

# Racism in football

WITH ENGLISH FOOTBALL teams now being accepted back into Europe, and League football as popular as ever, the United European Football Association and the Football Association are supposedly trying to stamp out hooliganism. But one thing they conveniently ignore is racism. One popular myth about racism is that it is confined to the terraces - this is rubbish, racism is everywhere. It runs through the changing rooms, boardrooms and the sports administrations at the highest levels. It's not confined to the big clubs either - it can be seen on a smaller scale at non-League clubs too.

One of the most disturbing aspects is the two-faced attitude of some of the so-called fans - one minute they are racially abusing a black player from the other team, the next they're singing the praises of a black player from their own side.

## Causes

Even though racism effects the national and international game, not much thought has been given as to its causes. Banks of England fans giving Nazi salutes and screaming abuse at John Barnes at the 1990 World Cup game in Sweden give a clear picture of what goes on. International games often promote and reinforce nationalism - always racist and putting the "Nation" above the classes. The State, politicians and the media, and racist-fascist groups promote this.

It is important to draw a distinction between hardcore racists and fascists and those who allow themselves to be drawn so easily into blind, ignorant prejudice by racist groups such as the British National Party, who are looking to spread their foul ideas and recruit new members.

It's up to football fans to do something about racism - we are the ones who have to stand in an unpleasant, hostile environment. Racism divides and weakens us, the working class.

## Liberal

It's no use lobbying or pressurising directors, the League or the F.A. to start a preachy white liberal anti-racist campaign. It's a waste of our energy because these people and bodies are racist themselves, and because racism in the working class can only be tackled by the working class itself.

The police, apart from being racist themselves, frequently help and defend fascist and racist activists, when they're not thinking about their bonuses and overtime for Saturday work.



## Hardcore

Hardcore racists and fascists need to be physically confronted in and outside grounds and their paper sales, leafletting, abuse and intimidation stopped. This type of work has been effectively done by groups such as Anti-Fascist Action. Fanzines produced by football supporters such as Fortune's Always Hiding (West Ham) Marching Together (Leeds United) Our Day Will Come (Manchester United and Celtic) have a role to play. Many already carry a clear, working class anti-racist message. Club rivalry between fans should be friendly and generous. All too often it's nearer war and rival fans are abused and beaten up. The magnanimous cheering of the Woking side by West Bromwich fans when their side had just lost 4-2 to the non-League club shows how things could be, though there is the wider question of whether competition naturally leads to aggression and violence.

The "easily swayed" racially prejudiced fans need to be talked to, argued with and confronted in a clear class-conscious manner which demolishes racist myths (they're taking our housing and jobs, Africa as the source of AIDS, etc) and shown that racism must be tackled both because it is oppressive and because it divides and weakens the working class. This should all be done in a direct, honest way which acknowledges that all white people have some racism in themselves to tackle and that much can be learnt from the struggles of black working class people. It should not be done in a preaching "I'm right-on, you're a racist" way which is dishonest, counterproductive and reformist.

Anti-Fascist Action can be contacted at:

B.M. BOX 1734 LONDON WC1 N3XX

# Housing in the nineties

AMIDST ALL THE bluster and rhetoric about a 'just' war to defend democracy, freedom and human dignity, the Arctic snows of February managed to draw some media attention to the plight of people sleeping rough. Indeed, one M.P. was apparently 'shocked' at the sight of homeless people 'caked in snow'.

It has been estimated that there are about 3,000 people in London alone who sleep in the streets. Yet homelessness goes much further than the visible signs of people in shop doorways or 'cardboard city'. When you start to include those in bed and breakfasts, hostels, squats and other temporary accommodation, homeless figures in Britain reach about one million.

## Deliberate

Homelessness in this country has been steadily worsening over the last twenty-odd years. Admittedly, it is a permanent feature of capitalist society but the current state of housing has more or less been deliberately created by the Government.

Since 1979, government spending on council homes has fallen by 75%. Coupled with this, over a million council homes have been sold since 1981. It's safe to say that today, the building of council accommodation is at a virtual standstill.

Having said this, plenty of housing is still being built. Yet the millions spent and invested has been on homes for the rich. Working class people don't even get a look in.

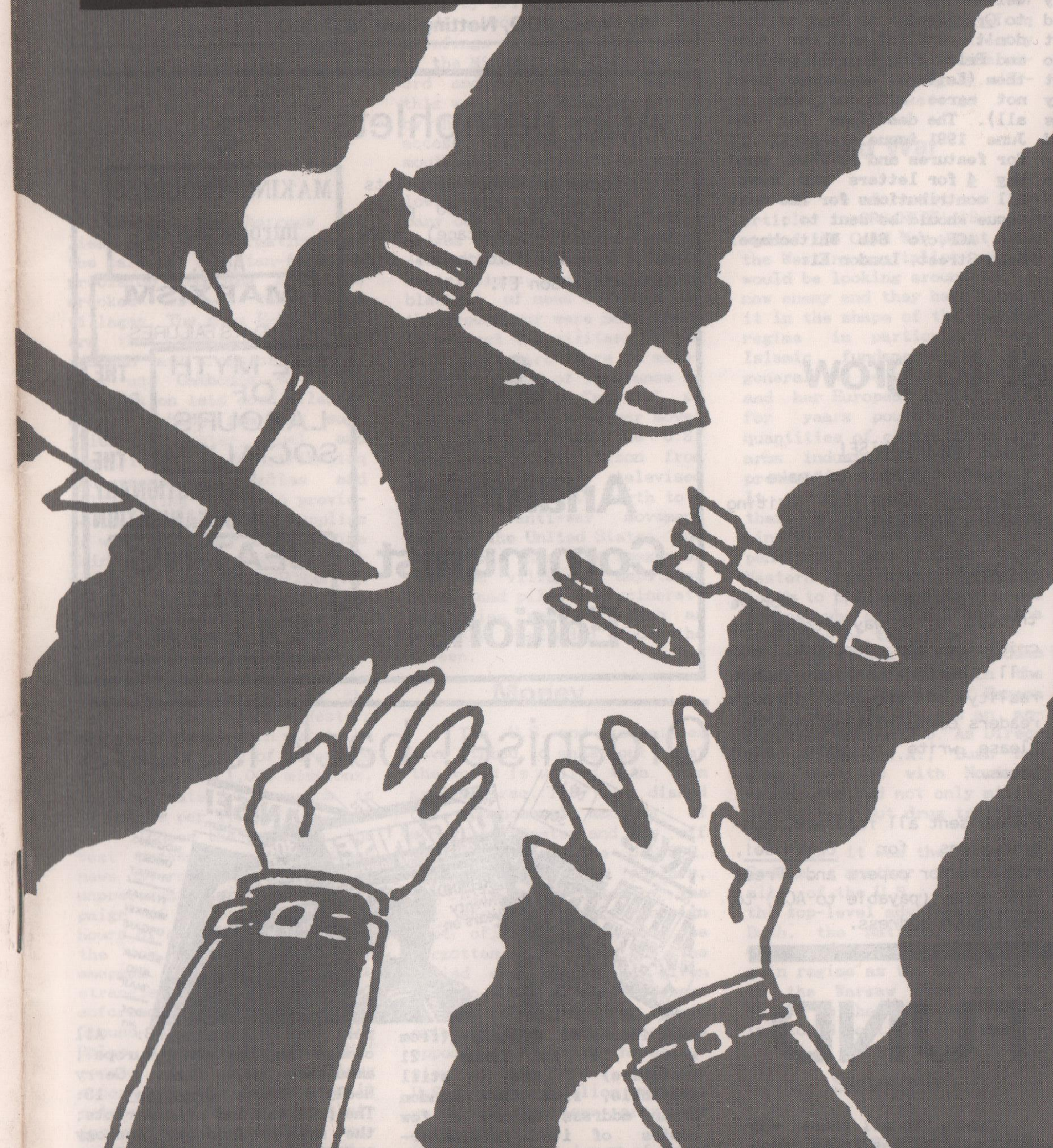
## Interest

With the complete lack of affordable and decent rented accommodation alongside constant plugging of 'right to buy' and 'everyone an owner occupier' propaganda, many from the better off end of the working class saw home ownership as an option. But with high interest rates, 1989 saw over 40,000 families lose their homes because they were unable to keep up with mortgage repayments. This has more than doubled over the last year.

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**ORGANISE!**  
for class struggle anarchism

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POLL TAX  
STRUGGLE

RACISM IN  
FOOTBALL

RECESSION

SUB  
CONTINENT  
IN CRISIS

VIVE LA  
COMMUNE

LETTERS



THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas: Aylesbury, Chesterfield, Coventry, Derry, Essex, Gillingham, Glasgow, Halifax, Leamington Spa, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield and Staffordshire.

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

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS: Write to: Nottingham ACF, PO Box 97, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 5LQ.

## ORGANISE

**Organise!** IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). **Organise!** is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

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

debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to **Organise!** - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the June 1991 issue are **April 13** for features and reviews, and **May 4** for letters and news. All contributions for the next issue should be sent to; ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

## Help Organise! to grow

WE FEEL THAT **Organise!** has an important role to play in the growth of revolutionary activity and ideas in these exciting times. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

But we need your support to help keep the furnace burning.

### SELL ORGANISE!

Although our sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling **Organise!** you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

### WRITE FOR ORGANISE!

You can help to make **Organise!** yours by writing letters and articles.

### FEEDBACK

**Organise!** will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please sent all feedback, contributions for **Organise!**, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the LONDON address.

## PRESS FUND

### PRESS FUND

We need money for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. The Press Fund exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of **Organise!**

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue: 2.50 Bradford; 6.00 Liverpool; 10.00 Gillingham; E.London 50.00; 45.00 Gillingham.

