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Anarchism: As We See It

An Introduction to the Politics of the Anarchist
Federation

Anarchist Federation

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dividual members) and regular day schools. All 'officers' (e.g. treasurer) are elected for fixed periods and can be removed by conference or delegate meetings if they act in an inappropriate way.

The AF, as its title suggests, is a federation. The point of the AF is to act in a united way so as to have the greatest influence within the working class. So, members join having accepted a number of basic aims and principles (printed at the end of this pamphlet). Also members, having taken part in the drawing up of policies, have a responsibility to help put them into practice. However, this means that local groups and individual members will set their own goals and actions within this context.

The running of the Anarchist Federation rests in the hands of all its members. We want to create a world where power lies in the hands of all people.

If you feel in general agreement with the ideas expressed in this pamphlet and agree with our Aims and Principles, then we urge you to apply for membership to help build our movement. You can do this by contacting us by email or in writing.

(Please note: Although we are very interested in seeing the formation of similar organisations to the AF in other parts of the world, for practical reasons it is only possible to become a member of the AF if you are living in Britain or Ireland).

Introduction

The world we live in makes no sense. Millions of people starve in the Third World while the Economic Community stockpiles unsaleable food. World leaders use violence to promote peace. Tiny nations fight against their neighbours for patches of territory. Governments place short term gains before the preservation of the planets resources. The great majority of the world toils for a bare existence while a tiny few live in immeasurable luxury. The poor are oppressed the world over, women and black people face extra oppression and hardship.

It is in the face of this insanity that the Anarchist Federation proposes a world of a totally different kind. In place of plunder we argue for co-operation. Artificial want must be replaced by generalised plenty. We must live in harmony with the planet, not against it. The system of government and exploitation which is largely taken for granted must be swept away. A better world is possible. This sets out to explain how an anarchist communist alternative, rather than being a utopian dream, in fact offers the best possible, sane and rational solution to the worlds problems.

1. A Rotten System

We live in a rich and prosperous world. It seems unbelievable, when you think of the poverty of the world, that there is more than enough for everyone. In fact enough food is produced to feed the whole world three times over. Yet while people go without, some people can afford to spend millions on parties and banquets for their equally rich friends. That we live in a class ridden world is plain for everyone to see. But what do we mean by class? At its simplest, there are two classes: those who own or play a major part in the control of the worlds wealth and resources, the capitalist boss class and those who

either have to work or claim benefits in order to survive, the working class.

The class system is an essential and fundamental part of the economic system which affects the lives of every single person in the world. The system is called “capitalism” and, though it has changed its form from time to time, it has become the dominant force over the past two hundred years or so. So adaptable, so all-embracing and corrupting, capitalism is viewed by almost everybody as natural and inevitable. This is not so.

Though capitalism is a global system of exploitation and banditry with huge multinational companies operating everywhere, the basis of it is quite simple. Basically, wealth is created by people who use tools to adapt the raw materials supplied by nature. In order to survive, workers are forced to sell their labour (“wage slavery”) at the market price. In their work, workers make the goods which are part of everyday life and provide services. However, the rewards workers receive in the form of wages are less than the value of the products and services they bring about.

The difference in value between what workers produce and what they earn is the basis for profit which goes to the capitalist. In this way workers everywhere are robbed of their share of the earth’s resources and the value of their work. It is in this sense that they are exploited. By amassing the labour value of millions of workers, capitalists increase their wealth and power.

Capitalism is a system of cut throat competition and is highly unstable. This leads to frequent economic crises in which the capitalists can only survive at the expense of workers. When profits fall, workers are sacked, creating the mass unemployment which is a standard feature of present day life.

Capitalism produces things for profit rather than need. So rather than producing a small range of useful products, companies constantly try to expand the range of goods for sale.

to put a stop to it. This is because we are talking about a social revolution. They will try to involve not only the police but the army (if it was to remain loyal to the system). They will use bands of fascists, spies, agents provocateurs, mercenaries, anything to stop us.

