

LISTINGS.

DECEMBER 90
JANUARY 91

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Liverpool Anarchist Group meets every Monday night, 8pm at the Mutual Aid Centre, 45 Seel St, Liverpool 1.....

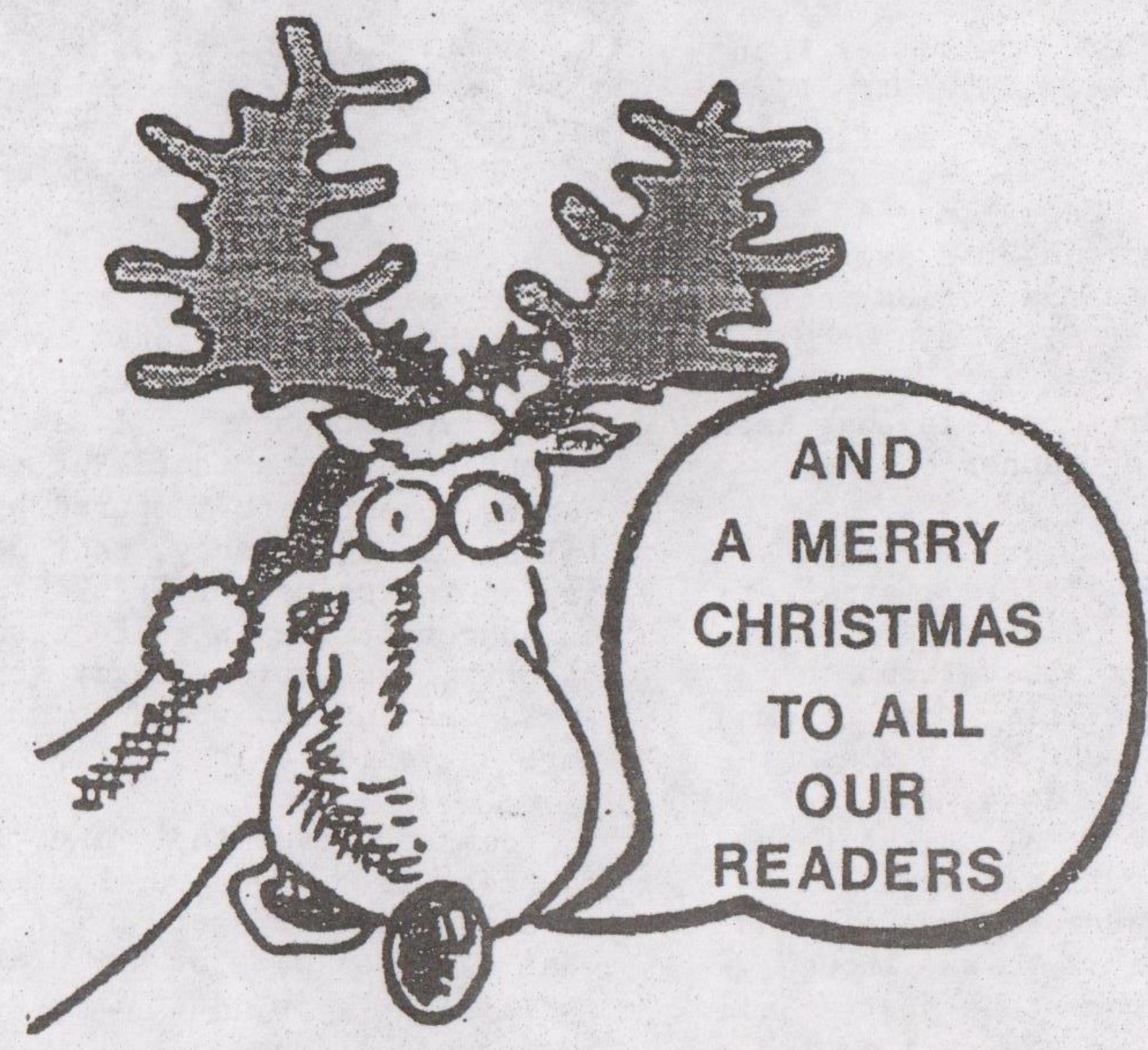
Wed 5th Troops Out Movement video night. "Behind The Mask" plus more. 7.30pm, Mutual Aid Centre, 45 Seel St. 50p admission.

Thurs 6th Inaugural meeting of North West Trafalgar Sq Defendants Campaign. 7.30pm, Manchester Town Hall.

Sat 8th Class Struggle Anarchist Network meeting, 11am-6pm, Mutual Aid Centre. Social in evening)starts 11pm.

Sun 9th Anarchist Black Cross conference, all day, Mutual Aid Centre.

Wed 12th Troops Out Movement public meeting, 7.30pm, Trade Union Centre, 24 Hardman St, L'pool 1. With Gerry McLoughlin of Sinn Fein & Mary Mason of Troops Out.



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Sat 19th 3D (independent anti-poll tax network) National Activists meeting, Manchester Town Hall, 10am-6pm. Details from Nick Finley, 20 Troutbeck Rd, Stockport, SK8 4RR.

Sat 26th Annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march, London. Phone Troops Out, 071 609 1743 for details.



newsletter

DECEMBER 90
JANUARY 91

LIFE
AFTER
THATCHER

HISTORY
Isn't over!

IRELAND
Anniversaries

REVIEWS

International
ANARCHIST
Black Cross

Militant
Lies & Tactics

20p
NUMBER 23



MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST NEWSLETTER
P.O. BOX 110
LIVERPOOL L69 8DP

Hello, and welcome to issue 23 of Merseyside Anarchist Newsletter.

Who would have thought we would outlive her! (politically speaking, of course) If we're to see off her successor we need two things off you, the reader. 1st, we are always looking for good articles and letters of interest to the anarchist movement. Why not write something? 2nd, we want you to subscribe. Just £3.00 will get you the next TEN issues. Merry Christmas,

NEWSLETTER COLLECTIVE.

AS EVER, THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR AND NOT NECESSARILY OF LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP AS A WHOLE.

SUBSCRIBE £3.00 for 10 issues
Payable to:
"Mutual Aid Centre"
at the address above.

DEADLINE February issue
MONDAY JANUARY 28th

BASIC ANARCHISM.

Anarchism is revolutionary anti-state socialism. In practical terms, anarchists aim for the destruction of the power of the ruling class and of all relationships based on domination and submission. This means taking over our industries and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

Anarchism will be created by millions of people, not a dictatorial elite (we are not marxist-Leninists), and all will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations thrown up by and for the revolution, not with the political parties who will try to dominate and destroy them.

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations (examples of which go from the original soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/5 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

There is no truce in the class war. The answer to ruling class power is continual and ever-widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP.

LIFE AFTER THATCHER

So, it's over. Thatcher has finally, unbelievably, thrown her hand in. For many in the anarchist movement she had been the dominant figure for the whole of their politically conscious lives - the enemy personified - capitalism made flesh.

The last days of Britain's longest premiership since 1827 have indeed marked the end of an era - the question is, what happens next.....

THE BLOODLESS COUP

Margaret Thatcher's victory over Ted Heath in the second ballot of the 1975 Tory leadership election was a triumph for the 'radical' right of the party. They, along with many figures in the military and political establishment, and members of the civil service, were frightened by the failure of successive governments to, in their eyes, get a grip on the economy and smash industrial militancy. When Heath was brought down by the 1974 miners strike many on the far right saw this as the last straw. Some, like industrialist Sir James Goldsmith and ex-environment minister Nicholas Ridley, went as far as to discuss a military coup with sympathetic generals (read 'Spycatcher!'), but others such as Airey Neave believed that the necessary policies could be implemented while maintaining Britain's sham of 'democracy'.

