

VIRUS

THE ENEMY WITHIN

NO.5

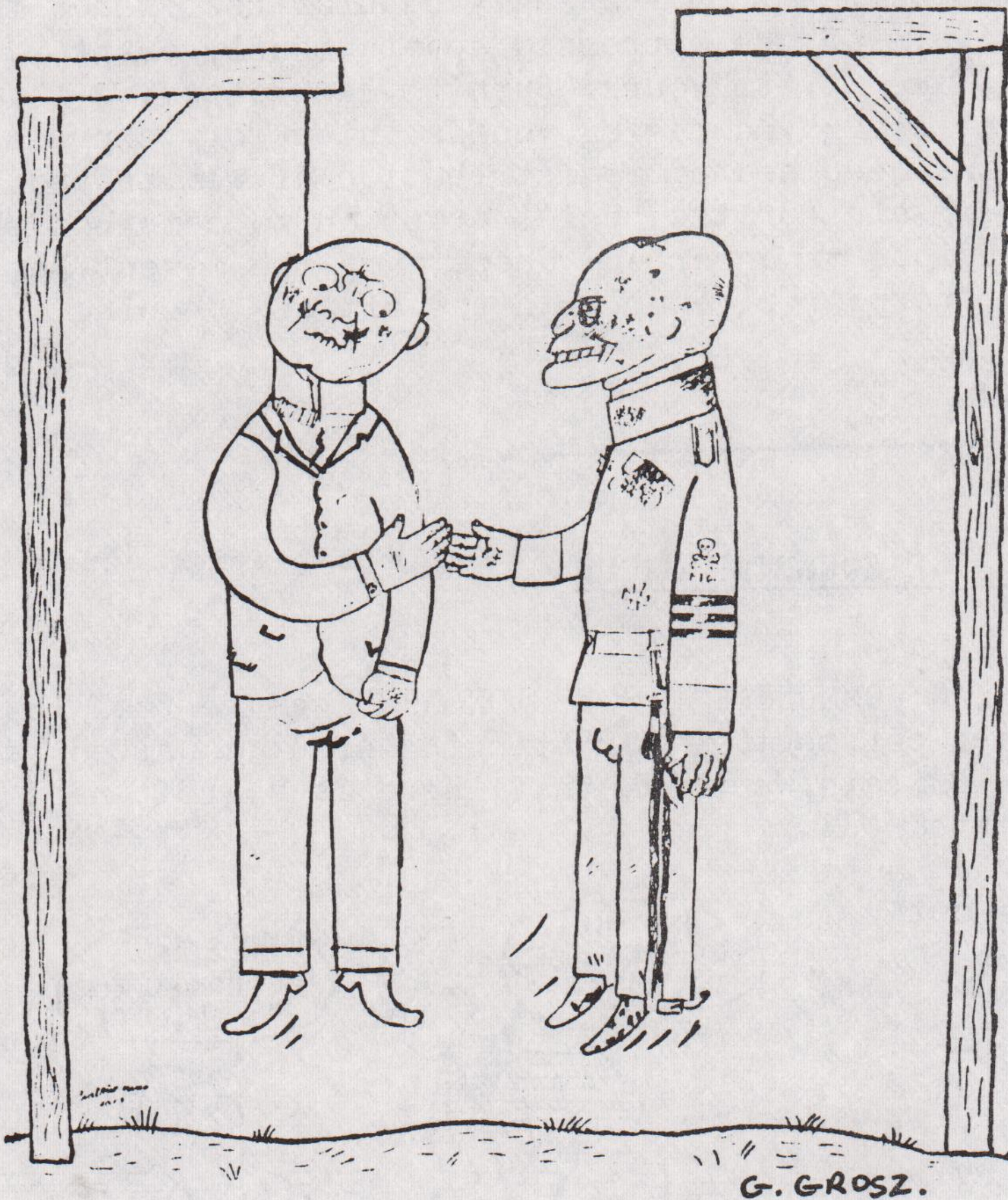
Militant Anarchism

Winter 1985/6



VIRUS NO.5

Contact address : 84b, Whitechapel High ST. London E.1.7.Q.X.



The capitalist and the general
wish each other : "A Happy New Year".

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the Riots.

THE STATE OF THE NATION (RIOT ON.')

What an absolute shithole Britain is. There are 4 million unemployed which is bad enough but, of course, such enforced poverty does not afflict everyone. If you are black, you stand a better chance than whites of ending up on the dole. Unemployment involves the degradation of D.H.S.S. interviews and public humiliation. But being unemployed does not only mean a life of poverty, it also carries the burden of guilt, imposed by affluent society, and the charge of laziness.

If you do happen to be in work, you may be one of the millions who don't earn enough to live on. With poverty comes a whole range of other problems. Homelessness and substandard housing is rapidly becoming a standard feature of life for many people. The shortage of decent accommodation is made worse by the pathetic level of new housing starts, especially in the council sector which has in the past met at least part of the need.

With poverty comes the problem of ill health - the correlation between income/social class and health is a scandal but no one seems to care enough to do anything about it. Poor people die younger, are more likely to see their babies die at birth, and suffer general ill health. So what? the official response is to close down hospitals and reduce health services generally for those who cannot afford to pay for it themselves. Poverty kills.

The companion to poverty is degradation. The police, drunk with power play bully boys on the streets. They are supported in their endeavours by a legal system which routinely takes their side.

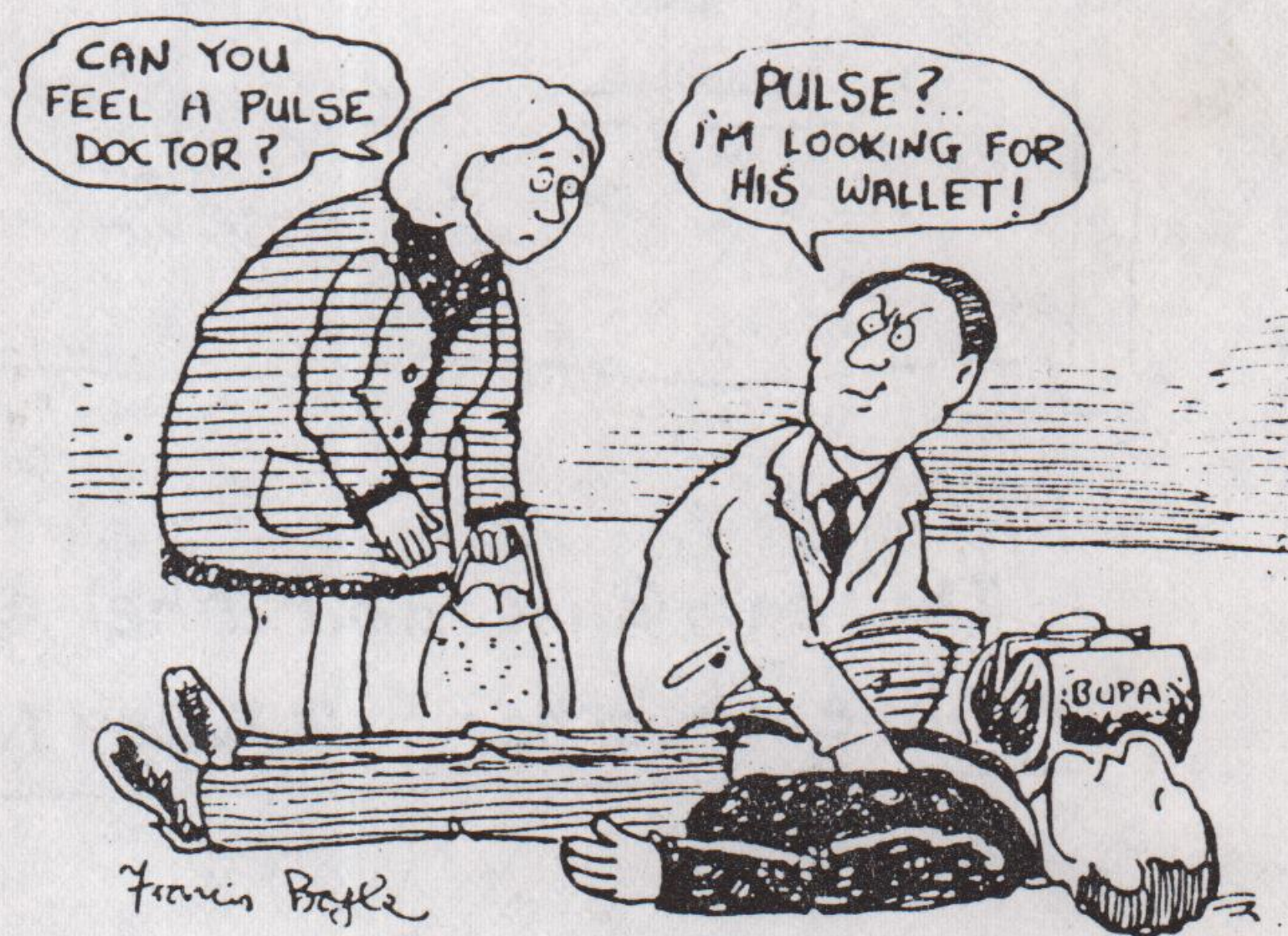
So it is with all this in mind that VIRUS gives a welcome to the burning and looting which nowadays seems to be the increasingly popular response of the poor to their plight. These festivals of the oppressed spontaneously erupt by an angry army of the unemployed. Take it, it's yours! Burn it, it's rotten!

