

A SELECTION OF ARTICLES  
FROM PAST PUBLICATIONS  
OF THE ANARCHIST  
WORKERS ASSOCIATION.  
PRODUCED FOR THE  
DAY SCHOOL.



# Anarchist Worker

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## The State and Workers Power

covering the Marxist and anarchist  
theories of the state and their  
application in the revolutions of this  
century.

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Anarchist Workers Association



The bulk of these articles are three years old. The points made then have since been corroborated and made plain to thousands of working people by the actions of the Labour leaders, the Trade Union bureaucracy and the many, competing, "NEW leaderships". That these articles have stood this test of time makes them more, rather than less, useful to our discussion which is not an academic exercise at recapturing the past but an attempt to understand the past in order to conquer the future.



# AN ENDLESS ROUND OF PARTIES

From hints given by its daily paper 'Workers Press', it seems that the Socialist Labour League (SLL) is going to declare itself 'THE revolutionary party', either during or after its next rally in London.

Another group which claims to be the true heirs of Lenin - the International Socialists (IS) - who are bitter enemies of the SLL, are also exhorting anyone who will listen to 'build the revolutionary party'. They, of course, mean 'join IS'.

With these groups urging people to rally behind their, opposing, leaderships, an opportunity occurs to re-open debate within the working class movement on the age-old problems of organisation, revolutionary activity, and 'new leaderships'.

The bulk of groups and organisations on the left of the Labour Party trace their ancestry to the ideas of Lenin and the organisation and tactics of the Russian Bolshevik Party. Ignoring the fact that they all denounce each other as heretics and traitors, all 57 varieties - Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists etc., all share to some degree the principles laid down by Lenin in 1902 in his pamphlet 'What is to be done?' The central ideas derived from this pamphlet can be summed up as follows:-

'Trade Union Consciousness' - by itself the working class can develop a partial understanding of the nature of capitalist society. Leading from this Lenin said that the working class could only develop defensive organisations such as trade unions. These will fight for material benefits, but only within the context of accepting capitalist society as a whole.

'Professional revolutionaries' - are needed to provide the working class with socialist ideas and with the leadership which will urge the working class towards socialism. Lenin says that these will initially be recruited from the more socially-conscious sections of the middle class and the intelligentsia.

'Democratic Centralism' - these revolutionaries must be tightly organised and disciplined. 'Reflecting the organised distrust of the leadership for the rank-and-file'. The most experienced should lead and the rest should obey. Once a question has been decided, everyone has to carry out the decisions.

Libertarian Communists/Revolutionary Anarchists start off our criticism of these ideas with a reminder of the kind of society we want to achieve. We want a society in which the working people **actually** have the power to decide how their lives are going to be lived. A society where decisions are made by a multitude of democratic organisations - federations of workers councils, community councils, estate councils, schools and education councils etc., each linked to the other and within each decisions deriving from the bottom. With delegates being elected for definite periods, with definite mandates, and who are instantly recallable. This kind of organisation means that we place great importance on the **self-management** of struggles now, because

through fighting, people not only learn how to work together and what to work against but they also learn how to organise themselves.

This means that now, as well as after the revolution, we reject all those who want to act 'on behalf' of people - whatever their motives. We attack reliance on trade union permanent officials, local Councilors, 'left' Labour MPs and 'new revolutionary leaderships'.

The importance of each struggle is what people learn from it. Whether they succeed in creating a viable, democratic and lasting form of organisation eg. rank and file bodies that last, tenants associations that are working on all the problems of a community, all the time, not just appearing with every new rent increase. The measure of success is not the number of 'recruits' gained for any Party but how much closer people are to organising themselves and learning for themselves. Honestly made mistakes, from which experience is gained are far better than the guidance of the most perfect 'leadership'.

So....we disagree with the Leninists because we think that however successful they may be, the kind of society they will bring about will not be very different from the one we live in now. We think that the Soviet Union is a good example of how not to make a revolution.

The idea of the naturally low level of working class understanding and of the professionals to lead us along, leads to the Party substituting itself for the working class. Creating a society where the Party is in power 'on behalf of the working class', and where in the interests of socialism the Party occasionally finds it necessary to shoot workers who don't understand their own 'best interests' (the history of the Russian revolution is full of such events - often the workers being shot by Lenin and Trotsky were those whose fighting had made the revolution in the first place eg. the Kronstadt sailors, the workers of 'red' Vyborg etc.) \*\*

This doesn't mean that we deny the need for organisation, for understanding history and for organising to help each other in struggle. Neither does it deny that all the media, all the traditional organisations such as the TUC and the Labour Party act to dampen down struggle and divert it into parliamentary impotence. There is, obviously, a need for papers and groups that combat the lies that are pumped out every day, that returns their own history to ordinary people brought up on the admiration of thieving priests and murderous barons.

We think that these organisations must not be separate from the ordinary everyday struggles and must be concerned with encouraging people to learn and act for themselves. Our view of socialism is a society where revolutionary organisations are irrelevant because ordinary people are running things themselves, NOT one where we sit on top doing things for people, perhaps in a better way, perhaps not.

This attitude means that we try and make our own organisation as democratic as possible - to pass around skills and knowledge

FORWARD - with  
Gerry Healy, Nat.  
Sec. of the SLL  
TO 1917??



so that everyone benefits. Again, honestly made mistakes, providing we are organised in such a way to learn from them, are much better than the dictates of the most infallible Central Committee. We therefore reject the 'thou shalt obey' attitudes of the Leninists.

