

# Two historians of anarchism

## Roland Biard

ROLAND BIARD, active militant in the French anarchist movement and then historian of the movement, has died at the age of 56, three weeks after being diagnosed with cancer. He co-founded the *Groupe d'Etudes et Action Anarchiste* with Alexandre Skirda (who is also a noted historian of anarchism) when they were both 19. The son of high-up officials in the Stalinist apparatus of the French Communist Party, he broke with his parents' ideas at a very young age.

His placid and benign appearance belied his great physical courage. He was at all the anarchist demonstrations against the Algerian war in 1961-2, including the

Charonne demo, which ended in the mass lynching of Algerians by the police. He was also present at the famous night of the barricades on 10 May 1968 in Paris. A partisan of a specifically anarchist-communist organisation, he served as secretary of the *Union des Groupes Anarchistes Communistes* (UGAC) from 1964 to 1966, was co-founder of the Kronstadt group, (which included Daniel Guérin in its ranks) of the *Mouvement Communiste Libertaire* (MCL), and then joined the *Organisation Révolutionnaire Anarchiste* in 1971. He left the ORA in 1974, over what he saw as the manoeuvres of certain "charismatic leaders" and the lack of

political and organisational maturity of the mass of membership. He devoted himself to writing a series of books including *Histoire du Mouvement anarchiste en France 1945-1975* (History of the Anarchist Movement 1945-1975), *La Commune de Budapest* (the Budapest Commune) and his monumental and exhaustive *Dictionnaire de l'extrême gauche* (Dictionary of the Extreme Left). He published numerous articles, under the pseudonym Julien Stern, or anonymously, in the libertarian press. Teacher, then history professor, he returned to his native and beloved Charente region in 1975. A *bon viveur*, he welcomed visiting comrades with great fraternity. Faithful to his ideas, he was cremated wrapped in the Black Flag of Anarchy. **ROLAND BIARD. Anarchist, Historian. Born 1942, died 4 October 1998.**

## Pier Carlo Masini

THE NOTED HISTORIAN PIER CARLO MASINI has died at the age of 75 in Florence.

Born at Cerbaia in the province of Florence, in 1923, Masini's youth was spent in the antifascist student circles which sprang up in Florence at the end of the '30s. He joined the liberal-socialist movement of Tristano Codignola, and was a driving force in its youth group around the magazine *Argomenti*.

He was arrested for 'conspiratorial' activity on 21 June 1942 and condemned to three years' confinement at Guardia Sanframondi in the Matese mountains in southern Italy. Released on 19 May 1943 he returned to Tuscany and there grew close to the Communist Party.

During the last phase of the war and the immediate post-liberation period, Masini moved towards the Anarchist movement, with what he saw as the compromises of Togliatti, the Communist Party leader. Under the influence of the anarchist veterans Alfonso Failla, Umberto Marzocchi (who had fought with the Anarchist militias during the Spanish Civil War) and Mario Mantovani, Pier Carlo became enthused with the ideals of anarchism from August 1945.

Two of the first Anarchist papers to appear in Tuscany in the months following the Liberation were edited by Masini — *Passione Rivoluzionaria*, organ of the Tuscan Anarchist Youth, and *Alba dei Liberi* (Dawn of the Free).

Masini's relationship with the Anarchist movement was not easy. Pier Carlo was full

of dynamism and enthusiasm, but he often came up against comrades advanced in years, exhausted by the long struggle against fascism and often isolated and marginalised within the workers movement by the hegemony of Marxism. Masini set out to consciously revive the movement, creating a political and cultural network that reached out far beyond the movement itself.

### Dialogue

He put the first stage of this plan into operation with the magazine *Gioventù Anarchica* (Anarchist Youth) which appeared between 1946-1947, jointly edited with Carlo Doglio. Despite its brief life of 14 issues, the magazine had a great influence on the renaissance of Italian anarchism, with articles covering many political and cultural issues, including important articles on cinema written by Doglio. Masini, through the magazine, entered into dialogue with other reviews and the tiny Bordigist and Trotskyist organisations.

Within the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI), Masini was initially occupied with its Antimilitarist Commission, then becoming editor of the FAI weekly paper *Umanità Nova* in 1948. A magnificent and energetic editor, he was also a superb orator.

The internal conflict within the FAI between the youth grouped around Masini and the more traditional elements came to a head with the Livorno congress of 1949 and the Ancona congress of 1950. Masini pro-

posed a Libertarian Party with an anarchist theory and practice adapted to the new economic, political and social reality of post-war Italy, with an internationalist outlook and effective presence in the workplaces. This led to the secession of the group around Masini and the creation of the magazine *L'Impulso* and the *Gruppi Anarchici d'Azione Proletaria* (GAAP — Anarchist Groups of Proletarian Action). The GAAP allied themselves with a similar development within the French Anarchist movement, the *Fédération Communiste Libertaire*, whose leading light was Georges Fontenis. These two groups were the main components of the Libertarian Communist International (ICL) in 1954, along with a small Spanish section and informal links with the British movement via the militant Ken Hawkes.

However, the GAAP's hopes of breaking out of isolation had not taken account of the mystification purveyed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its political and cultural hegemony over the working class. This led on to collaboration with Communist Party dissidents and above all with *Azione Comunista*, a confederation of small Bordigist, Trotskyist and ex-Communist organisations, among the latter being Giulio Seniga, who had been on the executive committee of the PCI. This grouping had been the result of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and represented the internationalist and anti-Stalinist section of the Italian extraparlimentary left. The GAAP fused with *Azione Comunista*. However, as Masini wrote in a letter to Fontenis, "nostalgists for paleolithic Leninism and second-hand Leninists" seized

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# ORGANISE!

## for revolutionary anarchism

No. 50/Winter 1998-9

Free to prisoners/£1

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MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION



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ORGANISE! IS THE magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a theoretical journal appearing twice a year and 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.

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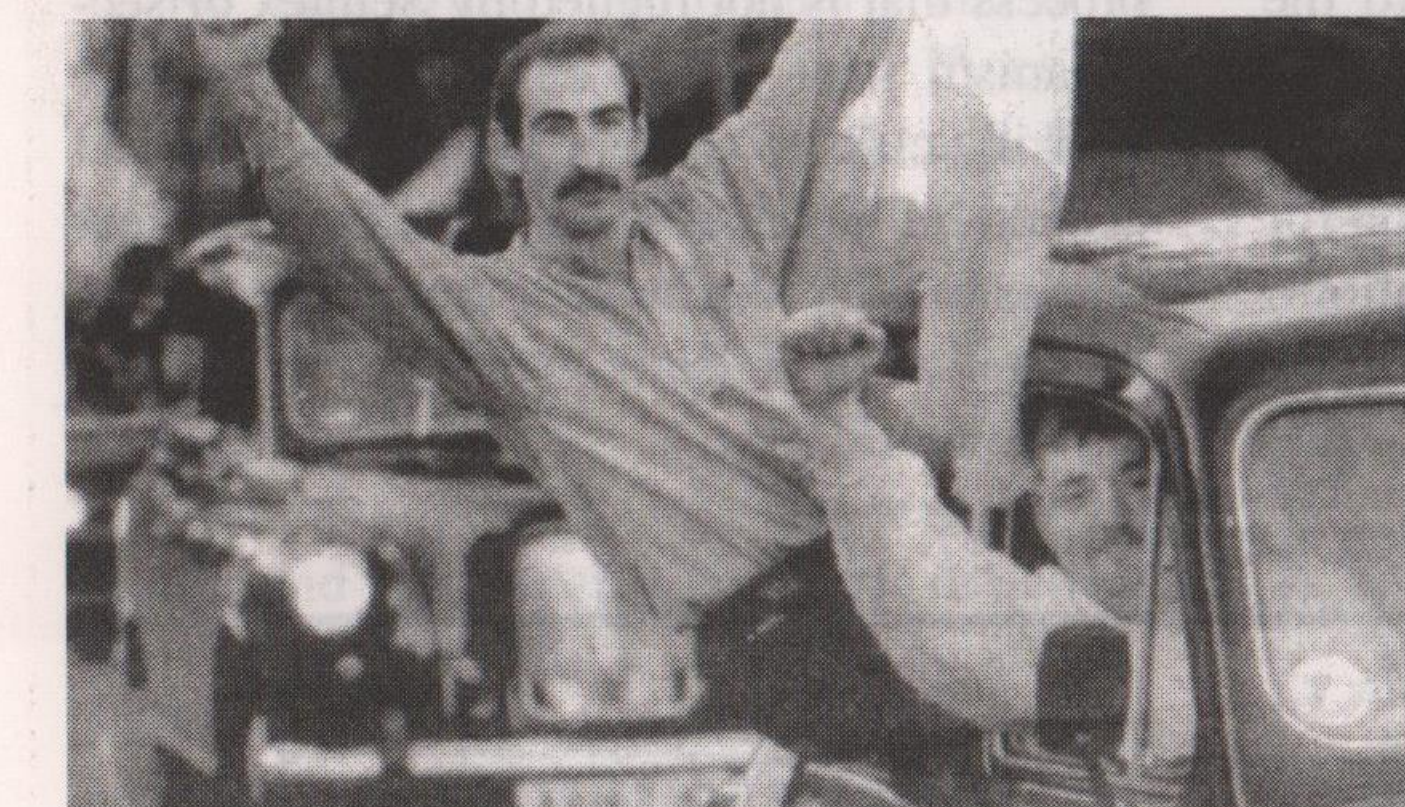
## 'Peace process' back from the brink

AT SEVERAL DECISIVE MOMENTS over the summer months the 'peace process' in the north of Ireland stood on the verge of total collapse — pushed to the very brink by acts of paramilitary violence, and street confrontations with the police and army, instigated by both loyalist and republican militants opposed to the terms of the Good Friday deal.

But Northern Ireland's political landscape has been dramatically reshaped in the past few years, and violent 'outrages' no longer seal the fate of delicate negotiations between unionist and nationalist politicians, now agreed on the need to reform the Orange state. It was soon apparent that the same acts that threatened to destroy the 'peace process', had ended up reinforcing it, revealing hard-line opposition to the deal on both sides as isolated and lacking popular support. These turbulent weeks in the province con-

the roads and fields on the outskirts of the town. The ferocity of loyalist violence that struggled in vain for days to breach the barricades was the most intense yet seen at Drumcree, but as sympathy riots by loyalist gangs broke out across the north, opinion within leading loyalist and unionist bodies polarised. The Orange Order was itself driven by bitter division over the meaning of the nightly mob battles and sniper fire at the Portadown siege. Some members saw the Drumcree actions as the 'heroic defence' of 'threatened' Protestant 'rights', and a reminder to the 'weak-willed' Trimble of grassroots loyalist anger. Other members feared it as reckless, out of control and politically suicidal. Resignations and recriminations multiplied in the ranks, as acts of sectarian arson and terror by loyalist thugs rose to a fever pitch. One such gang firebombed the home of the catholic Quinn family in Ballymoney on 12 July, killing three young brothers. The wave of public outrage that followed the Quinn killings saw the 'Drumcree 4' stand-off crumble, even as the notorious 'Spirit of Drumcree' group denied any culpability in the murders.

Loyalist groups hostile to the 'peace process' had hoped the Drumcree siege would become the issue that could cement fragmented opposition forces in the unionist camp. Ian Paisley,



Sinn Féin supporters celebrate start of 'peace process'.

firmed that there is currently no positive alternative to a settlement process driven forward by the determination of the leaders of western capitalism to put an end to decades of bloody instability in northern Ireland on terms favourable to them.

The events of the annual marching season appeared once again to place negotiations in jeopardy, as violent street clashes convulsed the Six Counties, reaching a predictable intensity around the loyalist 'twelfth of July' commemoration. The fourth annual stand-off at Drumcree outside Portadown, where Orange marchers insist on their 'historic' right to parade their celebration of fading sectarian privilege along the nationalist Garvaghy Road, proved to be a decisive turning point. In 1997, the march was forced through by a massive army operation. This year the march was forbidden to march through catholic estates on the ruling of the new Parades Commission.

### Blockade

In anticipation of 'Drumcree 4', the army and RUC constructed a vast blockade across

Neanderthal patriarch of the Democratic Unionists, is itching to lead any such revival in the fortunes of the 'no' forces. The inglorious collapse of 'Drumcree 4' took with it any immediate prospects for such a reversal in the direction of mainstream unionist political movement. It paved the way for the announcement, on 9 August, of a ceasefire by the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) — the sectarian murder gang responsible for some of the most callous and brutal acts of random terror against the catholic-nationalist community in recent times.

The crisis within fundamentalist loyalism that followed the Drumcree debacle, intensified pressure on militant republicans to renounce their own 'armed campaign' and accept the logic of the Good Friday referendum result.

The 15 August bomb blast in Omagh town centre, which killed 29 and injured more than 250, was a desperate rearguard action by the republican dissidents of the Real IRA (RIRA). It was intended to prove the RIRA's capability and commitment, and show that implacable republican hostility to the process remained undimmed. Counter-



McGuinness and Adams.

intelligence sources in the RUC concede that the RIRA's intention was to hit an army or police patrol, not to slaughter shoppers. But this mission objective does nothing to alter the fact that the Omagh bomb was a contemptible act of mass murder, and an appalling crime against the Irish working class, carried out in the name of a goal hostile to the interests of that class.

### Carnage

Reaction to the carnage at Omagh exposed the fragmented forces of republican paramilitarism to a torrent of condemnation almost impossible to counter. The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) called an indefinite and total ceasefire on 22 August, declaring in a statement that "the conditions for armed struggle do not exist". The statement went on to suggest that "the will of the Irish people is clear. It is now time to silence the guns and allow the working classes the time and opportunity to advance their demands and their needs".

The RIRA called a temporary ceasefire that became permanent within days. The 32-County Sovereignty Committee, understood to 'speak politically' for the RIRA, made no attempt to defend the Omagh killings. As of mid-October, the 'Continuity IRA' (CIRA) remained the only known republican paramilitary group yet to renounce the 'armed struggle'. The CIRM's leaders must be aware that they now face the undivided attention of British 'counter-terrorist' agencies — and (given the go-ahead) the wrath of the IRA's own enforcers should they go 'too far'.

The two events — at Drumcree and at Omagh — have ended up bolstering, rather than undermining, the 'peace process'. The complex set of negotiations inching forward at present is not under threat either from oppositionists involved in them or from rejectionists outside of them. The new Northern Ireland assembly, elected in the



poll that followed the referendum on the Good Friday agreement, is destined to be the body that will share executive powers with Westminster and between the communities in the north. David Trimble, leader of the largest pro-agreement union party, the Ulster Unionists (UUP), has been elected as first minister, with Scamus Mallon, of the mainstream nationalist party, the SDLP, voted in as his deputy. Powers will be transferred to the assembly from February 1999 onwards.

The reaction across both communities to this latest attempt at power-sharing and cross-border co-operation will be the critical test not only for the assembly itself but for the whole process — of which it is the linchpin.

### Trouble

The issue of paramilitary arms decommissioning now dominates the immediate agenda. Gerry Adams, leader of the largest republican party Sinn Féin (SF), has made the most unequivocal statement yet that the era of the ballot box and armalite is "over, done with and gone". Martin McGuinness has been chosen by SF as the liaison officer between the IRA and the new decommissioning body. Trimble still presides over a divided UUP, and has to remain watchful of the instabilities and uncertainties that define

unionism more widely. However, the majority of the UUP leadership appear to be moving towards an acceptance of the idea of arms decommissioning as a parallel process, undertaken in tandem with negotiations in the assembly, rather than as the central precondition of Sinn Féin engagement at executive level. The well-publicised private meeting between Adams and Trimble, in early September, was the first acknowledged instance of direct talks between republican and unionist leaders since the civil war and partition.

On the security front, the 'normalisation' process has restarted, after being thrown into reverse during the marching season, with a number of troop deployments being downgraded or ended altogether.

In total conflict with this strategy, the Irish and British governments agreed a further package of sweeping 'anti-terrorist' powers in the wake of the Omagh bomb. This new battery of legal powers may itself face challenge in the courts, but is clearly intended as a blunt instrument to batter down the last remnants of outright opposition to the 'peace process' — armed or otherwise. The word of a senior police officer is now to be sufficient evidence to secure a conviction for 'membership of a prescribed organisation'. In the post-Omagh atmosphere, opposition even to this, the effective abolition of 'due

process' and further erosion of the 'presumption of innocence', has been muted and marginal — although, to placate its own membership, Sinn Féin went through the motions to 'condemn' the new laws as 'unnecessary'. The early release of convicted paramilitary prisoners is critical to buying the acceptance, or at least acquiescence, of militants on all sides. It is a clear pay-off by the British state for the agreement by armed groups to stand their forces down, and for the tightening of the thumbscrews on the remaining renegades in the ranks.

### Challenge

The Northern Ireland 'peace process' is beset with problems, and stressed by counter-presures from within. Negotiators will have to confront a number of seemingly irreconcilable differences in the months ahead. But the collapse of republican and loyalist paramilitarism is another clear testament to the ascendancy of the 'talks option'.

