

GANDHI

ORGANISE! IS STARTING a new series, *Myths and Legends*, which will take a look at various 'Sacred Cows', diagnose BSE and recommend culling. We kick off with a look at the 'saint' of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi is often cited by pacifists as the shining example of how non-violent civil disobedience works successfully. Unfortunately, these paeans of praise leave out a close study of Gandhi's role in the Indian struggle for 'independence', and just as importantly, who were his class allies in that struggle. By 1919 the Indian capitalist class had decided they wanted independence from the British rulers. However, as can be imagined, the British were reluctant to agree to this and a propaganda campaign for withdrawal had no effect. Indian workers and peasants also resented the yoke of British domination. In response to a mass rally at Amritsar in the Punjab, General Dyer ordered the machine-gunning of the crowd, resulting in over 300 dead and many thousands wounded. The Indian capitalist class came to the conclusion that after the failure of the propaganda campaign, mass action was necessary to gain independence. However, they were haunted by the spectre of the Russian revolution, which had progressed from democratic demands to outright social revolution. They received the answer to their prayers in Gandhi, who had already led several campaigns of civil disobedience in South Africa against the racist laws there. He thus had a certain credibility, and was also not hindered by any identification with any particular region of the sub-continent.

TRUSTEES

His theories of civil disobedience were rooted in Hindu theology. He preached the unity of classes among Indians, the rich to be "trustees" to the poor. This message of class unity was vital if he was to create an alliance between the industrialists and the rich peasants. Indian capitalists enthusiastically welcomed these ideas, and he was financed by some of the leading industrialists in West India, the Sarabhais, textile magnates in the Gujarat, and the Birlas, second largest industrialist group in all of India. Millions of rupees were given to him over a period of 25 years. The rich peasants

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and shopkeepers also provided a pool of activists for his Congress Party. Gandhi, due to his simplicity of life style, was able to mobilise peasants and workers behind him in the cause of nationalism, where the Indian politicians in top hats and morning suits would have found it very difficult. He facilitated a cross-cross alliance for nationalism.

Gandhi had advocated his doctrines of non-violence from early on. This did not stop him from supporting the British in 1899 in the Boer War, volunteering to help them and organising an ambulance corps. As he said, "As long as the subjects owe allegiance to a state, it is their clear duty generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support, to the acts of the state". When Gandhi was organising a mass march in South Africa in 1913, to obtain rights for Indians there, the white railway workers went on strike over pay and conditions. Gandhi immediately cancelled his march, saying that civil resisters should not take advantage of a government's difficulty. On the outbreak of the First World War, Gandhi actively recruited for the British war effort, despite his 'pacifism'. On the outbreak of the Second World War, he publicly pledged not to embarrass the British, and would lend moral support to the Allies.

OBEY

Each of Gandhi's mass campaigns of civil disobedience (1920-1922, 1930-1933, 1942) took place when British capitalism was in trouble. Each crisis broke a few more links with Britain. They also strengthened the Indian capitalists. Fair enough, one can argue, it was good tactics to attack British imperialism when it was in difficulties. What Gandhi failed to do was tie the second campaign to a massive working class upsurge, in conjunction with a mass campaign against a British Parliamentary Commission touring India (both in 1928). Instead he waited till 1930 to launch the campaign. He rejected the idea of teaming workers struggles with a campaign for British withdrawal because he was an advocate of peace between the different classes of India.

Gandhi never questioned the concept of "legality" either. He told his supporters to



Nehru "What are we going to do with these damn workers?"
Gandhi "I know, I'll hit them over the head with my non-violence crap - that'll do the trick!"

obey the law and he always insisted that the British had a "legal right" to arrest them. Once arrested, the campaigners were told to cut themselves off from everything outside and passively await their release.

When in April 1946 Indian sailors mutinied in Bombay and Indian soldiers refused to fire on them, Gandhi's Congress Party refused to support them, which effectively broke the mutiny. Workers demonstrated their support in mass strikes, and the thought of workers and rank-and-file soldiers combining in action must have been troubling to Gandhi.

Gandhi's use of the Hindu religion as justification for civil disobedience was disastrous. Not only did it alienate the members of other religions in India, principally the Muslims, but it legitimised the caste system. Gandhi opposed one caste oppressing another, but he never came out in favour of the abolition of the caste system itself. Many "untouchables" were alienated in this way. The massacres that took place after independence were at least partly due to Gandhi's reluctance to include the Muslims within his Congress Party.

Although Gandhi admitted that he had read certain libertarian thinkers, principally Kropotkin, he had very little in common with their ideas. While Kropotkin was committed to the end of class society, Gandhi never repudiated either the class or the caste system, and never tried to reach out to the working class, in India or internationally. For that matter, his Puritanism, his dislike of sexuality, his cult of martyrdom, have very little to do with militant anarchism.

No 46 Summer 1997

ORGANISE!

FOR CLASS STRUGGLE ANARCHISM

No.46 SUMMER 1997

£1 (FREE TO PRISONERS)

THE CRIMINAL CLASS? DO THEY MEAN US?

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MAGAZINE OF THE
ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

Aims and Principles

1 The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve

little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class.

The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for

the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.).

Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce.

The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow.

Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the

revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Editorial

Labour's massive electoral victory points not to coming militancy in the workplace and on the streets in the immediate future, but to a period of quiet in which the new Labour government will be able to carry out attacks on the working class more easily than the Tories had done. They still have the backing of large sections of the boss class, are seen as "having a clear mandate", are still supported by large sections of the media and are establishing an increasingly authoritarian rule, both through government and inside their own party.

They are most likely to meet opposition from three main groups: the anti-roads movement, as Labour appears to be continuing with some of the Conservative road-building programme; from workers in education, in both schools and further education colleges where attacks on conditions and jobs will continue, and in the public sector generally, both as a result of wage freezes and the possible

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imposition of restraints on industrial action. The simmering discontent in the inner cities among the poor and unemployed may also be flashpoints in the near future.

As we have repeatedly said, the opportunities for the growth of revolutionary anarchism are the best for some considerable time. The disorientation and collapse of the Left, whether Labour Left, Trotskyist or Stalinist, and the increasing irrelevance of the Green Party, and yet among British revolutionary anarchists there is disorientation, a clinging to localism and indeed voluntary isolation among some. For our part, we will continue to argue for united activity and propaganda and greater co-ordination where possible, whilst remaining convinced of the need to create a mass movement for revolutionary change, alongside the creation of a specific anarchist communist organisation with a clear manifesto and programme.

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New Labour-Same Old Danger!



They're having a laugh... at our expense!

THE LANDSLIDE LABOUR victory had the backing of large sections of the ruling class via the media, with the notable support of the *Sun* and the *London Evening Standard*. Indeed, the proprietor of that last newspaper, Lord Rothermere, whose two national dailies the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* continued support for the Tories signalled his approval by moving over to the Labour benches in the House of Lords. Explaining his move, Rothermere volunteered the information that Labour "were carrying out many of the policies I believe in". What he means is that Labour supports a pro-Europe line, as well as being favourable towards supporting small businesses, giving independence to the Bank of England and creating a regulatory body for financial services. Firming up this support for Labour, the *Mail* came out in praise of Blair and his Foreign Secretary the day after Rothermere's move to Labour benches.

This highlights the splits in ruling class ranks over Europe. Some continue to look towards anti-Europe positions and continued go-it-alone stances. This translates as close co-operation with the United States. However, whilst the USA administration is aware of the dangers of Europe as a rival power bloc, they are also fully conscious of the role the European Union can perform in policing the whole of Europe and pushing through austerity measures necessary for capitalism on a world scale. They would prefer to exercise their influence on the European bloc through their new ally in Britain, Tony Blair.

It is in this context that valuable support from sections of the boss class showed itself in increased financial support, media backing, and indeed in votes. Growing numbers of tax investment advisors, for example the firms of Arthur Andersen, Coopers and Lybrand, Binder Hamlyn, told investors that a Labour government might be good for their financial health. The increased support in the City for Labour had a knock-on effect as advice was handed on to stockholders and investors.

There are other reasons for such support besides a pro-Europe position from Labour. There is anxiety that the constitutional structure of Britain is creaking and antiquated and does not fully serve British capitalism's needs. There is fear over the break-up of the United Kingdom. There is an awareness that many people are disillusioned in Parliament and Democracy, particularly over the snowballing revelations of sleaze and corruption. It is felt by some in the British boss class that the Irish problem has to be resolved, and that a fix-up could not be effectively carried out by the Conservatives who were too much in pawn to the Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Streamline

Labour will move to streamline certain constitutional processes with the enthusiastic backing of liberals in the media and the intelligentsia organised through Charter 88. It will head off separation moves by nationalists with its sops of a Scottish referendum and devolution for Wales and Scotland. Through its well-publicised stands against sleaze and

corruption it will hope to head off disillusion, even though its reputation for corruption in particular in municipal councils is notorious. With a massive majority it will be ruthless in driving through austerity programmes, cuts in jobs and welfare, continuing attacks on the health service and public transport, further bolstering of police powers. The Labour Party has actively sought the support of the police in its law and order campaigns. This will be eased by a majority that the Conservatives no longer had.

The unions of course will play their role in policing Labour's New Britain. Already John Monks, TUC general secretary, has met with Prime Minister Blair and talked about a "substantially changed mood in Whitehall". Another sign of better union-boss link-up was the planned visit of CBI director general Adair Turner to this year's TUC conference.

The vote in the general election itself has to be looked at. First of all, it has to be stated strongly that the Labour victory was not so much because of increased support for Labour, but because of an anti-Tory vote. There was a perception among many that the Conservatives must be voted out. This was a cross-class phenomenon, more noticeable among sections of the ruling class and "professionals" than among the working class. There were also many abstentions by many who had previously voted Conservative. On the other hand, in some working class areas, in particular in north east England, the number of abstentions shot up drastically.

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Commentators in the bourgeois press recognised the anti-Tory, rather than pro-Labour significance of the vote. The turnout of voters for the election was a post-war low. It can be said that the election was notable for the high level of working class apathy and suspicion, and indeed hostility, among the working class, and the anti-Tory abstentions and tactical voting.

Cosmetic

Labour will carry out a number of cosmetic changes to give the illusion that it is a government of action, indeed that it is a government that is pro-working class. So we have an authorised investigation into the Gulf War syndrome, a moratorium on the closure of London hospitals for six months, various moves on the minimum wage etc. Within a short space of time these cosmetic changes will be eclipsed by the attacks that Labour is planning on us.

This should not be seen as a "crisis of expectations" scenario which many on the Left are putting forward. There are no

heightened illusions in Labour soon to be disappointed leading to rising militancy. There are no expectations in Labour to carry out radical reforms in favour of the working class. The working class at the moment is in a period of profound defeat. Struggles will only happen when we fight back against planned attacks. At the moment the period of quiet, of class peace, can be seen as lasting a long time. The only signs of hope are to be seen in the action of BA workers and of continuing wildcats among postal workers. There will be a continuing and slowly increasing, we hope, guerrilla warfare of unofficial strikes, more and more outside the control of the unions. As regards activity on the environmental front, Labour may well make moves to buy off some of those involved with various sops, whilst some may be increasingly radicalised as they realise that the Labour agenda on the environment is not significantly different from that of the Tories.

ACF On Tour in Europe!



