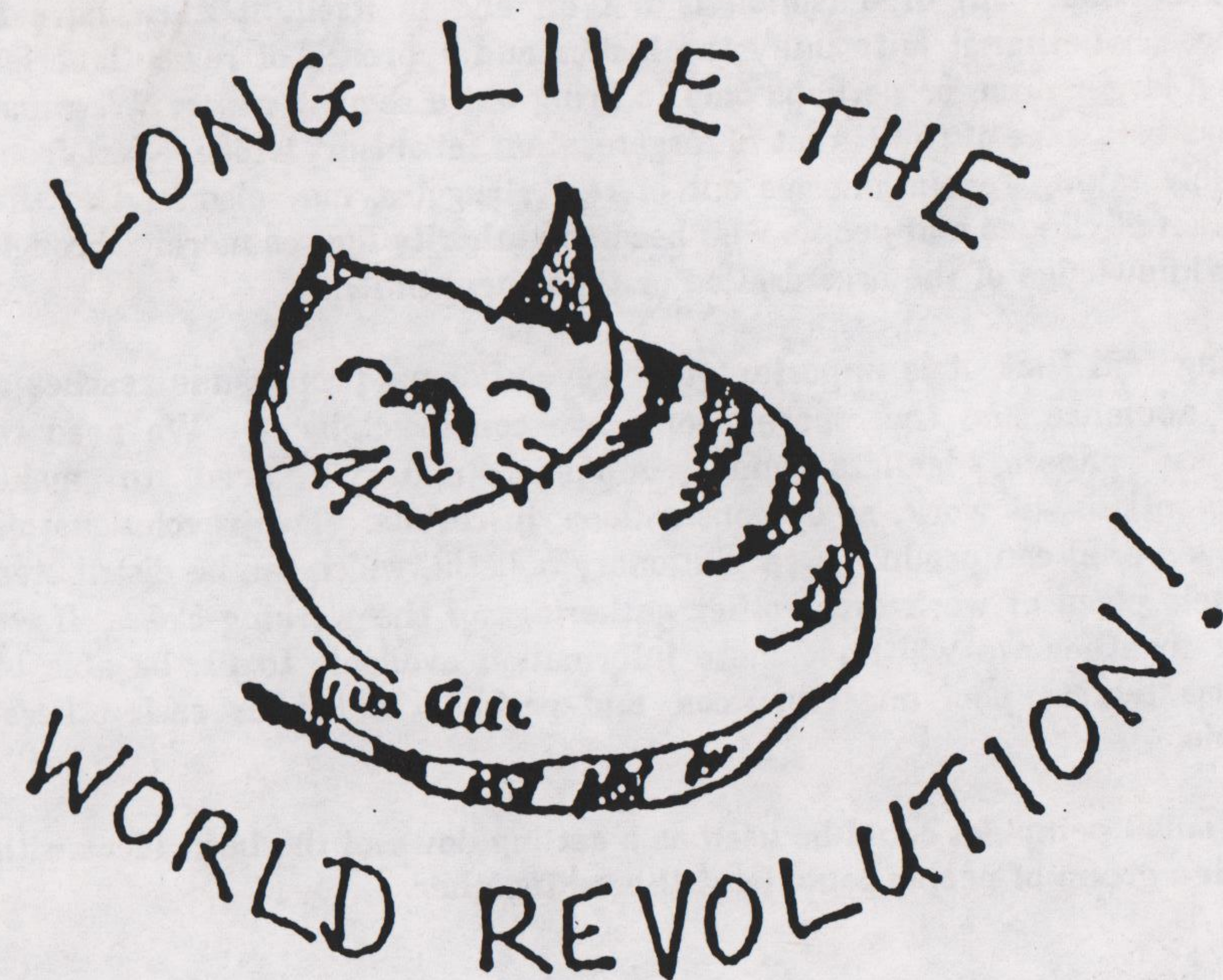


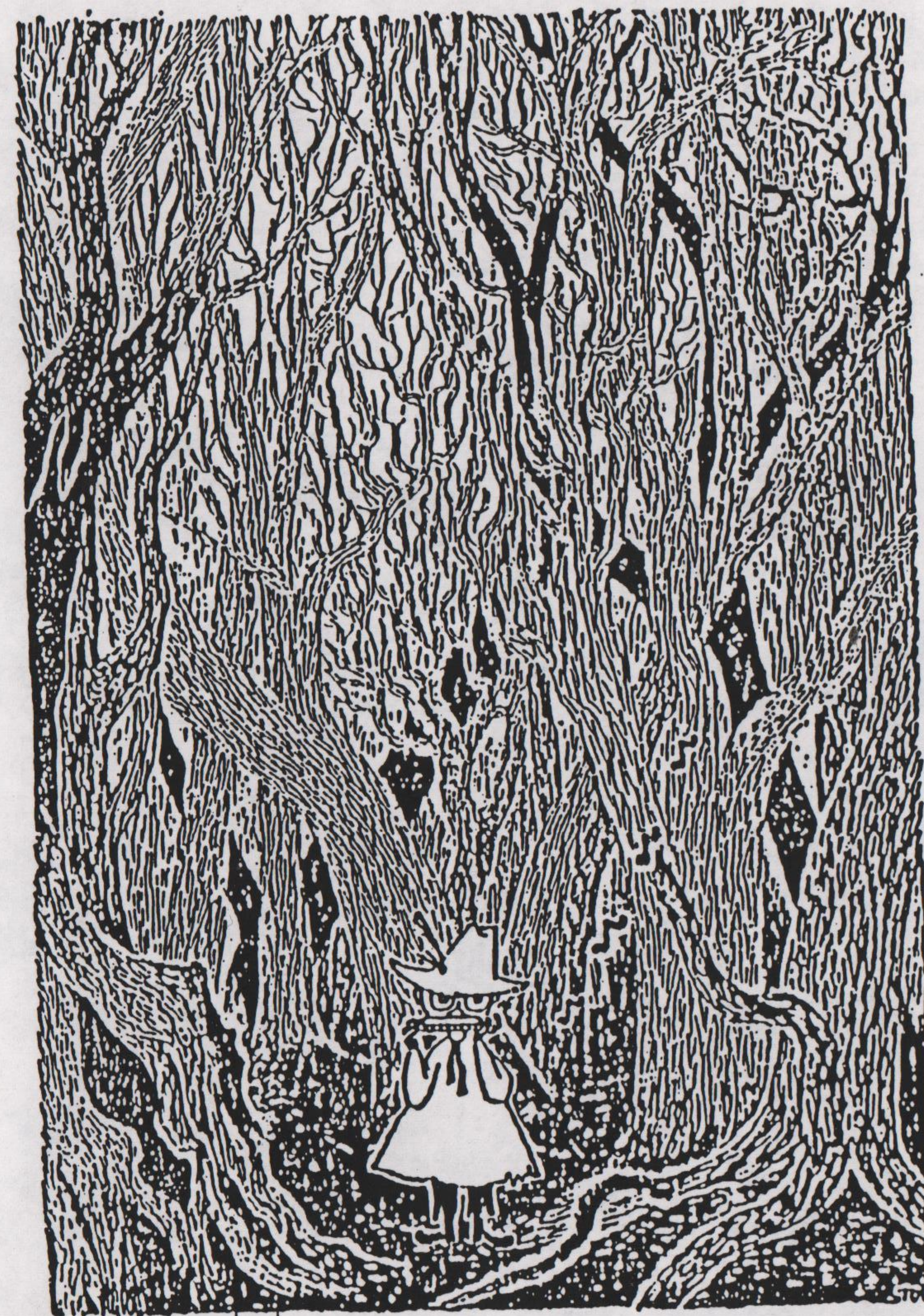
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PROLETARIAN GOB

