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Subversion

We need

NUMBER 11

A Winter of Anger

The state's plans to close over half the mining industry, to sack thousands of miners, to jeopardize thousands of other jobs was not just bad judgment. It was a sign of just how desperate the state of the British economy is and of how determined the state is that we, the working class, should pay and not the bosses.

The plans for the mines did not just come from nowhere, nor did they come because the Tories are uniquely wicked. The redundancy threats came close on the heels of Black Wednesday, the collapse of the pound and Britain's withdrawal from the ERM. The government said it would have to cut public spending and closing the mines was just a first step.

**ALSO IN THIS
ISSUE:**

**WAR IN
YUGOSLAVIA**

MILITANT

**DISUNITY OVER
EUROPE**

**ANARCHISM AND
THE LEFT**

LEFT GREENS

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.
- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.
- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.
- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.
- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.
- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.
- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.
- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.
- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.
- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Want to Get Involved?

If you agree with our basic principles "What We Stand For" and are in general agreement with the views expressed in

articles in this and other issues of **SUBVERSION**, then why not get involved?

There are a number of ways you could do this.

1. Join **SUBVERSION**. You can do this if you are in agreement and live in the north of England. We have members in Manchester, Leeds and Oldham.
2. Write to us and let us know you are out there!
3. Take extra copies of **Subversion** to give to friends or distribute at meetings (be realistic, though not pessimistic, about the number you might be able to pass on).
4. Try writing short articles for future issues. We will happily give you advice on what the right length is, and will make suggestions about topics if you want.
5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**.
6. Arrange to meet us.
7. If meeting us is difficult, you might like to have a local contact address published in **SUBVERSION** and use this to find out if there are others locally of a like mind.

Meetings

We hold regular meetings in the Manchester area. If you'd like to come, write to our address for details, or look out in Frontline Bookshop.

We also take part in open discussion meetings in Sheffield. These are organised jointly with members of the CWO, CBG, ACF and local anarchists. If you'd like to come along, drop us a line.

Subversion is printed and published by Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Disunity over European Unity

Despite the huge costs of reunification and the general slow down in world trade, Germany remains the strongest economy relative to others in Europe. It is also, alongside Japan, a major competitor of the USA for dominance of the world market.

For the other countries of Europe this is a major problem. Inside or outside the EEC and its exchange rate mechanism, Germany's economic strength is something they have to deal with. The attitude of European states to the EEC is very much their attitude to Germany.

The ruling classes of places like Belgium have already more-or-less thrown in their lot with Germany on the basis of 'if you can't beat them, join them'.

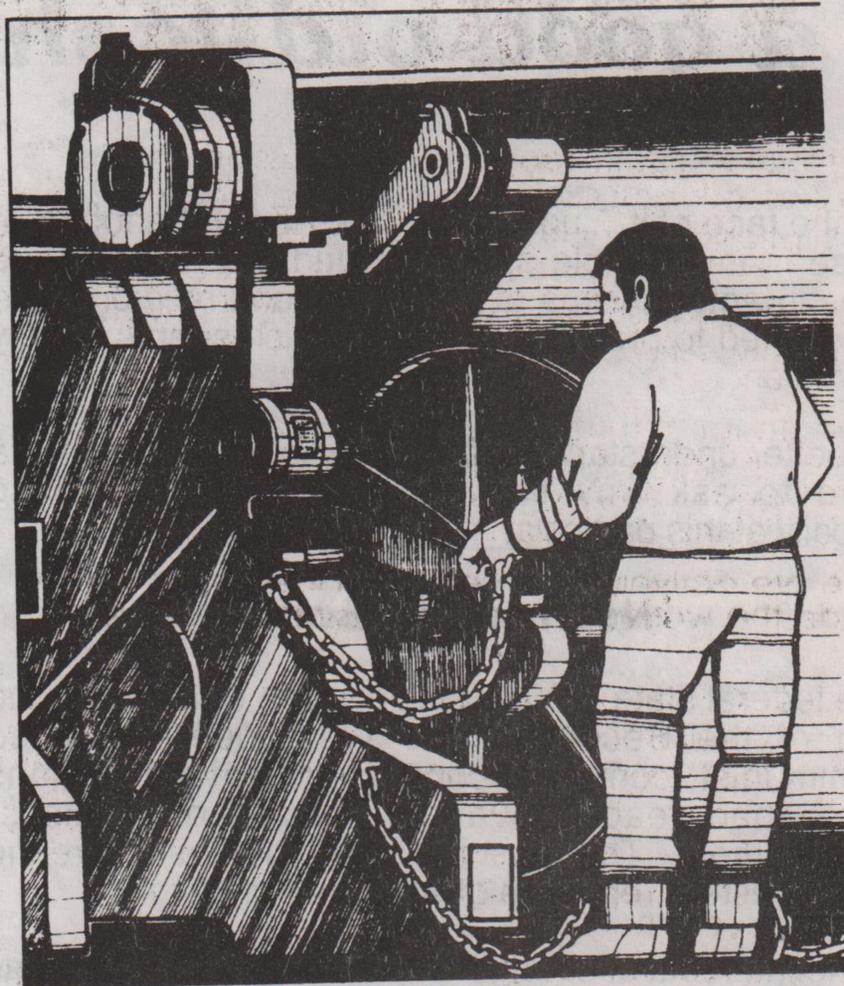
Other states, like France and Italy, have decided that Germany's strength is best contained within a strong integrated union where they can exert their political influence and ensure some redistribution of wealth to weaker sections of the European economy.

