

Wildcat

No. 17
Spring
1994
\$3/£2



FIGHTING THE NEW WORLD ORDER SOMALIA SHOWS THE WAY

CONTENTS: Civilization, Waco, Democracy, Autonomy, Post-modernism

DEVELOPMENT BY OTHER MEANS

The War in Somalia

The defeat suffered by the death squads of the New World Order at the hands of the heroic proletariat of Somalia has made it clear that warlord Clinton didn't send in his gunmen to give food to the starving but to terrorise the proletarian population. This is not because fearless journalists have exposed the UN's war aims, but on the contrary, because fearless proles have killed journalists.

We don't have any means of knowing directly what's going on but the revolt of the proletariat has been strong enough to leave traces in the bourgeois media in the form of events which it simply can't explain if clan-based armies and their supporters were the only source of resistance towards the UN. They have not been able to deny that many clashes between UN troops and Somalis have been with largely unarmed civilians rather than with the soldiers of General Aideed. On occasions residents of working class districts of Mogadishu have built barricades which even Aideed's militiamen are not allowed to pass. Often the media will try to make out that there is just a blind nationalist,



or even racist, rage against foreigners - ignoring the fact that almost all the foreigners in Somalia are journalists, soldiers or others directly involved in the UN war effort.

Some of the most outrageous media bullshit is that concerning the "warlord" General Mohammed Farah Aideed. In June 1993 there was a UN offensive, supposedly in response to the deaths of 24 Pakistani UN soldiers sent to close down Aideed's radio station, in which numerous buildings were attacked around Mogadishu. The stated aim was to capture Aideed and bring him to trial for

the deaths of the soldiers. The real aim was clear - it was to strengthen support for Aideed in the same way as the US bombings of Baghdad were designed to strengthen support for Saddam. Aideed at first welcomed the American invaders but then saw how hated they were and became a champion of anti-imperialism, his radio station pumping out anti-UN propaganda. This improved his standing with the proletariat no end.

ANOTHER WAR FOR OIL?

The economic and strategic reasons for the US/UN intervention in Somalia are fairly clear. Somalia has enormous reserves of oil. Four major American oil companies (Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips) obtained the rights to prospect nearly two thirds of Somalia's surface area just before President Siad Barre was overthrown at the beginning of 1991. Somalia was classed by the World Bank as one of the most promising African countries in terms of petroleum resources. It does not yet possess a significant oil industry or oil producing proletariat but it almost certainly will in a few years time. Creating social peace through terror there could pay handsome dividends for the bourgeoisie (literally for those investing in oil). The geographical location of the country is also important, allowing control of the tanker routes to the Red Sea and the Gulf. But it's easy to make too much of these sorts of considerations. Capital has strategic interests all over the world - why should there be a need for such an overwhelming display of force in this particular little corner of it?

The main reason is that the US government thought that they could win without too much effort, installing a Somali government of their choice and helping American national unity recover from the battering it was given by the uprisings of May '92. At the same time the image of the UN could be improved. Everybody loves famine relief agencies, so what could be better than showing UN troops protecting them? A few thousand US troops could have been stationed

there for a spot of counter-insurgency training. In other words, Somalia could have played the military training role for the US that Northern Ireland has for Britain. At present the US Army is being reorganised as a force which can actually take over pieces of territory and police them for long periods of time rather than one which only knows how to bomb them to bits and then get the hell out. Unlike British troops, most American troops don't know how to be cops. This is changing.

At the Fort Chafee army base in Arkansas 50,000 soldiers a year are put through a special training programme involving an artificial country called "Cortina". This has a guerilla army (played by a US infantry battalion) and police, army and civilian authorities provided by a defence consultancy firm called BDM International. The troops are taught how to liaise with the local authorities and which suspects to free and which to hold. They are given the necessary ideological preparation for carrying out massacres - angry demonstrations by villagers often shield guerillas. None of this prepared them for the horrors they would face in Somalia.

The US bourgeoisie must have thought that after years of war the Somali proletariat would be so crushed that they wouldn't resist the US/UN invaders, and might even welcome them as liberators. They were wrong.

BRUTALITY

The brutality of the UN forces is something that the media don't even try to hide. On 13 June at least 14 Somalis were killed when UN troops from Pakistan fired a heavy machine gun directly into a crowd protesting at the American bombing of various districts of Mogadishu, supposedly arms dumps for General Aideed. The commander of the Pakistani troops justified the shooting in words chillingly reminiscent of those used by British military commanders after Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland, or those used after various massacres in Vietnam. He said that Somali "gunmen" routinely use civilian crowds as human shields. No guns were found on any of the dead. The head of UN peace-keeping operations, Kofi Annan, said that the incident showed the need for UN forces to be better equipped with tear gas and other riot-control gear. On other occasions US helicopters have fired cannon shells and rockets at hospitals and even at the offices of their beloved relief agencies.

As soon as they arrived the UN troops made it clear that they were there to act as cops. When the US Marines first arrived in Mogadishu they encountered no

military resistance at all, the first violence they were involved in was beating up some unarmed Somalis sleeping in a hangar at the airport! A wave of brutal "weapons searches" followed. Sometimes the lads even went a bit too far for their masters to tolerate. In March a Somali civilian was beaten to death while being detained at the Canadian UN compound at Belet Huen. Four paratroops were charged with torture and second-degree murder, the first time any Canadian soldier has faced such charges resulting from UN operations.

Much of this brutality, though, is in direct response to working class militancy. On 24 February there were widespread riots against the UN.



A helicopter pilot gets a guided tour

Thousands of unarmed Somalis, described in the press as "supporters of General Aideed", fought UN troops and attacked the US embassy using just knives and rocks and shouting anti-American slogans. They were fired on with machine guns from US Cobra helicopters. The UN

have never admitted how many they killed. The French embassy was also attacked. On September 9 Pakistani UN troops were attacked by a mob of hundreds of Somali men, women and children. A hundred or so were killed when UN helicopters opened fire.

SMOKED PORK...

During a battle starting in Bakara market in Mogadishu on October 3 at least 500 Somalis were killed. Two US helicopters came down. Given the importance of helicopter pilots in carrying out massacres it's hardly surprising that the charred bodies of some of these pigs were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by a jubilant crowd. Another one was protected from the righteous wrath of the proles by Aideed's men, raising the spectre of a "hostage crisis" for the US government. The attitude of the local population is well illustrated by the following quote from the *Guardian* (5 Oct 93):

"There were six Americans inside the helicopter. I saw it had been hit and then it crashed down on six children who were coming out of the Koranic school", said Hassan Issa Ahmed, whose house was five yards from the crash site. "The Americans defended themselves by opening fire on all sides. So people went into their homes to get their guns. We killed three of the Americans and one of them ran away".

On other occasions UN troops have been dragged into crowds at feeding centres and hacked to pieces. And it's not just soldiers who are being brutally dealt with. When the Americans first arrived in December '92 there were around 600 journalists about, including more than a hundred photographers and cameramen just at the famous beach landing of the marines. Now there are just eight Western correspondents. Recent TV pictures have been produced by means of a miniature video camera left in the hands of the Somali driver of the Reuters team. This mass withdrawal of the media is the result of the deaths of three Reuters and one Associated Press journalist, all deliberately killed by angry mobs. In July '93 three photographers and a soundman were killed after American helicopters rocketed an alleged "command and control base" for General Aideed in an area packed with civilians, killing at least 30. According to the testimony of Scott Peterson

(*Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 93), a journalist who narrowly escaped with his life, the hacks were under the protection of Aideed's men at the time. Another surviving journo-pig, Mohamed Shaffi of Reuters, described how he burst into a nearby residential compound to escape but a woman living in it chased him back on to the street (*Independent*, 13 July 93). This incident led to calls from the Italian government for military operations to be suspended. The few media scum who remain are generally too frightened to leave their hotel rooms.

At the time of writing the US troops are still scheduled to leave by March 31, 1994 and the French and Belgians before then. Half the 16,000 US troops stationed in Somalia are kept well out of harm's way — they're at sea. The rest are mostly based at the huge fortified UN compound in Mogadishu and aren't even in a position to defend the UN's own property. According to one UN official,

Somalis slip over the wall night and day, ripping off anything they can. We're losing vehicles from the port before we even inventory them. (Guardian, 27 Nov 93)

No police force can operate without some degree of cooperation from the policed population; UN troops are no exception.

...AND POWDERED MILK

The US invasion of Somalia was originally called "Operation Restore Hope", with the stated aim of maintaining food aid to the starving children whose images had graced the TV screens of the Western countries. This is true up to a point in that "aid to the starving" is a well-used capitalist code word for the use of food as a weapon against the proletariat. Capital creates famine.

In Africa this is usually the result of the destruction of non-capitalist ways of obtaining food — subsistence farming, herding, hunting and gathering. It might do this through a declared war between states (extremely common in Africa) or through its "peaceful" development — a bloody war against the independent producers! In other

parts of the world where there is already a proletariat famine may be deliberately created by means of sanctions as a means of crushing proletarian resistance. Either way, food aid is then dangled in the faces of the starving to ensure that they do capital's bidding. "Food for

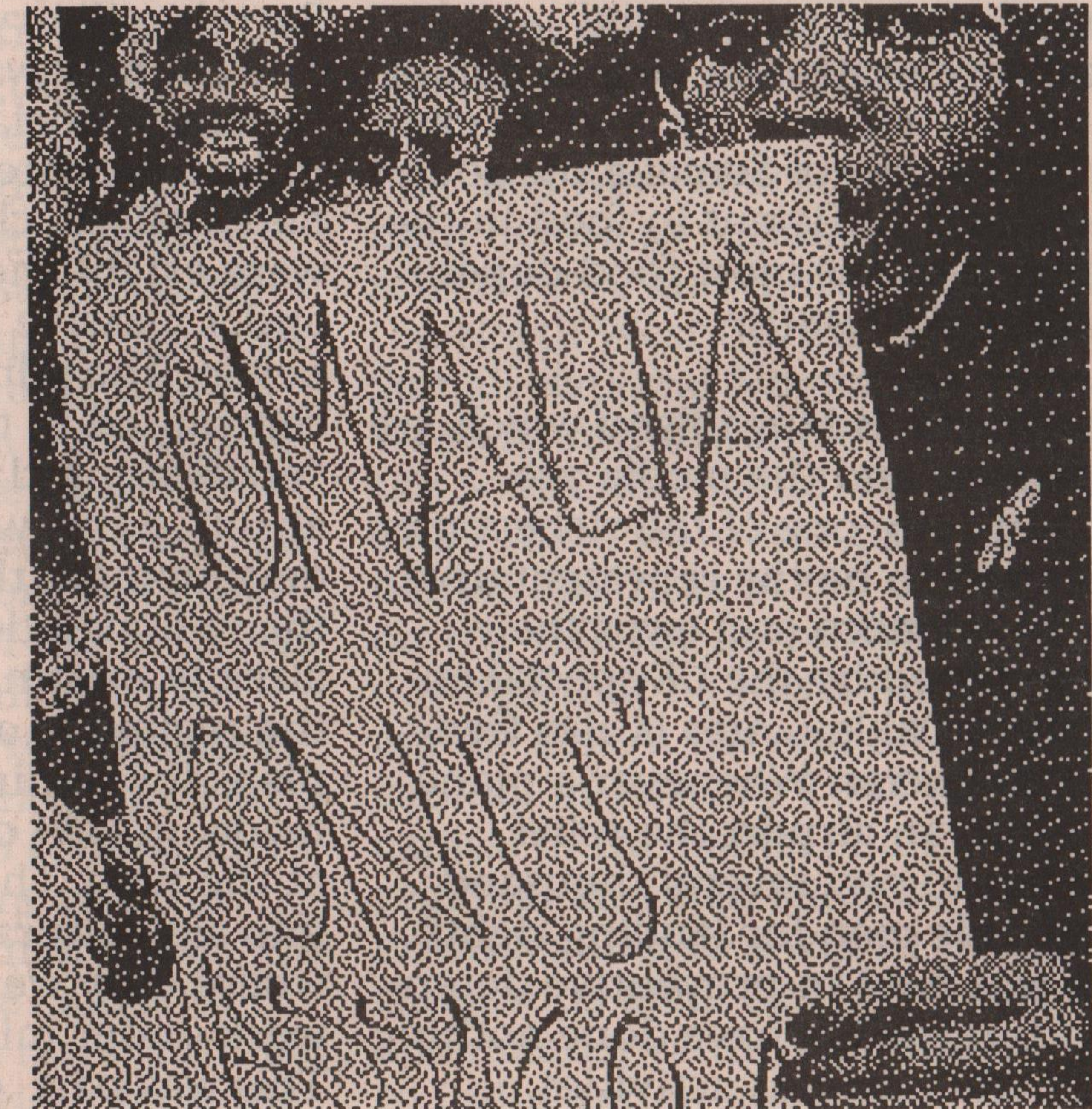
Work" schemes, the Third World equivalent of workfare, are just the most blatant examples of this.

Food "aid" might be organised through the UN or through charities, otherwise known as NGOs (non-governmental organisations) or PVOs (private voluntary organisations). As every cynic knows, charities are businesses — but not just because they provide fat salaries and conferences in Rome with generous expenses. Charities must obey the logic of capitalist expansion, they must use money to make more money and so expand capital's Evil Empire of alienated labour. In the Western countries where they are based this

means such things as paying for more adverts showing starving children, putting money into the coffers of advertising agencies, public relations companies and newspaper owners and opening more charity shops which gullible idiots work in for free. Charities must compete with each other for the money avail-

able and so are forced to expand and restructure. In the famine-stricken regions where they operate it means creating dispossession and the means of maintaining it, so creating more "clients" (starving people) for the charity and thus attracting more aid.

Food aid is often just a hidden form of subsidy for whichever regime happens to be in power,



being used to feed the army - this applies to Bosnia as much as Somalia. In Angola UN aid is being distributed through the military on both sides in the devastated city of Kuito, even though there are no civilians on the UNITA side of town. In Kurdistan famine and food aid are used to strengthen the Kurdish nationalists and to take back the gains of the 1991 uprising by forcing starving insurgents to sell their guns, anti-tank rockets and printing presses.

Food which doesn't go directly to soldiers ends up being sold by local merchants, and buildings and vehicles must be rented from other entrepreneurs who become dollar millionaires in the process. The presence of all this money and commoditised food accelerates the destruction of subsistence food production and encourages cash crop production. In the case of Somalia the country went from being self-sufficient in food in the early '70s to being one of the most food-dependent in Africa by the mid-1980s.

Many of the large houses in Mogadishu which are rented to relief agencies and the media are owned by one Osman Atto, one of the richest men in the country. He used to be the representative of the US oil company Conoco and owns their office, which is being used by the US special envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley. Atto is also General Aideed's main financier. Whenever a plane carrying food flies into an airport the relief agency concerned has to pay several thousand dollars to Somali middle men for landing rights and security. Atto was held in preventive detention for a few days but the UN have done nothing to curtail his legitimate business activities.

DEVELOPMENT

Somalis are a distinct ethnic group who, prior to capitalism, were mostly farmers in the South of what is now Somalia and nomadic pastoralists in the North. The colonial era saw the North under British rule and the South under Italian rule. Fortunately for the nomads in the North the British did very little with it. In the South develop-

ment began - the best land was grabbed by Italian farmers who grew cash crops such as cotton and sugar cane. Life for the nomads has never been easy but mass starvation was very rare before capitalism. When the rains failed they could migrate long distances - something which became impossible with the creation of nation states and private property in land.

Serious capitalist development in Somalia began with Siad Barre's military coup in 1969. The country was put under "scientific socialism", what little industry existed was nationalised, close relations were established with the USSR and a massive military build up began. The administration was centralised in the name of "eradicating clannism and tribalism". Barre was committed to development through war and the militarisation of society. The already existing famine enabled the regime to accelerate its plans for settling nomads, who made up 80% of the population at the time. They were forced into agricultural "communes" where they were expected to work under military discipline. This was part of a regional trend. The nomadic way of life of millions of Africans was, and is, a major headache for the capitalist class because nomads don't respect national borders, don't attract Western aid and are almost impossible to tax, conscript or control.

In July 1977 Barre launched a

major invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia — its inhabitants were "Somalis" too — rapidly capturing the whole region and dramatically boosting his own support. Ethiopia had also recently become a client state of the USSR and the USSR decided to back Ethiopia with 18,000 Cuban troops. Barre turned to the Americans and by 1981 Somalia had become a client state of the US and the economy began to be privatised. The Somali troops were run out of Ogaden but the war was continued by the Western Somalia Liberation Front guerillas organised by Barre's regime. Life for the nomads in the region became intolerable and hundreds of thousands ended up in refugee camps in Somalia. Concentrating them in arid localities resulted in overgrazing by the animals they had left. Western relief agencies arrived with food - far more than was necessary. Most of the food was going to the Somali army to maintain the war to dispossess the nomads to create more refugees... Many camp commanders were WSLF officers and the WSLF and the Somali Army would come to the camps to conscript teenage boys. Just like in Barre's pro-Soviet phase the inhabitants of the camps were instructed in political ideology by state officials called "politicians" - this time they were taught to blame the Russians and Cubans for their plight. Aid was turning "empty" desert into burgeoning towns. Barre's program of military-led accumula-

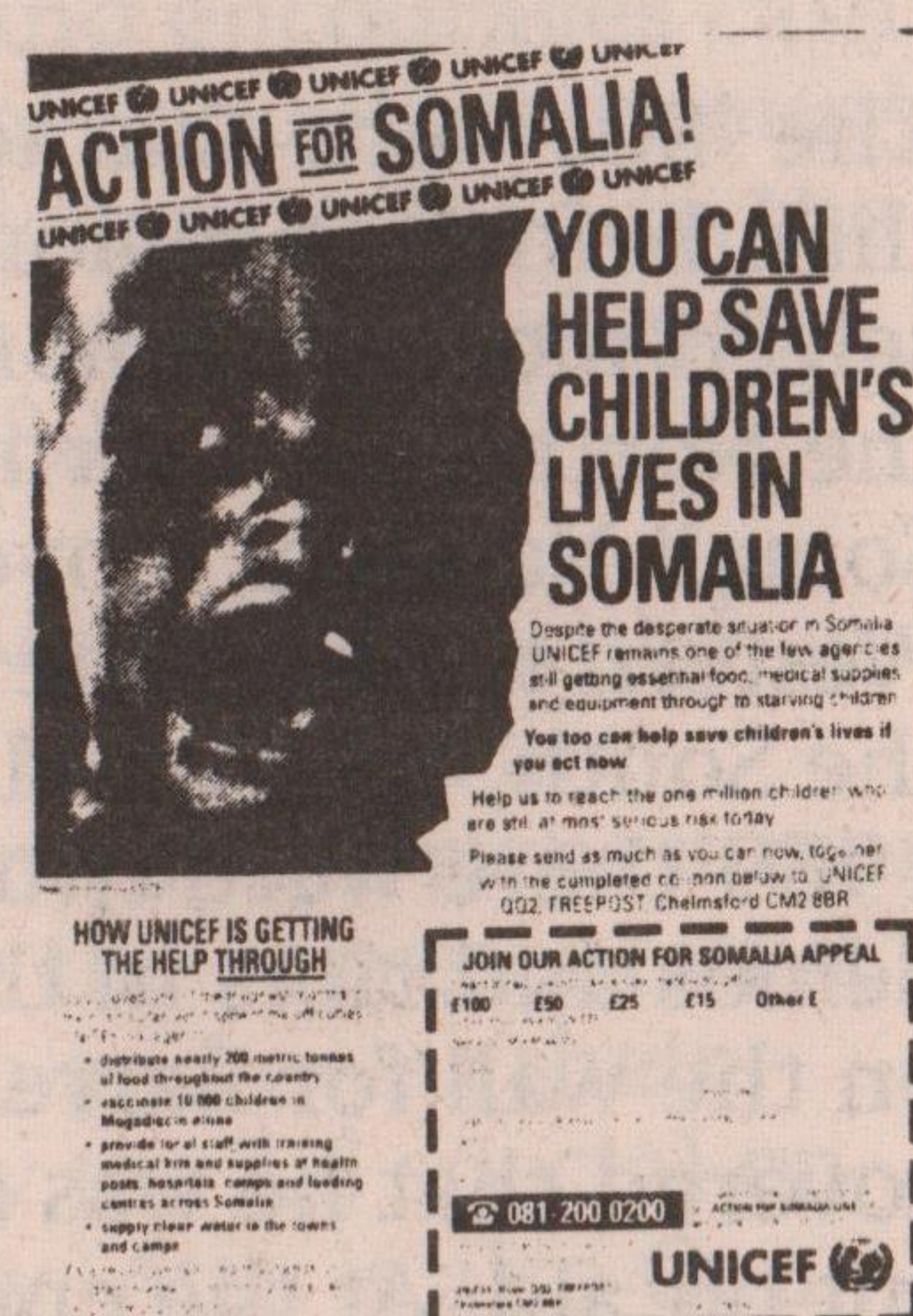
tion was being enthusiastically supported by hordes of young middle class Western do-gooders who built the infrastructure and tried to teach former nomads how to grow food so that they could settle down and become peasants and agricultural labourers. Who, after all, could object to the building of roads - even if most of the people who used them were soldiers, cops and refugees being herded from one place to another? The camps were supposed to be temporary. Many of them are still there. In 1981 a study done by aid workers found that the relief industry accounted for two-thirds of the country's economy. Towards the end of his reign Barre was also receiving \$100 million a year in military and economic aid from the USA, making Somalia the third largest recipient of US foreign aid behind Egypt and Israel. It didn't do him much good.

The '80s were characterised by even more war than before as regional nationalist movements seized more and more areas of the country - in the North West (former British Somaliland), the Somali National Movement; in the Central and Western regions, the United Somali Congress; in the South, the Somali Patriotic Movement. In July 1989 there were two days of anti-government demos and riots in the capital. The writing was on the wall for Barre. Washington suddenly discovered that he was a human rights violator and cut off aid. At the end of 1990 the USC took the capital. In January 1991 Barre fled, leaving the capital in the hands of an unstable alliance of regional and clan leaders. This quickly broke down leading to a war in which hundreds of thousands died. General Aideed was the military commander of the USC and a former ambassador to India under Barre.

The war in the capital reduced its population of one-and-a-quarter million by half. The southern countryside was looted by soldiers to the extent that whole villages were left with no food and no animals in the middle of the dry season. Throughout the war troops protected the luxury houses of the capital and the agri-business plantations. Villagers in Qorioli starved to death next

to huge banana plantations. If they even gathered grass to eat they were likely to have their hands tied together and a bullet put through the palms.

So the Somalis lost the battle against dispossession through war, a process that made the Highland Clearances look like a vicarage tea party. They became proletarians (apart from the few who became bourgeois generals and nationalist leaders). But what sort of proletarians have they become? A large percentage of the men have been soldiers in the various nationalist/clan armies and are no strangers to the use of fire arms. In general the wide availability of guns has had a detrimental effect on working class solidarity by intensifying the war of all against all. In other parts of the Horn of Africa traditional tribal disputes over natural resources which might have occasionally resulted in a few spearings can now turn into massacres. On the streets of Mogadishu robbery of fellow proles by men with guns is pretty common. At the same time guns are often used by workers against their employers, which these days usually means the charities and the UN, who are just as keen to force down pay as any other boss. For example, following the disappearance of several food trucks in November '92 the World Food Program laid off its long-haul Somali drivers for three months and brought in Ethiopians to work for half the wages. In response to these kind of attacks, charity administrators have been known to be besieged in their compounds by their own security guards demanding more pay. At the end of 1992 a UNICEF house manager was



nearly killed when he tried to sack some workers.

