

Council Communism

TOWARDS AN ANARCHIST CULTURE



PROBLEMS IN
ANARCHO SYNDICALISM ~
a reply

TECHNOLOGY AND
REVOLUTION
and more...

the enemy
within.

VIRUS

MILITANT ANARCHISM

25p.

NO. 10

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Where We Stand

We believe that:

1. Capitalism and other social systems, in which wealth and power are the property of a ruling class/elite, must be destroyed.

2. Reformist and statist solutions will necessarily fail and therefore revolution is the only possible means of achieving anarchist-communism. How far such a revolution will be peaceful depends upon the degree to which the ruling class clings on to power through violence and state repression.

3. Genuine liberation can only come about through the self activity of the great mass of the population. We regard parliament, representative democracy and political vanguardism as being obstacles to a self-managed society. Institutions and organisations which attempt to mediate in the fight against domination cannot succeed. Trade unionism, as it is presently constituted, plays an important part in maintaining class exploitation, insofar as it regulates and justifies it through collective bargaining and bureaucratic structures. Nevertheless, it is important to work within the trade union movement, in order to build up a rank-and-file workers' movement which encourages workers' control of struggle and cuts across sectional boundaries.

4. Workers and other oppressed sections of society will, in times of revolutionary upheaval, create their own democ-

atic institutions, whether they be based on the workplace or the community. To this end we encourage the creation of organs of struggle based on the rank and file, independent of political parties.

5. Pure spontaneity is unlikely to be sufficient to overthrow entrenched class domination. Anarchists must indicate the libertarian alternative to class societies, participate as anarchists in struggle and organise on a federative basis to assist in the revolutionary process.

6. Capitalism is international and needs to be fought internationally. We therefore try to maintain contact with as many anarchist-communists as possible in overseas countries as the preliminary stage to the creation of an anarchist international.

7. We do not simply seek the abolition of class differences, for inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, age, sexuality and gender. Personal relationships are now often based on domination and submission. We seek not only an economic revolution but a social and cultural revolution as well, involving a thorough-going change in attitudes and organisation of everyday lives to free us in our social and personal interactions.

8. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

"LIBERTY WITHOUT SOCIALISM IS
EXPLOITATION,
SOCIALISM WITHOUT LIBERTY IS TYRANNY."

The Anarchist Communist Federation is a network of class struggle anarchists. The organisation is based upon individual members and groups. At the present moment there are groups in Canterbury, London, Manchester, Medway, Newcastle and Nottingham. Individual members are to be found in many other towns. The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain. Besides VIRUS we also publish our agitational paper LIBERATION. Subscriptions to VIRUS cost £1 a year, whilst LIBERATION subscriptions are £1.50 for six issues.

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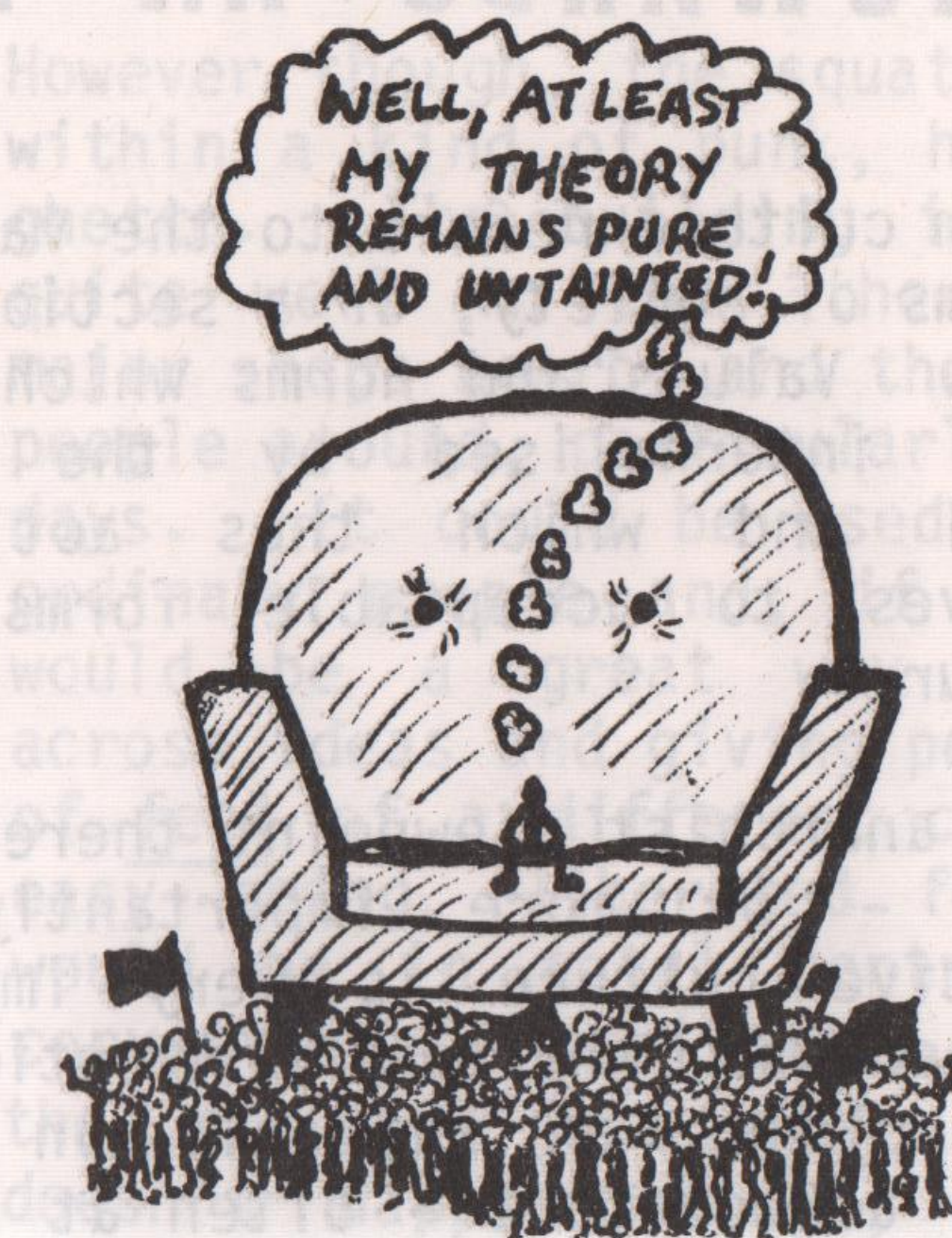
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An Excuse to Retreat to the Armchair

