

# Aims and principles

## of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against 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. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to 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.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

## Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps you would just like to be put on our mailing list.

Whatever you want to find out from us, please get in touch.

Write to our national contact at:

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Alternatively you can email us at [info@afed.org.uk](mailto:info@afed.org.uk) or visit our website: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

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FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM



## The anniversary issue

Features on the Anarchist Federation, in its 20th year, the Hungarian revolution and the British general strike

Plus... interview with a Belarusian anarchist, décroissance, anarchist lives and more



# Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers. We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on. The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be **15th March 2007**. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at [organise@afed.org.uk](mailto:organise@afed.org.uk).

## 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 written the articles and nobody else. If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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The Anarchist Federation is a member of the International of Anarchist Federations [iaf-ifa.org](http://iaf-ifa.org)



## contents

### 03 - Editorial

### 04 - Growth and degrowth

### 06 - Swaziland

### 07 - The 'vast machine'

### 07 - Interview with Belarusian anarchist

### 10 - 1956: The Hungarian revolution

### 13 - Anarchist Federation open letter

### 14 - Organise! - the second decade

### 17 - The politics of the Anarchist Federation

### 19 - The general strike

### 20 - Charles H. Kerr, radical publishers

### 22 - Armand Guerra

### 22 - Reviews and obituaries

### 26 - Revolutionary portraits: Erich Muehsam

### 28 - Aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation

# editorial

Welcome to the 20th anniversary issue of Organise!, for revolutionary anarchism as always. After we covered the celebration of 70 years since the height of the Spanish revolution in 1936 within the pages of our previous issue, Organise! now brings you the other promised anniversary articles on the 1926 General Strike in Britain and the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Mass revolt against governments has happened before, and it can happen again if we can continue to build the anarchist movement in Britain and internationally. In the more recent past, much has happened that the Anarchist Federation has engaged with practically and theoretically. We won't dwell on the details in the editorial. Just look inside and read our open letter where we summarise some of what we do as the AF and ask some questions - we hope you will consider answering them. We also look back over the second decade of Organise!, amounting to some 25 issues since we published our first ten year review. As we approach next year's local elections in Britain we know we have to endure the mainstream media bombarding us until we are sick with endless trivia about the two party race between Labour and Conservative. While this is happening, the war-mongering and increasing repression of the State will no doubt continue unabated. The authoritarian marxist-leninist Left have no answers. The Socialist Party is in disarray once again, emanating from splits in the Scottish SP. The trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, supposedly anti-parliamentary (and with its claws firmly in the Stop The War Coalition), has cynically put itself behind the electioneering campaigns of

Respect and has even stood candidates in council elections. Next year, will it yet again ask us to 'vote Labour without illusions' to 'keep the Tories out', because Labour is still closer to the workers? Any remaining illusions, including the worth of voting for politicians, have surely been dashed over the last decade of Labour rule. As anarchists always say, voting changes nothing. Supporting or lobbying politicians only encourages them, to the detriment of self-activity. The Anarchist Federation does not claim to have all the answers, but the anarchist tradition has been influential in many past revolutions and in contemporary struggles. Anarchist communism has endured, and it is growing internationally. Now is the time for those who are identifying with anarchism in the environmental



and anti-capitalist movement to take a serious look at organisation. Will real change come from the acts of small direct action groups or from the effect of our communicating more effectively with working class and disaffected middle class people, so we can 'do it' together? As the State increases its powers through repressive laws and surveillance we can expect the police to come down hard on clandestine direct actions of any kind. And in the future, the mainstream press may well choose to ignore the reporting of what governments will increasingly term 'terrorist' activities, further starving such spectacular events of the publicity they seem to depend on. What is the difference between small scale insurrectionary activism and mass revolution? This question is an important one that the anarchist movement in Britain will need to answer in the next decade. The approach has got to be about gaining wider support for anarchist principles and aims amongst 'ordinary' people who we know are being attacked and stand to gain so much by the ending, not reforming, of the capitalist system. We will certainly need more generalised support to defend social centres from future victimisation, which is bound to come. Propaganda is part of this, as is the radicalising work we can do in our workplaces and local communities. Anarchist organisations also help provide memory of gains and losses from the choice of certain tactics and strategies. We know what we want - the destruction of capitalism and a better world. But we are small in numbers and we will remain small unless we reach out. The AF believes that all this is done most effectively in anarchist organisations.

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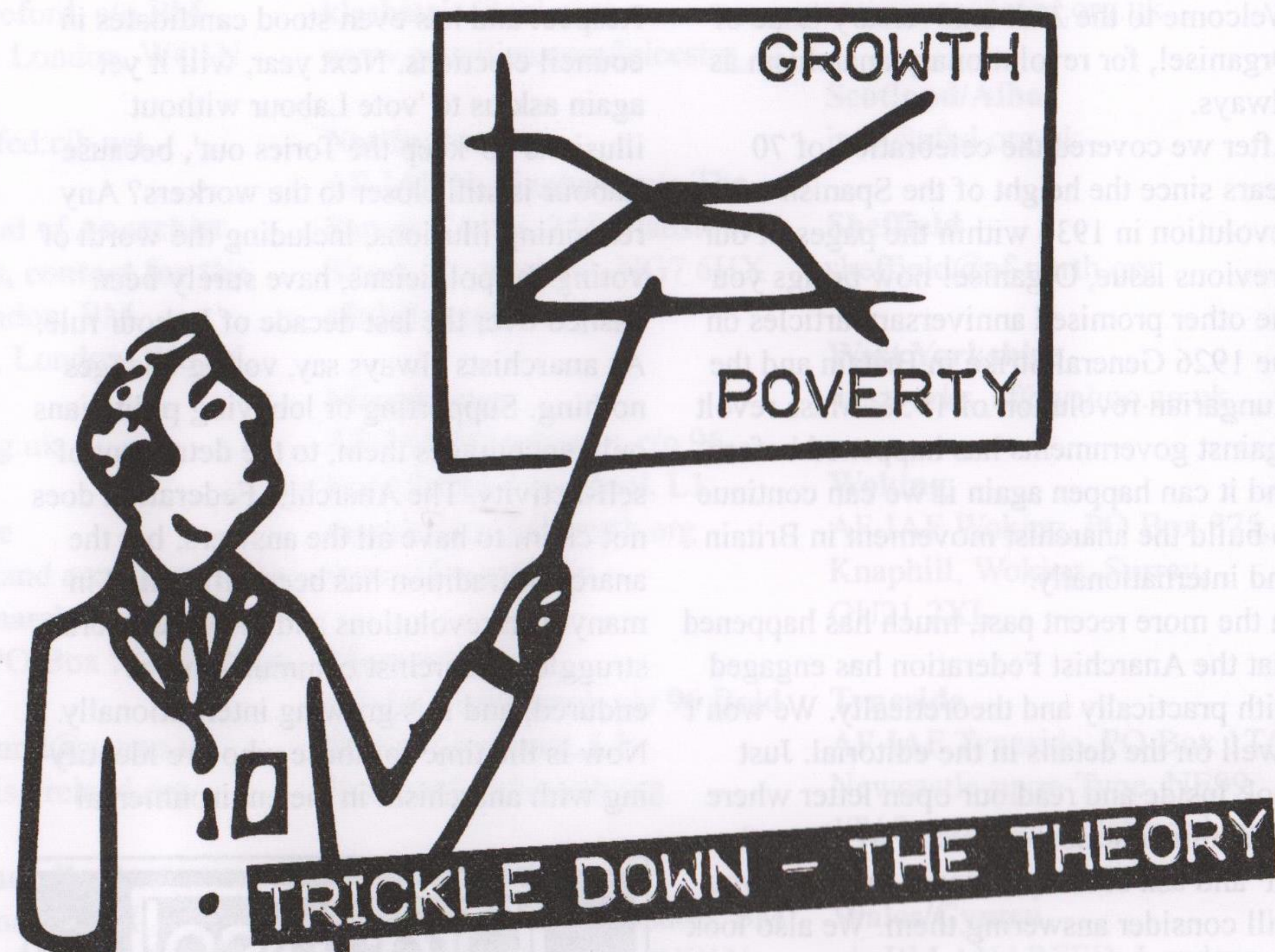
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"It is a disquieting reality that even though there has been increased economic growth for many years now in the Western world, a serious proportion of the population is worse off, few are actually benefiting while a tiny number are seriously better off."

This statement was made in 1997 by Green economist Richard Douthwaite and led off his article Good Growth and Bad Growth, which distills points he made in a book The Growth Illusion. But does anything exist that can be described as good growth? This article investigates the idea of growth and in particular looks at the spread of interest amongst both reformists and revolutionaries in France (including the French Anarchist Federation) in the idea of Décroissance that can be translated alternately as 'degrowth', 'ungrowth', or 'retreat'.

Economic growth is central to the ideology of modern capitalism. In capitalist economies, growth is usually related to a mea-



# growth and degrowth

## Revolutionary approaches to saving the planet and making a happier future

surement known as Gross Domestic Product, GDP, defined as the value of all goods and services purchased in a country over a specified period. Growth is said to occur if this value increases, and most nation states are obsessed that this happens, year by year. But this says nothing about whether spending was necessary, or who did the spending. Consumption of any goods or services, whether needed or not, contributes to growth.

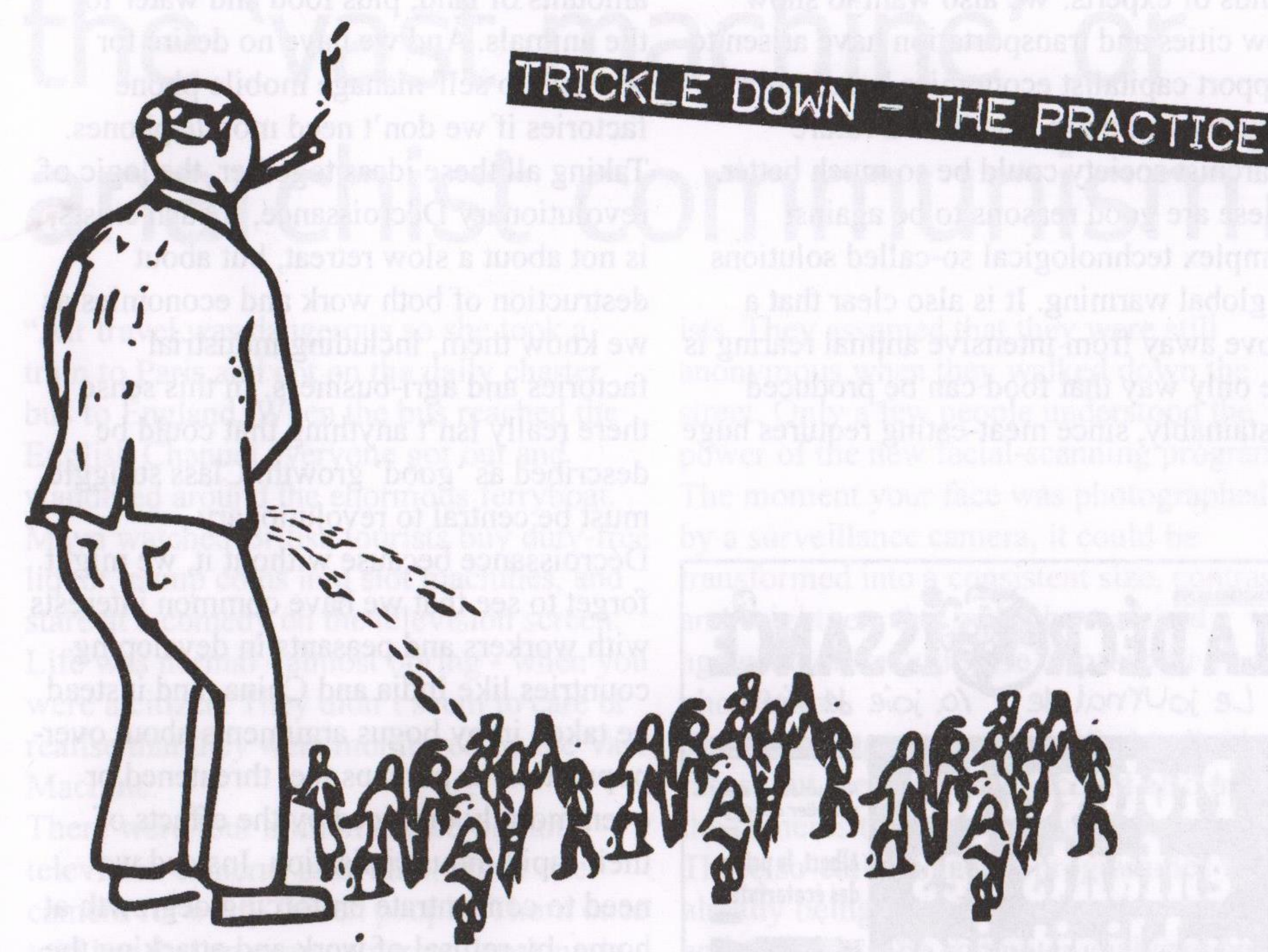
It has never been clearer that growth is at the expense of the well-being of most people on earth and the planet itself. Most of us do not have a say in what is produced from the Earth's resources, because the land and means of production are owned by a minority of individuals. Shareholders of companies do not usually care and are certainly not encouraged to think about the consequences of 'getting a good return' on their investments. The idea of the consumer in developed countries also depends on spending being good, whatever it is on, without a care about waste of energy or raw materials, or the working conditions of the people who provide the items or service. Consumer goods pushed by marketing and advertising campaigns all contribute to GDP whether or not they are really needed.

Money spent on destroying the environment (like cutting down trees for profit), and even money spent cleaning up oil-spills, all contribute to this insane measure of monetary value since it all makes profit for someone. For the technologically 'advanced' nation states, making war abroad is especially good for growth because it involves spending huge amounts money on weapons that quickly become obsolete if they are not used, and especially if they ensure their corporations get the contracts for rebuilding the damage (as is the case for UK and US companies in Iraq). Perceived insecurity at home from the 'war on terror' is also a boon for the economy, as this helps companies sell surveillance technologies, fingerprinting machines, ID databases and the like.

The great lie of the free market is that everyone benefits from growth due to the so-called 'trickle-down' effect. In fact there is a growing rate of consumption by the rich and middle classes in the developed countries, whilst the rest of us, whether we are the workers (or unemployed) in those countries or part of the poor majority in the 'developing' world actually have access to very little of the world's wealth. Ecologists are fond of telling us that for everyone to

consume at the same rate as the US, we'd need several Earths just to grow enough food, never mind the energy required and the effect of energy use on global warming. Put another way, the 'ecological footprint' of most developed countries, and especially the cities within them, is much much bigger than the size of the land mass of those countries. It is only by poorer countries producing food and through irreversible damage to the environment that average consumption per person in richer countries can be so great. If the rich and middle classes of the rest of the world start to consume at this rate, the damage would only increase (this is the often quoted fear of Chinese and Indian industrial development).

