

Che Guevara

IN THE SECOND of our series we look at the life and ideas of Ernesto Che Guevara. Che has been in the news a lot lately, with his remains being dug up in Bolivia and reburied in Cuba, the publication of hitherto unknown photos of his Bolivian campaign and two new biographies. The heroic cult that has developed around him has taken on new life. Whilst his image - on T-shirts, posters, and beer labels - continues to make money for capitalists, there seems to be a revival among the young in the idea of Che as idealistic hero and fighter for freedom. This hero cult seems to have infected many young radicals, some of whom regard themselves as anarchists.

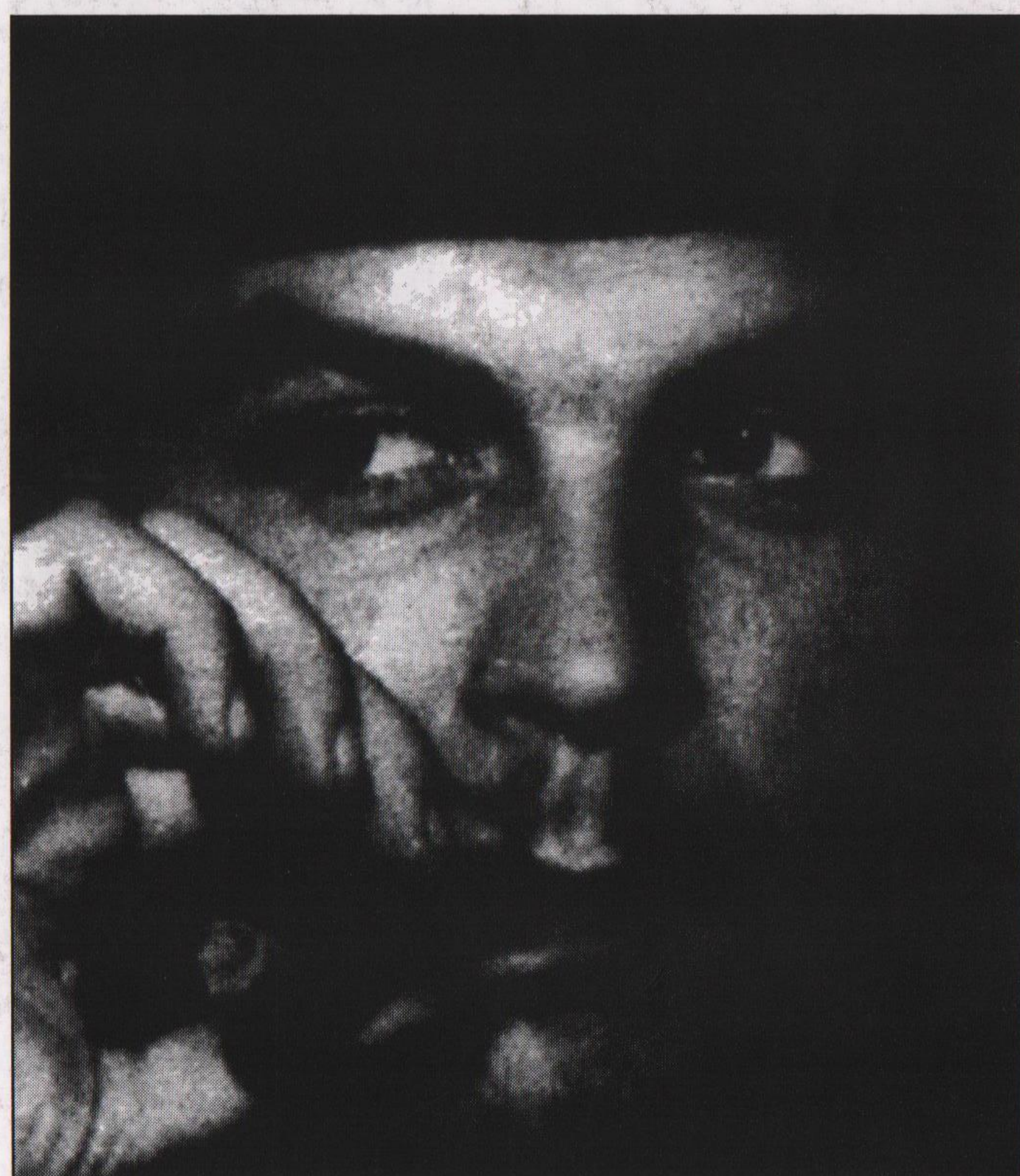
The truth may be unpalatable to many. After all, the Che cult is still used to obscure the real nature of Castro's Cuba, one of the final bastions of Stalinism. As jaded Stalinists and fellow-travelling Trotskyists celebrate Che's anniversary we take a look at the real man behind the legend.

Born in Argentina to a Cuban aristocratic family who had fallen on hard times but who still had much wealth, Guevara had a comfortable upbringing. When Juan and Eva Peron started on their rise to power, using populism and appeals to workers and peasants to install a regime that had many fascist characteristics (1944-1952) Guevara was still a youth. At this period he seemed remarkably disinterested in politics and failed to offer any opinions for or against the Peron regime.

Events in Guatemala were to change this. Arbenz, a leftist army officer, was elected as President. In 1952 he nationalised the property of the United Fruit Company, a major US company which owned much land and had great economic and political influence. He also began to nationalise the land of the local big ranchers and farmers. Guevara was caught up in enthusiasm for this experiment in 'socialism' which infected middle class Latin American youth. Just before a trip to Guatemala he wrote: "I have sworn before a picture of the old and mourned comrade Stalin that I won't rest until I see these capitalist octopuses annihilated".

Army

Guevara was in Guatemala when a US backed invasion force smashed the Arbenz regime. He was able to flee to Mexico. Here he joined up with the Cubans around Fidel Castro and his brother Raul. In November 1956, Che and 80 other members of the July 26 Movement (J26M) founded by Fidel had landed in Cuba to carry on a guerrilla campaign against the US backed dictator Batista. Here Che proved to be the most authoritarian and brutal of the guerrilla leaders. In fact Che went about turning volunteer bands of guerrillas into a classic



Army, with strict discipline and hierarchy. As he himself wrote: "Due to the lack of discipline among the new men... it was necessary to establish a rigid discipline, organise a high command and set up a Staff". He demanded the death penalty for "informers, insubordinates, malingerers and deserters". He himself personally carried out executions. Indeed the first execution carried out against an informer by the Castroists was undertaken by Che. He wrote: "I ended the problem giving him a shot with a .32 pistol in the right side of the brain". On another occasion he planned on shooting a group of guerrillas who had gone on hunger strike because of bad food. Fidel intervened to stop him. Another guerrilla who dared to question Che was ordered into battle without a weapon!

Apart from the drive towards militarisation in the guerrilla groups, Che also had

another important duty. He acted as the main spreader of Stalinism within J26M. He secretly worked towards an alliance with the Popular Socialist Party (the Cuban Communist Party). Up to then there were very few Stalinists within J26M and other anti-Batista groups like the Directorate and the anarchists were staunchly anti-Stalinist. The communists were highly unpopular among the anti-Batista forces. They had been junior partners of the regime and had openly condemned Castro's previous attacks on Batista in 1953. They belatedly joined the guerrilla war.

With the Castroite victory in 1959, Che, along with his Stalinist buddy Raul Castro, was put in charge of building up state control. He purged the army, carried out re-education classes within it, and was supreme prosecutor in the executions of Batista supporters, 550 being shot in the first few months. He was seen as extremely ruthless by those who saw him at work. These killings against supporters of the old regime, some of whom had been implicated in torture and murder, was extended in 1960 to those in the working class movement who criticised the Castro regime. The anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists had their press closed down and many militants were thrown in prison. Che was directly implicated in this. This was followed in 1962 with the banning of the Trotskyists and the imprisonment of their militants. Che said: "You cannot be for the revolution and be against the Cuban Communist Party". He repeated the old lies against the Trots that they were agents of imperialism and provocateurs. He helped set up a secret police, the C-2 and had a key role in creating the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, which were locally and regionally based bodies for spying on and controlling the mass of the population.

Missile Deal

Che was the main link, indeed the architect, of the increasingly closer relation between Cuba and the Soviet Union. The nuclear missile deal which almost resulted in a nuclear war in 1962 was engineered at the Cuban end by Che. When the Russians backed down in the face of US threats, Che was furious and said that if he had been in charge of the missiles, he would have fired them off!

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

INTERNATIONAL
ROUND-UP

AND LOADS MORE...

The Revolutionary Myth

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 worldwide 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.

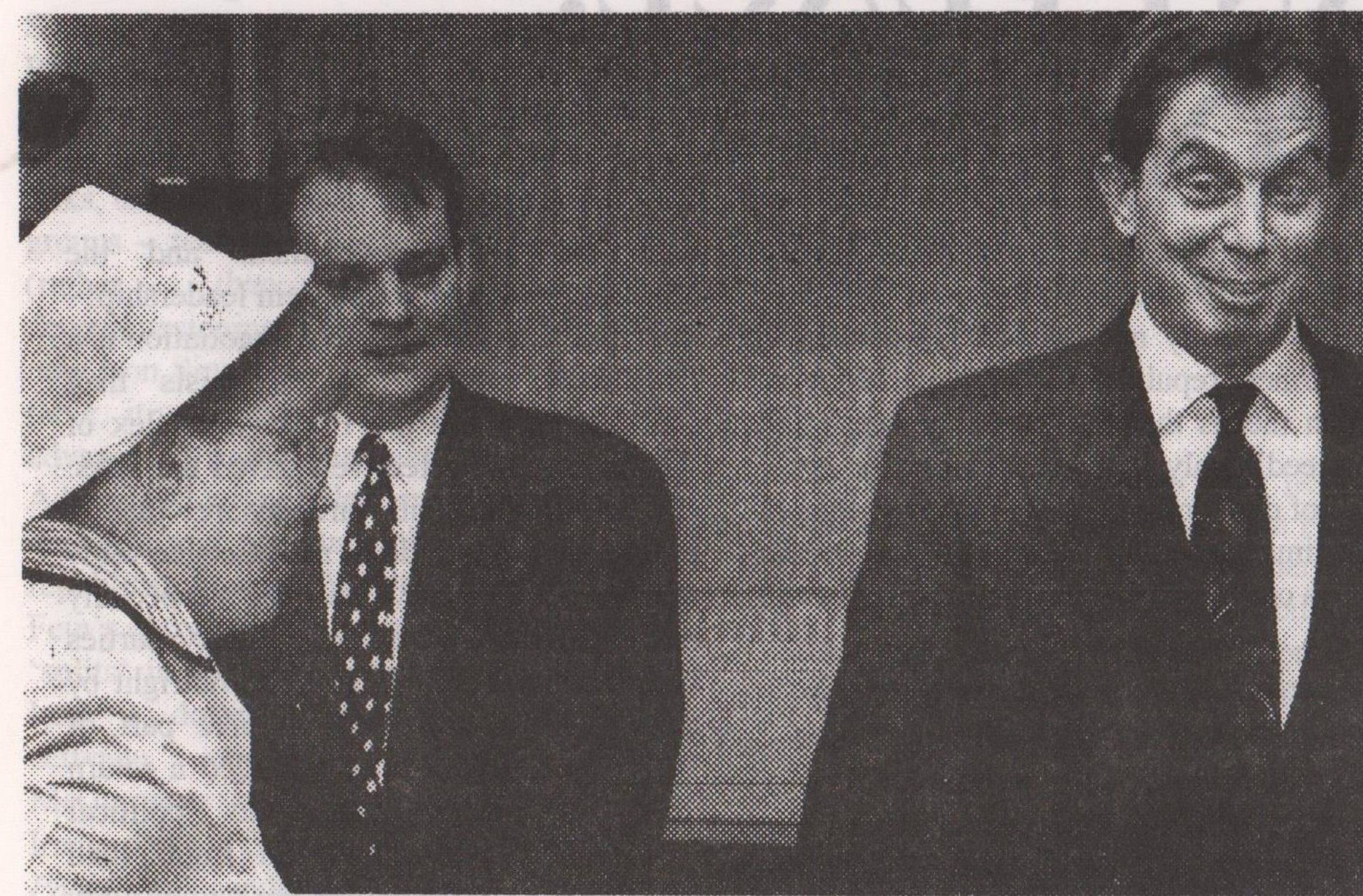
Organise!-what's happening?

READERS WILL BE aware that only two issues of *Organise!* appeared in 1997. We have prided ourselves on bringing *Organise!* out as regular as clockwork four times a year. However lack of funds has meant that the production of *Organise!* slowed down. We know that you, dear readers, look forward to each issue of *Organise!* and we hope to be back on schedule for 1998. You can help to keep us regular (!) by taking out standing orders to *Organise!*, taking out supporters or ordinary subscriptions, sending cheques or postal orders (for any sum from as low as 50p to your entire National

Lottery win of millions of pounds), made payable to ACF.

Readers may or may not be aware of the appearance of our agitational newsheet *Resistance* the pilot issue of which appeared in October. We have decided to suspend publication of *Active Resistance* our youth magazine and to concentrate on our new agitational *Resistance*. If you want copies of this send 46p worth of stamps to the London address. A new issue of *Resistance* is due out in January.

The Blair Necessities



Just in case you forgot what the git looks like...

