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DIRECT ACTION

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FROM MOSCOW TO WASHINGTON

International Anarcho-syndicalism



EDITORIAL COMMENT

It has been levelled at us by opponents of anarcho-syndicalism that we are proposing ourselves as an alternative to the TUC. Let us hope 'Winning the Class War', DAM's industrial strategy, ends this myth. Much as we do want to see alternatives to flabby reformist bureaucracy, we do not claim to be an alternative. But we do believe we have a strategy to germinate one.

The response of the left to the problems of organising in the labour movement has been weak. When the left has looked at organising workers (an idea so logical to us that it barely seems to need stating), it has led them to taking militant workers out of the work place, where they are strongest. The rank and file groups of the '60s and '70s failed because the principles they were based on were social democratic and never went further than militant unionism. Plus, they were dominated by political parties with their axes to grind, which led to infighting and collapse.

The '80s version of rank and file groups, the "Broad Left", is even more of a failure. It operates by encouraging militant union activists into putting energy into unrepresentative branch meetings, attempting to have radical motions passed - never to be acted upon - and supporting this or that left bureaucracy in union elections. Time is spent talking to other activists at the exclusion of organising with other fellow workers on the shop floor. As anarcho-syndicalists we have no interest in encouraging workers in the illusion of trade unions being reformable or in believing that union leaders will take up the fight on the workers' behalf. All 'don't let them off the hook' has been is a substitute for building action constructively with other workers.

DAM'S INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY CATALYST OR MOULD?

Nevertheless, anarcho-syndicalists are active in unions, both as shop stewards and in local branches, since we believe in collective action and will pursue it at every opportunity. But still we recognise the contradictions in being in a trade union which supposedly defends our rights but is tied to capitalism. (See back pages 'The Life and Times of a Shop Steward')

Critics of 'syndicalism' portray it thus: "since believing that capitalism has to be fought on the shop floor...in practice this meant supporting strike activity but shunning political strategy". Since we believe that economic and political struggles should not be separated, anarcho-syndicalists, far from lacking politics above 'trade unions consciousness', our tactics are aimed at taking politics where bread and butter issues are fought, alongside solidarity. This presents the widest possible scenario for revolutionary politics. Where the workers are, not in political parties, or in the Broad Left, putting pressure upwards through the union instead of making the necessary links across to workers.

Against this posturing we substitute real action. By this, we mean building the confidence of workers who want to fight back, and developing ways of organising that suit those workers, and are open and participatory. Our aim is not to be the mould through which workers must pass before they meet the criteria of true revolutionaries, but to be a catalyst that spurs them on to organise themselves. Our industrial networks are a means to do this - watch for regular industrial network reports on pages 4 and 5 in future issues.

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For a revolutionary Anarchist
(Non-governmental) society through
Syndicalism (the struggle for workers
control) to free communism
(common ownership and no state).

LETTERS

Dear DA,

It was good to see DA take up issues of sex, AIDS and HIV in 'Safer Sex - Showing the Way'. It was unfortunate that you used misleading and inaccurate terms such as 'high risk groups'. It is not a person's sexuality that puts them at risk, but their sexual practices. To make generalisations and assumptions about the sexual practices of both gay men and lesbians only leads to more confusion and misleading information on transmission of HIV - calling gay men "one of the highest risk groups" assumes that all we do is fuck, and what do you mean by "lesbian sex"?

Unfortunately, the moralist bigots have used fear and ignorance to hijack campaigns for safer sex - controlling and discouraging sex, or discussion of it, thereby censoring information on techniques of making it safer. They've used the myth that so long as you cut down on sexual partners, you'll be OK. In reality, if you're practicing safer sex, the number of partners you have should't be a factor of risk.

Campaigns for safer sex should be pro-sex and not based on guilt, misinformation and fear. (I'm not implying the article in DA was based on these!) They should be explicit and give clear no-nonsense advice so we can make decisions about the risks we will or won't take and can celebrate sex and sexuality for the pleasurable experiences they should be.

Let's hope that future information in DA will be a part of the solution in fighting not only the spread of HIV, but the prejudices and misinformation surrounding it.

With love and solidarity, Bert

Dear DA,

I disagree with Dino's reply on the question of squaddies. He misrepresents Ashleigh. She wasn't defending the army, she was supporting squaddies. (You don't defend the NCB when you support miners). Added to which he says in British society people will join without compulsion whereas others, like in Spain and Italy, have to be forced to do it. (It reminds me of the old story they used to tell us that you could never have concentration camps in England as British people would never operate them).

Get the facts right. The officer class in the British Army dislike having conscription. They were forced to have it in war-time. Politicians (rather than generals) love it for the feeling of power. In Spain they had it even though after the civil war Franco, a military dictator, characteristically had the best of both worlds by keeping it but refusing to let the conscripts have proper military training in case they used it against him. In Italy and the most of the continent it is useless for military purposes but has become a tradition because of submission to it. Unfortunately, even in Europe you can always get "vol

unteers" for anything if the money's right, this is a fact of capitalist life. Here it's not always right but the pressure is via unemployment.

I suppose about 75 per cent of older British males and 30 per cent older females have served in the armed forces, about 85 per cent of younger European males do so now. They are not a special breed. They are as much but no more responsible for what the armed forces do as workers are for what capitalism does. If they were organised, at least as much as the officer class is, they could enforce that responsibility.

Who were more anti-militarist, not to say revolutionary: the sailors at Kronstadt Invergordon and Wilhelmshaven, on the one hand, - the lone conscientious objectors in Europe today or the legalised COs of wartime Britain? What do you think in Britain scares the ruling class more: to approach squaddies with a message of forming soldiers councils - or (as I saw some well-intentioned hippies do) march into a recruiting office to say they would not join the army (the answer they got was "Thank Christ" but I think it was jocular).

Whatever soldiers and sailors do in their capacity of serving their rulers, it is the responsibility of their rulers and will remain so until they organise. When orders cease to be orders, revolutions come about. If one is taking a moralistic viewpoint that people shouldn't get themselves there in the first place, how about arms

workers, and almost every industry in wartime? Again, if you want to know what is the best thing to do - organise or shun - find out the opposite of what the authorities would tolerate, and why, before judging.

Oh, and if you're raising the bogey of Ireland, there are even now, unfortunately (or were before they started redundancies) more Irish Catholics in any one unit in some regiments than in the whole of the Republican movement put together. Are Irish Catholic-origin soldiers also written off, like 75 per cent of the working class in Northern Ireland, as not being part of the Irish because they are not engaged in revolutionary struggle, and not wanted if they did? Or do we take seriously our desire for a united working class fighting against civil and military oppressors?

Fraternally, Albert



Dear DA

Some women in London planned to hold a conference for women on Anarcho-Syndicalism in September '91. Much interest was generated but due to lack of finance and members to organise it, it has been postponed indefinitely.

However, a group of us, some of whom were interested in the anarcho-syndicalist conference, but who wanted to know more about the subject, meet regularly to talk about anarchism, women's liberation and other class issues. The first of a series of public meetings has been held, which was on 'Racist violence - how can we organise against it?'. We hope to develop towards being active together, based on common views and principles.

Thank you to those who showed interest in the conference. If class struggle anarchist women - groups and individuals, nationally and internationally - made contact with us, it would be helpful in creating an undercurrent of interest and activism to build for a future conference. (And future revolution!)

Contact: Common Ground
C/o Southwark Women's
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Peckham High Street
Peckham
London SE15

SUBSCRIBERS' NOTE !!!

Would all subscribers please note that if they are more than two issues over due on renewing their subs we will have to stop sending them the paper. We don't like doing this but can't afford not to. Please could all groups as well please send us money from bulk sales as soon as possible as DA is skint and still owes Aldgate £400 etc etc !!!!

COWBOYS' CHARTER

HEADING DOWN THE SAME COURSE

John Major announced 'his' Citizens' Charter on 23rd July, starting the Tories' 1991/92 election campaign on a new wave of lies. A few consumer protection measures have been thrown together as a cover for even further privatisation and deregulation of public services. The 'commitment' to public services is a fraud. Elitism, two-tier services, and the profits of cowboy contractors is what is being promoted. What is new is the recognition, by the Tories that the electorate actually care about public services, and do not see them as some kind of expression of moral weakness (as Thatcher did).

There is no point in the Tories winning the next election if they cannot continue to throw a party for the rich. They cannot do that if they lose the election, so the Citizens' Charter is an attempt to do both. Public service workers know, punters do not get to meet the faceless bureaucrats who make arbitrary decisions which have a devastating impact on service provision. Forcing the low paid, powerless frontline workers who get the flak for these decisions to wear name badges is just opening the way for the victimisation of individuals. Dennis Reed, National Local Government Officer for NALGO (the public service workers' union) put it thus: "the government's suggestion is part of an election campaign seeking to blame public service workers for the failures caused by 12 years of underfunding".

It's more like 15 years of underfunding (starting with 'Sunny Jim' Callaghan and Labour's monetarism), and since the manipulation of public services to provide empires, salaries, perks, etc, for senior management. NALGO has put out positive adverts saying 'don't blame public service workers for the mess in despite failing to provide any critique of public service bureaucracy and their implication of support for Labour.

Since greater state investment in public services and transport is not on the cards, the collective right to decent public services is not proposed by the charter. The issue is being buried by the red herring of the individuals right to compensation for the inevitable failure to deliver. Incidentally, the right to compensation will apply only to public services provided directly by the relevant authority; once it gets privatised you can forget compensation. Compensation will be available from the 'organisers' of 'unlawful' strikes (and presumably of other forms of industrial action). Since no legal right to strike exists or to take any other form of industrial action, shop stewards and branch officials are potentially subject to financial victimisation when workers take industrial action. If past experience is anything to go by, compensation provisions will be used by far right groups like the Freedom Association to orchestrate campaigns of financial haemorrhage against direct services and victimisation of union activists. The Tories are plan-

ning a return to the attacks on public service workers by middle class 'Mr Angries,' a feature of the early '70s. There are also plans for the extension of CCT, (not an insecticide, but definitely poisonous). Compulsory Competitive Tendering, is a means to force public services onto a profit-oriented commercial footing, subdividing service organisations into assorted 'companies' which literally have to buy services off each other. It creates a bureaucratic nightmare of paper mountains, delays and wasted money. Services cannot be swiftly supplied by support services as they are needed. Budgets have to be made in advance for everything or forget it, order to identify what areas of services can be profitable - so that they can be forced out to tender with private contractors, and financial stringency can be imposed on the non-profitable services, who have to justify their spending. Service contracts and business plans have to be drawn up, for services as far removed from profit-making as public libraries.

New tiers of managers are added to provide a Client Side (at assistant or deputy director level in local government) requiring their own administrative support, draw up the Service Contracts consultants at £500+ per day are employed. So money is diverted from service provision. Consultants, (usually former public sector managers who found out there was more money by going solo, line their pockets at the expense of services. Service managers, now on the

Contract Side who may be privatised, draw up Business Plans which attack staffing levels and conditions. Since most public services have national pay machinery, actual wages are unlikely to be cut yet, but your average public service worker in local government receives about £8-14,000 a year gross, allowing for overtime, and regional and grading differences. This is who benefits and loses WITHIN the public sector as a result of the measures in the Citizens' Charter.

