

# DAM LETTER FROM HULL AND REPLY

FEW people will know, or care, about the political reasons why the Hull group of the DAM collectively resigned from the organisation this summer, and this is not the place to comment on them. (Those curious to know may send an sae to PO Box 102, Hull for free copies of our resignation letters.) But it's recently come to our notice that certain DAM members have since been conducting a campaign to smear our reputation with the false accusation of dishonesty.

Other people in other circumstances would take legal action against these libels; as anarchists we would not resort to the law even if we could afford to. But it would be in everyone's interest if the facts of the matter were made clear so that people can judge for themselves. Hence this letter.

The DAM accuse us of stealing a typewriter belonging to the DAM's paper *Direct Action* (which we edited and produced), either for our own gain or in order to damage DAM. We have gained nothing however, and have no wish to inflict damage on the DAM, which is quite capable of doing that for itself.

The story of the typewriter is as follows: In early 1985 we took over the running of DA. As no accounts existed, we incurred a debt for printing with Aldgate Press of £136 which we later learnt we could not immediately pay.

Subsequently we found the DAM already owed several hundred pounds to Aldgate Press. What was most worrying was that amongst the rest of the DAM the general attitude was that the debts need never be paid, as a libertarian press was unlikely to sue. The official version of this was 'We'll pay later when we have more money' - an unlikely prospect.

In December 1985 *Direct Action* received a donation of £1,000. The person handing it over on behalf of the donor said it was to be used at the discretion of Hull DAM. After discussion with DAM delegates it was decided to spend some of the money on a typewriter, as the one then in use was hired. (Suggestions that some of the money should be used to clear debts were never responded to clearly. In the event it was used to cover losses as the paper never broke even.)

But later, in March 1986, we were advised by many DAM members that the typewriter was not a sensible buy, especially in view of the fact that the Manchester DAM, who would succeed us on the paper, already had one.

When, for political reasons, we resigned from *Direct Action*, we were concerned about the debt to Aldgate Press. We felt that as anarchists we should pay our debts without compulsion from the law, and that a libertarian press did not deserve to be ripped off. We felt obliged to repay what we had incurred, even though we could not be responsible for what DAM had owed previous to 1985.

We raised the money by selling the typewriter because Manchester DAM already had one; because it would have been unfair to use up the remaining cash which would pay for the printing of their first issue, and because the loss on its sale was less than the cost of hire over six months, so we got good value for money.

It was sold for £136 cash and a cheque for this amount was sent to Aldgate Press.

When delegates from Manchester visited Hull to collect the property of *Direct Action*, they examined the accounts etc, before taking them away. They said they were satisfied that everything was in order and honestly accounted for, and signed a statement to this effect. But they expressed surprise and disappointment on learning that they no longer had either the debt or the typewriter. They said the debt should have remained outstanding, and the typewriter used by their group to be exchanged for items to be used by Manchester DAM. As the typewriter belonged to the paper *Direct Action* and not to any one DAM group, this struck us as somewhat irregular. Yet they are now the ones to accuse us of dishonesty.

When differences develop into splits there is bound to be ill-feeling. That feeling dominates the DAM to the extent that the leaders appear to have deliberately misled their members about the real facts. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that DAM has achieved a pretty low level of maturity and integrity.

## The former members of Hull DAM

IT IS not the DAM's usual practice to use other publications to answer our critics, but we feel that we have to respond to Hull Syndicalists' letter, to clear up any misunderstandings people may have about the whole affair.

What our 'comrades' from Hull fail to mention in their letter is that having decided to resign from the DAM, they then went on to produce an issue of *Direct Action*. In fact they sent out their resignations with that issue, which also advertised that Hull Syndicalists had already been formed. If that wasn't bad enough also included were a number of

articles supporting the CNT-U or 'Renovadas'. Having been members of DAM for several years they were well aware of our policy, and that of the I.W.A., in recognising only one anarcho-syndicalist union in Spain, the CNT-AIT. This not only left us with a paper we were unable to sell but also caused anger, upset and confusion. I find it quite amusing that Hull Syndicalists are now trying to portray themselves, in their letter, as the injured party.

With regard to the typewriter, again there are a number of omissions. On the same night that the two comrades from Manchester DAM informed me that Hull Syndicalists were refusing to hand over the typewriter, as national secretary I

rang up one of their members. I informed him that we wanted the typewriter back. He said he would raise the issue at their next meeting. The following week I rang again to be told that Hull Syndicalists had voted to dispose of the DAM's collective property (i.e. the typewriter).