Germany itself recognises that to compete with the emerging USA dominated bloc, incorporating Canada and Mexico, it must expand its immediate productive and market base in Europe, as rapidly as possible.

Britain on the other hand has always prevaricated over its policy towards European Union. Its long standing ties with the USA and substantial investments in that country have ensured this. That section of the British ruling class in favour of European Union has, since Thatcher's fall, had the upper hand. The USA supported this move on the understanding that Britain would act as its bridgehead into Europe. Britain would work on the inside to promote a looser and wider union integrated into a US dominated NATO and based on free trade with the North American bloc.

The rapid acceleration of the world economic crisis and the disintegration of countries like Yugoslavia on the immediate periphery of Europe has brought all these differences to a head. It has especially reopened splits in the British ruling class over European policy.

As usual the political parties of capitalism from the left to right and the whole of the media have tried to engage our participation in the debate over all these issues, pretending that it is our interests at stake rather than theirs. But clearly,



in or out of the EEC and the ERM, the worsening crisis only brings more attacks on the social condition of the working class. It is in the weakest economies that this attack is at its most vicious. Massive public expenditure cuts in Italy alongside the abandonment of protective wage agreements are the order of the day irrespective of whether Italy is in or out of the ERM.

Workers there, far from being diverted by the EEC debates, have responded in their hundreds of thousands with massive strikes and demonstrations. And the union leaders who have cooperated with the government all along have come under verbal and physical assault. The first faltering steps of self-organisation outside the Unions have been taken through the formation of 'Committees of Struggle' and other base committees which cut across trade union and sectional barriers. Whilst these have yet to go beyond a 'militant trade unionism' in their political approach (with the danger of becoming simply alternative unions) there is great potential for a genuinely independent class based movement to grow.

There have also been large strikes in Greece and Spain. We can only hope and work towards the same response now in Britain, where the recent outrage at massive redundancies in the mines and elsewhere shows that workers here are reaching similar conclusions to those parts of Europe.

{For more background reading we would recommend the article 'EMUs in the Class War' in 'Aufheben, c/o Unemployed Centre, Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex.}

Yugoslavia

- a good old fashioned bosses war

On the face of it, Yugoslavia looks like yet another of those many 'trouble spots' around the world where age old antagonisms of nationality and religion have intertwined to produce a conflict which seems to defy resolution.

To better understand what's really going on there, we have to ask why this situation has erupted so bloodily at this particular moment.

North and South

The federal state of Yugoslavia which emerged at the end of the Second World War under so-called 'communist' control encompassed several regions which had reached various stages of capitalist development. The most advanced of these were the north-western republics of Slovenia and Croatia.

In the interests of strengthening the Yugoslav state as a whole, a large proportion of the surplus value (profits) produced by the Slovenian and Croatian working class was constantly creamed off by the state capitalist bureaucrats in charge of the central government for investment in the less developed southern republics - Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia.

This policy provided the material basis for continual tensions among the factions comprising the Yugoslav ruling class: as one excellent account of the background to the war in Yugoslavia puts it, "between on the one hand rulers who stressed a degree of Croat and Slovene independence along with economic efficiency, and on the other hand those who were concerned with the preservation of the machinery of centrally directed investment, the all-round development of the national capital, and the preeminence of Belgrade and the largely Serb administrative apparatus."¹

Economic Crisis

The economic and social policies in Yugoslavia at any particular time tended to reflect the interests of whichever one or other of these ruling class factions held the upper hand. By the 1980s, however, as the Yugoslav economy became gripped ever tighter by the crisis affecting the whole of world capitalism, the scope for reconciling these two contradictory tendencies each pulling in opposite directions was steadily eroded.

¹ see "Yugoslavia: Capitalism and Class Struggle 1918-67" in the pamphlet Yugoslavery from BM Blob, London WC1N 3XX

The more the local ruling classes of the richer republics pinned their hopes of surviving the crisis on ridding themselves of the economic burden posed by the less prosperous rest of the country, the more the federal authorities strove to safeguard their own futures by recentralising the whole state under their own control. At the same time, another faction within the Serbian ruling class, judging that the Yugoslav federation could not possibly be held together, began to whip up Serbian nationalism in preparation for an anticipated war against of each against all.

The inevitable outcome was the declaration of independence by Slovenia, Croatia and later Bosnia, the invasion of large swathes of these republics by the federal army, and the outbreak of hostilities by the various 'irregular' forces each fighting on behalf of their own particular nationalism.

Class Struggle and Nationalism.

Not the least pressing aspect of the economic crisis affecting the various factions of the Yugoslav ruling class during the late 1980s was the militancy of the working class in Yugoslavia. From 1986 through to 1990, faced with rising unemployment and triple-figure inflation, workers in Yugoslavia launched repeated strikes aimed at defending their living standards against wage freezes and wage cuts. These strikes involved hundreds of thousands of workers and took place right across the whole of Yugoslavia, regardless of republican boundaries.

Now it seems that this struggle of class against class has been almost totally submerged in the war of nation against nation, religion against religion. The current war in Yugoslavia is taking place because the ruling class's strategy for 'solving' the crisis has triumphed over the working class's own independent response. Nationalism - the idea that workers can find way out of their problems by rallying behind 'their own' bosses in opposition to other workers - remains a depressingly powerful force which time and again blocks the path of working class progress.