BM Makhno, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

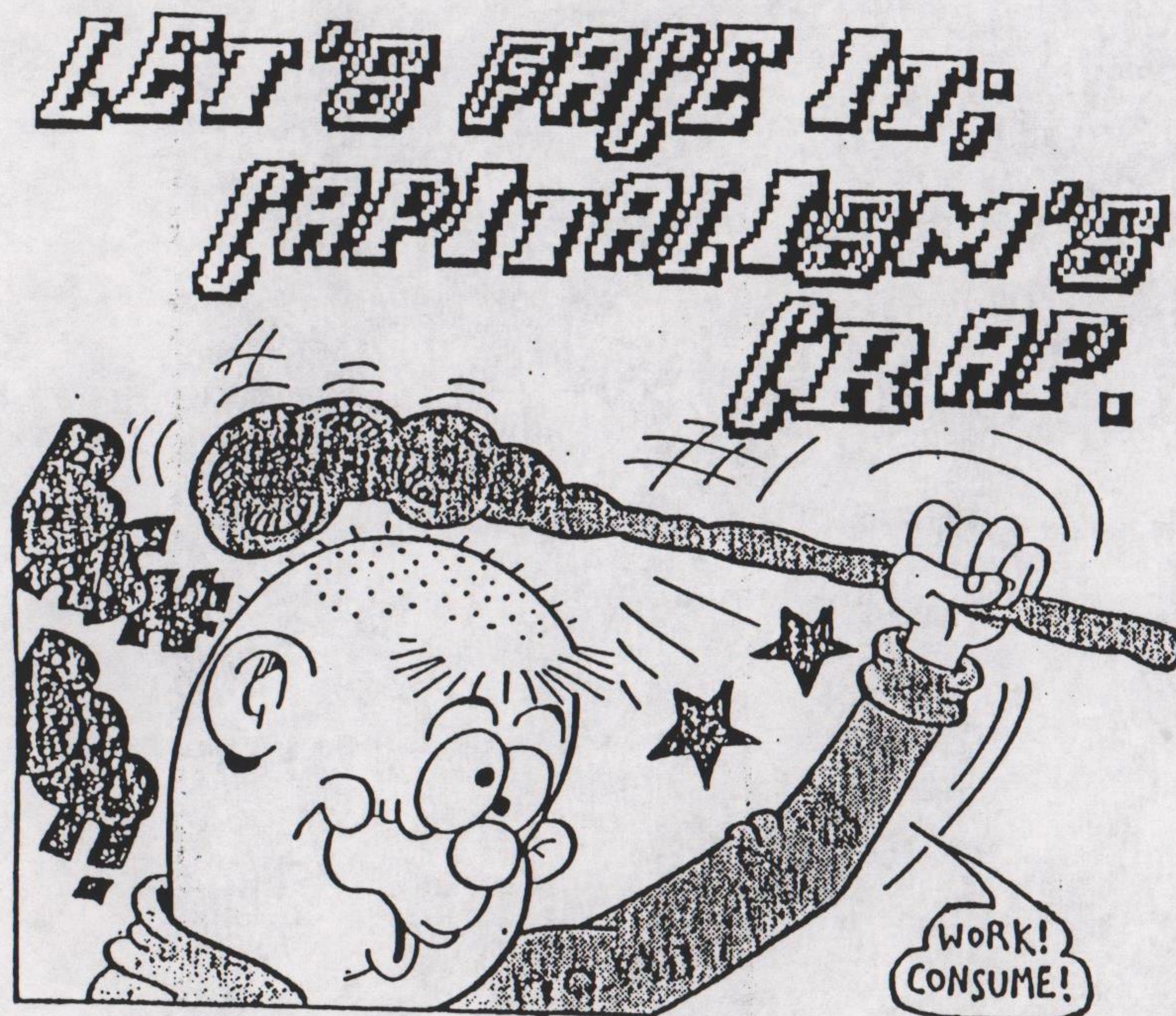
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ANARCHIST COMMUNISM OR DEATH!



What is Class Struggle Anarchist Communism

## ANARCHIST COMMUNISM OR DEATH!

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[1993]

## An Explanation of the Terms Used

First of all I am a communist. Communism is the struggle for a world in which all forms of money and production for profit or exchange will be destroyed. Production will be for use, and distribution will be according to needs and desires, there will be no buying and selling of products in a market place, people will be free to take what they choose from various distribution centres or outlets.

