

LISTINGS

OCTOBER*OCTOBER*OCTOBER*OCTOBER*OCTOBER*OCTOBER*OCTOBER*

SAT 12th Poll Tax Prisoners Solidarity Conferenc, Birmingham, Methodist Hall, 11am-5pm (corner of Lozells Rd and Soho Rd). See inside for more details.

TUE 15th First day of 3-day IMF/World Congress. Day of Action and Protests against banks (071 387 7557 for details)

WED 16th World Anti-MacDonald day. Protests in solidarity with London Greenpeace activists fighting libel case (phone as above)

SAT 19th National Anti-Poll Tax Demo, London.
11.30-13.30 Women's picket of Holloway Prison, Parkhurst R, N7
13.00 on Assemble for March at Caledonian Park, Market Rd, N7
(Caledonian Rd Tube). Tel 071 738 7586

Anarchist Bookfair. Conway Hall, Redlion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube), 10am-8pm.

THUR 24th "Britian's War In Ireland-Prospects for Peace". Bernadette McAliskey speaking. Banqueting Hall, Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square, 7.30pm. Organised by Troops Out Movement.

SAT 26th 2 day National APT Conference "Finishing Off the Poll Tax"- Manchester
27th Town Hall 10am-6pm on Sat, 10-2pm on Sun. Phone 061 707 1584 for more details, or write to: NWAPT Forum, PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Eccles, Salford M30 7FX.

Class Struggle Anarchist Network meeting in Leeds. Details from PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*NOVEMBER*

SAT 2nd Anarcho-Syndialist Dayschool, Liverpool, YMCA, Mount Pleasant, 10am-6pm(see inside for more details)

SAT 9th National Demo against MacDonalds. Central London. Starts 12 noon. (071 387 7557 for details)

SUN 10th National Demonstration Against Racist Attacks, London. Assemble 1pm Algate East tube. Contact AFA, BM 1734, London, WC1N 3XX

SAT 23rd Manchester Martyrs Commemoration. Assemble Platt Fields, Rusholme, 12.30pm. (Manchester Martyrs Commemoration Committee, PO Box 5 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5EZ

AWG dayshcool, Conway Hall, London. Details from PO Box B20, Huddersfield, HD1 1XS

Liverpool Anarchists meet the first and third Monday of every month, 7.45pm

MERSEYSIDE

ANARCHIST

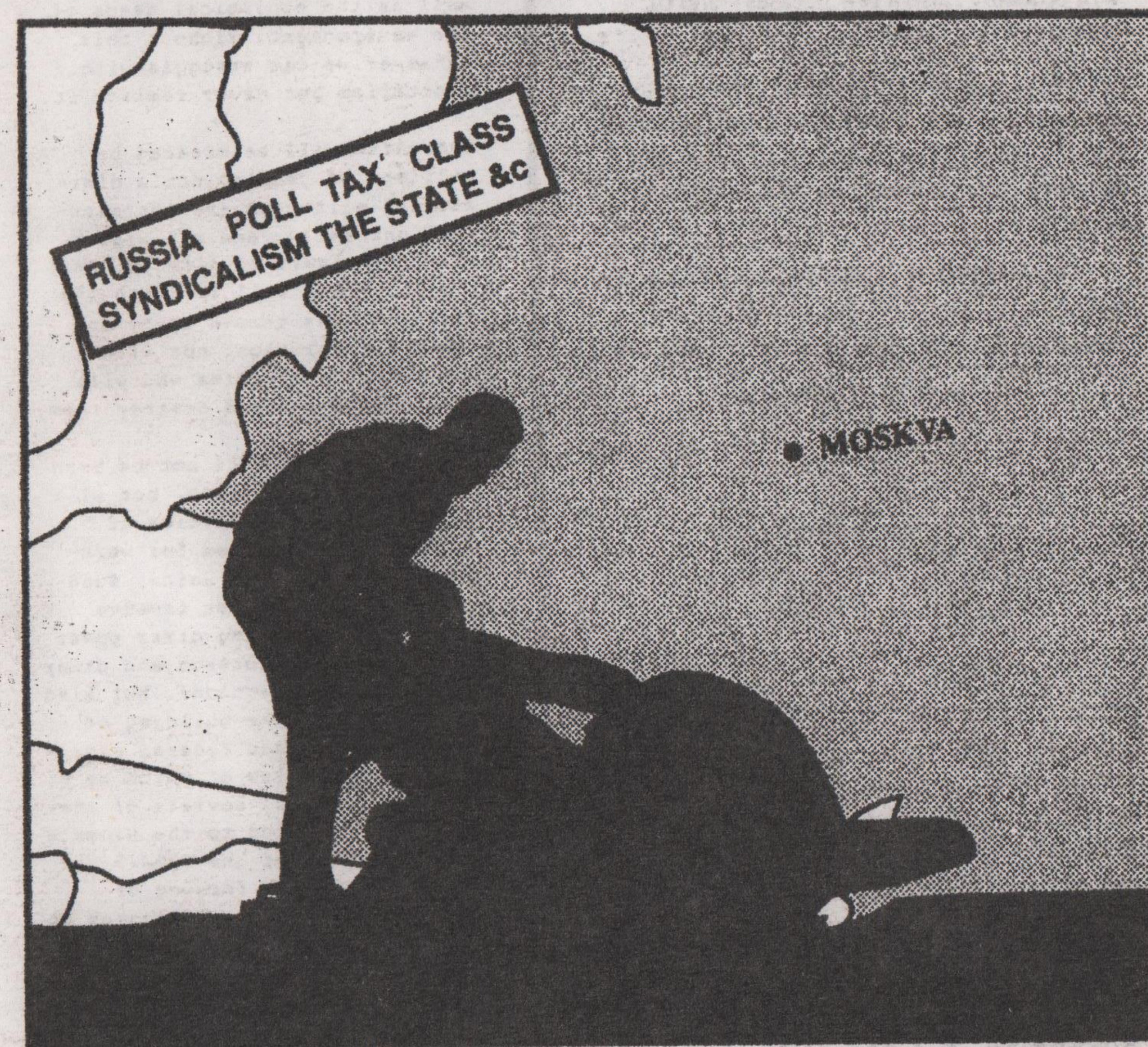
NEWSLETTER

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NUMBER 31

USSR



AFTER THE COUP

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

Hello there,

Welcome to the October issue.

As promised in the last issue, we have an article giving an Anarchist perspective on the soviet coup and its aftermath. There's also articles on syndicalism, the state, class (which will probably raise a few hackles)—and of course the Poll Tax.

We're somewhat late this month due to production problems (which will also account for any lessening of print quality this issue). However, things should be back to normal soon.

October 19th in London is the place to be—with both an Anti-Poll Tax march and the Anarchist Bookfair. Try to make it if you can.

THE EDITORS



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

DEADLINE December issue. 14th November

SUBSCRIBE M.A. now price is 25p per issue or £3.50 for 10 issues.

BASIC ANARCHISM.

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

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

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations (examples of which go from the original soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/5 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

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

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP.

POLL TAX NEWS

UPDATE

● Government statistics show that between April and June the number paying anything towards their Poll Tax had fallen to 67% (10% down on last year). By the end of June councils had collected only 12% of the amount they hope to raise by next April—9% down on last year. (Guardian 14.9.91)

● In Liverpool—in part due to the failure of the council's computer in February and March, and the long-running NALGO strike—only 9% of this year's Poll Tax has been paid so far, and only 56% of payers have made any payment. The extra billing for non-payment next year could be £100—compared to an extra £71 this year (L'pool Echo 10.9.91)

According to the City Treasurer's Report (29.7.91) the council expected the processing of the Poll Tax backlog and taking all Poll Tax non-payers to court to get "liability orders" granted (which they need before they can try wage deductions, bailiffs etc.) to take until October 1992! NALGO strikers have recently voted for a conditional phased return to work (200 odd have gone back, with over 750 still out until 11 members made compulsorily redundant are given job interviews). Assuming the strike is over, Liverpool Council is presumably hoping to finish the court cases by early 1993... Some hope.

