

# Libertarian Communist Review

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Putting the record straight on Bakunin

The role of a revolutionary organisation

From Primitive to Libertarian Communism

**20p**



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# Editorial

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After a lapse of two years, the LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW appears again.

We regard its appearance as an important development in the field of libertarian thought and action.

The LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW is not intended to be a magazine for mass-produced dogma. We intend to look at the history and theory of the anarchist and libertarian communist movement in a critical way. We hope to examine the flaws and inadequacies in the writings of the most noted libertarian socialist thinkers, and we intend to conduct a critical reappraisal of Marx and Marxist thinkers, and of the theory and praxis of left communist and libertarian socialist movements that run parallel with the anarchist movement.

Above all, we hope to rejuvenate and advance libertarian communist theory in the context of the present and the future.

It was probably true to say that the first LCR was launched before the libertarian communist movement was capable of supporting it. This was at the same time as the development of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (now the Anarchist Workers Association) with its struggle to establish the skeleton of a national organisation and a monthly newspaper.

The need for greater theoretical discussion and development as the precondition for further advance and material and political resources now enable us to renew publication.

We make no bones about the REVIEW being an integral part of the work of the AWA but this does not mean we shall exclude non-members from its pages. This is not due to any confused view that all ideas are valid or deserve publicising but because part of the work of the libertarian communist organisation is to force developments, by its activities and its arguments within both the broader libertarian and the socialist movements.

We welcome contributions from members of the AWA, from sympathisers and from comrades in other libertarian socialist groupings. Send manuscripts (typed double space on one side of the paper please) to LCR Editorial c/o AWA, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside.

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

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The following text is a translation from the French. It comes from *Solidarite Ouvriere*, the monthly paper of the Alliance Syndicaliste Revolutionnaire et Anarcho-syndicaliste. We have many criticisms of syndicalism, and this

includes its anarcho-syndicalist variant.

However, the ASRAS, in its reassessment of the libertarian movement, its commitment to revolutionary class politics and to a materialist dialectic, represents one of the more worthwhile and progressive libertarian groups in

France, along with the Organisation Communiste Libertaire and the Collectif pour un Union des Travailleurs Communiste Libertaire.

Future issues of *LCR* will contain critiques of anarcho-syndicalism.

# putting the record straight on Mikhail Bakunin

On the eve of the centenary of Bakunin, the return of all the gross stupidities which have been said about Bakunin requires a considerable work. Without hesitation whatsoever, the prize for falsification goes to Jacques Duclos, the former head of the PCF, who has devoted a huge book of several hundred pages to the relationship between Marx and Bakunin, which is a masterpiece of fiction.

Now is the time to compile a catalogue of falsifications that surround Bakunin. For if Duclos holds — with Marx himself — the sad privilege of the thought of Bakunin, the anarchists are unrivalled in being his greatest unconscious falsifiers. Of the things in common that the two leaders of the First International have, the foremost is perhaps that their thought has been misrepresented in an identical way by their own disciples. We wish here to follow the development of this misrepresentation of Bakunin's positions.

Later, we will explain what we think to be his true theory of revolutionary action.

Bakunin continually moves between the mass action of the proletariat and action of organised revolutionary minorities. Neither of these two aspects of the struggle against capitalism can be separated: however, the libertarian movement after the death of Bakunin divided into two tendencies which emphasised one of the two points while neglecting the other. The same phenomenon can be found in the Marxist movement with the reformist social democrats in Germany and the radical and Jacobin social democrats in Russia.

In the anarchist movement, one current advocates the development of mass organisation, exclusively acting within the structures of the working class, and arrives at a state of a-politicism completely foreign to the ideas of Bakunin; another current refuses the very principle of organisation as this is seen as the beginnings of bureaucracy: they favour the setting up of affinity groups within which individual revolutionary initiative and the action of example will facilitate the passage without transition to an ideal communist society, where everyone will produce according to their his/her ability and will consume according to his/her need: joyful work and taking from the common store.

The first current advocated the action of the mass of workers within a structured organisation, collectivisation of the means of production and the organisation of

these into a coherent whole, preparation of the workers for social transformation.

The second current completely refused authority and the discipline of organisation; tactically this is seen as temporisation with capital. This current defines itself in an essentially negative way: against authority, hierarchy, power and legal action. Its political programme is based in the concept of communal autonomy, directly inspired by Kropotkin, in particular *The Conquest of Bread*. This current triumphed in the Congress of the CNT at Saragossa in 1936, whose resolutions expressed misunderstanding of the economic mechanisms of society, scorn for economic and social reality. The Congress developed in its final report "The confederal concept of libertarian communism", founded on the model of organisational plans of the future society which flourished in socialist literature of the 19th century. The foundation of the future society is the free commune. Each commune is free to do what it wishes. Those which refuse to be integrated outside the agreements of "convivencia colectiva" with industrial society could "choose other modes of communal life, like for example, those of naturists and nudists, or they would have the right to have an autonomous administration outside the general agreements"

In today's parlance, one could say that the followers of Bakunin can be divided

in one "right wing deviation" which is traditional anarcho-syndicalism, and one "leftist deviation" which is anarchism. The first one emphasises mass action, economic organisation and methodology. The second one hangs on to the objectives, "the programme" quite independent of immediate reality. And each of these currents claims for itself — by the way very frequently — Bakunin.

We have distinguished four principal misrepresentations of Bakunin's thought:

**SPONTANEISM** From time to time, Bakunin seems to sing the praises of spontaneity of the masses; at other times he affirms the necessity of mass political direction. In general anarchists have clung to the first aspect of his thought, and completely abandoned the second. In reality, Bakunin said that what the masses lacked in order to emancipate themselves was organisation and science, "precisely the two things which constitute now, and have always constituted the power of governments" (*Protest of the Alliance*). "At the time of great political and economic crisis, when the instinct of the masses, greatly inflamed, opens out to all the happy inspiration, where these herds of slave-men manipulated, crushed, but never resigned, rebel against the yoke, but feel themselves to be disoriented and powerless because they are completely disorganised, ten, twenty or thirty men, well-intentioned and well-organised



amongst themselves, and who know where they're going and what they want, can easily carry with them a hundred, two hundred, three hundred or even more" (*Oeuvres* 6, 90).

Later on, he says, similarly, that in order that the minority of IWMA can carry with it the majority, it is necessary that each member should be well versed in the principles of the International.

"It is only on this condition," he says "that in times of peace and calm will he be able to effectively fulfil the mission of propagandist and missionary, and in times of struggle, that of a revolutionary leader."

The instrument for the development of Bakunin's ideas was the Alliance of Socialist Democracy. Its mission was to select revolutionary cadres to guide mass organisations, or to create them where they didn't already exist. It was an ideologically coherent grouping.

"It is a secret society, formed in the heart of the International, to give it a revolutionary organisation, and to transform it and all the popular masses outside it, into a force sufficiently organised to annihilate political, clerical, bourgeois reaction, to destroy all religious, political, judicial institutions of states."

It is difficult to see spontaneism here. Bakunin only said that if the revolutionary minority must act within the masses it must not substitute itself for the masses.

In the last analysis, it is always the masses themselves that must act on their own account. Revolutionary militants must push workers towards organisation, and when circumstances demand it, they must not hesitate to take the lead. This idea contrasts singularly with what anarchism subsequently became.

Thus, in 1905, when the Russian anarchist Voline was pressed by the insurgent Russian workers to take on the presidency of the soviet of St Petersburg, he refused because "he wasn't a worker" and in order not to embrace authority. Finally, the presidency fell to Trotsky, after Nossar, the first President, was arrested.

Mass action and minority revolutionary action are inseparable, according to Bakunin. But the action of revolutionary minorities only has sense when it is linked to mass working class organisation. If they are isolated from the organised working class, revolutionaries are condemned to failure.

"Socialism . . . only has a real existence in enlightened revolutionary impulse, in the collective will and in the working class's own mass organisations — and when this impulse, this will, this organisation, falls short, the best books in the world are nothing but theories in a vacuum, impotent dreams."

**APOLITICISM** Anarchism has been presented as an apolitical, abstentionist movement by playing with words and giving them a different meaning to that which the Bakuninists gave them.

Political action, at the time, meant

parliamentary action. So to be anti-parliamentarian meant to be anti-political. As the marxists at this moment in time could not conceive of any other political action for the proletariat than parliamentary action, the denial of the electoral mystification was understood as opposition to every form of political action.

The Bakuninists replied to the accusation of abstentionism by pointing out that the term was ambiguous and that it never meant political indifference, but a rejection of bourgeois politics in favour of a "politics of work".

Abstention is a radical questioning of the political rules of the bourgeoisie's game.

"The International does not reject politics generally. It will certainly be forced to involve itself insofar as it will be forced to struggle against the bourgeois class. It only rejects bourgeois politics."

