

CHINA: in whose hands?

THE BRUTALITY OF the Chinese State in crushing the student uprising earlier this summer shocked the world. The bravery of the resistance to such an autocratic regime was an inspiration to us all. But what must be understood is that the callousness shown by the Peking authorities was only its mask slipping, its hand being forced.

Any state must be prepared to use the ultimate threat of violence against its people to maintain power. China is no different, it is the state showing its true face.

Under obvious dictatorship this true nature of the state is easier to see. In the so-called 'democratic' West it is simply the case that it rarely plays its full hand.

After the destruction of the hard line Maoist leadership in China, the new regime tried a more pragmatic approach. A centrally planned economy operated during a period of complete restructuring. But once the structuring of industry and the establishing of roads, power networks, ports etc. had taken place, the economy moved onto another stage.

The 'Iron Rice Bowl', the policy of a job, food and shelter for life, was broken. The politicians needed a new direction for the economy.

The Deng Xiaoping leadership then tried to use the political and social methods of the centralised economy to create a mixed economy without social change in any real sense. He used the liberal wing of the leadership, Zhao Ziyang etc, for this, with the hope of democratic reforms. Li Peng and the 'loyal' army dashed

these hopes. The economic reforms were a failure, corruption widespread, and the scene set for the kind of unrest we saw in May/June.

The student movement began by establishing that it wanted reforms within the Chinese system, not to overthrow it. They appealed to Zhao Ziyang and other liberals within the Party for change, and appeared to simply favour a more open society and a freer economy (a kind of Glasnost and Perestroika).

Gorbachov's visit to Peking provided an ideal focus for action, and the hunger strike and occupation of Tianamen Square began as an attempt to embarrass the Government into giving way while the eyes of the world were on it.

Student leaders demanded to meet government officials, still believing that the will of the people could in itself force change. They were adamant about their non-violence, as a moral principle as well as a tactic, as though this would somehow shame the State into giving in.

Reports from those present in Tianamen Square on June 4th, as the tanks rolled over thousands of sleeping protesters, say the

dead were people who still believed that the approaching army would, at worst, move in to carry them out of the area and then withdraw.

As many students prepared themselves for a night of fighting, others went to sleep as normal to prepare for a moral victory the next day. We salute them for their bravery in taking on the State, but we must learn from their deaths never to underestimate the brutality of Government and the forces that serve it.

The student movement was by no means 'liberal' however. The adoption of the 'Goddess of Liberty' must not be seen as an embracing of an American ideal. The symbol is originally one of the French Revolution, and whilst some concentrate on the reforms the students wanted, the demand was essentially for a form of socialism rather than capitalism.

We can criticise them for being naive about the real nature of state socialism, but we can't accuse them of aspiring to bourgeois, western-style democracy.

For the students and workers to call themselves a 'Democracy Movement' must also be understood in context. There have been strong libertarian socialist movements in the area, but to call yourself a 'communist' in a state comm-

unist country is to appear to be pro-government. People emphasising ideas of freedom, equality and choice in such a climate could have much in common with anti-state communists such as ourselves.

After being forced underground, the student movement has learnt many lessons. Not least, they have seen that the armed forces, whether labelled the 'People's Army' or not, is on the side of the powerful, and, as an organisation, serves the State's interests.

Individual soldiers in a conscripted army can be won back to the class from which they came, as the people's movement discovered. This obviously increases the chances of success for an uprising. But the students underestimated the loyalty of many troops to the state, with which their selfish interests lay, and as such had no tactic for dealing with the attacks that followed.

Without indulging in moral outrage, we must pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those that fought and died in Tianamen Square. The movement must develop a clear analysis of what happened. Already students are saying that they should act as more of a part of a workers and peoples' movement as a whole.

The left is inconsistent in its response. The Stalinists must surely be shamefaced, and all Leninists know that to ensure the success of a state-communist "revolution", the authorities must be prepared to crush "counter-revolutionary" movements.

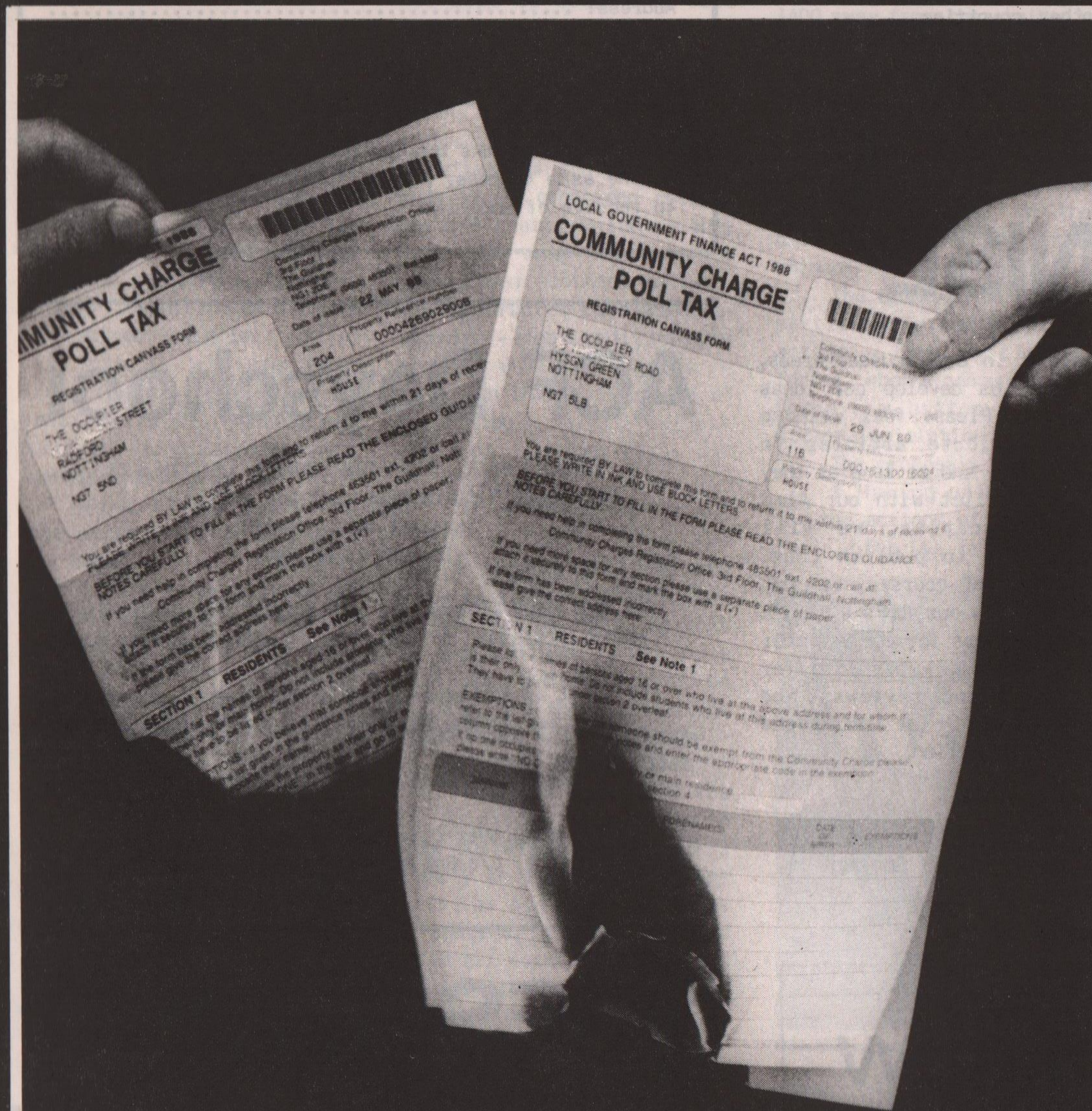
It happens that such movements are often of the same people who worked for revolution, and are now questioning the right of their government to exploit, lie and dictate to them.



833 AF/ACF

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism



POLL TAX

A BURNING ISSUE

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

30p

Aug-Oct

1989

Issue 16

WOMEN
HOME
WORKERS

POLAND:
SOLIDARITY
STITCH-UP

INDUSTRIAL
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FRIENDS
OF
DURRUTI

CHINA IN
CRISIS

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the following areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Bradford Chesterfield, Coventry, Co. Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Kent, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Wokingham and York.

We have internal groupings around the following industries and interests:

Health, Education, Unemployed, Postal, Students, Local Government, Community Youth Work and Women.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist communist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 125, Coventry, CV3 5QT.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate in depth debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and other open up

debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to **Organise!**, and as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles, we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the November issue are September 15th for features and reviews, and September 29th for letters and the news section.

All contributions to the next issue of **Organise!** should be sent to: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

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PRESS FUND

SADLY WE CAN'T report a repeat of our first successful Press Fund appeal.

That brought in an amazing response, easily taking us past our initial £250 target.

But this time, as our July 20th deadline past, we'd had in less than £100 - not even taking us half way there.

Our thanks go to all those readers, subscribers and supporters who did send in donations - the money will go straight towards meeting our production, printing and postage costs.

But this makes it all the more important that we reach the next £250 target with this

August-October issue. Especially because - as you can see - we've four extra pages in this issue, to allow space for all the features we wanted to include.

If you think **Organise!** - and other ACF publications - are worth supporting, please make a donation to our press appeal. We can't consider publishing a larger, or more frequent, **Organise!** without such extra financial support.

Please send all donations as soon as possible to: ACF Press Fund, Box-1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham NG1. We need to reach our target by October 20th. Let's go to it!

An upsurge of action

A WAVE OF industrial action has hit Britain with recent strikes by railway, underground, local council, BBC, dock and oil rig workers.

The strength and solidarity of much of the action has been impressive and inspiring.

But despite the upsurge in strike activity, there are few signs as yet of the isolated, sectional disputes being forged into a more generalised struggle.

This is all the more frustrating at present when practically all the disputes currently being waged are over identical issues:

- * pay offers below the rate of inflation - in effect pay cuts.

- * the breaking up of national agreements over bargaining and conditions - to divide and isolate workers in the same industries.

- * the introduction of flexible work patterns and the ending of traditional job demarcation lines.

But despite the lack of co-ordination and unity, there have been some very encouraging developments.

Unofficial action by tube and oil rig workers has clearly shown workers' ability to by-pass the union and really hit the employers.

Unofficial

Tube workers saw clearly that the best way to maximize the impact of their strike action against the 'Action Stations' plan, and link up with the struggles of train drivers, was to come out on the same day - paralysing London's transport network. London bus crews - involved in a 'separate dispute' - joined the action, until a quick settlement by their union put an end to such unity.

Despite their union's attempt to keep the two groups of workers isolated, an

unofficial strike committee was able to bring the tube network to a near total standstill time and again.

On the oil rigs in recent months there have been a whole series of strikes, occupations and sit-ins on the platforms - much of it organised outside the off-shore unions - who even now only represent a minority of platform workers. Sub-contracted construction workers - not traditionally seen as a militant group - have been in the forefront of the action.

Sparked

An unofficial Offshore Industries Liaison (OIL) committee, has co-ordinated most of the strikes, many have which have been sparked off on one rig, and spread - through radio calls for solidarity - to other rigs in the field.

The exact nature of the OIL committee is difficult to work out at this stage. It is clearly an attempt to go beyond the sectional divisions of specific trade unions, and unite all workers in the field around common demands for better safety, higher wages, etc.

But whether it sees itself as an action-based, open workers' organisation (instead of a union) or as a temporary stop-gap, treading water while "real" workers' organisations - ie trade unions - are built, isn't clear.

Oil workers who for years were ignored by the traditional trade unions, must push for the rank and file strike committees not to be submerged into union structures.

On the docks, attempts by the rank and file to get industrial action underway before the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme, were repeatedly sabotaged by Todd's officials

who ordered ports - particularly non-scheme ports - to keep working normally because the dispute was "nothing to do with them".

The endless delays over court action, and 'talks about talks' to negotiate a replacement scheme, allowed the employers time to launch a counter-offensive - including an 11th-hour offer of massive redundancy payments, that drew 1400 away from the strike, and deepened the demoralisation of the remaining dockers.

With the official strike now at last underway, there seem few signs as yet of dockers willing to ignore Todd's orders to 'stay put' at their ports and spread the action through flying pickets.

The upsurge in action - particularly the unofficial action - has rattled the Tories, who've announced plans for a new battery of anti-worker legislation.

