

From the Battle of the Boyne, to the Battle against the Bosses

THE TWELFTH OF July saw the 300th anniversary of the (in)famous Battle of the Boyne, with the 6 counties of northern Ireland covered in cardboard King Billys and red, white and blue bunting. The triumphant parades of this 'special' Orangeman's Day were typical of the usual carnival of reaction which the non-Loyalist population has had to suffer for so long.

But the truth behind William of Oranges' victory over James II in 1690 is drowned beneath the noise of the fife bands and the menacing thump of the Lambeg drum, long the musical accompaniment of Loyalist terror. Presented as a victory for religious freedom and Protestant rights over attempts at 'Papist' domination, the reality reads something different.

William, ruler of the United Provinces of Holland, was invited by the leading members of the English Parliament to overthrow King James II, a catholic convert, who by representing the last vestiges of feudalism was holding back the development of the emerging mercantile bourgeoisie and the power of the politicians. William himself had eyes on the English throne and was well pleased on his landing in England in 1688 that James, with little or no support from even his own aristocracy, did a runner

to France without a fight!

However, James was still nominally in power in Ireland, a situation held through his viceroy, the Earl of Tyrconnell. Seeing Ireland as a potential power base and a stepping stone back to England and Scotland, James landed in Ireland (his first visit... and last) with French arms and advisers. The native Irish catholics and 'dissenters' (non-Anglican protestants) saw this as an opportunity to break the domination of English Parliaments over Ireland, so they gave support, not always wholeheartedly, to James.

Religion

However, at the now legendary Battle of the Boyne (and at several subsequent and more decisive battles), William, having a vastly superior army, defeated James who had to flee once more

into exile. In this struggle for power William was supported by the catholic King of Spain and the Pope himself! So much for a crusade against Popery!

These facts very much give the lie to the claim that that was basically a religious war, independent from a real

struggle for political power and colonial control. It is yet another example of religion being used by the ruling class as a cover and justification for their power struggles, when questions of strategic and economic power were the real motive force.

Godless

But 1690, along with the 'Siege of Derry' and many other historical episodes, is still being used by the Orange Order to bring together 6 counties protestants of all classes in a celebration of their refusal to 'surrender' to papism, republicanism, and on occasion, 'Godless Communism'. The reality is that for working class protestants, Loyalism is in fact an all consuming ideology which requires their abject surrender to the hegemony - political, social and economic - of their Orange bosses.

It is this domination which must be smashed if the working class of northern Ireland are to win their own 'Battle against the Bosses' and have something more to celebrate than the the victory of one marauding monarch over another. •



Pissing in the wind?: Orange bandsman prepare to celebrate the anniversary.

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism



The class struggle in Ireland

40p

Aug-Nov

1990

Issue 20

ROMANIA'S
MINERS:
THUGS OR
HEROES?

POLL TAX
TROUBLES
DEEPEN

TRAF SQ
DEFENCE
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BATTLE
OF THE
BOYNE

LETTERS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

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, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, London, Newcastle, Northampton,

Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, and York.

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

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS:
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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 debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome

to contribute articles to **Organise!** - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree without A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the November 1990 issue are September 17 for features and reviews, and September 30 for letters and news.

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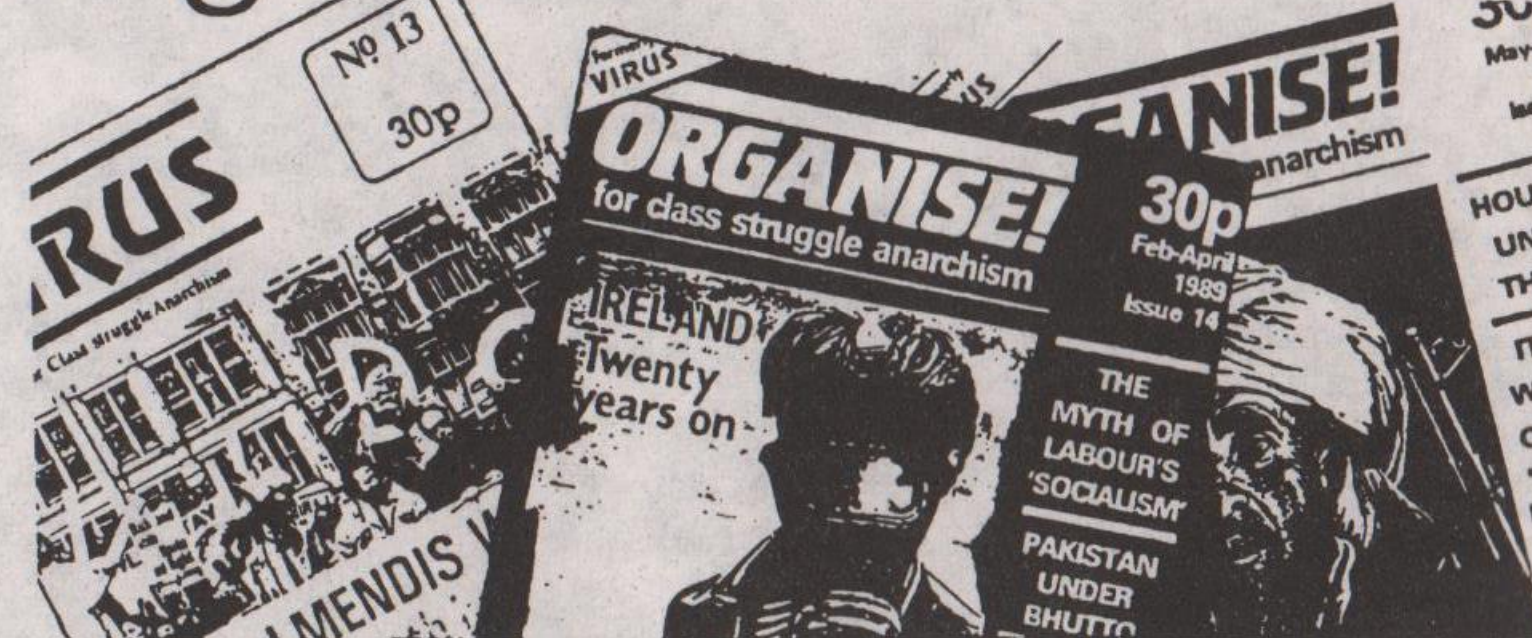
As the fightback against the poll tax grows, as the collapse of Leninism in Eastern Europe provides the chance for a renewed class struggle anarchist movement on an international level, it becomes vital that the ideas of libertarian communism become widespread within every section of the working class - the ideas of running society in a free and self-organised way, where there are no longer classes, borders, or armed forces, where money has been abolished

and where racism, sexism and exploitation are things of the past.

If you support our ideas then help us to spread them. Not only by sending us as much money as you can afford to our Press Fund, but also by taking a bundle of **Organise!** to sell at your workplace, dole queue, tenants association or poll tax group. (Bundles on sale on return basis from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1).

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund: Romford £2.50; Oxford £2.50; Aldershot £1; Romford £12.50; Coventry £10; London £83.92; ACF fund raising £58. Keep it coming in! Money to the Nottingham address above.

Organise! back issues



Back issues of **Organise!** (from issue 14 to issue 19 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address (as are a few copies of issues of its forerunner - **Virus**). They cost 40p & sae each and include:

Organise! 17: Anarchy in the Eastern block; Cambodia: what future; Militant and the poll tax. **Organise!** 18: All change in Eastern Europe?; ambulance crews fight; Gerry Healy's death. **Organise!** 19: The poll tax and prison riots; the myth of Mandela; ecology and class.

AFTER THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE RIOT:

The State goes on the offensive

THE EVENTS DURING and after the 31st March in Trafalgar Square graphically demonstrate the various ways in which the State will attack working class people when they fight back against its oppressive political, social and economic measures.

When 200,000 people took to the streets to protest against the Poll Tax, the State - in the shape of the Metropolitan Police and its riot squads - had already decided that everyone on that march was a de facto criminal, to be dealt with by baton, riot shield, charging horses and any other violent measure that it took to keep us off 'their' streets.

Courts

But smashing us in the face with a truncheon isn't the only way in which the State keeps us down. Once they've done that, the massive power of the Judiciary and Courts can be brought to bear. Immediately after the 31st the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Metropolitan Police set up a 'riot prosecution service' - the first of its kind - made up of 137 full-time officers and 13 lawyers, to prepare cases and help make yet further arrests.

