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the
Best
of

Subversion

**An introduction to the
Politics of Anti-Left
Communism.**

*Selected articles from the
first eleven issues of
Subversion.*

50p

INTRODUCTION

All right, we'll say it before you do: isn't the 'greatest hits' collection always the last resort of worn-out old stars who've run out of fresh ideas and think they can make easy money out of repackaging and flogging something their fans already bought the first time around?

Well, yes, fair enough. But that isn't why you've got 'The Best of Subversion' in your hands. We're not stars, we've got plenty left to say, and we certainly don't set out to cultivate passive admiration.

We publish about a thousand copies of each issue of Subversion, many of which are given away at meetings, demonstrations etc to people who probably haven't come across us or the bulletin before. Also, however carefully we try to plan the mix of articles in each issue, we can never hope to express the entire A to Z of our politics every time.

Along with our pamphlets on Ireland and the Labour Party, we hope that this selection of articles from Subversion, covering most of the major events and issues which have confronted us since we began the bulletin, will be a useful introduction to the politics of Subversion for those who don't know much about us, but want to find out more.

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DOWN WITH POLL TAX DOWN WITH ALL TAXES

Although we'd been working together politically long before the emergence of the anti-poll tax movement, it was this inspiring upsurge of working class struggle right across the country which gave us the impetus to start producing the Subversion bulletin. The many articles on the poll tax in the first few issues also reflected our involvement in local anti-poll tax groups. The following piece, from Subversion 2, typifies much of what we wrote: attacking the Labour Party (it wasn't simply a 'Tory tax'), pressing for community and workplace action, and stressing the need for the anti-poll tax struggle to be linked up with other aspects of the fightback against a generalised attack on working class living standards.

The Poll Tax may be unfair, even on capitalist terms, but that is not the reason we oppose it. We oppose it for the same reason we oppose increases in rent, mortgages and electricity, etc. We oppose it because it is an increase in our cost of living and an attack on our living standards.³

We support street organisation of workers resisting the tax, but we think to be successful this struggle must not be confined there, but needs to extend into the workplace - which is where we are at our strongest.

One way is to whack in large pay demands to take account of the Poll Tax bills. But many of us who are pensioners, unemployed, etc. don't have that option.

If a widespread struggle gets underway, based on workplace and localities, it should include social demands like higher pensions and dole, as well as common wage demands. A good example of this was in Poland a couple of years ago, when striking workers included in their demands raises for some of the sections of the working class who can't easily strike, such as healthworkers.

In the present climate that kind of extension of the struggle is difficult, but it needs to be done.

BEWARE CON (OR LAB, OR LIB DEM) TRICKS

The anti-Poll Tax movement needs to be firmly based on the 'can't pay - won't pay - won't implement' approach. It should not be sidetracked into support for one or other of the supposedly fairer systems of taxation being hawked around by the various political parties.

Any government, whether reformed Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrat or whatever would be forced to try and make us pay for the economic crisis. Their methods of doing that might vary slightly, but that's all. Our job is to resist all of these attacks - not get involved in their debates about the best ways of making us pay.



MAY
FREE

STUFF THE POLL TAX!

The Poll Tax has now become a reality for every adult in the country. For working class people it is a savage attack on their living standards. It comes when council rents and mortgage repayments are rocketing and inflation is soaring over 10%.

Together they offer us a stark choice - between paying or going without new clothes, food, holidays or entertainment.



MEDIA LIES
This attack is backed up by media propaganda lies get published saying non-payers are criminals. They say bailiffs will be sent to steal our belongings. They say non-payers will go to prison. Councils, Labour and Conservative, issue dire warnings and threaten us with prosecution. Labour politicians tell us not to break the law.

SCOTLAND - ONE YEAR ON
Yet in Scotland the Poll Tax came in over a year ago. Over a million people have either refused to pay or are months in arrears.

The number of successful prosecutions there can be counted on the fingers of one hand - with a few left over to spare. The truth is that the state cannot cope with the number of law breakers. The Poll Tax is already in its second year there and it would take the courts over 80 years to deal with non-payers. They know the media and state propaganda is just lies.

FIGHT BACK IN ENGLAND
In the rest of Britain hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated against the tax. Public meetings continue to attract unheard of numbers of working class people. Anti-Poll Tax groups are growing around the country.



GANG WARFARE IN THE GULF

The Gulf War, and its aftermath, also featured prominently in early issues of Subversion. We tried to explain the economic background to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the Allies' response, to support our basic standpoint that this was a war in which the only losers would be the workers of all countries whose blood was spilt for the sake of the bosses' profits. 'Gang Warfare In The Gulf', from Subversion 4, also tore apart the various ideologies - and, in particular, 'anti-imperialism' - which were used to whip up support for one side or the other in the slaughter.

THERE ARE TWO GULFS currently looming before the working class. One is the geographical gulf which threatens to be the centre of an immense killing ground, whose dry sands will drink the blood of vast numbers of working class people sent, as ever, to die in the name of an illusion. The other is the great gulf between reality and the aforementioned illusion, or illusions, for the gangsters who rule the world, and fight among themselves like vampires vying over our blood, our sweat, our life-energy present us with a choice.

Firstly, there is the view which emanates from America and its allies, which requires us to believe that the forces they have sent to the Gulf are the upholders of civilization and righteousness against one who has suddenly revealed himself as a shameless outlaw, a new Hitler who must be stopped in the name of all that is right and proper.

Secondly, the view which keeps its siren song into the ears of many Arab workers, to the effect that Saddam Hussein is leading a glorious war of resurgence of the Arab Nation against Western Imperialism, after whose defeat everything will be just fine.

And thirdly, the Leftist echo of the previous view, which holds that Imperialism is far more iniquitous than plain ordinary capitalism and anyone who, in the hallucinations of the Leftists, is fighting against it should be supported, and anyway, all "nations" have a "right" to "self-determination". The above views all have variations, adding to the richness of our choice.

GANGSTERS FALL OUT

The reality is that ALL the participants in this conflict are a vile bunch of thieves and gangsters who have fallen out over the spoils of their exploitation of us, the working class. The notion that we who are the victims of these Al

Capones, these Legs Diamonds, these Corleones writ large who are the rulers of the nations of the world should take sides with any of them is the very pinnacle of idiocy.

These gangsters, however, as we have already intimated, are skilled in the construction of fantastic tapestries of illusion which they substitute for reality in the minds of all of us who have not yet learned to see them for what they are. But the ghostly fingers that tugged at us in a darkened room stand revealed as filthy cobwebs once the light is switched on.

THE REALITY BEHIND THE SPECTACLE

Let us look in more detail at these lies. It is not, perhaps, necessary to spend too much time on the Western view (shared also by what was the Eastern Bloc, now). The foul hypocrisy of those who staunchly supported Saddam Hussein and his regime for years and scarcely blinked at the latter's genocide in Halabja, for instance, only "discovering" Hitlerian tendencies when the growing world economic crisis threw former friends at each other's throats in the scramble for a dwindling "take", will be starkly obvious to those who have seen through right-wing capitalist lies. But capitalism has more than one string to its bow - the left-wing of capitalism even pretends not to be capitalism.

We will discuss the lies of the nationalist third-world bourgeoisie and those of the Leftist together for, as we have said, the latter are merely the junior partners of the former in most things.

IMPERIALISM OR CAPITALISM?


A whole plethora of governments, movements and grouplets, from the Iraqi government to the most radical of the Trotskyist sects, implores us to "oppose Imperialism" and support Iraq, (although some of them are more coy about that latter part). What then is Imperialism? This is a word which has been defined in many ways, but its main use, for the champions of the Third World, is simply this: If you don't want to oppose capitalism as a whole, if you want to distinguish between "good" capitalists and "bad" capitalists and only oppose the latter, you need some other term under which to group together the people you are opposing. Hence, the larger, dominant powers who are the major block to the aggrandizement of the weaker capitalist powers, are called "Imperialists" and the said weaker capitalist powers are alleged to be "fighting Imperialism" when conflict occurs.

This "anti-Imperialism" will usually incorporate an economic analysis of the world as it was nearly a hundred years ago, as though nothing has changed. It was at that time that the Leftists created this "theory of anti-Imperialism" which survives even today.

class and the working class - the former exploiting and oppressing the latter. The idea that they are a single unit with a single will, a single interest, the idea that they are a single "self" which can have "self-determination", is surely the cleverest fraud that the capitalists have ever devised to make workers forget their own class interests and support the class which oppresses them.

subversion!

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free**



NO WAR

As each day goes by the crisis in the Gulf gets worse. As each day goes by the language used gets stronger. Talk becomes action. Sanctions and blockades are enforced. Thousands starve in desert camps. Hostages are taken. Resistors are hanged. Children die.

Each side is stirring up feelings. They are preparing their populations for the shooting war that is to come. For us, one thing is clear: Whatever either side says, this war is not worth one drop of workers' blood. It is a bores' war - being prepared to fight for bores' interests.

WHY WAR?

Iraq is broke. The Iran war left it \$80 billion in debt. The population is prone to strikes, the army mutinous. Iraq owed Kuwait billions. What better way to solve its problems than to invade its major creditor? Even better to gain control of 20% of the world's oil!