The council communists consider themselves to be revolutionaries. They are not interested in reformism. To them reformism means acceptance and participation in the status quo. Yet is it not a fact that the movement for reform today can be the revolution or the sell-out of tomorrow? Reformism has a dual nature. The reformism of the Labour Party, of trade-union bureaucrats, of the poverty lobby, is that of trying to get their organisation integrated into the state as representatives. This is one brand of reformism somewhat different from the rent strike, the demonstration or the mass picket. To fail to see this is to be blind to anything other than your own revolutionary pronouncements, to be irrelevant today and insignificant tomorrow. The political activity of the "ultra-left" council communist is so far left it is meaningless. To propose the formation of merely propaganda groups is not only political suicide, but to refuse to take a role that could be decisive in a revolution of the future.

The revolutionary should be active now, providing concrete assistance to struggles occurring in the present. Through the grass-roots struggle, those in struggle become more confident of their own abilities, if they succeed and see their activity linked to concrete reforms. The reforms of the Labour Party, the collective bargaining of the unions and the legal actions of the poverty lobby create passivity. This kind of "we'll do it for you" reformist socialism kills the potential for revolution. This is the activity we should be avoiding. The programme we should follow is one of reform from below leading to revolution. Revolutions do not appear out of thin

air or as simple knee-jerk reflexes to repression. They occur when people feel confidence in the success of what they are doing, although not always with the conscious intention of revolution.



To maintain a position of the organisation as a propaganda group is to confine yourself to the armchair. Without involvement in struggle, your ideas will become sterile, untested except in the distant future. Your experience will become more and more confined to the text-book. Your ideas will be viewed as irrelevant, as they don't relate to the experiences of people now. You will not have earned the right to be heard as you will have contributed nothing to struggle. This will lead to disillusionment very rapidly.

Closely allied to the propaganda group idea is the notion of ideological leadership. As with concrete leadership, ideological leadership is bureaucratic vanguardism. The point of our ideas is not that



they are superior but that they can be of assistance to those in struggle. The measure of the value of our ideas is how useful they are in helping people understand their own position and what to do about it. Notions of having a superior world view are arrogant nonsense. We cannot experience everything nor know every fact. The whole point behind

the idea of self management is that experts are replaced by structure and organisations that effectively use the collective knowledge and experience of all of us to meet our needs and desires. As such we can have no complete detailed programme for the unpropertied classes, only a general approach.

TOWARDS AN ANARCHIST CULTURE

The term culture refers to the values and norms of society, or a section of society. Values and norms which are learnt, internalised by the individual and which thus act as directives to acceptable forms of behaviour.

From an anarchist viewpoint therefore culture - or more importantly - alternative culture is very important, because whereas conventional culture places an emphasis on individual achievement - often at the expense of others, competition, private property, accumulation of wealth, inequality and so on - we, as anarchists need to encourage a culture which places emphasis on communal ownership, co-operation, equality and the fullest possible participation in the running of one's own life and so on.

Very often certain radical: Marxist, anarchist or whatever - tend to concentrate on the workplace and on the relationship of the working class to the forces of production. However, although this is very important, revolution is about much more than just violent conflict and the changing of people's relationship to the forces of production. That is only one part of it. It's also about new ideas, new thoughts and feelings, new approaches to life, new modes of behaviour, new relationships: in short - the emergence of a new culture.

