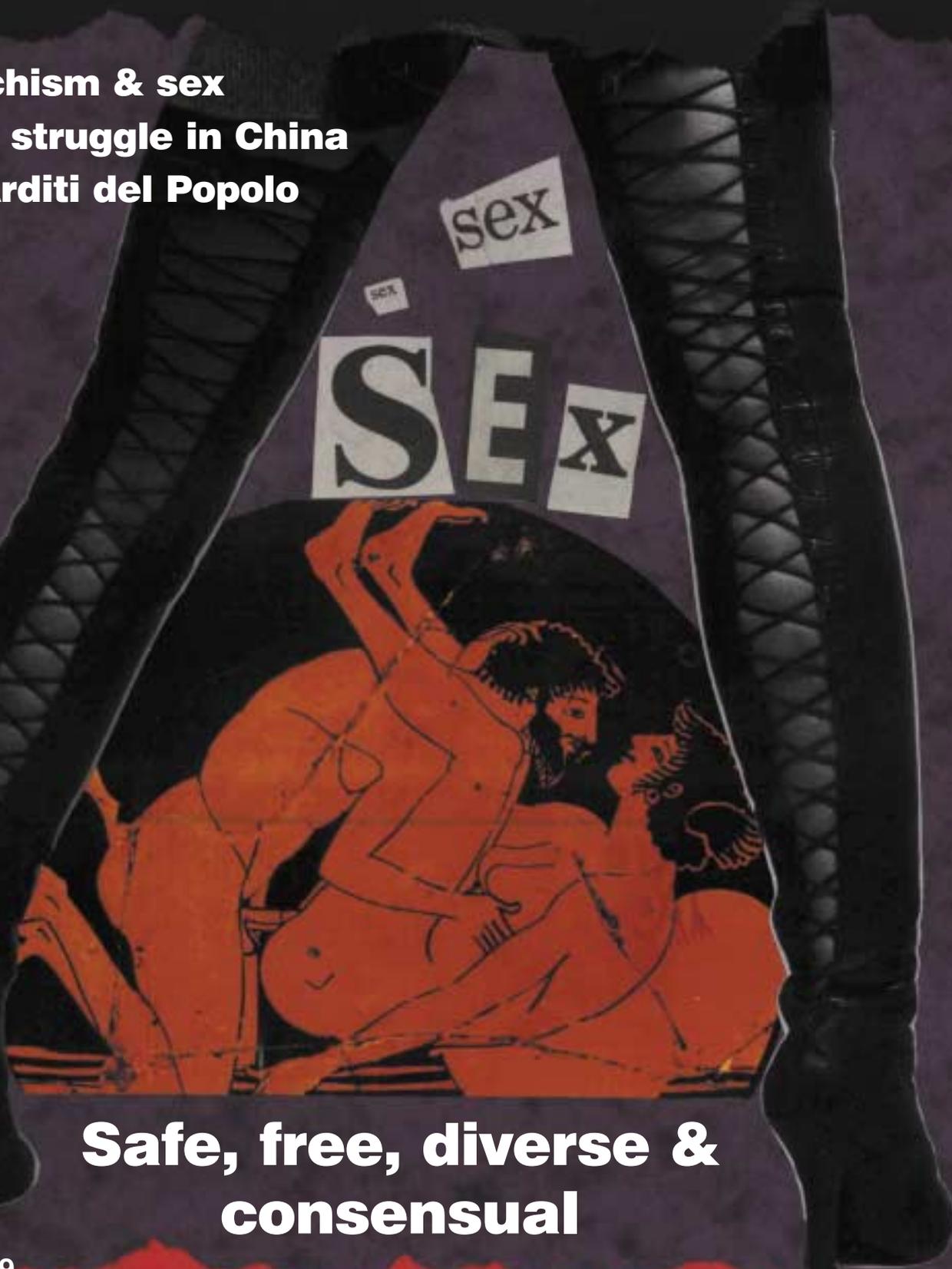


ORGANISE!

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

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The Arditi del Popolo



**Safe, free, diverse &
consensual**

ISSUE 59

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF) and the Anarchist Federation Ireland. *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.

We aim to produce *Organise!* three times a year. To meet this target we positively solicit contributions from our readers. 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 in late Feb 2003.

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 disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk.

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Organise! back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

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Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon

Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin; Syndicalism

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Safe, free, diverse & consensual: **Anarchism and sex**

Within the broader anarchist movement, attitudes to sex and sexuality tend to be pretty varied.

Anarchist views on sex can range from the idea that 'anything goes' between consenting adults, to the more traditional approaches of what constitutes free love between individuals. One thing these diverse opinions do have in common, however, is the idea of sexual freedom and the opposition to sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, being pro sexual freedom and anti sexual exploitation is open to wide interpretation and can encompass diverse, and sometimes conflicting, analyses from one anarchist to the next.

Within certain historic anarchist traditions (as well as within the left), there has often been a significant strand of 'puritanism' towards sex and any activities deemed generally frivolous.

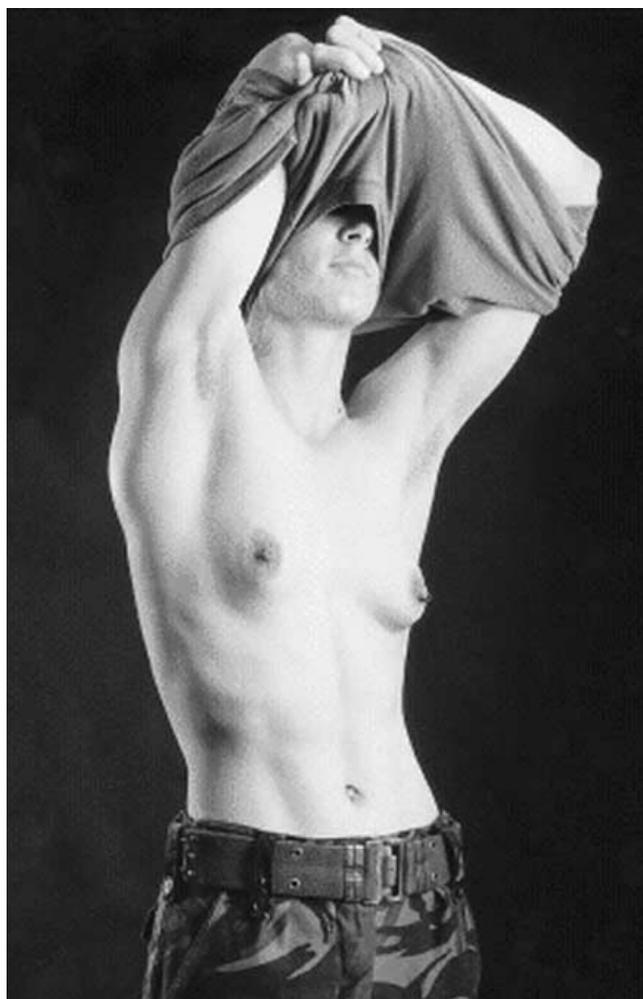
We all know the story about Emma Goldman dancing all night with the blokes at an anarchist social event, then being chastised for behaviour not befitting a revolutionary (we know about her subsequent outrage too). We also know that some sections of the anarchist movement in the Spanish revolution have been accused of similar puritanism, and the idea that anarchist and communist revolutionaries should somehow live their lives like ascetic monks or nuns still, in some quarters, continues to this day.

The novels of 19th century anarchist writers like Octave Mirbeau were classed as pornography by the literary establishment of the time. *The Diary of a Chambermaid* portrayed the sexual habits of the bourgeoisie in such a way that Jean Grave commented, "What filth and decay there is under the pretty surface of our society". To be fair, Mirbeau's proletarian anti-heroine, Celestine, was certainly no sexual saint either, but the emphasis on the so-called sexual 'perversity' and 'depravity' of the rich at play clearly implies the notion that sexual waywardness is in some way bourgeois. This is really not that dissimilar from the old Militant Tendency (now the Socialist Party) telling us a few years back that homosexuality was nothing but a bourgeois disease.

Victorian values

Added to this, is the enduring effect of certain elements within the women's liberation movement, which led many feminists and their male supporters to adopt 'puritanical' attitudes towards sex and sexuality, and to embrace censorship against pornography and all kinds of erotica.

Without doubt, many positive things came out of feminism and the women's movement in general, yet a major downside was the growth in the belief that men in general are inherently exploitative towards women (admittedly based on the very real fact that many men do actually behave in this way for much or at least some of the time), whereas women were always seen as victims of male domination and oppression. For some feminists there followed from this view a giant leap of faith, in which it was alleged that all men were either actual or at least potential sexual abusers of women, while women, on the other hand, were seen as fundamentally saintly and almost asexual beings



open to corruption by men; and those women who, by doing things like actively going out, picking up and fucking blokes (or even entering into relationships with 'the enemy'), were in fact merely living as the dupes of men and their patriarchal system. Subsequently, this 'asexual exploitee' view of women holds much in common with the bog standard religious 'woman as madonna or whore' mythology and contains more than a hint of good old 'Victorian values'. Sadly, even the occasional anarchist still clings to some of this patronising moral baggage.

Under capitalism, everything and everyone is a commodity, we all have our market price. And whether by selling our labour power as workers, or by buying things necessary (and some things not so necessary) as consumers, we all exist as part and parcel of the commodity system, of world capitalism.

Sex then, is no different and is something that is not only marketable but aggressively marketed under capitalism (as we all know, sex sells). However, when sex is bought and sold – whether via pornography, prostitution, etc – the left, pro-censorship feminists and some anarchists have a tendency to see this trade as somehow worse than many other forms of capitalist exploitation.

Lapping it up

As an example, a lap-dancing club recently opened up in Nottingham and a campaign was promptly organised to shut it down. Now, I don't know whether anarchists were actually involved in this campaign, but I do know that some anarchists see such a campaign as a worthy cause.

I understand the arguments of the pro-censorship feminists. However, the view that pornography (and in this case lap-dancing) in some way incites men to commit violence or rape against women is very dubious. Also, the simplistic overview of pornography and the sex industry in general – which is seen as a place where the women involved are super-

exploited victims – seems to me to be one built on a form of conservatism or liberalism, crypto-religious moralism, with a large helping of sensationalistic media mythology thrown in for good measure. But only a smattering of this view is based on the actual reality of sex work or the sex industry, which, in truth, is extremely broad and multi-faceted. Yes, sections of it are horrendously exploitative, sometimes tantamount to real (non-wage) slavery, and being little more than a means for commercial interests big and small, legitimate and illegal, to coin it in.

But I'd say that (certainly in this country) many sections of the sex industry are *no more, no less* exploitative than any other capitalist concern and other sections still are about as unexploitative as you can get under capitalism.

So to generalise about the sex industry too much leads to a very limited and naive understanding of it and says nothing about actual conditions there.

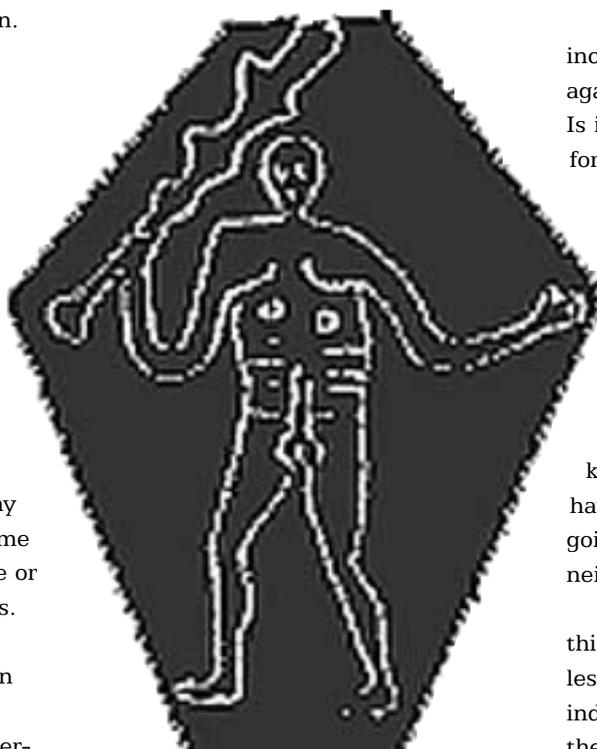
Now I tend to think of lap-dancing clubs as, well... crap. But in the socio-economic scheme of things, within capitalism, I'd put them in the above 'no more, no less' category of the system's exploitative industries. In lap-dancing clubs, there are usually strict

safety rules of 'no physical contact' between dancers and spectators and if you don't mind being gawped at by some bloke or blokes, then the money isn't that bad and pays a lot better than most other working class jobs. It's also the kind of job where you can come and go as you please and the hours can often be quite flexible. True, employers usually discriminate by only employing women deemed stereotypically 'attractive' or 'sexy' and by having an upper age limit – on the basis of that being what brings in the paying punters.