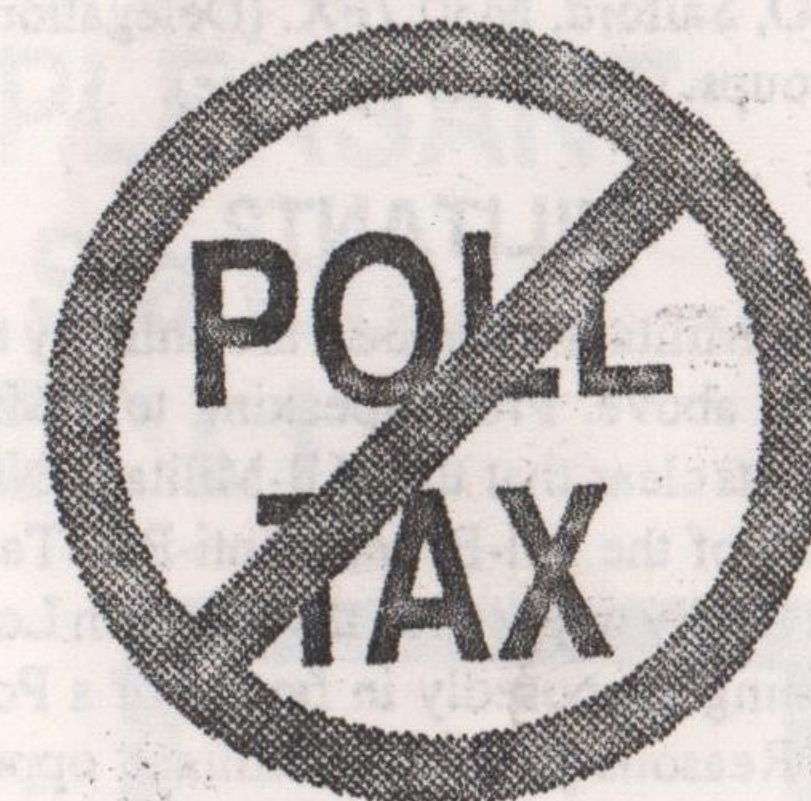
● In other parts of Merseyside, Wirral Council is still owed £15 million (18.2%) of last years Poll Tax. 21,000 summonses had been issued by the end of March, and non-payment levels this year are even higher (L'pool Echo 23.9.91). Sefton Council is still owed £7 million from last year, while non-payment levels are up this year (28% of the total due, compared to 32% last year, had been paid in by the end of August) (Echo, 24.9.91).

● Meanwhile at least one person (Dave Nellist MP) has successfully applied for a judicial review of his Poll Tax court appearance—on the grounds that the previous magistrates refused to allow him a McKenzie Friend (lay legal advisor). (Guardian 18.9.91)

PRISONER SUPPORT

Over 70 people have been jailed for non-payment of the Poll Tax, and this excludes people who've received suspended sentences or orders to pay as a result of committal proceedings. Over 100 were jailed as a result of last years police attacks on demonstrations. In the next two years of the Poll Tax jailings are likely to intensify.

On Saturday, October 12th there will be a National Poll Tax Prisoners Conference. This will be at the Methodist Hall, Villa Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham, 11am-5pm. Contact Birmingham Prisoners Support Group, 20 Corner House, Wellington St., Smethwick B66 2NR. Registration fee: Delegate £5; individuals £3/1£(conc).



NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Saturday, October 19th. 1pm. From: Caledonian park, Market Rd, Islington, London N7 (Caledonian Rd. Tube). To: Trafalgar Square, via Pentonville Prison. For all Poll Tax debts to be written off, for an amnesty for jailed non-payers and those jailed for the Trafalgar Square demo of 1990. Called by the Prisoners Support Group, Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, and local anti-poll tax groups

Phone 071 738 7586 for more info. Or write to TSDC c/o Brixton Law Centre, 506 Brixton Rd, London SW9

ANTI-POLL TAX CONFERENCE

On 26/27th October there will be a national "Finishing Off the Poll Tax" conference in Manchester. This will be to discuss the vast changes that have occurred since the last All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation Conference in November last year - ie the new laws, the growing cuts in services, the councils' attempts to enforce collection, the changes within the Anti-Poll Tax movement itself, the need to rebuild links, etc.

For the record: many of the Anti-Poll tax Groups involved in organising this conference are affiliated to the All Britain Federation. This Conference has been organised after a request to the National Committee of the All Britain Fed—to organise a similar national or regional conference—was ignored; Terry Fields MP, recently out of jail, has been invited to give a talk if he so wishes.

For more info contact 061 707 1584, or write to the Northern Anti-Poll Tax Forum, PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Salford, M30 7FX. (Delegation fee is £5 for groups. Observers welcome).

MILITANT?

Loyal 'Militant' members are unlikely to be at any of the above. From speaking to 'Militant' members, it's clear that the (All-Militant) National Committee of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation is totally opposed to the march in London—despite being supposedly in favour of a Poll Tax amnesty. Reasons given for 'Militant' opposition boil down to claims that the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign can't be trusted, if they're not actually agent provocateurs doing the state's work... All standard 'Militant' fare that's been a regular sideline of the Anti-Poll Tax struggle since the early days. Basically, 'Militant' would rather have nothing happen than see it happen outside 'Militant' control.

This isn't surprising—with 'Militant' being part of a tradition that looks with fond eyes to the creation of the one-Party Bolshevik state in 1917. 'Militant' apparently believe they own the class struggle in general and the anti-poll tax movement in particular. The fact that most anti-poll tax groups were never part of the All-Britain Fed, that the

Anti-Poll tax movement is made up of millions more people than any political sect, or that non-'Militants' aren't prepared to just obey orders (and that Federal Committees are supposed to be answerable to their affiliated groups), doesn't seem to have sunk in at all.

Anarchists, and others, may be quite willing to work with 'Militant' members (or other state socialists) where necessary and practical. To work for any Party's hidden agenda is a game for mugs.

Meanwhile 'Militant'—at present being wiped across the floor within the Labour Party—are trying to find their bearings under Kinnock's New Order. Internal 'Militant' leaks to the Guardian in early September have shown just how torn 'Militant' is over staying or going. With so many being kicked out of the Labour Party—and with those still in having to keep their heads down—they may not have much choice in the matter. Seen in this light, Militant's attempts to block initiatives within the anti-poll tax movement seem more an attempt to keep control of one of their last remaining areas of influence...

For Marxist-Leninists, when push comes to shove, Party power usually comes before workers' democracy. For Anarchists/libertarian socialists the opposite is true. We fight **FORTHE CLASS, NOT THE PARTY.**

A WORD FROM TROTSKY

"They have come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers' right to elect representatives above the Party. As if the Party were not allowed to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy!"—Militant's hero Trotsky on the Workers' Opposition (a faction within the Communist Party calling for more working class control). Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, 1921.

CRISIS^{IN} THE USSR

Bourgeois political pundits are rapidly running out of ways of describing the speed with which the Soviet "state communist" system has collapsed in Eastern Europe, and now, in recent weeks, the Soviet Union itself.

During 1989 when it became obvious that Gorbachov would not send in the tanks to prop up the Stalinist regimes of the satellite countries in Eastern Europe, a series of popular uprisings swept away the history of the last forty five years - although not, unfortunately, the dependence on leaders and governments.

Within the Soviet Union itself, thanks to Gorbachov's policies of Glasnost and perestroika - i.e., relaxation of the Communist Party's iron grip and economic reforms that never quite materialised - the ramshackle Soviet bureaucracy found itself faced with demands for independence from the constituent republics of the USSR and the re-emergence of old ethnic quarrels which have surfaced again despite seventy-four years of Soviet central control.

