

The Libertarian Communist

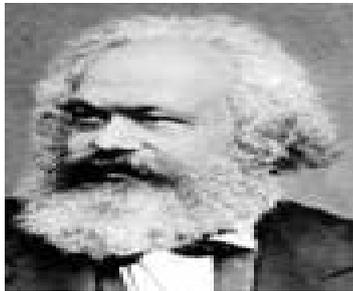
A Discussion Bulletin for the Anti State,
Non Market Socialist/Anarchist sector

£1

ISSUE NO 14 MAY TO JULY 2011

BRINGING IDEAS TOGETHER

Marx



Goldman



Luxemburg



Bakunin



**Aim: the creation of a World wide Libertarian Communist
Society.**

The purpose of The Libertarian Communist is to promote discussion amongst the Anti State, Non Market sector irrespective of whether individuals or groups consider themselves as Anarchist, Communist or Socialist as all such titles are in need of further qualification. If you have disagreements with an article in this or any other issue, wish to offer comment or want to contribute something else to the discussion then please get in touch. If any article focuses on a particular group then that group has, as a matter of course, the right to reply. So please get in touch with your article, letters and comments. You can do this by contacting com.lib.org@googlemail.com or writing to Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset BH12 1BQ.

Contents

Page 2: **The cover, this issue and the next.**

Page 3: **Letter: More on the Money Thing: Kathy Summerson**

Page 3: **Problems of Revolution: Reconsidering Organisation and the Role of Communists: R.S**

Page 8: **Why is Robin Cox not growing? A reply to why the World Socialist Movement is not Growing issues 12/13.: Kathy Summerson**

Page 10: **Workers control in the Spanish Revolution 1936: Alan Woodward**

Page 12: **Revolution: three strategies, three groups of theory: Laurens Otter**

Page 14: **Death toll mounts from 2009 defeat of Ssangyong strike: Loren Goldner**

Page 15/16: **Details and contact information for groups in the Anti State, Non Market Sector.**

The front cover, this issue and the next

First the cover to this issue, well in a way it is a case of doing something different but it also reflects the idea that one of the aims of this publication is to try to bring together and develop the ideas of thinkers who might be considered as coming from different parts of the anti state, non market sector. It is not intended to use the same design on each issue and definitely not the same thinkers as appear on the front of this issue. This issue is 16 pages rather than 12 and so it covers three months rather than two, hopefully this will give us more time to get in articles for the next issue due out in August. Thanks to those who have contributed articles to this issue

There are also other ways in which this issue signatures a departure from recent issues in as much as the articles reflect a wider range of views within our sector. In the article "*Reconsidering Organisation and the role of Communists*" **R.S** examines the problems with building mass organisations of the working class and if this strategy is a worthwhile exercise. Such parties, the author argues, have normally been dominated by people outside of the working class. Whilst this journal would not endorse all of the views in this article we would hope that it will provoke discussion. In "*Why is Robin Cox not Growing*" **Kathy Summerson** gives a blunt critique of Robin's two part article Why the World Socialist Movement is not growing. Perhaps her piece begins in a rather personal manner but consider this for yourselves as well as how you see this discussion developing. Perhaps we have not heard the last on this issue. In the article *Workers Control in the Spanish Revolution 1936* **Alan Woodward** looks at the self management process in Spain during

the revolution considering its successes and short comings by examining two industries that of the transport system and the health service. The author of *Revolution: three strategies, three groups of theory* is **Laurens Otter**. As its title implies it sets out briefly different strategies for pursuing revolution and hopefully readers will be encouraged to pick out the bones and contribute to the discussion in future issues. Finally we are reminded of what the class struggle really means with an article by **Loren Goldner** which was posted on World in Common in April which deals with the terrifying consequences of the defeat of a strike by workers at the Ssangyong motor company in Pyongtaek in South Korea in 2009.

Alan Woodward's article on Workers' Control is very timely as in the next issue the plan is to have a few articles on the subject of workers self management focusing on the role workers' co-operatives can play as embryos of a self managed society. Can co-operatives be useful in this role or are they either doomed to financial failure within capitalism or more or less bound to end up as, or even more, exploitative than capitalist enterprises? Are co-operatives so constrained in a society dominated by capital that they are useless as a barometer for how a self manage society could function or are such experiments absolutely necessary if we are ever to convince people that a free/self managed society is a possibility? This discussion will start without any preconceived answers. What we are looking for is a critical analysis of co-operatives and their uses and limitations. If you would like to contribute something to this discussion whether pro or anti co-operative than feel free to send in your article to the email or postal address listed at the top of this page.

Letter: More on the Money Thing

Dear Lib Com

It is gratifying to myself, as must it also be to Mr Carr, that notice has been taken by SPGBers of my short piece, "**The Money Thing**", in Lib Com 10. This year's conference is asked to "**reaffirm ... that the aim of the Socialist Party is not abolition of money**". Sadly, this food for thought has not been digested. The motion continues that the aim instead is the "**supercession of the market as a means of allocating goods and resources**" The money thing and the Distributionist Heresy are thereby reaffirmed in full. To reiterate the message: communism means the collective ownership of the means of production, socialised distribution (abolition of the market mechanism) being a product resulting therefrom and secondary thereto.

Pay attention boys!