If each question can be approached on its merits, rather than each problem being a battle to the death because the minority must submit, then the progress towards a coherent and cohesive organisation is quicker in the long run. The history of the Leninist groups shows that the 'efficiency and discipline' of forced activity covers the growth of blocs inside an organisation - based upon 'beaten' minorities, and leads the profusion of splits and splinters that litters the political landscape. This does not mean that libertarian organisations do not expel scabs or racists or split on matters of principle, but it does mean that the freer discussions and decision making are the better in the long run. That it is not inefficient in the long run to allow minorities to maintain their position rather than force them to follow the line of the majority.

The creation of this type of organisation, making sure that skills, knowledge, and responsibility are spread to everyone, is more difficult than building an obedient machine around the dictates of a Centre. This is because people are used to being told what to do all their lives. **THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT WE ARE WORKING TO DESTROY.**

\*\* read 'The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control' from SOLIDARITY,

SINCE WE FIRST PUBLISHED THIS ARTICLE.

The SLL declared "the Party" - the Workers Revolutionary Party. It then swiftly split giving three groups where there was one.

The IS has been through at least four splits/expulsions producing five groups.

None of the groups has yet shown **any** awareness of the sterile pattern, none has much influence or effect, all have a stable leadership and a vast turnover of members.



# CASTLES IN THE AIR

The last issue of *Libertarian Struggle* carried some of the criticisms which libertarian revolutionaries put forward of Lenin's ideas, and of the aims and methods of his followers. That article gave some idea why we oppose dictatorial organisations claiming to 'lead' the working class. The picture is unclear if we just leave it understood that we reject the queue of 'NEW leaderships' without explaining our attitude to the current political leadership of the working class. Which means explaining our attitude to parliamentary politics and the Labour Party.

For over 50 years the majority of class-conscious workers have looked to the Labour Party as their Party. An explanation of why the Labour Party has consistently betrayed their hopes can best be done by concentrating on two factors - first, the influences and limitations imposed on both British parliamentary democracy and the British Labour Party by the circumstances of their origins - second, the straitjacket imposed by the general principles of parliamentary democracy and parliamentary socialism.

The first assumption of parliamentary democracy, and those socialists who want to use Parliament for change, is that Parliament itself is a neutral institution, above the class struggle which takes place every day in society. By this light, if the working class can capture parliament it can use the powers of parliament in its interests as easily as the Tories use it in the interests of the ruling class. (This view is held by both the Labour Party and the Communist Party.) Why then have successive Labour governments (and in the past Communist MPs) made so little impression on the basic inequality and injustice of our society?

Parliaments do not descend from on high but have their roots in particular historical experience. As every skoolkid knows (although the political significance is, naturally, ignored) Parliament arose as the instrument of the rising capitalist class in its battles with the old feudal aristocracy and the supreme power of the Crown. It rules in the name of the 'nation' (which seems normal to us but which was revolutionary when the most sacred myth of the time was the 'Divine Right of the King appointed by God'). It is not an institution designed to express the conflict in society but designed to absorb it and unify everyone around this myth 'the nation'. But while it does this it still maintains the rule of the capitalist class. It does this not only by diverting working class interests in the name of the sacred national cow, but also because, as an institution created by and staffed by the privileged classes over the past 300 years, it has all the checks and balances inbuilt to prevent the machinery being used for new purposes. (History is full of examples of Labour Chancellors being prisoners of the Treasury, Labour Foreign Secretaries stuck with reactionary Foreign

Office staff who (a) advise the same course as always and (b) can smother anything else.)

So we can see by this brief description that, far from being a neutral weapon, Parliament is a fortress of the ruling class - putting out and reinforcing ideas that are in their interests, staffed by them or their servants. It is intricately built and a newcomer will not find the difficult and tortuous paths around it. If he asks the occupants to guide him he is their prisoner.

Let's now look at those who intend to take this castle on our behalf. The Labour Party is not a socialist party - it has never stood for Socialism in any programme but the one drafted in 1918. At its birth it was made up of trade union leaders - who wanted parliamentary representatives to defend them against the more reactionary elements of the ruling class, and give them legal rights to carry on getting the best they could under capitalism; Fabian (ie. gradualist) socialists and other reformists (not revolutionaries); and some very small genuinely socialist groups. This pattern has been very important for the Party - the bulk of the strength has always come from the union bur-



eaucracy (money and nominal membership); the leadership has always been largely provided by the middleclass reformers - if going to Eton helps one become a Tory MP or Minister, then going to Oxford or Cambridge is equally necessary for most Labour MPs or Ministers; and the small number of 'lefts' remain to do any local donkey work and remain as powerless to affect Labour leaders as ever they have been.



So, the weight of the Party is always towards changing things within the context of capitalist society. To this extent it often plays the role of mouthpiece for the more modernising sections



of the ruling class eg. the Wilson govts pioneering of wages control, 'Fair' rents etc. Its most progressive measures have been in line with modernising capitalism in its own long term interests - even the great reforms of 1945 carried on in the tradition of forward-looking capitalism, represented best by the 1906 Liberal Governments introduction of pensions and unemployment benefits. The union bureaucracy and the middle class reformers are not interested in using parliament for working class interests. Their place in Parliament and in the Party expresses two things: first their having 'made it' as part of the privileged elite of the country. In this they are not representatives of the working class (we certainly have not 'made it') but they are representatives of their social strata - the TU bureaucracy and the middle class intelligentsia.

