

Revolutionary portraits

Anatoli Zhelezniakov

We continue our series Revolutionary Portraits on the lives of those women and men, who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Anatoli Grigorievich Zhelezniakov was a young sailor serving on a minelayer based at the naval base of Kronstadt when the rule of the Tsar was overthrown in Russia in February 1917. He was already an anarchist, subscribing to anarchist communist ideas as put forward by people like Kropotkin. He and fifty other sailors went to the aid of the anarchists in Moscow who had occupied the Durnovo villa, which had been owned by the governor of that city. They had converted it into a place for reading and discussion, with the gardens turned into a children's playground. It became a centre of anarchist agitation and the new Provisional Government tried to close it down. When some of its occupants seized the printing plant of a right wing Moscow newspaper the government ordered the anarchists to be evicted.

Zhelezniakov and the others joined the anarchists barricaded in the villa. After a government attack on the villa, in which an anarchist worker was shot dead, Zhelezniakov was arrested and sentenced to 14 years hard labour.

Escape

A few weeks later, he managed to escape from the "republican prison" as one anarchist paper called it. He restarted his activities and organised a mass demonstration of Kronstadt sailors outside the US embassy to protest against the death sentence imposed on the working class activist Tom Mooney, framed on perjured evidence and on the threatened extradition to California of the anarchist Alexander Berkman, whom the authorities tried to implicate on the same evidence.

He was elected delegate to the Second Congress of Soviets by the crew of the minelayer on 25 October 1917. That night he and a contingent of sailors took part in the storming of the Winter Palace that led to the collapse of the Provisional Government.

He was then at the head of the detachment that guarded the Tauride Palace where the newly formed Constituent Assembly was to hold its sessions. As an anarchist, Zhelezniakov was passionately opposed to all forms of capitalist democracy, and during the first day of the life of the Constituent Assembly he marched in, pronounced the words "The Guard is tired" and dispersed the Assembly for good.

It was ironic that this move by a libertarian and anti-parliamentarian was to lead to the rise to power of the Bolsheviks. Zhelezniakov saw the ending of the Constituent Assembly as a constructive move, coinciding with the development of soviets and factory committees that would take lead to the complete self-organisation of the masses. To defend the Revolution he then fought as a commander of a flotilla and then of an armoured train, in the Red Army. He fought against the reactionary White generals Krasnov and Denikin, and against the Don Cossacks of Ataman Kaledin. Then Trotsky began reorganising the Red Army. The egalitarian methods that had prevailed within it up to then, were replaced by the introduction of Tsarist officers in positions of importance and the ending of the mass meetings and the introduction of a strict hierarchy. Zhelezniakov protested strongly against this, as did many others. For this he was outlawed by the Bolsheviks, like many other anarchists.

Refusal

The leading Bolshevik Sverdlov tried to persuade him to renounce his positions on the Red Army, and offered him an



important position. Zhelezniakov refused this overture, leaving for the South and Odessa, where he resumed a military campaign against the Whites. Again, the following year, 1919, the Bolsheviks repeated their offer. This time, because Zhelezniakov perceived the situation as critical, he accepted and became a commander of the armoured train campaign against Denikin, who put a reward of 400,000 roubles on his head. He fought on until he was killed by an artillery shell from Denikin's forces, dying at the age of just 24.

The Bolsheviks, who gave him a state funeral in Moscow and erected a statue to him in Kronstadt, immediately turned him into a hero. If he had lived, he no doubt would have been imprisoned or shot by the Bolsheviks, as they did to so many anarchists in the Ukraine and to so many Kronstadt sailors in 1921. Indeed, they obscured the fact that he was an anarchist, even inventing the lie that he had joined the Bolshevik Party. But as he said to the anarchist Volin, not long before his death:

"Whatever may happen to me, and whatever they may say of me, know well that I am an anarchist, that I fight as one, and that whatever my fate, I will die an anarchist."

ORGANISE! FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

ISSUE 55

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SAVAGE IDEAS?



INSIDE:

Kropotkin.
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Mental Health.
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MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published twice a year in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to publish articles that fall within the political scope of our Aims and Principles. Having said that, agreement with our A&Ps does not mean that there is no more room for debate. The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective view of the Anarchist Federation. This is, for example, true of the article, Land and Ecology. Others, like the Esperanto and Mental Health articles are obviously intended to provoke discussion and make readers stop and think for a moment. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

Once again, we have included a number of articles from people outside the AF. These include a major article on Kropotkin, an anarchist from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and an article on the US anarchist scene. We hope that others will take the opportunity to contribute articles that meet the broad editorial objectives of *Organise!* If you would like to contribute, but are unsure how to do so, then get in touch first.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in October. Articles and letters for inclusion should be sent to us by July 31st.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: AF, c/o Box 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if articles could be sent either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles and letters can be emailed to us at: anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

What goes in *Organise!*: *Organise!* hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the articles and nobody else. If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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Organise! index: A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues No 14-No 43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

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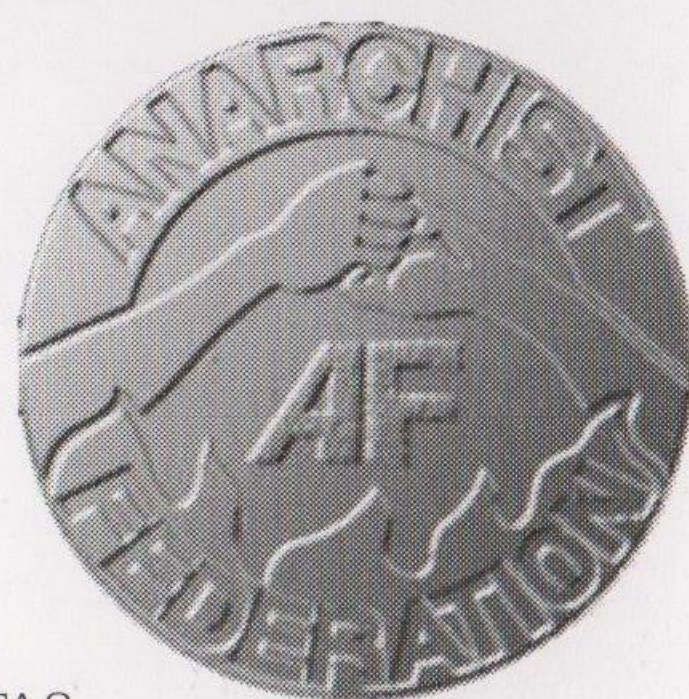
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Organise! back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE. Issues 1-26, 28, 30-36 & 42 are sold out.

Issue 27: LA Riots' Yugoslavia, Malcolm X

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Issue 37: Pornography, Booze, cigs and dope, Moral panics

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Issue 51: GM Foods, Who owns the land, War in Kosovo, Ireland — the 'Peace' Process

Issue 52: War in Kosovo, Roots of our movement, Land and Freedom, East Timor

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Issue 54: Civil war in Colombia, Humans and Animals, Giving up Activism, Dissent

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Some comments & observations

Organise! editors' comment:

This article is written by Ronald Young. He is a prisoner in the USA and is the editor of a magazine Chain Reaction. The article arrived just too late for the last issue of Organise! and was actually written prior to the events of S26. Obviously then, the article reflects Ronald's own views and not those of the AF. We do, however, find his views and analysis of interest and wish to share them with our readers. Anyone who wishes to do so can write to him at the address at the end.

The American anarchist movement is once again at an historic crossroads. One hundred years ago it was at its height of popularity only to be crushed by authoritarian 'red scare' tactics and war hysteria. Today the anarchist movement is once again gaining in popularity, not just in America but across the globe. And once again, history is attempting to repeat itself as elements both within and without seek to destroy anarchism before it has a chance to reestablish itself among the working class of the world.

The forces outside of the anarchist movement that seek to destroy it are fairly obvious for the most part. It is the insidious counter-revolutionary forces residing 'inside' the anarchist movement that has the greatest potential for diverting us from our primary goal of agitating for world social revolution. It is these forces which are the main focus of this commentary.

Primitivists

The primitivists advocate the infantile notion that we can just throw away all technology and return to a 'wild' state of existence. One of their tenets is the silly idea that humanity should abandon the cities and move back to the hinterlands. If I'm not mistaken, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge attempted to do this in Cambodia, resulting in two million or more deaths. Besides the possible cost in human lives from such a scheme, can you imagine the environmental devastation resulting from the six billion inhabitants of earth all defecating in the wilderness without the beneficial 'technology' of treatment facilities to process the billions of tons of waste? What do the primitivists intend to do with it all, recycle it into organic farming operations? I can think of no better way to transmit untold numbers of deadly pathogens among the population than to use untreated human waste as a crop fertilizer. If I'm missing something here, please, somebody enlighten me and I will stand corrected.

It would be a horrendous act of stupidity for humanity to just blindly abandon all forms of technology, transforming ourselves back into the presumably 'feral' creatures we once were. Taken to an extreme, we would have to get rid of every contrivance created since the dawn of humanity. It's obvious that much of the primitivist dogma is derived from Luddism and the radical environmentalism of groups such as Earth First! and they are attempting to use anarchism as the vehicle to advance their agenda.

I'm the first to agree that anarchism must contain a critique of the inter-relationship we have with the environment and ways to best protect it, ensuring the survivability of the human species as well as the diverse fauna and flora of the planet. But it would be contrary to anarchist principles to adopt an 'earth first' ideology that places 'saving the earth' above saving humanity. The earth isn't a conscious being that cares whether or not it is 'saved'. Only humans have the conscious capacity to care about the future of the environment — best viewed as what might be considered the selfish act of 'saving our own skins'. If humanity wishes to continue inhabiting this planet, we can do so only if the environment remains healthy enough to sustain us. However, the environmental extremists who would disregard human suffering, in favour of the planet do not belong in an anarchist movement whose fundamental goal is the betterment of the human condition. Such elitists must be roundly repudiated.



Also related to the primitivists are the Animal Liberation Front and its various offspring. It is admirable that humans have evolved to the point where they actually care about the rights of animals. But I for one (here I go stepping on some more toes) believe it is quite absurd to give animals 'equal rights' to those of humans. Yes, we must do all that we can to eliminate cruelty to animals and provide them with humane, dignified living conditions. But I stop short of demanding an all-out ban on the human consumption of meat, though I admit that most poultry, dairy, cattle and hog operations practice inhumane and environmentally destructive methods of production which should be seriously scrutinised.

To move to the world envisioned by primitivists would be to live in a land of disease and death, not one of health and happiness, as these well-meaning but misguided souls would have us believe.

PPWC, cross-class movements and creeping liberalism

Moving on to my next subject of contention, I want to make some comments and observations concerning a group called the Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC) founded by Ali Khalid Abdullah. Ali claims to be an anarchist, yet his PPWC likes to consider itself

all-inclusive of various liberals, progressives and an array of native American and black nationalist movements.

Ali is very articulate in his anti-capitalist critique and I agree with many of the points he makes. He also appears to be doing an excellent job in organising numerous chapters of PPWC. But some of Ali's writings are punctuated with references and support for the New Afrikan Movement. This movement appears to embrace the ideas of separatism and nationalism, two ideas which I believe run counter to the principles embraced by most anarchist communists. Let me make one thing perfectly clear. I do believe that the struggle waged by various oppressed racial and ethnic groups against capitalism may require them to form separate organisations at various times to address their special circumstances. But these organisations must also recognise that in order for the social revolution to be successful, all ethnic and racial groups will at some point need to form integrated coalitions whose aim is to achieve a worldwide revolution that ultimately puts an end to all divisions within the international working class — whatever those divisions may be.

You may or may not have seen a recent article of Ali's entitled "Why aren't there more anarchists of color?" Ali, who himself is black, doesn't offer any definitive answers to this question other than to chastise the anarchist movement for being too white and living in communities disconnected from people of colour. Perhaps there is some merit to this, but I believe the reasons are slightly more complicated than the simplistic notion that anarchists aren't doing enough to reach out to people of colour. And we will only begin to address the problem when we move away from simplistic excuses and begin a serious analysis of the situation. There are anarchist groups here in the States which I know are involved in black and Latino communities. Unfortunately, Ali wasn't very specific in just what elements of the anarchist movement he was addressing, other than one mention of

The ruling class uses the fear of unemployment and deprivation to play off working class groups against each other.

an Oregon group's failure to specifically mention racial oppression in its literature.

There are no doubt many people of colour who perceive the anarchist movement as generally being a white movement and who may be skeptical as to whether or not anarchist groups will be receptive to addressing the issues of racial and ethnic exploitation in addition to the issue of economic exploitation. These are serious reservations which must be overcome by providing a thorough analysis of capitalism and showing that its exploitative nature of one group (the ruling class) dominating another (the working class) manifests itself in all aspects of society, including race relations. The ruling class uses the fear of unemployment and deprivation to play off various working class groups against one another. It is this division that keeps the ruling class in power. This is the message we need to be sending to all members of the international working class.

To me, Ali is hinting at the notion that anarchists must embrace nationalist and cross-class movements simply because they may contain an anti-racist or 'liberation' dimension. The anarchist movement must be dedicated to eliminating racism, but it must do so within the context of agitating for revolutionary anarchism communism. It is detrimental to the overall goal of social revolution to focus on single issues, without placing them within the wider context of a complete anarchist critique of capitalism. It will be equally devastating for anarchists to wander into the quagmire of nationalist politics.

We must support all people's rights to self-defence against exploitative forces, but we must not support nationalist tendencies that fall short of embracing the idea of an international working class and worldwide social revolution. It's perhaps possible that some social revolutionary movements may first appear having nationalist tendencies but have as their goal international working class solidarity. To garner support from anarchists, these groups must make it clear that it's their overall objective to link-up with other revolutionary movements for the complete global overthrow of the capitalist system and establishment of a worldwide libertarian-egalitarian society free of artificial borders.

Ali makes a valid point in his article when he says anarchists must be actively involved in communities of colour and the struggle against police brutality and racial profiling. However, when it comes to being involved in any sort of mass demonstrations, anarchists must be watchful about who we are aligning ourselves with and what are their motives. Case in point: the movement against racial profiling by the police doesn't necessarily agitate for the complete dismantling of the State and its coercive police forces that in reality oppress us all, though some groups may be more oppressed by the police apparatus than others. The goal of the liberal reformists in this case is to make police oppression more equitable. It's not the repressive methods of the police, per se, that these groups find appalling so much as the 'selective' use of those methods.

The American anarchist movement, in particular, has not been very discerning of these sometimes subtle, yet fundamental, differences anarchists have with other social movements. We must be careful about marching in every band simply because it opposes police brutality or racial profiling. Left unchecked, this creeping infiltration of single-issue reformism will eventually turn anarchist agitational efforts into a mishmash of watered-down liberalism. It will have the effect of destroying the

social revolution while still in its embryonic stage.

While we may be anxious to increase the ranks of anarchists, let's not be so blind and gullible as to allow just any old thing to be passed off as anarchism simply because it addresses a social wrong. Let us not be fearful that our criticism of reformism will be viewed as politically incorrect or cause a reduction in our numbers. Yes, anarchists must fight for better conditions today. But you are aware, just as I am, that reforms achieved today can easily be taken away tomorrow. Reforms are a quick fix — a stop-gap measure, if you will. But they also have the tendency to act as safety valves, giving renewed life to the exploitative forces we are working so hard to destroy. So we must stand our ground, not losing sight of our ultimate revolutionary goals or allowing the anarchist movement to be co-opted by reformists. The anarchist movement has no need for liberals and reformists; we need people who are dedicated to international working class solidarity and the complete overthrow of capitalism and the State. We need people who have thrown off the shackles of believing that either can be reformed and made friendlier to the working class.

I don't advocate that we agitate purely in the abstract without getting involved in concrete direct actions. The point I make, which I hope is clear, is that anarchists must always operate within the realm of achieving a social revolution for the betterment of the working class and thus all of humanity, not merely reacting to each provocation from the State in a way that diverts our scarce resources from the business we need to be about — achieving anarchy.

Part of the problem is that various anarchist groups want to be seen as socially active and not just sitting around sipping on a cold brew discussing theory. And it's absolutely imperative that anarchists become active in the social affairs of our respective communities. There's nothing wrong with agitating at the grassroots level provided we stay

focused on the big picture. We must agitate for anarchism and attack the problems we face using the principles of anarchism as our guide. Anarchists must be careful that we don't find ourselves advocating for 'equality of oppression', instead of the abolition of oppression. It appears that in many instances anarchists are doing just that, though they may not be fully conscious of the fact because they are still carrying baggage from their pre-revolutionary class struggle days of liberalism. It's time to toss that baggage overboard so we are unimpeded in our journey to achieving the social revolution.

'Anarchist chic'

The anarchist movement is experiencing a rekindled interest among the masses, especially among the younger generations. Anarchism's hope for success lies in its ability to attract young people who are truly interested in attaining working class consciousness and maturing in their understanding of anarchist communism and its critique of capitalist society. But there is also a danger to the anarchist movement from those persons who are simply interested in being 'anarchist chic'. They think it's cool to wear black, mask-up for street demonstrations,

There's nothing wrong with spontaneity but organisation is also necessary.

destroy corporate property and spray paint circle-A's (and they are right to think it's cool), but aren't firmly grounded in the principles of anarchism.

