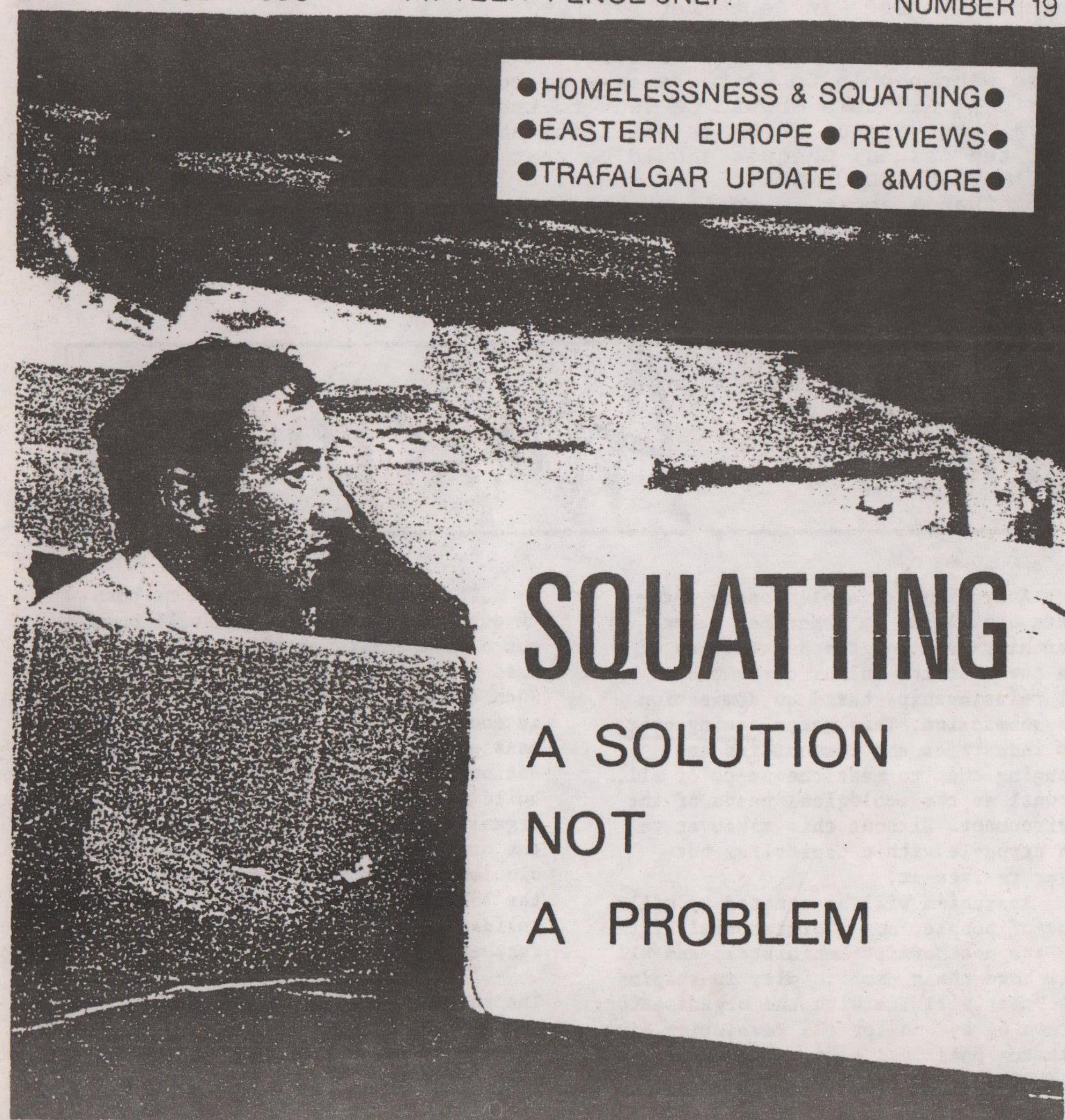


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Saturday 1st March for DEWSBURY 82. Meet Leeds Trades and Labour Club, Chappeltown Road, LS7. 1pm.

● HOMELESSNESS & SQUATTING ●
● EASTERN EUROPE ● REVIEWS ●
● TRAFALGAR UPDATE ● & MORE ●



Self-defence is no offence

INTRO.

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST NEWSLETTER, P.O. BOX 110, LIVERPOOL, L69 8DP.

Yes folks!

It's that time of year again, when the hard-pressed newsletter collective take a month off to lounge in the sun, savour England's World Cup victory (!) and concoct yet more fiendish articles for our twentieth issue in September.

All this means that the next deadline will be MONDAY AUGUST 27th. We always welcome readers letters, news and responses to articles. We also want people to write reviews of books, pamphlets, films etc (see inside). All this should be sent to the address above.

Subscription fees are still at the outrageously low rate of £2 for ten issues. Cheques should be sent to the P.O. Box but made out to 'MUTUAL AID CENTRE'.

That's about it really, other than to say that, unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Liverpool Anarchist Group as a whole. See ya.

BASIC ANARCHISM.

Anarchism is revolutionary anti-state socialism. In practical terms, anarchists aim for the destruction of the power of the ruling class and of all relationships based on domination and submission. This means taking over our industries and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

Anarchism will be created by millions of people, not a dictatorial elite (we are not Marxist-Leninists), and all will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations thrown up by and for the revolution, not with the political parties who will try to dominate and destroy them.

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations (examples of which go from the original Soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/85 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

There is no truce in the class war. The answer to ruling class power is continual and widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP

REAL REVOLUTION ?

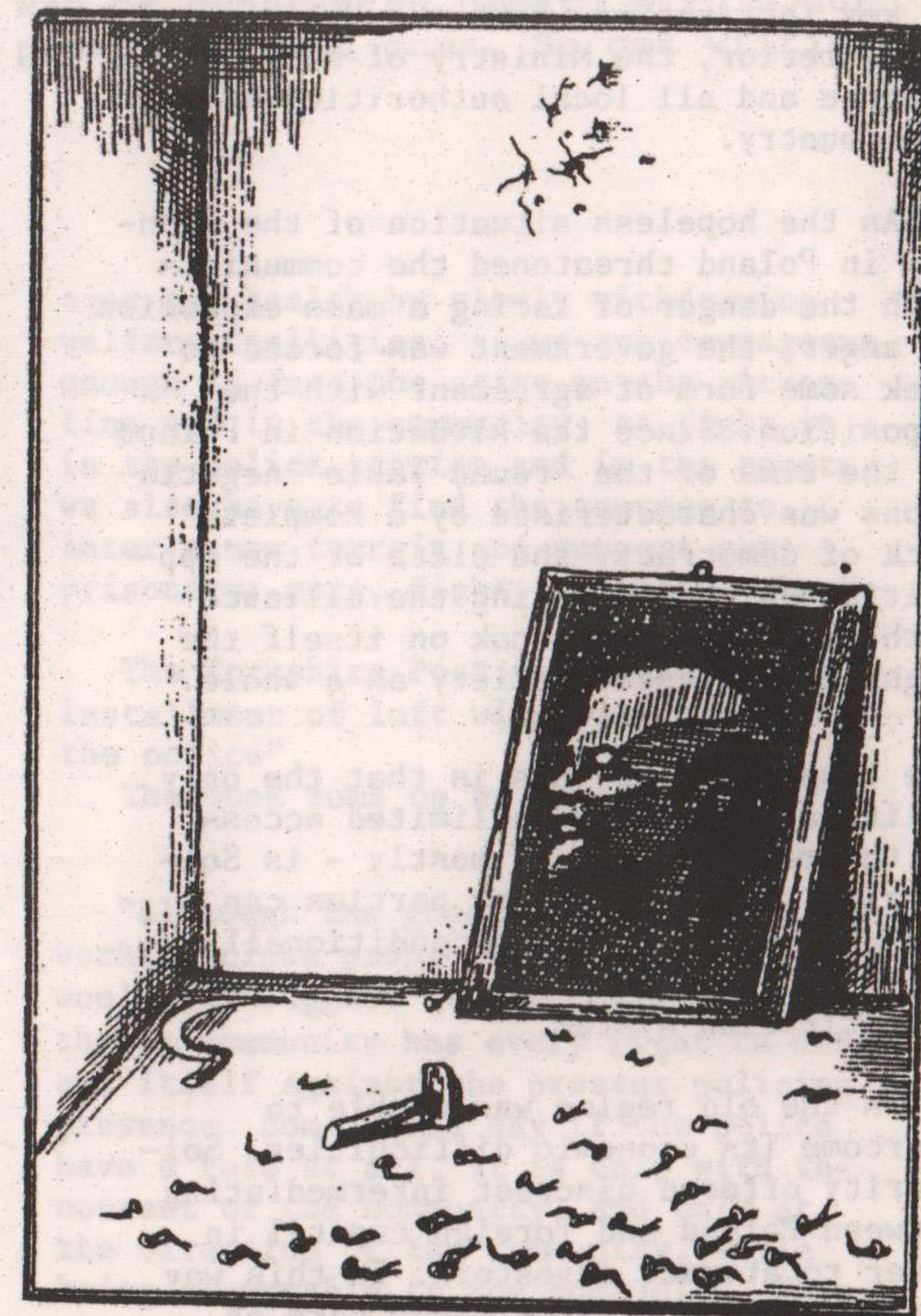
The speed of change in Eastern Europe has taken many people by surprise and has made analysis of the situation difficult. Merseyside Anarchist recently received some articles by the Polish Anarchist Federation which we are happy to reprint.

