

Black Flag

Price £3.00

Issue 230

Late 2009

An end to the safety net

Labour is stripping away the last of Britain's social wage — is there anything left to stop them?

Front page pictures:
Garry Knight,
Photos8.com,
Libertinus
Yomango,

Also inside
this issue...



Theory:
After the
revolution,
what next?

OAXACA
RESISTE

Reportage:
How Oaxaca
has learned
to wage war

Editorial

Welcome to issue 230 of Black Flag, the fifth published by the current Editorial Collective.

Since our re-launch in October 2007 feedback has generally tended to be positive. Black Flag continues to be published twice a year, and we are still aiming to become quarterly.

However, this is easier said than done as we are a small group.

So at this juncture, we make our usual appeal for articles, more bodies to get physically involved, and yes, financial donations would be more than welcome!

This issue also coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Anarchist Bookfair – arguably the longest running and largest in the world? It is certainly the biggest date in the UK anarchist calendar.

To celebrate the event we have included an article written by organisers past and present, which it is hoped will form the kernel of a general history of the event from its beginnings in the Autonomy Club.

Well done and thank you to all those who have made this event possible over the years, we all have many fond memories.

Other articles include an analysis of the 2008/09 Welfare Reform Bill; Part two of a critique of the ideology and legacy of 'New Labour'; Perspectives on Anarchist Economics; Anarchist issues around migration; Neoliberalism and class struggle; Eye witness accounts of events in Oaxaca and a new look at Friedrich Nietzsche; plus much more to wet the appetite of the discerning reader.

We would also like to thank wholeheartedly the groups and individuals who made this issue possible with their contributions.

Keeping up with our aim to be the home of wider debate in the movement, we have contributions from the Anarchist Federation, Brighton Solidarity Federation, Manchester No Borders and numerous individuals. Keep up the good work comrades.

In the editorial note of the last issue we predicted a "summer of rage" – in many respects, like the weather, it turned out to be a bit of a damp squib. Let us now look forward to a "winter of discontent"!



Walk this way: The Black Flag ladybird finds it can be hard going to balance trying to organise while keeping yourself safe – but it's worth it. Picture: Anya Brennan.

Web: asi.zsp.net.pl



Free the Belgrade Six

Ratibor Trivunac, Tadej Kurepa, Ivan Vulovi, Sanja Đoki, Ivan Savi and Nikola Mitrovi.

The Belgrade Six were arrested under suspicion being connected with Black Elijah, which took responsibility for a molotov attack on the Greek embassy in Belgrade. They are part of ASI, a group connected to the IWA international, of which Ratibor (pictured centre as part of a satirical anti-religious piece) is general secretary.

Content

- **Cover story:** Examining the new welfare bill and why its regressive politics must be fought Page 4
- **Theory:** Exploring the roots of anarchist economics Page 7
- **Overview:** The history and present of the anarchist bookfair, by one of the founders of the event Page 9
- **Breathing Utopia:** Our new series on how society's essential functions might work after a revolution, starting with journalism Page 12
- **In Focus:** Part two of Tom Gaynor's look at the ideology and legacy of New Labour Page 14
- **Theory:** Examining neoliberalism Page 16
- **Debate:** Nicholas Evans argues the case for a new kind of Wikipedia Page 18
- **Reportage:** The secrets of Oaxaca Page 20
- **Theory:** Was Nietzsche an anarchist? Page 24
- **Report:** The Anarchist Conference 2009 and moves towards another in 2010 Page 26
- **Debate:** Manchester No Borders on the need for solidarity with Calais migrants Page 27
- **Biography:** The story of Ethel MacDonald Page 28
- **Radical Reprint:** Ethel and the Civil War Page 30
- **Reviews:**
Ethel MacDonald: An anarchist's story Page 32
Black Flame: The class politics of anarchism and syndicalism Page 33
The Battle for Spain: 1936-1939 Page 34
The resistable rise of Benito Mussolini Page 36
- **Reviews column:** Hob's Choice Page 38

Ethos

Black Flag is for a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation – against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

The Black Flag has been a worldwide symbol for anarchism since the 1880s. It is at base a representative of the negation of all oppressive structures.

About

Contributors/excerpts:

Anarchist Federation
Iain McKay
Malcolm
Tony Wood
Rob Ray
Tom Gaynor
Brighton Solidarity Federation
Nicholas Evans
Joshua Neuhouser
Luke Hawksbee
Manchester No Borders
Ade Dimmick
Ethel MacDonald
Mal Function

Layout/design

Rob Ray

Printing

Clydeside Press,
Scotland
☎ 0141-552 5519

Contact/Subs

✉ blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk
📍 Black Flag
BM Hurricane,
London,
WC1N 3XX

Bulk Orders from AK Press

✉ AK Press (UK)
PO Box 12766
Edinburgh
EH8

☎ 0131 555 5165

✉ AK Press (USA)
PO Box 40862
San Francisco CA

☎ 94140-0682
✉ ak@akpress.org

Is the war of work

Cover Story: With its new welfare bill, New Labour is completing a 30-year campaign against the dispossessed

The Welfare Reform Bill of 2008-9 is poised to complete the destruction of welfare benefits as a social wage, a process that began 30 years ago and reached a milestone with the introduction of Job Seekers' Allowance in 1996, just before Labour took over from the Conservatives.

This article traces the path towards workfare and wholesale privatisation of welfare in Britain that successive governments have forced us down.

It also describes the forms of struggle that arose in the 1990s and examines the dilemmas faced by activists working in this arena today.

In 1997 the Conservative Party's Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) and pilot workfare (work-for-benefits) scheme, Project Work, became part of Labour's New Deal. A change in government made little difference to the attack on benefits.

The Department of Social Security became the Department of Work and Pensions, a change of name that signifies the ideological shift from the idea of a social wage.

Welfare money is no longer an insurance or substitute for not having a job. Instead, it is to be given only if you can prove you are 'actively seeking work' whatever the state of the job market.

The amount of money received by claimants under JSA has halved from the 21% of average wages that it was in 1979 to 10.5% today. This is because the benefits level is no longer linked to average wages but instead to a prices index.

Due to the state of the economy, unemployment jumped by 220,000 in the three months up to June 2009 to 2.435 million, its highest level since 1995.

So called 'youth unemployment' (under-25s) is at a 16-year high while the number of people out of work for longer than a year is the highest for 11 years.

Even this figure is based on numbers of recorded claimants, which distorts the true figures since so many people are denied benefits or can't be bothered to jump through the hoops to get them.

Recent changes to the benefits system have included forcing lone parents with young children to work and the scrapping of Incapacity Benefit in favour of an Employment and Support Allowance alongside more systematic medical examinations.

Introduction of the Flexible New Deal, which is workfare by any other name, is due in October this year. The government wants to get 70% of lone parents into paid work by 2010 and one million of the 2.7m people on currently on incapacity benefits on to Jobseekers or into work, most likely



the former.

Attacks on the unemployed in the 1980s and 90s followed massive job cuts in many 'traditional' industries. Unemployment figures were massaged by the Tories by letting a lot of people go on the sick rather than appear as regular claimants.

This time, as unemployment has reached record levels again, we are facing a widespread attack on public sector workers through creeping privatisation, introduction of performance-related-pay schemes, and a looming pensions crisis.

Younger people continue to suffer from no longer being allowed to get unemployment money if aged 16 or 17, constant hassle at the Job Centre if you are older, and from the shift from student grants to loans and fees, forcing them into low-paid jobs.

As this process has gone on, the justifications have become more obviously ideological.

When the DWP launched its Pathways to Work initiative in 2003, it began a systematic move to move large numbers of Incapacity Benefit claimants off benefits.

Flexible New Deal will foist workfare on many more claimants following their dabbling with various pilot schemes. The government also plans to raise the education participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015 with threats of fines and community service for failure to comply.

With the Welfare Reform Bill currently in the Committee stage in the house of Lords at the time of writing, it won't be long before the latest round of attacks are consolidated and fresh ones are introduced.

In addition, a much smaller set of private welfare contractors have taken over from the mishmash of third-sector organisations that took part in the early workfare pilots of the 1990s.

These companies include names like Serco, Seetec, TNG, A4E, Work Directions and Remploy and a host of smaller subcontractors.

Benefit Fraud

However, it's turned out that the privatisation of Job Centre Plus and associated schemes

lost at long last?

to force people off the dole or disability benefits has become a bit painful for some of the companies.

In particular the department of Work and Pensions began to investigate the largest private New Deal provider Action for Employment (A4E) for fraud in May 2008.

Deal, hoping to become a sub-contractor instead.

In February 2008, training provider Instant Muscle went into administration leaving staff unpaid and unemployed trainees turned away from the doorsteps of their 'motivational training centres'.

people off ESA and on to Jobseekers is of course very strong, seeing as the government is intent on saving on its benefits bill.

Incapacity benefits claimants are therefore being put through a terrible ordeal, with many suffering extreme stress and some breaking down crying in waiting rooms prior to their examination.

There are now a vast number of appeals against denial of ESA, causing even more stress and upset for those concerned, something that we have already seen in the asylum system, where many asylum claims are subsequently upheld on appeal.

Direct Action

Action taken by the Groundswell anti-JSA network of claimants groups, supported by many anarchists in the late 1990s, was varied, imaginative and often very angry.

The dozen or more groups in the network included Nottingham Campaign Against the Job Seekers' Allowance, Oxford Claimants' Action, Merton Unemployed Centre and a good number of London-based Claimants' Unions and local groups against the JSA.

Job Centres were invaded, voluntary sector organisations were occupied and charity shops were picketed. Leaflets were handed out to claimants and job centre workers alike explaining entitlements and appealing for solidarity against implementation of JSA.

Bristol Claimants reported action taken against the Conservative Party's Project Work welfare pilots that included musicians playing inside the Job Centre.

Job Centre and Job Club windows got smashed. Deer fence and dry stone walls built by claimants forced on to the Environmental Task Force option of the New Deal were destroyed.

Stencilled slogans on windows of charity shops using Project Work stated 'THIS CHARITY USES SLAVE LABOUR.', in the knowledge that specific charities had signed up to use Project Work labour in shops whilst maintaining the illusion that they were run entirely by volunteers. In Brighton active opposition led to six organisations withdrawing from Project Work.

A controversial area for activists in Groundswell was the role of Job Centre workers who were suffering from a pay-squeeze themselves but were on the front-line of imposing the benefits regime changes on claimants.

The use of 'Job Club' (forcing you to apply for shit jobs every week under threat of getting benefits cut) and the various types of compulsory work-for-dole schemes in the New Deal meant that the harassment experienced by claimants was on the increase.

Benefits workers were being challenged to fight for claimants as well as themselves,



Recruiters in Hull had filled in, and some cases put false signatures on, "confirmation of employment" forms which are supposed to be filled by companies who agree to take on workers. Other recruitment companies were also under investigation.

A4E also conspired with a recruitment agency to bend the definition whereby New Deal providers can only claim a 'job outcome' if the job is intended to last for 13 weeks or more and is 16 or more hours per week. Many so-called job placements don't fall into this category.

This has become public knowledge to the extent that in June work and pensions secretary Yvette Cooper said she could cancel multimillion-pound contracts if widespread fraud was uncovered.

A4E, set up by media friendly entrepreneur Emma Harrison in 1991, recently quoted a turnover of £145m claiming to have helped 19,725 people into work.

Amongst the smaller providers YMCA Training also got themselves into trouble over its operation in East of England and has now opted not to bid for Flexible New

Medical assessment

Another large company involved with implementing welfare reform is ATOS Origin group who took over computer company SchlumbergerSEMA in 2003, and in so doing acquired the web-based 'Evidence Based Medicine' software Logic Integrated Medical Assessment (LIMA).

They perform the new Work Capability Assessment and other medical examinations across the UK. In response to a recent question in Parliament it was revealed that ATOS took over £80m from the DWP in one year from March 2008 to February 2009 for its services.

However questions are now being asked about the implementation of LIMA which allows ATOS employed medics to score claimants on interview questions and visual assessment. Because scoring is biased towards what a claimant can apparently do during the interview, it cannot account for illnesses where there are good days and bad days.

The incentive for the assessors to get



and understand claimants' unease over the CPSA union backing a call for better security screens in Job Centres.

Some groups in Groundswell supported and copied the "Three Strikes and You're Out" idea initiated by Edinburgh Claimants, which was a parody of the American approach to petty criminal offenders where you'd go straight to jail after three offences.

Although interpreted as anti-worker by much of the left, Three Strikes was designed only to confront managers responsible for implementing JSA and "over-zealous" staff who were individually known to be harassing claimants.

Three Strikes was carried out by sending a letter demanding they desist or face further letters with the final threat of having their photo appear in the street. Other groups were uncomfortable with the idea and the tactic remained controversial.

The TUC-backed Jobs Not JSA campaign in particular absolutely hated it, but the tactic did manage to oust some of the worse 'little Hitlers' from some Job Centres and raise the profile of claimants' opposition

Dilemmas

These developments are evidence of a renewal of claimants' group activity that will surely inspire others. However, there may be a mismatch between what local campaigns are saying might be achieved by direct action and what the experienced activists in them think can be gained in reality.

ECAP and LCAP still find themselves helping people individually through conventional casework, just as No Borders activists spend time and effort getting asylum seekers out of detention. More self-organisation is the aim, but is difficult to achieve in practice.

And politically, these campaigns can't really 'win' in the sense of stopping New Deal developments by direct action. There is nothing the unemployed can withdraw or strike against so they can't exert pressure on the state in that way.

The state still holds most of the cards and appears to have the ideological will to destroy the concept of the social wage. Even if a few providers get 'outed' as the corrupt

other, they are in a position to identify struggles that can be won more easily, such as community resistance, workplace occupations etc. – action that has to be collective or it doesn't work at all.

CAP activists need to be clear to themselves that direct action case work is not all that different to what has gone before and so won't change anything really significant in itself.

There is another potential barrier to the growth of a fightback. In the 1990s unemployed activists were being forced into work or training for pretty much the first time by the implementation of JSA and the New Deal.

Quite a few comrades got themselves into further or higher education, often as mature students, before student fees kicked in and made this a less affordable option. Others learnt IT skills that were useful for temping. A bit of collective knowledge helped you avoid the worst of the New Deal excesses.

In contrast many of today's activists have grown up with the constant hassle meted out by the New Deal. Some have found ways to survive in spite of this, signing off and squatting, living on their wits and taking bits of work when they arise to stave off being put on a 13-week motivational course by the likes of A4E.

But even if they thought it desirable, these alternatives to buckling under are not easily accessed by everyone. And even if some employed activists are supporting workplace occupations and other workers struggles, this activism is not about their own circumstances and often not local either.

The same is undoubtedly true for those who have jobs but who don't spend most of their time on workplace activism, but it does seem that few if any unemployed activists are engaging in the arena of their economic situations.

It will be hard to create a sustainable culture of resistance if we cannot build, through long-term solidarity and collective action and an insistence on self-organisation, confidence in our local working class communities.

In conclusion, whilst there are encouraging signs of new claimants' groups forming and a host of new websites and blogs, it's clear we are still very much on the defensive, using methods that are probably no more effective than those used when we didn't stop the introduction of JSA.

Class antagonisms between the unemployed and stressed public sector workers who are being asked to do the government's bidding still look unresolvable, and the handing over of welfare provision and medical examination to the private sector means that there is even less chance of solidarity arising.

But the fight goes on, for when there are livelihoods at stake it's not an option to just give up and go home.

■ For further reading on this topic, go to www.afed.org.uk/nottingham/claimants.

A Britain-wide 'No to Welfare Abolition' meeting is also being considered.



CAP groups: The London Coalition Against Poverty takes on direct action casework.

directly inside Job Centres amongst those who were cutting peoples benefits off with impunity.

Few of the original claimants' action groups have survived from the Groundswell days, although Edinburgh Claimants have remained admirably consistent.

Some activists have found new inspiration from the Canadian Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) approach to 'direct action casework', with LCAP launched in London and ECAP in Edinburgh.

The CAPs combine increasing awareness of benefits entitlement and claimants' confidence with direct action at Job Centres to highlight the effect of benefits regime changes and the role of providers like A4E. LCAP are making links with some of the old Groundswell affiliates like Newham Claimants Union.

New and renewed initiatives are emerging from anarchist inspired community groups and trade union sources. Haringey Solidarity Group is in the process of reforming a claimants group while a number of new blogs are also being run.

scum they are, more will just step up to take their place. It's a growth industry and one that the Tories support even more than Labour. Unemployment activists will surely know this.

But even if we are honest and accept that winning outright is impossible there is one very important point to the existence of CAPs and other claimants groups who are prepared to take direct action. Just as with blogging and talking to people we encounter on training courses aimed at 'dolescum' they can help create the atmosphere to:

1. Create solidarities and produce collective knowledge, working class people getting together to learn what rights we have and what strategies work.
2. Demonstrate the practical advantages of mutual aid.
3. Widen participation in struggle because some of the people helped will in turn get involved in helping other people.
4. Foster a generalisation of struggle since CAPs don't only focus on benefits and do engage with wider struggles.

Once people are in touch with each



Theory: The roots of anarchist economics

MONEY IS NOT GOING TO HELP YOU NOW

This article is based on a talk give at the Radical Routes Conference "Practical Economics: radical alternatives to a failed economic system" on the 23rd May. Radical Routes is a network of radical housing co-operatives.

Anarchism aims for associated labour, free labour in other words – the situation where those who do the work manage it. In the longer term, the aim is for abolition of work (work and play becoming the same thing).

We do not abstractly compare capitalism to a better society, rather we see the structures of new world being created in struggle within, but against, capitalism. Thus the assemblies and committees created to conduct a strike are seen as the workplace organisations which will organise production in a free society.

Different schools of anarchism

There are generally three different schools of anarchism: Mutualism, Collectivism and Communism. Anarcho-syndicalism (revolutionary anarchist unions) is more a tactic than a goal and so its adherents aim for one of these three (usually anarcho-communism).

In practice different areas will experiment in different schemes depending on what people desire and the objective circumstances they face. Free experimentation is a basic libertarian principle.

While these three schools differ on certain

issues, they share some key principles. In fact, if someone claims something as "anarchism" and it rejects any one of these then we can safely say it is not anarchism at all.

The first principle is possession, not private property. Use rights replace property rights in a free society. This automatically implies an egalitarian distribution of wealth.

The second is socialisation. This means free access to workplaces and land, so the end of landlords and bosses.

The third is voluntary association, in other words the self-management of production by those who do it. While the name of these associations vary (co-operatives, syndicates, collectives are just three of them), the principle is the same: one person, one vote.

The last key principle is free federation. This is based on free association, which is essential for any dynamic economy, and so horizontal links between producers as well as federations for co-ordination of joint interests. It would be rooted in decentralisation. It would be organised from the bottom-up, by means of mandated and recallable delegates.

Bakunin summarised this kind of economy well when he stated that the "land belongs to only those who cultivate it with their own hands; to the agricultural communes... the tools of production belong to the workers; to the workers' associations."

The rationale for decision making by these self-managed workplaces would be as different from capitalism as their structure.

Critique of Property

To understand anarchist visions of a free economy, you need to understand the anarchist critique of capitalism. One of the earliest anarchist thinkers, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, proclaimed that "property is theft".

By this he meant two things. First, that landlords charged tenants for access to the means of life.

Thus rent is exploitative. Second, that wage labour results in exploitation. Workers are expected to produce more than their wages.

"Whoever labours becomes a proprietor... of the value his creates, and by which the master alone profits."

This feeds into Proudhon's "property is despotism", that it produces hierarchical social relationships and this authority structure allows them to boss workers around, ensuring that they are exploited.

So to remove this, use rights replace such property rights. Personal possession remains only in the things you use. To quote the anarchist writer and activist Alexander Berkman, anarchism: "abolishes private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and with it goes capitalistic business."

"Thus, your watch is your own, but the watch factory belongs to the people. Land,



machinery, and all other public utilities will be collective property, neither to be bought nor sold.

"Actual use will be considered the only title – not to ownership but to possession. The organisation of the coal miners, for example, will be in charge of the coal mines, not as owners but as the operating agency."

Socialisation

While not all anarchists have used the term "socialisation", the fact this is the necessary foundation for a free society and the concept is at the base of anarchism.

This is because it ensures universal self-management – democratic industries – by allowing free access to the means of production.

This has been an anarchist position as long as anarchism has been called anarchism.

As economist David Ellerman explains, the democratic workplace "is a social community... The ultimate governance rights are assigned as personal rights."

Self-management

Socialisation logically implies that there would be no labour market, simply people



Community support: Zanon Ceramics, now renamed FasinPat, was taken over when its boss shut the plant. The co-op which emerged to run it has recently won legal ownership of the site.

looking for associations to join and association looking for associates. Wage-labour would be a thing of the past and replaced by self-management.

This is sometimes termed "workers' control" and the turning of workplaces into "little republics of workers."

This would be based on one member, one vote (and so egalitarian structures and results), with administrative staff elected and recallable, the integration of manual and intellectual work; and division of work rather than division of labour.

To Proudhon, this suggested free access, with "every individual employed in the association" having "an undivided share in the property of the company" and has "a right to fill any position" as "all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members."

While these principles underlie all schools of anarchism, there are differences between them.

Mutualism

The first school of anarchism was mutualism, most famously associated with Proudhon.

This system had markets. This does not imply capitalism, as markets are not what define that system. Markets pre-date it by thousands of years. What makes capitalism unique is that it has the production of commodities and wage labour. Mutualism is based on producing commodities but with wage labour replaced by self-employment and co-operatives. This implies that distribution is by work done, by deed rather than need.