I feel that this "new" or "alternative" culture is very important because if society changes, through revolution, but people cling onto the old capitalist norms and values, there is obviously a danger of a new society evolving which is not completely libertarian or anarchist.

Therefore, here and now, long before any revolution may take place, it is up to us to encourage and spread the ideas and values of an alternative anarchist culture.

One of the best ways we can do this is in the sphere of leisure. Leisure is something that is sometimes overlooked by revolutionaries, who look at the workplace instead. However though, considering that in an anarchist society, where work would play its proper role, that being a means to leisure rather than something that dominates people's lives and considering that in today's society the field of leisure is dominated by money-grabbing capitalists in the form of venue owners, promoters and managers, just as it is in the field of work by bosses and managers etc - it is important to create an alternative form of leisure - both to get away from capitalist manipulators and to provide the setting for a subculture to emerge which one day - hopefully - will become mainstream culture.



An obvious example of an alternative culture or subculture that has arisen over the last 8 or 9 years or so has been the anarcho-punk movement, where many bands have shown that you can do without greedy promoters and managers and so on and do things yourselves, the way you want. Although the anarcho-punk movement has its faults and although some bands have reportedly "sold out", 'punk culture' has been responsible for getting many people interested in anarchism - eg me! Despite this though, the alternative culture of punk has a big disadvantage, that is it's very ghettoised.

There's an example of this in Upper Street, Islington. I'm not sure if it's still going but I'm talking about the squat in the old City Limits building - I think its called Blut-bluts now but it used to be called the Daisy Chain cafe.

Anyway, Blut-bluts is an example of people coming together and doing things themselves in their way.

On the upper floors you've got squats, on the ground floor there's the cafe and a room to kind of lounge about in and the basement is a kind of empty shell where bands can play. When things get going there, it's a good atmosphere and you have a greater sense of belonging than you would in a major venue.

However though, the squat is trapped within a kind of punk, hippy, vegan ghetto. The building is situated quite well in that there are many major shops nearby and therefore many people around, particularly on Saturdays. It could be used to attract ordinary people and, if it did, it would be a great way of getting across ideas and giving people a kind of feel of a different culture - an easy going, liberated feeling that would be in total contrast to the conventional capitalist shop that they may have just come out of. This doesn't happen though, because as I've said its trapped within a punk ghetto and therefore most people feel excluded from it.

I think if an alternative anarchist culture has any chance of spreading it mustn't get trapped within punk, hippy, vegan or student ghettoes. So I think questions we've got to ask ourselves are:

What do we consider an alternative culture to be? What is its role? How do we bring it about and help it spread? How can we prevent it becoming ghettoised and thus inaccessible to most people? and How do we make it accessible without being a copy of what already exists?



new technology

The article on New Technology in Virus no 9 got its economics in a twist. Marx said that the introduction of constant capital, machinery and other labour-saving devices, to replace variable capital, ie the hours of work needed to be done by workers, would lead to overproduction and crisis. He was wrong. On the face of it, it is quite convincing. If you replace workers with machines, then fewer wages are paid but your output remains the same or is increased. The demand for the goods, however, reduces because you're paying workers, as a whole, less money. The capitalists, in

general, cannot make more profits without paying more wages, otherwise where does the money come from to pay for the goods? To maintain itself, capitalism must maintain a careful balancing act between increases in productivity and wages. These two can, in theory, be maintained. Wages can be increased as productivity increases with the introduction of new management techniques, new technology etc, whilst at the same time maintaining profits. It is a remarkably complicated balancing act depending upon political and social forces, such as the class struggle, bureaucritisation, the actions of multi-nationals etc. In general, new technology is not the cause of unemployment. In particular cases, we can see new technology leading to job losses. This is because we are in a recession and there are no other jobs to go to. The idea linking technology and job losses can't explain why in a boom period new technology is introduced without overall job losses. For further clarification I would suggest Cardan's 'Modern Capitalism and Revolution'.

TECHNOLOGY AND REVOLUTION

The two-page article in 'Virus 9' entitled "New Technology - Friend or Foe?" takes the position that "it is not technology that is morally wrong but only the system under which it is implemented". I believe this view is mistaken and that anarchists and other revolutionaries must critically re-examine the nature of technology and realise that social change cannot be achieved through the use of a technology developed by or within capitalism. Indeed to assume that revolutionaries can uncritically adopt, adapt or manage capitalist industry and technology cripples our movement by limiting opposition to the excesses of industrialism, instead of focussing attention onto the causes of industrial disasters.

The article also fails to examine the political economy of new technology and limits discussion to one basic form of new technology - namely information technology. Yet the development of information technology is underpinned by the use of exploited labour and its production poses many of the problems created by other older technologies, such as pollution and industrial disease. Only the types of pollution and the types of disease are different. Indeed, if the costs of non-polluting, non-exploitative, socially useful production were included in the price of computer technology, it is doubtful if they would be used very often.