The proposals include:
* Making unions liable for the actions of their members: official or unofficial

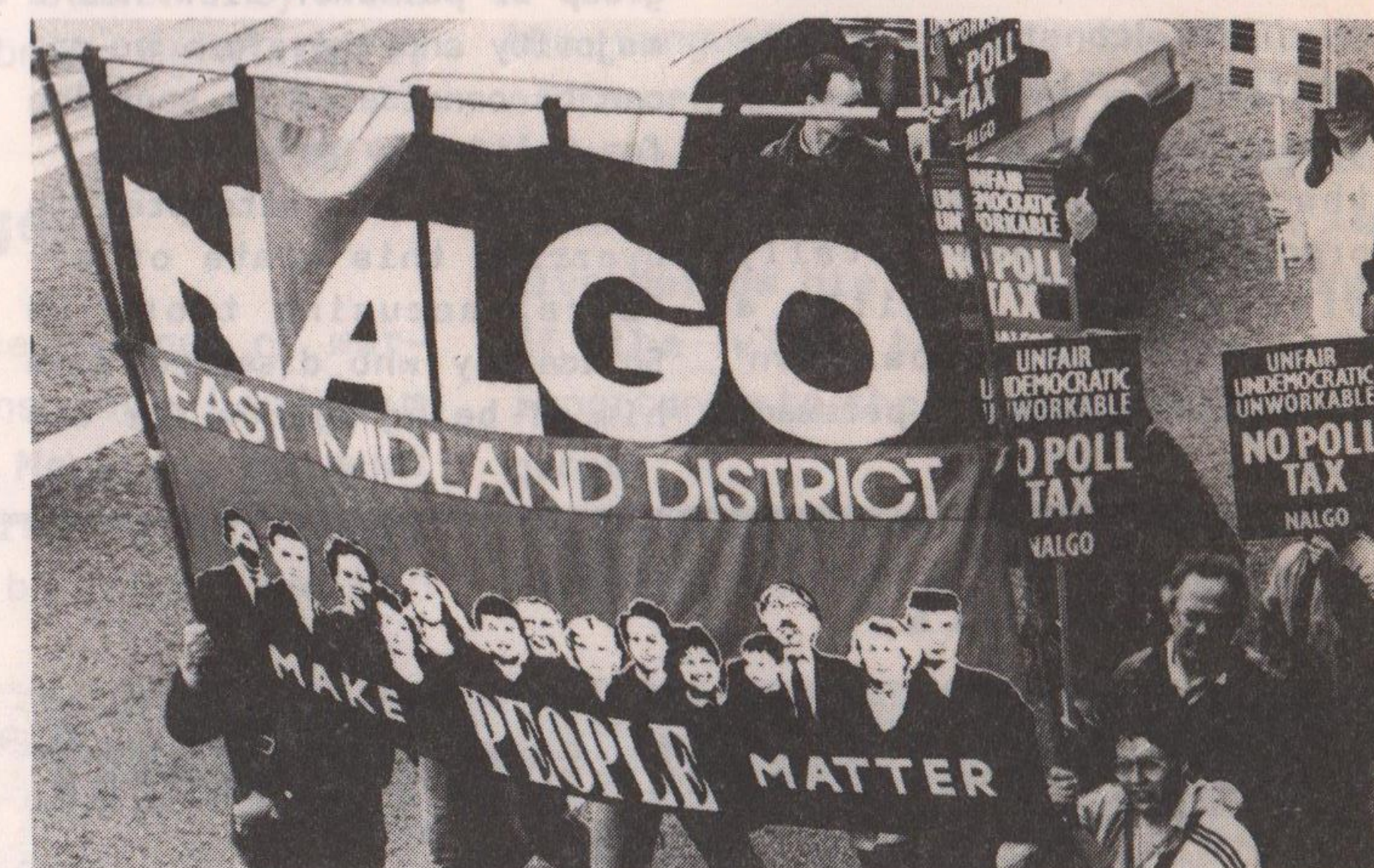
- to ensure that unions police wildcat action more effectively.

* Introducing a compulsory "cooling off" period after a successful strike ballot, before any action can be taken. (This is something the unions could easily support - allowing them more time for 'negotiation' before having to use the 'last resort' of industrial action).

* the outlawing of strikes in 'essential services'.

As the Tories intensify their attacks, our response must be to unify the struggles and fight on generalised class demands. We need to overcome the divisions of trade, union and workplace and forge solidarity between groups of workers.

In supporting those struggles we must continually highlight the divergence of interest between the union and the workers, and show that successful action is built despite, not because of, trade unionism.



Poles apart

WHILE THE CHINESE authorities have unleashed the military beast on students and workers, their Polish colleagues have resorted to a more subtle - and perhaps more effective - means of spiking the opposition.

Adam Michnik, editor of Solidarity's daily paper, is now calling for the opposition union to form the next government, in return for which it should support the Communist Party's candidate for President.

This is likely to be

General Kiszczak, Minister of the Interior and head of the secret police. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, the Papal hand-kisser, supports his candidacy too.

During the seven years since General Jaruzelski installed a state of emergency, a section of Solidarity has allied with the so-called 'reforming wing' of the Communist Party to form a 'centrist' group to push for co-government between the

(Continued over, page 4)

Poles apart

Continued from
page 3

Party and sections of Solidarity.

The 'Communists' have agreed to this not out of liberalism, but because they hope to gain from such concessions. The 'Communist' system (read state capitalist) not only in Poland, but throughout the Eastern Bloc is going through a deep economic and technological crisis. The 'Communist' leaderships have taken the decision to give the opposition some 'rights' in exchange for an acceptance of the regime and the guarantee that the opposition won't threaten economic interests.

This 'constructive' opposition in Solidarity will be given the task of replacing the present 'Communist' propaganda - now totally discredited - with a 'propaganda of opposition' which will attempt to persuade

the working class not to defend its own interests for the sake of the 'national good'.

During the seven years of Jaruzelski, the 'constructive' group proclaimed itself the leadership of Solidarity, whilst ignoring working class interests. As a result a group in opposition to Walesa and the 'constructives' emerged, known as the Group of Labour.

It is not a united group, and includes those who support Christian-Democrat (conservative) positions and those who could be described as trade unionists and syndicalists.

Typical

This is typical of Solidarity, which from the start saw itself as an organisation of multiple views. In meetings and assemblies - both at the factory level and in the national commission - wide differences of opinion were to be found, often bitter and sometimes violent. No one group or point of view has a majority and therefore no-one can be considered as speaking for Solidarity as a whole.

Walesa has attempted to override this state of affairs, accusing those in Solidarity who disagree with him of being agents for the

regime, of having no experience of struggle, or of fleeing abroad when the state of emergency was announced.

In autumn 1988, Walesa forbid any public announcements by the Group of Labour. In a televised debate with the leader of the official unions OPZZ he stated that Solidarity was ready to make sacrifices and to 'roll up its sleeves'.

In other words, he accepted work speed-ups and longer work-hours, a fall in the standard of living, and further price rises.

Since the state of emergency, all of the national bodies of Solidarity, the Provisional Council (TRS) and the executive national commission (KKW) which up to then were elected posts became nominated positions - contrary to Solidarity's statutes.

These moves by Walesa and his group were supported by the radio stations funded by the United States and their allies. Interviews given by the Group of Labour to US journalists were sent first to the KKW for approval, before they could be broadcast.

The 'constructive' group is now being seen more and more clearly by many Polish working people as a group that has betrayed the interests it set itself to defend. Walesa's

group will attempt to create unions no different from the official unions OPZZ. Many of those workers who ignored the OPZZ, are certain to give the new ones a wide berth. Walesa may succeed in creating these unions from above, but with few members.

Anarchism

However, it is not enough to defend the immediate day-to-day interests of the working class. The Group of Labour has no shared political outlook, and this highlights the deep crisis of ideas that now exists in Poland.

Ideas that challenge the whole foundation of the Polish system, which reject both market and state capitalism, have to be developed.

Already, the Polish anarchist movement, destroyed in the turmoil of the 30s and 40s has re-emerged, and is beginning to grow.

This is a good omen for the construction of a mass movement that will reject both the Walesa group and the 'Communist' government, and move towards the goal of a new society.

*NEXT ISSUE: We examine the emerging anarchist movements in Poland, Hungary and the USSR.

has conceded that until "the basic administration is in place, we can't even consider action against non-payers". Strathclyde region is "because of the problems that have bedevilled us - nowhere near being able to give figures for those who are refusing to pay".

A secret Lothian regional council memo shows the extent of concern in local authorities over the non-payment campaign. They fully expect to have to take 100,000 people (out of a total of 680,000) to court to try to enforce payment.

In the best organised areas, bailiffs are being sent away empty handed from the homes of working class families - by anti-poll tax 'reception committees' who physically prevent the seizure

is difficult to gauge at this stage - largely because in region after region the poll tax collection machinery is in chaos, with tens of thousands of 'payment books' yet to be posted, and people waiting over four months for the rebate applications to be processed. The struggle to frustrate registration has compounded the councils' problems - with many regions unable to claim that they have even a roughly accurate working list of those liable to pay. Stories abound of babies, children and the long deceased receiving demands for payment.

David Conley, Glasgow council's director of housing,

POLL TAX

Mass non-payment takes off

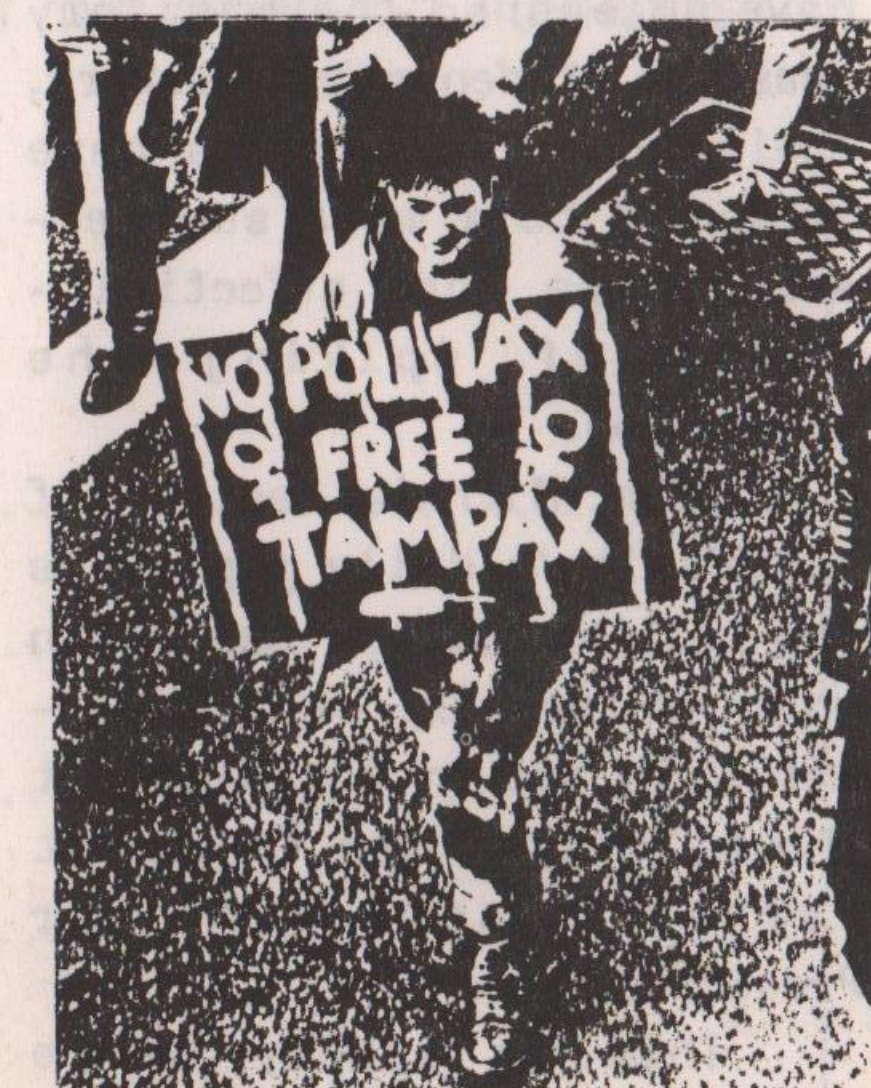
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of ordinary working class people are still flatly refusing to pay their first poll tax demands - over three months after the bills were sent out.

