

ISSUE NO. 225 £2

# Black Flag

FOR ANARCHIST RESISTANCE



## The State of the Movement

Inside: G8, Iraq, Anti-Fascist Action, IWW Centennial

# Black Flag



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

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## editorial

Another year, another Black Flag. After a well attended meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair last year Black Flag has finally recruited some new blood into the collective. More is needed, but at least we haven't folded, which was looking pretty likely at the time. We hope now that we can move towards more frequent offerings than the annual scramble for the bookfair.

This issue concentrates on the 'State of our Movement'. Where have we been, where are we now and how can we move forward. Tensions between the need to organise and base our political activity in our local communities and in our workplaces and the need to organise and show our face nationally and globally are touched upon. Indeed the G8 protests in Gleneagles caused furious debate on our editorial list and the next issue will look at the politics of this and the other high profile international summit protests.

As part of the examination of the state of our movement, Nick Heath's article on page 12 touches on the need to rethink the anarchist media in this country. He questions whether the British Anarchist Movement needs three glossies. We'd like to know what you think. How can we make sure that we aren't putting effort into duplication and irrelevance.

Two events have eclipsed the G8 protests just as we go to press. The awarding of the Olympic Games to London and the London Bombings and ongoing terror alerts. The Olympic bid was a blow but hardly surprising. Olympic Committee President - and Nazi Sympathizer - Avery Brundage once said famously, "The cardinal rule of the Olympics is no politics," which is like saying the cardinal rule of boxing is no punching. The French government has been a thorn in the side of the US's imperial objectives and France are paying the price whilst the US's favorite poodle gets the gold.

But this is not only a question of French humiliation on an international stage. This is about the kind of National Security apparatus that the Olympics require in the post 9/11 world, and which country would have been more likely accommodate what amounts to temporarily martial law. In the wake of the bombings in London on 7th July, the state's adoption of detention without trial and the 'new' 'shoot to kill' policy horrifyingly played out on a London tube train on 22nd July, London is certainly game. Repression of local dissent and the poor has been a feature of every Olympics, from Hitler's cleansing of Berlin in 1936 to the 1968 slaughter of hundreds of students in Mexico City, to the thousands of African-American homeless men illegally jailed in Atlanta.

We have our work cut out for us.

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# London Bombings

Below is a statement put out by Libcom.org in response to the London Bombings on Thursday 7th July.

"As social anarchists and libertarian communists, we at libcom.org deplore the horrific attacks on innocent people this morning in London. We express our deepest sympathy to anyone affected by the blasts. We condemn the use of violence against ordinary people and the perpetrators of the bombings whether they be Islamists or anyone else.

Terrorist actions are completely at odds with any struggle for a freer, fairer society and never help oppressed people in any part of the globe. Instead violence against civilians is a tool of states and proto-states every bit as brutal as the ones they profess to oppose.

The British Government, by sending British soldiers to kill and die in Iraq and Afghanistan has made all of us a target for terrorists in their pursuit of increased profit and power at the expense of ordinary working people.

We stand for a world in which human solidarity and co-operation replace the quest for profit as society's driving force, and stand in solidarity with all people fighting exploitation and oppression in all its form, from opponents to the occupation of Iraq here to those in Iraq who are opposing both the occupying forces and the ultra-reactionary Islamists that the Occupation helps strengthen.

Our thoughts today are with the victims of this atrocity, and their loved ones."

Supported by -

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IAF-IFA Secretariat, West Midlands  
Anarchists, Burnley Voice, Ipswich  
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Freedom Newspaper, Preston Solidarity  
Federation, South London Solidarity  
Federation, Red Party, Organise!

The G8 was like the United Nations of policing - thousands of cops from every British force. And like UN peacekeepers, this was an imposed force that everyone, locals and protesters alike, could have done without.

The G8 Legal Support Group provides a vivid picture of the repression we faced in the statement to follow, but more important is the way in which the policing was undermined by determined protesters using flair and imagination.

After the pointlessness of Saturday's white ring round Edinburgh, much of the Make Poverty History crowd left town (or else retreated to celebrity lobbying), clearing the field for those of us who recognise that poverty and capitalism are intrinsically linked and fair trade is an oxymoron.

Monday's action was aimed at the precarious nature of work in the new millennium whilst satirising the left's demands for full employment, but appeared more as a training exercise for both sides. The forces of the state played with their new riot gear and newly assumed draconian powers and the Insurgent Rebel Clown Army played with the forces of the

state - their camp marching behind paramilitary ranks of riot cops was a particular joy to behold.

The protest on the following day had already succeeded - Dungavel Detention Centre had been cleared for the week for fear of mass breakout. Not only was this a symbolic victory; such dispersals of jailed asylum seekers are important for the circulation of information within the detention camp system.

Wednesday was always going to be the big day, the opening day of the summit and the arrival of the world's leaders. The direct action camp planned to blockade all roads leading to Gleneagles (and there aren't that many), whilst the left would march on the summit. All the acceptance of different tactics couldn't disguise the contradiction - the left would have to cross the blockades to reach the start of their march. In the end however it worked out better than could be expected.

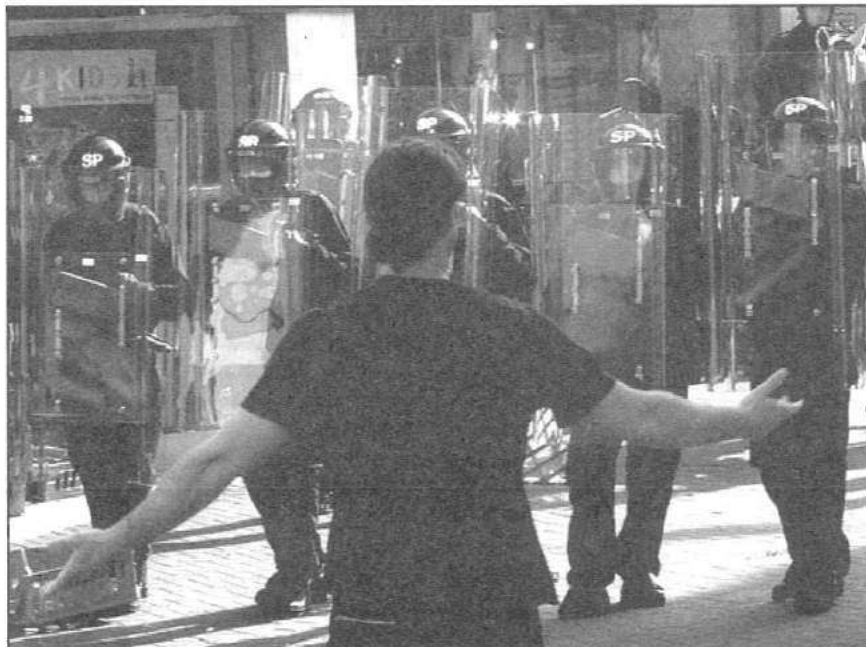
Although some groups were rounded up before their blockades could begin, all roads were blocked at least for some of the morning. A variety of tactics were used, from the kids blockade, to locking on in and under cars to good old

fashioned barricades. This may or may not have delayed the start of the summit (there are contradictory reports from a body with scant regard for the truth), but a number of support vehicles were certainly caught up in the traffic chaos that affected the whole of southern Scotland.

The left meanwhile reached Auchterarder, the starting point of the march, as did many clowns, samba bands, black clad anarchos and a sound system. The state had banned the march, but the left was in belligerent mood, threatening to march on the US Consulate instead. Since in central Edinburgh a demonstration was already underway by those prevented from reaching Auchterarder, threatening a repeat of Monday, the state backed down. The high point of the march was the promise that we could pass by the security fence. In reality however this was a fake fence, set a few hundred yards in front of the real one, the void filled with riot cops and horses. It was therefore a surprise to discover that round the next bend the actual fence was just a short run across a barley field. The entry was hesitant at first, but soon about 500 protesters ➔

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G8 GLENEAGLES



had ignored the demands of the stewards and headed towards the fence. The state, caught off guard, had to fly riot cops in by Chinook military helicopter, but this was too late to prevent the fence from being breached.

The disgusting bombing in London cut across the protests as it did across every other aspect of daily life. Immediate thoughts were for family and friends in London, and the desire for confrontation evaporated. Unfortunately this was clearly a one sided feeling,

as the cops broke up small protests as people attempted to express their feelings about the bombings and the complicity of the Labour Government.

The final day saw a small solidarity picket at Edinburgh prison, where male prisoners were being held. Disturbingly, the picket planned for the woman's prison didn't happen. In Glasgow meanwhile there was Boogie on the Bridge, a street party against climate change and the extension of the M74. The changed mood was

best summed up by the banner that read "Dance for your sorrow, your anger and your joy". Local support was much in evidence, but unfortunately locals were not at the front when we left the bridge en masse, a fact that contributed to us being penned in on an industrial estate. After hot and frustrating negotiations with the cops, the demonstration proceeded under heavy guard to the Cre8 Community Garden, where permanent opposition to the motorway

extension is based.

Given the current climate and the increasing threat to meaningful protest in the UK, that plenty of protests happened was in itself no mean feat and no one can have failed to have grasped the sheer scale of opposition to both the policies and the rationale of the G8. In summary, despite the enormous resources at its disposal, the state did not have it all its own way at Gleneagles.

□



## G8 Legal Support Group's initial statement on the policing of the G8 protests in Scotland, July 2005

During the protests against the G8 over 700 people were detained or arrested by the police, often overnight, and around 366 people have been arrested and charged. The courts have imposed draconian bail conditions, which not only prevented those arrested from continuing their protests against the G8 summit, but forced those not resident in Scotland to leave at an impossible speed, making the conditions impossible to comply with. As a direct result of this tactic, some people were rearrested for breach of bail. People unable to give an address in the UK have been remanded in prison, even though in all the cases we are aware of, none faces serious enough charges to result in a prison sentence even if convicted. Amongst those remanded in custody was one person aged 16 and a woman with a child.

We have also received worrying reports of people being held for over 4 hours in Reliance security vans against regulations, and not being given sufficient food or water while in custody. For example one person reported that they were held in Sterling police station for 10 hours and that they were verbally abused, the lights were switched on and off and no calls were made to solicitors or friends on his behalf. He was subsequently released without arrest or charge.

The police made widespread use and abuse of powers under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994. This section is supposed to be used to search for weapons. However it has been used as a blanket authority to stop and search in a manner designed simply to intimidate protesters. For example, everyone attending the protest at Dungavel Detention Centre was subject to a bag search. At the Hori-zone ecovillage in Stirling, the police at times searched everyone who came and went. At least two people have been charged with failing to submit to

a search.

The police routinely demanded people's names and addresses, without a clear legal right to such information and in a manner that seemed calculated to deter people from protesting. At times they also demanded to see identification despite the fact that there is no requirement to carry or produce identification in the UK. At least one person was arrested and faces trial for simply not giving their name and address.

Huge numbers of people were photographed and/or filmed just for participating in protests or because they were staying at a campsite, again a form of policing designed to intimidate.

The police also often placed protesters in cordons, the legality of which is still uncertain, detaining people for many hours. At the Hori-zone ecovillage in Stirling for long periods of time the police refused to let anyone leave. Legal Observers from the G8 Legal Support Group were also detained, preventing us from monitoring some of the protests. No legal justification was provided for this abuse of power.

The police also banned protests. They cancelled the G8 Alternatives demo at Gleneagles "for reasons of public safety" and this led to coaches of protesters being held on a roundabout eleven miles away from Auchterarder for an hour. Eventually the protest was allowed to go ahead. On this and other days many protesters were arrested whilst travelling to protests and held for alleged conspiracy. At Waverley train station in Edinburgh people were prevented from holding a spontaneous protest against the ongoing 'war on terror'.

A number of protesters were injured by the police hitting out with batons. Most suffered head injuries. Many of the police on duty routinely covered up their identification numbers, making it impossible to identify them.

The public were prevented from attending some sheriffs' courts, meaning that people had to face the court without support from friends. Apparently the reason was that there may be protests at Court, although there had been no actual protests, just groups of concerned friends. This flies in the face of the long established legal right to an open hearing in court.

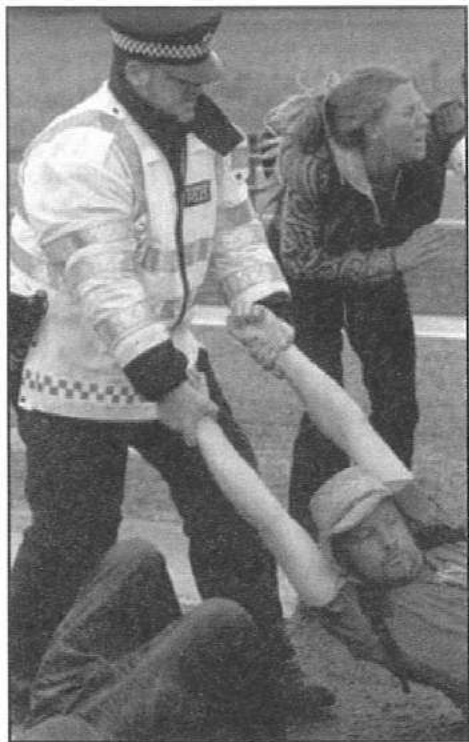
Finally we note that this was one of the largest policing operation ever seen in the UK. The state was clearly prepared to devote unlimited resources to it, all with the sole aim of preventing the leaders of the G8 of being aware of the popular discontent with their policies and the effect of those policies on the vast majority of the world's population.

The cumulative effect of these police measures was an unprecedented erosion of civil and humans rights and a further attack on the right of people to publicly demonstrate. The police appeared to police the protests against the G8 on the basis that they were not at all times bound to comply with the law of the land and sought to prevent challenge to their actions by seeking to conceal their identity by covering up ID and failing (even when asked specifically) to give legitimate reasons and legal powers to justify their actions. For these reasons we unreservedly condemn the policing of the protests at the G8 summit in Scotland in July 2005. □



# THE SUMMIT PROTESTS

## - a dissenting view



Well, there it was then. After almost two years of planning and approximately £200,000 spent by the 'anti-authoritarian' movement, the protests at the G8 summit came and went in the space of a week. 200,000 attended the Make Poverty History march, 5,000 took part in marches on Gleneagles and hundreds took part in blockades. But was it all worth it?

One thing that everyone accepts is that summit protests are symbolic. No matter how well they go, they are always symbolic and this is for one simple reason: the summits themselves are symbolic. The summits are just pomp and ceremony for the world leaders to show off their democratic and diplomatic credentials. Even if you did manage to shut down the meetings, the decisions will get made anyway. They'll just do it another day. So all the rhetoric of activists calling to "Shut Down the G8!" is, to put it bluntly, absolute nonsense not to mention dishonest. Add to this the amount of well-intentioned activists who have been arrested and those who'll get sent down, all for a symbolic protest.

As it's accepted that the protests themselves were symbolic, we come to the main argument in favour of summit protests: that some of those who hear about 'anarchism' on these protests will eventually come around to a more coherent, working class based analysis. This can't be denied. Many libertarian communists got involved in politics after watching past

summit protests on TV. I certainly did.

But does this justify almost two years of organising meetings and the £200,000 spent? No, of course not. The reason that those of us who did get involved in radical politics through summit protests did so was because there was no other point of entry into radical politics. Simply because some of us got involved through that kind of protest, doesn't mean that new people necessarily should if we can develop more effective political alternatives on their doorstep. Perhaps, instead of getting people involved in solid class politics by first sucking them in through dead-end activism, we should just try and create better entry points for solid class politics!

The fact is that summit protests are yet more disconnecting of politics from the lives of working class people. Our politics are only relevant if we ground them solidly in our everyday lives and orientate ourselves towards our workmates and neighbours to solve the problems faced by our class. Through collective struggle to improve our daily conditions, we (as a class) grow in strength and confidence and it is here, in the daily struggles of normal working class people, that libertarian communism is found. This isn't to say we reject a global analysis in favour of some kind of 'localism'. It just means that while we have a global political analysis, we realise that the only way we can fight all the problems of capitalism is by fighting it where it effects us: in our workplaces and our communities. As the old cliché goes, "think globally, act locally".

One thing we can't forget when we are engaging with people is that libertarian communism is not simply an ideology, it is a living, breathing tendency within the working class that needs to be encouraged. We are not trying to recruit people to some rigid ideology; we are trying to promote a fighting spirit within our class. And we can't do this through a series of annual symbolic protests with no real substance to them. We can only do it through day-to-day organising where we live and work because it's only through collective workplace and community action that we can encourage that spirit.

Things like the Turkish Workers' Action Group<sup>1</sup> fighting for better conditions in the Republic of Ireland or the Communities Against the Water Tax network<sup>2</sup> are where we

can fight capitalism directly and where we can build a strong, independent working class movement fighting for its own desires and not those dictated by trade union bureaucrats or slimy politicians..

Whenever we take part in any form of political action we must always ask: How will this contribute to encouraging the militant tendencies within the working class?" So, how do summit protests contribute to increasing the sense of solidarity, strength and confidence within working class communities? The simple answer is; they don't. Their effect is at best, insignificant and at worst damaging as it associates radical working class politics with protests taking place outside the daily struggles of our class, reinforcing the ever-growing walls of the activist ghetto.

The British libertarian socialist group, Solidarity, had it right when they described meaningful and harmful action in their pamphlet 'As We See It':

*"Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf."*

The protests may indicate that a significant number of people are opposed to the policies of the G8, but it in no way demonstrates any alternatives. The protests were little more than a very expensive, human petition. Capitalism is not about powerful men sitting round tables running the world. Capitalism is not something we can gather together from all corners of the globe to protest against. Capitalism is a social relationship played out in our daily lives and that is where it must be fought. □

Written by Political Matti and originally published in Working Class Resistance #10, magazine of Organise! Ireland

1. See Working Class Resistance #9 for more info on TWAG

2. see [www.organiseireland.org](http://www.organiseireland.org)



# Anti-Fascist Action - an Anarchist perspective

Militant physical force anti-fascism has a long tradition in Britain, going back to the 1930's and the 'Battle of Cable Street' in London's East End. From the mid-1980's to the turn of the century, militant anti-fascism found its most authentic expression through the organisation Anti-Fascist Action. AFA was never an 'anarchist' organisation. However, the agreement of anarchists with AFA's twin aims of 'ideological and physical opposition to fascism', and the anarchist emphasis on direct action rather than electoralism, meant that, within AFA, much of the cutting edge on the streets was provided by anarchist activists.

## The following is a brief summary and analysis of those years, and the aftermath.

With the 2004 publication of a book – "No Retreat" – by two former members of Manchester Anti-Fascist Action<sup>1</sup>, and the launch of a new physical force anti-fascist organisation – Antifa<sup>2</sup> – now seems as good a time as any to go over some old ground as to what Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) was, what it did, and why it eventually fell apart, from an anarchist perspective. This isn't a 'kiss and tell', so names will be avoided and specifics kept out where possible. It is also the perspective of an ex-AFA member active in Liverpool and the Northern Network, so it will mostly take a Northern angle<sup>3</sup>.

### AFA's origins

AFA was originally set up in 1985 as a broad front anti-fascist organisation. The main fascist organisation at this time was the British National Party (BNP). Various contenders for the title of the 'real' National Front also existed, following the demise of the original NF after Thatcher took power in 1979. Taking Liverpool as an example, the few attempts by the BNP or NF to hold public marches or meetings in the city centre during the 1980's had been smashed into the ground by a large turn out from locals – notably from the Liverpool black community<sup>4</sup>. The last attempt by fascists

(NF) to march through Liverpool city centre was in 1986 – also an early AFA national mobilisation. This failure of big events, however, didn't stop the BNP selling papers openly in the town centre on a regular basis, unopposed. Nor did it stop them starting a campaign of violence against Left wing targets – in particular against the bookshop 'News From Nowhere', run by a feminist collective. After a few almost-successful attempts to burn the bookshop down, the windows being smashed in on Saturday daytime attacks – probably after a paper sale – and fascists generally strutting into the bookshop to intimidate staff and customers as and when they pleased, it was obvious something had to be done. Other fascist attacks at the time included smashing the windows of the Wirral Trades Council (over the water from Liverpool). BNP local activity like this was typical in any area in Britain where they were left unchallenged.

AFA was launched in Liverpool in 1986. At that time, Militant was still the strongest working class group on the Left (though in the process of being kicked out of the Labour Party). Neither they nor the Socialist Workers Party were interested in being organisationally part of AFA. The SWP, in fact, sometimes sold papers in Liverpool city centre at the same time as the BNP – though, to be fair, if a fascist march was likely, both the SWP and Militant would have a turn out. From an early stage the main organisers

of Liverpool AFA were associated with the local anarchist scene. This became more explicit with the re-launch of Liverpool Anarchist Group in 1987.

Liverpool AFA was mostly anarchist – but it was never an anarchist front or a recruiting tool, except by way of natural influence. Anyone who agreed with the 'physical and ideological opposition to fascism' could be involved, and many did. Links were made with Trade Unions to raise money for specific events. Links were also made with Jewish and other anti-racist groups, and meetings were held to attract wider participation. In later years this non-sectarianism also meant a working relationship with some of the new Anti-Nazi League activists. Anti-fascists at the two universities also set up AFA groups at this time – a process repeated several times as students came and went

### BNP driven underground

Within a year or so, the Liverpool BNP went from boasting about how the 'reds' were always beaten when they tried to force the BNP off the streets (according to confiscated copies of the 'British Nationalist'), to the effective collapse of the group. Years later, the BNP admitted in the Liverpool Echo that "they were driven underground by left wing extremists in the mid-80s" [Oct 1993]. This kind of effective shut-down of BNP groups – by any means necessary – was typical of AFA in this period.



## Collapse and relaunch of AFA as a national force

Nationally, meanwhile, the original AFA had collapsed due to incompatible political differences. Local and Regional groups (like the Northern Network) however continued, and national call-outs still occurred using existing contacts. AFA was re-launched in London in 1989, and in 1992 a national meeting was held in London to sort out a new national structure. The re-launch of AFA was as a militant 'united front' – i.e. an alliance of different political tendencies – orientated towards the working class, to reclaim working class areas then claimed by fascists as their own. The class perspective was agreed because, first, fascists don't just play the race card – they address genuine fears of the white working class (unemployment, bad housing etc.) and their success is often based on disillusionment with so-called 'socialist' councils. This propaganda needed a class-based answer. Second, it wasn't enough to 'defend democracy' – if AFA didn't say the system needed to be smashed, that would leave fascism as the 'radical' alternative. Third, the working class is the object of fascist attack once in power – only the working class can oppose it. AFA, it was agreed, wasn't interested in 'allies' that were part of the problem such as corrupt councillors. Links, it was agreed, would continue to be made with black and asian communities under attack, but AFA propaganda should be mainly aimed at the communities where fascists themselves aimed to recruit.