"THROUGH ITS WELL-PUBLICISED stands against sleaze and corruption (Labour) will hope to head off disillusion, even though its reputation for corruption in particular in municipal councils is notorious" (Organise! 46). Our comments on the Labour victory have been overtaken by recent events. Labour's long-standing reputation for corruption has been highlighted by the 'money for influence' revelations concerning Formula One and Sainsbury's. Labour's attempts to restore confidence in democracy through its anti-corruption campaigns and postures have been severely damaged by these lightning revelations. In fact, these events have increased the growing cynicism and disillusion with parliamentary democracy, in particular among the young. Whether these trends translate into growing apathy, or a reinforcement of direct action and do-it-yourself organising remains to be seen. What is apparent is the need for revolutionary anarchists to help this reinforcement come about through sustained activity and propaganda.

Labour has been more successful in some of the constitutional reforms it promised. It delivered the goods on Scottish and Welsh devolution, in the short term heading off any immediate hopes by nationalists for the break-up of the United Kingdom. It still has the support of much of the media and sections of the boss class. It has forged what is in effect a National Government, with the Liberal Democrats as junior partners and Tories like Heseltine and Mellor incorporated into its committees on the Millennium 'celebrations' and sport. At

least in the short term it has succeeded in marginalising the Tories and increased the chances of pro-Tory splits.

Labour was also very concerned about the threat posed to the monarchy by an ever-mounting popular hostility. Whilst various Labour 'lefts' might describe themselves as republicans, Blair and his immediate clique have fallen over themselves to show how much they admire the Royal Family as an institution and as individuals. Far from being an attempt to undermine the monarchy, as various commentators in the media believed, Blair's intervention in the aftermath of Princess Diana's death was in fact an attempt to save it. By forcing the Royal Family to issue a statement and to return to London to meet the crowd of mourners, Blair was forcing them to streamline and to become more 'accessible'. He knew that only this would save them. His determination to preserve the monarchy was further underlined by the Golden Wedding Anniversary celebrations, with the unprecedented visit by the Royals to No. 10.

SUN WORSHIP

The Blair leadership is determined to forge as much ruling class unity as possible. Alongside the above manoeuvres to include Liberal Democrats and Tories, it invited Steve Hilton, who thought up the 'demon-eyes' campaign, to its last party conference, as well as a gang of former advisers to Tory ministers. Also attending the conference was the editor of the *Sun*, who then devoted five pages in his rag praising Blair.

Why does the Labour government seek this unity? It wishes to firstly put over the illusion of consensus, to return, in rhetoric only, to the so-called society of class peace championed by old-style Tories like Heath and MacMillan, and the old Labour governments of Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan. Indeed some of the Blair government's tactics are based on a close study of Wilson's tactics whilst in power. Will Hutton in his book *The State We're In* spelt this out: "Agreement with the Lib Dems is part of the construction of a wider coalition of interests. Labour has broken away from its old role as the standard bearer of the organised working class (*Shurely shome mistake?-ed.*). The best in the English liberal tradition-reformist, fair-minded, tolerant, even 'stakeholder'- is being reawakened. A new political consensus is developing; it extends from stakeholder, pro-European companies through the liberal professions to partnership-minded trade unions, incorporates the public sector, and has near-universal support from the Christian churches and other religious traditions. This is a new formulation of Middle England". Will Hutton is a standard bearer of the need to streamline both Britain's political institutions and British capitalism, so that it can be more competitive in the world market.

Secondly, the Blair government knows that divisions in the boss class have been highly destructive. It knows that sooner or later social unrest will erupt and it intends to create as much prior solidarity in the ruling class as possible.

TOUGH CHOICES-TOUGHER LIVES-TOUGH!

The Labour conference sent out a message to the people it intends to attack, you and me, the mass of the working class. In a carefully choreographed speech Blair warned what he planned was: "A compassionate society, but it is compassion with a hard edge. A strong society cannot be built on soft choices. It means fundamental reform of our welfare state".

What this means is that the Labour government will attack welfare benefits and services in a way in which the Tories could only dream of. First of all single mothers would be attacked, their benefits scrapped and their compulsory forcing into low paid jobs under 're-education' schemes. State pensions will be the next target after this, with their complete abolition and compulsory private pensions replacing them. Similarly unemployment benefit will

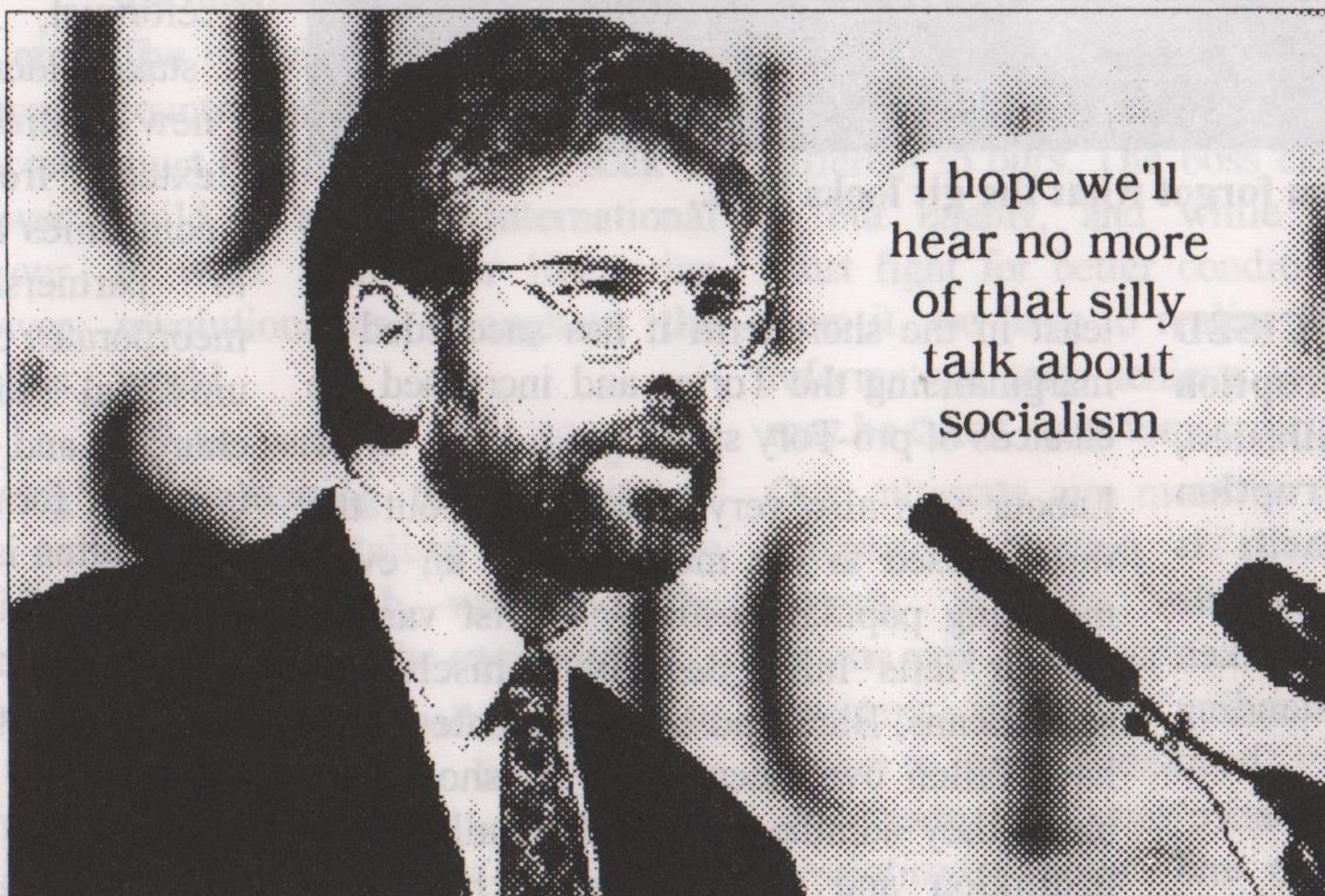
IF YOU WANT PEACE, PREPARE FOR...

ON 15 SEPTEMBER representatives of eight unionist, loyalist, nationalist and republican political parties gathered at Stormont Castle in Northern Ireland as the faltering 'peace process' took another shaky step forward. There was high drama at this first meeting of the multi-party talks since the announcement by the IRA of another 'total cessation' of military operations, and was the first major political initiative since the bloody clashes that had once again accompanied the annual 'marching season'.

To make sense of the 'peace process' currently underway in Northern Ireland, it's important to understand the context in which the 'endgame' of 'the Troubles' is being played out. Although it's still an unthinkable 'heresy' for the Left, it's readily apparent that British ruling class has no interest in keeping possession of the six counties of the north of Ireland. Not only does the province not generate profits, it sucks in expenditure from the British treasury, and will continue to do so indefinitely without a 'peace settlement'. The international investment that was briefly on offer during the last IRA cease-fire, shows just how much the province could be economically regenerated if the area became a 'normal' capitalist democracy. Few significant elements in the British ruling class feel any meaningful commitment to northern Irish Protestant unionists, or have any interest in maintaining a unionist statelet in the north – an uncomfortable truth that increasing numbers of Ulster loyalists now recognise. A majority of Sinn Fein leaders now recognise both these facts, but acknowledge that the 'long war' and the 'ballot box and the armalite' have been strategic failures, and have calculated that a new political approach was needed to take forward the republican project. The leading unionist political party, meanwhile has identified both republican war-weariness and the decline of British interest in the province, and has calculated that a policy of negotiation with Irish nationalism might serve long-term unionist interest better than a blanket refusal to consider any further

reform of Protestant ascendancy in the statelet, and the narrow focus on ever tighter military and security responses to the armed republican campaign. None of which means that the 'peace process' will 'succeed', only that the chances for some kind of deal are probably better now than at any time since the deployment of British troops on the streets of Derry and Belfast in 1969.

For the first time, since the new republican 'peace strategy' articulated



by Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams became official Sinn Fein (SF) policy, the two leaders were able to head a SF delegation into substantive talks on the future status of the Six Counties, with the full blessing of the British and Irish governments, and the US Presidency. Sinn Fein's inclusion in the talks process came at a price that the New Labour administration calculated was worth paying. It was inevitable that Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) – flag-bearers of old-time fundamentalist (and deeply sectarian) Ulster unionism – would refuse to 'sit down with Sinn Fein-IRA' and quit the talks, to fume and scheme from the sidelines. But increasingly the DUP is not the unionist party that matters.

The Mainstream

David Trimble, leader of the larger, more mainstream (and much more politically significant) Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), had waited until the very last moment to confirm that the UUP delegation would attend the talks – to the palpable relief of

both the Blair government and the McGuinness-Adams Sinn Fein leadership. The UUP's assessment that negotiation is a less risky strategy for unionists than condemnation and the Paisleyite reflex of 'Ulster says no' effectively saved the talks. All the participants are aware that a prospective 'peace deal' might conceivably survive a boycott by the DUP (especially now with the loyalist paramilitary parties signed up) but would be killed outright by the refusal of the UUP to take part. It would have heralded a return to military and political stalemate on all fronts, and confirmed for the paramilitary hawks on both sides that 'politics' was a proven dead-end. For the British and Irish governments desperate to engineer a stable long-term solution to the 'Northern Irish question', to bring Sinn Fein in without letting the Ulster Unionists slip away was a major political coup. Eight out of the ten parties entitled to be there, are now locked into a talks process that is required to agree a draft settlement

package by May 1998.

The British general election changed the political context for the talks, and shifted the balance of power between several of the key players in the north. During its last months in office, the enfeebled Major administration, relied on the Commons votes of the unionist parties to keep it in office, as its majority crumbled seat by seat. The UUP and DUP were able to stall the process for as long as they could prop up Major. The scale of New Labour's election victory robbed the unionists of that parliamentary leverage. In the province itself the UUP continued to advance at the expense of the DUP. The SDLP lost one seat, as large numbers of nationalist voters switched support to Sinn Fein – which celebrated its best ever poll showing. It won 126,000 votes (a 16% share), and two Westminster MPs – as Adams was elected in West Belfast, and McGuinness in mid-Ulster.

The IRA's announcement on 20 July of a ceasefire, saw the new British NI Secretary Mo Mowlam agree that Sinn Fein could enter the talks in September if the ceasefire held, if SF would forego the use of

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political violence, commit to negotiating in good faith, and if an agreement on the vexed question of paramilitary arms 'decommissioning' could be hammered out. Sinn Fein duly signed up to the Mitchell Principles on 'democracy' and 'nonviolence', agreed with the Blair government a formula for its entry into talks, and – along with loyalist paramilitary groups – reached an agreement on parallel (rather than prior) weapons decommissioning. Though this strategy has now won Sinn Fein seats at the negotiating table, it will require tangible progress in advancing republican interests for the Adams-McGuinness leadership to retain the support, and maintain the unity of, the republican camp. Within days of Sinn Fein's entry into the talks process, stories of 'splits' in the IRA, and resignations by at least a dozen long-standing Sinn Fein activists, opposed to the Adams-McGuinness 'peace' line, appeared in the Irish press. The republican weekly *An Phoblacht* condemned these reports as 'mischievous' propaganda, but carried an acknowledgment by the IRA that 'a very small number of people have left the army over a period of a few weeks' (13 November). The losses may well be small, and there is no sign yet that the dissidents are an organised alternative, but the defections are a sharp reminder to Adams and McGuinness of the risks of republican revisionism. The history of 'physical force republicanism' shows all too well that the movement splits when it reinvents its ideology or overturns cherished principles – in this case, renouncing the use of political violence. But times have changed since the IRA tore itself apart in the 1920s (over the act of partition), and again in the 1970s (with the onset of 'the Troubles'). After the 1981 hunger strike campaign, and the policy of 'criminalisation' that triggered it, British strategy was to try isolate and marginalise diehard republicanism, and to try to construct a new middle-ground built around the more moderate nationalist SDLP, that would uncut support for republican 'terror'. The new strategy is not to lock hard-line republicanism out (or hard-core loyalism either) of the 'democratic process', but to lock it in.