Bakunin condemned suffrage as an instrument of proletarian emancipation. He denies the use of putting up candidates. But he didn't elevate abstentionism to the level of an absolute principle. He recognised a degree of interest in local elections.

He even advised Gambuzzi's parliamentary intervention.

Nowhere in Bakunin will you find hysterical, vicious condemnations that became dear to anarchists after his death. Elections are not condemned for moral reasons, but because they risk prolonging the bourgeoisie's game. On this point, Bakunin proved to be right over and above the Marxists, right up to Lenin.

Anti-parliamentarianism was so unfamiliar to Marxists that from the start of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks — at least at the beginning — passed as Bakuninists in the European workers' movement.

**THE REFUSAL OF AUTHORITY** The Bakuninists called themselves "anti-authoritarians". The confusion that arose as a result of the use of this word has been bitterly taken up since Bakunin's death. Authoritarian in the language of the time meant bureaucratic. The anti-authoritarians were simply anti-bureaucratic in opposition to the Marxist tendency.

The question then was not one of morals or character, and attitude to authority influenced by temperament. It was a political standpoint. Anti-authoritarian means "democratic". This last word existed at the time but with a different meaning.

Less than a century after the French Revolution, it described the political practices of the bourgeoisie. It was the Bourgeoisie who were "democrats".

When it was applied to the working class movement, the word 'democrat' was accompanied by 'social' or 'socialist', as in 'social democrat'. The worker who was a 'democrat' was either a 'social-democrat' or anti-authoritarian.

Later democracy and proletariat were

associated in the expression 'workers democracy'.

The anti-authoritarian tendency of the International was in favour of workers democracy; the tendency qualified as authoritarian was accused of bureaucratic centralisation.

But Bakunin was far from being opposed to all authority. His tendency allowed power if it came directly from the proletariat, and was controlled by it. He opposed the revolutionary government of the Jacobin type with insurrectionary proletarian power through the organisation of the working class.

Strictly speaking, this is not a form of political power but of social power.

After Bakunin's death, anarchists rejected the very idea of power. They only referred to the writings that were critical of power, and to a sort of metaphysical anti-authoritarianism.

They abandoned the method of analysis which came from real facts. They abandoned this as far as the foundation of Bakuninist theory based on materialism and historical analysis. And with it they abandoned the field of struggle of the working class in favour of a particular form of radicalised liberalism.

**THE CLASS MOVEMENT** Bakunin's political strategy did not depart from his theory of the relations between the classes. This should be established once and for all.

When the proletariat was weak, he advised against indiscriminate struggle against all the fractions of the bourgeoisie.

From the point of view of working class struggle, not all political regimes are equivalent. It is not a matter of indifference whether the struggle is against the dictatorial regime of Bismarck or the Tsar, or against that of a parliamentary democracy.

"The most imperfect of republics is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy."

In 1870, Bakunin recommended using the patriotic reaction of the French proletariat and turning it into revolutionary war. In his *Letters to a Frenchman* he makes a remarkable analysis of the relationships between the different fractions of the bourgeoisie and the working class, and develops some months in advance and prophetically, what were to be the Paris and provincial Communes.

A thorough reading of Bakunin shows that his entire work consisted of constant enquiry, the relationships which could exist between the fractions which make up the dominant class and their opposition with the proletariat. His strategy for the workers movement is intimately linked with his analysis of these relationships.

In no case can it be separated from the historical moment in which these relationships take place. In other words, not every time is ripe for revolution, and a detailed understanding of the



relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class permits one at the same time not to miss suitable occasions and to avoid making tragic mistakes.

Bakunin's successors thought, on one hand, that there existed between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat a sort of immutable and constant relationship; on the other hand, that the relationship between the classes could not in any way enter into the scheme of things to determine revolutionary action. In the first case, they adopted a certain number of basic principles that were considered essential, and they gave themselves the objective of putting them into practice at some time or another in the future, whatever the circumstances of the moment.

Thus, the report of the Saragossa Conference already mentioned could have been written at any period. It stands absolutely outside time.

On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, the military problems for example, and agitation in the heart of the army, are dealt with one phrase: "Thousands of workers have been through the barracks, and are familiar with modern revolutionary warfare."

In the second case, they thought that the relationships of power between the classes were unimportant as the proletariat must act spontaneously. It is not related to any social determinism, but on the contrary to the hazards of exemplary action. The whole problem lies then in creating the right detonator.

The history of the anarchist movement

is full of these sensational actions, which were useless and bloody. In the hope of encouraging the revolution, they attacked the town-hall by the dozen: they made speeches, they proclaimed — very often in an atmosphere of complete indifference — about libertarian communism. They burnt local archives whilst waiting for the police to arrive.

Attentism or voluntarism, in either case the reference made to Bakunin is insulting. Very often, the libertarian movement has replaced the scientific method of analysis of relations between classes with magical incantations. The scientific and sociological nature of Bakuninist analysis of social relations and political action was completely rejected by the libertarian movement.

The intellectual failure of the libertarian movement can be seen in the accusations of 'marxism' made about every attempt to introduce the slightest notion of scientific method in political analysis.

For example Malatesta said: "Today, I find that Bakunin was in political economy and in the interpretation of history, too Marxist. I find that his philosophy debated without any possibility of resolution, the contradiction between his mechanical conception of the universe and his faith in the effectiveness of free will over the destinies of man and the universe."

The "mechanical conception of the universe", that is in Malatesta's mind, is the dialectical method which makes of the social world a moving whole, about which one can determine general laws of

evolution. "The effectiveness of free will" is voluntarist revolutionary action. The problem can therefore be reduced to the relationship of mass action on society and the action of revolutionary minorities.

Malatesta is incapable of understanding the relationship of interdependence which exists between the human race and environment, between the social determinism of the human race and its capacity to transform the environment.

The individual cannot be separated from the environment in which he/she lives. Even though the individual is largely determined by environment, he/she can act upon it and modify it, provided the trouble is taken to understand the laws of evolution.

**CONCLUSION** The action of the working class must be the synthesis of the understanding of the "mechanics of the universe" — the mechanics of society — and "the effectiveness of free will" — conscious revolutionary action. There lies the foundation of Bakunin's theory of revolutionary action.

Two Bakunins do not exist — one which is libertarian, anti-authoritarian and who glorifies the spontaneous action of the masses; the other one 'marxist', authoritarian, who advocates the organisation of the vanguard.

There is only one Bakunin, who applies to different times in diverse circumstances principles of action which flow from a lucid understanding of the dialectic between the masses and the advanced revolutionary minorities.

## The role of a

# Revolutionary Organisation

THIS essay attempts to clarify what we libertarian communists and revolutionary anarchists mean by a revolutionary organisation. The definition of a libertarian revolutionary organisation is brought out in bold relief by its contrast to the Leninist and other authoritarian organisations; also by its organisational and political disagreements with the informal groupings of the traditional anarchists.

What truly distinguishes the Libertarian Communist organisation is its relationship with the working class, its theoretical elaboration of that relationship and a precise understanding of class

spontaneity. It becomes increasingly more important to attempt this clarification. The crisis in capitalism, on every level (economic, social, cultural and sexual) is reflected in the crisis in the Left organisations. These organisations duplicate ruling class values in their authoritarianism, their high degree of centralism, and the sheep-like submission of the rank and file to "omnipotent" and "all-wise" leaderships.

As the crisis in capitalism becomes more extreme, the related crisis in the left parties deepens, with schism after schism, opportunism and collaboration with the agents of the bosses, the Labour Party. It

is vital that a strong libertarian movement in all areas of social life is created in order for working people to defend themselves against the ever-more frenzied attacks of the capitalists, and to create a free self-managed society. To assist in the building of such a mass movement, a libertarian revolutionary organisation is necessary, an organisation that fights for the co-ordination of all anti-capitalist struggles. Such an organisation must have a structure that ensures permanent political debate and is controlled by the whole membership in a truly democratic way.

The libertarian revolutionary



organisation must expose the authoritarianism and elitism of the Leninist groups, and show that these groups do not in actual fact advocate socialism but a form of state capitalism.

## CLASS SPONTANEITY

*"The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves."* Declaration of the First International.

*"The working class by itself can only attain trade union consciousness."* Lenin, *What is to be done?*

A vast abyss of theory and practice lies between these two statements. We reject the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia and which seeks to drag the workers into a new form of oppression—the "workers" state.

We support the theory of working class spontaneity. It is important to understand what we mean by this; the concept has been distorted and misunderstood for too long. We don't take the "unhistorical" attitude that some traditional anarchists defend: that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no links with previous struggles, and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years in taking part in, clarifying, and co-ordinating struggles in the working class and elsewhere, greatly helps the revolutionary process.