Organisationally, it was agreed that AFA would be a decentralised federation based on a regional structure – building from the existing regions of London AFA and the Northern Network. The only national structure was to be a national coordinating committee of 2 delegates per region, to meet as and when needed, with no powers to make policy (or certainly to impose policy – some minor national decisions did have to be made over these years, but these were non-controversial).

London AFA at that time was mostly run by the Marxist Red Action – in alliance with elements of the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement (DAM)<sup>67</sup>, and the Trotskyist Workers Power. There were also non-aligned independents – anarchists and other socialists – involved.

## The Northern Network

The Northern Network (originally the Northern Anti-Fascist Network) was a looser federation of Northern AFA groups – Bolton, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, South Yorks, Tyne and Wear, Preston,

and others. Tyne and Wear were actually a Council-funded body set up before AFA. Of the rest, Manchester were run mainly by Red Action (the strongest Red Action branch outside of London as far as I can tell); a few groups – like York – would probably be best described as "non-aligned" independents. The rest were mainly organised by anarchists – sometimes in the DAM, sometimes not. Lots of anarchist activists at the time weren't in any national organisation – or were involved mainly in other areas. This reflected the way the anarchist movement had grown since the early 1980's – some became anarchists through the Left or Trade Unions, others through anti-militarism, others through animal rights.

In the North things tended not to be as sectarian as in London. Apart from the regional groups of the DAM and Class War, there was also the general Northern Anarchist Network. There were often overlaps between different anarchist and activist scenes – people would join a call-out, but didn't necessarily prioritise anti-fascism. Even the DAM didn't officially prioritise anti-fascism – many or most of the DAM were trade union activists or shop stewards – though some groups

**"AFA at its height was definitely far more than the activist core, and far more than just street fighters. AFA activism involved public speaking, magazine and pamphlet production, organising fund-raisers (gigs, carnivals), etc."**

definitely prioritised the anti-fascist fight more than others. In Liverpool, again, anti-fascism was only one area – in 1988-1990, anarchists were far more active against the Poll Tax, and in 1995-1997 more active in support of 500 locked-out Liverpool Dockers. For Liverpool anarchists, anti-fascism was never seen as an end in itself – only as part of the wider struggle.

A good indicator as to whether a movement is alive or in trouble is to ask – is there a wider periphery, or is it just the activists? AFA at its height was definitely

far more than the activist core, and far more than just street fighters. AFA activism involved public speaking, magazine and pamphlet production, organising fund-raisers (gigs, carnivals), etc. A lot of people put time and effort into AFA-related activities who agreed with the aims, but weren't particularly involved organisationally – or go to meetings. It should also be noted that at this time there was a working – and productive – relationship between the anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight' and AFA, partly because AFA was the only game in town. This included, in Liverpool, a Searchlight member from Manchester speaking at a Liverpool AFA re-launch meeting in 1992.

## Countering fascist mobilisations

At a Regional and National level, AFA actions were mainly based around countering known – or intelligence-indicated – fascist mobilisations. Remembrance Sunday in London was the first national focus point in 1986 – the National Front having made a point of marching to the Cenotaph on the day, then attacking Left wing targets – notably



the Anti-Apartheid picket outside the South African Embassy. These militant AFA mobilisations had the desired effect – the fascists were stopped. In the North, meanwhile, the Northern Network mobilised against the BNP's Remembrance Sunday meetings at Clifford's Tower, York. The BNP chose Clifford's Tower as it was the site where many of York's Jewish community were burned to death in the middle ages. Some of these early AFA mobilisations to York were relatively open, and quite large. In 1988, for instance, Liverpool AFA took a

full coach and minibus – over 80 people – to the event, though on that occasion we were stopped on the outskirts of York and escorted all the way back to Liverpool by the police (the same happened to a coach from Newcastle). Echoes of police tactics in the Miner's Strike of 1984-85... Later mobilisations tended to use just mini-buses. Again, after a few years, AFA tactics were successful.

### Tactics on the streets

Remembrance Sunday was only one day – many other AFA mobilisations occurred, in many parts of the country, over these years. This was especially so as new AFA groups were formed and new AFA

was the chief steward at a mobilisation at Colne, Lancs 9. Coordination, anyway, was more based on informal working relationships and trust rather than any official positions, and once the fascists were located, what happened next had more to do with personal initiative and 'bottle' than a 'commander'.

### National AFA mobilisations

The main national public AFA events over these years are reasonably well known (or used to be), but are worth outlining:

In London, Blood and Honour – the nazi music front – was beaten off the streets in 1989 when they tried to organise publicly. In 1991 an AFA Unity

Against Racist Murders<sup>12</sup> – but there were no more AFA marches. By 1993, in big national anti-fascist marches, like the marches to the BNP headquarters in Welling, organised by all the 'big names' – the biggest of 40,000 in September 1993 – AFA activists either organised separately to track down any BNP groups (like London) or joined the march (like Liverpool).

AFA carnivals did still continue. A rained-on Unity Carnival in London in September 1992 provided a useful recruiting ground for the 'Battle of Waterloo' a week later – when Blood and Honour were smashed off the streets again, by over 1,000 anti-fascists



Regions were organised (established Regions providing backup to new areas, such as the Midlands, when requested)<sup>8</sup>. Tactics evolved and were constantly under review. A typical 'event' in the North would involve a call-out after intelligence indicated fascist activity – eg a BNP election leafleting would be taking place (mobilisations weren't just about marches). AFA would meet, send out scouts, and act according to intelligence gathered on the day. Sometimes AFA leafleting of estates was not just to counter fascist propaganda, but also to provide a legal excuse for being there. As time went on, in the Northern Network (London AFA operated very differently), each local group elected a delegate during mobilisations. Delegates from each group got together on the day and coordinated events. Usually, but not always, the unofficial 'chief steward' was the one in whose backyard the nazi mobilisation had occurred. Near Manchester this was likely to be someone from Manchester AFA/Red Action, but even close to Manchester this wasn't always the case – for instance, an anarchist from nowhere near Manchester

Carnival in London – attended by 10,000 in September – was followed on Remembrance Sunday by a 4,000 strong confrontational 'National Demonstration Against Racist Attacks' through the East End. From reacting to the fascists, AFA was seizing the initiative. This was the biggest anti-fascist demo in years – AFA seemed on the verge of some kind of breakthrough.

Instead, seeing the way the wind was blowing, within months the SWP had re-launched the Anti-Nazi League (a very different animal to the original ANL of the 1970's<sup>10</sup>). Militant launched Youth Against Racism in Europe, and Black Nationalists in the Labour Party launched the Anti-Racist Alliance<sup>11</sup>. The end result of this was that, while these new organisations brought in new faces, anti-fascist unity had suddenly become a competitive market place, with organisations which were better funded, and better-connected in terms of media publicity than AFA. AFA did continue to help organise and provide stewards for specific broader anti-racist marches – such as the 1992 'National Demonstration

organised around AFA. The last big AFA carnival was in Newcastle in June 1993, with 10,000 taking part. In London, in January 1994, an AFA national mobilisation humiliated another attempt by neo-nazis to go public – this time with Combat 18<sup>13</sup>.

Other areas AFA was involved in included Cable Street Beat – inspired by the Rock Against Racism of the original (1970's) ANL, to promote anti-fascism through music. Freedom of Movement was set up later – based in Manchester – to further this idea in the clubbing scene.

Other AFA campaigns were launched to promote anti-fascism at football grounds – starting with Leeds, and later Newcastle, Manchester, Glasgow, etc. A national AFA magazine – 'Fighting Talk' – was produced, and the AFA profile was also raised by a BBC 'Open Space' programme fronted by Menzie from the Angelic Upstarts band.

### The United Front crumbles

The 'united front' – where activists worked together and no-one took the piss – started to break down as the 1990's



progressed.

The relationship with Searchlight started to turn sour. Anarchists had never trusted Searchlight since at least the early 1980's – when articles in anarchist papers examined Searchlight's then editor Gerry Gable's links with Special Branch (alleging a 'something for something' relationship – ie Searchlight would give details to the State, and not just about fascists...)¹⁴. In 1993 Searchlight ran a smear campaign against anarchists – in particular against specific DAM and Class War members – alleging they were really fascists. This probably wasn't a coincidence now there were alternatives to AFA to back... From the mid-1990's Red Action – who had previously had a very

didn't come from nowhere. A turning point, as far as London Red Action goes, was the election of a BNP councillor – Derek Beacon – in the Isle of Dogs, London, in 1993. As was said at the time, London AFA felt they had nothing to offer people apart from 'don't vote BNP', which in the circumstances, Red Action felt, could only have meant vote Labour or Liberal Democrat – the very people who'd helped create the housing problems in the Isle of Dogs in the first place. Red Action had always been a strong supporter of the Irish Republican movement – and the move of Republicans from the armed struggle towards community organising, and the electoral success of Sinn Féin, may well have also played a role in the re-

.....

**"The IWCA was being pushed as a way to stop AFA stagnating as the BNP abandoned the battle for the streets. In reality, the struggle for the party political line alienated much of the AFA core and periphery – in undermining the united front it became a factor in the decline it was stated to prevent"**

close relationship with Searchlight – began more and more to take the line that association with Searchlight was becoming a liability – with Searchlight increasingly providing mis-information and trying to manipulate AFA for its own agenda¹⁵.

Relationships between Red Action and anarchists also began to break down. In London, State interest in Red Action at this time seemed more than just paranoia, and anarchists were obviously being kept out of the loop. Workers Power left for the ANL, many independents left, and, increasingly, London AFA was moving from an alliance run mainly by Red Action, to one consisting more or less exclusively of Red Action.

In Glasgow – around late 1992 – relationships between anarchists and Glasgow Red Action deteriorated to the extent that anarchists felt compelled to organise a separate meeting. At least two anarchists leaving the meeting were physically attacked by Red Action members. One of the organisers of the meeting – a committed anti-fascist of long standing – was later falsely smeared as a police grass in Red Action's paper 'Red Action'¹⁶.

### **Red Action and the IWCA**

The main contribution to the united front breaking down, however, became the pushing of a new Red Action strategy – the Independent Working Class Association – around 1995. The IWCA

thinking of Red Action's strategy.

When Red Action started pushing forward the idea of the IWCA, articles were written, circulars sent out, and a meeting held in the North in late 1995 where London Red Action put forward their case. The argument was basically 'if not us, who?' was to fill the political vacuum created on the left by Labour abandoning the working class on the one hand, and AFA's success in beating the fascists on the right. The BNP were moving from the 'battle of the streets' (which they'd lost) to a EuroNationalist/community activist¹⁷ strategy. AFA, it was stated, would have to adapt. This wasn't billed as a decision-making meeting. No vote was taken, but from then on Red Action argued that there was a 'mandate' – that there was a 'consensus' in AFA to officially back the IWCA – despite the Northern Network voting against official backing (a warning to anarchists who worship 100% consensus and never voting...)¹⁸. This position was backed by London's control of 'Fighting Talk'¹⁹.

### **Electoral politics take over**

As was said at the time, many AFA activists already had wider political commitments – and Red Action's analysis wasn't unique on the need to 'fill the vacuum'. In Liverpool, Labour Party purges against Militant led to the Broad Left (of which Militant was a part) standing candidates as 'Real Labour' from

1991, and, again in Liverpool, the Independent Labour Party (this time without Militant) was launched in 1992²⁰. Scottish Militant Labour was launched in 1991, with Militant Labour following in 1993, standing candidates against Labour, and leading to the launch of the Scottish Socialist Party, and the Socialist Party in England in 1998. As Red Action pushed the IWCA in 1996, Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party was launched²¹. As was stated then, why should a united front organisation like AFA prioritise any particular working class party in an election? After all, AFA was open for SLP and other party supporters to join – and many AFA activists were against electoralism as a strategy anyway.

The IWCA down-playing of the workplace as an area of struggle also came at the time when 500 Liverpool Dockers had been locked out and solidarity actions were occurring all over the world (most notably among USA Longshoremen and in Australia) during a struggle lasting over 2 years (Sept 1995-Jan 1998). Possibly a major difference with the Red Action push to form the IWCA was that it initially aimed, not just at various left groupings (prominent at the original IWCA founding meeting in 1995²²) but mainly at those in AFA – often those sick of the left, party politics in general, and often anarchists. AFA was being pushed as the launch-pad for, and backbone of, the IWCA.

AFA had worked because it was a 'real' organisation involved in 'real' actions that made a difference. Increasingly, AFA activists I knew were hostile to Red Action's attempts to 're-align' AFA. One ex-Marxist in Liverpool AFA, for instance, felt it was the same old party-political bullshit they'd left behind. There was, eventually, a compromise of sorts – but the whole process left a bad taste²³. The IWCA was being pushed as a way to stop AFA stagnating as the BNP abandoned the battle for the streets. In reality, the struggle for the party political line alienated much of the AFA core and periphery – in undermining the united front it became a factor in the decline it was stated to prevent²⁴.

### **Looking back**

I stopped being active in AFA around the end of 1996. I don't believe in sniping from the sidelines at events I wasn't involved in, but here's an honest opinion on the last years²⁵. First, some anti-fascist mobilisations did still occur – eg against the NF in Dover in 1997 and 1998. Internally, a new (or what Red Action called a 'newly inaugurated') AFA National Coordinating Committee was set



**“When the BNP turned away from street confrontations towards electoral politics AFA largely wound down its activities. Instead of harassing the BNP on the doorsteps, and on the streets as they canvassed, AFA allowed the BNP to operate freely and the BNP have used the freedom to develop a highly professional electoral strategy.”**

up in 1997. From the way this was used it is clear that this Committee actually had powers – a far cry from the old national committee. In itself, I think, this is an indication of how few anarchists were still involved organisationally by now, and how far the Northern Network had declined. In 1997 an AFA statement officially banned members from associating with Searchlight – and, in 1998, Leeds and Huddersfield AFA were expelled by the new Committee, officially for ignoring this policy<sup>26, 27</sup>. Expulsions didn’t stop the decline. There were some local re-launches – eg Liverpool in 2000. But by 2001 AFA as a national organisation hardly existed.

Red Action’s analysis, back in 1995, was that, unless AFA adapted to the new BNP strategy, AFA would ‘atrophy’ and wither. AFA was geared for confrontation. Without confrontation AFA – as it then was – would have no reason to exist. It is true that organisations created for a single purpose – anti-poll tax unions, strike support groups etc – do usually cease to exist once the struggle is gone, despite efforts by some activists to keep things going and to generalise the struggles. So, this Red Action analysis was either far-sighted or a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Tactics Stagnate**

I think some of the decline in AFA nationally has to be down to the IWCA. Apart from the refusal of many AFA activists to be bounced into a strategy they disagreed with, the redirection of energy of an important section of AFA into a new organisation, would, of itself, have meant less time for keeping AFA going. But there were definitely other factors. If a tactic is repeated too often, the police eventually cotton on. This happened with the ‘Stop the City’ demos in the early

1980’s and the ‘J18’-style demos in the 2000’s<sup>28</sup>. There’s a case to be made that AFA’s means of operation – in some parts of the country at least – became too predictable, and so ineffective (as was recorded in ‘Red Action’ and ‘Fighting Talk’ at the time). The broader community and trade union side of AFA also tended to die away as the anti-fascist market place emerged (ANL, FYE, ARA etc) – and a semi-clandestine strategy alone has to be constantly innovative or eventually fail. The break with Searchlight, I think, also played a role. Without good intelligence militant anti-fascism is blind. A lot of intelligence gathering is just hard boring work, and can be done by any local activists with the will. Only Searchlight though has used infiltration of fascist groups to any great extent – and this was more than useful in the North at least.

Finally, there’s the issue of the AFA periphery. The IWCA aside, the far fewer regional and national mobilisations in the late 1990’s, and the much lower AFA national public profile, in themselves, would have led to the shrinkage of the pool from which new AFA activists could emerge – especially in an organising role. At some point this had to have an effect. Street fighting has a shelf life due to age. Arrests, injuries, and increasing family commitments mean that without constant new blood any militant organisation will enter decline, if only from attrition. This situation wasn’t just true of AFA, but was a general trend within the anarchist movement that had grown up since the early 1980’s. A smaller pool, with fewer mobilisations, and important sections of AFA now prioritising the IWCA, meant that AFA decline was gradual rather than sudden.

### **The IWCA today**

So what about the IWCA today? Times have moved on. There are two types of questions that spring to mind:

1. Is the IWCA an effective strategy for building a working class movement?
2. Did the IWCA effectively replace AFA, and how is the IWCA as an anti-fascist strategy?

The first question is really beyond the scope of this article. Briefly, however, the IWCA has shown that, in some areas at least, small groups of activists can gain a base, from more or less nothing, that can be turned into sizeable votes at election time. The concentration on immediate working class issues is also something that community activists could learn from. The web site has some good ideas<sup>29, 30</sup>.

What about the second issue? Is the IWCA a natural progression from AFA? The AFA public contact list had over 30 groups spread across Britain in 1996. The strongest Red Action groups used to be London, Manchester, and Glasgow. The IWCA made a strong showing in North London (Islington) and Glasgow (Strathbungo) council by-elections in 2003. Oxford is where the IWCA has had most success so far – with 3 councillors. The IWCA web sites, in late 2004, showed groups based almost entirely in the South – which does raise the question: what happened to the original IWCA opening campaigns in Manchester and Birmingham back in the mid-’90’s? Why doesn’t the IWCA have a noticeable presence in Manchester? As far as I can tell, the IWCA has some overlap with ex-AFA (mostly Red Action, but also some anarchists or ex-anarchists), but to say the IWCA is a natural progression of AFA as a whole isn’t true. Some AFA groups and individuals moved towards IWCA activism, many didn’t<sup>31</sup>.

Is the IWCA an effective anti-fascist strategy? As stated, in some areas the IWCA has gained a foothold. None of these, however, are areas where the BNP is a direct contender – eg Burnley or Goresbrook (London) – so council elections where the IWCA and the BNP go head-to-head are presumably in the future. The issue of why militant anti-fascists should prioritise one working class political party (or strategy) over another, however, hasn’t gone away. In Coventry, for instance, the Socialist Party has 2 councillors (down from 3). In Scotland the Scottish Socialist Party is a contender – like them or loath them – and in Strathbungo the IWCA and SSP both stood candidates. Even now, if anti-fascists want to support a working class anti-fascist election candidate, the IWCA isn’t necessarily the only choice.



## Where now for anti fascist activism?

The IWCA may be many things, but it's not a physical force militant anti-fascist organisation. Is there a need for militant physical force anti-fascism still? More importantly, can this strategy work now? Things are very different now – when AFA started out, CCTV centralised street networks didn't exist and mobile phones were like walkie-talkies. What used to lead to charges of 'breach of the peace' is now more likely to be 'violent disorder' or worse (if the Terrorism Act 2000 etc is anything to go by). Where does this leave anti-fascists who want to make a difference, now? As a 2004 TV expose showed<sup>32</sup>, the BNP hard-core is still nazi – though well-hidden behind suits and smiles at present, and growing with the

constant media barrage – and manna from heaven for the BNP – against asylum seekers and Muslims. The enforcing of 'No Platform for Fascists' seems to have gone by the board with almost regular BNP interviews in the national media.

A fairly recent (October 2003) pamphlet has this to say:

*"I also believe that the demise and then the winding up of Anti-Fascist Action, and the inability so far of militants to develop a similar organisation has been a big boost in the growth in the BNP. AFA was able to physically defeat the BNP in the 1990's..but when the BNP turned away from street confrontations towards electoral politics AFA largely wound down its activities. Instead of harassing the BNP on the doorsteps, and on the streets as*

*they canvassed AFA allowed the BNP to operate freely and the BNP have used the freedom to develop a highly professional electoral strategy"*<sup>33</sup>.

AFA used to say – "fascism didn't begin with the concentration camps – that's where it ended". We know where fascism leads, so that leaves no room for complacency. AFA's active policy used to be for "physical and ideological opposition" to fascism. Things are very different today, but either the BNP are fascists or they're not. The need to provide a working class alternative to Labour and fascism should be the priority. But if the BNP are fascists – and they are – the case for militant confrontation certainly hasn't gone away. □

*An ex-Liverpool AFA member. Feb 2005*

## NOTES

1. No Retreat: The secret war between Britain's Anti-Fascists and the Far Right. Dave Hann & Steve Tilzey. Milo Books.
2. [www.antifa.org.uk](http://www.antifa.org.uk).
3. This article has been run past other ex-AFA members to cross-check the facts and provide feedback.
4. e.g. attempted fascist meetings in the Adelphi Hotel and St. George's Hotel.
5. Infotaken from the Liverpool AFA minutes of the national meeting – far more detailed than the official minutes.
6. DAM abolished itself and launched the Solidarity Federation in 1994 – the aim being to build a class organisation based on anarcho-syndicalist principles – based on industrial and community networks – rather than being just a political grouping of anarcho-syndicalists (see <http://www.solidfed.org.uk>). Not all DAM members – including some of the most active anti-fascists – joined the new organisation.
7. For a brief overview of some of the events in London AFA during these years see the pamphlet 'Bash the Fasc – Anti-Fascist Recollections 1984-93', K.Bullstreet. Published by Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane London, WC1N 3XX.
- NOTE: Every would-be militant would do well to read the section 'Appendix 4: Survival Rules'.
8. Scotland existed as a Region from '93. In '94 the Midlands Region was launched and moves were begun to launch a Southern Region. The AFA public contact list in 1996 (as shown in Fighting Talk) had 12 groups listed in the North, 12 in the South (including London), 4 in the Midlands, 3 in Scotland, and 1 in Wales. Some groups were not in the list – eg Doncaster, Chesterfield, and Mansfield. Groups varied in terms of numbers and resources, and were often contacts for a much wider area but this still gives a rough idea about where AFA's strength lay at this time.
9. This isn't a review of 'No Retreat'. However, some points are in order. The book covers some of the mobilisations that happened in the North West – but several mobilisations are missed out (e.g. York 1988, Rochdale and Dewsbury 1989, and Wigan 1990). This is an autobiographical account, so this would probably be expected. There are also factual inaccuracies as to who did what – the issue of who was the 'chief steward' being one of them. This isn't necessarily bad memory or worse. Adrenaline leads to tunnel vision, were you think you're at the front of the queue, or leading people from the front, but it ain't necessarily so... I could make more serious criticisms of the book, but I'll stop here.
10. For a comparison of the old and new ANL, see "The Anti-Nazi League A Critical Examination 1977-81/2 and 1992-95". Originally published by the Colin Roach Centre in 1996, it can be read at <http://www.red-star-research.org.uk/rpm/anl.html>.
11. 'Black Nationalist' meaning that racism could only be fought under Black leadership. Where this left Asian, Chinese, and Irish members wasn't mentioned...
12. November 1992, Eltham, London. The march was held under the banner of the 'Rohit Duggal Family Campaign'. 16 year old Rohit Duggal was murdered in

July 1992 in a racist attack.