The British government now share with the leadership of Sinn Fein an interest in maintaining cohesion and order in republican ranks. The Brits want to do business with republican leaders that command the support of their core constituency, and with the ability to police any settlement they sign up to both in the Army Council and down on the Falls Road. McGuinness and Adams need to prove to the Brits that they can deliver nationalist and republican obedience. The worst-case scenario for both is that the republican

movement fragments in all directions, and that a new wave of rejectionist paramilitary groups emerges – eager to prove their ferocity, and run by Volunteers with no interest in 'talking to the enemy'. The previous IRA cease-fire which lasted from August 1994 to February 1996, was ended, as frustration in the ranks mounted, in order to maintain the unity of the movement, despite the political costs for Sinn Fein's leaders already being fêted in Washington as 'statesmen for peace.'

Capitulation?

Two minor republican currents have never endorsed the IRA cease-fires, nor Sinn Fein 'peace' policy. The INLA, recently emerged from a typically bloody feud, has carried out a number of attacks in recent months, including the killing of an off-duty policeman last May. The Continuity Army Council (CAC) has carried out a number of attacks, most pointedly with a 400lb car-bomb that wrecked a police station in Markethill, South Armagh the day before the Stormont talks reassembled. Both groups attack the 'capitulation' of the Provisional IRA, and Sinn Fein's 'acceptance of partition', but they remain marginal paramilitary forces. Their respective political wings, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Republican Sinn Fein, also remain essentially marginal although the latter has experienced a certain amount of growth recently. However, at present, occasional spectacular INLA or CAC actions help (rather than hinder) current IRA strategy – they serve to 'remind the Brits' of the power of 'the military option', without getting the IRA's own hands dirty, which would compromise Sinn Fein. There is no question whatsoever that if the INLA, the CAC, or any other armed republican group, attempted to start a paramilitary campaign to which the

Provisional IRA were opposed, the Provos would first warn – and then quickly disarm/liquidate – any units that refused to comply with its order to stand down.

The two minor parties representing loyalist paramilitary groups, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party, have an uneasy working alliance with Trimble's Ulster Unionists – joining the temporary 'walk-outs' that are a necessary component of UUP engagement with the Stormont talks, then dutifully accompanying Trimble on his return to the table. It is an indication of the marked decline of Paisley-style unionism, that the 'political representatives' of loyalist terror squads see more value in joining a talks process with Sinn Fein, than in operating as the 'left face' of implacable unionist hostility to any deal. PUP and UDP leaders have gained credibility in British government eyes from their effectively handling of loyalist prison protests and riots last April, and from local election successes that have seen the PUP win six local council seats. Their new 'respectability' has however been undermined by constant breaches of the (now defunct) Combined Loyalist Military Command ceasefire, and the appearance of a new sectarian murder gang, the Loyalist Volunteer Force, which broke away from the Ulster Volunteer Force just prior to the general election.

Tensions between the various Loyalist paramilitarists were particularly acute last summer, regularly erupting in violence, and this is likely to continue periodically. The lack of one dominant paramilitary force has allowed new, autonomous Loyalist factions to develop unhindered and to develop local power bases.

As for the talks process, it seems inconceivable that they will produce a settlement package acceptable to a majority of those on all sides in time to meet the May deadline insisted on by Blair. There is



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certainly no 'magic formula' waiting to be revealed: all the potential solutions to the NI question are known, from complete incorporation into Great Britain, on the one hand, to Irish re-unification, on the other. Any capitalist deal, designed to bring about a new stability, isolate the 'militants', and able to overcome the in-built 'unionist veto' in the north, will be a compromise between unionist and nationalist aspiration.

The initial deal

What astute unionists, and indeed loyalists, are after is a deal with northern Irish nationalism that protects the union with Britain, but which concedes the nationalist community in the north enough concessions to buy the acquiescence of the majority, which isolates and marginalises hard-line republicanism and which puts an end to 'the Troubles' by drawing the IRA's sting. What politicians like Trimble will hold out for is a new constitutional deal that nationalists and republicans accept as fixed and permanent. The McGuinness-Adams republican strategy, in contrast, is to draw unionists into an open-ended settlement process, in which each 'new settlement' is accepted as temporary and transitional, and through which the chains of the union can be snapped or rusted link by link. In this scheme the threat of renewed republican terror, the promise of ever-increasing inward investment, and the evidence of the rewards of 'normalisation', are together intended to cajole and entice unionists down

the constitutional path towards future Irish re-unification.

The initial deal would have to have several key components: Northern Ireland would remain part of the UK, but a devolved power-sharing government in the province would have more autonomous responsibilities. Weighted majorities in these new assemblies would undercut automatic unionist dominance. There would have to be some form of 'all-Ireland council', through which the Dublin government in the Republic could have influence and some input into the government in the north. Continuing reform of sectarian discrimination in northern Irish society, would be rewarded by major injections of cash from the British, Irish and American governments. The Brits would scale down military and security operations, in parallel with the surrender of paramilitary weaponry, and the release of prisoners on both sides, as northern Irish society would be encouraged to 'normalise'.

This is clearly the kind of scenario favoured by the British, Irish and American governments, and recognised as probable by both Trimble for the pro-talks unionists, and Adams for the pro-talks republicans.

As the old, and the new, political leaders of the divided communities of the Six Counties sit down together at Stormont one thing is clear. If a new constitutional deal is lashed together - and the process may yet fall apart, or seize-up in deadlock - it will be because enough of the politicians in Belfast, Dublin,

London and Washington have agreed on the need to move 'the troubles' in the interests of a new post-Cold War European capitalist order. The 'peace process' in Northern Ireland is being driven forward by the most forward thinking sections of the political and economic bourgeoisie inside and outside Ireland who recognise that their interests will be better served by the resolution of 'the long war.'

For those concerned to advance an agenda around global proletarian interests, there are still opportunities being opened up through the operation of the 'peace process' - despite the best efforts of the participants in it to counter their effects.

Green nationalism and red republicanism have always been ideologies of a boss class in waiting. Now that its 'most radical' leaders are the welcome guests of US presidents and British prime ministers; now that its economics advisors are warmly embraced by corporate America; now that all talk of a 'secular, socialist' united Ireland has been confined to the fiery graveside speeches, that fact is indisputable: it should now be clear even to those around the anarchist movement seduced by its paramilitary trappings into cheerleading for 'the Provos', whilst ignoring the existence of Sinn Féin. The recasting of republicanism is both an opportunity and a challenge, a challenge most of all for those who oppose a 'normalisation' of capitalist social relations presented as a victory for the working class of Ireland.

green anarchists sent down

THE FIRST RESULTS of the GANDALF (Green Anarchist and Animal Liberation Front) trial are out and it was a big win for the forces of oppression. Three editors of *Green Anarchist*, Steve Booth, Sax Wood, and Noel Molland, have been convicted of conspiring to incite 'Persons unknown' to commit criminal damage by printing and distributing animal rights and ecological info over a five year period. They have been sentenced to 3 years in prison for this. Another editor, Paul Rogers, has had his trial postponed to next year. Simon Russell, editor of the Animal Liberation Front newsletter, was acquitted.

Now the ACF has more than minor differences with the politics of *Green Anarchist*, as has been seen abundantly in the pages of *Organise!* and frankly find their tactical approach foolhardy and unhelpful to the cause of liberation. Obviously we will continue to make these criticisms of GA politics. But equally as obviously, we do not like what has happened in the Gandalf trial. We will campaign against the sentences.

One theory put forward in the pages of *The Big Issue* is that the real target of the police who zealously pursued prosecution, was Robin Webb, press officer for the Animal Liberation Front. He was originally to join the others in the dock, but the case against him was dismissed. In an extraordinary move the Crown Prosecution Service intend to demand a judicial review of the magistrate's decision.

But an equally valid theory would be that the police are testing the water. They were able to carry out a number of raids, fishing expeditions to gather information on British anarchism in general. Now that the GA editors have been convicted the way is open for arrests of class struggle anarchist activists. If there is a social explosion in the coming years, riots, mass waves of wildcat strikes, a growing revolutionary movement, then the State has a precedent and can more easily prosecute anarchist publications. The implications of the verdict are that anyone who reports on sympathetic reporting of *any* direct action activity risks being prosecuted.

Far right activists have produced material far more capable of prosecution. Only in a limited number of cases has the CPS decided to act. The sentences dealt out against GA were heavier than far to any previous sentencing in similar cases. Also note that the heavy 18 year sentence handed out in December to Barry Horne, animal rights campaigner convicted for a firebomb campaign is a much heavier sentence than that given to many rapists and murderers. The judge, it should be noted, is the only civilian judge with military rank, Major-General Selwood.

Write letters of support to Steve Booth (CK 4323) and Saxon Burchall-Wood (CK 4322) both at HMP Winchester, Romsey Road, Winchester SO22 5DF.

Anarchists and Organisation - Where to Next?

ANARCHIST REVOLUTIONARIES WORLD-WIDE who seek to maximise the impact of their practical, agitational and theoretical work by associating together in organisations such as the ACF have been despondent in recent years about the wide-spread anti-organisational malaise in the British anarchist movement. Criticism of the pitfalls of 'the Organisation' are important, and we debate within the ACF and with other comrades, groups and organisations about such issues as the 'leadership of ideas' and the problem of whether 'form' sometimes takes priority over 'content'. For example: does being in an organisation with a coherent programme make us crypto-Leninists?; how much time does internal bureaucracy take in relation to practical solidarity and the development of theory?; and is being in an organisation worth the effort?!. We have long felt that most anarchists committed to the anti-organisational tendency - as opposed to those still seriously debating the issues and considering their priorities carefully - do not have a viable alternative to formal organisations. At their worst, they can be strategically redundant life-stylists attempting to shock rather than to build for actual change; egoists who do not wish to be restrained by formal accountability to others; or for 'action' with no 'theory' (as though the former has any purpose without carefully considered direction).

This may be changing. The debate around 'where to next?' in the post-Class War era has meant that new quarters the organisational question is being considered seriously again. Even more promising, debate is not taking place solely around the issue of workplace struggle, which we think is limited in potential in this clever capitalist era, but specifically in terms of building confidence and a subversive alternative in our communities. community activity is not a new idea to anarchism, of course, but in the past it has typically been part of what is a major weakness of the anti-organisational tendency. It has generated 'localism' where the town anarchist group has little on-going theoretical or practical link with a revolutionary movement more widely, and local injustices rather than the generalised working class experience form the agenda for activity. This improves to an extent when anarchists who are not in

organisations seek to associate more closely together through federal structures - current examples being the Scottish Federation of Anarchists and Northern Anarchist Network - but these organisations are too often seen as a national/regional support network for local activism, not somewhere where theory is developed or national activity initiated. Fortunately, in the post-Class War fall-out, of the many possible new directions/structures being proposed, the return to localism has not managed to dominate. Disillusionment with one form of organisation, the Class War Federation, has not lead to the abandoning of organisation itself, which, say in the late 1980s or early 1990s, would have been a distinct possibility. Local activity is still being viewed within a wider framework.