Then there are those anarchists who take the concept of anti-authoritarianism to the extreme notion that we must be 'disorganised' and move from one demonstration to the next without any sense of direction. Each affinity group just

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'doing their own thing' isn't going to win anarchists the social revolution. There's nothing wrong with spontaneity but organisation is also necessary. Yes, it's true that anarchists believe in autonomy and free association. But anarchists also believe in the idea of federation and working class solidarity. If we can't get our act together at the small scale we are

It will take a federated, 'organised' effort to win the revolution.

currently operating, how can we hope to achieve world revolution and create a system of distribution for the planet's six billion inhabitants?

This doesn't mean that every act of every group must always be scrutinised by every other group and voted on, as some libertarian socialists have recently commented. But there should be a continuity and overall purpose to our actions that contributes to our ultimate goal of world revolution. And when it comes to coordinating our efforts on a larger scale we will meet with utter failure without an organisational structure.

I embrace the concept of affinity groups and local autonomy. Small intimate groups know best the needs and nuances of their communities, and also reduce the possibility of infiltration by counter-revolutionaries.

But it will take a federated, 'organised' effort to win the revolution. To quote Alexander Berkman, "Any one who tells you that anarchists don't believe in organisation is talking nonsense. Organisation is everything and everything is organisation" (*The ABC of Anarchism*). We must formulate a cohesive methodology, if you will, that takes the anarchist movement from a series of disconnected events and random acts of defence, and moves us toward a proactive, offensive posture.

Instead of waiting for a meeting of the capitalists, at which we demonstrate, blockade and riot, it's

time to carry out our own events. While we're taking it to the streets we must also agitate and organise for the mother of all direct actions — the global general strike, which will be the defining moment that brings capitalism and the State to its knees. Anarchist must also prepare to defend the revolution against acts of violence by the State's police and military forces in attempts to break the strike.

While a general strike on a global scale seems fanciful at the present time, it is toward such a culminating future event that all current direct actions should converge. The problem, as things now stand, is that between J18 N30, A16, May Day 2000, etc., there is too much lag time where passions are allowed to cool. The momentum is not being carried over from one action to the next. When we have the world's attention we must seize that opportunity and not allow a kcooling off period where the movement ends up floundering.

And while I'm on the subject of direct actions and street demonstrations, I'd like to say a couple of things about the upcoming S26 demonstrations in Prague. It has been reported that the protesters are likely to face an army of 11,000 police backed by 5,000 military personnel. This is a prime example of how the oppressed can easily become the oppressor. Apparently Czech President Vaclav Havel has forgotten about the days when he was an outlaw in the Charter 77 Movement, but has remembered remarkably well the tactics of oppression used by the invading Soviet forces during the Prague Spring of 1968. Czech police kicked and beat with truncheons May Day demonstrators and were in Washington DC on A16 to get first-hand training in American methods of repression.

This is how 'democracy' is being enforced by the capitalist powers. The authorities make much of the fact that street demonstrations and rioting are not 'democratic' methods for redressing grievances against the State, but fail to also mention that the global financial and corporate

institutions which are backed by the police powers of the respective capitalist states are neither popularly elected or supported by the majority of the people. They are nothing but dictatorships ruling the world through the iron fist of brutal repression.

Conclusion

The world is once again awakening to anarchism. A golden opportunity lies before us, which may not happen again for another hundred years, if ever. We can squander the moment or seize it and make this century and this millennium the age of anarchism. We must be willing to be critical of those people who claim anarchy in name only. The winnowing process must begin to separate the wheat from the chaff — to separate the cultists and the faddists from the revolutionaries who are in this for the long haul of achieving the social revolution.

Anarchists must not allow the reformists and cross-class movements to co-opt the growing anticapitalist movement. We must do all that we can to inflame the passions of the working class in favour of anarchism.

Anarchists must rise above the idiotic notion that to focus, organise and guide our movement is somehow lowering ourselves to becoming Leninists or authoritarians. Yes, we must guard against vanguardism in its strictest sense, but also not be afraid to challenge the notion that to act in an organised, unified and concerted effort is somehow selling out our anarchist ideals. It's not.

I don't claim to hold all the answers. There is much I still need to learn but I also hope that I will be able to make some positive contributions as to how to get where we need to go. For the time being I present these comments and observations to you so that they may be critiqued as to whether or not I'm moving in the proper direction or merely suffering from an extremely hot Texas summer.

Forward to anarchist communism

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The land and ecology

Scientific fact proclaims the existence of an ecology of which we are a part. No system of ethics or morality, except the diseased mythologies of fascism, can justify human existence in the present if humanity fails to exist in the future. Capitalism will either destroy humanity by destroying its ecological niche or it will destroy humanity by changing it. From these three statements comes an inescapable conclusion: that the class war is also a war of ecological survival.

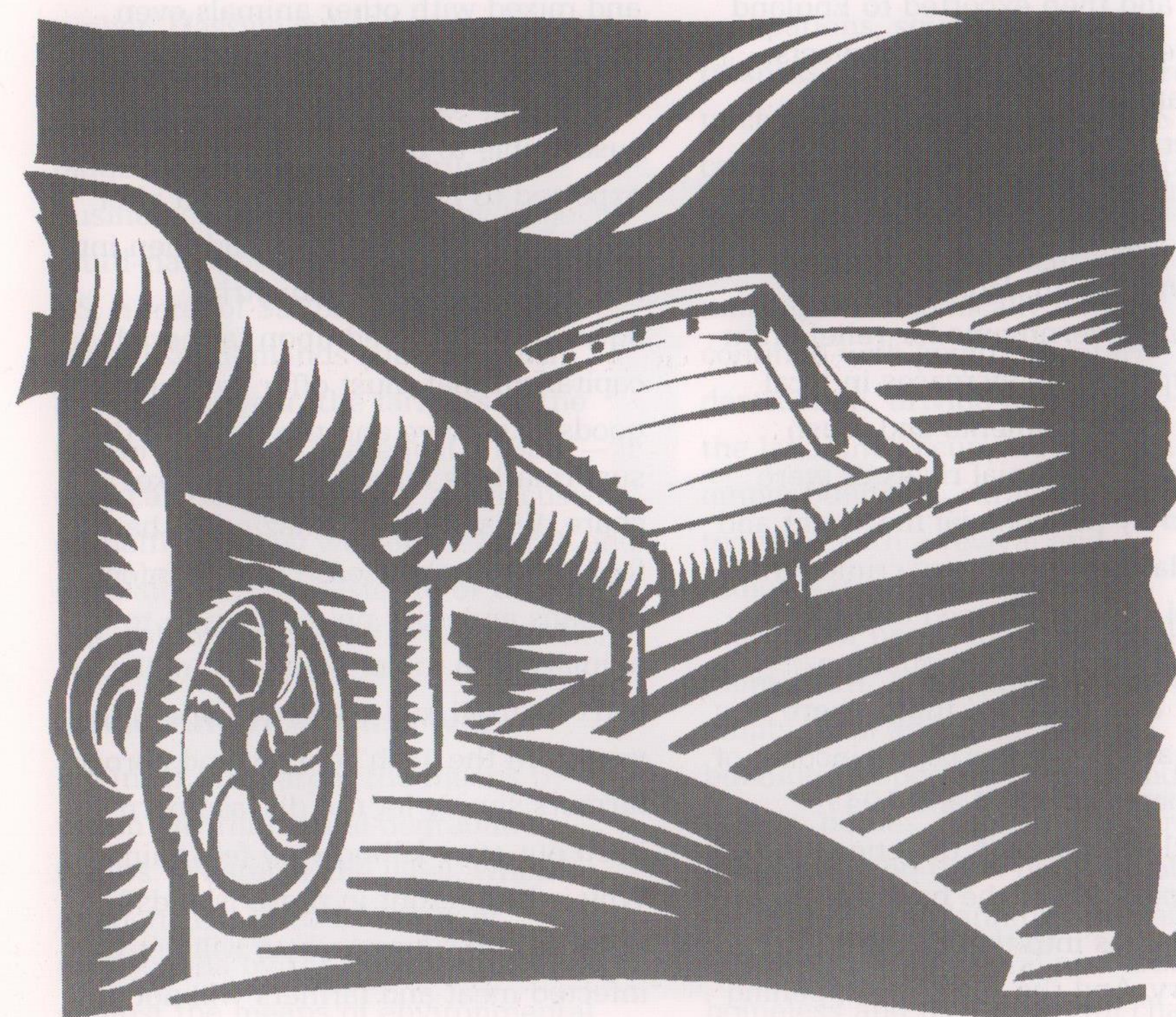
Are we the problem?

Of course working class cultures created or maintained by capitalism are part of the problem. As previous articles in *Organise!* have shown, some members of the working class enjoy wantonly destroying the environment, whether shooters and hunters, trail-bikers or off-road drivers. We consume our environment in the same way and for the same reasons we consume capitalism's goods. We appear happy to see mountains quarried for stone and the holes turned into landfill, forests planted and felled to feed our craving for newsprint, furniture and packaging. We sometimes side with the rural owning class against our best interests. Two-thirds of Scottish rural households have an income below the poverty line, yet continue to defer to the local ruling class. We grub up hedges, spray pesticides or let useful land lie fallow because someone pays us to do it. That who we are is a social construct created by capitalism to suit its needs, not ours, is the cause of this false consciousness and revolutionary consciousness the solution. No people at any time, in any place have truly "walked light on the land". We have all inflicted ourselves upon the land and the

ecology it is part of as much as our greed, our desires and our technological capacity have allowed. If these impacts were historically relatively small, so what you could ask? It is today and tomorrow that matters. We have used as much of the world's resources since 1950 as the whole of the human race did in its entire existence up to that point. Capitalism's point of no return has already been reached; it will die or be radically changed. How many of us will die in the process is the question.

A new Holocaust of the ecologies

Capitalism has created the Spectacle to seduce us, it has appropriated all the planet's resources and built a vast machinery of control, including states, governments, armies, death-squads, laws, judges, policemen, prisons, gulags, advertising, schools, socialisation, madhouses and the whole process of production and consumption, in order to protect and extend that grand larceny. And to be precise, by capitalism we mean capitalists, real people running real governments and corporations, in huge mansions, wielding vast and shadowy powers. People with great wealth and no ethics, people for whom personal aggrandizement expressed in profit, status or authority is too powerful an opium. The effect of this is the wholesale destruction of the planet's biological and social ecologies, the mass holocaust of the poor, in which disasters are only the most visible events in an unrelenting carnage of wars, starvation, pandemics, crippling disease, ignorance, riot and pogrom. A jungle cleared, a shanty bulldozed, a golf course built on sacred land, farms drowned beneath a reservoir, chemical spills into water systems, toxins into the air from urban incinerators. These are not environmental events alone, they are social and economic events, they are battles lost in a class war, if the working class is those who must endlessly produce and yet have no say over what is produced and how. Every year, 900m die of hunger in a world even the despised UN says could support 14bn people. Is this just drought and famine, environmental events? Or is it because



people have been cleared from the land, forced to work for pennies, droughts caused by massive dams or to fill the swimming pools and water the gardens of the rich?

The environment was and is an area of working class struggle because it is we who suffer most from environmental degradation and expropriation of land, water and clean air. Boycotts of dam projects, nuclear power stations, forest clearances, heavy industry (for instance in Thailand where a riot by 100,000 people halted a steel-making project), dumping of toxins and waste have been social as well as environmental victories for the working class. Early socialists argued strenuously that political and economic struggle was the means to achieve environmental reform. Revolutionaries like William Morris and Kropotkin proposed sustainable economies that were also socially just. The land would be a vast granary, water would run clean and food would be pure, free from chemicals and adulteration. Environmentally-caused diseases like cholera, diphtheria and typhus would be eliminated. These programmes of reform grew out of the unrelenting struggle of working class people against bosses and owners, struggles to defend their place within ecologies (such as resistance to clearances or enclosures) or to improve environments that capitalism had ruined (for instance campaigns for clean water, decent housing and sanitation). Their struggle brought reforms, such as nationalised water companies, but because they did not change the nature of either ownership or control, they were temporary. The same struggles are being waged by the working class in its millions today but most are led by reformist leaders. The anti-capitalist movement must re-learn, as the global poor already know, that the revolution must be made by us, here, on the land and in the towns, and not by campaigns against far-off institutions like the WTO or UN or without an end to private property or (so-called) democratic control.

The engine of environmental

destruction is capitalism, with its iron laws of expropriation, exploitation and despoliation. The petrol is private property, which includes private and state ownership — in essence, the same since the state exists to protect private property and periodically redistribute it between owning classes. The state exists to preserve the vast inequalities in how global resources are shared out. And with what result? 125 wars in the developing world since the 1950s, killing over 20m people. Fierce wars for land in Palestine, Zimbabwe and Brazil. Between 1975 and 1985, the number of urban Third World poor without access to safe water increased by 100m. Water wars rage in South Asia, the Middle East and Central America. Water speculators in the city of Guayaquil sell water to the poor for 400 times the price paid by volume consumers like factories. While the rich use 300 litres a day, the poor get less than 25. This is not a modern phenomenon. The imposition of free market economics on colonial territories in the 19th century massively increased death tolls from drought and monsoon: as many as 18m died in India and China alone in two years in the 1870s. Famine in China sparked the Boxer Uprising. 'Modernisation' caused village stocks of grain to be centralised in the Indian Empire and then exported to England whenever there were bad harvests. When famine struck, the colonial administration raised prices beyond the reach of the peasants who starved, fled the land or turned to banditry and even cannibalism. Money sent by European governments for relief often ended up funding increases in local military establishments and 'bush wars' against colonial rivals or were pocketed by the colonial merchant and ruling classes — the very crimes that the Iraqi state is accused of today. Despite a decades-long effort to 'civilise' and 'develop' India, there was no increase in the per capita income of people between 1757 and 1947. Wealth flowed in both directions but did not pass out of the hands of the ruling classes into that of the peasantry. And the same is happening

today. The Advance Brazil plan will spend £27bn to develop Amazonia, destroying 95% of the rainforest by 2020; how much of this will create sustainable economies and ecologies which truly benefit ordinary people? And if they protest, the iron laws of capitalism — ownership, property rights, laws — will be used against them. The 'right' to use and exploit is created by ownership and defended by privilege, law, custom and power. Whether Scottish croft, Colombian forest or Turkish homeland, power confers ownership which in turn creates wealth; wealth produces a corrupted system of judges, lawyers and bailiffs to protect and extend ownership which over time creates a privileged class — privileged to use the state to protect its interests.

The recent foot and mouth 'epidemic' is a massive abuse of animals and the land caused by the pursuit of profit. Infected swill from schools, probably arising from the cheap imported meat schools use (cost-cutting before children's health), was fed to pigs because it was cheap. Infected and disease-free animals were taken to large agri-business holding stations — the weak or unwanted were sold in local markets, spreading infection. They were then transported hundreds of miles to fattening stations and mixed with other animals even though it is well known that livestock transported long distances are very susceptible to disease. Some were exported to Europe, others sold after fattening to the abattoirs and then into the food chain. This industrial agriculture is forced upon farmers by a capitalism that must offer ever cheaper goods to survive and the greed of the supermarkets for profit and market share. What is truly amazing is that foot and mouth disease cannot infect humans and does no more harm to animals than minor sores and milk that can't be used and wears off after a few weeks. In the 19th century and abroad farmers simply let the disease burn itself out after killing very few animals. Why is it different in these islands? Because the supermarkets will not buy infected meat and farmers will not pay

to feed a cow that even temporarily produces no milk. Foot and mouth was not a natural disaster, it was an economic disease, killing profits but of no harm to animals or humans. One million healthy, disease-free sheep were killed to protect the profits of the supermarkets and agri-businesses, the ultimate indictment of capitalist profit motive and methods of organisation. Strangely, the animal rights and environmental campaigners stood silent, arms folded while supposedly right-wing farmers threatened outright defiance of the law; an encouraging development. Are ten thousand foxes or lab rats worth more than 1m sheep, animals that could feed and provide wool to millions? Or is the liberal reformist critique of capitalism still incomplete, ignoring the exploitation and captivity of the working class as either producer or consumer, in favour of opposing one kind of cruelty (in field and laboratory) but not other kinds (in abattoir and rendering plant)?

