

WHY THE REVOLUTIONARIES HAVE FAILED

FOREWORD

Although this pamphlet is essential reading for all who are concerned and distressed about why the working class is no nearer to freedom than ever it was, it is addressed specifically to members, supporters and sympathisers of political groups such as Black Flag, Direct Action Movement, Counter Information, Class War Federation, Subversion, Anarchist Communist Federation, and the Anarchist Worker's Group. We shall refer to them collectively as the libertarian-communist-anarchist-social revolutionaries – more detailed reasons for which will become clear later.

Obviously, since there are so many separate groups, there are a number of disagreements between them, but it is not these that we are concerned with here. Nor are we concerned here with the 'political positions' on which, as far as we know, they are all agreed and with which we too agree. For example, that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class themselves'; that they must not put any trust in leaders or political parties; that such 'emancipation' (1) requires a revolution which is more than likely to be violent; and that the rest of the so-called Left, from the Labour Party through to the Marxist-Leninist/Trotskyist parties and groups, are obstacles to these aims.

However, there are other 'political positions' on which all the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries are also agreed, but with which we most emphatically do not agree.

While it may be said that these 'revolutionaries' are good at describing the rottenness of this society and the plight of the working class, when it comes to who is causing it – who, in other words, are the enemies of the working class – they are vague and obscure. They keep telling us that our enemies are The State, Capitalism and The Ruling Class. Smash The State!, Smash Capitalism!, Smash The Ruling Class! they scream all over the place. And they continually tell us that to do this we need Democracy, Socialism and Anarchism. (2) In fact, people have become so used to seeing these words liberally spread throughout lefty texts that they have simply become 'part of the furniture' – to the extent that whether they really mean anything is not questioned or even thought about.

We don't believe that these terms ever had a distinct meaning, and therefore never could have had a meaning clearly understood by the working class. But this is not the point. A serious examination of them will show that today they are obscure and meaningless, and their habitual use causes analyses and ideas with potential to benefit and advance the struggle, to be ignored by the very people a 'revolutionary movement' (3) needs to recruit.

This pamphlet is a more detailed critique of wrong 'political positions' resulting from a use of terminology that so far has been fairly successful in concealing crucial realities. The most crucial and important of these is the true identity of the class who keep the working class suppressed. We shall show clearly and incontrovertibly who, what class, these people are.

This pamphlet should, therefore, provoke positive and constructive debate and can be an important contribution to the discussion going on about the way forward in at last building an effective working class 'revolutionary movement'. But it can only do so provided it is given honest and careful consideration by all who genuinely want such a 'movement', a number of whom surely must be connected with the groups mentioned above.

AN EXAMPLE

Some while ago a magazine appeared which, although reasonably well written, had all the political defects we want to draw attention to. It was called 'Socialism From Below', published by the Anarchist Worker's Group. As it was also subtitled 'Discussion Forum', Andy offered to write an article criticising the magazine. Since the AWG probably didn't know him, it was pointed out that although he had written a number of political articles and pamphlets over the years, he was perhaps best known as the author of a recently republished book: HUNGARY 56. (4)

David Luton of the AWG replied by return-post saying they welcomed criticism, so please send the article.

We shall give in some detail what then ensued, not because the AWG are in any way exceptional in their actions, excuses and arguments, but because they are fairly typical of all the groups we are addressing. We therefore want it to be clearly understood that the AWG is used solely as an example.

The criticising article of about 2,700 words was sent. After a month had passed without even a word acknowledging receipt, Andy wrote to ask why. Just on three months later (i.e. four months after sending the article), a letter arrived from the AWG National Secretary – Bruno Waterfield – to say that they did not intend to publish the article because it was too long. Andy's reply pointed out, among other things, that (a) David Luton, when asking for the article to be sent, had made no conditions whatever as to the maximum number of words it should contain, and (b) it was in any case very much shorter than several of the articles in their No. 1 issue, and would easily go on two pages of their 31 page magazine.

Waterfield's response to this was that the issues the article raised were of much less importance than those they were covering such as abortion rights, and what was going on in Eastern Europe. He added that the AWG was not afraid of the criticisms and would be more than happy to discuss them – but privately, through a personal reply. The fact that they had decided not to publish the article was, said Waterfield, "not negotiable, take it or leave it."

Andy answered that irrational excuse for not publishing the article raised doubts about their sincerity – for it must have been obvious from the outset that he had not proposed writing a serious political article solely for the secret consumption of AWG members; and while it was now doubtful they would be 'more than happy' even to discuss the criticism privately, one thing had become crystal clear: they were definitely afraid to do so openly in the pages of their 'Discussion Forum'. This was disturbing because in it they stated: "We intend to let no argument go unchallenged, and no question go unanswered. We intend to win the battle of ideas through our active involvement in all the vital struggles of the working class." (This, you may eventually agree, is somewhat worse than a mere overzealous boast.) Nevertheless, Andy asked for the 'private' reply to be sent.

SMOKE-SCREEN

The 'reply', which came seven weeks later, was called "Smoke Without Fire" – a title which at first seemed a strange choice. However, on reading, it became fairly appropriate even though 'Smoke-screen' would have been more apt. Paradoxically, it made the reason for the quibbling excuses also crystal clear. So what did the article say that caused these people, the AWG, to resort to such devious methods?

We shall not reproduce the article verbatim because, apart from the AWG's claim that it is available from them on request (5), some of the original has been paraphrased to accommodate the fact that much of it also applies to the other groups mentioned above.

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

The article began by asking: Why is it that, today, despite many decades of struggle and suffering by the working class through thousands of strikes, campaigns and demonstrations, as well as their continual daily grind and conflict whether in work or out, they are still a dominated class no nearer to real emancipation, to freedom than ever they were?

Why is it that this situation prevails despite decades of political activity by those claiming to be involved in bringing about this emancipation, despite their millions of words written and distributed in thousands of lefty magazines, papers, pamphlets, leaflets?

These are questions that have never seriously bothered the ‘revolutionary tourists’ – particularly the university students who go on a left wing holiday for a time then, having got or failed their degrees, go back to their original bourgeois lives.

But they are questions, the article continued, which for years have been gnawing at the minds of some who called themselves libertarian socialists, anarchists and suchlike, who genuinely wanted and believed they were working for the emancipation of the working class. Eventually, those whose brains had been gnawed away either buried themselves in communes or joined the Trotskyists or the Labour Party. Others, through frustration and despair, abandoned the struggle. A substantial part of the reason for this is what we criticise in all those who are on the scene today, some of whom are in the Anarchist Workers Group.

Since the AWG publish a lengthy magazine, they almost certainly would agree that one of the main weapons in the struggle is the printed word – newspaper or magazine – because through such, ideas about things like the sort of society we live in, why the struggle is necessary and how it might be made more effective, can be put to working class people in the hope that they will find such ideas relevant and useful to the problems and struggles they continually face.

It follows that the language used is of paramount importance. Yet this, said the article, is where all such groups have failed and continue to fail, because the communication of ideas is obstructed by words which are meaningless or are given false meanings. Consequently, arguments, analyses, ideas, even advice for action, description of problems and reporting of struggles, often make little or no sense. It is a fact that many of the people they seek to help and attract are put off by the boring repetition of senseless jargon.

The AWG and all other similar groups, keep telling us that the enemies of the working class are The State, Capitalism and The Ruling Class; all of which must be smashed, and to do this we need Democracy, Socialism and Anarchism.

WHAT DEMOCRACY?

‘Democracy’, the article stated, is a word which, from the Ancient Greeks onwards, has only ever meant whatever it’s users wanted it to mean. So what do the AWG mean when, in their policy statement, they talk of the need for ‘worker’s democracy’, ‘democratic control’, and say ‘we stand for the fullest democracy of all worker’s organisations’?

We continually hear talk of ‘Democracy’ from all sorts of people all over the world – from Right to Left, Stalinists and Leninists, Tories and Labourites, Republicans anti Democrats ... And the fighting and killing in parts of Eastern Europe, the USSR, and Yugoslavia, are the result of struggles for power between various sections of the dominant classes as they attempt to change to capitalist market economies while calling the process ‘a reform to Democracy’.

