

**SYNDICALIST BULLETIN**



**NUM  
BER  
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THE BULLDOG on our front cover was designed by Thomas Theodor Heine and first appeared in 'Simplicissimus' in 1897.

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CONTRIBUTIONS should be submitted before August 20th for Issue 2. All correspondence to Syndicalist Bulletin, PO Box 102, Hull.

OUR THANKS to HB (Liverpool) and MH (York) for their donations totalling £10. WE DO NEED MORE!

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# dual unionism or reality ?

If you have ever read through copies of Tom Mann and Guy Bowman's The Syndicalist, you will see that the debate in Syndicalist circles was that between dual unionists - those who wished to set up brand new revolutionary unions - and those who wished to gain influence for our ideas in the mass reformist unions.

An interesting debate in 1913; or even now in France or Italy. Well cast your imagination back to Leeds, London, Liverpool or wherever you are reading this, because that debate is starting up again right here in Britain.

I read with incredulity of the plans of a section of British anarcho-syndicalists to set up the 'Free Workers Union' in five years time. Yes in five years time we will have our own IWA-affiliated union central; one partisan of the idea was already stating the need for a secret Anarchist Federation to keep it on the straight and narrow (can I have my union card now ?).

Premature is not the word to describe this venture.

When succesful alternative unions have been formed, it has been as the fruit of long-term groundwork carried out in the working class. The Italian Syndicalist Union was formed in opposition to the moderate General Confederation of Labour (CGL) only after a Rank and File in the CGL - the Direct Action Committees - had reached a strength of some hundred thousand, then deciding to form a Syndicalist union. The Spanish CNT was formed after the UGT, but was a product of an Anarcho-Syndicalist tradition unbroken in Spain since the founding of the Spanish section of the First International. Both countries had low unionization rates which allowed the Syndicalists to gain the affiliation of a largely unorganised working class.

In contrast are attempts to build revolutionary unions where there is no basis of Syndicalist practice in the workplace, or where there is mass reformist unionism. →

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In 1926 the more dogmatic French Anarcho-Syndicalists grouped around Pierre Bagnard left the large CGTU to form the CGTSR (General Confederation of Labour (Revolutionary Syndicalist)) - or the Sans Rien (without anything) as the bulk of French Syndicalists who worked in the reformist centrals called it. It became a trade union for Anarchists; the reverse of the Syndicalist aspiration of the union being the working class. It died in 1939 with 4000 members. Then there are the ten, yes ten, attempts to set up IWW administrations in Britain, throttled by mass unionism, the inability of its members to look for a homegrown Syndicalism and in later years by what one ex-IWW Bulletin subscriber describes as "the would be bombers and pistoleros of the Anarchist movement". There was an Anarcho-Syndicalist Union set up in Britain in the '30s; it lasted a couple of years.

Leaving aside the vanguardist pretensions of setting up a union creaming off the most militant workers (or more likely just the Anarcho-Syndicalist cadres), let's look at the union situation in Britain today. After eight years of particularly anti-union government, the unions have lost 2½ million members. Yet they still have 9½ million workers enrolled and the loyalty of the most militant workers who, whatever they may feel about union full-timers etc, are still committed to their union, the men and women on the shopfloor. Are the shop stewards, the militants of the NUM, the dockers, the committed of all Trade Unions really going to leave the organisation they know and work in for a pure new union "set up by the Anarchists" ? I think not.

A mini Anarcho-Syndicalist union would find itself isolated, unable to give worthwhile solidarity. There are no industries in 1987 Britain where Syndicalist ideas are current, no industry in which there are more than a handful of Syndicalists - this would be the marginal unionism of workers on hot dog stalls, the unemployed, barmen who'd all be members of the founding Anarcho-Syndicalist organisation anyway, or of the smaller Marxoid sects which would move in on such a union. I do not insult the part-time and unemployed, all I say is Syndicalism to have any muscle, must talk not just to them but to the mainstream of the workforce who have the power to stop society.

Some Anarcho-Syndicalists may say "haven't succesful alternative unions been created in France (the CNTF) and Italy (USI)". Yes and no: undoubtably combative and displaying an internationalism to be admired, they have failed to entice the class conscious workers of their countries from their traditional reformist unions. The CNTF, with approximately 900 members, has not been influential in the French labour movement simply because most militant workers (and the bulk of Syndicalists) have tended to stay in the CGT-FO, CFDT and CGT who between them organise three million workers.



OUR HISTORY AND ITS LEGACY

TO TRADE UNIONISM

In Italy Syndicalism has been the concern of small groups since Mussolini smashed the USI in 1926. The present USI set up in 1983 by a split from the Italian Anarchist Federation should not expect Italian workers to flock to it when not even the foundations of a Syndicalist consciousness have been established in Italian workplaces, It remains even smaller than than the CNTF. I feel the IWW in North America is a different matter. With US unionization rates at 16%, with existing unionism as rotten as the AFL-CIO, and with an unbroken history as a union alternative reaching back to 1905, the IWW is still a going concern.

