

# LISTINGS.

NOVEMBER NOVEMBER NOVEMBER NOVEMBER

- Sat 3rd Anti-racist march, 1pm Alexandra Park, Manchester. Rally 4pm Albert Square. Speakers from ant-deportation campaigns etc.
- Mon 5th Anarchist Group meeting, 8pm, Mutual Aid Centre, 45 Seel St.
- Thurs 8th Video night at the MAC. Trafalgar Sq riot video plus others. 7.30pm, Mutual Aid Centre.
- Sat 10th Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign benefit gig, 'Upstairs at the Picket', Hardman St. 8pm. Pyramid Dream plus support and sound system. £3/£2. Crucial!
- Sun 11th Anti-fascist actions in London and York. Contact P.O. Box 110 for details.
- Mon 12th Anarchist Group meeting, 8pm, Mutual Aid Centre.
- Wed 14th Anti-poll tax protesters in Oriel Rd magistrates court, Bootle.
- Mon 19th & 26th Anarchist Group meetings, 8pm, MAC.
- Sun 25th 'Manchester Martyrs' march. All supporters of British withdrawal from Ireland and anti-fascists are urged to attend. Details from P.O. Box 5, Southwest PDO, Manchester, M15 5EZ.

## MARTYRS

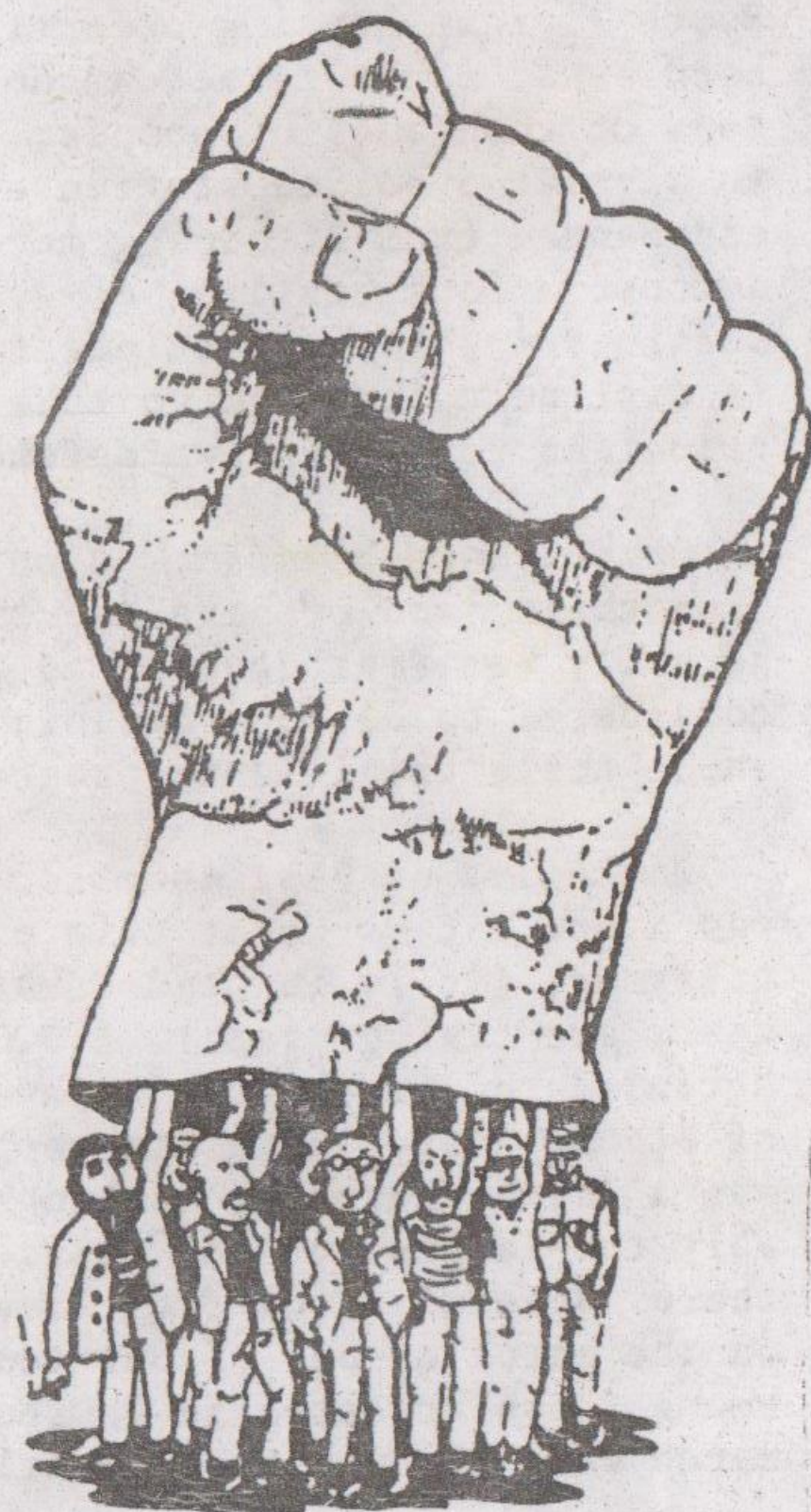


Manchester Martyrs  
Commemoration March

November  
25th

Details: P.O. box 5  
SWPDO, Manchester  
M15 5EZ

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# MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST

newsletter



NOVEMBER 90

inside...

More views on

IRAQ

Local  
Anarchist  
GROUPS

Trafalgar  
SQUARE  
Defendants

DEWSBURY

82 & more

20p

NUMBER 22



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

Hello,

Those of you who are awake will have noticed that the price of your newsletter has risen. Now, you may not think this is worth us commenting on, you may even think we're still not charging enough (and you'd be right!). But the fact remains that this issue produced serious faction fighting which threatened the very stability of our group. Everyone agreed on the need for a price hike but the 'wets' thought that 20p would be best, whilst the 'hardliners' called for a rise of 25p. The 'wets' won, so think yourselves lucky!