Kathy Summerson

Problems of Revolution

Reconsidering organization and the role of communists

by **R.S.**

In recent years an increasing number of people have begun questioning the accepted knowledge, of whatever form, on organization and the role of communists in the class struggle. Both new and veteran militants alike are seeking out the best way to move forward out of the capitalist quagmire we face. This welcome development reflects the beginnings of a renewed proletarian awakening. In the interest of continuing and broadening the discussion, I have tried to write up some of my thoughts on these questions, which I have been going over for the last two years. I must apologize for whatever is lacking here, as my conclusions are not yet totally complete. This is but an attempt at a contribution toward reconsideration of these issues, which are of vital importance.

Organization

Are mass parties a thing of the past? They certainly exist. But they are not organizations of the working class, nor can they be. Sure, many were born out of the organic struggles of the working class, and militants even took the lead in constructing them. But they were

never going to be tools through which revolution would be made, and at a certain point they ossified and became alien to the class they grew out of.

"...Workers' self-activity does create organizations create unions and other institutions, which may become bureaucratized and turn against the worker. Unions are not a secret plot designed to fool the workers. Workers organize them and then they get out of control." - **Martin Glaberman**

When unions became permanent, legal organizations they needed professional bureaucrats to organize the day to day operations. This opened the door for administrators to step in and take control, and they in turn brought individual workers into the bureaucracy when necessary. The same process occurred with the "workers parties." Militants were either forced out or co-opted, to become useful in bringing workers back in the fold of "acceptable politics" if and when they got uppity.

"How long it will be until the Socialists realize the folly and inconsistency of preaching to the workers that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves, and yet presenting to those workers the sight of every important position in the party occupied by men not of the working class." - **James Connolly**

Bureaucrats and wannabee bureaucrats found a welcome home.

"The general coordination of workers' organizations to capitalism saw the adoption of the same specialization in union and party activities that challenged the hierarchy of industries. The mass of organized workers like the mass of wage slaves in industry left the work of direction and control to their betters." - **Paul Mattick**

This is nothing new. It's been the case since the beginning.

"The labour party becomes the party of the 'people.' Its appeals are no longer addressed simply to the manual workers but to 'all producers,' to the 'entire working population... Both the friends and the enemies of the socialist party have frequently pointed out that ***the petty bourgeois members tend more and more to predominate over the manual workers.***" - **Michels, Robert.**
Political parties: a sociological study of

the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy. [Emphasis added].

The modern political party is an invention of the bourgeoisie. It arose with their system. Early on attempts were made to use similar bodies for the furtherance of working class interests. But that has proven to be impossible. The working class can't liberate itself through participation in bourgeois parliaments. It can't take control of the bourgeois state and use it for its own ends. And it can't make use of an organizational form created by the bourgeoisie to liberate itself either. Parties are now staffed with administrators, seeking self-perpetuation and empowerment. They pursue their own interests by wrangling around to maintain their positions in organizations that rest on elements of their own class, the working class or the bourgeoisie. But they have no interest in abolishing their own positions.

"Therefore, those who contemplate a 'revolutionary party' are learning only a part of the lessons of the past. Not unaware that the workers' parties -- the Socialist Party and Communist Party -- have become organs of domination serving to perpetuate exploitation, they merely conclude from this that it is only necessary to improve the situation. This is to ignore the fact that the failure of the different parties is traceable to a much more general cause -- namely, the basic contradiction between the emancipation of the class, as a body and by their own efforts, and the reduction of the activity of the masses to powerlessness by a new pro-workers' power. ... However, when circumstances have pushed them into action, they must undertake this task by organizing themselves autonomously, by taking into their own hands the means of production, and by initiating the attack against the economic power of capital. And once again, every self-styled vanguard seeking to direct and to dominate the masses by means of a 'revolutionary party' will stand revealed as a reactionary factor by reason of this very conception." - **Anton Pannekoek**

Historically, the working class has created its own organs in struggle, without the guidance of any "saviours" from other classes. Thus, Marx wrote that the "true secret" of the Paris Commune was that "It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing class against the appropriating class, **the political form at**

last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor."
[Emphasis added.]

Similarly, neither the Bolsheviks nor any other permanent organization created the Soviets. It was the working class itself.

"The soviet system of the Russian Revolution of 1905 disappeared with the crushing of the revolution, only to return in greater force in the February Revolution of 1917. It was these soviets which inspired the formation of similar spontaneous organizations in the German Revolution of 1918 and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the social upheavals in Italy, England, France and Hungary. With the soviet system arose a form of organization which could lead and coordinate the self-activities of the very broad masses for either limited ends or for revolutionary goals, and which could do so independently of, in opposition to, or in collaboration with existing labor organizations. Most importantly, the rise of the council system proved that spontaneous activities need not dissipate in formless mass-exertions but could issue into organizational structures of more than temporary nature." – **Paul Mattick**

They were created out of necessity, in the midst of struggle. Of course the political specialists and professional revolutionaries decry this all, because it leaves them no special position. And they can point to examples of "spontaneous" uprisings falling apart. But that proves nothing other than that they were not ready.