Imperialist Vultures

Since 1945 more than 20 million people have been killed in over 100 wars around the world. Most of these conflicts have been war-by-proxy between rival superpowers on 'third world' battlefields. Now these 'little wars' are moving closer to the heartlands of world capitalism.

Yugoslavia borders on seven other states, each of which in its own way is eyeing up its neighbour's

decaying corpse for whatever pickings it might grab. Also circling over the scene are two larger vultures: Germany, which rushed some of its EC partners into early recognition of Slovenian and Croatian 'independence' with the aim of eventually pulling these states into a German-dominated European bloc; and the USA, which initially declared against any dismemberment of the Yugoslav federation and is seeking some way of thwarting the growing expansionist ambitions of its rising European rival.

Whatever 'peace' settlement is eventually imposed on Yugoslavia will do nothing to remove the underlying causes of the conflict. It will merely ratify a realignment of the forces which are jostling for the strongest position from which to fight the next war, and the next war after that. The most we can do to aid our fellow workers in Yugoslavia is to expose and oppose the capitalist forces big and small which are responsible for the bloodshed and misery there, and to hope that eventually out of the gruesome futility of the present conflict the Yugoslav working class's spirit of class combativity might yet be resurrected.



The "Peace Keepers"

Only someone with a heart of stone could fail to be shocked by the atrocities being committed - on all sides - in Yugoslavia. But this is no reason for anyone to support the 'peace initiative' of the United Nations or European Community. These bodies are not intervening in Yugoslavia out of humanitarian fellow-feeling, but as part of the self-interested manoeuvring of the big powers which dominate them.

In flat contradiction of its stated aims of disarming Serb forces and enabling refugees to return home, so far the objective result of the UN 'peace-keeping' force's intervention has in fact been to consolidate Serbian conquests.

In the Serbian-occupied Baranja region of north east Croatia, for example, UN troops "are increasingly assisting in the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' ... Hundreds of Croats and Hungarians are assisted in their passage out of Baranja by the UN" (Independent on Sunday 27.9.92). At the same time, UN officials "vowed to use force" to stop Croatian refugees returning to their former homes in the same region. (Independent 30.9.92).

At the time of writing (early October) such actions by the UN were raising the strong possibility of armed confrontation between UN and Croatian forces. All of this fits in with the UN's role as a tool of US capitalism's strategic objectives in Yugoslavia.

pamphlets

Ireland. Nationalism and Imperialism. The Myths Exploded. Why the British State and the IRA both defend capitalism. 50p inc. postage.

Labouring In Vain. A socialist analysis of the Labour party from its formation to today. *Out soon.* 50p inc. postage.

Left-Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21 ... An infantile disorder? By Bob Jones, Pirate Press. 60p inc postage.

Fascism and Anti-Fascism by J Barrot, Pirate Press. £1.50 inc postage.

Back issues. Some copies of Subversion 9 and 10 left. Send a donation and 24p stamp.

All cheques payable to Subversion.

Subversion

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Manchester M1 1HW

A Winter of Anger continued

It was followed by threats to many famous London hospitals and the announcement of a plan to tax invalidity benefit. It comes at a time of a continuing running down of the NHS which shows itself in closures or threats to close less famous hospitals like Elizabeth Garret Anderson, the women's hospital in London, or Booth Hall, the children's hospital in Manchester. It accompanied threats to freeze or squeeze public sector pay.

Against this background the massive anger and demonstrations were essential if there is going to be any fight back by the working class.

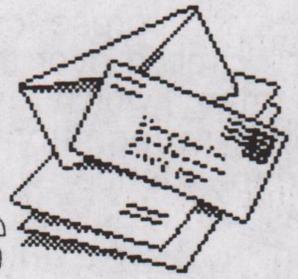
But the working class is up against a united front of the ruling class. The Labour Party, the Liberal Party, large numbers of Tory MPs, the Press, Radio, TV, Church, TUC, UDM and NUM were united in opposing the closures. But their opposition was not the same as ours. It was an opposition calling for a national energy policy, a policy which would look at all the energy production in Britain and make cuts and redundancies across the board, not just in one sector. A policy which might "save" a few jobs in Britain but which would happily lead to many redundancies for workers in other countries.

So far this coalition has led the opposition. What has been the result? Ten pits have closed, thousands of miners stand to lose their jobs in a few months time rather than immediately. The management of British Coal are making it plain that they intend to go ahead with as many closures as they can get away with. Thousands of other workers will still lose their jobs and whole working class communities will be destroyed or thrown into total despair.

What the working class needs to do is to take back control of the fight. This means organising independently of the unions, independently of the Labour and Liberal Parties. It means a fight against cuts in jobs, pay and services wherever they happen. It is not a question of arguing about which jobs should go, but of making sure the ruling class pays, not us. It means a united fight where we recognise that an injury to one is an injury to all. Not a fight based on demos and petitions, but a unified strike movement where everyone is actively involved in running the strike.



letters



Bookchin and Green Anarchism

Readers of the article on 'Bookchin and Green Anarchism' in **subversion 10** may have noticed that due to a technical error Murray Bookchin's name appeared several times as Murray Bacon. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused!

On a more serious note, we have received the following letter (edited for reasons of space) from one of the co-editors, with Bookchin, of the Social Ecology Project publication **Green Perspectives**. We are publishing this because we feel that they have a right to comment in their own words, but regret that they have not chosen to write it in an easily accessible style.