Subscriptions have also gone up (as we warned they would) to £3.00 for ten issues. Still amazing value!!

We welcome all contributions of letters, articles and reviews. Be a devil - write something!

THE NEWSLETTER GROUP

AS EVER, THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR AND NOT NECESSARILY OF LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP AS A WHOLE.

**SUBSCRIBE** £3.00 for 10 issues  
Payable to:  
"Mutual Aid Centre"  
at the address above.

**DEADLINE** DEC/JAN issue  
Monday November 26th.

## 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 1984/5 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 ever-widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP.

# THE GULF

BACKGROUND  
TO THE CRISIS

We are being prepared for war. Every newspaper and TV report on the Gulf carries with it the implication that war is inevitable. Politicians speeches are littered with phrases about the time for negotiation being over, and are full of attempts to whip up anti-Iraqi emotions.

How did we reach this point and now that we're here, what should the anarchist position be?



YESTERDAY - THE TRENCHES



TO-DAY - UNEMPLOYED

Labour Party Election Posters, 1923

NOTHING CHANGES

### KUWAIT

When Saddam Hussein's troops occupied Kuwait on August 2nd, we in the West knew very little about that country. But the facts which have emerged since don't generate much sympathy for the deposed royal family.

Kuwait was founded by the al-Sabah family in the mid-18th century as part of the Ottoman Empire. When Iraq gained independence from the empire it took Kuwait with it and this was the position until the arrival of British colonial rule in 1899. Under the British and the

al-Sabah's Kuwait remained a desert backwater until the discovery of oil in 1938 and its development after the Second World War.

Britain eventually accepted the right to 'independence' for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the other small Gulf states in the 1960's, but made sure before they left that all were economically tied to the West. By exploiting both the oil and the cheap migrant workers used to serve the industry, the al-Sabah's had accumulated fantastic wealth and invested it in Europe and the USA.



Kuwait was ruled absolutely by the royal family with only a tiny minority of the population being able to elect people to a rubber-stamping parliament, which the al-Sabah's abolished in the early 80's when Islamic fundamentalists began using it as a platform to criticise them.

#### SADDAM HUSSEIN

As we've seen, Iraq always had a territorial claim to Kuwait and there was an ongoing dispute about oilfields which straddled the border. When Saddam Hussein became leader of the ruling Iraqi Ba'ath Party in 1979 he was, amongst other things, determined to increase Iraq's power in the area and acquire a deep sea port to boost his oil exporting industry - this meant going through Iran or Kuwait to the Gulf. Iran was still coming out of its revolution and appeared relatively weak. So, after a bloody purge of the Ba'ath Party leadership to consolidate his power, Hussein invaded Iran. The desire for a deep sea port was only one of a host of reasons for this, but important nevertheless. When, after eight years of war and half a million casualties, the war reached a stalemate, both sides agreed to recognise the pre-1980 borders in advance of a full peace treaty.

The war severely damaged Iraq's economy and had not brought any territorial or strategic gains. Hussein began agitating within OPEC for an increase in oil prices to help rebuild Iraq but no agreement was reached, and so Hussein began to look towards Kuwait as a solution to his problems. He intensified the border disputes and used them as a pretext for invasion. Iraqi control of Kuwait would boost its oil output and gain it access to the Gulf while increasing Hussein's prestige and allowing him to divert attention away from the humiliating treaty about to be ratified with Iran.

#### THE WEST

The invasion of Kuwait caused a panic in Western governments. A friendly oil-producing client state had vanished overnight and the fear was that Iraq would next go for Saudi Arabia. Even if Hussein was content to keep just Kuwait, it meant that 'unpredictable' Iraq now produced as much oil as the West's major suppliers, Saudi Arabia. After intense

diplomacy the U.S. gained approval for a multinational force to be sent to Saudi Arabia and railroaded agreement through the United Nations.

Because Kuwait was a feudal monarchy, this action couldn't be backed up with the usual claims of American intervention to 'protect democracy and freedom', so the old 'defence of small nations', 'national sovereignty' and 'deterrence of aggression' arguments were trotted out. The hypocrisy of the West is exposed by the fact that they didn't move a muscle to prevent far greater aggression and violation of national sovereignty when Iraq invaded Iran. This, of course, is because Iran wasn't a puppet oil supplier and Khomeini's regime was seen as a threat to the pro-western 'stability' of the region.

#### WAR RESISTANCE

Despite the efforts of the media and politicians, there is not the same nationalistic fervour surrounding this military adventure as there was for the Falklands in 1982. This means that there is much more chance of building a large scale anti-war movement. Demonstrations and actions have already taken place around the world and in Britain several anti-war groups have sprung up.

The largest, supported by the Labour left and CND (who are desperately seeking a lifeline for their rapidly expir-



Oh no.....they're back again!!

ing campaign), is the 'Committee Against War in the Gulf'. This bunch of moderates and part-time pacifists have put their faith in the United Nations. Their main objection is that the multinational force in Saudi is under U.S. rather than U.N. control. Even if you ignore the fact that the U.N. is just a mouthpiece for the international boss class, you can't deny that it has sanctioned the military build-up. So presumably, if the U.N. did eventually order the troops in to massacre Iraqi conscripts and any Kuwaiti who got in the way, that would be all right, would it? What these liberals are really saying is that its fine to uphold Western interests and maintain the status quo as long as its done within the framework of 'international law' and after some behind the scenes arm-twisting at a capitalist talking shop.

As usual, the professional bandwagon-jumpers of the 'hard' left have set up their mini-movements. Each bending over backwards to achieve the most radical posture amidst the totally boring inter-trot squabbles - "We set up our anti-war campaign first", "Well we called our anti-imperialist London demo before you did". Pathetic!

