

SWAMP THING

National Bulletin of the Non-Leninist Revolutionary Milieu

Issue No.1

Summer 1994

Response to the *Aufheben* proposal for a national bulletin

We shall deal with proposal first as product and then as process.

Product:

A monthly news bulletin featuring accounts of struggles and mentioning proposals and future events would be useful. However this seems very like CI, only more frequent and more critical.

Presumably CI reports struggles uncritically for a reason, not because of slackness. So it would seem initially like a good idea to examine those reasons. Perhaps it is hard to develop a proper critique in such small space?

It would seem that it would be easier to develop a bulletin in tandem with CI, alternating issues, using same mail list etc. Or even setting up a second or more production bases so that CI comes out more often. Presumably there are no basic disagreements with CI, as they have been asked to respond to this proposal

It would be best for the bulletin to be produced by a group of 3-4 people with broader support from other groups and individuals, by way of finance and submitting material. It would seem pointless to rotate the work around pre-existing groups which already have commitments to their own projects. Whilst we should seek widespread input, the number of people involved should be kept to the *minimum* required for the practical work.

Having said this, what priority would we give such a project, and how would we express this. Frankly it would not be too high a priority, expressed by sending in the odd article, taking a few to distributor and contributing a fiver every now and again.

We are also aware that the production of a bulletin for the sake of it could have negative effects. It could be used to create the impression there is movement where there is none. Instead of the 16 frames per second of the cinema, we would have 26 frames a year, coupled with frantic activity as militants rush up and down the country.

These techniques are used by both political groups and wacky cults to keep their membership in condition of uncritical activism. Everything becomes rushed, ready for some immanent event. The cultist/activist never has the chance to sit back and reflect. Their social life is within the organisation.

This state of affairs is maintained by the leadership in order to keep the membership more pliant to their control. The ideology adopted is secondary and might just as well be the verities of ultra-leftism as the words of some long dead bozo who was hung from a tree. This proposal seems to be more orientated towards process than the need for such a product.

Process:

From reading the proposal it is clear that the object isn't simply to find away to produce such a bulletin. On the contrary, it is to provide "a minimum basis for more co-ordinated interventions in the class struggle." We agree with N's response on this (points 1-4), but the proposal "for a sort 'internal discussion bulletin'", is reminiscent of *Intercom* which existed in the '80s.

Despite the point made in 1.2, *Aufheben* are proposing to set up a new organisation, although presumably this point is meant to mean that they don't want to fetishise the organisation (i.e. make it a focal point of activity to be subjectively internalised as source of identity for the individual militants involved.)

They want a coherent bulletin without a homogeneity of ideas! They wish to create a forum for differences to be clearly articulated through discussing very short articles about particular struggles. In practice this means haggling over the inclusion of key (or pet) phrases and accusations of pedanticism.

The proposal for a bulletin does not offer a way to articulate these differences clearly. The following article is what we arrived at when we tried to seriously sort out our differences with *Aufheben*. The more we looked into their texts, as if they were for a publication we were involved in, the more critical we became. Despite certain superficial similarities to our own views it became apparent that there was a yawning chasm. This is not a matter of 'petty sectarian sniping' — our response comes not so much from ideological principles but bitter experience. A case of we wont be fooled again.

Why We Want to SMASH *Aufheben*

*"Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain.
I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant."*

The decision to attack a group like *Aufheben* is not made on a moral basis. There are plenty of groups (*Anarchist Communist Federation, Wildcat, Class War, International Communist Current*, etc.) which deserve to be smashed — some for being leftist, some for being boring (as a matter of policy), some for using the class struggle to work out their psychological problems. However our decision was made following the *Aufheben* proposal to set up a "national bulletin". The level of deceit and confusion propounded in this proposal give us the opportunity to put the boot in against an anti-proletarian tendency of which this is merely one tentacle. By attacking *Aufheben*, we attack much more.

The cause of our hostility is that we see *Aufheben* trying to liquidate the hard won clarity that has emerged during this century. We have been aware that such a development was likely for some while. The demise of the Soviet Union has meant that leftists have come to be more critical of Leninism — not because they suddenly saw Bolshevism as a counter-revolutionary weapon against the working class, but because the 'Soviet' Union failed to provide a 'material basis' for their arrogance and elitism.

