



ANARCHISM

—AS WE SEE IT....

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST
FEDERATION .

There are many misconceptions about what anarchism is. Most people would probably associate it with chaos and destruction. This pamphlet goes some way towards setting the record straight. It is not however, the last word on anarchism but it is a useful tool to further the cause of anarchism by spreading our ideas more widely.

THE WORLD AS WE SEE IT

The world is divided into social classes: the ruling class made up of owners and controllers of the world's wealth and resources, politicians, bureaucrats and state functionaries, high-ranking military, controllers of the media, police chiefs and others; and the subject class comprising the vast majority of the world's population - workers of the city, in the home and in the countryside, technicians, housewives, unemployed. On a simple level, there is a distinction between the "haves" and "have-nots", the rulers and the governed. The line blurs however: those belonging to the middle class, and some sections of the working class too, may align themselves with the ruling class, acting as a buttress of the established order, so some employed look down on the unemployed. The nature of society as we know it is one of conflict. The everyday struggle between the ruling class and the subject class is one of the dominant features of our lives under capitalism.



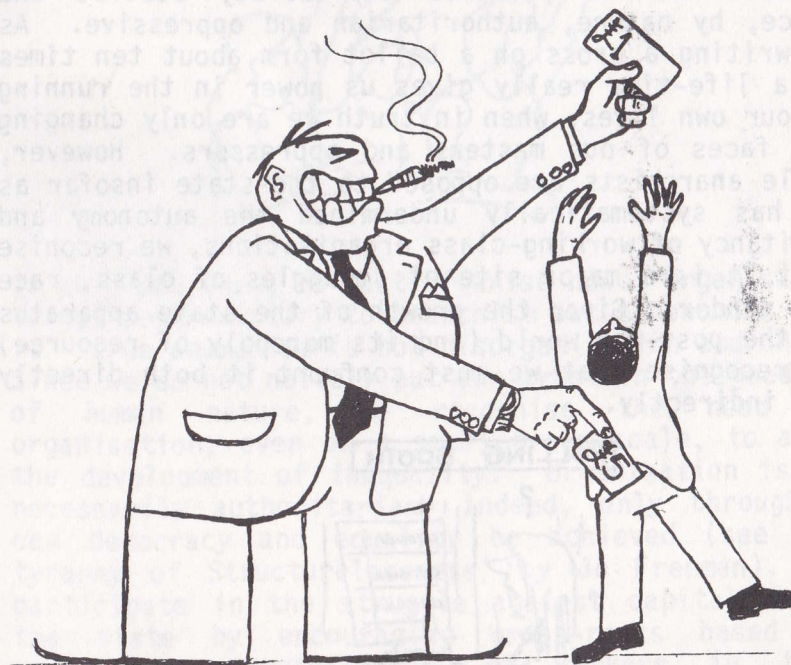
Equally important is the division between the sexes, which first appeared before history and was the blueprint for later forms of oppression, such as

class, race, age and disability. The ideology of hierarchy is practised in the home, the workplace, the school, indeed in all relationships, for example sexual harassment at work, male violence, women's unpaid domestic labour and exclusion from all major areas of decision-making. Many racial groups also experience intolerable discrimination as seen in apartheid, anti-semitism and everyday experiences of racial minorities in Britain.

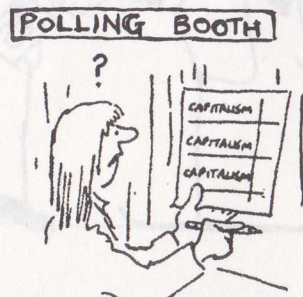


Capitalism is the global system of economic exploitation which enslaves its workers, creates poverty in the midst of wealth and disregards the needs of those who have least. In country after country, people are forced to work in order to obtain the necessities to sustain life. In exchange for this labour, we receive money with which to buy food, clothing and housing. This selling of our labour creates wealth for those for whom we work because the items we produce are sold for far more than the cost of their production. A product's value rises from its production to its eventual sale; its value increases when sold to a wholesaler, who in turn sells it at a profit to the retail shop on the high street. So each link in this chain of events creates profits for all bar the producer and the consumer. This profit-making is the motive force of capitalism. The creation of capital is the means by which companies grow and their owners and controllers become wealthier.

Capitalism produces things for profit rather than need, emphasised in the way many companies in this country and abroad sell similar products, with competition to outsell each other often being fierce. Supermarkets like Tesco, Sainsbury and Asda all sell more or less the same products and all have one motive: to get the consumer to buy their goods. Rather than being concerned about supplying the food necessary for our survival, they are merely interested in making profits. To be hungry is not enough, one has to have the money and the profit-makers would rather let food rot than feed it to the hungry and the poor. This becomes increasingly blatant when enormous beef, butter and grain mountains hoarded in the EEC countries exist alongside appalling famine in places like Sudan and Ethiopia. Of course the bureaucrats aren't interested in starving peoples; they would much rather dump food mountains in the sea, because **enforced** scarcity helps keep food prices up, capitalists' profits high.