ACF COMRADES FROM London and Woking attended the large Euromarch on June 14th in Amsterdam. The organisers of the march -unemployed organisations, trade unions etc. with an input from Greens, Trotskyists and social-democrats- put forward reformist slogans around full employment and workers' rights, the protection of welfare provision, and talked about "basic human rights" and "the focus of a much wider campaign to stir the trade union movement in defence of the welfare state". Labour lefts like Bann backed the appeal. However, there was a large presence at the 80,000 strong march, of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, all of whom attempted to get over an anti-capitalist and revolutionary message. ACFers were pleased to meet comrades of the Dutch ACF, who have translated many articles from *Organise!* into Dutch for their paper *Woorden van rebellen*. We marched with these comrades behind a banner we had brought from Britain and distributed a leaflet in English advancing a clear revolutionary

message. There were sizeable contingents of Dutch, Danish and German autonomists whilst the spectacular resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism in Europe was witnessed by the seas of red and black flags in the contingents of the French CNT, the Spanish CGT, the Italian USI and the Swedish SAC, which numbered several thousands. Also present were Greek anarchists behind their black banner, as well as Belgian, German, Norwegian, Slovenian and Japanese anarchists.

Kinky sects

Whilst the European-wide continued presence of the Communist Parties, either in fundamentalist Stalinist mode, or mutated (see if you can tell the difference between us and social-democratic parties) mode was noticeable, the Trotskyists were strikingly thin on the ground, with only the French Ligue Communiste

Revolutionnaire showing any noticeable presence, with a sprinkling of Trots from various British sects. The French 'alternative' union structures, the SUD, organised outside the main union centrals, around railworkers, postal workers and those working in education, were also present, in particular a sizeable railworkers contingent. The Belgian Renault workers in struggle against mass sackings also formed a large bloc. The Dutch police carried out a number of provocations during the event. At the Central Station they seized a red and black flag, saying it was "forbidden to be anarchist during the summit". When a bank's windows were smashed by autonomists in the demonstration, the police attacked. A little later, a well-organised provocation was carried out. An empty police van was left out in the path of the demonstration, whilst some police occupied a building nearby, training cameras on the van, whilst passing themselves off as demonstrators by waving flags and blowing whistles. Some autonomists in the crowd respond by overturning the van and were captured on camera. The police made several baton charges, concentrating on the heads of demonstrators. They blocked 3,000 Italians arriving at the Central station. The majority of these were not released until well after the demonstration had reached its final assembly point. 200 were

arrested, handcuffed, held in a prison in Amsterdam and later that night returned in a train to Italy through Germany. This seems to have been a concerted action between German and Dutch police.

Joint Action

During demonstrations on the following three days the riot police made further baton charges. As a result of all these actions, as well as the police attack on the anarcho-punk Days of Chaos event on the Friday, 609 arrests were made. This does not include the Italian action. Few of these, it seems, have been charged. The severe security measures appear to have been thought out in advance, and the blanket arrest tactic used to paralyse actions, and to gather information on those arrested. This is a taste of what Europol plans for us in the future.

Whilst the ruling class is organising through the European Union to carry out attacks on us through sackings, cuts on welfare benefits and general austerity programmes, this demonstration was very important in that large numbers of anarchists marched together on a European level for the first time. It points towards the resurgence of anarchism in Europe and towards further joint actions.

AUSTRIAN STATE ATTACKS ANARCHISTS

ALL OVER EUROPE anarchists and other radical left activists are being persecuted and criminalized by state authorities. In countries like Germany this sort of repression already has traditional status (RAF, Revolutionäre Zellen, Bewegung 2. Juni, radikal...). Recently other countries started using invented criminal acts in order to shine through the anarchist movement and structures (Italy, Spain, Greece...), imprison comrades and intimidate others. What a lot of comrades don't know is the fact that such repression have also been going on in Austria for the last 2 years. Every day people without European Union passports are being expelled, every day left activists and projects get attacked by fascists and every day people get visited by the state police, just because they don't want to shut up and close their eyes to racist politics. In the following article I'll primary focus on the repressions against anarchist groups. We should nevertheless not forget the many arrests during demonstrations or the many interrogations through state authorities.

The recent repressions started in April 1995, just after the two comrades *Gregor Thaler* and *Peter Koniczek* were found dead under an electric mast. The investigating police proclaim that they tried to fix an explosive charge onto this mast in order to bomb it away. The state uses this act to shine through the Austrian radical left movement, and summons about 200 activists. In the early morning hours of January 23 1996 two private rooms of supposed activists of the anarchist group *Revolutionsbräuhaus (RBH)* were searched through, as well as the *Anarchistische*

Buchhandlung (anarchist bookshop) and an office of a communist group (that was used as post address by the RBH some years ago). The state authorities reproaches the RBH for having published an invitation to violent and criminal acts (§277), degradation of the Austrian Republic and its symbols (§282), the foundation of a criminal organisation (§278, §278a) and finally hostility against the state and its



constitution (§246)¹. Cause are sticky labels that only appeared in one place: the popular bourgeois *Krone Zeitung* (some sort of Austrian version of the Sun) in May 1995. Even though it was very obvious that these stickers are an invention of the *Kronen Zeitung*, the investigating police didn't interrogate the responsible journalist until January 1996. The author of these stickers *Gerhard Walter* is no unknown person. He has written articles in the journal of the right-wing police union AUF². Walter never really denied that these stickers were

a falsification. Nevertheless these known facts, the judges *Christiane Moser* and *Birgit Kail* signed the raid orders in December 1995, which then took place on January 23 1996.

This was not the end of the repressions against the RBH. On February 23 1996 17 people were invited to interrogations by the state police. Some days later, on March 17 1996 19 houses/flats were searched through by the state police and a lot of material (computers, discs, books, journals, letters...) were, as on January 23 confiscated (only in June 1996 was most of the confiscated material re-addressed to the owners). The public prosecutor doesn't allow any insight into the documents of the investigation, which normally is a common right you have, when you are being accused of a crime. On March 15 1996 only limited insight is allowed. As the state authorities claim that the investigation are still going in. So the activists of the RBH and all the other accused just don't know why they are being persecuted and what they are accused of. In December 1996 the activists finally got a more than thousand pages thick document about the

investigations, which in the end proves nothing new and so the accused activists are as informed as in the beginning. It is meanwhile quite clear, that these whole accusations are just used in order to shine through the anarchist movement, intimidate activists and diminish our solidarity within the movement. It is also clear that these whole investigations are made by some FPÖ-near politicians, judges and police officers. So if one day Haider and his FPÖ would get to the majority of the votes, they

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Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin talks to *Organise!* about Black Autonomy

LORENZO KOM'BOA ERVIN was a former Black Panther who fled to Cuba in 1969 after an FBI shoot to kill order was issued on him. Later arrested and imprisoned he was released in 1983 after serving 15 years for hijacking the plane he escaped from the USA in. Whilst inside he continued the struggle, acting as a jailhouse lawyer and prison unionist and developing his political philosophy. Author of *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, Lorenzo spoke to *Organise!* during his speaking tour of Britain in May. For reasons of space, this interview has been edited. A full transcript can be obtained by writing to Newcastle ACF(See inside back page for address).

Organise!: On this tour you have stated that the working class has changed and is changing, and consequently, our approach as revolutionaries must change to take account of this. Can you explain what you mean?

Lorenzo: The working class in the United States, in the United Kingdom and in most parts of the western world, with the influx of other peoples of colour into these countries in considerable numbers, make up considerable minorities and are a considerable part of the labour force. But you can't pretend that this is a period like sixty or seventy years ago with an industrial base and where most of the workers were white, which was true then. Things have changed now over the last twenty or so years, but yet some so-called revolutionary movements persist and keep posturing and saying that the work force is white and that other people should just follow along with their bags in tow behind these white workers, which in fact represents the aristocracy of labour in the sense that they have certainly more resources and certainly a better quality of life than a lot of other labourers of colour have. So from that standpoint, it would be fair to say that the nature of the workforce has changed; there are more women, more Blacks and Asians, in the US and the UK, so we can't keep building movements based on old dead ideology of the white industrial worker and "the worker" as vanguard.

Organise!: So what do you see as the role of the revolutionary movement?

Lorenzo: Well I think the role of the revolutionary movement is still in workplace organising, but I also think, in community organisation. In fact in my mind, the role of community organising is primary, in that the cities, where so many of these workers are concentrated, has become the new battleground in terms of destabilising the government. We don't have massive workplaces anymore, for the most part, which is not to say that they don't exist at all. So what we're talking about is building neighbourhood and community alliances, for instance workers in the community, other people in the community and with peoples of colour, which for me is all important. you have to breakdown racism in the society...racism is not just sentimental, by that I mean it isn't just some idea or deliberate policy. So whatever analysis we make has got to take into account the importance of combating racism NOT as some kind of thing that we do for altruistic purposes, but because we'll never be able to defeat capitalism in and of itself without dealing with the fact that it uses divisions in the working class.

Organise!: Some revolutionaries would argue that although they base the struggle around the workplace, they also look to organise in the community as well. What would you say to that?

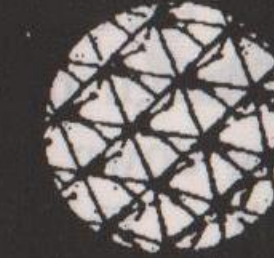


Lorenzo: Well, the syndicalists first of all say that the workplace is the primary place of struggle, and to me they make an out-moded analysis of what even constitutes the working class, in that in their mind there's the idea that somehow the unions are progressive, and what's more the unions are some kind of force that can be revolutionised. Clearly these unions are something that's based IN capitalism. They cannot be a progressive force in the next period. They will have to be destroyed. They are no more than instruments for defensive struggles for workers to get better wages and that sort of thing. They are not in any way, shape or form a revolutionary vehicle themselves, and in this period they don't even constitute anything progressive. They, in fact, are selling workers out routinely and they are not going to be reformed. In my estimation, they're not going to be revolutionised, and in any case they can't be.

Organise!: There's some misunderstanding about why you advocate the formation of autonomous Black community groupings. Can you explain this and how you see these struggles uniting?

Lorenzo: I have been attacked because people think I'm advocating some kind of separatism. Let me just point this out: *Black Autonomy* (the journal which Lorenzo founded ed. note) has no such philosophy of xenophobia. It's not against white people and there is no philosophy about a so-called black state or any other state. It has no conception that there cannot be class unity. In fact we work with a number of white formations of anarchists and so forth. But the reality is, to create class unity, you've got to have a period of time, especially when there's racism there's mistrust, which has gone on for years and years. You've got to BUILD this class unity. It's not going to fall out of the sky...you can't make people come together in bogus alliances. There has to be a principled way of doing it and the principled way of doing it is when people struggle around issues of common concern. Now there are issues that affect the Black community which don't affect white workers as a whole, who don't understand them and may even be in opposition to them. We have to create those movements that are autonomous in the communities, whether anti-racist, anti-nazi or whatever it is. In my estimation there is nothing threatening in that at all for white people, I don't understand what that's supposed to be. They've attempted to characterise all Black movements, even anarchist movements as somehow harmful to working class unity. We feel that one of the preconditions for working class unity is that

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THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE



"Hey, wow! Trevor's found a way to trainspot on the Internet..."

THE 'INFORMATION REVOLUTION' of computerisation and miniaturisation during the past twenty years has created an 'Information Society'- or so it is said. How real has this 'revolution' been? Has it fundamentally altered relations between the ruling class and the working-class?

The phenomenon can be seen from two main angles. One concerns the technological development of the microchip. The microchip not only offered enough memory and processing power to make the home computer possible, it has come to pervade all kinds of devices like washing machines and cameras. Similarly, it has underpinned

a massive and continuing wave of automation in the workplace. Information in this context is the stream of data required by a machine to perform with the minimum of human intervention; the revolution *is* this drive to reduce the human input.