Because of this, any social revolution is likely to be followed by an attempted counter-revolution from the boss class and their hangers-on. So any social movement will require an armed uprising against the boss class. Class struggle under workers control can put into practice some facets of anarchist communism, yet the creation of workers militias will be needed in order to defend themselves and eventually defeat and totally abolish capitalism.

This may sound a bit heavy going, but with capitalism hurtling towards increasing economic instability, ‘conventional’ and nuclear wars, and environmental destruction, then in truth the bad times are already here and getting worse by the minute.

10. Ends and Means

We want a future for ourselves and our children — a future which promises the maximum degree of freedom and without economic exploitation. We believe that we have set the foundations for this today. The AF is fighting for such a future. We organise today in a way that reflects our ultimate goal. We are not a rigid bureaucracy (like the leftist organisations) run and manipulated by party bosses. In fact we have no full time or permanent officers or central committees, no leaders and led. Our positions on various issues and actions are decided through the equal involvement (as far as people choose to be involved) in a variety of ways. These include printed discussions in an internal bulletin, yearly conferences (open to all members), delegate meetings (made up of temporary local group delegates and in-

dustries in order to spread the anarchist message. In all cases the fight for freedom is a fight against capitalism.

The AF tries not to make any issue or struggle a priority over others. For too long the working class has been divided and ruled. It is of utmost importance to link up all working class struggles in order to create a mass social movement against the present system.

And this is our medium term goal, the creation of a vast solidarity movement of fighters against ruling class oppression.

9. A Working Class Culture of Resistance

It is important to create the means for our class to respond to attacks. Nowadays, because struggles are often seen as separate, they are easily picked off one by one. The creation of a true working class unity means that an attack on any section of our class will be seen as an attack on us all.

We are not saying that such a movement should only be defensive. By building confidence in ourselves as a class we are creating the means to actually go on the attack against the system.

And by going on the attack we mean the creation of a mass self-organised movement and the creation of workers' councils as a method of working class power and self-organisation. Added to this will be mass tenants and community organisations all controlled by those involved and advocating mass rent strikes, demonstrations, riots and social unrest. Such a movement will have the power to bring capitalism grinding to a halt.

The boss class is happy with things the way they are (give or take the odd economic hiccup). They are horrified at the ideas of anarchist communism. And when we are talking of creating a mass social movement of resistance which will attack the very foundations of the capitalist system, then we know from history that the capitalists will use all the forces of the state

So in supermarkets we find dozens of deodorants, toothpastes and washing powders. Supermarkets like Tesco, Sainsbury and Asda all sell more or less the same products and all have the same motive: to get the consumer to buy their goods. Rather than being concerned about providing the things necessary for our survival they are merely interested in making profits. To be hungry is not enough, people must have the money and the profit makers would rather let food rot than feed it to the hungry and the poor.

This becomes increasingly blatant when enormous beef, butter and grain mountains hoarded by the EC countries exist alongside appalling famine in large parts of Africa. In this context, all the charity events must be seen as insignificant. The creation of food mountains are the result of enforced shortages which, in the market, mean high prices and profit. The EC bureaucrats would rather dump the food mountains in the sea than threaten profitability. This happens world wide.

In the search for profits, capitalism has moved into the age of consumerism. We are urged to buy, buy, buy. Even children are not safe from the advertisers who invade our homes through television and cover every available space with billboards, slogans and shop signs. Newspapers and magazines cannot survive unless they are stuffed with advertisements. With the aid of huge technological resources, capitalism brings out ever new products which supersede the previous ones. Just look at how camera technology has changed over the years. Last year's technological wonder is now obsolete. You have to buy the latest and the best.