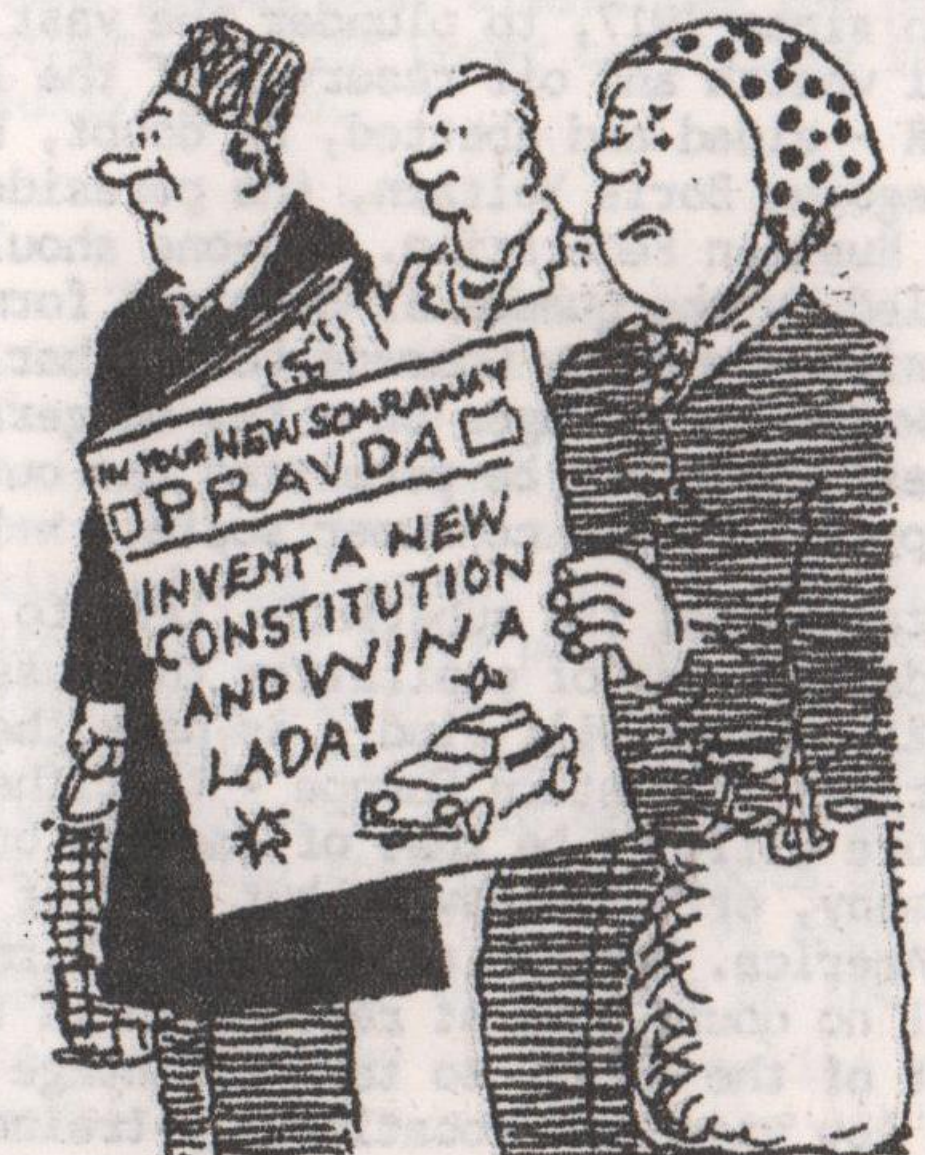
In a last desperate gamble to preserve its privileged position, the Soviet bureaucracy, under the leadership of Gennady Yanayev and other hard-line communists, attempted a coup so as to turn back the clock and restore the 'good old days' of orthodox Stalinism. The events of that time need no rehashing here - they are fresh enough in people's memories. What is necessary though is some kind of reassessment of what the future could hold for the peoples of what was once the Soviet Union.

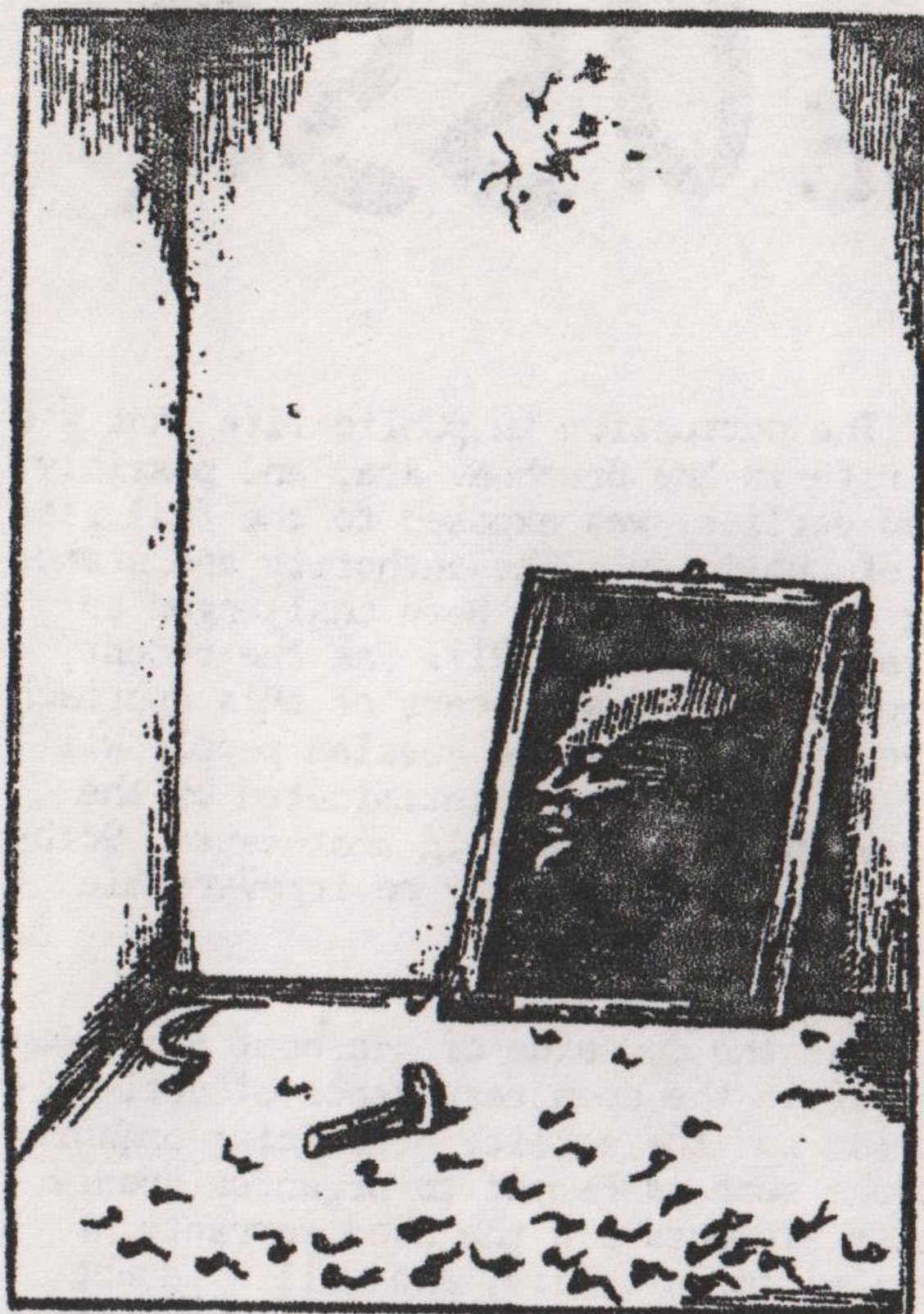
Since he came to power in 1985, Gorbachov had made reform after reform within the Soviet Union, to the accompaniment of condescending praise from Western leaders who were unstinting in their praise of this "champion of freedom and democracy". The relaxation of the central control of the Communist Party over all aspects of Soviet life has produced both good effects and bad.

The corruption in public life that was so rife in the Brezhnev era, and possibly even earlier, was exposed to the full glare of publicity. The authority and standing of the party has been challenged as never before since 1917. As the recent coup has shown, six years of this approach have ensured that the Russian people will not go back to being intimidated by the Party and the State - in that sense, Gorbachov has presided over an irreversible change.

But the downside of glasnost has shown itself in the open resurgence of anti-semitism and the ability of fascist organisations such as Pamyat to organise openly. These elements are the bond-servants of capitalism in crisis, and will no doubt be used if domestic and foreign exploiters deem them to be necessary.

There have been few more sickening, hypocritical spectacles than the phoney welcomes emanating from Bush, Major, and Thatcher inviting the peoples of the Soviet Union to join the "world community", to participate in "western-style democracy" (whatever that is) and to enjoy the goodies which will, they say, inevitably be spewed out by the operation of the "free market".





The most rank hypocrisy came from Thatcher at the time of the coup when she urged people to take to the streets to enforce their will. Like they did in Orgreave, Maggie? Or Trafalgar Square in 1990?

The promises of western affluence and prosperity wouldn't - or shouldn't - fool a syphilitically-infected gorilla. The West has no intention of building up Russia and the other republics into future industrial and commercial rivals. The only concern of the West is, as it has been since 1917, to plunder the vast mineral wealth and oil reserves of the former USSR - aided and abetted, no doubt, by the demagogue Boris Yeltsin, the peresident of the Russian Federation. No-one should be fooled by the queues of Russians forming outside the Happy Comrade burger bar, to blow two weeks wages on a few burgers and cokes! They may be permitted the outward trappings of the consumer society - but

certainly not the substance. left to the tender mercies of capitalism the Russian working-class will find - as have their comrades in Eastern Europe - that their future will not be that of America or Germany, or Scandinavia, but that of Latin America. Western and Japanese firms will no doubt look at relocation in that part of the world, to take advantage of the low wages and vocationally-trained workforce.

