

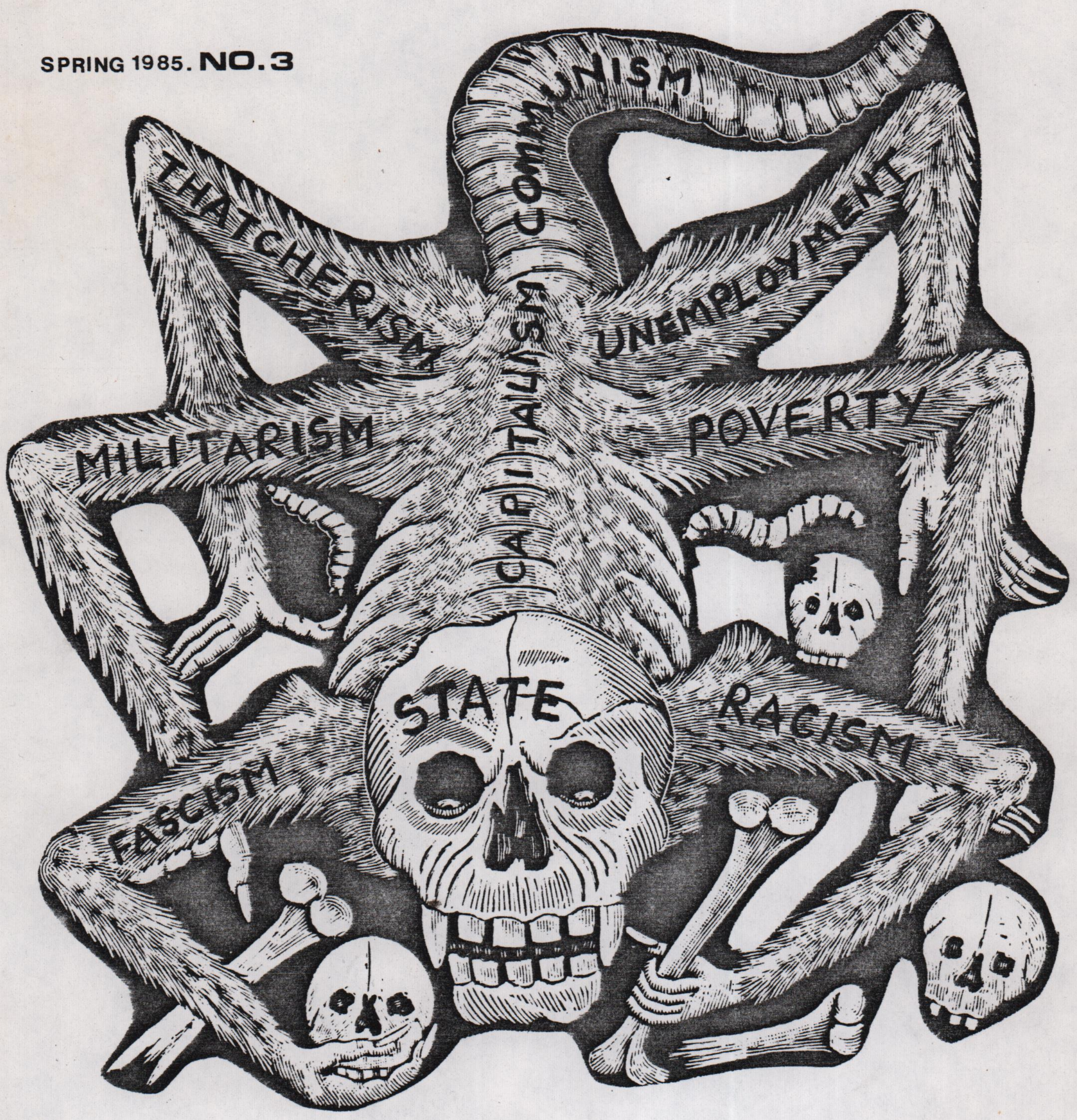
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VIRUS

(THE ENEMY WITHIN: MILITANT ANARCHISM.)