One of the first acts of this so-called 'Operation Carnaby' was to seize phot-

ographs from the press, who - with the exception of the 'Guardian' and 'Independent' reporters - willingly handed over up to 30,000 still pictures to complement 90 hours of the Mets own video tape.

These scum then orchestrated a massive and hysterical campaign to help the CPS and Met. track down others involved, running such features as "Gallery of Hate" (Sunday Mirror, 13/05), and the infamous "If you know 'em, shop 'em" (The People, 13/05).

It is clear that the Press is nothing but the instrument of the State, and our first consideration as a class in any similar situation should be to stop anyone taking pictures of us. We must smash any cameras before taking on the Pigs as an absolute priority. Secondly, we must start to consider "masking up" before the march, as they have done in other countries around the world for years.

Inevitably, there followed many more arrests (over 100 in addition to the 350+ arrested on the day), with paramilitary-style dawn raids in the Stamford Hill and Dalston areas of Hackney to name just two incidents. Meanwhile, wherever the CPS has had half a chance, it has upped - or added on - charges to those arrested. Or, to keep cases from being heard

before a potentially sympathetic jury, reduced them instead: basically, whatever it takes to secure a conviction.

One example among many was of a Nottingham student sentenced to a month for nothing more than throwing an empty can that hit no-one (he pleaded guilty, the prosecution asked for leniency, but the State wants blood). As one defendant put it "People were arrested at random and charged at random had no idea what offence I was supposed to have committed. It was like a lottery."

Trafalgar Square (and the recent events in Bucharest) have shown once again that there is no such thing as a "benign" State, that the buzzword "Democracy" is a sick myth. All States will crush working class people when they try to fight back against poverty and oppression, all States must be destroyed.

Scum

The reaction of the Left has been typical of what working class people have come to expect. 'Militant' were the first to show themselves as police collaborators after the 31st, with Steve Nally losing no time in announcing that the

'Militant' dominated All British Anti Poll Tax Federation (ABAPTF) would be "naming names", swiftly followed by them calling on the 'labour' movement to "unmask" and "deal with ... the disruptors and disorganisers (sic) of Saturdays demonstration" ('Militant' Editorial, 6th April).

Tommy Sheridan concurred, saying the ABAPTF would have "no qualms" about "informing the police" of any rioters it could identify. In Nottingham, "Militant" scum echoed this threat in an open meeting of anti-poll tax activists held on the 1st April.

Since then, they have been scrambling to backslide from this position after the wave of anger that met these announcements. But it doesn't matter what pitiful excuses they make now, they will always collaborate with the State against working class people, or (like the Socialist Workers Party) tail-end real struggles with laughable whining about "a lack of leadership". Among all this mayhem, the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign (TSDC), and several affiliated local campaigns have provided valuable support and aid for defendants. The message is clear: Fuck the Left and let's organise ourselves for anarchist communism! •

The Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign was set up by defendants and their solicitors in the aftermath of the 31st of March to help counter the massive State campaign against those arrested both on the day and since.

It's avowed aims are to "unconditionally support all those arrested", to be "run by and accountable to those arrested" and to be "independent of all other organisations".

The campaign has gathered information on over 150 defendants, raised money to help with legal costs etc., co-ordinated solicitors and defendants, and provided a forum for discussion and solidarity for those arrested. Representatives try to be at every court case, and it is currently fighting to get access to the 30,000 still photographs and 90 hours of video tape evidence that the CPS is trying to withhold from defence lawyers.

The TSDC has become the national focus for def-

endants, but local groups affiliated to it have sprung up in Birmingham, Nottingham and Brighton, to help people locally.

The campaign urges anyone who has been arrested, or anyone who has any information that may be of use to defendants to contact them or their local affiliated groups as soon as possible. It is vital that we build a strong and co-ordinated front against the forces of the State arrayed against us, so setting up local support groups raising the matter at local anti-Poll Tax groups and raising money by benefit gigs, collections etc, will all be of help. Contact the TSDC at: Trafalgar Sq Defence Campaign, c/o Haldane Society Lawyers, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1; (tel 071 833 8958).

Anarchists from East and West meet

ORGANISED BY THE 'Germinal' group of the Italian Anarchist Federation, this conference was one of the first of its kind, especially since the recent events in Eastern Europe.

200 people were present, including most of the Western European countries as well as the United States, Canada, and most Eastern European countries.

There were discussions on fundamental questions facing the international anarchist movement. It was vitally important to make contact, and above all to share our experiences of struggle and our conceptions of society, in order to move forward to transform it.

During these debates certain 'comrades' in the

West have implied that a market society is compatible with a libertarian society, that society cannot be analysed in terms of social antagonisms. In other words, the class struggle is not a priority. This was most noticeable with the U.S. and Canadian delegation.

Others affirmed the Great Vague Ideas of Anarchism - abstentionism and anti-clericalism, but how useful were these incantations to the East European comrades?

What's more, when it came to discussing concrete solidarity, again the American delegation proposed the setting up of an International Press Agency via computer network! But is this possible for the Eastern

Europeans, or politically interesting for militants of both East and West? Especially if it was merely an exchange of information without analysis?

The events in Eastern Europe have shaken the preconceptions of many Western comrades. As anarchist communists, with a class analysis of society we must

base ourselves on our experiences in social movements. We need to reach accurate and useful conclusions about the nature of international capitalism, but not with a feeling of superiority over our Eastern European comrades. This is the sense of the motion drawn up by some French, British and Austrians present.●

NEWS FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Based on Reports from countries present at the meeting.

POLAND : The longest established and strongest anarchist movement in Eastern Europe. Within the Anarchist Federation, there are twenty local groupings. There is little political unity between these groups, which are active mainly in the 'counter-culture'. The Federation has difficulties in gaining influence in the working class because of these problems.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA : There are two hundred activists within the Czechoslovak Anarchist Union (CAS), and there are also several active independent groups (e.g. in Prague there is the group Prague Beruschi). About 50% of the CAS is workers, 25% unemployed and 25% students, all from working class backgrounds. CAS has no clear political perspectives as yet.

ROMANIA : There was no constituted group at the conference, although Nicolas Trifon who is exiled in France was present - he is editor of the excellent libertarian magazine on Eastern Europe, "IZTOK".

YUGOSLAVIA : Again there is no constituted group, but some individuals were present at Trieste. Some were in favour of a market economy, some were opposed.

USSR : The anarcho-syndicalist group KAS was set

up in May, and it drew in the network around the magazine OBCHTCHINA, giving it several active groups throughout the federation. Its' representative at Trieste were against the class struggle, for a market economy, for non-violence and for participation in municipal elections. Nevertheless the KAS has several currents within it which do not agree with these views. Outside the KAS are two other groupings, the ASSA (individualists and anarcho-syndicalists) and the AKRS (Union of Revolutionary Anarchist Communists) which was not represented at Trieste.

BULGARIA: Appearing in autumn 1989 the Anarchist Communist Federation of Bulgaria was set up on the initiative of exiles. It has libertarian communist positions, but for the moment seems cut off from youth and the social movements.

The East European movement is very young. It has emerged after many years of a political Ice Age. The only experience to which it relates is the 'Revolution of 1989' with its many contradictions. It will commit many errors. It is up to class struggle anarchists in the West to debate with those in the Eastern European countries, exchange experiences, provide literature and material support. Only in this way, and not from an arrogant, sterile 'principled' position, can worthwhile developments take place.●

ROMANIA'S MINERS:

Loyal thugs of the ruling class?

THE 'TRAMPS, GYPSIES, students and oppositionists' who hurled molotov cocktails at police lines, stormed and set fire to their main headquarters, and attacked a government-run TV station in Bucharest, on June 13, were "the same sort of embittered youth that battled with your police in the Trafalgar Square riots", Romanian President Ion Iliescu confided to a visiting Labour Party MP later that month.

Peripheral

These 'golani' ('down-and-outs' as they were dubbed) had, he explained, launched an "organised attempt" to bring down his National Salvation Front (NSF) government. In a later thank-you speech to Romanian miners who he summoned to Bucharest to stamp out the protest, he described how their actions had prevented "an attempted coup by a force of extremist, rightist elements... with iron-guardist and fascist character(istics)... (who had drawn on) all kinds of peripheral, parasitic elements of our society".