Both in the home and the workplace new technology has been portrayed as labour-saving, freeing a person for more interesting tasks. But whereas companies seek to fill the extra leisure time with increased consumption of CDs, computer games, etc., the labour saved at work is in a economic sense. Through Information Technology (IT), firms can 'downsize' i.e. sack or retire employees and increase profits by extracting the same or more work from fewer staff. The process of creating the information economy, on which the information society rests, has been seen in sectors as diverse as printing, car-manufacturing, where robots are increasingly employed and banking.

The other aspect of the 'revolution' concerns information itself. 'Information' may be seen as facts or knowledge, such as share prices in foreign markets, but it may equally be entertainment. This is because the means are increasingly being found to digitise data, and data can be text, sounds, images or any combination. Here the revolution primarily concerns the means of delivery and access, rather than the content itself, which has often existed in a prior form, thus books preceded CD-ROMs. The difference with these later developments is usually one of flexibility or interactivity given to the user, e.g. being able to search a

CD-ROM by any word the user wishes rather than a book's fixed index. In another area, satellite TV, linked with digital techniques, is opening up the prospect in Britain of over two hundred channels.

With the resultant smokescreen about choice, interactivity and 'video on demand', important issues are being obscured. Yet, if anything, power, wealth, cultural, political influence, and matters of class, are magnified by the 'Information Revolution'.

Ultimate Agenda

The trail almost invariably leads back to a small clutch of media magnates such as Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi, Disney and Time-Warner. These have diversified amongst the fields of publishing, films, radio, TV, CD-ROMs and on-line databases. What their film and TV arms provide is a choice from the least challenging end of the spectrum: action films, light comedies, sport. Where political opinions are expressed, as in their newspapers, these tend to be of the most orthodox pro-capitalist promoting their own ultimate agenda: the increase of profits and market share. Having built up vast markets they thus have maximum influence with the distributors of such products, who are also few in number. The quantity of producers may be vast, but their underlying ideas and values are few. This media environment increasingly saturates the world.

All of this has important psychological consequences for the class struggle, as many people are left unaware of the potential

alternative to 'business as usual'. If radicals' views and actions are ever reported, it will usually be either to demonise or mock. This in itself promotes resignation rather than resistance amongst those who might be feeling their way towards such positions. This is not to say that people do not fight back against their oppression anyway, but it is hardly coincidental that struggles are so often either isolated or channelled into the pathways of union and political party action. The information that would help avoid these traps, based on hard-earned experiences, is not widely and easily available. Establishment views, including what passes for opposition, are. Yet it is greater access to information which is said to be the essence of this revolution. In reality, though there is more information about than ever before, whether business statistics, news, education or entertainment, much of it is more of what we are accustomed to expect in a wider range of media.

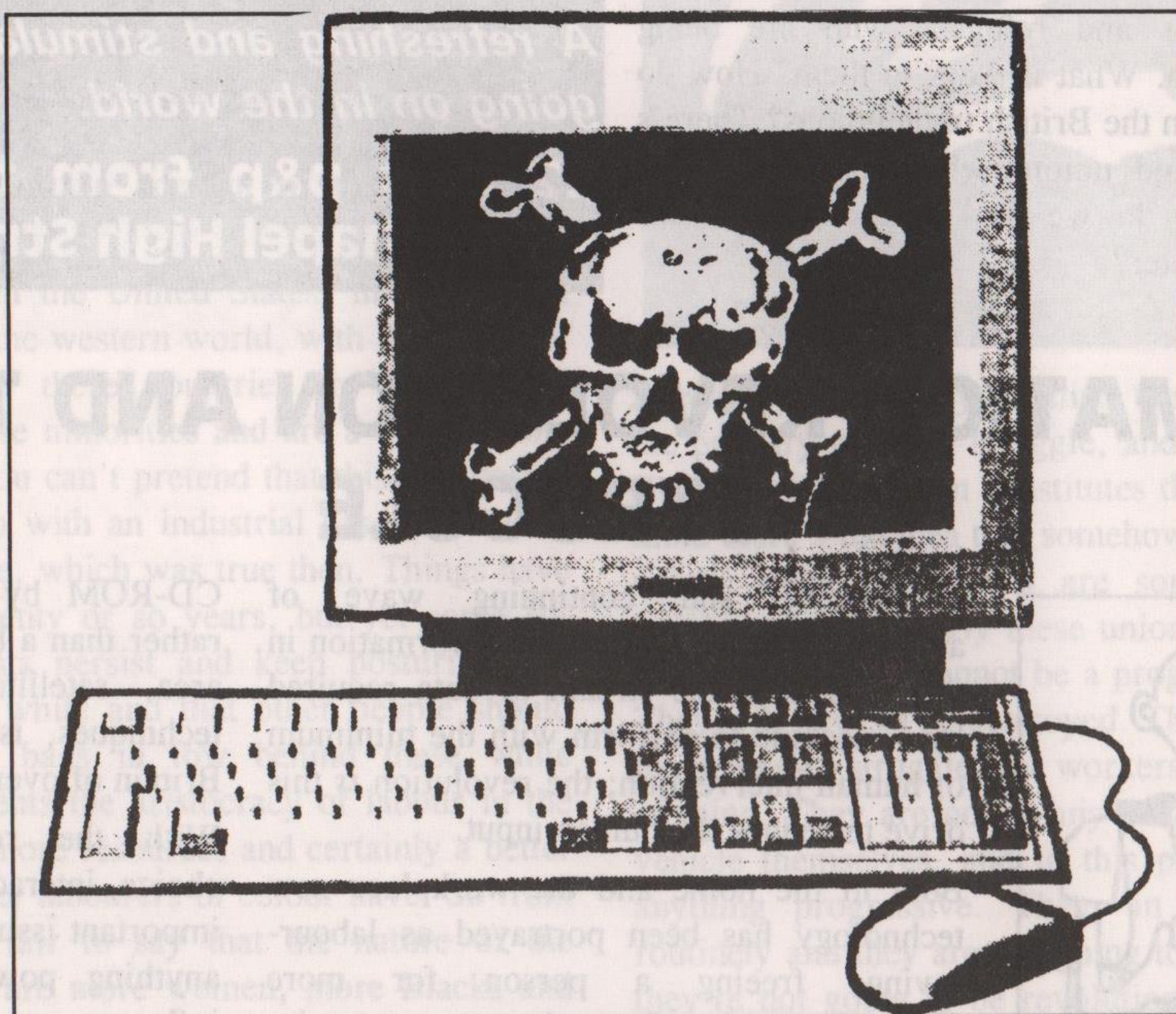
The possible exception to this picture is the Internet. The connection effected between thousands of personal and institutional computers has produced something significantly different to the media discussed above, both in terms of the degree of individual involvement and the content of the

communications. Many radical and revolutionary publishers and organisations have World Wide Web sites. Particularly in the case of campaigning groups e.g. prisoner support, news can be spread quickly to produce a prompt response.

In addition, much information is intentionally placed on the Internet to be read or downloaded without charge or as shareware. There is an implicit challenge to capitalist notions of exchange and ownership. The fierceness with which the US has pursued the issue of strictly enforced intellectual property rights i.e. copyright and patents, for example in the last GATT negotiations, illustrates the rising profile of this issue and the anxiety felt by the ruling class. Capital is increasingly seen as locked into information-based products. This is not just facts and figures or music but also applies to things like the make-up of genetically-engineered food. For if information such as a patent can simply be copied to a disk in a few minutes, what price ownership of knowledge?

American Views

However, there are problems with the Internet, showing that it is not the totally new community of which some dream. There is the expense of getting, and staying, on-line. Though the costs of the hardware are coming down, most people still do not possess it. This equipment, and the telephone systems supporting it, are even more lacking in poorer parts of the world. Parallel to this is the fact that much material on the Net stems from the West, especially America, and, as business interest grows, it is further skewed towards becoming a marketplace of mainly American views and products. Having begun from a government-funded and academic base, growing commercial involvement threatens



to make more and more information only accessible via a 'pay as you go' route. Many theorists now speak of the distinction between the information rich and the information poor. As with the companies advancing into the new media, this reproduces class distinctions that already exist in wealth, education etc.

Governments and police forces have for some time been seeking to monitor the Internet's content and transactions more closely. In America this brought about the 1996 Internet Decency Act and several attempts at the 'Clipper Chip', a 'key' which would give agencies like the FBI access to coded data transmissions. A strange coalition of civil libertarians and businessmen who for very different reasons united on the issue of privacy, has so far scuppered the Clipper. Similarly in Britain, the 1994 Criminal Justice Act defines the transmission of electronic data as publication, making it liable to laws on obscenity and official secrets. There have also been moves to make Internet Service Providers (the firms that connect users) legally responsible for all the material they convey. These measures have produced

strong opposition. But the point here is that the authorities are determined to take cyberspace into their jurisdiction.

Finally there is the question of class within the computing world. The previously noted cost of ownership is worsened by the refinements and new programs that are continually being introduced. This reliance on built-in obsolescence is but one example of traditional capitalist thinking: wasteful of resources but it boosts up those profits. Bill Gates, founder of the software company Microsoft, has, in twenty years, become one of the richest people on the planet. In January 1997 he owned 141 million shares valued at \$83.37 each, from which in 1996 he was thus 'earning' \$30 million daily. For all the rhetorical praise of free competition that the computer industry shares with the rest of capitalism, Gates' fortune flows from Microsoft having engineered deals so as to make its software the standard for the world's personal computers: in other words, through a quest for monopoly.

'Revolution'

Companies like Microsoft and Apple make much of their relaxed working approach, in contrast to the straight-laced corporate men of IBM before them. However, hierarchy still persists, from the entrepreneurial founders, through the programmers and

engineers and down to the assemblers of silicon chips. California's Silicon Valley workers suffer more occupational illness than in general manufacturing. And clearly, Bill Gate's, salary and those of his peers is vastly more than that of the workers upon whom their fortunes are built. But though issues from which struggles might come are present, workers in the computer industry, and indeed all jobs that involve IT, are perhaps extra vulnerable to management's demands. This is because of the ease with which their work can be monitored e.g. number of key-strokes per hour, and switched to another part of the country or the world where lower wages are paid to equally skilled workers.

It would be ridiculous to claim that there have not been many changes in the past twenty years in the ways in which we perceive and receive information. It comes more quickly, in more forms, to more people than ever before. But its' production, distribution and consumption have been based on already existing hierarchies. It is a 'revolution' only in a loose capitalist sense.

continued on page 18

CRIMINALISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS



ARE WE CRIMINALS ? Are you ? The rhetoric of the ruling class, their servants and apologists certainly suggests we are criminals and that we are to blame for everything wrong in the world. This is a song the capitalists never get tired of singing: there's something wrong with the working class !

Criminalisation of the working class is a set of policies applied more or less severely depending on the rough balance of power between the twin poles of bourgeois democracy: conservative, reactionary, statist on the one-hand, do-gooding, moralising, populist on the other. It is something that is always with us. It is also a future history becoming all too horribly real - why ? 'Law and Order' usually plays a big part in elections but didn't in May - why not ? The reason is that Labour and the Tories agree on both the causes of criminality and its 'cure' - the inadequacy of the working class as parents and draconian assaults on individual 'criminals' publicly celebrated as a means to cow and

intimidate the rest of the sheep. Criminality is seen as a working class disease. Its cause, basically poor and uneducated people, must be caught and shot with the 'magic bullet' of prison and punitive sentencing or isolated by public humiliation, electronic tagging, injunctions and permanent branding, for instance through publicly-available registers of sex-offenders which invite vigilantism and mob justice.

Campaign

The process of criminalisation is not new. When we read about the 'sturdy beggars' of Elizabethan times, debtors prisons or the pariah status of the 'undeserving poor' we hear echoes of a

long campaign to maximise the power of the ruling class by dividing and stigmatising those who are ruled.