Yet riots alone do not go far enough. Rampaging youths (nice Tory expression) do not in the end effect a genuine, deep seated redistribution of wealth and power. They are, perhaps, mini rehearsals for the social eruption to come but they are also, essentially only expressions of anger and despair of the moment. Let us look forward to the day when the poor rise up with the aim of sweeping away the whole stinking system.

THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST DISCUSSION GROUP

VIRUS now supports the LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST DISCUSSION GROUP as we feel that this organisation offers the best perspective for bringing about a united revolutionary anarchist movement in Britain. We think that there is a great need for anarchists to act in a concerted manner. At the moment many very good anarchist militants are carrying out propaganda and direct action in a wholly isolated and uncoordinated fashion. Though there may be a considerable degree of unity of outlook between these militants, the very fact of their isolation means that they are very much less effective than they might be. The L.C.D.G., basing its approach on the PLATFORM OF THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS, written by N. Makhno, P. Arshinov, I. Mett etc., has a programme for realising the benefits of organisation and an anarchist philosophy.

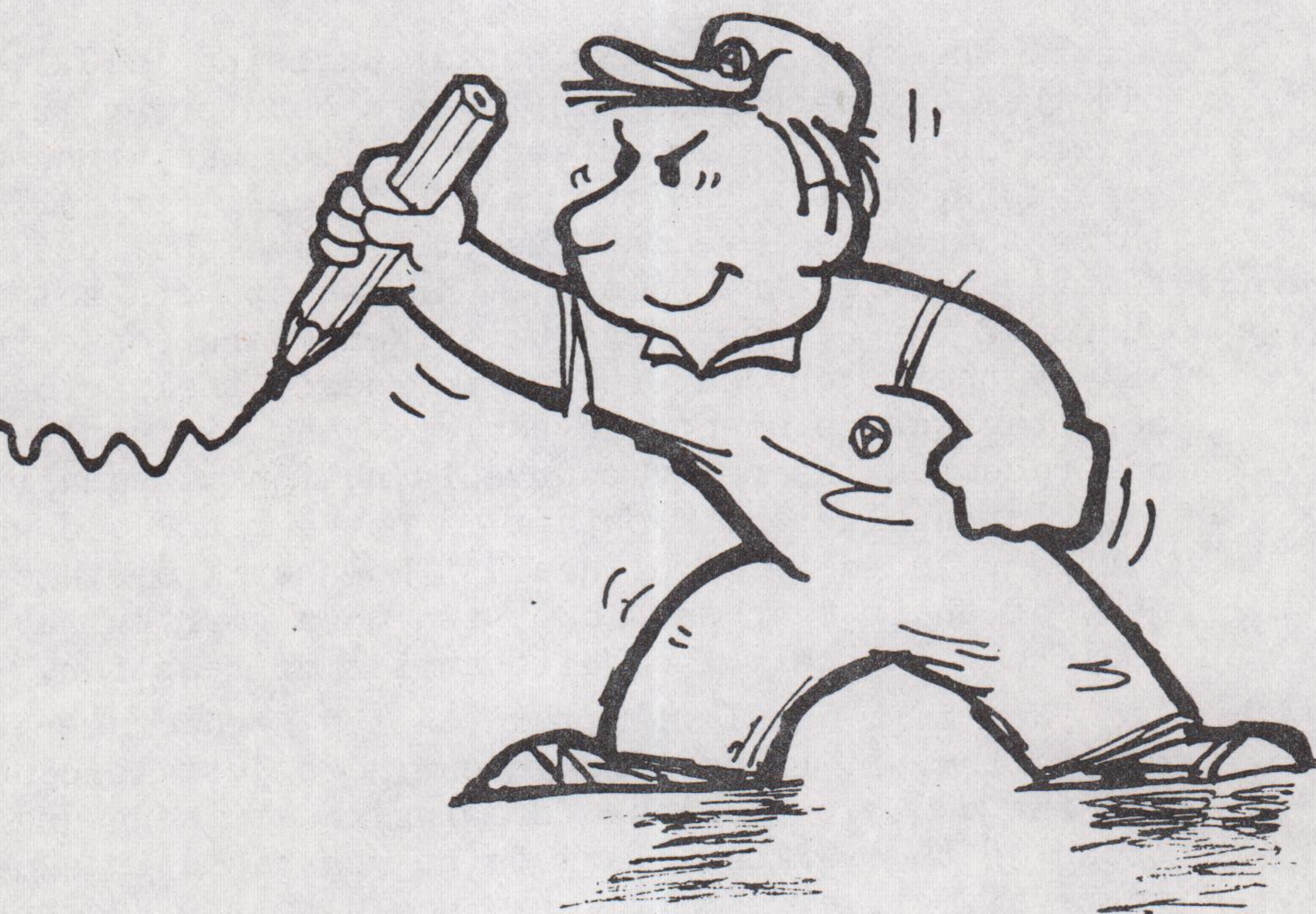
Starting from this issue, VIRUS will be including articles written by members of the L.C.D.G. in order to put forward a hopefully consistent outlook and approach. If you support the anarchist idea of a united revolutionary anarchist movement, contact the Libertarian Communist Discussion Group, c/o 84b, Whitechapel High St, Angel Alley, London E.1.7QX.



Subscriptions to VIRUS cost one Pound per year.
Send cash or stamps to VIRUS c/o 84b, Whitechapel
High St, Angel Alley, London. E.1.7QX.

READERS

LETTERS



Chester, Cheshire.

Dear Comrades,

Congratulations on your publication! How refreshing it is to read an anarchist paper that has an actual ideology, instead of just consisting of ranting anti-establishment, dead slogans.

However at this point I must lay my cards on the table and say that I'm actually a member of the S.W.P, but having said that, I have a lot of respect for certain anarchists and the ideology they represent, yourselves included.

But I must find fault in your various arguments, and so if I may, I'd like to say where I think you go wrong. The basic difference between Marxists and yourselves is the way in which to bring about a classless, stateless society. I would argue that the state cannot be destroyed and a classless society emerge without there first being a dictatorship of the proletariat for the length of time necessary to crush all bourgeois resistance that would inevitably follow the rising of the working class to overthrow capitalism.