Enter the Cowboys, the real beneficiaries. Services which go out to tender - refuse collection, street cleaning, building work, buildings cleaning, catering facilities and catering services (such as meals on wheels), parks and grounds maintenance, leisure management, with housing management, legal services and accountancy also due to be added to the CCT list under the Charter - do so under the conditions most favourable to contractors. Except for leisure management, which was the pilot for the services added under the Charter, they are all manual labour-only contracts with capital such as dust-carts being provided by the Councils. There is a mechanism for contractors to appeal to the Department of the Environment to move the goalposts if the terms of the service contract are considered to favour an in-house bid. Many private contractors, who are part of larger firms who, will subsidise loss-leading bids to secure a contract, and put up the prices once the competition has been eliminated. Other ways of hiding costs to win contracts, then saddling the Council with the costs when they become apparent become apparent.

Far from being a means of introducing 'healthy competition' to public services, tendering is a method of

providing a state subsidy to private business at the expense of taxpayers and services. Once a service contract has been won by a cowboy, the Council or Health Authority, etc, is legally obliged to pay up, but also incurs the losses and has to provide the capital investment in, say, leisure facilities. The contractor makes the money out of charging for the use of the facilities. The proposal to force NHS hospitals to subcontract out treatments to private hospitals if patients have had to wait beyond a prescribed period is y another way of subsidising the private sector and expanding its business. The NHS foots the bill to the private sector for treatment of patients who could never afford private medicine. The motive of lining the pockets of private medicine explains why the simpler, cheaper way of proper investment in the NHS isn't considered. The financial crisis in the NHS will become worse and lengthen waiting lists. More bureaucracy will be introduced to supervise sub-contracting. Private medicine will not have the spectre of US-style malpractice suits if they botch an operation either, since the NHS hospital is responsible.

This is but a continuation of past Tory legislation. Education is no exception. The proposed publication of 'schools' achievements' will accelerate the intention of the Education Reform Act which was to create a two-tier public education system (with the private sector still there for the real elite). It will exacerbate institutionalised racism and class hatred by differentiating between white middle class 'centres of excellence', and black and working class 'ghetto' schools in areas considered unwinnable by the Tories. Major's Charter is as phoney as his "classless society".

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

British rule in Ireland has always created conditions where, for a sizeable percentage of the population, emigration is made preferable. Over the centuries these imposed pressures have ranged from famine, genocide and war to unemployment, sectarianism and discrimination. Many of those who have left have settled in England and the huge Irish communities in Liverpool, London, Manchester and Birmingham are a testament to Britain's need, from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution to the present day, for cheap Irish labour to keep the economy running smoothly.

Despite their centuries-old contribution to the profits of the ruling class, Irish emigrants have always met with suspicion, racism and, in times of strife in Ireland, outright hostility from the British state. Britain's Special Branch, was formed in the 1860's specifically to combat the rise of militant Irish republicanism. An example of repressive measures, initially justified by the state as a response to the Irish 'terrorism' but later used against anyone threatening the status quo. Today, Irish people in Britain face a wide variety of racism and draconian legislation, brought in not only in an attempt to defeat the IRA but to deter the Irish community from supporting the ongoing republican struggle.

The 1988 Broadcasting Ban was aimed at denying republicans the 'oxygen of publicity', but many journalists who are pro-establishment or spineless have used the ban to prevent all representatives of Irish groups from having access to the media. Stifling these voices has helped the right wing press to whip up more anti-Irish racism. When a group of Irish workers were arrested in Cheltenham by armed police last year, the gutter rags were full of headlines such as "IRA Bomb Gang Held". When the men were released without charge 48 hours later this passed almost unmentioned on by the papers and the damage had been done. Irish workers had been linked in the public consciousness with IRA volunteers. The limited publicity which accompanied the release justified the police action by implying that the possession of an Irish accent made you fair game for arrest at gunpoint, detention without charge or trial, interrogation and unemployment. The men felt compelled to leave their jobs and return to Ireland after the hype surrounding this encounter with the law.

Few observers outside Britain now accept that an Irish person facing 'terrorist' charges before a British court can expect a fair trial. Cases such as the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Family

The Repression of the Irish Community in Britain

and Judith Ward have left the reputation of British Justice in tatters, but they have not prevented vicious sentences being imposed on Irish persons who are on political charges. The Winchester Three were sentenced to 25 years on no evidence (and were only released on appeal after serving 3 years). Nick Nullen and Danny McNamee were framed and given 25 and 30 years after equally ludicrous hearings. All these people were convicted by the media before they set foot in the dock, and a similar circus no doubt awaits Dessie Ellis and others remanded on such charges.

The jewel in the crown of British repression is the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Introduced in 1974 by the Labour government, the Act gives the police sweeping powers. Tellingly, these are usually granted to the security services during wartime and this gives the lie to the British claims to be dealing with a law and order problem in the Six Counties.

Despite its ineffectiveness to deter the armed struggle, the PTA is widely used to harass Irish people and all opponents of British rule in Ireland. Few trials arise from its use but thousands have been arrested, detained and raided under its terms. Its vague provisions enable the po-



lice to 'trawl' Irish areas, especially in the wake of IRA actions, inflicting collective punishment on communities because of their own inability to catch republican activists.

Under the PTA people can be refused entry to England, Scotland and Wales on no stronger grounds than the Home Secretary signing a banning order with their name on it - a form of 'internal exile' operating within the UK which freedom-loving British governments have condemned so vigorously elsewhere.

If you're Irish in Britain you have but one choice. Either knuckle under to racism and discrimination, ignore the occupation of your homeland which forced you or your descendants to emigrate, and live with the dull ache of the threat of the PTA or

being framed on a jumped up charge; or be politically active, try to change things and risk the wrath of a state bogged down in its last colonial war. Anti-Irish racism and laws like the PTA have a common aim - to create fear and hostility within and towards the Irish community in Britain and to divide them from the rest of the working class. Added to this, show trials like that of the Birmingham Six enable the state to hold political hostages in the hope of deterring others from joining the struggle.

The British state fears working class unity, especially in opposition to its war in Ireland. It must surely be our job to encourage unity, to have solidarity with Irish struggles in both Britain and Ireland and thereby realise its worst fears.

Only TUC affiliated unions are allowed to affiliate to Trades Councils. Most union branches are forced to go through union headquarters to affiliate so the bureaucrats at the centre can retain check and some control. Affiliation to the Labour Party is a statutory feature. Purportedly their purpose is to encourage solidarity between trades in a given area, raise the profile of trade unionism and recruit new union members.

Many trades councils find it impossible to carry out these roles, but have nevertheless worked well in building solidarity with disputes, notably the 1984/5 miners' strike, and have done excellent work in the locality. The Leicester & District 'Grenby plastics' dispute, when Ross Galbraith and Gary Sheriff were sacked for refusing to handle goods bound for South Africa springs to mind.

Trades Councils tend to be composed of rank and file delegates, nearly always activists, rarely full-timers. Their low profile is the reason the traditional left have failed to develop a strategy towards them. It could not produce the same turn over of members they require for recruitment. The number of rank and file delegates ensures they will be more radical than their constituent unions and certainly more than the TUC. Solidarity, however minor, is an embarrassment to fat-cats at Transport House, whose interests are poaching off 'rival' unions and protecting their salaries. They are stifling this independent voice - abolishing the County Associations of Trades Councils, the annual conference and slashing funds. But Trade Councils continue despite the attack across the counties, and recently held an unofficial conference. Neither the state or union bureaucracy will invest in its own downfall.

For anarcho-syndicalism, several opportunities are there. A chance to meet other local militants. They offer a forum for co-ordinated activity away from bureaucracy, across trade and craft divisions. Find out information countrywide and learn from experiences of other militants who have been in similar situations. Improve membership of unions and activity and make links with grass roots campaigns. Some trades councils won't mind you!

SACRIFICED FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

All is not rosy in the garden of our local Labour Club. Trades Councils are only as good as their affiliates and delegates. Most don't turn up. It isn't rare for them never to reach double figures at one time. It's a drawback, particularly where branch organisation is weak or workers are spread out in branches across several authorities (London). Public sector unions NALGO, NUPE, CPSA, NUT, & NATFHE predominate.

We should not sew illusions about the TUC. We encourage union membership because of a belief in collective action, but point out that the struggle is on two fronts - employer and, unhappily, union bureaucracy. The most obvious non-

TRADES COUNCILS - ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Trades Councils sprang up in the Syndicalist Revolt of 1910-18. They are usually defined as the Local Trade Union Congress. Many are called Trade Union Councils. Local Union branches affiliate and send delegates according to membership. There is both potential and problems in organizing through them. To what extent should anarcho-syndicalists put effort into organising trades councils? Both accounts here are from committed anarcho-syndicalists. The first is from a white collar council worker in London. The second from an education worker from Manchester.

TUC Union is the electricians' union, EEPTU, expelled from the TUC (but not the Labour Party) for its sweetheart deals with employers. Despite its leadership it organizes many workers, principally in the building trade, who can go nowhere else. If they want to fight links need to be made elsewhere, regardless of their bureaucrats.

Trade Council affiliation to the Labour Party means they are affiliated to bosses of some of their members. The false promises of social democracy cannot be clung to. The unions are where our interests have been sacrificed in order for a Labour government to be elected - a tactic which has shown its uselessness over the last 12 years.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

Anarcho-syndicalists are not speaking like Tories do of non-political unions. A lynch pin of anarcho-syndicalism is the recognition that political demands are integrated with economic demands. Workers' organisations need to be free of those who would be compromised by power whatever the level. Trades Councils are uniquely placed amongst all the committees of the bureaucratic unions. They don't remove militants from the workplace - where our class is strong - but they do encourage and can encompass wider links.

In some areas Trades Councils are too small or bureaucratic to be worth involving yourself in. In others they are a means of spreading the ideas of industrial networks to a wider audience of working class militants. I do not have over-optimistic hopes for Trades Councils, neither should all the eggs be placed in one basket. They are one of the means by which we can see how local federations might operate, with many networks federated along with local solidarity groups and other working class campaigns and organisations.

The strategy of building Libertarian Working Class organisations whenever possible is necessary. If workers can begin to burst the chains of reformist organisation and are looking for better ways, the examples will be there.



Does the C.P. control your trades council?

The strategy to develop industrial networks comes from a general consensus among anarcho-syndicalists that existing union structures continually compromise and betray the very workers they purport to represent. As workers it's still in our interests to be active members within workplace unions rather than isolate ourselves as individuals. Rather than put all our energies into representing earlier experiences of building rank and files, our priorities lie in the long term development of the industrial networks.

However, into this framework drifts a confused and romantic idea that local Trades Councils and their hierarchical structures exist as some kind of true workers' federations, representing the class interest. If delegates to Trades Councils are elected by the reformist, TUC affiliated unions, surely the Trades Councils themselves can never be little more than a mirror image of local bureaucracies?

Some Trades Councils are better than others (Manchester manages to be quorate where Liverpool often fails), just as one union in a workplace is more effective than another, ie, the AEU in Kellogs in Trafford Park serves the interests of the craftworkers often at the expense of the USDAW members on the lines. So much for workers' control to common ownership within the reformist union structures!

Where did this idea that Trades

Councils could be 'captured' as some form of revolutionary workers' federation come from?