Only one group is putting forward ideas which anarchists can comfortably support. They are 'No War But Class War' who are calling for Western troops to be withdrawn and for direct action against the war effort, as well as for the creation of an international anti-war movement based on those lines.

A minority within the anarchist movement seem to be calling for support for Iraq. This isn't because they back Saddam Hussein but out of a general desire for the West to lose. If and when fighting starts, all anarchists will be working towards a Western withdrawal or defeat (which of course means an Iraqi victory - the lesser of two evils) but at all times we should make it clear that the working class has no 'side' in this war. We don't support the military dictatorship in Iraq or the elected dictatorships of the West - none of them are worth getting butchered for. The last words must go to a U.S. soldier in the Saudi desert: "I'd rather folks paid more for their oil, than pay for their oil with my life".

**NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR** was set up in September at a meeting called by Hackney Solidarity Group, and attended by people from the Anarchist Communist Federation, Class War, Wildcat, the Direct Action Movement, and various individual class struggle anarchists, anti-state communists and others.

We have intervened in demonstrations with our banner- No War but Class War, neither Washington nor Baghdad-and leaflets (send a stamped addresses envelopes for copies). We also organised a picket of BP (see report in this bulletin).\*

We hold regular meetings in London and are trying to organise meetings elsewhere. We can provide speakers if you are holding a meeting.

We would encourage people to set up similar groups around the country, and indeed around the world.

We want to produce this bulletin\* for as long as the Gulf crisis lasts. By spreading information about opposition to the war, we hope to encourage further resistance. Please send us news of any actions, leaflets, press cuttings, etc.

In english or arabic, our message is the same:

**THE WORKING CLASS HAS NO COUNTRY**

الطبقة العاملة ليست لها وطن

**NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR, BM 8884, LONDON WC1N 3XX.**

\*

From "No War But The Class War" (Bulletin No.1)

International anti-war news and comment, available from BM 8884, London WC1N 3XX.



# LETTER ON IRAQ

Dear Merseyside Anarchist,

I feel it necessary to say a few words on your original article on the Gulf crisis, 'Yankee Go Home', and the following letters in reply to it, but also, and most importantly, to the Anarchist Movement's 'initiative', namely its position of 'No War but the Class War'.

Although I feel that the original article was, with respect, very poor, especially its seeming criticism of the Palestinian people and the Arab working class, it did come out (albeit in a roundabout way) with the position of if it comes to a war we must take sides. This is a very important and necessary thing. And this is why I find it very puzzling indeed that the Anarchist Movement seems to think that this position contradicts the slogan 'No War but the Class War'.

Who suffers in such wars? The working class of course! We agree I hope. But let's be more specific. It is the Iraqi working class, the Kurdish people and the Palestinian people who will suffer day to day; it is they who are suffering under the murderous sanctions and they who will suffer in the killing fields if it comes to war - unless of course, the Anarchist Movement has the gall to claim that the British and U.S. murder machines (ie their armies) are just workers in uniform, and in that case, come to think of it, so are the pigs!! And over in Ireland that means that "these terrorists are murdering our working class boys" hey? What a load of rubbish. Such an argument should be left to the Militant, not the Anarchist Movement.

It seems to me that the AWG are the only Anarchist group which has taken a line worthy of the title 'No War but the Class War', for quite simply an anti-Imperialist war and the defeat of the U.S. and British ruling classes and their running dogs would be a massive victory for the working class as a whole. It is not for Anarchists to tell the Iraqi peoples or the Kurds how to fight against Saddam Hussein, they've been doing it for years without our

'helpful' advice. It is our duty in solidarity to support them in their fight against the British and American warmongers in every way possible. Just because you support the Iraqi and Kurdish peoples against Imperialist aggression it doesn't mean in any way that you support such a worthless piece of scum as Saddam Hussein. It must be understood now that this isn't a war against Saddam Hussein (he was put in power by the CIA to serve their interests because of the growth of the Iraqi Communist Party), neither is it a war in defence of the right of national sovereignty, but it is a war to protect Imperialist war profits and their right to exploit the working class by any means necessary to gain the greatest profits.

It cannot be questioned that this is a war against the Iraqi working classes and the working classes of the whole area. It is not Saddam Hussein who will suffer from sanctions or the ruling clique who will die on the battlefields if we allow our ruling class to get away once more with murderous slaughter. Be in no doubt that this is a class war, the problem is that the Anarchist Movement (except the AWG - and I'm not a member) doesn't seem to realise this fact, so contradicting their own sloganising - unless, of course, the British Anarchist Movement has a monopoly say on what class war really is!!

Now is the time to take sides, there is no way out or any fences left to sit on - they've already been taken by the liberal left and the pacifists. Or is Anarchism yet again going to fail to place itself firmly in the hands of the working class, never again to be corrupted and murdered by middle class liberals and lifestylists? I hope not!!

British hands off the Middle East!  
Imperialist troops out now!  
Self-determination for Kurdistan!  
Victory to the Palestinian Revolution.



## WHY UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT

There have now been 500 arrests arising from the police attack on the March 31st anti-poll tax demo in London. We at 'Merseyside Anarchist' have always called for solidarity with the 500 and support for the Trafalgar Square Defendant's Campaign. The following article first appeared in the TSDC newsletter, 'Stand Firm' and we felt it was well worth a timely re-print, bearing in mind the heavy fines and prison sentences which are now being dealt out to those arrested.

Question: I was on the Anti-Poll Tax march that day. I would like to support your campaign, but there are one or two things I'm a bit worried about. Why do you give unconditional support to those arrested?

Answer: The campaign doesn't want to sit in judgement over anyone. The situation is quite clear - the police launched an attack on the march and are now trying to blame not merely demonstrators but even passers-by for what took place. We support all those arrested. We would remind you that not one police officer has been disciplined, despite a mass of evidence indicating law breaking by a large number of police officers.