Information technology is not the only new technology. There is also, for example, the new biotechnology. Historically viewed, nuclear technology is also a recent development and, like biotechnology, has the horrific potential of undermining the basis of life itself. Of course, I recognise that most forms of tech-



nology pose a potential threat to the safety of individuals and groups of people but the qualitative differences between previous types of technology and the "new technologies" currently being developed are that the latter threaten mass extermination and they also threaten the biological basis of existence.

The development of new technologies is always justified by references to greater efficiency, greater speed, reduced costs and even the potential for saving life. Yet if we constructed a crude balance sheet of (eg) lives saved versus lives lost, it is by no means certain that the introduction of new technologies will save more lives than they jeopardize. For every life saved by the speed of the technology, how many more lives are wasted in the system of production? The truth is that new technology is not primarily used to save life, its real impact on our lives is to enable more efficient exploitation of our labour and to facilitate control over our lives by the state and the ruling class.

Technology is not neutral. Indeed there is a consistent and growing body of evidence which demonstrates conclusively that technology embodies values and that, as it is developed within an authoritarian and hierarchical society, the values embodied within technology are in turn authoritarian and hierarchical. Harry Braverman's 'Labour and Monopoly Capital' explains quite succinctly how successive generations of capitalism have used technology as a means of social and economic control by investing skill in the machine while de-skilling the worker rendering him/her powerless. Domination stems not from an abuse of the technical apparatus but is the underlying rationale behind its development. We should also be aware that technological domination doesn't stem solely from the use to which this or that technology is put but is an inherent feature of the invention and development of technology.

Steven Rose and others have established an impressive body of work refuting the concept of scientific neutrality. Science, like other forms of social activity, takes place within the framework of a whole series of power relationships, which determine what scientific enquiry will be pursued and how it will be shaped, resourced and implemented.

Technology must be seen for what it is - a very specific system of domination (not to be confused with "tools") as explained in a recent issue of 'Fifth Estate': "Technology is not a tool but an environment, a totality of means enclosing us in its automatism of need and production." Although the repressive character of technology has been clearly exposed in the work of (for example) Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul, the myth of technology's neutrality still prevails and remains a central feature of capitalism's ideological hegemony. Technology's neutrality is accepted unquestioned by the media (eg 'Tomorrow's World') by the scientific establishment and by much of the left, yet as Langdon Winner notes: "Shielded by the conviction that technology is neutral and tool-like, a whole new order is built piecemeal, step by step, with the parts and pieces linked together in novel ways - without the slightest public awareness or opportunity to dispute the character of the changes under way" (Autonomous techniques). changes which promote authoritarian social changes. Robert Jung in the 'Nuclear State' explains how nuclear technology was deliberately chosen because it necessitates hierarchy and social control and Ivan Illich has examined the centrality of particular technological forms in promoting the powerlessness experienced by ordinary people in "modern" and "modernising" societies. There is also a growing body of research which indicates that technology transfer from "developed" to "under-developed" countries is one of the main methods of transplanting capitalist relations of production with "Third World" countries.

One of the most worrying aspects of the new information and communication technologies is the way they have evolved under the control of military-industrial interests (both here and in the US) and the way that control over the technical means of communication and over the technical apparatus of cultural production has lent itself to military-industrial



Illustration: Bill Sanderson

control over the content. This control will be increased in Britain with the implementation of satellite broadcasting and communications systems and the eventual introduction of cable television on a wide scale. The way in which the use of military technology, developed for military use, can affect social organisation when used in a civilian context has been explored by Steve Wright, who recognises that police use of military technologies has been one of the most important dynamics behind the militarisation of the British police over the past few years.

Debate

What is also overlooked by the author of the 'Virus' article is the way in which the whole system of industrial production now threatens to exterminate us. Windscale, Seveso, Bhopal, Chernobyl - none of these were random accidents, rather they are all predictable symptoms of a technological system of production based on extermination. Indeed these accidents are so predictable that it is possible to forecast with certainty that similar, even worse, accidents will happen. It only remains difficult to predict precisely where and when the next "accident" will occur. Even these

"accidents" are dwarfed by the massive and relentless daily destruction of the ecology and the persistent, but less spectacular, poisoning of the environment, the increasing numbers of chemically-induced diseases and the rapid spread of hunger and malnutrition as technological farming replaces far more efficient organic methods.

Capitalism has been built on bloodshed. Whole populations have been savagely exterminated; indigenous cultures have been wilfully and deliberately destroyed and the industrial method of production introduced by force: its benefits are not, and never have been, so obvious that people have willingly abandoned established ways of living. Before people tolerated wage-slavery they had first to be dispossessed; their original communities destroyed and significant sections of the population driven to a state of dependant pauperism. This process still continues and it is built into the structure of technology.