"If the proletariat does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for socialist organisation of labour, no-one can do this for it and no-one can compel it to do this. The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another social class or is in the hands of the soviet power; then the soviet power will be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class... it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organisation must be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all; something else will be set up..." - '**On the Building of Socialism', *Kommunist* #2, 1918.**

This is why Marx refused to become any sort of official leader of the nascent workers organizations coming into existence in his time. And why Marx and Engels warned against what they already saw taking shape:

"...when such people from other classes join the proletarian movement, the first demand upon them must be that they do not bring with them any remnants of bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, etc., prejudices, but that they irreversibly assimilate the proletarian viewpoint. But those gentlemen, as has been shown, adhere overwhelmingly to petty-bourgeois conceptions. ...in a labor party, they are a falsifying element. If there are grounds which necessitate tolerating them, it is a duty only to tolerate them, to allow them no influence in party leadership, and to keep in mind that a break with them is only a matter of time. ...In any case, the time seems to have come." - ***Private Circulation Letter from Marx and Engels, (First drafted by Engels) to Germany's Social-Democratic leadership, 1879.***

How can a "revolutionary party" be built in a non-revolutionary period anyway? If the majority of workers are not revolutionary, who would be the recruits that would join the "revolutionary organization," giving it a mass basis? Is it any coincidence that the largest organizations are always the most openly reformist? Even if such an organization could be created, member by member, from scratch, why on earth would the bourgeois let that happen? Even small groups which challenge the current order without challenging the fundamental premise of capitalism are smashed out of existence. Why wouldn't an authentic "workers party" be destroyed before it could be of any consequence? Why were so many well known (and many unknown) proponents of revolution assassinated, tortured and imprisoned? Isn't it much more important then for understanding and a grasp method to exist among the revolutionary class? Individuals can be killed. Organizations can be destroyed. But the working class is a requirement of capitalism and ideas cannot be murdered.

What is to be done?

So what do we do? Well it depends who "we" are. Elements from other classes who are sympathetic to the cause of the proletariat should at best support it where possible and at most offer suggestions based on study and

analysis. But they should do no more. The working class is the revolutionary class because of its relation to the means of production. Working people are exploited and oppressed. By pursuing their own interests, as a class, and eliminating the source of that exploitation and oppression they liberate all of humanity. It's not moralistic qualms with the way things run that motivates this class to act, but the need to free itself from wage slavery.

"Marx had learned from Hegel one lesson which he never forgot: putting in front of society a 'slogan', a formula, a set of 'sectarian principles' with which to make the world correspond is not the point. The social formation Marx strove for all his life was a human society, which he fought to release. While he respected the work of Fourier and Owen, he saw it as foreshadowing the Communism that arose from the sufferings of the proletariat itself." - **Cyril Smith**

If you are outside of the class but are outraged over poverty, starvation, the treatment of workers, sweatshops, sexism, homophobia, etc., but understand the root cause to be private property and capitalism, then do what you can to support the actual movement of the working class towards its own liberation. But don't try to lead or direct the working class. Don't think your single issue activism is the way forward and condemn "backward workers." Homophobia, anti-semitism and the like were rife among the workers that made the October Revolution. Reactionary ideas certainly weren't erased from the minds of the workers that made the Hungarian Revolution, the Paris Commune or the St. Louis Commune.

"Marx believed that the conditions of life and work of the proletariat would force the working class to behave in ways that would ultimately transform society. In other words, what Marx said was: We're not talking about going door-to-door and making workers into ideal socialists. You've got to take workers as they are, with all their contradictions, with all their nonsense. But the fact that society forces them to struggle begins to transform the working class. If white workers realize they can't organize steel unless they organize black workers, that doesn't mean they're not racist. It means that they have to deal with their own reality, and that transforms them. Who were the workers who made the Russian Revolution? Sexists, nationalists, half of them

illiterate. Who were the workers in Polish Solidarity? Anti-Semitic, whatever. That kind of struggle begins to transform people." -

Martin Glaberman

Which is certainly true:

"Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration that can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; the revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." - ***The German Ideology***

If you absolutely need to "do something" or to make yourself feel better, volunteer at a food bank, donate money to a charity, speak out, etc. At least that may have some positive effect on the lives of some individuals. It won't change anything in the overall swing of things, but it's better, and probably more effective, than naming yourself a part of the revolutionary vanguard and railing against injustice through a bullhorn so you can sleep at night, since at best that will land you in irrelevance and at worst will land in a position opposed to the self-activity of the working class. Or, if you're really serious, join the working class. And don't do it in the sort of "slumming for support" way that leftists did it in the 60's and 70's. Otherwise, you'll get the same response they did (ie. you'll be asked: "What the hell are you doing here?").

For those who already belong to the working class, the choice is clear: fight for your own liberation. Because the alternative is continued enslavement. Workers have no way out other than the abolition of wage slavery. It's not a political position they can take up during their youths and then discard later on when they move on to other things and "learn to accept the ways of the world." This is what really matters. Communists are not to have some perfect system invented in advance to sell to the masses. Marx wrote that

"Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The

conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence."

In the words of *The Communist Manifesto*, communists:

"...point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality....[and] always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole. ... The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

What does this mean in practice? It means they point out the next step, always keeping the final goal in view. This could mean arguing for a strike when your co workers start expressing anger over the way they are being treated. It could mean arguing on a picket line to elect delegates to go to other workplaces and call for them to join the strike. It could mean calling for mass assemblies in certain situation or even workers councils. It could mean arguing for defensive bodies, or any number of things. Workers who are aware of the overall situation in advance have the advantage of being able to analyze things and try to gain an understanding of what's going on. The better the understanding, the better able they are to help their class find its way. And such workers are 1000 times better able to do this sort of thing than leftist groups that circle around workers' actions when they spring up like vultures over a dying beast. Co-workers engaged in the same struggles, with the same stakes, can be trusted much more than a handful of students waving around a red flag and hawking their socialist rag. Of course such workers can't *will* revolution into being. They can only act on what exists.