The idea that if countries get richer by increasing GDP everyone will benefit to some degree has been challenged by some economists over the last few decades and some have come up with alternative measures to GDP. Measures such as the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) attempt to capture the effects of disregard for people and the environment in the endless search for increased profits that contribute to growth. They attempt to include the effects of unemployment caused



by companies automating production, for example. What these newer measures show is that whilst globalisation has helped increase growth in the rich economies as indicated by higher and higher GDPs, other measures like the ISEW have gone down very sharply since the 1970s (even in Australia, Germany and the UK) and gaps in average wealth between rich and poor people, and between rich and poor countries, are getting greater.

In France, Décroissance (degrowth) is an idea that has raised considerable interest in the French Anarchist Federation recently. It has its origins in a 1979 book by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen "La Décroissance" which is related to his 'bioeconomic' theory. On the more popularist side, there is a bi-monthly paper Décroissance published by Casseurs de Pub which has an anti-consumerist 'more is not better' theme that rails against packaging of vegetables, 5-blade Gillette razors, advertising brands in schools and cars (including Formula 1 racing), similar to the Adbusters approach. The central idea of Décroissance, similar to the one that gives rise to the need for sustainability indices, is that perpetual increase in economic indicators like GDP are not sustainable by the ecosystem of the Earth. It has four principles:

1. The current economic system depends on limited resources; but raw material and energy are fundamentally constrained by scientific principles (second law of thermodynamics)
2. Economic growth and ecological impacts are tightly coupled.
3. The goods and services produced by

economies are not the only wealth; quality of life (joie de vivre), social relations, equality and justice are other kinds of wealth.

4. Companies do not take into account the poverty of consumer products related to quality of life.

Décroissance then is about moving from unsustainable economic growth to a reduction of growth in money terms, whilst increasing quality of life and other kinds of 'wealth'. It is about simple living and localisation of production and consumption, in opposition to a globalised economy. It also fits well with the anti-development views of many greens like Edward Golding, founder of the Ecologist magazine, who argues that economic development of the third world countries actually creates poverty for most of the people who live in them. Capitalists see poverty reduction coming from increased spending power, but this says nothing about who in developing countries gets to do the spending of money made by the brokers of deals with multinationals, IMF loans, or bilateral trade agreements with rich nations like the US, which always come with heavy strings attached. Even the notion of 'sustainable development' is debunked by ecologists, especially as this has become so twisted by governments and multinational companies, who want us to believe they can solve the world's environmental problems by developing 'greener' technologies like hybrid cars, or by increasing use of nuclear power instead of fossil fuels, without affecting economic growth.

Anti-growth views are challenging to

social-democrats and marxists who argue that growth is only bad in the wrong hands, that people are only starving and disease-ridden because of unfair distribution. All it needs is a restructuring of society and the problem is solved! On the other hand, the idea of Décroissance seems to side with a much more negative and even catastrophist outlook about the world, supported by other contemporary theories like 'Peak Oil' which predicts that a slow down in the rate of global oil production is inevitable in the next couple of decades which will have a huge effect on the world economy. James Lovelock, the somewhat crazed British scientist of 'Gaia' fame, also sees the need for 'sustainable retreat' but warns that its already gone so bad that 'civilisation' will have to plan to defend itself against the disasters and scarcity created by global meltdown, which he thinks will result in 'tribal' warfare. The logic of this is we'd better get ready to deny entry to flooded-out Bangladeshi refugees unless they have something useful to offer 'our' European democracies, because that will be the only hope of maintaining stability in the face of environmental collapse.

It all seems a bit gloomy. So why are social anarchists in France interested in this kind of theory now? In Britain, ecological ideas and environmental activism have been around for long time on the radical agenda and crossed over significantly into anarchist circles in the 1990s before predictions of global catastrophe really hit the mainstream (at least, wildlife TV presenter David Attenborough admitted he was only recently convinced that global warming was a real phenomenon). It is probably true to say that environmentalism has influenced anarchism less quickly in France, and it has emerged at a time when global warming and fuel crises are becoming discussed more widely. More generally, anti-globalisation sentiment in France is in part a response to threats to the domestic economy such as pressure by the World Trade Organisation to remove farming subsidies that support local production of food (WTO talks failed to reach agreement because neither US nor France want to remove their own). It is therefore no surprise that José Bové, the farmer who became a media icon over his anti-McDonalds and WTO activism, is also a supporter of Décroissance.

On the other hand, much of the British environmental movement has not yet realised the need for non-statist solutions and can be quite individualist and moralis-



tic. One important aspect of French anarchist views on Décroissance is that living 'lightly' does not have to equate to austerity and overpowering morality and libertarians "do not want to see totalitarian management of décroissance driven by new Green Khmers", a reference to overbearing communist control in Cambodia. From the "habit of a nun we could make a hell of a lot of g-strings", they say! They also make the point that although individuals taking the initiative to live a greener lifestyle is laudable e.g. buying goods that don't have to travel so far (French wine springs to mind!), this is not a solution to over-consumption and energy waste because so much of this comes directly as a result of government policies on military spending, transportation and agriculture which are all materials and energy intensive. Governments who create public campaigns to get us to save electricity and water are complete hypocrites, and the middle class desire for a more eco-friendly and ethical, but still market-led, economic system is a dead-end. The French anarchists are also fiercely anti-work - work being not only the driver for much of the wasteful consumption in our society, but also part and parcel of our class-divided society. Anarchist communists, although we are not anti-technology, are in favour of creating simpler devices and tools that do not leave power in the

hands of experts. We also want to show how cities and transportation have arisen to support capitalist economies based on industry and trade, and how a future anarchist society could be so much better. These are good reasons to be against complex technological so-called solutions to global warming. It is also clear that a move away from intensive animal rearing is the only way that food can be produced sustainably, since meat-eating requires huge



amounts of land, plus food and water for the animals. And we have no desire for workers to self-manage mobile phone factories if we don't need mobile phones. Taking all these ideas together, the logic of revolutionary Décroissance, if such exists, is not about a slow retreat, but about destruction of both work and economies as we know them, including industrial factories and agri-business. In this sense there really isn't anything that could be described as 'good' growth. Class struggle must be central to revolutionary Décroissance because without it, we might forget to see that we have common interests with workers and peasants in developing countries like India and China, and instead be taken in by bogus arguments about overpopulation or perhaps feel threatened or even morally outraged by the effects of their rapid industrialisation. Instead we need to concentrate on forcing degrowth at home, by refusal of work and attacking the basis of capitalism - ownership of land and resources, and the powers that result from this - and create solidarity with workers who are struggling for better lives abroad.

Read the AF's pamphlet on ecology and class struggle: Where there's Brass, there's Muck, available from our usual address.

## swaziland

**Like previous years in Swaziland, 21st January 2005 marked Youth Day, a day of protest against the absolute monarchy in Swaziland. And also like previous years, it was marked by savage police repression.**

Swaziland has lived under a state of emergency since 1973. All political parties and associations are banned; arrests of opponents to the regime are frequent, as is torture. Several people have died in custody under suspicious circumstances. On that day, petrol bombs had been thrown at court houses and the homes of members of the regime. At first, the Swazi regime accused the only revolutionary organisation in southern Africa, the Zabalaza Anarchist-Communist Federation (ZACF). The ZACF responded by recalling that they "unanimously rejected terrorism as a method of popular mass mobilization" and that a few people acting alone were not enough to change the system. Following this, 16 members of the youth wing of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), a Swazi oppositional group, were accused of high treason and attempted murder over the petrol bomb attacks. There is a distinct lack of evidence in this case and the regime is using the arrests to further repress opposition.

The ZACF has demanded a general amnesty of all political prisoners and stated that militants had to go beyond their habitual demands for "the total destruction of the State, and its replacement by decentralized popular assemblies of the working class, the poor and the peasantry". Whilst the Swazi Royal Family lives in conspicuous abundance, an average Swazi family lives on less than \$1 a day. Most people have no access to water and nearly 42% of the population are victims of AIDS with no preventive programme in place. There is no free primary education. The PUDEMO called for the right to education and healthcare, access to medicines to counter the effects of AIDS, and a guaranteed right to food for all. The PUDEMO activists are now out on bail. However, when they come to trial they may face the death penalty. Pressure has to be put on the Swazi regime for the dropping of charges. Both South Africa and Britain are active supporters of the corrupt regime.

## the 'vast machine' or anarchist communism?

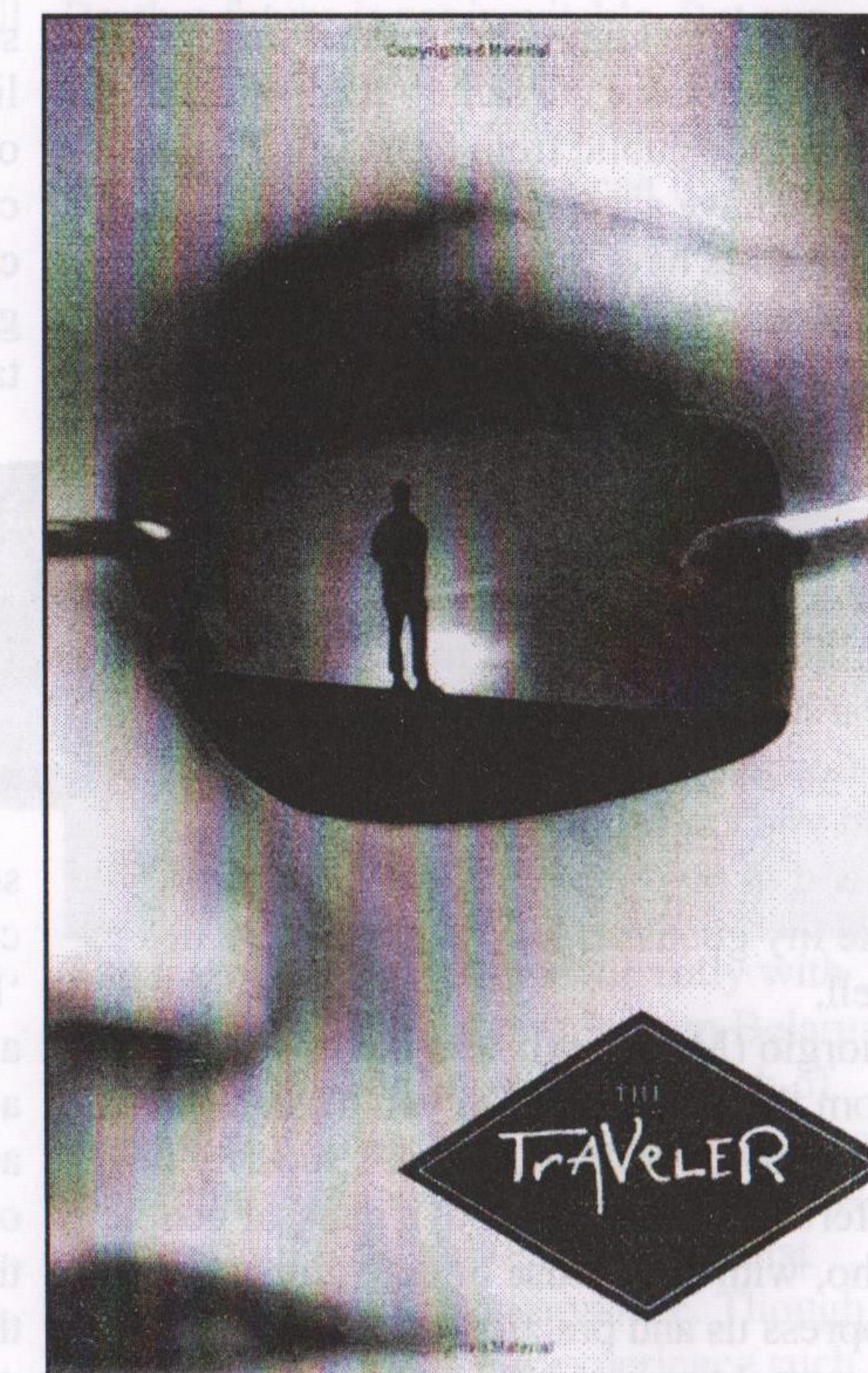
"Air travel was dangerous so she took a train to Paris and got on the daily charter bus to England. When the bus reached the English Channel everyone got out and wandered around the enormous ferryboat. Maya watched British tourists buy duty-free liquor, pump coins into slot machines, and stare at a comedy on the television screen. Life was normal - almost boring - when you were a citizen. They didn't seem to care or realise that they were monitored by the Vast Machine.

There were four million closed-circuit television cameras in Britain, about one camera for every fifteen people. Thorn once told her that an average person working in London would be photographed by three hundred different surveillance cameras during the day. When the cameras first appeared, the government put up posters telling everyone that there were 'SECURE BENEATH WATCHFUL EYES'. Under the shield of the new anti-terrorism laws, every industrial country was following the British example.

Maya wondered if citizens made a deliberate attempt to ignore the intrusion. Most of them truly believed that the cameras protected them from criminals and terror-

ists. They assumed that they were still anonymous when they walked down the street. Only a few people understood the power of the new facial-scanning programs. The moment your face was photographed by a surveillance camera, it could be transformed into a consistent size, contrast and brightness that could be matched against a driver's license or passport photograph.

The scanner programs identified individual faces, but the government could also use the cameras to detect unusual behaviour. These so-called Shadow programmes were already being used in London, Las Vegas and Chicago. The computer analyzed one-second images taken by the cameras and alerted the police if someone left a package in front of a public building or parked a car on the shoulder of a highway. Shadow noticed anyone who strolled through the city instead of trudging to work. The French had a name for these curious people- flaneurs- but as far as the Vast Machine was concerned, any pedestrian who lingered on street corners or paused at construction sites was instantly suspicious. Within a few seconds, images of these people would be highlighted in color and



sent to the police." (Taken from The Traveller by John Twelve Hawks, Bantam Press, July 2005)

The above passage about a fictitious future society, taken from a 'bestseller', does not seem that far off from today's Britain. Recent articles in Organise! and in our pamphlet on ID cards have already highlighted the kinds of technology that are available and being implemented to various

Continued on page 8

## Interview with a Belarusian anarchist, living in Britain since the crack-down over election protests.

**How easy is it for you to organise meetings? Can you book rooms to have meetings and advertise them?**

It is possible to organise meetings via closed communication channels (mostly mailing lists and personal contacts). Booking rooms is more difficult: from time to time, activists gather in each other's apartments, but regular meetings in a same location would draw attention of state enforcers: warranted and unwarranted searches, confiscation of equipment, in some cases even planting incriminating evidence such as drugs. Advertising meetings in public is quite dangerous. The last safe publicly advertised gathering happened last autumn, during the Belarusian Social Forum and the "No Culture without Subculture" festival. Since then, the state uses all legitimate means to stop publicly announced meetings from happening. The most widespread practice is to use fire department inspection as an excuse for closing down the site.

**Can you be openly anarchist or against the govern-**

**ment? Can you publish material that is critical?**

No. The new criminal code introduced last year criminalises a whole range of activities - see the survey document on the web at <http://belarus.indymedia.org/1713>

**Can you organise public protests?**

Yes and no. We can organise public protests, but any protest that isn't sanctioned by the state is illegal, and state officials only sanction actions that are innocent and located at far ends of the city. Nevertheless, illegal protests are organised - exemplified by the protests that took place in March and April in Minsk.