Of course, rejecting industrialism and capitalist technology doesn't involve a toolless form of survivalist drudgery. Rejecting existing technology means rejecting the existing system of machinery and social relationships that comprise the technology. We would still be

free to appropriate this or that tool for our use, although our criteria for determining what is, or is not, a useful tool would be different. Would use of the tool empower or enslave an individual? Would the tool enable individuals to overcome their social isolation and within what new framework of social relationships should the tool be developed and used?

What are the implications of the emerging critique of technology for anarchist practice now? For this is the most notable failure of the 'Virus' article. We must not allow ourselves to develop abstract critiques of society, which, however interesting they may be, do not inform our practical activity - the point is to change the world, not to interpret it. Firstly I suggest we need to stimulate informed debate both within the anarchist movement and beyond. This debate should not only discuss the nature of technology but also the implications of



Thatcher's cabinet celebrates British victory in nuclear war

technology and industrialism for existing concepts of self-management and syndicalism; secondly we need to determine what are and what are not appropriate tools for social change. Those tools which might be appropriated for our use should be dislocated from the social relations in which they are currently used and we should actively attempt to disseminate information about how they work and can be used. We should also become actively engaged in developing new tools, as well as adapting existing ones. These new tools should embody the features and values we see as desirable and should promote the kind of social change we see as desirable. Lastly, I see nothing wrong with an informed Luddism.

As a basis for discussion within the movement I would suggest people refer to:

Mavros Black 'A syndicalist response to new technology': Black Flag Sept 1985 (also available as a Black Chip pamphlet)

Black Chip 86:1 (Spring 1986), especially the articles 'Computers and control' and 'How do technologies embody values?' by Les Levidow and Bob Young

Murray Bookchin 'Self-management and the new technology' Telos 41 (Fall 1979)

Mike Cooley 'Architect or bee?' Hand and Brain 1980

Andre Gorz 'Farewell to the working class' Pluto 1982

Various issues of 'Fifth Estate' and the writings of Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford and Ivan Illich.

PROBLEMS IN ANARCHO SYNDICALISM ~

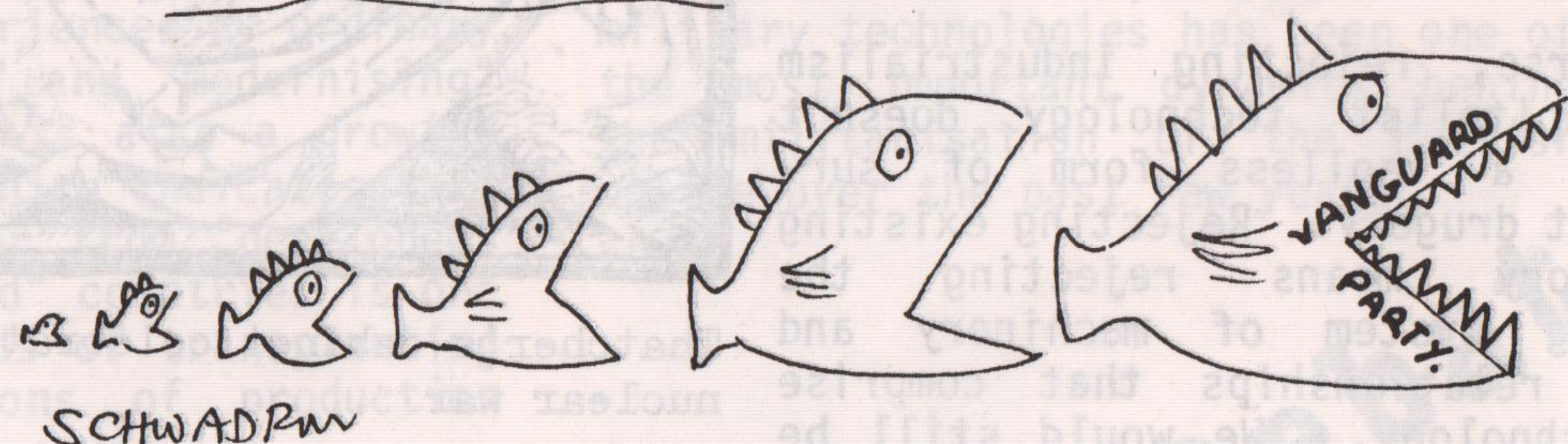
a reply

Organisation and Leadership

The issue of the CNT's entry into the government has long been a topic of debate within the anarchist movement. It is glaringly obvious that many statements made by the CNT "leadership" at the time are utter nonsense and that many of their actions amount to treachery.

Durruti is quoted in the article as saying that the rank and file were not consulted. Obviously those who took the decision had no mandate. But the attitudes and actions of the rank and file at the time are the real issue. If the rank and file opposed the move then the fact that these members were not recalled or expelled implies that the democratic machinery of the CNT did not work in practice. If the rank and file did not oppose it, then this reflects a deep ideological weakness in Spanish anarcho-syndicalism at that time.