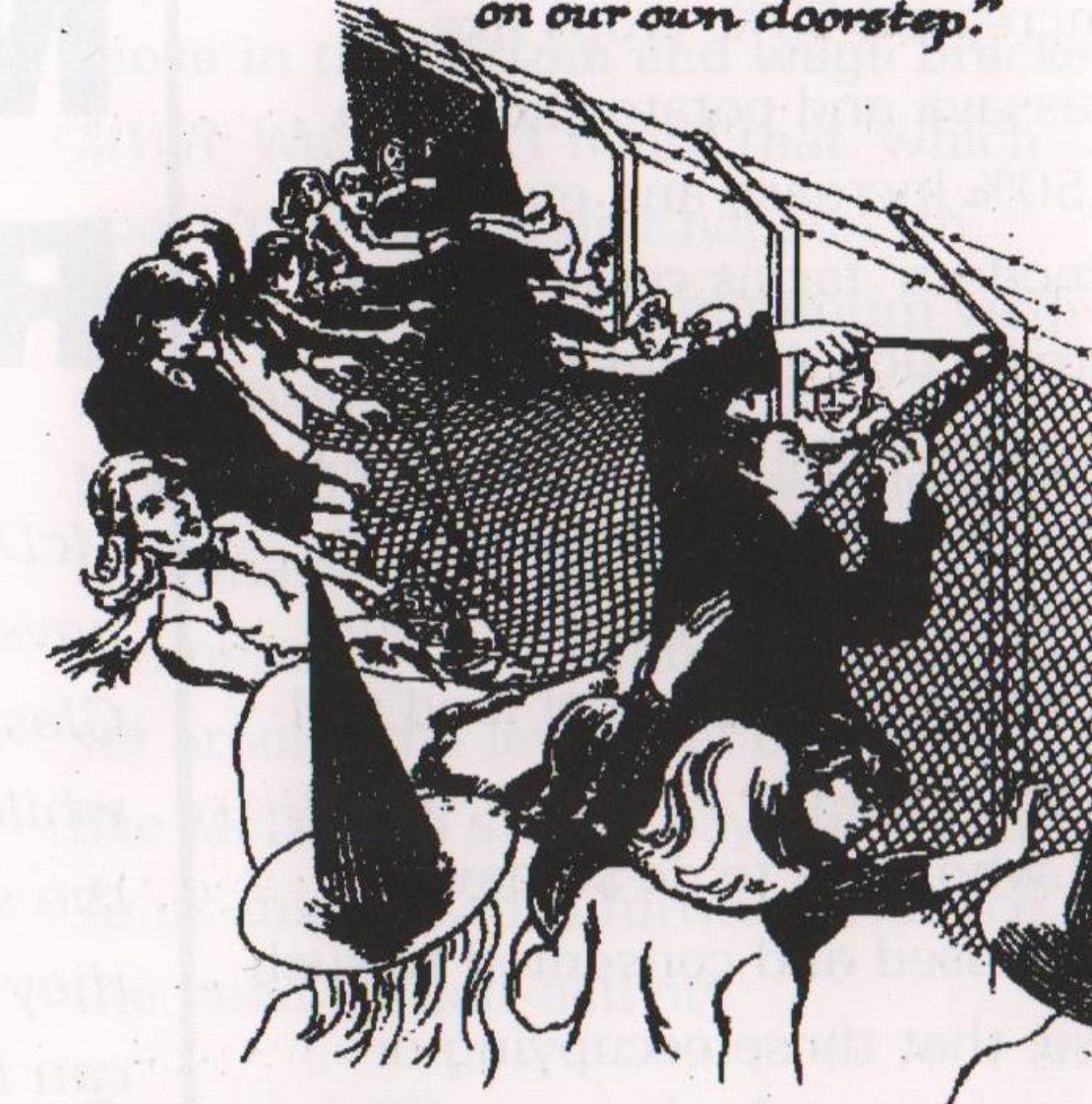
Globalisation and free trade are forcing intense farming methods on farmers with disastrous consequences. In 1999, 200,000 farmers in Europe gave up the unequal struggle and big business moved in. Ten companies worldwide control 60% of the food chain. Four of them control the world supply of corn, wheat, tea, rice and timber. Massive subsidies, paid for by taxes on wages and non-agricultural businesses, swell the profits of the biggest farms and agricultural businesses, usually owned by large multi-national corporations — in the US, a total of \$22bn. While western capitalism demands subsidy worth \$362bn per year, the farmers of the rest of the world share just \$18bn — if they can't compete, they are accused of inefficiency by western 'experts' and legislated out of existence or driven to the wall by 'free and fair' competition.

Environmental class war

We must first target the means by which environmental degradation occurs. Whatever the label, whether irrationalism, neo-Luddism or propaganda by the deed, direct action against the means of environmental

destruction and degradation is an act of resistance and ultimately one of the means by which revolution is realised. Resistance takes familiar forms. The first industrial working class wrecked mines and broke weaving frames in the 1740s, spinning machines in the 1770s, agricultural machinery in the 1810s, forms of resistance that continued all through the 19th and 20th centuries and which the working class of the developing world are using every day. It is a form of resistance embraced by the direct action movement. But we need to go further, much further. Isolated actions are no good, we need a programme and the means to achieve it. Since ownership always creates owners, masters, we must socialise the land. Use of land and resources cannot be based on singular or personal 'rights' but on the utility and social benefits such use creates. We have to stimulate and support movements for radical land reform (i.e. changes to both ownership and use) which have expropriation and socialisation as both their end and their tactic: squatting must become a rural as well as an urban phenomenon. Our aim should be to drive farmers who are abusing the land off the land, leaving it for us to reclaim. We must tie popular boycotts of retailers who sell non-organic/GM food to occupations, squats and mass trespasses, to drive those who refuse to change off the land. The HLS campaign is a model we need to spread. If we wish to change land use, as a challenge to capitalism now, then making it economically difficult to continue with environmental destruction, driving agri-business off the land and occupying and squatting empty buildings, rural and urban, together with a revival and radicalisation of the commune movement needs to be undertaken far more often. A movement to occupy empty rural and small village buildings, especially second and holiday homes, coupled with squats of urban housing (both new and old) and occupations of planning and developer offices would link rural and urban homeless and be a powerful challenge

"We can only begin to tackle the concrete and barbed wire that divides our world when we start with that on our own doorstep."



to the state's defence of property. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of unused or misused land and tens of thousands of unused buildings across the country. We should make room within this movement for those who want to build within capitalism as well as destroy it. We must learn how to make society work, practically; 'green gatherings' with a revolutionary intent and without the pacifism and mysticism; radical communes that teach as well as shelter. We shouldn't regard it as reformism so long as we do not get trapped within capitalism's property relations and all understand that the places we create now will be socialised in the future.

The land and us

We cannot change the laws of nature but we can change conditions of existence. We have been predators but in the main do not kill as often as we did. We defend the means of our existence (the land, the crops, waterways) but can limit the impact of our actions radically. While we (collectively and individually) will continue to defend our existence (for instance by limiting the impact of insects on crops), we will do it from necessity, humanely and rationally, and in ways which do not adversely effect the environment — i.e. in ways which are unnecessary or not easily renewable or which disadvantage non-proximate life. Think organic, low-impact farming won't work? A recent study of sustainable agriculture using

low-tech methods introduced on farms supporting 4m people in majority world countries revealed that food production increased 73%, crops like cassava and potato showed a 150% increase and even large 'modern' farms could increase production 46%. In Brazil, farmland the size of India is left untilled while 20m rural poor have no land at all. The future occupation and use of land will depend on the extent to which all who wish to do so have discussed and consented to such use, that those occupying or using the land continue to work in solidarity with the whole of society within broad principles of co-operation, sharing freely both the means of production and what is produced. No individual or group of individuals will have any 'right' to say "the land must be used in the way we decide", nor can what is on or under the land or produced upon it be their property, whether plant or animal. The number of people involved in agriculture (in its widest sense) will probably expand greatly, with vast estates and agri-corp holdings broken up and shared out, but also urban farms created in and near towns. The aim of agriculture (and activities like food processing) will be self-sufficiency for the localities and specialisation or growing for 'export' only where there is surplus land or productive forces. It is likely that neighbours, co-workers, communities and communes will collectively agree to use land in particular ways according to a plan or programme of beneficial change. This will not always be in the direction of development or 'efficiency' (which will have different definitions and parameters anyway); if people need more gardens or wilderness, small-holdings instead of sheep stations, they will create them.

Interview with McDonald's Workers' Resistance

McDonald's Workers' Resistance (MWR) is a group of politically aware workers who have taken the bold decision to organise a workplace group in their store in Glasgow. The first issue of their piss-take newsletter McSues appeared recently, and while aimed at McDonald's employees, is accessible to anyone with experience of the service sector. Looking to spread their message and link up with other groups, they participated in this interview for Organise! There is much that other workers can learn from their example.

Organise!: Initially, how did the MWR group come together? Was it politically motivated or 'economically', i.e. through the need to organise for improved working conditions?

MWR: There were specific issues at our store that were pissing people off, for example we were due hundreds of pounds in unpaid bonuses. At the same time a group of us, who over the years had become close friends, got talking and decided to try and take the informal resistance that we'd practised for years a stage further. A number of us were already influenced by radical politics so you could say it was politically motivated. At present our ability to influence our economic circumstances is limited, so that was possibly less of a motivation.

Organise!: How successful had your tactics been in improving your working conditions?

MWR: Objectively, not very. We haven't won higher wages or anything like that, although we did have some initial success with the bonuses. It's been obvious for some time that to have any real impact we need to reach out to McDonald's workers in other areas and it was with this in mind that we produced *McSues*. However, we have to be realistic: McDonald's opens a new restaurant every three minutes, so even if another McDonald's employee got organised every 10 minutes, the ratio of unorganised, to organised employees, would be increasing.

The main way our experience of work

has changed has been through changes we've enacted ourselves. We challenged the company's obsession with hierarchies by downing tools to vote on every petty decision; we've skived more; stolen more; supported each other better and we've found a voice with which to hit back against their idiotic propaganda. Finally, several of the group who produced *McSues* have subsequently got themselves new jobs, and found their working conditions have improved quite a bit!

Organise!: How do you see your role in the wider context of the struggle against capitalism?

MWR: A response that frequently follows a denunciation of McDonald's is an anecdote about an even worse or equally bad job. This is not surprising because, contrary to what you'd think from the attention it receives, there is nothing special about McDonald's — it's just especially good at doing what all businesses attempt, that is maximising the profit they can make out of their employees' labour. MWR is not a cohesive group with a membership or constitution or anything like that, and not everyone involved or in contact would necessarily identify themselves with these aims, but we have never wanted to hide the fact that many of us would like to see the complete overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a system where workers have direct control over production. Already our struggle is clearly linked to others, and not just other workplace struggles. For example, McDonald's can

sack workers at will and the (D)SS will be happy to force others into McDonald's service. So we are aware that we are in the same struggle as claimants' groups and many others.

Organise!: What are the MWR's opinion on trade unions? Are you seeking TU representation rights?

MWR: While we would wish to offer solidarity to McDonalds' employees seeking trade union representation (presently in Canada and Russia, for example) and recognise this as positive, it is not an objective for ourselves. We've been greatly inspired by postal workers in Scotland who in recent times have had much success with the sort of industrial action we'd like to see at McDonald's. However, most of this seems to have been done in spite of their union. And this appears to be typical. Additionally, where the staff turnover is as rapid as it is at McDonald's, the traditional trade union model is not really applicable. This, combined with the impotence of contemporary trade unions, has the positive effect of creating space for more effective and more radical alternatives. MWR is an exploration of this space.

Organise!: What has the reaction of the company been to your activities?

MWR: Increasingly, we are concentrating on more anonymous activities away from the shop floor, for example, distributing propaganda, communicating with other McDonald's employees etc. We have been acting anonymously since obviously, McDonald's will sack us as soon as they find us.

*They seek us here, they seek us there,
They see us every fucking where,
But they'll not find us whoever they ask,
'Cos decent folk they just don't grass.*

Organise!: Have you managed to link up with any other like-minded groups in the UK or overseas?

MWR: At the time of writing we are attempting to develop contacts with McDonald's workers in struggle around the world. Some of these struggles are quite advanced; in France, where the CNT have been organising, a store was recently occupied. There have been

strikes in Florence, Italy and union drives in Russia and Canada. We are hoping to propose the formation of an international network of McDonald's workers. Global business, global resistance.

Organise!: What has the reaction of other McDonald's employees been to the appearance of *McSues* and are future issues planned?

MWR: At present only a small amount of the print run has been distributed, but we've already had enthusiastic responses. Even workers who don't agree with our aims usually find *McSues* a good laugh and subsequently struggle to take the company seriously. That in itself is positive. Further issues are very definitely planned, but as several of the group who produced the first issue have escaped the job, we are very keen to get contributions in from other McDonald's workers.

Organise!: What is your view of the current wave of 'anti-capitalist' protests? Would you encourage demonstrators to hurl bricks through the window of your store while you were working?

MWR: Definitely not. We'd encourage them to do it on our day off so we could join in. When there was all the press coverage of the McDonald's that got smashed up on Mayday 2000, so many workers were saying things like: "Wow, I'd love to do that. That would feel so fucking good." *McNews*, McDonald's official staff newsletter, actually printed an article about the Whitehall store re-opening after it got smashed up (issue 25, p.5), where they admitted that: "Before trouble flared, staff shut the restaurant on police advice." So all the shite about low paid workers and families fleeing for their lives was just media lies.

Not all those who identify as anti-capitalist revolutionaries agree with what we're trying to do. Some have declined to work with us, because "people shouldn't work for McDonald's". If people can't tell the difference between the company and its workers then that's a bit scary. But generally we support the anti-capitalist protests.

Organise!: How did the company react to the introduction of the minimum wage? There were stories of those over 21 being sacked in favour of those in the bottom end wage bracket.

MWR: We haven't heard that, which doesn't mean it didn't happen. In general, however, the minimum wage didn't have a great effect on McDonald's. No politician would want to damage the interests of big business, so the minimum wage was set around the level that companies like McDonald's were paying already. To us this provides further evidence of the need for self-activity.

Organise!: What are the future plans for MWR?

MWR: In the short term we hope to consolidate and develop contacts at stores in Britain to form a network of McDonald's workers. This would help us to share ideas and propaganda and possibly we could start thinking about what sort of actions could be co-ordinated nationwide. We'll also be working to develop our international links and to try and learn from the experiences of workers in France, Italy and Canada. Hopefully we can work together to develop effective strategies for global resistance.

And in the long term? Well, we worry that something designed so brilliantly upon the principle of maximising our exploitation could never fit into an emancipated society. However, we have observed that when you empty a McDonald's restaurant, you are left with a not bad five-a-side football pitch. So post-revolution MWR is committed to providing quality all-weather sports facilities!

Write to MWR at: MWR, PO Box 3828, Glasgow G41 1YU. *Or email them at:* mwrposse@yahoo.co.uk. *McSues is on the web at:* <http://www.mcspotlight.org/campaigns/current/mwr.html>.

If you are a McDonald's employee, or know someone who is, why not get in touch? Take a bundle of *McSues* to distribute to your fellow workers. Contribute to the next issue. Help spread the word. And other workers in low paid, shitty, service sector jobs, why not organise in your workplace? Capitalism? Together we can crack it!

Aff yer head

This article is an attempt to create a description of mental illness, from a first person perspective, after having been through the mental health system and wishing to save the experience of madness as a valuable one, with links to the general social critique of anarchism.

The most marked experience of serious mental illness, or of those labelled schizophrenic by an essentially oppressive psychiatric profession, is the assumption of a new identity. This entirely takes the place of the sufferer's old identity and, in essence, the 'lunatic' becomes an entirely different person. Now, this is not to deny that there are not large difficulties faced by anyone who has suffered a total mental breakdown. The most marked aspect of this is paranoia/confusion, where language itself becomes oppressive and the person begins to hallucinate. But I would argue that the reasons for this experience are entirely rational, and based on the problems of living in an entirely antagonistic society.

Identity

I would like to begin my analysis with a general outline of identity. For me, identity is entirely social. A person learns to co-exist and interact with other people, and develops as a result of this interaction. They are given an identity by their parents, and this develops through interaction with them, other children and adults in their environment. In modern bourgeois democracy, for the early part of their lives, most people are allowed a certain leeway, in that their identity is a result of their association with other people, and not imposed by the antagonistic state/capital machine. This may, however, only apply to the children of middle class families. I would argue this leeway of identity would survive in an antagonistic society, where who you are is not important, you will be valued as a member of the human race regardless.

I would argue that for most of the sane majority, their identities have not

been challenged. They are more than just a name. In mental illness, however, it becomes impossible to exist with your previous identity and an escape route is sought, albeit unconsciously. The reason for this desperation is that their social identity is removed, i.e., their social situation

Suffering is universal in present society.

has become antagonistic, or they find no more avenues for development, they have been cast out of a previously supportive social situation, or they have been punished as a result of their official identity. As a result of this, an intense feeling of worthlessness sets in and you find nothing left to fall back on. Your social identity, built on the people around you, has been negated. This may take the form of physical or sexual abuse, betrayal of trust or, under capitalism, the adaptation of your social situation to antagonistic society by itself becoming antagonistic. This is witnessed in basic atomisation, where people become mendacious, self-serving, manipulative and generally cold. A prime reason, therefore, for the delusions of mental health sufferers, is their total alienation. Alienation from language, from other people, and therefore from their social identity. The action of capitalism expropriates a man's soul by turning the basis of that soul, his society, against him.

I would now like to turn to the process of mental illness itself, or the ways in which a new identity is found. Most mental patients assume an identity taken from history, be it Jesus

Christ, Genghis Khan or in my case a descendant of the leaders of the last Jacobite Rebellion. The reasons for this are manifold. Firstly, there is a lack of conscious historical purpose or identity for most people under capitalism. Inability to play a part in improving society as a fully functioning member of the human race. Most people are consigned to the herd of wage slavery, and as a result, are subject to expropriation of their very souls.

Secondly, assuming the identity of a great person from history allows you the symbolic power that goes with it. People are more likely to value Finn McCool than nonentity no. five from the South Side of Glasgow. The term historical can also be used to cover heroes from mythology, who represent powerful entities and are part of the cultural history of mankind. Thirdly, the person feels an unconscious affinity with this new character, which they may have developed earlier in life. The new personality allows the development of dreams from childhood, when development was on a more unconscious level. This basically ties in with the Freudian return of the repressed. Fourthly, there is an element of redemption, the sufferer believes that they can become this person and therefore return something to the glory of their name because, the sufferer, themselves, is such a good person. While of course, becoming a better person themselves, being absolved of all their sins. Fifthly, they may feel that elements of their experience mirror these historical characters. And lastly, the sufferer needs a powerful identity to rationalise all the pain being felt.