The first looks at the recent 'revolutions' and questions the extent to which things have really changed. The second (which will appear in our September issue) is a history of anarchism in Poland and an outline of its present resurgence.

The recent rapid changes in all East European countries may seem quite incredible. In fact they are so, at least to some extent, as in "normal" conditions one hundred years would probably not be enough to reconstruct everything so quickly. But the problem is of a different nature: the point is that conditions have never been "normal" in Eastern Europe, at least since the Second World War.

The growing optimism of Western leaders and the sudden growth of feeling of freedom among those who have been living under the shadow of Big Brother for so long inevitably brings us to the basic question: why did it all happen? The fact that the Western world has always been known for its political blindness and that over 40 years of communist tyranny in almost half of Europe didn't teach it anything, is nothing new. But some of those who had to live behind the Iron Curtain are much more careful and do not jump to conclusions so easily.

What seems pretty incomprehensible for the West, and what is quite clear for us, is that "Perestroika" did not come as a godsend and that not a single tyrant gives away their power for nothing. Perestroika, which has forced modernisation of the Soviet state (and the whole Eastern Bloc as well), was a necessary condition which had to be fulfilled in order to maintain the powerful international position of the Soviet Union. The only purpose of Perestroika is to strengthen the already existing system. Although the methods which are being used now are quite new, put simply, need is the mother of invention and the old methods of the stalinist era are no longer effective. There are many ways of keeping power but it is enough to give two examples - Poland and Romania - as in general



the process there mirrors what has gone on throughout the East.

The alliance of the communist regime and the opposition which was agreed during the 'round table' negotiations in Poland is based mainly on the approval of the pro-capitalist course of the Polish economy. The immediate effect of this pact is that the old crew's domination got some new camouflage in exchange for giving 'Solidarity' a chance to share power.

"spontaneous revolution" was a mockery all prepared by the old oligarchy. The bloodbath myth was to clean the hands of those who "voluntarily" joined the insurgents, while Causescu's hasty execution was to silence him and to gain popularity among the people.

It seems quite impossible that Causescu's machine wasn't good enough to measure public opinion long before social discontent began. The whole thing was probably a well arranged trick played by those who were still willing to keep the power although under a new name. Forthcoming elections (so-called "free" ones) are to guarantee that no other party will have time to organise itself and appoint candidates, so the Front will be the only one to count (two members of the Peasants Party were recently murdered while sticking posters up - they were found with their tongues cut out).

Those Western politicians who are gloating over the changes in Eastern Europe may get a shock one day. A system which is 50 years old does not fall to pieces in a single day. What's more, it is strong enough to fool not only the foreign mass media but also people here too. The countries of Eastern Europe have been living in bondage for a long time and they are at present easy to accept a substitute for real change. This is true not only in Poland and Romania but is the case all over the East.

The lesson for us then is that nothing is new. It has been proved again and again that government is murder. We should not let big bosses fool us, as it is our life and we alone can change it. Nobody will do it for us and, what is more, we shouldn't let anybody do so unless we want to replace old masters with new ones. We should also remember that there are dozens of "leaders" saying they have the right answers but all they are about is riding on our backs. They are as much an obstacle to any change as the state itself. If you disagree, just turn on your TV - there you will always find another Lech Walesa!

**To be continued
in September's
newsletter....**

Of course, according to the best totalitarian traditions, the government doesn't bother itself with asking for people's permission to do this or that and nobody gives a damn for what people think.

The situation in Romania, though it may seem to be completely different, is in fact another example of what authority is able to do and how nicely it can camouflage its intentions in order to retain power.

As a matter of fact, nobody tried to analyse back-stage arrangements in the communist apparatus of Causescu - the whole world was paralysed by what happened in Romania. Now that the fight is over we can try to have a more in depth opinion.

What can be easily noticed is that the new Romanian authorities are dominated by ex-communists from the old regime or, at least, by those who were not directly involved in Causescu's mafia but who were still doing well at that time. And in Romania "doing well" meant obviously to collaborate with oppressors. How did it happen that those people are there again? Why did they give up all the profits they used to have just because they were lucky enough to belong to the communist elite?

The National Salvation Front, which was "spontaneously" created at the height of street fighting in Bucharest had in fact been formed long before the troops were sent to Timisoara. The number of casualties, previously reported at 80,000, eventually dropped to some 600. Why? Who was so particular about making people impressed by a bloodbath? The famous photograph, which has shocked the world, showing the body of a young woman with a baby nearby, turned out to be a hoax, as bodies had been dragged out from two different graves and had nothing to do with the famous Timisoara massacre. Who did it and what for? General Vlad, previously in charge of the secret police declared that his troops joined the "revolution" just at the beginning of the uprising. If so, why did the new authorities find it so important to keep on repeating that there were still strong Securitate troops fighting back in major cities?

We will never know anything for sure, but what can now be said is that the



of Poland and its old-fashioned economy mean good prospects for those interested in making a quick buck with no questions asked. Sooner or later foreign capitalists will take complete control of Polish industry and will start to impose their conditions and settle their own rules. Accepting credits, so eagerly granted by the West, can only result in further economic dependence and eventually in political dependence. Joining the international capitalist market will at once put Poland among the Third World countries. The majority of our society already find it difficult to make ends meet as most earnings have to be spent on food, which is increasingly expensive (that's the very first achievement of Mazowiecki's "market economy"). That's why the so-called middle class, which is so important in developed countries, can never appear here, although the government has already based its vision of economic development on this non-existing class. These processes can cause poverty only (already worse than conditions known under communist rule) and will surely result in both mass unemployment and the growth of anger among working class people. No doubt, these will become the greatest problems in Poland and the question of class war will be back here again.

Solidarity as a trade union is no longer an organisation fighting for working class rights as it became an instrument of authority. This transformed it from a free trade union onto a mechanism for transmitting orders from the state to the people. As the previously used way of exercising power became useless, it was necessary for the old oligarchy to introduce some adaption in an attempt to keep them secure and to retain power. This meant that the worn out communist mask of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) had to be discarded in favour of a new, social democratic one. In fact nothing has changed of course, and the communists are still keeping tight hold of key institutions like the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of National Defence and all local authorities around the country.

As the hopeless situation of the economy in Poland threatened the communists with the danger of facing a mass explosion of anger, the government was forced to seek some form of agreement with the opposition. Since the situation in Poland at the time of the 'round Table' negotiations was characterised by a complete lack of democracy, the elite of the opposition which was making the alliance with the communists took on itself the right to represent society as a whole.