I'M GOING TO COUNT
TO 10 AND I WANT
EVERYONE TO TURN AROUND.



SCHWADRM

areas where the CNT was not as strong there would have to be collaboration with the Socialists and therefore the popular front.

This was a terrible error as history has shown but always at the forefront of the debate was the international question. The Italian and German proletariat had been repressed by the fascists and Russian foreign policy was playing an immensely counter-revolutionary role, confusing and dividing the loyalties of the

The July 21 Regional Plenum, in which talk of libertarian communism was dropped for the anti-fascist struggle, would suggest that this ideological weakness was indeed present (despite the famous slogan of "the war and the revolution are inseparable"). The attitude seems to have been one of indifference towards national questions - a sort of "we've got the factories, everything else is irrelevant". This celebrated "apoliticism" (which the author's quoting of Bonanno suggests the CNT did not



A workers' demonstration in Barcelona, 1937

have enough of!) was fatal to the revolution. Revolutionary organisations must take economics onto the political plain. The bourgeoisie cannot simply be ignored; they must be smashed. Garcia's comments of "what would I have done with the power" shows that the "leadership" had the same essential attitude, which was why they chose the cop-out of joining the government.

However, the question of revolution or war was not black and white. Fears that a revolutionary Catalonia would be isolated were expressed. The workers needed arms and the non-Catalan delegates argued that in

workers' movement throughout Europe. Nevertheless, the CNT's illusions about the Popular Front were a serious theoretical error, which prevented the delegates from concluding that the workers' movement would be stronger not weaker if workers' power was established and the state apparatus suppressed.

However, all this took place in a revolutionary situation. The suggestion that we should not defend our interests in the here and now is facile ultra-leftism, besides which it is often "reformist" struggles which escalate to the point of revolution because the capitalist

system in crisis cannot grant certain demands.

To be effective, the organs for present day struggles should obviously be controlled by the rank and file. The author agrees with this: "Anarcho-syndicalism correctly asserts that workers must organise themselves in their economic units and in these structures must practise the organisational forms of the anarchist society". Whether these organs degenerate through waging struggles over conditions etc depends on: 1) whether the rank and file is genuinely in control, 2) whether the rank and file has a revolutionary perspective. However, it is important to note that consciousness grows out of struggle. Participation, as the author says in the introduction, is the all important issue.

However, the dynamism of an organisation also depends on the political content of that participation. Revolutionary ideas do not emerge from nowhere: they are the product of accumulated historical experience, of argument, discussion and modification through practice. That left opposition to the reformism of the CNT was not more coherent was not merely an historical tragedy; it was a lesson which the Spanish proletariat had not yet understood.

We see the rebirth of the CNT and its strategy of participation within workplace assemblies, which cut across the sectarian divisions of the unions, as an attempt to rectify some of the mistakes of the past and, in effect, a completely new anarcho-syndicalist movement.

The CNT in 1936, although formally committed to libertarian communism, was a coalition of syndicalist tendencies, of which the most dominant was anarcho-syndicalism. Anarchists within the CNT found that the nature of trade unionism, which grouped together revolutionary workers alongside reformists in a mass organisation, was not in itself sufficient.

They saw the need for a distinct, if not entirely separate, specifically anarchist organisation. This led to the formation of the FAI, which did not perform its task particularly well.

The truth of the situation was that the conscious revolutionaries (elements within the Libertarian Youth, Friends of Durrutti) were a minority within the mass anarcho-syndicalist organisation. We locate ourselves within that tradition and we take from it what we see as most useful: the emphasis on self-education through struggle; the principle of direct action unmediated by party, union bureaucracy or state; the insistence on delegate democracy; principled opposition to parliamentarism and the necessity of internationalism.

PRO PRESOS



LA LIBERTAD
NO SE MENDIGA,
SE CONQUISTA

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The General Strike

The idea of armed insurrection begs the question of who will arm the workers. A successful insurrection will involve the coordinated action of revolutionary workers over a wide geographical area. The CNT organised many such insurrections upon the initiative of the FAI, some of which were just as counter-productive as failed general strikes.

Debate

An insurrection cannot be prepared and undertaken outside of the mass workers' movement. This amounts to vanguardism and ignores the dynamic of struggle. In many instances, a general strike will develop out of a mass strike, which has itself developed from an apparently insignificant demand. Once expropriation has followed the withdrawal of labour, the workers must arm themselves, not just to defend their control of the workplaces but to smash the bourgeoisie administration. The general strike cannot be separated from the insurrection. One is integral to the other.

The implication of any general strike cannot be anything but revolutionary, whether the participants are conscious of it or not. The point of anarcho-syndicalism is to organise at the workplace in a revolutionary fashion, so that the general strike when it comes will be consciously revolutionary. This is the polar opposite of ideas of a vanguardist party, in that a mass revolutionary union, controlled directly by its members, really is the organised expression of the working class.