13. Some people called this 'Waterloo 2' – though it wasn't anywhere near as public. Combat 18 was the short-lived organisation of nazi 'hard men' which eventually disintegrated.
14. Various articles in anarchist papers and magazines. Also New Statesman, 15.02.1980.
15. See articles on the Red Action web site [www.redaction.org](http://www.redaction.org). Also various 'Fighting Talks'. Whatever the reasons, it's clear there was a breakdown in the Searchlight-Red Action relationship.
16. Information re-confirmed recently [2004] by a then member of Glasgow DAM, and by a contact in Liverpool. Looking back, the Glasgow Red Action attack on anarchists wasn't really dealt with properly – either within AFA or the wider anarchist movement. As it was, the incident caused a lot of bad blood nationally, but AFA held together.
17. "EuroNationalist" meaning a strategy similar to Le Pen's National Front in France – rather than a 'march and grow' storm trooper traditional nazi approach.
18. Liverpool AFA sent out a statement nationally – soon after London Red Action's meeting, arguing against AFA becoming the physical wing or part of any political party or organisation. This statement was provisionally adopted at the next Northern Network meeting, pending further debate.
19. Fighting Talk (Nov '95) stated that the Northern Network supported the IWCA, and printed an IWCA recruitment article. This was never updated. AFA groups were sent IWCA leaflets with 'AFA' on as sponsors. The way things happened could, perhaps, have been due to a genuine misunderstanding of how the Northern Network operated. It came across as railroad – to put it mildly. It could certainly have been handled better.
20. There's some background information on this in "The Labour Party, Marxism and Liverpool" <http://promote.snu.ac.kr/~skkim/data/article/files/liverpool.html>
21. The various parties' own reasons for setting up can be found on their web sites.
22. The IWCA was originally promoted as a kind of 'united front' of different political groups – where people could join "without demanding that they abandon their distinctive positions" (IWCA leaflet attacking the SLP, 1996). Not having to abandon your politics wasn't strictly true, as the IWCA was always up front about standing in elections. This was always going to be a problem for many anarchists in AFA.
23. Months later (in what may or may not have been a concession) London Red Action stated that IWCA material would no longer have initial sponsors' names on – ie they wouldn't have 'AFA' on. Later Fighting Talks were also less blatant about the IWCA. At a Northern Network meeting (possibly mid-1996) a London Red Action member argued that London should be given a chance to put their strategy into action. While it's clear there wasn't a split as such, it's also very clear that the Northern Network didn't vote to support the IWCA.
24. This is bound to be a point of contention. I believe it's accurate for the Northern Region at least. Little information came directly from AFA groups in other

Regions in this period.

25. See various articles on the Web – A-Infos, Anti-Fa Infos, Red Action web sites. Also personal contacts used. So I believe it's accurate. I've left out the forming of international links – including the international anti-fascist conference in London in 1997 – as I don't think this had much effect on AFA's development in Britain.
26. The official public statement on the expulsions was in Fighting Talk No 19 April 1998 (also at <http://www.ainfos.ca/98/may/ainfos00300.html>). Red Action's official explanations are at their web site – [www.redaction.org](http://www.redaction.org). Red Action has a lot of good points, but also a lot of inaccuracies, i.e. it's not true that only AFA groups with links to 'Searchlight' were opposed to AFA officially backing the IWCA back in 1995/6 – the opposition was a lot wider. No-one had a problem with Red Action being involved with the IWCA – many people had a problem with an official AFA-IWCA link.
27. An ex-Leeds AFA member recently gave me a very different version of events leading to the expulsions. But due to lack of full information I won't elaborate here.
28. "Stop the City" were attempts by the, then massive, anti-militarist movement to occupy and close down the City of London. "J18" etc were similar-style demos by the emerging anti-capitalist movement.
29. IWCA web site is at <http://www.iwca.info/>
30. This isn't an article about whether Anarchists should support the IWCA. However, some points are worth making. First, voting in local elections (and concentrating on the community rather than industry) has been advocated by some people from an anarchist tradition for some time. In particular, Murray Bookchin, in the US, has been promoting Libertarian Municipalism as a way forward since the 1980's. Second, Liverpool Council under Militant in the early 1980's – the fight against Tory rate-capping, the surcharge and expulsion of 47 councillors etc – showed some of the potential and the limits of what radical councillors can do. Third, current enthusiasm for the IWCA in some quarters is very similar to the enthusiasm shown by some Scottish anarchists in the early 1990's – when Scottish Militant Labour arose from the anti-poll tax successes of Militant in Pollokshields and elsewhere. Quite an interesting article, from Scottish Anarchist no 2 which covers the emergence of Militant Labour in Scotland is at <http://www.spunk.org/texts/pubs/sa/2/sp001218.txt>
31. If the Northern Network (or its majority) had 'really' agreed to back the IWCA in 1995 – as has been argued – I think there would be more proof on the ground by now. This isn't to say that the IWCA won't get a base up North – just that this will have to happen under its own steam, rather than as part of an AFA legacy. At the time of writing the one published IWCA contact up North is the Vauxhall IWCA in Liverpool.
32. 'Secret Agent', BBC1, July 2004 – an undercover investigation into Bradford BNP.
33. "The Rise of the BNP and how to Counter it" Revolutions Per Minute number 11. Written by Mark Metcalf. Available at Freedom books, or [www.red-star-research.org.uk/rpm/AF/AF.html](http://www.red-star-research.org.uk/rpm/AF/AF.html). This is a very short pamphlet with a lot of common sense.

# Looking back and forward



**"Organisational responsibility and discipline should not be controversial. They are the travelling companions of the practice of social anarchism."**

**Nestor Makhno**

I have been involved in the anarchist movement since the mid-1960s. I came into a movement that appeared to be active and on the up. This vitality seemed to be accentuated by the forthcoming events of May 68. British anarchism seemed to be coming into its own, in a way not seen since before the First World War.

As I write, I have before me a photocopy of the inside front page of *Freedom* from 26th October 1968, the day before a large contingent of anarchists, numbering several hundreds had marched under the folds of black and red and black banners on the massive demonstration against the Vietnam War. Under the heading Anarchist Federation of Britain there is a list of almost 60 groups or grouplets, with federations in Wales, Scotland, Essex and East Herts, the North-west, Sussex, East London, as well as a number of student groups.

Alas, the view that is given by all of this was a false one. A slightly more than cursory look at the Anarchist Federation of Britain reveals that it was a house of straw, soon to be blown to the ground by the Big Bad Wolf of unfolding political events. Albert Meltzer comments: "The looseness of structure of the Anarchist Federation in the late sixties - having been revived in the early sixties - led to its disintegration into unrepresentative conferences, at which anyone could attend". (The Anarchists in London 1935-1955)

Stuart Christie in his 'Edward Heath Made Me Angry' remarks that the AFB "wasn't really a federation at all, more an

ad hoc body convened for a particular purpose then disbanded again".

This was indeed the reality of the AFB and its conferences, several of which I attended. The anarchist movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s, if one can judge from the pages of the *Freedom* of the time, appeared to be more cohesive and theoretically united than was later the case. A small number of people were involved, and these were mostly based in London. If this small movement sometimes appeared uninviting, exclusive and secretive, this may just as much be due to the repression of the post-war years (the trial of the War Commentary editors) as isolation of the movement itself.

The events of Hungary 1956 were to have an effect in the drift of intellectuals and others out of the Communist Party and the gradual establishment of the New Left. The movement against the Bomb, expressed in the Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament and the Direct Action Committee which later transformed into the Committee of 100, attracted both a number of these ex-CP militants and increasing layers of disaffected young people. This marked a break with the preceding period of "apathy" used by the old Left to explain lack of movement within the working class. The Gaitskellite leadership of the Labour Party had justified their politics with the outmodedness of the class struggle and the apparent embourgeoisement of the working class. The Tory leader Macmillan's remarks that the British people had "never had it so good" epitomised this period of relative class

peace and stability. A revolt, often inchoate and unarticulated, among young people against this complacency meant some were attracted to this new movement.

Involvement in action and debate and a wide variety of political views, many never before encountered by these new activists meant at the broadest level, numbers of them providing the base for local Labour Parties to campaign for the victory of Harold Wilson as leader of the Labour Party and ultimately as Prime Minister in 1964. The direct action tactics of the C100 influenced others so that the threat of The Bomb was replaced by a realisation that the problem lay in the nature of the State and of capitalism. Many were still trapped in single-issue politics, and were still enamoured of the concept of non-violence, elevated to an abstract concept rather than a sometimes useful tactic.

It was the interaction between the two different groups which eventually provided both the core for the forthcoming increasing radicalisation and the base of the new groups of the extreme Left that were born or strengthened around this time. The C100 had proved to be a school of radicalisation, whilst some of the broader layers, who had gone into the Labour Party or the Young Communist League (youth wing of the Communist Party) had become progressively disillusioned with these groupings.

The small anarchist movement had not ignored this new peace movement. In fact many working class anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists had earlier or later



recognised the importance in directing activity in that direction. This included people like Ken Hawkes, Tom Brown, Bill Christopher, Pete Turner and others. The Syndicalist Workers Federation in which many of these activists were involved benefited from the burgeoning peace movement so much that it was to increase from a small core of activists to an organisation of 500 for a short time. But all of this was at a price. The anarchist revival was in part due to a first wave of activists who had broken with the orthodoxy of the Labour and Communist Parties and consensus politics, through Suez, Hungary and the experience of Gaitskellism, and via the C100 had entered the anarchist movement. The second wave was the far larger number of young people whose first political experience was CND/C100 and for whom the initial enthusiasm for the election victory of Wilson had quickly been replaced by bitter disappointment. This disappointment was expressed in a rejection of orthodox politics, but it was often couched in extreme moralistic positions. (I was one of the latter).

This sudden growth of the anarchist movement resulted in a transformation. The small numbers of experienced anarchists were overwhelmed by many who had little understanding of social anarchism and proceeded to describe their own brand of radicalised liberalism as anarchism.

This radicalised liberalism was expressed not just in terms of a vague humanism, rejecting the concepts of class struggle that were seen as identical with the moribund politics of the Communist Party, but in a fear of organisation and of consensus.

The first conference of the Anarchist Federation of Britain (AFB) had been held in 1963 in Bristol. A secretariat was set up at this congress to establish some sort of continuity, but over the years this was criticised and abandoned.

Each conference of the AFB attracted all and sundry. On one hand anarcho-syndicalists and anarchist-communists, on the other individualists, radicalised liberals and pacifists and prophets of the counter-culture. These conferences were glorified talking shops where few decisions were ever agreed on, and even fewer carried out. There was no structure as such. Positions became shared by default. They were not usually discussed at the conferences, adopted or agreed upon, as there was no recognised way for doing such a thing. These gatherings were large and attracted representatives from

many local groups like for instance the Harlow Anarchist Group, the Manchester Anarchists and the Brighton Anarchists, who were very active.

It was no surprise that many who had been initially attracted to anarchism were deterred by its chronic disorganisation and lack of effectiveness. Some of these turned to groups like International Socialism (precursor of the Socialist Workers Party) and the International Marxist Group. Digger Walsh, active in the Black Flag group of the period, was to be quoted in a national paper as lamenting the fact that 800 militants had gone over to the Trotskyists.

"Disjointed local activity; often moving from one 'issue' to another; unable even to create a small scale programme of work over a period, characterise our 'practice'. In the event of a degree of small scale organising e.g. squatters (1946 and 1968);



the campaign to turn Morrision Fire Station into a Youth Centre (1970) etc; the lack of theory and its consequence is exposed par excellence". (Towards a history and critique of the anarchist movement in recent times. K. Nathan. R. Atkins, C. Williams, ORA pamphlet no1., 1971.)

In the face of this impasse, a number of developments occurred in the AFB. One of these was the Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance (ASA), as the title says an alliance of anarchists and syndicalists who attempted to relate to the industrial unrest and to the huge demonstration that had taken place in 1971 against the Industrial Relations Bill. It attempted to orientate towards industrial activity, although a lack of perspective meant that it started reporting on counter-cultural activity in its paper Black and Red Outlook. A lack of structure also meant it repeated many of

the errors of the AFB. Another group that emerged within the AFB was the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA) originally conceived as a ginger group within the AFB. It argued for formal membership organisation and structure. I remember being involved in writing a leaflet produced by Brighton Anarchists for an AFB conference at the Teynbee Hall in the East End of London that argued against such ideas and putting forward the counter-argument that an organisation would emerge but as the result of 'natural organic growth' of local groups starting up and eventually federating.

The increasing frustration with the swamp of pacifism, liberalism and vague humanism meant that both groups estranged themselves from the AFB, which was now spiralling into terminal decline. The ASA ran out of steam pretty

**"The second wave was the far larger number of young people whose first political experience was CND/C100 and for whom the initial enthusiasm for the election victory of Wilson had quickly been replaced by bitter disappointment. This disappointment was expressed in a rejection of orthodox politics, but it was often couched in extreme moralistic positions."**

quickly, whilst the ORA seemed to be full of dynamism and drive and was able to produce a monthly paper that both reported on struggles in industry, among the unemployed and the squatting movement, but made a good attempt at anarchist and working class history as well as theory. The ORA had started moving away from the swamp as a result of the dockers and miners struggles and the influences of French libertarian communists.

In the pamphlet I quoted above you can read that: "The IS would not have attained their size and influence such as it is if a decent libertarian organisation had existed. It is an unholy mixture of libertarian and Leninist groups. The attempt by Cliffe (sic) to compete with IMG by out-trotting Mandel will make this alliance increasingly unstable. BUT do we have any capacity to attract these

comrades? In fact, the flow has been the other way. Good comrades (for the most part industrial militants rather than students) have been lost without anyone attempting to understand why." This was true and remains true today. A lack of effective organisation, in spite of the decline of Leninism, means we will be at a standstill until we rectify this problem.

All serious anarchist militants were concerned about the rapid growth of IS, IMG and the Socialist Labour League with no corresponding growth in the anarchist movement. Ultimately, though, the founders of the ORA were looking for too quick a fix. They thought that just by creating a revolutionary anarchist organisation the problems of the anarchist movement would be solved. They did not take into account dogged and determined work over a number of years. So, with the miners strike, the 3-day week and the fall of the Heath government, they concluded that a revolutionary crisis was about to happen and that the anarchist movement, still stalled by chronic disorganisation as it was, was inadequate. They decamped to various Leninist organisations, chiefly to the SLL which had always been parroting on about an impending revolutionary crisis (in much the way Trotskyists had done at the end of World War II).

Their analyses had been right in many instances. One of the shortcomings that they had highlighted was the lack of industrial activity. As Brian Bamford, whom I do not often agree with, has pointed out: "At the time of disputes at Roberts-Arundel in Stockport, Pilkington's Glassworks in St Helens, the strikes and stay-in occupations at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and in engineering, the miners struggles in the 1970s, the anarchist influence was tiny" (Freedom 6 August 1994)

What was left of the ORA painfully reconstituted itself as the Anarchist Workers Association and soldiered on into the beginning of the 80s when it transformed itself into the Libertarian Communist Group and eventually went into the leftist organisation Big Flame. This tradition - ORA/AWA/LCG - was distinguished by its steady adherence to class struggle and its critique of the anti-organisational and liberal humanist strands in the 'movement'. Set against these plus points were its leftism, which meant it tailed the leftist organisations, got itself involved in the Socialist Unity electoral alliance alongside IMG and Big Flame, and eventually dissolved itself into an organisation that had been previously described in the pages of its paper as schizoid libertarian Leninist.

**"The Angry Brigade activities were meant as supplementary to the actions of the mass movement. However they had failed to understand the nature of this movement and had overestimated its revolutionary capabilities."**

Alongside these developments in the early 70s were moves in other directions. Notable among these were the Angry Brigade actions. The general illusion that there was a mass movement capable of carrying out a revolution, common in many quarters, led these libertarians, active in claimants and squatters struggles, to engage in a number of attacks on property, including the homes of Ministers and capitalists seen as instrumental in bringing down repression on the working class. The Angry Brigade activities were meant as supplementary to the actions of the mass movement. However they had failed to understand the nature of this movement and had overestimated its revolutionary capabilities.

The Black Flag group itself had many cogent criticisms of the failings of the AFB. However, promised and much heralded creations by this group failed to materialise. In fact, the Black Flag group aligned themselves with the Angry Brigade through uncritical cheerleading in the pages of its journal.

Of course, the humanist and pacifist elements that rejected class struggle continued to peddle their forms of radical liberalism within the pages of Freedom and Anarchy.

"Like federalism itself, of which it is one of its principal elements, collective responsibility exercises itself in two ways - upwards and downwards. It makes an obligation of the individual to explain their acts to the collective, and for the latter to explain their acts before the



Angry Brigade Supporters at the Old Bailey Trial

individual...collective responsibility consecrates and clarifies individual responsibility" - my translation - Pierre Besnard, entry on Responsibility in the Encyclopédie Anarchiste 1933.

### The 1980s

The beginning of the 1980s saw another upsurge in anarchism. A number of young people began to refer themselves as anarchists. This had its origins in the birth of the punk movement in the late 70s and the influence of the Crass group. The politics pushed by Crass in its music were a mixture of the aggressive stances of the punk movement coupled with a pacifist ethos that referred back to both the hippy movement and the pacifist elements within the anarchist 'movement'.

Small groups began to spring up and these were increasingly to be seen at the demonstrations called by CND, itself going through a revival as a result of the political climate of the Thatcher-Reagan years. Some of the demonstrations mounted by CND were very large, something not seen since the previous period of radicalisation.

This new wave was very much defined by lifestyle and ultimately a form of elitism that frowned upon the mass of the working class for its failure to act.

At the same time, the small number of existing class struggle anarchists failed to engage and to offer an alternative and to argue class struggle politics to these new activists.

The high point of this particular wave



were the Stop the City demonstrations in 1983-4 which involved an alliance of anarchists, pacifists, ecological and anti-nuclear activists. These actions were exciting and inventive. They challenged the apathy and inertia of the period and the routinism of the Left. However, they made little effort to reach out beyond the ghetto of activism.

Some anarchists were beginning to question this and to argue that we had to go beyond the Stop Business As Usual and to argue our ideas in the workplace and community.

The Great Miners Strike of 1984-5 was a challenge for this movement as was the Wapping dispute that followed shortly after. Some refused to be involved. As one said "Suddenly all our aims and dreams are thrown aside in the euphoria of class struggle... playing the capitalist money game" (The Beano, June 1986).

Others discovered the class struggle roots of anarchism and reinforced the small class struggle anarchist movement.

To its credit Black Flag galvanised itself during both the miners strike and during Wapping. For a while it took on a fortnightly frequency. It gave its pages over to extensive reporting of the struggles, moving away from its standard presentation of prisoners struggles, investigative journalism and "armed struggle". In this way it performed a very useful function. But once again it failed to move on from there, failed to offer a credible anarchist alternative and held its fire on the Scargill leadership of the miners strike.

Despite the defeat of these struggles, class struggle anarchism was reinforced. The Direct Action Movement (successor to the SWF) welcomed many new members to the extent that it became the biggest anarchist organisation with a membership of 150. But again as with the SWF in the 60s, it had problems with activists from a radicalised liberal background. As a strategy, it advanced the classic syndicalist tactic of building revolutionary unions in the here and now but failed to get a grip with the reality of the workplace.

Class War, which had emerged as a group around the paper of the same name in the mid 80s, transformed itself into the Class War Federation (CWF) in 1986. The latter group was made up of activists who rejected the pacifism, lifestylism and hippyism that were dominant tendencies within British anarchism. In this it represented a healthy kick up the arse of that movement. Again, like the Stop the War actions, it rejected apathy and routinism. It groped towards organisational solutions in its

development of a Federation. But it was trapped in a populism that was sometimes crass, and in a search for stunts that would bring it to the attention of the media. In its search for such publicity, it went so far as to immerse itself in populist electoralism with its involvement in the Kensington by-election. These contradictions were eventually to lead to the break-up of the old CWF, with some offering a sometimes trenchant critique of their own politics up to that time.

However, no organisational alternative was offered beyond a conference in Bradford that attempted to reach out to other anarchists and to offer a non-sectarian approach at unity of those seriously interested in advancing the movement. Alas, these moves were stillborn and many of those who had offered critiques of the old ways of operating dropped out of activity altogether. A rump remained that has carried on maintaining Class War as both a grouping and a paper in the same old way.

Other groups that emerged in the aftermath of the Miners Strike were the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) and the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG). The former had its roots in Virus magazine that had begun appearing during the course of the Miners Strike and in the AWA/LCG of the 70s. It offered organisational measures, was as its name suggests openly anarchist communist and orientated to the class struggle. At first, it adopted Platformist positions but over the years moved further

and further away from a dogmatic Platformism, to the extent that it now talks of the Platform as one of several reference points for its politics. It, from the first, made a number of appeals for united actions with other class struggle anarchist groups, appeals that in the main fell on deaf ears. It has failed to construct an organisation beyond a skeletal federation of small groups and individuals.

The AWG emerged from the DAM in 1988, and pulled in a few people who had left CW and the ACF. It repeated the mistakes of the ORA/AWA in its leftism (including its support for national liberation struggles) and its rank and filism, which had been another characteristic of that organisation. It was far more condescending than the ORA/AWA in the way that it related to the movement, and had far less longevity and level of activity. Again, as with other organisations, it attracted a number of activists, some of them ex-SWP, who had no real understanding of anarchism and failed to go beyond leftism. It had criticised other anarchist organisations for failing to educate their new members and thus developing a two-tier system of experienced militants and raw new members. This it failed to do itself. It thought that it alone could offer a solution to the problems of the movement. Like the ORA it imploded. This time there were none left to carry on, all its members dispersing into Trotskyist groups or disappearing into inactivity. One of the grossest mistakes it made was its support



for the Saddam regime against the Americans in the first Gulf War on spurious "anti-imperialist" grounds.

