

Kurt Gustav Wilckens

KURT GUSTAV WILCKENS was born on 3 November 1886 at Bad Bramstedt in Schleswig-Holstein, close to the Danish border in Germany, one of the five sons of August Wilckens and Johanna Harms. Of average height with red hair and light blue eyes, he loved nature and hated cities. Starting work as a miner in Silesia, he emigrated at the age of 24 to the United States where he got work in the Arizona mines.

In Arizona he became involved in the agitation of the revolutionary workers' organisation, the Industrial Workers of the World (popularly known as the Wobblies). Wilckens took part in strikes and became an orator in the miners' mass meetings.

The IWW organised successfully among Mexicans and South Europeans, the lowest paid of the miners. As a result of the growing might of the miners in the Bisbee area, the local businessmen and scab miners organised into Loyalty Leagues. Early on 12 July 1916, 2000 Loyalty Leaguers commenced a round-up of miners. One miner shot dead a Loyalty leaguer in self-defence and was gunned down. There were robberies, vandalism, and beatings and abuse of women carried out by the Leaguers during the round-up. 1,186 men, including 104 Wobblies, among them Wilckens, were herded into cattle trucks and dumped across the border in the New Mexico desert.

Wilckens, by now an anarchist as well as an IWW member, was interned in a camp for German prisoners. He escaped from there, was recaptured and deported to Germany in 1920 from where he departed



to Argentina, arriving there in late September.

Here, he got a job as an agricultural worker in Rio Negro, then as a docker in Buenos Aires. He frequented the anarchist bars and centres. On 12 May 1921, he was the victim of a provocation by a cop who attempted to have him expelled from Argentina. This failed, but Kurt spent four months in prison before being freed. At this time, anarchism was strong among the working class of Argentina. After his release from jail Kurt devoted all his energy and money to help his imprisoned comrades.

In the south, in Patagonia, the anarchists had started organising among the agricultural workers of Santa Cruz province and among the workers of the meatpacking plants and ports. General strikes broke out regularly and workers formed themselves into horse-mounted units. Patagonia was experiencing an armed uprising inspired by anarchists. The government sent in the troops and, egged on by the British landowners, 1500 workers, including many anarchists, were rounded up and summarily executed.

The leader of the repression, Colonel Hector Varela, was feted by the British who sang, "For he's a jolly good fellow". The reaction of prostitutes in a local brothel was different, shouting, "Assassins, Pigs! We won't go with killers", when Varela's troops turned up after the slaughter. They were jailed for insulting men in uniform!

Disgusted

Wilckens was disgusted by the murders headed by Varela. He was heavily influenced by the pacifism of Tolstoy, but felt that violence from the ruling class had to be answered. On 27 January 1923, he met Colonel Varela on the street and hurled a bomb at him. Wounded in both legs, Varela attempted to draw his sabre. Wilckens emptied his colt revolver into him, ending the life of this butcher.

Arrested by vigilantes, he bluntly shouted, "I have avenged my brothers". Wilckens insisted that his act was an individual act, with no accomplices. At his trial he stated that he had shot Varela so that he could never kill again.

In jail, Wilckens began to recover from the injuries sustained during the assassination. Anarchists gave great solidarity and

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he was visited frequently and received food parcels (he was a teetotaller and a vegetarian). He was able to write for various publications, including some international anarchist papers. He explained that he didn't: "see Varela as an insignificant official. No, in Patagonia he was governor, judge, executioner and gravedigger... Tomorrow, our tomorrow will not foster strife, crime and lies; it will foster life, love, science; let us work to speed that day".

Assassinated

The sentence proposed by the judiciary was 17 years in jail. But already the army and the right were plotting. On the night of 15 June 1923, before sentence was passed, prison guards smuggled in Ernesto Perez Millan. This young man, an ex-police sergeant from Santa Cruz province, was a member of the Patriotic League, a reactionary and anti-Semitic organisation formed after the 1919 general strike, with the backing of the army, the Church and the employers. He had sworn revenge at Varela's funeral. He shot Wilckens through the chest. The bullet pierced a lung but did not kill him outright. He died the following morning.

The police and the government confiscated his body, but news spread and an unlimited general strike broke out throughout the country. The police fired on a mass demonstration in Once Square. Two workers were shot dead, including the Spanish anarchist Enrique Gombas, and one cop. Millan himself did not long survive the murder. The authorities made out he was unbalanced and had him put in a secure mental hospital. Here, he was gunned down by a Yugoslav midget!

Wilckens had acted in a time of great social strife and class war. A gentle and idealistic man of great integrity, he expressed immense solidarity. His disgust at the massacre of workers had forced him to act.

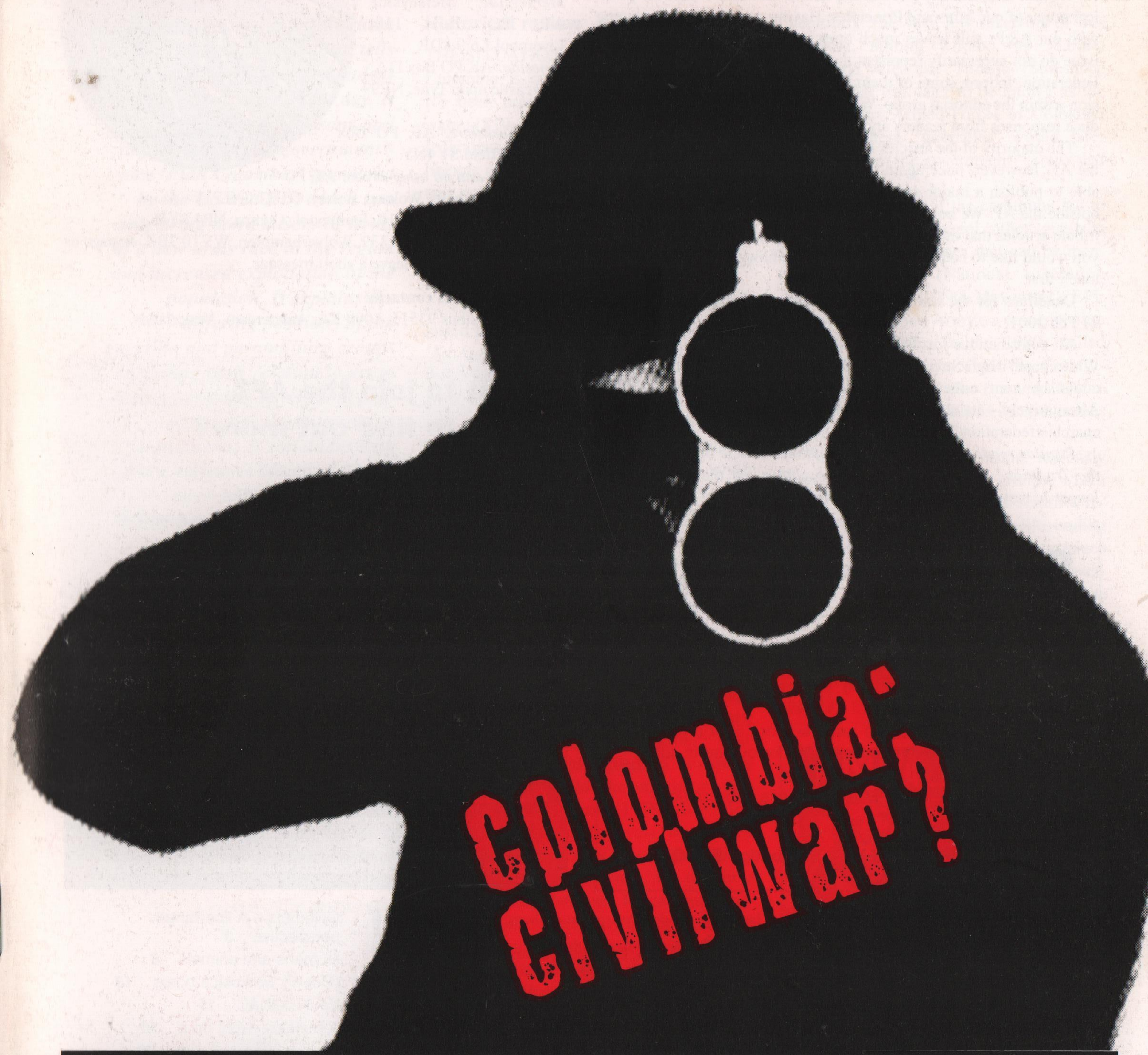
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MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

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ORGANISE! IS THE magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published twice a year in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to eventually publish any article that falls within the political scope of our Aims and Principles. Having said that, even agreeing with our A&Ps still leaves much open to debate. The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective view of the Anarchist Federation. Indeed, some of them have provoked considerable discussion within the editorial group. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The majority of the articles in this issue are written by members of the AF. However, once again, we have been fortunate enough to be able to publish a major article (on Colombia this time) by someone outside the AF. We hope that others will take the opportunity to contribute articles that meet the broad editorial objectives of *Organise!* If you would like to contribute, but are unsure how to do so, then get in touch first.

Deadlines for the next issue are: articles 14 Feb 2001 and letters 21 Feb 2001.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if articles could be sent either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles and letters can be emailed to us at: anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com.

Regular readers will note that the planned article in the series, 'In the Tradition', has not appeared. The author felt the need to have longer to research the article. It will appear in the next issue.

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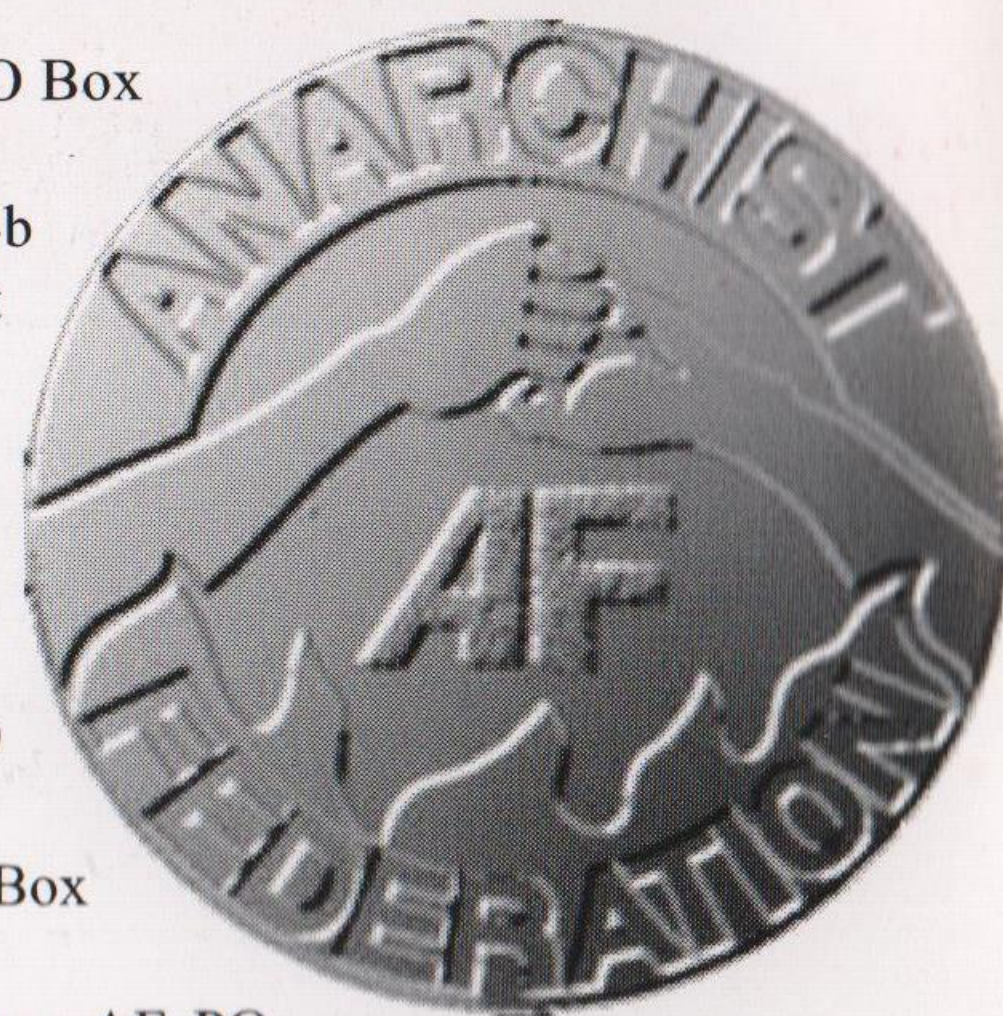
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Columbia — a libertarian perspective

This fascinating article, written by a Colombian anarchist, tells the story of Colombia's violent history, up to the present day. It examines the reasons and implications of its government's new 'Plan Colombia' sponsored by the US and EU, which can only bring more misery in terms of a new arms race in the region and increased exploitation of the population. It explains the differing positions of the guerrilla and paramilitary groups including their relation to drug-dealing, and the activities of civil and indigenous opposition movements. It concludes with reports of opposition by anarchists and other anti-militarist activists, and a call for your help in spreading the libertarian message in the face of a strong Marxist-Leninist tradition.

Historical review

THE SITUATION OF WAR through which Colombia is currently passing isn't new. It's been present since the independence wars (1810-1819). At first it was between federalists and centralists, then between liberals and conservatives, the most important political parties in the country. From this situation originated several internal wars, the most recent of which started on 9 April 1948 with the killing of the liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan.

This killing unleashed a civil war which lasted for a decade or so, known simply as 'La Violencia' (The Violence). The main difference between liberals and conservatives was their positions towards clericalism, making the liberal party the most radical option because they openly expressed their anti-clericalism in a country with a deep catholic tradition. The church, one of Colombia's most important political forces, aligned itself with the conservatives and got to the point that they would even preach "Killing is a sin but killing liberals isn't" and played an active role in war.

La Violencia reached one of its peaks in 1953 when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla launched a *coup d'état* to 'pacify' the country, and it came to an end in 1958 when the treaty known as 'El Frente Nacional' (The National Front) was signed. In this treaty both parties agreed to take turns in power, a situation that lasted until 1978, when a liberal (Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala) was elected president after another liberal presidency (Alfonso Lopez Michelsen). By that time the differences between liberals and conservatives had practically disappeared.

The signing of this treaty resulted in the breakaway of the most radical elements within the liberal party, and led them to look towards Marxist doctrines, which were fashionable due to the influence of the Cuban revolution.

At the beginning of the 1960s, several communist experiments were born, among them the commune which became known as 'Marquetalia' in the central part of Colombia. This commune was bombed and destroyed by the army in alliance with the US army (in what is known as the LASO

operation). The very few survivors of this massacre, among whom was Manuel Marulanda Velez aka 'Tirofijo' (Sureshot), funded what was later to be known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). These 'guerrillas' would later declare war on the government — a war that has yet to end.

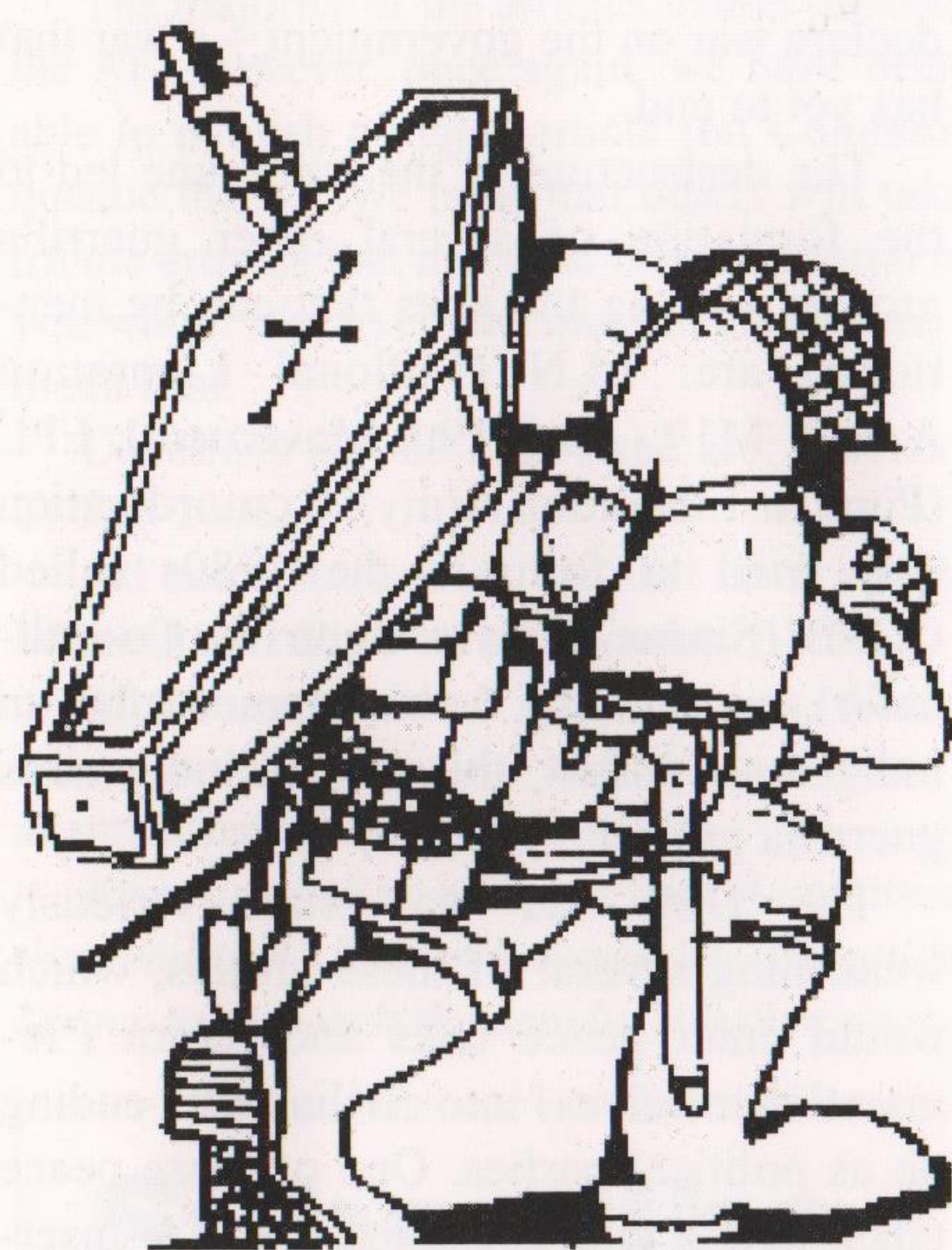
The destruction of the commune led to the formation of several other guerrilla groups. Among the ones that can be mentioned are: ELN (National Liberation Army), M19 (April 19th Movement), EPL (Popular Liberation Army), a co-ordination they tried to form in the 1980s called CGSB (Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Co-ordinator), and Quintin Lame (named after an indigenous outlaw, this was an indigenous guerrilla group).

The 'Dirty war' was crude, seriously weakening several of these groups, which would enter peace talks and return ('re-insert' themselves) into civilian life, ending up as political parties. One of these peace talks, in the mid-80s, caused the re-insertion of M19, that would then become the 'M19 Democratic Alliance', and of certain sides of FARC, which would become the Patriotic Union (UP). Later, 'paramilitary' groups [Ed. note: The term guerrilla is reserved for the left-wing] would massacre



many of the militants of these groups, including M19's candidate (Carlos Pizarro Leon-Gomez) and two of UP's candidates (Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa and Jaime Pardo Leal), all of them running for president in 1990s elections. This massacre included over 3,000 militants of UP during the following decade, as well as hundreds of different labour unionists, students, teachers human rights, left-wing and social activists etc.

This situation, which blocked alternative routes to power for these groups (a central point in the Marxist-Leninist



discourse), intensified the war and took it to the point it is at today, the same point as when *El Frente Nacional* was signed, where what is being discussed is the share of power each group is going to have. There are two sides in struggle. Both are extremely militarist, both are convinced that they are capable of winning the war and both lack wide political support among the civilian population. For both, their expectation is instead a political leadership based on economic and military strength.

Drug trafficking and the current political situation

Drug trafficking first appeared in Colombia at the end of the 1970s, centred on the northern coast, with what they used to call '*Fiebre Marimbera*' (Weed Fever), focused on the growth and distribution of marijuana. It also generated the first US intervention with the introduction of 'Paraquat', a pesticide intended to eliminate illegal crops. Its consequence, as with subsequent experiments in the Colombian countryside, was a huge ecological disaster in the fumigated areas, harming the health

of the inhabitants of the area and destroying legal crops essential to economic activity.