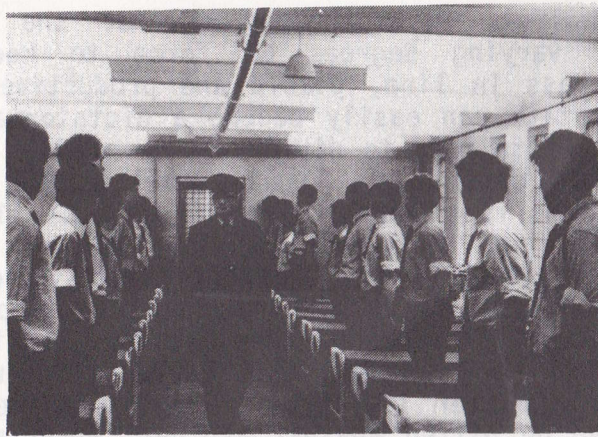


The capitalists' ready use of the "big stick" on the discontented in the poorer countries is in contrast with a mask bearing a benign smile for workers in the West. The Welfare State in Britain is a sleight of hand on behalf of the capitalists. The health service exists primarily to maintain a healthy workforce, not for the benefit of individuals. Likewise, the education system functions largely to provide a literate and numerate workforce, to obediently take their place in the hierarchy of order-givers and order-takers in society. The capitalists have succeeded, to a degree, in pulling off a con-trick through their control of the state, the mass media, schools and the sources of most of our everyday information. Unemployment benefits, pensions and health-care have to some extent been won by the working class through decades of struggle. Nevertheless they are all part of the front which tries to convince us, the working class, that capitalism acts in our interests. Perhaps the greatest illusion is that of "freedom" to vote in elections. Whether left or right, the parliamentary parties are in practice capitalist, statist and hence, by nature, authoritarian and oppressive. As if writing a cross on a ballot form about ten times in a life-time really gives us power in the running of our own lives, when in truth we are only changing the faces of our masters and oppressors. However, while anarchists are opposed to the state insofar as it has systematically undermined the autonomy and militancy of working-class organisations, we recognise that it is a major site of struggles of class, race and gender. Given the growth of the state apparatus in the post-war world (and its monopoly of resource) we recognise that we must confront it both directly and indirectly.



The capitalists rule through use of the state, employing varying degrees of force to keep the working class in line, placid and productive. The "benign" state can easily become a dictatorial one. The capitalists need to divide worker against worker in order to control us, knowing well that a united working class is a danger to their system. When the capitalists and their politicians disagree on who controls what property, land, which resources, trade-routes etc, they use nationalism to pit one worker against another, so they are made to fight to the death in the bosses' interests. When workers combine for better living standards etc, one trade will often be pitted against another, ensuring each worker's interests **appear** different. They use racism to divide black and white and they use sexism to divide women and men. For example, if the bosses lay off workers when demand is falling for their products, there are always politicians to blame high unemployment figures on immigrants from Asia (note, not from South Africa or Ireland) or on black and Asian people in general. There are many who accuse women of working for "pin money", taking jobs from men. Calling it "pin money" is a justification for keeping a women's wages low or a ready excuse for making her redundant. Capitalism benefits not only from women's poorly-paid labour in offices and factories but also from the vast source of unpaid, unseen work in the home, where children and men are taken care of for free. Most women act as a buffer for the capitalist system - they absorb the stresses capitalism wreaks on men, whether soothing tensions or receiving their partner's violence.