Manic depressives and schizophrenics share a feeling of great unhappiness or actual physical pain caused by their relations with other people and rationalise that the reason for their persecution is their powerful, previously hidden identity. They feel they have power because of the abnormal amount of pain they are suffering. A first step to reaching the mentally unwell would be to help them understand that suffering is universal in present society.

Official identity

I would now like to turn to the response of the system and society to mental illness and the potential for liberation that mental illness reveals.

Basically, the system works by re-imposing the person's former or official identity. This is a continuous process starting in the family and the world of work and only intensified in mental hospitals. A person's official identity is a stick to beat them with. As a child, consumer (of anything, as long as you pay for it) or labourer you are placed on an unequal footing. Anyone who thinks they control your identity can use this fact to completely disregard your humanity, if you know personally the people who oppress you, it becomes worse because the oppression takes on a physical and manifest form.

A person only develops when he/she can approach other people without fear. Living with or working for a person who thinks they control your identity automatically puts them in a position to create fear in you. This is the psychological consequence of capitalism, where people turn other people into property. A main tactic can be, in fact, labelling or calling someone mad in the first place, when they are not. This implies that the person is not human, is already an outcast, has created their own suffering, or, has brought about their own punishment by acting in the way they do — an argument analogous to the one where Jews deserve to be exterminated because they are weak. Of course, this is the main problem with mental hospitals where people are treated as self-made outcasts from an otherwise benevolent society. The existence of the state ties in with this as everyone becomes a piece of property or a subject and thus expendable. Those who value themselves and their independence are deemed insane.

Hospitalisation

I would now like to turn to more concrete matters by focussing on the effect of psychiatric hospitals on patients. Firstly, the patient is ignored. Nurses, doctors, do not talk to patients.

This is because the suffering person is deemed irrational and therefore basically impossible to talk to, no longer a social being. That this ignorance may be the reason for the patient's problems in the first place, and he/she may be dying to talk to people about his/her new identity and how the world can finally be a better place, is concealed or ignored, perhaps consciously, to further weaken the person's psyche.

People are denied basic human rights on the most innocuous of pretences. Wanting to leave the hospital, or basically confronting the psychiatric profession with the truth, that you are being oppressed unjustly, you are not irrational, and being somebody new doesn't mean that you are, can lead to your being sectioned. This means that for 28 days, soon to be six months, you cannot go outside the ward, have to take medication and have a nurse follow you everywhere. Everyday situations in mental hospitals go beyond the Kafkaesque. Medication itself is designed to suppress your mental activity, your delusions, which are basically an essential part of yourself at that time, and as such to cut you off from your physical existence, suppressing your very will to live. Witnessed by the high number of suicides among mental patients after leaving mental hospital and after returning to the person you most hate, yourself, and the same environment as caused your emotional destruction, most likely friends and family. The system does not even treat you as mentally ill. If you were, you could be talked to and reasoned with, but this is not the way of modern psychiatry. Besides, some people get banged up just for being activists, as in the case of Greg Minns in Burnley.

Liberation

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the liberation found in mental illness. Firstly, a mental patient is entirely sociable. They depend on other people for warmth, kindness and solidarity. The usual picture of mental hospitals is completely false, they are usually very quiet and subdued places. The

change in the sufferer's identity is also accompanied with a change in the identities of those round about them. The happiness found in escaping from your life needs to be shared, in a way. Also they are left no doubt about their own goodness, although you are totally alienated the mere fact of your having a body with which to associate with other people means you can intuitively follow your own will and power to do good rather than evil, evil no longer has any hold over or attraction for the totally insane. Basically, your experience becomes proof of the power of the individual. But as a social being your wants are basically the same as those around you, love, comfort, peace and happiness. But, to say that these can be achieved in anything other than a stateless communist society would be a blatant lie.

In conclusion, the experience of mental health sufferers is one of unending pain, but that all that is needed to end their suffering is compassion and understanding. With the ending of capitalism and the state, not only would suffering not arise, but also people would be free to be forbearing with the mentally dispossessed.

Greg Minns

Greg is a young activist who has fallen victim to the mental health laws of the UK. We have publicised details of his case in earlier issues of *Organise!* He has recently put together a dossier about his case. It makes frightening reading and is an indictment of the use of drug therapy in dealing with those who fall foul of these laws. If you want a copy, then write to him at Millerbank, 27 Carlton Road, Burnley, Lancs BB11 4JE. Be sure to enclose a couple of quid to pay for photocopying and postage.

Tribal life and anarchism

The Politics of Peter Kropotkin

Organise! *editors' note: This article is an edited version of a chapter from a book by Brian Morris. A member of the AF, with Brian's permission, did the editing. If you want to find out more about the book, then contact the AF's London Group.*

Kropotkin is one of the first thinkers to attack the ideas of philosophers whose work helped to justify capitalism and the state. He was, in particular, strongly opposed to the views of such philosophers as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, all "contract theorists" who tended to view humans in as essentially asocial, atomistic beings. Hobbes especially considered the human person as a self-directing machine, a possessive individual who was aggressive, competitive, acquisitive, anti-social and power seeking, ever engaged in a restless desire for power. Life in the "state of nature", that is, tribal society, was thus uncivilised — lacking culture, art, sociality and morality. It exhibited a "war of every one against every one". As Hobbes graphically expressed it is in the oft-quoted phrase, in the state of nature there is continual fear and conflict, and the "life of man" is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Therefore, the only way society could exist was to have a state.

Although acknowledging the social nature of the individual, Locke and the political economists tended to re-affirm this liberal conception of the individual as a "possessive" individual, the competitive owner of private property, both in terms of real property and in terms of owning "property in the person".

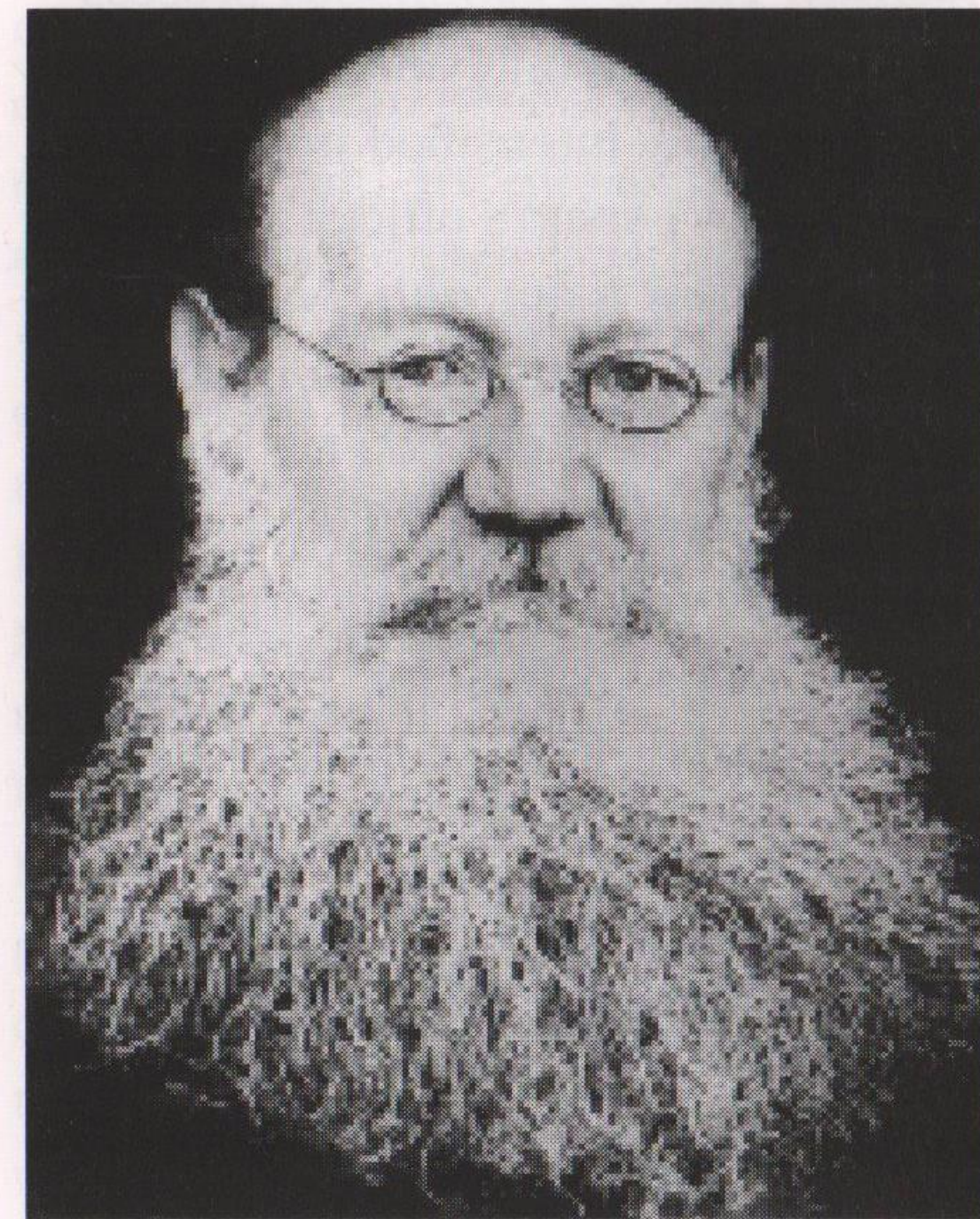
Kropotkin rejected entirely the Hobbesian view of social life along with the possessive individualism of liberal social theory. For Kropotkin, humans were intrinsically social animals: indeed, as we have seen, sociality and mutual aid were held by Kropotkin to be intrinsic to animal life

itself and therefore to human life as well. Humans without society had simply never existed; neither had absolute freedom — in the sense of licence to do anything. Therefore, according to Kropotkin, these philosophies are myths used to justify the nation state.

As the views of Hobbes seemed so widely accepted, Kropotkin in his writings felt it important to defend the integrity of tribal society. He thus attempted to indicate that clan-based societies do not live in a perpetual state of fear, natural lust and hostility but are characterised by social institutions based on mutual aid and reciprocity and by explicit moral principles.

Mutual Aid

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin devoted separate chapters to outlining the social life of what he described — following the terminology of Lewis Morgan and other early anthropologists — as "savages" (hunter-gatherers) and "barbarians" (agricultural peoples living in settled villages). Believing firmly in the "idea of unity in nature" and that there was no "gulf" or "abyss" between humans and animals, Kropotkin stressed that humans were no exception to the general principles of sociability and mutual aid that he felt played a crucial role on the evolution of animal life. All humans, throughout history and without exception, thus live in societies, and Kropotkin felt that the "social instinct" was deeply rooted in human psychology. He even suggested that "social life — that is, we, not I — is the normal form of life. Such



sociability and mutual aid was expressed in many different ways — for mutual defence, in collective hunting and the sharing of food, in the rearing of children or simply for enjoying life in common.

Kropotkin felt that there were common patterns of social organisation evident among early human societies — which were independent of both climate and race — and that the same process of evolution had been going on among humankind with "a wonderful similarity". It was represented by two distinct phases: an earlier phase of hunter-gathering when "clan organisation" and "tribal solidarity" were the primary forms of organisation; and a later phase which emerged with the development of agricultural and pastoralism. In this later stage or era, the patriarchal "family" emerged as a distant social unit, and the "village community" became the chief means of "barbarian" people in their struggle against a hostile environment.

Drawing on his own experiences among the Tungus and other native peoples of Siberia, and on the few anthropological studies that were then available at the end of the nineteenth

century, Kropotkin sought to emphasise that the Hobbesian view of "primitive man", bore very little relation to the realities of tribal life. For studies of the "Bushmen" and Hottentot (the Khoisan people) of Southern Africa, the Dayaks of Borneo, the aboriginal people of Australia, the natives of Papua New Guinea, and the Aleuts of North Alaska, all indicated the importance of mutual aid and social solidarity among tribal communities. Kropotkin indicated, with ethnographic data drawn from numerous sources, the complexity in the organisation of their marriage rules, the fact that the band or clan and not the family, was of crucial importance in their social life, and that "unbridled individualism" was a characteristic of modern societies rather than tribal life. The emphasis among these tribal communities, as recorded by sympathetic observers, was on the sharing of food and goods, on the importance of generosity, on equality among clan members, and on sociability. Kropotkin notes the high standard of morality among such people as the Aleuts and Eskimo (Inuit), and describes their social life as one based on "communism" and tribal solidarity.

Kropotkin writes particularly perceptively of the unwritten encyclopaedic knowledge of the natural world possessed by tribal peoples and of the close relationship that pertained between humans and animals among such peoples, as well as among the early ancestors of Europeans. Among tribal peoples then, Kropotkin suggested, a close intimacy pertained between humans and animals. They had a deep knowledge of the habits and ecology of animals, which was expressed in proverbs and sayings, they considered animals, as social beings, to be considerably wiser than themselves, for they had observed that all animals were in continual communication.

When he journeyed in Siberia, Kropotkin wrote, "I often noticed the care with which my Tungus or Mongol guide would take not to kill any animal uselessly. The fact is that every life is

respected by a savage, or rather was, before he came into contact with Europeans". Kropotkin notes that tribal people, far from expressing contempt for human life, hated murder and bloodshed, and to spill blood, whether of a human or an animal, was a "grave matter".

Nostalgia?

Kropotkin has often been accused of looking with "undue nostalgia" towards the past, and as portraying tribal life as more idyllic than it actually was. But it has to be remembered that Kropotkin was attempting to counter the Hobbesian portrayal of tribal life by his contemporaries, and he did not in fact ignore the violence and murder that was evident in tribal society, nor the power that was often possessed by the shamans. He noted, for example, that solidarity often did not extend beyond the clan or tribe, and that "quarrels arose between people of different clans and tribes which could end in violence or even murder". Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* was seeking a better understanding of the social life of tribal people, not advocating a return to a hunter-gathering existence. He was not an anarcho-primitivist.

Contrary to the Hobbesian image, Kropotkin recognised that "savages" (hunter-gatherers) had complex social organisations and cultural forms, and that their life was governed and sustained, not by a "war of all against all" but by an intricate web of customary norms and inter-personal relationships. Mutual aid and reciprocity were the guiding principles of such tribal or clan-based societies; the same could be said for the agricultural peoples whom the Romans called "barbarians". For Kropotkin this was a phase or era of human social evolution that came before serfdom (feudalism) and to the rise of the state, as exemplified by the Roman Empire. "Barbarian" society thus constituted a phase between clan-based tribal communities and the emergence of the state as an institutional form. It was represented in Europe in such peoples as the Celts, Teutons and Slavs, who

when they first came into contact with the Roman Empire, were undergoing, Kropotkin felt, a transitional phase of organisation. For with the development and increasing concentration of wealth and power in tribal society, and a more settled existence, the patriarchal family steadily emerged as a separate unit, independent of the clans, and the village community became the central focus of social life. Although Kropotkin recognised that the village community was a form of social organisation found throughout the world, he discussed in some detail three specific societies, the Buryats of Eastern Siberia, the Kabyles of Algeria and the Mountain people of the Caucasia, relying specifically on the pioneer writings of Henry Maine and Maxim Kovalevsky.

Kropotkin emphasised four aspects of their social life; that each of these people had their own complex and unique form of morality; that there was a strong emphasis among these people on reciprocity and sharing; that although they lacked state instructions, these people, though communal rituals and confederal relationships, had a sense of tribal solidarity or nationhood; and finally, that there were no institutions of "private property", land being held in common by the clans or village communities. Communism was thus a ruling principle among the "barbarian" people, as it was for clan-based societies. As Kropotkin wrote:

"Land was thus under common control, hunting and cultivation were often communal activities, and the resolution of social conflict was achieved through clan institutions or village assemblies."