Though patchy and uneven, a mass country-wide campaign of non-payment has been built in Scotland, through the work of anti-poll tax unions. The months ahead now promise a fierce battle between an increasingly confident and independent working class campaign and the labour authorities who control nearly all Scotland's local councils.

The arrival or registration forms on doormats throughout England and Wales, has, in many areas, acted as a

catalyst to kick local campaigns into action - giving a sense of urgency and impetus to the struggle.

The exact strength of the Scottish non-payment campaign



'Don't abandon the streets!'

The Friends of Durruti, and the events of May 1937 in Barcelona

"Over the Telephone exchange the Anarchist Flag had been hauled down and only the Catalan flag was flying.

That meant that the workers were definitely beaten."

- George Orwell
Homage to Catalonia

THE EVENTS OF May 1937 in Barcelona, during the Spanish revolution, were sparked off by an attack on the central telephone exchange in the town, controlled by a joint committee of the CNT (the Anarcho-syndicalist union) and the UGT (the socialist union).

The attack was led by the Communist police commissioners at the head of Assault Guards. The reason given for the attack was that the CNT listened in on all conversations between the Catalan regional government, the Catalan Generalitat, and abroad.

In response, barricades went up, and rank and file members of the POUM (the anti-Stalinist communists who had split with Trotsky in 1934) fought alongside anarchist workers against the forces of the PSUC and the Generalitat. The CNT-FAI leadership, far from supporting resistance to what appeared to Catalan workers to be a provocation, called for a laying down of arms. The revolutionary Friends of Durruti group called for resistance to the Stalinist provocation, and the setting up of revolutionary councils. Five hundred dead and a thousand wounded resulted from the five days of fighting. It has been seen as the beginning of the end for the social revolution developing in Catalonia and Aragon.

In works detailing the events of May 1937 the Friends of Durruti appear again and again. Yet very

often little description of their numbers, influence or political platform is given.

For example, in Peirats' history of Spanish anarchism we read: "The relative unimportance of its members, POUM participation, and the marxist flavour of some of its communiques, all served to dilute the real influence of the 'Friends of Durruti'" (1). Thomas (2) (a right-wing bourgeois historian), in a footnote calls them: "bolshhevik-anarchists, in the sense that they wanted to capture power, not the dissolution of the state. They were Leninists without being Marxists, if that is possible."

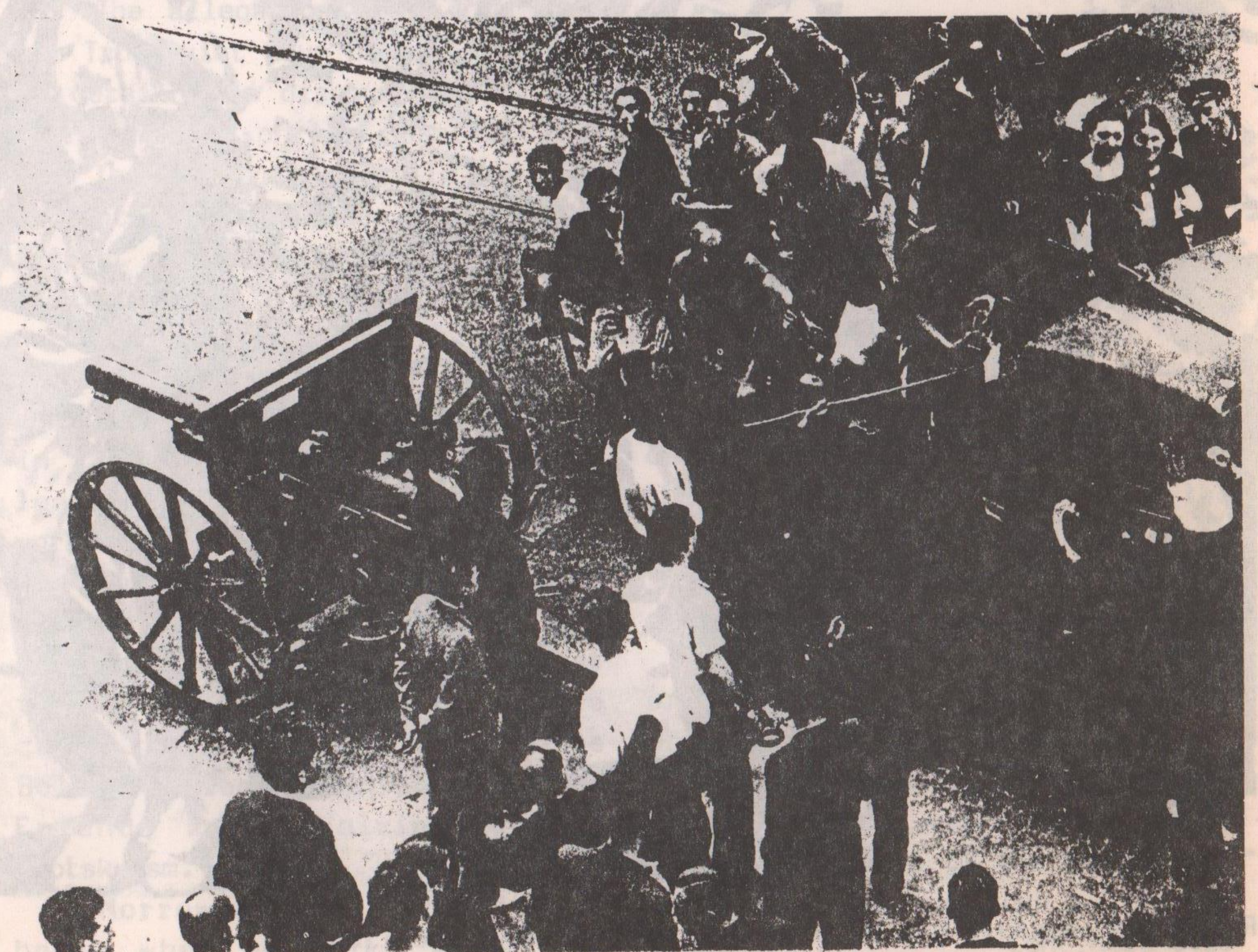
Charges

Apart from the charges of marginalisation, unconscious Leninism with a flavour of Marxism, we must consider other allegations - that they were led by the Italian

anarchist Berneri; that they were Stalinist agents (according to the CNT leadership); and that they were fascist agents (according to the communist parties). We must also examine the views of Morrow (a supporter of the Trotskyist Fourth International), who implies that there was a working relationship between the Friends of Durruti and the Bolshevik-Leninists, Spanish section of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

Sometimes there is the distinct impression in the pages of Morrow that the Bolshevik-Leninists were in the vanguard, dragging the Friends of Durruti behind them in the May actions (3). This view is echoed in other Trotskyist publications. To give Morrow his due, the book is one of the view that attaches any importance to the Friends of Durruti group.

Vernon Richards, an anarchist strongly critical of CNT partici-



pation in the Republican government was also to question the marginalisation of the Friends of Durruti. He cites Peirats himself contradicting the above-quoted passage in another work (4). Peirats here talks about "an important section of opinion" in opposition to the CNT leadership, at the head of whom were the 'Friends of Durruti'.

He describes this group as based on elements who were hostile to militarisation of the militias (where the revolutionary self-discipline and absence of hierarchy was being replaced by rigid officer/soldier ranks, and hierarchical discipline), many of whom left the units of the newly-formed Popular Army when then voluntary militias were dissolved.

Devotes

Richards notes that it is "especially regretted that to this 'important section of opinion' the historiographer of the CNT devotes but eighteen lines" (5).

It does seem surprising that very little has been written on the

Friends of Durruti if indeed they were at the head of an important section of opinion.

Recent publications have thrown some light on this shadowy group. A recent translation (6) of a Friends of Durruti manifesto reveals the aims of the group. This Manifesto was published clandestinely in mid-1938, a year after the May days.

It identifies itself as the authentic voice of the CNT rank and file and counters allegation of provocation:

"They labelled us agents provocateurs because we demanded that provocateurs be shot, that the armed forces be disbanded, that political parties who had armed the provocation be suppressed, and also that a revolutionary junta be established, to press on with the socialisation of the economy and to claim all economic power for the unions". (7)

It called for a further revolution that:

"Would bring urban and rural workers complete satisfaction."

It talks of the death of Nin - the POUM leader - believed murdered

by the communist secret police, at a time of general silence on the subject.

Apart from the Friends of Durruti Manifesto, translations of important extracts from their paper El Amigo del Pueblo ("The Friend of the People") have appeared in French. And, surprisingly, some correspondence with a Scottish revolutionary group during 1937-38 has again seen the light of day.

Militant

The Friends of Durruti seem to have been made up of predominantly younger members of the CNT and FAI (the Iberian Anarchist Federation, formed to defend anarchism within the CNT and numbering 30,000 members in 1936). One leading light was an editor of El Amigo del Pueblo, Jaime Balias, who had come into the libertarian movement during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Others were: the libertarian youth militant Santano Calero; Carreno and Ruiz - close collaborators of the dead anarchist militant Durruti; and Ponciano Alonso - a writer of the

"novels of the idea" popular in CNT-FAI circles before 1936.

Peirats' admission that many of the Friends were militants from the Durruti Column is backed up by a statement by Balias to Fraser (8) (a British communist historian) in 1976, where he says that the group was formed of members of the Durruti Column who had returned to Barcelona - with their arms - to protest against the militarisation decrees.

It seems unlikely with these pedigrees that the Friends of Durruti were either fascists or stalinist provocateurs.

One other major allegation - that the group was small and had little effect - has been examined. Balias himself claimed that the group has the support of the CNT-FAI grassroots, and of many of the anarchist militia on the Aragon front (9).

Chueca, prominent in the Council of Aragon, and Jover, one of the militia column leaders, are recorded as having made donations to El Amigo del Pueblo, as did groups like the "X Group" on the Aragon front (10). Peirats himself - perhaps a little reluctantly - seems to admit a certain amount of support.

Another allegation makes out the Friends of Durruti to be a small group. Balias estimates membership at between 4,000 - 5,000 (11). This is the only solid figure that we have. Definitions of 'small' may vary, but if the figure is to be believed, such a number of militants concentrated mainly in Barcelona could have a decisive effect on events.

Attacked

The POUM member Wilebaldo Solano (12) admits that it was the Friends of Durruti who had "mobilised the people when the Telefonica was attacked, it was they who had the arms and were first to man the barricades."

In the course of the May Days they published a leaflet and a manifesto that appears to have been warmly welcomed by the workers (13). The text of the leaflet is terse - dictated by the critical situation:

"CNT-FAI. Friends of Durruti Group. Workers. Don't abandon the

street. Revolutionary Junta. Execution of those responsible. Disarming of the armed forces. Socialisation of the economy. Dissolving of the political parties who have attacked the working class. We salute the POUM comrades who have fraternised with us in the street. Long live the Social Revolution."

It can be seen from the above, and by many statements in their leaflets and paper, that the Friends saw themselves as an oppositional current within the CNT-FAI, loyal to the organisations, but hostile to the vacillations and compromises of leading members. For example in Number 3 of the paper, in bold letters:

"The Friends of Durruti association is made up of militants of the CNT and FAI. Only the union assemblies can expel us from the Confederal organisation. The meetings of delegates of local and cantonal organisation do not have the power to exclude a comrade. We demand that the committees pose the question of the 'Friends of Durruti' in the assemblies, there, where lies the sovereignty of the organisation." (14)

What should be made of the allegation that 'POUM participation' neutralised the position of the Friends, and in the process assimilated them to 'Trotskyism' in the eyes of the CNT 'leadership'?

The allegations that the POUM was Trotskyist have been dealt with in detail (and discounted) in most current works on the Spanish Civil War. The POUM rank and file had come out onto the barricades, and won the respect of the Friends. Up till then "relations with the POUM had been notably cool". (15)

The POUM leadership had no confidence in the Friends and acted in the same way as the CNT-FAI leadership in demobilising the workers.

Some Trotskyists have attempted to use the allegation that the Friends of Durruti were Trotskyist to maintain that indeed there were close links between them and the Bolshevik-Leninists, and that the Friends were evolving towards Trotskyism.

