

Libertarian STRUGGLE

for Workers' Power



The employers and the Wilson-Tory coalition got their way early last month over the EEC. Cock-a-hoop over that victory, they now intend to continue their policy of bailing themselves out at the expense of the working class. Militants everywhere must now fight against demoralisation in the labour movement.

However, it must be made clear that the only effective way to do this is to present a fighting libertarian socialist strategy to combat the attempts of the CBI, the state, and trade union bureaucrats to impose massive unemployment and inflation on our backs.

UNEMPLOYMENT HOW TO FIGHT IT

It is essential that international links are built with workers abroad in other EEC countries. The bosses will try to take full advantage of the massive referendum 'Yes' vote to fully integrate British capitalism with that of our 'partners', and to clamp down at home.

This can only make Campbell-Adamson & Co. all the stronger when faced with discontent in the trade union ranks. We must

therefore fight them at their own game — but with our own methods.

Shop stewards and rank and file organisations should follow the example of the GEC Action Group and make effective contact with their counterparts in France, Germany, etc, to counteract the international moves by the ruling class.

Meanwhile, at home, such attacks as short time working must be met with a slow down in production by workers. And the only effective answer to redundancies is mass occupation of places of work.

We must be very careful about what exactly this means. Work-ins are not always practicable. But machinery and equipment must not be allowed to be moved out, otherwise the employers will be put back into a position of strength.

To be successful, occupations must be conducted on a mass level. All workers must be involved, with elected delegate committees under their direct control. Otherwise, their morale drops, the bosses gain confidence and

can divide and rule. Demands must be for full pay, work or no work. It's the capitalists' crisis, and they should pay for it.

LABOUR LEFT A BLIND ALLEY

One thing the EEC campaign showed above all is that the 'policies' of the Labour Party 'left' can only tie the hands of workers behind their backs in this struggle.

Nowhere did it offer an authentic socialist answer to our problems — only misleading statements about a 'sovereignty of the people' which has never existed. Benn really wanted us out of the Market so that he could put his pet policy of state direction of the economy into operation.

He did not want people to take control of their own lives. Nationalisation does not mean this — it did not stop British Steel Corporation boss, Sir Monty Finniston, from trying to throw thousands of steel workers onto the already massive dole queue, nor the running down ('rationalisation') of the coal industry after the Second World War.

The boss-worker authority relationship remains the same. Benn's talk about introducing some 'industrial democracy' and

even 'workers control' only means a bigger say for the trade union bureaucrats — not self-management of factories, offices, and so on.

The 'left' has also failed to make headway or even maintain its existing position in the unions. Again this is because of their bankruptcy as far as socialism is concerned. The election of John Boyd (of Salvation Army fame!) to succeed Scanlon in the AUEW is symbolic of a far greater crisis in the left and the labour movement.

Attempting to get and keep bureaucratic trade union positions is no substitute for mobilising the mass of the workers against the capitalist policies of Wilson and his Tory friends.

SMASH THE WILSON-TORY COALITION

The difference between the 'left' and the 'right' of the Labour Party has been one over what tactics to use in managing the working class. But between Wilson and the Tories there is relatively little argument over certain vital tactical issues. So much so that one can safely talk of a Wilson-Tory coalition.

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REGIMENT- ATION.

Two ex-soldiers write about their experiences in the Army. These days the daily papers are full of adverts to lead an adventurous life and go places. Young workers are clutched out of the dole queues, to be sent over to Ireland to do the British government's dirty work. Day to day life in the Army is something quite different from the State propaganda, as these accounts show.

I like many other fools in recent years decided that the only way for me to be able to escape and see the world was to join the Army. Well in the next few lines I hope to be able to inform you of some of the class and social struggles encountered whilst in the Army.

Within the first few weeks from applying to join and finding out that you have been accepted you are treated courteously by all the staff at the recruiting office. Then suddenly you're in and bang! all the courtesy disappears: you are no longer called by your first name as had been the case up till then; instead there's a multitude of comments doubting the validity of the marital status of your parents.

SLAVERY

After having completed your basic training you are at last a soldier — or are you? On arriving at your regiment, you are given one of several jobs which last up to six months, one of which is Officer's Batman or should I say slave. Slave is what it is — cleaning the officer's boots, washing his dirty underwear and such like.

Well that sort of thing went out with the end of slavery in the 19th century or so I thought, but then I was in the Army and not supposed to think for myself. I just had to do what my 'betters and superiors' told me, regardless of what it was.

OFFICERS AND THEIR LADIES

The 'betters and superiors' aspect of Army life didn't end there. Even at Regimental Dances and Buffets it was always 'Officers and their Ladies' and 'other ranks and their women', with few exceptions in the authoritarian hierarchy of the place.

On joining the Army or any other branch of the Armed Forces, you give up your right to freedom of choice and speech. Two examples of this are regular parades to attend Church, and the inability to say what you think of such things as Northern Ireland, the monarchy and so on.

Most of the people who join in my opinion fit into two categories:-

- 1 Those who lose the ability to think and act on their own.
- 2 Those who rebel and are eventually discharged from the force.

In closing may I say as an ex-squaddie that I avidly read the Soldiers' Supplement in 'Wildcat' and was astounded by the blatant inaccuracy of it. It appeared to have been written by an ex-Public Schoolboy who was in the Cadet Force or something. To take just one example, Thompson sub-machine

guns which the writer claimed he was using in the mid-sixties, went out after World War Two!

Ex-squaddie, Royal Engineers

I was 17 years old. A working class boy with a spirit of adventure and a healthy fear of both the pit and the dole queue. Since these were the only alternatives open to someone with no 'O' levels, I allowed my relatives to talk me into joining the Army. After all, the Army offered me a chance to escape from home and enjoy a measure of freedom (or so I thought).

ILLUSIONS

My illusions about Army life were soon shattered by the reality of basic training. This is a process which is at best degrading and at worst soul destroying. It seems to be designed to destroy a person's individuality and self respect.

This is so that the previously free individual can be Brain Washed into becoming a Robot-like creature incapable of any thoughts which are not placed in his head by the Establishment.

The only saving graces of this process are that a) it is never 100% effective, and b) the training tends to develop the body (if not the brain).

Out of a training platoon of 47 at one stage, only 20 of us 'passed out' as trained soldiers. This was a 'failure' rate of over 60%. Only stubbornness and a determination to prove my instructors wrong, when they said 'I would never make it', carried me through this period.

So I became a 'Trained Soldier' and was posted to a rifle company in an Infantry Battalion. All through training I had been told that 'things would be better' when I joined my Battalion. The only obvious difference was that the Army's repressive discipline was more covert in operation. It tended to masquerade behind a light hearted camaraderie between Officers and Men (ie bourgeoisie and workers).

The impression thus given to the outsider is one of good natured class collaboration. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many squaddies view with disgust the glaring inequalities which exist between the Officer class and themselves.

QUEEN'S RULES.

Officers for instance use their positions of power to evade the more irksome and petty aspects of military discipline; haircutting etc.

Weighall tried to avert mass industrial action over the pitiful British Rail offer.

If eyes are raised to the future, we can already see him following the steps of his predecessor, Sir Sidney Greene, with a little three-lettered word before his name. It is the same with all trade union bureaucrats — they will sell out workers at every opportunity. Otherwise, they lose control over them.

The media will always be on hand to help the bosses and bureaucrats in their hour of need. For instance, during the recent dispute at Chrysler, Stoke, the capitalist press tried to whip up an anti-strike hysteria, fostering and blowing up an anti-strike group among the workers' wives.

Little or no publicity was given to women who broke up this reactionary 'movement'. This example points to another necessity — women, whether in the factory, office or at home must take part fully in struggles, on an equal level with men. Neglect of this leads to division and defeat, and sexism will remain deeply imbedded in the working class.



Troops breaking picket line in Glasgow

Their reaction to the same show of individuality in an O/R (other rank) is to crush him immediately with the full weight of Queens Rules and Regulations — a book, incidentally, from which it is an offence for

a squaddie to quote in his own defence.

In fact when I was 'in' I was even refused access to the copy of Q/R's kept in the Company office. So you can be charged with 'Failing to Comply' with regulations which you are not supposed to know. Now that makes sense doesn't it! To them it does. After all, it is nonsensical, one-sided legalities such as this which preserve the bourgeois officer class in their privileged position.