At the end of the 1970s the first cocaine exports occurred (mainly for the US market), and the most important distribution networks were created, which would later give birth to the drug cartels. Medellín Cartel was the most important one of all. It had its headquarters in the medium Magdalena River, where the two main barons, Pablo Escobar aka '*El Patron*' and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha aka '*El Mexicano*', had their fortresses. The first baron was the brains of the operations and was in charge of the '*sicario*' (paid assassins) schools, security in the cities, and the logistics of the distribution networks. The second was in charge of the security of the operations in the countryside since he was in command of the paramilitary groups in the area. Rodríguez Gacha had links with another member of the cartel: Fidel Castano, aka 'Rambo', also a radical anti-communist who started organising paramilitary groups in the areas of Córdoba and Uraba, near the border with Panama on the north-western coast.

Castano's groups are the most important paramilitary groups in Colombia at this moment. Both Castano and Rodríguez Gacha developed operations that included hiring Israeli mercenaries, such as Yair Klein, for military training of their troops. They did this in association with important banana export corporations such as Uniban in Uraba, as well as with the support of rich cattlemen in the area. It all started as a retaliation against taxing by the guerrillas through '*vacuna*' (vaccine) which was a tax on cattle raising, and '*boleto*' (ticketing) which was a tax on urban economic activities such as trade. Other continual attacks from the guerrillas included kidnapping (in fact Rambo's father was kidnapped and, after paying the requested ransom, his family only got back a corpse), and other forms of blackmail. Important *sicarios* were trained in the paramilitary camps. They would later train others in the *sicario* schools of the cities, mainly Medellín.

Not least, paramilitary activity has always been linked to drug dealing and trafficking. The biggest plantations and laboratories are located in the southern part of the country, in the middle of the jungle where they were almost impossible to detect. Since the opposing guerrillas have traditionally had a very strong control of these areas, they tax illegal crops as they do other economic activity in the area. In fact, the guerrilla link with drug dealing is more related to taxation than to the actual traf-

ficking. Their direct involvement in trafficking has never been actually proved, although it is they, rather than the paramilitaries, who are always referred to as 'Narcoguerrillas' or 'Narcoterrorists', even though some paramilitaries have publicly accepted their links with drug trafficking (Carlos Castano, current commander of the AUC – united self-defence groups of Colombia – the biggest paramilitary group in Colombia, accepted it on a televised interview some months ago).

The legal army of Colombia, as well as the government, have also had several scandals that link them to drug-dealing activities. One example of this was when the previous government (under Ernesto Samper) had really difficult relations with the US due to scandals surrounding the economic support it had received from Cali's cartel during its campaign. This even led the US government to withdraw the Colombian president's US visa, along with those of six, three-sun generals (the highest rank in the Colombian military) on the grounds that they were related to drug trafficking activities. Another example was when several shipments of heroin were found on planes of the air force, such that the media named them the 'Blue Cartel' after the colour of their uniform.

Drug dealing is one of the few really profitable economic activities in Colombia.

It is also important to mention that drug dealing is one of few really profitable economic activities in Colombia [Ed. note: The others are oil and fruit]. Therefore, it is central to the resources which are fuelling the current arms race of the legal and illegal forces in Colombia.

Peace talks

Recently, peace talks with FARC have been taking place in the southern 'demilitarised' area of San Vicente Del Caguan. The reality is that the so-called demilitarisation of this area is more of a smoke screen because FARC has traditionally had complete control over this area (which is the size of Switzerland but very poorly populated as it is in the middle of the jungle), and the state and its military have never had a very active

presence. The situation is so extreme that people who have lived in the area say that when there's a legal argument about land, for example, that it won't be solved by a police inspector, a judge or a lawyer, but by a guerrilla.

The main points being discussed are, from the FARC's side, the complete dismantling of paramilitary groups by the government, as well as a complete change in the economic policies of privatisation of public companies that follow a neoliberal model. They suggest instead the implementation of a systematic nationalisation of all the resources and companies in charge of managing them. The government insist on the guerrillas stopping kidnappings and taxation of economic activities, and reaching a cease-fire treaty. This is with the idea of improving the conditions for foreign investment and obtaining credit from international financial institutions.

The government was traditionally using double-speak when referring to the guerrilla groups. When they talked about FARC they tended to talk about dialogue and about the need for a 'political negotiation'. When they talked about ELN, they talked about the need of force to stop 'terrorist activities' and the state's reluctance to bow to 'armed blackmail'. However, ELN started a bombing campaign against the electrical power infrastructure of the most important provinces of Colombia (blowing up between 10 and 30 pylon towers a day) which led the state to reconsider their policies. Pre-talks were started that considered the ELN's request that three towns be demilitarised to start the actual peace talks. This has generated a strong opposition in those areas, which is a mixture of popular discontent and paramilitary pressure.

Development model

The government has been imposing a series of both political and economic policies of a neoliberal nature. These are aimed at the privatisation of state resources based on the argument of a lack of efficiency of the institutions in charge of the administration of these resources on the one hand, and the supposed efficiency and transparency of



private organisations on the other. All this departs from a lineal and economic model of development, which doesn't take into account any variables other than productivity. The model requires the modernisation of the infrastructure of the country, which includes dry ports, airports, river and sea harbours, the building of new highways and the modernisation of those now existing, and the optimisation of the conditions for foreign investment in the country.

Since guerrillas oppose these policies based on their anti-imperialist discourse, which gives arguments to their aspirations of national liberation, they also oppose foreign investment and they have been systematically sabotaging these governmental policies. The army can't efficiently fight them due to their mobile nature, and there is strong pressure from human rights activists against its continual violations. So the army has had to lean more and more frequently on paramilitary groups that act as a cover to develop operations they wouldn't be able to do as the 'National Army' – such as massacres of supposed supporters or sympathisers of the guerrillas. This helps the army displace thousands of peasants from these areas, so that the government can sell their lands for peanuts – to the multinationals, or to the state for their huge projects intended to modernise the infrastructure, or to paramilitaries for drug-dealing operations. 'Pacifying' the lands that were previously controlled by the guerrillas means the return of economic activity to these areas, which is always profitable for landowners (many whom are themselves paramilitaries).

Continuous fighting in certain areas of the country is always linked to certain centres of economic activity. In Uraba, for example, it has to do with the project of building another canal between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans along the Atrato River, now that the US is losing control over the Panama canal. It also has to do with the modernisation of the Turbo harbour, essential for the banana export activity, considered a priority in the Caribbean coast. Besides this, being so close to the Panama Canal provides a privileged situation when it comes to drug or arms trafficking. In Santander, in the north-eastern part of Colombia, paramilitary activity has to do with oil exploitation by multinationals such as BP and Oxy. It has traditionally been boycotted and sabotaged by ELN, which has the harbour of Barrancabermeja as one of its biggest fortresses, and this is in turn currently another big centre of paramilitary activity. In Valle del Cauca, paramilitary activity has much to do with the strong

The army has to lean more and more frequently on paramilitary groups.

presence of guerrillas in the surroundings of Buenaventura, the main harbour on the pacific coast, and around the highway that connects this city with Cali, the third major city after Bogotá and Medellín.

Finally, it's important to mention the paradoxical effect of massive displacement (nearly 7% of the population). People migrate to big urban centres, stretching the shantytowns around these cities and worsening the situation of inequality that already exists. This could help take the war into an urban phase, one that the guerrillas have never been able to reach in more than 30 years of struggle, but now may help them regain the popular support they have been systematically losing. The paramilitaries are effectively helping the guerrilla groups gain this urban support, since they are mainly displacing those who they consider might be (or become) guerrilla supporters or sympathisers.

Plan Colombia

The government has developed Plan Colombia, with the idea of getting international support in their 'War on drugs'. This war centres on the 'Narcoguerrillas' or 'Narcoterrorists', therefore making evident their real goal – financing war on guerrillas – since they do not refer to other drug dealers, and they never mention connections between trafficking and the army, corrupt politicians and paramilitaries, even though it's been more than proved (or as we have seen, admitted) for ages.

The money that the government is asking for is US \$1.7 billion for the next two years. The US congress has already approved the giving of US \$1.3 billion and the national government is lobbying around the EU to get the rest. More than 70% of this money is destined for the modernisation of the army (the biggest violators of human rights in the Western Hemisphere), including the purchase of equipment. The rest of the money will be invested in things such as 'training on human rights' for the army, maybe in the 'School of Americas' where most Latin-American dictators have been trained by the US Army.

The direct effect of this plan will be the

revitalisation of the arms race within the conflict, because if the army gets US \$1.3 billion in weapons and equipment, the guerrillas are likely to get another US \$1.3 billion in weapons and equipment from their 'Revolutionary Taxes', kidnappings and their other 'economic activities'. On the other hand, this support will make the already deadly and systematic violation of human rights in the hands of the army a lot more efficient.

Another consequence of Plan Colombia is the increased impoverishment of the population as a result of the US government's economic support for improving the conditions for foreign investment and liberalisation of the market. This includes lower wages and fewer guarantees for workers, as well as lower taxes for multinationals, which means that even less money from local resources will stay in Colombia. It also includes worsening of living conditions for indigenous and black communities and other groups that oppose the neoliberal idea of development.

Alternative resistance

The current situation of war in Colombia and the everyday decreasing credibility of the guerrillas and their political programme

have helped feed alternative movements of resistance. These come from the idea of civil unarmed resistance, and preach positions such as 'Civil Disobedience' as alternative strategies. Although they are generally reformist in nature, they have looked for creative ways to oppose official policies.

One example is the highway blockades in certain areas of the country. They have been used by disparate groups such as the U'wa and other indigenous groups, as well as those who oppose the demilitarisation of the three municipalities for the peace talks with ELN. They achieved the isolation of some province capitals for more than a month after blocking the Pan-American Highway in the south-western part of Colombia. They took Pasto (capital of the Narino province) and Popayan (capital of Cauca province) to critical moments when supply distribution was damaged, causing losses which led the government to sit down and talk things over with the organisers of the blockade.

The movement that opposes a demilitarised area for ELN isolated the northern coast of Colombia, causing a huge crisis for the cattle raising industry and for supply distribution in cities as important as Cartagena and Barranquilla (amongst the

The indigenous movements have a huge tradition of resistance.

biggest eight cities of Colombia with millions of inhabitants).

Another example is that of the NGO's who have been targeted by paramilitaries and who lost many of their militants over the last decade, resulting in their development of incredible networks of 'contra-information' that can now be used by radical activists.

On the other hand, the indigenous movements have a huge tradition of resistance. Quintin Lame, an indigenous person from Colombia, bears the record for the most times in prison in Colombia, due to his different activities of resistance, and an indigenous guerrilla group in the 1980s was named after him, as mentioned earlier. They were initially inspired by the Zapatistas in Mexico, then by the Mapuches in Chile, and finally by the indigenous movement in Ecuador, which brought down two presidents during the last 10 years, and continue to be strong and combative. The most important examples of this struggle are the U'wa in the eastern part of Colombia and the Embera-Katio communities in Uraba, in the north-west. What is special about these movements is that they have opposed the official policies and their model of development without adopting the idea of anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles. On the contrary, they have also opposed the nationalist idea that homogenises and stops them from affirming their traditions and beliefs within a state that excludes them from its social and economic policies. They have chosen to declare absolute independence from the programmes preached by both the guerrillas and the state. This has gained them enemies on both sides. On the other hand, the fact that they use different resistance techniques and categories from those of the guerrillas has helped crack their already worn-out discourse.

Apart from these movements, it's important to mention the appearance of anarchist groups within the underground scene of the cities during the last decade. Initially some looked more like a copy of the anarcho-punk movement in Britain and the Radical Rock movement in the Basque Country in the 1980s. More recently they

have created a more authentic identity, basically through the interchange of ideas with other groups in Latin America, especially Venezuela and Mexico. They have now begun to put their struggle in a more realistic context within the Colombian reality.

In Medellin, 'Caminos', maybe the first anarchist collective in the city, reached a peak in 1992 within the resistance movement against the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the so-called discovery of America. Then came TURRA, some kind of a RASH (Red and Anarchist Skinheads) section in Medellin. Its main source of militants was both the punk and the skinhead movements in the city. It formed as a broad collective that included both Marxist and anarchist militants. It eventually broke up because the ideological differences between anarchists and certain Marxist groups (Leninists and Maoists) were impossible to reconcile as they were creating a sensation of incoherence within the group.

Then came the 'Jose Maria Vargas Vila' propaganda, study and discussion group, named after a radical liberal writer of the 1940s. This group attended the libertarian meeting to commemorate 30 years of May 1968, in Bogota, organised by 'Alas De Xue' – maybe the best known anarchist group from Colombia at an international level (though they are really small and not very active in Bogota). Alas De Xue formed in the 1980s, and published a couple of books and used to publish the *Biofilos* newspaper. There is another group in Bogota, more of an insurrectional nature, called '*Anarquistas al Combate*' (Anarchists into Combat), who used to be very active in public universities in Bogota but are now a lot weaker, although they still exist.

Currently, in Medellin, most groups are linked to the anarcho-punk movement, which is very influenced by the Mexican anarcho-punk movement linked to the Zapatista struggle. Examples of such groups are '*La Sombra*' and CASO (Anarchist Collective for workers' solidarity), even though the latter has strong connections with the anarcho-punk movement in Medellin, they have tried to reach a much broader population.

All these groups, plus the SHARP (Skin-Heads Against Racial Prejudice) section of Medellin, another collective called Red Juvenil (youth network) and some autonomous individuals, are part of a project called '*Antimilitarismo Sonoro*' (Sounding Antimilitarism) which is probably the biggest autonomous project in

Medellin and, perhaps, in Colombia. This collective aims to organise propaganda activities aimed at promoting conscientious objection to military conscription (which is illegal in Colombia at this moment) and against police brutality from an antimilitarist position. The hierarchical and authoritarian structure of any army and thus of all the armed actors of the Colombian conflict: Colombian army, police, paramilitaries and guerrillas, is challenged.

The idea has been from the beginning to establish a clear position and to break from the traditional discourse of the left (armed and legal) of a very strong Marxist-Leninist tradition, looking for new and creative ways to carry out propaganda activities, such as cultural activities within the inde-



pendent music scene in the city. Several concerts have been put together by the collective, the biggest of which took place last year with two bands from Argentina (Todos Tus Muertos and Lumumba) and two local bands (Niquitown and Sociedad FB7). Between 8,000 and 10,000 people attended this free concert in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city even though there was a boycott of the event by the mass media. Many goals were achieved by this concert, specifically by more collectives getting involved in the project. It was mostly organised by Red Juvenil and some individuals, but there were four collectives involved in the following concert and there should be even more in the next one.

Another concert was organised on 13 May 2000 to commemorate the international day against military conscription. Only local underground bands played, but some 3,000 people attended. The bands that played that day were Rechazo (punk), Beto el Recluta (ska and reggae), Lo que Queda (punk), Laberinto (hip hop), Tribu Omerta (hip hop) and Rulaz Plazko (hip hop).

Future plans for this year include a compilation CD and antimilitarist book that will include bands from all over the Spanish speaking world and some from other parts, for example Robb Johnson from the UK. We are also thinking about our next concert. We plan to get Fermin

Muguruza (well-known radical Basque musician) to play in Medellin, hopefully on 26 September, and to do some smaller benefit concerts to help us become self-sufficient.

We have also been working with a group concerned with civil opposition to police brutality, involving propaganda against state policies to recover 'Public Space', which have affected thousands of street vendors and youths who have been brutalised in certain squares the police want to kick them out from. Some activities include sabotaging collective arrests from the inside by getting arrested and then, through a legal support network that has been built for both this and the anti-conscription groups, getting released with all the other people that have been illegally arrested. There is also a graphic arts collective working on a boycott against these policies. Other activities include publishing posters and leaflets with legal information in case of police harassment, mainly in relation to the amount and types of 'drugs' that can be carried according to the constitution. We're also working in high schools promoting conscientious objection to military conscription and our legal support groups that include several actual objectors.

Another important point in *Antimilitarismo Sonoro* is breaking away from state sponsored campaigns against the war that intend to blame it all on the guerrillas and do not take into account the role of the legal army and the paramilitary groups. That's why we are very clear about our opposition to any kind of army.

How to help us

The current plan is to get a second-hand sound system with a 16 or 24 channel mixer and at least 5,000 Watts of power to do our concerts and to be able to self-manage the project. People from different groups such as the AF and RTS all over the UK, the Rainbow Centre in Nottingham, the Autonomous Centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow have already expressed willingness to help with this, and any further suggestions are welcome at this email address: corleone69@hotmail.com, or this postal address (No name please): A.A. 54413, Medellin, Colombia, South America.

There have already been action and demonstrations against Plan Colombia in Britain – check the AF web-site News Diary and *Resistance* bulletin. Get further information from the Colombian Refugee Association (CORAS), 36 Vauxhall Street, London SE11, Tel: 0207 924 0647, Email: coras@refugio.fsnet.co.uk

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Humans and animals: To kill or not to kill

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS ANIMALS has been rightly challenged by a movement of activists, many of whom consider themselves anarchists. They have campaigned around a variety of issues including animal experiments, the fur trade, vegetarianism/veganism, endangered species and fox hunting. Many of these causes have found support from a wide-range of people, affecting lifestyles as well as opinions. We are beginning to realise that animals have their own claim to this planet, independent of their use to the human species. This political movement appeals to people's emotions. Most people love to see furry creatures and they can elicit soppieness from the most macho hard-man. It is also popular amongst urban dwellers because the only form of wildlife they might come across is the neighbour's rotweiler. The sighting of a fox or a kite, or even visiting ducks in a park, can give the resident of a concrete jungle a lot of pleasure. Naturally, people don't want to see these creatures hurt.

It has been the horror stories about the treatment of animals that has caused many to become vegetarians or vegans and to

argue animal life should not be taken for the use of human beings. (There are, of course, other reasons for not eating meat eg land use and health risks). Killing of animals is 'morally wrong' and for some this is an absolute principle, just as some people are pacifists and hold to the belief that human life should never be taken, no matter what the circumstances.

It is very difficult when political issues enter the realm of morality and ethics. Such issues require us to ask, 'Why is it wrong?' and 'Who decides?' Anarchists have great difficulty with these questions because we have no doctrine from either the Christian or Leninist church to tell us what's right and wrong. Some issues are clear-cut, but many are not so clear and the answer of whether something is right or wrong often depends on the circumstances. However, these issues do need to be discussed and debated so that we can work out an anarchist ethics. In the case of killing animals, I would argue that it is not 'wrong'. It would be 'nicer' not to, but it is not a moral wrong.

As anarchists, we would agree that we want to create a society where animals have a respected place. The whole relationship between human and animal can be transformed, just as the relationships between people will be. However, will this mean that animals will cease to have any role in the satisfaction of human needs? Will they just hang around where they want and get on with their lives? Will humans never again have to kill an animal? Though I do not want to rule out this scenario, I do not think it is a realistic option. There are a number of contexts in which humans kill animals, including research using animals and factory farming, that are very dodgy and have been much discussed in many animal welfare publications as well as in our own Ecology pamphlet and Manifesto. In this article I will be looking at the killing of animals in the 'wild' and relating this to other issues such as conservation and land management and land ownership that have been discussed in the series on 'Land' in the past two issues of *Organise!*

Animals have their own claim to this planet, independent of their use to the human species.

Wild animals as food

Human beings have been killing wild animals for food and other products very early on in their emergence as a species. Rituals and art forms developed around the theme of the hunt. Prehistoric rock paintings and carvings invariably feature the animals that are the hunter's prey. Domestication of animals and the advent of raised livestock have meant that hunting wild animals has been less important.

Capitalism has reinforced this with the profit-driven factory farming system where animals are force-fed, packed together and slaughtered on an assembly line. However, in some parts of the world, hunting is still the main way of obtaining a food source, as well as many other essential products. These traditional societies do not yet have access to Tesco's and other 'benefits' of global capitalism!

Also, even in western societies most people lived on the land until very recently. Killing deer, rabbits or fowl was an important way of supplementing a rather meagre diet. Puffins and fish were about the only things available to the inhabitants of the very bleak and barren St Kilda's island off the coast of Scotland.

Poaching has had a long tradition amongst the rural working class as a way of gaining some power. Food is power because without food people are at the mercy of the landowner. This is one reason why landowners have always cracked down on poaching; they don't want the people to have an independent source of food. If people had been able to shoot and fish on the private estates in Ireland and

Scotland, the failure of potato crops would not have had such a devastating impact.

Bad design

Unfortunately, all life forms have to use other life forms for food, for shelter and for play. The mere fact that we exist means that other species have to die. Humans have been a particular problem because of our success in expanding our numbers. This fact, together with the development of exploitative economic systems and destructive technologies, has resulted in the loss of habitat for countless animals and other species. And loss of habitat means death. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try and limit our impact (population control is an unpopular subject but needs to be addressed) but, unless we commit mass suicide as a species, we have to accept that our existence depends on the death of others on the planet. Therefore to kill an animal is not 'wrong' but unfortunately necessary. I have already mentioned examples where people either have to eat meat or starve. We could still limit our food consumption to the so-called lower life forms. But who decides what is higher and lower? And, then again the lower life forms aren't present on the Siberian tundra in winter! Isn't it preferable that people living in these difficult areas are able to provide their own food supplies rather than relying on imported vegetables? Even if we stopped eating meat, what about our beloved pets? It is uncertain whether or not we can turn all animals into vegetarians. People can at least choose to not eat meat, carnivores cannot. In addition, there are a number of people who actually like eating meat. There may be many things like rape and murder, racism and sexism that we would want to ban, but eating meat is still too morally contentious to be included in the proscribed activity list in an anarchist society. In our *Manifesto for the Millennium*, the question was deliberately left open.