Q: Well, I appreciate that the police were responsible for starting the trouble, but how can that excuse the behaviour of the louts who just turned up to have a fight with the police?

A: We think you have been influenced too much by the newspapers. Let's get a few points clear from the start. As the Poll Tax is a tax which effects everybody, then all sorts of people are going to get involved in the fightback - and they are going to bring the wealth of all their experience. For many it will be the first political campaign they have been involved with. For others, fighting the Poll Tax will be a continuation of the struggle they have been involved in for maybe years. Over the last ten years in particular, various groups of people have been thrown into conflict with the police - the Black community, striking miners and printers, travellers, football fans, acid house revellers etc. You can't expect people who've been subjected to the routine racism of the police, who have been brutalised on the picket lines, who

have had their homes destroyed, their liberty curtailed, who have witnessed the slaughter of Hillsborough - you can't expect such people to be neutral about the police. The fact of the matter is that the police action at Trafalgar Sq. wasn't something new, but the continuation of a policy of going in hard against sel-





8 ected targets. More and more people who have been subjected to these attacks have reached the conclusion that self-defence is the best response. This is the consequence of experience, not some sort of innate "loutishness" dreamed up by the press. If you want to create a "lout", give someone a blue uniform, riot gear and immunity from prosecution and let them loose in the West End.

Q: OK, I know there's been trouble with the police before, and I recognise the importance of learning from experience. But that's really not enough to justify the attacks on buildings and cars. Some of the behaviour in the West End was disgusting!

A: It still remains unclear why the police drove the angry crowd into the West End - was it a deliberate policy or just incompetence? But let's look closely at just what happened. There have been no reports of demonstrators or "rioters" attacking members of the public (though plenty of accounts of police doing so). The newspapers chose to publicise the lurid accounts put out by theatre managers and the like, about how they protected their clientele, and their fears of fire bombs. But these prejudicial stories merely serve the interests of the big property owners of the West End. As soon as we move away from slur and innuendo, we discover that there were no petrol bombs thrown that evening, that the fears boosted by the theatre proprietors and the press were misplaced.

The stores which were attacked were generally the property of big business - precisely the people who benefit from the introduction of the Poll Tax. Some people obviously felt that rather than simply retaliate against the vicious but stupid police officers, effective self-defence meant attacking their paymasters as well. Often this was done with tact and care, inviting the staff and patrons to move out of the way before destroying a restaurant window. Demonstrators were warning other members of the public that police were running loose, and in particular making sure that those with small children could get to a place of safety. On one occasion when some nazis proposed making a racist attack on an Asian tobacconists, the crowd dealt with the matter immediately, with the fascists joining the evenings casualty list. In fact, aside from police action, there was nothing that occurred that anyone should feel ashamed of. This is why we stand for unconditional support for all those arrested.



Q: Come off it! There was all sorts of vandalism and looting going on. Surely you don't condone that. Surely you don't expect the mass of responsible people involved in opposing the Poll Tax to put up with this behaviour by a minority criminal element.

A: The press has been churning out the old idea of an under-class again. The right-wing version of this says that the underclass is a natural part of society - that some people are always going to be unable to cope and will be feckless, loutish, poor and criminal. The liberal version says that society is rather unfair and that unfortunately some people are driven by desperate poverty and deprivation to become criminals. The trouble with both these views is that they both say: These people are criminals even if it is sad that they are, and this doesn't encourage "criminals" to fight for their rights.

Back in 1981 the underclass idea was used against Black youth in Britain - this time it is being applied to broader sections of youth, squatters etc. These people have suffered constant attacks on all their rights and living standards and have learnt that the only way to respond to direct attacks (including those by the police) is to fight back - whether by defending themselves against the cops or by smashing symbols of conspicuous consumption such as expensive cars and department stores.

If this "mass of responsible people" you talk about is serious, they will see through this pack of lies. The state has imposed a series of attacks affecting the young unemployed. They cannot stay in one place and sign on, and often they are forced into homelessness. Those of us living in London have seen the growth of begging over the last five years. No doubt this is cropping up in other cities. We have witnessed the imposition of

9 grinding poverty reminiscent of the thirties on a section of the working class. If they choose to steal and loot to survive, who are we to criticise? If they use the opportunity of the Poll Tax demonstration, can other marchers complain? No, because these people are also affected by the Poll Tax. And when the "mass of responsible demonstrators" return to their homes after the march, the homeless have no homes to go to.

Q: But I'm not merely talking about those sorts of people. There seems to be sort of evidence that political extremists moved in on the march to turn it into a riot. In the end they carried out precisely what the police wanted to achieve through their provocations.

A: The press, the police and even some left-wing groups have speculated on this, though they never quite agree who to blame. This is just a way of passing the buck. If there had been a premeditated attempt to cause a riot, there would have been much more damage, we would have seen petrol bombs and prepared weapons. This was not the case. Films show sticks of balsa wood being thrown at police - hardly an obvious choice of weapon. Now there has been debate by various shades of opinion as to what is the best way of defeating the Poll Tax. It is not the job of the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign to decide what are the proper tactics to be used. These broader issues will develop along with the Anti-Poll Tax Movement itself. Our role is to co-ordinate support for all those arrested as a result of the March 31st demonstration.

The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign estimates that £50,000 will be needed to cover the fines and court costs of the 500 arrested on March 31st. In addition to this the campaign itself requires money to carry on its work of providing legal assistance, publicising the cases, organising demonstrations and prison pickets in support of the 500. TSDC is also aiming to pay £10 a week to all those who receive prison sentences.

As well as sending donations, TSDC wants groups and individuals to affiliate to the campaign and to get involved in building local support groups.

