Revolutionary Portraits

Iosif Solomonovich Bleikhman

Iosif Solomonovich Bleikhman was born within Russia in 1868, at Vidy, what is now Belarus.

From a Jewish background, he took up the occupation of tinsmith. Emigrating to the United States, he became an anarchist communist in 1904.

Returning to Russia, he was arrested by the Tsarist regime and deported to Siberia. The appalling conditions there made him join the Petrograd Anarchist Communist Federation and become popular among Petrograd workers and the sailors of Kronstadt, making speeches and writing many articles under the name of N. Solntsev in the pages of Kommuna and Burevestnik (Stormy Petrel), the publication of the Anarchist Communist Federation. He was elected to the Petrograd Soviet in July, and his activities meant he was hunted by the Kerensky government.

The July Days

Discontent with the Kerensky government increased in July 1917. Workers, sailors and soldiers gathered in large meetings in Moscow. Bleikhman exhorted a delegation from Moscow to take action. No assistance from political organisations was needed, he said, to perform their revolutionary mission, as "the February revolution also took place without the leadership of a party." He urged the masses to seize all available supplies, the factories and mines, and to destroy the government and the capitalist system at once. Later that day, the Machine-Gun Regiment revolted and were joined by crowds of soldiers, sailors and workers. The abortive insurrection that took place was known as the July Days, and the Kerensky government was in danger of being overthrown. The Bolshevik leadership considered any action to be premature and were worried that joint action by anarchists and rank-and-file Bolsheviks would endanger their party. Trotsky refers to Bleikhman in his usual condescending way in his history of the Russian Revolution: "... the anarchist Bleikhman, a small but colourful figure on the background of 1917, with a very modest equipment of ideas but a certain feeling for the masses - sincere in his limited and ever inflammable intelligence - his shirt open at the breast and curly hair flying out on all sides... The soldiers smiled delightedly at his speeches, nudging each other with their elbows and egging the orator on with pithy comments. They plainly liked his eccentric looks, his unreasoning decisiveness, and his Jewish-American accent sharp as vinegar." The Menshevik leader Prince Brestelii sneeringly refers to him as a "superficial" ideas in "ungrammatical" Russian he had gleaned from anarchist pamphlets.

Icons

The Bolshevik Ilyin-Zenevsky gloats about the fate of Bleikhman in his memoirs. He deals with the first conference of the Red Army held in Petrograd in March 1918. He disapproves of the ideas of the Red Army men. "Here at the Red Army conference... the speakers took no account whatsoever of the state aspect of the matter, but simply cursed the Soviet power from the standpoint of their own selfish interests". Bleikhman attended this conference and was elected to the presidium. The Bolsheviks attempted to have an honorary presidium put in place, consisting of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and a number of other Party leaders. Bleikhman addressed the conference saying: "I categorically object to an honorary presidium... We've elected them already. Why do we need an honorary presidium for? They would be just icons that we made for ourselves. One lot of gods has been overthrown, only for a new lot to appear!" Despite this a small majority elected the honorary presidium. Ilyin-Zenevsky was appalled by the attitude of the Bolshevik Party members at this conference, whom he considered shared the outlook of the anarchists.

The conference elected a special executive bureau made up of Bolsheviks and anarchists, including Bleikhman, to supervise the work of the military commissariat of which Ilyin was a member. "Just you wait, we have yet to have a talk with you". Bleikhman "growled menacingly" to Ilyin. Ilyin goes on to say: "We had a talk with him before he could do that". Repression

Not long after the attack by armed units of the Bolshevik government on the anarchist centres in Moscow in April 1918, in which 40 anarchists were shot and hundreds arrested, repression fell on the anarchists in Petrograd. As Ilyin notes: "One fine day Bleikhman and a number of his anarchist comrades, who were concentrated in the Moscow Gate precinct... were surrounded by our units and after some resistance compelled to surrender... The most inveterate cut-throats among them were put in prison. After being kept under arrest for a short time, Bleikhman was released. Thenceforth he behaved somewhat less noisily. The facts go somewhat against this bland last sentence. Bleikhman was deported to a concentration camp and forced to carry out humiliating and painful labour, in mud and water up to his waist. Already frail as a result of his time in the Tsarist jails, his health was ruined and he died in 1921. He had indeed become less..."
Confessions of a peace thug: Shannon and Direct Action

This is a personal report of my own participation and observations, so of necessity it is strong in some areas - the various demonstrations at Shannon, and weak in others - the peace camp, the surveillance. of what I have been doing in the campaign to de-militarise Shannon has been helping to organise meetings, leafleting, organising buses, sticking up posters, and running another bus, and sticking up posters, and sticking up posters, and oh yeah did I mention sticking up posters? Needless to say this report has been a hit "served up", with little emphasis on humdrum work and more on the those rare moments of adrenalin rush, with special reference to that one glorious piece of mass destruction on October 12.

I was first down in Shannon in mid August last year. We were only about 70 strong, yet we defied police orders to stay outside the airport, and by entering caused a warplane to leave without refuelling. On August 31 there was a 24 hour women's peace camp outside the airport, with an information stall in Shannon town itself which got a good reception. On September 1 there was a small picking outside the main terminal. Also at this time two American warships carrying ammunition to the Middle East were due to stop over in Cork, but this visit was cancelled because of planned protests. On the night of September 3rd Dubskwy went into the airport grounds and re-decorated a warplane. I am normally critical of "phalghubers" type action but it led to increasing anti-war mobilisation - a month the numbers protesting at the airport increased tenfold. Shannon became a public issue. On October 12 hundreds of people turned up to demonstrate and after a fence was surgically struck and decommissioned, one woman darted across the runway grounds pursued by Keystone Cops. She was followed by well over a hundred, who soon faced water cannon and police dogs. Ten people were arrested but released after the people occupying the runway grounds refused to move until they were released. After the airport road was blocked we all went down to the catapult to make sure they would get out.