The U.S. and the West depend on imported oil. They are on the edge of an economic recession and are terrified of another oil crisis. This war gives them the chance to gain long sought after bases in the Gulf.

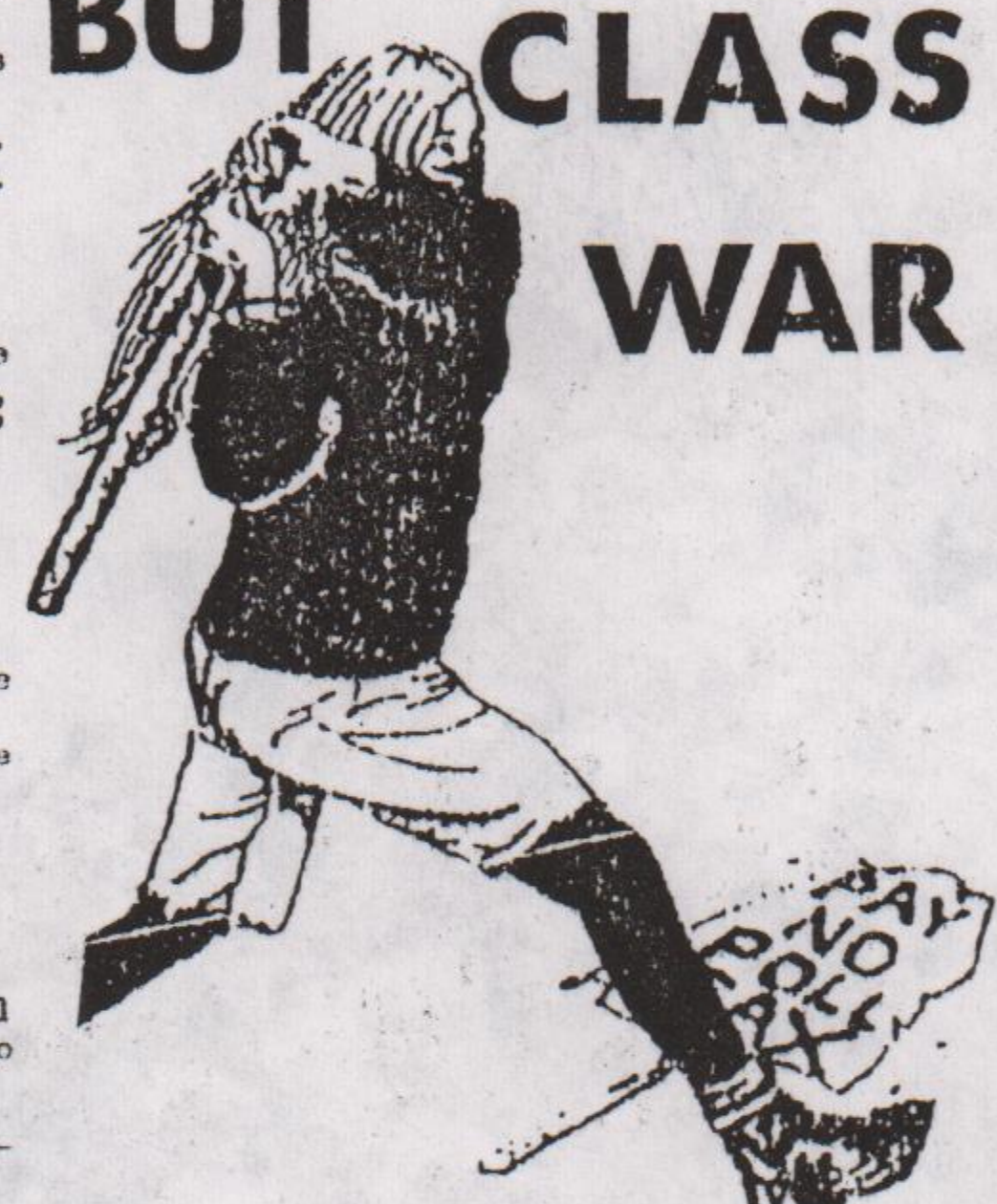
The interests of both sides are the same - safeguarding profits, defending capital. These are the bores' interests.

SO WHO LIVES?

Who will die if there is war? Thousands of Kuwaiti workers and poor immigrant workers caught in the crossfire. Thousands of Iraqi and Saudi workers in their homes. Thousands of young workers either conscripted into armies or forced in to find a job. Saddam, Bush, Thatcher, the Ecu will all be safe and well.

Workers will lose here and in the Gulf. Our interests are the same here as in Iraq. Higher wages, better living conditions, the end of oppression.

We say, down with both sides. Intensify the class struggle here and in Iraq. Push forward with pay claims, fight the Poll Tax, sabotage the war drive.



BUT CLASS
WAR

Some Leftists will even admit that nationalism doesn't benefit workers but say they have a "right" even if you don't agree with it. Perhaps we should then spend time and energy advocating the "right" of workers to demand longer hours and lower wages? We can treat this "brilliant concept" with the contempt it deserves.

A REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Is there, then, such a thing as Imperialism? Can the working class make use of such a term? This is a very moot point, but we can say that Imperialism, if it means anything real, is simply the inevitable conflict for resources and markets that capitalism powers must engage in when the world has reached a certain stage of historical development. The weaker powers' attempts to resist domination by the stronger ones is aimed at replacing them as dominant powers, not in "defeating Imperialism". The weaker powers are part of what is today an integrated capitalist world - they do thus not stand outside Imperialism but are part of it. Their conflict with the major powers is no more "anti-Imperialist" than the challenge which a young stag mounts against the leader of the herd is aimed at eliminating the system of hierarchy which the nature of

such animals entails.

THE OPPORTUNIST THEORY OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM

These Leftists were groups such as the Bolsheviks, whose political programs, despite any radical phraseology they might contain, consisted in constructing State-Capitalism. Their target areas were the relatively advanced industrial countries, and the adversaries which stood in their path were the existing rulers of those countries - rulers who also had other enemies. One such enemy was the emerging nationalisms which were starting flex their muscles in what were then mainly colonies. Thus, the Leftist concept of "anti-Imperialism" arose as an opportunist attempt at alliance between various weak capitalist forces against a stronger one.

THE "RIGHT" OF "NATIONS" TO "SELF-DETERMINATION"

This is a concept the Leftists always take refuge in if all else fails. But what does it really mean? A "nation" is an involuntary union of antagonistic classes - the capitalist

Thus all countries in the world are Imperialist. The term anti-Imperialism is therefore meaningless if used for anything but anti-capitalism.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM

The working class has no interest whatsoever in aiding any of the factions within the class that is its enemy. Our class must resolutely oppose all the world's states, all the parties, movements and groups which represent one form or other of capitalism. For all the squabbling that takes place between them, they are all heads of the same hydra.

The interest of workers throughout the world lies in overthrowing capitalism and creating a classless society without national boundaries, without wage labour, markets and money, where Humanity produces for its own needs, based on free and equal access for all. Such a society is possible. The struggle to achieve it starts now. Oppose war, in the Gulf or anywhere, intensify class struggle, no war but the class war!

YUGOSLAVIA

- a good old fashioned bosses war

The wars in former Yugoslavia have been portrayed as springing from deep-rooted religious, national and ethnic antagonisms suppressed under Tito. In 'Yugoslavia - A Good Old Fashioned Bosses' War' we argued that this appearance is deceptive: that the origins of the present conflicts lay in the rivalry between different factions of the ruling class, and its response to the struggles of the working class in Yugoslavia.

On the face of it, Yugoslavia looks like yet another of those many "trouble spots" around the world where age old antagonisms of nationality and religion have intertwined to produce a conflict which seems to defy resolution.

To better understand what's really going on there, we have to ask why this situation has erupted so bloodily *at this particular moment*.

North and South

The federal state of Yugoslavia which emerged at the end of the Second World War under so-called "communist" control encompassed several regions which had reached various stages of capitalist development. The most advanced of these were the north-western republics of Slovenia and Croatia.

In the interests of strengthening the Yugoslav state as a whole,

a large proportion of the surplus value (profits) produced by the Slovenian and Croatian working class was constantly creamed off by the state capitalist bureaucrats in charge of the central government for investment in the less developed southern republics - Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia.

This policy provided the material basis for continual tensions among the factions comprising the Yugoslav ruling class: as one excellent account of the background to the war in Yugoslavia puts it, "between on the one hand rulers who stressed a degree of Croat and Slovene independence along with economic efficiency, and on the other hand those who were concerned with the preservation of the machinery of centrally directed investment, the all-round development of the national capital, and the pre-

eminence of Belgrade and the largely Serb administrative apparatus".*

Economic Crisis

The economic and social policies in Yugoslavia at any particular time tended to reflect the interests of whichever one or other of these ruling class factions had the upper hand. By the 1980's, however, as the Yugoslav economy became gripped ever tighter by the crisis affecting the whole of world capitalism, the scope for reconciling these two contradictory tendencies, each pulling in opposite directions, was steadily eroded.