More details can be had from -

TSDC,  
Room 205,  
Panther House,  
38 Mount Pleasant,  
London,  
WC1X 0AP.



One of the main themes of last months 'Anarchist Organisation' article was that our movement would be strengthened through anarchists joining one of the national organisations (D.A.M., Class War etc).

But where does this leave the local anarchist group? Does it still have a role and if so, what should it be? The following article looks at this and draws on the mistakes made and lessons learned by Liverpool Anarchist Group.

# THE LOCAL GROUP

The last few years have seen an upsurge of interest in anarchism, and one of the results of this has been the formation of numerous city and town-based local anarchist groups. Some have flourished while others have come and gone without anyone noticing.

As a member of the Direct Action Movement I'm a firm believer in the value of national organisations, in anarchists being able to unite around a set of ideas and from there develop agreed policies, strategy and tactics. Even though all the national anarchist organisations have local branches I still believe that, when working properly, local anarchist groups have an important, if not vital, role to play in the growth of our movement.

When most people begin to get interested in anarchism they tend to have a hazy view of what it actually is, and so are reluctant to join a national organisation with a defined philosophy. This is fair enough at the start, but if people are allowed to drift along without contact with other conscious and active anarchists, then their politics can descend into liberalism - which is no good to them or the rest of us!

This is where the local anarchist group should come in. It should be broad based enough to allow newcomers with little knowledge to participate, but defined enough to bring people's politics on and to enable them to take the next necessary step - joining a national organisation. In short, local groups should be seen as a staging post and a contact point for new people - not the be all and end all of anarchist organisation. Of course, local groups are extremely useful for allowing all the anarchists in a given area to organise and co-ordinate their activity regard-

less of their different approaches and groups, but their primary function must be to spread the basic ideas and give newcomers an entry point to the movement.

For this to be able to happen, local groups must have a bottom line - a basic requirement for acceptance. And this must be that the group as a whole and each individual within it believe in class struggle anarchism. Anarchism has always been a working class movement and can only be put into practise with the participation of the mass of working class people and after a successful struggle against the ruling class. Class struggle must therefore be the central plank of any anarchist's ideas, with everything else secondary. From there it follows that no anarchist organisation can function (let alone be effective) if it includes people who don't accept this basic belief.

Pursuing an 'open door' policy where anyone using the term 'anarchist', regardless of their politics, is allowed to participate is one of the main reasons that anarchist groups fail. It means that the group can only agree on what it is opposed to and cannot carry out its main job - telling people what anarchism is. Too wide a variety of views and the involvement of non-anarchists make it impossible to have a collective opinion. This vagueness led Liverpool Anarchist Group to adopt the 'Basic Anarchism' statement which appears in every newsletter, as the minimum agreement necessary for joining.

Its unfortunate that groups should have to do this, but it stems from the fact that its easy for people to call themselves anarchists without understanding what the word actually means.



Anyone who can't or won't accept party discipline, or who can't be bothered to learn about politics, or who simply hates the police or likes a certain fashion or music can and do claim to be anarchists. We as a movement can't stop them but we can at least establish a bottom line - not to exclude anyone who's genuinely interested in finding out more, but so we ourselves can collectively state our beliefs. Outside individuals will continue to have their off-the-wall definitions of anarchism, but what matters at the end of the day is that the movement is able to put across genuine anarchist ideas coherently. 'Open doors' make this impossible.

Local groups can also suffer from over-organisation. Once upon a time, some people in Liverpool (including me!) felt that, as the Anarchist Group had a reliable core of activists and seemed stable, it would be possible to define more strictly the politics of the group. A membership scheme was suggested, based on the 'Basic Anarchism' statement, to establish who exactly was in the group.

From there it was envisaged that we could go on to develop a more formal structure and a much more concrete definition of our anarchism.

It was an attempt to shift the group away from its original propaganda/co-ordination role and towards becoming the vehicle through which anarchism in the area would grow. Despite initial acceptance we found that attendance at meetings dropped and enthusiasm waned. Membership was soon scrapped and fortunately the group was able to outlive this mistake. For me the lesson was clear - if you want to define your anarchism and build a strong organisation, join one of the nationals, and let local groups be what they're best at - loose and activity based. There's nothing wrong with them having discussions and disagreements over the finer points of anarchism, that's a necessary and good thing - but trying to cram everyone within them into a single set of policies doesn't work.

A serious problem with broad based anarchist groups is lack of direction. There are so many causes and campaigns to get involved in that activists can quickly become burned out or disillusioned. We've never really got round this problem in Liverpool but sheer lack of time and energy has forced us to concentrate on a few of the many worthwhile areas such as producing newsletters (!) anti-fascism, anti-poll tax work and solidarity with prisoners as part of the Anarchist Black Cross. While all this activity is good, local groups must combine it with education and debate on anarchism itself, otherwise we just end up as do-gooders tailending a million worthy causes (what I call bob-a-job anarchism), or a rent a mob charging round every demo, riot and fascist-bash without any clear idea why. (This produces adrenalin addicts, not anarchists). Activity is pointless without education and vice versa.

Finally, if all this is correct, it places a responsibility to remain involved with the local group on the shoulders of those of us who are members of the national organisations. Its no good just slugging them off for being directionless and not political enough if you're not prepared to help them along. Anarchists aren't going to be inspired to join a national (which is what we want after all) or even be sympathetic to its politics if they perceive its members to be arrogant, elitist and judgemental. Think about it.