As well as co-operatives, the other key idea of mutualism is free credit. A People's Bank would be organised and would charge interest rates covering costs (near 0%). This would allow workers to create their own means of production.

Lastly, there is the Agro-industrial federation. Proudhon was well aware of the problems faced by isolated co-operatives and so suggested associations organise a federation to reduce risk by creating solidarity, mutual aid and support.

As all industries are interrelated, it makes

discuss it. Like libertarian communism, it is revolutionary, considering that capitalism cannot be reformed.

Communism

It must be stressed that this is not like Stalinism/Leninism. Most anarchists are libertarian communists and the theory is most famously associated with Peter Kropotkin.

Unlike mutualism and collectivism, there are no markets. It is based on the abolition of money or equivalents. So no wage labour and no wages system under the mantra: "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs".

This is because there are many problems with non-capitalist markets. Income does not reflect needs. They produce collectively irrational behaviour because of market forces.

Libertarian communism extends communal/collective possession to the products of labour. This does not mean we share tooth-brushes but simply that goods are freely available to those who need it: To quote Kropotkin: "Communism, but not the monastic or barrack-room Communism formerly advocated [by state socialists], but the free Communism which places the products reaped or manufactured at the disposal of all, leaving to each the liberty to consume them as he pleases in his [or her] own home."

Evidence

The empirical evidence is overwhelming for libertarian economic ideas.

For example, workers' participation in management and profit sharing enhances productivity. Worker-run enterprises are more productive than capitalist firms. A staggering 94% of 226 studies into this issue showed a positive impact, with 60% being statistically significant. Further, for employee ownership to have a strong impact on performance, it needs worker participation in decision making.

Co-operatives, moreover, have narrow differences in wages and status, well under one to ten, compared to one to 200 and greater in corporations.

The successful co-operatives under capitalism, like Mondragon, are usually in groups, which shows the sense of having an agro-industrial federation and are often associated with their own banking institutions.

Then there is the example of various social revolutions around the world. No anarchist talk would be complete with a reference to the Spanish Revolution of 1936 and this is no exception.

Yet we do so for a reason as this shows that libertarian self-management can work on a large scale, with most of industry in Catalonia successfully collectivised while vast areas of land were owned and managed collectively.

More recently, the revolt against neo-liberalism in Argentina included the taking over of closed workplaces. These recuperated factories show that while the bosses need us, we do not need them.

sense for them to support each other. In addition, the federation was seen as a way to stop return of capitalism by market forces. It would also be for organising and running public services.

Mutualism is reformist in strategy, aiming to replace capitalism by means of alternative institutions and competition. Few anarchists subscribe to that perspective today.

Collectivism

The next school of anarchist economics is collectivism, most famously associated with Mikail Bakunin. It is similar to mutualism, less market based (although still based on distribution by deed). However, it has more communistic elements and most of its adherents think it will evolve into libertarian communism.

So it can be considered as a half-way house between mutualism and communism, with elements of both. As such, I will not



London's bookfair

Overview: On the biggest anarchist event in Britain, from the people who were there from the start and who are there now

Malcolm's view

On Saturday October 24th 2009 the Anarchist Bookfair was at Queen Mary & Westfield College, University of London, Mile End Road. So I would like to thank the Black Flag Collective for asking me to write a short article on the History of the Anarchist Bookfair.

First let me declare my interests; I was not in London when the first bookfair took place at the Autonomy Centre, however I started working at Housmans and was involved with the setting up of the Anarchist Bookfair as we know it.

We now need to cast our minds back to 1984. During this period contacts were made between A Distribution, a co-operative of publishers set up to provide a joint distribution for books and periodicals, the Anarchist Book Service, set up to provide a wide selection of titles by mail order for those having difficulty obtaining them through local bookshops, Freedom Bookshop and Housmans Bookshop.

It was obvious to those involved that pooling our resources we could be far more effective than working on our own.

At this period the major showcase of radical publishing was the Socialist Bookfair. Housmans, Freedom and A Distribution had all taken part in this.

None of us was particularly impressed, either by the structure of the Bookfair or the ambience of it, i.e. as far as we were concerned it was no fun.

First, not only did we have to pay for the stall, but all the books we sold were invoiced to Bookmarks less a third and there was an entrance charge. The entire stock of books at the fair was in effect on sale or return to Bookmarks.

In our joint discussions we discovered that not only were none of us making any money out of the Socialist Bookfair, none of us were enjoying the experience and we were attending out of a sense of solidarity with the radical publishing scene.

A few quick calculations convinced us that if we pooled what it was costing us to attend the Socialist Bookfair in time and money we could set up a small bookfair dedicated to Anarchist publications and groups and be



Larger venue: Looking over some of the stalls at Queen Mary & Westfield College in 2008

no worse off than we had been attending the Socialist Bookfair. Starting off small with few overheads we reckoned we could finance the project by a 10% levy on sales.

The current Bookfair collective have my sympathy trying to juggle the Bookfair nowadays. Right from the beginning we had a different vision to the Socialist Bookfair.

Obviously we wanted to sell books, but we wanted to use the revenue generated to create a space that would be more than just an Anarchist supermarket.

With the minimal charge, 10% of sales, we approached numerous Anarchist groups who all enthusiastically signed up to the project.

The other main attraction for us was that we could get numerous groups under one roof and people who read regional papers/publications would have the chance of meeting the people behind them and discussing issues with them.

One of the banes of working in bookshops is having people ranting at you about publications. At the bookfair we could

always say there is the group, I am sure they will be interested in your critique.

We were lucky to be supported at the two Bookfairs at the Tunbridge Club by Crass. Crass not only helped publicise the Bookfairs via their extensive network but also cooked and provided the food which certainly helped the cash flow.

My memories of these Bookfairs are pretty hazy, although it was obvious by the second one held at the Tunbridge Club that we would have to find a larger venue.

Apart from organising the Bookfair the founding groups produced a free magazine called the New Anarchist Review, the first edition being produced before the 3rd November 1984 Bookfair.

Did you attend any of these Bookfairs? I can't even recall who had stalls there apart from the usual suspects. If you remember attending, either as a stall holder or visitor,



we would be interested in your memories.

I seem to recall that the November 84 Bookfair was on at the same time as the Socialist Bookfair, just down the road from the Tunbridge Club, and some over enthusiastic colleagues spent most of their day leafletting the said Bookfair for the Anarchist Bookfair.

The food crew (Crass and friends) not only provided cheap and excellent food but also raised over £150 for the miners.

The first Bookfair at the Tunbridge Club having been so successful, another was organised six months later on 4th May 1985.

It was obvious that the Tunbridge Club was too small to contain the potential of the Bookfair. The founding groups decided to take the plunge and go all out and book Conway Hall.

The large hall was consequently booked for Saturday, November 9th 1985, from 10am to 10pm. The total hire charge for this was £175. Thus began the Anarchist Bookfair residency at Conway Hall, which ran from 1985 until 2000, when its continual growth required a move to larger premises.

The founding groups had decided that trying to organise a Bookfair every six

discussions, group meetings etc. Once again I cannot remember the exact date when we started this. However, the New Anarchist Review dated July 1990, advertised meetings.

So within seven years the Bookfair had moved from a purely book oriented affair and had started to take on the shape that it has now.

The growth of meetings, the social space provided by the Bookfair was pivotal to its growth. In the early years the founding groups were acutely aware that the Bookfair only format had its disadvantages.

We were aware that some people felt slightly isolated at some of the earlier Bookfairs. Understandably, there was a danger of cliques forming, friends chatting, which unintentionally could deter new people from engaging fully. With the meetings, the food and drink, we made the most of these aspects to try to make newcomers welcome.

Obviously as people selling books we were not averse to them going home with bags of our books, but more importantly we wanted them to make contacts with groups/individuals who shared their interests and most importantly that they went away

environs of Conway Hall when there was a rumour that the Bookfair was going to be attacked by fascists? If so we would like to hear from you.

Consequently, I see this article as the first rough draft at compiling a history of the Bookfair. However, the Bookfair is an ongoing process which over the years has been shaped by many groups and individuals and consequently I've asked the current Bookfair Collective to add their memories and future plans for the Bookfair.

Tony's story

I got involved in the Anarchist Bookfair in 1999. At this time Dean from AK Press, Martin & Carol Peacock and Clifford Harper were the main stay of the collective. I was asked if I wanted to get involved as they wanted to expand the collective slightly.

Then as now, the remit of the collective has been to stay small – after all, all we are doing is administering an event. The stall holders and groups doing meetings are doing the main work.

Also, we would rather the rest of the movement did what they are doing, rather than we all stop and just organise a day in the life of anarchist activities. Since 1999 the collective has undergone many member changes and now neither Cliff, Martin, Carol or Dean are involved – all have moved onto other projects.

When I got involved, there was definitely a move to expand the bookfair, make it more organised and bring the meetings into a more prominent part of the day. There was (and has again) been talk of making it two days, but we have resisted this for organisational reasons, although we continually try to get other anarchists to organise events on the Friday evening and Sunday daytime.

One of the first things we did was to start talking about moving the bookfair away from Conway Hall. Lovely as the venue is, it was becoming far too small for our needs, with stalls in every nook and cranny and meetings held wherever we could fit one person and a dog in.

For anybody with the slightest disability it was a nightmare. There was resistance to this both inside the collective and amongst the wider anarchist movement.

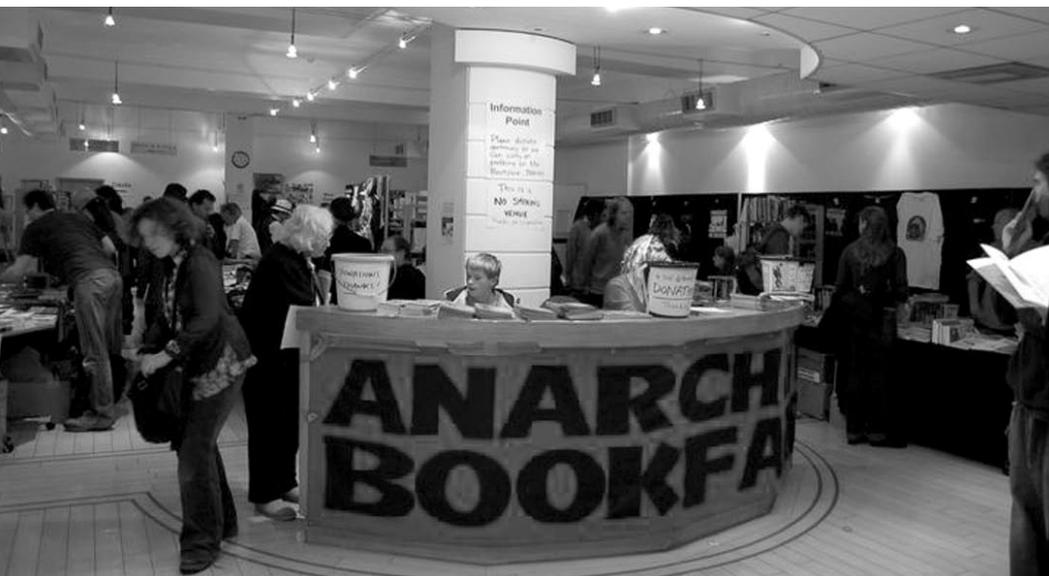
A lot of people seemed to want to keep it as a cosy event where we all knew each other. Eventually the heretics like me won and we moved the bookfair to the Camden Centre on Euston Road.

Before talking about the move, there were a number of other things we wanted to improve about the bookfair. Having gone to the bookfair from the late 80's it was clear there was a lot of infighting amongst anarchist groups.

We had loads of groups asking not to be near this group or that. We really wanted to stop this bickering and infighting and make the event far more pleasant.

We also wanted to make anarchist politics accessible to a wider audience and so tried to get in speakers who weren't the typical speakers you would expect and would draw in non-anarchos to the event.

This also meant trying to move the day away from just the pissed punk with a dog on a string. As a fellow crusty, there is still obviously a place for punks at the event – although we have said that dogs will be need to left outside the building.



Old venue: The information booth on Holloway Road. Picture: indymedia.org.uk

months, although probably sustainable, was far too much like hard work! So it was decided that it would be held yearly.

My memories of the Conway Hall Bookfairs tend to blur together. Certainly I have many happy memories of washing up in the kitchen while Martin cooked the food, serving out coffee and numerous other glorious activities.

We always made it a point of principal to assist the caretakers in tidying up at the end of the Bookfair. I am pleased to say that the Anarchist Bookfair and Conway Hall welded well together.

The Bookfair was rooted very much in the practice of its founders, that is selling books. That is what we all did. However it was also obvious that as long as the book aspect could be used to generate income along with the food and drink, which to begin with was being provided by the organisers, the Bookfair had the potential to be far more than just buying and selling.

One of the advantages of moving to Conway Hall was there was room to expand the Bookfair by hiring more rooms for

thinking that was a really good, interesting day and that they will definitely return next year.

After a few bumpy starts the Anarchist movement as a whole got behind the Bookfair, realising that here was a great public platform for Anarchism to counteract the media distortions and to show mutual aid in practice.

Anarchism became, for one day at least, more than ego-driven schisms, petty squabbling, rows, point scoring that was completely lost on interested visitors (well, OK, this took place in the pubs nearby). So to all of the groups/individuals past and present who have helped create this atmosphere... keep up the good work.

At the height of its activity in 1988 the New Anarchist Review was distributing 2,000 copies four times a year to radical bookshops and individuals.

The more I reflect on the Bookfair the more conscious I am of how vague my memory is. Can you remember the Bookfair that was disrupted by a bomb scare? Where you one of the people asked to patrol the

With us all getting older and having kids we started to realise just how scary the crèche was. It was run on voluntary labour and people put their names down on the day and I still remember around 1995/6 taking my son into the crèche room onto to find the child minder for that hour was a punk with his dog in the crèche and a can of Stella in his hand.

Also, half the rota hadn't been filled in. A number of people (John McArthur comes to mind as one) saved the day by doing hours looking after the kids, but a number of us parents were still very uneasy about leaving our kids there.

Anyway, we finally, in 2001, decided to move to a bigger venue and eventually chose the Camden Centre. We could use our own caterers (Veggies in Nottingham) and run our own bar, which was definitely a deciding point for us as it meant money from the food and drink subsidised the amount we asked stall holders for their pitches.

One problem with the Camden Centre was that they didn't have enough meetings rooms, so the meetings were held further up the Euston Road at Friends Meeting House. A further problem was that the venue insisted on us having a load of stewards who needed to be recognisable and walk around with walkie talkies.

The two years at the Camden Centre were definitely eventful. Arguments with the venue that our "stewards" were not good enough; a car driving through us lot sitting outside the venue and the driver nearly being lynched; a bomb scare with fake bombs left at the building; one of our safety stewards jumping on one of the suspect packages claiming "it ain't a f**king bomb" – you should have seen the blood drain from the coppers face who was "protecting" the public from the suspect package. Plus of course there was the excellent Chumbawamba and Gertrude gig. We thought it was time to move again.

Looking for venues that had everything we wanted was tiring work especially when they realise what the event is. Finally we found the University of London Union.

Being a student union run building we thought they would be more relaxed than the Camden Centre – how wrong we were. We knew they wouldn't let us run our own bar or food and that meant a reduction in funds.

We didn't realise just how much of a pain in the arse they were to be though. We were not allowed to take in any computer/video/type equipment and were told we had to hire theirs (at ridiculous prices) as ours were not tested for health & safety.

They even stopped a meeting when they realised we were sneaking in our own equipment instead of paying for theirs. It even got to the stage that we couldn't hang banners up as we were not "registered" to use a ladder even though the two people putting the thing up were both builders and use ladders every bloody day!

Even though the venue was ideal, after two years it just wasn't any fun for us organisers and we were homeless again.

The Voluntary Sector Resource Centre on Holloway Road came to our rescue and we had two good years there and hoped to have many more. Unfortunately with Arsenal

moving their stadium nearby and cops and Arsenal fans on the Holloway Road every other Saturday the venue said we could have the bookfair there still, but it couldn't be on a day when Arsenal played at home.

Something to do with a big fight between the cops and Anarchists a year or two before, and realising that the two might not go well together on a Saturday afternoon.

As dates of matches come out in June and we have to book a venue by the January, it was yet another venue we said good bye to – but at least this time on good terms.

So, we have now ended up at Queen Mary's college on the Mile End Road. Somehow having the bookfair in the east end of London seems like home, with all the past history the east end and anarchism has.

Also, we are near both Freedom Press and the London Action Resource Centre so it makes it an obvious place to stay. Staff there are great and the place has lots of rooms, so we can expand as and when we need to.

Every year we do try and improve and build on previous years. Over the last 10 years I have been involved this has gone on it a load of different ways.

As a parent, the crèche is still properly run and it is the one thing we pay people to staff. After all, they are there for 10 hours looking after other people's kids so the rest of us can have a relaxed day and not stress out if a mad ketomine head is doing the rota that hour!

Recently, as our kids have got older a number of us have looked at how the bookfair keeps the older kids interested and hopefully interests them in anarchist ideas. A couple of comrades have therefore taken on running an "older kid's space".

We would welcome ideas and help to make this space better. For the last few years we have a room set aside just for radical and anarchist films and recently we have set aside a space just for anarchist cabaret which always goes down well.

One of the things a number of us back in 1999 wanted to do was make the event much more than just a bookfair. We realised it was, at the time, one of the only places where anarchists from the UK and Ireland (I know maybe a politically incorrect, but easy, term) and further afield come together on a regular basis.

So, we really wanted to expand the discussion and workshop side of the bookfair. We also wanted to move away from it being just a place where anarchist meet up every year (although this is hugely important) and make it a place where non-anarchists can find out what we all do, say and believe in, and hopefully pull more people into anarchist groups, organisations, and ways or organising.

So, we have made a concerted effort to increase the size and variety of meetings, workshop and discussions – sometimes not to everybody's liking.

We have taken a chance and used well known speakers even when they are not themselves anarchists. Sometimes this has worked, sometimes it hasn't, but it is a tactic the present collective thinks worth carrying on with.

How else would we have got a mention in the magazine "Saga" (a magazine for the over 50's with a readership of some 1.2 million)

if it hadn't been for us having Dorothy Rowe speaking.

There are so many stories about the bookfair which could be told, but here is maybe not the place. There is talk of having a history section on the bookfair website (www.anarchistbookfair.org) but that if for another time also.

To finish I have to look at the bookfair ten years ago compared to today.

Personally, I often think the anarchist movement in these isles isn't growing and we are still too often a small group of people happily living within our own ghetto.

But, I read how the bookfair only started in 1984 in one room with a few stall holders. Ten years ago we had something like 50 stall holders and 20 or so meetings.

In 2009 we will nearly have 100 stalls and



Fond memories: Chumbawamba played at the Camden Centre

something like 50 meetings and a room dedicated just too political and anarchist films, with an estimated 3,000 people coming through the doors.

In the last few years there have been bookfairs in something like 10 other places around us – a number of which are now established. And this is just one small bit of the anarchist movement.

Not bad really.

By Malcolm and Tony Wood



Stop the press,

Anarchists are often accused of having no vision for a post-revolutionary future, which in some ways is true. Most are not prepared to pretend that they can predict every aspect of how such a drastically different world would end up.

But each of us, in our individual areas of expertise, probably has some sort of notion how we think things could work when capital is overthrown. It is in such a spirit that Black Flag is launching its new series, *Future Visions*, where we ask – what might our personal new worlds look like?

In the first of this exclusive new project for Black Flag magazine, I will be talking about a truly free press...

In defence of a future journalism

Many anarchists would argue that news reporting is not a useful post-revolutionary trade in the same way as say, plumbing or construction are. The control of language and information a professional media often wields could in fact be actively dangerous to an anarchist society.

The potential is there for journalists to have influence out of proportion to their role or expertise, as is the case today.

Information, particularly using the best of today's online technology, could also be instantly accessed by anyone, straight from the source – if the secrecy of competitive business is removed – making journalism not just dangerous in an anarchist society, but arguably unnecessary as well.

In this misty future, journalists could be replaced by the active individual, writing their own news about the subjects they love – the citizen reporter.

To a great extent, even though it's my job, I would agree with this analysis. Journalism as it stands today is of use only as a combatant against the lies of capitalism and as an advocate of progressive change.

Post-revolution, the need for this role would be greatly reduced, and with the elimination of dodgy marketing, PR and paid-for science, its (somewhat dubious) function as a bullshit-cutter would also be largely redundant.

However, regardless of this, I think there is still room for journalism to emerge and thrive within a free society – though the role would be markedly different.

Journalism partly became big business in the first place for the very good reason that with the best will in the world, people who are too close to a subject are prone to a) exaggeration and b) protectiveness of their position. People do need impartial and accurate information.

Even within a society which encourages honesty and openness in thought and deed, inaccuracy and hyperbole are inevitable in close communities. As long as this is the case, having people to find the truth will be important.

A talent for boiling down difficult information into understandable (and dare I

Breathing Utopia: Rob Ray kicks off our new series on how the world might operate in a post-revolutionary society by looking at his own industry – journalism.

say it, interesting) language will also remain vital – not just because jargon is an inevitable consequence of any really complex social structure, but because not everyone is going to be a good communicator.

Finally, in a post-revolutionary scenario, there will always be the need for vigilance against corruption and those who would seek to further themselves at the expense of others, and a truly free press is one more bulwark against that scenario.