The more the local ruling classes of the richer republics pinned their hopes of surviving the crisis on ridding

themselves of the economic burden posed by the less prosperous rest of the country, the more the federal authorities strove to safeguard their own futures by recentralising the whole state under their own control. At the same time, another faction within the Serbian ruling class, judging that the Yugoslav federation could not possibly be held together, began to whip up Serbian nationalism in preparation for an anticipated war of each against all.

The inevitable outcome was the declaration of independence by Slovenia, Croatia, and later Bosnia,

the invasion of large swathes of these republics by the federal army, and the outbreak of hostilities by the various "irregular" forces each fighting on behalf of their own particular nationalism.

Class Struggle and Nationalism

Not the least pressing aspect of the economic crisis affecting the various factions of the Yugoslav ruling class during the late 1980's was the militancy of the working class in Yugoslavia. From 1986 through to 1990, faced with rising unemployment and triple-figure inflation, workers in Yugoslavia launched repeated strikes aimed at defending their living standards against wage freezes and wage cuts. These strikes involved hundreds of thousands of workers and took place right across the whole of Yugoslavia, regardless of republican boundaries.



MANDELA V THE WORKING CLASS

A significant stage in the process described in 'Mandela V Working Class', from Subversion 3, was reached around the time that 'The Best of Subversion' was being put together, with Nelson Mandela taking office as President of South Africa. For us though the most interesting phase is yet to come. When the ANC inevitably fails to deliver its promises of jobs, housing and education, and when it becomes obvious that the long-awaited and much-heralded arrival of 'democracy' has made no real difference to the lives of the working class in South Africa, who will be the target of their frustrations, disillusionment and anger?

If you thought Nelson Mandela was a great heroic leader of the oppressed masses of South Africa who, now risen like Christ after 27 years in the underworld and poised to lead said masses, if not to life everlasting, at least to freedom in the here and now, you might be a little puzzled.

Surely that can't be right. Mandela condemning the schools boycott and 'ordering' students back to school. Mandela supporting the use of South African state forces to suppress riots. Mandela and de Klerk singing each others praises. Etc. etc. What's going on?

If you were surprised by all this, it's because you didn't realize what the ANC was all about. The ANC has always been a capitalist organisation.

THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The working class in South Africa is probably the strongest on the continent, and has been increasingly showing this strength in the last few years.

There have been major strikes by both coal and gold miners, in the hospitals and on the railways. This in addition to the resistance in the squatter camps, the rent strikes and school boycotts. All of these struggles are a shining example to workers everywhere and show that the workers in South Africa are among the most advanced in the world in combativity. However, they face a serious threat from the ANC.

THE CLASS NATURE OF THE ANC

The ANC is one of many similar groups around the world, such as the PLO, IRA, SWAPO, Sandinistas, etc. who claim to be fighting against oppression and for, usually, 'national liberation'. All of these organisations are simply the latter-day equivalents of the nationalist, bourgeois democratic movements of the historical period following the French Revolution. At that time the emerging capitalist powers needed an ideology which would bind the whole population to the ruling class. They found it in the idea of the 'nation' - a unity of both rulers and ruled, oppressors and oppressed, capitalists and workers who, because they lived in the same area of land and spoke the same language, supposedly were a single unit with a single interest.

THE BIGGEST CON IN HISTORY

It has worked well for the capitalists. The ideology of nationalism has always meant that the working class has accepted the aims and interests of its exploiters, the capitalist class, as though they were its own. It is perhaps the biggest con in history.

Today, capitalism is dominant throughout the world, but there are always conflicts between rival capitalist powers large and small, both between countries and between different factions within a single country. The weaker capitalist factions make use of the same old lies about democracy and 'national liberation', usually coupled with the left-wing capitalist policy of Nationalisation, i.e., direct state control - thus the rhetoric of these groups like the ANC, PLO, etc.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

When they come to power the result is always the same. They get on with the business of running capitalism and exploiting the working class.

When the MPLA, Frelimo, Zanu, Sandinistas, etc. came to power the masses discovered the same thing they did after the French Revolution - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more it changes, the more it stays the same).

When the ANC comes to power it will be exactly the same, only they're being a bit more obvious about it than most. This is because of the dovetailing of interests between them and the Nationalist Party at this moment in history.

MENE MENE TEKEL UPARSIN

The growing world economic crisis has hit South Africa badly - especially since the greater part of the international capitalist class has mounted the campaign of sanctions (this latter because they can see the writing on the wall for the Apartheid regime, and they want to get in the good books of the non-racial regime whose accession to power is only a matter of time anyway). The more intelligent and forward looking faction of the white bourgeoisie, represented mainly by the Nationalist Party, realises that a non-racial capitalism is necessary - and as this is also the aim of the ANC, hence the increasingly pally relationship.

For the working class, in South Africa as elsewhere, no form of capitalism, whatever fancy phrases it uses, will change the relationship between exploiters and exploited - it will just be an exchange of one lot of exploiters for another.

THE WORKING CLASS ALTERNATIVE

The working class must not allow itself to be conned by the ANC's version of capitalism. Our class can only free itself by abolishing wage-labour itself and taking the means of production - the factories, mines, land, etc. - into its own hands, running them collectively for the collective needs of society. This is the basis of what we call Communism. In contrast to the widespread use of the term Communism to mean state-capitalism, as in the Eastern Bloc, we mean a classless society without national boundaries, without inequalities or oppressions, where money, markets and commodity production have been abolished and replaced by production for need, with free access for all.

Continued on Page 12

YUGOSLAVIA

- a good old fashioned bosses war continued from page 6

Now it seems that this struggle of class against class has been almost totally submerged in the war of nation against nation, religion against religion. The current war in Yugoslavia is taking place because the ruling class's strategy for "solving" the crisis has triumphed over the working class's own independent response. Nationalism - the idea that workers can find a way out of their problems by rallying behind "their own" bosses in opposition to other workers - remains a depressingly powerful force, which time and time again blocks the path of working class progress.

Imperialist Vultures

Since 1945 more than 20 million people have been killed in over 100 wars around the world. Most of these conflicts have been war-by-proxy between rival superpowers on "third world" battlefields. Now these "little wars" are moving closer to the heartlands of world capitalism.

Yugoslavia borders on seven other states, each of which in its own way is eyeing up its neighbour's decaying corpse for whatever pickings it might grab. Also circling over the scene are two larger vultures: *Germany*, which rushed some of its EC partners into early recognition of Slovenian and Croatian "independence" with the aim of eventually pulling these states into a German-dominated European bloc; and the *USA*, which initially declared against any dismemberment of the Yugoslav federation and is seeking some way of thwarting the growing expansionist aims of its rising European rival.

The "Peace Keepers"

Only someone with a heart of stone could fail to be shocked by the atrocities being committed - *on all sides* - in Yugoslavia. But this is no reason for anyone to support the "peace initiative" of the United Nations or European Community. These bodies are not intervening in Yugoslavia out of humanitarian fellow-feeling, but as part of the self-interested manoeuvring of the big powers which dominate them.

In flat contradiction of its *stated* aims of disarming Serb forces and enabling refugees to return home, so far the *objective* result of the UN "peace-keeping" forces intervention has in fact been to *consolidate* Serbian conquests.

In the Serbian-occupied Baranja region of north-east Croatia, for example, UN troops "are increasingly assisting in the policy of 'ethnic cleansing'....Hundreds of Croats and Hungarians are assisted in their passage out of Baranja by the UN" [*Independent on Sunday* 27.9.92]. At the same time, UN officials "vowed to use force" to stop Croatian refugees returning to their former homes in the same region [*Independent* 30.9.92].

Continued on page 12

THE MENACE OF ANTI-FASCISM

Sometimes articles we write become all the more pertinent in the light of events which take place after they're published. The BNP's performance in local elections in east London and the subsequent increase in racial attacks in that area, and the success of the neo-fascists in the national elections in Italy, seem to have made it all the more vital to gain a thorough understanding not only of racism and fascism, but also of anti-racism and anti-fascism. 'The Menace of Anti-Fascism', from Subversion 10, set out to provide just that.

GOING FISHING

The low level of workplace struggle in Britain over the last few years left the anti-poll tax movement as one of the few fishing grounds open to left wing groups. With the partial success of that movement and consequent decline in organised opposition to the poll tax, left groups have been cast adrift looking for new pools from which to recruit. It has proved a difficult search.

Anti-apartheid doesn't provide good campaign material since the ANC started playing footsie with the National Party. Other foreign adventures were considered a bit risky since 'liberation' movements generally began falling over themselves to court western politicians and bankers. A few esoteric groups have chanced their arm at reviving interest in support for Fidel Castro's Cuban dictatorship, but it isn't much of a crowd puller these days.

The general election campaign provided a brief respite from the left's desperate search, but now that is out of the way, the problem has returned.

In the absence of any new and exciting campaign material the left have fallen back on to some of their old tried and trusted formulae for conning workers into supporting them.

THE LAST TIME ROUND

The left played a significant part in the 30s and 40s in rallying support for "democratic" CAPITALISM against the forces of fascist CAPITALISM in Europe. 'Communist' parties and even Trotskyists gained themselves considerable credibility by attaching themselves to the coat-tails of various western governments whom they had previously dismissed as vile enemies of the working class. Even anarchists on the fringe of left politics came out of the cold and fell into line by supporting Republican capitalism in Spain against Franco's fascists.