## 12 THE ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR '90

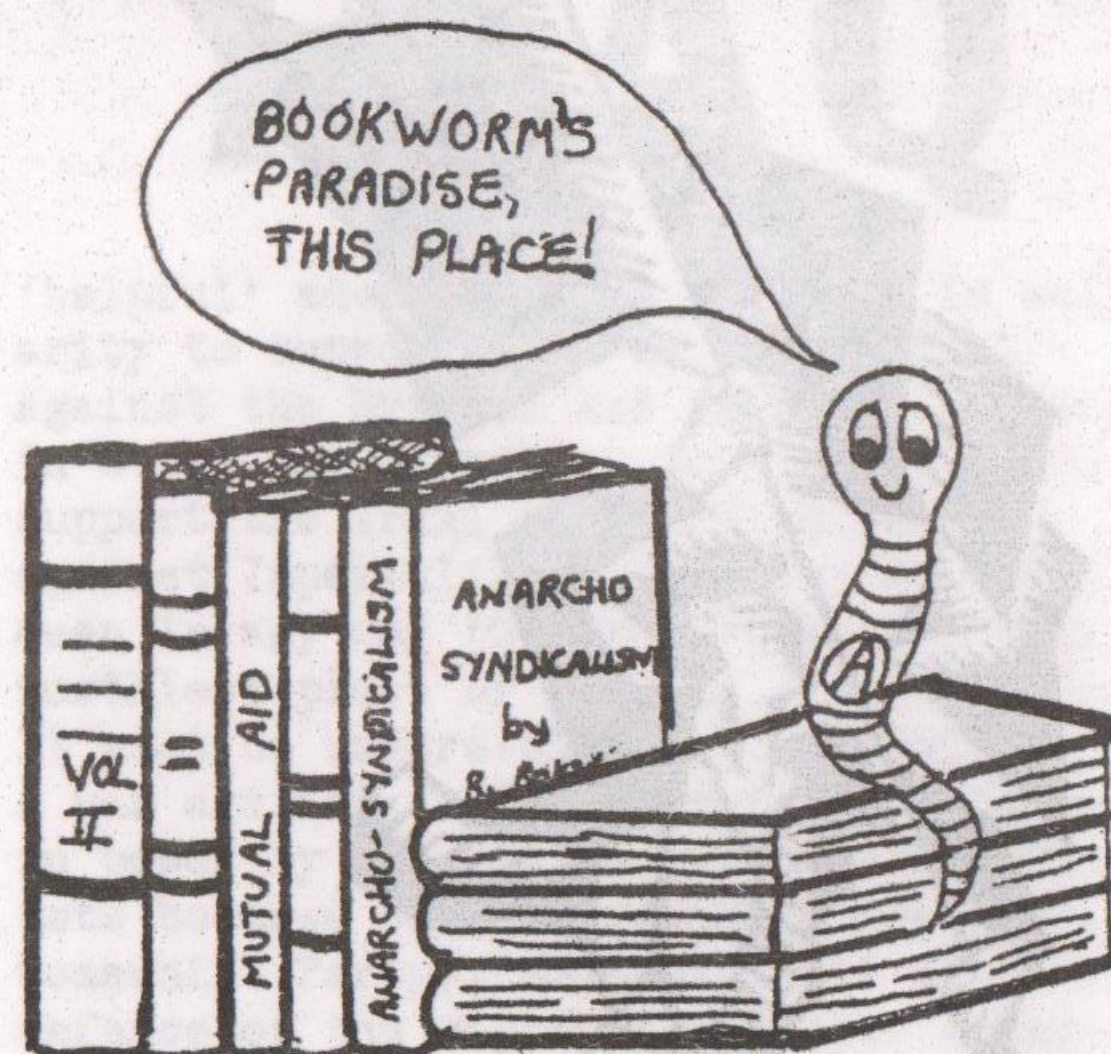
The annual bookfair at Conway Hall in London is the closest the anarchist movement in Britain gets to a national gathering, though it resembles a market place rather than a political conference. All the major anarchist distributors and publishers have stalls there, as do all the national groups from Class War and the ACF to Lib Ed and Green Anarchist.

The range of anarchist publications on sale is impressive. If you're into books the bookfair is an excellent opportunity to add to your personal "library" (though of course you need a fair amount of dosh!). You can also buy any number of badges or your favourite Class War T-shirt!

For Liverpool Anarchist Group, the bookfair provides an excellent opportunity to sell 'Merseyside Anarchist'. Last year we had record sales. We didn't do quite so well this year as there seemed to be fewer people than last year - probably many of the usual "customers" had gone to the anti-poll tax march in south London instead. Of the 12 of us who travelled from Liverpool, 9 went straight to the march.

About three o'clock, after the march had ended, most people arrived at the fair. Most of our Liverpool comrades returned about this time, so we missed the subsequent 'action' at the picket of Brixton Prison. Those of us who did stay reported that police provoked the 2,000 strong picket to such a degree that some people began throwing missiles at them. Hundreds of riot police appeared from nearby sidestreets and charged the pickets, splitting them into two main groups. Rioting followed in Brixton, but not on the same scale as Trafalgar Square.

Lo and behold, later that night there was a high ranking cop on TV saying that future poll tax marches might have to be banned. The strategy of the police and their bosses is clear: Attack the picket, cause a riot and use it all as an excuse to ban future marches - especially the one proposed for next March, the anniversary of Trafalgar Square. We say march anyway, ban or no ban!



## REVIEWS

IRAN UNDER THE AYATOLLAHS  
Dilip Hiro  
Routledge & Keegan Paul

With the eyes of the world firmly on the Middle East its understandable that there should be an upsurge of interest in the region, and for students of revolution such as ourselves, 'Iran Under the Ayatollahs' is invaluable reading.

It's easy to find out about France in 1789 or Russia in 1917 as there's a wealth of information which has been collated over the years, but every generation seems to have a blind spot following immediately behind it and it can be difficult understanding events which occurred in the last 20 years. This is firstly because historians and social commentators are often unwilling to document situations which have not yet reached a conclusion, and secondly because the establishment as a whole simply doesn't want us to know. Knowledge is power, and so if people are aware of what's happening in the world around them, and more importantly why those things are happening, they are on the way to influencing change.

