

ORGANISE!

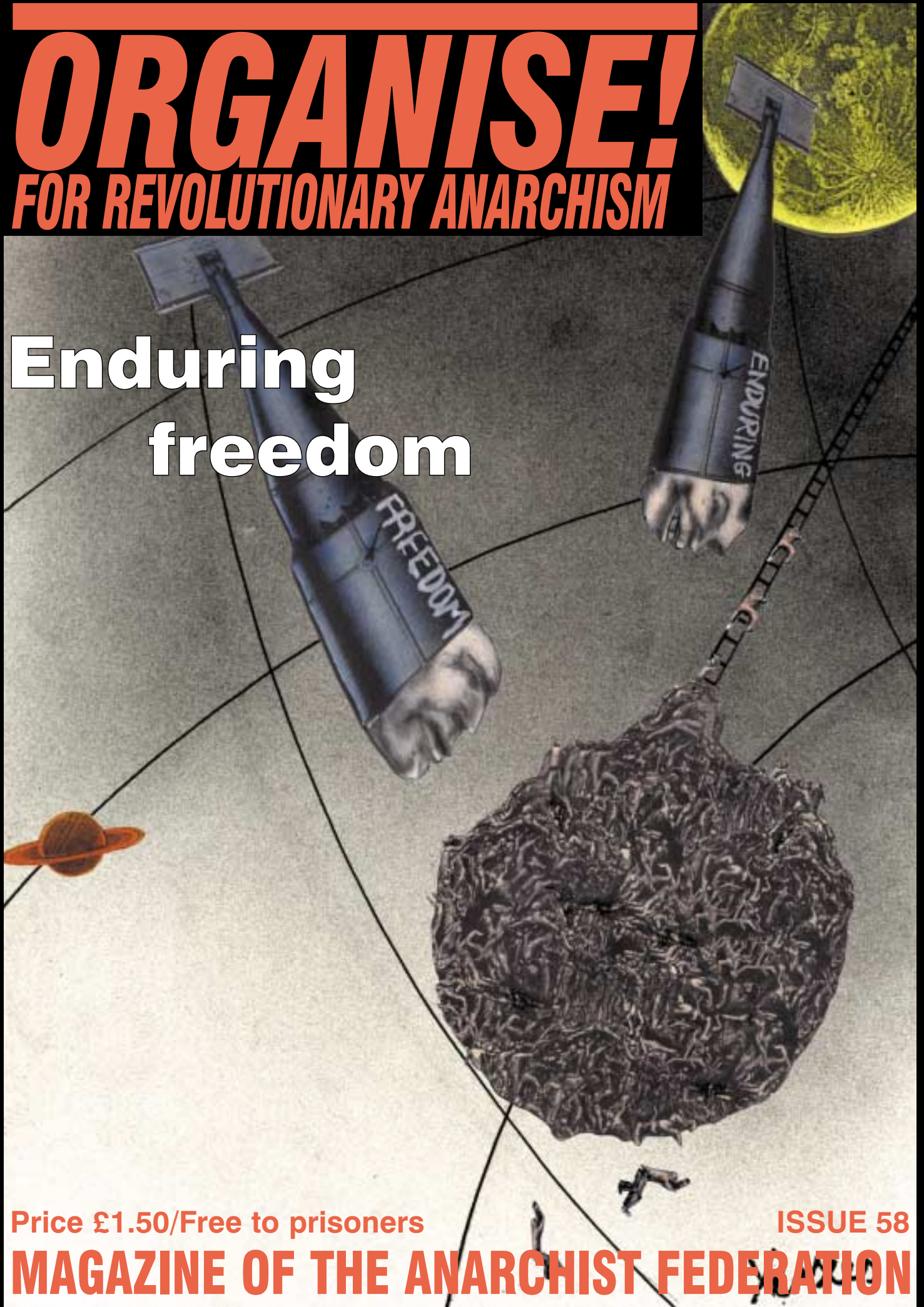
FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

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ISSUE 58

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION



Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

From this issue, *Organise!* will be produced three times a year. On top of producing our monthly newsheet, *Resistance*, this will involve a major effort on our behalf. We therefore positively solicit your contributions. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first.

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out for Mayday 2002.

All contributions for *Organise!* should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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Issue 37: Pornography, booze, cigs and dope, Moral panics

Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin, Syndicalism

Issue 48: French unemployed, Haile Selassie, Revolutionary unions?

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Articles from *Organise!* can be found on the internet at:

<http://www.afed.org.uk>

You can also E-mail us at:

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Oil in troubled waters

Afghanistan – the other factors

This article is in two parts. The first was posted on the a-infos web site. The second, written by an AF member.

The oil behind Bush and Son's campaigns

By Ranjit Devraj

NEW DELHI – Just as the Gulf War in 1991 was all about oil, the new conflict in South and Central Asia is no less about access to the region's abundant petroleum resources, according to Indian analysts.

"US influence and military presence in Afghanistan and the Central Asian states, not unlike that over the oil-rich Gulf states, would be a major strategic gain", said V R Raghavan, a strategic analyst and former general in the Indian army. Raghavan believes that the prospect of a western military presence in a region extending from Turkey to Tajikistan could not have escaped strategists who are now readying a military campaign aimed at changing the political order in Afghanistan, accused by the United States of harbouring Osama bin Laden.

Where the 'great game' in Afghanistan was once about czars and commissars seeking access to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf, today it is about laying oil and gas pipelines to the untapped petroleum reserves of Central Asia. According to testimony before the US House of Representatives in March 1999 by the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan together have 15 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. The same countries also have proven gas deposits totalling not less than nine trillion cubic meters. Another study by the Institute for Afghan Studies placed the total worth of oil and gas reserves in the Central Asian republics at around US \$3 trillion at last year's prices.

Not only can Afghanistan play a role in hosting pipelines connecting Central Asia to international markets, but the country itself has significant oil and gas deposits. During the Soviets' decade-long occupation of Afghanistan, Moscow estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable natural gas reserves at around five trillion cubic feet and production reached 275 million cubic feet per day in the mid-1970s. But sabotage by anti-Soviet mujahadeen (freedom fighters) and by rival groups in the civil war that followed Soviet withdrawal in 1989 virtually closed down gas production and ended deals for the supply of gas to several European countries. Major Afghan natural gas fields awaiting exploitation include Jorqaduq, Khowaja, Gogerdak, and Yatimtaq, all of which are located within nine kilometres of the town of Sheberghan in northern Jowzjan province.

Natural gas production and distribution under Afghanistan's Taliban rulers is the responsibility of the Afghan Gas Enterprise which, in 1999, began repair of a pipeline to Mazar-i-Sharif city. Afghanistan's proven and probable oil and condensate reserves were placed at 95 million



barrels by the Soviets. So far, attempts to exploit Afghanistan's petroleum reserves or take advantage of its unique geographical location as a crossroads to markets in Europe and South Asia have been thwarted by the continuing civil strife.

In 1998, the California-based UNOCAL, which held 46.5% stakes in Central Asia Gas (CentGas), a consortium that planned an ambitious gas pipeline across Afghanistan, withdrew in frustration after several fruitless years. The pipeline was to stretch 1,271km from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad fields to Multan in Pakistan, at an estimated cost of \$1.9 billion. An additional \$600 million would have brought the pipeline to energy-hungry India. Energy experts in India, such as R K Pachauri, who heads the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), have long been urging the country's planners to ensure access to petroleum products from the Central Asian republics, with which New Delhi has traditionally maintained good relations.

Attempts to exploit Afghanistan's petroleum reserves have been thwarted by continuing civil strife.

Other partners in CentGas included the Saudi Arabian Delta Oil Company, the Government of Turkmenistan, Indonesia Petroleum (INPEX), the Japanese ITOCHU, Korean Hyundai and Pakistan's Crescent Group.

According to observers, one problem is the uncertainty over who the beneficiaries in Afghanistan would be – the opposition Northern Alliance, the Taliban, the Afghan people or, indeed, whether any of these would benefit at all. But the immediate reason for UNOCAL's withdrawal was undoubtedly the US cruise missile attacks on Osama bin Laden's terrorism training camps in Afghanistan in August 1998, done in

retaliation for the bombing of its embassies in Africa. UNOCAL then stated that the project would have to wait until Afghanistan achieved the "peace and stability necessary to obtain financing from international agencies and a government that is recognised by the United States and the United Nations".

Oil and the Afghan war

The article reprinted above provides one very compelling reason behind the USA's decision to launch a war against Afghanistan in the wake of the attack on the Twin Towers.

Since the Gulf War, US foreign policy has been based around a number of simple premises. Firstly, find the oil fields, gain access to them and if necessary go to war to defend them – this accounted not only for the Gulf War, but also for their adventure in Somalia, which sat astride major oil shipping routes. Secondly, any attack on the US or its interests will result in massive retaliation against anyone who can be implicated.

In the case of Afghanistan, however, the volume of oil and gas at stake is relatively small in its own right. Fifteen billion barrels of oil would last about seven months at current usage and the gas would provide around 22 months of global supply. These are useful quantities, but will not be the saviours of the western economies in the way that some are predicting. Finding the causes of the war requires us to look into other, regional factors.

Since the departure of the Soviet army, Afghanistan has been wracked by civil war. As is well documented, the Taliban regime was created and then supported by the Pakistani government. The Pakistani state is itself a key ally of the USA in the region. What is less well appreciated is who supported and armed the Northern Alliance. They received arms, training and other support from the Russian and the Indian states.

The 'coalition against terrorism' that US President George W Bush is building now, is the first opportunity that has any chance of making UNOCAL's wish come true. If the coalition succeeds, Raghavan said, it has the potential of "reconfiguring substantially the energy scenarios for the 21st century".

Russian and Indian interests

Russia was obviously keen to recover some influence in the region. Not only would this allow them to utilise the oil and gas reserves in its client states along the Afghan border, but it would also put to rest the turmoil caused by Islamic fundamentalism in those same regions. It was notable that, when the Northern Alliance began their push on Kabul, that the soldiers who appeared on our TV screens were in new uniforms and driving newly-acquired tanks. Likewise, the Russian Special Forces were quick to take up positions in Kabul after its capture. What is less well known is that Russian Special Forces were involved in the original Northern Alliance push as the war entered its new phase. Some reports suggest that they suffered quite heavy casualties spearheading the offensive (possibly up to 300).

India has long been on the verge of hostilities against Pakistan. India controls 2/3 of Kashmir, the other 1/3 being in Pakistan. Control of the Indian part is hotly contested, with the Pakistani secret state sponsoring military operations by guerrillas on the one hand and the Indian state actively repressing Kashmiris under its own control, often with appalling brutality. Deaths in the region have numbered up to 90,000 over the past decade.

The success of the Taliban regime threatened to destabilise the region further by providing moral and physical support for Kashmiri separatists. Sources in the Delhi Times saw the war as an opportunity to get rid of this 'local difficulty'. India,

although formally allied to the west, has long seen its future linked with that of the Russians. Thus they also had links with the Northern Alliance and were more than happy to provide them with support. This had the added bonus of getting India firmly on side with the Americans, and India in return expected US support in its conflict with Pakistan.

This in part helps explain why Pakistan was prepared to ditch the Taliban and join the coalition. If India expected US support, Pakistan was desperate to retain it. Moreover, for the military government of Pakistan, the Taliban had become an embarrassment and a source of unrest in Pakistan itself. Pakistan is a regionally divided country with some parts barely under the control of any formal state. Regions bordering Afghanistan and further south, Azad Kashmir, were key areas of support for the fundamentalists who are at such odds with the modernising central state. The war provided an excuse to station government troops along the border in regions that had never seen one before.

The USA was not only interested in punishing the attackers of September 11 and, in fact, has never bothered to offer conclusive proof they originated in Afghanistan. Not only did it provide access to a useful, if not enormous supply of natural resources, but it also prevented the civil war letting Afghanistan fall under the control of a joint Russo-Indian regional bloc.

Chinese interests

A further compelling reason for the war was the growing influence of China in the region. Pakistan is already becoming a huge market for Chinese products. Moreover, China is a major competitor of the US for the support of Pakistan. China provides Pakistan with arms, including the design of its nuclear capable missile, the Shaheen. On New Year's Day, it was announced that China is now the sixth largest economy in the world. It expects to grow even more over the coming decade. China is the country bordering Afghanistan that has been

forgotten in reports and analysis of the war.