Parallel to the developments within the anarchist movement had been the emergence of the libertarian socialist organisation Solidarity, which had been created by ex-members of the Socialist Labour League in 1960. Solidarity had also become involved in the anti-bomb movement via the Industrial Sub-Committee of C100. Like the best anarchists, Solidarity had refused to endorse "non-violence" and had participated in the peace movement, "because it was the only place where methods of direct action were being carried out". Solidarity was a theoretical engine room for the entire libertarian movement. Its quite natural fears of developing as an organisation after the experiences of the SLL, meant that it was ham-strung in offering organisational alternatives to the IS, of which it had many very trenchant criticisms.

**"We have to start thinking outside of the boxes of our little groupings, and we have to start thinking big. We must start growing and growing up."**

Looking back, it would have been useful if closer ties could have been developed between Solidarity and the different elements of class struggle anarchism so that joint activity could have intensified. (Some joint work of this nature did take place, as cooperation was at least attempted in East London, e.g. via the East London Libertarian Federation and led on to the 1968-69 squatting campaign, in which libertarians worked together). But mutual suspicion, the magnifying of ideological differences and the failure to recognise shared viewpoints had their role to play in the failure of the libertarian movement of the period to construct a credible alternative to Leninism.

Alongside the development of national organisations were various attempts at local and regional coordination. The libertarian upsurge of the 80s led not just to the growth of organisations but the development of a number of local groups. Some of these groups were a microcosm of the old AFB - class-struggle anarchists

jostling pacifists, individualists and lifestyleers. A development occurred in these groups - partly in response to ideas generated by class struggle anarchist organisations - which resulted in the forming of specifically class struggle anarchist groups. These groups were to a lesser or greater extent limited by a parish-pump anarchism which made them wary of national organisation to which they counterposed local and at best regional organisation.

None of the attempts by local groups to construct regional federations - as with the Northern Anarchist Network of the 80s, the Class Struggle Anarchist Network, the Scottish Libertarian Federation and the Midlands Anarchist Network - were to be long-lasting. Nor were attempts to federate the local groups on a national basis. The local groups were often also crippled by a suspicion of theory, an activist mindset which meant moving from the issue of one day to the issue of the next - all of this alongside an unwillingness to look at coherent organisational solutions.

Today we have a movement where a number of organisations exist more as chapels than anything else. The original intention of galvanising and organising the movement has ended in these organisations becoming not just isolated from each other but from what passes for a movement. The crisis of Leninism has deepened; but what should have been a golden opportunity for British anarchism has not been effectively capitalised upon. Where before local groups had more or less withered away, a number of local groups have emerged. Will these repeat the mistakes of their predecessors and remain trapped in localism, to be ephemeral creations to be remembered by few?

Looking back after almost 40 years of anarchist activism, it would be excusable to feel dejected. The same mistakes have often been repeated decade after decade. Indeed, the lack of continuity in the movement ensures that these same mistakes ARE committed again. New forms of confusionist thought have emerged within the anarchist movement, in particular primitivism and insurrectionism; both in many ways new forms of the old individualist scourge. (In fact these currents seem to be converging, as with the recent Wildfire bulletin).

But on the positive side, class struggle anarchism appears to have strengthened itself within the British movement to a certain extent. Some new local anarchist groups have emerged and there seems to be a tentative but growing need to cooperate and coordinate activity.

We have to drop the outlook of the

chapel. The national organisations should, whilst recognising their differences, be looking for ways in which they can cooperate and make the movement as a whole more effective. We should be looking at ways of coordinating the activities of the local groups and the national organisations and stress that the vitally important work of constructing strong and active local groups should not in the least rule out the crying need to organise nationally.

We need to have propaganda that addresses not only the Great Questions of the day like war, racism and exploitation, but issues like housing, transport and gentrification. Anarchism has to become a visible movement, with mass stickering and flyposting, and mass propaganda distributed on estates and in neighbourhoods. Whilst demonstrations have become extremely ritualised, we must not shirk our responsibilities in making sure there is a strong and visible presence on such events, especially if they are large scale, with bookstalls, mass distribution of literature and united anarchist contingents.

In the period just before the Second World War, the Glasgow Anarchist Communist Federation ceased publication of its journal Solidarity in order to support 'Spain and the World' (precursor of War Commentary, which became Freedom). In London, the veteran Russian anarchist Leah Feldman was the chief initiator for dropping many superfluous papers to support 'Spain and the World'. Should we not now be thinking along the same lines? Is there really room for 3 glossy magazines? Could resources be pooled? Could this lead on to a new vibrancy within British anarchism?

We have to start thinking outside of the boxes of our little groupings, and we have to start thinking big. We must start growing and growing up. The opportunities are there. We have to attract both those disillusioned by Leninism and the newly radicalised youth who are emerging as a result of anti-war activity and a revulsion at the Labour government. We have to draw back into the movement those discouraged in the past by the ineffectiveness of our movement, who have retreated into private life. We have to be seen as a serious movement, not one viewed as ineffectual and passive, riddled with dilettantes and cranks.

Every serious anarchist should now be thinking and acting upon ways to maximise our effectiveness and clout. We should be thinking of greater cooperation and the development of forums where we can start to discuss these concerns. □

Nick Heath





# ON MEANS AND ENDS

The question of means and ends can be scrutinized on both the level of theoretical ethics and practical considerations. It entails a close relationship between these two different approaches, especially in the (marginalised) realm of principled politics. My aim here is primarily to briefly outline the fundamental ideological positions and political problems with regards to this critical debate, as well as the contours of its possible resolution.

A sensible "modus operandi" cannot be based on a generalized question: "do the ends justify the means"? The real dilemma is, rather, whether this particular end justifies this particular means. The general answer can be traced to the basic tenet of utilitarianism: "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Jeremy Bentham), doing what is best for the majority. However, although this is the best approximation to the democratic political ideal, there are (at least) two great dangers that loom over those subjected to this "utilitarian calculus of pleasure and pain". Firstly, determining what this "greatest happiness" actually is can often only be a complex and dubious matter. Those claiming that they have successfully grasped the issue have sometimes used this principle as a demagogic tool for establishing their oligarchic tyranny over political opponents and subjects in the name of "The People". Secondly, there is an immense risk of creating a "tyranny of the majority" based on a simplification of this approach. A sexual minority deemed "perverted" by the general population can, for instance, be seen as an obstacle to "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (if this happiness is

superficially and statically understood, of course). Despite the common misconception which associates tyranny of the majority with radical participatory democracy, this type of "mobocracy" is primarily a trait of more authoritarian regimes in which the dominating elites politically instrumentalise people's lack of genuine democratic culture.

**Capitalism has no 'higher end'**  
Under capitalism (and class rule in general) there is a fundamental means and ends compatibility. Class rule is both a means and an end - monopoly and domination serve to ensure profit-making, which in turn serves precisely to perpetuate and strengthen this monopoly and domination. There is no "higher end" in capitalism. However, this system constitutes a sharp and dynamic break from the previous, largely static epochs. In many ways it is a historically progressive force, as Marx was so keen to observe (especially in the first part of the "Communist Manifesto"). In its "free trade", imperialism and exploitation, apart from ethical abomination, he saw the mode most conducive to the development of the forces of production, which are a basic precondition for the birth of a higher social order. In its most glittering moments capitalism is self-destructive.

From this perspective even Machiavelli's "Prince", seen as a classical example of the idea that the end justifies any means, has a certain redeeming potential. His monarchism was largely bent on aiding the unification of Italy (what was later to become known as "Risorgimento"), against feudal limitations. It was feudalism transcending itself. "The Discourses", on the other hand, functioned as a considerably less ambiguous progressive effort, introducing the principles of republicanism

and civic order, important elements of nascent capitalism.

## One person's terrorist...

The most important debate about the relationship between the means and the ends in present times concerns radical anticapitalist politics. I believe outlining some of the vital points made by Saul D. Alinsky in his famous "Rules for Radicals" might shed more light on this subject.

Firstly, he contends that "one's concern with the ethics of means and ends varies inversely with one's distance from the scene of conflict."<sup>1</sup> The judgement must be made in the context, a particular place and time in which the action occurred. One person's "terrorists" (remember Margaret Thatcher's characterisation of Nelson Mandela for instance) are often another's "freedom-fighters". Capitalist "industry of consciousness" (mass media, politicians, academia...) has always utilised common ethical principles in order to demonise the rebels that the ruling elites were against, playing on people's fears, prejudices, differences and aloofness (especially with regards to class, nationalist, religious and racial divisions).

Alinsky further claims that the concern with the ethics of means and ends increases with the number of means and ends at hand<sup>2</sup>. A prominent example is Lenin's abandonment of the project of "war communism" and the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921. Soviet Union was ravaged by the civil war and foreign intervention (approximately ten million people died in the war and from hunger). The economy was devastated. Bolsheviks faced growing discontent from the peasantry (which was too large to ignore) and the workers (whose independent action threatened the

dominance of the party leadership, and were therefore brutally crushed).

Thirdly, Alinsky emphasizes that, from a historical perspective, success or failure strongly influences the ethical outlook<sup>3</sup>. "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx). History is written by the victors, as the saying goes.

### Self defence or self indulgence?

The next important consideration should be given to the difference between self-defence and self-indulgence of the dominant group<sup>4</sup>. The defence of London during the bombing raids of WWII cannot be morally equated with the terror/carpet bombing of Dresden (nor, for instance, the bombing of Tokio, Hamburg or Kassel<sup>5</sup>) by the Allied forces, or the persecution (ethnic cleansing) of the German population from what is now western Poland, Sudeten or Yugoslavia. Partisan resistance in France or Yugoslavia cannot be morally equated with their merciless revenge following the defeat of fascists and their collaborators.

Another point we should bear in mind is the fact that the kind of means that are selected largely depends upon the character of the opposition<sup>6</sup>. It is evident that, for example, conduct towards civilian and military opponents shouldn't be identical, and that there are also big differences between conscript soldiers (civilians in normal circumstances) and the standing army (professional soldiers and mercenaries who perceive their military activity as a career; they have less or no connection with the domestic population, are better trained, less accountable, more brainwashed etc.). The implications of these variations are much more intricate and dubious, and no amount of conventional wisdom can really help us here.

Finally, Alinsky notes that any effective means are automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical<sup>7</sup> and are often made illegal. As J.J. Rousseau succinctly put it in his "Social Contract": "Law is a very good thing for men with property and a very bad thing for men without property."<sup>8</sup> It is illustrative that strikes not authorised by the union leadership ("wildcat strikes") are therefore illegal. Ultimately, there is some truth in the popular anarchist saying "If voting could change anything, they'd make it illegal."

### Revolutionary transition

There are two great ends and means debates (largely overlapping) that have particularly occupied the attention of political radicals (and still do) - the problem of revolutionary transition and the question of revolutionary violence.

Put simply, the problem of revolutionary transition has historically been marked by the essential conflict between the (primarily) Leninist doctrine of the "transitional period" which was based on the notion of "revolutionary" dictatorship and a very gradual "withering away of the state" as opposed to the libertarian communist conception of the "abolition of the state" and "socialism from below".

The basic libertarian socialist

"I am aware of the fact that it is not always possible to do what one should do; but I know that there are things that on no account can one ever do."

presumption states that authoritarian means cannot be used to achieve libertarian ends. Therefore one of the most prominent "revolutions from below" (along with the Spanish Revolution and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956) - the Paris Commune of 1871 - included the immediate "smashing of the machinery of the state" (Marx) & the establishment of workers' and community councils (workers' self-government/participatory democracy), along with direct eligibility and immediate revocability of all officials, who were receiving working men's salaries. Although the majority in these direct-democratic councils were anarchists (especially Proudhonists) and Blanquists, the revolutionary Republic received Marx' and Engels' unwavering approval and support, and influenced their more libertarian writings. However, (apart from the crucial external factors) partly due to poor organisation, confusion and a failure to take a firmer stance on several issues, such as the question of the reactionary government in Versailles, the Republic was crushed following a month-long counterrevolutionary siege; 30,000 Parisian citizens were killed, and many more were sent to distant French colonies as forced labourers. The radically democratic and essentially humane nature of the revolution played a certain part in its tragic demise.

### Dictatorship of the proletariat

The Leninist model, on the other hand, denies the existence of a direct connection between means and ends, as well as the

claim made by Marx (and Flora Tristan before him) that "the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself." Leninist conception of the dictatorship in the name of the proletariat (manipulatively called "the dictatorship of the proletariat") was carried out through the highly centralized rule of the Bolshevik Party and the cruel suppression of dissent (notably the Kronstadt rebellion<sup>9</sup>). Although they



Devastation in Dresden in WWII

(barely) won the Civil War and (partly) defeated the foreign interventionist forces (largely due to Soviet Union's geographical position, and with the help of Ukrainian anarchists and peasant militias, but also the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk), Stalin managed to take over after Lenin's death in the party's Central Committee, subsequently executing all the members of the old revolutionary vanguard (with the notable exception of Alexandra Kollontai) and (quantitatively and qualitatively) advancing the reign of terror. "Those who make revolution half way only dig their own graves", howled the prophecy of the Jacobin leader Saint-Just. The ensuing years seem to further support Michael Bakunin's claim that "dictatorships tend to perpetuate themselves".

There have been some attempts to develop a modified revolutionary platform conducive both to radical democracy ("socialism from below") and disciplined party structure and more classical political activity (notably the Spartacists led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Europe, Daniel De Leon, one of the founders of the IWW, and his Socialist Labor Party in the USA as well as James Connolly in Ireland in a somewhat more syndicalist manner). These efforts failed to take a stronger root.

### Violent or non violent struggle

The approaches to the question of revolutionary violence can be separated into three basic blocs: proponents of violent struggle, "circumstantialists" and proponents of nonviolent struggle.

One of the most famed proponents of



violent struggle is Michael Bakunin, who seems to have somewhat romanticised destruction and illegality: "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge!"<sup>10</sup>. This strain of thought often resulted in nihilism (eg. anarchist "propaganda of the deed", i.e. "terrorism"), although this can partly be said of some more moderate proponents of violent struggle and nonviolent protest alike.

A more nuanced and analytical approach was offered by the "circumstantialists" like Georgy Lukacs who, in his "History and Class Consciousness" criticised both the romanticism of illegality and the acceptance of the bourgeois-legalistic mindset. Effectiveness with regards to approximating the ultimate revolutionary goal (while recognising the specifics of the concrete situation) should be the only criterion<sup>11</sup>.

In early modern times, beginning with the American abolitionists Adin Ballou, Henry David Thoreau and William Lloyd Garrison, who later influenced Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy's Christian anarcho-pacifism, the idea of nonviolent resistance existed in a rather abstract "aprioristic" context. It found a more pragmatic expression in Gandhi's satyagraha<sup>12</sup>, which involved relatively successful methods of non-cooperation and nonviolent action (boycotts, strikes etc.). However, due to his doctrine of class collaboration and the avoidance of direct class struggle, he failed to prevent traditionalist influences (of which he was to some extent a part himself) which finally led to mass religious and communal strife between Hindus and Muslims (the vile British partition of India being a major cause) with millions killed

and many more forced to flee from their homes<sup>13</sup>.

Nearly at the same time the Dutch revolutionary anarchosindicalist and antimilitarist Bart de Ligt earned his reputation as a proponent of more radical methods such as mass civil disobedience, unarmed factory occupations, acts of diversion, sabotage and the general strike, which offered a powerful revolutionary alternative to conventional armed struggle<sup>14</sup>. As well as believing that violence encourages authoritarian organisation and a militaristic culture incompatible with human emancipation, he saw the adoption of armed struggle as a way of pushing the rebels into an inherently unequal position of adopting the "rules of the game" in which one party controls all the dice (almost absolute military superiority of the state). Already in 1933, long before technological developments such as robot soldiers that are devised under the current US "Future Combat Systems" programme<sup>15</sup>, Ralph Chaplin of the Industrial Workers of the World stressed the need for a creative new kind of militancy which would adapt to the changing characteristics of the capitalist system. Similarly to de Ligt, his answer to both reformism and armed insurrectionists was the strategy of a revolutionary general strike (including unarmed factory occupations), informed by the theory of power which claims that workers can "fold their arms and the world will stop"<sup>16</sup>.

In our times, encouraged by various experiences of relatively successful unarmed resistance at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (particularly the "velvet revolutions" in

Eastern Europe, with the Soviet Empire crumbling like a house of cards in a few years practically without a shot being fired, as well as the recent "October Revolution" against Milosevic in Serbia, "Rose Revolution" in Georgia, "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine, "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan, the Ecuador ouster and many others<sup>17</sup>) there is more than a handful of those still interested in this unarmed approach, most notably Gene Sharp<sup>18</sup> and Brian Martin<sup>19</sup> who have made important contributions to the strategy of unarmed resistance and civilian-based defence, arguing that it is no longer possible to militarily counter the military power of the state, that revolutionary wars destroy revolutionary social and economic potentials of the areas involved and have never been successful against established capitalist states, that violence excludes ordinary citizens, women, children and the elderly while supporting machismo and stifling democratic culture and democratic decision-making, thus reinforcing the conditions of slavery<sup>20</sup>.

Although none of the three basic approaches towards violence holds the absolute truth, and the specific methods and tactics for obtaining radical social change are yet to be "fully" devised, I believe a remark made by the old French anarchosindicalist Sebastien Faure still bears some meaning:

"I am aware of the fact that it is not always possible to do what one should do; but I know that there are things that on no account can one ever do."<sup>21</sup> □

Dan Jakopovich

1 Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York, 1989, p.32.

2 Ibid., p.34.

3 Ibid., p.34.

4 Ibid., p.34.

5 See for example:

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terror\\_bombing](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terror_bombing) ;

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_dresden](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_dresden) ;

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Tokyo\\_in\\_World\\_War\\_II](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Tokyo_in_World_War_II) ;

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Hamburg\\_in\\_World\\_War\\_II](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II) ;

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Kassel\\_in\\_World\\_War\\_II](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Kassel_in_World_War_II) .

6 Saul D. Alinsky, op.cit., p. 41.

7 Ibid., pp. 35-6

8 Antony Jay (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.

9 The most famous account is Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1970. Ida Mett's *The Kronstadt Commune* is also a prominent work on this topic (available online on [libcom.org/library](http://libcom.org/library)).

10 Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, Fontana Press, London, 1993, p.263.

11 "Every essentially revolutionary objective (...) denies the moral *raison d'être* and the historico-philosophical appositeness of both present and past legal orders; how far — if at all — they are to be taken into account is therefore an exclusively tactical question."

(Georg Lukacs, *Tactics and Ethics* -

[www.marx.org/archive/lukacs/works/1919/tactics-ethics.htm](http://www.marx.org/archive/lukacs/works/1919/tactics-ethics.htm) )

12 Radically rejecting the dichotomy between ends and means, and believing that "means are the end in the making", he once stated: "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree, and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree..." (see [www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful/india/satyagraha.html](http://www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful/india/satyagraha.html) )

13 See Menejjeh Moradian & David Whitehouse, *Gandhi and the Politics of Nonviolence*, International Socialist Review Issue 14, October-November 2000 ([www.isreview.org/issues/14/Gandhi.shtml](http://www.isreview.org/issues/14/Gandhi.shtml)).

14 Bart de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence*, Pluto Press, London, 1989.

15 See [www.sundayherald.com/36926](http://www.sundayherald.com/36926) , Get ready for cyberwar, *The Guardian*, January 23, 2003, & Robot army will think for itself, *New Scientist*, May 21, 2005.

16 "Modern airplanes, poison and incendiary gas, artillery and machine guns in the hands of highly trained specialists have put the unarmed and practically untrained worker at a decided disadvantage in the matter of military conflict... Just as gunpowder displaced the bow and arrow, so economic action will displace Labor's cruder and less potent weapons in the final struggle for emancipation from wage slavery."

(R. Chaplin, *The General Strike*, IWW, Chicago, 1982)

17 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colour\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colour_revolution) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-violent\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-violent_revolution)

18 See [www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org).

19 See Brian Martin's publications on his website - [www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/pubs](http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/pubs). A pioneering attempt to apply Clausewitzian strategic theory to civilian-based defence & unarmed struggle was made in Boserup & Mack, *War Without Weapons: Non-Violence in National Defence*, Frances Pinter, London, 1974. (see [tmh.floonet.net/articles/wow.html](http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/wow.html)).

20 George Woodcock developed an argument on similar lines in his classical "Anarchism and Anarchists", Quarry Press, Kingston, Ontario, 1992.

21 Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, Freedom Press, London, 1995, p.215.

# Guerrilla Marketing:

**We all know somebody desperately trying to get attention for their cause.**

**Whether slapping around the bible at speakers' corners or shoving crudely xeroxed flyers under wind screen wipers, getting the word out without stooping to using money seldom achieves critical mass. Stories of grassroots publicity successes or clever (and priceless) headline grabbers like Fathers 4 Justice and British hunting supporters are usually the exception that proves the rule. The general public's attention is a commodity traded on by global corporations and cutting through this monopoly requires a strategic effort.**

So how do you reach the masses? Those people walking up and down the streets all day. Your agenda might just be the only thing missing from their lives. Why would somebody who doesn't (yet) agree with you go to the trouble of coming to your party or subscribing to your newsletter? Reaching the general public has been necessary for most things... ever. From coups to the releasing of the wrongful imprisoned, nothing jolts soulless, bureaucratic dinosaurs like public attention - except maybe for public scrutiny and/or outrage. And, for a public more indifferent than the world has ever seen, getting us to hear, let alone, accept new ideas requires militant precision.

To be warmed by the toasty glow of attention and authority, the nice people who own the world's stocks use a cleverly named little industry called public relations. Think of marital relations - it's like that but with the public looking on. A patriarchal fuck ritual. Where advertising requires the client to pay for space and airtime, PR exists to force organisations' agendas on consumers through the mainstream media, which is comprised largely of messages 'sold in' to its outlets (magazines, radio, newspapers, television and popular online portals) - nauseating, yes, but it's all about using their tools to turn the machine around.