It has also proved premature when 'breakaway' militant unions have been formed in single industries. Do any of our readers remember the 'Blue Union', the National Association of Stevedores and Dockers formed in Britain in the 1960s as an alternative to the sell outs of the T&GWU ? Although in Hull at least many dockers look back with nostalgia to those days, the simple truth is that the union's desperate financial state and complete lack of employer recognition destroyed it within ten years. Need I say more ?

British Syndicalists need to realise that we are not even on the first rung of the ladder leading to building a union confederation. Before we can go any further we need to forge a serious Syndicalist propoganda organisation which itself can only come about after discussion and the building of a network of local Syndicalist groups and individuals.

Instead of forming a 'union' in five years time we would be more in tune with reality if we set ourselves that time scale to build a propoganda organisation, perhaps on the lines of Bob Mander's ISEL project (see article). Such an organisation could, when an upturn in militancy comes, help put forward the concept of a radical rank and file independent of political vultures; which would have the strength to either reform the unions or build a new, viable Confederation.

We should not be afraid to face reality.

THE I.S.E.L. OPTION

For many years now our comrade Bob Mander of the South Wales Federation of Anarcho-Syndicalists has been putting forward the idea that the best means for re-establishing Syndicalism in the British working class would be the re-founding of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League which had such influence in our class before the Great War. Here he gives an historical introduction to the subject. He has also produced much documentation on proposed structure, communications, and the benefits of re-forming the ISEL; we will print more in the next edition.

IN STUDYING the history of syndicalism and the development of Industrial Unionism we must go back to the period just before World War 1. This period between the years of 1910 and 1914 is referred to in the textbooks of history as the period of 'Labour Unrest'. Perhaps the most outstanding figure of this time was Tom Mann, who more than anyone else was to have a profound influence on the subsequent development of the labour movement and trade unionism in this country. Newspapers at this time carried articles headed "A Threat to the State", and in his memoirs JR Clyne wrote of the period that "Civil war seemed at times to be very near".

At this time labour unrest was paralleled by the militancy of the suffragettes and the Irish question. In 1911 a massive dock strike took place which spread very rapidly culminating in confrontations at Hull, Liverpool and other places. The loss of working days in 1909 due to strike action had been 2½ million, this rose rapidly in the years that followed to up to 41 million. Mass strikes occurred in all industries throughout the country, yet of these only 20% were fought on wage issues.

It was at this time due much to the efforts of the Syndicalists that the National Union of Railwaymen was formed and we see the beginning of the Transport Workers' Federation, the Amalgamated Engineers Union, etc. There was a general movement towards amalgamation and consolidation of what had hitherto existed as small isolated craft unions. It was a period of massive union growth: in 1910 2½ million workers were organised, by 1920 over 8 million workers were union members.

In 1898 there had been the formation of the Workers' Union, organising mainly unskilled and semi-skilled workers; this organisation was later to merge into the Transport and General Workers Union. This was at a time when there was constant failure of wages to keep pace with prices, mass poverty existed regardless of the boom of British industry and its exports. At this time a large number of workers were disillusioned with parliamentary Labourism. There arose a new concept of the role of trade unions, new ideas had been introduced into this country from France and the United States.

In this country the Socialist Labour Party had split from the Social Democratic Federation but had been ineffectual in alleviating the social conditions of the working class. Tom Mann in the development of his Industrial Syndicalist ideas had been influenced by James Connolly who had spent some years in America and had brought back the ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World, which was at that time fighting some of the greatest labour battles in American history. Such men as Eugene Debs and Daniel de Leon had a profound effect on Mann. Industrial Unionism became an integral part of the policy of the Socialist Labour Party, and a movement was launched called 'The Advocates of Industrial Unionism'. It adopted the principles from the preamble of the IWW beginning "The working class and employing class have nothing in common..."

DETROIT AND CHICAGO

In America a split occurred in the IWW between the De Leonist group based on Detroit and the majority of the IWW based in Chicago. The split was fundamentally on the issue of whether the means to workers' emancipation was to be political and industrial, or solely an industrial approach.

In 1909 the Industrial Workers of Great Britain was formed but as an organisation was not very successful. At this time revolutionary Industrial Unionist ideas were being propogated through a newspaper called The Socialist.

The failure of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain had been partly due to its sectarian attitude and attacks on craft unionism which alienated many of its militant members.

Tom Mann had returned from Australia where he had been active as a labour organiser; he was already known in this country as a labour leader, and prior to his return there had been articles in the Socialist Labour Party press denouncing him. While in Australia he had become very critical of Australian Labourism, and on his return declared his policy for Industrial Syndicalism. The French CGT was at this time actively engaged in industrial insurrectionist activity. It had two structures: there was a federation of craft unions, and the industrial federations organised as Labour Exchanges and known as "Bourses du Travail". The movement in this country was working through the Trades Councils and was encouraging union amalgamation. It was pointing out that craft unions, though useful at an earlier stage of capitalist development, were outmoded in a modern industrial society and were unable to combat the ever-growing concentration of capital.