After the attack on the Twin Towers, the Chinese secret service, the MSS, reported that the US was about to sign an agreement with Russia to enable it to launch the war. They saw this, rightly, as the most significant change in the international situation since China and Russia fell out in 1962. There is some evidence that this led to China either supporting or increasing support for the Taliban regime. Certainly, 15 dead Chinese soldiers were found at Kandahar where they had been escorts for one of bin Laden's senior lieutenants, Basir al Masri. Chinese soldiers also fought alongside Taliban and al Qaeda forces in the battles of Konduz and Kandahar. When the Tora Bora caves were captured, the US found large quantities of Chinese arms.

In the 19th century, the British and Russians fought over Afghanistan to control access to the warm water ports of Pakistan. Now it looks like a new alliance is playing a very similar game. Currently, Russia is weak in terms of international power. It is willing to side with the USA (and also India – long in conflict with China), to secure its own southern borders and control over client states from its increasingly strong Chinese neighbour. For the USA, a potentially powerful rival is kept hemmed in and its own influence in Pakistan is increased.

From our perspective, this new alliance shows that the US is planning for the long term future, as well as securing access to raw materials that should come online around 2010, just as demand is expected to peak. It also presages future potential conflict between the existing Superpower and what is sure to become its major regional rival in future years.

The only reasons for the scale of this war have been economic and geopolitical. Clearly, ideology has had little to do with it. Attacking the excesses of Taliban Islamic fascism provides an apparently acceptable justification for going to war, but states never go to war or the sake of

Resistance!

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of *Resistance* means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged hard work.

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an ideology. US history proves that it will cosy up to any vile regime if it sees its own interests as benefiting from such a course of action. We are confident that even without the attack on the Twin Towers the USA would have eventually found an excuse to intervene in Afghanistan.

More worryingly still, the 'War on Terrorism' makes a lot of sense if it heralds a concerted US campaign to gain control of as many sources of energy as possible. If the oil fields around Afghanistan do not offer sufficient hope of staving off the oil crisis for long, they do if combined with control of other minor sources. We can expect the USA to meddle in other countries under the guise of attacking al Qaeda. Targets already identified include Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, all important for the oil industry. We can predict a rising of international tensions and a move into more general open warfare.

As anarchists, we see once again that war, for all its flowery rhetoric, is fought in the interests of capital. Those who suffer are overwhelmingly working class and peasants. That is why we have no hesitation in condemning these wars and in taking no side but that of our class.

Then and now: Class war in Argentina

How should we view recent and ongoing events in Argentina?

The economy has gone into freefall with IMF-inspired restrictions on the movement of capital (even down to ordinary withdrawals from bank accounts). Sections of the middle and working classes are threatened with immediate impoverishment. Loans on a whole range of things have been taken out in dollars but must now be repaid in heavily devalued pesos. High utility bills and taxes forced upon Argentina by foreign capital and corporations hit the waged. Diminished spending power has reduced the income of people in the informal economy far below the poverty line. A range of largely passive actions designed to gain a bare subsistence in the form of hand-outs (a traditional practice in Argentina) have been met with armed force, both private and state-sponsored.

The government owes \$150bn to external banks and lenders, money that will need to be squeezed from the working classes through retrenchment and cuts in welfare. The chronic 20% unemployment rate is bound to increase despite the untold social misery this will create. A Radical Party president and government have resigned. The ruling class, fearing military intervention, invite a corrupt Peronist politician to take his place. His period in government is short as a moderate populism is deemed insufficient by provincial power-brokers and those who see political advantage from paralysis; the working class pay the price in arrests, injury and death on the streets.

The economic situation of Argentina has been aptly summed up as follows:

"The attempt to push through expanded industrialisation... led to a deepening balance of payments deficit which could be met in the short term by foreign loans while awaiting a hoped-for expansion of exports of the new industrial products. This foreign exchange bottleneck had inevitable inflationary results. As the deficit worsened, Argentine governments were forced to turn to traditional agricultural exports in order to pay interest on foreign debt and maintain industrial inputs. To increase the value of these exports at a time when world market prices for them were generally declining, Argentina resorted to successive devaluations [which] helped fuel an inflationary spiral."

Then and now

But this was Argentina of the 1960s, not today. The government's solution, the same as today, was: *"an emergency, IMF-sponsored stabilisation plan...to restrict industrial production by limiting credit and squeezing the home market by salary limits and increases in public tariffs... The result for the working class was immediate and drastic: an industrial recession which saw unemployment rise dramatically... and continuing high levels of inflation which inevitably adversely affected real wages"*.

If social relations and the prospects for revolutionary change are at least partially dictated by economic forces, what can those battling on the streets today learn from this period in Argentina's history?

In 1955, the charismatic populist, Peron, was overthrown in a military coup. Peron had created a social and political power-base focused on the large industrial unions and their federation, the CGT. His power initially came from the strength of the organised working class, which had adopted the syndicalist and increasingly anarcho-syndicalist method of organisation. But the CGT allowed itself to be absorbed within a corporatist state and a corrupt union bureaucracy developed.



Photo from www.indymedia.org

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s a series of social contracts had been forged in which a Peronist government mediated between antagonistic social classes and forces. Argentina was highly industrialised, with an economy larger in value than almost the rest of South America put together. Argentine workers had long enjoyed time wages based on hourly rates, with standard contracts protected in a variety of institutional ways.

This period led imperceptibly to the creation of a political culture in which trade unions were an accepted, normal, even valued partner in managing society. The Argentine working class began to see themselves as an authentic part of *national* life, socially and politically, and with a positive role to play in shaping the nation's fortunes.

But this role and sense of self, which developed and intensified, had the unfortunate consequence of obscuring the self-interest of the working class, of confusing it with the interests of the ruling classes, often articulated by the union leaders and bureaucrats.

Peronist ideology was essentially corporatist, and through hundreds of decrees and laws, an attempt was made to thoroughly integrate the working class and its institutions with the state. Peronist union leaders depended on their relationship with a (Peronist) government to deliver their side of the social contract but *"this relationship implied a commitment on the part of the union leadership to the notion of controlling and limiting working class activity within limits established by the state; this implied... working class passivity"*.

Peronist opposition to periodic attempts to worsen terms and conditions was often couched in terms of the *justicia social*, in liberal bourgeois terms, not the class struggle, nor did it have the revolutionary idea of (for instance) proposing worker's control of factories: workers and bosses were one. This cultural feature of Argentina made it relatively easy for the military and their puppet governments to isolate

militants and those genuinely engaged in the class struggle.

After Peron's overthrow, the period 1955-58 saw intense resistance to government attempts to re-shape the social contract by dissolving or



Photo from www.indymedia.org

reconstituting factory committees, regional *sindicats* and indeed whole unions. Mass sackings and arrests provoked serious strikes, wildcat actions, sabotage, the formation of clandestine cells in unions and factories. As today, the city of Rosario and its environs was a centre of radical resistance which the army had to crush during September 1955. The aim of the ruling class was not to destroy the Peronist unions or their federation, the CGT, but to tame them: *"[I]f the unions recognised the need to stay within their own sphere, and if the corrupt demagoguery of those most closely compromised with Peron could be erased, then the Peronist-led unions had an important role to play in post-Peron Argentina as organs of social control and channels of expression of the working masses."*

Peronist ideology was essentially corporatist.

Working class resistance was, however, almost entirely defensive: "one had no idea in what way an insurrection could have been carried out, since there was not even a hint of organisation, nor could one glimpse the existence of any group with... authority", as one militant said.

The union leaders hesitated and a general strike in November 1955 was defeated. Why? As one union leader, Miguel Gazzera admitted, "We were satisfied with what we had already lived through, tasted and enjoyed. We were inexorably finished, totally exhausted" – an apt description of

politicians and union leaders of the left in Argentina today, and an explanation of the total contempt for them held by the workers there.

The struggle continued and intensified, led by grass-roots activists

and clandestine groups of militants who replaced those who had been arrested or who gave up, defending sacked workers and articulating practical grievances. As today, neighbourhood resistance groups were formed to give focus and direction to working class solidarity. Slogan-painting, arson and attacks on food merchants, sabotage of communications, power stations, Radical Party buildings and factories where slow-downs and poor production went hand-in-hand with actual sabotage convinced the military that some compromise was needed if their long-term aims were to be achieved.

Exiled in Madrid, Peron tried to organise an insurrection in terms we would understand today:

"All attempts at confronting the military regime where it was strongest, on the purely military level, were to be avoided. Far more effective, said Peron, were the thousands of small actions which would gradually wear down the military and undermine its will to continue in power. In the social arena, the resistance should keep the workers in a constant state of upheaval with strikes, go-slows, low productivity. On a more individual level, thousands of both passive and active actions should be undertaken.... All these myriad acts of resistance would eventually make the government ungovernable and prepare the ground for the revolutionary general strike which, Peron considered, would be the signal for the national insurrection."

But no political programme capable of unifying the working class or

creating a mood for total civil resistance emerged from Madrid. Nor were local union leaders, under intense pressure to recuperate the working class and by now hopelessly compromised, capable of articulating one. Divided, exhausted, incapable of creating the objective conditions under which an insurrection could succeed, they hesitated. The militants too were themselves divided: some favoured the route of the clandestine *commandos*, others (the majority)

Photo from www.indymedia.org



argued that reconstituting the unions and recapturing them from state-appointed leaders and officials was the only way to confront the ruling class on more equal terms.

Defeat at the national level – and, gradually, at the factory level, as strikes were declared illegal, strike leaders hunted down, working class areas patrolled by tanks and armoured cars and with defeat mass sackings – led to the rise of more pragmatic leaders.

Over time, exhaustion and demoralisation set in, coupled with fragmentation, with thousands of militants on the run or blacklisted; activists were increasingly isolated and alienated from the 'base'. The defeat of the *Resistance* enabled the bosses to introduce those measures to increase labour productivity (especially piece-rates and incentives for performance) that a confident and combative working class had managed to resist. The inevitable decline in living standards which followed was *"the result of political defeat, the overthrow of Peron, not an economic one....The government and employers imposed by legal means and the power of the state what they could not impose through the discipline of the labour market"*.

The long-term solution to the problem of class conflict, once profits had been safe-guarded, was also a political one – to allow for such conflict but to define and constrain it within the boundaries of a national consensus in which the working class would be forced to see itself not as antagonistic but merely a competitor for a share of national wealth, alongside all other forces in society. Frequent cyclical downturns in the economy in the 1960s made it easy for moderate union leaders like Augusto Vandor to gain tight control of organised labour and crush dissent through the *burocracia sindical* in the name of protecting workers and their institutions; so long as they did the bidding of the military or the Ministry of Labour, they were safe.

Rejecting revolutionary syndicalism, leaders like Vandor increasingly made use of the electoral power of Peronism, mobilising the working classes to vote for union candidates, a strategy that brought important gains but only for the leaders themselves. The leaders gained power by threatening pro-Peronist mobilisations and electing Peronist slates of candidates (and often won concessions from the ruling class). Their mistake (inevitable given the nature of Peronism) was to believe that policies necessary to effect changes in the Argentine economy could be implemented within a context of class consensus.

Compromise

A historic compromise throughout the 1960s resulted. The union leaders would control their militants and in return were allowed to rebuild their power base on the back of large welfare programmes. The state would pass laws giving it the right to control union affairs and in return union leaders would get access to government and an understanding of their difficulties. Now controlling vast areas of patronage via the political spoils system, corruption began to run uncontrollably through the institutions of labour and its parallel political formations. Unions became big

business, with laws passed to make workers pay union dues, to contribute to the unions' social and welfare programmes and unions getting a share of any wage increase negotiated. Union leaders were also rewarded with laws that made it very difficult for opposition candidates or lists to win elections, which effectively secured their power.

Inevitably this could not last. In 1969, an authoritarian president with an agenda to rationalise the Argentine economy and modernise the Argentine state took power. The union leaders were immediately forced to respond to a wholly unlooked-for series of threats and into crisis. As in Argentina today: *"the crisis of leadership was characterised by a number of features: a growing problem vis-à-vis their rank and file at a time of radicalised social conflict; the emergence of a vigorous opposition movement within the unions; a growing problem of internal divisions amongst themselves; and an increasing danger of isolation as their traditional domination within the movement was challenged by new actors"*.