Before deciding on how to get attention, you have to create a concise message. This is what people will find out before they even want to know you exist. It will get sorted into either the 'yes' or 'no' chute in their brains - so it must encapsulate everything you believe, but in a concise and non-threatening way. How many articles, anecdotes, flyers and websites do you dismiss because they don't seem aimed at you. Whether tanning salons, car insurance or christianity - flyers that talk to me as if I am already on their side get binned. In the same way, communiqués and press releases that seem to exclude too many people are disregarded. This is because the general public need to be intrigued, not confronted. Challenging their preconceptions requires the same kind of guile as giving antibiotics to a dog. Your message must be wrapped in a delicious slice of compelling or eye-catching bologna. As a PR guerrilla, you will think of this mystery-meat outer shell as the packaging. It's a way of putting your central message within media-friendly, superficial brain candy. Being too direct can drive away the media, and often just hearing the name of your cause or organisation will inform the right people that you exist. This means that often, you can gain media coverage by giving the media more of what it likes, sound-bites, 'insightful' stats, something that seems new. Look into, the mainstream outlets (newspaper) that are read by people who are likely to agree with you. Get a feel for the kind of hooks they seem to bite for. Some like public opinion polls (easily obtained on the internet or the street) Others want spectacular images. Most just want something related to the current news cycle but with a different

## Reaching the mainstream media





angle. However, it is always about more of the same. Vapid but necessary.

If you can play the game up to this point, you'll surprise yourself with the amount of attention your ideas receive. It's the only way to win. It's how the world is fed its brain candy and almost everything we ever learn will start out as an agenda, carefully wrapped in a layer of interesting fact, colourful characters, the appearance of public support, pretty girls and loud music. And, though usually deceptive and intensely consumerist, the process can be used for social change.

Think of your 'hook' or 'angle' as the batman costume you'll put on your story. It's what dresses up your message in intrigue and novelty to quickly grab and hold attention. This also requires that you are sticking fairly closely to the kind of stories the journalist usually discusses. You will angle or 'spin' your story differently depending on the different outlets' audiences. This is also a great way to get attention in surprising publications that can lead to broader media interest. News outlets, for example, might care about a significant and growing public resentment toward a clear and specific entity, especially if there are statistics, video, pictures or even quotes backing it up. As an extreme example, you might be able to give fashion journalists a new and different story by talking about how direct action or anarcho-syndicalism is influencing mainstream style. This is, of course, a terrible example for a couple different reasons, which is still not to say that some journalist at some publication that reaches hundreds of thousands of ordinary people could want to hear more about this story. The DA or anarcho-syndicalist ideas would still be getting public attention and while the purists might encounter many new posers, the precise ideas of anarcho-syndicalism could be clearly explained on the websites members of the public would now want to see. Remember that most of what the proletariat ever hears about only gets to it through a process similar to this.

Once you have packaged your message, or at least figured out the ideas you're trying to present, it's time to think about turning these into actual content. And while you may be tempted to fire up the old typewriter and produce a detailed manifesto, again, putting your message within content that will appeal to the media is always a careful balance between selling out for stardom or tightly grasping your ideals as you bask in the sweet embrace of obscurity. Remember that fresh research, no matter how shabbily conducted, well-produced audio segments and eye-catching video equal money in the

bank to the people responsible for keeping popular audiences in their drooling stupors of passive amusement. This means you have to find a way to create these things using the resources available to you. Online polls can offer compelling statistics and are easily accepted and welcomed by print and even radio outlets. Video of action(s), especially when it's unique and tells a story can also find a home – especially since the number of



**"...Where advertising requires the client to pay for space and airtime, PR exists to force organisations' agendas on consumers through the mainstream media, which is comprised largely of messages 'sold in' to its outlets (magazines, radio, newspapers, television and popular online portals) - nauseating yes, but it's all about using their tools to turn the machine around."**

smaller and more relatively independent TV outlets is seeing a huge growth on cable and satellite line-ups.

Once you've got something to offer the media, it's time to get their attention. This only sounds like the hardest part. If you make a real effort to create compelling content, you'll be surprised at how quickly you'll start seeing real results. This process definitely feels an awful lot like work but makes for interesting life experience. Your first task will be to make a list of press journalists, radio presenters and even TV producers you want to take interest. You'll want to aim high but make sure you also have plenty of smaller publications and more obscure outlets which are more likely to give you a chance. Contact information for journalists, or at least their offices, is readily available online and in books available at your local library! Though you might have to jot some down from the nice updated copies at the book store. Remember that journalists are pestered continuously and so getting their attention requires capturing their interest in less than 1 minute. Standing out to them requires preparation. Once you do call them up, the highest degree of success you'll be able to achieve is when they ask you to email them more information about your story. Though, in most cases, you will be emailing them in the first instance, since a great deal of journalists simply won't take phone calls. With tight deadlines and travel, they're a lot more likely to prefer email. This is why you will need to prepare a short and informative email that contains almost no opinion and the kind of 'hook' journalists crave. And

all this starts with that email. Don't forget to answer any potential questions a journalist might have and add some background information. You will also want to include a link to your website, though most journalists will call you up if they have more questions.

### About Websites

Make sure the first page of your site contains plenty of text talking about your

ideas. If it's not what you want to do, even invisible text will get you more search engine-directed visitors. After you've submitted all the pages of your site to all the major search engines, you should also email the people who run similar websites asking for a link. This is even more effective if you keep in touch with them with pictures of your activities and any images that go along with your cause. When people go looking to find out more about your message, they will look online. An up-to-date website that is easy to find should be a priority for any group or individual looking to affect change.

As you can see, getting the average Jane and Joe to put down their Starbucks latte and pay attention is a series of compromises. Purists might resist disguising their ideas as just another momentary flash of claptrap within the mass media. However, I wanted to present a realistic explanation of what we see to be true every time we pass a newspaper stand. The truth is, these things are read by millions of people every day. We have all attended events and meetings full of those who have already changed their minds and behaviours and now agree with our ideas and support our goals, whatever it is you're into. Only by reaching those cynically dismissed as consumers; salary workers; married people; service industry workers and countless others, can any movement, group and, especially, rebellion ever gain the momentum needed to force any kind of broad change. □

Alex Shapiro

As much as socialists in Britain might flick through history books, drooling at the radicalism of the working classes of France, Italy, Spain etc there's one thing we can't forget: our own history of radicalism is not too shabby.

Sure, it's easy to spend endless nights wanking over the Paris Commune or the CNT's role in the Spanish Civil War but the end result is the same. You feel embarrassed and ashamed at your lack of involvement in actual struggle as you pine over those sexy foreigners and their ideal struggles where there are never any arguments because they're all just so revolutionary and want to have a revolution every night. Sigh! We look at our own relationship with the class and feel shame. We've just never been as close as the Italians. Is it us? Is it them? We struggle to think of the good times. Were we ever happy?

But the class in Britain has as rich a history of struggle as any country (though obviously I'd rather be on strike in Barcelona than in Basildon!), certainly much richer than it is given credit for. Looking back at the Peasants' Revolt and the demands of the Diggers shows just how far back the history of working class militancy and dedication to socialism goes. The years between 1918 and 1926 were probably the closest we've ever been to revolution with general strikes, mutinies and urban unrest widespread. Post-WW2 saw more self-activity; working class Jews took a 'No Platform' approach to dealing with the fascist threat (in fact, you could argue that fascism has been dealt with more thoroughly in Britain than anywhere else in the world) and we saw various urban riots and strikes across the country, for instance the 1974 miners' strike which brought down Ted Heath's Tory government.

Of course, shit happened. You could probably describe the Thatcher/Reagan

era as the most successful period for Western capitalism ever. Not only did they manage to almost totally smash domestic dissent but they even managed to oversee the collapse of their only rival empire (and simultaneously open up new markets for themselves). With the organs of working class opposition crushed and being the last superpower left standing, it must have been champagne and cigars all round.

In Britain, the climax of this period of struggle was the 1984-5 miners' strike which ended not just in the defeat of the miners but also the defeat of the entire British labour movement. It is a defeat from which we are still yet to recover. Apart from Poll Tax, we've been on the end of 20-odd years of defeat. Our unions crushed, many 'radicals' co-opted and the abandoning of the working class by the left, leaving a political vacuum in working class communities which only seems to be being filled by the far-right (well, they're the only ones having a go anyway). This is the context in which we're operating.

Yup, we've heard it all before, the old 'political vacuum' schtick. Labour have abandoned the class, the Leninists have abandoned the class, everyone's abandoned the class. And to be honest, it's about bloody time! But it's not like 'anarchists' or 'libertarian socialists' or any other group of militants should be trying to muscle in on that vacuum either. We should know by now that the way to build a revolutionary movement isn't by building a mass federation. It's not like one day we'll have enough people calling themselves 'anarchists' and, BANG!, socialism. It's only through the self-organisation and self-activity of the working class that socialism can be achieved. Nothing less and, sadly, there's no short-cuts.

Just as sad, in these dark days of retreat, those wet dreams of revolution (or even just a good relationship with the working class) seem very far off. And just like we can't have the revolution on behalf of the class, we can't create the suitable conditions for building a mass movement either. As all good Marxists should know, capitalism creates the conditions for its own destruction and it's only a matter of time before we see a new upsurge in working class activity against capitalism and the state.

From this point, it has been common for politicians to go one of two directions: Substitutionist activist self-gratification – when the class is in retreat, it's not uncommon for impatient revolutionaries



# Back at Square One: The Working Class Movement in Britain



to adopt an activist 'kick it till it breaks' mentality. The idea here is that if we call enough demos, squat enough buildings, take enough 'direct action', recruit enough people into our federation then eventually 'it' will break. Usually confined to primitivists, insurrectionists, individualists, post-modernists, post-leftists and other bourgeois anti-organisationalist no-hopers. Sadly, some decent revolutionaries are also sucked in by the need to 'do something' and their heads soon become irremovable from their arses.

"The class shall provide" navel gazing – things aren't going so well, it's all a bit depressing but, because capitalism creates the conditions for its own collapse you have hope. The working class will get it together eventually and it'll be all right on the night. No need to worry, right?

Wrong. Capitalism might create the opportunity for revolution, but it's still us, as a class, who have to seize that opportunity. Victory is not assured and the working class needs to have practiced the ideas of libertarian socialism in their day-to-day experience in non-revolutionary times if a revolution is ever to be successful.

The former is also another blind alley often walked up by revolutionaries. We know that the only way to build a revolutionary mass movement is to organise institutions of working class power in our workplaces and communities. I know that we know this because we're always saying it. But how much of this rhetoric is just lip-service to radical working class politics? Looking at the activities of a lot of anarchists and socialists, I'd say a fair bit.

Our relationship with the class is almost non-existent at the moment and it is because we have become so distant from people's everyday lives. We have left workplaces and communities and have begun building national federations (which when you look at them, actually don't look very much like federations at all – do any of the national federations have three-figure memberships? How many functioning local groups does each federation have?), printing newsletters with little relevance to people's lives (how many people get in touch after picking up a copy of your newsletter?) and generally just tail-ending anti-war demonstrations, hoping to pick up a few disillusioned Trots who will then be able to join our ever-growing army of newsletter hand-outers in the hope of picking up yet more

**"Apart from Poll Tax, we've been on the end of 20-odd years of defeat."**



disillusioned Trots. A slightly caricatured description of revolutionary activity in Britain perhaps, but I think if you look honestly, you'll agree that the reality is not all that different. A bit depressing, but don't worry, it's not all doom and gloom, things will get better (as will this article, I promise).

#### **So what do we do now?**

All this throws up a lot of questions: What is working class power? Where does it come from? What does it look like? How do we go about building it? And finally, what can we do to build it when we aren't living in conditions sympathetic to revolutionary organising?

Well, to answer the first two questions quickly, working class power comes from the militant organisations of the class built to fight capitalist exploitation and it comes from the class itself, not any political party – revolutionary or otherwise.

As for the third, well, that's slightly more complicated. Though revolutionary organisations of the most militant and politically consistent sections of the working class are necessary, they AREN'T the institutions of working class power. All they can be are political outreach groups, encouraging the spread of communist trends within the working class and participating and supporting working class struggles. But the actual struggles themselves must be carried out by the working class through its own institutions.

In the community, these institutions are residents' associations, holding meetings open to all in the community, broadcasting relevant news throughout the community and beyond through a federation of residents' associations (an

example of a working, current example would be the Haringey Federation of Residents' Associations in North London – [www.haringeyresidents.org](http://www.haringeyresidents.org)). These RA's would take action on a wide variety of issues, not just to do with housing but also things like anti-social crime, far-right activism, park closures etc.

In the workplace, the institutions of working class power are unions, preferably directly democratic but (for the present time anyway) more likely to be bureaucratic TUC unions. That said, unions only give us strength if we have a strong rank and file movement pushing its leadership through its own militant self-activity i.e. wildcat strikes and other collective action outside of official union control.

But how to build it? And more importantly, how to build it now, when revolutionary politics aren't exactly popular?

Well I suppose it would be a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we obviously we need to start strengthening and (sadly in many places) setting up the institutions outlined above. Okay, so they may not be revolutionary now (or ever), but the collective action that takes place within them can have a massive effect on those who take part, radicalising many workers. And who knows where some of these organisations will go? In more revolutionary times, RA's could fight for direct community control. Strong rank and file movements within the unions could attempt to split off to form radical union federations. We don't know how these things could end up. Organisations that seem reformist now could turn out to

*Continued on page 29*

It was a nation at war, with a militant insurgency fighting the might of the US military. And yet it went to the polls. Officials of the occupying power said they "were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout" despite of a "terrorist campaign to disrupt the voting." A "successful election has long been seen as the keystone" in the President's strategy of "encouraging the growth of constitutional processes." The "hope here is that the new government will be able to manoeuvre with a confidence and legitimacy." This "could have been dashed either by a small turnout, indicating widespread scorn or a lack of interest in constitutional development, or by . . . disruption of the balloting." The high turnout "was a welcome surprise" and even higher than the previous US Presidential election.



Is this joyous reporting of democracy in action about Iraq today? No, it is from the New York Times about the South Vietnam presidential elections in 1967 ("U.S. Encouraged by Vietnam Vote", 4/9/1967: p. 2). Like today, the media pointed to the size of the popular vote and the inability of the Vietcong to destroy the election machinery as the "the two salient facts." Strangely, the electors backed the generals who have been ruling South Vietnam since a military coup two years previously. This did "not, in the Administration's view, diminish the significance of the constitutional step" that had been taken.

So in spite of Bush, Blair and the media being all a gush over the successful Iraqi elections, it is useful to remember the fact that the US has systematically held "successful" elections in the countries it is occupying or whose dictators it is backing. The term for this process is called "demonstration elections," an attempt to show that US commitment to democracy is deeper than lip service. Yet it is only the appearance of democratic norms and its end result is not in question. And that is the case here.

#### A little relevant history

Amidst all the politicians back-patting each other, it would be good to remember that the Bush Junta initially opposed one-person, one-vote elections of this sort. First, it was going to turn Iraq over to Chalabi within six months but that fell through. This was replaced by the notion that US Viceroy Paul Bremer would exercise personal rule for a few years. In November 2003, Bremer announced council-based elections in May 2004. This election would have been restricted to the US/UK created provincial and

municipal governing councils, the members of this small elite being (unsurprisingly) pro-American.

This was when people power kicked in. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani immediately gave a fatwa denouncing this and demanding free elections mandated by a UN Security Council resolution. Bush was reportedly "extremely offended" at these demands and Bremer was soon ordered to get his appointed Interim Governing Council to fight Sistani. Sistani then brought thousands of protesters into the streets in January of 2004, demanding free elections. Faced with a massive show of popular rebellion, Bush caved in bar on one issue - the

timing. He got the elections postponed to January 2005.

So if it had been up to Bush and Blair, Iraq would have been a benevolent dictatorship under Chalabi or, at best, it would have had stage-managed elections based on the votes of handful of pro-American notables. It was people power that changed the equation, not the (non-existent) benevolence or democratic ideals of US imperialism.

And why the huge delay? The official rationale was that the US objected that they could not use UN food ration cards for registration, as Sistani suggested. Yet, in the end, that is exactly what they did use. The real reason is obvious. Shaping a nation state in line with the needs of US imperialism takes time. The Bush Junta recognised before the invasion that a democratic Iraq would not stand for the strategic goals the war was fought for: controlling the oil reserves and establishing military bases to project US imperial interests in the Middle East. Quick elections would have scuppered these plans and so the US rejected them.

#### Elections, but not democracy

So after having elections thrust upon them by people power, the US worked hard to ensure that the processes they put in place made sure the occupation would continue, no matter the result. Not that the result was left totally alone. In spite of the usual overblown rhetoric by Bush and Blair, the election itself fell totally short of accepted electoral standards. If it had been held by, say, Saddam, Britain and America would have been the first to denounce it. Apparently Bush is to be portrayed as the bringer of



democracy to Iraq by the simple fact that this so-called election took place.

The occupying forces have been unable to provide the necessary security for truly aboveboard democratic elections. But that has its advantages. An under-reported, but extremely significant, fact about the elections was that they were held under a state of emergency that lasted months and that the candidates' identities had been withheld for security reasons until just before the election. This meant no public campaigning, no speeches, no basis for choosing between one candidate and another. So people were voting for people they did not know who belonged to party lists whose policies were not clear. In addition, there was a US-appointed election commission. Such facts have not got in the way of the hype.

All this undoubtedly helped the current US appointed prime minister who ran under the slogan of a "strong leader for a safe country." He has huge name-recognition in a field where most candidates had little chance or time to get themselves known. Television coverage also favoured Allawi, who was constantly in the news as well as dominating the paid advertising on the satellite channels. The role of funding from US sources must have been significant. Sadly for the Americans, the voters gave both Allawi and them the (purple) finger and he got less than 14% of the vote in spite of the advantages provided by the US occupation.

Bush did say that American forces would withdraw from Iraq "if the new government that is elected on Sunday asked him to do so" but added that "it seems like most of the leadership there understands that there will be a need for coalition troops at least until Iraqis are able to fight." That is wishful thinking. Few Iraqis "understand that there will be a need for" the occupation of their country. According to a recent poll, 82% of Sunni Arabs and 69% of Shiites want US forces to withdraw either immediately or after an elected government is in place. Even the Kurds want the US to leave. A genuinely democratic election would have to reflect this fact.

Yet it is very doubtful that the US would allow those seeking an immediate or absolute end to its presence into Iraq's highest offices. This explains the complicated voting procedures and the need for overwhelming (two-thirds) majority in the new National Assembly to elect a government. In this way the current set of US puppets can play a key role in the inevitable coalitions produced by the elections and, consequently, ensure US interests are served.

Then there is the Sunni boycott of the vote. There is scope for making up the "Sunni deficit" by appointing Sunnis to the drafting committee. If they did, then the occupiers have a powerful weapon to get what they want as representatives of all three communities need to agree to proposals. If they ignore the Sunnis then they have a potential veto as any constitution is to be put to a referendum in the autumn. If more than a third of voters in three of Iraq's 18 provinces vote it down, the draft falls. Sunnis form a majority in at least four provinces. This could be a long-term problem for the US, but in the short-term the appointment of Sunnis has obvious appeal.

### **Deterring Democracy**

When the Iraqi assembly did open on March 16th, the fact there was no government was dutifully reported. Why this was the case went unmentioned. The BBC news failed to mention why, their reporter Jim Muir in Baghdad saying that coalition politics was a novelty in a country ruled by a tight dictatorship for decades, and the learning curve has been steep. The implication was clear - it is the fault of the Iraqis themselves. This, however, is not the case.

In any democracy worthy of the name, if a party has 51% in parliament it gets to

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**"An under-reported, but extremely significant, fact about the elections was that they were held under a state of emergency that lasted months and that the candidates' identities had been withheld for security reasons until just before the election. This meant no public campaigning, no speeches, no basis for choosing between one candidate and another."**

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form a government. This was the case with the last US Presidential election (ignoring for the moment the issue of vote rigging). Not so in Iraq, where a two-thirds majority is required. This means that the United Iraqi Alliance, a coalition of Shiite parties, that has about 53% of the members of the Iraqi parliament is not able to form a government. It was three months after the election when a new government was finally agreed (and then only a partial one).

Thus the Iraqi democratic process has been gridlocked by this need for super-majorities, a provision imposed by the American occupiers. Why? Simply to

secure the continuation of the US occupation and the furthering of US interests by means of a neo-colonial decree. It is an anti-democratic mechanism used to thwart the will of the majority of Iraqis (who braved great danger to come out and vote).

So remember when Bush, Rice and the rest praised the elections, chastising critics for supposedly claiming that Iraqis were not ready for democracy? Well, behind the scenes they made sure that democracy was not really an option. For the Bush Junta, the Iraqis are not considered ready for any form of self-government not approved of by Washington.

Ironically, the Bush Junta's own elections in Iraq confirm Bush's own demand that Syrian troops leave Lebanon "because you cannot hold free and fair elections under foreign military occupation."

### **The ideological war**

Of all which suggests that those who seek to turn the issue away from war onto democracy are missing the point. For example, pro-war leftist David Aaronovitch states that "that, now, is all that matters. Not whether you were for or against the war, for or against Blair, for or against Bush. Are you for or against democracy in Iraq? The rest is air." ("Now it's time for the war critics to move on", The Guardian, 1/2/05) Yet the obvious reply is that the Iraqi election was not democracy. Saddam had elections. It did not make his regime democratic.

And so the elections are playing their role in the ideological war being waged to legitimatise and normalise the occupation. That you can oppose the sham of the US run elections because you favour real democracy should never be forgotten. Yes, democracy in Iraq is a noble goal but a democracy shaped by US imperial interests will hardly inspire or be a genuine democracy. Do not forget that the Iraqi National Assembly has limited powers nor that the US is well practiced in creating regimes with elected parliaments but where real power remains with the military (or itself). As long as the state bureaucracy retains control of the politicians in the interests of big business then a little formal democracy is perfectly acceptable - just like at home!

So now the Iraqis can also get the joy of electing politicians who say one thing in opposition and do the opposite once in office. They, too, can experience the kind of democracy in which they protest in their hundreds of thousands against a policy only to see their "representative" government simply ignore them. And

they too can see their representatives bend over backward ensuring corporate profits and power while speaking platitudes to the electorate.

And, of course, come our elections we were treated to moralising and guilt-tripping appeals against voter apathy with comparisons to the brave voters of Iraq. That these voters may become just as apathetic as their British counterparts when faced with lying politicians who ignore their wishes in favour of corporate and imperial power goes without comment.

### **Democracy for who?**

We had a taste of this process at work in Iraq before the election. On December 22, 2004, Iraqi Finance Minister Abdel Mahdi informed the world that Iraq wants to issue a new oil law that would open its national oil company to private foreign investment. In other words, to sell off the resource that provides 95% of all Iraqi revenues. As he explained: "I think this is very promising to the American investors and to American enterprise, certainly to oil companies."