The state only came into existence because of the existence of a class based society, and some form of state would necessarily survive a proletarian revolution until the emergence of a classless society. But do not misunderstand me in my term 'some form of state', it would bear no resemblance to the present bourgeois state which only exists as a means to exploit the working class, but would be under the full control of workers' councils (soviets) and would exist to smash all bourgeois resistance (with the use of workers' militias).

'But isn't that what happened in Russia and look what happened there', I hear you say. Well, the failure of the Russian revolution has nothing to do with the workings of Marxism in practice but of the weakness of the Russian proletariat. In a country where 80% of the population were peasants opposed to any kind of socialism that would endanger private property, the revolution was doomed to failure without their cooperation. The victorious proletariat of October 1917 was almost non-existent by 1921, having to a large extent been wiped out by the bloody civil war that followed, a war in which up to 20 imperialist powers came to the aid of the reactionary White armies. Those that remained were largely as a result of their size, not able to fully participate in the workers' soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat being gradually replaced by the dictatorship of the Bolshevik bureaucracy.

By the time of the Kronstadt uprising in 1921, the Bolsheviks were so paranoid that any rebellion was to them counterrevolution. Personally, I believe that the crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion was wrong and is totally opposed to everything that I believe in, their call for 'All power to the soviets' is something that I believe in. Also, I believe that they stood for the true revolution however most of the sailors at Kronstadt were not the men who had been the vanguard of the October revolution. Many were conscripts made up largely of peasants who by their very nature, and in Russia their closeness to feudalism were the most backward elements in society, who did not want a socialist society but one based on the petty bourgeois notion of equality of private property.

In conclusion, Kronstadt is not a black and white issue, not 'right' against 'wrong'. In their fight against Bolshevik dictatorship they were right, but many of their proposals amounted to a counter revolution, and the timing could not but help the White armies of reaction.

Now if I may I will turn to the need of a revolutionary party to overthrow capitalism. It is not enough comrades just to concentrate on socialist propaganda and the odd bit of stone throwing! What is needed is for the most militant sections of the working class to be organised in a mass party of the working class to be effective. A party that would be the vanguard of a proletarian revolution, leading (but not controlling) the working class into a dictatorship of the proletariat which would, after the last remnants of the bourgeois reaction have been crushed, lead to the 'withering' away of the State as Marx put it. In other words, the only way to destroy the state is to destroy class society, the only way to destroy class society is by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Finally, I would remind you that we in the SWP argue that there exists no socialist country in the world today, describing countries of the Eastern bloc as 'State Capitalist' and in need of a workers revolution as much as any other country in the world today. And again I must say that the only way to overthrow capitalism is to be organised in a mass revolutionary party of the working class. I'm sure you would not agree, but I would be happy to enter into a debate on this or any other subject if you would care to write back to me.

Yours fraternally,

Jim.



REPLY

Well, it's certainly refreshing to come across a member of the SWP who has some sympathy with anarchism, despite the perceived weaknesses. The comrade who wrote this appears to be hoodwinked by the 'libertarian' Lenin of STATE AND REVOLUTION, yet has the problem of squaring this with Leninism in practice.

The comrade offers all of the usual excuses for the degeneration of the revolution. Typically, he points to the 'backwardness' of the peasantry as a major cause. This attitude, apart from being extremely bigoted, does not even

accord with Marx's view of the Russian peasant. At one stage, he believed that the peasants, based on the rural commune, could by-pass capitalism altogether and achieve socialism, so long as a proletarian revolution were successful in West (see E.H. Carr, THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION vol.2., appendix C, 'Marx, Engels and the Peasant'). A large number of peasants supported the October revolution under the banner of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, and, so long as the Bolsheviks were dominant, Lenin was even prepared to enter into a governmental alliance with it.

But the Leninist prejudice against the 'backward' peasantry could not be suppressed for long. Peasants who had supported the revolution enthusiastically soon changed their minds when communist vanguardism expressed itself in the forced requisitioning of food and the plundering of the countryside during the period of War Communism. Had the Bolsheviks had a more positive attitude towards the peasants, the reaction might have been defeated more quickly. Incidentally, the arrogant and indifferent brutality of the Stalinist forced collectivisation of agriculture had a direct precedent with the treatment of the peasants in the immediate post October years.

Yes, civil war, the killing of many workers, foreign intervention etc. played an important part in undermining the revolution. But to argue that without them Bolshevism would not have deteriorated into bureaucratic dictatorship, is in my opinion wrong. The Bolsheviks, from day one of the revolution, were opposed to independent self determination of the working class. For instance, they opposed workers' self management of industry, preferring instead, one man management. (See Maurice Brinton, THE BOLSHEVIKS AND WORKERS CONTROL.).

The libertarian Lenin of STATE AND REVOLUTION did not survive October 25 1917. There was barely any mention in this 'near anarchist' work of the role of the political party - every worker was supposed to run society through soviets, defended by the peoples' militia. Yet nearly all of Lenin's political activity before and after writing STATE AND REVOLUTION was concerned with perfecting the vanguard party and stressing its importance. Thus WHAT IS TO BE DONE? at one extreme of time scale, and LEFT WING COMMUNISM at the other, are about the role and organisation of the party.

Why then no mention in STATE AND REVOLUTION? Part of the answer lies in an understanding of Lenin's opportunism in the months before October. Lenin's policies were moulded to fit into the libertarian mood of the masses. In order to win their support, Lenin had to become the leading advocate of libertarianism (not a few anarchists were duped by this). But once the Bolsheviks had seized power, direct soviet democracy was swept away and replaced by Party dictatorship.

The major value of libertarian Marxism, as most clearly expressed in STATE AND REVOLUTION is that it allowed the Bolsheviks and then groups like the SWP to appear as libertarian - fooling even their own members. The reality of all Leninist groups is that they are narrow, authoritarian, sectarian vanguardist and intolerant. The SWP cannot cope with dissent in its ranks and frequently resorts to expulsions to settle arguments. A permanent clique dominates the membership which meekly follows every twist and turn in policy. Finally, the SWP, like all Leninist parties is ultimately contemptuous of the working class (the workers, they say are only capable of achieving 'trade union consciousness' unless they are lead by the Leninist party i.e the SWP.). What dangerous arrogance!

Lancaster.