With regards to the Kabyle, Kropotkin wrote that they:

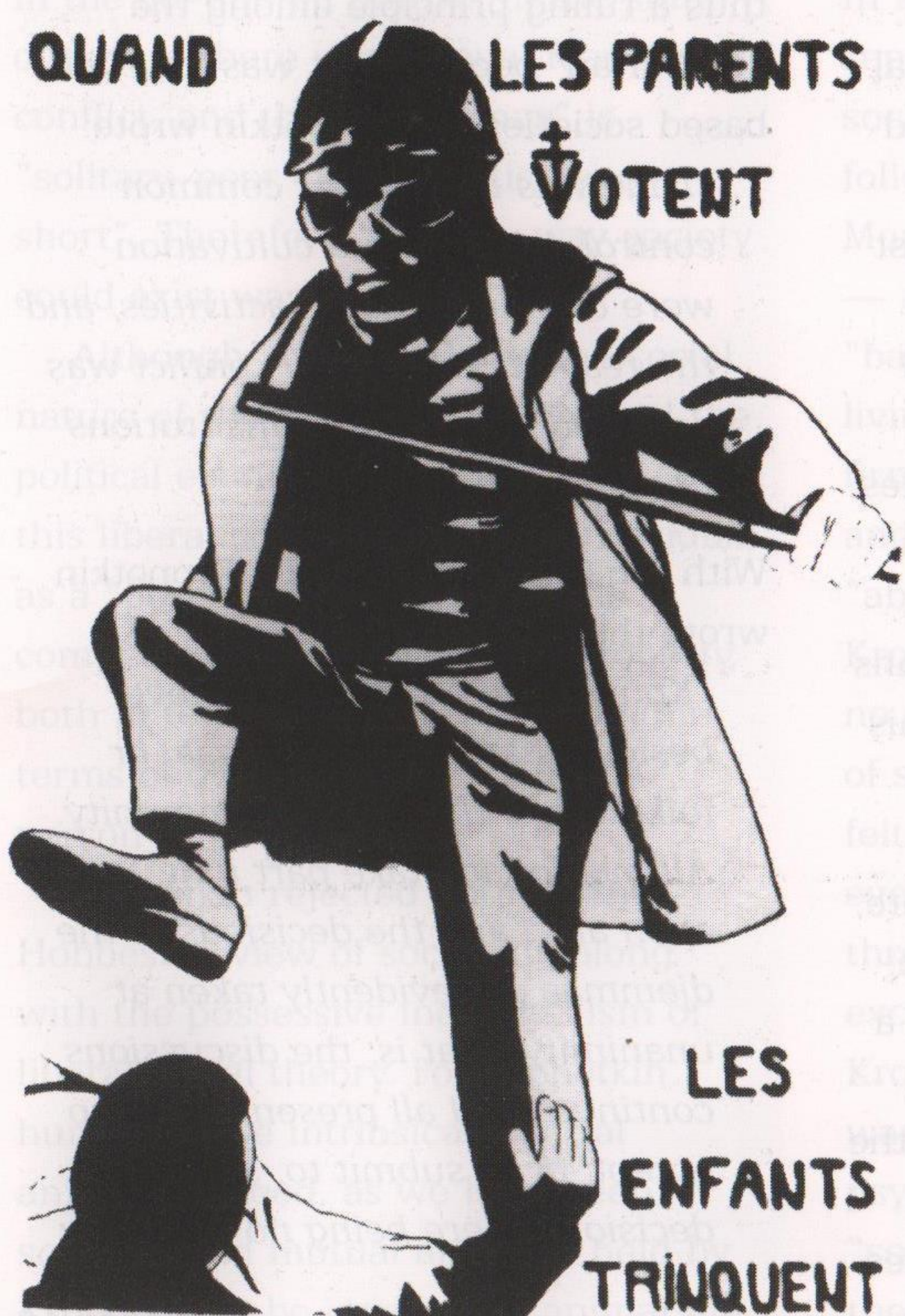
"Know of no authority whatever besides that of the djemmaa, or folk-moot of the village community. All men of age take part in it, in the open air... and the decisions of the djemmaa are evidently taken at unanimity: that is, the discussions continue until all present agree to accept, or to submit to, some decision. There being no authority

Continued on page 19

Part three

In the tradition

This is part three of 'In the tradition', a roughly chronological outline of the various political events, movements and ideas which have influenced the development of the Anarchist Federation. We left off last time having looked at currents which emerged during the 1960s, particularly the British-based Solidarity and the Situationist International (see Organise! #53). Both of these groups were to see in the events in France of May-June 1968, confirmation of their argument that a modern revolution would be one which would develop through the autonomous activity of millions of 'ordinary' people and a revolution against the official 'representatives' of the working class; the unions, labour and communist parties.



Thanks to the tireless efforts of the bourgeois media, 'May '68' has been reduced to a 'student revolt' centred entirely on Paris and in particular the occupied Sorbonne University, which involved some barricade building, some fighting with the police and a load of hot air. The modern media enjoys pointing to the subsequent political trajectories of various participants, notably the 'spokesperson' Daniel Cohn-Bendit, then a libertarian communist, now a NATO supporting Green MP, as proof that the events had no long lasting effect, were just an outburst of youthful exuberance by the children of the bourgeoisie.

Social revolution continues to haunt capitalism

The reality of the events of May-June, "the greatest revolutionary movement in France since the Paris Commune" (*International Situationniste*, September 1969) is very different. Although the actions of the students provided a detonator, the actual social explosion was manifested in the largest wildcat strike in history, the occupation of workplaces across the country and the proof, if proof were needed, that the spectre of social revolution continues to haunt capitalism.

Superficially, the insurgence of May 1968 appears to have come out of nowhere. In France and in Europe generally, class struggle was at a low-ebb; there appeared a massive depoliticisation, particularly amongst young people and prospects for any movement for revolutionary change seemed particularly remote.

However, amongst large sectors of the working class there existed a long-standing bitterness born of long-neglected grievances over wage claims and simmering resentments over conditions of work. Amongst young workers particularly there was a sense that the misery of the previous generation wasn't for them. It was amongst this part of the working class, including the 'blousons noirs', the members of street gangs, that the revolutionary spark ignited and they were usually the first to join the students on the streets, in order to 'have a go' at the police.

In the universities, the high-schools and in many workplaces, there were also various revolutionary groups and individuals who had been agitating for years, some of whom were or had been involved in various libertarian socialist currents outlined in part two of 'In the tradition'. Prior to the May-June events these groups had enjoyed a growth, but one that could not be described as large or rapid. However, revolutionary ideas had a small but growing audience amongst significant sections of students and workers.

The original agitation had its origins in the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris, a new ultra-modern nightmare of glass and steel stuck in the middle of a mainly Algerian immigrant working class area. In April 1967, some male students set up camp outside the female dormitories in protest against sexual segregation, setting a ball of dissent rolling which culminated in a student boycott of lectures in November.

March 22nd

On March 22nd 1968, a group of students occupied the university administrative building in protest against the arrest of members of the National Vietnam Committee (anti-Vietnam war protests were taking place across the globe). This was the birth of the March 22nd Movement (M22), an affinity-type group of the amorphous New Left, but which included anarchists and people influenced by Situationist ideas. The M22 'spokesman' Daniel Cohn-Bendit was associated with the Noir et Rouge group of libertarian communists (see 'In the tradition' part 2) and, thanks to the media, his face became the face of the movement. Also amongst the student agitation were the Enragés, by no means all students themselves, but

The greatest revolutionary movement since the Paris Commune.

rather a group of troublemakers close to the Situationist International. From the student side these groups attempted to push the movement as far as it could go, against the forces of Stalinism and 'modernism' which attempted to keep the struggle a sectional one confined to improving the conditions of the monkeys in the University zoo.

The May events began with the call for a demonstration by the M22 for Monday, May 6th, in order to coincide with a disciplinary hearing involving M22 members at the Sorbonne and the official day for beginning exams. The academic authorities, hoping to crush the militant minority, closed the Sorbonne and called in the riot police, the CRS on Friday 3rd May. Violent clashes occurred in the Latin Quarter (the area around the University) whilst the cops attempted to pick up the troublemakers and generally intimidate the student population. The official student union (UNEF) and the lecturers union called an immediate strike in

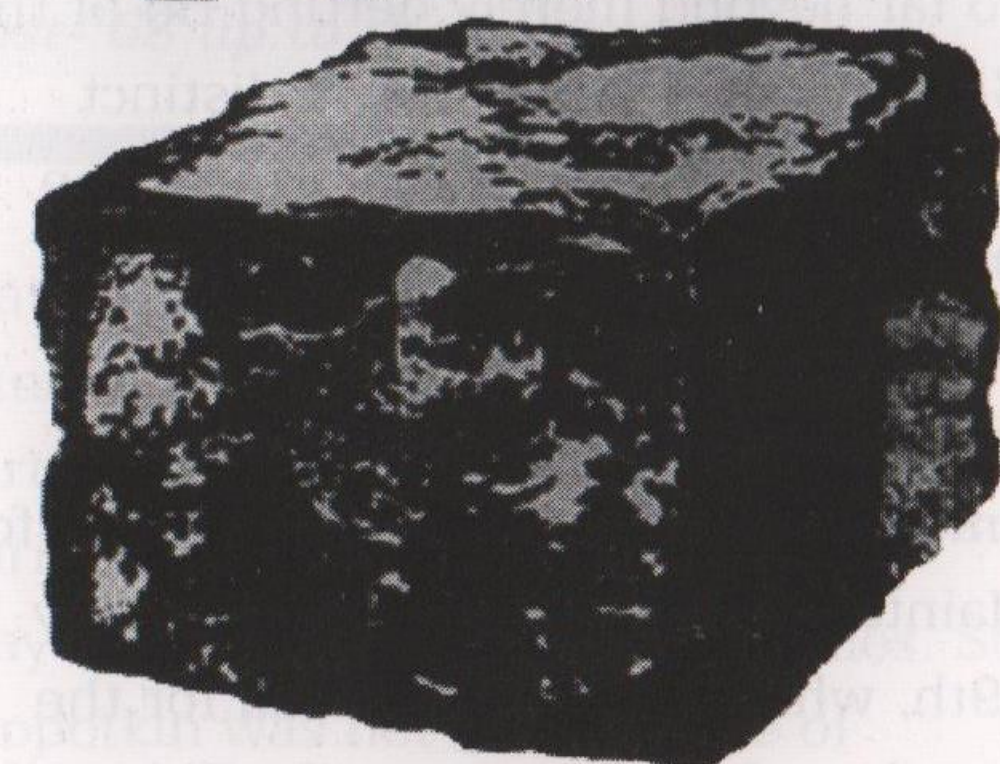
protest. This continued over the weekend as an emergency court jailed six student 'agitators' and the authorities banned the planned Monday demonstration. The march went ahead and was the biggest seen in Paris since the Algerian war. Between the Monday and the following Friday the momentum increased with ever larger numbers in the streets, talking, planning, organising. On the Friday the first barricades went up and the situation took a semi-insurrectionary turn following a 30,000 strong march where the University students were joined by large numbers of high school students and local workers. The police response was brutal in the extreme, but the situation was changing from a 'student' protest isolated in Paris to something that would engulf millions throughout France, that is a class movement.

On May 13th, realising that a grassroots revolt was gathering momentum, the trade unions, led by the Stalinist CGT, called a one-day protest strike in order to let off a little steam and to maintain some sort of leadership role. The demonstration of at least 200,000 (some estimate a far higher figure) contained workers from every industry and workplace. At the 'official' end of the march the CGT stewards, of which there were at least 10,000, managed to get most of the crowd to disperse, although they needed to physically intimidate many non-party activists in order maintain control. Thousands still managed to converge on the Champ de Mars at the foot of the Eiffel tower to discuss just where the struggle was going.

On the 13th also, the Sorbonne was vacated by the CRS and subsequently occupied by students and others. In an atmosphere which has been described as 'euphoric' the university buildings were transformed into a vast arena of revolutionary discussion and action, 24 hours a day. The original occupiers were soon joined by delegations from other educational institutes, from the high schools (where the Jeunesse Anarchiste Communiste (Anarchist Communist Youth) organisations

MOINS DE 21ANS

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played a significant role in forming Action Committees) and from factories and offices. Various committees developed with responsibilities for the occupation, propaganda, liaison committees with the workers and other students. Leninist groups argued with each other over the historical significance of it all and who would be providing the correct leadership. Funnily enough, none of them were required to do so. Those who really wanted to develop the movement as far it would go attempted to deepen the break with bourgeois society and to encourage the working class to take things into its own hands (and out of those of the parties and unions).

Occupation of the workplaces

The occupation of factories and other workplaces began on May 14th when the Sud Aviation plant at Nantes was occupied by its workers. The next day the Renault factories at Cléon and Flins were occupied and over the next couple of days the wildcat strike wave was spread all over France. Few major workplaces were not affected, even in small rural towns. Action Committees were set up in numberless factories

and offices and red (and sometimes black!) flags were hoisted over building sites, railway stations, schools and pitheads. By Monday May 20th the whole of France was paralysed. Students were talking with workers and workers were talking amongst themselves, the main question being "How far are we going to take this?". Back in the Sorbonne, revolutionary elements within the Occupation Committee issued a call for "the immediate occupation of all the factories in France and the formation of workers councils". For a period it looked as if a revolution which would go far beyond merely getting rid of the Gaullist government was a distinct possibility. When the majority of the Occupation Committee prevaricated, the revolutionary elements, situationists and members of the Enragés group formed a Committee for Maintaining the Occupations on May 19th, which continued to call for the creation of workers councils. This call was echoed by various groups involved in the struggle in different parts of France, whilst increasing numbers of workers joined the strike movement. By the end of the week 10 million were on strike.

For the abolition of bosses!

But the dead hand of Stalinism and of social democracy still lay heavily upon the working class. On the 24th the CGT called a mass demonstration of its members in Paris. The March 22nd Movement and the Action Committees called for a demonstration around the slogans "No to parliamentary solutions! No to negotiations which only prop up capitalism! Workers! Peasants! Students! Workers! Teachers! Schoolboys! (sic) Let us organise and co-ordinate our struggle: For the abolition of Bosses! All power to the Workers!" The CGT assembled, in an effort to demobilise, around 200,000 workers, the revolutionary demonstration being around 100,000 strong. During the latter demonstration the Stock Exchange was burnt down and various government ministries were saved not by the numbers of riot cops but the success of

the Trotskyists Young 'Revolutionary' 'Communists' and the social democrats of the official student union in turning the demonstrators back into the 'security' of the Latin Quarter. On the same day in Bordeaux, demonstrators attempted to storm the municipal buildings and that night street fighting occurred in Paris, Lyon, Nantes and other cities.

Reactionary mobilisation

The struggle had reached a critical point and the power which appeared for the taking began to look like it was slipping from the grasp of the would-be revolutionaries. The May 27th CGT demonstration of perhaps half a million workers passed off with little or no incident. Three days later President De Gaulle announced an election within 40 days and supporters of the General and of the maintenance of capitalism generally suddenly sensed that the movement had stalled. A reactionary mobilisation took place with hundreds of thousands of France's bourgeoisie and their petit-bourgeois hangers on swamping Paris, calling for order, support for the police and a violent death for the Jew, Cohn-Bendit. The revolutionary initiative had been lost and it only remained for the trade unions to step in and mediate towards an orderly return to normality.

Not all workers (and certainly not all students) went back to 'normality' so compliantly. The strikes in the important sectors such as the railway, post and in the mines continued into the first week of June. The car workers at Renault, Peugeot and Citroën continued to occupy. But as the CGT and the other unions organised a return to work nationally, the most intransigent sections of the working class found themselves increasingly isolated and subject to state repression. On June 7th the Renault works at Flins was subject to a pre-dawn raid and the occupying workers expelled at gunpoint. Sporadic fighting in the countryside around the plant continued for three days. In various parts of France pickets refused to budge and were having to be battered out of the plants and back to normality.

In the Peugeot works in Sochaux, an attack by the CRS was repulsed by volleys of bolts and other metal objects. In response the police opened fire on the workers, killing two. After a 36-hour battle, Sochaux was finally 'normalised'. Most car workers voted to return by the 17th, the striking radio and TV workers were the last to return, holding out until the second week of July. As for the students, the Sorbonne was cleared by the CRS on the 16th, others held out for a few more weeks. Militants insisted "the struggle continues", as indeed it does, but the revolutionary potential in France was petering out. The struggle was to continue, but elsewhere. Solidarity, in the eyewitness account Paris May 1968 concluded that the events pointed to the need for:

"the creation of a new kind of revolutionary movement... strong enough to outwit the bureaucratic manoeuvres, alert enough day by day to expose the duplicity of the 'left' leaderships, deeply enough implanted to explain the to the workers the real meaning of the students' struggle, to propagate the idea of autonomous strike committees (linking up union and non-union members), of workers management and workers councils."

ITALIAN SUMMER

'May 1968' was followed by the Italian 'Hot Summer' of 1969 (which actually began in Autumn 1968), where a wave of strikes and factory occupations, often outside and against the union structures spread over industrial Italy. Mass strike meetings were opened up to 'outsiders' — local people, students and revolutionary militants. Particularly combative car worker strikes broke out in Alfa Romeo and Fiat plants and there were street confrontations with the cops throughout the year. University, but particularly high school, students were involved in struggles which echoed those of the French student mobilisations.

This wave of struggle gave birth to many organisations, both at the level of the factories and in the broader

social milieu, the most notable being Lotta Continua (The Continuing Struggle) and Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy). The anti-union nature of the struggles also gave rise to what became the theory and activity of 'workers autonomy' (not synonymous with the organisation of the same name), which the new organisations attempted to relate to. Workers were taking their struggles on to the streets, using imaginative direct actions. Occupations of city centres and sieges of municipal buildings continued throughout the 1970s.

Restructuring

Struggles in Italy also took place around the prisons, which from the early 1970s were increasingly home to revolutionary militants, often culminating in massive demonstrations and prison riots. The period of heightened class struggles heralded in 1968 underwent a transformation as a new employers' offensive, based upon the desire to avoid the emerging economic crisis, involved a technological restructuring of industry and the end of the 'workers' fortresses' of the massive plants. On a political level, the Communist Party was increasingly integrated into the state structures in return for its complicity in this restructuring. This integration of the Communist Party was in part responsible for the emergence of urban armed struggle in the mid-70s.

Armed struggle

Indeed, in Italy, the 1970s were defined by two aspects. Firstly, a level of militancy amongst a large number of workers both employed and unemployed which manifested itself in autonomous struggle both in the factories and on a territorial basis and which arguably reached its high point in the 'movement of '77'. Secondly, the 'armed struggle for communism' carried out by several Leninist groups which, when not actually state sponsored contributed nothing to the actual class struggles which they claimed to somehow 'lead'. The activities of the latter, which left the working class as spectators to their

own 'liberation', tend to overshadow the actual content of the class struggles that took place and any revolutionary potential.

AND IN 'SOCIALIST' POLAND...