It is doubtful most Iraqis want that. Mahdi, it should be noted, ran in the elections on the ticket of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution, the leading Shiite political party and which also belongs to the United Iraqi Alliance which Sistani instructed his followers to vote for. Such a promise made just before the election smacks of a deal to reassure the Americans, to swap Iraq's oil for political power.

The US holds the strings in Iraq. It controls the military, the money (the \$24 billion in U.S. taxpayer money allocated for the reconstruction) and the rules governing Iraq's economy. These last two are overseen by US-appointed auditors and inspector generals who sit in every Iraqi ministry with five-year terms and sweeping authority over contracts and regulations. So the economic neo-liberal reforms imposed by Bremer have been hard-coded into the new "sovereign" state. The US has announced that troops will be staying until 2006 (at least) and point-blank refused to even talk about timetables. Any Iraqi politicians will have to adjust to this reality, making a quick withdrawal of troops unlikely - regardless of popular wishes. This suggests that the will of the Iraqi people will continue be ignored in the new "democratic" Iraq.

This is not all. The new Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) will be subject to the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). How diligently the ITG will execute the bidding of Washington is uncertain. However, the dispersal of

power and the checks and balances between various branches of the government should ensure a willing puppet. For example, the judiciary will emerge as a prominent player in national politics as it is the interpreter of the TAL. The Supreme Court has the power to challenge virtually any decision that it believes to contravene the TAL.

This means that the judiciary has the ability to block legislative and executive actions of the ITG. It is the legal answer to anything the National Assembly might have to say about the occupation and the war it is waging on the people of Iraq or anything else. Who are the members of the judiciary? Article 43(b) of the Transitional Administrative Law provides the answer: "All judges sitting in their respective courts as of 1 July 2004 will continue in office thereafter, unless removed from office pursuant to this Law." In other words, the branch of government which can block the actions of the National Assembly was installed by the occupiers. All legislation, including the constitution of the Iraqi state itself, will be those acceptable to the occupying power.

### **Keeping Iraq 'occupier friendly'**

Once the Iraqi Assembly meet, the US imposed two-thirds majority rule worked its magic. After more than two months of haggling, a speaker, the presidency council and prime minister were all selected. And all were members of previous, US appointed, governments.

The Assembly Speaker is Hajim al-Hassani, the industry minister in (US appointed) Iyad Allawi's Interim Government and a member of his Iraqi List. Last year, the Iraqi Islamic Party (of which he is member) withdrew from the government to protest the US assault on Fallujah, al-Hassani refused to resign his post as industry minister and supported the US. As industry minister, he led the privatisation program for the US-appointed interim government. This included a change in Iraq's investment law, allowing foreign investors to enter the Iraqi securities market and own up to 49% of publicly listed companies.

The President is the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani. The Kurds are probably the only ethnic group in Iraq which does not hate the Americans. Indeed, the Kurdish parties oppose any timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq, as does the US. Talabani himself was also one of the rotating presidents of the (US appointed) Iraq Governing Council (IGC). After the new government was finally formed, he stated he did not think Iraq

**"So now the Iraqi's can also get the joy of electing politicians who say one thing in opposition and do the opposite once in office. They, too, can experience the kind of democracy in which they protest in their hundreds of thousands against a policy only to see their "representative" government simply ignore them. And they too can see their representatives bend over backward ensuring corporate profits and power while speaking platitudes to the electorate."**

was occupied and rejected calls for the US to leave immediately.

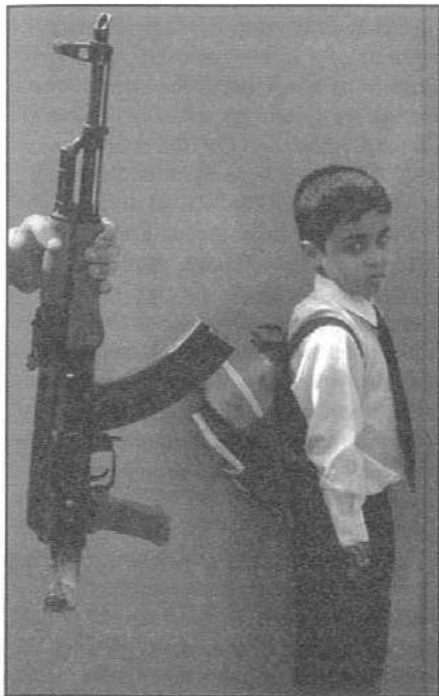
Talabani's two vice-presidents are Adel Abdul Mahdi and Ghazi al-Yawir. Mahdi was finance minister in Allawi's outgoing government while Yawar was another president of the IGC. Mahdi, incidentally, announced his support for the complete privatisation of Iraq's oil industry at the end of last year. Talabani named Ibrahim Jaafari as Iraq's new prime minister. Jaafari held the role of vice-president in the outgoing US-appointed interim regime.

So we have a reshuffling of existing (US approved) politicians, rather than a new start. The two thirds majority rule gives minority parties immense power, and given that pro-US occupation parties are in the minority, it is easy to see why the occupying powers imposed that particular rule.

So the presidency council reflects US interests and, as a consequence, so will the new "Iraqi" government. For the first task of the presidency council was to agree on the choice of prime minister, in whom executive power mainly rests. Moreover, as well as appointing the executive, the presidency council has other, more significant powers. While day-to-day legislation may be passed in the parliament by simple majority, these decisions can be vetoed by the presidency council. The parliament can push through such legislation only by mustering a two-thirds majority, which again gives considerable power to minority parties. A three-quarters majority is required to amend clauses in the TAL itself.

And so, as predicted, the US imposed two-thirds majority rule has ensured that





the new "democratic" Iraqi government is occupier friendly. The new officials all have a track record of working with (when not being appointed by) the Americans and, moreover, in favouring US economic and political goals.

### Mission Accomplished?

Even a high turnout does not change the fact that this is an illegitimate, occupier's election organised to achieve the goals of the US occupation. And what were these goals?

While the powers that be are justifying the Iraq war purely in terms of regime change, the reality is different. Given that Bush and Blair both explicitly rejected the idea that the war was about liberating the Iraqi people, it seems the height of hypocrisy to use it to retroactively justify the war. Are we expected to forget the promises that Saddam could remain in power if he disarmed? Nor should we forget that the Iraqi people are occupied, not liberated.

So Saddam may be gone, replaced by a US appointed interim PM who is a CIA agent, but that was not the proclaimed reason for the war. WMDs, the rationale which was used to justify the invasion, are quietly forgotten, as are any suggestions of a tie between Saddam and Al Qaeda or 9/11. Iraq, it is fair to say, is a base for terrorism but that is only due to the actions of the US/UK and can be discounted as a rationale. It seems ironic, in light of this, to justify the war in Iraq in terms of democracy when Bush and Blair's systematic lying to, and ignoring of, the general population showed a deep contempt for it at home.

And do not forget that other, more

believable, goals have been achieved. Access to Iraqi oil, for example, has been achieved (barring economic sabotage by insurgents). The building of military bases in Iraq has started, with up to 14 "enduring" installations being prepared to project US power into the heart of the Middle East. So Vice President Dick Cheney's Defence Policy Guidance report of 1992 has been achieved: "Our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the [Middle East] region and preserve U.S. and Western access to the region's oil." What a coincidence!

### The war continues

Ultimately, that 8 million Iraqis voted is not the measure of success. Nor will it stop the insurgency any more than any of the previous milestones (such as catching Saddam, or destroying Fallujah, or transferring "sovereignty") did. January was the third bloodiest month for the occupying forces. Will the insurgents lay down their arms? No. Will the terrorists end their campaign? No. The war Bush declared over on May 1st, 2003, will continue unabated.

Nor does it mean that the Iraqi people are free. Far from it, they are still under occupation and they know it. So when Bush said that the "world is hearing the voice of freedom from the centre of the Middle East" he was right only insofar as it was the voice of a people who want freedom from the US! Indeed, the election itself, like its result, was a victory for the voice of freedom against Bush. Yet while the Iraqis undoubtedly went to the polls to end the US occupation, the sad fact is that they have simply legitimised it. The elections were not designed to challenge US power, indeed they are a means of justifying the continuing foreign presence than providing democracy for the Iraqis.

Now, after the election, the reality is the same as it has always been: that the only institutions in Iraq with real power are the US and UK military. Any Iraqi government will lack both the power and the effective institutions to impose its will on the country (or the insurgents). The long-awaited government will almost certainly still be reliant on US and UK power to govern. So even if the Shia religious parties were to get enough seats in the assembly, their options would be limited by the fact they need US troops to both keep them and impose their decisions.

Which shows the hypocrisy of the politicians' attacks against the insurgents. Condi Rice, for example, asserted that the Iraqis want a future "based on democracy, on the vote, not on the gun." Needless to

say, democratic government is also based "on the gun." Without the means of coercion represented by the gun, it would simply be ignored. But, it will be argued, democratic state violence has the consent of the people. Yet according to a recent survey, 53% of Iraqis believe that ongoing attacks in Iraq are a legitimate form of resistance. Does support for violence make it right? Or does violence become acceptable only if the state directs it to maintaining the political and economic rule of a few over the many? Apparently.

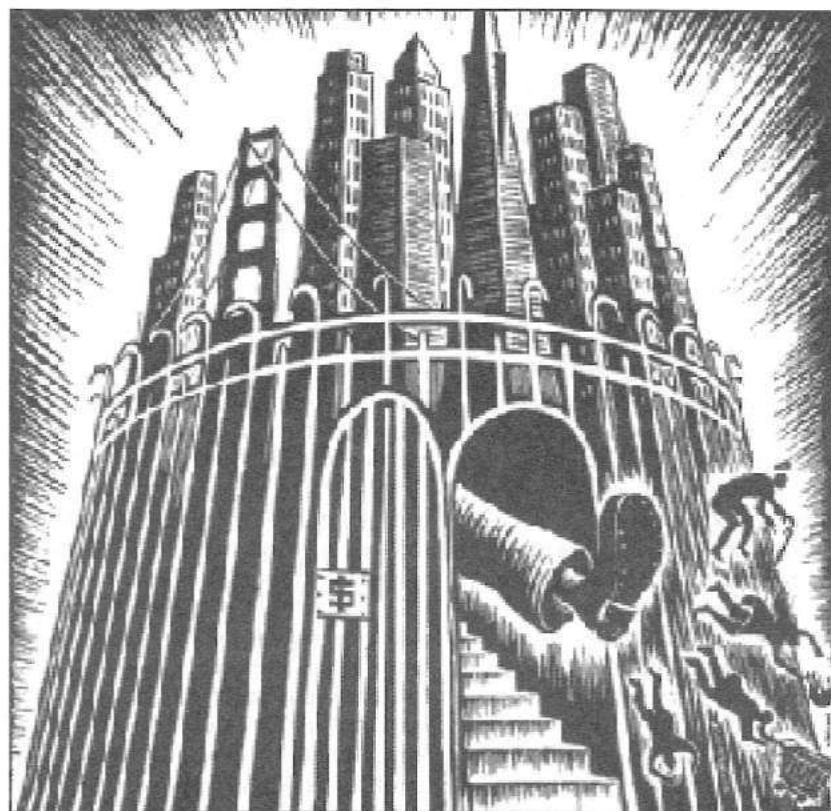
Only a systematic boycott of the election would have shown a clear opposition to the occupation and hastened its end. Sadly the concept of a boycott was hi-jacked by the extreme Islamist terrorists in Iraq. Those segments of the insurgency which target ordinary Iraqis have as little concern for them as US imperialism. Therefore, the millions of Iraqis who voted, as well as the UN electoral team and the Iraqi election commission staff, deserve our respect.

Yet this should not blind us to the political impact of the vote nor the constraints in the election and the assembly it has produced. The only elections that will ultimately matter for Iraq are those organised and supported by Iraq's people. They will be elections held without foreign occupation and without a CIA agent as president. It will take time. But the time will come and it will come in spite, not because of, the USA.

But that will not create genuine freedom, only a representative democracy. Condi Rice, like Bush, talked about "liberty" and "self-government" being "universal values." Yet representative democracy is not "self-government." It is about alienating power to a few people who then (mis)rule in your name. To call it "self-government" is nonsense. Similarly, while democratic governments tend to be less oppressive than others it does not follow that this equates to liberty. But what can you expect from politicians who routinely call foreign occupation "liberation" and who are systematically undermining human rights at home?

Freedom means a significantly different form of democracy, one which is based on mandating delegates rather than picking masters to govern in the name of a people muted by hierarchy. One that does not stop at the workplace door but rather eliminates economic autocracy (capitalism) along with political hierarchy (the state). It will be about direct democracy, the process of collectively managing joint interests, rather than alienating power to a handful of politicians, bosses and bureaucrats. In other words, libertarian socialism. □

# FORTRESS EUROPE



# A CONQUERING NAVY

## The EU as a significant international player

While rightly acknowledging segregationist tendencies within the EU and the fact that it is playing second (if second...) fiddle to the US, many underestimate its immense power and international significance.

As "the most fully elaborated and authoritative multilateral institution in modern history"<sup>1</sup>, the European Union is "the world's largest trader of goods, accounting for 19.1% of global merchandise exports and imports. The European Union is also the world's largest trader of commercial services, with 24.3% of world trade in services" (circa €300 billion)<sup>2</sup>. Together with the US and Japan, it is "home to eighty-seven of the world's top one hundred transnational firms" and they "account for 88 percent of their foreign assets". These three are also "responsible for most of the foreign direct investment that goes on in the world."<sup>3</sup> This Triad, led by the US, is still the principal collective imperialistic alignment in the present world system.

With the creation of a customs union in 1968 a common external tariff as a part of a common commercial policy (focused on relations with non-member countries) has also been established. Issues of external trade have long been the central sphere of European Commission's global influence (since it is a party during trade negotiations, subordinate to the Council of Ministers which sets guidelines). Member states have largely handed over their decision-making power (especially regarding agriculture and fisheries) to the European Union itself.<sup>4</sup>

The most important elements of EU's trade policy include the Common Customs Tariff, rules governing imports from outside the EU, as well as EU's prerogatives with regards to investigating complaints made by member states concerning alleged unfair trading practices of a particular Third Country (that country can file a complaint to the WTO in case of an unfavourable decision by the EU).

The export of vital resources (notably

petrol and natural gas) is also subject to international agreement<sup>5</sup>. All EU policies have to be integrated in the international regulatory system governed by the World Trade Organization (WTO), previously GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs). "The GATT/WTO philosophy is 'free trade good, protection bad'. As this is also the driving philosophy behind the EEC/EC/EU integrationist project, one would expect the Community/Union to be amongst the GATT/WTO's best pupils. This has not, in fact, always been the case, as the temptation for the Union ... is to pursue the alternative - the creation of a self-sufficient market behind impenetrable external borders."<sup>6</sup>

The U's protectionist mechanisms include not only tight migration controls, manipulations around the issue of "illegal" immigrants, and enormous agricultural subsidies, but also delinking their food prices from those of the world market (which is forbidden to the Third World Countries by the EU).<sup>7</sup> The Common Agricultural Policy of the EU stands as a "silent testimony" to its glaring hypocrisy.

If we could, for instance, disregard the fact that in six of the eight years from 1990 to 1997 underdeveloped countries paid out more in debt service than they received in loans (the total transfer of money from the poor South to the rich North in this period is \$77 billion!)<sup>8</sup>, the development policy of the EU, particularly the trade-related technical assistance to which it has devoted over €700 million between 1996 and 2000<sup>9</sup>, might seem less tragicomic. However, it should still be acknowledged that "the EU and its member states account for more than 50 per cent of both international development aid and humanitarian aid..."<sup>10</sup>.

The establishment of the European monetary union enhanced collective decision-making and concerted action, also decreasing the dependency on US manipulations with the dollar<sup>11</sup>. Some have even interpreted the war in Iraq primarily as a US reaction to Iraq starting to trade oil in euros in 2000, which could have easily provoked a domino-effect, with other major oil producers such as Venezuela and Russia also switching to the euro<sup>12</sup>. What seems clear is the existence of a ruling elite interested in the idea of a federalist Europe as an independent force.<sup>13</sup>

The 1992 treaty of Maastricht opened the door for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The violent break-up of Yugoslavia and a lack of coherent response by the EU indicated the weaknesses that could ultimately hinder the entire project of creating a stable European oasis of security



and guaranteed profits (admittedly, EU members were more active in peacekeeping duties afterwards). The new threats from nuclear proliferation and "non-state actors" (international mafia and terrorists), together with US unilateralism, interestingly combined in the Kosovo crisis, provided a climate conducive to stepping up the level of approach.

The Amsterdam Treaty<sup>14</sup> provided for the appointment of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (the first appointee, Javier Solana, was a former NATO general secretary who had presided over the bombing of Yugoslavia). Among other things, the Treaty empowers the EU "to carry out humanitarian aid and peacekeeping tasks (known as Petersberg tasks), to devise common strategies, general foreign policy guidelines, joint actions and common positions."<sup>15</sup> It also opened the possibility for the development of a common defence policy and joint armed forces<sup>16</sup>. Despite the "Berlin Plus" rhetoric of cooperation<sup>17</sup>, these developments are seen as a direct threat by NATO and the US<sup>18</sup>. An enlightening analysis of the draft for the EU constitution<sup>19</sup> recognises an intensified commitment to "collective security", increases in arms, "pre-emptive action" (like the new US National Security Strategy) and neo-liberal and neo-imperialist policies. It might well be true that the European project is "mired in liberal quicksand"<sup>20</sup>, but the "realist", Machiavellian stance of the major European powers should not go unnoticed either.

Yet, despite everything, common ruling class interests (real and perceived) – factors such as "the huge amount of commerce between the world's two biggest trading entities (the United States is the EU's biggest trading partner, accounting for nearly 22% of the EU's total trade)"<sup>21</sup>, the Asian challenge and general global insecurity coupled with US control over the main resources, its military and financial dominance – present a risk which keeps the EU under the watchful eye of its Big Brother. But the little brother is not so little any more<sup>22</sup>.

Dan Jakopovich

#### Footnotes

(1) Robert O. Keohane, *Sovereignty in International Society* in David Held & Anthony McGrew (ed.), *The Global Transformations Reader*, Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd, UK, 2004, p.153.

(2) EUROPA website/trade/trade issues - [www.europa.eu.int/comm/trade/genetools/faqs\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/trade/genetools/faqs_en.htm)

(3) David P. Calleo, *Rethinking Europe's Future*, Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford, 2001, p. 225.

(4) Steven P. McGiffen, *The European Union – a Critical Guide*, Pluto Press, London, 2001, p. 81.

(5) *Ibid.*, pp.83-5.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 86.

(7) Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, Zed books, London & New York, p. 30.

(8) The total transfer of money from the poor South to the rich North in this period is \$77 billion! - World Development Report 1998/9, World Bank in Wayne Ellwood, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*, New Internationalist Publications in association with Verso, Oxford & London, 2001, p. 47.

(9) EUROPA website/trade/trade issues - [www.europa.eu.int/comm/trade/genetools/faqs\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/trade/genetools/faqs_en.htm)

(10) Steven P. McGiffen, *op.cit.*, p.49.

(11) David P. Calleo, *op.cit.*, pp.330-1.

(12) Geoffrey Heard, *Eco-Economy: Economic Perspective On The War*, Scoop, 21 March 2003, [www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/H10303/S00182.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/H10303/S00182.htm)

(13) See the website of The European Round Table of Industrialists ([www.ert.be](http://www.ert.be)). It is a semi-covert pressure group which consists of about 45 CIOs (general directors) of the biggest European corporations, and basically advocates for a unified and competitive market. Its offices are right next to the European Commission in Brussels (by pure accident, of course). Every six months it also moves its offices right next to the current Presidency (again, a perplexing coincidence).

(14) See the official website - [www.europa.eu.int/abc/obj/amst/en](http://www.europa.eu.int/abc/obj/amst/en).

(15) Steven P. McGiffen, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 49.

(17) See [www.nato.int/issues/nato-nato-eu](http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-nato-eu).

(18) "Strobe Talbot, former deputy Secretary of State, said the last thing Washington wanted to see was a European defense identity 'which begins with NATO, and then away from NATO.' The risk, he told a seminar at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is of an EU defense structure that first 'duplicates the alliance and then competes with the alliance.' Mr Talbot's words...also touch America's basic ambivalence about greater European unity: that it is fine so long as it does not threaten US global pre-eminence." (Robert Cornwell, *Europe warned not to weaken NATO*, *The Independent*, October 8, 1999 in Istvan Meszaros, *Socialism or Barbarism*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2001, p. 55).

(19) Tobias Pflüger, *A military constitution for the European Union?* ([www.wri-irg.org/news/2003/eumil-en.htm](http://www.wri-irg.org/news/2003/eumil-en.htm))

(20) Samir Amin, *U.S. Imperialism, Europe, and the Middle East*, Monthly Review, November 2004, [www.monthlyreview.org/1104amin.htm](http://www.monthlyreview.org/1104amin.htm)

(21) EUROPA website, *op.cit.*

(22) On the topic of US-EU relations, especially with regards to the war in Iraq, see my article *Germany & US: Discordant Harmony*, ZNet, March 21, 2005.

*Back at Square One - continued from page 23*

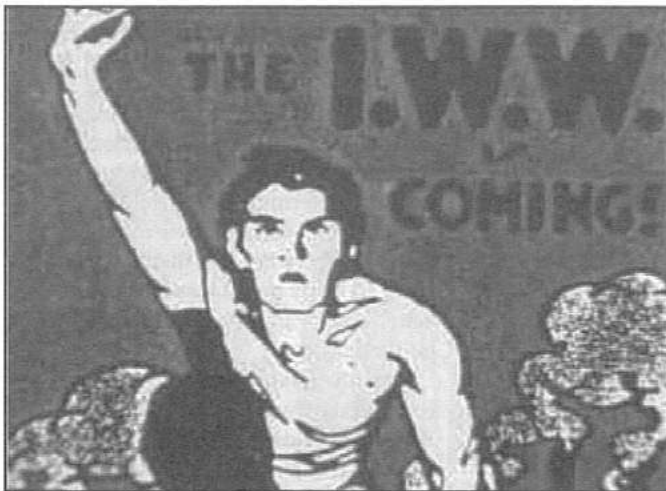
be very revolutionary in the future (or at least be a good point of discussion for revolutionary ideas). All we do know is that it will be determined by the class according to whatever their collective political experience has shown them. Oh yeah, and they might just make our lives better now by fighting for improvements in our daily lives.