The ordinary squaddie rightly or wrongly, knowingly or otherwise, has signed away his right of free speech. In effect, all his 'inalienable' civil liberties have been transformed into 'privileges' and as such can be instantly taken away in order to oppress him and keep him in his 'place'.

It is the duty of the working class to come out strongly in favour of the self-organisation of rank and file soldiers, and the building of links with strong sections of workers. Remember, soldiers can't demand this for themselves, as they would be laying themselves open to disciplinary sanctions, charges of mutiny, etc..

Squaddies are working class too!

Ex-squaddie, Cheshire Regiment

CLASS WAR CONTINUES

There's an old socialist saying that the capitalists may win battles from day to day, but that the working class only needs to win one big battle to be victorious overall. The bosses won over the Common Market because of the absence of a credible socialist alternative to the 'Yes' men and women.

But the class war continues and we are not on our knees. With autonomous mass rank and file self-organisation, the working class will be in a firm position to clearly answer any attacks on them with a libertarian socialist strategy that will mean:-

No to Unemployment!

No to Inflation!

No to Social Expenditure Cuts!

Yes to Rank and File Power!

Editorial Collective

EDITORIAL continued.

This was the second major feature of the Common Market campaign. How long this will continue, and whether it will turn into something more concrete depends on how the crisis develops.

For a working class strategy to be successful it must include the smashing of Wilson and the Tories' control over affairs, and the Labour Party's ideological hold over the workers themselves.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

All the lessons from recent class battles must be thoroughly learnt. We cannot play the ruling class with their own rules. We must cease even to play, and start to really fight. We must rely on our own struggles.

The railworkers have only recently seen how their chief 'representative' Sidney

memoirs of a

GASMAN.....

Pete Squires worked for the Gas Board for 13 years, as a fitter and then as a Technical Assistant. He was involved in the conversions to natural gas and tells here of his experiences and of the treatment given to Top People and to Gas Board workers in Southeast England.

'Go round the back' — it's as simple as that — use a 'tradesman's entrance'. When you're working for the Gas Board in the posh areas of Surrey you are a 2nd class citizen. You are a serf, and they are the upper and middle classes.

I would reckon that on average the middle class is even worse to work for than the upper class — they're so conscious of their position. They know they haven't made it to the upper class, and they're determined they're not going to fall down into the working class. So they make sure to remind you that you're their social inferior.

KNOWING HOW TO COMPLAIN

When we were going to convert an area to natural gas, we could tell even before we started work, just by driving round, where the complaints were going to come from. If there was a road of expensive houses, that meant trouble. The middle and upper classes really know how to complain — even if they have nothing to complain about.

There was one woman in Bookham who decided she hadn't had good enough service, so she complained: not to a conversion officer, not to an area manager, nor even to the Chairman of the South East Region — but to a government minister.

Of course we were sent round the minute we heard about the complaint — and then she had the nerve to complain because at 7.30 that evening the fitters were still in her house finishing the job.

The hostility of some upper class types to workers in the Gas Board is incredible. I've known one man in Brighton who tried to secretly tape-record the fitters on the job, so as to have something to complain about. It's not very nice when your mate has to whisper when you join him, 'Mind what you say — it's being recorded'.

TEMPTATION

Some people, who knew that the converters were going to have to lift a carpet while doing the job, out down a 10-bob note under the carpet to see how honest they were.

One time that happened a fitter went round with 20 nails and nailed the edge of the carpet down — to show them that he wasn't standing for it.

SPECIAL TREATMENT

Certain kinds of people get specially good treatment from the Gas Board — like government officials, senior officials in the Gas Board, and anyone like a journalist with access to the media.

All these types got their gas conversions done not by the usual converters but by Technical Assistants. (Converters work on contract for the Gas Board, and have only 5 weeks' training. Technical Assistants have all served a 5-year apprenticeship, and are permanent employees of the Gas Board.)

I was sent round myself — as a Technical Assistant — to do a conversion job on the house of an ex-High Court judge. He got his

house done earlier than was usual. Also, I had instructions to check all his gas appliances — which wasn't normal. For most people we were supposed to check only central heating and bathroom appliances.

(The sheltering of 'Top People' from the realities of working class life is one of the many things which makes bourgeois democracy a hopeless proposition. In many cases members of the ruling class, whether elected or not, simply do not know how working people live. Like one senior Bank of England official, who was reported recently as saying 'What's all this about unemployment? I was at my golf club last weekend, and nobody there was unemployed.' — ed.)

ENCLAVES OF THE RICH — AND POOR

You see a hell of a lot of wealth when you go round doing conversion jobs. There was one house I converted in Sussex so big that you could have got the average 3-bedroomed semi (without the roof!) into just its living room. The guy who owned that had 4 or 5 servants, and I was told that he owned the freehold of all but 3 of the houses in the next village. And he kept a pack of hounds.

In parts of Surrey there are whole estates barred to the public. Private roads, like Coombe Hill Estate near Kingston or St. George's Hill, with a barrier across the road leading into them, manned by a flunkey.

Inside you get some well-known characters living, like Eric Sykes, Ringo Starr and one of the bosses of Tate & Lyle. They've made their money out of the public, and want to live somewhere where the public can't bother them.

One of these estates has even got its own private golf course in the middle. They can't keep them as private as they'd like, though. One time I went through there was 'Ringo I love you' plastered all over the gates. Must have lowered the tone no end.

Some of the most squalid places we've had to go into whilst converting were down in Deptford. The poverty in some of the houses there can be pretty terrible — there was one place that when the fitter opened the front of the gas oven he found rats inside.

SURVEILLANCE

As for the way the Gas Board itself was run; as far as I know there's very little co-operation between workers and management, in the sense of each taking notice of the others' ideas.

There was one stage during conversion when our unit was allowed to plan its own schedule and work at our own speed. When we started on that system there was a backlog of between 1,500 and 2,000 houses. We got that down to nothing within a few months.

But all the same the thing turned sour in the end. They came one day saying 'You took a long lunch break on such-and-such a day', and after that they started making us fill up an extra lot of time sheets, just to keep a special watch on us.

After that you felt you couldn't win, and there wasn't much point in trying to take a pride in doing an efficient job. From then on it was alienation alright, sitting outside the houses in the van, playing cards or reading a book. The more closely the bosses try to watch you, the less efficiently things get done.

OUR TOWN- WANDSWORTH

The London borough of Wandsworth has been described as a 'hotbed of political activity' and 'a leader in the field of campaigning action groups'.

After talking to some members of the community, the most common reason given is that as more and more areas of London become 'trendy', thus causing prices in the property market to rocket, and of course the prices in the shops also become fashionable and soar, the working class population are slowly moving into less trendy areas where they can almost afford rents and prices.

Wandsworth is one such place; and areas such as Battersea, Tooting and Balham are known nationwide.

SATURATION LEVEL

Having reached a certain saturation stage, the people become agitated in their ghetto and start to organise against local issues at first, and hopefully eventually national issues.

In the borough at present there is a group for every opinion — Communist Party, Maoists, etc., etc., including the National Front!

Alongside and sometimes intermingled are the action groups. The most well known locally is Battersea Redevelopment Action Group (BRAG), which campaigns against property redevelopers buying valuable sites in the area, especially the prized ones by the River Thames.

There is also Battersea Park Action Group (BPAG) who are currently engaged in fighting the strong challenge of Trust House Forte and EMI to turn the old Battersea Fun Fair into a million pound money-spinning enterprise — Disneyland Park — as in the USA.

Walt Disney (Europe) Ltd has demanded — and got — an apology from the Evening Standard for reproducing this cover to the Battersea Redevelopment Action Group's Battersea Park Report. They have contacted BRAG: first a quite pleasant phone call, and then a slightly more aggressive letter. The message behind both is that Walt Disney won't stand for their 'lovable, fun characters' being ridiculed. Mr Lewis apparently objected to Mickey Mouse and all his friends (copyright Walt Disney) gardening in Battersea Park and has now stated that he wants all remaining copies of the cover destroyed.

taken from Pavement, a Wandsworth community newspaper



It appears that there is an action group for every issue in the borough, including an old age pensioners group, TAP, who are campaigning to get a disused cinema in Tooting turned into a social centre and not, as proposed, into a Bingo Hall.

