

# Libertarian Communist

15p

AS WE approach the end of 1977 the earnings of British workers have fallen below the average of many other major 'Western' industrial powers. Mass unemployment continues with no sign of abating. And the employers mark up profit levels which continue to increase faster than inflation.

You might expect the ruling class to be tickled pink. No doubt they do indeed feel a little glow of optimism. Not much, however, beyond that. They know that the present situation is only the beginning of a solution to the crisis favourable to themselves. The actual output of their enterprises remains stagnant and their goods uncompetitive.

In order to generate new expansion of their British-based concerns they still need to push real wages even lower, or to get us to produce very much more for the same wages on existing plant, or to invest in new high productivity machines and operational methods.

To cap it all, there is still dissension from sections of the working class. The needs of the employers are threatened by workers attempting to recoup their diminished living standards through increases in either incomes or fringe benefits. Occupying the centre of the stage is the question of the workers acquiescence. Are there grounds upon which we can accept what is happening to us?

## Fair deal?

The leaders of the Labour Party who with Liberal party support continue to occupy all the seats in the Cabinet, say that there are. They offer us a deal.

You might remember the deal we got from them before. It was called the Social Contract. In return for rising unemployment, falling living standards, hospital closures and education cuts we got: some food subsidies, some scraps of toothless 'employment protection' legislation and (god help us!) the Bullock Report!

The new Callaghan-Healey deal abandons any promise of legislation to bring about 'social justice'. It involves bringing to the fore a government strategy which first saw the light of day with the April 76 budget. A few tax 'concessions' are cast down to us as a sign of good faith in our intentions and to indicate that prosperity really is just around the corner this time. In return we are to restrict our wage claims to 10%, on the understanding that this will hold down inflation (given, it is added in a whisper, favourable world prices and exchange rates). The promise is that take-home pay will, on account of these measures, rise marginally faster than prices for the first time in years.

The first thing we notice about this package is the implication that it is our wages that cause inflation. Initially, the logic of this argument seems faultless: its seems reasonable to expect that if we get more wages the employers will have to put up

# KEEP WARM THIS WINTER: MAKE TROUBLE!



prices of their goods to compensate, taking the wage increases back from us in the form of price rises. The problem is, of course, that employers have been increasing the prices of goods by more than wages have increased. According to the retail price index (which is based on a commodity range wider than that of the average working-class shopping list, and so underestimates the effect of price rises on the workers), prices in July 1977 had risen by 17.6% on the level of a year before. Meanwhile the basic hourly rate had risen by only 4.7% and average earnings by only 8.8%. (Average earnings tend to be misleading too, as they include all those, who, like company directors, are on very high salaries. Also, they don't take into account the unemployed. As a result no less than 2/3 of all workers earn less than "average earnings".)

Evidently something other than the cost of labour to the employer has to be taken into account if we

are to know why prices rise faster than wages. Something else is the crucial factor in inflation for us. That something is the crisis of profitability upon which capitalism is based. During periods of expansion since before the First World War the employers have adopted a policy of setting prices at steadily rising levels in order to enable growing profits to be made. They have been assured the realisation of these prices by systems of credits and later by the tactic of economic intervention via government expenditure.

## Dumped

During each period of expansion wages can be allowed to keep pace with price rises. Periodically, though, the employer finds that the policy of stimulating the economy by money means breaks down. It becomes hard to sell goods profitably enough. The employers then seek to reduce the unit cost of the only commodity not marketed by capitalists themselves—

labour. They dump and refuse to buy the labour which is surplus to them. They attempt to hold down the price of labour, which they do not sell, relative to the prices of other goods, which they do sell. There is a battle for the resources with which to restructure industry: government debts are recalled and government expenditure directed more to helping industrial investment.

## Profits

The Callaghan/Healey deal is at heart merely an expression of this. It intends to secure the holding down of wages at their new low levels as a means of boosting profit margins, and switching from consumer goods consumption to capital goods consumption. The deal in no way offers back to the working class what we have already lost, not at least until the next period of expansion, should it occur. The signs are that things would have to get very much worse for us before they

could get better by these means. The point is that the reconstruction of capitalism is always built on our insecurity, on declines in our standards of living. This is the "economic reality" which Callaghan and Healey seek simultaneously to impose on us, and to disguise with their talk about the national interest and everyone tightening their belts etc, etc.

The use of tax concessions to sweeten, if ever so slightly, continued pay restraint, reveals how cunning a capitalist government can be when it is on such an offensive.

In the first place we notice how it can magnanimously announce tax cuts which in reality only partially counter the extra tax that has been levied quietly over the past few years as inflation has raised the wages of individuals over successive tax thresholds. A married man with two children under 11 would have paid one tenth of his income in tax in

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## Public Sector

# A Creeping Sickness

THE HEALTH SERVICE has become a focus of militant action by the working class in fighting social service cuts.

Massive campaigns have been waged at the EGA and Hounslow hospitals to prevent closures. Less

publicised but equally determined battles are being fought throughout the country.

This represents an important step forward for the class as it goes beyond the traditional limitations of trade unionism by raising the political question of the **SOCIALLY NECESSARY** level of

health care. This has been reflected in an important feature of many of these struggles—the support gained from local trade unions outside the health service, from womens groups and community groups.



Hospital workers from Tooting Bec take part in the week of action protest in November against health cuts. But are these token protests enough?

Photo Mark Rusher (IFL)

But at the moment these struggles are limited to a few militant sections of the working class. The class as a whole remains trapped in the illusion that health and other social services cuts are necessary today for better living standards tomorrow.

There is very little understanding about the **KIND** of health service the workers movement should agitate for.

Socialists must counter the established myths about the NHS that have tied our class to a reformist acceptance of government policies with a socialist analysis and on the basis of this draw up a strategy that can take the present campaign forward from being defensive and limited.

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST offers the following as a contribution to the discussion we need.

## History

The idea of a free and universal health service is a very old one. It was suggested in 1920 by members of the medical and state establishments in response to the chaotic way health care was organised.

Bodies allied to the labour movement, such as the Socialist Medical Association, argued for reforms to provide a national service. This was echoed by a minority within the establishment on the basis that the existing system was irrational by its own standards.

But it was not until the material conditions of the second world war DEMANDED a nationally planned

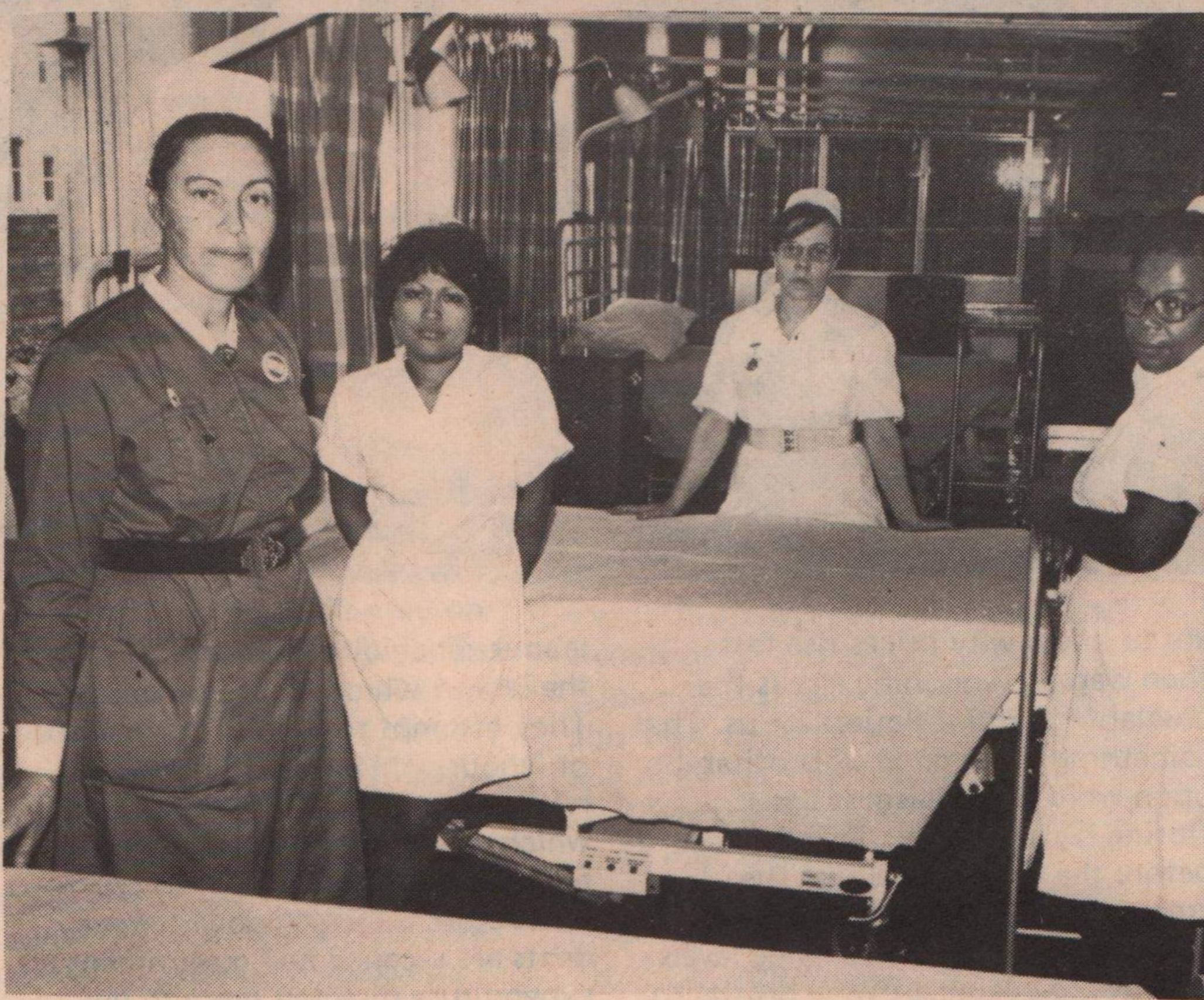
## HOUNSLOW

Hounslow Hospital was recently raided by the authorities, and patients and machinery removed. However, the occupation continues.

Most of the jobs that were at stake have been preserved, as the occupation committee has succeeded in getting staff transferred to other hospitals in the area such as the West Middlesex. The occupation committee itself is staying put in order to keep up the pressure on the bureaucrats, who have referred the 'problem' of Hounslow to a planning committee due to report back in January.

The occupiers are considering a number of possibilities for further action and people are always needed to strengthen the picket lines on the hospital gates.

For further information ring 01-570 4448.



# OCCUPIED!

## PLAISTOW MATERNITY

Plaistow Maternity Hospital has been occupied since July, when its closure was confirmed. The health workers are operating a strict security system to guard against any Hounslow style raid by the authorities.

The work-in at the small 59 bed hospital is receiving widespread local support and attracted almost 1,000 people to a recent protest march. Despite the backing of local consultants and GPs the reaction of

Ennals and his sidekick Moyle has been to prevaricate on the issue.

The workers are not going to be easily discouraged, and are encouraging local activists and trades unionists to lend their support. A meeting has been arranged for Dec 8th to formalise arrangements for picketing etc.

If you missed it or want to help or want more info etc ring 01-552 3311.

The occupations by Health Service workers at the Hounslow, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Plaistow hospitals show that the Government is not going to be able to bulldoze through all its cuts in public expenditure without a fight.

However, we should realize that our fight back needs to be fiercer still and more organised before we can hope to stem the decimation of the Health Service planned by the Labour Government.

London is due to lose 120

hospitals, 40% of the total, by 1986, according to the recent NUPE survey. 20,000 beds and 24,000 jobs are for the chop, and we are told by Ennals, the Minister involved, that this 'reallocation' is ultimately for our own good.

Labour movement militants, sick to the teeth with the broken promises and betrayals of another reformist period of Labour government, have been turning on their former leaders and in a handful of encouraging examples have taken action into

their own hands. They've seen that petitioning MPs and lobbying Parliament won't work, and have realised that direct action is the only tactic that offers any chance of success.

The point is that the Labour party opportunists can see no alternative but to cater to the needs of capitalism. Since capitalism is in crisis the burden for the failings of the private profit system is being laid on the public sector, where the working class is vulnerable and the

government has a lot of direct power.

Nationalisation is still seen by confused reactionaries as the main thrust of 'socialism'. Militants in the labour movement continue to call for more nationalisation as if by itself it really can bring about socialism.

Nowhere are the failings of this approach more easily seen than in the case of the National Health Service, the 'jewel of the Welfare State'. Its controlled by a closed network of consultants and administrators, its used as an easy touch by huge multinational chemical concerns, and

its brutally mutilated whenever the needs of capitalism dictate.

Nationalisation is obviously in most cases preferable to what went before, the danger lies in regarding it as a solution. In the long term we must put forward the idea of workers control, arguing that priorities and decisions in the public sector should be determined by those who are affected by them. In the short term we can point out that public sector workers can best fight the cuts and the government offensive if they unite and struggle together.

## Public Sector

service that it was put into practice.

The war made the British working class slaves to reformism. The military organisation of the workers into the army and the factories, a nationalist war to preserve "democracy" and a glimpse of the benefits of rationally planned services all played their part in convincing the people that radical changes could be achieved through Parliament.

The post-war Labour government swept into office on the tide of reformism. It inherited plans for the NHS from the previous TORY government. The Labour Party added nothing significant to the plans other than the nationalisation of the hospitals.

Thus from the start the NHS was a contradictory body. Although having the support of the majority of the working class and representing a real gain in extending health services, it was at the same time a response to the needs of British capitalism. The growing sophistication of medicine further highlighted the chaos of the old system; reserves of workers had been exhausted and the labour force had grown, significantly through the entry of women who have traditionally been unpaid domestic nurses; all these required a national organisation to service the workers for capitalism.

Reformists within the workers movement, like its enemies, talk only of the first aspect, the "socialist" nature of the NHS. The myth that the NHS is a socialist jewel in a capitalist setting has prevented the working class from questioning the real nature of the NHS.

## Inequality

One aim of the NHS was to get rid of the inequalities of the old system. Despite the rise in the general level of services many of those inequalities continue. For example, differences in GP, hospital and community medicine facilities and staffing between London and Sheffield are as great today as they were in 1938! And differences between different services are still enormous; those that capitalism has no use for (the mentally and physically disabled) and those who have outlived their usefulness for the bosses (the old) get far inferior services.