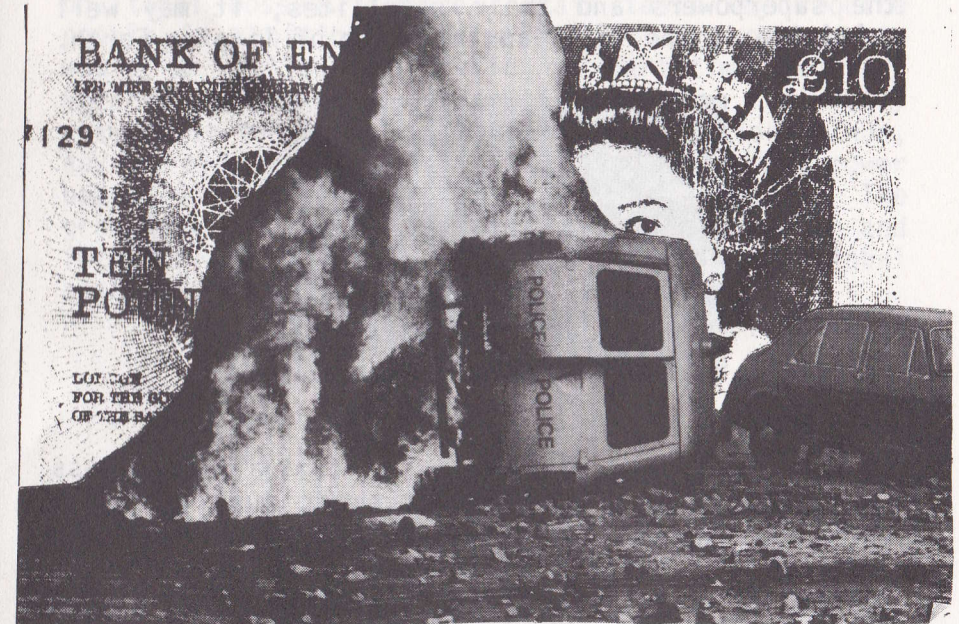
Beneath capitalism's apparently reasonable and logical facade lies a whole range of irrational petty hates and rivalries, making life intolerable or dangerous in many ways for ordinary people. The state uses this as an excuse for its "law and order" policy, providing ever more police to exert control and use violence on the working class. But it is the profit system which is the real source of this terror, a fact that is hushed up by the state's control over information and mass communication.



There have always been crises in the capitalist system due to overproduction, which have meant cycles of booms and slumps. Just as capitalism is international, so too are its crises. The current crisis effects us in the West in terms of the bosses' onslaught against the unions. The trade union bureaucracies, which function as mediators in the class struggle finding compromise between the workers and the bosses, have found that today this role isn't good enough for the capitalists and their governments. The ruling class seeks to eliminate the traditional union bosses in skilled craft and manufacturing industry and wishes to gear the economy towards "new technology" and the service sectors. After all, with "Third World" countries entering into manufacturing industry, why employ workers here when there is a cheap labour force, ripe for exploitation overseas? Hence we see the emergence of unions which are **totally** pro-company attempting to take the place of the established unions. The crisis also means increased unemployment in the West. With four million on the dole acting as an effective labour pool, workers are scared of losing their jobs and so industrial unrest is effectively quelled.

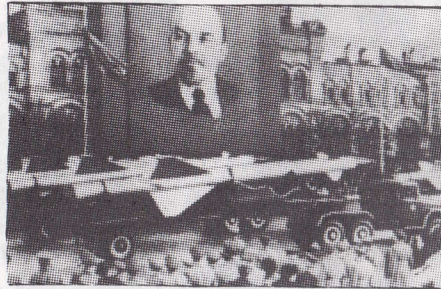
Nevertheless, there is resistance. In this country, the heroic efforts of the striking miners in 1984-5 showed the will to fight back. In the cities too, rioting youth showed (and continues to show) the

occupying police force that it is not wanted on the streets of Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side, Tottenham or St Pauls.



What are the alternatives to capitalism? The "state socialism" of the Eastern European countries is effectively **state capitalism** - it is no alternative. Rather than end capitalist exploitation, state socialism has strengthened it with the state becoming the ultimate boss and the Party the new ruling class. For the ordinary worker, conditions in general are worse than in the so-called "free" capitalist countries. The history of state socialism has been one of the most tyrannical forms of social organisation known in the 20th century. For those unfortunate enough to be living under it, at "best" it has meant the denial of any free expression, no right to strike etc, at worst it has shown extreme butchery on a par with Nazism. The Soviet Union has shown itself to be just as good an exploiter, just as good a capitalist and imperialist as its Western counterparts. The divide between the two "schools" of capitalism merely represents in practice a dispute

over methods of exploitation and repression and is concerned with control over sections of the globe - the USA and Soviet "spheres of influence". It is a dispute which has meant escalating militarisation of the superpowers and their satellites; it may well culminate in the total annihilation of life on Earth.



There is only one alternative to capitalism: a mass revolutionary working-class movement must be built which is capable of destroying capitalism in its entirety - that means smashing the state too. We are talking about the creation of a society that will not only be economically communist but politically stateless or anarchist.

ANARCHISM: WHERE IT COMES FROM

Anarchism is not the product of the minds of a few intellectuals divorced from the great mass of the people. It springs directly from the struggle of workers and the oppressed against capitalism, from their needs and necessities and all their unrealised desires for freedom, equality, happiness and self-fulfillment. Whenever revolutions challenged the old order, anarchist ideas and forms of organisation emerged, if only briefly, and often without calling themselves anarchist.