A choice of action had to be made between a policy known as boring from within, that is infiltrating the existing union structure and infussing it with Syndicalism, or dual unionism, a policy of rebuilding Industrial Unions seperate from the existing unions. Mann wrote to Eugene Debs on this issue and decided on the former policy. In 1910 he helped to organise what was to be known as the Industrial Syndicalist Education League, which believed that fundamental changes would come about by infusing the rank and file of the trade union movement with Syndicalist ideas. This organisation had a five-level membership all of which were engaged in propagandist activity of one sort or another. In the development of British Syndicalism there was thus a marked difference from the IWW who had totally rejected the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labour and had built a parallel structure on an industrial basis. Eugene Debs had advised working within the existing union framework and Tom Mann saw the danger of alienating workers by forming seperate unions. It was on this issue that later, in America, one of the Labour leaders broke away from the IWW with a group of Communists.

While Mann was serving a sentence in Strangeways Prison for his activities, his wife wrote an article to the Daily Herald in answer to a criticism of her husband's point of view. She pointed out that there was no difference between Syndicalism and Socialism in essence and aim of emancipating the working class from the bondage of capitalism, and that the Syndicalist concept was for each industry to be self-governing, each Industrial Union building a State within the State.

After Tom Mann's release from prison, he became more anti-parliamentarian than he had been before, convinced that the road to emancipation could not be achieved through the State machine. In 1912 there was a conference called for the amalgamation committees in which Mining, Transport, Engineering and Railways were represented. It was during this time that the Syndicalists in South Wales published "The Miners' Next Step".

1914 brought the outbreak of World War 1 after which, due to subsequent developments in the Russian Revolution in 1917, workers were fragmented into various leftist political parties and Syndicalism declined. It had nevertheless left its imprint on the British labour movement, culminating in the militancy of the 1926 General Strike.

Now, after 73 years of Political wilderness and betrayl, we should again reorganise the ISEL having learnt the lessons of the past we can now rebuild the greatest Industrial fighting force that Britain has ever known.

BOB MANDER

TYNESIDE -- A PERSONAL VIEW

Class-conscious anarchist/syndicalist on Tyneside has undergone a dramatic growth over the past 18 months or two years.

TRS (Tyneside Revolutionary Syndicalists) were formed in late 1965, in an attempt to get together the most class-conscious elements in the area. Since then it has been successful in producing a local paper, which has helped it gain many local, national and international contacts.

One of the main features of TRS' activity has been its concentration on grass-roots activism, especially on the picket line and in support groups.

At present it is still the largest single group in its area, though not the only one. Others include a ~~dam~~ branch, an ACF branch, a libertarian bookstall group and a group based around the Northern Anarchist Network. There is a good deal of co-operation between all the various "parties". Partly, this is due to a large degree of membership overlap between them; also there is a general recognition that there are too few anarchists to afford solits over definitions of "anarchist/syndicalist/anarchist-communist etc". And there is a genuine feeling of having common aims and interests.

This is exemplified most in a local strike, at "HFW Plastics", in Gateshead. We are seen by others as "the Anarchists", and are a recognised force.

We were instrumental in helping to form a support group for the strikers which is non-hierarchical in form. elegates from the (mainly female) workforce attend each meetin and get involved in the activities and decision-making process.

One of the Gateshead Workers' Support Group's major projects is the clling-for and organisation of the SUPPORT Conference in Manchester on July 25th. Hopefully, this will result in the formation of a national organisation capable of effectively helping workers fight back, instead of the present tardy, confused way of doing this.

There has been some discussion of a regroupment locally. We "unofficially" co-operate anyway, and there is not enough money around for so many separate groups. But in the short term this is not a likely development. In a year, perhaps it may be possible -- but it will require a lot of patient discussion to overcome the inevitable difficulties. Many, including myself, see this avenue as a very useful one in the long term.

Relations between "the Anarchists" and other left-wing groups are variable. The WRP locally are very easy to work with, notably in the Gateshead Support Group. This is because they are genuinely non-sectarian in this area. Conversely, the RCP's new non-sectarian approach is seen for what it is -- another twist in the Central Committee's policy. The RCP have been taking a close interest in anarchist activity, apparently on a national scale. So watch out!

The other major grouping, the SWP, seems to be in decline. Their foiled attempt to subsume Militant seems to have led to some confusion and demoralisation. Their leading militants appear burnt out and will use any excuse to avoid practical action such as attending pickets. All they do is "build" (sic) the Party. Turnover of members is high.

All in all, the situation for rank-and-file libertarians here is very positive. We now have visibility on the streets, due to the bookstall and selling the Tyneside Syndicalist. And we are now seen as a force in local struggles, not just bystanders.

The key to all this has been close co-operation, regardless of shades of disagreement or membership of particular groups. Our future tasks include extending our activities to those areas which in the past have been ignored or by-passed due to lack of resources (people and money). That way permanent roots can be established, and we'll not be a passing phase, as is so often, unfortunately, the case.

M.T.

OUR PILOT EDITION (referred to on page 5) is still available. Just send 20p in stamps to PO Box 102, Hull.

## RANK AND FILE CONFERENCE

9/5/87, Conway Hall, London

Thirty people took part in this second Rank & File Conference. The one before this was turned into a jamboree by various political bizzarros, notably Workers Power and The Leninist (the latter a particularly wacky Communist Party faction).