These included, 'black-marketeers', 'pimps', 'smugglers', 'ex-prisoners', and - referring to the protestors who for seven weeks had been camped in University Square - "those who lived in a drugged climate of moral misery and corruption".

It was Iliescu's success in painting the Bucharest rioters as a diseased, quasi-fascist mob of degenerates and untouchables (made easier by the NSF's total control over the national media and the orchestrated destruction of opposition newspaper offices by the miners) that enabled him to first isolate, and then crush, this the most serious threat to his rule since the December coup and the ousting of Ceausescu.

Attempting to contain and neutralise uprisings - by claiming them to be the work of hostile, alien elements, separate from the rest of the oppressed - is a favourite ruling class strategy. In Hungary in 1956, the Government blamed the workers' uprising on "fascists and reactionaries"; Thatcher blamed "criminal elements" for the poll tax riots; Lech Walesa blamed recent railworkers strikes in Poland on the agitation of "dis-affected ex-Communists"; Strangeways Governor Brendan O'Friel blamed "an explosion of evil" on "the work of the Devil". It's proved to be an effective tactic.

When Iliescu called on the miners to rush to Bucharest to "defend the revolution" from the golani he was confident both that they would come, and that they would do their job with a brutal enthusiasm.

Like Ceausescu, Iliescu realised the importance to the regime of maintaining the loyalties of powerful, key groups of industrial workers. After a damaging strike in 1977, the mines were flooded with Securitate (secret police) agents, to quell unrest and spy on militant workers.

On assuming office, one of the first acts of the Iliescu administration was to double miners' wages, introduce a four-day week, and halve some production targets. Whilst the vast majority of the poor and working class in Romania have continued to exist in abject poverty, since the 'ending' of the Ceausescu dictatorship, the miners have enjoyed some tangible material benefits from NSF rule. Their living and working conditions remain utterly miserable (90 miners were killed in accidents in the Jiu Valley field alone last year). They still often have to crawl to the pit-face on their hands and knees in baking heat and choking dust - but now they earn twice as much for doing so. After years under the yoke of Ceausescu "people are grateful, pathetically so, for small improvements in their daily lives" as one commentator put it.

When news came from Bucharest on official TV that a gang of 'hoodlums and work-shy students' were attempting to overthrow the government and put those improvements at risk, the miners collected their clubs, boarded the government-organised trains and prepared (for the third time this year) to protect Iliescu, and - by doing so, they believed - themselves. For the present, the NSF has bought itself the loyalty of the miners.

As Bucharest hospitals filled up with the seemingly random victims of the miners' violence, Securitate agents in the capital donned miners work-clothes and directed operations to ensure all important targets (ie the homes and headquarters of NSF opponents) were hit. Riot cops joined in too. The threat of a 'coup' allowed Iliescu a cover under which - through the miners - he could move to terrorise into silence all forms of opposition. Rival party offices were ransacked, their printing presses smashed. Known militants and dissidents

were arrested, others escaped the net and fled into hiding.

If ordinary Romanians needed any more persuading of just how little had been changed by 'the revolution' - for all their bloody sacrifice - the return of an atmosphere of fear and panic to the streets of the capital was a graphic confirmation that though the tyrant Ceausescu was dead, the tyranny lived on.

To make any sense of the confusing alliance of class forces that did battle on the streets of Bucharest, and examine what might happen in the future, we need to study the politics and objectives of the different sets of combatants.

What then of the golani, the 'great unwashed'? They took Iliescu's intended insult, and turned into a sign of their resistance: 'yes, we are the golani, and proud of it'. Their encampment in University Square became a focus for opposition after the NSF (who first pledged to stand down after a 'caretaker' period in government at the start of the year) won the elections, stitched up for them by their control of the national press and TV. As Romania's first new Parliamentary session opened, a crowd of demonstrators gathered outside chanting "Down with Communism", reflecting the growing realisation of a vocal minority that the new government was in fact stuffed full of Ceausescu's old hench-men and officials.

Class

The golani that set up camp in the Square, were - it seems - mainly students, but included groups of workers and the unemployed too. They were united in their opposition to Stalinist-style 'communism' and in the belief that the NSF "have stolen the revolution". Beyond that, as in every other cross-class, intellectual 'opposition movement' elsewhere in Eastern Europe, they will have differed wildly: between those wanting an immediate introduction of a western-style market, or the return of a monarchy; some left-ists, syndicalists, Trotskyists; and anarchists and libertarian communists too.

What got quickly lost in the media coverage of the initial rioting in this country, was that some of the golani were totally opposed to attacks on the police station and tried to defuse the situation by agreeing to end their camp-protest, and disperse peacefully. Only a section of the golani had prepared "what

STATEMENT FOR THE TRIESTE CONFERENCE 14-17 APRIL 1990
DRAWN UP BY DELEGATES FROM THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION, THE ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP AND THE NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK [BRITAIN], UNION DES TRAVAILLEURS COMMUNISTES LIBERTAIRES AND THE COLLECTIF JEUNES LIBERTAIRES [FRANCE] AND TAT BLATT, SCHWARZE DISTEL AND AUSGEMEINSCHAFT [AUSTRIA].

The representatives of libertarian communist organisations present at this meeting of Western European Libertarian comrades want to draw attention to certain points in the debate with our Eastern European comrades.

Because of the tenor of the debates in the different commissions that have been held, we hope that our Eastern European comrades do not return to their countries where state capitalism and authoritarian Marxism are collapsing, and where the building of a new mode of organisation of society is the order of the day, with a false image of the libertarians of the West.

These comrades should know that:

1. We are not advocates of the Western consumer society.
2. We are totally and unreservedly opposed to the market economy and the doctrine of free enterprise
3. We aim not to act on the margins of society, but in its' midst, to transform it, in social movements, because for us the central agent of the revolutionary process is the working class.

We find it disquieting, to say the least, for some libertarians to seek to export anarchist dogmas to countries where anarchism had as its theoreticians and has today such reference points as people like Bakunin, Kropotkin, Archinov and Makhno.

Within a re-defined framework of discussion, we will be ready to fully contribute to the debate and we think it possible that some initiatives of concrete solidarity will be possible.

was obviously a vast reserve of petrol bombs", and were willing to take on the cops and try to seize the TV station to spread news of their uprising.

From this distance, forced to rely on the capitalist media, it's impossible to objectively assess the political make-up of the minority that battered their way into the police station and set light to bus-barricades in the street. It'd be encouraging to think that that minority didn't risk their lives for the chance to shop at Laura Ashley, eat at McDonalds, or wave a plastic flag while watching the changing of the Palace Guard.

Sadly, recent events in Eastern Europe are all too full of instances of 'militant struggles' (including those fought for by working class groups) for thoroughly reactionary ends.

Certainly there will have been a minority of positive anti-capitalist forces at work amongst the golani rioters. How significant they were, we can't as yet say. But our job is to try to identify and support those elements - not simply dismiss the whole affair as a squabble between rival groups of would-be capitalists.

Weaknesses

What is also unclear, is whether those who joined in the attack hoped and expected other sections of the dispossessed and downtrodden, (including the industrial working class), to join them in mounting a serious challenge to NSF rule, or whether theirs was a largely spontaneous reaction to the police attack on their camp. If it was the former, the golani seriously over-estimated the level of support they enjoyed. If growing numbers are rapidly concluding that their 'revolution' never really happened, they currently lack the confidence to confront the Salvation Front head-on, and certainly don't agree on what the NSF should be replaced by. As a result, the golani faced first the police truncheons, and then the miners' clubs, alone.

This highlights the two massive weaknesses that crippled the rebellion. Firstly, the 'broad-front' nature of the opposition movement - in which proletarian interests are submerged in a mish-mash of conflicting and contradictory politics. And, secondly, despite the presence of a small number of workers in the golani's ranks, they are clearly detached from the bulk of the working class, failing to organise around issues of even immediate concern to Romania's poor. The fact that the most visible and militant form of resistance to the regime mounted thus far was - basically - a 'peace camp', is proof of this detachment.

The crushing of the golani revolt won the praise of some sections of the British Left. As well as the predictable

Stalinist support for the miners' "speedy response to President Illiescu's call to defend democracy" (*Morning Star*, June 15), both the Militant Tendency and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) - to name but two - joined the chorus of approval.