Neave and the radical right did stage a coup, but it was bloodless and happened inside the Tory party. Much to the horror of grassroots party workers and the old Tory establishment, Ted Heath was bundled out of place by the right's stalking horse challenger, Margaret Thatcher. Plans for a military takeover were dropped and Thatcherism was born.

THE THATCHER FACTOR

Thatcherism; the aggressive form of Conservatism that dominated the 80's was a new departure for politics in Britain. Even though they were rooted in the Tory tradition of maintaining class differences and protecting the rich, it differed significantly in style and substance from that of previous Conservative administrations.





Thatcherism will be remembered as a 10 year moral and political crusade. Though much of its legislation was aimed at "protecting British interests" and loosening controls on capitalism, it was about far more than economics. The much-touted 'victorian values' were the excuse used by the right to attack on the social front. Everything from the breakdown of the family to abortion rights to womens employment were presented as being somehow 'un-British' and laws came in which affected the most intimate parts of people's lives. Even the AIDS tragedy was cynically used to whip up anti-gay hatred and promote god-fearing, heterosexual, monogamous family values. Thatcherism was/is a new moral as well as a new political order.

All this would have seemed unthinkable under previous prime ministers, because Thatcher herself broke a political mould and unleashed a new plague upon us - the conviction politician. Look at her predecessors - Callaghan, Heath, Wilson - history will remember them as the grey men in suits - plodding career politicians with ideas little different from the people they'd replaced.

THE DOWNFALL

As we all now know, Thatchers dogma was eventually to be her downfall. Over the last few years British business

(and a good many Tory M.P.'s and ministers) were calling for agreement on economic and monetary union in step with the other member states of the EEC because they felt that this would produce a more stable (and therefore more profitable) financial climate. But Thatcher was always dragging her feet because the process involved giving up some of Westminster's 'sovereignty' and decision-making powers. The tension this slowly created in the cabinet eventually blew up in her face: When her loyalty to everything British came into conflict with the smooth running of capitalism, the Tory party remembered where its real interests lay - and deposed her.

THE TORIES NEXT STEP

Though she herself has gone, her unquiet ghost still lingers. The new leadership won't now return to pre-1975 Toryism. Thatcherism and the general raft of policies which comprised it will remain. Of course, there'll be less stridency and less lecturing from 'the nation's grandmother' but free markets and individualism will be with us for some time yet.

Despite their current fury, Maggies children on the radical right won't as they've been threatening to do) leave the party. Firstly because they've got nowhere else to go (fascism isn't needed in Britain yet!), and secondly because at the end of the day all the Tories can agree on certain fundamentals - like safeguarding capitalism, and to hell with the rest!

So once the recriminations are over and the right see that the Thatcher legacy is in safe hands (suitably modified to fit in with Europe and possibly minus the election-losing poll tax), there'll be no permanent splits in the Conservative party - they've all got far too much at stake to allow mere political differences to jeopardise things.

BAD RESULT FOR LABOUR

Kinnock and his band of instantly-forgettable cohorts may be publicly gloating over Tory troubles, but behind the scenes there are serious worries about what might happen next. Labour have gained much support, partly by moving to the right, but mainly because people are sick of Thatcher and her failed 'economic miracle'. It's true to say that many of these born-again Labour

voters couldn't actually tell you what the party stood for (who could ?!). They are just desperate for a change and anyone will do.

But now Thatcher has gone the Labour leaders are thinking the unthinkable: What if the Tories can ride out the recession and shake off the hostility caused over the last few years? What if Kinnock's overall strategy fails, if Labours' shift to the right doesn't pull in enough voters and the Tories win a fourth general election? His fear isn't over what this'll mean for working class people but what the consequences might be for himself and the Labour party.

Imagine the frustration that this would cause. All those people from the humblest party activist to leftwing M.P.'s who'd listened to Kinnock selling out year after year, chasing Tory voters and erasing all traces of socialism from the party in a bid for 'power at any price' would be seriously disillusioned. If Labour is unable to win general elections, even with light blue policies, many will question the way the party has been going since the early 80's. The best Kinnock could hope for in this situation would be a shift to the left inside the party - the worst would be a split or large scale defections. Unlike the Tories this is possible for Labour because there are two distinct traditions within it - those who still believe in socialism of some sort coming via a Labour government and the rest; the yes-men and women, the guilty middle classes who can't bring themselves to vote Tory, the careerists and the place-seekers.

KINNOCK'S LOSS - OUR GAIN

As anarchists we recognise not only that it makes no difference who leads the Tory party, but also that a change of government has no bearing on working class interests. In stressing these facts we should be seeking to win over not just those who had no time for Kinnock or Thatcher, but the genuine socialists in the Labour rank and file.

We need to argue that there have been Labour governments before - they don't work. Not for nothing are Tony Benn's diaries entitled "Office Without Power", they tell of how radical Labour policies were foiled in government not only by the right of the party, but by the state



itself. Unfortunately both Benn and groups like 'Militant' haven't learned this essential lesson of history - that government can never equal socialism - only working class action can bring it about, and this is surely the only aim of the anarchist movement - making that possible.

Make no mistake - a fourth Tory term in office would be bad, but we would only make matters worse if we didn't use that opportunity to damage the real obstacle to change in Britain - belief in the Labour party. ●

YOU
BASTARDS!



Militant LIES & TACTICS

"We are going to hold our own internal inquiry which will go public and if necessary name names."

Steve Nally, Secretary ABAPTF, ITN News, 1st April '90.

"Our Federation is going to be conducting an internal inquiry to try to root out the troublemakers."

Tommy Sheriden, Chair ABAPTF, LWT News, 1st April '90.

The Poll Tax riot on March 31st this year not only scared the shit out of Militant, it also revealed the true face of the "democratically elected" "leadership" of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation (ABAPTF). With the formation of the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign (TSDC) the Militant, sorry ABAPTF!, leadership were forced to adopt a position of condemning the police for the riot. However, whilst the TSDC called for the October 20th demonstration and won support from the London Federation, the ABAPTF officers opposed the march and refused to become involved in it's organisation.

When the October 20th march was a 35,000-strong success but a later rally called-for by the TSDC was attacked by police the ABAPTF officers set about a pre-conference campaign of lies and misinformation which not only tried to claim credit for the peaceful demonstration but tried to slander both the TSDC and Class War at the same time.

Their approach has been to use the March 31st riot and the heckling of speakers on October 20th to call for "proper (i.e Militant) stewarding" for future demonstrations. They even went so far as to claim that the Trafalgar Square riot would not have taken place if the Federation (again read Militant) had been allowed to steward the march (Militant, 26/10).

More outrageously still, they have used the heckling of speakers and alleged racist abuse of a speaker at the October demo as an excuse to make bizarre accusations in the pages of Militant and elsewhere of links between Class War and the National Front! The proof, they say, is the alleged presence of Young NF members at the 1983/4 "Stop the City" demonstrations "organised by Class War". Furthermore, not content with slandering an organisation whose record of fighting fascism is second to none (except, perhaps RED ACTION!) they have attempted to discredit the TSDC in the same breath. In a letter to the TSDC (oct. 25th) the three Militant ABAPTF officers referred to the hecklers:

"...these people perported to be supporters of the TSDC. It is true that many of these people were also associated with Class War."

Under the guise of protecting the movement from "provocateurs" they make the extraordinary assertion that "those involved (the hecklers) are therefore either unconscious or conscious agents of the state."(!)

This is the attitude with which Militant chose to approach the ABAPTF conference in Manchester, resulting in the disgraceful booing and jeering of delegates who called for support

for the TSDC. And they have the cheek to call for "unity" in the movement (on their terms) and to refer to those who opposed their slate in the ABAPTF elections as "splitters"!