Shortly after this the Third Grassroots Gathering took place in Belfast. This brought together over one hundred environmentalists, anarchists, and other assorted troublemakers from across the island and beyond. There were almost 20 different workshops on a wide variety of topics including Gender, Direct Action, Social Reclaim the Streets, Sectarianism, and Forest Gardens. Long and laborious meetings at this event sought to co-ordinate an autonomous strand within the peace movement with an orientation towards direct democracy and action. We announced a 'day of action' on December 8th. That day a diverse throng of around 400 demonstrators gathered in Shannon, accompanied by 200 Garda (on two shifts), the Garda canine unit, undercover police, Special Branch, a police helicopter and Aer Rianta's own security. Well we must be doing something right. We set off on a long trek to the airport, complete with music from a shopping trolley sound system and cider fiddle. Strangely absent were mass produced placards bearing the same slogan, so people had to make do with D-LY banners, homemade T-Shirts, one coffin with 'Irish Neutrality' written on it, various Uncle Sam/Dubya impersonators, and a bunch of kids chucking flour about the place. A team of graphic design artists went to work on the truly classic 1970s tail fin monument near the terminal.
leadership of the Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM) as a day on non-violent direct action. We emphasise the word leadership because much of the membership of the IAWM had no awareness of our approach. That leadership's reaction was to call a general meeting to try to get people to claim that nasty anarchists were hijacking their event. In the week running up to the March 1st Action, two charter companies carrying American troops through Shannon pulled out, citing "security threats". World Airways having already pulled out, according to media reports, this left one charter company hired by the American military still using Shannon airport, as well as direct military flights. One big push might have been to make Shannonsafefor Washington. And as a result, the government had to seek the March 15 action served to build up a general climate of confidence and culture of resistance through winning and most importantly through winning by our own efforts. The conservative Left's campaign against direct action served to facilitate state repression. People arrested in October started to get their summons and more people were arrested and charged on March 1st. House raids, arrests and riots cops appeared on the horizon. Blanket policing prevented a march from ever getting into the airport grounds. The numbers of cops at Shannon station increased massively. Last year there were 234 cops in Clare with only 30 in Shannon. Now there are 140 in Shannon alone. Many activists have been banned from Clare despite it being unconstitutional according to a High Court judge. Even so, the state has not thrown a ring of steel around an airport. The conservative Left's response has been to do it by lobbying or voting or whatever. Direct action's purpose is to have an effect, to directly sort out the problem. The diverse actions at Shannon, by creating a "security threat", led to the charter companies pulling out. Shannon was being depoliticised as a result of direct action. Now there's all kinds of 'direct action'. The successful penetration of security at Hillsborough during the Bush-Bramante summit? The blockade of the Dail? Here in Galway we watched a Fianna Fáil office, and likewise in many other places the focus was on the politicians. But where was the end product? Many of these events had the form of direct action but the content of protest lobbying. "Put pressure on the airlines", start with letter writing, get progressively frustrated through protest marching while the movement's tactics had been "realistically" threatened. This from the representative of a regime guilty of mass murder, stating clearly that we had got them over a barrel and on the run. You could play by the system's rules, do only what you are permitted to do, and Jane Fort will probably love you, there will be no controversy, you'll have a nice media image, no political backlash....and you'll get absolutely nowhere. Imagine what a unified mass non-violent direct action mobilisation in Shannon on March 1st could have done. Following March 1st, the movement went into reverse. Day X reaction didn't keep the pressure on Shannon and two of the further demos there either massively policed by the boys in blue or kept under control by the political parties. Direct Action is not another way of saying militancy, it means going and sorting a problem yourself, as opposed to indirect action - asking someone else to do it by lobbying or voting or whatever. Direct action's purpose is to have an effect, to directly sort out the problem. The diverse actions at Shannon, by creating a "security threat", led to the charter companies pulling out. Shannon was being depoliticised as a result of direct action. Now there's all kinds of 'direct action'. The successful penetration of security at Hillsborough during the Bush-Bramante summit? The blockade of the Dail? 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Friends and neigbours

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Do or Die! Afo Prior House, 6 Tibury Placed, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5.00 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anarchist movement and the various ways we can respond to everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it’s must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists, is the only group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, C/O Black Planet (U.S.) Books, 1623 Fleet St, Baltimore MD 21231, USA, or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste, 70, Rue du Mans, Quebec, G1K 1J0, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them through our website.

The Anti-War movement in the North East

Though the war in Iraq is still being conducted at a low level, memories of the anti-war movement seem very faint.

Yet, for a few brief weeks in spring, a highly significant movement helped send perhaps two million people to demonstrate in London and a further 100,000 in Glasgow. That response to Blair’s invasion of Iraq also appeared in towns and cities all over the country and was sustained for several weeks before the war was finally declared ended. As everywhere else, the north east of England experienced some incredible moments in this campaign and the anti-war movement there, like elsewhere, provided both inspiration and lessons for anarchists.

The Tyne and Wear Stop the War Coalition was set up in the aftermath of the September 11 destruction of the World Trade Centre, it being obvious from early on that the US would respond with aggression and violence and that Britain would support this stance. But things did not really take off until relatively recently: the attack on Afghanistan stepped up the tempo, which reached fever pitch with the build-up to the attack on Iraq, an attack everyone instinctively knew had been decided on months before.

Before the war started, one of the best things that happened was an occupation of the Labour Party national recruitment office in North Shields on 7 February. Two people pretended to want to join the party and the rest covered the camera on the door and ran in. A group went upstairs to try and get a banner out of the window while others stayed on the ground floor. A third group stayed outside. The staff were a bit radgie at first but they calmed down and a few occupiers ended up talking to them about why they were doing it. Many of the staff seemed to think that they were ‘non-political’, and that the target was not legitimate (odd as it was national Labour Party office and most of the workers there were Labour Party members). The cops came but realised they could do nothing to remove the occupiers, so they stayed until the media turned up. After about two hours inside the occupiers agreed to leave, to a paparazzi-like reception from the media. All in all it went pretty well. Though it would have been better if the occupiers had made a bit more of a nuisance of themselves, it got some good media coverage (both ITV and BBC cameras showed up, as did three radio station and two newspapers) and there was a national Labour organiser up from London there at the time, so presumably the message got back to London as well...

But this was a relatively small group of people. Though there were others demos and stunts, the really interesting stuff happened on the day the war started. This is a report written at the time:

The first day of war in Iraq saw some of the largest and most militant activity that Newcastle has experienced in recent times. Events began at 8 am at the Haymarket. A crowd of eighty-odd that had gathered moved into the road and blocked traffic for forty-five minutes. Some gave out leaflets but most just sat and chanted in the road. A banner was hung off a nearby church. There weren’t as many of the usual suspects, due to some uncertainty regarding when the war had actually started. Fortunately there was a large group of school kids and sixth-formers from Heaton. Identified by their pink sashes, they were the most ‘up for it’ and they made it happen in the morning.