These scum were drawn to socialism as they sought an ideology to consolidate their sense of moral superiority. Even though the basis of this is essentially religious, they wanted this expressed in a secular fashion, as they associated religion with the backwardness of the 'third world'. The function of the leftist

groups has been to preserve this sense of superiority against the working class. The militant fights the good fight under the tutelage of a rigorous hierarchy.

At first sight the individual sects may appear to be autonomous, and indeed they have been designed to appear so. However, while the party managers are paid by the organisation, those who concoct the ideological cocktail are invariably academics — paid functionaries of the universities. These establishments constitute some of the oldest power bases of the bourgeoisie. They are well versed in the suppression of working class self-activity, specialising in the colonisation of the theoretical development. Let us see this in action in the case of *Aufheben*.

*"Words and notes don't mean a thing,
Listen to the music, listen to us sing."*

In *Decadence, the Theory of decline or the Decline of Theory*, they are essentially recycling a discussion of free will and pre-determination in the terms of subjective and objective reality, in terms of an Autonomist vision of the class struggle imposing the collapse of capitalism, as opposed to the 'classical Marxist' view that the decadence of capitalism imposes the task of revolution upon the proletariat. *Aufheben* begin their article:

"We are subjects faced with the objective reality of capitalism. Capitalism appears as a world out of control — the denial of control over our own lives. But it is also a world in crisis. How do we relate to this crisis?"

The reader is invited to view themselves as an entity stripped of all qualities, a naked subjectivity. However, we do have an objective existence and it is this which makes us

It is self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists to imagine that by making war on *décadence* they therewith elude *décadence* themselves. This is beyond their powers: what they select as an expedient, as a deliverance, is itself only another expression of *décadence* — they *alter* its expression, they do not abolish the thing itself.

part of class society and the class struggle. As proletarians we have an objective interest in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. We have no interest in taking up this invitation to view ourselves as mere subjective vessels floating rudderlessly on the tempestuous waves of capital.

From this bad start things get worse. The history of theoretical development as a part of class struggle gets replaced with the ~~the~~ history of the concept — a bit like the Trotskyist notion of the battle of ideas. By using the categories of objectivist and orthodoxy, our political lessons are liquidated — Trotskyist Leninism is made the flipside of Left-Communism. This is obscene. Whatever criticisms we may make of Left-Communists, we know that they manifested the social struggle at a turbulent period. The trotskyists however are counter revolutionaries who directly collaborated in the Imperialist war effort during the second world war — smashing strikes and grassing up revolutionaries (for execution). Rivers of blood separate us from these parasites.

When *Aufheben* use decadence as an essentialist notion referring to a thing in itself, we see the dead hand of the academics lurking in background. There is a world of difference between the Trotskyist murderer who thinks that Nazi-"Soviet" invasion of Poland is progressive as it extends the power of the 'non-capitalist' "Soviet" Union, and the Left Communist who sees such barbarism as a symptom of the decadence of a world system — a fundamental difference, a class difference. Erase that difference, and all hope of autonomous revolutionary activity is erased.

The most tedious and mundane discussion of a workers circle is a thousand times more important than

the outpourings of the smartest college professor (not that we accept Luxemburg as a revolutionary — see *Aufheben* No.2 p31.) We may find Christopher Hill's book *A World Turned Upside Down* useful. But this does not stop us recognising that Hill, as Master of Balliol college Oxford, is a paid up member of the ruling class, and has written the book to serve the ends of that class. We are not arguing for an intellectual purism. On the contrary, proletarian theorising must supercede both academic intellectualism and the anti-intellectual pose of such groups as *Class War*. Neither are we objecting to being involved with people who have an academic position. What we object to is their refusal to see the qualitative difference between participating in proletarian debate and the tortuous world of academic discourse.

Aufheben's venture of a 'national' bulletin should be seen in the context of their close relationship with *Wildcat* and *Radical Chains*. (In fact 'Alan' of *Wildcat* writes for *Radical chains* under the name of George Gordon, the Protestant bigot of the eighteenth century.) *Radical Chains* in turn are linked to the arch-Trotskyist group *Critique*. At the recent *Critique* conference last January, *Radical Chains* did a lot of the donkey work. The caste of this Trotskyist circus consisted of clowns from all sorts Trotskyist outfits — Frank Furedi, the guru of the Revolutionary Communist Party, etc. etc.