In the years leading to the General Strike the Trades Councils effectively became the voice of hundreds of thousands of workers. The mass mobilisation of workers running into tens of thousands in Manchester is now a matter for the history books. (This year's May Day march and rally attracted 30 people - all delegates to the Council and no workplace representatives.)

The slow strangulation of the Trades Councils began when they affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. February 1925 saw the first official Conference of Trades Councils supported by the TUC. Later that year, the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool took the decision to expel members of the Communist Party from Labour Party membership. Initial support from the TUC for the miners quickly evaporated as the bureaucrats began to lose control to the workers! The government declared the strike illegal, and was supported in speeches by Labour MPs. Workers were appalled to hear the radio describe the TUC sell-out as an "unconditional surrender".

They gathered in Manchester and other cities, still refusing to return to work, to find Trades Councils officials feebly encouraging them to go back. Under the Trades Dispute Act (the 'Blacklegs Charter'), Trades Councils were compelled to change their rules and delete all political objective. Again, workers experienced the vague mumble of protest and inactivity from the TUC and Labour Party which we still see today. The final kick in the teeth for the Communist Party came with the TUC, now having control of the Trades Councils instead of the workers, introducing the 'Black Circular', an instruction from the General Council of the TUC to instruct Trades Council delegates to expel members of the CP.

OTHER WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS OUT IN THE COLD

Today all Trades Councils remain bound in their rules to TUC policy. While under the Model Rules for Trades Councils the initial 'object' is:

"to promote the interests of

all its affiliated organisations and to secure united actions on all questions affecting or likely to affect those interests."

This means in practice that only TUC affiliated unions can send delegates to the Trades Councils. This means that local anti-deportation campaigns, tenants groups, lesbian and gay organisations, etc, cannot have a voice without an official invitation being proposed and agreed through a union branch, and the same request being proposed and agreed within a Trades Council meeting before an invitation to speak only is sent to that organisation.

In effect, unless a sympathetic worker supports a local issue, local groups have no direct representation and no voice at Trades Council. Even if a union branch manages to support a proposal, say, to have a speaker for TOM at Trades Council, no self-respecting TUC affiliated officer would allow that to go forward without pointing out that it is not within the "objects as the TUC may from time to time determine."

Finally, we have the line on PROSCRIBED ORGANISATIONS:

"in no circumstances shall the Trades Council co-operate with or subscribe to the funds of any organisation whose policies or activities are contrary to those of Congress."

Well, with the practised art of the Philadelphia lawyer, some Trades Councils did manage to agree to allow the EPLU (the breakaway electricians' union) to affiliate. Their reward was the recent attacks and withdrawal of funding by the TUC - shocked at finding their pet dogs still had a bit of bark left in them.

NORMAN WILLIS - HANDS THE COMMANDMENTS

The joke in Manchester is that the Trades Councils exist nowadays as a form of community care for ageing Tankies and a creche facility for the youth section (local Trots under 40) to practise their speeches for patronising workers in their tea breaks. Delegates, in the main, are totally unrepresentative of their workplace branches. Issues are discussed and debated and little action comes of it. Even if we managed to get ourselves elected so that we had a strong anarcho-syndicalist presence on the Trades Councils, our activities are limited by the reformist nature of the Councils themselves.

Their rules are not aims and obligations or statements of principles agreed by the working class, but commandments handed down by Norman Willis, and his father before him. Most local workers have never heard of Trades Councils, or if they have, regard them as an irrelevance to workplace struggle. Many Trades Councils have a 'Secretary for Life' - hardly workers' delegates instantly recallable!

So, let's not be confused about the role of Trades Councils within our anarcho-syndicalist perspectives. Their role in raising the profile of local issues is limited, just as our activities within the Trades Unions are also limited. They are not federations but dinosaur organisations long past their sell-out-by date!

The following has been sent to us by David Douglas, branch delegate of Hatfield NUM. We disagree as to the reformability of the NUM as a trade union within capitalism and do not wholly agree with this vision of it in, but nevertheless, this article forms an important part of a continuing debate in D.A. on the trend of Union mergers. (see back issue 73, RMT and Strikes).

Away from the glare of publicity, another miners' struggle is on. This is an internal struggle revolving around the future structure and form of mining trades unionism. It is between the defenders of the NUM and its industrial unionist structure and those who want to see the union absorbed into the ranks of the TGWU.

The miners union is unique in many ways, not least for its antiquity, but also because its structure is essentially industrial unionist. It is not a craft union, recruiting on the basis of what tools the worker uses. Neither is it a general, labouring union recruiting in the phrase of Tom Brown, "everyone from midwives to undertakers". It is a union recruiting from where people work, regardless of craft. It unites fitters, electricians, canteen workers, pit winders, coal face workers, training staff, clerical

that the miners union is 'busted', but it is severely knocked about, given that it threw itself into all-out war against the might of the British state in 1984/85.

All forms of physical, economic and propaganda warfare were rained down on the union for twelve months. A lesser union would have disintegrated. As it was, the union emerged from the conflict very crippled and ill-equipped for the next round of the battle. A round which has led to the loss of over 100,000 members since the end of the strike as the closure programme swathed its way through the coalfields.

The income of the union has thus been reduced drastically, whilst a huge army of pensioners and widows are still defended and represented by the union at no cost to themselves.

We are told that the range of services we offer, the degree of expertise we call upon, the geographical area we cover, the number of staff we employ and the level of representation we give cannot be sustained by a union with only 50,000 working members, spread over three countries and six counties. The idea is that we merge with the TGWU and 'plug' ourselves into its infrastructure.

N.U.M. MERGER NOT THE ANSWER

workers and storemen in a single miners union. If you drive a truck or work in a workshop, if you wash the baths out or type letters, if you work in mining you are in the mineworkers union. Also, unlike many unions, branches are not based on where you choose to live, but where you work, in office, workshop or pithead.

The miners union structure predated the Soviets and involved much of the Industrial Workers of the World's (IWW) industrial unionist form. Many of the miners rank and file leaders were themselves industrial unionists. Some subscribed to the Industrial Unions of Britain - the British version of the IWW. This is not to say that the NUM or its forerunners were 'red unions', revolutionary unions or non-bureaucratic. The miners union suffered as well as most from bureaucracy, compromise, and at times, betrayal. None of that, however, dims its magnificent history as an organ of workers' self-defence. And at times, a platform or catalyst for revolutionary struggle and open class war.

The sound branch structure or semi-official 'panels' [of branches] have done much over the years to minimise some of the worst features of bureaucracy found in other unions. This can partly explain why the union has been so combative over the last hundred years or more.

WHY CHANGE NOW? The Americans have an expression, "if it ain't busted, don't fix it". We can't say

This would allow the favourable economies of scale to cover all of our services whilst reducing our costs and subs (most members of the NUM pay £4 a week in union subs and levies).

IS IT THE ANSWER? Suffocation, dilution or industrial suicide is no answer. Merger is a bureaucratic vision of salvation, offering to keep the bureaucracy in the manner to which it has become accustomed. There will be a whole new source of subscriptions to tap into. Less cynically, it is a notion which hopes to tap the traditions and power of the miners into a union with over one million workers. Hopefully this will transform the TGWU into a fighting union like the NUM. In honesty, some see the chance to seize the levers of power of the biggest and potentially most powerful union. This will greatly enhance their own personal power base.

Would the miners' tail wag the TGWU dog? Would the hefty TGWU bureaucracy allow the miners to come in and start kicking arse? Would, and indeed could, the far flung members of the T&G be transformed by belonging to the same outfit as the miners? I don't think so! Quite the reverse would probably happen, as the miners become robbed of their industrial identity, and an immediate point of interest and continuity, I feel that the union, as far as the rank and file are concerned, would become remote and so die as a living participatory organ.



DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION SUMMER SCHOOL
OPEN DAILY-FREE-ALL WELCOME-ENQUIRE WITHIN
APPEAL FROM THE COMMITTEE
FOR DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

The answer is more straightforward. We should:

- commit ourselves to ensuring the survival of the NUM as an independent industrial union;
- implement last year's conference decisions on winding up area unions and constituent bodies, and so become a single national union structure based on the branches. Where necessary there would be regional officers elected by national ballot who would be subject to recall;
- a thorough review of property owned by the union, with a view to selling off of unnecessary buildings and offices;
- a central provision of legal and welfare services and the end of unnecessary duplication;
- a review of national and area staff level, to ensure efficiency, but prevent duplication, unnecessary red tape and paper production;
- a review of all salaries and expenses paid to full-time officials, and branch officials on union duties, in order that these are based on actual financial expenses. An end to the purchase of officials' cars;
- campaign of recruitment in scab UDM areas, and of all workers in small mines and open cast workings. We should begin talks with NACODS (National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers) with a view to their becoming part of the industrial structure.

The struggle to keep the NUM as an independent union is unlikely to gain much support amongst the majority of area, or even branch officials, as this will mean 'bucking the system' and opposing the national left leadership. For this reason, the campaign to merge with the TGWU is likely to be bristling with top brass and the 'stars' of the union.

The campaign against merger, if taken to the membership, who are deeply opposed, has every chance of carrying the day in the forthcoming ballot IF we work for it and deflect the thousand and one red herrings likely to be thrown our way. Finally, we must stop the ballot becoming a bureaucratic road show in which the members are made to feel that the whole thing is a foregone conclusion.

FOR OUR HISTORIC UNION TO DIE OF APATHY WOULD BE THE CRUELEST DEATH OF ALL.

Since 1985 Goldsmiths College Outreach Education Unit has benefitted over 3,000 participants. The Unit's commitment has been to generate flexible democratic methods of education, a diverse range of studies including, amongst others, the arts and trade union studies. This has meant that disadvantaged sections in the locality - homeless and unemployed people, and those living in poverty - have access to education according to their own needs and interests. The level of excellence has been of a standard education. Many of these students have been attracted to the democratic approach of the Unit.

This April the Unit was notified that it was to close on 31st July 1991, and the staff were sacked. There was no prior consultation about the closure or job losses. The College Committee ignored the procedures set down in the University regulations. Furthermore, funding existed for the Unit to continue (and even expand its work), £170,000 per annum from the Universities Funding Council. Additionally £249,000 was offered to the Unit by the European Social Fund, plus a research grant of £26,000.

On becoming part of the University of London last year, the Warden of Goldsmiths expressed at the presentation of the charter its "...vigorous commitment to South East London and to the wider community...and to the educationally disadvantaged". Goldsmiths authorities have shown their contempt for the local community, for industrial relations, and for the disadvantaged. Earlier this year they closed down Lee Community Education Centre and 70 part-time jobs were lost. Community Education has been the first to be most savagely axed as an easy option by

the College authorities. It has been a victim of tokenism and they are banking on the marginalised position within education establishments and the vulnerable position of its users for a big fuss not to be made.

Continually, those hit worst by government policies are at the same time deprived of the resources to speak out. Threatened with a managerial lockout, a group of staff and users took 'Direct Action'. We have been ordered to leave the premises. We have a FREE DEMOCRATIC SUMMER SCHOOL in occupation. It is necessary that the building continues to be used by the people it was designed to benefit, people who would be excluded from any other educational establishment.

We have had support from Trade Unionists. The Unit used to run courses for shop stewards. Goldsmiths finds this very threatening - the victimized workers who attended a first meeting against all the cuts for all Goldsmiths staff.