Accepting without question the regime's portrayal of the rioters as being "led by middle class intellectuals and students whose aims is the introduction (sic) of capitalism", the RCP put the riot down to the disaffected jealousy of an intelligensia who had "largely been excluded from the corridors of power" (*tns* 23 June). Militant - as might be expected - put things more crudely: the 'provocative' violence of the demonstrators, incensed the miners who "showed themselves to be a formidable barrier to capitalist restoration (sic)". "The workers", it explained, "understand the advantages of a planned economy", adding ominously: "They were putting down a counter-revolutionary minority and we'd do exactly the same". (*Militant* 29 June).

It's worth recalling that both these groups gave enthusiastic support to the Tiananmen Square protests in China last year - although the demands of the Chinese students were equally as class-confused and politically incoherent as the golani's are.

What's disturbed Western capitalist commentators is not so much the catalogue of smashed skulls and broken limbs chalked up by the miners, but by the spectacle of seeing Illiescu encouraging sections of his own working class (those

"dirty faced runts" as *The Observer* described them) to take matters directly into their own hands. Having evoked the power of the working class, Illiescu may in the future be unable to diffuse or control it.

What, then, persuaded the National Salvation Front to take such a risk? The battle of Bucharest seemed to take them completely by surprise. Illiescu's alarm call to the miners was more of a panic gut-reaction than a calculated tactical move. While Illiescu dealt with this eruption of political street violence with relative ease, it was really the last thing he - or the Front - needed.

Divisions

The NSF are beset with problems. There are deep divisions within the Front over the pace and direction of economic change. Since taking power, the NSF has seen productivity in the factories slump alarmingly. There is a growing rift between Illiescu and the Prime Minister Petre Roman, and between army and police chiefs. The miners' action led to the (doubtless temporary) suspension of millions of dollars of investment from the West, which they need urgently.

Illiescu lacks the total support of either the leaders or the ordinary ranks of the police: he blamed the severity of the rioting on their half-hearted response to the initial violence. He since

switched control of the police to army officials, established a National Guard and replaced the Minister of the Interior. Some analysts are predicting the break up of the NSF under these pressures.

The deployment of the miners as the government's stormtroopers, highlights two things about the Illiescu regime. First, that they have successfully driven a wedge into the Romanian working class, by convincing the miners that their interests are bound up in the survival of the regime. Second, it shows that Illiescu understands where the ultimate power in his society - in any society - lies: in the hands of the working class. As long as that power remains passive, divided and confused about its own real interests, the ruling class (if not Illiescu himself, or the NSF) will survive intact and in control.

In the city of Timisoara, birthplace of 'the revolution', protests sprang up in response to the miners' attacks. In a development typical of the distortion of class alliances endemic in Romania (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe), local army chiefs pledged to defend nervous protestors against any future assault by maurading miners.

What then of the future? The NSF's problems look set to multiply. The ruling class needs to try to stabilise an increasingly volatile situation, probably by moving towards more 'democratic' methods of control, to buy time and passify its liberal-democratic opponents. It could purge a few sacrificial Ceausescu-ites from its own ranks and offer more social reforms too. But its freedom of manoeuvre is limited by economic constraints: the Treasury's coffers are empty.

Austerity

Within days of the miners' return to the coalfields, Illiescu was forced - by the need to unfreeze an EEC trade deal - to publicly criticize the miners' "over-reactions" and "excesses". Since then, Prime Minister Roman has attacked lazy and incompetent workers - including miners - for the productivity losses that the country can barely afford. He's warned that the losses must be made good.

And there, for the regime, is the rub. To turn round Romania's chronically backward, inefficient economy, means railroading through a major austerity package at the expense of the already

impoverished Romanian working class. As one Liberal Party spokeswoman understood: "One can not easily ask a miner for his help one day, and then shut down his mine - however unproductive - the next".

With the fall of Ceausescu, the poor's expectations have risen, not declined. Many workers, miners included, will simply be unwilling to suffer further attacks on subsistence living standards, in return for the promise of 'jam tomorrow'.

During the 1977 coal strike, 30,000 Romanian miners struck in protest against punitive wage-cuts imposed by Ceausescu after they failed to meet impossibly high production targets. They took the Prime Minister hostage for three days during the dispute.

As the reality of the NSF's reform programme becomes clearer, many of the criss-cross class alliances already under strain in the Romanian 'opposition movement', will snap - and the poor's real class interests come into sharper focus.

If that happens, Illiescu may regret the day he taught the miners how easy it was to impose their will on the streets of Bucharest.●



Miners patrol Bucharest in search of the rioters



Rioter amid burning cars outside Bucharest's wrecked police station

Nationalism, republicanism and the *real* class struggle in Ireland

ANTHONY WAS BORN and brought up in northern Armagh. Like most working class catholics, his family's history is a history of struggle against the British and Orange states. Anthony has not written a book on northern Irish politics, nor does he claim to be a 'leader' or 'spokesman' for his community. We chose to interview him because he has experienced sectarianism and the class struggle at first hand. His efforts with friends to forge links between two working class communities attracted attention and threats from both the Loyalist UDA and Republican IRA.

We do not believe that working class unity is merely an "empty slogan". It is a united working class that will smash the Orange state. We continue to support the oppressed minority in their refusal to be terrorised into submission by the forces of the Orange and British states. However this does not mean "solidarity with the IRA".

Barrier

Because of their politics, Sinn Fein are a barrier to workers' unity in that they fail to acknowledge that such unity is necessary to the struggle. Their struggle is not one of social revolution, they do not want to dramatically change society, they want a political revolution to gain political power over the Irish working class. The ACF does not necessarily agree with all the views expressed, but we feel the interview is useful in furthering libertarian discussion on the issue.

"ORGANISE!: LOUGHGALL, CO ARMAGH WAS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE ORANGE ORDER. HOW MUCH INFLUENCE TO THEY HAVE OVER THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTY?"

ANTHONY: I live very near an Orange Hall. It is an exclusively male, and, of course, an exclusively protestant club. I would liken the Orange Order to the English masons, only the Orange Order is much more sinister.

The influence of the Orange Lodges prevails in everything, in every aspect of northern Irish life, and in every strata and class of society. They are designed for protestant unity, to keep interaction between the two communities to a minimum. It is expected that every protestant in a position of authority will be in an Orange Lodge.

Orange Lodges recruit very young. They get kids and start them marching, then indoctrinate them into the ways of the Lodge, to make them safe and sectarian grown up protestants.

The catholics also have their own version of the Orange Order, the 'Ancient Order of Hibernians'. It is not as influential.

The basic aim of both these organisations, both run by the upper and

middle classes, is to maintain the sectarian status quo. They're afraid of any interaction, because once the two working classes come together, they'll realise they have more in common than they've been led to believe.

Q: IN BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TERMS BELFAST VERY MUCH GREW UP SEPERATELY FROM THE REST OF THE NORTH. HOW IS THIS REFLECTED IN THE TROUBLES OF THE PRESENT DAY? HOW DIFFERENT IS THE SITUATION IN ARMAGH?

A: Belfast was a very protestant city until partition, then the protestant bosses needed cheap catholic labour. Catholics now make up about 30% of the city.

Although Belfast was not really in the front line of the civil rights movement at the start, it soon became the focal point of the struggle because of

the exploitation and discrimination of catholic workers.

Belfast is very much three cities in one: middle class protestant areas; working class protestant areas; and working class catholic areas. A great deal of conflict is between the two working class areas. A great deal of effort is expended in 'protecting' middle class areas from the worst excesses of the violence.

Split

Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland ('Gods own city, the Devil's own people'). The city and its population are split 50-50, between catholics and protestants.

It is not an industrial city, but conflicts regularly break out between the two communities. Our local 'leaders'

play the communities off against each other. The protestant leaders say 'the catholics complain too much, they have it easy now, they've come a long way and there's no longer any discrimination'. But, the catholics see they have worse standards of housing, worse jobs and worse facilities and they blame their protestant neighbours.

The struggle is more intense in Belfast because that's where the unionists have more at stake. They are better organised, and because there is always the possibility to have an entirely protestant workforce it is easy for them to piss on the catholic minority.

Q: ARE THE FOLLOWING THREE STATEMENTS WHICH ARE ALL COMMONLY HEARD IN ENGLAND REALLY CORRECT OR ARE THEY MERELY MYTHS OF THE LEFT? FIRSTLY, 'THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT IS THE IRA AND SINN FEIN'?