**What controls exist on people who may be questioning the system? How intrusive are the police or any other authority?**

With the latest criminal law changes, the state has all the tools necessary to threaten and punish people without breaking its own laws. Even without it, police routinely fake detention protocols,



degrees. The arguments for this increased surveillance are the same - it is necessary to protect the public from terrorism. Many people have accepted this dangerous logic. Anarchists have always argued against the argument that we need to give up our freedom in order to be 'safe'. For example, Malatesta provides an eloquent denunciation back in the late 19th century in his book 'At the Café: Conversations with Anarchists':

"Gino (a worker): Is it true that you anarchists want to remove the police force? I am not their friend, and you know it. But I'm also not the friend of murderers and thieves and I would like my goods and my life to be guarded as well.

Giorgio (Malatesta): And who guards you from the guardians? Do you think that the best way to provide for one's security is by offering up one's neck to a gang of people who, with the excuse of defending us, oppress us and practice extortion, and do a thousand times more damage than the thieves and murderers?"

Events since September 11th and the advent of the 'war on terrorism' in earnest, have given us many reasons to see the truth in Malatesta's words. Just think how 'secure' the Brazilian worker felt when he was shot by the police seeking to 'protect' the public. Yet, for the most part we continue living our lives oblivious to this repressive surveillance, increased police powers and the vast quantities of information that exist about us in various data banks. On the

surface, it doesn't seem to impinge on our lives. Even those active in anarchist and other social movements that challenge the current power structures, are not usually conscious of the likely surveillance that is going on. Our phones are most likely tapped, undercover officers will have been used to identify 'who's who' and our activities will be monitored. It is only in certain circumstances, recently in the build-up to G8 protests, that individuals have overtly felt the weight of surveillance and police control of activity. Nevertheless, the protests have largely gone ahead in some form. In Scotland last year, despite certain individuals being targeted by the 'FIT team', the heavy police presence around the 'eco-camp' in Stirling, and some actions seemingly known to the police in advance, meetings, demonstrations and other actions went ahead, sometimes taking the police by surprise. Instead, the focus of the State is largely on Islamic activists. Anarchists have not shown too much concern about this, seeing Islam as an enemy of anarchism. However, we maybe should rethink our silence. Anarchists could easily become the next target. The State may choose not to see the difference between an Islamic 'training camp' and one set up by Earth First.

In Russia this year, anarchists were the target. In Russia and many other countries of the former Soviet Union, anarchists are struggling to organise under heavy surveillance and police repression. Those activists

who attempted to go to St. Petersburg, as they had gone to other venues for other protests, had a very different experience. The protests were banned outright and hundreds of known activists were arrested in advance. People were stopped at the border and bureaucratic and financial impediments made practical organisation almost impossible. Yet, despite these difficulties, anarchist movements exist and are continuing to grow and develop. There is no doubt that the tendency throughout the world is for those in power to increase their control over every aspect of our lives. Capitalism is a system that is unpredictable and impossible to control. Marx's economic predictions have proved to be only too true: that capitalism is inherently prone to lurch from crisis to crisis. As a result, those in power desperately struggle to control what they can, in order to ensure the stability and survival of the system that is the basis of their dominance. They cannot control capital itself: financial movements around the world, rising and falling prices of commodities, fluctuating demand for products. Therefore, they aim to control the people - as workers and consumers. Every aspect of society is geared to ensuring that people consume and work, according to routines and schedules. They need our lives to be predictable and our minds to be busy with seeking individual 'happiness' that is brought about through 'success', money, and entertainment. Any thoughts of the 'bigger' questions on the meaning of life are safely



writing things like "public disorder" and "attacking police officers" when no such thing took place. For example, one activist was arrested again immediately after being released from prison; two undercover officers came up to him and fell to the ground, as if he attacked them.

State authority is being propagandized in all state institutions, starting with kindergartens. Concerts of musicians known to be critical of the state are not allowed. Carrying non-state flags is illegal. During the protests in March-April, it was usual for police to subject people on the streets to searches and to confiscate innocent things such as warm clothes and food. The activist scene is also widely penetrated by police and KGB provocateurs, instilling the atmosphere of fear and distrust.

#### What about neo-Nazi groups? Do they threaten what people try and do?

They exist around Belarus, but luckily, the situation is not as bad as in Russia. In many towns and cities, there are strong anti-fascist movements that keep neo-Nazis in check. Still, Nazis benefit from the silent support of the state. For example, just before I left Minsk, a Nazi concert was announced and held in a

concert hall of a military base a couple of blocks from my house. How do people feel repression in everyday life?

In a lot of different, mostly subtle ways:

- The abundance of police and military on the streets, sometimes carrying Kalashnikovs
- State red-and-green flags (nicknamed "sunset over swamp") in all appropriate and inappropriate places, often accompanied by portraits of Lukashenko
- Endless stream of Stalin-era propaganda on TV and in state newspapers (and there's only one non-state newspaper left, and they only sell it under-the-counter or in some European embassies)
- Praising of state and Lukashenko in kindergartens (this one really pissed me off), not to mention schools and universities
- the general atmosphere of fear, as people who believe propaganda think Belarus is surrounded by enemies and internal traitors, and those who don't think that they'll get in trouble if they speak up
- No job safety at all, as people get fired at will (speaking Belarusian can be enough), and as new taxes and legislations bring down whole sectors of local economy

controlled and managed, for example, through organised religion. However, all through history, many people, to varying degrees, have proved impossible to control and manage in this way. In today's world, anarchists are some of these people, refusing the legitimacy of the State and the need for authority, rejecting the work ethic, the drive for money and status and the diversion of consumerism, and ignoring the existence of borders. In the 'Traveller' the heroes and heroines resemble anarchists. They have chosen to live 'off the grid'. This is the only way they can survive as free human beings and resist the 'Vast Machine'. The novel is based on the struggle of these exceptional individuals, cut-off from the rest of society, against the Machine. Many anarchists also attempt to have as little to do with society as possible - not engaged in official 'work', living in squats or camps and travelling to different countries to help with struggles. As the State becomes even more intrusive and repressive, some individuals are forced into 'disappearing', living under assumed identities, leaving their homes and countries. Therefore, having alternative networks and ways of living that are independent of the State and capitalism are crucial to both our resistance and survival. However, we want to do more than resist; we want to transform. These alternative networks, structures and cultures will form the basis of the creation of a new society. But this is not enough. As the characters in 'The Traveller' discovered, they needed

other people, ordinary people who were still part of the system, in order to mount any effective resistance. The same goes for anarchists. Creating alternative, off-the-grid, micro-societies may be important for survival, for making life more bearable for some individuals, and/or for creating new ways of doing things, but the goal is to transform *all of society*. A few individuals heroically fighting back will not accomplish this. Therefore, we have to have a strategy that also involves resistance and transformation in the 'heart of the Machine', where the vast majority of people are. History has shown that although individual action is important, it is only when people in great number say 'no' or 'we want this', that change takes place. The campaign against the Poll Tax was an example of this. Individuals may have found ways of avoiding the Poll Tax but this did not bring an end to it. But when masses of people refused to pay, the government caved in. The same could happen with ID cards. It is not enough for anarchists and a few others to find ways of avoiding its imposition, we need to build a mass movement against ID cards where thousands and thousands of people are refusing to have anything to do with them. The protests against the G8 in Petersburg could not have been repressed if the small anarchist and alternative movements in Russia and Europe had been joined by thousands of ordinary Russians. We can not only turn back the tide of repression and surveillance, but create an alternative society. The descent into a Big

Brother future is not inevitable. But our success depends on a two-prong strategy: the creation of autonomous networks and structures within which we can live more freely and experiment with new ways of living, and the building up of a mass movement that will cause the 'Vast Machine' to disintegrate in the face of its force and vitality.



The interview running concurrently with this article is with a comrade from Belarus, now living in England which, though of interest in its own right, illustrates many of the points made in this article. They show the constraints on political activity that make it very difficult to organise. Though in Britain anarchists do not experience such repression, we must not become complacent; the British State is moving in the direction of increased surveillance and repression of opposition movements. As mentioned above, Islamic groups are feeling the brunt of surveillance and repression. The point to be taken from this interview is that despite the repression, they not only manage to fight back, but stress the importance of having a public presence and are aware of the need to win over others to anarchism.

#### What do you do or can you do to resist and fight back against all of this?

First of all, we spread information: news outlets with anarchist viewpoint, propaganda of self-organisation, informational support of grass-roots initiatives, and critique of the establishment (both the state and the opposition parties). The recent creation of Indy Media (IMC) in Belarus has certainly increased the amount of activity in this area.

Somewhat related is the (sub)cultural activity, such as organization of expositions, concerts, satirical movies ("Navinki" group has grown to be very good at the latter), etc.

Now and then, anarchists start or get involved with other independent initiatives. For example, we managed to form a strong anarchist core within the Minsk Linux User Group, our example of self-organization has led many MLUG activists to form better opinion of anarchism, some of them have become anarchists themselves. The Critical Mass movement in Minsk was started by anarchists from Belarusian Anarchist Federation group. The IMC Belarus was initiated by anarchists and to this day remains strongly pro-anarchist.

Then there's also an anti-fascist movement across Belarus, which

is far more successful than its counterpart in Russia. It is quite well-organised, although you can't also discount the fact that fascists in Belarus are not as dangerous as in Russia: they have less criminal background, there are many disorganised bonehead groups with no direct backing from state or church, and there is strong anti-fascist sentiment in the general public, caused both by World War II memories and the traditional Belarusian mentality of tolerance.

One area that begs for further exploration is the labour movement, which was thoroughly destroyed in the late 90s. Belarusian workers are disorganized ("official" trade unions obviously serve entirely different purposes), and there's also a divide between workers and intellectuals, with most anarchists being intellectuals and having huge difficulty (if they are at all trying) finding contact with workers. Even worse, there is another divide: between the city and the village.

This divide is illustrated by the make up of the Spring 2006 demonstrations: 99% of the participants were young intellectuals, mostly students of humanitarian and IT colleges and universities. No attempts have yet been made to get working class people involved.



# 1956: the hungarian revolution

## Organise! remembers the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

The Soviet army advanced into Eastern Europe in 1944. If certain people believed that this would lead to liberation, they were soon to be proved wrong. Not only was capitalism not abolished but the old fascist regimes, like those in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, which had operated as willing junior partners of the Nazis, were maintained in a sense in that the old political structures were maintained. The personnel of the regimes were for the most part, kept in place. The Soviet leader Molotov remarked that above all "law and order had to be maintained to prevent the rise of anarchy"!

The new Hungarian government had at its head Bela Danolki-Miklos, a general decorated by Hitler and who had acted as go-between linking the Nazi regime and the fascist government of Admiral Horthy, who in 1919 had launched an horrendous White Terror against the first Hungarian Revolution.

Horthy, because of his Magyar nationalism, had proved to be an unsteady ally of Hitler, who had sent in a German occupying army.

Many Hungarians were stunned when Danolki-Miklos, a Nazi dignitary who still recognized Horthy as the legitimate leader of the country, was put in place at the head of a government, with the window dressing of a few socialists and Communists. The Soviet regime had an objective of controlling the country through setting up a Hungarian Communist Party divested of any elements who still dreamed of any real form of communism. The Party gained control of the Ministry of the Interior and its secret police, the AVO. In 1948 it got control of the Ministry of Defence. It chopped up the opposition by allying with one current against another. It used torture and murder and repression. The forces of repression were a curious mixture of the old scum of the Horthy



regime and the new scum of the Communist Party.

### Hungary becomes a Russian colony

Russia imposed severe reparations on Hungary which drove living standards down and led for a time to famine. Moscow demanded \$300million in equipment and agricultural products. These went to Russia for the most part, the rest being sent to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Despite the repression of the AVO and the presence of the Red Army, the situation in Hungary became explosive. Moscow had to reduce its demands from 25% to 10% of national budget of Hungary spent on reparations.

Massive nationalizations led to an economy co-managed by the Hungarian government and the Soviet Union. Workers in nationalized industries suffered appalling conditions, based on piecework with rewards for higher productivity (Stakhanovism) with the lowest wages for the majority!

A long struggle between the working class and the new regime began in this period. Absenteeism and doing as little as possible at work were the main weapons of the working class. The regime denounced "lazy workers" and the falls in productivity and the bad quality of goods manufactured. In 1948 the Minister of Industry said: "The workers have adopted a terrorist attitude towards the directors of nationalized industries."

A law was passed forbidding workers to leave their workplace without permission.

At the same time from 1948 to 1950, the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe expelled from their ranks a large number of what they called supporters of "Titoism" (in Hungary, nearly 500,000 were expelled!)

In March 1953, Stalin died. Workers' revolts broke out in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia where a demonstration of Skoda workers and arms factory workers was savagely repressed. Two weeks later, the workers of East Berlin rose up, setting off revolts throughout East Germany viciously put down by Russian tanks.

The Soviet leadership had to adopt a new strategy. In Hungary this meant that the 'hard' leader Rakosi was demoted and the 'soft' Imre Nagy was appointed as Prime Minister. Several reforms were put through: light industries were revived, which hitherto had suffered at the expense of heavy industry which the USSR had needed, there was increased production of consumer products, individual peasants were given aid, and repression became less severe. The Kremlin hoped that this would quieten the Hungarian working class.

After Khrushchev came to power in the USSR, Nagy was dismissed and Rakosi put back in place. Most of the concessions put through in the last 20 months were taken away little by little. Pressure to increase reparations redoubled.

### The Polish workers revolt

On 28th June 1956 the workers of Poznan demonstrated demanding the withdrawal of the Russians, the end of piecework and 'Bread and Freedom'. Again the revolt was brutally crushed. In Hungary workers continued their struggles with a series of strikes. This encouraged intellectuals, artists, writers and students to put forward their demands. The Petofi Circle was founded by students in the Communist Youth organisation. This became an important centre for debate and discussion. At the same time underground pamphlets began to circulate, literary reviews appeared and semi-public meetings took place. Rakosi made an attempt to forbid these meetings but failed. He wanted a massive roundup, but the Soviets were fearful of things getting out of control and intervened to have Rakosi dismissed again. He was replaced by his right hand man, Gero.

This allowed the Writers Union to boot out all Rakosi supporters from its leadership, replacing them with dissidents and even non-Communists.

The regime tried to curry favour by exonerating Rajk, a Communist dissident executed earlier for Titoism. Two hundred thousand people turned up when Rajk's body was exhumed to be re-buried for an official funeral. Before his disgrace Rajk had been in charge of the AVO. Most of those who turned up that day came not to honour Rajk but to show their opposition to the regime.

### October 1956 - the workers enter the struggle

Through local union branches workers called for the running of the factories by the workers. The National Committee of Unions turned these demands into 'union democracy' and 'worker's control'.