So as anarchist communists, our attitude to a lap-dancing club should be pretty much on a similar basis to our attitude to a cinema or a foundry or a supermarket – in other words, it's about business as usual. But, of course, it isn't that simple, is it? Why do people get so up in arms about these clubs that they want to campaign to shut them down more than they do the local rag trade sweat shop that pays 'illegal' workers a quid fifty an hour for a 12 hour day? Is it because in the former a woman has the audacity to dance naked or semi-naked for a few hours for a half-decent wage? Or is it because the campaigners don't want to have (admittedly not very) naughty goings on behind closed doors in their neighbourhood?

And why are people much less inclined to bother about campaigning against the local rag trade sweat shop? Is it because it's 'just a bunch of foreigners' working there and they actually don't give a shit about refugees working long hours, in awful conditions with little or no health and safety regulation, and getting paid piss poor money? Is it because working in the rag trade is at least 'honest toil' where no one has to get their kit off? Or are people just OK about having those kinds of seedy things going on behind closed doors in their neighbourhood?

Now when talking about what I call this middle bracket of 'no more no less' exploitative sections of the sex industry (e.g. lap-dancing clubs), I get the sneaking suspicion that what it all



comes down to is morality. What's really at issue here is that people use their bodies in a sexual manner for money. *"And only a really, really exploited person would do that, wouldn't they? Or someone psychologically damaged... sexually abused as a child... a helpless dupe... someone on the side of the enemy... Well, how can any self-respecting woman allow herself to be objectified in such a way?"*

Well I'm sorry to say this, but it's as if some of us haven't really moved on from Queen Victoria's day and sex is still the big taboo it always was. Sex for sale, sex as a commodity, sex in public, sex in print and on film, off-beat, bizarre, kinky, fetishistic, wayward sex, missionary style sex, in fact any kind of sex at all in a public arena is the issue.

People who choose to attack the local lap-dancing club but not their local petrol station do so because of personal morality/moralism about sex. Sex makes it a moral issue because if we were just talking about a simple economic relationship, then it really is as humdrum as the next industry. But we're not, are we? So, when certain anarchists single out the lap-dancing club or the adult bookshop, they're not basing their actions on a class analysis, but on what they think is morally good or bad for the rest of us (which actually brings into question their interpretation of anarchism). This elevation of their opposition to the sex industry is a personal moral choice, but it's got absolutely nothing to do with either a revolutionary class analysis or with anarchism itself.

Revolutionary skin flicks

Another disturbing thing about pro-censorship ideology is its (possibly wilful) ignorance of sexual openness as a liberating even revolutionary force. It's no coincidence that during many revolutionary episodes, pornography and erotica have played a significant role in popular revolutionary culture. Sexual images created for pleasure have of course been around for millennia but usually they were only accessible to the well-off, the

educated, and the high clergy. But during the French revolution, greater free sexual expression and the distribution of pornography really came to the fore. In other words, it became freely available to us plebs as well. I remember reading about the early days of the Portuguese revolution of 1974, when the fascist dictatorship had just fallen and all the forbidden literature was suddenly becoming freely available, so one could find works by Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx and Lenin sitting alongside an assortment of porno mags!

And historically, it's also no coincidence, that when the reaction begins to reassert itself, both Bakunin and the sex magazines are the first to go under the proverbial counter. Neither is it a coincidence, that pornography and so called 'illicit sex' is illegal and severely punished under some of the most repressive (and incidentally anti-women) regimes in the world.

...if pornography were the food of love, this would be a Big Mac...

That's not to say pornography is a wonderful liberating thing in itself. It isn't. The vast majority of pornography (particularly the soft-core variety produced by the big corporate media empires) is absolutely dreadful, reflecting very sexist capitalistic values and only seems geared to appeal to the dreariest most sexually-repressed conformist male. Hence, if pornography were the food of love, this would be a Big Mac.

It's interesting to note that such soft-core trash is quite freely available in any newsagent or high street WH Smiths; it is actively promoted by mainstream media and distribution networks and is seen by the establishment as acceptable and pandered to by some of the most conservative of institutions. On the other hand, hard-core pornography is seen as dangerous, subversive and is usually a police matter to be dealt



with under the Obscene Publications Act. While some of the material classed as hard-core can be decidedly dodgy, and even dangerous, it's also no surprise that some of the more interesting, non-mainstream, least stereotypical and sexually diverse erotic material finds itself put neatly under this heading.

Anarcho-sex with bread and butter!

Having said all this, pornography (good and bad) is of course just more spectacle; something to be used by the passive (usually) observer. Sex and sexuality, however, are not passive, but things we do, things we actively participate in. Which leads me to the question, can there be such a thing as an anarchist view of sex or even an anarchist sexuality?

The fact that certain readers may profoundly disagree with some of the points raised in this article means it's very tempting to answer no.

Also some comrades may argue that it's all just a diversion from the real struggles against capitalism and the bread and butter class issues.

Yet I don't think that an anarchist view of sex and sexuality is in any way a diversion.

Moreover, I believe it's not that far away from the so called 'bread and butter' class issues as some comrades might think.

Food, drink, a roof over our heads and sex are all basic human needs. OK, the lack of sex doesn't generally kill you (as is the case with starvation), but being sex-starved can seriously fuck you up mentally. Having said this, many adults do participate in fairly regular sexual activity and of course sometimes it's all very good, while at other times it's not at all enjoyable. Added to this, the fact that more open and diverse sexualities are vigorously repressed not only by the family, church, state, the education system, peer group pressure, the mass media and of course capitalism in general, but also by some of those who adhere to apparently more progressive ideologies; rebels, radicals, leftists, anarchists and communists.

Consequently, although not exactly starving, I'd guess that much of the world's adult population is at least sexually malnourished or undernourished (which can lead to problems such as lack of self confidence, depression and other mental illnesses, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide). So I'd say this situation is something definitely worth addressing by revolutionaries.

Deviancy

There's also the problematic view which I mentioned earlier, that any sexual waywardness (usually labelled 'deviance', 'depravity' or 'perversion') is in some way a product of capitalism, a bourgeois trait. If this is the case, will sex in an anarchist society only be the kind which is firmly rooted in anarcho-communist social reality? Or more bluntly, does this mean that any possible future anarchist communist society would be relatively 'kink free'? I, for one, sincerely hope not. A sexual future like that, sort of reminds me of the childhood view of the Christian 'Heaven', where you have to sit on a cloud all day playing a harp. And, quite rightly, Hell always seemed much more appealing to me. Hmm... unless you're into sexual fantasies based on the socially just and egalitarian cummings and goings between the workers' assembly member and the mandated local

delegate... or maybe a little 'mass action' would appeal?

Sex, of course, can often reflect social realities, but it doesn't have to and can be totally unrelated to anything we know or have experienced. Anyway, let's face it, sex doesn't always work too well on the rational and philosophical level (except in articles such as this). And people do all sorts of inexplicable, weird and wacky things when they're in their purely sexual mode. This may involve things like playing out sexual power exchange fantasies, fetishism, transgendered activities, etc. Often, the reasons we like doing the things that we do cannot actually be explained, nor would we necessarily want to explain them either (just in case it makes something we find really exciting, suddenly seem mundane). Nor does that mean it's unhealthy sexual tastes or activities we are indulging in (or want to indulge in).

Unfortunately, psychiatry has traditionally offered medication and the asylum for any wayward and 'bizarre' sexual tendencies in people (particularly in working class people), and bourgeois society at large and its media likes to label such divergent people as 'perverts'.

It's important that we never fall into this line of thinking. If revolutionary anarchists were ever to start denouncing anyone with a 'non-mainstream' sexual orientation or preference, it would be a total disaster not only for anarchism as a philosophy, but also for our class and for future humanity. For me, the revolutionary anarchist attitude to sex and sexuality has to encompass the belief that sexual activities and relations should be *safe, free, diverse and consensual*; acknowledging that people are queer, bi or hetero, ranging from the monogamous to the polyamorous, from the disinterested asexual to the rampant polysexual, and from the softest vanilla to the hardest edge playing SM-er. At the end of the day, if it's a safe and mutually consensual activity (however weird it may seem) and all parties involved enjoy themselves, then what's the big deal?

Hopefully anarchism is about sexual freedom, openness, honesty and equality. And when I say this, I'm not talking about everyone devising rota systems to see whose turn it is to go on top. The honesty is when people are truly and non-judgementally in a position to sexually express themselves without fear of being labelled a pervert, a deviant or a poof.

And when people are really being sexually honest, some weird shit can start to happen. And that, in its own way, can be quite revolutionary.

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.

If you would like the next 12 issues of *Resistance*, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to 'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL. Better still, take a bundle to distribute!

AF Ireland produce their own regular newssheet, *Resistance Ireland*, which is available from: Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505 Belfast, BT12 6BQ. Phone: 07951 079719.

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All our newssheets are available in either text or pdf format from the AF Ireland website: <http://www.afireland.cjb.net>

Interview with an anarchist dominatrix

For two years Mistress Venus was a professional dominatrix in central London. She's also an anarchist communist. So, we at Organise! thought we'd take the opportunity to ask her a few questions about this.



Organise!: *There's a popularly-held belief, also prevalent among the left and some anarchists, that anyone (particularly female) who works in the sex industry, is in some way a victim and has been forced into that situation. How realistic is this view?*

Mistress Venus: I think it's very important to make distinctions between workers in different areas of 'the sex industry'. The role played by a girl working the streets is very different from the role (as that's exactly what it is) played by a professional dominatrix. Speaking from personal experience, my decision to work as a dominatrix was purely my own choice and was something I wanted to do. It was an extension of having spent years going to fetish clubs and performing as a fetish model. I knew the scene, the roles played and exactly what was involved. I had no illusions about it and I was in no way coerced into it. I kept my day job (working in a shop), worked when I wanted to and unlike many, had no monetary pressures I was forced into supporting.

I must admit that the approach I took was a very practical one: I only ever worked with at least one other dominatrix, who worked as my 'maid'. And sometimes a male colleague stayed within the building and helped set up the 'sessions'. Sessions were pre-arranged, with the 'client' and myself both discussing our own limits and expectations, though obviously not all sex workers are afforded this level of co-ordination and support!

There's a very different attitude from the 'client' towards a dominatrix, compared to that towards a girl on the streets, I think. To my 'clients', I was the embodiment of their desires. They worshipped everything about me, and I had the power to control whether

they were allowed to even look at me. And, if they displeased me, they cleaned my bathroom out with a toothbrush!

There was never any sex involved in the 'sessions'. The sexual energy from the client is derived from the playing and reversal of power roles, from a form of humiliation and degradation absent from their 'normal' daily lives. That's not to say, however, that I didn't, at times, feel used, or stop and question just exactly what I was doing. In fact, at times, it served to reinforce ideas I'd previously held about the exploitation of women by men, particularly, in the case of a dominatrix, sometimes very rich and powerful men!

To my 'clients', I was the embodiment of their desires.

Ultimately, I stopped though. I chose to give it up. I wasn't interested in, or enraptured by, the money it brought in (and these guys would pay up to £120 an hour, £30 extra to be pissed on!). It was something I chose to enter, and chose to leave; a choice many 'sex workers' don't always have!

O: *You say your 'clients' worshipped you when you were in your dominatrix role, and you also talk about having power and control over them. How does that role fit in with you being an anarchist?*

MV: During a domination session both parties are consenting adults who choose to perform their particular role – whether it be the role of the master, the all-powerful oppressor, or that of the weak, oppressed slave – and

choose their own limits. The session is an escape from reality; a performance where the clients enter the realm of their imagination, and briefly live out fetishes that are scorned in this society.

The roles we play mirror the power-based capitalistic society we live in today, a society of greed, oppression and subversion, a society of force, silence and pain. This is in no way representative of the lifestyle I choose to live in as an anarchist, a society based on equality, respect and self-government.

Domination is a game, the adult's version of what children call 'playing'. It's not real and, for me personally, it does not reflect elements of my personality. I enjoy the sessions as a performer, as an experimenter and as an exhibitionist... It's the attention I crave. The thrill of power and control is a novelty in a game, not something that I desire to be present in my 'real life'. I think it is very important, in a society based on freedom, that people should be able to express themselves and their fetishes and fantasies freely and in a safe environment (providing all parties are consenting), whether those fetishes involve being whipped as a naughty school-kid or dressing up as a nurse!

O: *Earlier, you mentioned that your work sometimes reinforced issues around the exploitation of women by men. Did you feel you were more exploited than you might have been in other kinds of work?*

MV: During a domination session, the traditional, stereotypical gender roles are usually reversed. During the sessions the female dominatrix becomes the power holder, taking control over the male. This is a mirroring of the patriarchal society we inhabit today; where males traditionally have the 'best' jobs, the higher wages, the positions of power in society and the home; and where the male is seen as the all-authoritative figure in control. Throughout the world, history is told through the eyes of the male, and women are repressed through, for



example, religion, violence, exploitation and inequality. The role of the dominatrix temporarily reclaims some of this power and hands it back to the woman; one might almost say it is the man who becomes the exploited. However, I do consider the 'sex industry' as being one of the very vehicles used by men and society to exploit women, an arena where women use their bodies as an object for sale. And being a dominatrix is still making a living using the 'being' and body as an object, regardless of who wields the so-called 'power' for the duration of the session (or who holds the whip!).