"...the Communists know only too well ... that revolutions are not made deliberately and arbitrarily, but that everywhere and at all times they have been the necessary outcome of circumstances entirely independent of the will and the leadership of particular parties and entire classes." - **Friedrich Engels**

We can only act in the conditions we face, but

yet, broadly speaking, it is our actions that create future conditions. There is a delicate balance, and that can be the depressing or even dangerous part. It can lead to all sorts of things, from antipathy to adventurism to joining a "revolutionary organization" that promises to deliver. Take my word for it. And that can't really be blamed or totally prevented. But attempts can be made. It seems it may be necessary for proletarian militants to separate themselves from "Communism" if they are going to take that sort of approach at all. Marx clearly set himself apart from the socialists of his day. After World War I, the Communists clearly separated themselves from the Social-Democrats because of what they came to represent. Today, whether we like it or not, "communism" is associated in the minds of most with what existed at the worst of times in the USSR, China, etc., and what exists currently in North Korea. And the terms socialism and communism are really meaningless anyway without reference to class. Difference classes have their own "socialisms."

That's why the Manifesto dedicated a whole section to addressing them, and why **Engels** later wrote:

"...'the appropriation of the means of production, their subjection to the associated working class and, therefore, the abolition of wage labour, of capital and of their mutual relations.' Thus, here, for the first time, the proposition is formulated by which modern workers' socialism is sharply differentiated both from all the different shades of feudal, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, etc., socialism and from the confused community of goods of utopian and of primitive communism."

Militants must break free of the left wing ghetto. The same strategies and tactics that have lead everywhere but the liberation of the working class over the last century will not become any more effective in the future. One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. The basic principles and line of march that have issued out of the class itself remain relevant and important. The distortions added by years of "official Communism" and even many of its detractors needs to be peeled away, or avoided all together. What's important is for workers to find the path to their liberation, on their own, as a class. The

working class has shown that it is capable of creating its own bodies and moving forward. For what use then is a party? Especially when the "revolutionary" parties have time and time again done nothing but damage to genuine class movements! Militants in the working class can argue for the next step, even coordinating their work, without the need for formal or permanent "official" organization. And those with an understanding of the traditional role of "revolutionary parties" in such situations will need to remain aware and point such things out to the class as a whole. Any models which resemble the methods of religious recruiters should clearly be avoided. Contrary to the belief of some, workers aren't just waiting around for some enlightened figure to come around and tell them how bad their situation is. The specifics of practical activity depend on the situation, the forces involved, etc. And there needs to be more discussion around this too. Of course a "non-revolutionary period" can change into its opposite very quickly.

"The working class is divided by race, by gender, by age, by skill, by ethnic group, etc., etc. All true. However, if some social scientist had examined the workers in the industrial suburbs of Budapest in September of 1956, or the industrial suburbs of Paris in April of 1968, the same would have been found. There would have been no evidence of the coming social upheaval. How could there be? The workers themselves did not know." - **Martin Glaberman**

That is obviously both our goal and what we must prepare for. In the meantime, all of these questions deserve our careful attention.

+++++

Why is Robin Cox not growing? A reply to Why the World Socialist Movement is not growing in Issues 12/13 By Kathy Summerson

In his missive to the Lib Com entitled "Why is the WSM not growing?" Robin Cox argues that the SPGB (WSM by any other name) is hindered by overly restrictive entry requirements, specifically its opposition to religion. Why this is any concern of this particular ex-member, is,

as he himself might say, a matter for God alone.

For those who are unaware of the case, Cox left the SPGB some years ago in a pique after his hare-brained scheme to set up a SPGB-supporters' club for bible-bashers was shot down in flames, taking with him a number of active and enthusiastic members. The attempt to set up a Jesus-friendly SPGB look-alike has failed miserably and most of the potential or ex-members his views attracted have, disappointed, lapsed into apathy. This is just the latest in a series of similar incidents in the Life of Robin dating back to "Spanner" of the '80s. Fruitless navel gazing? Barrage of harping criticism? Yes please. True it is that while in the SPGB, Cox submitted a number of excellent articles to the *Socialist Standard*. Some of them I have just finished translating into plain English. And verbose? Isn't he! Just look at his contribution to the Lib Com: Seven pages to say what one (or preferably none) would have done quite adequately. So "Why is the WSM not growing?" A two word answer: "Robin Cox." Splitter, whinger, long-winded tedium monger. Coxey, I love you dearly old stick, but rejoining? They'd be mad to take you.

Of course, I am being very personal here, but if you begin your articles with "I" that is exactly what you must expect. To be fair, Cox is not a lone sinner. Indeed, even as an ex-, he remains an absolutely typical SPGBer. Unlike Robin, I have no particular wish to indulge in intellectual masturbation - one can get quite enough of that from the SPGB's own tuppenny ideologues. However, every question deserves an answer. This is not the politically-correct (SPGB Central) one but here goes.

The idea that the SPGB is not growing due to its opposition to religion is sheer nonsense. The fastest growing organisation in the "Anti-State, Non-Market Sector" is probably the Anarchist Federation. The AF's 10th Principle

(agreement with which is essential for joining) is "We oppose organized religion and religious belief(s)". This was introduced some five years ago and is based on grounds which true SPGBers would approve (see <http://libcom.org/forums/anarchist-federation/questioning-af-aims-principles-02042009>).