However, certain principles should be adhered to when taking life. Firstly, the animal/bird/fish should not be endangered. In fact, we should take what we need from those animals that are maybe too abundant. In this country deer and rabbits are consid-

ered a threat to many other species and therefore would make the ideal source of meat. Secondly, the animal needs to be killed without cruelty. Those doing the killing must be extremely skilled and able to kill the animal in one shot. And, finally, there should be respect. Though accounts may be over-romanticised, Native Americans and other traditional peoples have an approach to killing animals which honours them and thanks them for giving their lives so that humans may live. Now this may seem pointless because the animal will still be dead regardless of the attitude of the hunter, but an attitude of respect and reverence will help ensure that life is not needlessly taken. Anyone who does eat meat should have the experience of either killing or witnessing an animal



The endangered Capercaillie

being killed, at least once. They will then have to confront directly the consequences of being a meat-eater and gain respect for the animal.

Animals and land 'management'

We live in a very sanitised and safe environment in Britain. Most natural 'enemies' have long ago been wiped out. The dangers that do exist have been created by ourselves: cars, pollution, viruses and each other. Therefore, it is understandable that today many argue for humans to not intervene; we've caused enough problems already, let 'nature' get on with it. However, it's not so simple. We can only take such a position because we don't feel threatened by the natural world. When we do, spiders in our houses, being bitten by mosquitoes, rats in the courtyard of a housing estate, most of us would take drastic action. Recently, Central Park in New

York was saturated with insecticide because of a deadly virus-carrying mosquito. In less urbanised parts of the world, where nature has not yet been covered in concrete, there is much more intervention, often needed to combat diseases like malaria. Humans, like all other species, adapt their physical environment to suit their needs. Beavers build dams, birds build nests. So human alteration of the environment to make it more hospitable is itself a natural process.

Protect and survive

Therefore, the idea of land 'management' is not new. (The word 'management' is an unfortunate term that is currently being used to refer to any conscious modification

of the environment by humans.) And a key part of this alteration process is taking the lives of other species. Farmers and shepherds have always killed animals to protect their crops and flocks. Anyone would do the same: whatever is necessary to protect the food supply. The process of growing food is more complex than many of us urbanites would imagine. There are many obstacles to be overcome, some of which are caused by animals and birds eating the

crops at various stages of growth.

The other area for intervention is when some species threaten other species' existence. You could argue that we should let 'nature take its course', but the reason some species are so vulnerable is because humans have already made a mess of the situation in some way. For example, the RSPB is quite willing to kill foxes and crows because they are a serious threat to the almost extinct capercaillie. Rabbits cause enormous problems in woodland areas, as do red deer. Wardens on nature reserves therefore have to make a choice: will they kill the rabbits or allow a rare aspen grove to be destroyed? (This issue was discussed at length in the last *Organise!*)

Recognising that humans may need to kill animals as part of a land management policy does not mean that an anarchist communist society could not do things better. The problem is not human adaptation of the environment as such, but its scale and quality, driven by the need for capital-

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What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response, then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the sky!

ism to produce profits and be 'cost-effective'.

A society not governed by the profit-motive could develop alternatives where human interests were safeguarded, whilst at the same time allowing animals to keep their lives. Often so many animals are killed because of the desperation not to lose any part of the crop or flock. When the world food production system is organised differently then we can allow animals to take a bit without worrying that there won't be enough for us. Organic farming techniques are being developed that hopefully will mean that we don't have to resort to pesticides every time we are plagued by insects.

The way humans modify their environment is determined by ruling class interests and 'experts', usually with no consultation with the people involved. And they can choose to intervene when it suits them. Cars are causing probably more harm both to humans and other species than rabbits. But a whole range of capitalists are making too much money out of this private transport system to look for alternatives. And farmers aren't allowed to complain when the local fox hunt tramples over their fields, causing more damage than the presence of the fox itself!

Wolves as a solution?

Introducing natural predators, such as wolves, is often put forward as a way of reducing the need for humans to kill annoying animals. However, if people think that having wolves do the dirty work for them lets them off the moral hook, they are mistaken. Introducing wolves that you know

will prey on other animals will still mean that you have been responsible for killing animals. And it is only more 'natural' if you assume that humans aren't part of nature.

Wolves are also a problem for domestic animals. In the southern Alps in France, wolves have been reintroduced. It is generally recognised, even by the wolves' most staunch supporters, that they do tend to follow the herds of domestic sheep which make an easy source of food for them. Needless to say, shepherds aren't too happy! This problem has been got around by offering shepherds compensation for sheep killed by wolves. This doesn't mean that wolves shouldn't be reintroduced but that we need to be aware of the consequences. It's still based on human choices and values of what is thought important. In Britain, it has been discussed, but the problem is lack of habitat for the wolf. The first priority must be to create more forests for them to live in.

As can be seen from the wolves' example, there is no quick fix to the moral dilemma of not wanting to kill animals but having to nevertheless. Therefore, though there is much we could do now, and even more we could do in an anarchist communist society, it will take time and much practical experience to work out new ways of doing things that don't involve the death of other species.

Wild animals: killing for fun?

Whereas we just might accept that there may be circumstances where animals need to be killed in order to defend human interests, it seems impossible to justify the killing of animals for sport. Therefore, sports that involve the killing of animals should be banned. Or should they? The

issue is actually more complex and therefore the solution not so straightforward. First, we need to distinguish between hunting and shooting. In other parts of the world, hunting is the general term used for the killing of animals in the wild. In Britain, the term 'hunting' is only used for killing animals with dogs. Many who participate in the sport of shooting would agree that this is cruel. The animal is chased for prolonged periods of time and experiences intense fear. A small animal such as a fox may be killed quickly once caught, but a big stag will inevitably take time to die. Shooting does not cause suffering in this way. Shooters take pride in making a clean shot. The stag is killed without even knowing it was being stalked. So whilst it makes sense to ban foxhunting on the grounds of cruelty, the same argument cannot be applied to shooting.

Second, stereotyping anyone involved in the sport of shooting as a bloodthirsty brute is unhelpful. There certainly are people like that, but most would say that it's not the actually killing that they enjoy. It is the process that they enjoy: the getting to know the animal and its habits, the being out-of-doors, the camaraderie of participating in an activity with other people. The idea of just going for a walk without a gun seems senseless to many from a rural background. There is often great respect for and knowledge of the prey. In the way they speak about an animal or bird it is often hard to tell the difference between a wildlife enthusiast or a birdwatcher and someone who is going to go shoot something!

Finally, much of the call for an end to killing animals for sport has focussed on the ruling class varieties. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between disgust for the

killing of the animal and the hatred of the people who are doing it. Many who would protect the stag or the grouse would quite happily take the gun and use it on the rich bastard him- (or her-) self. Therefore, a class analysis of the sport of shooting is needed.

The ruling class and shooting: animals as trophies

The origins of killing animals as a form of recreation lie clearly with the ruling class. It was only they who could afford the luxury of killing an animal for other purposes apart from wanting it as food. The 'sport' goes back at least to Norman times. William the Conqueror was a fanatic hunter. Whole areas of the country were cordoned off and called 'Deer Forests' (often with no actual forest there!) and were the special preserve of the King and his entourage of knights and nobles. Heavy punishments were liberally dished out, including hanging and transportation, to anyone who dared poach a deer or even a rabbit. The class struggle over poaching went on for centuries and still goes on to some extent. Many of the locked gates around sporting estates are there so that any poachers won't be able to get a deer out easily by vehicle.

Queen Victoria gave an added impetus to the sport when she and her hunting consort started coming up to Scotland for the 'season' - a practice still maintained enthusiastically by the current Royals. Balmoral, in Deeside in Scotland, became the model for the Highland 'sporting estate'. Sporting estates proliferated all over the Highlands, distorting both the landscape and the economy. The new landowners came from all sections of the ruling class, not just the aristocracy. The big event is the Glorious Twelfth (of August) when the grouse-shooting season begins. September and October are popular for the stag shooting. In Scotland and on the grouse moors of Yorkshire, the landowner invites his/her cronies for a shooting holiday. It is a form of recreation that symbolises belonging to an elite. Though the stag or grouse might eventually be eaten by someone (eg venison exported abroad), food is not the objective of the shoot. What matters is the size of the 'bag' of grouse (how many they managed to get) or the quality of the antlers ie how many points the antler has. A 12 or 14 'pointer' is the most sought after 'trophy' for the mantelpiece. The Royal shooting party has been known to kill almost 600 grouse in a day! The animal or bird is thus seen as a symbol of one's skill.

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Commercial shooting

Recently, the nature of the sporting estate has changed. Estate owners usually earned their wealth outside and the estate was a way of spending their money to enhance their status. Nowadays, for many (not all by any means), there is some pressure to make the estate pay, or at least reduce the losses. The situation of Archie in 'Monarch of the Glen' is not total fiction! This has meant that shooting has become more commercial. Whole companies exist in order to market 'Shooting Holidays in Scotland'. The 'guests' come mostly from abroad.

There are many reasons why the rich of the world choose Scotland. The main prey are grouse and red deer stags. Some people come to shoot roe deer or hares but they tend to be less well-off, often working class people from Germany, Holland or Italy, because this type of shooting doesn't have the same status. In these countries, with a larger rural population and fewer restrictions from landowners, there has been more of a tradition of shooting small animals for the 'pot'. Hares are an expensive delicacy in Italy and a trip to Scotland with a rented refrigerated van can make a tidy profit. Scotland is the only country in the world that has red grouse and where red deer are so numerous. The guests do not have to go

on big wilderness treks to get their trophy. The deer are on open ground so that they can be stalked with minimum effort. Even less effort is required for the grouse as the moorland terrain allows the guests to be driven to their butts.

All of this, together with the romantic image of the Highlands, makes Scotland a much sought-after venue. They come in couples, the men usually (but not always) shooting whilst the women shop. Or they come from companies, a form of corporate bonding amongst the executives. On a world-wide level, these wealthy businessmen often belong to the 'Safari Club'. They travel around the world and collect 'trophies', competing with other members of the club for the biggest, rarest and most numerous trophies.

The income from these commercial shoots is considerable. Guests pay £50 a bird and usually book 100 or so birds for the party. However, the costs of organising the shoots is quite high and many estates are still losing money. However, the owners are reluctant to abandon this tradition as it is still an important part of ruling class culture. As a result, many people's livelihoods, the whole pattern of land use in the Highlands, not to mention the fate of much wildlife like the capercaillie, is linked to the continued existence of these playgrounds for the rich.

The working class and shooting: work and recreation

Much that counts as working class shooting is actually work and could be considered as part of land 'management'. Shooting of deer is done regularly by Forestry Commission and nature reserve stalkers as part of the general effort to reduce deer numbers and allow for tree regeneration of the Scots pine. However, most of those employed will be working on sporting estates and therefore their work is related to the shooting of wildlife as sport.

The shooting done by the keepers and stalkers needs to be distinguished from that of the guests. Their purpose is to 'manage' the wildlife in such a way that the objectives of the sporting estate are achieved. These are: to obtain greater than average numbers of grouse on the moors and to make the cull target for both hinds and stags as agreed by the estate with the Deer Commission. The keepers spend their whole year doing everything they can to keep the grouse and their offspring alive. Their knowledge and care of the birds rivals that of a naturalist. Keepers can be very single-minded and therefore any other

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form of wildlife that threatens their grouse is considered a legitimate target. Keepers have been known to poison golden eagles' nests because they may eat their grouse. They themselves must be aware of the irony of this situation; all this work so that some of these birds can be killed! The stalkers, a part from the few months where they takes guests shooting, spend their time completing the cull. The hind season is after the stag one: November to February. As few guests are interested in shooting hinds (no antlers for trophies), the stalker walks (and drives) around the hills on his own.

Some of this type of working class shooting can be justified. It is agreed that deer need to be killed anyway to allow tree regeneration. If anything, those keen to see the regeneration of Scotland's native pine forests argue the stalkers aren't killing enough. When land has been transferred to community ownership, just like on land owned by conservation bodies, deer stalking continues. However, the shooting of the enemies of the grouse is only necessary in order to maintain a ruling class tradition. Most people, including the keepers themselves, never shoot 'driven-grouse' from a butt and therefore do not need to have artificially high numbers of grouse on the moors. If they do shoot them, it is as walked-up or rough shooting and the end result will be a bird in a pot.

Class conflict

Keepers and stalkers have a reputation for being forelock-tugging lackeys. They have traditionally sided with the landowner and historically have a role in catching poachers and keeping people off the land. Climbers in the '50s had to crawl along the tops, sneaking past gun-toting keepers, in order to put up new routes on the cliffs of the Peak District. This role continues today. Many walkers have had nasty encounters with zealous keepers denying them access to their laird's land.

However, like all groups of workers, there is potential for winning them over to our side. Estates are much less likely to be in the hands of the same owner for generations. In addition, keepers and stalkers are increasingly likely to come from outside the area, often having taken degrees in 'wildlife management'. This means that the old loyalty to the 'family' has been replaced by a more independent attitude. Properties are changing hands so frequently in some cases or owned by landowners that are never there. Keepers and stalkers often find themselves running

the place on their own as they are the only people who know what to do, instilling a certain contempt for the landowner. Their wages are very low and their houses dependent on the job. With the increasing commercial pressures, there have been redundancies and heavier workloads. They can work incredibly long days, for no extra pay, during the season itself.

Keepers look down on the guests for not being able to shoot without someone loading the gun for them and telling them which way to point. On some estates, the stalkers come into regular conflict with the guests over which stag to shoot. The stalkers aim to shoot stags that do not have a 'good gene pool'. This means that they want to keep the 12 and 14-pointers alive and the guests can have a 10-pointer at most. The guests don't like this because a smaller antler doesn't look so good above the mantelpiece or in the boardroom. Stalkers hate going out with a bad shot. They want the deer killed in one and if the guest doesn't kill the deer with the first bullet, the stalker will quickly intervene.

Enjoyment

In many cases, keepers and stalkers do not actually enjoy the killing of the animal. They are doing it because it has to be done from a land management perspective or because it's part of the job. They may enjoy other parts of the job, however. The being out-of-doors, the observing of the wildlife and variety of tasks the job offers. However, there are many others who enjoy the sport itself and would practice it if they had more time. Other recreational working class shooting involves people in rural areas who do other jobs, but who go shooting rabbits or stoats. To do this they have to know people like farmers or form a syndicate. They might shoot roe deer or hinds, but they would have to know someone, though poaching does actually take place. Young people might have a ferret or an air pistol that they go out with to get rabbits. People from the city may also take part but they tend to have some rural roots or connections.

In America, having been prevented from shooting animals (poaching) by the landowners in Europe, the new immigrants took advantage of their new freedom to be able to kill their own food without the risk of hanging or transportation. This tradition has been passed down amongst the males in many working class families. Therefore, there are a number of working class people who would argue against the banning of shooting.

Is there a difference?

Though both involve the killing of animals, there are important differences between ruling class and working class shooting. The ruling class obsession with the size of the 'bag' and with trophies has led to the extinction and near-extinction of many species. Because they are shooting purely for sport and for social objectives, there is no concern to consider the effects of their actions on the land as a whole or on the local economy.

For the working class, killing animals has traditionally been done for a purpose: to put food on the table. And today, that legacy remains. The object of the shoot are animals that they believe need to be killed for land management or which can be killed and eaten because they are not endangered. This does not mean that all working class shooters are exemplary. Like their ruling class counterparts, there will be many who are cruel and kill with total disregard for the consequences. In the Alps, ex-soldiers machine-gunned marmots and chamois for no reason whatsoever. Native Americans played their part in the demise of the buffalo. The almost exclusive male character of the sport can lead to much macho posturing that is quite sickening.

There are therefore two issues to consider. Are we in favour of creating a society where all shooting by people who say they enjoy it, even if they are doing it in keeping with strict conservation and humane criteria, is not allowed? And if so, how do we go about winning over other members of our class to this position?

In answer to the first question, I would argue that the answer depends on whether or not we will still be killing animals for food and as part of land management. If we are, then I see no problem with the job done by people who enjoy it. If we don't actually need animals to be killed, but some people want to go out and kill wild animals that are not endangered for their own pleasure, then it is more difficult. As long as they actually use the animal for something, though, I can't see how we can force people not to. Instead we would hope that as the new society developed, people would become more interested in looking at and observing wildlife than shooting it. This process has

Organise! index

A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues 14-43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

We need the rural working class on our side.

already begun. Many shooters have become wildlife photographers instead and a majority of people living in rural areas are not at all interested in shooting. The children of gamekeepers have learned much from their fathers but are using their knowledge and appreciation of wildlife in different ways, some of them working for conservation agencies.

The second question is particularly important in the current period. The Countryside Alliance has managed to mobilise many of the rural working class under their umbrella and for their objectives. The Gamekeepers demonstration in Edinburgh in July against the Watson Bill illustrated this. The Watson Bill is explicitly aimed at foxhunting, which is only in the Borders on a very small-scale. But the landowners have instilled the idea that it will first be foxhunting and then shooting – something Watson himself has categorically dismissed. This has put the fear of job loss into the workers themselves as well as other rural residents. We could dismiss all these workers as counter revolutionary, but I would argue for another tack. We need the rural working class on our side both during the revolution and in the constructing of a new society. Their experience on the land will be vital.

No moralism

First, moralistic arguments about how awful it is that these 'bad' people are killing cute little animals will not get us anywhere. This will only alienate many people and reinforce the view that city dwellers really don't understand the countryside. I have already tried to show that there are many cases when animals do actually need to be killed. Instead, the focus of struggle must be against landowners, not against shooting. Workers like gamekeepers will not be class enemies because their occupation involves them killing animals but if they side with the landowner against the rest of the working class. The conservation organisations tend to have a strategy of changing the land use without changing the system of ownership. They would be content if the private landowner would agree to stop running the

estate for sport and plant trees instead. This is already happening on some estates. There is an example of one foreign owner who can't stand the idea of shooting anything and wants it all to stop!

So, instead of saying we want the shooting to stop, we should argue for the end of the private landowner and for the estate workers, together with people in the community and even those from outside who visit the area, to manage the estate themselves. If this were the case, then we would see quite a transformation in land use and power. This is happening to a certain extent on Knoydart and, though they are not revolutionary, the John Muir Trust on their Skye properties has attempted to show that things can be done differently when conservationists work together with people

who live on the land. If the workers see that there is an alternative, one which is better paid and where they don't have to kow-tow to landowners and rich Americans, then the alliance which has been cleverly constructed by the ruling class will fall to bits.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't campaign against the killing of wild animals. But the focus should be on ruling class sport, the killing of endangered species and cruelty. In addition, it should be linked to a general campaign for a transformation of the way land is owned and cared for and should be based on debate and discussion with other members of our class in order to construct a united movement that can create a better world for both humans and the other species that we share the planet with.

(Out of) Workplace notes

FOUND YOURSELF OUT of work? The exploiter who previously bought your life no longer has any use for you? Time on your hands, short of things to do? No problem. It could turn out to be a golden opportunity to find there can be more to life than the tyranny of the workplace.

In an imposed world, instead of life consisting of meaningful pursuit, our core humanity vanishes without trace, devalued and obliterated. Technology is reshaping us, whether as workers or consumers. Being thrown out of work might just be the spur that precipitates change, a chance to confront the given status quo and to structure life in the context of one's own devising rather than follow a script laid down from the day we are born. With time to think, we learn to reject, challenge and oppose everything drilled into us up through the conditioning phases of schooling, social life, workplace discipline and the vacuous nonsense poisoning the mind via the non-stop media barrage. Life can be considered in a clearer, more penetrating light. Importantly, the formula for living may be set according to a perspective of choice, instead of having each day's precious time dictated through a controlling framework that frequently results in boredom, fatigue, stress, illness and interpersonal harassment, all maladies degrading to the human condition and spirit, and which

are endured constantly workers struggling to scratch a living from the crumbs cast downward on the terms of the bosses, they of the exploiting class, busy raping the world from corner to corner in the insane pursuit of profit, power and what they regard as wealth.