We are criminalised in three main ways. Firstly, the state invents a vast range of offences, usually based on the desire to protect property and control working class collective action and violence. It defines these as 'criminal', unacceptable in a 'civilised' society. In contrast, upper class offences like fraud, tax evasion or corruption are treated as individual falls from grace, exceptions to the rule deserving lenient treatment and sympathy. Working class 'crime' such as shoplifting or benefit fraud was seen this way in the 60s and 70s but the right-wing dominance of politics has swept belief in the idea of the working class as victims of an unequal society away; crime has become simply a symptom of wholesale working class degeneracy. Sections of the populace who have never committed a crime can now be treated as if they had. One of the sickest outcomes of such beliefs was the forced sterilisation and incarceration of 3000 children accused of

being 'mentally defective', 'sexually immoral' or 'incapable of intelligent parenthood' (does this ring any bells ?) in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. Tory politicians are proposing that children be tried in adult courts. Michael Howard proposed that the parents of children who have not committed crimes but were merely *in danger* of committing crimes should be fined or suffer curfews enforced by electronic tagging if they fail or are unable to obey 'parental control orders'.

Stigmatised

Secondly, the working class is stigmatised as criminal or potentially criminal on the basis of a few sensationalised cases. This allows the State to concoct laws which bear down most on the working class and to justify a presumption of guilt by police and courts which is parroted by the media and picked up by reactionary groups who then threaten violence, demand the 'criminal' be evicted from their homes or hurl abuse and worse. This treatment is not now reserved for the 'worst' criminals (like sex offenders) but increasingly directed at anyone who fails to adhere to the new right-wing code of conduct (for instance parents who cannot 'control' their children in East Sussex or on the Meadowell Estate). Being black, a lone parent, living on a ghetto estate, being young or unemployed, all are being portrayed as criminals who haven't been caught or parents of a new generation of the lawless. Actions and conditions previously seen as social problems are being criminalised. Benefit fraud and immigration officials are joining police stop-checks ostensibly to catch rogue lorry drivers or unsafe vehicles. They treat everyone like criminals and actively gather information on other people whose names are then run through computers. One-third of Britain receives some form of means-tested benefit and all are potential criminals in the eyes of the State. If you are treated like a criminal it is because the State thinks you are a criminal. This allows people who have committed no crime to be penned up in detention centres or manacled while on remand, even if they are dying, as happened in one recent case. These are merely the worst aspects of the drive to socially control behaviour and criminalise those who resist - parent-school contracts, compulsory

FEATURE

parenting classes for dysfunctional families, probationary tenancies in council housing, curfews to keep young people indoors. In America law enforcement is increasingly resorting to 'shaming sentences' where the guilty must take out newspaper ads or erect signs outside their houses publicly proclaiming their crime.

Reactionary

Thirdly, any demand for change or resistance to this political program is itself criminalised through reactionary laws. As the area of freedom gets smaller we are increasingly criminalised. 18th Century rationalists campaigned for a universal code of justice which abstractly judged all actions. What they failed to realise was that the State will always develop codes of justice that serve its interests and that in a parliamentary dictatorship like Britain all actions will be legalised or criminalised at the whim of the ruling class. Things like the Criminal Justice Act and the massive expansion of the 'Surveillance Society' threaten to make guilt by accusation and association the norm. Demonstrations are photographed, city centres filmed, unmarked police vans with infra-red cameras prowl night-time streets, benefit hotlines receive thousands of malicious, unsubstantiated accusations every day. We

are increasingly patrolled and controlled, seen as dangerous or potential criminals. Against this threat (a threat wholly concocted by the ruling class to justify a police state), any repressive measure is justified.

The election of a Labour Government is unlikely to slow this process and may even accelerate it. The massive majority was won by votes from Middle England, people who are basically conservative, well-off, in secure jobs who simply got tired of the Tories and voted instead for a different 'Tory' party - Labour. MPs representing the clean streets and shopping centres of the south are likely to parrot the prejudices of their constituents, not fight for social justice.

Tide

In such a situation, with a right-wing political tide running so strongly, it is difficult to see what can be done. Around the world, though, there are examples of people successfully challenging injustice. The landless peasants of the Sem Terra movement in Brazil are occupying unused land and forcing the Government to award it to them. French workers have forced the government to retreat on Thatcherite austerity policies. South Korean workers

paralysed the country protesting against attacks on labour rights.

Cultural of resistance

All these campaigns have a number of things in common. Firstly, they successfully universalise their action so that all sections of the working class can understand and agree with what they are fighting for. Secondly, they all involve determined mass action which ignores rules and laws designed to curb protest. Thirdly there are very high levels of solidarity inside the campaigns and a willingness to accept the support of and draw into the struggle other groups - this only comes about by extensive political education, grass-roots control and consensus not command politics. If we are to successfully challenge the process of criminalisation, we must do the same. We must develop a culture of resistance which understands that the State's attacks may appear to be aimed at particular groups but are in fact part of a broader process of wholesale criminalisation, isolation and control. Work on estates, determined campaigns against attacks on the working class, taking our ideas into new arenas, strengthening and renewing the belief in mass action - these are our urgent tasks.

FEATURE

The Union Makes Us Strong?

SYNDICALISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

THE ACF HAS never, despite what some of our critics may have suggested, made our criticisms of syndicalism, including its anarcho variety, a "distinguishing characteristic" (see Black Flag Issue 211) of our politics. In a world-wide 'labour movement' dominated by social democratic ideas and practice and thoroughly integrated into capitalism, our focus of attack has not been on the relatively tiny syndicalist and 'alternative' union structures which exist. Rather, our arguments have been against trade unionism and for working class self-organised struggle.

However, anarcho-syndicalism remains the majority current within class struggle anarchism and is, despite various splits and feuds within its international organisations, in a state of resurgence. Now, therefore, is a good time to present a critical analysis of the theory and practice of syndicalism.

Theory and practice

Rather than separate theory and practice we will attempt to show how the behaviour of various syndicalist movements has been informed by its theoretical foundations and the political influences acting upon it. Syndicalism has been accused of 'apoliticism' and, indeed, a certain anti-politicism has been a central feature of many syndicalist organisations. This is only half the story, however, and fails to take into consideration the fact that syndicalism has come under the influence of many political currents, not least anarchism, and that it should not be forgotten that these have included reformist socialism (particularly the French CGT), nationalism (notably the Italian UIL) and even monarchism (monarcho-syndicalism in turn of the century France).

Origins

First we must look at the origins of syndicalism. "Syndicalism" is simply the French word for "unionism". It was the mass syndicat (or union) in France, the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT), founded in 1895, which gave "syndicalism" the meaning it has today. The CGT was militant, de-centralised, initially sceptical of parliamentary participation and considered the workplace as the front-line of the class war. When such tactics developed in other countries, militants consciously used the term syndicalism to differentiate themselves from the openly reformist, social democratic Trade Unions. Syndicalist unions began to become a significant factor in the decade before the First World War, as both a reflection of the ongoing class struggle and as the result of the efforts of consciously 'political' minorities critical of 'socialist' parliamentarism. The early syndicalist movement was far from homogenous, politically or organisationally. In many countries the syndicalist movement developed through deliberate attempts to organise those workers who had been ignored by the established social democratic unions, particularly the unskilled and immigrant workforces (the experience of the Industrial Workers of the World is a good example of this), whilst in other countries, syndicalist unions were craft or trade based and organised highly skilled artisans (e.g. the CGT in France).

Political minorities

Amongst the political minorities attracted to the syndicalist method were the anarchists. Indeed, anarchists were amongst the earliest syndicalist organisers in many countries, notably in France, Spain and Argentina. The syndicalist movement was certainly attractive to many anarchists who, having seen their influence wane following the period of "propaganda by the deed" (the 1890s), saw in syndicalism's combativity and distrust of parliamentary methods a

'natural' home for their politics. In some countries syndicalist unions were led by ideological anarchists and everywhere anarchist militants joined syndicalist



organisations. Some anarchists, however, were uneasy about the identification of anarchism with unionism. Others questioned the syndicalist method itself. In Spain, where anarchism was to become closely identified with the syndicalist Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT), often furious polemics ensued throughout the 1890s and 1910s between those anarchists, such as the anarchist communists grouped around the *Tierra y Libertad* journal, who felt the syndicalist methods were inherently reformist and a step backwards and those who believed that syndicalism offered anarchism a vehicle for reaching the masses.

Degeneration

Amongst the clearest critics of the identification of anarchism with syndicalism was the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. In 1907, when syndicalism was drawing ever larger numbers of workers, including anarchist workers, to its ranks, Malatesta argued that, "Syndicalism, in spite of the declarations of its most ardent partisans, contains, by the very nature of its constitution, all the elements of degeneration which have corrupted the workers' movement in the past. In fact, being a movement which proposes to defend the present interests of the workers, it must necessarily adapt itself to the living conditions of the present" (Les Temps Nouveaux, 1907). Other anarchist militants held strong reservations about the syndicalist method.

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The French anarchist metalworker Benoit Liothier expressed the fear, held by many, that syndicalism would tend to economism and therefore to reformism. "Syndicalism cannot be revolutionary if it cannot be political...whether we like it or not the economic struggle is tied to the political struggle." (Archives Departementales de la Loire, 1914). Like many anarchists of his generation, however, Liothier eventually became a militant of the CGT.

That anarchists identified with syndicalism and were often at the forefront of syndicalist organisation is of little surprise. Emergent syndicalism appeared to offer tactics which related libertarian, direct-action orientated ideas to the every day struggle of the workers. Anarchist workers wanted to be where the conflict with the bosses (and, therefore, the state) was at its most acute and for anarchists to have dismissed syndicalism at this historical point would undoubtedly have marginalised them further. For many anarchists the solution to any perceived problems within syndicalism could be solved by encouraging its tendency towards anti-politicism and its combative spirit. This meant a total engagement with syndicalist unionism and the birth of anarcho-syndicalism. Many of these people were dismissive of the idea of creating separate anarchist organisations and saw in the union the means and the end of the anarchist revolution.

Against this 'fusion' some anarchists argued

for the maintenance of separate anarchist organisations which would be active both inside and outside the unions. Malatesta, amongst others, advocated such a tactic, as did the anarchists who became known as "Platformists" during the 1920s. A fear, which was well founded, was that anarcho-syndicalism would become dominated by the syndicalist part of the equation to the detriment of a clear revolutionary perspective which related to all aspects of working class life, not just the factory or workshop.

Anarcho- and revolutionary syndicalism

The relationship between the anarcho-syndicalists and the 'revolutionary' syndicalists varied from country to country. Many 'revolutionary' syndicalists rejected even the 'anti-political' politics of the anarchists and saw in syndicalism the form and the content of revolution. They created a syndicalist ideology, at the pinnacle of which was the union organised General Strike which would usher in the new society. For some syndicalists the General Strike assumed an almost mythical significance and replaced the idea of violent revolution, which was considered unrealistic. For 'revolutionary' syndicalist ideologues the union replaced the party and was identified with the class as a whole. A desire to organise all workers, regardless of political or religious belief, led to 'revolutionary' syndicalists attempting to

marginalise anarcho-syndicalists in order to appeal to workers who actually remained tied to social democracy.

Whilst this anti-politicism led many of the 'revolutionary' syndicalists to a pronounced anti-statism, it did not stop others from entering into alliances with 'revolutionary' parties and politicians. Although politics were unwelcome in the syndical organisation itself this did not mean that 'revolutionary' syndicalism was not involved in politics. Whilst the Italian 'revolutionary' syndicalists flirting with extreme nationalism from 1914 onwards, demanding that Italy join the imperialist bloodbath (a demand totally opposed, to their great credit, by the anarcho-

syndicalists of the Union Sindicale Italiana) is probably the most graphic example of syndicalist political alliances, many others existed.

