

PATRIARCHY

A BIG WORD, used by many to describe societies that are ruled by men. Originally it was used to refer to more 'primitive', older cultures, comparing them with the matriarchal (ruled by women) societies that had apparently come before.

The term became popular in the late '60s and '70s with the growth of the women's movement. Instead of talking about capitalist society, which was a sex-neutral term implying the rule of capital, feminists were keen to use a word highlighting the dominant role men played in society. Bosses, military leaders, politicians, rapists, wife beaters, etc, are, for the most part men. Even working class men rule in their own home and upper class women are dependent and subservient to their dominant husbands and fathers. By using the term patriarchy, feminists hoped to challenge the assumption made by revolutionaries of various tendencies: that ending capitalism would automatically end women's oppression. Patriarchy could be used to describe a whole social system. In the '70s and '80s, debates raged as to whether such a social system existed. Traditional leftists in the Marxist organisations denounced the use of the term because it implied that men's oppression of women was more fundamental than the bosses' exploitation of the working class. Women activists accused the political organisations of putting all oppression down to class exploitation, so ignoring the existence of men's role in society as oppressors. Others tried to bridge the gap by using the term patriarchal capitalism, arguing that both sexual op-

pression and class exploitation were important: "By patriarchy we mean a system in which all women are oppressed, an oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression preceded capitalism, so does our oppression. We do not acknowledge that men are oppressed as a sex although working class men, gay men and black men are oppressed as workers, gays and blacks, an oppression shared by gay, black and working class women." (Editorial statement: *Scarlet Women* 8, Newsletter of the Socialist Feminist Current.

Side Issue

In the end nothing was resolved. In the Leninist organisations, the 'class side' won and women's oppression was once again relegated to a side issue. Many women retreated angrily into separatism, reinforcing the view that men are the key enemy. So where do anarchist communists stand in all this?

Anarchist communists reject the view that women's oppression will end with the overthrow of the bosses and recognise it cannot be explained simply in terms of an economic system. A more complex framework of analysis is needed, recognising the role of ideology and the role of men in keeping women down. For this the concept of patriarchy is useful, though a rather abstract term. This does not mean that male domination is natural or unchangeable. It is not men as such who are the enemy,

but the roles of masculinity that they are playing and the power they have. At the same time women's oppression cannot be understood solely in terms of patriarchy, as this fails to address the way capitalism has influenced women's oppression, creating different circumstances for women in different classes as well as giving them differing amounts of power. In the same way that we cannot gloss over differences between men and women within the working class, we cannot gloss over differences between women.

Nevertheless, the concept of patriarchy highlights the fact that women are oppressed and that they are not just oppressed by capital but by men, who have an interest in maintaining this situation.

In some cases it is obvious to see how men benefit from sexism: Men's superior place in the labour market, and the emotional and material benefits they gain from the family. However, men benefit in less obvious ways, as in sexuality, with women bearing the burden of contraception. Anarchist communism is about transforming all areas of life — not just material circumstances. It follows that we need to challenge the whole culture which will involve revolutionising the relations between men and women, liberating both sexes from the traditional roles that we have been brainwashed to play.

This struggle must be part of the general revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism. Capitalism uses the gender differences to its own advantage — the 'macho man' for war and business and the 'feminine woman' for caring, supporting and picking up the pieces. The revolution must be one that ends all power, whether it is that of capital, the State or male. On its own, the concept of patriarchy is inadequate for understanding women's oppression. However, used in conjunction with a general class analysis it plays an essential part in our understanding of society.



882 AF/ACF

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

50p

Oct-Dec

1993

Issue 32

Women Work — Who Gains?



INSIDE:

The Family, Patriarchy, Riot Grrrls!, Fascism, Women and Revolution, Fraud Squad

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

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 to 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.)

Deadlines for next issue are 4 December for features and reviews, and 11 December for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Women's issues

ORGANISE! HAS developed an anarchist communist analysis of ecology and the green movement in its pages. This is because we think it important to relate ecological issues to a general critique of capitalism, and that the ecological crisis is a direct result of the development of capitalism. We also feel that women's liberation is an integral part of the social revolution. Sadly, we have failed to develop this in the pages of *Organise!* (with the exception of articles like 'Women and Revolution' in No. 26) We hope to rectify this in this issue, and will continue to develop our analysis of women's oppression under capitalism and the important role women have played in revolutionary movements in future issues. Upcoming will be articles on abortion, pornography, the family, housework and a series of portraits of revolutionary women.

We take the opportunity to dedicate this issue of *Organise!* to the unsung anarchist militants Marusya Nikiforova and Lina del Papa. Marusya, was born in Alexandrovsk in Russia. Condemned to death in 1905 for anarchist activity, she escaped to America.

She returned in 1917 to create a black guard, an anarchist militia group, in the Ukraine, which led actions against the factory owners and landowners. Linking up with the insurrectionary movement of Makhno, she carried on the fight for anarchism, before, according to some, being hung by the Whites. Lina, daughter of an active anarchist in Carrara, Italy, fought with the anarchists in

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Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle if readers communicate with us. Send feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

BACK ISSUES

BACK issues (14-28) of *Organise!* are available at 20p & sae, from the London address, also copies of its forerunner *Virus*. Included are:

- *Organise!* 24: New World Order; Children; BCCI; Clause 25.
- *Organise!* 25: SOLD OUT
- *Organise!* 26: Women & Revolution; Direct action; US Greens.
- *Organise!* 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X.
- *Organise!* 28: ERM; Recession; Detective Fiction
- *Organise!* 29: Debate on the Unions; Italian Workers Fight
- *Organise!* 30: SOLD OUT
- *Organise!* 31 Somalia: Travelers; Natural Laws

Who We Are...

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

For all contact write to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

PRESS FUND

NOW IS A difficult time to be asking for money, with many out of work or wondering if they're going to get the chop. Cash is in short supply. But *Organise!* desperately needs money to continue to appear and to improve. We need money for our projected pamphlets, for the stickers and posters and leaflets we intend to produce. So we are asking you, dear reader, to think about sending something in, no matter how small, to help us continue the fight for anarchist communism. We know that many of you value the ideas presented in *Organise!* Do please help us by sending in POs, IMOs or cash. You can even send us a standing order to our account to regularly support *Organise!* Write to London address for account details. Dig into your pockets now! Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

£80, Sheffield; £100, London E3; £300, London WC1; £120, Telford; £20, Liverpool.

GOING TO THE DOGS?

THE VICTORY OF the fascist British National Party in the Millwall council by-election was met with horror in the political establishment, with Smith, Ashdown and Major rushing to denounce them. Overt racists in the Conservative Party, like Winston Churchill, the "miners' friend" (ha! ha!) using the BNP victory as an excuse to call for tighter immigration controls.

For revolutionaries, this fanfare of dismay was sickening. The Conservative Party has long been pursuing racist policies, with tighter immigration controls and their rabid support of a police force that carries out daily abuse of blacks. It was the Thatcher leadership's adoption of rhetoric and policies not far from that of the National Front that ensured the racist vote in 1979. The Labour Party, when it was in power, initiated the stricter immigration controls that the Tories inherited. As for the Liberals, they have known for a long time that the local Liberal Democrats in power in Tower Hamlets were using racism to gain votes. We were aware that British fascists, encouraged by a resurgence of fascism throughout Europe, would attempt to profit from the vacuum developing in British politics.

White working class people in Tower Hamlets had experienced the Conservatives in power nationally for 13 years, years of Labour corruption at a borough level, to be followed by more corruption and complacency from the Liberal Democrats.

Racist crap

On telly and in the papers the impression was given time after time that the vote for the BNP was not a racist vote but a protest vote at the neglect of the white working class in Millwall. Voter after voter, interviewed on press and in the papers was able to say "I'm not racist, but..." and then spew out the usual racist crap. The vote in Millwall was a racist vote. Those who voted for the

BNP may not all subscribe to the BNP's fascist programme, but they were elected because they appealed to deep racist sentiments. Racism is deeply ingrained in British society. This racism is not just at the level of street violence, it is at the level of State and institutionalised racism — in the police force, in customs and immigration, in political parties.

The Liberal Democrats in Tower Hamlets have been churning out racist propaganda for a long time. One Liberal Democrat councillor, Jeremy Shaw, stated 18 months ago that immigrants couldn't expect to be housed in Tower Hamlets. In the run-up to the by-election Liberal Democrats continued with their anti-Bengali propaganda in leaflets making out that Labour councillors wanted to spend £30,000 of council money on food relief to Bangladesh. Local Labour activists for their part tried to use the threat of a BNP victory to snatch back votes, which backfired by increasing the credibility of the BNP.