SPRING 1985. NO. 3



SPECIAL ISSUE ON VIOLENCE AND ANARCHISM

VIRUS

Welcome to VIRUS number 3. We would like any offers of help with future editions of the magazine, e.g. your letters, an article or a willingness to try and flog it. All correspondence to VIRUS c/o 84b, Whitechapel High St. (Angel Alley), London .E.1.

THE MINERS : DEFEATED BUT NOT DOWN



The miners have been beaten, of that there can be no doubt. Despite brave words about "heads being held high", there are hundreds of the most militant N.U.M. members who have not been taken back. This alone demonstrates most clearly that the war of attrition of the 12 month strike has ultimately worked to the advantage of the government.

But the miners are not broken. Many are just as defiant and militant as they were during the strike. There is plenty of scope for trouble in the coming months - scores have to be settled, vindictive managements to be tamed and sacked miners to be reinstated.

From the revolutionary anarchist viewpoint, the strike has been a very positive experience. Despite the acute suffering, there has been something close to a revolution in attitudes among the miners in particular and the country in general. They may be summarised as follows.

1. A DIVIDED NATION - the myth of a unitary, classless society has been fully exposed. People are either for the miners or against. There is barely a mid way between the two. Class divisions have once again become very pronounced; the Tory policy of class war has created a more fully class conscious proletariat.
2. The miners who stuck it out to Xmas and beyond demonstrated their toughness and resilience in the face of the greatest assault ever by the forces of state oppression. They have gained a new self respect.
3. In the solid coalfields, an intense community solidarity arose. Everyone pulled together to ensure the continuity of the struggle.
4. SELF ORGANISATION - the miners, their wives and their relatives created from scratch, the means of ensuring their survival. With the shortage of cash, a money economy in part gave way to one based on the fulfillment of needs. Food, clothing, shelter, toys etc. were all provided free to those in need. A new social order based on community and welfare perhaps became glimpsed at during the many months of short-

age. Picket lines, travel, defence of communities and the opposition to scabs were all to a large extent the work of the people themselves.

5. Miners' communities have traditionally upheld an extreme cult of masculinity and subservient role for women. A lot of this has been eroded. Women's support groups did not simply provide meals; they went much further as women stood on picket lines with their husbands and sons, raised funds, organised demonstrations and much more. Women can only have gained from the opportunities that the strike placed in front of them.

6. The miners and their supporters have been radicalised to an incredible extent. Revolutionary alternatives have once more, after more than a decade, become seriously listened to.

WE NEED MORE MINERS' AND OTHER SIMILAR ATTACKS ON THATCHERISM. IF A DEFEAT CAN ACHIEVE SO MUCH, WHAT POSSIBILITIES ARE OPENED UP IN THE EVENT OF A VICTORY?

READER'S LETTER

Though the miners' strike is over, the issue will not lie down and go away. Here we print a letter sent way back in November when picket-line violence was at its height which deals with the question of the middle class left and violence.

November 13th 1984

Dear VIRUS,

In your article on the Miners' Strike (issue no 1) you refer to pacifism as 'the disease which has been sweeping the middle class left'. Personally, I find this kind of bullshit sickening.

The middle class left object to the violence of the pickets because it is organised by the miners themselves (and not by any party or leader) and is aimed at the agents of the state, the police; they do not (as they profess) object to all violence as a matter of course because of any deeply held personal convictions. These people are actually shitting themselves because the miners are taking matters directly into their own hands and attacking the obvious source of their oppression, and **NOT** because they have the strength of character or depth of feeling or thought which makes people become pacifists. Given a good old fashioned, legitimate WAR, the middle class left now expressing such concern about violence between the filth and the miners would not be expressing any of the same (apparent) dedication to nonviolence, because its 'concern' is fear of people realising their own ability and strength as individuals **BREAKING THE LAW**, and **NOT** a desire for peace.

ANARCHY AND PEACE,

(but not socialism thanks)

Glenn.

THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE MINERS' DISPUTE. ACCOUNTS BY PEOPLE DIRECTLY AFFECTED ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS OF POLICE BEHAVIOUR HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN LESS EVIDENT. BELOW WE PRINT A LETTER FROM A WOMAN WHO LIVES IN THE ROTHERHAM AREA TO A FRIEND IN LONDON. IT TELLS IN CLEAR TERMS JUST WHAT WENT ON.