The NHS has failed to deal with these inequalities because of its contradictory nature. Although it provides a SOCIAL service it is based in a society with PRIVATE property relations. The NHS has from the start been a bureaucratic institution

## EGA

Perhaps the most well-known, and certainly the longest, occupation is that at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, where the workers have kept the hospital open for nearly a year, despite the opposition of the Area Health Authority.

The EGA was founded by a woman, is staffed by women, and treats only women patients. The Area Health Authority wants the hospital to close, and plans to create a womens unit at the Whittington Hospital in Islington to take its place. This will undoubtedly mean a reduction in the overall range of facilities available, and, of course, a reduction in Health Service jobs.

The workers at the EGA have until the end of December to reply to the AHA, and are at the moment considering what action to take. They are trying to build up support from among the public and also other Health Service workers.

If you can help, want more information etc phone 01-387 2501.

without any control by the people it serves. The services have been planned not according to local need, but by the power relationships in the NHS.

The medical profession has had a large influence in determining policy through its representation in the administration. More importantly, it has used its monopoly of medical knowledge and the State's guarantee of "clinical freedom" to distort the allocation of resources to suit its own interests—that is, into the prestige area of medicine.

Clinical freedom, by which only doctors are the final judge of medical practice, also puts doctors in a strong position when dealing with patients. The importance of this has been seen most clearly by the womens movement, particularly in the case of abortion.

Thus when we fight to defend the NHS we must also fight for a different kind of health service. Our ability to do so will depend on the class breaking from its present position of accepting the cuts as necessary.

## Struggles

NHS spending has grown in line with total public spending. Even straight economists (for example, Nat West Review, Feb 76) admit that this was an international trend rather than any Party doctrine.

Since the sixties the government has responded in the way that workers in other areas know so well—productivity schemes. At the same time there was a severe restriction on wages. When this in itself was not enough and the old question of inequalities arose, the government responded with more of the same medicine—rationalisation.

The reorganisation of the NHS (under that great enemy of bureaucracy, Keith Joseph) in 73 has resulted in even greater bureaucratic control of administration and over the workers—nurses, porters etc.

All these things led to a growing unionisation of health workers and a questioning of the structure and purpose of the NHS.

This was shown most forcefully in the 1974 strike over private paybeds. Workers at Charing Cross and elsewhere were not striking simply over pay and job security, but were challenging the responsibility of their management in determining the policy of their hospitals. A battle for a universal health service based on need was being waged from the bottom. At the same time this was a challenge to the power of the doctors because it was the unions that decided what could be counted as a medical emergency.

Since then the militancy of the health workers has been sapped by the force of the Social Contract and the establishment of sham consultation committees between management and unions.



# BUILD A PUBLIC SECTOR ALLIANCE

Public services in this country are under vicious attack from the employing class. Resources are being turned away from the 'Social Wage' into the paying off of government debts and the provision of grants to industry.

It is working class people who feel the effects of this process, both as users of the services and as workers employed in them.

Unfortunately, public sector workers who attempt to protect either their living standards or the level of services are often subjected to the most hypocritical abuse by the ruling class. The authorities attempt to obscure their general responsibility and their intransigence in negotiations by blaming the workers for any inconvenience or suffering associated

with the need for industrial action in the public sector. In most cases, moreover, public sector workers have difficulty in winning grievances when their action does not immediately affect the employers profits.

Only realisation of the common interests of the working class and of how the current crisis is an attack on the working class as a whole can provide a basis for the unity and solidarity necessary for successful resistance.

Such unity will not be built easily. Nor will it be the result of any single, simple process. Two elements will however, be of special importance. First, the growth of unified action amongst public sector workers themselves, and their creation of a common strategy for the public sector as a whole. Second,

the support of the wider labour movement for this process and its contribution to the achievement of a workers plan for the services involved.

Alongside the ever-present task of solidarity with workers in struggle we require understanding of the social processes at work and of the general objectives required by the workers movement—objectives for the particular services for the public sector as a whole.

In this issue our Public Sector Alliance pages concentrate on the National Health Service. In our next issue we hope to cover whats happening in education. If you have information about the struggle in this sector, or indeed about any other aspect of the public sector, please contact us so that we may consider it for inclusion in the paper.

It is clear that the NHS has led the working class to look upon the Health Service as an important part of its living-standards.

It is also clear that it has made health workers conscious of the social importance of their work.

The massive turnout for the national demo in Nov 76, in London this May and in other parts of the country shows that this consciousness is very strong.

The seeds of an offensive campaign exist; a socialist strategy is needed to unify these forces.

We begin our own approach to the building of this from the demands we would like to see associated with the development of a Public Sector Alliance. In the first place we re-affirm the necessity of building links with other sectors of the public services and with the wider Labour movement, so that sectoral struggles may be linked to the defence of the entire "social wage".

In the same way as we see a need for democratic bodies linking the workers in different sectors, we would encourage genuine rank and file movements in the separate sectors themselves. A good example is the Committee of London Area Stewards in the Health Service (CLASH). Operating in an open and democratic way, this body has drawn together many London hospitals pledged to joint action against all cuts.

We must pose not merely resolute opposition to further reduction in services, but the full restitution of cuts already made by such tricks as not replacing workers who leave—overtime bans and refusals to cover are needed.

We must pose positive discrimination in the allocation of resources to areas and services at

present underprivileged.

We must fight for increased spending to be met by cuts—in the profits of NHS suppliers. Workers must refuse to handle those expensive drugs where a cheaper, equally useful but less advertised alternative exists. Prices paid to drug companies must be unilaterally slashed. Private agencies, e.g. nursing, services to be banned.

We must fight for all accounts to be opened to the workforce. If the above aims are to be achieved, then full information is needed. Plans can only be made on a basis of knowledge about local needs, spending etc.

We should remember that cuts are also implemented by poor working conditions and low wages. We must fight for decent index-linked wages

for all health service workers.

Finally, we must remember that any struggle depends on the involvement and creativity of the entire workforce. We must fight for union meetings to be held in worktime.

We must fight for the replacement of the sham joint consultative committees by workers committees instructed to investigate and assess the work of the local services. This will include judging medical practice and must be linked with the users of the service, through other trade unions and community groups.

Let us take the struggle forward under the slogan—

**WORKERS MANAGEMENT OF A WORKERS HEALTH SERVICE SERVICE!**

## DEFENDING THE NHS

REVIEW: IN DEFENCE OF THE N.H.S.

This booklet has two aims. First, to reply to the reactionary suggestions made by the BMA, BUPA and other vested interests. These suggestions, such as hotel charges for hospitals stays and fees for services, threaten the basis of the NHS. Using evidence from other countries and evidence on British dental practice, the booklet shows that such methods of payment distort treatment away from medical need to private profit.

It goes on to investigate the advantages of such methods to the groups that make them. For example, the non-profit making insurance scheme, BUPA, is linked to several profitmaking companies, such as BUPA Nursing Services Ltd. Already, profiteering organisations have moved into the private health market.

The second aim of the booklet is to show that the real deficiencies of the NHS lie not in the way it is financed but in the way it is controlled. The power of the medical profession has meant that resources get channelled to areas where doctors can make their reputation, rather than where they are needed. Also, this power prevents an objective assessment of medical practice.

The booklet draws on evidence from many studies to back up its argument. This is its usefulness: the data can be used by healthservice militants to the struggle against reactionary proposals and the 'all-knowing' management and doctors.

Yet this is also the limitation of the booklet. It fails to see that knowledge is not a collection of facts but is built up from a class view. Libertarian Communists try to build such a working-class knowledge—in this case that means understanding the health service in relation to the society which created it. Such an analysis does not yet exist, but by ignoring these problems the booklet has no positive direction.

## Limp

Having used the facts to support their argument that "the present NHS financial structure provides a firm basis on which to build a rational organisation for the provision of health care," the booklet ends limply with a call that "those concerned that such care is provided should understand the basic issues of power, information and decision-making in the NHS and should not be side-tracked into thinking that the problems are purely financial."

Who "those concerned" should be (in my view, the entire working-class) and what they should do when they understand "the basic issues" is therefore not explained. Nevertheless, at 60p it's a booklet worth having if only for the useful information it provides. Hadji

## 50% rise - 'a bloody disgrace!'

"Simply because they've changed the name of the paper from ANARCHIST WORKER to LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST they think they can put the price up by 50%. It's a bloody disgrace!"

This was typical of the shocked reactions of hundreds of thousands of readers of the paper throughout the country to the price rise from 10p to 15p.

Of course this scandalous attempt to increase the rate of exploitation of the working-class who constitute the paper's readers doesn't mean that those who work

on the paper will be better off.

Outraged production workers have pointed out that their 10% rise is meaningless, as 10% of nothing is still nothing!

Seriously, though, we have had to put up the price because of the rapid increase in our costs. We have increased the size of the paper to 12 pages, and is 15 pence every two months really more than you can afford? Anyway, we do intend to keep the price stable at 15p for as long as possible.

## Left unity

## UNITY AT ANY PRICE?

IN THE LAST edition of Anarchist Worker we included an article on the 'unity of the Left'. The writer pointed out that disagreements concerning the understanding of history and of the role of revolutionary organisation in general terms could co-exist with relatively close agreement upon what response we should have to the immediate needs of the working-class, women and oppressed groups, and upon the general need for a 'socialist' solution.

Certain conclusions were drawn: that emphasis should be placed on supporting the campaigns which unite the voice and resources of the Left around specific issues, that debate on historical questions, while in itself essential, should not prevent the work of the movement with regards to the present needs of the class; and that the historical debate could only be given sharpness in practice via the development of the socialist movement in its entirety.

Though the above points retain their validity, the article did tend to leave out of consideration those areas of united work where quite a wide range of common objectives are covered. The most important example of this is the 'Socialist Unity' electoral bloc.

Socialist Unity has emerged out of agreement upon the necessity of a tactic, not just an isolated issue. It is, moreover, a tactic arising from the broad strategic need to combat bourgeois socialism, a tactic which of its nature involves the association with it of a wide platform.

I find the idea of standing in elections attractive because it offers a way of directly contrasting the socialist alternative with the 'choice' offered by bourgeois democracy. Some socialists and anarchists, it is true, argue that standing in bourgeois elections fosters electoral illusions. This seems a rather topsy-turvy way of looking at things. Those people who haven't broken from parliamentary illusions don't need the Left to 'legitimise' elections for them. And anyone can see the difference between a socialist campaign, aimed at proposing a solution based in struggle, and the big party puppet show.

The task of breaking the hold of bourgeois illusions entails confronting them directly.

It is true that if the Libertarian Communist Group had had much greater forces at its disposal we might have prepared for an imaginative abstentionist campaign linked to a programme of objectives.

As it is there is a certain unwillingness on the Left to consider this sort of approach, but you can see why when you realise that the abstentionist positions that have been put into practice in recent years have tended towards the vague, apolitical, confusing and elitist "Sod this, take your life into your own hands" job.

We do admit, however, certain advantages in the standing of candidates. In the first place, much as the prime way in which we judge the success of an election campaign is in the way in which it encourages struggle, the registering of a vote will give those who don't immediately move into action something to relate to. Someone who has abstained yet not become involved is that much more left in the dark as to the strength of the forces with which he has associated himself. In the second place actually winning the occasional seat would not come amiss! A successful candidate could make quite a bit of mileage out of issues such as official secrecy, accountability, the real location of power etc.

I support the idea of 'Socialist Unity' because I accept that it can pose a challenge to bourgeois democracy in the very arena of bourgeois democracy. For this challenge to be credible, however, it has to be simultaneously rooted in actual struggle and also presenting comprehensive objectives for this. The essence of a revolutionary electoral intervention is a programme of action which poses in general social terms the objectives needed to resist the capitalist offensive.

Two central problems arise in relation to the implementation of these objectives. In the first place is the problem of how we cope with conflicting views regarding the programme, its content, and the way it is put forward.

In the second place there is the problem of how the campaign presents the programme, i.e. just in elections or generally?

Both of these problems were raised at the Socialist Unity Conference in London on Nov 19th.

The conference was beset by many problems.

The basic documents had been circulated only a week before. Amendments and an important resolution appeared only on the day itself. The conference, for reasons outside the control of the organisers, was at the last moment switched to an alternative venue which turned out to be very cramped.

It was not easy to tell from the pack of sweaty and occasionally confused 'delegates' just how healthy is the future of 'Socialist Unity'.

The event was, from the point of view of the reconciliation of the various groups involved, by no means a stunning display.

The LCG proposed several amendments to the overall content of the programme. We also proposed two amendments to the programme which were intended to emphasize the fact that we rejected the 'parliamentary road' to socialism, placed our confidence in independent working-class activity and saw the fight for socialism as the only guarantee of the objectives of the programme.

One of our amendments was accepted by the proposers of the programme. It read: "We stand for a socialist alternative to capitalism, which will not be secured by any parliamentary majority but only by the organisation, unity and activity of the working class."

For the reasons outlined in the leaflet we produced, we also put forward amendments removing the demands from the programme relating to price freezes and nationalisation. Not one of the points we raised was taken up, or even referred to by the other speakers. This was not a total surprise, given that the conference was marked by set speeches and that amendments were only published on the day, but was still very frustrating.

In view of the lack of discussion, we felt forced to withdraw these two amendments. We were promised that the Steering Committee would consider them, which in the light of our later proposals on the structure of Socialist Unity, which would have made the conference the main decision-making body, was somewhat ironic.

Our final addition to the programme suffered similarly, with four fifths of the conference abstaining, and the remainder being more than enough to defeat it.

The purpose of this amendment had been to remove the section of the programme entitled "The resources are there to meet our needs". We agree wholeheartedly with pointing out injustices in the system, and how the finance capitalists and the former owners of nationalised industries rake in the lucre whilst our incomes dwindle.

However, we feel it is less confusing to put the question of resources in a more general way, as follows:

"This plan of action is an expression of our immediate needs and of our responsibilities to workers in other parts of the world. We do not make promises to be granted by any government, though the resources do exist for these things to be achieved. Our main aim is to suggest general working-class objectives, objectives which will be ultimately guaranteed only

by the concentration of all resources in the hands of the working-class, and their use by the working-class according to its own priorities."

The programme as it stands risks giving the impression that better or less greedy management of capitalism could provide a solution. It tends to look only out of the corner of its eye at the question of appropriation.

The fact that our proposals met so little response did not lead to us storming out. Socialist Unity is not crippled by its programme, but as we said in our leaflet at the conference "The platform we would like the campaign to adopt differs in content and emphasis from that so far used by Socialist Unity candidates. This represents the minimum basis which we believe is necessary for co-operation." We will have to discuss our further involvement in the campaign.