There are still plans afoot to create other groups to campaign against the constant smell of a glucose factory in the area and another against the noise and profits made by a heliport, but there is enough to gladden the heart of any revolutionary in Wandsworth, although it must be pointed out that

not all of the 'revolutionaries' are of the Left.

Some of the members of the various groups include liberals and even a couple of Tories! Most of these do not support the main reason of the campaign, but 'help' it because they realise that it would assist, for example, in the stopping of parking outside their houses!

One laughable incident occurred when a Tory member of a particular action group asked 'that it may not be a political issue' when it was pointed out to him that it was the politicians of the local borough council that were being fought, and asked whether he meant 'a political party issue', he went a lovely shade of that beautiful left colour — red.

Another amusing incident took place when another Tory, during a discussion about holding a demonstration outside the Town Hall, asked that it be called a 'rally', and not a 'demonstration', as it sounded 'so rabble rousing'!

Strange bedfellows are made when the will to change an issue is championed.

OTHER AREAS

It is known that other boroughs in London are similar to Wandsworth in having similar problems, eg Islington and Tower Hamlets, but it would be comforting to know that there are whole towns outside London which, as local issues are pushed harder and further, the country's campaigning peoples will interlock like a jigsaw puzzle being completed.

Anybody like to tell us about their town or area?

A Wandsworth campaigner

THE PITFALLS OF PICKETING PREBBLES

An AWA building worker writes about the experience of Islington Tenants Campaign, of which he is a member, in its battle against speculators and Prebbles estate agents. This campaign, which ended up in the High Court, has serious consequences for picketing elsewhere in the country.

In the Autumn of last year I became aware of the Islington Tenants Campaign. I'd be gazing out of the window of a 19 bus as it headed along Upper Street when I would see a couple of them picketing this estate agents' office and I'd think 'more power to their elbows'.

So when I heard that they were calling a mass picket of the estate agents, Prebbles, in order to defend the right to picket which



Prebbles had attacked through the legal system, it was time to put my thoughts into practice.

About 200 people turned up for that picket and over 100 police. The *Islington Gazette* was later to call it 'The Battle of Upper Street'. Not that we had come looking for trouble. There were quite a few undelicate working class militants amongst the demonstrators, but also old age pensioners, disabled people and mothers with young children.

But regardless of our intentions the police were determined to make a demonstration of their own. They wanted to demonstrate what happened to people who dared to attack the sacred rights of the property speculator.

If anybody on the picket, or anybody who saw what happened, had harboured illusions about the police as 'keepers of the peace', those illusions must have been rudely shattered. The real nature of the police as a force serving the capitalist class was made quite clear.

Shortly after that mass picket I joined the Islington Tenants Campaign. I was a tenant, I lived in Islington, my landlord had not so



long before asked me to leave so that my flat could be tarted up and sold, and I could envisage circumstances in which I might need the solidarity that the Campaign could provide.

BACKGROUND TO THE CAMPAIGN

Islington has a severe housing shortage, it has had a severe housing shortage for many years, and anybody who can see an end to the shortage this side of mass revolutionary action can probably also see pink elephants parading round Highbury Corner.

It is traditionally a working class district, and this is still true of most parts of the



borough; but in recent years the professional classes have become interested in some areas. For instance, Barnsbury has crumbling Georgian residences which can be renovated and is quite near to the City and the West End.

There is more than a hint of official endorsement about this process of 'gentrification'. Many people from the planning departments of the GLC and the borough have acquired homes in Barnsbury, as has Margaret Watson, chairperson of Islington Council's Housing Committee.

For the working class this rise in the 'value' of a district means there is pressure on tenants to get out so that buildings can be tarted up and sold at a whacking great profit. It also means that whereas some workers could afford to buy their own home at the cheaper prices of yesteryear, fewer and fewer can do so today.

Between 1961 and 1971 unfurnished tenancies declined from 54% of all housing in Islington to 34%, while actual population dropped by nearly 23%. This huge drop in population reflected the fact that many working class people, even those whose families had been in Islington for generations, could no longer afford to live in the area.

For property speculators 'gentrification' has meant a bonanza. They buy a house with sitting tenants for a low price, say £5,000. They then use either or both stick and carrot to get the tenants out. The 'carrot' may in some cases be far more than the tenant earns in a year — but it doesn't go as far as you expect when you're homeless.

The 'stick' can take many forms — 'repairs' which somehow make the place impossible to live in, your new neighbour being a large friend of the landlord who plays the trombone (very badly) and gives wild parties every night, and so on.

Once the tenants have been got out, the house may stay empty for a couple of years awaiting 'renovation'. Eventual profit for the speculator may be two or three hundred per cent.

Islington Council's policy of buying up properties to let to council tenants can actually make the situation worse. By buying from the speculators they are accessories after — if not before — the fact, to putting tenants on the street.

The council's valuation department say that they pay the market value for properties. But what is this 'market value'? It is something which the council itself helps to fix by the prices it pays. It is widely believed that certain speculators have friends on the council.

THE PEACEFUL PICKET

This then was the context in which a group of tenants got together to form the Campaign. It was not a tenants 'association' — it didn't claim to represent all the tenants in a particular street or of a particular landlord — but it was an action group concerned with the rights of tenants in general.

The Campaign organised a march around



Islington, stopping at the various estate agents and demanding that they discuss a charter of tenants' rights. Prebble & Co., the biggest outfit of speculators in the borough and part of a veritable empire of interlinked companies, refused to talk. From March 1974 the ITC began to picket Prebbles offices every Saturday morning.

The picket consisted of a handful of people with placards giving out leaflets to passers-by. Prebbles photographed the picketers, checked on their names and addresses, and in July started legal action against them.

On the 8th November Judge Forbes granted Prebbles an injunction restraining nine members of the campaign from picketing. The campaign decided to appeal, but in May this year the High Court upheld Forbes' ruling.

It should be understood that these injunctions are officially temporary things intended to preserve the status quo while a matter is still *sub judice*. Prebbles case against the picketers for conspiring to lose them business has yet to be heard. It may be a couple of years before it comes to court — if ever.

A couple of months ago the local police quoted the *Prebbles v ITC* ruling as proving that picketing 'other than in furtherance of an industrial dispute' was illegal, when they tried to stop myself and other parents from demonstrating on the road outside our

children's school for a safe crossing.

But the implications go far beyond Islington. For instance a friend in Derbyshire told me about a picket there which was called off by local Labour Party lefties who got the shits because of the Prebbles business.

And we should remember that it is not just picketing 'other than in furtherance of an industrial dispute' which is under attack. Two members of my union, Des Warren and Eric Tomlinson, are in prison for picketing in furtherance of an industrial dispute.

I happen to know some of the Campaign members who had injunctions slapped on them still have a few tricks up their sleeves — nothing illegal of course — but I can't say much about that at present because the information might be useful to any friend of Prebbles (such as members of Special Branch) who might read *Libertarian Struggle*.

However I don't think I'll be giving anything away if I say that the Tenants Campaign has been fighting a costly battle and is very short of money.



If any reader can get his or her union branch, tenants association, squatters group or whatever to send a message of solidarity and a small contribution to the funds, it will be really appreciated.

Also, members of the campaign (such as Margaret Ryan — 72 years old and fighting like mad) are keen to speak to union branches and so on about the ITC and the attack on picketing rights. If you can get your branch, association, or other body to show solidarity or invite a speaker, or both, the address to write to is:-

Islington Tenants Campaign,
c/o 196 Liverpool Road,
London, N1.

Dave Coull (Islington Tenants Campaign)

WE GO FROM HERE

In 1926, a group of exiled Russian anarchists published this historic pamphlet. It was born out of their tragic experiences during the Russian revolution — the spring of workers' and peasants' self-management and its bloody replacement by the winter of famine and bureaucratic Party dictatorship.

It was the determined hope of Makhno, Arshinov et al, that such a disaster should not recur. To this end they collectively wrote what has become known as 'The Platform'. It draws on the lessons of the Russian anarchist movement — its failure to build up a working class presence sizeable and effective enough to counteract the tendency of the Bolsheviks and other political groups to substitute themselves for the working class. It contains a rough programme of organisational tasks for anarchists — in short how we can be effective.

'ANARCHO-BOLSHEVISM'

Since shortly after its publication, however, the Platform has been buried under the more glamorous revolutionary textbooks. Its authors, for their pains, were labelled 'Anarcho-Bolsheviks' (so a new political term was invented!) by some of the more 'celebrated anarchist personalities', such as A. Berkman and E. Malatesta.