Alarm clocks and buzzers

When this writer came out of work by virtue of a third redundancy in an (over) long working life, it wasn't with the explicit aim to enjoy it, but only that it not turn into a negative experience, depressing or limiting to the quality of life either physically or mentally. The longer the system, by its own shortcomings, kept me at arms-length from employment, with not even the hint of a half-decent job showing its face, the easier it got to see through all the lies, the deceit and illusions upon which capitalism is built, fuelled and sustained. So, how desirable or necessary was it to place myself yet again inside the clutches of conformity to an order that is detested by nearly everybody who has to put up with it? Was it really such an enticing prospect to submerge one's being once more in the abjectly competitive, soul-crushing regime once again? A world virtually sealed off from normality by death-wraps of tarmac and caskets of concrete, noise and pollution

swirling around every street, choking everything that draws breath from within its confines. Where was the attraction in returning to that sad little routine? Money? Busyness? Social approval? No thanks, here was discovery of a new, fresh, uncluttered, pleasantly harmonious world, a world that responded not to shrieking alarm clocks and buzzers, but to natural rhythms, patterns and cycles through which everything moved at its own pace. Flora, fauna, colours, sights, sounds, smells, growth, things that can never be empathised with, marooned inside the suffocating atmosphere of the industrial concentration camps called factories, or in the sterile isolation of walled, sealed and cocoon-like offices, indeed anywhere where life has become a commodity to be bought, sold and homogenised. No more reluctant submission to a hierarchical order based on smiley boardroom fascism with its power junkies, underlings, creeps, regimentation and payroll numbers ascribed like identification tags to armies of workplace slaves the world over.

Suddenly there was time and space to get involved, to connect up with important things, all those things that it was a struggle to cope with when life had to be put up for sale to an employer. There was time and space to positively engage in the fight back against capitalism's oppressions, to help plan and take part in occupations, demos, to keep in touch with others on a regular, personal basis. Visiting/writing/campaigning for victims of the system. Castigating scabs from the solidarity of a picket line. Working on articles for alternative zines. Cultivating an allotment. Help with the care of sick relatives or friends. There is no shortage of tasks. There is much in need of doing and not a little of it far outside the blueprint set down for us all without input, discussion or agreement from the masses.

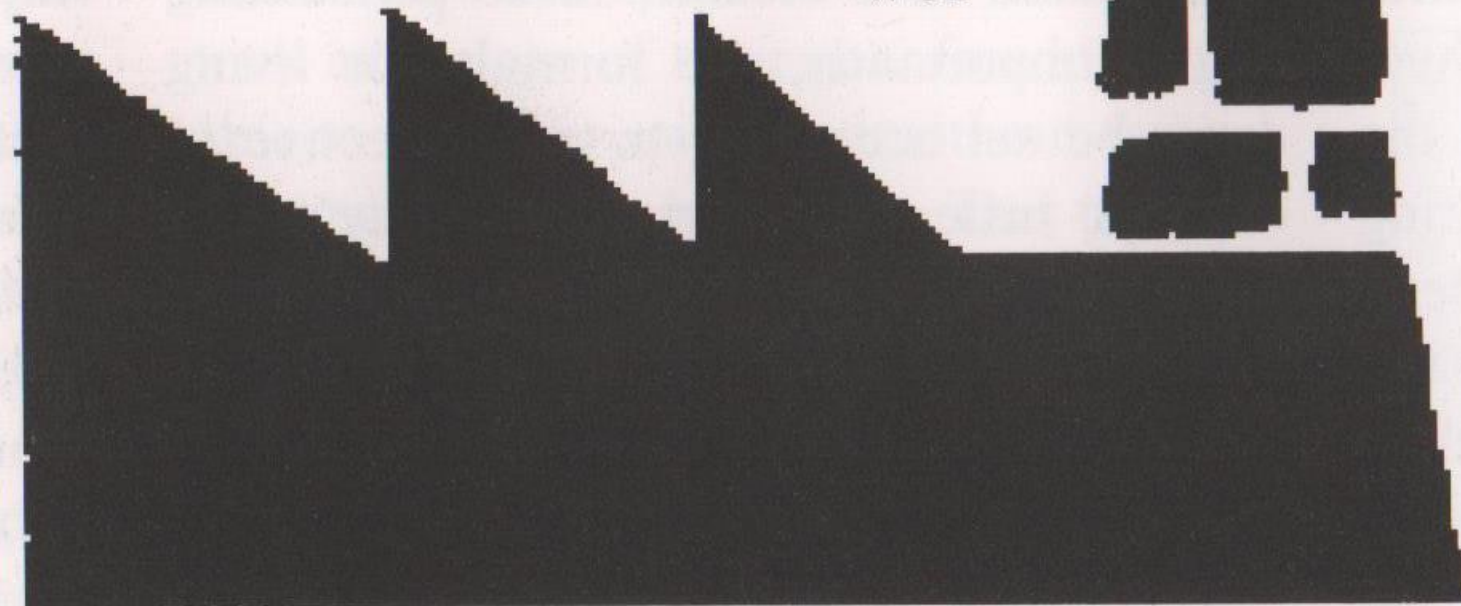
No sane person would acquiesce with the kind of world that has been created and is being perpetuated if they could avoid it. Money, profit, has become the dominant factor around every single facet of living. So is it really surprising if some fear for the very survival and sanity of the human race? When those who position themselves as experts and leaders are responsible for manifold destruction at every level, how else can they ever be regarded other than as mad, bad and inhuman beings defining everything and everyone in terms of price, gain and loss? And the cost of this madness is inevitably wrought upon ordinary people, changing them and breeding irrationality and conflict in

every aspect of life: desperate people driven to commit terrible acts that in an equal world they would never be pushed to even contemplate. The work ethic was created by and alongside the profit motive. It is the engine, the pulse, the heartbeat of the vicious capitalist monster, the corporate culprit now metaphorically careering right off its axis. Rejection of work and the exploiter's agenda need not be negative. Work undertaken at the behest of a ruling class is a brutal and repressive act of social control. Whole lives are eaten up by the work habit. The refusal of work (employment) would instantly curtail (if enough of us got out of the loop) much of the world-slaughtering capitalist ethos. Is that not the ultimate objective, which every anarchist revolutionary aspires to achieve?

The spectacle

If these are some of the worst elements of having to submit oneself to the 'benevolence' of a boss, there are other disparities permeating the world of paid work. When, for instance, we compare what 'ordinary' people earn with the obscene amounts of money 'earned' by the cult of the self-obsessed such as endlessly flaunt themselves in the public eye like sports stars, 'personalities', show-biz freaks and politicians with fingers in every pocket and every pie, not to mention the ruthless, worthless scum manipulating the filthy drug cartels. All pulling in huge bundles of money, yet possessed of no discernible talent or socially commendable merit, whilst people who do the vital tasks in the community receive barely a pittance, this despite enduring long hours, poor conditions and the constant fear of job insecurity. Some (safe and warm in the comfort-zone) will call it envy; but for the life of me it's not plain why these celebrity cretins are reaping rewards so utterly beyond the dreams of ordinary, decent, hard-grafting people. To take as one example, that of a footballer, an 'occupation' considered less than useless a few decades ago and a sport holding its lofty position today of

fevered
wor-



ship solely due to marketing and the media (football is now corporate-led, focussed on the middle classes), not through any commonweal value or social contribution. It is galling to listen to the comments of the clowns in government when they're ranting and pontificating about the 'dignity of work'. Where is the dignity, much less the morality, in a remark like the following, muttered by one of the so-called people's game's high-profile role models, Michael Owen, a 20-year-old international footballer, earnings potential £50,000 a week: "There is nothing going on in the world at the moment that I find distressing or have a view on" (October 1999). Is that not the pinnacle of pigshit, imbecilic ignorance? Why doesn't this cosseted, shallow, privileged young man simply tell the truth and say that he doesn't give a damn about all the misery, suffering and devastation going on right across the globe? Is this what fifty grand a week does for you? Turn you into an insensitive, dumb, myopic prima donna who doesn't know, doesn't care what's happening in the real world? Keep it, ball-kicker, some folks with more integrity than you'll ever know will settle for £50 a week, grudgingly repaid to us as the dole, and a justifiably clear conscience, while trying to put the world on a fairer footing, if not for themselves then for those who come after.

The argument for refusing work in it's current context was never more clearly put than by Peter Marshall in his book *Riding The Wind*: "In nearly all cases, the so-called work-shy are square pegs in round holes. Given a meaningful activity which fulfils their natures rather than degrades them, which is undertaken voluntarily rather than forced upon them, which unites them with their fellows rather than divides them, which enhances nature rather than destroys it, then I believe virtually everyone would be pleased to do real work. They would then work not for the sake of money, not for the sake of reward, not for the sake of status but for the intrinsic value of the work itself." Bob Black also puts it all in a nutshell: "Work is the source of nearly all misery in the world. Almost any evil you'd care to name comes from working or from living in a world designed for work. In order to stop suffering, we have to stop working."

For further can-work-won't-work, spanner in the works ideas, see: *The Abolition of Work*, Bob Black; *Ballad Against Work*, Majdoor Library Group; *Finding Time*, Norman Juppe; *The Refusal of Work*, Echanges Et Mouvement.

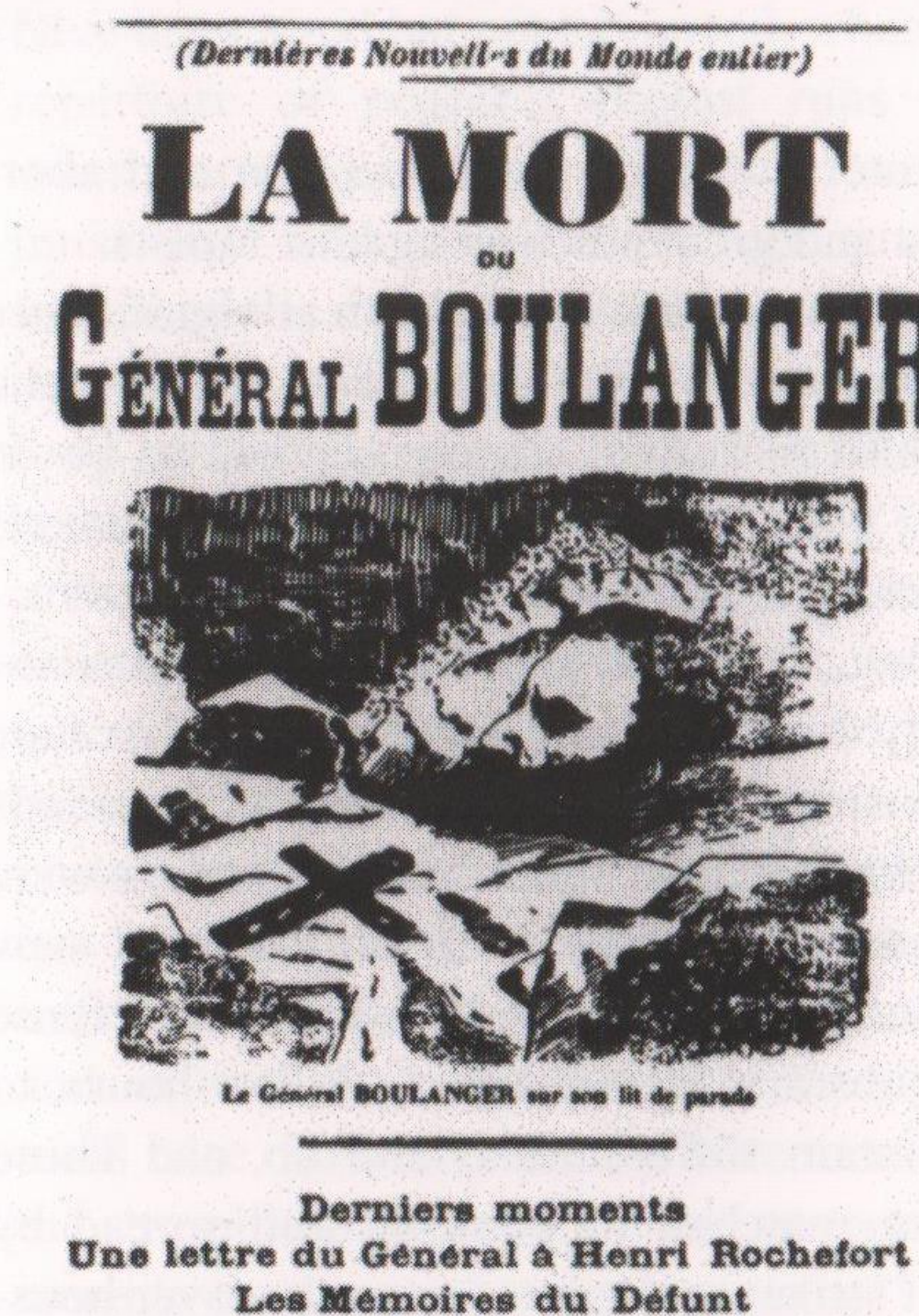
Paul SIGNAC

PAUL SIGNAC (1863-1935), like his fellow Frenchmen Camille Pissaro and Maximilien Luce, was both an outstanding artist and an anarchist. He was a theoretician of new painting techniques, a lover of the sea and sailing and a 'discoverer' of St Tropez. Born into a bourgeois family, he never had any financial problems and could paint in good conditions. After having seen an exhibition of paintings by Monet in 1880, he decided to finish his studies and become an Impressionist painter. His first paintings represent the quays of the Seine at Asnieres and the seaside.

In 1884, at the Salon of Independent Artists, he met Georges Seurat and adopted his new techniques of painting. Neo-impressionism was born. The colours used were pure, applied in little touches to give maximum luminosity and harmony. Signac used scientific theories of colour in his work. He thought that the effect science could have on art was revolutionary. Like Luce, Signac wanted to put over life of workers and peasants in his paintings. So one of his paintings includes gasometers on the border of town and country. He also painted interiors of bourgeois houses where the people represented have a sinister air. In 1887, he painted pictures of the port of Collioure, the following year that of Portrieux. A lover of the sea, he visited the Mediterranean coast in 1892 and discovered St Tropez. Like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the exiled Jewish American anarchists who lived here in the 1920s, he found St Tropez charming and not at all the den of the rich that it is today.

Individuality

In 1888, Signac discovered anarchist ideas by reading Elisee Reclus, Kropotkin and Jean Grave, who all developed the ideas of anarchist communism. With his friends Angrand Cross, Luce and Pissaro he contributed to Jean Grave's paper *Les Temps Nouveaux* (New Times). His financial support was considerable; he sent regular cheques and made a gift of his works for five lotteries between 1895 and 1912. But the art of the militant did not attract him



Leaflet announcing General Boulanger's fictitious death, illustrated by Signac, 1889

and, unlike Luce, he only provided five drawings and two lithographs to the paper. He thought that the subject did not count for much in art. For him, what was revolutionary was the search for harmony which, he thought, contributed to the struggle against ruling class conventions. He felt that many great artists had been maltreated in the past and saw the history of art in a political manner. He advocated the need for social revolution alongside the need for artistic freedom. He saw anarchism as the



best guarantee of the latter. He thought that it was up to each individual artist how best they served the movement. "The anarchist painter is not the one who will create anarchist pictures, but he who, without desire for recompense, will fight with all his individuality against official bourgeois conventions by means of a personal contribution."

Nevertheless, it is interesting to study two anarchist paintings that are a reflection of his ideas. In the 'The Demolition Workers', two workers are demolishing buildings representing society, whilst on the horizon the sun of anarchy is rising. In 'The Time of Harmony' a huge painting originally destined for the House of the People in Brussels, an idyllic version of the future society is represented. This was painted in 1894, in the year when individual attacks by anarchists on members of the boss class were at their height. In this work, activities of work and leisure are peaceful and in total harmony, though Signac can be criticised for his typecast roles for the sexes.

Signac's work would have an influence on the new art, on the Fauves and the Expressionists. In 1904 Matisse came to paint with him at St Tropez.

The First World War

The First World War was deeply traumatic for Signac. He was disgusted by the way Kropotkin, Grave and other anarchists (a minority in the movement) had become supporters of the war. These were people he had greatly admired. He was demoralised and could not paint for three years. He took part in activities for peace alongside the writers Barbusse and Romain Rolland, considering himself an internationalist.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution filled him with hope. After the war he began to paint afresh, with landscapes of Brittany, Normandy, the Atlantic coast and Corsica. He became President of the Salon of Independent Artists, which permitted young artists to exhibit. A year before his death he mobilised with other artists and writers like Gide in the Vigilance Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals. His last paintings represented great sailing ships, witnesses, like Signac, of a fast disappearing world.

A Molotov might do it

THE HISTORY OF SOCIETY CAN be written in the actions of ordinary people. Waves of protest break over a society not because leaders stir up waters of discontent but when people dare to claim rights and benefits that they think should be theirs. Protest waves subside when people are satisfied, exhausted or when they are cowed into submission by police or terrorists.

There is wave of protest sweeping around the world. Is it a truly significant series of events or merely one more 'long wave' of dissent doomed to recuperation and demobilisation? What are the critical points within the 'protest cycle' that seems to move inexorably through mobilisation, disruption, exhaustion and recuperation without moving on to a more threatening, revolutionary phase?

We can learn a lot from a study of the decade of protest (*Il Sessantotto*) in Italy from 1965-1975. It was part of the 'new wave' of protest that began to sweep over Western Europe. Using direct confrontational action, people erupted into the streets, the campuses and the factories, demanding new rights, access to power and revolution. The demand for autonomy caused students to occupy universities, for tenants to 'auto-reduce' their rents and workers to slow down production lines. Women campaigned for more nurseries,

greater access to contraception and abortion and greater action against rapists.

These actions had political significance because of large-scale and widespread industrial action; society seemed to be on the edge of collapse and governments teetered. The Italian economy was restructuring, as all capitalist economies periodically do. On the one hand, some old or state industries were shedding tens of thousands of workers. On the other, the bosses were trying to introduce 'flexibility' and new processes. Both provoked strikes in defense of jobs and for more pay, shorter hours, to maintain differentials, and so on. These were matched in intensity and spread by rent strikes and mass campaigns over housing, transport, the environment and other issues.

The institutionalisation of the mass parties, the unions they sponsored and the municipal councils they controlled led mostly working people to look to other means and other ways of making demands. With a combination of threat and ridicule, radical groups and the people they mobilised disrupted institutions, opposed elites and attacked authorities. But "when the dust of disorder had settled... the boundaries of mass politics had been extended". Disorder contributed to the broadening of bourgeois democracy.



Protest activated the state's formal mechanisms of decision-making (the task group, the white paper, legislation) and reforms were made. When excluded groups protest on behalf of marginalised agendas, do they simply strengthen democracy and the state that hides behind it?

Disruption

Disruption is possible where societies and organisations are polarising and where victory or defeat will have far-reaching effects: an example would be the demands for greater democracy in the Catholic Church and the challenge of liberation theology – if their supporters had triumphed it would be a radically different entity. Does such structural conflict exist? Possibly, as we begin to confront the multi-nationals and the process of globalisation they are pushing. The question of power in areas such as national sovereignty, trade, finance and development is again, as it has before, reaching a critical point. Where political arrangements are unstable and allies available to the movements, the wave of mobilisation will be prolonged. But where alignments are stable and elites repressive, opportunities for protest disappear and demobilisation follows. This fairly well describes Europe and North America, where it is likely that protest movements will be short and quickly recuperated through short-term political alliances, reforms and repression.

Protest

The potential for protest is chiefly determined by a number of factors. Firstly, the extent to which formal political institutions are open or closed to participation by groups on the margins of democracy and the presence or absence of repression.

guage' people can understand and identify with, collective action will develop; especially when the justifying culture of society is weak due to rapid economic, industrial and social change. But when grievances have been aired but not advanced, when the repertoire of peaceful protest runs out, when repression raises the price we all must pay and if we have not greatly increased the numbers of skilled and active organisers – what then? People cannot for long sustain campaigns on behalf of their rights or benefits without identifying them with general values and reaching out to others through a framework of common understanding. Does this explain why (in these islands at least), environmental protest has not developed a mass base nor has protest spread to other groups and interests (such as housing, policing, work and so on)? And if it does not develop a mass base, how easy for the state to isolate the 'trouble-makers' by making concessions to the 'common sense majority'?

Organisation

What role did 'organisation' play? In Italy at least, the most successful groups were decentralised and provisional, preventing both decay into ideological sects or degeneration into bureaucracy, and included a strong dose of spontaneity. While an obsession with organisation can dampen disruption and reduce levels of mobilisation, material conditions will burst through whatever organisations exist and throw up new forms of collective action. But as these groups try to intensify disruption to gain mass support, they come under pressures from outside and within which demand greater co-ordination, more control over militants and an increase in organisation. But people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes and it is the concrete experience that moulds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets. Small, radical groups and their scattered supporters will never organise or stimulate mass protest on their own. They need the generalisation of discontent (which exists in some parts of the world but not in all parts of the world) that only worsening material conditions and increased militancy create, allied to groups possessing a mass base and organisational form. In other words, "socialising the class struggle" or (as the AF would put it) "creating a culture of resistance". The problem is that (at the moment) environmentalism and its anti-capitalist rhetoric is inspired by 'post-

There is a wave of protest sweeping around the world.

material' issues (ie not based on our material needs), and has a radical pragmatism but no real ideological unity or organisational substructure. It can link with other agendas but cannot unify them.

