

## DEATH & BIRTH .

This is part of an attempt to analyse the problems within BF and show that these are inseparably connected to the problems of the left as a whole and a reflection of a new political/economic situation caused by the restructuring of capitalism. None of the elements can be taken in isolation - BF is part of the left and the left only exists in a useful form inasmuch as it responds to and opposes capital & patriarchy .

After the analysis (what CLR James calls) the 'leap'.

BF suffers from a lack of coherent theory and practice and therefore self confidence. These three factors strengthen each other and form a vicious circle. Despite the attempts of various individuals & groups to rework the theory to make sense of the changing society, there have been no real advances because the task has fallen on a few instead of all of us. The task is vast & we have been losing a defensive struggle and spiralling into deeper crisis .

Practice - few BF groups have branch practice, comrades who are achieving things are doing so as individuals in particular spheres, not as BF. The few branches which are thriving are those with a firm local commitment quite apart from BF as a national organisation & those which place emphasis on national organisation are in crisis (see April NC minutes).

Thus, there is an inevitable and justified lack of confidence in eg recruitment - what are we inviting people into and why?

Comrades recognise all of this, become despondent and leave for the LP, womens' mvt., individual work or whatever - the temporary comfort of another ideology, however inadequate, seems better than the morass you know .

The left : The LP's socialist credentials are dead - its 'solutions' are outdated in terms of socialist transformation (although not in terms of a capitalist recovery). We are presented with reflation - same again, opening us up for the next crisis - , nationalisation - read the 4 trades councils' report to see what that means for the workers involved. The LP can not and will never pose the question of Power & who has it. It is incapable of challenging sexism & racism because it thrives on them. The LP's massive decline in membership reflects all of this .

Trotskyists : Just as the LP's analysis is rigid & belongs to the turn of the century era of parliamentary socialism, so Trotskyism belong to the 1930s; both dogmas have become a fetter on the development of socialism & are, in the end, reactionary. The 'permanent revolution' is wrong, the Transitional Programme is an embarrassment, the theory that replacement of labour movement leaders creates a revolutionary situation allows mass politics to be forgotten & justifies entryism & collapses into Stalinism - all corpses are pretty much the same. Thus Trotskyism is on the decline - the IMG, once hard liners, reveal their lack of understanding of society in their frequent 'Turns' (to students, to sexual politics, to industry, to CND, to the LP....) none of which show any real commitment or understanding, all of which are attempts to stay alive .

Leninist groups, as a whole, are tougher in organisation & therefore better able to survive by turning inwards; stubborn gasps for breath - ultimately fossilization .

In this context BF is in a comparable position; worse from the point of view of irrelevant survival, better from the revolutionary point of view of seizing the initiative & adapting to fight a restructured form of capitalism on new ground (grasping the dialectic of struggle).

The changing society: I do not propose to analyse the changes going on now because I do not pretend to understand many of the implications beyond that they are vast & all engulfing. (Gov. cdes are beginning to try to answer some of the questions that are posed by the way in which

we think about 'unemployment').

However, what is true is that the labour movement, the left & the working class as a whole are losing those battles which are being fought. By & large these are sectional struggles, by no means socialist in their aims & unable to comprehend, let alone (yet) fight to transform the non-employment, new technology, much greater state powers, more explicit & virulent racism of the new capitalism that is arising. The only opposition is kids smashing up YOPs, sectional strikes, exposes in the New Statesman and limited rioting in some areas. As far as the campaigns are concerned we see eg Fares Fight - a massive expenditure of energy producing a few recruits & no success. T.O.M., despite the hunger-strike, remains a group of 400 (at most) leftists & Irish people all of whom have the experience to understand the assumptions behind phrases like 'imperialism' or 'self determination'. Any advances made by T.O.M. have been the result of hard local work done by local groups not by the national organisation.

### The 'Leap'

The situation is new, radically different from the appearance of the events of 1968 - 1974, our assumptions about the working class essential, (conscious or not) commitment to socialism is undermined by the disarray around us. Our theory (such as it is), the campaigns we are in, our form of national organisation & our practice (such as it is) have all been overtaken by their opposites, capital & patriarchy, just as they outgrew, swallowed and use the opposition presented by the LP & by Trotskyism.

What we must do is recognise the situation for what it is & re-affirm our revolutionary commitment by making the 'Leap'. We must disband & arise anew rather than be killed off by our growing irrelevance. Why was BF different from & better than other left groups in the early days? Because it recognised that they were not engaged in forms of struggle which were important to the working class, because BF was not tied to the aged formulas of aged gurus. Our ability to comprehend the need for basic change is greater than that of the rest of the left because we are not as tied down by inessential bits of dogma - we can discriminate -e (we are more dialectically inclined). We can grasp the problem & see it is not going to be solved by the call to arms of a tiny national organisation with little working class base. I believe that a network of broad, local, agitational groups can begin to build a new, relevant socialist opposition. Local groups can argue for the farsighted ideals that people harbour as dreams but which are lost among the fear of unemployment & the knee-jerk reaction of 'self defence'. Local groups can argue against workerism & sectionalism where it matters. For too long we have implicitly assumed, like Trotskyists, that the revolutionary potential of the working class is equal to a conscious desire for socialism. People see the LP as one of 2 or 3 evils, they are not taken in by its promises dressed up as socialism but rightly they do not see the left as the answer to their private or corporate dreams/ideals. By fighting locally we can establish this link - something that has not happened to any extent since the 1910s & '20s & perhaps a brief period in '68 for a few. A loose network rather than a national organisation gives the opportunity for linking struggles, discussing theory (by which I do not just mean books but practical theory eg the Polish workers' struggle) and producing useful, practical information.

Comrades, the choices are a) to fall to pieces as now b) to get more like the SWP or RCP by tightening up organisationally c) to place our faith in the essence of our politics & LEAP, to tear away the old & outdated forms, to revolutionise ourselves in order to begin to play a part in revolutionising society.

The essence of our politics will survive & re-emerge with or without us - for myself I want to be a part of it and therefore I propose the death of BF and the rebirth of BF's revolutionary politics.

Revolutionary greetings,

S.T.

## POSTSCRIPT

What I've written above is an attempt to put onto paper the core of several months of consideration and discussion both of what is going on at the day to day level and also of how to interpret that in a way that is thorough enough to provide pointers toward the future. When the existing form of the world alters we must alter with and against it or else our opposition to it becomes valueless and the latent (potential) form of the world which true revolutionary organisation offers is lost for a while. Each time it is lost it reappears in new working class action, revitalised having learnt the lessons of the past but our task is to link the changing forms of struggle and hasten their development through both practice and theory. In concrete terms the development of struggle is seen in dramatic terms in what has happened in Poland - each time (1945, 1956, 1970, 1976, 1980, 198?) the struggle has been fought in a different way but a revolutionary objective, always the same in essence, has remained. We must learn lessons if we want to play a part in the struggle for revolutionary socialism and feminism.

The theoretical support I have found is in much of the better Marxist writings eg Marx versus Proudhon, CLR James' 'Notes on Dialectics', Raya Dunayevsky, .....

Perhaps such, theoretical works are not necessary but they can help to free the mind from the immediate and look beyond the merely pragmatic but useless attempts at survival - we must look to the future.

I hope comrades will discuss the ideas in the above and rather than label me a saboteur, compare it with their own beliefs in what lies beyond the next meeting but in the future and in the general state of capitalism/patriarchy. Most of all I hope it might provoke discussion and decisions at the weekend conference.

S.T.