A: It's much more than a myth of the left, it's also a myth of the right. It's very useful for the right to group the IRA and Sinn Fein together and call them the enemy.

Hoods

Similarly it's handy for people in England to forget or ignore the fact that there are many groups in northern Ireland fighting for emancipation but with different goals in mind, and with different methods to hand.

Q: SECONDLY, 'THE IRA AND SINN FEIN ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE OPPOSING THE BRITISH STATE'?

A: There are many people, and groups, opposing not only the British state but

also the way our society is at the minute, and for a change in it. The IRA and Sinn Fein say they're fighting to change society, but they are fighting for a society on their terms.

For example, those high up in the IRA and Sinn Fein enjoy enormous privileges. Also there are massive profits to be made from extortion and protection rackets in northern Ireland. The IRA own many drinking and gambling clubs (which is preying on their own people) and also taxi services.

It's well known that those high up in the IRA enjoy good houses and cars particularly. They are all paid for by the profits of racketeering. We often see the local IRA Brigadier driving through our shitty council estates in his brand new Mercedes Benz.

The only reason why the IRA try to stop 'hoods and gangsters' in catholic communities, is because these 'hoods' are muscling in on the IRA's own business.

In Belfast there are meetings between catholic and protestant paramilitary leaders to, in effect, carve up the city in terms of extortion.

Demise

Until 1987, the INLA was the most significant republican grouping after the IRA. The demise of the INLA was caused by disagreements concerning money. The INLA was at maximum only 200 people. They split into two groups, the IPLO (Irish People's Liberation Organisation) and the 'Belfast Brigade' which was still known as the INLA. In 1987 they were ripped apart by a feud: the IPLO actually wanted to do some fighting, while the Belfast Brigade were quite content to simply rake in profits from extortion.

Feud

Apart from Belfast, the main centre for the feud was Armagh. There were regular shootings and beatings. They self-destructed as could quite easily happen to the IRA.

Q: LASTLY, 'THE IRA ARE THE ONLY THING STOPPING A SECTARIAN POGROM'?

A: It's in the IRA's interests to maintain this 'myth' because it's a way of recruiting a lot more people. At times of stability and relative peace between the two communities the IRA don't do very well at all. They then revert to their old hardcore of members who try to stir up trouble between the communities.

Catholics always look to the IRA as

Continued over





their last line of defence, because they're seen to be armed and strong, but they're being misled.

Q: IS THERE A NEED FOR ORGANISED CATHOLIC SELF-DEFENCE?

A: There was at the time of NICRA (Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association) because that was more of a sectarian struggle than a class struggle. Now the communities are interacting more, there's a need for class based struggle and self defence.

When the blinds that have been brought down by the middle class, Orange Order and church etc, are lifted slightly, the two communities will see they have the same enemy. Then workers' self defence will be necessary. The IRA are not going to support cross-community struggle, because it's not in their interests to.

Q: ARE THE IRA AND SINN FEIN AS NON-SECTARIAN AND SECULAR AS THEY'VE BEEN PORTRAYED BY THE LEFT AND THEMSELVES?

A: If they're secular and not tied up

with the church it's not through their own choice - they'd love to be associated with the catholic church, but they've been 'disassociated'.

As for being non-sectarian, well they may have one or two protestants, but that is it.

That's the main problem with the IRA, they say that they're non-sectarian, but on the ground they threaten people who make links between the two communities. For example, I myself and others have been threatened for being involved in a cross-community 'social group' in Armagh.

School

Also, I went to a mixed school in Armagh, where there was real pressure to only mix with your own community. That was my real education, going to this school and finding out that these people were the same as me. These people lived in some of the shittiest housing in Europe, but they still look down on us and say 'we're better than you'.

Q: DO YOU FEEL THAT SINN FEIN'S NATIONALISM IS A HINDRANCE TO THEIR ABILITY TO OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FACING THE WORKING CLASS?

A: Yes, absolutely. Nationalism is a narrow minded ideology which to some extent runs contrary to the needs and aspirations of a working class. You only have to look at examples of how Sinn Fein has pissed on the demands of the working class (eg refusing to support abortion rights, or to organise rank and file trade union activity to defend workers' struggles).

Sinn Fein will never be a movement of the working classes. They are at the minute, and probably always will be, a section of society encompassing all classes, which does not hold the interests of the working class dear to its heart.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT, WHOSE DEMANDS ARE FOR 'TROOPS OUT NOW' AND 'SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE'?

A: These people see 'troops out' as a cure-all solution to the problems of northern Ireland, when in fact immediate withdrawal will create many more.

It would create a pre-1969 situation with an Orange Order backlash against catholics because of the perceived withdrawal of 'Britishness'. It would strengthen and not weaken the Orange State and protestant supremacy. Thatcher would only withdraw after strengthening the Orange forces of the RUC and UDR.

Enemies

In my own experience the UDR and the RUC are seen as much more of a threat than the British troops. The British troops are seen as a foreign and historic enemy, while the RUC, UDR and UDA are very much the enemy at home.

Of course I want the troops out, but the withdrawal of troops must come with the emancipation of the working class. 'Self-determination for the Irish people'? What does that mean?"

Anthony is a socialist who has been alienated from the republican movement because of his faith in the masses rather than the organisations who try to act on their behalf.

In the early years of the present struggles it was the radical nature of the republican movement and especially the small groups who held sway within it that shook the British state to its core. We must identify and show solid-



arity with the most progressive elements of the movement. Assist our Irish comrades in the building of a strong cross-community all Ireland anarchist movement.

Although it is partition, the Orange state and sectarian politics which divide the Irish working class,

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT was drafted by the ACF's Ireland Commission, based on discussions at our last national conference, and has been endorsed by the rest of the organisation:

"The working class of Ireland is divided and exploited by British structures of imperialism, which are part of a wider Western imperialism. This imperialism has many forms - political, economic, cultural and strategic. In this context it is clearly a myth and a media lie that the Irish war is a religious war. Religion has been used by the British state to divide the Irish working class in order to maintain their interests. We support the class struggle in Ireland - North and South - that is attempting to oppose these divisions, oppressions and exploitations.

The presence of British troops in Ireland is only one aspect of imperialist domination. As in any fight against imperialism, we support the removal of capitalist troops through united internationalist working class action. The removal of troops on any other basis would only occur if the interests of the British and international ruling class were maintained, and such a move would have nothing to offer the Irish working class.

As anarchist communists we see that nationalistic and hierarchical resistance can merely unite a capitalist Ireland. Both the "stages theory" and the idea of "self determination" would lead to such an outcome, neither benefiting the Irish working class, nor advancing the international fight against capitalism and its protectors, nation states. Thus they are an irrelevance to the class struggle, as are the nationalist and elitist organisations that advocate these methods and goals.

It is only through a generalised class struggle - both social and armed - that a world wide anarchist communist society can be envisaged."

the nature of republican resistance is a problem we cannot ignore as revolutionaries.

The IRA and Sinn Fein will undoubtedly try to hold on tight to the reigns of power in the republican movement, just as they try to control all struggle against the British state, in the guise of 'community policing':

Message

"This is a special message for young people - no hi-jackings, no joy riding, no stone throwing at the Brits. If you want to do these things, there are organisations to do this for you", Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein President.

But, they must be challenged. We must not be sycophantic, afraid to criticise: Sinn Fein's politics are rotten to the core, and their right to leadership of the working class must be challenged, just as we deny the legitimacy of loyalist organisations 'representing' the class.

Otherwise the struggle for freedom will go on, well after the present 'troubles' have ended.●

The poll tax flagship heads for the rocks

THEY BADLY NEEDED a clear cut, decisive victory to dent the growing confidence of their opponents. In the end, the government suffered a series of messy, humiliating defeats as the first attempts by local councils in England and Wales to force poll tax non-payers to pay up through the courts ended in chaos and confusion.

The government - both local and national - had hoped a swift series of 'enforcement orders' dished out to the first poll tax defaulters hauled up before the bench, would show (in the full glare of the media spotlights) - the futility of trying to evade payment of the Charge. Instead, they saw the non-payment movement clock up a series of inspiring, confidence-boosting victories.

First in the Isle of Wight and then in South Tyneside, cases collapsed in a morass of bureaucratic incompetence in early June, as the first 'official' estimates of non-payers to be published admitted that - nationally - around a third of those on the Charge register had yet to pay a penny of their first bills.