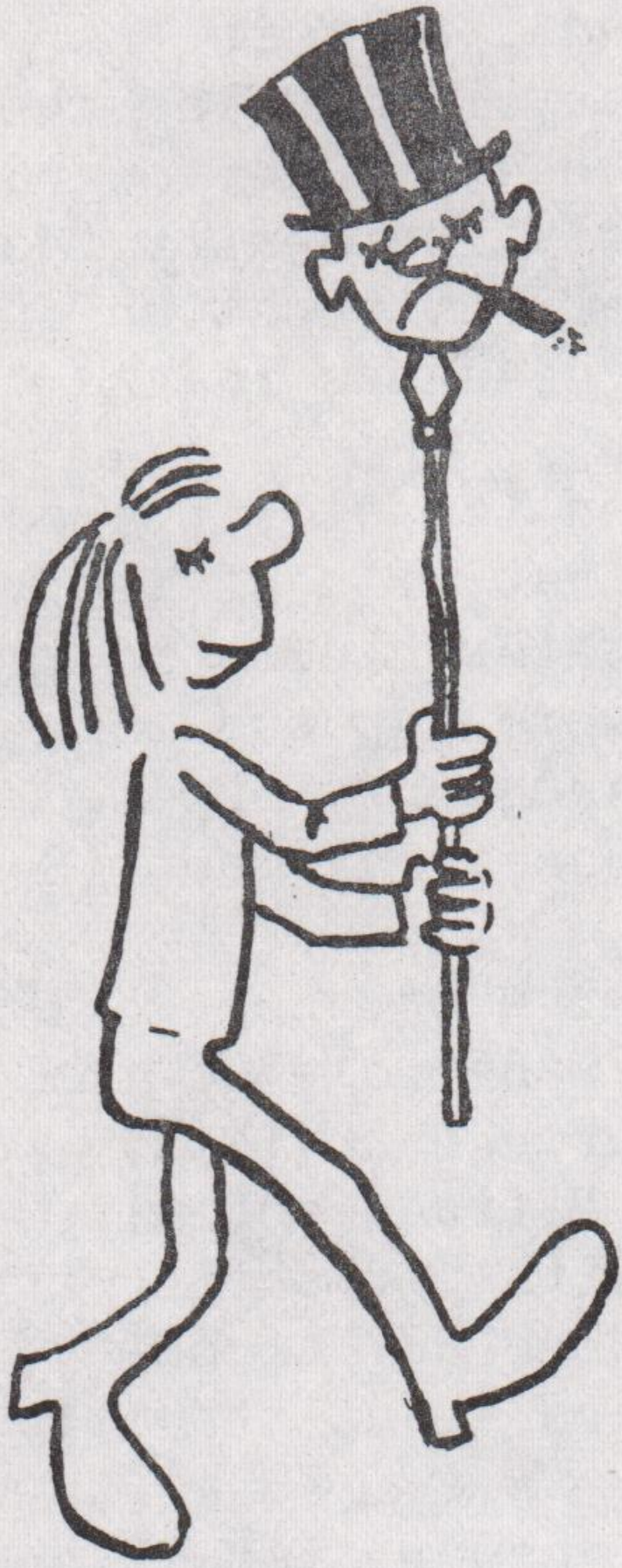
Dear VIRUS,

Thanks for issue no.1 of VIRUS which I enjoyed, especially the piece on 'democratic centralism'. I believe your analysis to be the correct one, and my (brief) experience with the SWP has borne this out. I now have four issues of VIRUS. Much space is devoted to analysis of the traditional left (revolutionary or reformist), and I feel such analysis is important if we, as libertarian socialists wish to argue our case convincingly. If I may suggest

an idea for an article: it might be interesting to do an article on Lenin himself, showing it was not 'circumstances' which lead to the degeneration of the revolution, and Stalin; but the Bolshevik and in particular Lenin's insistence upon applying Marxist principles to the Russian situation; and how opposition to this was systematically eliminated.

Find enclosed £1 for the Berkman and Goldman pamphlets.

All the Best,
Tony.



Thanks for your support. I think that your idea on Lenin is a good one. See what we can do .

ANARCHISM AND LIBERALISM

British Anarchism is undergoing a process of restructuring and ideological shift at the moment. And about time too. For far too long, anarchism here has been under the guidance (I hesitate to say 'leadership') of individuals of a decidedly liberal orientation.

Liberalism is the political and economic theory most suited to young, competitive capitalism. It seeks to remove the shackles of government and law from human behaviour, primarily to allow capitalists to develop and accrue wealth. As an ideology of capitalism, it has grown deep roots, having penetrated the three main political parties. Thatcherism is liberal economic theory plus conservative politics - the minimum state in commerce and the strong state in civil society (politics). The Labour Party's ideology of 'Labourism' consists of a mixture of socialist rhetoric (well nearly), a commitment to welfare capitalism and the liberal concept of equality of opportunity (meritocracy or individual effort adequately rewarded).

Liberalism is an ideology of individualism in which 'economic man' can freely compete with others. It requires the minimum state only, to 'hold the ring' and maintain civilisation. Its concept of freedom is essentially a negative one, i.e. individuals should be free from interference to act as they wish, so long as they do not harm the system which provides such freedom.

Whilst negative freedom is of course very valuable, it has usually been accepted by anarchists to be inadequate. Non interference with individuals is desirable but such freedom allows some to freely starve whilst others freely accrue huge fortunes. Communist anarchism has always tied freedom to equality and community. Freedom must take on a positive character which comes from human cooperation and social solidarity. The community (but not the state) must provide the economic and social foundations to allow individuals to develop his/her humanity. The freedom for the working class to develop and overthrow the systems of exploitation is a very important positive one which revolutionary anarchists support up to the hilt. But we must not fall into the trap which has ensured that Marxism is a philosophy of enslavement, namely of reducing the individual to a mere cipher in the great march of history. A tension exists between negative and positive freedoms and it is important to achieve some sort of equilibrium between the two.

This brings us back to the relationship between liberalism and the anarchists. For twenty years or more, during the 1950's and 1960's anarchism, as represented by many of the contributors to 'FREEDOM' and 'ANARCHY' was content to indulge in social criticism and 'permanent protest'. Revolution was substituted by some sort of reformism in which the most objectionable features of capitalism could be whittled away. Experiments in education squatting etc. would show the way forward, if only people would rationally listen to the anarchist case. Issues of ANARCHY were like libertarian Fabian pamphlets in which anarchist experts could put forward their arguments - armchair anarchism. If the system could not be overthrown then at least it could be circumvented - lifestyle anarchism and 'freedom in the head' became popular and relatively easy forms of anarchism to adhere to. Whilst to be sure, anarchists in the fifties and sixties were fully aware of the shortcomings of capitalism (hence 'permanent protest'), there was no desperate urgency in affluent post war Britain. Bakunin's class conflict approach became a thing of the past. The issues were now couched in terms of the individual versus the state - a classic liberal approach.

The sum of these developments was the transformation of anarchism from the most militant revolutionism into into an uncomfortable political liberalism, protest against the evils of poverty, punishment policies etc. but no urgent desire to for an overthrow of capitalism.

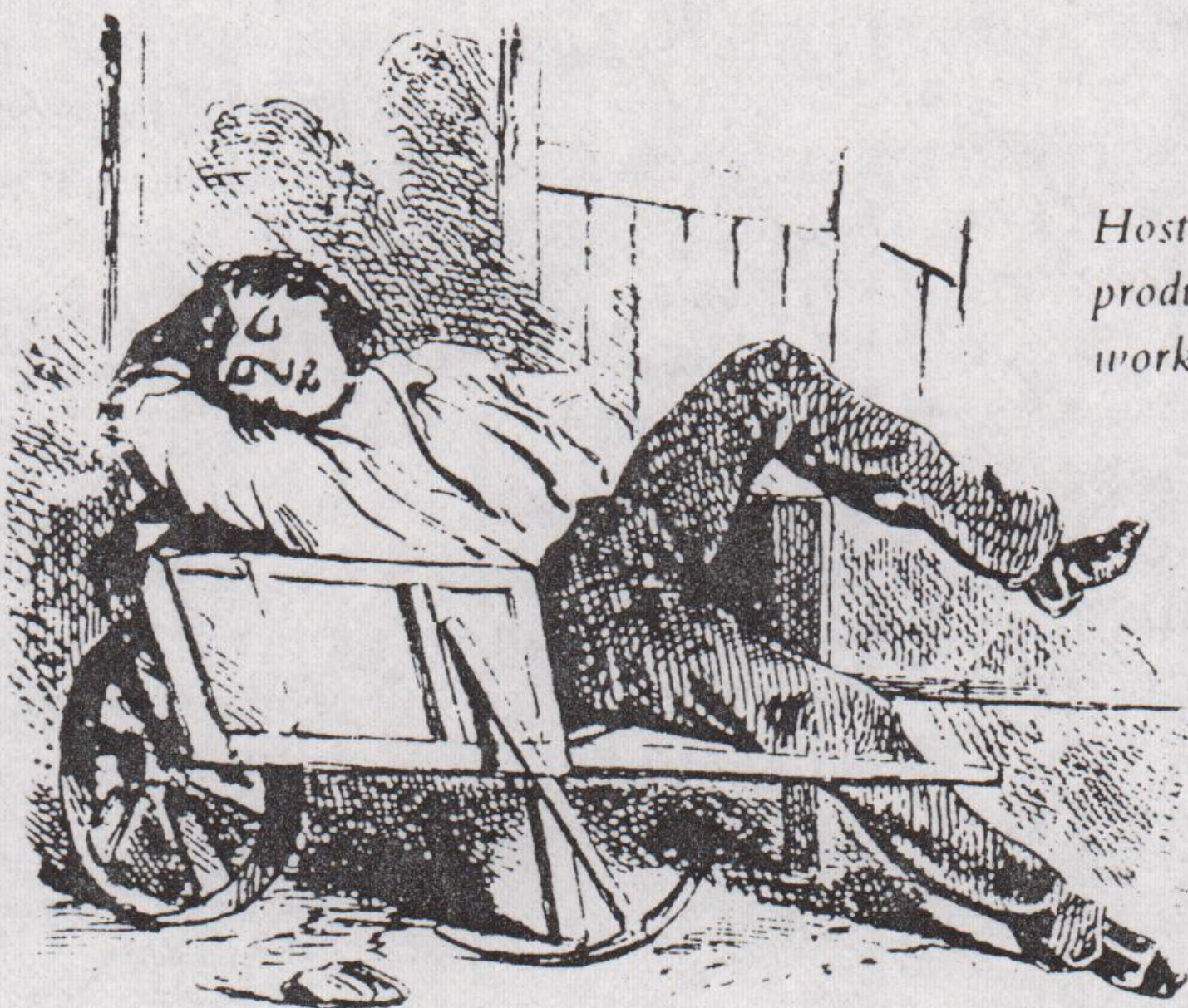
Times, however, have changed. Millions of people are suffering the effects of the decline of world trade and Britain's place in it with her outmoded economic infra-structure. Though there are still many anarcho-liberals still around, the mood within anarchism is changing. The CLASS WAR group have managed to capitalise on the anger of many of the young, though in a rather crude and unconstructive way. The time has come to extol the virtues of a class based libertarian communist approach which will appeal to those in industry, the women's movement, the unemployed etc.