"PLAY IT AGAIN SAM"

So today, thinks the left, if we shout loud enough about

the new fascist menace in Europe and hark back to the horrors of World War Two, perhaps we can create a new 'anti-fascist' movement and round up all those footloose labourites and liberals reeling from another Tory election victory.

So that's exactly what they have done. Time, energy and money have been diverted into various organisations and activities previously quite low on their list of priorities. Unfortunately for them, not only is it difficult persuading most workers that there really is a fascist menace, but competition for the footloose is so intense amongst these lefties that each has decided to set up their very own 'anti-fascist' or 'anti-racist' front. Incidentally this sectarian promotion of different groups, all supposedly fighting the same enemy, is in flat contradiction to the Trotskyists' oft repeated, if false theory, that fascism in the thirties made such headway only through the failure of all the left groups to create a genuine 'united front'.

DISUNITED FRONTS

To our knowledge there are at least five ostensibly national anti-fascist/anti-racist fronts in Britain alongside dozens of other local alliances. Of the national groups some are straightforward extensions of one particular group. Militant's Youth Against Racism and the SWP's Anti-Nazi League are examples of these. There's the moderate Anti-Racist Alliance made up of Labourites and their hangers on. Smaller political groups like Red Action and the anarchist DAM have clubbed together in the more radical sounding Anti-Fascist Action. The participants in AFA have made a virtue out of necessity, by proclaiming non-sectarian principles against the 'opportunism' of the likes of Militant and the SWP.

THEM AND US

Well, you might say, this is just sour grapes on the part of an even smaller group like Subversion, who couldn't extend themselves to setting up their very own anti-fascist front in competition with the others or haven't the stomach for in-fighting in AFA. But Subversion is not in the business of trying to manufacture opposition in the absence of genuine working class struggle. Neither are we interested in recruiting on the basis of single issue politics.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Then again you might think we're being a bit unfair on the lefties' motives or political reasoning. After all, even if it is accepted that the left's claims are a bit overblown, surely it's still true that for some workers even a tiny group of self-proclaimed fascists or their supporters can make life a misery? And isn't it true that the fascists on the continent are much stronger than here – shouldn't we be working together to stop that happening here?

AND THE ANSWERS

Well, on the first point we agree that, for instance, if some bunch of fascist thugs is harassing black workers then they deserve a good beating and we should support those workers organising themselves to sort the fascists out, in whatever way we can. Such groups of self-organised workers should, wherever necessary, link up over as wide a geographical area as practicable. Of course in any physical confrontation with fascists in this type of situation we don't stop to ask if the individual next to us is a member of the SWP or Red Action, but this shouldn't stop us from questioning the politics of such groups.

HISTORICAL ROOTS

On the second point, it is true that self-proclaimed fascist groups are stronger in some other European countries and that alongside these groups are much larger and more influential extreme right-wing organisations like the National Front in France which the working class needs to oppose.

Here we come to the 'heart of the matter', politically speaking. It is essential that we understand the emotive and non-historical use which the left makes of the term fascist. Fascism (or Nazism, and there were some important differences between the Italian and German variants of what is commonly described as Fascism in popular usage) was a very particular combination of nationalism, racism and state corporatism which the ruling class supported in Germany and Italy in a specific historical situation.

Other combinations of the same elements were found to be more useful elsewhere – Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe for instance. Yet Stalinism was aligned with the so-called forces of 'democracy' against fascism! Furthermore, we would argue that it was 'democracy' and the democratic parties of capitalism in Germany who effectively paved the way for the rise of the Nazis to power, in particular through their political and physical attacks on the working class rebellion in central Europe between 1917 and 1920.

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

Capitalism as a system is neither naturally 'democratic' nor 'totalitarian' in its political forms. Whatever the political form, it is however, always a dictatorship of the capitalist class over the working class. The nation states of capitalism will at different times pass through a whole range of right wing 'democracies' and 'dictatorships' and left-wing 'democracies' and 'dictatorships'. The particular political form will depend on the perceived needs of the national ruling class to deal with their competitors abroad and their enemy at home – the working class. It is also at least arguable, that political 'democracies' have perpetuated as much violence against the world's workers – through wars, starvation, enforced poverty, ecological disasters, industrial 'accidents', civil repression, etc – as have

political 'dictatorships'.

Let us not forget such current or recent examples as the Gulf War, Serbia's 'ethnic cleansing', famine in Africa, Shoot To Kill and Bloody Sunday in Ireland, the Chernobyl and Bhopal disasters, to name just a few.

BACK HOME AGAIN

So returning to Britain today, we can see that there is a huge difference between sorting out a bunch of local fascist thugs and building up a whole campaign focussed on some supposed national or international fascist threat.

The real enemy of all workers, black or white, at the present time are the everyday institutions of capitalism and the people who run them – the courts, police, jails, immigration office; the established political parties of capitalism, Labour, Tory, Liberal, SNP etc; the media and churches; AND right in the heart of the working class, the unions and the bureaucracy which runs them.

THE STATE OF THINGS TODAY

It's the state which enforces a rigorous policy of racism throughout society, especially in times of recession. (It's the Tories with the tacit support of Labour who have introduced the racist Asylum Bill not the fascists).

It's the state through its police and army which tries to break our strikes and occupations.

It's the established political parties which seek (ably assisted by the left) to channel our discontent into harmless parliamentary pursuits and dependence on leaders. It's the media which reinforces racist and anti-working class values. It's the churches that divide workers and preach subservience to the system "on earth as in heaven". It's the unions who divide workers and divert our energies.

LEFT FRONTS

Yet the left in their "Broad" fronts and alliances say 'fear the fascist menace – vote Labour!' Instead of fighting the sham of capitalist democracy they either openly or covertly encourage participation in the system 'in order to keep the right wing and the fascists out' or just to minimise the fascist vote. This despite the fact that it is often workers' confused rejection of capitalist democracy which tempts them to support the fascists.

The Anti-Racist Alliance seems to be made up of assorted left wing Labour Party types and various Black 'community leaders', all loyally working within the system, promoting reforms and offering advice to those in power. The last Manchester meeting we attended had as its honoured guest a black community policeman from the USA, who was particularly strong on the benefits of working within the system.

Even the AFA, which many consider the best of a bad bunch for its members' willingness to 'get stuck in' still trawls the polluted waters of the trade union bureaucracy for

support and produces election leaflets with propaganda aimed only against tiny local fascist groups.

RIGHT WING RESURGENCE

That nasty fascist and extreme right wing groups are able to make any headway amongst workers today is a reflection of the depth of the economic crisis, the visibly worn out policies of the established parties of capitalism (including the so-called 'socialist' parties) to deal with it, and the disunity and demoralisation of the working class following the defeat of a wave of strikes and other struggles in the seventies and eighties.

CLASS STRUGGLE

The re-emergence of working class struggle and the increased unity and self-confidence across racial and other barriers which comes with it, cannot be artificially manufactured by small political groups through the medium of campaign style politics.

Struggle will re-emerge. It always does. There are already at least some small signs of this which the media prefers to hide news of beneath a barrage of false debate over capitalist issues and the latest demoralising news of massacres in Yugoslavia etc. To have any chance of success, the struggle as it re-emerges needs to know its enemies and not be diverted into capitalist battles between left and right, democratic or dictatorial, black or white etc. We will not assist this process by promoting cross class alliances under the banner of anti-fascism.

YUGOSLAVIA

-a good old fashioned bosses war
continued from page 8

At the time of writing (early October 1992) such actions by the UN were raising the strong possibility of armed confrontation between UN and Croatian forces. All of this fits in with the UN's role as a tool of US capitalism's strategic objectives in Yugoslavia.

Whatever "peace" settlement is eventually imposed on Yugoslavia will do nothing to remove the underlying causes of the conflict. It will merely ratify a realignment of the forces which are jostling for the strongest position from which to fight the *next* war, and the next war after that. The most we can do to aid our fellow workers in Yugoslavia is to expose and oppose the capitalist forces, big and small, which are responsible for the bloodshed and misery there, and to hope that eventually, out of the gruesome futility of the present conflict the Yugoslav working class's spirit of class combativity might yet be resurrected.

* see "Yugoslavia: Capitalism and Class Struggle 1918-67" in the pamphlet *Yugoslavery* from *BM Blob*, London WC1N 3XX.

CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

continued from page 19

people's perceptions of the society around them, and place in a new perspective the limited goals they originally set themselves. All of these things can be observed, to varying degrees, wherever working class people take action together to fight back against the miseries heaped on them by capitalism.

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

The wider the struggle, The greater the potential for the development of new forms of organisation directly controlled by those involved in the struggle, and the greater the potential for the development of radical ideas not confined merely to tinkering with society as it is but with the ambition of completely transforming it.

A CLASSLESS SOCIETY

Our approach is thus materialist: it is based on the working classes' struggle in pursuit of its material interests, and recognises that the source of revolutionary ideas and the means to turn these ideas into reality is the working classes' active engagement in the class struggle. This is the seed that will flower into the classless society, a society where all humanity is at last in control of its own destiny, can fulfill its desires and can achieve its true potential.