Ideally then, regardless of whether we are in the future society or not, journalism should remain to investigate, confirm and streamline raw news so the general public can be as reliably informed as possible.

Changed focus

Journalism today divides into two main areas, hard and soft news. Soft news covers celebrities, lifestyle and entertainment. Hard news covers anything of real import to society at large, earthquakes, political corruption, crime, industrial disputes etc.

It is unlikely the latter would disappear.

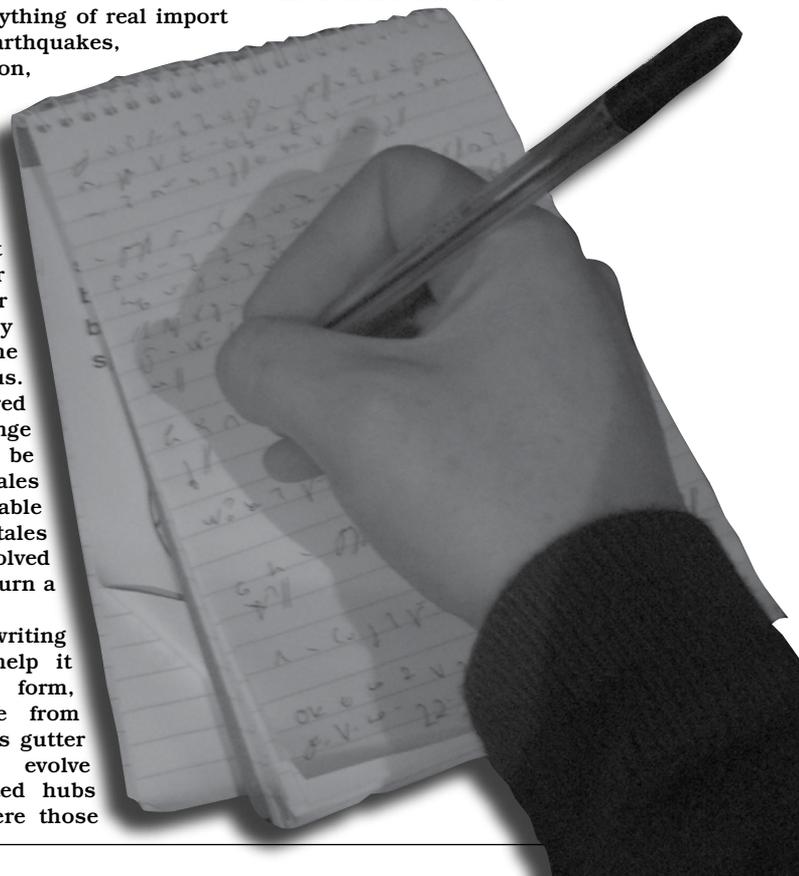
For the former, people will always want to hear spectacular stories about other people's lives, they will be interested in the famous and the genius. How they are covered however will change markedly. Gone will be the necessity for sales and people will be able to write their own tales – edited by others involved in them or who can turn a phrase well.

Collaborative writing of soft news will help it to become an art form, culturally distinctive from the sniping of today's gutter press. What may evolve beyond that is edited hubs of such stories, where those

tasked by society with doing so follow and verify what's been written, sifting tall tales from real life drama free of the restrictions of press ideology. In this way the journalist can evolve into an administrator of news, rather than a gatekeeper – and when people don't want to share, they won't have to.

In the latter case, things get more complicated. Hard news requires hard research, sometimes a stone stomach. Avoiding corruption and the building of a power base through access to important events and control over how they are presented is problematic.

However this is the one vital aspect of journalism, and the means by which such a watchdog function is achieved is the means by which journalism survives in an anarchist future. In this vein, it is hard news which requires the most attention and it is this I shall focus on here.



it's revolution

Maintaining honesty

The biggest weak point of all journalism today is reliance – on the state, or on business, or on the trade unions – for its resources and continued existence. Whoever pays the piper calls the tune.

Much of this would be stripped away in the new world. Instead, journalistic collectives would likely be made up of multi-tasking individuals who the community at large have granted the tools and time for their role.

Individuals or single groups would be unable to use economic muscle to force a particular editorial line. The only point at which their existence could be threatened would be at the regional level, in meetings where the community offers its opinion through a direct mandate.

However this very independence, allied with their investigative function and freedom to attack or defend policy, could make such entities ripe targets for the power-hungry.

To some degree the community itself would have to be responsible for maintaining a free press which is actually free. If the news begins to push a particular agenda to the exclusion of others, the journalistic collective could be recalled citing a mandate that bars bias, triggering a debate and vote on its direction.

Similarly, individuals could be called upon to justify themselves, or ousted entirely, if their work is unreliable or misleading.

Beyond this, in a society where honesty and co-operation is considered natural behaviour, journalism could be expected to a great extent to self-police, with self-serving reporters quickly finding themselves ostracised by those they work with.

Such mass control of journalism however brings its own problems.

Pushing real change in any community, particularly a tightly-organised one, requires that a minority challenge the majority. Maybe an individual who has learned the value of washing will have to challenge everyone else who believes a bath brings bad humours.

In a situation where the journalist can be instantly recalled, the danger is that a community will shut down access for such explosive new ideas.

To avoid this, of course there is the possibility of such small groups producing their own agit-prop in their free time, as happens now, but better would be an understanding that some space in every free mass press must be open to all.

Running a newsroom

My first job as a journalist was as a sub-editor on a weekly paper. We were a new team for a new product, and apart from our editor, we were all young and inexperienced.

It seemed on the face of it that our seven-strong team (three subs, three reporters, one editor) was the perfect example of a workplace needing strong management to keep it running.

Yet for a fortnight, when our editor was off sick, no-one was available from other parts of the company, and our publisher was too inept to intervene, six cub journalists ran a newspaper with no less than five slip editions*.

As the most senior sub (I'd been in the role for a year-and-a-half) I was nominally left in charge. As an anarchist and knowing my limitations I decided to throw the paper open to the skills of all.

The reporters were told 'pick the order of your stories', and the front page was picked from a selection of the top suggestions. I listed the stories into an order, and anyone could challenge it. The subs just picked up whatever was available, and worked until they were finished.

At the end, those papers came out on time, filled all the slip pages, and were roundly praised by all and sundry.

On a micro level, this experiment showed

any other trade isn't.

As such, it would be likely, as for any trade I can imagine in an anarchist society, that those most skilled and able to run things would, with the ongoing support of the other journalists, take a leading role. They might check the newsgathering of others to make sure they are maintaining a high standard or to make sure they aren't dropping stories they shouldn't.

Like any other anarchist collective however, this would only happen in fast-moving situations, and only for as long as the rest of the collective is happy for that to happen – there would be no automatic powers to order others to do things. So you might have an 'editor', but their influence would only go so far as was necessary and useful to the collective effort.

There would be no more changing the front page on a whim, bawling out reporters for reporting on things the editor isn't



Bias? Embedded reporters in Iraq have found it difficult to maintain independence

that within a small newsroom, collective control, with a few minor concessions, is entirely possible. It would be within this context that I'd see journalism functioning in an anarchist society.

What was necessary, and this would remain the case in any reasonable future, was a certain level of training and skill from the people involved. We were all young and unhoneved by years of doing the job, but we had been taught how to spot a good bit of news, how to write it, how to present it.

Really skilled journalists, and I've met a few, are genuinely people to be reckoned with. Their understanding of how to compact complex issues into something an idiot can get comes alongside an often encyclopaedic knowledge of their patch or specialist subject.

Unless you an obscenely talented individual, being a good journalist is NOT simply a case of suck it and see – just as

personally interested in, or editors giving their mates the best stories.

Instead an anarchist journalism would take the skills of society's nosiest and most erudite members and turn them to the task of explaining and protecting society.

Space is too limited here to go into much depth. But the above, I hope, illustrates that in some ways, as with say, the civil service, a future society might benefit from journalism's existence – even though it might not be readily recognisable as such.

* Slip editions are where you swap out the first five pages or so of a newspaper targeted at say, Ipswich and insert news from Felixstowe, then sell it as a 'Felixstowe' production.

By
Rob Ray



Marketisation

In the first part of this article Tom Gaynor covered the way in which New Labour had presided over the implementation of neoliberal reforms in the UK and the effects this has had on the distribution of wealth and living standards.

In part two, he looks at a central part of this strategy – attacks on public services and the social wage under the cover of privatisation and marketisation.

New Labour privatisations are strikingly based on a purely ideological belief in market efficiency which has little basis in reality.

Massive, inefficient, publicly-subsidised Private Finance Initiatives have been a central feature of Labour government, and their failure to deliver their stated aims shows their real function – the deepening of class power by transforming more and more sectors of society into fronts for private accumulation.

This use of privatisation can be seen well

In Focus: Tom Gaynor on how education and employment have been attacked by new Labour

City Academies

New Labour's attempts to marketise public services and further integrate capital into government can be seen well in its City Academy Program. A resuscitated and expanded version of the discredited Thatcherite City Technology Colleges scheme,

Academies were reintroduced by David Blunkett in 2000. Officially a program to revive "underperforming" schools, New Labour's obsession with academies reflects a purely ideological attachment in the

the program has attracted various religious organisations with the aim of teaching their brand of mysticism with government support.

Importantly, the £2 million input is not what it seems. The cost of building an Academy is around £25 million, and if 10% of the start-up cost is cheaper, sponsors can commit that instead. Moreover, this sum often takes the form of "payment in kind" - imaginary funds such as various outsourced services charged at market value.

The government has also been watering down the necessary commitments in order to attract the sponsors for the program's expansion. Some schools, such as Salford City Academy, have seen the promised funds fail to materialise.

Private schools are being allowed to become academies, receiving massive government funding as a result. Likewise floundering private schools face "nationalisation" as academies. As the board of governors can decide the quality of pay and working conditions, and recognise or de-recognise teachers' unions, the attack on public sector education workers involved is clear.

In his book *The Great City Academy Fraud*, Francis Beckett describes the program as an attempt to turn the clock back to structures of education from before the post-war settlement.

The Vardy Foundation, the pet charity of the Evangelical Christian and successful capitalist Peter Vardy, already running 3 academies with a "pro-christian" agenda, is actively putting into place a long desired agenda.

In the words of Nigel McQuoid and John Burn (both heads of Vardy academies) in a 1995 booklet, "In Britain the Christian churches were active in the field of schooling long before the state took over... in retrospect it is a matter of regret that the churches so readily relinquished control of education to the state..."

Thanks to New Labour, that dream is becoming a reality. Beckett describes a return to models of philanthropy very deliberately opposed to the model of education developed after the postwar settlement: "What city academies represent, therefore, is a return to the idea, condemned by Atlee, that the rich should contribute voluntarily, rather than through the tax system.

But there is a new twist. The sponsor can get all the things a nineteenth-century philanthropist could get, and which Atlee



Private party: Mossbourne Community Academy, the successor to Hackney Downs School.

in the "deregulation" of the postal sector. Introducing competition into postal services has brought about no benefits whatsoever to customers, but has been a boon to big business.

The mantra of "modernisation" has been used to attack workers in the sector, with recent disputes over pay, pensions, closures and redundancies symptomatic of the use of privatisation and competition to drive down working conditions as established organisations engage in the race with new competitors to the bottom, and "restructure" themselves to become more market efficient. Below is a brief overview of two areas this has affected, education and unemployment.

supposed "efficiency" of the private sector and market choice. There are currently 134 academies, and the government aims to expand the program massively.

Academies are publicly funded schools where private "sponsors", in return for a payment of £2 million, are given the right to appoint the majority of the membership of the governing body, which, together with the principal, runs the school. This gives them effective control.

Teaching has been outside of the remit of the Local Authority and education legislation since 1944, with sponsors having a major input into the curriculum and "ethos" of the school. In line with New Labour's courtship of religion and promotion of its social role,

by stealth

grudged him: control of how the money is spent, a 'monument' to himself, the gratitude of the recipients. But unlike the nineteenth-century philanthropist, he does not have to pay the cost of the thing he is 'giving' – or even a substantial contribution towards the cost". The Vardy Foundation aims to control 9 academies. Other groups, including the Oasis group and the Church of England, are following in its wake.

Even on the government's own terms, the academies aren't working, performing poorly in league tables and even failing Ofsted reports. In June 2008, 26 were reported to be failing to deliver five GCSE passes. They have also demonstrated an unsurprising unwillingness to take on social responsibility, expelling disruptive pupils and saddling neighbouring local authority schools with them instead.

During the original trials, it was noted that two academy schools in Middlesbrough expelled 61 students – compared to 15 between all the other schools in the borough.

Such behaviour can be expected from an application of business logic to social institutions, as undesirable costs will be "externalised" to society, cutting internal costs. The fact that the government has pressed on with the program before the results of the trial were properly established, and extended the program despite academies not showing their promised "performance" is nothing more than the expression of New Labour's ideological belief in the necessity of extending market ideology throughout society, irrespective of the real consequences or circumstances, and the desire to formally blur the lines of government and private capital itself.

Unemployment

This attack on social provision has taken more obviously sinister forms. The recently published proposals to "reform" the benefits system look prepared to deal with the surge in unemployment which is accompanying the current crisis in capitalism – with nearly 4 million unemployed forecast for the end of 2009.

The "reforms", backed by the "thrilled" Conservatives, stand to reintroduce the ideology of the workhouse into unemployment provision. Those out of work can be compelled "at any stage in their claim" to undertake compulsory "voluntary" work.

That proposed is near-identical to judicially sentenced community service. This "volunteering" stands to provide private contractors with full-time workers at dole pay – extending the unpaid full-time compulsory work which many long-term unemployed can find themselves saddled with via New Labour's "New Deal for the unemployed".

Additionally, drug addicts face having dole

denied if they do not undertake treatment, a sure-fire way to get them out of the dole queue and into prison as they are forced to turn to crime to fund their habits. Those out of work due to disability will now be re-assessed for what work they can do, with the aim being to provide as large a pool of low-paid workers as possible.

The program is being presented as a socially conscious scheme to redeem through work. It comes with the promise that all welfare provision will be open to private companies through "right to bid".

ownership by the state means common ownership. The state and the community are not the same thing, far from it. Unlike Trotskyists, we do not see formal ownership as determining whether something is capitalistic or not.

Our reasons for fighting privatisations should be that they are direct attacks on the living and working standards of our class. Marketisation and privatisation drive down wages and working conditions of staff, its inefficiency affects our standards of life, its antisocial priorities undermine our social



Dole denial: A heroin addict sits on a street corner. Picture: Ramon Llorensi

Once again, in a return to prewar ideas about the redemptive quality of work, ignoring the real causes of unemployment for the berating of "lazy" claimants, and in seeing charities and business as the natural providers of this work,

New Labour sets about the task of dismantling the postwar settlement and providing philanthropic commercial opportunities to business.

The expansion of private inroads into public services made by Thatcher has been central to New Labour's new, "non-ideological" approach to governance.

Unlike trotskyists and other leftists however, we should not make this a moral issue. The libertarian socialist position should not be to fight privatisations because

and intellectual wellbeing.

Pay and working conditions are worse in the private sector, hence the use of privatisation to attack conditions. NHS staff in Surrey demonstrated their awareness of this when they voted with a majority of 84% against the privatisation of their workplace in a union ballot.

They were ignored, and 700 NHS workers were transferred to Central Surrey Health, a flagship private social enterprise.

■ *The final part of this article will deal with the NHS, prisons and immigration.*

By Tom
Gaynor



Neoliberal, the tool

Theory: Examining the class logic of a fundamentally illogical way of understanding the global economy

By the 1970s it was clear the social democratic welfare state had failed to secure social peace. In fact, it had created the conditions for a new worldwide revolutionary wave, as class struggles in the workplace and wider society overflowed or bypassed altogether the representative organs that were meant to act as a pressure-release valve. A new mode of accumulation was required: neoliberalism was born.

Neoliberalism has been characterised by an extension of the market into previously non-commodified areas of life. This was marked dramatically by the 'Water Wars' in Cochabamba, Bolivia over the privatisation of water supplies, but can also be seen in the patenting of DNA sequences and the commodification of the Earth's atmosphere through carbon trading. Concurrently, this extension of market logic has led to the casualisation and flexibilisation of the labour market, the atomization of the working class and an attack on the representative, collective bargaining structures that characterised social democracy.

During the previous decades, Rand Corporation game theorists had been developing the paranoid assumptions of Cold War nuclear strategy into a model for the whole of society, drawing on Adam Smith's insistence that "regard for his own self-interest" would guarantee the social good through the "invisible hand" of the marketplace and Thomas Hobbes' bleak notion that human beings naturally live in a war of all against all. The neoliberal economist Friedrich von Hayek called this an 'automatic system', which in reality is nothing but the dream of an unfettered logic of capital.

These models assumed Homo economicus, economic man. Homo economicus was cold, calculating and ruthless – basically, sociopathic. Unfortunately for the budding neoliberal theorists – and fortunately for the rest of us – this economic man was a fiction.

The Rand Corporation's own experiments falsified their fundamental axiom. When tested, the Rand Corporations own secretaries consistently co-operated with one another, and numerous subsequent studies have also discredited the idea. However these were not disinterested scientists searching dispassionately for truth, but ideologists for the logic of capital. Ideologists whose time would soon arrive.

In the hands of the state, these neoliberal ideas would become a powerful force for social transformation. Thatcher declared that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." Then she set about



Security focus: The state works as policeman, not protector. Right, society's atomisation has caused widespread problems with alienation. Pictures: Chris Brown and Michael Korchia

making it so. As she said, "economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul." Capital had spoken, through its latest avatar.

The result was a massive project of social engineering. People did not behave as the logic of capital required, so they had to be made to do so. The ideal was the production of atomised, cold, calculating individuals pitted against one another in endless competition – the production of the particular 'human nature' of Homo economicus.

This ideologically constructed 'nature' would become a major fig leaf for the

neoliberal project, and help secure its autonomous reproduction - since who would resist the laws of nature? Consequently all tendencies to co-operation and mutual aid, all manifestations of collectivity had to be extinguished. Fresh from the industrial unrest of the 1970s, the first targets were the economic representative organs of Social Democracy; the trade unions. Thatcher picked her opening battle with the miners. Across the Atlantic, Reagan took on the air traffic controllers. Neoliberalism had arrived.

This first phase of neoliberalism was explicit class war. Thatcher declared that

of elite class control

the miners' strike of 1984-5 was "about who runs the country, the government or the unions." Again, stripping away the ideological rhetoric, the question was capital's logic or the working class'. This phase was thus centrifugal – it brought social tensions into the open, polarising society in often violent confrontations between the working class and the state.

Subsequently a second, consolidatory phase of neoliberalism would be developed to manage this problem; this is the role played by communitarian state multiculturalism, enthroning 'community representatives' on ethno-national rather than class lines.

Neoliberalism has seen the social functions of the state rolled back as it has shifted from seeking to guarantee order and social peace (the objective of the social democratic mode of accumulation), to the management of disorder – be that deregulated markets, the permanent global war on terror or the sites where class struggle erupts into the open.

One need simply observe the role of the state in the miners' strike of 1984/5 to dispel von Hayek's fantasy that neoliberalism is an 'automatic system' that doesn't need the state. The clash between capital's logic and human needs always creates social conflict, and thus always requires a coercive force – a state apparatus of law and government. An apparatus that is, as Hayek's ideological ancestor Adam Smith was prescient (and honest) enough to note:

"in every case (...) a combination of the rich to oppress the poor and preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods that would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor who, if not hindered by the government, would soon reduce the others to an equality with themselves by open violence."

The neoliberal state is literally *laissez faire*, rather than trying to impose order, it 'lets things happen' while seeking to stop undesirable effects (such as eruptions of class struggle). This is the link between market liberalisation and the state that characterises this form of capitalism. As the state sheds its social functions, political representation withers; participation in political parties and elections falls, even causing some sections of the ruling class to fear a crisis of legitimacy.

Whereas social democracy sought to integrate a militant working class into the process of capital accumulation by means of class compromise and collaboration, neoliberalism attacks the economic institutions of representation (trade unions) and oversees a withering of political representation (voter apathy, abstention etc). It does this on the basis that the balance of class forces renders such mediating institutions obsolete. Consequently, it is no surprise that neoliberalism's security state bears much resemblance to that 'combination of the rich to oppress the poor'

described by Adam Smith 250 years ago.

So when Thatcher complained about "the hard left operating inside our system, conspiring to use union power and the apparatus of local government to break, defy and subvert the law", we know exactly whose law she meant. The neoliberal state is 'minimal' only in the sense that it is focussed on its core function of class warfare, outsourcing many of the welfare functions and representative organs which were supposed to guarantee social peace under the social democratic mode.

Therefore we can arrive at the counter-intuitive formulation that neoliberalism constitutes 'class collaboration on an individual basis.' The focusing of the state on its core role in capitalist production, managing the disorder inherent to it together with the proliferation of minor hierarchies (team leaders, outsourcing etc) used to try and harness individual, atomised workers to the logic of capital mean that the social question has not only ceased to be "posed openly and honestly", but atomised to the point it ceases to be recognised as a social question at all.

Under the guise of meritocracy, the labour market is shifted away from an open exchange – of labour power for money to live – between a dispossessed class and capital, and towards a naturalised, pseudo-gladiatorial conflict where the promise of individual betterment is held out to encourage opportunistic, individualistic competition and mutual struggle to the detriment of solidarity and mutual aid.

Thus it is increasingly the case that what were experienced and expressed as collective issues under the social democratic mode – be they wage disputes, unemployment or housing – are now experienced as personal issues with individualistic 'solutions' – a career change, promotion, a direct debit to an NGO... This situation is both a cause and an effect of the balance of class forces, and thus our present weakness.