The other side to building a strong revolutionary workers' movement in Britain is building a solid infrastructure of radical community groups, industrial networks, reliable methods of news distribution, an archive of working class history and a space for revolutionaries to discuss and collate ideas, tactics and experiences. Precisely because we can't instigate a heightened level of class struggle, we need to get organised so that we can effectively intervene in struggles when they do happen. We also need to create the resources necessary for working class militants to do effective outreach work.

Steps to this effect have already started to be taken. There are now quite a few radical community groups across Britain such as Haringey Solidarity Group, Colchester Solidarity Group etc. What is needed now is improved communication between these groups, so we know what campaigns or issues we're involved in and can offer support. One particularly exciting development on this front is the Community Action Gathering that took place on June 18th in East London ([www.libcom.org/cag](http://www.libcom.org/cag) for more information). The libcom website itself ([www.libcom.org](http://www.libcom.org)) is beginning to put together quite a big archive of working class history, theoretical articles and organising resources. It also offers an open newswire and discussion forums which can be used to distribute information of struggles as well as cheap web-hosting for class struggle and libertarian groups.

Of course, none of these groups are perfect (and never will be) but they can only get better when we start getting involved and offering support. Once these initiatives have been around for a while, they can form the roots and provide the resources for a new movement that orientates itself around the lives of the working class and, in turn, encourages the growth of a strong, self-active revolutionary working class movement. Told you this article would get better, didn't I? □

Political Matti



# THE IWW CENTENNIAL - One Shipyard Worker's Perspective

**Arthur J. Miller**

Come with me for a moment up upon an old rusted steel ship. Up the gangway to the main deck, then into the main house and down the steps to the engine room. Then off to the port side of the engines and down into the bilge over the top of a small opening to a ballast tank. Yesterday we had removed all the nuts from the lid of the tank. This morning a marine chemist tested the air of the tank and certified that it was safe for workers.

Before going into the tank we take a padlock and attach it through one of the holes in the lid so that no one can bolt the lid back on to the tank. We do this because there are no hole watches. We climb down into the tank, which is about four feet deep. On our hands and

knees we to crawl through the tank and through the lightning holes that divide up the tank structurally. Where pipes go through the lightning holes, getting through them is hard and some people just can't do it because they panic when they squeeze through the tight hole. We reach the piping and valve we must remove with our little bucket tools.

Our job is to remove the ballast valves and any section of the ballast piping that is rusted away. Once we finish this tank we have three more ballast tanks to do the same job in.

The tank is all rusted out and so are the pipes, and the bolts and the nuts connecting the pipes to the valves. First we

disconnect the reach rod that is attached to the top of the valve. We take out a wrench to fit as a backup for the cap side of the bolt so that the bolt does not move as we take off the nut, and another wrench for the nut side. One of us holds the backup wrench while the other works the nut side of the bolt. The bolts are all rusted out and will not come loose by hand so we have to use a five-pound maul to beat them loose. Because of the rust we must beat the nuts all the way off. We then must disconnect the tail suction piece off the valve. And then remove the valve off the rest of the piping. We inspect the inside of the piping and find that it is rusted out and then we cut the piping out with a power saw until we reach the forward bulkhead. We cut the pipe into sections that are as long as we can make them and still be able get them out of the hole. These sections of pipe are used to fabricate new pipes in the shop. When the new pipes are ready we must drag them down into the tank along with the new valve and fit the system back together and have a welder weld out the joints connecting the sections of pipe.

My hands begin to get stiff from all the hammering and holding the wrench that sends a shock wave through my hands when I hit the wrench with the maul. By the end of the day my hands are so stiff I cannot make a fist. The heavy vibration from the power saw adds to the stiffness. The stiffness comes from many years of such work, hour after hour of abuse of my hands, year after year. I have had surgery on both my hands and that did relieve the pain I was having, but both of my hands are permanently damaged.

It is hot down in the tank and the longer we work the hotter it gets. Soon we are drenched in sweat. Hour after hour of beating nuts off and pulling old pipes and valves loose can

make it seem like the workday will never end. Because the ship is set to sail soon we are working 12-hour days until the job is done. Then they kick us out the damn door like we were nothing but trash until there is another pipefitting hell to endure. Welcome to my reality of the working class experience.

What does the IWW mean to me as an industrial worker? It means the only hope for real industrial change. What do I think of the IWW's Centennial? One hundred years of workers like me resisting our bosses and trying to make a decent life and decent working conditions for all workers.

From the belly of ships to the grease pits of fast food joints, we labor for the benefit of a few. From the dark shafts of coalmines to the confined cubicles of office workers, our conditions serve to maximize profit. From the long-haul truck drivers to the janitors of office buildings, we are dehumanized as lowly servants of the rich. From the hot steel furnaces to the farms where our food is grown, our human existence only has value in our production. From every job from all the lands of the world, we suffer as a class to satisfy the greed of a few. Must this forever be the doomed fate of working people? No! We can as a class organize together and seize the tools of production and create a society where there is honor and respect for labor; where our conditions are set by us the workers who do the work. Our toil will no longer benefit a few parasites but rather where we will labor for the well-being of all. That is the hope the IWW brings to the working class even in the hardest of times.

I received a request to write something on the subject of the IWW's Centennial and why the IWW is still relevant today. They knew I was a longtime Wobbly and they



wanted my perspective on the subject. My first thought was to tell them that there have been many things written on the subject by intellectuals. When I thought about which ones I could recommend, it hit me, maybe I should write on the subject because it would be different than most other writings on the subject and maybe something different is needed.

Many historians and advocates of various political philosophies will write or talk about the IWW's first hundred years in many different ways. The words they write will often be guided by their own personal agendas. More often than not, such writings will lack a true understanding of the IWW, because the IWW was founded and existed for 100 years based upon the one thing they have a hard time understanding and acknowledging: the direct experiences of rank- and-file workers who sought to organize for a better life. Somewhere in the madness of political and intellectual interpretations of the IWW there needs to be other voices

**"Every thing that we do to improve our way of life involves a struggle with the class of folks who live off our labor. The business unions may help us gain more nickels and dimes from our employers, but the Wobblies want more than just a few more crumbs off the industrial table, we want peace that will only come from an end to class conflict."**

heard: that of the simple workers who made up the real history of the IWW.

I am not a political philosopher or a historian from the intelligentsia; I am a simple shipyard worker and a member of the IWW for 35 years. This writing seeks to give a different perspective on the IWW's first 100 years, one that is grounded in the reality of the working class experience.

The IWW turns 100 years old this year. Who could ever image such a thing? But when you think about it, who could ever doubt this birthday would come about? For there is something about the IWW that will live on as long as working people are exploited by the employing class. Like Joe Hill, the Wobblies will never die.

There are some who will tell you that the days of the Wobblies have long since past, some even say that class no longer matters. But those folks just don't understand the reality of working for a living. It does not matter if you are slinging burgers at a fast food joint or digging coal down in some deep dark mine, or if you lived in 1905 or 2005, "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common"; these words are as true today as they were one hundred years when they were first written by workers in the Preamble of the IWW.

It is not that us working folks are looking for a fight; the class struggle is forced upon us. Every day of our lives we struggle in order to survive in this world. Every thing that we do to improve our way of life involves a struggle with the class of folks who live off our labor. The business

unions may help us gain more nickels and dimes from our employers, but the Wobblies want more than just a few more crumbs off the industrial table, we want peace that will only come from an end to class conflict. That is why our Preamble also says:

**"It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall be overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."**

Some times I get asked why I continue to be a Wobbly year after year? It is true that on many jobs I have work the shop is organized by other unions. I have been a member of five AFL-CIO business unions with their limited vision and their top down form of organization. Being a Wobbly keeps me grounded in the concepts of what a union should stand for and how a real union should function. Though I have been active in other unions I paid dues to, still there ain't no shame or contradiction in being a dual unionist.

I have lived in the underbelly of this world, that which they do not show you on TV or teach you about in the schools. As I grew up I was placed in youth institutions and Foster Homes and learned that this system cares not for the youth of the poor. All they want is blind obedience and not a word about any suffering endured. I saw how our society keeps people of color down in a lower-class level and uses its doctrine of "might-makes-right" to keep them there. At the age of 17 I had to quit



school and work full-time for my survival. Finishing high school was not an option for me if I wanted to eat.

I have worked a string of jobs that I would not care to see anyone be forced to endure. It is not work itself that I rebel against, it is the dehumanizing conditions of labor. I worked assembly lines, as a farm worker, washing dishes until I landed a job in the hard rock mining industry. At Bunker Hill Mining Company as a zincstripper, I saw just how far the workers could be subjected to abuse by their employers, fifty-six percent of the Bunker Hill workers over the years have come down with kidney disease due to lead poisoning, including myself, and hundreds of children who lived in the area were poisoned as well. Five miles down the road at the Sunshine Mine, the murder of ninety-one miners was called an industrial accident. At that point I decided I wanted to learn a trade so I became a marine pipefitter. Since 1974 I have worked in fourteen shipyards on the west, east and gulf coasts. When I could not find work in shipyards I worked other jobs, roughneck on a wildcat oilrig, long haul and port truck driver and as an environmental technician at some nasty toxic sites and oil spills. This is where my Wobbly perspective comes from, not out of some damn book.

As a young Wobbly my mentors were old-time Wobblies who were still around, people like Gilbert Mers, Blackie Vanughan, Fred Hansen, Carl and Fanny Keller, Paul Ware, Walter Westman, Frank Cedervall, Fred Thompson and others. From them I learned what being a Wobbly was all about and I learned Wobbly history that you will not find in any books. The first thing they taught me was that there is only one class of Wobblies and no matter if you joined years ago or you joined today, every Wobbly is a Wobbly, there are no second class Wobblies. And that every worker no matter how they labor, as long as they did not labor against their fellow workers like scabs and cops, were just as much a worker as any other worker. Though these old-timers may not be in the history books, to me they were the real working class heroes of the IWW because they never gave up on the class struggle.

Contrary to what many have written about the IWW, the IWW was not created out of a coming together of different political philosophies. The IWW came about as a direct result of the direct experiences of working people who tried to organize labor unions.

It has always been the experience of working people that as individuals or as tiny individual organizations little could be gained. It was only when working people united together and supported each other in universal solidarity did we working folks ever stand a chance against the employing class.

It was found that the old craft style of unionism only had a limited effect and only for a limited number of workers. In craft unionism the workers on the same job were divide into different unions and many workers were left unorganized. Out of that experience came the concept of industrial unionism where all the workers in an industry were organized into one union. Unions such as the Western Federation of Miners and the American Railroad Union pioneered the idea of industrial unionism here in America and those experiences inspired workers to create the industrial unionism of the IWW.

Even with industrial unionism advancing the power of organized labor, workers quickly found that single-shop or single-area organizing had its limitations and that those limitations became even clearer as the companies of the employing class became larger and went well beyond limited geographic areas. Out of that realization came the idea of creating national and international industrial unions and the concepts of industrial organizing and industrial action.

It was realized that there needed to be an organization that united the industrial unions and that would directly seek to organize those that have yet to be organized. This was necessary in order to build a labor movement that could stand up to the organized power of the employing class. Attempts were made to create a new type of labor organization, such as the American Labor Union, which the Western Federation of Miners tried to create.

The direct experiences of labor struggles showed that the existing economic arrangement meant continuous class conflict and limited gains for working people. Nowhere in the creation of our world was it written in stone that one small class of people had the divine right to own the means of production within society and that the many, the working class, was doomed to forever toil for that same class of owners. This economic arrangement made the employing class very rich and condemned those that did all the real work of society to poverty and

**"When I could not find work in shipyards I worked other jobs, roughneck on a wildcat oilrig, long haul and port truck driver and as an environmental technician at some nasty toxic sites and oil spills. This is where my Wobbly perspective comes from, not out of some damn book."**

faced with forever being in a state of class conflict in order to improve their lives and to protect the improvements they have gained. Not wanting to leave future generations an inheritance of poverty and class conflict, many good unionists came to believe that the organized labor movement needed to do more than just gain more crumbs from the bosses table of riches, but that also the labor movement had the responsibility to change the economic system and that the only economic system that could create industrial peace was one where the producers controlled their production.

In 1905 veteran unionists gathered together to try to create an organization based upon their collective union experience that would included those things they had come to realize a labor movement needed: universal working class solidarity, industrial unionism, industrial organizing and action, an organization that would seek to organize all workers and an organization that would seek the end of class conflict by changing the control of the economic system to those who produce giving them control over their production. The organization they created was the Industrial Workers of the World. In each of the decades for one-hundred years Wobblies have struggled and organized working people. Though the intellectual historians like to focus on a few different Wobbly struggles and so-called leaders and to analyze them and declare them successes or failures, that is





not the true history of the IWW. The IWW, like the class struggle of which it is a part of, cannot be looked at in the isolation of a few events or individuals. The class struggle is a long journey down the road of liberation and each step down that road adds experience and knowledge making further steps possible. As long as working people struggle against their exploitation no part of their struggles is a failure because, in the long run, all of their struggles together is what will help us working people reach our collective goals. Each stage the IWW went through in its one-hundred years was an important stage for our organization. Even when we reached our lowest point of membership in the mid-to-late 1950s, those Wobblies who remained did an important job of keeping the organization and our ideas alive for the next generation of Wobblies.

Each Wobbly struggle is important. From the massive grand Lawrence Textile Strike in 1912, all the way to the smallest fast-food strike, each worker is important and every struggle is worth fighting. We do not say "an injury to many is an injury to all", rather we say "an injury to one is an injury to all" All the IWW struggles throughout our one-hundred years have been the result of the efforts of rank-and-file Wobblies and that has not been what the history books tell you. They say that our struggles have been the result of a few leaders. The history of the rank-and-file Wobblies is the history that has yet to be written.

A few years ago I was asked to speak at a

college where the film "The Wobblies" was being shown. After the film a college labor history professor spoke for 45 minutes about the IWW. He did not understand our history, which has been made by all our members. He did not understand that the IWW is not about a handful of historical events but rather the IWW is a long journey down the road of class struggle. He seemed to think we are just moved by ideology rather than the collective working class experiences. Though he knew words out of books on the IWW, he did not know or understand the IWW. I guess I was like some museum piece, a real live Wobbly, when he was done ranting his nonsense, he told me I had five minutes to speak. How could I explain the truth of the IWW in that time? So I did not use up that five minutes of

token time. Rather I got up there and said, "Labor historians are to workers as anthropologists are to Indians. Don't believe a word that they say." And as I looked out at the shocked expressions upon the faces of everyone there, I walked out. I ain't no damn museum piece nor anyone's token!

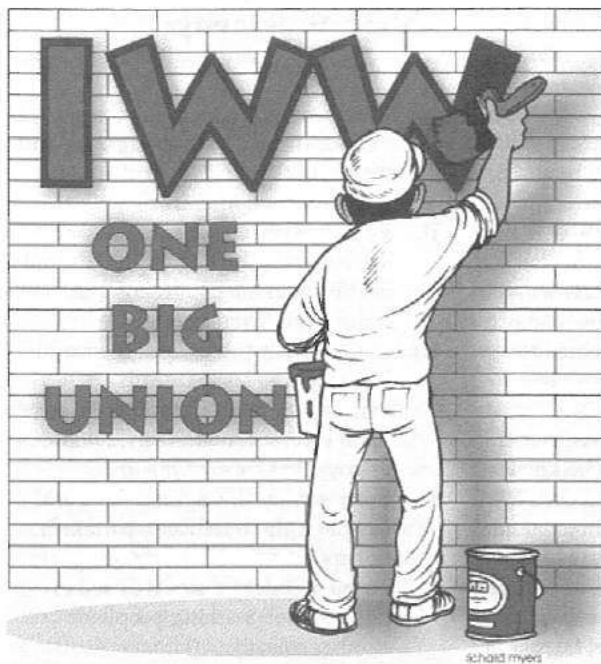
The IWW believes in the idea of building a One Big Union of the working class. But in practice Wobblies have supported and do support the struggles of all workers against their bosses no matter what organization they may belong to, and we have tried to educate working people to the great idea of universal working class solidarity. In the reality of day-to-day struggle the One Big Union has also come to mean the organized solidarity of the working class.

Universal working class solidarity is something that you will not find much of in the business unions. It is not uncommon for business unions to scab on each other by crossing picket lines or handling scab goods or even doing the work that striking workers would have done. Though a few unions may have gained a little by scabbing on other unions, the labor movement has greatly suffered because of it. Based on my experiences with business unions and the Wobbly tradition, below I have written up what I believe the Principles of Universal Labor Solidarity should include.

## Principles of Universal Labor Solidarity:

- I. Every worker on every job throughout the world has a right to organize with their sister and fellow workers in their common interests.
- II. Every worker throughout the world has a right to a living wage, safe and healthy working conditions and health care coverage.
- III. Every worker throughout the world has a right to labor free of harassment and discrimination based upon race, sex, nationality, religion, or any other form of bigotry.
- IV. Every worker throughout the world has the right to refuse to partake in or support wars where working people of one country are used to fight and kill working people of another country.
- V. Every worker throughout the world has the right and responsibility to protect the environment of this world.
- VI. Every worker throughout the world has the right to withhold their labor as the means advance the above principles.
- VII. No worker throughout the world should ever be a scab.
  - A. No worker should ever cross the picket line of striking workers.
  - B. No worker should ever supply a shop on strike with goods or services.
  - C. No worker should ever handle scab goods.
  - D. No worker should ever consume scab goods.
  - E. No worker should ever do the work that striking workers would have done if they were not on strike.
  - F. When ever workers are faced with government repression because of their right to organize and strike then all workers have the right to withhold their labor from the companies and industries profiting from that repression and a universal boycott should be in place of all goods going to that country, coming from that country and on the companies profiting from the repression in that country.
  - G. Every strike or job action is a class action and should be support with direct solidarity unless that action violates the Principles of Universal Labor Solidarity.

Wobblies have always understood that resistance to the employing class and the governments that work directly in their



## Paint the town red. Join the Industrial Workers of the World!

interests takes many different forms. Though the purpose of the IWW is creating a revolutionary industrial organization, still the Wobblies have actively supported other forms of resistance and at times even gave their lives doing so. Wobblies fought in the Mexican Revolution, and fought the fascists in Spain. Wobblies have been active in such social movements as: free speech, antiwar, civil rights, anti-apartheid, and defense of the environment. Wobblies resisted segregation laws in the South of the U.S. years before the renewed Civil Rights Movement started in the 1950's. Wobblies have actively supported indigenous people's resistance. Wobblies have actively worked in support of political prisoners from Mooney-Billings and Sacco-Vanzetti, from the old days to Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal of today. Wherever you find resistance you are sure to find some Wobblies. There were many Wobblies in the streets of Seattle during the 1999 protests against the WTO and many Wobblies working to save the redwood old-growth trees. .

Though the history books seem to think the IWW was and is a U.S. labor organization, this is not true. The Industrial Workers of the World, as its name suggests, is an organization of workers around the world. IWW organizations have existed on every

continent on the face of the earth and have had major organizing and industrial action in such places as: Chile, South Africa, Mexico, Canada and Australia, to name a few countries. The IWW understands that the employing class and their corporations go far beyond national borders and thus the organized class struggle must be international in scope.

In today's world where the employing class is far greater organized

internationally than ever before and where it is clear that the international capitalists seeks complete control over the world's natural resources, production and marketing, the international working class must organize in order to be able to withstand the onslaught of international corporate totalitarianism. In my view, only the organizational ideas of the IWW has such plan for the international organization of the working class that is needed in the modern world.

We no longer have the luxury of passing off our responsibility of actively seeking change to the mythical someone else that will do it for us. I strongly believe that the capitalists are blinded by their greed and they will pursue their quest for greater wealth until our planet is nothing more than a wasteland and unable sustain our continued existence upon it. We must organize and take action for our very survival. Industry must be changed, not only in who controls, but also to make it safe for our environment. Though there are environmental activists who have carried on important resistance, but it is, in my view, the organized working class that needs to make the industrial change. First, because the economic system must change, for there ain't no way to reform the greed of capitalism. And because the workers are at the point of production where the changes must take place. The time has come where class responsibility

is not just to your sisters and fellow workers but also a responsibility to the earth we dwell upon. Class responsibility is not something we can pass off on others, it is the responsibility of each and every worker.

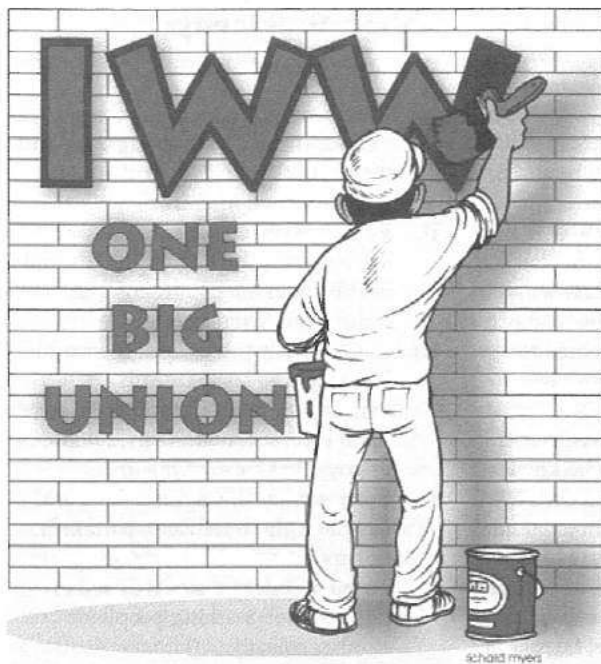
There are those that see the working class as nothing more than a mass entity. The working class is a great diversity of individuals and that diversity is our strength and not our weakness, for every worker brings to our organization skills, ideas, knowledge and a creative spirit that is unique to them. That is one of the things that has made the IWW survive for so long, for we not only believe in the uniqueness of each worker, that has been the backbone of our organization, that also is why we seek you out fellow worker to join us. We need your uniqueness with us for that will make us even stronger.

From 1905 to 2005 the Wobblies always struggled for day-to-day improvements in the conditions of working people while at the same time educating and organizing workers for the long-term class struggle that they always hoped would eventually realize industrial peace and well-being for all working people. Through the years there have been many different political ideologies calling for this, that and some other thing, I place my hope in the ideas of the IWW. The IWW ain't an idealistic utopia that sounds beautiful while getting there seems next to impossible. Nor is the IWW a top down controlled plan by those who believe they can save us all; but who will save us from the saviors? The IWW is a simple idea of how to organize working people together by working people themselves in order to make day-to-day improvements in their working lives and to organize the class power of working people so that when the organized power of working people is greater than the organized power of the employing class, then the final battle of the class war will be fought and all the bosses and capitalism will be removed like a parasitic cancer growth from the host body of human society.