Dear Stella,

I was very pleased to receive your letter, and please thank the young lady for sending the money. The lads thank you very much. Things are not getting any better here. We have just had three working miners in Bolton but every one has had to leave the area, otherwise men here have been solid and willing to stay out for as long as it takes.

The police have been pigs, not letting the men go and pick coal from the tips. Riot police have been, as many as ten or twelve van loads to round them up like cattle. If the strikers have said anything they have been beaten up and kept in the police station for up to four days.

One old friend of ours was picketing last week at night with just four more lads. When the police went to the pit gates our friend Gerry was rude to them. He then tried to get away but they got him and broke or cracked five of his ribs. This was done by eight police. Seven left, thinking that he was unconscious but one came back and started kicking him in the head. Gerry is fifty-nine years old, he couldn't run as fast as the younger ones.

The soup kitchen is still going, the shops have given until they can't give any more. Some women in the street are giving a party for the kids at Xmas, everyone is doing a little bit. One thing about it, it will be a Xmas to remember. But we will still get through, we have to.

I do not know what the lads would have done without the help they have had from friends like you and your friends. Your friend Martin sent £25, I am getting food for the lads with it.....

Jack still runs the boxing club for the young boys. I've been collecting clothes for over a year to have a jumble sale but people haven't the money to buy, so last week I sent it all to the welfare hall for them to give it out. It may help a little.

Well this is all for now,

Love,

Sybil.



**FREEDOM FOR THE PIKE
IS DEATH FOR THE
MINNOW.**

DESTROY THE PIKE!₃

TO THE ANARCHISTS

The time has come
To throw off the yoke
Of capitalism.
All fetters,
Commissars,
Generals,
Tribunals,
And priests.
For order
And science
And laws -
What are they?
Invented from boredom
By great men in cabinets!
The old world
We'll destroy
And wreck
And burn!
Not 'order'.
We'll build without it
We'll live !
But the great commune
To bayonets
Cannot fall!
Before it
On their knees
All will bend,
Even authority!
So quickly
My brothers
Let's raise
The black flag!
And grasp
The hand
Of all
The oppressed!

VICTOR TRIUK. 1918. Russia.



Handy Hints for Class War Demonstrators ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

1. Don't get involved with 'set piece' battles. The state can always (nearly) outnumber the strikers/demonstrators. They have better communications, mobility, firepower, coordination, plus power of arrest (the most intimidatory factor of all).

2. Do terrorise the local police and their families whenever possible - **sneaky** night-time attacks on police houses on council estates, bricks through 'isolated' police station windows, bumping into individual bobbies, letting down of police car tyres etc.

3. Don't be frightened of police horses, unless they are charging towards you. A sharp point up a horse's bum can render it totally uncontrollable. Similarly, in tight situations, pigs can be pulled off horses. They may seem invulnerable but if you grab hold of a copper's leg, he will lose all self confidence and panic. Marbles thrown under a horse's hooves makes it (temporarily) uncontrollable.

4. Sometimes in face to face confrontations the odd copper can be pulled into the opposing side and surrounded. Isolated pigs become terrified and vulnerable in the middle of a hostile crowd.

5. Don't get involved in confrontations if you are on your own in a demonstration. As a member of a supportive group, snatches during a pull and push session can be resisted. Stick together, link arms and hold on for dear life.

6. In mass face to face confrontations the police will try to form 'wedges' to break up the crowd. Let two or three of the leaders through and then surround and isolate them.

7. Sometimes coppers will advance slowly into an opposing crowd intending to push it aside. Beware of the knee in the balls; respond similarly.

8. In the dark (so you won't be too easily identified) try using artillery. Catapults can be bought from sports shops and are useful for hit and run attacks.

9. If you are highly visible (e.g. a punk, or in some other way different) you are more likely to be singled out for arrest. Be one of the crowd!

10. Read 'Towards a Citizens' Militia - Anarchist Alternatives to the Nato and the Warsaw Pact' by the 1st of May Group (Cienfuegos Press).

And what brings
you to these
heavenly parts?

oh, I lay down in
front of a cruise-
missile launcher
and it cut me in two

IN PIECES ON EARTH.....
IN PEACE IN HEAVEN.

VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION

Political violence involves the inflicting of pain and suffering on human beings (though the destruction of property etc. is also a form of violence). Revulsion is the normal and natural response to violence. Nevertheless, in a variety of forms it is endemic to every existing society and everyone has the potential for committing a violent act. Whilst in a general sense, violence is to be condemned, we should understand that, given the world as it is, it will always be used. For those who uphold social and economic inequality, violence is a perfectly justifiable means of maintaining public order. The state is violence writ large, with its' sophisticated armories, prisons, armed forces etc. Violence will only cease to be a commonplace once social order becomes the every day duty of the person within a community of equality and freedom. State violence maintains the social order which creates personal, individual violence.

Violence is encouraged by human inequality. So long as one person, race or class feels it can attain its' goals through superiority of strength, rather than argument, there will be violence or the threat of violence (coercion). In Britain the poor are subject to

some of the less obvious forms of violence. It may assume a psychological character, for example the humiliation felt when having to answer personal questions for means tested benefits, or the despair felt as one month on the dole gives way to another. The violence which is homelessness, a meagre meal or a cold room is of another category. And, if the poor and oppressed should dare to stand up and organise to overcome their poverty they, are met with the direct skull crushing violence of the oppressive state.

All anarchists would, without doubt, oppose state violence whether it be communist or capitalist. On the use of violence to counter or overthrow the state, however, the movement is split down the middle. On the one hand, the pacifist wing, whilst adhering to the anarchist belief in direct action, will only act in ways which are obstructive to the state so long as it involves non-violence. Many other anarchists however, more or less reluctantly, accept the necessity of violence and others positively enthuse over the prospect. The key questions relating to the use of violence for anarchists are these:

(1) Can an egalitarian, stateless society be achieved without matching the violence of the state with the revolutionary violence of the oppressed? If not, what alternatives are there?

(2) If violence is a necessary element in the revolutionary overthrow of the state, what forms should it take? Is individual terror of any value?

To this writer, it seems that pacific direct action must be of limited value. Lying down in the road, chaining oneself to railings setting up peace camps etc., whilst they may be of some use, are necessarily easily swept aside by the forces of the state. Such forms of direct action may be able to curb the worst excesses of the liberal state through its 'propaganda value', but it cannot pose a serious threat to the violent state machine. Much more effective however, are mass strikes and demonstrations, which by their popular character can be much more impressive. Nevertheless, general strikes and peaceful demonstrations alone are insufficient. No state was ever brought down by a 'national holiday' or C.N.D. style demonstrations. The refusal to use violence literally disarms the revolutionary movement. Confronting soldiers with carnations may be a fine moral gesture, it may even cause some defections and an unwillingness to fight (very positive indeed) but given the goon like professionalism of the British armed forces such acts are likely to be of very limited value. Pacifist anarchism has no answer to question of how to neutralise an armed opposition.

Much anarchist violence has been counter-productive insofar as the use of individual terror has usually provoked massive retaliatory state terror which has seriously debilitated the movement. A further problem is that terrorist violence, being almost always the work of vanguardist minorities, can never actually topple a state. The result is a strengthening of the state as it is presented with an ideal propaganda weapon and an excuse to diminish civil liberties. In Northern Ireland, for example, years of I.R.A. bombings have merely served to justify a viciously repressive police state. There would have been rejoicing throughout the land, had the Brighton bomb hit its 'intended target'. But what would have been the aftermath in terms of the states' response? We would have to endure weeks of sickening propaganda, an attack on the Irish community and perhaps the reintroduction of hanging. There would still be a
Tory government.