What we mean by working class spontaneity is, its abilities to take direct action on its own behalf, to develop new forms of struggle and of organisation. (This can be seen in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have thrown up councils and committees independent of the "vanguards". During the struggles of the last few years, we have seen the flying picket used by hospital workers and miners, and the mass picket by miners and engineers at Saltley Coke Depot.)

The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of, and sometimes against, the pontifications of the revolutionary 'elites'.

*"Let us put it quite bluntly: the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are historically far more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of even the best central committee."* Rosa Luxembourg, *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*.

The experiences of working class life, at the point of production and elsewhere, and within the context of the ever changing ground of the class struggle, constantly lead to the development of ideas and action which question the

established order.

On the other hand, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of working class solidarity e.g, through control of the media and education, through racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness.

The libertarian revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that the only possible proletarian revolution is one in which workers use mass action to take power and smash the apparatus of the ruling class, and that class itself. Any other revolution cannot by its nature be proletarian, and only leads to the formation of a new ruling class.

Understanding these facts, the anarchist organisation recognises it has several specific and important tasks to perform for the rest of the class.

## IDENTIFICATION

The anarchist organisation must always see itself as part of the class. In order to strengthen this identification it seeks to develop and extend its influence in the class.

At the same time, the anarchist organisation must recognise itself as being in ideological advance of the class as a whole. Ideological advance should not be confused with practical advance for, as we have said, workers everywhere learn new modes of struggle and new forms of organisation that can benefit other workers. The anarchist revolutionary organisation must always be ready to learn from the class and should be expected to constantly revise its tactics with the unfolding situation. It should always realise it is not infallible, does not have all the answers all the time. It learns from the class as well as pointing out the lessons to the class. It is transformed as the working class is transformed in the revolutionary process.

Because it is part of the class and at the same time a distinctive organised tendency, the revolutionary organisation faces a contradiction in its relationship to other workers (of course, if it isn't part of the class then like some political groups it tends towards elitism, vanguardism, divorce from class reality. Theory and practice must be rooted in concrete conditions.).

There are dangers in these contradictions and the revolutionary anarchist must realise this—not only realise, but derive a practice from it. This contradiction cannot be completely removed until the triumph of a libertarian communist society.

## TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION

In understanding that the revolution must be made by the self-activity of the working class, and recognising the above contradictions, the anarchist revolutionary organisation has a number of tasks to perform.

It must act as a propaganda grouping, ceaselessly and untiringly putting over the message that the working class must take power; the ways in which this can be done, ideas of libertarian organisation and examples of self-activity by workers.

It must search out and recall the history of past struggles, the successes and mistakes of these struggles, and must impart the lessons to be learnt to as many members of the class as it can reach. Working class history is deliberately obscured and excluded from the books by the ruling class. The revolutionary organisation has to rediscover these struggles in its efforts to develop class consciousness.

Whenever important developments (e.g. the Lip occupation at Besancon in Southern France) occur inside the class, the revolutionary organisation must spread the news through its links with organisations in other countries. The revolutionary organisation is internationalist; it seeks links with other

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.

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groupings in order to increase class effectiveness.

But the organisation cannot see itself as solely a pedagogic group, e.g. Solidarity in this country. Above all, it is an assembly of activists. It must actively work in all the base organs of the class, rank and file groups, tenants associations, squatters associations, unemployed groups, womens and gay groups. It works inside the trade unions to build a strong rank and file movement. It rejects the notions of transforming the unions into revolutionary unions, because their top structure has been integrated into capitalism and acts as a mechanism to control the workers. It seeks to build links between unionised and non-unionised workers in the struggle for a movement at the base.

The organisation works inside the womens and gay groups, and sexual politics groups to radicalise and cause a break with liberalism, reformism and Leninism. It seeks to bring a recognition of the essential interconnection of sexual and class oppression. There can be no successful and complete sexual revolution without the triumph of the working class and the end of hierarchical society.

The organisation works for full democracy inside all these groupings and inside the class as a whole for self-activity, for the self-management by working people of every struggle and every facet of life. Only by building democratic organisations in the course of struggle can the proletariat hope to reach libertarian communism.

## THE LIBERTARIAN FRONT

The anarchist organisation realises that the social revolution cannot be won without a struggle at the point of production and the seizure of the means of production. However, it does not relegate the struggles in other areas of life (unemployed, sexual, environmental and ecological, cultural) to a secondary role. All these struggles are implicitly anti-capitalist, and all these issues are closely entwined. The questioning of one facet of capitalism can lead to the total rejection of the system. The militants of the organisation involved in these groups must seek to pinpoint in what ways the class system causes and/or perpetuates the problems that these groups are confronting.

It is vitally important that a 'libertarian front' of all these groups is built. Thus revolutionary work consists in part, of linking each area of struggle, bringing out all the latent anti-capitalist and libertarian tendencies to be found there.

Revolutionary anarchist militants seek a regroupment of all those who have

'globalised' their struggle, i.e. developed from fighting on one front against capitalism to a total critique.

This radical regroupment "the libertarian front" has to be striven for by the revolutionary organisation, and reflected in all its activities and publications. It must act as the driving force of such a grouping, constantly drawing in radicalised elements and hoping to build a mass movement.

When we say "driving force" we don't mean the Leninist approach of seeking to dominate such a movement by capturing positions etc.. We seek to minimise the dangers of the organisational contradiction and thus seek an intimate relationship with the mass movement. We don't want to take over such a movement.

What counts is not so much the numerical increase of the organisation but its development of the whole working class movement. We see our organisation as a means of communication and a weapon to be used by the working class.

## THE LEADERSHIP OF IDEAS

In opposition to the Leninist ideas of leadership, the anarchist organisation fights for the "leadership of ideas within the class, through example and suggestion. This entails a clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self-managed struggle, and of Leninism.

In the struggle against Leninism and all forms of elitism, comes the realisation that a struggle of ideas must be waged at base level. This realisation is reflected in revolutionary anarchist theory and practice—the call for mandation of delegates, for mass decision making, for mass action.

## THE COMPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

All sections of the working class who recognise the implications of struggle against capitalism and who subscribe to the libertarian communist project, will be united inside the organisation.

Elements of other classes and strata who see the need for the victory of the working class will also be gathered inside the organisation. Blue collar and white collar workers, elements of the working intelligentsia and scientific strata will work together in the realisation of the revolution. The ~~anti~~-intellectual has a role to play in helping clarify positions inside the organisation, but s/he should never have a privileged position inside the organisation. In fact, the practicality of working people very often outstrips the intellectual in the grasp of theory and practice.

The revolution needs the impetus of a strong disciplined anarchist grouping to push it to its furthest possibilities. Precisely because of the absence of such a body, the instrument of revolutionary workers, past revolutions have fallen back. (We take into account all the other factors that have impeded the full realisation of the revolution.)

The revolutionary impetus must be strong enough to sweep the so-called 'vanguards' aside. In opposition to the 'vanguard' parties, the anarchist organisation should see itself as the 'guard-dog' of the revolution.

The revolutionary organisation will fight in the newly created workplace and neighbourhood councils on an ideological level against authoritarian groups. If the Leninists use force to destroy the workers gains, then the anarchist organisation must be fully prepared to combat them on a physical level, and to help other workers prepare for this eventuality. If they prove a threat to the revolution, the left 'leaderships' must be suppressed. It follows on from this that in the revolutionary period the anarchist organisation must call for and assist in the arming of all working people, for defence against all their enemies, capitalist and state capitalist, and the creation of workers' militia units under the control of the councils.

As the revolution advances, the relationship of the organisation to the class develops. A new level of unity is reached because the organisation grows as wide sections of workers see its perspectives as the way to a new and just society.

In the transitional period, the struggle against authoritarian groups and values becomes easier as they disintegrate. (Unless new ruling groups emerge in which case a new confrontation breaks out.)

It can be seen from this that the anarchist organisation does not dissolve itself immediately after the initial insurrectionary phase of the revolution. It must continue to grow, in order to aid the class towards libertarian communism. As this ideal becomes more and more possible, and obstacles to its achievement fall away, the organisation at the same time becomes more open and eventually disappears completely. (Unlike in Spain during the Civil War, the organisation remains principled and tight during the actual revolutionary crisis.)

The anarchist organisation should see itself in the future period as a tendency in the council movement advocating maximum democracy, and it should be prepared to exist with other tendencies, as only by a constant debate in the class can correct decisions be reached.

NICK HEATH



Communism, to many people, is a dirty word. For much of this century, communism has been associated with Russia, a country which, in fact, has as its social system, not communism or socialism, but a particularly vicious and totalitarian form of State capitalism. Genuine socialists and libertarian communists have had an unenviable task of demonstrating that neither communism nor socialism exists — or has ever existed — in such countries as Russia, Cuba or even Yugoslavia. They have also had to explain that communism, in a primitive form, has indeed existed, as a form of society, for much of Humanity's existence on this planet, for perhaps two or more million years.