Political activity was banned and with it the unions' main source of legitimacy. An authoritarian economic plan to stimulate the economy through shifting wealth from wage earners and agriculture towards urban employers, alongside wage controls and massive cuts to the public sector, was imposed – solutions also designed to reduce inflation (which stimulates wage demands and cuts into the purchasing power of the middle classes) and reward foreign capital. Strikes and protests were made illegal again and the army and paramilitaries used to defeat labour action. Police powers were greatly extended. Under this blanket authoritarianism, reform of the economy was pushed through, but at a price of solidifying opposition, uniting previously competing parts of society and suppressing social forces previously harmlessly channelled by social institutions like the unions.

Once again, revolt broke out in those industries and regions most affected by 'structural readjustment',

in particular Cordoba, led by mostly young militants opposed to *burocracia sindical* and the too-close relationship of military junta, employers and unions. What distinguished the ideology of *clasismo* and its organisational form, *sindicalismo de liberacion* was the frequent use of direct action, plant occupations, taking management hostage, and *paros activos*, unofficial and direct strikes which included demonstrations aimed at taking the conflict to the wider community. Years of repression, attacks on working conditions and poverty led to massive social mobilisation, given initial focus (largely because political activity was banned in Argentina or else heavily-controlled) through action in the workplace.

Years of repression led to massive social mobilisation.

This new militancy was intensely anti-bureaucratic and challenged existing models of leadership, offering personal honesty in contrast to corrupt or co-opted union leaders, based on democracy and accountability, constant consultation and the ability to recall delegates. Its strength was its questioning of capitalism but it aimed only to create a socialist society via nationalisation of production and workers' control of industry – more partial solutions which left capitalism intact. *Clasismo*, because of its ability to spread social unrest and action beyond the factory gate, threatened not only the social contract between unions and employers but also the military state itself. The initial unrest, the *Cordobazo*, had led to the resignation of President Onganía. A second uprising, the *Viborazo*, removed another.

However, as in Italy in the 1970s, the militant leadership could not persuade the rank-and-file to embrace their revolutionary aims. Democracy, overthrow of the dictators, a revised social contract, progress – these the workers and impoverished middle

classes would march and vote for and did, forcing the junta to dismantle the worst aspects of its *Revolucion Argentina* and reintroduce civilian government. But the factory opposition's consciousness-raising could carry them only so far. Failure to carry through a revolutionary programme in August 1971 allowed the Peronist unions to swing the workers back behind their leadership – a more moderate regime allowed political activity to get under way and paved the way for Peron's return (in 1973).

The events of 1971-73 are being played out once again. First, economic crisis, then social unrest and uprisings which the police and army cannot quell. The fall of a president, an interim president installed (the Peronist Duhalde), elections promised which will solve everything, two years of economic and social paralysis, then an electoral fix that solves nothing. The cycle begins again.

Back then the opposition could not go beyond strikes and protests. The threat of more militant actors, Marxist urban guerilla groups who unleashed a campaign of murders, attacks on military installations, kidnappings and bank robberies in the early 1970s, forced the ruling class and its allies, church, parties, unions, to close ranks. Out-manoeuvred, the working classes

and their young leaders were abandoned after Peron regained power.

The new *Pacto Social* froze wages and prices, recreating the historic alliance of unions and employers. National reconstruction would commence but at a price the workers would have to pay. Business and unions were re-integrated into the formal institutions of the state, alliances made with rival parties to take the heat out of politics. New laws against terrorism were used to crush the *clasista* opposition, who were first removed from office in the unions, then sacked, then declared to be outlaws.

What lessons have been learned? Firstly, there are few limits to the combativeness of the working class in times of social upheaval or class mobilisation as we witnessed over the last few months. Secondly, without a unified set of demands that are achievable and organisational forms and methods that cannot be reclaimed (for instance, not just factory occupations but requisitions and expropriations), revolutionary forces will either be used, then isolated and crushed or will be recuperated.

The left parties and groups played their historic role of putting forward easily mediated demands in order to build support for an "independent,



Photo from www.indymedia.org

self-directed organisation of the working class with the aim of establishing a government formed by the workers and the people" (the Trotskyist MAS group) – as if governments solved anything! This was the role of the socialists in the 1970s too. But MAS has learned some of the lessons of history too, and called for "popular assemblies, plenaries, co-coordinating bodies, congresses and any other means that permit us to decide freely *from below*".

The *Asambleas Populares* that have sprung up have begun to develop as revolutionary organisations, putting forward radical demands. But will they go further? They demand things (the abolition of the Supreme Court, the freeing of political prisoners) but also need to carry these things through, by declaring the Court at an end, prisoners free to go and enforcing these demands. These popular assemblies call for those in power to step down or aside but have not (at the time of writing) posed the ultimate question of power, not who controls it but its abolition, by undertaking actions that directly confront the ruling class with the mass power of the working class. Any recuperation of the revolutionary forces is far more likely if institutional actors, in this case political parties and unions, have not been dissolved, creating (as it were) an open field where the working class and ruling class directly confront each other. It is clear that for this to happen there must be the capacity to organise both inside and outside the factory, or to form strategic alliances with political and community groups that share the revolutionary agenda.

The revolutionary group *Organizacion Socialista Libertaria* posted the following on the internet: "we were up until the late hours of the morning in each street, each militant discussing in his or her neighbourhood the best way to establish a minimal *territorial* organisation with the aim of defeating the state of siege". This geographic and political 'spread' creates the necessary critical mass of

consciousness and fighting spirit which alone gives people the feeling that there is an alternative and it is achievable *now*.

These territorial organisations must not be of defence only. In each of the territories (neighbourhood, township, county and province) the *Asambleas Populares* will need to do more than agree resolutions and pass decrees but physically expropriate the ruling classes. By quickly forging territorial alliances around common demands (for instance via the *comisiones de enlace*), holding conventions of the dispossessed, entering those places (whether factory or *barrio*) where people await a spark, the workers of Argentina could go on the *political* offensive, taking power where it exists (in people's minds and on the streets) and abolishing it, through mass action against the institutions of the capitalist state – banks, shops, state-controlled media, loan sharks, police stations, courts – by abolishing or expropriating them.

First the means to live: food shops and all places preparing food taken over and production and distribution organised on an egalitarian basis. Debts (eg local taxes, to the utilities and so on) cancelled, the records destroyed. Power stations occupied and power lines strung to all who need them. The police stations emptied or blockaded, only those who throw away their uniforms and hand over their weapons to be fed.

Next, political and social

institutions of reaction – parliament, courts, political parties, all forms of media, local bureaucracies, churches and so on – to be declared abolished, at an end, dissolved, their power ended, the offices emptied, their resources appropriated. And at this moment new ways of organising society would need be developed (as did not happen previously), using provincial and national "popular constituent assemblies" only to declare the power of the ruling class abolished and to decree its expropriation everywhere throughout Argentina (and, if necessary, to order a national insurrection against the remains of the armed forces) before standing aside in favour of the local *Asambleas*.

Obviously, for this to happen a situation of dual power must develop, but the decisive struggle will not be won if the working class waits for orders or for the ruling class to step aside. Only when the working class moves to take and abolish power can we call the situation truly revolutionary. If the people of Argentina have waited to be led, the revolution will not have occurred – not the siren song of the workers' state or government but of freely federated assemblies and councils, a commune of communes, must be the call.

Quotes in italics are from *Resistance & Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class*, Daniel James, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

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ADD

The craze for speed

Over two million American children, and thousands of adults, are diagnosed as suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and prescribed the drug stimulant Ritalin (a street drug banned in Sweden in the late 1960s).

America has the highest number of ADHD children, with adult numbers also large and increasing fast. Drug companies and medical 'experts' maintain that ADHD has biological and medical causes (despite a lack of evidence), and suggest that 7% of the world's population (400 million people) are sufferers.

Studies show that while 'hyperactive' children become 'normal' under sensory-rich conditions, they begin to fall apart when the sensory stream starts to fade. Under sub-optimal conditions, children are calmed by Ritalin, showing that for many using it the problem is not an innate brain dysfunction (there is no scientific evidence of one), but developmental, the rise of a rapid-fire culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, which has transformed human consciousness, creating a nation hooked on speed and stimulant drugs that simulate speed's mind altering effects – coffee, crack cocaine, methamphetamines, and ecstasy.

SPEED – What we cannot control makes slaves of us all

America possesses a culture of speed, the fastest on earth, as befits the most advanced capitalist country. This culture is the result of

capitalism and its ideology of progress, and speed. Capitalism as a system has to constantly expand in order to survive. It does this by finding and creating new markets, and by increasing the rate of exploitation. Time is money and profit (the measure of levels of exploitation) can be maximised where production, distribution and consumption occurs at high speed.

The time that working class people spend labouring for others (whether waged, or unwaged such as housework) creates profit for bosses. Speed is one of the main ways in which the rate of exploitation can be intensified, raising profits. The faster goods are produced (production lines, automation), the faster they can be sold. The quicker they are moved, the quicker they can be sold (road transport, the 'just in time' system which minimises the time they are in warehouses/shops). Computers speed up production and communication, enabling virtual meetings (eliminating the time and cost of travel), and the electronic transfer of

assets (such as money). Goods and services can also be sold online increasing people's access to goods and the rate of consumption, minimising labour costs and eliminating the need for shops.

The faster people are transported, the faster they can generate profits through working and/consuming. Rapid transport such as cars, high speed trains and planes is essential for business people and politicians to have more time for their profit making and power games – "tell me how fast you go, and tell me who you are" (Illich). The next development is 'the 24-hour society' (which has already started, eg 24-hour shops). People 'will be able' (ie expected to) work or shop at any time, to prevent the wasted non-profitable time when people sleep.

There are strong links between speed, the technology that facilitates it, militarism and totalitarian states of both left and right (both fascist and Bolshevik). The futurist Marinetti (a supporter of the fascist Mussolini), wrote of "the beauty of speed... a new good... We want to exalt aggressive action, the racing foot, the fatal leap, the smack and the punch". The Nazis put money into land speed record attempts, and awarded Henry Ford a medal for his car making, mono-production, and anti-semitic politics. Hitler's great autobahn (motorway) project was an expression of the new god, speed. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky happily embraced the new capitalist science of time and motion studies (Taylorism, time and motion studies) in the 1920s to maximise worker exploitation.

PROGRESS – The future is not free

The mind sees the future as the place of imagination, thought and dreams: progress appeals to this future orientation. It is intrinsically an enemy of place, dislocating itself from mud and dirt, and of the present, which it seeks to escape, for a future which cannot be attained – tomorrow never comes. This is its appeal, even though people are surrounded by the negative effects: the polluted air, unsafe streets



and gridlock of car-based transit; Brazil and Indonesia ablaze (the fires visible from space); a working week as long as ever – in the 21st century (!); global warming and climate change. The appeal of new technologies, virtual reality, space research, 'pure' science (GM foods, cloning) is the appeal of change, flame and incandescence. The 'change' is often illusory, minimal, as speed has the effect of making everything the same: plant mono-cultures such as coniferous forests for agri-business, mass produced mono-job cars on production lines, same-every-time fast food (preferably drive-through), roads-to-somewhere-else where the differences have been (largely) ironed out by fast transit.

Time is an historical fact rather than a natural one. Christianity broke the cyclical worldview of time, substituting a linear, irreversible one (towards Judgment Day and the end of all). In Europe there was a shift from the extended family in an agrarian society with (largely) public lives, to the nuclear family, living private lives in cities. In 1800, 1% of the world's population lived in cities; by 1990 the figure was 33%. In England, the comparable figures are 10% and 90%. Urbanisation and the division of labour have fragmented and de-personalised social life. People no longer experience time as something they live IN, but as something they live alongside (and which is passing them by). Time is treated as an obstacle between the unsatisfactory present and the future promise of happiness. So we anxiously await the weekend and pine away the years waiting for an end to childhood/school/work.

Speed aims to collapse the gap between now and the future: it represents the two dimensions of time and space fused into one. The essence of both is as much psychological as physical – 10 minutes can feel like an hour and vice versa. Similarly, the world of the newborn child is so large that she has no conscious awareness of anything larger than her immediate surroundings. Cutting-edge technologies mean that the rest of the

world is seconds away by phone and electronic highway, and hours away by high-speed train or plane. Despite this human mastery of 'time-saving' technology, and the prevailing idea that time is fixed and objective (incapable of being affected by human actions), technological and social practices accelerate time, making it scarcer. A future-directed society accelerates time, leading to the compression of time day-to-day and the under-valuing and under-experiencing of daily life. People lose the ability to relax and appreciate the moment, and so use technology such as cameras and camcorders to record their experiences (themselves distorted by this process) for the future, when they hope to appreciate them.