Again I'd like to pause to clear up one or two items that they've used to cloud the issue. Manchester DAM had no intention of selling the typewriter - in fact we wanted access to it for back-up in the event of failure with our own equipment. In the meantime it would have been used by the DAM for other purposes. But this of course is beside the point - the typewriter belonged to the organisation as a whole, as does our paper *Direct Action*, and we couldn't have sold it even if we'd wanted to. Besides this, the person who donated the £1000 was pretty upset by the antics of Hull Syndicalists, and stated that he wanted anything purchased with the donation to be handed back to the DAM.

At no time have we claimed that the money from the sale was not paid to Aldgate Press, nor have we ever claimed that there was anything wrong with their accounts (though the £375.49 we lost by not being able to sell the paper they produced would have come in handy).

To round off what will be the last official statement by us on the matter, it must be said that to decide to leave an organisation and then to go on to produce a paper on behalf of that organisation is hardly the action of anarchists. To then sell equipment belonging to that organisation against its expressed wishes is the action of thieves. The pitiful running around by Hull Syndicalists handing out leaflets and writing to libertarian papers will not change these facts.

Tony Crowther

(In November we received another letter from Hull, saying the former DAM members there had been called on, at 11 p.m., by current DAM members demanding money. We are told this was unofficial.)



## DAM initials

DAM's reply to the letter from Hull was obtained for us by a member of Aldgate Press who is also a member of DAM.

For those unfamiliar with the initialisms, DAM is the Direct Action Movement, an anarcho-syndicalist organisation active in this country; IWA is the International Workers' Association to which DAM is affiliated; CNT is the Confederacion Nacional dos Trabajos (National Workers' Federation), an old Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union made illegal (of course) by the Franco fascist government.

Following the restoration of democracy in Spain, half a dozen rival 'CNT' groups emerged, each claiming to be the authentic continuation of the pre-Franco CNT, distinguished from each other by the addition of further initials after a hyphen. The CNT-AIT (Asociacion Internacional dos Trabajos - Spanish for IWA) is so-called because it is recognised as the authentic CNT by IWA.

Some time ago, CNT-AIT applied to a civil court in Spain for a judicial declaration that they, and only they, are the authentic CNT (this is important as the government has promised to restore funds confiscated by the fascists, and CNT is thought to be due for some twelve million pounds). In June this year, after long deliberation, the court found that there is indeed only one authentic CNT; however this is not the applicant, CNT-AIT, but an objector to the application, CNT-V (for Valencia), the 'Renovados'. CNT-AIT has lodged an appeal.

Editors

# Germany MASS ARREST IN MAINZ

Sixty-two anti-NATO demonstrators were encircled without warning and arrested by police in Mainz on 16 September. They had participated in a demonstration on the occasion of a conference of the ATA (Atlantic Treaty Alliance) at the Hilton Hotel in Mainz. The ATA is a private international organisation devoted to propaganda in favour of NATO with national sections in all NATO countries. Five hundred people defied the huge police presence and came to the demonstration against NATO and ATA. Some people were molested, searched, robbed or arrested by police on their way to the demonstration. The protest march was so heavily surrounded by police it resembled a convoy of prisoners.

After the official end of the demonstration a group of approximately 100 people, on their way to the railway station, were stopped and surrounded. 62 persons were put one by one in vehicles for the transport of prisoners. This procedure

lasted two hours during heavy rain. Most of those arrested had to wait several hours in the prison buses (without any possibility of going to the toilet). They were released during the night, some in the neighbouring city of Wiesbaden, some in remote suburbs, most of them at the Mainz police HQ. The police took fingerprints, made photographs, etc, sometimes very brutally.

The police have difficulties explaining this terrorism, because there was no damage caused by the demonstrators, or any other legally convincing pretext for such an action. The demonstrators had not even been ordered to disperse before the arrests were made. It is obvious that the mass arrest was carefully planned in advance, apparently with the object of intimidating and to identifying radical opponents of NATO and the West German State. The police claim to have caught mainly RAF (Red Army Faction) sympathisers and similar radicals but their catch embarrassingly included many school-children, down to 13 years old, who are unlikely RAF sympathisers.

Encirclement and mass arrests of non-violent demonstrators seem to have become a standard police tactic in West Germany, since the infamous encirclement in Hamburg on 8 June, when 800 anti-nuclear demonstrators were encircled and held captive up to 15 hours under degrading circumstances before being arrested.

The affair is to be investigated by the Mainz city council and the Diet of Rhineland-Palatinate.

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