## Want to join the ACF? Want to find out more?

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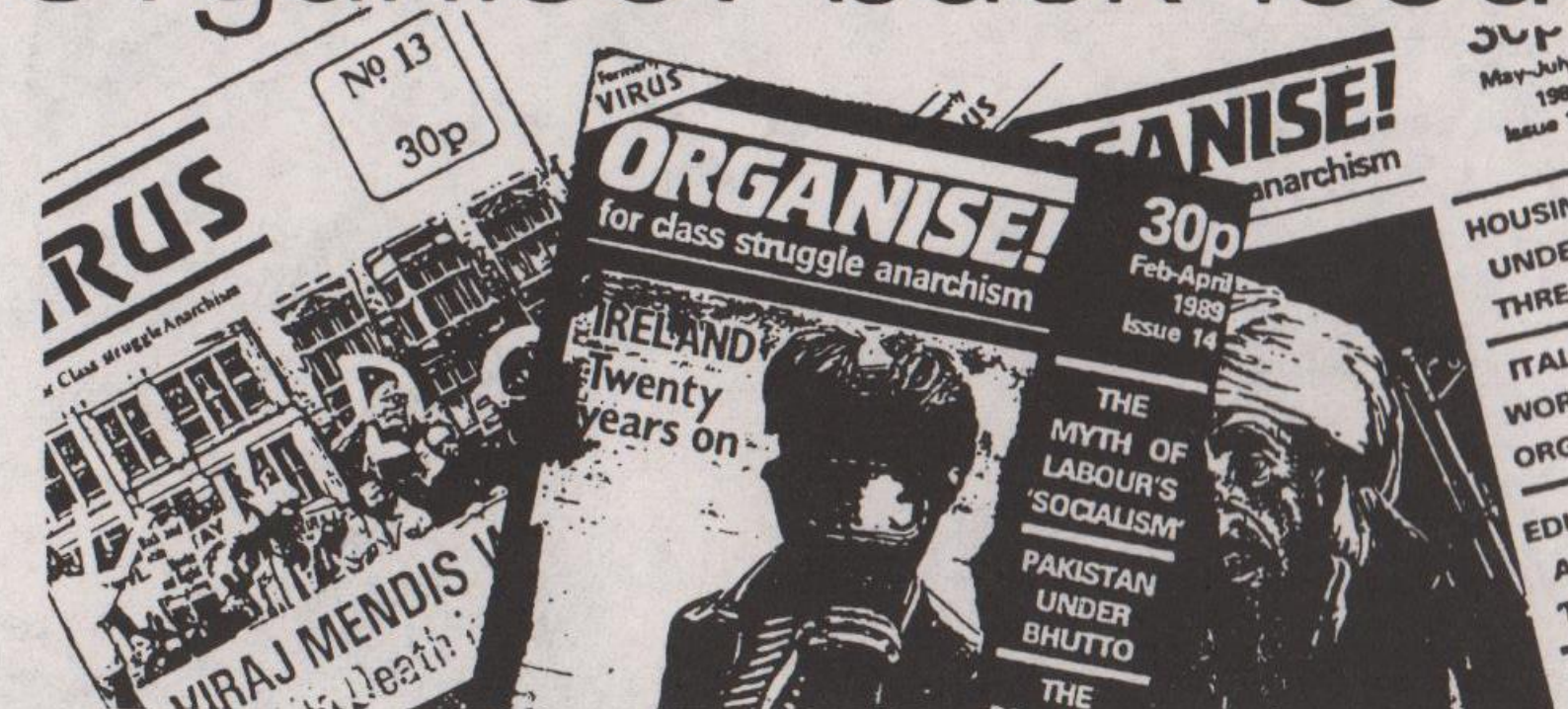
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## Organise! back issues



Back issues of **Organise!** (from issue 14 to issue 21 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner **Virus**. They cost 40p & see each and include: **Organise!** 17: Anarchy in the Eastern bloc; Cambodia; what future; Militant and the

poll tax. **Organise!** 18: All change in Eastern Europe?; ambulance crews fight; Gerry Healy's death. **Organise!** 19: The poll tax and prison riots; the myth of Mandela; ecology and class. **Organise!** 20: Class struggle in Ireland; Romania; Poll tax update; **Organise!** 21: Gulf war; Russia in crisis; Brixton.

# THE WARFARE STATE

THE REASONS For the Western war drive against Saddam Hussein are as much veiled in hypocrisy as Kuwait and Iraq were by the smoke clouds from burning buildings and oil-fields. Suddenly, the Iraqi state's massacre of the Kurds gets glaring publicity and support for Iraq from the U.S., Britain, France, West Germany, the Saudis and the Kuwaitis - which allowed this to happen, is conveniently forgotten.

The carnage itself is veiled in a language that camouflages any notion of maiming and killing, of the slaughter of many human beings. This bloody war is reduced to hi-tech jargon where even the expression "body bags" must now be "human remains pouches". One mildly diverting video war game substitutes for the reality of thousands of dead.

### Barrage

Behind the barrage of lies and disinformation and the talk of civilian-friendly precision bombing are the wrecked cities, towns and villages. The same B-52 bombers that twenty years ago reduced vast areas of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to total devastation laid down miles of carpet bombing, smashing supplies for water, fuel and electricity, food distribution and emergency supplies and obliterating those who provided these services and supplies or who lived near them. As the Edinburgh based revolutionary newsheet COUNTER INFORMATION noted: "A B-52 dropping ten tons of bombs from three miles high on a city of 4 million people is carnage and terrorism incarnate. The only sanitary part of the war is the 'news'. The 'low' Western aircraft losses turn out to be the same as those of Korea and Vietnam; 4 per 1,000 missions. The loss rate for Tornados is 10 losses per 1,000."

Indeed the media in the West presented squeaky-clean news coverage on the war in an unprecedented propaganda campaign of distortion. Despite hours of media time devoted to the war, few hard facts ever emerged. The military have a stranglehold on the media, enforced through Strict Media Ground Rules. Point 3 of the Rules states that "You MUST remain with your military escort at all times, until released, and follow their instructions regarding your activities." Point 6 states that "If you are not sure whether an action you will take will violate a ground rule, consult your escort officer prior to taking that

action". As David Feingold of Cable News Network stated: "The rules are there and the military run the operation. We are used as conduits of information and disinformation."

### Illusions

We do not have any illusions in the impartiality of the media. They are there to fool us, to lie to and about us, to whip up nationalism, racism and chauvinism, and to attack any act of working class resistance. What is distinctive about this war was that it was the most heavily censored in recent history. Any on-the-spot news was vetted by British, American and Saudi censors, as laid down at briefings given to the media by the Ministry of Defence on 3rd and 7th January. Beyond this were sanctions threatened by the military against media access. A Ministry of Defence mouthpiece warned: "We would have to think hard about allowing any reporters to accompany our troops if their editor was carrying reports which jeopardised security." These restrictions, and the complete blackout of news coverage of the ground war were not there to protect the military in the Gulf. They were there to maintain the cloud of ignorance at home, to maintain "morale" so that no serious anti-war movement grew back home. The U.S. have learnt their lesson from Vietnam. The heavily televised carnage helped give birth to a powerful anti-war movement both in the United States and in Europe. This time images of napalmed villages, amputated limbs, and piles of incinerated bodies were as much as possible excluded from the screen.

### Money

The U.S. and its allies have tried to make out that the world is united with them against Iraq. They have dished out phenomenal amounts of money to sweeten and pay off any objectors. The U.S.S.R. received \$4 billion dollars, the bill to be footed by the oil sheikhs. Egypt's foreign debt of \$14 billion would be forgotten if it opted for the allied camp. Syria was given the go-ahead to move forward in the Lebanon and to begin exterminating any factions opposed to it, with the collusion of both Israel and the U.S., and a billion dollars worth of American arms was promised.

President Assad of Syria has many striking resemblances to Saddam. Like Saddam, he is a Ba'athist, like Saddam he rules his country in a brutal way, grinding down the working

class and the peasantry. Up until this war, the Syrian state was pilloried by the West for its organising and financing of "international terrorism". Cast your mind back. Whilst the Syrian regime was receiving the treatment the Hussein clique is now getting, a U.S. hostage returned from Iran, held up a sign saying "Buy Iraqi War Bonds". The U.S. assisted Iraq in the war against Iran, its Navy blasting Iranian planes and ships, whilst satellite information on Iranian military movements was readily passed on to Iraq. Less than 4 years ago, the frigate USS Stark was hit by an Iraqi Exocet with the loss of 37 lives, during the Iran-Iraq war. This was conveniently overlooked by the U.S. administration, and benignly dismissed as a mistake.

### Cold War

As we forecast in an article in **ORGANISE!** 18, the end of the Cold War meant that the Western capitalist states would be looking around for a new enemy and they have found it in the shape of the Saddam regime in particular, and Islamic fundamentalism in general. As we said: "The USA and her European allies have for years poured enormous quantities of capital into the arms industries under this pretext" (the Cold War-eds.) "It is difficult to imagine these multinationals taking kindly to a cut in this expenditure, and indeed most Western governments will be loath to cut back their armed forces, who after all are the guardians of the state".

The attack on the Saddam regime has a precedent in the overthrow of Noriega of Panama last year. He too was an accomplice of the U.S. As Director of the C.I.A., Bush had many meetings with Noriega, which involved not only military matters but drug trafficking.

Now it was the turn of Saddam, another unreliable ally of the U.S.. Last May, the top-level advisory body to Bush, the National Security Council, pinpointed the Hussein regime as the best heirs to the Warsaw Pact as the Enemy, so that military spending could continue.

### Strength

A week before the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam was advised by the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq that the United States had "no opinion on your border

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# BOSSSES CRISIS: Who foots the bill?

WE'VE HEARD IT all before: time to tighten the belts again. The economy is going into recession which means massive unemployment and lower living standards. But of course not everyone will be affected. The rich will as always maintain their privileges and demand that the working class makes the sacrifices.

Industrial production has fallen steadily over the past few months and is now over 3% below that of November 1989. Unemployment has been going in the opposite direction, reaching 1.84 million, over 6% of the workforce, in February. This figure would be even higher if the Tories hadn't changed the way of measuring unemployment eg. not counting 16-18 year olds who are on YTS or other training schemes. Inflation is the highest it's been for years: over 9%. The Confederation of British In-

dustries has even gloomier predictions for the future with recession hitting all sectors of the economy, including the once buoyant service and building industries in the south-east. If the bosses' organisation predicts bad news then it must be bad!

Having joined the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, the government is going to have fewer options since it cannot lower the value of the pound to encourage exports. But in any case, all the solutions proposed by any of the political parties will hit the working class and not the rich. People will lose their jobs or those in jobs will have to work harder and accept lower wage increases in order to make their products more 'competitive'. The Gulf War, with its enormous waste of resources, is certain to lead to higher taxes and cuts in spending on the NHS (except

People accepted the recession of the early 80s as necessary. They believed Thatcher when she said there was 'no alternative' in order to get the economy going again. On the surface, events proved her correct with a lowering of the inflation rate and a drop in unemployment levels.

Now we can see the Thatcher 'boom' for the sham that it was. Much of the lowering of the unemployment rate was due to a massaging of the figures, hiding large groups of unemployed from public view. Unemployment never really improved much in Northern Ireland or the North of England. Jobs might have opened up in the south-east but workers couldn't afford the housing and were forced to commute great distances or stay in cramped accommodation. Consumer spending was financed largely by credit. People believed in the boom so they went on a spending spree with their credit cards and bank loans to help them obtain the material possessions that seemed so necessary in Thatcher's world.

The expansion of the economy, however, was built on shifting sand which has now shifted well away. Output in manufacturing has been declining since the late 1970s in any case. Expansion in the 80s was in the banking, retail

and building industries which cannot last on their own if nothing is actually being produced. Consumer spending went on imported manufactured goods which caused a huge balance of payments deficit. Credit spending cannot go on forever. At some point the debts have to be paid and people find themselves in a tight situation with many losing their homes.