The best proof of this is that the only political force with unlimited access to the mass media - TV mostly - is Solidarity. Other groups or parties can share it only if they unconditionally agree to take part in creating a new authoritarian system.

As the old regime was unable to overcome its economic difficulties, Solidarity offered discreet intermediating between Poland and foreign capital in order to attract investors. In this way the old PZPR apparatus takes care of Solidarity's positive image and, simultaneously, tends to offer a view of them as a leading force on the political scene. In fact, all decisions are still dependent on the old regime. In exchange Solidarity offers credibility for the old oligarchy and some help in adapting it to the new political situation.

Because the Soviet economy is no longer strong enough to support them, our authorities, already driven to despair, are feverishly seeking allies among Western capitalists. The enormous indebtedness

TRAFALGAR SQ. UPDATE



How did you feel when you heard about the poll tax riot on March 31st? Most people we know were over the moon. Not because the violence was something to be glorified or that in itself it was going to stop the poll tax, but because here were people getting off their knees and visibly fighting back. The sight of thousands of people taking on the police while thousands more urged them on was inspirational. Some people may have qualms about the looting that went on (some who claim to be 'socialists' have condemned it), but we see nothing wrong in that. Consumer goods normally beyond the reach of the average working class person suddenly became readily available that day and 'exclusive' clubs and shops were made aware of our collective anger. Don't waste your sympathy on the West End - it was insured anyway!

Though the riot was in no way a threat to the state or the establishment, it was a humiliation for them.

To a government big on law and order rhetoric, the sight of massive disorder spreading through central London was shocking to say the least. On a wider scale, the British state likes to portray itself as benign and dignified. It wishes to give the impression that this is a country run largely by consensus, where every issue can be settled through the democratic process and where class conflict is a thing of the past (we're all middle class now, don'tcha know!). Unfortunately for them, the sight of riot police battling it out with the citizenry in the capital's world famous picture postcard surroundings rather gave the lie to all that.

Of course, politicians of all parties rallied round in an attempt to paper over the cracks and vied with each other in the moral outrage soap opera which ran non-stop for the next week. While Tory back-benchers muttered about bringing back the gibbet, Roy Hattersley demanded police action on

a scale not seen since the Gunpowder Plot, and David Waddington nearly set about a reporter who had the nerve to suggest that the police just might have started it all. Thatcher and Kinnock were at pains to point out how alien the whole business was to our great "traditions of protest", and with a stretch of the imagination you could almost believe that the rioters had in fact beamed down from a passing mother-ship and weren't really British after all!

Now, the riot is long gone but the damage has been done. The scenes which flashed to a zillion TV screens carried with them a subliminal message: Thatcherism has failed. The world saw that after suffering a decade of 'popular capitalism' we may be down but by christ we're not out. And yes, that even in England's green and pleasant land we can still riot like the best of them when we put our minds to it.

TRIAL BY MEDIA

The forces of the state couldn't stop the rioting that day, they had to let it burn itself out (literally) in the streets around Trafalgar Square before mopping up in the wee small hours. That can't repair the damage done to the image of conformity which once prevailed but they are determined to revenge themselves on the people they see as responsible.

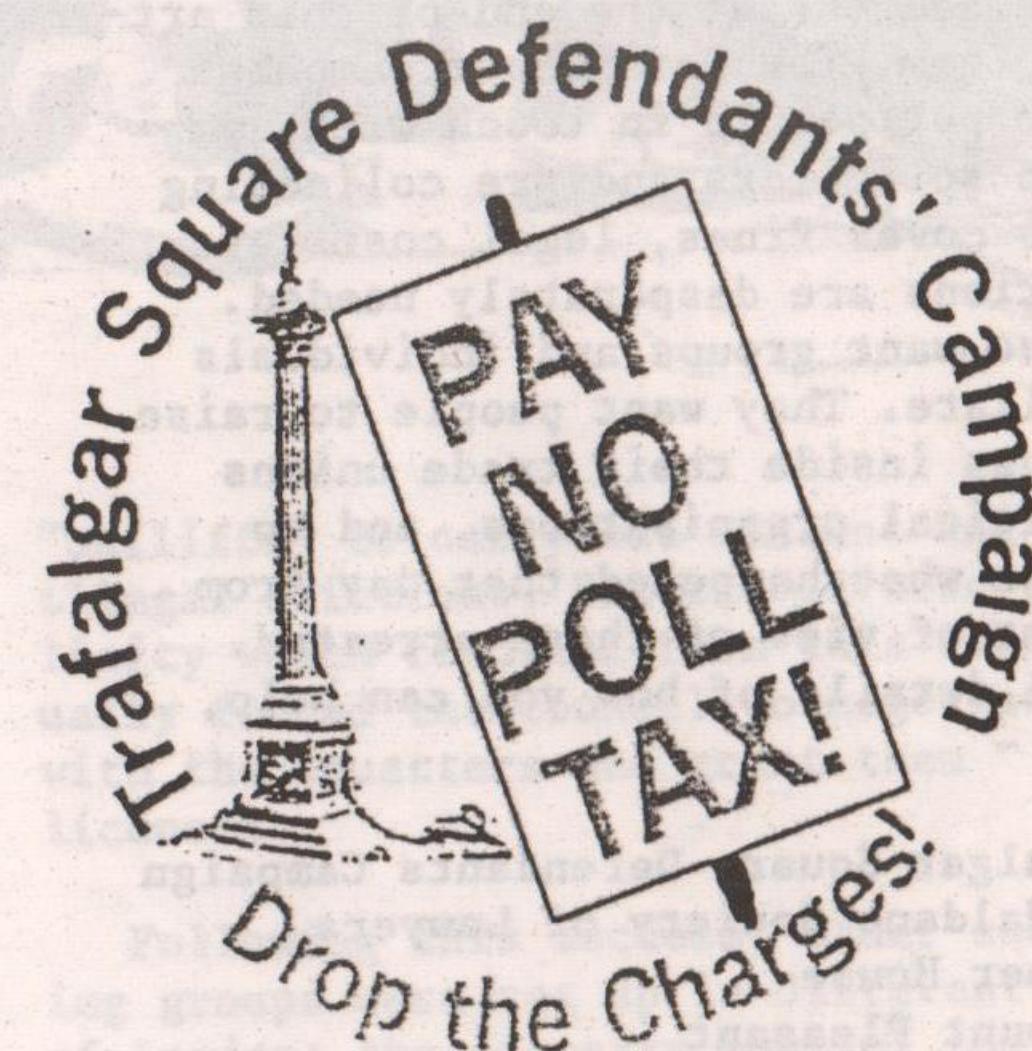
409 people were arrested at Trafalgar Square but that's not enough for them. On April 1st the police appealed for the media to hand over all photographs and film they had of the riot, and the Met's biggest ever operation was begun with 125 coppers engaged in the follow-up.

Gutter rags like the Sun and the Star went far beyond what was asked of them and printed full face pictures of many demonstrators in the hope that some low-life would shop them. The Sun went as far as to declare that its employees were "the willing agents of the state".

This time there were no howls of outrage about 'trial by media' of the sort that followed the Gibraltar killings. It seems that if you're in the SAS it's all right to murder three people on a busy street in broad daylight - anonymity will be guaranteed

and there'll be no charges. But go on a demo where a few Walkmans get looted and you become public enemy number one - with Kelvin McKenzie as judge, jury and executioner!

At the time of writing nearly 100 arrests have been made in post Tiananmen, sorry, Trafalgar Square raids as police 'identify' (their term) people from the 30,000 photo's and 90 hours of film. More raids are sure to follow (so if you were there, make sure your house is clean). On June 5th they ordered newspaper editors to name all the photographers they had in London on the day of the riot. Some journalists have done the decent thing though, and sent their films abroad rather than have them used in riot show trials.