Some of us know that the AWG and their like do not mean what any of this lot mean. But do all their working class readers know this? What do they mean anyway? What sort of workers' organisation would be 'democratic'? What sort of election would decide who does what in the councils and committees? Could all actions be decided by a 'simple majority – a majority of at least one? And so on and so forth.

These questions are put only to illustrate that it is worse than pointless for those like the AWG to keep using the word 'Democracy' – just as our enemies do – without any definition of exactly what they mean by it. How working class people could best organise themselves in whatever situation can easily be explained in a policy statement without adding to the confusion by simply talking about 'Democracy', which could mean well, almost anything – or nothing.

WHAT SOCIALISM?

It is no amazing revelation that there is considerable confusion among the Anarchist Workers Group about 'Socialism'. One would think, the article continued, that having a magazine that they call 'Socialism From Below' and the several references to the need for 'Socialism' in their policy statement, they regard this unexplained 'Socialism' as their main aim. Yet in the same statement they refer to themselves – as do all other such groups – as libertarian communists, anarchists, and revolutionaries. So perhaps it is also not surprising that these libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries are apparently ignorant of the fact that 'Socialism' has no specific meaning.

On the contrary, there are almost as many theories about what 'Socialism' is as there are people to write and spout about it. No wonder, perhaps, that it is used as a term of abuse and derision by the more obvious enemies of the working class – such as the Tories and most of the media – to describe the politics of, say, the Labour Party. And of course, 'Socialism' has been used all over the world by a hotch-potch of anti-working class organisations to their political ideologies: Stalinist, Nazi, Labourite, Trotskyist, and so on.

The AWG gave the impression they might have been aware that 'Socialism' has no meaning when – in the Editorial of their magazine – they referred to "a tyranny calling itself Socialist," and later that "so-called socialists have made council-workers redundant, slashed essential services, and have cooperated with the Poll Tax." (6) Yet by their unqualified use of the term, they add to the confusion in an already confused working class – a confusion that expresses itself in apathy.

In any case, many working class people have got more sense than to read or to listen to a lengthy theoretical dissertation about what a particular group of people say they believe 'Socialism' to be, especially when, as in almost all cases, it is peppered with other senseless verbiage. A system of social and economic organisation in which the working class freely run their own lives can be described without simply using a meaningless label.

ANARCHIST ANARCHISM?

Another word that no longer has any specific and clearly understood meaning (if it ever had) is 'Anarchism', and much of what has been said about 'Socialism' applies here too. There is no single body of ideas and theories called 'Anarchism', hence the groups calling themselves 'anarchist' all have differing definitions of it – that is, on the rare occasions that they give any definitions at all. Yet it appears scores of times throughout the AWG's magazine 'Socialism From Below' – 29 times in the Editorial alone.

Why do they all keep using it? One is tempted to conclude that at least some of them use the word to describe themselves and their ideas out of a kind of romantic bravado – a kind of swaggering boastful defiance. Or maybe the reason is the latter combined with an emotional attachment to the word – in the sense that some people need to feel they belong to a sort of community like, say, the supporters of a particular football team may feel they have. Whatever the reason, it would perhaps not matter but for the fact that many working class people (even the more politically minded and militant among them) are deterred and turned off by words that have for them little or no meaning – or perhaps only a distorted one.

For the truth must be born in mind that, due to generations of conditioning of the working class by their enemies, most of them have come to accept ‘Anarchism’ as meaning ‘total chaos’. The additional fact that it has no specific and agreed meaning even among those calling themselves ‘anarchists’, prompts an important question which the AWG and all the others should clearly answer: What does the constant use of the words ‘anarchist/anarchism’ throughout their writings contribute (a) to better understanding by working class people of the ideas, and (b) to getting their agreement with them followed by action based upon them? These facts and honest answers to the questions would make an indisputable case for ceasing to use these words.

ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS?

The criticism of the Anarchist Workers Group’s use of ‘The State’ and ‘Capitalism’, said the article, is different from the above for it is not that these words have no meaning – they do very definitely mean something. The criticism is that the AWG, together with the rest of the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries, continually portray these things as the enemies the working class must first destroy.

It’s quite possible they would all agree that some of the most important sections of ‘The State’ are the judiciary (judges, magistrates, courts etc.), the police, the armed forces, prisons, the civil service, the church, even some social workers could be included. In the AWG’s magazine we found the statement that “anarchists have no illusions ion the State.” By ‘illusions’ they obviously mean ‘a false conception’, yet the AWG shows plainly that this is precisely what they do have – for they use the term throughout their magazine as if they were quite unaware that ‘The State’ was established, built up, and is continually being sustained and strengthened by a particular class of people so as to run society in their way, and to maintain the kind and form of order in it that ensures their continued dominant position within it. ‘The State’ is therefore a means, an instrument (a weapon if you like) of this dominating class. Obviously, all sections and activities of ‘The State’ are managed and controlled by members of this class. It follows that ‘The State’ can only be ‘smashed’ when, not before, the working class take power from this class.

HUMANISING AN ABSTRACT

Turning to ‘Capitalism’, the article pointed out that the AWG and the whole of the Left always refer to it as having a life, dynamic, and motivation all of it’s own – indeed, as if it were some kind of human animal. In other words, they seek to humanise (anthropomorphise) an abstract.

Hence, the AWG (in SFB 1 – Editorial) talk of issues that are central to “the battle against Capitalism”, and that people should be won over to “the struggle against Capitalism.” That the animal needs to eat is revealed where they tell us “the southern Ireland economy was plundered by the rapacious need of British Capitalism for food.” And there are more such fantasies. In fact, there are many thousands of examples in the writings of the Left where we are exhorted to see ‘Capitalism’ as the devil incarnate whom we should first religiously expend our energy trying to destroy. ‘Capitalism’ is a name given to an economic system on which all financial transactions,

production, and markets are based. Over the years, numerous so-called economists (7) of various political views have written hundreds of books and theses about what kind of economic system they believe 'Capitalism' to be and how it functions. Obviously, their theories differ widely. Nevertheless, it is only an economic system. Unlike the people who use it to maintain their power, it cannot be seen. 'Capitalism', like mathematics, algebra, or calculus cannot be touched – working class people cannot get hold of it and kick the shit out of it.

When they do take action, in a strike for example, they do so because of decisions taken which attack their living standards and/or working conditions – and such decisions are taken, either in government or in the management of industries, by members of the dominant class referred to earlier. Strike action causes them problems – it interferes with their management of industries/affairs/things, it screws up their production targets, cuts into the profits they seek for themselves in the markets, and so on. Working class strikes are therefore part of the struggle against a class of people, not specifically and primarily against an economic system.

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE ENEMY

The development of the economic system called 'Capitalism' really began in the 18th century with the so-called Industrial Revolution (8) and the rise to a dominating position in society of this particular class of people. Clearly, it is a system that principally suits and benefits this class. It is an economic system that creates and ensures a divided society in which one class dominates another. It is consequently a system that is cherished and protected by this dominating class through their 'State'. But the AWG and all the groups like them, use 'The State' and 'Capitalism' as substitutes for the real enemy of the working class – indeed they use them as a means to avoid naming the true enemy.

No doubt there are some among them who do this out of pure ignorance. But most do so because they are themselves not members of the working class. Sure, we want to get rid of 'Capitalism' and 'The State'. But we can only do so when we know who the class of people are who created and control these things so as to exercise and maintain their dominance over us, and when we are conscious and confident of our power to get rid of them.

THE RULING CLASS?

So who are these people who dominate the lives of the working class? All the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries, as well as all the Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist parties and groups, have the answer: 'The Ruling Class'. The term crops up repeatedly throughout their newspapers and magazines, along with the phrase 'the class struggle' – and the AWG is of course no exception. Even in their policy statement they talk of challenging the power of 'The Ruling Class'. But just who this 'Ruling Class' is – what they mean by 'ruling', and who the people are who do it – is nowhere defined or explained. Therefore, the article they refused to publish called upon them to do so, and added that if we assume the AWG and Co. know who the working class are, they will know that they are a class dominated by another class, and this gives rise to conflict between them – hence, 'the class struggle'.

Clearly, it is this dominating class of people who, for obvious reasons, use their power to prevent the emancipation of the working class – it is they who are the enemy of the working class. And if the working class are to defeat that enemy, they need to know precisely who that enemy is. To keep blankly saying 'the ruling class', 'the boss class' and 'the capitalist class' may not be an anti-working class conspiracy, but it is certainly an evasion of facing up to a crucial reality.