There will be no wages system; work will no longer be 'employment', but a creative and rewarding experience, useful for the community and necessary for a persons individual fulfilment.

The divisions that exist under the present economic order - capitalism - would disappear in communism: there would be no classes since the means of production would no longer be owned by one section of the population (whether it be the bourgeoisie, the government, or State) - the means of production would fall under communal ownership (that is, owned by all and none at the same time).

For one section of the population to maintain their ownership of the means of production they have to defend their position - this is done by the State, which not only protects the owners from the mass of non-owners, but also protects the owners from other capitalists in other States. Thus national divisions in the world are perpetuated by capitalism.

Furthermore, since labour power in the world is a marketable commodity workers are set in competition against each other by their need to be employed. This competition forms the basis of all sexual, racial or other divisions in the working class, and is skilfully maintained by our rulers in order to keep wage-earners weak - divided - in the face of capitalism.

I use the word anarchist to differentiate myself from other political trends which may be labelled communist - trends which support State Capitalism; parliamentary activity; the establishment of a Party to 'lead' workers or act as a kind of vanguard; or the growth of any hierarchy which puts power into the hands of a few.

Ultimately it is not the word that counts but the practice of individuals or groups. Many communists will agree with all the basic propositions in this text and although they may prefer not to use the word anarchist there will be no real divergence of methods. To make matters more complicated, many people who call themselves anarchist communists will not agree with all of this text! Just as we know these days that we have to learn more about a persons position if they simply call themselves 'communist' or 'socialist' to understand their ideas, so too do we have to know more about a person beyond the label 'anarchist'. No one owns these words, and labels are far less important than ideas and action.

For historical and semantic reasons I believe this text to be best described as anarchist communist. But more important than what we call ourselves is what we stand for, beyond the label.

I use the term class struggle to emphasise the recognition of the central role that must be played by the working class in the revolution and the establishment of communism. Only in the class struggle (or class war) will the working class realise its power and the hostility of all individuals and organisations which try to control them in the interests of preserving capitalism - whether they be Trotskyist or Leninist parties, unions, or any other body which seeks to contain or use working class militancy for its own ends.

Having briefly defined why I use the terms class struggle anarchist communism we can now go on to look at some of the more specific tenets of which it is made up. The headings below should not be considered as what I am for, but merely as convenient titles to break up the text!

#### Reformism, Demands, and Transitional Demands

These days reformism is generally taken to mean chipping away at aspects of the present society in order to make peoples lives a bit better. A 'reformist demand', simply, is a demand made by people on the government, law, or whatever, which addresses a single aspect of their lives. An example would be a demand to make abortion legal and freely available. This is a demand that all revolutionaries would actively support. However, in their support, revolutionaries would also point out the limits of such a reform, they would argue, for example, that this 'right', if won, could be taken away in the future, and also that we will only be sure of secure, egalitarian and decent health care when we run society ourselves. When we are collectively strong we can force things out of our rulers, or they make concessions in order to contain us. When we are weak these palliatives can be taken away. The history of capitalism has shown us that we have no 'inalienable rights'. On the part of the ruling class everything is fair in the class war. It is not so easy for the communist movement. From our side, we are building a new world within the shell of the old, we have to be honest with ourselves, our comrades, and the rest of our class. As our task is to destroy authoritarianism we cannot go about it in an authoritarian manner.

The whole question of a revolutionary's role in the area of 'demands' is a complex one. Our first rule must always be honesty to our class. As we are revolutionaries we should not spend our time persuading the working class to invent reformist demands - that is, we should not initiate reformist demands ourselves, we know that reforms are limited and precarious and we should always say so. Also, of course, we should not support all

reformist demands willy-nilly. Each demand has to be examined on its merits.

However, once a movement for a particular worthy reform is initiated (for example, for higher pay, or free health care, etc.) we should get involved not only to help the reform succeed but also to point out the dangers, limitations and possibilities, and to push the struggle further, to broaden the movements horizons and to make links with other sections of our class. Some believe we should not only initiate reformist demands but impossible reformist demands! (also known as Transitional Demands). The logic behind these methods is that the working class need to be led and manipulated into becoming aware of the need for revolution. Although these activists recognise the limits and precariousness of reforms, they believe that the only way to teach workers this fact is to send them on these learning exercises.