The conference and it's run up, the clear existance of bogus anti-poll tax groups and the inefficient (deliberate?) distribution of conference papers and credentials to genuine poll tax unions (the list goes on) is a frustrating lesson which exposes again the nature of those who would "lead" our movement.

It can only be a testament to the size and strength of the mass working class movement which has grown up against the hated poll tax that such tactics and blatant sectarianism of the Militant tendency have not killed off this campaign long ago.

Despite them, the campaign continues to grow.

DON'T PAY IT
DON'T COLLECT IT
DON'T IMPLEMENT IT

A QUOTE

“Ten years mean a lot of memories, I put it to Bruce, good and bad. Why not start with the worst and save the best for last?”

“Worst memories? Uh. Difficult. They're not major mountains, but I remember that time we went to Aldermaston, and we had promised that we wouldn't try to get into the base, and we had made all sorts of commitments. And I went round the back to find that people had pulled the fence down and were jeering at the police and charging onto the base. I just felt betrayed. What was Class War looking for?”

“And I remember going to the Embankment once, and this black bus drew up - they were really difficult people! - and they were shouting, “Where's the vicar, where's the fucking vicar?” It was me! Ha-ha-ha-ha. They wanted to get me!”

Some Views On

HECKLING

Having said all of the above, I believe however that we need to critically re-examine the tactics being used by some of those heckling speakers at demonstrations after October 20th.

Whilst Tommy Sheriden and Tony Benn represent worthwhile targets for abuse, it could be argued that while rallying under the Class War flags to abuse and jeer at Bruce Kent and Joan Ruddock and their Middle-class supporters on CND demos in the early eighties was good fun, we should be developing a more rational and clear-thinking approach when faced with a mass rally of working class people united in opposition to the most hated piece of Tory legislation ever introduced.

The Poll Tax has presented us as anarchists with a real chance to push our ideas onto the agenda of a genuine mass working class movement. We shouldn't waste that opportunity. Back to Militant: "Beer cans were thrown at the bus from which the speakers were addressing the rally. Some hit children at the front and we were lucky that nobody was seriously hurt..." Although they would probably say the same whether the heckling was "intelligent" or "rowdy" it is difficult to disagree. If the hecklers were indeed claiming to be "anarchists" then it must be in all our interests to make sure they pack it in or get lost. Heckling has it's place but thinking too has it's uses.

PUNK IS DEAD - Good records, bad political philosophy!!
Your views welcome.

(T.P.)

ALL-BRITAIN ANTI-POLL TAX CONFERENCE

p8

BRUCE KENT (ex-General secretary of CND) interviewed in 'Sanity' Nov. '90.

P.T.O.

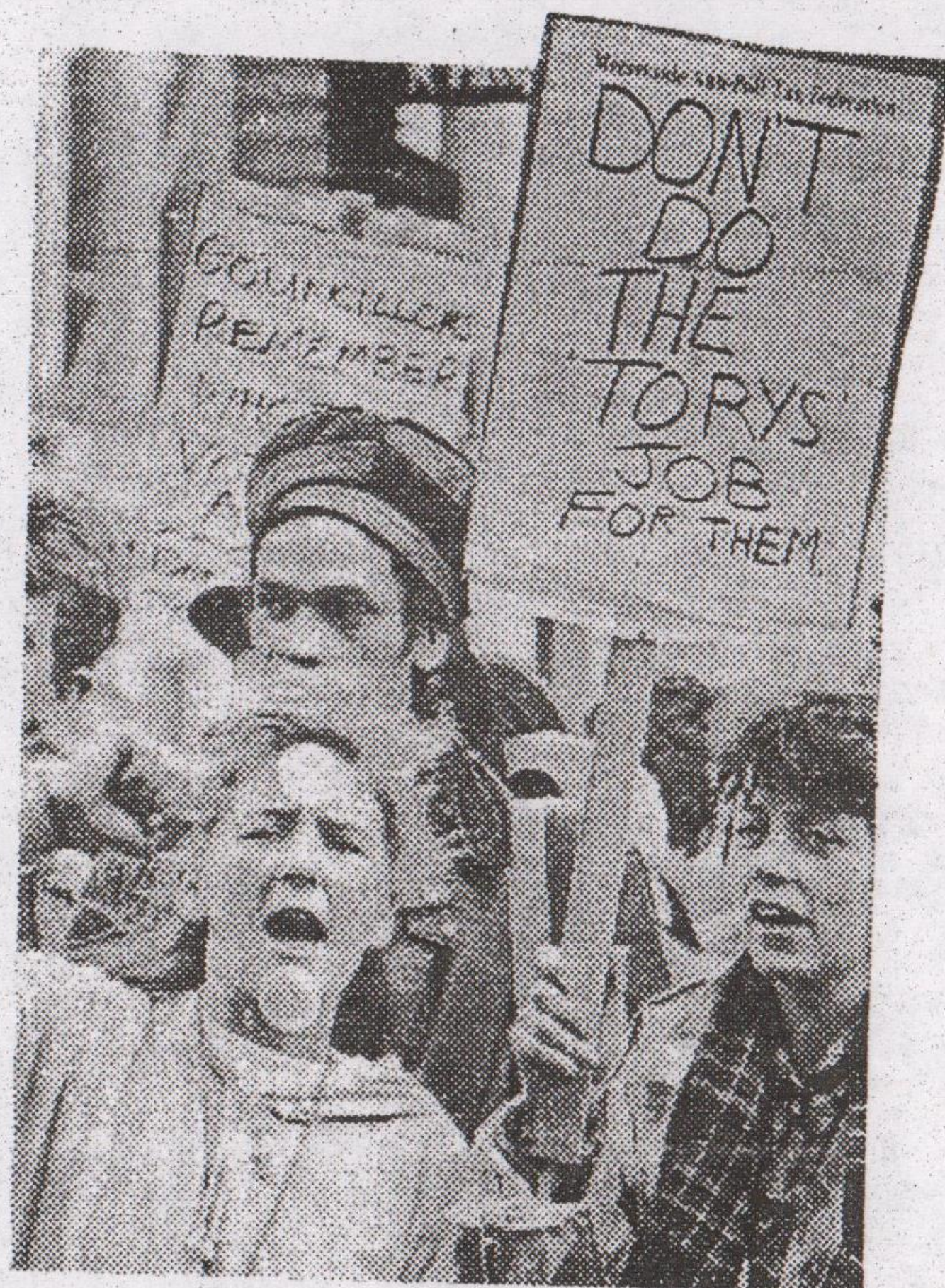
ANTI-POLL TAX CONFERENCE

The poll tax is undoubtedly the most despised piece of legislation this century. Its consequences of dire poverty and run down services have provoked massive resistance by working people up and down the country. Resistance to the poll tax has included mass non-payment, the largest demo outside a police station for 20 years, the biggest demos outside the courts since the war, and, of course, the largest confrontation of workers with the state for at least 100 years.

This opposition to the poll tax played an important part in making Thatcher resign. However, the systematic criminalisation of all anti-poll tax activists both at national and local level has clearly exposed the limits of a policy of peaceful mass non-payment as the way to beat the poll tax. It was in this situation that delegates gathered in Manchester on November 25th for the second All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation conference.

Predictably, instead of being able to collectively assess the experiences of activists from around the country and work out a strategy that can defeat the tax, we were treated to a Militant rally with only a thin veneer of democracy. Time and time again during the day bland platitudes playing to the Militant faithful treated as politically countering the the opposition's criticisms. The People's March (People's Farce ?) was hailed in an orgy of triumphalism interspersed with claims that the ABAPTF had got rid of Thatcher by themselves! Needless to say Militant dominated the elections and people like Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan were re-elected as National Officers.