Morrow attempts this in his book, when he talks about the

relations of the Trotskyist militants Moulin and Franz Heller with the Friends. (16)

In Number 10 of Cahiers Leon Trotsky (published by the French Institut du Leon Trotsky) a study by F. M. Arando has appeared on the Friends of Durruti, attempting to show close collaboration. The sole tangible evidence, however, is that several 'Friends of Durruti' (unnamed) met with one Trotskyist, the German Hans Davis Freund, known under the pseudonym of Moulin. Nothing is said about this meeting. In the same edition (p82) Pierre Broue (author with Temime of a major work on the Civil War and Revolution) admits that the Friends turned down a meeting to discuss common action. Morrow seems to exaggerate the importance of the Bolshevik-Leninists, when estimates of their numbers range from as few as six, to as many as twenty.

Having established that there were few real contacts between the Trotskyists and the Friends, we have to deal with 'the Marxist flavour' of Peirats, and the 'unconscious Leninism' of Thomas. These statements seem to be based on the advancement of the concept of the 'Revolutionary Junta'.

Masses

Junta - a word of Spanish origin - has connotations of military dictatorship in English. In Spanish, there are other meanings. 'Junta' is used by libertarians to imply a revolutionary committee under the control of the masses.

What the Friends are saying, in fact, is that bourgeois power must be smashed. They talk of the "crushing" of "social-democratic centralism" (17) in Number 5 of their paper, and in Number 4 of the abolition of hierarchies, and finally, in Number 7 we can find the statement that:

"The state machine suffocates and ends up by creating new promotions of the privileged..."

Hardly a Leninist viewpoint, and Marxists, with their 'blind spot' on the role of the State, are rarely seen to take such a critical view.

Continued over



Republican assault guards sent to crush the May rebellion.

Balius (18) clarifies that position of the Friends:

"We did not support the formation of the Soviets: there were no grounds in Spain for calling for such. We stood for 'all power to the trade unions'. In no way were we politically oriented. The junta was simply a way out, a revolutionary formula to save the revolutionary conquests of July 1936. We were unable to exercise great influence because the Stalinists, helped by the CNT and FAI reformists, undertook their counter-revolutionary aggression so rapidly. Ours was solely an attempt to save the revolution; at an historical level it can be compared to Kronstadt because if there the sailors called for 'all power to the Soviets', we were calling for 'all power to the unions'."

Statist

Balius uses 'political' to mean parliamentary, and statist - a common anarchist understanding of the word.

One final allegation was that the Friends were led by Camillo Berneri, a gifted Italian anarchist in exile. This was alleged by the Communists (as, for example, in Grido del Popolo, the Italian Communist paper). Berneri by his own admission adopted a 'centrist' position between the Friends and the CNT leadership, and was never a member of the Friends - though the latter did publish his thesis against militarisation.

The Friends of Durruti, it would appear, were authentic rank and file militants of the CNT-FAI seeking a way out of the dilemmas posed by militarisation and the attacks of the Communists and the bourgeois Republicans. They appear to have had a significant role in mobilising workers during the May Days, though their influence was far from strong enough to counter that of the CNT-FAI leadership.

They were willing to accept the POUM rank and file as allies, as the result of practical solidarity on the barricades.

The charges that they were marginal, too closely tied to the POUM, were Stalinist or Fascist

provocateurs, were Leninists or Marxist, are either the result of lack of information, or a wilful misinterpretation by Trotskyists or Stalinists, or those who seek to defend the reformist CNT leadership.

The Friends of Durruti were a brave attempt to reassert and defend the gains made by the Spanish revolution, and represent an important episode in the history of revolutionary anarchism.

The Spanish libertarian movement, faithful to certain aspects of Bakuninism, but infiltrated by moral and cultural notions closer to liberal humanism than revolutionary analysis, had not totally ignored anarchism outside Spain. But fixed on its traditional anarchist credo, it hardly took account of ideas developing in the international movement.

In this context, the Friends of Durruti, from the first day caught up in the revolutionary struggle, made a bold attempt to break with the dead weight of the past.

But it was too late, and the development of their ideas was to end with the crushing of the Spanish revolution. They had not broken with the revolutionary romanticism that gripped the Spanish movement, nor with a hero-cult towards Durruti.

They had a pronounced taste for simplification common in the Spanish

movement. Also, we would now criticise them for attempting to base libertarian communism upon a syndicalist form.

Though they talked about the setting up of revolutionary councils this was too often confused with the anarcho-syndicalist unions, and they were unable to go beyond the extreme-left of anarcho-syndicalism.

Even as regards the construction of a specific anarchist organisation they stuck to the old conspiratorial and romantic ideas of the FAI of 1927, and though they rejected the new FAI structures of 1937 - which led to the dilution of the anarchist organisation - they were only able to offer the small 'affinity group' as an alternative.

On the other hand, they saw that the War could not be won without the strengthening of the revolution, unlike the CNT-FAI leadership who put the War before the revolution.

They saw the immediate need to destroy the state apparatus and replace it with working class organisation. They defended the importance of class analysis, and denounced the theoretical confusion and improvisation that was also common in the Spanish movement.

NOTES:

- (1) Peirats, p215
- (2) Thomas, p656
- (3) Morrow, p191, "Only the small forces of the Bolshevik-Leninists, who had been expelled as 'Trotskyists' from the POUM, and had formed their organisation in the Spring of 1937 - only this small band, working under the three-fold illegality of the state, the Stalinist and the CNT-POUM leadership, clearly pointed the road for the workers. Not only for the ultimate road of the worker's state, but the immediate task of defending the democratic rights of the workers."
- (4) La CNT en la Revolucion Espanola. 3 vols (Toulouse 1951, 1952, 1953).
- (5) Richards, p131
- (6) Towards a Fresh Revolution (Cienfuegos Press).
- (7) *ibid*, p28
- (8) Fontenis (see bibliography).
- (9) Class War on the Homefront (see bibliography).
- (10) *ibid*, p39
- (11) The Spanish Revolution, Bolleton.
- (12) Fraser, p381
- (13) see Morrow, Fontenis
- (14) Fontenis, p26
- (15) Fraser, p381
- (16) Morrow, p292
- (17) Fontenis, p40
- (18) Fraser, p381

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- Peirats, J. Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution (Solidarity, Toronto) 1977.
- Fontenis, G. Le Message Revolutionnaire des "Amis de Durruti" (France) 1938.
- Towards a Fresh Revolution (Cienfuegos Press, Orkney) 1978.
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- Class War on the Home Front (Brief History of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation) (Wildcat, UK) See Pages 30-34 on relations with the Friends of Durruti.



HOMEWORKERS: An invisible workforce

"DUST, DUST AND more dust. That was the story of my life working as an overlocker. All over the walls and floors, and in the cupboards. It's amazing where it used to get to."

I remember well how my lungs used to ache. I never knew if it was all the dust I was inhaling, or the stooped position I sat in for hours on end. The pay was appalling too! The whole thing was hellish."

This Leicestershire hosiery worker isn't describing the nightmarish conditions she endured slaving in some dingy, back-street sweat shop. She's talking about conditions she was forced to put up with working in her own front room - as one of the growing army of homeworkers: an invisible workforce whose numbers have swelled to over a million in the last decade in the UK.

Her story of low-pay and ill-health is typical of the experiences of tens of thousands of working class women all over the country who are now working from home.

Increase

Their numbers are set to increase still further, as more and more firms look to 'homeworking' (or 'outworking' as it is also referred to) as an alternative to traditional factory-based production.

Many kinds of simple manufacturing, assembly and packing work can easily be farmed out to homeworkers - particularly 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled' work, that doesn't require complex machinery.

Homeworkers produce clothing, toys, household furnishings, cleaning materials, fireworks, shoes. They stuff and address envelopes, pack catalogues, peel and prepare vegetables. Without exception, homeworkers work on 'piece rates' - only being paid for what

they produce, and the rates, of course, are appalling.

The Hussain family from Yorkshire were paid between £3 and £5 for packing 1000 greetings cards. It took the family of four more than an hour to pack the first 1000. "We did about four days work, spending every evening on the packing. We earned about £29 in all - for the four of us".

Such stories are typical: Saroj from Birmingham sews pockets on trousers for 90p a pair - she works 56 hours per week for around £20-25. Fatima, from the East End of London, was paid 45p for sewing a skirt, that later sold in Top Shop for £10. Another worker earned £8.50 for 35 hours work knitting a jumper that was to retail at £80.

It's not hard to see the advantages homeworking offers the bosses.

First, there are the obvious savings on factory costs - from rent

and heat, to providing a canteen, to meeting health and safety requirements.

Secondly, and more importantly, homeworking breaks up what would otherwise be a mass workforce, centralised in a few factories, into hundreds of separate, isolated, individual workers.

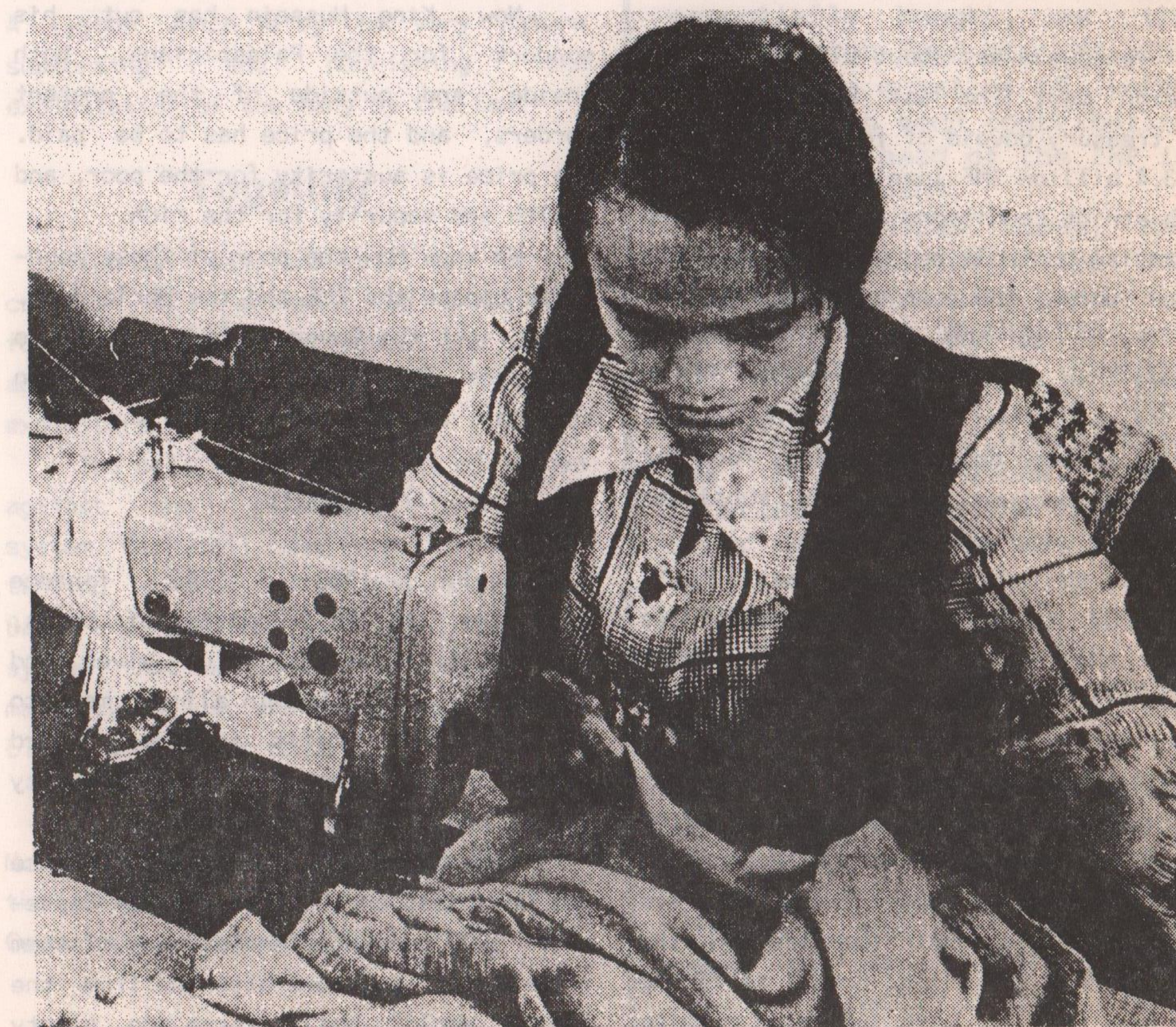
Through atomizing the workforce in this way, homeworking hampers the ability of workers to join forces to fight for common interests.