In a more general sense, Cox argues that "party line-ism" is 'bringing us down'. If by that he means having a comprehensive theoretical standpoint based on Marxist principles - I bloody wish. Most of the internal work of the SPGB *is* based on the sort of internal minutiae (dues, price of journal, who will be party tea boy and will he get muffins) which he would have us believe is ignored in favour of theoretical wranglings. Just look at a few recent conference agenda. No wonder no one votes in SPGB ballots! No wonder no one attends the conference! Who is really interested in these 'practical matters'? Voting on (or more pertinently raising and discussing) what is the Marxist case on particular issues is exactly what members should be interested in.

But.

Clearly they are not. It is exactly this lack of political interest, reflected not just in the Party's internal affairs but also in its external propaganda, which is a deterrent to the class conscious worker. Issues such as the recent ethics dilemma, even if tediously philosophical and tortuously semantic, show an interest in the real world, all too rare in the SPGB of today. From whence springs this deficiency? Revealing is the phrase "making socialists", which contrary to Cox's assertion remains the business, perhaps the sole business, of the party.

The ethos of the SPGB is that by persuasion of party propaganda the majority will reject capitalism and choose socialism. Capitalism is the current, nasty, state of society. Socialism, the happy world of the future. The convert has no

need to learn further about capitalism, about the world, because knowing socialism, the socialist knows all there is to know. There is no need to do anything further, because the socialist cannot act until the majority has come to the same conclusions as he. Personal revelation of the true state of things and of the state of things to come is all. Each man is his own Robert Owen, his own Charles Fourier, an idiot savant of revealed socialism.

What's missing there is: class consciousness - the knowledge and actions of acting in accordance with your economic interests as part of a collective. Naturally, the SPGBer will happily quote fragments of the sacred scrolls of socialism, idiomatic phrases of class, without understanding or applying the ideas behind them. Look you at Cox's own document published herein. Count you the mention numbers of class. That but once and but as an aphorism, unsupported and alone standing.

Properly understood, the Marxist position, the position of the SPGB, is a matter of class and that alone. Such a viewpoint has consequences throughout all spheres of human life. And it has underlying principles, without which class consciousness cannot be attained. The attitude to religion, for instance, is not a "secondary" or "non-essential" position, but one intimately connected with the underlying principles (the materialist mode of thought) and the resultant attitudes (opposition to the stalwart defenders of the capitalist system) of the class position.

In my previous missive to the assembled minions (LibCom 10), I stated that this state of intellectual ignorance and practical inactivity is neither official nor original-true nor universal. But it is widespread and deep rooted. To eradicate the sickness would be impossible but to encourage intellectual growth and informed action most possible. Mr Cox would ditch the "rigid theoretical carapace" to induce valuable assets such

as his own good self to rejoin. Perhaps instead the SPGB should try to grow a hard ideological shell to match its tough but tiny Marxist heart. And add a couple of big class action claws as well.

+++++

Workers control in the Spanish Revolution 1936

by **Alan Woodward**

The Army mutiny in Spain in July 1936, and the resulting 3 year civil war, had a few positive effects. Well away from the fighting, in the cities, towns and countryside, thousands of anti fascist committees were set up; thousands more workplaces were occupied and work kept going. The collectivised workplaces were run by committees, or comites, and we give two examples below - a major transport system and a health service.

Barcelona Tramways

Perhaps the one of the best examples of socialisation was that of the Barcelona Tramways, described extensively by the major book on the collectives [**Leval, page 245**]. It covered trams, buses, underground, taxis and two funicular railways, and 7,000 workers of whom 6,500 were CNT. There were 600 operating trams and July 20 saw many still in street barricades, extensive road damage and the main company Offices guarded by Civil Guards. Armed workers saw off the troops and found the building deserted except for a lawyer left behind to parley. This man was well known as he had led the prosecution two years previously of workers leader Jose Sanches which resulted in a 17 year sentence. He had demanded 105 years for the crime of heading a 28 week strike! The workers wanted to shoot the man on the spot but Sanches opposed that and even arranged for an appointment the following Monday and an escort home. Predictably he was never seen again.

Workers get organised

The Comite of Seven called an immediate meeting of delegates from various sections - the power station, repairs, cables, traffic, conductors, stores, accounts, offices, etc. The workers were in control and began organising. A radio broadcast recalled all workers except a tiny number of extreme right wingers. Company engineers accepted the authority of the comite, including a former colonel who had been victimised for supporting the union.

After day and night working, five days after the fighting, there were now 700 trams on the road, an extra 100, doing away with the trailer cars that caused so many accidents. The vehicles were all repainted in the red and black colours of the CNT/FAI. Other technical improvements included the replacement of 3,000 awkward metal support poles by aerial suspension, a new safety and signalling system, a new electric furnace, milling machines and electrode welding sets.

The new system worked well. Each section was headed by a workers rep and an engineer, nominated by the Syndicate. Every decision was approved by the comite. Assemblies were held on sectional issues and a general assembly ratified major points, like one to carry out the additional repainting without overtime. At one assembly, efforts were made to get the hundreds of shareholders to attend but only one middle aged woman who owned 250 shares, attended. She declared herself happy with the arrangements, and Leval recounts that the woman was unlikely to be deprived of her means of support

More production

The service was substantially improved. Monthly income was 12% up on 1935 figures. 1937 figures for passengers carried went up by 50,000,000 to 233,557,506. A uniform fare charge of .02 pesetas meant a substantial reduction for

most people. It was 20 months before fares were increased. The war and the blockade meant that internal workshop production of materials and parts used went up from 2% to 98%. All debts were paid off, unlike many situations, and financial assistance rendered to other municipal undertakings.