Children and speed

There is growing evidence that much of a child's brain development occurs after birth. There are one billion neural connections in a brain space the size of a large match head: consciousness and the human mind are emergent products of a brain with an almost unimaginable complexity and an enormous flexibility. In the newborn child's brain, about 4.7 million branches grow out from the neurones every minute, making connections to other neurone branches. Development must occur after birth because the brain needs life experiences to steer its growth.

Children live in an everlasting NOW.

Children gradually adapt to simple sensory pleasures, creating a growing demand for stimuli with a greater sensory impact. The brain has a great capacity to adapt to stimuli, mainly deriving from evolution: it focuses on important stimuli and ignores the 'irrelevant' ones. Historically, there was a natural constraint on the 'loudness' of stimuli, so the brain's adaptability was not a problem; now the constraint has been shattered by technological changes in transport and

the electronic age of film, video games and MTV.

Children naturally experience time differently, they live in an everlasting NOW which is present-absorbed, spontaneous and elastic; they have not yet learned linear, capitalist clock time. The younger the child, the longer a wait will seem: their life experiences are smaller – an hour is much longer for a child of four years old than an eight-year-old. Children's problems with attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity appear developmental: they do not appear at birth and it is difficult to identify symptoms in those under four to five years' old. Long-term research into child development shows that the quality of care-giving more powerfully predicts distractibility (an early precursor of hyperactivity) than early biological or temperamental factors. Factors such as single parenting and poor external support are affected directly and indirectly by rapid-fire culture and create the conditions for a restless and sensory-laden lifestyle for children. Some are over-stimulated during infancy and early childhood by parents unintentionally imposing their sense of timing on them, interrupting their pacing and interests. These family circumstances are likely to correlate with other distractions such as the pacing of the day's activities, and reliance on plugged in pastimes such as television.

ADHD symptoms are best described as sensory addictions, similar to drug addictions. Studies of drug addiction show that it is perfectly normal for psychoactive drugs to create experiences that encourage and maintain their self-administration, especially where other desirable activities (such as social interaction) are unavailable. Drug-seeking behaviour is therefore normal rather than pathological. As we have seen, human consciousness adapts to stimuli, focusing on the important and ignoring the 'irrelevant'. This is an inflationary spiral, as the excitement of new stimuli wears off and new ones are sought, which in turn become boring. Adaptation level theory says

that the satisfaction gained is relative rather than absolute, because it depends on the individual's expectations (the product of upbringing, self, and the effects of advertising). Research suggests that chronic exposure to rapid fire culture during development can produce a chronic state of human consciousness that is highly adapted to a rapid fire world, creating a protracted sense of time and a restless pursuit of constant stimulation.

ADHD is also developmental rather than biological or medical, because its prevalence has varied historically and cross-culturally. Only since the 1970s has there been an exponential rise in children medicated with Ritalin, although stimulants have been accepted as treatment for hyperactivity since the 1950s. The rising numbers of adults receiving the drug is even more remarkable. European countries have far less ADHD than the US, for example Britain (although the incidence was 24 times higher in 1997, than in 1990). Children are 10 times as likely to be diagnosed as having ADHD in America than they are in Britain or France. Europeans tend to view these behavioural problems as developmental and psychological, they are also less common in Western Europe than America. In contrast to child advocates and developmental studies, psychiatrists (particularly in the US) ignore significant changes in children's lives.

A 1989 study examining children and adolescents over 13 years found a significant increase in problems including attention, sociability, anxiety, delinquency and aggression. Another published in 1993 found that up to 25% of schoolchildren experienced physical symptoms that were largely psychosomatic. In America the divorce rate is 50% higher than in Europe, 25% of children under six years live in poverty, 45% of children below the age of a year are in daycare, the figure is

66% for children under six years of age.

GO SLOW – Or why the boy threw the clock out of the window

We have seen how capitalist society has transformed human consciousness, resulting in millions of people hooked on speed and stimulant drugs that mimic its effects. How can we counter speed, to make life more tolerable and move toward a human scale and human speed, an anarchist communist society? One of the major attractions of progress and technologies that collapse the present into the future, for the working class, is that ordinary people have no control at present and often feel that there is no prospect for improvement in the present; the future offers the mirage of escape and a better society, for example the 'leisure society', created by computers and automations. People also often feel that society is too complex now for them to understand and control – revolutionaries need to explain that we don't want to control and run this society but to radically change it along human-friendly lines.

We need to promote slow(er) activities, not as worthy, hair-shirt things we should do but because they are enjoyable and satisfying. Slow activities include reading, sewing, embroidery and weaving, cooking, baking and brewing, art, gardening, self-directed play. Resistance to speed (and the ideology of progress) is part of current struggles, such as anti-road and air travel protests (the Twyford Down road scheme saved a huge three minutes from travel times) and the wildcat strikes of postal workers. We need to expose the ideology of speed as 'progress'. Slower forms of travel (walking, cycling, trams, buses and so

on) enable us to reclaim the streets for simultaneous transit – as both travel, play (for both young and old) and the chance to socialise. The journey to a destination, particularly over medium and long journeys, should be something enjoyed, not endured. Mass, high-speed transport (cars, high speed trains and planes) has the effect of destroying the environment and making exotic destinations more and more like the towns and cities we are 'getting away from' – not something to be reached, merely visited. Human consciousness is not expanding, it is being damaged, packaged and controlled. The disorientating effects of speed open the doors, but what steps through is not freedom, it is mental illness and human bondage.

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What's wrong with civilisation?

Primitivism & deep ecology

The threat to humanity of modern industrial civilisation has led to the development of complex ecophilosophies which seek to create conditions where a more spiritual and natural humanity can develop. Two of the most important are the primitivist and deep ecology movements. This article seeks to briefly explore the areas of agreement and disagreement anarchist communists have with them and explain why we oppose certain aspects.

First some definitions. Primitivism is a set of views and perspectives based on the idea of a natural and spiritual humanity in harmony with nature that began to disappear as civilisation developed from Neolithic times, to the extent that today humanity is alienated and desensitised, rapacious, and increasingly in thrall to modern industrial society's conditioning and control. Its more extreme proponents (like John Zerzan) propose a radical regression of social organisation and technology to the level of the hunter/gatherer. A sub-set of primitivism is anarcho-primitivism, a libertarian and anti-statist form of primitivism. The deep ecology movement comprises a group of ecosophies that are deeply spiritual, seek a balance between human needs and nature and propose a deconstruction of civilisation to achieve a harmonious existence. In this case, 'deep' refers to the extent to which the fundamental basis of existence is questioned; 'shallow' ecology is transformative but only in terms of systems and process – environmentalism is a form of 'shallow' ecology.

There is much in the primitivist analysis that anarchist-communists would agree with – try substituting the word 'capitalism' for 'civilisation' in any primitivist text. Environmental impacts, the diseases of affluence and poverty, alienation, the subjugation and domestication of much of humanity, the damaging effects of power, hierarchy, authority – all problems we can agree on. With primitivists we agree that, "Never has civilisation manufactured so many means for its own disappearance. To stop this path to suicide, change the world order and invent a new way of organising social life becomes each day more urgent because at the end of that road lies, perhaps, the end of humanity". We agree with anarcho-primitivists who say, "Only widespread refusal of this system and its various forms of control, revolt against power itself, can abolish civilisation and pose a radical alternative". But what do anarchist communists and primitivists disagree about, and is it important?

Population

A radical reduction in human population is a fundamental principle and aim of all primitivists and deep ecologists. An essential

'platform principle' of deep ecology reads: "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease".

Extreme primitivists believe that the total destruction of civilisation is a necessity and the inevitable rapid reduction in human population appears to be a price worth paying. We would argue that we would not like to live in the urban dystopia of 20 billion ravaged souls that primitivists portray but nor would we want to live in a rural arcadia of only five hundred million sturdy individualists. How is this reduction to be achieved?

Anarcho-primitivists at least put forward compelling arguments for a natural and beneficial fall in the rate of procreation and by reasserting their opposition



to power relations, organisation and administrative systems, deny the possibility of (for instance) mass die-offs or death camps.

But, by rejecting all forms of social anarchism, organisation and planning, they deny the possibility of re-engineering of our social ecology in any rational way. The combination of extreme ideology, rampant individualism and the irrationalism of many primitivist groups and currents could easily lead to wholesale destruction or paralysis of technologies and systems of production and distribution, preceding and during the revolution – it is already happening on a small scale today. In such a situation, millions could die of pandemics, starvation, war and reaction. Without primitivists and deep ecologists accepting that common sense must govern this process and that we must engineer a social ecology generally acceptable to the whole of humanity and not just its extremist fringe, the nightmare vision of civil war between anarchists and libertarians to destroy or preserve technologies and the possible victory of the counter-revolution will continue to haunt and divide the movement. Without wishing to prejudge this process of building unity and consensus, we know that there are many analyses that suggest ecological impacts can be radically minimised and a fulfilling life (by global standards) guaranteed to all, including much leisure, without destroying the planet or massively reducing its population – let's look at them together and not let ideology drive out reason.

Civilisation

Primitivists believe that humanity has a natural condition but now exists in an unnatural state which is rapidly heading towards spiritual and possibly physical extinction. Most blame the development of civilisation which, by inventing certain processes (for instance mathematics) and systems (for instance trade), objectified and commodified Nature and alienated humankind from it. Civilisation domesticates individuals from an early

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age. It alienates and creates 'alien' emotions (longing, greed, self-love) which express themselves in conflict, possessiveness, the desire to accumulate and defeat. Most illness and disease, including mental illness, are direct products of civilisation. Modern medicine offers only palliatives or a further alienating and controlling hi-tech solution. Hierarchy, division of labour and the subjugation of women, states, priests, kings and armies are all products of a civilisation primitivists would like to unbuild.

Anarchist communists agree with the problems identified but not the solutions. Anarcho-primitivists offer a less than honest critique, claiming that 'classical anarchists' would do no more than radically reform society: "Although there might be some changes in socio-economic relations... basic patterns would remain unchanged. The Western model of progress would merely be amended.... Mass society would essentially continue, with most people working and living in artificial, technologised environments and subject to forms of coercion and control."

The abolition of money, wage relations, the socialisation of production and consumption with all goods free to use, an end to all forms of ownership and hierarchy, the end of democracy and all other changes needed to bring about an anarchist communist society are not 'reforms' but truly revolutionary. The concept of Progress is itself a social construct of capitalism and would need to be rigorously re-evaluated. If production and consumption are to be brought into harmony on the basis of human need and ecological sustainability, then all things involved in satisfying human need (knowledge, science, technology, production, distribution and propagation, exchange, communication and so on) will need to be deconstructed and changed in truly revolutionary ways. Civilisation should not be abolished, rather transformed into the revolutionary society.