What is needed is a challenge to that process that is not fuelled by Sect or sectarianism but by the determination of the working class to seize control of the political agenda in pursuit of its own independent interests. That requires not the reform but the destruction of the state — not just in Ireland, but the world over.

## Claimants' groups target Reed Employment

OVER THE WEEKEND OF 23-25 October 1998, claimants groups throughout England, Scotland and Wales launched a campaign against Reed Employment UK Ltd, which is administering the New Deal in the Hackney & City area of North-East London. The aim of the campaign is to draw public attention to this systematic exploitation of the unemployed for corporate profit; and to deter other, equally greedy, private agencies from sticking their snouts into the trough so cynically prepared for them by the Labour government, and ultimately to force Reed to withdraw from the scheme.

### The current action

In towns and cities across the country, claimants and campaigning groups flyposted somewhere between 30-50 high street offices of Reed Employment. These posters were aimed at:

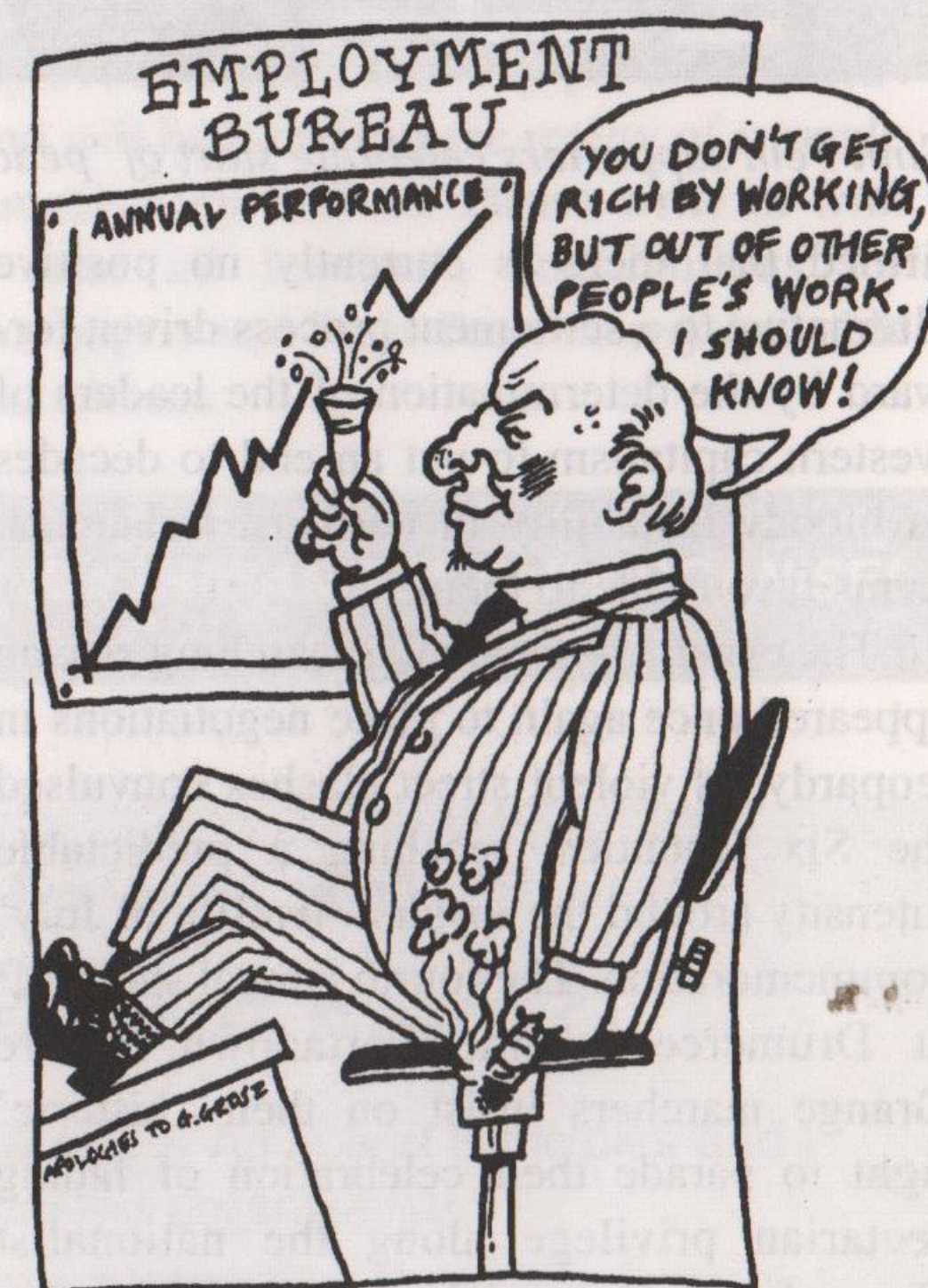
- Reed managers who, over the next few months, will become aware that they can-

not exploit the unemployed for their own benefit.

- Reed staff, who need reminding that their actions — processing claimants for crap, low-paid jobs — are not without consequences.
- Other employment agencies, who we envisage will receive the same treatment if they follow Reed's lead, and ordinary members of the public — who either pass Reed Employment offices every day, or who presently use Reed to find work — unaware of what Reed are up to.

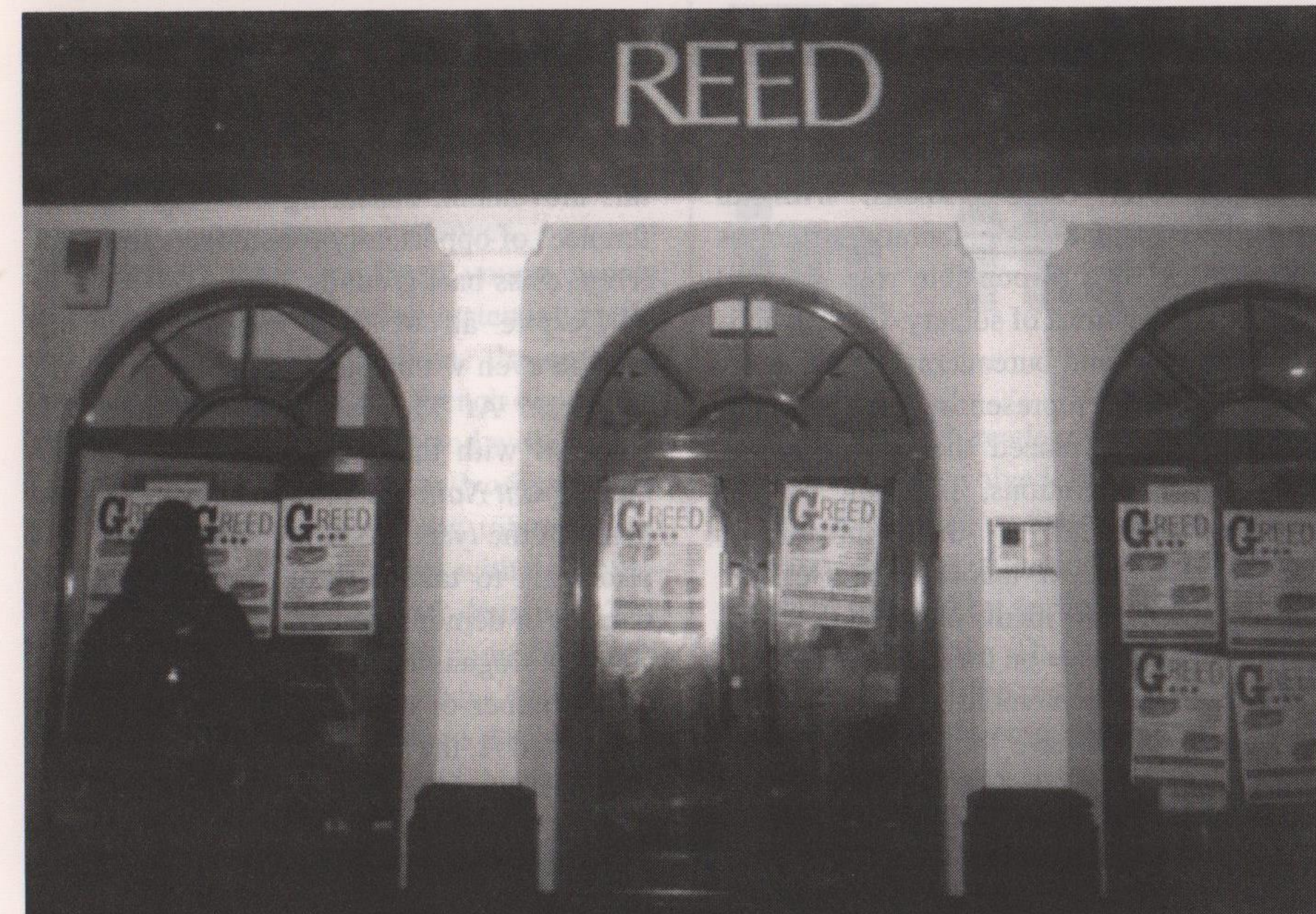
In the past, companies like Reed (who make huge profits off the backs and the suffering of the unemployed and others) have been able to console themselves with the thought that actions against them were just one-off.

Not this time. The flyposting is just the start of the campaign. This will be followed up shortly by a campaign of leafleting and other direct actions are being considered.



### Your help is needed

Haringey Solidarity Group & Hackney Claimants are calling this nation-wide campaign against Reed. Claimants and workers in Brighton are also about to launch a campaign against Reed, and we understand the more active members of CPSA (one of the dole workers trade unions) are trying to fight against the continued privatisation of the



Employment Service by companies like Reed, from within job centres.

We need to hit Reed regularly and at as many of their offices as possible. If actions are just concentrated in North and East London and Brighton, Reed will be able to weather the storm. Their profits are large enough that they can soak up a few offices making a loss.

The campaign needs the support of groups and individuals throughout the country. Groups within the Groundswell claimants' movement have already agreed to back this campaign against Reed's, but others are welcome and needed.

A leaflet has been produced explaining Reed's involvement in the exploitation of the unemployed/unwaged. Naturally this leaflet also mentions other unsavoury things about Reed's. We need to get this distributed outside Reed offices — to both passers by, Reed staff and anybody thinking of using Reed's to find jobs. If you can help, then contact us. Obviously, if groups want, they can produce and distribute their own leaflets — this may even be better. But, if you ain't up to producing your own, contact us for copies of ours.

Our aim is to hit Reed's where it hurts — in their pockets — until they realise the only option is to ditch their involvement in the New Deal. Of course we are not suggesting groups or individuals take illegal action — that would be incitement and we know where that can get us! We would ask that groups take whatever action they feel is appropriate in their local area to a) get people to boycott Reed's and b) force Reed to pull out of the New Deal and any other schemes where they benefit from the suffering of claimants. If there ain't a Reed's near you pick on any of the other employment agencies — they all hope to get in on the act and cream off profits from low waged and claimants' suffering.

### Background

Reed Employment is one of the UK's biggest recruitment agencies, with offices on the high streets of most major towns and cities.

On 16 April 1998, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Reed's had posted a 1997 pre-tax profit of £14m, up from £12.3m the previous year, after a 19% rise in turnover to £227m. Chairman Alec Reed described it as a "quietly successful year". According to the 1997 *Sunday Times* Rich List, the Reed family enjoys a fortune of £50m, making Alec Reed the 360th richest person in this country.

Under the insane logic of capitalism, rich is never rich enough. In March 1998, under a contract with the Employment service, Reed launched a pilot scheme to deliver the New Deal for the Young Unemployed in the Hackney and City area of London. His staff — hiding the fact that they are themselves underpaid behind silly T-shirts and fixed smiles — are levering claimants into jobs at rates as low as the criminally inadequate £3 minimum wage for young people.

Reed is one of almost a dozen private companies that are now contracted to exploit the unemployed in areas throughout the country. Some Employment Service workers regard this as the thin end of the wedge of eventual privatisation. There has been talk of lobbying for strike action.

### Shady goings-on already

Within weeks of launching their glossy 'New Deal Campus' in Hackney, Reed were revealed to be indulging in sharp practice:

1. That Reed's agenda is less to assist claimants than to generate a quick profit became clear when the company tried to undercut existing Employment Service rates for staff administering the New Deal

Gateway by £3,000 a year. Reed even advertised posts at these rates in local jobcentres, until someone put a stop to this cynical attempt to exploit, not only claimants, but also those processing claimants for exploitation.

2. Reed do their best to place 'job ready' clients through their existing network of employers, who pay them a fee for every successful placement. This means that they are being double-funded: first through their New Deal contract, then by employers!

To some observers, this is merely an indication that monitoring will be advisable. To claimants, it comes as confirmation that the New Deal is rotten root and branch.

Reed are not the only pigs with their snouts in the New Deal trough, but they give off the foulest stench. We are going to hit them where it hurts — in the wallet!

### Get involved

Could you let us know what actions have been taken, as we want to regularly send out information to the press. Obviously groups names won't be mentioned in any of these.

We also want to keep activists regularly informed about the Reed campaign, and start up a network of groups/people fighting back. To be included contact us at: Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474 London N8. Phone and fax: 0181 374 5027. email: hsg@clara.net

### Haringey Solidarity Group

**Update:** Reed offices were flyposted in Brighton, Manchester, Edinburgh, Sheffield and London.

## What you need to know...

### Reed Head Office

6th Floor, Tolworth Tower  
Tolworth, Surbiton  
Surrey, KT6 7DN  
Phone: 0181 399 5221  
Fax 0181 390 8860  
Email clientservices@reed.co.uk  
website <http://www.reed.co.uk>

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## The high school students' movement in France

IN OCTOBER, 500,000 students of the *lycées* (high schools) demonstrated in almost every French town. Claude Allègre, Minister of Education, who has followed a course of confrontation with the teachers, turned himself into a Father Christmas with the students, concerned as he was with the strength of the demonstrations.

The demands of the students were simple:

- lightening of learning programmes and decrease in class sizes
- the average class size is between thirty and forty, while the recommended class size is between twenty and twenty-five
- the filling of all vacant teachers posts.

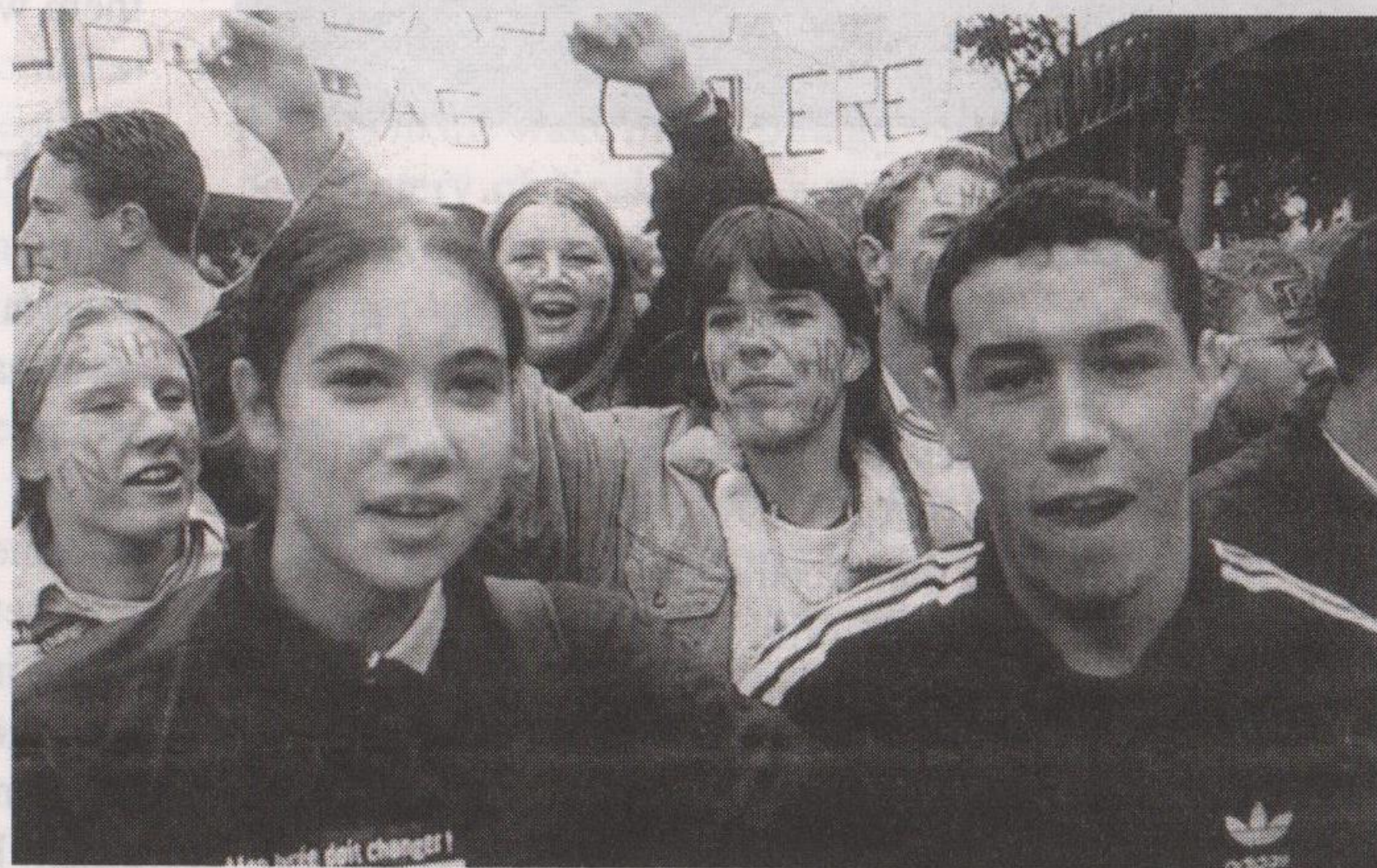
Allègre played the old game of pretending to listen to the students' demands, making vague promises, letting negotiations drag on till the school holidays came along, multiplying the demagogic announcements whilst watering down promised reforms. The result: on 5 November there were ten times fewer students in the street than at the previous large demonstrations. Allègre has a number of advisers who used to be on the other side of the barricade back in 1968. Chief among them is Alain Geismar, ex-Maoist leader who has become Inspector-General of National Education and chief go-between between the students and the Minister. Sharks like him know all about struggles and how to defuse them.