No doubt Bush, Major and Co. will really think that the Russian workers have "arrived" only when they are enjoying the full range of benefits which accrue from living under capitalism - like having your home repossessed because you can't afford the mortgage payments, or losing your life savings when some dodgy bank goes through the floorboards, or having poll tax bailiffs breaking your door down.

Events in Russia are in a state of constant change and only a fool would attempt any detailed description of what will happen next. But amidst the squalid politicking of would-be leaders of the Left and Right, there is healthy evidence of the re-emergence of anarchist organisations, operating more openly than they have been able to do in years. Not since Kropotkin's funeral in Moscow in 1921 have the black flags of anarchism been seen in such numbers as they have been in recent demonstrations.

An anarcho-syndicalist union, SMOT, is gaining strength rapidly, although, true to the tradition of Western democracy, one of its representatives was recently refused a visa to enter Britain.

Although the situation in Russia has potential for the right-wing and for free-market restoration, and also for the left to exercise its self-styled "crucial" leadership, the mood of the Russian people could just as easily indicate that they are not about to take any more crap from whatever opportunist or authoritarian elements that seek to profit from current events. There is nothing inevitable about the rise of reaction, either right wing or left. In the last century and the early part of this century, Russia provided not only some of the most important theoreticians of the anarchist movement but also one of its numerically largest contingents.

On the banners carried at Kropotkin's funeral in 1921 there appeared the slogan: "Where there is authority, there is no freedom". We can only hope that the Russian people - who have had more experience than most of the truth of that slogan - act in sufficient numbers to ensure that no State or Party ever again dominates their lives as thoroughly as did the Soviet system.

POLICE FRAME-UP

CONVICTION has asked us to publicise the case of ROBERT TAYLOR, one of the many people framed by the police and imprisoned for crimes they didn't commit.

Robert Taylor has been subjected to eleven years of police harrassment. Since 1980 he has been charged and acquitted 18 times. However, three years ago he was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for a robbery he didn't commit after the police rigged an identity parade.

he was accused of robbing a shop in Manchester armed with a shotgun in December 1988. But this shotgun robber was wearing a mask which covered his face and hair, and the eye-witnesses who were in the shop at the time did not have a good chance to identify him. However, they all agreed that he was a white male.

Robert Taylor is of mixed race.

The police relied solely on identity parade evidence to convict him. However, despite all the eyewitnesses agreeing that the robber was a white male, the men chosen for the identity parade were all, for some unfathomable reason, Black or of mixed race.

D.C. Morris, the officer investigating the case, was present in the parade room and Robert's solicitor - Keith Dyson - saw him indicating to witnesses who they should pick out. D.C. Morris was "nodding his head and moving his hands". After a complaint was made, none of the subsequent witnesses identified Robert. In any case, it is against the rules for holding identity parades for the investigating officer to be in the room. Knowing this, D.C. Morris had told Robert's solicitor that he was the police photographer!

The solicitor, Keith Dyson, now became a witness in Robert's case and could no longer act for him. Robert found a replacement solicitor only two days before the trial. In court, Keith Dyson was not called to give evidence. The identity parade evidence was accepted and Robert was convicted on this alone. there was no forensic evidence.

Misconduct of the identity parade was not the only tactic the police used to get a conviction. Robert was made the subject of a police manhunt, wanted for a murder with which he had no connection and was never charged, but it gave the police the opportunity to present him as a dangerous man and to publish his picture in the press and on TV. In court several policemen surrounded him at all times, even accompanying him into the witness box. The message to the jury was clear.

Messages of support can be sent to:

Robert Taylor 468,
HMP Garth,
North Wing,
Ulmes Walton Lane,
Leyland,
Lancs PR5 3NE.

I THINK,
THEREFORE
I AM...



...IN JAIL

AGAINST THE STATE

This article seeks to define how anarchists see the State and illustrate why we believe it should be dismantled or smashed.

One thing that draws all anarchists together is our belief in hostility to the State, be it passive or aggressive. All anarchists argue that the state should be abolished and replaced by a new form of social organisation. To know what this really means we need to define what the 'State' is.

The state is not just government, it is all the forms of authority which restrict our individual and collective freedom. The state is a sovereign body that claims complete authority to define our rights, what we can and can't do and where we go and who we meet. It does not allow anyone to practice customs or activities which it has not endorsed. Furthermore, the state is compulsory: in other words everyone born into society is forced to recognise the state and all the obligations that go with it. No-one can opt out of these obligations except by leaving the society itself. For example under capitalism you



have to have money in order to gain goods and services. If you try to get these without money you either have to steal, which means breaking the state's rules, or become self-sufficient and thereby drop out.

The state is also a monopolistic body: that means it claims a monopoly of force in its territory. This means that competitors to the state are violently put down if they represent a threat to the state's authority. One key element of the state is that it is a distinct body. This means that its roles and functions are carried out by a distinct class of people. These are not just politicians but bureaucrats who run society, and the armed forces and the police who enforce their will.

Anarchists usually have two main reasons for calling for the end of the state. Firstly, anarchists believe it has no right to exist because it is unnecessary. Secondly, we claim that the state fosters a whole series of social evils, causing individual and group corruption and restriction. When we step back and look at the enormous restrictions the state places on our lives, it is hard to believe that anyone would willingly surrender their rights to such an oppressive ruler. Why should we be content with the rules, regulations, bureaucracy and restrictions placed on us by our predecessors? What right did they have to bind us with their laws?

Proudhon denounced the state by writing:

"To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation, at every transaction, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licenced, authorised, admonished, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is under pretext of public utility, and in the name of general interest, to be placed under contribution, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolised, extorted, squeezed, mystified, robbed; then at the slightest

resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, outraged, dishonoured. That is government that is its morality, that is its justice."

Although Proudhon directs his charges at government, not at the state, he does put his finger on the main issues. Firstly, the state restricts people's freedom far beyond that needed to ensure social well-being. This is carried out not for people's protection, but to preserve the state itself. We can see this in things like anti-gay legislation and press censorship. Secondly, the state dishes out excessive penalties to those who break its laws, whether or not the laws can be justified.

Thirdly, the state, whether part of capitalism or not, exploits its subjects. On the one hand it appears to offer them benefits through housing, roads, and schools, while on the other it exploits them through taxation, economic regulation and transfer of wealth to itself or its chosen privileged group. The state also performs the ultimate means of exploitation by enlisting its subjects to fight wars and die on its behalf.

The one thing that anarchists believe in that the state does (but not the way it does it,) is co-ordinating productive work. A collective rather than a coercive society is needed to organise work for everybody's benefit. Any collective agencies should be voluntary and strictly limited in their role, to safeguard personal freedom.

Another arm of the state is organised religion. The majority of anarchists are atheists or deists (they believe in a higher power but not in organised religion.) the authority of religion can be clearly seen through the Catholic Church's grip on many undeveloped nations. It is possible to separate economic, political and even religious elites, but they are all part of the state's elite.

We cannot accept anything less than a stateless society. A socialist state is still a state and this can have even greater controls over the social aspects of our lives. Exploitation and coercion would continue and the minority would still rule. One aspect of the state is that it has a tendency to centralise.



Anarchists generally believe that the most effective and equitable way to organise is from the bottom up. This means small units of localised production for need, not profit, sometimes organised into federations for efficiency. This frees us from rules imposed from the centre and allows change and adaption to suit local needs and circumstances. The state will always be limited in the kind of social change it can bring about because it deals with too many different situations. Any decisions at state level will therefore always result in losers as well as winners.

Organisations which seek to change the state by tinkering at the edges, such as the trade unions, should be treated with mistrust. Unless the aim of such organisations is the overthrow of the state. This cannot be achieved overnight as any direct actions have to be accompanied by education and a change in attitudes. A belief is needed in the rights of individuals and a rejection of exploitation. We have to end the domination of the state and start doing things for ourselves.