Often, yes, I was left feeling as though I had been exploited, possibly more so than if I had a more 'conventionally acceptable' or 'normal' job. Regardless of the fact that I enjoyed the role play and enjoyed the escapism, the costume and grandeur of the part, I still felt as though my body had been used by another person as something they had control over, simply by the fact that they were paying for the session, paying for me to dress up in a certain way and behave in a certain way at a certain time (even though we could say the same about a number of roles we play in our life!).

I believe the body is the last aspect of our lives we have any control over. This explains the large and growing

amount of interest in fetishes such as body adornment and modification (tattoos, piercings, scarification etc). And when it dawns on me that I am making a living by someone ultimately controlling what I am doing with my body, the element of how much choice I have over my body and life has to be questioned. There is a feeling of having been exploited, felt by nearly everyone who has to work hard in this society, which is based on inequality and division. I've felt it whether I was working in a shop or in an office, or as a cleaner, which were my previous professions, but the feeling of having your own body exploited is a much more raw one, a much more personal one, that does leave you feeling 'naked'.

There is a big difference when money becomes involved. I spent years going to fetish clubs, where all the 'games' and activities are done by choice with willing participants, everyone enjoying the role they played. But when the exchange of money becomes involved, the element of choice is gone and the realms of 'body fascism' open up. If people are going to pay for services, they expect you to look a certain way!

Hence the feelings of exploitation creep into the normally pleasurable areas of your life.

O: *We've seen the positive initiative of the setting up of the International Union of Sex Workers in this country. But, more recently, however, at least in London, they've affiliated to the GMB. Now, obviously, the AF would see this move towards mainstream trade unionism as retrogressive. But as someone who's worked in a job generally identified as being part of the sex industry, what do you think is the potential for better self-organisation among sex workers?*

MV: I think there's huge scope for potential, just as there is between workers within any industry. What it needs, however, is for various obstacles to be overcome both by ourselves and by society, and for barriers to be broken down, for example the barriers created by the

'separatist' attitudes so prevalent between workers, both within the same branch of work or within different branches. Once this is achieved, and we all begin to realise that our strength and support will stem from our working together, then we will be stepping closer to self-government and organisation, as opposed to resorting to being represented by a body so influenced by, and affiliated to, the Labour Party! By improving communication between the various workers and branches, and achieving the de-stigmatisation of the industry by society, we can begin to co-operate with one another to create a united body offering, for example, advice and information, and giving emotional and practical support for people, both already within the industry, and entering it.

We need to abolish all forms of control that are so common within the sex industry, and abolish the different levels of power; we need to work as one so that we are all informed, safe, supported and united, as opposed to working alone through force or need, in sometimes dangerous conditions. Sex work, in one form or another, will always be around, it always has been, and it's certainly not in any danger of disappearing – whether we live in a capitalist society or even in a moneyless anarchist society.

Sex work takes a myriad of different forms and is entered, used and left for a myriad of different reasons. It's just that in one of these societies workers within it will continue to be exploited, misrepresented and scorned by that very society itself, and in the other one we will have the power, ability and motivation to both be ourselves and govern ourselves!

Discussion board

The Anarchist Federation now has a discussion board at the following address: <http://flag.blackened.net/wwwthreads>

Log on if you fancy a chat.

Not in my backyard

This article sets out some of the main problems faced by sex workers in their relationship with the State, and concludes with a brief interview with Jenn Clamen of the International Union of Sex Workers.

You're self-employed, running a legal small business on a tight budget and want to advertise your services. For most, a card in the local shop window or phone box might be just the ticket. But not if you're a sex worker, it seems.

Clamp down

Though prostitution is legal, soliciting on the streets isn't. Until the Criminal Justice & Police Act came into force in 2001, the prostitute's tactic of advertising sex by putting cards in phone boxes was legal too – not anymore. It's estimated that 13m cards are distributed across Britain each year and in 2001 BT removed 150,000 from phone boxes in central London alone – though it didn't stop schoolboys swapping cards in playgrounds when the Pokemon craze died down! Apart from the waste of money, carding is now attracting severe penalties as the police and local councils clamp down. The police pose as clients and get the addresses of people selling sex. They are visited, warned, often the landlord is informed. With most landlords afraid of being charged with abetting prostitution, such a warning usually ends in eviction. The woman (and it usually is a woman, sometimes with children) is moved on again and again. Their livelihoods are lost as it takes time to re-build your client base. Immigration officials often accompany police, and women working illegally are issued a deportation order and dumped at the nearest airport. Sometimes the only way they can raise the airfare is to head back into town and go back on the streets. If they have been trafficked (smuggled into the country) they may still owe the traffickers their fare and be in immediate danger here and in their home countries. Cards at flats are confiscated and the card boys,



if caught, face heavy fines, up to £1,000, or 28 days in jail.

One operation in the area covered by right-wing Westminster Council (all-part of its family-friendly tourist strategy) led to 60 card boys being charged, though none of the women were. As Jenn Clamen says: "The real agenda is not getting rid of the cards, but getting rid of the women. Prohibition is unlikely to drive sex workers into convents but harassment will force them underground where there is less access to support networks and where they risk more violence."

Interview

Organise!: *When was the union formed, what are its main policies, how many members does it have and what do they see as the main benefits of membership?*

Jenn: The IUSW was formed in 2000 and now has 100 members. It has recently affiliated to the GMB and its Sex Work & Fantasy Branch has 40 members.

The main demands of the IUSW are: decriminalisation of all aspects of sex work involving consenting adults; the right to form and join professional associations or unions; zero tolerance of coercion, violence, sexual abuse, child labour, rape and racism; legal

FEATURE

support for sex workers who want to sue those who exploit their labour; the right to travel across national boundaries and obtain work permits wherever we live; clean and safe places to work; the right to choose whether to work on our own or co-operatively with other sex workers; the absolute right to say no; access to training – our jobs require very special skills and professional standards; access to health clinics where we do not feel stigmatised; re-training programmes for sex workers who want to leave the industry; an end to social attitudes which stigmatise those who are or have been sex workers.

O: *What are the main benefits of membership?*

Jenn: The main benefits of membership are that being part of a collective group that is ostracised and generally doesn't get to enjoy all of the benefits of a free society, gives power and confidence to people in the sex trade. Being part of the GMB has the usual practical benefits: discounted travel insurance, free legal advice, compensation for injuries at work (although this only applies to people working in wholly 'legal' aspects of the trade i.e. massage parlours or dance clubs).

O: *What are the main forms of discrimination faced by sex workers?*

Jenn: Because the law around sex work is so contradictory and ambiguous, it is very difficult to ensure that sex workers can be safe and healthy in their jobs. This in itself is discrimination. The Government has set up the law to feign approval of sex work, by making it 'legal'. However, none of the activities around sex work (including living off the money earned) is legal. This too is discrimination. On a more practical level, sex work is not considered a real job, so people who sex work cannot enjoy the benefits of working in a 'real' job i.e. compensation if hurt, health benefits, etc.

O: *Is sex work dangerous?*

Jenn: There is a lot of danger in sex

work because of the lack of proper laws. Sex workers are exposed to a lot of violence from punters and pimps, if they have a pimp, because there are no laws to protect them. If raped or assaulted, proving it is difficult because generally the population thinks it's part of the job: many women who work on the street will tell you that this is exactly what police called to the scene will say. A lot of women are forced to work underground because they must remain out of sight so as not to get a fine for soliciting. This puts them in more danger, as they are not always familiar with the working area and the punters in that area.



O: *To what extent are sex workers able to control their transactions with clients and their employers (if any)?*

Jenn: Sex Workers are usually in control of the transaction. For women who work in flats, it's a simple transaction. There is usually a maid, who answers the phone and keeps the money, and a working girl. The punter comes in, requests a service, woman gives a price, money is exchanged – simple. Where a woman has a pimp, a lot of her money goes over to him or her, resulting in a lack of control. With regards to services, however, most women determine what services they offer, and how they offer them, bar none. If people are new to the industry, it obviously takes time for them to devise their own working regime, so they may not be in as much control as they would like to be. In some massage parlours and escort agencies, and even flats, the owner

will demand the girl see a particular client she may not want to see, or perform certain services like oral sex without a condom. However, the answer to this dilemma is simple, move to another sex working job. If a woman wants control over her business, she will seize it.

O: *What is the general attitude of officialdom – police, social workers, local councils and so on?*

Jenn: The general attitude is that sex work is a pest. Most councils will deny that it exists in their area (very typical of posh suburban areas). At the same time they are beginning to use anti-social behaviour orders (introduced originally to deal with 'neighbours from hell') against street women – if breached they face up to five years in jail. A lot of the police and general public think it should be decriminalised but still maintain a 'not on my doorstep' attitude. There are a lot of people in favour of a 'red-light district' where sex work would be 'contained': fair enough, at least they are aiming for a decriminalised area.

O: *And the Government?*

Jenn: The Government will not make any efforts to change the law; this is the main problem. The current laws themselves are the real problem, the nuisance. I think there is a general attitude that if the law made more sense, there wouldn't be so many problems. In the meantime, while the laws don't make sense, people think that visible sex work (I stress visible because a lot of it is indoors) is a pest – even though many of the people with this attitude are punters themselves.

O: *What are the main other ways by which sex workers are controlled by society?*

Jenn: The lack of structure in the law controls the lives of sex workers. They cannot go public. They must live double lives. They must always be on guard because of a lack of safety. They must suffer with the stigma attached to sex working. They are not controlled as other people can be:

most are confident and self-assured. But in general, it's the law that gets you down.

O: *Some people argue that street prostitution attracts kerb crawlers who accost women not interested in selling sex and are perceived as a menace to children. The trade seems to attract crime – especially drug-related crime – and can be a nuisance, affecting the whole neighbourhood. Are sex workers to blame for this and should they ply their trade indoors?*

Jenn: No. Street sex workers are not to blame for drugs or menacing punters. Many street workers are homeless and can't trade indoors. I have been to residents' meetings where this is suggested, but it's ridiculous: where would they go? They don't have homes. The main problem with street sex work (aside from complaints about mere visibility) is condoms and syringes around parks and schools. This is why needle exchanges and sex work projects exist, to help people dispose of them safely. The councils also have to train rubbish collectors to handle these things (with gloves, sterilizing equipment etc). Safety is the biggest issue in street sex work but I wouldn't blame the women themselves for a lack of it. The social context around street sex work does not allow for a dialogue between residents and working women.

O: *What are the IUSW's proposals for addressing these issues of perceived and actual nuisance, crime and safety?*

Jenn: The anti-kerb crawling campaign being mounted currently in some areas is not a safe or effective way of targeting punters or sex workers; it makes sex work more dangerous by pushing the women further underground and into working areas they are not familiar with. With regards to punters approaching women who aren't sex workers, there is danger because some punters can get rude and intimidating. A designated working area may solve that problem. Educating residents and council members so that they do not need to feel against the women is one way.

Decriminalising an area where sex workers can work, shower, and see punters is another. Residents need to acknowledge sex workers as residents and come to an understanding together about safety in the neighbourhood.

O: *What change in the status of sex workers and society's attitudes to sex workers would you like to see?*

Jenn: Society, and especially Government, needs to pay attention to what is going on in the world, the fact that London is laden with sex and sex work, that there is a demand for it. That people need to feel protected. It would help if the double standard that most Britons have about sex was dumped, that the stereotypes of sleazy, broke sex workers was forgotten or changed for good.

O: *What are the means by which this could come about?*

Jenn: Decriminalisation of all aspects of adult sex work involving consenting adults. Accepting sex work as a profession and a choice. Legislation needs to be changed.

An anarchist view

As anarchists we may have an inkling of some of the problems sex workers face. We too lead double lives and often find ourselves arrested for doing things that up to a moment before were entirely legal! Though there's not as much demand for our politics as there seems to be for sex, more's the pity!

We also recognise the truth that collective organisation brings strength and confidence. Some lessons have been well learnt. We would certainly support the formation of more IUSW branches and are glad to see that sex workers recognise the limitations of trade union membership! Where we differ perhaps is in expecting any change in attitude from Government or that legislation will do anything more than increase control and lessen perceived public nuisance while doing nothing to curb those who exploit or harm sex workers.

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

Black Flag. £1.50 per issue/£6 sub. BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

SchNEWS. Weekly direct action newsheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX.

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

Earth First! Action Update, monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12-issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

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 anti-capitalist 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 1J0, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them through our website.

Class struggle in *China*

Ever since the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, the most advanced sections of capital have sought to integrate China into the world market.

The first steps towards definitively starting the process of integrating China appear finally to have been taken, with China's December 2001 entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

We can safely assume that this would not have occurred had not both parties seen benefits to making this move – on the one hand access to untapped markets and vast reserves of cheap labour, on the other a chance to build up modern technologies and infra-structure and solve a few social problems.