The strikes and occupations were echoed in the proletarian insurgency in Poland in 1970-71, when workers responded to 'socialist' austerity measures with their very own May '68 (only in December and January!) burning down the ruling Stalinist party headquarters to the tune of the Internationale. In areas of the country the working class was effectively master of the situation. As in France,

Tribal life and anarchism Continued from page 15

in a village community to impose a decision, this system has been practised by mankind wherever there have been village communities".

Although Kropotkin was an inveterate optimist when it came to the question of a social revolution, he was neither naive nor ill-informed when it came to understanding the realities of social life. He thus did not romanticise tribal society, and the suggestion that Kropotkin was an advocate of "post-industrial tribalism" represents a total misunderstanding of Kropotkin's conception of a future anarchist communist society.

In stressing that humans did not live in a "state of perpetual warfare" and that mutual aid and reciprocity were the norm in tribal society — thus countering the "caricature" of tribal life put out by the followers of Hobbes — Kropotkin never sought to hide the limitations of the early forms of social life. He notes that among tribal people infanticide and the abandonment of old people was often practised, that raiding and fiends are common, with a blind commitment to the "rules of blood revenge", that one finds secret societies and initiations that give power to shamans and priests; that witchcraft beliefs are common, and

and indeed Italy, the working class balked at 'going the whole hog' but exhibited a need and desire to, if only temporarily, go beyond all forms of representation and to develop an autonomous activity. And all this without the leadership of the self-proclaimed vanguards...

The May-June events in France were the clearest confirmation that only a mass social revolution which stretched to every sector of exploited humanity could end the chaos of capitalism.

In the concluding part of 'In the tradition' we look at the developments post-'68 up to the present day.

that different ethical principles are often applied to those outside a particular tribal community — and that during conflict "revolting cruelties" may thus be inflicted upon enemies. So Kropotkin was not an advocate of anarcho-primitivism, nor did he suggest that the "tradition of authority" should be replaced by the "authority of tradition". He recognised only too well the hierarchical aspects of tribal life, and the sometimes oppressive nature of public opinion. As he wrote:

"There is no doubt that primitive society had temporary leaders. The sorcerer, the rainmaker — the learned man of that age — sought to profit from what they knew about nature in order to dominate their fellow beings. Similarly, he who could more easily memorise the proverbs and songs in which all traditions was embodied became influential".

Another key point of Kropotkin's critique of bourgeois social theory was his view that sociality and culture are not the enemy of individual autonomy and expression, but must be seen as "the structure without which no individuals can even begin to exercise their potentialities". Individuals in tribal society were not unreflective or lacking any individuality, their lives completely determined by social norms and public opinion. Kropotkin always stressed the need to develop a society that not only respected but also

enhanced individual freedom and initiative. Individual autonomy is of paramount importance to Kropotkin and he neither romanticised tribal life, nor considered public opinion on tradition as some hallowed social form, but rather sought to develop a new form of society "in which the welfare of all would become the groundwork for the fullest development of the personality". Kropotkin was thus concerned to cherish and uphold the "development of individuality" and the creative power of the individual.

Throughout his writings, Kropotkin made a clear distinction between two forms of individualism, the kind of bourgeois individualism associated with Hobbes and Nietzsche, and the "true individualism" of the anarchist communist tradition. The egoism — the "narrow and selfish" individualism — espoused by liberal theorists and by the anarchist followers of Nietzsche, Kropotkin considered "spurious" for it was essentially asocial and implied the oppression of one's neighbours, at the elitist affirmation of a "superior type" of humanity. The egomaniac, or the narcissistic individual who was content to treat other people as objects, or as a means of their own empowerment, was not Kropotkin's idea of an anarchist.

Individualism

In a recent study on the politics of individualism L Susan Brown essentially follows Kropotkin in making a distinction between two forms of individualism, the instrumental individualism of liberal political theory, and the existentialist individualism, which she argues, is shared by both anarchist political philosophy and liberalism. Instrumental individualism implies an "abstract" (asocial) individual, as a possessive individual, an individual who uses others to further their own ends and self-interest. Instrumental individualism is thus based on the belief in freedom as a means to achieve individual interests, and conceives the human person as a possessive, competitive individual, the owner of property, not only in terms of "self-ownership" —

having property in oneself — but also as holding real, private property.

Existential individualism, on the other hand — Kropotkin's "true" individualism — is "founded on the idea that freedom is an inherently valuable end in itself; self-determination and individual autonomy are desirable for themselves, and need no other justification". Thus freedom can have two very different meanings — that of instrumental freedom manifested through the market, and that of existential freedom, expressed in the individual's capacity to be autonomous and self-determining.

In an important critique of liberal feminism — as expressed in the writings of John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan and Janet Radcliffe Richards — Brown clearly demonstrated that liberal political theory contains an inherent contradiction, in embracing both forms of individualism. For all three scholars, in their liberal commitment to an inherently unequal class system (capitalism) and in advocating state power, completely undermine the existential individualism that they also profess to espouse. Individualist anarchism, Brown suggests, is essentially a radical version of liberalism and not an alternative to it, and that only social anarchism has political coherence in combining existential individualism with free communism.

In contrast, liberalism and individualist anarchism (or anarcho-capitalism) to the degree that they advocate private property and the free market economy always compromise individual freedom and undermine existential individualism.

Brown also emphasises the fact that social anarchism is not only opposed to governmental power (the state) but seeks to dissolve all forms of authority and power. She quotes Rudolf Rocker:

"Common to all anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions which stand in the way of the development of free humanity."

She thus concludes that anarchists oppose any form of social organisation

that take away or inhibits the self-determination of the individual.

However, in contrast to Kropotkin, her emphasis in the study is on individual autonomy rather than on social freedom. Kropotkin was not only critical of the state, and all its manifestations and techniques of power (prisons, schools) but also of private property, the wage system, capitalism and all forms of religious authority — not just the state.

Kropotkin never fantasised about a pre-social state of nature, for he recognised that humans were intrinsically social beings — as well as being autonomous individuals. He thus repudiated entirely the philosophy

Kropotkin recognised that humans were essentially social beings.

of the individual as asocial, possessive, narcissistic and competitive. He considered this narrow and selfish individualism to be both "misanthropic" and oppressive. But in stressing that humans were inherently social beings, this did not imply that human nature was "fixed" or "static", or that they had ontological "freedom". Kropotkin stressed social freedom and a communal individuality, and advocated anarchist communism in that he felt that this formed the best basis for individual development and freedom, and allowed for the full expression of a person's faculties, capacities and individuality.

It has been fashionable, usually by writers of Ph.D. theses, to criticise Kropotkin for having a romantic view of human nature and therefore making ethics unnecessary. This presents a complete travesty of anarchist thought. It has often been said that Kropotkin, and anarchists more generally, are too innocent, too naive, and have too rosy a picture of human nature. It is said that, like Rousseau, they have a romantic view of human nature, which

they see as essentially good, co-operative and peace loving. But of course, real humans are not like this: they are cruel and aggressive and selfish, and so anarchy is just a pipe dream. It is an unrealistic vision of a past golden age that never existed. This being so, some form of coercive authority is always necessary. The truth is that Kropotkin — and other anarchists — do not follow Rousseau. Kropotkin, as we have seen, repudiated Rousseau's idealisation of the "noble savage", while Bakunin was even more scathing in his criticisms of the eighteenth century philosopher.

Kropotkin and most anarchists, think of humans as having both positive and negative tendencies. If they did think humans all goodness and light, would they mind being ruled? It is because they have a realistic rather than a romantic view of human nature, that they oppose all forms of authority that are coercive, or in any way inhibit the self-determination of the individual. In essence, anarchists oppose all power, which the French describe as "puissance" — "power over" (rather than "pouvoir", the power to do something), and believe, like Lord Acton, that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Social anarchism

In his study of nineteenth century social anarchism, David Morland argues that Kropotkin (along with Proudhon and Bakunin) was not a starry-eyed visionary out of touch with the world, but had a realistic attitude towards humans and human nature. These anarchists recognised that both an inherent sociability and an inherent egoism were rooted in human psychology. But because they acknowledged human "egoism" the classical anarchists like Kropotkin, Morland contends, could not logically and empirically advocate an anarchist society, a society without a state. Equating politics and power with coercive government and seemingly unaware that for most of human history people have in fact lived in societies without government, Morland

argues that human "egoism" renders a stateless society "impossible". With "egoism" there inevitably arise conflicts and disputes, and these, for Morland, necessarily entail state institutions, although for most of human history such conflicts and disputes have been resolved — or not resolved — through social institutions that have no relationship to the state. To bolster his case Morland highlights the inconsistencies and problematic nature of Proudhon's and Bakunin's anarchism — long recognised and critiqued by anarchists — and is continually engaged in the conflation of moral coercion and public opinion with state force. Anarchists, of course, have always recognised that public opinion and social norms (not state laws) can be problematic and oppressive.

Morland's essential argument is contained in the following:

"Both humanity's egocentrism and the economic and political disputes that will ensue from this egocentrism have to be restrained... Hence the need for the state. The state's raison d'être is grounded in human nature and politics."

Hobbes basically argued this three hundred years ago. But the state — centralised, coercive authority — is there not just to keep law and order or to settle disputes — stemming from our egoism — but to promote and uphold, and when necessary, defend, systems of social inequality and exploitation i.e. class interests. This has always been the *raison d'être* ever since the first state arose only a few thousand years ago. As the old liberal Adam Smith put it, government is for the security of property, and is, in reality, instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, for those who have property against those who have none. Not severing politics from economics the classical liberals had a much more historical sense of what the state is all about than it seems contemporary liberals like Morland who views the state simply as a neutral referee and as a guardian of public interest. Kropotkin, of course, was always to emphasise the intrinsic

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relationship between political (state) and economic (capitalism) power.

Human nature

Kropotkin in critiquing the "individualism" of Western metaphysics and political theory, at least attempted to outline an alternative conception of human nature. Kropotkin recognised that humans have certain inherent capacities and powers that are rooted in our biological inheritance: and that humans, like many other animals, are intrinsically, social beings, constituted through social relationships. Thus, for Kropotkin, we are neither completely socially determined — a "docile body", or simply an "effect" of discourses, language or power; nor are humans free of social constraints. But Kropotkin also stressed the importance of social agency and "personalism", a form of existential individualism that emphasised creative self-determination and autonomy — a view of the self that does not entail submission or confession.

The language of freedom

The voice of internationalism

Anarchists have been at the forefront of the international workers' Esperanto movement practically from day one.

The Anarchist Federation, rightly, has always taken its international work seriously. Our International Secretariat has contact with anarchists and other revolutionaries across the globe. The work they do may simply be a matter of letter writing, exchanging info with comrades about matters in their respective countries. At other times, it has meant concerted solidarity actions on an international level. Furthermore, the AF also participates as a member section of the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF).

Point 4 of our *Aims and Principles* states, "The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated". But such boundaries might not only political or economic constructs, they may also be social or psychological barriers. One major barrier between workers uniting on the international level, which is often overlooked or even ignored, is language.

Language is always a problem, as anyone will tell you if they've attempted to communicate with overseas comrades, particularly if they have limited knowledge of a foreign

language and if the overseas comrade knows very little English.

Yet for us as revolutionaries, this need not be an insurmountable problem. With a little bit of application and a degree of international co-operation, the language problem is something we can overcome without too much difficulty.

Of course, we could all spend loads of time attempting to learn lots of languages (badly)... Alternatively, we could spend just a little time learning one very simple and neutral international language (Esperanto) as a means of communicating with comrades in other countries.

Now usually, at the mention of Esperanto, the cynical comments begin...

"But hardly anyone speaks it."

Fact: Several million people worldwide speak Esperanto. Actually, even in Britain where Esperanto is relatively weak, Esperantists greatly outnumber anarchists.

"But English is already a kind of international language, isn't it?"

True. But English is the international language of business, the multinationals, power, imperialism, etc. In many parts of the world English has been forced on people, in some cases literally at the point of a gun. Esperanto on the other hand, is not the property of any class, nation, corporation or government. As far as I know, there is no international Esperanto police force putting the boot into the workers.

Another problem with English is, though it may be a relatively simple language if you want to learn the basics, a non-native speaker will still always be at a disadvantage. In fact English is riddled with countless bizarre and often incomprehensible grammatical forms, completely illogical phrases, strange idioms, as well as

weird spelling and pronunciation. In the end, English for the non-native speaker is yet another barrier to international communication. Much the same problems tend to apply to all other national languages.

With Esperanto, however, everyone is a non-native speaker and therefore everyone is relatively equal — no one has the linguistic advantage. It is also incredibly simple and can be learned in a very short time. In other words, you ~~don't~~ have to be a linguistic egghead to benefit from it. Pronunciation is phonetic. The grammar is completely regular. There are no irregularities to painfully memorise with Esperanto. So, once you learn the basics, that's more or less it. It's then simply a matter of putting it into practice and gaining the experience.

We anarchist communists often talk about creating a "culture of resistance". Well, on the international front, Esperanto can greatly contribute to that goal if we use it for the purpose of international resistance. But it's up to us to build on this. I'm not saying that every class-conscious worker in the world has to learn Esperanto (though that wouldn't be a bad thing). Yet Esperanto, should we choose to use it, is a very useful tool, which can only help the class struggle.

A bit of history

Anyone who's read our excellent pamphlet *The Anarchist Movement in Japan* will notice that some of the reprinted pages from the old anarcho-communist journals are in two languages: Japanese and Esperanto. In the early part of the 20th century a group of Esperantists were executed by the Japanese state for their anarchist activities.

In fact, anarchists have historically been at the forefront of the international workers' Esperanto movement practically from day one. The first anarcho-esperantist group was formed in Stockholm in 1905. This was followed by the influential Peace-Freedom group based in Paris in 1906. Meanwhile, in China and Japan, anarchists began publishing the Esperanto journals *The Voice of the*

People and New Century. The influential Chinese anarchist Shin Fu was an Esperantist and the famous anarchist writer Ba Jin originally wrote his novella *Springtime in Autumn* in Esperanto (later published in English, by the way). I believe Malatesta also understood the international language. Moreover, in 1907 the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam adopted a resolution to support the use of Esperanto. Subsequent conferences reaffirmed this aim.

In the early 1920s, the Ukrainian anarchists A. Levandovski and J. Zilberfarb founded the International Language Scientific Anarchist Library (ISAB). The ISAB called for the formation of a world anarcho-esperantist organisation. With the help of S. Haydovski and N. Futerfas in Russia, the French anarchist Julio Migny and others, the World League of Non-Statist Esperantists (TLES) was eventually formed. TLES had member sections in 15 countries and published the journal *Free Worker* from Berlin.

Between the two world wars, anarchists in Bulgaria published the journal *The Worker*, which was later transferred to Stockholm. Meanwhile, repression in Japan forced the Esperanto journal *The Anarchist* to close down when its editors were jailed. In Spain 1936-1939 the CNT-FAI regularly published its Esperanto information bulletin from Barcelona.

The carnage and destruction of World War 2 saw the end of TLES. However, in 1946 the journal *Non-Statist* began from Paris, published by the provisional Centre for International Anarchist Youth. These comrades carried on some of the work of the old TLES. In 1969, the anarchist fraction of the World Non-nationalist Association (SAT) began the journal *Liberecana Ligilo* (Libertarian Bond), which continues to this day — currently edited in Belgium.

The scene today

It goes without saying that not all Esperantists are revolutionary anarchists, far from it. The biggest international organisation is the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA),

Esperanto contacts

For anarcho-esperantists in Britain, contact the London group of the AF

Liberecana Ligilo (Libertarian Bond)
J.Schram

Hof ter Bekestraat 49

BE-2018 Antwerpen, Belgium

Email address: j.schram@skynet.be

SATEB (SAT in Britain)

c/o P.Simons

The Cottage, 34 Beaulieu Drive

Pinner, Middx HA5 1NG

Email address:

arturo@signalprent.demon.co.uk

(NB: SATEB also offers a free 10 lesson correspondence course for beginners)

Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT)

67, av Gambetta

FR-75020 Paris, France

Email address: satesper@noos.fr

Website:

www.multimania.com/satesperanto/

(The Libertarian Fraction/Liberecana Frakcio can also be contacted *mvia* this address)

which is represented in this country by the British Esperanto Association (EAB). Traditionally, it has always aimed to be politically neutral in its orientation. The second biggest organisation is the World Non-nationalist Association (SAT). Since its foundation in 1921, the SAT has traditionally held a class struggle approach, seeing Esperanto as a tool to bring workers of different countries together and to further the workers' cause on the international front. The SAT publishes a monthly journal *Sennaciulo* (Non-nationalist) and has members across the globe. It provides the means for its members to directly communicate with their fellow workers overseas. Its British affiliate is SATEB (i.e. SAT in Britain) who publish *La Verda Proleto* (The Green Proletarian — green traditionally being the colour of the Esperanto movement).

SAT in Britain is predominantly leftist, although I have to say, very friendly and open. Though the international SAT is a bit of a mixed bag of anarchists and various types of



leftist. Anarchists are fairly influential within the organisation. The Libertarian Fraction itself produces an excellent quarterly magazine *Liberecana Ligilo* (Libertarian Bond). Interestingly, the SAT pamphlet series also has some pretty good titles, including some by anarchists like

Bakunin, Kropotkin and Grave, as well translations of the council communist Anton Pannekoek.

Practicalities

Esperanto has the potential to be an incredibly useful and practical tool to further revolutionary communication

and goals on the international level. It's also the easiest language to learn in the world and you can make yourself understood in Esperanto in an amazingly short time. It certainly has the potential to be the international language of freedom, resistance and solidarity.