This conference consisted mostly of members of the Socialist Federation (SWP rejects plus an assortment ranging from Kinnockite Labour Party members to the self-styled 'ultra-left') and the British IWA section, the Direct Action Movement.

Rank & File groups present were the Building Workers Group who have a genuine implantation in their industry fighting UCATT's corruption and the iniquitous lump. The tiny Rank and File '83 teachers group, an individual from the Scottish teachers Rank and File, and embryonic groups in the rail and telecom industries.

A rank and file is needed now more than ever as the unions show less and less inclination to defend their members. However, Rank and Files cannot be 'set up' by tiny political groups, condemned to being the seven Anarchists or whatever who work in this or that industry.

What is more practicable in this period of defensive battles is the building of a strike support network so we may begin to defend ourselves and build cross-industry links that way; all the better if that support can be international such as that of the pickets set up by IWA sections in Ardrbride/Laura Ashley strike. That is why the Support 'conference' is important, whereas the fledgling Rank and File conference was an irrelevance.

## LOCAL NEWS

### HULL

An active if not particularly successful anti-election campaign, with a lot of flyposting, leafletting and a poorly attended public meeting. Still if the public won't come to us, we will have to go to them: a duplicated free sheet to put round pubs is in the offing.

Hull Syndicalists, PO Box 102, Hull.

### YORK

There's been more pickets of Laura Ashleys in York in solidarity with the Ardrbride strikers; these have received a very good response from shoppers, but we weren't able to answer claims made by Laura Ashley management (to the local press etc) about the dispute because of lack of up to date news. Again this underlines the need for a national solidarity network. Otherwise not alot happening, although there was an interesting meeting on 'Development in Africa - An Anarchist Perspective' held by the University Anarchist Group, with a speaker who'd worked in Guinea-Bissau and in Mozambique after

the revolution there. It's unusual to hear an informed libertarian critique of state 'socialism' in Africa, and some photocopied material is available for anyone who's interested (please send sae & a few stamps to cover costs). Also the university group did a collection for the Vitoria Six which raised £20, and other groups have been written asking for their support for the solidarity campaign. A showing of the video on Women in the Spanish Revolution is to be held on July 24th as part of the DAM-organised tour.

Also some literature from the SAC in Sweden is being translated (see elsewhere in this Bulletin).

York Libertarian Socialists, c/o Anarchist Group, SU pigeonholes, Goodrick College, University of York, Heslington, York (forwarding address).

## CONFERENCE ON STOPPING SOUTH AFRICAN COAL IMPORTS

Doncaster 9/5/87

I attended this conference as delegate of the T&GWU (Hull Dockers). Organized by Doncaster Anti-Apartheid Movement and the NUM, it was a useful conference, with a good few miners there. Peter Kennedy of the NUM international office, spoke of the urgent need for solidarity around the rise of industrial activity and the related repression in South Africa (the railworkers strike, bombings of COSATU House, the institutionalized carnage in the mines where there have been 46,000 'accidental' deaths this century). Coal is South Africa's second largest earner after gold, and its main energy source. The South African NUM have asked for a coal boycott campaign as an effective means of damaging the SA economy. SA coal has been banned from France after the CGT Miners Union picketed docks importing the coal which was used by local authorities, similarly the United Mineworkers of America, enlisting community support as part of their battle with Shell Oil, got SA coal imports stopped.

Colin Adkins of Anti-Apartheid explained how coal imports have risen 1000% since 1978, and particularly since the 1984 British miners strike. An Anti-Apartheid activist from Doncaster told how small local coal importers have become multinationals since the 84-5 strike due to selling cheap SA coal.

This practical and informative conference had three low moments: a South African exile who parroted the (Communist) party line on the need for armed struggle in SA (who's for some more car bombings?), a Euro-MP who admitted he could do nothing as the Euro Parliament was a talking shop so did a bit of sly electioneering instead, but perhaps the worst was Peter Brathers regional T&G boss from the Goole dockers (they scabbed during the national dock strikes in 1984) - "British workers can't do much except 'raise collections, they can't afford to lose their jobs". I then told them of how the Hull dockers had refused a big contract from a shipping company in Notts which would have brought hundreds of jobs to Hull docks when it was found that importing SA coal would be involved. I also put over the case for workers action such as enacted by the Dunnes workers, and the need for direct links with COSATU through union branches.

Out of this a meeting was organized in Hull with two Dunnes strikers whom the dockers have now adopted. An agreement was made to research coal imports and for Sheffield Anti-Apartheid to organise an NUM-backed anti SA coal imports demo this summer. In September a convention will be held in Sheffield on stopping coal imports, organised by the NUM and AAM. This way lies practical solidarity for our South African brothers and sisters worth a hundred non stop consular pickets any day.