## Sacrifice

Once again it's a fuck-up, with the working class left to pick up the pieces of a system that is continually having crises. The rich sit tight, hoping that workers will work hard, accept job losses, wage cuts and fewer social services. Then when their profits pick up they might give a few crumbs to the workers.

We mustn't fall for the same old shit. Workers made sacrifices in the 80s and believed the rubbish about it being necessary. This cannot happen again. Capitalism is never going to give us a decent life. It's time to get rid of a system that is continually demanding sacrifices while a few are sitting pretty.

# WORLD TRADE a coming crisis

ALONGSIDE THE IMF and the World Bank there is another major world economic institution- GATT - the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, set up by the major industrial nations 43 years ago to supervise part of the world economy. These nations saw a major cause of war in 'economic disorder', an effect of trade wars whose basic weapons were tariff barriers.

In one very small sense GATT has helped world trade but being US dominated and served by other 'big' nations it has served their interests primarily. Over seven rounds of talks the industrialised nations have freed what they wished and protected what they wanted. Textiles, steel, motor industries have been protected. Now agriculture and services are threatening to split world trade into three sectors.

## Debts

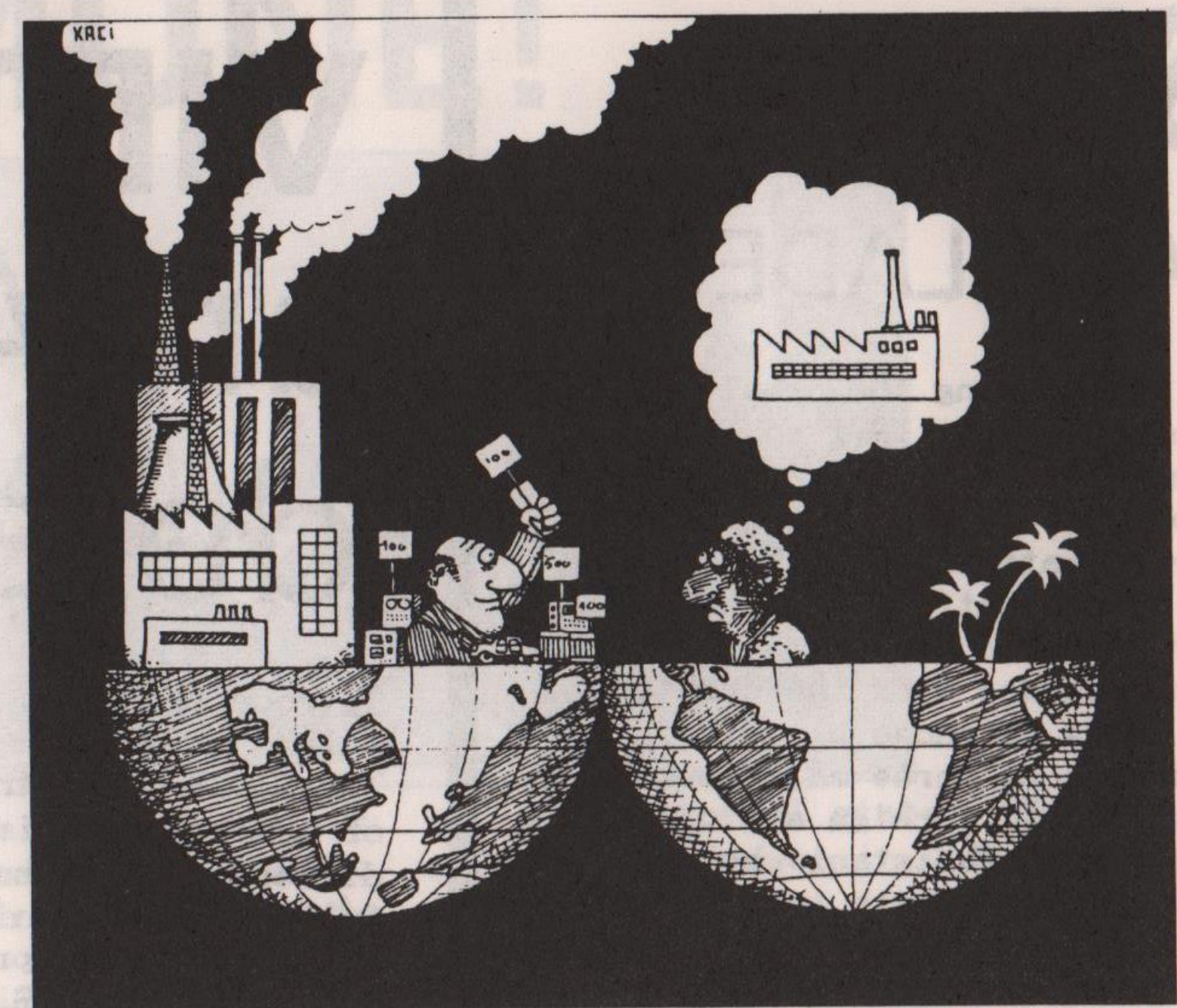
Firstly, the US along with the rest of the Americas are moving closer together. The US now has free trade agreements with Mexico and Canada. Central and South America need to export to clear huge debts, much of it to the US and others. The US wants to end EEC farm subsidies and to obtain freedom for its own services sector. The US trade deficit would be eased by Latin America being able to trade again. Increased free trade and an end to EEC

farm subsidies would help American farmers and increase the market for American manufactured goods. The US also hopes to add to its \$90 billion services exports by recovering some of the \$60 billion lost to piracy of its 'intellectual property' - its ideas, inventions, innovations, information, science and technology.

## Plans

The second sector is the EC, parts of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries. Here the Common Agricultural Policy is the problem. The EEC has a huge farming lobby which will only put up with a 30% cut in subsidies. The US wants a 90% cut. Plans have been discussed to cut back on the huge industrial farms consuming ton after ton of chemical fertilizers and instead to support smaller farms and poorer rural communities. This would help cut back on the huge surpluses which are then dumped abroad destroying other farming communities. Agriculture, however, accounts for only 5% of EEC exports, services are another 25%. The UK earns 60% of its Gross National Product through services. The greater European sector would like easier access to other markets for services and manufactures.

Japan, the Pacific and Asia, forms the third sector with its own interests in



manufacture and technological exports. This third sector has to battle against barriers against its own specialist exports.

## Blackmail

Beneath these three economic sectors lies the South, the Third World, which by means of all forms of restrictions is being pushed further from survival. Non-Tariff Barriers like the Multi-Fibre Agreement, quotas, 'imposed' voluntary restraints, blackmail and threats are endangering the industry and agriculture of the Poor World.

Beyond the debts we all know about there are other dangers - the sub-Saharan belt of Africa faces famine yet again. The GATT talks threaten to place further bills on their plate - for 'intellectual property', and also the colonisation of financial sectors by big, well-supported

Western Banks and Corporations. Thus, their economies will be further controlled and more precarious.

Free trade is only free for the rich and powerful who force others to buy their products, preventing poor countries from becoming less dependent on western imports. Any agreement which is reached by GATT will only succeed in furthering the domination of the west over the Third World. The ruling class in Third World countries will then impose more hardships on their working class. Poor farmers will be unable to survive when western grain is sold at low prices. Workers will be forced to take wage cuts and work harder in order to make their products 'competitive' with those of the west. The Gulf War further endangers poor countries by raising oil prices and disrupting trade routes. Economic crisis will hurt only the weak, the economically vulnerable, the working class.

# THE WARFARE STATE

Cont. from page 3

conflicts with Kuwait". Like Noriega, Saddam had to go. The Iraqi state's own regional interests were now clashing with those of the Western powers. Iraq had fulfilled its role in stopping the Iranian fundamentalist threat in its tracks. Now it was to be inveigled into a confrontation.

The same week that the U.S. Ambassador spoke to the Iraqis, General Schwarzkopf and his top brass planned an exercise that exactly simulated an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

## Moslems

For its part, the U.S.S.R. is terrified of the unrest spreading to its own territories where Moslems are in a majority. It sees the spectre of unrest among the Arab, Iranian and Turkish masses materialising throughout the Near and Middle East. Its own influence in the Gulf area, carried on previously through its former client Iraq, is sorely jeopardised. The U.S. and its allies threaten a permanent military presence in the region. The money provided by the West

have kept the Soviet bureaucrats quiet so far, but the danger of American supremacy and power struggles in the leadership may change all of this. For its part, the Iranian state for many of the same reasons colluded with the U.S.S.R. to limit the allied war offensive.

## Revolutionaries

Mass movements against the war emerged throughout the world, from the Maghreb countries of North Africa to Malaysia, from Germany to Italy. But many anti-war movements were dominated by the Church (with its fundamentalist counterparts in Moslem countries), the social-democrats, including Labour, with their call for sanctions, and the Trotskyists, with their call for support for the Iraqi regime. As revolutionaries and anarchist communists we didn't take sides in this conflict. Taking sides means supporting the interests of capitalists against the working class. The only side we take is that of the working class in its fight to dump the bosses, of any nationality, off its back.



# SUB-CONTINENT IN CRISIS

## PAKISTAN

THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT has not lasted long. The so-called People's Party has, as always, involved itself in too-open corruption and allowed the ultra-reactionaries to take power again. By throwing away the good will she could have found in those further impoverished by the right, and following the usual road of jobs, power and profit for the boys, she has shown how all of Pakistani party politics is nothing but exploitation. The 'damn beards' (mosques) and 'chocolate Caesars' (army) are back in power. Drug barons

are now entering Parliament on the side of the right. Unable to impose their influence upon Afghanistan the military now have plans for Kashmir. They have taken a more hawkish line on Kashmiri 'liberation', training fighters and arming them. A muslim Kashmir breaking away from Indian control could be easy to control and profit from.

## INDIA

Great changes have been taking place in India. Rajiv Gandhi began the process of walking India into a regional sub-Imperialist power:- the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, supposedly

protecting Tamils and supporting the government, made the north a colony of the rupee and Indian goods; - Nepal blockaded to ensure Indian goods getting preferential treatment; - interference in Sikkim and the Maldives.

## Privilege

The caste system is still fully in force even though the new government attempted to redistribute educational privilege to lower castes. High-caste youths committed suicide in protest and 'despair'.

Communalism has returned with a vengeance. The BJP and VHP have orchestrated all

Sikhs are seen as outsiders or foreign invaders. Many have been murdered for their politics, with police leading the way at times. Much of this has surrounded a mosque in Ayodhya which is said to be Rama's birthplace.

India's capitalist class marches on-the caste system and religious and cultural chauvinism keeps the poor classes and lower castes confused and controlled-capital makes its deals with transnationals, using their technology and the poor of the tribal and pre-capitalist areas as ultra-cheap labour to produce goods for export.