The same official (under)estimates acknowledged that in some areas the situation was even worse. In most inner-London areas, officials were conceding that around 75% of those obliged to pay has so far ignored all reminders. By the end of April, Camden council in north London had received only 4% of poll tax monies owed. In the Tory-run 'flagship' borough of Wandsworth (with the lowest poll tax level in the country) council officials had sent out an initial 4,800 summonses to defaulters. Greenwich had got in £1.6m, instead of the £5m it expected; Hackney £1m out of £4m; Southwark £1.5m out of £5.2m. In Chelsea, Lambeth and Kensington, poll tax administration is in too much of a mess for their Treasuries even to guess at the levels of non-payment.

In Rotherham, 40% of residents had paid nothing. In Birmingham 50%. In Scotland, where the tax has now been in force for 17 months, total arrears of unpaid poll tax now stand at above £170m, and show no signs of coming down. Such high levels of arrears are putting an enormous strain on council financing: there simply isn't sufficient cash in many authorities' coffers to meet all their own bills. "We have something like a £15 million gap between what we pay out, and what we are getting in", the

borough Treasurer for Wigan council explained to the press. "We've already forked out £300,000 on interest payments, on money we borrowed to cover the shortfall. It's costing us £3.50 a minute, 24 hours a day - and our situation is not unusual".

Treasury analysts confirm that Wigan's experience is, indeed, typical. Council borrowing in April was £900 million higher than in the same month last year - a clear indication of the extent of non-payment local authority's were preparing for.

In Strathclyde region (Britain's biggest authority) £87 million of last year's poll tax remains unpaid. Council officials there estimate that as much as £50 million of that may have to be written off as "bad debts".

Labour local government spokesman David Blunkett told the BBC evening news on July 17 that Labour councils threatening non-payers were doing "a first-class job in almost impossible circumstances".

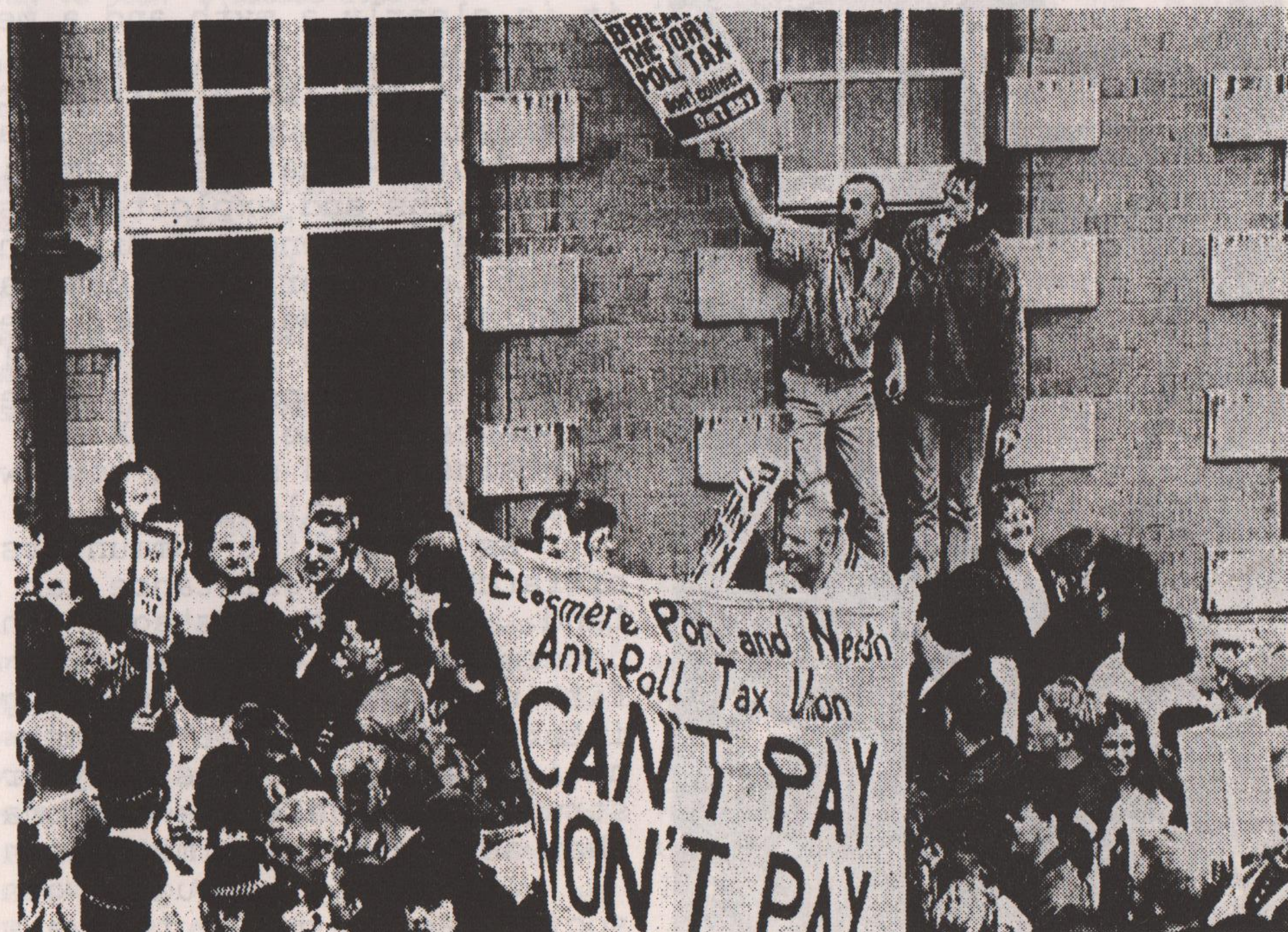
Mass non-payment of the poll tax is now an incontestable nationwide fact. A year's experience in Scotland shows that, while the numbers of non-payers may dip a little (as a trickle of court enforcement and wage arrearments take effect), a mass campaign of payment refusal can sustain itself over time. In the current political climate, we were never going to see a majority of the

working class joining a movement centred on non-payment. But a significant, sizeable section of our class has proved its determination not to bow to poll tax law. The task before us now, is not so much to convince people of the need for non-payment, but to encourage the mass of non-payers to organise their resistance collectively.

The bureaucratic inertia that has dogged the poll tax from the beginning, is - if anything - worsening as the months go by. "I've described the poll tax as a nightmare", a tired and emotional Birmingham Treasury official explained. "But the poll tax is different... You wake up from a nightmare". Birmingham's council has already prepared to write-off £7m as "uncollectable", admitting that "it could prove much higher". In Labour controlled Birmingham's poll tax nerve centre, they're preparing to send out 250,000 final demands. As office clerks slog through an awesome mountain of unanswered mail, council officials have taken to hiding truckloads of unopened mail-bags in a secret store room, fearing the sight of them "would have an adverse effect on our staff's motivation". Other councils' officials are equally depressed.

Inner-city bureaucrats are also discovering to their cost just how mobile 'their' populations are - making the compiling of accurate poll tax registers impossible. "The Government has no idea of how many changes of address we're supposed to keep us with", complains Islington council leader Margaret Hodge. "99% of the rates were collected. Houses, unlike people, don't do inconsiderate things like moving around". How accurate, then, were her lists of potential payers? "God knows".

Problems with computer systems



Demonstrating solidarity with those up in court, in Warrington in June

custom-designed to administer the tax are rife too. In many authorities, the software in use is unable to accurately log a payment against an individual account, or work out deductions for those on housing benefit or Income Support. The system in Rugby still isn't ready to be used. Manchester City Council admits to having "lost" thousands of names from its records. The result? that many of those who've paid received threatening final demands, as non-payers are overlooked.

Industrial action against the poll tax, while increasing, remains sporadic and, as yet, largely unconnected to the non-payment movement.

Disputes involving poll tax workers have broken out in a number of places including York, Hammersmith, Sunderland, Slough and - most notably - in Greenwich, London. There, 160 housing workers went on all-out indefinite strike, in support of cashiers suspended by the council for refusing to take on poll tax duties. But the strike was never a political anti-poll tax one. The cashiers weren't up in arms over the poll tax, but wanted better terms and conditions for taking on the extra work.

We obviously support such action, but (to coin a phrase) "without illusions".