Since the demise of Primitive Communism, and the advent of private-property society, first of Chattel Slavery, then of Feudalism and, lastly, of Capitalism, "pockets" of peasant-communism, have persisted up until present times. Small communistic communities have been established, often by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois "intellectuals", with varying degrees of success. But throughout the centuries, the idea of communism, usually in an utopian or backward-looking form, has been advocated — and sometimes acted upon — by small idealistic sects. It was not until the middle of the last century, however, that individuals and political groups began to advocate communism as a new, advanced, type of society which should, indeed, would, take the place of capitalism; which would be a "higher" form of society; would be in the interest of the whole of the people, and not just a small class as is capitalism and, most importantly, would have to be brought about by the majority of the population — the workers — through a social revolution. Some of the modern advocates of communism, particularly in the earlier decades of the last century, have been dubbed "utopian" communists; others following Marx and Engels, have at least called themselves "scientific" communists and socialists, but have been accused of, in fact, being "authoritarian communists" by their anarchist opponents who, in many instances, began to advocate a form of non-authoritarian socialism or collectivism which, later, emerged as Libertarian Communism.

Briefly, I shall discuss, first, the system of Primitive Communism and then the ideas and theories of Utopian Communism, Authoritarian Communism and, lastly, Libertarian Communism as advocated by the more working-class elements within the so-called Anarchist Movement. Some non-anarchist groups also propagate libertarian communism as their objective. Their ideas are mainly based upon those of Morris.

## PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM

Rousseau's Noble Savage was largely a figment of his own imagination; nevertheless, the popular conception of the primitive male savage beating "his" wife's brains out with a club is equally false. The savage was neither violent nor competitive.

The basic characteristics of savagery was dependence upon "wild" sources of food supply, with all the disadvantages that this implies. Primitive people often suffered from malnutrition and the fear of starvation. Communities were small. Only at certain periods of the year was food plentiful. Such form of existence, however, gave rise to an embryonic, rudimentary, ethical code. "Private property", writes Grahame Clark in his *From Savagery to Civilisation*, "is limited to such things as weapons, digging sticks, collecting bags and personal trinkets, although in dividing meat, for example, the share of each individual is as a rule socially defined. Communal rights are generally recognized to extend over all the territories required to provide food for the group, territories within which all the seasonal wanderings are confined, and the limits of which are known to neighbouring groups." Of primitive communist, savage, society Peter Kropotkin observes: "Within the tribe

# From Primitive Libertarian

everything is shared in common; every morsel of food is divided among all present; and if the savage is alone in the woods, he does not begin eating before he has loudly shouted thrice an invitation to any one who may hear his voice to share his meal". "In short", continues Kropotkin, "within the tribe the rule of 'each for all' is supreme, so long as the separate family has not yet broken up the tribal unity." (*Mutual Aid*). The Biblical concept of "mine and thine" had not yet emerged.

Of Primitive Communism, Paul Lafargue in his *Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilisation* comments:

"If the savage is incapable of conceiving the idea of individual possession of objects not incorporated with his person, it is because he has no conception of his individuality as distinct from the consanguine group in which he lives. The savage is envirorened by such perpetual material danger, and compassed round with such constant imaginary terrors, that he cannot exist in a state of isolation; he cannot even form a notion of the possibility of such a thing. To expel a savage from his clan, from his horde, is tantamount to condemning him to death; . . . To be divided from his companions, to live alone, seemed a fearful thing to primeval man, accustomed to live in troops . . . Hunting and fishing, those primitive modes of production, are practiced jointly, and the produce is shared in common. . ."

When savages no longer lead a nomadic existence, and begin to build a permanent or semi-permanent dwelling-house, the house is generally not a private one as we understand it, but a common one. In such houses, provisions are held in common. Of a somewhat later period (the lower status of barbarism among some American aborigines), Lewis H. Morgan observes: "The syndasmian family was special and peculiar. Several of them were usually found in one house, forming a communal household, in which the principle of communism in living is practiced". (*Ancient Society*). Morgan mentions the Iroquois, with whom he lived, in particular. Later, with the emergence of the patriarchal family, households become the possession of single families. Nevertheless, throughout this period, land continues to be held in common.

But, continues Lafargue, "Very gradually did the idea of private property, which is so ingrained in and appears so natural to the philistine, dawn upon the human mind." Humanity underwent a long and painful process of development before arriving at private property in land. Indeed, the earliest distribution of the land was into pastures and territories of chase common to the tribe. The development of agriculture was a determining cause of the parcelling of common lands, often into small strips, sometimes on a permanent, but usually on an annual, basis. Lafargue notes that generally "landed property on its first establishment among primitive nations, was allotted to women". And regarding women within primitive communism, Frederick Engels wrote: "Communitic housekeeping, however, means the supremacy of women in the house; just as the exclusive recognition of the female parent, owing to the impossibility of recognising the male parent with



# Primitive to Communism

certainty, means that the women, ie the mothers, are held in high respect. One of the most absurd notions taken over from Eighteenth-century enlightenment is that in the beginning of society woman was the slave of man. Among all savages and all barbarians of the lower and middle stages, and to a certain extent of the upper stage also, the position of women is not only free, but honourable". (*Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*). And Lafargue observes that "Landed property, which was ultimately to constitute for its owner a means of emancipation and of social supremacy was, at its origin, a cause of subjection; the women were condemned to rude labour in the fields, from which they were emancipated only by the introduction of servile labour. Agriculture, which led to private property in land, introduced the servile labour which in the course of centuries has borne the names of slave-labour, bond-labour and wage-labour".

In sum, writes Engels, "At all earlier stages of society production was essentially collective, just as consumption proceeded by direct distribution of the products within larger or smaller communistic communities. This collective production was very limited; but inherent in it was the producers' control over their process of production and their product. They knew what became of their product: they consumed it; it did not leave their hands. And so long as production remains on this basis, it cannot grow above the heads of the producers, nor raise up incorporeal alien powers against them, as in civilisation is always the case."

Thus, in brief, was what has been called Primitive Communism.

## UTOPIAN COMMUNISM

It is, in this short essay, impossible to chronicle all, or even most, of the utopian movements and revolts which included communistic elements and tendencies. Suffice it that we mention one or two. Utopian or backward-looking communist currents can be traced as far back as the great slave revolt of 71 BC. Spartacus is reported as saying: "Whatever we take, we hold in common, and no man shall own anything but his weapons and his clothes. It will be the way it was in the old times". (*Spartacus*, by Howard Fast).

Class hatred and an utopian form of communism was practiced by many of the early Christians, most of whom were, in the early days of that religion, plebians or former slaves. The Acts of the Apostles confirmed that "...all had things in common". And in the eleventh homily (sermon) of the Acts, one reads: "Grace was among them, since nobody suffered want, that is since they gave willingly that no one remained poor. For they did not give a part, keeping part for themselves; they gave everything in their possession. They did away with inequality and lived in great abundance...What a man needed was taken from the treasure of the community not from the private property of individuals. Thereby the givers did not become arrogant...All gave all that they have into a common fund..." In his *Foundations of Christianity*, Karl Kautsky comments

that in the Gospel of St. John, the communistic life of Jesus and the apostles it taken for granted. Such communism, however, was mainly a communism of consumption. The Jewish Essenes also practiced a similar form of communism. Christian communism soon declined and disappeared. "Acceptance of slavery, along with increasing restriction of the community of property to common meals, were not the only limitations the Christian community encountered in its efforts to put its communistic tendencies into effect", writes Kautsky. Rich sympathisers joined the Church. Money became more important. Concessions were made; and rich men found that they could enter the Kingdom of Heaven—at a price! In sum, says Kautsky, "It was the Christian community, not Christian communism, to which the Roman emperors finally bowed. The victory of Christianity did not denote the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of the gentlemen who had grown big in their community. The champions and martyrs of the early communities, who had devoted their possessions, their labour, their lives for the salvation of the poor and miserable, had only laid the groundwork for a new kind of subjection and exploitation". Nevertheless, the ideas and ideals of communism did not completely die. Even within the Christian Church.

Communism is occasionally mentioned during what historians have called the Middle Ages. It is sometimes referred to as "agrarian communism"; but as Frank Ridley points out in his *The Revolutionary Tradition in England*, "The communism of the Middle Ages was essentially and necessarily a religious communism: it took the form of religious heresies in both East and West...it was one of the major forces making for social revolution throughout the entire mediaeval era. Its untiring propagandists were the underground religious heresies, from that little-known subterranean world which was always smouldering beneath the surface of mediaeval society." This communism was, of course, from the nature of the times, an agrarian communism of consumption, and not an industrial communism of production as in modern times. It was also a religious, and as such, a backward-looking communism. What else could it have been? For that matter, all communism and every revolution that had communism for its aim prior to the Industrial Revolution, looked to the past for its models. Of particular interest, however, is the communism of John Ball and the peasants who took part in the great revolt of 1381.