IT AIN'T OVER TILL ITS OVER

It's not enough merely to sympathise with those arrested in connection with the Trafalgar Square riot, now is the time for solidarity and direct aid. The police baton charges on March 31st were just the opening moves of an unprecedented legal assault which aims not only to punish anyone they can lay their hands on, but also to criminalise the whole anti-poll tax movement. The battle of Trafalgar Square has now moved to the courts and must be won there just as it was on the streets.

In the aftermath of the riot, a number of initiatives were begun to help those arrested and the most effective of these has proved to be the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (TSDC). It unconditionally supports all those arrested, it is run by and is accountable to the arr-

esteemed and it is demanding the support of the whole anti-poll tax movement. Refreshingly, it is not dominated by Militant, who showed their true colours when they stated on TV that they'd pass the names of anyone they believed to be connected with the riot to the police. So we know who's side they're on..... Any support TSDC wins from the wider movement can only be beneficial to the breaking of Militant's stranglehold on the campaign.

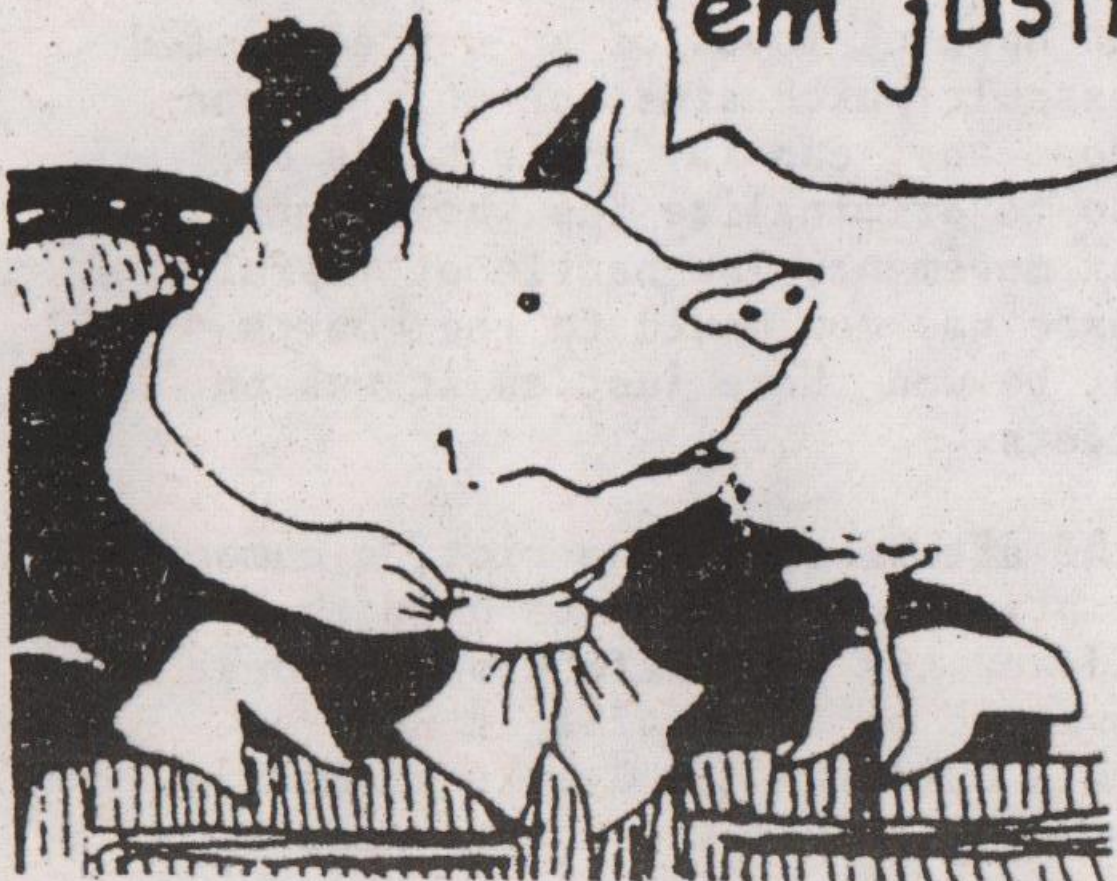
WHAT YOU CAN DO

TSDC want to contact all defendants to co-ordinate legal defences and are asking everyone to demand adjournments in their cases for this reason. So, if you're a defendant, get in touch - if you know someone arrested that day, pass the address at the end of this article to them. The Defendants Campaign can also put people in touch with sympathetic solicitors and are collecting money to cover fines, legal costs etc. So donations are desperately needed. TSDC also want groups and individuals to affiliate. They want people to raise the issues inside their trade unions and political organisations, and to publicise what happened that day from the point of view of those arrested. For full details of how you can help, contact -

Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign
c/o Haldane Society of Lawyers
Panther House
38 Mount Pleasant
London
WC1X 0AP.

Telephone 071 833 8958.

I'll give 'em justice



For people who have never had to, and never will have to squat, the word probably brings up images of hippy dossers living in squalor - but this is a false image created by the press. In fact, squatting has an ancient history and has been carried on in Britain for centuries. Many different people have lived, and still do live in squats, most often because they have nowhere to live and it's their only option. Some people squat for "ideological" or "political" reasons, because they reject the concept of profit and property rights connected with conventional forms of tenure, or they want to live a more communal life-style than that possible in conventional housing.

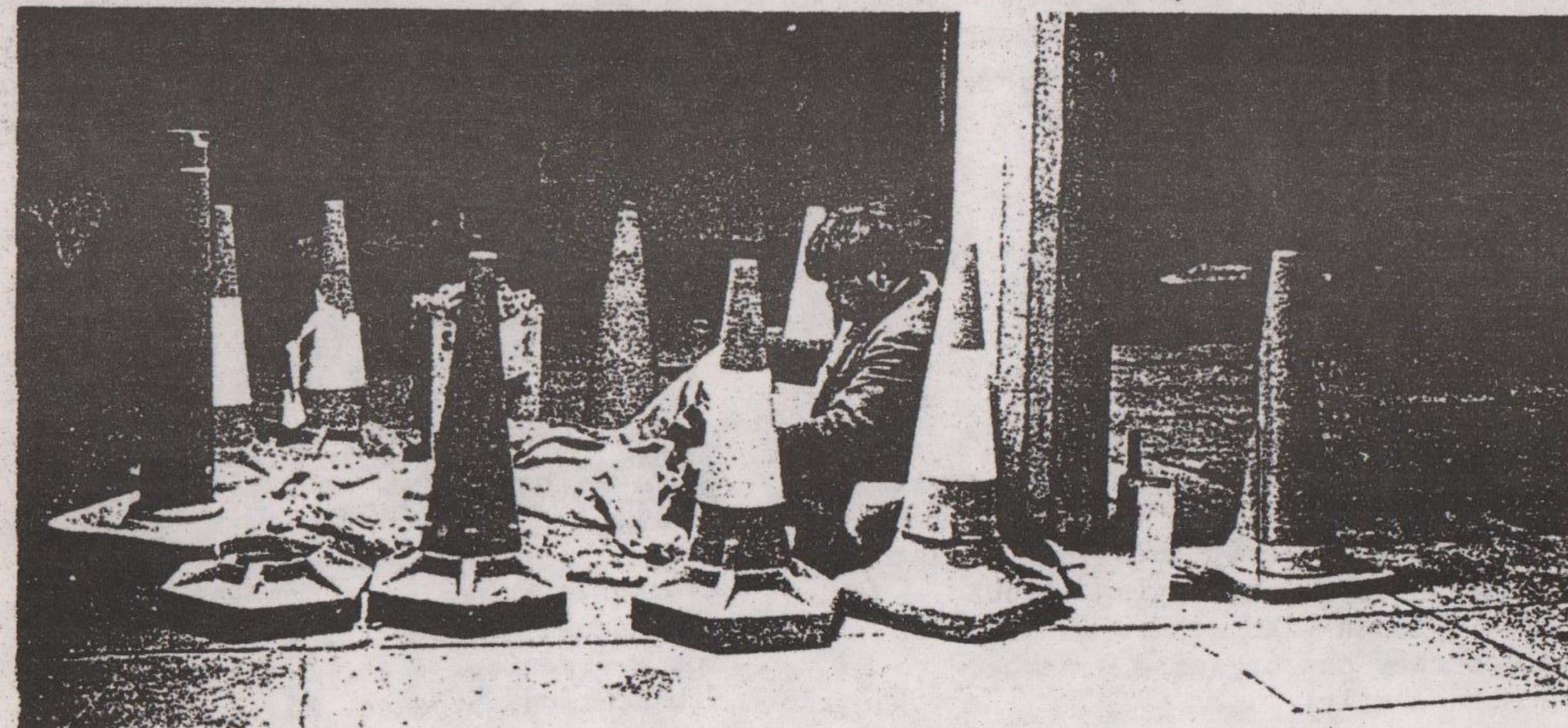
HISTORY

Up to the 17th century, the poorest people in society often squatted on unused common or wasteland. It was held under the common law that anyone who succeeded in building a dwelling on common or wasteland between sunrise and sunset could not lawfully be evicted. A few squatter houses built under this law still exist.