## **MORE LIES, MORE LIBERALS**

A pilot issue of a quasi-'Syndicalist Bulletin' came out in May. It was published by people in Hull who absconded with DAM funds and now aim to publicise the phoney CNT like Catholic Action-Sinews. They conned a comrade, M. H., into giving them money with which they financed the pilot issue as they said they were anti-vanguardist. Seeing the bulletin he wants his money back which is fair enough but unlikely from that lot (though they hardly need it as big money is floating around that scene as 'Mick Larkin' knows). Christian Pacifist Laurens Otter contributes a predictable distortion of history about the FAI taken from the usual Woodcockery sources.

## **PAGE 7 BLACK FLAG**

THE HEADLINE (above) SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. I can count 5 lies in half as many column inches!

ROSMER (MONATTE, SERGE, CILIGA, WEIL)

## ON TROTSKY

However much we may dislike the fact, leftist working class politics have been since 1917 dominated by apologists and mild critics of the Soviet ruling elite, and those of other 'socialist states' which were initially built by stalinists in Russia's image.

Anarchists have not always been free of the confusions which questions on the nature of Russia have bred. In the early days you had, on the one hand, people Guy Aldred claiming that Lenin's conspiratorial organisation and willingness to turn to the peasantry and refusal to wait until Russia was economically ready, meant that he was a Bakuninist not a Marxist, and so hailed Russia as a near-anarchist society. (This view was taken up by such Left marxists as Pannekoek and the SPGB, who were able to attribute the introduction of state capitalism in Russia to the malign contribution of anarchists). Contrasting with Aldred, on the other hand, many anarchists said that Bakunin and subsequent anarchists had always predicted that Marxism would lead to state capitalism (innacurately pretending that the Russian revolution had followed the prescribed Marxist model), and that events had confirmed this.

Contrasting with both of theses the bulk of the syndicalist movement - as featured in the founding statement of the AIT - dwelt on the issue of despotism, rightly attacking this, but failing to make a class analysis, and so opening us up to Marxist allegations that we are merely liberals with bombs with no clear class analysis. In this tradition, as recently as the mid-60s, one writer (still influential in the British anarchist movement) claimed that it was a marxist heresy to suggest that Russia was state capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist or whatever; Russia was, he said, a despotism but not divided by classes on a basis of economic differentials.

Of course the general picture has been healthier than this. It was in the French anarcho-syndicalist paper Revolution Proletarienne, that Simon Weil first saw a distinction between two forms of state capitalism and, by so doing, solved the difficulty besetting many left critics of Communism at the time of the Third Period. Lenin had, in the early days, admitted Russia to be state capitalist, but claimed that Soviet Power was such as to override that capitalism and to give workers control over the capitalist state. At that time most of industry had still been under private ownership. Come the Third Period, when Stalin nationalized vast sectors of Soviet industry and farming, at the very time when he was wiping out the last vestiges of independent proletarian organizations - and Marxists were somewhat bemused. Former Workers' Oppositionists like Kollantai and their international sympathizers saw the nationalization as being revolutionary, and therefore continued opposition, even when it came from workers organizations, was literally 'objectively counter-revolutionary'.

Weil argued (and the Rosmer-Monatte group which published Revolution Proletarienne developed the argument further over three decades) that whereas the initial Soviet society had been state capitalist insofar as traditional capitalism had remained unchanged, and the Tsarist state apparatus had been "taken over almost unchanged" (to use Lenin's words), there was now a new form of state capitalism which consisted of the collective power of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was not recruited from the traditional capitalist class, but extracted surplus value and appropriated it to its own use in the same way as capitalism traditionally did.

Today and for the last thirty five years if you ask a member of the AIT about the class nature of the Soviet Union they would be more likely to quote the ringing words of the former New York Libertarian League - "The Free world is not free, the Communist world not communist; both are fundamentally the same..." - than the AIT's founding statutes.

But while for the most part we tend to have got the analysis about right (there may be debate as to whether state capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist, managerialist or what is the best term, but most agree as to the essence), anarchists still have room for argument as to the history of how it so became. History not in terms of the events - we all agree that when Trotsky led troops into Vyborg to suppress the Soviet, when the Moscow Anarchist centre was suppressed, when troops turned on Makhno, and above all when Kronstadt was butchered, the Leninists were acting against the workers; but history in the sense of the precise meaning that we should read into this.

Most anarchists of course take the straight position that the fact that the soviets were suppressed, one-man-management introduced and so forth in the time that Lenin was in power shows that there is a direct line from Lenin to Stalin. That there is no reason to make a distinction between Leninists and Stalinists. Indeed there used, in the early '50s, to be many anarchists who would have argued that Trotsky was actually worse than Stalin, and Trotskyists should be regarded as worse than stalinists.

But the Rosmer-Monatte-Weil-Victor Serge-Anton Ciliga tradition to which we have referred obviously believed - though never explicitly explained that belief to other anarchists - that there was a material difference between Trotsky and Stalin. Though they attacked Trotsky on issues such as Vyborg, Kronstadt, and one-man-management - and though they rejected the bolshevik form of organisation on which the exiled Trotsky insisted - they did remain allied to Trotsky (maintaining with him friendlier personal relations than Trotsky's dissident former followers normally retained).