These new demands added a revolutionary content to the agitation which up to then had been one of protest. The Petofi Circle took up the demands of the workers and turned them into a narrow demand to be made on the government. Learning that the old Polish leadership had had to resign, despite the support of Moscow, the intellectuals thought that their moment had come. The Petofi Circle called for a demonstration of solidarity with their "Polish brothers" for 23rd October. The government banned the protest but then backed down when it learnt that people were massing throughout Budapest. Fifty thousand gathered to hear a resolution from the Writers' Union. This called for national independence on socialist principles, equality of relations with the USSR and a revision of the economic agreements, direction of the factories by the workers and technicians, the departure of Rakosi and for a new government with electoral freedom.

The demonstration was due to end but many taking part decided to march on Parliament. A hundred thousand gathered. It was decided to go to the main radio station so that the demands could be broadcast. On the way there, a huge statue of Stalin was dragged off its plinth and smashed.

Thousands more joined the march, including many workers. At the radio station, AVO thugs hidden in the building fired on the crowd, killing many. The crowd continued to advance, overwhelmed the police outside and took their arms to fire at the building.

Workers returned to arms factories where they worked and loaded lorries with arms which were taken to the radio station.

The panicking Communist Party leaders put the 'soft' Nagy back as Premier. But it was under his leadership that the government called on the Red Army to help "restore order".

"It was the workers who... saved the struggle from complete collapse. They saw the Nagy issue as largely irrelevant. In the society they were glimpsing through the dust and smoke of the battle in the streets, there would be no Prime Minister, politicians, and no officials or bosses ordering them about," says Andy Anderson, author of Hungary 1956.

"The young workers led the way and everyone followed them," - 21 year old worker at United Electric factory in a Budapest suburb. Workers and students set up a revolutionary council. The battle continued around the radio station. Nagy called for the laying down of arms and promised widespread democratisation. This failed to deter many people. The revolutionary Council of Workers and Students called for a general strike.

### Tanks come in

Russian tanks moved in and many barricades were built against them. Fighting went on for three days in Budapest with workers and students using molotovs, arms they had captured and even a small field gun with which they bombarded the tanks. Meanwhile the revolution was spreading.



At Magyarovar the AVO fired on a crowd killing over a hundred people. Armed workers and students from nearby Gyor arrived. The AVO headquarters was captured, and the surviving AVO thugs were beaten to death or lynched.

The general strike spread through Budapest and out into the main industrial towns.

Revolutionary committees and councils were set up all over Hungary. Councils were formed in the mines, the steel mills, the power stations. Many issued programmes. Their essential demands were revolutionary in that they shook the foundations of the bureaucracy and were almost certain to lead from there to the creation of real communism.

Peasants and farm workers organised food deliveries to the urban workers and drove out the State farm collective managers. In some areas land was redistributed, in other the collectives continued under their control.

Soon Budapest prison was captured and all the political prisoners were released. When revelations came of the terrible conditions, torture and beatings, almost every AVO man captured was killed by the crowds. Nagy now promised the disbanding of the AVO, and the Red Army withdrew from Budapest. However, this was merely to regroup. Nagy was warned by the councils that unless the Red Army withdrew completely, they would force them to. The Nagy government assured the people that the Russians would not attack again. But soon Pal Maleter and Kovacs, who had been leading lights in the Budapest fighting, were arrested during negotiations with the Red Army. The Red Army opened fire on all the major cities on November 4th. MIG fighters strafed the population. The working class bore the brunt of the fighting that followed. Many Russian tanks were destroyed.

The AVO came out of the holes in which they had been hiding and began to hang insurgents in groups on the bridges over the Danube in Budapest. Many of those hanged were workers.

#### The armed resistance ends

By November 14th, armed resistance on a large scale had ended. Although many began to return to work, the strike continued in most industries.

The new government under Janos Kadar started to arrest members of the councils. But the councils continued to consolidate their power and Kadar was forced to hold talks with them.

He began to use other means to destroy the councils. He started issuing ration cards, but only to those who returned to work, and

used the Red Army to stop food deliveries to the towns by peasants. Nagy, seen as too liberal, was arrested. Later he and Maleter and others were executed in Moscow. Kadar began arresting more workers' delegates, as well as delegates of student bodies. Many came forward to take their



place. When the State realized this, they went in for wholesale arrests of workers. Mass demonstrations continued, and workers fought the AVO and the army when they came to arrest their delegates. Many were gunned down by the AVO. The arrests and executions continued through 1957. It was announced that the workers councils would be replaced by works councils, controlled by trade union bureaucrats, completely subservient to the State. And finally it was announced that any remaining councils were to be abolished.

#### The West

It comes as no surprise that the Hungarian working class received no support, no arms, no medical supplies from the Western powers. What they fought for was as much opposed to capitalist democracy as it was to the state capitalism of the Soviet Union. As for the Western trade unions, they did nothing. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions rejected an appeal from the workers councils for an international boycott. Contrast this with the action of Liverpool and Hull dockers who refused to touch cargoes on Soviet ships.

The Hungarian Revolution helped dispel the clouds of mystification around the USSR and its satellites. It reaffirmed the notion of unrelenting struggle by the working class against all bosses and masters, no matter how they attempt to disguise themselves as the workers' representatives.

It lights the way to a new society for which so many working people have given their lives.

The best way to honour the Hungarian Revolution is to continue the struggle for human emancipation and the coming of a new society based on equality and social justice.

The Anarchist Federation, formerly Anarchist Communist Federation, has now been going 20 years. We have written an open letter to enlist responses from people who we've worked with over the last decade and other people who we know, including Organise! readers. Get the knives (or fireworks) out!

## open letter for the anarchist federation's 20th year

The Anarchist Federation is marking its 20th year with an article in Organise! magazine looking at the last decade and we'd like to enlist the help of groups and individuals in and around the anarchist movement to make this an interactive piece! A lot has happened within the anarchist movement in Britain in the last 10 years; the dissolving and re-emergence of Class War Federation, the end of Subversion and launch of IWW UK. We changed our name from Anarchist Communist Federation, membership of the new AF has grown, and anarchism in general has made a strong mark in the environmental and wider anti-capitalist movements.

Amongst the anarchist movement's publications, Organise!, Direct Action and Black Flag continue to come out in magazine format, whilst Freedom has been revamped back to a fortnightly. The anarchist-influenced IWW is growing in numbers and offer a new magazine Bread & Roses. Anarchist publishers like AK Press, Freedom and KSL are producing excellent new written material. In 1998 the AF launched its monthly agitational bulletin Resistance, and our groups and individuals produce several local bulletins. We maintain a web-site and provide all our publications online for free.

In Britain (and also Ireland), the AF continues its participation in both community and workplace struggles. We worked in Groundswell (along with local groups like Haringay Solidarity) against the Job Seekers Allowance from 1996, and in 2006 continue to fight against repression within the Defy-ID network that is opposing "identity cards and the database state". We have worked to oppose closures of community facilities like swimming pools and local post offices. Some members work within Antifa against fascist organising, whilst others continue to support anarchist prisoners at home and abroad. We were also instrumental in setting up the Anarchist Youth Network. We struggle in our own

workplaces as we extend solidarity to those in others. Amongst many workplace struggles we supported are the Liverpool Dockers and Gate Gourmet workers, and we are stepping up our organising with other comrades around the changes in schools and further/higher education. The AF has continued to participate in the events of the anarchist and the wider anti-capitalist movement; from anarchist Maydays and bookfairs to film fairs; at RTS and Earth First! gatherings to those against the G8 (and earlier events like J18 and N30). Some of us are involved with the growing number of Social Centres and have supported the Rossport Solidarity Camp. We demonstrated and organised against the hideous wars escalated or initiated by our politicians and armed forces in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. Whatever the Left said at the time, its past decade in power has shown New Labour to be at least as bloodthirsty and repressive and pro-business as the Tories were under Thatcher. The AF has built up its international presence through joining the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF-IFA) and in its current position as secretariat. Looking west we encouraged the formation of NEFAC in the USA. Looking east we have strengthened links with comrades in the former soviet bloc as they adjust to capitalist realities inside (and outside) the borders

of the expanded European Union. Over the last decade, we have worked with comrades and friends to build organisational capabilities that we hope will advance the anarchist communist project. We'd like to do it much more, and better, in the future. If we missed you or your group out from the above please note this short appeal was not intended to include everyone we'd like to hear from!

#### The three questions...

Q1. What are the best things the A(C)F has done and/or written (in Organise! or elsewhere) since 1996?

Q2. What else could we have done in the last decade that we didn't, or, did we do (or write) something we shouldn't have?

Q3. What should the AF prioritise in the next decade?

Additional comments are welcome.

The address for written replies is: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX, England, UK.

Email: [organise@afed.org.uk](mailto:organise@afed.org.uk)

Back issues of Organise! are online via [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

Thanks,  
The Anarchist Federation







In 1996, in the 10th anniversary edition of *Organise!* (no.42), we printed our first retrospective article 'Organise! Onwards' saying: "Organise! has occupied a unique position amongst the many anarchist papers which have arisen in Britain by its consistent format and level of analysis. It has always been intended to sit between the agitational 'in your face' rag and the heavier theoretical journal. It is aimed at the reader who doesn't need to be convinced how bad our life is under capitalism and the state, who is looking for more information and a closer view of the class struggle." We have tried to remain true to this aim, although with a few significant changes. One change has resulted from our aim to increase the participation in *Organise!* by soliciting views from outside the AF, using interviews and by the commissioning of articles by comrades who are close to us politically, especially from other countries. Secondly, at the end of 1998, we launched our monthly bulletin *Resistance* and since then have published *Organise!* less often but with more pages, accompanied by a shift towards more in-depth analysis and less immediate news reporting. If this has worked, it has partly been due to longer-term themes that have emerged during the last decade: continuous war-mongering by the Western states, massive uprisings in Latin America, the ongoing consequences of European expansion, welfare and public sector attacks and fightback by workers,

*Organise!* was reporting on the likely effects of the New Deal and clearly saw that a change in government would mean little difference in the attack on benefits. In addition a controversial area for anarchists was the role of dole-office workers who were suffering from a pay-squeeze themselves but were on the front-line of imposing the benefits regime changes on claimants. The use of 'Job Club' (forcing you to apply for shit jobs every week at the threat of getting benefits cut) and the various types of compulsory work-for-dole schemes in the New Deal meant that harassment of claimants was on the increase. Benefits workers would have to fight for claimants as well as themselves and voluntary organisations would need to be challenged about their contracts with the Job Centre to provide placement for claimants in the guise of 'voluntary' work. As part of this fightback, members of the AF participated in the Groundswell anti-JSA network. In *Organise!* we analysed and supported the 'Three Strikes' idea initiated by claimants' groups that was designed to confront individual 'over-zealous' dole-office employees. See issues 42 to 50 for coverage of the full story from 1996 onwards. Attacks on the unemployed from the New Deal (which followed job cuts in many 'traditional' industries) have now given way to a widespread attack on public sector workers through creeping privatisation of health and education services, introduction of performance-related-pay schemes, and a

China, New Blood' (issue 65). Exploitation in Britain will also continue, and this is likely to fall sharply on migrant workers and those on incapacity benefits who are the next targets of the New Deal. Britain is awash with casual and 'flexible' working (covered in *Organise!* 64). Younger people continue to suffer from no longer being allowed to get unemployment money if aged 16 or 17 and from the shift from student grants to loans and fees, forcing them to do low-paid jobs. So as well as supporting the casualties of job cuts and those still in work who are fighting for their livelihoods, it will surely become necessary to challenge once again the role of some public sector workers, including dole-office staff and Home Office civil servants, who are implementing government attacks on the marginalised sections of our class.

#### Kicked in the Balkans

In issue 45 (Spring 1997) we began to analyse the continuing break up of the former Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the Bosnian war. We looked at the pro-democracy movement *Zajedno* that was attempting to bring down Milosevic's government and the continued extreme nationalism in Croatia. At the same time, post-Cold War imposition of market economies was having devastating effects on the living conditions of working class people in Bulgaria and Albania, some losing everything to hyperinflation, others to pyramid selling schemes. Now that the workers had been

## organise! magazine - the second decade

growth of a wider anti-capitalist movement, and activism against environmental destruction. We will examine these themes in the following paragraphs with reference to back issues of *Organise!*

#### Three Strikes and You're Out!

If you're on the dole at the moment or receiving any of the welfare benefits that are still remaining in Britain, you could be forgiven for thinking you have been forgotten about. Not so in *Organise!* where we have devoted many pages of news and analysis to work and unemployment issues. In 1997 the Conservative's Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and workfare scheme Project Work became part of Labour's New Deal. Since before JSA started in 1996,

pensions 'crisis' that is being blamed on longer-living workers but in reality has much more to do with the outrageous market speculations of pension fund managers. The gap between rich and poor is widening as the middle classes benefit from their ability to borrow huge sums by remortgaging or securing loans on their houses, that has resulted from national expansion of the southern property boom. In addition, the opening up of individual shareholding under the Tories has meant that the middle class is also benefiting from the profits of huge 'investment' (read exploitation of workers) of the UK into China, for example. *Organise!* has endeavoured to expose the other side of this money machine in articles such as 'New

nicely softened up for full-scale market 'reforms', the old Communist Parties were no longer needed. We predicted that pro-democracy mobilisations in Bulgaria and Serbia would mean no more than a removal of old style Stalinists from office and their replacement by fully fledged disciples of the market. In Serbia's case, for the West at least, it wasn't soon enough. Milosevic's nationalist adventure in Kosovo/Kosova was all the excuse needed for NATO armed forces to come in aid of what was portrayed as a 'humanitarian' intervention, but was in reality about a strategic speed-up of reorganisation in the region. Unfortunately, many groups on the Left and even some anarchists fell for it and ended up siding with Albanian nationalism and NATO