The Somali proletariat also have an undying hatred of the UN and all its works - no doubt heightened by the knowledge that Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the UN, used to be the foreign minister of Egypt when it supported Siad Barre. The fact that they have forced the most powerful nation on earth to drastically alter its foreign policy should inspire class struggle militants across the world. There is much we can learn from them - not least that terrorising journalists really spoils the game for international capital. The struggle of our class in Somalia can only sharpen our understanding, and hatred of, food aid charities - those insidious capitalist rackets with shops and offices on almost every main street in every town in Western Europe and America.

A very useful article about food aid charities, written by a disaffected ex-aid worker can be found in the *Village Voice*, 19 Jan 93. A major article about the use of food as a weapon against the proletariat can be found in *Zero* # 2 (1977). This publication is seriously out of print but send us a donation for a photocopy.

HOW WILD IS WILDCAT?

285. Progression: motion forwards - N. progression, arithmetical p. 71 n. series; march, course, career; march of time 111 n. course of time; progress, stride, leaps and bounds 277 n. spurt; gain, advance, headway 654 n. improvement; overtaking 306 n. overstepping; next step, development, evolution; furtherance, promotion, advancement, preferment; progressiveness, 'onward and upward department' 654 n. reformism; enterprise, go-getting 672 n. undertaking; achievement 727 n. success; progressive, improver 654 n. reformer; go-getter, coming man 730 n. made man.

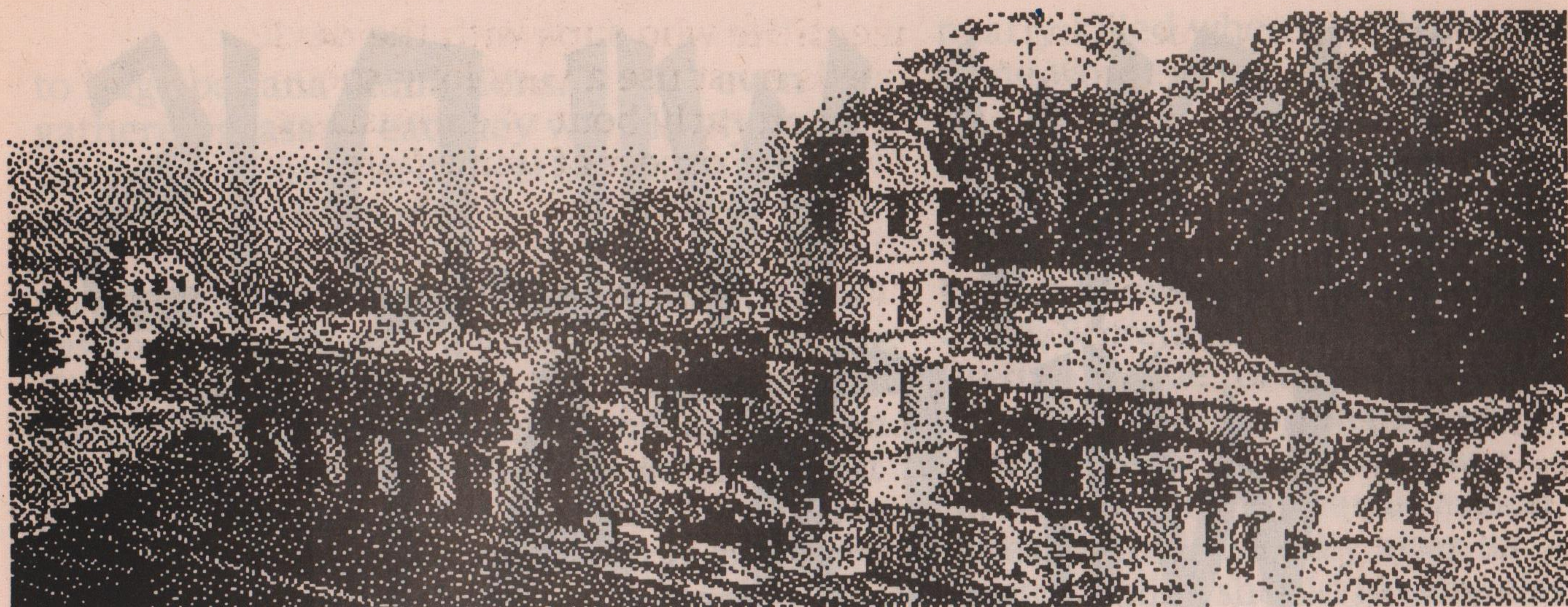
Introduction

Following the short review of Fredy Perlman's *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* [1] which appeared in issue 15 of our central organ, we have nailed our colors to the "anti-Civilization" bandwagon.

But the abandonment of the Marxist theory of history, and its replacement with an as-yet uncompiled jumble of insights, is not to be undertaken lightly. We are in a period of transition, and these two articles are intended to express this, with all the hesitations and contradictions inevitable in such a non-trivial exercise.

The central question we wish to address is this: was the development of class society in any sense a necessary precondition for its opposite? The traditional Marxist answer to this has been an unqualified "yes". As Marx put it in the Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which corre-



Don't participate in the ruin of Creation... Participate in the creation of Ruins.

spond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or — what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.... No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.... In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as

progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close.

This was later vulgarized by Engels: "the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life" (*The Origins*). But there is continuity between Marx and Engels; although Marx talks about consciousness "corresponding to" the economic foundations, and intellectual life being "conditioned" by the mode of production, he also says social being "determines" consciousness. The phrase used by Engels, "in the final in-

stance", is as content-free as the expression "at the end of the day". Either something is determined by something else, or it isn't.

Engels argued that, although there was a communist society prior to the emergence of Civilization, this was only "primitive" communism. The primordial community had to be broken, and thousands of years of slavery and war had to ensue, in order to develop the productive forces sufficiently for humanity to return to communism on a higher level. The development of the productive forces, a story written in the annals of Mankind in letters of blood and fire, was necessary in order to

ment? He who sups with the devil needs must use a very long spoon: after an early bout of enthusiasm for the prospect of immediate communist revolution in 1848, Marx and Engels settled down to a more "tactical" period in which various capitalist factions were backed on the grounds that they had more chance of developing the productive forces than others, increasing the chances of a successful communist revolution in the future. The canonical example is their support for the Union in the American Civil War.

At the other extreme is the view that an advanced form of communism - a society of abundance with no exploitation and little conflict - could have developed directly out of the primitive communist societies which existed in most of the world for most of the time that human beings have been around, and that resistance to Civilization has ALWAYS had the potential to lead



create the material preconditions for communism.

One of the problems Marxists inherited from this fire-and-brimstone teaching was this: if the productive forces need to be developed in order to create the preconditions for communism, and they are not yet sufficiently developed, are revolutionaries obliged to support their develop-

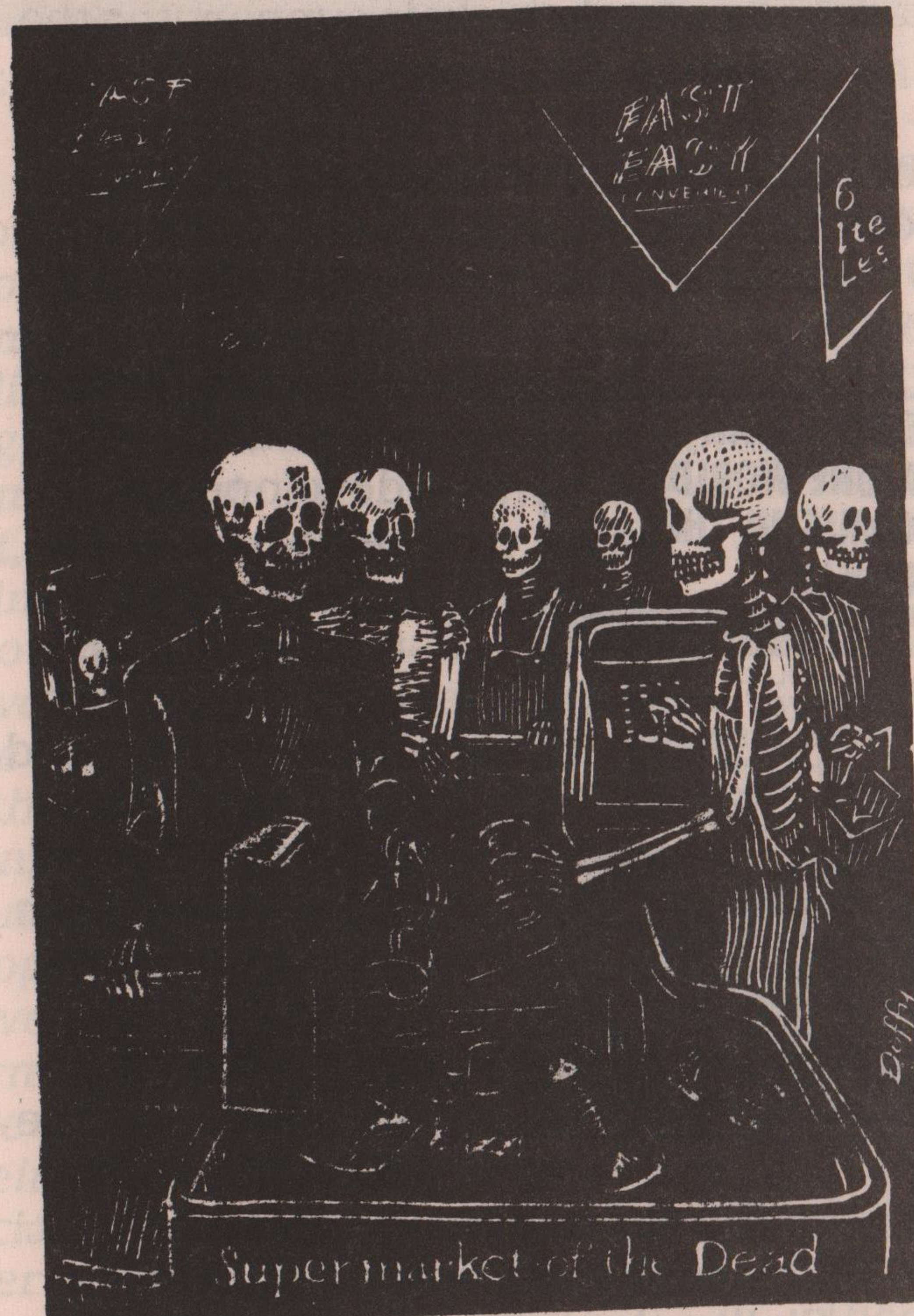
to the global human community. This may seem academic, since Civilization now covers the world, and if communism is going to happen, it will have to arise from the world as it is. But as we shall see, rejecting the necessity of developing the productive forces as a precondition for a global human community has important consequences today.

As well as the writings of Perlman, Marshall Sahlins, John Zerzan etc., a radical break with Progress includes the Russian anarchist Kropotkin, the Italian communist Bordiga and his French successor Camatte. What the left communist tendency around Bordiga termed the "invariance" or continuity of the communist program was originally described by

all class societies. Kropotkin was a geographer turned revolutionary. He, unlike probably any other revolutionary theorist of the last two centuries, personally witnessed (and lived among) all forms of human societies, from gatherer-hunters to peasants to the industrial working class. For him, an anarchist communism was available at any point in history. A traditional Marxist would deny that a revolution could occur (or succeed) in the peasant society in 17th century Europe because mass production (and thus the mass worker) had not come about to give it a social content.

Although it may have been possible to develop communism in areas of the world where class society, or Leviathan, to use Perlman's nomenclature, was weak and disintegrating, such as America, was it not inevitable that, sooner or later, Europe would invade, with guns and small-pox? Given the Native Americans' almost total lack of awareness of the world outside them, they would have been unable to prevent such an invasion. It has always been possible to directly create a communist society but this can only be done permanently on a world scale, because any Leviathans left alive will sooner or later spread their tentacles. In the

Kropotkin. The concept is simple. As long as there has been class society there has been a movement towards a communist society - the abolition of Today it obviously isn't. If communism can be created in one valley,



or one continent, there would be no desperate urge to spread it. Sooner or later, communism would be crushed by one of the Leviathans lurking about. It is hard to imagine how the natives of America could have resisted the Conquistadores WITHOUT having an explicit knowledge that such people existed and would one day come to get them. For all the wisdom that they must have possessed, it remains a striking fact that pre-capitalist peoples (communist and civilized) knew almost nothing about the parts of the world inhabited by people not of their culture. Communism has always been possible. But it is arguable that stable, permanent communism depends on the development of a world proletariat.

This argument is subtly different to the elegant and seductive verses of the materialist excuse for history outlined above. Whereas the Marxist theory of stages has led many of its followers, including Marx himself, to support capitalist development, the view that permanent communism depends on the development of a world proletariat does not lead in that direction. Marxists argue that the chief productive force is the proletariat itself. We disagree. For us the proletariat is the working class as a revolutionary force, precisely to the extent that it opposes development and sabotages production, ie. to the extent that it isn't a productive force.

Although the concept of "the development of the productive forces" leads to attacking the class struggle, the development of the proletariat as a revolutionary class leads to

supporting it at all times. The struggle against class society may be unable to permanently abolish it until some unknown date in the future, but that does not lead us to support Leviathan rather than the struggle against it. (It is impossible to have it both ways. To the extent that Marx supported Lincoln, he supported the crushing of the class struggle against the war effort, and there was plenty).

Anyone can find examples of the proletariat benefitting from accidental by-products of capitalist development. The "model villages" created by the Guatemalan army during the Terror of the 80's helped the Native Americans organize by concentrating people from scattered and divided communities together, helping them understand their common interests, though this is not the kind of example usually favoured by Marxists to defend development.

We do not intend to take a position here on whether a global communist society has always been possible, or whether class society was in any sense a necessary detour. A question like this cannot be answered in a few pages. We hope these articles stir up the debate.

It is difficult to say at present exactly what consequences will follow from the abandonment of Marxism. Supporting and learning from the struggles of indigenous peoples, nomads etc., against Progress is one of them. Another is a definitive rejection of Eurocentrism. The traditional

Marxist view is that the most capitalistically developed parts of the world must be the centre of the revolution, since here the transition to communism is made easier by highly socialized production. This is wishful thinking. The parts of the world where capitalism is most highly developed are also the ones where the working class is most separated from community. The socialization of production can help the class struggle — a strike-bound factory in South Korea can disrupt the economy of Germany and vice-versa. It can just as easily hinder it — often the ability of urban proles to resist starvation is critically dependent on their links to the land, eg. peasant relatives. In the sixties and seventies, French workers around St. Nazaire were still able to significantly supplement their diet by *hunting* whilst on strike.



Aztec human sacrifice

The Left and Rights

The social-democratic view of socialism as evolution (ie that socialism would be the next stage beyond capitalism) was a major cause of the downfall of the 1917-21 revolutionary movement, much of which saw state capitalism under workers' control as a step towards communism. Communism became an inevitable outcome of the general progress of society. Social democracy promoted a dependence on a passive working class response to the crisis as the mechanism of transition from one "mode of production" to the next. This sees workers

as victims of capitalism, only becoming revolutionary in reaction to capitalism and the actions of the capitalist class. All factions of social democracy subscribed to this notion. Marxists argue that it was impossible to create communism prior to the development of the productive forces made possible by the explorers of the 15th and 16th century, with their Bibles and smallpox. This argument is like the famous quip from the Vietnam war, "it was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it", writ large. It is equivalent to saying "it was necessary to exterminate the communities of entire continents in order to lay the foundations for a global human community". This is called dialectics, or speaking with a forked tongue.

For the social democrats, communism meant capitalist prosperity for all so factory production, and therefore factory discipline, had to be maintained at all costs. The refusal of work was as important as ever in practice but was almost never consciously advocated. In Petrograd in 1917 the workers organized into Factory Committees frequently decided to fine themselves for lateness and other healthy expressions of proletarian indolence.

Together with Progress, the left peddles the concept of civil rights. Rights are defined by capitalism as what it can give to the proles, usually to buy off an attack. But rights are attacks upon traditional freedoms which guaranteed personal autonomy. Rights take away freedom and make the working class even more integrated and depen-

dent upon capitalism. A useful way to conceive of the difference between rights and freedoms is to look at Housing. Now, in classical capitalism, one has the right to own property, even someone else's house, which leads to the creation of homelessness in order to make housing a valuable commodity. In response to the working class's defence against homelessness, etc. the left wing of capitalism demanded the right to housing, a program which, at its most extreme, became one of the key programmatic components of Stalinism, the right to housing supplanting the right to own property. But nowhere in the continua of these extremes of "rights" lies the freedom to house yourself. There is a big difference between the right to be warehoused in a tower block in Moscow, Brixton or Watts and the freedom to build and live in a mandan/longhouse/tipi/yurt or "organic" home in a medieval Arabic/African/Chinese/Japanese town.

There are trends within Marxism which do not follow the logic of Marx and Engels' progressive errors. According to the Autonomist wing of Marxism the attack on industrialism and work (the "revolt against work") is fundamental to class resistance to capitalism. Such people have always, in practice, to some extent, fought against capitalist Progress. Other Marxists argue that although historical stages (Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism, etc.) were necessary, all necessary stages have now been completed, and that there is therefore no reason to support the further development of class society in order to help create the

preconditions for communism. In spite of these exceptions, we think that the Marxist theory of stages is a weak basis for a communist platform, because those who accept the need for the development of the "productive forces" as a precondition for communism, must consider the possibility that they haven't developed far enough yet. This at least opens the POSSIBILITY of giving critical support to some aspects of capitalism today, and of telling sections of the working class to wait.

Intransigent opposition to Progress is certainly closer to a direct expression of the needs of the proletariat. The Luddite movement in 19th century England is probably the most famous example of resistance to the development of the productive forces. Oppressed classes have always opposed the extension of exploitation. The exploiters and their allies have often found ways of arguing for the "necessity" of this or that development. There is a seamless continuity between Marx's support for the wonderful Yankees in the American Civil War and German social democracy's support for the First World War. This was no "betrayal" of their ideology; they thought the victory of Germany would help the development of the productive forces, and they may well have been right! In the late seventies, the Iraqi Communist Party justified their alliance with the Ba'athists against the Kurdish Nationalists by saying that Saddam stood for capitalist progress against the backward Kurdish bourgeoisie.

In one crucial sense, though, even

Perlman's *Against His-story* can be used to defend historical inevitability. In his description of the spread of Civilization, he argues that successful attempts to resist it usually lead to the creation of permanent armies, which become the basis of state power. Communities of resistance gradually degenerate into new Leviathans. For example, he describes how this happened to the communist movement in 15th century Bohemia. Although he says that the defeat is complex, and not predetermined, his actual description has a fatalistic ring to it. The Bohemian Taborites' consciousness of the predicament didn't enable them to get out of it. Between 1420 and 1434, they defeated five assaults by Crusader and German Imperial armies. Initially, they resisted the tendency to set up a military machine. Their military leaders, Zizka, Proscop and Zbyněk, were temporary chiefs, and not initially generals. But the Empire was a machine for grinding out armies, and each time it was defeated, it came back. Although the Taborites successfully defended themselves, the continual combat gradually turned them into a mirror image of what they were fighting. Among the specializations which permanent militarism enforces is a division between soldiers and peasants who toil to feed the army. The Taborite military leaders negotiated with barons to supply the army with food produced by forced labor. The more radical Taborites were still attacking the barons, undermining the military front. The Taborite leaders eventually organized a crusade against these more radical communists, and the degeneration was complete.

Perlman's book contains, in embryo, a theory of historical development. His account of the origins of ancient Sumer is unquestionably materialist. Leviathan has been through numerous stages, as has resistance to it. Only modern capitalism has instituted the "worship of Leviathan unadorned" - previous class societies tarted up Babylon with hanging gardens, etc.. Compare Florence with Seoul. Perlman predicted the emergence of One Big Leviathan, and hinted that this period, which has now begun with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, may have great potential. Certainly, the proletariat of the world is more culturally homogenized than ever before, but it is difficult at present to see how the New World Order of Madonna and MacDonald's contains its own negation.

We don't consider that the succession of societies, and the development of greater and greater productive forces have led to the possibility of abundance for all after about 5000 years of war and slavery. Primitive societies were societies of plenty. Whatever the reason for the origins of class society, it was IMPOSED on the majority of humanity by its originators and their successors. It did not "arise" because of the "need" to "develop the productive forces". Technologies and the forms of social domination which accompany them have always been instruments of political control rather than methods of satisfying given human needs. Needs are created by society, along with the means to satisfy them. Societies are not determined by their "material

basis" - precisely the reverse. As Perlman put it, the so-called material foundations are the claws and fangs of Leviathan, not the ground on which it stands. Perlman briefly discusses the abandonment of Civilization by pre-Columbian Americans. The first article below examines it in more detail, and digresses into the theoretical implications. The second article is a review of a recent publication dealing with the issues of Progress and Primitive Communism from a different angle within the revolutionary movement.

Around 1500 BC, Civilization first blighted the

1000 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Americas. The mysterious Civilization of the Olmecs appeared on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. The Olmecs carved giant heads with African features, and one stela with a bearded, Babylonian-looking bas-relief. The Mayas of Copan and Palenque buried their kings in pyramids, like the Ancient Egyptians. The first Mexican archaeologists assumed that Mesoamerican Civilization must have originated in the Old World. It may have been possible to cross the Atlantic in a boat of that period. With the consolidation of nationalism, and particularly the Mexican bourgeoisie's audacious affiliation with the Aztecs, it became fashionable to see the Olmecs, Aztecs, Mayas etc. as home-grown. It was consid-

ered insulting to Native Americans to suggest they couldn't have built their own Leviathans. Today, the tide has begun to turn full circle, and perhaps it will again become possible to investigate the possibility of an Old World origin for the Olmecs. Some academics seriously discuss the possibility of Chinese input in Maya culture [2].

If Civilization was imported, the consequences would be helpful to our position; it would mean that Civilization only originated in Eurasia. Its

subsequent spread would be the result of the fact that attempts to resist it lead to the formation of permanent armies and thus states;

resistance is recuperated. If it arose in two places, this would add weight to the argument that Civilization is inevitable; but not much, since there is no doubt that, however many birthplaces the Beast has, the vast majority of its victims were taken captive by expanding Leviathans, rather than "giving rise to" their own. Perlman gives odds that Civilization arose in one place, ancient Sumer. This view was fashionable in Victorian Britain, ie. until the sixties, whereafter it became trendy to believe in multiple origins, as this was compatible with the more democratic ideology of multi-culturalism which had only just caught on — though it had been *de rigeur* among US anthropologists since the 1910's.

The Olmecs were succeeded by the Maya, whose civilization stretched from Northern Yucatan through the Peten jungle to the highlands of what is now Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya kings appear to have formed city-states which warred and made alliances, like the Ancient Greek metropoli, rather than a centralized Leviathan. One of the reasons for the downfall of the Olmecs was resistance. Olmec sculptures were systematically vandalized. Though little is known about exactly how this happened, archaeologists have tended to cohere around the view that it was the result of a rebellion of the lower orders. This position has been under attack in recent years.

The blatantly political nature of patri-archaeology is well demonstrated by the work of leading MesoAmerican researchers Linda Schele and David Freidel. *A Forest of Kings* [3], describes the creation of a Maya city state, Cerros, as a decision taken by the whole community: "The people of Cerros did decide consciously to embrace kingship as an institution", though they don't make it clear how they know this. Building the temples was "an effort of master builders, masons and laborers *DRAWN* from the *COMMUNITY, COORDINATED* by the ruler and his counselors" (p106). We have emphasized some of the more problematic words. How were the laborers "drawn", since when have rulers merely "coordinated" production, how can a class society be described as a "community" except by those who have a vested interest in disguising class antagonisms?