The second thing that the Labour Party represents is a genuine desire to modernise the economy and to improve the general welfare BUT within the context of 'the nation's needs' NOT those of the working class - who are the first to be attacked when the 'nation' (ie. the needs of British capitalism) needs it.

While the capitalist system is in sufficient health - that is when its screwing enough profit out of every working class family - its able to grant a few reforms and the Labour Party is the tool which introduces them. When capitalism is gripped by crisis, as at present, and the glaring inequalities become such that many people become open to socialist ideas for a complete change THEN the Labour Party, far from taking the lead in the fight, sides with the established order, starts dishing out the 'national interest' muck. The only thing the Labour Party has got really upset about during this reactionary Tory government has been the 'loss of Sovereignty of our Queen(!)' because 'we' joined the Common Market. The Labour Party betrayed the tenants over the Tory Rent Act, attacked the jailed dockers, and denounced the gasmen. One thing it won't do is fight the Tories.

We have already said that Parliament exists to smother rather than to voice working class interests. And this is true of the whole process of elections. If you compete in elections you must accept the rules. (And we know who made the rules.) If you accept that you must change society through Parliament you must first accept the defence of the whole election game, so that when you win (this year, next year, sometime, never) its all in a fit state to be used. So the 'lefts' act to divert all working class activity into the game. Don't strike or occupy - lobby your MPs. Don't refuse rent rises and organise your estate - trust your local Labour/Communist Councillor (or elect one). The game wants people only active enough to vote for the 'good guys' so that they have enough counters to play the game. Progress to socialism needs people organising and acting for themselves, so that day by day we get closer to the working class DIRECTLY exercising ITS OWN power over the whole of society.

Those of us in the socialist movement have been taught from birth or learnt through experience to hate the Tories. There is a strong emotional pull when the Labour Party thrashes them in an election. But our role in the game then is just that of spectators. We've got to

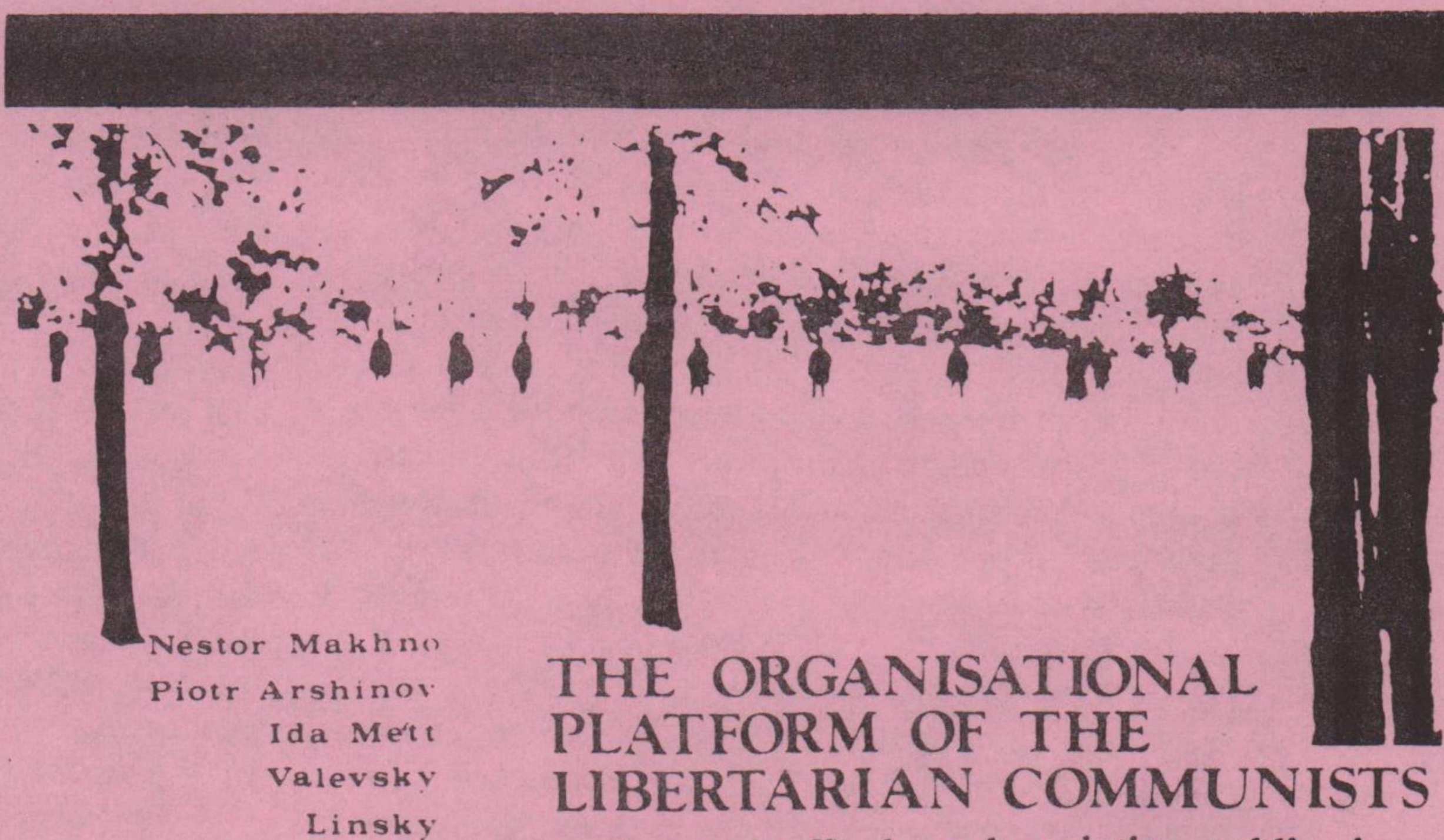
play a whole new game, with our rules not theirs.