We must be honest — it was only at this stage we cottoned on to what was going on — a major re-orientation of the extreme left. Alongside the various trotskyist and neo-trotskyist parties, groups like *Critique* function as a think-tank. The extreme left needs to develop common ground around which it can order its debates. With the demise of the 'Soviet' Union, defence of this obscenity can no longer be a rallying

cry. Unencumbered with a party faithful *Critique* has the flexibility catalyse the development of a new ideology by providing the social space where the party theoreticians can define the terms of discourse. Thus critique prepares the ground for a subsequent barter of political positions. However before this process gains momentum, these creeps need to find a fulcrum to launch themselves afresh. They clearly hope that by gaining a major influence in South Africa, they can catapult themselves out of obscurity.

What's this got to do with us, you may wonder. Who cares what a bunch of washed up old has-beens (and never-wases) get up to? Well, we realised sometime ago that these lumpen-intellectuals would drift our way — onto the terrain of proletarian autonomy. While these intellectual pigmies seem curiously stunted from a proletarian point of view, their links with the academic establishment gives them power out of proportion with the value of their vacuous ideas. The GLC promoted hand-picked middle-class feminists to drown the Women's Liberation Movement in a sea of vocally extreme but reactionary garbage. but this was simply extending a process which university Marxism perfected years ago. *Millions of pounds have been spent by the state across the world financing academic Marxism.*

Within this framework, *Radical Chains* has placed itself as spanning Trotskyism and Autonomism, as illustrated so effectively by their staging the Tiktin-Cleaver bout. While *Radical Chains* straddle the high ground, a different group has been needed to penetrate the proletarian milieu, which *Aufheben* call so dismissively "the proletarian swamp". For them, our intransigence in refusing to be 'regrouped' by middle class academics is a sign of swampiness.

However *Aufheben* make a proposal for a national bulletin about practical matters and then seek to exclude the AFC, even though they would collaborate on practical matters. *Aufheben* pretend they are not proposing a new organisation, and then describe a method by which delegates from different groups would regularly meet. The truth is that they *are* proposing to set up an organisation whose hidden ideological agenda would gradually emerge. Thus in the second mail-out we see *Radical Chains Discussion Group* included—hardly 'non-Leninist'. (This ironic considering that the ACF is non-Leninist but has been excluded because of being anarchist. Why not a 'Non-Anarchist Revolutionary Milieu'?)

In fact the whole idea of describing those who have seen through the Bolshevik counter-revolution as the "non-Leninist Revolutionary Milieu" is just another little trick. We are not non-Leninist or even anti-Leninist. We simply recognise Leninism as an anti-proletarian counter-revolutionary movement which has had its time. *Radical Chains* might think that we can come together with decomposing Leninists in order to 'share the insights of our respective traditions' — but what have we to learn from the Leninists? How to militarise labour? How to introduce one man management? How to lie and cheat and act in the most opportunist way? How to crush the working class?

What have they to learn from us? They want a way in to the class struggle. They want the proletarian milieu to act as their rank and file while they integrate us into a new extreme left nightmare world of lies and deceit. They want to liquidate our hard fought for insights, making us accept as an equal in discussion some Trotskyist counter-revolutionary.

NEVER is our reply.

THIS TEXT WAS PRODUCED BY TWO FORMER PARTICIPANTS IN RED MENACE. SINCE THE DEMISE OF RM, WE PRODUCED WORKERS SCUD, SUMMARISING SOME ASPECTS OF THE WAR IN THE GULF. AT THE TIME THAT THE AUFHEBEN PROPOSAL APPEARED WE HAD ALREADY BEEN DISCUSSING THE NEED FOR A FORUM OF DEBATE. HOWEVER WE CATEGORICALLY OPPOSE THE DIVISION INTO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY, WHICH ONLY SERVES TO BOLSTER AN IDENTIFICATION WITH A NATIONAL CULTURE. WE ASSERT THAT THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT WILL HAPPEN AT AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. WE CAN BE CONTACTED AT: BOX 15, 138 KINGSLAND HIGH STREET, LONDON E8 2NS