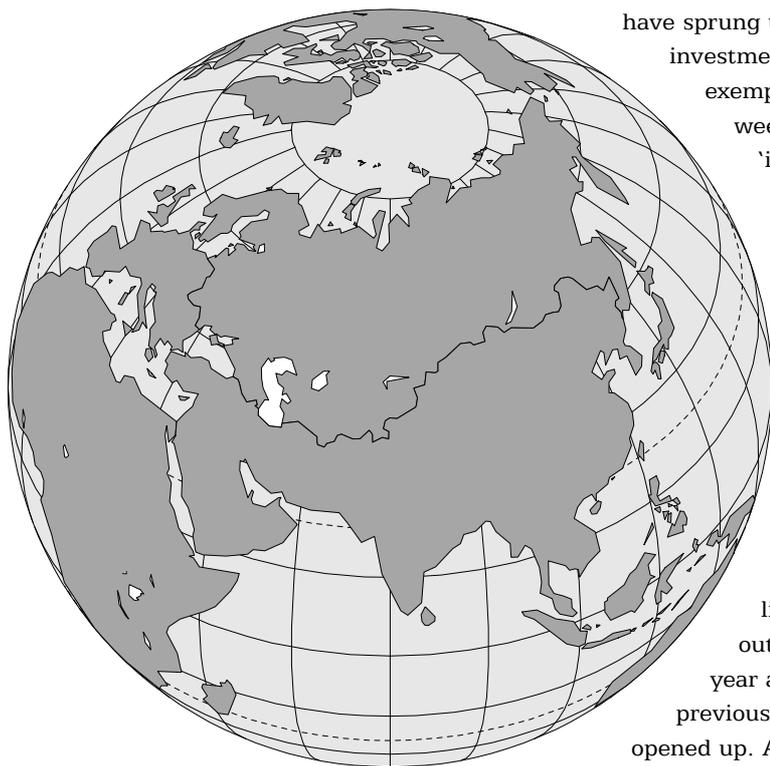
But this decision has also opened up a space for a resurgence of mass class struggle that did not exist prior to the restructuring of the last few decades. This opening follows from two separate but complementary dynamics: the destruction of the old state-owned and centrally-planned heavy industries of the north east, and the introduction of foreign capital to the coastal areas and the south.

Restructuring

The restructuring process began in the 1970s with the dismantling of the huge collective farms, the development of small-scale household plots and the gradual introduction of competitive markets. In the 1990s these family farms had largely been pushed aside by the growth of large-scale agri-business and the parallel rise of rural wage labour. This also led to the creation of around 200 million unemployed, landless peasants and a fall in the standard of living in the rural inland areas – current estimates put rural income at half that of the urban coastal areas. With entry to the WTO and consequent international competition, this number is expected to rise even further, as the *China Daily* remarked, "The country is facing a serious oversupply of labour with the number of people coming into the labour market reaching an unprecedented peak".

In scenes reminiscent of the enclosures associated with early industrialisation, these dispossessed workers have no option but to move to the newly-developing urban areas, to take up sweat-shop labour for the many new factories that have sprung up following the easing of restrictions on foreign investment, and state sanctioned tax and human rights exemptions. Often working 12 hours a day, seven days a week – and with no legal rights because many of them are 'illegals', having flouted the state's internal passport system to reach the cities – these are the workers that 'the new China' of 7% annual growth is being built on. The various 'Zones' the state has set up (economic, high-tech, finance and trade, export processing, etc) are in fact statements to foreign investors of the Chinese state's willingness to solve its rural problems by allowing these people to be ruthlessly exploited. Unsurprisingly, the workers are none too happy with this situation.

The second phase was to deal with the old, inefficient areas of the state-controlled economy. This basically entailed privatisation, mass sackings, the lifting of the state monopoly on trade and the phasing out of 'cradle to grave' social security. Ten million jobs a year are being lost, and this is expected to continue as previously ring-fenced areas such as telecoms and banking are opened up. A 'rust belt' has developed in the old industrial heartland of the northeast, which has seen the collapse of huge swathes



of industries that whole regions were based around – 75% unemployment is not uncommon in many towns.

So, having identified the state's plans, what resistance is the working class putting up to these frontal attacks on their living conditions? The official strike statistics show that the number of declared strikes rose from 8,150 in 1992 to 120,000 in 1999, all illegal. Undoubtedly these figures are too low as they fail to record undeclared or wildcat strikes, and the blocking of roads and railway lines that have become increasingly common tactics.

The 'rustbelt' areas of the northeast have seen the largest amount of open class struggle since 1949, prompting the commander of the People's Armed Police, the main anti-riot force, to say police must prepare for an increase in 'mass incidents'. The most visible struggle has been that at Daqing Oilfield where 50,000 workers have besieged the management offices for months in a redundancy and benefits dispute, clashing with paramilitary police and overturning cars. The shrinking oil industry is seething with conflict elsewhere as well. Disputes over severance terms led to large protests at the Huabei field in Hebei Province and the Songjiang field in Jilin Province.

Ten million jobs a year are being lost, and this is expected to continue

These workers are symbols of the 'old China'. Most of them are middle-aged or nearing retirement, many of them had been on the *xiagang* system. That is, they were on the company books, did no work but were paid a living wage. That has now gone, and with cuts in pensions and heating allowances, these people are understandably worried how this will affect them as there is little chance of finding new work – hence the militancy of their actions.

This is mirrored in the protests in

nearby Liaoyang, where large industrial disputes are common. In March this year, workers from six different companies co-operated on a scheme to protest about benefit and wage arrears. They blocked the main roads and chanted, "We are the working class!" Soon, workers from another 14 companies joined the protest; again the overwhelming majority were middle-aged or nearing retirement. A steel worker in his 50s, in a statement that could have been made by an Argentinean *piquetero*, claimed that they must use militant tactics, as "We have no other hope now".

In March 2001, 2,000 miners in the northern city of Datong barricaded roads and fought the police, as they protested over lay-offs and pay reductions. Ten thousand miners also occupied the centre of Fushun, blocking roads and railways (again, a tactic that is often used in Argentina). This form of protest has also been used in Wuhan, Sichuan and Sheyang.

In Lanzhou, 5,000 taxi drivers attempted to storm the Government offices in protest at increases in fines and licences – 3,000 police were needed to save the party officials. Sheyang workers took a more direct approach in the Sheda Toy Factory, taking hostage the factory owner and his wife. They were held for 20 days until back pay they had been promised was forthcoming. Importantly, the police refused to intervene, as, in their own words, they "did not wish to provoke the workers".

Maybe they could have passed this advice on to their brothers in Shuikou city, Guangdong province, where workers from the privately-owned Nanxuan Wool Textile Factory fought running battles with police and company security guards for three days running in June this year.

This is a significant development as it represents one of the first (reported at least) fights against the new foreign-owned companies, rather than the defensive battles being fought out in the old state-run centres. The workers here were the classic, newly-arrived to the city escapees from rural

On the net

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

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

You can also email us at:

anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

poverty, prepared to put up with intensive exploitation out fear of the (very real) consequences of not doing so.

The private security guards, who are notorious for their bullying behaviour, manhandled workers in the queue at the canteen, 800 workers then walked out in protest, only to be attacked by security with iron bars. Photographs of the clashes published in the Yangcheng Evening News showed blood trails around the factory grounds. The remainder of the 15,000 workers then turned on the guards, who were only rescued by the intervention of the paramilitary police. Three days of rioting followed, with all the factory windows being smashed, company cars and police trucks being torched. A Guangzhou labour correspondent remarked, "There is nothing unusual now about labour protest in Guangdong, but these events are unprecedented".

There has also been a spate of boss-killings, particularly in Hubei province in central China, another of the 'rustbelt' provinces. Children are now said to play a game called 'Kill the Boss' in which they re-enact managers' deaths, pretending to stab and throttle each other.

Linking struggle

So what are the chances of these disputes breaking out of their isolation and linking up with other autonomous working class actions? Unsurprisingly, the vastness of China is helping the state to keep these struggles cordoned off from each other, as is the state news and broadcasting monopoly – something which the Government has been very keen to safeguard recently, allowing satellite channels to broadcast

only approved material and restricting news coverage.

Any wider link-up, leading to a sustained period of struggle, is going to have to develop counter-information networks, such as those that sprung up in the Stalinist states. News of the dispersed disputes, how the state reacted, what tactics were successful or useless etc need to be circulated and developed by those in struggle. Permanent links will depend on how successful each sector (new industry or old) can be in supporting the others; this is the key question at the minute. Isolated disputes can be dealt with easily – bloodily or peacefully. What will really worry the state and foster working class confidence, is when struggles break out in one area and are followed by solidarity actions in another.

Limited struggle?

It is noticeable though, that the older workers are fighting for things like more generous redundancy packages or guarantees for pensions or other social security issues such as heating allowances and lower rents – essentially things to soften the blows of the remainder of their life – whilst the workers in the newer industries are looking for higher wages and fewer working hours. The former could possibly be characterised as a limited struggle, as one that will pass as China continues to integrate further into the world market, and the latter as a struggle that is open-ended and only

going to reach its full development in the years to come.

The question of the elderly is very rapidly evolving into a class issue. The elderly population is presently 130 million, but is expected to more than double in the next generation, and this, combined with the effects of the 'one child' birth control policy (fewer young adults to look after parents) is leading to serious battles to safeguard pensions and related health schemes now before conditions get any worse.

The question of the elderly is very rapidly evolving into a class issue.

This can be seen in the trouble in the old industrial heartlands; the (ex)workers are trying to protect themselves before the state restructuring worsens conditions any further. We should recognise that this is a class struggle even if it doesn't appear in the usual forms. What's more, this is one of the few issues that concerns the whole of geographic China, and might possibly help the emergence of the counter-information networks mentioned above.

We should not be complacent about the role that China is being given in the class struggle in the other countries either. At the minute, the stability and developed infra-structure of the West continues to make it a

worthwhile area to invest in – a rapidly developing and technologically-advanced China will be used as stick to beat other workers with. The threat of shifting work to one of the new 'economic zones' will offer bosses the opportunity to introduce measures designed to increase the already-monstrous productivity levels. Flexibility, casualisation, new organisations of work with constant supervision, so that not a second of the day is not spent working, are all already being introduced against fierce resistance – all under the cover of competition with cheap labour zones meaning there is little choice.

Not 'stealing our jobs'

The answer is not to oppose Chinese workers and accuse them of 'stealing our jobs', but to recognise that we are all part of a global working class, and that our needs are one and the same, and that by linking our struggles and raising them to an international level (as capital has already done), we can effectively block capital's plans, which can in turn allow us to develop the space to articulate a positive expression of these collective needs, directly and a higher level than the nation state, and so more effectively.

One thing is clear though: class struggle continues in China, and the state's plans are only serving to further advance the antagonism. What happens next depends on how far the workers are prepared to act in each other's defence and, outside of any state or official organs, on what forms of working class communication evolve, and on how far they are prepared to challenge the state locally, nationally and internationally.

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.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&g. If anybody you know in Britain speaks Serbo-Croat or if you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood, then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.



The *Arditi del Popolo*

How the people's militias fought back against Italy's fascists.

By the end of World War I, the working class in Italy were in a state of revolutionary ferment. Not yet ready for the conquest of power themselves, workers and peasants by 1918 had won a variety of concessions from the state: an improvement of wages, the eight-hour day, and a recognition of collective contracts.

By 1919, however, a new radicalism had descended upon the labour movement. In that year alone, there were 1,663 strikes across the peninsula, while in August the newly-formed shop stewards' movement in Turin (the forerunner of the workers' councils) underlined the growth of a new vibrant militancy that drew its strength from the autonomous capacity of workers to organise themselves along libertarian lines and which had "the potential objective of preparing men, organisations and ideas, in a continuous pre-revolutionary control operation, so that they are ready to replace employer authority in the enterprise and impose a new discipline on social life".¹

In the countryside, the peasantry opened up a second front against the state by occupying the land that had been promised them before the war. The Visochi decree of September 1919 merely validated the co-operatives that had already been set up while the 'red

leagues' assisted the formation of strong unions of day labourers.