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## ASIA

## BANGLADESH

Following the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 power was concentrated in the hands of the local bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic class. The 'Father of the Nation' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League presided over the creation of this extended class. This was done by three major means: ripping off foreign aid, nationalising Pakistani holdings and alliances with the foreign investors, like the British-owned tea plantations. Socialist rhetoric went hand in hand with repression, resulting in the creation of a one-party system in 1975 and the green light for foreign investment by multi-nationals to exploit the population.

Colonel Abu Tahir led a revolt by sections of the military in 1975 against the regime, talking about the creation of soviets amongst the soldiers. Zia Ur Rahman removed the left-progressives and took power. Tahir was hanged.

General Ershad came to power in 1982 and continued the same class rule. Huge quantities of aid have poured in—60% of the budget was spent on the army, most aid was simply stolen by the rich. Finally Ershad's brutality and corruption forced the opposition to unite and Ershad has been abandoned by his military backers. The opposition comprises forces controlled by the bourgeoisie in the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League, the right and left wings of Bangladeshi capital. There is a small revolutionary left, marxist, maoist, etc, but these forces are too small and authoritarian to make a real change for a poor, desperate and ravaged people.

Asia's problems are being overshadowed at present by the huge media event called the Gulf War. But soon those problems will have to be noticed again. The forces of capital keep the continent in a vice-like grip—notwithstanding the region's leftists. But those Marxists, Leninists and Maoists of South Asia have not found any answer at all, except taking power and returning to the world economy. Going back to capital is no answer. South Asia's only solution is a world solution, the destruction of capital and its agents on a world scale.

# VIETNAM — an American defeat

## Introduction

THE STORY OF Vietnam is similar to that of many other Third World countries. The difference is that the USA launched a full-scale war on the country, resulting in world-wide protests and eventual defeat for the US. Journalists and politicians are quick to deny any similarities between the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. For obvious reasons they did not want to see a large anti-war movement or a US defeat. But looking at the history of the war, we can see that though the details are different, the basic cause of the two wars is the same: the need for western capitalism to assert its economic and political domination over rival capitalisms.

## History of the War

• Vietnam became a French colony in 1870 and its early colonial history followed a typical pattern: exploitation of the land and its people for the benefit of the French. Opposition began very early with a working class developing around Hanoi and Saigon. There were many strikes and uprisings in the first part of the 20th century. As happened in many other Third World countries, the opposition movement became dominated by groups of intellectuals who had been influenced by western revolutionary ideas while studying or working in France.

Ho Chi Minh was the main founder of the Vietnamese Communist Party and was the leading figure from World War II through to the victory over the Americans. He established the Viet Minh (Vietnam Liberation Movement) during World War II in order to fight the Japanese occupation. The Viet Minh took control in Hanoi with only 1000 men. Elections were held in 1946 in the Chinese-controlled north in which the Viet Minh won a big victory. They assumed that their government would be recognized by the Allies.

The Viet Minh were very much a vanguard organisation. The mass of the people, mostly peasants were not directly involved in the formation of the post-war society. Ho Chi Minh bragged,

"When the August Revolution took place there were about 5,000 Party members, including those in jail. Less than 5,000 Party members have thus organised and led the uprisings of twenty-four million fellow-countrymen."

Meanwhile the British occupied the southern part of the country. The British, under the leadership of General Gracey wanted to see the return of French rule to the country. They invited the French back and gave them free rein to begin to reconquer the country. The French promised Ho Chi Minh that he could have a free state within the



Deformed children of Vietnamese victims of 'Agent Orange'

French union which he was willing to accept. But once the French felt strong enough, they went back on their promise. The war lasted from 1946 to 1954. The French lost.

## US INVOLVEMENT

• After World War II the US gradually replaced Britain as the main imperialist power in the Pacific and South-east Asia. The US had first supported the Viet Minh. But they soon came to realise that their interests were better served by the French puppet regime. When the French pulled out of the south, the Americans moved in. The motivation for this was clearly not a desire to defend "freedom" or "democracy". In 1954, before there was a need to assuage public opinion, a leading American magazine, *US News and World Report*, could write the callous truth,

"One of the world's richest areas is open to the winner in Indochina. That's behind the growing concern. Tin, rubber, rice, key strategic materials are what the war is all about. The US sees it as a place to hold at any cost."

The Geneva agreements, drawn up to arrange the end of war settlement temporarily divided Viet Nam in two. Elections were to be held in 1956 to reunify the country. The US and the government they had set up in South Vietnam refused to sign the agreement. Elections were never held and the country remained divided. President Eisenhower's memoirs explain why the US refused to accept the Geneva agreements. He writes,

"I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of fighting, possibly 80% of the popula-

cont. p11

# VIVE LA COMMUNE!

SEVENTY YEARS AGO the Communist government led by Lenin and Trotsky introduced their New Economic Policy, a measure which started a free market in agriculture and sections of industry. Today, Gorbachov and his supporters are once again trying to establish a latter day variant; the free market is celebrated after decades of the command economy. Always anxious to base new moves on the basis of Marxist-Leninist precedence, we can expect the Kremlin to highlight the anniversary of the NEP with banquets and other celebrations.

What will not be celebrated, we can be sure, is the single event that made Lenin's NEP so urgent: the uprising by soldiers, sailors and civilians at the Soviet naval base at Kronstadt. 1991 is also the anniversary of the Paris Commune which took place in 1871, fifty years before Kronstadt. This article will examine some of the issues involved in these two commune movements and consider the implications of the construction of anarchist communist societies.

Both the Kronstadt and Paris Communes share some interesting features and tell us a great deal about the states which drowned them both in blood after only a few weeks of existence.

## Inspiration

The Paris Commune provided revolutionaries with an example of the possibilities inherent in spontaneous popular self-activity. Though defeated, it inspired anarchists, including Bakunin, who claimed it as their own. Even Marx, who had hitherto emphasised the necessity of "political" ie parliamentary struggle, temporarily adopted an almost libertarian position on the Commune. The Communards, he declared lyrically, "have stormed heaven" and, though careful not to abandon the concept of proletarian dictatorship, Marx and Engels identified that dictatorship with the self-activity of the masses that the Commune brought about.

Lenin, ironically, was for a brief period before the October revolution enthusiastic about the Paris Commune, advocating the creation in Russia of the 'Commune State'. However, Marx's, Lenin's and Engel's libertarianism were extremely temporary. Lenin in particular soon abandoned the superficial libertarianism of his "State and Revolution" and imposed an iron dictatorship of the Party and Cheka (secret police). Having praised the Paris Commune for its libertarian self-activity, he subsequently crushed Russia's home-grown variant: Kronstadt.

## Example

What did the Paris Commune achieve? Firstly it created a popular army from the ranks of disaffected government soldiers and the armed populace of Paris. Though ultimately defeated by the forces of the state, it fought valiantly from street to street until the final surrender. militarily, the Commune made the strategic blunder of awaiting the government attack on Paris. Had it met the invading army some way outside Paris the outcome might have been very different. But, as a model of military organi-



sation, the Commune gave us the people's or workers' militia as an alternative to the standing army which acts as guardians of our oppressors.

On the social level the commune carried out a number of reforms. It was extremely egalitarian, fixing a modest upper limit on earnings for servants of the Commune. Those employers who had fled Paris were expropriated and the workshops were run by the workers. This latter development was of crucial importance since it demonstrated the feasibility of ordinary working people taking control of production themselves. Similarly, the question of distribution was placed in the hands of the Paris masses. In addition, whereas bourgeois "democracy" effectively removes any decision-making from the people, the Commune destroyed political hierarchy and initiated a system of delegate democracy. Delegate democracy gave the workers a direct say in the administration of their everyday lives by which elected delegates were mandated to carry out their wishes and were subject to dismissal should they fail to do so.

The Commune in its day to day activity carried out a number of changes which stemmed from their everyday oppression. For example, night work was abolished for the bakers of Paris. The Parisians would have to wait for their bread! Pawn shops, which were seen as exploitative, were closed down and the church which had played the role of ideological oppressor of the masses was disestablished, its property socialised and its involvement in education terminated.

These measures, though inadequate from an anarchist communist perspective, were all part of a thoroughly progressive and anticapitalist popular social experiment. Anarchists would today perhaps point out limitations of the Commune, for example the continuation of the wages system and the introduction of the cooperative as an alternative to private capitalism. However, had the Commune not fallen and had the model been adopted elsewhere in France (and abroad), a more thorough-going federation of communes might have arisen to replace the nation-state.

## Last Gasp

The Paris Commune arose in response to a conservative bourgeois capitalist state, determined to maintain its power in a period of war. The Kronstadt Commune, in contrast, arose at the end of a period of civil war. But again, it was the libertarian expression of revolutionaries exasperated by the activities

of a dictatorial state. The Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 had been carried out in the name of the soviets or workers councils which had sprung up spontaneously earlier in the year. The bolsheviks very quickly created a highly authoritarian police state which by early 1921 had abolished virtually all political activity except that of themselves.

The period from October 1917 to 1921 had been one of continual civil war which had sapped the morale of even the state's most enthusiastic supporters. However, rather than harness popular anti-capitalist feeling, the government strove to harness it within its own ideological and organisational straight-jacket. It was against this system that the Kronstadt sailors ("the flower of the revolution", according to Trotsky) rose up. The Bolsheviks brought into being a dictatorship which extorted produce from the peasants at gunpoint, which enslaved workers under a hierarchy of political commissars and which granted privileges of extra food rations and accommodation to Communist Party members. The whole perverted system of restrictions and state corruption (there were over 50 different levels of food allocation, depending on rank) was documented by Emma Goldman in volume two of her autobiography. Incidentally, this is now cheaply available from Freedom books and should be read by anyone interested in the "communism" of the period.

It was in the Baltic fleet that the original ideals of the closing months of 1917 were retained in their strongest form. Despite attempts to condemn the Kronstadters as Whites or backward peasants or worse, all of which have since been shown to be false, there is no doubt that they wanted a libertarian society controlled by the working class through their own assemblies. At the naval base and on the ships the sailors held mass meetings to formulate their demands. These were summed up most clearly in the 'Petropavlovsk revolution'.

## Soviets

Far from being counterrevolutionary, the demands of the Kronstadt Commune continued a tradition that went back at least to 1905 when Russian workers first brought about the reality of the soviet. In fact, the first demand called for "immediate new elections to the soviets" which had by then become mere rubber stamps of the government bureaucracy, being totally devoid of any independent life whatsoever.

Cont. on page 10



# FIGHTING THE POLL TAX: NEWS FROM LEEDS

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE describes the struggle against the poll tax at a local level, but the lessons to be learnt from it can be applied nationally. ORGANISE! eds.

THE COUNCIL FIGURES for non-payment of the poll tax in Leeds at the end of 1990 show 10% of the adult population have paid nothing at all; and a further 10% are 5 or more months in arrears. Of course the real figure is higher because this does not take into account those people not registered at all. Clearly there's still more than 100,000 people in Leeds still not paying.