This book is full of similar pseudo-neutral scientific discourse. "The labor costs in quarrying stone, burning limestone to yield plaster, and finally building the structures, must have been enormous. If the elite of Tikal were constantly expanding this public space, we can assume that the prosperity and prestige of this kingdom were attracting a steady influx of new people whose participation in the ritual life of the kingdom had to be accommodated" (p136). On the other hand, we can investigate the origins of slavery, resistance to it, and apologies for it.

American Leviathans were generally fragile. They were prone to disintegration as a result of resistance by the mass of the population who thought an uncivilized life was preferable to being sacrificed to the gods. When discussing the causes of the Maya collapse, Schele and Freidel take pains to avoid the simplistic views of the previous generation of Mayanists, for example JES Thompson, who, when invited to a seminar on the collapse, reportedly wired back, "No need for seminar. Peasant uprising.". This was written when class struggle was still fashionable in academia.

"For many, however, the end came when people turned their backs on the kings, as they had done a Cerros eight hundred years earlier, and returned to a less complicated way of living" (p379). Why? Schele and Freidel list a dozen or so factors:

1. Dense population;
2. Malnutrition;

3. Sickness;
4. "A hard life indeed";
5. Neglect of raised fields due to military competition between rulers;
6. Crisis of faith;
7. Conquerors unable to legitimate themselves to the conquered;
8. Growth of the nobility, in more than one sense. The average noble was 10cm. taller than the rest of the population. They were better fed, and their children survived, therefore there were too many of the bastards;
9. The rich scumbags were driven to wage wars for tribute to pay for their upkeep. Endless war caused further problems;
10. Barbarians began to assert control of the trade routes;
11. Uprising. At Dos Pilas, for example, "a desperate nobility threw up a huge log stockade around the sacred center of their city, trying to shield themselves against the vengeance wreaked upon them by their former victims" (p383).

None of these factors explain anything without an understanding of the class struggle.

A more recent "explanation" blames ecological catastrophe for the collapse of Civilization. But Civilizations thrive on disasters. The ecological narrative, like many others, attempts to make the oppressed passive objects of crisis. The idea that they may have left Leviathan because they didn't like it never occurs to academia. For an-archaeology, the problem is to explain, not why Civilization was overthrown, but why it took so long for the

former victims to wreak vengeance on the desperate nobility.

The uprisings wiped out Maya Civilization throughout the Peten region. Stelae, written dates and monuments came to an end between about 790 and 890 AD. What replaced the Classic Maya Civilization was not communism. But it was a lot better than human sacrifice. A communist revolution would have led to an offensive against the other Leviathans of the Americas. The rebelling population returned to what anthropologists call a "hunter-gatherer" life, though it is known that these societies are not dominated by production. It would be at least as accurate to call them "shaman-storyteller" societies. They also did some farming, but abandoned the intensive agribusiness of their deposed kings. They continued to use the cyclical calendars, but abandoned the "Long Count" which counted the days since a certain point in the past, since they did not need linear history. They also abandoned writing, since they could remember all the information they needed. They created a truly post-historic society.

Avanti!

We have no intention of idealizing primitive society. Perlman refers to the pre-Civilized condition as "the state of nature", but this is too simplistic. There are at least two main stages in primitive society, and it is worth considering what kind of life

pre-human hominids lived before society emerged. From studies of our close relatives, some anthropologists have concluded that before the emergence of homo sapiens, our ancestors lived in harems. Tyrant males would monopolize groups of females, excluding the majority of males. This behaviour maximized the chances of a successful male's genes being transmitted. Evolution produces SELFISH gene-transmitting behaviour, not the behaviour which is best for the species as a whole. To have sex with as many partners as possible increases the chance of a male's genes surviving. It may even be genetically "fitter" for a male to kill infants of other males, ensuring that females spend all their time looking after HIS offspring. Conflict between males prevented the emergence of community. At some point, there was a revolution which led to the creation of human culture. The most convincing explanation of how this happened can be found in Chris Knight's book *Blood Relations* [4]. Females had different interests than males; their genes are best reproduced by looking after their children. Eventually they overthrew the individualistic tyrants, and forced males to cooperate in going hunting, by refusing to have sex until the males returned home with game. They organized a periodic "sex strike" during which none of the females were available, since if any females broke the strike, it would quickly under-

mine the whole system. This then is the basis of culture; cooperation imposed by females by means of a strike. With this cooperative hunter-gatherer lifestyle, humans had it made. No other species could touch them. They quickly spread round the world around 50,000 years ago, and found vast game reserves wherever they went, with occasional dearths when they crossed deserts, etc.. This was the Garden of Eden. But the story of the Fall was rewritten. Eve was not responsible.

The Australian Aborigines have some remarkably lucid stories about how men overthrew women, and introduced the patriarchal society which most primitive peoples lived in. But patriarchy did not inevitably give rise to Civilization, as proven by the numerous examples of patriarchal peoples living for thousands and thousands of years without the slightest inclination to build ziggurats and throw each other off the top of them. The "Mesolithic crisis" of c. 10,000 BC supposedly led to the emergence of Agriculture and hence Civilization. But if Civilization was an inevitable response to a world-wide crisis, how come so many people managed without it until very recently? Why did it have to be imposed at such cost?

Vorwaarts

Marxists, who place today's horny-handed industrial prole-

tariat in a superordinate position to pre-capitalist rebels (though even Marxists instinctively identify with all communist rebels - witness how many Marxist groups are named after Spartacus), could ask why didn't the Maya rebels go on to create communism? A fair question, but no more so than the same question asked of the participants in the 1917-21 revolutionary wave. Our position that communism has always been possible is perhaps stronger because we can point to considerable successes in pre-capitalist anti-Civilized movements, for example the Maya had 700 years of relative freedom before the Spanish invasion. The Bohemian communist movement of the 15th and 16th centuries was far more successful than the 20th century workers' movement. There were no Marxists around to tell them that the means of production weren't developed enough, so they brazenly set up large-scale communist societies which lasted for decades.

There has always been some awareness of the danger of class domination and how to oppose it. People with leadership obligations, eg. shamans, try to permanently usurp their responsibilities and turn them into a system of class domination. The communist program has always been immanent in

the struggle to prevent this happening, and to reverse it once it has occurred. This position turns Marxism on its head; the political has precedence over the economic. If this makes us closer to Anarchism than Marxism, then so be it.

Arguments about Progress seem academic. But much working class passivity is reinforced by the belief that progress is inevitable - people identify with the economic success of "their" company or "their" country, and thus find it hard to fight lay-offs and wars when these are explained as economically necessary. Just as it is useful to

know that for most of human existence, there were no classes, refuting the popular belief that they are natural, it is encouraging to know that people have always resisted Progress, sometimes with overwhelming success. We are not suggesting that winning this "battle of ideas" is going to convert people into revolutionaries. Generally, people adopt more radical ideas as a result of struggle; their conservatism is mainly produced by fear of the bosses' power. But showing that struggles can be won can only

undermine this fear. The evidence against the inevitability of Progress shows that we CAN win, that class society has NEVER been inevitable, and that its continuity is less assured than its apologists of left and right contend.



1. *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*, Perlman F, Black & Red, Detroit 1983.
2. *The Maya*, Coe M, Thames & Hudson, London 1993.
3. *A Forest of Kings*, Schele L and Freidel D, Morrow, New York 1990.
4. *Blood Relations*, Knight C, Yale University Press, 1992.

FROM MARXISM TO SHAMANISM



Review : *The Decadence of the Shamans* by Alan Cohen. Unpopular Books, London 1992. (Box 15, 138 Kingsland High St, London E8 2NS, UK).

Its obscure title belies the ambition of this pamphlet; it is an attempt to integrate the gradually growing understanding of the Golden Age of "primitive communism" which existed prior to the emergence of Civilization, into the Marxist theory of Progress.

Pre-civilized communities were not poor, even in the material sense. They lived in vast forests and plains teeming with edible flora and fauna of all kinds. Starvation was rare. Today it is endemic. This is the bitter fruit of 5000 years of development. In a way, there is little more to say. To argue for the necessity

of Civilization is ridiculous enough in America. In Africa, it is obscene. But human beings have lost more than material wealth. To the First People, what mattered were dances, visions, rituals and shamanic trances. But rather than urging an abandonment of the evils of Civilization, Alan Cohen tries to maintain an understanding of the shamanic experience in primitive society within a theory of historical development which argues that the advantages of primitive communism will be realized on a higher level AS A RESULT of the development of class society.

This pamphlet originated at a conference on northern and Arctic religions in Helsinki. Siberia and the

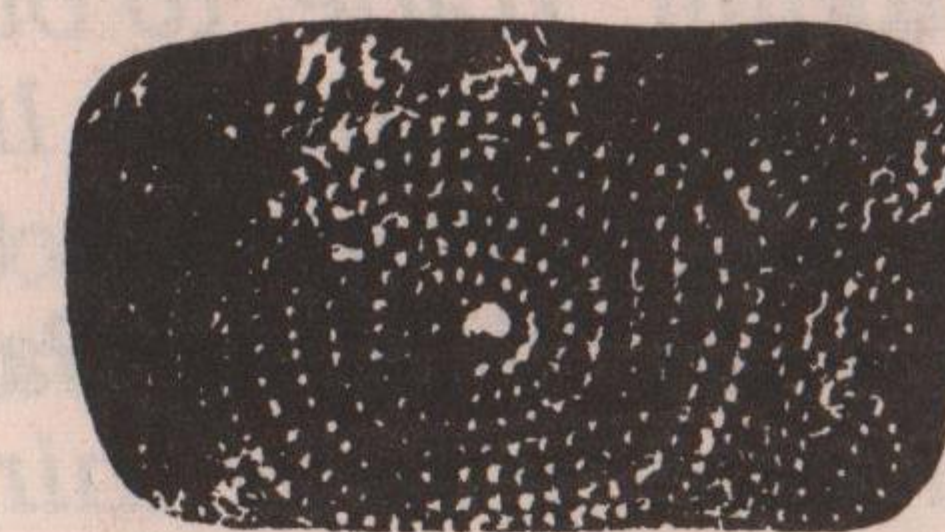
Arctic was an area of the world virtually untouched by class society until recently; it was still inhabited by people whose spiritual masters, or SHAMANS, regularly induced ecstatic states, journeys to the "other world". Quotations from *Black Elk Speaks* and other accounts of the shamanic experience, our last connection with the universal consciousness which once stretched from Australia to Alaska, give something of the flavour of these journeys, and any but the most bone-headed materialist will be stimulated. These sympathetic accounts jar bizarrely with Cohen's defence of Progress. He is unable to refute the primitive communist position, so he resorts to amateurish insults. This is a sign of weakness.

The author has great insight into the

content of shamanic trances, especially considering how little is left of primitive communist society, but he expresses ignorant assumptions about the content of pre-Civilized society in general. Following Marx, he states that "labour is the specific and central human activity" (p5), so labor existed in primitive communism. Because of humanity's innate urge to develop production, a consequence of the fact that labor is our specific and central activity, it was inevitable that "the very 'ascent of man' through the labour process, his break with the rest of the animal kingdom, was also the 'fall' into alienation" (p6).

Cohen's ontological error is based on a factual one. The labor process was not the means by which humans broke from the animal kingdom. The People of the Beginnings did not LABOR. They hunted, they picked berries, they may have scattered seeds, but this was not LABOR. "Hunter-gatherers" did not wake up cursing the fact that they had to go out hunting and gathering; they just did it. They did not regard food-collection as a chore, serving the more important activities of ritual, dancing, storytelling and collective vision-sharing; it was all part of life, and it was simply lived. Talk of labor in primitive society is an error; Marxists see the primitive community through class society, then use this distorted vision to explain how the latter "developed" out of the former. It is easy to believe primitive communists lived in scarcity, because the few remaining examples do so. Wherever mis-anthropologists looked, they saw the

sad remnants of primitive society living in refugee camps, and concluded that this was how they had always lived. Capitalism created the material foundations of its own anthr-apology.



Mal'ta, Siberia,
Paleolithic

Class society did not develop; it was imposed. A very small minority of human beings, probably the immediate predecessors of the ancient Sumerians, enslaved their neighbors and spread the curse of labor. Labor did not develop because it is the

essence of humanity, because of the spontaneous urge to develop the forces of production. The state did not 'arise' because of the needs of 'society'. Political authority arose from usurpation, and imposed needs ON society.

BAD MARX

To ensure that we have not distorted Cohen's position, let's cite him at length :

Marxism is undoubtedly a theory of progress. It sees historical development as an overall forward movement based on the gradual accumulation of contradictions and sudden qualitative leaps onto new and higher levels: in broadest outline, from animal to man, from primitive communism to civilisation (class society), from the cycle of class societies based on natu-



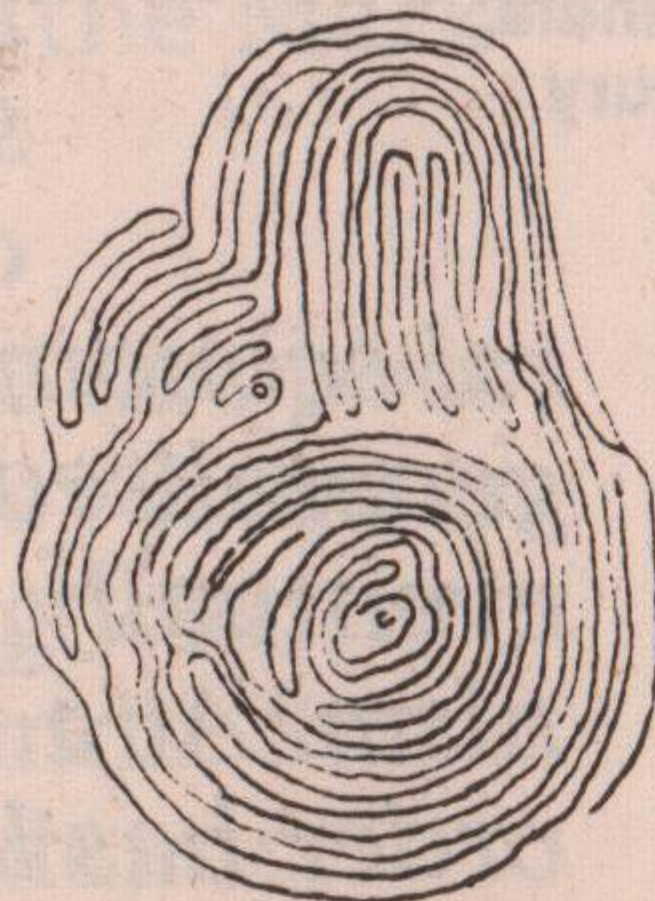
Rajasthan, India,
18th Century

ral economy to capitalism, based on generalised commodity production; and eventually, from capitalism to communism. At a time when a senile bourgeois order has lost any sense of historical progress, when the terrible events of the 20th century and the increasing decomposition of the dominant ideology has

inaugurated the reign of nihilism, of disbelief in any future as well as innumerable desperate attempts to go back to the past, it becomes more than ever necessary to affirm this. As the theoretical outlook of the only class that can take society out of its present impasse, marxism alone can dare to look the present in the face and to hold fast to a vision of the future (p7).

We think this is a good summary of the Marxist theory of Progress; we reject it entirely. Some sophisticated Marxists try to argue that this sort of fundamentalism is a vulgarization of Marx and Engels' real position [1]. Although Marx unquestionably contributed much to the class struggle, and although he certainly began to break with Marxism (compare his *Ethnological Notebooks* with Engels' *The Origins* to see how the two great minds were thinking less and less alike), the theory of Progress is true to the bulk of his writings, and his and Engels' political activity. In the *Communist Manifesto*, *The German Ideology*, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, the *Critique of Political Economy*, through letters and articles supporting the American Civil War, to the *Grundrisse*, Marx was for most of his life, capitalism's most able apologist:

... Will Bakunin reproach the North-Americans for waging a 'war of conquest' which, of course, meant a severe blow to his theory based on 'justice and humanity', but which was carried out successfully to the advantage of civilization only? Or is it by chance that the wonderful California was snatched from the lazy Mexicans, who didn't



Zulu Maze,
Africa

know what to do with it? Is it a misfortune for the wonderful Yankees to exploit the gold mines there, to increase the means of transport, to make, in a few years, of the most appropriate coast of that peaceful ocean, a place with a high density of population and a busy trade, to build big cities, steamboat lines, a railway line from New-York to San Francisco, to really open for the first time the Pacific Ocean to civilization and, for the third time in history, give a new orientation to world trade? (*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, cited in *Communism* no. 7, April 1992).

Later, Marx filled in the theoretical foundations of this position:

THE MOST EXTREME FORM OF ALIENATION - wherein labour appears in the relation of capital and wage labour... is a necessary point of transition - and therefore already contains in ITSELF, in a still only inverted form, turned on its head, the dissolution of all LIMITED PRE-SUPPOSITIONS OF PRODUCTION, and moreover creates and produces the unconditional presuppositions of production, and therewith the full material conditions for the total, universal development of the productive powers of the individual (*Grundrisse*, p515, cited in Cohen, p36). We should be so lucky.

If Engels subsequently turned Marxism into a more vulgar theory of Progress, this can only be welcome. Engels does not fudge the issues. Either class society is a nec-



Hopi Maze,
North America

essary precondition for real communism, or it isn't. We prefer to see warrants for genocide unadorned by dialectical gilding: "The power of these primordial communities had to be broken, and it was broken" (Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p101).

Alan Cohen has also faced up to the problem, and come down squarely on the side of Engels and the productive forces; "the historical process, with its ever-increasing burden of alienation and repression, unhappiness and guilt, is a necessary 'travail', an unavoidable stage in the true birth of mankind" (p37). Still, he needs to explain the difference between "the Stalinist anthropology which has been used to justify the destruction of shamanic cultures in Russia and China", against which he rails, and the views of Engels, to which he subscribes: "The power of these primordial communities had to be broken". To say something is necessary is to support it, by promoting the defeatist notion that resistance is futile.

It is pure hypocrisy for Marxists to "call capitalism to account for centuries of crime committed against the primitive peoples" (Luxemburg). Belief in "inevitability" is one of the strongest prejudices which holds people back from struggling against development. To reinforce, with clever-sounding theories, the popular view that you can't stand in the way of Progress is to side with the conquistadores against the invariant program of General Ludd.



Crete, Mediterranean,
1st Millenium BC

Cohen believes that "the art of ecstasy is the expression of an immemorial human struggle to overcome the harsh limitations imposed on him [sic] by scarcity and the struggle for survival". This view of primitive society has now been supplanted by research into the "original affluent society" (Sahlins).

We don't pretend to have great insight into the rich traditions of visions and trances which have survived into the present age, themselves only a minute fragment of the original Dream Time, the once-universal human culture which stretched from Australia to the Arctic, which the blood-sucking monster Civilization has all but destroyed. Cohen's book contains a scholarly yet exciting introduction to shamanic and mystical experiences. The nearest most people in the west come to "other realities" is limited to experiments with psychedelic drugs. Without the social context in which such stimulants can be taken, and the novice user guided through the various terrors which lurk in the collective unconscious, little is gained from such experiences. Primitive societies had this social context. They were also more able to deal with what we call "madness".

Those called to the shamanic profession, particularly among the Siberian tribes, often pass through a deep mental crisis that is hard indeed to distinguish from a descent into insanity: candidate shamans become withdrawn and dreamy and babble all kinds of nonsense; they may wander off for days, living like wild



Isle of Wier, Finland
Found in 1838

beasts in the forests; they become sick; they experience frightening hallucinations which frequently involve fantasies of being dismembered, torn to pieces by demonic spirits, and so on (p20).



This kind of behaviour has been normal to human beings at various points in their lives for millennia; primitive people understood and accepted it; capitalism persecutes it. The point is not whether these spirits "exist" in the same way as this computer exists. Shamanism is neither a science nor a religious cult; it is a view of the world which makes sense, which works.

We don't know exactly what the content of communism will be, but we can state now that it will not develop the productive forces and complete man's conquest of nature. On the contrary. Although it is impossible to simply "go back", a large component of the revolution will have to be a return to the state which existed everywhere before the State existed anywhere. Marxists like Cohen say it will be a return on a higher level, but it will take incalculable efforts before we have even managed to regain the achievements the pre-Civilized community, never mind improving upon them. Civilization has wiped out millennia of human culture - it will have to be recreated from scratch.

According to Marxist eschatology, "The 'great civilizing mission of capitalism' is the unprecedented development of man's productive capacities and the creation of a world economy, laying the material basis for a truly global community founded on abundance instead of

scarcity". But such an abundance existed before Civilization, which has systematically impoverished more and more people. "On the intellectual plane, it signifies the breaking down of religious illusions and the full development of the historical, scientific world-outlook" (p11). This world outlook is the pitiless glare of the

vivisectionist and the calculating myopia of the computer programmer. It is a religious illusion in itself, with Value in the place of God.

John Zerzan, in *Elements of Refusal* (Left Bank Books, Seattle, 1988), quotes Andrew Ure, leading theorist of early industrial capitalism, as follows:

"when capital enlists science into her service, the refractory hand of labour will always be taught docility". We would go further (in fact, so would Zerzan... much further...). As the ICG put it in *Aids, Pure Product of Science!* in *Communism* #8: "Science, as knowledge subsumed by capitalist valorisation, is rotten to the core. Like all of Capital's productive forces, Science is fundamentally inhuman; not only in its applications, but in its foundations".

It is increasingly difficult to defend the traditional Marxist view of historical development as it becomes obvious to almost everyone that it has been 'misery in misery', and increasingly, revolutionaries "dream of a return to the simplicities of the remote past" (p37). American readers can't understand why we even bother to argue the point - in the wake of the 500 Years of Resistance Campaign, surely Progress is now universally reviled? Perhaps they are all members of



"that disintegrating petty bourgeoisie which can only look backwards because it has no historical future" (p12).

Cohen has some understanding of why the disintegrating petty bourgeoisie opposes Progress: "today, even the most remote Amazonian tribes are being wiped out by the 'development' of the rain forests, a development which in a period where capitalism has become totally irrational, is posing a real threat to the very fabric of planetary life" (p12). He puts 'development' in apostrophes for the same reason lefties enquote the word 'democracy', as if capitalism was not really democratic. These little quotation marks imply that capitalism isn't really developing the Amazon, as though there was, or there could be, a kind of development which was not destructive. He effortlessly explains how this false 'development' is destroying the planet; capitalism has become totally irrational. But capitalism has always devastated nature and wiped out human culture; it is no more irrational now than ever before, though the consequences have gotten worse and worse as development, or the war against life, has progressed. In fact this war has been going on since the dawn of class society. The deserts of the Middle East were created by ancient civilizations. Yet the Amazon once contained hundreds of thousands of people living in a sustainable relationship with their environment, since they didn't try to develop it.