READING

P.J. Proudhon - "General Idea of Revolution in the 19th Century" (Freedom 1923)

J. Locke - "Two Treatises Of Government" ed. P. Laslett 1965

SYNDICALIST REVOLT

The years before World War I saw an explosion of class warfare in Britain not seen since the Chartist movement of the early nineteenth century. Known as the "Labour Unrest" or "Syndicalist Revolt", this period saw the rapid escalation of strike action—insurgent in character, largely unofficial, and often violent. Trade Union membership doubled from around 2½ million in 1909, to over 4 million by 1914—while days lost through industrial action rose from around 2½ million/year from 1900-1909 (with the exception of 10 million days lost in 1908), to an annual average of over 10 million days in 1910, 1913, and 1914—and nearly 41 million in 1912.

The first major unrest centred on the South Wales coal fields. In the Cambrian Combine strike of September 1910 to August 1911, striking miners formed mass pickets, intercepted trains, and attacked scabs, working pits, and managers' houses. At Tonypany one striker was killed by police. In 1911 the strike wave spread to the transport industry. Between June and August 1911 strikes took place in all the major ports—starting with seamen, and soon extending to dockers and other groups of workers in factories and processing plants. In August, an unofficial walkout by railwaymen on Merseyside escalated into the first national railway

strike and a General Transport Strike on Merseyside. On Merseyside two strikers were shot dead by troops during street fighting—as crowds attacked prison vans taking prisoners to Walton jail. In Llanelli (S. Wales) two workers were also shot dead, and crowds bayonet charged—strikers in turn tore up rail tracks, damaged signal boxes and telegraph systems, and set fire to trucks. In 1912 another transport strike broke out in London, and the miners came out again—this time nationally.

1913 saw the strike wave spreading to many groups of workers previously unaffected—semi-skilled and unskilled engineering workers in the West Midlands' "Black Country Strike", the Leeds Corporation strike, etc. The Dublin Lockout of August 1913-January 1914—against the Irish Transport Workers' Union of Jim Larkin and James Connolly—led to 5 deaths, over 650 jailed, and the formation of the Irish Citizens Army as a workers' defence force. Back on the mainland, rising unofficial strikes in the building industry in 1913 came to a head with a bitter 5 month lockout in 1914. Many smaller strikes also took place during this period. Meanwhile, the formation of the National Transport Workers Federation in 1910, the National Union of Railwaymen (by amalgamation of smaller unions) in 1912, and the Triple Alliance—a solidarity pact between miners, transport workers, and railwaymen—in 1914, seemed to lay the groundwork for more effective solidarity between unions. Increasingly, as conflict continued and attitudes hardened with the onset of a new economic downturn, Britain seemed to be rushing headlong towards mass industrial revolt, if not an insurgent General Strike. As the atmosphere of crisis intensified, it took the outbreak of war in August 1914 to bring the movement to a halt.

The reasons for the Labour Unrest are many. First, between 1900 and 1910 real wages fell by roughly 10% as profits, rents and prices increased and wages remained steady. With an upturn in the economy after 1909, and lower unemployment

THE LABOUR WAR.

WORK AT A STANDSTILL
IN LIVERPOOL.

QUIETNESS AT THE DOGS AND IN
THE CITY.

STRIKE SPREADING THROUGH
THE COUNTRY.

BEHIND THE LABOUR UNREST.

THE PREACHING OF
SYNDICALISM.

WHAT IT MEANS.

LABOUR M.P.'S SURPRISED.

(and so less competition for jobs), grievances over pay and conditions came to a head. Strikes would probably have occurred anyway, but, increasingly, another factor also came to the fore during this period—the rise of Syndicalism.

SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism is revolutionary class war unionism. It takes its name from the revolutionary syndicalism of the French CGT union confederation ("syndicalisme" meaning trade unionism) at a time when the CGT was heavily influenced by Anarchism. Anarchists such as Pelloutier, Pouget, Yvetot, and Delesalle (to name only the best known) pushed for direct action—mass protests, strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc.—to both win disputes in the here and now and prepare for the overthrow of capitalism by the revolutionary General Strike. From 1902 onwards, aggressive CGT-organised strike waves soon began to turn theory into practice (1). Internationally, Syndicalism was on the rise—in Spain, Italy, and Latin America. From the USA the Syndicalism or "Industrial Unionism" of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) spread to Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere (2). British Syndicalism—from small beginnings within the anarchist/socialist movement between 1900 and 1910—drew on the experiences of both the CGT and IWW, as well as on home-grown traditions of industrial militancy and anti-state socialism. From 1910 onwards Syndicalism

emerged rapidly from these bases into the mainstream of the class war. Syndicalism became a household word, both feeding into and growing out of the developing mood of class confrontation and industrial direct action.

Syndicalism's call for action increasingly fell on ready ears. The growing gulf between 'respectable' union officialdom, absorbed in state arbitration machinery, and the union rank and file, turned more and more militants towards Syndicalism as a fighting alternative. This was especially so as the growth of big business and bosses' organisations—and new skill-displacing technology in some industries—made old-style craft unions seem increasingly out of date and ineffective. The industrial unionism and class solidarity advocated by Syndicalism made increasing sense. Meanwhile, the new Labour Party's election "success" in 1906 had led to disillusionment for many supporters—as Labour MPs quickly became cogs in the Parliamentary machine. Likewise, the sterile state socialism of parties like the Social Democratic Federation (the largest Marxist party of the time), and the Independent Labour Party increasingly led socialists to look for fresher fields of action.



WE NEVER FORGET
SABOTAGE

TOM MANN

In 1910 the Syndicalist movement received a massive boost with the return of Tom Mann from Australia. Tom Mann was already well known as a militant labour agitator, organiser and public speaker. Joint leader of the famous London Dock Strike of 1889 (which influenced future French anarcho-syndicalists like Pouget), a member of the SDF, then of the Independent Labour Party, Tom Mann left England in 1901. In Australia the reality of state-control of industry struck home, as did the strike-breaking of the ruling Labour Party, and Mann returned a convinced Syndicalist—though not renouncing political action completely until 1912 (when he stated that "political action is of no use whatsoever" (3)). Together with Guy Bowman, Mann helped unite British Syndicalist organisations and individuals around the Industrial Syndicalist Education League (a propagandist body founded in 1910), and bring the Syndicalist message to the wider labour movement through far flung speaking campaigns, and his role as a strike organiser during the transport strikes of 1911 (he was the chairman of the Strike Committee in Liverpool). The conviction of Mann, Bowman, and the two Buck brothers in April 1912—for an article printed in 'The Syndicalist', calling on troops not to shoot on their own class—gained yet more publicity for the Syndicalist cause. By November 1912 ISEL Conferences in London and Manchester had attracted delegates representing upwards of 100,000 workers.

Parallel to the ISEL, movements towards industrial unionism, through union federation and amalgamation (the amalgamation committees movement), quickly became important areas of Syndicalist propaganda—in building, printing, engineering and transport in particular. By 1913 Syndicalism had become the main current among

GENERAL STRIKE DECLARED.

MERSEY RAILWAY AND FERRIES INVOLVED.

amalgamationists. The demise of the ISEL in 1913, and Syndicalist regrouping—mainly around the Industrial Democracy League (previously the Amalgamation Committees Federation, set up in 1912)—did not prevent the further expansion of Syndicalism. More workers were moving towards a Syndicalist position, and Syndicalist influence consolidated in industries such as mining (especially South Wales), the railways, and transport. During the Dublin Lockout of 1913 Jim Larkin—the organiser of the Irish Transport Workers Union and closely associated with the Syndicalist movement (though not a "typical" syndicalist)—became an important promoter of revolutionary industrial militancy on both sides of the Irish Sea. James Connolly, also an organiser of the ITWU, had previously been an organiser for the IWW in the USA.

In the building industry Syndicalists increasingly made the running over amalgamation. Two ballots were held, both in favour of amalgamation, in 1912 and 1913, but were successfully resisted by full time union officials. In 1914 the weak response of union officials to the bosses' offensive and Building Trades Lockout led to Syndicalists taking the lead in forming strike committees and organising the rank and file. The sell-out of the established unions during this dispute, and the

sabotage of the amalgamation campaign, led directly to the creation of the Building Workers' Industrial Union on Syndicalist lines—mainly based in London and Liverpool. Despite war breaking out on the same weekend that the BWIU was formed—and craft union hostility being compounded by state hostility to the BWIU's anti-war position (conscription forced the union's most active members into the army, prison, or hiding)—the BWIU still survived until 1917(4).

Before the First World War, Syndicalism—though still a minority current—was growing rapidly. Increasingly it became seen as a threat, not just to the grip of state socialism within the labour movement, but to the capitalist system itself. This shift, from relying on Parliamentary action, towards direct action and Syndicalism, was matched by a similar shift within the Syndicalist movement—from a Syndicalism that still saw some (secondary) role for political action, to out-and-out Anarcho-Syndicalism. Anarcho-Syndicalism was emerging as the dominant tendency. From 1914 Anarcho-Syndicalist impact was further strengthened with the launch of a thriving weekly paper—'The Voice of Labour'.