During the last three months of 1990 the council began taking to court the non-payers to obtain liability orders against them. In all over 28,500 people (5% of the total adult population) were summonsed to court. Of these 1415 people actually turned up and had their cases heard in court. All but a handful lost. Of the rest 3435 paid before the court hearing and hence the summons was dropped. At court the massive number of non-attenders was dealt with at the end of the day, with the magistrate granting thousands of liabilities in a few seconds. Thus the council got over 25,000 liability orders. But this is only the first stage in enforcing the poll tax and the figures show the majority of non-payers are not intimidated by the council threats.

Given that there were 18 court days set aside for poll tax cases, lasting for a total of 164 hours, then the average case of those attending lasted about 7 minutes. Interestingly this also shows the potential profit for the court itself. Each liability order granted was charged thirty pounds court costs. That's 750,000 pounds for 164 hours work. But is anyone going to pay it?

This court system looks set to continue in the same fashion throughout the next three months as well. Another 20 days in court have already been set aside by the council. A bonus for them

is that the numbers turning up is expected to reduce dramatically. On the first few days the turn out of those summonsed was over 20%, this then fell steadily. It meant the council was able to increase the number summonsed from a few hundred to a few thousand at a time. By now most people probably know someone in the city who has been to court, and have been told it's a waste of time turning up.

The council's next step was to send a series of threatening letters saying "Pay now or else". The threat of using bailiffs was Leeds' Labour council's chosen method of enforcing the tax. Only a few forms were sent out asking for details of where you work. Hence arrestment of wages or income support is less likely. But the council has only ten bailiffs of its own and two professional firms working for it. They cannot possibly visit all 100,000 non-payers even without us physically preventing them.

## FIGHTING THE COURT CASES

For the last three months of last year the major focus for the organised anti-poll tax movement was around the court cases. There are about forty local groups linked together within the Leeds Federation of anti-poll tax groups. Also in it are about ten workplace groups but up till now these have been less active. A campaign of canvassing, leafletting and flyposting across the city was done where emphasis was put on practical information: telling people not to panic, that the court case was a civil procedure enabling the council to go on to enforcement, explaining what the council's enforcement options were and saying that if poss-

ible non-payers should attend their own court hearing.

The majority political view inside the Leeds Federation was that large numbers of non-payers turning up to court willing to argue their cases would make the system unworkable. This view was strongly propounded by both the 'Militant tendency' and the liberal-minded independents. This meant trying to argue cases on legal technicalities one by one. It required a team of volunteers acting as unofficial legal advisers (McKenzie Friends) at every court date. A legal group was set up to coordinate this. This strategy is dull, defensive and creates an unnecessary hierarchy between activists and ordinary people. After all who really cares about the legal niceties of transitional relief? The idea that we could clog up the courts is also naive, because given a mass turn out all the council has to do is either adjourn cases, or keep going till people are forced to go home for reasons such as childcare.

## Realism

A second political viewpoint was that of encouraging people to express their anger. This may have led to more noisy mass disruptions of the court. This viewpoint was propounded by the 'Socialist Workers' and the anarchists. One argument against this at the time was that after the court was cleared of protesters, many hundreds of liability orders would go through unopposed. In reality this is what happened every time anyway, because as soon as the cases where people had actually turned up were finished, hundreds more went through on a nod. A second argument was that disruptions would only work once or twice

and could not be repeated every single day. This is true, but there was no reason why the two strategies could not be mixed.

What actually happened was that the council managed to steamroller the cases through court. But only just! On each court date activists turned up to give advice, to take names and addresses in order to put people in touch with their local group, to act as McKenzie Friends, and to provide tea and coffee during the long wait. Often people who arrived at ten in the morning would have to wait till late afternoon before their case was heard. For us the most useful part of this whole process was that the time most non-payers spent outside waiting to go into court was a great opportunity to have direct in-depth conversations with a broad cross-section of non-payers. Almost all were working class.

## BEATING THE BAILIFFS

In the new year the focus has changed. The emphasis of local groups is now to defend those threatened by the bailiffs. Firstly this has meant an information campaign on the legal rights of the bailiff. This clearly shows that bailiffs are not allowed to break into your house on their first visit. (Or second visit if they didn't get in first time). So the first and most important line of defence is to keep them out. Don't let them into your house. The next thing to do is call for support.

The main aspect of current organising work is to build a network of street reps. These people have the task of mobilising other people in the area when someone in their street is faced with the bailiffs at the door. At the moment in many local areas telephone trees of activists are being publicised, but as yet there has been very little discussion of what to do in an actual situation where we are face to face with the bailiffs. 'Militant Tendency' members seem to almost fetishise long lists of contacts, but to discourage discussion on what we're actually going to do.

Also set up have been four anti-bailiff coordination groups, one for each quarter of the city (N.E.S.W.). Their major task at the moment seems to be finding activists who are available

This March 23rd sees a demonstration to celebrate a year of non-payment and to show solidarity with all those arrested and imprisoned after last March's demo. Make this demonstration even bigger than last year's by turning out on the day, and bring your friends and neighbours. See you in London!

## POLL TAX PRISONERS LIST

Show support for all those imprisoned as a result of activity against the PollTax by sending letters to the following:

Wayne Calder-NT0082, HMYOI Huntercombe, Huntercombe Place, Nuffield, Henley-on-Thames Oxon RG9 5SB. Sentenced to 2 years.  
Robert Robinson Prison No. RA0741, HMP Camp Hill, Clissold Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5PB. Sentenced to 2 years.  
Neil Armour-MV3338, HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Rd, Wandsworth, London SW18 3HS. Sentenced to 2 years, one year suspended.  
Alan Clarke-MV2254, HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Rd, London N7 8TT. Sentenced to 2 years (He can't read so send cards rather than letters)

The following are on remand:

Marcus B. Roskilly-KT1294, HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.  
Daniel Atwood-KT1303, HMP Brixton.  
Paul Jacob, RA0711, HMP Brixton. (Paul is a traveller. His home and 2 vans have since been destroyed. A Support Fund has been set up to raise money for a new van for him when he gets out. Cheques payable to D. Spencer, to Box S.34 Cowley Rd, Oxford.

during the day and have a car. Finally there is a bailiff monitoring group whose task is to find out who and where the bailiffs are. And to research the legality of their operations and whether we can stop some of the dirty tricks by taking them to court.

So far the response to the bailiffs has been patchy. In the first few cases of them visiting we did not find out till after they had gone. But everyone has refused to let them in and kept them out on the doorstep. Already they have been exceeding their powers. For example, refusing to identify themselves at the door, threatening to come back later and smash the door in and making a list of items by looking through the window or in one case by guesswork and then claiming 'walking possession'.

## IN THE WORKPLACE

For the workplace anti-poll tax groups now is the time the first wage arrestments are being made and it is important that these are fought collectively and with the full support of local area groups. The second major task will be to counter the coming propaganda offensive by the council. Come March the council will have to set a new rate. Poll tax non-payers will be blamed for any rise. But more importantly the council will probably announce cuts in jobs and services, again blaming the non-payers. We need to win the argument in council workplaces and unions that it is the poll tax to blame for the cuts not those fighting it.

## POLITICAL HACKS AND ANARCHIST REVOLUTIONARIES!

While the workplace and local groups spend most of their time and resources on campaigning, the Leeds Federation has often been riven with sectarian political squabbles. By now it tends to be only the most politically motivated activists that turn up to these meetings. The structure though is still fairly open. The Fed. meets twice a month, one meeting is open to anyone and the other is open to one delegate

per group.

There are three main political factions at this level. First, the 'Militant Tendency', who are very dull serious politicians but they do a lot of the committed local work. The biggest problem with them is their sectarian arrogance. They believe they are the backbone of the anti-poll tax movement. Secondly is the Socialist Workers Party who are more lively but less committed. At the moment they seem to be more active doing anti-Gulf war work. Thirdly there are the independents who are a loose collection of committed activists, not sharing a common political ideology. In Leeds a collective has formed to produce a regional 3D bulletin. The mix of politics inside 3D includes a range from 'Trotskyism' ('Socialist Organizer') to anarchist communism.

## Grassroots

The small class struggle anarchist scene in Leeds has not really been involved in the bureaucratic wranglings at the Leeds Fed. Rather, many individuals have been involved in their own local groups and just done the active grassroots work. Leeds Class War and Direct Action Movement groups jointly produced a leaflet which was handed out outside the courts. In it, it was stressed that the main struggle for the campaign would be defeating the common fear of the bailiffs. It is this fear that the council rely on to scare people into paying. We criticised the idea that the movement could 'win' in court.

The much larger 'lifestylist' anarchist scene is not involved in organised activity at all. But large numbers do turn out for demos and it goes without saying that it is these people who tend to cause the most trouble for the council, the police and the bureaucrats running the Leeds Fed.

One specific area of activity is exclusive to the anarchist scene, that is the support of those arrested and imprisoned on the anti-poll tax demos. All of the dozen or so arrested have been from within the scene. The scene

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## COMMUNE Continued

The Kronstadters also wanted to see a restitution of proletarian freedom which had been systematically eliminated by the Bolsheviks since 1918. The communards had absolutely no desire for any restoration of power to the exploiters, but freedom of speech and assembly for the peasants, workers and their political allies was an important demand. This attempt to restore the freedom of the pre-October days was of some urgency since it was not only the bourgeoisie who were to be found in the prisons; virtually the whole of the non-Bolshevik left had been incarcerated.

In reality, a whole dictatorial, oppressive state system had been brought into being by Lenin and his party. Their knee-jerk response to any difficulty which arose after their seizure of power was to tighten the screw further; repression, bureaucracy and control were the methods used. A pleasant irony in all of this is that Lenin died a deeply unhappy man once he very belatedly realised the nature of his Frankenstein society. Not only was Lenin's Russia a dictatorship but it also was an extremely hierarchical one. Bourgeois privilege had given way to the privileges of the "commisariatocracy". Not surprisingly, the sailors of Kronstadt demanded the "equalisation of rations" for all workers except those engaged in dangerous or unhealthy jobs.

There is no doubt that the insurrectionaries had had a gutful of the

Bolsheviks and their methods. Only the overthrow of the Bolsheviks and their replacement by organs of self-organised production together with the granting of freedom to artisans and peasants (as long as they didn't hire labour) could retrieve the situation, argued the Kronstadters. But the Kronstadt demands, even though they had once been mouthed by the Bolsheviks themselves, were met unsurprisingly with repression and slander. Like the communards of Paris,



Louise Michel -  
anarchist Communard

those of Kronstadt put up bitter resistance to the state's bullying and military assault. With the destruction of this last breath of 1917 died the last

hope of Russia's oppressed. Only now is there any sign of a rebirth of libertarian ideals.

### Self-Organisation

The Paris and Kronstadt Communes were expressions of working class self-activity which continue to provide inspiration. Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist groups will cynically invoke the former when it suits them whilst, inconsistently, condemning Kronstadt as counterrevolutionary. If they are particularly hypocritical they will cry crocodile tears over the destruction of Kronstadt, pointing to the "tragic necessity" of it all.