Such consumerism is not confined to the 'advanced' western countries. Even the poorest African cities are covered with advertisements urging people to buy useless or even dangerous products. However, it is the Third World working class which suffers the most from international capitalism, while their ruling class grabs it's share of the wealth. Their resources are plundered — look at the decimation of the rain forests — , and their

workers are forced to live at a standard that will only just allow them to survive. Many parts of Africa cannot feed their populations, yet they grow foodstuff for export. South-East Asia has become the world's sweat shop and brothel combined. All in all, capitalism penetrates all areas of life. Coca Cola and MacDonald's hamburgers are the true symbols of the 'new world order'.

2. Social Control

As a result of living under such a system, many working people are naturally disorientated, to one degree or another, for much of the time. To maintain peace and order in society, there has arisen a whole range of methods for controlling people. The most powerful of these is the state, though social control techniques are found at all levels of society.

The state acts in an alliance with capitalism, with which it shares many interests in common. Capitalism provides the state with an economic system which finances it through exploitation. The state, in turn, supplies a system of order which allows capitalism to carry out its business effectively. In countries like China, Cuba, North Korea, etc., these are combined into one system, probably best described as 'state capitalism'.

The state is mainly a system of organised violence to maintain the domination of the capitalist ruling class. However, order is best achieved through people's consent, rather than naked force. As a result, the modern state contains elements which are concerned with trying to make us think in certain ways and act as obedient citizens. The state has also a seemingly kind face in that it provides welfare benefits which are supposed to help the poor, sick and elderly.

By means of governments acting within the parliamentary system and civil service, the state controls its operations. The armed forces, MI5, MI6, the police force, courts and prisons,

8. The Anarchist Alternative — the AF

The Anarchist Federation was set up to assist in the struggle for a better world — a world without politicians, generals, priests and bosses. Whilst we do not see ourselves as a group of gurus who have all the answers, we do believe we have some useful views and ideas that the working class can use. We also have a definite vision of how to achieve a world without exploitation.

At present we are trying to spread our ideas among the working class. This means producing magazines, leaflets, pamphlets, posters, cassettes, et cetera, to get the anarchist message to as wide an audience as possible. But anarchist communism isn't just about having good ideas. Ideas alone are useless, they have to be applied. So the AF is involved in active support of strikers, squatters, tenants, prisoners, demonstrations, pickets, riots, et cetera. We don't get involved just to spread our ideas but because we believe that such struggles and their linking up in social movements creates class confidence in our ability to change things. The boosting of such confidence is important because it means a small victory today can lead to a greater victory tomorrow.

We get involved in things as anarchist communists, in other words we push the idea that all struggles should be controlled by those directly involved in them and not by outside party bosses, agitators, trade union bureaucrats, or self appointed community leaders.

In all areas of the community we support the creation of grass roots organisations, such as autonomous and working class groups to fight sexual oppression. Likewise we support autonomous working class black groups and involve ourselves in the fight against racism and fascism. In the workplace we promote the building of a strong autonomous movement outside the control of the unions and management. At the same time we seek to create revolutionary anarchist groupings in in-

where; the former Soviet Union in it's 'socialist' heyday wasn't anything of the sort. State 'communism' was still a form of capitalism (state capitalism) where the Communist Party was the boss and the party bureaucrats the privileged.

Given the collapse of state 'communism' (capitalism) in Eastern Europe, we should be surprised to find that groups still exist in Britain who want to follow the example of the Soviet Union. Yet, remarkably, organisations like Militant and the Socialist Workers Party continue to peddle the same old message. "The workers are backward", they say, "they need the leadership of organisations like ours", they continue. "There is a crisis of leadership; only we know the way forward...we need party discipline...a party of leaders and led..." and so on.

The old Soviet Union model of so-called socialism has been a disaster for the working class across the world. Whether these people follow the teachings of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or Mao, the reality is that these prophets proved to be brutal opponents of the real working class (as opposed to their fantasies about the working class). The message is clear: the working class and the oppressed, if we are ever to be free, need to get on with the job ourselves, without self-appointed leaders.