By the 19th century this type of squatting was less possible because most land had been enclosed and brought under cultivation. There were urban squatters at this time, though there are only a few records of their existence. However, a 19th century historian claimed that at one time paupers had squatted in the towers of Windsor Castle.

It wasn't until just after the Second World War that squatting occurred on a mass scale. Hundreds of thousands of houses had been destroyed by bombing and many families were forced to live in impossibly overcrowded conditions. In May 1945 a group called the Vigilantes - many of them anarchists - moved homeless families into empty property in Brighton. After this was reported in the press, squatting spread to other towns on the south coast and to some major cities. Public sympathy was with the Vigilantes, and the government decided to empower local authorities to officially requisition empty property for homeless families. However, local authorities were not obliged to house the homeless, and not all of them made use of this power. In 1946 homeless families began to occupy abandoned army camps,

SQUATTING.



beginning with a camp near Scunthorpe in May. Within six months, 44,000 people had squatted 1,000 army camps all over the country. On Merseyside the first occupation was of an army barracks at West Derby. This was quickly followed by occupations of camps at Bebington, Burscough, Speke, Hoyle, Chester, Frodsham, Sutton, Neston, Wrexham, Wigan and Widnes. The army wasn't interested in evicting people from camps for which it had no further use, and the government believed it would not survive the adverse public reaction if it carried out mass evictions, so most of the squatters were allowed to stay. Many army camps were still occupied up to the 1950's.

Squatting on a mass scale only began again in the late 60's and early 70's, and was most widespread and organised in London (as it still is). It began with the London Squatters Campaign in 1969. This started by organising token occupations of empty buildings, and subsequently moved homeless families into empty council houses in Ilford. The houses were due to be demolished for a redevelopment scheme, but work was not due to begin for several years, meanwhile sound council houses were being left empty. The campaign fought a long battle with Ilford council. The council hired

"bailiffs" to carry out violent and illegal evictions. But the adverse publicity which resulted from this eventually forced the council to negotiate with the squatters and grant them licences.

Following this success, other squatting groups were set up in different parts of London; the property boom of the early 70's encouraged property speculation and made the shortage of housing particularly acute, so squatting became the only option for more and more people. Some squatters managed to remain in occupation for several years, some won permanent housing from their local council, or help in setting up housing co-ops. The squatting campaigns of the 70's helped bring about the Homeless Persons Act of 1977, which imposes a duty on councils to house homeless people. However, the Act tends to exclude people without children, and people who are "intentionally homeless". This clause is interpreted widely, and enables councils to evade their responsibilities.

SQUATTING ADVICE AT M.A.C.

Some adverse court decisions during the 70's eroded squatters existing legal

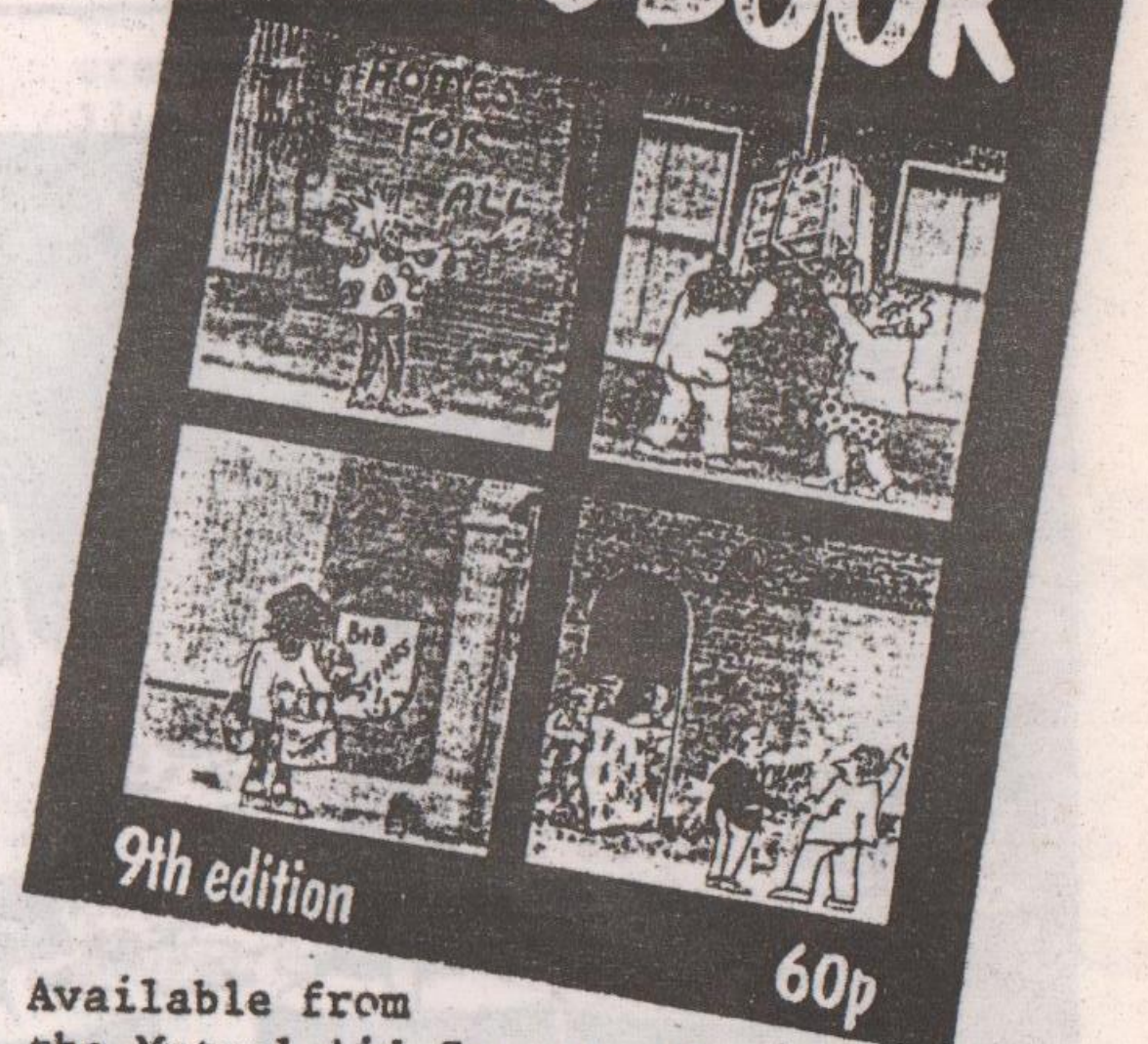
rights. Finally, the Criminal Law Act of 1977 introduced new legislation which made squatting more difficult, and squatting declined for a while as people were uncertain of what their legal rights were.

However, squatting is still legal, and there are still tens of thousands of squatters in Britain; though squatting is not carried out on the same scale as in the 70's, when in some instances whole streets were squatted.