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Other weaknesses were brought up from the floor and were generally agreed to be in need of remedy. In particular, we hope that at some stage there will be opportunities to make up for the failure of the programme to deal with the question of women's liberation fully, to adopt a position on Scotland and Wales, and one on education below university level.

The question of how S.U. should use its programme was intermingled with a debate on structure. The LCG proposed an individual membership basis in order that individual militants should not be

repeatedly overwhelmed by the flow of the larger groups in and out of campaign meetings.

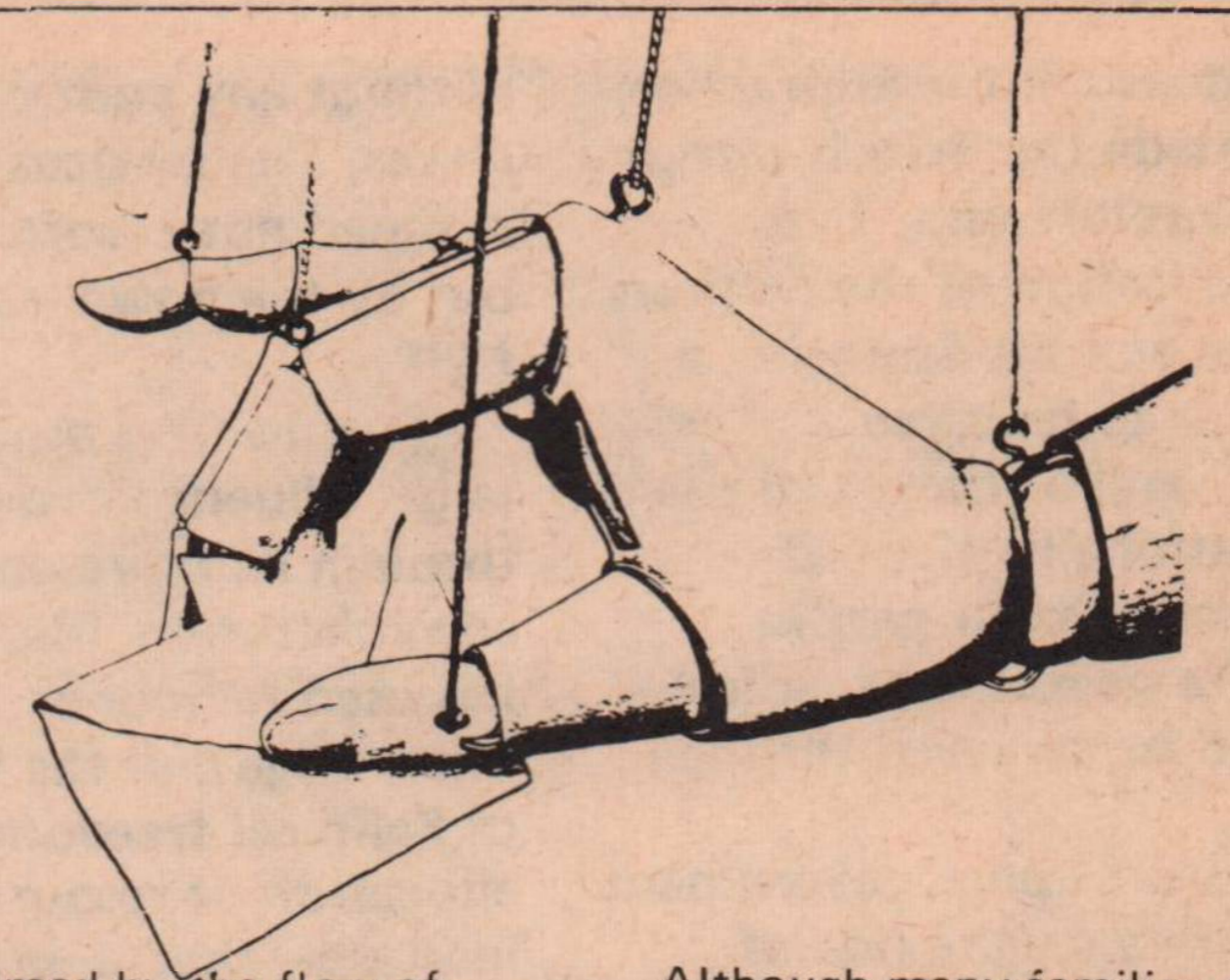
Moreover, this would have allowed the autonomous groupings, such as the women's and blacks committees to participate fully in the campaign and be involved in the discussion on the elaboration of the programme and on tactics to be used nationally.

This was generally seen, however, to be jumping the gun a bit; the majority felt that a fluid commitment was necessary until the actual function and mode of operation of the campaign was finalised.

There was also a little debate on the subject of what people saw as the future of S.U. Some comrades, particularly some in Big Flame were prepared to see S.U. as the basis for, that wonderfully vague phrase 'a new revolutionary organisation'. However, there was considerable opposition to this, particularly from some I.M.G. speakers. (I should perhaps point out that the International Marxist Group were, as

expected, in a clear majority at the conference.)

A debate between those in favour of S.U. taking the position that we should call for a vote for Labour where we were not standing, and those who saw this as something we should not commit ourselves to now, provided a good opportunity to see the differences between the approaches of the I.M.G. and Big Flame. The I.M.G. did win the final vote by virtue of their majority at the conference, and so committed S.U. to the slogan 'For a Labour government, but build the Socialist Alternative'.



Although many familiar arguments made their appearance, that Labour is the traditional party of the working-class, that it's not, that to call for a Labour vote in some areas would destroy our credibility, that to call for a Labour vote in some areas would destroy our credibility, etc. I felt that Big Flame were on the whole correct to argue that we should not make a decision on this sensitive issue at the conference, that such a decision was a tactical one, which should be made nearer the day, and which if taken now might exclude potential supporters.

On this decision, as on others, we found ourselves in a minority at the conference. However, on the whole, and despite the organisational muck-ups which made the conference even more confusing than it would otherwise have been, the conference did make considerable progress.

Socialist Unity now has a programme, and has clarified its attitude to autonomous groups. Perhaps the conference did gloss over several important points of difference between the various participating groups. Certainly it did leave quite a few gaps in terms of the issues it covered, although the involvement of so many socialist feminists should ensure that the problem of how to integrate women's liberation into the programme solved successfully.

There was also a lack of discussion of past election campaigns by S.U. but all in all the conference was not a failure.

Above all else, the conference showed that there is a current of opinion on the left which is prepared to work together to resist the attacks of capitalism on the working-class, and oppressed groups such as women, blacks and gays.

Ian Green

## Build this new paper

The appearance of our paper under the name 'Libertarian Communist' represents a new stage in the development of our organisation, which was formerly called the Anarchist Workers Association, and is now called the Libertarian Communist Group.

As a group we have just come through a violent period in our internal life. We hope we have emerged from this with a better understanding of politics and of some aspects of how our organisation should relate to the rest of the workers movement.

We have, however, been considerably weakened in terms of both human and financial resources. So, although the paper now has 12 pages, we shall, at first, be able to come out only once every two months, and at a cost of 15p.

## Traditions

We have departed fairly radically from traditional anarchism. We still make the criticisms of anarchism that we have made in the past: that because it is anti-organisational, romantic, individualistic and lacking any clear class analysis it cannot play a very real part in the struggle. We now go beyond that and say that anarchism, at least in Britain, lacks a strategy and a clear political project, and is unable to intervene actively in the struggles of the working class.

However, we are not uncritical of the more mainstream, Leninist revolutionary tradition in Britain. Most of the groups in this tradition have a rigid and elitist view of the nature and role of revolutionary

organisation. They also seem to have at best only a paper commitment to democracy in the revolutionary process and to the control of the means of production by the working class as a whole.

We seek to build a Libertarian Communist organisation. What do we mean by this?

1) We advocate the replacement of the capitalist market economy by a planned socialist economy directed by the workers according to their own needs through united and democratic organs or workers self-management.

2) We affirm that in fighting for such a solution no revolutionary organisation should seek to carry out a seizure of power independent of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

3) We affirm that we shall never as an organisation seek a mandate to form a government, but will fight for the constant involvement in the act of social self-management of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

4) We place full confidence in and encourage the development of authentic organs of workers democracy as the organisations of working-class unity and of mass self-determination of labour.

5) As part of the process, however, we believe in being consistently political and democratic. This means communicating with the workers movement in the context of first, that generalisations can be made concerning the social events involving us, and secondly, that we can do something about them. We seek to contribute to the working class's understanding of itself as a class, that is, precisely in terms of accurate generalisations and specific social objectives.

6) We seek to contribute to the development of a tradition in the working-class movement of its understanding itself and its history firmly in terms of the growth of the potential for the mass self-determination of labour.

## Paper

How does this affect the paper? Well, we intend to cover the struggles of the working class, and not to be afraid to criticise their mistakes. We want to raise for discussion what are for us key issues. These include the nature of workers democracy and its application in the revolutionary process, and the relationship of revolutionary organisations to the class. We also hope to contribute to the development of a revolutionary theory which can encompass the struggle for the liberation of women, and also blacks and gays, and which is relevant to contemporary world reality.

However, all this doesn't mean that we will stop doing some of the things that we've done over the last few years in Anarchist Worker. We intend to cover not only industrial struggles but also other areas that we think important. These include the struggles of women, of squatters, in the community, against racism and fascism etc.

We are a small organisation, and this issue of the paper reflects the areas in which we are active. We really need information, views, articles etc from you. Even very short pieces are a help, as they tend to break up the long boring articles our members write! We also badly need people to sell the paper. The next issue will be coming out at the beginning of March. Copy for that issue should reach us by the beginning of February. All copy, letters etc to

136 Kingsland High Street,  
London E8



Photo Laurence Sparham (IFL)

## CONFLICTING DESIRES

*Love of Worker Bees: Alexandra Kollantai (Virago—£2.50)*

Besides the main story, 'Love of Worker Bees' the book also contains two short stories, 'Three Generations' and 'Sisters'. Although all three deal with the idea of love, none of them are just 'love stories'. Rather they are concerned with women coming to terms with their emotions and their political beliefs, and the conflict between the two.

The first chapter of 'Love of Worker Bees' presents to us a woman Vasilisa, who is a dedicated political worker, with her roots on the factory floor, deeply involved with her comrades. She sees revolutionary ideas in practical terms and works hard to bring them into being (e.g. her work with the collective house). She is a popular speaker and valued Party member because of her affinity with her fellow-workers and their problems. When she starts living with Vladimir, a new situation arises as her personal life interferes with her political life. For me this is an important part of the book, dealing with the problems faced by women activists in a male-dominated society. Despite revolutionary ideals, women are still expected to see to the domestic tasks.

"One day on her way to a meeting, she realised thoughts about resolutions and policies were becoming jumbled up in her mind with preoccupations about millet gruel. What on earth could she give Volodya to eat?" (p.62)

The middle part of the book is less satisfactory, because Vasilisa seems to become blind Vladimir's obvious political faults and sexist behaviour. Is it possible that her love for him would really made her so unsure of herself and so ready to believe him? It is a relief to turn to the end of the book and find an ending which is satisfactory both emotionally and politically.

## Feelings

Once Vasilisa has come to terms with her feelings for Vladimir and is able to put them into their proper relationship to her deeper political beliefs there is no longer any problem and she is able to go on to express deeper feelings towards Vladimir's

mistress and to her own child.

Similarly, in 'Three Generations' the three women are all trying to work out the place of love within revolution. Maria sees as overriding everything: one should follow the dictates of the heart regardless of other people or social conventions. Olga is not so certain and has to struggle to resolve the conflicts between her emotions, her physical desires and her political views. Unlike her mother Maria, she does not think one can have only one great love to whom one should give complete loyalty. Her daughter Zhenya takes these views further—she sees nothing wrong with having brief relationships with men whilst committing her real feelings to fighting for the revolution. Politics are more important to her than love

## Problems

In 'Sisters' the woman has a similar problem to Vasilisa in that

whilst her love for her husband continues, she begins to find his lifestyle and politics too different from her views. She finally leaves him when he brings home a prostitute with whom she talks and realises how much they have in common. She is disgusted by her 'revolutionary' husband's treatment of this woman and of herself—using them for his own needs, not considering them as people.

In all three stories the women come to have strong understanding for and relationships with other women, partly through their shared oppression. This is particularly seen in the first and third stories where the wives feel sympathy for their usurpers. This portrayal of women and the deep understanding of their problems in relation to politics makes this book very relevant to women (and men) today. All the stories are simply and clearly written and can be read and appreciated by anyone whether they have a knowledge of the political background or not, as it is the conflict the women feel which is important.

M.B.

great Victorian breweries fared.

The brewing industry has now become thoroughly capitalist, divorced from its local roots. Indeed, it is alleged today that some of the quaint brewing companies, who survived Slaterisation of merger in the 1960s, are financial supporters of the lunatic Right. Historically, the capitalist brewers have always had massive political interests; not for nothing did Victorian and Edwardian socialists protest against what they bitterly referred to as the "beverage".

Against this sort of background, working-class temperance can be easily understood, and the brutal reality of alcohol is still a threat to socialism as witness the conditions of large sections of the working class in areas like Scotland today. As the 7:84 Theatre Company said in their production "Out of our Heads", 'Look at him, he drinks because he can't change things and he can't change things because he's pissed.'

Despite the 'rationalisation' of brewing by the megakeg kings, Real Ale, that is, beer cask conditioned in the container and served by traditional methods without using CO<sub>2</sub> is coming back and the Campaign for Real Ale is regarded as one of the more successful modern 'protest' movements. A more considered view of the Campaign will have to await the social historian, but libertarians should, I think, be active in CAMRA because essentially

concerned with the quality of life. It is arguable that Real Ale is, quite apart from other considerations, healthier than the products of Grotney's or Twitbread's.

Above all, CAMRA shows that Big Business can, given sound organisation, be beaten soundly by a grass roots movement, albeit in this case by a very middle class one.

The new double LP from Free Reed Records seeks to celebrate Real Ale. The 50 tracks feature well-known actors such as William Rushton and folk musicians like Robin and Barry Dransfield. The LP is far from a failure, but overall lacks life and cohesion. It might have been better if the producers had been more selective in the items and issued a single LP.

However, it vividly illustrates the love affair of the average drinker with wholesome beer. Real beer is a heritage to be defended. Defend it.

Ian S. Sutherland.

## letter

### Uncritical

I'm surprised that the last issue of Anarchist Worker had some uncritical references to the Mandel 4th International resolutions on Socialist Democracy.

C.M. says it is encouraging that the United Secretariat rejects substitutionism and bureaucracy and accepts Mandel's good faith.