If these people are ever successful over here they will bring about new forms of exploitation and oppression. They will shout about socialism and the brave new world but it will be them, not the downtrodden, who will be in charge. They name the system will have changed but exploitation and oppression will continue.

The Labour Party sometimes uses the word 'socialism' to describe their policies, but not very often! Once again, the Labour Party is not and never has been socialist. The Labour Party provides a few hundred jobs to middle class careerists but has never done anybody much good. Despite several Labour governments (how many years ago?) nothing ever changed. There was still mass unemployment, cuts in welfare, racism and so on. Capitalism carried on just as before.

all act to physically control us. They are brutal agents which inflict punishments if we attempt to question their 'right' to rule. The state and its forces of repression are in no sense neutral and actively oppose the struggle for liberation.

The welfare state, the school system and social workers, etc., all seem to have our interests at heart. In reality they are just different and more subtle forms of control or have become necessary for economic reasons.

This health service exists mainly to maintain a healthy workforce but only in so far as the system needs healthy workers to operate. Alcohol abuse and cigarettes are both serious causes of illness, yet they provide the state with large amounts of money in the form of taxes. And no serious attempt has been made to undermine the profitability of these two industries. Profits come before health.

Similarly, the education system, ever more obviously, is organised to provide a workforce which can read, write and do basic mathematics, as well as learning how to obediently obey orders and accept control from above. Teachers fill young people's heads with ideas that are acceptable to the ruling class.

These ideas are reinforced by the mass media including the television, radio, film industry and magazines. Between them they create a body of ideas commonly known as 'common sense'. Common sense is the popularised value system of the exploiting class which is opposed to working class people. So, nationalism, religion, patriotism, racism and sexism which actually weaken working class solidarity are common within the working class.

All these factors contribute to the illusion that there is freedom, justice, equality and democracy whilst in fact the grip of capitalism and the state is strengthened. Take the example of 'democracy'. Whichever party 'wins' a general election, capitalism and the state are largely unaffected. The working class are still exploited and oppressed and the rich and powerful hang on to their privileges. Since the Tory party is most

directly involved in the dominant set up, it is best placed to win elections. Labour, even when given the chance to govern, behaves like the tame agent of capitalism that it is.

Outside the state system there exist organisations which claim to represent the interests of the working class while actually helping to maintain the system of oppression and exploitation. The trade unions are examples of such bodies. Firstly, they undermine any sense of purpose and solidarity within industry and individual workplaces by dividing workers according to level of skill. This perpetuates differences of income and status within the working class and creates an 'aristocracy of labour'. Secondly, unions are organised often on an industry basis and in doing so compartmentalise struggle. How often have strikes broken out in different industries, only to be picked off one by one?

Trade unions too are bureaucratic organisations which have interests separate from the workers they claim to lead. Union members want to win strikes, union bosses want to keep up their comfortable lifestyles. When the two conflict, the workers are betrayed. The union bureaucracies are deeply involved in capitalism through their investments, property ownership, et cetera.

The whole process of negotiation between unions and management (known as collective bargaining) only serves at best to get the workers a few more benefits while keeping the system of exploitation intact.

On a different level, the family acts as a very important enemy in the hands of our controllers. Children often learn from their parents (as they did from theirs) ideas of male superiority, racism, patriotism and the necessity for domination and obedience. The ways in which people get on with each other often reinforce personal oppressions which need to be challenged.

6. The World In Your Hands

If you look at the world as it actually is today, compared with the system we anarchist communists would like to see, then — to put it mildly — we've certainly got our work cut out! To make such a change seems an enormous task.

But before you start to feel a bit daunted by this, remember we live in a rapidly changing world. The world we know today would have been unrecognisable only twenty years ago. In fact, the world has changed more in the last fifty years than the previous five hundred.

Things like economics and technology play a part in shaping the world but at the end of the day it is people who actually change things. Earlier we mentioned the welfare state as a form of control. But on the other hand such things as basic health care only came into being because the working class fought for them (even though politicians may have claimed the credit). Without the threat of action we would never have won such things. Strikes or the threat of them help to improve wages and working conditions. Without action from our class things only get worse. Likewise the poll tax only got scrapped because people fought and refused to pay.