Those who want to divert us are at best mistaken, more usually they are self-seeking charlatans and renegades. Our job is to organise ourselves to destroy the ruling class and with it all its myths, all its servants and friends. Through our day to day direct action to make its fortress irrelevant. Its game obsolete. To cut off its sources of supply - our belief in it. To isolate it - by creating our own institutions REALLY under our control. When we're strong enough, to smash it to pieces.

### SINCE WE FIRST PUBLISHED THIS ARTICLE.

Labour returned to power because workers, lead by the miners, brought down the Heath government. Wilson, and now Callaghan, carried on the Heath policy. 1,500,000 out of work. Living standards slashed. Health and social services cut to ribbons. Education hammered, class sizes rise, teachers on the dole. Prices rocket.

TUC acts to stop resistance to these atrocities. Main weapon - "national interest". It becomes clear to many that Labour is part of the problem not the solution to capitalism.



The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists was written by a group of anarchists who had participated in the Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war.

They attempted to communicate their experiences and what they had learnt, to the international anarchist movement, stressing the need for disciplined anarchist organisation, built on and relating to the working class.

The Platform was severely attacked by the anarchist 'celebrities' almost without exception, who saw the formation of a structured anarchist organisation as a threat to the inalienable rights of the individual.

This historical document has been rediscovered, and has been instrumental in the development of organised class anarchism in the 1970's.

To obtain a copy, send a cheque/PO for 20p + 7p p&p made out to 'AWA General Fund' to: AWA, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside.



# GERMANY 1918

With the growing interest in workers' control over the last few years, many militants are looking back in history to times when workers took over their factories and set up councils to govern society in their own interests instead of the interests of the bosses. This is a far cry from the mild suggestion of worker participation with the bosses or (in the case of nationalised industries) with the State's representatives.

One such revolution which has usually been obscured until recently took place in Germany in November 1918 and much can be learned by examining it.

Before the 1st World War the German working class was the most powerful and well-organised in Europe, and the Social Democratic Party, the SPD, was the strongest party in the Second International. But while its leaders were full of empty chatter about class war, the party was committed to a reformist, non-revolutionary practice. A sterile party bureaucracy had grown up, living off the party and unconcerned about socialism. The leader of the SPD right wing, Bernstein (similar to Roy Jenkins) actually said that the party was everything and socialism nothing. Unlike the Labour Party, however, the SPD contained a significant revolutionary wing led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who argued that the party should be revolutionary in practice as well as theory.

However, all the Social Democrats were committed to parliamentary democracy, and even the revolutionaries in the party did not realise that a socialist society would need new, more democratic, institutions. The appearance of workers and peasants councils (soviets) in Russia in the 1905 rebellion should have shown the revolutionaries that they must argue and agitate against the fake democracy of a parliament where a few rule with the occasional consent of 'the people'. It should also have convinced them that it was necessary to break completely with the reformist SPD. Instead they continued with the vain hope of changing the SPD's policies, and allowed the illusions in Parliament that many workers held to continue unchallenged.

The First World War showed the consequences of this. The majority of the SPD supported the war completely and (like the Labour Party in Britain) their leaders went on recruiting platforms to urge workers to kill British and French workers and be killed themselves in the interest of the ruling class. Some Social Democrats, appalled by the butchery of the trenches, finally broke with the SPD to form an Independent SPD under Kautsky (similar to Michael Foot in the British Labour Party) and called for a negotiated peace - an abstract view laying the fate of the working class in the hands of the beneficial ruling class at that moment slaughtering millions of workers in the interests of their profits. Only a small group around Rosa Luxemburg - the Spartacists - argued for a realistic solution - the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class by the workers. The Spartacists were still committed to fighting for parli-

ament rather than the direct democracy of a society run by workers councils until near the end of the war. The complete lack of agitation and propaganda for council communism among the working class was soon to be seen.

## THE REVOLUTION

In November 1918 the working class took matters into their own hands. A naval mutiny at Kiel led to the seizure of power in the cities and towns of Germany.

Workers and Soldiers set up councils to run the area and called for the end of the war and the setting up of a Republic. On November 9, a general strike led by revolutionary shop stewards paralysed Berlin and thousands of workers marched through the capital, occupying public buildings. Many were armed, and the sight of the red flags frightened the SPD leaders as much as it did the ruling class. Prince Max of Baden, the Chancellor (Prime Minister) said: "To combat the revolution we must conjure up the democratic idea" (or parliament) and appointed the SPD leader Ebert as Chancellor. Ebert said "I hate revolution like social sin". The SPD then proclaimed a Republic to forestall the revolutionaries.

The power of the State was non-existent however. Germany was in practice ruled by workers and soldiers councils, the result of a spontaneous mass movement. However, it was only the beginning of a revolution. To be successful, there had to be a complete break with reformism of the SPD (just as there must be a complete break with the Labour Party in Britain). The councils had to turn into permanent institutions - a democratic substitute for the illusions of parliament - and take over industry from the capitalists. If this did not happen, then the revolution would be defeated and capitalism and the ruling class would recover.