Their criticisms were frequently harsh; so that Trotsky would protest that their arguments implied a direct link between Lenin and Stalin, and he would protect himself with the famous phrase that a river of blood separated the party of Lenin from that of Stalin (their arguments implied in return but never explicitly stated that a similar river of blood separated the soviets of 1917 from those of 1921). Trotsky also insisted that Stalin was the "gravedigger of the revolution" (again they missed the opportunity of saying, in so many words, that one only consults a gravedigger when there is already a body). But harsh though these criticisms were, the fact that they were made as comments about someone who was obviously seen as an ally in the general struggle for socialism - a view which was certainly not held of Stalin - means that for the Rosmer-Monatte group there was somewhere, though unfortunately never explained, a distinction.

Believing as I do, that failure to make such a distinction inhibits people turning to anarchism who otherwise might, I should like to suggest a possible argument which I think represents what Rosmer and others believed but left unsaid. At the risk of once more being branded an heretic, I will borrow another Marxist concept: the distinction between subjective and objective revolutionism.

What was revolutionary in 1917 was obviously direct workers' self-organization and power (ie. the soviets); however this would not have occurred had it not been for the earlier impact of revolutionary socialist propoganda. Whether we like it or not the major factor in such propoganda was the influence of the bolshevikii. Thus the objective power of the workers was linked to the subjective dominance of bolshevism. Progressively from 1917 the objective workers' power was destroyed, as were all subjective revolutionary influences other than the bolshevikii. But this was not just - as many anarchists have described it - a mere coup d'etat by a counter-revolutionary clique. Until the death of Lenin there was a sincere belief (however elitist) that the party represented the real interests of the working class. Only after the rise of Stalin did that elitism, and the substitution of the subjective power of the bolshevikii for the objective power of the soviets, degenerate so that the Communist Party became the simple tool of an emergent ruling class.

LAURENS OTTER



## \*spain

### UNION ELECTIONS: An analysis taken from the CNT's

"Boletin Internacional" (February)

Since the union elections were held last year and the results obtained by the CNT (1200 delegates out of 160,000) any analysis of these figures must be based on the socio-political and economic reality in which the process was carried out:

(a) Manifest fraud and financial support from the Government for the UGT (and return of historical patrimony to that organisation).

(b) The weight of union bureaucracies (CCOO and UGT) joined in general agreement in the big factories.

(c) The reality of CNT implantation, its organisational weakness, which explains the difference between the results and the polls beforehand.

(d) The aim on the part of the CNT to consolidate its union sections via the elections should show the elections as a means not an end.

When evaluating the results we must take into account:

1 - They appeared to consolidate a two union model (between UGT and CCOO who obtained about 80% of the delegates).

2 - Autonomous unionism disappeared off the map, consisting now only of the CNT on the national level, save in the Basque country (LAB) and Galicia (INTG and CXTG). Revolutionary Syndicalist and radical options obtained a very poor showing.

On the other hand abstentionist strategies failed to catch on in the big factories where the level of consciousness and struggle is most deeply rooted

3 - In the biggest workplaces (cars, chemicals, transport), the CNT has established itself as the third union force by having the capacity and presence to present a competition for the union section.

To sum up, the results were poor in terms of numbers but just as José March, Secretary General of CNT, has pointed out, our option is a medium-term one given the generally unfavourable circumstances in which we are developing.

.....  
From July 2-5 the CNT is celebrating its 10th Congress - a full report in the next bulletin.  
.....

## \* USSR

### GLASNOST ! ... (but not for the workers)

Funny how in the West we only hear about dissent in the Soviet Union from greedy ballet dancers - already pampered by the State but claiming 'asylum' here to boost their earnings - or from hard-done-by poets or nuclear physicists. But what about ordinary workers, those at the bottom of the Soviet pile ?

Vladimir Gershuni has been kept in maximum security psychiatric hospitals these last five years. His crime ? the Moscow stonemason was before his arrest a leader of SMOT, the Free Inter Professional Association of Workers, which is the bravest of things - an independent union in a 'communist' country.

You won't hear of his case in the British press (a revolutionary unionist like himself is no Solzhenitzyn ready to write hymns of praise to capitalism). He has been adopted by Amnesty International who tell us we can write demanding his immediate unconditional release to:

SSSR,  
RSFSR,  
142360 Moskovskaya Oblast,  
Chekhovskiy Rayon,  
St Stolbovaya

S. Meshcherskoye,  
Moskovskaya Oblastnaya,  
Psikh Bolnista No.2 IM,  
Yakovenko,  
Nachalnikiv,  
USSR.

When arrested Gershuni was suffering from ulcers, asthma and chronic dental problems. Let the authorities know he hasn't disappeared: WRITE THAT LETTER TODAY !

# letters

FROM HENRY BELL, LIVERPOOL:

Dear Comrades,

I couldn't agree more with the tone of your editorial (of Syndicalist Bulletin:1). I have always believed that British syndicalism has suffered far too long from a Spanish hangover. The most damaging consequence of this has been that in the past too many people involved with syndicalism in this country have been would-be pistoleros, dynamiters and vanguardists who more properly belong to the lunatic fringe of anarchism (even that movement would have disowned many of them). In their fantasies they saw themselves manning the barricades or swaggering through the streets decked out in the colours of the CNT militia.