To this day we have the ability to change things if we act together. The power to transform society lies in the hands of those who create everything — the working class. This is the source of our power, should we eventually use it, the power not to make a few reforms but to change the whole system, to make a social revolution.

7. The Left

Anarchist communists are not the only people to talk about revolutions. There have been many 'revolutions' in the past, yet still, capitalism exists. Real communism has never existed any-

This would not, however, mean the ending of personal possessions.

Communism requires the abolition of money and, if conditions permit, the distribution of goods and services free on the basis of personal need. In other words people will be able to take whatever they want, as they need it. If production is insufficient to provide the necessary abundance, then goods and services will be shared out equally to ensure their fair distribution. Given modern computer technology, there should be little difficulty in planning production and distribution to suit everyone's needs, especially if there is not the wasteful duplication of production which marks the present system.

At present, for most people, work is something to be avoided as far as possible but which is also necessary to provide a tolerable living standard. In an anarchist communist economy unnecessary work will be abolished and necessary work reduced to an absolute minimum to fall in line with people's desires. Then, either unpleasant work will be rationed after being reduced to an absolute minimum by appropriate technology or done by those who find such work to their liking. The distinction between work and non-work will be abolished as people once again assume a harmonious way of life.

However, anarchist communism is not simply a matter of a new type of economy or method of social organisation. As a continuous process beginning before the revolution and developing after it, there needs to be an attack on all beliefs, attitudes, institutions and practices which diminish freedom and justice. Religion, sexism, ageism, racism, nationalism, greed and self-seeking, all need to be done away with, otherwise the revolution would not have been worthwhile. But we cannot do more than outline some of the developments which may come about. Many things may arise which we cannot foresee and so this outline of anarchist society is in no way a 'sacred' and unchangeable blueprint.

3. Changing It All

Having read so far you might be wondering what could possibly be done to overthrow the systems of control and exploitation which dominate every aspect of our lives. Can change really be possible?

The answer is a definite yes! The state and other oppressive organisations exist precisely because change is possible. The capitalist system is in a constant state of crisis. To a certain extent the constant process of boom and slump which is part of how capitalism works helps it by ensuring that only the fittest survive. On the other hand, it means constant instability and the possibility of workers' uprisings as increasingly capitalism fails to deliver.

Britain in the 80s and 90s has been marked by periodic local uprisings against the police, unemployment, boredom, and the poll tax. These are, however, minor compared to what happened in the past and what could happen in the future. It is within this process of radical social change that anarchist communism is located. But what is anarchist communism?

Briefly (we will explain more in the next chapter), anarchist communists want to see the destruction of the present system which benefits the rich and powerful. We want to see the creation of a world organised to meet the basic needs of all humanity, where the products of all work belong to all (communism). We also want to see the abolition of ruling class power. Society will be controlled by all people through their own organisations (anarchism). But isn't this all just a beautiful dream?

4. A Working Class Tradition

Anarchism is not the product of the minds of a few intellectuals who have no contact with the great mass of people. It springs directly from the struggles of workers and the oppressed

against capitalism, form their needs and all their unrealised desires for freedom, equality, happiness and self-fulfilment. In the past, whenever revolutions challenged the bosses, anarchist ideas and forms of organisation emerged, if only briefly, and often without calling themselves anarchist.

In the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, groups such as the Levellers, Ranters and Diggers developed ideas of freedom, equality and justice. During the French Revolution workers and artisans who were developing their own class awareness began to develop anarchist ideas (the Enrages). It was in the Paris Commune of 1871 that French workers actually created organisations of mass control which challenged the old system for a brief space of time before being drowned in blood. In the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, workers and peasants developed similar structures of direct workers' control such as the workers councils and factory committees. This has nothing to do with the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917. Similarly, in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the workers set up workers' councils when they took on their 'communist' oppressors. During the May days of 1968 in France, workplaces and universities were taken over and in many case run on near anarchist lines.