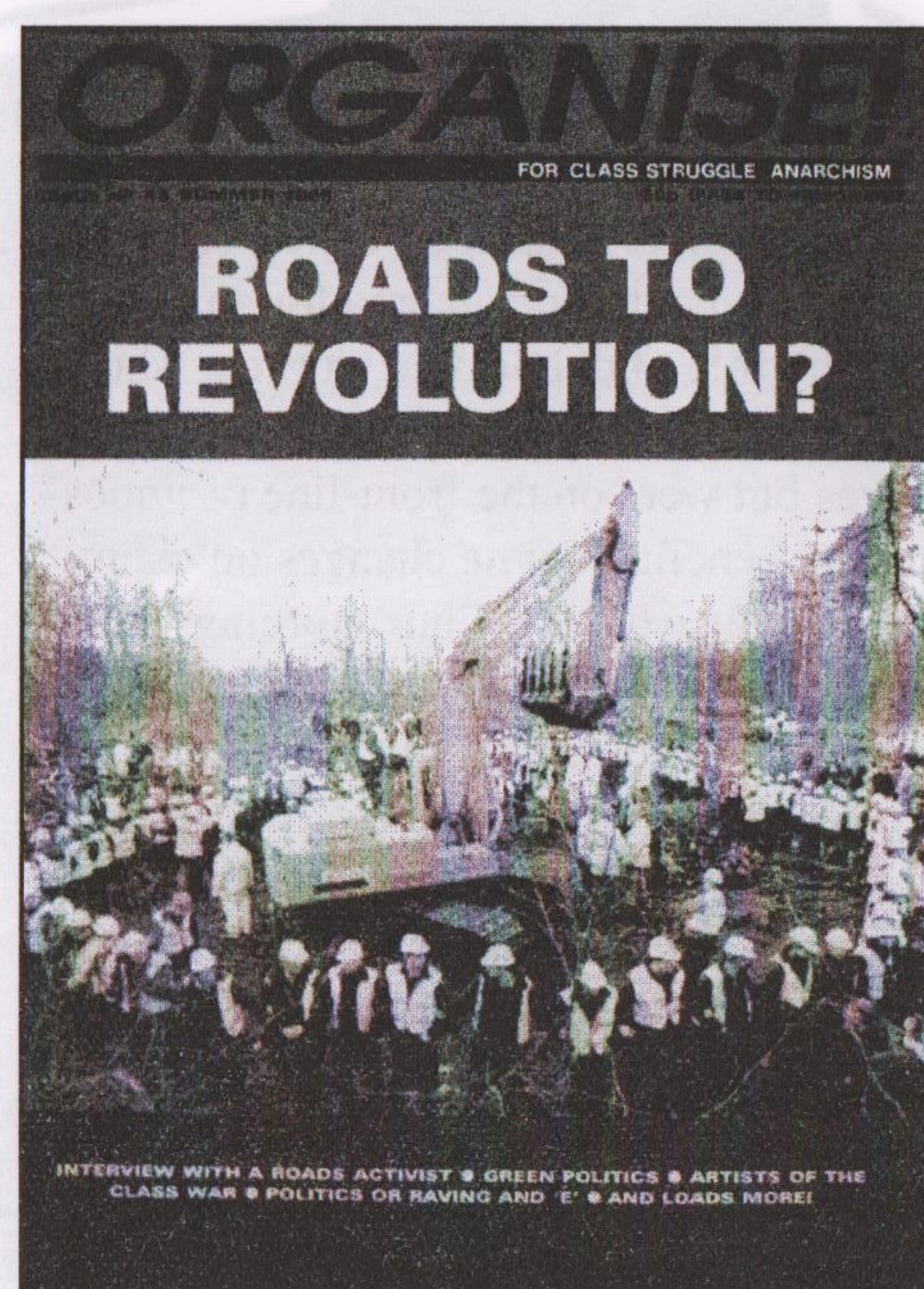
bombings rather than maintaining a 'No War but the Class War' stance. We are now reaping the reward of unfettered military interventions which are justified either by humanitarian intent or anti-terrorism. Confusion over Kosovo/a as something other than 'business as usual' for militarised states is perhaps one reason why the Left has been so ineffective in fighting against the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the US initiated 'war on terror' that is now being used to justify all manner of bloody offensives whether by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon, or by Russia on its borders.

### International Connections

We continue to adjust to the expansion of the European bloc from the Baltic and East and the negative effects of the rules governing monetary union that some EU member states have entered into. Rules to keep public spending down have meant that States have tried again and again to impose austerity measures but there has been continued resistance, notably in France. We have attempted to get first hand accounts from anarchists in those countries by means of interviews, by translating articles, and by asking for those comrades to write articles for us. We have also become much closer to our comrades in Eastern Europe, notably in Belarus and the Czech Republic. Northern Ireland continues to simmer since deals were made to bring Sinn Fein into government and we have continued to analyse the situation there, in conjunction with our comrades in 'Organise! Ireland'. Across the Atlantic, uprisings in Latin America have suffered from lack of reporting from a libertarian perspective, with much of the Left being unable to say anything that is not a simplistic support of leftist governments against US imperialism. We have published reports by and about anarchist groups and individuals in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela. In recent issues we have also attempted to make up for a paucity of reporting from Australia and Africa. Please expect more in the future.

### Identity Crisis

We have experienced an increasingly authoritarian Labour government since its election in 1997, which has brought in wave after wave of new repressive laws, culminating with the ID Cards Act of March this year. Articles about identity schemes in Organise! have concentrated on understanding Labour's motivations and the strategies to oppose it. We maintain that ID databases are to do with economic control



of the working class and that scare stories about crime and terrorism are merely bogus justifications, worse still it has encouraged anti-immigrant attitudes. Ex-Home Secretary David Blunkett's idea of an 'entitlement card' is just that – a way for the state to manage how taxes and welfare monies are spent. It is all the more scary that this power is going to be enabled by a raft of private companies who will run information databases and set-up biometric 'interrogation centres' on the government's behalf. We are also at pains to help remember that the Tories tried to introduce ID in the mid-1990s, and to realise that the ID Cards Act is just one part of State legislation that goes back at least to the Criminal Justice Act that anarchists were fighting before, and is not just the initiative of a particular party. In Britain, the AF has been supportive of resurrecting Defy-ID, a network of local groups that was begun several years ago but has suffered from a loss of enthusiasm; perhaps inevitable given the time taken for the legislation to go through. Further to this, the European paranoia about border control will greatly influence the introduction rate of biometric passports and identity schemes, and some kind of international coordination is badly needed.

### Green Anarchy?

Recognition of the threat of environmental catastrophe from industrial growth and its unsustainable fuels and infrastructures has become more widespread amongst liberals. The anarchist movement responded much earlier and has been involved in many environmental actions as well as in more generalised anti-capitalist initiatives from J18 to the Scotland G8 which have been

reported on and analysed in depth within the pages of Organise! over the last decade. In the aftermath of the dissolving of Class War Federation in 1997 much soul-searching went on and a conference in Bradford in 1998 was initiated by some of the ex-CWF comrades who were inviting others to look at the way forward for anarchism in Britain (see Organise! 47 and 49). Members of the Anarchist Communist Federation – as we were then known (see Organise! 52 for an explanation of the name change) – agreed to take part in organising the conference which succeeded in attracting 250 people. By far the biggest surprise of the event was the engagement of environmental activists, including people involved with Earth First!, who were calling themselves anarchists for the first time. A true meeting of anti-capitalist minds was perhaps helped by the ACF having published Organise! articles taking a positive stance towards environmental activism such as land occupations and road protests. We analysed green issues from an anarchist communist perspective that have since been collected in our pamphlet 'Ecology and Class: where there's brass, there's muck'. On the other hand we were critical of the potential for elitism in direct action groups if they are not connected to a wider class struggle, and of deep ecology or primitivist perspectives – whilst recognising that the destructive economic growth inherent in capitalism is partly fuelled by demands for technologies, and that these technologies are not neutral with respect to the power relationships we are forced to accept under the present system.

### Myths, Legends & Portraits

After we continued our 'Aspects of Anarchism' series to its conclusion (now an AF pamphlet) we introduced two new ones. Starting at issue 46 the 'Myths and Legends' short series took the hatchet to popular icons such as Che Guevara, Gandhi, Haile Selassie and Evita. Following this we set things straight by recounting the lives of lesser known anarchists and libertarian socialists in the ongoing series 'Revolutionary Portraits', which are complemented by the importance given in Organise! to obituaries of comrades who have left us more recently. Articles from these series and obituaries have since been reproduced as part of the Libcom.org online library. In addition to the regular series we have also published several serial articles, notably 'In the Tradition' which charted the political influences of the Anarchist Federation over five issues, and 'The Union

## the politics of the anarchist federation: a tribute

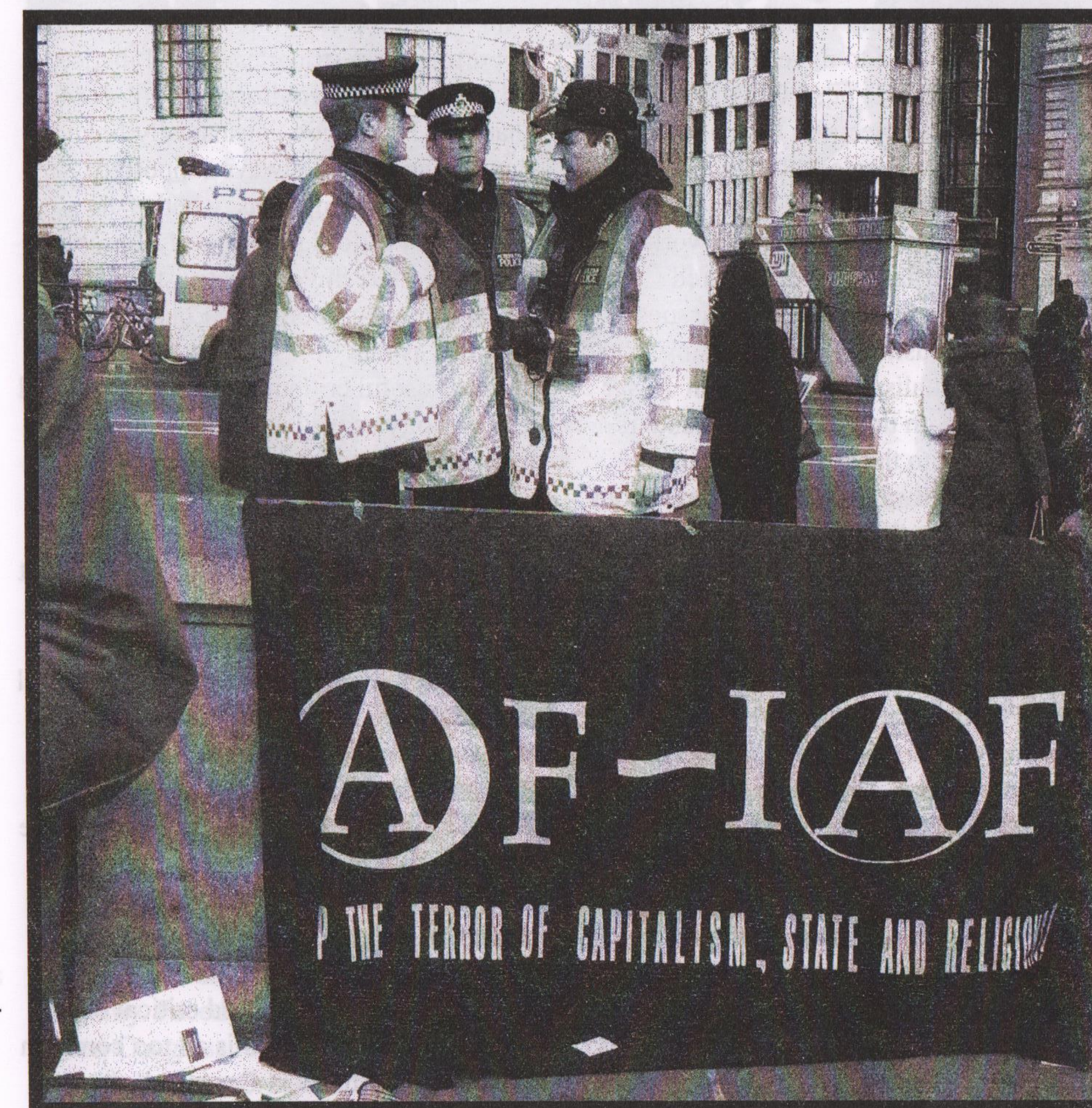
By Brian Morris

In an important academic study of contemporary anarchism Karen Goaman (2002) focussed exclusively on avant-garde individualists and anarcho-primitivists. She implied, quite misleadingly, that these "currents" represented contemporary anarchism, and were, moreover, the only ones that engaged in radical "activism". What was interesting about her study was that she emphasized the importance of anarchist periodicals, for they created a sense of community, and, by drawing on past traditions, re-kindled and kept alive an alternative vision of social life. Unfortunately, by focussing exclusively on anarcho-primitivism and the avant-garde (falsely equated with anarchism) Goaman neglected to mention those anarchist groups focussed around such important periodicals as "Direct Action", "Black Flag", "Class War", "Red and Black Revolution", "Rebel Worker" and "Freedom". Even more striking, given her emphasis on the Situationists and the avant-garde (the focus of her thesis) she completely fails to mention the Anarchist Federation. Yet over the last two decades the Anarchist (Communist) Federation has been actively engaged in contemporary struggles – whether relating to struggles around the workplace or community, environmental issues or the anti-capitalist movement – as well as regularly producing a splendid anarchist magazine Organise! and several important pamphlets.

As the Anarchist Federation is this year

Continued from page 16

makes us Strong?' – an in-depth look at anarcho-syndicalism and its approach to workplace struggle, in three parts. All this is in addition to our continued coverage in Organise! of anarchist history and culture in the form of feature articles and reviews of new books and pamphlets, and support of anarchist prisoners through regular articles,



celebrating its 20th anniversary it might be useful here to offer my own reflections on this periodical, appropriately titled with the active verb "Organise!" – for revolutionary anarchism.

Although the magazine openly advocates a

printing of their letters and by sending out free copies.

### The Future

The future of anarchist printed magazines in Britain is uncertain. Not for the first time have we heard that an issue of Black Flag might be the last, or that there are too many magazines saying similar things, whilst internet media seems to be more and more attractive not least in terms of cost, and the number of radical bookshops have been decimated. True enough, more people will read Organise! articles on our website or

specific form or strand of anarchism, that of anarchist communism and revolutionary class struggle, what I think is quite refreshing about Organise! is that it has always been free of sectarian angst and vituperation. Thus while engaging in constructive

through one of the online newswires like A-infos, but the AF believes there is still a need for a printed magazine such as Organise! The growth of the social centres phenomenon means there are once again places you can go and find anarchist literature in printed form. Prison copies are read and passed around. If you can help with cash Organise! is always in need of contributions to its press fund. No amount is too small. But more importantly, keep reading Organise! and when you have, write us letter and tell us what you think. Thanks for your support!