In Norway the pre-war 'revolutionary' syndicalist "fagopposition" (union opposition), for example, was closely identified with the left wing of social democracy whilst in the United States the industrial unionist (the North American equivalent of syndicalist) Industrial Workers of the World were for the first three years of their existence (1905-1908) riven with open political rivalry between the Socialist Party of America and the Socialist Labour Party. In Ireland the syndicalistic Irish Transport and General Workers Union was led by people who had been or still were active members of socialist parties and Irish syndicalism, despite its militancy, rarely exhibited the anti-statism and anti-party sentiment of other syndicalist movements.

Often 'revolutionary' syndicalists appeared to be simply impatient with the stodgy Second International version of socialism that dominated the Left and were not against 'revolutionary parties' per se. The mass defection of 'revolutionary' syndicalists to Bolshevism in the period immediately following the Russian Revolution bears witness to this. Collaboration with the bourgeoisie was not confined to the nominally apolitical 'revolutionary' wing of syndicalism, however. An interesting example of anarcho-syndicalism being found on the wrong side of the class barricade, twenty years before the infamous CNT involvement in the Spanish government, is the experience of Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution - the Casa del Obrero Mundial

During the first twenty years of the 20th century Mexico was engulfed in revolutionary turmoil. Various 'constitutionalist' (i.e. democratic) capitalist factions vied for power whilst attempting to overthrow the dictatorship of General Porfirio Diaz. Meanwhile the Agrarian (landless peasant) movement of Emiliano Zapata and the emerging urban working class attempted to defend their own interests amidst the chaos. The Agrarians engaged in guerrilla activity against the various 'revolutionary' governments with the aim of reclaiming and defending the land of the indigenous population from the landowners. During the years 1906 to 1915 the Partido Liberal Mexicano (P.L.M.) played a leading role in attempting to bring together Agrarian and proletarian revolt. Beginning from an advanced left liberal-democratic position the P.L.M., under the influence of the Magon brothers, developed into an anarchist communist organisation with its own guerrilla units involved in the expropriation

of land in the Baja California region and leading strikes in Veracruz, amongst other areas. The P.L.M. called for "Tierra y Libertad" (Land and Freedom), the immediate expropriation of the landlords and bosses and the abolition of the state.

Red Battalions

In 1912 the anarcho-syndicalist Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World Worker) was formed and rapidly attracted the urban workers of Mexico City to its ranks. Yet, within three years the anarcho-syndicalists were organising Red Battalions to fight in defence of the Mexican state! Although the Casa emerged with a typical anti-politicism and a desire to concentrate on economic struggle several factors led it to give support to one bourgeois faction, the Constitutionalist forces of Venustiano Carranza, against the Agrarians and their P.L.M. allies. Firstly, the anarcho-syndicalists viewed the industrial proletariat as the organised vanguard of the social revolution, in spite of the fact that they constituted a tiny minority of the Mexican working population. This vanguard, they argued, had to be developed and expanded as rapidly as possible and the anarcho-syndicalists sought what they hoped would be the best conditions for this. Secondly, the anarcho-syndicalists considered the Agrarian movement as an essentially reactionary one, committed to turning back the clock, and rejecting the 'advances' in technology and understanding that capitalism had brought. They pointed to the Zapatista's "religiosity" and general 'backwardness' as proof of their danger to the 'advanced' sections of the working class. Finally, and most importantly, the anarcho-syndicalists believed that the progressive, democratic bourgeois state which was offering the Casa freedom to organise (and in fact was actually encouraging the Casa to organise!) should be defended against 'reaction', Agrarianist or anti-constitutionalist.

After the anarcho-syndicalist Red Battalions had played their part in 'saving' the Mexican state, the inevitable happened. In the spring of 1916 the Constitutionalist government turned on the Casa, disbanded the Red Battalions and forcibly closed down the syndicates following the second of two General Strikes that year. The failure of the anarcho-syndicalists to recognise the class nature of the state, despite all their verbal anti-statism, had led them to take sides against genuinely revolutionary movements.

Bolshevisation and "the end of the mass syndicalism"

Without doubt the high-point of syndicalism was the period between (roughly) 1895 and 1914. In this period the only current, in the workers movement on an international

level, to offer an alternative to mainstream social democracy was syndicalism. It is of course possible to argue that much of syndicalism was in fact social democratic in content if not in form.

However, despite Leninist claims to the contrary, this was far from the end of the story and the revolutionary wave which engulfed the world following the 1917 Russian Revolution also saw a 'revival' of syndicalism following the four years of world war. Syndicalism now, however, had two new rivals, Bolshevism and council or left communism.

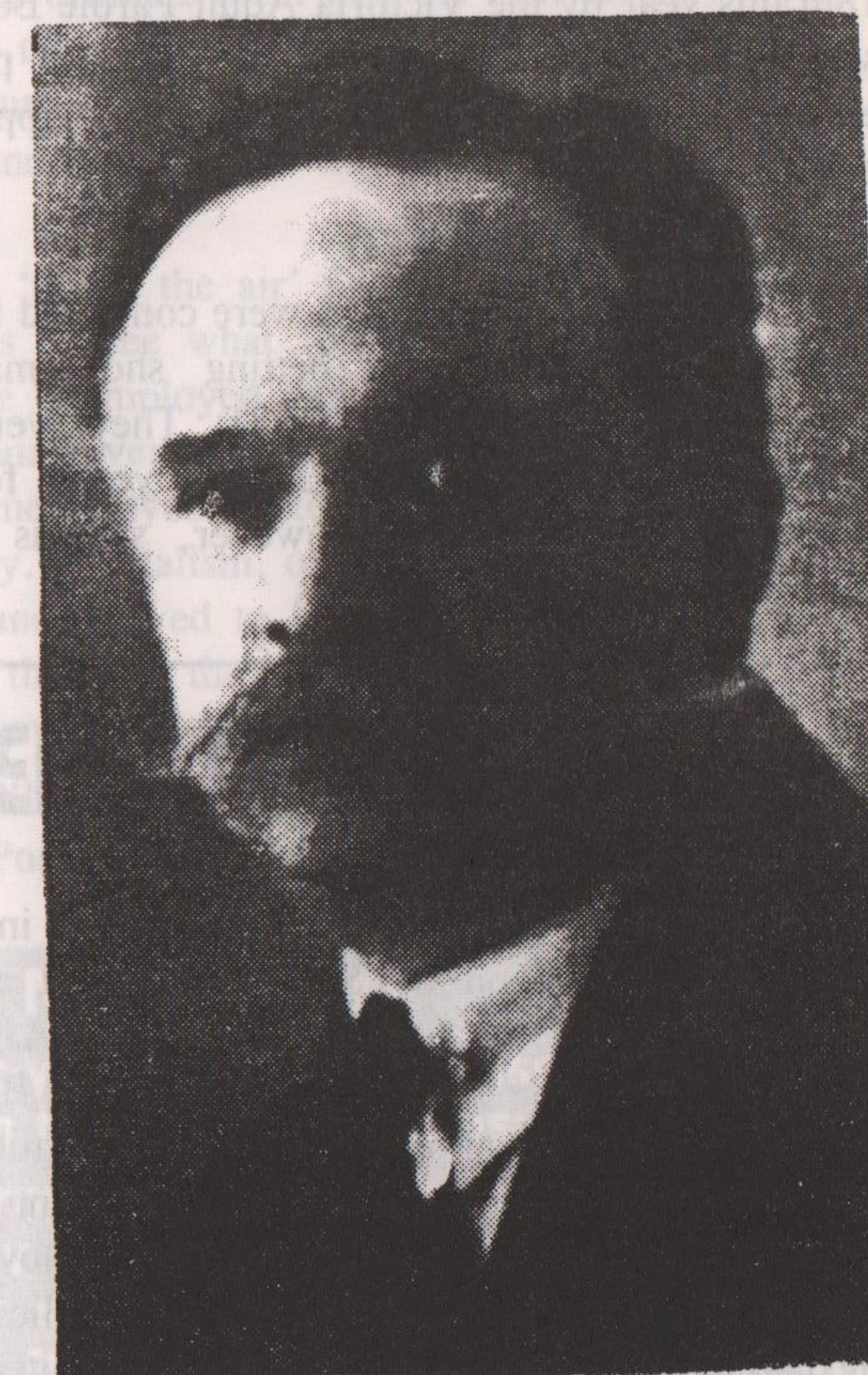
Bolshevism's triumph in Russia sent shock waves throughout the workers movement. Social Democratic parties everywhere developed would-be Bolshevik factions. These factions sooner or later split from the old parties and formed Communist Parties modelled on the Russian example. Many of the very earliest Communist Parties, however, emerged from the syndicalist, anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movements. The CGT in France developed a powerful communist-syndicalist faction; the IWW in the United States was wracked by in-fighting between dyed-in-the-wool industrial unionists and budding Bolsheviks; many of Britain's foremost pre-war syndicalists such as Tom Mann quickly gravitated towards the embryonic Communist Party. Impressed by the dynamism of Bolshevism and its ostensible break with social democracy, former syndicalists constituted the early rank and file of such parties everywhere. Amongst anarchists also, Bolshevism possessed a magnet-like quality, not least because it was associated with the Soviets, the council organisations which seemed to offer an alternative to state organisation.

The Workers Councils

When news came through that everything in the Socialist Fatherland was not rosy and as Bolshevism attempted to create both a Third International of political parties and a Red Trade Union International under their strict control, dissension began to emerge. Many of the earliest critics of Moscow were not syndicalists however but Marxists previously involved with socialist political parties. These militants began to question the Trade Union and Parliamentary policy of the Bolsheviks and their closest impersonators. Groups such as the Workers Socialist Federation in Britain, the Communist Workers Party of Germany and similar 'left' communists (meaning 'left' of the Third International) saw in the experience of the revolutionary workers councils (or Soviets) in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1919 the form, as they saw it, that the new struggles would take. After coming out against the Bolsheviks and attempting to create their own International in 1921 (the original 4th International!) this

political current became known as council communism. Council communist organisations only took anything approaching mass form in Germany although they also existed in countries such as Holland, France, Belgium and Britain.

At the same time the international syndicalist movement began to re-organise itself through the creation of the I.W.A. (International Working Mens' Association). In 1922 the syndicalist movement could still claim large unions such as the Unione Sindicale Italiana (500,000 members), the Confederacao Geral do Trabalho in Portugal (150,000) and the Freie Arbeiter Union in Germany (120,000). They were joined by the Spanish Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) in 1923. By 1923, however, the Leninist/Stalinist ice-age was beginning and between that and the emergence of fascism, syndicalism was facing a difficult period, to say the least. Within 10 years the only mass syndicalist union left was the CNT. The others were now reduced to groups of militants scattered in exile or living in a semi-underground condition. By 1936 all that was left were small propaganda groups in various countries, a few minority unions and the 2 million strong CNT about to play a historic role in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.

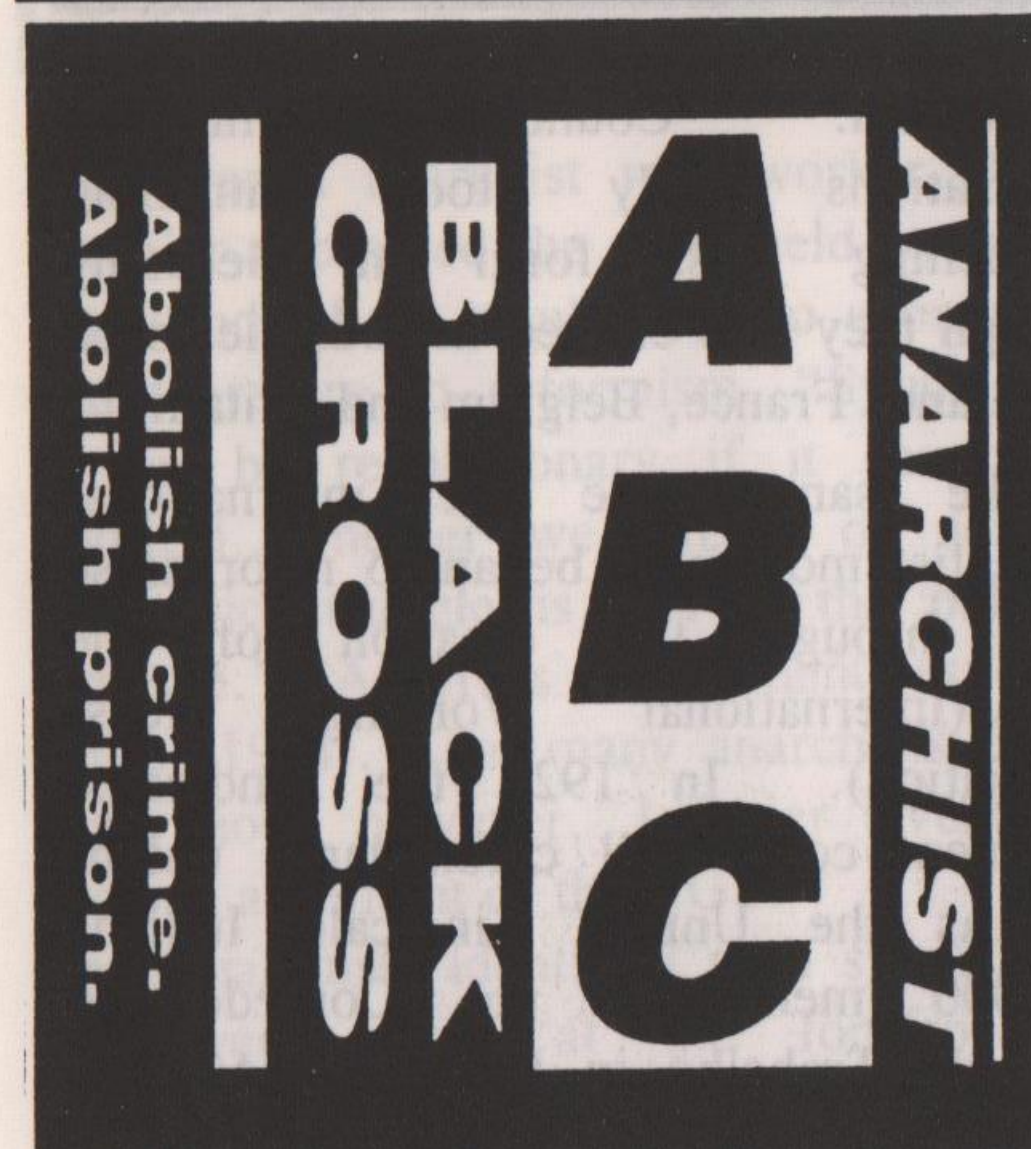


Pierre Monatte:

leading anarchist supporter of syndicalism

The Spanish Revolution - The End of Anarchism? (to be continued in the next issue)





Polish Anti-Fascists

THE TRIAL OF 13 people in Poland for the killing of a fascist in self-defence (as reported in *Organise!* 45) has taken place. The result was that 8 were freed, and 5 were convicted. They are planning to appeal against their sentences, and are

therefore requesting financial support to help pay for this. They also need money as they all have large fines to pay.

Send messages of support to the 5:

Tomasz Wilkoszewski (15 years for murder); Gregorz Pasak (3 years 6 months); Rafat Socha (3 years 6 months); Andrezej Szczesniowski (3 years).

All at Areszt Sledczy, UL. W.P. 24, 97-300 Piotrkow Trybunalski, Poland.

Mariusz Zych (3 years). He is at Zaktad Karny, Mecka Wola, Poland.

Send donations to ABC-Warszawa PO-Box 71, 01-125 Warszawa, Poland

Ben Alterman

Following his 34 day hunger strike last year (see *Organise!* 44) which resulted in the Office of Corrections admitting that they were wrong to withhold his mail and that it wouldn't happen again, Ben was surprised to find himself being granted parole on February 18th this year by the Victoria Adult Parole Board in Australia. He sees this as a vindication of the value of prisoner support and extends his thanks to all the people who supported him. We wish him well!

The Toxteth Two

Ray Gilbert and John Kamara were convicted in December 1981 of killing John Suffield, a betting shop manager in Toxteth, Liverpool, on 13th March 1981. They were sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and 6 years for robbery to run concurrently. There are, however, serious doubts as to their convictions and evidence exists

which proves their innocence. A number of things casts doubts on their convictions; none of the eye witnesses picked them out during identity parades; no forensic evidence was provided linking them to the crime; evidence was fabricated by police and other inmates; the prosecution used uncorroborated statement evidence; their alibis were not properly investigated by the police; there was interference of defence witnesses; custody records were destroyed; deals were made between police and remand prisoners for shorter sentences to testify against the two accused, with interviews and statements not being released; and two juries were dismissed, one on a point of law, and the other for reasons not disclosed.

Informants

In 1981, prosecution witness Thomas Pickett admitted to other inmates at HMP Risley that his statement was fabricated. The Home Office took 7 years to look into this. In 1992, all remand prosecution witnesses were requested due to serious concerns about their statements against the two men. Liverpool police refuse to release the original inquiry document in order to protect their informants. There are believed to be other statements made by remand prisoners interviewed at the time; there is also documentation from subsequent inquiries into the conviction.

In 1993 C3 department of the Home Office asked police to look into points raised in letters to MPs. They concluded the convictions were 'safe'. In the same year the Rough Justice team lost all of Ray's legal documentation which has caused him severe problems in obtaining correct paperwork.

Both men consistently protest their innocence and resist their maltreatment whenever possible. Because of this they are often singled out for special attention. Ray is currently in the Segregation Unit. Their case has recently been forwarded to the newly appointed Criminal Case Review Board which is supposed to investigate miscarriages of justice. There are already serious concerns about the effectiveness of this body, despite the fact that it has yet to do anything of note.

This case is yet another serious frame-up in Britain. Both men are continuing their struggle for justice, and we urge you to support them however you can.

Send letters of support to:- Ray Gilbert, H10111, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 5TZ.

John Kamara, H10109, HMP Swaleside, Brabazon Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4DZ.

For more information contact:- Newcastle ABC, c/o PO Box 1TA, Newcastle, NE99 1TA.

DOLE BONDAGE - UP YOURS!

Dole Bondage - Up Yours! is a pamphlet in the form of an open letter of resignation by Stuart Bracewell as secretary of Wales Against the Job Seekers Allowance (WAJSA). It recounts the development of the group until late 1996. By then, as happens in many single issue campaigns, leftist domination of a broad front of activists first rendered the group irrelevant to those it had been formed to empower, in this case the unemployed. Then it sapped the group of the creative energy needed to publicise and fight the issue, by calling another boring demo with limited potential. Finally it destroyed the group as it stood by inactivity, by not building for or turning up for the march they had called, leaving unemployed activists demoralised and disillusioned. As an angry founder member of WAJSA, Stuart Bracewell exposes the cynical and redundant organisations such as the CPSA, Socialist Party (then Militant) etc. whom he rightly blames for the stagnation of the group. This is a lesson to us all.

WAJSA was, with hindsight, doomed from the first, containing an alliance of anarchists and Earth-Firsters and members of Militant,



Socialist Labour Party, Cymru Goch, Alliance for Workers Liberty and later, the CPSA. As is often the case when such groups come together "sectarian differences...seemed to have been put aside". Sectarian differences are a red herring when it comes to working with the left. What is really at issue is our entirely different agendas. What proves to be a problem, as it did in WAJSA, is that the Left's first tactic is to make sure that their agenda becomes that of the group. In response, libertarians frequently put our agenda on the back-burner, or express it only apologetically, for the sake of unity. In this case, the libertarian agenda was the empowerment of the unemployed. The Leftist agenda was the empowerment of CPSA members working in Benefit Agency/Employment Service, which was eventually exposed by their own tactics and refusal to engage in any action opposed by CPSA representatives. These agendas were not only different but, as time has told, mutually exclusive.

"Ultra-Left nonsense"

The CPSA are the union whose members' job it has been to implement the welfare state and to protect its resources from 'fraud' by claimants. Since the introduction of the JSA in particular, this role has been extended to the active persecution of the unemployed. In WAJSA, the inevitable conflict of interests came to a head when CPSA reps turned up to accuse libertarians of planning assaults on their members. This was part of the hysterical response of much of the Left to the Three Strikes policy; a policy which does not involve recommending physical assaults on employment staff, has not actually been implemented anywhere except in Edinburgh where it originated and has not even been mentioned, let alone debated, in WAJSA until this point. Suggestions that the CPSA members obstruct the legislation were labelled "ultra-left nonsense" by a CPSA steward, and to occupy offices of managers in a show of "mutual solidarity" between the CPSA workers and claimants was called "Mickey Mouse terrorism" by a Socialist Party member. As *Dole Bondage* points out itself, "abstract calls for unity and solidarity are futile unless there is something concrete to base that unity on, and mutual acts of solidarity".

Dole Bondage raised particular interest in Nottingham Campaign Against the JSA (NCAJSA), not least because it reached that group exactly at the same time as the Left disassociated themselves from NCAJSA. NCAJSA was lucky, having potentially fallen prey to Leftist inertia, and worse, itself. Fortunately, the Left are so weak these days that they tend to drift off if they can't dominate a group by numbers or by large amounts of ill-directioned activism (letter writing, press work etc.). The 'spontaneously libertarian' nature of NCJSA (most of its long-standing members had never met before the group was started) frightened the Left as soon as they appeared, because of the high level of political awareness and consequent debate in the group. This process of discussing politics in meetings is very frustrating to trade unionists in particular, who claim to know only that the workers are right and potentially have power, and that claimants are victims of capital and have no power. Well, where does this leave the unemployed when they perceive themselves to be in conflict with workers? Simply raising this question meant that NCAJSA was "ideologically confused". Things came to a head when a leading Militant member initiated an anti-Project Work demo at the offices of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, in the middle of nowhere, volunteering his cadre in support and also to do the press work and arrange an 'appointment' with the manager to make sure he would be present. Scarcely like the WAJSA experience, none of these promises materialised and the demo was an embarrassing flop. The office wasn't even staffed at the time of the demo! Soon the group heard through minutes of a Trades Council meeting sent to the unemployed workers delegate! that the group was "anti-worker" and had been dropped.

If the Left had been a large or very active proportion of NCAJSA membership, this would have been as destructive to the group as the presence of the Left was to WAJSA. Happily, NCAJSA is now free to criticise those who need criticising; those who need to wake up and realise that we no longer live in a clear-cut world of worker vs. boss (if we ever did). Politics and daily life is far more complex. For example, as *Dole Bondage* points out, it is the same leftists who oppose and attack scabs for undermining the power of workers as are now attempting to undermine the power of the unemployed to survive the attacks of the state. They do this by supporting the workers who uncritically implement state legislation, uncritically except to demand screens to protect themselves from the evil and violent unemployed. They fail to see that cutting off someone's benefit, or even threatening to, goes beyond 'doing their jobs'. It is threatening violence -starvation- against claimants. We have to ask, would the reaction be as indifferent to racist or sexist legislation. Of course not, and rightly. It would seem that, as long as a worker is a 'legitimate' worker i.e. not a scab that the unemployed can be sacrificed so that that worker can build his or her career. As a CPSA member of WAJSA put it, when it was suggested that industrial action should be taken, "(it was better that) union members implement the JSA than scabs".