The USFI's theses do not lay the basis for such work. They don't explain how democracy works, as they suggest it should, in geographical areas. Such geographical democracy is imprecise. Libertarian Communists should argue for co-ordinated democracy born in struggles in living communities, at work, in factories and in streets or small areas.

This develops a second point: the USFI Theses merely assert that Lenin's measures in "State and Revolution" are correct. They do not explain how socialist democracy was practised and what problems it faced. They therefore ignore the difficulties of co-ordinating, as opposed to bureaucratically planning and destroying workers control and management.

Underlying these criticisms one can see that the USFI's method is idealistic, they tend to argue what they want, rather than how class struggles can be advanced in historical situations. It follows that their (and our) practice will not consciously resolve these contradictions, unless their politics is criticised and re-evaluated.

T.Z. L.C.G. Yorkshire.

## BATTLING THE BEVERAGE

"The Tale of Ale" issued by Free Reed Records, Duffield, Derby. Social reformers have always had a powerful interest in booze. Either celebratory (of beer, that is) viz Orwell and Cobbett or downright teetotal, as were, significantly, the founders of the SPGB and the CPGB. Your present reviewer is a member of the Campaign for Real Ale and proud of it.

The production and distribution of beer is in many respects the story of the entire capitalist system in microcosm.

What began as a product highly localised in production in the Medieval age is today exemplified by what CAMRA calls "Euro-Fizz", tasteless gaseous chemistry, the same from Florence to Fulham, Malta to Manchester. A sterile liquid sweeping across Europe in tanker-loads.

The hey day of brewing was probably between 1800 and 1939, when most of the firms whose names today hang on as 'front names' for conglomerates, who just happen to

make beer along with car parts or airbeds, were founded and flourished. It is all too easy for radicals to go all pink and romantic over the mere mention of the past—one wonders how workers in the



WE'RE ALL MATES TOGETHER! But in the hearty world of Real Ale, class lines can get a tiny bit blurred. Photo John Sturrock (Report)

# AIMS & PRINCIPLES

- 1 Capitalism is a class society.
- 2 The basic irreconcilable contradiction within it is between the class which owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, the bourgeoisie, and the class who produce the agricultural and industrial wealth, the working class.
- 3 The social enslavement and exploitation of the working class forms the basis upon which modern capitalism stands, without which capitalism could not exist.
- 4 The state is the instrument of the ruling class. To destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, we must destroy the power of the state.
- 5 Russia and China are class societies in each of which a ruling class of administrators collectively owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and in which a working class, the sole producer of all wealth, is exploited by that class. These states we define as corporate state capitalist in that the ruling class is totally integrated with the state, as is the trade union structure.
- 6 The class nature of society is reflected in all the dominant philosophies: class, race, sexual, social and personal relationships. The class relationships are expressed through all social relationships and generate attitudes such as sexism and racism.
- 7 The conflict of interests between the two classes generates the class struggle. In the history of society, the class struggle has been the primary factor in the determination of the form and structure of society.
- 8 The day to day struggles of the working class reflect the class struggle. The position of the working class as the collective producer of society's wealth makes it the only

force capable of replacing capitalism by a classless society. The existing defensive organisations thrown up by the working class, such as trade unions, whose bureaucracy is increasingly incorporated into capitalism, are not adequate for the smashing of the capitalist system, and the building of a free, classless society. However, the working class rank and file organisations such as democratically controlled shop steward committees, factory committees, strike committees, are developing through the place of work. These organisations are the forerunners of workers councils, which are the expression of working class power. Outside of work, the working class has developed other forms of organisation that are potentially revolutionary, such as tenants action committees, rent strike committees, and tenant-worker joint action committees.
- 9 Dual power exists before the power of the bourgeoisie is smashed. If the working class are successful, then the organisation of the needs of society will be firmly based in working class hands. This is the collective working class in power, in which the working class destroys all remnants of bourgeois society, such as racial hatred, the family and hierarchies. This is the period of transition between capitalism and libertarian communism.
- 10 From our analysis we reach the inevitable conclusion that capitalism cannot be reformed in any fundamental way and that the only meaningful transformation of society is through the development of working class organisations and by means of a violent social revolution. Violence becomes inevitable for the working class to defend themselves against the onslaughts of the

dispossessed ruling class.

### The role of the AWA

- 1 The task of the AWA is to aid the preparation of the working class for their seizure of power. The establishment of an anarchist society is something that has to be consciously fought for by the working class. The AWA is a conscious organised expression of libertarian communist ideas. Through the shared experience, information and knowledge of the class struggle, AWA must be able to analyse and disseminate the nature of the problems facing the working class and apply these lessons in the class struggle.
- 2 The AWA aims to offer a lead within the working class movement; by example and explanation; and to build into the movement a high level of political consciousness so that it is capable of defeating capitalism and fighting the creation of a new ruling class. Fundamental to this is the contradiction between the organisation as a tendency within the class and its being in ideological advance of it. This contradiction can only be resolved with the establishment of a libertarian communist society. During the period of transition, the potential basis for the emergence of a new ruling class is progressively removed so that the need for a separately organised libertarianism will decrease.
- 3 The AWA seeks to develop and support working class organisations which are the forerunners of workers councils and to develop in them revolutionary consciousness. The AWA does not seek independent power for itself

but seeks to work through the working class organisations.

- 4 The AWA seeks to establish international links with libertarian revolutionary organisations and groups with an aim of establishing an international libertarian communist movement.
- 5 The AWA seeks to combat attitudes of sexism, racism and national chauvinism as attitudes that help maintain class society.

The form our organisation takes is a realisation of libertarian perspectives in the current situation. We recognise that it is not a social model of a free society and must itself develop in interaction with the developing liberation of society.

- [1] We are a membership organisation.
- [2] Membership is open to those who agree with our analysis of society and its transformation, and who work towards this end.
- [3] The main policy making body will be the National Conference. Between National Conferences there will be held bi-monthly Delegate Conferences to co-ordinate and carry out National Conference decisions, to decide interim policy and to initiate activity. Delegates are mandatable and rotated. Delegate Conference decision can be revoked by National Conference.
- [4] We seek to establish AWA groups in all areas, not only geographical but also industrial, educational, etc. Groups interpret National and Delegate Conference decisions to relate tactics to their local experience.

As agreed at the National Conference in London 31 August - 1 September 1974.

## Support needed

IF YOU AGREE WITH US, SUPPORT US!

Even if you've got criticisms, then that doesn't excuse you! Perhaps you think the paper is too analytical, doesn't have enough news in it. Well, then, give us money so that we can do away with our present bi-monthly schedule, and come out monthly again. If we could do that we could put more 'news' in, and we wouldn't have to worry about it becoming quickly out of date.

Why not send in reports about what's happening in your area, about the struggles you're involved in?

If you're critical of the changes and developments in our politics over the last year or two, why not write us a letter saying why? Come to think of it, if you want to congratulate us on something, why not write us a letter then?

If you want to sell the paper, write to us and we'll send you some. Doing that wouldn't mean that you were committed for life, you know, and would help us a great deal.

The people who write, edit and lay-up this paper are all, as they should be, active in a lot of struggles and campaigns.

So to make this paper more effective we need your help. So send us money, or views, news and reviews, or both.

All copy, donations etc to:  
136 Kingsland High St, London E8.  
Cheques should be made out to:  
LCG General Fund.

# International

## The stormy events in Italy over the last few months had their roots in developments some 20 years before. Libertarian Communist reports in depth:

The economic boom in the late 50s-early 60s was explained by the abundance of labour and the level of wages clearly lower than that of other industrial countries.

The boom led to better living standards for Italian workers but accentuated sectional and geographical inequalities.

It was not accompanied, however, by technological modernisation, nor by adequate development of housing, transport, health, schools, etc. for millions of migrant workers from the South.

At the end of the sixties the first difficulties were seen with the May revolt of students and workers in 1969, and then the first effects of the economic crisis.

The international events leading to the devaluation of the dollar, and the rise in prices of raw materials caused a state of crisis that was very serious for the fragile Italian system.

The Christian-Democrat government showed itself incapable of dealing with the crisis. Christian-Democracy was revealed as an unstable federation of many currents—some openly rightwing some prepared to make deals with the left and the socialists.

Christian-Democracy is in fact a coalition of class interests (industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie, techno-bureaucrats of the private and public sector, petty-bourgeoisie, and managerial and supervisory strata) and of centres of power of clans and individuals, frequently antagonistic. This led to the powerlessness of the party.

## Actors

Since the 2nd World War, the principal actors on the Italian political scene have been the CD and the Communist Party, the first in the government and the second as the opposition.

They run the system between them, whilst maintaining uninterruptedly the distinction between government and opposition.

For example, the "workers cooperatives" which only belong to them by name, are one of the most

developed sectors of the Italian infrastructure.

They are controlled, often jointly, by the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives and the National League of Cooperatives, closely tied to the Christian-Democrats and the Communists. These associations have developed a very solid technocratic layer.

These technocrats are also firmly implanted in the regional and local administration, and in some cases are the same people (the same men are in the local council of a town like Bologna and at the head of the regional cooperatives).

This is a result of a strategy decided 30 years ago by Togliatti (then leader of the Communist Party) as a way of getting power in a country in the American orbit.

In its historic compromise between the 'communists masses' and the 'catholic masses' the PCI has never been obstructive in its parliamentary practice.

In a study by the politician Gazzola on the role of the Communist Party in parliament, it was shown that 'nearly 3/4s of legislation passed by parliament between 1948 and 1968 have had the consent of the Communists'.

This 'reasonable opposition', this moderating role in relation to its working class electorate, has been commented on by Petrazza in the *Mondo Economico*, organ of the Lombardy Employers Association.

"One cannot define the PCI as an anti-capitalist system party—because in reality the same party is one of the pillars holding up the regime".

This long march has been rewarded with power in the municipalities.

The PCI, conscious of its role as an arbiter of 'ordered' development, of its reforming rationalisation, is putting itself forward more clearly as a controller of power.

The recent events show that in effect it is the last bastion against attacks on the system.

The boom of the late 50s-early 60s was explained by the abundance of available manual labour.

This pool of labour was concentrated in the south.

Capitalism put into motion a movement of agricultural workers to the north to work in industry.

A mass of men, women and children passed from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century, with

hunger and poverty at their back, and before their eyes a fabulous mirage of a Fiat 500 for everyone.

These workers brought with them their own characteristics, from an 'arabised' and peasant culture.

This produced a reaction on the part of Northern workers with their traditions of trade unionism and European mentality. They composed, through skills and wages, an "aristocracy of labour", the electoral base of the PCI. The new proletariat was marginalised by the parties and unions. Marginalised, super-exploited, and soon, as the crisis began to bite, thrown on the dole, there was no choice but to radicalise or starve.

The Terroni (a pejorative term referring to Southerners) have been the main protagonists in the struggles of the last few years.

## Nucleus

The young migrants have constituted the most militant nucleus of the urban working class. This irruption of young workers has been answered with a partial and momentary recuperation of organs of struggle of this period of working class autonomy.

The factory councils created by the movement have been institutionalised by the union bureaucracies, as useless instruments of consultation and manipulation of the rank and file.

However a recent meeting (Easter) of factory councils in Milan, showed that this period of recuperation is over. Delegates from 300 councils protested against the exclusion of various demands from the threshold agreement between the union bureaucrats and the bosses.

In the last few years, the Terroni movement has constituted itself outside the parties, including those of the extreme left, and the union structures, and has begun to reply to the armed wing of capitalism (200 people on the revolutionary left have been murdered since 1968).

These two phenomena (autonomy of the class and radicalisation of struggle) have provoked a crisis in the extreme left. All declared intention of constructing a "great workers party" have been resented by revolutionary workers in the factory councils and autonomous factory committees, who see this as undermining the mass movement.



Demonstration of workers from Leyland's Innocenti plant. The slogan AN ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT—mirrors the Lucas workers campaign

## ITALY: THE NEW M

The less obtuse Leninists, and the most active, are leaving their inoperative organisations (Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia, PDUP, Manifesto) and entering the autonomous movement.

These leftists have regrouped around a Milanese paper 'Rosso'. For a time there was a similar paper in Rome, but this broke up and the Leninists regrouped themselves in three local sects, parasiting on the central meetings of factory and neighbourhood committees with their quarrels, a sordid spectacle for

those present who were outside the sects.

'Rosso' acts as the paper of 'Autonomia Operaia' and praises the activity of the terrorise groups, the Red Brigades and the Armed Proletarian Nuclei.

It has often been criticised for its kamikaze tactics.

However the movement of 'Autonomia Operaia' can be seen as equally that of many neighbourhood and factory committees in Rome, Milan, Bologna, and Naples, calling themselves 'Autonomia Operaia'—or

## Khaki terror in Uruguay

SINCE THE MILITARY COUP D'ETAḤ of June 1973, there has been a "khaki" terror of unprecedented intensity in Uruguay.

The case of Gerardo Gatti and Leon Duarte are examples of this repression and of the activities of the international police.

Gatti is 46. He has three children and was a member of the Bookworkers Union. He was a member of the secretariat of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) the militant trade union organisation or Uruguay.

He published *Lucha Libertaria*, *Rojo y Negro* (anarchist papers) and the daily independent *Epoca*, and was a founder member of the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU).

He was a founder of the ROE (Worker-Student Resistance) a libertarian communist combat organisation set up in 1968.

In 1970 he was imprisoned for publishing a book attacking the military, and was tortured many times.

## Exile?

He had to flee to Argentina in 1975. On June 10 1976 he was

arrested, and has since disappeared.

In other words he is in the hands of the Uruguayan police in Buenos Aires.

One of his friends was contacted by the police, who proposed that he act as an intermediary with the unions and solidarity committees in Europe, to establish negotiations for a ransom for his life.

He is in great danger as already another member of ROE, the libertarian communist chemical worker Gilberto Coghlan, has been tortured to death in December 1973.

Leon Duarte has also disappeared under similar circumstances. He was general secretary of the militant rubber workers union, and was a founder of the CNT and the ROE. He fled to Argentina in 1975.

Please send letters of protest to General Harguindeguy, Minister of the Interior of the Argentine Republic.

## Repression

In Uruguay itself the situation is severe.

The CNT is now illegal and hundreds of trade unionists have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned.

In 4 years of dictatorship the

Generals have set about dismantling many institutions.

The number of university students has dropped steadily. Teachers have been purged in hundreds. The University Students Union has been banned. All important academic posts are held by direct appointees of the dictatorship.