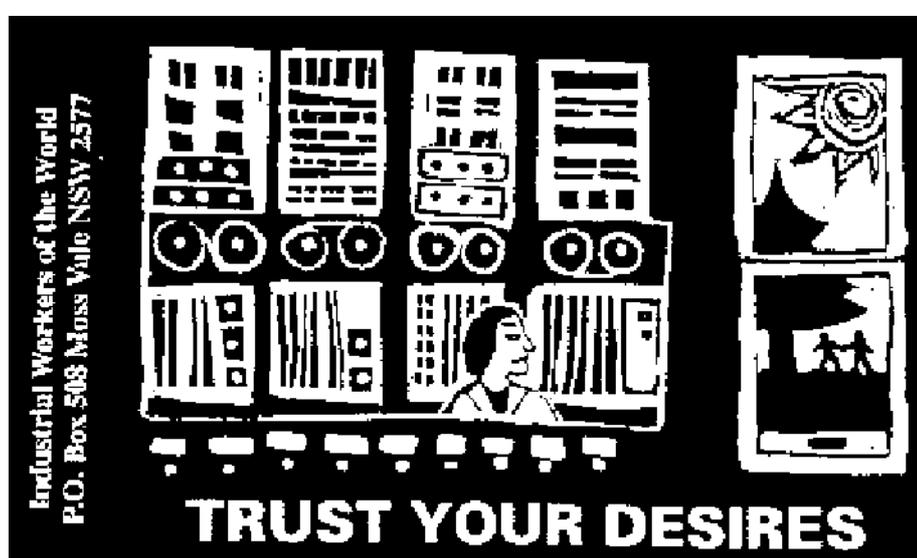
However, 1919 also marked the initial signs of capital defending itself against the growing onslaught. A meeting of industrialists and landowners at Genoa in April sealed the first stages of the 'holy alliance' against the rise of labour power. From this meeting were drawn up plans for the formation, in the following year, of both the General Federation of Industry and the General Federation of Agriculture, which together worked out a precise strategy for the dismantling of the labour unions and the nascent councils.

Alone, however, the industrialists and landowners could not undertake the struggle against the labour movement. The workers themselves had to be cowed into submission, had to have their spirit of revolt broken on the very streets they walked and the fields they sowed. For this, capital turned to the armed thuggery of fascism, and its biggest thug of all: Benito Mussolini.

Formation of the fascist squads

Immediately following the end of the war, there was a veritable flowering of anti-labour leagues: Mussolini's *Combat Fasci*, the Anti-Bolshevik League, *Fasci for Social Education*, *Umus*, *Italy Redeemed*, etc. At the same time, members of the *Arditi*, the war volunteer corps, on being demobilised, organised themselves into an élite force of 20,000 shock troops and were immediately put to use by the anti-labour movement.

This movement mostly comprised the middle or lower middle class. Ex-officers and NCOs, white collar workers, students and the self-employed all allied themselves to the fascist cause in the towns, while in the countryside the sons of tenant farmers, small landowners and estate managers were willing recruits in the war against the perceived Red Menace. The police



and the army both actively encouraged the fascists, urging ex-officers to join and train the squads, lending them vehicles and weapons, even allowing criminals to enrol in them with the promise of benefits and immunity. Arms permits, refused to workers and peasants, were freely handed over to the fascist squadrons, while munitions from the state arsenals gave the Blackshirts an immense military advantage over their enemies. Ultimately, by November 1921, the various hit squads were welded together into a military organisation known as the *Principi*, with a hierarchy of sections, cohorts, legions and a special uniform.

The Arditi del Popolo

To compensate for the shortcomings of the Socialist Party (PSI – *Partito Socialista Italiana*) and the main trade union, the CGL (see below), militants of various tendencies, anarcho-syndicalists, left socialists, communists and republicans formed, in June 1921, a people’s militia, the *Arditi del Popolo* (AdP), to take the fight to the fascists.

While politically diverse, the AdP was a predominantly working class organisation. Workers were enlisted from factories, farms, railways, shipyards, building sites, ports and public transport. Some sections of the middle class also got involved, including students, office workers and other professional types.

Structurally, the AdP was run along military lines with battalions, companies and squads. Squads were made up of 10 members and a group leader. Four squads made up a company with a company commander and three companies made up a battalion with its own battalion commander. Cycle squads were used to maintain links between the general command and the workforce at large.

In spite of its structure, the AdP remained elastic enough to form a rapid reaction force in response to fascist threats. AdP behaviour was dictated by whatever political group held sway in a particular locale, although most sections were allowed virtual autonomy over their actions.

These sections were quickly set up in all parts of the country, either as new creations, or as part of already existing groups like the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI – *Partito Comunista d’Italia*), the paramilitary *Arditi Rossi* in Trieste, the Children of No-One (*Figli di Nessuno*) in Genova and Vercelli, or the Proletarian League (*Lega Proletaria* – linked to the PSI). Overall, at least 144 sections had been set up by the end of summer 1921, with a total of about 20,000 members. The largest sections were the 12 Lazio sections with about 3,300 members, followed by Tuscany, 18 sections, with a total of 3,000 members. Other regions were as follows:

Region	Squads (s) battalions (b)	Members
Umbria	16s	2,000
Marche	12s	1,000
Lombardy	17s	2,100
Tre Venezie	15s	2,200
Emilia Romagna	18s	1,400
Liguria	4b	1,100
Piedmont	8b	1,300
Sicily	7s	600
Campania	7s	500
Apulia	6s	500
Sardinia	2s	150
Abruzzo	1s	200
Calabria	1s	200

The AdP very quickly built up its own cultural identity with individual sections proudly flaunting their own logos and images of war. While the AdP as a whole was easily recognisable by a skull surrounded by a laurel wreath with a dagger in its teeth, and the motto ‘*A Noi*’ (To us), the Directorate’s logo was a dagger surrounded by an oak and laurel wreath. The *ivetavecchia* meanwhile didn’t leave much to the imagination when choosing their banner – an axe smashing the *fasces* symbol! Although they did not have, nor want, their own uniform, the average AdP member preferred to dress in black sweaters, dark-grey trousers, with a red flower in their buttonholes. Their songs were direct and confrontational as they themselves were:

“Rintuzziamo la violenza/del fascismo mercenario./Tutti in armi!sul calvario/

dell’umana redenzion./Questa eterna giovinezza/si rinnova nella fede/ per un popolo che chiede/uguaglianza e liberta’.”

“We curb the violence/of the mercenary fascists/Everyone armed on the cavalry/of human redemption/This eternal youth/is renewed in the faith/for the people who demand equality and freedom.”

The fascist offensive

The Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta, commenting on the massive factory occupations in northern Italy in September 1920 which involved 600,000 workers, predicted, “If we do not carry on to the end, we will pay with tears of blood for the fears we now instil in the bourgeoisie”... His words were to be prophetic, as both the PSI and CGL, instead of expanding the struggle from the factories into the community, collaborated with the state to return the workers to their jobs. It was from this moment onwards that the state moved on the offensive and Mussolini’s ‘revolutionary action’ squads were supplied with enough arms to take to the streets.

Until the formation of the AdP, the fascists had things mostly their own way. Starting off with an attack on the town hall in Bologna, the fascist squads swept through the countryside like a scythe, undertaking ‘punitive expeditions’ against the ‘red’ villages. Following their success there, they began attacking the cities. Labour unions, the offices of co-operatives and leftist papers were destroyed in Trieste, Modena, and Florence within the first few months of 1921. As Rossi writes, they had “an immense advantage over the labour movement in its facilities for transportation and concentration... The fascists are generally without ties...they can live anywhere... The workers, on the contrary, are bound to their homes... This system gives the enemy every advantage: that of the offensive over the defensive, and that of mobile warfare over a war of position.”²

However, by March 1921, there were growing signs of working class defence structures being put in place.

In Livorno, when a working class district (Borgo dei Cappucini) came under attack by the fascists, the whole neighbourhood mobilised against them, routing them from the town. In April, when the fascists launched an assault on one of the union centres (*Camero del Lavoro*), the workers held strike action on the 14th and surrounded the fascist squad, only for the army to rush to the fascists' defence. By July, the working class had created their own armed militia – the *Arditi del Popolo*.

Arditi del Popolo in action

The AdP first saw action in Piombino on 19 July 19, when they attacked a fascist meeting place and rounded up the fascists inside. When the Royal Guard tried to intervene, they too were forced to surrender. The AdP held the streets for a few days before the sheer size of police numbers forced them to withdraw.

In Sarzana, they went to the aid of the local population that had managed to capture one of the fascists' most important leaders, Renato Ticci. When a squad of 500 fascists attempted to rescue Ticci, the AdP were there to force the fascists into the countryside. Twenty fascists (probably more) were killed and their squadron leader commented: "The squad, so long accustomed to defeating an enemy who nearly always ran away, or offered feeble resistance, could not, and did not know how to defend themselves."

Sell out

However, just as the AdP was building up the momentum on the streets, they were betrayed by the PSI who were more interested in signing a pact of non-aggression with the fascists; this at a time when the fascists were at their most vulnerable. Socialist militants were forced by their leadership to withdraw from the AdP, while the CGL union ordered its members to leave the organisation.

One union leader, Matteotti, confirmed the sell out in the union paper *Battaglia Sindicale*: "Stay at home: do not respond to provocations.

Even silence, even cowardice, are sometimes heroic."

The communists went one step further by forming their own pure 'class conscious' squadrons thus decimating the movement further. According to Gramsci, "the tactic...corresponded to the need to prevent the party membership being controlled by a leadership that was not the party leadership". Quite soon, only 50 sections of 6000 members remained, supported both by the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI) and the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* (UAI).

A number of these sections went into action again in September in Piombino when the fascists, who had burned down the offices of the PSI (the same organisation that had sold them out a month before), were intercepted by an anarchist patrol and forced to flee. Piombino was soon to become the nerve centre of the defence against fascism, defending itself against a further fascist onslaught in April 1922, before finally succumbing after one and a half days of fierce fighting, when the fascists, aided by the Royal Guard, were able to capture the offices of the USI.

In July 1922, the reformist general strike to defend 'civil liberties and the constitution' marked the final disaster for the labour movement, as the work stoppages were not, and could not be, accompanied by aggressive direct action. The fascists simply ran public services with scabs and made themselves masters of the streets. With the strike's collapse, the fascists mustered their forces to deal with the last remaining outposts of resistance, one of which, Livorno, succumbed to a force of 2,000 *squadristi*.

Conclusion

So what lessons can we today learn from the *Arditi del Popolo*? First of all, we need to learn the benefits of organisation. Like the AdP, we need to form local anti-fascist groups, operating autonomously in their own areas, but gelled together in a national network. These groups should not refrain from applying militant direct action tactics against the likes of the

BNP; the only language the fascists understand. We need to avoid the path of reformism advocated by the recruiting agents of reformist parties like the SWP and destroy, once and for all, the nationalist myth that scapegoats our ethnic communities and which has allowed the likes of British Home Secretary, David Blunkett, and Irish Minister of Justice, John O' Donaghue, to hoodwink large sections of the working class into the belief the root of their socio-economic woes lies elsewhere. To do this, we need to tie the fascists' agenda to that of the state which supports it, and get across the message that fascism will only ever be destroyed once the state is smashed. Only a society run along the principles of anarcho-communism can ever hope to achieve this.

¹ Williams L. *Proletarian Order* 1975

² Rossi, A. *The Birth of Fascism* 1938

Thanks to Nestor McNab, for his help with translation of parts of this article.

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Clanship to *theme park*

*It's the rich
what gets the
pleasure, the
poor what gets
the blame...*

Scotland the Nation is a relatively recent idea, much the same as all other nations. The formation of this entity has taken place without the will or consent of the majority of people who live within the constructed borders.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area known as the Highlands & Islands was considered to contain people who were a species apart from the industrious citizens of Edinburgh, Glasgow and the agriculturally productive areas of the Central Belt, the North East and the lowlands. The lairds, clan chiefs and landlords of the peripheral areas had by this time thrown in their lot with the politically and economically powerful based in Glasgow, London and Edinburgh, thus breaking the symbolic links they held with their tenants as part of the same clan.

In the days of their forebears, of Culloden and Glencoe, they had been the foot-soldiers of plundering chieftains who needed cash to adopt the sophisticated and luxurious habits of the ruling class in more 'advanced' areas. Industrialisation and agronomic agricultural rationalisation meant that the people of the Highlands and Islands became either surplus to requirements or fodder for the armies, factories and mines that made and protected the wealth of Empire.

During the height of the Potato Famine (1846-55), stirred by the romanticisation of the Highlands,

Prince Albert wanted to build a fairy tale castle in this wild and mysterious land. He managed to persuade the Government to pay for his folly and his holiday home was built. The cost of labour for the enterprise was pleasingly low; with starvation and eviction rampant throughout the area, people were willing to work eight hours a day for a pound and a half of meal. Meanwhile, the fantastically rich Duke and Duchess of Sutherland were hosting a fundraising visit at Dunrobin Castle for Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Beecher Stowe's visit was a coup for the fashionable Duchess who led the upper class craze in Britain for the emancipation of American slaves. Nobody mentioned the irony that the Duke was currently evicting and starving thousands of his tenants whose lives in many ways were just as unbearable as the lives of plantation slaves in America.

The dismissal, abuse and exploitation of the people who live in Scotland continues today. We exist in a theme park for the rich and famous – from Madonna to Al Fayed. Our recently bestowed parliament is just as answerable to the UK Treasury, the Labour Party and their business cronies as any other Government department, despite their smug glorying in giving the elderly the basic minimum they ought to expect in any 'civilised' society. The Nationalists up here would still be as much a part of a corrupt and destructive global system of capital. Meanwhile, the Socialists have a prescriptive Bible interpreted through the Word of Marx via demagogues and polit-pin-ups whose views are stone writ LAW.