This was because the authors and sympathisers of the Platform pinpointed the failure of the Russian anarchist movement in its disorganisation, lack of national co-ordination, and thus theoretical and practical confusion. In other words — ineffectiveness.

To remedy this, the Platformists proposed a formal organisation, a 'General Union of Anarchists'. To be effective, yet still run in a non-authoritarian way, it would stick to several strict principles.

The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists

an AWA publication available at 20p plus postage from Black Flag Bookshop, 1 Wilne St, Leicester

THEORETICAL AND TACTICAL UNITY

There should be agreement among members on theory, which 'represents the force which directs the activity of persons and organisations along a determined path towards a determined goal' (p15). In the same way, tactics used by separate members and groups within the organisation should be uniform — a common tactical line.

The Platformists rightly recognised that absence of this leads to lots of diverse people saying different things, yet using the same label to describe themselves. This leads to a lot of argument, no agreement, no united or continuous activity.

This has been the sad history of the post-war British anarchist movement. It was to put an end to this mess that AWA (then ORA) was formed though we obviously still recognise the need for healthy internal debate about theory and tactics.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Moreover, the principle of collective responsibility was demanded by the need to be effective. Each individual was to be responsible to everyone else, thus guarding against the possibility of someone doing something irresponsible (eg endangering other comrades, or giving the wrong impression of the organisation to workers) without being answerable for such an action.

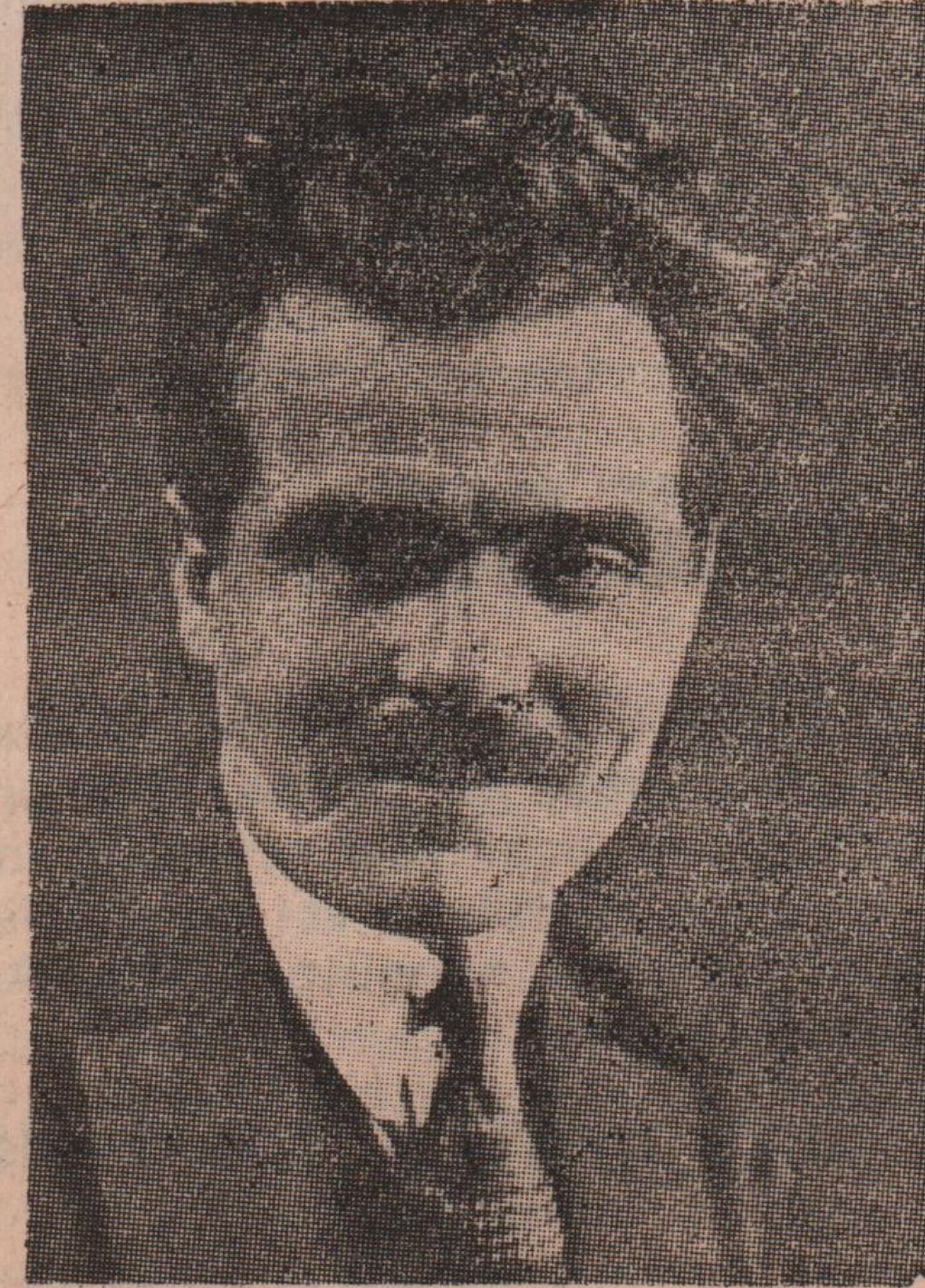
FEDERALIST EQUALITY

Berkman, Goldman and others found this

foreign to their over-individualistic taste. It meant everyone being as far as possible equal inside the organisation, the absence of political 'stars'.

They said that having an 'executive committee' (proposed by the Platform) would be using authoritarian methods, which would ultimately result in an exploitative state capitalist society like Stalinist Russia.

They ignored the inclusion of another



MAKHNO

fundamental organisational principle accepted in the pamphlet — federalism: 'Anarchism has always denied centralised organisation... (which) relies on the diminution of the critical spirit, initiative and independence of each individual and on the blind submission of the masses to the 'centre'' (p15).

It does not so much matter what an elected body is called, as what its powers are, and whether the membership of an organisation, factory or neighbourhood council has direct control over it. This the Platform's critics did not understand.

It is noteworthy that the pamphlet's writers were workers; Arshinov, for instance, was a metal worker. Only the reactions of 'celebrated' anarchists are recorded in most history books, not those of rank and file libertarians who knew what it was really like to struggle daily against capitalism at the workplace and at home.

The Platform itself was neglected for years after the deaths of Makhno and the other authors, until our French comrades reprinted it in 1972.

THE IGNORED PARTS

During the arguments about it in 1926, most of the pamphlet was in fact ignored. The first two sections of it, as well as that on organisation, are useful reading for people generally unfamiliar with anarchism.

They deal with the nature of capitalism, the state and class struggle. What sort of general action is needed to smash capitalism is outlined, as are the problems of the actual creation of libertarian communism — the realisation of the principle, 'from each according to his/her ability, to each according to her/his needs.'

None of this can be divorced from the methods we use now to achieve that goal — a society based on need, not profit, or the maintenance of a ruling bureaucracy as in Russia and China.

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

We do not treat the Platform as 'gospel truth'. Its language often bears the dated mark of the 1920's; and it needs to be developed, expanded and tested in action. AWA is now striving to do exactly that. But this pamphlet is well worth reading for those who want to grasp the main principles of organisational revolutionary anarchism.

The full names of some of its authors may now be forgotten, but the struggle to which they dedicated their lives continues, and what they had to say still has relevance for us all.

R. Williams

REVIEWS

HOUSING BULLETIN

The second *Bulletin* of the *Oxford Housing Action Group* is concerned primarily with 'Town & Gown'. It shows in several well-researched articles how the colleges of the University own not only most of the town but a great deal of the surrounding area.

Although difficult to read in places, it should be read by those students who want to see an example of how to research your college as well as by those interested in housing generally.

Oxford University are renowned for their almost feudal system of housing tied to the job — even here the class system shows through as the manual workers are 'given' tumbledown terraced houses whilst the dons have houses in the surrounding villages.

'Housing Action Group Bulletin No2' 5p+5½p post from Duncan Bowie, St Catz, Oxford.

FOOD CO-OP

Much emphasis has formerly been placed by those of the 'Libertarian Network' on community organising, an area which the traditional Leninist Left tended to ignore. Some of the women of *East London Big Flame* have produced a pamphlet about their experience in helping to organise a food co-op on a working class estate in Bow.