Better conditions

Working conditions were both equalised and bettered. Previous day rates of 8,9,10, 11 and 12 pesetas were now 15 ps for labourers and 16 ps for skilled engineering workers. Washbasins and showers were installed and an occupational health service introduced. 30 district doctors were appointed who treated workers and their families. A home help service was set up. A well equipped clinic was appropriated, specialists installed and put at the service of the Syndicate.

There was full sick pay. Discipline at work was typical of that in other comites. Serious cases were dealt with by assemblies, and dismissals usually became transfers. Drunkenness resulted in the pay being made to wives. An effective sanction in workplaces was the "naming" of irresponsible workers on a displayed blackboard, which presumably allowed a variety of personal responses.

Defended against State take over

The value of the collective organisation was obviously recognised by the workers as much as the public. When the government tried to assume control of the tramways in June 37, as part of a whole scheme to take back all the utilities and public services, the workers mounted a massive campaign. Huge posters called for rejection of "municipalisation", the euphemism used by the reformists for their planned destruction of the system. All the gains itemised above were listed and such was the response that the plans were shelved

Conclusion

The success of the tramways comite was due to the superiority of the workers management and external factors. Petrol shortages meant more use of the public service and the crippling effects of the war and blockade were minimal in the industry. The old regime was conservative and reconstruction was overdue. Other collectives were less able to stand the pressure and potash mining ceased as a result of international constraints for example.

Health Service

We can now turn to examples one involving the extension of collectivisation into social welfare, that of socialised medicine, in Catalonia initially but also other cities in Republican Spain. This is from the same source as above, page 264. Deriving from a Syndicate of Liberal Professions, the Syndicate for Sanitary Services, SSS, was set up in September 1936 to tackle the problem of health. Spain had high infant mortality 18 or 19 per 1,000 and this disguised the fact that it was double in working class areas than elsewhere. There were many other problems as well .

The initiative was taken by CNT Ministers in the Central and Catalonian government and the resulting health service was often staffed by political members. This political lead was to become a disadvantage when the counter revolutionary forces removed CNT personnel from 1937. This included Dr Marti Ibanez who had been Director General of Sanitary Services and Social Assistance in Catalonia, just one of luckier of the victims of the Stalinist counter revolution, who lived to tell the tale

By February 1937, Leval writes that the SSS had on roll 1,020 doctors of different specialities, 3,206 nurses, 330 midwives, 633 dentists, 153 pharmacists, 633 assistant pharmacists, 335 preparers of dressings, 81 other specialists, numerous masseurs and 220 veterinary surgeons. In

all, a total of 7,000 people to cover a Catalonian population of 2.5 m. By June, there were in Barcelona, 18 hospitals [six of which had been set up by the SSS], 17 sanatoria [9 new], 22 clinics, 6 psychiatric establishments, 3 nurseries, 1 maternity hospital and two very modern annexes to the General Hospital, one for bone TB and the other for orthopaedic treatment.

Outpatient departments were established in all principal localities and smaller localities were attached. These were adequately equipped and staffed to deal with problems. Funding for these as for other parts of the SSS was from central and local government. Operations were free in the new clinics as was psychiatric treatment.

Doctors

Doctors responded in different ways. The older established ones were suspicious and a number left the country. Younger staff were enthusiastic generally about the new system. Previously new doctors were virtually unpaid, worked in poor conditions and waited their turn to fill dead men's shoes. Now all hospital doctors were paid 500 ps a month for three days work. In addition, they could have private patients but this practice was closely supervised to prevent excesses. No doctor could receive two salaries and the widespread practice of neglecting official work for private practice was ended. A majority of staff also worked voluntarily in addition to their posting.

A series of reviews of related areas were begun. For example, pharmaceutical products were to be re-organised from laboratories to outlets. Health and safety at work was re-structured to begin an occupational health service and insurance companies involvement reduced in favour of State provision.

As well as the Catalonian SSS, there were a number of other health syndicates set up. Some date from 1936, like the Mutual

Aid Society of the Levant in Valencia, which in fact survived the Franco years. In Valencia in February 1937 a Congress of Federations of Health Syndicates was held. These were from all over Republican Spain, over 40 in total with 40,000 staff. An important aspect of the Congress was a planned further development in organisation especially with regard to diseases like TB. This of course would involve consideration into housing and schools and other aspects of public health.

While not all syndicates were as comprehensive as the Catalonian model, they represent a pioneering venture into a national health service well in advance of other countries. Much of this was due to the CNT and practically nothing except funds from government. In many cases, military personnel provided field hospitals and dealt with right wing pharmacists. CNT generally organised evacuations from the war zone, bomb shelters and anti gas brigades

In conclusion, the achievements in health were far from being the version that socialists would like to see. Private practice and ownership remained. Old ideas and practices were not completely removed. The constraints of war and the trade blockade imposed obvious limits. It was an experiment in un-propitious circumstances and was generally terminated with the victory of the military forces of the Right. It does represent an extension of workers power into social welfare, beyond the workplace limit set by anarcho syndicalist theory. It demonstrated that workers could effectively manage society as well as their workplaces.

"Spanish radicalism, in effect, raised questions and provided answers that have a unique relevance to the problems of our day: local autonomy, confederalism, collectivism, self management, and base democracy in opposition to state centralism, nationilization, managerial control and bureaucracy." [Murray Bookchin, **To Remember Spain**, P.49, AK Press 1994

Revolution: three strategies, three groups of theory. Laurens Otter

Basically there are, (or at least were in pre Post Fordist days), three - arguably four strategies, (we will return to the fourth), that underlie all revolutionary activity within those countries that use the myth that rule is based on parliamentary democracy. Though these strategies are seldom found entirely unmixed it is worth setting out the pure form of the first three.