Groundswell

It has to be said that the non-Labourite Groundswell network has provided a national framework for debate and activism essential for groups such as the one in Nottingham to survive. If WAJSA had been less Left dominated and more involved in Groundswell (which *Dole Bondage* admits it was not) then the libertarian-minded might have found the support necessary to establish their own agenda from the start. For clarification, the ACF is involved in local groups and consequently in Groundswell. Whilst much valuable debate about the JSA takes place in the ACF we do not seek to set up JSA groups or to co-ordinate them like the Left do their 'front organisations', nor to take them over! We seek to participate in what we call the 'culture of resistance' as it emerges, and to both support it practically and influence it with our ideas on an open and non-cynical basis.

Things are somewhat 'up in the air' for the anti-JSA movement nationally, as it waits to see what form of forced labour New Labour is offering the unemployed and plans its response. But a combination of a Labour government and the leftist abandonment of the interests of the unemployed makes it easier for claimants to identify the real enemy. Capitalism, of whatever variety, needs the unemployed to stay unemployed to keep its workers working. It should be no surprise then that the left-wing of capitalism wants to stifle political debate amongst the unemployed.

The Pamphlet is available from *Infantile Disorder*. PO Box 10 (no other mention), Pontypool NP4 8YH Wales. Cost £1.

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* you might be interested in these publications:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole Cl, c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of group of same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Activist and Thinker

The Anarchist Revolution. Polemical Articles 1924-1931. Errico Malatesta. 124 pages. Freedom Press. £3.50

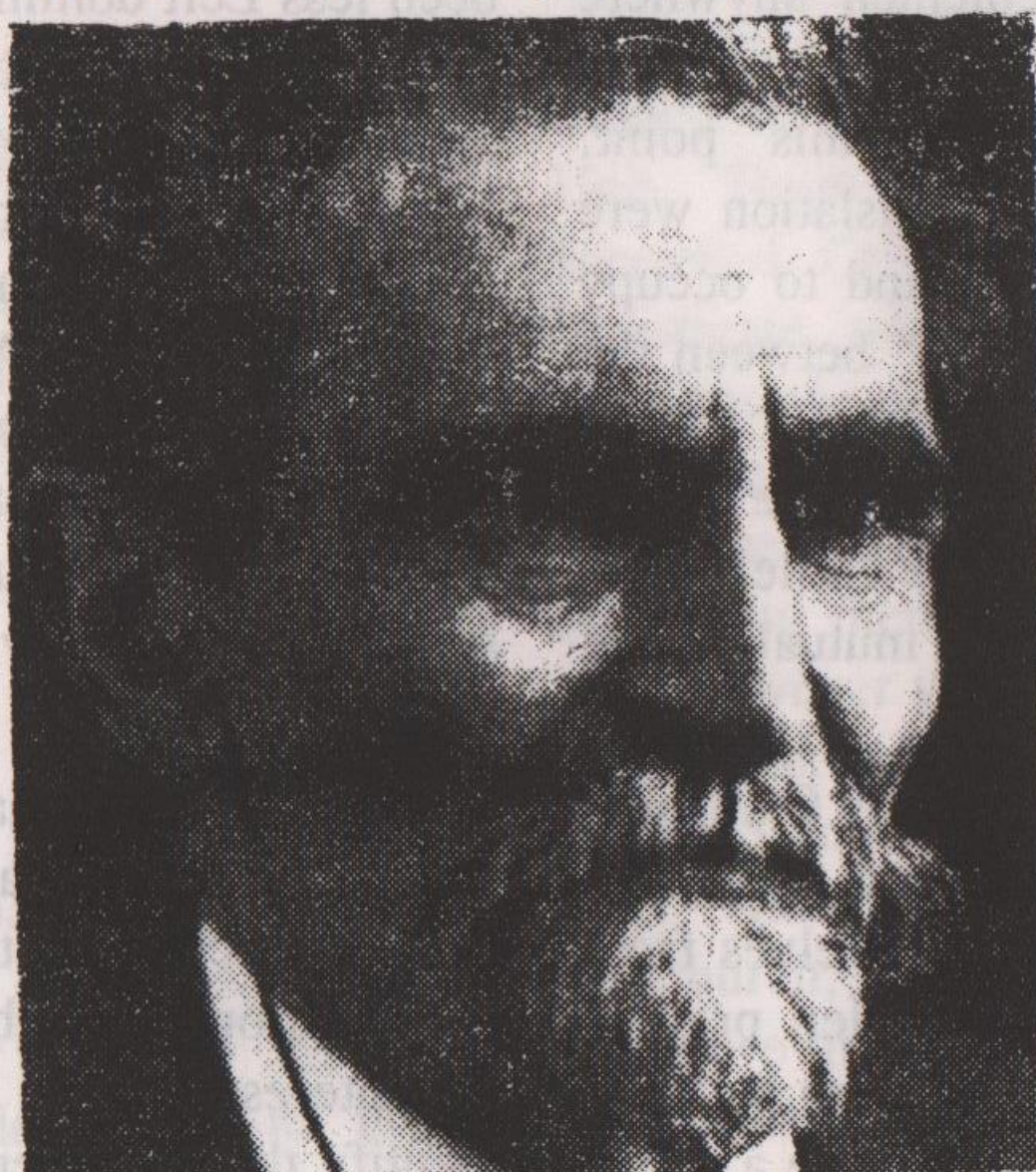
THIS BOOK, EDITED and introduced by Vernon Richards, gathers together articles translated in full for the first time and intended to supplement *Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* also published by Freedom Press. Malatesta was an Italian anarchist agitator active for more than 60 years. These writings are important because they cover the period of fascist reaction in Italy for much of which Malatesta was under house arrest. The "preventive counter-revolution" as another outstanding anarchist communist, Luigi Fabbri, a close associate of Malatesta, called the rise of Mussolini and Fascism, was to lay waste to the effervescent optimism of the Italian anarchists.

Malatesta remained an anarchist communist through his long life as a revolutionary. He took an active part as a militant devoted to organisation in the Unione Anarchica Italiana (UAI) which was founded in 1920. The founding of this organisation did not mean the uniting of all anarchists in one body. A good part of the movement, including the anti-organisational current among the anarchist communists, with Luigi Galleani as their leading light, as well as the anarchist Individualists, took a critical attitude to the UAI, judging it as too 'centralising'. In the face of these divisions, very characteristic of the Italian movement, with harsh arguments and fierce polemics, there were periodic efforts to at least find unity in action in the light of the setback of the revolution and the common foe of reaction and fascism.

Practical

This explains Malatesta's articles in this collection on individualism where he attempts to persuade adherents of this current of the eminent logic of communism, at the same time underlining the possible bureaucratic and centralising dangers that could arise. Malatesta never gave in to the vaunting optimism that afflicted Kropotkin. He was not afraid to realise that problems are bound to arise. Only at one time, in the light of the Bolshevik seizure of power in the name of 'communism' did he consider the label 'associationist' rather than 'communist'. These doubts soon pass and he re-affirms his devotion to the concept of anarchist communism throughout the other essays that follow. Similarly he addresses himself to the problem of the unions. Always critical of syndicalism, whether anarcho- or revolutionary, he says: "So what should the anarchists do when the workers' organisation, faced with the inflow

of a majority driven to it by their economic needs alone, ceases to be a revolutionary force and becomes involved in a balancing act between capital and labour and possibly even a factor in preserving the status quo". However he fails to carry through these criticisms to their logical conclusions, and opts for "anarchists to remain in these organisations, as they are, to work within them and seek to push them forward to the best of their ability, ready to avail themselves, in critical moments of history, of the influence they may have gained, and to transform them swiftly from modest weapons of defence to powerful tools of attack". This begs the question, whether the unions, syndicalist or otherwise, can be so used, and whether new forms of organisation, for example workers councils, would not arise in revolutionary times. It is easy being wise with hindsight, but we must remember that Malatesta was already armed with a critique of syndicalism and had



supported the development of the factory councils.

He came to the conclusion that the establishment of a libertarian society would be the result of a series of successive breaks and periods of gradual progress. This progress meant an adoption of a "practical programme that can be adapted to the various circumstances that may arise as society develops prior to, during and after the revolution" (*On 'Anarchist Revisionism'*). Whilst not in the least abandoning the need for a revolutionary break with the old society, he saw that there would be periods of preparation, when anarchists would have to do their utmost to prepare the masses of the population through propaganda and education.

All of this raises a number of questions. Will this be the scenario for the establishment of an anarchist society, via a series of revolutionary changes? Will there be periods in between of relative stability?

Or will the transition to anarchist communism involve one cataclysmic break? Malatesta was influenced by the thought that somehow Fascism would collapse, due to antagonisms between the different currents within it, or antagonism from sections of the ruling class that were supporting it for the time being, or as a result of a mass uprising or as combination of these factors. He must have envisaged the establishment of some 'left social' republic as a first stage after the fall of fascism. However he failed to envisage the World War, and then the establishment of the "Historic Compromise" in Italy, a direct consequence of the Cold War.

Platform

Finally, the book contains a polemic between Malatesta and Nestor Makhno about the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. Makhno wrote this with other Russian and Ukrainian anarchists, advancing the need for a General Union of Anarchists and for collective responsibility and tactical and theoretical unity. Malatesta quite correctly points out that a General Union was impossible, as opposing tendencies within anarchism could not long last within the same organisation, quoting the Platform itself on this question. Having got down to the fact that the Platformists meant a specific anarchist communist organisation, which they themselves should have made clear, Malatesta then delivers a number of criticisms about collective responsibility, majority decisions, and the Executive Committees as proposed by the Platform. In some ways this exchange appears to be a dialogue of people not really understanding what each other means. Malatesta criticises the concept of collective responsibility and then elaborates something that seems to be exactly what the Platform means by collective responsibility. Now, I have always taken the expression Executive Committee as proposed by the platform to mean a co-ordinating body controlled by the membership, perfectly compatible with anarchist and revolutionary principles. However, the term is ambiguous and is inadequately explained. Should not have Malatesta got to the substance of what the Platform meant, rather than react in a knee-jerk way to the use of the term? Makhno's clarity on the need to solve the problems of disorganisation are not adequately answered by Malatesta. Indeed, the general repression throughout Europe meant that the whole problem of organisation was not to be seriously debated again until the fifties.

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AUSTRIAN STATE ATTACKS ANARCHISTS *continued from page 5*

could easily use the now collected facts to criminalize anarchists.

In April 16 1996 the private rooms of one activist of the anarchist journal *Libertad O Muerte!* (LOM) were searched through as well. In June 1995 LOM did a flyer about a fascist monument in Innsbruck. In December 1995 this stone was smashed by some unknown activists. So the investigation police uses this fact to have a look into the anarchist scene of Innsbruck. The activist was held at the police office headquarters for 5 hours. Later on 2 other anarchists were invited to interrogation as well. A month later all the confiscated material is given back and in Mid of June 1996 the LOM-activists is being informed by the public prosecutor that the accusation against him (of severe damage) was withdrawn due to a lack of evidences. Another example for a repression based on a constructed criminal act.

In the last 2 years such repressions, raids and interrogations have constantly taken place within the anarchist and radical left scene. These here are just 2 examples of how the Austrian state is working in order to diminish our motivation and energy to fight back. However we shouldn't see such repressions disconnected from all the other repression waves going on all over Europe. The different European states are co-operating to reduce to silence and intimidate critical and subversive minds.