FROM VISIONS TO TELEVISIONS

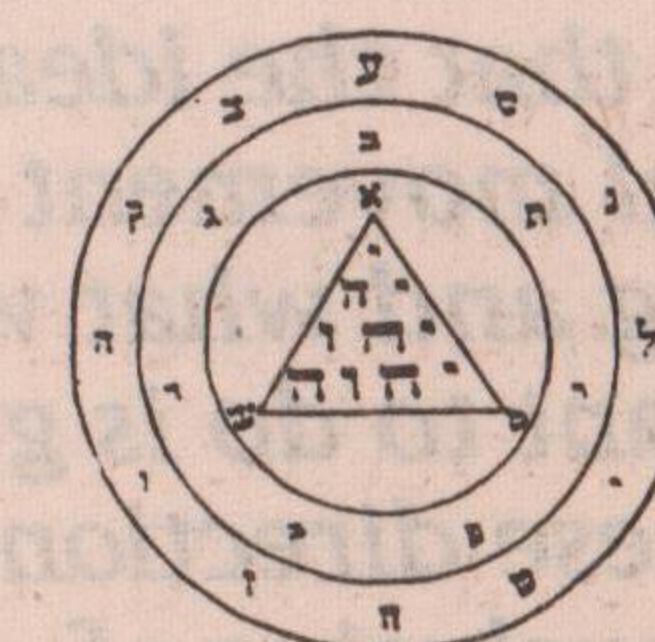
Marshall Sahlins, author of *Stone Age Economics*, is the most famous academic opponent of economic views of primal

man. In retrospect, his arguments seem understated. He accepts that Stone Age peoples lived in poverty, but since their desires were few, their supply exceeded their demand (*The Fifth Estate*, Vol 14 #3, 1979). In fact, a consistent economist would not conclude that they were poor. Think of the value of game reserves in, say, Scotland. Only millionaires can afford to hunt in them. The First People all had access to forests compared to which Sutherland is a Sahara. This leisure facility would of course have to be weighed against the absence of CD players in their caves. But we do not accept an economist's view of the People of the Beginnings. We cannot say that their material needs were few, since this implies measuring them, implies Value. We cannot measure the value of living in a

tipi against a two-bedroom house. Even their material conditions are incommensurable. How much more absurd is it to try to measure culture.

Without the premiss of the hungry hunter-gatherer, Cohen's model of historical development falls to the ground.

He says labor necessarily arose from the struggle against "the hitherto prevailing conditions of scarcity" (p14), hence alienation and psychological repression; "the tribe was the boundary for man", the individual was dominated by the collectivity, which in turn was dominated by the struggle for survival" (p36). However, "the historical accumulation of alienation/repression, far from being a mere misfor-

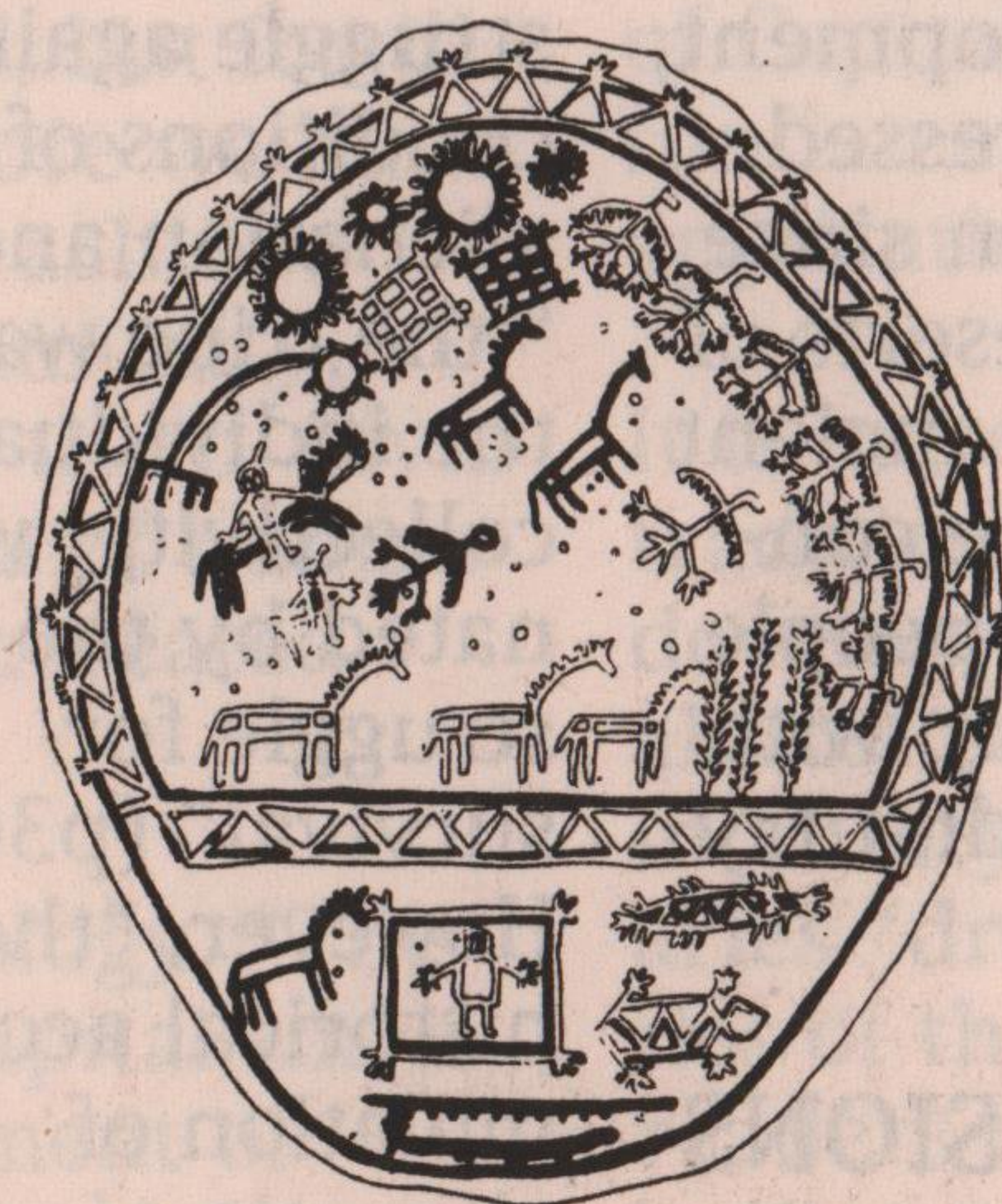
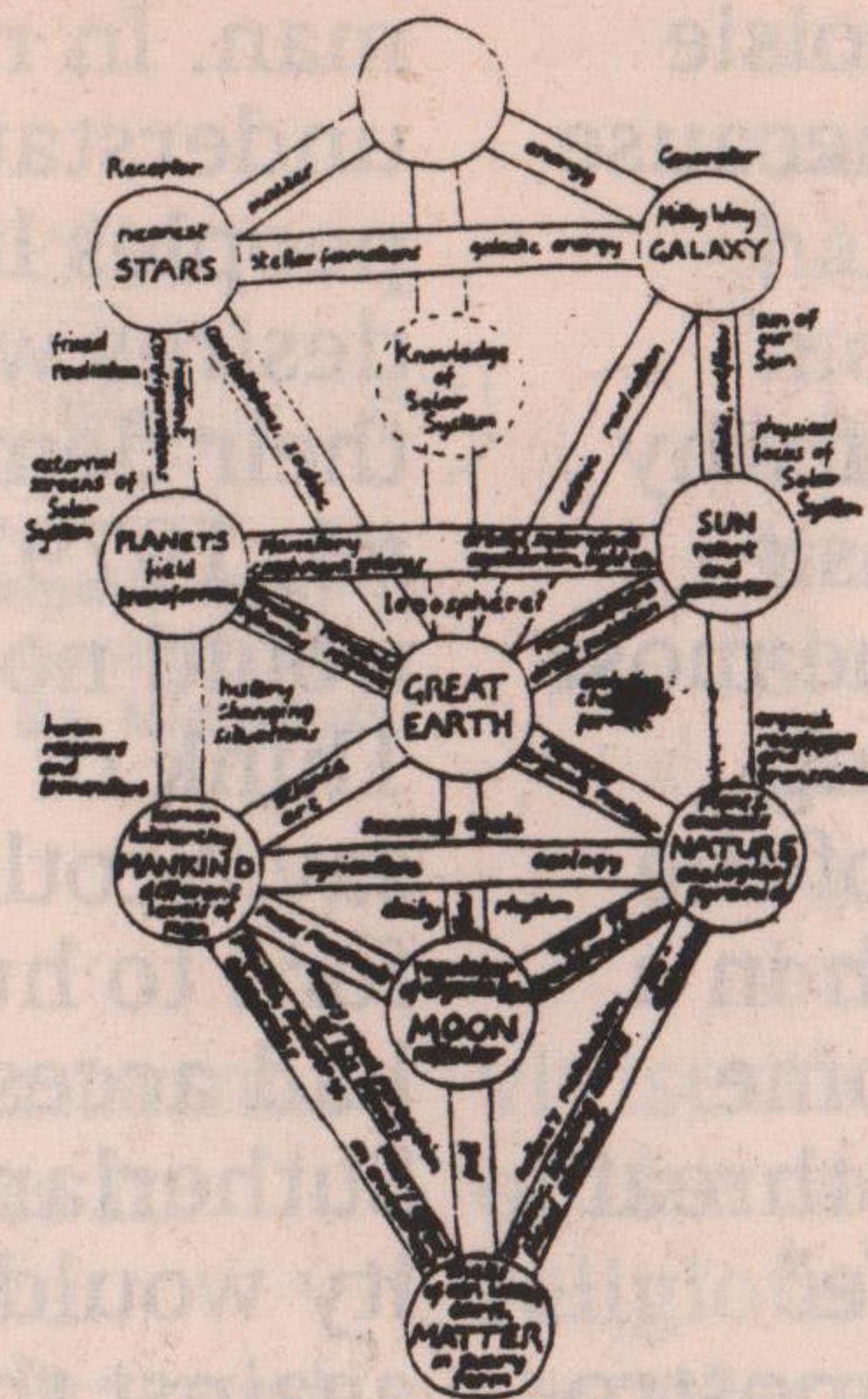


tune, is a precondition for the true emancipation of man" (p15). But if primitive man's life was not a relentless struggle for survival [2], than all this repression and alienation was not a necessary precondition for anything - it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Richard Tate.

1. Although the authors of *Aufheben* are our friends and comrades, when it comes to the Civilization debate, they speak with corpses in their mouths:

Abandonment of the idea that the historical development of the productive forces is a progress towards socialism and communism has resulted in three main drifts in thought: 1) The abandonment of the project of abolishing capitalism and a turn to reformism of the existing system by the 'new realists', 'market socialists' etc. 2) the post-modern rejection of the notion of a developing totality, and denial of any meaning to history resulting in a celebration of what is, 3) The maintenance of an anti-capitalist perspective but identification of the problem as 'progress' or 'civilisation'; this romanticism involves the decision that the idea of historical movement was all wrong and what we really want to do is go back. These directions are not exclusive of course; post-modernist



practice, to the extent it exists, is reformist while the anti-progress faction has its roots in the post-modern attack on history. In the face of the poverty of these apparent alternatives it is understandable that many revolutionaries would want to reaffirm a theory of decadence or decline... (*Aufheben* 2, 1993, p27).

Neither we, nor Perlman, nor *The 5th Estate* have said that we can simply "go back". Perlman's position is not that "the idea of historical movement was all wrong", it is a theory of historical movement. Accusing us of post-modernism is an example of the amalgam technique. The "anti-progress faction" does not "have its roots" in post-modernism nor any other product of academia. It has its roots in thousands of years of class struggle. *Aufheben* don't explain why the anti-Civilization current, market socialism and post-modernism are only "apparent" alternatives: "of course" they're the same, aren't they? Neither do they give us their own position on progress and historical inevitability. They will need all their dialectical agility to continue avoiding the issues addressed in these articles, but if they wish to confront them seriously, our pages are open to them.

2. The Internationalist Communist Group are consistent opponents of progress. However, they



believe that the development of alienation was inevitable because of OCCASIONAL outbreaks of scarcity:

Yet, if we regard primitive communism as an embryonic prefiguration of the future human community, it is nevertheless true that this community was still imperfect and limited (we do not intend to revive the myth of "paradise lost") because it was strictly subordi-



ing and hunting societies to become agricultural/stock-breeding societies, which means : production for exchange, emergence of value and then of money as a medium of exchange, expropriation of men, division of labour, division into classes etc. (Communism no. 6, p4).

Temporary scarcities must have been common among the homo sapiens who first left Africa, but this did not lead to exchange. If this were the case, Civilization would have started developing much earlier than it actually did.

In January 1980, a group of Guatemalan peasants including Rigoberta Menchu's father occupied the Spanish embassy in Guatemala City to

MASSACRES AND the media

protest army brutality etc.. The army burnt it down, killing everybody inside. Guatemalan TV gave a fairly accurate account of what had happened, despite being the tool of a military dictatorship.

In May 1985, the Philadelphia authorities were involved in a confrontation with a political/religious commune called MOVE. The unusual lifestyle of its members led to various arguments with its neighbors. Some of the neighbors stated "We believe that any problems the community has with MOVE should be solved by the community and that the police cannot help us", while others pressed the city to do something.

The authorities discovered there was a tank of gasoline on top of the MOVE house. The Orwellian-named Bomb Disposal Unit dropped a bomb on it, with predictable results. The fire department did nothing for over an hour, and very little for four hours. The fire destroyed 61 homes, damaged 110 others, and killed 11 of the MOVE people, 5 of them children. Police gunfire had prevented them from escaping. 250 neighbors were left homeless, wishing they had not cooperated with the pigs of City Hall in trying to resolve their differences with MOVE, and that they had ignored the hysterical press campaign.

In the March 1993 Waco tragedy, the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and

Firearms burnt to death over 80 people including children in a religious commune. The US media made out it was the fault of the victims - they

had a suicide pact, they murdered their own children, etc.. The USA was founded by religious outfits which, if they were around today, would be persecuted as "cults". "Cult" usually means nothing



Injured cop

more than a small minority religion. For example, the Waco Branch Davidians were an offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventists. Members of a cult, unlike, say, worshippers of the Roman Anti-

christ, are described as "brainwashed". Add to this dehumanizing psycho-illogical garbage the routine accusations of child abuse, and you have a warrant for a massacre.

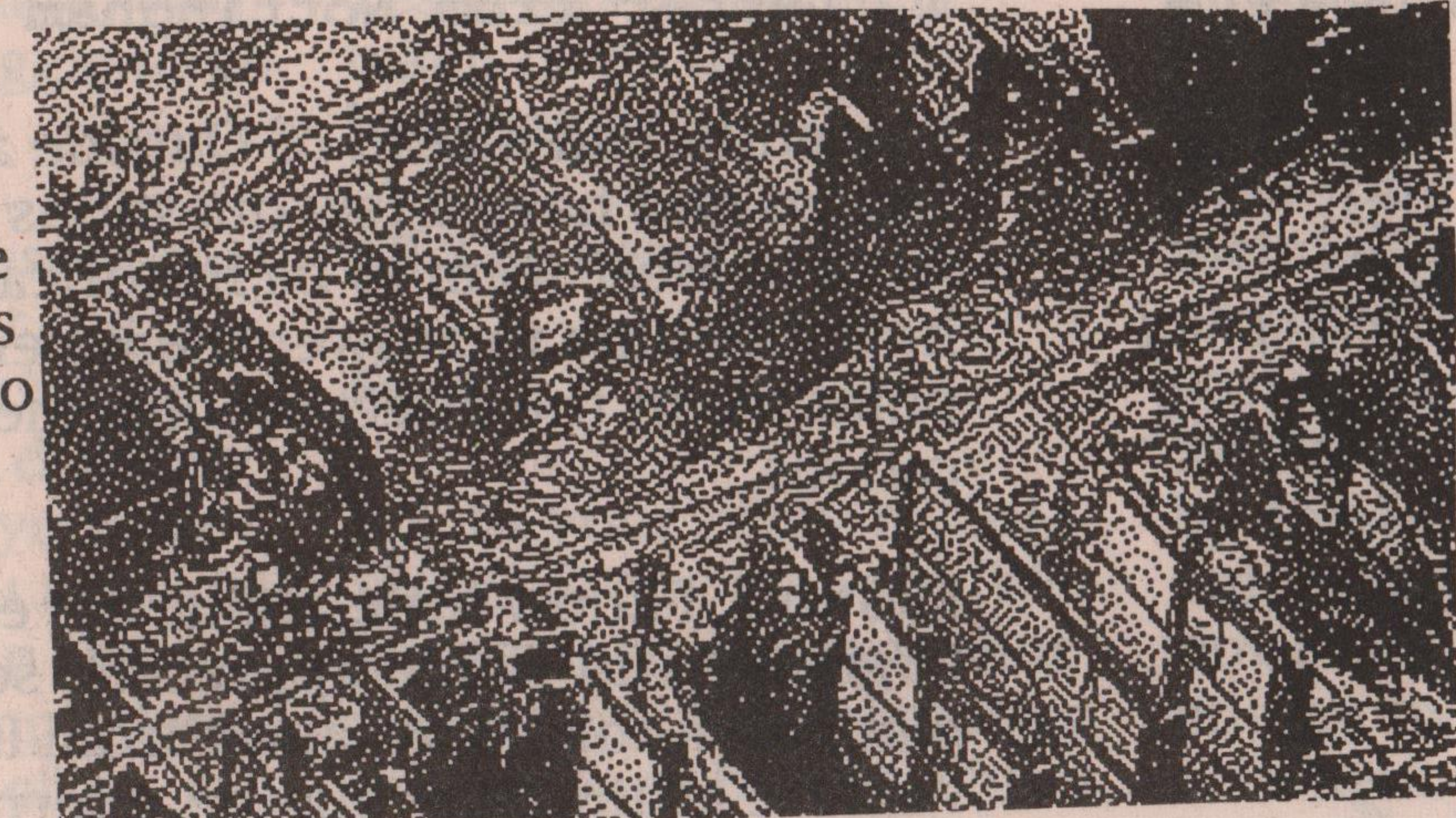
For example, the Waco Tribune-Herald helped soften up the locals with a lurid series of stories about "this menace in our community" which it ran just as the ATF pigs started the siege. The ATF raid was ordered because they had "intelligence" that the Waco outfit were "amassing heavy armaments". But Texas is full of people like that. The idea that the Branch Davidians had any reason to defend themselves against over 100 armed men who surrounded their house is hardly raised in the

March 15 issue of *Newsweek*, published during the build-up to the massacre. The ATF agents merely "took up positions", implying that the "hail of gunfire" that greeted them was an unreasonable response. *Newsweek* does give voice to one DA who says the Koresh people are "peaceful and non-aggressive unless they are attacked", adding that the ATF played right into the group's apocalyptic vision. To say that the ATF "played right into" this vision is to say that this vision was true! According to a "deprogrammer" — a psycho-the-rapist who specializes in turning "cult" members into normal American citizens — the Branch Davidians had been programmed into a "crisis mentality". Their leader David Koresh told them to be ready for "the

aggressors who would come from without the walls to destroy them". And they tell us that he was mad?

Published six months after the massacre, the official report says that once Koresh knew they were coming, the ATF agents should have cancelled the raid, but some of them rewrote the documents to make it look as though they didn't know that he knew. This report has two purposes — to blame it on individuals rather than the police state apparatus, and to show

that they are so confident of their ability to murder us whenever they feel like it, the American ruling class can openly admit that the Waco bloodletting was justified by deliberate lies, just like,



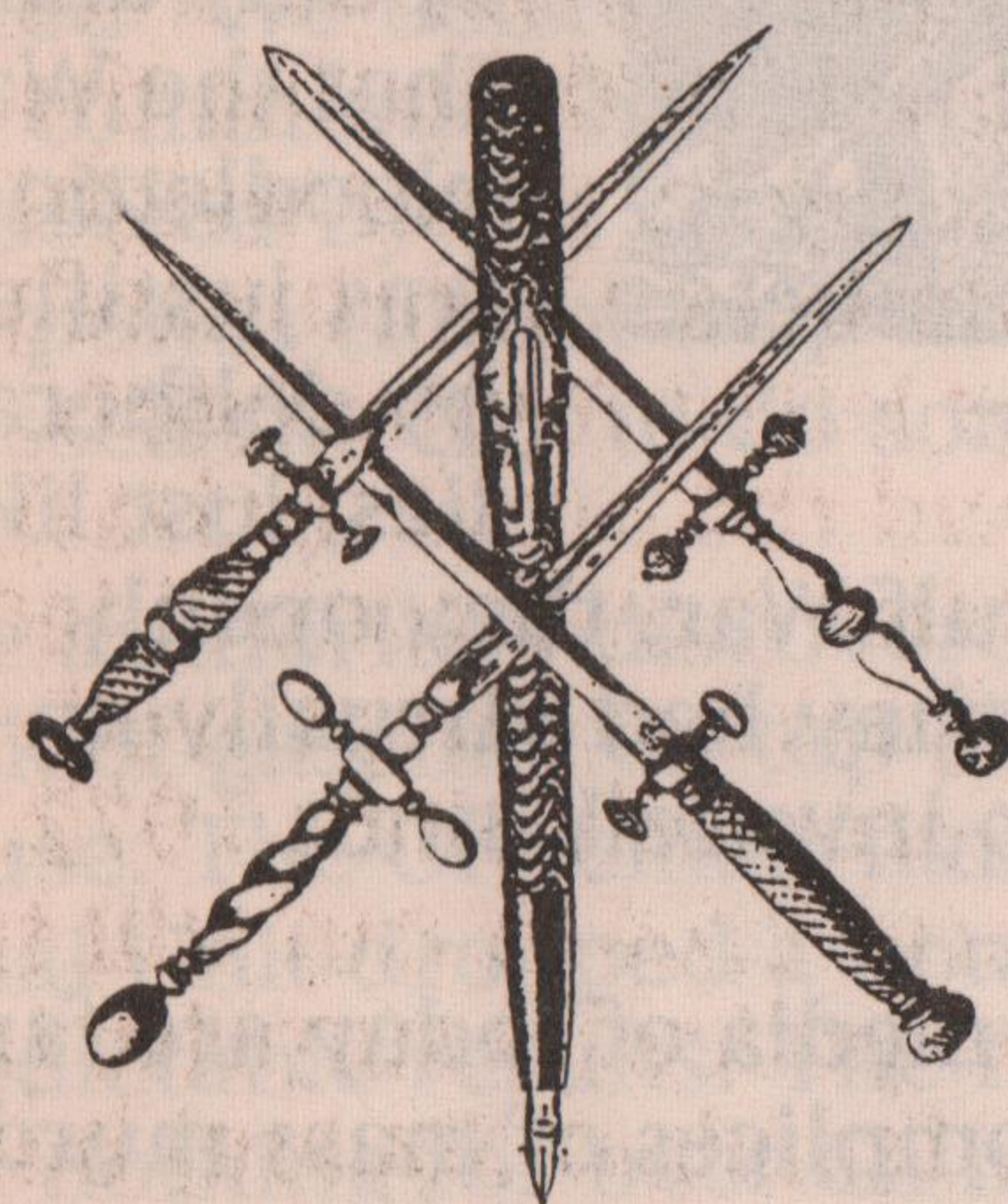
The aftermath of the MOVE crisis

soon after the Gulf War, they openly boasted of how they had virtually encouraged Iraq to invade Kuwait.

The democratic media of today are far more adept accomplices of mass murder than those of dictatorships. In a state run by one party or one rich family the media is not taken seriously because it is seen as representing the views of a particular fraction of the ruling class. In a liberal democracy on the other hand, the media is more credible because it appears to represent "all sides" even-handedly. So it is more able to brainwash the public into supporting the murder of innocent people, whether in Philadelphia or Waco, Mogadishu or Baghdad.

DeAR rED bASTARDS

letters to Wildcat



Here is a selection of our correspondence over the last year. Our dismissive remarks about comrades in the North of England in the last Letters Page has, fortunately, made no difference to the volume of correspondence we receive from that periphery. We do not make a point of publishing every letter we receive but do so when we think it raises an important issue or forces us to do this in reply. Both the letters and replies are often edited to some extent to remove personal details, requests for publications and other material irrelevant to the discussion.

1. Letter from Nottingham

I recently had a read of *Outside and Against the Unions* and have a few questions that have arisen from it. Most seem to be historical so if you don't have the time to answer them perhaps you could point me in the direction of some relevant publications.