To the Editors:

...Your account of Bookchin's ideas in 'Bookchin and Green Anarchism' ... [suggests] that he is ultimately a reformist by associating him with reformist tendencies in the Left Green Network (an organisation which Bookchin co-founded) and some of whose members support his views.

...It is understandable that, an ocean away, you would not be aware of internal dissensions in the Left Green Network. Be apprised here that (1) the LGN has passed no 'program' - what your writer must be referring to is one of several draft programs that have been floating around for some time now; and (2) despite the somewhat diluted assertions of libertarian municipalism in the LGN's Principles, libertarian municipalism is only one of many tendencies in the LGN, which encompasses not only social ecologists but eco-socialists, social democrats, anarchosyndicalists, and anarchists of a postmodernist bent.

Bookchin has consistently fought the very reformist tendencies in the LGN that you associate with him -- indeed, a considerable literature makes the same criticism that you do. In 'Critique of the Draft Program of the Left Green Network' (June 1991), for example, Bookchin and I criticized in detail just such reformist tendencies in one of the draft LGN programs and concluded by asserting that "the Left Greens should be uncompromising in their spirit of opposition We know of no other way to countervail the cooptive powers of capitalism but to oppose to it the most

demanding ecological positions in our movement." Subversion readers who wish to see a copy of this critique and our other antireformist writings may write to the Social Ecology Project, P.O. Box 111, Burlington, Vermont 05402, USA.

Finally, far from advocating a 'steady building up ... within capitalism.' Bookchin places himself in the great anarchist tradition of the "Commune of communes." His libertarian municipalism seeks to develop a civic communal opposition to the nation-state and the capitalist system by means of the 'counterpower' of a new confederal politics (in the Hellenic sense of the word politics) and a municipalized confederal economy. Not to see that this counterpower would emerge as a 'dual power' is a mistake that many of our opponents in various Green movements typically make.

Janet Biehl

Subversion comments: the first point to make is that Bookchin's strategy (as expressed in the final paragraph above) misses out the class struggle and appears to consist merely of abstract organisational forms, talking about 'civic communal opposition' and the 'counterpower of a new confederal politics' and the like. What exactly is being organised?

For Subversion, the class struggle is the only motor of revolutionary change. When we talk about forms of organisation, we are talking about how to organise class struggle and secondly about the organisation of a new revolutionary society, since the second will arise out of the first. A revolutionary classless society can only arise out of class struggle.

The second point concerns the people Bookchin is organised with. There is a saying that you shouldn't judge a person by the company they keep - but how can we be criticised for "associating Bookchin with reformist tendencies in the Left Green Network (LGN) when he himself has chosen to share an organisation with such people?

Among the several excellent points made in the Social Ecology Project's "Critique" of the LGN is that the LGN's "Draft Program" contains many demands for reforms "that are quite compatible in principle with the capitalist system and that are partly in existence already."

From this we would conclude that so-called "reformists" are not a 'backward' section of the revolutionary movement, but in fact belong to the 'progressive' end of the capitalist spectrum.

Revolutionaries have no common cause with such "reformist" (i.e. left-wing capitalist) groups. On the contrary, we must sharply distinguish ourselves from them not only politically but also organisationally. Only in this way can we keep our message unmistakably clear in the eyes of the people we are trying to reach.

Subversion

Anarchism and the left

Dear Comrades,

Your article, "The Menace of Anti-Fascism" is to be welcomed, even if you do beat about the bush a bit before you actually come to the point.

Of course it's very important to stress that the enemies of our class struggle are the politicians and political parties left and right - that while their ideas and appearances may appear different, the ANL, AFA and the BNP are united in their support for capital and the state against the working class.

So why do you involve yourselves with leftist parties like the Anarchist "Communist" Federation, and Class War who promote Anti-Fascist Action (firmly defending the trade unions, elections and all the other "rights" we workers have in a capitalist democracy).

From reading your magazine it would appear that you know who the left are, and what they are (i.e. an integral and essential part of the capitalist system) but are you just the radical left of it?

I'd like to see **Subversion** clarify their position on Leftism (Anarchism included) and assert their opposition to it.

Against all states and all states in waiting.

S. Leamington Spa.

Subversion replies:

Dear Comrade,

The position of Subversion on leftism is quite clear. The left is simply a part of capitalism, no less than the right. Left and right are twin pillars of capitalism's political apparatus.

The politics of leftism can be summed-up as an updated form of the old bourgeois-democratic programme (mainly based on "right" - the right to work, right of nations to self-determination, liberty, equality, fraternity, etc.) coupled with a state capitalist economic programme. Different groups or currents may vary the menu here and there but form part of the same "cuisine".

This is true of ALL varieties of leftism, from the Labourites and Stalinists to the most radical-talking of the Trotskyists and Maoists. ALL of these currents are just different options WITHIN capitalism.

It is because of this fundamental rift between revolutionary politics and leftist politics that revolutionaries never describe themselves as "left" or "left-wing". Some revolutionaries describe themselves as "ultra left", i.e.

beyond the left.

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that supporters of left wing politics or members of left wing groups are consciously acting in the interests of capitalism. All of us are brought up in an environment where we are constantly bathed in capitalist ideas all of our lives, and when we begin to break from the mainstream ideas of this society, we inevitably break from it a bit at a time. This is why people who want to oppose capitalism often gravitate to one or other form of leftism, at least to begin with.

Capitalism then has many faces. If the face of mainstream society has begun to look ugly to someone, they will be presented with another face. If the right has no charms, the left will smile seductively.