WAR AND REVOLUTION

The outbreak of the First World War dealt a body blow to the movement. Only by 1916 were the threads of pre-war syndicalism drawn together again—carried forward by the syndicalist-inspired shop-stewards movement in engineering.

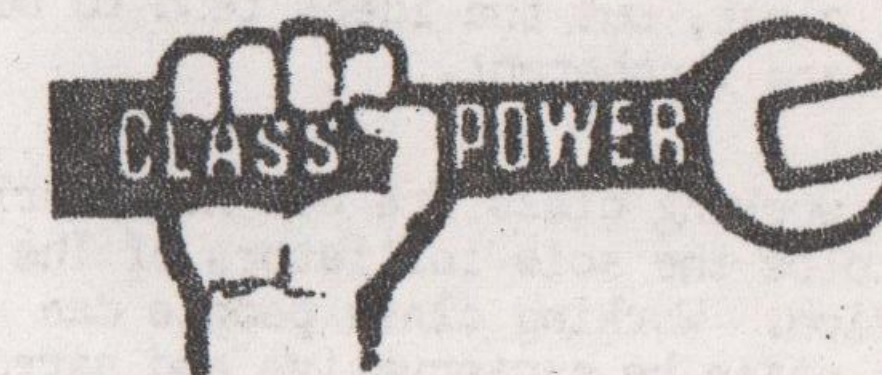
From 1917, with the Russian Revolution and the rise of Bolshevism, a new era of revolutionary left politics began. Across the world Anarchists, Syndicalists, and Social Democrats, flocked to the new Communist Parties, mesmerised by the apparent "success" of Marxist-Leninism. That era is only now coming to a close.

Today, as Communist Parties worldwide rush towards suicide, only Trotskyite die-hards still believe in the Bolshevik myth. We know from experience that the Labour Party has nothing to offer working class people. Socialists who believe otherwise face a rude awakening. Meanwhile, the TUC remains sold on class collaboration, tied to

the Labour Party, and dominated by careerist bureaucracy. For social democratic trades unionism saving the funds has become more important than winning the fight—and surrender preferable to breaking anti-union laws.

State socialism is in crisis. Anti-state socialism (Anarchism) is once more on the rise. As capitalism heads towards ecological disaster—and the ruling class tightens the screw—effective Anarchist resistance must grow. Beyond short-term tactics we need a strategy of attack. Learning from the past, yet facing the future, now is as good a time as any for Anarchists to *rekindle the Syndicalist fire*.

ANARCHISM IS THE AIM SYNDICALISM THE MEANS



Notes:

- 1) George Sorel—a French philosopher—is often claimed to have had a big influence on French Syndicalism and to be its main theoretician. Neither is true.
- 2) The IWW, founded in 1905, split in 1908 between a majority who rejected political parties (who became known as the Wobblies) and the followers of Daniel DeLeon.
- 3) Speech at Holburn Hall, July 1912. Also see Tom Mann's article 'Syndicalism and the State' ('The Syndicalist', March-April 1913).
- 4) At its height—up until June 1916—the BWIU reached an estimated membership of around 25-30,000. (Rank and File Movements in Building 1910-1920: Peter Latham).

Worth Reading:

Anarcho-Syndicalism: Rudolf Rocker
The Slow Burning Fuse; the lost history of the British Anarchists: J Quail
Syndicalism 1900-1914: Bob Holton
Syndicalism on Merseyside 1906-14: B Holton (in Building the Union: L'pool Trades Council)
Sabotage: Geoff Brown.

The Syndicalist and Amalgamation News

Edited under the
auspices of the
Industrial Syndicalist
Education League.

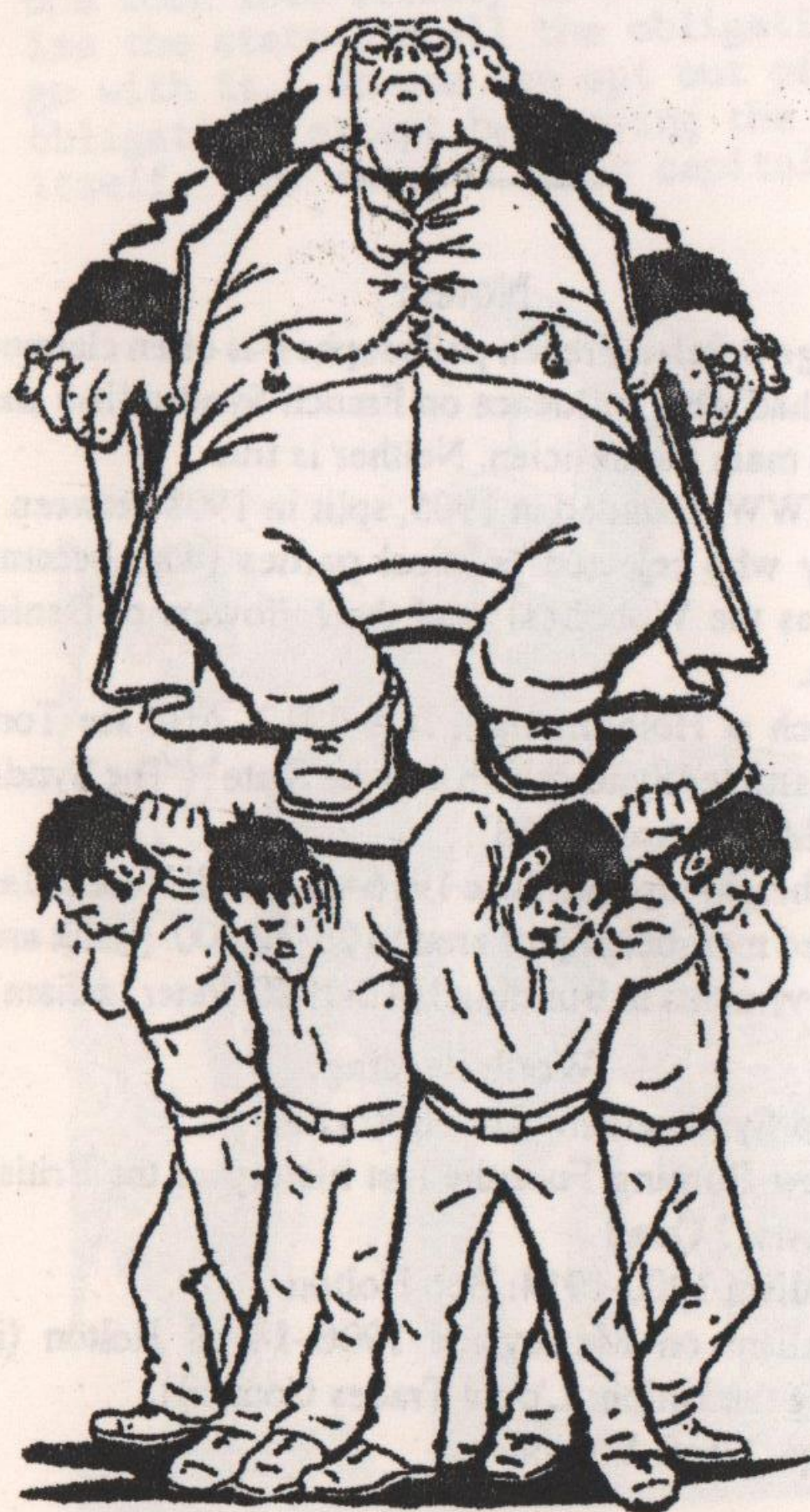
President
TOM MANN
Secretary
GUY BOWMAN

SOCIAL CLASS

In "Post-Scarcity Anarchism", Murray Bookchin wrote an article which criticised the outdated and rigid concept the Marxist Left groups hold of the working class.

Unfortunately the present anarchist movement tends to cling to the same rigid concepts and to oversimplify the class-struggle. "Class War" in particular tends to oversimplify, and to promote the idea that the whole working class feels equally oppressed and united in loathing the established order. Class War has produced more articles recently than any other anarchist group on the subject of social class, but the ideas tend to be woolly and incoherent.

The working class are not necessarily going to be the sole initiators of The Revolution. Working class people can just as often be conservative and narrow



in their thinking as revolutionary. They are not united, in thought or practice. It needs to be recognised that the present system could not exist without support from a large section of the working class.