Continued from Page 9

MANDELA VS WORKING CLASS

It will be the first genuinely free society in history. To achieve this genuine liberation, the working class must fight resolutely against all factions of capitalism. The ANC is just one more gang of capitalists confronting us.

**DOWN WITH DE KLERK
DOWN WITH MANDELA**

**FORWARD TO COMMUNIST
REVOLUTION**

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

COUNCIL WORKERS - IT'S TIME TO FIGHT
WORKERS' SOLIDARITY AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT AND
WAGE CUTS

Analysis of the class struggle, based on our observations of what has been happening in Britain and elsewhere, and on our experiences in our own workplaces, has always been a vital element of the Subversion bulletin. While in Britain resistance to the attacks on our working and living conditions has mainly been sporadic and localised, we have drawn encouragement from some of the massive struggles which have taken place in other countries. 'Council Workers - It's Time To Fight', from Subversion 3, and 'Workers' Solidarity Against Unemployment and Wage Cuts', from Subversion 7, also identify the major obstacles, such as trades unionism and nationalism, which have prevented such struggles from developing further, and suggest the new ways in which workers must fight if we are to turn the tide of the bosses' offensive.

COUNCIL WORKERS - IT'S TIME TO FIGHT

All over the country small groups of public sector workers have been striking, occupying council buildings, demonstrating and protesting against the impact of cuts in their workplaces.

Against the background of a deepening economic crisis, a combination of grant cuts, changes in housing and education finance, competitive tendering and of course the poll tax is pushing all councils, of whatever political flavour, onto the offensive against their workers.

As each of these attacks has come along the unions have argued for co-operation with the employers and "saving our strength" for the bigger battles to come. But each decision to co-operate has simply weakened and demoralised us further. Only when councils have tried to make cuts "without fully consulting the unions" have those unions protested. Some token consultations conceded and they have soon been satisfied. They have then united with the employers in trying to squash any flames of militant resistance by sections of workers most affected by the latest round of cuts.

Many of the small groups of workers now taking action to defend their interests have in previous years, or even months, voted at union meetings for co-operation with the employers, only to find now exactly what that means in terms of job losses, cuts in services, and reductions in working conditions. This apparent contradiction is being exploited for all it's worth by the unions who wave the

flag of "democracy" against anyone who refuses to co-operate, implying that these 'refuseniks' are "out of step" or "on their own". The unions deliberately hide the widespread nature of the anger and revolt that is building up, hoping to keep each section of workers isolated and under their control.

But workers are learning to combat these union manoeuvres. In Barnsley for instance thousands of teachers went on a wildcat strike against job cuts despite all sorts of dire threats from both the employers and the unions.

We have to understand that whilst the immediate causes of particular disputes might vary - poll tax capping in one place, privatisation in another, grant cuts elsewhere etc - that these are all part of one co-ordinated employers' offensive. If we are not to be worn down by endless rearguard sectoral disputes, attempts must be made to link all the main disputes together in a single fight against the cuts.



That doesn't mean passing resolutions appealing to the union 'leaderships' to organise something or sitting on our arses waiting for the next 'big' fight. It means using the time released by being on strike to go directly to other workers involved, or in dispute themselves, and arguing for combined and united action. It means controlling any strike ourselves through regular mass meetings, which cut across union and sectoral divisions, and directly elected strike committees.

In this way we can turn the current defensive actions into an offensive against the employers and the government and take a small step towards building the confidence, solidarity and organisation necessary to take on the whole rotten system.

As Manchester City Council goes about implementing the government cuts a number of small disputes have arisen in the libraries, housing departments and elsewhere over

things like collection of the poll tax, covering for vacancies and so on. In each case the union (NALGO) has sought to keep them isolated and avoid any generalised resistance to the cuts. Their job has been made easier because the majority of workers have previously been persuaded to co-operate with the Labour council rather than oppose them outright.



When you consider the effects of the current cuts this seems surprising, so how did the union pull it off? Basically they manipulated the membership in the following way:-

1. First of all they called a mass meeting early in the year before the practical effects of the cuts were widely known.
2. They deliberately kept the membership ignorant of those effects.
3. They suggested mass redundancies around the corner but only if the council wouldn't negotiate seriously to "sort things out". This tactic combined fear with an easy way out.
4. They made militant sounding noises about strikes but only to secure negotiations not actually against the cuts themselves.
5. They warned that total opposition to the council and the poll tax would leave us isolated. This was a self-fulfilling prophecy to the extent that other union execs elsewhere were saying the same thing.
6. They also warned against being provoked into 'precipitate' and 'futile' action by politically motivated groups like the SWP, who are generally not very popular (conveniently ignoring their own political motives in supporting the Labour Party mainstream!).
7. They had their own ready made, glossy 'do nothing' campaign against those who argued for non-implementation.
8. And of course they controlled the meeting in the usual biased way towards the platform, restricting opposition speakers and resolutions.

This combination enabled them to get a majority in favour of their line, although a substantial minority refused to be

brow-beaten. That majority vote is now ritually produced any time someone argues for spreading some action against the cuts. So far their tactics have worked, but they can't keep the lid on the growing anger amongst council workers for ever. We must turn the increasing number of small streams of resistance into an irresistible tide of opposition.

WORKERS' SOLIDARITY AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT AND WAGE CUTS

No longer, in Britain, is it a case of a wage cut OR redundancies, a wage rise BUT with worse conditions. Today we are faced with a massive onslaught on our class, involving wage cuts, worsening conditions AND compulsory redundancies. Neither is this onslaught restricted to one economic sector or area of the country. It covers everything from Local Authorities, Health Services and Public Transport, through the engineering sector (Govan shipbuilders, GEC, Fords, IBM, ICI, etc) to the services sector (Barclays Bank, Woolworths, Marks and Spencer, etc) and from north to south.

WORLD WIDE RECESSION

Labour politicians would have us believe this is all the fault of the wicked Tories. But although Britain's economy may be more fragile than some others, this cannot hide the fact that the whole world economy is in a state of disintegration.

The economies of the so-called Third World and Eastern Europe are in a state of near collapse. The motor industry, whose health generally reflects the state of modern industry, is suffering a major crisis right across the globe, involving plant closures and redundancies on a huge scale. Hi-tech computer industries have now also been caught up in the downward spiral of recession. Germany, the power-house of central European capitalism, is heavily burdened with the costs of reunification and even Japan is showing the first signs of economic decline, despite its competitive lead. The GATT talks on trade continue to flounder as each nation desperately tries to stop itself sinking at the expense of others. The whole world, not excepting the USA, is burdened with historic levels of public and private debt.

Our bosses and politicians from left to right are orchestrating a fierce attack designed to make us pay for their crisis ridden economy.

WORKERS FIGHT BACK

Our class has not sat idly by and accepted all this shit!

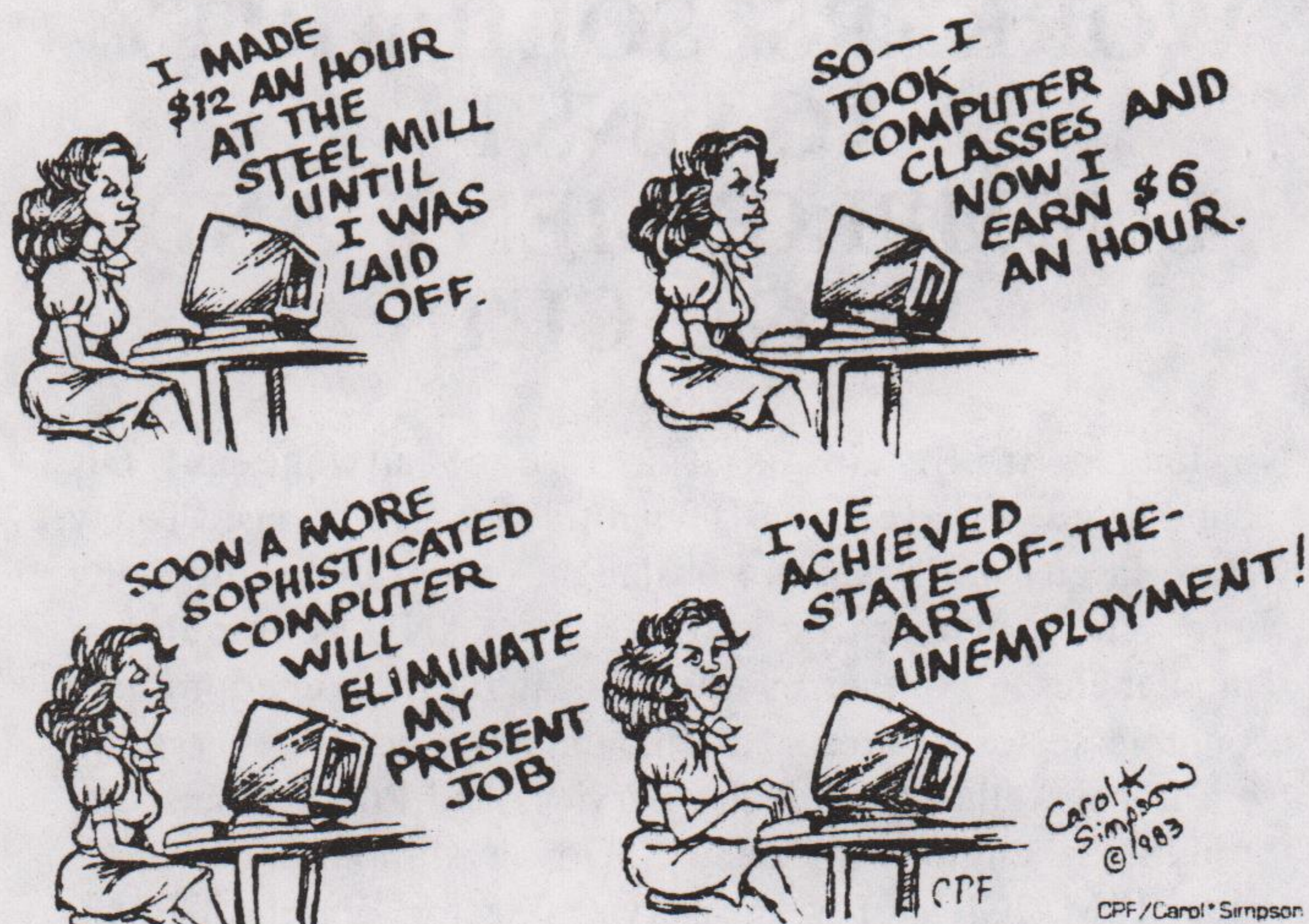
There has been a wave of strikes involving miners, textile and transport workers and many others right across the USSR and Eastern Europe and more recently in that last Stalinist stronghold of Albania. East German workers have long since forgotten the false euphoria over re-unification and are fighting back against redundancies and the withdrawal of social services.