First off, I know little about the events at Orgreave and would appreciate some more information on this. Why, apart from it being 'trench warfare against the pigs on a terrain they have chosen', was it a waste of time? Also, in what way was it pig-chosen?

The issue of when to support a particular struggle I find quite confusing. Are you saying that a struggle is to be supported while it is making demands but when it begins to compromise (i.e. negotiate the struggle away?) is when it should be criticised and, if necessary, actively opposed.

You say (on p8) that many miners' picket lines allowed non-NUM members to cross. I find this astonishing, have you any documentary evidence I could see? Surely this is a relatively recent development, I was under the impression that strikes used to spread quite readily in the '70s and before. It's frightening to think how blinded people become with the whole union game/rulebook.

When you talk of union bureaucracy on pg. 9 you missed a well-hammered point (maybe because it goes without saying) in that in creating professional negotiators you create a body of people who have an interest in continuing a situation where they retain their livelihood and status and for that reason (as well as the others you state) will only allow a struggle to go so far.

I would be interested to know more about the CGT's U-turn on the 1st World War. How did they justify it? Could you also explain what you mean by 'an area official in the NUM... would simply lose control' (bottom of pg. 10). How did the Communist Party undermine France May '68? Was it a simple case of telling the unions to tell the workers to go back to work?

I agree entirely that the unions, by their institutionalisation, can't help but promote corporatism, but isn't this inevitable with traditional trades based in long-standing communities? It seems that with an increasingly mobile workforce that, although you lose this corporatism, you 'gain' individualism, therefore losing the inher-

ent strength of an old community.

Thanks for your time. *Wildcat* is, in my humble opinion, an excellent and provocative read and very accessible without being populist (although I thought the recession guide was a bit sketchy) and I look forward to seeing the next issue. Oh Yes, I was completely taken in by the Columbus half-page!

All The Best,

Fred

P.S. In your reply to *Collide-O-Scope* you say 'We are against any state, not for the moralistic reasons put forward by anarchists, but because it cannot be used for our purposes'. Could you explain further?

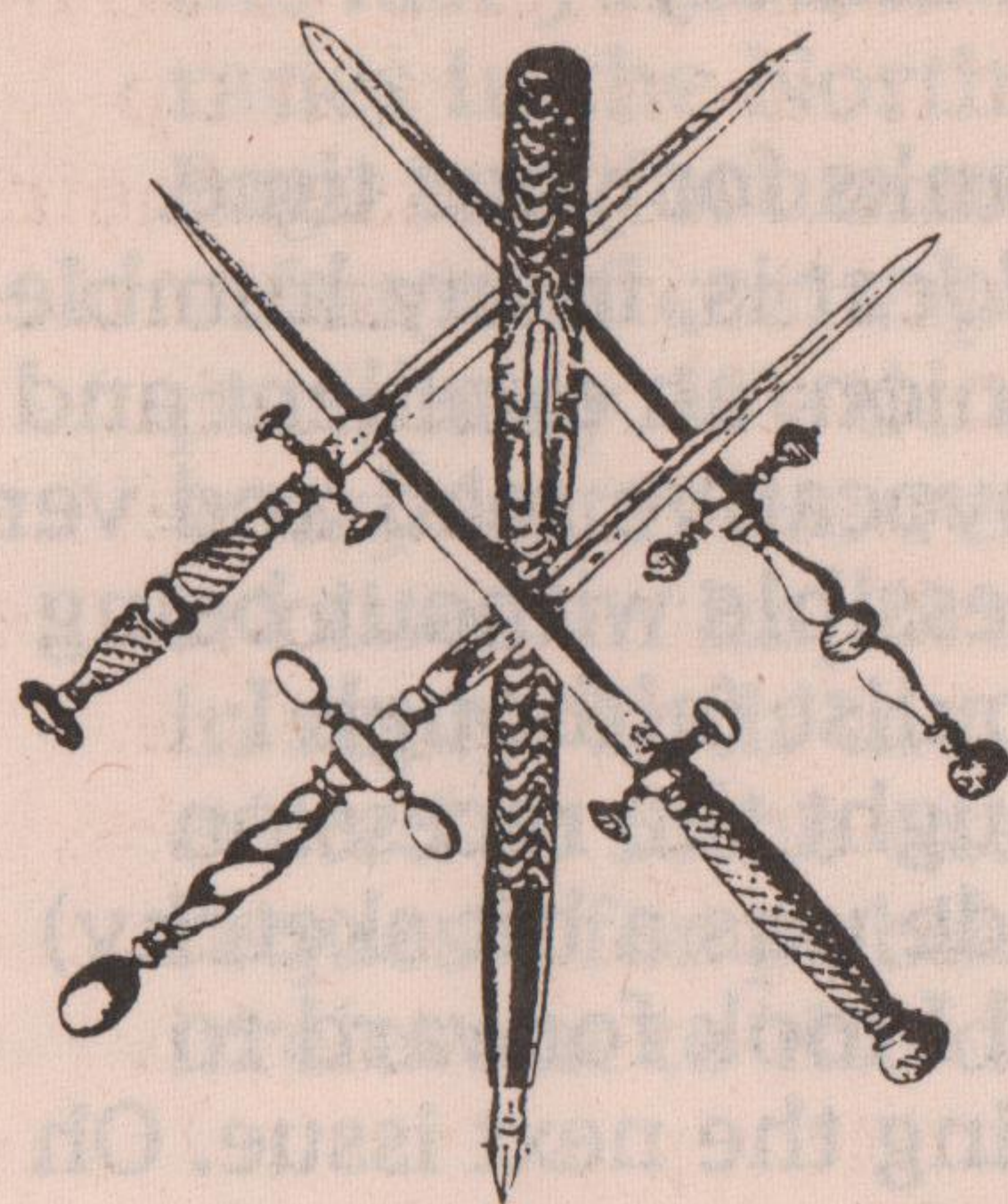
2. Reply to Nottingham

I'll deal with your comments about the OATU pamphlet starting with Orgreave. Orgreave was THE mass picketing event of the strike. It was widely seen by the Left and most miners as an opportunity to repeat the famous victory at Saltley in February 1972 during a previous miners' strike. Saltley coke depot was successfully shut down by

a mass picket of thousands of miners joined by thousands of engineering workers from nearby factories. The picket was extremely peaceful by today's standards but the police were completely unprepared for dealing with such a thing and just had to admit that there was nothing they could do. This victory had been important because Saltley contained Britain's last substantial stockpile of coke for gas works (remember this was in the days before North Sea gas!) and power stations. Saltley is generally seen by the Left as THE example of mass workers' power, of defeating the enemy by sheer weight of numbers. Unfortunately for leftist mythologists (and the working class) police crowd control techniques have improved enormously since 1972. Large crowds can still take the police by surprise (as at Trafalgar Square) but not if we tell them in advance what we're going to be doing! Despite the heroic efforts and sacrifice of the pickets the attempt to shut down Orgreave coke depot was a complete failure. Some idea of what the pickets were up against can be got from reading *State of Siege* (Canary Press, 1984).

I think you are fundamentally misunderstanding what we're on about when you talk about "the issue of when to support a particular struggle". There is no question of supporting a struggle or not. We always support the class struggle. The problem is one of when we support various organisational forms (strike committees, support groups, defence campaigns, soviets, hit squads, workers' militias...) which arise in the course of struggle. The creation of one of these forms can start off as an important advance in the struggle but later the committee (or whatever) can become something that holds the struggle back. At this point revolutionaries should denounce it and try to organise something else - a real strike committee as opposed to a trade union dominated negotiating committee, for example.

You find it astonishing that NUM members allowed members of other unions to cross their picket lines? It is standard trade union practice, you know! I'm not sure what you consider to be real documentary evidence (does it have to be signed by two school teachers in the presence of a magistrate?) but here's a copy



of Workers' *Playtime* from during the miners' strike. We plagiarised quite a lot of information from the article *The Miners' Strike in Lancs*. It contains a picture of some miners with a banner saying "Your day at work is your day of shame", which can't be bad. When I say that "an area official in the NUM... would simply lose control" I mean just that. If he became too "moderate" the miners would no longer feel they needed his permission to go on strike because he would have "sold out", ceased to be one of the lads.

You're right, I didn't mention the fact that union bureaucrats are often "corrupted" by their privileged position. Partly this is because, as you say, that it goes without saying that this happens. Partly it's because I think far too much is made of this,

particularly by those who want to reform the unions or replace them with other unions. The point I wanted to make is that an organisation can act as a trade union (and therefore undermine struggles) even if it doesn't have an army of full-time officials and all the usual trappings of a respectable labour movement body. In any case, if you just want to make money and generally "get on" in the capitalist system you don't become a union bureaucrat, you become a manager. It may be shocking to low-paid workers that the leader of "their" union earns, say, £50,000 a year plus a flash car but by the standards of top company directors this is peanuts!

The Communist Party undermined May '68 not just by telling the unions to tell workers to go back to work (although it did do this). It ran the unions. It was also responsible for providing march stewards and other anti-proletarian thugs who physically prevented "outside agitators" from going to occupied factories. It also put out a great deal of misinformation (for example, trying to claim that left-wing "extremists" were really fascists - that old trick again!) and generally did everything they could

to maintain "Order".

Yes, it's true that corporatism is almost inevitable where you have a long-standing community based on a particular industry (as in the coal industry). But unions don't just promote corporatism under these conditions. Unions promote corporatism in Basildon as well as Barnsley. It's certainly true that the destruction of these traditional working class communities is a defeat for the class. As capital comes to dominate more and more areas of life it becomes more and more difficult to live in any kind of community at all, apart from one which is openly antagonistic to capital.

When we say we are against all states "but not for the moralistic reasons put forward by anarchists" we are distancing ourselves from the view that it's wrong to run a state because revolutionaries are not in the business of "telling people what to do". The revolution does involve telling people what to do or, more often, telling them what not to do. Call us old-fashioned if you like... but we still believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, something which is

expressed in an embryonic form whenever strikers threaten to beat up anyone who crosses their picket line or a landlord is terrorised into reducing rent or calling off an eviction. The state is not some neutral administrative organ which can express the interests of any class, it can only express the dictatorship of capital. That's why we're against it.

Thanks for your encouraging remarks about *Wildcat*. We don't receive nearly enough fan mail.

3. Letter from Portland

I've been sent the last two issues of *Wildcat*, and I thought I'd drop you a letter. All in all I think *Wildcat* is one of the most dynamic revolutionary magazines I've read. Could you get it out more often? Here's some comments on specific points.

1) In *Wildcat* #15, I felt one major connection was not made. In rejecting progress as a capitalist ideology (the review of Perlman's *Against Leviathan!*) we need to identify its meaning to the revolutionary projects of the past. Specifically, the Marxian trends... Your article on the Russian

Revolution was a little too conspiratorial for my taste. I just cannot picture Lenin and the Bolsheviks being capitalists giving a line to the working class. It is just too simplistic. But the Bolsheviks definitely had a capitalist line. How come?

I would like to suggest that the social-democratic view of evolutionary socialism (i.e. that socialism would be the next stage beyond capitalism) was a major cause for the downfall of the Bolsheviks. This stages theory is consistent with most of Marx's and all of Engels' work and is the weak point in their Marxian methodology. Lenin et. al. believed that industry was necessary to the development of socialism. "Socialism is state ownership plus electricity." Being realists the Bolsheviks admitted that industry needs trained and coordinated administration. Thus, an administrative elite came about, usually from the former middle-to-upper administrators from the czarist regime, and capitalism recreated in a new form.

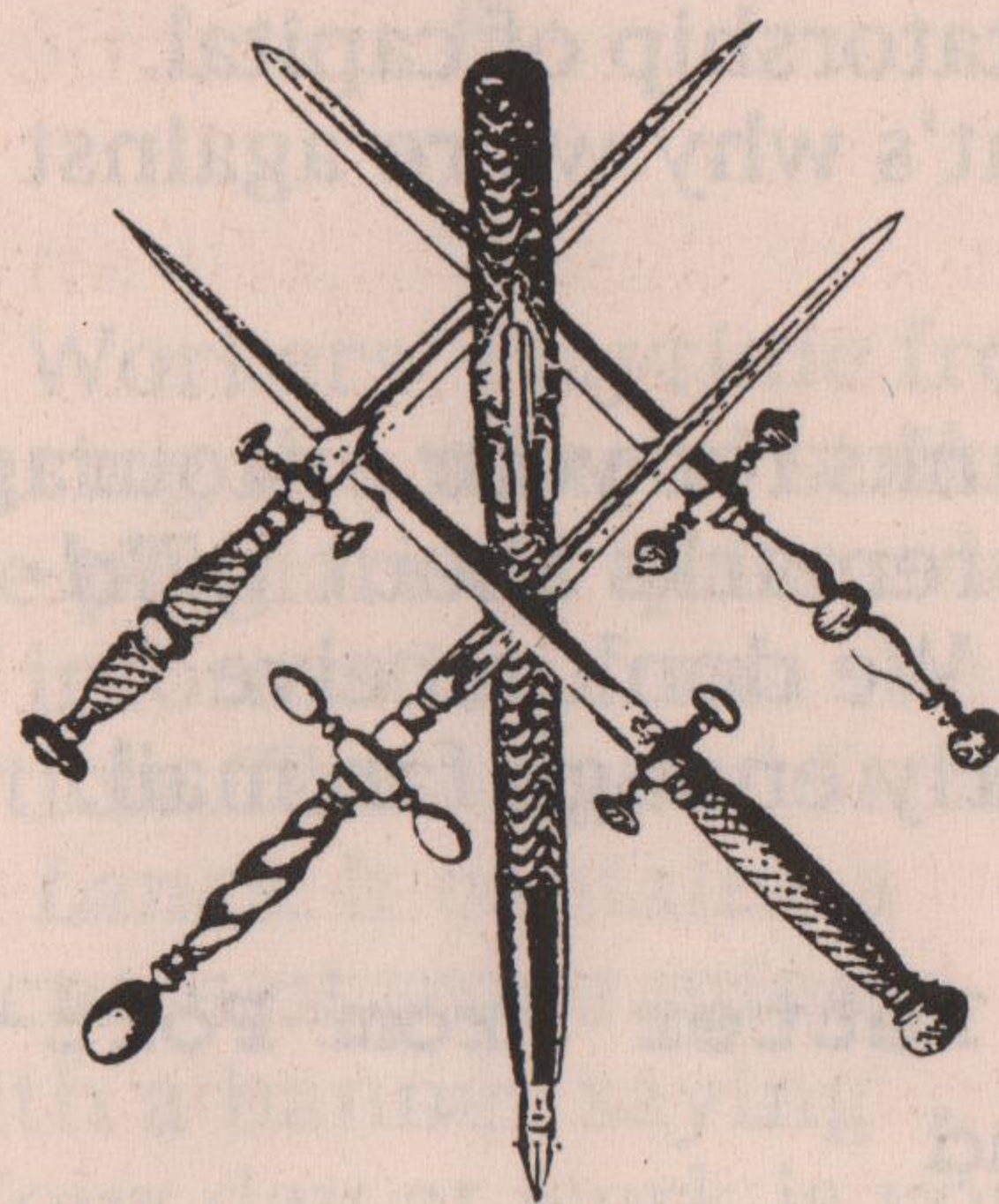
Now the need for centralized administration of large scale industry is realistic given the belief in industry. In being consistent with Messrs. Marx

and Engels the Bolsheviks needed to develop and maintain capitalist industry, thus wound up being capitalists, through function. And our anarchist comrades shouldn't get too smug, these arguments were made by the anarcho-syndicalists during the Spanish revolution for their collaboration with the republic to keep the industries going. Thus the attack upon industrialism and work is fundamental to the attack upon capitalism. The break with leftism must come from a thorough attack upon the ideology of progress.

2) The issue of small action groups. Sticky question guys. Yeah, small groups do get a lot done, but there are specific dangers to them as well, and your enthusiasm, while understandable, needs to be tempered - especially in print. Small action groups need to avoid substitutionism on their part and especially on the masses' part. There is a real tendency for people in mass movements to become less involved because action groups do the dirty (and dangerous) work for them. Small action groups also tend to become elitist amongst themselves.

3) Columbus (*Wildcat*

#16) - the joke backfired here in the US, guys. Even I couldn't tell at first if you were kidding or not. I could only imagine what a lot of the people around here who would read this mag. would think, since those who are sympathetic to this trend tend to



also be involved in Amerindian struggles.

4) *Earth First!* - In the US, *EF!* is an amazingly heterogeneous grouping, and your assessment of the organization is somewhat accurate. The problem is the development of the organization occurred in the exigencies of a large number of *EF!* people doing monkeywrenching, thus there was no center. "How can they infiltrate a marshmallow?" was the standard reasoning. The lot of them tended to be wanderers and outdoors types who would arrive,

gather and disappear like a nomad tribe. But they got the necessary stuff done. The original people in *EF!* tended to be working class folks or at least oriented that way. The concept of monkeywrenching was supposed to have been taken from the experiences of the IWW and combined with the politics of the Luddites. (But for us to be successful it needs to be the other way round - kind of.) But this was also the 'redneck' (racist, anti-human) faction, who in many ways are unfortunately representative of rural working class culture in the Western USA.

The success of *EF!*, if there was one, was to give a subversive expression (i.e. sabotage) to the efforts to halt the destruction of the earth. With the development of the environmental movement the usual hangers on came to *EF!*, the students and the middle-class do-gooders. With them came the baggage of their social-classes, pacifism, etc. I was at the meeting where the end to tree spiking in the Pacific Northwest came about. Spiking (the placing of spikes in trees to ruin the timber milling blades) can endanger workers. While

Eco-defence was very clear about avoiding injuring workers through spiking, the authors made a fatal assumption. That being the timber companies cared enough about workers' safety that they wouldn't send spiked trees through the mill. Of course the mill owners did send through spiked trees, and at least one worker was seriously injured, and this threat to workers' safety was used by the timber industry to divide workers and "environmentalists". Now at this meeting earth firsters met with radical loggers for the first time. It was agreed that *EF!* should abandon tree spiking because it attacked workers. But I also remember *EF!* people saying they wouldn't give up other forms of sabotage - especially against timber company equipment and property. One of the workers laughed and replied of course, sabotage as much as you want. He then went on with a short talk about all the sabotage by workers in the mills. Sabotage was eventually essentially abandoned by *EF!* for mass demonstrations as the organization became more hip and student orientated (i.e. middle class). The older, redneck faction refused (like most of the US work-

ing class) to recognize the social nature of the problem of environmental destruction, Thus couldn't effectively use the tactic of sabotage they rediscovered. The students and activists refusing to give up the benefits of being middle class and able to access 'justice' could never accept sabotage and thus renounced the only tactic that really worked. *EF!*/US really doesn't exist anymore. The activists have run on to the newest *mouvement-du-jour*. The diehards continue to keep the name going, but the only place *EF!* seems to be growing is in the eastern US and in Europe - both places without much wilderness left.

4. Letter from Ian, Sheffield

I'm pretty new to this game having a bit of involvement with some anarchist stuff but mainly living a hedonistic life on no money. However, escapism is the easiest way out of things. What I would like to know are your views on "Workerism and Workerist attitudes" within the left. Recently I have gone to a couple of meetings of a local Socialist Workers' Party branch just really to see their (lack of) reasoning and sit as an observer. I find

their extreme workerism hard to take and their attitude to the unemployed is laughable. Recently we have seen another boost for the shoe leather industry - yes, the left are organizing a "Right to Work" march to London.

Anyway, back to workerism. What really worried me was the latest issue of *Organise!* [magazine of the British group, the Anarchist Communist Federation - ed.] (who seem intent on forcing a strict definition parting of anarchist between rich liberal drop out types and organised sub-trots). They had an article on the miners' struggle and I thought that this would be good to start a fucking positive discussion. Two reasons: (i) coal mining is the shittiest, hardest, degrading, body/mind destroying work ever. Never mind alienation a la Marx, you end up being alienated from your brain! (ii) coal mining is the driving force behind all the production in this country, ie. electricity, steel (for car working, industry) etc. etc..

So the ACF say "Keep the pits open, link up with car workers". We don't need any more fucking cars on our roads. Cars these days are designed to fall apart

in five years, and are also designed with safety features forced by the notion that YES YOU ARE GOING TO CRASH because the traffic density is totally fucked up. It is ok. to argue should we organize in the workplace or not — but we should be arguing to put an end to this useless commodity production. Workers talking with workers about what they want to do and what they don't want to do. My brother works at a car factory and the only thing he looks forward to is the game of football in his dinner hour. Sometimes I feel that a blatant "Keep the pits open" stance is little better than the trots who have their eyes on managing the whole show. As *Against Sleep and Nightmare* discusses - production for capitalism's sake vs. production for production's sake... when you're at the bottom of the pile misery is the only thing you experience. Maybe the ACF would call me a rich-liberal-anarchist, maybe I should be writing to the ACF? Working class... my dad started turning on his lathe at 16 and has been there for nearly 40 years making huge bobbins for yarn for the fashion industry, is this something to be proud of or romanticize?

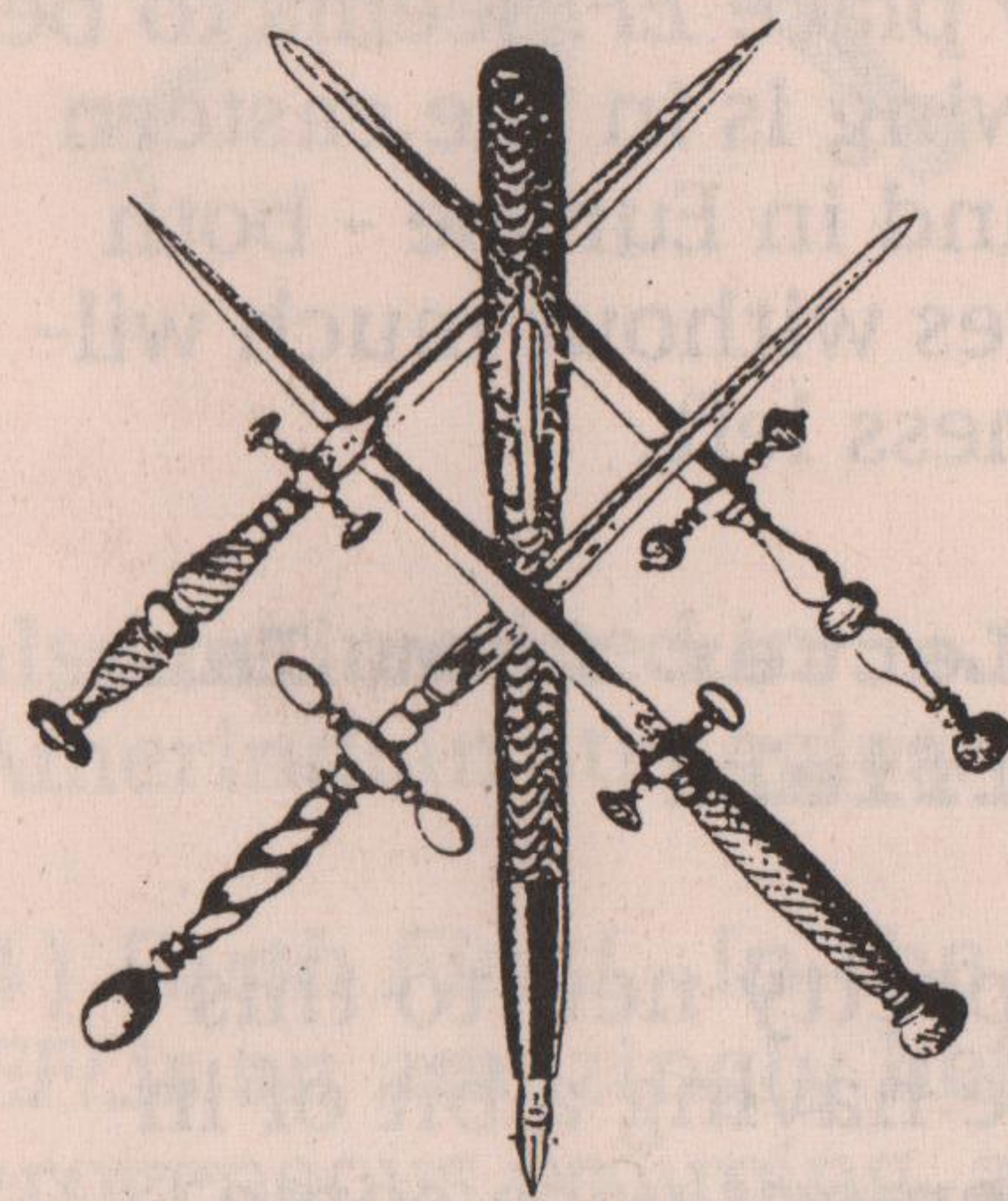
For total change, for communism.