Such arrogant manipulation is misguided on at least two levels. Firstly, other workers need no help in forming demands from revolutionaries, they do it all the time, whenever workers see a chance to better their immediate conditions they will usually take it. Secondly, the dishonesty involved in the tactic will lead the 'revolutionary' into all sorts of difficult situations: from having to defend reformism to workers; to being accused of deceit and leading people up the garden path; to negotiating with the opposition on behalf of the workers. Misleading our class is a dirty trick, and indicative of authoritarianism.

Ordinary workers (who, remember, are not revolutionary all the time!) are constantly making demands in different areas of society. We must intervene openly, arguing the best tactics to win (solidarity, linking up with other struggles, extending the struggle into other areas, etc.) and also warning that even if we win, this reform can be taken away in the future. Our opposition must be directed at every facet of this society which keeps us in chains.

#### Nationalism

If we are to eradicate capitalism it has to be done in every part of the world. There can be no such thing as 'Socialism in One Country'. Nationality is a facade maintained by our rulers to hide the real common interests of the working class throughout the world. The working class has no country and must realise its internationalism.

All forms of nationalist movement (from the IRA, to the Kurdish nationalist movement, to 'black nationalism', to the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, and so on) seek to replace 'foreign' bosses with home-grown ones (black nationalism aims to replace white bosses with black ones). All nationalism is bourgeois and unequivocally serves bourgeois interests. Nationalist

struggles are not in the interests of the working class, only the class war serves our interests, which is directed against all bosses, 'foreign' and 'local'.

National liberation movements usually identify with anti-imperialism. Imperialism is a misleading term since it is capitalism's natural tendency to expand and create new markets - imperialism is not a useful word because it limits the understanding of what capitalism is, making it seem as if capitalism's geographical expansion across the world was somehow separate from the internal dynamics of capitalism itself. History has shown that anti-imperialist movements seek to do no more than replace foreign bosses with local ones. Anti-imperialism simply means nationalism. Fighting 'imperialism' is a waste of time, our struggle must always be against all ruling classes and capitalism itself.

'Native Peoples' movements (such as Aboriginal or Native American) have also proven to be little more than nationalist movements. At the end of the 20th century it is clear that people cannot exist in the world without being involved in the machinery of capitalism: buying, selling, having one's labour power reduced to a commodity to be bought (or not) by employers.

Capitalism creates a universal economy which cannot be stemmed or contained, there is only one cure for capitalism: its utter destruction. If 'Native Peoples' nationalism gets anywhere it will be over the backs of, and at the expense of, the 'native' working class, who will find that their new masters are not much different to the old ones.

### Sexism

The struggle against sexual oppression is integral to the struggle against the whole of this society, i.e. the class struggle. There is little class unity while sexism is a force in the working class.

If working class women are paid less than their male counterparts, for example, we will support a reformist demand to raise their wages. However, our interventions will be as revolutionaries: arguing the need for direct action, solidarity from other workers, and the fact that no wage rise is enough to satisfy our real class interests.

We do not support demands such as equal pay for women company directors. Feminism seeks to emphasise the common interests of women of all classes at the expense of their class interests. Unless the working class develops and maintains a class analysis of their position in society then they will remain the dupes of the ruling class.

If, for example, a judge, is exposed and hounded by the establishment and media for being gay, should we support him? A judge is an enemy of the working class who daily implements capitalist laws. I do not care what sexuality a judge is and will not support the right of a judge to be gay - this would be nonsensical since I do not support the right of judges to exist at all

However, the incident would provide anarchist communists with an important opportunity to examine homophobia and its divisive influence in the working class. We would argue that our real enemies are capitalism and the ruling class not other working class people - ignorant prejudices are not only a waste of time and energy, they play right into the hands of a ruling class which wants us to remain fearful, submissive and divided.