The political system in which all our 'democratic' choices are placed is merely the servant and social architect of capitalism. This economic *fait accompli*, this Darwinian proof of profit, survival of the fittest, puts the

majority, the surplus population, the poor, the hungry and the powerless on the road to extinction. That road is lined with media images and dreams of wealth and satisfaction just out of reach, so we walk on without wondering where we're headed. Unless Tommy Sheridan can turn Scotland into the Cuba of the North, or until the Nats can persuade Europe to give them a 'Setting up an Independent State' grant, we're headed along extinction alley.

We might alter the path, break through the images and myths and join with our fellow workers, learners, long-minded ones around the globe and begin to find means of working, learning, thinking and sharing together as free individuals with our own visions and dreams to guide us, and our own and shared experiences and flexibilities to get us there.

Think about it. Where would you like to live: a consumerist theme park where you serve an assigned role, or a safe, peaceful, infinitely varied and beautiful planet where you live as you choose, a valued autonomous individual?



The prison industrial *complex*

Any study of the prison industrial complex in America quickly reveals that forces with a financial interest in a big prison population have helped to cause and perpetuate the prison boom.

The American state holds two million people in prison on any given day – four times the number in 1980 – because there’s money in it. This represents the highest per capita incarceration rate in the history of the world. In 1995 alone, 150 new US prisons were built and filled.

The prison industrial complex is rapidly becoming an essential component of the US economy. More than five million people are behind bars, on parole, probation, or under other supervision by the criminal justice system. The influence of the prison industrial complex penetrates deep into the political and social life of America. Legislators pass harsh sentencing laws virtually written by shadowy prison corporations – like the Corrections Corporation of America – who endlessly lobby for tough laws and the privatisation of prisons. The prison guards’ union sponsors candidates who support tough laws and the economic exploitation of prisoners in the name of rehabilitation. Police departments base part of their budgeting on the proceeds from drug-related arrests. Thousands of people go to prison, or stay there longer, in the pursuit of profit.

Some commentators point to the disproportionate imprisonment of blacks and Latinos and declare prisons a modern form of slavery: this is a similar criticism to that of the Black Panther Party, who argue that racial minorities in America are an internal colony, a pool of downtrodden, second-class citizens valued only for the low-wage labour they supply.

Prisons are big business

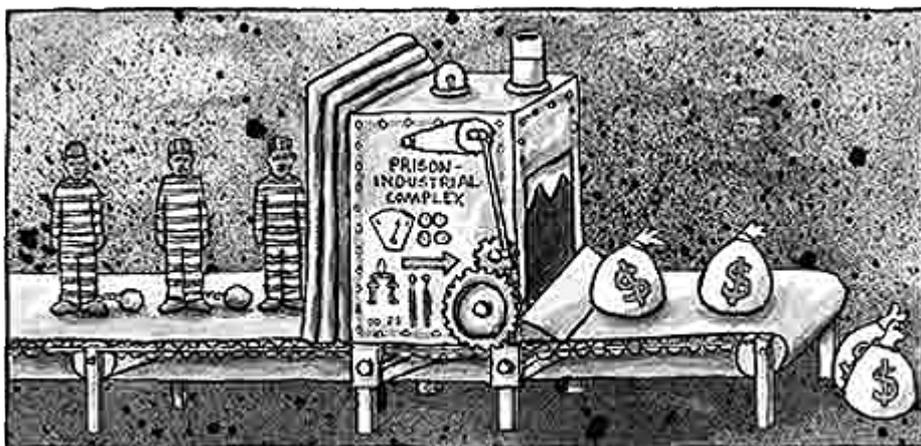
Prisons are becoming big business in four ways. Firstly, state correctional departments are turning their prisons into factories. Secondly, corporations are forming partnerships with prison authorities to provide goods and services for their customers. Thirdly, prisoners are increasingly seen as a captive market (literally) that can be exploited as consumers. Lastly, the prison regime is increasingly being colonised by the corporations, as justice is privatised.

Back to the farm

The industrialisation of the prison system is increasingly common. One example is the California Prison Industry Authority, set up in 1983. A semi-autonomous state agency, the PIA uses inmate labour to manufacture a wide variety of products that are sold to state agencies such as the Department of Corrections (CDC), the Department of Motor Vehicles, state hospitals and California State University.

About 7,000 prisoners, in 23 of California’s 30 prisons, sand and upholster furniture, grind eyeglass lenses, and sew shirts and jeans. Inmate workers butcher beef and make hamburgers at the PIA’s meat processing plants. The PIA’s labour costs are extremely low (obviously) and the PIA is not required to pay holiday pay or provide for industrial injuries, sick leave, health insurance or other benefits. The PIA pays rent to the Department of Corrections for factory and warehouse space at prices well below market rates and the PIA pays no local, state or federal income taxes. State agencies are required by law to buy from the PIA and abuse of this monopoly is endemic.

The PIA claims that inmates learn



PRISONERS

valuable skills that reduce re-offending, while producing valuable products that lower public spending. These arguments are used to justify massive spending on prisons in California, about £5bn a year, or 18% of the state budget (compared to only \$4.4bn spent on California's schools). Even so, audits show that the PIA lost over \$33m up to 1996, overcharged customers by \$12m and did little to reduce re-offending rates.

Prisons are also a leading rural growth industry. With traditional agriculture being pushed aside by agribusiness, many rural American communities are facing hard times. Economically depressed areas are falling over each other to secure a prison facility of their own.

Prison labour is like a pot of gold.

Service at a price

For private business, prison labour is like a pot of gold. No strikes. No union organising. No unemployment insurance or industrial injury payments. No language problem unlike investing abroad. New leviathan prisons are being built with thousands of eerie acres of factories inside the walls. Prisoners do data entry for Chevron, make telephone reservations for TWA, raise hogs, shovel manure, make circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds and lingerie for Victoria's Secret – all at a fraction of the cost of 'free labour'.

Prison industries often directly compete with private industry. Small furniture manufacturers complain they are being driven out of business by prison companies that pay around 25 cents per hour and have the inside track on Government contracts. In one case, US Technologies sold its electronics plant in Austin, Texas, making 150 workers unemployed. Six weeks later, the electronics plant reopened in a nearby prison.

The criminal must pay

Prisoners are both captive workers and captive consumers. The major



telecomms corporations, AT&T and Bell, make big profits out of prisoners. The two million inmates in the US are ideal customers: phone calls are one of their few links to the outside world. Most of their calls must be made collect and they are in no position to switch to long-distance carriers.

A pay phone at a prison can generate as much as \$15,000 a year – about five times the revenue of a typical pay phone on the street. It is estimated that inmate calls generate \$1bn or more in revenues each year. The business is so lucrative that one company, MCI, installed its inmate phone service, Maximum Security, throughout the California prison system at no charge. As part of the deal, it offered the California Department of Corrections a 32% share of all the revenues. MCI Maximum Security and North American Intelcom have both been caught overcharging for calls made by inmates. And prisons are beginning to charge inmates for basic necessities from medical care to toilet paper or to use the law library. Many states are now charging 'room and board': Berks County jail in Pennsylvania charges inmates \$10 a day.

Private money, private justice

Like the military/industrial complex, the prison industrial complex is an interweaving of private business and Government interests. Its public rationale is the fight against crime. Its two-fold purpose is profit and social

control. Fear of crime and the demonisation of criminals serve a similar ideological purpose: to justify the use of tax dollars for the repression and incarceration of a growing percentage of the population. Though it is serial killers and rapists who cause headlines, most of those locked up are poor people who commit non-violent crimes out of economic need. Still, the building and maintenance of prisons is big business and a change of policy would hit profits. Investment houses, construction companies, architects, and support services such as food, medical, transportation and furniture all stand to profit by prison expansion.

Three strikes? Not even one!

These trends have been accelerated by the explosive growth in private prison companies. The rationale for privatisation is that Government monopolies, such as old-fashioned departments of corrections, are wasteful and inefficient, and the private sector, through competition for contracts, can provide much better service at a much lower cost. Like PFI in Britain – inspired by the prison-building programme in America – a private company will either run the prison for a Government agency, or build and operate its own. Private prisons are built and run more cheaply than state prisons but not because the private sector is more efficient: most of the savings come from the use of non-union labour.

Today, at least 27 states make use of private prisons and approximately 90,000 inmates are being held in prisons run for profit. The Correctional Corporation of America, one of the largest private prison owners, already operates internationally, with more than 48 facilities in 11 states, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and Australia. Under contract by Government to run jails and prisons, and paid a fixed sum per prisoner, the profit motive mandates that these firms operate as cheaply as possible.

Correctional officers in private prisons usually earn lower wages than officers employed by state prisons,

while receiving fewer benefits and no pension. Prison owners are also raking in billions by cutting corners. Substandard diets, extreme overcrowding and abuse by poorly-trained personnel have all been routinely documented. It is here that capitalist business principles take over and begin to distort the ugly processes of law-making, arrest, trial and punishment.

Not even the roads are safe

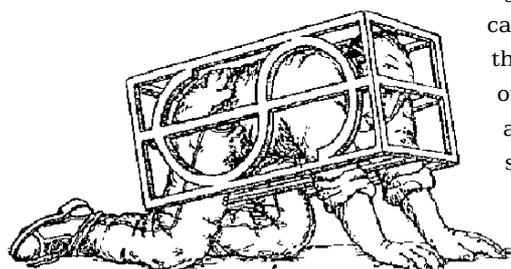
Private companies transport thousands of inmates across the United States every day with minimal oversight. Federal regulations concerning the interstate shipment of cattle are much stricter than those concerning the shipment of prisoners.

The firms save money by employing non-union guards and making multiple pickups and deliveries on each trip. Prisoners may spend as long as a month on the road, visiting dozens of states, sitting for days in the backs of old station wagons and vans, locked up alongside defendants awaiting trial and offenders on their way to prison.

The turnover rate among the transport guards and drivers is high; the pay is relatively low; and training for the job rarely lasts more than a week. Violent criminals are being shipped from state to state in the custody of people ill-equipped to deal with them.

America's first line of defence – against itself

As the Cold War winds down, defence industry giants like Westinghouse are lobbying Washington for their share of the domestic law enforcement market. The corporations are moving into every aspect of law enforcement, often offering bribes and inducements to Government agencies in exchange for lucrative contracts.



Since 1980, spending on corrections at the local, state, and federal levels has increased about fivefold. What was once a niche business for a handful of companies has become a multibillion-dollar industry with its own trade shows and conventions, websites, mail-order catalogues and direct-marketing campaigns.

The prison-industrial complex now includes some of the nation's largest architecture and construction firms, Wall Street investment banks that handle prison bond issues and invest in private prisons, plumbing, catering and health-care companies. As the prison industry has grown, the line between public and private interests has blurred. Prison service officials find lucrative employment with firms that supply the prison industry.

The prison-industrial complex now includes some of the nation's largest firms.

The flight of capital

The anti-globalisation movement has become wise to the fact that capital flows to wherever it can make most profit, often to the hurt of the people who have helped it grow rich and powerful. It rails against sweatshops in Thailand and Indonesia but ignores the internal colonies on its own doorstep.

The American state wages a half-hearted war against drug production in the Third World. Why? Because the financial interests of major corporations – donating millions to right-wing politicians and their campaigns – have a vested interest in the arrest and punishment of millions of Americans of colour for drug use and possession. Public policy has, as so often in America's past, become the plaything of private interests.

Capitalism is continually forced to seek ways to intensify

exploitation. Casualisation and flexibilisation run parallel to each other, whether in the prison-factories of Tennessee or factory-prisons of China, defended by a fearsome system of violent repression and punishment in America and abroad.

Prisoners are fighting back with strikes and union-inspired militancy. But until the dispossessed workers of America can find common cause with the millions of working class people forced to labour as virtual slaves in the rural gulags of the penal system, nothing will change.

For some, poverty is the prison, for others mindless consumption. For the rest, there is always the prison-industrial complex – and 25c an hour.

Subvertisement

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Haven Distribution exists on a shoestring budget and is run voluntarily. It is an essential service for prisoners. If you can afford a donation or a monthly standing order, it would be appreciated (especially as funds are running low).

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The Zazous

A challenge to Nazi-Vichy rule – the French Zazous.

In 1940, the Nazis had occupied France. The Vichy regime, in collaboration with the Nazis and fascist itself in policies and outlook, had an ultra-conservative morality and started to use a whole range of laws against a youth that was restless and disenchanted.

In Paris, young people started meeting in cafés, passing their time mocking the politics of the time. This spontaneous development was a sharp response to the deadening effect on society of the Nazi-Vichy rule. They met in cinemas, in the cellar clubs and at parties arranged at short notice.

These young people, who called themselves *Zazous*, were to be found throughout France, but were most concentrated in Paris. The two most important meeting places of the *Zazous* were the terrace of the Pam Pam café on the Champs Elysees and the Boul'Mich (the Boulevard Saint-Michel near the Sorbonne).