ITS ALL OVER* trade union reality

"We haven't had fascism in this country....because the trade union movement has done what in Italy and Germany had to be done by the police",namely the subjugation and fragmentation of working class combativity. **

The humble beginnings of trade unionism roughly started to take root in the 18th century when associations were formed among workmates known as 'friendly societies' which made collections for sick pay and funerals etc. Due to the widespread hardship which came with the economic revolution and the demise of trade ~~union~~ independence, the legacy of the friendly societies evolved into 'combinations' which were the beginnings of workers organising to struggle for shorter working hours, better conditions and pay. It was around the beginning of the 19th century that combinations began to take on the basic structure and form that is recognised in the trade unions today.

Trade unions originally took on their structure and role in an epoch of material scarcity and want, therefore taking the the form of a kind of 'pressure group', serving to extract as good a deal as possible from the owners. The prevailing conditions of scarcity obviously put very concrete limitations on the form and content of rank and file demands and struggles, i.e. what it was possible for the proletariat to regain from the capitalist within the restrictions of an underdeveloped mode of production.



*Hostile comment on
productivity in the national
workshops.*

The revolutions which have taken place in the mode of production have resulted in the potential for the total elimination of scarcity and want, with production capacity and capabilities to satisfy world needs. Its all too obvious to figure out why the ruling classes haven't utilised these liberating means and have worked to mystify the content. Hierarchical power, having been born from material scarcity and the hostilities of nature, become a total anachronism once these factors have been overcome, eradicating the justifications for capital's despotic existence. This is why capital continually eeks out re-hashed pseudo justifications to hide the reality of its overdeveloped commodity economy.

But the question remains, 'Why haven't the opposition (or so-called opposition), namely the trade unions' scope and perspective run correspondingly with the revolutionary content of a highly developed mode of production?

Increasingly since the First World War, the history of trade unionism has been one of co-optation and recuperation by capital, sell out and betrayal by union bureaucrats of their members whose interests they claim to represent. Essentially though, it is the rank and file who sell themselves out by placing their faith and aspirations in the hands of bureaucrats. The higher one is placed in the hierarchical structure, the more inclined one is to compromise because the more one's own interests are the antithesis of rank and file interests. This is not to say that it is diabolically wrong to be a rank and file union member but that it is dangerous to have illusions about the position of union leaderships in relation to capital. It is imperative to recognise the extreme limitations union consciousness places upon the scope of struggle and the dire necessity to supersede this.

With the deepening crisis of capital and the encompassing 'social chaos and catastrophe', it is always the working class that is called upon to make the sacrifices and wherever it makes attempts to combat the increasing hardship, the union structures are the most virulent saboteurs of rank and file combativity, amongst their most ruthless opponents.

Modern capital is the "cunning fox" of control. Rather than consolidate its position through brutal repression, it uses intermediaries to channel and fragment opposition and resistance to the status quo. Though, when threatened by a situation which it cannot contain, the state will not hesitate for one moment to unleash the full force of its repressive apparatus. State control through intermediaries serves capital's interests much more efficiently, for stability and expansion of the national economy and for capital to accumulate, it is essential to maintain the illusion of relative freedom - martial law hits the economy as well as the proletariat. Direct repression never crushes resistance but harbours and incubates it. Under repression, resistance will thrive. The enforced outlawing of strikes, for example, will simply increase other forms of class struggle such as 'go slows', sabotage and absenteeism.

Trade unions serve as intermediaries (therefore buffers) between the interests of capital and the interests of the rank and file to prevent any direct confrontations. The sabotaging of the '84 to '85 miners strike by the union bureaucrats is the inevitable outcome of any dispute which remains within the limits of union domination. The countless instances of rank and file initiative being countered by union bureaucracy and red tape, the restriction of the dispute to one industry etc. are clear for everyone to see. The emphasis of the T.U.C and, as a whole, the union monolith was to confine and annul a rapidly forging autonomous movement among rank and file miners who were increasingly superseding the union stranglehold through direct confrontations with the protectors of capital's interests and beyond the union's control. Class struggle begins to germinate the seeds of class consciousness. It is easy for the dominant social order to deal with the grievances of the proletariat who have placed their interests in a bourgeois union representative behind closed doors. Not so easy to deal with an insurgent rank and file who have taken their interests into their own hands. Trade unions play a major role as the safety valve of capitalism. The recent dispute of B.R. guards which began with wildcat action without waiting for union approval was effectively sabotaged by the N.U.R. bureaucracy by introducing the mechanism of a ballot which resulted in putting a brake on the momentum of the struggle, separating the guards from other rail workers and other sectors. This prevented extension of the struggle, put a completely false framework on it by posing everything in and on union terms.

Union officials are in favour of strikes only when everything is on their terms and well within their control, i.e. when there is no contestation involved.

When the proletariat begin to confront directly the state, without the ghosts of the old world, representation or the reformists and apologists of shit, when

we take control of our lives into our own hands and through struggle set about achieving our interests, the single issue which sparked the dispute begins to encompass the whole contradictions of capital and serves to breed class consciousness among the rank and file. They increasingly begin to experience their interests in the true light - as the antithesis of capital and its interests. Direct confrontation and struggle against capital begins to create the mutual and passionate spirit of real community, exposing the inherent alienation of the reproduction of capital and social characteristics of capital. We begin to forge the new world.

* T.U.C., 1926 General Strike.

**P. Worsthorne - assistant editor of The Sunday Telegraph in T.V interview, 1980.

SOURCES

International Dockers Struggles in the Eighties (Workers of the World Tonight)
BM blob abd Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy, B.M. BIS make informative reading on autonomous rank and file struggle.

ENRAGÉS

ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN, AND
MAKE OTHERS BELIEVE IN POLITICAL
SOLUTIONS ARE COUNTER-
REVOLUTIONARY // ALL THOSE WHO
WOULD ACT AS MEDIATORS
BETWEEN THE PROLETARIAT AND
THE NEW WORLD ARE COUNTER-
REVOLUTIONARY //



SNIPPET - The wonders of 'socialist' planning

An entire shipment of boots from a Soviet factory was despatched to shops with high heels attached at the toe, a Soviet newspaper said yesterday. The boots were put on a special display at an exhibition of defective goods held in the Ukraine, the Literaturnaya Gazeta reported yesterday - REUTER.