Just as I would never participate in a campaign to re-instate a gay or lesbian judge, I would not advocate equal treatment in the police force for women officers, or an end to racism in the armed forces, or the creation of women and gay priests. I want all these institutions, which act to oppress the working class, to disappear.

### Religion

Religions have cast a shadow of ignorance over the world for many centuries. Unless the idea of God, or a divine force, is expelled from people's minds they will not be able to understand the world or what needs to be done to make it a just and decent place, without exploitation, fear or want.

We have had enough superstitious mumbo-jumbo; enough Fundamentalism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islamicism, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. If we want an end to religious wars then religion itself must be eradicated from our lives.

The working class needs realism and imagination - not the mind-manacles created by priests, holy people, and their wheedling cohorts.

### Consumerism

One of the most telling things about 'developed', or 'western' society is the claim in recent years that one indication of poverty is not being able to afford a television, and therefore that the television is a 'necessity'! It is obvious whose side the social workers who came up with this gem are on: as a pacifier and disseminator of dis-information the TV has no rival.

The whole of consumer society, its fashions and trends, rests on our alienation from each other and from our real desires. We are meant to identify more with products and fictional TV or advertising characters than with each other. We are conned into believing we have real choices: this car or that car; these baked beans or those baked beans; this part of culture or that part. We need our money now not only to survive but in order to be able to make these important choices.

We are consumers to the end, we look at society through a newspaper, television or radio. Not only are we encouraged to believe their crap, we are expected to actually buy it as well!

Our own car (on hire purchase!), our own TV, our own washing machine - are these things meant to make us happy? Has capitalism done something nice for us for once? Of course not! Buying these products helps keep the 'economy' running smoothly and it keeps us isolated from each other: so we can experience the poverty of our daily life on our own, in our own car, in front of our own washing machine. Or even, while we are sat on the bus, in the dreams of owning our own car and our own washing machine!

Consumerism is a weapon used to reinforce our isolation, and thereby it sustains the real poverty of our lives.

### Unions

One of the most insidious enemies of the working class is the union in all its forms. Unions are designed to operate in non-revolutionary times, to 'protect' workers from the worst excesses of capitalism on a day to day basis (apart from when they are set up by the State, particularly as has happened under Fascism and Stalinism). What this means is negotiating for a fairer form of exploitation for its members. In order to be effective unions must have the support of their non-revolutionary members and the bosses, this rules out any revolutionary content in unions beyond a fake commitment to a distant 'socialism'.

Once a union begins effective operations it quickly takes its place on the side of capital, this is inevitable, the survival and prosperity of the enterprise (or business) is essential to the union's very existence. A union would rather see large numbers of its members sacked than to lose its role in the industry completely, the bosses know this and it is one reason the unions and bosses work so closely together. The unions are able to contain and control workers, and in times of unrest this is essential not only for the bosses themselves but also for the enterprise.

The logic of the union, because it has an important role in capitalist relations (a bit like bourgeois democracy), means it can never be anti-capitalist and in revolutionary times will always attempt to save capitalism, thereby revealing its true counter-revolutionary nature. This goes for every type of union, whether it be trade, syndicalist, or anarcho-syndicalist.

In Spain in 1936, the anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, persuaded many of its members to abandon the revolution and join with the republicans in fighting the war against Franco. The CNT joined the government, it was not a 'mistake' but an inevitability. The perpetuation of the revolution would have made the CNT redundant. It was Buenaventura Durruti himself who predicted that the way the CNT was conducting itself would lead to 'a sort of State socialism' (i.e. State Capitalism) if the CNT took control of Spain. In fact, State Capitalism is the logical extreme ambition of all unionism - where the unions take over the running of capitalism completely. We well know that this means no real change in circumstances for wage slaves.

Revolutionaries should not take union posts, such as the post of shop steward. Shop stewards have to negotiate with bosses, they have to look after the interests of non-revolutionary workers in non-revolutionary times. Shop stewards with revolutionary aspirations will always find themselves compromised, drawn up into the union apparatus, or despised by the workers for not gaining a good working relationship with the bosses, which is essential if the shop steward is to defend members in day to day injustices.