A consequence of this more atomised, casualised workforce is the disappearance of the notion of the 'job for life' – and the identities and communities this fostered – that characterised post-war social democracy. This was a deliberate policy to attack what were the strongholds of working class militancy, in particular the factories, mines and surrounding communities of the West, which have largely been dismantled and exported to the 'developing world' – where the same class conflicts have subsequently re-emerged.

However, it must be reiterated that the enemy is not neoliberalism per se as today's reformists would have it, but the logic of capital. Struggles against neoliberalism are struggles against that logic, but unless they recognise themselves as such face the prospect of co-option into support for reconstituting representative institutions – which is certainly an option open to capital

if faced with increased workers' struggles.

Neoliberalism is an attack on the working class through the dismantling of past class compromises. This is not because post-war social democracy had working class content, but because it marks an extension of the logic of capital and a decomposition of the class. The representative structures of social democracy were not organs of workers' power, but signifiers of the level of working class militancy that made such structures necessary to ensure sufficient stability for continued capital accumulation.

Thus the revolutionary, anarcho-syndicalist approach is not to look back to



a mythical golden era of representation, not to "rebuild the power" or of "reclaim" the unions, nor to "campaign for a new workers party" or "reclaim the state" as today's leftists would have it. To do so rejects the primacy of struggle, mistakes the signifiers of workers' militancy for militancy itself and thus puts the cart before the horse.

In any event we have no desire to return to such horses and carts, even if leftists manage to resurrect them. Instead, the task is to build a libertarian workers movement based on self-organisation, direct action and solidarity.

By Brighton
SolFed



Wikipedia started online in January 15, 2001 as an academic project co-founded by Brian Bergstein and Jimmy Wales.

It first gained mainstream attention when USA Today ran an article that suggested it was "a flawed and irresponsible research tool".

However a 2005 study by scientific journal Nature found different results within certain categories. It took 40 articles about science and maths from Wikipedia and checked them for levels of accuracy.

Nature looked for factual errors, omissions and misleading statements. Wikipedia had 162 errors compared to Encyclopedia Britannica where there were 123⁽¹⁾. This is certainly great achievement, however in some areas USA Today may be right.

The subjects of science and maths are very different to political movements. While scholars still have value, they might be less experienced or knowledgeable on the subject compared to active participants. Political movements may require accurate information from other sources.

To take one example, individualist anarchism is a form of socialism, as are the views of Josiah Warren, but you wouldn't know it if you read the articles on Wikipedia⁽²⁾.

Given that the site is now annually pulling in 684 million visitors worldwide⁽³⁾ however it might be in the best interest of people in many fields and subjects, including libertarians, to create and maintain factually accurate information about their history and theory.

How does Wikipedia work?

Anyone can contribute to most articles in Wikipedia by clicking on the 'edit this page' tab in an article, though some are protected and can only be edited by certain editors.

It is also possible to engage in a discussion about disputed aspects of an article or make suggestions by using the 'discussion' tab, and to view older versions of the page, even reverting back to them if copy has been compromised.

There are also levels of authority within Wikipedia:

- Anyone with an account that has made 10 edits or has been registered for four days or longer becomes autoconfirmed and can: move articles, edit semi-protected articles, and can vote in certain elections.

- Administrators: (also known as 'admins' or 'sysops') are elected by the community and can delete articles, block accounts or IP (internet provider) addresses and edit fully-protected articles.

- Arbitration Committee: (ArbCom) is like the Wikipedia supreme court. The Arbitration Committee tends to be selected from a pool of administrators.

The members of the ArbCom are elected to three-year terms on a rotating schedule. The ArbCom's work with disputes if they are unresolved from dispute resolution.

- Bureaucrats: (B-crats) The B-crats are elected in a process similar to the Administrators. They can add or remove admin rights, approve or revoke the privileges of 'bots' - semi-automated or automated tools that edit wiki pages - and

War of the edits

Theory: Looking at the facts and flaws of online collaborative encyclopaedia Wikipedia

rename user accounts.

- Stewards: are higher than everyone else other than the Board of Directors of the Wikipedia Corporation. They normally act only when local admin or bureaucrat is unavailable.

So the site is largely run in theory, on a democratic basis.

From an anarchist point of view however this does not go far enough.

One possible solution would be to start or support a similar project maintained by

A more anarchist Wikipedia

As anyone can participate in the project, it has the potential to bring out many libertarian principles. So could it be organised in more federal manner? For example:

Users could present different academics, scholars, thinkers etc. and then vote on who they think most accurately depicts their views⁽⁵⁾. The most popular academics, scholars thinker etc. would then be the ones cited for a specific subject.

A similar system to the 'grace periods' used by some existing collectives to allow for challenges might then be helpful. Users who have demonstrated a willingness to participate or long-time or frequent users would be the ones to vote in the topics they frequent.

Such active users in different subjects such as science, art, history, etc. could form their own virtual confederal groups and eventually link together into a 'subject info' federation⁽⁶⁾.

If this idea became popular enough, proposals could be drawn up through trial and error in order to change Wikipedia policy and guidelines in order to improve the site's



Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia founder

Greatest misconception about Wikipedia: We aren't democratic. Our readers edit the entries, but we're actually quite snobby.

an owner who is determined to offer only accurate information.

This option has been carried out excellently for anarchists by Infoshop.org at its open Wiki⁽⁴⁾.

However the sheer size and influence of Wikipedia itself means that we cannot simply ignore it.





accuracy⁽⁷⁾.

Alternately, an active group on the site could propose changes to the most important policies and guidelines first, then attempt to gradually reform towards the ultimate goal of a Wikipedia Federation.

Among the most important of such single proposal changes would be to change the verification rule within Wikipedia policy in order to potentially improve accuracy.

The Verifiability rule in Wikipedia currently states: "Verifiability: The threshold for inclusion in Wikipedia is verifiability, rather than truth⁽⁸⁾."

Wikipedia prefers sources from peer reviewed journals, books published in

University presses, university textbooks, magazines, journals, books from respected publishing houses, and mainstream newspapers.

In some ways this is useful, such credible sources are very good for citing on many subjects like science for instance.

Regarding political movements however, as mentioned above it can sometimes be more useful to include the opinions and views of people or publications that are popular within that movement or which follow its traditional ideas.

Criteria for such inclusion might include heavy citing from individuals within the movement and by the majority of notable books, magazines and other forms of media within that milieu.

Accuracy therefore may be improved in certain areas of Wikipedia that contain information about current human movements and cultures, while relying on peer reviewed journals, books published in university presses etc. for subjects involving science and other forms of study that are usually best studied in science labs at universities.

Possible new verification rules could then run along the following lines:

■ People in movements and cultures: Put main emphasis on opinions and views of popular people within the movement or culture as the main reliable source.

■ Publications, books, media etc: Put main emphasis on popular media within the culture or movement, which cite sources from past and present popular people within it.

■ Lesser-known individuals and media: Emphasis should be on opinions and views of lesser known individuals and media that follow or cite popular individuals or media within the culture or movement.

■ Popular people and media verifiability: Verifiability about popular people and media could be checked through how often they are sourced by the other individuals, through internal media for the movement or culture and the sales they generate.

Virtual affinity groups or direct democratic virtual groups could also be formed to encourage the process, draw up proposals and come up with excellent ideas.

In the meantime

Within the current system, we can benefit from getting together in virtual affinity groups to work with Wikipedia as it is presently as it's in the best interests of scholars, sympathisers, and people directly involved with the subjects being represented in Wikipedia.

Voluntary direct democratic virtual groups can help ensure unintentional misinformation is corrected on subjects they are directly affected by. These groups could be created outside of Wikipedia, with the aim of maintaining information within it.

Each member would take part in maintaining information depending how much work each member within the affinity group has chosen to do.

The creators and users have done a good job with Wikipedia so far; for instance, one page on the site cites anarchism also as libertarianism⁽⁹⁾.

As a result, people new to libertarian ideas may be more inclined to listening to the movement's opinion, history and theory since the term anarchism has sometimes been misinterpreted. But Wikipedia can and should be pushed further.

By Nicholas
Evans



Notes

1. en.wikipedia.org.

2. Regarding Individualist Anarchism in general, Wikipedia states: "Individualist anarchism is seen by many as one of two main categories or wings of anarchism – the other has been called... socialist... anarchism." On Josiah Warren it notes: "Warren's economic theory was by no means a rejection of the "classical" theory of capitalism: if anything, it was an extreme insistence upon the most individualistic features of capitalist economies."

3. Snapshot of Wikipedia.org Retrieved Jan 26, 2009 from: siteanalytics.compete.com/wikipedia.org?metric=uv

4. infoshop.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

5. This method is a familiar social libertarian practice. See for example:

workplace assembly is perfectly able to listen to an engineer, for example, who suggests various ways

of reaching various goals (i.e. if you want X, you would have to do A or B. If you do A, then C, D and E is required. If B is decided upon, then F, G, H and I are entailed). But it is the assembly, not the engineer, that decides what goals and methods to be implemented. As Cornelius Castoriadis puts it, "[w]e are not saying: people will have to decide what to do, and then technicians will tell them how to do it. We say: after listening to technicians, people will decide what to do and how to do it. For the how is not neutral – and the what is not disembodied. What and how are neither identical, nor external to each other. A 'neutral' technique is, of course, an illusion. A conveyor belt is linked to a type of product and a type of producer – and vice versa." [Social and Political Writings, vol. 3, p. 265] McKay, Iain. An Anarchist FAQ: . An Anarchist FAQ Collective: Anarchistfaq.org (1996-present) Retrieved Jan. 23,

2009 from: infoshop.org/faq/secl3.htm

6. Please see Proudhon's Principles of Federation. Vernon, Richard (editor) Proudhon, Joseph-Pierre The Principle of Federation. Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1979

7. Wikipedia. Wikipedia: Policies and Guidelines (date unknown) Retrieved Jan 26, 2009: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Policies_and_guidelines

8. Wikipedia. Wikipedia: Verifiability, No Original Research, Neutral Point of View. (date unknown) Retrieved September, 21 2008 from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability

9. Users of Wikipedia. Libertarianism_ (disambiguation) Libertarian Disambiguation: Wikipedia.org (Date unknown) Retrieved Jan. 24 2009 from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarianism_(disambiguation)

Looking back over

I arrived in Oaxaca in the fall of 2008. My perceptions of the popular uprising that took hold of the city two years before had been shaped almost entirely by what I read on the IndyMedia website. I had heard of an Oaxaca Commune, a place free of state interference and moving towards anarchism.

The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) had held the city for 133 days, days when governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz was forced to flee and no policeman dared show himself, at least in uniform – something that brought crime to record lows.

So I was surprised to see red flags bearing the hammer-and-sickle carried in marches, and rallies where laminated paper icons depicting the holy succession of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin were reverently displayed in front of the stage.

And though the spirit of self-management in Oaxaca was lauded, I attended a rally where activists who publicly advocated an electoral boycott were struck with red flags in front of the cathedral by enraged communists.

Something more complicated had happened here.

Background

In the aftermath of the Zapatista rebellion of 1994, the government of Oaxaca was preoccupied with preventing the spread of armed struggle into their state. They had reason to worry. To name a few examples among many:

In 1977 an unpopular governor had been dislodged by a student movement in the capital.

In 1979, the local section of the government-controlled teacher's union broke away from its national organisation

in a rank-and-file rebellion and began a tradition of annual strikes.

In 1983, indigenous communities in the Sierra Norte regained control of their forests from timber companies, and have since then managed them as cooperative, sustainable enterprises.

And when the government expropriated coastal farmland in Huatulco for a tourist development in 1984, killing peasants who refused to move, it caused such resentment that guerrillas from the Revolutionary Popular Army attacked the town's tourist agency in 1996, leaving nine dead.

Rural appeasement

Facing the widespread feelings of sympathy and solidarity with the Mayan rebels, and careful not to let any sparks get near the tinderbox they anxiously governed, the state decided on a strategy of co-option.

Beginning in 1995, government officials began to negotiate with indigenous groups with the goal of conceding demands for autonomy in exchange for social peace.

By 1998, four-fifths of the municipalities of Oaxaca had abandoned the electoral system for one known as “usos y costumbres”, a traditional method of making decisions in assemblies where the whole village discusses the problems facing their community until consensus is reached.

Public works are constructed through voluntary, unpaid labor contributed by all able-bodied members of the community. Public services are provided through a rotating system of volunteer positions that all the men of the community are expected to serve in throughout their adult lives.

And as it became common in the time of NAFTA for villages to be emptied of able-bodied males who migrated in search of work, women throughout the state began to take on these positions for the first time.

This was also not a strictly ethnic phenomenon. Many villages that did not previously identify themselves as indigenous communities opted for usos y costumbres in order to escape from the control of the government. Graffiti began to appear in many rural areas, warning that

“Here we do not allow political parties, least of all the Institutional Revolutionary Party (the ruling PRI).”

While some of Oaxaca's many rebellions had been based in the state capital, such as the student movement of 1977, the new movement for autonomy based on agrarianism and indigenous tradition was primarily active in the countryside.



Oaxacan anthropologist Benjamin Maldonado, describing the loss of community among migrants to the city of Oaxaca, wrote that “to have a territory as communal property moves people to participate collectively in the decisions over its use and defence.

“Its fragmentation in the urban environment contributes to a feeling of a lack of belonging since the space over which one is responsible is the family home, not the larger community.” As a result, “urban spaces in their immense majority are... those where indifference as a form of relation between neighbors predominates.”

Spark of the Section

So when Section 22 of the teacher's union went on their yearly strike in the city in 2006, it was met with indifference by some, hostility by others. To most the teachers were simply lazy and overpaid professionals who would rather plan a march than a maths lesson.

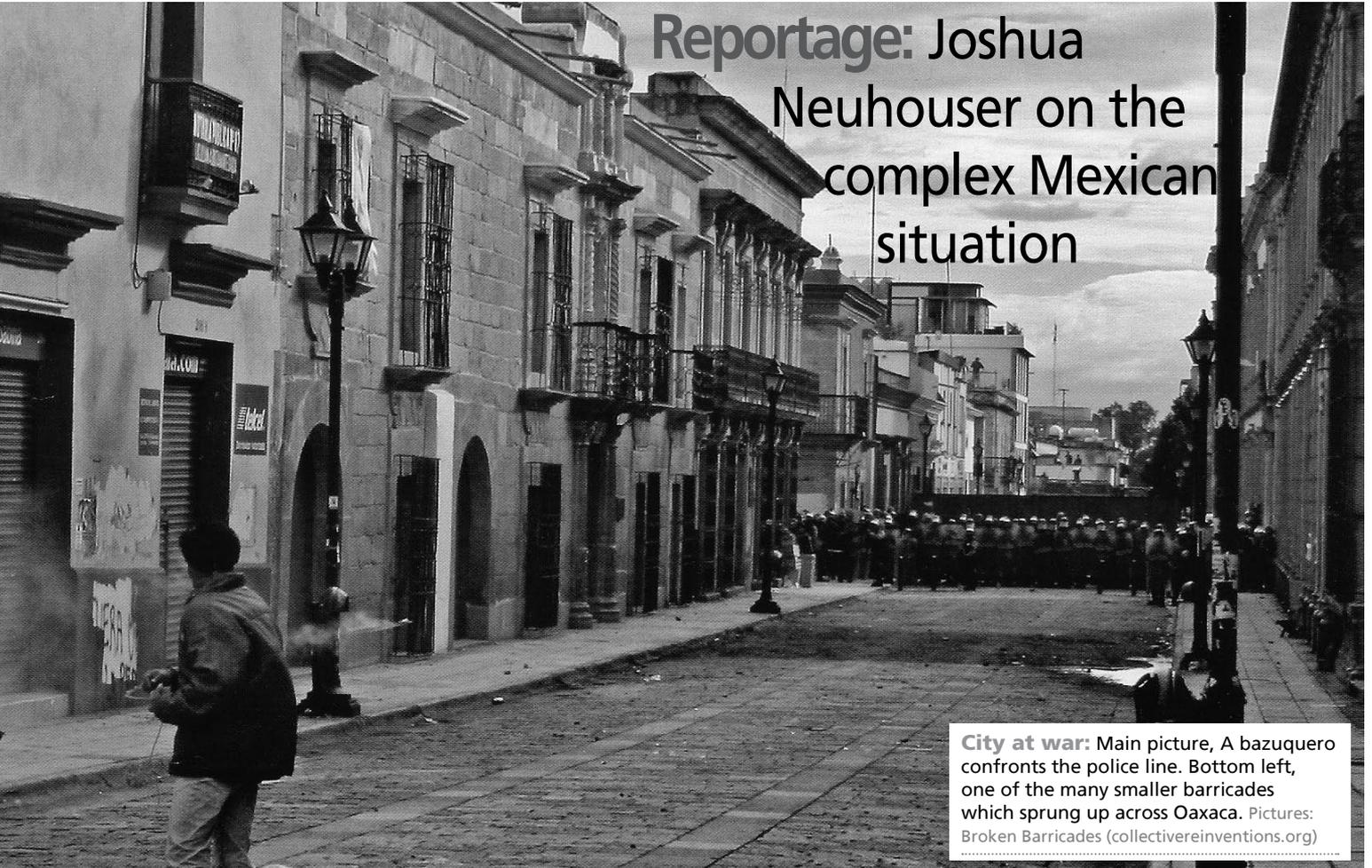
But Oaxaca had been changing, and even city dwellers were increasingly dissatisfied. The state was ruled with an iron fist, a trend which continued under the governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz who had come to power in a blatantly stolen election in 2004.

On the early morning of June 14th, when



Oaxaca's rebellion

Reportage: Joshua Neuhouser on the complex Mexican situation



City at war: Main picture, A bazuquero confronts the police line. Bottom left, one of the many smaller barricades which sprung up across Oaxaca. Pictures: Broken Barricades (collectivereinventions.org)

the police tried to evict an encampment of striking teachers from the city square, they used a level of repression that had not been seen in recent memory.

For those living downtown, this attack was the last straw, and neighbors spilled out of their houses and apartments to defend the teachers despite their previous lack of sympathy with the union's demands. Together they drove the police out of downtown.

But according to one participant in the movement that was to follow, "more important than the victory over the police was the victory over the conservatism of the city."

The rage of the people of the city ran deeper than one confrontation with the authorities, and the teachers found themselves but one voice among many. Everyone had different grievances and different ideologies, but all could agree on one thing: Governor Ulises must go.

It was a demand both broad enough to rally diverse groups behind it, as well as a realistic one, as there were multiple precedents in Oaxacan history of when a governor had been forced down by a popular movement.

A constitutional provision states that if an executive is incapable of maintaining a state of governability, new elections must be held

– and after a thirty-member Coordination Committee was chosen, Oaxacans set out to prove just how ungovernable they were. The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) was born, and a strategy of disrupting the government's work by occupying state buildings was decided upon.

Co-option from the left

Some groups who wished to use APPO for their own ends, typically Marxist-Leninist organisations like the Popular Revolutionary Front (FPR), began to dominate the assembly's meetings. The FPR, which has its strongest base of support in the rank and file of the teacher's union, made up for their lack of numbers in their ability to talk nonstop.

Meeting attendance dropped drastically as a result, and those who stuck it out at committee meetings found most of their energy used up in endless arguments. In the end, the only decisions made by the Coordination Committee that had any impact on the rest of the movement were the dates they fixed for marches.

But for the most part people acted autonomously, either as part of an organisation that made its own decisions, as part of an informal neighbourhood committee, or by themselves.

One of the most famous actions taken during the movement – the occupation of the state-owned television station and its conversion into the women-run Cooking Pot Channel – was planned and carried out entirely outside the consultation of the Coordination Committee.

No one had planned to occupy the television station. A women's march had been organised by the recently-formed Coordinating Committee of Oaxacan Women for August 1st.

The march passed by the state-owned television station, and some of the demonstrators suggested that they demand the microphone in order to counteract the media's misrepresentations of the movement. When they were refused, a brief meeting was held and it was decided to take over the station, which was promptly conceded to them without a fight.

Escalation

August saw a surge of violence on the part of the state government. On the 8th, there was an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the equipment of the movement-friendly Radio Universidad. On August 9th, the wheelchair-



bound teacher and FPR militant Germán Mendoza Nube was kidnapped, and three members of the Movement of Unification and Independent Triqui Struggle – Andrés Santiago Cruz, Pedro Martínez Martínez and his eleven year old grandson Pablo – were murdered.

The next day, the mechanic José Jiménez Colmenares was shot and killed by snipers while he was attending a rally.

After Jiménez's death, the first barricades appeared in Oaxaca.

These tensions began to come to their climax on the week of the 20th, when paramilitaries attacked the women's TV station and destroyed its equipment late at night. The 21st saw the first appearance of what became known as the Caravan of Death – masked policeman in civilian clothes who cruised around the city at night in the backs of pickup trucks, sometimes firing their guns in the air, occasionally shooting at civilians.

Their first casualty was Lorenzo Sampablo Cervantes, killed outside a

fought on the kilometer-long Brenamiel barricade at the entrance to the city, says that the barricades were a focal point of cultural regeneration for those who had been assimilated into the state of individualism dominant in Mexico.

"It was a community where everyone took care of each other. When we were in the barricades, we regrew what was cut by the Spanish invasion.

"People who were conservative before, rediscovered community. Other ideologies, the socialists, the Stalinists, just see the barricades as physical resistance and they don't see the regrowth of a civilization," Venegas explains.