The East End has been plagued by casualised and poorly-paid work, often in small workshops and factories, for many years. There are 19,000 on the housing waiting list on the Isle of Dogs, 25% unemployment, and grinding poverty and squalor. And this in an area lauded as part of the Thatcher miracle, the Docklands Development, with the half-empty Canary Wharf looming over the run-down estates. The BNP exploited the anger among the white working class, turning it on other working class people, rather than against the boss class. The fight back against fascism must involve a fight against racism, both popular racism and State and institutionalised racism. The fascists must be fought physically, but alongside this must come mobilisations around housing, homelessness, and rotten living conditions, which create class solidarity and counter-act racism.

We will have a more in-depth article in the next *Organise!*



No Platform for Fascists!

ONE OF THE cornerstones of libertarian ideas is that of freedom of speech and thought for all. So why not extend this belief to fascists, since they are a pretty small minority anyway? On an evenly-balanced platform it would be easy enough to give fascists their voice, as their arguments are so plainly stupid that we could destroy them at our leisure.

However, fascism merely represents the extreme right position of capitalism. There may be little love lost between mainstream politicians and the megalomaniac fascist leaders, but they are tolerated, and when situations demand, they are brought into play. It is no coincidence that fascism seized control in countries like Spain, Italy and Germany where revolutionary movements were becoming a serious threat to capitalists. In Germany the term national socialist and the predomi-

nantly red flag were deliberately used as part of the moves to control the working class.

The links are also more subtle. The fascist love of uniforms, marching, power, submission to leaders, racism, violence are merely more obvious forms of what capitalism feeds us with every day of our lives, down to the insecurity that underpins individuals in capitalist society.

Storm troopers

In times of insecurity for the capitalists, such as revolutionary periods, they will fall back on the storm troopers of capitalism, the fascists, to try and avert their increasing problems.

So why the rise in fascism? We may well be a long way off a revolutionary situation, but capitalism seems committed to paddling itself further and further up shit creek. Society is increasingly fracturing, and with a thoroughly-destroyed

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I enclose £3 for a four-issue sub (or £6 for a supporting sub). Add 25% for overseas/institutions. To: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. **Important!** Letters for ACF nationally should be sent to Devon (see 'Want to join' box). Letters for *Organise!*/ACF (London) should go to Whitechapel High Street.

left wing of capitalism, the far right can easily appeal to the insecurities engendered in the dispossessed. However, the capitalists do not yet feel desperate enough to resort to fascism to instil some discipline, so it continues at a low level with attacks on ethnic minorities and political opponents.

Of course, the capitalists would rather not use fascism as a weapon if they can avoid it, saving it as a last resort, since it has a nasty habit of going out of control. Hitler was a prime example of this, bringing Germany to its knees before the capitalists finally managed to regain control. The conflict between the Nazi

regime and the traditional German ruling class can be seen in the various assassination plots hatched by the military top brass against Hitler. Obviously industrialists would rather avoid having their industries bombed every night because of the fascist desire for empire, saving that 'pleasure' for other people's countries, particularly in these times of transnational corporations where empires can be built more subtly.

Links

We can see links between fascist organisations in mainstream capitalism, and seem-

ingly more respectable organisations. Many ex-National Front (NF) members joined the Conservative Party. Sympathisers can be found in parliament and in groups like the Tory Monday Club. The decline in the NF after its most successful period in the '70s was partly due to Thatcher stealing and implementing some of their race policies.

No platform for fascists' is an essential policy. We are not talking about political debate. We are opposing those who shift the blame for our social problems away from the bosses and onto minorities who suffer their violence. Be in no doubt that if fascism

calls up the fascists, we will be put up against the wall along with anyone else who upsets their ideology, as has happened to millions before us.

Foothold

At its simplest level it is a matter of destroy or be destroyed. We must not allow them a foothold of respectability as this only makes the boss class less concerned about their use. How will we challenge the endemic bigotry in society if we allow small numbers of people to spread hate-filled ideas freely? It is up to us to make sure they are swept off the streets.

Fraud Squad!

SINCE THE END of the Second World War, popular culture attempted to portray the police in a favourable light: Dixon of Dock Green, the Laughing Policeman, PC Plod the podgy patriarch who sets the world to rights with a firm (but friendly) clip round the ear and a stern word or two.

This image was of course very different from reality, but it was what people wanted to believe. The State and ruling classes had just emerged 'victorious' from war and people felt no need to question the nature of the system that had caused the bloodbath. In any case most people were being bought off by the cosmetic changes of nationalisation. British justice, British police (the best in the world) and even our criminals were somehow gentlemen.

But it couldn't last. If a 'few bad apples' had been turning up through the '60s and '70s, by the '80s the whole barrel was beginning to stink: fit-ups, violence and murder, Masonic corruption, the regular deployment of riot squads, sexism, racism and soaring crime rates. Something had to be done, not, it should be pointed out, that the State disapproves of much of this, but because the illusion of 'British justice' and the elaborate farce that surrounds it might be exposed.

The police, it seems, are

having a hard time. After years of being lovable bobbies they are suddenly being exposed. But it's not as bad as all that, the State looks after its own. Politicians can get indignant, journalists can moan about rough justice, a few wrists get slapped, a few officers get sent to spend more time with their families and a generous pension and things get back to normal. Until the Sheehy Report.

The Sheehy Report is not designed to give the police a good kicking while they are down. The Government is strapped for cash and needs to save money by not being as generous to the police as it once was.

A point to remember is that the State is not a huge monolith. It is ridden with petty rivalries which with the widening of class warfare will someday prove its undoing.

Favourites

The police are not going to merrily trot into line just because they are told to. After all, throughout the '80s they were Thatcher's favourites, with the perks that made them something more than the humble public servants they'd like us to think they are, like the average £3000 a year overtime. The police have decided to use the Sheehy Report as an opportunity to restore public confidence in the police.

Everytime the police appear to discuss the Sheehy Report they are taking part in an elaborate PR exercise in an attempt to fool us into believing once more in good old PC Plod.

We are told for example that the police "put their lives on the line" as if this was somehow unique. It would be pointless to deny that police work involves physical danger but it's worth knowing that the number of fatal injuries at work in the construction industry stood at 158 in 1987-8 as compared with 11 in both the prison and police services, eight of those being road accidents. The figures for assaults on the police can be contrasted with the 37 deaths in police custody in 1989 in London alone, or the 21,825 complaints of police violence made in the same period.

The police claim that the implementation of the Sheehy Report will result in experienced officers leaving the force and a decline in numbers, affecting their ability to 'catch crooks'. The myth that detectives track down criminals is just that, a myth. Studies in the USA found only three per cent of all arrests were the result of special training or skill, the vast majority of cases being 'solved' by the offender's identity being obvious, victims' testimony or the offender being caught red-handed. The detective's job is really to make a case stick rather than solve cases, as is



illustrated by the clear-up rate for burglary of eight per cent for London. The police conjure up the 'catching crooks' myth to justify increased numbers to strengthen their forces of repression against strikes and demonstrations and the general defence of capitalism.

For the government the Sheehy Report is a justification for penny pinching; for the police an opportunity for a propaganda drive to re-establish the myth of its role and nature. It is no surprise that the Labour Party is now trying to steal the Tories' mantle of Law and Order and to be seen increasingly as the Policeman's Friend. For anarchist communists it illustrates once more the treacherous nature of the internal politics of the State, and an opportunity for further agitation about the nature of one of its important component parts.

JD

The above article was sent in by a comrade outside the ACF.

MCLIBEL

MCDONALD'S Hamburger Corporation is the largest retail property owner and food service organisation in the world, with annual sales of nearly £20 billion. Many people over the years have criticised its practices, its low pay, military-style work, its overpriced, mass-produced 'food', its destruction of the environment through packaging and waste, its promotion of a junk culture.

In 1985 London Greenpeace (a small, independent collective) launched a general anti-McDonald's campaign to try and co-ordinate opposition. This resulted in a worldwide Anti-McDonald's Day every October 16th. A detailed fact-sheet was produced and translated and taken up in dozens of countries.

McDonald's counter-attacked by sending spies to London Greenpeace meetings, and serving writs on activists who they followed home, in September 1990. They had already silenced other criticisms through threatening libel action. Two of the activists, Dave Morris and Helen Steel, backed by London Greenpeace and the McLibel Support Campaign, have resolved to fight this major libel case. They intend to use the trial as a public forum to expose McDonald's. They are unlagged and up against the colossal resources of the McDonald's empire. They have been refused legal aid.