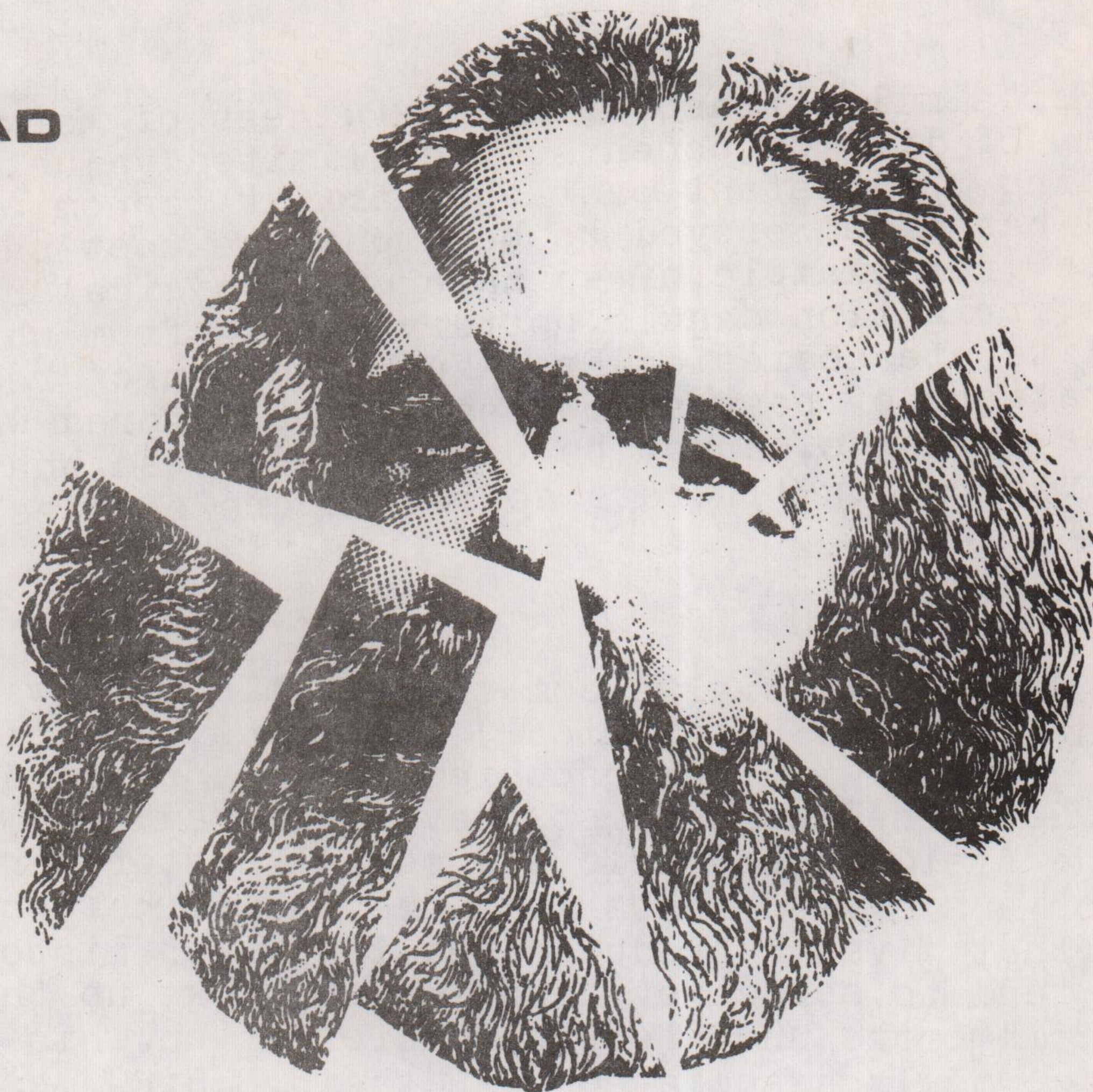
For anarchists, the purpose of revolution is to destroy the state and the exploitative system which sustains it. History has shown that revolutionary vanguards necessarily pervert the revolution, helping to ensure that one elite becomes replaced by another. The revolution must be carried out by and with the approval of the great majority of the population otherwise anarchy cannot be achieved. It is within this context that the issue of revolutionary violence should be considered. The state and all of its' oppressive apparatus must be swept away. Since this will almost certainly provoke state counterrevolutionary violence, this must be overcome with mass revolutionary violence. It is in this context that we should welcome the working class violence of Thatcher's Britain. The 1981 riots and the violence of the miners' picket lines mark a new approach by ordinary people to the problems of controlling their lives in an unequal society. Whilst not revolutionary in aim, such violence represents a shift from the post war tradition. Hopefully, popular violence will occur frequently enough to help build a tradition of street revolt which can lay the basis of a new combative approach to politics.