Eventually, some went to work, but the kids weren’t finished yet. They marched to the Monument and spent half an hour chalking anti-war slogans all over the area. Dissatisfied with that, the kids moved off again... to the Metro. The cops had heard where they were going and accompanied them to the Metro doors. For some reason they didn’t follow the group to Gateshead, where they made straight for the Tyne Bridge. Stopping traffic on the Tyne Bridge was child’s play. No copper showed for ages. Initially sat on the Gateshead side, people decided to take the middle of the bridge. As they moved off, a copper finally caught up. He drove past, stopped and tried to...
Resistence

Resistence is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of Resistence means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist movement and all the usual anti-war and anti-capitalist movements in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work - seem to be spiraling rapidly downwards into decay. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work. If you would like to become involved in Resistant, then send POBs, cheques for £4 payable to "AF: to: AF: PO Box 375, Kripke, Woking, Surrey GU21 1QL - Better still, take a bundle to distribute - AF Ireland produce their own regular newspaper, Resistence Ireland. It is available from their address:

Anarchist Federation (Ireland)
Post Box 167
Dundalk, Co. Louth.

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make people stop, but everyone just walked past him. Numbified by this, he got out and grabbed the first person he saw. Then things started getting a bit hairy. Whilst the cop was teasing with his arrestable radicals had got out of their cars and were looking like they were gonna kick off. Then several cops vans showed and the fun was over.

The group then marched back into Newcastle, accompanied by police vans the whole way. At lunchtime, it met up with the main march and again stopped traffic at the Haymarket. The final event of the day came at a 6pm appointment himself police liaison and stopped traffic at the Haymarket. The going to end up bored to death. Despite people shouldn't sit in the road as anti-war vigil. Addressed by the usual for them, regardless of your motives.

Like the crowd of perhaps 1,000 was across the park by the church and sat on causing disruption and testing the line of sight. A vicar by a representative of a similar organisation as the SWP regional organiser then announced that the demo was over and everyone should go to the next one. The way in which a high level of solidarity, spontaneity and militancy was effectively killed by people who were meant to be supporters of the cause was nothing short of a disgrace. It definitely did not need to end that way.

Yet, this incredible day, did not herald the start of an even larger and more militant campaign of direct action. There was another rally-cum-march on the Saturday after war started but the police refused to let the crowd march up Northumberland street as it was busy with shoppers. They condoned it but people went through various shops and the march kind of happened anyway. It dispersed after a 'vigil' at the war memorial and there weren't enough people to do a show on the road again. Most of the kids weren't there, and they were the ones who had made it so successful the previous Thursday. An attempt by a few people to sit in the road ended in predictable failure as angry taxi drivers jumped out of their cars. It was also a Newcastle home match and a lot of the fans were pretty abusive. Since the war actually started a polarisation had occurred, as might have been expected. After that relative failure I still thought that the success of the first day's action could be repeated or even bettered but, unfortunately, I was

marched. The subsequent Thursday and Saturday meetings began to decline in size and militancy. By May Day things had reached a real low. It was the most depressing Day March I can remember (so mean feat given previous marches' ability to induce feelings of total despair). It was pathetic and everyone was searching through town. Did the slight way the first night's actions were killed-off put people off doing anything similar? What is certain is I didn't see that same level of militancy again. The experience of that little night left a bitter taste in my mouth, and, I imagine, in that of many others.

For an all-too-brief moment we had glimpsed something special in Newcastle. The political impact on those who became politically engaged for the first time is something that can and will last. In the north east one of the most important features of the anti-war actions was that they were supported and often inspired by people who had not taken direct action before. It was great to see, for example, a load of kids running up the 'blinking eye' bridge and locking-on, when we'd heard that a naval training vessel was due on the Tyne (and consequently needed the bridge again). It was the kids of Heaton that took the Tyne Bridge and the youth of all Tyneside seemed to be at the mass road blockade that first evening of war. The youth gave the demos a lot of energy and inspiration, and they were up for a lot more than just marching and chanting slogans. Another positive development has been a lot of young people coming into contact with anarchist ideas and setting up groups. Amongst the Youth Network in places like rural and very Tory Hexham, and other groups elsewhere who are now more interested in anarchist ideas.

The internal politics of the Stop the War Coalition was predictably messy. A coalition of peace activists, liberals, Greens, lefties of almost all 57 vegetables, anarchists, some old Labour people (I think), hippies and assorted neo-er-do-wells, it was always likely to end in tears. It often did. And when one group came to show it almost always seemed to be the SWP and a few hangers-on versus the rest. A group outside of the STWC did theLabour Party occupation and it got slagged by some at the following STWC meeting. The SWPers accused the occupiers of being "super heroes", "elitist", and "petty bourgeois" etc. (the same old unoriginal and frankly meaningless platitudes you'd expect). The SWP didn't like it but it was being left out that really riled them. As the occupation appeared to be one of the more effective things done in the region.

Then there was the repeated SWP attempts to push through their reorganisation idea. The effect of this would be to create a 'committee' with a handful of 'elected' (read SWP-appointed) people who would make all the decisions and co-ordinate the whole regional campaign. It seems that it's more democratic to have this committee then it is for anyone who wants to get involved just coming along and having their input. One of the most hilarious aspects of it all was the SWP claim to represent more people and therefore deserve more voting power/influence over what went on. If an SWP member is a trade union branch secretary, ergo he or she represents all the people who are in that branch in whatever meeting they happen to be taking part in. The truth is, like the rest of us, they represent themselves, their party and no one else. Anyway, they argued that at present the STWC was not working efficiently in the region and that it needed co-ordination by this committee. Bar one or two others, like a few people that thought that a 'command structure' [!] was an essential part of any organisation, the rest argued that it worked well enough as it was: the problems that did arise could be sorted out as and when necessary; the committee idea meant putting control into the hands of a few people at the expense of everyone who wasn't on the committee; specific events could, as was already happening, be organised by sub-groups of those interested.

The first time the committee idea came up, it was not decisively defeated with, though people were quite opportunistic outside the ranks of the SWP.