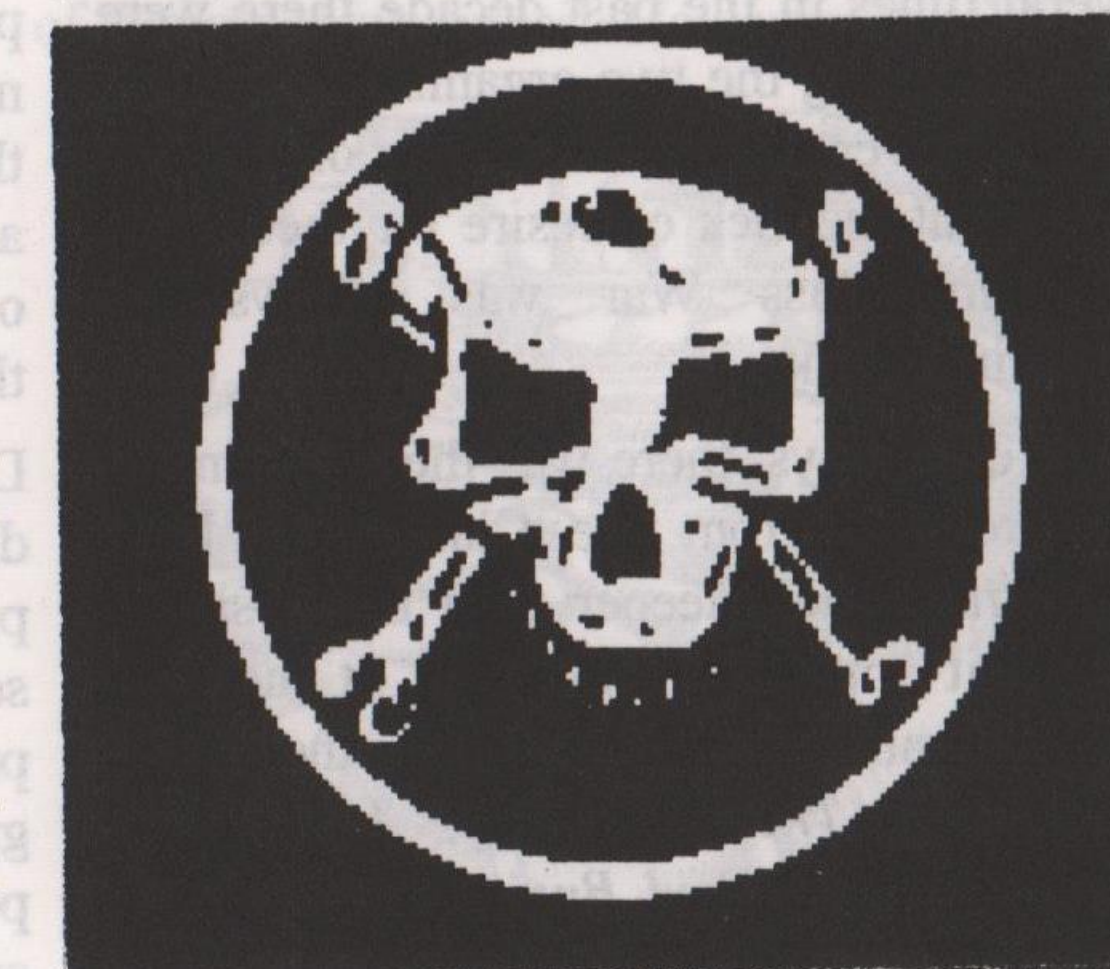
What will hopefully emerge will be bigger than any current organisations and will have a programme that will incorporate activity around issues which all the groups and individuals within it agree on, and initiate constructive debate on those we don't. This is not to say that the ACF doesn't want more people to join 'our' organisation. Of course we do. We think we have some good ideas to offer a national co-ordination of anarchists, just as we learn as an organisation from our members' activity networks and local groups and campaigns. We also think that the movement needs structures that are reliable, though not necessarily permanent and rigid, to give it some stability against the onslaught of state forces. But we work towards the creation of an organisationally united anarchist/libertarian communist movement, and do not imagine for a moment that its structure will be an enlarged ACF. In addition, we are encouraged by the assumption behind new initiatives outside the ACF that formal organisations like our own have something to offer the libertarian movement of tomorrow.

We offer here two articles which discuss possible new scenarios for the British anarchist/libertarian movement at the turn of the century. The first discusses the process which has brought Class War to its current position of self-analysis. The second discusses some ideas on organisation within the local community current in libertarian circles in relation to our own ideas on the subject

Revolution - An Unfinished Business

MOST ACTIVE ANARCHISTS will surely have heard by now of the dissolving of Class War Federation, and publication of the 'last ever' paper: "Class War is dead... long live the class war - an open letter to the revolutionary movement". In the aftermath of this, the October 1997 Anarchist Bookfair revealed a trinity of approaches: the handing out of a discussion document "Smash Hits" produced by those looking for a new direction, a new issue of *Class War*, "Get Rid of the Posh", by those determined to hang on to the paper, and those promoting an anti-monarchy

movement. The latter two factions also appear to be involved with the paper *Animal*. The sentiments expressed in the open letter have been broadly welcomed for their openness and honesty. The Bookfair meeting, organised by the 'new direction' faction, which took place straight after the ACF's meeting on revolutionary organisation, was well attended. The need to look to the future, not at past failures, was put forward strongly and passionately. So what happened to Class War? Class War Federation was launched around the same time as the ACF, in the early-to-mid 80s,



there be autonomous struggles of historical groups that have been bringing together groups and individuals who were coming from a class struggle perspective, some of who were already selling the existing Class War paper, and many who were in active local anarchist groups. This was a very positive step for the anarchist movement, greatly helping the break away of serious class struggle anarchism from lifestyle and do-gooding liberalism, typified by the anti-nuclear movement of the time. The CW approach justified class violence against an atmosphere of pacifism. It supported riots and rejoiced in anti-trades union activities in favour of independent working class action. This helped draw in a number of working class activists from the Left, and earned respect for anarchism in disputes like that of the Wapping printers. Class War also injected a badly needed humour into revolutionary politics.

There's not much point going on about the often quoted problem of Class War's idealisation of the male street fighter. In reality, there was much more going on in Class War than they are often given credit for. This has much to do with the fact that there was a hell of a lot of politics in Class War that was excluded from the paper. Individual members of Class War were influenced by anarchism, autonomist Marxism and the situationists, and these views greatly influenced the politics of CWF, especially in the early days.

Synthesist?

And therein lies the serious problem. How do you reconcile those different theoretical viewpoints in a overtly populist organisation? One method would have been to become more platformist, encouraging theoretical unity. Instead Class War took a conscious decision towards the alternative approach of allowing differences to co-exist, an almost synthesist approach (see article on European Anarchist Movement in this issue for a further discussion of this tendency). Putting aside the ACF's strong disagreements with CW's bias towards supporting national liberation struggles and their ambiguity over the unions, there was much agreement with ACF positions, and several times in the past decade there were moves to bring the two organisations closer together, even as far as a series of 'merger talks'. But the lack of desire for theoretical unity in Class War was always the stumbling block.

In the early days, there was the dropping of the circled-A from the Class War logo, which ran much deeper than the cosmetic change it appeared, and many at the time argued against it. None of the theoretical publications (*The Heavy Stuff*, *A Decade of Disorder*, *Unfinished Business*) seemed to reflect the organisation as a whole, even *8 Organise!*

when they said they did, but more importantly they did not seem to influence the organisational direction of CWF in any way, even though much of the theory was classic anarchism. *Unfinished Business*, their most developed exposé of theory, is littered with quotes from influential anarchists, and the book as a whole endorses the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. But the paper carried on seemingly regardless, pumping out the often changing simplified lines, determined not to be labelled anarchist, whilst CWF experimented with organisational forms, some libertarian, some quite dubious. For example, there was the two-tier membership policy of members and supporters, the 'Rigorous Approach' promoting the idea of getting the 'best brains' together to develop CWF's theory, and the support for an election candidate in London.

The lack of an organisation wide approach to theory helped to create and justify intellectual hierarchy, often, ironically, disguised as anti-intellectualism. Furthermore the lack of theoretical unity allowed intellectuals to come in and cause mayhem. First there was Andy Anderson's destructive two class theory (Middle Class, Working Class, no Ruling Class which he is still pushing), then there was the almost leadership cult of Tim Scargill. Both of these caused splits. Some would argue that Ian Bone's influence in CW's activities was also a symptom of this, yet another ego being allowed to dominate. Instead of a sixth *Heavy Stuff* magazine, a pamphlet written entirely by trades union maverick Dave Douglass was offered.

Unwilling

Unfortunately, for all their honesty, the ex-CWF membership seem unwilling to discuss this past, to learn something from it, or share it with the revolutionary movement. There is still the arrogance that if Class War has failed at least it was bigger and better than any of the other anarchist organisations. In the light of the wind up of CWF, they would do well to reconsider the positions of ex-members who were in the past critical of its approach to organisation and theory.

Discussion will no doubt continue, but at present the main idea seems to be that of promoting solidarity groups as widely as possible. In terms of creation of a 'culture

of resistance', which the ACF agrees with whole-heartedly, this appears to be a positive start, although the old problem of London dominance should not be overlooked. But at some point the same questions of how revolutionaries organise will arise. Even if a decision is made not to create structures with worked out policies, in a desire to involve as many people and groups as possible, some agreements will have to be reached, and also a method of dealing with the disagreements. The criticism usually levelled at the ACF (and groups like Subversion) is that we would rather sit down and discuss theory than go out and do it. But the reality is we've all been 'doing it' for more than 10 years. We haven't built the mass revolutionary movement we want to see, yet. That's a fact. But simply desiring something better in an almost desperate manner, without some analysis of past failure, is not enough.

It is hoped that these criticisms will be taken in the comradely way they are intended, and that something positive and vibrant will emerge, as least from the 'new direction' faction of ex-CWF. We aren't sitting and criticising from the sidelines either. The ACF, more than any other group, has had close dealing with Class War. Some current members of ACF have previously been in CW, and many others have attended conferences as observers, and of course there's the aforementioned experience of the merger talks. And we've often worked together practically over the years, so let's hope that will continue.

As for the faction (which some have called 'provisional CW') who are producing the new London *Class War* paper, they don't seem up to much with their sexist "Lock up your daughters" sloganeering and a Leftist approach to Ireland which makes out that the Sinn Féin election victories were a victory for the working class. To Movement Against the Monarchy we say please give it a rest ma'am, do something useful! But, don't take our word for it, the addresses to contact can be found on page 18.

Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary Manifesto for the Millennium

The Manifesto is the ACF's in-depth analysis of the capitalist world in crisis, suggestions about what the alternative anarchist communist society could be like and evaluation of social and organisational forces which play a part in the revolutionary process.

£2 plus p&p from the ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

Organising for Change Within the Community



What Community?

WHEN DISCUSSING POSSIBLE alternatives for effective organisation at 'community level', we should first recognise that most of us do not experience any sense of community where we live. If we get on well with people living around us it is sometimes at the expense of concealing our more extreme views about how society should be run and who should run it. As one woman put it at the ex-Class War meeting at this year's Anarchist Bookfair in London this October, *people in my community think I'm mad!*

This feeling of isolation from the very people we identify with in class terms is natural, because there can be no real community in a capitalist world, only different degrees of alienation. There are only 'communities of unfulfilled interest', if you like, be they defined by geographical area (such as a street, estate or suburb), or by interest, for example ones that are defensive or campaigning (e.g. refugees facing deportation, victims of male violence, employees fighting management), or creative (e.g. the 'artistic community'), leisure orientated (e.g. a football team and its supporters), or intellectual (e.g. a utopian reading group), or whatever. It is important to note is that these groups, unless deliberately structured to avoid it, are frequently as divided by competing and conflicting interests - e.g. white middle class woman organiser vs. Asian and working class users/victims; or football club directors vs. fans; or artistic patrons and artists with a commission vs. amateurs and radicals - as they are united by what brought them together.

Awareness

For example, a campaign in which ACF members were peripherally involved as part of their 'local community' was able to stop the siting of a Sainsbury's supermarket in

their neighbourhood. It would have increased traffic and pollution, taken up part of a children's playing field and put local shops out of business. The campaign was strengthened by the awareness that at the same time Sainsbury's was taking on several almost identical campaigns in similar locations around the town, on the basis that it only needed to beat one of them to get a new site. However, the fact that two rival corner shops were initially behind the campaign kept a certain irony largely unstated; they had each acted to mobilise a largely fictional community in their own economic interests. They succeeded in keeping out of the area the supermarket which would have provided the community with cheaper, better quality food as well as jobs, so that they could both continue to compete for local custom. Transient propertyless elements, such as students and problem families renting accommodation, were not even aware of the campaign, let alone mobilised by it. And the campaign's major tactic was writing to local councillors, whom the shopkeepers already knew, being part of the propertied community etc. etc. Neither was there any attempt to link up with the campaigns in similarly targeted localities because, on the face of it, we had different interests from them. So now it is not ours but another community which has a Sainsbury's built on what was its only bit of grass and trees.

Community - a lost cause?

So how do we go about attempting to create community? And if it isn't really possible under capitalism, is it a waste of time? Of course not. Attempting to bring people closer to others with the same interests is important work for revolutionaries. People in our own communities are usually also working class, also oppressed, unfree or exploited either by ability, race, gender, sexuality or economics, and also either angry or depressed, or commonly both, that this is how shit things are going to be for the rest of their life. But it is sometimes other people that they see around them that they blame as readily as they blame 'the rich', 'the boss' or 'the state'. It is by raising and discussing such issues, not by minimising and smoothing over apparent conflict, that community activity can be challenging, radical, subversive and a part of wider long-term change. After all, didn't we become anarchists and communists

ourselves because of the painful truths we perceive in the world around us. Our problem is essentially that we don't meet many people day to day who have yet come to same conclusions. These very real practical and tactical difficulties faced by anyone attempting to organise in their local community have been borne in mind when making the following observations about three potential and existing community-based initiatives.

New Libertarian Initiatives - Some Observations

The IWCA and Birmingham Newtown

The alliance between Red Action and some other activists which produced the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) placed involvement in community issues on its agenda from the start. Correctly pointing out that working class people were cynical about middle class leftists and councils intervening for their own political gain in community issues, they wanted to give 'the community' the chance to set its own agenda. In Birmingham's Newtown area the IWCA canvassed local people to determine what issues they wanted action on. Street crime, mugging and burglary were the issues which kept coming up, and so a public meeting on the issues was set up. The organisers escorted people to the meeting who were literally too afraid of muggers to leave their homes alone. In addition, IWCA members who did not live in the area kept in the background so that the meeting genuinely reflected 'local' and not 'political' opinions.