If the aim of the AWG (stated in their Editorial) “to be actively involved in all the vital struggles of our class” is genuine and not merely empty words, then the timer is up for terminological subtleties, for intellectual tightrope walking, for equivocation, and for the skillful (and unskillful!) avoidance of facing up to reality.

THE TRUE REALITY

The reality is that the class of people who dominate the lives of working class people is the middle class. This is a better term than ‘bourgeoisie’ to describe the dominant class despite the fact that it is no longer in the middle as it once was (between workers/peasants below and the nobility/aristocracy above) since at the time of the so-called Industrial Revolution and following it, this class took power from the then dominating aristocracy who have gradually ceased to exist as a class; it is a better term because ‘bourgeoisie’ doesn’t mean much to the vast majority of working class people, whereas they are far more aware of who the middle class are.

It is quite possible to show in considerable detail that there are today only two classes in society and that it is the middle class who dominate every aspect of working class life. But here we can only briefly consider some of the ways in which members of the middle class run, manage, and control almost everything and therefore make all the decisions that matter, and how they have tried and continue to try – with some success – to condition us working class people to believe the lie that we are inferior to them.

HOW THE MIDDLE CLASS DOMINATE

When looking at the components of The State we see that all components are of course hierarchically structured (9) and that the Judiciary – from the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice, through the various ranks of judges, right the way down to the magistrates – are all middle class, as indeed are all the barristers and solicitors. We see that the Civil Service is managed and controlled by Senior Civil Servants all of whom are middle class; that the Police (uniformed, Special Branch, MI5) are run by Commissioners, Chief Constables, Inspectors of Constabulary and so on, all of whom are middle class (10); and that virtually all the commissioned officers who run the three armed forces are middle class.

All governments of the last 150 years have been composed almost entirely of middle class people. All political parties that we are exhorted to vote for are run by middle class people, so it’s not surprising that almost all MP’s are of the same class.

All industries – from manufacturing, through services, to arms dealing – and of course all multinational companies, are run by the middle class. The crooked parasites who are paid ludicrously high salaries for dealing on the Stock Exchange, including those involved in the multimillion pound frauds that are always going on and that most of them get away with, are all middle class.

Oil, which is of high economic importance to this country and to most others of the world, is controlled exclusively by middle class people – as are the other sources energy; electricity and gas.

All the places we work in, and all the places we live in, have been designed by middle class people who of course never asked us what sort of places we wanted. All the so-called leisure activities – from sports to holidays – are in the control and management of the middle class.

THE PRESS

The newspapers we read are all controlled, managed, and written by middle class people. ‘The Freedom of the Press’ we hear so much about is nothing more than the freedom of these people to run the Press in their way for their ends, which are to increase their wealth and to propagate their views, their ideas, their ‘culture’, so as to help reinforce and sustain their dominant position in society.

The people who run the BBC, and all those who own, manage, and run the television companies, are middle class – and they do so for the same ends as those who run the Press. The TV programmes working class people watch – whether news, documentaries, drama, comedy, soaps, sit-coms, music, quiz-games, or adverts – are chosen, written, produced, presented, and acted in by mainly middle class people.

Television is a particularly influential and effective medium in conditioning working class people to see themselves, society, and the world, in a certain way – and that way is through the eyes of the dominant class. The precise form of this conditioning is not always glaringly apparent, nor is it always consciously planned. It doesn’t need to be. But a careful examination and analysis of the programmes leaves no doubt that, through their eyes, we are clearly being led to believe what they themselves believe – even if sometimes only by subtle implication – namely that they are superior to us.

EDUCATION

The education system plays a similar role to that of television, though it’s probably even more pernicious. Working class children are ‘educated’ (as indeed their parents and grandparents have been) in school buildings designed and equipped by middle class people, where what is to be taught, how and when, is decided by middle class people – and it is they who compose the top administrators down to virtually all the teachers.

‘Education’ in schools where the majority of pupils are working class is a prepackaged commodity forcibly fed to these young consumers through a nationalised system of distribution, and where ‘achievement’ is measured by the degree to which these consumers swallow, digest, and regurgitate the package. It is a system which curbs, and in many cases, kills a child’s natural ability and eagerness to learn.

It is a system which actively discourages working class children from thinking, other than very superficially, about how and why society is run the way it is – a system that in no way could lead them to conclusions about their position in society that might motivate a desire to effectively challenge the dominance of the middle class. On the contrary, it is an education system that leads them, as it is intended to, in the opposite direction – into obedience, into accepting their lot in life, into accepting that it’s ‘natural’ for the middle class to be the dominant one, into deference and respect for their middle class ‘superiors’, into believing themselves inferior.

REMOVING ‘CONSCIOUSNESS’

A psychological theory of the German middle class fascists (11) was that by constantly telling a class or race of people they are inferior, they will eventually accept it as a fact. But the middle class have since been more cunningly calculating than that and have gone a step further. Because the majority of them are contemptuous of the working class and believe their own propaganda about their superiority, they arrogantly think their dominant position ensures the best possible way of organising society. Therefore, through the media and the education system, they seek to remove altogether from the minds of working class people even whatever awareness they have of being a dominated class – and it is this awareness which is at the root of what we call working class

consciousness. This, if substantially achieved, would obviously remove the constant threat of the working class struggling for ‘emancipation’. And here too, it must be admitted, they have had some degree of success.

FIGHTING WINDMILLS

The article then asked again the questions that began it, and concluded with some more – questions which all those this pamphlet to should clearly answer.

If you really believe we working class people are involved in ‘the class struggle’ – a phrase which appears many times throughout your newspapers and magazines (12) – then what class are we struggling against? Who are they? Where is this ‘Ruling Class’ you are always on about? While the middle class are busy deciding, managing, controlling, and running everything, what’s this ‘Ruling Class’ doing? Is it because none of you will unequivocally answer these questions that you are compelled to hide behind a smoke-screen of pseudo intellectual jargon and meaningless terminology?

It’s your refusal to answer these questions that leads to the suspicion of dishonesty rather than ignorance – a dishonesty resulting in the demand that we working class people do what the Left has been asking us to do for over a century: become Don Quixotes and go out to fight windmills. This is a crucial part of the answer to the crucial question of why the working class are still a dominated class no nearer to freedom than ever they were.

The AWG make the grand claim that they “intend to win the battle of ideas” and “make anarchist ideas the leading ideas in a victorious workers’ revolution“. (Editorial – SFB No.1) Many of you would perhaps make a similar claim. Yet the perspective today for such a revolution is far from clear, for the evidence of working class consciousness and effective militancy is very thin, whereas the confident dominance of the middle class – as well as the thriving mediocrity and squalor of their ideas, values, and culture – appears to be as strong as ever.

So what use are ideas that claim to be concerned with enabling the working class to take power if those putting forward such ideas cannot or will not clearly define the main obstacle to power and emancipation?

THE PRIVATE REPLY

As was said earlier, the AWG ‘Reply’ was aptly called ‘Smoke Without Fire’. True, there was no fire, but smoke there certainly was – great thick clouds of it. Yet, paradoxically, it made clear the real reasons why the AWG had refused to publish the article. It did not even attempt to deal with the criticisms one by one as set out in the article. As for answering them, anything that by some stretch of the imagination could be termed an attempt to do so, had to be searched for amongst a scattered jumble of lefty pseudo-intellectual jargon that amounts to little more than a meal of very old sawdust. It was also sprinkled with some quite ridiculous accusations.

To sort the ‘Reply’ into some kind of order and to translate the jargon into what these ‘anarchist workers’ may conceivably mean, is an almost impossible task because the very things the article criticised – use of meaningless terms – litter the whole piece, and still with no comprehensible definitions. But we’ll try at first dealing with accusations, some of which do not apply or even relate to the main criticisms, and others based on statements that simply were not made in the article.

SEMANTICS – A DIRTY WORD?

They began with the stale accusation that Andy is obsessed with semantics. Over the years, lefty writers have often used ‘semantics’ as a dirty word to throw at some things they couldn’t/wouldn’t agree with, yet to which they were unable to find a reasonable counter-argument.