Report from the Third Congress of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists: Quebec City, 10-11 February 2001

by Becky & Nicolas (Sabate Anarchist Collective)

Over 35 people attended the 3rd congress of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) held in Quebec City on February 10th and 11th. Participating delegations hailed from Montréal (Le Trouble, Main Noir, and several as of yet nameless groups), Boston (Barricada and Sabate), Baltimore (Roundhouse), Western Massachusetts, and, of course, Quebec City (Emile-Henry, the hosts, and Le Maquis). Also present was a member of the Lyon section of the Francophone Anarchist Federation (FAF) who extended to the congress the greetings of the FAF and gave a presentation regarding the organisational model of the Lyon region of the FAF.

Several important motions, including the call for an anarchist contingent at the anti-FTAA demonstrations in April and for the publication and wide distribution of a four-page agitational bulletin about the FTAA and anarchism, were passed during the weekend. Additionally, the conference served as a debut for NEFAC's magazine, *The Northeastern Anarchist*. The magazine was well received by conference participants and is available throughout the region at movement bookstores and info-shops.

Among the most important accomplishments of the congress were the transfer of the General Secretariat of the English section from Prole

Revolt (Morgantown, WV) to Roundhouse, the discussions around Federation structure, the acceptance of several new groups and individuals into the Federation, and the acceptance of several new Federation initiatives. These initiatives include an organisational tour to spread the word about NEFAC and aid people in the creation of new collectives, the writing of an international anarchist anti-FTAA statement similar to the ones written around the Prague and Nice mobilisations, and important organising for the mobilisation against the FTAA summit, including calls for anarchist contingents at the demonstrations of April 20th and 21st.

Two upcoming regional meetings will be held to further develop the French-speaking section of NEFAC, focusing on participation in the anti-FTAA protests and organisational and political questions in the region. The launching of a sister publication to *The Northeastern Anarchist*, a French-language anarchist-communist theoretical journal, is also being planned.

As NEFAC approaches its first year of existence, member collectives and individuals are taking the time to reflect on and discuss how to work most effectively within the group. As a regional federation, working within a framework of tactical and theoretical unity and coherence, we aim to struggle collectively, transcending

national and linguistic boundaries. By sharing resources — study guides, speakers, discussion lists, publications — we will develop this framework over time. And through the collective production of written materials, we will turn our discussions and ideas into fuel for agitation and organisation. Over the next year, as NEFAC grows, we will turn our efforts outward, to organise and to link struggles in our local communities to the growing anarchist movement.

Contacts

NEFAC General Secretariat (English)
Roundhouse Collective
C/o Black Planet Radical Books
1621 Fleet Street
Baltimore, MD 21231, USA

NEFAC Collectif de Secrétariat Général (Francophone)
Groupe Anarchiste Emile-Henry
C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O.
Quebec (QC), G1K 1J0, CANADA
Note: the NEFAC website is at:
<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~acf/neacf.html>

Organise! on the net

Articles from *Organise!* can be found on the internet at:
<http://www.afed.org.uk>
You can also E-Mail us at
acf@burn.ucsd.edu

Harold Thompson

Editors' note: Harold Thompson has been a contact of ours for a long time now. He recently sent us the following letter. As we have published details of Harold's situation before, we decided to edit it. If you want to learn more about him then contact the Friends of Harold H Thompson, whose address is at the end of this letter. They are distributing From the Belly of the Beast, a collection of his writings.

Dear Organise!

I send warmest of anarchist greetings and friendship to all at the Anarchist Federation from the belly of the beast!

I am an anarchist who works as a jailhouse lawyer aiding prisoners with their legal matters, appeals, grievances and lawsuits in the Tennessee state prison system where I have been captive for 21 years.

The judicial system in this country leaves indigent prisoners on their own to struggle through the quagmire of the appellate process without the benefit of aid of legal counsel. Inside, I stay busy with other prisoners' legal work as well as my own, fighting the system from within, which is another plateau of the struggle where the brutal face of the capitalist monster is unmasked as there is no need of pretense or a civilized mask when dealing with prisoners. It is always a terrific morale boost when I win in court for myself or others, which makes the long hours of my work worthwhile.

I am serving life plus 82 years in the State of Tennessee and am convicted of killing a murderer, who was also a confirmed police informant. In 1986, I attempted an armed escape from an East Tennessee rural gulag. After firing six shots from an automatic pistol and throwing two of three bombs on state property, I was captured by shotgun wielding prison guards. I was later placed on trial for escape-related charges, was found guilty and sentenced to 32 additional years. Prior to my abortive escape attempt I had been extradited to Ohio and received 21-75 additional years resultant of a shooting incident

conviction there. During 21 years in Tennessee prisons I have served over eight years in maximum security solitary confinement but have never been broken and will never allow myself to be broken, bend or intimidated by the prison system and will continue fighting against injustice until the day I die.

Presently in court, I am contesting rejection and withholding of anarchist literature and correspondence with a civil rights violation lawsuit I filed in November of 2000 after suffering over 20 such mail rejections over the past year at this Tennessee Department of Correction gulag. This lawsuit has the distinct potential of helping all U.S. anarchist or politicised prisoners who are undergoing this type of mail harassment by prison officials. This case will likely end up at the U.S. Supreme Court with opposing counsel or me seeking high court review. It takes funds to properly fight a court case in the USA so I am forced to call on my brothers and sisters in the free world for help with copy, postage, notarisation and typing supplies expenses with my two pending lawsuits.

In 1999, I was attacked by two Aryan Brotherhood racist cowards, beaten and robbed of my watch and ring. I had offended AB bigoted prisoners because I chose to help all prisoners meriting help

regardless of race. It turned out a staff member was working hand in glove with the AB racists and was supplying them with departmentally banned race hate literature which was sent to her from a racist organisation through the prison mail room.

The United States Supreme Court has ruled prisoner-on-prisoner assaults are not a part of a prisoner's sentence and therefore violate a prisoner's constitutional rights, making such actionable in court.

Aside from my own situation, a recent national event merits brief comment. This nation now has a new president in office resultant of Election Hijack 2000. Considering he is George Herbert Walker Bush's son, little George, Junior, this nation in all likelihood will be at war in a few years, or less, in some under-developed country or Iraq. Bush, Jr., it is easy to predict, will try to achieve his father's unfulfilled obsession of taking Iraq's Saddam out of power by any means necessary. He will propel this nation toward fascism at high speed, which will stoke the fire of rebellion in many working clan hearts. The widening chasm between the rich élite and working class poor will expand with Bush in office. The country's wealthy minority will enjoy the benefit of tax cuts with the weight of the capitalist system yoke on the shoulders of the working class masses growing progressively heavier with less jobs, decreasing buying power, less pay, more

FROM THE BELLY OF THE BEAST.....



homelessness, and less on family tables. Now is the time to educate and agitate by anarchists. Rough days are ahead but also the exciting potential for sweeping change.

I would welcome letters from anybody willing to write and deeply appreciate any donations sent to my support campaign to help with legal expenses fighting the system from within, as I am struggling on a shoestring budget in

need of support. Anybody wishing further information about my writings, struggle inside prison walls, or me can also make contact with my support campaign at the following computer address of catherine.kay@btinternet.com. I will close and hope to receive letters and support from out there. Take care, stay strong and continue to struggle for what your heart tells you is right! Confusion to

our enemies! They will never get us all! I love you all!

In Anarchist Struggle & Solidarity,
Harold Thompson, #93992
Northwest Correctional Complex
Route 1, Box 660, Tiptonville
Tennessee 38079, USA

If you want to contact Harold or provide support, then write to: Friends Of Harold H. Thompson, P.O. Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21, UK.

Anarchists in Turkish prisons

Dear Friends,

Here is a letter we have just received from an anarchist in Turkey, about the unbearable conditions anarchists prisoners face in Turkish prisons. We have decided not to reveal the name of the correspondent.
5th MAY GROUP

"I have been an anarchist prisoner for five years. They (DGM, Malatya — DGM is a state security court] gave me 15 years because I did not deny my anarchist identity and ideas. I had to deal with all sorts of problems. In Malatya prison I was put in the block dominated by Marxist-Leninists prisoners. However, I was not accepted by them. I was told to stay only as an ordinary, non-political not as an anarchist. Only PKK (Editors' note: the Kurdish Workers Party, a nationalist party) accepted me, with one condition: I was not to talk to anyone about anarchism. Although they gave way a little after I insisted, they did not recognise my anarchist identity. They were moderate towards me because in the past I had defended myself in DGM as a Kurdish anarchist. If this was not so, I am sure they would have never let me in their block. I had no choice but to demand my transfer to Burdur prison. There were four other anarchist prisoners in Burdur prison. They were

people who converted to anarchism inside the prison walls. Like many other anarchists in prisons, they came from leftist background. At that time I was tortured when I was arrested. Difficulty to breathe, liver aches, ear and eye problems. Most importantly, I had serious trauma. My cell had no air conditioning and my health began to deteriorate even more. I was having problems with breathing and sometimes I fainted. I suggested to my anarchist comrades that we should demand to be transferred to a block with air conditioning. They agreed. But the prison authorities rejected us outright. We were told to contact the representatives of the Prisoners' Committee, which was controlled by Marxist-Leninist organisations. I explained to them about this matter. In the meantime, I could not see a doctor about my deteriorating health. I also talked to the representatives of MLKP (Marxist Leninist Communist Party) and PKK and asked them for help. They got upset. They refused to help us because we were anarchists, not 'revolutionaries'. They did not see us as revolutionaries. They told us not to cause any more problems. Me and my comrades discussed the matter among ourselves. We decided to ask for a

transfer to another prison where they were no Marxists. Some friends told me to stay in one of the political blocks until my health got better. First I refused, but then I got worried because I was fainting more frequently. I decided to tell this to the representatives of Prisoners' Committee. MLKP refused to let me stay in their block straight away. PKK, on the other hand, told me to stay with one condition: I had to be an 'ordinary' citizen. I was very much hurt and refused. In the meantime, some of my visitors from outside were sent back by the Prisoners' Committee. The reason was that we were not revolutionaries. (...) We were transferred to different places. I was sent to Konya/Ermenek prison. For about two years I lived there. For a while I stayed with Trotskyists, because they too were rejected and treated like us by Prisoners' Committee. Finally, I realised how difficult it was to live with Marxists. My own political leanings were the reason for this. My health was in danger in solitary confinement. I was sent to Ankara Numune Hospital and had an operation. However, they couldn't do anything about my severe headaches and ear problems."

"...As you can see, the penalty of being an anarchist is very severe. You are confronted from everywhere. I think this is something which anarchists have been highly aware of. I hope this letter would be helpful in informing you about the conditions which an anarchist faces in Turkish prisons."



Up Against the Odds

*An Account of the JJ Fast Food Workers Strike
Tottenham 1995-96*

John McArthur. RPM Publications.
£1.50. 42 pages. Illustrations.

The author of this pamphlet was a member of the JJ Fast Food Workers Support Group and is a committed anarchist. He notes: "The workers at JJ Fast Foods were sacked on October 1995 for organising against low pay and atrocious working conditions. Their activities in the dispute, and the support for them that was generated in the local community and beyond is an example of grassroots working class self-organisation at its best. It showed the vital part that immigrant communities can play in these struggles, effectively cutting across the racism and false divisions that are deliberately and increasingly encouraged and inflamed by politicians, capitalists, the media and the far right".

The run-up to the strike in North London and the appalling conditions, long hours and lousy wages (70-hour week for £100 is normal) faced by many Turkish and Kurdish immigrants is described. As John says: "significantly, the British State has continued to intensify its harassment, detention and forced dispersal of immigrant workers".

When 45 of a total of 75 workers joined the Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU) over summer 1995, the boss, Mustafa Kamil, immediately sacked their shop steward. Workers at JJ were working 60-70 hours a week for £130 with no proper breaks, no overtime, holiday or sick pay. A strike effectively started and Kamil called in a number of security guards, relatives and/or members of the Turkish far right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) who attacked the strikers with sticks. When police arrived they too attacked the strikers.

The workers then put large pickets in place. Immediately the full-time officials of the TGWU attempted to heavily control the pickets, making sure that they were 'orderly' and confined behind barriers set up by the police. The TGWU

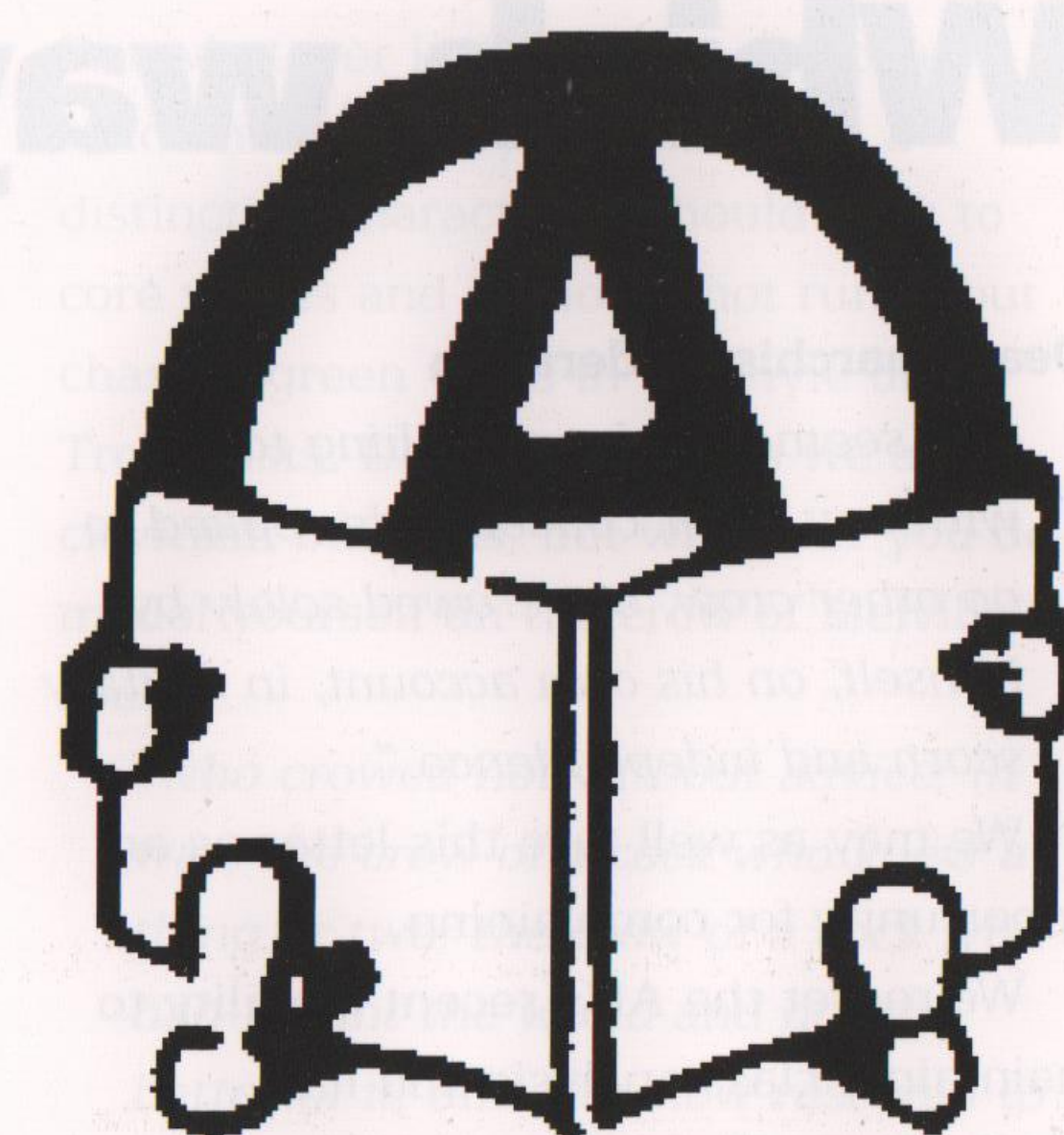
told the strikers that the pickets were not to be pickets and the dispute was not a strike! They attempted too defuse the action by starting process applications to an Industrial Tribunal. The police and especially the riot cops of the Territorial Support Group were present in force. The police harassed strikers at their meeting places and stopped them and their supporters in the street. Plain-clothes cops threatened workers with the threat of race checks and criminalisations of asylum seekers.

Burger blockade

With the aid of the Colin Roach Centre in Hackney and the Haringey Solidarity Group a support group was set up. Pickets of kebab and burger shops supplied by JJ were systematically set up.

Meanwhile the TGWU officials unilaterally announced in November that the pickets would be changed from 5am to 2pm, because it was 'too dark' at the earlier hour. This despite the fact that that was when vans came and went with food supplies. Fortunately the strikers ignored this order. Eventually Kamil, due to an effective boycott and vastly reduced deliveries agreed to negotiate. The T&G officials attempted to force the workers to go back at any price. They tried to get the pickets called off. They agreed under pressure to call a mass demonstration in North London. And then did nothing to organise it. When it was organised independently by the workers and support group they sent a hostile letter saying that the demo had not been agreed by the T&G and was unofficial. They contacted the police and told them this, effectively calling on them to ban it!

When the strike looked like reaching a successful outcome, with JJ risking going bust, the union attempted to persuade the workers that going through the Industrial Tribunal was better than economic struggle. They persuaded the workers to return but said nothing about being on the same terms and conditions



or in some cases worse ones. The workers rejected this, and the T&G district officials flatly told them to accept the new conditions. Only 12 returned to work on 18th March 1996.