There have been militant strikes of bus, railway and newspaper workers in the USA. Major strikes and demonstrations have taken place in Brazil and other South American states racked

by hyper-inflation, IMF imposed austerity measures and government corruption.

There have been a number of lengthy strikes amongst textile and other workers in India that have been sustained by a high level of 'community' support.

In the midst of the war in the Gulf, militant Turkish miners and their supporters threatened the stability of the Turkish government.



Examples abound of the world wide nature of working class resistance to the bosses' attacks.

Here in Britain the beginnings of a fight back have been evident amongst Liverpool Council workers, Massey Ferguson, Post Office, Tube and other workers.

POTENTIALITIES AND PROBLEMS

There exists the potential for a widespread, militant and unified response from our class that could at least temporarily push back the effects of the crisis and lay the basis for an offensive against the whole rotten economic system.

Unfortunately there are still many obstacles in the way of our class taking the first essential steps towards such a unified response.

Two such major obstacles are NATIONALISM and the UNIONS.

NATIONALISM

In the USSR and Eastern Europe, where the old rigid Stalinist regimes have recently crumbled, local ruling class factions are flexing their muscles in a desperate bid to avoid being dragged under with the rest of their former compatriots.

They are using the resentment of workers at decades of central bureaucratic control and suppression of local languages and culture to bolster their own positions of power in a wave of petty nationalism. The struggle of workers is being diverted from their common class interests towards futile programmes of decentralisation and new nationhood dressed up in the language of "freedom" and "democracy".

On the Indian sub-continent a whole plethora of nationalisms, ethnic and religious divisions is fostered in a similar attempt by local ruling class factions to wrest some degree of power and influence from an economic situation out of the control of the bloated bureaucracies of central

governments.

In the 'middle' east and elsewhere, both major and minor imperialist powers cynically use national and religious rivalries in their own ends in total disregard to the suffering of that land's shifting refugee crisis. The sheer immensity of suffering amongst the people of this area has so far almost totally smothered earlier glimmerings of independent working class action.

In western Europe, nationalism doesn't have quite the same force, but it is still at work, particularly through expressions of racism against North Africans in France, Turkish workers in Germany and Asians in Britain.

Here in Britain, politicians of all varieties try to present the economic ills we are suffering as a peculiarly British phenomenon. They invite us to take part in THEIR democratic debates as to the best solutions – in or out of the EEC, Tory or Labour managers for UK plc, etc. In Scotland and Wales the nationalists and their partners in the Green Party add colour to this dull discussion by promoting their own petty nationalist concerns. As if an 'independent' Wales or Scotland would be any less affected by the world slump or being sacked by a Welsh or Scottish boss was more agreeable.

UNIONS AGAINST THE WORKING CLASS

If nationalism is not enough on its own to derail our struggle, the Bosses rely on the Unions to assist them.

Whatever the benefits of the Unions in the last century, it is clear that today they are totally integrated into the structure of capitalism.

Not only are the Unions major capitalist investors in their own right, but their structure reflects the hierarchical organisation of the capitalist state and big business as well. They are junior partners in the management of the economy with special responsibility for controlling the workforce. This job is all the more effectively carried out precisely because they maintain a FORMAL independence from the corridors of power. This is a lesson well learnt by the failure of the old Stalinist Unions in the USSR and Eastern Europe. That they can do a better job for the bosses by being 'independent' is well illustrated by the history of SOLIDARITY in Poland. It was SOLIDARITY, not the old unions which brought the escalating struggle of the workers there under control and which helped enforce subsequent austerity measures.

UNION TACTICS

In Britain, the Unions are even more experienced at heading off trouble on 'the shop floor'.

These are just some of their tactics against us:

- Holding separate ballots amongst different Unions in the same workplace.
- Holding open ended ballots which don't commit them to any particular line of action.
- Continually re-balloting every time the bosses make a slight alteration to their offer.
- Keeping strikes and strikers isolated from each other by

monopolising the means of communication.

- Bringing different groups of workers out on strike at different times when their interests are the same and they would have more impact by striking together (viz Tube, Bus and Railway workers in recent disputes).

- Doing behind the scenes deals with the bosses.

- Calling for militant action prematurely, then referring back to failed actions when workers are really keen to go on the offensive.

- Calling campaigns on side issues (like the engineers' 35 hour campaign) when workers need to fight for jobs and wages.

- Splitting workers between 'profitable' and 'non-profitable' firms (like the arguments of the power and BT unions at present).

- Arguing that we "shouldn't rock the boat" in the run up to a parliamentary election and lying that the Labour Party will solve our problems.

- Threatening withdrawal of strike pay (OUR money) if we don't agree to their deals with the bosses.

- Arguing for "lawful action" when the law is DELIBERATELY designed to defeat us.

The list is endless and no doubt you could add a few more from your own experience.

ANOTHER WAY

Of course the Unions don't always get their way. Recently, Massey Ferguson workers in Coventry responded to the announcement of 60 day lay offs by holding a mass meeting and going on IMMEDIATE all out strike - without waiting for ballots.

There is a long and honourable history of wildcat strikes amongst workers, but only rarely have these completely broken from the trade unionist framework on any scale.

It is vital now that workers everywhere begin to take matters into their own hands.

This means opposing the diversionary tactics of the Unions by uniting our struggles across Union and other sectional boundaries.

Strikes need to be organised through mass assemblies open to ALL those involved and with directly elected strike committees. Strikes over basic issues like redundancies and wage cuts need to be spread as widely as possible by sending large delegations directly to other workers facing the same threats. Efforts must be made to involve the unemployed and other unwaged workers.

To deal with the unions' monopoly on communications, networks of militant workers in different areas and industries need to be built up to spread information and agitate for joint action. Groups of militant workers need to meet also to discuss the POLITICAL implications of the struggles going on. Increasingly solidarity action across national boundaries will become both necessary and possible.

The experience of all this kind of organised action will help develop a new independent community of resistance. We can begin to develop the confidence and practical understanding necessary to challenge the whole economy of wage labour and production for profit.

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CALIFORNIA DREAMING

The place of riots in the modern-day class struggle has been a recurring subject of debate both among ourselves and in groups close to us politically ever since the major inner city riots in Britain in the 1980s. We don't see this particular manifestation of the class struggle as containing an inherently greater revolutionary potential than any other form, but neither do we dismiss riots as the aimless flailings of the lumpenproletariat. Within these broad boundaries lie many complex issues which will no doubt fuel our discussions for a long time to come. Meanwhile, here's what we wrote about the LA riots of April 1992.

When Capitalism is confronted by events which rupture the smooth facade of its peaceful order (the peace of slavery) and challenge the grip of its talons on our bodies and on our minds, it responds in a practised manner.

Just as an act of Class rebellion has two parts - both the physical fight itself and the salutary effect which that has on the consciousness of other proletarians - so is the retaliatory strike of our rulers also twofold.

Firstly, it uses physical force against acts of insurrection, whether they be strikes, riots or anything else. And secondly, the class nature of these struggles these appeals in physical form for solidarity from the rest of the working class - are countered by lies, lies and more lies from the ruling class.

The recent riot in Los Angeles, with its echo in many other U.S. cities, illustrates this well.

RACE RIOT, CRIME SPREE

First we are told that it was a race riot, blacks attacking whites etc. Then we are shown the acts of "criminals" racial assaults and looting of stores blending together in the image. And finally we are told it was the revolt of an "underclass" which has been left out of the prosperity enjoyed by "most Americans". Lies, lies and more lies.