Thus the value of the left for capitalism is that it is a safety net to catch people who would otherwise turn to revolutionary politics. The leftist groups and parties

are OBJECTIVELY capitalist because, despite the best intentions of people who have been thus "caught", their energies will be spent on struggling for an alternative WITHIN capitalism. Part of the activity of revolutionary groups, therefore, will involve trying to win supporters of leftism to revolutionary politics.

This is a brief summary of our view on leftism. As for the specifics of leftism, e.g. support for trade unionism, support for "national liberation" etc. and why we say they are counter-revolutionary, we have dealt with these in other articles in the past and will deal with them in other articles in the future, so we will now deal with the more specific part of your letter, i.e. our attitude to the ACF and Class War.

We consider the vast bulk of the so-called "Anarchist Movement" to be part of the left and therefore counter-revolutionary. However, this doesn't mean that all groups that use the name "Anarchist" are leftist.

For the record, we do not consider the ACF to be Leftist. Although their politics a few years ago at the time of their former magazine "Virus" were pretty appalling, the ACF's politics today, as stated in their Aims and Principles, are very similar to ours.

Surely, you might say, a leftist group evolving lock, stock and barrel into a revolutionary group is unheard of!

Indeed, the best that can normally be hoped for is for a handful of people in a leftist group to radicalise to the

point of becoming revolutionary and split from the group. However, with a very small group, the number of people coming to revolutionary politics could constitute a majority of the group, and this appears to have happened with the ACF.

Their magazine **Organise** has improved leaps and bounds over the last 18 months. On the specific issue of Anti-Fascism which prompted this correspondence, the ACF, unlike Class War, has now come out clearly against cross class alliances like AFA.

Some of the changes in their politics have been at least partly the result of a constructive dialogue between our two groups.

Having said this, some articles in **Organise** still display vestiges of the old ahistorical, "idealist" approach of traditional anarchism. There is also a continuing reluctance to jettison their identity with the anarchist movement as a whole, even if in practice they have rejected most strands of that movement, as represented by anarcho-syndicalism, lifestylism, anarcho-pacifism, radical liberalism and so on.

Even if **Organise** from time to time publishes the occasional article which in our opinion is rubbish, we have little hesitation in characterising the ACF as a revolutionary group.

Class War, however, is not a revolutionary group. It is a swamp which contains both revolutionary and leftist elements. A significant part of Class War has unambiguously counter-revolutionary positions, like support for the IRA or other capitalist states in waiting. They also have no clear understanding of the counter-revolutionary nature of trade unionism. But they also contain elements which are revolutionary or on the edge of being revolutionary and it is with these elements that Subversion has engaged in dialogue. For the record we have never had any organised relationship with the national Class War Federation, although we did briefly organise joint discussion meetings Manchester Class War.

We hope this answers your letter and look forward to any further communication on this or any other matter.

Note: **Organise!** can be obtained for 50p plus postage from the ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX.



Blast from the Past

The SWP and the Miners

The following extracts come from a pamphlet **How Socialist is the Socialist Workers Party**. This pamphlet was published in 1985 by the group **Wildcat**, the group that was the forerunner of **Subversion**.

With the SWP again calling for action by the TUC and the unions to "defend" the miners, we feel that the points this pamphlet makes about the last miners' strike are relevant today.

At the start of the strike the SWP announced that rank and file action was the key to victory This call for rank and file control of the strike was not repeated however. The SWP pulled back from a position which would have led them into outright opposition to the union bureaucracies. Instead, as usual, it attempted to steer a middle course between the union leaders and militant activists.

Following the mass pickets at Orgreave this became much more difficult....

The SWP later claimed that Orgreave had shown that "area bureaucracies were able to block the scale of mobilisations necessary for effective mass picketing." (Socialist Worker 3.11.84). In fact what Orgreave really showed was that effective mass picketing was impossible unless militant miners seized control of the strike from the NUM. Obviously this would be no easy task. Moreover any organisation that made this call would not be well received by many of the most militant miners, who remained fiercely loyal to the NUM, despite the fact it was sabotaging their efforts to win the strike. The SWP were not prepared to risk this unpopularity.

THE SWP AND THE TUC

The consequences of attempting to work through the unions can be seen in the SWP's attitude to the TUC..... [their] words of caution were forgotten as **Socialist Worker** euphorically declared:

"The TUC resolution in support of the miners can open the way to victory in the coal strike." (SW 8.9.84)

What about the SWP's call for activists to 'translate the words of any TUC resolution into deeds'? Well sorry what we (i.e. the SWP) really meant was that activists should ask TUC leaders to translate the words of their resolutions into deeds. In other words, its just the same old tired Trotskyist call to "force the leaders to act" after all:

"What You Can Do

...send a flood of resolutions to union executives and the TUC general council demanding full support for the NUM. Insist the TUC launches a massive campaign in support of the strike..." (SW 17.12.84)

All of this would be comical if it wasn't so serious. The belief that solidarity for the miners can be organised through the TUC is one of the most important causes of the weakness of the strike. By adding its 'radical' support to this illusion the SWP is helping to defeat the strike.

THE SWP AND THE 'HIT SQUADS'

Miners have seen the need to meet state violence with their own violence. Organised in a paramilitary fashion, working in semi-clandestinity, the 'hit squads' have attacked NCB installations, scab firms and strikebreakers. Workers in some pit villages have organised semi-insurrectionary attacks on the police. This is one of the most important gains of the strike. It marks a practical break with the peaceful traditions of trade unionism. It marks the recognition of the need for all-out class war against the bosses.