Many were surprised at the social mix found at the barricades. One activist who came from Mexico City, imagining that when he arrived he would encounter "well-theorised" people in Oaxaca, expressed surprise when he realised that the barricades were the work of "people of the town, that don't know how to manage much terminology, don't have doctrines, don't

big claws, but little meat," pointing out that the movement's achievements – including the thousands of barricades and occupation of multiple mass media outlets were out of sync with the rather reformist goal of removing a governor from office.

Nevertheless, he agrees that in some neighbourhoods, the barricades pointed the way towards autonomous community organisation.

Starting in 2007, neighbourhood associations began to pop up in Crespo, Zaachila, and other barrios throughout Oaxaca – and within them, the initiative has primarily been taken up by veterans of the 2006 barricades.

While their level of organisation is admittedly uneven and varies from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, if allowed to develop, these assemblies could provide the bases necessary for properly choosing neighbourhood delegates to a genuine assembly of the peoples of Oaxaca.

A slow state response

The federal government was initially reluctant to respond to the crisis in Oaxaca. It was an election year, and the country was in the middle of a presidential succession crisis.

While outgoing President Vicente Fox constitutionally had the power to remove Ulises Ruiz Ortiz from office and defuse the situation, as had been done many times in the past, his party's candidate, Felipe Calderon, needed the support of the PRI (to which Ulises belonged) in order to maintain his claim to the Presidency.

And so on October 29th, the Federal Preventative Police (PFP) arrived in Oaxaca, putting the city under what amounted to a military occupation.

The downtown core was soon controlled by the federales, but when they tried to capture Radio Universidad on November 2nd, they were confronted by barricaders who had armed themselves with slings, fireworks, and Molotov cocktails.

The fighting was centered around the barricade of Cinco Señores, located near the university at the intersection of three major streets.

Since most of the barricaders were street kids, many were afraid to go near what became known as The Barricade of Death, and some of the barricaders reciprocated with a strong distrust of the better-off activists within the movement.

However, David Venegas has pointed out that as many of these young men were homeless, the barricaders of Cinco Señores became a family of sorts, and they developed a loyalty to each other and to their barricade that could not be matched anywhere else in the city.

In the days before the battle, the mutual distrust had begun to break down as students mixed with street kids mixed with housewives, and it was replaced with a feeling of solidarity that stretched across class lines.

After hours of fighting, the federales were repelled with nothing more than improvised weaponry, and the barricaders celebrated their victory in battle as "something glorious".



Out in the heat: Protestors on June 22 2006.

movement-controlled radio station. But by the third night, barricades had gone up all over the city, representing a major shift in the direction of the movement. As Paul Perez Sampablo, Lorenzo's nephew and a barricadero himself, points out that "after this, the barricades took a different course – before, they had always existed, but they had not been so fortified."

A curfew of sorts was put into place by the people of the city. Paul explains that it was not a strict curfew, that they simply asked people who worked late to please be in their houses before 10pm, because it was easier to tell who was entering the neighbourhood that way.

Cultures collide at the barricades

Some have observed that the neighbourhoods of Oaxaca where the street fighting was fiercest were the ones with the highest number of migrants from the countryside.

Barricade fighter David Venegas, who

have revolutionary manuals."

As Oaxaca's tourist-oriented economy tanked following international warnings of chaos on the streets, people across the city began losing their jobs, and consequently spent all day having political discussions at the barricades.

Ruben Valencia, who was also from the Brenamiel barricade, insists that APPO started backwards – because unlike the assemblies in indigenous communities that are defined by a limited territory and a population with a shared history, APPO began in a conference room reserved at the university. "But APPO found its territory in the barricades."

Benjamin Maldonado believes that these immobile, unorganised barricades signified APPO's crisis of representation. Unlike with assemblies in indigenous communities, based on consensus agreements between all residents, APPO was still only a coalition of organisations and individuals.

"APPO was like a lobster," he says. "It had



Other view: From an APPO council member



Ruben Valencia Nunez is an organiser on the APPO council and active in media, land rights, and social centre groups. He is also lucky to be alive, as he was the victim of an assassination attempt in January 2009. Five men in a car who looked like plain clothes police officers first shouted insults about APPO, then followed him to a cafe and attacked him with a knife on the head and neck.

Ruben was in Scotland earlier this year to give a talk about the situation in Oaxaca. The following is an edited transcript of that talk, in which he describes how he has seen the APPO's birth and growth:

APPO was peaceful and from the grassroots. Despite media lies, there were no leaders. Decisions were taken in popular assemblies. The government tried two different ways to defeat the movement.

Firstly they tried buying off the "leaders" through bribes and secondly they used death squads. Then, from December 2006 to January 2007, the main noise in Oaxaca was of sirens, helicopters and police boots.

A study by a human rights organisation from Barcelona described it as a strategy by the government to repress the entire people of Oaxaca, because they could not cut off the head.

From December 25th a blackout was imposed on information from the city. In working class and poor neighbourhoods there were death squads in cars and on motorcycles without licence plates. The government through the mass media tried to create paranoia, claiming they were combating the narcotics trade.

A secret meeting of progressives in 2008 discussed why the uprising hadn't been able to get rid of the state governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. They concluded it was for two reasons.

1. In 2006 the Zapatistas had been running

the Other Campaign, there was the campaign of Obrador, the candidate of the Party of Democratic Revolution, plus a citizens' movement campaign tour protesting over electoral fraud. In such a context Oaxaca, as a symbol of grassroots popular struggle, could have inspired nationwide uprisings and had to be stopped.

2. Ortiz had worked with the Federal Government and multinationals on mines, biopiracy, high speed railways and hydro-electro dams. The movement has identified many companies in Europe, as well as China and Japan, working with the Oaxaca and Federal governments against the peoples' wishes. He was a valuable asset to them, worth defending.

Yet today, despite the repression, APPO and the popular movement is succeeding in other ways.

Not one major corporate project has been implemented, but there are lots of new initiatives: city farms, drinking water projects, new ways of exchange and economics like LETS, and self-managed education. There were 50 community radio stations before the repression, now there are 160-170.

There are not just political organisations

in the movement, but also grassroots organisations. Two examples:

1. A working class neighbourhood had no drinking water. It made demands and struggled with APPO for alternatives to problems with sanitation and polluted rivers. They built compost toilets and collected rain water for drinking. The construction of the water system was self-managed, and independent of government.

2. A poor neighbourhood assembly elected a representative to APPO. Before this they had a PRI-run structure connected to the local council. They had no public space, but wanted a cultural centre for young people and children. They put the demand to the council who agreed after a year. Politicians wanted the credit, but this was rejected as the centre was built by the contributions of the people.

The politicians in Oaxaca are corrupt. The future is widespread popular assemblies, self-organisation, not voting for politicians.

The Oaxaca proposal today is for the grassroots to come together, the indigenous people, the students, the anti-privatisation trade unions to create a constituent assembly with the aim of a new constitution from below.

Conference09

Report: What happened and what's next for the anarchist hooah

When the Anarchist Movement conference ended back in June 2009 most people thought it a worthwhile experience and on balance that it should happen again soon. The feeling was definitely positive and five or six embryonic groups came out of the final session.

Oh, how memories fade. Once the conference was over the knives came out! There was criticism on internet discussion lists over the topics picked and the people allowed in – even though in the pre publicity and on the day it was stated these were just suggestions. Any group could pick all, some or none of the topics suggested. And yes, we did forget to employ the anarcho police to check everybody's credentials.

But for me at least, the conference was meant to be a small part of trying to bring together our disjointed movement. The national organisations have their conferences; Earth First! have their gatherings; there is Climate Camp; some local areas have regional events, as do single issue campaigns and groups active in identity politics.

But, where is the space where these, and all the rest of us can come together, sit down and discuss the issues which affect us all and can look at how we move forward as one (many parted) movement?

Ok, there's the Anarchist Bookfair in London and as an event I love it – I would, I help organise it. But this can never fulfil the remit for a national Anarchist conference. The format is just too different to try and combine the two.

If we intend to be a threat as a movement or ideology we need somewhere we can all come together; discuss how we relate to each other; work out what we really agree and disagree on; and start discussing a movement wide strategy for the coming



Crowded: The final day of the conference saw everyone gather to talk through the discussion they had in their groups

months, years and yes, decades. may not have got it quite right. But, without it, or something similar, how do we move forward outside of the remits of our national organisation, local areas, single issue or identity politics groups? I feel one way is the yearly conference. So, should we have one in 2010? I say yes.

London?

In 2009 the conference was very London dominated, and I guess was always going to be. This needs to change. The venue needs to move around the country. The organising group needs more input from people outside the capital. Organising meetings need looking at. But, this will only happen if others take up this call.

Format

I feel the format worked. Breaking into small groups means less confident participants were more comfortable about speaking. The idea of having pre set topics worked both in June and at a similar event in Bradford in 1998.

Hopefully, for future conferences more contributions would come in about subjects for discussion and maybe we could produce discussion documents in advance to get participants thinking.

Like the London bookfair I suggest the conference would grow in importance and size over the years.

Although it took place over two day of intense discussions, I feel the conference was not long enough – most groups only scratched the surface. Should future

events be over a bank holiday weekend with people registering on the Friday night and the conference lasting Saturday to Monday? With more time, the final session could be more productive as well.

What's next?

All this can all be argued over. The question is "is there a will to do it and a belief that it's needed?"

This is something the wider movement will need to decide. As a first step towards this, there's an open meeting at the London Anarchist Bookfair.

Finally, somebody recently told me they didn't come to the conference as they thought it was about setting up another national organisation. We have several national organisations already. We have numerous local groups. We have abundant single issue campaigns we are involved in.

For me, as I have said already, the Anarchist Movement conferences should be a vehicle to bring all these together, to see how we can work together, understand each other (outside of cyberspace) and have a co-ordinated strategy for seriously looking at bringing about an anarchist society.

If we are not serious about our beliefs, why the fuck are we involved!

■ You can join the Anarchism'10 email list at mail.haringey.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/conference10_haringey.org.uk



Tony Wood,
organiser

For me at least, the conference was meant to be a small part of trying to bring together our disjointed movement.

months, years and yes, decades.

Discussion boards and the like can't do this. So, until somebody comes up with something better, I suggest all we have is the (possibly) yearly Anarchist Movement Conference.

No, it is not perfect. The first time we

By Tony
Wood



In defence of migrants

The No Borders camp in Calais took place from June 23-29 2009 and made national headlines as it attempted to bring together residents of The Jungle, a migrant camp on the French coast, with local people, publicising the situation there as they went.

Here, a member of No Borders who attended the camp writes about what they wanted to achieve and the reactions the group was faced with upon its return.

RIOT POLICE STOP ANARCHIST ASSAULT ON BRITAIN'S BORDERS was the Daily Mail headline ahead of the No Borders camp.

But while the quiet convergence subsequently passed largely unremarked, newspapers from the Guardian to the Telegraph ran vivid features on what the camp encountered, documenting migrant lives in Calais with varying degrees of sympathy.

These were prompted by government talks and the opening of the UN office, but reflected and refracted our experiences.

In Calais, the externalisation of the British border to France creates a situation of direct struggle between authoritative oppression and people who do not obey these restrictions. On their way to Britain thousands camp in the vicinity of Calais, harassed by oppressive state policies.

In solidarity with those who enact their opposition to control and global inequality by moving across borders in search of better lives, the No Borders Camp aimed to demonstrate (and act) against the state's claim to control the movement of people.

The No Borders position and anarchism share a mutual enemy: borders as an institutionalisation of authority.

Alas, upon our return from the Calais No Border camp we noticed a surprising development. While in continental Europe anarchists mobilise in solidarity with migrants facing the xenophobic responses to the recession (at the Calais demonstration there was a large turnout of French anarchist groups and CNT syndicalists), in the UK some anarchists have begun to question such actions.

To us it seems like this is the result of a false opposition of class and immigrant solidarity.

The 'English' anarchists – of that identity they seem to be proud – write on blogs and discussion forums that they will stand in defence of the working class when the "liberals" of No Borders abolish immigration controls in favour of capitalist exploitation.

There is Matt D., member of the IWW and Liberty & Solidarity who blogs at 'workers self organisation'. He draws a distinction that could have come straight from a primitivist or gated-communities pamphlet: "No borders... or community control of resources".

The No Borders position for him is "un-anarchist" as it "can only be realised if some large international body enforces it".

Or take 9/11 Cultwatch writer Paul Stott who finds it hard to believe that anarchists would "travel to another country" in

solidarity with migrants rather than staying here in solidarity with workers facing recession.

Even Class War founder Ian Bone on his blog defines class struggle in national terms: "it's our England we will fight for". Paul Stott again adds to this a typical expression of labour movement nationalism: "Is there anything more likely to drive down existing wages than mass immigration?"

We do welcome discussion and criticism, even and especially of the fundamentals of our theory and practice. We are not shy of debate and hope that in the near future we can continue and exchange with the 'English' class struggle anarchists.

For now, in the constraints of a short article, we want to briefly respond to four frequent statements from within that movement that we have disagreed with.

No borders would benefit capitalism

You will have probably observed that, today, movement is increasingly free – just so long as it is profitable. To say that capitalism would benefit from no borders is to overlook the role border control has served and continues to serve in the maintenance of an exploitative status quo. It is one of the primary means through which labour-power is disciplined and global divisions of labour, privilege and power are enforced. At the border the abstract logic of profit confronts the lived reality of our lives. Hence the border, like the factory, is both a site of suffering and a vector of antagonism.

No borders is utopian

Yes, but only if you think like a state. 'But how can you make this work, it's unmanageable, it's not practical,' the anxious statesman will cry. From the perspective of the state, no borders is indeed utopian – a place that could not be.

For us, no borders is an axiom of political action, a principle of equality from which concrete, practical consequences must be drawn. It means recognising, on the basis of our equality, solidarity in struggle irrespective of origins. There is nothing less utopian and nothing more immediately practical than this.

An anarchist society would have community borders

The border traces "inside" and "outside". What is outside is perceived as dangerous and a threat to the inside, hence the 'need' for a border. The security that the border offers is essentially imposed externally and with reference to this threat.

But there is another kind of security, one created internally through cooperation and mutual support. There is nothing in this kind of security which necessitates

the exclusionary and violent practices of bordering. It is this latter kind of cooperative security which we are hoping to create.

National culture should be reclaimed

The nation state is a modern/recent form of sovereignty based (not solely) on forms of cultural nationalism which in turn are achieved through the glorification of typically 'English' traditions and stereotypes. We do not aim to undermine or ignore the history and traditions of struggle in the UK. Rather our aim is to undermine static conceptions of culture or community that create imagined divisions between 'us' and 'them'; divisions that have very real consequences for those who find they cannot, or do not want, to fit into these rigidly-defined identities.

For us it seems that rather than attempting to transcend notions of class (domination), this 'English' anarchism appeals to an affirmative cultural identity of class. We feel that we need to abandon such sociological concepts of class for revolutionary perspectives of social struggle.

Not everyone sees the distinction between class struggle and migrant solidarity. Let's conclude with a comment by 'Alessio', who defends the no borders position in a reply to Paul Stott: "As the 'English' anarchists ponder on their next move, it seems like every other anarchist movement across Europe strides confidently forward.

"I see a pattern emerging here, maybe we should be more confident in anarchist politics and how we express them rather than continuously feel that we should pander or apologise to certain sections of the class in the UK".

By Manchester
No Borders



Solidarity: The march in Calais

Was Nietzsche really

Friedrich Nietzsche has been placed at different points along the political spectrum by different readers and thinkers. Some regard him as an anarchist, while for others, his work laid the foundations for fascism and Nazism.

This should come as no surprise, as his philosophy has developed a reputation for self-contradiction, and he largely declined to make definitive statements on political philosophy (He must have been thinking of himself when he wrote that “It must be more than ever permissible for some people to keep aloof from politics...”⁽²⁾).

Anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman called him a “giant mind”⁽³⁾, while the anarchist communist Pyotr Kropotkin listed “the works of Nietzsche” as texts which “are full of ideas which show how closely anarchism is interwoven with the work that is going on in modern thought”⁽⁴⁾.

Analysis: Claimed by many, just what was the great philosopher?

rest principally on the idea of sacrifice.” The similarities are clear.

In one of his more anarchist-esque aphorisms, Nietzsche forewarns us that “socialism may serve to teach, very brutally and impressively, the danger of all accumulation of state power⁽⁸⁾.” He finishes the paragraph with “the cry... ‘as little state as possible’.”

This echoes Paine’s “that government is best which governs least”, or in Thoreau’s more libertarian words, “that government is

reawakens... the long-buried horrors and extravagances of remotest ages”, and in which he goes on to say that “an overthrow” can never be “a perfecter of human nature”.

Thus it becomes clear that there is a gulf between Nietzschean and anarchist philosophy. Nietzsche advocates revolution not to uncover the charity and cooperation in human nature, but to uncover the animality and brutality in it.

This is not a traditional anarchist view, and Nietzsche also opposes traditional anarchist thought in that he leads a sustained attack against egalitarian ideals; for Nietzsche, humans are ranked according to their gender⁽¹⁰⁾ and the nobility of their soul⁽¹¹⁾.

His generalisations regarding races and cultures also suggest a racist mind although contrary to the popular image engendered by his association with fascism, he is not overtly racist in most of his work⁽¹²⁾.

As part of this anti-egalitarian stance, Nietzsche argues that “Every elevation of the type ‘man’ has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society – and so will it always be”, “requiring slavery in some form or another”.

For Nietzsche, this “long scale of gradations of rank” is not based on socioeconomic classes, but classes built upon biological, psychological and cultural differences. The aristocracy are not necessarily made up of the richest men, but of the “more complete men”⁽¹³⁾.

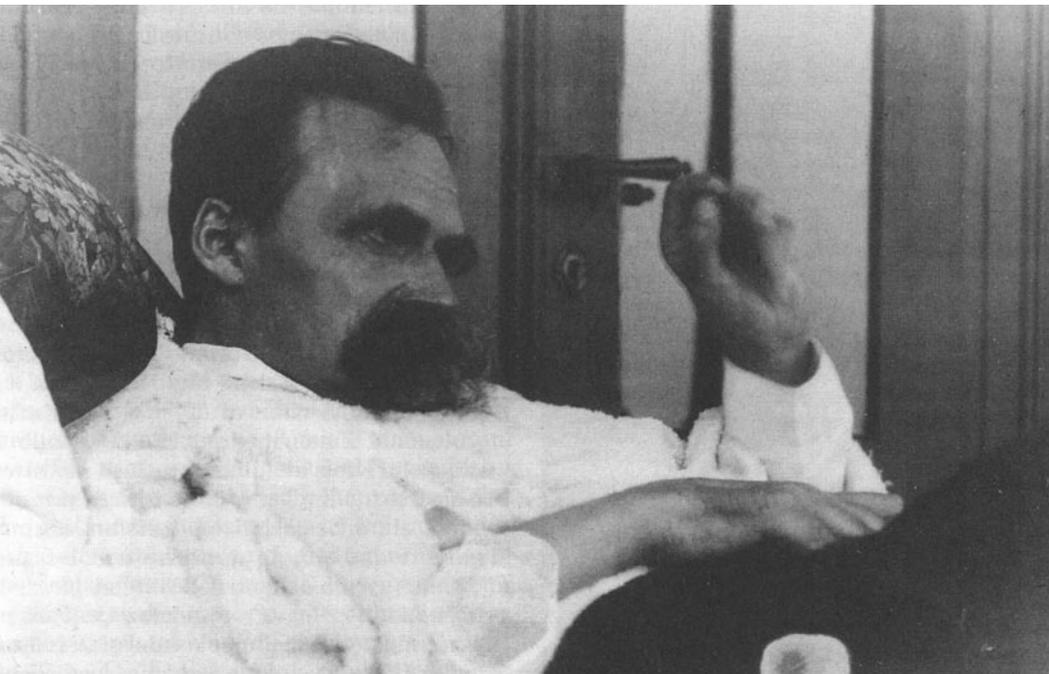
Nietzsche made disparaging remarks about anarchists because he (correctly) saw them as opposed to this principle of hierarchy. For him, anarchism (like socialism) was a manifestation of christian morality and the modern “democratic impulse”, or a “new buddhism” (a religion he despised nearly as much as christianity⁽¹⁴⁾).

The concepts appear to be wrapped up in his mind for more than one reason. “The christian is nothing more than an anarchical Jew”, states *The Antichrist*, aphorism 44.

Among these derogatory comments, there are two that I am aware of that explicitly use the word anarchist (there are other references to socialism which could apply equally to anarchism in Nietzsche’s mind, and in some cases, he may be conflating the two, particularly as he is known to have read few primary texts on either subject⁽¹⁵⁾), and both refer to culture⁽¹⁶⁾.

As mentioned previously, Nietzsche considered the interests of culture to come before the interests of politics.

Therefore the phrase “anarchist dogs who now roam the alleys of European culture” and a similar damning comment about anarchists as the swamp of European



Conflicted: Above and right, Friedrich Nietzsche’s politics are hotly debated.

Famous for writing that “God is dead” (and we, allegedly, are his murderers)⁽⁵⁾, the German philosopher denounced religion in general and christianity in particular, as well as the state, which he declared was an “antagonist” of culture⁽⁶⁾.

Nietzsche emphasised the importance of culture, so this slight amounts to a great criticism in his mind. From these general points it is clear how he garnered respect from leading anarchists.