In the English Revolution, groups on the far left of Puritanism (the Levellers and Diggers) developed libertarian ideas and, during the French (bourgeois) Revolution, those workers and artisans who were developing their own class consciousness began to evolve anarchist ideas (the Enrages). It was in the

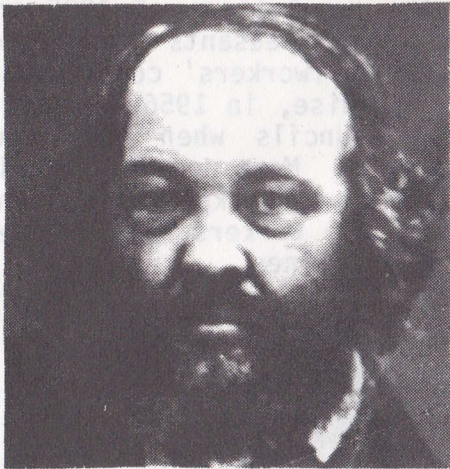
Paris Commune of 1871 that French workers actually created democratic structures which challenged the system for a brief space of time before being drowned in blood. In the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 in Russia, workers and peasants developed similar democratic structures (workers' councils and factory committees) and likewise, in 1956, Hungarian workers created workers' councils when they took on the Stalinist bureaucrats. More recently, during the May Days of 1968 in France, workplaces and universities were taken over by workers and students along anarchist, democratic lines.



Hungarian workers show their appreciation of Lenin

From these movements of the working people, anarchism developed as a coherent force among the most class-conscious workers, who were organised in the First International - an association of European workers. A distinct anarchist tendency influenced by

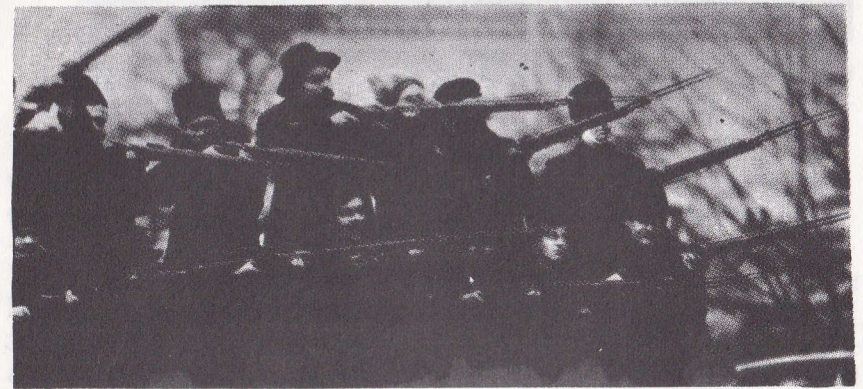
the Russian Revolutionary, Mikhail Bakunin, and his friends and comrades emerged.



Since then, anarchism has had an important influence on working-class movements throughout the world, from Latin America, to Germany and Sweden, to China. It became deeply rooted in class-struggle organisations of workers in Italy, Spain and Portugal. It played an important role in all major modern revolutions. Anarchists have consistently argued and fought for the need for working people to take over and run society, to take into their own hands the administration of society and of the means of production and have consistently warned against the possibility of any party or bureaucratic elite climbing to power on the backs of working people during a revolutionary period.

It was during the Russian Revolution of 1917 that anarchist warnings against a bureaucratic elite taking advantage of a genuine popular revolution came to be justified. Anarchist militants took an active and important part among the conscript soldiers, who refused to continue fighting the World War and participated in the unrest in the towns and countryside. They helped topple both the Tsarist regime and the bourgeois, liberal Kerensky regime that followed. The anarchist slogans of "The land to those who till it, the factories to those who work in

them" and "All power to the Soviets (Workers' councils)" were taken over by the Bolshevik Party, who took advantage of real libertarian sympathies among the people. As soon as the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Lenin, came to power, they began to persecute other revolutionaries. The anarchist movement was practically the first victim of the repression and many were shot, imprisoned or deported. The Bolsheviks feared the increasing influence of anarchists within the masses - it was anarchists who had been in the forefront of setting up factory committees to run the workplaces.



In the Ukraine, the Makhnovist movement, under the influence of the anarchist militant, Nestor Makhno, played a major part in defeating the White (Tsarist) armies, which were marching through on their way to smash the Bolshevik government at Petrograd. They literally saved the life of the Bolshevik regime. This did not spare them from the repression of Lenin and Trotsky and the Makhnovists were forced to fight on several fronts against both the Whites and the Reds. They fought courageously against overwhelming odds but were eventually defeated. Nevertheless, and under very difficult war conditions, they attempted collectivisation of the land in the area under their control.



Anarchist banner in the Ukraine.

Likewise, at the Kronstadt naval base, revolutionary sailors and workers, who had in 1917 been dubbed "The flower of the revolution" by the Bolshevik leadership, were by 1921 branded "counter-revolutionaries" and "white guards". Their crime? They questioned the increasing dominance of the Bolshevik government over the Soviets, which were by now mere appendages of the state rather than the basis of workers' power. The Kronstadt revolutionaries, by reacting to appalling hardships due to Bolshevik policies, were in fact taking up the anarchist case against the state. For their impertinence, they were massacred.