During the conference itself there were two main bones of contention. One was whether or not to organise a national demo on December 8th and the other was the question of defending people who had been arrested after March 31st and October 20th, and whether to censure Nally and Sheridan for their outrageous statements on these occasions. In addition to, and support for the initiatives of, the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign were booed. Whilst valid criticisms of Steve "name names" Nally and Tommy "shop 'em" Sheridan were drowned out and implications about 'agents provocateurs' started to fly. One Milie even told us that what we needed was a bit of political 're-education'!



tion, the theme of transforming policies on workplace APTU's from paper into a central aspect of our work acted as a backdrop to a number of arguments.

The debate over whether to hold a demo on Dec 8th was a confrontation between the Millie's and the SWP. Though I think it would have been a good bash it is difficult to believe the SWP were doing this for the benefit of the movement or just trying to 'Build the Party' by sounding radical. Indeed the SWP's political yoga over the poll tax made it easier for the Federation leadership to try to discredit genuine activists by portraying all supporters of the demo as 'johnny come latelies'.

More important was the discussion around defending those criminalised by the state for opposing the poll tax. People who got up and argued for affil-

iation to, and support for the initiatives of, the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign were booed. Whilst valid criticisms of Steve "name names" Nally and Tommy "shop 'em" Sheridan were drowned out and implications about 'agents provocateurs' started to fly. One Milie even told us that what we needed was a bit of political 're-education'!

It seems to me that in a period where we are being viciously attacked and banged up on mickey mouse charges, NOT to defend wholeheartedly those on the receiving end is itself criminal. We need to make sure that any future demo is adequately defended by ourselves and not by stewards whose main concern is to co-operate with the same police who are out to attack us. Co-ordinating raising support for all poll tax prisoners needs to be an integral part of the ongoing struggle.

The conference was disappointing (though I expected it) not only for the above reasons but because again, any

real orientation towards the workplace was evaded. Workers are absolutely central to beating the tax both in our communities and in our workplaces. Local APTU's should attempt to forge links with local government workers on a Rank and File basis around "No Poll Tax; No Cuts". In this way we as workers and users of local services can aid each other in our struggles. It means that when council workers are on strike, we are there offering support and assistance and when the bailiffs come round workers in the locality should aid in the bailiff-busting. Eventually it means taking generalised political strike action against the poll tax.

Ultimately when they've dragged us through the courts they'll come for us in our communities and our workplaces. We have to unite these two elements NOW to secure victory. All of this won't be easy, but it's essential if we're ever going to be able to demand and get decent local services without paying through the nose for them.

National Activists Conference

"Which way forward for the anti poll tax movement?"

Saturday 19th January 1991

Manchester Town Hall

10.00am - 6.00pm (provisional)

A new year, and another year of struggle. 3D has called a national activists conference to discuss the major issues facing the anti-poll tax movement.

- ☆ What have we achieved so far?
- ☆ Is non-payment enough to defeat the tax?
- ☆ How can we organise effectively?
- ☆ What is our response to cuts in jobs and services?
- ☆ How can we build a movement capable of defeating the poll tax?

The conference will be an opportunity for activists to take a serious look at strategy and will provide a space for political discussion which usually doesn't happen in APTU meetings because of the day to day pressures of campaigning. It won't be a rally where debate is suppressed, but there will be workshops where everyone will have a chance to contribute. There will also be a social and an opportunity to exchange information. In order to organise an accessible conference, in a decent venue, there will be a registration fee and a pooled fare system will operate. If you want to attend the conference as an individual or as a representative of your APTU please return the tear off slip below.

to Nick Finley, 20 Troutbeck Road, Gatby, Stockport SK8 4RR.

Anniversaries have always played a part in the struggle to end British rule in Ireland. Commemorating past episodes doesn't indicate a sentimental or backward-looking attitude, but in this case shows that the republican movement is conscious of its history, and moreover takes a pride in it. Anniversaries are used to educate today's generation about the continuity of struggle and the conditions which give rise to it.

In this sense 1991 is a significant year for supporters of a British withdrawal from Ireland, containing as it does three major anniversaries.

THE HUNGER STRIKE

On March 1st it'll be ten years since the start of the Hunger Strike for political status by republican prisoners in the H-blocks. They were demanding to be treated in accordance with what they were - political prisoners of war.

They had been imprisoned for engaging in armed struggle, were convicted in special non-jury courts under draconian 'emergency' laws, and incarcerated in top security jails especially constructed to house them, and yet the state wanted to 'criminalise' them and their struggle by treating them as ordinary convicts.

Criminalisation was resisted first by republicans refusing to wear prison clothes and to slop out their cells; these became known as the blanket protests and the 'dirty' protests, but were not enough to change government policy. Eventually the prisoners resorted to their ultimate weapon - the Hunger Strike - to achieve recognition.

Ten men died, but four out of their five demands were met, a de facto political status was gained and criminalisation was smashed.

Of equal importance was the effect the Hunger Strike had outside the jails. It galvanised support for the republican movement and brought a new generation out onto the streets. Also, while fasting in his cell, IRA volunteer Bobby Sands stood as a parliamentary candidate in the mid-Ulster by-election - and won! The realisation that electoral success and its attendant publicity was possible for republicans in the Six Counties transformed Sinn Fein from being merely the public face of the IRA into becoming a political force in its own right. The

IRELAND - YEAR OF ANNIVERSARIES

strategy epitomised by the slogan "the armalite and the ballot box" was born and the struggle took on a new dimension.

UPRISING!

April 23rd sees the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising in Dublin. To understand its significance today, it's important to realise that there have always been two tendencies within the struggle for Irish independence - those who believe in 'constitutional' methods of change, brought about by negotiation within the existing structures, and the physical force tradition; those who accepted both the need and the right for an oppressed people to take up arms to achieve their liberation.



In 1916 the physical force republicans were in a minority. The constitutionalists of the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond were supporting Britain in the First World War, were urging Irishmen to enlist in the British Army and were prepared to bide their time until after the war in the hope of achieving a limited form of Home Rule.

Despite this, the physical force tendency, led by revolutionaries like James Connolly and Constance Markievicz, had long been planning an armed uprising to take advantage of England's preoccupation with the war. Even though they were short

of weapons, had poor co-ordination outside Dublin and were almost certain to fail, they went ahead and took on the British at the start of the Easter weekend, proclaiming a Republic and calling for support.

The Rising only took hold in Dublin, where after a week of heavy fighting the vastly outnumbered IRA surrendered.

Though they had only few sympathisers at the time, their heroic example and the brutality of the British after the Rising persuaded many people that force was the only language Britain understood. Within three years a war of independence was underway which was to drive Britain from 26 of Ireland's 32 counties.

INTERMENT

Since that partition and the formation of the 'Northern' Ireland state, the authorities there have had to use internment without trial in every decade to keep the lid on opposition and to hold the state together.

The late 1960's saw the emergence of the Civil Rights movement, which demanded nothing more than equality for the states Catholic minority. The violence this movement was met with ensured (just as after the Easter Rising) that people realised the futility of campaigning for limited reforms. Up until then the republican movement had had little influence in the Six Counties but the radicalising experience of the Civil Rights movement gave it new life. The IRA re-emerged in force, first to defend the Catholic ghettos from loyalist mobs and the RUC, and then to go on the offensive against the state itself.