Nietzsche’s anti-christian comments were harsh and relentless, and should interest not only because of the committed anti-theism which he held in common with most anarchist thinkers, but also because of their similar content and style. In ‘Beyond Good And Evil’, Nietzsche writes of “The great ladder of religious cruelty”, and goes on to explain the importance of sacrifice in religion⁽⁷⁾; in ‘God And The State’, Bakunin tells us that “all religions are cruel... all

best which governs not at all”.

Although it cannot be established beyond doubt that Nietzsche is endorsing this cry, we can judge by the context that he probably does approve of it (at least when opposed to the alternative – “as much state as possible”).

Elsewhere, he writes that “No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself”, sharing the sentiment expressed by South American revolutionaries as “It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees”. Furthermore, “an overthrow [of the state]... may possibly be a source of strength to a deteriorated humanity⁽⁹⁾”.

It seems so far that Nietzsche is a champion of revolution, freedom and atheism, and thus of anarchism.

It is important, however, to understand this latter quote in context; it comes from a passage in which Nietzsche has already declared that “every such overthrow

of anarchist stock?⁽¹⁾

culture in an unpublished notebook⁽¹⁷⁾ should be interpreted at least as severely as his earlier comments about the State, over which Nietzsche prioritised “culture”.

Nietzsche also clearly opposed anarchist thought with his principle of the Will To Power, by which he suggested that “obedience is the natural order of things⁽¹⁸⁾”.

We can see now that, beyond his hatred for Church and State, Nietzsche shared few political traits common to most anarchists.

His philosophy was radically individualistic, set itself in opposition to “a common green pasture of happiness for the herd⁽¹⁹⁾”, was pessimistic about human nature, and denied the equality of men (let alone women).

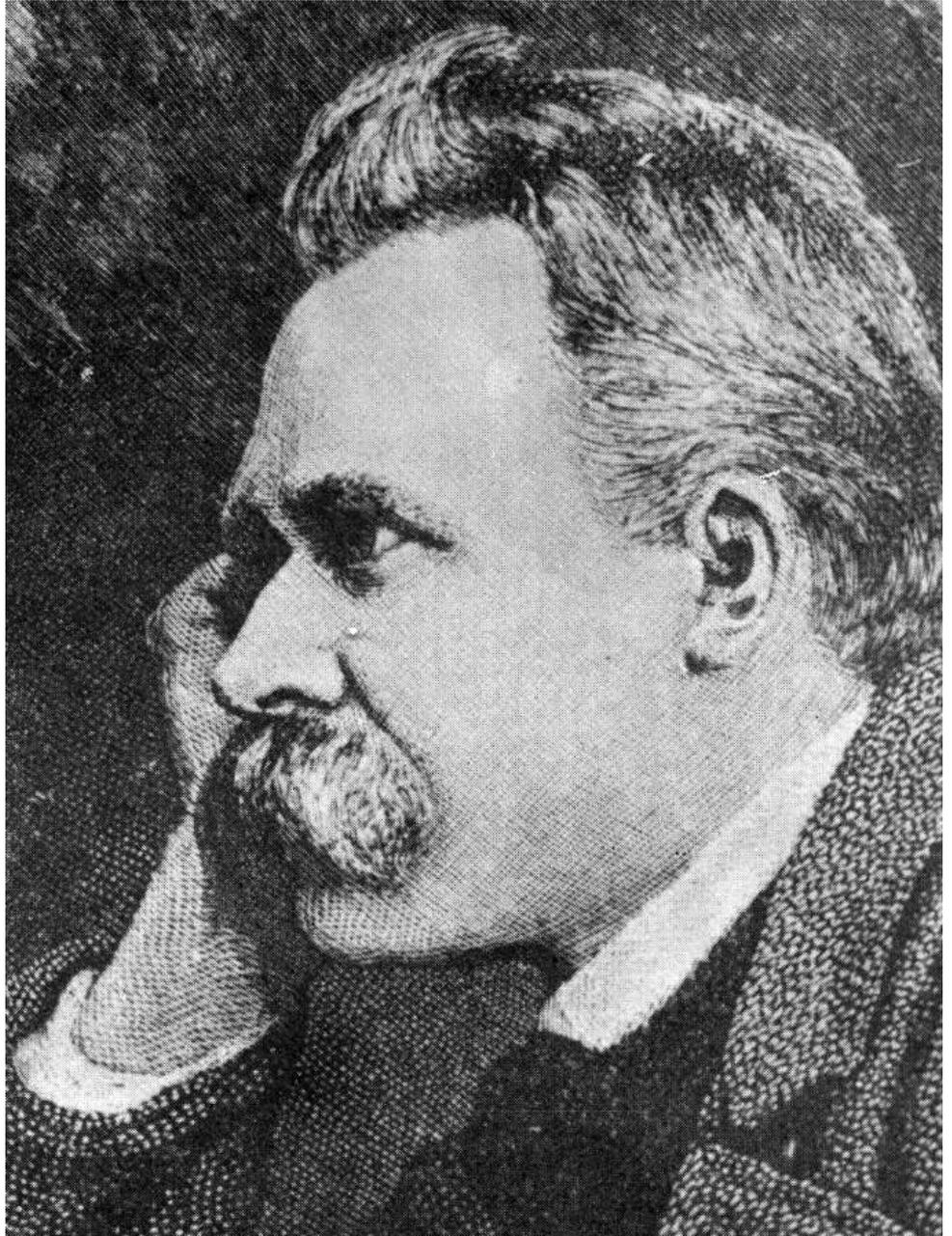
The adoption of Nietzsche by some anarchists may have had more to do with his drastic stance on the nature of truth, and other more broad philosophical problems than his political pronouncements.

Nietzsche’s claim that there is no truth, only subjective interpretations or perspectives⁽²⁰⁾, his advocacy of far-reaching sociocultural change in general, the projects of aesthetic self-creation and the transvaluation of values that he set for the coming “Free Spirits” and his rejection of bourgeois morality (and often, it seems, morality per se) may be the reasons for his influence in the ‘autonomous Left’, ranging from anarchist communists to avante-garde artists, from situationists to students.

In conclusion, we must sum up the tension between Nietzsche’s hostility towards anarchism and his apparent support for some of its principles, albeit in an Egoist fashion, rather than a social one.

An assessment of Nietzsche’s philosophy by Benjamin Tucker may be the best way to approach the question this article attempts to answer.

Tucker wrote: “Nietzsche says splendid things – often, indeed, anarchist things – but he is no anarchist⁽²¹⁾.”



By Luke
Hawksbee



Notes

1. After drafting the basis of this essay, I encountered a text by the title of ‘Nietzsche: Socialist, Anarchist, Feminist’, by Robert C. Holub, while researching more detail. After a cursory glance, I realised that many of the points that I had touched on were also mentioned in Holub’s essay. The similarities in the material we each covered are evident, but I hope my article will be of use as a different perspective or a basic introduction upon which Holub’s essay could be considered an elaboration. Those interested in this topic should use Holub’s article as a starting point for further research.

2. HH 438

3. ‘Anarchism And Other Essays’ (Preface), Goldman

4. This can apparently be found in the ‘Encyclopedia Britannica’ (11th Edition), under ‘Anarchism’, although the quote was taken from a reproduction of the article in another source (‘Anarchism: A Collection Of Revolutionary Writings’, Kropotkin)

5. GS 125

6. TI: What The Germans Lack 4

7. BGE 55

8. HH 473

9. HH 463

10. Interestingly, Nietzsche writes in HH 377 that “The perfect woman is a higher type of humanity than the perfect man”, but follows it up by adding that the perfect woman is “much rarer”; on the whole, Nietzsche’s thoughts on women are misogynistic, as in BGE 144 - “When a woman has scholarly inclinations, there is generally something wrong with her sexual nature”.

11. BGE 263 – one can “determine the ultimate value of a soul, the unalterable, innate order of rank to which it belongs”.

12. That is not to say that his texts do not contain any racist-sounding comments, but Nietzsche was less racist than many of his contemporaries. He suggests that a “Negro” may be used to approximate “pre-historical man”, but this appears to be based on

inept anthropology and biology, rather than spite.

13. BGE 257

14. BGE 202

15. For instance, despite all his criticism of Socialism, he did not read Marx, and his sister claimed he had not read Stirner, although others dispute this and claim not only that he did so, but also that Stirner was a major influence in Nietzsche’s philosophy. He appears to have known few Socialist or Anarchist thinkers by name, given that he rarely refers to any individual, contrary to his habit of referring to other philosophers by their names and/or precise descriptions. Blanqui’s famous quote “Neither God nor master” is merely referred to as “a Socialist motto” without attribution in BGE.

16. BGE 202

17. ‘Nietzsche: Socialist, Anarchist, Feminist’, Holub

18. BGE 188

19. BGE 44

20. OTL 1, OTL 2, BGE: Prejudices Of Philosophers

21. ‘Nietzsche: Socialist, Anarchist, Feminist’, Holub

Ethel MacDonald

A working class girl from Scotland, she would become a heroine of revolutionary Spain



Biography: Saluting the Scots Scarlet Pimpernel

Ethel MacDonald (1909–1960)
Anarchist, feminist, broadcaster and publisher

This year saw the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ethel MacDonald. Ethel was one of nine children, born into a working class family from Bellshill, which is two miles north of Motherwell, once the steel capital of Scotland, which lies some 12 miles south east of Glasgow.

She left the family home at the age of 16 and very soon got involved in politics. Writer Rhona M Hodgart describes her as a “feminist, opposed to the economic and political domination of women and a strenuous fighter on behalf of the rights of women and the working class.”

In 1925 she joined the Independent Labour Party. Gradually moving towards an anarchist position, she joined the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation in 1931. In 1934 there was a split in the APCF, with Guy Aldred, one of its founders, leaving to found the United Socialist Movement. Ethel followed Aldred and remained a member of the USM until her death in 1960.

However, Ethel is perhaps best remembered for the relatively short time she spent in Spain between 1936 and 1937.

Spain in 1936 was a turbulent arena of civil war, revolution and conflicting and competing political ideologies.

In 1936 Andre Prudhommeaux from the French Anarchist Federation, one of the co-coordinators for recruiting foreign volunteers, contacted Aldred requesting a delegate from the Scottish Anarchist Movement. Aldred felt that Ethel, as USM Secretary, was the ideal candidate.

However, Aldred's choice of delegate proved to be unpopular with Jenny Patrick from the APCF. Jenny believed that she was better qualified to represent the movement as she had been an anarchist since 1914. Jenny was duly co-opted as an APCF delegate and Aldred sent them both!

A travel fund was launched in Glasgow to send them on their way. They left Glasgow bound for London on October 20th, 1936. More money was raised at Hyde Park meetings to send them to Paris. Once in Paris, and almost penniless, they hitch-hiked to Spain.

Arriving in Perpignan, on the France-Spain border, and close to Barcelona, exhausted and starving, they were met by Prudhommeaux.

The women were then smuggled across the border to the safe-keeping of Augustin Souchy, whose job it was, amongst many other things, to meet and greet new arrivals.

Ethel was designated to help set up an English Language section of the CNT-FAI Information Service in Barcelona. She was to become a highly-respected and influential radio presenter and a prolific writer of letters and reports on events taking place in Spain, and Barcelona in particular. Jenny was initially directed to the Ministry of Information in Madrid.

Ethel was to become an eye-witness to the so-called May Days - the stalinist counter-revolution and atrocities against libertarian

communists in Barcelona in May 1937. In particular comrades from the CNT-FAI and POUM, the Workers Party of Marxist Unity, were targeted.

The purges were conducted by the pro-Soviet PSUC and the PCE, the combined socialist and communist parties of Catalonia and the Communist Party of Spain, in the “interests” of the Republican government.

Ethel's reports proved to be invaluable. They were amongst the first out of Spain to inform the world of the attacks, imprisonments and assassinations, conducted in the name of ‘socialism’, against anti-Stalinist revolutionaries and indeed, the true nature of the pro-Soviet communist parties.

Following the May Days and the subsequent round-up of militants, Ethel set herself the task of supporting incarcerated comrades. She smuggled information both in and out of the prisons; as well as helping

I returned full of sadness, dulled by the tragedy I have seen’.

After a period of convalescence Ethel embarked upon a vigorous lecture tour of the UK and Europe, championing the anarchist cause in Spain and never missing the opportunity to attack the Stalinists.

Over the next twenty years or so Ethel immersed herself in the work of the USM and its publishing wing, the Strickland Press.

In February 1958 Ethel had a seemingly minor accident. She was standing on a box in the Strickland Press print room, attempting to reach the jammed distribution bar. She appeared to lose her balance and fall.

John Taylor Caldwell noted in his autobiography *With Fate Conspire*; “I made a jocular remark, but she didn't respond. Her face looked pale and frightened. I asked if she had hurt herself; she replied that she hadn't, but that her left leg had suddenly given way and felt weak.”

Factfile: Ethel MacDonald (1909-1960)

In late 1940 Ethel received her call-up papers. She wrote across them in blue pencil “GET LOST”, and posted them back. Some weeks later she received further notification reminding her of the serious consequences of not complying with the Act. Her response on this occasion was to write in large blue letters, “COME AND GET ME”.

- One of nine children, she left home at 16, initially joining the Independent Labour Party.
- In 1931 she met Guy Aldred, the influential anarchist and an editor of Freedom newspaper, and became active in the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation.
- In 1934 she joined Guy in forming the United Socialist Movement (USM). She would remain close to the comrades in this group until her death.
- The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 saw her efforts, along with those of the USM, put into

supporting the fighters of the CNT.

- On October 20, 1936 she set out for Spain to join the anarchists there and become their English-language voice.
- Her subsequent radio bulletins, which lasted until the left split in May 1937, made her an international star.
- She was eventually forced to flee, arriving back in Glasgow in November of that year.
- She would spend the next 22 years fighting for the anarchist cause and was a key figure in the Strickland Press.
- She contracted Multiple Sclerosis in 1958, and died two years later.

numerous foreign anarchists escape from Spain.

Her exploits captured the imagination of the British Press, who dubbed her the “Scots Scarlet Pimpernel”. Eventually her endeavours culminated in her own imprisonment. Forever the activist and thorn in the side of authority, she was involved in organising hunger strikes whilst behind bars.

She was released after several days, seemingly after the intervention of Fenner Brockway, a highly-respected and influential British ILP member and former Member of Parliament. Having no papers and fearful of re-arrest she went underground and had to be smuggled out of Spain.

Upon her eventual return to Scotland the Glasgow Evening Citizen reported: “There was sadness in Ethel MacDonald's face as she said: ‘I went to Spain full of hopes and dreams. It promised to be utopia realised.

Initially she was diagnosed as suffering from rheumatism. Further tests revealed she was actually suffering from a particularly virulent strain of multiple sclerosis.

A year from the accident she lost the use of both arms and both legs. Along with her family, she was nursed at home by her close comrades Jenny Patrick, John Taylor Caldwell and Guy Aldred.

By the end of 1959 she was totally paralysed. She died in Knightswood Hospital, Glasgow, with her comrades by her side, on December 1st, 1960, following an admission for acute pneumonia.

There was no funeral. Ethel bequeathed her body for medical research to the Anatomical Department of Glasgow University.

**By Ade
Dimmick**



Damn parliament,

*Ethel MacDonald was a prolific journalist and much of her recorded work survives. Below we reproduce one of her speeches broadcast on Radio Barcelona and published later in the year in the CNT's *Regeneración* newspaper.*

Tomorrow, Saturday, the 20th of February, 1937, is the date fixed by the Sub-Committee of Non-intervention, sitting in London, for the commencement of the ban on volunteers for Spain.

Volunteers to Spain! From where have these volunteers come? Italy has sent, not volunteers, but conscripts. Germany landed in Spanish territory not volunteers, but conscripts.

The army of rebel Franco consists, not of volunteers, but of conscript Moors, conscript Germans, conscript Italians, all bent on making Spain a fascist colony and Africa a fascist hell, with the defeat and the



Passionate voice: Ethel MacDonald saw parliamentarianism as tantamount to surrender

retreat of democracy everywhere.

The situation today proves the truth of the words of St. Simon and of Proudhon that parliamentarianism is the road to militarism, that parliamentary democracy is impossible, and that mankind must accept industrial democracy, revolutionary syndicalism.

But syndicalism and industrial democracy do not imply trades unionism which is the British idea of organisation and action. If mankind is not prepared to accept this, then the only other alternative is a retreat to barbarism and militarism. An insistence on parliamentary so-called democracy is merely playing with freedom and in effect, retreating to militarism. The progressive conquest of political power under capitalism is a snare and a delusion. The present

Radical Reprint: Ethel

MacDonald railed against the inactivity of the British left as thousands died fighting fascism

situation in Germany illustrates this truth very clearly.

If parliamentary socialism had any worth whatever, this could never have taken place. Germany could have given the world the example that would have set alight the fires of world revolution. But Germany failed because of this paralysing belief in parliamentarianism and this disbelief in the power and initiative of the working class.

It has been left to Spain, with its anarcho-syndicalism, to do what Germany should have done. And this paralysis extends to other countries that still believe in the power of parliament as an emancipating weapon of the proletariat. It should act as such but that is beyond its power. Belief in parliament does not lead to freedom, but leads to the emancipation of a few selected persons at the expense of the whole of the working class.

What are the actions of the parliamentary parties with regard to support of the Spanish struggle? They talk, they discuss, they speak with bated breath of the horrors that are taking place in Spain. They gesticulate, they proclaim to the world their determination to assist Spain and to see that Fascism is halted; and that is all they do. Talk of what they will do. This would not matter if it were not for the fact that the workers, through a disbelief in their own power to do something definite, collaborate with them in this playing with words.

Comrades, fellow workers, of what use are your meetings that pass pious resolutions, that exhibit Soldiers of the International Column, provide entertainment, make collections and achieve nothing? This is not the time for sympathy and charity. This is the time for action.

Do you not understand that every week, every day and every hour counts. Each hour that passes means the death of more Spanish men and women, and yet you advertise meetings, talk, arrange to talk and fail to take any action.

Your leaders ask questions in parliament, in the senate, collect in small committees and make arrangements to send clothes and food to the poor people of Spain who are menaced by this horrible monster of fascism, and in the end, do nothing.

We welcome every man that comes to Spain to offer his life in the cause of freedom. But of what use are these volunteers if we have no arms to give them? We want arms,

ammunition, aeroplanes, all kinds of war material. Your brothers who come to us to fight and have no arms to fight with are also being made a jest of by your inaction.

We want the freedom of the Mediterranean. We want our rights, the rights that are being taken from us by the combined efforts of international capitalism. You have permitted Franco to have soldiers and arms and aeroplanes and ammunition. Your government, in the name of democracy, have starved the government and workers of Spain, and now they have decided to ban arms, ban volunteers, to the government of the Spanish workers.

Your government, workers of the world,



Ethel
MacDonald

Of what use are your meetings that pass pious resolutions... provide entertainment, make collections and achieve nothing?

are assisting in the development of fascism. They are conniving at the defeat of the workers' cause, and you tamely accept this or merely idly protest against it. Workers, your socialism and your communism are worthless.

Your democracy is a sham, and that sham is fertilising the fields of Spain with the blood of the Spanish people. Your sham democracy is making the men, women and children of Spain the sod of Fascism. The workers of Spain bid you cry, "Halt!" The workers of Spain bid you act!

I, myself, was in Scotland when sanctions were proposed on behalf of Ethiopia. The Labour Party there threatened war. The Trades Unions threatened war. The Communist Party threatened war. The threats wore off, and Italy seized the land of Ethiopia, and despite the continued protests from various persons, Italy has commenced the exploitation of Abyssinia. Ethiopia is

raise your guns!

now the colony of Italy.

But Abyssinia is not Spain. Despite its history, Abyssinia is a wild and undeveloped country and may, indeed, in some parts, be semi-savage. But Spain is a land of culture and more important, a land of proletarian development, and it is menaced by the hireling Franco because it possesses proletarian culture.

And Franco is assisted by Hitler and Mussolini and all the hordes of international capitalism because of the wealth contained within its territory, and to gain possession of that wealth for purposes of further exploiting the working class and for their own personal aggrandisement, they are prepared to massacre the whole of the Spanish working class. For what are the lives of the workers to them? Labour is cheap, and is easily replaceable.

And you, parliamentarians, you so-called socialists, talk and talk, and know not how to act. Nor when to act. For Spain, you are not even prepared to threaten war.

Non-intervention, as a slogan, is an improvement on sanctions. It is even more radically hypocritical.

It is more thorough and deliberate lying, for non-intervention means the connived advance of fascism. This cannot be disputed. Under the cloak of non-intervention, Hitler and Mussolini are being assisted in their wanton destruction of Spain. Non-intervention gives them the excuse to do nothing, and behind the scenes to supply these European maniacs with all that they require.

Your governments are not for non-intervention. They stand quite definitely for intervention, intervention on behalf of their friends and allies, Hitler and Mussolini. Your governments and your leaders have many points in common with these two scoundrels. All of them lack decency, human understanding, and intelligence. They are virtually the scum of the earth, the dregs that must be destroyed.

Comrades, workers, Malaga has fallen. Malaga was betrayed and you too were betrayed, for you have witnessed not merely the fall of Malaga but the fall of a key defence of world democracy, of workers' struggle, of world liberty, of world emancipation. Malaga fell; you, the world proletariat, were invaded: and you talk. Talk and lament and sigh and fear to act! Tomorrow, Madrid may be bombed once more.

Barcelona may be attacked. Valencia may be attacked, and still you



Front line: Above, Spanish children raise the clenched fist. Below, a woman fighter takes aim.

talk! When will this talking cease? Will you never act?