Efficiently

As one of the strikers wrote in Labour Briefing "the strike could be resolved if Greenwich Council coughed up some more money to collect its poll tax more efficiently". In the end, that's exactly what happened, as NALGO and the council stitched up a compromise deal. While on strike workers distributed leaflets to Greenwich residents (including the 30% who aren't paying), urging them not to cross their picket lines. Now the dispute is settled, those same workers will begin the job of sending out final demands to those non-payers urging them to "cough up".

Turning that sectional dispute into the kind of action that sought to unite those housing workers with the thousands of local non-payers requires a major shift in the political orientation of the action. Attempts to achieve that are made more difficult by the actions of Left-ists who make out we've just witnessed an "anti-poll tax strike".

More encouraging have been the first examples of concerted action against the threat to workers' jobs from poll tax capping. In June, around 1,000 teachers in Barnsley struck for a day in protest at the announcement of the loss of 23 teachers' jobs in the borough due to poll tax cuts. The 'unofficial' strike was in defiance of a NUT ban on any industrial action on the issue. Local teachers have responded to the union's threat to discipline the

organisers, by planning a further three one-day strikes. Teachers in Bristol have held a one-day strike too.

Council workers in Haringey - where a £14 million package of cuts threatens over 600 jobs - voted in mid-July for an eight day programme of strike action, and indefinite strike action in selected areas. Haringey NALGO officials immediately called on the council to enter "meaningful" talks on the cuts to avoid confrontation".

While the Barnsley, Bristol and Haringey developments are significant, the action being taken and planned is nothing like as widespread or militant as we should now be witnessing. Many council workforces have yet to meet - even in their separate sections - to discuss the threat to their jobs. The scale of action necessary to seriously challenge the poll tax cuts threat, is in a different league to that we're seeing discussed now. And while the votes at both NALGO and NUT conferences not to sanction industrial action against the poll tax left some workers angry and determined to fight regardless of the union, it left others demobilised and unwilling.

As attempts to beat poll tax capping through the courts fail, and the scale of resultant cuts in services becomes clearer, limited action will certainly spread. But as yet, the industrial wing of poll tax resistance looks set to badly lag behind the community campaign of non-payment.

Elsewhere on the industrial front, the very first wage arrestment orders against Scottish non-payers have been granted against workers in a Dundee sweet factory. Workers at the Keiller plant have held mass meetings to discuss their response. This is against the background of growing unease amongst employers at being drawn into poll tax enforcement. The Engineers' Federation has warned the government that workers seeing their bosses deduct their unpaid poll tax at source could "lead to a serious deterioration in labour relations". The Financial Times too has warned of the "potentially disastrous consequences" of the widespread use of such powers.

Elections

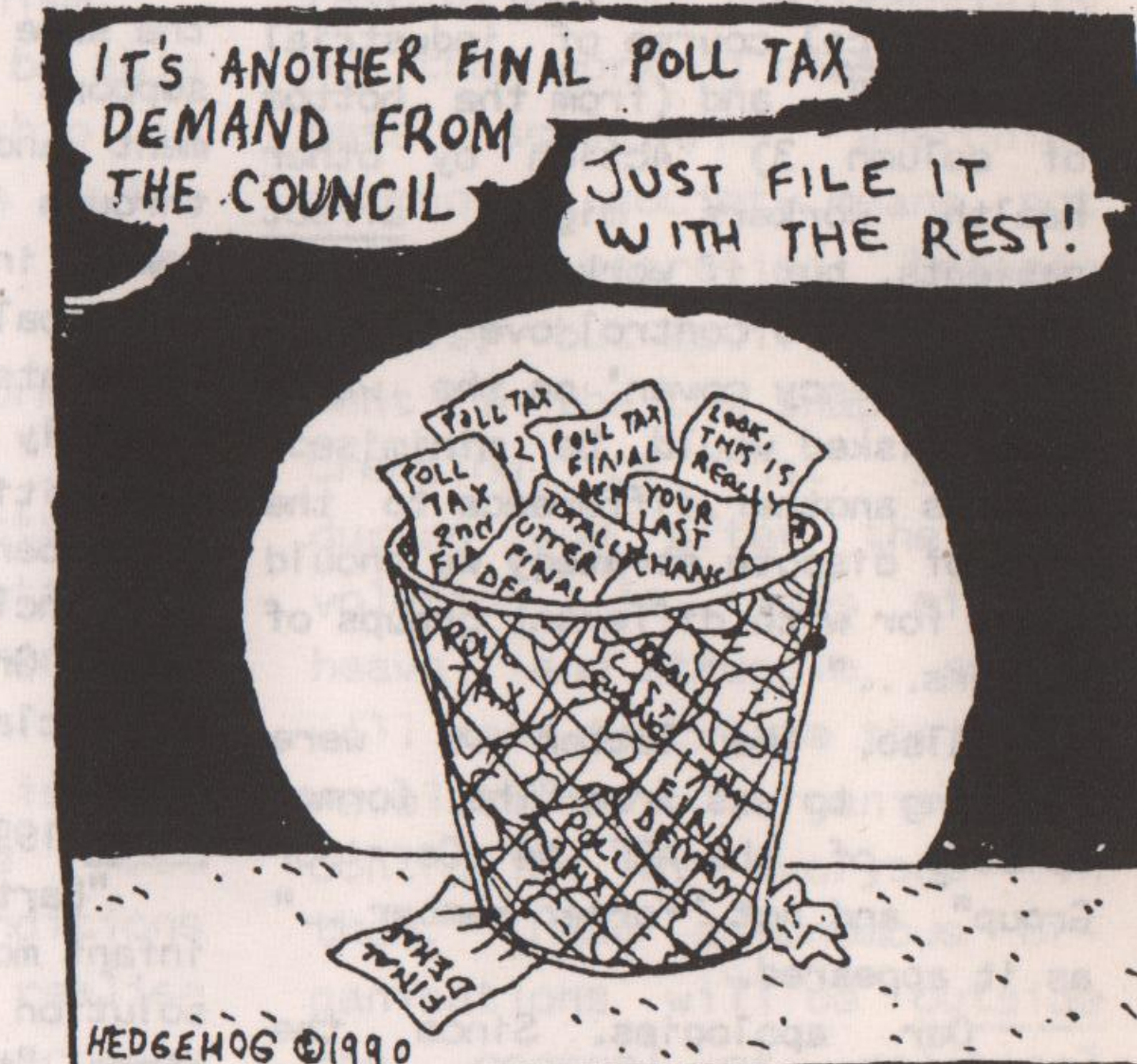
The May local election results sent a mixture of confusing messages to both Labour and Conservative camps about the impact of the poll tax on voting habits. We've long argued that the poll tax is a means of ensuring local councils destroy their own services in a "battle of the budgets" with their opponents, competing to offer the local electorate the lowest possible Community Charge.

In Wandsworth and elsewhere in London, 'low-spending' Tory councils

swept to power in defiance of the national swing towards Labour. But in Bradford, home of the infamous axe-swinging Pickles administration, the Tories were ousted and a Labour council returned.

But if the Tories have yet to totally win the argument that high Community Charge levels are the fault of spend-crazy local councils, Labour officials country-wide have taken full note of the dreaded "London effect".

One of the first statements of the newly-installed Bradford Labour council was to explain it "could not promise to reverse the planned cuts" of the Pickles period. Haringey Labour leader Toby Harris announcing plans to shut day centres for the elderly, end free home



helps, close swimming pools, and chop £1.5m in grants to voluntary bodies, bemoaned his lot: "We have been faced with choices none of us imagined possible", he complains: "Do we close libraries or schools? sports centres or nurseries?". His 'disbelief' at the butchery he is preparing to perform will be of little comfort to those he expects to bear the brunt of his axe-blows.

His colleagues in Derbyshire face similar dilemmas in deciding exactly where to clobber the poor. Faced with imposed budget cuts of £40m it is clear that nothing is safe: not even the agreement of no compulsory redundancies for local teachers - "There is no absolute promise that that cannot change", one official warned.

On a national level, the Government is clearly worried. The day after it was revealed that high levels of non-payment were forcing up government borrowing, the Tories announced plans to shelve their 'care in the community' legislation for two years. If introduced now, the new law would have upped poll tax bills by an average of £50 a year. But poll tax levels look set to rise by around 10% next year anyway, even allowing for the government's expected multi-million cash-handout to local authorities.