As the initial wave of enthusiasm in the late '60's for food co-ops waned, this pamphlet presents a timely re-appraisal of this form of activity and its relevance for revolutionaries. That the 'point of consumption' tended to concern women more than men, who put more emphasis on the 'point of production' shows one way that the male dominance of the left was reinforced.

Sometimes, however, the pamphlet does seem to talk down to the reader, almost to the extent of insulting one's intelligence. But give it a read.

'Peoples Food Co-op, Lincoln Estate Bow', 16pp 10 pence from: 186 Campbell Rd, London E3.

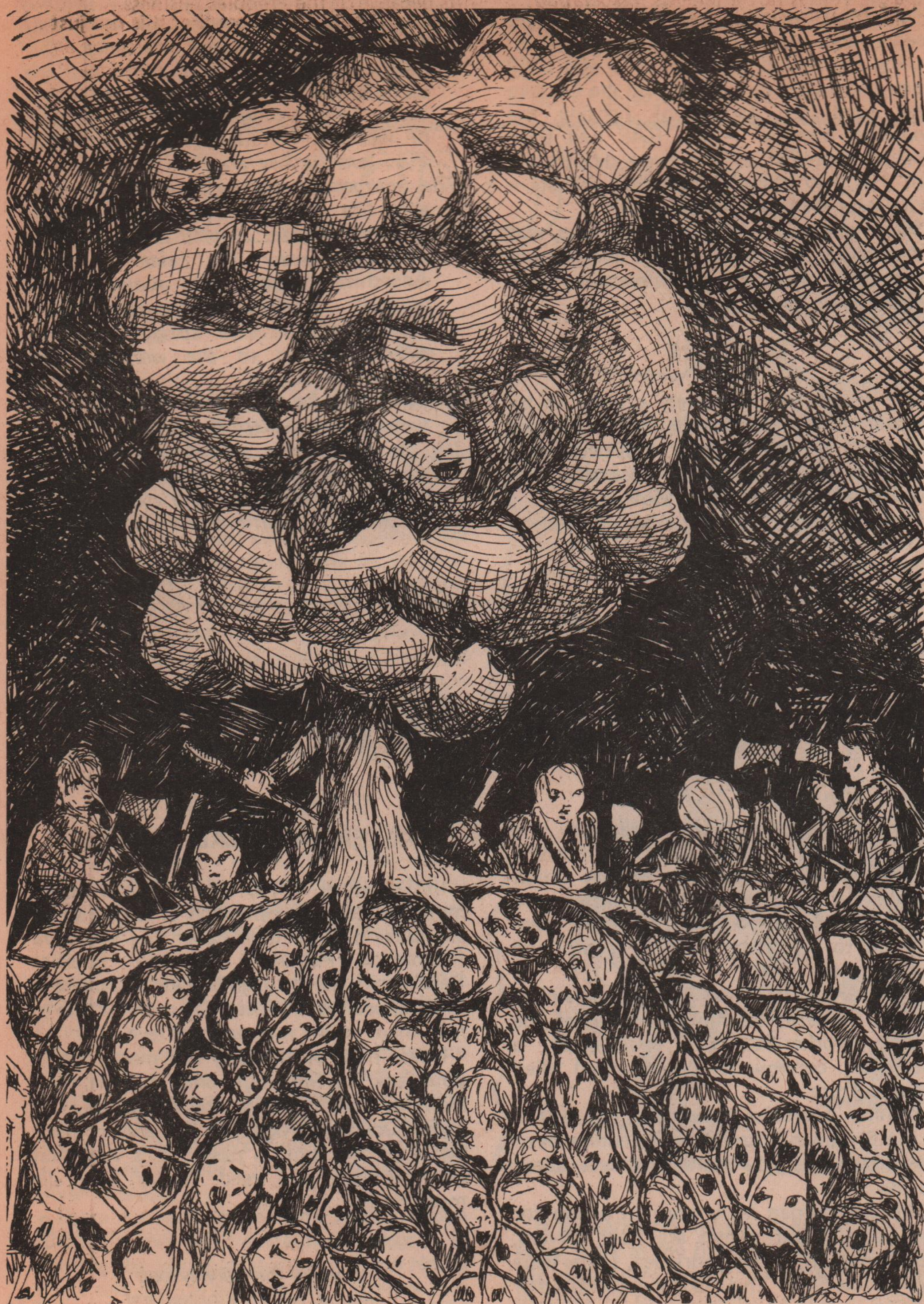
KIDS' STORIES

Partisan Books (34 Dallow Road, Luton, Beds.) are producing a series of non-sexist, and feminist, children's stories, five of which have appeared so far. Being duplicated, all on white paper, it is more likely that children would enjoy these more being read to them, and would find it difficult, needing much patience and determination, to read the stories themselves.

Project Baby and *Doughnuts* are the best, although they suffer from having too much reported speech and paragraphs too long. I have found that kids prefer lots of action and direct speech so they can imagine themselves in the situations the stories portray.

Linda and the Food Co-op has a good story line, but like the others suffers from the way it is printed and stodgy writing. Nevertheless, at only 5p each, they are a great deal better than some of what kids get fed at playgroups and primary school.

Project Baby; Doughnuts; Linda and the Food Co-op; Princess Elivira Jones and the Magical Multi-storey Car Park; Katie and the Troll & The Silver Bell. All at 5p each.



IT'S TIME THE BOSSES GOT THE AXE

REPRESSION IN GERMANY

The 'Baader Meinhof' Affair

The present crisis in capitalist society affects not only countries like Britain and Italy, but also the so-called affluent ones like West Germany. At the moment, about 1,300,000 workers are unemployed. This does not include the hundreds and thousands of immigrant workers whom the State forced to return home, school leavers (100,000 to 200,000 young workers out of work) who do not receive unemployment benefit, and casual workers, many of them dockers.

Inflation is running at 6-7%. Exports are declining, especially in the car and steel industries. Most carworkers are on short time. Nearly all private builders are in considerable financial trouble, and recently one of the largest collapsed.

Unemployment benefit is about 65% of recent wages. However, this full rate only goes to those in continuous work, and after a period of six weeks. State charges, like

fares and regressive taxation, are becoming more and more expensive, while programmes for better schools and bus services are scrapped.

RESISTANCE

Workers are fighting back, however. In February a demonstration of 2,000 young metal workers and unemployed youth took place in Ludwigsburg against capitalism and unemployment.

More recently, thousands of peasant farmers and workers occupied a site near Wyhl, in Southern Germany near the French border, where the government intends to erect an atomic energy plant. One farmer stated on TV *'One doesn't become an anarchist by accident, but because of the conditions in this society. In the future, we will use illegal methods to fight for our rights'*.

With this upheaval goes a campaign against all socialists and anarchists. The union bureaucrats are expelling left-wing members, even Moscow-line Communists, after past expulsions of Maoists and Trotskyists. Progressive teachers and even liberal Secretaries of State are being dismissed.

hunger strike in November 1974, a hunger strike in protest against solitary confinement and sensory deprivation. Sensory deprivation entails the soundproofing of a cell, a bright light on continuously, the walls painted a blinding white.

This terrible treatment is to induce mental derangement in prisoners.



The courthouse at Stammheim jail, Stuttgart

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

Iran rarely makes news in the British capitalist media, except for the occasional arms deal. Hidden from the eyes of workers here is the brutal rule of the Iranian Shah's regime.

In fact, the Labour Government has recently proved beyond all doubt where its sympathies lie. For April 29th saw the arrest of 21 Iranian students in London on the charges of 'conspiracy to trespass at the Iranian Embassy'.

They were peacefully protesting, by a sit-in against the Iranian regime's increasing repression, including the recent torture and subsequent death of nine prominent political prisoners.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Their demand was simply that the Shah's government must allow an international medical and legal commission to examine the bodies of the nine to determine the cause of death and to investigate the prison conditions.

Birds of a feather flock together, and the British State stepped in to 'protect the property' of the Iranian Embassy, ie to prevent publicity and embarrassment concerning just one example of the terroristic repression of Iranian workers.

The 21 students were detained for more than forty hours without being charged. Now the British police, in collusion with the Embassy, are planning to mete out severe punishment to these militants.

WILSON AIDS 'SAVAK'

This 'co-operation' is nothing new. A short while ago, Iranian students at Bradford University protested against the activities of SAVAK (the infamous Iran Secret Police) on the campus, which had led to the disappearance of one student on his return to Iran.