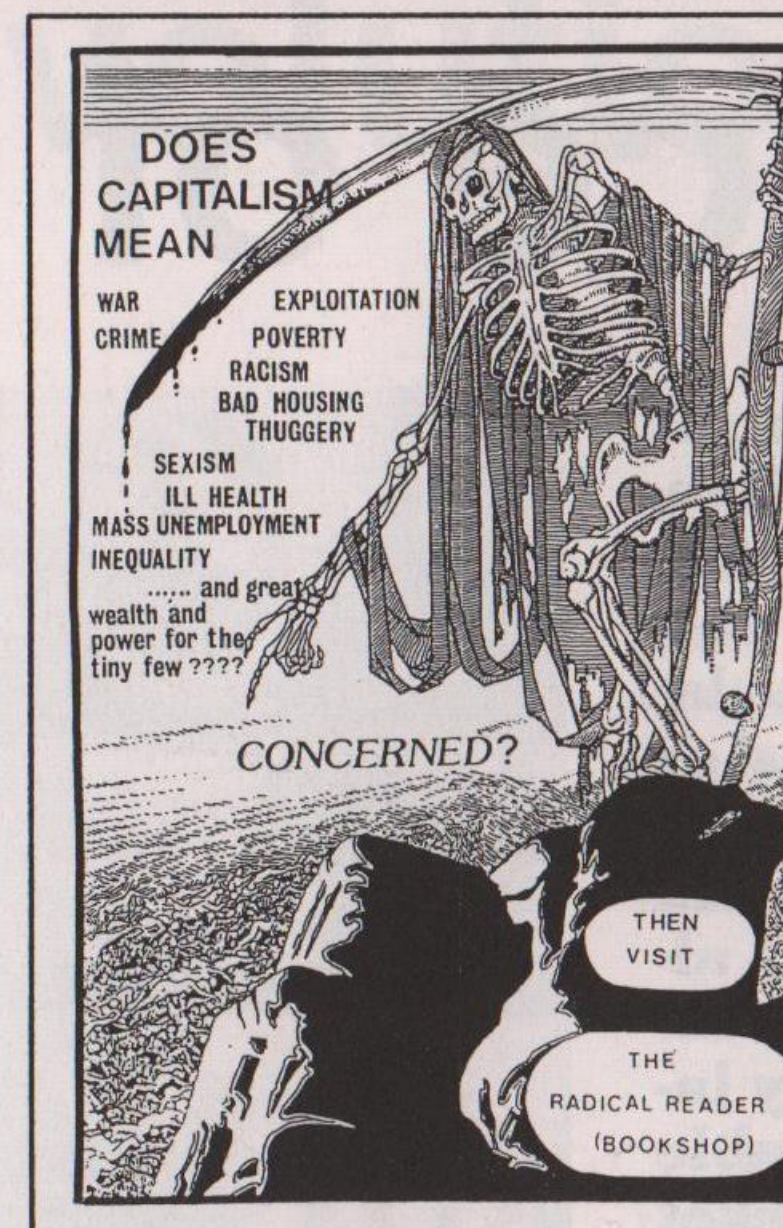
McDonald's hoped to exhaust or financially cripple the defendants by dragging out proceedings. When they saw that this wasn't working they began to dramatically speed up the process and pile on the workload.

The great cover-up

McDonald's are applying for the trial to be without a jury. They are withholding documents that will reveal just what their practices are. The McLibel Support Campaign is asking for protests to be stepped up, information about McDonald's practices, help with research, transla-

tors, fund raising and messages of support.

There will be a National Demonstration against McDonald's and their libel action, on Saturday October 16th at Euston station, 1pm marching through central London. A national meeting of the Campaign will take place on October 30th, 4pm at the London Greenpeace Fayre, Conway Hall WC1.



BUNDLES of this poster can be obtained from the London address for a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em. London ACF also have a small concertina leaflet explaining the basic ideas of anarchist communism. Donation for a bundle to above address.

Our last lot of six different stickers has sold out. So we've produced a new series of nine different stickers (anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, ecology etc). Again, bundles can be obtained from London address, if you enclose a donation.

The attempted coup in Russia

THE FAILED COUP by an alliance of fascists and old-style Stalinists, ironically crushed by tanks, failed to win mass support, mass support that was relied upon by Rutskoi and Khasbulatov. The population of Moscow stood by as spectators.

Seventy years of Stalinist repression had ensured that there was no love for this gang of authoritarians. Yet neither

was there any warm support for the Yeltsin regime.

Living standards have plunged drastically and the much-vaunted turn to a market economy has meant that many are much worse off. Yeltsin's closing down of parliament, his iron grip on the media, and the brutal crushing of the rebellion have been praised by his Western allies, usually so accustomed to defending 'democracy'.

In clinging on to power Yeltsin has put himself more and more in the debt of the military, and the influence of the armed forces will increase in this coming period. There will be further repression of any groups who oppose the Yeltsin regime, including those that criticise the introduction of the market economy. We will have a more in-depth look at the events in Russia in the next *Organise!*

A new winter of discontent?

ANGER AND discontent is increasing among public sector workers, from firefighters to town hall workers.

The Fire Brigades Union is attempting to defuse the anger of 50,000 firefighters, disgusted by the suspension of a pay formula that tied their wages to the average earnings of industrial workers for the past 15 years.

Among civil servants, health workers, and town hall workers there are signs that militancy is beginning to re-emerge. Any fight against the employers and the Government must be united, links being created between the different sectors. Local solidarity committees should come into existence, attempting to help these links come about and drawing in the working class

population of each area, including the unemployed, housewives, the old and the young. The unions and their friends in the Labour Party may well sabotage any action, as they did in the recent mobilisations against pit closures, but things could escape their clutches. *Organise!* will report on any further developments in the next issue.

Contraflow

For news about resistance to capitalism worldwide get *Contraflow*. For a copy send stamps, donations, saes to 56A Infoshop, 56 Crampton St, SE17. They don't have a bank account, so leave any cheques, POs blank.

Anarchist Black Cross

Following a meeting in Hackney in September, attended by activists including ACF members, it was decided to set up an Anarchist Black Cross group north of the river Thames. The ABC group in South London will continue to meet. London ABC produces a bulletin every three months. It supports working class people in prisons. Where they can they support prisoners with material aid, demos, letters. For info about the two London groups or about the bulletin (send donation) contact London ABC c/o 121 Railton Road, London SE24. Tel: 071-274 6655 (ansaphone).

The Price of Peas

THE PRICE OF peas tells us a lot about the society in which we live. Local supermarkets now stock peas from Kenya, and peas from Guatemala, although they're usually labelled as 'mange tout', 'snow peas' or 'sugar snap peas'. They're rarely called peas unless they're frozen, and they rarely come from Britain, although peas grow here well on a seasonal basis. In fact, the exotically labelled varieties are usually available out of season, when the supermarket can charge more. But what does their profit cost us?

One of the reasons that profits are bigger is that production costs are lower in Third World countries. Land is cheap, doesn't have the same 'development' value. But most of all, wages are low. The low wages result from the deliberate under-development of Third World economies by the major capitalist countries, and not because, as the myth so frequently suggests, Third World countries are intrinsically backward, or 'haven't caught up'.

Capitalism has had a global economy for hundreds of years. Initially it was based on pillage and slavery, the early features of capitalism developing out of a matrix of commerce and militarism. The imperial voyages of discovery in the 16th century made it possible for capitalism to expand the global economy, slaughter the indigenous populations of vast regions of the world, and establish the basis for the current world order. To replace the millions of people that had been massacred in the name of profit, millions more were enslaved and transported across the oceans to work in plantations, growing and harvesting the raw products that were needed to fuel the growing industrial revolution.

Destroyed

The countries that capitalism and imperialism conquered were varied societies with developed agricultural economies, and often possessing local industries which were destroyed. The cotton industry in India was destroyed to ensure that India became a market for mass-produced English textiles. The social and economic disruption caused by the expansion of global capitalism was massive, and still continues.

Guatemala is one of the countries from which peas are imported. Wages are low, but the reason they are low is because anybody who tries to do anything about the imposed system of wage slavery is gunned down. This is what Amnesty International said about Guatemala in their 1992 report:

"Hundreds of people were alleged to have been extrajudicially executed by the



security forces and their civilian agents. Scores of others 'disappeared'. The victims included indigenous people, human rights activists, trade unionists, street children and a police officer investigating human rights abuses. Members of popular movements, journalists and others were increasingly subjected to death threats and harassment: several were abducted and tortured by unidentified armed men believed to belong to the security forces. Police officers were reported to have tortured or ill-treated criminal suspects and street children."

There follows a detailed account of some of the best documented incidents.