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

MARXISM ASSESSED PART TWO

THE LAWS OF HISTORY



Marx's greatest claim was to have found the key to the working of capitalism - exploitation, accumulation of capital, conflict between the means of production and their relations etc. He nevertheless took an historical viewpoint, capitalism is just the latest (albeit the most powerful) in a whole series of exploitative societies. The history of all previous societies, he once declared, is the history of class struggle. One form of economic society (the mode of production) superseded another once the contradictions between exploiter and exploited became acute enough to lead to a revolution. The prime exploited class in capitalist society, Marx argued, is the proletariat, which when conditions are right will sweep away capitalism and create a classless society. Thus, as well as providing a model for understanding the past and the present, the marxist ideology was claimed to be able to indicate the course of future development.

During the graveyard speech for Karl Marx, Engels claimed that the master had done for capitalism what Darwin had done for nature, namely that he had discovered the laws of its' development. The idea of a scientific revolutionary doctrine revealing social laws akin to the discovery of natural laws is very much a nineteenth century approach which Engels adopted and helped to place at the forefront of subsequent Marxist thought. Unfortunately, the Marxists have been much less successful than natural scientists in their application of 'laws' to society. Biologists and chemists can often demonstrate with certainty, that given certain conditions, definite predictions can be made (e.g. that a plant starved of nitrogen will achieve only stunted growth). Once the number of variables increase however (as say, in meteorology) the degree of predictability diminishes.

For similar reasons, the usefulness of Marxism, whatever the claims of its' proponents, is of limited value. As a means of understanding the distant past the Marxist economic deterministic model has often proved to be among the most satisfactory. Archeologists, for example, often have only physical remains - buildings, tools, irrigation canals, pottery etc. - from which to reconstruct pre-literate societies. From such 'economic' remains reasonable explanations of past societies can be offered which, by the nature of the evidence, cannot be easily disproved. What often does not survive from preliterate societies are peoples' thoughts, ideas, beliefs etc.

As such material becomes available when we research more recent literate (historical) societies, economic determinist models must compete with philosophies of history of a more idealistic bent. Nevertheless Marxists have achieved some remarkable successes in the field of economic and social history and British Marxist historians have perhaps lead the field. The problem remains, however, that given a predeternined theory of history, Marxist historians will tend to select evidence which backs up that theory, whilst rejecting more uncomfortable information. This type of history is most commonly associated with the U.S.S.R., especially in the Stalin period. In the hands of politicians history is used to justify present day actions. Thus events in the past are seen as historically inevitable and therefor historically necessary. From this, it is a simple leap to justify any action on the basis of historical necessity - witness present day Stalinist justification of the 1930's purges.

If the past and the present are believed to conform with some theory of historical inevitability, then surely so must the future. The temptation to offer predictions has proved irresistible to all Marxists since the Master set the trend. The problem, however has been that most of the predictions have been proved wrong. Like early Christians awaiting the second coming of Christ, the proletarian revolution in the West has had to be pushed further and further into the future. The forces behind social change are simply too complex to be predictable on the basis of a theory, no matter how sophisticated. The Marxist 'scientific' tools are not precise enough to cope with the enormous interplay of forces and events which mould the movement of history. Accordingly, Marx was proved wrong regarding the 'increased immiseration' of the proletariat despite subsequent wriggling by his disciples to reinterpret what he meant. Imperialism, the greatest economic development of the twentieth century was completely unforeseen by Marx. Western Marxism is in a state of profound crisis as so many of Marx's predictions which were supposed to have happened have failed to materialise. European Marxists can no longer sit back and wait for the inevitable revolution as did their forefathers in the early German S.P.D. Their inevitable revolution is a long time coming.