The occupation is demanding the reinstatement of sacked staff and a public inquiry into the closure. As we go to press, Goldsmiths are taking court action to repossess the building and donations to cover court costs are gratefully received. (Cheques payable to Democratic Education Summer School).

We have been offered a building to carry on with the Summer School and intend to keep the heat on Goldsmiths. The new building is on Goldsmiths' doorstep, only one door up from where we are being slung out of. See you in September!

Contact: 34 Lewisham Way, New Cross, London SE14

'WINNING THE CLASS WAR'

is an excellent publication by the DAM. It's a well produced interesting pamphlet, which doesn't really seek to lecture or give a blue print of what to do next. As such, it gives a lively, if complex introduction to the ways and means of the labour parties, dodgy unions and the possibilities for class action in the nineties. Available via DA for the very meagre price of £1 plus 30 pence extra please for postage.

'Winning the Class War' A DAM-IWA publication 1991.

ISBN 873605 00 5

TO KAS...

Anarchists, in the opinion of Anatoly Lukyanov, President of the Supreme Soviet, are one of the few political forces to be taken seriously in the USSR. That was certainly not meant as a compliment for the various anarchist organisations, associations and dozens of smaller groups, but rather as a kind of warning and appeal to politicians and Party bureaucrats, perhaps even as lead-up to an anti-libertarian offensive. At demonstrations in Moscow and Leningrad the anarchists have always been present in such numbers that the Western media often have to report that "their presence could not be overlooked". Although the anarchist movement in the USSR is not on par numerically with the Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals and other forces, it makes up for this with its active membership.

The brief history of modern anarchism in the USSR is connected with glasnost, perestroika and the rise of Gorbachov, like almost all political and social culture which has developed in the last few years outside the Party and bureaucratic control. Of course, this is meant as no justification for the West's darling 'Gorby' and his lack of democratic spirit. Until the death of Chernomyrdin all

opposition was brutally suppressed.

According to Michail Tsomva, International Secretary of the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS), the roots of modern soviet anarchism are to be found in the Komsomol, the Party youth organisation which today has lost virtually all significance. In the early '80s socialist groups and discussion circles arose in almost all parts of the country. Many of them were marxist-oriented. In 1985-86 some young people at the Teachers' College in Moscow began looking at the relations between Marx and Bakunin and soon developed an anarchist leaning. Andrei Isaev, Alexandr Shubin and others then founded the club Obshina in 1987. (An obshina was a type of Russian village community - with collective production and without private property - which existed until 1917, when they were destroyed by the Bolsheviks). The club Obshina went public with a discussion meeting on 9th May 1987, and in September 1987 it published the first edition of the magazine OBSHINA, the first anarchist publication in the USSR for almost 70 years.

Together with similar discussion

circles and marxist and Social Democrat groups, the anarchists and independent socialists launched the Alliance of Socialist Federalists (ASF) and the Federation of Socialist Social Clubs (FSOK). From the latter the first specifically anarchist organisation was formed in January 1989 - the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS), which today is the largest and most significant anarchist organisation in the country.

KAS saw itself as "an independent political organisation of the non-party type, standing for stateless socialism on the basis of collective/employee property in the workplaces, industrial and regional self-management, federalism and demilitarisation" (quote from the 1st Congress program). KAS united a broad spectrum of libertarian tendencies: anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, individualists, pacifists, socialist federalists, etc. KAS has both individual members and member groups; the organisational structure is basically a loose one, with no binding statutes and no formal membership; there are no fixed membership dues. In this way KAS hopes to avoid 'paper-members' and the development of authoritarian tendencies. But this loose structure has seen a range of problems which deserve a look at.

After the 1st Congress in May 1989, two congresses were held in 1990, where substantial disagreements emerged about the direction and future activity of KAS. The second congress of the two, in March 1990, led to the resignation of a sizeable minority, among which was the Leningrad ASSA and a number of anarcho-communists and anarcho-individualists. Bone of contention was the KAS majority's position in favour of market economics; but also the issues of direct action, violence as a method of political struggle, co-operation with the Greens and the left of the Social Democratic Party were hotly debated. The standing of several Moscow KAS members in the Moscow city council elections was also contentious, although now there is unanimous rejection of such participation in future.

At the Kronstadt-Congress in March this year, previous members repeated their heavy criticism of KAS' economic platform. KAS was accused of reformism and 'libertarian liberalism'. KAS members themselves, however, put their internal differences down mainly to pragmatic issues like commitment and level of involvement. Although nobody has a monopoly on the truth, as they put it, many KAS members are said to have a rather vague understanding of anarchism. Good prospects are seen for spreading anarcho-syndicalist ideas and tendencies in the newly developing labour movement. Here there is no room for anarchist clichés. A congress is being held around the middle of the year to develop an updated KAS platform.

Today KAS encompasses 500 to 1,000 activists in around 60 cities of the USSR. Syndicalism is increasingly becoming the central ingredient, which comes as no surprise. Neither the ruling Communist Party (be it the conservative or the reformist wing) nor the pro-capitalist democratic parties can offer the population a tangible alternative, an at least general way out of the catastrophe.



The economic collapse which is now occurring looks to be setting the scene for a 'valley of tears' - one of the radical economic reform programs which less and less people have any faith in. This can be seen from the strike waves which welled up last year and which are now rising higher and higher. One year ago, as a broad labour movement began to take shape, KAS adopted a double strategy. On the one hand, it took part in the activities of the Confederation of Labour, a broad umbrella organisation made up largely of free trade unions, strike committees, workers' clubs and associations, which represented a very broad spectrum of forces all the way from bourgeois and marxist forces to anarcho-syndicalists. At the same time, KAS in Moscow set up a union called 'Resistance' which was to stick to a clearly anarcho-syndicalist model. This has since floundered, which led to KAS taking on a more active role in the Confederation of Labour. In summer 1990 the labour movement 'Information and Consultation Centre' (IKC) was set up, where information from the union and labour movement is sent and then disseminated in weekly bulletins and on radio by KAS-KOR, KAS' news service. KAS-KOR has a genuinely functional national network of correspondents who report on all that happens and is newsworthy in the labour movement. In practice, KAS-KOR is the news service of the entire Confederation of Labour. In addition, the IKC offers a legal and social counselling service for workers and is setting up an archive on the labour movement. A Workers' University is in the planning stage. Since prioritising its work in the Confederation of Labour, KAS' influence has grown; and this is at least one reason why the Confederation of Labour has not degenerated into an extended arm of pro-capitalist parties or a mouthpiece of the Marxists. Alongside its syndicalist work, KAS also devotes itself to cultural and economic topics. For example, a range of exhibitions is under preparation on 'The Life and Work of Bakunin', 'Russian Anarchism Past and Present', 'The Labour Movement and Syndicalism in Russia', 'Makhno - Myth and Reality', etc. Most arguments and certainly the most heated ones are currently on economic policy, and this is likely to

be the case for some time to come. That's logical really, due to the catastrophic state of the economy. Any political organisation which goes public gets plugged for its position on the economy above all else. In this context political utopias tend, even in the discussion stage, to recede into the background. Most organisations are united in their rejection of the Communist Party's totalitarian dictatorship. Now the most important task is getting out of the economic calamity. While it's true that more and more voices in the population are calling for a 'strong man' (sic), a 'saviour' this is not so much the expression of a desire for a new kind of dictatorship as it is of powerlessness in the face of economic chaos, the mafia, corruption and bureaucracy. KAS' economic platform does not go uncriticised from within, but does seem to be in keeping with the opinion of a majority of members. KAS envisages a system of stateless market-socialism with mixed forms of property. It goes by the assumption that the market is the only possible form of economic circulation where the economy does not gain power over people. Economic planning is seen as being directed against the people and producing nothing but bureaucracy. At the same time, KAS strictly rejects both State and private property. Private property even contradicts market principles, says Alexandr Shubin, because it carries in itself a strong tendency towards monopolisation which by its very nature destroys market-economic relations. Instead, KAS espouses collective and community property within a system of local self-management. The property of a business should belong solely to the workers of that business. In such a system the circulation of goods should be based on the competition principle, which is indispensable in any functioning economy. Autonomous, self-managed municipalities would run the system of welfare institutions (eg, hospitals, homes, kindergartens, etc); they would also be responsible for the socially weaker members of society - the elderly, the sick and children.

A congress has been arranged to flesh out this economic platform in fine detail. The address of KAS' International Secretary is: Mike Tsomva, Volzhsky Boulevard 21/26, 109462 Moscow, ph. 179-1395

INTRODUCTION

Soviet anarchism is both exciting and confusing. Anarchist groups are springing up everywhere. Whilst numerically small, the presence of anarchists is significant on demonstrations and in workplace activity. However, the lifespan of anarchist groups is often very short as the merge, split up or simply re-name themselves.

Anarchism in the USSR is different from anarchism elsewhere in the world. The modern anarchist movement there is new and almost without a history. Anarchism was crushed by the Bolsheviks to the extent that it really ceased to exist. It is only in the past 3 or 4 years that anarchists have again been openly active. The Soviet Union is a vast and totalitarian country. Internal communication is complex and difficult. Access to printing is strictly controlled by the state. Thus the distribution of information and propaganda - crucial to building a movement - is extremely hard. This isolation is compounded by the difficulty of making and maintaining international contacts. Finally, many individuals and groups refer to themselves as anarchist without really understanding what the term means. Many "anarchists" are closer to social-democracy or bolshevism. Indeed, a significant section of the Anarcho-Communist Revolutionary Union in Leningrad has recently split off to form the Trotskyist Revolutionary Proletarian Cells.

Given the isolation and complexity of soviet anarchism, it is vital that anarchists here provide support and solidarity. Through international solidarity Soviet anarchists can reclaim their history and can learn from struggles elsewhere. The process is, of course, not one-way - we have much to learn from them.

Here we present two slightly different perspectives. "Anarcho-syndicalism in the USSR today" first appeared in Direkte Aktion, the paper of the German section of the IWA (the FAU). It is broadly sympathetic to the KAS (Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists), to date the largest anarchist grouping in the USSR. Vadim Damier of the Initiative of Revolutionary Anarchists in Moscow is in contrast highly critical of the KAS's current leadership. Both refer to the KAS's current support for some kind of free market. The position of the DAM and the IWA is clear on this point. Market mechanisms, even when operated by worker's co-operatives, are based on competition and profit-taking, thus serving to exploit the working class people. A free market can play no part in our struggle towards libertarian communism. Nevertheless, we feel that now is the time to be making links with soviet anarchists not breaking them. It is early days for the new soviet anarchist movement. All the anarchist groups have made mistakes and are attempting to learn from them. The KAS is not a unified organisation. It is a broad and relatively loose grouping containing various strands of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism. In establishing links with a number of groups, we hope to play a part in the development of a truly revolutionary working class movement.

IN THE USSR.



..OR NOT TO KAS?

Interview with Vadim Damier of the Initiative of Revolutionary Anarchists (IREAN)

We met Vadim Damier in London this July. Vadim was here at the invitation of the SWP and was attending the Marxism '91. He was trying to contact the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups in Britain.

Vadim is an anarcho-syndicalist. He refers to himself as in the tradition of Kropotkin, Malatesta, Rocker and the IWA. He has recently left the KAS, because of disagreements over the KAS's promotion of the free market and over its autocratic leadership. Vadim is a founder member of IREAN (Initiative of the Revolutionary Anarchists), a small anarcho-syndicalist group in Moscow. IREAN is an active group, but has few contacts with workplace organisations.