When workers are gathered together under the same factory roof, they have the ability to take direct collective action at the point of production. Homeworkers - scattered and invisible even to each other - do not.

Co-workers

Hundreds of homeworkers living in the same town, will, initially, be unaware even of how many other workers are employed by the same company locally, doing identical work. They will have no idea if the terms and conditions they work under are the same as co-workers in neighbouring streets. And they won't know whether attacks on those working conditions are general to the

Continued on page 12



IMF: Imperialist Masters of Finance

EARLIER THIS YEAR Venezuela erupted. People took to the streets, armed and unarmed, to engage in "IMF" riots. This is not a new form of activity, but one practised almost everywhere the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has used its knife. 300 were killed, and 2000 injured when the poor engaged, effectively, in civil war against uncivil price rises. Increases of 90% on petrol, and 30% on bus fares rightly angered people where, even after wage rises forced by the riots, the minimum wage is £60 a month.

As always, it is the workers who are being forced to pay. As one angry student asked of the loans being negotiated by the government: why should we pay for things we never saw or enjoyed? As supermarkets were being stripped by mothers, they stated a simple fact: our children have to eat.

Debt

Venezuela has about £19 billion in foreign debt. The last President left the treasury devoid of foreign currency. A \$3.4 billion IMF loan has been agreed with strict conditions - price rises and financial controls being among them. In other words, the poor will get poorer.

Prior to the price rises their income had already lost around a fifth of its value over the preceding decade. Paying foreign debts means less food for the poor because government subsidies disappear under the IMF knife.

The whole of Latin America is teetering on the edge. \$30 billion flows from the region to the "advanced capitalist" countries each year. In other words, the poor are paying for the privilege of that poverty.

We have seen the spectacle of food riots in Argentina - the poor are going hungry, raiding supermarkets to feed themselves and their families in the face of huge inflation. Brazil is facing the same problem, with inflation running

at 100%, and those at the bottom left to live as best they can scavenging or starving in the shanty towns.

Inflation is truly a disease - a disease of capital - the victims being the poor, those who receive the IMF "cure" for the well-being of the "needy" boss and middle classes.

Late in April, Jordan also saw the outbreak of IMF riots. Unusually, the rioters were not from the 65% Palestinian population. Price rises of 15-50% demanded by the IMF were the cause. The result was simply the sacking of the Prime Minister, not an attack upon the root causes of the problem.

The root of the problem is that the Hashemite rulers have ridden the easy road by using Saudi aid given because Jordan is a frontline state against Israel, and they have used this for their own wealth and power, not for any for any real benefit for the people.

Now King Hussein has cut his support for the Palestinians, both inside and outside of the present borders, and the price has to be paid. The price is austerity for the poor, and wealth and security for the rich.

We know how the poor of these countries oppose the IMF and the World Bank. They fight the Governments who impose IMF rules. They take what they can when they can. But what of Europe?

Berlin

Berlin, 1988 : 140 finance ministers, 10,000 delegates of banks, industries, managers, plus wives and bodyguards - 20,000 in all - met to discuss their profit in the "Third World". 14,000 members of the security forces mobilised to protect them.

Alongside this a counter-conference was organised on the 23rd-25th of September. 3000 people attended, many of them reformists, and some attended from the "Third World". Whilst there are plenty

in left and liberal circles who argue for a New International Economic Order, the counter-conference realised that it is necessary to go further.

Consequently there were calls not just for the scrapping of the debt, but also for a change in the economic relations in the world, and for the payment of reparations to the "Third World". They realised that it will be necessary

to break the hold of the imperialist centre (USA, EEC, Japan) over the world economy, and the need for social upheavals in these centres.

The counter-conference, however, was unfortunately limited, being accessible only to those who could afford the £7 fee, and could afford to travel to Berlin. There was a lone voice for the reform of the World Bank, but the most



radical voices were heard from those areas most affected by IMF policies.

Many went beyond the organisers' limitations, and called for imaginative direct action, the destruction of exploitation and oppression, and not just for a simple and limited discussion.

* Women demonstrated against the restriction of their being limited to taking only part time work in the "Third World".

* There was a demonstration in front of a pharmaceutical group's HQ against their involvement in "Third World" birth control and genetic research.

* Bankers were harassed as they went to "work".

* 8000 people demonstrated as internationalists, on the principle that the division of the world is not between "Third World" and "advanced" countries, but really between the upper and lower classes throughout the whole world.

* 80,000 people demonstrated against the IMF conference on the 25th, in solidarity with Palestinians, Kanaks, Phillipinos, South Koreans etc.

* There was much street-theatre, street games and music.

The basis for all these oppositional events was a call not for the gradual change of a system which is unjust in part of its activities, but for the destruction of the whole system. A system which is by its very nature supporting and nourishing the exploitation of the many by the few.

Together

The call was, and still is, for the creation of a movement to unite the forces of the poor throughout the world against their essentially racist exploiters.

The call is for the unity of women against the patriarchal-imperialist system. Each call came from this understanding - that the IMF and the World Bank are just two faces of the same system that exploits and oppresses the majority of us, whether we are women, black, working or not.

Much of this article has been taken from the magazine of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL).

What is the International Monetary Fund?

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund (IMF) was established in 1944 at Breton Woods (USA), along with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank, IBRD). The aim was for the major world powers to be able to guard against the problems which had occurred in the inter-war years - the Soviet Union was also involved at first, but left after increasing disagreements.

The IMF was created basically to counter the balance of payments problems, arising out of trade deficits, that had plagued the capitalist world prior to the Second World War. The IBRD was established to see to the long term problems of the destruction caused by the war itself, later looking to the problems of the "Third World" and development issues.

The IMF is run by a cartel of the major capitalist nations, the USA being at the very top. Voting power is essentially bought, as the quotas which fund the IMF also define the quantity of votes available to each contributing nation. The head of the IMF is always American*.

The central ideas, and the basic policies of the IMF are, and always have been, the central ideas of the USA and the policies most in keeping with US interests. The USA, after all, has influence over 80% of the votes. The interests of the USA and the other major nations are obviously not the same as the interests of the poorer nations, let alone the interests of the poor the world over.

* The USA has 20% of the vote, Western Europe 28%. For major changes to be actioned, an 85% majority vote is required, therefore the USA has the power of veto. The poorer nations directly control only 34% of the vote.

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whole workforce, or whether the company is targetting small sections, or even individuals.

Homeworking also has the advantage of allowing management to isolate themselves from the workforce. Homeworkers have no direct contact with even lower level bosses - like production managers and supervisors. The only contact they have with the company structure at all, may be with the driver of the van who delivers and collects their work.

A totally individualised workforce, unaware even of its own size and strength, and knowing next to nothing about the bosses who exploit it - what could be more ideal? Such a situation that allows management almost complete 'flexibility' to hire and fire at will; drive down wages; change terms and conditions; switch production; and, if required shut down operations and move them wholesale to another town or country. And all of this without any interference from workers' organisations.

Labour

In the past, many multinational companies centred their assembly and basic manufacturing work in 'Third World' countries, where costs (including wages) are cheap, and workers' organisation poor. Now British and European homeworkers are becoming part of those same pools of labour - their wages low, their organisation poor. All those workers are prone to exactly the same attacks - withdrawal of work, cuts in wages - as transnationals switch production around the globe in search of the cheapest costs at a given time.

But if the benefits for the boss class in promoting homeworking are so clear, and the position of homeworkers so precarious and exploited, why has there been such an explosion in the numbers employed in this way?

In a recent TV interview, one employer explained that it was a mistake to think of homeworking as "real, full-time, bread-winning employment". He claimed that the women employed by his hosiery firm were working "to earn themselves a

bit of pin-money to supplement their husband's income".

The economic reality that homeworkers themselves describe is somewhat different.

As the recession has deepened over the last ten years, unemployment has rocketed - driving tens of thousands out of the traditional labour market. This has particularly badly affected working class women. The Thatcherite drive to return to 'Victorian values', has further pushed working class women back 'into the home'. What pitiful levels of nursery and creche provision that did exist for working class families has in most cases disappeared in wave after wave of council cutbacks, and, combined with the closure of nursing homes and hospital wards, has forced many women to return home to look after children or care for elderly relatives.

So, many working class women have needed to find employment that can combine earning a wage, caring full-time for children/relatives, and running a home. Homeworking provides just that.

For many working class families, homeworking becomes the only means to bring in a desperately needed second wage. It's not a case of earning pocket money, but of finding a way to make ends meet.

As well as their division and isolation, other obstacles stand in the way of homeworkers organising together collectively to improve their conditions.

Cuts in housing and other benefits have combined to push many working class people further into poverty and debt in recent years. From economic necessity, some homeworkers continue to sign on the dole (or continue in part time work outside the home) without declaring their meagre earning from homeworking. This overlapping into the 'informal' or 'black' economy makes some homeworkers understandably reluctant to draw attention to themselves. Most, if not all, homework bosses realise that some of their workers are 'doing in on the side', and are happy to exploit that situation. Some have threatened to grass up troublesome employees to the DSS.

'Trade unionism' has played a significant role in isolating

homeworkers from other workers and re-inforcing divisions in the class. Trade union bureaucrats have not only ignored the plight of homeworkers, but have often denounced them as a threat to 'real workers'. They've argued that the appalling conditions and wages that homeworkers 'allow bosses to get away with' are used as a lever to undermine 'their members' pay and conditions.

Hostility

While it's undoubtedly true that bosses will try to play workers off against each other in such a way, it is the sectional and divisive nature of trade unionism that allows them to get away with it - in this case actively encouraging hostility to replace class solidarity. A struggle that sought to unite homeworkers, with low-paid factory workers, with casual and part-time labour around common class interests could immediately expose the unions' role.

Despite the difficulties, groups of homeworkers have already begun to get organised. In Leicester, an Outworkers Campaign Group has already begun to break the isolation of many local homeworkers, bringing groups together to share experiences and pool knowledge. Simply meeting other homeworkers has been an important step forward for many.

But there are problems. From the start, the Campaign has responded to demands - from homeworkers - to operate as a kind of 'local agency' for women looking to take up homeworking. They keep records of 'good' and 'bad' employers and put women in contact with firms who have vacancies. While this may help keep workers away from the worst employers, it inevitably draws the Campaign into a management role.

But more importantly, the Leicester Outwork Campaign was not the initiative of any of the 10,000-plus local homeworkers, but was established and funded by the local council. They paid for two university graduates to staff and run the project 'on behalf of' those workers. The use of 'professional helpers' and publicity material

which 'welcomes the involvement and interest' of local homeworkers, clearly shows that the organisation is apart from, and not a part of the workforce.

In getting organised, the first struggle that homeworkers need to wage, is the struggle to find information: about the company they work for, about other firms working locally, and about the hundreds of other homeworkers living in the same town.

Contacting other homeworkers may mean leafletting local estates and shopping centres, or advertising in the jobs column in local papers. The first step in shattering their isolation may simply be to bring their work to each others houses, enabling them to share child care, and giving them time to talk and plan. If this is successful, it could be moved to a local community centre or hall - enabling many more workers to get involved, and giving scope for estate-wide organisation to take off.

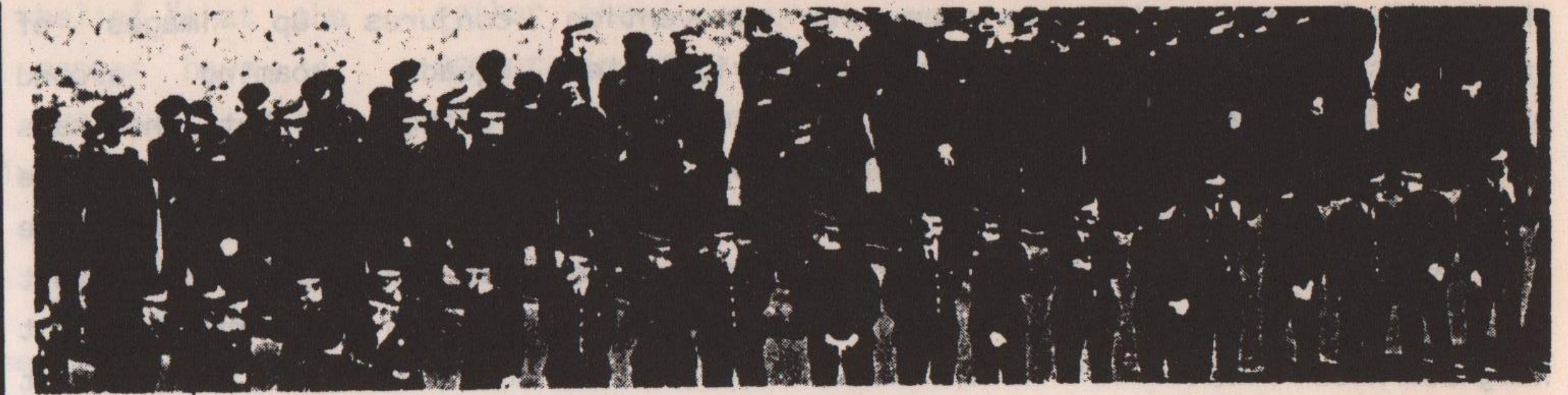
Struggles

Because homeworking is based outside of the factories and in people's homes - it destroys the artificial divisions that are erected between struggles in the 'workplace' and struggles in the 'community'. There is the immediate potential for homeworkers to generalise their specific economic struggles into wider fights for community resources, for better local health care, against 'yuppification', drawing support and forging unity across the class.