Solidarity With All Political Prisoners And The Persecuted!

Anarchist Greetings To All Comrades Living Underground!

State Violence Has No Limits, Neither Has Anarchist Solidarity!

¹ All these law paragraphs have never been used so far in the Austrian history. They are all some sort of relicts out of monarchist, austro-fascist and national-socialistic times. They can be

compared to the popular German laws §129 and §129a.

¹ The AUF is the FPÖ-police union. The FPÖ is the party of the famous ultra-conservative, right-wing and xenophobic Jörg Haider, which got about 25% of the votes at the last elections. The political line of the FPÖ may be compared to that of the Front National in France. There are strong links between FPÖ-politicians and members on the one side and fascists and neo-nazis on the other side. The main slogan of the FPÖ was some years ago "Austrians first!"

Addresses: Revolutionsbräuhof, Hahngasse 15, 1090 Vienna, Austria (contact address for the Anarchist Bookshop and the committee against repression as well) Libertad O Muerte!, c/o LOM, Postlagernd, 6024 Innsbruck, Austria.

Sources: TATblatt #50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 75; Kultur Zwischendurch #76, 77; plus various flyers and information sheets

Article written by: **HABASLETAT** (from Libertad O Muerte!) c/o LOM, Postlagernd, 6024 Innsbruck, Austria.

OBITUARIES

Georgi Grigoriev (Balkanski) 1906-1996

THE VETERAN BULGARIAN anarchist Georgi Grigoriev died 12 October 1996 at the age of 90 in Sofia. He was an anarchist from the age of 14, and a year later joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Bulgaria (FACB) which had been founded in 1919.

Georgi himself narrowly escaped a murder bid by a Royalist gang in 1925, and was forced to take refuge in Czechoslovakia. He then became an agronomics student in France. Here he joined a large number of Bulgarian anarchists, who had fled via Yugoslavia and Austria. Most of the group settled in Toulouse and this 35-strong group, of which Georgi, under the name of Hadjiev, was a member in conjunction with comrades in Paris and Beziers, carried out an important work of political elaboration and the drafting of a programme for the FACB. Returning to Bulgaria after an amnesty in 1930, Grigoriev and the others organised an underground group in Sofia. The work of agitation culminated in the clandestine national conference of the FACB in 1932, held in the forest, near Lovech. The conference was a major step in the reconstitution of the FACB. But in 1934, the military re-established its grip. Once more, Grigoriev fled to France.

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and revolution, the Bulgarian anarchist movement both in exile and underground in Bulgaria, gave their support to the Spanish anarchists. 30 militants managed to defy the pact of non-intervention and entered Spain, either by boat or over the Pyrenees. Grigoriev himself was present as delegate of the FACB at the joint conference of the CNT anarcho-syndicalist union and the specific anarchist organisation, the FAI, in November 1936.

Returning to Bulgaria Grigoriev was arrested in 1939, spending time in prison and then concentration camp until liberation on 19 September 1944. The FACB began to re-organise, but there was only a year's grace before the Communists clamped down on them. At least a thousand militants were put in concentration camps. Grigoriev evaded capture, fleeing to France. Here under the pseudonym of Balkanski he took part in the exile organisation, the

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Bulgarian Anarchist Union, as well as participating in anarchist activities in France. He published two books in French, a *History of the Anarchist Movement in Bulgaria and National Liberation and Social Revolution*. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Grigoriev returned to Bulgaria, where he was reunited with the family that he had not seen for 40 years. He took an active part in the resurgence of the Bulgarian movement and above all in the founding of the Bulgarian Anarchist Federation.

Gerard Ali Khanifar 1950-1997

THIS FRENCH COMRADE of Arab origin died on 21 February 1997. Born on 10 August 1950 he went to schools organised by Michelin for their workers. Because of his North African background, he found school life difficult and he remained forever marked by the humiliations he received there. He started work at Michelin among the 'sans grades' (the unskilled and lowest grade of worker). He became an anarchist in May 1968 when he actively participated in the worker-student liaison. His concern for effective organisation led him to join the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste (ORA). He served several prison terms for his active solidarity with Spanish and Portuguese Anarchists in struggle against Franco and Salazar. His uncompromising militancy put him on many a bosses' blacklist. Self-taught, in 1993 he obtained a diploma at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales thanks to his work on Bakunin *For a Contemporary Reading of Bakunin*. He went on to gain a doctorate with his work on the life and activities of a local French Anarchist. He prepared a work of popularisation on the ideas of Bakunin and contributed to the Biographical Dictionary of the Workers Movement founded by the Anarchist historian Jean Maitron. His industrial activities were both on an international level (solidarity with the British miners in 1984-5) and local (latterly work with the striking lorrydrivers, the unemployed and the casualised theatre workers). Theoretician and activist, he helped set up the Spartacus group of the Federation archiste in Clermont Ferrand in 1994. For his friends and comrades he was warm and, above all, always in solidarity.

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FEATURE/OPEN LETTER

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE *continued from page 8*

The companies which made fortunes from telecommunications and publishing in the past have been able to use these resources to expand into the newer media fields and secure substantial stakes e.g. British Telecom's November 1996 achievement of a stake in News Corporation, which ultimately will surely see Murdoch's programmes being piped down BT's cables.

Nonetheless, just as many small alternative publishers have obtained an audience in the past, devices such as camcorders and computers

linked via the Internet are allowing a broader and faster distribution of dissenting views. It is only to be expected that those in authority will respond by trying to limit these new forms of expression. In the contest of opposing views of how the world is and could be, what people experience and how it is confirmed or denied by the media is crucial. It is the class struggle within people's minds, the place where it begins. It can only end with the achievement of a real social revolution.

Open Letter

The following is an edited reply to the Turkish and Kurdish anarchists whose open letter was printed in *Organise!* No 45.

Dear 5th May Group

WE HAVE DISCUSSED your proposal and we have decided to support your call for a conference, however we did decide that it would be better if the conference was separate from the Anarchist bookfair, as it is all too easy for just anyone to turn up without any commitment to the aims of such a conference. This would also go for the day after the Bookfair, as we will be having an ACF meeting then. In any case, you may find the Bookfair date is too soon and that there is not time for a long meeting as there are always lots of other meetings happening that day.

The ACF would not support the idea of organisation of a conference being limited to the first three respondents. It should be open to all interested groups. I'm sure that you did mean for all groups to participate on an equal basis, so I think that it would be best to wait and find out whether you get any other positive replies. From a political point of view, the sort of initiatives that you are suggesting has always faced difficulties, as there are anarchists who do believe in class who are anti-organisation. You will be aware the number of anarchists who are

involved in class struggle anarchist or anarchist groupings on a national or a world wide scale are relatively small. This is something that the ACF itself is trying to address, as we are currently building stronger links with anarchist communists world wide.

Of those who consider themselves class struggle anarchists, some of these are stuck with localist tendencies, though some links exist between these such as the Northern Anarchist Network, who are predominately class struggle and also comprises of members of the ACF and other organisations like the Solidarity Federation, Subversion, and the Scottish Federation of Anarchists. So there is already some organisation outside of the longer established federations, and this works fairly well in co-ordinating actions like the anti-JSA, Dockers support, ect, and there is also a cross over with single issue groups.

You may not be aware that initiatives like you are proposing have already been tried. There is currently a grouping of revolutionary socialist network, which involves a variety of Marxists and a few anarchists. The ACF is unlikely to support the idea of a confederation of groups with widely differing views about anarchism. In Britain we are closest political with



Subversion who do not wish to be labelled as either anarchists or Marxists. We agree in our objection of syndicalism and of nationalist tendencies, both issues which are an immediate problem in any call for unity in the 'movement'.

So, all though there are some problems for your call for a confederation, in your open letter a point which is perhaps not addressed in the current networks, that is, how to involve comrades from other countries who are currently in Britain. Maybe this question is the one you could bring up by organising a brief meeting at the Bookfair for those who have responded to your letter (and those who may not have seen it) to discuss your proposal further.

In summary, we supports the idea of organising a conference, whether or not this leads to the formation of a confederation. An initial meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair would help get more support for the idea, and would also raise some of the specific

problems that you are having as Turkish and Kurdish anarchists in Britain. Please let me know when you get anymore interest in your proposal and how you want to take this forward.

NOW AVAILABLE

Organise! Index

A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues No 14-No 43

Send a Press Fund donation payable to ACF, to:- ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

London ACF are proud to announce the appearance of a new pamphlet in the Stormy Petrel series:

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals. All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them.. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.). Deadlines for next issue are 1st October for features and reviews, and 8th October for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Press Fund

You can send cheques, POs, IMOs (made out to ACF) stamps etc. You can even send us a standing order to our account. (write to London address for details) All donations to London address.

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We need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends and workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people. Write for *Organise!* You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles. Subscribe to *Organise!* Why not take out a sub to *Organise!* Better still take out a supporter sub. Get your friends to subscribe or treat them to a sub. *Organise!* will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas. Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

ORGANISE! BACK ISSUES

BACK ISSUES OF *Organise!* (from issues 19-40) are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE. Issues 25, 30, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 43 are sold out.

Issue 26: Women and revolution; Direct action.

Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X.

Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise.

Issue 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural laws.

Issue 35: Rwanda; Italy; Carmageddon; Poetry and revolution. Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.

Issue 40: Work; Job Seekers Allowance; Art As A Weapon.

Issue 41: French Revolt; Scargill's SLP; Racism.

Issue 42: 10 years of the ACF special with History of anarchist communism in Britain.

Issue 44: Underclass; Surrealism; Eco-Fascism.

Issue 45: Albania; Ecology; Industry; Voting.

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Organise! on the Net

Articles from *Organise!* can now be found on the internet.

Address: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~acf/>

You can also E-Mail us at acf@burn.ucsd.edu

Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. For contacts :

Scotland: PO BOX 5754, Elgin, Scotland, IV 30 2ZD

Wales: PO Box 10, Pontypool, Cymru, NP4 8YH

Merseyside: Merseyside ACF, PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP

Brighton: Brighton ACF, c/o Unemployed Centre, Tilbury Place, Brighton, Sussex

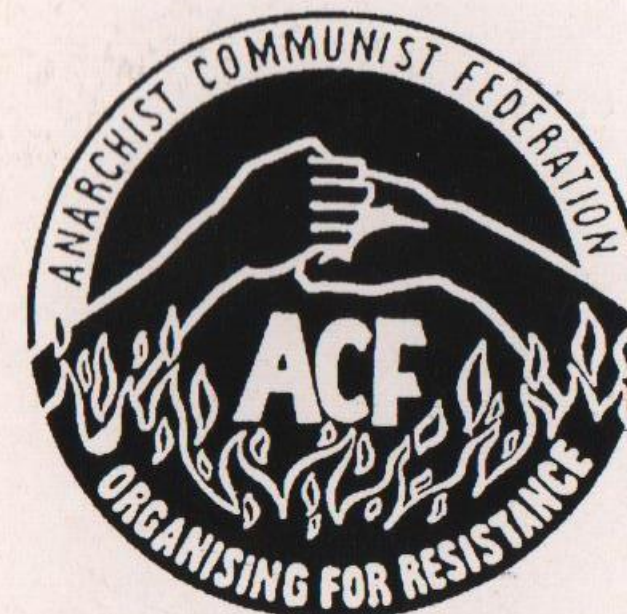
Newcastle: ACF, PO Box ITA, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1TA

London and all other areas: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street London, E1 7QX

ACF International Contacts

New Zealand: PO Box 6572, Wellsey St. Auckland. New Zealand

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☐ Please put me on the ACF's mailing list.

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