DA: Tell us a bit about yourself and your involvement in politics?

In 1987 I was involved in the first big opposition conference and "organisation". This "organisation" was really an informal network involving virtually all sorts of political groups except fascists. It also gave rise to all sorts of different groups including the Socialist Clubs. I was never a member of the Socialist Clubs, because they were too right wing.

In 1988 I was involved in the founding of the Moscow Ecological Federation and wider attempts to establish a green movement across the USSR. There were and are a number of problems with

the green movement, being an "alliance" of political views including confirmed reformist ideas. Indeed the Green Movement has now formally split.

Through the Green Movement I met Alexander Shubin. Although Shubin and myself have been involved in the same organisations and have been friends and comrades, our views have developed in diametrically opposed directions. We now have completely different views. Basically, I am for direct action and against the free market, whilst Shubin is against direct action and for the free market. Although I still consider myself part of the Green Movement, I have left the Moscow Ecological Federation, because of the hegemony of Shubin's views within it.

In 1989, along with Shubin, I was involved in the founding of the KAS. Although I was never in complete agreement with the KAS, at the beginning I felt that that the organisation was on the right track and that it was important to struggle from within. Now, however, the right wing leadership of the Moscow KAS has gained a stranglehold on the whole organisation and has moved too far in embracing the free market and other capitalist ideas. I finally left the KAS in the middle of last year when a number of comrades were expelled from Moscow KAS. My disagreements are however primarily with the leadership of KAS and Moscow KAS. I continue to work with many individuals as well as KAS local and regional groups.

DA: What are your disagreements with the KAS?

Well, in the KAS official programme there's very little to disagree with. It states that what the KAS wants is "Socialism without a State" as the basis for a future libertarian communist society. But there's no open discussion about what these

things mean. Shubin and others within the leadership have, behind closed doors, discussed what they mean and how to achieve it. Although they appear to have reached a common position, this is not written down and is not shared widely within the KAS.

The leadership's position is that currently within the USSR there is not a developed enough technology to enable libertarian communism. Only the free market can enable the development and modernisation of technology. So, a free market along with a kind of limited capitalism should form part of a transitional programme towards a libertarian communist society. This transitional society would be based around self-managing worker-controlled factories and enterprises with some (especially environmental) control from people in the locality. These enterprises would compete on a for-profit basis and money would remain. All relationships between enterprises would be through the free market. They recognise that this would lead to a widening of inequalities and that such inequalities must be compensated for (but without a state).

Essentially that's how they see the future. I disagree.

Before I left the KAS, I argued with Shubin and others about these things. I put forward a counter proposal intended as an alternative to centralised planning and to the free market - an anarchist theory of planning from the bottom up. I envisage a federation of free communes - the self-management of production federated together with associations of consumers and with ecological and other functional groups. This federalism would be on the basis of solidarity and would decide on where, how, what and when things should be produced. Through such co-ordination a libertarian communist society could be achieved. Shubin however felt that this was much too structured, too dictatorial and too inflexible. In his opinion only the free market can allow the development of society.

The other problem with the KAS leadership is that they don't do anything. They feel that the time for direct action is past and actively discourage any activity.

It was really disagreements about both these issues coupled with the expulsions that led myself and some others within the KAS leave and to found IREAN (Initiative of the Revolutionary Anarchists). These disagreements also led to the split in the green movement.

DA: Tell us about IREAN.

IREAN is a direct action organisation. At the moment it's very small. The founding declaration was published in our paper Black

Star on 5th March 1991. In my opinion of all the Moscow groups only IREAN really understands what libertarian communism means.

IREAN currently only organises in Moscow, although we are actively seeking links in other states. We are currently talking to some potential partner groups. There are a lot of groups who refer to themselves as anarcho-communist, although many of these have anarcho-bolshevik tendencies. Most of these groups are made up of genuine revolutionaries, but their ideas are confused and not very well thought out. I am hopeful that these discussions will prove fruitful.

We work with quite a lot of groups. There are a lot of non-ideological anarchist groups and individuals who carry out some

good activity (eg demonstrations, blockades, anti-nuclear actions), but their ideas aren't really sorted out. There's also the Association of Anarchist Groups, which again is non-ideological and has no firm programme. It's really more of a network. Indeed it's quite probable that there are anarcho-capitalists within it. In the green movement there are a lot of ecological anarchists carrying out direct action. We have grassroots contacts with several local and regional KAS groups. In Moscow there's also the Anarchist Youth Front - again non-ideological - which has focussed on actions against conscription. They are trying to form a wider Federation of Anarchist Youth Groups.

A brief guide to soviet anarchist groups

The KAS (the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists)

The KAS is the largest of the anarchist groups in the USSR. Its founding congress was held in May 1989. In its early days almost all members of other anarchist groups were also members of the KAS. After each of the subsequent 3 congresses, there have been major splits with various individuals and groups withdrawing from the KAS. Disputes have centred around the increasing concentration of decision-making powers in the Moscow KAS and over the leadership's promotion of a market economy. Almost certainly some members of the KAS want to participate in local council elections. The KAS publish a regular paper, Obschina, which has a print run of 30,000 and is available through state-run newsagents. At the moment the KAS is actively co-operating with the All-Soviet Union of Young Leninist-Communists. As a result it has received premises, a telephone, an official registration number and has been able to regularly broadcast on Radio Russia and Voice of America. The KAS remains a broad grouping. According to the Zaporozhije KAS group, a group somewhat at odds with the leadership and which has made significant inroads into the workplace, the KAS must remain "a coordinating organisation for anarcho-syndicalists who work in different movements and who respect different logics and disciplines".

The ADA (the Alliance of Anarchist Movements)

The ADA group together a number of anarchist groups. The grouping was established in November 1990 as a more general anarchist (as opposed to anarcho-syndicalist) alternative to the KAS. The ADA was formed by the AKRS (the Revolutionary Union of Anarcho-Communists), the ASSA (the Association of Free Anarcho-Syndi-

calists) and the AKA (the Association of Anarchists in Kazan). The Moscow group of the ADA, the Union of Anarchists in Moscow, bills itself as uniting the Moscow AKRS, the Union of Anarchists, the dissident anarchist fringe and the Christian anarchists. Members of the ADA produce a number of regular publications. The Anarchists Club in Nizhnij Novgorod is a member of both the KAS and the ADA.

The KAU (the Confederation of Ukrainian Anarchists)

The KAU is a regional grouping uniting member and non-members of the KAS.

The Black Front (or League of Federalists)

This loose grouping gathers together IREAN (the Initiative of Revolutionary Anarchists), AROM (the Union of Young Radical Anarchists) and the Anarcho-Socialist Revolutionary Group. IREAN was in part a split from the Union of Anarchists in Moscow. IREAN criticises this organisation as centralist and for its misrepresentation of the KAS.

The UAB (the Shock Anarchist Battalion)

A direct action orientated organisation whose membership overlaps with the ADA.

The AFM (the Young Anarchists' Front)

A group of young people representing different branches of anarchism. The AFM mainly co-ordinates direct actions against conscription.

Source: SMOT English Language Bulletin.

FREE CROATIA ...UNFREE CROATIANS

As we go to press Yugoslavia stands on the brink of civil war. In Croatia, recently declared as independent, the federal Yugoslav army is siding with local ethnic serbs against Croatian nationalism. The EEC, promoting itself as mediator, is desperately seeking to establish west european hegemony through a negotiated political solution. Media attention is focussed on the rivalries between the nationalities within the Yugoslav Federation. Croatia is presented as a pro-western modern nation struggling to break free from autocratic (serbian) state communism. Precious little attention has been given to strikes and factory occupations that have taken place throughout Yugoslavia over the past 2 or 3 years. The working class is militant and angry. But, of course, our ruling class is anxious as the Yugoslav bureaucracy that the problem is not seen in class terms.

Yugoslavia is a federation of 6 republics and 2 autonomous provinces. The state was established following the Second World War by Tito's League of Communists. In establishing control over the working class, Tito sought to preserve and foster the various nationalisms and inter-ethnic racisms within Yugoslavia. The state bureaucracy operated a decentralised form of central planning that gave a degree of autonomy to the republican and provincial bureaucracies. Given this power base, it is hardly surprising that these bureaucracies have responded to working class militancy with the promotion of nationalist movements. It is important to stress that all the nationalist movements in Yugoslavia are led by sections of the existing ruling class. The aim is to strengthen the position of the ruling class whether that be within the existing federal state or through some redrawn regional boundaries. These nationalisms - Croatian, Serbian or Slovenian - are a direct attack on the Yugoslav working class. As such they have everything in common with the nationalisms of the EEC member states and the new european racism. Croatian nationalism is particularly brutal....

Whenever the Nation gets Liberation, the way from frustration is the railway station....

During the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia, German soldiers were appalled at the viciousness of the Croat massacres, though used by them to Nazi atrocities and cowed by military excuses and intimidation. Croat nationalists committed the most



atrocious massacres on the Jewish minority, as expected, but more enthusiastically on the entire non-Roman Catholic population, and not just the anti-Nazi partisans. Serbs and Orthodox Christians who had been neighbours for years were wiped out, sometimes given the chance of conversion. It was a phenomenon combining the fervour of the Inquisition with extreme nationalism and taking advantage of Nazi racial genocide techniques (though the racial - or even national - difference between Serbs and Croats is negligible to an outsider).

During years of Turkish domination in Eastern Europe, Croat Nationalist leaders imbued with the most extreme bigoted Catholicism exploited resentment at oppression and nurtured sentiments of self-determination which they took into the Austrian Empire. With the rearrangement of Europe after WWI, when many small nations got self-determination, socialist or radical leaders (as in Poland) took over as dictators or would-be dictators and utilised any reactionary force such as the Church and most became clerical-fascist. In Croatia they started from that point and moved rightwards from there.

Though in Germany, for instance, important sections of the Church were prepared to dissent from the Nazi regime at times, this was never done in a Catholic country. It is noticeable that only in Euzkadi (the Basque country) did any section of the Church oppose Franco in the civil war and after, when a State the Church supported was suppressing a people totally loyal to the Church.

Nationalists are not the Nation

Of course, not all Croats were Nationalists or more than nominally Catholic, and certainly not all were of that political Catholicism which leads to clerical-fascism. Because of the centralising feature of the kingdom of Yugoslavia, however, their parliamentary representation was Croat Nationalist. In their private lives they could live peaceably with Orthodox Christians, Protestants and Jews. There were some politically inspired national or religious clashes but no more than elsewhere. Most people could no more understand than they do here why the Nationalist politicians made such a big thing of it. As always there were Croats who thought for themselves and moved to other ideologies (Tito, for instance, was a Croat). The Nationalists, however, insisted it was as much a sin not to vote "Croat" as to go to an Orthodox Church.

When the Nazis moved in, the partisans resisted strongly. At first these were both Serb and Croat. General Mihailovitch did as much as Tito to oppose the German occupation, and the Allies were inclined to support him as being rightwing and dependable until overwhelming pressure from the Nationalist politicians forced the Croat divisions into being pro-Hitler. They could not miss the chance offered them of an independent State they could dominate and the fact they could wipe out everyone who was not baptised their way brought the clergy on their side.