Social and economic circumstances have changed considerably since anarchism was first invented, and since the concept of social class is an essential part of anarchist theory, we need to develop more sophisticated ideas on the subject. This not only to ensure that our ideas remain relevant, but because the State has developed more sophisticated methods of control to contain discontent and keep the people divided against each other. The British State - and the states of all the industrial countries - keep their power through a complex blend of coercion, propaganda and bribery.

The old definitions of the proletariat are no longer useful. The industrial workforce is not now a majority of the population - and it's becoming smaller. The body of people who might now call themselves 'working class' would include as many shop, office, health service and transport workers as factory workers. The definition still holds true that the working class includes all those people

who produce the goods and provide the services which are essential to a society's existence. But this leaves out all those people who produce dangerous or superfluous goods - anything from nuclear weapons to Cindy dolls - which would have no place in a libertarian socialist society. It would take a huge leap in their social and political consciousness for these people to take the necessary revolutionary step of closing their industries down.

Also, although the workplace brings people together in large numbers and enables them to organise, it also accustoms them to hierarchical management and obedience to leaders, promotes conformity and encourages the work ethic. The bosses can use the workplace as much to promote the values and ideology of capitalism as the workers can use it for

organisation in their own interests. As Bookchin says: "The class struggle in the classical sense has not disappeared; it has suffered a more deadening fate by being co-opted into capitalism." Trade union activity revolves around improvements in hours and wages, and fighting redundancies - all reformist stuff and perfectly acceptable to the ruling class.

AN UNDERCLASS ?

What of the working class people who don't work? Despite Class War's dismissal of it (in 'Heavy Stuff no.4') as "A sociologist's wet dream" (whatever that means), there is some substance to the idea that an underclass exists - i.e., a body of very poverty-stricken people separate from the main part of the working class.

An underclass has value to the State in that it can be used to illustrate ruling class propaganda. The existence of unemployed people, for example, reinforces the work ethic: 'you have to work for what you want, work hard enough and you'll earn it. Only parasites get something for nothing. Unemployment is due to personal failure, not the erratic workings of the economy.'



Unemployed people tend to be despised; I'm sure I'm not the only unemployed person to be called a parasite to my face by working class people who happen to be in work. Many working class people don't get the rewards they deserve for the effort they put into their jobs. Having someone below you on the economic ladder distracts their attention from the fact that they're getting a bad deal and that people above them are gaining vastly more wealth for doing nothing at all of any value.

BRIBERY

However, there are working class people who do well - or at least as well as they want to - out of the capitalist sys-



tem. This is where bribery comes in. The people with secure employment can achieve a comfortable standard of living. The advertising industry encourages people to buy the latest and best in clothes, cars, household equipment and electrical goods. People are essentially told to believe they can buy happiness (or sex appeal, or success.) All lies, of course. But enough people are taken in. The point is, that people who have a high enough standard of living to be content will not feel inclined to jeopardise it by taking part in a revolution.

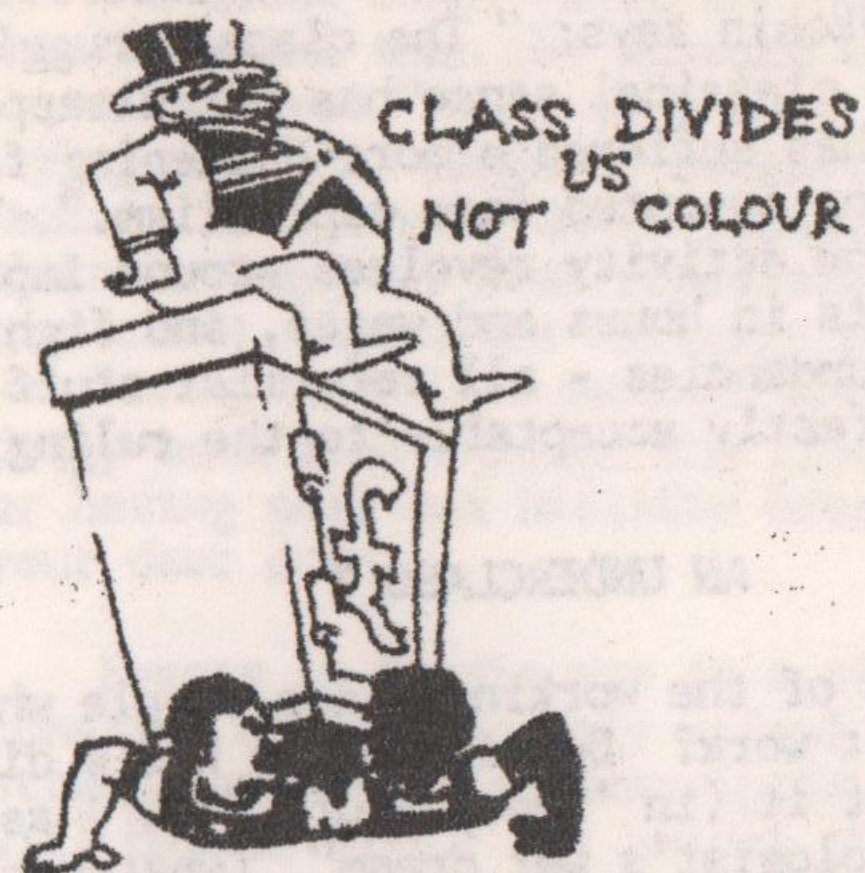
Of course, not everybody gets a good standard of living, or else they achieve it only to have it snatched away. But the promise is held out that it's possible, if you only try hard enough. The fact that some people must always pay the price for others' wealth under capitalism is carefully hidden.

There's a carefully-cultivated assumption that if you're poor it's your own fault, you're in some way personally deficient. Unemployed people and single parents in particular are subject to this kind of propaganda, are made to feel their low worth by every part of the social system, from the D.S.S., to the council, to financial institutions, to the media (which ignores their existence when it's not holding them up as objects of pity, or else relating how they've committed the appalling crime of working on the side.) to the contempt of other working class people who have swallowed the lie that poverty is due to personal failure.

A successful social revolution must mean that people can break out of the confines of their original social class - whether working or middle class. There has been little serious discussion in anarchist papers about what role the middle class might play in any social revolution, nor is it ever admitted that some middle class people do come to despise the capitalist system and wish to overthrow it; many prominent members of the anarchist movement have come from the middle class.

CULTURE

You don't need to be a sociologist to appreciate that working class and middle class people have distinctly different values and ways of relating to the world around them, as well as different lifestyles. But it must be kept in mind that much so-called working class 'culture' is a result of the system the people live under. Any-one who wants an illustration of this should read the novels by Pat Barker, which give an unsentimentalised account of modern working class life. She shows the peoples' honesty, warmth, solidarity in times of crisis - and also their bigotry, violence and appallingly narrow outlook.



The most poverty-stricken of the working class are believed by anarchists to be the most likely to see through the myths of the capitalist system and turn to revolutionary activity. But with poverty goes powerlessness. The people in general are made to feel that the organisations that rule them are remote and incomprehensible; the people at the very bottom of the pile are made to feel even more utterly incapable of changing their situation.

Bigotry, violence and narrowness are not 'natural' to anybody, except in the conditions they live under in a capitalist society. The education system, especially, operates to keep the working class in ignorance. How many working class kids are made to feel alienated by the education system or else to regard education as another kind of commodity, to be used solely to better their work prospects? It is never admitted that independent thinking and self-teaching can exist, and are the basis of real education.

The ultimate aim of any anarchist social revolution is a classless society, and for this to succeed people will have to achieve a high degree of personal liberation. This is likely to mean that much of what passes for 'typical working class culture' now will disappear.

There is nothing wrong in suggesting that the working class might not be the only revolutionary class. If anarchism is to remain relevant, our ideas need adapting, and old assumptions about the class system deserve to be re-examined and discussed in depth. replies to this article would be welcome.



ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM '91

NATIONAL DAYSCHOOL

A DAY OF WORKSHOPS & POLITICAL DISCUSSION FOR ANARCHO-SYNDICALISTS AND SUPPORTERS

NOVEMBER 2nd
YMCA, MOUNT PLEASANT
(Near Lime St. Station),
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10am-12:

GENERAL POLITICAL
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1-6PM:

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Reviews

TERRORIZING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

American Foreign Policy
in the Post-Cold War Era

Noam Chomsky

Pressure/AK Press

64 pages, £3.95

Noam Chomsky is one of the few anarchist/libertarian socialists today with an international reputation—both for his work on linguistics and for his exposing of the real policies of the US ruling class (as opposed to the propaganda dished up on the media). This pamphlet, like most of his work, is worth a read—and serves as a short introduction to Chomsky's ideas if you've never read him before.