But these are early days. The explosion in homeworking has not yet been matched by a growth in workers' organisation, but there are signs of a growing confidence.

Because homeworkers are such 'low-status' workers, and because they are 'difficult' to organise in traditional workplace models, it seems likely that trade unions will continue to ignore them.

This must be seen as an opportunity, not a set back. Homeworkers' self-activity can challenge the limitations of trade unionism and council paternalism, and go direct to make demands on other sections of the class for solidarity.●



CAPITALISM: The biggest crime of all

CRIME IS A major issue for working class people, but how to deal with it ourselves has always proved a difficult problem for revolutionaries.

One of the main arguments we face is the ruling class would have us believe that acts of theft or violence are a social problem which affects us all equally, and that their solutions to it benefit all society.

To counter this, we must analyse crime using class based politics, because today's crime is defined by the ruling class (and the working class is blamed for most of it). Of course, some actions defined as crimes today will still be considered crimes in an anarchist society, but some will not be crimes at all.

Moralising

We must also be careful to avoid moralising, since as anarchists we believe neither in respect for property when we advocate industrial sabotage, nor in the sanctity of life, since we see killing of some members of the ruling class and their supporters an inevitable part of class struggle and revolution. Neither will we shed any tears if a wealthy so and so has his/her house turned over, or gets pushed about in the street, never mind suggest it is something to be punished for.

Even if we accept that some crime and anti-social behaviour is due to poverty and alienation under capitalism, it is not enough to suggest it will just disappear after the revolution once we have common ownership and stress-free lives.

We need to come up with some answers now, otherwise we will never be able to argue for the complete destruction of the police and 'justice' system. Taking control of production in

the factories must also mean taking control of the streets, creating our own code of conduct, and having procedures for dealing with crime - we need to help create the confidence so that working class people can do this as part of a general solidarity and a feeling of strength in the community.

As a solution to crime, the ruling class give us the police and Neighbourhood Watch on one hand, probation and prison on the other. The rich can also afford to hire private security firms to protect their homes and property.

Most people would say they hate the police, but in the final reckoning see them as necessary because there is no alternative. We must go beyond the case of someone hating the police because they were caught speeding, or were searched in the street at 11pm, because they may still believe in a police force and prisons as a solution to 'real' crime, if only for serious crimes like rape or murder.

We must also be careful not to argue against a police force just because they are racist and sexist, which is often used as a reason for getting rid of the cops. Presumably we would still be against a 'right-on' police force that beat up working class people with equal vigour, regardless of sex or race.

Disorder

We know the police exist to keep us in line. From the horse's mouth, even a Chief Police Officer admits that policing is geared more and more to preventing public disorder, whether in riots or in industrial struggles (violent picketing).

But try saying that to the person who reads the high coverage of crime in

the daily papers, or the pensioner who is too scared to leave the house after watching Crimewatch or Police 5 on TV.

Neighbourhood Watch has caught on in working class areas and it is precisely that foothold in the community the police are looking for. However, Neighbourhood Watch is more about individuals protecting themselves in the home with alarms and window locks, and not walking out late at night, than creating a collective community effort against crime. This is not surprising really, because a community working together against crime might also have the strength to fight physical and political attacks by the state. Imagine a Broadwater Farm type effort against poll-tax collection!

Keeping an eye on our own is necessary and some form of community patrol is a good idea, if it is totally answerable to the people it is attempting to defend, and is working without and against the police.

To some, the idea of working class people running their own community crime

prevention conjures up images of vigilante squads roaming around kneecapping wrongdoers, but who says our methods should be crude? Are the police and courts more just? We are the ones closest to the people who commit anti-social acts in our community, not the police, and we can find the fairest and best way to deal with them.

Community

Some forms of 'community justice' already exist. We can take examples from the many Asian youth organisations who have come together to crush violence committed by racists and fascists. The justice is dealt quickly and efficiently to individuals without the macho gang warfare often envisaged by left-wing anti-fascists.

One problem faced by the Asian youth squads was that some members of their community felt intimidated by their actions - a problem which will hopefully be solved by making sure

everyone knows who they are. Another was attracting trouble by their presence. In spite of these problems this shows the effectiveness of crime prevention by a group linked to the community.

The Guardian Angels were in the news recently as they came over from New York to clean up the London Underground and get the 'scum off the streets'. This group of uniformed vigilantes were cautiously welcomed by Douglas Hurd and the police as a solution to crime in working class areas. In reality, in the US they have done more to protect Yuppies on the subways and look after property developments by clearing out the homeless and anyone with a 'strange' haircut.

The Guardian Angels are typical of a group of self-appointed police substitutes who are answerable to no-one. This is completely against the idea of community control.

In summary, the answer to crime is the same as our solution for running society - organisation by the working class, for the working class.



Guardian Angels: self-appointed, answerable to no-one.

In defence of structure

THE ORGANISATIONAL PLATFORM OF THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS; Workers Solidarity Movement, £1.50.

RE-PUBLISHED RECENTLY BY the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM), this pamphlet was first produced in 1926 in Paris by the "Dielo Trouda" group, of which the exiled Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno was a founding member.

Two excellent introductions give brief historical and political context to the text, and point towards the determining factor of its content: the failure of the anarchist movement - particularly in Russia during the revolution - to provide a theoretically coherent and organisationally effective alternative to the authoritarian and reformist Marxist elements within the working class.

It was clearly the intention of the "Dielo Trouda" group to tackle this problem with the publication of this pamphlet.

Contrasts

The first section, entitled "General Section" deals with ideas of the class struggle, the hegemony of the state and its relationship with capitalism, and exposes the ideology and methods of Marxist-Leninism with classical anarchist-communist arguments.

A particularly telling contrast is drawn between the Leninist concept of the masses as being "unable to go beyond a trade-union consciousness", and the

anarchist belief "that the labouring masses have inherent creative and constructive possibilities".

The next section, entitled "Constructive Section", builds on the ideas presented previously, and attempts to outline some strategies for the organisation of production and consumption during and after the revolution, and the defence of the revolution by a standing "people's army".

These ideas are brief to the point of superficiality, but they do attempt to face some of the questions that anarchist have found most difficult to answer when contrasted with authoritarian solutions.

Organisation

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the last section of the pamphlet deals with the organisational methods that the "Dielo Trouda" group felt it would be necessary to adopt to achieve anarchist-communism.

Their conclusions have been accused of being "only one step away from Bolshevism", and it is not difficult to see how such charges could be made.

The pamphlet advocates a highly organised vanguardist "General Union of Anarchists" (GUA), that would operate on the basis of a clearly defined political line, federative structure and collective responsibility. What is not made clear, is how this line is to be developed, and precisely what relationship the GUA would have with the working-class in a revolutionary situation.

It is all too easy to see this vanguardist approach leading to a revolutionary elite acting upon an inflexible ideology,

rather than creating and encouraging the development of anarchist-communist politics through the self-activity of the working class.

Nevertheless, no-one would claim that this is a closed issue, and as a point of departure for anarchist-communist organisations, the pamphlet provides a clear argument for the need for co-ordinated political organisation.

Tintin strikes

BREAKING FREE (The Adventures of Tintin), J. Daniels; Attack International, £2.00.

FROM THOSE WHO brought us Scum - Tintin's adventures at Wapping - we now have Breaking Free, a comic book fantasy which has Tintin "back with his pals, battling it out against the State and bringing the old world to its knees, in a classic full-length story of love, struggle and revolution."

The plot is totally implausible. Tintin has been kicked off the JTS scheme, caught shoplifting and has had his dole cut - the only similarities between this Tintin and Herge's are the

name and (brilliant!) haircut. He starts working with his uncle, The Captain, on a building site.

There's an accident on the site and one of the workers is killed. Immediately - and I mean immediately - the workers call a wildcat strike and demand more wages, fewer hours, better safety, the sacking of the site supervisor and compensation for the dead man's family. The union is instantly dismissed: "oh, it ain't our union, it's just for the bosses...", and the strike spreads to all the company's sites, other work places, communities and quickly develops into a revolutionary situation as working class people begin to recognise their common needs and interests.

Racism, sexism and homophobia are dealt with in a very brief and simplified way - once people are told it's wrong, they don't do it again. Similarly, although all sections of the working class are involved in the activity, there is no attempt at political insight beyond a popularist and spontaneist approach.

But this is a work of fantasy as opposed to serious political propaganda, and as such should be read for fun.



Unconditional support

THE FIRST ISSUE of *Organise!* is an improvement on *Virus* in the quality of layout and presentation, and there is definitely an improvement in content: more up-to-date issues and debate.

One article in particular - "From imperialist war to class war", was both informative and topical.

But there was one section which worried me.

I agree that the task of libertarian revolutionaries in Britain is to oppose imperialism, to point to the bloody repression of the anti-unionist struggle, and expose the propaganda war conducted through the British media. Of course, we must call for 'Troops Out' and promote working class unity.

But are we to oppose, quote: "the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of international socialism"?

Taken to its logical conclusion this statement means that British libertarian communists should side with the British State in opposing the unification of Ireland as a bourgeois, capitalist state, because the Irish working class (North and South) must fight for unification only in the context

of international socialism".

When, as British revolutionaries, we call for 'Troops Out', we cannot add in brackets, as a pre-condition of our own, "But only in the context of international socialism!"

The fight for international socialism must be built on international working class solidarity. This solidarity is not just miraculously present in workers' minds, it has to be built.

To build it in Britain, amongst British workers, we must support, unconditionally, the Irish people's right to self-determination. In practice this means challenging the imperialism of the British State, calling for 'Troops Out', and a united independent Ireland (only to be united with Britain "in the context of international socialism").

To build international working class solidarity in Ireland, amongst the Irish working class, is to fight, as the author of the article correctly points out, for "a revolutionary secular socialist movement" which is as opposed to Ireland's indigenous bourgeoisie as it is to British imperialism.

In practice this means challenging the nationalism of the Republican Movement, and to counter-pose to this the fight for anti-imperialist working class unity, arguing for international socialism.

So, libertarian communists in Britain and Ireland have the same goal. But, because we are approaching it from different

sides (from the oppressing state and the oppressed nation), our methods of fighting differ. This has often been called the 'dual role' of revolutionaries.

To argue, on any basis, that libertarian communists should "oppose the unification of Ireland" AT ALL, is to side with British imperialism by default. The struggle for self-determination of a people is in itself progressive, as it challenges the logic of imperialism which is the logic of capitalism.

Even if we recognise that the unification of Ireland as a bourgeois nation state will not bring liberation for the Irish working class, we must see the struggle for self-determination as part of the international fight against imperialism. This fight may not be consciously socialist but it is always objectively anti-capitalist and as such must be supported.

To believe that the anti-imperialist struggle can ever be a 'pure' fight for international socialism is hopelessly utopian. It will always involve many and diverse sections of the oppressed, whose aims may well be contradictory. Libertarian communists must recognise this and fight for working class dominance of the struggle and argue consistently for international socialism.

Yours for a strong, Libertarian Communist movement and International Socialism
Starik

AUTHOR'S REPLY: DESPITE our disagreements, Comrade Starik raises some interesting and important points I would like to reply to.

When I said that libertarian communists should oppose the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of International Socialism, I meant to emphasise that we should not look to British solutions.