They were not unduly persecuted after the War except for individuals, perhaps because Tito understood their mentality (though it did suppress religion). But the Croat Nationalists, who defined themselves as Roman Catholics, certainly felt persecuted, and only a year or two ago were having visits from the Virgin Mary herself to tell them so.

With the break-up of State Communism everywhere they have the chance of a comeback. For this reason Nationalists are trying to break away and have their separate State, and already one hears the classic Tsarist solution to the "Jewish problem" (let one-third emigrate, kill one-third and convert the remaining third) - only applying this to Serb Orthodox Christians. Leaving aside the lack of appeal this must have to Serbs, many Croats tremble when they hear this because it means total power for the Nationalist politicians and clergy. (If a Serb gets killed for heresy, what is the penalty for a Croat in not attending Church or not being a Nationalist?)

Most Serbs and most Croats don't want civil war, into which they are being dragged and no more want to take sides than anyone else. Most now don't want State communism, nor do many want nationalism. On the whole many Serbs, providing they aren't living there - since the railway was invented everyone doesn't stay in the place their ancestors were born - would like Croatia to go, tarry, sink or swim. Probably most Croats would prefer to ditch the politicians who have Beirut on the agenda, but the class struggle has been so diverted under State communism that they have little immediate chance of unity.

Nationalism - clerical fascist or not - is no alternative. Class struggle may divide nations but it solidifies people. State repression no more justifies the unreasonable and impossible nature of Croat Nationalism and religious-racial bigotry than does the reverse.

U. S. S. R.

Now that strike action is illegal in the USSR, union activists are increasingly being victimised by the state.

In Bielorrussia, following the successful resumption of strikes in Kuzkas, Dombas, Varkuta and Minsk this March, activists and strike committee members have been singled out by the KGB and the bureaucrats. Members of the Orcha Town and the Minsk Tractor Factory Strike Committees as well as several individual workplace activists and have been charged with taking illegal strike action. SMOT and the Conference of Strike Committees of Bielorrussia are calling for international protests and solidarity.

Messages of protest to the state authorities at:

USSR - Bielorrussia
Minsk 220129
Rebuplikkanskaya Prokuratura

Messages of Solidarity to:

USSR - Bielorrussia
Minsk 220094
Prospekt Rokassovskovo
Dom 12, Kov, 1, kv 550
Matveyenko Anatoly
(Metro professionalaavaya
Rabotchaya Solidarnost - Interprofessional Workers Solidarity)

At the same time in the Ukraine, the Coordinating Council of the Union of Socialist Trade Unions of The Ukraine (Sotsprof) is facing repressive actions by the state authorities. Sotsprof's bank accounts have been closed and union premises are increasingly under threat. Sotsprof are calling for international solidarity.

Messages of protest to Dnepropetrovsk City Council:
USSR - Ukraine
Dnepropetrovsk
City Council of People's Deputies

Messages of solidarity to:
USSR - Moscow
9-aja Parkovaja ul., No. 2, appt. 29
Sergey KHRAMOV

Source: SMOT representative Paris.

Two young anarchists have been charged with "bandit armed action" after a KGB attack in Moscow. On 12th March at a peaceful protest outside the KGB headquarters A. Rodionov and A. Kuznetsov were attacked by two unknown passers-by. Of course they defended themselves. The attackers turned out later to be KGB. The young anarchists now face 7 years in prison. The Moscow Union of Anarchists are appealing for solidarity protests at Soviet embassies. For more information contact
USSR - MOSCOW 125195
Belomorskaya street,
No. 22, corp 1, appt. 123
Tikhomirova E.I.

Source: Moscow Union of Anarchists flyer.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Six members of the Czech Anarchy Union are in prison after disturbances at the Czechoslovakia General Exhibition. This extravaganza advertises the potential for profit in the newly "democratized" Czechoslovakia. The six have all been charged with civil disturbance and attacking police officers after two demonstrations in May. On the second occasion the anarchists were attacked by fascists, but only anarchists were arrested. The six are Filip NOVAK, Antonin VOTHUBEK, Daniel VESELY, Jakub POLAK, Petr SIPOS and Miroslav KHUN.

Further information, messages of solidarity:

A + KONTRA
Valdstjenska 14
Praha 1
CSFR

Source: A + KONTRA (Czech anarchist paper).

USA - WSA CONFERENCE

Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA), the US Section of the IWA, held its 8th annual convention in May. The WSA was founded in 1984 and coordinates anarchist unionist activities in Alabama, California, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, New York, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. WSA members are active in a variety of areas, including labour solidarity, workplace organising, anti-sexist issues, anti-racist issues, environmental safety and anti-militarism.

WSA members from around the United States gathered in Fort Wayne, Indiana on the 25th and 26th of May. As is customary on these occasions, the work of the WSA and the IWA more generally was reviewed and discussed. The focus of the convention was very much on the practical issues of how to get things done. Delegates agreed on the production of pamphlets on anti-militarism, anarcho-syndicalism and feminism, and on workplace organisation.

The convention also agreed to support the creation of a Free Women's Group, autonomous of the WSA, and affiliated to the international Free Women Network.

One of the more controversial issues at the convention was on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW, also known as the Wobblies, have recently expressed interest in affiliating to the IWA. Although the IWW have members throughout the world, most members are in the US. A merger is, therefore, of particular interest to the WSA. Of course it is early days and there are many potentially thorny issues to be resolved. Indeed formal talks are yet to start. However a favourable outcome would result in a more united worldwide anarcho-syndicalist union.

The WSA produce an excellent quarterly paper, Ideas and Action. Copies are available for £2 inc p&p from DA.

FRANCE

In Ermont a district on the outskirts of Paris, Bamaro Fofana, a young North African, died in police custody this May. An official police inquiry absolved the police of any responsibility. It found that Bamaro "committed suicide" whilst handcuffed and with four cops! He had "jumped" from a fifth floor window. This young man's death is not an isolated incident. It occurs against a backdrop of state neglect and increasing right-wing and fascist activity.

Ermont is one of the outer "suburbs" that surround Paris. In these "suburbs" the housing is poor; the shops few and expensive; public transport awful; and, any other facilities almost non-existent. They have been ravaged by municipal neglect and face increasingly high levels of unemployment and poverty. Police brutality and racist attacks are commonplace. Right-wing vigilante groups operate without hindrance from the police. At Ermont, for example, vigilantes policing a local supermarket have been free to attack local people in a seemingly random manner. Over the past year throughout France, young working class people have been fighting back against these appalling living conditions. The police response has been harsh and repressive as Bamaro's death illustrates.

The Local of the CNT, the Confederation Nationale des Travailleurs, the French section of the IWA, are actively involved in the protests against Bamaro's death. Their leaflets says:

"Against the cops and vigilantes in the neighbourhood! Solidarity in Struggle! the authorities' response to the revolt is police repression to criminalise the youth In our communities there is NOTHING, no cinema, no decent concerts, no places to socialise, nothing but balcony flower competitions These days to be

young and black in police custody is dangerous At Ermont it is clear that the legitimate demand of the family of the young student killed, to know the truth about his death, will only, achieve success if the youth self-organise themselves At Ermont, as elsewhere, we must demand:

- Free leisure facilities
- Self-managed local centres
- The right to organise festivals and concerts
- Decent living conditions and housing
- The boycott of shops policed by vigilantes
- Support for the family of Bamaro Fofana."

Further information, messages of solidarity:
Jeunes d'Ermont
Groupe Antifasciste Durruti
(Youth of Ermont - Durruti Anti-Fascist Group)
BP 76, 95126 ERMONT CEDEX

OR

CNT - AIT
Unione Locale Ermont-Eaubonne-St Gratien
BP 56, 95602, EAUBONNE CEDEX.

Source: "Le Combat Syndicaliste", paper of the CNT.

ASYLUM SEEKERS FIGHTBACK

Two hundred refugees, mainly Africans and Turkish Kurds, have gone on hunger strike in a bid to overturn the rejection of their application for asylum in France.

The Information and Solidarity Network (known as the 'Reseau'), an umbrella organisation set up by the Federation of Associations of Solidarity with Immigrant Workers (FASTI), the Movement Against

Racism and for Amity between Peoples (MRAP) and other prominent groups, organised a large demonstration in Paris in May. The turn-out, which was over ten thousands, surprised even the organisers and certainly contributed to gains which were subsequently won in negotiations between the Reseau and the government. The ministry for Social Affairs promised asylum-seekers better facilities for presenting their case, a 'watchdog committee' composed of independent observers, a revision of existing regulations before the end of June, and a three-month freeze on deportations of those who arrived in France before 1st January 1990. The Reseau is demanding permanent residence and work permits for all those who came before that date, and a re-consideration of the cases of those who came the following year.

POLICE BRUTALITY

It now seems almost certain that the death of Aissa Ilich, the North African teenager who died in custody following a severe asthma attack, was linked to the brutal beating he suffered at the time of his arrest. Both the regular police and the CRS (riot squad) agree that the beating took place; however each force is blaming the other.

'INNOCENT OF RACIAL DEFAMATION'

Fascist leader Le Pen was cleared of charges against him when remarks he made referring to a "Jewish international" which "played an important role in the creation of the anti-national spirit" were judged by the court as not racially defamatory.



French Jewish youths hit back against Le Pen's fascists

SCANNER APPEAL

THE PRODUCTION OF DA IS NOW ALMOST COMPLETELY COMPUTERISED, HOWEVER WE DESPERATELY NEED A SCANNER TO COMPLETE THIS TASK. THE SCANNER WILL ALLOW US TO INPUT AND MANIPULATE PHOTOGRAPHS AND GRAPHICS WITHIN THE COMPUTER AND BEST OF ALL SCAN ANY TYPED TEXT SENT TO US AND RECOGNISE IT AS TYPED, SAVING US LOADS OF TIME AND HASSLE, ALLOWING US TO DO A BETTER PAPER TOTAL NEEDED APPROXIMATELY £750

'IRELAND UNFREE..'

Fridav

A forthcoming DAM publication from a libertarian working class viewpoint. Due out in September.

As usual, these things cost money: Advance orders welcome - Price £2.50/£2.95 including p&p Bulk Orders available. Contact DA, PO Box 574, London SE4 1DR

INTERNATIONAL

The CNT-AIT (Anarcho-Syndicalist Union, Spanish section of the IWA) was the origin of the first rural strike in Andalusia to take place in ten years. The strike paralysed the olive harvest throughout the entire province of Seville, and last a month and a half in some villages. It culminated with the involvement of 90% of the province's agricultural workers. It came to a successful conclusion with an agreement encompassing the principal demands.

strike was massive. In the province of Seville more than 100 localities were on strike.

The CNT and the SOC acted to spread the strike to other provinces. For example the CNT organised a general strike in the area of Fernan Nunez (province of Cordoue), where other villages joined the strike. In order to stop this development, the bosses of this province hastily signed a 'collective' agreement with the CCOO and UGT unions on 16th January.

ANDALUSIA

The event happened as follows. In November last year, members of the CNT in Pedrera, recognising the importance of the coming olive harvest, thought the time had come to try and improve their living conditions. Whilst in different economic sectors wages more or less followed the rising costs of living, those of the 'jornaleros' (1) have remained the same. They made contact with the other existing unions in the village, the union of agricultural workers (SOC) and the Workers Commissions (CCOO).