The SWP condemns the activities of the 'hit squads' as "individual acts of violence" which "can very easily endanger the strike" (SW 2.6.84). However the actions of the 'hit squads' are not individual acts. They are organised secretly of necessity. But they are supported by militant activists as essential back up for more traditional actions such as picketing.

The truth is that the straightforward, practical violence of the 'hit squads' is simply too revolutionary for the SWP.

A few copies of this pamphlet are available from us. Send 50p for a copy.



REVIEW

UNFINISHED BUSINESS the politics of Class War. AK Press £4.50

This long awaited book represents a serious and welcome attempt by the Class War Federation to sort out its own politics and present them to the working class in a clear and comprehensible language.

Subversion shares some important areas of political agreement with Class War which are hammered home in this publication. In Summary these are:-

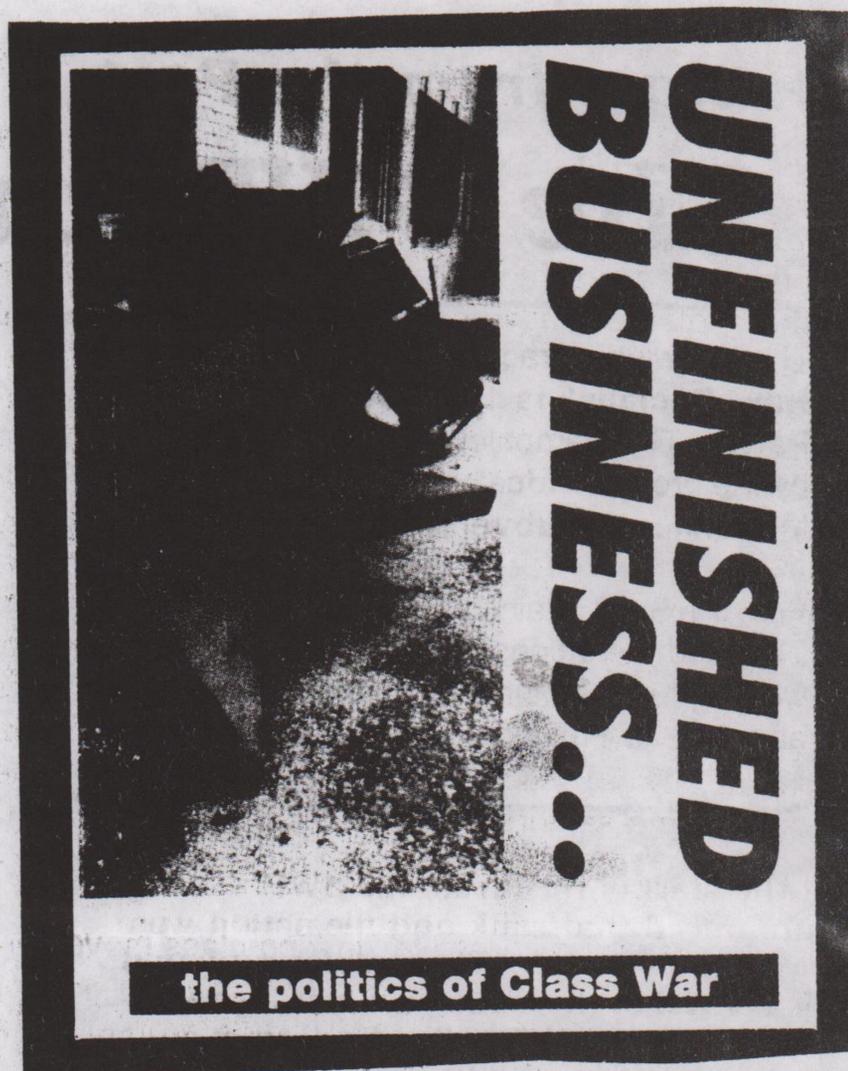
1. A clear rejection of 'reformism' as a way forward for the working class and a commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its state.
2. A recognition that the overthrow of capitalism means the complete abolition of the wages system, money and the market in all their forms.
3. Rejection of the 'old labour movement' as represented by the Labour Party and the trade unions and a commitment to independent working class struggle.
4. The need to combat racism and sexism within the context of the class struggle.

They also reject, as we do, Leninist views on revolutionary organisation. Whilst they continue to use the term 'federalism' to describe their approach to organisation, they clearly do not mean by this the kind of 'every idea or tactic is of equal value' and 'every individual or group can go its own way' approach of traditional anarchism.

Having said this there are some important weaknesses in the book which are very much hangovers from traditional left wing politics and in particular, anarchism.

Firstly, their analysis of capitalist class structures is very confused. They attempt an amalgam of 'Marxist' and anarchist definitions of class, relating this to 'wealth or property' ownership on the one hand and 'social power' on the other, rather than a straightforward 'relationship to the means of production' definition which we would use.

We wouldn't disagree with them when they say that capitalism is basically divided into three classes; the capitalist or ruling class; the middle class; and the working class. But their estimate of the size and importance of the 'middle class' is completely mistaken and their examples of who make up these classes reveals the muddle they've got themselves into. For instance, they say that rank and file soldiers are working class but rank and file policemen are not! Despite both being part of the state apparatus of repression. This distinction sees them reverting to an ideological rather than a material definition of class. They classify people like teachers and doctors as



middle class but go on to say that in a 'revolutionary' period a large section of the 'middle class' will come over to the working class side, whilst sections of the working class will side with the capitalists. But if teachers and their like have distinctive and opposing class interests to the workers, why should they? They also imply that 'peasants', i.e. small agricultural landowners, could be considered working class, whilst small business owners are clearly middle class!