The El Galpon theatre, to take one example, has been forced to close. 38 opposition newspapers and periodicals have been shut down, and the same goes for the film studios.

The majority of the country's most famous artists, writers, and journalists are in exile.

## Torture

There are over 6,000 political prisoners in Uruguay, meaning that one in every 500 of the population is in jail, the highest proportion in the world.

One in every 70 people has been in jail at one time or the other, or is likely to have been mistreated under the regime. 300,000 have fled into exile.

Despite the incredible repression, and the hideous tortures that militants have to suffer (like the Sawhorse—where the victim is forced



Committee for Human Rights in Argentina picket of Greenwood Conference Theatre film showing of potential investment in Argentina. Photo Derek Spiers (IFL)

to straddle an iron bar that cuts into the groin) resistance continues.

The CNT still organises underground, bringing out clandestine publications.

## Help

It is essential that the campaign of international solidarity is strengthened.

Please help out by getting

resolutions passed in your union branch or organisation, condemning the violation of civil rights in Uruguay. Send a copy to Sr. Presidente de la Republica del Uruguay Dr Aparicio Mendez, Casa de Gobierno, Pza Independencia, Montivideo, Uruguay, and a copy to the Committee for Human Rights in Uruguay, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 4JL who also welcome contributions.



on the banner—it reads "AGAINST REDUNDANCIES—FOR in this country. Photo Chris Davies (Report)

## MASS MOVEMENT

of many multiple ideology groups with the same name, or to individuals who have refused all ideological name (ex-anarchists as well as ex-Leninists) 'Autonomia Operaia' and working class autonomy are thus seen in a very complex and sometimes contradictory manner, with 'Rosso' and others seeing the new movement as a base for a new party.

Other groups involved in the events of the summer were 1. 'Metropolitan Indians' ideological heirs of the Dutch Provos and the

American Yippies, who dress up in Red Indian and clown costumes and use ironic and derisive slogans against the Communist Party and the bosses 'More work, less pay' 'long live sacrifice' etc.

2. The revolutionary groups of feminists and gay liberationists. 3. The 'criminal' elements who have become revolutionary, lower middle class clerks and shop workers who have lost their job security, unemployed and never-employed sons and daughters of Southern immigrants.

4. The 'autoriduttori' who mobilised around taking goods out of supermarkets en masse and distributing them in the streets, and in printing their own bus, tube, film and theatre tickets, and electricity bills, and reducing prices through working class action.

The reforms that had opened the universities after 68 to working class and peasant youth were seen as a way of hiding unemployment.

When some of these reforms were attacked in late 1976 by the education authorities, this opened up a new wave of protest.

'Block' systems of degree programmes would shorten the time at university to 2 years and throw many out into unemployment (there is no dole in Italy) or the lowest paid jobs.

When fascists attacked students at Rome University in answer to the protests, 3000 retaliated by besieging the fascist h.q.

Two days later, the students occupied Rome University. The police surrounded the campus for 2 weeks, but failed to stop the occupation.

On February 17, 2,000 Communists and union bureaucrats led by youth leader Luciano Lama demonstrated on campus against the student 'provocateurs'.

They were driven out by 2,000 autonomia armed with iron bars and molotov cocktails.

This set off a movement throughout the country. All the groups of revolutionaries united against cutbacks in housing, transport, in industry and in education.

100,000 demonstrated in the rain on March 12 in Bologna against the killing of a Lotta Continua militant by the police.

100,000 militants were involved in Bologna, Rome, Turin and the south in street battles against the police and army. Barricades went up everywhere.

## Subversive

The Communist Party replied to this with an article in Unita on Sunday March 20th:

'The recent battles were proof of a 'new strategy of tension' directed against the country's democratic institutions. To combat these subversive manoeuvres, adequate

political conditions are necessary—the constitution of a government of democratic unity is becoming urgent'.

Earlier the Party had said 'When armed bands having nothing to do with the student movement devastate, sack and murder, the duty of the democratic forces of order is to protect and to repress'.

The revolutionary left itself suffered severe convulsions.

'Lotta Continua arrived at Piazza Esedra in disarray, without an organised plan. The dissolution of the movement took place Monday during a meeting at a student assembly hall, where critiques and autocritiques were presented in an atmosphere of mounting confusion, without their arriving at any clear polarisation of positions, without their being able to clearly decide who were the good students and who were the bad' (L'Europeo, 3/25/77)

While the left wing of Lotta Continua (who stand with one foot in traditional Leninism and one in self-managed socialism) were faced with a movement that had refused the organisational leadership of the revolutionary left, the right wing denounced the autonomists as provocateurs.

What about the libertarian communists?

In Milan, they are active in factory councils and autonomous factory committees. As the factory councils have been re-radicalised, it is possible to find the same individuals in the 2 structures at the same time. There appears to be a total absence in the new student movement, as in the womens groups, ecological groups etc.

In Bologna, the Federazione Comunista Anarchici (FCA) acts as an internal vanguard of the mass movement, as much theoretical as practical.

Comrades have 'liberated' a hall in the centre of town, which serves as a meeting place for many autonomous committees of town and university.

This position of 'specific' organisation in the depth of a very radicalised movement will definitely have its problems.

The manner in which these multiple contradictions are (or are not) overcome will have extraordinary lessons for the international libertarian communist movement.

The practice of the FCA (Bologna and the region of Modena, manufacturing centre of Fiat tractors) builds around the paper 'Comunismo Libertario' based on many active militants in autonomous committees of university and workplace (Fiat, foundries). The FCA militants often play a role of vanguard, in practice, and not in a Leninist manner, and will be a rallying point for the creation of a national libertarian communist organisation, which is one of their expressed intentions.

In Rome, the situation is different. The contradictions between the base organisation and the 'specific' political organisation led to the self-dissolution of the Federazione Comunista Libertario (FCL) in 1973, into the autonomous committees.

Declaring that all political ideologies led to more divisions in a class already divided, the militants of the ex-FCL refused all labels, no longer calling themselves libertarian communists or anarchists.

However they are still regarded as such by Leninists in the committees, and by those militants in the committees who have left the rotting traditional anarchist movement and who work closely with them.

## Intensity

The struggle in Italy is continuing with greater and greater intensity.

However in order to increase its effectiveness and chance of success, the struggle must be widened.

Large sections of employed workers have remained outside the struggle, and these need to be brought into the revolutionary movement to broaden its mass base.

Although the struggle has affected the south to a greater extent than before, much work needs to be done among the poor peasants, agricultural workers and the poor of the towns.

The mass movement has to reach maturity. This means greater unity and organisation at a regional and national level. It means an end to the 'anti-politics' of some of its components, and the drawing up of a political programme that can be effectively used to combat capitalism. A programme decided democratically through the mass organs of struggle.

## Blacks denied union rights

Denial of basic civil liberties and repression of black self-organisation are well-known features of life under the apartheid regime of South Africa.

Recently we have seen the death in detention of leading militant Steve Biko, the banning of the black newspaper *The World* and the suppression of numerous black organisations including the South African Students Organisation, the Black Peoples Convention and the Black Womens Convention.

Such brutal tyranny is part and parcel of a society which ranks as one of the most thorough systems of capitalist exploitation in the world today.

In metropolitan countries, such as our own, the working class, though alienated from control over production and so over all the decisions which affect its future, has nevertheless on the one hand a tradition of independent organisation and on the other a history of having been partially won to acceptance of capitalism by a combination of ideological, institutional and material bonds. Under apartheid there is no such pretence at incorporation, at least as far as the African workers are concerned

## Wages

Social organisation is everywhere geared to the most extreme exploitation of the African workers. African workers are excluded from the machinery of the 'Industrial Conciliation Act', which governs

industrial action. They are not counted as employees and are not allowed to join a registered trade union. They are supposedly 'represented' by the white trades union officials who sit on negotiating bodies. Their wages are set almost inevitably at subsistence level.

Black workers are housed away from the white settlements in townships which amount to little more than poorly equipped labour camps. Should they become unemployed they risk transportation to the 'Bantustans', barren reserves where they are expected to scratch out a subsistence living from the infertile and overcrowded land, costing the government as little as possible in terms of aid. Africans are not trained to occupy jobs superior to those of whites. They are subject not only to segregation, but also to constant and humiliating surveillance.

The bannings, imprisonments, murder and the rest are the inevitable political superstructure of this system.

Africans who engage despite all this in political and industrial struggle face daunting consequences. In the factories the police openly collude with the employers to break strikes. They have set dogs on crowds of workers, black union organisers and have been continually harassed and meetings and demonstrations have been violently dispersed. Strikers have often been summarily dismissed and blacklisted by other employers. This happened in last year's strike by workers at Britain's Pilkington Glass group. This strike also produced the curious scene in which two union men who had been standing outside a factory gate were charged with 'riotous assembly'.

British companies like Pilkingtons are substantially involved in South Africa.

They do not merely trade with apartheid. They do not merely invest in its mines and manufactures. In many cases they are the direct exploiters of African labour. They are apartheid!

## Veto

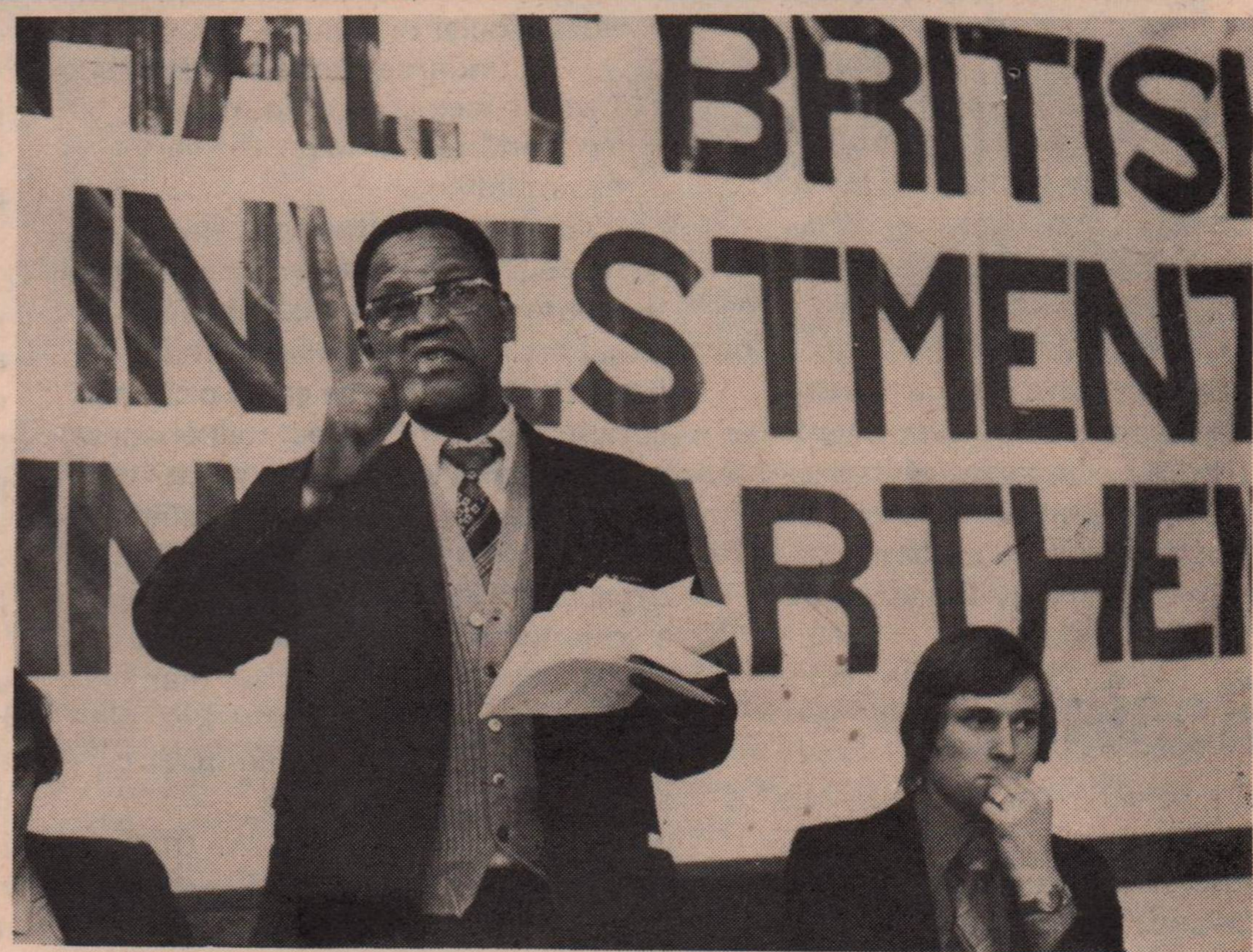
No wonder then that the resolutions to the UN Security Council, which proposed a total arms embargo on South Africa, an end to atomic cooperation and action to restrict trade and investment, were vetoed by the British representatives.

Workers in Britain have a clear choice in relation to apartheid. On the one hand we can support our employers in their shameful exploitation and oppression of the African working class. On the other hand we can oppose them, even though successful opposition might entail them trying to recoup their losses through increased exploitation of ourselves.

Libertarian Communists have no hesitation in choosing the latter course. We should refuse to benefit from apartheid. Our allegiance and our future lie not with the capitalist class but with the solidarity of workers throughout the world.

## Action

Opposition to apartheid in the British labour movement has for too long remained on the level of polite lobbying of politicians and passing of pious condemnations. As with any other issue affecting its pocket, the employing class will have to be hurt before it will budge. There is no way forward in waiting till we have persuaded them they ought not to profit from pillage and murder. To the



John Gaetsowe speaks at the conference on British Trades Unions and the Fight against Apartheid. Photo Derek Spiers (IFL)

extent that the everyday life of industry is bound up with apartheid we can break that connection now through industrial action.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement is organising a campaign leading to a week of action in March 1978

The week of action is intended to be a week of blacking of all trade and materials associated with South Africa.

By supporting the campaign we can make a beginning in the development of active solidarity with the African struggle. Our ultimate objective must be the permanent national blacking of all trade with South Africa until the African people

have won the right to self-determination. I.G.

Please take up the issue of the Anti-Apartheid Campaign in your union branch. Further information about it should be available from: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2DQ.