Guatemala is not an isolated case. Scores of dictatorships, fascist and sub-fascist regimes around the world, appear in the Amnesty Report, to the extent that no-one who reads the report can have any doubt that death squads, torture and imprisonment are virtually systematic. Although the 'developed' capitalist countries would like to pretend that they have no responsibility for this state of affairs,

it is those very countries which directly cause the global system of terror, torture and death.

Invasion

They still use their military might to invade countries that do not do their bidding. Guatemala, Panama, Grenada, and most recently Somalia, are some of the more obvious examples. They train and arm the torturers and murderers — and let's be quite clear about this, it's not just the United States that does so, but our oh-so civilised British state. The way in which Britain armed and equipped the Iraqi state was not an aberration, but part and parcel of what happens every day, as the recent sale of military aircraft to the Indonesian government shows. In the pursuit of power, and in order to line their pockets, there is nothing that the state and the ruling capitalist class will not stoop to do.

And that is the real price of cheap, out of season peas on the supermarket shelf.

The Russian Revolution and Women

IT WAS WOMEN, women workers, who set off the chain of events that resulted in the February Revolution in Russia in 1917.

In Petrograd, women textile workers decided to celebrate International Women's Day on February 23rd. Leaflets were distributed by the Mezraiontsy group, which was formed of members of both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the Russian Social Democratic Party opposed to the split in its ranks. The leaflet, referring to International Women's Day, pointed out that workers, and in particular women, were victimised by the World War that was raging. Despite its inflammatory language, the leaflet was intended to be merely educational. It was not intended to bring workers out on the streets.

The Bolsheviks for their part, regarded the build-up of organisational strength of their Party as vital and refused to divert unnecessary energy for what they regarded as relatively insignificant propaganda. Some Bolshevik rank and file workers resented this, calling for bolder action, including a strike for the day. One Bolshevik factory worker, Kayurov, was asked by a group of women textile workers to explain the meaning of Women's Day and for guidance on events on the Day. He urged them to refrain from action and only follow the directives of the Party. All the parties, whether Bolshevik, Menshevik or Social Revolutionary, underestimated the mood in Petrograd. As Trotsky himself was forced to admit later: "The February revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organizations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives."

Anger

Meetings took place in the Vyborg district on that day, and a mass of women marched to the Municipal Duma, the puppet parliament set up by the tsar's regime, to demand bread. The soldatki, the wives, daughters and mothers of soldiers, left the massive bread-lines and started to raise their voices in anger and indignation at the suffering of the last few years. These women, held in as low standing as prostitutes, began to raise banners demanding 'Bread!' and 'Our Children Are Starving'. Joined by housewives and the women textile workers of Vyborg, they began to swarm over the bridges on the River Neva towards the centre of the city. The women of the trolley terminus on Vasilev Island swelled their ranks, first visiting the nearby barracks of the 180th



Infantry Regiment to get the pledge of the soldiers that they would not fire if they came out on strike. About 90,000 workers, both women and men, began to come out on strike, as women textile workers went to the large metal factories calling on the men to join them.

The Bolsheviks in the factories were put on the spot. They knew their Central Committee was reluctant to take direct action. On the other hand, they did not want to be isolated. Kayurov was to go on record as saying: "I was extremely indignant with the actions of the strikers. Not only did they blatantly ignore the decisions of the party district committee, but also just the night before I had appealed

to the women workers to maintain restraint and discipline. And suddenly this strike. It appeared that there were no goals and purposes, if we discount the ever-increasing bread-lines, which were essentially the reason for the strike."

Unfolding

By the following day, the numbers in the streets had risen to 197,000. Trotsky again: "The women go up to the officers more boldly than the men. Taking hold of their rifles, they beseech and almost command: 'put down your bayonets and join us.'" By February 26 women were going up to the soldiers' ranks in masses and taking their guns. The Russian Revolution was unfolding, and the Bolsheviks, taken by surprise, now rushed to control it.

In spite of centuries of darkness, Russian working women had broken with their deeply-ingrained submissiveness and fatalism. Women in the factories were instantly sacked if they were found to be pregnant. They worked long hours for less pay than men, and were often forced into casual prostitution to make ends meet. And now for a brief moment, working women had got off their knees and were indeed to initiate one of the most important events in human history. We don't look at history because we are obsessed with dusty archives, we remember these events because they show that people can transform themselves into noble human beings. The dark clouds lifted and the sun broke forth for a few instants in Petrograd in February 1917. By recalling events like these, we show that it is possible to bring change, and that the summer can still come.



Women in the Spanish Revolution

WOMEN HAD A major role in the social revolution that swept through Spain in 1936. Anarchist women organised themselves in the *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women) linked to the mass anarcho-syndicalist union, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT). They had always been active in the Spanish revolutionary movement. One example is Teresa Claramunt, an anarchist textile worker who was active in the general strike of 1902 when women attacked food speculators and stopped buses and trolleys.

Women active in the CNT and the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) founded the *Mujeres Libres* dedicated to liberation from the "Triple enslavement to ignorance, as women, and as producers". The organisation lasted only three years when the victory of Franco terminated all hope of social change. But by

1939 it had grouped together over 27,000 women in 147 groups throughout Republican Spain.

Within revolutionary anarchism, the problems of hierarchy and formalised authority have always been seen as important problems, related to class society, and interdependent with it, unlike many socialists, who saw class relations in simple terms. So anarchist thought has been able to see various forms of oppression — racial and sexual — as interlinked with economic relations.

As early as 1872, a Spanish libertarian conference declared that women should be the full equals of men in the home and workplace. Yet despite this positive response to the whole question of women's liberation at a theoretical level, both in Spain and internationally, many anarchists treated their emancipation of women as at best, secondary to the emancipation of the working class as a whole,

and something that would be solved with the incorporation of women into the paid labour force or on the "morrow of the revolution".

Lola Iturbe, who was later to be a leading activist in *Mujeres Libres* wrote in her article 'Anarchist Communism Will Liberate Women' that: "Only the reign of libertarian communism can provide a humane solution to the problem of women's emancipation. With the destruction of private property, this hypocritical morality will fall by the wayside, and we will be free... We will experience love with the complete freedom of our appetites, respecting all the various forms of amorous and sexual life." This was fine as far as it went, but in Spain, where there was a sharp sexual division of labour, this left a lot of questions unanswered. How would women become involved? Would a new society automatically abolish the sexual division of labour? Or would it

leave it in place and strive for a 'separate but equal' status for women?

Up to the 1930s Spanish society was dominated by the Catholic Church and was extremely sex divided. Most women and men were forced to keep exclusively to the company of their own sex. The economic and cultural subordination of women was more extreme than that of men. So, for example, rates of illiteracy were higher among women, and women who worked outside the home had the lowest pay and the worst conditions. To some extent the libertarian movement attempted to answer this with the widespread establishment of *ateneos*. These were cultural centres which were established by anarchists to educate and enlighten. They were particularly important for women in attacking illiteracy and helping build self-confidence. However there was widespread contempt for women expressing themselves among the men in the *ateneos* and throughout the libertarian movement.

Self-organisation

In 1933 in Madrid some women active in the libertarian movement sent letters to women throughout the country saying that they wanted to set up a women's organisation and asking what issues needed to be addressed. There was a large and enthusiastic response. Meanwhile in Madrid women in the CNT were becoming concerned that the numbers of women in the organisation were dropping — and this in a city where thousands of women were involved in textile work. These two groups combined to form *Mujeres Libres*. They did not use the term feminism, most of them never having heard of the word. Those who had, associated it negatively with the fight for the vote for women and for admission into the professions. As working class women, they saw these aims as irrelevant, if not contrary, to their own.

Mujeres Libres argued that women were forced to organise independently because of their lack of self-confidence and because of male resistance to women's participation in struggle.

As one of them argued: "I always felt strongly that women had to be emancipated. That our struggle was — and still is — more than just the struggle against capitalism... We used to talk a lot about that, insist that the struggle was not just in the factories, in the streets, or even in the *ateneos*. That it had to go into the house. The boys would sometimes laugh and make fun of us when we'd say those things. They said, it is the struggle of all of us, and we all should struggle together. But I would say, no, it's not just that. We need to express ourselves, to be who and what we are. We're not trying to take things away from you, but we need to develop ourselves, to demand our own rights." Another activist, Mercedes Comaposada, talked about her experience of trying to teach a class sponsored by the CNT in Madrid: "But it was impossible

because of the attitudes of some comrades. There is a saying 'Women belong in the kitchen or darning socks'. No, it was impossible. Women barely dared to speak in that context."