A basis of common demands was arrived at. The principal demands were an increase in the daily wage from 2,865 to 3,500 pesetas (approximately equivalent to £15 to £20), 36 working hours a week and, at the proposal of the CNT, that for each man hired a woman should also be hired.

The unions convened an assembly of the entire village, which decided on an indefinite general strike from 11th December. This decision was rapidly passed on to other villages in the area. For ten days the 'jornaleros' of Pedrera were the only ones on strike. But other general assemblies were organised and progressively other villages joined the movement. On 19th December, in solidarity with the 'jornaleros', workers in other industries, including bars and shops, went on strike in Pedrera.

At Christmas the bosses, along with the General Workers Union (UGT - socialist) declared in the Press that the strike was illegal. All the same, the movement continued to grow. By 3rd January 19 villages were on strike in the provinces of Seville, Malaga and Granada.

7th January was the date planned in the province of Seville for the signing of the agreement between the bosses and the CCOO and UGT unions, the bosses not wanting to know about either the CNT or the SOC. The bosses declared to the unions present at the negotiations that this year no rise would be given in wages...the UGT then joined the strike. On 8th and 9th January the

Eventually, on 18th January, an agreement was signed for the province of Seville by the CNT, SOC, CCOO, UGT and one of the two bosses associations, that of the small firms. This agreement was only binding for the employers who accepted it, the workers decided to boycott the others. Before being hired, the 'jornaleros' ask the boss if he accepts the agreement. If he does not, they refuse to work. Finally, a certain number of bosses of the association that were not signatories individually accepted the rate so as not to be left with their crop of olives on their hands, or to be more precise, on their trees.

This struggle was won due to the stubbornness and determination of workers living in extremely difficult conditions, their existence dependent on seasonal employment and unemployment benefit when they qualified (2). It was also aided by numerous solidarity demonstrations. An example amongst thousands: comrade Carlos Molina, Uruguayan musician, on 6th January sang in front of 3,000 strikers at Pedrera.

We make no apology for the following little anecdote that gives a clearer insight to the lives of our friends in the CNT. At a joint meeting the leaders of the UGT, CCOO and SOC all spoke in the same vein of the Andalusian people's misery, the oppression of women, etc. When it came to Pepe Gomez's turn, general secretary of the CNT, he said: "What can I tell you about the country? I'm from the dockyards (Puerto Real). I'll recite you a poem...." to rapturous applause.

The above article is from No 0 of L'Affranchi, publication of the Friends of the AIT, Lousanne.

L'Affranchi, Reflexions Sociales, Case Postale 213, 1000 Lousanne 6, SWITZERLAND

(1) Casual agricultural workers hired by the day. In Andalusian villages each morning you can see unemployed men and women waiting for employers to pass through and hire the men and more rarely women that they need.

(2) To receive unemployment benefit you need to have worked a certain number of days minimum in the year, if not you receive nothing. For this reason the importance of demanding that women be hired.

Dear Readers, Subscribers, Distributors, Bookshops.

Welcome to this issue of DIRECT ACTION.

We have recently changed the way in which DA is produced and this has taken us some time to organise. Apologies therefore for any delay in receiving this issue which we hope you will enjoy.

Distribution note. There have also been changes to the distribution of DA. this shouldn't have affected many people but if it did please let us know.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM FOR BEGINNERS

THE 'F' WORD FUSS

'FEDERALISM' is a word much in the news recently, in relation to the arguments amongst our state bosses over the future shape of European government, then in relation to the conflicts in Yugoslavia-Croatia-Sloveni. It has been said that the word has as many meanings as people who use it. Look at organisations calling themselves Federations (ie, The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation) and the Swiss State (!). Anarcho-syndicalists use the words 'federalism' and 'federation' positively. The most famous of anarcho-syndicalist organisations, the Spanish CNT, describes itself as a Confederation.

Rudolph Rocker defined federalism in opposition to centralism in his 1938 book 'Anarcho-Syndicalism':

"But centralism, that artificial organisation from above downward which turns over the affairs of everybody in a lump to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; and this crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification, and permits no independent action. The organisation of anarcho-syndicalism is based on the principles of federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every member

above everything else and recognizing only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common convictions."

It is clear that no state or combination of states can be 'federalist' in the anarcho-syndicalist sense. In the light of events in Eastern Europe, look at the words of the Russian anarchist, Kropotkin. At present we see former empires (the Russian, the Yugoslav) breaking up into competing capitalist statelets. He said "the attempts to bring together constituent parts of the Russian Empire...under a central authority are doomed to failure". Kropotkin foresaw another solution to the question of regional and ethnic identity and self-determination - a solution whereby the old empires became workers and peasants federations and "a time when each component of the federation will itself be a federation, a free federation of rural communes and free cities, and I believe too that Western Europe will also move in this direction".

Kropotkin exalted the 'Paris Communes' because "communal independence was a means and social revolution its aim". Future communes would be ideally "communalist" but also "communist... revolutionary in politics and in the field of production and exchange". It is important that federalism, seen in an anarcho-syndicalist terms is not only a

matter of democratically accountable structures (vital though they are) but of politics and long term revolutionary aims. Workers organisations cannot co-exist happily along side the centralised state, as Kropotkin puts it, the federal structure will remain "a branch of the state, hampered in all its actions, always on the verge of coming into conflict with the state and certain to be defeated in its struggle with it." There can be no dual control.

Clearly, the federalism of the European Community's Jacques Delors is 'centralist', whereby the rights and liberties of individuals, groups and even states are only determined by the CENTRAL authority of what is a European super-state. Petty nationalists like Thatcher and Ridley who object to this do so not out of concern for the individual worker or the working class as a whole, but out of a desire to maintain and strengthen the Capitalist Nation State.

Likewise, the 'federalism' of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation was the phony federalism of a body manipulated by a single centralised and hierarchical party, Militant. Some of the Federation's constituent parts built up from the bottom did operate successfully along genuine federalist principles, and formed new links across to other groups, and new groups and campaigns around the poll tax sprang up and still function to varying degrees.

The 'Federation' Committee drew itself away from the activist levels of organization that it feared so much, where democratic control was maintained, when it felt confident enough to survive without them. It shrivelled as any kind of useful body..

Who with any sense and credibility sends donations to the All Britain Federations to cover the debts incurred, apparently on our behalf? Ther term 'federation' was helpful in attracting people to the All Britain 'Federation' who were looking for fresh means to organise that included them, wherever they were - and to an extent it was used by Militant in some areas as a short term structure to build up the support. But Militant went on to bastardise the concept. It became 'newspeak' along with words they used like 'democracy and 'unity'.

Leninists make a habit of this. Ultimately they believe in centralized authoritarian government, despite changing/switching terms, demands and support for democratic methods at opportune moments. Promptly they will dump these with a perceived change in trend to capture support or, when the power is in their hand, to tell the rest of us to go to hell. Lenin's 'All power to the Soviets' is the main (and, sorry, the most boring) example. Leninists loathe federalism, often under the guise that it is somewhat 'wishy washy', when actually it is a threat to them, taking power, because it promotes direct workers control. The Socialist Workers Party argues that 'democratic centralism' is necessary in order to take on a capitalist centralised power efficiently.

In his book 'The Unknown Revolution', Chapter 5 on 'Personal Experience', Volene (Russian anarcho-syndicalist) cites Petrograd, late 1917, at the factory Nobel, with its 4,000 workers. The Bolsheviks wanted it closed and the workers to be made redundant, since the various difficulties the government faced at the time made it impossible for them to run the factories from central government efficiently. Chliappikoff (Workers Commissar) tells the fac

tory workers it must close and be opened up as a plan of co-ordinated factories. The factory workers approach Volene, of the anarcho-syndicalist union, and ask him to represent them at a mass meeting by government officials and workers because they disagree. He asks them at the meeting if they, the workers, feel capable of running the factory; they say yes, they know how to run it properly. But the officials insist on closure. In answer Volene says:

"...the government has just replied to you. It registers itself as powerless to assist and plans to close down the factory, despite your decision and your interests...the government, your government (sic) has no reason to deprive you of your earned bread... Me, I am not of your government, neither do I wish to be. No government is able to do what is necessary for you, no organization holds life in general." (general apoplexy by Commissar Chliappikoff - thunderous applause by factory workers.)

So much for centralized power, dynamism and efficiency of the Bolsheviks, who would rather close down a factory that can be productive and feed people (as they did) than see workers' control through federalism prosper.

The federalism we hold in our tradition is that in which all the workers have an equal part and control, the international federalism promoted by the International Workers Association.

Rudolph Rocker's 'Anarcho-Syndicalism' is published by Phoenix Press, BM Books, London WC1N 3XX (or see page 11 - Merchandise) Volene's 'The Unknown Revolution' is published by Freedom Press Camillo Berneri's 'Peter Kropotkin - His Federalist Ideas'

SUBSCRIBE

Subscription to DIRECT ACTION is really nice and easy. DA is sent around the world for the following costs.

Within the UK only £3.50 for 6 issues, and £6.00 for 12 issues.

Direct Debit is nice and handy for us, (our bank details are Account No: 07216904, Sort code 010488, Account name 'Direct Action' at the LadyBarn Branch of Nat West).

Europe is a bit more expensive but blame the post office 6 issues is £4.50 and for 12 only £8.00

North and South America is more pricey with 6 copies at £6.50 and 12 copies at £12.00

The most expensive is unfortunately the rest of the world. 6 copies at £7.00 and 12 at £13.00

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PUBLIC MEETING
with
ALEXANDR CHUKAEV
Paris Representative for SMOT

7.30 pm Thursday 27th August
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London W1

There has been a change of venue:

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION
are holding their Carnival
on
SUNDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER
AT HACKNEY DOWNS.

Donations will be gratefully received
Contact: Box BM, London WC1N 3XX.

RADIO LIBERTAIRE TEN YEARS ON

It is the 10th anniversary of the anarchist radio based in Paris - 'Radio Libertaire'. Future events are all based in Paris:

1st September: the first five presenters back on air for a special historical account;
28th September: a public debate on anarchism and prison;
4th October: live magazine programme in esperanto for the 10 years of Radio Esperanto;
Also in October: anarcho-syndicalists organise debate and film projection on the workers movement;
30th November: a whole evening of comedy films.

PLUS OTHER EVENTS

Contact: 'La voix sans maitre....sans publicite'
145 rue Amelot
75011 Paris
Tel: 0101 33 48 05 34 08

or D Chalaud
7 Topyand Square
Richmond
Surrey TW9 2DE

The DA group wish to thank the following for donations to Direct Action:

Manchester DAM - £100

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to everyone, from those within and outside the Direct Action Movement, for their help and contributions to this issue, without which it would not have appeared! Special thanks to the production group and to Albert for technical assistance and loads of patience

STOP PRESS

The position for control of the Soviet Union is now more than ever up for grabs. Gennady Yanayev's (et al) position is no less precarious than Gorbachev's was, with a divided army and the influence of Boris Yeltsin to keep him looking over his shoulder.

Gorbachev's promised economic reforms were a direct result of a disintegrating Soviet economy, which could neither sustain itself of feed it's people. The free market could not and was never intended, primarily, for the purpose of feeding people either.

Yanayev's promises to increase wages and lower food prices by the same token will prove unsustainable whilst a privileged class remains, and it is for the protection of this privileged class (the bureaucracy) that Yanayev siesed power.