The majority of workers, still holding to the illusions of parliamentary reformism failed to carry the revolution through to its logical conclusion. They saw the councils as effective instruments for obtaining peace, without realising that only socialist revolution could guarantee lasting peace. The councils were dominated by the SPD, who were hostile to them and wanted to reverse the revolution. The SPD took part in the councils to bring the mass movement under their control. No attempt was made to smash the Civil Service. No attempt was made to replace the army with a democratic militia. No attempt was made to take over the factories. In many areas, councils tried to introduce the eight-hour day - good enough in itself in ordinary circumstances but pathetic in a revolutionary situation. Only the workers councils in Saxony called for the 'taking over of production' by the working class, abolition of unearned income, arming of the people to safeguard the revolution, and abolition of the existing courts of law. The election of a new Saxon workers council which followed, elected a majority of SPD deputies who immediately became much more 'moderate'.



The day after the revolution succeeded on November 10 the Berlin Workers and Soldiers Council met and agreed to the formation of a cabinet under Ebert, composed of SPD and Independent SPD members. Liebknecht's call to break with the SPD met with a cold reception. It was seen as breaking workers unity. But Liebknecht was right. Ebert was unconcerned with workers unity. His policy was to divide the working class, and was to lead to workers turning machine guns on other workers. Workers unity in such a situation is always revolutionary unity and a total break with the policy of Ebert's and their politics. That very day Ebert was negotiating with General Groener, the head of the Imperial Army, with the intention of crushing the revolution.

This is not simply a matter of Ebert being a scoundrel. As with Ramsey MacDonald's decision to split with the British Labour Party in 1931, it was not a question of making mistakes or of picking the wrong men to lead. The decision arose from Ebert's politics. His belief in 'the national interest' and his fear of a mass movement led directly to policies of repression. In exactly the same way Reg Prentice, Shadow Minister of Labour, attacked workers who came out on strike to release the five dockers imprisoned by the Industrial Relations Court last summer. He called on the workers to obey the law rather than go on a political strike. His position was the result of his politics - the politics of the Labour Party.

Ebert now devoted himself to destroying the revolution. He set up 'commissions' to 'study'

the question of nationalisation, and when the moderate commissions finally reported, they were, predictably, in favour of capitalism. Spartacist demonstrations were broken with force, and at one demonstration troops machine gunned the crowd, killing 16 and wounding 12.

In December 1918 a National Congress of Workers and Soldiers Councils met in Berlin. Instead of becoming the permanent body governing Germany, as the Spartacists demanded, the Congress committed suicide by calling for a Constituent Assembly to set up a parliament. It was the death of the revolution. The Spartacist rising which followed the Congress was bungled, and had little chance of success. The civil war between revolutionary and reformist workers (the latter aided by the army and the fascist Free Corps), in which the best socialist militants like Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht were butchered, was part of the tragic aftermath of this failure by the workers to break with reformism. The failure to create a socialist Germany ruled by workers councils paved the way for the victory of Hitler and the destruction of the German working class movement. As Marx pointed out, the final choice is between socialism and barbarism.

The working class must never ignore its own history. Mistakes have been made at the cost of much misery and suffering, and must not be repeated. There must be a total break with those like the Labour Party and the Communist Party who continue to agitate for reformism and a parliamentary road to socialism. But workers must not rely on any other leadership, "Revolutionary" or otherwise, to take power on its behalf. The result of that, as shown by Russia, has been to destroy the workers councils and

create a state capitalist society. Workers must take power into their own hands and smash the State machinery, governing society in their own interests through workers councils. Above all we must learn from the mistakes of the German working class in 1918, that, those who make a revolution by halves dig their own graves.

#### FURTHER READING ON THE GERMAN REVOLUTION :-

The German Revolution of 1918 - A.J.Ryder  
Cambridge University Press.  
Rosa Luxembourg - P.Frohlich. Pluto Press.

#### FURTHER READING ON THE SPANISH REVOLUTION :-

The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain - Broue and Temime. Faber.  
Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain - F.Morrow. New Park.  
Lessons of the Spanish Revolution - V.Richards. Freedom Press.  
Homage to Catalonia - G.Orwell. Penguin.  
Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship - N.Chomsky. in American Power and The New Mandarins. Penguin Penguin.

## SPAIN 1936

In July 1936 the Spanish military, in alliance with the Catholic Church, the Fascists, and the monarchists rose in revolt against the Left Republican government that had been elected a few months previously. They were resisted, not by that government, but by the Spanish working class, who set in motion one of the most fundamental revolutions of the 20th. Century. Within days of the rebellion the mass organisations of the Spanish workers had inflicted severe defeat on the Fascists and their supporters in most of Spain, and especially in the major industrial areas. The bourgeois government of José Giral and Azana was powerless to resist either Franco or the workers' revolution. Wherever the Fascists were defeated, effective power passed from the middle class institutions to countless workers' committees, factory committees and peasant collectives. The Spanish working class began to organise itself for the fundamental tasks of defeating Fascism and consolidating and extending the social revolution.

The Civil War that ensued lasted nearly three years. By the time the Fascist victory was complete the social revolution was long dead. Within the Republican zone, the bourgeoisie, reduced to irrelevance in July 1936, slowly but inexorably reasserted its power. The working class suffered defeat after defeat. By 1939 'law and order' had been restored in Republican Spain. The workers' committees had been disbanded, revolutionary parties had been outlawed and thousands of working class militants had been gaoled, tortured and murdered. The Spanish revolution was defeated long before the final victory of Franco.



## WHAT HAPPENED ?

In 1936 the Republican State lost well over half its army and police force to the Fascist rebels. Faced with the rebellion, the government at first tried to negotiate, thus losing valuable time. In Madrid and Barcelona thousands of workers gathered outside government buildings demanding arms - and when it became obvious that they had to fight, the Spanish government at last issued arms to the working class organisations. Once the workers were armed, the best the State could hope for was a paper survival. Power was in the streets and in the factories, in the hands of the common people.