‘Semantics’ is defined as the study of the meaning of words. Sure, we are concerned with the meaning of words, as all writers should be. It’s indicative of the malaise of the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries that is necessary to point out that they too should all be particularly concerned with the meaning of words. For if you are writing and publishing material about the plight of working class people and what they can do about it, you should be passionately concerned that what you are saying is clearly understood, especially if it is about what the AWG ‘Reply’ called “difficult and controversial ideas.” It is only then that the people you’re talking to can form a judgement, decide whether they agree with you, whether to act upon it – indeed, whether to join you.

In a frantic search for counter-arguments, they said the article was guilty of ‘easy populism’ and ‘demagoguery’. ‘Populism’ is a word that has recently become popular with middle class journalists, though exactly what it means is unclear. ‘Demagoguery’ means appealing to the passions and prejudices of people. Why they made these particular unjustified and irrelevant accusations we shall leave for the reader to judge.

‘AUNTSALLYISM’

They then made the astonishing accusation that the article seeks to sweeten difficult and controversial ideas by giving them a label that makes them more easy to swallow. At no time has Andy said or even implied that he wants people labels of any sort – sweet or sour. On the contrary, the article stresses that the AWG (and all the ‘revolutionaries’) are obscuring any helpful ideas they may have precisely by their use of meaningless labels (e.g. democracy, socialism, anarchism).

The ‘Reply’ accuses the article of taking these ‘labels’ out of the context of their magazine and thereby turning them into ‘meaningless ciphers’. Again, the opposite is the truth. It is specifically within the context of their magazine that they are ‘meaningless ciphers’. There are many examples, but to take just three:

“We stand for the fullest democracy and independence of all workers’ organisations.” (Even the Tories say something like this.)

“There can be no socialism without workers’ democracy.” (Many in the Labour Party say that.)

“Our aim is to make anarchist ideas the leading ideas ...” (All groups calling themselves anarchist say this.)

They also attribute to the article a number of statements that were not made – for example, that the word ‘socialism’ was lifted their magazine and compared to the Nazis’ ‘socialism’. This is not so, it was not compared to it. You will have noted that the article explained the various reasons why the word ‘socialism’ has no meaning and added the fact that this ‘label’ has been used by a variety of anti-working class organisations to describe their ideologies, among whom are the Stalinists, Nazis, Labourites, and Trotskyists.

So did the AWG make all these false accusations unwittingly? Was it a kind of political dyslexia? We doubt it. This form of ‘auntsallyism’ – imputing to somebody statements they did not make (or a belief/opinion they don’t hold) so as then to try to score points by attacking them – is the game of

the professional party politicians, thus unworthy of serious political discussion. And though we shall not examine this ‘tactic’ further, it’s worth bearing it in mind when trying to discover the AWG’s reasons for using the meaningless words in question – while at the same time pondering on how the other libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries would answer the criticism.

DEMOCRACY?

As was said above, the ‘reply’ did not deal with the criticisms one by one. The following statements – collected together from various parts of the ‘Reply’ and placed in sequence – are therefore what the AWG says about why they must keep using the word ‘democracy’.

“Socialism is inseparable from working class power which is in turn inseparable from workers’ democracy.”

“When we talk about democracy we mean the real democracy of workers in their mass assemblies, committees, and councils.”

“Workers’ democracy is an expression of revolutionary consciousness that dictates and is dictated to by the democratic organisations of the working class.”

“Socialism without workers’ democracy is not socialism.”

If you refer back to what was said in the article, you will see that an answer to the criticism has been entirely avoided. For apart from the statements being somewhat incomprehensible, the question they immediately evoke is glaringly obvious:

What is workers’ ‘democracy’?

SOCIALISM?

What the AWG might call statements in response to the criticism of their use of the word ‘socialism’ are also scattered around in the ‘Reply’. But they are also virtually incomprehensible – so much so that it was almost decided to exclude them, for they only expose the fact even more, not simply that the AWG are waffling, but that they are floundering.

Nowhere in the ‘Reply’ do they show how using the word ‘socialism’ contributes to clear and better understanding by working class readers of what the AWG believes they should do to free themselves. Nevertheless, perhaps some of what they wrote should be examined.

Apart from statements tying up ‘socialism’ with ‘democracy’ and already dealt with above, they also say: “Ideas like socialism are difficult to get across, not because people do not like the word, but because the politics are challenging.” This comes under the heading of ‘the game of party politicians’ because the article did not even imply that people do not like the word ‘socialism’. It is not a question of whether people like the word – such a question does not arise. ‘Ideas like socialism’ is a nonsense because, as was said in the article, there are as many theories about what ‘socialism’ is as there are people who write about it, and the theories range widely from right to left. One only needs to add the question: What are the politics of ‘ideas like socialism’ that are challenging? and the total futility of the whole statement becomes even more obvious.

‘SOCIALISM’ UNKNOWN

When the AWG make clear in the title of their magazine ‘Socialism From Below’ and in their policy statement that their main aim is ‘socialism’, repeatedly refer to ‘socialism’ in their other writings, and always with no definitions as to what it means, then they are attempting to use a form of political shorthand or labelling. This would not be unreasonable if all readers knew what it means. The fact that probably none of their readers knows what the label means apparently does not bother any of the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries.

So why do they all keep using the word ‘socialism’? Is the reason esoteric? Is it a word the meaning of which is clearly understood by at least the members of each group? Highly unlikely. In fact, it’s almost certain that each member would separately not be able to say what they all jointly meant by it.

Despite the AWG’s statement that “there can be no question of equating our view of socialism with that of the Kinnockites,” we still don’t know what their ‘view of socialism’ is. But even if sometime they were to tell us it would still not justify using a label to describe it that has been made meaningless by a Noah’s Ark of political animals.

Not surprising then that nothing in the ‘Reply’ attempts to answer the basic criticism, or justifies in the remotest way continued use of the term. However, in the third issue of their magazine, though still titled ‘Socialism From Below’, they did not use the word at all! Had they responded to our criticism? No, it must have been a fluke – ‘socialism’ appeared numerous times in Issue No. 4, still with no definition about its meaning.

ANARCHISM?

Haphazard references to ‘anarchism’ in the ‘Reply’ began by claiming the article stated that “the word anarchism should not be used because it has been employed by a variety of anti-working class ideologies from Stalinism to right-wing social democracy.” Here again they’re up to party-politician tricks. As you will have seen, the article said nothing remotely like this about ‘Anarchism.’

In other parts of the ‘Reply’ they prefaced things they believe with phrases like “As anarchist workers we argue that ...” and “As anarchists we see that ...” You will of course be fully aware that the criticism is not about what they believe (that would be a separate debate), but why they obscure and/or distort what they believe by giving it a senseless and pointless label.

Surely we are not the only ones who are sick of people calling themselves anarchists – from middle class 60’s dropouts to the young punks who are dragged around by their black dogs on bits of string. We can sympathise with those of them who need some such ‘ism’ to belong to, or even those who just want to shock people, but they certainly don’t contribute anything to the class struggle.

However, we are concerned with those who do appear to have a potential for useful contribution to the struggle – but why do they blunt it by their obsession with Anarchist/Anarchism? Nobody knows precisely what it means and therefore, like ‘socialism’, it hampers working class readers in understanding ideas about how to achieve freedom.

ESPERANTO?

Apart from an assertion that ‘anarchism’ is a working class tradition (which would be questionable whatever meaning is put on the word), the ‘Reply’ does not in any way attempt to justify why they consider it imperative to call themselves ‘anarchists’ and their theories and ideas ‘anarchism.’

What appeared to be an attempt at justification was where they said labels “like democracy, socialism, and anarchism cannot be meaningfully removed from the context of our propaganda and intervention with a content derived from our political materialist understanding of how society works and how it is to be changed.”

Unfortunately, this statement makes no sense to us. But they also said that they can replace these ‘labels’ with others of their own invention – by using a kind of “libertarian communist Esperanto.”

Perhaps a “libertarian communist Esperanto” might (and it’s a big ‘might’) lead to a general understanding among those calling themselves ‘libertarian communists’. But surely all would agree that such esotericism – use of language only intelligible to the initiated – must be strictly avoided. We repeat, it’s not a question of inventing codes and labels, for the AWG and all the other ‘revolutionaries’ are obscuring any helpful ideas they may have solely by their employment of meaningless labels.