Red Army soldiers massacre the sailors and inhabitants of the Kronstadt garrison.

It was in Spain in 1936 that the anarchist movement had its finest hour. The mass anarchist union, the CNT, and the anarchist organisation, the FAI, were at the forefront of the fighting when Franco (backed by the military, the fascists, monarchists and the Catholic Church) attempted to overthrow the bourgeois



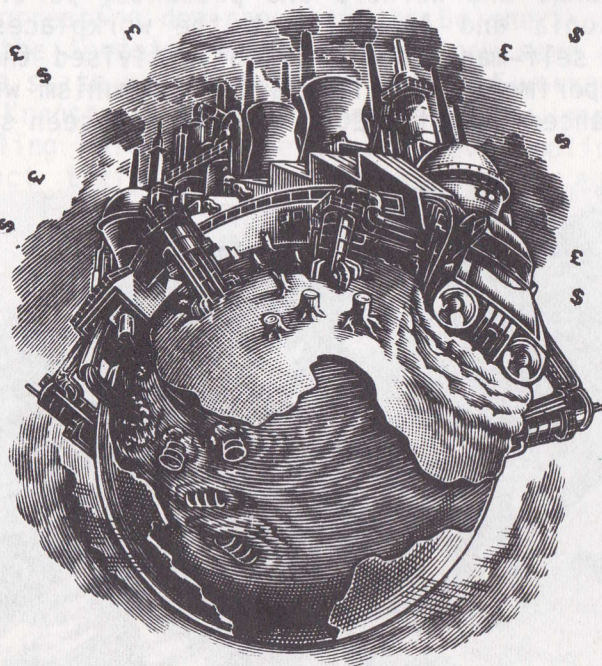
democratic republic. In many areas the Franco forces were smashed and workers and peasants, particularly in Catalonia and Aragon, put the workplaces under workers' self-management and collectivised the land. These experiments in libertarian communism were the most advanced that the 20th century has seen so far.



Yet, by the time of the collapse of Republican Spain and the subsequent fascist victory, aided by big business as well as the might of Hitler and Mussolini, these revolutionary achievements had virtually all been destroyed. The iron heel of state socialism had once again stamped out all committed revolutionaries and their achievements (not only anarchists but dissident marxists in the POUM organisation too).

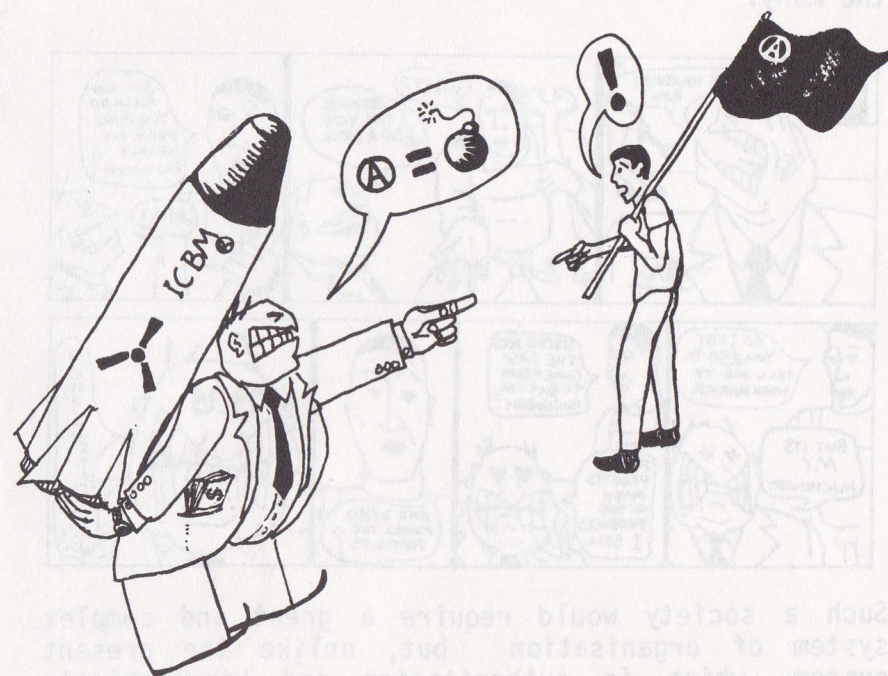
Nevertheless, these **real** changes brought about by workers inspired by the anarchist ideal shows that anarchism is not a utopian dream. As we have seen, it bases itself on the struggles of working people, on their revolutionary attempts to create a new and free society. In other words, anarchism is an ever-present undercurrent in working-class practice rather than an imported ideology.