One tactic used to counter this was internment. On August 17th 1971 thousands of troops and police smashed their way into homes across the north in an attempt to capture republican activists. Hundreds of people were dragged off to prison camps where they were held without trial, some for several years. However, internment failed. Experience had taught the

movement to be ready for it and many activists were already on the run and evaded capture. Also, much of the state's information was inaccurate and the move backfired badly. Old IRA volunteers who hadn't been active since the 40's and 50's were rounded up as were teenagers and people wholly uninvolved with politics.

Internment was beaten; prisoners resisted, communities provided shelter for fugitives and Britain was condemned internationally. Internment is commemorated each August as a victory by those campaigning for a British withdrawal.

SOLIDARITY

Throughout the year, Merseyside Anarchist will be covering in depth these anniversaries and the issues they raise. This isn't just as an act of solidarity with people fighting the British state, but because, as anarchists, it's important that we have a clear understanding of resistance, repression and revolution. All these things are happening now in Ireland and that fact alone is enough to demand our attention.●

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

PUBLIC MEETING

GERRY McLOUGHLIN

(SINN FEIN)

MARY MASON

(TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT)

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 12th

7.30pm

TRADE UNION CENTRE.
24 HARDMAN STREET
LIVERPOOL 1.

BLACK CROSS

At this summer's International Black Cross Conference in Liverpool the production of 'Mutual Aid', the internal bulletin of the Black Cross was transferred from Northern ABC (England) to Toronto, Canada. The first issue from Toronto is now out and we urge all Black Cross groups to ensure that they receive their copy and subscribe. The purpose of this article is to outline the work of the ABC and its importance to us, and how it is we can all get involved in supporting 'our' prisoners.

THE ABC

The ABC is an International anarchist prisoners' support organisation with active groups in Canada, the USA, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, England, Scotland and Australia. There are further contacts in Spain, the USSR and Latin America.

Our aim in the ABC is to give support on many levels to Anarchist and class struggle prisoners through the basic solidarity work of letter writing, prison visits if requested, campaigning for prisoners' demands, the highlighting of cases and conditions, pickets and occasionally financial aid (to prisoners and/or relatives).

Whilst lending support to all other prison campaigns from the Birmingham six to Animal Rights prisoners and Irish POWs, our priority remains to support those prisoners who are inside as a result, directly or indirectly, of their anarchist/revolutionary activities, and who have no other support channels of any kind.

Ultimately, the ABC seeks the abolition of all prison systems.

MUTUAL AID

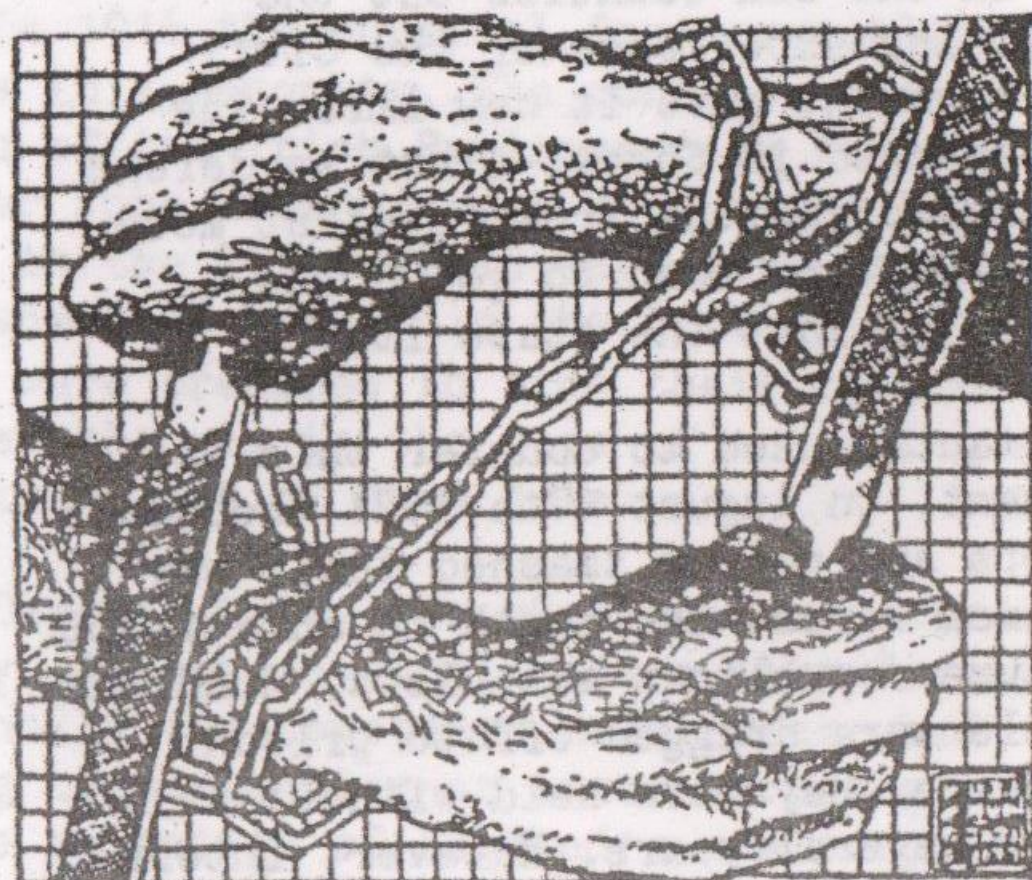
In order to spread the information which enables us to carry out our support work the ABC internationally produces a quarterly internal bulletin, 'Mutual Aid' (they are inside for us, we are outside for them - that is how the ABC sees its work). It publishes a Prisoners' List and holds an annual conference. Nationally, groups hold regular meetings,

produce leaflets and coordinate "days of action" and specific prisoners' campaigns.

THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK

The Emergency Response Network (ERN) was set up by the ABC in 1989 and exists to help prisoners whenever an emergency arises. If a prisoner is being beaten or tortured, is being denied urgent medical treatment or is on hunger strike the ERN exists to notify all groups worldwide by means of a telephone tree. From there each local anarchist black cross group can organise whatever actions and publicity are necessary until the emergency ceases. ERN work may include telephone blockades of embassies or prisons, leafletting or direct action as appropriate.

Already the ERN has proved its effectiveness as a thorn in the side of the authorities. Screws and prison bosses will attack prisoners so long as they think they can get away with it. Some examples - Two Greek prisoners, Kostas Andreadis and Dimitris Voglis



both went on hunger strike earlier this year after being framed on explosives charges. Greek comrades are convinced that it was only through international pressure generated by the ERN (The Greek prime minister heard of the case on Dutch radio!) that led to the release of both activists. Often it is pressure from abroad which has a decisive effect on a situation where pressure from at home has failed. In the USA, the same ERN pressure forced the screws to stop beatings of John Perotti (an IWW organiser and lawyer).

In the case of denial of medical treatment sufficient worldwide pressure can result in the authorities backing down. In one such case, Dr Alan Berkman, who has cancer was being refused help. He is probably alive today because he was able to self-diagnose the cancer and seek help from the ABC.

23rd September '88

'Maybe anyone who reads the booklet will realise how important it is to let prisoners know that there are people out there who care and support them. When I was out and about I thought many times of the innocent Irish people imprisoned over here and I'm sorry now that I never wrote to them. Think of all the people who say, "Ah, well, my letter won't amount to much" - if all the people who said that actually wrote, wouldn't that be truly wonderful'.

Martina Shanahan

WHY GET INVOLVED?

It must be in the interests of all anarchists, whether you belong to an established group or not, to give the maximum possible support to class struggle prisoners, especially those who find themselves imprisoned by the state for their revolutionary activities. The events of Trafalgar Square and the recent heavy sentences handed down to three members of RED ACTION for anti-fascist work, show that at any time any one of us could find ourselves in the same position. Prisons are there to separate those who break ruling class laws. At Xmas time that support is needed more than ever.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Get involved! In England ABC groups exist in Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Preston, Bolton, London and Oxford. In Scotland, there are groups active in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Groups in the north meet regularly as Northern Black Cross (until July we were responsible for "Mutual Aid") and the next meeting will take place at the Mutual Aid Centre on December 9th.