But we anarchist communists see in the commune a sketch of how society could be organised. The commune model provides an organisational basis for creating self-directing, integrated units which when federated with similar bodies could have a national and even international character. The Paris and Kronstadt Communes were both brought about under extremely difficult circumstances and lasted only for a matter of weeks. Despite their preoccupation with survival, they demonstrated the practicability of the commune as an organisational form which generated the maximum level of freedom, solidarity and equality. The commune as a geographical entity can accommodate both community and workplace anarchy. It is a model for the future.

Clearly then there is an even stronger need to continue and build further an organised mass campaign of defiance. The strength of this campaign is at present at the grassroots community-based level. We need to go further. Firstly, the campaign needs to be taken much more aggressively into the workplace. The two facets of the campaign should be seen as equally important and mutually supportive. Secondly, is the need for national communication and coordination outside the stranglehold of the 'Militant Tendency'. At present the grouping pushing hardest for this is the 3D network. Thirdly is the need to continue the support for those arrested and imprisoned currently done by the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign. We need to build support for the prisoners in the wider movement as a whole not just the anarchist and ultra-left parts of it. Fourth is to build the next massive demo in London on March 23rd, so that it is just as big and just as angry as the last.

### Solidarity

The repression can also be clearly seen in the determination of the courts to follow through with the poll tax riot trials. They are already handing out severe sentences with most of the heaviest cases still to come. Examples are two years for 'kicking a police van', four months in remand for obstruction and one month for custard pieing a councillor. Another facet of this repression is the desire of the police to ban future marches.



## VIETNAM

tion would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh."

### The American military build-up

Once established in South Vietnam, the Americans immediately began to destabilize North Vietnam. Eisenhower despatched 300 CIA agents to Hanoi in 1954, gradually increasing their number and scale of operation. In 1961 President Kennedy sent 500 more men to the Saigon military mission and financed secret raids into North Vietnam. The nature of the Diem government in South Vietnam came to the attention of the world in 1963 when a picture of a burning Buddhist monk hit the front pages. He was protesting at the vicious attacks that Diem had launched on Buddhists. Despite the obvious dictatorship that they were supporting, the Johnson administration stepped up operations in 1964 with Operation Plan 34A, 'an elaborate programme of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam'.

Up until now, the war had been conducted without the general public really knowing what was going on. It was just another of the many CIA-organised operations that were going on around the world. But all this changed with the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

As part of Operation Plan 34A, raids were being launched into North Vietnam by American naval forces. When Vietnamese torpedo boats chased the raiders they came across two American destroyers which had been covering the raid. Shots were exchanged. Johnson claimed to Congress and the American public that American ships had been the object of "an unprovoked attack". No mention was made of the 34A raids. In less than 12 hours bombers were on their way to Hanoi. The war had begun in earnest.

In February 1965, Johnson launched Operation Rolling Thunder: a massive bombing campaign. He did this despite having promised during the election campaign the previous November not to escalate the war. Although many tons of bombs were dropped, the bombing campaign proved to be a total failure. Therefore, troops were sent to start the ground war in April 1965. By 1967 there were 525,000 US troops in Vietnam.

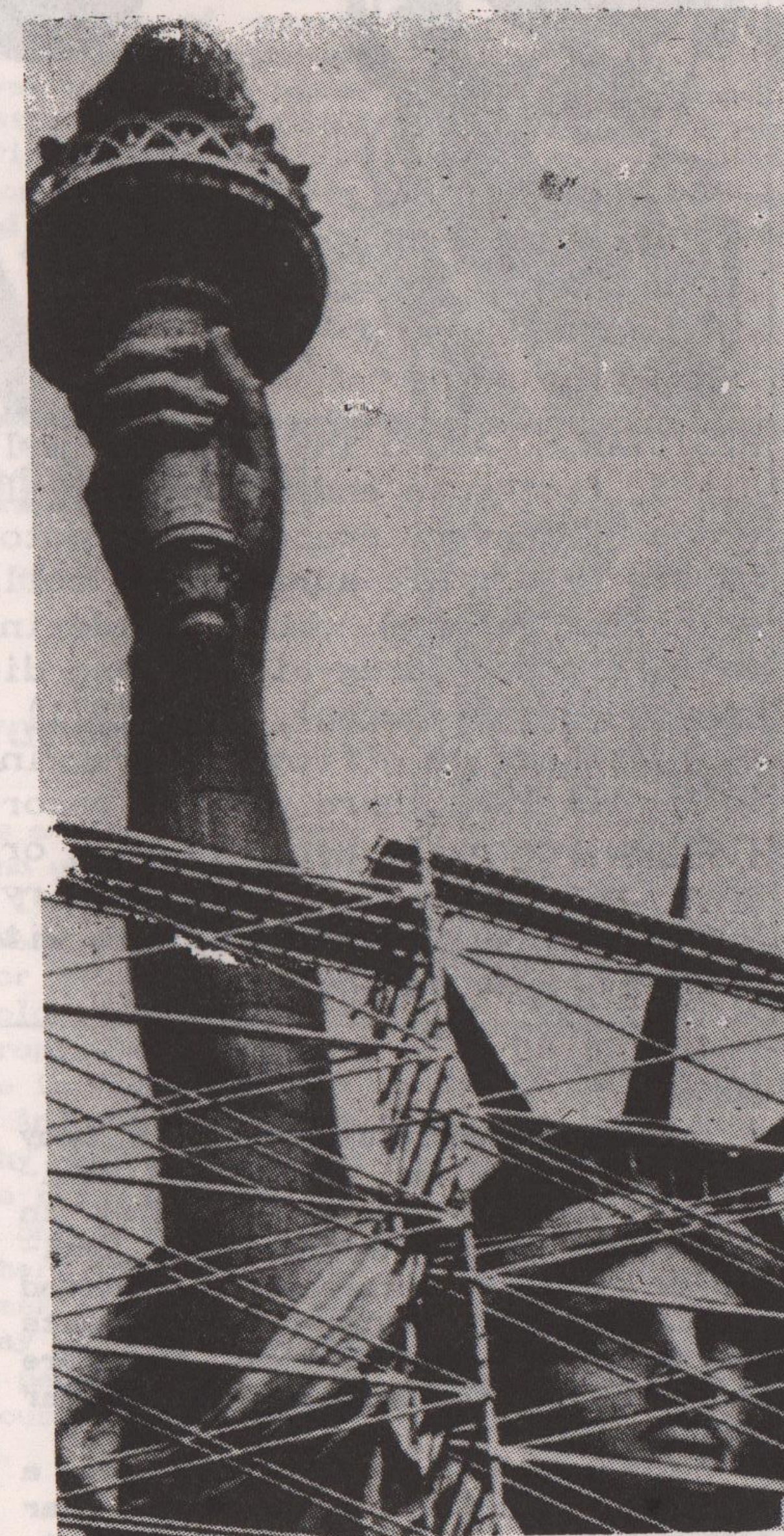
The land war was no more successful than the air war. The Southern Vietnamese Communists (the Viet Cong) were undistinguishable from ordinary villagers. They had the support of much of the population, especially the peasants who hated the large landowners that backed the Diem regime. The Americans did not know how to deal with such a guerilla war and became more and more desperate. Typical of the actions that American soldiers were involved in was the My Lai incident. They went into the village of My Lai looking for Viet Cong. When they couldn't figure out who the Viet Cong were, they proceeded to systematically massacre the whole village. When they had finished 504 villagers had been killed, including 173 children, 56 of whom were babies.

Back in American, with incidents like My Lai making headlines and the number of American casualties growing, the public became increasingly disillusioned with the war. When the Viet Cong

launched the Tet Offensive in January 1968, simultaneously attacking 80 strategic centres, disillusionment became rampant with protests escalating by the day.

Richard Nixon campaigned for President in November 1968 on a 'peace' platform. He promised to withdraw American land troops and 'Vietnamise' the war. He planned to rely primarily on air and naval attacks which would hide the effects of the war and reduce American casualties. His 'peace plan' was no more effective than previous plans. Bombing hadn't produced the results before and it didn't succeed this time. Noam Chomsky writes,

"While travelling in North Vietnam I was shown a bridge, still standing uneasily, that was attacked daily from 1965 until the termination of regular bombing, with 99 American jet planes



lost- the cost in planes alone must be \$500 million, to destroy one bridge."

Protests continued and the war continued with the bombing of Cambodia. In 1972 Americans sent B-52s to drop 40,000 tons of bombs on heavily populated Hanoi. The bombing lasted 12 days and led to even other western governments voicing their protests. By the time the Americans finally accepted defeat and went to the negotiating table at the end of 1972, 56,000 American soldiers had been killed, 303,000 had been wounded and countless numbers of Vietnamese had lost their lives. Between 1964 and 1972 \$108 billion dollars had been spent. Every enemy soldier had cost \$500,000 to kill.

The US and its allies hoped that the Gulf War would develop in a totally different direction from that of the

Vietnam war. The latest hi-tech weapons were supposed to be more effective than the B-52s of the Vietnam era. The blatant anti-people nature of the bombing in Vietnam where success was measured in terms of people killed or maimed was replaced by sanitised precision bombing of military targets. The land war was delayed again and again in order to avoid casualties of Americans and their allies. The media was more controlled and was fed endless rubbish in hopes of distracting the public from the realities of war. The emphasis has been on a quick victory, never admitting that the Vietnam War was supposed to have ended after a few months. Saddam Hussein is an obvious tyrant whereas Ho Chi Minh appeared to have more support amongst the people so that the US could be more credible in its claim to be opposing tyranny. The Iraqis invaded Kuwait and in Vietnam it was the US who was the invader.

Precision bombing of military targets has turned out to mean many civilian casualties. The war protests were there from day one, deliberately played down by the media, but there nevertheless. Many Arab governments were very worried about a prolonged war as their people cried out against their support of the western imperialists and infidels.

The Vietnam War came to an end for a variety of reasons. The US was defeated militarily, the cost of the war both politically and economically was becoming too much for the ruling class itself and the anti-war movement put pressure on the US government. It's difficult to say which factor was decisive in bringing about the end of the war. This time the US and its allies won the war. It's important to look at the lessons from both the Vietnam and the Gulf War and apply them in any future wars that will take place. The New World Order has been established, and the US and European blocs, in collaboration with the Soviet bloc, will continue to act as the world's police. As revolutionary anarchist communists we see that the only long term solution to war is the overthrow of the system that produces it. We have to build an international revolutionary movement, a movement that rejects all the power blocs, and does not fall into the trap of supporting one set of rulers because they are perceived as being one's enemy's enemy, are "unwittingly anti-imperialist" and are leading the fight against the great imperialist powers. For us the ruling class is international, and everywhere it is our oppressor. The building of this revolutionary movement will be a difficult task, but it is the only real answer to the wars and famines that will prevail until this evil set-up has its foundations demolished.