It was experiences like these, and there were many, that compelled anarchist women to start discussions that led to the founding of *Mujeres Libres*. On one hand, the participation of women in the *ateneos*, the CNT, the FAI and the youth movement had given women confidence, had empowered them, through political education and learning. On the other hand, the attitude of men in these bodies demonstrated the need for specific organisation of women so that they could emerge as fully equal members of the libertarian movement. As Lola Iturbe remarked in the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad*: "All those *companeros* (male comrades), however radical they may be in cafes, unions, and even affinity groups (FAI), seem to drop their costumes as lovers of female liberation at the doors of their homes. Inside, they behave with their *companeras* (female comrades) just like common 'husbands'." One young woman remembered that when girls went to meetings of the Libertarian Youth, the boys would laugh at them before they even spoke!

The *Mujeres Libres* went to work immediately they were set up. They mounted a huge literacy campaign with regular classes in towns and villages wherever they had groups. In cities where they were strongest they set up large centres. These held literacy classes, and classes in typing, stenography, nursing and child-care (nursing was usually carried out by nuns and male nurses) electrics, mechanics and plumbing. There were general weekly meetings. As one activist noted: "We encouraged women to pay attention, to become active."

ML worked closely with the CNT around the problem of women doing the poorest paid work, and around equal wages. During the Revolution this was put into practice to a limited extent. It is estimated that equal wages were paid in about 50% of the collectives. ML groups grew up in many factories, and in rural areas ML sponsored training programmes from first aid to advanced forms of stock breeding. They advocated and supported child care facilities in the neighbourhood and workplace, so that women could be liberated from the home. In Barcelona they created a flying column of child minders to ensure women could attend classes and political meetings.

Problems

Despite these achievements, ML paid little attention to the sexual division of labour or the stereotyping of men and women into certain kinds of labour. Marriage, long seen by the anarchist movement as an evil was rejected and a mutual agreement was introduced instead. ML took a strong position on prostitution, running training courses for women who

wanted alternative employment. Mercedes Comaposada argued that one of the tasks of the revolution was to change men and women, and that it was impossible for men to transform their lives while they kept a portion of the people in prostitution. "As long as any woman is kept as an object and is prevented from developing her personality, prostitution, in fact, continues to exist." ML regarded the spreading of information on birth control as a major task and did this through their paper and through classes.

Temma Kaplan argues in her work on *Mujeres Libres* that women revolutionaries subordinated their specific demands in the interests of winning the war against fascism. In my view, this was the general problem with the Spanish anarchist movement, which tended to place the winning of the war before the social revolution. Kaplan argues that that was no reason to believe that the condition of Spanish women would have been fundamentally changed if the anarchists had won the war. She tends to adopt a pessimistic attitude on the reluctance of Spanish anarchists to envisage a change in sex roles, whereas I think that the development of a movement to challenge the old values would have made this possible. But, as Liz Willis points out about *Mujeres Libres*: "The characteristic anarchist mixture of high-flown rhetoric, sketchy theory and intensive practical activity did not match up to the exigencies of grim political reality, despite the real achievements of the group under difficult conditions."

When we think of women's specific organisation we tend to think of the suffrage movement at the turn of the century and the women's liberation movements of the '70s. But between these was an organisation of 27,000 that wedded the oppression of women to libertarian revolutionary politics, and this organisation has been hidden from history, receiving little coverage even in the books written by women historians (for instance Sheila Rowbotham fails to mention it in her *Women, Resistance and Revolution*). What the story of *Mujeres Libres* tells us is the need to develop a revolutionary perspective where the liberation of women is a fundamental component. Things have changed to a certain extent for women, if only in the industrialised countries of Western Europe. Within the anarchist movement, men cannot get away with things as they could have had before, and it is to be hoped, would not want to. But the liberation of women cannot be subordinated to a vague 'social revolution', or the real social revolution that will take place will itself be partial, inadequate and diminished.

Further reading:

Women in the Spanish Revolution. Liz Willis. Solidarity pamphlet.
Free Women of Spain. Martha A Ackelsberg. Indiana University Press. (Expensive paperback so try to order it from your library)



Woman's Place: Women and Culture

THE OBJECT OF this article is to examine how culture works in the production and legitimisation of female oppression and subordination, by naturalising their position in patriarchal capitalism. In addition, it will show how this is resisted and challenged through culture, and how in turn, such challenges may be recuperated in an attempt to contain them within a logic and practice acceptable to the system.

From this we can understand how culture should be thought of as a process, a site of constant struggle for meaning where active social agents deploy strategies and practices to achieve objectives. The term 'culture' is not used here to refer exclusively to the 'high' or 'legitimate' culture of classical music, the ballet or painting, as in its common usage. It also refers to the culture of the everyday and the personal, of what we wear, eat or say.

One of the most obvious ways in which women are positioned into roles of subordination is manifest in the daily bombardment of images of women on TV, in films, magazines and ads where they are portrayed as submissive objects to be consumed by the male gaze. As John Berger argued in *Ways of Seeing*, this portrayal of the female image is rooted in a tradition originating in the history of European oil painting and the genre of the nude.

In this tradition social presence is determined by gender so that "men act and women appear". The role of the woman is to be represented as a passive, submissive object of display, an object to be consumed and used by the active male spectator for his pleasure. This mode of the representation of women, based upon the traditions of European painting (just take a look around any major art gallery) creates an orthodoxy which also informs the representation of women in, for example, advertising and pornography in contemporary culture. This objectification of women, through images, has a real effect on the way men use women as objects in everyday life. In this way patriarchy is reinforced through culture.

Marginalised

The activities of preparing and eating food are also divided by gender in ways which define women in subordinate positions. The sexual division of labour places women in the role of domestic workers, responsible for childcare, cleaning and cooking and this contains and marginalises their activities in relation to the male, who is seen as being active in the



outside world — struggling, striving and achieving. This is reinforced by the numerous articles in women's magazines concerned with food and how to prepare it. But this also functions as a kind of pornography for women, where food is presented as an illicit pleasure, whereas for men food is presented as a source of nourishment and nutrition — "a good hearty meal" — to sustain their activity in the outside world. Women are encouraged to consume food under a strict regime of 'the diet', counting calories and fat content. Pressures to achieve the 'ideal figure' through dieting, as represented in media images, are so great that many women suffer from eating disorders causing illness and death. As such, images of sugary and fatty foods become an illicit

pleasure of the 'naughty but nice', a pleasure which can only be satisfied in the image, as a substitute, on pain of being 'unattractive' to men.

The marginalisation of women through language has been taken up by some strands of feminist thought as being a key mechanism of their subordination. The prevalent use of the terms 'man', 'mankind' or 'he' to refer to humanity or people in general, both male and female, is not, as some would argue, merely an acceptable form of abbreviation, but an operation which makes the presence of women in society invisible. Language is also used to value, or devalue, human activity according to gender: here men 'talk' or 'discuss', women 'chatter' or 'gossip', where men 'laugh', women 'giggle',

where men are 'intense', women are 'hysterical'.

These are just some examples of how women are marginalised into subordinate positions, into the passive objects of male servitude, through culture. In the process this culture, especially in its most everyday manifestations, takes on the appearance of the 'natural' and the 'normal', and so functions to mask its material basis in the interests of patriarchal capitalism.

Battleground

But this process is also resisted and is never totally successful in its positioning of women. There are many examples of such resistance, including women's struggles over birth control and abortion rights, and the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. One of the most lively and positive oppositions to everyday sexism today comes from *Riot Grrrl*, where, as one of their fanzines states, women should "dare to believe that we belong anywhere but under his heel".

Riot Grrrl can't be pinned down to one set of ideas or opinions, and they are rightly antagonistic to attempts to categorise and label them. But, in general terms it might be described as a loose network of, mainly, young women involved in producing fanzines opposing sexism and other oppression, often including gig reviews, articles on self-defence and attacks on the mass media, especially magazines aimed at women, and the music press. With fanzine names like *Clitoris*, *Destroy All Music*, *Grrrl Pride* and *A.N.G.R.Y.*, the attitude is positive, confident, and aggressive, as shown in this passage from *A.N.G.R.Y.*:

"I care about everything that affects women, I live and feel for women because I am one — whether the issues are serious or horrific like rape or battered wives or female circumcision or abortion rights or whether they are less appalling and life-threatening like being whistled at by

builders or being laughed at because you want to play football or be in a band, they are still important and disgusting and this is our time to do something about it. The oppression of women is universal and I can't change the world on my own, but I'm not on my own anymore and neither are you. *Riot Grrrl* has empowered me to act."

There is a concern in the fanzines, and in the bands associated with the movement, to get girls and women to be supportive of each other and build their confidence, an attempt to see being female as something positive in its own right, rather than being negatively defined as an object and instrument of male pleasure. This can take the form of subverting images and messages culled from girls' teen mags so that, for example, when an advice column starts to tell girls: "The five big mistakes women make with men...", the *Riot Grrrls of Tight T-Shirt* respond: "Cooking, cleaning, keeping quiet, having sex, going to football matches."