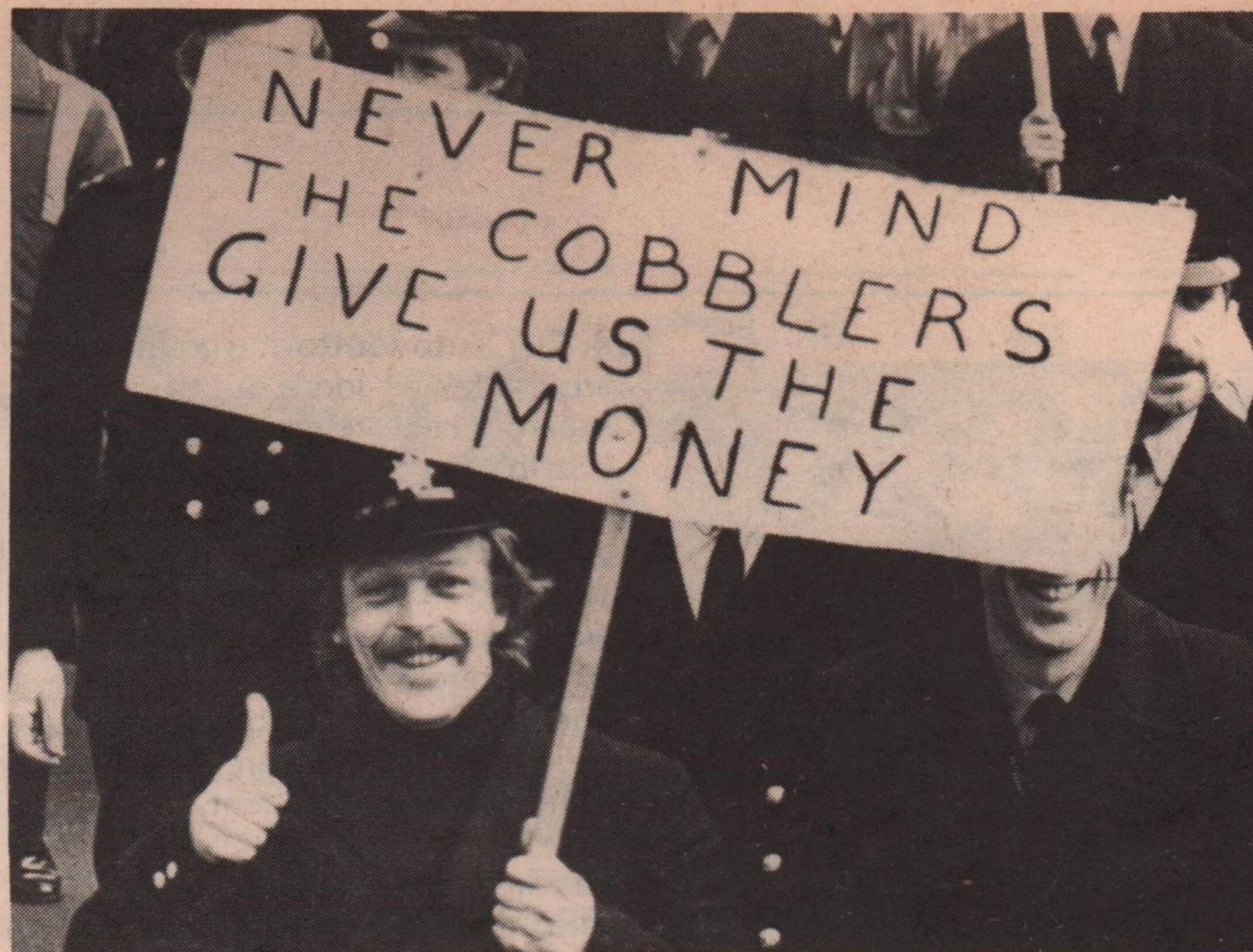
In the next issue of *Libertarian Communist* we hope to provide a longer contribution on apartheid, to serve as an aid to militants in the weeks leading up to the week of action and in our efforts beyond that.

# Libertarian Communist

By the time you read these words the firemen's strike may very well be over. Even with the outcome still in doubt in the bleak days before Christmas valuable lessons can yet be learnt by militants from the way the action has so far gone.

An unemployed correspondent for LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST spent some time wandering around the fire-stations of the capital talking with the men on the picket-lines. These are some of the important issues that he felt had been raised.

By far the most important and most widespread reaction amongst the strikers in London was the total loss of faith in their traditional leaders. From the labour government and the TUC hierarchy, down to the local fire officers and union officials, all had become the enemy to the men around the braziers. Each striker knew that Callaghan and Rees were out to smash them so that other workers' claims could be held down more easily, that the TUC considered it more important to maintain their



A warm smile from a fireman on the FBU demonstration. Photo Andrew Ward (Report)

## FIREMEN IN BLAZING ROW OVER PAY!

government friends in power than lift a finger to safeguard the interests of their members.

Most fire officers were clearly out and out scabs, whose action in crossing the picket lines and aiding the military strike breakers had turned what could have been a swift victory into a drawn out war of attrition. Many of their own union officials had to be carefully watched too. Only by keeping up the pressure on their representatives could the men feel at all safe with the negotiations that from time to time were opened up with the government.

### Solidarity

From the start of the strike amongst the full time firemen was solid. The men expressed in action a common identity built up through years of hard and dangerous work. The skill and determination of each fireman were vital before the strike in saving the lives of fire victims and of fellow fire fighters alike. With the strike, the same determination was turned against Merlyn and the slippery men at the top of the greasy pole. Marches and pickets, the production of leaflets and broadsheets and physical assistance to other fire stations—all such actions

strengthened the firemen's resolve. When, or even if, they went back, they would only work alongside FBU members.

The positive response from the 'public' passing the picket lines, the support from other workers, especially from those with whom the firemen worked—the ambulance driver hospital worker and policeman, all helped extend the implications of the strike outside the immediate confines of the dispute. These other workers were suffering from the same onslaught of wage 'restraint' as they were.

The way the TV, press and radio presented the strike, although not as slanderously as they have dealt with other sections of the working class in conflict, certainly helped break any trust the firemen might have had left in the institutions of authority. Facts about the vastly increased devastation caused by fire since the beginning of the strike seemed to be absent from the media presentation. Reports of incidents were clearly distorted.

### Cynicism

Who could believe that Basnett, president of the TUC and leader of the GMWU, was sincerely considering

the interests of the firemen with his proposal for a public sector commission on wages when he'd just blocked TUC financial aid to the strikers? A natural cynicism thus became general amongst firemen. This could take some along a 'go it alone' path, distrusting offers of help from Ray Buckton of ASLEF as self interested, and regarding the 'interference' of left militants as cock-and-bull twaddle. Some, perhaps too enthusiastic, revolutionaries helped spark feelings of not inconsiderable hostility at certain fire stations by blustering in with too much advice.

Quite often, however, where the intervention of the left was less abrasive or where local circumstances had produced a more politically conscious militancy, striking firemen came, quite naturally, to see an alliance with other workers in the public sector—whose common enemy was the government—as being the most obvious way forward. Some sort of joint action, especially with health workers, but also with workers in NUPE and NALGO whose claims were outstanding, even with postmen with whom firemen had not much contact, seemed to many strikers a sensible move to make.

The experience of many striking firemen has taught them to distrust the men at the top of the labour movement. For some this could mean the growth of a hardened antipolitical cynicism—a distrust of all solutions put to them by aspiring leaders. For others, the strength of their stand against the government and the support given to them by other workers has stimulated a faith in their own self-activity.

At the moment it is up to revolutionaries to stress this positive aspect of the strike, whatever its eventual outcome, as not only the most effective way of safeguarding working class living standards, but also the kernel of an organisational way forward breaking the shackles imposed by an archaic trade union structure, and providing a real alternative to a corrupt and dying Labour Party.

We must not set ourselves up as the new leadership, merely a more militant reflection of tired out figureheads, but provide encouragement, and where possible advice, to fellow workers engaged in, or on the brink of, militant self-determination in the face of a capitalist attack mounted by their labour leaders.

M.L.

1964/5, assuming he was on average earnings. Today he would lose nearly a quarter. Millions have entered higher tax brackets without achieving any advance in relative prosperity. In fact real take home pay has been sinking faster than real earnings!

In the second place, we see how taxation policies relate to the governments wider economic strategy. Alongside increases in taxation in real terms, income tax has come to constitute a proportionately greater part of government income. Yet at the same time the services we get in return for this taxation have been violently cut! No wonder the government has flexibility in terms of its revenue, especially when the concessions it has given will probably be compensated for by the effects of further inflation.

### Resist

The tactic of tax "concessions" is dedicated on by the government because of the particular features of the balance of class forces. The working class is putting up a very uneven resistance to the consequences of capitalist restructuring. Its not just that some workers are fighting and others aren't. Our organisation and combativity has in general shown itself to be stronger on the wages front than with regard to either cuts or unemployment. The ruling class has much better co-ordination. It is able to transfer gains made in the

arena of taxation and government expenditure right into the thick of the battle on the wages front.

We are in a position where the employers refurbish the profitability of industry by means which affect our welfare, our security, our living standards and our work-loads. It is a process which reinforces rather than removes social inequality.

In the underdeveloped countries the workers exist in even more abject conditions, under the very same employers.

**The government is the capitalists agent in all this work, and never gives us a complete picture of what is going on. Can our species gain for itself the fruits of the earth only on conditions of this abject helplessness of the people who do the work?**

Libertarian Communists believe that it is possible for us to develop a capacity to run ourselves according to a common and agreed assessment of needs and objectives, rather than via the jungle morals of the market. We advocate a unified and democratic planning of work and the distribution of resources. We think that the way for workers to enter upon such a project is by laying down, right now, objectives for the whole of the working class, and by fighting for these objectives through think and thin.

### Programme

Amongst such objectives would be the following:-

1) Fighting reductions in real income: fighting for immediate increases to compensate for previous

cuts in wages; fighting for inflation proof clauses in wage agreements, so that incomes rise automatically with the cost of living; fighting for a national minimum wage of £50, to cover all adults, in or out of work, male or female.

2) Fighting redundancies and unemployment: fighting for a policy of work-sharing with no loss of income; for control of operative levels, production speeds, hours worked and work conditions by the shop floor; for all information to be available to the workers.

3) Fighting the cuts in the social wage: fighting for the refurbishing of all services, a guaranteed level of expenditure to beat inflation, and extension of services by means of public works; especially facilities for abortion, child care, care of the aged and handicapped, education facilities for minority racial groups.

4) Fighting divisions of the working class according to sex and race: equal pay and job opportunities for all; an end to educational discrimination; an end to the immigration laws; 24 hour nurseries; guaranteed job security for 18 weeks leave during pregnancy; equal and autonomous rights for women with regard to state benefits.

These could prove some of the immediate tasks of a socialist society. They also provide a basis for supporting and understanding the many which emerge under capitalism which have local demands but are in fact expressions of the general conditions of class conflict.

We don't claim that all the objectives mentioned can be secured

for everyone while capitalism lasts. Neither do we say that the removal of capitalism hinges on the emergence of a mass movement around these positions.

However, some time or other the working class in its fight for social emancipation will have to come to terms with the adoption and implementation of some such general social priorities, and the sooner we start the better.

EDITORIAL BOARD



The first arrest under the Criminal Law Act, some two weeks after it became law. Alan Beddoe was arrested in the course of evictions in Abercrombie St, Battersea and charged under Section 10 of the Criminal Trespass part for obstructing a bailiff.

## Left-overs

ALL THE NEWS THAT DIDN'T FIT!

### SHORTSIGHTED LIBEL CASE

In June 1975 Longsight News, a community paper in the Manchester area, published an article drawing attention to the case of a 14 year old boy who had been mistreated and illegally questioned by a P.C. Kelly of Longsight Police Station.

It now looks as if the person who wrote the article will be on trial for libel sometime next year. Significantly the costs of the Police case will be born by the Greater Manchester Police Federation.

The case is important for a number of reasons. It raises the whole issue of the arrest and questioning procedures used on minors. As they said in their original article. "This was only one of many incidents concerning young people and children who are picked up by the police on suspicion of some minor offence, or sometimes its more like a pretence of suspicion, like the boy who lit a fire and was taken away 'on suspicion of stealing firefighters' which in fact his mother had given him, or the kids who climbed a roof to recover a lost ball and were taken away on suspicion of attempting to break in."

The legal position is this: POLICE DO NOT HAVE A RIGHT TO TAKE ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 17 AWAY FOR QUESTIONING. THE PARENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO BE PRESENT AT THE QUESTIONING.

Also, though its true that community papers dont have much which can be lost if they're done for libel, it is the case that libel laws, indeed the whole legal system, operates against the working class in struggle. For instance, Socialist Worker has had to cope with a succession of libel cases, the latest of which is being brought by George Ward. They do have assets to lose, and its a sure bet that George has more money than they do! Also many people who have, for instance, been acquitted of minor offences like obstruction, find themselves paying substantial sums towards their costs.

Longsight News want ideas and practical help. They can be contacted at:

Longsight News Defence Group  
c/o 109 Oxford Rd  
Manchester M1  
Phone (061) 236 3112 or after  
6pm (061) 224 6387.

L.C.

### WHITE SUPREMACY ON THE RUN

200 Swiss citizens living in Rhodesia replied recently to a letter from the Swiss consulate in South Africa asking if they wanted emergency airlift evacuation if the situation worsens.

This represents a third of the Swiss population in the rapidly crumbling regime of the white supremacists, who are desperately trying to avert the victory of the black nationalist forces and the end of 5 years of guerilla warfare.

A Swiss consulate spokesman in Johannesburg said "It's just a routine survey."

**NAC BENEFIT: Sunday 15th January 5.30pm at the Roundhouse. X-RAY SPEX + THE SADISTA SISTERS + DEAD FINGERS TALK. Tickets £1.50.**

**LEFT WITHOUT MARX. Libertarian theory group studying Marx. Contact 15 Matcham Rd, London E11. Tel.: 01-555 5248.**



known example of how even after all the trials of the Civil War a section of the Russian fleet and proletariat could not only foresee for themselves some of the harmful aspects of the New Economic Policy but also raise some of their central demand the political one of free elections to the Soviets. For this they were miserably slandered and crushed by force of arms!

The experience of the Makhnovites in the Ukraine is a well known example of how the organisation of anti-capitalist regional autonomy was treated by a government pledged to minority rights of national self-determination. It was miserably slandered, double-crossed and crushed by force of arms!

Another interesting, but less well known area to investigate would be what happened to the soldiers' Soviets. It is a common apology of latter-day Leninists that the war disrupted Soviet democracy, yet this war also saw the development of a coherent army. What happened to Soviet democracy in that? Did it go out the door when Trotsky re-introduced many traditional features of military discipline?