Neither is anarchism chaos. The present capitalist system **is** chaos. An anarchist society would be infinitely more ordered and sane: Chernobyls and vast food mountains in Europe alongside starving millions in Ethiopia would not be allowed to exist.



It is worth pointing out too that anarchists are not advocating "nice" alternative lifestyles within capitalism. We know that things will only get better through mass, organised opposition to the capitalist system and not by, say, self-exile to some "right on" commune somewhere in the Outer Hebrides.

Neither are anarchists mad bombers, clad in long black cloaks, clutching smoking bombs. True, anarchists have carried out acts of resistance against capitalists and tyrannical governments but practically every political group whether democrat, nationalist or fascist has carried out acts of violence. Yet it is anarchists who are stereotyped as causing violence for the sake of it.



Neither do anarchists spend their time plotting in smoke-filled cellars and back rooms. Anarchism has always meant an active involvement in daily struggles in the workplace and community.

What we are talking about are not just beautiful ideas. History demonstrates that these ideas **can** work. The present desperate situation shows us that, even if there were no such historical examples, attempts must still be made to change society and stop the headlong rush to war, famine and barbarism.

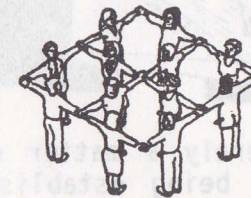
ANARCHISM: ITS GOAL

In the event of social revolution, the society anarchists would wish to see established would be one in which the state, capitalism, property and classes would not longer exist. Without these, all labour would be free, co-operative and socially useful. The sum of all labour would be shared equally thus benefitting every member of society, unlike the present system which benefits a few at the expense of the many.

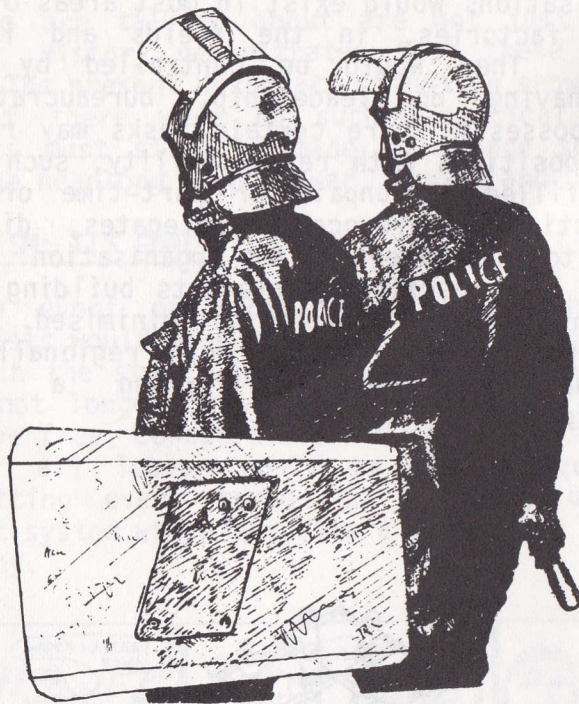


Such a society would require a great and complex system of organisation but, unlike the present system, which is authoritarian and hierarchical, anarchists envisage an essentially libertarian and non-hierarchically structured society. Such organisation would take the form of federated autonomous groupings, which might be workers', women's and community groups, factory committees and mass assemblies (depending on local and practical conditions).

Such organisations would exist in most areas of life - in the factories, in the fields and in the community. They would be controlled by their members, having no leadership, bureaucrats or political bosses. Where certain tasks may require people in positions with responsibility, such posts would be filled by unpaid or part-time ordinary workers acting as revocable delegates, directly answerable to the members of the organisation. Thus, any threat of reactionary elements building power bases within society would be minimised. The groupings would be federated both regionally and internationally, eventually forming a global anarchist-communist community.



Anarchism would also mean the end of "law and order" (which is largely for the protection of the boss class through violence and force, threat and intimidation). The prisons would be smashed, the police and army abolished and the judges would be redundant, thrown onto the scapheap of history! There may still exist "anti-social" behaviour but this would be dealt with on a human, community level, without resort to police. However, in an anarchist society, an organised community would be an armed community in order to combat potential imperialist manoeuvres from outside or even seriously anti-social behaviour which may arise within society (eg psychologically violent people, overt racists, sexists and supporters of a return to capitalism).