Rational debate was hardly even tolerated, and it was considered almost heresy to mention that more time ought to be devoted to considering the origins of British syndicalism, the present situation and the future. Let us hope that these days are over and done with.

Yours for British syndicalism. Fraternally.

PS: I am glad to learn from your report that the CNT has decided to live in the 1980s. It offers a gleam of hope that our own old Rip Van Winkle might recover from his Spanish hangover and begin to face reality.

FROM MARK HENDY, OKEHAMPTON:

Dear Guy,

Having read your bulletin I am sorry I sent you the money. You have spent it mostly on attacking good militants past and present.

You have Laurens Otter writing that the FAI ran the CNT, something the statist parties in Spain invented to excuse their own failure to take over the CNT. What an insult to the CNT membership, who simply saw through the politicians.

You also support the fake CNT in Spain today. Perhaps you intend to join them in setting up a fake international. I hope not.

Vanguardism is petty-bourgeois elements trying to take over workers' struggles for their own ends. Part of it consists in fighting off rival cliques of would-be leaders.

I must say, your bulletin is not unlike an exercise in this kind of thing. But you have already shown, in a single issue, that in the libertarian movement such cliques are more easily invented than found.

Fraternally yours.



## \*sweden

Some months ago now, a friend from Sweden who was visiting York turned out to be an active member of the SAC (Sveriges Arbetares Central-organisation) in Goteborg. We arranged an ad hoc meeting, to which about a dozen people came to hear about Sweden's syndicalist union (I should add that the comrade, Bosse Lekblad, was speaking about his own experiences, and not 'on behalf' of the union).

Sweden is an affluent, stable country where 3-4% unemployment is considered a crisis, and decades of continuous Labour government have created a cradle-to-grave paternalistic welfare state. Nonetheless the SAC, formed in 1910, has continued to organise militant, independent workers and is currently enjoying a boom. This is because the social-democratic unions of the LO (the Swedish TUC) are totally incorporated into the state, and are thus completely incapable of organising to defend workers interests. Last year saw some sizeable defections from the LO to the SAC, particularly among public sector workers. The SAC now has around 20,000 members, which would be roughly equivalent to some 120,000 in UK terms as a proportion of the workforce

However this shouldn't be taken as meaning that a mass syndicalist movement exists in Sweden. The SAC is still a small minority current, and faces bitter hostility from the LO for 'rocking the boat'. Apparently many workers are still unaware of its existence, or their right to join it. Moreover, employers such as the big car companies are happy to face massive fines in order to sack shopfloor militants.

Bosse described the organisation of SAC with its dual structure of locals (area units) and syndicates (industrial units). Each unit is autonomous as regards its own affairs: for instance in decisions about industrial action the syndicate is sovereign, there is no power of veto from above. The union is federal, with the central office in Stockholm largely restricted to information & co-ordination roles, and publications services.

We've subsequently received some SAC literature from Sweden, some of which we've translated. The SAC's paper Arbetaren is well-produced with wide ranging political and cultural commentary, but surprisingly little about workplace organisation and syndicalism. An introductory pamphlet, "A Free Fighting Union - The Syndicalists" is interesting, if rather ambiguous.

The pamphlet begins by declaring that the SAC seeks to "...fight for a road out of the crisis, a road whose milestones are union democracy, self-management and socialism." The rank and file democracy of the union is emphasised, stressing local decision-making and non-authoritarian structures:

"In SAC the right to make decisions is always held by the members, who experience the daily conditions of the workplace."

The SAC, the pamphlet continues, is completely independent of Party politics, and is committed to a conception of socialism opposed to "...both the Swedish model and the bureaucratic dictators who rule in Eastern Europe and China". Although not explicitly anti-statist, it is emphasized that "Socialism does not mean that Company tycoons shall merely be replaced by State 'experts'."

In the next section, on SAC's "trade and industry programme" it is stated that,

"...instead of scratching around for pennies, we regard the question of power as being much more important. Although not ignoring the necessary campaigns in every union for higher wages, SAC concentrates its efforts in fighting for an ever-increased influence over production and conditions at work..."

Further sections deal with SAC's policies for fighting unemployment, its internationalism, its commitment to defending the environment, workers' rights to join SAC and the role of members in a syndicalist union.

I say that this pamphlet is ambiguous because it alternates between radicalism and moderation. For instance it's unclear whether the trade & industry programme is concerned with immediate short term reforms, or whether the SAC is limited to seeking 'industrial democracy' and greater workers' rights within capitalism.

As readers probably know, the SAC has been strongly criticized in anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist circles for many years for its supposedly bureaucratic and reformist tendencies. Some of this criticism has been ultra-left fantasy, like Alfredo Bonnano's Critique of Syndicalist Methods, which has the SAC holding back the insurgent Swedish proletariat from revolution. How far the more plausible criticisms are valid I don't know; there has, after all, been very little information about the SAC available in Britain, and few direct contacts with Swedish militants. Furthermore there's been a tendency for some people to assume that any syndicalist current outside the IWA is inherently suspect. The SAC does seem to have maintained a combative and strongly independent tradition in conditions of stifling social peace, and on this basis it seems best to keep an open mind (one thing that Bosse mentioned was that after the assassination of Olaf Palme everyone from Communists to Conservatives united in a display of national unity, while the SAC stood virtually alone in proclaiming that "nothing has changed").