Also at work were the various organisations claiming to represent the students, each competing against the other as the authentic voice of the *lycées*. At least five coordinations have seen the light of day. One of these, the coordination of the FIDL (*Fédération Indépendante Démocratique Lycéenne*) is close to the *Gauche Socialiste* current of the Socialist Party, that is, the party in power. Its stage-managed meeting with Allègre was met with derision by the majority of striking students, so much so that it was forced to do a U-turn. After the meeting with Allègre it called for an end to the strike movement, then called for a mobilisation after the holidays because it was afraid it would be outmanoeuvred by the other coordinations. It should be pointed out that the *Gauche Socialiste* has no representatives in the government and is relatively marginalised within the Socialist Party. It hopes that it can be shown to be useful as a broker so that it can get selected for some of the electoral lists for the European elections in 1999.

The movement itself presents many class divisions and different situations. The media has attempted to show the movement as one

of responsible young citizens, with an apprenticeship of the 'democratic strike' as the first step to a responsible role as good middle class bastions of society. Indeed, budding politicians and bureaucrats of the coordinations, often representing no one but themselves, have placed themselves at the head of demonstrations, insisting on the 'apolitical' character of 'their' movement, ordering students to tear up any leaflets handed to them. The media has colluded with these groups, to insist on the teachers helping out by directing the demonstrations.

The journalists have found it more difficult to explain those *lycéens* extremely sceptical about their future and about their movement's ability to change their lives



tical about their future and about their movement's ability to change their lives

### The content of the movement

Many movements start up with reformist, economic, or even everyday demands and end up 'demanding the impossible', so it might seem churlish to criticise the *lycéens'* movement. After all, we readily support industrial strikes for pay or conditions or to stop closures. But the *lycéens'* demands are eminently reasonable and well-behaved. They want reduction in class sizes, more teachers, more technical and material back-up, so that they can study properly, get good results and end up with a good job and career. Sure, everyone wants their study environment to be better. But the whole education system, from kindergarten onwards, is a place to establish discipline, time keeping and recognition of hierarchy. Did you ever hear of an action by prisoners whose aim was more warders? And in the *lycées*, the aim is to tell the students that they have a chance after finishing their courses, that they will all get permanent jobs when the future for many is long-term unemployment or jobs with short term contracts. The myths of education for all, and equal chances for everyone, as well as good citizenship, are very strong in

this movement, obscuring the very real differences of opportunity for students from different class backgrounds.

Despite all of this, radical ideas still emerge even within such limited movements as these. At Montpellier, more demands emerged with the call for members of the racist *Front National* sitting on the governing board of the *lycées* to be removed and for the principals to take a position on this. On a number of demonstrations, some banners and chanted slogans called for revolution. Also, on a number of demos, many students had the circled A, the sign of anarchy, painted on their faces... a gesture, or an indication of increasing radicalisation? At Paris, the most popular slogan was "*Dans grève, il y a rêve*" (in a strike, there is a dream), an indication that students are looking to a different future, that utopian demands have the possibility of emerging. And the joy of the mass of students at demonstrating for the first time and not having to be at college was there for all to see.

It is noticeable that the same tactics are being used on the *lycéens* as on the unemployed.

First of all, a pretence at dialogue and that the demands will be considered by the government, followed by drawn out negotiations to sap the movement. Then heavy policing to intimidate the more intransigent and most active. This is what happened with the unemployed in 1997-8, and is now happening with the *lycéens*. In some towns, spokespeople for the *lycéens* were submitted to security checks and ID controls as soon as they arrived at demos. This points to the excellent coordination between police, and the principals and managers of *lycées*. Unfortunately, a large number of teachers have colluded with this. There has been a real horror among many teachers at the thought of students demonstrating, followed by questioning and criticising the movement in class, and getting heavy about absences from college on the day that demonstrations took place.

At the end of three weeks of demonstrations, and continuous criticisms from the mass of teachers, the very same people decided to come on strike and support the students — three days before the end of term! — attempting to tie their feeble demands to the feeble demands of the students! Of course, the Socialist government has attempted to turn teachers against students and vice versa — easy to do under the circumstances.

### The casseurs

As well as those students sceptical about the movement's ability to really change their lives (and who have resorted to attacks on property in some instances, as at Montpellier) there are those young people excluded from the education system altogether. The youth of the *banlieux*, the outlying parts of towns that are the French equivalent of the inner cities, in groups and without hiding their faces, have used the *lycée* mobilisations to loot expensive shops, tobacconists, and audio-visual goods stores with no apparent concern for the *lycéens'* demands. The press have quickly tagged the name 'casseur' (breaker) on to them as they have with previous examples of disaffection in the *banlieux*. Allègre and the State have used this in a number of ways, turning youth against youth, the 'good' against the 'bad'. A little police repression in the deprived parts of town in the run-up to demonstrations, a little wind-up reporting in the media beforehand about the possibility of trouble, also does wonders in provoking outbreaks of looting.

The gangs who have undertaken these actions are hardly paragons of revolutionary virtue. The cults of money, physical strength, authority and sexism within the gangs, the stripping of coveted items of clothing from other young people, show the dominant values of capitalist society, of "war of all against all". But instead of blaming these disaffected youth, it would be better to look at the increasing levels of poverty, unemployment and social deprivation, with news of redundancies practically every week. With the Jospin government, the cult of law and order has been raised to levels not seen for years. With the creation of a national security council, the gendarmerie out in force in the *banlieux*, and everyday there are an increasing number of CRS (riot cops) on the street. The police are now to be seen in the supermarkets, on the tubes, in all the town centres on a permanent basis.

The Communist Party has joined in this orgy of law and order, denouncing the casseurs, praising the CRS! Increasingly the Communist Party equates the poor with the 'dangerous class' with no comment on the worsening social conditions.

The high school system as a conveyor belt to rising higher in society is in the process of breaking down. At the moment the youth of the *banlieux* are contrasted with the nice high school students. A growing realisation that the future is just as bleak for many high school students is needed.

The limited demands of today have to be replaced by a vision of a different society based on equality. Whether this has any possibility of developing at the moment within this oh-so-reasonable movement seems unlikely.

## The repression in Italy

IN ORGANISE! 48, readers will have seen that the ACF was involved in an informational picket of the Italian State Tourist Office in London, drawing attention to the repression recently suffered by sections of the anarchist movement in Italy. This article attempts to offer a history of the repression and attempts to put in context the response of the anarchist movement.

Anarchism has a long history in Italy and deep roots in certain working class communities. Prior to the Fascist take-over of 1922, the anarchists constituted a major force in the Italian workers' movement, particularly through the mass *Unione Sindacale Italiana* and the specific anarchist organisation *Unione Anarchica Italiana*. Anarchists were at the forefront during the factory occupations of 1919 and in the physical opposition to the Blackshirts of Fascism. Anarchism experienced a revival following the 'democratisation' of Italy in 1945 but seemed to lose its way during the '50s and '60s. Post-1968, the movement began to re-organise and anarchists played a part in the fierce social struggles of the 1970s. Anarchism, to some extent, however, seemed overshadowed by autonomism, which had its roots in a form of Marxist-Leninism that was different to both traditional Stalinism and Trotskyism and appeared to emphasise the need for workers' self-organisation. Some anarchist groups orientated towards the 'autonomous' movement, but the majority continued to follow more 'traditional' paths, anarcho-syndicalism, platformism and synthesism. Today these currents are represented by the Italian syndicalist union — the Federation of

Communist Anarchists — and the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI). Outside of these organisations there are other currents and many independent local groups.

Amongst these other currents are the so-called 'Insurrectionists'. The outstanding example of this current is the group around the magazine *Anarchismo*, edited by the anarchist theorist Alfredo Bonanno. Another magazine in the 'insurrectionist' mould was the now defunct *Cane Nero* (*Black Dog*). *Anarchismo* rejected the path taken by syndicalists, platformists and the Italian Anarchist Federation alike, in that it rejected all permanent organisation and looked to the temporary, autonomous, affinity group and to individual acts of rebellion. These ideas had a certain influence upon many anarchists who remained outside of the organisations, particularly the militant squatters of Turin.

### The Turin anarchist squatters

Turin is unusual in Italy as its squats are almost exclusively anarchist, rather than autonomist or of the 'revolutionary left'. Most anarchist squatters reject any compromise which might 'legalise' squatted social centres, which has been a tactic used by the local state in Italy for several years. The relationship with the authorities has long been acutely antagonistic and the Turin anarchists bore much of the brunt of the initial harassment and repression which began with raids and arrests from the end of 1995, climaxing on 17 September 1996. On this date, Italian special police (the ROS) raided 60 addresses across Italy, arresting dozens of militants on





various serious and outlandish charges, not least murders, bank robberies and kidnappings!

Behind these raids appeared the figure of Judge Antonio Marini. There is debate in Italy whether the campaign against the anarchists is a personal crusade by Marini prior to his retirement, or whether he is merely the latest front-man for the Italian secret services, or both. Using a shadowy informer, Namsetchi Modjeh (in Italy such people are known as 'repentants', repenting for the sin of being revolutionary...), Judge Marini attempted to conjure up a vast political-criminal conspiracy with the title of the 'Revolutionary Organisation of Anarchist Insurrectionalists' (ORAI), at the head of which was placed Alfredo M. Bonnano. This organisation, something like a hybrid of the Red Brigades of old and a criminal fraternity, was supposedly responsible for a good percentage of all the unsolved major crimes in Italy and its 'members' were accused of 'subversive association', a catch-all charge often used against political prisoners. The press joined in the spirit of conspiracy-mongering and anarchist-bating.

The response of the anarchist movement was swift, despite the climate of intimidation. The FAI issued a statement, *The Federated Italian Anarchists Accuse!* (21 September 1996), which condemned the "acts of repression amplified by the press" as "a malicious articulation of new techniques of social control". They pointed out certain blatant lies, not least that the phantom ORAI had been expelled from the FAI in 1988, at a Congress in Fiori which didn't even take place! They also rejected the attempt of the State to divide the anarchists into 'good anarchists' (the FAI) and 'bad anarchists' (the so-called Insurrectionalists). They pointed out that if the judges wanted to eliminate the FAI, they would use the same tactics of criminalisation. Simultaneously, the FAI distanced itself from the sort of activities which the arrested were accused of (ie, kidnapping and murder) and criticised the myth of 'illegalism', which tends to see all acts of illegality as necessarily revolutionary.

### Solidarity and beyond...

This response, however, was criticised, particularly by the *Cane Nero* group, who saw it as an attempt by the FAI and others to distance themselves from the arrested comrades. *Cane Nero* also demanded not just solidarity with the accused against the state (which all libertarians should not hesitate to give), but political support, that is support for the specific perspectives of the accused. This attitude seriously pissed-off many comrades, who saw it as self-marginalising. At this time, libertarian communists inside and outside the FAI were doing solidarity work and

attempting to link the repression with a general critique of the whole prison system and its function vis a vis the working class.

An Anarchist Defence Committee was set up and through its work many people outside of Italy came to hear about the Marini frame-up. Internationally, an active defence committee also developed in Munich.

Inside the prisons, the accused issued statements which rejected the charges and poured ridicule on the idea of their membership of any organisation such as the ORAI. They stated: "Judges know perfectly well that the anarchist organisation they talk about does not exist. They know the model of an armed gang — a mirror of their own model — cannot be applied to the real relationships between anarchists." (Statement reproduced in *Communism*, journal of the Internationalist Communist Group, No. 10, May 1997.)

The approach of the state — to attempt to connect the accused together through the imaginary ORAI — was also exposed by the



Edorardo Massari (left) and Maria Soledad Rosas (right).

supposed 'leader', Bonnano, following his release from prison after 13 months. Referring to the documents of the prosecution, Bonnano said: "The model that was realised in Germany with the RAF, in France with *Action Directe*, as today with the Basques of ETA, or in Italy with the Red Brigades... has nothing to do with us, have been stitched on to us as we see in these accusations. Reading the documents, which are thousands of pages long, one realises that this is the kind of model they have in mind, ie that they do not understand that our revolutionary aim is to go towards another kind of attack on the state." (Interview with Alfredo Bonnano, Radio Onda Rossa, 20 November 1997. Published in *Breakout*, May 1998.)

During their incarceration in 1997 some of the accused and their comrades on the outside broke with the 'Anarchismo' current and formed a group called Anarchist Revolutionary Action, publishing their platform in the final issue of *Cane Nero* and producing a new magazine, *Pagine in rivolta*. Politically

the group appears to remain in the 'insurrectionalist' mould.

### New raids, new repression

On 6 March 1998, the police once again raided the anarchist squats of Turin, arresting Massimo Passamani, Edo Massari and Maria Soledad Rosas. These comrades were eventually accused of a specific 'criminal act' (as opposed to any and all the police had lying about unsolved...) — the sabotage of the construction of the high speed train network (TAV), between Turin and Lyon, at Val Susa, claimed by a previously unknown 'group' called the 'Grey Wolves'. There had been an ongoing campaign against the TAV, involving the *Rifondazione Comunista* (Stalinists now part of the centre-left government) and the Greens amongst others, and rumours flew about that the attacks could have been the work of insurance racketeers or the secret services trying to discredit the protests. Whatever the case may be, the Turin squatters generally saw the attack as a direct action worth supporting.

On the morning of 28 March 1998, Edo Massari committed suicide in prison at Vallette a Cuneo. A reaction from the squatters of Turin was not slow in coming and there were street clashes with the police. The local federation of the FAI stated clearly that suicide in prison was really murder at the hands of the state. The following week, 6,000 people took to the streets of Turin to demand the release of the other two 'suspects' and an end to the repression. This demonstration was supported not only by the squatters but the anarchist movement generally and the 'autonomists', the latter who criticised the use of violence as a tactic. Angry and focused, the demonstration brought the events surrounding the resistance to the TAV and the repression to the attention of many, not least because of the attendance at the demonstration of one Stefano Alberione, a leading member of the *Rifondazione Comunista* and trade union big-wig, which the media made much of.

But another death was to come. In early July 1997 Maria Soledad Rosas committed suicide whilst under 'house arrest'. Another victim of the repression. More blood on the hands of the state.

Following the death of Soledad 'persons unknown' launched a letter bomb campaign against various targets: a journalist; the judge who conducted the investigation against the three squatters; a Green city councillor who had tried to mediate between the local council, the accused and the judge; a *Rifondazione* MP; another city councillor (*Rifondazione*), well known for conducting the negotiations between an autonomist squatted social centre and the local council; and the prison doctor where Edo Massari

died. The origin of these 'bombe pache', in the country where the secret services have been capable of so many provocations in the past, was questioned by many. The Correspondence Commission of the FAI issued a statement suggesting that the bombings were exactly that, a state provocation. They asked "To whom are the parcels a valuable tool?" and accused the state and its secret services of preparing "...a soup to be used eventually as a pre-emptive weapon to criminalise the movement of the opposition, the base of workers (rank and file initiatives), the unemployed and immigrants". They also spoke of "secret service infiltrators" and of the "tragic end of two lives (Edo and Soledad) crushed by the violence and power, which once again, we find inside the repressive apparatus of the state".

Around the same time a previously unknown group, the Group of Revolutionary Initiative, believed to be Marxist-Leninist oriented, expressed its solidarity with Anarchist Revolutionary Action (see above) and claimed responsibility for attacks upon the offices of the *Rifondazione* in Turin and Milan. This has led the Italian bourgeois media to hysterical talk about a return to the 'bad old days' of urban guerrilla activity, such as that of the Red Brigades and numerous others in the late 1970s.