On a global scale the two most important events of the past 20 years have been without doubt the end of the Cold War and the Iranian revolution.

Just as Gorbachev, perestroika and glasnost have totally changed Europe, so too have Khomeini, Islamic fundamentalism and the 1979 Iranian revolution created a whole new agenda for the Middle East.

Under the last Shah, Iran was a regional superpower and saw itself as the 'policeman' of the Gulf. The Shah pursued a nominally independent foreign policy but was on very good terms with the West, purchasing huge amounts of arms from the USA, keeping oil cheap and trying to develop Iran along capitalist and consumerist lines while pushing Islam into the background.

Dilip Hiro's book tells in detail the story of how discontent, class struggle and fundamentalism combined to create a movement capable of toppling the most powerful monarchy in the region, and which propelled a 77 year old cleric from exile in France to the position of head of the Iranian state and spiritual leader of millions.

The events of 1979 do not fit comfortably with our western view of revolution. Islam cannot simply be labelled 'left' or 'right' and the fundamentalism of the Iranian Shia's contains elements which are both attractive and repulsive. For example, all Muslims pay a percentage of their income to a fund which caters for the poor and the sick, and after the 1979 revolution many of the businesses owned by the Shah, his family and the ruling class were taken over and run for the benefit of the 'Mustazifin Foundation' (the Foundation of the Deprived) which channelled money into the poorest sections of society. In Iran, Libya, the Lebanon and increasingly amongst the Palestinians, militant Islam is able to draw its most vocal support from the dispossessed and the downtrodden, because it is seen to stand against Western influence, corrupt local rulers and unbridled capitalism.

On the other hand, Islam's massive oppression of women and gays, its unquestioning obedience of centuries-old religious texts, the overbearing influence of the clergy and its strict control over all aspects of life make it (whether in its moderate Sunni or fundamentalist Shia forms) unacceptable to libertarians.

We also take it for granted that revolutions automatically contain within

them a desire for progress and new ideas, and indeed, even those dominated by the most dogmatic Marxists can usually take credit for some social advances. But in Iran you had (and still have) a mass revolutionary movement consciously demanding the establishment of "God's government on earth" and a return to a system of law and social control based on the writings of a 7th century mystic! Unlike Lenin, Khomeini didn't have to seize power in a coup after the masses had done all the dirty work, enough people wanted him to rule that, after years of struggle, the actual transition from the Shah to the Ayatollahs was relatively smooth. Clearly, the revolution in Iran must force us to think again about our understanding of the term.

Of course there was opposition to the founding of the new Islamic Republic out of the post-revolutionary provisional government, and Hiro follows the fortunes of the various monarchists, Marxists and other left communists who attempted to get their message across both inside and out of the workings of the new regime. One group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq saw the creation of a truly free society coming from a mixture of Islam and Marxism. They carried on an armed struggle against the state on a large scale, killing thousands of government officials and clerics. In one bomb attack they assassinated the prominent religious leader Ayatollah Beheshti, 4 cabinet ministers, 10 deputy ministers and 27 M.P.'s, but because of Khomeini's massive popularity this was not enough to bring down the government.

'Iran Under the Ayatollahs' exposes the mechanics of revolution - how pressure built up on the Shah, how the fundamentalists were able to marshal their support and survive the repression, and how, in the end, the old order collapsed. It also gives a good account of events after the revolution such as the consolidation of power, the reaction of Europe, the Superpowers and other Middle Eastern countries, and Saddam Hussein's invasion in 1980.

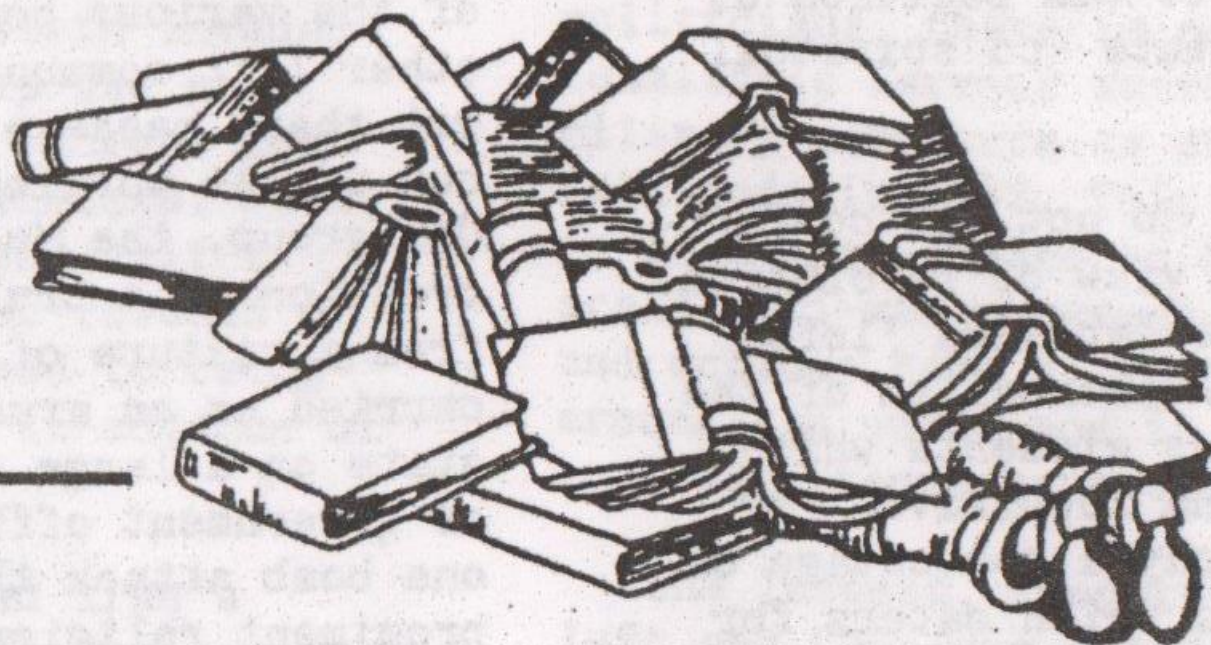
This is a brave book because it was published during the Iran-Iraq war when the future of Khomeini's regime was still in the balance. Many of its conclusions have been borne out by more recent events and the author provides us with a readable and thought-provoking account of one of the major upheavals of our times.