What started on the night of Wednesday 29 April was an explosion of class anger such as happens all too

rarely. The acquittal of a bunch of racist pigs of a crime which

had been recorded for all the world to see was merely the spark for a generalised class action by working class people of all colours. Starting with the attack on the police station and proceeding to the looting of everything from food and other basic necessities to things such as televisions, our class fought back against the system which

oppresses it. Workers everywhere should applaud this resistance.

However, this "carnival of the oppressed" had a goodly share of gatecrashers.

BLOODS, CRIPS AND OTHER SCUM

Riots, whatever their cause, often attract anti-social elements who swarm in like flies to a plate of uncovered food. The two major drug gangs, the Bloods and the Crips,

have always been just as much an enemy of working class interests as the Police - their endless bloody conflict has taken vast numbers of lives, both their own members and innocent bystanders.

In the L.A. riot, these murderous gangs declared a truce, so they could devote their energies to participating in the riot. Not, of course, from a working class standpoint, but from an ethnic (anti-white and anti-Korean) and from a business standpoint - they have put forward a joint program of reconstruction of their neighbourhoods, involving a partnership between themselves, the state and business interests. If you didn't already know it, this must convince you that the gangs are just another part of Capitalism - if anything came of these plans, the drug

gangs would simply be an extra tier of the state machine. The participation of these gangs in the riot was the participation of a faction of capitalism fighting for its own sectional interests.

What the presence of the gangs shows, together with that of other anti-social elements including a definite racist element (which overlaps with the gang element), both against whites and against Koreans, is this: rather than ONE riot, there were really TWO riots which took place simultaneously - the class riot and the "anti-social riot/pro-capitalist





Redistribution of wealth in Los Angeles.

riot" which was parasitical upon it.

ELEMENTARY

A similar confusion, a similar distinction between positive and negative elements exists in many social movements - a typical strike, for instance, will be imbued with Trade

Union ideas which merely aim to reform Capitalism. An example is the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. Central to the N.U.M.'s strategy was the "Plan for Coal" which was an alternative way of running Capitalism "in the Miners' interest". This reactionary nonsense existed alongside a genuine class-struggle element.

THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION

For revolutionaries it is CRUCIAL to differentiate between the class element and the reactionary element in all such cases, despite the capitalist media, both left and right, which will always try to merge the two parts into a single "phenomenon". The presence of counter-revolutionary, pro-capitalist organisations (whether the Bloods, the Crips or the N.U.M.) alongside workers engaged in class struggle, and indeed the presence of confused ideas in the minds of many of the workers involved, must not be allowed to muddy the issue. Revolutionaries take a clear, uncompromising stance - we support ONLY the class element and oppose the reactionary element.

Aside from the attempts of the media to clothe the L.A. class rebellion in the anti-social garb of its "parasite-riot", they also tried the other tack of using the "underclass" theory.

WE'RE ALL MIDDLE CLASS NOW

According to this, the bulk of working class people are not, in fact, working class at all but middle class. Below the middle class is a small, impoverished, chronically unemployed class called the underclass. They it was who were responsible for the riot, so even if it was a class rebellion, the story goes, it has nothing to do with most workers, who are middle class in any case.

This theory is of course reactionary garbage. The working class is a single class united by its position in society of possessing nothing but its ability to work. Some workers may earn more than others but they are

still powerless in any real sense - power is exclusively in the hands of the owners of society's wealth, the controllers of the state machine, namely, the capitalist class.

This divisive nonsense about an underclass is peddled not only by the capitalist mainstream but by the Left - this is but one example of the way the Left acts in practise as just another part of capitalism.

95 Miles From L.A.

We said a couple of sentences ago that the working class is powerless. This is true in everyday life, but there is one situation in which workers DO have power - when they engage in class struggle.

A riot is not a revolution. Nor, for that matter, is a strike. We have a long way to go, but the Future develops out of the Present, and great struggles develop out of small ones. The L.A. riot is one of a number of signs of increasing class struggle from around the world in recent months. Let us take heart from it.

*I'd be safe and warm if I was in L.A.
California dreaming on such a winter's day.*

CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

Two comments we frequently get are: it's all very well going on about strikes and riots, but what have they got to do with communism, and, it's all very well going on about communism, but how is it going to be brought about? These are two approaches to the one question - the revolutionary potential of the present-day class struggle - which was the subject of 'Class Struggle and Revolution' in Subversion 2.

Subversion stands for the creation of a world without states, classes, money and wages, where production will be undertaken for need not profit but to directly satisfy all human needs.

Some people describe this as "utopian". In one sense this is true: such a society does not exist anywhere, and never has. But we reject this "utopian" label if it implies that our goal has no connection with present-day reality.

The question of how to connect the day-to-day struggles we engage in now with the future society we desire has long been a subject of controversy among political groups.

Some organisations engage in the class struggle in order to recruit members to their party, with the aim of eventually becoming strong enough to seize power. We oppose such groups. We do not set ourselves up as generals, directing the rest of the working class into battle. A genuine and successful revolution can only be carried out by vast masses of working people consciously organising and leading themselves.

Besides, in the unlikely event that such groups did succeed in seizing power, the likely outcome would be in a so-called "worker's state" (with them in power), in which we would find ourselves working for "socialist" bosses, being paid "socialist" wages, and so on. If they share our future goal at all - and in most cases they don't - it is only as a distant mirage which continually recedes in the face of

endless "transitional periods".

CONVERTS FOR SOCIALISM

Other organisations, who, we acknowledge, do share the same aim as us, and who do not see themselves as saviours of the working class, nevertheless treat this vision of the future society as some kind of philosophical ideal. They seek to "convert" individual members of the working class until eventually there are enough "believers" to turn this ideal into reality.

When members of such organisations engage in the class struggle, it is their identity as individual members of the working class, rather than as revolutionaries, which

prevails. They regard the present day class struggle as necessarily limited and defensive, in no way connected to the future revolutionary attack on capitalism. Thus they end up actively defending organisations such as the trade unions whose very purpose is to contain the class struggle within the terms set by capitalism

BREAKING WITH NORMALITY

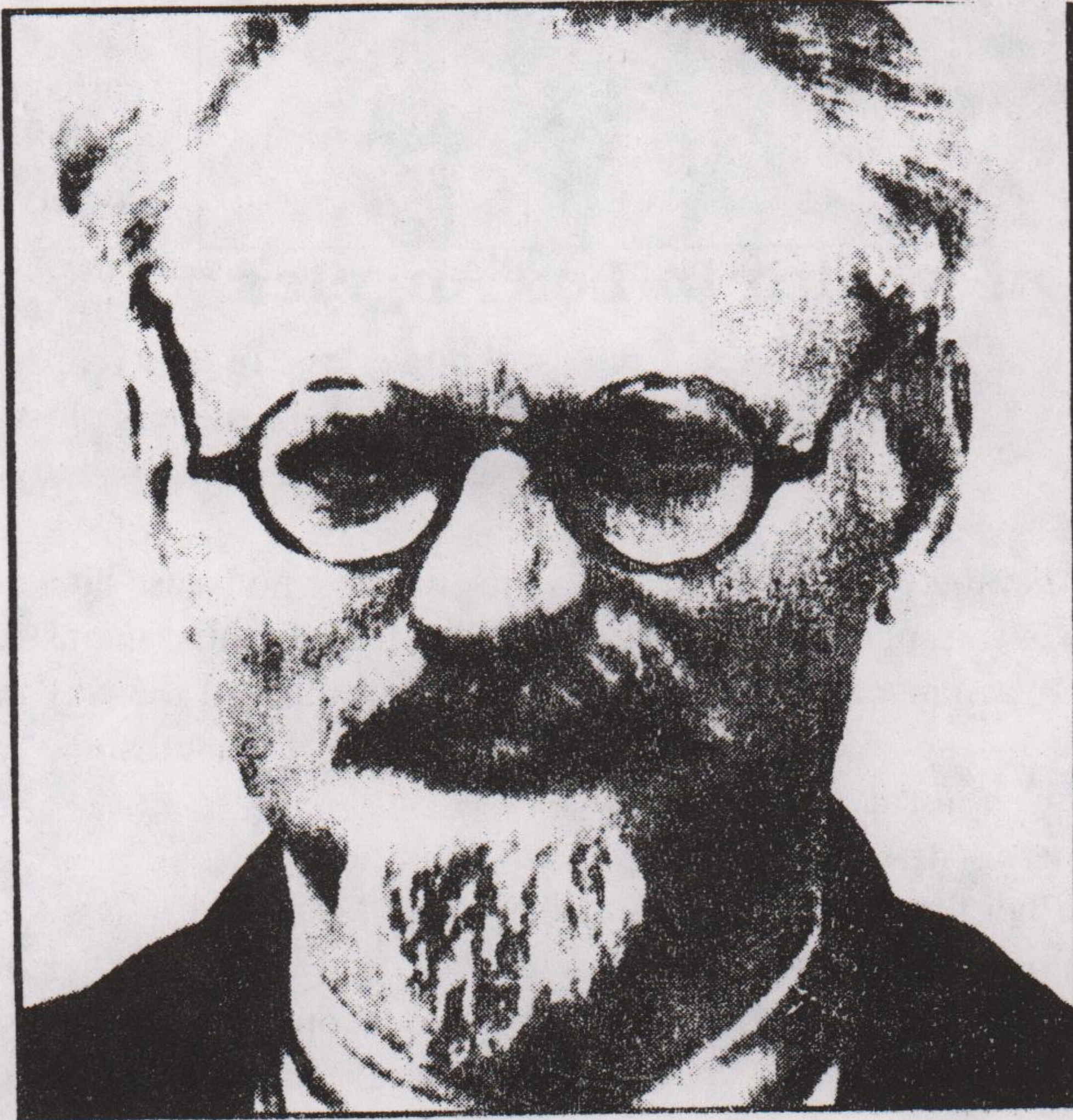
By contrast, the starting point of our approach to the class struggle is the view that the seeds of the future struggle for communism are contained within the working class's struggles of today.