The meeting was a huge success in terms of numbers and steps were taken to make the area safer. For example, access to alleyways used by burglars was blocked off, to the fury of the impotent council. However, the WCA

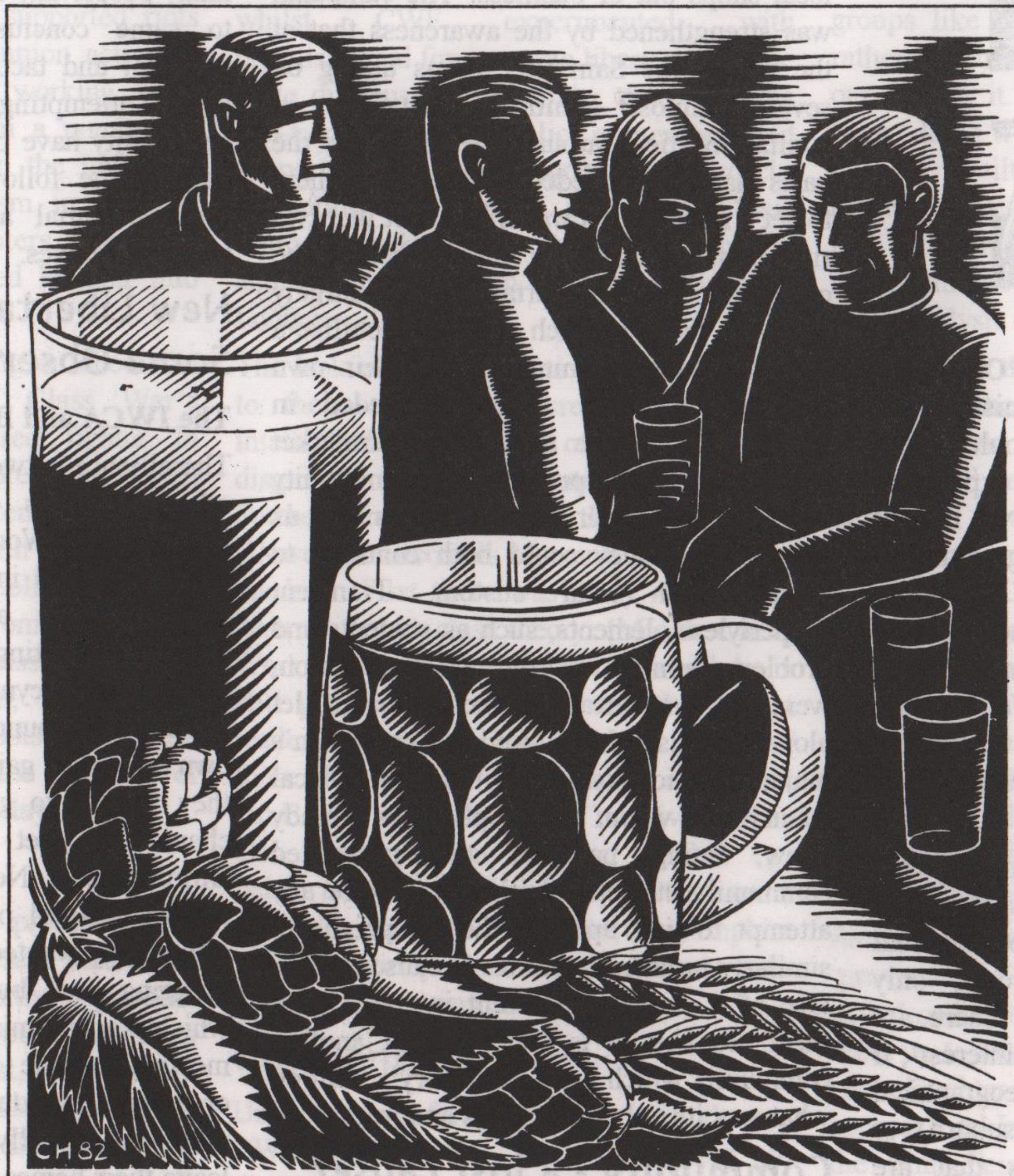


seems to have failed to address itself properly to reactionary ideas which they must have anticipated would also be expressed by some people in any crisis-ridden community. For example, the idea that the major problem is 'anti-social' elements. Activists in the IWCA surely know that crime is mostly committed by people with little or no alternative but a choice between misery on the dole and preying on the most defenceless people who live near them. Are these people not also part of the community of the area, or does community only extend to the law abiding.

And exactly what type of activity is being taken against muggers? Failure to challenge such ideas and to simply accept community wishes just because the community is working class, can lead, as it seems to have done at points in Newtown, to what libertarians should recognise as a misdirection of legitimate anger. For example, we heard at the Bookfair from a macho-type involved in Birmingham that, "it just so happens that most of the muggers are black. You can't get away from that fact, even if the SWP call you a racist, because tackling the problem of mugging is what ordinary people want". 'Ordinary' people would exclude black people then? Of course this isn't what IWCA members believe - this was nerves and bravado making him speak without thinking straight - but it made a largely white anarchist audience squirm and it is hard to imagine that 'law-abiding' black people would be comfortable to hear muggers described in such thoughtless and insensitive language. We must never demonise the 'criminal', be they poor and desperate or cynical drug barons, in the terms used by the state, the cops, racists or vigilantes.

Failure to address the problems of vigilantism as a solution to social violence is in fact a major problem with the Newtown initiative, from our point of view. For a start, it panders to the property ideology of the state, just like neighbourhood watch or grassing thieves up to the cops. But more importantly, just

because we feel helpless in a violent society doesn't mean that a group of tough guys can sort it out for us. Self-activity is central to the libertarian agenda but peripheral - actually an obstacle - to patrols of self-appointed protectors of the weak who see their role as some kind of alternative law and order in Newtown. The message should never be 'the cops can't protect you, but we will'. This sounds all too much like the community control undertaken by paramilitaries in the North of Ireland, which



has more to do with vanguardism and substitutionism, which Red Action support, than it has to libertarianism.

Forest Fields Independent Residents Association

The IWCA initiative has inspired other projects which are fortunately more influenced by libertarian ideas. In inner-city Nottingham the Forest Fields Independent Residents' Association (FFIRA) also hosted a huge meeting as a result of canvassing the area. The initiative was also a response to the recently established *Partnership Council*, set up by businesses and budget holders to get local consent for their own vested interests in the allocation of five million pounds of European money.

Before FFIRA had even done anything, councillors were up in arms about their authority being usurped, and one of the meeting's organisers was practically

challenged to a fight by a drunken local official. The politicians presumably realised that their inactivity in the area was being exposed and that dangerous self-activity by the residents was looking likely. A good start! As the organisers anticipated, what people most wanted to get off their chest was the state of the area - litter and dog shit mainly - and also the danger posed to children by shopkeepers selling cigarettes, drink and fire works to minors. Hardly the issues revolutionaries like to get their teeth stuck into, but what was wanted was a community-led agenda, not an ideological one (although hopefully converts may be made along the way!).

Unlike the IWCA in Birmingham, The IWCA and their comrades in Forest Fields demonised neither 'irresponsible dog-owners' nor 'corner-shop owners' but suggested ways in which it could be pointed out that the community as a whole, of which the 'culprits' were a part, should put the blame squarely on the council (for example, for failing time and time again to provide litter and dog shit bins). Posters in shops and a demo at the councillors surgeries involving dog owners, dogs and dog shit are being planned!

These activists have taken the initiative as part of their community, not on its behalf. And yet the fact remains that at the initial large public meeting when issues for action were agreed, only a handful of people put their names down on the contact list, and even fewer have turned up to subsequent meetings to put the plan into action. There is clearly a long way to go before many people will feel confident or inspired enough to take action themselves rather than leave it to politicians or radicals. Nonetheless, the campaign is still young and maybe it will generate activity interesting enough to establish a track record and prove itself worth getting involved with. Indeed, important pit-falls such as getting bogged down in single issues are already being addressed before they become a problem, and it is too soon to be despondent.

Community Confederations

Another idea was launched at the Anarchist Bookfair which attempts to take organising within area communities beyond localism

and lifestyle. A discussion paper titled *Community Confederations* tells us that the "culture of protest is defeated.....but the state....cannot and will not stand against a vibrant alternative.....[that should] create practical examples of an anarchist way of life at street level...[initiating community gardening, transport, pooled resources etc.] and that the confederations should have a branch in every town and be linked through a national network".

In itself the paper is badly thought out. No community based network can be organised on a town basis without becoming centralised and elitist, because it could not involve direct participation and free discussion but, as the paper virtually suggests, rely on an unimaginative system of elected delegates of some kind. We are stifled enough by democracy as it is, but on a town-wide scale?! At the meeting, however, the proposer suggested not that these groups should be in each town, but rather in every community - i.e. many in each town. This is an important distinction. Organisation of this kind, if it took off on a large scale, would mean that pockets of subversion would no longer be isolated by geography or the dominance of informal elites which thrive in unstructured groups, but be linked to their neighbours by geography and constant contact and comparison.

Unfortunately, the discussion paper does not really depict the class make-up of towns in a useful manner, for it states that "this process could resemble a union for the community, reaching across generational, gender, ethnic and cultural barriers we now face, and dissolving the class divisions which plague us". Really this is rhetoric and not a plan of action. What kind of union would an area community have? What bosses would it negotiate with and what labour would its members withdraw? And how many communities are plagued with class divisions? Aside from a few students, teachers and social workers with stripped-pine dining tables, area communities in the inner cities contain working class people, communities in the suburbs are usually either white working class or lower middle class, the upper-middle class and the bosses live in big houses in private estates or in the countryside. The very fact that we have a common class interest in our working class communities is why there is any long term point discussing community organisation at all.

Necessity

However, the *Community Confederations* idea that autonomous community projects should be established and resources shared should not be dismissed as readily as it

might be in some quarters. On one level, the idea of sharing garden forks, bikes, child care etc. appears useful only as a point of middle class liberal/ecological principle when there is a class war to be waged out there. It can be, usually correctly, dismissed as life-stylist. But this is a valid view only if the people involved in it are a/middle class and b/have the economic choice to spend their time distributing propaganda rather than weeding a communal vegetable patch. The reality of life for many people, even for some people with jobs, is that they are malnourished, freezing in winter, unable to get access to even essential transport and health care, or an education worth their children turning up at school for. It is not the duty of anarchists to fill this gap, because it is the fault of the state. But informally and increasingly alternative lifestyles, involving shared and created resources, are being sought not just by idealists but by semi-political people just trying to survive. As the leaflet points out, we might just want to extend this into the areas where we live not only as an example of anarchist ideas, but to help us survive and fight in the long term. After all, no one dismisses squatting as 'lifestylist', be it by punks or homeless families. More often than not it's a necessity.

The author of *Community Confederations* doesn't believe that it is going to take more than this to change the world permanently and meaningfully, and he is wrongly dismissive of the need for revolution. When speaking about the idea at the Bookfair, he suggested that organisations such as the ACF had a place within this network, as its theoretical backbone, or something along those lines. Whilst we do think we have some good ideas, we don't see it as the role of revolutionary organisations to act as gurus. Such situations need hard work, new ideas, and coherent explanations arising from everyone's experience, not outside experts! We are individuals in our area and interest communities too, but we are also in a groups trying to start the process of *real* change now. The point is that if such community based initiatives thrive - we start fixing up communal cars, teaching each other languages, performing music, brewing communal beer or whatever, and all without payment or exchange of any kind, and a collectivity empathy and practical support could reduce crime perpetrated by working class people against each other - we should also raise our sights to a society when this will be the norm and there will be liberty and equality as a matter of course.

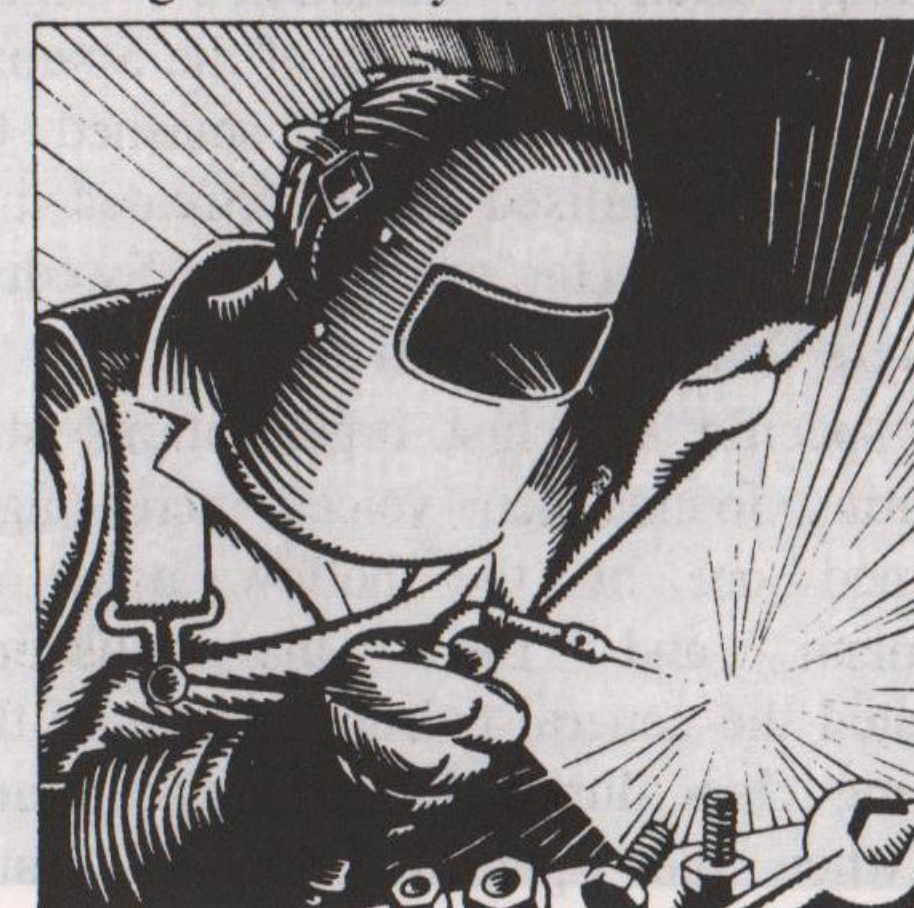
The Culture of Resistance

What we feel is needed is the creation of a culture which is more dynamic and innovative than traditional forms of



democratic and hierarchical political struggle, but more analytical and honest about the nature and causes of the problems which the working class experiences than the vibrant, but essentially reformist, counter-culture which our capitalist society has become so adept at accommodating. This revolutionary culture, the 'Culture of Resistance' which the ACF talks about in its propaganda, was not our invention. It has been discussed by revolutionaries since the struggles of our class moved beyond the work place and the stifling 'one union' mentality and took on more varied forms and possibilities. Class War have recognised its importance before and it is also a phrase used by the African-American anarchist organisation Black Autonomy, and they both seem to mean the same thing by it as we do. But only in pockets has subversion managed to be both dynamic and ideologically coherent, which the 'Culture of Resistance' has to be.