In Spain's major industrial region, Catalonia, lay the centre of working class Anarchism. Industry was expropriated and factory committees set up to provide the essentials necessary for the struggle against Fascism. The Catalan government was powerless. This was admitted by Companys, the Catalan president, who said to the Anarchist militants, Durruti and Oliver: "Today you are masters of the City. If you do not need me, or do not wish me to remain President of Catalonia, tell me now and I shall become one more soldier in the struggle against Fascism." His offer was not taken up. The first in a long chain of errors. The Catalan government was considered irrelevant. Economic power was in the hands of the workers, the police had been disarmed and police functions undertaken by armed workers' patrols. The Anarchist unions organised untrained and poorly armed militia to replace the now extinct Republican army and the long military struggle was begun without help from a government that was powerless to do anything but continue a shadowy existence. In Catalonia, and to a lesser extent throughout the rest of anti-Fascist Spain a regime of **dual power** was established.

In Madrid, Valencia and Malaga power lay with the joint Socialist-Anarchist committees. In Asturias, where the Communist Party had some influence, a system of workers' supervision was established, though the mines were rarely expropriated wholesale. Only in the Basque provinces did the capitalists retain control of the factories: and here, significantly resistance to Franco was short-lived and half-hearted.

## THE COUNTRY SIDE

The social revolution in industrial Spain had its counterpart in the agricultural regions. The crying need for land reform had been consistently ignored by both Left and Right in the Republican governments of 1931-36. Now the peasants were willing to wait no longer. The fields were expropriated, and those landlords that were not ordinarily absent were forced to flee or were executed. Village committees took over the administrative functions of the area, and hundreds of thousands of acres were collectivised. For the first time the Spanish peasantry felt in control of its own destiny and the results were remarkable. Production was actually increased, and this at a time when all the special difficul-

ties of Civil War were present. With the help of the militias the last vestiges of the old regime were destroyed, and the peasantry declared in words and deeds their desire to aid the defeat of Fascism. How could a movement as widespread as this be defeated ?

## THE ANARCHISTS

The responsibility of the Anarchist movement in launching the social revolution was enormous. Even in areas where Anarchism had little organised expression, the influence of Anarchist doctrine was incontestable. Over half of Spain's industrial workers belonged to the major Anarchist union, the CNT.(National Confederation of Labour.) Given this situation it must be admitted that the responsibility for the eventual defeat of the social revolution rests heavily on the shoulders of the Anarchist movement. There were two fundamental failures, the failure to transform the workers' committees which were running industry, into workers' councils that would present a **political** challenge to the continued existence of the bourgeois State. And the failure to seize the financial institutions of the State; for when the middle class gathered courage to re-emerge, it found itself still in possession of the purse strings. The CNT-FAI leaders, with a naivete that indicates an ill acquaintance with Anarchist theory, propounded the notion that the industrial power of the workers had reduced and destroyed the bourgeois State. Juan Lopez, a CNT leader declared in September 1936, that the establishment of workers' committees "...has resulted in the disappearance of government delegates in the provinces we control... the local organs of administration of the old bourgeois regime have become mere skeletons because their life force has been replaced by the revolutionary vitality of the workers' unions."

But this was far from the case - the skeletons were soon fattened up, life was breathed into them. **Prominent Anarchists of the CNT, with neither sanction or approval of the movement, entered the Republican government.** This was done, it was said, to safeguard the revolutionary gains, and to contribute to anti-fascist unity. What nonsense ! The best way to safeguard a revolution is to destroy the State, not become part of it. And 'anti-Fascist' unity is not possible with people whose initial concern is to destroy the revolutionary movement. Certain Anarchist leaders sacrificed the Spanish revolution for a suitcase full of ministerial portfolios.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF THE REVOLUTION

Regimes of dual power are inherently unstable. A struggle must take place between the working class and the old system, until one or other is victorious. The Spanish Anarchists, along with the revolutionary anti-Stalinist party, the POUM, had consistently rejected calls for the establishment of workers' councils. A facile identification of the workers' aspirations with those of the trade unions, both socialist and Anarchist, had meant the establishment of **union committees,**



rather than rank and file committees. There had even been bargaining for representation on committees for groups and parties with little or no influence in the area. For instance in Catalonia, the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias, which was for many months the most important body in Catalonia, had fifteen members. Five were from the CNT-FAI, three from the Socialist UGT, one from the POUM, one from the Peasants Union, one from the Communists, and four from the bourgeois parties. Clearly, this is a deformed manifestation of workers' power, and the committee, formed by such a disparate group of people representing organisations rather than groups of workers in field and factory, was subject to 'politics' in the worst sense. It was divorced from the masses and beyond their immediate control.

The effect of this kind of organisation rapidly manifested itself after the entry of the Anarchists into government. Bourgeois authority and institutions were rapidly re-established. Sometimes at gunpoint. The last fling of the Spanish workers took place in Barcelona in May 1937. The story of that struggle has been told elsewhere in this paper see May Day issue of *Libertarian Struggle*. The workers of Barcelona, abandoned by the Anarchist officialdom attempted to prevent the State seizure of the collectivised telephone exchange. In the armed conflict that followed, a dissident Anarchist group, the **Friends of Durruti** issued the following demands: Form revolutionary juntas disarm the Civil Guard, shoot those responsible for attacks on workers. Dissolve all political parties that have turned against the workers. But the time for the formation of workers councils was passed. The members and supporters of this group were imprisoned and executed. The CNT leadership - the Anarchist ministers - remained silent and allowed it to happen.