Imperialism can never play a progressive role and any move by the British state towards unification would have their desire to maintain economic imperialist domination at heart. A united capitalist Ireland would be acceptable to all but the most Neanderthal elements in the British ruling class, if it was to remain in the western imperialist orbit and was able to maintain reasonable political stability.

We disagree with Comrade Starik when he talks of 'unconditional support for the Irish People's right to self-determination'.

Who are these 'Irish People'? Irish workers? Irish petit bourgeois? Irish bosses? And do they all have the same interests? Where is the class analysis in this catch all phrase the 'Irish People'?

When Comrade Starik talks of an independent Ireland, he fails to come to terms with the fact that in "an international capitalist" (and therefore imperialist) system, political and economic independence is a fallacy.

All nations which have gone through 'national liberation' have been forced to ally with one of the imperialist blocs. 'Unconditional support' also has a Leninist ring about it. Unconditional support for the dominant anti-imperialist group in Ireland, would mean excuse-making for elitist paramilitary actions, some of which verge on out-right racist murder (like the targetting of individual Protestant workers - a strategy the IRA has followed in the recent past). This is best left to the Stalinists and Trotskyites.

Starik is right to say that a revolutionary secular socialist movement must be built to challenge the Left nationalism of the Republicans and that the struggle to smash the Orange State and kick the British troops out, must be dominated by the working class and its interests. This is one of the tasks of revolutionary minorities in both Britain and Ireland. Let's go to it.●

Anarchy or Oligarchy?

I AM WRITING in respect to the articles on 'rotation' that have appeared in previous issues of your magazine, and to ask about the ACF's emphasis on organisation.

I would be interested to know your opinions (if any) on Robert Michel's 'Political Parties' - one time Marxist and syndicalist, later elitist and fascist.

I would like to know whether you think his work is of any relevance - especially to Anarchists (as his book does contain a section on Anarchism and says elsewhere that although organisation is essential it is gained at the expense of a conservative/reactionary elite. (See especially Chapter 4 B, 'Psychological Cause of Leadership': "One who holds the office of delegate requires a moral right to that office... One who has for a certain time held the office of delegate ends by regarding that office as his own property". And also Chapter 6, 'The Political Gratitude of the Masses').

He says Anarchists "are the declared enemies of all organisation, and who, when they form organisations, do so in defiance of their own principles..." (p82).

He talks of Anarchist 'leaders' such as Kropotkin and Bakunin as having "some of the qualities and pretensions characteristic of all leadership" (p358), ie superior intellect compared to the masses who look up to them as superiors.

This brings me to Michel's argument that the working class will never be 'educated' enough to prevent leadership/ bureau-

cracy stepping above them and ruling their lives.

So "who says organisation, says oligarchy" (p401). Do you think this is relevant, and if so if Anarchism is possible, or to what degree it is possible?

Yours sincerely
RSW
Manchester

ORGANISE! EDITORS' REPLY: In the first instance it is necessary to make it absolutely clear that anarchist-communists do not advocate organisation "in defiance of their principles"; in this respect Michel makes the classic mistake of confusing absence of government with a lack of order and organisation in society.

"Anarchy", literally translated from the Greek means, "without government", and it is the organisation of society on a non-hierarchical basis that anarchist-communists seek, not the creation of an unstructured and disorganised society. The article on rotation was an example of one possible form of organisation that might prove useful in an anarchist-communist society.

On the question of delegation it is not made obvious from your letter on what basis a delegate "requires a moral right to that office". Anarchist-communists see delegation (or mandation) in the context of rotation as a useful mechanism in decision making, and would seek to involve everyone affected by the decisions taken in that process. This would include rotation of delegates on a regular basis; certainly there is no moral prerogative attached to this function, and because the delegate is involved in a conscious effort to avoid hierarchical social structures, it is unlikely "(the) delegate ends, by regarding that office as his own property".

In examining this issues of leadership and the political consciousness of the working class, Michel conveniently chooses to depict 'hierarchy' as

an inevitable feature of human nature and of society. Michel ignores the social conditions that, under capitalism, distort this supposedly 'inherent' and 'unchangeable' nature.

Anthropology furnishes us with examples of societies where no hierarchy existed, and where human social activity has been expressed through co-operative and communal forms. Even within our own unequal and hierarchical society, and despite every attempt by the ruling class to destroy it, co-operation plays an important and fulfilling role in the every-day lives of working class people, both through work, struggle and community action. This shows us that it is meaningless to insist on hierarchy as being the only "natural" and inevitable form of social organisation.

If we take the goal of society to be the promotion of well-being, freedom and equality for all, it is clear that this cannot come from the destructive competition and "enterprise" of capitalism.

Anarchist-communists, by participating in active and conscious working class struggle, seek to bring about a classless society based on communal and co-operative forms to achieve this goal.

From the above, not only is it clear that this is a

possibility, but once established, exploitation and oppression will become far more meaningless in the human context than co-operation and community may appear today.

Whoops!

THE EDITORS SEEM to have given the article I translated and adapted on the Italian Base Committees ('Self-organisation Italian style' - *Organise!* 15) a bit of a mauling.

The article did not first appear in the Italian anarchist paper *La Lutta*. As far as I know, there is no such paper.

It appeared in the French libertarian communist magazine *Luttes!*.

Similarly, my mention of a group of activists on the railways - the Union of Anarchist and Libertarian Railway Workers - which I explained was not a trade union, but a union in the sense of a coming together - a workers' group - was totally dismembered.

I hope this letter sets the record straight.

Yours
NH
London ACF

'Revolutionary Unionism'?

IN A RECENT issue of your otherwise excellent magazine, a large article by a member of the Communication Workers Group appeared ('What is the potential of rank and file action?' - *Organise!* 14).

The article is infuriating reading for the anarcho-syndicalist. The article espouses a view of the reformist trades unions that I'm sure most anarcho-syndicalists would agree with.

However, by stating that 'issues' like 'pay and conditions' are so corrupting for workers' organisations, and to claim that by its "fundamental nature" unionism is doomed to sell-out and abandon any revolutionary intent it may have held, the article is saying that there is no difference between existing unions and the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union. What an insult!

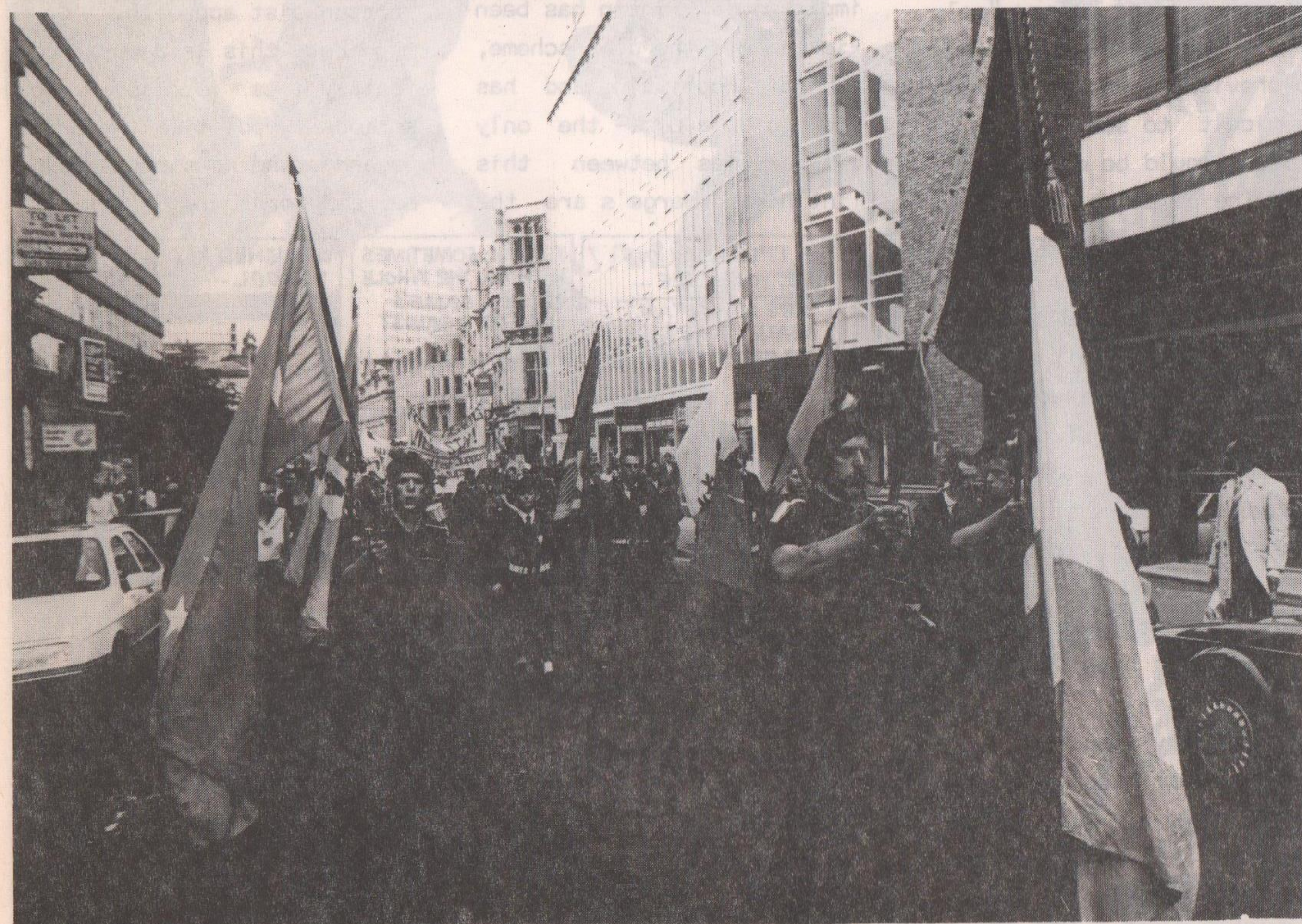
It dismisses the various rank-and-file movements that have existed in Britain with the desultory claim that "all rank-and-file movements in Britain have been alternative union movements".

It then says that the simple day-to-day activities of the union will take over and turn the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union into a "fairer negotiator for a fairer form of exploitation... This is the sole purpose of a union, and it has no time or inclination to overthrow the state, as it has a mass membership to look after and an economy to keep an eye on..."

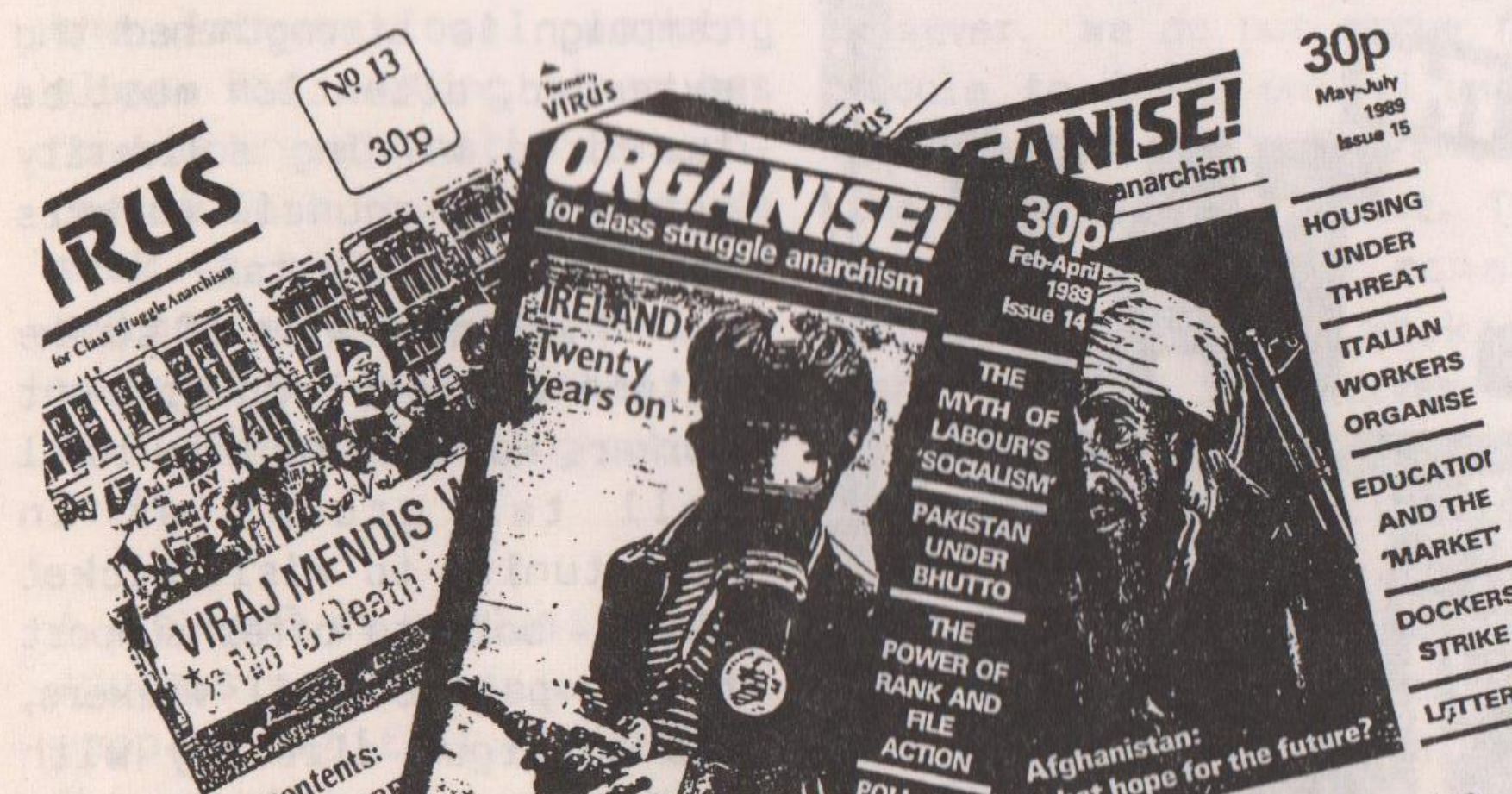
I can see how these arguments apply to the reformist, bourgeois unions - but I cannot for the life of me see how these effect Anarcho-Syndicalist Unions. Surely such an organisation is a revolutionary, working class organisation? What else could it be?