The 'Culture of Resistance' essentially embodies two things. Firstly, we have said that there is no community but only unfulfilled communities of interest. Revolutionaries should engage in these communities, as they typically already do, as people sharing the experience or supporting those who do. Such campaigns as we are involved in or initiate at community level are not less important because they are reformist either, because these days 'reforms' can mean the difference between health and illness, warmth or hypothermia, sanctuary or persecution, and not infrequently life and death. And, as well as taking on hard graft, we should raise issues and ideas honestly and straightforwardly as members of the



same interest community. We are good at the former, but rarely effective at the latter. As people sharing such experiences we should not be shy of raising the issue that poverty, discrimination etc. are part of a wider state strategy to weaken our class, take up our time and energy, and stop us making choices about what we actually want in an ideal world, i.e. one in which we can all flourish, not just exist.

Secondly, we need to establish new forms expressing revolutionary ideas and subverting existing culture, working with our political groups and also the allies who we meet in the campaigns and communities described above. Then we can spread our ideas in ways which will appeal to people bored or cynical about conventional forms of protest and recognising that, as the

Community Confederations author also points out, the state has learnt to deal with demos, leafleting etc. Newly emerging and creative forms of protest and subversive activity, such as Reclaim the Streets, can teach us to be unpredictable and unexpected in our tactics. But in addition we have to put the case for changing the political world, and not settle for learning to survive it. And we must also attempt to inject our politics and outlook into established arenas which are conventionally safe from subversion - by-passing and sabotaging the tedium which local councils impose on area politics; distributing liberated erotic literature in local libraries; participatory art forms in school playgrounds at lunchtime; drowning out Salvation Army marching bands with sound systems, or whatever.

It only remains to stress how important it is for us to critically reassess the ways in which we engage in our communities. The fight is too readily channelled into being either boring, ineffective or elitist, and potential communities are smashed or divided before they become collectively self-active. We must be more creative and subversive, and organise well enough to get one step ahead of the advocates of tedium and authority. We must encourage networks of dissident groups linked by their communities of interest or locality, with input from groups and individuals who have been thinking about revolutionary activity specifically, to create a revolutionary culture which is both self-active and liberating for the individual and has ability to sustain itself and prove successful.

Syndicalism: a Critical Analysis



PART 2 OF OUR SERIES ON SYNDICALISM CONTINUES.

BY 1936 BOTH the anarchist and syndicalist movements found themselves, if not either in exile or underground, then as minority organisations. Victims of the twin assault of the capitalist state and Bolshevism, the Industrial Workers of the World had been reduced to a shadow of their former strength; the International Working Men's Association's largest affiliates, with the exception of the Spanish CNT, had been effectively smashed by Fascism, marginalised or had retreated into open reformism (for example the Swedish Workers Central organisation).

The specific anarchist organisations still operating found their voices increasingly drowned out by the hollow noise of Stalinism and their marginalisation reflected the general political defeat of the working class during the inter-war years. So, when the Spanish Civil War and

Revolution broke out in July 1936 all the hopes of libertarian revolutionaries became focused upon events in Spain and the actions taken by the Spanish working class.

The Spanish Revolution

The situation in Spain was exceptional in that organised Stalinism was marginal and exercised little influence amongst the working class up until 1936. Rather, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists constituted the only credible alternative to the social democrats of the Partido Socialista Obrero. The PSO could combine revolutionary rhetoric with a wholly reformist and constitutionalist practice and the division in Spanish working class politics could broadly be drawn as being between revolutionary libertarianism (the anarchists and the CNT) and reformist authoritarianism (the PSO and the Union General de Trabajadores). When the reactionary military, led by General Franco,

collectivisation of the factories and land into practice, which, given the circumstances, could only fall short of libertarian communism, but showed the creative and organisational potential of the working class.

However, by the end of the year representatives of the CNT had taken positions in the Republican Government and had effectively called off the class war in favour of 'anti-fascist unity' for the sake of victory in the war. The formerly minuscule Spanish Communist Party had become a major governmental player, the collectives and the workers militia organisations began to come under attack and the revolution looked like being strangled at birth. The response of those who wished to carry on with the revolution was the 'May Days' insurrection in Barcelona in 1937, itself the product of another provocation, this time by Stalinists, against CNT workers at the Telephone Exchange. Workers once again fought for

control of the streets only this time they found themselves undermined by the leadership of the CNT.

The Failure of the Anarchists

The actions of the CNT in joining the Government, of betraying the revolution, are often flung in the face of anarchists by Leninists (who themselves wouldn't hesitate to join any government given half a chance). Usually this is given as evidence of the 'End of Anarchism' as a revolutionary theory/movement. Certainly, the Spanish experience does signify the end of a certain type of anarchism. But the blame for the class collaboration and betrayal really does not simply lie at the door of the CNT. After all, despite the union's long-standing relationship with anarchism, it remained a union whose structures had developed an autonomy of their own and a bureaucracy which had a life of its own, regardless of its democratic nature. The unions susceptibility to reformism and incorporation had been exposed during the 1920s when a tendency emerged which opposed the influence of anarchism within the union. In 1931 this had resulted in a split, creating the moderate anarcho-syndicalist 'opposition unions'. Eventually, some of these 'moderate elements' formed a parliamentarist, reformist Syndicalist Party.

The FAI

Partially in opposition to this tendency, and the earlier attempts during the 20s by Leninists to 'bolshelize' the union, the Spanish anarchists founded a specific anarchist organisation, the Federacion Anarquista Iberica, in 1927. The FAI was to work mainly inside the CNT, to reinforce its libertarian orientation, but existed as an organisation in its own right, with its own press and its own organisational culture. The FAI viewed the CNT as the main means towards the libertarian communist revolution and *Faistas* were commonly the most ardent CNT militants. By 1936 the CNT and FAI were, along with the Libertarian Youth, the component parts of what was collectively known as the libertarian movement. The vast majority of the FAI defended the entry of the CNT into government, indeed, 'anarchist' Minister of Justice, Garcia Oliver was himself regarded as a particularly hard-line *faista*. Comparatively few anarchists rejected such collaboration and even fewer posed an alternative. The most coherent of these were the group known as the Friends of Durruti, militants of both the CNT and FAI, who realised that the involvement of 'anarchists' in government had been an inexcusable mistake and that the revolution had in fact been effectively curtailed by the forces which many thought would lead it. In their words; "Democracy defeated the Spanish People, not Fascism". (see Stormy

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Petrel pamphlet *Towards a Fresh Revolution* for further writings by and about the Friends of Durruti). We can conclude, with the Friends of Durruti, that apolitical anarchism failed in Spain, that is the belief that the State and political power can be ignored/circumnavigated rather than smashed and replaced with the power of the working class.

World War 2 and After

The defeat of the Spanish revolution and the crushing of the CNT under the Franco dictatorship was closely followed by the Second World War and temporary eclipse of anarcho and revolutionary syndicalism. The depth of defeat felt by libertarian revolutionaries during this period was almost unfathomable. It led some leading anarcho-syndicalists such as Rudolf Rocker, into supporting the allies against Nazi Germany whilst many Spanish anarchists in exile actually fought for the allied armies in the, somewhat naive, hope that with the defeat of Italy and Germany, 'Fascist' Spain would be 'liberated'. Other anarcho-syndicalist militants conducted a fearless guerrilla campaign against the Franco regime, many paying with their lives. But, following the war, the syndicalist movement was more marginalised than ever. A social democratic consensus was taking shape in the Western World and the Cold War was at its height. Syndicalist and anarchist groups remained tiny throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, mainly 'holders of the sacred flame' with only occasional impact within the class struggle. Things began to change with the upsurge in class struggle in Europe towards the end of the 1960s, particularly the events in France in 1968 and later in Italy. Slowly, the syndicalist organisations began to re-emerge as workers began showing an interest in alternatives to Stalinism and social democratic stodge. The death of Franco in 1976 and the 'democratisation' of Spain saw the accelerated development of the formerly illegal CNT. The USI was relaunched in Italy and towards the end of the 1970s the I.W.A. once more became a functioning International, albeit one mainly composed of propaganda groups.

Syndicalism Today

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the so-called 'socialist' countries and the death-crisis of organised Stalinism, anarchist ideas and forms of organisation have experienced a marked growth, not least in Eastern Europe where often the anarchists are the only 'left' current of any size. In Africa, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent, areas where there has been little previous libertarian tradition, anarchist and

anarcho-syndicalist movements are emerging.

The revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalist current has seen the most rapid growth and even the Industrial Workers of the World are (modestly) expanding once again. This development is obviously welcome, as it reflects a re-awakening of revolutionary potential amongst the working class, but it is not without its problems. The question to be asked is "Is the syndicalist method the way forward?". Amongst the anarchists who have embraced syndicalism there are critical voices and some feel the need to develop new ways of organising and thinking. Some have realised the need to connect with other working class movements away from the existing structures, for example the activities of the USI in the COBAS (committees of the base) in Italy. Some have seen a need to 'adapt' syndicalism to community and interest organisation. Others, however, have tended to defend a very traditional, workerist, vision of 'building the (anarcho) syndicalist union' as the answer to everything and reject criticism of the syndicalist method as 'Marxist' or anti-organisational. To be continued in *Organise!* 48, we will look at libertarian communist perspectives on anarcho-syndicalism and workers struggle organisations.

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* these might interest you:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from c/o Transmission, 28 King St., Glasgow G1 5QP, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of Subversion. 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.

SchNEWS. News about CJA, anti-racist, anti-roads struggles etc. Sent 1st class stamp to SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle PO Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2DX.



The Anarchist Movement in Europe: A Survey

ORGANISE! TAKES A look at the European anarchist movement, with special mention of the recent conference of the International of Anarchist Federations in Lyon, France attended by observers from the ACF.

It has to be noted that in some European countries there has been a noticeable resurgence of the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. Contrary to what our anarcho-primitivist friends might say, this growth is a product of the escalation of class struggle and is more and more based on recognition of that struggle. We take a look at some countries where there is a fairly sizeable movement, and give thumb-nail sketches of the groups represented.

FRANCE

In France the principal specific anarchist organisation is the Federation Anarchiste Francophone (French-speaking Anarchist Federation) with sections in both France and French-speaking Belgium. It is a synthesist organisation. That is it attempts to apply the theories of the Russian Voline and the Frenchman Faure

who thought that it was possible to unite anarcho-syndicalists, anarchist communists and anarchist individualists in the same organisation. Its politics have noticeably improved in the last decade and it has taken an active part in all the strikes and social movements, taking strong positions against the Front National, militarism, including the Gulf War, the moral order, especially in the mobilisation against the Pope's visit, and in struggles around immigration. It has its own radio station based in Paris, Radio Libertaire, and a weekly paper *Le Monde Libertaire*, distributed in all the newsagents and kiosks. The FA also has a presence in a dozen local free radio stations. What is remarkable is that all attempts by the

Communist Party or the Trotskyists to establish radio stations have collapsed and Radio Libertaire has become the foremost free radio station with many listeners and an open attitude to other anarchists and revolutionary libertarians. It has a fine bookshop in Paris, and in most major towns has bookshops or is associated with bookshops. It has around 700 members and is present in all French departements (equivalent of provinces or counties). The individualists within the FA appear to be an insignificant handful, whilst the Paris



region appears to be dominated by anarcho-syndicalists, with anarchist communists strong in other parts of the country. Apart from the FA, the other libertarian organisations are Alternative Libertaire (AL) and Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL). Both of these groups are a result of a split in the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste which had developed inside the FA in the late 60s. The ORA left the FA in 1970 and based itself on the ideas of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists. The ORA attracted several hundred militants in the glory days of the early 70s. An acrimonious split led to the expulsion of the group which eventually became Alternative Libertaire whilst the majority transformed itself into

the OCL. Both groups now appear to have less than a hundred militants. AL has a monthly newspaper and orientates itself to work in the reformist unions, with its militants taking positions in the union structures. Both it and OCL have positions of critical support for national liberation struggles, a position rejected by the FA. AL orients itself towards debate with the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, one of the main Trotskyist groupings, as well as to various green formations and dissident Communists. OCL has a far more critical

attitude towards the unions. It produces a monthly glossy magazine often containing interesting analyses. Both groups appear to have lost members in the last decade or at least to have remained static.