Technology

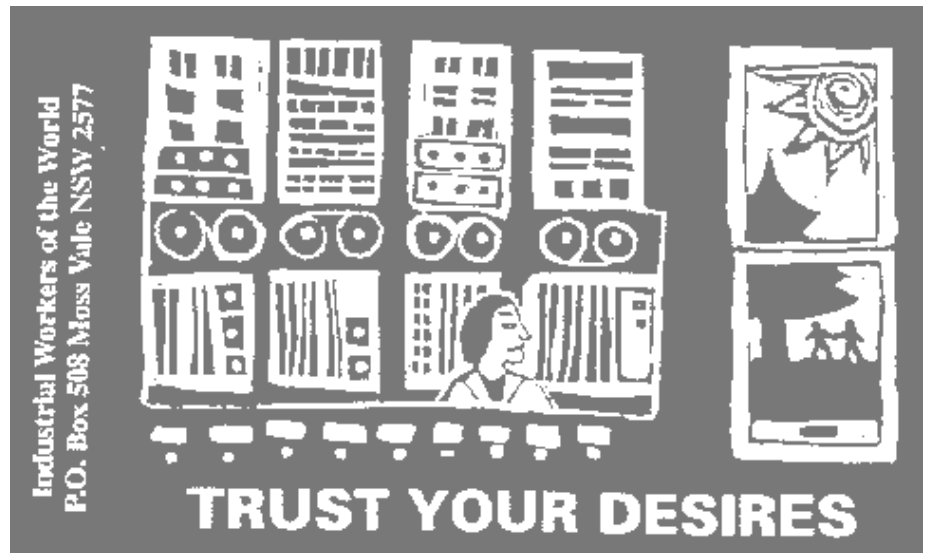
Primitivists hate technology and seek a regression to levels of technology which would not be able to support current world levels of population nor

give access to many things beneficial to humans. Deep ecologists advocate an 'ecological wisdom' which grows out of specific places and contexts as guiding the use of technology and technics and reject the modern industrial monoculture currently being globalised. The Fifth Estate, a leading anarcho-primitivist project, "oppose technology or the technological system but not the use of tools and implements... discussions about the future should be predicated on what we desire socially and from that determine what technology is possible. All of us desire central heating, flush toilets etc, but not at the expense of our humanity". Anarchist communists would agree that the extent to which our essential humanity can develop is important. Where we disagree is that a society with a high level of technology is necessarily evil and self-destructive, viewing this as a consequence of capitalism's misuse of technology.

Primitivism and deep ecology criticise modern corporations and the industrial method but rarely address the role capitalism plays in creating and maintaining these monsters. The simplification of society we seek is the abolition of things like the advertising, fashion and sex industries, media whores, sporting heroes, education gurus, churches and cults and the institutions that allow technology to be misused to create them.

What is also missing from the primitivist critique is the role *all* people would play in deciding what is humanity, what are the essential aspects of *their* humanity and how and in what ways technology and technics can be changed to preserve and augment this humanity without unnecessary harm to other life or the environment. We believe that it is here that syndicates, co-operatives, councils and communes, despised by extreme primitivists as assemblies that 'mediate' aspirations and alienate people, would play a vital role as the forums within which ideas are exchanged, costs and benefits weighed and decisions made.

Some, for instance Zerzan, see all forms of organisation and collective



action as alienating and advocate a reversion to a 'society' of self-sufficient hunter-gatherers, self-realising individuals, natural humanity. Anarchist communists in contrast, see *society* as the truly liberating and liberatory environment in which humanity may find its greatest expression. Anarchist communists are often accused, with other anarchists, of being ideologues. Yet while agreeing with many that 'technology' is not neutral and that civilisation must be radically-reformed in ways that are sustainable and maximise both human individuality and sociability (both freedom and society therefore), we are completely neutral in our approach to *what* technology, *which* tools, used *how* and *when*. Technology is not a matter of morals but *what works*, within the context of sustainability and humanity.

Primitivism and capitalism

Strangely, for all their radical credentials, primitivists, deep ecologists and anarcho-primitivists are not necessarily anti-capitalist (although they do not like modern, global corporate capitalism). At least one website has links to a natural capitalism which "explores the lucrative opportunities for businesses in an area of approaching environmental limits", particularly through "increased productivity". Wealth in the hands of the wealthy (environmental) entrepreneur is all

right, it seems! Anarchist communists would dissolve the illusion of money. The evils of accumulation, expropriation, property and ownership would be ended by the socialisation of consumption and production – take what you want but only what other people are prepared to provide or (more usually) *to each according to need, from each according to ability*.

Primitivism, in contrast, awards ownership to the man who builds and, presumably, power and wealth to the man who builds most – as if no master of guilds ever got wealthy from the work of dozens or even hundreds of individual craftspeople and shops, provided materials by the master, renting tools and machinery from the master, and selling what they produced to the master at the prices he set (in agreement with all other masters).

Because primitivism, as a system, can never offer human beings what they might want or need, it will inevitably involve trade, exchange and money, the means of exchange, and quickly regress into a capitalist society and a renewed statism. While spiritually radical, the deep ecology movement is also profoundly reformist: "In order to start the process of lessening our impacts, diverse strategies are vital, *in the area of business*, for example [including] back and forth play between workers and leaders" – the class struggle can wait, it seems, while workers and bosses play, from the bottom-up.

Spirituality & ecology

We profoundly disagree with primitivists on the question of humanity and spirituality. Firstly, we reject the notions of a 'natural humanity' that can be rediscovered and its more subtle idea that a 'good' humanity can only be achieved by regression to either a hunter-gatherer existence or an extremely purified and simplified individualism.

Modern humanity is a social construct, something that can be uncreated and redefined in the direction of autonomy, mutual aid and solidarity without any need to bow to the unreal. Many deep ecologists, worshippers of the self, seek to extend their individuality via mystical constructs – Gaia, the Tao, Buddha, animal spirits, Christ, pagan and esoteric forms and so on. Human beings become nothing – mere particles in some vast, cosmic life.

We have no interest in capturing Power, but seek to abolish it

Surrendering perception, ethics and will to something essentially unknowable and, in our view, non-existent, is fantastically shortsighted and socially dangerous. As revolutionaries, we accept that no future society can be built without the ethical development of millions of people, the development of awareness and understanding, their free and conscious adherence to its principles and modes of action. But if faith and religious fakery underpins it, what results? Cults, fashions, orthodoxy and heresy, mass consciousness without individual responsibility, the death of solidarity, the end of society.

Deep ecology, primitivism and the revolution

Primitivists, including anarcho-primitivists, accuse classical anarchists and the left generally as being reformists, proposing societies where

Power would be transformed but preserved. If this were true of anarchist communists, we would be on their side – unfortunately, it isn't.

We have no interest in capturing Power, but seek to abolish it – no state, no government, no bureaucracy, no hierarchy, no hidden knowledge, no secret meetings, no memberships, no clubs or cliques, no family, no priests, no pundits, no heroines, no scapegoats. And, we agree, no politics – just "a politics of desire, pleasure, mutuality and radical freedom". To which we would add a social-organic conscience or ethic shared by all humanity.

Anarcho-primitivism agrees with us on the need to build a "community of resistance", to equip people with the skills to bring about a revolution and live it afterwards, "the bases for direct action and [sites for] new ways of thinking, behaving, communicating, being".

We disagree with the primitivist project and its casual approval of irrationalist and chaotic attacks on civilisation, its random un-building of society – this is not the revolution. Nor do we agree with the profoundly individualist project of the deep ecologists who see the radical transformation of society as either a personal religious obligation or an opportunity to develop karmically.

We disagree with the anarcho-primitivist critique of organisations because we suspect they mean 'leftist parties' and agree totally that "the kind of world envisaged... is unprecedented in terms of the degree and types of freedom anticipated.... So there can't be any limits on the forms of resistance and insurgency that might develop" except that such resistance must not be recuperable (as deep ecology and environmentalism can), nor purely irrational (as with primitivism) nor place freedom on a pinnacle ahead of co-operation and sociability as the anarcho-primitivists do.

It must contain within it the seeds of a sustainable, fulfilling social ecology, a free society, anarchist communism.

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Direct Action, anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation. £1.50 per issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW.

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Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anticapitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet Radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, link to them through our website.

Did you give **Santa the sack?**

The arguments against the modern consumer Santa, the red-coated liar promising bounty or the solace of spending for people too busy to find out why they are sad or desperate, are well known.

Old Nick can be used as an analogy for other non-real phenomena and poses us two questions: would they have a role in the free society and if so what would it be?

One of the interesting things about Santa is that people of all kinds, but most importantly those responsible for the care and upbringing of children, actively participate in maintaining falsehood. They do it too with the bogeyman, that all-purpose persuader-from-fear, and others like him. Some parents invent imaginary angels and devils to persuade, bribe, intimidate or coerce children into obedience and conformity. Or they perpetuate an external myth offered them by society to achieve these ends: Father Christmas.

When asked by a child, "Is Spiderman real?" we have no hesitation saying no. We tell the child that the character is made up, that he exists in comic books, cartoon and films and in our imaginations too, but we do not say he is real. We do not tell lies about Thomas the Tank Engine, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Jack and Jill, Fungus the Bogeyman or the Great Pumpkin, but we do about Old Nick. It has been said, ad nauseam, that this is because we want to perpetuate our own childhoods, that we connect with our parents by perpetuating this hoary tradition of deceit, that some part of us dies a little when our children see through the myth. Self-lies on more than one level, the power to be derived from a

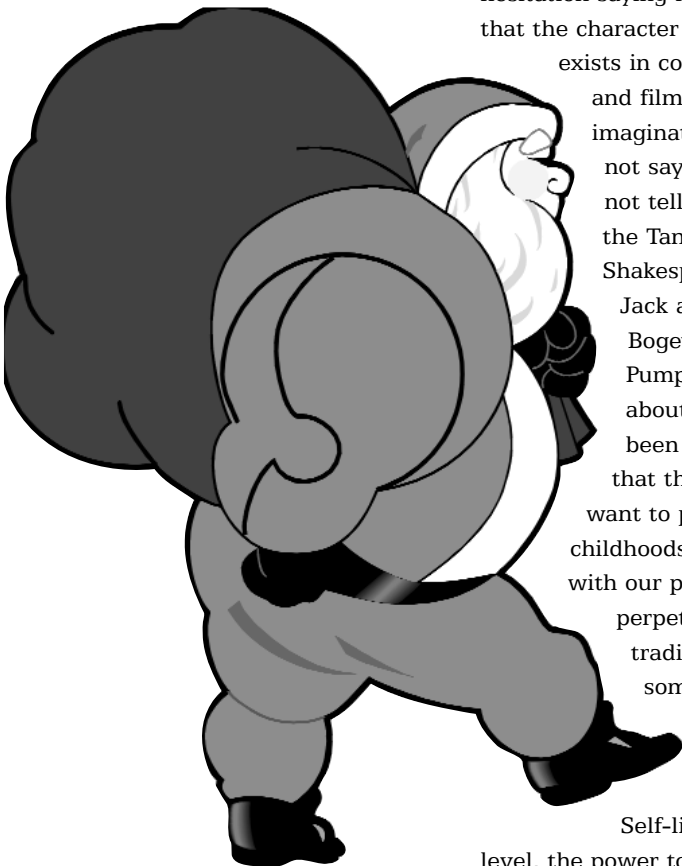
shared secret, the notion of progression up through a hierarchy of secret knowledge (replicated in religious and spiritual cults, schools, political sects, gangs and bureaucracies) all wrapped up in one harmless, laughing old man.

The ladder of understanding

When a child asks "Will Father Christmas bring me a present?" what prompts us to say, "Yes. If you are good". What do we learn from Father Christmas? I have no doubt that when young we benefit from the notion that there is a benevolent entity who gives without expecting a reward or exchange, who can be relied on each year to bring us pleasure and release.

Humans need a sense of security to aid in their socialisation, a sense that in a baffling world there are forces that are altruistically benevolent, that do not overlook even the poorest home or most frightened child. This stimulates 'reaching-out', 'curiosity', testing of boundaries. Unconditional love has become the bedrock of much bourgeois parenting for this very reason. But as we grow we learn too that one day that entity will turn his back on us, that we will no longer be the object of his love and benevolence. We become unworthy, simply by growing up.

Father Christmas also teaches about the hierarchy of worth. Why do some children get splendid presents while others do not? Given that few children who do not have to work for it understand the value or meaning of money, the unequal distribution of presents must have more to do with the recipient than the giver. If our parents loved us more, wouldn't they make Santa bring us the presents we really wanted, no matter the cost? Poverty is my stigma, and I am



branded inside and out with shame and low self-worth. And this has a social aspect as well. Low self-esteem, shame, guilt about the presents we can't afford to buy or never received, envy of those who shop so carelessly, all of these emotions and others suck us in to the rat race of competition or bury the natural urge to kindness, which is a biological as well as cultural imperative, making our society mean and grudging and filled with deep self-loathing, barely admitted. Or is mental illness declining?

Tell me a story

This is the thing about stories, the unreal made real in pictures, words and music: that if we believe in them too much they take hold of us and our societies (en masse, because of the power of the media and the efforts of social institutions to exploit the phenomena), rather than us using them – which explains God, of course.

The unreal will always bring harm to someone if we are made to believe. The unreal can be changed and this

change creates uncertainty, confusion, conflict. The unreal disappoints when it is discovered to be unreal. There is no fanatic like an apostate, it is said.