What Class War have failed to do is make a materialist analysis of the way capitalism has developed over the last 150 years and how this has effected its class structure.

Modern capitalism is based on a complex division of labour on an international scale. Putting it very simply, commodities are no longer produced in factories and surplus value extracted from individual factory workers, but are the social product of the 'collective worker' as represented by factory, transport, communication, educational, health, housing and other workers. For example, whereas teachers in the early days of capitalism were for all practical purposes 'outside' the production process and for all their low pay, 'middle class' today we have a mass education industry fully integrated into the production process, with teachers playing their part in the creation of the social product of capitalism. Most teachers have become working class. This isn't to deny that the role of teachers inclines them to conservatism and places obstacles to their becoming class conscious. But this equally apply to other sections of the working class. It does mean that there is a material basis for teachers and other similar groups of workers to be drawn into the advancing class struggle when it reaches a certain pitch. Even today it is fair to say that there were probably more teachers actively involved in supporting the last British miners' strike than there were 'working class' soldiers!

Unfinished business cont'd.

There is certainly more chance of teachers and other 'professional' workers becoming involved in a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism than there is the remnants of the peasantry or small time business people and others of the traditional middle class which still survives.

The important point for us is the relationship of people to the means of production. Thus many doctors running their own business might be 'middle class' whereas others fully employed in the NHS could more reasonably be considered working class. As Class War themselves say, there are many grey areas and it is certainly true to say that there is much more class mobility amongst some sections of the (mainly better paid) working class than others. The potential for upward mobility may detrimentally effect the ideology of some sectors of the working class, it doesn't alter their objective class position at any given time.

A radical, militant and collective working class movement may well develop initially amongst the traditional working class - i.e. average manual and office workers. A recognition of this is important to our political strategy. It will only successfully go on to challenge capitalism if it draws in firstly the unemployed and then the rest of the modern working class. We can't expect more than a handful of genuinely 'middle class' people to become committed to the movement precisely because they have got more to lose than gain in the immediate situation.

Secondly, Class War have an extremely ambivalent attitude towards nationalism.

On the one hand they state correctly that 'Nationalism is one of the ways of keeping the working class divided', but then they say, '...in the face of often brutal oppression nationalism gives working class people something. That "something" is identity, pride, a feeling of community and solidarity....'

We would say it gives the working class a **false** sense of pride, a **false** identity and a **false** sense of community and solidarity.

We do recognise, as Class War say, that in places like Northern Ireland many of the struggles engaged in by the Catholic working class are not **purely** nationalist. But our job is to clearly split the nationalist from the class elements, both theoretically and practically, not fudge the two as Class War does.

Sadly, even the strengths of this book are not consistently carried through in the practice of the Class War group. This is shown starkly in their confused approach to the trade unions. One of their very few members to talk and write regularly about workplace struggle is Dave Douglass, but despite some interesting insights into aspects of this struggle he still promotes an outdated 'rank and file' approach which ends up defending the Trade Unions. (See the interesting Wildcat pamphlet "Outside and Against the Unions" for a criticism of his views.)

As worrying, is the 'idealist' tendency in Class War which sees many of their members worn out in an endless search for the 'right formula' that will get their ideas across to the working class. This was particularly evident at their final "Communities of Resistance" Rally in London where any critical discussion was deliberately squashed, with instant appeals for us to 'get stuck in' and 'do something' only to be told by Class War at the end that their idea of doing something was yet another typical lefty "Day of Action" stunt.

Militant continued from back page

poll tax movement. Earlier this year independent anti-poll tax groups tried to organise a demonstration in Manchester. Militant responded by organising one for the same day in Glasgow. This was to be a national demonstration, so the independent groups called off their Manchester demo. Militant then didn't bother to organise for the Glasgow demo, which on the day was turned into a rally for Tommy Sheridan, who was then standing as MP for Pollock.

Another problem developed. Anti poll tax meetings began not to take place. Where there were no Militant members then no meetings took place. In Blackley (a suburb of Manchester) they had no members before the Poll Tax was implemented. Militant organised one meeting. Over 200 people attended that meeting. Nobody joined Militant after that meeting. This was to be the only anti poll tax meeting to take place in Blackley. Later Militant gained **one** member in that area. Despite many requests from him, and a lot of interest from local people Militant would not organise another meeting. Because of Militant's attempt to own, run and use the anti poll tax unions as a front they soon faded, became disorganised or non-existent in areas like this. But a lot of money was raised at meetings and Militant is never slow to catch on to making money.

At branch meetings, members of Militant were told that because of the protection they were getting from the anti-poll tax federation it was time to increase subs. So the money any members were saving by not paying the poll tax could go to the organisation! How many did raise their subs we don't know. What we do know is that the Militant led and backed All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation was a failure.

The reasons for this failure, the failure to stop bailiffs, courts, wage arrestments and imprisonment was that the anti poll tax federation was controlled by just a handful of full time NCOs.¹

The anti poll tax movement was severely weakened through a large part of it being dominated by Militant front organisations.

Next issue: Militant and Gay Liberation

¹ Militant claimed 8000 members. Ted Grant recently put the true figure at just 1500 fully paid up members.

Militant

the truth behind the myth

[The following article has been written by a member of Subversion who recently left Militant.]