If for some as yet unknown reason these so-called ‘revolutionaries’ feel they still must use the words ‘Democracy, Socialism and Anarchism’ throughout their newspapers and magazines, then the words can only have a meaning less likely to confuse working class readers if every issue has, say, a preface clearly explaining what they believe each word means. Such a preface would have to be very long because, with ‘socialism’ alone, a few sentences would not suffice to differentiate a particular definition from the 57 other varieties. (12a)

This is doubtless not practicable. But even if it were, it would still not remove confusion – and surely all would also agree that it’s essential to avoid confusion about the meaning and understanding of ideas.

A justification the AWG and Co. may have for continuing with this form of labelling is that by leaving the meanings vague they can employ an interpretation that suits them at any particular time. Be that as it may, the point is that ideas and analyses can easily be put forward without discussion being impeded by always having to guess what is meant by this or that ‘label’.

THE STATE?

Although the same old cover-up slogan ‘Smash The State’ appeared several times in the ‘Reply’ from the Anarchist Workers Group, we’re not surprised that there was nevertheless no response to our criticism. We understand their silence. It follows from their refusal to clearly define the class who created ‘The State’ and continually sustain and strengthen it to maintain their power and dominance over us. It is this refusal that is also responsible for their other wrong political positions.

CAPITALISM?

They say almost nothing in the ‘Reply’ that answers the criticism about their irrational use of the word ‘Capitalism’. But what they do say is a revelation. They insist that ‘Capitalism’ is like a human animal for it does have a life, dynamic, and motivation all of its own. They maintain this is so because it has two motors.

By ‘motor’ they presumably mean a thing that gives movement. The first ‘motor’ is, they say, “the competition between different firms to maximise profit which compels them to extract the maximum surplus value from their workforces.”

‘Surplus value’ eh? Now here’s a Marxist term if ever there was one. In Karl Marx’s famous book ‘Capital’ (13) – though only a tiny fraction of 1% of the ‘workers of the world’ have ever read it –

he certainly said a great deal about 'surplus value'. Maybe his theory of 'surplus value' is summed up where he said:

"The surplus value generated in the process of production by C, the capital advanced, or in other words, the self-expansion of the value of the capital C, presents itself for our consideration, in the first place, as a surplus, as the amount by which the value of the product exceeds the value of its constituent elements." – Capital p.194

Or perhaps the AWG 'Marxists' would favour:

"Surplus value bears the same ratio to variable capital that surplus labour does to necessary labour, or in other words, the rate of surplus value $s/v = \text{surplus labour/necessary labour}$. Both ratios, s/v and surplus labour/necessary labour express the same thing in different ways; in the one case by reference to materialised, incorporated labour, in the other by reference to living, fluent labour. The rate of surplus value is therefore an exact expression of the degree of exploitation of labour power by Capital, or of the labourer by the Capitalist." – Capital pp.200-201

Got it? No, nor have we – and we suspect that many of the AWG members don't get it either. So it's more likely they prefer:

"In its blind unrestrainable passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus value, Capital oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day." Capital p.250

MARXIST MOTORS

Whatever 'surplus value' means, one thing is certain: in Karl Marx's writings – particularly in 'Capital' – he anthropomorphizes an abstract. So this may well be the 'motor' that moves the AWG to do likewise.

The second 'motor', say the AWG, is "the struggle between workers and bosses arising from this exploitation and the socialization of labour."

Do you all honestly believe that if 'Capitalism' had these two 'motors', it would prove it's not just an economic system? Would this really prove it's not just an abstract, but that it is truly 'the devil incarnate'?

Anyway, those libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries who – due to their own emotional problems – still need to refer to 'Capitalism' as the anthropoid enemy which, along with 'The State', the working class must first get rid of (or as they keep saying, 'smash'), can go right back to Marx's description of 'Capitalism', with its "blind unrestrainable werewolf hunger," for corroboration and support.

But Marx was wrong about a number of very important things. We don't care whether he said the working class must first smash Capitalism. He most probably did, for he and his mate Engels (14) were both middle class. And if he did, he was wrong – just as the AWG are wrong. However, KM isn't around to admit or deny it, whereas the AWG are. Yet all they can do in their 'Reply' is to reiterate, without any meaningful reasoning, that the 'Ruling Class' will only be got rid of after the working class has smashed 'Capitalism' and 'The State' – the questions of how and why are avoided.

Obviously there are at least a few amongst them that know what we know, namely that any real attempt to answer these questions will reveal their indefensible position. For the 'revolutionaries'

are compelled to adopt and advocate all the wrong political positions we have so far exposed because of their refusal to clearly define the class of people who are the obstacle to working class emancipation – and this brings us to the by far most important criticism of all.

THE QUESTION OF CLASS

Many libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries will agree that the necessary critique of this society and most others in the world can only make sense and be comprehensible – indeed, can only begin – when what is happening in them and all that is rotten about them, is seen in terms of class. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely on the question of class that we find, not just confusion for that can be sorted out, but that these same ‘revolutionaries’ have put up the barricades.

The ‘class struggle’ they so often refer to only exists because there is a dominant class and a dominated class. All appear to be agreed that the dominated class are the working class. But although there are those among them who want to include in the working class certain sections of people whose eligibility we would dispute (which for the moment is a separate discussion), there is certainly no agreement about who the dominating class are because there is absolutely no definition of who they are.

This apparently impregnable barrier is one the ‘revolutionaries’ refuse to attempt to remove by a serious and honest examination and exposure of who the class are the working class are struggling against. On the extremely rare occasions when they’ve felt pressed to attempt to do so, their intellectual contortions and evasions have been, to put it lightly, pathetic.

The working class is engaged in a struggle and many are aware of it. But a substantial number are not aware of exactly who it is they’re struggling against. Some do not even see the problem in class terms. Why? An important part of the answer – and it cannot be overemphasised – is that those that ought to be painstakingly explaining the situation are continually obscuring it with meaningless labels such as ‘The Ruling Class’.

RULING?

It is significant that in the ‘Reply’ the AWG do not mention ‘The Ruling Class’ at all – and this despite the term appearing ten times in the magazine our critique was based on. They in fact only use their cover-up synonyms ‘capitalist class’ and ‘boss class’. The reason for this may well be that the term ‘Ruling Class’ clearly implies a class that is doing something, i.e., ruling, whereas ‘Capitalist Class’ does not and is therefore even more vague. Had they continued to use the term ‘Ruling Class’ in the ‘Reply’ (as they still do in subsequent issues of their magazine) they might just have felt compelled to be honest enough to explain what ‘ruling’ means.

PREJUDICED TRANSLATIONS

It could be said that the term ‘Ruling class’ originates with Marx and Engels, one example of which is in the Communist Manifesto (1848) where they wrote the since much-quoted statement: “The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.”

The manifesto was written in German and the word translated into ‘ruling’ is the German word ‘herrschend’ (i.e. ‘die herrschenden Ideen’ and ‘die herrschende Klasse’), whereas the more accurate translation of ‘herrschend’ is ‘dominant’. Thus, the corrected translation reads: ‘The dominant ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its dominant class.’”

But in translating (particularly subjects where politics are involved) bias invariably creeps in and, where possible, meanings are chosen and sometimes even changed to correspond better with the translator's opinions and prejudices (15). The people who do the translations (e.g. see Note 13) – and almost all who quote this particular statement – are middle class, which is of course the dominant class.

GREATER REVELATION

However, what the AWG's 'Reply' said concerning class was an even greater revelation than their earlier nonsense about 'Capitalism'. They said the article was wrong about there now being only two classes in this society because there are actually three, and the middle class is still in the middle with the working class below and the 'capitalist class' above. To use their exact words: "The middle class occupies an intermediate position between the capitalist class and the working class."

As you will have read above, the article outlined some of the ways in which the middle class dominates the lives of us working class people, and how they have tried and continue to try (with some success) to condition us to see ourselves as inferior to them. There are of course many more ways. But the point is the AWG evaded this, just as they evaded any kind of definition of who the 'Capitalist Class' are.