Write for a prisoners' list to us in Liverpool or to NABC at:

P.O. BOX 446
Sheffield
S1 1NY.

If you wish to form an ABC group, or join an existing one, we can advise you on ideas for activity which can range from just a few minutes per week writing letters and sending Xmas and Birthday cards to regular correspondence, gaining publicity, giving financial help and eventually prison visits. (Prison visits will normally take place only after you have built up a relationship with the prisoner concerned).

Subscriptions to "Mutual Aid" are on a group or individual basis and can be obtained by sending Cdn\$20 by International Money Order to:

Mutual Aid
Toronto ABC
P.O. Box 6326 Stn A
Toronto Ontario
M5W 1P7 CANADA

(M.O.s to "Toronto Black Cross")

Also, regular news of prisoners' struggles worldwide appears in "Black Flag".

IMPORTANT NOTE

We have received news that Martin Foran has started another hunger strike over his treatment for an infected colostomy, (mid-NOV). Please write to him or send him a card to;

Martin Foran C51796
HMP Frankland
Brasside
Durham DH1 5YD

See Back issues of this newsletter for details or write.

HISTORY ISN'T OVER!

The collapse of East European 'Communist' governments and the end of Cold War are such huge events that we have yet to appreciate the full implications of the changes.

One thing is certain: Those who are predicting the final victory of capitalism and the death of socialism are a little premature! The following article questions the post mortem.....

Many in the Western ruling class saw the Cold War as a struggle between two totally incompatible systems - Capitalism and Communism, 'free' enterprise and state control. They had so much invested in capitalism that they were prepared to threaten (and fight) a nuclear war to defend it.

A GLOBAL CONFLICT

The Cold War went on for over 40 years and though to us its most visible manifestation was the 'Iron Curtain' which divided Europe, it was in fact a global conflict. With massive military might and the centres of political power in Europe, the Soviet Union and the USA, direct armed conflict between the two blocs was considered both undesirable and unwinnable on the European front. This, coupled with the ever-widening search for raw materials and the need for strategic allies and bases around the world ensured that Superpower rivalry outside Europe was anything but a 'cold' war.

In what became known as 'regional conflicts' East and West intervened in every part of the world to support friends, topple enemies, to prevent the other side getting the edge and to secure the supply of oil, minerals, food and just about anything else to be found in the 'third' world. In some cases 'spheres of influence' would be tacitly agreed: "We won't interfere there if you don't de-stabilise so-and-so across the border" etc. But this didn't often happen and bloody wars ensued until one side or the other could install or sufficiently defend a friendly government. The list is endless and spans both the globe and the decades - from



Korea in the early 1950's to Nicaragua and Afghanistan at the end of the period.

Short of full-scale fighting between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the only way the Cold War could be won decisively was if one of the Superpowers became exhausted by this constant conflict, and this is in fact what we've seen happen in the USSR and Eastern Europe over the last few years.

One of the main aims of the arms race from America's point of view was to continually force the Soviet Union to put its resources into developing new and more costly nuclear weapons. By 1960 both sides had enough warheads to totally destroy the other, but America pressed on, adding layer after layer of overkill and searching for a way of delivering a 'first strike' which, in

theory, would knock out the Soviet nukes before they were airborne. The USSR of course followed suit, and so it went on until very recently.

END OF EMPIRE

The effects of building huge nuclear stockpiles and constantly maintaining, equipping and deploying large standing armies was shattering to both Superpowers. The USA became the world's biggest debtor nation and poverty increased rapidly in the States as the Cold War went on. But by far the biggest strain was on the Soviet Union.

It began the Cold War at a disadvantage, having been devastated during the titanic struggle with Nazi Germany from 1941-45 and having far fewer allies abroad than the capitalist alliance. Added to this was the Communist Party's bureaucratic control of the economy which slowed the development of new ideas and technology. Being led by a paranoid madman like Stalin didn't help either - he constantly disrupted industry and administration by purges of management and workers alike. Even after his death the USSR always lagged behind the West due to the restricting influence of the Party. One German writer summed up the situation brilliantly when he recently observed that a society which was so tightly controlled that no-one could even use a photocopier without first consulting their superiors was never going to win the Cold War!

Eventually pressure on the Soviet Union became so great that a faction developed within the Communist Party which admitted that the Cold War had to end. They gained influence, and ultimately control of the Party when Gorbachev came to power. More importantly, they recognised that the Soviet economy would also have to change - firstly because without the military shield it would be vulnerable to Western coercion, and secondly because discontent at home about inefficiency, mis-management and shortages of the basic necessities as well as consumer goods was threatening to boil over. The driving force behind Gorbachev's ideas was the belief that if the Party made no attempt to reform the system and to manage the coming changes, then change would happen anyway and utterly destroy the Party and everything it had done since 1917.

However, events have moved so fast

that the Soviet empire isn't changing but disintegrating. As people in Eastern Europe saw the Kremlin relaxing its grip they took their chance and overthrew their corrupt and repressive leaders. For them, communism hadn't come about through struggle or revolution but had arrived with the Red Army in 1945 and was imposed by a succession of Moscow-approved strongmen. Previous attempts to challenge or even alter Party rule were crushed - East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 56, Czechoslovakia in 68, Poland in 1970 and again in 82. But when people came out onto the streets in 1989 the regimes had lost their Soviet backers and with them the will to fight.

POLLING BOOTH



In most countries the governments gave in easily, merely trying to retain what influence they could for themselves and their parties in the new scheme of things.* Even in Rumania, where the dictatorship refused to go, a week of street battles was enough to convince its supporters that the game was up.

But for Gorbachev, far more disturbing changes were on the way. The end of the Cold War has led to the 'unfreezing' of history, and with it the emergence of many old conflicts which Soviet power had smothered.

Just as the East European states created after World War 1 contained many

* In Poland and Rumania especially, Communists and 'former' Communists still control key areas of the state - change in Eastern Europe hasn't been as revolutionary as we've been led to believe.

different ethnic groups within them, so too does the USSR. And the inter-communal violence now going on in Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia is being mirrored by many similar conflicts within the Soviet Union itself. Whereas the Soviet leadership may have been prepared for the loss of its allies in Eastern Europe, the threat of the USSR itself breaking up fills them with dread.

In the West we've heard much about demands for independence from the USSR's Baltic republics - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, but their struggles seem tame when compared to those happening in the southern republics such as Azerbaijan and Moldavia, where different ethnic groups are butchering each other and those seen as loyal to Moscow, and where the demands aren't for a mere degree of independence but for integration with other countries (in these cases Iran, Turkey and Rumania).

THE END OF HISTORY ?

It's against this background of turmoil and ongoing change that some commentators in the West have declared the end of History! "The Cold War is over" they say, "and capitalism won". They maintain that all history was building towards a final conflict between capitalism and communism, and now that it's ended, so too has history. Their smug and self-gratifying theory claims that now capitalism has no barriers, in a few years it will have firmly established itself around the globe and we'll all enjoy a prosperous and conflict-free future; the 'New World Order' which Bush and his ilk are pushing.

Now obviously this 'end of history' theory is total rubbish (not to say a little premature!), but it at least recognises that there's a common struggle running through history. Their mistake is to conflict between East and West as its final outcome, rather than just the latest episode in a much wider and older struggle by the great mass of humanity to lead a decent and dignified existence and not to be robbed, oppressed and murdered by whatever bunch of political gangsters happen to be around at any given time.