It is not entirely true to say that guerilla armies defeated modern states: they defeated states in countries where the proletariat was in a minority, where it had not been necessary for the state to extend itself into the sphere of education, healthcare, the media and the unions - the so-called ideological state apparatuses. These Third World states relied more on force than consent to govern and, while the mass action of the workers was important, it was not central.

The question of the armed forces is not as black and white as the author suggests. Soldiers' and sailors' mutinies were a crucial part of the Russian Revolution and the uprisings

which ended World War One. Although these were conscript armies, it is not unreasonable to anticipate widespread desertion. Iran under the Shah was one of the most militarised modern states yet waves of strikes paralysed even this apparent monolith.

It is obvious that the more disaffection there is in the ranks of the army, the lower morale is etc, the more chance of success a revolution stands. It is also true that workers in both the country concerned and in interventionist countries have immense powers of sabotage and this may prove decisive. This does not lessen the necessity of armed defence of the revolution.

Community

Syndicalism is anarchism as it relates to the workplace. Workplace organisation is, by definition, of utmost importance in a proletarian revolution. Yet anarcho-syndicalism has always paid great attention to organisation in the community. Post revolutionary society will be run by workplace and community assemblies and their delegates. The more organised the working class is in both of these places before revolution breaks out, the stronger it will be.

Conclusion

It seems that the division between the 'syndicalists' and the 'non-syndicalists' in the revolutionary anarchist movement is increasingly academic, especially given the willingness of modern anarcho-syndicalists to learn from the past and adapt to the present.

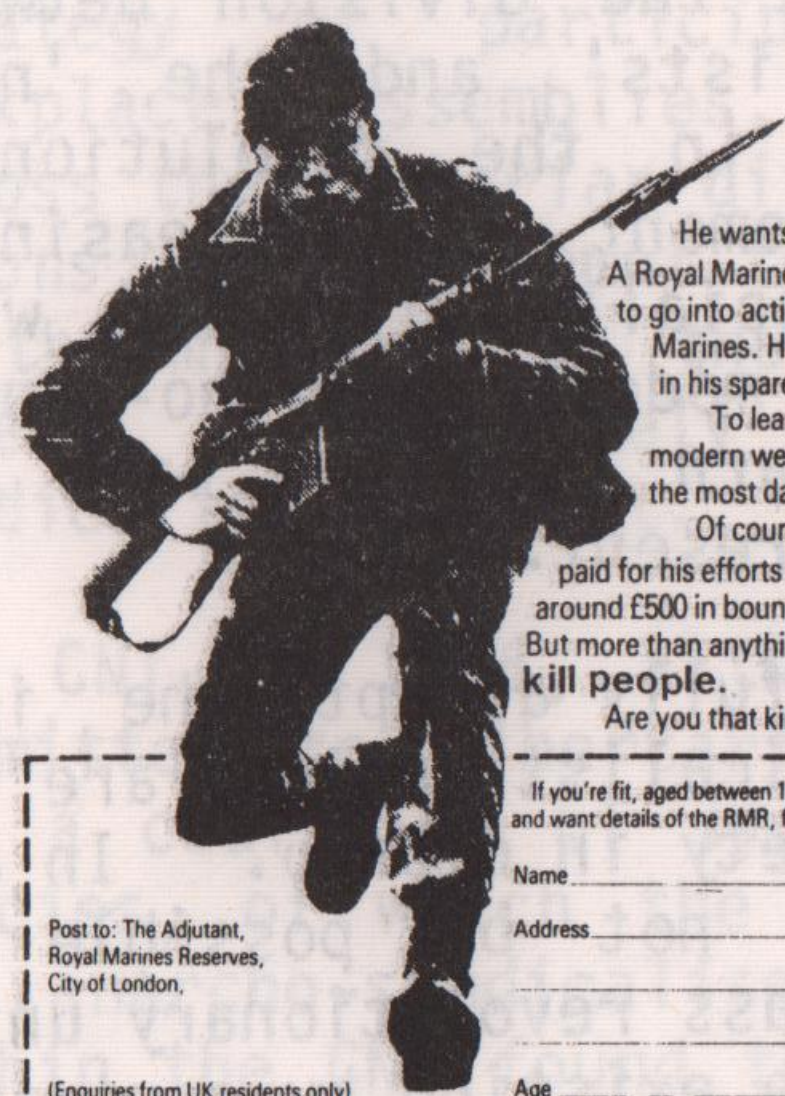
We would not fully accept the idea that the syndicalist unions are the socialist society in embryo. In any case, it may not be possible to construct a mass revolutionary union outside of the existing bureaucratic unions before a revolutionary situation arises in this country. No-one can credibly deny the importance of organising for the battle in the here and now, and yet no revolutionary

will refrain from involvement in a revolutionary situation simply because the organs of working-class power had not already been built under capitalism.