One last point is that the SAC seems to have revised its conception of syndicalism in the modern world, acting more as part of a social movement than purely a union. An example of this is the way that the SAC is closely involved in environmental politics - eg. the union's Forestry Federation is campaigning "...against airborne crop spraying and the ruthless exploitation of the forests by big companies". In this vein Bosse mentioned that they were concerned about the effects of acid rain, suggesting that British and Swedish syndicalists might be able to co-ordinate some kind of work in the labour movement around this issue.

Hopefully more news and discussion from Sweden will be forthcoming, and reported in future issues of this bulletin. Meanwhile a full translation of the pamphlet mentioned above is available from York Libertarian Socialists; please send sae & about 35p in stamps to cover photocopying. The address of the SAC national office is:

SAC,  
Syndikalisterna,  
Sveavagen 98,  
113 50 Stockholm.

MARTIN HAMMOND

# SUPPORT!

This **SUPPORT** conference has been called by sacked workers and supporters in an attempt to build solidarity and a fighting body to win our demands.

**VENUE:** Manchester TOWN HALL      **DATE:** July ~~22~~<sup>25<sup>th</sup></sup> 1987      **TIME:** 12 noon.

## CONFERENCE CALLED BY:

**Ancoats Casualty Sit-in**  
c/o Ann Dobson  
24 Woodward Street  
Ancoats  
Manchester 5

**Gateshead Workers Support Group**  
c/o 180 Two Ball Lonnen  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 9SB

**Ardbride Supporters**  
c/o Box 83  
43 Candlemaker Row  
Edinburgh

**Ardbride Sacked Workers**  
Anna Druggan  
28d Montgomerie Street  
Adrossan  
Scotland  
Ka22 8EQ

**Senior Colman Strike Committee**  
c/o AEU House  
43 Crescent  
Salford  
M5 4PE

**Trader Sacked Workers**  
c/o 114 Stone Hill Road  
Derby

### Invitations sent to -

Keetons sacked workers, Salpas sacked workers, HFW Plastics sacked workers, Babcocks strikers, all Regional Justice for Mineworkers Campaigns, Caterpillar workers, ex Hangers strikers, ex Silent Night strikers, sacked printworkers, Tower Hamlets Support Group, Oxford Printers support group, Picket (rank and file supporters of sacked printers), ex Contracts Strikers, ex Wheelers Support Group, City Anti-Apartheid Group, London Transport workers, National Rank and File Group, Trader Support Groups, Gateshead Unemployed Action Group, J. Blakes, Laura Ashley Support groups and others.

If you know of any others you feel should be contacted please do so.

For further information please complete.

We wish to participate in the conference -

Name/Organisation .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Approximate numbers attending \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Gateshead Workers Support Group, 180 Two Ball Lonnen, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9SB

Dear Comrades,

Up and down the country workers in many industries have been sacked, or are involved in disputes, or have recently been involved in disputes with their employers. There is a growing tendency for employers to simply sack their entire workforce and replace them with scab labour. Unfortunately, although the employers are gaining confidence when it comes to taking on the workforce, we as workers have yet to gain a major victory of late.

With the use of anti-trade union legislation, the inability of present trade unions to stop the employer offensive and the isolation of each dispute, many employers have seen their chance, and seized it, to drive down wage levels, conditions and practices and in the process rid themselves of a union organised workforce. The methods of the employers at present have been there for all to see - Murdoch's mass sacking of printworkers at News International and the many disputes dotted around the country including those who have called this **SUPPORT** conference.

There is an urgent need for us to unite together, stopping the isolation and in the process giving that especially needed boost to workers in dispute through active solidarity. Joint work such as demonstrations, pickets and propaganda could be the first step and would go some way to stopping the isolation and demoralisation that is so often felt, enabling us to fight the employers that much more effectively.

The conference has been called by both workers and supporters presently engaged in disputes. The sponsors hope to unite those workers in struggle on an active level and hope that a body of supporters can be built to give solidarity to those in dispute.

The sponsors suggest that at the conference on July 18th that we discuss, not only joint work and action, but also tactics that can be used against the employers.

We **urge you** to become involved in this conference and arrange for as many of your strikers, supporters etc, to attend. We hope that through such a conference of active workers we can build a fighting body that can turn the tide of defeats into a growing number of victories over the employer.

We ask you to fully support this conference - it is in the best interests of all workers in struggle. Please send notice of your intentions to attend and ideas and proposals for discussion. This would be extremely helpful to enable us to organise the conference and meeting room. We shall forward further information to all those attending the conference, such as maps and further details in the near future. If you require a creche for the duration of the conference please contact us before July 1st.

Let us make July 25<sup>th</sup> a major event !

Build solidarity for victory !