There are squatting advice sessions at the Mutual Aid Centre, 45 Seel St, every Thursday from 1 - 5pm. We aim to give potential squatters advice, information about their legal rights and practical help. Squatting on Merseyside is not (yet!) well organised, and we are disappointed that so far, no people who are currently living in squats are involved in the group. This limits what we can do, but we are trying to put people in touch with others who want to squat so they can organise somewhere to live more easily.

We are also still gleaning local information that may be of use to squatters. Liverpool City Council claims to have an "enlightened" policy towards the homeless, but like all councils they interpret their responsibilities as strictly as possible. A serious omission is that there is no direct access hostel i.e., a place you can simply walk into off the street if you're homeless and penniless. You either have to pay at a privately run hostel, or get referred

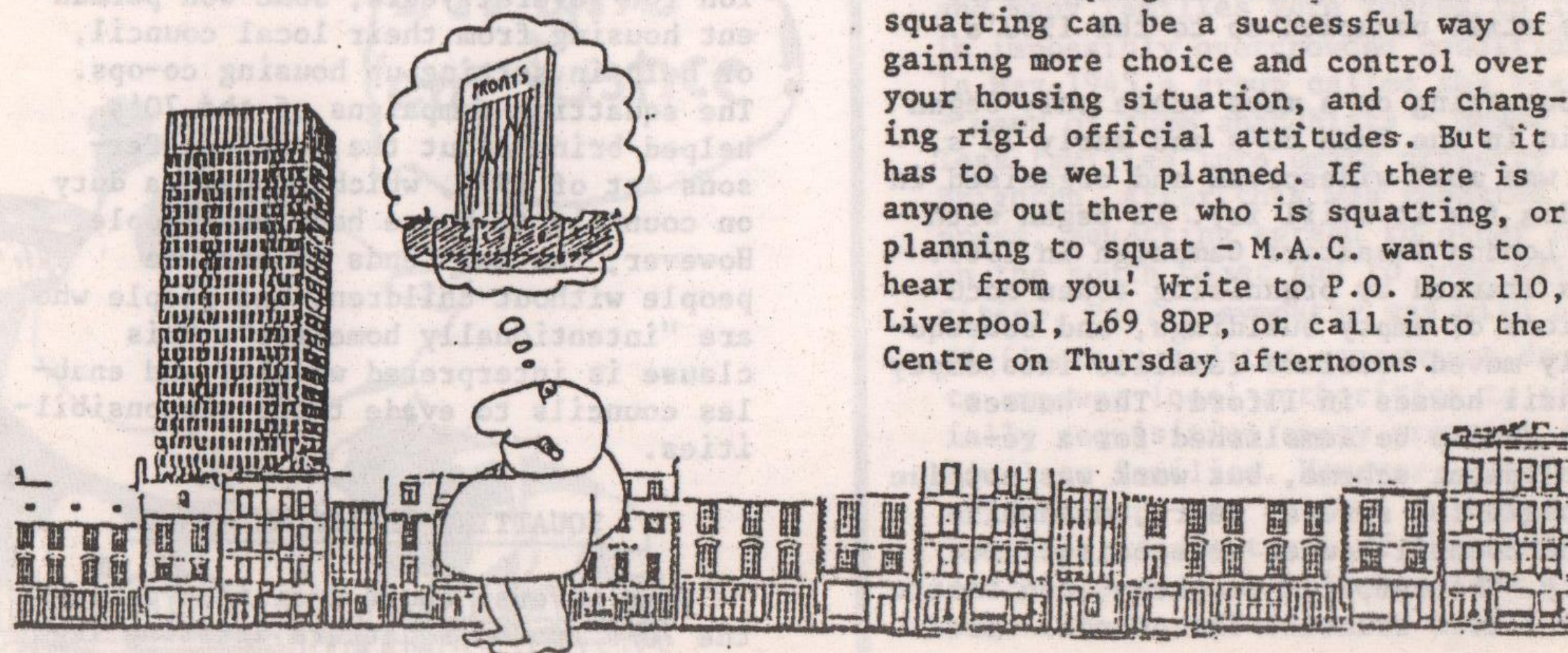
SQUATTERS HANDBOOK



Available from
the Mutual Aid Centre, anytime
for a donation.
9th Edition. 56pages. A5.

to a council-owned hostel by the social services or a housing aid office; in which case you'll be subjected to intrusive bureaucratic investigation and be expected to give all kinds of details about your personal life, almost down to the size of your knickers. If the council offers you a place, you have no choice about where it is, and you only get one offer. If you don't like it - tough.

Past campaigns have proved that squatting can be a successful way of gaining more choice and control over your housing situation, and of changing rigid official attitudes. But it has to be well planned. If there is anyone out there who is squatting, or planning to squat - M.A.C. wants to hear from you! Write to P.O. Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP, or call into the Centre on Thursday afternoons.



fore taking part, on our behalf, in a competition which will divide workers, and ultimately create employment for some and unemployment for others. But what the hell, as long as jobs go to Sheffield's workers "I'm alright Jack". As the Single European Market approaches, the competition between the cities of northern England will hot up and Labour councillors are showing their true colours.

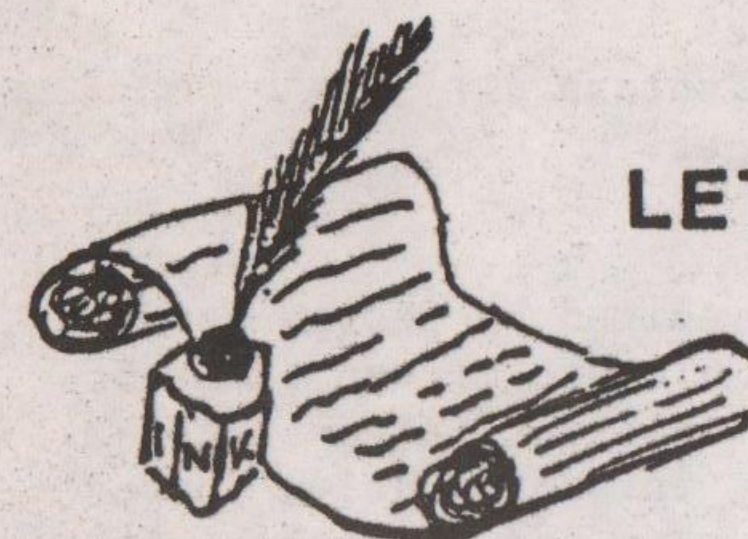
In this case, the WSG is a two headed serpent. Poll Tax bills will be high, to cover the cost, therefore wages will have to take this into account to enable workers to pay it. This will result in more non-payment of the Poll Tax. Leisure facilities for the people of Sheffield are being closed down to save money for the WSG, this also makes a high Poll Tax difficult to justify.

The only jobs on offer in reality (as opposed to those in the minds of the councillors), are low paid such as part time shop assistants and sports facility attendants. The companies that are hardly flocking to Sheffield anyway, are not employing local people in any of the 'good jobs'. The council compounds this by using volunteers (read scabs) to do skilled jobs such as painting and decorating, translating etc, for the games. This is a panic measure as the true cost of the games is becoming apparent. The "Telethon 90 Paint The Village" farce was a disaster. Only 300 out of an expected 2,000 turned up, many were small children and the majority of the work done will have to be gone over by proper painters. There were also a few people who volunteered only to vandalise and disrupt the work being done.

The council, in acting over the heads of the people of Sheffield and without consultation, forced us into the position of having to find other ways of making ourselves heard. We never wanted the WSG and if we can disrupt them or the preparations for them, we will.

Terry,

Sheffield.



LETTERS

Last month we printed a piece about community opposition to the holding of the World Student Games in Sheffield. We have since received this letter which follows the story up.....

Dear Merseyside Anarchist,

Since your last newsletter went to press, the organisation responsible for organising the World Stupid Games has collapsed. Universiade GB formally wound themselves up on Friday June 1st. The reaction of Sheffield council was to set up another body and put in another £1 million towards the running of the event. The people of Sheffield are expected to pay for this through the Poll Tax.