As well as the direct sabotage by the T&G officials, the 'Revolutionary' Left also played their part.

Trots

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in particular cynically used the strike to attempt to recruit to their Party. When this failed they withdrew support. They also arranged collections in workplaces in a way which alienated support there — as at Hackney Bus Garage, where the SWP's visit resulted in a blanket ban on anyone visiting to gain support. They had attempted to swamp Support Group meetings with large numbers of SWP members and called on the workers to "push the T&G officials to act".

John describes the role of anarchists in the strike, which was enthusiastic and which encouraged self-organisation. But as he says: "It is both a strength and a weakness that anarchists were undertaking much of the practical work, but failing to put a strong enough case for breaking with the courts and the TGWU, and for complete independent organisation".

John is a convinced anarcho-syndicalist, and his conclusions that the way forward is through Revolutionary unionism is something that the Anarchist Federation would take issue with. "But that's another story" as he says, and the pamphlet is an effective and eloquent testimony to both the courage of immigrant workers and the role of the trade unions and the Left. I thoroughly recommend that everyone read it.

Which way the AF?

Dear Anarchist Federation

"He seemed to have nothing to do with any other concern. He replied to no other crow, but crowed solely by himself, on his own account, in solitary scorn and independence."

We may as well take this letter as an opportunity for complaining.

We regret the AF's recent inability to maintain a class analysis and its consequent subsumption under green ideology. Have you forgotten the two main aspects of class struggle theory for anarchists are: (1) that the major part of the working class has to be involved in any revolutionary activity; (2) that the struggle of the working class is sited in the social and economic domain (and has no particular interest in politics)? It seems the AF have endorsed the direct action interventions of green anti-capitalists because the greens use anarchistic methods (but within the political arena); have the AF also adopted the greens' reformist programme through which the world can be supposedly improved, i.e., what are the short-term goals of the AF?

The anti-capitalists want to shut down multi-national corporations, if achieved this would constitute a victory for the greens, does the AF understand capitalism in this way? Would another form of 'debt-free', 'fair trade' capitalism be acceptable to the AF? We ask because we understand that capitalism is based on the exploitation of the labour of the working class and therefore no matter what form it took it would remain fundamentally unchanged at its core (we think this is the essential principle of class struggle analysis). In a similar vein does the AF consider the recent political changes in Serbia (the integration of that country into the European economy according to NATO's specifications) a move in the right direction, an improvement? When the owners of capital in that country remain unchanged? We are certain that the greens' claim of opposition to world capitalism is not an opposition to capitalism as such but to its current form and that their short term reform goals are their only goals.

Aside from the emphasis on direct action, the greens have very little in common with socialists, particularly anarchist socialists. The class composition of the anti-capitalists is predominately bourgeois, as activists they are used to workers not being involved, they practice 'direct democracy' within their organisations but are contemptuous of those outside. Their personal backgrounds mean they are practiced in being leaders and interpreters, it is a position they are familiar with, they are quite happy that it should fall to them to act and they view it as typical that the working class is not involved, they have no conceptual means of registering working class struggle or the values of ordinary people.

Are millions of workers moved to revolt by the example set by the self appointed gladiators of anti-capitalism? If the current wave of anti-capitalist spectacular actions were calling up flocks of recruits for the AF from the industrial working class then a continued focus on the World Bank and IMF would seem appropriate, if however membership numbers remain critically low then another strategy might be adopted after a thorough critique of the limitations of anti-capitalism.

Extremism

We suspect that the anti-capitalist movement has served its purpose for its leadership and that the intensity of its actions will now begin to pall and its (really quite small) numbers will begin to fall away. It is unfortunate that many anarchists equate revolution with acts of political extremism, ordinary people feel a distaste for extremity, particularly gratuitous extremity. This does not mean that they will not participate in a revolution, just that they need to feel the force of necessity and sense that there is no other way. In tactical terms we think it is a great pity that you have chosen to advocate direct action as the primary means of expressing your values because we are certain that in doing so you have chosen to inhabit a ghetto of political activists which very few ordinary people wish to have anything to with.



The principle of class struggle anarchism, as already stated, lies in the mass participation of many, many workers. If many, many workers are committed to the struggle against capital then their personal qualitative involvement would not have to be so great, if however large numbers are substituted by small numbers then the requirement on any given individual must increase, at the moment, fifteen thousand people are taking on the role of five billion, the distortion of perspective and analysis brought about by this arbitrary representationalism must be obvious to anybody who opposes authoritarianism, it also instigates a completely non-anarchistic form of evaluation where the acts of the few are valued above the acts of the many — do you truly believe that the actions in Prague are more significant than the events in any workplace in any provincial town?

The greens have no qualms about the make-up of their organisation (indeed they are greens because they are uncomfortable at the thought of being red, i.e., being dictated to by workers, being in a theoretical position where their actions are not central), their mission is to save the Earth, and by any means necessary; they have no need of delegative structure beyond their own self-referring because they fight for a political entity that they alone can interpret. It is curious and disappointing to us that the AF now finds more in common with EF! because of the latter's emphasis on its narrow definition of activism and direct action than it does with proletarian struggle. Extreme actions do not amount to a revolutionary position, the militancy of anti-capitalism falls a long way short of being pro-revolution. Has the AF asked itself the question: why should we spend time on fighting the World Bank, what is it we gain by its demise? Unfortunately the AF

appears more ready to express solidarity with other political activists no matter what their class status because of their common engagements than it does to work within proletarian struggle. Are political activists no longer classed as a hindrance by anarchists? Perhaps this avant garde is now to be promoted, in the Bolshevik style.

It seems to us that the first goal of all pro-revolutionaries ought to be 'all power to the working class' — you have forgotten this (we cite as evidence for our general position on the AF's greenward drift — the events listings page of your recent Resistance which numbers 'green fairs' in its dates to watch).

We have personal respect for several greens of our acquaintance, their integrity and their quality as human beings is not to be doubted, we have no wish to belittle the efforts these people have invested in their causes but their causes are mistaken and theoretically ungrounded. The revolution must take the people (specifically the working class) and not the Earth as subject and object. If the AF is substituting the masses with the militant acts of a few in its programme then it has made a grave strategic error.

We are nobodies but as nobodies we call on all socialist anarchists to re-theorise their positions and separate out once and for all the confusion of social-economic struggle with politics. We'd like to make it quite plain that we are not making a claim for ourselves, we are not putting our position to the forefront, we are not in competition with any anarchist body. We do not appreciate the intimidating cultural machismo of anarchist activists and therefore do not wish to be implicated in its self-dramatising gestures, as with so many others our personal qualities would not be appreciated in the anarchist milieu which (in our opinion) has a deranged conception of what is needed — is not this derangement caused by the emphasis on personal extremity and the forgetting of anarchism's socialist roots? We are quite happy with our irrelevancy, the revolution is no more our job than it is that of the drivers and postmen who processed this letter. We are quite content with the current level of our activities but we do wish there was an

equivalent organisation in England to the federations in Italy and France to which we could contribute our efforts. We see no reason why an anarchist federation in England could not have five or six thousand members in a couple of years time but something needs to change in the cultural make-up of those who currently lead the movement. On the other hand, if the AF gave up all pretension to be a mass organisation (becoming a closed organisation with membership based on invitation) and concentrated on producing tight theoretical positions, critiques and interventions both within the anarchist and the workers movement then this would serve a useful purpose. Or it could become an umbrella organisation linking up groups within libertarian socialism.

Reply to Robbie

We think that Red Robbie is wrong on a number of counts. The first is in his assumption that we have turned our backs on class politics. The Anarchist Federation have always held the view that the revolution is the affair of the whole working class and not some small part of it and certainly not of a vanguard elite.

However, we think that his main problems lie in his apparent lack of understanding in what constitutes the working class and its exploitation by capitalism and he totally ignores the mass movements of liberation and expropriation in the developing world.

RR seems to take the view that the working class is made up of industrial workers alone or that we focus our attention only on environmental activism when in fact we try to publicise and support many different forms of struggle in many different places and situations. This may have once been the truth (though we doubt it), but today the picture is much more complex. Workers, that is those who work for a wage for a living and do not benefit from the expropriation of surplus value by capital, are seldom in a position of being obviously exploited in the way that, say, a nineteenth century mill worker was. Instead, they are part of a vast collective effort that is exploited by capital as a collectivity. Many of those who are

But whatever it does it should focus much more tightly and maintain a distinctive character, it should stick to core values and it should not run about chasing green votes in the style of the Trotskyists. Don't listen to us we are clownish buffoons, but whatever you do, model yourself on the crow of Melville's cock:

"who crowed not without advice; (it was) the crow of a cock who knew a thing or two; the crow of a cock who had fought the world and got the better of it, and was now resolved to crow, though the earth should heave and the heavens should fall. It was a wise crow; an invincible crow; a philosophic crow; a crow of all crows."

Yours, Red Robbie (October 2000)

maligned as being middle class are in fact part of this process.

Not only are we exploited collectively, but also the consequences of capital's exploitation are greater than simply alienation in the workplace and relative poverty outside it. Society as a whole is the factory today. Taylorist methods of control are increasingly being applied to the world outside the factory and leisure is produced and consumed using the mass methods of modern capitalism; facts that we are aware of even if RR is not. In most western economies, for example, the advent of 'just-in-time' production methods has done away with the need for factories and supermarkets to maintain large stocks on site. The road networks of the world instead perform the function of vast mobile warehouses. Therefore, whatever the ideological justification they gave themselves, however much they muddled their actions with reactionary mysticism, when roads campaigners were trying to fight motorway construction they were in a very real sense fighting part of the class struggle against capitalism.

It is true that this struggle has now largely ended and that those involved have been looking round for new 'actions'. Like RR, we think that the constant desire to move from one 'action' to another is, in the end, counterproductive. It may be possible to

mount an action against a business or a road, but how can you do so against capitalism? Readers should spend some time reading "Give Up Activism", which we reprinted in the last issue.

Power or passivity?

However, although we are concerned at the direction that the direct action movement is taking, that does not mean that we do not share its hatred of capitalism and its effects and do not from time to time find ourselves alongside them in action. For us the criteria is simply whether their actions lead to a greater sense of combativeness or lead to greater passivity. The idea is an old one, but it remains valid to say that whatever leads to a greater sense of power and involvement of workers throughout the world [and it is time RR broadens his horizons and understanding], acting in their own class interests, is a revolutionary action. The way that capital is destroying the planet we live on makes many of the direct actionists' activities fit into this category.

We do, however, criticise futile or spectacular actions, which others simply admire and can have no involvement in. We have, for example, found much to be concerned about in the way that groups like Reclaim The Streets organise themselves. That doesn't mean that we don't take a devilish delight in resistance being expressed through violence and destruction and the more than occasional place trashed by a group of angry demonstrators. Emotion is a part of revolution too.

We have given a considerable amount of space to discussions of the politics of direct action in both Organise! and Resistance. This is in part because so little else is going on at the moment. We would love to be reporting mass activity in workplaces and communities. Until that happens, we will continue to deal with the real world.

Finally, we think RR is wrong when he discusses what role a revolutionary group should have. We know we are small and we know that our influence is limited. But we want to change that. We don't think that the best way to do so is to get together with a couple of friends, bring out an occasional magazine and refuse to get our hands dirty. We'd rather make the odd mistake while engaging with others

in struggle. We learn far better lessons that way and in the process hopefully don't go round sounding like a bunch of know-it-alls with the "correct (but irrelevant) line" on everything.

RR is wrong when he caricatures us as having mass membership pretensions. What we seek is mass resistance; the workers themselves will decide whether they want to form their own structures and organisations or join the AF or other groups. RR demands we change in order to claim leadership of a mass organisation (which we do not seek) or recommends we become a "closed, by invitation-only" organisation, something we decisively rejected when the ACF was first formed. Damned if we do, damned if we don't according to RR.

It is not easy to join the AF. To do so you have to agree with our Aims and Principles and our general political line.

The Agitator

A Directory of autonomous, non-hierarchical groups, centres, bookshops & such like.

£1 (plus postage) 68 pages.

Available from Haringey Solidarity Group PO Box 2474, London N8

The second edition of this directory is what it says it is, a handy manual to the anti-authoritarian movement in Britain. Includes useful website addresses, magazines and periodicals.

Revolutionary Activism

The Spanish Resistance in Context

Kate Sharpley Library. No price given. 19 pages

This pamphlet consists of an interview with Octavio Alberola, very active in the Spanish anarchist resistance in the 1960s.

Exile

As a son of an anarchist exile in Mexico (later murdered in suspicious circumstances) he was one of those who rebuilt

Emotion is part of the revolution too.

You have to meet with members and discuss our politics. But our methods of internal organisation are less relevant than the level of our activity and the relevance of our politics. We think that by continuing to exist in this way we will bring more of our fellow workers into contact with anarchist communist ideas. Some will want to join us. In doing so they will strengthen our development by bringing fresh ideas and approaches into the AF, a process by which we all learn.

Red Robbie publishes a magazine – *Athos* – it can be obtained from:

Groupe Athos Magnani
Box A, Arjuna
Mill Road, Cambridge.

the anarchist youth movement in that country.

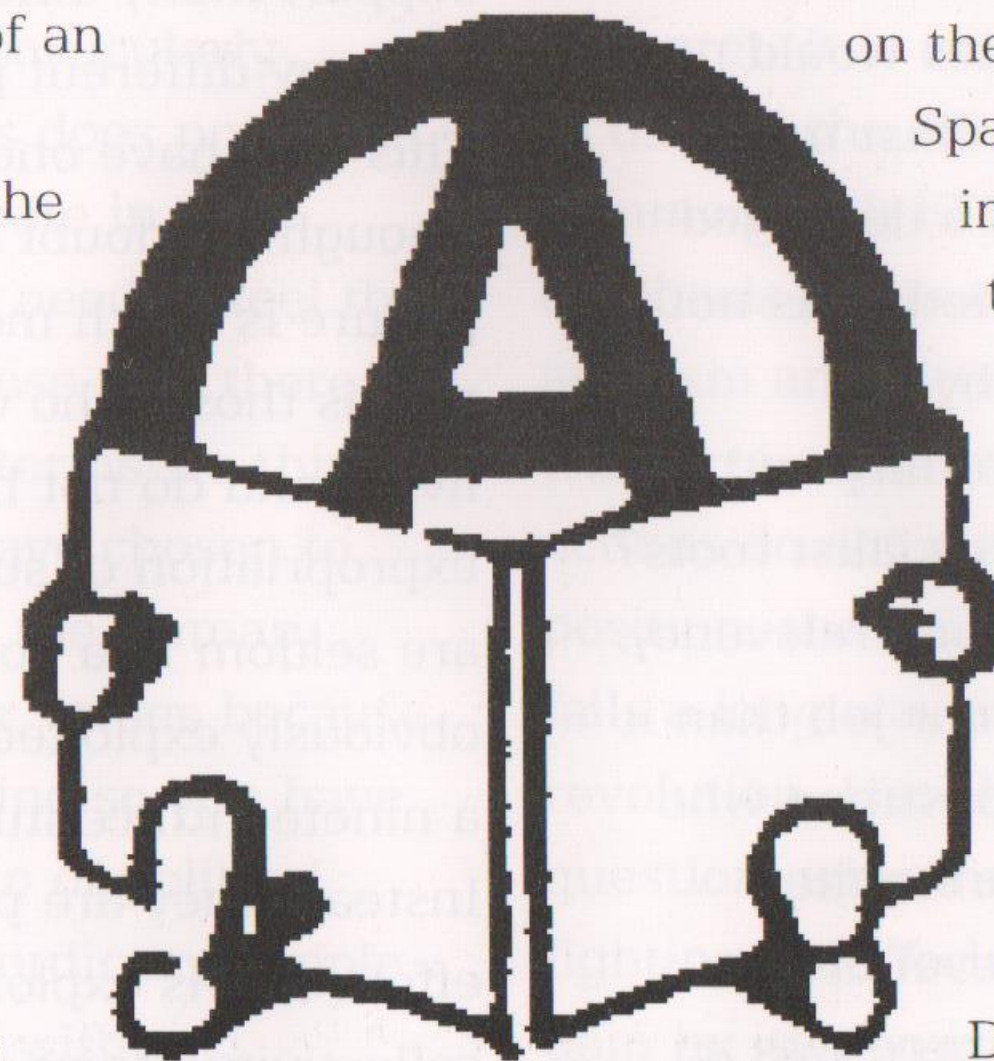
Moving to France in 1961 he took part in the activities of the FIJL (Spanish Libertarian Youth) which acted as an opposition to bureaucratised CNT (anarchosindicalist union) leaders in exile in France. Alberola also touches upon the events in France in May '68 in some detail, and the connection of his grouping to these events.

Breaking with the routinism of the exiled Spanish libertarian movement, his group, organised as the First of May Group, took part in direct action against the Franco regime.

A section of the pamphlet deals with the garroting of the Spanish anarchists Delgado and Granados in 1963, who were involved in an attempt on Franco's life. Another chapter, 'Sabate in

Perspective' gives Alberola's views

on the activities of Sabate, Spanish anarchist involved in armed action against the Franco regime, who was gunned down in 1960. He links Sabate to the newly emerging activist anarchism of the following decade in Spain, France, Germany and Italy. Definitely worth a read.



Aims and principles

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

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

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

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

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

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

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able

to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

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

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

Please put me on the AF's mailing list.

Name

Address

**Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.**