Such evasions lead them into various forms of hypocritical dishonesty, one of the most significant of which is where they say: "The development of human society is the product of conflict between opposing classes, therefore we must correctly identify classes." Surely you will agree that our critique is aimed at prodding all 'revolutionaries' into doing precisely this. Accordingly, we must continue to ask for clear answers to our criticisms.

So what is a 'capitalist'? It is a person who possesses capital? If so, what minimum amount of capital does s/he have to have? Where does it have to reside – invested, banked, or ...? If the 'revolutionaries' are ever able to answer these questions, we must further ask who these people are and how they constitute a class separate from the middle class? The more one goes on with this 'examination' the more obvious it becomes that 'Capitalist Class' is a nonsense.

CLASS DIVISIONS?

The Anarchist Workers showed their petulant frustration at being unable themselves to give any definition of who the 'ruling/capitalist/boss class' are by accusing Andy of wrongly defining class "on the basis of a division between order-givers and order-takers." This an outright lie. Nothing remotely like this appears in the article.

It would seem that the authors of the AWG 'Reply', being aware that Andy was a founder member of the 60's Solidarity (North London) group, have been delving into some of that group's earlier publications. That 'The class divisions in modern society are more and more divisions between order-givers and order-takers' was a theory put forward by a French group 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' – Cornelius Castoriadis, alias Paul Cardan – and adopted by the Solidarity group. Andy never agreed with this 'theory' and has since criticised it in other publications, e.g. 'This, if nothing worse, is a pretty desperate attempt to mislocate the class division.' (16)

However, the AWG went on to say that the real class division is not between order-givers and order-takers, but "between exploiters and exploited." This reveals their irrationality for it suggests they have conceded our argument, because by 'exploited' they obviously mean the working class – and the 'exploiters' of the working class are the middle class!

They later expose their confusion even more by saying the article mistakenly defines class on a sociological basis rather than a materialist one, yet fail to give an explanation of what they mean by either. Now we're not going to get bogged down in such a sterile discussion that would only serve to divert attention from the real issue.

Nevertheless, since they refer (correctly!) to "bourgeois political scientists" who at the beginning of this century "dressed sociology up as a neutral political science" and concocted analyses about class "specifically to combat materialist ideas formulated by people like Karl Marx," we think a further comment may be of some use here.

AN INSIDIOUS ROLE OF SOCIOLOGY TODAY

There are today still some middle class sociologists engaged in concocting analyses, pretentiously claiming it's 'social science research', and producing 'academic' books which seek to fog over the incontrovertible fact of a society divided by class. But they also play another more insidious role today as far as working class people are concerned.

Sociology is today a practical tool used in social and economic/industrial control by governments through to multinational companies. It is a tool used in a variety of fields, e.g. military training and strategy, policing, education, industrial relations, advertising, marketing, and housing.

The middle class sociologists are councillors and informers for their class. They inform about what they reckon the working class is thinking and doing; they seek to discover the danger points – the signs when working class people's actions and attitudes are showing signs of becoming a threat to the stability of their class's dominant position. Sure, they get it wrong sometimes as the 1981 and 1991 uprisings throughout the country showed. But they also get it right. These university-trained sociologists therefore play an important part in helping the class remain the dominant one.

A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE ANSWER

The AWG 'Reply' suggests that the working class don't need to know who the people are stopping them from gaining emancipation because "an independent working class fighting by and for itself will clearly draw the class lines in this society." But they completely omit to explain how the point is reached where the working class is "independent and fighting by and for itself" without knowing long beforehand precisely who it is they should be fighting – precisely what class of people they are.

Left to the likes of the Anarchists Workers Group the working class will never know who the enemy truly is – never mind about how to make the struggle more effective and the eventual defeat of this enemy. And this is a significant part of the answer to the questions which began the article.

FAILURES!

The Anarchist Workers Group and all the groups to whom this pamphlet is mainly addressed continually waffle about the 'Ruling Capitalist/Boss Class', but none ever describes who they are. The AWG had the opportunity to do so, at least privately in their so-called 'Reply', but did not even attempt it. They have therefore totally failed to comply with their own commandment "We must correctly identify classes." They have not even complied with what has been called The Eleventh Commandment 'Thou shalt not get found out.' For they have been found out. They have totally failed to show that society is divided in a way other than into two classes: the dominant middle class, and the class they dominate – the working class.

There is of course a hierarchy among the middle class. Indeed, every society in history that had a dominant minority had a hierarchical structure throughout – a graded, ranked, pyramid-like structure as in a suit of playing cards where every card between top and bottom is superior to those below it, and an inferior of those above it. (9)

But the AWG did not choose sections at the top of this middle class pyramid, describe them, then appoint them as the ‘Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’. The reason why they avoided doing this is not simply the possibility of thereby opening themselves up more widely to the charge of being engaged in ‘bourgeois sociology’. We must give them credit for seeing that it would be absolutely impossible to explain how these sections of the middle class in any way constitute a separate class – and most certainly not in the way that the working class and the middle class are clearly separate classes. (Incidentally, it is worth noting that all the ‘revolutionaries’ never clearly describe who the working class are. If they ever do, we’re sure they will present us with more surprises.)

In the AWG’s magazine *Socialism From Below*, a long article criticised the failure of the ‘anarchists’ over the last ten years and puts a great deal of emphasis on the reason for the failure being “no will to understand the class nature of society.” This is an obvious case of the pot calling the kettle black, for a “will to understand the class nature of society” requires as an absolute necessity the clear identification and description of each of the classes involved. This, as we keep stressing, is just what the AWG and the others never do. It does not say much for their honesty and rationality to criticise others for not doing what they themselves don’t do. Nevertheless, a number of AWG criticisms of the ‘revolutionaries’ are valid, particularly their castigation of the Class War group – no doubt partly because to be lumped together with CW can be, politically, worse than just embarrassing.

But as was said at the beginning, there are ‘political positions’ about which they are all united (even with the various Trotskyist parties and groups!) and consequently never criticise one another for: that the enemies the working class must ‘smash’ are first ‘Capitalism’ and ‘The State’, and then that spectral substitute ‘The Ruling Class.’

Anyone who criticises the groups for this will not get a clear, understandable, reasoned argument in reply. Most will not answer at all. So it must be said that the AWG at least gave what they called ‘A Reply’ – even though it was ‘secret’ and devoid of any clear, understandable, reasoned argument.

Why this refusal to face up to reality? Could it be that the people who run these groups – or a substantial number of them – are not themselves working class? Could it be that these groups are dominated by middle class people? Could it be that these people therefore somehow manage to blindfold themselves to the fact that their own class is the main enemy of the working class? If so, it would go some way in explaining why they are glued to this fiction ‘The Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’ whom they simply will not clearly identify and describe.

FEELINGS OF GUILT

In the past, some groups have said the working class cannot free themselves without the help of middle class political activists. For example, the 60-70’s Solidarity group said: ‘There can be no victorious revolution without a union between working class and middle class activists.’ (16) Although none of the groups ever openly said why they held this view, it was clearly implied that the working class are not capable on their own of freeing themselves.

Of course, such a view was expressed because the groups were dominated by their middle class members; and it was this view that compelled them (doubtless out of feelings of guilt) to invent an

enemy that was not their own class – hence the phantom, the never-defined ‘Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’.

If any of the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries of today were to publicly say the working class must have the help of middle class political activists, we could discuss it. And though they never do, the feelings of guilt are nevertheless still there – otherwise, why still keep using the cover-up term ‘Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’?

We do understand their predicament. There are some among them who genuinely do want to change the power relationships between the classes, as opposed to those of them who want to retain some sort of power – through political party or whatever – for themselves. So obviously we are not saying that all middle class people who call themselves some kind of libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries have nothing to contribute to the struggle. For there clearly are middle class individuals who are not enemies of the working class, and who do not support people who are. But we are not talking here about this tiny minority of individuals. We are talking about a whole class.

We must stress, however, that the predicament of middle class ‘revolutionaries’ arises from their inability to overcome their feelings of guilt that they belong to the dominant class – the class whose well-being depends on the suppression and exploitation of the working class. They can have no more experience of being working class than males can have of being a female in a male-dominated society.