Ian.

5. Reply to Ian, Sheffield

If you're living a hedonistic lifestyle on no money you're not doing too badly. Personally, I found that I couldn't live a hedonistic enough lifestyle on no money so I had to get a job!

But seriously.... We reject



workerism of any kind. The proletariat is defined by its dispossession and its resistance to that dispossession, not by the fact that it sweats at the point of production. This is not to deny the importance of workplace struggle (or struggle in any other area of life). Historically the workplace has been an important site of struggle just because it has been a

place where large numbers of proles were concentrated under the same roof with similar immediate concerns around pay/hours/conditions. This has even led the bourgeoisie to partially "legalise" the class struggle in this area through allowing official strikes, granting workers immunity from liability for loss of business etc. At the same time we have to recognise that the very category "workplace struggle", as something separate from the rest of life under capitalism, represents a defeat for the working class. It is an expression of the victory of the "factory system", beginning in England in the early 19th Century. As is well described by E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (if you haven't read it its well worth going out and stealing, his new *Customs in Common* is pretty good too) the factory system developed before large-scale machinery - it was a means of curbing the indiscipline of semi-artisanal workers by bringing them together under the watchful eye of the overseer and factory boss. Before the victory of this system there was no clear distinction between workplace and community struggles. Were the Luddites a "community

struggle" or a "workers' movement"? It's a meaningless question. In the 18th Century it was usually prices rather than wages which brought the dispossessed out onto the streets - and why not?

Today workerism (overall fetishism?) is quite obviously opposed to the class struggle as was clearly demonstrated by the anti-poll tax struggle. For months and months the SWP denied that there could be an APT struggle because it wasn't a workplace issue. They finally jumped on the bandwagon when they realised that if they didn't Militant might gain more recruits than them!

I think your question about the relationship between struggling for improvements within this society (keeping your job, getting a higher wage, more dole money etc.) and struggling against this society (dynamiting the pits, demolishing the car factories, fucking in the streets etc.) is a very important one. I think one way of looking at it is in terms of the limitations of any struggle which confines itself to one sector of the economy or one area of life. If you are struggling purely as a miner what else can you do be-

sides "save the pits"? We discuss this in some depth in the pamphlet about the trade unions.

The slogan "Keep the pits open" is pretty reactionary (though, perhaps, not as bad as "Save the British coal industry"). But I don't think this means that we're against all "reformist" demands. There was nothing wrong with shouting "No Poll Tax", particularly while trashing the West End of London. There would be nothing wrong with the demand "No Redundancies" in connection with the pits, particularly as its really a demand against work given that the reason companies make redundancies is either because they don't have enough orders to keep everyone busy or they think they can get away with increasing the intensity of work for the workers who are left.

Yours for the Abolition of Work, for real hedonism on NO MONEY,

Alan for *Wildcat*.

P.S. Thanks for the tenner.

6. Letter from ABC, Sheffield

PO Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY, UK.

It was good to see an article (*Wildcat* #16) seriously getting to grips with the whole issue of prisons and (Ruling Class) "Justice". As a member of the Anarchist Black Cross and writer for *Taking Liberties* it pisses me off how most revolutionaries either ignore it or dismiss it as somehow not central to the class struggle. Obviously this is bullshit as the Prison system and the whole concept of (Ruling Class) "Justice" is the biggest stick the state has to beat us with. It's a reality we all face and as such should be part of any Class Struggle revolutionary's agenda. British prisons are concentration camps for the working class and although only a tiny minority are in for 'political' crimes, the prisons are full of our class engaged as a result in direct confrontation with the state and all its bully-boys.

The article itself was good, comprehensive in its coverage of recent events, but I'd like to comment on a few things.

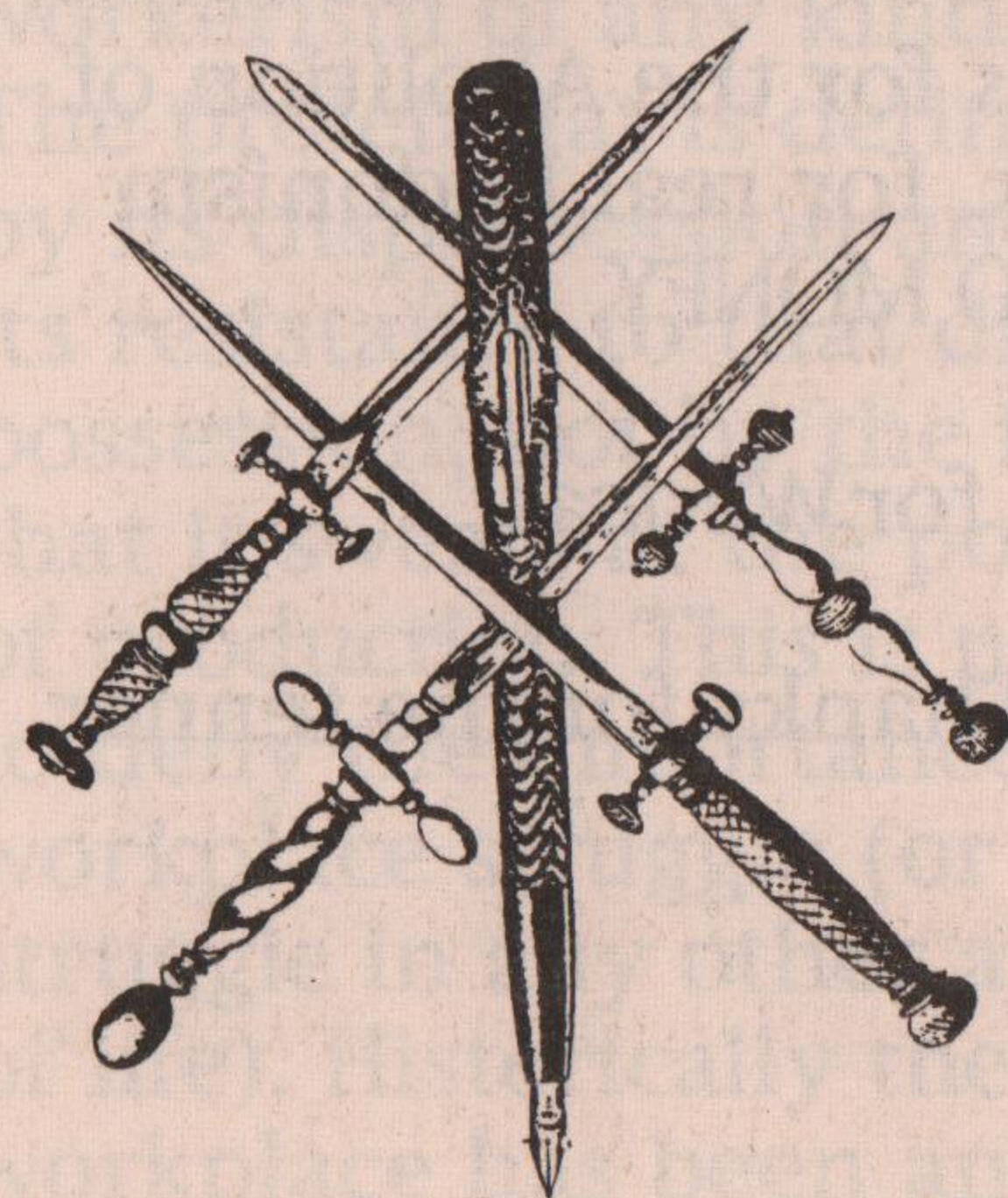
Of course the Royal Com-

mission will be a white-wash; the State has no interest in improving the lives of those it locks away, it'd quite happily leave them to rot if it thought it could get away with it. The only reasons it considers 'reforms' is to shut up the liberals such as Judge Tumin, and most importantly because prisoners have shown that if they don't then they'll take the fucking places apart! This Royal Commission will not happen until probably 1994, results made public a couple of years later - plenty of time to paper over the cracks. No doubt the Home Office will buy a few more table tennis tables, install in-cell lavatories etc. but meanwhile there'll still be 23 hour lock-up in most prisons and the standard screw brutality. Naturally we should welcome changes that make the lives of our incarcerated friends and comrades easier, but our fight is not one for reforms but for the destruction of all prisons.

You wrote that we should not "demand Justice": well, we should never demand the sort of "Justice" that we're brought up on - it's as likely as nicking fog. What we should be demanding is CLASS JUS-

TICE. Whether we all agree as what this means in theory and practice is by the by - we have to start working towards it now. If we want to take back control over our own lives then we've got to be able to look after our communities, defend them from attacks by the state and also from the anti-social dicks among us, and protect the weaker and more vulnerable sections of the community (eg. the old and sick). Class Justice can only come from us, from our communities, whether it be running drug dealers out, punishing rapists etc. we have to start working towards it because when the cops fuck off (as is the case in many parts of the country) there's only us left.

I completely agree with your statement that we should support demands of Irish prisoners (see *Taking Liberties* #7). Is-



sues such as location of prisoners, however, is not something peculiar to Irish POWs, though of course it affects them most severely. One of the reasons why teenagers, sent down for the first time as vulnerable and scared kids, when imprisoned 200 miles away from their families and friends, take their own lives, is the isolation, fear and depression this causes. As a consequence the State has the blood of these "young offenders" deaths on its hands.

As you say revolutionaries must make prisoner support work a priority and about time too. Since the demise of *Black Flag*, *Taking Liberties* has been reporting on the Class Struggle within Britain's prisons trying to encourage increased understanding of what goes on in them and to draw comrades on the outside into the struggle. A major reason why this is not a priority is that prisons and what goes on in them remains 'mystified' and 'distant' to many people, but this can be changed.

In Solidarity,

Grem for *Taking Liberties*.

PS. There are TWO jails in Durham - Albert Dryden

(no. CK0635) is in FRANKLAND. Kenny Carter (no. AD3434) is now in Full Sutton. Please print our address - enclosed are TLs 2-7, #1 is now out of print.

7. Reply to ABC, Sheffield

Thanks for your letter of 30.9.92. It was particularly welcome in that it was the first positive response we have received to *Wildcat* 16. Most of the feedback we have had so far has been totally negative and frankly discouraging. If however the Justice article has helped in however small a way to push the issue of prisoners' support up the agenda, it will have been worth publishing. Now to come on to your detailed differences with our positions. Originally, the article was intended to be a theoretical discussion about the origins of the concept of Justice and its development during early capitalism, describing how the rise of wage labour measured by labour time corresponded with, physically and conceptually, the emergence of the prison system. Unfortunately, we didn't get time to write that article, so the bits explaining why we are against Justice got a bit squeezed by the LA stuff.

The point we tried to make is this: Justice, if it means anything at all, means exchanging a particular quantity of punishment for a measurably equivalent quantity of crime. Judges, in sentencing people, refer to the need to deter others, the need to protect the public, and other such noble motives, but one rationalization they usually come out with is the rightness of punishing miscreants according to a "tariff" of sentences which correspond to the crime allegedly committed. Each crime is "worth" roughly a given amount of punishment. For example, robbery of larger amounts of money is likely to result in longer prison sentences than smaller amounts. Murder carries a longer sentence than burglary because a human life is considered to be worth more than a video recorder. A murder is worth about 16 years, a rape about 4 years, and a burglary perhaps 2 years. So, roughly speaking, 1 murder = 4 rapes, 1 rape = 2 burglaries. Justice means quantifying crimes according to some theoretical unit of measurement, just like money is used to measure the value of goods, a unit which must be equally applicable to

crime and punishment, otherwise it would be impossible to assign the punishment which equals the crime.

We agree with what you say about the need for the working class to deal with anti social elements within its ranks. However, this has nothing to do with Justice. We are not interested in punishing someone, in making them pay. We are only interested in preventing anti working class activities. The actions of self-defence carried out by the working class should not be calculated according to what the anti social element in question deserves, but solely according to what is required to achieve the deterrent and preventative aim. Victims of criminals understandably want revenge, but this is not something we defend. Since we do not defend the exchange relationship, we are not interested in Justice. So we would not use the term "Class Justice" to describe acts of working class defence.

We take your point about the Royal Commission being a whitewash as far as improving prison conditions is concerned, but we do think there is a serious effort within the ruling class to improve the

record of the police. The growing contempt for the bastards in blue worries the state, because the police are nowhere near strong enough to control even a medium-sized upsurge in class confrontation by brute force. They rely on consent. They are by their brutality and arrogance, undermining this consent. The bourgeoisie therefore wants to reform the police - and the rest of the criminal justice system which, it is increasingly clear, has conspired to put hundreds of innocent men and women behind bars. Whether they can achieve this reform, is another matter. We also accept what you say about the demand to be kept near families applying to prisoners from the mainland as well as to Irish prisoners, particularly young first-time prisoners from the mainland, who, as you rightly argue, are often driven to suicide by isolation.

Finally, we reiterate our commitment to make prisoner support work one of the priorities of revolutionaries today. Thanks for the numbers of Albert Dryden and Kenny Carter, and the copies of *Taking*



Liberties. Keep up the good work.

Yours for communism,

Wildcat.

POETRY CORNER

Strike!

in the spirit of Eugene V. Debs,
an American Beowulf, who was like both a
sacred covenant rainbow
for all the blue proletariat
and a
bolt of crimson lightning from a
powerful electromagnetic storm
and struck fiercely against the
industrial money monsters who
were mute, blind, stark and cold
to all colors of tears and as
brutal, bloodthirsty and beastly
as the Anglo-Saxon monster Grendel!
Strike like a prairie grass fire by the light of
the Morning Star at dawn, or
Strike like a heat wave by the light of the
scorching sun at noon, or
Strike like a hurricane by the reflective light
of the full moon at midnight,
But strike, as passionately as you love to make
love.
Strike
Strike
Strike!

Tashunka Raven.

DEMOCRACY = DEMAGOGY + HYPOCRISY

Who are right, the idealists or the materialists? The question once stated in this way hesitation becomes impossible. Undoubtedly the idealists are wrong and the materialists right.

Bakunin, *God and the State*

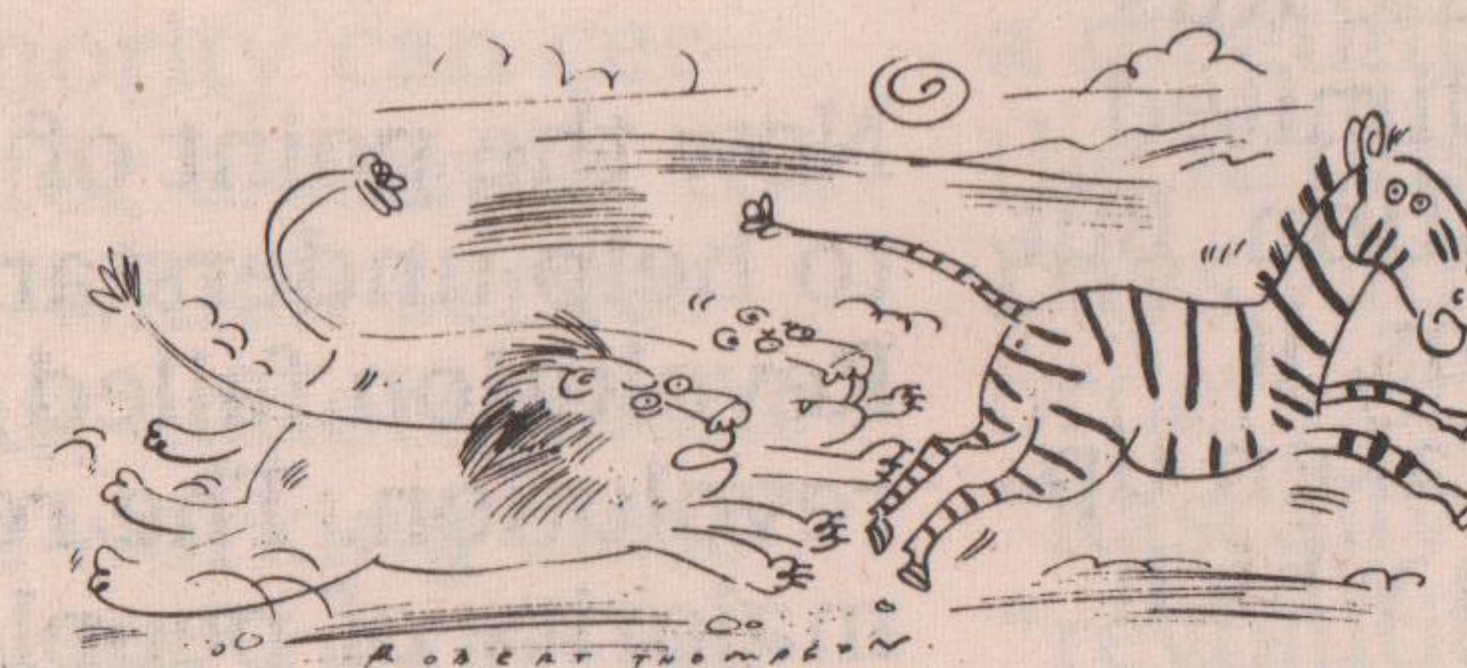
The *Discussion Bulletin*, published in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was for most of its miserable existence completely irrelevant to the class struggle. But recently it has published some decent material, namely two articles on the Russian Revolution from *Wildcat* #15. It has also published libellous replies to these articles. Here we respond to these misrepresentations, and in the process, expand on an important aspect of the communist program: proletarian dictatorship against democracy. For the benefit of those readers fortunate enough not to have seen the *DB*, we republish below two letters which were first printed in #59.

1. Letter from WILL GUEST

Dear Readers of the *Discussion Bulletin*,

A few additional comments on *Wildcat's* present attitude toward democracy in the revolutionary movement seem called

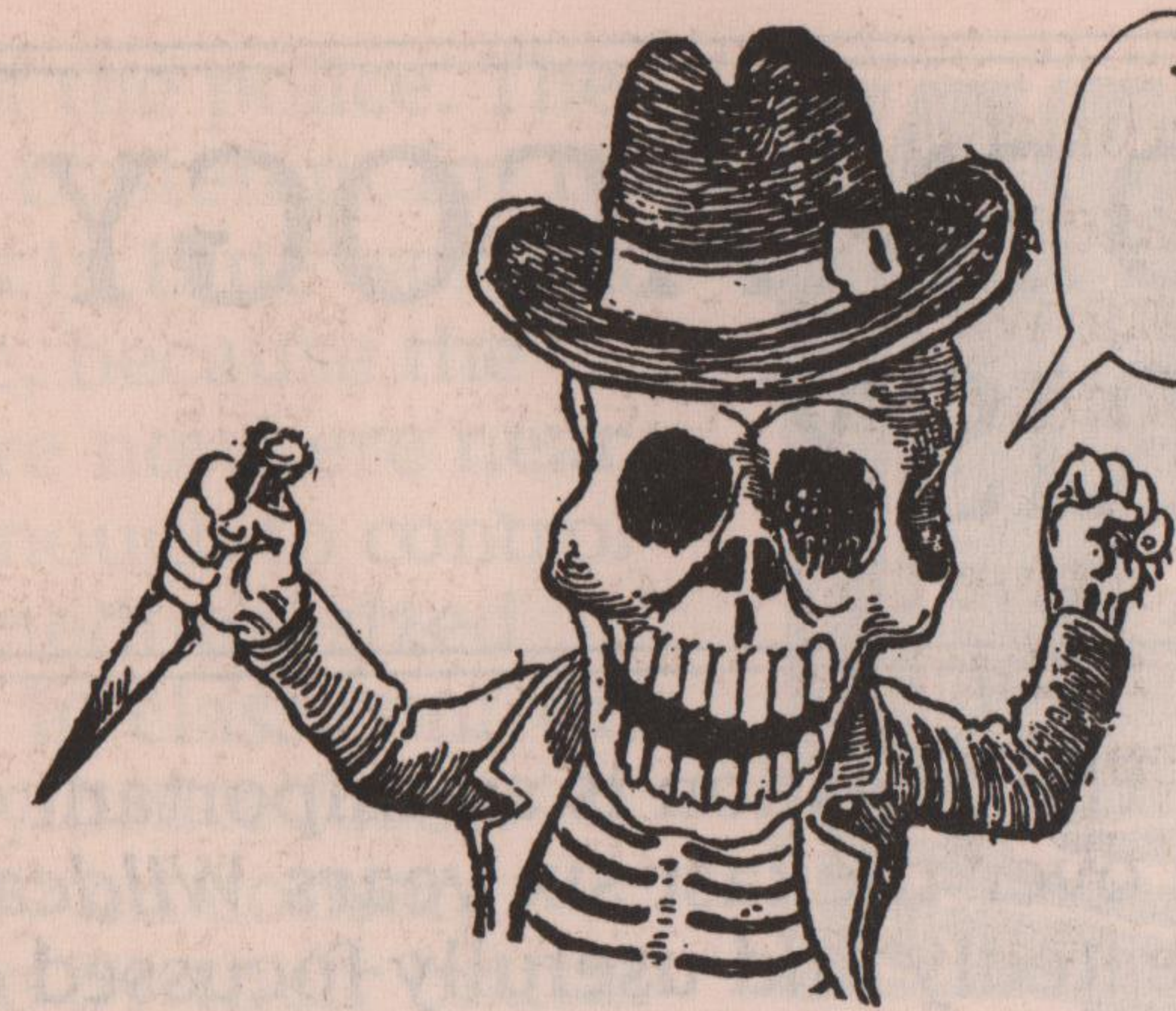
for. The question is an important one and over the last six years *Wildcat* have repeatedly and usefully focussed on it in their analyses. I have to admit frankly that, in rereading their writings on the subject from *Wildcat* #10 (1987) to the present, I find their critique fairly convincing. But their more recent articles on the Bolshevik Counter Revolution and their reply to my letter in response to their analysis of the Russian events (in *Wildcat* ##15 and 16, and reprinted in *DB* #58), all seem to me to share some similar problems, which did not stand out as clearly in earlier writings.



"If you stop running we'll give you a fair trial!"

What I find convincing is *Wildcat's* emphasis on the necessity for revolutionaries to attempt to advance the revolution at all times, even or especially in the face of reactionary actions on the part of

other sectors of the working class (not to mention the capitalists). They are correct to point out that many workers have repeatedly demonstrated, in revolutionary or potentially revolutionary situations, the deep hold of reactionary ideology upon them. Even in workers' councils and assemblies, bourgeois notions of democracy and democratic process, for example the notions of representation and majority decision making, are tenacious and frequently have resulted in



DEATH TO
DEMOCRACY!

counter-revolutionary activities. *Wildcat* are correct to point this out, warn against it, and to keep harping on it. [Why couldn't he stop there? -ed.]