RULING

CLASS

VENGEANCE.....



As another part of our irregular 'handy hints' series we bring you a list of possible maximum sentences which might be imposed by magistrate and crown courts. Some charges e.g. 'being found in enclosed premises' are only dealt with in magistrates' courts. Other, more serious ones may be tried in a crown court, or if processed in a magistrates' court, may involve the crown court to impose a heavier sentence than summary 'justice' allows. These are maximum sentences and will only be fully severe in especially serious cases or if the accused has a number of previous convictions.

<u>OFFENCE</u>	<u>MAXIMUM SENTENCE MAGISTRATES COURTS</u>	<u>MAXIMUM SENTENCES CROWN COURTS</u>
Actual bodily harm	£2000 fine and 6 months.	5 years and un- limited fine.
Assaulting a pig	£2000 and 6 months	
burglary	£2000 and 6 months	14 years and un- limited fine
common assault (indictable)	£2000 and 6 months	
common assault	£400 and 2 months	
common assault (section 47)		12 months and un- limited fine
destroying or damaging property	£2000 and 6 months	
drugs-class A.	£2000 and 6 months	7 years and fine
drugs-class B.	£500 and 3 months	5 years and fine
drugs-class C.	£200 and 3 months	2 years and fine
drunk	£50	
drunk and disorderly	£400	
firearms	£2000 and 6 months	5 years and un- limited fine
found in enclosed premises	£400 and 3 months	
going equipped to steal	£2000 and 6 months	3 years and fine
grievous bodily harm	£2000 and 6 months	5 years
handling stolen goods	£2000 and 6 months	14 years
insulting words and behaviour	£2000 and 6 months	
obstructing the highway	£400	
offensive weapon	£2000 and 6 months	2 years and un- limited fine
resisting or obstructing a pig	£400 and 6 months	
theft	£2000 and 6 months	10 years and un- limited fine
wounding	£2000 and 6 months	5 years and un- limited fine

REVIEW

TELL US LIES ABOUT THE MINERS: The Role of the Media in the Great Coal Strike of 1984/5 by Dave Douglass, published by the author and Doncaster and Cambridge and South London groups of the Direct Action Movement. 60p.

Dave Douglass, NUM militant, has put together a pamphlet of how the miners strike was reported in the media. As he says: "People 'on the left' have a tendency to take for granted that everyone knows that the capitalist press is biased and that this assumption is commonly accepted. It is not, a great many people in Britain, perhaps a majority, still believe that the British press is free and truthful, that T.V. has no axe to grind and reports the news as it happens. I hope this pamphlet will show those people how dangerously wrong that belief is".

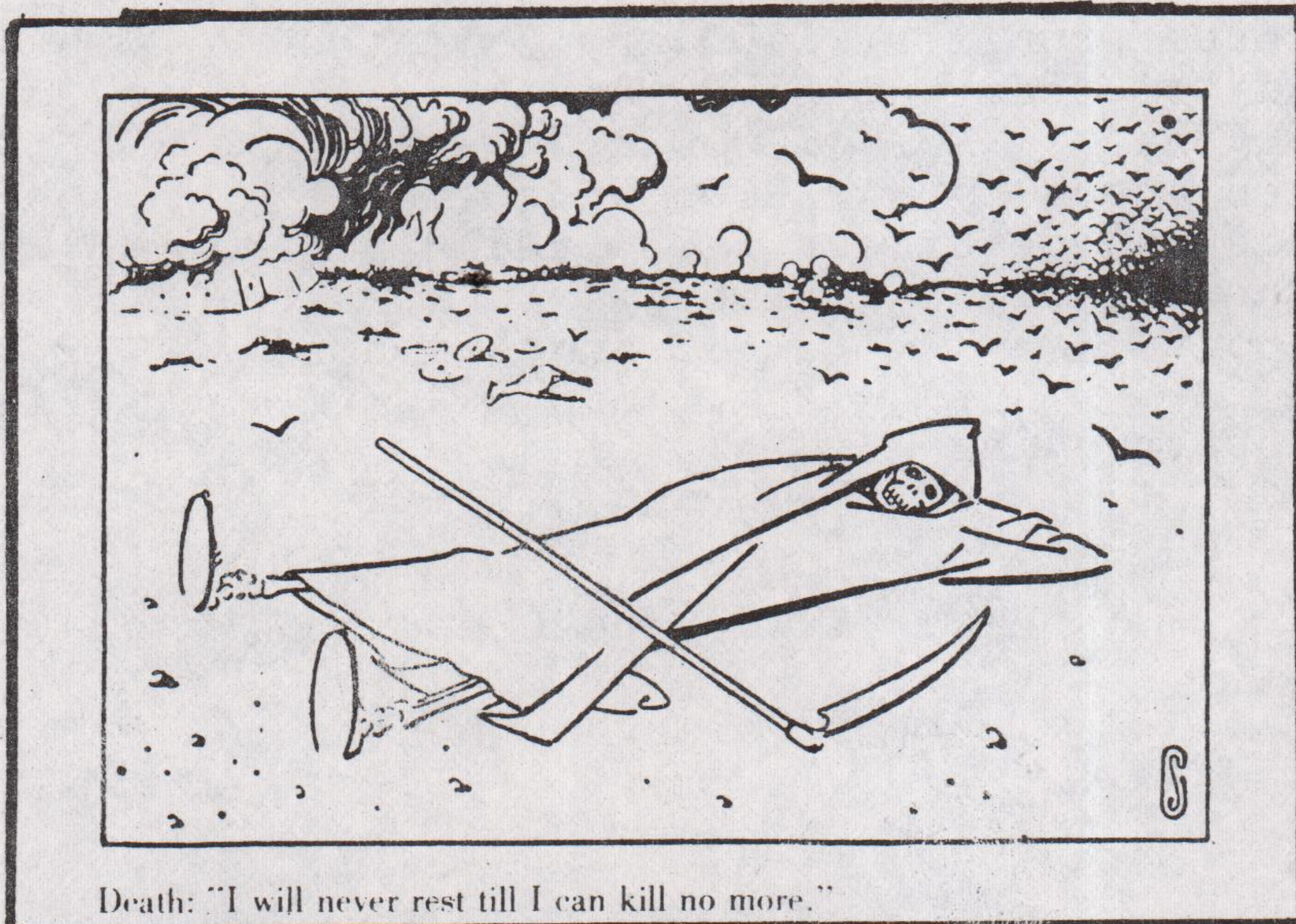
The miners strike made many women, children and men aware of how far the press, radio and T.V. were controlled by the ruling class. Before the strike, many people in these communities imagined that the media was a faithful transmitter of what was happening here and the rest of the world.

All the class hatred felt against the working class came out in the press including the more 'refined' and 'intellectual' papers.