## CONCLUSION

Many Anarchist histories have concentrated on the counter-revolutionary role of the Communist Party. Yet this is to be expected from the Stalinists, whose policy of unity with the middle class means inevitable defeat for the masses, witness the events in Chile. The failure of Anarchism is far more disturbing. Essentially it is the failure of the Anarcho-syndicalists who make a far too ready identification of their union with the working class as a whole. The way forward in a revolutionary situation is the rapid building of **workers councils** composed of delegates directly responsible to the workers who elected them. Union committees are no substitute for direct workers power. Spain marks the death knell of Anarcho-syndicalism as a movement, and should be its final discrediting as a theory. Revolutionary Anarchists call for 'All Power to Workers Councils' the failure of Spanish Anarcho-syndicalism to heed that call has subjected the Spanish working class to over three decades of Fascist tyranny. That is a lesson that must be learnt and learnt well.

## SINCE WE FIRST PUBLISHED THIS ARTICLE.

Franco is dead. The Spanish ruling class are attempting to give the regime a democratic whitewash. The Cp is negotiating its terms for helping with the paintwork. As in Portugal, the European Labourites, with CIA money, move in to set up "democractic" labour organisations to divert the working class.

In the Basque Country and Catalonia the revolution rears its head. The CNT is reorgansing, along with a new wave of socialist opposition groups, inside the working class. It is still not clear whether the lessons of the civil war have been learnt

The  
tyranny  
of  
sTRuCTurEleSSneSS

by  
Jo Freeman

5p

In this pamphlet Jo Freeman attempts to sketch out an approach to organisation that would prevent the growth of elitist leaderships—which both highly centralised and highly informal groupings tend to produce. In revulsion from the tyrannical structures of governments, unions and other organisations some anarchists have shied away from any meaningful consideration of self-organisation. The Anarchist Workers Association played no part in the writing of this pamphlet but has found it highly applicable to the ineffectuality of anarchism in Britain in recent decades.

Send 5p + 7p p&p to AWA, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside for a copy. 10 or more 3½p each. Please make cheques/PO's



# CHILE - PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO DISASTER

The world's press has described Salvadore Allende as "the world's first democratically elected Marxist leader". The social democrat and Stalinist parties in particular have seen this as a vindication of the belief that socialism could be achieved through the ballot box.

Chile was looked upon as the model which would eventually be copied by the rest of Latin America. Working class revolution and armed struggle were held to be things of the past. What was their necessity, now that the State (or at least part of it) was in the hands of the workers "representatives"?

The recent events in Chile have shown once again the criminal folly of such beliefs. Allende's "peaceful road" has been far from peaceful, and has led not to socialism but to fascist military rule.

## CHILE'S PROBLEMS

The 1960's saw the deepening of Chile's social crisis. Rising unemployment and continuing inflation (at a rate of 30% a year), combined with the perennial Latin American problems of rural poverty and illiteracy, produced an explosive situation. Urban workers demanded higher wages and widespread nationalisation. In the countryside, the landless peasants living in virtual serfdom on the big estates demanded a massive redistribution of land and the establishment of adequate medical facilities and services.

In 1964 the Christian Democrat Party under the leadership of Frei came to power on the promise of implementing large scale reforms. Frei proved to be a miserable failure. Unemployment rose even higher and the rate of inflation increased. Nothing was done to combat illiteracy or provide medical services in the rural areas. The Chilean peasantry gained the dubious distinction of having one of the highest infant mortality rates in Latin America. The promised land reforms came to nothing. Only a tiny proportion of land was redistributed so that by 1969 over 60% of all arable land was owned by less than 600 people.

What the Chilean workers did get in plenty from Frei was repression. Militants were imprisoned and left wing papers banned. Protest was met with brute force. In the November 1967 General Strike six people were killed by the police. Other massacres followed. Mass discontent reached boiling point, and this period saw the beginning of the peasant expropriations in the countryside which were to continue throughout Allende's rule. In the cities, strikes reached record numbers, and a mass squatting movement by the homeless was in full swing.

Allende won the 1970 Presidential election simply because the right-wing parties could not form a common front against him. Many disillusioned PDC supporters switched their votes to the ultra-conservative National Party. The

result was that Allende got in with only 36.3% of the vote - not much higher than he received when he stood against Frei in 1964.

The programme of Allende's UP (Unidad Popular) - the coalition whose main elements were the Chilean Communist Party and Allende's own Socialist Party, was unashamedly state capitalist. Allende planned to nationalise the banking, insurance and trading companies, as well as the main industrial and mining concerns. Small and medium industries would remain in private hands. The nationalised sector would be run by state appointees, not by the workers.

Nevertheless, such a programme could never be accepted by the Chilean bourgeoisie. The right wing parties controlled congress, so Allende found it necessary to compromise on the programme in order to stay in power. The nationalisation of most companies was 'postponed' - Allende hoped that the Congressional elections of 1973 would give the UP a majority.

## THE WORKERS FIGHT BACK

Despite Allende's compromises the working class pressed ahead with its demands. His promise to "lay the foundations of socialism" had opened up a Pandora's box which no amount of bargaining with the ruling class and half-hearted concessions to the workers could close. Workers and peasants began to arm themselves in preparation for the struggle they knew was bound to come. Factory occupations and rural expropriations continued unabated. Allende was caught in an impossible situation. He could not legally carry through his programme because of the forces arranged against him in Congress. If he was to attempt extra-legal measures, this would obviously lead to a right wing coup. On the other hand, if he did not fulfil his promises, the workers would take decisions into their own hands and sweep aside Allende and his reformist coalition for good.