In Russia in 1917 that struggle reached a new high. People were sick of war, the ruling class and repression - so they rose up and dealt with them. Unfortunately they allowed Lenin and his cronies to



GORBY CLINGS ON

hijack their revolution - and the rest is all too well documented history; a new dictatorship arrived in place of the old. Capitalism took 70 years to regain access to this particular marketplace but we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that that was the final round in the class war, that the Bolsheviks were the best thing struggling people could come up with, and that now they've been exposed as being of no more use than the crooks they replaced that we may as well pack up and live unhappily ever after under capitalism - no way!

Marxists are relative newcomers to the fight against the boss, and although they had a good analysis of capitalism, they didn't have much idea of how and with what to replace it. They came up with 'the revolutionary party' - a vanguard of educated, professional types who were supposed to use our anger to take over the state and then bring about a free,

communist society for us. Nice idea - pity about the reality!

So what we've seen recently isn't the end of history but the final failure of an experiment to do away with capitalism. Marxism has been tried now, it didn't work and the class struggle goes on. It must go on, not because the working class is bloody-minded and confrontational but because while there is a system like capitalism, which is based on competition and under which the overwhelming majority of people lose (if you're lucky you'll just be poor, if you're unlucky you starve), then there is always going to be conflict between the rulers and the ruled - and this is the unbroken thread running through history.

TOWARDS A REAL REVOLUTION

As anarchists, we've got an unequalled opportunity in front of us - if we can grasp it. People all over the world are still going to engage in struggle and look for alternatives to capitalism, the collapse of the Soviet Union hasn't altered that, but it has broken the hold Marxism had over class struggle.

In 1917 everybody was mesmerised by the Russian Revolution and when Lenin and co. took it over people thought 'that must be the way to do it', so millions joined Communist Parties and stuck with them despite the sell-outs, the betrayed revolutions around the world and the increasing terror inside the Soviet Union. Now that Marxism and its bastard offsprings, Leninism, Trotskyism and Maoism are utterly discredited, it's up to anarchists to get their house in order, get into working anarchist organisations and get a viable manifesto sorted out so that we can build around the failure of the Left and people's need to fight.

Marxism could never provide us with the final victory in the class war because it didn't aim to get rid of the state - the centralised power structure capitalism needs to be able to operate. They took over the state, but its power took over them - and destroyed whatever plans they may have had to carry the revolution forward. After that, people no longer slaved for a boss - the fruits of their labour were enjoyed by a new ruling class - the Party.

Only anarchism takes this into account by seeking to destroy both capitalism and the state, and to disperse power to manageable workplace and community levels. This prevents the revolution being sold out by a new leadership and does away with the need for a professional 'revolutionary party', an elite armed with obscure theories - organisations such as these are totally alien to what's needed by people in struggle, let alone those who want a successful revolution.

Finally, the one thing we can be sure of, with the communists out of the way and right-wing violence on the increase across Europe, is that if we don't go for it, if we can't provide a lead to those who still want and need change, then the fascists will - and that's one 'new world order' that must never be allowed to happen.

SUPPORT THE POLL TAX PRISONERS

On Saturday, November 10th a successful gig was held at "The Flying Picket" in Liverpool with bands "Pyramid Dream", "Waitin for Deffo" and "The Street". The event was well attended and raised £145 which was sent to the TSDC in London. The TSDC still needs money desperately to defend all those arrested on March 31st and October 20th. Organise your benefit NOW! Thanks to all those that attended that night. Liverpool Bust Fund.

REVIEWS

ANARCHISM & ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM.

Rudolf Rocker
Freedom Press

£1.25

48 pages.

I'll be honest - this was the first book on anarchism that I'd read for ages, and I was pleasantly surprised at how good it was!

The book doesn't contain the dry theory that many of today's anarchists whinge about, but a clear and easy to read essay which reflects the lessons learned by Rudolf Rocker during his 60-plus years in the anarchist movement.

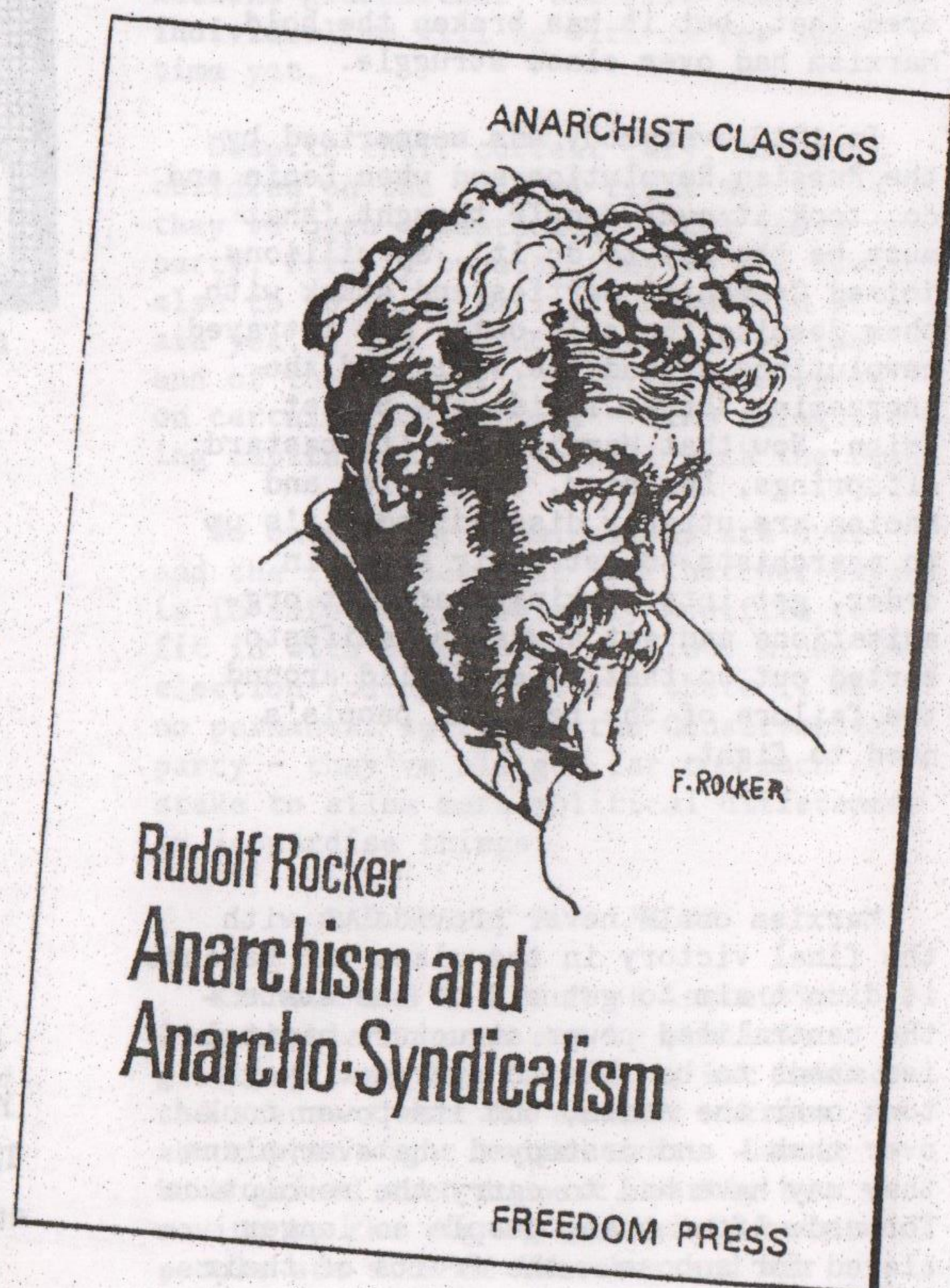
In this little book he not only describes anarchism in a nutshell and gives short biographies of its early exponents, but also outlines well the anarchist case against the state and the political parties who would run it 'on our behalf'.