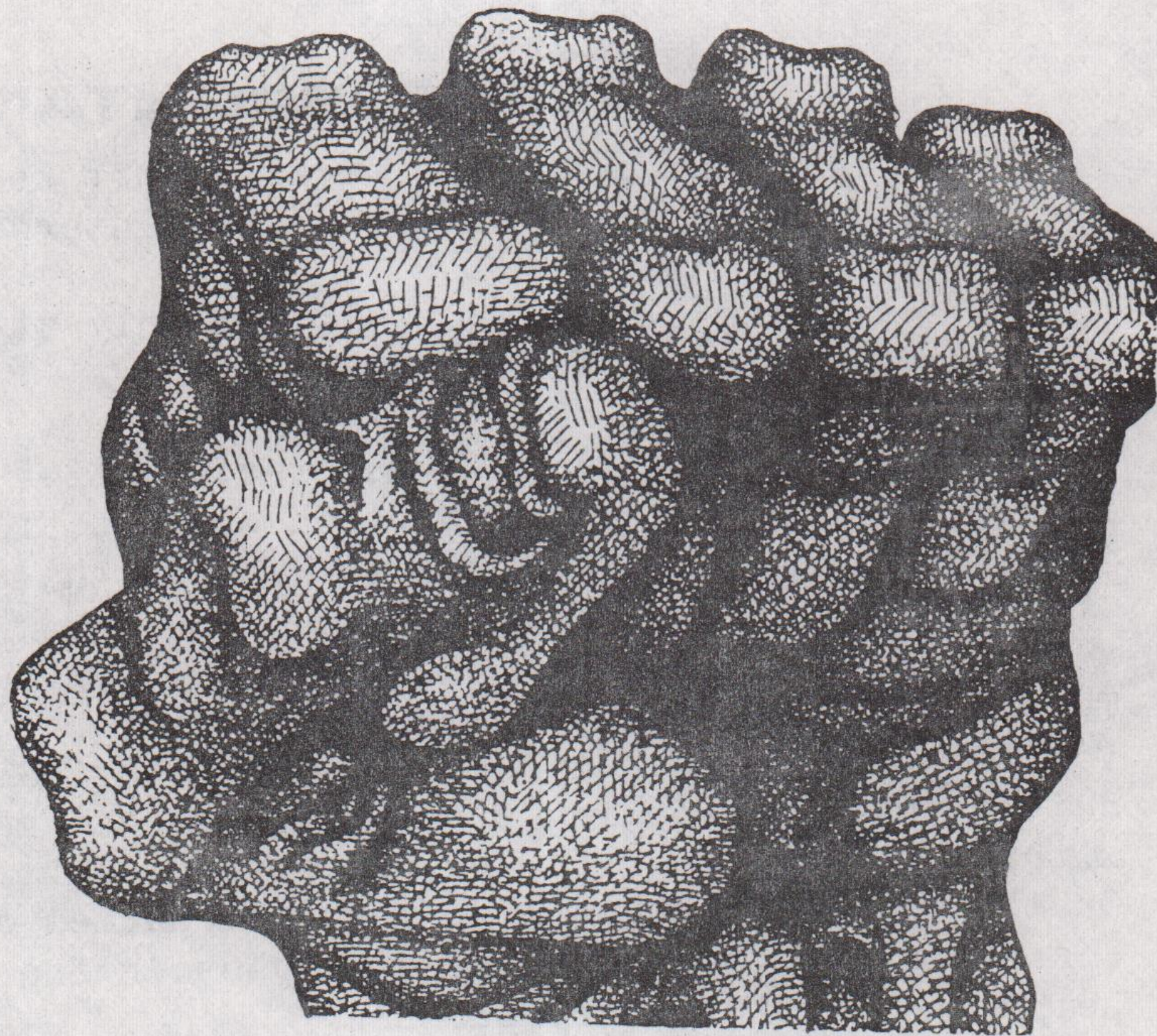
As Dave Douglass points out, the media in Britain have moved steadily away from a 'radical' bourgeois independence towards complete subservience to the bosses and the state over the last fifty years. He shows how despicably the media has used the most unsavoury methods to distort the miners strike. Just one example was when the BBC and ITV reversed the film of an incident at Gasgoine Wood to show how police were forced to draw batons in response to stone throwing pickets. In fact the police had charged without warning and the stone throwing occurred in self-defence.

This pamphlet should have a wide circulation in the labour movement and in general in order to help people break away from the blind belief in the screen and the press.

N.H.



THE ROLE OF A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION



We Libertarian Communists and revolutionary anarchists have a vision of a revolutionary organisation in bold contrast to that of the Leninists and other authoritarians. At the same time our concept of revolutionary organisation is in political and organisational disagreement with the idea of informal groupings as advocated by some anarchists.

What truly distinguishes the libertarian communist organisation is its structure, its relationship with the working class, and its theoretical elaboration of the relationship coupled with a precise understanding of class spontaneity. It becomes increasingly important to attempt this clarification. The crisis in capitalism on every level (economic, social, cultural and sexual) is reflected in the crisis of the organisations of the revolutionary left. These organisations duplicate ruling class values in their authoritarianism, their high degree of centralism, their worship of hierarchy and the sheep-like submission of the rank and file to the 'omnipotent' and 'all-wise' leaderships.

As the crisis in capitalism deepens, the related crisis in the left parties becomes more extreme, with schism after schism (see the recent events in the Communist Party for the latest example of this) opportunism and collaboration with the social-democratic agents of the bosses, the Labour Party (the transformation of the International Marxist Group into the Socialist League, when it started to enter the LP, and its ever increasing swing to the right, coupled with a fragmentation into a dozen factions, is a fine example of this).

It is vital that a strong libertarian movement in all areas of social life is created in order for working people to defend themselves against the ever more frenzied attacks of the capitalists, and to create a free self-managed society. To assist in the building of such a mass movement, a libertarian revolutionary organisation is necessary, an organisation that fights for the co-ordination of all anti-capitalist struggles. Such an organisation must have a structure that ensures permanent political debate and is controlled by the whole membership in a truly democratic way.

The libertarian revolutionary organisation must expose the authoritarianism and elitism of the Leninist groups.

CLASS SPONTANEITY

'The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves'. Declaration of the 'First International'.

'The working class by itself can only attain trade union consciousness'. Lenin, WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

A vast abyss of theory and practice lies between these two statements. We reject the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia and which seeks to dragoon the workers into a new form of oppression - the 'workers' state.

The concept of working class spontaneity has been distorted and misunderstood for too long. We do not take the 'unhistorical' attitude that some anarchists defend: that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no links with previous struggles, and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years in taking part in clarifying and co-ordinating struggles in the working class and elsewhere, greatly helps the revolutionary process.

What we mean by working class spontaneity is the ability of that class to take direct action on its own behalf, to develop new forms of struggle and organisation. This can be seen in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have thrown up councils and committees independent of 'vanguards'. In this country both the flying pickets and the mass picket have been developed as weapons of struggle, and more recently 'pit commandos' emerged during the Miners Strike. All of this independent of the Revolutionary Party (whichever one that happens to be). The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of, and sometimes against the pontifications of the revolutionary elites.

'Let us put it quite bluntly: the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are historically far more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of even the best central committee'. Rosa Luxemburg, ORGANISATIONAL QUESTIONS OF RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

The experiences of working class life, at the point of production and elsewhere, and within the context of the ever changing ground of the class struggle constantly lead to the development of ideas and action which question the established order. On the other hand, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of the working class' solidarity, through its control of the media and education, through its perpetuation of racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness. The working class is neither an amorphous mass, nor, at the moment a solid, united class, conscious of itself to a high degree.

The libertarian revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that the only possible proletarian revolution is one which working people use mass action to smash the apparatus of the ruling class, and that class itself. Any other revolution cannot by its nature be proletarian, and only leads to the formation of a new ruling class. Understanding these facts, the anarchist organisation recognises it has several specific and important tasks to perform.

IDENTIFICATION

The anarchist organisation must always see itself as part of the class. In order to strengthen this identification it seeks to develop and extend its influence in the class.

At the same time, the anarchist organisation must recognise itself as being in ideological advance of the class as a whole. Ideological advance should not be confused with practical advance for, as we have said, workers everywhere learn new modes of struggle and new forms of organisation that can benefit other workers. The anarchist revolutionary organisation must always be ready to learn from the class and should be expected to constantly revise its tactics with the unfolding situation. It should always realise that it is not infallible, does not have all the answers all the time. It is transformed as the working class is transformed in the revolutionary process.