"THE ABC OF ANARCHISM" - Alexander Berkman (Freedom Press 1985; £2)

As the title suggests, this book is intended as an introduction to the theory of anarchism, and although it was originally written in 1929, it is still as relevant today as ever. The basic principles of anarchism are clearly and simply expressed, making this an excellent first book for anybody who is just beginning to explore what anarchism is about. But even for committed anarchists, this book is worth reading because the author's evident idealism is inspiring.

Berkman first deals with the commonest myth about anarchism, that it inevitably involves violence and disorder. He looks at the occasional acts of violence committed by anarchists - which are often motivated by a resentment of injustice, but which have no basis in political theory - and compares them with the continual violence committed by governments.



"ANARCHY: A GRAPHIC GUIDE" - Clifford Harper (Camden Press 1987; £5.95)

This is essentially a history of anarchism, though it is by no means written in a history-book style. Clearly and concisely, it gives an overview of anarchism from medieval times to the present day. It may seem surprising that there were "anarchists" in medieval times; anarchism did not develop as a coherent political philosophy until the 19th century. But the human impulse towards freedom has a very long history, and many groups of people have tried to live free from authority and hierarchy.

For this reason, the book might not be popular with "purists". It mentions groups such as the medieval Free Spirit, and the early American immigrants, who were essentially seeking religious freedom; the 17th century Ranters, who did no more than indulge in rowdy behaviour which offended bourgeois sensibilities; the "counter-culture" of the 1960s; even the Sex Pistols!

He goes on to explain what anarchism is, the role of government in social life and the myths which sustain it, why anarchism is possible and how it could be brought about, and how production and consumption would be organised under an anarchist system.

There is very little in the book that is dated. Berkman draws heavily on the Russian Revolution to illustrate his ideas since at the time he was writing, this was the most recent anarchist-inspired revolution. However, he mostly uses examples of what can go wrong with a revolution, so this is not irrelevant in a modern context.

When "The ABC of Anarchism" was first written life was a lot grimmer for the working class than it is now. But one thing has not changed: the working class is still forced to serve an oppressive, hierarchical system, and this being so, the ideas in this book are as relevant as ever.

However, a large part of the book deals with the main tradition of anarchism: the ideas of 19th century writers such as Max Stirner, Pierre Proudhon, Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin; events such as the Paris Commune, the Haymarket Affair, the Kronstadt rebellion and the Spanish Civil War.

This book is better than other histories of anarchism in that it is written in a clear, non-academic style, it deals with events in clear chronological order, and shows the variety of ideas and popular movements that constitute anarchism. It shows anarchism as a vital and continuing tradition.

However, for those with a serious interest in anarchist history it will prove limiting as it deals with nothing in depth, and it has no suggested reading list for those who want to find out more. Also, it makes no attempt to assess the political validity of the different movements and groups that have taken the label "anarchist".

# DEWSBURY 82

In June 1989, the British National Party held a rally in Dewsbury, Yorkshire. The local council, very unwisely, allowed them to hold a public rally outside the town hall. Naturally there was a big police presence, but this did not prevent BNP supporters from roaming the town and attacking any Asians they came across. However, local Asians and anti-fascists attempted to fight back.

Kirklees Black Workers Group had called a counter demo, which was attended by hundreds of anti-fascists from around the North. The rally was initially peaceful, but police tactics towards the anti-fascists were deliberately confrontational. They charged peaceful demonstrators, thus sparking off the riot that followed. They initially made 59 arrests, and later arrested 23 others after fishing expeditions in local towns.

Bail conditions imposed on some of those arrested have been compared with South African banning orders: some have been asked for sureties amounting to tens of thousands of pounds, or forced to sign at a police station every day and banned from attending marches, demonstrations, rallies or even public meetings - this in particular has made it difficult for them to take part in campaigns for their own defence.

Others have been sacked or suspended from their jobs or have had their social security benefits stopped as they are considered to be "unavailable for work" while their trial is in progress.

In Leeds, on September 1st, there was a protest march at this punitive treatment (it is in Leeds that the court cases are taking place). 1,000 people attended the march with an even mixture of Black, white and Asian people. There was a large anarchist contingent, probably the largest of any single group there. Several of us from Liverpool were on the march as one of our comrades was among those arrested in Dewsbury. The march went through the Harehills area

of Leeds and through the town centre, ending at Leeds Crown Court. At one point a group of fascists shouted abuse at the marchers, but when a group of people swarmed after them they wisely retreated to a nearby pub.

The crown court trials of the remaining Dewsbury 82 defendants began on 3rd September in Leeds. The trial is scheduled to last two months.

25 people were committed to the crown court, but two have already been dealt with. Significantly, one of these was the last white defendant of the original 82 to be arrested. The police want to present the Dewsbury incident as a purely "Asian riot", despite the fact that both white and Asian anti-fascists attended the counter demo. The trials at Leeds crown court have all the makings of political show trials: Black youths are in the dock essentially because they tried to protect their community from a fascist attack.

## FINANCIAL APPEAL

The Kirklees Black Workers Group has launched a financial appeal to help with legal costs for those charged - they need to raise £10,000. Donations can be sent to DEWSBURY 82 CAMPAIGN, KIRKLEES BLACK WORKERS GROUP, c/o SK CRC, 24 WESTGATE, HUDDERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE.

## £10,000 HARDSHIP APPEAL.