Yet again the council has acted without any consultation with their electorate. The sad thing is that most people will not see any alternative to voting for them time and time again, but that's beside the point.

The councillors tell us that they are acting in the interests of the people of Sheffield, that the World Student Games (WSG) will put Sheffield back on the map. It's a publicity stunt that will apparently make companies suddenly think, "Oh, I know, let's set up in Sheffield, they had the WSG there!" It should be obvious to anyone that companies, who's only concern is to make profits, will only set up where profits are to be made. This usually means where wages are most depressed, due to unemployment or local conditions, or where workers are known to be 'not militant'.

It is also obvious that if Sheffield does attract companies, bringing jobs, then all this means is that jobs are'n't going elsewhere. The council are there-



NATIONAL FRONT



Dear Merseyside Anarchist,

On Sunday 17th of June, 17 people were arrested on the A1 after going to an anti-fascist demo in Newcastle. The day in Newcastle had been really good with the fascists on the run all day long and not being able to have a march or show their faces.

The trouble happened on the way home to Leeds at a service station when a load of fascists attacked and trashed a van anti-fascists. The van managed to get away with no-one being hurt but about half an hour later the van was stopped by the cops and everyone in it was arrested and held for affray. All the people in the van were held overnight, released and bailed to appear at the police station again in a few weeks time. As far as we know the fascists were arrested but released a couple of hours after without charge, surprise surprise!

The attack at the services might have been a chance encounter but it's just possible that the fascists were following people home after being angry at not being able to show their faces in Newcastle.

In Solidarity,

Leeds Anarchists

Rightwinger shot
Gunmen in Antibes, southern France, fired from a passing car and wounded a member of the rightwing National Front as he was putting up posters, police said yesterday. — Reuter.

2.6.90

THE ANARCHIST READER
George Woodcock
Published by Fontana
£4.95. 384 pages.

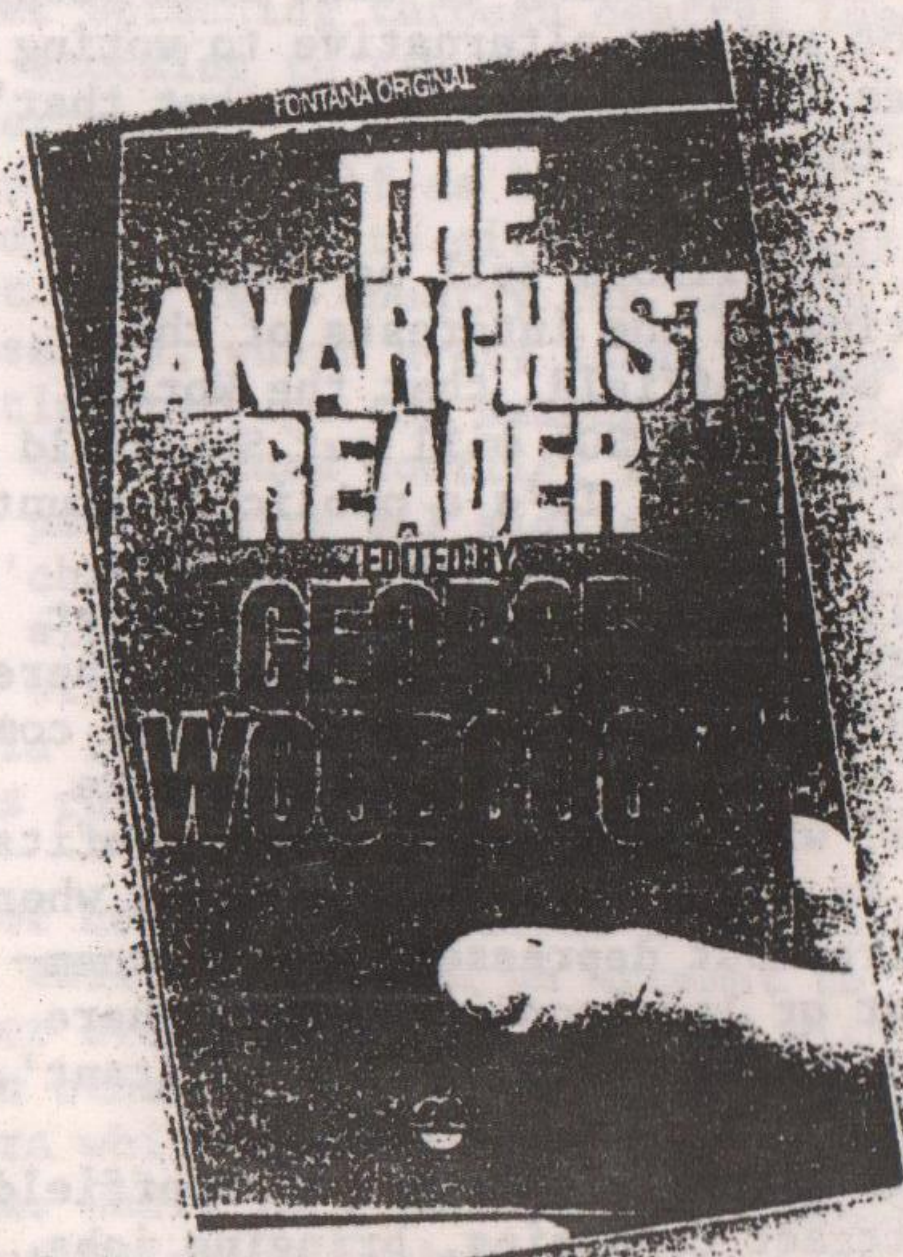
This book, edited by George Woodcock, author of the classic modern study of anarchism, is an essential read for all anarchists who intend to delve deeper into the diversity and relevance of anarchism.

Published by Fontana, it is a collection of essays and letters written by key anarchists throughout history, including such literary giants as Tolstoy, Wilde and Orwell

This totally absorbing book also includes an historical introduction to anarchism and charts the beginnings of anarchist thinking, looking closely at Pierre Joseph Proudhon and the effects of his works on the likes of Marx and the anarchist activist Michael Bakunin.

With many of the works being translated for the first time or updated by Woodcock, this book provides an excellent viewpoint from which to scan the history of anarchist ideas and relate them to modern day society.

Reviewed by the Loxlie DC Rebels.



REVIEWS.

The response to last month's appeal for readers to send in reviews has been encouraging, so this section will probably appear regularly in future newsletters. So, if you've recently read or seen something which was good, bad or indifferent, tell us about it! Reviews aren't just for boring old academics, they're a good way of generating debate within our movement, weeding out crap ideas and promoting good ones. So get writing.

STATE OF SIEGE

Politics and policing in the coalfields in the Miners Strike.

Jim Coulter, Susan Miller & Martin Walker
Canary Press.

This book is a collection of three reports written during the miners strike. If you need reminding of the behaviour of the coppers, or if you're too young to remember, this book is a good way to find out what was going on. It includes a brief history of the NUM and a good description of how the soup kitchens were organised.

The book takes the side of the miners without compromise, a lot of it is the words of the miners themselves. It points out that the coppers were a law unto themselves and that the communities were very naive, to start with, about how the state would behave towards them. As the book goes on chronologically, it shows how the attitude of the strikers towards the police changed. A very clear illustration of the principle of politicisation through struggle. A recurring theme of the book is that the police have only one real task, that of defending the interests of the ruling class.

It is not written by anarchists, it is, however, very critical of the 'labour movement leadership' and is fiercely defensive of the working class. The section on imprisonment has this to say -

"If we are courageous enough to face the state as it impoverishes us and dam-

ages our health by slowly withdrawing welfare facilities; if we are courageous enough to face the state on the picket line and in the community; to fight it in the police station and in the courts; we also have to find the courage to enter a new terrain and support our prisoners; more, fight to release them".

The Yorkshire Post called it "Another installment of left wing bile against the police".