Bolshevik predictive abilities were little better. Lenin, like all Marxists, were taken totally by surprise by the spontaneous February Revolution of 1917 and hurriedly scurried back from abroad (Lenin was in Switzerland and Trotsky was even further away, in New York!). After they had seized power, they confidently expected victorious revolutions to break out in the West. As we know, that prediction proved to be wildly over ambitious. Trotsky was perhaps the most arrogant of the Russian Marxists. Even after he lost the battle with (in his opinion) the inferior, Stalin, he never lost faith in the superiority of his Marxism. Accordingly, he made many 'scientific' predictions, nearly all of which turned out to be wrong. For example, he thought that his Fourth International would win the support of the seething revolutionary masses at the expense of the Comintern. Of course he was wrong. He predicted the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy and was wrong, and, the biggest howler of them all, he confidently forecast the outbreak of revolution in Europe after the end of the Second World War.

So all in all, the Marxist method has proved to be singularly unsuccessful in the realm of futurology. This has not undermined their faith, however, for blinded with the often impenetratable density of much Marxist writing (for examples see any structuralist Marxist text) they cannot see the wood of reality for the trees of theory. Other, less academically minded Marxists, simply push any doubts to the back of their minds. They would do better to abandon Marxist metaphysics in favour of a genuinely liberative revolutionary approach unfettered by a constantly disproven ideology.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. These were the aims of the first great modern revolution. They have not anywhere in the world been realised. As slogans for capitalism, they have of course been long forgotten. But within the left where reformism and state socialism fight for superiority they are sadly lacking too. There is precious little liberty, equality or fraternity within the self proclaiming Marxist states (though attempts have been made to justify Soviet invasions of Eastern Bloc states on the grounds of fraternal support for socialism). The Marxist parties in Britain are not exactly hot houses of free debate, equality or brother/sisterhood. So where do we stand?

class conflict

Capitalism is a deeply exploitative system in which social life is determined by the needs of profit not human fulfilment. The system maintains itself by a complex network of institutions - the coercive state (police, army etc.), the ideas manipulators (the mass media, schools etc.), the family and so on. So,

despite a fundamental contradiction between capital and labour, the system is 'managed' more or less successfully in the interests of a small minority. The system has no provision for reforming itself away, indeed the most powerful capitalist institutions exist to maintain that system. Consequently, revolution not reform is the only means by which it can be abolished - the system must be subverted from within, weakened, and ultimately destroyed.

exploitation and resistance

It is the working class which constitutes a large majority of the population and which is most openly exploited by capitalism. Day to day resistance to the system is an accepted and ordinary fact of the worker's life. This may range from the mundane - time wasting and fictional illness to an all out national strike involving hundreds of thousands of workers. The unemployed, the homeless and other dispossessed elements (who may or may not be of working class origin) also provide a source of irritation to those in authority. The great contradiction between exploiter and exploited, though not politically an accepted reality (note the huge numbers of workers who voted for Thatcher), is a living source of instability. Ultimately, it may trigger a general revolt among the population at large.

propaganda and solidarity

The major problem confronting revolutionaries is not the building of **socialist** parties which will lead the revolution but convincing those who are in a position to bring about great social change of the need for socialism. Economic pressures such as inflation usually bring about economic demands. These in turn may well take on a political character, especially when a government, the courts and other state bodies involve themselves.

The need however is for confrontationist political strikes to be carried further into the realm of ideas and action. Socialists, therefore, who wish to see a genuine revolution directed by the oppressed themselves have the job of indicating the possibilities and practicabilities of a libertarian socialism. The role of revolutionaries is primarily one of education, propaganda and solidarity so that workers will take over the running of society for their own ends.

uprising

No-one can predict when and under what circumstances a revolution will occur (not even the Marxists with their particularly valueless 'dialectical materialism'). However, truly spontaneous popular revolutions often involve some or all of the following: general strikes, worker's councils in factories etc., soviets and armed insurrection. Should such a general uprising take place, it is usual for a 'dual power' situation to arise. Alongside more or less powerful remnants of the capitalist order exist the organisations of the people. To achieve liberation the revolutionaries must move, ^{beyond} dual power, dissolve powerful blocs of authoritarianism (both on the right and left) and bring into being a self managed society. The overcoming, by the workers, of a dual power situation is crucial, for there are dangers of capitalist restoration on the one hand and a Leninist coup on the other. Both, history has shown, effectively destroy genuine (i.e. anarchic) socialism. To achieve a society of free and equal citizens based on non state forms of social ownership and cemented by feelings of social solidarity is the aim. It will not be easy but neither is it impossible.