Failing to get what they wanted inside the STWC, the SWP attempted to come along as SWP members, as if they were deliberately trying to show that the structure didn't work. The SWP fervently believes you can't organise without people telling you what to do. They were going to try and impose their "top-down" model and show us (a) we needed leaders and (b) they were the best people for the job. Though a committee would still minute creativity and disempower people who were wanting to do stuff, it would have given control to the SWP. There are many lessons that need to be understood or things that require thinking about by anarchists, arising from the anti-war campaign and its activities. (1)

(1) Spontaneity, often from people new to ‘political activity’, can be a very effective tool if you want to keep the police on their toes, and refusal to cause maximum disruption. There is no need for marshalling, corralling and generally being controlled a la SWP.

- The internal politics of the Stop the War Coalition was predictably messy. A coalition of peace activists, liberals, Greens, lefties of almost all 57 vegetables, anarchists, some old Labour people (I think), hippies and assorted neo-er-do-wells, it was always likely to end in tears. It often did. And when one group came to show it almost always seemed to be the SWP and a few hangers-on versus the rest. A group outside of the STWC did the committee adopted was the same arguments had been, that it was about control not democracy or organisation, that we should be doing things, not wasting time arguing about how we should be doing things. After heated and at times very comical debate, it was voted down. The STWC was operating in a relatively ‘anarchist’ manner. With no formal hierarchy, it was characterised by openness, equality and democracy. Of course, it could have been better, but most of the problems were down to people not using some initiative and not communicating. Most of the complaints from SWP members, if they were deliberately trying to show that the structure didn’t work. The SWP fervently believes you can’t organise without people telling you what to do.

FEATURE

I'D RATHER BE KILLING CAPITALISTS...

another war is possible

FIGHT THE REAL ENEMIES: Bosses, Cops & Politicians

no war but the class war

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ORGANISER - Issue 61

CONTINUES
FEATURE

What goes in ORGANISE!

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

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

On June 19th we had the opportunity to interview Neka, a representative of the Autonomous Argentinian movement. She is a member of the piqueteros, the movement of the unemployed, so called from the Argentine word for blockade.

Interview with Neka, representative of the Autonomous Argentinian movement

Though they are best known for direct action, they carry out much wider projects, developing neighbourhood networks, education and health initiatives and micro-companies, self-organised workshops in which the unemployed make first what they need then products for sale to get some income. This is especially important since there has been no dole or benefits in Argentina until recently. Even the very limited dole came as a result of the direct action of the piqueteros.

Argentina made headlines a year and a half ago due to the collapse of the economy and political institutions. Millions of Argentinians lost their savings and money in December 2001 when the economic policies implemented at the end of the IMF and World Bank,vector of corruption and increased resistance. But the struggle of those affected by harsh living conditions has been a constant for a long time. The state continues to decline due to a lack of legitimacy and resources, abandoning responsibility for health and social services for instance. This makes self-organisation a necessity for most Argentinians, who need to build their own structures so they can go on with their every day lives.

This has provoked a debate about the role of the state. Though most of the time services are delegated to it, there’s no need to do so. Self-organised workers can do the work, providing health, education and other services to people in standards. After all it’s us, the workers, who do the real work and not state bureaucrats. But while the state collapses and retreats from a lot of its supposed duties, it has never had any problem to keep up, or even increase, the level of repression, thus disclosing its real nature and priorities. Even in the days of December 2001, when governments were made and unmade in a matter of days, if not hours, the only fully working state organisation was the riot police, which killed many demonstrators.

Efforts were made of any possible solution for the Argentinian crisis in the foreseeable future, especially via capitalism. The fact that international organisations such as the World Bank or the WTO are demanding more of the same policies that led to the crash, and that international banks are pressing for debts in the first place, is not helping at all. Through these last years, only the will of the people to resist, finding new ways of social organisation, has allowed them to keep their lives going. Even if it had a lot of problems and set-backs, as we would expect when someone is exploring new ways, it was a very important and kept hospitals, schools and factories open. Now the bosses and the state are coming back, as if nothing had happened, to rechain the companies or areas that they left when the crisis struck. Their only argument for this is coming from the barrel of a gun. There’s still a future of struggle for the Argentinian people ahead. We can only hope that we can support and help them.

Interview with Neka, representative of the Autonomous Argentinian movement

Could you explain to us who are the piqueteros, how they are organised and how they first appeared?

Let me introduce myself. I’m Neka and I am a member of the MTD Solano. We are a part of a coordination of different movements called MTD Anibal Veron. We began to get organised post the end of 1999, mainly out of necessity in the neighbourhoods, as we began to be badly hit by unemployment. That was our starting point.

These assemblies and meetings, did they begin spontaneously, or were they an initiative taken by some existing political group?

No. Most of us had met each other through the every day reality of the neighbourhood, as we were engaged in different projects. For example, I was part of a team working on health issues in our barrio. We had better touch, there was a bond between us. And there were also some compañeros who had been involved in other projects in the area. When we first decided to get together and discuss the problems brought by unemployment, most of us had a deep and sound
Yes. It’s a life of movement. This word, piquetero, we never branded ourselves like that. It started being used by the media, that is the state, in a not where it should be. Direct action, piquetero, we never branded ourselves like that. It started being why the food is concentrated there, and began to blockaderoadsand occupy to seewhat capitalism and class, which doesn't exist today any more. It's a life of movement. Thisontology is never finished, that's why we work so hard, such as the repression. When 'kids are starving todeath every day, dying of malnutrition, there are more than 300 different assemblies, are all part of the effort to change the system is criminal. When the state...
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interested in the Spanish Civil War and its different experiences. There are big similarities with the historical way of building up an organisation. But nowadays in Argentina we don’t keep any big relationship. We do with individuals, but not with any anarchist organisation.

We have big similarities with the anarchist struggle. Some compañeros at the MTD Solano who come from the anarchist struggle. There’s a risk of having only that which can be constructed or practised. There’s a risk of having only speech, agreements, theories and when we come back home, nothing happens. The system is preying on and living in our spaces, in our every day life. It gives us an education to make us obey, it imposes the way our clothes are, and where we have to live. You and I cannot choose the place, the house or the barrio where we want to live. I think that the struggle against this taming, this domestication or discipline that we all receive so make us obey the system, that’s what we have to co-ordinate afterwards.