Because it is part of the class and at the same time a distinctive organised tendency within it, the revolutionary organisation faces a contradiction in its relationship to other workers (of course, if it is not part of the class then like other groups it tends towards elitism, vanguardism, divorce from class reality. Theory and practice must be rooted in concrete conditions). There are dangers in these contradictions and the revolutionary anarchist organisation must be aware of this, and furthermore, derive a practice from this awareness. This contradiction cannot be completely removed until the triumph of a libertarian communist society.

TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION

In understanding that the revolution must be made by the self activity of the working class, and recognising the above contradictions, the anarchist revolutionary organisation has a number of tasks to perform. It must act as a propaganda grouping, ceaselessly and untiringly putting over the message that the working class must destroy capitalism and establish a libertarian communist society, and the ways in which this can be done, ideas of libertarian organisation and examples of self activity by workers. It must search out and recall the history of past struggles, the successes and mistakes of these struggles, and must impart the lessons to be learnt to as many of the class as it can reach. Working class history is deliberately obscured and excluded from the books by the ruling class. The revolutionary organisation has to help in the task of re-discovering these struggles in its efforts to help in the development of class consciousness.

Whenever important developments occur outside the class, the revolutionary organisation must spread the news through its links with organisations in other countries. The revolutionary organisation is internationalist; it seeks links with other groupings in order to increase class effectiveness.

But the organisation cannot see itself solely as a pedagogic group, like SOLIDARITY in this country. Above all, it is an assembly of activists. It must actively work in all the grassroots organisations of the working class, rank and file groups, tenants associations, squatters groups, unemployed groups, womens and gay groups. It seeks to make links between unionised and non-unionised workers in a struggle for a movement at the base. The organisation seeks to work inside the womens groups and sexual politics groups to help radicalise them, and to argue for a break with liberalism, reformism, and Leninism. It seeks to help in the recognition of the essential interconnection of sexual and class oppression. At the same time it respects the independence and autonomy of the womens and gay movements. It does not seek to make these movements into an appendage of

the revolutionary organisation, just as it respects the autonomy and democracy of the rank and file workers movements that may develop. Obviously, this does not mean it does not seek to spread its ideas in these movements.

The organisation works for the full democracy inside all these groupings, and inside the class as a whole for self-activity, for the self-management by working people of every struggle and every facet of life. Only by building democratic organisations in the course of struggle can the working class hope to reach libertarian communism. The revolutionary organisation itself must have complete democracy and must be organised as a federalist structure, as only federalism can hinder bureaucratic degeneration and encourage the active participation of all members in the organisation.

The anarchist organisation realises that the social revolution cannot be won without a struggle at the point of production and a seizure of the means of production. However, it does not relegate struggles in other areas of life (unemployed, sexual, environmental/ecological, cultural) to a secondary role. All these struggles are implicitly anti-capitalist, and all these issues are closely intertwined. The questioning of one facet of capitalism can lead to a total rejection of the system. The militants of the organisation involved in these groups must seek to pinpoint in what ways the class system causes and/or perpetuates the problems different sections of society are confronting.

It is vitally important that a 'libertarian front' of all these movements and groups is built. Thus revolutionary work consists in part of linking each area of struggle, bringing out all the latent anti-capitalist and libertarian tendencies to be found there. Revolutionary anarchist militants seek a regroupment of all those who have 'globalised' their struggle, developed from fighting on one front of capitalism to a total critique. This radical regroupment has to be striven for by the anarchist revolutionary organisation, and reflected in all its activities and publications. It must act as a driving force of such a grouping, constantly drawing in radicalised elements and helping to build a mass movement.

When we say 'driving force', we don't mean the Leninist approach of seeking to dominate such a movement by capturing positions and so forth. We seek to minimise the organisational contradiction and look for a close relationship with the mass movement. We don't want to take over such a movement. What counts is not so much the numerical increase of the organisation but its development of the whole working class movement. We see the revolutionary organisation as a means of communication and a weapon to be used by the working class.

THE LEADERSHIP OF IDEAS

In opposition to the Leninist ideas of leadership, the anarchist organisation fights for the 'leadership of ideas' within the class, through example and suggestion. This entails a clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self-managed society, and of Leninism. In the struggle against Leninism and all forms of elitism, comes the realisation that the struggle of ideas must be waged at grass roots level. This realisation is reflected in revolutionary anarchist theory and practice the call for the mandation of delegates, for mass decision making, for mass action.

A libertarian communist organisation will obviously not be the only organised tendency within the working class. Unlike Leninist organisations, it does not see itself as the party, but as one of several organisations which will participate in the mass movement alongside workers without affiliation. There may also be organisations of women or black people who will be represented in the movement and in the councils that may develop.

THE COMPOSITION of the REVOLUTIONARY

ORGANISATION

All sections of the working class who recognise the implications of struggle against capitalism and who subscribe to the libertarian project, will be united inside the organisation.

Elements of other classes and strata who see the need for the victory of the working class will also be gathered inside the organisation. Blue collar and white collar workers, elements of the working intelligentsia and scientific strata will work together in the realisation of the revolution. The intellectual has a role to play in helping clarify positions inside the organisation, but s/he should never have a privileged position inside it. In fact the practicality of working people very often outstrips the intellectual in the grasp of theory and practice. Workers must be the vast majority inside a revolutionary anarchist organisation.

The revolutionary organisation will fight in the newly created workplace and neighbourhood councils on an ideological level against authoritarian groups. It will work within the working class to ensure that the structures function democratically and to fight against any organisation or party that aims to take power *in the* name of the working class. If the Leninists use force to destroy the workers gains, then the anarchist organisation must be fully prepared to combat them on a physical level, and to help other workers to prepare for this eventuality. It follows on from this that the revolutionary period the anarchist organisation must call for and assist in the arming of all working people, for defence against all their enemies, and the creation of workers militias under the control of the councils.

As the revolution advances, the relationship of the organisation to the class develops. A new level of unity is reached because the organisation grows as wide sections of workers see its perspectives as a way to a new and just society.

The anarchist organisation does not dissolve itself immediately after the initial insurrectionary phase of the revolution. It must continue to grow, in order to aid the class towards libertarian communism. As this ideal becomes more and more possible, and obstacles to its achievement fall away, the organisation at the same time becomes more open and eventually disappears completely.

The anarchist organisation should see itself in the future period as a tendency in the council movement, advocating maximum democracy, and it should be prepared to exist with other tendencies, as only constant debate in the class can ensure that correct decisions can be reached.

N.H.

THIS ARTICLE HAS NOT TOUCHED ON THE ACTUAL INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION. A FORTHCOMING ARTICLE ON 'FEDERALISM' SHOULD GO SOME WAY TO DEALING WITH THIS QUESTION.

BAKUNIN ON INSURRECTION AND

THE RIOTS

A popular insurrection, by its very nature, is instinctive, chaotic, and destructive, and always entails great personal sacrifice and an enormous loss of public and private property. The masses are always ready to sacrifice themselves; and this is what turns them into a brutal and savage horde, capable of performing heroic and apparently impossible exploits, and since they possess little or nothing, they are not demoralised by the responsibilities of property ownership. And in moments of crisis, for the sake of self defence or victory, they will not hesitate to burn down their own houses and neighbourhoods, and property being no deterrent, since it belongs to the oppressors, they develop a passion for destruction. This negative passion, it is true, is far from being sufficient to attain the heights of the revolutionary cause; but without it, revolution would be impossible. Revolution requires extensive and widespread destruction, a fecund and renovating destruction, since in this way and only in this way are new worlds born.....

But poverty and desperation are not enough to generate the social revolution. They may be able to call forth intermittent local rebellions, but not great and widespread mass uprisings. To do this it is indispensable that the people be inspired by a universal ideal, historically developed from the instinctual depths of popular sentiments, amplified and clarified by a series of significant events and severe and bitter experiences..... When this idea and this popular faith are joined to the kind of misery that leads to desperation, then the Social Revolution is near and inevitable, and no force on earth is able to resist it.

Michael Bakunin, 1873.