Harold Wilson, who is also Chancellor of Bradford University, has refused to intervene on behalf of this person, and to make sure that the Labour government would stop SAVAK activities in this country.

As long ago as May 12, 1974, a Sunday paper reported that the Iranian Embassy was engaging in undercover activities, and that the first secretary at the Iranian Consulate was the organiser of SAVAK activities in London.

BRITAIN'S 'DEBT' TO THE SHAH

There is, however, one new and even more powerful reason why the British government cannot afford to 'offend' the Shah. Only recently H. Wilson announced that he had arranged a multi-million pound loan from the Iran government.

Where there's a loan there are conditions — clear or secret. The cost to the British social-democratic government attempting to tide over one more capitalist crisis has been this — to make it essential for Wilson and his cronies to co-operate with, and above all, not to 'offend' one of the most vicious and right-wing regimes in the world.

CONSPIRACY LAWS... AGAIN

Now the 21 Iranians face the British version of capitalist 'justice', in the form of conspiracy laws. We only need remember how they have been used in recent years to deal out large sentences to workers here to realise their nature.

First, they were tried on the Stoke Newington 8 (in the 'Angry Brigade' trial) to see how they fitted. Since then the Shrewsbury 2, Irish workers and others have felt how comfortably they fitted on the back of the working class.

The Wilson Government and its police must be forced to drop all charges against the 21, as a first step towards smashing the conspiracy laws out of the statute book.

The trial of the 21 is now unlikely to come up before the autumn. This time must be used to build up a trade union campaign to get the charges dropped.

All persons wanting to help defend the 21 should contact:

The Iranian Students Society,
c/o 101-103 Gower Street,
London, WC1.

R. Williams

ANARCHISTS OR MARXIST-LENINISTS?

Germany also sees the trial over the next few months of members of the *Red Army Fraction* (RAF), or 'Baader-Meinhof Gang' as they are called by the German bosses' papers.

This group, who regard themselves as Marxist-Leninists, formed in 1970 with the intention of starting urban guerilla warfare in West Germany and hopefully sparking off a revolution. They took part in bank raids attacks on US bases (which killed four American soldiers, two of them colonels) and newspapers.

Prominent among them were Andreas Baader and ex-journalist Ulrike Meinhof. During the period between 1970 and 1972 many shoot-outs took place, and the German state used the excuse of fighting the 'anarchist menace' — the RAF had been labelled anarchist by the press despite the fact that they called themselves Leninists — to increase the level of repression.

Mass raids took place on left-wingers, and 2 Anarchists, Georg von Rauch and Tommy Weisbecker, unarmed and defenceless, were gunned down by the police.

TORTURE

The group was effectively broken up by summer 1972, and rotted in prison from then on. It was obvious that the state intended to break them mentally and physically before their trial took place.

One RAF member, Holger Meins, died on

NO ELITE NEEDED

Meinhof and the other prisoners need the solidarity of all revolutionaries in the face of this vicious state repression. We must state, however, that we regard the tactics and the ideology of the Red Army Fraction as misguided and wrong.

A small elite, regarding itself as a vanguard and engaging in urban guerilla warfare in the climate of Western European capitalism, cannot make a social revolution.

As the revolutionary anarchist groups around the paper *Befreiung* state:-

'We are not the Red Army Fraction. We think it is impossible to make guerilla warfare in West Germany. We think that the RAF conceptions are false. Our politics are the emancipation and the mobilisation of the masses. We must support and propagate the mass struggles of workers. We have possibilities other than guerilla warfare.'

The bourgeoisie seek to liquidate our rank and file work in the factories, the neighbourhoods, the unions. This offensive, under the cover of 'anti-Anarchist struggle' hits above all the militant workers propagating self-management of their struggles and the self-organisation of the working class against the bosses.

We will not be treated as criminals by a furious and hysterical bourgeoisie.

We, as libertarians, continue the struggle among workers and peasants, for their self-emancipation, for the class struggle, for generalised self-management'.

N. H.

URUGUAY

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

In December 1974, the ROE and other militants started a campaign to release those comrades through their paper, *'La Voz de la Resistencia Popular'* (Voice of Popular Resistance) and through leaflets and posters. They appeal to all libertarian communists to help them on the international level.

Please help by bringing this matter up in your rank and file group, union branch, shop stewards committee, or trades council, and make sure the Uruguayan Embassy is made aware of any motion passed. It's vital that our brothers are freed before they die mysteriously in jail.

R. B.

*Release the railwaymen
and all political prisoners!*

During a general strike against the dictatorship in Uruguay (July 1973), several railwaymen militants of the Railway Union and the Railway Resistance Committee were arrested during a union meeting. They were sent out to the prison camp at Penarol and tortured there.

In December 1973 the Anarchist chemical worker, Gilberto Coghlan, member of the ROE (Worker-Student Resistance, a libertarian communist organisation) died under torture.

Another Anarchist, Luis Vega, was sent to to the Britanico hospital where comrades of the Federation of Health Workers saved his life.

The railwaymen have been in prison for two years. Their names are Raul Olivera, Luis Ramundo, Oscar Rodriguez, Lucas Pena and Nayda Sosa. They like the 6,000 other political prisoners in Uruguay have been arrested without charges brought against them.



pickets of Iranian students outside Bow Street Court photo Angela Philips (IFL)

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

THE ROLE OF THE AWA

- 1 Capitalism is a class society.
- 2 The basic irreconcilable contradiction within it is between the class which owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, the bourgeoisie, and the class who produce the agricultural and industrial wealth, the working class.
- 3 The social enslavement and exploitation of the working class forms the basis on which modern capitalism stands without which capitalism could not exist.
- 4 The state is the instrument of the ruling class. To destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, we must destroy the power of the state.
- 5 Russia and China are class societies in each of which a ruling class of administrators collectively owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and in which a working class, the sole producer of all wealth, is exploited by that class. These states we define as corporate state capitalist in that the ruling class is totally integrated with the state, as is the trade union structure.
- 6 The class nature of society is reflected in all the dominant philosophies: class, race, sexual, social and personal relationships. The class relationships are expressed through all social relationships and generate attitudes such as sexism and racism.
- 7 The conflict of interest between the two classes generates the class struggle. In the history of society, the class struggle has been the primary factor in the determination of the form and structure of society.
- 8 The day to day struggles of the working class reflect the class struggle. The position of the working class as the collective producer of society's wealth makes it the only force capable of replacing capitalism by a classless society. The existing defensive organisations thrown up by the working class, such as trade unions, whose bureaucracy is increasingly incorporated into capitalism, are not adequate for the smashing of the capitalist system, and the building of a free, classless society. However, the working class rank and file organisations such as democratically controlled shop steward committees, factory committees, strike committees, are developing through the place of work. These organisations are the forerunners of workers councils which are the expression of working class power. Outside of work, the working class has developed other forms of organisation that are potentially revolutionary, such as tenants action committees, rent strike committees, and tenant-worker joint action committees.
- 9 Dual power exists before the power of the bourgeoisie is smashed. If the working class are successful, then the organisation of the needs of society will be firmly based in working class hands. This is the collective working class in power, in which the working class destroys all remnants of bourgeois society, such as racial hatred, the family and hierarchies. This is the period of transition between capitalism and libertarian communism.
- 10 From our analysis we reach the inevitable conclusion that capitalism cannot be reformed in any fundamental way and that the only meaningful transformation of society is through the development of working class organisations and by means of a violent social revolution. Violence becomes inevitable for the working class to defend themselves against the onslaughts of the dispossessed ruling class.

- 1 The task of the AWA is to aid the preparation of the working class for their seizure of power. The establishment of an anarchist society is something that has to be consciously fought for by the working class. The AWA is a conscious organised expression of libertarian communist ideas. Through the shared experience, information and knowledge of the class struggle, AWA must be able to analyse and disseminate the nature of the problems facing the working class, and apply these lessons in the class struggle.
- 2 The AWA aims to offer a lead within the working class movement by example and explanation; and to build into the movement a high level of political consciousness so that it is capable of defeating capitalism and fighting the creation of a new ruling class. Fundamental to this is the contradiction between the organisation as a tendency within the class and its being in ideological advance of it. This contradiction can only be resolved with the establishment of a libertarian communist society. During the period of transition, the potential basis for the emergence of a new ruling class is progressively removed so that the need for a separately organised libertarianism will decrease.
- 3 The AWA seeks to develop and support working class organisations which are the forerunners of workers councils and to develop in them revolutionary consciousness. The AWA does not seek independent power for itself but seeks to work through the working class organisations.
- 4 The AWA seeks to establish international links with libertarian revolutionary organisations and groups with an aim of establishing an international libertarian communist movement.
- 5 The AWA seeks to combat attitudes of sexism, racism and national chauvinism as attitudes that help maintain class society.