From these movements of the working people, anarchism developed as a force among the most class conscious workers. Beginning in the nineteenth century in the First International, a distinct anarchist tendency emerged, influenced by the Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin and his friends and comrades.

Since then, anarchism has had an important influence on the working class movements throughout the world, from Latin America, to Germany and Sweden, to China and Japan. It became deeply rooted and influential in class struggle organisations of workers in Italy, Spain and Portugal. It played a part in all major modern revolutions.

to create a network of independent yet co-operating organisations which will administer society.

This system, known as federation, will join together communities from the local to the international level. By basing social organisation on a sense of solidarity and co-operation individuals can participate in the running of their lives, contributing to the extension of their freedom.

So, people would directly, for the first time, take full control of their lives. There would be no place for leaderships, bosses, professional politicians and civil servants. Where certain tasks may require people in positions of responsibility, such posts would be filled on a voluntary and perhaps part time basis. These people would take on such tasks and they would be subject to instant recall by the people they serve.

Anarchism would be the end of 'law and order' as we know it. The legal system which includes the police, magistrates, judges and prisons are a means of protecting the rich and powerful from the mass of the people. After the destruction of inequality and government such bodies would be disbanded. The prison would be demolished, the judges retired and the police officers re-engaged doing socially useful work. Most crime is against property and is caused by inequalities of wealth. As property becomes communalised and inequality disappears, so will most crime. There may still be anti-social elements but these would be dealt with by the communities themselves on a just and humane basis.

Capitalism has distorted and perverted every human relationship. Greed, getting rich, promotion at work, the reduction of human beings to economic units, the isolation of individuals, and so on, are directly the result of placing money before people.

Anarchist communism would abolish capitalism and private property and place it in the hands of the people. The public buildings, shops, offices, factories, warehouses and land would all be held by the community to develop for the benefit of all.

the corner as nature succumbs to industrialism, nuclear power, carbon dioxide emissions, deforestation, factory farming, etc.

Anarchist communism will mean a radical rethink on how we run our lives. We will have to live in harmony with nature, not against it. Do we really need so many motor cars? Do we need twenty types of toothbrush? Aren't there pollutant-free forms of electricity generation? These and countless other ecological issues will have to be tackled if humans are to have much of a future.

As well as changing the way we relate to nature, we have to change the way we relate to each other. All areas of our lives at the moment are subject to control from above. Thousands of people do jobs which amount to bossing people around and restricting freedom. Young people, blacks, gays and nonconformists are particularly prone to police harassment. Once we enter the workplace any semblance of personal control gives way to petty management and bullying. For many women and children, even their homes are unsafe in the face of family violence.

Anarchy means freedom. Individuals must not be subject to outside interference so long as they do not deny freedom to others. But freedom does not simply consist of being left to do your own thing. For real freedom to exist people must have security, a safe and caring environment and the means to achieve full human potential. Freedom, then, means the best possible education and health care to enable us to get the best out of life.

Freedom will best be strengthened through developing communities in which people can run their own lives. Under capitalism communities have all but disappeared as individuals and families lock themselves into their homes isolated from everybody else. In an anarchist society communities of various forms will probably occur, perhaps on the basis of workplace or locality. These communities will voluntarily join with others

Anarchists have always argued and fought for the need for working people to take over and run society, to take into their own hands the control over the workplaces. They have consistently warned against the possibility of any party or others climbing to power on the backs of the working class during the revolutionary periods.

It was during the Russian revolution of 1917 that anarchist warnings of the struggle being hijacked by careerists and professional politicians came to be proved right. Anarchist militants had taken an active and important part among the conscript soldiers, who refused to continue fighting the world war and had participated in the unrest in the towns and countryside. They had helped topple both the Tsarist regime and the government of middle class politicians that followed.