Like other challenges to the various forms of oppression that sustain the capitalist society we inhabit, *Riot Grrrl* is subject to attempts at its recuperation: an attempt to define, or redefine *Riot Grrrl* in terms which are acceptable and profitable to capitalism and play down, or ignore the elements which are a real challenge to the existing order.

Music press

Some *Riot Grrrls* see the music press, like the *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* as being a major instrument in this process: "They think it's all on the surface and we are following some fucking fashion because NME says: *OK, Kids, this is Riot Grrrl* and it's trendy."

The most sussed among the *Riot Grrrls* are antagonistic towards their categorisation because they see that this is just an attempt to turn their movement into a trend: a trend that can be defined simply in terms of music and fashion that can be consumed, and then passed over as

the media move on to the business us the next trendy fad.

It is to their credit that some *Riot Grrrls* are intent on resisting this procedure of recuperation, and it shows us that this movement has more real potential to challenge sexism and build confidence among women than any mere fad or 'sub-culture'.

In this process of oppression, resistance, recuperation, and resistance to recuperation, we can see that culture forms a kind of battleground where ideas and meanings are fought for, where territory is lost and won, where we must always be strong, inventive and vigilant in our struggles against the oppressions of capitalism.

The author would like to acknowledge and thank Aylesbury *Riot Grrrls* for their help with this article.

For more information about *Riot Grrrl* contact: BM Nancee, London WC1N 3XX enclosing an SAE.

The Friends of Durruti

New pamphlet!

LONDON ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included: an historical introduction by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends. This will be the first in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the Friends of Durruti pamphlet available from ACF (London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p inc. postage.



Who Needs the Family?

THE TORIES HAVE long held up 'the family' as the cornerstone of capitalist society. The recent onslaught against single mothers is the most recent example. This is mirrored across the Atlantic with Presidential candidates outdoing each other in their support for 'traditional family values'.

Politicians blame the decline of the family on the 'permissiveness' of the sixties and in particular on the women's liberation movements which campaigned for birth control, abortion, women working outside the home and freer sexuality. Many women were no longer willing to get married and remain in the home caring for husband and children. There is also an element of racism in this onslaught as politicians target black people who they claim do not share a commitment to the two-parent and children model of the family.

Why all the fuss? Why do people's personal lifestyles worry our rulers? People are still going out to work, being exploited, accepting the system. Whether people get married, how they raise their children, who they have sex with shouldn't make any difference to the bosses' profits.

Not so. The recent obsession with 'the family' only stresses the fact that capitalism needs to control every aspect of our lives. There is no divide between the personal and the public. The family is indeed one of the cornerstones of capitalism.

Before we can examine how the family props up capitalism, we need to first decide what 'the family' is. Doing this is not easy, since the family has changed form considerably over the course of human history. People have lived in kinship groups and communities where the nuclear family was firmly embedded in a web of kinship relations, with many members of the wider family taking responsibility for child-rearing. In pre-industrial rural societies, it is common to talk of the extended family where a number of generations lived in the same household, with the oldest male ruling the roost.

Since industrialisation and in particular since World War 2, it is the nuclear family that seems to be accepted as 'the family'. This consists of two married parents (of opposite sexes, of course) living with their children and cooperating as an economic and social unit.

Murdock, a pro-family anthropologist, claims to have studied 250 societies and found the family as a common feature in all, concluding that the family was universal.

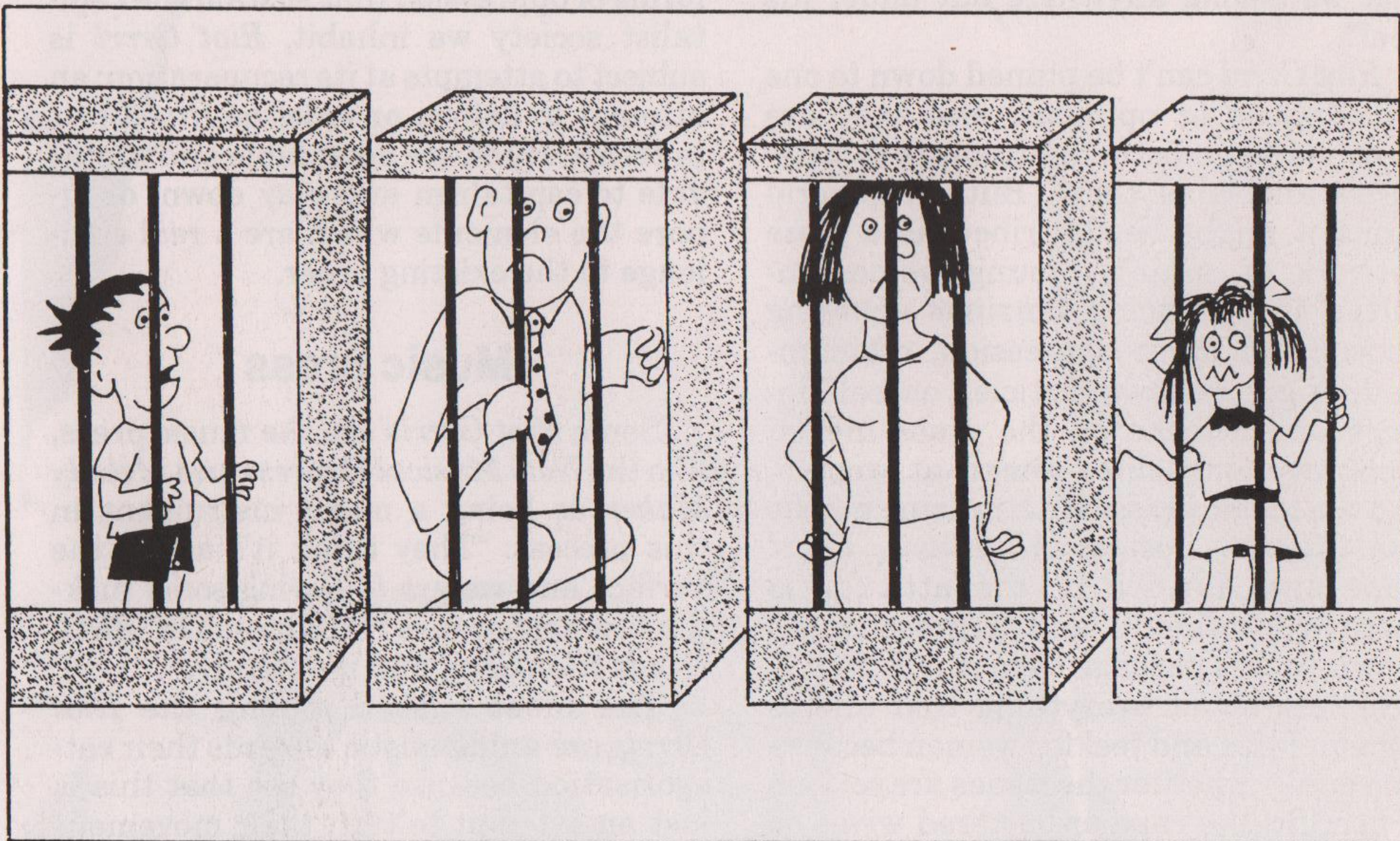
However, others have discovered other societies where the child-rearing and marriage arrangements are quite different. In the Nayar tribe in India, a

woman was free to take up a number of sexual partners, after going through a sexual initiation ritual. As a result, the father of the children was difficult to determine. The mother's brother or nearest male relative was responsible for supporting the mother. If a man wanted to be identified as a father he could give the midwife cloth and vegetables. But the man had no rights over the child. This situation suited this type of society as the men were often away at war.

The family was also not always viewed in the same way as it is today. It was often an economic arrangement with a child being another worker rather than the centre of attention. Landlords often used to arrange marriages for their tenants on the basis of who would work best together. In the upper class, marriages

we live our supposed personal lives is very much the concern of the ruling class. Materially the family unit provides many benefits. It is a very cheap way of reproducing the workforce, the work being done by people who supposedly enjoy it. Any parent, particularly mothers, will attest to the burden of work involved. If childraising and housework were done by paid workers, the cost would be enormous. Estimates have been done on the wages for someone looking after two children and doing the housework and it comes to well over £20,000 a year. This itself is artificially low, being based on low wages for 'women's work' in the economy.

This arrangement is especially useful when the work can be done in addition to paid employment. Capitalism can have



were the means of forming business and political alliances. Up until recently, it was mainly the middle and upper classes who got married anyway as they were concerned to have clear heirs to pass their property on to. In other words, the family can take a number of forms and serve different purposes, depending on the needs of a particular society. There is no 'natural' or traditional family.