Cycles of protest

If in Italy the protest cycle followed a familiar pattern to past waves of dissent – from rupture to mobilisation to exhaustion and institutionalisation – can we see similar features in the new protest movements today?

Protest cycles often begin within existing organisations and institutions but are quickly externalised. Studies of protest by Indian peasant women, farmers in South American or the urban poor surrounding any major city in the developing world show how (often 'decadent or corrupted organisations) fail their members and constituencies and are abandoned. New actors use expressive and confrontational forms of action, demonstrating to others less daring than themselves that the system is vulnerable to disruption and that they have grievances in common.

The first stage in the protest cycle is disruption, which appears in a few sectors of intense conflict (Twyford Down, Newbury, Poll Tax). Protest is spread chiefly through imitation by other groups picking up on issues and tactics. But the rate of spread is determined by the availability of people using experiences and organisational skills acquired during earlier campaigns. And where we make negotiable demands the state has the resources and the guile to concede where it must and compromise where it can't, using institutionalised mediators (like the unions and social democratic parties) to moderate demands and recuperate dissent or, where this is not enough, to join with it in a process of stigmatisation, isolation and condemnation.

New Labour attacks on J18 and N30 protesters is in a long tradition of such actions. As in Italy, protesters look for issues and campaigns they can link with or which are connected in some way, for instance engaging with women's and neighbourhood groups to protest the health effects of roads pollution.



A very good example would be *Lotta Continua* in Italy. It was initially a loose coalition of radicals from a variety of 'left' groups and splinters who rejected the positions taken by the organisations they belonged to on questions of the vanguard, autonomy and working class orientations. Chiefly, militant workers and students in North Italy (especially Turin), they coalesced around the slogan "The Struggle Continues" through a series of strikes (especially the 1969 FIAT strike) and 'encounters' and rejected the idea that it was chiefly or only within the factory that the working class became revolutionaries. For them, what was important was not where the class struggle took place or over what issue but what the working class learned about the class struggle and itself and the development of the working class through struggle. In its finest moments *Lotta Continua* not only told people where the action was, it was part of the action and most closely resembles groups today such as Earth First! and RTS.

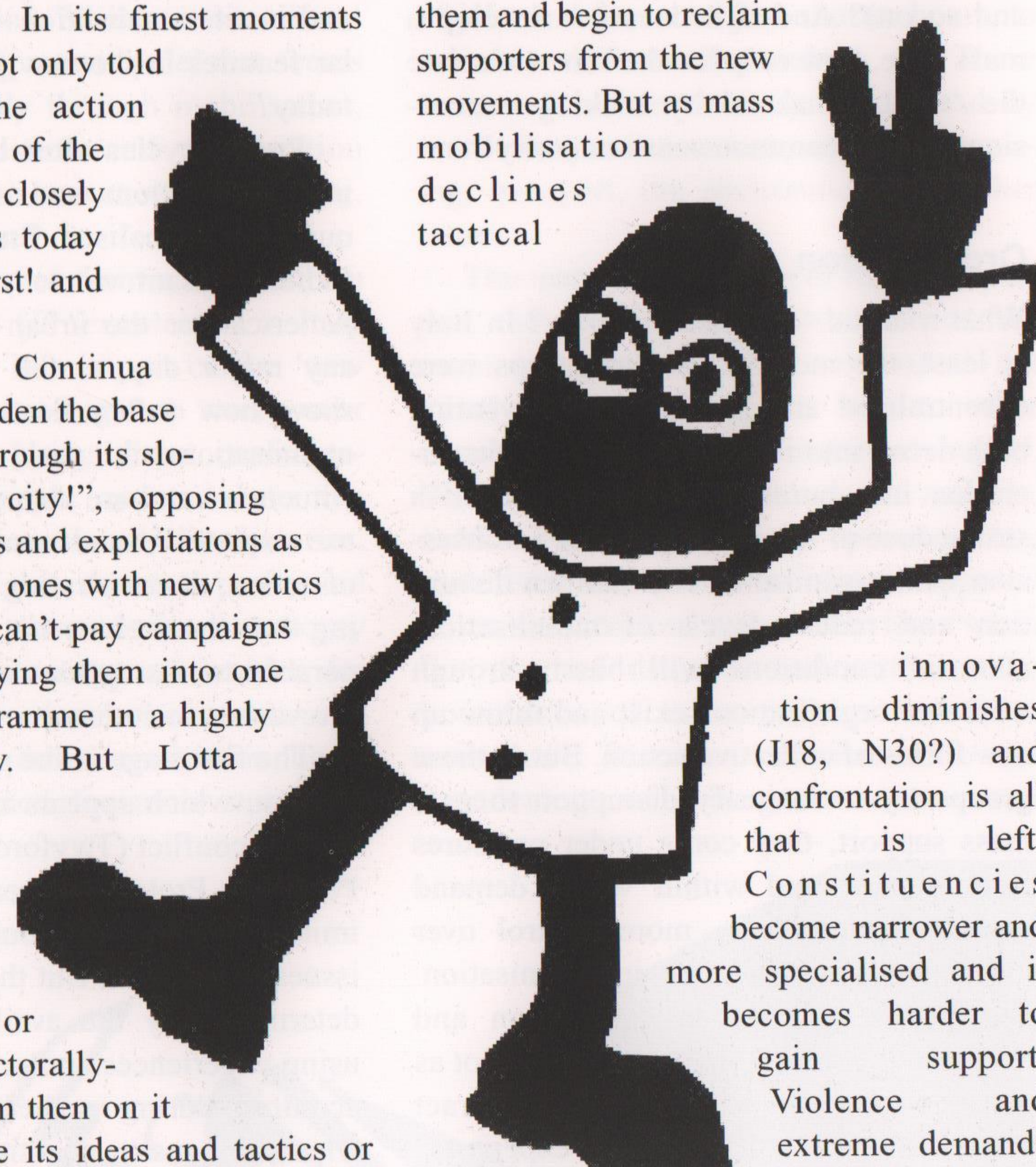
Lotta Continua attempted to broaden the base of the struggle through its slogan "Take the city!", opposing urban oppressions and exploitations as well as industrial ones with new tactics (the rent strike, can't-pay campaigns and so on), unifying them into one agenda and programme in a highly successful way. But *Lotta Continua* adopted a movementist strategy rather than staying on in the unions or forming an electorally-based party. From then on it had to generalise its ideas and tactics or lose its one advantage – the capacity for disruption – that could bring it new support and continue to challenge existing institutions. Its movementist principles and tactics led it to seek an explosion, not mobilisation and organisation of the masses.

This was fine as long as mobilisation and participation were increasing, but without a mass base de-mobilisation left only the rhetoric of revolution and violence. The new movement organisations 'led' the masses as long as there were masses to be led; but they could not lead people where they did not wish to go, a danger the environmental movement and anarchism

together face today. In Italy, workers had woken up to their economic power just as the post-war political consensus was unravelling, creating opportunities and allies. Protest politics rose to a peak just as mass mobilisation was beginning to decline, the workers bought off by economic and social concessions. The shifting pattern of conflict and campaign prevented a single coalition for change developing and allowed the elite to segment the movement by a strategy of piecemeal reform and repression.

Spontaneity

The peak of mobilisation contains a combination of spontaneity and organisation but as protest diffuses through society, established groups themselves adopt more aggressive forms of activity, institutionalise them and begin to reclaim supporters from the new movements. But as mass mobilisation declines tactical



innovation diminishes (J18, N30?) and confrontation is all that is left. Constituencies become narrower and more specialised and it becomes harder to gain support. Violence and extreme demands increase, often

stimulated by repression, causing many to defect into interest groups and reformist politics, narrowing the base from which activists can draw support, making them even more vulnerable. *Lotta Continua's* activists realised this, but its organisational dilemma led it into local electoral pacts with the communist PCI and development into a party of chiefly urban issues and protest before disintegration. Other groups with the same political background and revolutionary yearnings and rhetoric learned different lessons and went in different directions – some towards the armed struggle, others back into the factory and

the unions, for some the electoral road. A salutary lesson for today's activists, perhaps.

Lessons to be learnt

Italy's lesson is that inadequate strategic analysis and poor tactical decisions can lead social movements into the cul de sac of institutionalisation or the wastelands of terrorism. In the end, the extra-parliamentary groups in Italy, without a serious revolutionary project or the mass base to carry it through created a generation with the desire for radical change, a cynicism about reform and some of the tools of protest and disruption but little else. "For [*Lotta Continua's*] leaders, the only solution to these problems was organisation." Organisation is a product of the decline of mobilisation. And the development of more stable organisational forms could not halt the decline in the intensity and spread of the class struggle either here or in Italy. The revolutionary tide ebbed. Small groups of agitators and clandestine armed groups are what remain, keeping the flame alive and memories bright, striking where they can but increasingly isolated from the mass of the people: 'islands' of autonomy, radicalised neighbourhoods and tiny campaigning groups which continue to be attacked by Italy's repressive state.

Compromise

The Italian protesters of the 1960s and 1970s made non-negotiable demands but were unable to press them home. The State was able to compromise – but not with them. While some demanded fundamental change, the majority did not connect the way they pressed their material demands with any need to fundamentally transform society. The workers won major concessions through rank-and-file and autonomous action and, as importantly, forced the unions to adopt their demands as their own. The industrialists and government caved in (knowing that the gains could be recouped later), for the unions had managed to contain the unrest within the ranks and would keep their historic bargaining and mediating role. The nature of industrial democracy changed (for a while) but not the nature of the system itself.

For interest groups, concessions by the state robbed them of their *raison d'être*. We face the same problem. Many campaigns are infused with a fierce critique of institutions, recognised as tools of the state. But autonomist, grass-roots campaigns being waged across the world are not necessarily

revolutionary and will only become so when people acquire the will and the means to destroy capitalism by its expropriation. Campaigns against work, against state surveillance, police repression or authoritarian education in schools (for instance) could broaden the mass base of protest and disruption and link worker with libertarian, the victimised with the innocent. 'Anti-capitalism's' narrow front of saving the planet must be broadened into the wider front of the class struggle – the struggle of those without power or the means to live without being forced to toil against those who have.

Global collapse

It is encouraging that so many throughout the world continue to demand not only material advancement but also new or withheld rights under the banner and with the ideology of 'anti-capitalism'. In industrialising countries this was always a life and death struggle fuelling both the militancy of the oppressed and the fierceness of reaction. Our struggles in these islands over the last two hundred years are mirrored in the Philippines, Brazil, South Korea, Colombia and dozens of other countries today.

The next crisis of capitalism will not be a crisis of imperialism (for instance) but one of environmentalism; the problems of over-rapid and inappropriate development that formed the radicalised working class in Europe will fuel the same process globally but on a much bigger scale. In the West, struggle remains at the level of reform. Yes, the rhetoric of anti-capitalism is there, but the potential for marginalisation and recuperation is great (although, thankfully, transglobal corporations and institutions show little willingness to compromise nor the bourgeois democracies of reining them in – capitalism's oppression on a global scale will go on intensifying). Prague may well have been an important event and as levels of exploitation increase, we may even see larger protests, mass campaigns of rural and urban poor and even the toppling of regimes and governments. But it is also likely that in the developing world struggle will be transformed into movements for democracy, supported by the west and especially the US without the development of any deeply-rooted class consciousness. This suggests that the decisive struggle will be in capitalism's stronghold in the West.

But here, the environmental and anti-capitalist movement that has sprung from it is bound to fail and be recuperated in the short- to medium-term unless political or economic circumstances change radically (accepting that it might well be environ-

mental catastrophe that triggers political or economic crisis). The movement's thinkers argue that capitalism is bound to generate periodic and mounting economic, political and ecological crises and there is a great deal of evidence supporting this view. Global collapse may lead to chaos on an unthinkable scale, but not necessarily (and is very unlikely to lead to) revolution.

If this is so, what can anarchists and anarchism do? Well, it is already being done. The analysis that capitalism is the underlying cause and mechanism creating the 'ecological' and 'developmental' crisis is one anarchists have been refining and developing for decades. The task is to ensure that that analysis is available to all in struggle so that they can test its bases and conclusions in the light of their own experiences, one we share with the environmental and anti-capitalist movements.

Within that message is a second: that neither the state nor the institutions of mediation and recuperation (the unions, bourgeois parties) can deliver us from capitalism but only feed off us; we may win a strike or a campaign but be, in political terms, much worse off. Ecological catastrophe may lead to decisive events (as catastrophic defeat in WWI did in Russia in

1917) but leave the population of the world at the mercy of hunger, poverty, war and dictatorship. We can orientate ourselves and align ourselves with this coming struggle only if we recognise that the revolution may be made elsewhere but its agenda must be our agenda. Capitalist exploitation and oppression will continue to intensify and keep these struggles alive and energised. What the anarchists and autonomists of Italy proved was that the working class in all countries seethes with injustice and is never entirely cowed by oppression – it needs little encouragement to vent its anger. We must supply the spark, if not the means as well.

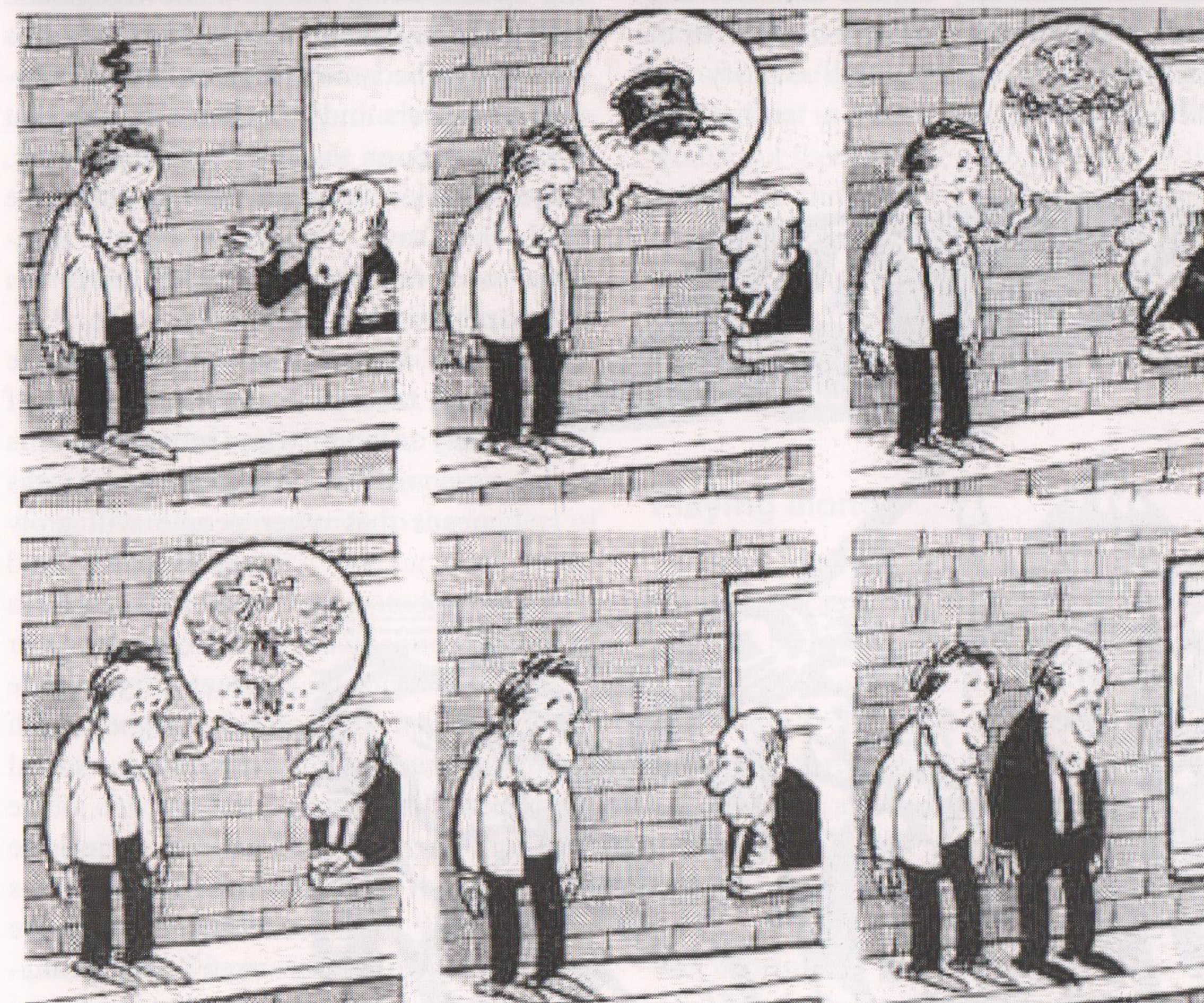
Bibliography

This article was inspired by and borrows heavily from Sidney Tarrow's *Democracy & Disorder* (1989). Other reading might include Charles Tilly's *From Mobilisation to Revolution* (1987), Judith Hellman's *Journeys Among Women* (1975) and anything in translation by Luigi Bobbio or Adriano Sofri on the period or *Lotta Continua*. If you want an insight into the AF's view of what needs to be done, read our *Manifesto for the Millennium*.

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Give up activism

This article is available on-line as part of the Reflections on J18 discussions. It is a contribution to the discussion of the separation between activists and the working class. It takes as its starting point the anti-capitalist demonstrations of 18 June 1999. However, it could just as easily apply to any of the recent demonstrations. The author writes from a viewpoint supportive of the actions. We think it is well worth a read and include it here in the hope of furthering debate. It is our intention to continue the discussion in the next issue of *Organise!* The author's address is at the end of the article.

ONE PROBLEM APPARENT in the June 18th day of action was the adoption of an activist mentality. This problem became particularly obvious with June 18th, precisely because the people involved in organising it and the people involved on the day tried to push beyond these limitations. This piece is no criticism of anyone involved – rather, an attempt to inspire some thought on the challenges that confront us if we are really serious in our intention of doing away with the capitalist mode of production.

Experts

By 'an activist mentality', what I mean is that people think of themselves primarily as activists and as belonging to some wider community of activists. The activist identifies with what they do and thinks of it as their role in life, like a job or career. In the same way, some people will identify with their job as a doctor or a teacher, and

instead of it being something they just happen to be doing, it becomes an essential part of their self-image.

The activist is a specialist or an expert in social change. To think of yourself as being an activist means to think of yourself as being somehow privileged or more advanced than others in your appreciation of the need for social change, in the knowledge of how to achieve it and as leading or being in the forefront of the practical struggle to create this change.

Activism, like all expert roles, has its basis in the division of labour – it is a specialised, separate task. The division of labour is the foundation of class society, the fundamental division being that between mental and manual labour. The division of labour operates, for example, in medicine or education. Instead of healing and bringing up kids being common knowledge and tasks that everyone has a hand in, this knowledge becomes the specialised property of doctors and teachers – experts that we must rely on to do these things for us. Experts jealously guard and mystify the skills they have. This keeps people separated and disempowered and reinforces hierarchical class society.

A division of labour implies that one person takes on a role on behalf of many others who relinquish this responsibility. A separation of tasks means that other people will grow

your food and make your clothes and supply your electricity, while you get on with achieving social change. The activist, being the expert, assumes that other people aren't doing anything to change

their lives and so feels a duty or a responsibility to do it on their behalf. Activists think they are compensating for the lack of activity by others. Defining ourselves as activists means defining our actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who make social change – whereas, of course, class struggle is happening all the time.

Form and content

The tension between the form of 'activism' in which our political activity appears and its increasingly radical content has only been growing over the last few years. The background of a lot of the people involved in June 18th is of being 'activists' who 'campaign' on an issue. The political progress that has been made in the activist scene over the last few years has resulted in a situation where many people have moved beyond single issue campaigns against specific companies or developments to a rather ill-defined, yet nonetheless promising, anti-capitalist perspective. Yet, although the content of the campaigning activity has altered, the form of activism has not. So, instead of taking on Monsanto and going to their headquarters and occupying it, we have now seen beyond the single facet of capital represented by Monsanto and so develop a 'campaign' against capitalism. And where better to go and occupy than what is perceived as being the headquarters of capitalism – the City?

Our methods of operating are still the same as if we were taking on a specific corporation or development, despite the fact that capitalism is not at all the same sort of thing and the ways in which one might bring down a particular company are not at all the same as the ways in which you might bring down capitalism. For example, vigorous campaigning by animal rights activists has succeeded in wrecking both Consort dog breeders and Hillgrove Farm cat breeders. The businesses were ruined and went into receivership. Similarly, the campaign waged against arch vivisectionists, Huntingdon Life Sciences, succeeded in reducing their share price by 33%, but the company just about managed to survive

by running a desperate PR campaign in the City to pick up prices. Activism can very successfully bring down a business, yet to bring down capitalism a lot more will be required than to simply extend this sort of activity to every business and every sector. Similarly, with the targeting of butcher's shops by animal rights activists, the net result is probably only to aid the supermarkets in closing down all the small butchers' shops, thus assisting the process of competition and the 'natural selection' of the marketplace. Thus, activists often succeed in destroying one small business while strengthening capital overall.