Apart from these groups, there is also the Coordination Anarchiste, another synthesist formation, based mainly in northern France, the result of an earlier split in the FA. This group seems on the verge of rejoining the FA.

Some anarcho-syndicalists work in the reformist unions. Others are organised in the Confederation National de Travail (CNT) a syndicalist union created in 1946. In recent years the CNT has had a remarkable growth in

members. Up to recently the CNT was a member of the International Workers Association (IWA) the anarcho-syndicalist international. It was expelled at a recent congress because of its attitude towards running for election on works committees and for its more open attitude to the Spanish CGT, its contingent forming a united one with that of the CGT at the anti -G7 demo in Lyons in June 1996 (See Black Flag for details of ructions inside the IWA). Two tiny groups both calling themselves the CNT, and basing themselves on 'pure anarcho-syndicalism' (CNT 'Le Mans' and CNT 'Tour d'Auvergne') in practice work together. Some members of FA and OCL are also members of the CNT. Recently AL

whose main practice appears to be in the breakaway unions (from the main reformist central union bodies) of the SUD, have taken a less hostile stance towards the CNT.

GERMANY

In pre-Nazi Germany anarchists prided themselves on organisation, for example in the FKAD (Anarchist Communist Federation) and in the FAUD (Free Workers Union). The Nazi persecution, the World War and Stalinist oppression in East Germany meant that few anarchist activists remained in post-war Germany, the rest being dead, exiled or disillusioned. The German movement has been characterised by spontaneism and fear of organisation, the latter partly a backlash against the Nazi past, so that all organisation was seen as intrinsically authoritarian. Autonomism and Maoism have also left their marks on the movement, as well as co-option of libertarian groups by the Green Party. The influence of the Red Army Fraction and their anarchist equivalents are also apparent. Recent organisational ventures have included the setting up of the IAFD (Initiative for an Anarchist Federation in Germany). This group has joined the International of Anarchist Federations. It remains a minority within the anarchist movement and appears to have a synthesist outlook. It does first class work in contact with the re-emerging movement in Eastern Europe, in particular with Russia, Belarus, and Poland. There appears to be no organised anarchist communist grouping.

Anarcho syndicalists are primarily organised in the syndicalist union FAU set up in 1977. This small union seems to have some support among Turkish 'guest' workers and is a member of the IWA.

AUSTRIA

The Austrian movement too has been influenced by some of the negative aspects that have effected the Germans. Groups of some interest are the Schwarze Distel (Black Thistle) and the newly formed Anarchist Communist League. Schwarze Distel, based in Vienna, was one of the groups including the ACF, which produced a joint statement at the International Conference in Trieste, Italy in 1990, where East and Central European anarchists met with their Western counterparts. This statement spoke out against the market and re-affirmed class struggle. The Anarchist Communist League appears to share many of the positions of the ACF.

ITALY

The main anarchist organisation is the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI). This is a synthesist organisation, with an anarchist communist tendency within it. It produces a weekly paper, and appears to number about

200 militants. The FAI orients itself to work in the base unions (the COBAS etc.) and anti-militarist and anti-clerical work. Smaller formations are the FdCA (Federation of Anarchist Communists) and the PAI (Italian Anarchist Party). The FdCA is a result of a fusion over the years of various libertarian communist groups. The PAI has so far failed to yield to this process, and has dwindled to a mere handful based mainly in Modena. The FdCA for its part numbers less than a hundred. It appears to be under the ideological influence of the French AL. Both groups, like the FAI, work in the base unions. Very few libertarian militants in Italy have come to any thoroughgoing critique of the unions. One exception is the group Amore e Rabbia, based in Bologna.

Some anarcho syndicalists are organised in the USI (Italian Syndicalist Union). The situation is similar to that in France with one USI (USI 'Rome') being expelled from the IWA, whilst at least another (USI 'Prato-Carnico') remains within it!

SPAIN

The syndicalists are split between the pure anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT union and the 'pragmatists' of the CGT union. The CGT was recently reinforced by several sections of the CCOO (Workers Commissions-union dominated by the Communists) breaking away to join them and claims 35,000 members. The CNT seems much smaller though we have no clear figures. Another union, Solidaridad Obrera, which appears to be a breakaway from the CNT, seems more based on the practice of workers assemblies, and appears to exist only in Catalonia.

There appear to be at least 3 groups calling themselves the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation). The principal one appears to be the FAI that is affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations. It has a staunch pro-CNT, pro-IWA line. It takes in both Spanish and Portuguese anarchists, producing a Spanish monthly *Tierra y Libertad* and a Portuguese magazine. There is also a Libertarian Youth Federation (FIJL) also allied to the CNT and FAI, as well as a libertarian women's organisation (Mujeres Libres). The FIJL produces an irregular paper, *Jake*. At Saragossa, for example, it has six local groups, with a total of 50 militants. There are also a number of independent anarchist groups, including the Revolutionary Anarchist Collective (Madrid) and the network of groups called Autonomous Struggle.

HOLLAND

VrijeBond- about 60 people. These were originally in the Dutch syndicalist union the OVB. They left the OVB in 1988 after disagreements between pure syndicalists-

the OVB leadership- and anarchists. OVB is now considerably less oriented towards syndicalism. A very loose network.

Vrije Socialist- more or less a grouping around the long-standing magazine of same name. Voorden van Rebellen- small grouping around a monthly magazine with politics similar to the ACF.

ACF Foreign Language Pamphlets

Thanks to the efforts of our Welsh comrades we now have a translation of our pamphlet *As We See It*.

If you know anybody who speaks Welsh why not sent them a copy. It is available for 50p plus post from the London ACF address c/o 84b Whitechapel High St. London E1 7QX.

Similarly we have a Greek and serbo-Croat translation of *As We See It*. If you can circulate this among the Greek and serbo-Croat speaking population here, then why not send for a copy? 50p plus post from London address.

Portuguese, French, Italian and Spanish, German, Turkish, Welsh and Esperanto translations of our *Aims and Principles* are also available for 20p plus postage.

SWITZERLAND

Organisation Socialiste Libertaire- politics close to those of French AL/Italian FdCA. Though mostly based in French-speaking Switzerland, though in recent years it has expanded its influence into German-speaking Switzerland with groups in Zurich, Bern and Biel. It produces magazine *Confrontations* and plans to bring out agitational newsheet. It was recently shaken by one of its prominent members taking a job as personal adviser to a cantonal

minister, the State Councillor Joseph Zisyadis, who is a Communist!

SWEDEN

SAC- syndicalist union expelled from IWA for what was seen as compromising relationship to Swedish State. It appears to have entered into alliance with Spanish CGT, as well as the axis around the French AL, Swiss OSL, Italian FdCA, in what has been seen as an attempt to set up a rival international to the IWA. Increasingly the SAC presents itself as politically anarchist and in 1996 experienced the resignation of a number of 'pure' syndicalists.

SUF- Syndicalist Youth Federation. Anarchosyndicalist youth network organised within the SAC.

Folkmarkt (People Power) A 'council socialist' group with some similar politics to the ACF, organised nationally.

EASTERN EUROPE

In Poland there exists the Polish Anarchist Federation (FAP) a loose synthesist organisation, uniting many different tendencies. There is a section of the FAP in almost every major and most minor cities. A small grouping known as the Anarcho-Communist Organisational Platform emerged during 1997.

There is also a grouping made up of ex-Communists, ex-Trotskyists who are in contact with the French AL.

In Bulgaria there exists the Bulgarian Anarchist Federation (FAB) mostly made up of ageing veterans from the heroic years of Bulgarian anarchism. There is little interest among the young although the FAB are making strenuous efforts to overcome this. The Federation of Anarchist Youth has been set up to facilitate this. The FAB is a member of the IFA.

There are anarchist groups in Slovenia, Croatia and Yugoslavia (Serbia) who are in contact with each other and who often carry out first class work under very difficult conditions. In particular the ACF has good relations with the Yugoslav group Torpedo.

In Belarus the anarchists are at the forefront of struggle against the military regime, facing physical attacks and arrests. They seem to be developing anarchist communist politics. In Russia a new organisation, the KRAS, Revolutionary Anarcho-syndicalists has broken with the politics of compromise of the KAS anarcho-syndicalists. Both the comrades of Belarus and Russia are in contact with anarchist groupings in the Ukraine. In the Donbas basin, a stronghold of working class anarchism during the Russian revolution prior to Bolshevik repression, interest in anarchist ideas among the working class is phenomenal with demand outstripping supply of literature.

CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

Anarchists in these countries organise across the frontiers after the splitting up of Czechoslovakia. The Czech Anarchist Federation was founded in 1995. In 1997 it accepted new members from Slovakia and became the Czech and Slovak Anarchist Federation (CSAF). A propaganda tour in Slovakia by Czech comrades followed this event with a revival of the movement there. Thirty Slovak anarchists met in conference and will either set up a Slovak Anarchist Federation or collectively join the CSAF which already had 2 groups in Slovakia. At the fifth conference of the CSAF in October 1997 there was a split between the synthesists/reformists and the class struggle anarchists, who are primarily orientated towards anarcho-syndicalism. The split was carried out in a "moderate and absolutely non-violent way". The Anarcho-syndicalist Faction (ASF) which had organised itself in the CSAF from the start and is a member of the IWA together with other class struggle anarchists have set up the Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA) whilst the synthesists/reformists/greens are keeping the CSAF label. Another grouping Autonomija, which existed alongside the CSAF and was increasingly oriented towards social movements and alternative culture- squatting and punk scene- has completely disappeared, whilst another group Solidarita has recently emerged which seems to combine platformism with anarcho-syndicalism.

GREECE

In Greece there is a large movement, mostly organised around affinity groups and primarily engaged in violent confrontations with the State on the German autonomist model. There is little anarchist organisation in the workplace and little realisation of the need for a strong specific anarchist communist organisation.

OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN ANARCHISM

There are distinct signs that the European movement is growing, in particular in France and the countries of Eastern Europe. The organisations of synthesis are in a majority position whilst those proclaiming some form of specific libertarian communist organisation seem to be at an impasse. There is no homogeneity among these groups. In what could be characterised as the right of European libertarian communism, there appears to be some form of co-ordination-French AL, Swiss OSL and Italian FdCA, with contacts in Poland. These groups seem to have evolved from their original platformism to some form of synthesis between platformism and revolutionary syndicalism. In particular the AL seems compromised by its relations with the extreme left. It seems that AL is making strenuous efforts to set up an alternative

international with their fellow-thinkers in Western Europe, contacts in Eastern Europe, and the SAC/ CGT grouping. This would be an alternative to both the IAF and the IWA.

The Sixth Conference of the International of Anarchist Federations

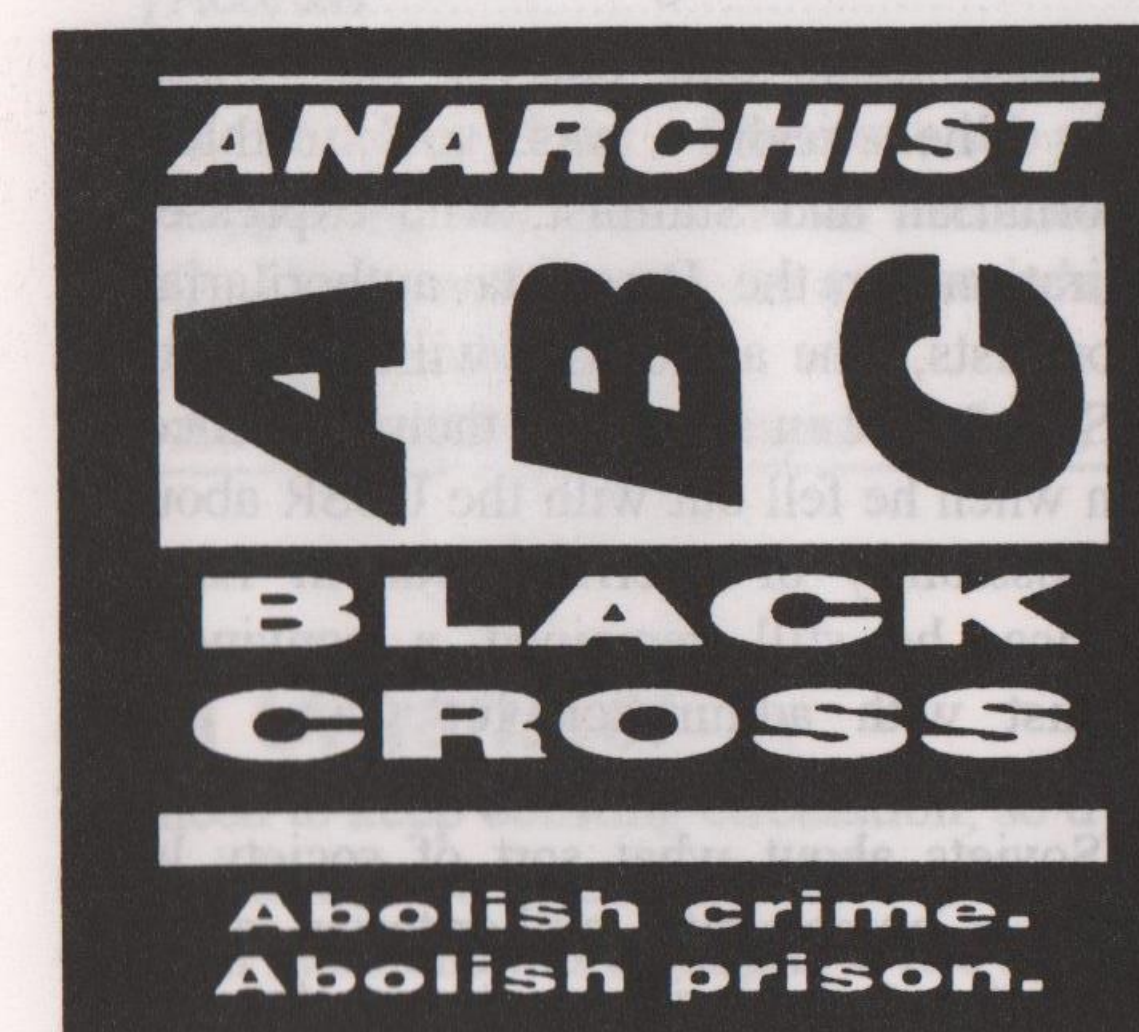
This took place in Lyons, France in the first weekend of November 1997. It was attended by 3 observers from the ACF. Present were the French FA, Italian and Spanish / Portuguese FAI, Bulgarian FAB, German IAFD, attending as members as well as observers from Guyana, Czechoslovakia, Colombia, Holland, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Finland and South Africa. The sixth section of the IAF, the Libertarian Federation of Argentina were unable to attend as were observers from Turkey who were refused visas. The IAF, in an encouraging turn towards openness, went out of their way to invite other anarchist organisations who were not members or candidate members, and allowed them to contribute to the conference. The IAF, it should be said, reflecting the politics of its component sections, has a thoroughgoing synthesist outlook.