### The situation now

The situation today remains quite fluid. Most of the arrested of 1996 and after, including the 'guru' of the supposed ORAI, Alfredo Bonnano, have been released due to the collapse of the 'case' against them. Solidarity actions with those who remain incarcerated have taken place in places as far apart as Argentina and Greece and a group committed to publicising the ongoing struggle is forming in Britain. Resistance to the TAV continues and the squats raided in March 1997 have been re-opened. The attempt by the Italian state to divide the 'antagonistic' movement, in particular the anarchists, into 'respectable' and 'criminal' appears to have failed.

To conclude, the repression, which focused on activist elements, marginal to both the 'historic' Italian anarchist movement but also to the autonomous workers movement, can be compared to the attempt by the British state's harassment of, for example, the *Green Anarchist* newspaper. Testing the water, the state appears to be attempting to see what sort of response can be expected from the broader 'movement' when its more 'illegalist' or apparently 'extreme wing' is attacked. The state will learn from the response it has met in both Italy and Britain. And we must learn too, for as social antagonism grows and our movement with it, state repression will grow too and divide and rule is only one of their tactics.

# Whose land is it anyway?

CLASS STRUGGLE ANARCHISTS focus their activities on the conflict between the working class and the bosses. The struggle has traditionally been in manufacturing industries, but increasingly it is recognised that capitalism has expanded into services such as retailing, banking and leisure. The Marxist analysis of capitalism replacing feudalism has been taken on board and the image of the ruling class as industrialists and financiers is one that we have in our heads when we think of the class enemy. They are the source of power, the owners of capital. Though we all hate the Royals and froth at the mouth at the idea of the aristos enjoying their hunts and balls, it is not the land-owning aristocracy who are considered to be the main source of capitalist power but rather they are seen as remnants of feudalism.

Most anarchists live in urban areas, along with the rest of the working class. We don't usually come into contact with the land-owning part of the ruling class. Some of us got our first glimpse of them while protesting at the Countryside Alliance demo. And, as the percentage of people employed on the land is under 2%, it is not the agricultural or forestry workers that are the focus of our activity. But in this article we see the landowners as an integral part of the ruling class, both in the sense of holding real economic power and in the ideological role they play in keeping the working class in their place. The Countryside Alliance demonstrations in London may have had the purpose of forcing the government to back down on any plans for change such as banning foxhunting, but the presence of thousands of 'country folk' on the streets of London should send us another message. The land-owning class and their lackeys are a fundamental part of the British ruling class and are immensely powerful and well-organ-

ised. We ignore them at our peril. Land-owners exercise their role three ways as members of the ruling class: economic, political and ideological power. Most of the information for this article came from Marion Shoard's excellent book, *This Land is Our Land*, but the interpretation is our own. Some of the facts might appear to be out of date since the original book was published in 1987, but as she points out in her 1997 up-date, nothing has really changed.

### Economic Power

Despite propaganda about impoverished aristos and the supposed increase in land ownership by the government and the National Trust, around 80% of Britain's land is in private hands. A hard core of titled families owns almost 1/3 of Britain, with 213 of these owning at least 5,000 acres. An example of this is the Duke of Buccleuch who owns 277,000 acres of Scotland and 11,000 acres of Northamptonshire. The remaining land in private hands is either owned by untitled barons or by owner-occupiers. But despite the image of the struggling farmer promoted by the Countryside Alliance, the average farm size is 170 acres, much higher than the average in the rest of the EC. The average would be even higher if Northern Ireland were excluded, as there is a greater percentage of small farmers there than in Britain. And the tendency has been to move from smaller to larger farms. When a farm is sold, it is other farmers that buy it, further increasing the concentration of land. Most people could never think of buying land, as the price has dramatically increased in recent years. It is therefore a close-knit group of people who own and control the vast majority of land in Britain. We have not even discussed the

## Friends and neighbours

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

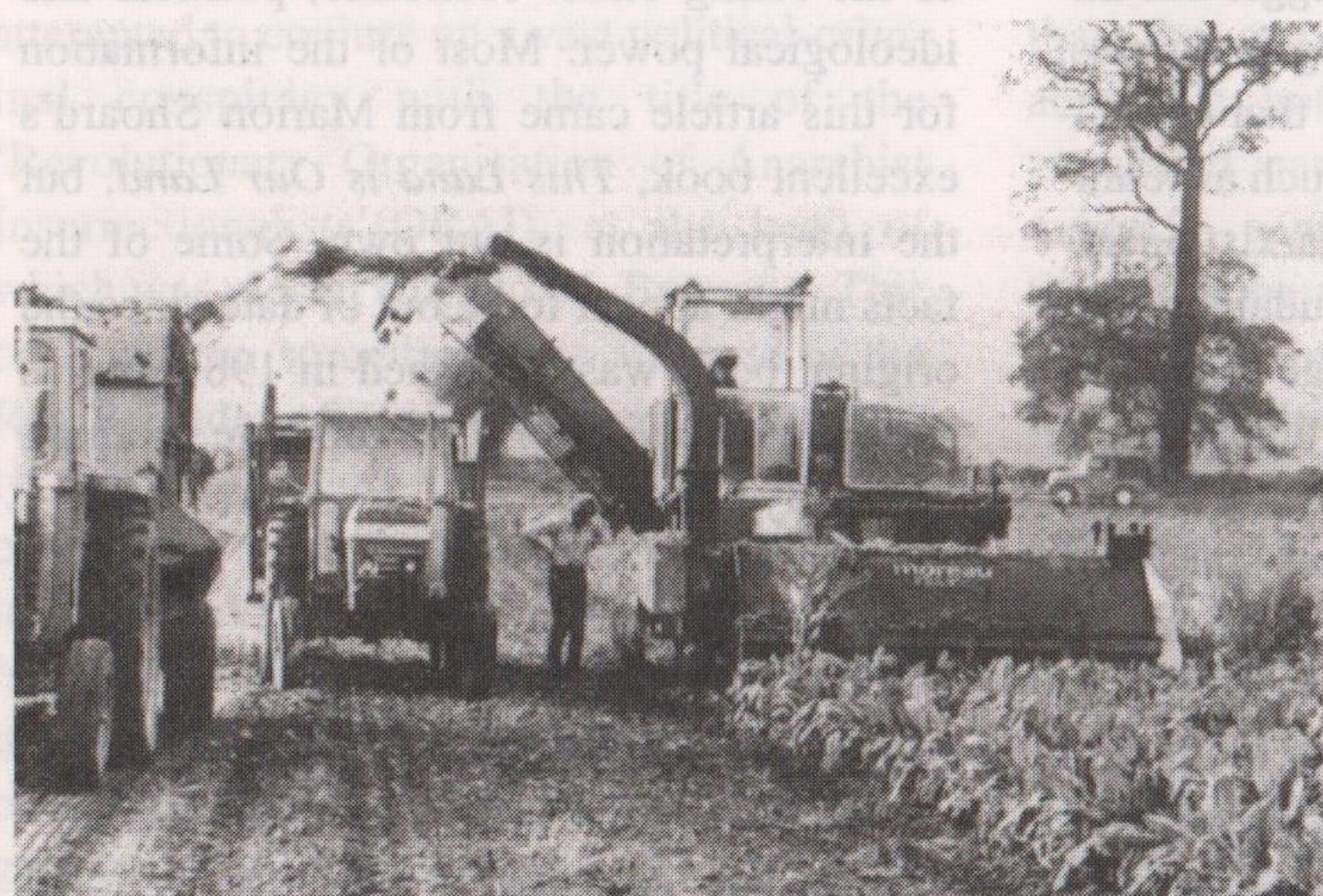
**Counter Information.** Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP, Scotland.

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



Crown's holdings, which are distinct from private landowners. These holdings are enormous: 335,000 acres of farmland; 38,285 acres of commercial forest; the entire shoreline; half the foreshore; to name just some of the properties! The Queen's private holdings are separate and count as private land. These include 50,000 at Balmoral, 20,000 acres at Sandringham and 50,000 acres of Lancaster.

Owning land may not appear to confer economic power and wealth in an economy dominated by industry and commerce. Many



landowners like to give the impression that it is a great burden. It is very difficult to disprove their claim, as exact statistics do not exist. The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth had just begun its work when it was abolished three months after Thatcher came to power in 1979. But, other figures can give some indication of how wealthy landowners are. For example, of the 10 people between 1970 and 1979 who left over five million pounds when they died, five were landowners. Looked at more carefully, even without exact figures, land ownership clearly brings enormous benefits.

The value of the land itself is the first source of wealth. Since the development land tax was abolished in 1985, gains from an increase in land values are subject only to a capital gains tax. In one case £11 million was made when an area was released for development; a tidy sum for not doing anything! Other ways of making money from the land include leasing it out to farmers, hunting and fishing rights and mining. For example, the Duke of Derbyshire receives an estimated £1.8 million in royalties every year for the mining of Derbyshire limestone. Even when coal was nationalised, landowners made a killing. The government paid out £2,875 million at 1985 prices. In addition, though landowners are associated with the countryside, these 'rural' landowners own much of urban Britain. The most well-known example is the Duke of Westminster who owns a large chunk of central London including Mayfair and Belgravia.

It is agriculture and forestry which bring

the greatest benefits. The obvious advantage is the receiving of subsidies. Farmers are exempt from rates on agricultural land and buildings which was estimated to be worth £360 million in 1984-85. They are also exempt from paying VAT, worth £300 million, and can average their profits over five years for tax purposes. It is estimated that the combined benefit from all the subsidies comes to £20,000 per year per farmer. This doesn't include anything they actually earn from sales. Forestry is another good source of income (and hand-outs).

There has been a great increase in afforestation in recent years of which 80% is in the private sector. This may sound like a good thing, but the planting has been 95% conifers, which offer a quick return and cause many ecological problems.

It is argued that despite all this wealth, it is soon taken by the government through inheritance taxes. However, this is misleading.

The inheritance tax system was amended by Thatcher and it is easy to transfer land to heirs as long as it is done before death. Another system used is to set up a Trust. Therefore, land ownership is clearly a major source of wealth and power over key aspects of the economy that has few, if any, disadvantages.

## Political power

Along with economic power goes political power. Firstly, there is the power over the employees. About 70% of agricultural workers live in tied cottages. It is not really surprising that so many farm and estate workers attended the Countryside Alliance demos. Though not the only reason, their dependence on their employer is certainly a factor. Landowners also play an important role in local politics. In 1981, membership of county councils had a disproportionate number of landowners and farmers. In Lincolnshire, for example, they represent 2% of the population but made up 22% of council members. They also have control over other important institutions. In 1983-84, the chairman of all nine water authorities' agriculture and drainage committees were farmers.

Their power extends even beyond the locality. Though they represented only 9% of MPs in the House of Commons in 1983, they obviously dominate in the House of Lords. In addition, one-third of Thatcher's cabinet in 1985 were landowners. They also appear in a whole range of other capacities: National Park Boards, Countryside Commissions and Nature Conservancy. For example, Mr

Dunning is an executive member of the Country Landowners' Association. He runs his own 700-acre farm in the Lake District and was appointed in 1971 to the lake District Special Planning Board to represent the national conservation and recreation interest in the planning of the Lake District national park. He is chairman of Rural Voice and spoke at the Conservative Party Conference in 1985. He is also a member of the Forestry Commission working group. The list goes on! And Dunning is not even an aristocrat!

The political influence of the landowners can be seen even more clearly in the farming and forestry lobbies. The main lobbies include the Country Landowners Association (CLA), the Scottish Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union. Most of the CLA's work is done behind closed doors through a long-established history of personal contacts. To succeed, the CLA doesn't have to achieve anything but just stop anyone else from changing the status quo. Examples of their accomplishments include removal of investment surcharge, abolition of three-generation security for tenants, the reduction of the capital transfer tax as well as many features (eg trespass) of the Criminal Justice Act.

The National Farmers Union, in addition to contacts in high places, relies on a massive publicity machine. In 1985 they spent £8.8 million compared to the £350,000 spent by the Ramblers Association. They have active local branches who lobby local MPs as well as maintaining daily contact with civil servants. In 1983 they had an average of 4.6 broadcasts a week. They keep a tab on public opinion so that they can act quickly. For example, we now see a number of ads for eating meat, an obvious response to the increase in vegetarianism. The Forestry lobby is also powerful, but they don't need to manipulate civil servants or public opinion to the same extent because the Forestry Commission has been run by landowners since it was set up in 1919!

There are whole aspects of land-owning power that we know nothing about because of the secrecy surrounding information on who owns what. There is no public land registry open to the public or even to government officials, very unlike the documentation on the ownership of companies which is very detailed and accessible. This secrecy alone gives enormous power as the government cannot formulate policy on land if they don't know the basic facts, even if they did want to do anything.

We must also keep in mind that the landowners are not really a distinct part of the ruling class. Rural landowners in fact own many urban properties and have control over the major primary industries that form the basis of any economy. In addition, many

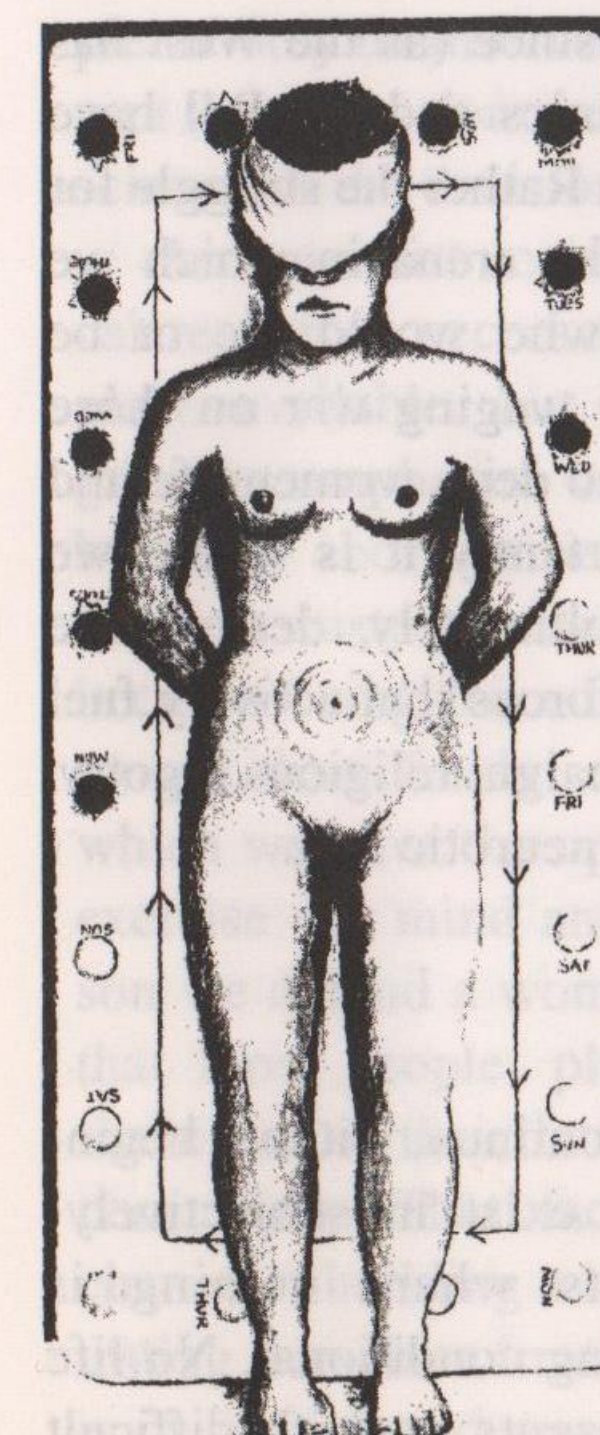
landowners are also industrialists or financiers or both. For example, Benwells in Newcastle went from being landowners to industrialists and now are both, wielding considerable power in both state and financial institutions. As Shoard puts it, "for power, however it originates, tends to turn into land owning power" (p195). This is because of not only the economic overlaps, with banks investing in land, media magnates buying up Highland estates etc, but because of the ideological and cultural role that the landowners play in maintaining the coherence of the ruling class.

### Ideological power

Since the Industrial Revolution those capitalists who made their money from industry and later finance have all aspired to be like the land-owning aristocracy in terms of their way of life. The industrialists may have had great wealth, but the landowners had 'cultural capital'. Even if industrialists didn't buy land themselves, they were integrated into the 'club' through participation in a certain way of life which includes blood sports. This is not only true of industrialists but also of the non-aristocratic farmers of all sizes. Many of Scotland's estates have been bought by millionaires who want to pretend that they have

**Is there anybody in there?**  
Abortion isn't the issue

**ABORTION AROUSES MANY PASSIONS** and seems an impossible dilemma to resolve beyond doubt. One reason may be that abortion is not, ultimately, an assault on a living



being but rather on the very reality people construct to sustain themselves. Many conservatives have an organic view of society in which the foundation of existence is the family and society is nothing more than the family writ large. To attack the family through its primary purpose, propagation, is

'breeding'. A classic example is of American billionaire Kluge whose new wife (an ex-wife of Russell Gay, porn magnate and herself a small-time porn star) was obsessed with the British aristocracy. He bought her the Mar Lodge estate, just down the road from Balmoral in the Cairngorms, as a birthday present. It is now in the hands of the National Trust for Scotland, sold when Kluge got divorced.