Today, the nuclear family, then, is seen as the ideal, its main purpose being to ensure that children are brought up to fit neatly into adult society. In addition, it is seen as a place where the adults, in particular the men, can relax and refresh themselves for their role in society. In other words the family is the unit which creates stable, conforming people, able to cope happily with the society they live in.

Cheap

This version of the family has a key role, both material and ideological, in maintaining the capitalist system. How

workers when it needs them and still have children raised. The family unit is also a source of profit, as a major consumer. Think of all the products that are sold to the family rather than being used communally — TVs, washing machines, cars, toys etc.

The nuclear family is also useful in that it is a geographically mobile unit. Instead of being tied to a wider family or community, the nuclear family is free to move wherever capital wants it. This is seen in the attitude of the State to Asian extended families. There is no recognition of the wider family ties in immigration policy. The extended family is not a convenient unit.

The State, however, can change its views when it suits. The recent turn to community care shows this. By having the nuclear family take responsibility for other members of the family — grandparents, aunts, uncles — the State is no longer responsible for providing decent health care for people that need it. So the workload, for women in particular, is in-

creased even more. And we are supposed to want to do it out of 'love' for our family.

This brings us to the ideological role the family has to play. We are supposed to experience our most satisfying times with members of our family. It is to this small group of people that we are to reserve our love and loyalty for. Outside the family are only 'others' for whom we have no responsibility. It is very difficult to build a working class movement based on solidarity and responsibility to the class when people look first to their family, seeing these interests as different from the interests of the class as a whole.

Inconvenient

It is in this context that we must analyse the State's preoccupation with single parent families. Capitalism finds this type of family highly inconvenient for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is unlikely that the parent can go out to work. Not only is the person not doing their bit to make profits for the bosses but they are actually being paid (a pittance) to raise children, something that should be done for free out of one's own earnings. It is for this reason that the government is intent on chasing down fathers, so the fathers foot the bill.

In addition, single parent families highlight the enormous strain that is involved in raising children. Women have been quietly suffering in their homes, coping with what is one of the most demanding of jobs, hidden from the view of society. The problems of child-raising experienced by single mothers are much greater and often spill out into the streets where they become public problems. There are few people who can raise children on their own without financial and emotional support. It's not surprising that there are problems. But the State doesn't want to know. That's what families are for: to raise children in private, not making demands on society. Single parent families do not fulfill that role. How very inconvenient for capitalism!

The growth in single parent families from 570,000 in 1971 to over 1.3 million today is in many ways a form of resistance, both to capitalism and sexual oppression. Many women will no longer accept staying in an unhappy marriage 'for the sake of the children'. They realise that both they and their children would, despite the difficulties, be better off without a man. Others decide that they would like children, but for whatever reason do not want to settle into a permanent relationship with a man. These women are taking positive steps, refusing to accept that any man is better than no man and showing that they can live independent existences. Other women, usually younger, are becoming mothers also as a form of resistance to capitalism, but in a less positive way in that they are forced into it rather than making a free choice. Many girls leave school, often with few qualifications, and there are few options open to them. Jobs are hardly plentiful and the ones that do exist are low paid and boring. They are stuck in their parents' home and the future looks bleak. Having a baby, though not a conscious plan, seems a way of giving their lives more meaning.

Raising a child seems a better option than slaving away for a boss. This is not surprising given all the propaganda we are given about the joys of motherhood. And capitalism used to be worried that women were not having enough babies!

It would seem as if this discussion is leading us to argue for the abolition of the family. After all, it is a prop of capitalism and a major source of women's oppression. However, this conclusion is too simplistic. There are few people who would argue that children should be raised collectively in mass nurseries. Many people would also object to being forced to live in large groups of people on a 24-hour basis. It is not the form the family takes that is the problem. Any living arrangement in our society, whether a lesbian couple, a group of friends or the traditional 'family' can be hierarchical and oppressive. The state's defence of 'the family' must be challenged, but not on the basis of the need for the abolition of the family. Instead, as part of the revolutionary struggle, we must fight to transform the relations between people, creating a society where people are free to develop the kind of living arrangements that suit them based on freedom and equality, not in isolation, but as part of a community.

ONCE AGAIN, we've been flooded with letters. We can't print them all, so watch out in the next issue for letters on unions, Israel, capitalism and crime, and fascism.

Japan

COMRADES,

In issue 29 an article looked at Japan, pointing out that workers amongst the poorest in Japan, took to the streets to protest their impoverished situation. You pointed out levels of exploitation in terms of labour-time. I would like to draw attention to other aspect. We are all of the opinion that the Japanese economy is an unsailable giant with well-paid workers and little unrest. It is certainly true that socially there is not the same sort or level of crime as witnessed in areas of the West and that many Japanese workers are relatively secure in their jobs and well-paid. But Japanese capital is as potentially vulnerable as any other form of capital.

As mentioned Japanese capital has been seeking to export itself across the world, particularly around the Pacific Rim, and into Europe. Why? Huge trade surpluses have meant such a high inflow of capital that there has to be an outlet. The 1991/2 surplus was nearly \$130b. The effect of this and the decline in world trade has meant a depressed stock exchange and lowered profits. To soak up this capital the State brought in a variety of measures — a partial rearmament and public works programmes, but also needed an artificially created land boom to aid the process. This latter measure unfortunately created in its wake bad debts of around \$525 billion as the bubble burst. Now major firms are reporting huge losses (Nissan, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, TUC, Pioneer, Matsushita) or drastically reduced profits (Toshiba, Toyota, Sony). Growth this year is likely to be under 1%.

In Japanese terms these figures are nearly enough for seppuku-ritual suicide. Every economy is vulnerable, even the mighty Japanese. As the global economy tends towards three trading blocs each centre, the USA, Japan, Europe around Germany, has problems. There is a tendency towards crisis which although slow on a daily basis is still progressing on a world level. As such we have a duty as revolutionaries to recognise what is going on and take the appropriate action — international organisation! Libertarian communist salutations,

JC (Sheffield)

Terror

DEAR ORGANISE!
Despite the fact that the back

page article on 'Terrorism' in the last copy of *Organise!* (No. 30) did raise legitimate points about many armed struggle groups (in particular, their self-serving elitist nature, rigidly Marxist analysis and substitutionist approach) the critique did have a number of quite serious shortcomings:

1. Using the headline 'Terrorism' next to a picture of a masked Provo is pretty stupid to say the least, reminiscent more of the shite we expect from the state-controlled British media than from a supposedly revolutionary journal. A word like 'Terrorism' is an unhelpful starting point in any debate of this kind, whilst if criticism of the IRA is going to be made (which it certainly ought to be) then it should be done in the light of the history of the Six Counties and in the light of the origins of the armed struggle there. Simplistic moralising and ultra-leftist purity is something I expect to find more in *Socialist Standard* than in the pages of *Organise!*

2. The article patronised in the extreme those anarchists who for one reason or another maintain a position of critical solidarity towards some armed struggle groups. Coming round to adopting such a position has often been a painful and tortuous process for those concerned and the arguments that they then go on to advance do have far more of a depth to them than the writer apparently wants to concede. Reiterating idealised norms of anarchist thought and practice is by no means an adequate response other than to the most naive of armed struggle cheerleaders and nor is selective quotation from the 2nd June Movement (had the quote been from the Angry Brigade would the contempt of the author been any different?)

3. Whilst attempting to juxtapose mass violent action on the part of the class to that of small 'elitist' groups on the other hand, the article fails to recognise that the two have, at several junctures in history, coincided quite happily. Small, autonomous groups within movements such as the Wobblies and the Spanish Anarchists repeatedly complemented wider events such as large strikes, riots and mobilisations with armed direct action against bosses, cops, scabs and fascists. That this happened without them totally distancing themselves from the mass movements and forming themselves into Leninist vanguards surely raises questions about the neat dichotomy drawn between different types of violence. If the ACF is saying the socio-political preconditions for such violence do not at present exist — an argument which may well have some validity — then it should say so much, much more explicitly than was done throughout the article.

4. Finally, I couldn't help but be amazed at the comment that the

members of the various armed struggle groups throughout the world put the lives of themselves, friends and relatives on the line not because they are interested in any type of liberation but out of pure self-interest. If the writer is seriously suggesting the majority of individuals involved in groups as diverse as the IRA, ETA, PLO or the ANC simply fight like a pack of mercenaries in the hope of reaping personal benefits in the post-colonial set-up, then I suggest he or she should stop writing in revolutionary publications and take up a job in Fleet Street instead. Sorry to sound so bitter but the fact is that internationally thousands upon thousands of ordinary people have been forced to take up arms and for the most part their motivations are totally genuine. That they talk of revolution in the language of so-called national liberation and dictatorial Marxism should be a source of shame for the anarchist movement as much as for anyone else. At a time when anarchist groups are marginalised and irrelevant to an extent beyond belief in over two-thirds of the planet this unfortunately makes such caustic sniping sound all too much like an expression of Eurocentric chauvinism than of a genuinely internationalist appraisal.