This is not the place to go into the causes of the revolt. They include the Hundred Years War, the shortage of peasant labour due to the Black Death, the terrible miseries of many of the peasants and the religious-agrarian communist propaganda of the Lollards.

Prior to the great revolt, a hedge-priest, whose "base" was in Colchester, by the name of John Ball, roamed the countryside, speaking to people wherever they gathered. Ball was probably the world's first communist "agitator". His text was a little jingle: "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?". After his release from Rochester prison, Ball spoke to an enormous audience of peasants on Blackheath, on June 12th 1381. His exact speech is not known, but Charles Poulson in his *English Episode*, and William Morris in his *A Dream of John Ball*, both give us a very good idea of what he probably said.

Says Poulson's John Ball: "...In the beginning all men were equal, all men were brothers. How is it that some can say 'I am nobler than you'? How is it that one man delves day-long in the earth, and with all his labour has not enough to feed his babes, and another takes the life from the poor and makes from it a jewelled mantle for his back?...I say to you that in spite of its fine pride and rich clothing, its white hands and perfumes, Nobility is evil...And in truth it is time to cry enough. I see you here before me, my brothers, and not one of you but



has lived his life toiling, from the first sun-up till the last rays fade. And you are clothed in rags. The corn and the cattle grow great in your care, but there is little fat on you. A handful of beans is your pottage. All that you grow, all that you make and build, is taken. This in fines, this in dues, this in labour. The noble master drains your blood like a vampire. Would there not be plenty and happiness but for what is taken? So I say, my brothers, let us feed our children before their lordships. Let us make an end to this thieving."

And, according to William Morris, John Ball spoke thus:

"...too many rich men there are in this realm; and yet if there were but one, there would be one too many, for all should be his thralls...And how shall it be when these (masters) are gone, what else shall ye lack when ye lack masters? Ye shall not lack for fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all that the earth beareth; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship... then shall no man mow the deep grass for another..."

On other occasions, John Ball remarked that "things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be in common". (See *A People's History of England*, by A.L. Morton. Similar views were expressed elsewhere in Europe, particularly among the French Jacquerie about forty years before. In England they became largely dormant for centuries. It is to the "Great Rebellion"—the English Revolution—of the seventeenth century that we must look next for communistic ideas and experiments.

Utopian communist ideas found champions among the Levellers; but, as yet, communism made no appeal among the people of the towns and cities, which did not possess an industrial proletariat. In his *Cromwell and Communism*, Eduard Bernstein remarks: "At the most, communistic proposals might have attracted the rural workers at certain times. In fact, there is no instance during the Great Rebellion of an independent class movement of the town workers, although during the zenith of the movement there were several attempts at agrarian communist risings".

An associate of John Liburne, by the name of William Walwyn, attacked "the inequality of the distribution of the things of this life"; and claimed, like John Ball before him, that "the world shall never be well until all things be common". And against objections to communism, he commented: "There would then be less need for Government; for then there would be no thieves, no covetous persons, no deceiving and abuse of one another, and so no need of Government." William Walwyn would appear to have been Britain's first anarchist-communist! There were others who advocated somewhat similar ideas, often with quotations from the Bible.

And there were also others who attempted to put their ideas into practice. Among them were the "True Levellers", as they called themselves; or "diggers", as their contemporaries dubbed them.

On Sunday, April 8th, 1649, there suddenly appeared near Cobham in Surrey, a group of men, armed with spades, who started to dig up uncultivated land at the side of St. George's Hill. Their intention was to grow corn and other produce on it. They explained to the local country-folk that their numbers were, as yet, few but would soon increase to 4,000. They proposed that "the common people ought to dig, plow, plant, and dwell upon the Commons without hiring them, or paying any rent". After they had erected tents, worked the land and

prepared to dig on a second hill, also for sowing, (their numbers had increased to about fifty), they were attacked by troops and many were arrested. Winstanley, their leader, was brought before General Fairfax. None of the "diggers" were prepared to defend themselves by force, however. Most were heavily fined. Later, they attempted again to take over common lands, but were again arrested—and fined. They also published pamphlets, some of which were "couched in somewhat mystical phraseology, which", says Bernstein, "serves as a cloak to conceal the revolutionary designs of the authors". One such pamphlet argued that "In the beginning of time the Creator Reason made the earth to be common treasury." They also composed a 'Digger's Song' in a similar vein.

In 1651, Gerrard Winstanley wrote his *The Law of Freedom on a platform*—in which he said:

"Is not buying and selling a righteous law? No, it is the law of the conqueror, but not righteous law of creation: how can that be righteous which is a cheat?...When mankind began to buy and sell, then did he fall from his innocence; for then he began to oppress and cozen one another of their creation birthright."

He continues that, though Crown and Church lands should be for common use, they were being sold to land-grabbing army officers and speculators of all kinds. He says that there should be neither poor nor rich; that there should be no inequality; that the "earth and storehouses be common"; that there should be no buying or selling, and, lastly, no need for any lawyers. Winstanley was not, however, opposed to organisation. "All officers in a true Magistracy of the Commonwealth are to be chosen officers. All officers in a Commonwealth are to be chosen new ones every year". "When publique officers remain long", he contended, "they degenerate". Indeed, the "True Levellers" had quite a platform of "articles" and "clauses"! Utopians, the Levellers and True Levellers may have been, but at least their ideas and organisation was, indeed, more advanced and practical than some of our own "modern" anarchists! Moreover, far from all the utopian communists of the period were pacifists. Within the Cromwellian army, there were a number of rebellions from 1647 onwards. Unfortunately, the movements of the period seem to have evolved or degenerated into Quakerism, and relative respectability.

## MARXISM

The society of the early savage was Primitive Communism. But a few thousand years ago, with the cultivation of the soil and the subsequent production of a surplus, class divisions became apparent. Warfare became organised; a repressive State emerged and prisoners were taken captive. They were, more often than not, made to toil in the fields or build temples and pyramids for their new masters. Hence the slave empires of antiquity. Wealth tended to accumulate in the hands of a few wealthy people. The fall of the last of the slave empires—that of the decadent Roman Empire—marked the dawn of a new era. About a thousand years ago, in what we call Europe and elsewhere, a new form of private property society, and a new form of slavery for the many, gradually emerged. It has been called feudalism. The slave became the serf. His master owned the land; and the serf toiled on his lord's land, producing wealth for him, and in return he was allowed to work upon tiny strips of land for himself. The wealth he, thus, produced was generally just enough for him to live on. "It had taken several thousands of years of chattel slavery to prepare the way for serfdom. And it took several centuries of feudalism to prepare the way for a new form of society—capitalism—the kernel of which already existed in the feudal society." (*Socialist Manifesto*, S.P. of C.).



The wealth and power of the townsmen, or at least a section of them, increased and that of the landowning nobility declined. The nobleman became a complete parasite upon society. Society's new masters—after many struggles and setbacks, as well as revolutions—became the burghers or, as they were later called, the bourgeoisie. Trade and commerce increased. "Once freed from the fetters of feudalism, the onward march of capitalism became a mad, headlong rush. Everywhere mills, factories, and furnaces sprang up. Their smoke and fumes turned fields once fertile and populous into desolate, uninhabitable wastes; their refuse poisoned and polluted the rivers until they stank to Heaven..." (*Socialist Manifesto*).

A new condition of slavery replaced serfdom. Socialists, both Marxist and non-Marxist, called, and still call, it "wage-slavery". Former serfs and, quite often, free peasants, were driven from the land and herded into the towns, where they were forced (otherwise they would have starved—and often did!) to work in the mills and mines, and the factories, of their new masters, the bourgeoisie, the owners of capital—the capitalists. The workers created, as did the slaves and serfs, a surplus for their masters, over and above what was needed to keep them more or less in working order. Capitalism, as a society, is based upon wage-labour and capital.