To try get back the decision making on our own lives. I think so, yeah. Talking about practical stuff, what do you think we could do from here, Europe, to support the struggling people of Argentina? Where we get strength and hope is from meeting other struggling people, or those who are doing things in their areas, proposing a new way of life. There’s also the sharing of resources. Usually here, as well as in Spain or Italy, there’s more resources, things that we have. Support, and sharing things as much as we can, I think that’s a very important issue. There’s also the repression. I think it’s been reduced thanks to world wide demonstrations, even when it was very strong. Though we don’t expect much from international organisations, protests and demonstrations in front of them, of embassies and so on does call attention to our situation.

If we look into the future, do you think there’s any solution for the crisis in Argentina within capitalism or would any solution have to go through a radical redefinition of everything? At the moment in Argentina we have a big void due to the lack of legitimacy that the state has had lately. But at the same time the system is very enduring and goes on creating conditions for it to survive and thrive. This is happening with the new government but it doesn’t mean that the right solution is being applied for us. There’s no valid answer from any reform or reproduction of what we had before.

Can this void of power that state crisis has brought along be filled by a network of all the struggling sectors? Do you think that such a coordination could be the embryo of a new society, organised in a different way? We, at least, are not thinking with the same logic that we are used to. I believe it is possible to imagine a different kind of society. We at MTD Solano don’t have any faith in a revolution employing the same methods of the bourgeoisie to govern. There must be a different logic.

Yeah, could spreading this way of organising, according to these different logics, could it take over the state, so at the end you get a network of assemblies managing the every day life of the workers? Yeah, I think that would be the logical way. Wouldn’t it? Because that’s the only way every one can take a decision on what affects them.

Finally, how do you think that this is going to evolve? The movement itself, also the social and economic situation in Argentina, what do you think is going to happen, and what would you like to happen? I don’t think the conditions are ripe for a popular government, no matter how much they want it. I think that, for a while, they’ll use some mechanism to create some social consensus, to gain the support they need to stay in power. But at some point it’s going to kick off again. They are using a lot of tools to create hope in the people, as they did...

"I think that the state is repression, that the essence of the system is criminal. When the state leaves millions homeless, without any benefits or health service, that is repression."

Argentina is going through? I think that even though national economic institutions and the state have responsibility for everything happening, I still think that the pressure has been on a global basis, that the interests of big capital have tout this pressure on. They have effects in countries like Argentina but also on everything happening in Africa, in Asia, and on some countries of Europe itself. It’s a conscious policy, planned and executed by the likes of the International Monetary Fund, the big corporations.

How do you see the attempts to create an opposition to this neoliberalist project by building up an international opposition? We take part in a lot of forums, for instance the Porle Angele summit, meeting people from all over the world. But we also meet many others at a regional or continental level. We find them very interesting spaces, but we also think that there’s a point in stressing the need of co-ordinating only that which can be constructed or practised. There’s a risk of having only

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**Class Struggle in the New Economy**

You might have noticed if you’ve read any of the bosses’ own publications (The Economist, Financial Times, Business Week etc) that they are pushing the idea of a ‘New Economy’.

A n economy based on the latest technology and IT, which has somehow overlooked all the contradictions of the ’old economy’ and developed a fundamentally harmonious basis; workers and bosses co-operating for the common good, the end of workplace struggle.

It’s the same self-serving myth the bosses have always dished out when they want to make changes that benefit them and harm us, right from the start of the Industrial Revolution. Marx said 150 years ago that "It would be possible to write a whole history of the inventions made since 1830 for the sole purpose of providing capital with weapons against working-class revolt", which is essentially what is happening today. They are trying to build ideology against us, whilst simultaneously claiming it’s for our benefit. A look at what is actually happening in the ‘new economy’ will dispel some of these myths. You have to look at call-centres and similar workplaces and the production and assembly plants that make the components for this new technology, not just information workers or high-paid software designers.

The first thing to emphasise is that the development of the New Economy is deliberate. It is the logical result of mostly US state-funded development programs that explicitly sought to create a pro-management environment through the use of technology. The early electronic plants in the 1950s were used as laboratories for road-testing new management plans to deal with the collective strength of what became known as “the mass worker” – a workplace community that had gained strength from the sheer numbers of people concentrated in one plant. The concept of ‘team-management’ grew from this experiment and was exported to other industries most notably the Detroit car factories and steel industries. It’s not only the advertised product that the ‘new economy’ is selling - it also sells plans to minimise worker resistance and new ways of making us work harder for longer for less pay whilst watching us every second. We should keep a very careful eye on what is happening in the ‘new economy’ as it may very well be happening close to home before too long - as the spread of just-in-time production, toyotism, self-management, work circles and other management ploys have demonstrated. So how have workers been responding to all this?

**Worker Resistance**

Despite the myths of a peaceful workplace there have been numerous examples of class struggle taking place in the hi-tech sector - practically from its origins. There’s a number of struggles that seem to be of particular significance because of the areas in which they took place, how they were organised, and the opportunities for spreading struggle among other parts of the working. The 1993 strike by workers at the Vsetarotron circuit board assembly plant in Sunnyvale, Silicon Valley was of great significance as it was the first to take place among production workers (mainly female Mexican immigrants) who are the basis of the ‘new economy’ but who remain...
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hidden behind the scenes in favour of stories about dot-com entrepreneurs. These workers were employed in a

„..."

Worse have their worst fears come true. Now, of course, none of this is

"..."

The lack of a union presence in the workplace can never escape labour

"..."

To put it simply, Bombardier is selling its business jet
to us. The company has been sold to the highest bidder, who

"..."

The strike which seemed so solid after two weeks out was brought to

"..."

unions with the company's bargaining council. The
time constraints. For a

"..."

At Bombardier?

On August 8th 2003, Maurice Nell, business

corporate reorganisation, imposing a dealthat

"..."

As a result of the strikes and other industrial action

"..."

The airline industry in the United States is moving back into profit,

"..."

Some people are already suffering the
time, and who consequently

"..."

The reality of conditions in the 'new economy' is that they have met with a

"..."

It is now the norm throughout the industry - not an

"..."

few years with the bursting of the
dot.com bubble, the transfer of jobs to
developing' countries and the mass

"..."

With "..."

The mass immigration of IT workers prepared to

"..."

The "..."

"..."

The story of "..."

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Add to this the fact that the Bombardier 415 is the world’s leader in putting out forest and mountain fires (think blazing oil wells) and you realise how much the company has fallen on hard times.