Where I differ substantially from their point of view is on the kind of activity which is needed to advance the revolution in the face of this bourgeois inertia of workers. *Wildcat's* critique of the Bolshevik Counter Revolution seems to me to be flawed in certain respects, and the lessons to be learned from the Russian events of 1917-1921 have limited applicability to the current situation. But beyond these analytical questions, it seems to me that *Wildcat* have taken up an extreme vanguardist position which has little utility in advancing the self-liberation of the working class.

There is no question that Russian capitalism in 1917 was "backward" compared to Western Europe and the US; it seems like belaboring the obvious even to mention it. The fact that the state was almost the only native component to the capitalist class operating there was not a sign of advanced development (as is shown by the state-capitalist "revolutions" in other backward portions of the world subsequently). The state was a substitute for the lack of a native class of private capitalists. As a result significant concentrations of industry in Russia

were centered primarily around St. Petersburg and Moscow, and only secondarily elsewhere, surrounded by a vast agricultural hinterland (and agriculture too was backward by contemporary measures). The industrial working class was a small minority of the population, which was overwhelmingly peasant. The well-educated and relatively well-off middle class of professionals and merchants were strongly concentrated in the two capital cities, as were virtually all important state institutions and the bureaucracy that ran them. The dependency of the whole country on St. Petersburg was quite extreme, and quite unlike the comparatively decentralized pattern of development in the US and Western Europe.

Now the point of all this obviousness is to help understand why the Russian Revolution failed to be a communist revolution. The reason is that only a majority of people can create a communist society, and they can only do so consciously. (I believe *Wildcat* would agree with this statement). In the face of the material and social conditions of Russia in 1917, the Bolsheviks did essentially what *Wildcat* claims we should do now. They were audacious (once they saw they could control events), they were undemocratic, and they did what was possible. The result: Counter Revolution.

The Bolsheviks seized, but THEY DID NOT DESTROY, the Tsarist state. Only a majority of people can permanently suppress state-formation. States are instruments

of a minority to control the majority. A second minority can wrest it away from the first (or could, in the conditions of backward and war-torn Russia in 1917), in which case it finds its interests directly opposed to the majority. Thus after October 1917 to have suppressed the state would have required suppressing the Bolsheviks.

Wildcat claim that the Bolsheviks were revolutionary in seizing the state; this needed to be done to advance the revolution. No other groups were prepared to do this, so the Bolsheviks had and took the opportunity. In doing so, however, they relied upon the power of the armed workers of Petrograd and Kronstadt and the support of the majority of the workers in key locations (as I said in my previous letter, in the garrisons, naval vessels, streets, factories, railroad stations, and communication centers. What other significant concentrations of workers existed?). *Wildcat* fudge the issue when they say "This minority can certainly take any action - for example, the overthrow of the state - which serves proletarian goals, without endorsement from the majority of the working class" (DB #58, p8). The "minority" of the Bolsheviks and their supporters did not and could not overthrow the state, i.e. destroy it. They could and did seize it and strengthen it for their own purposes, in opposition to the majority of the workers and peasants, while claiming it was a "workers' state".

So there is a vast problem unaddressed by *Wildcat* in its analysis of the Russian events, which is the unseparable connectedness of objective and subjective readiness for revolution. The two go together: if the objective conditions are unripe, as they were in Russia, so too will be the subjective ones. The most

radical, self-consciously revolutionary minorities were unable, despite their greatest efforts and sacrifice, to avoid doing what was objectively possible. We all know what the result was.

Objective conditions today throughout the industrialized world are vastly different from the Russia of 1917, and so, therefore, are subjective ones. The concrete impossibility in 1917 of a democratic communist movement does not exist today. Communism is possible if the workers decide to create it. The question for us is how to advance this collective decision.

Beyond these analytical criticisms I would like to make a few points about the nature of *Wildcat's* vanguardism, in which they resemble typical Leninist sects, if not the Bolsheviks under Lenin himself. What sort of activities do *Wildcat* explicitly praise in their recent writings? Raskolnikov is lauded for packing a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet during the July Days with Bolsheviks who followed his orders on how to vote (DB #58, p11). "Rascally Raskolnikov" was doubly "revolutionary" in that his packing of the meeting was undemocratic, and his duping of the higher-level Bolsheviks in Petrograd was wily. But the result was pitiful (400 workers killed or wounded, and many imprisoned), as *Wildcat* could not fail to mention.

In general, that is, as a matter of "principle", *Wildcat* are committed to "action" as the path to communism - executions, manhandling of "reactionary elements" (including workers who do not agree with *Wildcat*?), and violence of all kinds - looting, burning, etc. (see *Wildcat* #16 on the Los Angeles uprising of last year). Their rejoinder to my earlier letter

starts off with a quote from that leading communist theoretician, Bismarck: "The great issues of the day are not decided by fine speeches and majority verdicts, but by iron and blood." "Action" is the reaction to "reaction"; making a convincing case for communism is a waste of time and energy. In their letter, *Wildcat's* example of an inspiring action by a revolutionary minority is the storming of a prison in Iraq and the execution of the Baathist "pigs" inside. The "reactionary" elements of the working class (they are reactionary by definition because they are "nationalists") had felt that holding them in prison was sufficient; persuasion failing (or untried) the "revolutionary minority" did "what had to be done." This is "clear minority leadership". Who is being led, and how it leads to the creation of communism, are left unexplained.



Wildcat claim to promote "anti-state communism", not because states have anything inherently oppressive about them, but because states "cannot be used" for *Wildcat's* purposes. "We are, however, for taking dictatorial measures" against the working class. Despite rare lip-service to the fallibility of all factions they are clearly uninterested in the possibility that they themselves might have something to learn from others. Subtle tacticians and strategists they are not; Action is all. "Audacity, audacity, more audacity!". Sound

familiar?

Despite the detailed critique of the Bolshevik Counter Revolution contained in their articles, in certain fundamental ways *Wildcat* have not learned the lessons of Russia in 1917 to 1921. In their belief that their analysis of a revolutionary situation is the only correct one, that

only they are truly committed to communism, and in their resolve to act dictatorially to "advance" their revolution against workers who do not share their goals or notions of infallibility, *Wildcat* have preserved intact the core psychological traits of Bolshevism. Workers who do not fall in line behind them are to be deceived, manipulated, and ultimately, "if necessary", executed. Surely the Cheka used similar rationalizations to get to sleep at night after a day's "revolutionary action".

As *Wildcat* are fond of pointing out, the dominant ideas in capitalist society are bourgeois ideas. One of them is democracy, but another and far more fundamental (and dominant) one is the use of

force, as Bismarck's aphorism makes clear. *Wildcat*, psychologically, are the mirror image of the "pigs" they want to "waste". They have had some good analytical insights into past struggles, but I'm not convinced they have the key to the creation of a global communist society in today's or tomorrow's world.

The ultra-militant puffery of such a tiny cell of revolutionaries simply does not follow from the lessons provided by history or from the current predicament of the planet. *Wildcat* have evidently found their ideas and attitudes have little impact on the mass of workers around them, and have decided workers are incapable of understanding their own best interests and acting to secure them without "clear minority leadership" (in places in their writings *Wildcat* have come very close to expounding the Leninist concept of "trade-union consciousness"), which evades all discussion and collective decision-making. They have gone on to develop the proposition of "anti-democratic communism" as a cover for their vanguardism, which seems to be motivated, ultimately, by revenge and hatred. These motivations won't get us very far. Nor will *Wildcat's* "theory". "Anti-democratic communism" is a contradiction in terms, as communism is the expansion of democracy into all spheres of life. And history tells us, over and over again, that means and ends are inseparable. Dictatorship and force as principal means will create not communism, but a final tyranny.

2. Letter from JACK STRAW

Dear Readers of the *Discussion Bulletin*,

The *Wildcat* group makes in very explicit: It is against the CONTENT of democracy, not against a particular form

such as representation or majority rule. The content of their argument, as articulated in the response to Will Guest in *DB* #58, is the necessity of "class struggle activists" to assert control over any movement which may emerge from the confrontations of daily life. Regardless of how they may label themselves, the *Wildcat* crew thus expose themselves as vanguardists.

To them, the main danger of democracy, even "workers' democracy", is that revolutionaries would have "to take orders from that section of the citizenry who happen to be sociologically working class, rather than from those who actually defend proletarian interests." (italics mine). It's interesting that they see themselves outside the working class, and even more, that they think they and others of their ilk should be giving orders, because of their supposedly superior awareness of the class's true interests.

This goes further than their assertion of rights to unilateral action, defying the majority whenever they think the majority is wrong and they are right. There's certainly room for that, as for example in the British coal mine strike in 1984, or the anti-Vietnam war movement. Here we're talking about leading the rest of the class, "taking dictatorial measures". *Wildcat's* perspective on the Russian Revolution takes this line of thinking down some very disturbing paths. *Wildcat* argues from two opposite sides. It criticizes Will Guest for trying to have it both ways re the Bolsheviks' role, and seemingly condemns the counter-revolution. Yet the Bolsheviks are praised for being able to mobilize supporters in strategic points, thereby taking power, without waiting for the passive majority to act. Anyway, how is

a situation unique to Russia in 1917 to be transplanted to the advanced industrial world in 1993? Can you see the "important" workers bringing down the American state by taking over rail stations and naval vessels?

Somehow, some way, let's say that the most radical elements will destroy the state on their own. And then what? A critique of *Earth First!* in #16 gives us some rather scary hints. *Earth First!*'s workshop meeting format was lambasted for discussions chaired by "pathetic 'anti-sexist' types" instead of being led by people with "the self-confidence to lead the discussion". Why, anyone was actually allowed to "say what they like", while at *Wildcat* meetings, they feel "obliged to argue with anything they don't agree with."

To me, all this strongly suggests that their "leading" role will not stop with the elimination of the bourgeois state: it is to continue until all the "correct" decisions on the path to communism have been made. "No number of dire warnings about the dangers of dictatorship will change our minds". At a class I participated in a few years ago, one of *Wildcat*'s American affiliates tended to monopolize the discussion. When I asked him about that, he replied that he was afraid that if he didn't talk, people would "say the wrong things" and derail the discussion.

Two other pieces from #16 stand out in relation to this topic. In an article on the LA riots, the beating of Reginald Denny, the truck driver, is excused because "some of the people who beat him had

just defended a 15-year old boy against being beaten by the police". The only thing this could possibly explain is a revenge motif. And that's the main theme of Max Anger's "song", an ode to boozing, pissing and killing that, with a few cosmetic changes, could easily be sung by the US Marines. Would you trust your fate to people like these? Would you even be secure sharing a barricade with them?



Demo for the LA4

3. Our Response

Although we don't want to take time off from more important tasks to respond to the letters from citizens Straw and Guest we have found that if we don't stomp on false allegations straight

away, they spread like cockroaches. We are accused of defending political positions which we do not hold and which are not expressed in the articles which the *DB* reprinted. For example, we have never said that workers (or any other section of the proletariat) should be "deceived or manipulated". Neither have we "praised" or "lauded" any of the Bolsheviks' actions in 1917, still less described them as "revolutionary". The claim that we "excused" the beating of Reginald Denny is a lie, which makes it clear which side Straw and Guest are on in the media war against the LA defendants. Although the LA 4 have benefitted from a militant campaign in LA, our comrades in San Francisco found it impossible to get a defence campaign going in the Bay Area, thanks partly to the smug middle-class libertarianism which still thrives there. People arrested during the May '92 uprising are being quietly put away with no protests or anything - for example, Donald Coleman got 19 years and 8 months for torching a

7-11 store. Meanwhile, Damian Williams got 10 years for beating up Denny, while only two of the cops who nearly killed Rodney King received just 30 month sentences.

WG and JS both run in the binary mode of thought typical of those with a closed, totalitarian view of the world. For example, leftists in Britain say that if you don't vote Labour, you are helping the Conservatives, or if you are not an anti-fascist, you are on the side of the fascists. In the case of WG and JS, the binary opposition is between supporting the Bolsheviks or condemning them for being undemocratic. When we say that we do not condemn Bolshevik manouvers for being undemocratic, WG and JS say we "praise" them. We shall try, once again, to express something quite different: the point of view of communism.

STRAW MAN

According to WG: "*Wildcat* claim that the Bolsheviks were revolutionary in seizing the state". According to JS: "...the Bolsheviks are praised for being able to mobilise supporters in strategic points, thereby taking power...". This is quite simply false. The nearest we come to saying anything remotely like this is "The fact that the Military Revolutionary Committee did not wait for the Congress of Soviets to endorse the attack on the provisional government before acting is not a sin." Not quite the same thing, is it? So what is our view of the seizure of state power?

One of the major differences between communists and social democrats, including Leninists, is that our conception of revolution is social rather than merely political. For us there is no question of

creating some kind of revolutionary government which then enacts communism by a series of decrees. The question of whether such a regime should be based on a single party or on the sovereignty of the workers' councils (or some other arrangement) is irrelevant. As we explain at great length in the articles, by seizing state power the Bolsheviks were taking over the management of capitalism, that they did it in the name of communism is neither here nor there.

WG distorts our position by quoting out of context. He cites the sentence "This minority can certainly take any action - for example, the overthrow of the state - which serves proletarian goals, without endorsement from the majority of the working class", without the one which immediately follows: "It cannot however impose communism - this can only be the product of mass activity - therefore it does not seek to create a new state power - a 'workers' state' - in place of the old administration." Contrary to what WG says, if an organized minority can take over the state, in the sense of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie, it is certainly possible for it to overthrow it (particularly if most of the army has deserted or mutinied and the cops have run away, as in Russia 1917). The problem was not that the Bolsheviks "could not overthrow the state" because of objective conditions, as WG claims, it was that they never had any intention of doing so.

Communism is not a political program but a social movement. For example, private property in housing will not begin to be abolished because some "workers' government" says that it is no longer legal for landlords to live off rent but because proletarians are refusing to pay rent, resisting evictions, seizing the

mansions of the rich, and in the process developing more communal living arrangements.

This brings us on to the use of force or, to state the question more precisely, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (D.o.P.). This is the political position which WG and JS are really trying to undermine, using the tried and tested method of associating it with Bolshevism, with fanaticism and with notions of infallibility and other "psychological traits". WG says: "As *Wildcat* are fond of pointing out, the dominant ideas in capitalist society are bourgeois ideas. One of them is democracy, but another and far more fundamental (and dominant) one is the use of force..." [our emphasis]. Here WG appears to condemn all use of force (it's a "bourgeois idea"). There are only two types of people who condemn force *per se*. These are:

1) Committed pacifists. Despite their ludicrous morality these people may sometimes make a useful contribution to the class struggle - for example by sheltering army deserters.

2) Hypocritical demagogues.

The comment (by WG) that we are for taking dictatorial measures "against the working class" is a typical piece of "no violence" demagoguery. You cannot rule out using force against other working class people. Should working class people not use force to defend themselves against muggers, and other anti-social elements from within the working class? WG gives the impression in most of his letter that he thinks it is immoral to use force under any circumstances, but in his last sentence, he condemns us for advocating force as a PRINCIPAL means, which would mean his difference with us is

that he thinks we give too much priority to the use of force. By being ambiguous in this way, he can occupy the high moral ground of pacifism without paying the entrance fee. All of us, except pacifists, are prepared to put the boot in from time to time. The difference between us and WG is that we honestly face up to the consequences of this fact.

Every society has to make use of force to some extent. What makes class societies different is that they are based on force since they involve a small minority of the population robbing and enslaving everyone else. Proletarian communities of struggle must make use of force too. It's true that you can't turn someone into a communist by pointing a gun at them. It's also true that you can stop them from doing reactionary things, such as crossing a picket line.

Like every other aspect of the struggle force needs to be coordinated to make it as effective as possible. It is not a question of force versus solidarity. Solidarity is the basis of our struggle to transform life but it is meaningless without the use of force. For example, we would always try to fraternise with government troops sent to suppress us and we should oppose any creation of a permanent military front with us on one side and the forces of reaction on the other. But fraternisation would be impossible if the soldiers could overwhelm us immediately without any resistance. The Makhnovists probably had the right idea when they said to Red Army soldiers "surrender to us and you won't come to any harm, it's only your officers we want to kill". A more extreme example might be that of the mutineers on the huge Russian battleship Potemkin in 1905 who threatened to blow smaller naval vessels out of the water if they

tried to stop the rebellion. Many of them joined in. A more down-to-earth example was the fact that in the British miners' strike of 1984-85, many of the pits were shut down only by the intimidation of scabs. We would like to take this opportunity to correct what we wrote in *Wildcat* #3, Jan/Feb 1985. Under the headline Support Class Violence, we said

in general, violence in a strike is a defensive action. If the miners were receiving the support, and above all, the solidarity action they so desperately need, from other workers, then much of the violence witnessed over the past ten months need not have taken place.

On the contrary: if the strike had spread, so would the violence. The above section implies that if the strike had become more offensive, the violence would have been less necessary. But class violence does not tend to decrease as the revolution approaches: quite the opposite. Its important to understand the difference between force and bloodshed. Increasing the amount of force can reduce the degree of bloodshed, by making it clear to our opponents that it's not worth fighting. The above passage was written when *Wildcat* included "common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources" among its Basic Principles.

WILL TO POWER

By the D.o.P. we do not mean a specialised apparatus of repression (a workers' state). We mean the need for the proletariat to impose its needs despotically against its enemies. At the moment this is something which can generally only be seen in a very embryonic form - the beating of a scab (against

the Right to Work!), the shouting down of a politician or union leader (against Freedom of Speech!), the smashing of a reporter's camera (against Freedom of the Press!), the smashing up of a patriotic or religious meeting (against Freedom of Assembly!)... It's impossible to say in advance what organisational forms the D.o.P. will take in a revolutionary situation. We can say, however, that it will have a completely different form from that of the repressive apparatus of bourgeois society since the D.o.P. is a means by which a community of struggle (encompassing more and more areas of the globe) defends itself against dissolution whereas the bourgeois state exists to destroy community. It will certainly not possess a standing army or a judiciary, for example. Repressive measures will be carried out on the basis of expediency rather than Justice, an expression of a society based on exchange.

UNINVITED GUEST

The arguments of WG, JS and other left-wing libertarian critics of us authoritarian communists is not unadjacent to the libertarianism of the right. Their plaintive whining about our authoritarian psychological traits and the dire consequences thereof simply repeats what the bourgeoisie says about communists. What they are basically saying when they accuse us of vanguardism is "Who are these red troublemakers to tell you not to cross that picket line? What right do they have?". For the libertarians, some form of legitimate authority is being transgressed by someone using force. For the Right it's obvious who this authority is - it's The People represented by their democratically elected government. For the libertarian socialists it's something like The Workers Themselves.

The Right deliberately avoid the issue of who actually acts when The People act. Similarly for the libertarian socialists when The Workers Themselves act. When

they talk about a majority, they don't say of what. A majority in the whole world is unobtainable until the revolution is well underway, so to wait for this majority before starting would postpone it forever. A majority in one country is nationalist, and a majority in any other arbitrarily defined area is meaningless, since anyone can draw the boundary wherever it suits them. Talk of the majority of the proles is, then, another piece of demagogy.

ANTI-LENINISM OR ANTI-CAPITALISM

The most vehement anti-Leninists usually share many of the conceptions of Leninism. In particular they share an obsession with the division between politically conscious people (such as themselves) and the masses. They see the central question as being how the former relate to the latter. Do they lead them organisationally? (Leninism); do they lead them on the plane of ideas? (Anarchism); do they refuse to lead them? (Councilism). Whatever they do they mustn't be too critical of "ordinary people" because that would put them off. They assume that everyone else is obsessed with this question as well: "Wildcat have evidently found their ideas and attitudes have little impact on the mass of workers around them...". Who do they think we are, the SWP?

As we explained in our introduction to



Gorter's Open Letter, the view that proletarian revolution in Russia was impossible because the country was too backward is a profoundly na-

tionalist one - the point is whether revolution was possible on a world scale. WG's concern with Russia's backwardness is closer to the dogmatic Marxism of the more conservative social-democrats than to Lenin. Most of Mensheviks and Bolsheviks believed, until April 1917, that Russia was unable to participate in a communist revolution because it was too backward: it needed to go through a bourgeois revolution and capitalist development first. Trotsky among the Mensheviks, and later Lenin, argued that it could "skip" a stage, and go straight to a socialist revolution. Unfortunately, what they meant by "socialism" was in fact capitalism. This was not an inevitable result of Slavic atavism. There were communist revolutions in 15th century Bohemia and Germany, far more backward regions than Russia in 1917. The "backwardness" argument expresses a belief in the liberating effects of capitalist progress. Russian agriculture was "backward", in the sense that peasants still lived in communities which hadn't been completely smashed by capitalist development and could still serve as a basis for communism. They were not to receive the full benefits of Progress until Stalin's program of collectivisation in the 1930's. Marx came to realise that these communities could play a positive role in the struggle for communism and that capitalist progress was not inevitable (see *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, T. Shanin, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).

Although WG says "the lessons to be learned from the Russian events of 1917-1921 have limited applicability to the current situation", the whole basis of his politics is obsession with the bogey of Leninism. The hang-up of the libertarian left, anti-Leninism, belongs to the same category as anti-fascism: it identifies one particular form of the counter-revolution as the threat to the working class. Like anti-fascism it tries to rally people around the defence of democratic freedoms. Both anti-fascism and anti-Leninism are part of the official ideology of Western democracy.

DEMOCRACY OR COMMUNISM

As JS says, we are "against the content of democracy, not against a particular form such as representation or majority rule". In the most general terms democracy can be described as the reign of rights and equality. The existence of rights implies a society of atomised individuals. Equality implies a society in which individuals can have equal worth, one in which their value can be compared, that is one based on the existence of abstract labour. In other words, democracy is the way of life of capitalism, not just a particular form of the state. When WG says communism is "the expansion of democracy into all spheres of life" it is not communism but capitalism which he is describing. When we say we are against democracy it's not just from the point of view of dictatorship - although it's true that the Human Rights of the bourgeoisie won't be respected in the revolution. More importantly, it's from the point of view of community. Classical democratic forms of organisation such as elected representatives and sovereign assemblies are an attempt to maintain social atomisation by creating a fictitious com-

munity. Democrats are obsessed with notions such as accountability and revocability which assume that no one can be trusted. Against all this we say that one trusted comrade is worth a hundred revocable delegates!

Finally, a few words about revenge and hatred. This is what both WG and JS accuse us of basing our politics on. Revenge is not something we generally favour since it's based on exchange - "one bad turn deserves another". But it has to be said that revenge is more human - less corrupted by commerce and the state - than fully developed Justice. Hatred is another matter. John Major (Prime Minister of Britain) is not just a boring man in a grey suit. He is a monster drenched in the blood of the proletariat. When the bourgeoisie murder our class brothers and sisters, like the 100,000 children who died of disease following the bombing of Iraq, we don't just throw up our hands and say "this sort of thing is bound to happen until the majority of workers see the need for communism". Yes, we hate them.

Des Pot (no relation).

PS. No, Jack, we don't think a song containing the words "comrades, let's kiss" would be sung by the US Marines.

dem|a-gogue or dem|a-gog (demuhgag) n. [Gr. *demagogos*, leader of the people < *demos*, the people (see **DEMOCRACY**) + *agogos*, leader < *agein*, to lead: see **ACT**] 1. orig., a leader of the common people 2. a person who tries to stir up the people by appeals to emotion, prejudice, etc. in order to win them over quickly and so gain power - vi. -gogued or -goged, -goguing or -goging to behave as a demagogue.

DARKNESS AT MIDNIGHT

Capitalism is not in crisis. Firstly, it is having a massive expansion of accumulation in East Asia. Secondly, in the areas which are in economic downturn, such as Europe, capital is not experiencing a recession caused by its internal contradictions, it is *imposing* a recession — unemployment, war — on the working class in order to make it more atomized, divided and malleable, and thus able to work harder for less money. When this has been completed, there will be a recovery.