A similar thing applies with anti-roads activism. Wide-scale anti-roads protests have created opportunities for a whole new sector of capitalism – security, surveillance, tunnellers, climbers, experts and consultants. We are now one 'market risk' among others to be taken into account when bidding for a roads contract. We may have actually assisted the rule of market forces, by forcing out the companies that are weakest and least able to cope. Protest-bashing consultant Amanda Webster says: "The advent of the protest movement will actually provide market advantages to those contractors who can handle it effectively." Again, activism can bring down a business or stop a road, but capitalism carries merrily on, if anything stronger than before.

These things are surely an indication, if one were needed, that tackling capitalism will require not only a quantitative change (more actions, more activists) but a qualitative one (we need to discover some more effective form of operating). It seems we have very little idea of what it might actually require to bring down capitalism. As if all it needed was some sort of critical mass of activists occupying offices to be reached and then we'd have a revolution...

The form of activism has been preserved even while the content of this activity has moved beyond the form that contains it. We still think in terms of being 'activists' doing a 'campaign' on an 'issue', and because we are 'direct action' activists we will go and 'do an action' against our target. The method of campaigning against specific developments or single companies has been carried over into this new thing of taking on capitalism. We're attempting to take on capitalism and conceptualising what we're doing in completely inappropriate terms, utilising a method of operating appropriate to liberal reformism. So we have the bizarre spectacle of 'doing an action' against capitalism – an utterly inadequate practice.

Roles

The role of the 'activist' is a role we adopt just like that of policeman, parent or priest – a strange, psychological form we use to define ourselves and our relation to others. The 'activist' is a specialist or an expert in social change – yet the harder we cling to this role and notion of what we are, the more we actually impede the change we desire. A real revolution will involve the breaking out of all preconceived roles and the destruction of all specialism – the reclamation of our lives. The seizing control over our own destinies which is the act of revolution will involve the creation of new selves and new forms of interaction and community. 'Experts' in anything can only hinder this.

Activism is based on the misconception that only activists make social change.

The Situationist International developed a stringent critique of roles and particularly the role of 'the militant'. Their criticism was mainly directed against leftist and social-democratic ideologies because that was mainly what they encountered. Although these forms of alienation still exist and are plain to be seen, in our particular milieu it is the liberal activist we encounter more often than the leftist militant. Nevertheless, they share many features in common (which of course is not surprising).

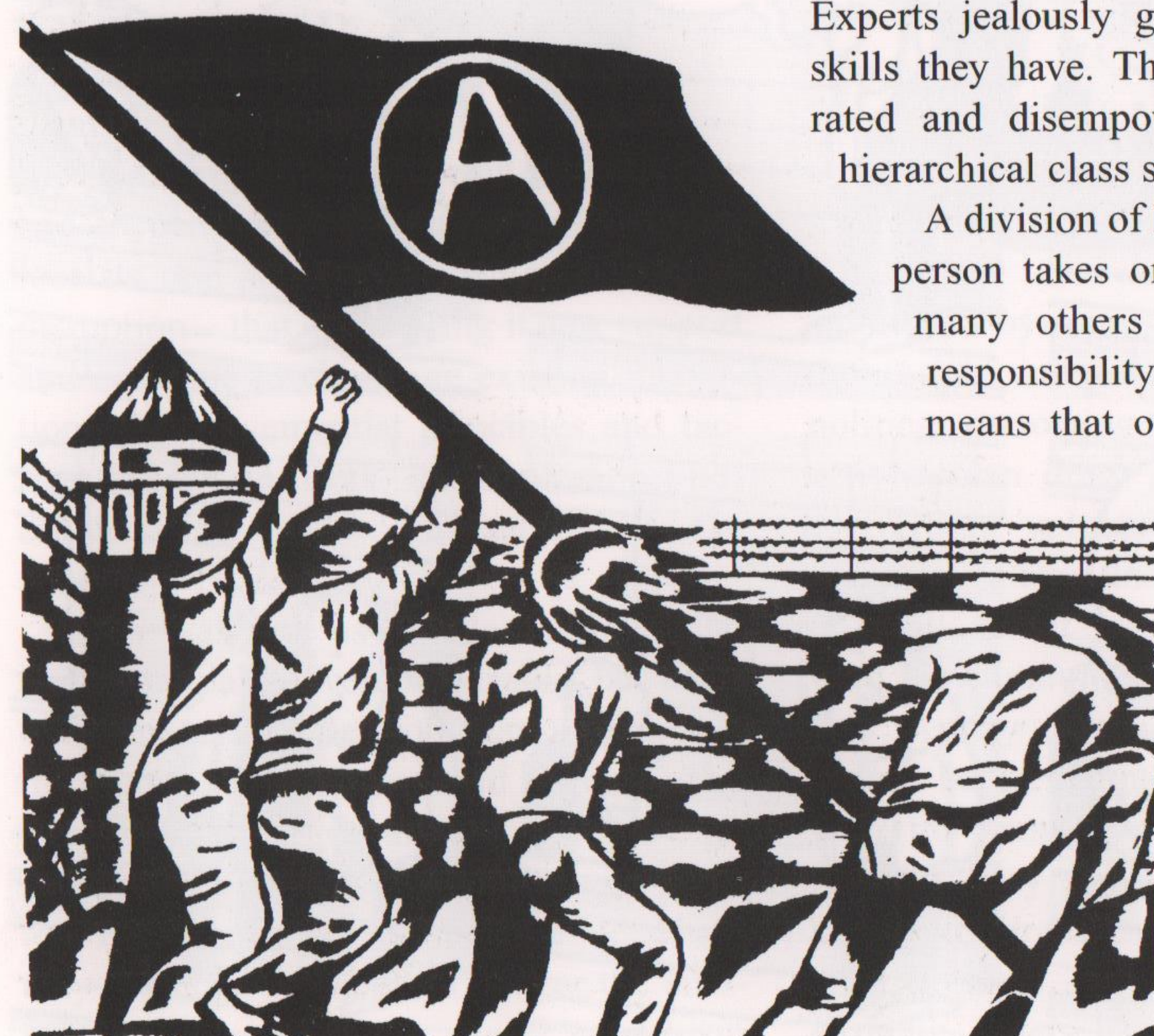
The Situationist, Raoul Vaneigem, defined roles like this: "Stereotypes are the dominant images of a period... The stereotype is the model of the role; the role is a model form of behaviour. The repetition of an attitude creates a role." To play a role is to cultivate an appearance to the neglect of everything authentic: "we succumb to the seduction of borrowed attitudes." As role-players we dwell in inauthenticity – reducing our lives to a string of clichés – "breaking [our] day down into a series of poses chosen more or less unconsciously from the range of dominant stereotypes." This process has been at work since the early days of the anti-roads movement. At Twyford Down after Yellow Wednesday in December '92, press and media coverage focused on the Dongas Tribe and the dread-

locked countercultural aspect of the protests. Initially, this was by no means the predominant element – there was a large group of ramblers at the eviction for example. But people attracted to Twyford by the media coverage thought every single person there had dreadlocks. The media coverage had the effect of making 'ordinary' people stay away and more dreadlocked countercultural types turned up – decreasing the diversity of the protests. More recently, a similar thing has happened in the way in which people drawn to protest sites by the coverage of Swampy they had seen on TV began to replicate in their own lives the attitudes presented by the media as characteristic of the role of the 'eco-warrior'.

"Just as the passivity of the consumer is an active passivity, so the passivity of the spectator lies in his ability to assimilate roles and play them according to official norms. The repetition of images and stereotypes offers a set of models from which everyone is supposed to choose a role." The role of the militant or activist is just one of these roles, and therein, despite all the revolutionary rhetoric that goes with the role, lies its ultimate conservatism. The supposedly revolutionary activity of the activist is a dull and sterile routine – a constant repetition of a few actions with no potential for change. Activists would probably resist change if it came because it would disrupt the easy certainties of their role and the nice little niche they've carved out for themselves. Like union bosses, activists are eternal representatives and mediators. In the same way as union leaders would be against their workers actually succeeding in their struggle because this would put them out of a job, the role of the activist is threatened by change. Indeed, revolution, or even any real moves in that direction, would profoundly upset activists by depriving them of their role. If everyone is becoming revolutionary then you're not so special anymore, are you?

Playing along

So why do we behave like activists? Simply because it's the easy, cowards' option? It is easy to fall into playing the activist role because it fits into this society and doesn't challenge it – activism is an accepted form of dissent. Even if, as activists, we are doing things that are not accepted and are illegal, the form of activism itself, the way it is like a job – means it fits in with our psychology and our upbringing. It has a certain attraction precisely because it is not revolutionary.



We don't need any more martyrs

The key to understanding both the role of the militant and the activist is self-sacrifice – the sacrifice of the self to ‘the cause’ which is seen as being separate from the self. This, of course, has nothing to do with real revolutionary activity, which is the seizing of the self. Revolutionary martyrdom goes together with the identification of some cause separate from one's own life. An action against capitalism, which identifies capitalism as ‘out there’ in the City, is fundamentally mistaken – the real power of capital is right here in our everyday lives. We re-create its power every day because capital is not a thing but a social relation between people (and hence classes), mediated by things.

Of course, I am not suggesting that everyone who was involved in June 18th shares in the adoption of this role, and the self-sacrifice that goes with it, to an equal extent. As I said above, the problem of activism was made particularly apparent by June 18th precisely because it was an attempt to break from these roles and our normal ways of operating. Much of what is outlined here is a ‘Worst case scenario’ of what playing the role of an activist can lead to. The extent to which we can recognise this within our own movement will give us an indication of how much work there is still to be done.

The activist makes politics dull and sterile and drives people away from it, but playing the role also fucks up the activist herself. The role of the activist creates a separation between ends and means: self-sacrifice means creating a division between the revolution as love and joy in the future but duty and routine now. The worldview of activism is dominated by guilt and duty, because the activist is not fighting for herself but for a separate cause: “All causes are equally inhuman.”

As an activist, you have to deny your own desires because your political activity is defined such that these things do not count as ‘politics’. You put ‘politics’ in a separate box to the rest of your life. It's like a job... you do ‘politics’ 9-5 and then go home and do something else. Because it is in this separate box, ‘politics’ exists unhampered by any real-world practical considerations of effectiveness. The activist feels obliged to keep plugging away at the same old routine unthinkingly, unable to stop or consider, the main thing being that the activist is kept busy and assuages her guilt by banging her head against a brick wall if necessary.

Part of being revolutionary might be

knowing when to stop and wait. It might be important to know how and when to strike for maximum effectiveness and also how and when NOT to strike. Activists have this ‘We must do something NOW!’ attitude that seems fuelled by guilt. This is completely untactical.

The self-sacrifice of the militant or the activist is mirrored in their power over others as an expert – like a religion, there is a kind of hierarchy of suffering and self-righteousness. The activist assumes power over others by virtue of her greater degree of suffering (‘non-hierarchical’ activist groups in fact form a ‘dictatorship of the most committed’). The activist uses moral coercion and guilt to wield power over others less experienced in the theology of suffering. Their subordination of themselves goes hand in hand with their subordination of others – all enslaved to ‘the cause’. Self-sacrificing politicians stunt their own lives and their own will to live – this generates a bitterness and an antipathy to life which is then turned outwards to wither everything else. They are “great despisers of life... the partisans of absolute self-sacrifice... their lives twisted by their monstrous asceticism.” We can see this in our own movement, for example on site, in the antagonism between the desire to sit around and have a good time versus the guilt-tripping build/fortify/barricade work ethic and in the sometimes excessive passion with which ‘lunchouts’ are denounced. The self-sacrificing martyr is offended and outraged when she sees others who are not sacrificing themselves. Like when the ‘honest worker’ attacks the scrounger or the layabout with such vitriol, we know it is actually because she hates her job and the martyrdom she has made of her life and therefore hates to see anyone escape this fate, hates to see anyone enjoying themselves while she is suffering. She must drag everyone down into the muck with her – an equality of self-sacrifice.

In the old religious cosmology, the successful martyr went to heaven. In the modern worldview, successful martyrs can look forwards to going down in history. The greatest self-sacrifice, the greatest success in creating a role (or even better, in devising a whole new one for people to emulate – eg the eco-warrior) wins a reward in history – the bourgeois heaven.

The old left was quite open in its call for heroic sacrifice: “Sacrifice yourselves joyfully, brothers and sisters! For the Cause, for the Established Order, for the Party, for Unity, for Meat and Potatoes!” But, these days, it is much more veiled: Vaneigem accuses “young, leftist radicals” of

“enter[ing] the service of a Cause – the ‘best’ of all Causes. The time they have for creative activity they squander on handing out leaflets, putting up posters, demonstrating or heckling local politicians. They become militants, fetishising action because others are doing their thinking for them.”

This resounds with us – particularly the thing about the fetishising of action. In left groups the militants are left free to engage in endless busywork because the group leader or guru has the ‘theory’ down pat, which is just accepted and lapped up – the ‘party line’. With direct action activists it's slightly different – action is fetishised, but more out of an aversion to any theory whatsoever.

Although it is present, that element of the activist role which relies on self-sacrifice and duty was not so significant in June 18th. What is more of an issue for us is the feeling of separateness from ‘ordinary people’ that activism implies. People identify with some weird sub-culture or clique as being ‘us’ as opposed to the ‘them’ of everyone else in the world.

Isolation

The activist role is a self-imposed isolation from all the people we should be connecting to. Taking on the role of an activist separates you from the rest of the human race as someone special and different. People tend to think of their own first person plural (who are you referring to when you say ‘we’?) as referring to some community of activists, rather than a class. For example, for some time now in the activist milieu it has been popular to argue for ‘no more single issues’ and for the importance of ‘making links’. However, many people's conception of what this involved was to ‘make’ links with other activists and other campaign groups. June 18th demonstrated this quite well, the whole idea being to get all the representatives of all the various different causes or issues in one place at one time, voluntarily relegating ourselves to the ghetto of good causes.

Similarly, the various networking forums that have recently sprung up around the country – the Rebel Alliance in Brighton, NASA in Nottingham, Riotous Assembly in Manchester, the London Underground etc, have a similar goal – to get all the activist groups in the area talking to each other. I'm not knocking this – it is an essential pre-requisite for any further action. But it should be recognised for the extremely limited form of ‘making links’ that it is. It is also interesting in that what

the groups attending these meetings have in common is that they are activist groups – what they are actually concerned with seems to be a secondary consideration.

It is not enough merely to seek to link together all the activists in the world, neither is it enough to seek to transform more people into activists. Contrary to what some people may think, we will not be any closer to a revolution if lots and lots of people become activists. Some people seem to have the strange idea that what is needed is for everyone to be somehow persuaded into becoming activists like us and then we'll have a revolution. Vaneigem says: “Revolution is made everyday despite, and in opposition to, the specialists of revolution.”

The militant or activist is a specialist in social change or revolution. The specialist recruits others to her own tiny area of specialism in order to increase her own power and thus dispel the realisation of her own powerlessness. “The specialist... enrolls himself in order to enrol others.” Like a pyramid selling scheme, the hierarchy is self-replicating – you are recruited and in order not to be at the bottom of the pyramid, you have to recruit more people to be under you, who then do exactly the same. The reproduction of the alienated society of roles is accomplished through specialists.

Jacques Camatte in his essay ‘On Organisation’ (1969) makes the astute point that political groupings often end up as “gangs” defining themselves by exclusion – the group member's first loyalty becomes to the group rather than to the struggle. His critique applies especially to the myriad of Left sects and groupuscules at which it was directed but it applies also to a lesser extent to the activist mentality.

The political group or party substitutes itself for the proletariat and its own survival and reproduction become paramount – revolutionary activity becomes synonymous with ‘building the party’ and recruiting members. The group takes itself to have a unique grasp on truth and everyone outside the group is treated like an idiot in need of education by this vanguard. Instead of an equal debate between comrades, we get instead the separation of theory and propaganda, where the group has its own theory, which is almost kept secret in the belief that the inherently less mentally able punters must be lured in the organisation with some strategy of populism before the politics are sprung on them by surprise. This dishonest method of dealing with those outside of the group is similar to a religious cult – they will never tell you upfront what they are about.

We can see here some similarities with activism, in the way that the activist milieu acts like a leftist sect. Activism as a whole has some of the characteristics of a ‘gang’. Activist gangs can often end up being cross-class alliances, including all sorts of liberal reformists because they too are ‘activists’. People think of themselves primarily as activists and their primary loyalty becomes to the community of activists and not to the struggle as such. The ‘gang’ is illusory community, distracting us from creating a wider community of resistance. The essence of Camatte's critique is an attack on the creation of an interior/exterior division between the group and the class. We come to think of ourselves as being activists and therefore as being separate from and having different interests from the mass of working class people.

Our activity should be the immediate expression of a real struggle, not the affirmation of the separateness and distinctness of a particular group. In Marxist groups the possession of ‘theory’ is the all-important thing determining power – it's different in the activist milieu, but not that different. The possession of the relevant ‘social capital’ – knowledge, experience, contacts, equipment etc, is the primary thing determining power.

Activism reproduces the structure of this society in its operations: “When the rebel begins to believe that he is fighting for a higher good, the authoritarian principle gets a fillip.” This is no trivial matter, but is at the basis of capitalist social relations. Capital is a social relation between people mediated by things – the basic principle of alienation is that we live our lives in the service of some thing that we ourselves have created. If we reproduce this structure in the name of politics that declares itself anti-capitalist, we have lost before we have begun. You cannot fight alienation by alienated means.

A modest proposal

This is a modest proposal that we should develop ways of operating that are adequate to our radical ideas. This task will not be easy, and the writer of this short piece has no clearer insight into how we should go about this than anyone else. I am not arguing that June 18th should have been abandoned or attacked, indeed, it was a valiant attempt to get beyond our limitations and to create something better than what we have at present. However, in its attempts to break with antique and formulaic ways of doing things it has made clear the ties that still bind us to the past. The



criticisms of activism that I have expressed above do not all apply to June 18th. However, there is a certain paradigm of activism which at its worst includes all that I have outlined above and June 18th shared in this paradigm to a certain extent. To exactly what extent is for you to decide.

Activism is a form partly forced upon us by weakness. Like the joint action taken by Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool dockers – we find ourselves in times in which radical politics is often the product of mutual weakness and isolation. If this is the case, it may not even be within our power to break out of the role of activists. It may be that in times of a downturn in struggle, those who continue to work for social revolution become marginalised and come to be seen (to see themselves) as a special separate group of people. It may be that this is only capable of being corrected by a general upsurge in struggle when we won't be weirdos and freaks any more but will seem simply to be stating what is on everybody's minds. However, to work to escalate the struggle it will be necessary to break with the role of activists to whatever extent is possible – to constantly try to push at the boundaries of our limitations and constraints.

Historically, those movements that have come the closest to de-stabilising or removing or going beyond capitalism have not at all taken the form of activism. Activism is essentially a political form and a method of operating suited to liberal reformism that is being pushed beyond its own limits and used for revolutionary purposes. The activist role in itself must be problematic for those who desire social revolution.

You can contact the author of this piece via: SDEF! c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY, UK.

Support the right to organise Boycott Colgate Palmolive

THE MISSOURI PRISONERS Labour Union (MPLU) is initiating an international boycott of all products produced directly or indirectly by Colgate Palmolive. This is in response to their failure to support the Missouri Prisoners Labour Union's campaign for a minimum wage for all Missouri Prisoners, abolition of all forced labour and abuse perpetrated by the Missouri Department of Corrections and the State Government, and Colgate Palmolive's active involvement in persuading the State of Missouri Legislature to impose a moratorium on all executions in the state.

In a letter to Colgate Palmolive, MPLU National Communications Officer Michael Lee stated, "Let me reassure you that neither myself or anyone directly associated with the MPLU has any intention of causing physical harm to either Colgate Palmolive employees or property. Our tactic is to simply fold our arms and turn a blind eye to your products."

The mass industrialisation of prisons is creating an army of doubly-exploited people.

The letter goes on to reiterate what MPLU's elected leadership stated in their April letter to Colgate Palmolive:

"...we realise that your company didn't put us in prison, but Colgate Palmolive [is] reaping immense profits from our incarceration and you have a social obligation to us. The situation I am outlining is the same argument organised labour has used to oppose sweat shop labour employed by Kathy Lee Gifford, Nike, etc. I would also like to add that we are not asking for anything from society except that we be treated in a fair manner as defined by the United

States Constitution and numerous legal cases. We are not advocating a cushy lifestyle but simply a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and a safe, non-abusive work environment."