The types of working class resistance to the attacks of capitalism we support, like strikes, riots, organising against the Poll Tax, and so on, all interrupt the routine of capitalist "normality". In overcoming the practical problems which crop up in the course of these actions, those working class people actively involved find themselves having to develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation. The development of these powers - all stifled by capitalism - is essential for the working class if it is to transform society.

COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE

By changing people's immediate material conditions, collective struggle also contains the potential to alter

continued on page 12



LEON TROTSKY

- FAILED SOCIALIST BOSS

debate..debate..debate..debate..debat

ANIMAL LIBERATION or SOCIAL REVOLUTION?

And finally...we have always considered a lively letters page to be arguably the most important feature of every issue of Subversion. We actively seek to provoke and develop a dialogue with anyone who comes across the bulletin, and the letters we receive are a measure of whether we are succeeding or failing in this aim. The following exchange of views, from Subversion 9, was sparked off by the publication of 'ALF Lash Out', on the activities and philosophy of the Animal Liberation Front, in Subversion 8.

Dear Subversion

The main purpose of this letter is to respond to the article "ALF LASH OUT" which appeared in SUBVERSION 8.

The main thrust of this article is to condemn ALF activity as being "terrorist" and hence anti-working class since it discourages mass action and intimidates people. No attempt is made to deal with the theory behind the action (that the domestication and exploitation of the non-human animals is oppressive and to be opposed) although presumably the author doesn't accept this. For some reason attacks on vivisection and hunting appear to be OK but actions against the exploitation of non-human animals for food are not. Let me assure you that animal farming involves at least as much violence and exploitation as vivisection and hunting and on an incomparably larger scale. You seem to think it funny or extreme that the ALF should target a cheese shop but it is simply consistent; the dairy industry and the beef industry are the same thing, you can't have the one without the other. If you attack butchers' shops then why not a cheese nshop.

I'm sorry but it really is nonsense to condemn ALF activity as terrorist, and to accuse them of "cavalier disregard for human life" is as absurd as it is slanderous. To my knowledge no human being has ever been harmed in any ALF action, great care being taken to ensure this....yet one hunt sab has now been killed, activists have been seriously injured on numerous occasions and recently an unarmed ALF group on an operation were arrested by armed cops with helicopter backup. Who are the terrorists?

ALF activity primarily consists of sabotage which has a long standing and proud place in the history of working class struggle. Would you condemn the workers' "hit squads" which emerged during the miner's strike? I presume not. If you oppose the politics of animal liberation then you should do so

politically, not by trying to smear people as terrorists.

You refer to the fact that capitalism is falling over itself to provide highly processed vegetarian and vegan products. Of course it is, that is the nature of the market economy. Similarly the supermarket shelves are stuffed with so-called "green" commodities.

"Anything you can sell, sell" is the motto. This doesn't mean, as you are well aware, that capitalism has ceased to wreck and pillage our planet and nor does the fact that you can buy Quorn products or meat in Safeways mean that capitalism is being "nice to animals" _ what a ridiculous suggestion!

Your comparison of animal liberation work with charity is also wrong. When people gave money to "Live Aid" that was charity. If people give money to the RSPCA out of guilt or something, that also is charity; but what about the group that broke into and damaged EC grain stores in response to the Ethiopian famine, was that charity? Well if it wasn't then neither is opposing physically the exploitation of non-human animals. Or are you saying that people should only ever act in their own immediate self interest? Or are you saying that the cause of non-human animals is different because not being human they don't count for anything?

Having just re-read the article "ALF LASH OUT" I see that you do admit that capitalism inflicts violence and oppression on non-human animals, you even condemn past ALF actions. If you are prepared to condemn activities around these issues now would you also say to women, blacks and gays etc that they should ~wait until after the revolution".

In conclusion I would repeat what I said to you in a previous correspondence on this matter:

Animal liberation is an important issue for revolutionaries to address because it is very linked to a project which is vital, namely a reappraisal of what exactly is and should be the relationship of our species to the planet we inhabit and our fellow creatures. The absolute schism between "man" and nature has led us to the nightmare of ecological disaster and totalitarianism which is the 20th century.

in solidarity
Steve.

Dear Steve,

Many thanks for your letter discussing our article "ALF Lash OUT" in Subversion 8. As promised this is an attempt at a proper reply.

We feel that your letter confuses a number of points. You say that ALF activity "primarily consists of sabotage which has a long standing and proud place in the history of working class struggle." You ask whether we would, "condemn the workers' hit squads which emerged during the miners strike?" We do not believe it is possible to equate the two.

There is, of course, one similarity between the actions of ALF and the miners' hit squads. Both are the product of movements faced with a downturn and the prospect of defeat. Had the Miners' Strike been winning, it is doubtful whether such activities would have been necessary. ALF is really in a similar situation, isn't it? They'd like there to be a mass movement fighting animal cruelty, but it doesn't exist. Our contention, of course, is that such an elitist, secretive activity militates against the existence of a mass movement.

There is a vital difference between the two. The actions of the miners was in the defence of their own living standards and conditions of life. This is something that they shared in common with other workers, e.g. working class women, blacks and gays. All struggle in their own self-interest and as such their actions can be seen as part of the struggle for socialism - something which will only come about by the mass of workers consciously fighting for it.

The actions of ALF and others are, on the contrary, not the actions of one group struggling for its own interests. Unfortunately, animals are unable to do this. As such they have no 'rights'. What animals have are the actions of altruistically minded humans who object to the way animals are treated. This is really not so different to the kind of charity initiated by Live Aid and so on.

We've said before that we don't object to charity as such. All of us reach into our pockets for some worthy cause or other and some members of Subversion go further. But we don't confuse this with revolutionary activity. It is merely our attempts to alleviate some of the problems around us and we recognise that such efforts are pitiful in comparison to the destruction and waste daily perpetuated by capitalism.

We also object to bombings because they are terroristic. Sometimes bombers get their intended targets and sometimes those targets deserve what they get. Equally often the victims are ordinary members of the working class who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or in ALFs case, young children who happen to be in the right car at the wrong time. Bombing can never be accurately targeted. They always have a randomness about them. As such they have place in the armoury of the working class.

We do not, of course, equate the activities of terrorist groups with those of the state. When it comes to terror the state is in a league of its own. It was, after all, the British and American states who massacred thousands of Iraqi civilians and fleeing soldiers. The states terrorism is routine and incredibly vicious. Even such experienced practitioners in terror as the IRA are mere babies in comparison.

We are against cruelty to animals for a number of reasons. One is that cruelty begets cruelty. Those who habitually abuse and degrade animals, or are associated with it, find it easy to be equally cruel to humans. This is particularly so when one group defines another as being less than human. Nazi Germany was an obvious example, as was Stalinist Russia and today's Yugoslavia.

We are cruelty to animals because the food it produces is of an inferior quality. We are against it because intensive farming uses up enormous quantities of energy and foodstuffs which would be better used to feed hungry people and not contribute to global warming. You are obviously aware just how much vegetable protein is used to produce tiny amounts of animal protein. The animal protein that is produced is usually of an inferior quality to that produced in more humane ways.

We are against much animal experimentation because it is unreliable and because it teaches many people the kind of cruelty we described above. We are against it simply because it is cruel and because we can't believe a communist society could be based on cruelty.

On the other hand we believe some use of animals is necessary. Maybe we are biased, but members of Subversion have friends and family whose lives depend on medication produced from dead animals. We fervently hope that a socialist society would render this unnecessary. We described the problems of diabetics in our last issue, many of whom have died as a result of having their animal based insulin replaced by synthetic insulin. Another example is cystic fibrosis. This effects 6000 people in Britain. It usually kills people before they reach the age of 30. Untreated they'd be lucky to reach two. The successful treatment of this condition requires the routine taking of enzyme capsules derived from pigs. The techniques for heart and lung transplantation that many people with CF need were first practised on animals. Their need for concentrated protein is such that they cannot be vegetarian and must eat meat.

Maybe one day there will be adequate therapies for diabetics and cystic fibrosis sufferers that don't require the slaughter of animals. We certainly hope so.

In the meantime we see no contest between a cow and a human being.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.
- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.
- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.
- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.
- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.
- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.
- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.
- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.
- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.
- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

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