debates and critiques of other forms of anarchism, it has been singularly free of the personal invective and abuse that mars other anarchist periodicals, especially in the United States. Aiming not only to develop anarchist ideas, but to offer a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and debates, what is also significant about *Organise!* is the truly broad coverage that it has always offered to its readership. Thus over the last decade or so *Organise!* has offered critical reflections on many different issues and struggles, both at a local level and in relation to the British state. It has then kept us informed about worker's struggles in Britain, and has offered enlightening reflections on such issues as the Criminal Justice Bill, advertising – "the poetry of capitalism", on racism in Tower Hamlets, and on the relation of squatters and travellers to the economic crisis. But what has always appealed to me about the magazine is that, within its twenty or so pages, it has invariably carried one or more articles on resistance movements or class struggles in other parts of the world. *Organise!* has therefore always offered its readers an internationalist perspective, in reporting on the world-wide impact of global capitalism. Thus there have been informative articles on, for example, worker's struggles in Japan, the resistance of native peoples in the Philippines and elsewhere to the intrusion of mining corporations, the terror in East Timor, class war in Argentina, and on the many issues relating to the politics of such countries as Cuba, China, Somali, Mexico and South Africa. Yet although *Organise!* has been centrally concerned with class struggles at home and abroad, it has never neglected other important fields of struggle, particularly those relating to gender, the environment, and wider cultural issues. Reading some anarchist texts and periodicals one might be forgiven for assuming that the anarchist movement only involves men, either academics or macho types. What then has been important about *Organise!* is that it has always been involved in gender issues. It has often focussed on women anarchists like Ito Noe, or on issues, such as abortion, that specifically concern women. Informative articles on anarchism and sex, on women and the Spanish revolution, and on pornography and the sex industry have expressed this interest in gender issues. With regard to ecology *Organise!* has always taken a balanced approach. On the one hand we have anarchist periodicals like "Anarchy" and "Green Anarchist" which

embrace primitivism with a fundamentalist ardour, and completely ignore class struggles, workers and urban problems, while on the other hand many anarchist journals and newspapers have tended to treat ecology as of marginal interest. In contrast *Organise!* has always treated the ecological crisis and environmental issues as important topics, while at the same time supporting class struggles. Social justice and defending the environment are, for the Anarchist Federation, intrinsically linked. Thus *Organise!* has always supported environmental campaigns, whether in relation to Twyford Down or in supporting the London Green Peace activists against the McDonald corporation. Equally important is that over the past decade it has provided useful critiques of primitivism and deep ecology as well as illuminating discussions of such issues as the politics of water, deforestation, nature conservation (anti-people or anti-capitalism?), public transport and land ownership. The pamphlet "Ecology and Class: Where there's Brass, there's Muck" draws together many of these earlier articles, and gives a very useful introduction to ecological issues, viewed from an anarchist communist perspective. The pamphlet is informative, well-researched and lucid, and covers a wide range of topics from biotechnology and global warming to primitivism and the anti-roads movement. Equally important, though having a central focus on class struggles, and critical of the kind of scholasticism that is all too common in Academia, articles in *Organise!* often deal specifically with theoretical debates and wider cultural issues. Thus over the decade there have been articles on Keynesian economics, intellectual property rights, the politics of the Socialist Worker's



Party, Malcolm X and Black nationalism, mutual aid and evolution, cultural identity, moral panics and children and god and religion. In retrospect, it is of interest to read the early articles on Tony Blair and Saddam Hussein. These show a good deal of prescience. The article on Blair entitled "Labour Pains" (1995) reflects on Blair's pamphlet on "Socialism" (no less), indicating how wishy-washy it is, and how Blair's politics are akin to those of Thatcher. How true! Finally, there are the aspects of the magazine *Organise!* that have always appealed to me – the political cartoons, the support for anarchist prisoners, the obituaries and biographical vignettes of revolutionary anarchists, some known, some unknown, and the book reviews. Though often critical, such reviews express a generous spirit. There is also, usually, an engaging letters page. Unlike some pretentious anarcho-primitivists the Anarchist Federation has always sought to critically develop anarchist communist ideas. So it has never saw the need to ridicule and dismiss the ideas of an earlier generation of anarchists as "obsolete". It has therefore drawn insightfully on the life and work of such social anarchists as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Makhno and Durruti. Asked to respond to what the Anarchist Federation has done over the past decade or so, especially in relation to its magazine, one can only say that *Organise!* has been a beacon of light in a troubled world. Long may it prosper.

Reference  
Karen Goaman, *The Old World is Behind You: The Situationists and beyond in contemporary anarchist currents*. Ph.D.Thesis University of London 2002

The Public Sector strike in March of this year saw one million workers on strike in what was the largest industrial disruption since the General Strike of 1926, eighty years previously. The strike against changes in the Local Government Pension Scheme was an example of the Trade Unions responding to the anger of their membership with a demoralising one day action. Following the strike, the unions declared all action postponed pending talks – all momentum was deliberately lost. So, was the story any different in 1926? Was the General Strike an expression of working class self-determination? Or was it a revolutionary strike aimed at overthrowing the ruling class? The way that the General Strike, or should that be *The* General Strike as it is the only one to have taken place in Britain, is remembered is often with a strong romanticism and the notion of terrible betrayal by union leaders. What was the background to the strike and how did the union leaders manage to get away with such a 'betrayal'?

#### 'Black Friday', April 1921

In 1921, the Government announced a wage cut for miners. This attack brought a militant response from large sections of the working class and the potential for a mass strike movement in defence of wages. The 'Triple Alliance' of miners, railway workers and other transport workers' unions frightened the state. The Russian Revolution was only four years old and a revolutionary wave of working class struggle continued throughout Europe. The government sent troops into the coalfields and geared up for a confrontation. The miners were left to fight alone when the 'Triple Alliance' collapsed on what became known as 'Black Friday'. Driven back to work after three months, the miners were given wage cuts of between 10% and 40%. This defeat left the miners feeling both betrayed and isolated. The overall level of working class confidence and combativity was also affected and trade union membership fell dramatically. It was not until the latter part of 1924 that the class struggle appeared once more on the rise.

#### 'Red Friday', July 1925

In 1925 the government threatened another vicious reduction in miners' wages, along with a lengthening of the working day. There had been a devaluation of the pound to 90% of its pre-war value and the British bosses were determined that the working



## the general strike: the great betrayal?

class would shoulder the burden of maintaining the country's place in the world economy. Faced with this threat the Trades Union Congress re-convened the 'Triple Alliance', now more generally known as the 'Cripple Alliance' and the Transport and Railwaysmen's unions again pledged to stand with the miners if the governments' threat was carried out. On this occasion the government decided to back down and the decision was hailed as a victory for the workers, a 'Red Friday' to avenge the Black one four years earlier. But why did the government decide to hold back? The retreat was essentially tactical. The strategists of the ruling class were not confident that the cuts could be successfully imposed at this point and wished to postpone the confrontation. In his report on the industrial situation to the King, Maurice Hankey, Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet said: "The majority of the Cabinet regard the present moment as badly chosen for the fight, though the conditions would be more favourable nine months hence." A nine month subsidy was given to the mining industry and a Commission (the Samuel Commission to investigate the problems of the industry was set up as a

smokecreen. The government began to oversee the stockpiling of coal and made preparations for a massive class confrontation. Plans were drawn up for the temporary 'nationalisation' of the road haulage industry, for the maintenance of 'order' and recruitment of volunteer strike-breakers. This latter would be handled by the Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies, a right-wing 'private' organisation led by elements in the ruling class, established for just such an occasion. That the ruling class really weren't sure that the 'Triple Alliance' would perform another 'Black Friday' turn for them is evident. Whilst the government didn't take the revolutionary rhetoric that emanated from the September 1925 TUC Congress on face value, they were still worried that the momentum for action might carry the trade unions further than their leadership might have wanted. They lacked confidence in the Trade Unions ability to control their membership. The state was also unsure about the influence of the Communist Party, both its strength amongst workers and its intention. On October 14th 1925 the Home Secretary ordered the arrest of 11 leaders of the party



who were subsequently imprisoned for periods of between six and 12 months on charges of seditious libel and incitement to mutiny. The majority were, however, released before the General Strike in May 1926.

The Samuel Commission came up with its 'impartial' findings in early 1926. It found that there had indeed been mismanagement of the British coalfields but wage cuts and increased hours were still inevitable in order to make the industry competitive in the world market. So, a full year in which the government was able to prepare for confrontation was lost for the workers. Anger reached a boiling point with the results of the commission and the ending of the subsidy. The TUC was forced to call a general strike, unsure of its ability to control it but afraid that by not putting itself at its head it would be by-passed. When J.R. Clynes (of the General and Municipal workers union) said that "I am not in fear of the capitalist class. The only class I fear is our own," he was being remarkably honest for a union leader! Up to the last minute, the leadership of the TUC attempted to lash-up a deal with the government and made plain their hope that a general strike would be averted. Meanwhile, the British press was busy creating hysteria about the impending class warfare. When printers at the Daily Mail, as right-wing a rag then as now, went on unofficial strike when asked to publish another anti-union article, the TUC repudiated the action.

On the 4th May 1926 the size and breadth of the General Strike took everyone by surprise, not least the TUC, who had organised very little in preparation for the action. The overwhelming organisational lead was taken at a local level, particularly through Trades Union Councils, local strike committees and quickly organised 'Councils of Action' which involved strikers and their supporters. In some areas, embryonic workers' militias formed and violent clashes occurred throughout the country, despite the best attempts of the TUC to maintain a blissful calm. 'Unorganised' workers in some areas were amongst the first to strike and everywhere joined their unionised comrades. Despite efforts by strike-breaking students the country was coming to a standstill and in many areas little or nothing moved without the agreement of the strikers. The state for its part, geared up for an escalation, aware of the possibility that things might get 'out of hand'. Battleships were anchored in the Clyde, the Mersey and elsewhere whilst the army and navy were put on standby, all leave being cancelled.

Understandably the trade union leaderships were extremely anxious and used every opportunity to display their moderation and horror at the way they were being treated by the government. In response to the publication of the British Gazette, the anti-strike bulletin of the government, the TUC published the British Worker. This daily

bulletin continually emphasised that the strike was an industrial dispute and nothing more, whilst encouraging local strike committees to organise sports activities and 'entertainments'. The famous football matches between strikers and the police were a product of such suggestions. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin described the general strike as "[a] challenge to parliament and the road to anarchy and ruin".

#### The Betrayal?

But whilst the TUC issued demands that the workers "stand firm", they pointedly refused to call out power and electricity supply workers and waited until a week into the strike before calling out maritime workers. By this time the TUC had already entered into secret negotiations to end the strike. None of their demands were met. But on May 12th, the General Council of the TUC called off the General Strike. The news, relayed through the British Worker, came as a shock to most strikers and on 13th May there were more workers out on strike than ever before. The workers were deliberately not told that the mineworkers union had opposed the ending of the strike and imagined that a victory of some description had been won. Confusion reigned and as news of the capitulation filtered through there was a general sense of bitterness and dockworkers, engineers, railway workers and others continued the strike unofficially. Eventually though, the

momentum was lost and the workers drifted back to work. The abandoned miners continued their strike officially but were isolated, slowly ground down and defeated.

#### The revolutionaries

What was the role of would-be revolutionary organisations within the working class during The General Strike?

The largest organisation claiming to be revolutionary at this time was the Communist Party of Great Britain. Since 1924 the party had been attempting to build a rank and file movement in the Trade Unions. This became known as the National Minority Movement and it attracted hundreds of thousands of workers, the majority of whom were not party members. Initially this movement looked like a semi-syndicalist movement but in August 1925 its direction was adjusted by the leadership. At this time the Communist International was pursuing a policy of fawning support for the 'left' leaders of Trade Unions. This was part of a general accommodation to international capitalism and suited Russian foreign policy. The Communist Party, rather than attempt to build up any movement independent of this left leadership emphasised the need for the bureaucrats to have ever more control, urging the workers to "follow the TUC and insist on the formation of the Workers' Alliance under the supreme authority of the General Council". During the General Strike itself Communist Party members threw them-

selves into building the local Councils of Action and strike committees. The party grew rapidly during the strike. At no time, however, did the Communist Party attempt to prepare the workers for a 'sell-out' by the TUC leadership by building independent organisation or even the nucleus of autonomous struggle. Whilst the party had no confidence in the traditional right-wing leaders in the TUC they saw a genuine "proletarian leadership" emerging amongst the newer left wing leaders (much as today's Communist Party and other leftists see such leadership in Bob Crow and Mark Serwotka et al).

The small revolutionary forces which rejected such a perspective included the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF) who opposed the CPGB's slogan of 'All Power to the General Council (of the TUC)' with the slogan 'No power to the General Council - All power to labour through its strike committees and mass meetings'. But it remained just that - a slogan. Whilst some workers did try to maintain their strike committees and defend their self-organised structures, the APCF mostly remained a voice in the wilderness as the Stalinist ice age decended.

#### So, was The General Strike betrayed? Could things have turned out differently?

The Trade Union leaders certainly didn't betray the workers, except in the sense that

they betrayed their trust. Rather, the Trade Union leaders played their role according to their class interest - which just happened to be different to that of their members. They were forced by pressure from below to call the strike and did everything in their power to make sure that it didn't go beyond 'an industrial dispute'. They left the miners to fight on their own, facing certain defeat. But why didn't the workers take the leadership out of their hands and extend the struggle? Certainly the creativity and organisational ability of the rank and file trade union members and, indeed, many non-unionised members, saw the strike maintained. The local initiatives were the life-blood of the struggle. Given time, the local Councils of Action may have linked-up and established a counter-power to the government. But, the fact remains that the majority of workers trusted their unions to defend their interests and did not see the need to take the struggle either out of the bureaucrats' hands or on to a higher level of struggle - the fight for power. Although workers were confused and angry that the struggle was called-off, they did not have confidence or independent organisation to carry it on.

The Communist Party, which had built a considerable rank and file movement over the previous two years, decided to put their faith in the left wing trade union leaders, rather than the self-organising abilities of the working class.

## charles h. kerr - radical publishers is 120 years old

2006 sees the 120th anniversary of the birth of the radical publishers Charles H. Kerr - making it the oldest 'publishers of anti-establishment literature' around today. Founded in Chicago 1886 to print radical Unitarian literature, CHK soon developed towards publishing anarchist and socialist material under the radicalising influence of the Haymarket fit-up, and has been publishing continuously ever since. One of the very first successes that the company had was in fact key in the campaign to pardon the surviving anarchists, Lester C. Hurrard's *The Coming Climax* (!) being particularly influential in Governor Atgeld's decision to issue a pardon in 1893.

The mainstay of the early catalogue tended to be what are today known as 'Marxist classics' but which in their time were important popularises of progressive ideas amongst the working class. A torrent of books and pamphlets flooded from the CHK press in the period up to 1920 covering industrial unionism, working class history, atheism, sex education, anthropology, economics (Mary E. Marcy's classic of the genre *Shop Talks on Economics* that sold over two million copies!) and the first ever complete English language edition of the three volumes of *Capital*.

Alongside this CHK also published the highly sophisticated

monthly theoretical journal *International Socialist Review* (ISR) which was associated with the extreme left of the Socialist Party and the IWW. Until it was forced to close by repression following its opposition to the US's entry into WW1 in 1918 ISR was probably the foremost English language journal in the world - that such a journal also managed to reach a circulation of 45,000 under the very difficult conditions for radical organising in the first few decades of the 20th century in the US attests to its very high standards married to a wide accessibility. The ISR was characterised by the quality of its contributors and the originality of their articles, which in the main came from the left wing of the Second International - of those elements that fought hardest, longest and earliest against the Internationals degeneration into reformism and social patriotism - writers such as Anton Pannekoek, Herman Gorter, Rosa Luxemburg and those who represented the new militant syndicalism that was fighting against the same damaging trends in the union movement - Joe Hill, Big Bill Haywood, Emile Pouget, James Connolly. Others who were also introduced to the English speaking world through ISR included Lenin, Kollantai and Trotsky. Cartoons were carried

by such powerful voices of the working class experience as Ralph Chaplin and Robert Minor (before he ditched anarchism for paid Stalinism), Arturo Giovannetti and Jack London. And all this under the very capable leadership of the remarkable Mary E. Marcy - who actually killed herself in despair when the state eventually did manage to shut down the ISR.