The form our organisation takes is a realisation of libertarian perspectives in the current situation. We recognise that it is not a social model of a free society and must itself develop in interaction with the developing liberation of society.

[1] We are a membership organisation.

[2] Membership is open to those who agree with our analysis of society and its transformation, and who work towards this end.

[3] The main policy making body will be the National Conference. Between National Conferences there will be held bi-monthly Delegate Conferences to co-ordinate and carry out National Conference decisions, to decide interim policy and to initiate activity. Delegates are mandatable and rotated. Delegate Conference decisions can be revoked by National Conference.

[4] We seek to establish AWA groups in all areas, not only geographical but also industrial, educational, etc. Groups interpret National and Delegate Conference decisions to relate tactics to their local experience.

As agreed at the National Conference in London, 31st August — 1st September 1974.

these countries, as well as information on disputes and wages in the British factories. Any trade unionist working for GEC can obtain copies from:-

**The Secretary, GEC Action Committee,
140, Clarence Road,
PETERBOROUGH, PE1, 2LE.**

Please send a stamped addressed envelope.

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE

welcomes letters and articles from militants everywhere. One of its main aims is to fulfill a function of helping working class people share experiences in the class struggle. So write to:-

*Libertarian Struggle,
13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside*

Dear Libertarian Struggle,

Thanks for the June issue. Your piece about Wedgwood-Benn & Co not presenting a real socialist alternative to the 'Yes' people in the recent EEC referendum campaign is certainly true.

Some of the literature that came through my door from the Labour Party smacked more of the fascist National Front than socialism. Reduced to its bare essentials, it was just an appeal to crude patriotism!

It's a real shame that so many working class militants are being taken in by Benn's pseudo-left demagoguery — for that's what it is. Only the other day he was saying that he was proud to have been a member of a cabinet which had made 'legislative provision' for 195 companies (including 'subsidiaries') to be brought under public ownership. Yet during that time unemployment and inflation had still risen drastically — but he didn't mention that.

Nor, of course, did he mention that nationalisation still means taking orders from bosses, sometimes the same ones as in private enterprise days. Only Libertarian Struggle and a few other revolutionary papers have pointed this out. So keep on plugging — the myths about Benn and his ideas have got to be got rid of if we're really going to get a socialist society.

Fraternally,
B. Peters

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE
will be taking
a holiday for a month.
Back again in
September as a regular
newspaper
putting the anarchist view
in
the class struggle.

Ruling Class Notes

Interesting to hear Mr. Wedgwood Benn attacking the social origins of students at Bristol University — after learning that a majority of them proposed to vote 'Yes' in the referendum.

It's true of course that middle and upper class students form a big majority at British Universities, and quite wrong. But perhaps the former Viscount Stansgate, husband of an American heiress, wasn't quite the person to complain about this — unless of course he thinks that the social origin of undergraduates are deplorable because not sufficiently exalted....

NO CONSPIRACY — ?

The Sunday Times (8.6.75) has published a revealing piece about British Army files on the Provos getting into the hands of protestant para-military men. Readers with long memories will recall that in 1914 the British Army actually mutinied — at the Curragh — rather than take action to interfere with protestant domination in the North.

But such insubordination would be unthinkable in the Army of today.

We can therefore dismiss as idle rumours reports of an unpublicised meeting on 23.7.74 in London between 8 senior officers of the British Army and representatives of the Orange Lodges of N. Ireland.

Also without foundation is the claim that at this meeting were discussed joint military operations against the Provos — including an invasion of the 26 Counties — in the event of a decision by the British Government to quit N. Ireland.

For any elements in the British Army to take part in such operations would of course be mutiny — impossible in the Army of today. Much has changed since 1914....

KEEPING SQUADDIES HAPPY

Merely a coincidence that, at this time of right-wing hysteria over the capitalist reforms of Wedgwood Benn, Wilson and his Government should give the Army a 30% pay rise....

THE OLD BILL'S BLUES

The British police force too is plainly in no need of inducement to keep its hearts and minds loyal to the British Government.

One of the most remarkable things to escape BBC censorship in recent years was an attack at this summer's police conference on Wilson and R. Jenkins. The BBC's audience of millions heard (on *The World at One*) a hall-full of policemen laughing at an ironical reference to 'dear Harold'.

A big pay rise in the near future for the police force too?...

THERE'S NO NEWS LIKE OLD NEWS

Sympathy for our IMG 'comrades' who were recently approached — unwittingly — by the Special Branch and asked to give permission for their warehouse in North London' Caledonian Road to be used by were recently approached — unwittingly — by the Special Branch and asked to give permission for their warehouse in North London's Caledonian Road to be used by the Branch, for the surveillance of the *General Picton* pub opposite.

The IMG itself at the time was holding meetings at the 'Picton'. The police officer on this occasion was curtly invited to leave by the IMG's representative. A better idea might have been to invite the Branch in, and let them set up their electronic equipment — which could then have been the subject of some very pretty photos....

DISCOVERING SUBVERSIVES

Participants in the referendum will have noticed that every ballot slip is numbered, and that opposite every voter's name the number of his or her ballot slip is recorded.

The same happens at a general election. Anyone thinking of voting for, say, a leninist candidate at a general election please note. The State could receive some very useful information afterwards. (A friend of the present writer's was recently informed, by two plain clothes fuzz investigating Irish matters, that his name was not on the Census!)

And remember the claim of *Private Eye* (30.5.75) that the Government's secret security service has 'tens of thousands' of employees. Where persecution rules, paranoia is sanity.

letters

The strengthening of the Common Market runs directly counter to the interests of the entire trade union membership employed by the General Electric Company. This is the agreed view of the **GEC Action Committee**, which receives active support from shop stewards' committees and office committees on the best organised GEC sites in Stafford, London, Rugby, Wigan, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Treforest, Leicester, etc..

The growing trend for mergers on a European scale represents a real threat to trades unionists in the electrical industry throughout the world.

The importance of developing links with trade unionists working for GEC in other countries was stressed at the Action Committee's meeting last weekend. Links have been established with GEC workers in Dundalk and Dun Laoghaire with the help of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and letters have been sent to the CGT and the CFDT in France, enquiring about union organisation in the 'Lincoln' washing machine factories which are now part of the GEC group. Similar efforts are being made to get in touch with GEC employees in Germany and Portugal.

Future copies of the *GEC Newsletter* should contain reports from factories in

FACTORY OCCUPATION

Italy 1920

In September, 1920, the metalworkers of Italy occupied almost every metalworks, factory and shipyard in the country. They held them for almost four weeks. This is the story of the origins of the occupations, the occupations, the outcome and the attitudes and the actions of the trade unions and the employers' organisations as well as those of the political parties and factions. It is a story of both victories and failures.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1920, the cost-of-living continued to rise. The workers' standard of living worsened considerably. In April, the metalworkers and many other workers in Turin went on strike over the principle of recognition of factory councils. They were defeated.

From May until the end of August, the metalworkers' union, the *Federazione Italiana Operai Metallurgici (FIOM)*, were in continual negotiations with the employers' organisation, the *Confederazione Generale dell' Industria (Confindustria)*.

There was complete deadlock between them, the union arguing that the workers could not stand the continuous increases in the cost-of-living, and the employers maintaining that they could not afford to pay the workers any more. Finally, the 'negotiations' broke down.

The employers had become increasingly intransigent; and, in the middle of August, the various metalworkers' organisations, after much debate, disagreement and hesitation, decided on a policy of 'obstructionism'. FIOM ordered a go-slow. In some plants, there were sit-down strikes, and in many others the employers claimed that the workers were not really working at all.

The conflict became increasingly bitter. On Monday, August 30, the 2,000 workers of the Romeo factory in Milan found the plant closed, and guarded by troops. They were locked out. The Milan section of the FIOM then instructed its members in and around the city to take possession of about 300 metallurgical factories and plants.