The *Zazous* of the Champs Elysees came from a more middle class background and were older than the *Zazous* of the Latin Quarter. The Champs Elysees *Zazous* were easily recognisable on the terrace of the Pam Pam and took afternoon bike rides in the Bois de Boulogne. In the Latin Quarter, the *Zazous* met in the cellar clubs of Dupont-Latin or the Capoulade.

The male *Zazous* wore extra large jackets, which hung down to their knees and which were fitted out with many pockets and often several half-belts. The amount of material used was a direct comment on Government decrees on the rationing of clothing material. Their trousers were narrow, gathered at the waist, and so were their ties, which were cotton or heavy wool. The shirt collars were high and kept in place by a horizontal pin. They liked thick-soled suede shoes, with white or brightly-coloured socks. Their hairstyles were greased and long.

In fact, after the Government decree of 1942, which authorised the collection of hair from barber-shops to be made into slippers, they grew their hair longer! In a parody of Englishness they carried formal 'Chamberlain' umbrellas, always neatly furled, and never opened in spite of rainy weather.

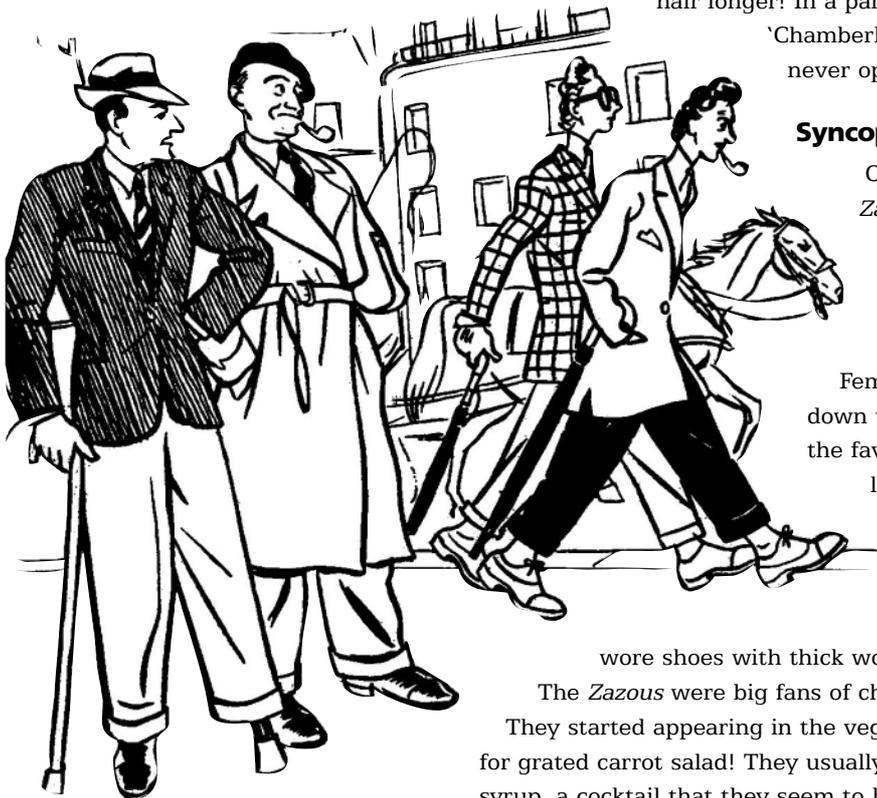
Syncopated

One fascist magazine commented on the male *Zazou*: "Here is the specimen of Ultra Swing 1941: hair hanging down to the neck, teased up into an untidy quiff, little moustache à la Clark Gable... shoes with too-thick soles, syncopated walk."

Female *Zazous* wore their hair in curls falling down to their shoulders, or in braids. Blonde was the favourite colour, and they wore bright red lipstick, as well as sunglasses, also favoured by some male *Zazous*. They wore jackets with extremely wide shoulders and short, pleated skirts. Their stockings were striped or sometimes net, and they

wore shoes with thick wooden soles.

The *Zazous* were big fans of checkered patterns, on jacket, skirt or broly. They started appearing in the vegetarian restaurants and developed a passion for grated carrot salad! They usually drank fruit juice or beer with grenadine syrup, a cocktail that they seem to have invented.



The *Zazous* were directly inspired by jazz and swing music. A healthy, black jazz scene had sprung up in Montmartre in the inter-war years. Black Americans felt freer in Paris than they did back home, and the home-grown jazz scene was greatly reinforced by this emigration.

Manouche Gypsy musicians like Django Reinhardt started playing swinging jazz music in the Paris clubs.

The *Zazous* probably got their name from a line in a song – *Zah Zuh Zah* by the black jazz musician Cab Calloway, famous for his *Minnie the Moocher*. A French crooner popular with the *Zazous*, Johnny Hess, also had a song, *Je suis swing*, in early 1942, in which he sung the lines "Za zou, za zou, za zou, za zou ze". An associate of the *Zazous*, the anarchist singer-songwriter, jazz trumpeter, poet and novelist Boris Vian was also extremely fond of z words in his work! The long drape jacket was also copied from zootsuits worn by the likes of Calloway.

"The *Zazous* were very obviously detested by the Nazis, who on the other side of the Rhine, had since a long time decimated the German cultural avante garde, forbidden jazz and all visible signs of... degenerations of Germanic culture..." (Pierre Seel, who, as a young *Zazou*, was deported to a German concentration camp because of his homosexuality.)

When the yellow star was forced on Jews, non-Jews who objected began to wear yellow stars with 'Buddhist', 'Goy' (Gentile) or 'Victory'. Some *Zazous* took this up, with '*Zazou*' written below the star. When the French Jews were removed from the scene, the Vichy regime and their Nazi masters turned on the *Zazous*.

Vichy had started 'Youth Worksites' in July 1940, in an attempt to indoctrinate French youth. The same year, they set up a Ministry of Youth. They saw the *Zazous* as a rival and dangerous influence on youth. By 1942, Vichy high-ups realised that the national revival that they hoped would be carried out by young people under their guidance was seriously affected

by widespread rejection of the patriotism, work ethic, self-denial, asceticism and masculinity this called for. The *Zazous* were degenerate and dandified and so weren't a lot of these scum obviously Jews?

The witch-hunt begins

In 1940, 78 anti-*Zazou* articles were published in the press, as opposed to nine in 1941 and 38 in 1943. The Vichy papers deplored the moral turpitude and decadence that was affecting French morality. *Zazous* were seen as work-shy, egotistical and Judeo-Gaullist shirkers.

Soon, round-ups began in bars and *Zazous* were beaten on the street. They became Enemy Number One of the fascist youth organisation *Jeunesse populaire française*. "Scalp the *Zazous*!" became their slogan. Squads of young JPF fascists armed with hairclippers attacked *Zazous*. Many were arrested and sent to the countryside to work on the harvest.

At this point the *Zazous* went underground, holing up in their dance halls and basement clubs. With the Liberation of Paris it appears some *Zazous* joined in the armed combat to drive out the Nazis – certainly they had a few scores to settle. But the *Zazous* were suspected by the official Communist resistance of having a "couldn't give a fuck" attitude to the war in general.

The *Zazous* were numbered in the hundreds rather than thousands and were generally between 17 and 20. There were *Zazous* from all classes but with apparently similar outlooks. Working class *Zazous* used theft of cloth and black market activities to get their outfits, sometimes stitching their own clothes. Some of the more bohemian *Zazous* in the Latin Quarter varied the outfit, with sheepskin jackets and multicoloured scarves. It was their ironic and sarcastic comments on the Nazi/Vichy rulers, their dandyism and hedonism, their suspicion of the work ethic and their love of 'decadent' jazz that distinguished them as one of the prototype youth movements questioning capitalist society.

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 written 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!



Though they did not suffer like their contemporaries in Germany, the working class Edelweiss Pirates, some of whom were hanged by the Nazis (see a previous article in *Organise!* for an in-depth article), nevertheless, in a society of widespread complicity and acquiescence, their stand was courageous and trail-blazing.

Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla by Ann Hansen
 ISBN 1-896357-40-7 2002
 AK Press Distribution, 674-A 23rd St,
 Oakland, California 94612-1163
 www.akpress.org
 Reviewed by Brian Burch

No matter what has happened in the last 20 years, the defining moment of my political activist career was the bombing of Litton Industries.

The Litton Industries plant, in northwest Toronto, was where Canadian complicity in the arms race was more publicly revealed. In the factory on City View Drive, Canadian tax dollars were subsidising the production of the guidance system for the American air-launched cruise missile. For years, the Cruise Missile Conversion Project and various local expressions of the Alliance for Non-Violent Action, attempted to end Canadian involvement in the arms race.

In the fall of 1982, there was an upheaval in the resistance to manufacturing the tools of war – a bomb went off at Litton Industries, a bombing that the group Direct Action took responsibility for. The police took this opportunity to go after peace activists. Our homes and offices were raided. People were picked up off the street or out of movie theatres for questioning. False charges were laid to pressure people to name names. It was a fearful and formative time, one that is hard to realise was 20 years ago.

Ann Hansen was one of the members of Direct Action. Her book is a slightly fictionalised account of the history of Direct Action and the political realities of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reading *Direct Action*, one gets a hint of Emma Goldman's *Living My Life*. There is a strong, personal narrative linked to a broader world of movements for positive and compassionate social transformation. Finding out that Ann Hansen had not read *Living My Life* was a surprise. Nonetheless, *Direct Action* is in the tradition of *Living My Life* – an open reflection on personal experiences, living in a revolutionary milieu.

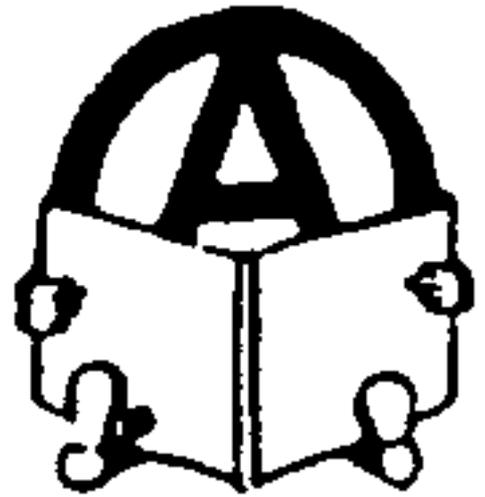
I confess that my first intent was to see if I was mentioned by name; and I was. What struck home the most was the short retelling of being picked up by police, who were driving an unmarked

car. This is, to me, symbolic of one of the less-talked-about realities in the aftermath of the bombing of Litton: the effects on the lives of people unconnected to the bombing. For about two years, there was a strong sense of fear in the lives of a number of activists wondering about what would happen next. Who would have their home raided? Who would face a series of harassing charges? Would one of us be charged because the police need to charge someone?

What is revealed throughout the book is a real militant compassion. Ann Hansen is good at portraying the range of issues that the five participants in *Direct Action* had attempted to address. There was not a sudden leap from a desire for social change to a participation in urban guerrilla warfare. Rather, we share a process that helps to reveal why people who were deeply committed to a just and ecologically-sound world would accept the risks of both their freedom and lives and the lives of others as a step towards their ideals bearing fruit.

Some of the biographical details of Ann Hansen were a surprise. The tapestry of relationships she was a part of was quite complex. Some were intensely emotional, indicating a capacity for love that I think also underlies her own willingness to take major personal risks in order to make life better for others.

While *Direct Action* is a personal statement, it is also an historical document. Twenty years ago, revolution was not merely an advertising concept. Like in the period when the Weather Underground arose, there were massive and public demands for radical social transformation. In Nicaragua and El Salvador, there were massive, popular revolts against US-backed regimes. In Canada, leaders of unions and churches were participating in demonstrations that were definitively anti-capitalist and anti-militarist. There was enthusiasm as victories could be pointed to – such as reproductive freedom – that had been run through mass, non-violent resistance to unjust laws. So, if there were roadblocks to change, was it unreasonable to want to remove the roadblocks? If immediate harm was going to occur – such as building weapons for the US military or



destroying the ecosystem or exploiting women's sexuality – was it unreasonable for people to try to sabotage the actual places where harm was occurring?

Direct Action looks at this reality and helps to question it. In the light of a strong anti-globalisation movement and the US response to the events of September 11th, I think that this is an essential book to read and reflect upon. We are in a world where the police have recently been given extreme powers to crack down on dissent. If nothing else, this book will encourage serious thought about how to effectively resist, while considering the consequences of resistance.

Anarchist Communist Editions

Available from c/o 84b
 Whitechapel High Street, E1 7QX.

Anarchism – As We See It. 60p plus SAE.

Aspects of Anarchism. £1 inc. postage.

**Manifesto of Libertarian
Communism** by Georges Fontenis.
 60p plus SAE.

**Role of the Revolutionary
Organisation.** 60p plus SAE.

Basic Bakunin. New reprint,
 £1 including postage.