When we lie to each other, whether on the petty level of a parent and child or on the grand level of a society that wants to believe in lies rather than face the truth, great evils arise: wars, pogroms, injustice, intolerance, great rage and great sadness, mental illness. Is there anything to be said in Santa's defense and, by analogy, in the willingness of humans to lie to their children and others (and to create, disseminate and defend entirely non-real phenomena) in order to alter their behaviour or perception of themselves on a mass scale? Nothing.

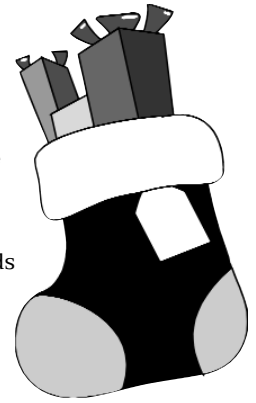
Myths & the free society

The free society will still create the unreal through the arts and the mass media. But no-one will lie to another or deceive through their silence. If we have stories at bedtime, they will be co-operative acts, tales told by adult and child together – in this way a

child will learn how to create and control unreality.

There may be tales of heroes and villains, told in pictures, words and songs. But art will be a participatory thing; all will have had their chance to create the unreal and so will understand its power and its limitations. Co-operation and mutuality is hard-wired into our genes, say the scientists.

We will learn that (when all is ours to use) the act of giving is a simple but by no means uncommon event. When all we have to do to receive (a thing we need, a helping hand, whatever) is to ask, all become equal. When mutual aid and solidarity with each other is universal and eternal, not conditional or provisional, will we need a smiling liar to open a sack or the doors of the church?



Supporting prisoners

Ali Khalid Abdullah & the PPWC

Since referring to US anarchist prisoner Ali Khalid Abdullah in the previous two issues of *Organise!*, a number of people have contacted us to ask if we have any knowledge of the group Ali himself founded some time ago – the Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC).

The reason they're asking is that, like some of us, they have written to PPWC without getting a reply, which obviously sets alarm bells ringing.

The contact address for PPWC is: PPWC Information Center, c/o Cynthia Ritsher, PO Box 554, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA. Understandably, the silence emanating from what should be a lifeline for Ali and other US prisoners is of no small concern to a lot of folk, not least the prisoners themselves. If Ms Ritsher and the

PPWC are still active and anyone can confirm this can they let us know? Similarly, if you too have been met with a wall of silence.

There is an urgent need to establish whether PPWC/Ms Ritsher are still doing the business, particularly in Ali's case, as he is due a parole hearing early in 2002 and needs all the support he can muster. If anyone out there knows anything about this situation can they advise us asap please, so that we in turn can let both prisoners and enquirers know where they stand as regards PPWC. Suspended in limbo is no place for anyone, inside or out, to be. Comrades inside either deserve our wholehearted support and solidarity or we may as well not bother at all. There could be very genuine reasons for Cynthia Ritsher and her team not responding to what we know amount to many requests for information to



help support comrades through PPWC. Maybe they are not even receiving mail? We don't know. Either way, the people who matter the most are entitled to know what is going on on their behalf. Get in touch please if you know anything.

Christopher Lee Plummer

Chris Plummer is due to be paroled any time soon, after eight years. This is great news and we wish him well.

However, this is not the end of the story. It is vital we maintain support for him.

We know that returning to the outside can be a difficult and traumatic time, added to which the slightest parole violation can send you straight back to prison looking at an even longer sentence, as all previous good behaviour and other credits are cancelled out. And there are plenty of people within the law and order establishment looking to send ex-prisoners right back to jail.

Chris is well aware of the hoops he will have to jump through! Chris's parole attorney is set to cost him \$5,000 in addition to all of the above, a not insignificant sum for anyone, let alone someone who has just got out of prison. We are therefore asking anyone who can contribute a little money, however small an amount, towards these costs, to send their donation to the AF address and we will forward any donations on. Also, we would be interested to hear from anyone who could perhaps put on a benefit gig or such like to help raise funds. A quick whip-round at meetings would also be much appreciated. Please ensure that you mark any donations clearly for Chris Plummer, but make them payable to the AF.

*Chris can be contacted at:
Christopher Lee Plummer, 677345, PO
Box 4500, TN Colony, TX 75886, USA.*



From one shithouse to another

A tale of everyday madness in Britain's prison system

Sitting here in my allotted 5ft by 7ft space in the 16-man dormitory that will be my home for the foreseeable future, I cannot help but laugh at the thinking that goes into some of the decisions the powers that be make, not to mention the pettiness and total absurdity of some of the rules and regulations.

With only two weeks until I was due to be tagged and sent home with a new 'fashion accessory' on my ankle, the wisdom of the system deemed it right and proper that I be removed from my single cell (with colour TV and panoramic views – of the next block!), uprooted from within spitting distance of my friends and family, and sent on a jaunt to the south coast.

Having been a model prisoner (though avoiding any arse-licking I might add) I now find myself in the 'open' Ford prison having been, until yesterday, in the dark depths of Wandsworth (scene of the last hanging in Britain... arrghh!). Now you may be thinking, dear reader, "Shut the fuck up, you ungrateful bastard", and in some respects you would be right.

There are few other things about prison that upset the mellow experience for the passenger. I personally find the whole moving scenario a major pain in the arse. It can be a very unsettling, disorientating and worrying experience. I'm sure even the big-mouthed wide-boys get a tad stressed at the prospect of being taken from a settled routine, from a wing you have grown accustomed to, and then having to undergo the whole process again, with a new set of faces and rules.

For me personally, the move from a 23-hour lockdown in one of England's more unpleasant establishments to the relative freedom of 'Ford' has been a bit of a culture shock. Apart from the obvious distance problems and the fact that I'll have to reapply for 'tagging' (which may end up meaning I'll have

to do all my sentence due to the backlog), I'm now in the position of not knowing what the fuck is going on – again! Although I do know that I'll have to work here, making some fucker a profit from my labour for £7 per week, yippee!

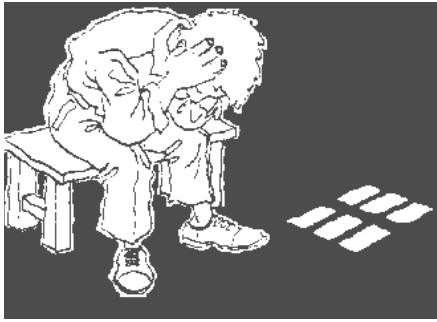
The screws here are keen to point out the error of your ways, if you step

The regime here resembles a bizarre Butlin's meets Boy Scouts meets the Teletubbies!

out of line. The problem with this (as in Wandsworth and, no doubt, many other penal palaces) is that they don't tell you where the line is! I can honestly say that these trained 'amoeba' have absolutely no interest in conveying what it is that they want you to do. The cons here are a bit more helpful though. In Wandsworth, if you ask a screw a question, the cons think you're brown-nosing. If you ask a con you'd be lucky to get a sneer, a grunt at best. A no-win situation! Basically, you were left to work it out for yourself which, in that environment, can be a rather daunting task.

Here at Ford, if it wasn't for my comrades in incarceration, I'd know jack-shit about the running of the category 'D' second world war airstrip-turned-nick (1960). The regime here resembles a bizarre Butlin's meets Boy Scouts meets the Teletubbies!

We all live in these bunker type dorms surrounded by fences a young lad could climb in seconds. The dorms are left unlocked all night and they trust that inmates will adhere to the nightly checks and stay snugly in their pits. With such amazing rules as 'stand by your bed for inspection' (very Borstal, very 'Scum'). You can't



lay on your bed if you're not working! What? If you haven't got green work trousers on from Monday to Friday, you'll be reported, charged and confined to your dorm (the only way to check this would be to make sure a screw sat outside from dawn 'til dusk – totally unenforceable!). My favourite so far (and I've only been here one

afternoon) is that you can have your t-shirt off, but only if you are not sunbathing. The authorities fear prisoners may sue if they contract skin cancer!

I mean, for fuck's sake, it's no wonder 15 tormented souls had it away on their toes last week alone! All I'm saying is, you wonder who sits around making this shit up!

Like in Wandsworth, you have a central hall, with all the wings leading off like wheel spokes. I came back from exercise one day (this entails an hour in a yard with several hundred other bods, walking around in a circle), I go to walk to my wing and I'm stopped, shouted at and told I'm walking the wrong way round the

circle. Is it me? or would these masters of mind control not be better putting their collective genius together to do a crossword or something?

Anyway folks, just fancied a rant at the machinations of the prison system! Just shows that being a model prisoner doesn't necessarily mean you'll get what you want. So was moving me to Ford a good move for me? Personally, I'd sooner have stayed in Wandsworth, rather than relive my Army Cadet days, but I suppose things could be worse, a lot worse. Keep on kicking.

Sean

PS Thanx to those who bothered to write.

The 43 Group

by **Morris Beckman**

A Centerprise Publication

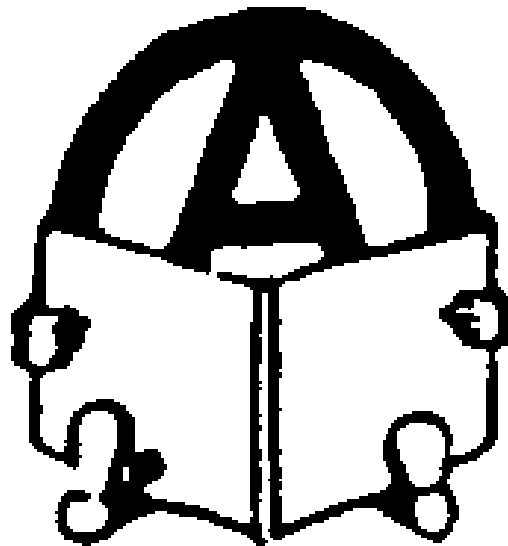
ISBN: 0 903738 75 9

The 43 Group describes how Jewish ex-servicemen and women formed a direct action organisation to combat the re-emergence of Britain's fascists after WWII, firstly on the streets of London and later throughout the country. It is a fascinating account of a hidden history of working class resistance and a manual of modern-day direct action campaigning, offering many useful insights into organisational methods.

After WWII, Jews were alarmed at the resurgence of Britain's fascists, aided and abetted by the Labour Government's complacency and often connivance of the police, town halls, watch committees and local magistrates, who defended the fascist's right to free speech but cracked down hard on counter-protests (sound familiar?). Fascist groups and parties re-formed, newspapers and 'book clubs' flourished, candidates stood and hectorated.

After bitter and frustrating experiences directly confronting the fascists, only to be met with police strong-arm tactics and court appearances, 43 Jewish ex-servicemen and women met to form a group aimed at destroying the growing fascist movement. The group organised from the bottom up and by word-of-mouth

with most recruitment on a personal basis, in cells but with access to the resources of the whole organisation, which grew quickly: taxi drivers provided transport and a quick getaway, people with fighting skills organised in flying wedges to drive in and break up fascist street demos and meetings, others worked in intelligence and counter-intelligence (some even joining fascist



groups), security (looking for moles, moving equipment). Contact was made with sympathetic policemen and journalists, and local communities mobilised against fascist groups and activities.

It was a tough job. Fascism was still an international movement, thuggish Nazi prisoners-of-war had remained behind in Britain, it could call on the

wealth of the lunatic fringes of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie for money and influence. But the constant pressure of the 43 Group and its supporters and allies, notably the Communist party, paid off. Fascist groups found they could not organise and were under constant surveillance and attack, meetings were constantly disrupted, local newspapers began to openly scorn the fascists and indignantly call on the government to act against them, and the town halls, now aware of the depth of local feelings, began to deny them access to the school halls and meeting rooms that gave them an air of respectability. By the early 1950s, after years of struggle, the fascist menace was largely defeated – still present, they were not likely to pose a serious threat and did not again until the 1970s.

Attacked

An encouraging account marred only by the fact that the Jewish establishment, like many bourgeois liberals, attacked the 43 Group (which had, at its height, thousands of members and supporters) for being 'thugs', 'heavies' who delighted in violence – a sorry accusation levelled at Class War in the 1980s and 1990s and the Black Bloc even today.

Any activity the middle classes cannot control frightens them to death. A good read that repays careful study – the film, I am told, is also one to watch out for.

Anarchist Song in France and Italy

Part 2: Italy

“Nostra patria e il mondo intero”

(Our country is the entire world).