The book sums up by saying,

"Although the great majority of working class people in the coalfields would not suggest it, it could be said that a community has every right to defend itself against the present policing presence. Some would say if the police have a role at all, it is only with the consent of the community, and only at the direction of the community, while being answerable to the community. When the community is forced to be answerable to the police, when their culture and collectivity is attacked, when their community is put on trial by a state police force, then the people are 'right to rebel'. Right is on their side if they try to expel the police by force from their communities".

STATE OF SIEGE costs £3.50 and should be available from all good radical bookshops, or via A Distribution, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1.

Since their formation a couple of years ago, the Anarchist Workers Group (who publish SFB), have attracted considerable flak from many in the movement - much of it unjustified. Personally, I think part of the problem lies in the way the AWG put across their ideas. Both in their journal and in public they present well thought out and closely argued points, but in doing so they bear an uncanny resemblance to members of the little trot parties we all love to hate! That said, it's high time non-AWG anarchists forgot the presentation and concentrated on the ideas.

Socialism From Below no 2 will no doubt be criticised for being 'too heavy'. Its articles are detailed and wordy but well worth the effort. I'm not sure who SFB is aimed at but there's no doubt that the already committed will get more out of it than the casual browser. If it meant for other anarchists then its 'heaviness' can be excused. There's no point being a distinct organisation if your not going to put education, arguments and strategies forward to the wider movement, and SFB does just this.

It begins with an analysis of the events in Eastern Europe and presents good solid anarchist responses to the changes, and to the myths being peddled about them in the West. Next up is a detailed piece on abortion and embryology. Though its conclusions are a timely restatement of previous anarchist arguments (no compromises over abortion rights or time limits, no state intervention in women's decisions and no faith in seemingly 'liberal' laws such as the 1967 Abortion Act), the article is valuable mainly because of its comprehensive history of abortion law and the struggles around it, and its explanation of the recent 'Human Fertilization & Embryology Bill'. Articles such as this are the ammunition anarchists need to win the arguments surrounding such relevant and ongoing issues.

Similarly, 'Pride and Prejudice' argues from a class perspective for Lesbian and Gay liberation and traces the course of, and motives behind, anti-gay legislation.

SOCIALISM

DISCUSSION FORUM OF THE ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP

from below

AWG, PO Box B20, Huddersfield, HD1

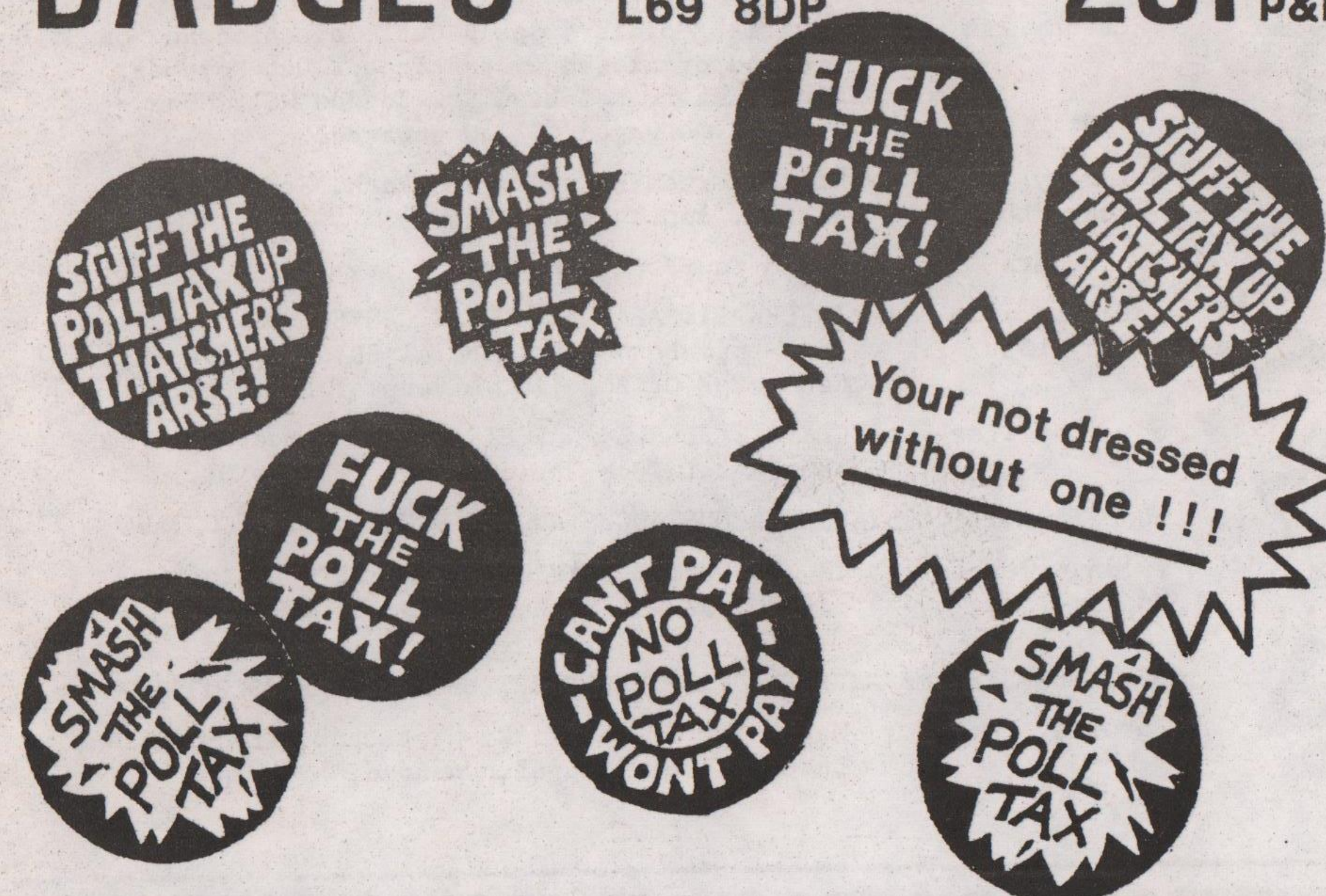
SFB's most controversial article is 'Anarchist Organisation- the next step'. Basically, the AWG are critical of anarchist organisations in episodes such as the Spanish Revolution/Civil War (many of today's anarchist ideas are based around the theory and practice used then). The AWG argue that anarchists should be organised as a type of 'vanguard' and that an anarchist organisation should be able to give a lead by virtue of its better ideas. They make the point that anarchists shouldn't just support struggles but should be able to intervene and out-argue the left. For this to happen there must be a previously agreed programme, formulated and put into practice by a 'cadre' organisation of almost 'professional' anarchist revolutionaries. For many, this will appear too close to 'party' style organisation, but the article anticipates these criticisms and attempts to refute them.

I disagree with their reasons for adopting this approach. I don't doubt

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that it is a workable form of organisation but I think, despite what the AWG say, that there is a danger inherent in it of the emergence of an elite and from that a formalised leadership. I'm also wary of their rejection of anarcho-syndicalism because of faults and mistakes made by the CNT and FAI in Spain. Surely these must be recognised and learned from for use in future mass anarchist movements. They are insufficient grounds for dumping anarcho-syndicalism as a whole. I'm sure that the AWG, along with many other anarchists in Britain, are frustrated with the slow growth of our movement, and with the hostility many so-called anarchists show to basic concepts like organisation and class struggle. But I hope they haven't allowed this to play a part in formulating their ideas - we're involved in a long struggle here with no short cuts. We'll draw people into the movement if our ideas are relevant and if our organisations

are accessible - if we're seen to be indistinct from groups like the SWP or RCP, people will reject us just as they have rejected them.

The AWG are doing a good job in presenting their ideas. Socialism From Below is outlining the way they want anarchism to develop and it is up to all genuine anarchists to read what they're saying. Some of their proposals are controversial but it's important that they are accepted or rejected only after being understood, and not on the basis of prejudice or heresay.

Socialism From Below is available for 60p plus 20p p+p (cheques payable to Anarchist Workers Group) from -

AWG,
P.O. Box B20,
Huddersfield,
HD1 1XS.