Taken as a whole, the article smacks of a dangerous slide into ultra-leftism - one of the few creeds that actually defuses revolutionary fervour.

The working classes exist because of economic factors - all of us, proletariat, lumpen-proletariat and peasantry are forced to rely on an economic relationship with capitalism. This means we have to work in



Republican marching band on Troops Out march.



Back issues of *Organise!* - and its forerunner *Virus* - are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

order to survive. This entails a reliance on 'bread and butter' issues such as pay and conditions.

As usual, the tired old argument about anarcho-syndicalism being 'divisive' is dragged out. What rot! Tell me, where does the line exist between working class communities and the workplace? Who the hell do you mix with after work?

The article argues that "something else is needed - something revolutionary and all-embracing socially".

My view is that it would be impossible to have a single revolutionary body. You need an Anarcho-Syndicalist Union (which is a damn sight more "socially embracing" than a gang of mardy Lefties hunched over their coffee in the canteen) as well as your specific anarchist group, women's group, Jewish, Black, Irish, etc.

Anarcho-syndicalism is a socially embracing ideology - which seeks to organise in all section of the working class and their communities. It is very ironic to hear anarchist-communists tell us to 'come out of the factories' when its a

line we invented to confront the Revolutionary Syndicalists.

Most of the criticisms of anarcho-syndicalism are really criticisms of revolutionary syndicalism.

"It's always nice to end on a quote". Here's a very interesting one from Rudolf Rocker's The London Years:

"The old slogan, 'the worse, the better', was based on an erroneous assumption. Like the other slogan 'all or nothing', which made many radicals oppose any improvement in the lots of the workers even when the workers demanded it, on the grounds that it would distract the mind of the proletariat, and turn it away from the road so social emancipation.

It is contrary to all the experience of history and psychology: people who are not prepared to fight for the betterment of the living conditions are not likely to fight for social emancipation. Slogans like this are a cancer in the revolutionary movement." (*)

PH, Nottingham Direct Action Movement (DAM)

AUTHOR'S REPLY: Instead of just saying "what an insult!", why don't you try to explain why my analysis of the fundamental nature of unionism doesn't also apply to the anarcho-syndicalist union?

I do not "dismiss" rank-and-file movements, I wrote an article examining them! It is true, however, that we need to go beyond them.

It is not "desultory" to say "all rank-and-file movements in Britain have been alternative union movements" - it is a fact. If you think an alternative union movement to the existing one is of little importance then why do you want an anarcho-syndicalist union?

You don't say why an anarcho-syndicalist union "is a revolutionary working class organisation". You just say, "What else could it be?". Come on! The article demands a more reasoned response than that!

Why is the article "ultra-leftist"?

You end with more assertions of anarcho-syndicalism's revolutionary character. However, they are not backed up,

and therefore, in the light of the arguments in the article, serve as no defence for anarcho-syndicalism.

Regards the quote: did I say I opposed "any improvement in the lot of the workers, even when the workers demanded it"? No, I said the opposite of course. Please read the article again...

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

Those for the next issue should be sent to the address on page 2 by September 29th.

Please keep letters to around 250 words - otherwise we may need to edit them.

All letters must carry a name and address, if the author wants it published. (We don't - unless specifically asked - print your address in Organise!, but may need to contact you ourselves). Letters without a name and address won't be considered.

We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it and apologise if this occurs. Edited letters are marked at the end with a (*).

nounced it was to establish a Debt Counselling Service to offer tea and sympathy to those that it is driving deeper into poverty.

It's hardly surprising that growing numbers of working class people in Scotland - including many life-long Labour voters - are increasingly seeing their 'socialist' local authorities as part of the enemy.

Council rent arrears are, at an all-time high in Scotland - the recent cutbacks in housing and other benefits have left many families simply unable to meet all their bills. At the core of the 'won't pay' campaign is a huge number of people who simply cannot pay.

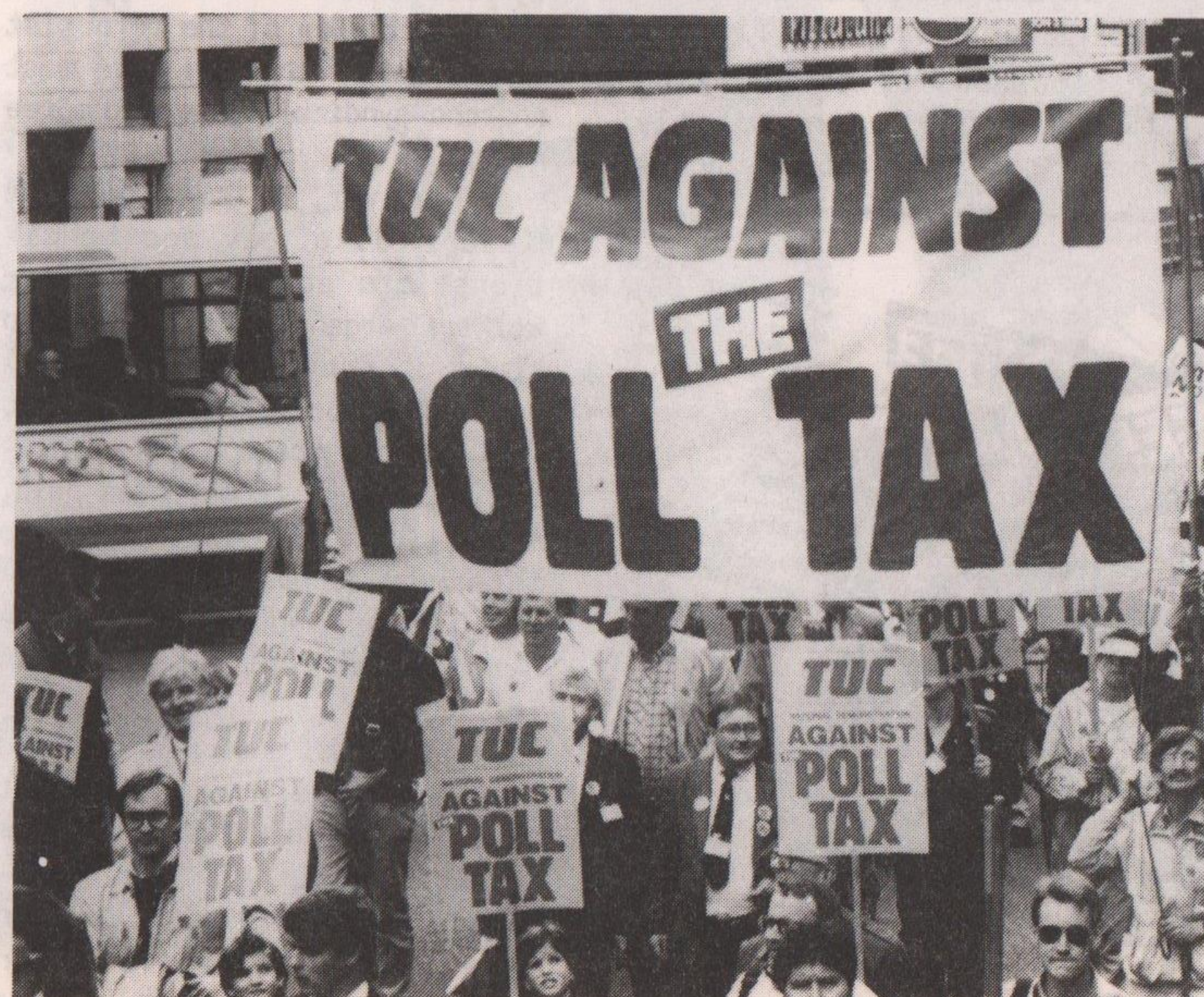
While the non-payment campaign is strengthened and extended, attention must be turned to winning solidarity action from council workers administering the tax.

The recent wave of strike action by local government workers was used by many local poll tax groups as an opportunity to visit picket lines - both to offer support to low-paid council workers, and to argue directly with them the need to disrupt and sabotage poll tax collection from within.

the fight in Scotland, has been made worse by the inability of Labour Councils to disguise their enthusiastic compliance with the tax.

Labour

The TUC's hopes that resistance could be focused in a solely anti-Tory direction, have been wrecked as Labour councils have been seen to compile registers, fine resisters, dispatch bailiffs and issue huge poll tax demands - while simultaneously denoun-



POLL TAX:

«(Continued from page 4)

of goods from those who refused to pay their non-registration fines. At least one set of bailiffs needed a police escort to get them off the estate in one piece.

Not surprisingly, labour movement leaders are worried by all this activity. The rally at the 30,000 strong TUC poll tax march in Manchester in July was used as a platform to denounce non-payment and condemn industrial action. To a barrage of booing and cat-calls the opening speaker was first of many to fiercely attack any suggestions that the law should be broken, and proclaimed the 'utter failure' of the non-payment campaign in Scotland.

The decision by the TUC to launch such a public and aggressive attack on effective action (rather than simply ignoring it through calls for a 'united campaign' and a future 'vote for Labour') reflects the growing concern in the labour and union bureaucracies that they are failing to head off the real fight against the poll tax.

The abject failure of the 'Stop It' campaign to derail

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in the face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and economic and political colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist communist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

5. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

6. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions, however, are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a point of common departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

7. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolu-

tionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creation of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

8. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this

end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

AT OUR NATIONAL conference in April this year, we further amended our 'aims and principles', making two additional changes:

* Point 4 has been split into two separate sections, one on war and the environment; one on revolution.

* What is now Point 6 - the section on the unions - has been revised, reordered and slightly expanded.

ACF pamphlets are available from: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

ACE No 1 Basic Bakunin: The ideas of Bakunin, one of the founders of class struggle anarchism. (50p inc p&p).

ACE No 2 The Poll Tax and How to Fight It: Soon to be reprinted and updated, this pamphlet describes the effects of the Poll Tax, and the inevitable failure of the Labour Party and the Unions in fighting, and shows how to build effective strategies for collective action that can scupper the Tory flagship. (50p inc p&p).

ACE No 3 The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: a translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p inc p&p).

Also Anarchism as we see it: the original pamphlet outlining the theory, politics and direction of the ACF (50p inc p&p).

Also Russia 1917 - A Libertarian Communist Supplement: describes what happened in the soviets and factory committees (10p & sae).

Readers in London

An open discussion meeting for those interested in finding out more about the politics and activities of the Anarchist Communist Federation, is held on the first Thursday of every month at 8.30pm at the Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (Nearest tube - Russell Square). More details from London ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.