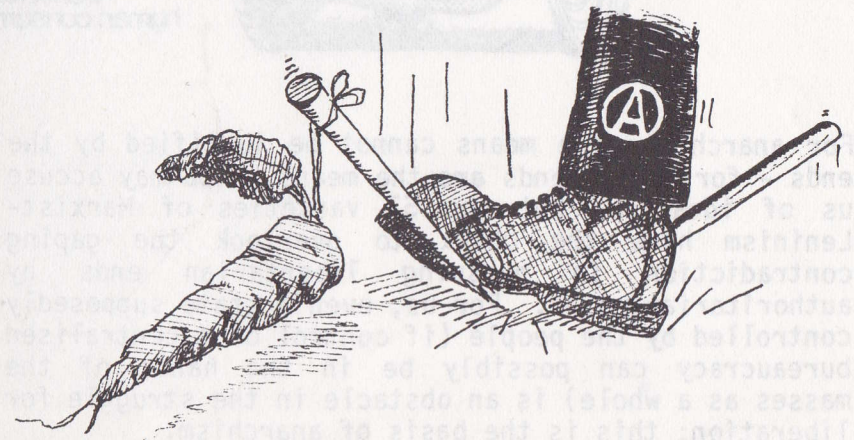
Anarchism is not merely a matter of a new mode of social organisation being established. As a continuous process it would entail an attack on all reactionary beliefs, attitudes, practices and institutions. Religion, sexism and patriarchy, racism and nationalism, as well as self-seeking and acquisitive attitudes run deep in the consciousness of many people today and it would be a serious mistake to believe that such things would be automatically eliminated with the downfall of the state and capitalism. Any anarchist society could only be established by a revolutionary, class-conscious and well-organised working class. Such class actions would destroy many reactionary beliefs but, nevertheless, deeply ingrained reactionary attitudes may still persist. Bearing this in mind, we would be either fools or utopians, if we believed that a future anarchist society would be entirely free from problems. Things may arise which are currently unforeseen and this is why our outline of the anarchist society is no "sacred" and unchangeable blueprint. This is not to say that we do not know

what we want, far from it, we know well what we want to see established for the future and we know how to get there but it is our organisation today which will be the key to the future.

HERE AND NOW: THE ANARCHIST-COMMUNIST FEDERATION

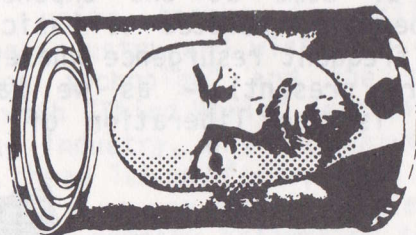
We cannot completely base our anarchism on what it was and what it will be: the essence of anarchism is here and now. Anarchism does not derive from the abstract reflections of an intellectual or a philosopher but from the struggles of the oppressed against capitalism and hierarchies - it is the result of our own actions. In this way it is important not to theorise about anarchism to the extent of pure abstraction from reality but it is still important to define what we mean by anarchism and to explain how our solution to the problems of class-ridden society in both East and West differs from that of the Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist left.

Anarchism is, first and foremost, based on the need for liberty. Not the classic liberal liberty concerned with "free speech" and "free" distribution (of pornography etc) in a "free" market: this liberty is the liberty of some at the expense of others. Anarchist liberation relates to basic needs (which explains its frequent resurgence whatever historical conditions are present) - as we have seen, its eventual end is the liberation of all oppressed groups.



Ah yes, you may say, but isn't that the same as Leninist socialism? It would be true to say that, to some extent, our ends are similar to those of the "Trots" but it is the way they intend to achieve these ends that we find so repugnant. Following religiously the endless volumes of the revolutionary theory of their gurus, they justify the means they use with the ends. For them, realism means basing the revolutionary struggle on economic conditions - only when these conditions are "right", they argue, can a socialist revolution take place. It's along the lines of this argument that they explain the necessity of their transitional phase of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Cutting down the Marxist rhetoric to a minimum, all that this boils down to is an insistence on their behalf that during the revolutionary transformation to a libertarian/egalitarian society, there is need to maintain the state apparatus (by placing it "in the hands of the proletariat") in order to control the revolution until the economic and political conditions are developed enough for the state to "wither away", as Engels puts it. This is what Marx saw as true materialism; revolution as a science!

57 varieties

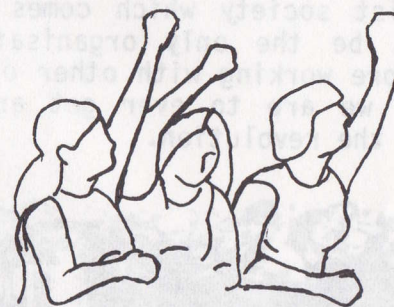


All unfit for
human consumption

For anarchists the means cannot be justified by the ends - for us the ends **are** the means. You may accuse us of idealism, but the 57 varieties of Marxist-Leninism have the cheek to overlook the gaping contradiction in pursuing libertarian ends by authoritarian means. For us, even a state supposedly controlled by the people (if control of a centralised bureaucracy can possibly be in the hands of the masses as a whole) is an obstacle in the struggle for liberation; this is the basis of anarchism.