All power lies at the point of production.

This strategy argues that it is this power base that gives the rulers the ability to brainwash their subjects, to manipulate all political discourse, besides supplying them with financial and other privileges. This being the case the one thing that matters is to challenge that power at the point of production, whether struggling now or preparing for future struggles. For the purists of this strategy all else is pure gloss.

Undermining the state

That as the state is basically a body of [wo]men under arms and by extension the body which has a monopoly of control over the armed forces within a given area and as war is the health of the state then if enough people can be persuaded to opt out of the military machine; *(and that obviously leads on to include the manufacture, maintenance, storage and transport of arms and also from paying taxes towards these purposes)* and by extension from all violence that inevitably is connected to any social system compatible to a state, then the state as well as its accompanying power structures would collapse. For some supporters of this strategy any activity that does not embody these tactics is, at best, irrelevant.

The withdrawal of consent argument.

Adherents to this strategy argue that exploitative society depends on consent, consent which stems from the intellectual enslavement of the exploited classes and that when and only when these are all convinced of the socialist case will class society collapse. Until that time all activity other than propaganda to this end is self defeating.

On paper, purely intellectually, each of these three could appear convincing; though for most, instinct and experience lead to modifications. When I was an FoC (print shop steward) I found it easier to relate to other workers, (whether other print workers, or on solidarity actions) if they knew something of my peace movement record; so though I was not lacking in comrades anxious to tell me that that record had all been a waste of time, which should have been spent in industry, my peace work gave me an introduction many purists lacked.

People from each tradition would point to the actions of the members of other traditions, (or of their own more eclectic comrades) to dismiss it as "petit bourgeois liberalism", as "mindless workerism" or can argue intellectually that this or that action merely intensifies class society; or that it is merely "scraping the spots of the patient, but ignoring the disease." Moreover, even in pure form, no politics - not even anarchist politics - within the union. Meanwhile the SPGB is quite content to argue its case in the context of an electoral and governmental strategy that subconsciously all party members must know could never lead to socialism.

The proponents of each strategy do/did in fact further the general cause despite their disdain for all eclecticism. Let me stress there are limits to the possibilities of eclecticism; the three basic cases underlying the strategies are - in pure form - more or less mutually exclusive, only to the extent that people modify the one can they adopt aspects of the others.

So most of us come/came up with an eclectic theory; it may - for a minority of us - be only a theoretical modification of one of the strategies; but the triangle of basic strategies is overlain by another triangle of groups or theoretical systems, systems generally evolved to suit non-parliamentary systems: a super-structure of theoretical formulations, useful for explaining and supplementing the basic strategies, but at least in some measure irrelevant; anarchism in its variant non-syndicalist or non-pacifist forms, ethical socialism ditto (though substituting non-impossibilist for non-syndicalist) and the spectrum of Leninist, Luxemburgist or other statist socialist parties.

Thus throughout radical history, there have been occasions, usually when struggles are at an abnormally sharp level, when the fourth strategy, the United Front is proposed. Obviously when

one examines such proposals in the cold light of later days; such a United Front could only come about if at least in some measure, the proponents of each strategy and/or each theory were prepared to abandon the pure expression of their case. Yet it is to an extent that there is an unexpressed, unofficial, underlying United Front that there is/was such a thing as a revolutionary movement at all.

The strands in future radicalism will no doubt be different. (*It is hardly for an octogenarian to start spelling out new trends*). Speaking for my own tradition, syndicalism, in something approaching classical form, will probably be very relevant as a strategy in 21st century China. It will probably be only one of theoretically possible forms of anarchism here in Britain.

+++++

Death toll mounts from 2009 defeat of Ssangyong strike

By Loren Goldner

It has been two years since the management of Ssangyong Motor Company in Pyongtaek, South Korea, announced the layoffs of 1000 workers. Shortly thereafter, those workers occupied their plant and held it for 77 days, from May to August 2009, when they finally succumbed to a massive police and army assault. In the immediate aftermath, many militants were arrested and some were sentenced to years in prison. Most, however, were laid off, on different terms (some with the hope of a recall after one year which to date has never materialized).

Two years after the announcement, fourteen people, both strikers and immediate family, are dead. (This is in turn part of a larger pattern in South Korea, including a spate of deaths from cancer by workers for Samsung and four recent suicides of students at KAIST, Korea's "MIT", resulting from grade pressures. Korea has the highest suicide rate of any advanced industrial country, and rivals the U.S. for deaths and injuries on the job per capita.)

Five Ssangyong workers have committed suicide and five have died from cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack or brain hemorrhage.

Doctors believe these were caused by severe stress in the aftermath of the strike and layoffs.

Some of the suicides resulted from economic problems following the lay-offs.

In Feb 2011, one worker on unpaid time-off died of a heart attack. Under the pressure of the

layoffs, his wife had killed herself in April 2010.

They had two children. The worker's bank balance was close to zero.

The following is gleaned from an article in the South Korean daily newspaper Hangyereh:

A Korean hospital also found that more than half the Ssangyong strikers it has seen are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, and 80% are suffering from severe depression. Almost all the workers involved have reported a deterioration in their marriages. Their average post-restructuring monthly income, of 822,800 Won (\$757), represented a 74 percent reduction from their previous salary.