Hunting is a symbol of the ruling class and the rituals involved in foxhunting, pheasant and grouse shooting and deer stalking have a powerful ideological role in integrating all sections of the ruling class, as well as ensuring the loyalty of the small fanners and employees who are caught up in the charade. The importance that the ruling class puts on blood sports is shown in the lengths they went to mobilise two mass demonstrations for the first time ever, essentially for the purpose of defeating the anti-fox hunting bill. It can also be seen in the outrage and subsequent behind-the-scenes manoeuvring that is taking place as a result of the National Trust banning stag hunting with hounds on their land.

It is the image of a 'way of life' that props up the ruling class. This is closely linked with the Royal family who epitomise this, portrayed as the paternalistic, caring

guardians of all that is 'traditionally' British. This 'traditional Britain' is synonymous with rural Britain. The message is that if the 'countryside' way of life disappeared, then Britain itself would be destroyed. Despite the Industrial Revolution and the fact that Britain has little of its economy devoted to agriculture or forestry, it is amazing that it is 'rural' Britain which is the symbol of the soul of the nation.

It is a powerful message and gives the landowners a pivotal role within the ruling class that is much greater than their economic and overt political power would suggest. In addition, it is the landowners who, through their activities and control of the land, have the most impact on the environment. Many anarchists and campaigners such as hunt saboteurs and anti-roads protesters will already be aware of this. This awareness must be spread to the working class as a whole and the landowners must be made a focus of our struggles against capitalism.

*Organise!* will be looking in more detail at the landowners and their relationship to class struggle in the next few issues. This series will include: a historical background to land ownership and previous struggles, blood sports, agriculture, conservation and the environment and the right to roam and access.

to threaten society and ultimately, their existence.

For the religiously inclined "Abortion is a symbolic threat to an entire system of thought and meaning [for] it signals that the Christian ideal of selfless charity is despised and rejected"; the unborn child is unreal, a symbol of security and continuity for themselves and their faith. Abortion threatens death to spiritual life but is life itself to the committed feminist. For them, controlling a body that has for centuries been regarded as property is essential to self-actualisation. "Abortion laws are woman-control laws... enacted before women could vote and part of the double standard in sexual attitudes which has resulted in widespread social and psychological disorganisation." Abortion and contraception are alternatives to compulsory pregnancy, which alone permit women to define themselves beyond the narrow scope of motherhood. Both sides of the argument are afraid that if they lose they will cease to exist. If this were simply a conflict over the rights of a few individuals, it would have lit-

tle to do with us. The problem is that it is fought out in the arena of the State and its policies. What is being challenged is the way in which society is organised and we all have an interest in the outcome. Anarchists support women's right to choose, not because of ethics or philosophy, or because by defending it we defend ourselves, but because the struggle to become free is one that we, female and male anarchists, are also fighting and because the direction towards freedom in society is one we are also travelling.

## Pseudo-science

Our present understanding tells us that the development of a human being is a continuous process, not a set of discrete steps at which it is possible to say that before there is no humanity and after humanity exists. There are therefore only conditions of being and non-being, possibility and non-possibility, organised and disorganised life. We owe no duty to molecules and strands of DNA. We may have obligations to people able to



recognise and reciprocate with us. Humanity does not consist of life alone, it consists of aware, organised and independent life. Is someone suffering massive and irreversible brain damage, unable to respond to any stimuli or survive if life-support is withdrawn, a human being? Yes. Is that human being a person possessing rights? No. Society and common sense says not; the person is gone, though the bodily remains of a human being are still with us. If it is not possible to identify the properties that makes us human or when we acquire them, there may be no such thing as humanity, no human rights, only people with lives of varying length and experiences of varying intensity, good or bad.

Pro-lifers refuse to admit that abortion is a universal, common to both early non-literate societies and to recent industrial ones. People have always attempted to prevent birth by contraception and when that has failed by abortion, and even, when that has failed, have resorted to infanticide. It is likely that abortion was the first surgical procedure ever attempted by human kind. We know that while most people have no predisposition to kill, all of us have a compulsion to survive which only the most extreme circumstances or pathologies override. If this is true (and it is), then people should feel badly about 'killing' an unborn child. They do not. All clinical experience confirms the tremendous sense of relief most women feel when an unwanted pregnancy is terminated. Most of us possess the innate sense to know that an unborn child is not a person in the same way that a born child is. It is never people who forbid abortion and always kings and states and governments. Even today a woman still needs the permission of a doctor licensed and scrutinised by the state — she remains unfree. Capitalism objectifies everything, perverting even the fact and meaning of life, the process of creation and termination. Procreation is no longer a personal or human process but one that all governments claim the right to control and influence. In the valleys they shout "breed, breed!", in the mountains they cry "sterilise, sterilise". Endless pseudo-facts, the products of pseudo-science and scientism, are used to frame our very perceptions about life and life-giving.

The Age of Reason and Enlightenment ushered in the age of perfectibility of men and man in society (women usually failed to enter the argument). It unleashed upon the world many forces that have worked for good and ill. Libertarianism corrupted by capitalism places each person on their own pedestal, demanding all that society can offer while fearing or ignoring their neighbour. Scientism gives some the power to fulfil their conscious and unconscious desires, fuelling the competitive and acquisitive urge. But an unfettered capitalism unleashed by liberalism and rationalism is rapidly degrading social

reason and the rationalist utopia. Where each individual is god, each fact is a gun. Capitalism feeds from the social irrationalism it creates. The result is all around us. The same technology that gave us control of our fertility, a control millions demand, also produced thalidomide and the possibility of profoundly altering the human genome. The irrational desire to purify and perfect that led to the Holocaust also fuels the vast industry of cosmetic and genetic manipulation.



### Rights?

The dividing lines between pro-life and pro-choice cross a number of arenas: the arena of rights — rights of the unborn, the mother, the commonality, the arena of essence — where does humanity come from, what does it mean to be human?; the arena of utility and necessity — if we are compelled to decide (for instance because the life of the mother is threatened) then how do we weigh necessity and consequence; lastly there is the arena of freedom — what obligation do we have to obey society's rules, what 'right' does society have to decide what happens to 'our' body.

Reality does not concede us rights, we are merely the means for life to continue. Nature is wasteful and cruel. We may regret this biological engineering but it is a reality we cannot ignore. Consider the millions of sperm lost with every ejaculation — each is a vital component of new life. There is a great deal of menstrual wastage before the woman is even aware she is pregnant. One in three fertilised eggs or embryos fail to develop correctly and die in the uterus, resulting in spontaneous abortion or reabsorption — millions of potential human beings die naturally every year, but what Rights does Nature concede them? Pro-lifers argue that humanity commences on conception but conveniently forget that for every five births there is one spontaneous abortion of a viable foetus — does divinity will this? Religions have created an elaborate hierarchy of rights and justifications to buttress this inconsistency, demanding that even where access to abortion is conceded, it is the responsibility of the

woman to prove a higher or 'better' right to life. This, of course, preserves religion's (and the state's claim to be the moral arbiter of society. When we fall into the trap of looking to authority for redress, we concede not only its right to exist but its power over our lives.

### Stigma

There is a stronger argument than rights or ethics, an argument sufficient to justify decades of class struggle, however violent, and capable ultimately of sustaining an entire, liberated society. This is the argument from necessity. Women do not primarily need contraception as a 'right' nor as one expression of personal freedom and choice but as a basic need, upon which millions of women, those who die in childbirth for instance, demand. Where there is social sanction and support for contraception and abortion, women live; where there is none women and their children die in their tens of thousands. Lack of pre-natal and ante-natal care, of basic health facilities, the prevalence of diseases, the ravages of female circumcision, the savage familial onslaughts on women who become 'illegitimately' pregnant, the stigma, in many societies, of bearing female children, all combine not just to make women second-class citizens but to leave women at the mercy of murderous people and groups operating with the sanction of states wholly permeated by the triumphant creed of male dominance. This creed ignores the routine death of thousands of women with a shrug of male shoulders and the self-satisfied smirk of the sanctified moralist — be it priest or matriarch. This is bad enough, but where religious bigotry and social reaction combine, murder and manslaughter are actively countenanced, encouraged, and in some places protected, as a basic pillar of society, one of the strongest foundations for social order. The argument for access to contraception of all kinds is not, therefore, a question of freedom, since (as the West has discovered) health clinics and the Pill have not made women free. Rather the struggle for 'women's rights' is the arena in which we defend the millions who would die, or be scarred for life while waging war on those sections of society who deny women life and freedom. More importantly it is where we confront and must, ultimately, destroy the social and economic forces that actively fuel the anti-abortion campaign: religious bigotry, male chauvinism and neurotic fear.

### Material world

Life and society are continua, without beginning or end. People exist in subjectively-defined environments where nothing is absolute and everything conditional. No life is perfect, reality presents us with difficult

choices; we are forced to weigh consequences. We rightly choose to exchange the life of the zygote, embryo or unborn foetus for the fuller life of the mother because on her life depends the life of other children, the life of her partner or other members of society, other people that have contributed to her development. It is a kind of madness that fails to weigh the economic, demographic, eugenic, humanitarian, social and pathological factors that are part of everyday experience in favour of things that are quite unmeasurable and dubious in their claimed benefits — faith and salvation.

We live (or want to live) in a material world in which what is, is, and what is not (or is not provable or is only potential) is not. Dreams, conjecture, ideas may be real in the mind of the thinker but remain unreal until they are shared. The idea of a new, independent human being that two people create when they make love is only an idea until that independent human being has been created by birth and begun to interact independently with the rest of society. We can only make a claim on others if they recognise our humanity. That claim to be depends on our self-awareness, our ability to choose, our responsibility to and for others.

### Existing life

For revolutionaries there is no question of trying to weigh one human right against another — all are bogus. Nor do we rate one person as superior to another. We do believe that what is real and can be measured, the life of the person we know far outweighs what does not, and may never exist. There is no absolute compulsion upon us to protect life, though the religions may wish that one existed. If we cannot be compelled to protect life as individuals then the state should not compel us collectively to do so either. At the same time we state that no individual can claim an absolute freedom in all circumstances to please only themselves. The decision to interrupt a process demands the same of our conscience as the decision to begin it.

An anarchist society will make the clinical resources necessary for abortion to take place available, but will also place a far greater emphasis on contraception; not because abortion is morally wrong but because waste is wrong, unfreedom is wrong, because being forced to make a decision is worse than freely creating conditions in which we have the opportunity to decide, to exercise our mind and conscience. The reason we defend a woman's right to choose is that most people, placed in this situation, make use of their intellect and consult their conscience. That fact offers us far more chance of building a better society than proscribing ourselves irrationally before the dead gods of faith and reason.

# Subversion

## And so farewell...

READERS OF *ORGANISE!* and contacts of the ACF may well know of the revolutionary group Subversion with whom we have had a fraternal working relationship over the last decade. We have organised a number of joint day schools with Subversion, and in Manchester a number of public meetings were also jointly organised. We also co-operated on organising a series of summer camps with comrades from Subversion. We share many of the political perspectives of this group.

So it is no surprise that we are saddened to hear that the group has decided to call it a day and disband.

In its ten years Subversion produced 24 issues of its magazine, an often thought-provoking and stimulating read. It attempted to get to grips with practical problems facing the revolutionary movement and this was often due to Subversion comrades actually being involved in these struggles. Such was the case with their coverage of the Poll Tax struggle, the Liverpool Dockers, the Job Seekers Allowance, the anti-roads movement and Earth First! activities, as well as workplace activities. It is no idle claim to say that Subversion, through its magazine, pamphlets and spoken contributions had a far larger influence on the British revolutionary movement than its membership, no more than eight at its largest, would imply. There was often a fruitful exchange of ideas between Subversion comrades and ACF comrades and other revolutionaries.

### Pitfalls

We know that Subversion attempted to avoid the pitfalls of rigid ideology often seen in both the Marxist and anarchist camps. In doing so, they admit that "they bred some suspicion" among those who they think preferred their "cosy comforts". Their description of themselves as libertarian communists, which is unquestionably what they are, should have been more insistent and sustained, rather than clever sophistries of self-description as seen in one issue of Subversion where they described themselves as anti-left communists. We know that means they are opposed to the left, as much as we are, but this led to confusion and puzzlement in some quarters.

The signing-off statement of Subversion claims that they had nothing new to say, which they regarded as the most compelling reason to wind up the group. But surely revolutionaries will always have something new to say about the twists and turns and the new developments of capitalism? The essential message of revolution is a fresh today as it ever was, precisely because state and capitalism, hierarchy and oppression, still exist. We feel sure that as individuals, the ex-members of Subversion will continue to have something to say. We hope that they continue to be active in the class struggle. We can do nothing but applaud their past activities within the Northern Anarchist Network, the Revolutionary Socialist Network and the Class Struggle Anarchist Network.

### Contributions

In line with a willingness to continue to work with the ex-Subversion comrades, the last National Delegate Meeting of the ACF decided that the pages of *Organise!* should be opened up to them. Indeed contributions from these comrades and other revolutionaries are welcome in *Organise!* As Subversion noted, their bulletin "provided an organised framework for revolutionaries to debate new issues arising in the class struggle". We hope that to some extent we can continue to do this in *Organise!* Of course all contributions would be subject to the same editorial framework as articles written by ACF members (length etc).

In the meantime the Subversion box number will be kept open for the next three months and back issues and other publications (the Second Best of Subversion, an anthology of Subversion articles, is still available) can be obtained from there:

Subversion  
Dept 10  
1 Newton Street  
Manchester M1 1HW.

The web site of Subversion will continue indefinitely maintained as the personal responsibility of the comrade who set it up. Many interesting articles can be read there. The Web address is:  
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195>. email: [knightrise@geocities.com](mailto:knightrise@geocities.com)



# Quiet Americans

## What is the state of US and Canadian anarchism?

*In the last year American anarchists have had the dissolving of Love and Rage, an upsurge in industrial action by workers, and continued state repression of members of Black Autonomy. So, what is going on, and what is the hope for anarchist organisation in America? In this article we attempt a round up of some of the current anarchist organisations in the United States and Canada, based both on contacts that the ACF has built in the last few years, and from anarchist press and internet sources.*

**BRINGING ANARCHISTS TOGETHER** on a continent-wide basis in North America has always been an uphill struggle, never mind the formation of robust organisations such as federations, but the late 1980s saw several convergences, firstly at the 'Haymarket International Anarchist Gathering' in Chicago in 1986, followed by 'Building the Movement Anarchist Gathering' in 1987 in Minneapolis, the 'Anarchist Survival Gathering' in Toronto, Canada in 1988, and 'Without Borders Anarchist Gathering' in San Francisco in 1989. Out of the Minneapolis gathering came an initiative known as the 'Mayday Network', involving several anarchist groups and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), some of whom were embarking on a conversion to anarchism. At a subsequent conference in Chicago in November 1989, *Love and Rage* newspaper was launched, together with a new organisation with a Statement of Principles, which became the Love and Rage network in 1991. Opponents from the beginning were wary of the involvement of the RSL, which in fact dissolved itself on the same weekend that L&R was founded. But the network was widely supported and groups not only in the US but also in Canada, Mexico and South America identified themselves with the network. L&R became the

Revolutionary Anarchist Federation in 1993 in an attempt by some of the groups to tighten up the loose network, resulting in the loss of some member groups. This point may be seen as the start of a decline — some features of this being uncritical support for the Zapatistas/ELZN and a move away from anarchism as the key ideology. On the other hand, being a loose federation, and never really identifying itself as anarchist except in name, L&RRAF was pretty well open to all comers from the beginning and was happy to embrace a wide range of political views and religious beliefs. The situation came to a head publicly in June this year with the press release announcement.

"[...] After more than eight years of hard work, the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation voted to dissolve itself during a brief conference at Hunter College in New York City on Saturday, May 23, 1998. Some participants in the conference spent the weekend laying the foundation for a new provisional organisation, the Fire By Night Organizing Committee. Members of another faction at the conference also announced their intention to launch a journal and a new organization. Neither of those projects has a name yet."

The press release went on to explain the dissolution in terms of non-agreement on whether anarchism had all the answers to their problems, on the theory of 'white-skin privilege' and about practical work. It appears that the FBNOC (who sent out the above release) have taken what they see as a general anti-authoritarian position, which is accommodating of Maoism and Marxism in addition to anarchism. Maoism especially is being taken up by non-Marxists in the USA, and is also finding its way into prisoner support organisations like ABCF and Jericho '98 (see below). Another faction is purported to be taking a class-based anarchist position, and producing a discussion forum document entitled *Towards a fresh revolutionary organisation* but in spite of attempts to contact them at

their Detroit address we have been unable to verify this. According to the FBNOC press release, this other faction calls for "a federation of collectives united around firm anarchist/anti-authoritarian politics and outlook, oriented to the working classes and most oppressed, and active in building Anti-Racist Action as an anti-authoritarian mass movement". FBNOC criticise sacrificing practice and mass organising to ideological purity. It's probably fair to say that for all its faults, most American anarchists were sad to see the end of L&R. One point in its favour was its managing to publish in both English and Spanish (through the Mexican *Amor y Rabia* group) and so reach a wider readership.