To go back to Germany. At the Second Congress of the Third International, Moscow, a comrade who is with us now in Spain, answering Zinoviev, urged faith in the syndicalist movement in Germany and the end of parliamentary communism.

He was ridiculed. parliamentarianism, communist parliamentarianism, but still parliamentarianism would save Germany. And it did. You know this. You know the conditions in that famous land today.

Yes, parliamentarianism saved Germany. Saved it from socialism. Saved it for fascism. Parliamentary social democracy and parliamentary communism have destroyed the socialist hope of Europe, has made a carnage of human liberty. In Britain,

parliamentarianism saved the workers from Socialism, gave them a Socialist leader of a National Government, and has prepared the workers for the holocaust of a new war. All this has parliamentarianism done.

Have you not had enough of this huge deception? Are you still prepared to continue in the same old way, along the same old lines, talking and talking and doing nothing?

Spain, syndicalist Spain, the Spanish workers' republic would save you. Yes, save you with the hunger and blood and struggle of its magnificent people. And you pause and hesitate to give your solidarity, and pause in your manhood and democracy of action until it is too late.

The crisis is here. The hour of struggle is here. Now is the decisive moment. By all your traditions of liberty and struggle, by all the brave martyrs of old, in the name of the heroic Spanish men and women, I bid you act. Act on behalf of Spain through living, immediate Committees of Action in Britain, in America, throughout the whole world.

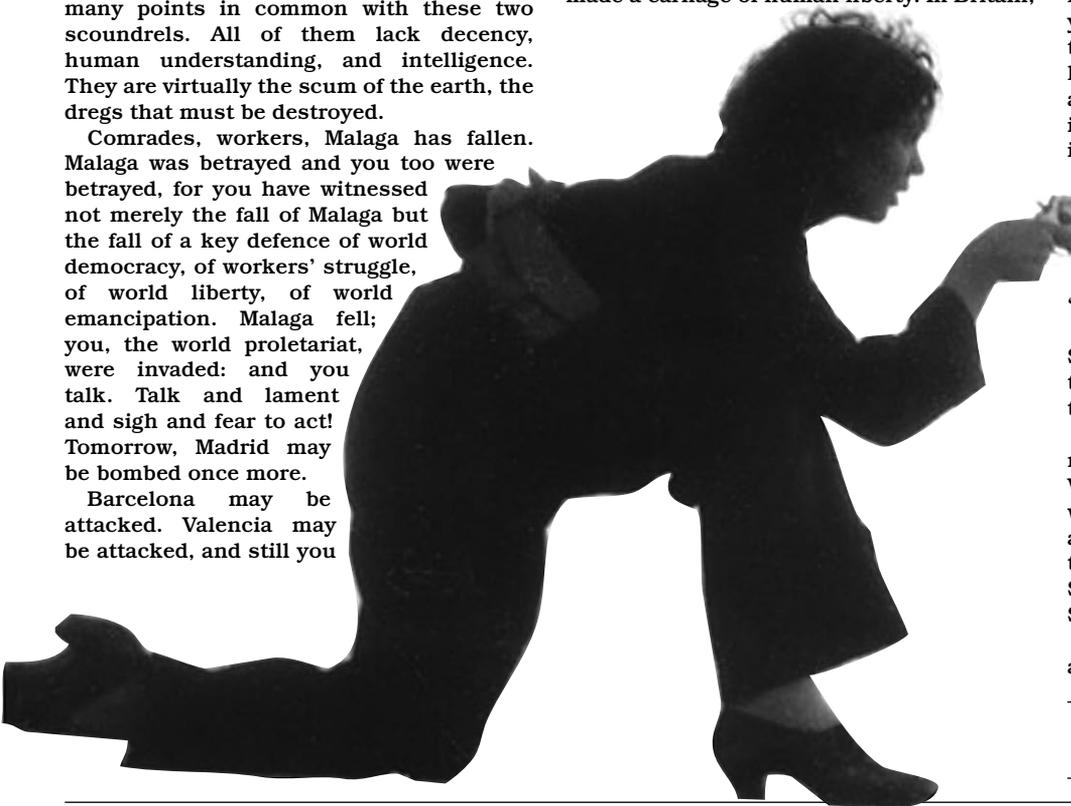
Let your cry be not non-intervention, but "Hands off Spain", and from that slogan let your action come.

In your trade union branches, in your political party hall, make that your cry: "All Hands off Spain".

What will your action be? The General Strike. Your message? "Starve fascism, end the war on Spanish Labour, or - the strike, the strike and on to revolution".

The British Government says: "You shall not serve in Spain." Good! Then to the British Workers we say make this your reply. "We will serve Spain and the workers in Spain and ourselves in Britain. We strike." Down tools! There is one flag of labour today. Spain's Red and Black Flag of Freedom, of Syndicalism and Courage!

"Workers of the world! Rally! Think - and act now!"



By Ethel
MacDonald



Review: A grand overview but not without problems

An Anarchist's Story: The Life of Ethel Macdonald.

Dolan, Chris.

Birrlin. 2009.

Paperback. 246pp.

£9.99.

978 1 84158 685 4.

This book by Chris Dolan follows on from a 2006 recorded history of Ethel MacDonald's political life, gleaned from the writings of her close comrades Guy Aldred and John Taylor Caldwell, as well as her own broadcasts, reports, diaries, essays, articles and letters.

The earlier TV tribute to the Scottish anarchist, celebrating the 100th anniversary of her birth, serves as a useful taster to Dolan's more in-depth work about her life, which was also published to celebrate her birth. The author was also involved, along with film maker Mark Littlewood, with the making of the 2006 docu-drama.

In his tribute to a very special life, Dolan has traced the people who knew Ethel personally – speaking to comrade and close friend John Taylor Caldwell shortly before his death and to her nephew Freddie Turrell.

He also consulted a variety of academics to gain a historic and political 'feel' to Spain between 1936 and 1939. These included Noam Chomsky in his capacity as an anarchist and 'expert' on European politics of the 1930's.

Perhaps the most accurate portrayal of the political climate in Spain of the time comes from Antonia Fontanillas, an anarchist in her late eighties at the time of writing, who vividly paints a picture of the May Days in Barcelona.

The book itself works its way through Ethel's family background and birth; from her introduction to socialism and her first involvement with the anarchist movement through to World War Two and the Strickland Press; culminating in her death from multiple sclerosis in 1960 at the age of 51.

Beyond the sources already cited, not a whole lot more is really known about Ethel Macdonald.

Because of this, the text is somewhat bulked-out with supposition, nostalgic musings, literary licence and a lot of historical and political backdrop information.

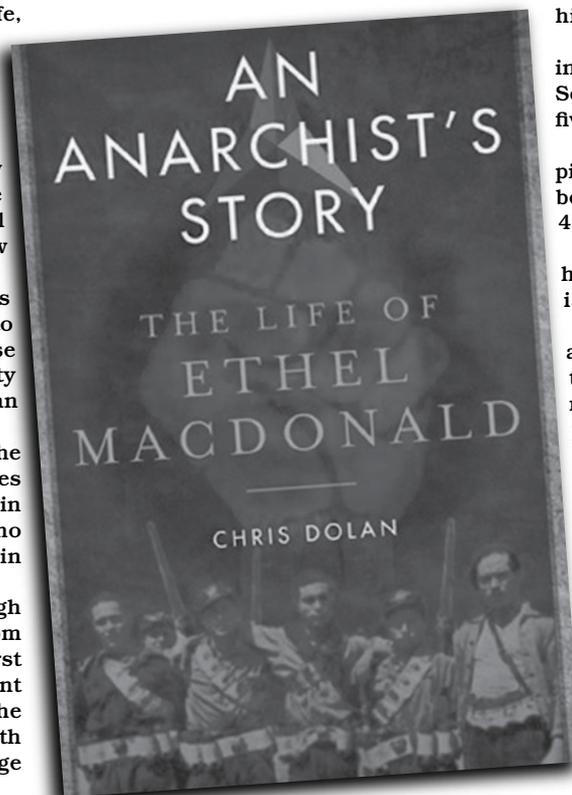
In his Author's Notes, Dolan writes: 'Where the facts desert us – because she herself saw them as unworthy of being recorded, or because few people felt that the efforts of a Glasgow radical merited documenting – we try and find her in what we do know about her world: Scotland, Spain, the ideas and ideals of her time, the radical history of Glasgow, and the bloody events in Barcelona in 1936 and 1937'.

Dolan further adds in his Introduction: 'Working class people do not leave much evidence behind them.

History belongs to the rich and powerful: they write themselves in, and airbrush out the irksome hoi polloi. Every once in a while a single voice makes itself heard' – Ethel Macdonald was one such voice.

Without being over critical of this book, I would raise a couple of points. First, I'd question a bizarre statement in the conclusion, where Dolan proclaims: 'Barcelona is a state of mind now. But that thirst for freedom, for equality, is still there. It seized the day in Cuba; and will do so again, somewhere.'

Bizarre in the fact that he has written a sympathetic tribute to an anarchist and subsequently extolled the virtues of anarchism, while equating it to the hybrid Marxist-Leninist brand of Castro's



Cuban nationalism.

Elsewhere he writes, making reference to the year 1959, "Castro has ousted the Cuban dictator Batista, a new revolutionary government sits in Havana, full of promise and possibility."

I'd recommend that Chris Dolan read *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective* by Sam Dolgoff; *Cuban Anarchism: The History of a Movement* by Frank Fernandez; *Cuba: Before and After the Castro Revolution* by Augustin Souchy and a short pamphlet entitled, *Saint Che: The Truth Behind the Legend of the Heroic Guerrilla*, Ernesto Che Guevara by Larry Gambone.

Second, on page 27 he writes: "She called herself a Marxist throughout her life and acted in accordance with his socialist theories".

Then on page 165, he goes on to call her a life-long anarchist.

Now, I've not read all of Ethel Macdonald's writings, but as far as I am aware, neither Aldred, Caldwell or Rhona M. Hodgart, an earlier biographer, made reference to her Marxist leanings.

Yes, she sometimes called herself a socialist, but this doesn't make her a dyed-in-the-wool Marxist.

Likewise, I don't think she would have gone to Spain as a representative of the Scottish anarchist movement, or indeed work closely with the CNT-FAI, if she felt she was a Marxist.

Also, from a military history point of view, I would like to make a correction. On page 109, Dolan refers to Moroccan Cavalry capturing a machine gun position, as the last cavalry charge in modern military history.

In actual fact, Polish cavalry were used in an attempt to repel German invaders in September 1939. The war in Spain had ended five months earlier.

Furthermore and please forgive me for nit-picking, but Guy Alfred Aldred was actually born in 1886, not 1883, as stated on page 42.

Undoubtedly Dolan is a socialist. He also has a penchant for Cuba. It is clear that he is not an anarchist.

Over Spain he takes a pro-republican anti-fascist stance, with sympathy for the anarchist cause, as well as making respectful reference to numerous anarchist personalities of the day; Durruti, Souchy, Prudhommeaux, Goldman, to name but a few.

He is also a massive admirer of the International Brigades. Moving to the present day, he finds Chomsky awe inspiring, and even makes reference to the Anarchist Communist Federation's Stormy Petrel pamphlet series, by virtue of the fact that Ethel Macdonald was given the family pet-name of Stormy Petrel as a child. Years later she was dubbed The Stormy Petrel of the Thirties by the Scottish Daily Mail.

Bearing in mind my previous comments, I do recommend this book, as it is a celebration of Ethel Macdonald's life and her largely unacknowledged contribution to the revolutionary cause.

I would also like to recommend that readers further indulge themselves in the history of radical Glasgow and its personalities – Ethel Macdonald's Glasgow, as this is also a somewhat neglected area of anarchist history and heritage.

I will round off this review in the words of Ethel Macdonald herself: "Governments will never save the people.

"They exist to exploit and destroy the people. There is but one force that can save the people – and that is the people themselves."

By Ade
Dimmick



Review: A welcome focus in class struggle anarchism

Black Flame. The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism. Counter Power vol.1

Schmidt, Michael and van der Walt, Lucien
AK Press
396pp paper back.
ISBN 978-1904859161
£18.00

This is the first of a two-volume set that examines class struggle anarchism and syndicalism (non-hierarchical unionism) from a theoretical and historical point of view.

The authors' perspective is global in nature, and benefits considerably from the fact that they are based in South Africa, which allows them to bring into their account aspects of the story that are often neglected in other books.

Schmidt and van der Walt set their stall in an uncompromising manner from the start.

The authors do however find room for the likes of Daniel DeLeon, James Connolly, and Big Bill Haywood, whose political leanings towards anarchism are far less clear cut but whose class roots are strong.

This does, at least, mean they do not have to spend time discussing some of the more contradictory features of the five libertarians, whilst concentrating on their main theme.

The main book is divided into three sections dealing with theory and analysis, strategy and tactics and social themes.

They take their starting point mainly from the writings of 19th century theorists Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, finding anarchism in a fundamental rejection of state and capital, both now and as a means to any desired social change in the future. They also foreground anti-imperialism.

The relationship between class-based anarchism and Marxist economics is discussed, with an admission that for anarchists, Marx's critique of capitalism is well worth using even if one rejects his solutions.

They do however suggest that anarchists have broadly rejected notions of economic determinism, as this would remove the need to work for the aims of a revolutionary struggle.

There is a detailed look at the arguments between the insurrectionary and mass anarchist approaches to revolutionary struggles with the outcome favouring mass struggles.

They come out against purely economic strategies but avoid giving any support to political parties. Finally they discuss the distinctions between anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism, which seems more based on a reluctance to use the "A" word by the revolutionary syndicalists than any deep-seated differences.

The authors also dismiss claims that George Sorel was in any way the theoretical founder of syndicalism and show that syndicalism was an integral part of the anarchist tradition.

Other chapters deal with the problems of bureaucracy in unions, both reformist and revolutionary.

Schmidt and van der Walt suggest that whilst they are aware

Should syndicalists try and create large mass unions, join rank-and-file movements (with the possibility of capturing them) or simply agitate within existing unions? The two conclude that in the end, tactics must be tailored to circumstances.

This is followed by a look at more specific anarchist political organisational techniques, covering topics such as insurrectionism⁽¹⁾, anti-organisationism⁽²⁾ and individualism (as opposed to collectivism) as well as the response to the "Platform"⁽³⁾ and the place of the militant minority in mass movements.

The final section dealing with social themes deals first with the class basis of anarchism. In particular it looks at differences between rural and urban movements and anarchist involvement in peasant revolts.

This is followed by a detailed look at issues around internationalism, race and gender, where the broad anarchist and syndicalist tradition is shown to have taken a stand against imperialism, but also against national liberation movements where they are merely the replacement of one ruling class with another.

The anarchist position on the women's "issue" is equally nuanced, opposing any reliance on either political participation or liberal "equal rights" (in an unequal society), instead placing the struggle within a broader class framework.

Throughout the book the authors illustrate their points both with quotations from relevant theorists and with examples of practice from all over the world. The text is clearly written and well-presented. Without being too critical it does sometimes appear that the anarchist and syndicalist tradition looks too perfect.

The treatment of the Mujeres Libres anarcho-feminist movement of Spain would have been improved by acknowledging the difficulties they faced getting the male-dominated CNT and FAI to take them and their issues seriously.

One might even suggest that while male anarchists are very happy to acknowledge exceptional women, the wider issues around gender still require extra work to get dealt with properly.

AK Press have done an excellent job with the book, there's enough illustrations to show the human face of anarchism and the international coverage is exemplary.



of the problems any large mass anarchist organisations can have, there is no necessary "iron rule of oligarchy".

They acknowledge however that it would require constant vigilance and the promotion of anarchist values to prevent this happening.

They show that times of reformist union activity can give rise to problems both with small, relatively ineffectual groupings and larger more successful ones, and discuss whether there are any hard and fast rules.

organisations tend to stratify. The WOMBLES in the 1990s were an anti-organisationalist force.

3. The Platform was written as a reaction to the failure of the Makhnovists in Ukraine to defeat the Whites and Soviets during the period of the Russian Revolution. It attempted to codify the basic elements

of anarchism into an easily-understood constitution, which has remained controversial with many anarchists regarding it as akin to trying to set up an Anarchist Party. The WSM in Ireland and Liberty and Solidarity in Britain are two examples of Platformist groups.

Notes

1. Where anarchists attempt to use direct action and confrontation with the state to inspire revolt in the general populace. Most notable in Europe is the Greek insurrectionary movement, which sometimes clashes with the Greek anarchist-communist one.
2. The belief that permanent structures or

By Mal
Function



A different perspective

Review: Beevor has produced useful antidote to any rose-tinted view of Spain's civil war

The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939

By Antony Beevor
Phoenix Press
£12.99

This is a cracking read and it is no surprise that themes of tragedy and irony dominate the story.

After a brief and schematic introduction to the build-up to the military rebellion (a period better covered in *Durruti: The People Armed* by Abel Paz) Beevor plunges into the action.

Here his book serves as a useful corrective to some of the unbalanced accounts many anarchists would offer, which give the impression that Barcelona was typical of the whole of Spain.

In fact it was a typical in that the anarchists there had taken the precaution of arming themselves and making contact with sympathetic people in the military who would be willing to resist the fascist uprising.

Consequently they were able in conjunction with other forces to stop it in its tracks, whereas elsewhere the military were either unopposed or hastily organised militias were unable to stand up to them once Franco's Army of Africa had been transferred to the mainland.

Equally an attempt to forestall the rebellion by means of a peaceful general strike, as used in Zargoza, was brutally nipped in the bud by means of threats to shoot anyone failing to return to work.

Elsewhere those parts of Spain with strong regionalist forces, such as the Basque region and the Asturias rallied to the Republic – except where these took on a strongly reactionary hue such as in Navarre where Carlist forces joined the revolt.

This is one of Beevor's strong points – he reveals the uneasy alliances that both sides went into the civil war with.

These were coalitions inevitably became polarised once the centrist politicians failed to do anything to resolve the deep political, economic and social issues that were paralysing the country.

No single faction was anywhere near strong enough to impose its own solution, so the anarchists along with everyone else had to find partners to prevent them being destroyed by opposing forces, whilst trying to implement their own agenda.

Needless to say the result was a whole series of compromises, which the Nationalists with their strong and ruthless leadership were better able to co-ordinate compared to the internecine battling on the Republican side.

In particular the "left" were hamstrung by Spain's lack of indigenous resources – raw

materials for industry, oil for transport, food for the people – which made them dependent on imports to be able to continue the war.

The Nationalists had the support of both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany who willingly supplied arms and ammunition plus "volunteer" fighting men.

The left had to rely on the Mexican and Russian governments as other possible suppliers imposed a "non-intervention" blockade – which somehow failed to stop the importation of valuable supplies to the Nationalists.

Some 12,000 trucks, 40,000 bombs and petroleum were all brought in by US firms, which was as important as the weaponry supplied by Italy and Germany.

The Republicans had to buy most of their weapons from Soviet Russia, which

libertarian collectivisations.

Yet without the Soviet military equipment it is unlikely the republican forces would have been able to survive as long as they did, as the alternative sources of supply were private arms dealers who were only interested in the money.

Hence they CNT often got sold third rate obsolete gear which proved of little value in the front line and served only to line the pockets of men such as Hermann Goring, who profited from selling arms to the republican forces at the same time as the Nazi Condor Legion was fighting them.

Doubtless he felt that some worthwhile combat practice would do them and his bank balance some good.

The irony of the CNT buying weapons from Nazi Germany need hardly be spelled out.

But then the Civil War was full of irony as far as the anarchists were concerned. Several leading anarchists accepted positions in governments, which they rationalised as being the price they had to pay to get the hands on the means of defending themselves (collectively) from the inevitable repercussions of a Nationalist victory.

The pressure on this score was all too obvious as in areas where the military took power they imposed a savage repressive regime that saw thousands of political opponents rounded-up, jailed, tortured and shot.

In view of this, one shouldn't be surprised that many leftists were the first to volunteer to fight for the Nationalists as a way of saving their lives.

Not that everyone else in Spain was a willing soldier, whether it was a case of conscription, or being "volunteered" as some International Brigade members were to make up quotas, or even prisoners of war being used against their former colleagues.

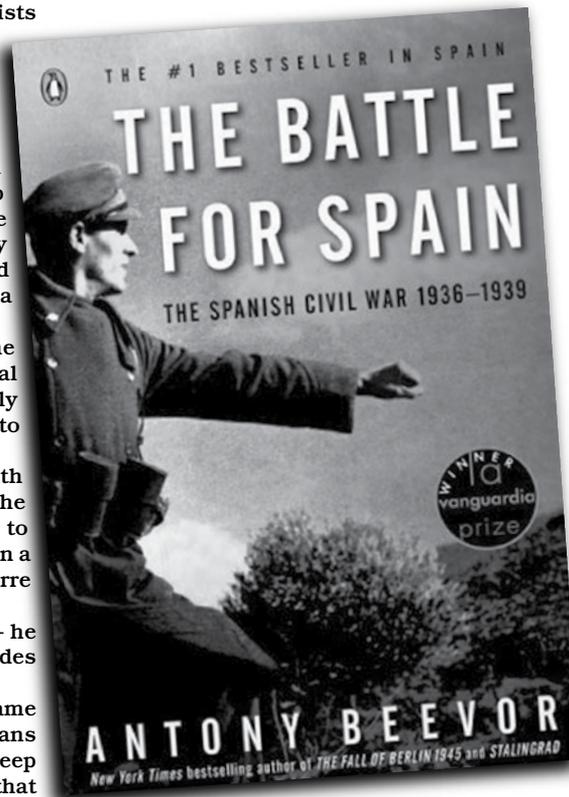
Equally desertion was a problem on both sides, with Civil Guard units nominally on the Republican side going over to the Nationalists, Italian conscripts sent by Mussolini deserting and joining Republican forces and so on.