For better conditions

The MPLU is a 500-member organisation, which was created by prisoners and supporters. It was legally chartered by the State of Missouri in 1998. MPLU's aim is to better the living and working conditions of Missouri prisoners in particular and two million US prisoners in general. In its own words, it:

"provides a much-needed political forum from which to promote the principles of social justice, economic and political issues confronting Missouri Prisoners and workers. Our commitment to non-violence has been demonstrated continuously. One of the linchpin principles of the MPLU is that there is nothing more powerful than a worker with arms folded, refusing to pick up tools or perform any labour. Since our inception, members have been subjected to all forms of abuse and harassment propagated by the Missouri DoC. On February 17, 2000 President White-Bey was finally released from Administrative Segregation (the hole) after being confined there for almost two years. His offence was simply to advocate that as workers we have the right to organise and the Human and Civil Rights of Prisoners must be respected. Presently several of our members still remain in the hole and are subjected to daily abuse. But the Union rolls on! In this campaign are calling for a moratorium on the continued use of the death penalty. If the State has such a tremendous power then it has the power to perpetrate any abuse on our membership simply for demanding a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Continual use of the death penalty is a human rights violation and an ineffective manner in which to combat anti-social behaviour. For the first time in history, prisoners who do not face the ultimate punish-

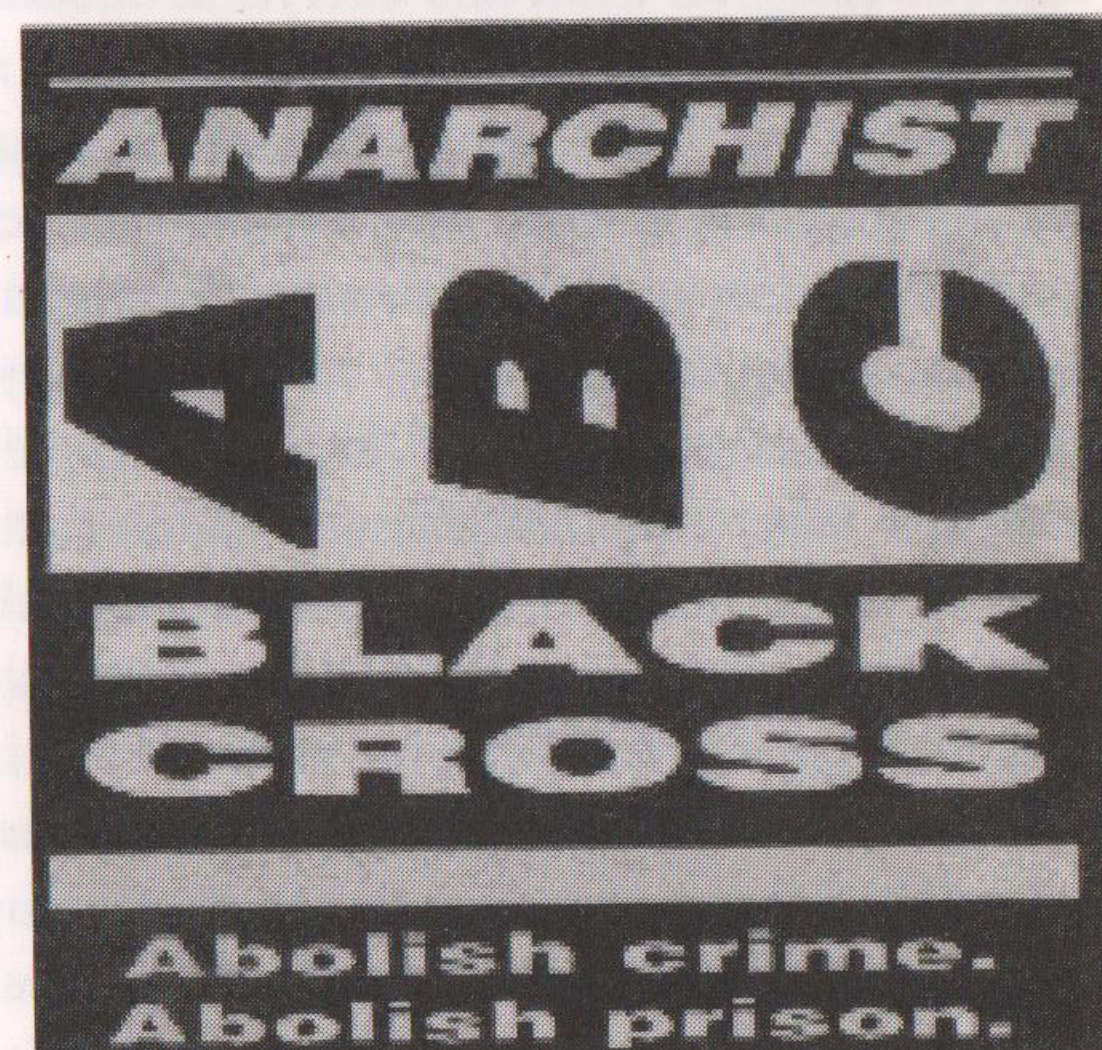
ment are calling for a moratorium on its use. We do so as part of our social responsibility as an organisation of economic self-defence and in defence of the human and civil rights of all prisoners. As of July 1, 2000 we are requesting that all prisoners and their family/friends, MPLU members and our supporters to non-violently decline to purchase Colgate Palmolive. In support of our efforts we have requested that all members of organised labour, peace and social justice activists and the NAACP to also refrain from purchasing Colgate Palmolive products until at such time our demands are met."

From The Barricades!

Mike Lee, On behalf of Raze the Walls!

Acts of solidarity

Until the walls are razed, the creation of solidarity both within and across them is both the least and the most we can do. The mass industrialisation of prisons, whether private or state-owned, is creating an army of doubly-exploited people and the ruthless punishments handed out to those who resist within and without demonstrate how we are all just a step away from a different kind of hell. Consumer boycotts will not change the fundamental nature of the system but simple acts of solidarity like this, done in a mass way, can bring relief and amelioration to those who suffer intensely in the way MPLU members have and continue to do. Think about it, the next time you buy a simple bar of soap.



Harold H Thompson

Dear Organise!

I send warmest anarchist greetings and friendship from the belly of the beast! I hope this finds each of you in good health and spirit with everything well. I'm in fair health and morale with things going in the usual topsy-turvy fashion of the gulag.

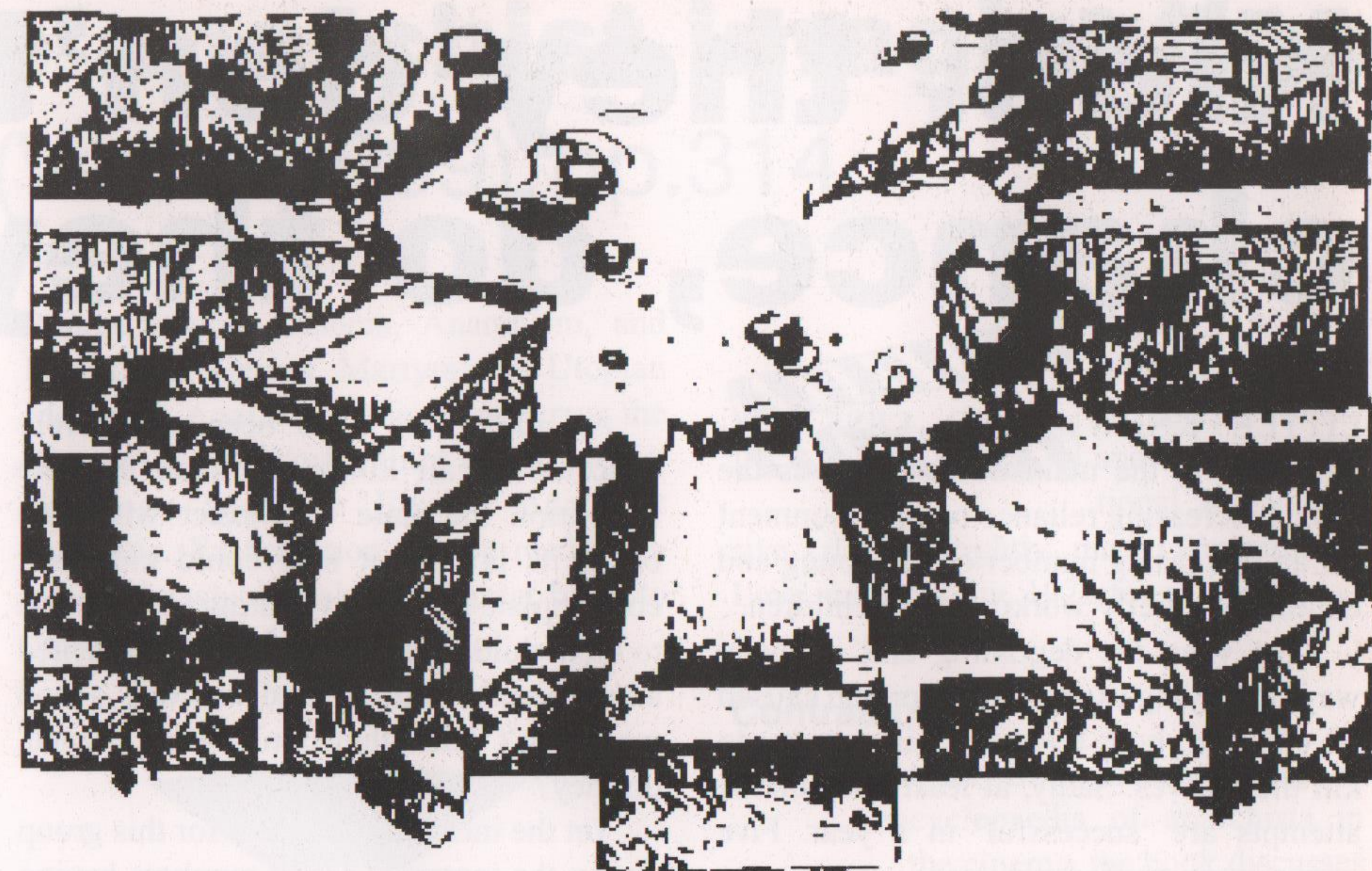
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Anarchist Federation and other British anarcho comrades for their display of solidarity, support and love shown by their contributions to the Friends of Harold H. Thompson Support Campaign which I use to fight our sworn enemies in their own backyard, the battlefield of the courtroom, on my own behalf and on behalf of other prisoners.

Soon I will be filing a civil rights complaint against the prisoncrats which I hope will benefit all anarchist prisoners in the States as it will directly address confiscation and seizures of anarchist materials by gulag mailroom personnel and the recent trend of the prisoncrats labeling imprisoned anarchists as belonging to a "security threat group" or "STG" as justification for anarchist material seizures.

For many years I felt as if I was struggling alone and am overjoyed to feel the presence of my beloved anarchist comrades as we indeed have the same goal even though we engage from different aspects in the struggle. I specifically want to thank anarchist comrades Eddy W., Frankie Dee and Catherine K. who have made the Campaign a reality when others had mostly voiced only a willingness to support me.

The only way we will ever rid ourselves of the monster of capitalism is for the many to take our birthright back from the few whose only motivation in life is greed and who profit from our blood, sweat and tears as their kind have done for many generations before us!

Someday the earth will shake with the stamp of our feet as the sleeping giant of the masses arises to deal with them, the air filled with our battle cries as we come! Let one of the battle cries shouted the loudest be: "They will never get us all!" We will carry the torch of our struggle to a victorious end over the monsters of the earth! The earth will be ours and establishment of our anarchist world will dawn a new free era for mankind! Now I dream of such an anarchist world. When many of us share the



same dream without letting hope die and who are willing to act then our utopian dream will become reality. Never lose sight of the prize! I will and we will collectively make it happen. We have to do it for the future of this planet, the future of mankind, the future of our children and to rid our company of the monsters of the earth. We will prevail!

I welcome correspondence and will answer each letter I receive, so hope more of like spirit will write me and/or contact

Friends of Harold Thompson whose address is PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL England or aplan-harold@hotmail.com. Confusion to our enemies! They will never get us all.

In Anarchist Struggle and Solidarity

Harold H Thompson, #93992
Northwest Correctional Complex
Route 1, Box 660
Tiptonville
Tennessee 38709

Beaten up, fitted up, locked up

THIS IS THE LATEST PAMPHLET from the Justice for Mark Barnsley Group.

It is a comprehensive account of the now infamous 'Pomona Incident', when freelance writer Mark Barnsley was viciously attacked by 15 drunken students out to celebrate the end of their exams.

For those not familiar with the case, these students, who later perjured themselves in court and admitted that they didn't really know why they attacked him, first abused a friend in the Pomona pub in Sheffield while he was inside and then attacked Mark with bottles, knives, glasses and bricks, following him for 150 yards as he tried to escape, repeatedly jumping on him and kicking him whenever he fell.

Yet, it was Mark Barnsley who was charged with assault and jailed for 12 years, an unprecedented sentence for this kind of case. Or is it?

Mark is not liked by the local police for a variety of reasons and the way in which

evidence was withheld (and is still being withheld), stories changed or concocted and the attitude of the judge at the trial is a savage indictment of policing in South Yorkshire.

Miscarriage of justice

This publication sets out the facts in great detail and makes the valuable point that middle class people like students, are able to commit very serious offences and get away with them while the working class can be abused, fitted up and jailed on a whim. One of its best parts is the advice it gives to those wanting to help or to protest such miscarriages of justice.

This is the story of determined people: Mark for one, his many supporters for another and should be read by everyone who cares.

£2 from Justice For Mark Barnsley, c/o 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ.

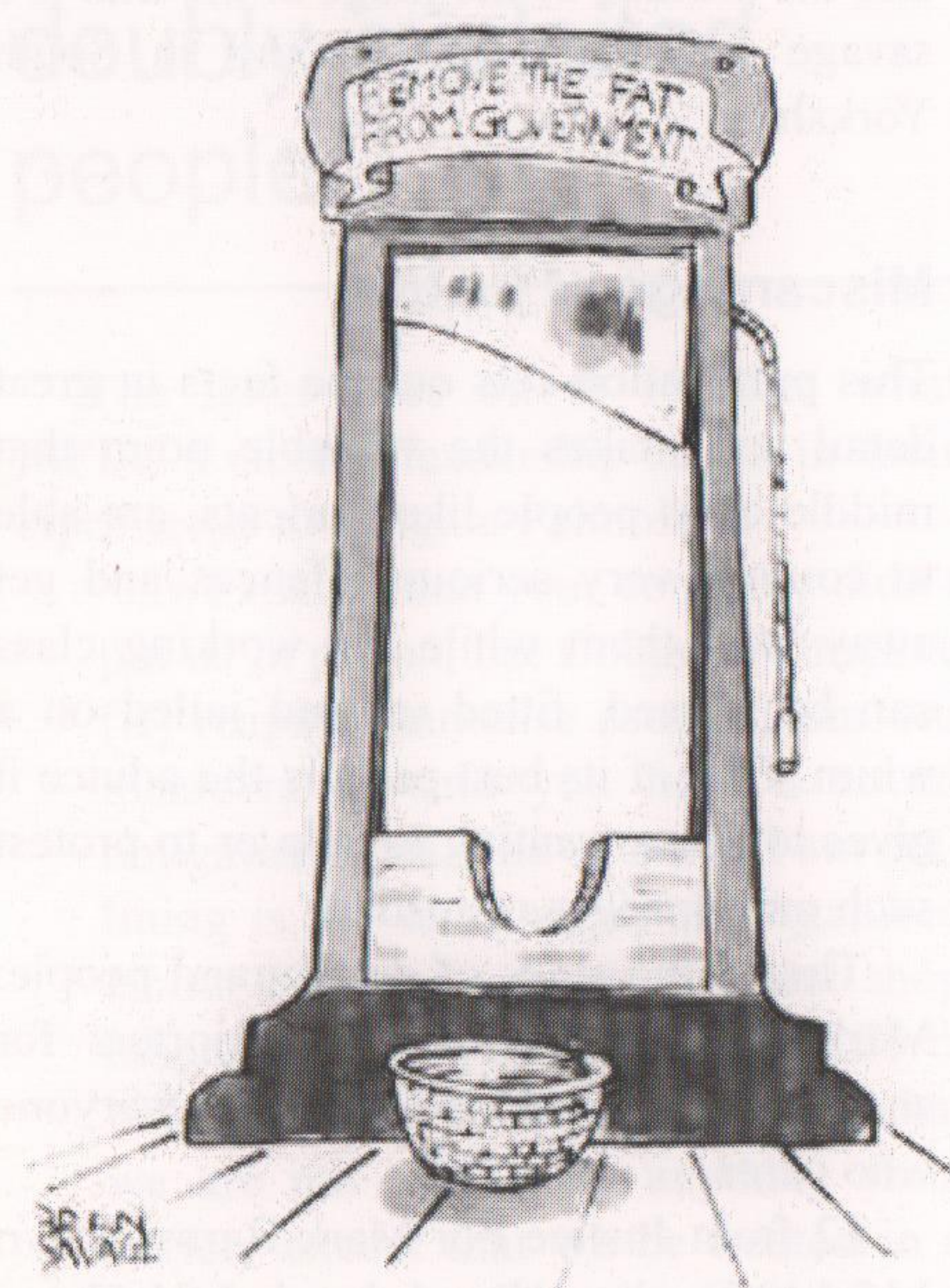
Kids, they don't have a chance, do they?

LITTLE KNOWN AND LESS DISCUSSED in the mainstream media is the state's increasing reliance on imprisonment for an increasing number of the young and children – chiefly working class children.

Last year, the degrading and in many ways terrifying experience of prison caused 60 children, both boys and girls, to try to kill themselves. Sadly, at least five suicide attempts are 'successful' in a year. Five young lives snuffed out every year, prematurely and very needlessly, five out of a growing army of teenagers held in dire conditions and facing blighted lives, many unconvicted, not a few detained illegally.

Cell nightmare

Once inside it's usual to spend 23 hours a day locked up and isolated in a cell, hundreds of miles from home. For a young person brimming with creative energy this must be a nightmare and it isn't difficult to understand why so many make serious attempts to end it. The irony is that fully half of those jailed will finally be acquitted or given non-custodial sentences. So why the wall of silence about the creeping reimposition of the death penalty? Why is nothing said about the State's bloodletting and the way a brutal regime falls so heavily upon young people with no inkling of what they are about to face?



As adults, we have been extensively educated by all kinds of media into the reparation the state will exact when we break its laws. But how could kids ever contemplate such a devastating interruption to their childhood? Even the most hardened adults would find it hard to cope – and many can't. Kids, they don't have a chance, do they?

Yet the incarceration rates for this group are on the increase, actual numbers having doubled to well over 2000 a year since the introduction of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. These figures confirm Britain's dubious status as the most punitive state in the EU. The 'credit' for this league-topping position goes to politicians (what's new!) like Straw and Widdicombe, forever competing to prove that the one can out-tough the other when it comes to crime even when, as the statistics show, many are acquitted and the re-offending rates remain stubbornly high.

Few rational people believe jail is the place for children or teenagers, yet the courts have fallen over themselves to implement the politician's mantra: "Prison works". The judicial process takes no account of vulnerable children who have themselves been sexually or physically abused, or whose self-destructiveness comes from guilt at not living up to society's demands. Criminals they may be, by the state's laws, but how did they get there? Driven by school and society's leaders to succeed, to make something of themselves, yet their minds and energies blunted by poverty and demoralised by lack of any real prospects, they seek any justification of their 'failure': rejection of society, violence, stealing. Seduced by the siren call of instant gratification and the demand that they consume, is it any wonder they take what society denies them the means to get: power, money, status? Confused, trapped, caught, and condemned with the full rigour of the law, they self-harm in jail and care, desperate to draw attention to the problems they face, most often alone.

How does jail reassure these kids that someone, somewhere in the adult world, where 'experts' supposedly have all the answers actually cares for or about them? Instead of authority ('leaders' and 'experts'

AF pamphlets in other languages

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 the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

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

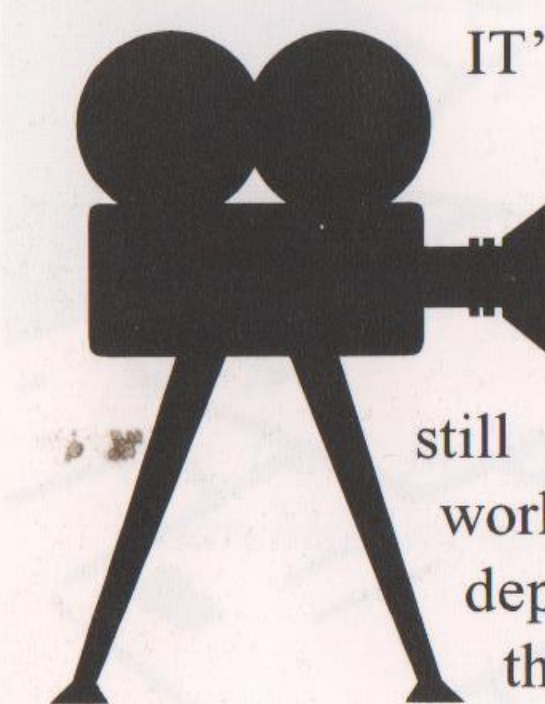
Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

again) demonstrating a positive commitment to protecting children from further physical or psychological damage, they are busy throwing them into an environment so bad, so alien, so depressing that bewildered kids, in what should be the 'best days of their lives' reach the conclusion there is only one way out, just one final solution to their awful predicament.