For me the most important part of the book is Rocker's view of anarcho-syndicalism - the belief that anarchism will come about through the efforts of revolutionary trade unions and their community-based equivalents. When detailing the development of anarchist movements throughout the world he stresses the fact that they were all based around libertarian workers organisations, which evolved in opposition to the authoritarian Marxist view which saw unions as merely stepping stones on which to climb to power.

By harnessing the revolutionary potential of syndicalist unions, anarchists were able to give their struggles a political dimension beyond mere pay and conditions. At the same time, mass organised workers power was the means by which anarchism could make the leap from theory to reality. Unlike today's unions, who's highest aim is for a Labour government and a few more crumbs from the bosses table, anarcho-syndicalism offers the re-organisation of society in favour of the producers and consumers,

and an economy based on people's needs instead of on profit.

Reading this book confirmed things I'd been thinking for a long time - that any 'anarchism' which doesn't put forward definite ideas about workplace and community organisation is pie in the sky, that anarcho-syndicalism provides the answers to all those awkward questions about 'anarchist economics', and that since the term 'anarchism' was coined, almost its entire history has centered around anarcho-syndicalist organisations and ideas: In short, that anarchism means anarcho-syndicalism and that no-one has yet come up with any other viable suggestions for putting anarchism into practise. ●



CAGE ELEVEN
Gerry Adams
Brandon Press
£4.95
156 pages.

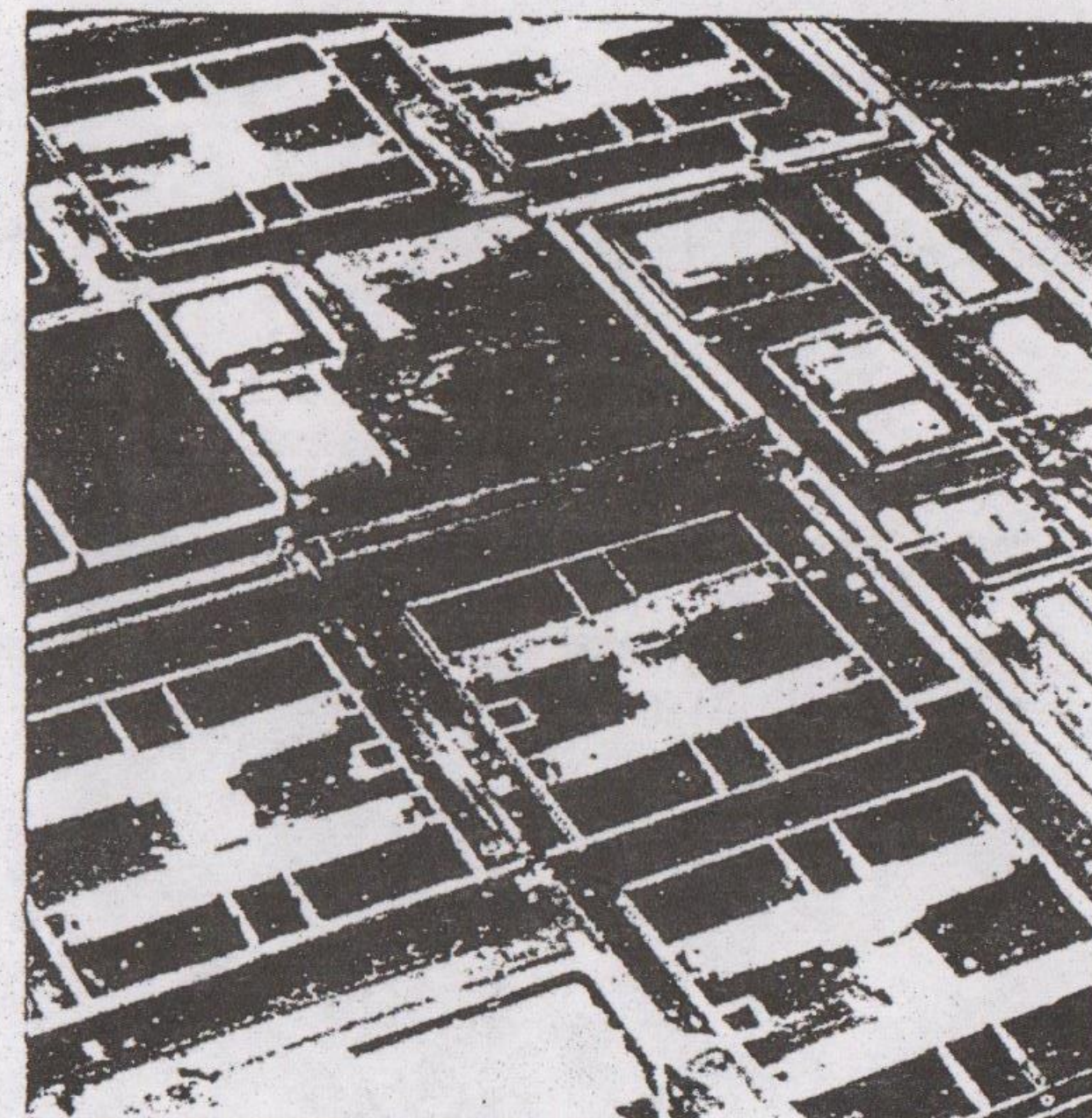
If nothing else, northern Ireland's 'troubles' have produced some great working class writers. Take Bobby Sands for example. In another time and place the man may well have passed unnoticed as just another ghetto philosopher and poet, but the realities of life in the Six Counties led him to take up arms against the state and, eventually, to death as a political prisoner. The upheavals he lived through and the tradition he came from gave meaning and a hard edge to his writings, which will always shine through in revolutionary literature.

Similarly you have Gerry Adams, one of the sharpest political thinkers to come out of the conflict. If you want to know about Republicanism and where it's going, you couldn't do better than to read his book 'The Politics of Irish Freedom'.

His latest work, 'Cage Eleven', is set in the early and mid-70's and sees Adams in a different incarnation; not then the President of Sinn Fein or M.P. for West Belfast, but an internee (and later a sentenced prisoner) in Long Kesh prison camp - the forerunner of the notorious H-blocks.

Whereas 'Irish Freedom' is a straight political statement, 'Cage Eleven' is a succession of short observations on all aspects of prison life, some solemn and sad, some hilarious. While some have only recently been set down, the rest appeared in a jail column for the then-fledgling paper 'Republican News', smuggled out of the prison by Adams and other inmates. Needless to say though, Cage Eleven is far more than just a jail journal - like life in the rest of the

Six Counties, politics is never far away and always intrudes into the narrative. Indeed, some of the book is a prisoner's-eye-view of the dramatic events going on outside. But, as is only fitting for an extraordinary jail, filled with extraordinary inmates, most of the tales relate to life behind the wire and are a tribute to the solidarity, resilience and organisation of the prisoners.



It's all here; the burning of the camp, the practical jokes (on 'the Brits' and each other!), the terrible food and the escape attempts - "I was only caught twice" says the author. But the more humorous moments are tempered by tragic tales; of Hugh Feeney, shot dead while trying to escape; of Frank Stagg, dying on hunger-strike in an English jail and of prisoners who'd already served several sentences and who would go on to serve more in years to come.

Adams observes that "I hope... that for most of my readers this book is the closest they ever get to finding out what a prison camp or any other jail is really like". But just in case it isn't, read 'Cage Eleven'!