But to return to the workers facing the sack. In June, Bombardier in the north called for ‘new working practices’ (more mumbo-jumbo from our friend at the ‘Telegraph’) and a ‘pay restraint’ (or: pay cut, or no pay) for workers at its three manufacturing plants. This, in spite of the fact that, according to Nell: demand has grown steadily in the last three months and only produced profits for most US airlines, according to analysts.

So, in the middle of those three months of profits, Bombardier decides to downsize the lives of over 1000 workers. This a month after they secured a contract worth more than $2.2bn with US Airways for a mixture of its 50 and 75 seat regional jets. So in the north, but simply want to create nothing but a management board of elite) stifle the hopes of those at the bottom (the workers) and impede their natural desire for an improvement in working conditions. This elite is nothing but a management board of full-time, permanent officials motivated by promoting collective bargaining, a rebellion against the discipline, a rebellion against the power and control of the management board of permanent and full-time officials motivated by keeping the trade union bureaucracy alive.

Anarchists throughout the north of Ireland believe that the workers at Bombardier’s three plants should be supported in their struggle against the bosses. We believe there is no need for ANY redundancies given the fact that Bombardier is NOT losing profits in the north, but simply wants to create MORE profits by relocating elsewhere. We hope to be participating in a campaign to raise awareness of the plight of these workers. Contact us for more information.

1. From Meet Canada the Global Arms Dealer by Stephen James Keir

Trade Unionism and Industrial Organisation
Anarchist Federation (Ireland) and Anarchist-Syndicalist Federation Statement on Trade Unionism and Industrial Organisation
The Role of Trade Unions
The Anarchist-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) and Anarchist Federation (AF), as organisations of class-struggle anarchists, agree that trade unions cannot be used, in the long term, as vehicles of revolutionary activity in Ireland. Here, as elsewhere, trade unions are top-down organisations of bureaucrats and workers where those at the top (the bureaucrats and trade union officials) still the hopes of those at the bottom (the workers) and impede the natural desire for an improvement in working conditions. This elite is nothing but a management board of full-time, permanent officials motivated by self-interest alone, with even less interest in rocking the industrial boat. Trade union officials will not, for example, involve workers in long-term strike action that would interrupt the flow of profitable union dues. In short, trade unions are not controlled by their members; it is they who control the fact that trade unions like SIPTU have scrapped notions of one-man, one vote, and will not even countenance changes in the ways they are organised, is testament to the stranglehold union bureaucracies have over workers.

As capitalism is an exploitative system where workers produce the wealth, but do not receive it, trade unions, by promoting collective bargaining, are also promoting and legitimising exploitation. In recent times, the ‘social partnership’ entered into by trade union leaders and bosses has made this even more self-evident, while Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) are paving the way for private investment in the public sector. In the meantime, trade unions are overseeing the run down of our public services which will be ultimately paid for by an increase in water charges in the north.

However, the AF and ASF do not believe that its members should not join trade unions. While we realise that they will never be able to step onto the revolutionary stage, we also acknowledge the benefits to be gained by union membership in the short term. Trade unions are places where workers can gather together, and where progressive ideas can be discussed. Trade unions can also offer better Health and Safety conditions, legal protection, and support over minor quibbles with management.

Shop-Stewards and Union Reps
The ASF and AF accept that in some cases - for example in militant workplaces - it may be worthwhile for its members to become shop-stewards or union reps. (Having said this, in periods of industrial calm, there is nothing to bar our members becoming shop-stewards if they feel that by doing so they can make a contribution to the struggle against the class boss.) An AF or ASF member who becomes a shop-steward will do so as a delegate, and not as a mouthpiece for management. The role of the shop-steward/union rep will be seen not as a means to advance the interests of our organisations specifically, but as an opportunity to advance anarchist ideas generally. However, the ASF and AF realise that becoming a shop-steward/union rep is a lesser tactic in the ongoing struggle against capital, and would argue more for autonomous working class organisation (see below).

Rank-and-Fileism
The AF and ASF are supportive of rank-and-file initiatives, while remaining aware of how these initiatives are often used as Leninist fronts whose object is to force through a particular party line. Rank-and-fileism can provide us with the experience and confidence we need to become better militants and can help us in our fight against bosses. Ultimately though, it will never be able, by itself, to break the top-down organisation (like called Labour parties, old or new, to radicalise enough workers to affect any major change to how trade unions function now or will function in the future. We agree that trade unions cannot be reformed, only deformed from within. Rank-and-fileism is a strategy that can prove useful, but only if used in conjunction with other strategies that will move workers away from the confines of ‘trade union consciousness’ alone.

Workplace Organising
The ASF and AF believe that workers must begin the process of thinking of themselves not as mute subscribers to decisions made behind their backs, and over which they have no control, but as individuals with the confidence and self-belief to organise beyond the manacled grip of trade unions, which, until now, have served to channel their energies down the road to nowhere.

To this end, the AF and ASF advocate the establishment of workplace and community groups that will act as hotbeds of militancy in times of increased struggle on the shop-floor (pursuing ideas of resistance and direct action in the form of go-slow, sabotage, wildcat strikes...) while maintaining and strengthening links with the community outside the workplace during quieter periods. We believe these groups ultimately will federate both at local/regional and
Anarchy in the UK

Over the years the anarchist and radical political movements have had huge, mostly positive, effect upon punk scenes around the world.

Punk Rock (an aggressive raw rock musical style) has since its birth in the mid 70's, declared its rejection of and deep hatred for authority. It was also the lack of emotion and variation in the music of the time that helped shape the Punk sound. The 5 minute guitar solos, and unoriginal sound plus the complete falseness and macho posturing that was 70's prog-rock led groups like The Ramones in the US to revert back to something simpler. Something that was more expressive of the feelings of youth.

It is a much-debated topic whether Punk started in the UK or the US. However, as the American Punk scene seemed to be active before the British, it makes sense to call the Americans the pioneers. Nevertheless, the harsh, raw style of rock spread to UK soon after and was taken up by bands like the Sex Pistols and The Clash. Punks had by no started to form their own style of dress too. The stereotypical safety pins and ripped clothes were as much down to poverty as it was a desire to look different. Many, if not all, Punks came from working class backgrounds and weren’t able to afford all the fancy clothes bearing designer labels that were fashionable at the time. So when clothes wore out it was a case of fixing them or finding replacements the best you could, which inevitably meant that you could end up looking extremely 'distinctive'.