Boris Yeltsin like all good opportunists was at the right place at the right time. Yeltsin called for a general strike and civil disobedience. Obviously we hope that the working class will continue to mobilise in their own interests but we also hope that Yeltsin will never gain the leadership of any movement created out of the current situation.

Meanwhile our western-capitalist leaders can continue to express outrage at the coup, but what they are interested in is which leader they can strike a deal with to enable the continued expansion of

international capitalism into the Soviet Union.

The Responsibility to destroy the old stalinist bureaucracy once and for all lies not with Tweedledum or Tweedledee, The "reformers" or the "conservatives"; bread cannot be baked with military might or American dollars. The responsibility lies with the organised revolutionary working class. The glimmer of "political freedom" experienced in the Soviet Union over the last 5 years cannot be so easily crushed.

The call to active resistance by the Soviet people from sections of the British ruling class has recently been demonstrated to be a most vicious kind of hypocrisy by the states refusal to allow Sasha Chukaev into the country.

Sasha (the official representative of the SMOT, The Russian Interprofessional free trade union) was to visit Britain this week and was due to address two public meetings organised by the DAM-IWA to be held in Leeds and London.

The SMOT has been active for several decades, surviving frequent attempts to suppress it. Recently it has been able to organise openly. However the KGB and the organs of the Soviet state continued to oppress the SMOT and other opposition groups. Since 1978 the SMOT has taken an independent stand of party politics, to concentrate on fighting for the interests of it's members.

The meetings were called to publicise the existence of the free trade union movements in Russia and publicise the continued oppression.

All of a sudden Sasha's visa to visit the U.K. has been revoked by the British embassy in Paris.

For all their fine words the British establishment are fundamentally incabable and unwilling to support the reality of opposition to the bureaucracy

It is imperative that Sasha is able to speak as a worker, now more than ever.

The meetings in both Leeds and London are going ahead. We hope that we have the opportunity to welcome Sasha Chukaev to the U.K.

MEETINGS

7:30pm Thursday 27th August
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square London W1

7:30pm Saturday 29th August
West Indian center
10 Laycock Place
Leeds

MORE NEXT ISSUE

Direct Action

THIS IS THE DAM

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.

2. Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.

3. We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self managed production for need, not profit.

4. In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.

5. We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is by independent organisation in the work place and the community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers' organisations must

be controlled by the workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers movement. Any and all delegates of such workers' organisations must be subject to immediate recall by the workers.

6. We are opposed to all states and state institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is world wide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all states do not exist to protect the workers of those states, they exist only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.

7. We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and environment.

8. The Direct Action Movement is resolved to initiate, encourage and wholeheartedly support the creation of independent workers' unions based on the principles of anarcho-syndicalism.

9. The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism: a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

CONTACTS - UPDATE

NATIONAL OFFICERS

NATIONAL SECRETARY, Manchester DAM-IWA, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW
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MIDLANDS

NOTTINGHAM DAM-IWA, PO Box 12, Carlton, Notts NG4 3SW
For contacts in Leamington, Leicester, Northants and Worcester, write to National Secretary

NORTH EAST

LEEDS DAM-IWA C/o Box DAM, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS2
MIDDLESBOROUGH DAM-IWA, C/o Leeds DAM
SOUTH YORKSHIRE DAM-IWA, PO Box 122, Doncaster, S Yorkshire
For contacts in Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Sheffield and York, write to North East Regional Secretary, C/o Leeds DAM

NORTH WEST

BURNLEY DAM-IWA, 12 Kingsland Grove, Burnley, Lancs BB11 3FY
LIVERPOOL DAM-IWA, PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP
MANCHESTER DAM-IWA, PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15
PRESTON DAM-IWA, PO Box 172, Preston, Lancs PR1
For contacts in Cumbria, Lancaster, Salford and Stockport, write to North West Regional Secretary, C/o Burnley DAM

SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH DAM-IWA, PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB
GLASGOW DAM-IWA, PO Box 239, Glasgow G3 6RA

EAST ANGLIA

NORWICH DAM-IWA, PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB

SOUTH WEST

BRISTOL DAM-IWA, C/o National Secretary
For contacts in Avon, Devon and Plymouth, write to National Secretary

SOUTH EAST

SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE DAM-IWA, PO Box 245 St Albans, Herts
DEPTFORD DAM-IWA, PO Box 574, Brockley, London SE4 1DL
EAST LONDON DAM-IWA, C/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
NORTH LONDON DAM-IWA, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
SOUTH LONDON DAM-IWA, PO Box 761, Camberwell SDO, London SE5
For contacts in Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire, write to South East Regional Secretary, C/o North London DAM

IRELAND

There is no section of the International Workers' Association in Ireland, but we maintain links with:
ORGANISE! (Anarcho-Syndicalist group based in the Six Counties),
C/o 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast 1, Ireland

All other international contacts should be sought via the International Secretary.

NETWORK FORUM

Donations or Standing Order payments in support in Industrial Networks should be made to:

NETWORK SOLIDARITY FUND,
Acc No 12282083, Sort Code 16-16-25,
Royal Bank of Scotland, Manchester Chorlton-cum-Hardy Branch,
44 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 1AR

Send any donations, or notify of any Standing Orders, to Network Forum, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW

INDUSTRIAL

Council Workers Network, C/o Manchester DAM and North London DAM
Transport Workers Bulletin, C/o Deptford DAM, PO Box 574, London SE4 1DL
Despatch Industry Workers Union, C/o 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU
Independent Education Network, PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW
Health Workers Federation, C/o PO Box 761, Camberwell, Londn SE5

OTHER

IDEAS & ACTION (US Anarcho-Syndicalist paper), PO Box 40400, San Fransisco, CA 94140, USA
REBEL WORKER (Australian Anarcho-Syndicalist paper), PO Box 92, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia
ANTI-FASCIST ACTION (North/South/East/South-East London Branches), BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

DIRECT ACTION

Trafalgar Square Defendant's Campaign (TSDC) have moved.

Contact TSDC and the Prisoners Support Group at:

Trafalgar Square Defendant's Campaign,

c/o Brixton Law Centre,
506 Brixton Road,
London SW9.
071 738 7586.

The life and times of a shop steward !

Shopfloor militants of trades unions see the unions as workers' organisations built on solidarity and collective action because this is what they themselves are committed to, and this is the role they play in the union and workplace. Because they associate shopfloor organisation with the union under whose banner they fight, they are often willing, for a time at least, to be involved in the branch and regional structures. This involvement is usually motivated by a desire to have access to the information monopolised by the union structures, and is the beginning of either a career as a union official or disillusionment.

Your 'average' union member's view of the union is personified by their shop steward or official, who is contacted for information or help in a personal grievance or disciplinary action, or in case of a dispute. The spirit of 'an injury to one is an injury to all' means that individual problems are the business of any working class organisation, as are collective disputes. The hierarchical nature of trades unions (down to the role of shop steward as often taught and practised) means that they are not the concern of a working class organisation, but the subject of a client/service relationship. They are not discussed on the shopfloor but are the preserve of their representative for their case. The differentiation between collective organisation and individual client services is at the heart of the contradiction inherent in the existing unions. It is the shop steward with one foot on the ladder of union hierarchy and the other on the shop floor, in whom the contradiction is strongest.

Anarcho-syndicalists must recognise this contradiction and explain it. Others who are critical of the existing unions ignore it and take up simple solutions. The 'Broad Lefts' and 'Rank and Files' take the view of the shopfloor militant, described, seeing the shop stewards and active branch officials (well, some are!) as the backbone of the union, and they try to elect individuals to positions further up the hierarchy, or to tinker with the hierarchy so that it more resembles their own image. 'Left' or 'Council' communists (whose view has been adopted by some anarchists in Class War and the ACF) take the easy way out, denouncing the unions as anti-working class from top to bottom, lumping syndicalism in with reformist unions for

good measure, and implying that all shop stewards are traitors. Me, I'm a shop steward and an anarcho-syndicalist. I think my union (NALGO) is rotten from the branch upwards, but don't visualise myself as a traitor with an identity crisis, or a reformist-in-disguise. (This is not self-delusion, my mates would tend to agree with me.)

The contradictions have been lived out by many groups of workers, most notably the miners in 1984-85, who fought both for their jobs and 'their' union, against the UDM in some areas, but who found the NUM and the TUC inadequate in the struggle, since they had more to lose than their members' chains. The unions from national level down to the branches are of a capitalist nature, and the workplace organisation is potentially anti-capitalist. The contradiction is rarely obvious except when the needs of capital and the state require the smashing of the union organisation. It is because workplace organisation is *potentially* (but not necessarily) anti-capitalist.

The link between trades union capitalism and individual client services to union members is summed up by the letter I got from NALGO. I was wondering what ballot it could be. I read the ominous words, "Important Membership Benefit...As a member of NALGO many of you [bad grammar!] will already know how valuable a credit card can be" — you need to have a credit card scam going to live on these wages! — "...this is the only credit card endorsed by NALGO and the TUC..."

This came about a week after we got paid. Most workers would have already paid the bills and looked hard at the pathetic amount left for weekly expenses (such as food). Credit card accounts are not going to fit on what money is left. It will, however, encourage workers desperate enough to get into debt.

The card is offered through the TUC's own bank, Unity Trust, billed as the 'Unity First [an old right wing slogan!] Mastercard. I'll hazard that the overwhelming majority of trades union members have never heard of Unity Trust Bank, so it's partly a way of advertising it among union members. It should be noted that NALGO, the third biggest union in Britain, is not affiliated to the Labour Party and cannot give it money, but tries to support it politically through spending on advertising campaigns which are (party) 'politi-

cally independent'. Unity Trust makes money for the TUC, which funds the Labour Party so it can compete with the Tories in the forthcoming 1992 General Election. It's a way of covertly poncing money from low-paid (250,000 - one third of the entire membership, half the council workers) workers, for the Labour Party.

Any money made will be invested in capitalism, *in the exploitation of workers*. It is a mockery of the idea that trades unions can deliver solidarity. They don't want solidarity between workers, they want services delivered (with the grace of the bosses) to atomised individual workers from on high by the trades union professionals. Hence the emphasis of "Join NALGO and save £100" and other monstrosities they peddle to us. What use are the enormous funds to us, anyway? When NALGO members in local government went on strike in 1989 we worked out in my branch that the strike fund was worth about £30 a piece to the 500,000 strikers. It's not money that wins strikes, it's solidarity. The miners found out to their cost that public support doesn't work, it doesn't hit the bosses in their pockets or challenge their power. What use is Alan Jinkinson (NALGO general Secretary) and a few priests delivering a petition to No 10 about repression in Central America when trades unions' funds are built up by investment in the very same system which relies on the exploitation of workers such as those to pay a dividend?

Trying to fight the bosses as a member of a trades union is like stabbing at a body and being held back by your other arm. We must break from the trades union apparatus to do damage to capitalism. We have to separate the *discussion* of our individual and collective problems as workers from the client/service and start working stuff out with fellow workers. This is the starting point of Industrial Networks, from which we hope to build up bigger networks which will break the monopoly of the union hierarchy over information about conditions and struggles. Then we need to begin to organise effective action in the workplace to resolve disputes in our favour. This is the alternative to trades union conservatism, a conservatism rooted in its capitalist nature. It is long term work and cannot appeal to the campaign mentality of the left, but then we will be around long after the left has lost interest. *We built this world, we want it back.*