Line from a song by Pietro Gori.

Italy has a strong and vibrant tradition of song springing from the people and industrialisation has not completely succeeded in destroying these musical traditions. In the central regions of Lazio, Tuscany and the Abruzzo, for example, the tradition of *ottava rima*, dating from the Middle Ages was strong among the peasants. It can use poetry from Homer or Dante, can be completely improvised, or can deal with political and social issues.

Whilst Italy did not have the flowering of political and social song that came with the Revolution in

Italy has a strong and vibrant tradition of song springing from the people.

France, the struggle for national unity and against the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian occupiers produced a number of songs. Among these were *Camicia Rossa* (Red Shirt) which sang with rapture of the red shirt worn by Garibaldi's volunteers. When General Cialdini ordered his troops to fire on Garibaldi's Red Shirts at Aspromonte in 1862, this led to the composing of the song *Rondinella d' Aspromonte*, which sings of Garibaldi's heroism and magnanimity. Garibaldi got two bullet wounds as a result of this incident and another song which is still recited by children was also created: *Garibaldi fu ferito* (Garibaldi was wounded in the leg).

Supporters of Mazzini and of Garibaldi during this period used songs to get their ideas of national unity over to the broadly illiterate masses as well as reading out speeches in the great squares. This awareness of the valuable role of song as an instrument of propaganda that developed with the nationalist movement made it easy for the

emerging worker's movement, and the socialist and anarchist currents within it to develop their own repertoire of songs. Just as the anarchists broke with old imagery of the bourgeois Republican songs in France, so it was with Italian anarchists and the nationalist repertoire.

Gori

One of the most committed anarchists was Pietro Gori (1865-1911), who devoted most of his life to the anarchist movement. A lawyer by profession, he also held many others jobs, for example an ordinary seaman. He had an important role in spreading anarchist ideas in both North and South America whilst in exile.

An anarchist communist like Malatesta, he ceaselessly struggled for the free society. He penned his first anarchist poems between 1892-3, *Alla Conquista dell'Avvenire* (To the Conquest of the Future) and his three volume *Prigioni e Battaglie* (Prisons and Battles).

When the Italian anarchist Sante Caserio assassinated the French President Sadi Carnot in 1894, in response to the execution of several French anarchists, Gori was falsely accused by the Crispi government in Italy of being involved. Gori had indeed written a song about him and his subsequent execution, *A Caserio*, with a beautiful and sad tune and lyrics, but Caserio had acted completely on his own. Gori was forced to leave Italy for exile in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. There, another campaign of false accusation was launched against him and other Italian anarchists instigated by the police in his home country. A botched attempt on his life was followed by pressure being put on the Swiss government. He and 15 other anarchists were imprisoned, and finally expelled from the country.

It was while he was waiting in

Pietro Gori



prison at Lugano to be deported that Gori wrote probably the most beautiful Italian anarchist song of all *Addio Bella Lugano* (Farewell Beautiful Lugano).

*Farewell beautiful Lugano, farewell my sweet land,
Driven away guiltlessly, the anarchists are leaving.
And they set off singing, with hope in their hearts*

[...]

*Ceaselessly banished, we will go from land to land
Promoting peace and declaring war,
Peace among the oppressed, war to the oppressors*

This song was first sung as the anarchists boarded a train to take them into exile. It was recently sung at the funeral of an Italian anarchist who had settled in Australia.

Gori also composed songs like *Il canto dei lavoratori del mare* (Song of the workers of the sea) and *Il canto dei lavoratori della terra* (Song of the workers of the land) as well as *Amore Ribelle* (Rebel Love) – a love song to Revolution!

Gori's pure personality and sincere devotion to the cause made him greatly admired among the Italian working class. When he died in 1911 (his health broken by his ceaseless propaganda work), the train taking his body to his final resting place stopped at every station along the track where large crowds had gathered.

Of the same second generation of anarchists as Gori, the Lombard, Luigi Molinari, devoted much of his activity to editing a paper *L'Universita Popolare* and to projects of libertarian education based on the Modern School ideas of the martyred Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer.

He believed in intensive campaigns of education among the workers and peasants and saw the value of song as a propaganda weapon. His *Inno della Rivolta* (Hymn of Revolt) is the most famous of his songs.

Other anarchists of this period also penned songs, like for example Attilio Panizza and his *Inno dei Malfattori* (Hymn of the Malefactors). The occupation of the factories by the

workers in Northern Italy in the years 1918-21 also led to a flowering of anarchist song. One of the finest is *Figli dell'officina* (Sons of the Factories), by Raffaelli De Feo. It counterposes class war to the murderous World War that had just ended.

*Proletarian war, War without borders,
We'll our red and black flags with the wind.*

The organisation of workers defence squads – the *Arditi del Popolo* which were started first in Rome in June 1921, gave birth to the song, *Il Popolo degli arditi*: "We are the arditi of the people, peasants and workers... Construct a proletarian front against fascism." But the fascist movement against which the *arditi* had mobilised triumphed and with its triumph came massive repression against the workers' movement and the anarchist movement. Many anarchists fled into exile, many were imprisoned and any activity was underground.

With the development of anarchist resistance groups in the mid-40s came the birth of new anarchist songs. One, the song of the Gino Lucetti Battalion, named after the anarchist who had tried to assassinate Mussolini, *Dai Monti di Sarzani* (Down from the Mountains of Sarzana), specifically mentions Pietro Gori as inspiration.

Pinelli and Valpreda

In December 1969, a bomb killed 16 people in Milan. The bomb had been planted by fascist groups, and they themselves had been used by the Italian intelligence services. All of this was established much later and there are indications that the American secret service, the CIA, was also involved in what has been called "the Strategy of Tension", provocations designed to bring on State repression.

The anarchists were immediately targeted by the police. The anarchist railway worker Giuseppe Pinelli 'fell' from the 4th floor window of the main police station in Milan.

Another anarchist, the dancer Pietro Valpreda, was arrested and after a long imprisonment was acquitted

and released. A large number of songs, many based on other tunes were created almost spontaneously during demonstrations and rallies. Some dealt with the murder of Pinelli, *Giustizia di classe* (Class Justice), *Lamento per la morte di Giuseppe Pinelli* (Lament for the death of Giuseppe Pinelli) and *Ballata per l'anarchico Pinelli* (Ballad for the anarchist Pinelli)

*There's a coffin and 3,000 comrades
We were all clasping our flags
And we swore that night,
That it won't end this way
Povero Pinelli (Poor Pinelli),
Anonymous and innocent
You loved anarchy*

Other songs dealt with the frame-up of Valpreda, *E a te Pietro Valpreda* (And to you Pietro Valpreda) and *Valpreda e innocente* (Valpreda is innocent). There was even a sarcastic one about Superintendent Calabrese, generally held responsible for Pinelli's death, *Povero Calabrese*.

Songs were also composed about the death in a police cell in Pisa in 1972 of the young anarchist, Franco Serantini and of the imprisonment of the anarchist Giovanni Marini after he had defended himself against a fascist gang. Songs are still being composed, like, for example, one based on a local folk melody on the occupiers of empty houses in Spezzano Albanese in the South.

Alongside this tradition of song was the appearance of singers who can be likened to Brassens and Ferre in

France, who made a living out of singing and who expressed a number of anarchist ideas in their songs. The most famous of these is Fabrizio De



Andre (above right). Born in Genoa in 1940, he became heavily influenced by the French chansonniers, above all Georges Brassens.

His long career as a singer, until his death in 1999, revealed his anarchist and atheist ideas and his sympathies for the oppressed and the outsiders.

The one that shocked the Catholic Church most was his *Il Testamento di Tito* (Titus' Testament) which purports to be the views of one of the thieves

crucified alongside Christ. His most political album recorded in 1973 is *Storia di un impeggiato* (White Collar Story).

Other singers who have expressed anarchist ideas are the Modenese Francesco Guccini and the upcoming singer from Salento, Alessio Lega, who

appears to be close to the anarchist movement.

What is important is that the tradition of anarchist song appears to be still vigorous, directly related to the social movements and not eclipsed by professional singers who may have some anarchist sympathies.

Revolution on the net

There is a wealth of anarchist and libertarian communist material on the internet. What follows is a necessarily selective and highly personal review of sites that should be interesting.

Solidarity texts

The British group Solidarity (early '60s to early '80s) was without doubt the most influential group ever to publish in the English language. A number of their key texts are available:

The Irrational in Politics, by Maurice Brinton. This text can be found at <http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Brinton/TheIrrationalInPolitics.html>. An excellent introduction to the politics of Wilhelm Reich. The author looks at sexual repression as a cause of mass support for authoritarian and fascist politics.

The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, by Maurice Brinton. A detailed account of the early days of the Russian Revolution, describing how the Bolsheviks effectively neutered, then suppressed organs of working class power. Available from <http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Brinton/TheIrrationalInPolitics.html>.

Hungary '56, by Andy Anderson. One of Solidarity's brilliant analyses of important periods of struggle. The Hungarian Revolution marked a watershed in left wing politics. For the first time a mass movement of workers sought to overthrow a 'communist' regime. From: <http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Anderson/Hungary56.html>

The Kronstadt Commune, by Ida Mett. In 1921, the revolutionary sailors of Kronstadt rose up against the Bolshevik state, and were, in Trotsky's words "shot like partridges". <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/russia/mett.html>

Paris, May '68. In the '60s, the state and ruling class were confident that prosperity had effectively killed off the prospect of revolution in the west. In May 1968, the students and workers of France shook that confidence to the core.

<http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/maya.html>

Portugal, the Impossible Revolution, by Phil Mailer. With the fall of the fascist regime in the '70s, the Portuguese working class set about reshaping society in their own interests. This book is huge, it runs to several hundred pages.

<http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/por.html>

The Workers' Opposition, by Alexandra Kollontai. Not all the Bolsheviks were happy with the direction their party was taking. There were numerous attempts to turn the party into a workers' organisation. One of these was the Workers' Opposition. <http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/koll.html>

Suicide for Socialism. An analysis of religious cults. "We're gonna die for the revolution. We're gonna die to expose this racist and fascist society. It's good to die in this great revolutionary suicide." The words uttered by two young men in Jonestown (Guyana) a few minutes before they, together with

hundreds of others, poisoned themselves were reported in the *Los Angeles Times* (26 November 1978) by Charles Garry of San Francisco, attorney for the Peoples' Temple.

<http://www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/othertexts/brinton1.html>

As We See It and *As We Don't See It*. Two pamphlets that set out Solidarity's basic politics. Still two of the best expositions of what it means to be a revolutionary. This pamphlet was rewritten in the late '70s. The most accurate versions are available on <http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/blasts/blasts.htm>. Also on this site is the Solidarity text, *Third Worldism or Socialism*.

<http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/blasts/thirdworld/thirdworld.html> and finally John Crump's pamphlet, *A Contribution to the Critique of Marx*.

http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/marx_critique.htm

Other texts

News from Nowhere. William Morris the artist was also a great libertarian socialist. He wrote his book, *News From Nowhere* in the utopian tradition. A socialist from the 19th century goes to sleep and wakes up in a world after the revolution has successfully occurred. This book sets out a wonderful vision of the future, with ideas and concepts of beauty and ecology that will still appeal to the modern reader. It is available in its entirety at the following address:

<http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/stor/nowh.html>

Workers' Councils, by Anton Pannekoek. Written during the Second World War by one of the foremost theoreticians of the council communist movement. An easy read and a great introduction to council communist politics, though somewhat mechanical by modern standards.

<http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/wcontitl.htm>

Other websites

The following websites are worth a look. They are not exclusively anarchist, but all of them contain politics that is of our tradition.

- *For Communism*. <http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/>. One of the most extensive sites around.
- *Class Against Class*. <http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/index.html>
- *Collective Action Notes*. <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/>
- *Antagonism*. <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909/>
- *Subversion*. <http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo>
- *Spunk Press*. <http://www.spunk.org>. An absolutely enormous site that will lead you to just about anything you want to know about anarchism.