### THE AMERICAN ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

For the first part of the war, up until 1964, Americans had little idea of what was going on in Vietnam. It was only another American covert operation. The Gulf of Tonkin incident brought the war to the forefront, but it wasn't until the numbers drafted increased along with the casualties that the media took an interest in what was going on.

As the casualties mounted and when

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## POLL TAX Continued

has thus tended to support its own and hence has not fought for support in the wider anti-poll tax movement. Similarly, support for the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign has tended to be limited to the scene. The only time a prisoner has gained wider support was for Bryan Wright, the first person to be jailed for not paying.

### IS THE POLL TAX BEATEN?

After the Tory debacle at the end of last year it seemed that the poll tax was in tatters. Thatcher was gone. It seemed the tax had to go as well. Heseltine, chosen by Major as the minister now in charge of the Department of Environment, had stated his 'opposition' to it. Millions more people joined the ten million or so non-payers in December and kept some extra spending money for Christmas.

Even if the poll tax is reformed or abolished (as appears likely), the government, or a possible Labour successor, will do their utmost to reclaim poll tax debts. With the deepening recession and the enormous cost of the Gulf War the government cannot afford to buy off protest. Without the option of the carrot the government will use the big



## VIETNAM

it became obvious that the US wasn't winning, the anti-war movement began to grow. In addition, incidents like My Lai brought home to people what the soldiers were actually doing to people in Vietnam. The massive bombing campaign had only been an abstraction; the objects of the B-52s and the napalm bombs were not real to most Americans. But the dead soldiers and the pictures of My Lai could not be ignored and led to a massive anti-war movement.

The movement was dominated by student groups. This did not mean that the movement was only a middle class movement. A much larger section of the population stay on in further education in America. But the organised working class were not only not involved in the movement, but were often openly hostile. This was not the case for the black working class who saw the anti-war movement as having similar objectives and enemies. It was often black people who couldn't avoid the draft as they were not rich or well-connected like current Vice-President Dan Quayle.

The anti-war movement was divided into primarily two tendencies. There were those that were against the war because the US was not winning and it wasn't worth it in terms of loss of American lives or the cost of military spending. Many of these still saw the Vietnamese as the aggressor and the US as defenders of freedom; it just didn't seem worth the effort. The second tendency, with wide variations within it, were aware of the true nature of US involvement: imperialist, self-interested aggression. For a whole generation of young people, the growing awareness that the rubbish they had been fed at school about America being the champion of freedom and democracy was a pack of lies, gave way to anger and rage at the entire system. As many looked deeper into the reasons why the US was in Vietnam, they began to see what the real problem was: an economic and political system that adopted policies that were wanted by a few while the ordinary people, the working class suffered both on the battlefield and in the lack of facilities at home due to the money spent on war. In other words, the real enemy was capitalism. This awareness led people to look for alternatives. Unfortunately, the alternatives were very limited and took on strange directions.

Some advocated 'turning on, tuning in and dropping out'. People experimented with drugs and alternative lifestyles, setting up communes or living rough on the streets of the city. Others, in their rejection of American capitalism, supported unquestioningly the countries that claimed to be socialist. Ho Chi Minh was idolised and activity against the war became activity in support of the Vietnamese 'communist' regime. People chanted pro-Vietnamese slogans and did the 'Ho Chi Minh hop' on demos. Various factions emerged based primarily on the support of a particular regime or ideology. Pro-Albanians debated with pro-Soviets as Trotskyists clashed with Maoists. They also romanticised all Third World national liberation struggles, putting them forward as the vanguard in the fight against world capitalism. These attitudes both reinforced and were reinforced by the organised white working class's support for



RESISTANCE AMONG THE AMERICAN military was a major but little publicised factor in ending the war. In June 1971 Colonel Robert D. Heinl wrote, "By every conceivable factor our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited when not near mutinous". (*Armed Forces Journal*, June 1971)

Attacks on officers ("fraggings") rose from 126 in 1969 to 271 in 1970. In 1968 there were 68 recorded incidents of combat refusal. By 1969 entire units were refusing orders and by 1970 there were 35 separate refusals in the Air Cavalry alone. Desertion and AWOL (Absent Without Leave) became epidemic with one GI leaving every three minutes at the height of the war.

the war.

Though we would disagree with many of the ideas of the anti-system activists, they were some of the first in our recent history to argue that capitalism could not be reformed and needed to be overthrown. Whatever their faults they left a legacy of ideas that are still influencing us today, for better or worse.

As anarchist-communists we have a particular perspective on wars. War brings into sharp relief the class nature of society, the oppressive nature of all states and the need for working class internationalism. We have no illusions that any of the warring sides are any better even if the country is fighting US imperialism. Ho Chi Minh used an authoritarian army and bureaucracy to control and dominate the workers and peasants. The war was not waged to deter aggression or defend freedom but to preserve the economic and political interests of the ruling class. In addition, we are not against a war because 'our boys' are getting killed or because 'we' are not winning. We are against war because of what is doing to working class people on both sides. Thousands of Vietnamese had been killed but the shooting of 4 students by the National Guard at Kent State University in 1970 sparked off a disproportionate amount of activity. This is not the basis on which

to build an anti-war movement.

## THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE GULF WAR

Having looked at what happened in the Vietnam War we can now see many similarities with the Gulf War. Freedom was not an objective of the Gulf War any more than it was in the Vietnam War. Bombing was seen at a distance, the media uninterested in the real effects of that bombing. There was tacit or even enthusiastic support for war as long as it was not "our boys" that were getting killed.

Within the anti-war movement there are also comparisons to be made. Some argue that the war was justified but not worth it and others have made a hero out of Saddam Hussein, an even more brutal dictator than Ho Chi Minh. Anarchist-communists will continue to oppose all wars between states, not because killing is wrong in itself, because one side is better than the other or because the British working class is suffering. We oppose wars because they have horrific consequences for ordinary people and go against the interests of all working class people regardless of nationality. Our opposition to the war comes from our opposition to capitalism. It is vital that we build any future anti-war movement on this basis.

## Anarchists International

*Alive-International Anarchist Newsletter*

Issue 0. Price 1.50

*European Anarchism-A Guide*

Issue 1. Price 1.00

*Alive* is produced, in English, by a small Amsterdam-based collective. Its aims are to provide news and information of anarchist organisations and events and to become "...a useful medium for improving international communications." To this end it carries an international contacts list together with reports of national and international conferences and items on the developing anarchist movements in the USSR and Hungary. *European Anarchism* also in English, regards itself as a project to improve communication and coordination within the international anarchist movement. Like *Alive*, it contains reports and declarations from the new anarchist groups of Eastern Europe including an interesting piece on the peculiar problems Polish anarchists

face. Not least of which is lack of funds—"Poland is, trust me, the only country in the world where revolution can be made for 1000 US dollars".

Both publications appear at a time when international anarchist links are already producing results. For example, the participation of European comrades in the October 20 anti-poll tax demo and the solidarity actions taken around the world against the poll tax and supporting those imprisoned for fighting it.

Such actions are clearly of concern to the state. A recent article in the Sunday Telegraph reported "...gangs of anarchists, like football supporters could travel to and from countries to attend demonstrations intent on violent protest. Last week a senior undercover police officer said 'It's not just rats and rabies that will cross the channel'".

The importance of *Alive* and *European Anarchism* in contribut-



ing to international anarchism will depend on the response they receive from groups and organisations around the world. Ideally they could provide not only exchanges of information and contacts but become platforms for the discussion of international anarchist projects and

action. Both publications invite contributions and can be contacted at the addresses below:

*Alive*, c/o J. van Lennepkade 122, 1053 MT Amsterdam, Holland.  
*Anarchism in Europe*, Apartado de Correos 999, Barcelona 08003, Spain.

## Housing in the nineties

Continued from back page

A large proportion of homeless people are young and single. The number of teenagers leaving the parental home and heading for London has increased rapidly over the last few years. The reasons are varied; some might just have felt like it, some might have believed prospects would be better in London, others have been thrown out of their homes or are running away from abuse. They haven't much going for them as far as housing is concerned. The chance of a single person under 25 being offered a council tenancy is less than remote. As for the Tories, they believe the best place for the under 25s is 'at home' with their parents. Consequently, state benefits for this age group have been cut unless they are in a government scheme. So it comes as little surprise to find that many of this age group end up sleeping rough.

## Properties

It is a fact that there are thousand upon thousands of properties lying empty in this country. Many homes, purpose-built for the yuppies cannot be sold. Thousands of council properties also lie empty, some in disrepair others not. And then there are the wealthy who, not content to have a ritzy pad in the city, have one or more country cottages where they can while away the weekends. At the end of the day it is appalling that while people sleep in the streets, houses should remain unoccupied.

## Profit

Although we are highlighting the callousness of the government and the boss



class, neither do we plead for a better deal, we expect no favours from them. The provision of housing like anything else is not based on need but profit.

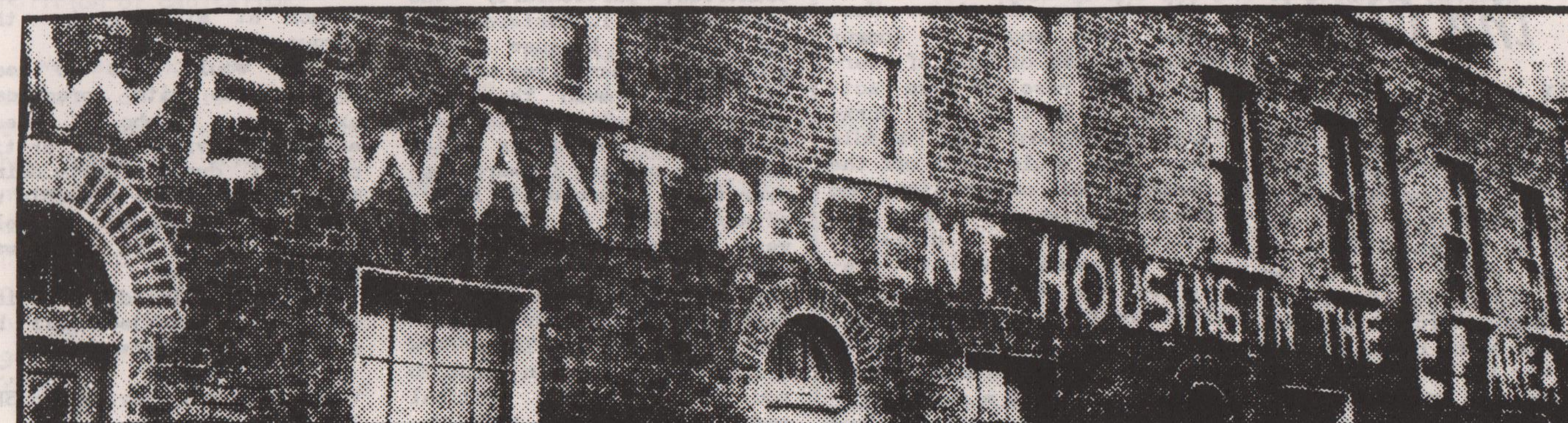
Having said this, the capitalists have an interest in ensuring a degree of comfort for some members of our class while condemning others to a life of misery. It's a matter of keeping the lid on things, housing a few families here and there, opening up the odd shiny new hostel, providing soup kitchens at Christmas and the like. This is because

the system has to be seen to benefit our class, window dressing to make it appear that something is being done. But things like better housing and health care for all are always unaffordable, we are told, while the government happily spends billions on a war.