By now the Punk phenomenon had spread like wildfire. Bands were popping up everywhere, especially in London where a huge scene was in full swing. A vast movement of rebellious Punks was now the new arch-enemy of the Establishment and showed deep suspicions to anyone claiming to rule them—most notably, the Royals. The growing youth movement was, to some, a genuine revolution, that had to be stopped. The infamous 'Anarchy in the UK' tour proved just how scared the State had become. Shows after show was cancelled nationally by disapproving councils, and the shows that did go ahead were met with protests from local residents and more often than not, the Church. It was no longer safe for Punk to walk the streets alone as a national hate campaign by the press, amongst others, meant that the fear of violent attacks by members of the public was very real.

Within the movement, 'rebellion' soon became exploited beyond all belief. The once alternative 'trends' were fast adopted by the fashion industry, capitalised on to another fashion, Two Tone, albeit a style of music many of which take the standard out and paste, A5, photocopied small pamphlet style. Many of which are inspiring and a good read. Fanzines such as Reason To Believe (who published an interview about the Anarchist Federation between two AF members) are also very political, focusing on prisons and war to name but a few issues covered.

Beyond the photocopier, there exist a small number of independent, not for profit record distributors and record labels. And when the record is finished, there are people that will press the record for only the bare minimum costs. There are even social centres popping up, like Emmaz in London (inspired by the 1 in 12, Bradford) for Punks to put signs on without having to play at corporate venues.

The politics behind Punk are simple - anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and co-operative. It’s an example of a cultural movement working along anarchist lines, regardless of whether the participants openly call themselves ‘anarchist' or not. Punks have done a lot over the years to help a variety of courses and organisations (including the AF), by putting on benefit gigs, selling benefit CDs and promoting the aims of various groups. Far from being chaotic, punk has actually done a vast amount over its 25 years to promote the ideas and practices of anarchism to a section of society that many anarchist organisations pay little attention to.

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Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.
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A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan has an anarchistic movement tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.
Aspects of Anarchism - £1
Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists are concerned. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.
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Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.
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This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.
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This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.
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The title says it all really.
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Kropotkin clearly felt, like many of his socialist contemporaries, that he was living on the “eve of great events”, and that a social revolution was imminent.

The Paris Commune of 1871 has been described as one of the most important urban insurrections of the 19th Century. It has long been hailed as both inspiration and model for revolutionary socialists. In his well known address “The Civil War in France” written only a few days after the defeat of the Commune, Karl Marx wrote that it “will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society”. Twenty years later Engels was to describe the Commune as exemplifying the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, and wrote that the state, whether a democratic republic or a monarchy, was “nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another”. Writing almost as a quasi-anarchist Engels wrote of a time when people would be “able to throw the entire lumber of oppression of one class by another”. Writing almost as a quasianarchist Engels wrote: “could not be anymore than a first sketch”. Born at the end of the war, the Paris Commune demonstrated the bankruptcy of state socialism. It was, he wrote: “a bold, clearly formulated programme of revolution that is more akin to Blankism and it led Trotsky to be critical of the Paris Commune precisely because it lacked the central direction of a revolutionary party.

Bakunin, who took a crucial part in the revolutionary uprisings at Lyon and Marseille in September/October 1870, was to claim, in contrast to Marx, that the Paris Commune demonstrated the bankruptcy of state socialism. It was, he wrote: “a bold, clearly formulated programme of revolution that is more akin to Blankism and it led Trotsky to be critical of the Paris Commune precisely because it lacked the central direction of a revolutionary party.

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The Paris Commune was of the 19th Century. These included many forms of association established within the International Workingmen’s Association. One advocated a people’s state, the other the anarchy, the free federation of worker’s co operatives. Kropotkin misleadingly thought of these concepts in ethnic terms, the German Socialists supporting state socialism, while socialists of the “Latin race” (Spanish, French) advocated the complete abolition of the state. The socialist state, Kropotkin suggested, was viewed by the majority of the French Socialists as the worst of all tyrannies. But unlike Bakunin, Kropotkin did not feel that the Paris Commune, in spite of its popular character and the heroic struggles of the communards, was in fact a form of anarchy. The Commune of 1871 he wrote: “could not be any more than a first sketch. Born at the end of the war, surrounded by two armies ready to give a hand in invoking the people, it did not declare itself openly socialist, and proceeded neither, believed in the idea of a dictatorship of capital, nor to the organization of work, nor even to a general inventory of the city’s resources, and did not break with the tradition of the State, of representative government, and (proclaim) the independence and free federation of communes.”

But Kropotkin felt that had the Paris Commune extended its activities beyond the two “revolutions” might well have occurred, driven by the force of events. Kropotkin, like other socialists at the time, sensed that a revolution was imminent. For him a social revolution implied the abolition of both the state and the nation state, and its replacement by a federation of free communes and voluntary associations. He was a member of the Intemational, Malon later wrote a history of the Paris Commune, published in 1885.

The revolution of 1871 was, for Kropotkin, above all a popular one, made by the people themselves. When the people of Paris rose against the despised government and proclaimed the city free and independent, “It sprang... spontaneously from within the masses”, he wrote. The overthrow of central power, Kropotkin continued, took place without the “usual scenes of a peasant revolution. On that day there were neither volleys of shot, nor floods of blood shed behind the barricades. The revolts were eclipsed by an armed people going out into the streets; the soldiers evacuated the city, the bureaucrats hastened towards Versailles, taking with them everything they could carry. The government evaporated like a pool of stagnant water in the spring breeze”.

Kropotkin suggests that in the years prior to the Commune two currents of political thought emerged within the International Workingmen’s Association. One advocated a people’s state, the other the anarchy, the free federation of worker’s co operatives. Kropotkin misleadingly thought of these concepts in ethnic terms, the German Socialists supporting state socialism, while socialists of the “Latin race” (Spanish, French) advocated the complete abolition of the state. The socialist state, Kropotkin suggested, was viewed by the majority of the French Socialists as the worst of all tyrannies. But unlike Bakunin, Kropotkin did not feel that the Paris Commune, in spite of its popular character and the heroic struggles of the communards, was in fact a form of anarchy. The Commune of 1871 he
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lighting were provided in the spirit of communism, focused on personal and social needs without reference to the value of the services the person may have rendered society.