Following the end of WW1 the company carried on as best it could despite suffering from constant state interference and financial difficulties, but on a drastically reduced scale. New books were still published but they became rarer and rarer during this period. Finally in 1928, Charles H Kerr retired after nearly 50 years at the helm - he passed the running of the company onto John Keracher and The Proletarian Party - a very odd bunch of working class autodidacts with a passion for lectures, free 'proletarian universities' and debate. (Incidentally, Paul Mattick, the veteran Council Communist was expelled from the PP in 1931 for 'factionalism'). The PP took very careful care of the press, despite the predictions of many that they would simply utilise it to sectarian ends. Instead they used it to keep key Marxist classics in print and to circulate educational material - they even managed to make the first English translation and publication of Engel's

important 'Anti-Duhring' under very difficult circumstances. The PP finally dissolved in 1971 after a 60 year existence in which they "never merged with any other party, never admitted defeat, never disbanded, independent to the last" in the words of one of the IWW affiliated members of the group which now took over the running of the company, injecting a fresh dynamic and more lively approach than the aging members of the PP had been able to.

New books now began to appear alongside the traditional classics - the first ever biography of Lucy Parsons, books on Eugene Debs and Joe Hill (Franklin Rosemont's book on Hill being one of the best books on radical working class culture ever published), books on labour organising in the south, Haymarket collections, books on black revolt, working class autobiographies, Hobo life, Surrealism, Marxism, Jazz, poetry, cartoons and many, many other subjects without there being any noticeable let up in the pace. They have played an absolutely crucial role in keeping the idea of popular working class social history, history from below, history by for and of the working class at the forefront of our struggles - they have always known that reclaiming our past is key to building our common future.



# armand guerra

Typesetter, film maker, scenario writer, actor and anarchist

Armand Guerra was born Jose Estivalis Cabo at Liria near Valencia on 4th January 1886, the son of a farmer and of a mother who was already looking after a child of 5 years. First as a choirboy and then as a pupil at a seminary in Valencia, he developed an intense hatred for the Church. He started working in a print shop in Valencia in 1899 at the age of 13 then in an electrical workshop with his brother Vicente. In 1907 a print workers strike broke out in Valencia and Armand was arrested and imprisoned. The police thought that after his release that he was emigrating to the West Indies. In actual fact he and his brother went to Paris and made contact with the anarchist movement there.

In 1909 he attended the meetings of the Germinal anarchist group in Geneva, Switzerland and started corresponding with the outstanding anarchist militant and doctor Pedro Vallina who had taken refuge in London. He also edited the Spanish anarchist paper *Tierra y Libertad* in Nice during that year (after the crushing of the 1909 revolt and the State murder of Francisco Ferrer, anarchist publications had been forbidden in Spain). Between 1910 and 1914 he wrote very regularly for the Cuban anarchist weekly *Tierra* published in Havana. He also wrote for the Swiss weekly anarchist paper *Le Reveil*, edited by Luigi Bertoni, under the anagram of his real name-Silavitse.

But Guerra was footloose and in February 1911 he traveled down through Italy before catching a boat for Cairo where he took part in the activities of Italian anarchists grouped round a print shop in the centre of the city, near the El Muski bazaar. He

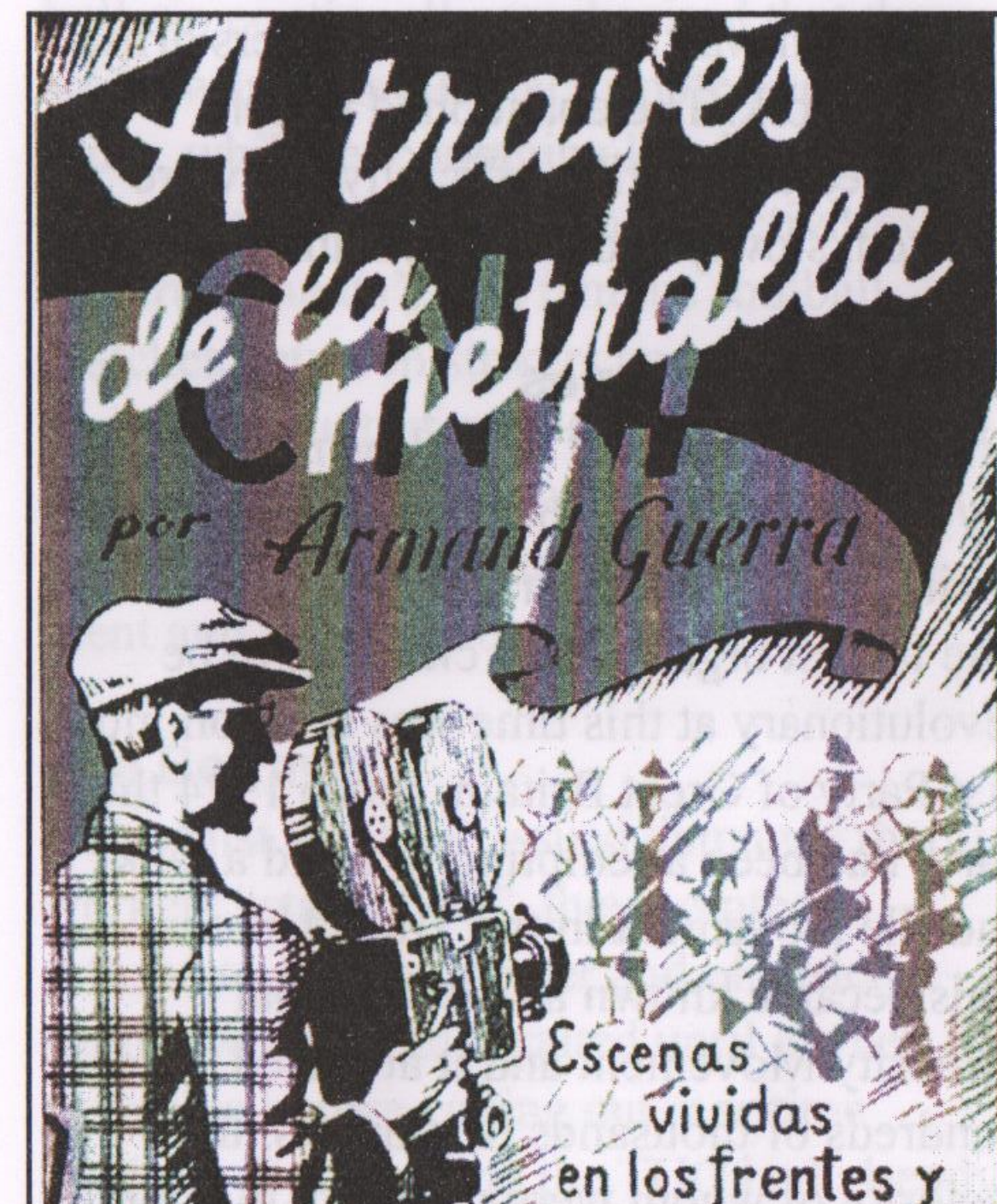
helped bring out a paper *L'Idea*, edited in three languages- Italian, French and Greek. Guerra hoped to ignite a revolt in Egypt, but the authorities forbade the publication of any anarchist texts in Arabic.

## Travels in the Balkans

He started a long boat journey from Istanbul to Braila in Romania and then on to Belgrade and Salonica, all the time tracked by the police. The situation arrived that he was ordered to leave the ship AND forbidden to land! Faced with this ridiculous situation, the captain came to his defence.

He returned to France and wrote several articles about his travels. During the summers, he worked in a printshop in Deauville. It was in this town in 1912 that the Gaumont operators shot the first animated colour footage in the history of cinema on the beach at Deauville. Perhaps inspired by this, he returned to Paris in 1913 and produced a film for the Éclair company called 'Un cri dans la jungle' (A shout in the jungle), which came to the attention of Yves Bidamant, secretary of the rail union Federation des transports par voie ferree. This individual suggested that Guerra produce films with a social message.

This began the venture of the Cinema du peuple when Estivalis began to use the pseudonym Armand Guerra for the first time. He brought out the films *les Miseres de l'aiguille*, *le Vieux Docker*, and *La Commune*. At this time he lived at 22 Rue du Donjon, at Vincennes across the road from the Pathe factory. He worked as a typesetter in Paris at the Maison de la



Presse, which printed most of the Parisian papers. Guerra continued to write for *Tierra* and to work for the Cinema du Peuple. From summer 1914, he began a correspondence with Marcel Martinet, a writer of "proletarian literature" and a member of the Cinema du peuple cooperative. His wife Renee contributed to the cooperative acting in the Guerra film *Miseres de l'aiguille*. Unfortunately Guerra's concierge was informing on him to the police about his political activity and he was expelled from France in September 1915. He had been under police surveillance since 1909 for his editing of *Tierra y Libertad*.

Guerra now moved to Lausanne in Switzerland where worked as a typesetter in a print shop. At the end of 1917 he picked up his cinematic interests again by setting up the company Cervantes Films. After making 6 films, he abandoned the project, for reasons not yet known, although it was probably because of financial reasons. Most of his films were filmed outdoors rather than in a studio, incurring much higher expenses. Most of the films were about gypsies or bullfighters, themes popular with contemporary audiences. The *Curse of The Gypsy* had nevertheless been produced to combat

The ideas and activities of these individuals nurtured a movement that was eventually to spark off the revolutionary days of 1918-1919.

An anti-war movement was initiated in 1917 around the Galileo Circle, a study group of students and intellectuals, and workplace activists from the Syndicalist propaganda group that had been initiated by Szabo. Agitation in the factories led to the formation of the first Workers' Council in late December 1917. Meanwhile young anarchists gained entrance into Budapest

Spanish clericalism. In 1920 he went to Lausanne again and then on to Berlin.

## Nosferatu

Here, he worked as an actor, director, and translator of scenes (he spoke 7 languages). The Berlin film scene was vibrant and dynamic so he was rarely without work. He was involved in the realization of films by great directors like Murnau, Pabst and Lang. Not only did he write scenarios but he was involved at all levels in production, including administration and writing of subtitles and the putting up of scenery. He acted of Hans Neumann's film *A Summer Night's Dream* alongside another anarchist actor Alexander Granach. (1). There is a likelihood that he was involved in the production of the film classic *Nosferatu*, in which Granach acted. Like another Spanish anarchist, Valerio Orobón Fernandez, Guerra worked translating scenes for the Spanish-German firm Filmofono. He pioneered cinema with sound in Valencia, and brought out 3 films there. In 1928 another film of his produced in Germany was banned by the censors. Guerra became the Berlin correspondent of *Popular Film*, a Barcelona film review, directed by his friend Mateo Santos (who brought out the first documentary on the Spanish Civil War in 1936 for the CNT). In 1930 he took over from another director for the film *El Amor Soyeando* (Love Sings). In 1931, because of protectionist laws put in place, he was forced to leave Berlin for good and settled in Madrid with Isabel Anglada with whom he had a child, Vicenta.

He played the role of a clown in 'La Alegria

army barracks to spread anti-war propaganda. A general strike calling for workers' councils broke out in January 1918 in Budapest. Strikes and agitation increased, in spite of the round-up of 50 anarchists, syndicalists and revolutionary socialists. A secret Government circular reported that: "Women workers not only frequently attempt to disrupt factories by interrupting production, but even deliver inflammatory speeches, take part in demonstrations, marching in the foremost ranks with their babies in their arms, and behaving in an

que Pasa' of Sabino Antonio Micon in 1934.

## War and revolution

During the course of filming his first full length feature film 'Carne de Fieras' the Francoists launched their coup. Later because the CNT wanted to honour all contracts for film workers the film was finally completed and has recently been re-discovered.

Guerra wrote a fascinating account of this period in his 'A Traves de la Metralla' (Through the Grapeshot). 'Carne de Fieras' was to be Guerra's last feature film. He made attempts to make a film about Durruti, and also brought out some newsreels 'Estampas Guerreras' but the CNT needed his considerable gifts as an orator and he had to abandon the camera.

In the last months of 1937 he toured throughout southern France speaking on behalf of the CNT. To those who questioned whether Mexico was the only country to have given arms to Republican Spain, he replied that the Soviet Union has sold arms, not given them!

With Manuel Perez he translated a pamphlet about the Francoist massacres on Mallorca.

Guerra fell foul of the Communist Party that was carrying out its counterrevolution. He was arrested by the SIM (secret police controlled by the Communists) and imprisoned between 8th April and 26th August 1938 on the Uruguay, a ship converted into a prison in Barcelona harbour. He was subsequently put under house arrest. He appealed to the General Secretary of the CNT, Mariano Vasquez for freedom.

insulting manner towards the representatives of the law."

The government collapsed, whilst strikes, military mutinies and massive demonstrations spread.

By November workers' militias had been formed. By early 1919 estate workers and servants began to occupy the land, whilst workers took over their factories. Soldiers' councils were formed and the unemployed put on mass demonstrations. The coalition government collapsed.

Meanwhile a Communist Party had been

With the final triumph of Francoism, Guerra managed to escape to Sete in southern France in February 1939, avoiding the French concentration camps that were to become the home of so many fleeing from Spain. On 10th March 1939, a month after having found his family at Saint Mande, he died from a stroke, probably brought on by the extreme exhaustion of the last few years. Guerra's films were all confiscated by the Franco regime. Only over the last few years are they beginning to emerge from the archives. It would certainly be interesting to get access to them in the English-speaking world, especially his *Carne de Fieras*, and to see if they have weathered the test of time. The uncontested fact remains that Guerra was not only a devoted anarchist, but had a significant role in the history of cinema.

(1) Granach was born Jessaja Granach in 1893 in Webiwici (Wierzbowce), East Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what is now the Ukraine. Born into a poor Jewish family with many siblings, he apprenticed as a baker. He came in contact with Russian-Jewish students with revolutionary ideas and in London in 1905 he set up a theatre group with other anarchists. During this time he met leading anarchists like Malatesta, Kropotkin, and above all Rudolf Rocker. In 1906 he went to Vienna and took part in Yiddish theatre, alongside his day job as a baker. In the 20s Granach became a big star in German cinema in films like *Nosferatu* and *Kameradschaft*. He gave money to the defence of Sacco and Vanzetti and starred in the play *Staatsraison*, written by his friend Muehsam which defended Sacco and Vanzetti and denounced the American judicial system. With the coming to power of Hitler, he fled to Russia. Arrested by the Stalin regime, only through the intervention of the German novelist Feuchtwanger was he extradited to Switzerland. From there he fled to USA, where he continued as a film actor in such films as *Ninotchka* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Curiously, in later Hollywood films, Granach often played the part of evil Nazis!