With the development of capitalism, economists and others, including social reformers and utopian socialist "intellectuals" began to analyse the new and developing society. A new body of ideas began to emerge as to the nature of capitalism. In the main, from about 1844 onwards, they have been associated with two Germans, who, for many years lived in England, the then most advanced capitalist country. They were Karl Marx and Frederick Engels—though both admitted their debt to earlier economists and philosophers. Nevertheless, both Marx and Engels were particularly scathing in their attacks on what they considered to be "unscientific" socialists and communists as well as those whom called themselves "True Socialists". However, in 1845, Engels was still influenced by utopian communist ideas. In the penultimate paragraph of his *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* he asserts that "communism stands, in principle, above the breach between bourgeoisie and proletariat...Communism is a question of humanity and not of the workers alone...And as Communism stands above the strife between bourgeoisie and proletariat it will be easier for the better elements of the bourgeoisie...to unite with it..." But by 1847, when he drafted *Principles of Communism* (that is the first draft of the famous *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels), Engels begins by saying that "Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of liberation of the proletariat". Incidentally, Engels in his *Principles of Communism* says that the workers are propertyless and are obliged to sell their labour to the bourgeoisie; later, after Marx had studied the capitalist mode of production, he asserted that the workers did not sell their labour, but their labour-power, their abilities to work.

In 1845, Marx wrote his *German Ideology*, in which he deals with and attacks the idealistic thinkers of Germany and, in the second part of the book, such "True" socialists and utopian communists as Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon. He also attacks Proudhon in his *Poverty of Philosophy*. However, the first great "classic" of "scientific" or what, later on, has been called authoritarian, communism was, of course, the *Communist Manifesto*. In the main, it has remained so; though Engels writes in his 1872 Preface that parts of the program had "in some details become antiquated".

The *Communist Manifesto* begins by asserting that "A spectre

is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism". The history of all hitherto existing (recorded) society, it proclaims, is the history of class struggles. But our society — capitalism — has simplified class antagonisms. "All society is more or less splitting up into two opposing camps, into two great hostile classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat", says the *Manifesto*. (I quote from the SLP, that is the De Leonist version, though I have four or five different versions and translations, all more or less the same). Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto* (which saw the light of day in 1848) openly break with the utopians and the "True" socialists in advocating that it will be the proletarians—albeit through a Communist Party—who must overthrow bourgeois society. Says the *Manifesto* "All previous historical movements were the movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the conscious movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority". This is, indeed, worth remembering as many so-called latter-day Marxists and all Leninists plug the "vanguard party" line. Marx and Engels emphasise that the workers have no country. They are, to all intents and purposes, propertyless. It is worth noting that, in 1848, and more or less throughout their lives, Marx and Engels combine their propaganda for communism with a list of reforms. Like many others, they felt that one could advocate both the abolition of bourgeois society and reforms of that society at one and the same time! The *Manifesto*, therefore, calls for, among other things, a heavy progressive income tax, abolition of inheritance, confiscation of the property of emigrants and rebels, centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, centralisation of the means of transportation in the hands of the State, organisation of industrial armies and free public education. In other words: state-capitalism!

Their vision of communism of the future, is summed up thus:

"When in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production is concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly speaking, is the organised power of one class for the purpose of oppressing another. If the proletariat, forced in its struggle against the bourgeoisie to organise as a class, makes itself by a revolution the ruling class, and as the ruling class destroys by force the old conditions of production. It destroys along with these conditions of production the conditions of existence of class antagonism, classes in general, and, therewith, its own domination as a class.

In the place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, an association appears in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

The *Communist Manifesto* ends with the now famous: "Workers of all Lands, Unite!"

In his paper addressed to the General Council of the First International (later published as *Value, Price and Profit* and not *Wages, Price and Profit*, as has been stated on occasions, particularly in Russia), Marx calls on the working class to abolish the wages system, though as an ultimate, not immediate, aim. This was in 1865. Ten years later, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx elaborates on what he considers a communist society would be like. Like the *Communist Manifesto*, the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, is readily available, and should be read by anarchists and libertarian communists. I will, therefore, only quote the main points from the third section. (I use the Workers' Literature Bureau version, published in Melbourne, Australia, in 1946. The other



editions are much the same, whether they be the Russian, De Leonist or Lawrence and Wishart editions). Says Marx:

"Within the co-operative society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products...What we are dealing with here is a Communist society, not as it has developed on its own basis, but, on the contrary, as it is just issuing out of capitalist society. Hence a society that still retains, in every respect, economic, moral and intellectual, the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it is issuing". Here, Marx argues that the producer gets back exactly as much as he gives; he receives a community cheque showing that he has done so much labour. "Equal right is here, therefore, still according to the principle, capitalist right...". It is still tainted with "a capitalist limitation". It is, therefore, says Marx, "a right of inequality". Nevertheless he argues, "these shortcomings are unavoidable in the first phase of Communist society". But—and here we come to the all-important and well-known passage of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*—"In the higher phase of Communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual under the division of labour has disappeared, and therewith also the opposition between manual and intellectual labour; after labour has become not only a means of life, but also the highest want of life; when the development of all the faculties of the individual, the productive forces have correspondingly increased, and all the springs of social wealth flow more abundantly—only then may the limited horizon of capitalist right be left behind entirely, and society inscribe on its banners 'From everyone according to his faculties, to everyone according to his needs!'".

In Section Two of the *Critique*, Marx asks the question: "What then is the change which the institution of the State will undergo in a communist society?". And his answer is: "Between the capitalist and communist systems of society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, whose State can be nothing else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat". Nowhere in this stage in Marx's thinking does he seem to envisage any sort of dying out or 'withering away' of the State. For such ideas, we have to look—at a somewhat later date—to Engels.

Engels' most important works on the subject of communism/socialism are his *Anti-Duhring*, first published in 1878, and his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884. Part of *Anti-Duhring* has appeared as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, a work much admired by groups such as the SPGB in this country. In Part Three of *Anti-Duhring*, Engels first discusses Robert Owen's communist theories and colonies as well as the ideas of Saint-Simon and Fourier. Such people, Engels dubs as utopians; but remarks that "The utopians...were utopians because they could be nothing else at a time when capitalist production was as yet so little developed". After analysing bourgeois society in the same, but somewhat clearer, manner as did Marx, Engels then outlines what has remained the 'classic' Marxist method of bringing socialism about.

"The proletariat seizes the State power, and transforms the means of production in the first instant into State property. But in doing this, it puts an end to itself as the proletariat; it puts an end to all class differences and class antagonisms, it puts an end to the State as the State." And "When ultimately it (the State) becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as

—along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy (sic!) of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished—there is nothing more to be repressed that would take a special repressive force, a State necessary. The first act in which the State really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a State...The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The State is not 'abolished', it withers away." In the *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* version it says: "It dies out". In his section on production, Engels argues that production must be revolutionised from "top to bottom"; productive labour will become a pleasure, not a burden; production, utilising modern industry, will be on the basis of "one single vast plan"; and there will also be the abolition of the separation between town and country, as well as the old division of labour.

In his *Origin of the State*, Engels argues that the proletariat must constitute its own Party and vote for its own representatives to Parliament. "Universal suffrage", he says, "is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more; but that is enough". Of the State, he contends that it has not existed from all eternity. Societies have managed without it. The State will inevitably fall. In fact, he says, "The society which organises production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole State machinery where it will then belong—into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze axe".

Before leaving the Marxian view of communism/socialism, I think it is worth mentioning that Marx and Engels envisioned a quite authoritarian state of affairs within such a society, at least in the early days. In his essay on *Authority*, Engels writes:

"Authority . . . means the imposition of the will of another upon ours; on the other hand, authority presupposes subordination. Now, since these two words sound bad and the relationship which they represent is disagreeable to the subordinated party, the question is to ascertain whether there is any way of dispensing with it, whether—given the conditions of present-day society—we could not create another social system, in which this authority would be given no scope any longer and would consequently have to disappear. . . .

. . . Everywhere combined action . . . displaces independent action by individuals; now, is it possible to have organisation without authority?

Supposing a social revolution dethroned the capitalists, who now exercises authority over the production and circulation of wealth. Supposing, to adopt entirely the view of the anti-authoritarians, that the land and the instruments of labour had become the collective property of the workers who use them. Will authority have disappeared, or will it only have changed its form?"

Engels then instances a factory, a large cotton mill. He says:

"... particular questions arise in each room and at every moment concerning the mode of distribution, production of materials, etc., which must be settled at once at pain of seeing production immediately stopped; whether they are settled by decision of a delegate placed at the head of branch of labour or, if possible, by a majority vote, the will of the single individual will always be subordinate itself, which means that



questions are settled in an authoritarian manner”.

Engels' conclusions regarding the “delegation of function” are, of course, open to debate; but in fact, he goes much further in his praise of authority. He continues:

“But the necessity of authority, and of impervious authority at that, will nowhere be found more evident than on board a ship on the high seas. There, in time of danger, the lives of all depend on the instantaneous and absolute obedience of all to the will of one”.

Engels was, of course, wrong then, as he would be now! I have, in fact, dealt with this in an article entitled *Anarchy in the Navy*, in *Anarchy 14*, instancing the running of much of the Spanish Republican Fleet by rank-and-file sailors during the revolutionary period in 1936.