As the year 1917 progressed, the workers became increasingly militant and radical. They enthusiastically took over the running of the factories and demanded an end to the old system of domination. The peasants seized the land and the worker/peasant soldiers flocked back to their homes. The anarchist slogan of "The land to those who till it, the factories to those who work in them!" and "All power to the Soviets" (workers' councils) were taken over by the Bolshevik (Communist) Party. In a skilful and temporary fashion Lenin duped the masses in order to take control. The workers became subject to an almost immediate party dictatorship which became increasingly brutal as the years went by.

The anarchist movement too became victim of the Bolshevik repression and many anarchists were shot, imprisoned or deported. The Bolsheviks feared the increasing influence of anarchists among the masses — it was the anarchist who had been at the forefront of setting up factory committees to run the workplaces.

In the Ukraine, the Makhnovist movement, under the influence of the anarchist militant, Nestor Makhno, played a major part in defeating the White (Tsarist) armies, which were

marching through on their way to smash the Bolshevik government at Petrograd. They literally saved the life of the Bolshevik regime. This did not spare them from attacks by Lenin and Trotsky. The Makhnovists were forced to fight on several fronts against overwhelming odds and were eventually defeated. Nevertheless, and under very difficult war conditions, they attempted common ownership of the land in the area under their control.

Likewise, at the Kronstadt naval base, revolutionary sailor and workers, who had in 1917 been described as the 'flower of the revolution' by the Bolshevik leadership, were in 1921 branded as 'counter revolutionaries' and 'white guards'. Their crime? They simply questioned the Bolshevik dictatorship over the Soviets which were now empty shells rather than organisations of workers power. The Kronstadt sailors, by reacting to the appalling viciousness of the Bolshevik policies, state corruption and starvation rations, were in fact reviving the anarchist case against the state. For this impertinence, they were massacred.

It was in Spain in 1936 that the anarchist movement face one of its greatest challenges and opened up the possibility of an anarchist-inspired revolution. The mass anarchist union, the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour), and the anarchist organisation, the Federacion Anarquista Iberica (Spanish Anarchist Federation), were at the forefront of the fighting when Franco (backed by the military, the fascists, monarchists and the Catholic Church) attempted to overthrow the republican government. In many areas the Franco forces were initially defeated by armed workers and peasants. In such areas as Catalonia and Aragon, workers and peasants took control over their own lives, as land and factories were taken into communal ownership. However, Spanish anarchism, being mainly built around unions, lacked political understanding and was soon out manoeuvred by 'communist' and republican government politicians. This unfortu-

nately lead to a compromise of many of the anarchist positions and politics. Spanish anarchism was defeated not only by the fascists and big business but by the Stalinists and the weakness of their own internal politics.

The outline of anarchist development given here shows that real changes can be brought about by workers who are inspired by anarchism. Anarchism is not a utopian dream. It is an ever present undercurrent in working class practice, the task is to make it the main one. Whilst workers may seek libertarian solutions to their problems in revolutionary periods, there are those like the Trotskyists and middle class politicians who will try to use them for their own climb to power.

Anarchists in the past have been too naive. They saw the main enemies (correctly) as being capitalism and the state but were insufficiently aware of the dangers presented by those who pretended to be part of the workers movement. It is for this reason that a large, well organised and politically aware anarchist organisation is needed. Such an organisation would offer alternative visions of the future, develop anarchist ideas and provide counter arguments to the state socialists, liberals and other false friends of the working class. The enemies of anarchism are well organised, anarchism needs to be better organised. To help bring about such an organisation is the task of the Anarchist Federation.

5. Anarchy — A Possible Future

Anarchist communist society will be radically different from the way we live today. Capitalism has changed the world beyond all recognition over the last two hundred years. Capitalists and state 'communists' (state capitalists) have tried to dominate nature and in doing so have brought us close to ecological disaster. Nightmare situations are possibly just around