After the defeat of the strike, 462 workers were put on unpaid leave. The promised one-year period has elapsed, yet the company maintains it is unable to begin reinstatement. Workers who retired or were fired are having difficulty finding new employment because of the Ssangyong "scarlet letter," and have been making do with temporary jobs and day-to-day work. Also absent has been any social safety network to address their deteriorating health and financial anxieties. Hangyereh calls the 14 deaths "social homicides".

We must never forget the brothers and sisters who have died in the class war.

Please distribute this report far and wide.

worldsocialistmovement/SPGB:

worldsocialism.org/spgb: Postal address:
52 Clapham High Street London SW4
7UN.

Email spgb@worldsocialim.org

Promotional Material for the World Socialist Movement

Tee-shirts Blue with polar bear and "*If You Were a Polar Bear, You'd be a Socialist*", **Yellow**, with blue and green globe and "*The World is a Common Treasury for All*". **Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL State size when ordering. £7.00 Plus postage and packaging. (P&P).**

Mugs: Standard size, red and white. On the front, "*Only Sheep Need Leaders*" and on the reverse side, "*Famine? War? Pollution? Capitalism is the Problem, World Socialism is the Solution*" **£5 Plus P&P.**

Pens: blue and white with blue ink; "*Only Sheep Need Leaders*" and a sheep. **Red and white** with blue ink with "*Workers of the World Unite*" **Black** with black ink, "*Only Sheep Need Leaders*" and a sheep. **50p each Plus P&P.**

Baseball Caps: Navy blue with embroidered "*World Socialist Movement*". **£7 each plus P&P.**

Balloons: different colours with "*World Socialist Movement*". **15p each plus P&P.**

All items carry the WSM website address. Cheques and Postal Orders made payable to SPGB SW Regional Branch. For further details contact Veronica at veronica.clanchy@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01202 569826

A couple of places to purchase Literature and help support the ASNM sector.

"there is an Alternative!"

STIMULANTS: A collection of material highlighting an opposition to the Mantra that "There Is No Alternative" to how we live today. Journals, Pamphlets, Books, DVDs and Cds etc available www.radicalbooks.co.uk

Libertarian Communist Literature has a selection of pamphlets and journals related to the anti state, non Market sector. Journals Include: **Black flag, Aufheben, Socialist Standard, Organise** and others. We have a variety of pamphlets including:

The Third Revolution? By **Nick Heath**, this briefly examines Peasant and Worker resistance to the Bolshevik government.

Anarchism and Anarcho – Syndicalism by **Rudolf Rocker.**

A participatory Society or libertarian communism: *a debate between the Project for a Participatory Society and the libcom.org group.*

Anarchy by **Errico Malatesta**

Basic Kropotkin by Brian Morris published by the **Anarchist Federation.**

How we Live and how we Might Live by **William Morris.** Published by and with a modern day assessment by The Socialist Party (SPGB)

If you are interested please contact the postal or email address on Page 2 with your details so we can send a full list of the literature we have in stock including their prices.

Radical History Network of North London.

For details contact Alan Woodward on 020 8292 8862 or RaHN at alan@petew.org.uk
Email: radicalhistorynetwork@googlemail.com

=====

Northern Anarchist Network (NAN)

If you want further information about this group contact: **Brian Bamford, 46 Kingsland Road, Rochdale, Lancs O11 3HQ** or email northernvoices@hotmail.com

=====

World In Common:

www.worldincommon.org
Email worldincommon@yahogroups.com

=====

Anarchist Federation:

www.afed.org.uk: Postal Address **BM Arnafed, London WC1N 3XX.** Email info@afed.org.uk

=====

The following three groups are industrial unions. They offer an anti bureaucratic alternative to trade unions. You can join either as an individual or if there is support for organising at your workplace.

Solidarity Federation.

www.solfed.org.uk or **PO Box 29, South West P.D.O Manchester M15 5HW** Email: solfed@solfed.org.uk

Industrial Workers of the World:

www.iww.org Or **P/O Box 7593, Glasgow, G42 2EX** Email: rocsec@iww.org.uk.

Workers International Industrial Union.

www.wiiu.org or www.deleonism.org/wiiu.htm or see the article on Industrial Unionism in issue 9

www.Libcom.org;

Another place to keep up with news from around the world from a Libertarian Communist view point.

=====

Wrekin Stop War

This can be found at www.wrekinstopwar.org or contact **Duncan Ball, 23 Sunderland Drive, Leegomery Salop, TF1 6XX** email: Duncan.ball@blueyonder.co.uk.

Red and Black Notes

You can obtain some RBN items from libcom.org as listed above. If you want to know more than read issue 6 Of The Libertarian Communist and the article by Neil Fettes pp.4-7

=====

See also: **Institute for Anarchist Studies**, the similar but separate, **Anarchist Studies Journal** and **Anarchy Archives**. See also the **Socialist Labour Party of America** (www.slp.org). Not to be confused with the Scargill mob and the **Marxist Internet Archive Library**.

Red Anarchist Action Network (RAAN)

www.redanarchist.org

From the RAAN Website

“The existence of Leninism as a force - albeit a discredited one - in today's political movement will no longer be tolerated, neither by our action network nor by the overwhelming force of the revolutionary mass, which by its very nature will destroy the ridiculous notion that the total suppression of bourgeois society can be achieved, much less led, by those who continue to worship the fascist doctrines of past state-capitalists. We are a union of anarchists, autonomists, situationists, and Marxists who believe that Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, and all those who affiliate themselves with the statist movements and ideologies they represent are not our allies, never have been, and never will be. “