Finally, a number of AF groups host their own sites, including: Manchester and Oldham:

www.geocities.com/anarchist_federation

Letters

Black Block

Dear Comrade,

In what I've read of the Black Block it was never forgotten what they got right in the recognition of the primacy of the working class and that the key struggles are 'in the heart of the beast' rather than waiting for capitalist hegemony to be nibbled from the periphery. Whatever criticism I have seen to the strategy stemmed from the ability to lump with the class enemy anyone who is not already prepared to engage in the subjective refusal approach and treat the class as if its conscious was homogenous while it, in reality, consists of a variety of sections, different breadth of consciousness and engaged in different forms and levels of struggle otherwise it would be simplicity itself not only to organise workplace actions on bread and butter issues but it should be less difficult to show the class unity between workers in struggle here and in other sectors of industry or other countries but it, as every activist well knows, is not that easy.

Another mistake is to expect the same level of militancy throughout the whole class than in the factory in which it is possible to make demands like "If they offer \$100, demand \$1000": You can either 1) wait for a militant section of the class to spontaneously come up with a position and articulate that demand in which all you can say is how to picket or, in suitable occasions, occupy; or 2) try to advance a clear revolutionary perspective that involves taking the control of the strike movement, not from the 'class', but from the union bureaucrats that try to cap the struggle and use it as leverage to gain a more advantageous position in which to cuddle up to the bosses.

We need to strengthen the forms of organisation at their weakest point so that no worker will comply with redundancy and plant-shutdown or the crossing of picket lines and workers, consciously and collectively, seek control of what they produce. The problem is that the 'economism' (option one), used by some anarchists like Bakunin, the kind of 'trot' that hides behind the

position Rosa Luxemburg took on "party and substitution" from before the Russian Revolution or like Eber, G. Lora or the late T. Cliff, seems such an easy way out, in that the most widely spread ideas are those fostered by the ruling class. To challenge those ideas requires theory and arguing against the system has always required a much higher level of argument than lobbying for compliance/apathy. This makes the revolutionary (option two) seem like some kind of 'outsider', whether called 'trot' or 'anarchist', even though s/he is working the same hours and getting the same crap pay as anyone else in that factory or production-line.

If you want to be factual, it is the reformist organisations such as CND, not the 'trots', who finger demonstrators to the cops, and reformists have always used censorship to keep a flabby 'consensus' together in that those who called for a principled anti-imperialist position were evicted with violence by so-called 'pacifists' as was shown in one of the demonstrations against Gulf War One, and these arguments are and will be fought and sharpened inside the anti-capitalist movement. It must be remembered that 'green' energy is not just 'muck and windmills' but the emerging 'over-unity' technology that are so non-polluting and free that, once on stream, no capitalist would allow them to be developed as they can't meter, control or sell it and never again will a single life be squandered for 'our' oil and we should get those military satellites, laser systems and missiles out of our space! (check <http://www.disclosureproject.org> for details!). Workers of all worlds unite!

John Johnson

Anti-globalisation

Dear Organise!

It's always a good idea to step back from the fray from time to time and consider whether the way you are going about things is the most effective possible.

But parts of your analysis of the anti-globalisation movement (in *Organise!*) read like an attempt by Mr Spock out of Star Trek to explain why emotion is illogical and feelings have no rational basis. A massive new movement emerges on the streets across the world,

scaring the shit out of the politicians and financiers, uniting hundreds of thousands in opposition to the monopoly of global capitalism, forcing the authorities to react with draconian emergency regulations, imprinting the word "anarchist" on the brains of a whole new generation of 21st century people.

And your question is: "What do we think we are accomplishing?" Yes of course we should be getting the message across in our own communities, workplaces and so on — you can't only turn up for big events and expect to build anything. But they're not mutually exclusive and a lot of your readers are undoubtedly already doing both. The importance of the summits may be symbolic but, like it or not, symbols inspire people and move them to action. Big, unruly protests raise the political temperature in a way that committee meetings will never achieve. They create a feeling in the air, an electric crackle of revolt that may not be easily quantifiable but is certainly highly potent — that's why they cannot be tolerated by the state. I also disagree with the comments that a lack of formal structure "can open us up to take-over and manipulation by authoritarian Leninist groups". I would have said it was the other way round — it's much easier for someone, whether SWP member or state agent (or both?), to take over an organisation, locally or nationally, if there is a committee they can get themselves elected onto and key positions they can aim to control.

Working on a looser organic basis, which seems to come naturally to most anarchists, means people go along with something only if they think it's a good idea, not because some all-wise anarchist "authority" (as if there could be such a thing) has decreed it. Long may this continue.

Dave Phillips

worthing eco-action,

PO Box 4144

Worthing, W Sussex

Dear Dave

I'd like to take up some of your points about structures. In certain specific arenas, such as when organising actions, such a (decentralised, non-hierarchical) structure is useful in terms of not having leaders of demos etc, but in terms of organisation it's not. I would definitely

recommend you read (if you haven't) *The Tyranny of Structurelessness in Untying the Knot* (available from AFed etc).

In practice, the sort of movements you're advocating are dominated by informal leaders who thrive on the lack of a structure (which could shut them up and bring more hesitant people, unconfident about their ideas, more to the fore). Such groups preclude the involvement of most working class people as they represent friendship cliques which are created usually in middle class circles and, crucially, OUTSIDE of the meeting/action basis of the group/movement.

Outsiders are given the impression that no one is 'in charge' but quickly realise that this is not the case and eventually work out who is actually in charge and why things work the way they work (the basis of the power, the informal rules). Also, lack of structure is the BEST type of organisation for SWP

etc to infiltrate. It often starts with 10 Trots turning up and proposing a vote on some bogus 'motion to send to Trade Union branches' or something – the SWP etc are already moving into position to take over. Attempts to oust them by this stage HAVE to be structured formally (unless you are going to physically fight each one that tries to come). But it's already too late because they can pack out the meetings at which these formal structures will be agreed on (eg they formalise membership to exclude people and win votes, they control the agenda even though its apparently created at each meeting 'from the floor').

If you are organising to take on an enemy, you need to plan a good battle strategy but you also need to build a castle to hide in when they fight back – and that's an organisation! (Sorry, doing too much medieval history at the mo.)

Claire
AF member

Manchester Radical Bookfair

Sunday 5 May

MERCI
22a Beswick St
Ancoats
Manchester M4 7HS

For details:
manchesterbookfair@hotmail.com
or write to Merci at the
above address.

Manchester AF are supporting
this event and will be leading a
workshop on the day.

Sail Mohamed *Continued from back page*

director of *L'Éveil social (Social Awakening), le journal du peuple*. Following an antimilitarist article he was prosecuted for "provocation of the military to disobedience". The *Secours Rouge International*, a satellite organisation of the Communist Party, lent him their support, which he rejected in the name of the victims of Stalinism.

In 1934, the "Sail Mohamed Affair" burst onto the scene. The demonstration of the fascist and anti-Semitic *Ligues* on 6 February 1934 set off a chain reaction throughout the worker's movement. Sail collected arms and hid them. On 3 March he was arrested for "carrying prohibited arms". The workers' movement gave him their support, except for the Communist Party, which denounced him as an agent provocateur. Condemned to a month in prison, then another for "retaining weapons of war" he ended up serving four months in jail. He resumed the struggle.

L'Éveil sociale merged with *Terre Libre* (monthly paper of the *Alliance Libre des anarchistes du Midi* – see

'Revolutionary Portraits: Paul Roussenq' in the last issue of *Organise!*). Sail was responsible for bringing out the North African edition of *Terre Libre*. He attempted to set up an Anarchist Group of Indigenous Algerians, with various appeals in the anarchist press. At the same time he continued to be active with the Union Anarchiste.

Spain

After the Francoist uprising in Spain, Sail joined the Sébastien Faure Century, the French-speaking section of the Durruti Column, the anarchist militia unit in September 1936, becoming its commander. Wounded in the hand during November 1936, he returned to France, after having sent out many letters describing the situation of the Spanish anarchist movement.

After his wound was healed, he took part in many rallies organised by the *Union Anarchiste* on Spain. Immediately after this tour, he participated at a meeting organised by revolutionaries in Paris to protest

against the banning of the *Étoile Nord Africaine* edited by Messali Hadj and against the repression of demonstrations in Tunisia, which had resulted in 16 dead. Again arrested for "provocation of the military" he was condemned to 18 months in prison in December 1938.

At the start of the Second World War, he was arrested again and put in the concentration camp at Riom. His large library was broken up after a raid. He escaped from there, forged false papers and went underground during the Occupation.

From 1944 he worked with others for the reconstruction of the anarchist movement. With the Liberation he set up the Aulnay-sous-bois group again, and tried to reform the Committees of Algerian Anarchists. In *Le Libertaire*, weekly paper of the *Fédération Anarchiste*, he wrote a column on the situation in Algeria. He produced a series of articles on the "Calvary of the Indigenous Algerians".

He died in April 1953. Georges Fontenis delivered an address in his honour in the name of the anarchist movement at his funeral on 30 April 1953.

Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able

to control its membership in order to make deals with , management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

Please put me on the AF's mailing list.

Name

Address

Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:

AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Revolutionary portraits

We continue our series Revolutionary Portraits on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Carl Einstein

Carl Einstein was born in 1885 at Neuwid in the Rhineland, Germany on 26 April. He was a nephew of Albert Einstein.

After having been an apprentice in a bank, whilst taking art history courses, he became a critic of art and literature. In 1917, he participated in the soldiers' councils set up within the German army in Brussels. Returning to Berlin, he was hunted by the police for activity as a member of the Spartakists.

Loosely associated with the radical art movement, he then edited a political and artistic review with Georg Grosz, *Der Blutige Ernst (In Bloody Earnest)*. He became closely associated with Franz Pfemfert and his review *Die Aktion* which dealt with both revolutionary ideas in politics and art. After having realised one of his dreams, to live in Paris, he founded with Georges Bataille and Loris, the review *Documents*, which appeared between 1929 and 1930.

He wrote articles on painters like Picasso, Braque, Leger and in-depth studies of African art. When the Spanish Revolution broke out, Carl joined the German-language group of the Durruti Column, the Erich Muhsam Century. Muhsam, a well-known anarchist, had been horribly murdered in the Nazi concentration camps, and this may well have influenced Einstein's later actions. He was wounded in combat. He delivered a funeral address at Durruti's funeral, which was also broadcast over the radio.

The collapse of the Republic meant his fleeing to France and his

internment at the Gurs concentration camp. Conditions here were terrible. In 1940 Germany invaded France. Unable to escape to America as he wished, he wrote to his friend the art critic Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: "If the Gestapo are on my trail I will drown myself." He did this on 5 July 1940.

On his memorial plaque, which Kahnweiler helped put up you can read Carl Einstein's words on the Durruti Column: "Where the Column advances, they collectivise. The land is given to the community, the



agricultural proletarians, slaves of caciques that they were, change into free men. One passes from agrarian feudalism to free communism."

Sail Mohamed

Sail Mohamed, Ameriane ben Amerzaine was born on 14 October 1894 at Tarberit-Beni-Ouglis in the Berber region of Kabylie, Algeria.

Like many Algerians, he received little schooling. A driver-mechanic by trade, all his life he thirsted for culture and took great pains to educate himself. From a Moslem Berber background, he became a convinced atheist. During the First World War he was interned for insubordination and then desertion from the French Army. His sympathies for anarchism were already developing.

At the end of the War, with the rebuilding of the anarchist movement, he joined the organisation Union Anarchiste (UA). In 1923, with his friend Sliman Kiouane, a singer, he founded the Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Algerians. In his first articles he denounced the poverty of the colonised people and colonial exploitation. He became an expert on the North African situation. He organised meetings with the anarchist groups of the 17th arrondissement of Paris on the exploitation of North Africans, which were delivered in both Arab and

French. Sail set up an anarchist group in Aulnay-sous-bois and became one of its most effective activists. In 1929, he became secretary of a new committee: the Defence Committee of Algerians against the Centenary Provocation (France was preparing to celebrate the centenary of the conquest of Algeria on 5 July 1830). All the tendencies of the anarchist movement, the UA, the anarcho-syndicalist union the *Confédération Générale du Travail syndicaliste-révolutionnaire* (CGT-SR) and the *Association de Fédéralistes anarchistes* denounced "Murderous colonialism, bloody masquerade". They put forward the statement "Civilisation? Progress? We say, Murder!" Following this, Sail joined the CGT-SR, in which he created the Section of Indigenous Algerians. The following year, with the Colonial Exhibition at Paris, the anarchist movement restarted its campaign against colonialism. Sail was in the forefront of this struggle.

Social awakening

In January 1932, he became the

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