## Direct Action

Homelessness needs to be fought against by mass working class action but sadly, this is lacking. But there are many who take matters into their own hands. With direct action, homelessness needn't be helplessness. Squatting, though not without its hassles, can be a means of solving one's own housing crisis.

Homelessness exists the world over, from the pavement families of India to the shanty towns of Brazil, it is a permanent feature of the capitalist system. And though it may from time to time be alleviated slightly, it can only be eradicated along with the society which spawns it.





## The imperialist mentality

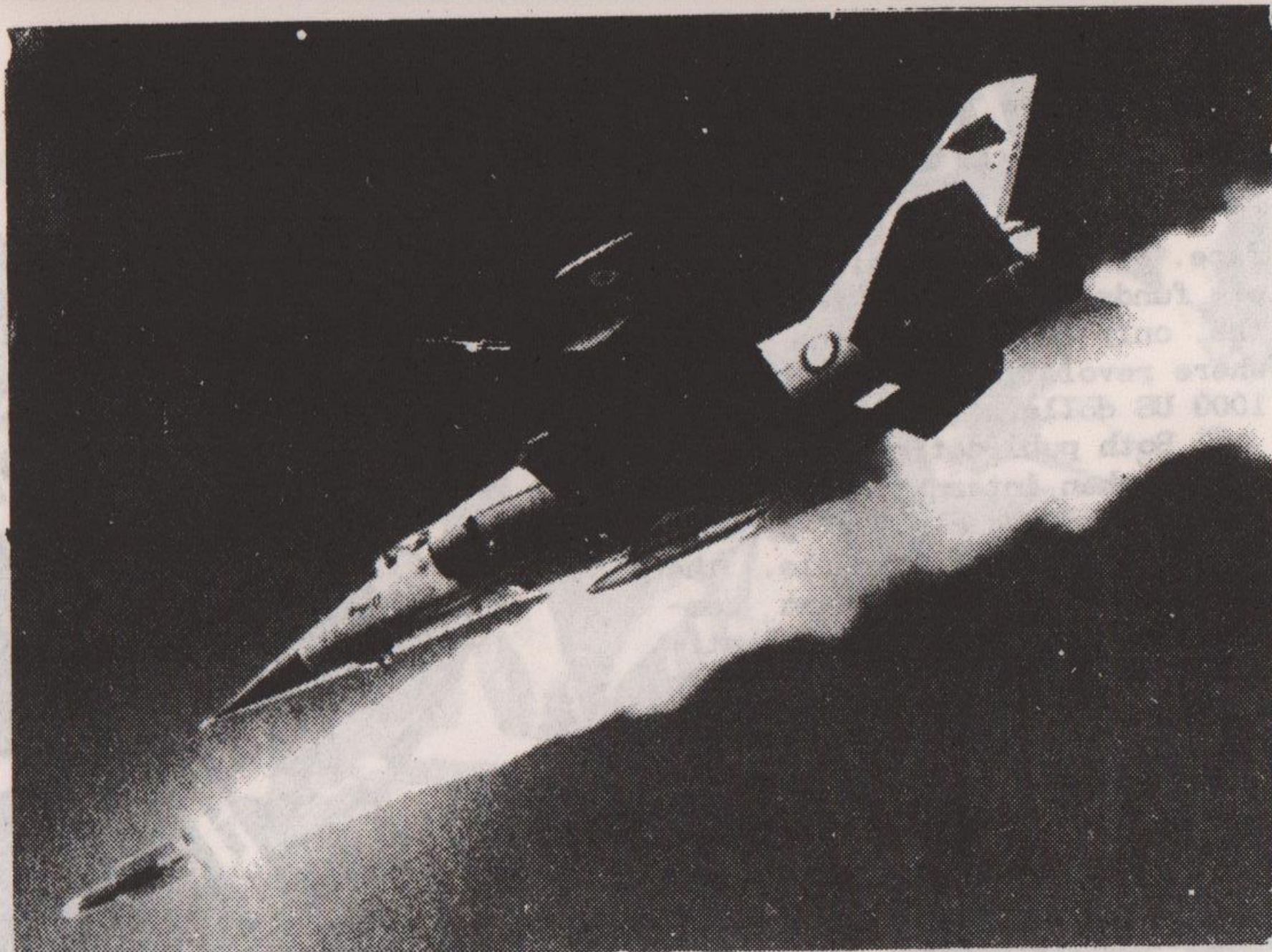
Imperialism thrives on fear. It is relatively easy to convince people that there is a threat from a different nation, class, tribe, or racial group and that everything must be done to combat this. Today as we see in the Gulf, this includes the possible use of atomic, biological and chemical weapons. Eliminate, suppress, enslave are the mottoes of imperialism from Ghengis Khan to Adolf Hitler. Force is the way to ensure the domination of one side or the other. In the attempt to create socialism similar results have arisen because power has been seized and wielded by the party apparatus involving corruption, militarism and new class models, ie. industrial management and its abuses typically revealed in Russia.

The anarchist alternative has rarely been applied on a large scale and is axiomatically abhorrent to international and social imperialism. It also contradicts the competitive element fostered by capitalism. Our main appeal is therefore to the oppressed working class and rootless and alienated youth, for the simple reason that they have nothing to lose and much to gain from collective labour, distribution of produce and democratic decision making where even the ideas of the minority can theoretically be applied, for example in agricultural and industrial experiments. Our main task is therefore to convince those who believe they benefit from the fruits of power, that those fruits are rotten to the core. Capitalism corrupts, pollutes, and enslaves. It can not even distribute its surplus food to famine regions, famines partly created by its own imbalanced methods.

AMA  
Edinburgh

## War in the Gulf

RECENTLY I've been ploughing through the INDEPENDENT in order to keep up with developments in the Gulf and I came across a paragraph which caught my attention. It was printed on 15 Jan 1991, the date on which the United Nations instructed Iraq to leave Kuwait before military force was to be used: "In a ground war the most difficult objective will be Kuwait City itself. Fighting in a built up



area is a dirty, dangerous and tricky business...the cost of taking Kuwait City, held by a division of at least 12,000 men, will be horrific. The city includes many blocks of flats which are very difficult to clear. The standard way is to go in from the top by helicopter. Having worked your way down to the bottom, enemy engineers can set off prepared demolition charges, destroying the building and wiping out a full company sent to clear it. This has an adverse effect on the company sent to clear the next block."

The last line, especially, of the above quote will be ringing in the ears of the ruling class. It would not be a far step from mutiny, one of the most feared words in the vocabulary of the military establishment. It underlines the futility of predatory wars. The nightmare scenario of chemical and biological warfare is an untested factor in this particular equation. In March 1988 5,000 Kurds in the town of Halabja were killed in a matter of minutes by chemical weapons unleashed by the Iraqis. This kind of atrocity could well be repeated on a much larger scale. Revolutionary movements are often born of the death and destruction brought about by the greed and avarice of capitalism, when even its most loyal servants turn against it, when society is paralysed by dissension and opposition.

A heavy military defeat for Iraq could provoke unprecedented hostility towards the USA and sharpen the conflict with the Israeli state. However this would no longer take the form of acts of terrorism but resolute mass action on the part of Arab workers throughout the Middle East. They would throw off the shackles of nationalism and fundamentalism and topple the motley collection of dictatorial regimes which have prevented the entry of workers into the 20th century.

We have to be clear in our minds that conflagrations of this kind are a natural by-product of the periodic crises

of capitalism. No matter how tenaciously their apologists defend this small-minded parochialism we anarchists will continue to propagate the ideals of proletarian internationalism as a superior system to theirs. The Praetorian Guard will become the revolutionary guard and they will steadfastly refuse to go back to the Stone Age. In the distant future people will visit their local museum and marvel at the curious relics on display: a police truncheon, a UB40 card and a photograph of carpet bombing raids on Iraq.

G  
Gillingham.

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

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

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

## Eastern Europe

On the whole I think the paper is very good. If I have a criticism it is that, in the issues I have seen so far (16-20), you are not critical enough of some of the anarchist groups in other countries, particularly the ones emerging in Eastern Europe. Just because these groups call themselves anarchists doesn't mean that they are sound revolutionaries - in many cases the ideas which they are putting forward appear to be a jumble of liberalism/leftism. If these ideas were being put forward by anarchist groups in this country I think you would be far more severe in your assessment. In your article on the Trieste conference in issue 20 you tend to be more critical and I hope you keep this up,

otherwise you are doing a grave disservice to the growing struggles of the East European working class.

MS  
Leeds.

YOU ARE RIGHT in saying that in many cases the ideas which the anarchist groups in Eastern Europe are putting forward are confused, and contain large elements of liberalism and leftism. However, there is a big difference between the situation in Eastern Europe and the West. There has been a complete break with the past due to the Stalinist ice age and many fruitful experiences have been forgotten. Anarchists in Eastern Europe are faced with little practical and theoretical experience, and little anarchist literature. The movement emerged, in most cases, from a counter-culture - the only place it could emerge from, given the conditions in Eastern Europe. Obviously it is still influenced by that counter-culture, with the preoccupations with punk and alternative communities. Illusions in the market will, we hope, disappear as the effects of the market are felt. We feel that this is already the case in Poland, where the movement does seem to be making theoretical advances. We do refuse to make apologies for these groups, but at the same time we feel that a constructive dialogue needs to be opened up, so that they can advance. One recent example of developments is that of the Hungarian group AUTONOMIA which realised the differences within its own ranks and split into 4 groups - one involved with the setting up of an alternative community, one trying to link theoretical development with action, anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-punks.

## Direct democracy

DIRECT DEMOCRACY NETWORK: This will be an international project which aims to produce some practical analysis of direct democracy (its strengths and weaknesses) with a special interest in mass organisations which use rotation of delegates (e.g. the Spanish dockers Coordinadora or the CGT-CNT branch at Michelin in the Basque country).

We would like to hear from anyone with practical experience, or who is interested in giving their criticisms of 'draft texts, doing translations (where possible we will work in Spanish as well as English), or in any way getting involved.

Various already existing texts on this subject will be sent to anyone interested.

Contact: Mick Parkin, 39 Vesta Road, Brockley, London SE4 2NJ

## Aims and Principles

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

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

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

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

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

economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

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

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

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

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

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

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise

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

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own

revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

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

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