That said, all the best for now,
S (Sheffield)

ORGANISE! EDITORS REPLY: We are not particularly interested in the guilt trips that supporters of national liberation movements unload on their critics. The photo of a masked, armed man that accompanied the article could as easily have been a member of ETA or the Corsican FNLC, as it could a Provo. We have consistently argued against both the politics and tactics of various national liberation movements. We never questioned the commitment and courage of those involved in these movements at the grass-roots level, whilst pointing out that the leaderships of these movements were governments in waiting. But that's not the point. Commitment and courage are no substitute for revolutionary politics. Even fascists can courageously fight for political goals. The point is, do the actions and ideas of the various national liberation movements lead to genuine liberation? The answer is clearly no! Take one example. We have made a point of analysing the politics of the ANC. It is quite likely that in some future scenario, the brave and genuinely committed rank and file of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, will be employed to crush a strike or uprising by black workers in the 'New South Africa' that is on the cards.

National liberation movements tended to adopt the language of Marxism because of the situation created by the then ri-

valry between the West and the Soviet bloc, and to a lesser extent, China. They were content to come into the orbit of the USSR or of China to obtain arms and finance. The international anarchist movement has failed to rebuild mass movements throughout the world for a number of reasons, but to blame it for this phenomenon of the Cold War is not on.

Yes, we would have criticised the Angry Brigade if it had come out with the sort of stuff the 2nd June Movement did. This was not one of the errors of the Angry Brigade, but if it had been, we would not have been scared to criticise.

Yes, you do have a point about the relationship between mass movements and small autonomous groups within these mass movements. You cite the example of the Wobblies and the Spanish Anarchists. We can't find much evidence of this with the Wobblies, but it certainly existed in the Spanish anarchist movement. The point here is that groups of anarchist militants, firmly rooted within the mass movement, took part in actions that complemented mass strikes and mobilisations. And yes, we are saying that such actions in Britain in the present conditions are not possible or advisable precisely because of the lack of a mass movement. Finally, we cannot take your accusation of Eurocentric chauvinism seriously. We have consistently given space to news and analysis on the world outside Europe, much more so than other British libertarian publications. We refuse to support national liberation movements because we are revolutionary internationalists.

Music

DEAR ORGANISE!

It's important to analyse cultural forms, like music, to understand how they can produce forms of resistance, or reproduce and sustain capitalist relations in our everyday lives. So, while I was glad to see the subject of music as an area of class struggle dealt with in *Organise!* 30, I disagree with much of the analysis and would like to add my own contribution.

At the risk of over-schematising the article, there seems to be a distinction being drawn between music of resistance which is non-commodified, experimental, avant-garde, authentic and non-technological, and pro-capitalist music, which is commodified, formalised, commercial, inauthentic and technology-dependent.

But is it the case that because a form of cultural production is distributed in the shape of a commodity it cannot be an expression of resistance to class, race, or gender oppressions? Is it simply that forms of music, such as avant-garde, jazz or folk, which attempt to set themselves apart from the commercial mainstream auto-

matically qualify for the status of being in some way rebellious?

Western Marxist intellectuals have often taken this line when analysing the role of culture in the reproduction of capitalist ideology. For them the 'mass media' of the 'culture industry' churns out easily-swallowed rubbish to distract the proletariat from realising its goal of a communist society. Conversely, intellectually challenging art, eg James Joyce in literature, Arnold Schoenberg in music or Sergei Eisenstein in cinema, is presented as revolutionary since its avant-garde form is claimed to question and undermine bourgeois ideology.

However, such a distinction actually serves bourgeois ideology very well. The bourgeoisie associate themselves not only with classical music, but with avant-garde, jazz and folk music, for instance, as patrons and audiences. This association is a form of cultural capital which proves their taste and discrimination and sets them apart from the 'masses' and their vulgar taste for 'mass culture'. This distinction, between the bourgeoisie and its haute cuisine for the refined palate, and the proles with their appetite for tasteless fast-food actually serves to under-write and justify the privileges of the bourgeoisie, ie "Even if you gave the masses all the money they wanted they would only squander it on rubbish, so they don't deserve anyway".

So, how can commodified music be resistant? Take, for example, the writer's claim that "increasing technological sophistication continues to push home-made music into the margins". While they may not be dirt cheap, electronic and computerised musical instruments are not significantly more expensive (in the case of drum machines far cheaper) than acoustic/traditional instruments of an equal sound quality. Technology, such as sampling, allows the user to 'steal' expensive studio-produced sounds, rhythms and melodies and combine them in new ways to produce his/her own music. This practice subverts the idea of individual creativity as the mark of individual genius and undermines the concept of music as copy-righted property.

The music and words of black rap groups like Public Enemy, though commodified and commercial, can serve as a focal point of identification for cultures of resistance to challenge the ethnic and class oppressions they face.

Rave music and the whole rave/dance culture is highly technology-dependent, yet, while again being commercial, also has its resistant aspects, in, for example, its emphasis on the body as site of pleasure, even ecstasy, achieved through music, dance and drugs, as opposed to the body as a disciplined tool in the service of wage labour.

Using commodification, technology, or musical styles as indicators of resistance or its lack is of limited use for the reasons mentioned above. What might be more useful is an approach which looks for opportunities and possibilities within 'popular' (a less derogatory term than 'mass') culture, and its technologies, to find spaces and points of resistance to challenge bourgeois ideology from within, rather than searching for pure, authentic examples of non-commercial, non-technological music to symbolise an ideal of resistance,

In solidarity
DS (Aylesbury)

DEAR ORGANISE!

In response to R.O.S's letter (*Organise!* 31) on my article about music, could I add the following comments to the remarks made by the editors?

I didn't discuss punk, or Crass music in the article because there is a danger of seeing only a single form of music as having street-cred, and anarchism has been so clearly identified with punk that the connection doesn't need to be emphasised yet again.

Yes, I could have written an article just about contemporary music, but it would have made it more difficult to show how class struggle has always permeated and shaped music and culture — which was my main purpose. I didn't set out to write an article about anarchism and music; otherwise I would have mentioned the Fugs, MC5, and so on. What I wanted was to show that culture is a battleground, and that by consciously developing a culture of opposition we can strengthen our struggle against capitalism.

Culture isn't a given 'thing' but something which is shaped by our environment and our actions.

As for John Cage, it should be recognised that whatever you think his music sounds like (and it isn't all as dire as people pretend, listen for example to 'Finnegan's Wake') it has to be conceded that he pushed back the boundaries of music. Without experimentation in music we might only have Strauss! or the Tango! — except that they also challenged the musical preconceptions of their time.

I don't deny that people reproduce music as a commodity using capitalist technology — and that's what Number One records are, commodities — but that wasn't my point.

Music is not rooted in daily life in the way it should be. Creativity and enjoyment are mediated by money and technology. The collective creation of music is now split between producer and consumer. This alienation stems from capitalism, and is one of the reasons why people oppose capitalism. It is an alienation which affects all areas of life (not just music).

ME (Saffron Walden)

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 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 anarchists 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.

JOIN US!

THE INTERNAL CRISIS in the Conservative Party, the dropping of any pretensions of 'socialism' by the Labour Party, and the BNP victory in Millwall, point to a vacuum opening in British political life. This is reflected throughout the world. The Communist Parties are all in disarray and terminal decline, and the social democratic and Labourist Parties have become increasingly discredited in the eyes of the working class — after terms of office in France, Greece and Spain etc.

The collapse of the left of capitalism, which always masqueraded as an alternative for the working class, and which to a lesser or greater extent received its support, has left a void that is not being filled by revolutionaries. The fascist

groups are seizing advantage of this and attempting to build up mass support. They must be met with resistance, both at the level of ideas and of physical force. It is imperative that we now start creating a revolutionary anarchist movement that can agitate in the neighbourhoods and workplaces and start offering a credible revolutionary alternative to the mass of the population.

Rebirth

It may look grim, with reaction triumphant throughout the world. Nevertheless, opportunities have been opened up by the new situation. It could be argued that a new period in history has started. With the rebirth of anarchist movements in Eastern Europe and Greece, and their emergence in Turkey, Lebanon and Africa, the signs are that an international revolutionary politics can be recreated after so many years of authoritarian Leninism. It is up to revolutionary libertari-