We have seen many times the pathetic and ridiculous antics some of them will get up to (in dress, speech, behaviour) so as to try to feel like and/or be taken for ‘working class’. Some, for example, will move into run-down working-class areas and live on a low income. Yet this cannot provide any real experience since, in almost all cases, they can escape whenever they want to because there’s well-off daddy and/or mummy to help – or there are other middle class relatives, friends from home, school and university, who will bail them out with a loan, finding a job, or even just a ‘good reference’. So they’ve always got a nice soft pillow to fall back on, whereas the working class as a whole have no such ‘pillow’, they just can’t escape.

This predicament of middle class ‘revolutionaries’ is part of the reason why they want us to believe there are three classes, and that the ‘class struggle’ they so glibly keep referring to is between the working class and the illusory ‘Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’ with (as many of them imply) a virtually passive and neutral middle class between the two.

The AWG and Class War offer a view only slightly different. The former says “The middle class simply play a disciplinary role for the capitalist class.” Class War’s policy statement ‘What We Believe’ used to say the class division is between the ruling class and the working class. In the amended version they now say the division is between “the ruling class who are supported by the middle class, and the working class.” The statement makes no further reference to the middle class since, says CW, it’s only the ruling class who “cause all the problems of the working class the world over” which “can be sorted out only by the destruction of the ruling class.”

Therefore both groups clearly imply that the middle class should be left alone because they’re not the enemy of the working class.

HINDRANCES AND POTENTIALS

The questions the article began with are never asked by the so-called Left, so obviously no meaningful answers are ever given. The various Trotskyists just go on sheepishly bleating: ‘The working class must be organised around a socialist newspaper that will be the basis for building the

revolutionary vanguard party to lead the working class to victory ...’ – or words to that effect. They of course omit to say that it is a party managed and controlled mainly by their middle class members.

We know, not only what perilous nonsense this is, but also what crippling damage they have done over the decades to genuine working class militants, and how they have disrupted and hindered any real progress towards working class freedom.

But what are we to make of the libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries who have so far failed/refused to face up to the realities we have been describing? When this refusal causes the Anarchist Workers Group to reply to our criticisms with such muddle and mendacity, what distortion must it also cause to the ideas, analyses, and strategies they put forward for consideration by their other working class readers?

We must, however, again point out that the AWG is only used as an example of what we criticise and condemn in all libertarian-communist-anarchist-socialist revolutionaries. Yet although they have all so far failed in their stated aim of ‘the emancipation of the working class’ – some important reasons for which we have given – it has to be acknowledged that they appear to be the only ones who have the potential to meaningfully discuss and propose action that could positively contribute to the achievement of this aim.

FACING THE TRUTH

In the lengthy critique of what they called ‘the anarchist movement’, it could be said that the AWG made some attempt at a positive proposal for action where they pointed to a number of things they believe are wrong. For example, they deplored the fact that “local groups could not break free from their fragmented and apolitical response to struggle because there was no organisational framework around which to operate ...” which “means that, even if it wanted to, the anarchist movement is incapable of responding to struggle on a national level ...” and is therefore “incapable of acting as the movement it claims to be. It lacks aims and principles, democratic decision-making structures, and any basis of accountability. This means the movement is unable to come to the attention of militant workers, and even if it were, has nothing to offer them.”

Sounds a pretty devastating indictment. Certainly the groups must ‘break free from their fragmented and apolitical response to struggle ...’ But no kind of ‘organisational framework’ or ‘democratic decision-making structures’ or ‘accountability’ will enable them to do this until they face up to the realities we expose and act accordingly.

It is absolutely no use them continuing to try to kid themselves and us. To break out of this self-deception, they first need an attribute that so far has been regrettably absent: honesty. When they are honest with themselves they will be able to see the truth of what we are saying, and will then be able to be honest with others. Then, and only then, do they stand a chance of being able ‘to come to the attention of militant workers’ with something worthwhile to offer them.

This AWG critique then added a statement which is obvious and totally indisputable: “If the anarchist movement is to have any real impact and lasting influence on the class struggle, it will have to undergo a radical transformation.”

PREREQUISITE FOR ‘RADICAL TRANSFORMATION’

A class maintains and strengthens its power, its domination over another class, through its control of a number of things – e.g. the media – but basically and ultimately through its control of the state

machine. Bearing in mind what ‘The State’ is – what it comprises – how do militant workers ‘smash’ it without knowing who the people are who control it?

All the ‘revolutionaries’ still keep producing papers, magazines, pamphlets, meetings and conferences on a variety of subjects, but never anything explaining who these people are – who this ‘Ruling/Capitalist/Boss Class’ really are. Use of these terms have too long served as a means to cover up the true reality. They must at last be abandoned. To know who the people are – what class they are – who through their control of ‘The State’ and everything else, dominate the lives of the working class, is an absolute prerequisite to beginning the ‘radical transformation’ the AWG calls for. It is, moreover, an absolute prerequisite in building a well-organised movement of working class people who are resolved upon their class’s emancipation.

A society in which one class dominates another can only continue thus so long as the dominated class more or less accepts its position – even if only because it sees no way out. And as the AWG itself admits, the so-called anarchist movement “has nothing to offer them” – offers no way out!

In fact, many working class people reject as ‘wishful thinking’ the very idea of emancipation.

Accepting that the middle class knows best how to run things, is one way in which some working class people try to rationalise, try to defend, their subordinate position. This sort of apathy, and the indifference of young working class people to ‘revolutionary politics’ today, is due to the success of the dominant class in the face of the failure of the ‘revolutionary movement’ – and the failure persists because the ‘revolutionaries’ will not look honestly at what they are saying and how they are saying it. For no matter how correct their analysis of any working class struggle or problem, their suggestions as to what militants can do about it are often made absurd and incomprehensible by blanketing crucial realities and truths.

THE PRIORITIES

So it is clear that the aim of working class emancipation involves a struggle more laborious and difficult today than ever it was. The middle class have a tighter than ever grip on the working class who are today less class conscious than ever – that is, they are less aware than ever of their position as a dominated class.

True, their illusions in the middle-class-managed and controlled Labour Party are, despite the illusion-mongering of the Trotskyists, not as great as they once were. But they still have numerous other politically-disabling illusions – for example, in consumerism, in parliament, in the need for leaders and parties, that the hierarchical way of organising everything is the only way ... Such illusions are the result of over a century’s conditioning by the dominant class.

The priority for genuine ‘revolutionaries’ today is not only to effectively expose these illusions, but at the same time to energetically assist working class militants in clearing away the blinding debris of decades of ‘left-wing’ conditioning.

Most of the older politically active working class people, however good their intentions, cannot make the essential ‘transformation’. They go on mechanically repeating phrases learnt a decade ago – phrases devoid of content and meaning. All positive and effective revolutionary activity must have at its core the radical development of the conscious and autonomous action mainly of young working class people.

To carry on as hitherto, to go on describing the way forward using meaningless labels and antiquated jargon that obscure the realities, is to cripple the struggle from the start and a certain way of ensuring that the working class's position in society remains that of the dominated class.

'RADICAL TRANSFORMATION' ESSENTIAL

The failure of the 'revolutionary movement' has left a vacuum, but it is a vacuum that the new approach of an honest 'radical transformation' could start to fill. There can be no doubt that such a transformation is essential and urgent so that a real and effective 'revolutionary movement' can at last be built.

Such a movement is of course nothing if its concerns are not also international. It could be argued that 'the emancipation of the working class' in many other countries of the world is more urgent. The many millions of totally impoverished people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and South America, are today still enduring and facing catastrophic suffering as they have done for generations.

So-called 'Charity' and 'Aid' are not solutions. While these 'good works' enable some middle class people to ease their conscience, cushion their feelings of guilt, and at the same time enable many other members of their class to make a lot of money, 'Charity' and 'Aid' nevertheless act as a cover-up for the true causes of this massive human suffering.

It can be shown how 'Charity' and 'Aid' are a swindle which ranks high on the list of middle class corruption when examining why countless millions of women, men, and children are today still dying of starvation (particularly in Africa) in some of the worst conditions that human beings have ever endured; cold, diseased, clothed in rags, and often without the most primitive form of shelter. We can expose the lies propagated by the middle class through their news media such as the causes being 'famine brought about by drought'.

But that is not the purpose of this pamphlet.

'RADICAL TRANSFORMATION' URGENT!