Although Kropotkin emphasizes the power and intrusive nature of the modern state, he puts equal emphasis on the fact that much of everyday social life and many social activities are independent of the state. Like other anarchists Kropotkin always made a clear distinction between capital and government (the state) and society, between what Habermas describes as "system" and "life world." Every day Kropotkin wrote, millions of social transactions occur without the slightest intervention of the state. Kropotkin's idea of revolution was the replacement of state institutions based on hierarchy and coercion with voluntary relationships. Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), an anarchist who was greatly influenced by Kropotkin, put it well when he wrote:

"The state is a condition, a certain relationship between men, a mode of behaviour which we destroy by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently towards one another ... until we have created institutions that form a real community and society of men." Kropotkin did not simply imply forming "temporary autonomous zones" for spirits within a repressive society, but creating real social institutions based on voluntary co-operation that would supplant state institutions and the market economy.

Kropotkin envisaged a society of "free communism," a society without a state, where all essential social activities were organized through voluntary associations and a network of autonomous federated communities. Kropotkin was not politically naive and believed that no social life was possible without some forms of control and authority; it was nonsensical to think of anarchism as implying the complete absence of power. What he envisaged was the creation of a society where power was dispersed, where "repression" was kept to a minimum and where the system of governance tended to be restricted and marginalized by the state: "We live side by side but not in compulsion and knowing society. All these exemplified enduring social institutions of mutual aid and support. They also indicated the spontaneous initiative of ordinary people and, for Kropotkin, the fact that voluntary associations and local communities or municipalities could and should supplant state institutions and the market economy.

But in contemporary Western society face to face communication, mutual aid associations and the state already the function of seeing that we do not harm the interests of our neighbour. Our neighbours' property is as much ours as our own; we are not separate, but united, we are % of all business of ours; it is the businessman of the policeman. You hardly recognize another individual, not separate, you, everything tends to alienate from one another..."

Propaganda

But through human history human societies have developed various institutional forms and diffuse sanctions ranging from simple expressions of disapproval to excommunication and ostracism that have been used to counter anti-social acts. Kropotkin thought these diffuse sanctions, along with public opinion and social custom, would tend, often unconsciously, to prevent anti-social behaviour. But he also recognized that in certain cases of tribal or kin based societies sanctions would have to be applied to curb unwarranted behaviour in any human community.

It is important to recognize that Kropotkin did not give priority to the community over that of the individual. He wrote:"Anarchist communism maintains that most valuable of all concepts, individual liberty. He does not ask the individual who has rejected god the universal tyrant, god the king, and god the patriarchal state, to give himself a god more terrible than any of the preceding god the state. We live side by side but not in compulsion and knowing society. All these exemplified enduring social institutions of mutual aid and support. They also indicated the spontaneous initiative of ordinary people and, for Kropotkin, the fact that voluntary associations and local communities or municipalities could and should supplant state institutions and the market economy.

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Dear Organise!

Last issue's article on fatherhood was thought-provoking but had little to do with anarchism or, more particularly, anarcho-communism. The article starts by proclaiming the 'inequality' of adults compared to children and goes on to urge us to "totally give ourselves to our kids", subordinating our will and needs to theirs. No Gods, No (Little) Masters indeed! Must the biological parents of the future give up everything they want to do for two, five, seven or however many years 'parenting' is meant to last? Or should we be free to be who we want to be, no matter what?

The article seems to suggest that biological parenthood is some universally transformative event, good for adult and child, ignoring the diversity of humanity for whom either condition may be inimical. Sure we will need and win a radical change in consciousness before, during and after the revolution but it will come from the transformation of social relations not procreation. Of course men can be carers, they can nurture. But that is a human condition.

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"noisy" as his health had been broken by the harsh treatment he had received in the Holswich labour camp. Nevertheless he and other Moscow anarchist-communists united with anarcho-syndicalists to set up the Moscow Union of Anarchist Syndicalists-Communists in early 1919. It published a paper Trud i Volya (Labour and Liberty) which issued calls for direct action "to destroy every authoritarian or bureaucratic system". After its sixth number, the Holswichs closed it down in May 1919. "Why would we have need of money, all Petrogud is in the hands of the workers; all the apartments, all the clothes stores, all the factories and workshops, all the textile mills, the food shops, all are in the hands of the social organisations. The working class has no need of money", I.S. Brichtman

not restricted to parents alone. Full socialisation as free human beings comes not from the family but from the free society, through our relations with all other humans we encounter. Patriarchy and the nuclear family, where so much abuse occurs and which are so destructive, will have to be destroyed and desire to be destroyed by their victims, those "pathetic, crushed, damaged, sore people" the author speaks of. But what of all the other victims? Must we wait until a revolutionary parenthood has created the fully-formed and imagined free people of tomorrow? Must we accept a decades-long "holocaust of the innocents" while waiting for the waves of love and compassion emanating from the last sane people on the planet to cure all sickness and usher in the jubilee? Is the author a secret supporter of Natural Law?

In choosing anarchism I have endorsed myself. I demand no unconditional love from other anarchists - I'm not a fascist after all - but expect to share in their comradeship, solidarity and mutual aid to whatever extent they choose. This isn't lunacy. It's not competitive egoism. It's not dominance games. It's freedom.

At the end of the day this article was about spirituality and faith, a strange position for someone who obviously rejects the tired dogmas of religion. It ignores all the basic principles of freedom in favour of notions of unconditional love that are as much creations of capitalism (to bind us with bonds of blood to a social relationship that serves the ruling class far better than it does us - or where do the slaves of tomorrow come from?). We're not on Walton Mountain, after all. It ignores all science in favour of the quick nostrums of a few feminist thinkers. And it turns its back on the need to transform social relations not individual ones. Once more we've backed on the individualist terrain of ripple in the pond or butterfly wings causing hurricanes around the world. Jesus couldn't do it, and nor did Gandhi. Only the millions of people of the oppressed, if necessary with guns in hand, can. What is the use of love if I can still see the bars around me? I cannot carry my child on my shoulders while fighting for freedom. I am an anarchist and my life is struggle, not games by the fireside.

Olenna Steps

A letter for ORGANISE?

Send your letters to: Anarchist Federation, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7OX

Or email anarchistfed@bigfoot.com

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Aims and Principles

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

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Expressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

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

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

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

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

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to recognise that forms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

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

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchism movement.

[Want to join the AF? Want to find out more?]

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation. I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

Please put me on the AF's mailing list.

Name: 
Address: 

Please tick/kill in as appropriate and return to: 
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7OX
Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505, 
Belfast BT12 6BQ

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