The upholders of a society that is itself the author of practically every social ill that afflicts it like a cancer, need to pause for once in their disease-dispensing judgements, in their headlong rush to sweep out of sight everyone seen as a problem. They need to take a good look around, particularly inwards, and recognise it is they who are poisoning impressionable, developing minds before they have ever been given the chance to taste the love, compassion and solidarity that ought to be the essence of the human condition.

Film and the anarchist imagination

Richard Porton (Verso 1999) pp.314



IT'S QUITE RARE to come across an academic work with anarchism as its subject matter. It is rarer still to find an academic work that exhibits any in-depth understanding of the authentic history and developing theory of

anarchism. Most academics don't get past calling the IWW the International Workers of the World. Those who do are usually happy to repeat the lies of the ruling class and to maintain the 'anarchist' caricatures that serve to maintain a false image of what we actually are.

Stereotypes

This book, however, written by a teacher of cinema studies at the College of Staten Island in New York, exhibits an unusually deep understanding and wide knowledge of the historic movement and the political arguments within anarchism. The author in fact sets out to consciously deconstruct the stereotypes of anarchism and anarchists that have appeared in both mainstream and 'alternative' cinema.

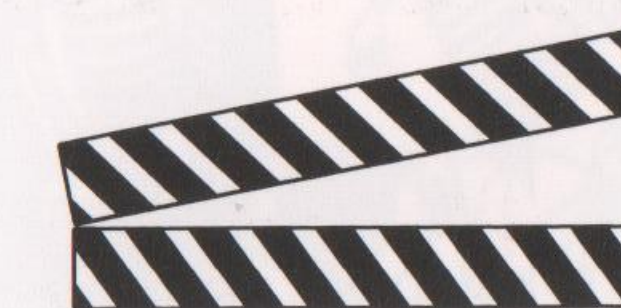
Extremely readable, the text rarely uses pretentious-git-speak to intentionally, or otherwise, obscure the core meanings of the arguments. The

introduction gives a good historical background to the development to anarchist ideas during "...more than a hundred years of labour agitation and revolutionary struggles" (p2), and offers the reader who has not come across anarchism before an informative background to the subject matter of the book.

It is obvious from the beginning that the author actually knows what he's talking about!

There are five sections: Anarchism and Cinema: Representation and Self-

Representation; Cinema, Anarchism, and Revolution: Heroes, Martyrs, and Utopian Moments; Anarcho-syndicalism versus the 'Revolt against Work'; Film and Anarchist Pedagogy and The Elusive Anarchist Aesthetic. Each section can be read independently which makes it a great book to dip in and out of.



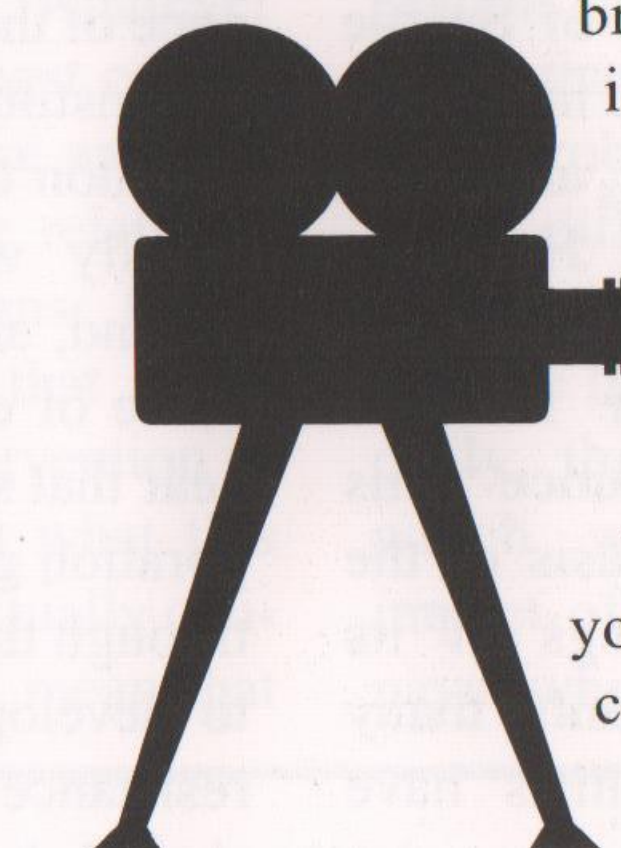
played a role in reinforcing the stereotype of the anarchist as irrational and impulsive, if not slightly mad (Wertmüller's *Love and Anarchy*, 1973 for example).

Contradictions

But far from merely being an encyclopaedia of anarchists in the cinema, the book discusses the contradictions within anarchist film-making and anarchists/anarchism as subject matter. Few perspectives aren't tackled intelligently and the research is exhaustive. Critics might suggest that this is a simply an academic exercise and that the cinema is Spectacular representation at its worst.

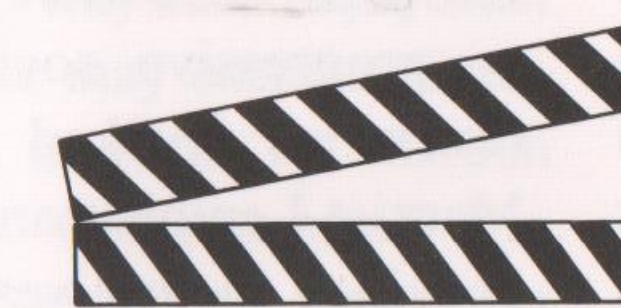
However, to have such a clued-up and sympathetic text in circulation which may bring revolutionary ideas into areas where they don't usually see the light of day, can only be useful.

Try and get it into your local public or college library.



Little-known facts

This reviewer must admit to not having heard of, never mind having seen, many of the films mentioned and it is fascinating to learn that Malatesta, for example, has been the subject of a highly sympathetic movie (Peter Lilienthal's *Malatesta*, 1971) or that Alexander Berkman unsuccessfully hawked a 'swashbuckling' screenplay based upon Nestor Makhno's life around Hollywood! It's also interesting to see how some film makers



who consider themselves 'sympathetic' to anarchism have



Anarchism in Japan

The Anarchist Movement in Japan. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. £1.80 plus SAE from AF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Letters from America

Dear Organise,

I am writing in order to respond to the points raised in *Organise!* #53 to our Seattle/WTO report [reprinted from *We Dare Be Free* #6].

Basically, I wanted to first say that this article was not intended to act as a critical analysis of the Battle of Seattle, but rather as a first-hand account of the frontlines of action, written from a militant anarchist perspective.

Outside of the small minority of explicitly revolutionary anti-capitalists (black bloc anarchists, wobblies, Peoples' Assembly, revolutionary socialists, etc.), the Seattle anti-WTO protests contained thousands of demonstrators whose politics ranged from an ultra-conservative protectionism to a well meaning (if not slightly confused) liberal reformism.

It would be entirely false to claim that the protest movement that came out of Seattle was solidly grounded in a class-based, anti-capitalist, anti-State political framework. However, rather than following the lead of many sectarian Leninist groups and denounce this movement on the basis of the political shortcomings of its mainstream participants, many revolutionary anarchists have made it a priority to organise within the direct action wing of the movement (which, though tactically more radical than its mainstream counterparts, still contains a high level of political ambiguity and liberalism, even among many so-called anarchists), and agitate for the sort of revolutionary framework we would like to see this movement eventually embrace on a large-scale.

To some degree, we can begin to see some positive results stem from these efforts.

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Many seemingly liberal protesters did indeed walk away from Seattle radicalised, and subsequently, as can be seen in the A16 protests that occurred in Washington, DC last April, the globalisation debate has shifted from being simply anti-corporate to questioning all aspects of the capitalism.

Another point that was raised in your editorial was over our acceptance of autonomous acts of resistance that are somehow divorced from the experience of the working class.

Not being one to objectify the working class as some abstract, homogenous entity, I find it difficult to determine the appropriateness of a certain action using such an ambiguous gauge. The United States has a long and illustrious history of class violence, however, I would think that this history is also "divorced from the experience of the working class", as it is constituted today.

I don't know, I come from a solidly working class background, and I personally feel a sense of empowerment when I hear that some exploitative corporation got a firebomb lobbed through their window. If we are to develop a strong culture of resistance within our class, we should be prepared to place these sorts of action within a class perspective where their significance can be understood. Obviously, we need to maintain a definitive stand against irresponsible acts of terrorism where human life is compromised, however, I see little reason why autonomous forms of direct action against the property of the capitalist class should not be supported.

The last point that was brought up was around the question of the left and the



unclear usage of this term in our article.

In my opinion, this is a very important point to clarify, since there has been ongoing controversy on both sides of the Atlantic around this subject.

Basically, for me, the left designates a fairly broad tradition of progressive social movements and ideas that embrace some form of progressive social change, economic democracy (socialism), or social justice. To some extent, this could include everything from revolutionary anarchism to classical liberalism to Marxian socialism to single-issue advocacy groups (anti-poverty, environmental, human rights, prison reform, etc).

When I speak about the left-protest movement, in no way is this confined to non-libertarians, but rather to the very broad definition of ALL groups and tendencies that are struggling for some form of social justice or progressive social change (even as fucked as most Marxist-Leninists are, they still convince themselves that they are fighting for an equalisation of classes and some form of socialistic economy). As far as I know, the actual usage of the term predates Marx by at least 50 years.

In this country, there is a growing tendency within the anarchist movement (mainly in the primitivist, green, post-situationist, and individualist anarchist milieus) which calls for

an abandonment of the left. What this essentially translates to, as far as I can tell, is an abandonment of direct participation within social movements or popular struggles, in favour of... well, to tell you the truth, I can't quite tell what sorts of options are presented as viable revolutionary alternatives to 'leftism' (other than isolated acts of random rebellion).

Basically, publications such as *Fifth Estate* and *Anarchy*, and writers such as John Zerzan, Hakim Bey, Jason McQuinn, Alex Trotter and Bob Black have used their anti-left position as a platform to attack class struggle anarchism (or 'social anarchism'), specific revolutionary anarchist organisations (Love & Rage), syndicalists (IWW, IWA), social ecologists (Murray Bookchin), and essentially anyone who according to them carries the residue of Marxism (ie class-based politics).

Since Bookchin's *Lifestyle Anarchism* vs. *Social Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* was published, the anti-left position has become rather popular within a growing number of anarchist circles, especially among younger, counter culture anarchists who see this position as more attractive and accommodating than Bookchin's somewhat rigid form of social anarchism.

Needless to say, the anti-left position has created more than

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a few obstacles for class struggle politics to take solid root within the anarchist movement here in the States, and comes in direct conflict with groups such as NEFAC who are looking to popularise these politics.

Hopefully it is just a passing trend...

Well, that's about it for now. Solidarity and revolution...

MaRK

(*We Dare Be Free*, Sabate Anarchist Group, NEFAC)

Dear Organise!

I am writing in response to the article about conservation of land in an anarchist communist society (in issue 53.)

The author is right about the fact that humans are beginning to realise that we do not have unlimited power and that the Earth is indeed more powerful than humans. In the article, the writer tends to refer to humans as 'on lookers' of nature rather than being part of it. They are also right in claiming that we cannot do what ever we want to the environment without repercussions (global warming, the ozone layer etc).

However, in the article, John Muir Trust and the author (for at least some part) accept the definition of wilderness as 'any area with no humans'. This is where they are wrong. The definition they accept is based on the colonialist way of thinking and living. The very term wilderness or the wild was used by colonialists, priests, etc, who believed that any living organisms not under control or dominated by their way of thinking or understanding were chaotic.

The term wilderness also encourages people to believe that somehow living in the suburbs or city is much more civilised than our natural environment. In that type of mind frame believing that humans by their very nature should separate themselves from nature can cause disastrous effects not only to humans but the whole world. The examples are all around us. People of all classes

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spit, throw trash and graffiti in planters while paying much more respect to the man made things. People erect sidewalks and benches to keep out of the 'dirty ground' as if the Earth is a bad thing. It is the 'dirty ground' which is part of what created us. We are part of the Earth, no matter how much we deny it. Thankfully, more and more people are realising that.

A possible solution to the problem of 'how humans can preserve nature while being able to enjoy them' is to reverse the capitalist way of thinking and domination. What needs to be addressed in our society is that society needs to encourage the person who gives the most as the better way of living rather than the present mode of the person who has the most is the richest. (Fred Charles was a perfect example.)

I do agree with your manifesto that humans must live in harmony with nature and not against it. But it is not enough. If more people could respect trees, plants and animals as equals (since we are no more than hairless apes. No more owning animals as pets and treating trees as only for humans Tecourses) as well as use recycling, solar power, crop rotation and 'industrial symbiosis' many problems would be solved and we would not need the definition wilderness or conservation. We would live co-operatively with nature and treat the environment with equal respect (living with trees, perhaps up in the trees?), less damaging ways of enjoyment with nature may emerge. Even, perhaps, a form of Green Anarchist Communism? I'm looking forward to hearing a response.

In solidarity,
Nick, USA

The author replies:

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter. I agree with the points that you make, though I would like to make a few comments.

"HOPE ALSO LIVES IN OUR HEART"



First, the point I was making about conservation organisations was to actually criticise the concept of wilderness. I was arguing that it is wrong to see humans as something separate from nature, which I think is the way conservationists and environmental campaigners often speak. It is the idea that 'nature' is good and humans are bad outsiders. So, yes, we need to stop seeing ourselves as 'onlookers'.

Second, the John Muir Trust does not really talk about wilderness. 'Wild land' is a more used term in Britain, recognising that people have always had a big impact on the environment. Still, whatever the term, they, amongst others, are trying to preserve areas of the country, that are relatively untouched by humans. I was trying to point out that doing this involves the intervention of human values about what this 'wild land' should actually consist of. That doesn't mean that

we shouldn't try and have these areas. On the contrary, creating or conserving areas where other species can flourish without humans all over the place should be one of our goals. This is for the benefit of other species but also for ourselves.

Third, it is not just a capitalist way of 'thinking' that needs to be changed, but the system itself which sees everything on this planet (and off!) as a way of making a profit. And, lastly, yes we do need to have respect for other species, but, unfortunately, it is necessary that we use our habitat for our own benefit. (See article in this issue of *Organise!*) Even your suggestion about us living up trees rather than cutting them down is a problem. Think of how many different species would be losing a home if we moved into the trees! We need to seriously think about ways in which we can reduce the impact of humans, but we can never wholly get rid of it.

Millennium rat

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for the splendid review of *Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat*.

I just want to comment on the adverse criticism, about "gratuitous cartoons about the stout anarchist rat". I reckon anarchists who denounce other anarchists in print deserve to be criticised, and the fat rat cartoon in *Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat* appeared in *Freedom* in response to pamphlets against the organisers of the annual Anarchist Bookfair. (The rat character is more-or-less copied from a drawing by Ronald Scarfe, and does not represent a particular individual.)

Best wishes,
DR

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Edelweiss Pirates

Dear Organise!

A few thoughts inspired by the Edelweiss Pirates article in the last issue, and discussions that followed it, on why the working class were subdued in Germany in the 1930s.

I think part of the problem in trying to find worthy moments of working class resistance to Hitler and the Nazis after 1933 might lie in a neglect of a proper understanding of events in Germany from the Revolution of 1918/19 until that date (ie, not going back far enough).

The Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic existed because of the revolutionary insurrection of the German working class at the close of the war. It was, of course, a symbol of the defeat of a revolution, but it was the best that the capitalist class could get away with at the time. If the Weimar Republic had not been created, then Germany probably would have faced an extended civil war, which may have resulted in the complete occupation of the country by foreign powers. Both a civil war and an occupation by foreign powers would have been bad for German business.

But, of course, the Weimar Republic was not a confident beast, and it lurched about all over the place. And, indeed, during the '20s a minor civil war took place anyway, and there were even attempted communist/socialist insurrections by sections of the working class. The *Freikorps* (the Republic's boot boys who were formed from disgruntled reactionary elements in the German army and who were to give the Nazis a good leg up) and others waged a war of assassination against the enemies, as they saw it, of capitalism, that reached quite huge proportions.

The Weimar Republic was not only a symbol of the defeat of a revolution, it was also an

expression of the fear that German capitalists had of the class that had given them such a shock at the end of the war. The Republic was a kind of buying off of the liberals (ie the SPD): they got political power, but in return they knew they had to regain control of the working class and create a situation where the economy could get on its feet again.

Indeed, the economy did start to get on its feet for a while, partly due to some crafty accounting by those in the Republic responsible for paying war reparations (I think). But it wasn't enough (especially with the Wall Street Crash) and the very existence of the Weimar Republic itself started to become a liability. Things needed to be speeded up, and revenge had to be exacted. The capitalists had waited for over a decade to get their own back and to finally take charge again of the labouring classes. Political events in the early '30s allowed them to do it. The working class had been effectively defeated many years previously. In the case of targeting militant workers, Hitler and his Party were merely carrying out mopping up operations for the boss class.

By the time Hitler became the democratically elected Chancellor there was little hope of working class resistance and as he tightened his grip there was even less chance. We could compare the situation to Northern Ireland in recent years, where due to the good policing of the working class by the IRA and the British government, there has been virtually no possibility of working class resistance. An unarmed working class will usually find itself at a loss in the face of an aggressive (armed) State (in the case of NI the working class was/is subject to the repressive arms of both the IRA and the UK government).

Of course, there were

actions against the Nazis while they were in power, but they were small and isolated and no one would presume that there could have been a toppling of the Nazis by a suddenly rejuvenated working class, who had found some guns and a bag of fertiliser in a lock-up just outside Hamburg. BUT this doesn't mean that reports of resistance to tyranny aren't inspiring, as the Edelweiss Pirates article shows. The problem with trying to put a 'working class' perspective on acts of resistance such as this is that in periods like this the 'conscious working class' element may not be very strong. In human history there are just as many stories of heroic resistance to anti-human things as there are stories of complicity in misery-making and atrocity.

Sometimes the working class in general just doesn't do anything very interesting, but the reason that periods like this exist is always because the working class has done very interesting things in the recent past. So, for example, the state of defeat that the working class in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s found itself in was a direct consequence of the attempts by the ruling class to regain control of the economy and the working class after the revolution of 1918 and 1919. Similarly, the state of defeat that the industrial working class has been enduring since the early 1980s in Britain is a direct result of attempts by the ruling class to regain control after the years of trouble in the 1960s and 1970s.

Proletarian gob

Organise! reply

We find little to disagree with in your analysis of Weimar Germany, the defeat of the German working class or in the role of the Nazis and Hitler.

Having said that, there is every point in making available the history of youngsters like

the Edelweiss Pirates. One interesting thing about them is that they had no connection to the older movement. They arose quite independently of it and arose amongst young people who had been brought up under the thumbs of Nazi ideologists. Although they did not develop a political view which we could identify as libertarian communist, their existence did show that even under a dictatorship as brutal as the Nazis, young workers were prepared to rebel.

We take the view that the liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself and that the working class will develop political consciousness as a result of its own struggle. It surely follows for us that the Edelweiss Pirates' existence and their struggles are in themselves put 'a working class perspective' on what happened in that era. They prove that sections of the working class were not simple dupes and were not impossibly cowed by terror and defeat. The ruling class would like us to believe that this was true. They could not celebrate the actions of thousands of young 'thugs' because they showed up the complicity of the bourgeoisie in Hitler's reign.

As the saying goes, from small acorns...

Louis Robertson



AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1 The Anarchist 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, lesbians and gays, and black people, may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class 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.

Stand and deliver!

Excuse us dear readers. If we could hold you up – in the nicest possible way – for a few minutes and ask you to surrender at least some of the contents of your purses and wallets.

Yes, it's that twice-yearly time when we ask you to hand over your valuables. Well, alright, cheques, postal orders, international money orders will do.

And, unlike Dick Turpin, who just frisked his victims, you know that your contributions will help *Organise!*, your favourite

anarchist communist magazine, keep on appearing, as well as helping our publishing programme of pamphlets, our stickers, posters, and the monthly broadsheet of the Anarchist Federation – *Resistance*.

You haven't been too free with your dosh in recent times, so please think about sending money soon. Every contribution, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated.

Contributions to the Press Fund for this issue: £100 (Woking); £20 (Cwmbran); £6 (South Shields); £4 (South London); £3 (North London).