The countless millions of totally impoverished people in the world are hardly a revolutionary class – their thoughts and actions are concentrated on the struggle merely to survive. They may even welcome another form of slavery that at least enables them to do this. Thus – as far as can be seen – their hopes of a solution may well have to reside in the working class of the so-called developed countries.

If this is the case, then their hopes can hardly be very optimistic – at least as far as revolutionary action by our class in this country is concerned. And though it is only here that we can hope to mobilise our class for such action, it is to put it mildly very disconcerting that, in the 1990s, it should be so crucially necessary to expose the sick condition of the 'revolutionary movement' by first saying all that we have in this pamphlet.

In addition, even if the present day 'revolutionary' groups in this country were at last to see the errors of their ways, the task of exposing the illusion working class people have in consumerism alone would involve a concerted, persistent and dedicated uphill struggle which there is little ground for believing the 'revolutionaries' are capable of.

But there is no alternative to optimism. We must be optimistic. So, despite the gloomy perspective, we want to be involved in the discussions and actions concerning the many important and difficult

problems confronting us in building an effective working class revolutionary movement here. We believe we have something useful and positive to contribute – and there must be a number of other working class people, as yet unknown to the politicians, who want to do the same.

We therefore fully agree that a ‘radical transformation’ is essential and urgent. But it must be begun at the beginning! The main purpose of this pamphlet has been to show where and what the beginning is.

NOTES

(1) ‘Emancipation’ is a word that some may feel to be a bit dated. In the past it was mostly used in reference to slavery – to describe the act of setting people free from the conditions of slavery and oppression. It is used here because analogous conditions have been those of working class people from their beginning – a dominated, oppressed, and exploited class.

(2) These are ‘political positions’ which, apart from the obscurity ‘Anarchism’, they share with the Marxist-Leninists/Trotskyists.

(3) Those who say they are working for the takeover of power by the working class.

(4) Republished by Phoenix Press in 1990, 9780 948 984 143

(5) In ‘Socialism From Below’ issue 3, the AWG stated that copies of the unpublished article and their Reply could be obtained by sending an SAE to their national address. Yet of those we know who have sent SAEs, none has received anything!

(6) Even the AWG’s policy statement ‘Where We Stand’ makes several unexplained references to ‘socialism’, e.g. “There is no parliamentary road to socialism.” “There can be no socialism in one country.” “We do not consider the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, or Cuba to be socialist.” Any copy of the Trotskyist newspaper ‘Socialist Worker’ is cluttered with references to this undefined ‘socialism.’

(7) An interesting comment made by Marx in ‘The Poverty of Philosophy’ (chapter 2) is that economists are “the scientific representatives of the middle class.”

(8) The Industrial Revolution is the name given to the profound economic and social changes that took place in Britain, Western Europe, and the USA from mid-18th century to WW1. It describes the process which economies and societies were transformed from being predominantly agricultural to predominantly industrial. The transformation brought great wealth and power to a new class of people – the middle class – and great social upheaval. The mechanisation of agriculture and the enclosure of arable land threw many thousands of people out of work. They were forced into the expanding cities where there was work in the new mills and factories. The middle class owners and managers kept wages so low that women and children were compelled to work for a pittance merely to exist. Working conditions were atrocious and brutally dehumanising; serious physical injuries which the ‘masters’ called ‘accidents’ were an everyday occurrence.

(9) A more detailed study of the hierarchical way of organising everything will show that it is a very significant factor in ensuring the domination of a minority class over the majority class. But this must be done in another place.

(10) In a class-divided society, the police – despite the overwhelming proof of their dishonesty and falsification – claim to ‘represent the interests of the community’. They in fact act in the interests of a particular class. While the police may on occasion help old ladies across the road, they have historically opposed, and do contemporarily oppose, the interests of the working class as a whole.

(11) After 1918, it was the middle classes who were responsible for the growth of fascism in Europe. It was they who were running the fascist parties and it was they who made up the membership. In Italy, for example, membership of the Fascist Party (the first in Europe) grew from a few hundred in 1919 to over 250,000 in 1921. Virtually all were middle class and included industrialists, landowners, and the vast majority of police and army officers. The reason for this was the middle class’s fear of the increasing strength and militancy of the working class and the peasantry. It was due to this full backing of the middle class that Mussolini, after a threatened coup in 1922, was able to take power.

The fascists rise to power in Germany and Spain – though a bit later and in different ways – was also due primarily to the full support of large sections of these countries’ middle classes who feared the increasing frustration, anger, militancy and organisation of working class people.

There is in fact incontrovertible evidence that Franco’s fascists in Spain won the Civil War (1936-39) not just due to support from German and Italian middle class fascists, but mainly due to the British middle class’s secret ‘diplomatic’ and economic assistance.

The middle class made up the extraordinary strength of the fascist parties at this period in countries as diverse as Hungary, France, Finland, Norway – and for the same reasons as those given above.

The fascist groups and parties in all countries of the world (including the UK) today are run by middle class people.

(12) For example, the term ‘class struggle’ appears 10 times on one page in issue 3 of the AWG magazine Socialism From Below.

(12a) Faced with the same problem, the Solidarity group of the 60-70s added to the multiplicity of definitions with a 10,000 word pamphlet (No.6 – The Meaning of Socialism – 1961) to which the reader was referred when ‘socialism’ cropped up in other publications.

(13) The Allen & Unwin 1957 reprint of Marx’s Capital (from which we quote on page 11) is translated from the German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and edited by Frederick Engels: and further translated and edited by Dona Torr.

(14) Friedrich Engels – often described as ‘a rich gentlemanly businessman who loved foxhunting’.

(15) This, as many will be aware, is very much the case in media news-reporting – but then we know what sort of people run the media ... don’t we?

(16) These were among several reasons why some in that group, including Andy, broke away in the late 60s and formed the South London Solidarity.

OUTRO 1998

Though we are pleased that Openly Classist have republished our two booklets, it’s also a bit of a piss off that, despite many years having passed, they are just as important today – perhaps more so. Their importance is as vital contributions towards our class at last taking the essential first step to freedom from domination [by] another class.

The theme of both is similar – stressing the truth about who this other class are, a truth that all parties and groups of ‘The Left’ have hitherto either denied and/or concealed, thus undermining and ultimately obstructing any real movement towards our goal. The introductions to both books give more details about this.

We are also pleased because, being a small group of working class people, we could only afford to produce a small number of each, and there were the additional problems of publicity and distribution. Needless to say, there was no help whatever from the parties and groups of the ‘revolutionary left’, i.e. the Anarchists and Trotskyists. In fact, First Know Your Enemy was completely ignored by all of them, even though each received a copy. Clearly, they thought that anything they might say would only make their position even more obviously flawed.

All of them also received a copy of Why The ‘Revolutionaries’ Have Failed when it was first published in November 1991. Yet only two – the French group Echanges et Movement, and the Anarchist Communist Federation here – published reviews (late 1992), though neither group sent us copies of them. We only became aware of their existence when somebody not connected with these groups sent us photocopies – in early 1996.

The review by the middle class in the ACF was very short, waffled, attributed to us things we had not said, and unsurprisingly, concluded that the real enemy of the working class is, as they have always maintained, the state and the capitalist class – the later was, as usual, quite undefined.

The review by Echanges et Movement, though longer, was a bit of a disaster in that it was very obscure. And although it also attributed to us thing we had not said – lies is the right name for this sort of party-political trick – we could excuse this because it was poorly translated from the French. Though it's doubtful whether this was the reason for their quaint conclusion that “working class people don't need to know who the class enemy is because through their daily life, they know exactly who it is.”

There are of course situations described in First Know Your Enemy which have changed since it was published nearly ten years ago. For example, in the section on the role of television where we refer to programmes long since deceased, we could give today's equivalents. Another is that Apartheid in South Africa has to some degree ended and Mandela is now President. But what we said about his role and that of the ANC has proved to be correct. The middle class (though some of them black) are still in control, pulling in the big money and living it up, while the majority, the millions of black working class South Africans, are still suffering greatly, with no signs of any real steps towards emancipation.

However, we believe that the reader will appreciate that the things which have changed since we wrote about them in 1986-87, have only changed superficially, and that our conclusions about them are as accurate and probably, therefore, more convincing.