### National initiative

Around the time L&RRAF was formed, another national initiative was launched. The Network of Anarchist Collectives was to be a "facility for resource sharing, mutual aid, and communication" amongst anarchist collectives in the US and Canada. From the outset, there were disagreements over whether the network should be restricted to 'anarchist' collectives and even over what a collective should be; an agitational group trying to smash the state, or just a self-organised group of some kind? In spite of these broad disagreements, a mission statement and member policy were eventually formed, but then only three groups wanted to join: the Chicago A-Zone, Critical Mass Media (Syracuse) and the Toledo (Ohio) A-Zone.

NAC produced several issues of a magazine (*Dis)Connection*, and organised a few gatherings including 'Without Borders' in San Francisco and 'Homestead' in Boston. The network is no longer operating as such, though (*Dis)Connection* is soon to be restarted by some of the original members.

One other recent loss was the *Demanarchie* group in Quebec, Canada in March, which previously translated ACF pamphlets into French. Members of the group have since met with other Quebec anarchists to discuss forming a new organisation. We are waiting to hear the outcome.

On a happier note, a New England anarchist-communist federation may be in the making. Boston-based *We Dare Be Free* newspaper was launched in the Spring 1998 and the authors are keen to promote class struggle politics on the East Coast. They have also begun an International Solidarity

Campaign to support international anarchist struggles, notably against the repression of Italian anarchists, and literature distribution by Insurrection Mailorder. As well as covering news, the editors of *We Dare Be Free* have reprinted texts by Bakunin and Malatesta, which has also been the approach of a smaller local project by the Anarchist Voice of Cambridge. These and other anarchists along the East Coast (from Virginia up to Montreal, Canada) are attempting a wider linkage "in the spirit of NAC" by means of the Atlantic Anarchist Circle.

### Active resistance

In 1996, a new series of gatherings began under the name Active Resistance, "an anarchist gathering of organizers and activists to share and discuss strategies and tactics to build and support radical left movements against capitalism and the state". The first AR continental conference was held in Chicago in August 1996 and was attended by 750 people, the second in Toronto in August 1998. AR98 was hosted by Toronto Anarchists, with some help from regional contacts. The seven-day event, which attracted 600-800 people, was mainly attended by "young punks/young people [...] aspiring towards anarchism", though members of IWW and members of the AAC and other networks were also present. Part of the event involved a conference (not unlike Bradford Mayday '98) with four schools/core groups; "Building Revolutionary Movements, Art and Revolution, Community Organising, and Alternative Economics". The AR98 organisers are due to produce a 'zine to bring together views and feedback about the event, but already one criticism has been that the groups were unable to discuss things in much depth since so many were coming across ideas for the first time. Informally, however, links between organised anarchists are said to have been strengthened. Another view is that whilst events like AR98 are significant as gatherings, they are not as important to many people as local and regional actions, although the event as a whole has given people "energy, inspiration and ideas". The next AR gathering is due in Texas, early in 1999.

Another new initiative is calling itself the Heatwave anarchist-communist federation, which is based in Fort Worth/Dallas. Heatwave is calling for people to set up 'Heatwave collectives' in other parts of the US, but apart from an internet web-site, we do not know much about them.

We have previously referred to the prisoner support organisations. One in particular, Raze the Walls! deserves a special mention, as the ACF has had good links with its members for quite some time. Unfortunately, RTW! Network dissolved in October 1997 over a messy disagreement over the support

or otherwise of a prisoner, but the Georgia group maintained the name RTW! and in conjunction with Florida based Orlando Anarchist Black Cross Support Group, they recently expanded their remit to general issues by the launch of the magazine *RTW!* Quarterly at the end of 1997, the first issue reprinted 'Working Class Times', seemingly unaware of the rows carrying on in the UK between its authors and Class War over the issue of whether there is a ruling class or just a middle class. But the second carried a consolidation of their own class-based anarchist position. The discussion of class politics in the US in prisoner support circles must be seen in a positive light. However, even here the question of Maoism has raised its ugly head, with a report by Orlando in the April 1998 ABCF Update #19 about their meeting of the recently bailed former Black Panther Party leader Geronimo ji-jaga Pratt (who advocates the setting up of Black Militias) at the Jericho '98 prisoner support march in Washington DC. The report said, "Geronimo also added [...] that we should engage in ideological struggle based on the guidelines set forward by the late Mao-Tse Tung. We are in total agreement with this. The fact that Mao was not an anarchist means little to nothing to us, his theories on combating liberalism have been tested in practice and we feel it would be incorrect for us to not to integrate this in our practice. We also think it's incorrect for people to refuse to learn from Mao because he wasn't an anarchist, while at the same time learning from the wisdom of Political Prisoners/Prisoners of War who by and large are not anarchists". This statement is typical of the ideological mish-mash we are hearing from the USA.

### Black Autonomy

Black Autonomy Collective/Black Autonomy International is an anarchist influenced organisation based in Seattle, which produces the paper *Black Autonomy* edited by ex-BPP member Lorenzo Komboa Ervin. In their statement "Anarchism + Black Revolution = New Black Autonomus Politics" printed in the Aug-Sept 1997 issue of the paper, the BAC attempted to reconcile class-struggle anarchism with the 'super-oppression' of people of colour, and a rejection of the 'race nationalism' of black nationalism whilst "sharing many basic ideas with them". They continue, "So-called 'white' people are a super-contrived nationality designed to help the capitalists keep the

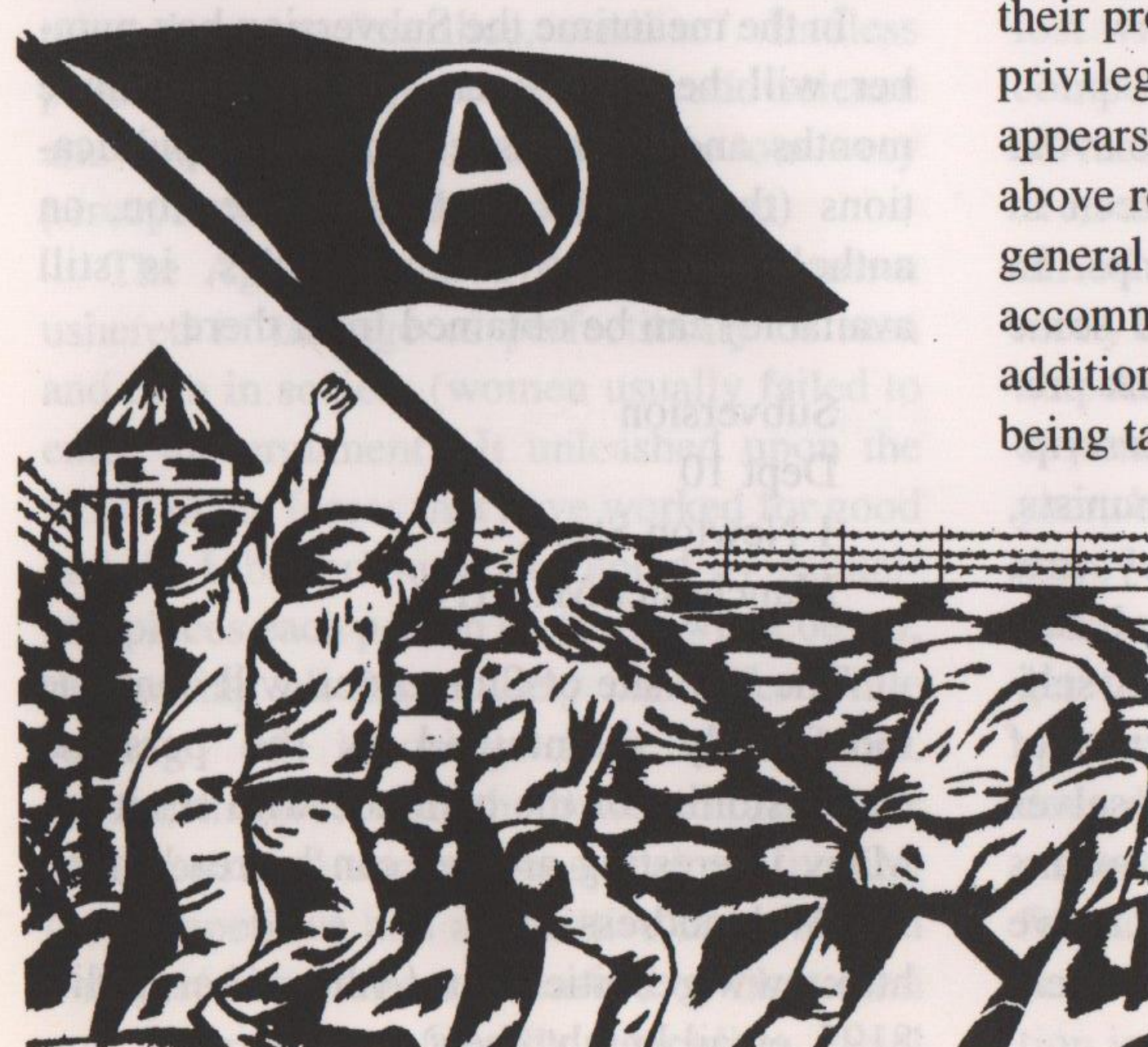
workers of color in their place and safeguard the status quo. So rather than see the 'white' industrial working class as a potentially revolutionary class, instead we see it as an opportunistic, collaborationist body which must be redefined and reorganized if it is to constitute a reliable ally and have any ability of fighting in its own interest." Like the Black Panthers before it, BA believe in the turning of working class communities into dual power communes to enable a protracted struggle with capitalism. Though they criticise 'euro-centric' anarchism, Black



Autonomy, through Ervin, have attempted to make links with anarchists internationally by a series of speaking tours in Europe, and also in Australia where he was locked up and nearly deported for remarks made on TV. Back in the States, BA continue to involve themselves in promoting the 'Copwatch' program, which patrols and documents police racism, and aims to try and prevent killings (by presence of cameras), to obtain releases from arrest, and to aid court cases. Most recently Ervin and two other BA members were arrested in May 1998 during a Copwatch protest in Chattanooga, Tennessee, over two separate killings of black men by cops within one week. They blamed their arrests on a sell-out by the "Nation of Islam, NAACP, Black preachers and Operation PUSH, who made a secret deal with the cops and politicians". The Chattanooga three now face six months' prison or a \$2000 fine. But Ervin has only just escaped sentencing under the Tennessee 'Three strikes and you're out' statute, which would have meant an automatic prison sentence up to five years, highlighting the precariousness their position, and continuing need for international solidarity.

### The Wobblies

So far we have not considered the labour movement organisations. The largest of these, the Industrial Workers of the World, is currently experiencing a boom in membership (now several hundreds), which is indicative of a growth in industrial action by US workers in general over the last few years.





Their monthly paper *Industrial Worker* reported in its October 1998 issue on the IWW General Assembly which was attended by 87 members, the largest meeting for many decades. General Secretary-Treasurer Fred Chase reported a more than doubling of membership since 1995 and an increase of one third in the last year alone. The assembly identified organising strategy as a key issue, especially as international sections are growing. The USA has seen some large-scale industrial actions over the last couple of years, including a national strike of United Parcel Services workers, a plant shutdown at General Motors, construction workers striking and fighting police in New York City and a walkout/lockout at Detroit News and Free Press. Although much of the action was supported and orchestrated by the Teamsters, some of it has had a rank-and-file flavour, which has undoubtedly given a boost to organisations like the IWW, who have also taken the opportunity to critique the 'business unions'. Parallels between the US and UK are also apparent especially over privatisation of transport and welfare, and against casualisation. The IWW was extremely supportive of the Liverpool Dockers and is benefiting from strengthened international links as a result. Whilst the IWW is revolutionary syndicalist in a general sense and deliberately avoids ties with specific ideological groups, anarchism remains a strong current within it. It also has a loose linkage with the US Earth First and some members of IWW are supporters of the Food Not Bombs organisation which distributes free vegetarian food to the destitute. The more politically-orientated journal *Libertarian Labor Review* — "Anarchosyndicalist Ideas and Discussion" presents an approach in favour of building the One Big Union in the USA. It has recently reported on a debate within the IWW (first printed in Australian magazine of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network, *Rebel Worker*) about whether or not activities like Food Not Bombs are too marginal and detract from the main task of building unions. Certainly the FNB campaign is part of the wider 'movement' such as it exists, and has supporters who do not have class struggle politics.

The American section of the IWA is known as the Workers Solidarity Alliance. Unlike the IWW, the WSA-IWA is not a union, but more like the Solidarity Federation in Britain, it is a propaganda organisation promoting anarcho-syndicalism, and supports workers' struggles. Its most recent continental initiative is the I-99 International Solidarity Conference which will be taking place in San Francisco on 1-5 June 1999. The conference will aim to bring together union activists under the banner, "The working class and employing class have nothing in common, the working class

should take over the economy, and the working class must organise into unions to fight the capitalist class". Subjects for discussion are the stopping of factionalisation, combating the World Bank, connecting workers issues with those of the environment and poverty, and exploration of alternative forms of organising and cooperation. At its annual conference the IWW also endorsed the I-99 conference, which may strengthen links between the two organisations, which already exist especially in San Francisco itself. The WSA-IWA has also organised a US speaking tour for Sam Mbah, member of the Awareness League in Nigeria and co-author of the book *African Anarchism*, published in 1997. He will speak in several cities during November 1998 to "enrich anarchism and anarchist principles with an African perspective, and help to carve a place for Africa with the framework of the worldwide anarchist movement". Interestingly, the debates which occurred within the RSL shortly before their rejection of orthodox Trotskyism and involvement in the early Love and Rage, are also credited (in *African Anarchism*) with influencing the similar transformation in the Awareness League, which was formerly a leftist coalition, but is now part of the IWA.

### Libertarian Municipalists

Moving on to the libertarian municipalists, their 2nd International/Interpolis Conference is due to take place in the state of Vermont on 27-29 August 1999. Hosted by the Institute of Social Ecology and billed as "The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism — an anarchist agenda for the 21st Century", Murray Bookchin is expected to deliver the 'keynote address'. It aims to build on the 'theoretical framework' established at the first conference which took place in Lisbon, Portugal in August 1998, attended by 125 people. Though still academic in structure, delegates are asked to treat it as "a working conference [...] with the expectation of building a movement with others who share their commitment". The stated aim of this movement being to build parallel institutional powers, via citizens' assemblies, either by participation in local elections or by extra-legal means. The idea of social revolution would eventually be to take power in these municipalities. This reformist approach has already been strongly attacked by the IWA as being no more than replication of the bourgeois state, typified by Bookchin's "ignoring of the meaning of workers' struggle".

In addition to the above, there are the magazines such as the anarcho-primitivist *Fifth Estate*, *Anarchy*, radical newspaper *Slingshot*, and *Profane Existence* — "making punk a threat again" (note the latest news is *Profane Existence* wound up in October 1998). There are also various council com-

munist groupings who produce useful propaganda such as Collective Action Notes, Red and Black Notes, and The Poor the Bad and the Angry, and we have also had intermittent contact with Los Angeles Workers Voice, who are sympathetic to the Communist Workers Organisation in Britain.

What can we conclude about the American scene? The politics seem very broad without much consensus, neither between groups nor within the 'networks of collectives' that are the preferred organisational form at present. The few coordinated continent-wide events are limited to the aptly named 'gatherings', rather than something which can be taken forward organisationally. Some activists appear to see anarchism as only one strand of their politics and seem happy to embrace what we see as authoritarian ideas, but which they see only as a different type of anti-authoritarianism. This is a resistance to 'ideological purity' amongst many American radicals, who as a result are more willing to accept general leftist ideas. This is somewhat different to Britain, where most activists still generally oppose any flavour of Marxism or Maoism, though support of national liberation struggles is still prevalent. On the other hand, local and regional activism is widely supported, for example against globalisation and capitalist trade agreements like MAI, something which may well find a resonance outside of the US. Race is also clearly a major issue, and European class struggle anarchists clearly need to understand how they are viewed by groups such as Black Autonomy and by other anarchists who subscribe to the theory of 'white-skin privilege'. These are challenging ideas, especially as BA is firmly in the class struggle mould, against cross-class alliances and against separatism. The libertarian municipalist agenda appears to be no more than a reformist strategy based on smaller political units than the state, and seems unlikely to strike any chord with the broader movement. The IWW, with a historical tradition to live up to, is the most consistent of the organisations and the only one capable of producing a regular paper, albeit without an overt anarchist agenda. Many class struggle anarchists, whether in the IWW or not, do refer to themselves as 'wobbly' in recognition of the importance of radical workplace politics. A few anarchists, mostly in network organisations at present, seem interested in trying to work towards a new continent-wide federation, possibly based on anarchist communism, which is something the ACF would greatly welcome, though the foundation for this does not look at all steady.