Based on a lecture given in January 1990, shortly after the US invasion of Panama, Chomsky deals with the origins, goals, and implications of US foreign policy. He shows how, under the smokescreen of promoting "democracy, freedom and justice", the US in reality enforces cheap labour and materials for the enrichment of the US ruling class. Hence the regimes of torture and mass murder to guarantee "regional stability" (the liberal codeword for US domination). The collapse of the USSR as a threat makes direct US intervention more likely, not less...

THE BIGGER TORY VOTE

The Covert sequestration of the Bigotry Vote.

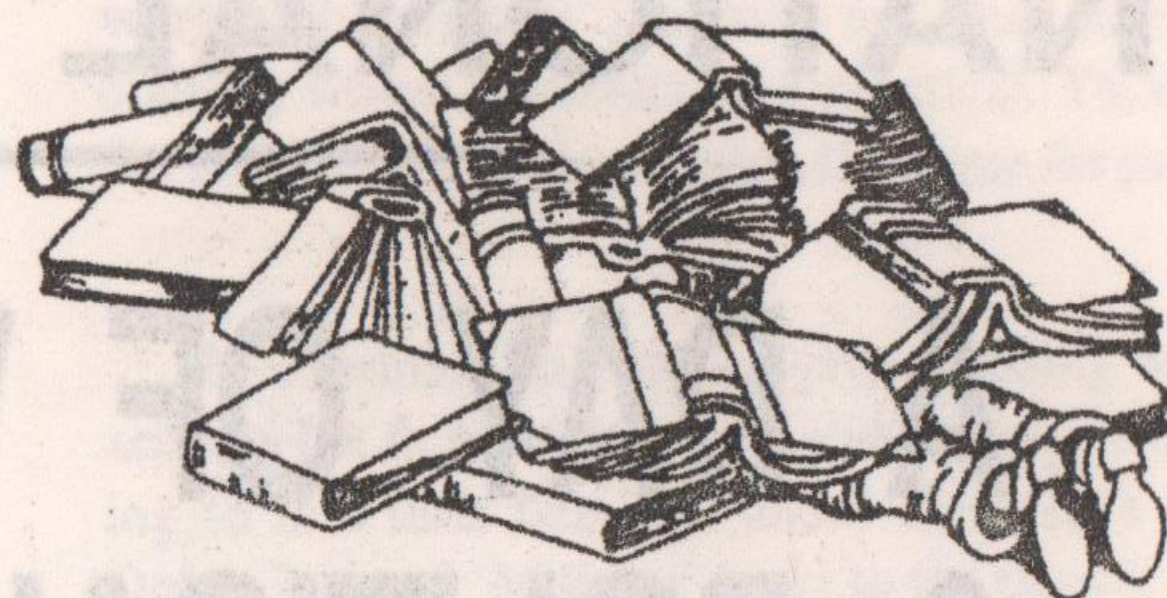
Nic Toczec

AK Press

48 pages, £2.95

This is basically a "who's who" and "who did what" on the links between the Tory right and out and out nazis. Despite needing an index and/or diagrams to make sense of all the initials (ACML to WISE) and names, it's still worth getting. Know your enemy.

You can order both the above from:
AK Press 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, Scotland, FK8 2RD



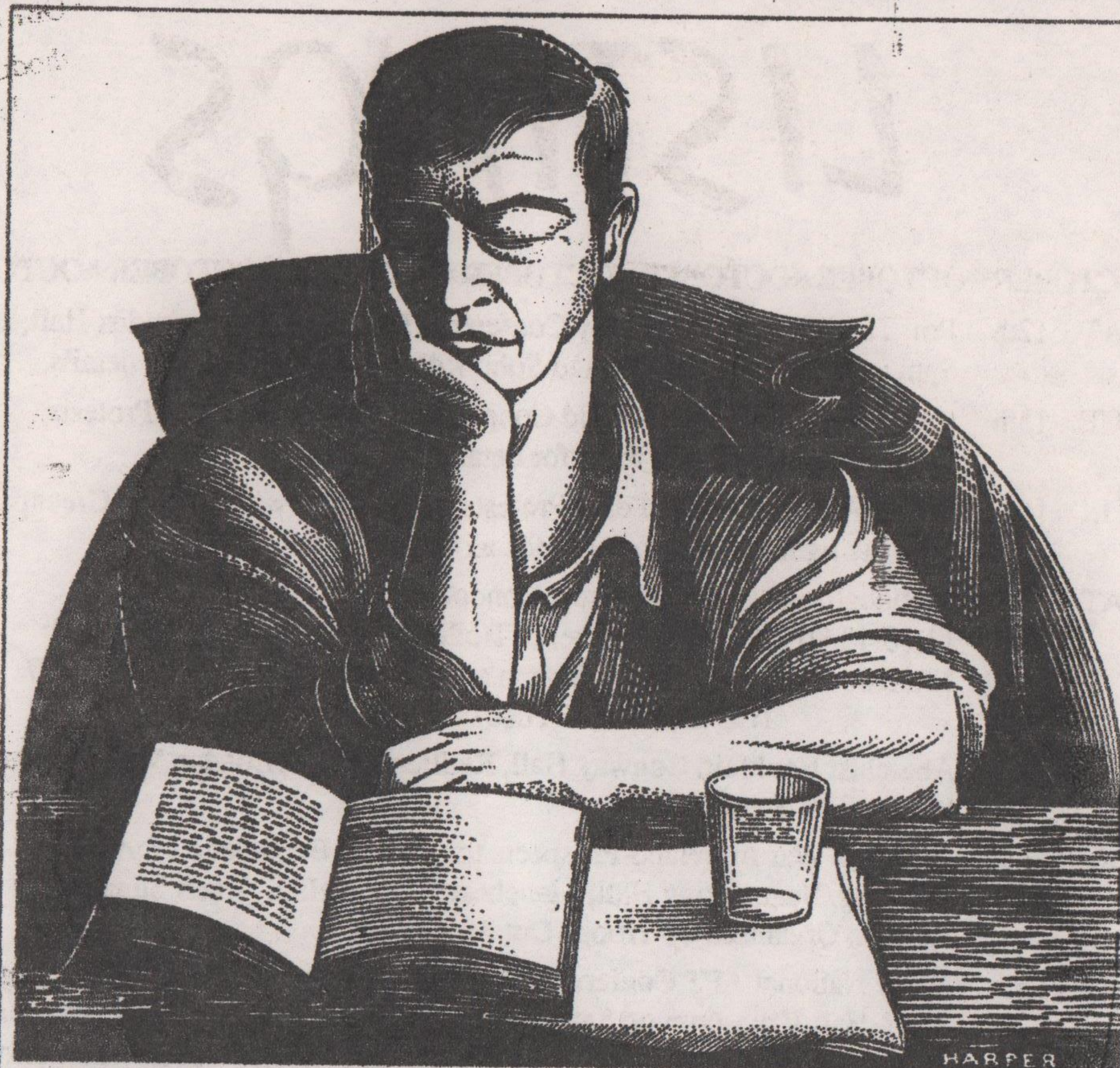
C.A.R.F., available BM box 8784,
London WC1N 3XX. 50p or £5 per year.

Campaign Against Racism And Fascism is a new quarterly magazine from London and is a good read for anti-racists and anti-fascists everywhere. Issue number 4, out now, has articles on changes in EEC immigration legislation, refugees in Britain, and the justice system.

CARF is produced by a voluntary, non-politically aligned collective. This keeps it free from the party propaganda so prevalent in rags such as 'War News', ('Living Marxism's' anti-racist mag.) CARF draws on a wide variety of sources such as council reports in Leicester and Lewisham, to the British Medical Journal. It also has a world-wide perspective with articles on North African and German Black and anti-fascist groups.

The magazine's strengths lie in exposing the BNP and NF for what they are—violent racists—having updates on various campaigns and charting the previous three months' events. Another point to recommend it, is that it clearly identifies institutionalised racism. CARF highlights the legislation, immigration policies, failure of equal opportunities and lack of police commitment. Clear examples are given of racism in housing, education, social security, and employment.

CARF is on sale at News From Nowhere bookshop in Liverpool. Look out for it at radical bookshops in your area.



ANARCHIST BOOK FAIR

SATURDAY · 19th OCTOBER 1991 · 10am-8pm

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