All things considered, the Tories' 'flagship' looks like it's heading for the rocks at full steam ahead. •

Striking errors

DUE TO AN unfortunate error on the Letters page of the last issue of *Organise!*, a section of our 'author's reply' to a letter about the ambulance dispute appeared in the wrong order.

The first eight lines at the top of the third column should have been at the bottom of the third column.

The column breaks would then have read: (from the bottom of column 2) "But it's no use pretending that every single group of workers can and should follow an identical course of industrial action...", and (from the bottom of column 3) "Action by other health workers might affect patients, but if workers asserted their direct control over levels of 'emergency cover' on the wards that risked would be minimised. There's another difference to the kind of dispute strategy we should argue for with different groups of workers..."

Also, the letter we were replying to was from "The former members of the ACF M4 Corridor Group", and not "former member..." as it appeared.

Our apologies. Since the discovery of these errors, one of the Nottingham *Organise!* editors has decided they now "wish to spend more time with their family" and has agreed to retire early on health grounds.

Yours suitably purged,
The Eds
Nottingham

Ecology and class

I HAVE A couple of questions about the "Ecology and Class" article in the last issue of *Organise!*: these basically concern your sources for certain claims.

(1) The German Green Party's support for nuclear power at state level: I am confused about this as I thought they had always firmly opposed it, indeed that such opposition had been crucial to their growth and support.

(2) "Earth First's" support for AIDS.

(3) Britain's Green Party refusing to back mass non-payment (of the poll tax - *Organise!*): To quote from a "Briefing for Local Green Parties" handed out at a recent anti-poll tax meeting - "The Green Party... considers non-payment and non-implementation as positive options for those who choose them". Admittedly this can

be read in an individualistic way, but it still doesn't bear out your claim.

So on this and the other two points, I'd be interested in your evidence for making these statements.

In the meantime, congratulations on a worthwhile read, which I hope to receive regularly in the future!

Adrian
Essex

AUTHOR'S REPLY: THANKS for your letter. I contended that when in power at State level, the German Green's sanctioned continued construction of a nuclear power plant. That source was an article I read in an old *Black Flag* a few years ago, but that's from memory, so... On firmer ground (and making the same point) despite gathering support from the squatters movement and having themselves risen through it, Die Grunen, when in power in the West Berlin senate (in coalition with the Social Democrats) sent in 300 police to forcibly evict the large squatted communities in Kreuzberg and Schoenberg. When the squatters (who included many radicals) resisted, Green politicians announced a 'declaration of war' on anarchists and autonomists (*Black Flag*, 1990).

"Earth First!" advocate higher infant mortality and disease as a solution to overpopulation (sic) since "the only way to control population is to let natural pro-

cesses do it" (from an article by Miss Ann Thropy in *Earth First* 1986). The same author wrote the notorious article "Population & AIDS" (*Earth First!* 1987) which cheer-led epidemics. In the same vein Daniel Conner wrote "Is AIDS the answer to an environmentalists prayer?" (*Earth First* Yule 1987) which describes the virus as a kind of revenge by Gaia (the Earth as an super-organism).

The Green Party's original stance on the Poll Tax was against 'breaking the law' (stated before and at their last conference), which is by definition against non-payment. It has now changed somewhat to 'support' for individual non-payers. "The Green Party supports all those who themselves choose such means [non-violent civil disobedience]" (my emphasis). This is echoed in your quote from the same document "...for those who choose them". This allows non-payment as a moral stance for some individuals whose consciences may force them into breaking the law, and no more. Such 'support' is meaningless. It is like supporting strikers as individuals rather than their collective organisation and action.

This is not of course to decry the active non-payment organising by some Green Party grassroots activists or indeed some Labour supporters, but they should listen to what their Party is actually saying. The ACF recog-

nises that all political parties must uphold the law as the basis of their power. We recognise no such right to rule.

Irish prisoners

NOEL MURRAY and Marie Murray are anarchists imprisoned 15 years ago for the murder of an Irish policeman. How long is a life sentence? Marie is currently the longest serving female prisoner in the whole of Ireland.

"What is it like on the outside?" Marie Murray put that question to me when I visited her on a cold day last January. The visitors' portakabin, situated in the yard of Mountjoy Jail, has been Marie's only link with the world for 15 long years.

Despite a sense of outrage at having been locked up without hope, she was cheerful and chatty. Her husband, Noel, serving his life sentence in Limerick Jail 150 miles apart, has been able to get an odd lift in a prison van up to see her. Clearly the Murveys are not now seen as a threat to the affluent Irish society which is so evident on Dublin's fashionable streets.

A greeting at the far end of the cabin demanded instant attention. A bouncy, plumpish 23 year old, her rosy cheeks not yet affected by prison's pallor, was confident enough to ask her cousin for a kiss. He had come to see Majella Boland whose innocence is an example of the cruelty which a male dominated state can inflict on a mother and her child.

Majella, who began a life sentence last December, sought an Irish solution to a violent Irish problem. Her husband, Patrick Boland, beat and abused her and sometimes threatened to throw their daughter out of a bedroom window. Paying a friend £120 to give him a scare seemed cheap if it was to bring some respite. But a minder became a murderer and Patrick was shot dead.

Declan Malone (with whom Majella had no kind of relationship) pleaded guilty to murder and got life. But the god-fearing Christians of Ireland wanted Majella's life too and she was charged and subsequently found guilty of murder by a jury of six men and six women.

Letters of support will indicate that the outside world has not forgotten them. Please send letters to: Noel Murray, Limerick Jail, Ireland, and Majella Boland/Marie Murray, Mountjoy Jail, North Circular Rd, Dublin, Ireland.

EW
Nottingham

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 believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. 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 face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide,

ethnocide, and political and economic 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 international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

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

6. 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.

7. 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 on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions 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.

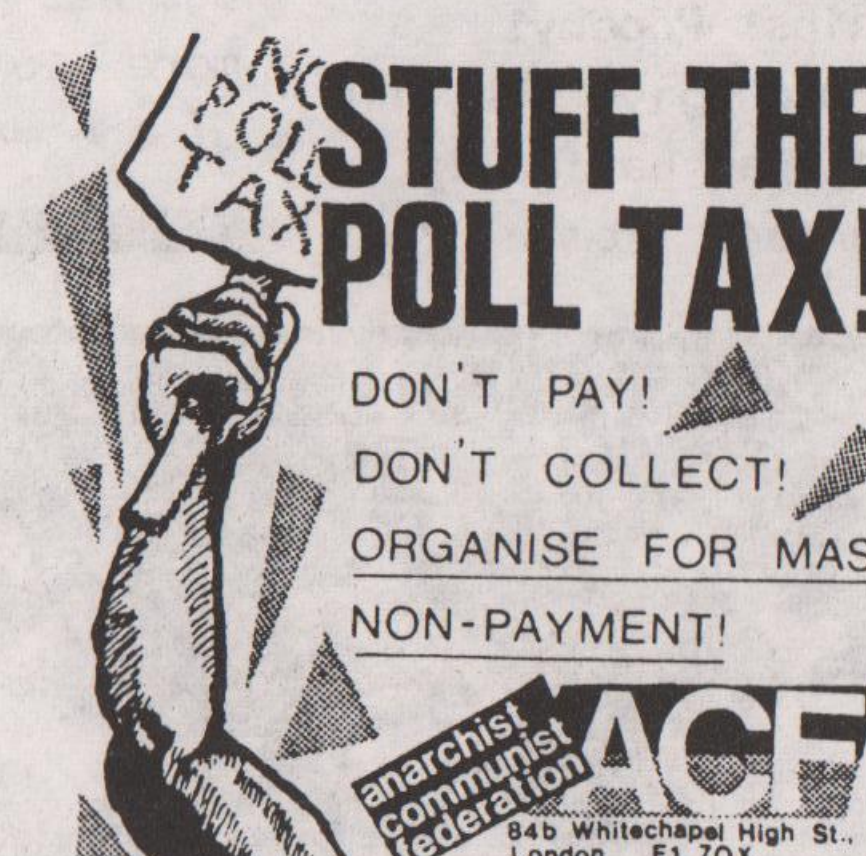
The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of

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 common point of 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.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary 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 the shaping and creating 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.

9. As anarchist 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. •

THESE AIMS AND principles contain another revised version of 'clause 3' on racism and sexism, following further discussion and debate at the ACF's Spring conference.



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