The ACF has a secretariat responsible for international contacts with anarchist groups and individuals. We welcome exchange of publications and ideas with anarchist organisations worldwide.

## Patrizia Cadeddu

THE MORNING OF 25 April 1997, the day of the municipal elections and the anniversary of liberation from fascism in Italy, a bomb exploded in front of the Milan city hall. A message claiming responsibility signed Revolutionary Action, calling for abstention, and a cassette of anarchist songs was left in the letterbox of the Popular Radio station.

Using a closed circuit camera film, the police concluded that they were 97.88% sure from studying the manner of walking, the hands and the shape of the lips of the silhouette that Patrizia Maria Cadeddu was the figure delivering the letter. Even the journalists, used to muck-spreading and lying, wrote that this sort of evidence was inadmissible! All other evidence — handwriting and fingerprints — was negative. Patrizia, who is 47, has a long history of activity in the Italian anarchist movement. In particular, she has carried out many activities at the Laboratorio Anarchico (Anarchist Laboratory), a self-organised building which hosted cultural events. This brought her to the attention of the authorities, with their new plans for Europe. Since her arrest, the building has been destroyed by redevelopment. This was convenient for the State, negating Patrizia's opposing their attacks on alternative thought on the building of monetarist Europe.

On 22 June 1997, Patrizia was sentenced to five years in closed prison with a two million lira fine — and 229 million lira damages for one broken window! Since then she has had new charges brought against her of associating with an armed gang, the same armed group that has been conjured up by the fantasies of Judge Marini (see separate article on Italian anarchist movement).

Patrizia is suffering from anorexia and now only weighs 5 stone 7 lb. She has developed a tumour in her left breast. After a year in prison, she can get a move to an open prison. She refuses to do this, claiming her innocence: either the dropping of all charges against her, or prison (which would mean death for her).

If you want to write to her, sending messages of solidarity and encouragement, address all correspondence to:

Patrizia Maria Grazia Cadeddu  
Piazza Filangieri, 2  
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## Green Anarchist — victory

FOLLOWING ON FROM the release of three *Green Anarchist* defendants pending a Court of Appeal hearing, as reported in last issue of *Organise!*, the convictions were quashed.

So far, the operation to attack *Green Anarchist* and Animal Liberation Front press officer Robin Webb has cost £4 million. Despite the convictions against the three editors being dropped, the trial of another GA editor Paul Rogers and Robin Webb went ahead, with the first hearing on 2 November at Portsmouth. The same judge — Major-General David Selwood — presided over this

trial! On top of this, the three GA editors cleared of charges were to be called as co-conspirators by the prosecution. Finally, on 25 November all charges were quashed. The defendants claim that the final total costs were £10 million. This is a serious defeat for the police and secret services in this country

(at the last trial, MI5 involvement was admitted by the police).

Letters of complaint about the trial can be sent to Hampshire County Council, Colebrook Street, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 9IJ

Latest information can be obtained from London Gandalf Support Campaign, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X. Email them at lgp@envirolink.org

### Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

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

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

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

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

Coming next: *The Italian Factory Councils 1920-21*.

### Telegram from Patrizia

Thanks to all who have had the courage to send a telegram.

*I claim more than 20 years of militancy in the anarchist movement. I supported all the struggles from the end of the '70s up to now; struggles I supported coherently. I claim love for all, for all the comrades in and out of jail. All the Milanese left want me shut up in a cell, sure of the fact that no one can go against the miserable game that they play today. To shut me up in prison was the only way to eliminate the Anarchist Laboratory, the only space that was really oppositional. Don't worry, when I get out, we will start everything up again. I love you all as always. I am tranquil and serene. Those who accuse me want to wipe out my record of anarchy, a record of never accepting compromise with the system.*



## ACE Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

*Anarchism — As We See It.* A new revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.

*Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary theory and practice. 60p & SAE. 6th printing now available.

*Role of the Revolutionary Organisation.* Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.

*Basic Bakunin.* A revised edition of our very popular pamphlet on one of the founders of revolutionary anarchism. 60p & SAE.

*Aspects of Anarchism.* Collected articles from the pages of *Organise!*, on the fundamentals of anarchist communism. 30p & SAE.

*Making Progress* is out of print at the moment.

*The Anarchist Movement in Japan.* The fascinating account of Japanese Anarchism in the 20th century. Japan had an anarchist communist movement that numbered tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells its story. £1 plus SAE.

*Where there's Brass, there's Muck.* A stimulating and thought-provoking ACE pamphlet on ecology. £1.80 plus p&p.

## Arizona

FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA in the USA comes news of some extremely disturbing political rhetoric. In recent state representative elections, four mainstream candidates, Republican and Democrat, have made statements openly calling for death penalty executions to be carried out in full public view.

Three of the people standing for Arizona state office expressed no qualms about advocating such spectacles of naked barbarism and indeed are touting open revenge murder as a basic plank of their campaigns. The fourth, a woman, condones semi-public judicial killings to be witnessed by invited audiences. This is a sickening development, illustrating the stark bloodlust besieging the American law and order mentality of the moment, and all too reminiscent of European brutality dating back to the last century.

### Handcuffs

Here in the UK, one of the first instruments of repression an activist is likely to experience when nicked is to be immobilised with handcuffs.

Handcuffs have been increasingly associated with deaths in police custody. The practice of handcuffing suspects behind their backs and then leaving them on their stomachs is identified with a form of suffocation known as 'positional asphyxia', which is a euphemism for murder in custody.

Handcuffs have been standard issue police equipment since the end of the 19th century. They were developed from the manacles used in the slave trade. Officially they should only be used by cops where it is considered necessary to restrain a suspect after arrest, either to prevent escape or to protect a person from self-harm, but in reality their use has become a matter of routine. Cops also employ handcuffing in court to make people look more menacing in front of magistrates. It's not uncommon for children to have been handcuffed to radiators in police station corridors rather than being placed in approved juvenile detention rooms, because of a shortage of resources.

In 1992, Michael Howard, Tory Home Secretary, sanctioned the use of 'Quik Kufs', a disposable nylon cuff imported from the USA. At the time of its introduction, the Home Office claimed that it was easier to put on than the conventional metal cuff and that chances of injury to prisoners was reduced.

**LANCASTER ANARCHIST GROUP**  
Contact: LAG, c/o Basement,  
78a Penny Lane, Lancaster.

Prisoners tell another story, complaining that the sharp plastic edges cause deep cuts to hands and wrists. Because they are lightweight in comparison to metal cuffs, cops can carry several pairs of 'Quik Kufs', facilitating several arrests at a time. Protesters, for example, at demos and on actions, have reported their indiscriminate use to round people up.

The trade in handcuffs and restraint equipment is big business, but the companies involved do not work to "build a safer world". Hiatt and Co. of Birmingham have been making handcuffs for over 100 years, supplying many UK police forces. They also used to make leg-irons, gang-chains (still in use in the USA) and other instruments of torture until the trade was officially outlawed in 1984 by public outcry. But Hiatt's associate companies abroad continue to sell these same goods today, even producing a glossy catalogue of their gruesome inventions. The reality is they still trade lucratively, despite the 1984 ban, in this and other forms of torture equipment. As recently as 1995, a Channel 4 TV documentary team was able to buy electric shock contraptions, batons and other torture items from household British companies like British Aerospace, ICL and others, all with the connivance of government-owned Royal Ordnance factories loaning the companies premises to trade from.

### Torture

Many of the firms supplying UK police forces still have links with the torture business. This has led to increasing protests against the annual Covert Operation and Procurement Exhibition (COPEX) held at Sandown Race course, where delegations from countries such as Indonesia, China, Turkey and other notorious regimes are encouraged to sample new wares. New Labour (still the same old joke as far as the working class are concerned) even sent its ministers to jolly the event along this year. Ol' Karl was dead wrong about a lot of things and on this one way out; not only have we "nothing to lose but our chains", but leg-irons, wrist manacles, body-belts, shiny plastic handcuffs...

Acknowledgements for much of the above to *The Law*, an excellent quarterly legal paper which brings news of the law, miscarriages of justice, discrimination, and much more from the sharp end. £5 for four issues from PO BOX 3878, London SW12 9ZE. If you want to know what's going on, and being hushed up, in the legal world, then a fiver is well spent on a sub.



**Eamon Collins (with Mick McGovern)**  
*Killing Rage* (Granta Books: London, 1997) and *Gerry Adams Before the Dawn: An Autobiography* (William Heinemann: London, 1996)

These political autobiographies (recently released in paperback) by two long-serving activists in the 'physical force' tradition of modern Irish Republicanism offer revealing insights into the evolution of both Sinn Féin and Provisional IRA strategy in the critical decades since the eruption of 'the Troubles'.

They are sharply different stories. Eamon Collins' book, *Killing Rage*, is the graphic and lurid account of the breakdown of a committed IRA volunteer, who — after an intensive period of active service — becomes disenchanted with the Republican movement. Arrested by the Brits, Collins betrays his former comrades-in-arms to the security forces, renounces his former ideals and disowns his paramilitary past.

Gerry Adams' *Before the Dawn*, in contrast, tells the life-story of a young nationalist, drawn into the Republican movement by the explosive events of 1969, whose evolution from front-line military activist to front-page political leader is driven by a commitment to the 'nationalist project' that never falters.

Together these life stories — one of the turncoat and traitor, the other of the dedicated career Republican — provide convincing evidence of the inescapable capitalist logic of contemporary northern Irish Republicanism.

In the years of the Cold War, many former committed Communist Party members in Britain and the US wrote memoirs recanting their dubious political past and exposing the repellent internal life of their own organisations. The fact that these books were greeted as welcome propaganda by right-wing capitalists from the Conservative Party to the CIA and back did not stop working class militants, eager to expose the ugly realities of

western Stalinism, from raiding these texts for their own ends.

### Critical

Similarly, the fact that *Killing Rage* has been seized upon by unionist politicians as the 'literal truth' of the 'innate evil' of the modern IRA, should not prevent an intelligent and critical reading of it. *Killing Rage* comes with a 'hidden agenda' painfully transparent on every page. Collins intends to exonerate himself,

through a merciless assault on his fellow volunteers, in which he 'proves' Republicanism to be an irreformable enemy of 'democracy' — an ideology he now supports in its place. Once that is recognised, a sceptical reading of the story of his part in the work of the Newry IRA in the early 1980s can still be illuminating. Collins recounts in detail the paramilitary operations he claims to have organised; his promotion through the ranks; his subsequent capture, and decision to turn 'supergrass'. The account ends with his trial and eventual release.

The stories of the often botched and chaotic missions; the amateurish and inept intelligence work; the clumsy and lazy selection of targets; and the make-up and motivations of many of the recruits, all provide a useful corrective to the deluded romanticism of the IRA-cheering left.

Collins himself emerges as venal, repulsive and utterly self-serving. Having agreed to turn state's evidence, he flits back and forth, tearing up his testimony one minute, rewriting it the next, withdrawing it again the next day, over and over — to the intense frustration of his Special Branch handlers. It seems surprising that someone so clearly unstable and unreliable (and just plain vain) as Collins could rise to a position of responsibility in the rigorously policed ranks of the IRA. When released by the courts on the ruling of the judge, Collins suddenly finds himself overwhelmed with loyalty for the British system of justice which "when it operated impartially according to its highest principles... could still represent the highest achievement of a civilised society" (p341), which, in this case, meant freeing the now penitent Collins.

It is a telling fact in itself that politics — even Republican-green capitalist politics — is almost completely absent from Collins' book. Unsurprisingly Adams' autobiography is chock full of it. Beginning with the story of Adams' upbringing in West Belfast, the

book really takes off with the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in 1969, which pushed to the fore a new generation of nationalist militants (Adams and McGuinness among them) ready to challenge the ossified Republican 'old guard'. What follows is a revealing insider's account of the rebirth of 'physical force' Republicanism in the north.

Adams describes the effects of 'internment', documents the split in the movement between its 'official' and 'provisional' wings, and recalls the negotiations with the British government that accompanied the June 1972 IRA ceasefire. The nationalist working class, of no concern to Collins, appear in Adams' book in a passive, supporting role — enduring the miseries of the unionist ascendancy, and the brutality, oppression and violence meted out by the British state. But, for Adams, that community exists only to offer unwavering and disciplined support to the official Republican leadership and its programme of national reunification and state-building.

### Aftermath

Even though his story concludes more than a decade ago, Adams is able to confirm that it was the aftermath of the hunger strike campaign in 1981 that convinced the movement's leaders of the value of "mass mobilisations and popular actions, of electoralism and broad front work" (p316). It is in that shift that the origins of the current Republican peace strategy can be found.

In his book, Collins is careful not to implicate himself as a trigger-puller, claiming his role always to have been limited to that of 'scout' or getaway driver. Adams, in contrast, includes a 'fictional' story of an IRA sniper hit on a British army patrol, an editorial decision he has since publicly 'regretted', alongside implausible denials about its obvious meaning. According to Collins, the two authors met only once, in 1984, when he confronted Adams at the funeral of an IRA volunteer, berating him for the 'creeping constitutionalism' that at that time he saw was at the heart of the new 'balloon box and armalite' strategy. Some 14 years on, and Collins is the sworn enemy of a Republican movement now reliant exclusively on electoral politics.

The standard argument of the British left is that modern Republicanism lost its innate revolutionary momentum when it began to seek an accommodation with the Orange statelet. Its refusal to pursue a cross community agenda of working class unity — so the argument goes — saw the movement stagnate in its traditional heartlands, as the 'long war' dragged on. But this explanation begins from a false premise — that Republicanism has revolutionary roots that have since withered.



As the 'peace process' in the north stumbles forward, the thinking revealed in these very different biographies confirms the opposite: the ideology of northern Irish Republicanism stands in stark opposition to the interests of the working class in the six counties, the Republic and beyond.

**Ecology and Anarchism. Essays and Reviews on Contemporary Thought.** By Brian Morris. Images. £14.95. 192 pages.

This book is a collection of essays that have appeared over the years in various radical publications, including *Freedom*, *Our Generation*, *Anarchy* and *Anarchist Studies*. Comrade Morris defines himself in the following terms: "...following Murray Bookchin, I think that Socialist Anarchism is the only viable political tradition that complements ecology, and offers a genuine response to the social and ecological crisis that we now face."

In his introduction, Morris indicates that the underlying orientation of the collection is to support three inter-linked theoretical perspectives and social movements — radical humanism, social ecology and socialist anarchism. So, the book has essays on Thomas Spence, seen as a precursor of anarchism, and the Mexican anarchist Flores Magon, as well as libertarian movements within the French Revolution. Morris's radical humanism means spirited and sustained attacks on the strong mystical currents within the ecological movement and a pitiless struggle with obscurantism, elitism and theologism.

### Mysticism

Indeed the first essay, 'Ecology and Mysticism' looks at the ideas of thinkers influential within the ecological movement like Schumacher, Skolimowski, Roszak and Wynne-Tyson all of whom he believes are blazing trails in a false direction towards mystical obscurantism. He concludes that "ecologists need to recognise that the social perspective that complements ecology is provided by anarchism, not by religion... A creative future can be sustained only by a synthesis of ecological principles and anarchist thought". This outlook is reiterated in a further essay on Skolimowski.

Also of interest is the essay on Thomas Spence. Spence has been described as Britain's first modern socialist, and here Morris attempts to claim him as a precursor of modern British class struggle anarchism. Spence's group was on the radical wing of English Jacobinism, and in its London base engaged in producing pamphlets, and a periodical, as well as forms of propaganda like the "anonymous handbill, the charcoaled pavement, the tavern club, perhaps the food riot" (E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the*

*English Working Class*). As Morris shows, Spence, "although a communist, was clearly hostile to any form of state socialism". Morris also points to similar developments among the *sans-culottes* and *Enragés* of the French Revolution.

As the book is a collection of essays over some years in different reviews on a wide range of subjects, some of the topics may be of peripheral interest to those interested in class struggle anarchism. Morris correctly notes that "Anarchism, as a social and political development was primarily a radical response to industrial or monopoly capitalism." This is in his essay on Lao Tzu, in which he attempts to reclaim the ancient Chinese philosopher, not as a religious mystic, but as the first writer to express the libertarian socialist ideal. Unfortunately, too many writers have concentrated on the philosophical roots of anarchism at the expense of the modern movement which sprang out of mass movements against capitalism. Morris is not coming from the essentially radical liberal outlook of these writers, and is attempting to, once more, counter the rampant mysticism influencing the ecological movement. Such philosophical research has some interest, and it would be daft to fall into the trap of workerism, just as one should realise the previous political thrust of the majority of writers engaged in such work. Overall then, a rewarding read, in particular Morris's attacks on the cults of religious mysticism that obscure the fundamentally social dimensions of the ecological movement.