We will leave Engels to his “impervious authority”; though it may not come amiss to mention here that, surprisingly, even William Morris, who has always been considered something of a libertarian socialist and a quasi-anarchist, also takes a similar line to Engels regarding the running of a ship “in socialist condition”, in his essay, *Communism*.

Lastly, I shall briefly turn to the libertarian or anarchist-communist viewpoints, which in the last century were mainly associated with two Russians—Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, though others also espoused similar views.

### LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

Between 1842 and 1861, Bakunin could best be described as a revolutionary pan-Slavist, though there are indications of libertarian tendencies before 1861. I would say, however, that he could not really be called a libertarian or anarchist before 1866, when he wrote his *Revolutionary Catechism*.

In his *Catechism*, Bakunin argues that “freedom is the absolute right of every adult man and woman” that “the freedom of each is therefore realizable only in the equality of all”. He asserts the absolute rejection of every authority, “including that which sacrifices freedom for the convenience of the State”; “order in society” he says, “must result from the greatest possible realization of individual liberty, as well as of liberty on all levels of social organisation”. He calls for the “establishment of a commonwealth”, and the “abolition of classes, ranks and privileges” and, rather surprising, “universal suffrage”, though Max Nettlau says that he did not mean in the State, but in the new society. Bakunin also calls for the abolition of the “all-pervasive, regimented, centralised State”, and the “internal reorganisation of each country on the basis of the absolute freedom of individuals, of the productive associations and of the communes”. Freedom can only be defended by freedom, he says. “The basic unit of all political organisation in each country must be the completely autonomous commune constituted by the majority vote of all adults of both sexes. No one shall have either the power or the right to interfere in the internal life of the commune...” The nation, continues Bakunin, must be nothing but a federation of autonomous provinces. Without political equality there can be no real political liberty, but political equality will be possible only when there is social and economic equality. The majority, says Bakunin, live in slavery. And “This slavery will last until capitalism is overthrown by the collective action of the workers”. Therefore the land, and all the natural resources, are (to be) the common property of everyone...” He concludes his *Catechism*: “The revolution, in short, has this aim: freedom for all, for

individuals as well as collective bodies, associations, communes, provinces, regions, and nations, and the mutual guarantee of this freedom by federation”.

Later, also in 1866, Bakunin wrote another Catechism on very much the same lines, in which he again asserts that the land is to be the common property of all; and that “The revolution must be made not for, but by, the people, and can never succeed if it does not enthusiastically involve all the masses of the people; that is, in the rural countryside as well as the cities.”

In his *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism*, Bakunin says that socialism means “to organise society in such a manner that every individual endowed with life, man or woman, may find almost equal means for the development of his various faculties . . . to organise a society which, while it makes it impossible for any individual whatsoever to exploit the labour of others, will not allow anyone to share in the enjoyment of social wealth, always produced by labour only, unless he has himself contributed to its creation with his own labour”. He thinks that the complete solution — to the problems thrown up by capitalism — “will no doubt be the work of centuries”. Nevertheless, “history has set the problem before us, and we can no longer evade it if we are not to resign ourselves to total impotence”.

Bakunin, again and again, asserts that the people must make the revolution themselves, that the State must go first; that society must be “organised from the bottom up by revolutionary delegations . . .”; that the “revolutionary alliance” of the people must exclude any form of dictatorship. But, at least in 1869, Bakunin argued that a well-organised revolutionary “society” can assist “at the birth of the revolution by spreading among the masses ideas which give expression to their instincts, and to organise, not any army of the revolution — the people alone should always be that army — but a sort of revolutionary general staff, composed of dedicated, energetic, intelligent individuals, sincere friends of the people above all . . . capable of serving as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the instincts of the people”. There need not, says Bakunin, be a great number of such people. Two or three hundred, he suggests, for the organisation in the largest countries. What our British “traditional” anarchists — who it would seem are not traditionalists, or at least Bakuninists — would say to this idea I fear to think!

Bakunin was particularly critical of those whom he called the “State Communists”. He was also scathing of those whom he considered wished to impose communism or, as he sometimes called it, collectivism, on the peasants. These he considered to be Jacobins. Bakunin and Marx were, of course, antagonists. This was partly personal and partly political. In his *Letter to La Liberté*, Bakunin attacks Marx, saying that the popes had, at least, an excuse for considering that they possessed “absolute truth”; but “Mr. Marx has no such excuse”. In Bakunin's view, “the policy of the proletariat, necessarily revolutionary, should have the destruction of the State for its immediate goal”. But Bakunin could not understand how Marx and the Marxists wished to preserve, or use the State, as an instrument of emancipation. “State means domination, and any domination presupposes the subjection of the masses and, consequently, their exploitation for the benefit of some ruling minority”, asserts Bakunin against Marx. “The Marxists profess quite contrary ideas,” argues Bakunin. “Between the Marxists and ourselves there is an abyss. They are the governmentals; we are the anarchists in spite of it all”, he says.

Basically, then, this was the great argument between Bakunin



and Marx; it is still the argument between revolutionary anarchists and Marxists; between authoritarian communists and libertarian communists.

(Note: All quotations from Bakunin are taken from *Bakunin on Anarchy*, edited by Sam Dolgoff. Much the same material can also be gleaned from *Bakunin*, edited by Maximoff.)

Of Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin writes: "Bakunin was at heart a Communist; but, in common with his Federalist comrades of the International, and as a concession to the antagonism that the authoritarian Communists had inspired in France, he described himself as a 'collectivist anarchist'. But, of course he was not a 'collectivist' in the sense of Vidal or Pecqueur, or their modern followers, who simply aim at State Capitalism." (*Modern Science and Anarchism*). Nevertheless, as early as 1869, a number of "Bakuninists" described themselves as Communists.

Kropotkin, to a large degree, developed the ideas put forward, often in a rather unscientific, uncoordinated, form, by Bakunin. Before becoming an anarchist, Kropotkin had had a scientific training and background. In his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, he sees, as it were, a new form of society germinating within "the civilized nations"; a society that must, one day, take the place of the old one: a society of equals, "who will not be compelled to sell their hands and brains to those who choose to employ them in a haphazard way, who will be able to apply their knowledge and capacities to production, in an organism so constructed as to combine all the efforts for procuring the greatest sum possible of well-being for all, while free scope will be left for every individual initiative". Kropotkin says that such a society will be composed of a multitude of associations, federated for the purposes which require federation — communes of production, communes of, and for, consumption, all kinds of organisations, covering not just one country but many. All of these will combine directly, by means of free agreements between them. "There will be", he says, "full freedom for the development of new forms of production,

invention and organisation". People will combine for all sorts of work "in common". The tendency towards uniformity and centralization will be discouraged, remarks Kropotkin. Private ownership and the wages system must go. There will be no need of government, because of the free federation and "free agreement" of organisations, which will take its place. And in his *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Kropotkin particularly attacks the "State Socialists", who under the name of collectivism (we should say nationalisation today), advocated, not communism or socialism, but State Capitalism. This, he says, is nothing new; perhaps just an improved, but still undesirable, form of the wage-system.

Kropotkin, in the same work, refers to "the coming social revolution", which is quite different from that of a Jacobin dictatorship. And of such a revolution, he remarks: "During a revolution new forms of life will always germinate on the ruin of the old forms, but no government will ever be able to find their expression so long as these forms will not have taken a definite shape during the work of reconstruction itself, which must be going on in a thousand spots at the same time." Such was Kropotkin's federalist — libertarian — communism and socialism.

Since Bakunin and Kropotkin formulated their ideas of free, federalist, anarchist, libertarian, communism, others have followed and developed them. Malatesta popularised them; and so did Alexander Berkman, particularly in *What Is Communist Anarchism*. In 1926, Archinov, Makhno, Ida Mett and others developed the ideas of libertarian, anarchist, communism and organisation in their *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. I will not discuss the views of Malatesta, Berkman and the "Platformists" here as, no doubt, many of you are as, if not more, familiar with them as I am. Naturally, the formulation of libertarian communist and socialist ideas, and forms of organisation, will continue, in the words of Kropotkin, "to germinate". Let us hope so!

PETER E NEWELL

February, 1976.

## Reviews

### A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF MARX

by John Crump (published jointly by Social Revolution/London, c/o 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9, and Solidarity/London, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6.) 10p

The aim of this pamphlet is to trace a connecting line of thought from Marx and Engels to Leninist state capitalism. In this, John Crump succeeds. At least in so far as success is to find quotations and examples from Marx and Engels' writings paralleled in Lenin. So here we have a stick with which to beat the non-Leninist Marxists. (For Marxist-Leninists the argument that Lenin follows Marx is of course already accepted, but with a different interpretation.)

But herein lies my first criticism. The pamphlet is very much in the trend of Marxist exegesis: the "what-Marx-really-said/meant" school. My usual response is

'so what?'. The question applies to this pamphlet and I don't think it is answered adequately.