Perestroika has been overwhelmingly successful, in spite of the problems German capital had during the *anschluss*. Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are being prepared for integration into the European Community before the end of the century, lowering overall wages, both what we get paid at work and social (benefits, subsidies, etc.). Not only are millions of laborers and unskilled service workers being brought in to compete for jobs; a highly skilled technical and scientific workforce accustomed to unattractive remuneration also exists in Eastern Europe. The bosses of the EC are having it both ways. A centralized state apparatus is being constructed — whatever squabbles take place in the talking shops of Europe's parliaments, the business end of the state, eg. the police, is being progressively integrated. Simultaneously, nationalism and fragmentation is used to divide the working class. Centralization for the bosses, balkanization for the proles.

As we have briefly remarked in previous issues, this analysis is erected partly on the theoretical foundations of Autonomism — a Marxist current which sees economic crisis, not as a problem caused by an irreparable defect in the capitalist hardware, but a battle ground of the classes. We referred to *Midnight Notes* as the eximious autonomist publication in English. We are critical of some of the conclusions which the *Midnight Notes* collective have drawn from their autonomist Marxism, but have learnt a lot from their method. The best of *Midnight Notes* and its predecessor, *Zerowork*, has recently been published by Autonomedia in a collection entitled *Midnight Oil — Work, Energy,*

Growing fast.

Stock Market rise*

Hong Kong	+311%
Malaysia	+231%
Singapore	+198%
Thailand	+197%
Philippines	+311%
Indonesia	+301%

Going fast.

You only have until Friday 26th to invest in the industrial revolution of the Far East with Singer & Friedlander's new Tai Pan Fund at the fixed price of 100p. It's a region primed to profit from both the strengthening West, as well as the huge emerging markets in China, Vietnam and India. Obtain a free Economist Asia Survey* and Application Form by telephoning the number below.

Tai Pan Fund

call 071-626 6226

* Survey: Minimal, with income 5 years to 25,10-15. You must invest in 5 lots of 100p, and receive 100p when you buy, and pay 100p when you sell. The fund's performance is not guaranteed. It is subject to market fluctuations. Charges on investments may affect the value.

Singer & Friedlander Investment Funds

Issued by Singer & Friedlander Investment Funds Ltd., 21 New Street, London EC2M 4HR. Member of IFMP.

War, 1973-1992.

The chief motivation for publishing this book was the Gulf War of 1991. *Midnight Notes* have spent 20 years studying the production of oil, the world's central commodity, from the viewpoint of the class struggle, so they are in a good position to draw up a balance-sheet of the United Nations holocaust.

The New World Order is identified, not as a piece of mere rhetoric, but as a distinct phase in capitalism's reversal of the gains the working class made in the worldwide struggles of the late sixties and early seventies: "a new capitalist strategy for accumulation". Arguments that the world is divided into rival blocs are ridiculed: they were all on the same side in the Gulf. They still are. This is historically unprecedented. People trying to understand today's world with the theoretical tools of the Third International, such as the concept of "imperialism", cannot make sense of it. *Midnight Notes* shows that autonomism is the one part of the Marxist tradition which still has life in it.

Capitalism has been preparing for a massive expansion. Huge new areas, Russia and China, for example, have been opened up for investment. But the readies were in short supply. In order to generate some "petrodollars" — money invested by oil states in the world banking system — the IMF tried to force oil states like Nigeria, Venezuela, Algeria and Morocco to cut welfare and wages. In all of these countries, riots ensued, and in Iraq, the Ba'ath government backed off rather than dismantle the "guns and butter" social welfare system on which its power depends. If Iraq was America's police chief in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is its bank manager. It

refused to allow the price of oil to rise to \$25 a barrel as Iraq needed to rebuild its economy following the Iran-Iraq war. Saddam Hussein couldn't screw the money out of the working class, leaving only one course of action — invade Kuwait, simultaneously cancelling a \$40 bn. debt and grabbing a large oilfield.

Midnight Notes provides the only coherent response we have seen so far to our argument that Saddam was "set up" to invade Kuwait. They agree that the USA didn't discourage him. But as they point out, he is not totally stupid. He knew that a US military response was likely. But he also knew that, as he is one of the best policemen in the region, he would not be overthrown. "The war was not an attack on Iraq as a nation-state, it was an attack on the Iraqi working class and a defence of the Iraqi police state..." (p45). The war, then, was not an attempt to get rid of Saddam — as Norman Schwarzkopf belatedly discovered when he was suddenly told to stop advancing his army into Iraq, and publicly expressed his anger at this apparent change of tack. *Midnight Notes* fills in this analysis, explaining not only how but why the Iraqi proletariat was targeted.

The aim of the Gulf War was to reduce the Iraqi working class from a well-paid, not particularly hard-working bunch of welfare bums into a desperate, starving, third-world underclass, and to crush workers in other Gulf states, particularly Palestinians in Kuwait. The cruise missiles which rained on Baghdad from January 17 onwards imposed the most savage IMF austerity plan yet. *Midnight Notes* mentions what we said in the leaflet we produced in cooperation with the ICG and *Aufheben*, 10 days that shook Iraq: the bombing of the retreat-

ing Iraqi conscripts was also aimed at destroying the class struggle, and keeping Saddam in power, by weakening the uprising. The loyal Republican Guard units were left unscathed, while the mass of conscripts were butchered on the road to Basra. Those who were obviously unwilling to do any damage to the Allies were killed, while those who might have fought the invasion were left alone. This proves that the war was against the insurgent proletariat, NOT against Iraq.

So Saddam Hussein remains in power, and the working class has had its expectations somewhat lowered. More than 300,000 people have died in Iraq as a result of medical shortages. Like other countries which have experienced IMF/UN germ warfare, Iraq has seen the reemergence of cholera, with 960 cases in 1993. About 4,000 children under five die each month, compared with 700 a month before the war. Water and sewerage systems which survived the bombing have declined from a lack of spare parts. The social contract has been destroyed. Virtually surrounded by US troops, Iraq is not allowed to make any profit from its oil sales, not even enough to pay wages. The Allies are trying to force the Iraqi workers into slavery. This is an attempt to find out how far austerity can go. Yugoslavia and Somalia are other laboratories for the same experiment.

The rest of the essays give the best of *Midnight Notes*'s explanation of what the autonomist method is, and examples of how to apply it. Conspiracy theories are not antithetical to autonomism. Concrete evidence is produced from White House memos that capitalists plan recessions to attack workers. The conflict of 1973 between the US and OPEC is exposed as a

fraud — both parties wanted higher oil prices. There are papers on the debt crisis as a means of enforcing austerity, and the "New Enclosures" whereby all remaining space is commercialized, and people are driven into tent cities and shanty towns from Lesotho to the Lower East Side.

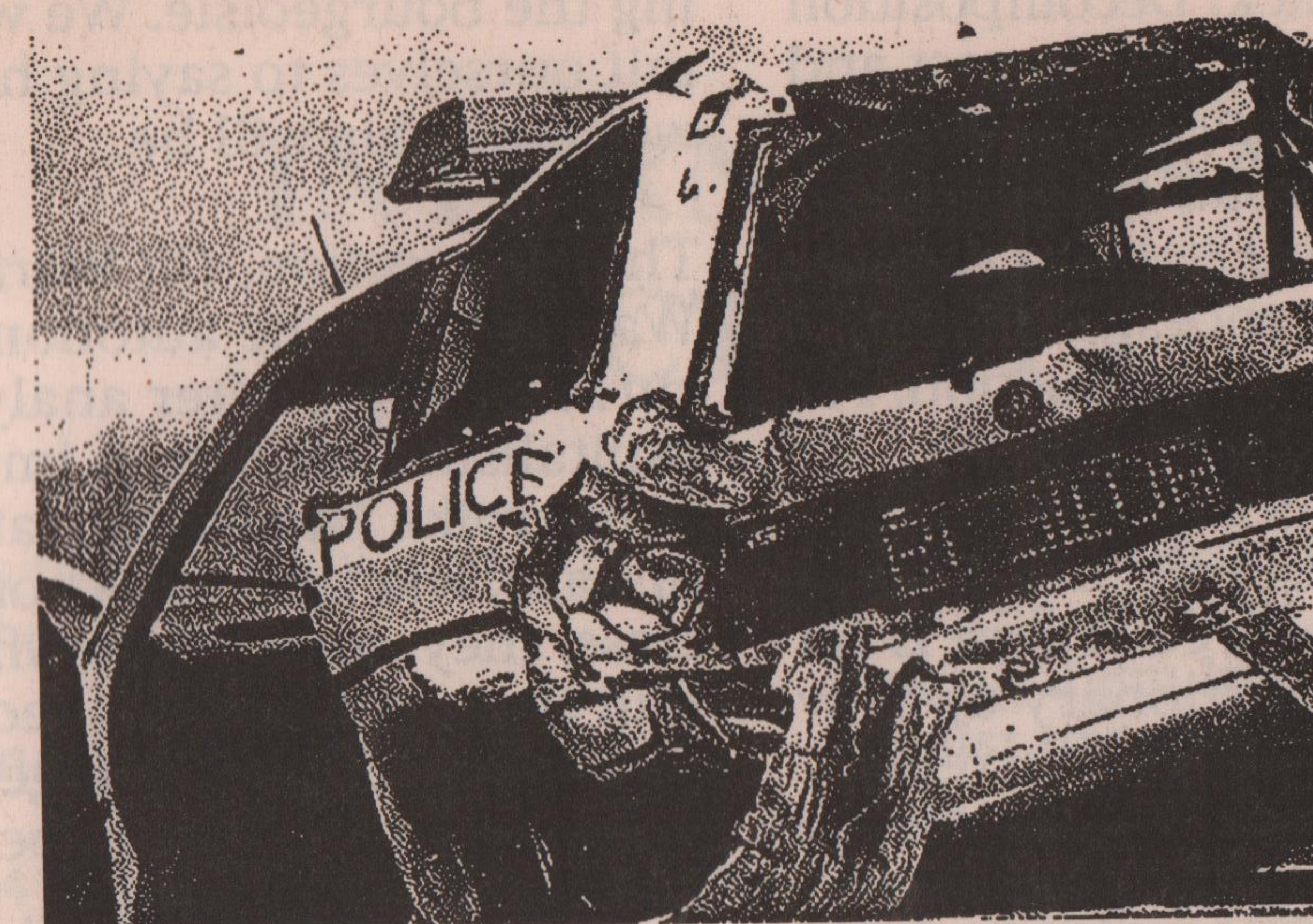
The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse attempts to relate just about everything, from physics to frisbees, to the autonomist version of Marxism. Science is a product of capitalism's fear of the working class. Thermodynamics replaced Newtonian mechanics after the proletariat overthrew the political system corresponding to it in 1848. The "energy crisis" was a crisis of the energy of the proletariat — it didn't want to work. Not only did it become more difficult to get rebellious kids and Vietnam vets to work like their fathers had done, but those who reproduce the working class itself — mothers and housewives — rejected the unpaid slavery of their mothers. It was the working class, not Friedman and Thatcher, who smashed the post-war Keynesian deal, by rejecting work itself.

Other articles show the strength of the autonomist approach by applying it to particular struggles. All of them, albeit hesitantly, expose the unions as agents of capital. Examples are *Resistance and Hidden Forms of Protest Amongst the Petroleum Proletariat in Nigeria*, *Wildcats in the Appalachian Coal Fields* and *Self-Reduction of Prices in Italy*.

In *The New Enclosures 1982-1992*, the governments of "state socialist" countries are condemned as willing lackeys of the IMF, unable to impose austerity measures because of the strength of the working class — *this is why Iran, Iraq*

and Libya were attacked. *Midnight Notes* has come to some similar conclusions as we have on the issue of Progress. They recognize that Marx and Engels supported capitalist devel-

opment because it supposedly prepared the material conditions for a communist society. In the final piece, the collective caustically comments: "Consequently, for all the pain and death, the 'blood and fire' of the Old Enclosures, they were inevitable and ultimately historically positive, for they accomplished 'the dissolution of private property based on the labor of its owner'". They are unsure whether this is a strategic error or a fundamental flaw in Marx's theory of history. "It is plain madness to accept the demise of such villages, tracts of land, neighborhoods and towns as necessary and ultimately progressive sacrifices to the destruction of capitalism and the development of truly 'universal' proletarians". Indeed it is; it is also plain Marxism, as they seem to recognize when they write of "a deeper categorical failure of Marxist understanding of the Enclosures that remains central to Marxism to this day". In any event, they totally oppose the New Enclosures, supporting struggles to defend communal land and space that forms an energy well of proletarian power. Examples: a Quiche village in Guatemala, an area of communal land in Nigeria, a town surrounding a paper mill controlled by



striking workers in Maine, an urban neighborhood in Mexico City. All threatened by capitalist development's enclosures; all defended by the proletariat.

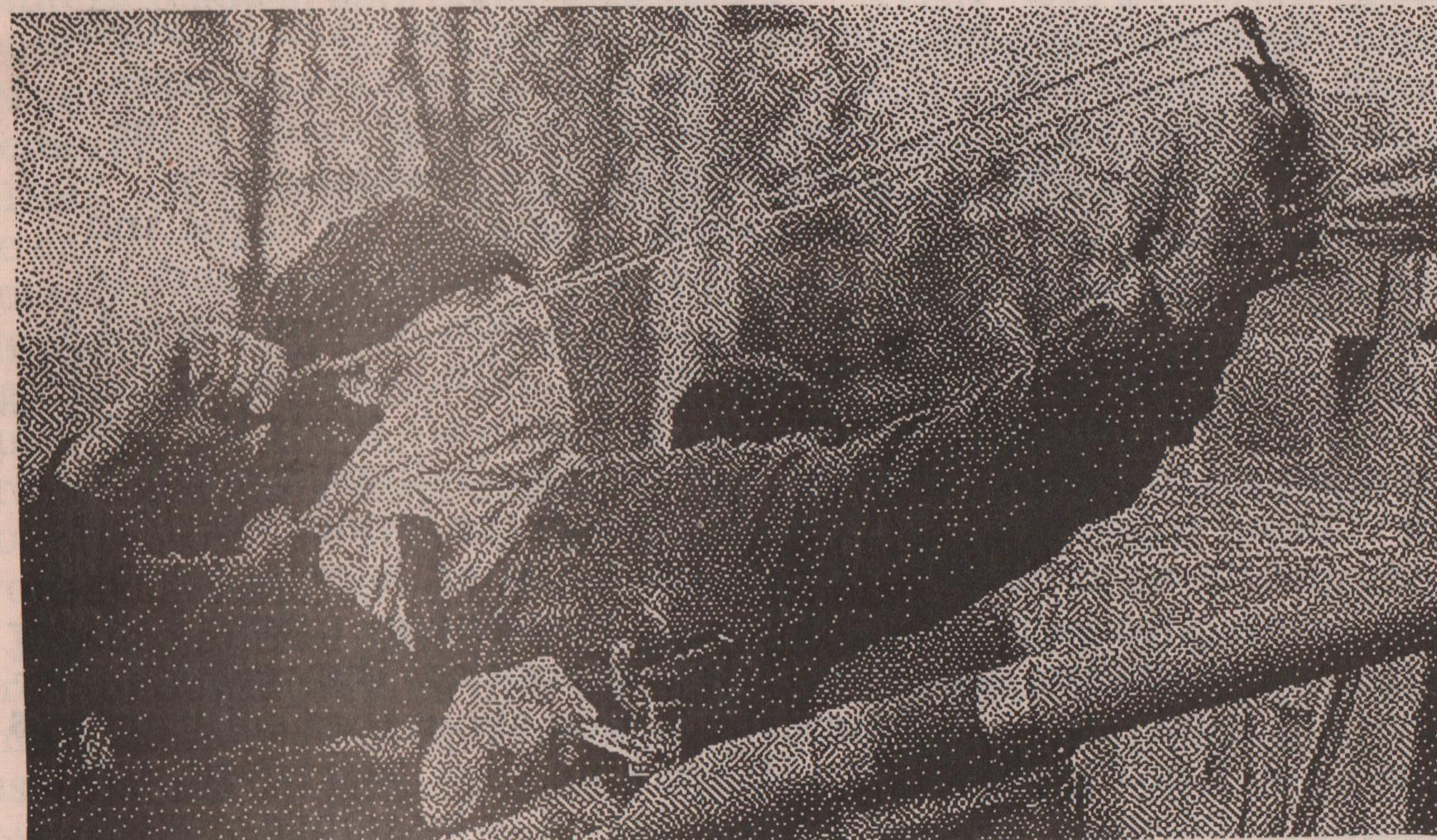
Up til now, the autonomists were the Brian Cohens of the revolutionary movement — they always looked on the bright side of life. In the most recent essays in *Midnight Oil*, a more realistic picture emerges. Despite occasionally referring to the possibility of new "revolutionary flashpoints", these are left vague and lack conviction. "The North American working class is now moving toward a recomposition". Although they say "The working class appears ready for explosion — or perhaps a disastrous implosion", as though the former were more likely than the latter, later in the same article (*The Post-Energy Crisis US Working Class Composition*) they ask the rhetorical question about the Gulf War "was the US working class, as a whole, sufficiently defeated to be willing — even eager — to die in exchange for nothing?"

The Gulf War worked. "What we are witnessing in the Mideast is a familiar pattern under capitalism: the forcible and violent decomposition of the working class" (p20). "Decomposition" is the process by which the working class is divided, atomized (fighting among itself) and exploited more intensively. "Recomposition" is when it pulls itself

together and fights back. Decomposition is the order of the day: "The largest and swiftest mass layoff in decades. Five million workers uprooted, deported, murdered or otherwise severed from their means of subsistence..." as *Midnight Notes* says in the introduction. For autonomism, the working class can never be defeated, since the bosses always need us. But *Midnight Notes*'s optimism has now disappeared. There is no evidence of "new revolutionary upheavals". If we look simply at the current level of resistance to capital's murderous offensive, the situation for the proletariat is in a worse state than during the

ing the bourgeoisie. We would not commit ourselves to saying how successful we think this will be.

The first section, *Oil Workers and Oil Wars*, shows the autonomist method's current limits. After analyzing capitalism's success in imposing perestroika (starvation, atomization, disease, war and work) on the working class, they don't know what to say next. Will the working class recompose itself and defeat this new stage of capitalist accumulation? They hope so, but give no reasons for optimism. This is, as they say, the midnight hour.



This is why *Wildcat* is intended to become more theoretical. Of course, there are struggles we could report on, and some we are involved in. But we are trying to produce an international journal which is able to go

midnight hours of the 1930's. However, capitalism has developed since then, and has created a more unified international working class. It is currently trying to fix that obvious bug in a single world capitalist order, by dividing up the working class at the same time as unify-

a step further than autonomism and draw up a balance-sheet of the current period. The period of preparation for the next proletarian renaissance, no matter how long, includes the process of discarding unwanted historical baggage and integrating more recent advances.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

Write to us as follows only, without mentioning the name:

BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

PO Box 14549, Portland, OR 97214, USA.

We were on the brink of forming a section in San Francisco. The comrades there had no fundamental disagreements with us, so it seemed obvious to regroup with them organizationally in order to facilitate producing this journal and other international activities, and they completely agreed. They expressed various criticisms of the last issue, for example they thought the spoof article *Hands Off Columbus!* was unsuccessful, because readers would tend to take it seriously. Nobody ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the American public, so we accepted this and their other criticisms, expecting the regroupment to proceed as planned. However, they decided not to continue, citing the disagreements with *Wildcat* #16, preferring a more localist approach. They have since produced one issue of a magazine, *The Poor, the Bad, and the Angry*. Since we accepted the criticisms, we feel they are being used as an excuse rather than a genuine reason for dropping out of the internationalist project. We think that they have not yet broken from anarchist anti-organizational attitudes. As important is their implicit attitude towards internationalism. For us

internationalism is not a question of building up local sections and then federating them into an international. Communist organization must be international from the start, immediately trying to develop international coordination and an international perspective.

Unfortunately, many of the comrades we find ourselves working with in the class struggle suffer from these libertarian prejudices. On the other hand, people who are clear on the necessity for organization tend to end up in sects which have no interest in the class struggle. We are trying to find our way out of this impasse. In the interim, given the lack of serious disagreements, we still intend to work as closely as possible with the SF people, who can be contacted at: PO Box 3305, Oakland CA 94609, USA.

Our US colony is now in Portland, Oregon. Other factions which should be of interest to readers include the Internationalist Communist Group (write as follows: BP 54, Brussels 31, 1060 Brussels, Belgium), *Armchair* (BM MAKHNO, London WC1N 3XX, UK) and *Aufheben* (c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY, UK).

PAMPHLETS AVAILABLE FROM WILDCAT

Open Letter to Comrade Lenin by Herman Gorter, 1920. Send £3 or \$5 in cash, stamps or money orders to the

London address.

Outside and Against the Unions - a response to a trade union hack who is trying to turn the British anarchists into good trade unionists. Send £1 or \$2 to the London address.

Fascism and Anti-fascism by Jean Barrot. This is available on PC disk (1.4M 3.5" unless otherwise specified) for £2 or \$4 from the London address.

Most back issues of *Wildcat* are still available. These are £1 or \$1 for issues 1 through 9, and £2 or \$4 thereafter, from the London address. For copies of this issue (\$3 each), write to the Portland address. Bundles of 10 cost \$20.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A four-issue subscription costs £5 or \$10 from the UK address. Do not send cheques. Use cash, US or UK stamps or money orders with the name left blank.

PRISONERS

If any readers have information on sentences being given to prisoners from the Rodney King riots, we would be grateful to hear from them. The fate of most of the defendants from the April/May '92 uprisings is getting no comment in the media. These are some of the prisoners whom we think need and deserve your support :

Kevin Artt, Pol Brennan and Jim Smyth are Irishmen who escaped from the Maze prison in 1983. They were arrested in California nine years later, and threatened with extradition — back to the Northern Ireland justice system which tortured and framed them in the

first place. Our latest information is that Jim Smyth is free, but they are all still in danger of extradition. For the latest info, write to the H-Block 3 Defense Committee at 2033 Hayes St., San Francisco, CA 94117.

Albert Dryden (no. CK0635), HMP FRANKLAND, Durham, UK. The full story of Albert's confrontation with the local council, who were trying to demolish his house, can be found in *Wildcat* #16. Kenny Carter (no. AD3434), framed for the murder of another prisoner, is in HMP FULL SUTTON, Birmingham, UK. The latest info about these and other prisoners in Britain can be found in *Taking Liberties*, PO Box 446, Sheffield, S11NY, and *London ABC Bulletin*, from 121 Railton Rd., London SE24. Info on political prisoners in America can be obtained from: *Breakthrough*, c/o John Brown Education Fund, 220 9th St., No. 443, San Francisco, CA 94103; *Bulldozer/Prison News Service*, PO Box 5052, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1W4, Canada; *Can't Jail the Spirit*, Editorial El Coqui Publishers, 1671 N. Claremont St., Chicago, IL 60647; Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044; People's Law Office, 633 S Dearborn, No. 1614, Chicago, IL 60604.

Of the Arizona 5, jailed for environmental defense work, only Mark Davis is still in prison. He can be reached at #23106-008, FPC, PO Box 1000, Boron, CA 93516. In *Earth First!* 1 Nov 93, Mark responds to Susan Zakin, a journalist who has written a book full of lies about *Earth First!* and the Arizona 5. He complains about her "breach of journalistic ethics" and says the "first duty of a journalist" is to check the facts. Such naivete is perhaps a result of the politics of deep ecology.