This does not mean we should not join unions where we think it appropriate. Access to shop\union meetings can be important in arguing our positions and in gaining information. Many places, of course, have official or unofficial closed shops anyway. Whatever the situation, we need to encourage the creation of revolutionary workers groups, regular propaganda, unofficial mass meetings, and any constructive actions which go beyond union control.

The idea that an organisation which supports the continued existence of capitalism by its very nature, and in whatever form, can work to the real advantage of the working class must be expelled from the minds of revolutionaries.

### The Transitional Stage

There can be no transitional stage, programme or period, between capitalism and communism. The revolution cannot afford to keep certain elements of the capitalist system, such as exchange, or money, since the

tendency of capitalism is always to grow strong and expand. The only revolution worth fighting for is the one that recognises the necessity of completely destroying all the bases of capitalism.

Capitalism and communism are completely incompatible. We cannot risk letting any remnants of the market, classes, the State and national frontiers survive or the revolution, in Kropotkin's words, "will be drowned in blood". Communism may take a while to be declared all over the world, but wherever it is declared it must be absolutely communist, and the war for communism - the class war - will not be over until the entire globe has renounced all vestiges of this inhuman capitalist regime.

### The Revolution

How will the revolution begin? Some might say that we have to wait for capitalism to find itself in a deep economic crisis before the proletariat wakes up to the need to sweep everything away. The period of the First World War was a prime example of a capitalist crisis, caused by intense competition for markets and war between nation states. The war was also useful for the European ruling classes as a safety valve for the escalating class war that was sweeping the continent.

Before the war large sections of the proletariat were already aware of the need for revolution, it was during the excesses and 'mis-management' of the war that this revolutionary upsurge found itself again and went further (especially in Russia, Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary and Britain).

The Spanish Revolution of 1936, although triggered by an attempted right wing coup, was largely the result of decades of the assiduous and energetic work of revolutionaries. Revolts of the proletariat in Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, Germany, Yugoslavia and Portugal in the 1960's and '70's have not solely been the result of economic crises.

There is no set of rules for what will start a revolution, it could be an economic crisis, the conscious actions of a revolutionary working class, or a combination of both.

What is important is that revolutionaries continue to work for communism and that our numbers grow. Revolutionaries must always be here, remembering the lessons of the past, making sense of the world as it is now and pointing to what can be done: what the world could be. This, of course, may be a hard and unrewarding slog, but it is vital if we are to prevent the counter-revolutionary disasters that have happened in the past, in Russia, in Spain, Germany, Mexico, and so on.

### Organisation

It obviously makes sense for revolutionaries to work together, however, different periods may require different forms of organisation. It may be that there is little point in forming a proper organisation, with a name, an aims and principles, and a desire to grow, because it would merely use up time and energy that could be used more fruitfully in interventions and other actions. An organisation is not an end in itself, it must have a purpose, whether it is to unify the tactics and approach of revolutionaries over a larger area, or perhaps only to bring out a regular paper. We must always be aware of the threat of 'organisation fetishism', which, apart from possibly taking revolutionaries out of real struggles, may also lead to the creation of cliques and people who become authority figures merely through their knowledge of the organisation or time spent in it.

Having said that, it is important that revolutionary propaganda reaches a wide audience and that more people are convinced by it. We need to produce papers, leaflets and pamphlets, and we need to make interventions, at work, at demonstrations, in revolts. Two revolutionaries (or even one) can produce a revolutionary bulletin, which can be distributed at their place of work or at other gatherings of the working class. If we work together we will have more information available to us, be able to discuss tactics, pool our resources, and perhaps to bolster each others' morale.

This small pamphlet could be used as a setting down of the basic ideas with which a group of people could be gathered together.



Our analysis must always be from a class perspective. The anarchist communist revolution is nothing less than the ending of all exploitation and the creation of mutual solidarity and freedom. We are revolutionaries, not reformists, con-artists or powermongers. We do not seek to placate the working class with short-term and illusory gains, we seek to sharpen its revolutionary temper. Only when the working class is completely out of control will we be able to take real control of our lives.