**The Meaning of Anarchism. By Captain Jack White. Organise!/International Workers Association, £1. 12 pages.**

At last the comrades of *Organise!*, the Irish anarcho-syndicalist group, have reprinted this long out-of-print pamphlet. Jack White, founder of the Irish Citizen Army, was an enigmatic character on the Irish left who has tended to be marginalised in Irish Labour history. This slim pamphlet is unfortunately his only written work presently available and it dates from the period after he had embraced anarchism. His 'conversion' occurred during his time as a volunteer in the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. The essay contained in this pamphlet is divided between a defence of anarchism against its Marxist critics and a discussion of the events in Spain from a libertarian perspective. White makes some odd comments about the "Spanish racial characteristic of human dignity."(!) and his notion that the Easter Uprising in Ireland in 1916 was more important than the Russian Revolution a year later (and more in tune with the spirit of anarchism!) is somewhat controversial. However, White's unorthodoxy was famous; his autobiography was even called *Misfit*, and this shouldn't detract from what is an interesting read. With a new introduction by an *Organise!* member, *The Meaning of Anarchism* should hopefully be a useful tool in connecting anarchists in Ireland today with those of its past. Available from P.O.Box 505, Belfast, N. Ireland. BT12 6BQ.

## Organise! and Resistance

AS YOU MAY (or may not!) be aware the ACF has decided to produce a bimonthly agitational newsheet *Resistance*.

The first issue has now appeared for December-January with articles on Mumia Abu-Jamal, Pinochet, students, and Kosovo. If you would like a copy send a stamped addressed A4 envelope to P.O. BOX 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL. Any donations will be gratefully received. Better still, write for a bundle to distribute to your friends and workmates.

With the appearance of *Resistance* on a two-monthly basis, this means that there is less pressure for *Organise!* to supply news. This was always difficult with *Organise!* only appearing every three months. *Organise!* will now appear twice a year. It will address itself to greater analysis and the development of theory. Our in-depth look at the countryside/land ownership will continue and promises to be a humdinger of a series. As you will notice, this issue is 24 pages — as we have only produced three

issues this year. We hope that this will make up to some extent for the missing issue and we ask readers to bear with us!

We hope to continue our look at various aspects of culture, which have been absent from recent issues. Also possible is an in-depth look at feminism and women's movements. It will be well worth continuing to support *Organise!*

We will honour subscriptions taken out to *Organise!* but will make an announcement to subscribers on the price of forthcoming issues and the size (number of pages, etc.) after our forthcoming National Delegate Meeting in January. As you can see in the article on Subversion we welcome contributions from comrades outside the ACF that open up new debates or contribute to current ones. As you can see from the present issue, there is an article from Haringey Solidarity Group. Also contributed by people outside the ACF is the article on the Irish 'peace process' and the review of two books on Irish Republicanism.

### Dear Organise!

Having read our open letter to the Scottish Anarchist Federation ('Let's Get This Straight', GA 52, p.12), the author of your 'Green Anarchist — Bombs Away?' feature (*Organise!* 49, p.15) must now be feeling very silly indeed. Because we're not arrogant enough to assume we have the monopoly of truth, we actually have open debate in our pages, some of it necessarily provocative. It must be confusing for you being invited to actually think for yourselves rather than just picking up on some bog-standard 'party line' and measuring it against your own. As your contributor demonstrated, you can save yourself the bother of thinking by just lumping this diversity of opinions together and then accusing the publication hosting them of "political confusion".

If he'd managed to get past 'The Irrationalists' first two paragraphs, he'd have seen the article's central question was around how we can avoid representation, mediation and spectacularisation in taking direct action. As the ACF's more interested in tail-ending everyone else intoning the usual age-old matters than in direct action, we're not surprised that rather than consider such questions, your writer chose to bitch on about a couple of ill-chosen examples. As author of four

brothers, Steve Booth is rather more alive to the growing danger of cults than your feature writer apparently is. As — unlike you — he repudiates all ideology, he was streets ahead of most of the objections your writer raised before they were even written.

As the ostriches at *Freedom* have already discovered, it'll take more than an airy wave of rhetoric to dismiss FC's anarchist credentials. Whilst there are contradictions in 'Industrial Society and Its Future' (paras. 180-166) it is clearly more sophisticated anarchy-wise than the ACF. Whilst you've spent over a decade putting out ineffectual calls to "organise" (ie to be organised — so why are you surprised you get so few takers?), concocting ideological genealogies and hammering out the 'correct' line (ie telling people what to think), FC was holding the entire US mass transit and communications infrastructure up to ransom without the benefit of all this precious dead weight.

I leave it to the common-sense of readers to decide which analysis — "confus(ed)" or not — has more revolutionary potential, which is of the future and which of the past.

Yours for the destruction of civilisation  
John O'Connor  
Oxford GAs

## ACF pamphlets in languages other than English

*As We See It* is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

*The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation* is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain, or you have contacts in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia or Macedonia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

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

Write to the London address for bulk orders.



### Dear Organise!

The editor of GA invited me to respond to your article 'Green Anarchist Bombs Away? Or away with the fairies?' (*Organise!* no. 49, page 15).

It is quite obvious from reading your brief squib that you haven't actually read 'The Irrationalists', as you make no attempt to engage with the arguments set out there.

Point two: The guilt by association thing. It is facile and empty to condemn *Green Anarchist* as a whole for the views of one person. GA does not have a political line, and a variety of viewpoints are expressed in its pages. People disagree. That is a sign of political maturity.

Point three: Only a fool refuses to learn lessons about effectiveness from his/her worst enemy. The examples (if you had took the trouble to read the article) were not endorsing the ideology of the Oklahoma bomber or the Aum cult sarinators. They were examples of tactics or methods.

If you said "Boadicea has the right idea — use a chariot with knives sticking out the sides to slash the Romans", people like you would say this was an endorsement of her Iceni nationalist politics or something.

Lucy Parsons, Alexander Berkman, Nestor Makhno, Durruti and other groups in the Spanish civil war, the Angry Brigade more recently, Unabomber and many others — it is a long tradition, and I think you are wrong to ignore it and sweep it under the carpet.

With best wishes

Steve Booth

"Traditional style anarchist"

### Organise! Editor replies:

Sorry, but we did read your article 'The Irrationalists' and perfectly understood what it was saying. In response to articles in *Organise!* and reactions from the Scottish Anarchist Network (formerly the Scottish Anarchist Federation) and other quarters of British anarchism, *Green Anarchist* and Steve Booth have made attempts to step back from the views that were expressed in the original article. We know

what we read. I quote: "The Oklahoma bombers had the right idea. The pity was that they did not blast any more government offices... the Tokyo sarin cult had the right idea. The pity was that in testing the gas a year prior to the attack they gave themselves away." This is unequivocal support for these actions, and we detect not a trace of irony. Later on in the article we are told that "What about the innocent people?... How can anyone inside the Fuhrerbunker be innocent... Why should Joe and Edna Couch Potato derive any benefit from what the Irrationalists do? They can either join in somewhere, or fuck off and die, it's up to them, it's up to you."

But if Steve Booth and *Green Anarchist* have now distanced themselves from the ideas of the groups lauded above, they have not distanced themselves from the tactics as revealed in the letters above. We repeat, in no way can such indiscriminate tactics be supported. The slaughter and injury of working class people can never be supported, and to muddy the waters by attempting to show that class struggle anarchists like Durruti, Makhno and Berkman would have supported such tactics is disgraceful. When any of the groups or people mentioned in the second letter — cleverly amalgamated with the Unabomber by Steve Booth — took actions, it was against specific members or symbols of the ruling class that they held responsible for particularly vicious and repressive actions.

Similarly, you say that the article argues against the spectacularisation of such actions. So why can we read in the article that: "Only the ability of a given group to create facts really counts... The Oklahoma bombing. Unless you can create facts, you are nothing".

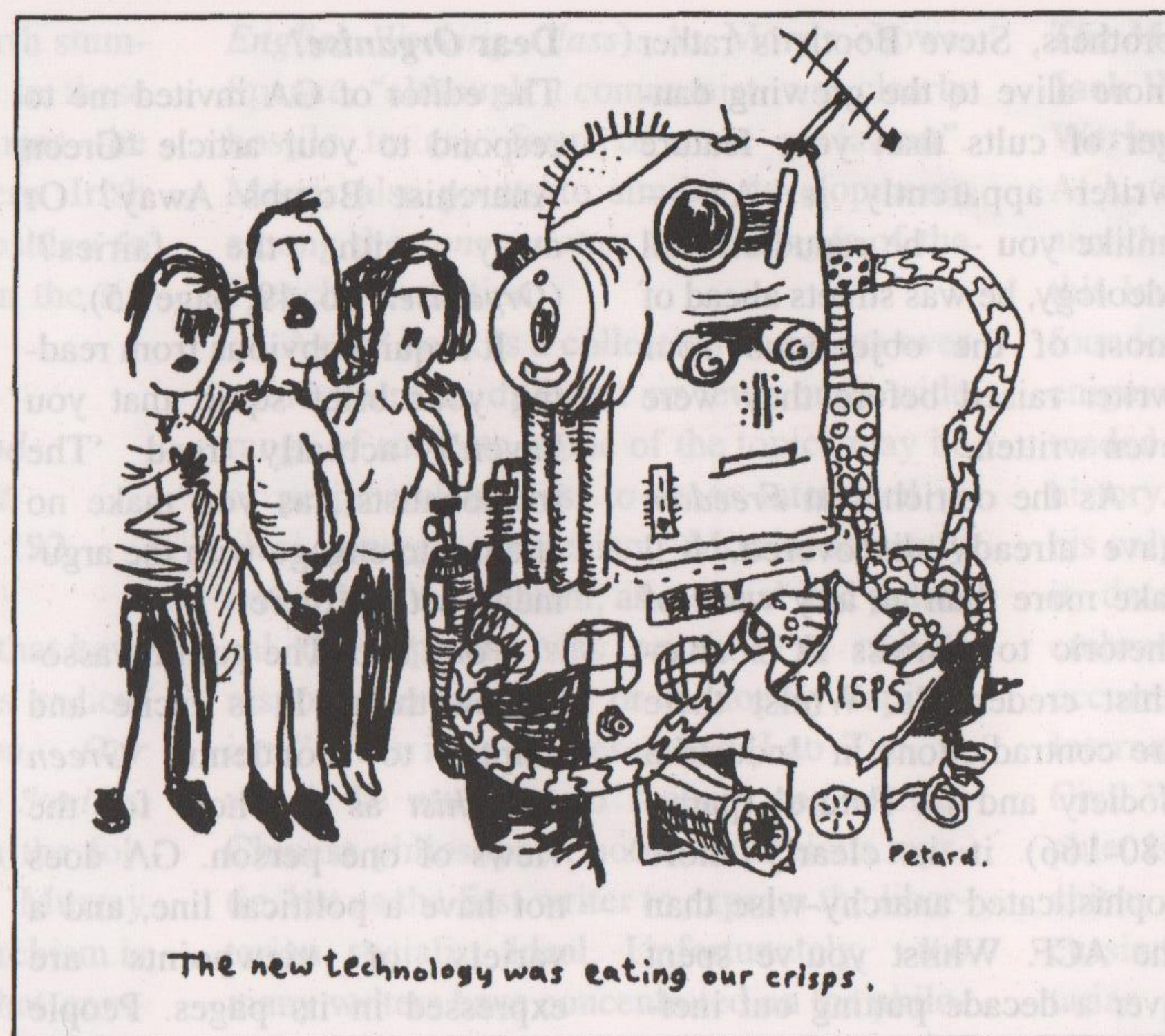
Fortunately, the vast bulk of



revolutionaries in Britain have rejected this claptrap, and rightly so. There is hope yet! For further and more detailed examination of these wrong notions we point readers to the article Irrationalism in issue 215 of Black Flag, available from BM Hurricane London WC1N 3XX (£1.50 plus postage).

#### Dear Organise!

It astonished me to find no mention (in your lead article 'a big yes to what') about the 'institutionalised sectarianism' which makes the Ireland Agreement so particularly awful. No analysis of the positive encouragement given to sectarians (particularly sectarian bureaucrats) by only allowing people to stand for election if they claim to be Protestant or Catholic (only a small number of seats are up for grabs as non aligned). The article claims that: "Sinn Fein and the 'working class' PUP/UDP involvement in 'national' government will expose them... [as] capitalist to the core. Increasingly, working class people will be looking for an alternative." This is probably not correct; the seats will always be evenly divided between Protestant and Catholic; the 'working class' sectarians will simply pass off their agenda (generally capitalist) as forced on them by the iniquities of the 'other side



sectarians'. The Agreement guarantees that this will be possible by not allowing any 'independent' working class interests from being expressed — only sectarians may enter the establishment.

"The destruction of Imperialism... is only possible through the destruction of capitalism on a world scale." This is similar to the SWP slogan "one solution.... revolution". It is also the only part of the article which informs me of what sort of agitation you would make around the Agreement. If I were a non sectarian, class conscious Irish worker I would not find this very useful.

The class relations in South Africa are no longer blurred by the racist state. Black people have crap homes and education because they are poor, not because they are black. This clarifies the class struggle. Although it was true to say that liberation would only be achieved by the destruction of capitalism on a world scale; it was also true to say that the anti-racist unions were achieving a step in the right direction by demanding equal rights.

Yours in comradeship  
J.N.

**Organise! editors' reply:** You miss the point. Independent

working class interests cannot be expressed in the 'national government' precisely because of its parliamentary nature. Increasingly, the working class in the North, as in the South, will have to turn to methods of struggle that are outside of parliament and based on direct action. In our view there does now exist the possibility of independent action with the evolution of both Republicanism and Loyalism.

As to South Africa and the anti-racist unions, well yes, the petty restrictions of apartheid have been abandoned. All well and good. However the economic and social inequalities that the mass of the population still have to put up with have to be contrasted with a white minority still owning the land, mines and industry in alliance with a new black ruling class in the State and bureaucracy and an increasing number of black capitalists. The different currents within both black and white sections of this ruling class mean a sometimes uneasy alliance, but an alliance nevertheless there to control and exploit the mass of the population. As to the role of the unions, as we have pointed out in previous issues of *Organise!*, they are in close alliance with the ANC to control and defuse any unrest in the workplaces.

In the last years of his life, Masini devoted himself to others of his passions for research, in particular a history of Italian literature between 700-800.

This did not stop him throwing himself with youthful enthusiasm into collaborating with the journal *Rivista Storica dell'Anarchismo* (Historical Review of Anarchism). He put great efforts into preparatory work for the review, thought up its title, and contributed to it right up to the end of his life. The last article he ever wrote, on the attempt on Mussolini's life by the young anarchist Anteo Zamboni, appeared in its second issue.

Masini's strong personality, his modesty and his style of methodical work, his intellectual wisdom, his *Toscanita* (Tuscaness) endeared him to those who had the good fortune to be his friends.

**PIER CARLO MASINI, Italian historian. Born 26 March 1923, died 19 October 1998.**

tions of 1876-78. He followed this up with an edition of three volumes of the writings of Bakunin, the great Russian anarchist.

In 1963, he produced a collection of the leaflets, manifestos and proclamations of the Italian section of the First International 1871-1880. The importance of Masini as historian of anarchism can be highlighted by the fact that before he started his work in the early '60s, there were no serious studies on Italian anarchism, outside of the small anarchist publishing houses.

Masini continued his work with *The First International in Italy*, still one of the great works of historiography. He followed this up with *History of the Italian Anarchists from Bakunin to Malatesta in 1969*. A cheap edition of this book in 1974 had a great influence on winning many young people over to the ideas of anarchism. Despite their disagreements with Masini's changed political views, many Italian anarchists remain grateful to him for his historic work.

## Pier Carlo Masini

Continued from page 24

control of *Azione Comunista* and forced out or discouraged the anarchists. Masini made the decision to join the Socialist Party (PSI) at the end of 1958, joining a tendency within it that had internationalist, classist and anti-Togliatti positions. He remained with these social-democratic views for the rest of his life.

However, Masini continued his interest in the historic study of anarchism. He produced a fine pamphlet on the Italian factory councils of post-WW1 Italy. He collaborated with the learned journals *Rivista Storica del Socialismo* and *Movimento Operaio e Socialista*.

He produced his first book on the Internationalists and the anarchist insurrec-

# AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

**3** We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist.

In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**8** Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale.

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

**9** As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process.

We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

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

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

## £1,000 PRESS FUND APPEAL

IN ORDER FOR US to continue publishing your favourite anarcho-communist magazine and our bi-monthly, *Resistance*, we need money. Your money!

The ACF has no rich benefactors, doesn't carry paid advertising and hasn't had much luck on the Lottery. In fact we're pretty skint!

So basically it's down to you and us to raise the funds. The Press

Fund needs a cool grand, £1,000 for the next *Organise!* to come out and for *Resistance* to appear in February/March 1999. Comrades, please send what you can. Every penny counts. Contributions to the *Organise!* and *Resistance* £1,000 Press Fund should be sent to Press Fund, ACF, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Cheques, postal orders, IMO's payable to the ACF. Thanks.