The Anarchist-Communist Federation was set up with this in mind. The qualification "communist" is due, not to a lack of anarchist feeling but rather because the term anarchist has often been misused - "anarchist" can range from the hedonistic individualist to the naive pacifist. We felt the need to define ourselves in stricter terms: as anarchist-communists committed to the class struggle as the only means of combatting inequality of all kinds, not only those of class.

In this sense, we see our communism as the true communism, not resorting to the discredited ideas of revolution desired by the marxist groups, in sustaining the state as a "necessary" transitional phase and waiting for the "right" economic conditions for the revolution to come about. For us, the revolution is not just a future condition to be awaited, it is here and now and in our own hands.

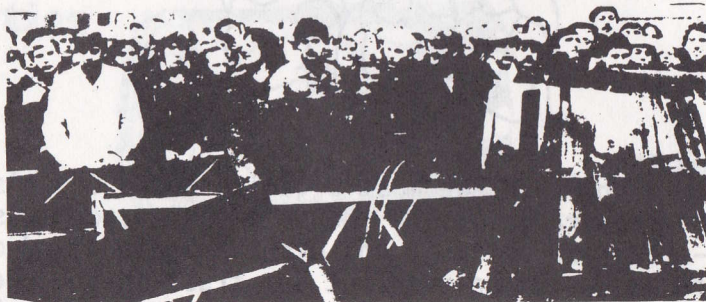


To this end then, we must organise now. Organisation is not contradictory to anarchism but synonymous with it - true anarchism is not disorganisation and chaos. Since we do not naively put our trust in the goodness of human nature, we recognise the need for organisation, even on a small group scale, to avoid the development of inequality. Organisation is not necessarily authoritarian; indeed, only through it can democracy and equality be achieved (see 'The tyranny of Structurelessness' by Jo Freeman). We participate in the struggle against capitalism and the state by encouraging grass-roots based and controlled organisation - of workers in their workplaces and of ordinary people in their

communities. Only **direct action** under control from below (rather than by experts, bureaucrats, exploiters or state functionaries) holds out the hope for revolutionary changes in society.



A basic principle which is considered an essential by the ACF is non-sectarianism. Though we have formed a specific organisation which we want to see grow and gain influence, it is the achievement of an anarchist-communist society which comes first. We don't expect to be the only organisation in the movement; therefore working with other organisations is important if we are to ever get anywhere both before and after the revolution.



The Anarchist-Communist Federation is an attempt to form a national and even international class-struggle anarchist network consisting of local groups organised in a federative way. Those committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the smashing of the state and who are tired of acting as isolated groups or individuals and are interested in affiliating, should contact the National Secretary, P O Box 125, COVENTRY CV3.



We believe that:

1. Capitalism and other social systems, in which wealth and power are the property of a ruling class/elite, must be destroyed.
2. Reformist and statist solutions will necessarily fail and therefore revolution is the only possible means of achieving anarchist-communism. How far such a revolution will be peaceful depends upon the degree to which the ruling class clings on to power through violence and state repression.
3. Genuine liberation can only come about through the self activity of the great mass of the population. We regard parliament, representative democracy and political vanguardism as being obstacles to a self-managed society. Institutions and organisations which attempt to mediate in the fight against domination cannot succeed. Trade unionism, as it is presently constituted, plays an important part in maintaining class exploitation, insofar as it regulates and justifies it through collective bargaining and bureaucratic structures. Nevertheless, it is important to work within the trade union movement, in order to build up a rank-and-file workers' movement which encourages workers' control of struggle and cuts across sectional boundaries.
4. Workers and other oppressed sections of society will, in times of revolutionary upheaval, create their own democ-

Where We Stand

atic institutions, whether they be based on the workplace or the community. To this end we encourage the creation of organs of struggle based on the rank and file, independent of political parties.

5. Pure spontaneity is unlikely to be sufficient to overthrow entrenched class domination. Anarchists must indicate the libertarian alternative to class societies, participate as anarchists in struggle and organise on a federative basis to assist in the revolutionary process.

6. Capitalism is international and needs to be fought internationally. We therefore try to maintain contact with as many anarchist-communists as possible in overseas countries as the preliminary stage to the creation of an anarchist international.

7. We do not simply seek the abolition of class differences, for inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, age, sexuality and gender. Personal relationships are now often based on domination and submission. We seek not only an economic revolution but a social and cultural revolution as well, involving a thorough-going change in attitudes and organisation of everyday lives to free us in our social and personal interactions.

8. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

"LIBERTY WITHOUT SOCIALISM IS
EXPLOITATION,
SOCIALISM WITHOUT LIBERTY IS TYRANNY."

LOCAL CONTACT:

