemporary models.

IS's 'technological capitalism' is offered as a current assessment of capitalism, but it is not specific enough to counter the quite basic objection that they have fallen for a piece of bourgeois ideology. The same piece, the white hot technological revolution, fetishized into a political programme by Wilson. Cut down to its roots all IS are saying is that monopoly capitalism has undertaken educational expansion to deal with the technological development inherent in itself. Given a generous dating of the development of monopoly capitalism- say the late 19th century, and/or agreement that laissez faire capitalism also underwent technological development, the current epoch can be regarded as hardly distinct at all (except of course as pure ideology). 1968-1970 can be set alongside 1870 or 1944, or presumably a whole series of similarly scattered dates in other monopoly capitalist countries. In other words, 'technological capitalism' is a rather trite and unexceptionable formula whose surface logic is not even itself upheld.

The only specific feature of 'technological capitalism' is the production of technicians, a new stratum between the mass (primary and secondary schooling) and the elite (the universities). Though this is a consistent point giving some justification to technologism as a distinct phase of capitalist education, there are one or two major objections.

Firstly, the students who are the basis of the student revolt are not primarily from the lower half of the binary system (polytechnics, colleges of education, technical colleges); secondly, even if one accepts IS analysis, all that is produced for politics is an 'explanation' from which no political conclusions are drawn at all. This is why we feel justified in arguing that the IS version of technological expansion is little different from that which occurred at other moments in history.

Further, if we accept their categories- for the sake of argument- technicians and technological education suggest a political spotlight on vocationally trained students who, in the vast majority of cases are not university students. (see IS section for the stress laid upon arts and social science university students.)

Finally, British history at least shows that the redbricks were created in the late 19th century as technological universities. If the present phase is really so different its difference needs to be thoroughly argued.

The odd echoes of alienation amongst students mentioned in the text are probably derived from American sociology, where a literature has emerged on alienation as a dominant feature of technological society (Blauner on auto workers). This borrowed approach from bourgeois sociology is paralleled by a tendency towards behaviourist psychology in the account of the individual student.

The Rowntrees invoke 'administrative imperialism', incorporating a labour aristocracy thesis: the US working class is non-revolutionary living off imperialist super profits etc. The term 'administrative' is meant to draw attention to an active, dirigiste state which generates economic surplus absorption sectors for capitalism (defence and education). This latter is presumably in contrast to the orthodox model of the state which serves

the dual functions of executive arm of the ruling class and arbiter of its internal contradictions. The central weakness of the Rowntrees' model is not in the formula itself, though this is open to objections, but in the notion that 'employment' in a surplus absorption sector is the root determinant of class position. It seemed to us that students and armed forces are, on the Rowntrees' own reckoning, involved in relations of consumption, rather than relations of production. Another plank of their analysis also has a basic weakness. They assert that students and soldiers are exploited- implying super exploitation. We found this a difficult idea to deal with, both because exploitation is a technical concept in marxist economics which requires that surplus value be quantified, and because we cannot see how sectors whose function is to absorb surplus are involved in the production of surplus value. The need to quantify it is quite secondary to the need to establish its existence. Whatever the solution to this tangle the implied idea that students are revolutionary because they are more exploited than traditional workers muddles poverty with relative exploitation (a low wage earner is often exploited less than a high paid worker. The general theory that poverty leads to militancy is not tenable: in the case of students it needs arguing if exploitation and poverty are principle determinants of political behaviour.

Nairn's work involves three main theses which are contemporary. He argues that capitalism has reached the point in western countries where the forces of production are effectively socialised, straining against the relations of production to a point where transformation at a political level would reveal an already socialised base to society; that the strategic commodity of capitalism in its last phase is mental, i.e. mental commodities and forms of consciousness; and that economic development has brought about a condition of post scarcity such that absolute poverty in western capitalist countries is no longer dominant.

We found difficulty in dealing with some of these ideas, particularly since none - to our knowledge - have received any special attention, even at the level of exegesis, by marxist scholars. The latter thesis, post scarcity, is not expressed in substantial terms, but in discussion we found that it had within it ideas which at very minimum break open the terrible restriction which reductionist marxism so often imposes. So much of sectarian thought is riddled with reductions down to crude economic 'facts' which have the intellectual structure of cul-de-sacs.

On the surface, the essence of Nairn's 'model' can look very much like the others, IS or IMG for example. However it involves a new level of capitalist development, called mental but easily translatable as technology, while capitalism uses the university for training a technical work force etc. These though are very superficial interpretations.

The basic difference is that in IMG's case and IS's, the model of capitalism does no more than 'explain' the student revolt; it offers a loose correlation between the capitalist 'truth' and events in the higher education system. Even if we accept these correlations they offer no political content derivable from their 'model'. Similarly, in the case of the CPB(ML), a purely moralist injunction opposition is all that emerges from the 'proof' that the university is an imperialist institution. Further, the motor which intervenes between the correlations is presented as an economic contradiction (a financial contradiction), the need to expand the universities but the inability to finance them. This is perhaps a budgetary matter and doesn't necessarily involve a contradiction let alone a crucial contradiction. (This point is dealt with under the section on Contradiction.)

Nairn's thesis, on the other hand, does knit together, explaining why students are in a vanguard position rather than merely correlating observations. His 'model' allows a coherent explanation of- why the student revolt is not a freak temporary occurrence, or a traditional adjustment problem- why students are a strategic force in advanced capitalism, for reasons other than purely conjunctural ones.

Nairn argues that advanced capitalism is now dependent for its progress in accumulation upon the production of ideas, upon mental forces. The university, the traditional institutional nexus for such production (and reproduction) is brought into the realms of private production by virtue of this strategic need. (This is contemporary for reasons associated with the post scarcity thesis- see below). But, because mental production is by its nature a social form of production it cannot be privatised, it cannot be satisfactorily appropriated- its surplus cannot be expropriated. This simple opposition is the motor of the basic contradiction (not budgetary strain) which cannot be resolved.

Whereas material production can obviously be carried out under utterly private conditions and relations of production, mental production cannot proceed on this basis. Similarly, 'mental surplus' (mental production above and beyond that which is required to maintain existing levels of mental production) cannot be finally converted into mental surplus value, the specific capitalist form of surplus.

The Nairn thesis, which is quite consistent marxism (Grundrisse, Preface to a Critique of Political Economy, Marx), comes to rest on the viability of the thesis concerning the contemporary strategic necessity of mental production. In answer to the observation we have made of other texts, namely that university expansion has been in existence since the late 19th century alongside technical advance, Nairn's text yields the post scarcity thesis, which firmly locates the stage he specifies in the post war world.

Though we could find no explicit linkage here, a simple calculation suggests that the era of post scarcity is one in which the reign of material survival economics is over or broken: an era when the working class(es) have to be ruled by means other than fear of survival. The solution is provided by mental production's output of consciousness as a commodity. Capitalism tries to produce this for bourgeois purposes alone but finds it cannot do so outside the freedoms of social production. The commodity of consciousness acts as a substitute control mechanism to survival/fear. On the other hand, the dictates of accumulation are such that expanded production produces potential rapid accumulation, but it throws weight on to realisation problems- hence the sales effort and all the practices which Baran and Sweezy discuss in Monopoly Capitalism, practices which come within the domain of mental production.

In other words, Nairn's three theses are closely linked and consistently relatable into a political whole. His model of capitalism is a historico-political model in which the motor is a basic contradiction between developmental stages of productive forces and relations of production.

This model cannot be cracked by arguing, as we tried to, that students are not exploited, do not have surplus value extracted from them etc., because its basis is that mental production resists appropriation into capitalist production. Mental surplus resists transformation into mental surplus value. What this means when applied to students is that they are the objects of contradictory forces which are situated at the base of the system. A corollary of this interpretation is that students are not working class

because they are not directly exploited. On the other hand they are part of the 'people'. It follows from this that Nairn's observation that students regard themselves as working class is a matter of self image, not deduced class position or true consciousness. Nevertheless, the new proletariat thesis can be sustained by reference to a more complex definition of class, which is derived not from the marxist model of simple reproduction (exploited and exploiters and realisers of surplus value), but from a model of expanded reproduction which involves, presumably, subsidiary surplus value being generated by workers whose function in the total system cycle is realisation rather than production of surplus value. However, the process of a contradiction in higher education, involving the struggle between free mental surplus and chained mental surplus value, is a struggle whose essence is a social trajectory of exploitation, a permanent presence of potential exploitation. No doubt other solutions can be suggested.

Whatever solution might be found for this problem (whose terms are at the moment very crude) Nairn's solution, or our interpolation of it, does have the advantage of avoiding the teleological problem arising from the intelligent/idiot formulation. This personalised contradiction raises questions of the essential educability and intelligence of man, opposed against bourgeois ideology and repression etc. Nairn's solution, the sectoral, epochal, basic contradiction, depersonalises and in a sense de-empiricises the question, while leaving the contradiction's kernel intact and meaningful. It avoids the implied elite humanism of the intelligent/idiot formulation, which arises when one asks why traditional workers aren't in revolt as a result of an intelligent /idiot contradiction. The only answer to this seems to require that there is an educational threshold- below higher education and technological education in which intelligence has not received enough support to develop a forceful and independent life.

In general then, Nairn's work raises lots of interesting ideas but leaves them suspended.

For example, we found the idea that neo-capitalism is infinitely more unified than previous capitalisms - through its enlarged state apparatus and extensive functions- a useful idea. We could work out what unification means- the speed of communication in politics, the power and subtlety of nation wide ideology as a weapon, the 'natural' lack of divisions between status groups, except when this is deliberately created for political reasons, etc. So that, if one had an idea of the political process and strategic priorities which actually engage with real distinct forces, one could compute the impact of neo-capitalism. In contrast, even if we accept that IS's capitalism is contemporary or technological, we could not see how this would make any difference to practice. Though Nairn's theses remain unresolved some of his ideas are attractive because of their general anti-economist, -ouvrierist, -reductionist character.

It is perhaps not surprising that Nairn's work is distinctly opposed to the usual explanations put forward to deal with the May events, he was after all attempting an interpretation of a profoundly complex moment in history. The established political groups in contrast managed only to uncover by way of explanation, rising strike waves, rising unemployment, and all the boring trappings of a mechanical hindsight. Obviously such analysis has nil predictive power- had the 'signs' been seen before the events they would not have been helpful.

The IMG make a sketchy attempt at a current economic analysis, but examination shows that this has no real relationship to their political conclusions on students. Their analysis is highly traditional despite modern overtones. The 'youth vanguard' is a purely political construct that has no base in the features of modern capitalism to which they frequently refer.

The 'youth vanguard' is a negative, residual social amalgamation. It is what is left after the traditional working class has been confirmed in its domination by Stalinism and Labourism - two political assertions that stem from Trotsky's analysis in the 30's from the thesis of the crisis of leadership.

The standard and available labour aristocracy thesis is not explicitly drawn on, possibly because this would bring real economic forces and relations into the analysis. Instead we find the following formulations, relating quite definitely to the post war world, if not to the late 60's. The 'late capitalist' world is the context in which the universities are turned into factories for the production of technicians for neo-capitalist society.

While the 'lateness' is obviously little more than a new form death knell (of the crisis) in the minds of the writers, rather than in history, all we know about neo-capitalism is that the universities are producing technicians for its use. In other words, 'neo-capitalism' might as well be simple plain old capitalism. The fact that the term 'technician' is questionable (though it might be rich in meaning) is unimportant beside persistent resorts to tautology in place of scientific (consistent) argument in support of theses and definitions: i.e. neocapitalism produces technicians for neo-capitalism. The 'late' character of the capitalist world might have a meaningful aspect. Ben Said, after all, does suggest (ii) that the bourgeoisie has lost its role as a rising class concerned to expand society's forces of production. The class is in this sense past its historical mission. However the way Ben Said uses this notion makes one feel that it is a post war phenomenon - this of course is rubbish, to repeat, monopoly forms of capitalism challenged laissez faire capitalism in the late 19th century not in 1955.

The CPB(ML) undertake little analysis of capitalism at the level of economic forces. Their work is orientated towards proving to themselves, and presumably potential recruits, that the university is an imperialist institution: this involves showing business domination and in particular US use of British universities.

Their talk of financial contradictions says little more than that the universities are part of the capitalist economy. The fact that the university is described as imperialist - rather than plain capitalist, and that the state is seen as corporatist or even fascist, doesn't say much about how to fight it. After all, no one inside the revolutionary

(ii) Black Dwarf no. 29, vol. 14. Having past their historical mission the bourgeoisie no longer present a leadership and a goal for their offspring and the youth therefore, faced with a variation of the crisis of identity turn to a volatile political existence which can be utilised for the revolution. (see IMG)

spectrum is hostile to an imperialist analysis partly because it doesn't say much.

One interesting point is that the CPB(ML) opposition to students and its corollary, romanticisation of the working class, means that the standard labour aristocracy thesis cannot be applied- though an imperialist analysis invites it strongly. Though there is a sense of Britain's position as an imperialist nation being particularly precarious, putting special pressures upon its economy, it is interesting that little attempt is made to correlate these particular pressures with the politics of either the working class or students. In the case of students this is especially odd since we are invited to a cross national comparison of student movements.

One final query with regard to the CPB(ML): if all non traditional workers are petit bourgeois (whitecollar, technicians, students etc.) then the 'facts' show that the petit bourgeoisie in a monopoly period is growing (service sector, intermediate jobs etc.) rather than being squeezed and annihilated. Though the CPB(ML) don't assert that the petit bourgeois is being annihilated, as such, they do try to explain student militancy in terms of pressures upon the students' class - the petit bourgeois. If they were prepared to live out the logic of their (broad) petit bourgeois classification that class should weigh a little more heavily in their analysis; that is if it is correctly called a petit bourgeoisie in the first place.

In Summary.

Most of the texts are concerned to exhibit some version of capitalism's fundamental structures. The purpose of this is primarily propagandist and has little, in most cases, to do with the positions on students it is supposedly backing. The positions of IS, IMG and the CPB(ML) rely heavily on a 'class' analysis which has only tenuous connections with, or is inconsistent with, their different models of capitalism.

The apparent newness of the student question obviously invites shallow new formulae, while at the other extreme, in the case of NLR, the normalisation of student militancy-in various countries, in various historical periods, often in strategic roles- avoids hard positions.(iv)

The basic elements which recur in analysis,- an extended state, planning, monopoly, imperialism, technology and mental work- bear close study, because they might be the basis of a particular operational politics. As they are used, on the whole, they have little meaning. These elements should also be studied against the background of a spealt orthodoxy whose own political assumptions need to be stated. Too often when reading the texts selected we had the feeling that the sects take surface phrases of classic politics and apply them without understanding their historical roots.

Finally, we felt that a confusion of levels of analysis is rife. The system mechanism of capitalism is often confused with the purely political usages drawn from it, e.g. imperialism is both a definite stage of capitalist development and the USA in Vietnam: though both belong together they are separate entities.

(iv) Fred Halliday in Student Power (Penguin)

Further the policy side of active capitalist rule is missed out, or confused, so that useful hints become general and meaningless. For example, IMG talk about the financial contradictions of higher education expansion. Either they are saying that a particular policy situation has resulted in the educational sector of certain nations suffering financial problems (this need not necessarily be so), or they are just mentioning crude economic 'facts' which could relate as easily and uselessly to a desert island economy financed by cockel shells.

The result of a widespread reductionism which mainly takes the form of economism, is to exclude whole areas of analysis which could produce a richer understanding and in particular a more concrete basis for strategic thought. Political history for example hardly ever enters the analyses discussed: no wonder we get so little concrete interpretation of current events from the groups. For instance no one mentions the possibility- one of many- that post war full employment and welfare provision have given added strength to the working class, such that in stable times the ruling class's dependence on ideological control is very high. Such a simple thesis might at least explain why the university revolt, a revolt at the centre of ideological production, becomes so important for the enemy. It cannot be produced by marxistic propaganda and economic reductionism.

Quotes from Nairn.

The term 'consumer capitalism' in Nairn we have taken as a short-hand term standing for post scarcity capitalism.

" 'Advanced ' capitalism, or 'consumer capitalism', the definitive victory of materialism in a universal worship of commodity fetish, is impossible without the mass media, advertising and automation, without a parallel expansion of the social 'brain' and the nerves of communication. Naturally, in western society such evolution is harnessed to commodity production - the increasing powers of mental production are subordinated to the dominating powers of material production and circumscribed within its categories." (p.159.)

"The last phase of Capital's progress, hence, does more than simply establish the 'material conditions' for liberation (in the sense of relief from primary poverty, the development of productive forces to the stage where some kind of socialism is 'materially possible'). It also anticipates the future state of society, beyond the revolution, in its form - in the real organisation of production within the persisting (or even intensified) alienation of the system (its chronic 'misorganisation'). Evidently there must be an essential contradiction operative here, peculiar to the later stages of the system. And it would be suprising indeed if it could be reduced to the terms of those older contradictions previously generated within capitalism (the contradictions of 'immature', evolving bourgeois society, still preserved in the unfolded system)." (p.161-162)

" Late capitalist society is infinitely more united than the conventional categories allow for, and this unity (because the system remains divisive at the same time) is itself an omnipresent contradiction." (p.163)

" One way of indicating the nature, and novelty, of the change is perhaps to say that the central contradictions of later capitalism are focussed in what would traditionally have been called the social 'superstructure' (because they involve social consciousness and ideology, and the quintessentially 'superstructural' institution of the university). But they cannot really be opposed to the contradictions or problems of the socio-economic 'structure' (i.e. the apparatus of material production, and the form it takes in existing society) because they evidently derive from it." (p.162-163)

" The ultimate phase of capitalist productivity, in other words, is the mass production of consciousness as a commodity. But consciousness resists the form of commodity-production, by its very dialectical and social character." (p.165)

Note on Productive Labour

In our discussions we were temporarily confused by bourgeois notions of direct and indirect work, two categories which are easily translated literally into the appearance of marxist terminology, i.e. productive and unproductive labour. From this it is easy to argue that students cannot be members of the proletariat - which is composed of productive workers - because students are indirect workers and hence unproductive.

According to Coontz' (i) interpretation of Marx, productiveness is a historical category, which does not have a literal application parallel to the bourgeois terminology. A pirate in the mercantilist period was productive, though he didn't work or produce a commodity as such, because he added to the store of a nation's merchant capital by plunder. In the capitalist period, productive labour is defined by production of exchange value, in addition, of course, to use value. The difference between these two is exploitation, i.e. the appropriation of surplus value from the worker. Unproductive labour in the capitalist world does not produce surplus value, though it does produce use value.

It follows that the question about students is whether they produce exchange value as well as use value. (This question is crucial, of course, if one regards membership of the working class/proletariat as determined exclusively by exploitation taking place.) Various possibilities ensue: for example, education can be regarded as a commodity (for Marx material goods and service are both commodities, just as labour is, of course) and the state can be regarded as a collective capitalist. It follows then that the student is either an apprentice (for which see above) or a worker belonging to the working class/proletariat by virtue of being exploited by the state as capitalist. This is only one solution, suggested to show that the obvious status phenomenology of students as indirect, service, non-workers, is secondary as an observation, and cannot stand for a marxist theory of class.

Marx, of course, tantalises on questions about who workers are. One particular example is german: in Theories of Surplus Value, vol 1 (p195) he argues that a teacher in 19th century Britain was a productive labourer for his employer, while in relation to his pupils he was, of course, a teacher. One possible extension of this is to argue that students are productive workers for the state, while for teachers they are, of course, students, and for the working class they are students. In other words, being a 'student' is not being anything to do with class as such. But this does not mean to say that students do not belong to a class, of course.

(i) S. Coontz, Productive Labour and Effective Demand Routledge and Kegan Paul.

'Consciousness' as a Component.

Our review of the literature revealed a central role for the category of consciousness. The actual meaning attributed to the concept divides, in general, between the sects and the others. Blackburn's discussion in his NLR article is a useful description of the basic line up. (i)

Summary of Usages

The Rowntrees regard class consciousness as a key category, and seem to want to prove the existence of a class consciousness by arguing the economics of student and military employment. In this sense, the category is a general catch-all: they do not deal with the actual 'level' of consciousness of the youth class, except to imply by their rejection of the heavy industry block of the traditional working class which used to have a vanguard role, that there is a vanguard consciousness in the youth sector. The actual content of consciousness is talked about only in terms of 'culture' and 'communications'.

The question of the content of consciousness is a fairly common underlying concern of several texts.

Cowley's piece (ii) talks about student consciousness and substantiates the nature of consciousness by references to the defense of traditional freedoms in the university against growing bureaucratic controls. When he uses the term consciousness he seems to want to talk about students' ideas, their key concerns.

IMG refer to an 'embryonic trade union consciousness' among students and in the same breath talk about this being a vanguard consciousness. We suggest that there are considerable difficulties posed by this usage, since it leaves open absolutely the key question; even if one accepts the initial categories— how does consciousness change? It seems that IMG's view on this question is that activists 'raise the level of consciousness'.

IS usage of the term raises some complex problems: it seems that a Durheimian notion of anomie is the basis of the consciousness of students (this point is mentioned further in the section on Contradiction). Once IS have pointed to the nature of consciousness they talk about its uneven development, about transformations from quantity into quality, and about the group's task to undertake educational work to raise consciousness. Their basic model seems to be the same as the IMG, merely adding a few standard analytico/ rhetorical characteristics to the basic practice of raising consciousness. In IS's case one is bound to ask what the relevance of a trade unionist level of consciousness is to groups who are not proletarian in class composition. The transposition of a concept designed for talking about the working class is confusing. For the Rowntree's who argue student as worker, of course it is acceptable to talk about trade union consciousness, though we suspect this consistency is largely fortuitous.

All the usages mentioned so far are based on 'exposures of the 'real' nature of the capitalist system to consciousness. NLR however, does not rely in its prescriptions or analysis on the category of consciousness in

(i) NLR 53.

(ii) J. Cowley. The Strange Death of the Liberal University, Socialist Register 1969.

any key role. Blackburn's piece on Red Bases is a preliminary critique of the exposure/level model of consciousness, though he politely refers to this model as being that of 'new style reformism'.

The CPB(ML) talk about raising the level of 'politics', a usage which we take to be the same as that of the Trotskyist groupings 'consciousness', though the choice of a different word undoubtedly results from the association of the category with Trotskyist analysis. They talk in practice terms about anti-capitalist demands, whose status so far as we can see (in terms of our present discussion) is the same as that of transitional demands in that they are designed to raise consciousness among the masses. The long passage in their document (ii) on the university is based on an exposure /proof that universities are imperialist institutions. They also use an odd formulation concerning 'the mass self realisation of students as tools of capitalism', which we would suggest raises similar problems to those outlined above - how does realisation or consciousness become raised, what is its role in politics once it is raised.

In the course of giving an outline of usages and content and allied notions of practice, certain points emerge quite clearly.

There is a common model of consciousness employed by groups whose surface politics is different. We suggest that this model is called, the mechanical, stagist model. It offers certain descriptions of the level and nature of a social block's consciousness (trade unionist, vanguard, proletarian, petty bourgeois etc.). It relies on notions of the content of consciousness which concern the understanding and realisation of contradictions or pseudo contradictions. The practice which raises consciousness is an exposure practice, expressed in demands whose objective is to expose rather than try, for example, to win positions of power, or majorities, or to win as opposed to lose. Finally, this practice has a key role in the relationship of activists and militants and cadres to the student masses.

In brief, the obvious limitations of this model are: it avoids the whole problem of a substantive analysis of the political beliefs of social groups: it draws on a limited range of sub-characterisations, avoiding all existing political positions and beliefs etc.: it regards consciousness as unilinear (except when the mystery of quantity turns into quality: it is based on only one notion of the process of political change, i.e. that political change results from exposing the real nature of capitalism to people who presumably did not realise this before: it avoids questions of concrete strategy, and confuses characterisations of the level of consciousness from classic literature by applying them to groups for whom they were not designed.

Its deepest error is to assume that the natural condition of consciousness of the masses before it is raised is one of political innocence and ignorance. It seems that there is a vacuum idea behind exposure politics, the view being taken that exposure creates a vacuum into which socialism rushes as the true explanation. This model seems to deny memory and history.

The other model, theorised in its critical aspect by Blackburn, and implicit in Red Basism, concerns a theory of politics as struggle, in a context of

(ii) Communist Party of Britain (Marxist- Leninist) Draft Action Programme and Analysis of the Student Movement. Sussex Branch CPB(ML).

winning and losing battles, building institutions and generating a culture of marxism and revolution.

These initial points need to be put in a firmer perspective. In our view the mechanical stagist model is not merely a piece of rhetoric on the surface of various groups politics. Their notion of consciousness feeds deeply into their whole politics.

Consciousness, the vanguard and the crisis.

The basic model of practice used by the Trotskyist groups and the Maoist group(s) involves a dual practice- raising the consciousness of the mass in question, students in this case, by posing programmes of demands that have an exposure function, as well as possible a transitional bridging function for bringing the masses painlessly to extreme revolutionary positions: while the party, proto party group builds cadres, which is the key task of the period. The 'period' is in fact the whole period prior to the crisis, when the vanguard group or party, which has prepared the masses, moves as a vanguard leadership, followed by the highly conscious masses.

In this model there are simplistic notions of crisis which are at best reductionist if not simply economistic (the financial crisis, the world imperialist crisis etc.). There is no notion of a strategy that relates to masses and blocs that can form alliances, only a strategy for the group, an internal strategy. The role of the masses is passive though it is pursued in the midst of agitation and strife. The function of exposure agitation is not victory or accumulated power positions but preparation to be led.(iv)

- (iv) It does not take much imagination to see how the past failures of socialism are always explained by sectarians in terms of leadership betrayals, and the wrong line etc. Their model of the masses consciousness/politics is fundamentally not designed to understand why the masses should be attached to social democracy, parliamentarianism and the cold war notions of, for example, freedom and democracy. When it is obvious that the working class is not 'responding' to exposure of capitalism's truth, the explanation offered, for instance in IMG's case, is that the working class is dominated by Labourism and Stalinism. Similarly, key problems in socialist history are explained by the grand leadership betrayal thesis. Its basis is the necessary idea that the leader was responsible for the line or exposure of capitalism to the masses' consciousness and that his (their) wrong line misled the masses i.e. a simple failure through betrayal. In other words, the inability of the sectarians to deal with history, with the masses, with real events, is closely allied to their attachment to a mechanistic concept of consciousness.

This question is explored further under the section on Strategy.

The victory/defeat aspect the mechanical model means that agitational work does not have to involve successes in the terms of the mass or sector being agitated. A defeat can be a 'success', it has the function of disposing established leaderships (useful since none of the groups has any real power), while a victory is always welcome, but unlikely, given that the groups' assessments of all struggles are always highly principled.

We offer a few points: firstly, the creation of a strategy for the masses obviously depends on the political nature and possibilities of the mass. If they are only an intermediate, progressive group, essentially subsidiary to the class struggle then it would seem to follow that a mass strategy that is designed to raise revolutionary consciousness amongst them is ab initio going to fail. This view seems to follow for oevrierist groups. The point we have made elsewhere is that the fundamental political range of possibilities of a social block depends upon its relationship to proletarian class membership. The groups seem to recognise this and undertake a class analysis in crude terms, but they then transpose a completely unsorted model of consciousness onto the mass without reference to their own class analysis. These problems are not unique to the student sector. It seems to us that the groups' relationship to the seemingly less problematic working class is constructed on much the same model of consciousness and practice. Therefore it is not just the muddle about the class and politics of the student sector which puts 'consciousness' or 'politics' as an aspect of their theory into the position of being a weak link in both their theory and their practice.

An important and disturbing aspect of the groups' (IS, IMG, CPB(ML)) model of consciousness concerns the status of the masses and members of the masses before they are brought into the firing line of group agitation and exposure politics. The assumed status of the mass is one of ignorance, innocence, illiteracy etc. Of course their are clear enemies, self professed rightists etc., but the volatile mass is the groups main concern.

From what we can see of the model of consciousness employed, the masses are regarded as clay lumps, suffering from ideological manipulation, beings who are basically apolitical or unpolitical. In short, all politics starts at the bottom of the model's unilinear ascent, not in the middle of ongoing history, not in the middle of politics. The illusion that the masses are apolitical and blinkered is obviously given some force by the fact that the existing groups do often attend the start of militancy amongst sections of the masses. But sad experience shows how, once brought into action, the masses discover their own politics, their own trusts and resources - and turn away from their agitational leaders. Amongst workers the direction of turning away often seems to be to less militant positions, e.g. the rent and housing campaigns in which IS were heavily involved: whilst among students in the early days, the students often turned away towards more militant positions than their over cautious professional guides. Whether these examples are accurate in detail is not our concern. What we wish to point out is that a correct conception of politics cannot be grasped, its level, styles and processes, cannot be understood by a mechanical, stagist model of consciousness.

Further notes

Another deficiency of this model arises from internal incompatibilities of analysis. A common theme in analysis of the condition of students in capitalist society is that they are victims of a contradiction between being sponsored into responsible intelligence, while being utilised by capitalism as unintelligent idiots with certain instrumental skills. It would seem,

prima facie, that students should become 'conscious' of this contradiction, after being exposed to agitational work, even if this does not merge naturally into their consciousnesses. What puzzles us is how the unconscious masses who suffer this contradiction can simply be a monolithic clay lump. Even if clay lump status is depassed by the raising of consciousness in struggle, we still do not know what political position a raised consciousness of this contradiction entails.

To summarise.

The model of consciousness employed does not seem to fit with the actual condition of consciousness of the masses either when dormant or active. In this perspective of criticism, we would argue that concrete analysis is essential for any practice to be relevant and that the category consciousness requires to be filled with substance if it is to be of any use.

To express ourselves sharply, in an example: we would argue that the condition of the masses, active or passive, is more likely to be one of knowledge and rationality, than one of ignorance and innocence. It might be that the problem of revolutionary politics is one of relevance and credibility, of victory and confidence, not ignorance and the desperate searching for militancy for its own sake.

Consciousness, ideology and contradiction.

Let us go further on the question of the nature and content of consciousness. Initially we found some difficulty in relating the category of ideology to the category of consciousness. In some group's literature the referent of consciousness is a contradiction, in others, it is an ideology. The Maoists talk about developing contradictions to produce politics (consciousness); however, after the fine rhetoric, we found little practical substance to this no doubt excellent injunction. Our difficulty seems to have been the result of their difficulties.

Our view on ideology is that in lived terms it is the substantial content of consciousness. This rough 'solution' leads us to argue that what is needed is a concrete specification of the ideologies lived in the student sector, not excluding the general ideology that is lived by the student as citizen-independently of his special status. It follows that when groups talk about developing contradictions, they should talk about the lived forces that are in contradiction to each other, and the actual developmental goals of practice. Unless this is done all the groups succeed in doing is presenting a contradiction as a fact to an audience. This is a radically different and inferior process from the one indicated by, for example, Mao, for whom the development of contradictions is the basic element in the production of strategy.

The problem of ideology and consciousness is a central concern in Nairn's work. He formulates the problem in terms of the relationships between ideas and reality. As far as we can see this problem needs transforming into a question of forces, with the two forces involved being, in one interpretation, socialist/marxist theory versus history (reality). Nairn argues that these are out of step. A more complex formulation would consist of the conflicting revolutionary and bourgeois ideologies (idea) versus the conflicting forces of bourgeois and proletarian power (reality).

This treatment of the question of consciousness is only a first step. From it we have come to see that there are questions of epistemology underlying the use of the concept: also we feel that some comment is called for on the status of the concept of consciousness within the marxist oeuvre. (v)

(v) The question of Lucacs.

The sects employ a reductionist and mechanistic notion of consciousness which excludes any possibility of the masses having a political life for themselves, excludes the dialectic of history determining men while men make history. Their reification of marxist categories, their suppression of the dialectic, is revealed in their language. If one looks carefully one discovers that the capitalist system results in crisis and that the empirically defined working class is the agency of socialism. We suggest a different account: capitalist face problems that result in crisis and the working class is only the agency of socialism in its role as proletariat. We go for an epistemology that involves men producing history, struggles, victories, defeats, consciousness etc. This production epistemology is expressed in a notion of the political process as one of struggle, a crucial component of which is victory and defeat. We reject the reification of forces and producing forces into abstract systems and abstract classes pushing towards inevitable laws of history.

We suspect that the sectarians have taken from Lucacs certain theses about the nature of consciousness, which though they need to be rejected as idealist in their own right, are utilised at the wrong level by the groups.. Lucacs, History and Class Consciousness was an attack on economism and determinism, an attack on bourgeois political philosophy and its expression within Second International revisionism. It was not designed as a tool for talking about political conjunctures, about what sectors and classes believe and how politics has developed. Lenin's wider use of the term does have this latter connotation but it was concerned with clarificatory theses on the nature of the Russian working class, against the theses put forward by reformists and spontaneists- the twin enemies to the 'right' and 'left' of Lenin. The concept was not used as an overall substitute for strategy and conjunctural analysis. On the contrary it was used in clear political attacks on other revolutionaries in an ascent to theory as the solution for political disputes. The sects usage shows an opposite direction- a descent into mechanism of practice.

Contradiction as a Component.

To decide on the nature of contradiction as a philosophical category is clearly not possible on the basis of the literature of the 'student sector' alone- though different 'philosophies' can be seen to underlie the use of the term in this literature. However, in analysing student politics/ nature of education (i.e. identifying contradictions governing the development of this structure) contradictions are given specific contents which may be summarised as being:

1. The 'contradiction' of socially mobile individuals.
2. Determined by the financial crisis of capitalism (or imperialism).
3. Between the ideology and reality of education.
4. An expression of the 'fundamental contradiction' of capitalism, between the forces and relations of production.

Who uses what?

The 'contradiction' of social mobility.

Both absolute upward social mobility and relative downward mobility, IS and CPB(ML) argue, result in personal 'insecurity' and/or choices between mutually exclusive alternatives-i.e. they result in contradictions for individual students. These contradictions are resolved by either adopting a trade union consciousness and integrating with working class life style, or, as the Maoists recommend, by adopting a proletarian line.

The theoretical basis of this interpretation is a substitution of the term contradiction for the term anomie in a fundamentally Durkheimian analysis of social mobility and relative deprivation. Besides being non-Marxist, such sociology is not even an accurate utilisation of bourgeois sociology. After all, it is widely accepted that Durheim's anomie has multiple meanings in its own right and certainly not a blanket explanation of conflict, stress and tension. Most importantly, it is useful to recall that Durkheim's oeuvre was a fully fledged anti Marxist exercise: his concept 'anomie' was designed (when applied to the division of labour, the economy) as an avoidance of Marx's category of contradiction (class struggle).

It is amazing that groups who condemn bourgeois sociology as mystificatory, (IS) and attack the teaching of sociology because it does not consider particular problems (IS and CPB(ML)) - can themselves depend on it's methods and concepts.

The financial crisis.

IMG argue that it is the basic contradiction between neocapitalism's demand for technicians and the inability to adequately finance their training (due to Britain's insoluble economic troubles) which turns universities and colleges into centres of tension and discontent. Similarly, the CPB(ML) identify as a key contradiction the increased demand of monopoly capital for technicians, managers and ideologues, and the inability to maintain facilities because of the imperialist financial crisis. This is how these two groups solve their problem of finding the economic contradiction which they 'know' must be there - somewhere. But unless they can explain why the most politically active institutions have not been those most starved of finance, and why so few of the demands raised have been about facilities,- that is, explain the way that this simple contradiction is mediated to other levels, they have explained very little. The maximum it could explain anyway (within their own political theory) would be a trade union consciousness.

Ideology and reality.

The contradiction between the 'ideology of education' and the 'reality' of particular institutions is of minor importance for the CPB(ML) but for IS it is central. For them 'it is a contradiction between the liberal ethos of the university and its stark reality that moves increasing numbers of students to militant action within the colleges' (from a document produced for RSSF conference by A. Nagliatti).

A number of problems arise as to the nature of this contradiction, not least the political practice which results from identifying this contradiction as the dominant and fundamental one governing the development of the student struggle. It would seem to imply that the contradiction has developed because the ideology (as mystification, rationalisation or false consciousness) is out of synchrony, i.e. is lagging behind the development of reality (as organisation and practice). This conceptualisation recognises the possibility that the contradiction may be resolved by the propagation of a 'new' ideology by the bourgeoisie. Indeed, as IS state, the political situation in higher education is that of a transitional crisis. This leads to their exposure politics and the limitation of student struggles to the recruitment of cadres, which IS put particular stress upon in common with other sects.

To identify the aspects of the 'contradiction' as above assumes a single or at least a monolithic ideology, both in terms of who propagates this ideology, and in terms of its sociological origins. Even if one is not concerned with the different conceptions of education propagated by different elements within the Ministry of Education, Local Authorities, Headmasters' Conference, NUT, etc. and is only concerned with the ideology of a particular institution of higher education, it is still far from difficult to demonstrate the ideological differences between say, administrators, professorial staff and non-professorial staff. When any attempt is made to identify the components of educational ideology it becomes apparent that they cannot be submerged under the simple category of 'liberal'. Concepts such as 'community of scholars' and 'academic freedom' can be traced to their feudal/aristocratic origins: the intrusion of egalitarianism into educational ideology owes more to Fabianism than to classic liberalism. In connection with this, the opposition elitism/liberalism is incorrect because it does not recognise elitism as an essential aspect of liberalism.

The document presented by Leicester comrades at the first RSSF conference did recognise some of the different components constituting the dominant ideology of education- even if in a very confused fashion.

Leicester's Aspects of Contradictions.'Ideology'

equality of opportunity
humanitarianism
egalitarianism
liberalism
university autonomy
renaissance man
community of scholars
academic freedom

'Reality'

class composition of intake
destructive research
domination into passivity
social controls
state financial control
fragmented of
exams
university curricula

Confusion is apparent in the lack of recognition of relationships between the 'ideological' aspect of these different contradictions, but more importantly, to list contradictions in this fashion does not deal with the strategic importance of any of them. The problem is, given a situation of capitalist

domination, whether the resolution of contradictions between capitalism and feudal residues necessarily lead to an advance for the revolutionary forces. Demands defending feudal residues- community of scholars etc.-- may be anti-capitalist but in what sense are they progressive?

To attack practice (monopoly capitalist) from the standpoint of ideology (laissez-faire capitalist, feudal) without proposing either new (socialist) practice (the problem of utopianism) or new ideology (i.e. specifying a socialist ideology of education) tends to have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the existant, that is, feudal and/or bourgeois, ideology.

Expression of the fundamental contradiction.

The problem of the relationship between contradictions, in particular between contradictions within the system of education and the 'fundamental' contradiction of capitalism, is raised in the clearest fashion in a paper by S.Clark, (presented to RSSF conference Autumn '68)

'The lowest level at which the fundamental contradiction (of capitalist society) is revealed is in the contradiction between the reality of the educational system and its rationalisation in liberal bourgeois ideology. This reflects the contradiction between the requirements of an independent critical attitude and the simultaneous requirement of very rigid boundaries on the exercise of such independence, which in turn follows from the contradiction between the means of production and the relations of production at its most advanced- the same level as within the automated industries'.

The language of revelation and reflection used in such a loose fashion cannot but raise the ghost of Hegelianism - it implies a concept of contradiction in which every contradiction is an expression of the fundamental contradiction. Yet this language is not used intentionally as a justification of political fundamentalism (shades of oevrierism), but rather as an attempt to argue the 'marxist' nature of the fundamental contradiction of the student situation. Given this interpretation of the concept of 'reflected contradiction' then an alternative formulation of the analysis would be that the marxist contradiction between the requirement of independent thinking and the restriction of the exercise of that thought (intelligent/idiot contradiction) is reflected in, that is, distorted by, bourgeois language, and appears as the ideology/reality contradiction.

But to treat the intelligent/idiot contradiction as marxist the sense in which independent critical attitudes are required must be specified. Clearly the problem is not resolved by arguing that requirement in terms of 'the natural inquisitiveness of man', or any other aspect of man's essence, but rather in terms of the nature of education imposed by the structure of knowledge (that is knowledge as necessarily social). Although Clark does not explicitly argue 'new proletarianism' his reference to the automated industries does entail the suggestion that in so far as the forces of production require that general critical attitude, they are in contra^{diction} with the restriction of that critical attitude demanded by the relations of production (i.e. its restriction to the accumulation of capital). Though Nairn does not raise the intelligent /idiot contradiction as such, his essay raises related problems such as, new proletariat, the structure of knowledge, and contradictions associated with the development of forces of production.

The need for a theory of contradiction.

We have used the distinction between marxist and non marxist contradictions when considering the ideology/reality contradiction, but its marxist or

non-marxist character is not determined pragmatically- in terms of its importance or otherwise for revolutionary practice. Rather, it is determined on the basis of the theoretical origins of the terms used to denote the aspects of the contradiction. If ideology is interpreted as mystification, rationalisation etc., and reality as the specific organisational form or practice, then the contradiction is, in Althusserian terms, an ideological one, that is a contradiction within (Althusserian) ideological practice as such it has a specific mode of resolution. A more obvious interpretation of the ideology/reality contradiction would be that of idea/reality, essence/existence, reason/unreason etc., oppositions which Althusser firmly locates within a Feuerbachian problematic.

The language of contradiction is used by all 'marxist' groups, but the problem is to understand contradiction as a term within a theory not as a word within a language. If contradiction is to be used as an analytical category then it must also be understood as an analytical category- as a practical analytical category. To do this requires an explication of the notion of a structure of contradictions, the relationships between the terms of such a structure being those of non-antagonism, antagonism, principal contradiction, fundamental contradiction. For Althusser these relationships as formulated by Mao become displacement, condensation, dominance and determinance.

We must understand contradiction as a practical category if we are to relate our political practice to our theoretical practice: that relationship is the discovery of the 'weakest link'.

Students as Intellectuals?

Most of the assertions about students draw obliquely on the notion of the student as an intellectual. Both the hostile and the sympathetic texts ascribe the characteristics of intellectuals to students, without any text, other than Nairn's (which is inadequate) even recognising that there might be distinctions between the two groups.

We have used the CPB(ML) texts to illustrate several themes which are common, with variations, to other texts. The notes on other groups are therefore quite brief.

Students as such are dismissed from strategic relevance and positive role by the CPB(ML) through being located as petit-bourgeois. The actual characteristics of students are those of intellectuals, who are seen as wanting to become an elite of leaders for the working class. They state, in para. 59, (i)

" The working class makes, and is making, its own leadership in the revolutionary struggle; it has no use for intellectuals or students who confine action to glib phrases about 'raising the political level' of workers or handing out leaflets at factory gates."

They then define the conditions on which intellectuals can contribute to revolution, but in doing so suppress the real question - i.e. leadership, which paradoxically they recognise as the real issue within their general hostility:

' The Marxist intellectual works within and beside the working class, forming his theory by participating in the workers' struggle ... it is necessary to learn from the workers before preaching to them.'

This effectively skates round the basic Leninist doctrine - no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory - by seeing the production of theory as a mere matter of role, instead of the strategic necessity of revolutionary politics. (ii) Any discussion on this is blocked by their (confused) attack on students and intellectuals in general class analysis. Their insistence on a negative role for intellectuals outside the party, and a positive if unspecific role for intellectuals within their party, avoids the whole question from which they started: that is, how to assess and relate to the mass of students whom they recognise have intellectual resources. It is no solution to the political problem posed by the relationship between a party and a mass to argue that unless members of these masses are in the party - or are working class, of course - that they are useless or hostile.

(i) CPB(ML) Draft Action Programme.

(ii) We take it that the reference to intellectuals and presumably students 'preaching' after they have got their theory from the workers, is a Freudian slip to avoid candour on questions of leadership.

Pathetic anti-elitist ideology, and a bowing to (supposed) traditional working class philistinism - particularly in the London RSSF document-coexists unhappily with an attempt at applying principled Marxism-Leninism which cannot succeed since it is in the main a quite inaccurate version of classic doctrine. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Gramsci, all devote considerable energies to discussing questions of culture and intellectuals and theory as historical questions of strategic priority. This literature contradicts the silly reductionism of the CPB(ML).

London RSSF's text (a group acting under the auspices of the CPB(ML)), Towards a Revolutionary Student Movement - a title which is singularly inappropriate in connection with the doctrines of Marxist-Leninist sectarians (iii) reveals their difficulties, climaxing with an amazing and embarrassing misinterpretation by a worker member. The worker polemicises against the view that students will invent theory in the university and then lead the workers - a view which is incidentally a travesty of any doctrine that to our knowledge has ever been put forward. The worker gives as his answer to such a move on the part of students, 'Get stuffed' p11 and then quotes extensively from What is to be done? to back up his antagonism. The passage quoted remarks that workers are reported to be critical of their economic leadership, and of leaders telling them how to do what they know well how to do already, i.e. trade unionism. Lenin then presents the workers real demand,

' We want to learn the details of all aspects of political life and take part actively in every political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less on what we already know, and tell us more about what we do not know, and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic' experience, that is, you must give us political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your duty to bring us that knowledge in a hundred and a thousand times greater measure than you have done up to now...' (iv)

Poor Lenin, to be so misunderstood!

The London RSSF's worker then floats the idea of the 'worker intellectual' in order to explain that he -and Lenin - are not against intellectuals (!)

IS's lengthy discussion of capitalism's need for skilled and trained manpower tends to highlight the difference between manual and intellectual work. However, their political discussion on students doesn't relate to this distinction and its consequences in terms of a possible different politics/consciousness for students as non-manual workers. There is however no overt association of students with intellectual characteristics or with any role as mental workers. The only real reference to the intellectual function

(iii) The possibility of a 'movement' of progressive character is backed by the CPB(ML)'s class analysis, and is hardly principled for a group whose strategic priority has persistently been cadre formation.

(iv) Ch.3 p.73 What Is To Be Done? Moscow, single text edition.

is concerned with students having certain technical skills, finding and interpreting facts and figures for the workers. This is a view which sees students as hack research workers for an already defined political project drawing on little more than crumbs of applied bourgeois sociology (see IS crit.)

IMG regard students as involved in society's superstructure, being propelled into a vanguard role by virtue of capitalism's ideological crisis (the crisis of values referred to by Ben Said) plus their innocence of Stalinism and Labourism. It is interesting that the vanguard role of students seems to have nothing to do with students as intellectual workers or an intellectual function, when, the root causes of their action are attributed to ideology: a correlation which when concerned with other matters produces quick, easy solutions e.g. a financial/ economic crisis in the university equals an economic/ trade union consciousness for students. On the other hand, along with other groups, the IMG recognises the importance of combating bourgeois ideology- as an aspect of their confrontationalist politics. This would be helpful if they would talk about the actual practice and nature of such contestation, i.e. does combating bourgeois ideology require special skills such as intellect, critical theory, academic training etc? On these questions they are silent.

The Rowntrees analysis is a naked piece of economic reductionism in which the fact that students are a special part of the division of labour - mental labourers- is quite irrelevant. In order to absorb economic surplus one merely needs to be employed in a key sector of the economy.

The CP's multi-sectional organisation has always included students as apprentice intellectuals. The recent student unrest has been neatly slotted into a pre-existing niche, the student section of the party - which is kept quite clear from other sections. This results in a complacency of analysis: for example, basic student power/ trade unionism is viewed as essentially the same as any other trade unionism, and since white collar trade unionist practice shows no obvious differences to manual unionism, student militancy raises no difficult questions. Meanwhile the potentially awkward vanguard issue is dealt with by regarding it as dangerous ultra-leftist Trotskyism (Betty Reid). The result of this is that the deeper questions arising from a mass political revolt in the education sector are not raised, at least in public. Given the traditional association of students with intellectualism we can see why the party wishes to avoid certain obvious issues and keep the sector sealed off. After all the party has had a difficult history with its intellectuals.

Nairn has a positive theory of the impact of mental labour on the form and content of student politics. The substance of this has been set out elsewhere (see the critique on Nairn and Consciousness as a Component). Though students are not traditional intellectuals, the group normally regarded as producing theory and ideas, Nairn discusses theory, critical ideas and ideology as a general social product of the student sector. Unfortunately, this avoids the classic questions concerning the conscious and organised production of revolutionary theory for the party- whatever form it might take. These questions are suppressed by a concentration on revolutionary sociology to the exclusion of concrete organisational questions. For example, the obvious question of leadership-analysis - theory-strategy, is shrouded in casual reflections on liberationism- a 'touch of anarchy'.

The intellectual features of the student sector figure prominently in NLR's Red Basism, which was concerned with establishing a revolutionary marxist culture in the universities. Students here are seen as consumers and presumably producers of a British marxism whose absence, for historical reasons, has been a structural blockage to revolutionary development. The obviousness of this thesis - students are literate and the workers aren't- invites empirical enquiry: has a revolutionary culture of any solidity been established in the universities and is it dominated by marxism or has it in fact succumbed to sectarian thought forms? The failure of NLR (ists) to follow up their interesting thesis is matched by the absence, unfortunately, of a firmly argued position on the nature of student politics. Added to this there should be reasons established as to why students, and not say, the labour movement itself, should be the particular targets for entrepreneurs of theory.

In summary, we found that amongst groups who are generally anti-student, there is a deep hostility to intellectuals and their associated (often supposed) political practices. Amongst those who take a generally positive line on students there is an avoidance of direct discussion of intellectuals and their associated practices, which is replaced by emphasis on culture (youth culture) and ideology, which we felt were attempts at somehow talking about intellectual practice without really confronting the issues. The NLR alone are positive about the association of students with intellectual life and role (theory etc.) while Nairn adopts a different approach, using a stricter methodology based on an examination of the contradictory forces at work on students. (See below for comments on correct methodology).

Further, we found that most views are based on the unwritten assumption that intellectual status is coextensive with student status, i.e. that the mass of students is intellectual. This assumption is found in both the pro and anti texts, and is so deeply rooted that it distorts analysis and argument which outside this confused context might have some value. We are strongly opposed to the notion that the mass of students is intellectual, and are hostile to most of the arguments based on this assumption. Most of our comments are based on the substitution of a distinction between the mass of students and individual and small groups of intellectuals, for the confused sociology of the texts.

The function of this confused sociology is quite clear in the case of the CPB(ML) for example. They use the notion of students as intellectuals to reinforce their basic class analysis of students (petit-bourgeois) with a strong dose of quite objectionable moralistic philistinism (sneers at student intellectuals are scattered liberally throughout their text, even to the extent that the Beatles and Bob Dylan are pilloried as political, intellectual criminals). We can only presume that the CPB(ML) feel very insecure about the simplism of their basic class analysis, and hope that it can be strengthened by attaching to it a pathetic attack on supposed intellectual life- which we further presume is aimed to pander to a deep supposed philistinism among workers. The pathos of their attack should be self evident, but its theoretical error is perhaps worth pointing out.

What they have done is to 'read' the classic marxist texts on intellectuals (Marx, Lenin, Gramsci etc. state that intellectuals are bourgeois or petit bourgeois by class) as corroborations of their own defensive moralism, rather than as scientific classifications.

The importance of forcing the distinction between intellectuals and the mass of students is that it isolates the real politics and much of the argument about students and intellectuals as separate objects of analysis. Before looking at some of these arguments, there is a point of clarification to be made about our own position: this subscribes heavily to the view that intellectual practices are a key force in any revolutionary formation, and recognises the presence, albeit primitive and not exclusive, of such forces in the student sector.

Clearly, though we do not subscribe to the notion that each and every student is an intellectual, or that the mass of students is intellectual (a peculiar formulation but one which does have some currency), we do not discount the view that the student sector can be the seed bed for the production of a new generation of marxist intellectuals, or even a new, or many, theories of socialism. The problem with this approach is not that it is incorrect, but that strictly applied, it does not relate to the mass of students which is the social unit upon which such speculation is based. A theory, and if you like, a strategy for the genesis of intellectuals and theory, is not adequate if it rests purely on the 'obvious' correlation of student sector with intellectual practice. As we pointed out in our comments on Red Base strategy, the NLR's assumption that the crucial break into marxist culture would emerge from the student sector needs to be argued. Is it such an obvious idea after all? Why shouldn't marxism be 'reborn' from within quite traditional political formations. If this is regarded as argued then specifically why should students be the market for marxist theory?

Turning now to an attempt to unravel the separate elements of political argument from the positions based on a confused sociology, let us look again at the CPB(ML), who give considerable prominence to the argument that only intellectuals (students?) who join the party are politically true cadres. It is interesting to note that the logical next step of this line of argument is not developed by the CPB(ML), or by any other group. The point is as follows: once an intellectual joins the party, and is rescued from error, reaction etc., what role does he then play in the party? Does his intellectual practice have a precise function, or has he the common status of the ordinary member? These questions have their amusing side of course, particularly when groups based on Leninist organisational principles persist in having quotas of intellectuals and students, flying in the face of Lenin's clear doctrine - that the party is composed solely of dedicated professional revolutionaries, who moreover are primarily of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois origin!

What the CPB(ML) are getting at is the supposed unreliability, promiscuousness, instability and free floating individualist ideology of the petty and big bourgeoisie. Somehow they seem to be suggesting that the only means of rescue for free floaters - rescue from the ultimate and inescapable truth of their class, is membership of the party. The weakness of this argument - which couched in a more complex language might appear to have some content and historical reference, is that it is not in any sense specific to students or intellectuals. It is a logical extension of a typical membership fetish by a sectarian group which is only one amongst many in a fluid period; when, beside there being no dominant clearly revolutionary party, the political stage is still occupied by a 'movement' politics (pestered by sectarians of course). In such a period the CPB(ML) charge could be directed at anyone not in their party - even presumably the more politically conscious workers. In short, they have drawn on a cluster of associations held about

the behaviour of intellectuals, and applied them to students en masse, not in the interests of marxist analysis, but in a quasi religious attempt to find supporting lines of argument for their claim to be the only true revolutionary party!

The generalised hostility we found in the texts to intellectuals, culture and intellectual practices stems in large part from the history of the groups who propound this hostility. The history of most of the groups, and in particular of the CP (the point is applicable internationally to a greater or lesser extent) has been troubled by various desertions by their intellectual cadres, most prominently in the thirties, fifties, but also to some extent after the French events. The fact that these desertions and their political causes in various ways account for the existence of the sectarian groups (and other groupings as well, to be fair) and that the leaderships of the better known sectarian groupings were themselves renegades in the first place, as well as being at least objectively intellectuals themselves, no doubt explains this hostility. This we regard as largely ideological and certainly dangerous if its political conclusions are imposed on either the student bloc, or intellectuals in general.

In the more precise context of the student question, the hostility has been exacerbated by the emergence and relative efficacy in mass politics of groups of intellectually committed cadres who have remained politically independent; they have found support for their critical marxism in various political events and their problem oriented analysis has created an interest in theory amongst sections of the student mass.

It is difficult to find a satisfactory term for this formation of independent intellectuals in student politics: it is no doubt an aspect of the grain of truth in NLR's covert prediction about marxism getting on its feet in Britain in the student sector. In the RSSF context, the political majority sustained by non-sectarian marxists was a clear expression of the presence and level of this formation. The sects' response was and is understandably hostile, particularly when they see relative amateurs, apparent free floaters, with the purchase they possess with a more advanced marxism over students, adamantly pitted against rival official marxisms and lines which the groups have carefully nurtured. The political threat posed by the new formation's marxism to the sects previous obligeopoly of marxism is a situation which has reinforced anti-intellectual (theoretical) impulses, which are also deeply founded in their primarily sovietist politics.

The sectarian spirit is the other major determinant of anti-intellectualism and cultural philistinism, and especially of any notion that marxism might itself be in a problematic condition, or that it can progress and generate its own theoretical life. All this follows from the fundamental theoretical statute of sectarianism, namely, that all basic theoretical and analytical work has already been done and is encapsulated in the thoughts of this or that leader or school, or that the problems which are recognised in socialist theory are already contained within the loci classicis of socialist history. One can see how from this viewpoint, any notion that the student upsurge could mean anything radical for socialism, its theory or its history, would border on heresy: that is if it ever

lasted for more than a short propaganda campaign or an opportunistic burst of activism. (v) (-the short run flexibility of sectarian political practice is invariably inversely related to the extremity of their sectarian attachment i.e. opportunism - to use a rather hackneyed language, is a necessity of headline marxism.)

The upshot of accepting the distinction between the mass of students and individual small groups of intellectuals (perhaps more usefully termed 'traditional' intellectuals (vi)) is that a clear reading of the classic texts on intellectual practices can be undertaken. (theory, practice, analysis- Lenin's What Is To Be Done, the axiomatic doctrine, 'no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory', Gramsci's work on education, culture, and intellectually based forms of power- hegemony etc., both as practical questions of revolutionary (subjective) organisation as well as polemical onslaughts on economism, reductionism, philistinism, ecvlerism and vulgarism.)

The question which remains, concerning the political nature of intellectual practices associated with student status, can then be posed as a scientific question of socio-political analysis. (rather than as a question concerning revolutionary subjectivity.)

At this point it would be easy to slip back into the methodological confusions which underlie the attitudes taken in most of the texts on these questions. The best term we could find to describe the common approach underlying these confusions was, empiricist status sociology, a sociology that tries to answer impossible questions with 'obvious' answers. The basic form of question is something like, 'What is the political nature of students, or students as intellectuals?' To which the answer could be any one of a range of internally empty categories, such as, 'radical', 'reactionary', 'petit bourgeois', 'a vanguard force', 'unstable intellectuals', etc. The result of this approach is of course that basic marxist methodology is excluded, despite predictable shows of marxist terminology, while answers are produced which predetermine any of the conclusions which might be drawn from class analysis, the application of questions of relationships to means of production, contradictions in these relationships- in fact, all the theoretical arsenal available to even a modest orthodox marxism.

So, instead of asking in this context, 'what is the role and importance of intellectual practices, resources and skills possessed by the mass of students', we suggest that analysis should concentrate on investigating the relationships of mental, theoretical, cultural and ideological forces

- (v) For all its apparent novelty and strategic courage how long will the youth vanguard line last?
- (vi) Gramsci's traditional/organic distinction concerning intellectuals could no doubt be developed, perhaps along the lines broached in Nairn's text. However, even in a situation where there are careful texts to be followed (translations of The Modern Prince for example) there is still likely to be a danger of the categories put forward being regarded as terms in an empiricist sociology.

to structures in capitalist society. In other words, approaches similar to the ones implied by the intelligent/idiot formulation, or some possible judgement about the forces of production and distribution of ideology in advanced capitalism should be adopted.

It should now be apparent that this is the approach, the methodology, which we have tried to employ in the other sections of this text.

Strategy - prerequisite of a political practice.

Superficially the history of RSSF (as an expression of the student movement) and the history of the movement itself, were dominated by strategic discussion, by splits on lines, policies, ideas of the correct things to be done. Until we undertook the analysis in the components section we shared the assumption that this history was about strategy. Now we are convinced that there was an absence of strategy, not a pleni-presence. In other words what we used to call strategy is a different political animal to strategy as the highest moment of political practice.

Below we set out to illustrate the misconceived conception of political strategy within RSSF and within the movement, and to explain this misconception, which we believe was not simply a product of the primitiveness of the student movement. This leads us to attempt some elementary clarificatory points for a theory of strategy.

The misconception, we argue, was based firstly on unsatisfactory theories of the political process, secondly on a failure of the professional sectarians to make an adequate conjunctural analysis, balanced by a purely abstract analysis from the Red Basists, and thirdly, by the real political objectives of the sectarians. (i)

'Strategies' within RSSF

A brief account of the ideas, lines and policies which were produced within RSSF as 'strategy' will serve not only as a reminder of the formal primitiveness of the organisation's politics, but, at the same time, as a reminder of the creativity of the period with respect to action techniques and ideas.

The ideas occupy a jumble of levels, refer to diverse agencies and situations; the failure throughout RSSF of any group to see the need to analyse this jumble is a sad comment.

National campaign mobilisers (the IMG stand out here) were opposed on two fronts, firstly by libertarian base builders, who saw all political problems being solved by the formation of small, flexible groups operating in each community, and on quite a different level by the Red

- (i) Perhaps we should make it clear that our emphasis on the influential position occupied by sectarian thought and practice is not merely the result of a particular political experience and judgement. Throughout most of the life of RSSF the independent majority won its supremacy by maintaining alternating alliances with one or another sectarian grouping. These tactical alliances whilst they exploited deep intra-sectarian rivalries quite obviously constrained the independents own rather novice theorists. Inevitably such alliances tended to give an impression that the sectarians were more professionally competent and more fundamental politicians than the illdefined independents.

Basists, who opposed national campaigning as a mechanical attempt to provide demo-fodder for a pre-existing politics (Vietnam etc.) which had taken little account of the specific potential or relationship to politics of students. Interlock strategy enjoyed considerable currency, though in one form - an attack on the inherent isolationism of student power politics - it was little more than an exhortation to see the university as a capitalist/imperialist institution involved in racialist, anti-worker, and authoritarian relations. In its other form interlock strategy was a matter of parallel mobilisations between students and other communal groupings.

For the Trotskyists strategy involved calculating the correct level of demands for meeting mass support - a version of the interminable manoeuvrings which stem from the transitional demands tradition of Trotskyism. Combatting bourgeois ideology, or ideological struggle, was a strategy associated with the independents and Red Basists: it was an attempt to tailor a specific politics to students, in opposition both to the philistinism of the classic sectarians and to campaign politics on established issues. Many of the issue campaigns were in fact simply extremist versions of established liberal protest politics, pursuing anti-racialism by confrontation rather than by symbolic moral protest.

The Marxist-Leninists (Maoists) were intensely committed to an utterly abstract politics which was their substitute for strategy: it consisted of casting all political phenomena under the architectonic of imperialism. Another strong strand of strategy, which was constituted by its backers as a positive and major strategic imperative, was the student-worker alliance. This was primarily Trotskyist in origin, and was in effect a simple matter of routinely expressing solidarity between workers and students. There was no reference to the organisational and structural prerequisites of an 'alliance'.

A major split between moderates (mainly Trotskyists) and extremists (independents, Marxist-Leninists, Red Basists, Libertarians) on the issue of how far activists should go, took the form of a strategic discussion; a different version of the problem of maximum impact or political efficacy emerged much later with discussions around the concept of the weak link, or, in more metaphysical terms, around the problem of the arrow and the target.

Finally, the grouping with which we were associated took up cadre formation/Leninism as a strategy of development, in opposition to the Libertarian caucus which was eventually the last remaining sect type grouping in RSSF.

At a somewhat different level the emphatic revolutionism of RSSF seemed to produce a strategic direction in its widespread opposition to participation in power structures, tactical alliances, taking irresponsible positions in established institutions etc. All this was opposed by a confrontationist ethic, under the high imperative of mobilisation; confrontation was pursued partly as a method of learning (how to struggle) and also, quite dangerously in many cases, as a strategy quite independently of calculations of loss or gain. Victory, in this context, was a matter unrelated to the relationship between friend and enemy, it was a matter of the relationship between activist leadership and student masses. This practice frequently resulted in bad defeats and widespread demoralisations, which were excused and even welcomed under the aegis of yet another strategic ethic - that of political exposure. (see below) The contradictions between practice and its frequent

limitations was to some extent tolerated because of the political commitment (at least at a formal level) to mass assembly political decision making- this in many cases absolved the leadership from criticism, and reinforced the Trotskyist habit of calculating transitional and intermediate levels of demand. (ii)

To summarise, what was regarded as strategy in RSSF was either a matter of tactics or technique, or a matter of emphasis upon one of the five basic points which appeared in the organisation's manifesto - educational revolution, worker solidarity, anti-racialism, anti-imperialism, and mass democracy against parliamentarianism. Significantly, the somewhat careful definition of the function of the manifesto (which was the central subject of the crucial debates) was that it was a manifesto for a political programme. There was no mention of strategy, which was both too big an issue and a non issue - being within an organisation it was difficult to retrospectively discuss a strategy for which an organisation might have been created.

It follows from our previous analysis of various texts that strategic discussion was necessarily absent, since there were no thorough or decisive positions on what was called the student question from which strategy could develop. For the movement, as a primitive even if significant development, this lack of position was no crime: for the professional politicians, for the groups, it was criminal political folly - that is, of course, if it is agreed that their 'positions' are hardly the principled and theoretically sound products they are claimed to be.

Notions of political process

The common notion of political process which we have set out in the section on consciousness is the primary determinant of the sectarians poverty of strategy. (iii) The notion of political process acts on one level as a substitute for strategy, this especially for IMG, IS and the CPB(ML). (iv)

- (ii) Cases were not unknown where the same group through two of its members put forward two lines, one extreme the other moderate, hoping that the insurance policy would mean that they could hegemonise which ever degree of revolutionism emerged from the mass assemblies.
- (iii) The refusal to see the student movement as a coupure in postwar politics, the refusal to attempt meaningful conjunctural analysis is a major weakness of these groups, but we regard their concepts of process as determinant in the first instance because the notions of process they hold in turn deny conjunctural analysis of any utility, i.e. it is impossible to analyse the student coupure with such a limited apparatus of theory as the sects possess.
- (iv) The CPB(ML) use a different vocabulary for talking about the same model of political process- see section on Consciousness.

The notion of process referred to is of course that of rising consciousness: the prime catalyst of this process being exposure politics. This model relegates questions of victory and defeat to a tangential status, denies any autonomy to the masses, and rejects concern for the possible establishment of partial positions of power (intermediate institutions, soviets, etc.). It implies an overall defensive politics, exposure attack being limited to situations where the enemies dependence on ideological cover is very heavy, such exposures are not necessarily dominant in the practice of revelation politics. The basic practice revolves around the permanent crisis of capitalism, which awaits the missing link of raised consciousness for its death knell etc., etc. The key question of strategic practice - What is the most effective ground for battle? - is unanswered by this notion of process, except in the utterly abstract and unfortunately familiar manner conveyed in the unashamed tautology that, 'raising consciousness is the strategic necessity'.

Red Basism doesn't solve any problems, but it at least leaves open the door for strategic discussion by its emphasis on struggle and institutionalisation, and its opposition to the abstractions of the Trotskyists' tradition. Sadly, in RSSF itself, there was no discussion of any order about the antecedents of Red Basism, and particularly the concept of dual power, which has a considerable history in political theory. This sort of avenue of development might perhaps have been explored had Red Basism been more than a tactical concept, an expression of a negative critique of Trotskyist political theory.

The absence of an adequate conjunctural analysis.

There was a grand strategic vision in RSSF if one cares to call ouvrierism by such a title. But this strategic vision was not rooted in a precise analysis of the current moment (i.e. the political presence of students) of the conjuncture: it was rooted in an epochal abstract analysis of the system of capitalism- thus technological capitalism, imperialist capitalism and others. The contribution of sectarian thought -ouvrierism- has been described as an attempt to play chess with draught pieces: it just cannot be done. On the other hand, the political position taken by the Red Basists and independents on the rise of the student movement (the SDS's in Germany and the US, and France 1968) assumed a conjunctural analysis, this in turn called for the assertion of a concept of relative autonomy. This was necessary both to protect the non-ouvrierists from seeming to have as total a solution to politics as the ouvrierists (i.e. students as opposed to workers), as well as to assert that history is more complicated than ouvrierists make out. The concept of relative autonomy allows a notion of sectors having their own life and superstructures being only indirect reflections of infrastructures etc. It was also necessary in order to argue a strategy of explicitly revolutionary mass politics in a sector which was clearly out of step with the working class.

What was wrong with ouvrierism was that it was not really a strategy and that it denied that studentism and May 1968 were a definite break. We reject both their political position on the period and their mode of analysis.

Strategic formulation then, requires a conjunctural analysis, which presupposes political positions on the major questions. (In some periods the

actual formulation of the relevant political questions is less easy than it was in the 1966-68 period). The absence of strategy was not a mere matter of technical oversight or omission: it was politically determined and theoretically determined - a product of sectarianism.

The inadequacy of ouvrierism as a strategy was revealed by the narrow practice with which it was associated, namely recruitment. This stemmed from the predictable attitude of professional sectarians, who, when they failed to hegemonise an independent movement resorted to exploitation.

In concrete terms IS, IMG, CPB(ML), and other groups, such as the RSL and the Libertarians, descended to the policy of recruitment: this required the airing of traditional sectarian issues, in many cases quite irrelevant to the questions of the student movement, and permitted an eclectic and opportunistic range of positions - provided of course that they did not conflict with sectarian shibboleths.

The CP and Libertarians fell outside the ouvrierism/ relative autonomy opposition, the latter having no concern for grand strategy, surviving on a series of tactical pushes on the grounds that almost any sign of opposition to the dominant order was anti capitalist and therefore revolutionary - provided it was not associated with the traditional labour movement. The CP position was consistent throughout the RSA; RSSF, NUS experience. It was to develop a mass student trade unionism, leavened with an issue moralism, reserving all the problems of higher politics for the party cadres. (This is of course technically admirable in general terms, it is to be opposed because of its political content not its form.) The CP did not consider the SDS's in Germany and in the USA, or the May events as a qualitatively new situation, seeing the movement as expressions of their basic position that the people and progressive forces are merged and united against a common monopoly capitalist enemy.

The Red Basists, NLR, and particularly the more advanced independents used the relative autonomy concept to argue an intense sectoral development for students. They agreed in broad terms with the NLR thesis on the absence of Marxism and revolutionary culture in Britain as well as with the hazy notion that it was strategically important to break bourgeois ideological hegemony.

Finally, it should be stated that IS, IMG and the CPB(ML) could not derive a strategy towards students from their ouvrierism since this was, and is not, a grand strategy towards the working class: it is a purely reflexive position adopted as a necessity by political outsiders. No wonder the weaknesses of their political thought were repeated in the student movement where again they were relative outsiders, choosing, even when they were inside (IS at LSE) to avoid full political responsibility in the name of their other, higher, commitment to the working class.

Organisational strategy- a sectarian displacement.

The third reason for the absence of what we have loosely called grand strategy was the real political motive of the sectarian groups involved. This was expressed in organisational proposals which, like many other ideas, appeared to be connected with strategy: its dominance in RSSF discussion severely affected the independents. The reciprocal error of the Red Basists and independents was to become involved in this sleight of hand and persistently defend the flexibility of a federative 'movement' rather than advocate tighter forms of organisation which alone might have made possible some institutional maturity. (The possibility of undertaking

strategic analysis as a long term commitment etc.) Paradoxically, it was the unattached Leninists (plus Libertarians) who insisted on keeping RSSF an open 'movement' organisation, while the hard line sectarians (with the exception of the Maoists) also refused to foster an organisational growth which might threaten their own organisations.(v)

At the same time organisational strategy was the chief means through which the groups tried to express their pre-existing fundamentalist differences. The Maoists, for example, insisted that RSSF could be a fully fledged, democratic centralist party, their real motive being to expose the anarchists and Trotskyists. The Libertarians, Situationists etc., opposed the formation of even a minimal administrative machine on the grounds that it would grow into a vast, bureaucratic, oppressive party, shades of Stalin etc.

Some of the above detail is rather tedious and unimportant but from it there are important lessons to be learnt.

Firstly, there is a deep-rooted propensity for para strategy type thought among sectarian politicians. This has so far had the power of persuading many activists that the sects do have a sense of political direction. In the case of IS, for example, the line pursued of RSSF as a federation of socialist societies, and of building up socialist societies themselves, appeared to be a strategy for the student movement. On the other side, the Red Basists, and particularly those of us associated with NLR's ideological struggle conceptions, never tested the limits of these formulations as strategy. This because we were unable to discuss organisational questions whilst we laboured under the (necessary) obsession of defending our autonomy from the sectarians. Although we knew formally at least that our politics required a professional cadre based organisational form it was quite impossible to raise this as a problem for a movement unscrupulously given vocal movementism support by sectarians who were themselves organised into disciplined cadre based groupings. We attempted to confront the necessity of cadre organisation much too late for the problem to have relevance to RSSF as an organisation: it remains to say that the hold exercised by the sectarians over our ability to sort out our politics and practice can only be broken through work on strategy, and therefore through theory.

The second important lesson concerns the necessity for a strict critique of levels of political practice and formation. Concretely, the absence of a critical presence within RSSF allowed the complex, ambivalent and ultimately ideological concept of a 'movement' to prosper as a mutually convenient, collective myth, which had the function of blocking any development of the political organisation of RSSF.

- (v) At one point IS voted for a lower subscription rate -the subscription at the time was 25p a year- and the hiving off of the newsheet service which was the lifeline of the organisation!

The argument that it is incorrect to have expected a critique of 'movementism' from a movement organisation cannot stand in relation to the sectarians, the independents or the Red Basists. For the sectarians, RSSF was originally their own united front for hegemonising the student movement: it was a conscious political initiative on their part, and certainly not an innocent sponsorship of movementism. For the Red Basists, and particularly comrades familiar with NLR thought (this included many of the independents), it was inexcusable that they should have subscribed uncritically to a movement politics when considerable currency had been achieved for NLR's critique of E. P. Thompson's 'movement' interpretation of British working class history.

The reason for the suppression of a critique of movementism is not difficult to grasp: it was a product of a complex series of tactical voting alliances between groupings, as well as a manoeuvre for suppressing the real political motives of those involved - this especially so in the case of the established groups - namely their recruitment/exploitation interest in the organisation. It was however a convenient suppression for another reason, namely, since RSSF was by mutual agreement an explicitly revolutionary organisation - a leap into maximalism for all participant groupings and therefore something of a risk - it was convenient to be able to present the decline of the organisation as a naive failure. No group which regarded itself as a political leadership was forced to take leadership responsibility for failure. Had the groups or NLR taken explicit and public responsibility for their fostered revolutionism its limitations would have rebounded on them much more harshly than RSSF's ultimate demise in fact did.

It seems to us now (since the last official phase of RSSF, when a Leninist aspiring cadre based project was launched by open discussion and debate) that it is impossible to found revolutionary political practice on an organisational level (above spontaneous and spectacular skirmishing) without confronting and arguing out a thorough organisational politics. The necessary developmental schemes for a long run practice can start from a base in a critique of movementism.

After the movement periods of the SDSs', France, RSSF, etc., it appears that the break into hard cadre formation which has been adopted is not simply a retreat into a sectarian mode of existence, it does constitute, belatedly, a critique of the 'movement' albatross.

The nature of strategy.

It remains to suggest more concretely what we consider to be the nature of 'grand' strategy, which we have opposed to the para strategies which were its substitute in RSSF. In reality these para strategies are lines, ideas, tactics and techniques, - not strategies.

What was and still is needed, is a grand strategy not for students, but towards students. At this grand level, political strategy involves analysis (class forces etc.) plans for the accumulation of requisite powers (alliances, insertions, acquisitions etc.) all subordinated to the ultimate (in the sense of highest not distant) objective of the seizure of power. The classics are models of the basic requisites: Lenin's strategy was to decide on the nature of the vanguard force (urban industrial workers against peasant narodnism) and implement their political existence; Mao, once again against the mainstream of current thought of his party, decided on prolonged guerilla warfare based on the peasantry, not the industrial working class - he decided on an alliance with the industrial workers of the

cities and with the national bourgeoisie in the period of national liberation struggle, but his strategic political strength lay with the peasantry.

Political strategy then is a plan of the general forces or balance among the classes of a nation (and between nations), within a clear notion of the historical limits and ranges of their development, this relying on a precise attitude towards the various sectors within the class structure.

The absence of this level of political analysis cannot be compensated for by a hundred tactical victories: they are useless without an overall perspective which is converted into grand strategy by being cast into the form of practical decisions (political practice).

It should not need stating that a strategy for students should be derived from a strategy towards students, which is the way history has constituted the student question.

The theoretical foundations of grand political strategy and analysis (not the theory of strategy, but the theoretical basis of its components) have been sketched at a preliminary - and frequently purely critique - level in our components sections. (vi)

The three reasons for the absence of grand strategy in RSSF suggest some theoretical preliminaries for proper political strategic analysis. They are:

1. The formulation of the correct political questions. This depends on the concept of political conjuncture, which in turn is predicated on a notion of the political process based on a production/practice epistemology (see sections on Consciousness and Contradiction). For the sake of clarity, it should also be said that the student question has contributed a blow against reductionist monism, which can coexist with conjunctural analysis: it follows from this that the concept of the relative autonomy of sectors and levels, simple though it is in itself, is necessary.

2. The ability to undertake the formulation of the correct political questions.

Our conclusion is that organisations not based on cadre statutes and a central line, are unable to effect real strategic analysis, even if their political positions are adequate. United fronts and movements, as we know them from recent history, are pre-strategic formations.

- (vi) Some of the content of the components sections is cast in the form of political problems, rather than straight theory. For example, the section on students and intellectuals is really about the agency of political theory (intellectual forces) but its form was determined by the ideological distortions of the various presentations of the student question.

Conclusions

Our conclusions are quite brief and tentative. Part of the reason for this is that our objective has changed in the course of our work. We started out hoping to generate a position, or at least some perspectives on what has come to be called the student question. What we have produced is a critique of the political ideologies which have been applied to the student question. The components section makes this clear in its attempts to dissect the conceptual basis of the various lines. We hope this section contributes towards an understanding of how little and how much a theory of class, or a model of capitalism, or a notion of the political process for example can contribute to the process of producing positions. It should also be clear that we have located areas where the marxisms employed create genuine theoretical problems.

It follows that our view, derived from our practical experience in the movement, and particularly in RSSF, that the sects killed the student movement has now a clearer definition. They killed it both for their own narrow organisational reasons, and also largely because they could not treat the student question adequately with the theoretical apparatus they possess, and to our knowledge still do possess, this despite their technical expertise in politics.

We have further come to the conclusion that our past experience of the sects as common enemies of the student movement is reinforced by the political fact that their thought is composed of the same elements. Despite different 'lines' on the surface, the Trotskyists and Marxist-Leninists have the same reductionist conceptions of practical marxist theory, and the same notion of the political process.

At the same time it is now clear that the 'others', the Red Basists, the libertarians and the independents, were incapable of mounting a coherent attack on the sectarians, incapable of forming a lasting perspective on the student question. This was primarily because the loose movement form of organisation to which they were committed could not cope with the problem of producing a stable, theoretically clear politics. In other words, although our political culture contained a commitment to theory, our active politics was not dominated by the doctrine that theory must be correct, and in command.

It is now blindingly clear that cadre organisation is a prerequisite of a politics dominated by theory.

The upshot of these reflections is that we will continue our work, aware that a loose and sporadic student movement will persist (a straight historical assertion). Further we will continue our work on the political assumption that the marxism of the sectarians- the only seriously organised forces capable of an effective politics at the moment- must be superceeded. It follows that this cannot be done by resurrecting any organisational form similar to that of the RSSF.

What was originally in 1967/68 a question of a political insertion now becomes a question of political existence. Without wishing to overrate what we have achieved, we would suggest that the current period requires of the old independent constituency that it exists in small groups of highly organised cadres. The current trend in student circles towards re-establishing a socialist society tradition is a backward looking strategy of survival, repeating albeit with smaller numbers, a model of organisation which had been defeated politically.

At the same time we are deeply opposed to isolationism. The point is quite simply that although being in and of the struggle is a prerequisite of political effectiveness, by itself it is a ritualistic politics.

Finally, we wish to restate our view that political theory and its problems can only be politically relevant if they arise from a study of concrete politics- the texts we have examined were primarily manifestoes for the developing student movement. Anyone who states that politics cannot advance until questions of theory are resolved must show concretely the reality from which the problem arises, and must reapply any theoretical solutions to the concrete political questions from which they arose. Otherwise a commitment to theory is only an element in a political practice, not a political practice itself.

There are two thematic positions expressed in the texts we have examined. The sects adopt variations on the theme that students are of secondary, or minor importance to the fundamental revolutionary agent, the working class. Even the IMG's vanguardism is a disguised fundamentalism - students are important because as youth they do not suffer from the political 'blinkers' which the working class possesses, but only in this sense are they vanguard, i.e. until the workers assume their true consciousness. We reject these views on the basis that their theoretical grounds are incorrect or inadequate, that the resultant politics - ouvrierism in one guise or another - excludes the real question which the student movement raised - new class, strategic vanguard, political advance etc. The problematic as viewed by the sects is purely polemical - it is a defense of the working class against supposed studentists etc. If the sects had faced up to their real problematic, the nature of the working class, their work on students would have been more valuable scientifically. In short, we reject their views on the grounds that they are based on bad marxism and the ideology of ouvrierism.

The other thematic position is expressed in its most extreme, and unfortunately abstract, form by Nairn. This is the new proletariat thesis. It is highly undeveloped, based on a higher marxism than the orthodoxies of the sects, but deeply unpractical. Its model of capitalism, its class sociologies, its historical thesis (post scarcity) and components of these (socialisation of the forces of production and mental labour) require verification and elucidation from Marx's work (and interpretations of this work).

The dissection and extraction of these basic positions/themes has carried with it the danger of reductionism, even if sometimes the questions appear to be of quite a high theoretical order, e.g. the nature and

boundaries of productive labour, and surplus value extraction. At some points we slip into the danger of implying that a 'correct' position on this question, for example, will solve bigger issues.

This was not intended. If anything we have been aware of the extent to which concrete history has been omitted from most texts, and our own examination of them. The notion of conjuncture, of overdetermination of an historical conjuncture for example are absent, though a lot of headway could be made with them as (nonfundamentalist) interpretations of the student question. But this would be a fruitless approach without a bigger theory of the current capitalist conjuncture. Even where there have been hints of historical/political theses in the texts, we suspect they are derived mechanically, post facto. For instance, many texts suggest that bourgeois ideology is the arena of strategic contradiction in current capitalism. We suspect this is asserted simply because universities have been in turmoil. It does not arise, in most cases, from a theory of capitalist society which argues strategic priority for this area as opposed to other areas, such as, the workers wage struggle.

The other important perspective arises from asking what exactly is the scientific objective of position taking? Can it be, as it is in the sectarians' case, a position on 'students', or should the objective be reformulated, as perhaps, a position on the importance of the student movement for the struggle for socialism. Such a formulation puts a positive emphasis on the overall context for the analysis. Obviously this is a simplification, but it is interesting to note that the only text which puts the student question -the dominant bourgeois formulation- into **the perspective** of socialist history is Nairn's. The other texts by the sects in particular, are obviously relating to socialist history, but we presume their uncertainty about the nature of socialism so far -except for a few blanket accusations about Stalinism and Labourism- means they cannot actually state their perspective in substance. One has to guess at the position which they are attacking, at some studentist deviation which they attack in the name of the workers' supposed revolutionism.

In this situation one can see how Marcuse came to be important, not because anyone believed him, or because his views articulated a deep if hazy conviction amongst revolutionary socialists, not because he was widely read at all, in France, Italy, Britain, or even Germany and the US, but because a Marcusean position is a political necessity to the sects.

These points are over simplified and generalised. Nevertheless, we think it is necessary for some group to stoop to the level of stating views about the nature of sectarian doctrine which are quite widely held. Up until now, the independents have tended to be above the battle, assuming that their automatic cultural superiority will dissociate them from the sectarians. We now **take** the view that if one wants to combat sectarian politics, it has to be done in terms that will be understood within an extensive, independent, revolutionary socialist culture.

Historical-Chronological note

this is just a brief outline of the principle events of the RSSF period intended as background information for those not involved at the time.

The Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation was formed on the specific initiative of IS and comrades who had been involved in the LSE and Leicester occupations of 1967 and 68. It was a response to growing student unrest in this country and to events on the continent. The Radical Students' Alliance campaign within NUS was a direct antecedent, the big anti-Vietnam demonstrations a background.

Leicester

After the Leicester occupation a conference was called to discuss the setting up of a national student organisation. Conversations between LSE and Leicester comrades with LSE/IS and comrades from Essex indicated support for a co-ordinating organisation which would develop contacts within the previously spontaneous student movement.

LSE Conference, June 1968

This was called as preparatory conference very shortly after the French May events. Four points of a programme were adopted and it was decided by a large and influential meeting that a federal organisation for revolutionary socialist students should be set up. A preparatory committee was elected on which the sectarians and independents were equally represented, the sectarians initiative having been somewhat superceded. This committee was to call an inaugural conference in the following Autumn term.

Founding Conference 8th. and 9th. November 1968

Considerable preparatory work was done for this conference and large scale support obtained. However the meeting turned out to be rhetorical in political content, though a constitution and manifesto were voted after complex fights and alliances. The programme was based on loose federal principles, built around the idea of a student movement operating through a coordinated practice. (The model in various degrees existed in the US and on the continent). The independents in alliance with IS and IMG held the ring against alliances between Macists and other Trotskyists (RSL). Ouvrierist politics were rejected and variations on Red Basism accepted. Anti-parliamentarism and moves anti the established labour movement resulted in the CP withdrawing, except in some individual cases.

First National Committee Meeting, 7th. December 1968

The first National Committee meeting met and elected officers and set up a minimal administrative machine, thereafter most RSSF activity depended on servicing from the centre requested by bases, or on the activities of base groups whose prime commitment (if it could be called that) was to RSSF.

National Committee meetings were open to all who cared to attend but were supposed to provide an information exchange and organisational session by direct contact of representatives from bases and the centre.

The organisation inherited from the June conference and the work of the summer, 1100 members, a jumble of information and some finances. RSSF as an organised presence rather than a collective idea was ascendent in the January to March period 1969. Its initiatives extended the LSE

struggle (the Gates issue) to a national level, and for a period regular National Committee meetings in various parts of the country established a coordination administration which appeared to meet real needs, and certainly achieved levels of access unavailable to the sectarian groupings.

National Conference, March 1969, Manchester

The next National Conference was the point at which independent opposition to sectarian domination emerged in organised form, with a clear and recognisable RSSF tendency opposed to the sects. This was the point when the idea of RSSF either took serious and substantial form as a permanent organisation, or it remained a short run stalking ground for the sects. The conference was unsatisfactory though initiatives on Ireland, Ferds, and other national issues showed the purchase of independent and intelligent politics.

The summer term of 1969 was predictably quiet.

Weekend National Committee Meetings

In September, weekend NC's were instituted to provide the means for developing an RSSF corps of cadres, and for a time the idea seemed to bite, meetings were well attended and there was some profitable discussion. The earlier part of 1969 had been an active period for students with considerable national presence via the press and large scale bourgeois hysteria and counter-attack. However, by the autumn a familiar pattern had established itself and stalemate developed, between students and bourgeoisie, and between independents and sectarians.

The inability of RSSF to remain politically suspended as a mixture of a genuine movement castrated by the sects, and a covert vehicle for a more revolutionary politics was brought into the open at some of these meetings, IS, having been only half-heartedly present for sometime withdrew over RSSF refusal to support national campaign type politics on the Irish question.

Other problems were brought into the open at the next conference.

Imperial College Conference, December 1969

By now most of the sects had withdrawn active participation or had been driven out. A Summer Seminar Conference held at Leicester in 1969 was the last time they were really present in any strength. At Imperial only RSSF and Libertarian comrades remained, with the sects, in some cases, present as observers. A move to form a tighter organisation -by the RSSF tendency, who wanted a non-federal, cadre based organisation, was discussed. It was agreed that there should be a period for comrades to discuss their position on the organisation and a conference was called for April.

At the April conference in Liverpool it was clear that unless comrades present were prepared to continue RSSF in its old form no one else was concerned to continue their servicing function. It was decided to wind up an organisation lacking developmental perspective and look critically at the experience it had produced. Since then no coherent presence at a national level has existed for student politics, though RSSF type organisation has again been attempted. Student action itself has undoubtedly both fallen off and matured by remains issue orientated and confused.

Selected Bibliography

The titles mentioned below are a few of the references which we found useful in a clarification of the problems which arose from the texts.

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