Most of the conference was taken up with confirming membership of new sections of the IAF, reports from the different groups and observers, and analyses of the situation in each country. Of particular interest were the reports of the East Europeans and of the observer from Guyana. The situation in Eastern Europe is very difficult, but also very encouraging with growing interest in revolutionary anarchist ideas. Comrades there are showing great courage and fortitude, particularly in Slovakia where large bands of fascists armed to the teeth are a major threat to the movement. The Guyanese group ASFALT involved in the mass struggles against French colonialism in recent times is rapidly evolving towards an anarchist position and will probably shortly join the IAF.

The IAF seems to have a class struggle position and orientates its work towards the building of a working class movement. However, there appear to be disagreements among member organisations as to how this should be done. Sections such as the FAI in Spain, where there is a long tradition of anarcho-syndicalist organisation, still maintain that building anarcho-syndicalist unions is the best strategy. Other organisations are more involved in a wide variety of struggles and are more oriented towards the building of specific anarchist organisations. These differences in strategy were reflected in debates at the conference. The will to grow and influence larger and larger bodies of people, with the preparation of international events, where each section

carries out co-ordinated propaganda and events on the same day (watch this space) was one of the more interesting aspects of the conference. The ACF comrades present were able to make a large number of fruitful contacts.

We have strong criticisms of the whole nature of synthesist organisations. Nevertheless, we were able to meet on a non-sectarian basis with many comrades. We are prepared to work with all class struggle libertarians, whatever our We are ready to debate with all libertarians over methods of organisation, analyses, European Union attacks on our class etc. differences, around practical issues like solidarity work



INJUSTICE BY WAY OF imprisonment continues to be heaped upon our class. There are 2 more individual cases to highlight this issue.

Mark Barnsley

Four Christmases spent locked up behind bars prompted Mark to go on 48 hour hunger strike at the end of November 1997. Mark took this step not only protesting his own wrongful conviction but in solidarity with the Hungry for Justice campaign organised by Action Against Injustice and Birmingham Prisoners Solidarity groups. The background to Mark's imprisonment has become widely known as the Pomona Incident. Mark, with his friend Jane, together with his small baby dropped into the beer garden of the Pomona pub one hot June day in 1994. Fifteen drunken students, male and female verbally abused Jane and the infant in Mark's absence, with harrowing comments like "I'd like to fuck your baby". This comment came from a male student with a verifiable record of making obscene telephone calls. When

with prisoners and strikers, co-ordinated actions against G8 and outlooks and approaches. We are strong supporters of internationalism, as both our presence at Trieste, Lyons and the Amsterdam demo, and our correspondence with international contacts have shown.

N.B. When we say "appear" in the above article we are basing ourselves on hearsay evidence. Any comments on, or corrections to the above article, either from comrades in groups mentioned in these articles, or from British comrades who may have

Prisoners

Mark came back and expressed his disgust, he was set upon, glassed, knifed, chased and beaten horrifically. Many witnesses to the incident confirmed Mark's story, some prosecution

witnesses even firmly corroborating Mark's innocence as non-aggressor. Four of the five who testified against Mark perjured evidence, acknowledged by the judge but kept from the jury. Independent experts produced evidence that not only were the students drunk but they were also high on other drugs. But again this was ignored and the jury did not get to hear about it. As is all too common in many 'miscarriages of justice' the prosecution withheld large amounts of pertinent evidence from the defence which would help clear Mark, evidence not presented at the trial and continually held secret by the prosecution to date. You can help Mark and lend support by contacting:

Mark Barnsley Support Group
P.O. BOX 567 Sheffield S50 0YS

Ishtiaq Ahmed

Yet again another litany of suppression of factual documents relating to the defence, withheld by the CPS on the spurious grounds of 'Public Interest Immunity', the entire police case against

Ishtiaq is centred on one statement which without, the police admit, there is no case to answer. Four statements previously made by the main prosecution witness did not implicate Ishtiaq. It is only the fifth statement, overturning everything previously attested under oath, that incriminates him. Significantly at committal hearings, this key witness swore on oath that the 5th statement was untrue. Again, this has been ignored.

A female witness for Ishtiaq was subjected to severely oppressive methods of questioning inducing her to tell falsehoods about him. This witness successfully complained about the intimidation and this led to the officer concerned being formally disciplined, but crucially this complaint lay 4 years unacted upon and when finally admitted to be genuine was never disclosed to the PCA. Worse, the CPS continue to hold onto 53 documents which Ishtiaq believes prove conclusively that the police fabricated evidence against him. The 'public interest immunity' referred to by the CPS is that the police are lying but the 'public interest' will not be served by the public hearing about it! The DI in charge of the police prosecution actually bought and sent a huge bouquet of flowers to the witness who went back on her first four clear statements. Letters of support to Ishtiaq Ahmed WV2288, HM

information, will be warmly received and printed in Organise! We have attempted to be as objective as possible in terms of reporting on numbers, situation and politics of each group and will gratefully accept any comments. We apologise for leaving out any group/organisation in particular countries where we know there is a movement but have little knowledge - for example the Baltic States, Luxembourg, Denmark, etc.

Prison, Cambridge Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 8PS.

Michael Shawn Barnes

The USA over the last decade has embarked on a programme of incarcerating its youth in adult facilities and in bootcamps. This is the answer to social problems created by capitalism that the U.S. political state proposes. In addition, various states in North America have passed legislation allowing courts to try children and teenagers for capital crimes for which they can receive the death penalty. At present a 13 year old boy who is mentally retarded awaits execution in Alabama's electric chair. He is falsely convicted of murder. His name is Michael Shawn Barnes and he is kept in harsh conditions on Alabama's death row and fed a poodiet. He needs our support urgently. Please write to: Alabama Governor Fob James Jr. State Capitol N-104, 600 Dexter Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36130, USA.

Hungry for Justice

AS PART OF an ongoing campaign against the prison system, the 27th-29th November saw some 80-100 innocent prisoners go on a three-day hunger strike in

protest about their continuing incarceration by the State. Organised in conjunction with a series of demonstrations outside the Birmingham based Criminal Cases Review Commission, the event was a great success and helped to provide a very public focus for those struggling for freedom and a bit of dignity.

Prisoners involved in the campaign are inside for a whole variety of different reasons. Some have been set up by the police (like Warren Slaney from Leicester), others are inside for acts of self-defence (like Satpal Ram who is currently serving time for defending himself against a gang of racist thugs). What unites all the campaigns,

though, is a resistance to the growing criminalisation of our class by the police. So keen is the state to lock us up that by the year 2000 it is estimated that one in two working class males will have been through the judicial system. Why the police decide to target people varies from case to case; the

important thing is not to let them get away with it!

For further info on the hunger strike or the prisoners involved, contact: Birmingham ABC, PO Box 3241, Saltley, Birmingham, B8 3DP

For stuff about framed prisoners write to: CONVICTION, PO Box 522, Sheffield S13FF 100.

Che Guevara *Continued from page 20*

By 1963, Che had realised that Russian Stalinism was a shambles after a visit to Russia where he saw the conditions of the majority of the people, this after "Soviet-style planning" in the Cuban economy had been pushed through by him. Instead of coming to some libertarian critique of Stalinism, he embraced Chinese Stalinism. He denounced the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful co-existence, which acknowledged that Latin America was the USA's backyard, and gave little or no support to any movement against American control. Fidel was now obsessed with saving the Cuban economy, himself arguing for appeasement. Against this Che talked about spreading armed struggle through Latin America, if necessary using nuclear war to help this come about!

Shambles

It was on this basis that Che left Cuba never to return. He went to the Congo, where he worked with the Congolese Liberation Army, supported by the Chinese Stalinists. strategies, he failed to relate to the industrial working class. The Bolivian working class, and especially the tin miners,

had a recent record of militancy and class. This was a shambles of a campaign, and Che ended up isolated with many of his band dead. Despite this, Che still believed in guerrilla struggle waged by a tiny armed minority. His final, fatal, campaign was in Bolivia. This also was a fiasco. Basing himself once more on old Castroist consciousness. The peasants, on the other hand, among whom Che hoped to create an armed insurrection, had been demobilised by the land reforms of 1952. So, Che was unable to relate to either workers or peasants. The local Communist Party failed to support him. Robbed of support, Che was surrounded in the Andean foothills, captured and executed.

Yes, Che was very brave physically. Yes, he was single-mindedly devoted to what he saw as the revolution and socialism. Yes, he refused the privilege and luxury granted to other leaders of Castroist Cuba, taking an average wage and working hard in his various government jobs. But many militarists, fascists and religious fanatics share these characteristics of bravery and self-sacrifice. Che's good looks and

'martyr's' death turned him into an icon, an icon duly exploited by all those wanting to turn a fast buck selling 'revolutionary' chic.

But good looks and bravery camouflage what Che really was. A ruthless authoritarian and Stalinist, who expressed admiration for the Peronista authoritarian nationalists, Che acted as a willing tool of the Soviet bloc in spreading their influence. Even when he fell out with the USSR about the possibility of guerrilla war in Latin America, he still remained a convinced Stalinist with admiration for China and North Korea. He had no disagreements with the Soviets about what sort of society he wanted a bureaucratic authoritarian state-capitalist set up with contempt for the masses.

Che may look like the archetypal romantic revolutionary. In reality he was a tool of the Stalinist power blocs and a partisan of nuclear war. His attitudes and actions reveal him to be no friend of the working masses, whether they be workers or peasants.

The Blair Necessities *continued from page 3*

be scrapped, to be replaced by a work-for-dole scenario. The National Health Service will be most likely up for the chop, if Labour think they can get away with it.

But some bourgeois commentators are getting edgy. They are warning that social unrest may well loom up on the horizon. Andrew Marr, writing in the *Independent* (30.9.97) warned; "But at the point when 'tough choices' become tougher lives for

people who are already barely coping, then this government will begin to experience at least some of the populist anger against the first and second Thatcher administration. Further, that anger will find political expression. I don't know how, or where, or who will lead it. But in every advanced society there is a leftist, oppositionist opinion which finds a way to be heard".

As we noted in the last *Organise!* our class is in a state of retreat and defeat. This may continue for some time. At the moment there is little sign of serious resistance. But this situation may not last for ever. Let us hope Marr's predictions are proved correct and that British revolutionary anarchism will prove itself capable of organising itself and of strongly influencing any future struggles.

Revolution - An Unfinished Business

Conference and Contact Addresses:

A conference is planned take to place in Bradford in the spring of 1998 to discuss the new direction. Anyone wanting to attend should ring 0117 907 3667, or write to: London CW, BM Box 5538, London WC1N 3XX. Copies of *Smash Hits* are also available. Deadline for the next one is 31st January 1998.

Animal and the new *Class War* paper are available from: PO BOX 467, London E8 3QX.

Movement Against the Monarchy can be contacted at PO BOX 14672, London E9 5UQ.

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 February for features and reviews, and 8th February for letters and news.

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

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Anarchist Communist Federation

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

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

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

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

Woking and all other areas: ACF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL

London: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street London, E1 7QX

West Midlands: ACF, PO Box 339, Wolverhampton, WV10 7BZ

ACF International Contacts:

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

Holland: Postbus 93515, 1090 EA, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Want to Join the ACF? Want To Find Out More?

- ☐ I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
☐ I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation.
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