So that my friends is my perspective on the IWW based upon the working class experience that I have lived. I wish all Wobblies a happy centennial birthday and I feel honored to have been with you through the years and with thoughts of past and present Wobblies that have made up our first one-hundred years, it has been an honor to be a Wobbly. □

Arthur J. Miller  
Ship Builder's IU320-IWW, USA





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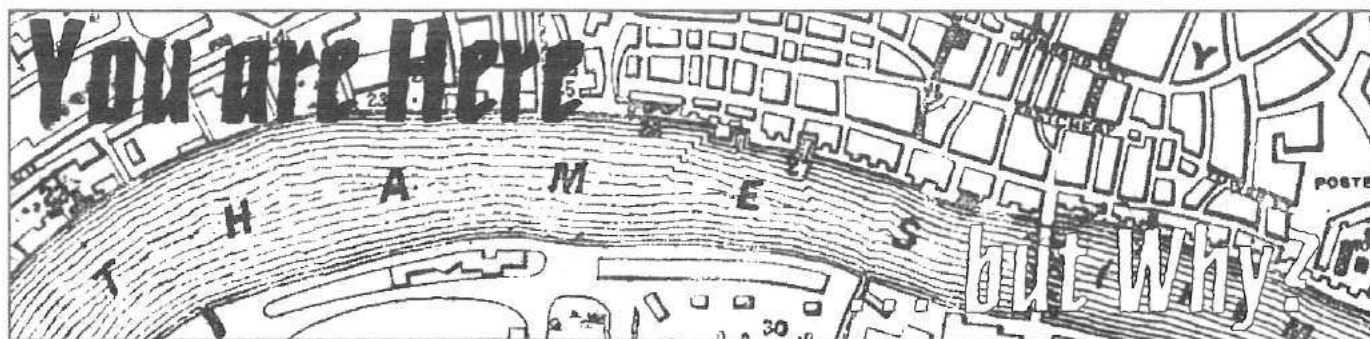
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**Why Are We Here?** One of life's big questions. Maybe we'll never now. Doesn't mean people aren't out there trying to answer it. The historical folk from the South London Radical History Group, in alliance with 56a Info Shop, organised a Festival of Mapping in June 2005, with the title "You Are Here, But Why?", featuring an exhibition of radical maps, meetings, events, walks, gigs and talks.

The musty librarians of the 56a Archive have been collecting people's hand-drawn, home-produced, altered and transformed maps for ages, and we put on a fine exhibition at 56a. There were many wildly different maps on show - maps of the radical history of different areas of London, people's personal maps of the things that helped them survive the last winter, photo guides to the changes in the environment of South London, the tortuous route to free food in skips in US cities, a squat map of Hackney; as well as charts of London's radical scenes (enthusiastically added to by all comers!) - to name but a few.

Many of the maps were interactive, inviting contributions from people dropping in to see the show, and the exhibition grew and changed as the month went on.

As well as the exhibition, a large number of events took place, including historical walks around the radical and esoteric past, present and future of Southwark, Kennington Park, a map text game in the surrounding streets (resoundingly won by the only player!), a South London Radical History Group discussion about the nature of history and why we bother with it, psychogeographical bunfights, a talk on the free food growing in the area. The events were generally well attended by a wide variety of people.

Personal favourites included the Kennington Common ramble

with chalking actions against enclosers of the Common (past and present) and the walk between the ancient well sites of Camberwell and Ladywell. Other projects included the Squat Sector, where willing volunteers were handed areas of the A to Z to survey for empty property to be put on the squatters' empties list, a precari-Punx chart of the crap jobs we're doing to survive, and a CD-Rom of the past present and possible futures of the local Grosvenor Estate, made by residents. The Map exhibition is available for showing at other spaces, (and open for people to add more of their own radical, personal, and altered maps). So if you think you have a space where it could be shown get in touch. The South London Radical History Group is currently on holiday, but a talk on the subversive history of cycling is planned for September, and more events are in the pipeline. Our publishing arm, Past Tense, also has several pamphlets available on South London Radical History:

**Deptford Fun City.** The radical history and music of Deptford and New Cross.

**Down With The Fences.** Accounts of the resistance to the enclosure of openspaces in South London.

**The Mayor of Garratt.** The satirical rituals of 18th century mock elections in the tiny hamlet of Garratt.

**The Corruganza Boxmakers Strike.** A short history of this 1908 women's strike.

Available soon:

**Subterranean Southwark.** An exhausting survey of everything underground in the Southwark area.

Several other publications are planned.

If you are interested in the South London Radical History Group, Past Tense publications, or the map exhibition, write to Past Tense/SLRHG, c/o 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton St, London SE17, or email [mudlark@macunlimited.net](mailto:mudlark@macunlimited.net)

## CENTRE OF ATTENTION

It's not every day that a squatted social space celebrates the one year anniversary of its occupation. With countless arts exhibitions, film screenings, performances, meetings, workshops and projects, RampArts in North East London has come to mean a lot to people and groups all over the world. To mark the milestone, it was time to party like only squatters can! I went along to find out how Ramparts survives.

I arrived just in time to catch ferocious Riot Grrrl foursome, Gertrude thrashing with surgical precision, stirring a crowd composed of familiar-face anarchists, textbook punks and an occasional spec of misplaced-looking party people, every conceivable group was being well represented. The usually spacious main hall was now a mass of sweating and churning, kicking and jumping, as Gertrude lead singer Zoe Gilmoure wielded the bow to an alien-looking electric cello. Gertrude's thrashing, guitar-driven, post-riot grrrl rock is powered by real skill on all instruments and they're not afraid to have fun with serious, political issues, just like the centre itself.

Ben and Selene are the duo that first saw potential in the vacant house on Rampart Street. They recall that evening one year ago. "We checked out a load of empty pubs which naturally come with public event space place and private accommodation space. On the evening we were ready to open our chosen building, a friend came and told us about a building on Rampart Street. We took a look and decided it was perfect. We opened the first house that night. Interestingly, the pub we were looking at is still empty". But sustaining a social space without profit motive or ongoing support from organisations for this long hasn't been easy. Ben and Selene warn about taking social centres like RampArts for granted, "Of course we never imagined we'd be here for a year and being around that long generates its own problems. We have had a drop off in involvement as new projects



# If you are not cowards, kill me!

**Louise Michel**



**Nic Maclellan (ed.)**

**Rebel Lives Series**

**Ocean Press ISBN: 187617576**

January 9th marked the 100th anniversary of Louise Michel's death. Michel was simply amazing, revolution personified. Known as "The Red Virgin," she played an important role in the creation of the Paris Commune by leading the people of Montmartre to stop the government seizing the guns of the National Guard. She fought on the barricades during the final days of revolt when not tending the wounded. Escaping the mass slaughter of 30,000 Parisians after

the Commune was defeated, she was arrested, tried and exiled to New Caledonia along with thousands of other rebels. There, she supported the indigenous people in their revolt against French imperialism. Finally returning to France when the government pardoned the remaining Communards, she took an active part in the anarchist movement.

In 1883, she hoisted the black flag and led a protest against unemployment across Paris and so this flag, previously associated with French labour struggles ("the black flag is the flag of strikes and the flag of those who are hungry," as she put it), became the classic anarchist symbol. A participant in many struggles, she was arrested numerous times and always remained defiant of the authorities she so clearly held in utter contempt. Anarchist and feminist, Michel fought for equality for all and for women's self-emancipation ("we women must take our place without begging for it"). She died at the age of 74 and, by a fitting coincidence, she was buried before a crowd of 120,000 people the same day as the 1905 Russian Revolution started.

This book will introduce this magnificent rebel to a new generation of radicals. It contains a selection of writings by Michel (including her defiant speech when on trial after the Commune - "If you are not cowards, kill me!"). These are by far the best thing about the book. It also has a couple of good selections from Emma Goldman who was profoundly influenced by Michel. The first is from "Living My Life" and the second is a letter about claims that Michel was a lesbian. It is nice to know that Goldman was not a homophobe and her anarchism extended to those of different sexualities. There is also a good account by Sheila Rowbotham of how the women in the Commune were radicalised by their struggles and, as a consequence, how they also had to fight the sexism of their male comrades. Howard Zinn, the American

radical historian, has a short piece on the "New Left" which is concise and to the point (i.e. that history proved Bakunin, not Marx, right). A tribute poem (Viro Major) by her friend Victor Hugo is also included, as are the words of "the Internationale" (written by anarchist Commune Eugene Pottier).

Unfortunately, however, rather than fill the book with as many first hand accounts of Michel's life and struggles as possible, we get subjected to accounts of the Paris Commune by the likes of Marx and Lenin. This hardly seems appropriate, given that these people spent some time fighting anarchists and their ideas. In the case of Lenin, this is doubly objectionable for, as well as repressing the Russian anarchists much more brutally than the French state did Michel, he also presided over the slaughter of the Kronstadt Commune (ironically, nearly 50 years to the day Michel faced the troops in Paris). Lenin's regime confirmed Michel's prediction, uttered when she along with other anarchists were expelled from the Marxist Second International, that the Marxists "will be worse than anyone he replaces [in power] because the Marxists claim infallibility and practice excommunication."

It is significant that while the editor is happy to account Michel's actions, her politics are downplayed. Given that this series is meant to present both the rebel's ideas along with their lives this is a serious flaw. The editor appears somewhat incredulously states that Michel's "emotional ties were with the anarchist movement" but that is hardly surprising as (four pages previously) it is admitted that she "adopted anarchist politics" in exile. What anarchism actually stands for, however, goes unmentioned. This is surely a significant omission (although this may be a blessing in disguise given how ignorant Marxists generally are about our ideas!).

For example, it is mentioned in the ⇨

are invariably more exciting for people to put energy into, many of the people and groups that use the space simply come for their event and contribute nothing beyond that, so we often feel like venue managers".

Anyone can come to one of RampArts' Monday meetings to discuss events or find out how they can help. Looking around the packed main hall, I knew these meetings are deserted by comparison. Tonight's event had all the excitement of a venue with none of the bad attitude, as volunteers helped keep everyone fed and tipsy, collected donations at the door and even rocked on stage.

Getrude's sweat-eliciting set came to an end. With only minutes before DJane Sexyrubbersole took up artfully caressing a steady stream of Drum n'Bass vinyl, I asked the Rampart duo about the overflowing turnout. "Attendance of events doesn't usually translate into support - our spring clean was a classic example. Sadly we find we get most hands-on support and volunteers from overseas visitors who we accommodate during their stay. The bands have been great, they perform for nothing and do it purely to support the space and whatever campaign is putting on a benefit. I guess the space also has something of a reputation now as we get bands contact us asking to play!"

But RampArts is about much more than rocking for good causes. I climbed up to the building's roof garden to take a break from the crowd and think about social spaces and RampArts. Ben and Selene are always kind and welcoming and with industrial-sized kitchen, huge social and exhibition space, screening room, hacklabs, and even a radio station, not to mention various ongoing projects, RampArts offers any individual or group limitless opportunities to get involved, even if it's sometimes to swing a broom.. No social space can survive without community support and encouragement, and there's no place more open to all than Ramparts. Check out [ramparts.co.nr](http://ramparts.co.nr) for findwhat's going on or find out more. With few places like it, let's keep RampArts alive for many years to come.

Alex Shapiro

introduction that Michel fully supported the statement by arrested anarchists made in 1883 and that she reproduced it in full in her memoirs. The editor fails to do likewise. Surely such a concise summary of what Michel believed in should warrant inclusion? Instead, we get two selections from Lenin! And given that Michel became an anarchist after the commune, it would make sense to reproduce, say, Kropotkin's critique of that revolution than to include people whose analysis Michel obviously rejected or even extracts from her own work on that event. Sadly, instead we are subjected to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Paul Foot all praising the "workers' government"! Given that Michel recognised the "monstrous manner in which power transforms men" and advocated ending the "crimes that power commits" by "spreading power out to the entire human race," quoting defenders of the centralisation of power into the hands of a few party leaders is hardly doing her memory justice. That Bakunin and Kropotkin are included in this section is of little comfort given the shortness of their pieces.

This downplaying of anarchism is hardly unique to this book, though. Socialist Worker, for example, reproduced an (edited) version of a 1979 talk by Paul Foot last year about Michel entitled "The woman who built barricades" (issue 1922, 9/10/04). That she was an anarchist was somehow forgotten, although the fact that she "joined the International Working Men's Association, which was set up by Karl Marx and others" was not. This falsehood is repeated by the editor, who makes the

**"The Marxist biases and its corresponding historical revisionism are annoying, but should not detract the reader from finding out about the life of this amazing woman."**

more modest claim that Marx "helped found" that organisation. It is true that Marx was present at the founding meeting of the International but he was not involved in organising the meeting or the process that led to it. That honour goes to British and (especially) French trade unionists, both of whom Marx spent a lot of time fighting once he was a member of the General Council.

The editor goes out of his way to present a Marxist spin to the Commune. He notes that "members of Marx's First International" were elected to the Commune's Council (taking nearly a fifth of the seats) and then immediately adds "while others were followers of the anarchist

leader Pierre-Joseph Proudhon." This produces an utterly false impression that Marxists made up a fifth of the Commune while libertarians were not members of the International. The International in Paris was made up of libertarians in the main and many of these were elected to the Commune (indeed, the French trade unionists who helped found the organisation were followers of Proudhon!). The author's comment can only be explained as a feeble attempt to imply a greater role of Marxists in the Commune than there actually was.

For the record, there wasn't one and if there had been then the Commune would never have happened (Marx opposed uprisings in response to the Prussian victory as "a desperate folly"). If you are going to subject your readers to extracts by Marx, it may have been useful to mention this. Or the fact that Marx initially supported the Prussians in the Franco-Prussian war, arguing that the French needed a "thrashing" and that a German victory would "shift the centre of gravity of West European labour movements from France to Germany" which would "mean likewise the dominance of our theory over that of Proudhon"! That Marx later considered the Commune as "merely the rising of a town under exceptional conditions" and that "the majority of the Commune was in no sense socialist, nor could it be" could also be considered relevant by some.

And, just to state the obvious, it was not, as the editor states, "Karl Marx's communist International." Marx neither owned it (although he acted like he did most times!) nor did it expound his theories. When Marx finally succeeded in imposing his ideas onto it, to combat the rising influence of the anarchists around Bakunin, he only succeeded in killing it off. Perhaps we should be grateful, as this ensured that the First International did not share the ignominious fate of the Second International which did espouse and practice his theories on "political action". So while the editor is right to note that the 1881 international anarchist congress failed to produce a viable organisation, it was considered as a continuance of the First International rather than creating a "Black International" to "match Karl Marx's communist First International."

All this may come from a problem with the Marxist appropriation of the Commune, namely how it singularly fails to fit into that ideology's paradigm. Perhaps this explains the editor's apparent unwillingness to discuss anarchism and, consequently, why Michel embraced it so wholeheartedly? If the editor had bothered to include, say, the Commune's declaration to the French

people it would become pretty clear that the ideas that inspired much of the Commune were derived from Proudhon's federalism.

Proudhon, of course, popularised many of the ideas then held by French workers. The term "mutualism" he used to describe his ideas was derived, like many of those ideas themselves, from the workers in Lyon who had raised the Black Flag in insurrection in the 1830s. While the editor does include three declarations by Parisian workers in the section on women during the Commune, the book is sadly lacking in such voices from below. Rather than allow the Communards to speak for themselves, in terms of reproducing their key declarations and statements, the editor prefers to inflict Lenin onto the reader (although it is amusing to read Lenin singing the praises of "the Internationale," a "proletarian" anthem written by a Communard follower of Proudhon, i.e. a "petty bourgeois" anarchist!).

This, perhaps, is unsurprising. For if the Commune was allowed to speak for itself, its decentralised, federalist vision of a socialism based on self-managed workers' associations would show how alien mainstream Marxism is from it. That both Proudhon and Bakunin predicted key aspects of the Commune (such as its federalism, the mandating and instant recall of delegates, its self-managed workplaces, and so forth) should not come as a surprise. Nor should the fact that Marx had in 1866 dismissed the French workers as being "corrupted" by "Proudhonist" ideas, "particularly those of Paris, who as workers in luxury trades are strongly attached, without knowing it, to the old rubbish."

I should stress that I am not suggesting that these comments by the editor are the produce of malice or sectarianism. I am sure they think they are being fair to their subject and celebrating a rebel life. They probably really do think of it as "Marx's First International." I would put it down to the ignorance that affects so many Marxists about anarchism and their own tradition as well as the usual bias in favour of history from above when it involves Marxist leaders. Thus Marx is considered more important than the Communards themselves or the working people who actually founded the First International just as the shenanigans of the Bolshevik leadership are the focus of their accounts of the Russian Revolution rather than what was happening in the streets and workplaces (particularly when the latter clashed with the former!).

The Marxist biases and corresponding historical revisionism are annoying, but should not detract the reader from finding out about the life of this amazing woman.



I once gave a copy of this book to a friend to read on his journey home. He was so engrossed by it he missed his stop and had to spend an hour in a small station waiting for the next train to North Wales.

Fortunately, he had a good book to read!

This little classic is essential reading for any anarchist or person interested in anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism. Written in 1937, at the behest of Emma Goldman, it was an attempt to explain the ideas inspiring the Spanish social revolution and resistance to Franco.

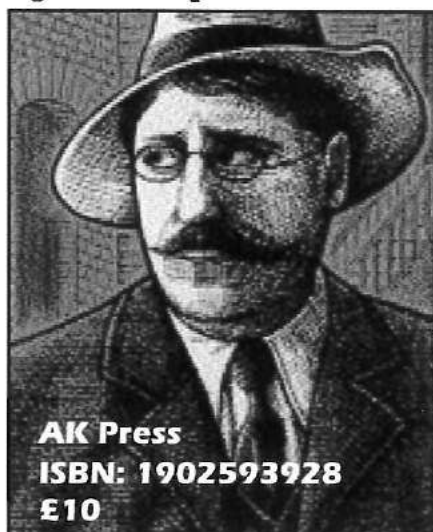
A German gentile, Rocker played a leading role in the Jewish labour movement in London's East End before the First World War. After the war he returned to Germany to play a key role in the anarcho-syndicalist movement which blossomed there during the revolutionary events of that time. He took part in founding the syndicalist International Workers Association and wrote its aims and principles (it is a shame that these were not included in this edition). As such, his book was informed by experience and practice.

Rocker's work has five chapters. The first chapter covers the basic ideas and development of anarchism, stressing the openness and flexibility of anarchist theory in its pursuit of a society fit for humans. As Rocker puts it: "For the anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all the powers, capacities, and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account." He covers all the famous anarchist thinkers, including Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin.

Rocker then moves on to a history of the international workers' movement, from the creation of capitalism to the modern working class and its struggles and organisation. He then moves on to forerunners of syndicalism, including the early British trade union movement and in those sections of the First International influenced by Bakunin. At the core of this discussion is the idea of workers' councils as both a means of fighting capitalism and as the framework of the new society which will replace it. Rocker then summarises the strategies, organisations and tactics anarcho-syndicalism embraced at the time (such as direct action, sabotage and the general strike). Lastly, he discusses the historical fate of syndicalist movements across the world, starting with revolutionary syndicalism in France.

Rocker's short introduction destroys most of the common misconceptions about anarchism and syndicalism. His description of how a syndicalist union is run refutes claims that anarchism rejects organisation. His account of the revolution in Catalonia

## Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice by Rudolf Rocker



destroys the claim that anarchism cannot be applied to a "complex" (i.e. industrial) society. His account of anarchist ideas and their roots in the ideas and practice of the libertarian wing of the First International effectively refutes any claim that anarchism and syndicalism are fundamentally different ideas or movements.

Rocker also effectively refutes mainstream Marxism. His account of the development of the labour movement and the disastrous effects of parliamentarianism and centralism on it should be mandatory reading for any would-be radical. If a radical urges you to vote in the next election, show them his devastating summation of the results of socialists doing so in the past (the fate of the German Greens in the 1980s would not have surprised Rocker in the slightest). As far as state socialism goes, Rocker uses the example of Leninism to show the impossibility of using centralised state power to achieve socialism. As he continually stresses, only the direct participation of the working classes in constructing socialism can make it work. Rocker contrasts the essential libertarian nature of genuine workers' councils to the reality of Lenin's and Stalin's Russia.

This edition also contains Rocker's appendix on the state of the syndicalist movement after the Second World War together with an excellent preface by Noam Chomsky (who is a big fan of Rocker's work) and an informative introduction by Nicholas Walter to the book and its history.

The book is not perfect, of course. Some may find it dated. Most obviously, there is no discussion of ecology, sexism or racism. His concentration on the labour movement could lead the casual reader to think that work was the main, if not only, pre-occupation of anarcho-syndicalism. Similarly, while he is right to stress that self-managed workers organisations will be the building block of a libertarian socialist economy, he fails to stress that the nature and structure of both work and industry will be transformed after a revolution. Perhaps he simply took it for granted that workers would be unlikely to simply do things the same way as capitalists used to and that workplaces which serve no purpose in a free society would be closed down or put to other, better, uses under workers' self-management? Either way, it is an omission that should not be made today.

Sadly, Rocker fails to discuss the necessity of community organisations to complement workplace ones. Nor is there any attempt to address the tendency of syndicalist unions to adjust themselves to the system they are fighting and become reformist. Given that numerous revolutionary unions had done this (most famously, the French CGT) it seems strange that Rocker fails to discuss it. Any account of anarcho-syndicalism really needs to address this issue if it is to convince other revolutionary anarchists of its merits. The current trade unions bear little resemblance to the syndicalist unions he outlines which suggests that the labour movement is not inherently revolutionary and, so there is a need for libertarians to organise as libertarians to influence it.

Similarly, while he is rightly proud of the revolutionary accomplishments of the CNT and FAI during the Spanish Civil War, he fails to account for their disastrous decision to collaborate with the Republican state until Franco was defeated. Such a silence, while perhaps an understandable unwillingness to criticise comrades in difficult circumstances, would need to be addressed by any new primer on anarcho-syndicalism.

Saying all that should not detract from the importance of this work. The ideas and tactics Rocker advocates are still fresh and valid today - and not only in the labour movement. Direct action, for example, has been successfully applied by numerous groups of people in many different locations, as has the idea of self-managed organisations run from the bottom-up.

To conclude, Rocker presents anarchist thought in a clear, compassionate, and contagious manner. It is enlightening and inspiring and should be considered essential reading for anyone seeking an alternative to capitalism which is based on liberty, equality and solidarity.



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