Anybody new to **Subversion** will gather that we are a radical organisation dedicated to revolution and the final destruction of capitalism and the smashing of the state.

But what about groups that claim to be revolutionary? How revolutionary is Militant?

"Well, that's them gone," spoke a full timer, about two members who left Militant earlier this year when the organisation split, "now let's get down to building Britain's only true revolutionary organisation and non-poll tax paying organisation..."¹

How true is this statement?

We all know the answer, but let's take a look at Militant, at its work and inside Militant itself.

Militant was formed in 1952 in Liverpool, as a trotskyist tendency just as it still is today. From the moment it was formed it entered into entrust work in the Labour party, acting as a party within a party. Militant was to centre itself around its newspaper, **Militant** - but it was in effect a secret sect. It said it was just a paper - an act of political denial which was to last for the next 40 years.²

The Poll Tax Question.

When the Poll Tax was introduced, Militant saw its golden hour, its chance to capture and fire the imagination of the working class, to spread "revolutionary" politics in the anti-poll tax unions and to use them for recruitment.

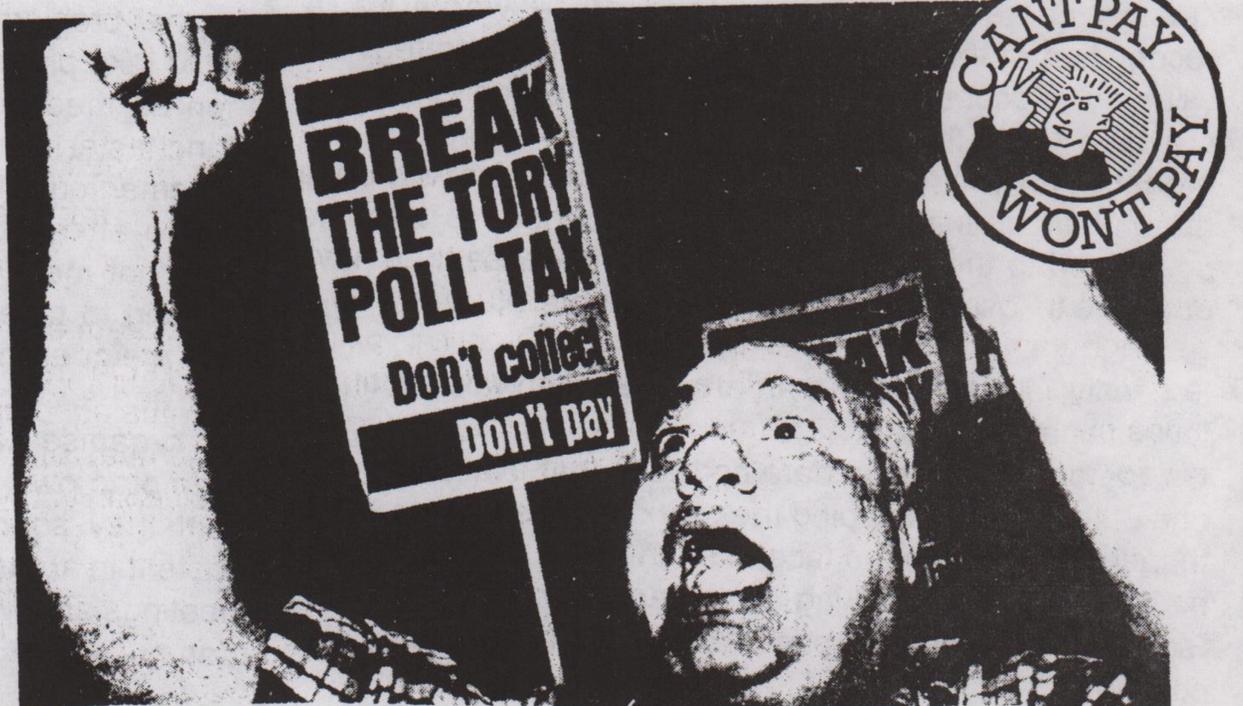
The main reasons Militant formed their anti-poll tax unions was to make a name for themselves and to recruit for Militant. Although Militant put a lot of work into the anti-poll tax movement, recruitment via this route was small. In some towns, for instance like Oldham, not one member of the public joined them.

¹ Quote made in January 1992 by a full-time NCO

² Some members of Militant still claim it is just a paper.

Forming the anti-poll tax unions was an act of political opportunism. Where Militant was strong enough they made sure all people in charge were Militant members or, as they say, "supporters".

Despite the growing anger at the poll tax and the threat of court, bailiffs and imprisonment, Militant stayed with its policy of legality. All actions and demonstrations had to stick to the law. Any act outside the law was not to be tolerated.



No outside help wanted

The test of how revolutionary Militant were was about to come.

The rising tide of anger at the Poll Tax led to the biggest demonstration in London for many years. Militant wanted an orderly and peaceful march. They were leading the demonstration and did not want any acts of anger.

The demonstration soon became a riot as anger boiled over. After the Battle of Trafalgar Square, Militant went to the press and on the radio threatened to nark on rioters. A "revolutionary organisation" was threatening to grass up and name rioters to the class enemy, the police.

At a rally soon afterwards, Tommy Sheridan, chair of the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation, echoed this. As soon as he stopped speaking angry chants rang out from the crowd. Militant had shot itself in the foot. The damage had been done. Many working class people never forgot this statement, Militant had shown its true colours.

From the beginning, Militant has wanted to lead the anti-