## Analysis

I should end with some indication of what the consequences of the above analysis are for revolutionaries. Revolutionaries in a revolutionary situation have a crucial responsibility to raise the question of power—the organisation of the masses for their own ends. We should seek, however, the construction of a united and democratic organisation of this power, and see this as



THE BUREACRACY: Stalin in 1929. By this time any idea about socialism had long been forgotten.

the active force, rather than acting "on its behalf". We should not take a mandate from such an organisation to form a government, but rather fight for its own involvement in decision making.

We should be prepared for workers in struggle to throw up a plurality of organisations, and seek to develop these into a common unity, rather than stifle their development.

We must above all beware of these who may seek to develop these into a common

unity, rather than stifle their development.

We must above all beware of those who may seek to refer uncritically to the Bolsheviks' record as a source of prescriptions in crisis.

At all times, whether in revolutionary struggle or in the political tasks we undertake in the present day, the beacon towards which we steer is the mass self-determination of labour.

**FOR WORKERS SELF-MANAGEMENT IN STRUGGLE AND OF SOCIETY!!!!**

# Libertarian Communist

Special Supplement

10p



The revolution and civil war in Spain in 1936-1939 contained some of the greatest moments in the history of the European working-class.

It is important for libertarians to remember that the largest single organisation of the working-class in Spain was the CNT, the anarco-syndicalist trade union.

Today, 40 years on, does the libertarian tradition have any importance in Spain?

The answer to that question must undoubtedly be yes. Despite being ignored by most of the revolutionary Left in Britain, the Libertarian movement has grown rapidly since the death of Franco. The CNT is growing rapidly, and now has perhaps as many as 30,000 members. As important, it seems to have learnt from the mistakes it made in the Civil War.

The Libertarian Spain Committee believes that solidarity work with Spanish libertarians is vital for us in Britain, and sees Spain as "the weak link in European capitalism."

Libertarian Spain, bulletin of the LSC, is available for 20p inc. postage, bundles of 5 for £1 cash with order, from LSC, 136 Burley Rd, Leeds 4. No 1, still available, covers the rebirth of the CNT, the June elections, economic and political background. No 2, available from January, covers recent developments, the counter-culture etc etc.

## Libertarian Spain



# RUSSIA 1917



13000 fully armed soldiers from Kronstadt arrived at Petrograd to fight the White general Kornilov. Lenin called them the 'flower of the revolution'.

The revolutionary process in Russia was associated with widespread discontent. Russia's participation in the imperialist First World War had placed tremendous strain on all aspects of society.

Although the war initially supplied some industrialists with considerable gains, it rapidly rendered the Russian economy derelict. For example, by the end of 1916 iron and steel production had fallen to 1/6 of its 1914 level, and coal production to 1/10 of its 1914 level. The rail transport system had come completely unstuck, with 1/3 of its locomotives out of commission waiting for repairs. The Russian general staff had mobilised some 15 million men, an estimated 1/3 of the male agricultural and industrial workforce, draining the land of manpower in order to form an army which they were increasingly unable to supply with munitions and basic necessities.

In the countryside the area of cultivated land was contracting and yield had declined by as much as 1/3. Starvation haunted the factories and the front; yet inflation made the richer peasants increasingly reluctant to part with their surplus produce above what they needed to sell to pay taxes.

What is known as the February Revolution was essentially the beginning of two simultaneous tendencies. On the one hand, all sections of the masses began to take actions and to raise demands directed towards the alleviation of those grievances which the war had either created or worsened. The soldiers wanted food and an end to the war; the factory workers, food and an end to the miserable conditions of their employment; the peasants, land enough to give them security from the vagaries of the market and freedoms from the landowners, merchants and tax collectors who were their scourge. On the other hand, there was a succession of provisional governments which failed either to crush these protests or to end them by finding solutions to the underlying problems.

Why did these governments fail? Partly because the disaffection of the soldiers limited their capacity for repressive action, but also partly because they were governments of the bourgeoisie which felt itself threatened by every aspiration of the masses.

## Capital

The sort of social development associated with the bourgeoisie in America and

# RUSSIA 1917

The last months of 1977 have seen the socialist press publish many celebrations of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The interpretation of this major episode in working-class history is one of the areas in which Libertarian Communists take a rather different attitude from that of those revolutionaries anxious to be of a 'Leninist' or 'Trotskyist' tradition.

The Libertarian Communist Group admits, however, that a comprehensive and agreed libertarian alternative has yet to be produced. What we present here, therefore, is by no means a group position. It is rather an individual viewpoint, which we hope exhibits the spirit of criticism we feel on this subject as a group, whilst contributing to the ongoing process of resolving this problem by new analyses.

Western Europe had not taken place in Russia. The political ambitions and competence of the Russian bourgeoisie were determined by their particular history. Their main characteristics were that they were dominated by foreign capital, their resources were often concentrated in large and modern plants, and they tended to be subservient to a state apparatus which could claim substantial responsibility for their existence. The Russian bourgeoisie did not sociologically or economically merge with the proletariat through intermediate layers of urban petty bourgeoisie. They were, on the contrary, acutely aware of the gulf between themselves and the large concentrations of workers in the factories. They were accustomed not to side with these latter against the autocratic state, but rather to call upon this state to obliterate all manifestations of independent proletarian activity. The Russian bourgeoisie cursed the imperial bureaucracy for its inefficiency and railed against the privileges of the court factions, but they had, and needed, little political programme of their own beyond

the hope of 'a united government composed of men enjoying the confidence of the country'. They dare not even stir up the peasantry, entangled as they were in a web of commercial interests with the major landlords and fearful of any change in established property relations.

Involvement in the war was itself a consequence of the combined interests of the autocracy and the bourgeoisie. Foreign control of leading sectors of industrial growth (e.g. of 60% of the output of pig iron) and especially of the money supply (e.g. 55% of Petrograd's bank resources were in foreign hands on the eve of the Revolution) gave an economic rationale to the military alliances. The bourgeoisie hoped, moreover, that success in battle would bring renewed economic and political gains in Turkey, Afghanistan and Poland.

## Property

Once the autocracy had been blown away, it became increasingly evident that the bourgeois parties and those socialists who put their faith in a 'bourgeois stage' in

the revolutionary process had nothing to offer. The key contribution of the Bolsheviks between February and October was to define the question of the agency through which could be accomplished those measures whose absence kept the masses in turmoil—the ending of the war, confiscation of land by the peasants, satisfaction of the workers' grievances in industry—as a question of class power.

The issue of bourgeois property was hardly ever raised directly by the mass movements of the period, except insofar as the land expropriations of the peasants threatened it or the weak class-anarchist current could get a hearing. In general terms the question of bourgeois property was only raised indirectly, through the medium of the political consequences the bourgeoisie felt necessary for its survival.

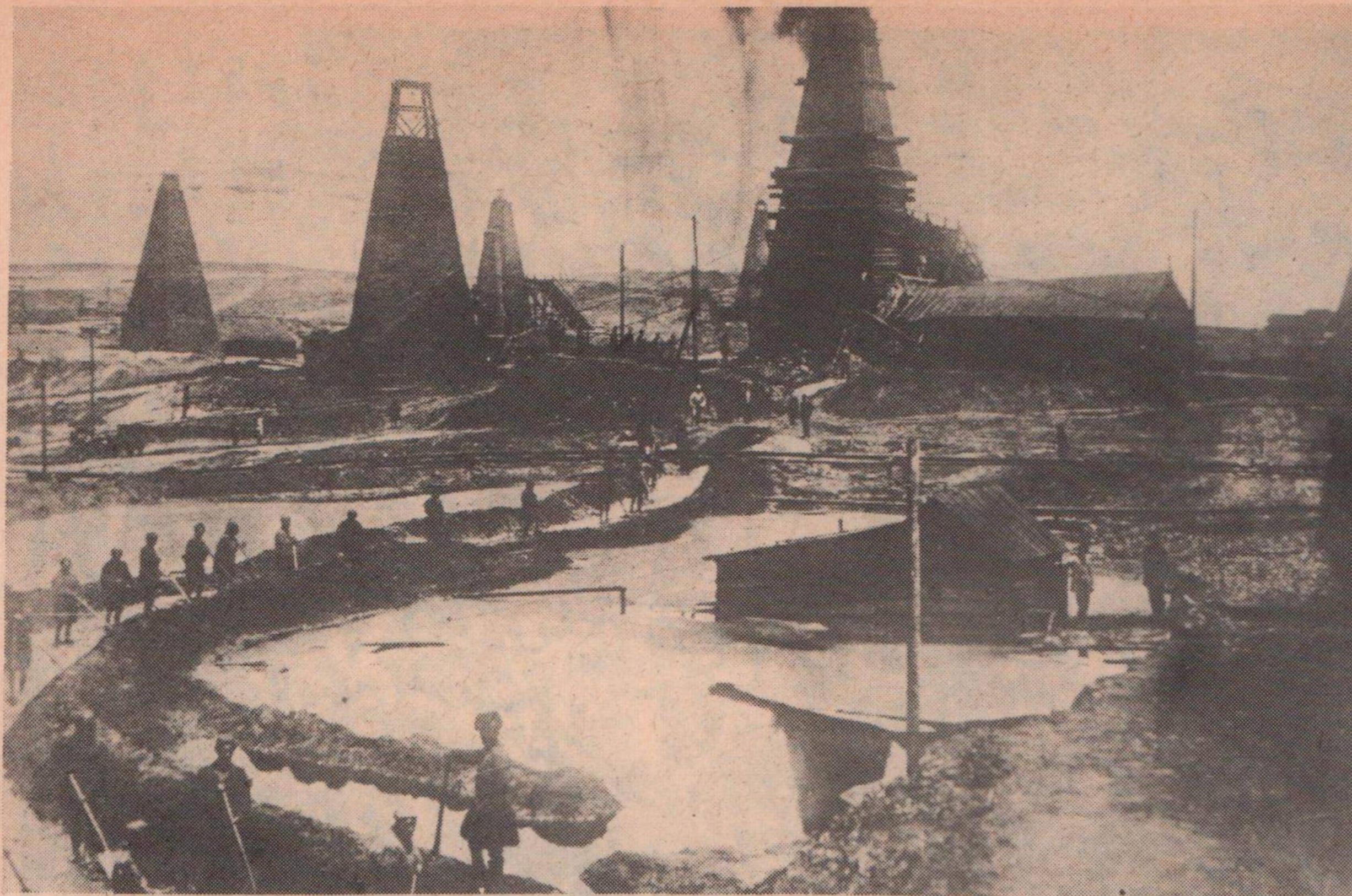
October saw the removal of the bourgeoisie from power at least insofar as it saw the removal of its representatives from the government and the abandoning of the political objectives with which it had associated itself.

## Soviets

A new organisation, the Soviets, had emerged as the location for the formulation of social objectives, an organisation associated with the participation and the policies of the previously oppressed social classes, the workers and eventually the peasants. This political expropriation provided the context for an entire social reconstruction. The capacity for organisation and struggle provided by the proletariat along with the allegiance of the soldiers, had laid down the conditions for the working people of both town and country to begin to determine the nature of their own work according to their own assessment of social needs and objectives. Or had it.

We know now that somehow, somewhere along the line, the workers and the peasants were to get left out of the process. Whereas under capitalism workers are alienated because social priorities are ultimately ordered and controlled by the accumulation of capital, the Russian workers were rapidly to find they had almost as little influence over the ordering and control of a bureaucratic planning which, if it did not behave in exactly the same way as capital, seemed nevertheless just as remote and alien.

Let's consider for a moment this question



INDUSTRY: Oil wells at Baku before the revolution.

of involvement. On the one hand its failure to appear in the Soviet planning process did not prevent the accomplishment of tasks which a Russian capitalism, as dependent on imperialist capital, might well have found impossible should it somehow have survived the state to which it was brought by the war. On the other hand, in purely productive terms its significance would surely have been of a positive nature in terms of the accurate assessment of objectives, potential capacities etc. What's more, workers who know why they are working and feel an interest in their work tend to work better. I believe, however, that it is as wrong on this side of the argument to leave matters exclusively at the level of productive efficiency as it is to ignore it. We have an interest in the rationalisation and planning of the productive forces insofar as such objectives coincide with our total species development.

The understanding of, and responding to, social needs and capacities by each of us individually as part of the collective, changes not merely the "how" of production, but also the "what" and the "why". That is the importance of the mass self-determination of labour in the revolutionary process.

What happened to the mass self-determination of labour in Russia? We could slip here into total and unapologetic fatalism. We could stop at pointing out that for us to seize hold of the world there must be ideal conditions for the revolution the world over. We see that from its onset the Russian Revolution was hampered by the non-occurrence of revolution elsewhere, in that workers aid from advanced industrial nations was not forthcoming, whilst imperialist counter-revolution was. We see that this placed the task of reconstruction in the context of a small and shattered industry hung in potential tension, with an overwhelming mass of newly independent peasant-farmers. We can see that both the Russian workers and the peasants were but poorly developed in terms of technical, cultural, organisational and political experience. These were certainly daunting problems.

Nevertheless, it is only after we have assured ourselves that everything possible was done that could have been done to sustain the mass self-determination of labour, even under these conditions, that we can allow ourselves the judgement that the disappearance of this component to the degree seen in Russia was unavoidable.

## Lenin

Of particular interest to us should be the

## THE TERROR

It is worth mentioning here the general question of repression in this period. From the very first days of the Revolution the vitality of the mass movement was endangered by the harassment, official and semi-official, of critics of the Bolsheviks. As early as December 1917 the 'Cheka', the 'Extraordinary Commission', had emerged from the Petrograd military-revolutionary committee, and it had not been too sensitive in its

search for 'counter-revolutionary' activities. The Bolsheviks do not appear to have advocated the right of appeal of all suspected 'counter-revolutionaries' to their local Soviet. Instead, only Sovnarkom, if that, had control over the 'terror'. Indeed, this 'terror' varied widely in practice. At times it was of a fairly petty nature, for instance, Voline writes in his *Unknown Revolution* of the cutting off of

performance of the revolutionary leadership, the Bolsheviks. That so much was achieved was due to the fact that the workers and soldiers in particular rallied behind the posing by the Bolsheviks of the necessity for a new power in Russia. Without this consolidation of the idea of a new social organisation, the way would have been left open for the autocrats and the bourgeoisie to impose a most violent and



All-Russian Congress of Factory and Shop Committees.

bloody retribution.

For the rest of this article, however, we must proceed to look at, as it were, the other side of the Bolshevik coin, in terms of the posing of the issue of social power.