## THE SWING TO THE RIGHT

As support for Allende dwindled among the workers, he became increasingly reliant on the Army. UP propaganda consistently extolled the 'democratic' traditions of the Chilean Army, which unlike most others in Latin America, did not have a history of intervention into politics. The military budget was increased. All ranks received handsome pay increases. Officers were given cheap housing and extra 'fringe benefits'. Most important of all, the military was given a virtually free hand to disarm the workers.

In the meantime the Chilean bourgeoisie had been active in making life as difficult as poss-



ible for the government. Investment was taken out of the country (in the first week after Allende's victory, over \$20m left Chile). Their strategy was to create an economic crisis which would give the army an excuse to intervene to 'restore order'. In this they were directly aided by international capitalism which made sure that it would be impossible for Chile to obtain desperately needed credits from foreign banks and governments. The Nixon government put pressure on international aid agencies to cut down on their aid programmes for Chile. The CIA was directly involved in numerous plots to overthrow Allende, as the recent revelations about the ITT affair have shown. All this, combined with the falling world prices of copper (which constitute 70% of Chilean exports) produced inflation and commodity scarcity of staggering proportions. The position was made worse by the recent 'bosses strike' of lorry owners, shopkeepers and the professional classes, when the Government had to use the Army to transport vital supplies.

In such a desperate situation the only way out for Allende would have been to appeal to the working class to seize power for themselves to forestall the inevitable coup. Some members of the coalition were in favour of this, but the Communist Party, which throughout has been the most right-wing element in the UP, bitterly opposed it. The CP strategy was to "win over the middle classes", and to do this it was prepared to abandon every radical aspect of the UP programme. In 1972, the Party proposed more concessions to the Christian Democrats, including cutting down drastically on the num-

#### SINCE WE FIRST PUBLISHED THIS ARTICLE.

The Cp. leaders have attempted to make agreement with the Christian Democrats for a parliamentary regime to replace Pinochet. Accompanying this manoeuvre they have attacked and slandered the resistance fighters of the revolutionary left. But while the leaders have learnt nothing many Chilean socialists now freely admit their mistakes - "there is no peaceful road".

ber of companies to be nationalised, compensating their former owners, halting the land reform programme, sacking the more radical members of the government and abandoning the long-term policy of replacing Congress with a Popular Assembly. Since then Allende has conceded most of these points, as well as agreeing to de-nationalise those companies that had previously been expropriated without congressional assent.

The CP has also proved to be the most diligent in repressing the left. In Concepcion, in Southern Chile, an anti-fascist demonstration was brutally broken up by the police on the orders of Chavez, the mayor of the town and a member of the CP central committee. A week later, the CP governor of the province of Cautin ordered the riot squad to "use maximum force" to smash a peasants' demonstration protesting about the lack of medical facilities in the area. The Communists have also been the most forthright in demanding the use of the Army against "the armed groups of the ultra-left" ie. the workers. It is certainly no thanks to the CP that, when the coup came, at least some workers were sufficiently armed to defend themselves no matter how much it may claim that it was stockpiling its own arms for such an eventuality.

#### POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The only major grouping on the left that has consistently advocated revolutionary action has been the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria - or Movement of the Revolutionary Left). In 1970 it had no real mass base, though its militants numbered several thousand. With the disillusionment of many Allende-istas it has since gained significant support among certain sections of the working class, notably in Concepcion and among the thousands of squatters in Santiago. By supporting the mass actions of the peasantry and the workers' occupations of the factories, it has provided a revolutionary alternative to the reformism of the UP. While some workers have been demoralised by the treachery of the CP, many others have at last seen through the illusions of "the peaceful road". The growing strength of the recently formed Revolutionary Workers Front (which unites the MIR with the small trotskyist and maoist groups) among hitherto loyal UP supporters is part of the explanation for the increasingly hysterical attacks on the "ultra-left" by the UP. The other part of the explanation is that the government was prepared to do anything to show the ruling class how 'respectable' and 'constitutional' it really was. Allende went so far as to bring the military chiefs into his government in order to placate the army and be seen as the upholder of "law and order".

The programme of the MIR, though essentially revolutionary, should be criticised. There is no firm commitment to direct workers' control of all industry and no guarantee that political power will rest in the hands of the working class through democratic workers' councils. What seems to be envisaged is a kind of dual power of a centralised state and workers' and peasants assemblies, and history has shown the contradiction of such a position. Nevertheless this statist element should not blind libertarians to the fact that the MIR is not a bolshevik type organisation. Its social composition has been fast changing with the entry of large numbers of highly politicised workers whose spontaneous actions over the last year show that they have the willingness and the capacity to take



control into their own hands. Some points of the programme are clearly out of date and others may be rendered irrelevant as the revolutionary events set in motion take their course.

The present military junta may have achieved temporary control of the situation, but given the polarisation of the classes and the present relationship of forces in Chile, it cannot hope to last long. The parallels with the Spanish Revolution of 1936 are obvious. Let us hope that the Chilean workers have learnt the lessons of their own recent history and reject once and for all the blind alley of reformism. It may be too much to hope also that the advocates of the 'parliamentary road' in this country and elsewhere will have also learnt from the Chile experience that no ruling class will ever give up its power peacefully.

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