That said there were also a great many willing volunteers to fight in Spain from anarchist and other anti-fascists determined to make stand against

Fascism.

There was a smaller number of fascist sympathisers too, such as 12,000 Portuguese volunteers and even 600 Irish Blueshirts led by Eoin O'Duffy (apparently these were withdrawn after only one action when they were attacked by their own side!)

Equally there were many native Spaniards determined to settle matters one way or



inevitably came at a terrible political price with the previously inconsequential Spanish Communist Party catapulted into a position of political power.

The party used their newfound clout to sideline and victimise those to the left of them such as the anarchists and the POUM, whilst ensuring the International brigades and communist divisions got the bulk of the weapons.

This meant they often suffered the bulk of the casualties as they were used to fight often militarily meaningless "propaganda" battles, and it allowed the party to suppress

helps war story

another with tens of thousands of union members – CNT and UGT – wanting to take up arms (many of whom had to be turned away due to lack of weapons) whilst the Nationalists had thousands of Falangists and Carlists eager to fight against their enemies.

Whilst reading the book, which chronicles the slow and inexorable advance of the nationalists to their final victory, one is continually wrestling with the dilemmas faced by the anarchists in the struggle and trying to work out how they might have done things differently.

Were the compromises with political principles worth the end result, could they have fought the war differently (but how would they have got the necessary supplies?) and so forth.

What is abundantly clear is that the CNT – FAI were never in a position to take control of the situation and impose their own solution to it.

Their attempts at setting up a libertarian communist society in the midst of a civil war met with much success in certain parts of the country, but could never be

anarchists faced in Spain.

Balanced because it situates them in the proper context, something many of the propagandist works fail to do, which somehow almost regard the war fighting as incidental.

The final question I suspect is: was the war winnable, could the social revolution have succeeded?

The intervention of foreign powers was decisive in what could have been a short-lived struggle - there wasn't that much ammunition in the country to fight a prolonged war.

Without the aid from Germany and Italy it is unlikely the nationalist forces could have won the war, but equally without the Russian aid the Republicans could not have won either.

Without that intervention maybe Spain would have continued in an unstable and conflicted way with localised expropriations and repressions.

It is ironic that the social revolution required a military uprising to trigger it off (although land collectivisation had been occurring in the early years of 1936 after



Devastation The ruins at Guernica. Picture: German Federal Archive

implemented in others.

Self-management of factories and services proved viable, but without the necessary resources no such economy will survive, especially if it is surrounded by hostile forces.

One can also say that it is equally absurd to lay the blame on the CNT for the situation that developed in Barcelona during 1938-39 where food became scarce due to lack of imports and loss of key agricultural land in Aragon, and industry was at a standstill for lack of power.

Once one can see the bigger picture much of what happened makes much more sense.

And it is this bigger picture that makes the book so valuable for those wanting a balanced view of the situation that the

the left's victory in the elections).

One takes as axiomatic that societies can run successfully in a self-managed manner, but would they have been able to survive in the face of a hostile world?

Well I'll leave the reader to ponder on those questions. This book is a well-written and well-informed read.

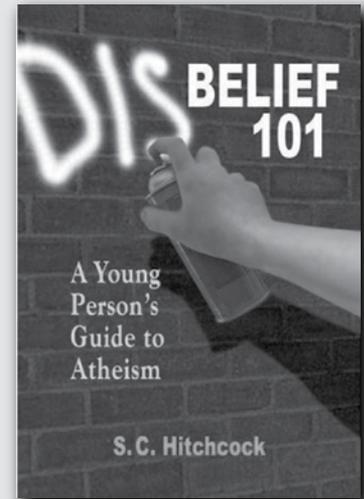
There is only so much one can cram into a book and doubtless people will have wished for greater coverage of various aspects which hardly get a mention here.

But as an overall picture of the Civil War it is as good as it gets.

By **Richard Alexander**



Hob's Book



Short review: Decent comic take on the subject of god

Disbelief 101: A Young Person's Guide to Atheism.

S.C. Hitchcock.

Pub. See Sharp Press. 2009.

A5 paperback book. 130pp.

\$9.95. (Send bills and double up for postage) PO Box 1731, Tucson, AZ85702, USA. www.seesharppress.com

Another title from the See Sharp stable, courtesy of prolific small press publisher and pamphleteer Chaz Bufe.

This book is basically a standard introduction to atheism, and as the title suggests, is aimed specifically at young people.

It is written in a humorous and highly entertaining style in non-academic language, without being patronising to the readership. The absence of dogmatic rhetoric is refreshing. I have often found that many works on freethought and atheism have been a tad on the dull side. It is a highly enjoyable read.

Amusingly Hitchcock refers to the godhead as the Invisible Flying Clown to emphasise the ridiculous nature of religious belief. He invites readers to transpose it with the word god in religious texts and speeches to emphasise this. It's certainly worth a giggle, and you could use any silly term you like really.

Hitchcock also uses numerous standard catch-phrases such as, "religion relies and thrives on your fear. But don't be afraid. God doesn't exist." All good stuff. Recommended.

By **Ade Dimmick**



Major holes damage

Review: Attempts to talk up Party influence simply weaken Behan's excellent historical piece

The Resistible Rise of Benito Mussolini

Tom Behan

Bookmarks

2003

The rise of fascism in Italy is a subject of interest to anarchists as Mussolini's story cannot be detached from the biennio rosso, the two red years of 1919 and 1920.

Italy was on the verge of social revolution, reaching a peak with the factory occupations of 1920. Fascism was a response to this, a "preventive counter revolution" (to use Luigi Fabbri's expression).

Unfortunately, there are few decent books on this period in English. This makes Tom Behan's "The Resistible Rise of Benito Mussolini" potentially very important. It claims to be the about the "Arditi del Popolo" (AdP), the world's first anti fascist movement which, while it managed to defeat Mussolini's Black Shirts on numerous occasions, rarely gets into the history books.

However the book is riddled with inaccuracies and distortions. These, ironically, are easily identified simply by reading the references Behan himself provides.

And, being a Socialist Workers' Party book, the worse of these relate to the anarchists and syndicalists -- ironically, as these were the only groups who supported the AdP wholeheartedly and the only people who publicly advocated the "united front" tactic Behan champions.

Behan's work itself is not all bad. The actual accounts of the development of the AdP and specific (successful) fights against the Black Shirts in Rome, Parma and Sarzana presents the English speaking world with much new material. It is a shame you have to wade through so much crap to get to it.

He also correctly shows fascism as a defence of capitalism against a rebellious working class, the state protection of the Black Shirts, the links between the fascists and the police and the funding provided by industrialists and landlords.

He is right in stressing that fascism could have been stopped and in placing the AdP at the centre of any attempt to do so. However this should not detract from the major limitations in Behan's book, namely that it is ideologically driven and utterly unreliable on the dynamics of the period and so any lessons to learn from it.

Factual errors abound. As an example, he asserts that anarchism in the 1870s was "more attuned to the needs of the peasants" and that it "was concentrated in the towns and countryside of the South, and had relatively little following in the northern cities."

The facts are radically different. According

to one of his own references, Italian anarchism's real stronghold at this time was north central Italy, with the majority of members being artisans and workers. The peasantry had the least representation.

Then there are the omissions. He makes no mention of the Italian Anarchist Union, the 20,000-strong federation with a daily newspaper which played a key role in the biennio rosso. Anarchists only appear as "individuals" and never as part of an organisation.

He also forgets to mention (like Bob Black) that the "surprisingly large number of revolutionary syndicalists" whom Mussolini



"found common ground with" after the war were Marxists (according to David Roberts, one of his, and Black's, references).

Similarly, he downplays that Mussolini had been a leading left wing Marxist before the war, dismissing him as a "demagogue" with "superficial radicalism." How he managed to rise so far in the Socialist Party to begin with is left unasked.

His most outrageous claim however is that "semi anarchist, semi revolutionary syndicalist USI federation ... with its main stronghold in the rural areas of the Po valley ... therefore played a relatively minor role in the big industrial disputes" of the biennio rosso."

Behan does provide a reference, namely a 1963 academic study called "The Italian

Labor Movement" but fails to explain why the reader should prefer this source to subsequent works by Gwyn Williams, Carl Levy and Martin Clark (all of which he uses as references) which focus directly on the factory occupations. Perhaps because these works show that it was the libertarians who first raised the idea of factory occupations and played the leading role in 1920?

It is understandable why Behan should rewrite history so. His book shows the absolute failure of Marxism (in all its guises).

Looking at the Italian Socialist Party, it proved Bakunin right, not Marx and Engels, by becoming as bureaucratic and reformist as he had predicted. He denounces the "Socialists' inability to provide strong leadership," yet he fails, unlike anarchists at the time, to link this to the hierarchical leadership so beloved by Marxists. The irony of calling for "strong" leadership in a book about resisting fascism also seems lost on him.

This blindness is repeated in his discussion of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). He deplores its actions and its leadership, yet never asks basic questions about what it says about Leninism.

He states that "many PCI members used their common sense and joined the AdP" against their party's wishes and the despite "feedback from below" the "PCI Executive Committee dug its heels in."

Why, if the Leninist party was the most democratic ever, did the PCI pursue its policy against the wishes of its members? And if Bordiga was so at odds with the membership then why did they ("often the most politically sophisticated activists") support him by an overwhelming majority in 1922 and repeatedly elect him as leader?

This is the key problem with the book. While Behan claims that the AdP "forms the central part of the book, the real focus is on the Communist Party. He discusses the ins and outs of its internal politics and its relations with Moscow far more than giving a serious account of the problems facing the AdP, how it organised, how confronted fascism and its relations with other anti fascist forces.

Unsurprisingly, when Behan does discuss the politics of the AdP, he rarely does it justice. He states, for example, that "they were still influenced by the ideas of D'Annunzio and therefore nationalism" before quoting their first manifesto which clearly stated that "We reject the manipulations and greed of patriotism, which takes pride only in its race. We avoid all nationalist scheming." If Behan gets such basic points wrong, it is fair to say that his attention is less than focused on the AdP!

otherwise fine work

Pondering the actions of the PCI leadership he tries to explain this by the party being young (infantile?) as well as being “much smaller” than the Socialist Party. He then adds that “it also had to contend with a very large anarchist movement.” This “context” allows some of its “suspicion and sectarianism” to be “understood.”

Is he really suggesting that it was anarchist sectarianism that caused the PCI leadership to reciprocate? But that does not fit with years of anarchist arguments for a united front. Initially raised by libertarians in January 1919 when Armando Borghi, anarchist secretary of the USI, proposed a “united revolutionary front,” it was rejected by the Socialist trade union. In mid-September 1920, the USI sponsored an “interproletariat” convention in which the PSI refused to participate. Behan is silent on this.

He does quote Malatesta’s appeal for unity against fascism made in May 1922, while ignoring previous libertarian calls (and Marxist responses to them).

Given that he argues the tragedy was that the “Communist and Socialist left never came together around an enlarged AdP to form a united front against fascist attacks,” this silence is strange. Particularly as the anarchist policy would have worked. The successful resistance to fascism in Parma and elsewhere was due to the application of libertarian ideas of a revolutionary united front.

In spite of lack of evidence and official hostility, Behan tries his best to paint the PCI as the mainspring of the AdP. While acknowledging that “its membership came from many different political traditions” he asserts not only that the “majority were probably Communists” but also “if they continued to engage in politics they generally became Communists”.

Which is it? And how could the PCI have “entered the AdP en masse” if they were “probably” the majority? And if the majority of the AdP were communists, why did the PCI leadership oppose it?

He even selectively quotes Gramsci, conveniently forgetting that he considered the party leadership’s attitude correct as it “corresponded to a need to prevent the party members from being controlled by a leadership that was not the party’s leadership.”

Behan’s contradictions can only be explained by the obvious fact that the “majority” in the AdP were not “probably” communists at all. Significantly, the strongest working class resistance to Fascism was in places with a strong anarchist tradition, a fact Behan ignores.

Perhaps the problems with the historical accuracy of Behan’s account could be forgiven if he managed to draw correct conclusions from this period but he does not. He states that the anti-capitalist demonstrations “have brought people together, and taught them the importance of having hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of safety in numbers.”

Yet his example, Genoa, does not prove

this as large numbers did not stop the police attack. If the rise of Mussolini can be said to show anything it is that “safety in numbers” is not enough.

Incredibly he asserts that the Anti Nazi League (ANL) has “some similarities” to the AdP. What an insult to the AdP! The AdP was rooted in working class life and it is precisely such links that anti fascists need to rebuilt.

Yet Behan seems to reject this, arguing that the class-based politics of the 1920s were a mistake as the “sterile verbal extremism” of the PSI resulted in “a practical refusal to make common cause with any ‘progressive bourgeois’ elements.”



Resistible rise: Benito Mussolini

By 1921, he argues, the working class “was now on the defensive and needed allies. This meant creating alliances on the ground, even outside the working class.”

In other words, while attacking the “Popular Front,” his vision for the AdP and ANI, is precisely that. What else do you call a mish mash of individuals and tendencies united by the lowest common denominator of being “outraged and disgusted by fascism”?

Fascism needs to be fought using revolutionary socialist ideas, not the ANL’s “two simple strands”, namely “the exposure of people pretending to be democrats as Nazi Hitler lovers” and “militant campaigning to ensure that the Nazis never gain a stable foothold in society.”

This does not present an alternative to fascism and, moreover, can boil down to supporting New Labour (or even the Tories). Given that these parties are responsible for maintaining the social problems that fascists try to use to scapegoat others, the message is that “anti fascism” means supporting the status quo.

Behan does, of course, pay lip service to the need for anti fascism to be relevant to working class people, yet this is not seen as being at the core of anti fascism as it not one of the “two simple strands.” He patronisingly states that “a revolutionary party is needed to educate and organise together with workers.”

Thus the working class (like the AP) is considered the steam which the engineers of revolution use to implement their ideologically correct principles. Rather than a socialism rooted in, and growing out of, working class life and struggles, we have a “socialism” which the working class must be “educated” into following.

Little wonder that armed with such an elitist and patronising attitude the SWP and its fronts have been so ineffectual against the BNP. Rather than present a working class socialism, the SWP is pursuing an essentially conservative agenda and fails to explain the class argument against fascism.

Little wonder that its interventions have meet with so little success in spite of leafleting against the BNP, people still voted for them. Clearly labelled them “Nazi Hitler lovers” does not work.

Fascism will only be defeated when a viable working class socialism exists - one based on self-management, direct action and solidarity (i.e. anarchism). As the resistible rise of Italian Fascism shows.

■ For more discussion see “The irresistible correctness of anarchism” available at: anarchism.ws/writers/anarcho.html.

By **Iain McKay**



Hob's Choice



Welcome once again to Hob's Choice and the world of radical pamphleteering. Hob's Choice is our regular feature which specialises in short-reviews of recently published pamphlets.

An A-Z of Borders

Pub. No Borders Network. 2009.

A5 format. 40pp.

£1. www.noborders.org.uk

No Borders boldly proclaim that they are "A transnational network of autonomous groups advocating freedom of movement and equality for all." A noble sentiment indeed. The pamphlet leads with a useful four page introduction to the history and 'concept' of No Borders, as well as clearly defining their position.

Equally useful is the four page further information pull-out sheet, which gives details of the various No Borders groups and their organisational structure, as



Fine work: Oscar Wilde, whose Utopian Socialist views are an enjoyable read.

well as contact details of affiliates and sympathisers.

The rest of the pamphlet is an A-Z of asylum/migration jargon. For example, RABIT = Rapid Border Intervention Teams; Schengen Information System (SIS) = A central database that tracks migrants, refugees, travellers and asylum seekers; NASS = The National Asylum Support Service.

If you are expecting a dynamic and radical perspective I'm afraid you may be a little disappointed, as this pamphlet is clearly aimed at the mainstream and uninformed - with a mildly radical edge. All in all though, I think it is a fairly handy introductory pamphlet to the complexities of the migration system. Accept it for what it is and distribute it widely amongst those it is aimed at!

Squatters Handbook. 13th Edition.

Pub. Advisory Service for Squatters. 2009.

A5 format. 82pp.

£1.50.

Advisory Service for Squatters, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. This is the 13th edition of the indispensable and now almost legendary Squatters Handbook.

It is an essential guide to housing law and squatting.

It is meticulously researched and well presented in a clear and concise way by the Advisory Service for Squatters.

The pamphlet is based upon their personal experiences over the last thirty years. All information contained within is accurate and up to date at the time of printing (July 2009).

The pamphlet covers a wide of relevant information ranging from: How to deal with the police and bailiffs; how to find a suitable place to squat; how to access amenities; law on evictions; squatter and homeless persons rights; how to prepare for court and much much more.

A few years ago I reviewed an earlier edition of the Squatters Handbook for another publication, recommending it to readers.

Nothing has changed since. Once again, I couldn't recommend this pamphlet more highly. First class job.

On the frontline: anarchists at work - Workplace strategy of the Anarchist Federation.

Pub. Anarchist Federation (Anarchist Communist Editions). 2009.

A5 format. 24pp.

£2. (payable, 'Anarchist Federation').

BM Anafed, London, WC1N 3XX. www.afed.org.uk

This is the long-awaited workplace strategy of the Anarchist Federation, officially adopted nationally in April of this year.

In the preface and introduction they address what is deemed to be the apparent contradiction of anarchist-communists joining trade unions and industrial unions such as the IWW, despite a seemingly apparent organisational and political position against doing so.

This issue is adequately addressed - but won't convince the more left-communist leaning comrades amongst us.

From an anarchist-communist perspective, the pamphlet moves on to look at the concept of work under modern capitalism; forms of workplace struggle; trade unions, class struggle and management; syndicalism and grassroots unions; escalating confrontation and the all important Workplace Resistance Group.

This is an important document which attempts to clarify a number of 'grey' areas in the AF's Aims and Principles.

The AF sensibly state that this document is not "final" and not a "blue-print" for revolution - as the revolutionary climate and the fight against capitalism constantly changes and constantly evolves.

Watch this space.

The Italian Factory Councils and the Anarchists.

Pub. London Anarchist Federation (Stormy Petrel Series). 2009.

A5 format. 24pp.

£1. (payable, 'Anarchist Federation'). Contact details as above.

Now this new AF publication is a different kettle-of-fish all together.

Published by London AF, it is a short but concise history of the Italian factory councils of 1920-1921, and the role played by anarchists.

Its aim is to take the subject-matter to a wider audience, "outside of academic circles and revolutionary groups".

It is a well-balanced, objective account, which is not afraid to be critical as well as positive.

It is also somewhat sympathetic towards Antonio Gramsci. In fact, the majority of the sources referenced are either about or by Gramsci; as well as including, quite naturally, Errico Malatesta's slant on the ongoing proceedings.

The pamphlet also includes profiles of Maurizio Garino and Pietro Garino, two of the anarchists who were actively involved in the Councils.

It further includes extracts from a report written by Garino in 1920 and published in Umanita Nova; and extracts from an interview with him given in 1971 (he died in 1977 aged 84).

This pamphlet serves as a useful introduction and may offer new insights into this particular era of class struggle and revolutionary history.

The Soul of Man Under Socialism. Oscar Wilde.

Pub. See Sharp Press. 2009.

A5 format. 32pp.

\$3.00. (Send \$ bills and double up for postage).

PO Box 1731, Tucson, AZ 85702, USA.

www.seesharppress.com

This is another reprint of Wilde's classic essay written in 1891. It is a fine work of literary prose written in the florid artistic style of the day.

Wilde expounds the virtues of an idealist vision of utopian socialism and condemns the evils of capitalism and authoritarianism within his work.

His socialism is presented as a self-actualised form of individualism and fully accomplished unselfishness.

Read it and enjoy it for what it is - it certainly doesn't form the basis of class struggle and proletarian revolution though!

■ Publishers are invited to submit newly published or recent pamphlets for a mini-review.

Each review will include publishing details and content summary. Comprehensive book reviews will continue to be published elsewhere in Black Flag.

By Ade
Dimmick





State terror: In September thugs from the ruling ANC party walked into Kennedy Road, Durban to run off AbM, the progressive shackdwellers' movement. Four were murdered in the attack and more injured (above). AbM activist S'bu Zikode, below right, was forced to flee and his home, bottom right, was trashed. Residents who haven't fled are now rebuilding (bottom left). Solidarity actions have taken place around the world, including in London where the London Coalition Against Poverty protested in support (below left). Pictures: abahlali.org

In colour: Crushing Durban





The BIG PICTURE: Grasberg's scar

Digging in: The view from space of Grasberg in West Papua, a totemic peak vital to the region's environment and sacred to its people. The site's existence is due largely to Indonesia's military occupation of West Papua, which allows the ongoing strip-mining project of owners Freeport McMoran. Violence has dogged the pit since its inception, with protests, strikes and blockades having been met with deadly force from the state. Indonesia have been found guilty by international bodies

of effectively running a protection racket for Freeport McMoran, taking tens of millions over the last ten years to provide security for its operations. Runoff from the site has included heavy metals such as copper and arsenic, leading to complaints from NGOs and locals that the rivers which source from the mountains are now rife with poison. Grasberg has become the largest goldmine in the world and one of the three largest copper mines.

Picture: Nasa