Mass revolutionary organisations will only usually exist in times of mass struggle. Genuine organs of struggle are on the whole generated out of that struggle. In all probability, the organisations which the workers use to defend their conditions under capitalism and the main organs of workers' power in a revolution will not be synonymous. Nevertheless, the degree to which we can create a firm basis from which working class consciousness, activity and organisation can grow will be of primary importance in a successful revolution. Our role as conscious revolutionaries is, therefore, to promote rank-and-file control of all struggles, whether in industry or community.

S. W. London Direct Action Movement

What kind of man dresses like this at weekends?



He wants to be a Commando.
A Royal Marines Reservist, ready to go into action with the Royal Marines. He wants to train hard in his spare time. To get really fit. To learn to use all kinds of modern weapons. To survive in the most dangerous conditions. Of course, he likes to be well-paid for his efforts too. Which he is, with around £500 in bounty and pay. But more than anything else, he wants to kill people.

Are you that kind of man?

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Address _____

Age _____

Post to: The Adjutant,
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'Class War on the Home Front: Revolutionary Opposition to the Second World War.' Wildcat publication. £1.50 (inc p&p) from Wildcat, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester.

The Anti-parliamentary Communist Federation sprang originally from the anarchist and libertarian socialist movement in Glasgow in the World War 1 period. In the 20s the APCF maintained its opposition to the Labour Party and the reformist trade unions, while making contact with the 'Left' and 'Council' Communists in Holland and Germany, advocate of workers' self-activity and workers' councils. It never really got over its identity crisis over whether it was anarchist or council-communist. At one time it called itself 'Anarcho-Marxian': "holding none of the prejudices which orthodox 'Anarchists' and 'Marxists' harbour towards each other ... it admires and would emulate the ardour, courage and initiative suggested by names like Bakunin, Malatesta, Durruti; the brilliance and perseverance associated with Marx. On the other hand, it equally condemns irresponsibility - common to many 'Anarchists' - and arrogance and intolerance - common to so many 'Marxists'.

However, it appears that there were some who considered themselves above all as marxists and others as above all anarchists. Before the end of the Spanish Civil War, the anarchists in the APCF had had enough, breaking away to form the Glasgow Anarchist-Communist Federation in 1937.

The APCF continued its opposition to bourgeois democracy and to Leninism. In its paper, 'Solidarity', it argued against the Second World War as an imperialist war, hoping that it would be followed by revolution. This pamphlet is devoted mainly to reprints of articles from the period of the Spanish Civil War and World War 2. It is always useful to find out more about the history that has been hidden from us, the history of working-class struggle and to a lesser extent the small revolutionary groups produced by struggle. Books by Ken Weller on the anti-war movement in World War 1 (reviewed in a previous 'Virus') and on the early anarchist movement by John Quail and Albert Meltzer are examples of this. To these can be added the Wildcat booklet.

'The Free' by M Gilliland. Hooligan Press. £1.80 from BM Hurricane WC1.

'The Free' is one of those rare books: a novel about anarchism. Perhaps Ursula le Guin's science fiction classic, 'The Dispossessed' is one of the few others that spring readily to mind. While the location for that book was another solar system, 'The Free' is based firmly on terra firma. Though no names are given, we are told that Macker and his friends and comrades live on an island of the edge of Europe and with the dialect we can soon guess where that might be.

Le Guin's world too often seems like the creation of a bloodless intellectual. There sometimes people are too good to be true; alcohol is fore-sworn and you get the feeling that you're in that "strawberries and cream" future of the classic joke. ("After the revolution everyone will eat strawberries and cream." "I don't like strawberries and cream." "After the revolution you'll eat strawberries and cream and like it.")

Gilliland's world is one of real people: nothing sanitised here; all the rawness of real life, where people have to struggle to live. There are no impeccably right-on paragons

The APFC was born in a troubled period. To its credit, it rejected both Labour Party social democracy and Leninism. Yet it was never able to really define its politics. This confusion is reflected in the change of name in 1944 to the Workers Revolutionary League and then its submergence in a 'Workers Open Forum' and in a number of splits. The APCF never had a perspective for a national or international organisation, basing itself primarily on Clydeside. Nevertheless, the APCF was an open, non-sectarian organisation and threw open the pages of 'Solidarity' to other revolutionaries, whilst always advocating mass direct action and working-class self-activity and against Leninism. As such, this pamphlet makes interesting, if sometimes difficult, reading.

of revolution, instead real people who feel and love and hate and make mistakes. The act of violent revolution is not romanticised but shown for what it is: a necessity but a terrible necessity at that. No the people don't win; they momentarily start down the road to a libertarian society, before the boss-state counterattacks. Yet the message is one of hope and that is a message that should be spelt out in all our anarchist publications and our developing culture. Read the book.



For details of the ACF send this form to the National Secretary, ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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