The minor these is more interesting though, unfortunately, not developed in terms of its relevance to us today. John Crump argues that, unlike Lenin, Marx *did* have a view of communism which was not state capitalist. So how come much of Marx's writings lend weight to the state capitalist school? This anomaly is attributed to the fact that Marx was an 'activist' eager to 'get involved'. As he lived for the most part through a non-revolutionary situation, he was obliged to water down his communism to make his ideas more relevant to the actual on-going (capitalist) struggles of the day. The alternative was to remain 'pure' in theory, but impotent in the sense of shying away from day-to-day practice (a la SPBG, a party which, until recently counted the author of this pamphlet among its members). John Crump asserts that the dilemma is still with us today and will not be resolved until the working class gets on the move and develops a communist consciousness.

Here I begin to part company over the view of communist consciousness (not explained—when is it ever?—but implicit throughout). Many times in this short pamphlet there are references to the 'correct' theory of communism, and Marx is criticised for deviating from this. But what is this 'correct theory'? Or, to bring out my point more clearly, whose 'correct theory'? To me, there is something false about a dilemma which counterposes on the one hand theoretical purity and on the other the theoretically murky areas of activity. It is no use us bemoaning the fact that Marx, Lenin, the working class, or whoever are deviating from 'the correct theory'. The task of revolutionaries (whatever that means!) is to observe and learn from what is already going on in society, what is already revolutionary, and to participate with others in those activities in which we find value. (I know this is begging lots of questions, but for the time being, as they say in Yorkshire—'nuf said!)

Bob Dent



# Who is the enemy?

**THE SUPERPOWERS, THE THREAT OF WAR, AND THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS** Second World Defence pamphlet No 1 20p.

Humanity, it is said, lives not by reason but by the myths it creates. And in the mythology of the traditional left the big bogeyman has always been the USA. Now, as the traditional left begins to disintegrate, new myths are created to replace those grown old and discredited. Thus the authors of the pamphlet under review, echoing Solzhenitsyn, claim that the main threat to Western Europe and its working people is from the USSR, a power defined as State Capitalist, imperialist, aggressive and expansionist.

Libertarians would not disagree with this analysis, that is why when others have prattled on about the 'Workers' Bomb', and about defending the Workers' States and the gains of the October Revolution we have taken to the streets in support of freedom in Czechoslovakia. That is why we have sought to expose the activities of the KGB which uses "Russian Empire Loyalists" in the CP and in outfits like the Appeal Group to spy on so-called anti-soviet activity.

That there is a threat from the East as well as from the West cannot be denied, for recent events in Angola, where the super-powers sought to assert their hegemony at the expense of the local working class people, have all too vividly reminded us of it. The big question, however, is what to do about it. Having rejected revolutionary defeatism (the concept that the working class can use the opportunities afforded by the crises resulting from inter-capitalist conflicts for its own independent, revolutionary ends) Second World Defence falls into the old trap of imagining that the enemies of our enemies are our friends. Thus they advocate an alliance between the workers and the capitalists of what they call the Second World, "those small and medium sized developed capitalist countries that are not imperialist great powers". Among other things, such an alliance would involve support for NATO (which is aimed not at the 'enemy without', the USSR, but the enemy within, the European working class) and the reintroduction of conscription with its extension to women.

A similar position is held by the Belgian Maoist group Top/Amada (see the article, "The Belgian Maoists and the passion for national defence" in *Le Proletaire* 21 Feb-5 March 1976). In a flamboyant declaration their National Bureau states: "The Belgian people and all the peoples of Europe have an urgent task: reinforcement of their national defence and preparation to defend, arms in hand, their national freedom." It is not so long since one British Maoist sect was advocating an alliance between the "progressive" capitalists (including Enoch Powell!) and the workers against the USA.

The fruits of such a policy of abandoning independent conscious working class activity in favour of an alliance with this or that group of capitalists can be seen in 1914 when the leaders of the Social Democratic parties of the Second International dropped any pretence to being internationalist and anti war and rushed to support on the one hand the Fatherland against Tsarist absolutism and on the other democracy against Prussian militarism, encouraging workers to march off to be slaughtered in their millions so that the profits of the arms barons might grow.

More recently we have seen all the super powers come to the aid of the government of Ceylon (which is supported both by pro Moscow Communists and the Trotskyists of the LSSP) against the 1971 uprising.

Since the war-time conferences at Yalta and Teheran which divided the Earth into spheres of influence, capitalism has been an integrated world system. As Second World Defence points out the USSR, having rebuilt its war ravaged industries by looting its East European satellites and using the slave labour of the prisoners in the camps, is now an exporter of finance and industrial capital—half of Egypt's foreign debt is to the USSR.

As recent Soviet purchases of US wheat (which led to a protest strike by American dockers) show not only that the USSR has failed to sort out the agricultural chaos created by the forced collectivisation of the first five year plan but also that it is willing and able to play the game of commodity speculation.

Meanwhile, Western capital seeks new markets in the East, Fiat builds car factories in Togliattigrad while West German, American and Japanese finance and technology help the Soviet Government to exploit the natural resources of Siberia. The West German Thyssen, Mannesmann Company, for example, agreed to provide the USSR with large diameter gas pipe on credit of 1.2 billion DM.

Over the last five years Poland has imported several billion dollars worth of machinery, everything from complete chemical plants to soft drink machines. The Polish Government is now trying to repay its massive foreign debt by imposing a severe programme of austerity on the working class.

Second World Defence claims there is a grave danger of war. Such a war they see being triggered by a Soviet invasion of Western Europe and fought along conventional military lines with the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons (such weapons are equal in explosive force to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima). Here they are wrong. The danger of war exists, but a war situation is more likely to develop from attempts by rival capitalist blocs attempting to plunder the third world of diminishing natural resources in an attempt to solve their economic crisis. Although such a war could begin as a conventional military conflict it could all too easily develop into an all-out nuclear conflagration.

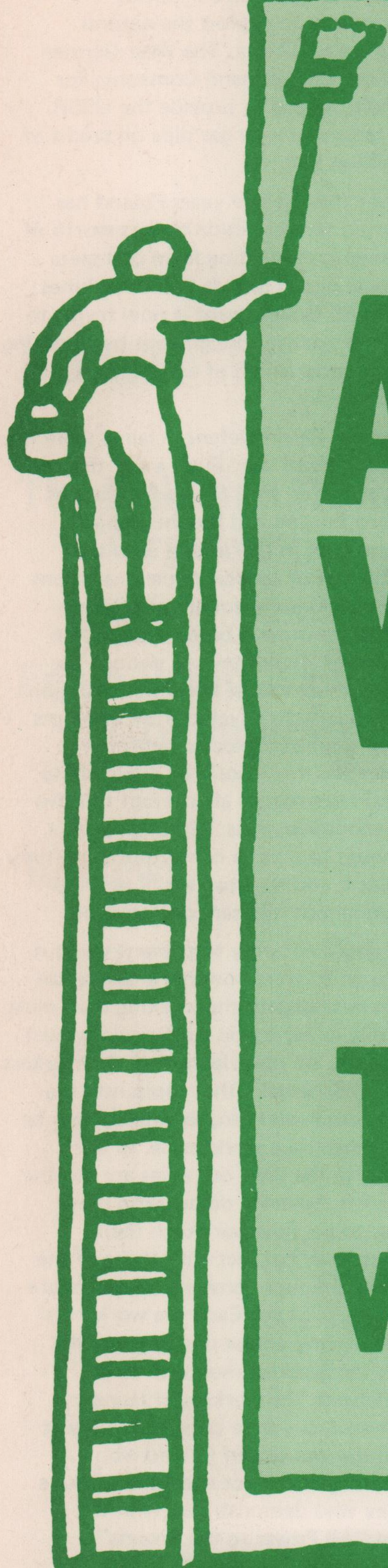
In order not only to prevent war but also to go forward towards a libertarian communist society the working class must redouble its efforts in its struggle against capitalism. We must learn that the workers have no fatherland, that capitalism is a world system and can, therefore, only be overthrown on a world scale. In our struggle in the West our allies are not the capitalists, however democratic they appear to be, however much their interests may conflict with those of the rulers of the super powers. Our allies are the workers of the East, the workers of East Germany whose uprising in 1963 shook the Stalinist monolith to its foundations, the workers of Hungary whose councils were crushed by Soviet tanks, the workers of Poland who revolted against price rises, the workers of Kiev who demonstrated with the slogan "All Power to the Soviets".

Second World Defence are right to quote Marx when he admonishes workers to masters the mysteries of international politics, but they themselves like many leftists have much to learn and much to forget.

Terry Liddle

(Terry Liddle is a member of Social Revolution (London))





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