OCCUPATIONS

During the night of August 31, the employers decided on a lock-out in Turin; and within a few days, lock-outs were proclaimed in Genoa, La Spezia and elsewhere, only to be followed by occupations of the factories by the metalworkers.

Between Wednesday, September 1, and Saturday, September 4, the metalworkers of Italy occupied their factories throughout the Peninsula. The occupation was almost total. It reached over 500,000 when workers in other industries also occupied their plants and places of employment.

In many areas, there were reports of festive scenes. In Turin, Milan and Genoa particularly, the occupation grew into a popular mass movement of the whole working class. Indeed, in Turin the occupation embraced 100,000 people.

Moreover, in Turin there were efforts to organise a system of workers' self-management in order to co-ordinate production and distribution. In many factories, workers armed themselves, and set up groups of Red Guards.

Red and, in some areas, red-and-black flags flew over the factories and shipyards. Alcohol was often forbidden in the occupied plants. The state police generally stayed well away from the factories, limiting their actions to guarding the banks.

The government refused to intervene either on behalf of the employers or the workers. The aim of the unions was to negotiate with the employers, and, at the same time, continue the occupations of the factories.

There were, of course, divisions among the workers. Some of the left-socialists,

communists, 'maximalists' and almost all the anarchists wanted to develop the struggle into a full-scale insurrection against capitalism and the state. The reformists were concerned only with wage-rates and working conditions.

Nevertheless, the government was able to get the union leaders and employers' representatives together by September 15. Negotiations were resumed. And by September 19, agreement was reached.

It represented something of a success in

In his view, the 'essential core' of the Italian working-class were to the left of their leaders. But, he stresses, there was not a single day on which the government felt that it had lost control of the situation. Spriano sums up the situation thus:

'At the critical moment, the crucial days of 10-11 September, when the struggle moved towards compromise, it became obvious that the masses, in the nation as a whole, lacked the power to resist... Those working-class groups which still wanted to



Italy 1975

trade union terms. There was to be an increase of four lire a day for all metalworkers, substantial improvements in minimum pay, cost-of-living bonuses, and compensation for lay-offs. Wages were to be paid for the period of the go-slow and occupations. FIOM was to submit the agreement to a referendum of its members.

Many of the workers had had enough anyway. There was disillusionment, uncertainty and worry. The workers voted by a large majority to accept the agreement. The anarchist militant, Errico Malatesta, wrote:

'Every factory was afraid of being left isolated in the struggle. Because of this fear, and the difficulty of feeding the different garrisons, everyone surrendered, despite the opposition of a handful of individual anarchists. The movement simply could not last unless it were broadened and generalised.'

The occupations ended without a struggle.

CONCLUSIONS

Such, in brief outline, is the story of the occupation of the factories in Italy in 1920. Paolo Spriano chronicles the events in greater detail, as well as analyzing the attitudes of the government, the various trade union centres, the employers' organisations and, above all, the different tendencies within the Italian 'Socialist' Party. More importantly, he asks: 'Was it really a revolutionary movement?'

extend the struggle, to carry it into insurrection, had no contact with each other. Reformist groups in the factories at once assumed much greater weight. So, one of the classic conditions for revolution, the decision of the masses to make it, was critically subject to dislocations, to uneven development in organisation, maturity, homogeneity and ideology...

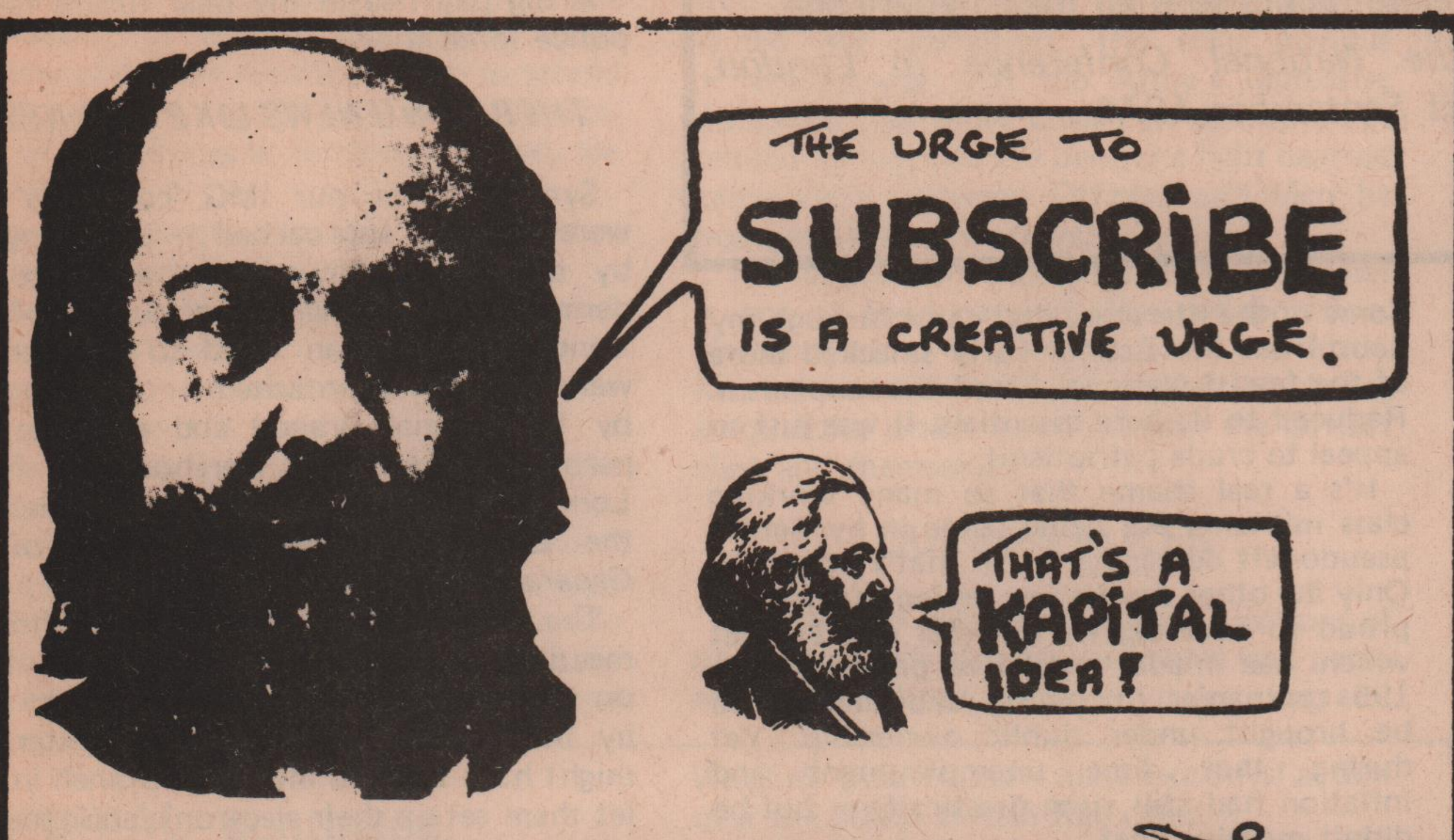
This, indeed, was the crux of the matter: the masses lacked the theoretical and organisational weapons for a successful revolution. Spriano is particularly critical of the reformist 'socialists'; he also quotes Lenin, Radek and other Bolsheviks in Moscow to demonstrate that they were just as ill-informed as to what was going on, and what was possible, in Italy at the time.

The anarchists and anarcho-sindicalists probably come out of the struggle better than the other political factions of the left, though Malatesta admitted in 1924:

'We did not succeed, and the movement collapsed because there were too few of us, and the masses were insufficiently prepared.' (see Vernon Richards (ed), *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, 1965, p136)

Useful lessons can be learnt from 'The Occupation of the Factories'.

P.E.N.



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UP AGAINST THE LAW

—issue 9 out soon—

—UPAL exposes the methods the police have used for years against working class people and the class-biased system of lawyers and judges we have to face in the courts.

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LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE at last has the new Composer that has been so desperately needed since the paper was started. But for libertarian ideas to become more widespread in the heightening class struggle, we still need your donations to help make possible a widely-circulated revolutionary anarchist 12-page monthly journal.

send donations to: AWA, 13 Coltman St, HULL.