**The Anarchist Movement in
Japan.** £1.80 ₤ SAE.

**Beyond Resistance. A
Revolutionary Manifesto for the
Millennium.** £2 plus SAE.

Spontaneity or organisation

Dear *Organise!*

Comrades, *Organise!* seems to accuse 'Trot' and Marxist organisations of being 'elitist' and 'hierarchical' in character. Against the supposed idea that power structures emerge out of ideology, you counter spontaneity. But spontaneity seems to largely consist of waiting for as large a section of the class to move and merely running alongside the movement without corrupting it with mere 'theory' and 'perspectives', treating each strike or demonstration in glorious isolation, and above all, doing nothing to sully the reformist illusions of those taking part.

You are in the same danger as García Lorca, who shed his one-time Marxism and his pretence at being a revolutionary to traipse behind the Argentine bourgeoisie, just as workers were engaging in their fiercest battles. Then, after a general strike that he and the union bureaucrats helped betray, he blamed the workers for failing 'spontaneously' to call for or build workers' councils as organs of power. But then, 'spontaneist' opportunists always end up blaming the workers.

The loop in which CND has got itself so profoundly stuck rests on the illusion that 'our' rulers can be peaceably persuaded to part with their massive stockpiles of armaments. You have eco-reformists demonstrating against climate-change and lobbying for traffic reduction. Even this seems too 'dogmatic' and 'political' for some levels of 'spontaneity' such as the 'non-sectarian', 'rank-and-file' call to 'Make the union leaders act!' But the bureaucrats act according to their own agenda.

We want to prevent redundancies with a sliding wage scale with a heavily reduced hours with no loss of pay, but these demands run along with plant occupation, and with genuine democratic workers' control to make sure that happens, re-tooling production away from munitions and yet more cars to items more compatible with the kind of world we want to build. The bureaucrats want to rope us into a chauvinist and classless alliance with 'our' patriotic bosses, in the name of 'competitiveness', to defend 'our' industries and probably insisting on state subsidies to cover the bosses' losses while freeing them from

'inconvenient' environmental regulations or workers' rights.

It is one matter if the ANL were to make a revolutionary turn in marking its 'independence' from the SWP, but the 'Don't Vote Nazi!' slogan in the Isle of Dogs election was worse than useless in that it threw the residents back on the establishment parties which have so clearly failed them and it would seem too 'dogmatic', according to the writers of *Organise!*, to insist on a revolutionary alternative on the ground.

While the residents of Asian descent in Brick Lane most needed defence and support it was when the ANL was having its bean feast in Brixton.

The way I heard it, the Bakunin/Marx split was not about the role of the state but that Bakunin thought the 'spontaneous' form of struggle to be self-sufficient, without the need to expose the masses to political involvement. The 'Trots' seem fairly consistent but the 'anarchists' seem divided as to whether the working-class in the metropolitan countries would act in their own liberation or wait for the heartlands of capital to be encircled by third-world and peasant revolt.

Some rare individuals under specific circumstances may spontaneously ignite like a candle and burn to ashes, while leaving the room where this happens largely untouched, and a spontaneous outburst of outrage may ignite a riot which burns out as soon, but never a revolution which needs ruthless strategy, planning and a lot of bloody hard work. But once workers are consciously aware of their real collective strength then they are unstoppable.

John Johnson

Editors reply. John's description of working class spontaneity would indeed be a recipe for back and doing nothing or allowing well-organised bureaucracies (including 'left' and 'revolutionary' parties) to set the agenda, if it truly represented our thoughts on the issue. As revolutionaries, we are both involved in daily struggle and putting forward ideas about how struggle can be taken forward. Our approach, then, is radically different to either the stand-around-waiting or futile-explosion role he paints for us. Perhaps these quotes from *The Role of The Revolutionary Organisation*,



one of our older, but still popular, works will explain our position:

"The concept of working class spontaneity has been distorted and misunderstood for too long. We do not take the 'unhistorical' attitude that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no memory of or connection with previous struggles and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years to clarify and co-ordinate struggles in the working class greatly helps the revolutionary process. Working class spontaneity is the ability of that class to take direct action on its own behalf and to develop new forms of struggle and organisation. This happens in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have formed committees and councils independent of 'vanguards'.... The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of and sometimes against the urgings of the revolutionary elite. The experiences of working class life constantly lead to ideas and actions which question the established order. At the same time, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of working class solidarity through its control of the media and education and by perpetuating racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness. The working class is neither an amorphous mass nor, at the moment, solid and united, conscious of itself and its power. The anarchist revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that the only possible working class revolution is one where people use mass action to smash the apparatus of the ruling class (the police, courts,

bureaucracy etc) and the class itself.

Any other revolution leads only to the formation of a new ruling class.”

Members of the Anarchist Federation are a part of the working class which is consciously involved in struggle and willing to explore the lessons of history and of current political struggle with workers in our common struggle for freedom. We are not 'above' the workers, nor 'in advance' of the working class. We shape the struggle by being involved in it, but are also shaped by the ideas and experiences of other people. Revolution is not the 'gift' of the revolutionary party to the people. It is the transformation of social and economic relations by the people themselves.

Dear Organise!

The nit-picking of your correspondent, Sebastian Melmoth (Organise! #58) over the revolutionary contributions of Phoolan Devi, Alfredo Bonnano and Murray Bookchin is sadly typical of many armchair 'anarchist' critics of the age.

Sure, none of the above-mentioned trio are/were anarchist 'saints', but at least they got up off their arses and, in two cases, challenged the system and the status quo head on; actions which cost Phoolan Devi her life and Bonnano long years of imprisonment. And I would somehow hazard a guess that through six decades of writing in opposition to

capitalism from a libertarian perspective, Murray Bookchin has introduced more people to anarchism than has the 'right-on' whinging of those quick to draw attention to his failings.

Small wonder 'revolutionary anarchism' makes only stunted progress, when we are encouraged only to acknowledge the so-called purists, the safely dead and a mythical, romanticised entity whose continuing inertia is constantly blocking the way to evolve.

For Revolutionary Anarchism, Frankie Dee.

Dear Organise!

Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) is Europe's largest contract animal testing laboratory. This means that they will effectively test anything for anybody – agrochemicals, plastics, food colourings...

The campaign against HLS started in 1997, when a documentary was screened showing, among other things, incredible amounts of animal cruelty. Since then, customers, shareholders and suppliers of HLS have systematically been targeted with an above-ground campaign including among other tactics: office occupations, banner drops, lock-ons.

As well as this, the ALF has been carrying out underground activities, such as liberating animals from suppliers, sinking the private yacht of a Bank of New York director and causing untold economic damage to anyone involved in HLS. To date, scores of customers and shareholders have deserted the sinking ship that is HLS.

The campaign against HLS focuses largely on customers and shareholders etc, such as Shell, Monsanto, Aventis, Glaxo SmithKline and other multinational pharmaceutical companies and banks who are also responsible for human and ecological genocide. Some of these customers are known to have had products tested on prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. Dow, one of HLS's customers produces Agent Orange, the defoliant used in Vietnam which is still causing birth defects in Vietnamese children.

The idea of anarchy (at least as far as I see it) is freedom and liberty. Does it matter if an individual is black, white, female, male, has skin, feathers or fur? As long as a living individual can feel

pain, they do not deserve to have it needlessly inflicted. To say we believe in equality and justice for all, but we will still treat animals like shit, seems very strange indeed; not a society that I am willing to be part of.

We are all aware of the extent to which multinationals will lie to keep the money flowing. This does not stop with animal testing. Most major medical advances are NOT a result of animal testing. Penicillin was discovered by chance when spores of Penicillium Notatum floated in through Fleming's window and started destroying cell tissue in an unwashed petri dish. Anaesthesia was discovered by a bunch of doctors who took to inhaling different gasses after dinner.

Animal testing, on the other hand, has conclusively proved that lemon juice is lethal, asbestos is safe and that Thalidomide is a wonder drug! You can prove anything you want depending on which animal you choose to use. These results are simply not safe to be applied to humans. Proctor and Gamble tested an artificial musk on rats, all of which died. The product was put on the market anyway with the reassurance that the results were irrelevant, as rats are not the same as humans!

Of course, from the workers angle, there will be people who are laid off when HLS closes. But these are the same type of people who would have lost their jobs when Nazi death camps were destroyed. Does a 'normal' person really want to cut apart living animals? Undercover footage has shown workers at Huntingdon Life Sciences punching beagle puppies in the face, taunting animals as they are killed, and ripping open a live monkey without anaesthetic. These are not the kind of people who deserve support and job security.

In a fair world, we would be looking for safe medicines which have the purpose of saving lives, not taking them. This is the aim of those fighting against HLS. We are not against medicine, we are against animal abuse, torture and murder.

For more information on how to help close down HLS, please contact Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, SHAC, PO Box 381, Cheltenham, Glos, GL50 1YN. Tel: 0845 4580630. Email: info@shac.net web: www.shac.net

Ito Noe

Continued from back page

Ito was well aware of the consequences of being an anarchist in Japan at that time. In 1911, Kotoku Shusui, the leading woman anarchist, Kanno Suga, and ten other anarchists were framed on flimsy charges of attempting to kill the Emperor and subsequently executed.

In his autobiography, Bertrand Russell recounts how he met Ito Noe in Japan in 1921. "She was young and beautiful... Dora [Bertrand Russell's wife] said to her: "Are you not afraid that the authorities will do something to you?" She drew her hand across her throat, and said, "I know they will sooner or later".

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.
Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505 Belfast,
BT12 6BQ.

Revolutionary portraits

Ito Noe

Ito Noe was a courageous Japanese woman who broke with her social conditioning and became a champion of both women's liberation and anarchism.

Ito was born in 1895, to a family of landed aristocracy, on the southern island of Kyushu. After graduating from Ueno Girls High School, she was forced against her will into an arranged marriage in her native village. She soon ran away to Tokyo.

In Tokyo, women had been developing progressive ideas since the 1870s. Hiratsuka Raicho founded the *Seitoshu* (Blue Stocking Society) and brought out its magazine *Seito* (Blue Stocking) which gave space to women to develop their literary, aesthetic and political capabilities. Ito joined this group in 1913, at the age of 18, and became one of its editors from 1915 to 1916. Skilled in several languages, including English, she translated articles by the anarchist, Emma Goldman, on the situation of women.

Ito later married the writer Tsuji Jun (1884-1944), who had taught her at school in 1912, but left him to have a passionate love affair with the charismatic anarchist firebrand Osugi Sakae in 1916.

Free love

Ito and Osugi believed in the concepts of free love. Osugi at this time was conducting an affair with the leading woman anarchist, Ichiko Kamachiko. Unfortunately, the theoretical concepts of free love collided with human jealousy and Kamachika attacked Osugi with a knife and severely wounded him. The mass media used this incident to attack Ito, Osugi and Kamachika for their 'immorality' and the anarchist movement in general. This caused problems in the anarchist group in which Ito and Osugi were involved and many comrades split with them.



Ito worked with Osugi in promoting the anarchist movement, as well as developing her ideas on women's liberation. She helped found the socialist women's group *Sekirankai* in 1921. She produced over 80 articles for different publications, as well as translating the work of European anarchists like Kropotkin and Goldman. In addition, she produced several autobiographical novels, which charted her life from adolescence, through breaking with tradition, to reaching her emancipated and anarchist outlook. They included *Zatsuon* (Noises) in 1916 at the age of 21, and *Tenki* (Turning Point) in 1918. In 1919, with Osugi, Wada Kyutaro and Kondo Kenji, she brought out the first *Rodo Undo* (Labour Movement) magazine, which sought to link anarchism to the industrial working class and many branches of an organisation with the same name were set up.

Earthquake

Two years later, in September 1923, shortly after the birth of her seventh child, the Great Kanto Earthquake hit Japan.

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.

As often happens in the aftermath of an earthquake, many fires broke out and more people were killed by these than by the quake. A total of 100,000 died and as many as two million were left homeless.

Rumours began to spread, encouraged by the authorities, that various 'unpopular' groups were responsible for starting fires and causing other mischief to aggravate the situation. As a result, mobs attacked many immigrant Korean and Chinese workers, and the police used the opportunity to murder anarchist and socialist militants. Thousands were killed. Among them were ten socialists in Kameido in Tokyo, as well as Ito Noe, Sakae Osugi and his six-year old nephew, Tachebana Munekazu. They were taken into custody on 16 September and all were beaten and strangled in the cells of the dreaded Kempei-tai secret police. Osugi had been No 1 on their death list for a long time.

Several days later, the bodies were found in a well, where they had been left to decompose. At the trial which followed the discovery of the murderer, a secret policeman, Amakasu Masahiko, on orders from Emperor Hirohito, was given just ten years' gaol. Released by personal order of Hirohito, four years later, and assigned to 'special duties' in Manchuria, he finally committed suicide in 1945, before his crimes could be avenged by the many anarchists after his blood.

Earlier in 1924, Wada Kyutaro, a comrade of Ito and Osugi, had attempted to kill Fukuda Masataro, the general in charge of the military district where they had been murdered, who had passed on orders from Hirohito to the secret policeman.

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