The big question, of course, is the one of how the Bolsheviks related the party itself to this change in social power. I interpret the dominant tendency in the Bolsheviks to have been one that tended to conflate the Party and the exercise of power by the proletariat (also understanding this exercise of power to be the proletariats way of leading the peasantry). This tendency was the one represented by Lenin. A neat expression of the conflation comes, for instance, in his work *On Compromises*. He said

*"Our Party, like any political party, is*

electricity supplies to the print works of the Anarcho-Syndicalist paper *Golos Truda*, and of the jostling and chasing away of its street sellers etc. It could also amount to repression of sizeable proportions, for instance, in April 1918, the Cheka seized Anarchists of all tendencies, from partisans to pacifists. Whatever its specific manifestations, the general characteristic of the terror and its lack of responsibility to direct Soviet institutions undoubtedly contributed in its own way to the centralising ossification of the Revolution.

*striving after political domination for itself. Our aim is the dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat."* A rather vaguer expression of the same thing occurs in the better known work *Left Wing Communism*.

*"The mere presentation of the question 'dictatorship of the party or dictatorship of the class' testifies to the most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking... It is common knowledge... that as a rule and in most cases... classes are led by political parties."*

It is also possible, of course, to find passages of Lenin in which he seems to emphasise the sovereignty of the Soviets rather than that of the Party. In *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* for instance, he wrote of the Soviets

*"This apparatus, by virtue of the fact that its personnel is elected and subject to recall at the peoples will without bureaucratic formalities, is far more democratic than any previous apparatus."*

In the final analysis, it is to the practice of the Bolsheviks to which we must turn. There we see a practice which reveals a repeated emphasis upon the Party, especially on the Party as government, rather than upon the fight to involve the workers and peasants in the Soviets as decision-making bodies, where the leading role of the proletariat, insofar as it still had one, could be expressed politically.

The organisation and accomplishment of October was the responsibility not of the Soviets as a whole, but rather of the

protesting at the extent to which Sovnarkom was governing with previous submission to VTsIK. A resolution supporting Sovnarkom in this was passed, however, and thereafter Sovnarkom began to operate with increasing independence.

The constitution eventually passed by the 5th All-Russian Congress did nothing to counteract the lack of initiative of the Soviets and the drift of power away from VTsIK to Sovnarkom. The crucial point, however, is that there was no attempt by the Bolsheviks to prevent this contraction of political influence.

In the period between the insurrection and the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly they had spread confusion as to whether the Assembly or the Soviets were to be the sovereign organisation, eventually making a complete about turn on the matter. They had not consistently fought in the Soviets for the Soviets to proclaim their sovereignty. As events proceeded they were to show further unwillingness to take matters into the Soviets. They were also to show themselves unable to foster initiatives taken by the workers outside the Soviets.

## Peace

No doubt in the early days many Soviet delegates had been engaged in heated discussion in their localities over the questions upon which they would be called upon to ratify a decision. In the case of the insurrection and the dismissing of the

Bolshevik dominated Petrograd Soviet and its military-revolutionary committee. The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets merely ratified the event, and legitimised a 'provisional workers and peasants government' which was to direct affairs 'until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly'.

This provisional government consisted of the Bolshevik-dominated Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom) and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK). When the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened in January 1918, however, it found itself again merely ratifying a decision to dissolve the Constituent Assembly already executed by the VTsIK. That the Second Congress had left behind. Or rather, by a VTsIK which had more than doubled its size since then: 108 delegates had been added by the peasant congress in November, another 100 had appeared from the army and the fleet, and 50 from the Trades Unions.

As a result of these events, the crucial opening period of the Revolution was marked by considerable confusion as to where decision making and political power were actually located. This confusion was not limited to the question of the competence of the All-Russian Congress. There was further confusion between VTsIK and Sovnarkom. The latter body conferred legislative power on itself by a decree of 30th Oct 1917. In doing so it admitted 2 qualifications. Its powers were to be valid 'only to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly' and VTsIK had the power to 'defer, modify or annul' any of its enactments.

Within a week of the passing of this decree non-Bolsheviks in VTsIK were

Constituent Assembly there does not seem to have been much disagreement. However, on the question of the peace negotiations with Germany, there was disagreement, and this makes it a good issue around which to study the participation of the Soviets in government in their heyday.

It is particularly important here to separate the question of the rights or wrongs of the Brest-Litovks settlement from the way in which it was achieved. There was considerable disagreement at the time on the matter. On the one hand those who saw the need for a settlement even at the price of annexations in order to give the new government a breathing space. On the other those who thought that the abandonment of aggression and the front coupled with propaganda and partisan resistance to any offensive would provide both a workable military strategy and also an inspiration to the workers of Europe. According to the bourgeois historian Shapiro (*Origins of the Communist Autocracy*), the government went so far as to take a referendum of the views of some of the Soviets and found that a majority were in favour of the second course of action outlined above.

Given the length of the negotiations and the strength of feeling in the country, this was an issue on which the Bolsheviks could

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have sought the widest possible debate, and made the final decision of all the Soviets. Debate was certainly fierce in VTsIK and the Bolshevik Party, but it does not appear to have been politically centralised outside these bodies. Certainly, the extraordinary 4th All-Russian Congress of Soviets of March 1918 was called merely to ratify the treaty.

It was the way the decision was taken as much as the actual settlement which had tremendous repercussions on the Soviets. In particular the main non-Bolshevik party, the Left Social Revolutionaries, lost confidence in the Soviets and proceeded to appeal to the workers and peasants to take up arms against the Germans, without the sanction of the Soviets. The German ambassador, Nirbach, was assassinated, and clashes occurred between revolutionary partisan units and troops loyal to VTsIK. As a result the Left Social Revolutionaries were expelled from VTsIK, and their presses were closed down.

In the handling of decisions relating to the Constituent Assembly, and to the peace, and in the operation of the terror, we see components of the decline of mass involvement in the Soviets. We see that the Bolsheviks did not seek to foster this involvement, and indeed, through their handling of the terror and of the organisation of the Soviets, served to hinder it. The progressive alienation of Soviet power was not simply a matter of the quality of involvement in the Soviets themselves. This was particularly true with regard to the proletariat, and its relations with the entire sector of public life associated with the management of the economy.

In the general upheaval after February 1917 the Soviets had not been the only form of working-class organisation to develop. Many industrial enterprises had seen the founding of plant based workers committees. On May 30th 1917 a conference of such factory committees in Petrograd defined themselves as 'fighting organisations elected on the basis of the widest democracy' seeking to create 'new conditions at work' and the 'organisation of thorough control of labour over production and distribution'. Individual committees seem to have varied from types of trade union branch to revolutionary organisations of the shop floor.

On October 17th 1917, however, an all-Russian conference of such committees called for the passing of all power to the Soviets, mainly due to the Bolsheviks having a majority at the conference.

The existence of the factory committee movement raised important questions about the running of the economy in the post-October period. The first of these was whether or not the factory committees could assume "ownership" of their places of work. The Bolshevik conception was quite clearly that Soviet power did not involve actual expropriation of the bourgeoisie. They did not propose any sweeping measures of confiscation.

The Bolsheviks envisaged a controlled or directed capitalism, "state capitalism" in Lenin's words, arrived at by such measures as the nationalisation of credit. However, this strategy collapsed rapidly even before the introduction of "war communism". In many places the employers simply fled, in others they were summarily deposed. Repeated Soviet decrees stating the need for



Anarchist banner in the Ukraine.

government approval of any expropriation went unheeded. The Bolsheviks could do little to curb this movement.

Mixed up with the problem of whether or not to take over the factories was the wider problem of what the basis was to be for assessing and implementing economic objectives, and what role the factory committees were to play in these processes.

## Solution

The Bolshevik solution to the problem involved the effective subordination of the organs of working-class power to officials appointed by the state. On November 14th VTsIK passed a decree on workers control which laid down what the factory committees could and could not do. Factory committees were to remain in control of their individual enterprises, but were to be ultimately under the control of the "All-Russian Council of Workers Control", which was itself dominated by representatives of the Trades Unions. (The general relation of the factory committees to the Trades Unions is by no means clear, but the committees do seem to have been at this stage the more authentic rank and file movement.) Moreover, 'in all enterprises of state importance' (A phrase which could mean anything) all factory representatives were to be 'answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property'.

Following the passing of the decree a projected All-Russian Congress of Factory Committees was prevented from meeting. Eventually, on December 5th 1917, a further step was taken with the creation of the Supreme Economic Council (Vesenka), empowered to work out 'a plan for the organisation of the economic life of the country and the financial resources of the government'. A few members of the All-Russian Council of Workers Control, now subordinate to Vesenka, did sit on this new body, but they were outnumbered by representatives of the Commissariats and by specialists appointed by the government.

In the space of a few months, therefore, the skeleton of a planning system was erected which gave exceedingly little scope to the initiative and involvement of the working class through its factory organisation. Decisions about economic priorities were to be increasingly taken by state departments connected with the working class neither through the Soviets nor through any separate organisation based on the factory committees. It was not long before the combination of undemocratic centralisation of control, civil war, increased economic chaos and demoralisation began to threaten even those rights in plant organisation which the factory committees had fought for and won. (Some latter-day Leninists point to the economic chaos as an example of how badly the committees fared without central control. How they could develop more than "parochial" interests when they were repeatedly being cut off



PARTRIDGE SHOOT: Red Army soldiers massacre the sailors and inhabitants of the Kronstadt garrison. Throughout the firing the huge gun emplacements of the garrison remained facing out to sea, guarding against the possibility of White attack. The people of Kronstadt had insisted on carrying out re-elections for their Soviet: Trotsky said in his ultimatum to them 'We will shoot you down like partridges'.

from centralised organisation is generally left unexplained.)

Lenin's Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government gives, as early as April 1918, an indication of how the Bolsheviks intended to cope with the problems. Among the measures he proposed were the introduction of piece-work, "Taylorian" systems of work organisation, a card system for registering the productivity of each worker, productivity bonuses and stricter discipline. He wrote "Unquestioning submission to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labour processes that are based on large-scale machine industry... today the Revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of the labour process."

The working class had been given no opportunity to express itself on these matters through the Soviets. Where it did express itself, through the factory committees, and later, to a certain extent, through the Trade Unions, it showed both

the ability to recognise that the class came above the individual factory, and the desire to be involved in the formulation of class wide objectives. From the first day the Bolsheviks opposed rather than encouraged this ability and desire.

## Kronstadt

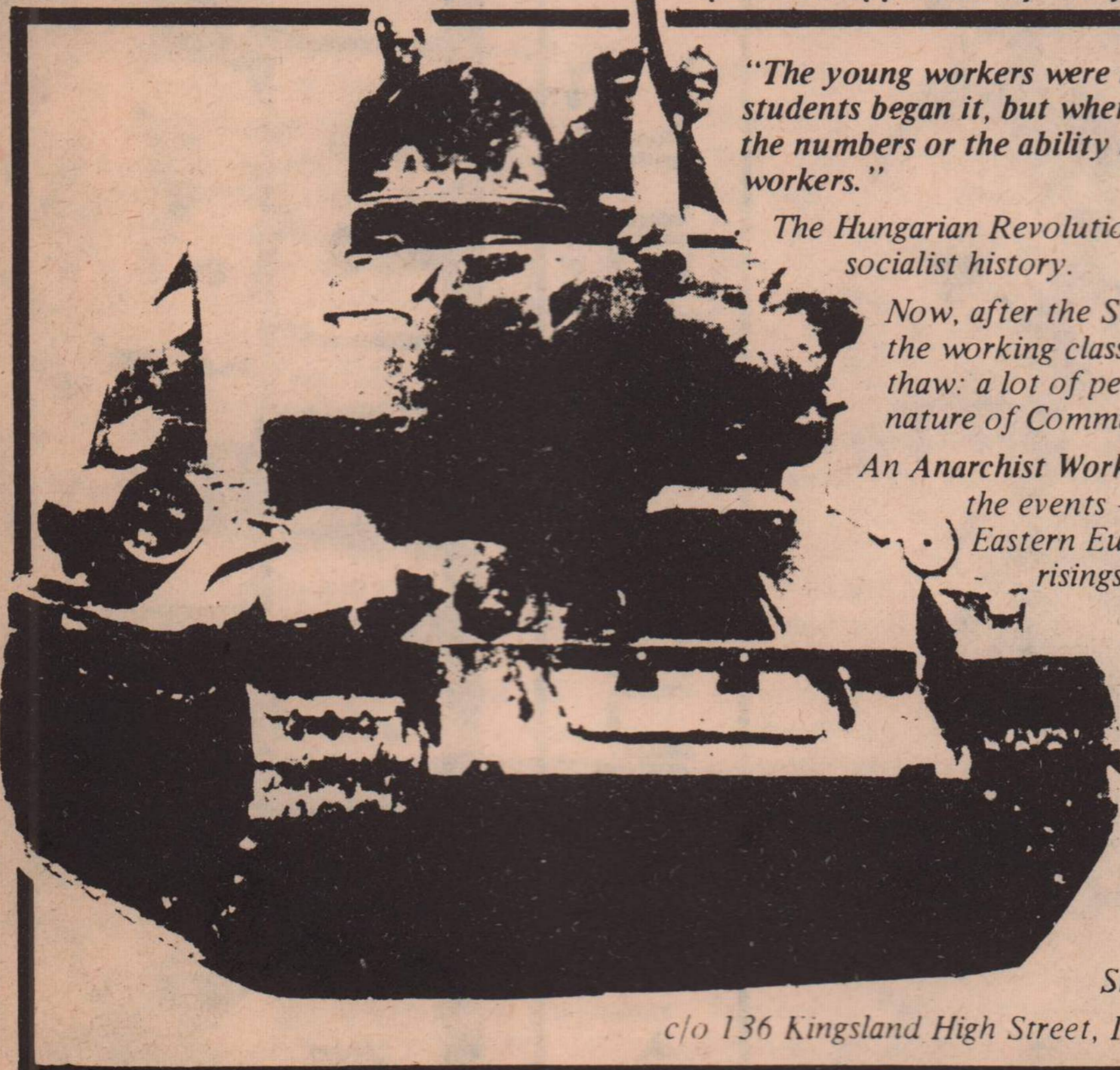
We can see, I hope, that there are, at least, cases to be further investigated with regards to the ability of the Russian masses to sustain involvement in the revolutionary process. Although the Bolsheviks contributed to the circumstances where such activity and involvement could flourish, they failed to fight for it, and eventually actively hindered it. What's more, still other features of the Russian Revolution could be considered in this light, were it not for lack of space.

The experience of Kronstadt is a well

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