**War and revolution: the Hungarian anarchist movement in World War I and the Budapest Commune (1919) by Martyn Everett. Kate Sharpley Library - 2006, £3, 28 pages**

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. But Hungary had another revolution in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War. Martyn Everett describes the emergence of an anarchist movement as a breakaway from the Social Democratic Party. He then

goes on to describe other emerging currents and the strong support that anarchism had for a time among Hungarian peasants. Such important figures of Hungarian anarchism and libertarian socialism such as Ervin Szabo, Ervin Batthyany, Sandor Czismadia and Jeno Henrik Schmitt, are discussed.

formed, initially set up by returning Hungarians like Bela Kun, a former Social Democrat who had become a Bolshevik whilst in Russia. Many anarchists and syndicalists believed at this time that the Bolsheviks were carrying out a libertarian revolution in Russia, and they joined the new Party. These illusions began to be shaken a little when Kun, on the orders of Lenin, engineered a merger of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party (a party that had been pro-war, and had

Continued on page 24



## Storming Heaven: Class Composition And Struggle In Italian Autonomist Marxism by Steve Wright (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

This is the only full length English language introduction to the Italian Marxist tradition of Operaismo or what later came to be known as autonomism - and which is now undergoing something of a revival under the title of 'autonomist Marxism' with Toni Negri being the mismatched poster-boy. Previously only available as a PhD thesis or in mangled electronic form it was published by Pluto Press in 2002 and has since helped to uncover the material background to the original texts which are now circulating around the internet or in samizdat form and to further open up the real significance (including the limitations) of the key concepts of the tradition for those without Italian or access to specialist libraries.

The book opens with a very dense and useful introduction to immediate post-war Italy, the political background, the historical groups, the capitalist offensive (placed within an international context) and then moves through a near chronological examination of 'workerism' as it emerged out of the resistance by workers and intellectuals to the Italian Socialist Party and Communist Party of Italy embrace of capitalist development and 'nation-building' at the level of both the enterprise and as an institutional project, then follows the key concepts as they grew out of the working classes own behaviour and the later refinements as conditions altered. One of the strengths of the book is that Steve doesn't beat around the bush or attempt to deal with the Byzantine organisational networks that criss-crossed the various Italian territories in the 60s and 70s, beyond what is essential. He clearly outlines what he regards to be the traditions main theoretical breakthroughs and what he considers to be its central weaknesses without fuss or the need for intellectual

showboating - often problem in this particular area. Amongst these key ideas that are viewed as particularly valuable is the concept of class composition and the early emphasis of Quaderni Rossi and Classe Operaia on flesh-and-blood working class behaviours as uncovered through the original use of 'workers inquiries' by Alquati - even here though the often mechanistic chain of technical composition of labour process = political composition of working class = political organisation that was built on this approach is criticised and the later recognition of the importance of cultural factors by Primo Maggio is offered as a useful modification forced on the workerists by the reality of the internal differentiation of the working class in the factories and outside.

Other key concepts that are welcomed are the (sometimes confused) recognition of the importance of reproduction to capital, of social issues outside of the factory, of the rediscovery of working class histories long sidelined by the official parties historical narratives and of the centrality of working class movement to the development of capital - the discovery of the working class perspective as opposed to the logic of capital - an especially clear discussion of Mario Tronti's early texts makes this often difficult overturning of traditional Marxist approaches very simple to grasp. Steve is equally as strong on the shortcomings of autonomism, and chief amongst the sinners is Tony Negri who comes in for some sustained (and justified) criticism for his 'tendency' to abstractly impose a few characteristics of a limited section of the working class across the whole of the social terrain and to then make great leaps from this starting point - he quotes Tronti's apt warning that "a discourse which grow upon

itself carries the mortal danger of verifying itself always and only through the successive passages of its own formal logic" - which seems more than little prophetic given Negri's recent trajectory...

Other workerists are criticised for their overwhelming concentration on the immediate process of production beyond the point where it was sustainable and the over-reaction when this became apparent to them - the consequent ditching of the mass worker thesis and the embrace of the socialised worker to the detriment of those still in the factories being particularly short-sighted and damaging. In fact, this sort of wild flip-flopping in pursuit of quick political gains is consistently deplored throughout the book. As is the gradual degeneration of the leading groups of autonomia into 'political micro-factions' - especially of the 'organised' section of the area of autonomy - who aped the forms of the historic left and tried to force the rhythm of the movement via a slightly modified vanguardism with disastrous results.

One slight criticism that I have is that the 1977 events are not really entered into in any great detail - in terms of activity anyway. There is, though, a very interesting look at Sergio Bologna's famous essay 'The Tribe of Moles' which covers the composition and experience of the movement during that period. A similar point could be made as regards the terrible state repression that autonomia faced in the late 70s. This book is all the more useful as it doesn't come from someone who has followed Negri and others into the post-modern swamp, and who hasn't rejected the key breakthroughs that were made in the 60s and 70s but instead argues that they should be built upon whilst recognising the changed conditions in which we find ourselves today - that would be to stick to the original promises of the workerists - something which many of the most prominent names connected with the traditions were unable to do themselves.

suppression of the army, Bolshevik influence was equally apparent in the call for land nationalization, where the original owners were appointed as "commissars for production". This disarmed revolution in the countryside and caused resentment among the peasantry. Kun started taking authoritarian measures against the workers, calling for increased production and arresting several syndicalist militants.

## Joaquin Perez 1907 - 2006

In the late 1980s I attended a film show in London on the achievements of anarchism during the Spanish Civil War. At one point an elderly Spanish anarchist sitting next to me began weeping quietly. The passion and conviction of Spanish anarchism had suddenly been made manifest. Later on I learnt that he was Joaquin Perez and was one of the last surviving members of the heroic band of anarchist fighters, the Friends of Durruti.

Joaquin Perez Navarro was born into a poor peasant family at Calpes de Arenso near Castellon on 4th August 1907, the eldest of three children - a sister and brother. He lost his father at the age of 11. He emigrated with his mother to Barcelona in 1918. There he worked as a hodcarrier's mate before becoming a waiter, a profession which he remained in for the rest of his working life. In 1919 at the age of 12, he joined the mass anarchosindicalist union the CNT. He took part in the fighting in Barcelona against the Francoist uprising and then immediately went to fight on the Aragon front in one of the anarchist militia columns. He worked in the anarchist collectives of Gelsa and Pina de Ebro. In 1937 he joined Los Amigos de Durruti (Friends of Durruti) a group of anarchists pledged to fight militarization and the betrayals of the Communist Party and named after the legendary anarchist fighter and militia commander Buenaventura Durruti. He fought with the Friends on the barricades in Barcelona in May 1937 (these events are depicted at the end of Ken Loach's film Land and Freedom). Later he fought with the Iron Column, an anarchist militia that had initially been constituted from prisoners released from the jails of the Republic. At the end of 1938 he was imprisoned and

Kun's military policies were equally disastrous. Initially revolutionary militias had swept back attacking troops led by the Romanians with the support of the French government. Kun called for a peace treaty with the Czechoslovak government and thus sacrificed Slovak revolutionaries who had also moved to set up a Republic of Councils. This added to growing demoralization. Kun and his Bolshevik core

tortured by the Stalinists, who condemned him to death and put him in Montjuic prison.

He escaped from there with the fall of Barcelona to the Francoists and reached France. There he was imprisoned in the French concentration camps at Argeles and Barcares. Later on he was in a work gang building docks at Brest. With the German victory over France, he managed to escape to England. In London he was involved in the activities of a Spanish exile anarchist group. Between 1969 and 1974 he was involved in a liaison commission of the CNT in Britain. When he first arrived in England he worked in the building trade but very soon transferred to catering and worked at the Berkeley Hotel in Mayfair for quite a few years. He then moved to the George & Dragon Restaurant in South Kensington (which was privately owned but eventually bought out by Wheelers) and retired from there at the age of 65.

Joaquin was totally committed to the anarchist movement and time never faded his passion and fervour for the injustices that were committed during the Spanish Civil War. He could recall every detail and emotion as if it had only happened yesterday and, in fact, at the age of 92 he finally finished writing a book outlining his experiences during that time. By all accounts, Joaquin was quite a ladies' man, but in 1953 he was "caught" by Carmen, his best friend's sister-in-law - he had met her on her arrival at the airport, immediately fell in love and they married within Carmen's 3-month stay in the UK. Carmen and Joaquin were married for 50 years but sadly he lost his beloved "Chati" two years ago and life was never really the same again. He is survived by their only daughter, Violeta.

Joaquin was a very content, gracious and quiet individual with very strong principles and high standards. However, he was also a

negotiated safe passage out of Hungary, deliberately excluding anarchists and oppositional Communists. The Budapest Commune was drowned in blood and many revolutionaries murdered, some in ways like something out of the Middle Ages. As Martyn Everett remarks "The pressure of war, which continued in Hungary long after it had finished elsewhere in Central Europe, also forced anarchists to cooperate

charmer and flirted outrageously with most of the nurses and carers at the nursing home where he lived for the last year of his life and where he was given untold love and affection by all the staff.

In the last years of his life he wrote a number of books: "Relato Poetico" his experiences as one of the Friends of Durruti (London 1995), "SIM" on the activities of the Spanish secret police, jointly with Francisco Piqueras (Barcelona 1998) and "Yo luche por la revolucion social del pueblo espanol y de todos los pueblos del mundo" (Barcelona 1999). He died in his sleep in London on 21st August at the age of 99. He was the last surviving member of the Friends of Durruti (the group's founders, Jaime Balius and Pablo Ruiz had died a few years before). His body was cremated on the 30th August, wrapped, according to his wishes, in the red and black flag of the CNT and of anarchism.

## Defending Anonymity

Since the ID Card Act became law in March this year Tony Blair has said it will be a "major plank" of Labour's next election manifesto, whilst heir-apparent Gordon Brown aims to increase even further the use of ID databases by private companies like banks and supermarkets. Whatever they are saying now, the Conservatives too tried to give us ID cards a decade ago when Michael Howard was Home Secretary under John Major's government, and were only stopped because they lost the 1997 General Election. It's clear that both parties have a long history of repression when in power and that ID will be beaten on the streets, by collective action, or not at all. The AF's free pamphlet, Defending Anonymity, looks at what the new Act will mean in practice and analyses the real reasons why the State wants to track us all with identity databases and related technologies. It suggests ways to fight whilst explaining why some arguments against ID are worse than counterproductive.

The revised second edition of Defending Anonymity is available online at [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk), and in print from our usual address (please send Stamped Addressed Envelope).

with others when in more peaceful circumstances they would have chosen different tactics. As crisis enveloped the Commune and the authoritarianism of the Social Democratic-Communist alliance became more pronounced, members of the Anarchist Union attempted to develop an alternative independent strategy, based on broadening the social base of the revolution, but the pace of events cut this short."

## Continued from page 23

attacked the emerging revolutionary movement). The much larger Social Democrats effectively swallowed the Communist Party. Some anarchists left to set up the Anarchist Union and began setting up centres and forming their own militias. Others remained as a libertarian

opposition within the merged party. Meanwhile a Socialist Republic had been formed, followed by the forming of a Revolutionary Council in Budapest - the Budapest Commune. Whilst libertarian influence was demonstrated in its call for the abolition of bureaucracy, and the



# erich muehsam

Poet, playwright, bohemian, anarchist revolutionary

Erich Muehsam was born in Berlin in 1878 into a fairly well-to-do Jewish family. Soon after his family moved to Luebeck in north Germany where his father worked as a pharmacist (in fact the pharmacy is still there).

He hated the school where he was sent, which was known for its authoritarian discipline and its unsparing use of corporal punishment. Erich was often a victim of "the unspeakable flailings which were supposed to beat out of me all my innate feelings" because his rebellious nature often clashed with the school regime. In 1896 he wrote an anonymous piece for the socialist paper Luebecker Volsboten denouncing one of the school's most brutal teachers. This caused a scandal and Erich was expelled for taking part in socialist activities.

Erich had wanted to be a writer and poet from an early age and he left Luebeck to pursue this aim in Berlin in 1900. He got involved in a group called Neue Gemeinschaft (New Society) which combined socialist ideology with experiments in communal living. Here he met Gustav Landauer who introduced him to anarchist communist ideas. Muehsam contributed to Kampf, the anarchist paper of his friend Senna Hoy, who later died in terrible conditions in a Russian prison.

In 1904 Erich went to Ascona in Italian Switzerland to live in the artists' colony of Monte Verita (the writer Herman Hesse, the dance theorist Laban, the psychotherapist Otto Gross and many Dadaists and Expressionists lived there at one time or other).

He began writing plays there, the first of which, The Con Men, mixed new political theory with traditional dramatic forms. He also continued contributing to many anarchist papers, which drew the attention of the German authorities. He was considered one of the most dangerous anarchist agitators.

He moved to Munich in 1908 and took part in the cabaret movement. He did not care much for writing cabaret songs, but he achieved much notice because of them. In 1911 he founded the paper Kain which

Never in my life have I learnt  
To submit to anyone  
Here I am locked up,  
Far from my home,  
My wife, my workshop.  
And even if they kill me,  
If I must die,  
To give up is to lie!

But if the chains broke  
Then I would breathe in sunshine  
At the top of my lungs- Tyranny!  
And I would cry to the people: be free!  
Forget to submit yourselves!  
To give up is to lie!

From Muehsam's poem 'The Prisoner'

advocated anarchist communism. He castigated and ridiculed the German state, fighting capital punishment and theatre censorship, and prophetically analysing international affairs. The World War that he had predicted led to the suspension of Kain. At first Erich publicly supported the war, but by the end of 1914 was persuaded that he had been wrong, saying that, "I will probably have to bear the sin of betraying my ideals for the rest of my life". He threw himself into anti-war activity taking part in various actions. He supported the strikes that were beginning to break out. As these became more widespread and began to take on a revolutionary nature, Erich was among those arrested and imprisoned in April 1918, and then freed in November. With the fall of the Kaiser and King Ludwig of Bavaria, Munich burst into revolt. Muehsam and Landauer as well as Ret Marut (later known as the novelist B. Traven) were among those agitating for the setting up of Workers Councils which led on to the founding of the Bavarian Council Republic. This lasted only a week. The Social Democrats, terrified by the thought of revolution, allied with the right. The Freikorps, a reactionary militia organised by the socialist minister Noske and composed of right wing military and students, crushed the Council Republic. Landauer

died under the blows of rifle butts and boots. Muehsam escaped but was later captured and sent to prison for 15 years. In prison, Erich continued with his writing, composing many poems and the play Judas. Released in the amnesty of 1924, he returned to a Munich in the grip of apathy. He joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Germany (FKAD). He restarted Kain but this failed after a few issues. He then brought out Fanal (The Torch) where he attacked both the Communists and the far right. His openly revolutionary tone and his attempts to stop the rise of the right made him a hate figure among conservatives and Nazis.

He used satire to ridicule the Nazis with short stories and poems. This came to the personal attention of Hitler and Goebbels, arousing their anger. He agitated for the freeing of the revolutionary Max Hoelz and wrote a play, Staatsraeson (For reasons of State) in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti, in 1928.

In 1930 he completed his last play Alle Wetter (All Hang) which called for mass revolution as the only way to stop the seizure of power by the radical Right. A few hours after Van der Lubbe had set fire to the Reichstag in February 1933, Muehsam was arrested and then spent the last 17 months of his life in the concentration camps of Sonnenburg, Brandenburg and Oranienburg. His teeth were smashed in with rifle butts, his scalp was branded with a swastika from a red-hot iron and he was hospitalised. He was forced to dig his own grave for a mock execution, and his body became a mass of bruises and wounds. His tormentors tried to force him to sing the Nazi song the Horst Wessel Lied. He refused to give in and sang the International. "Thanks to his will power he resisted all attempts to humiliate him" (Augustin Souchy).

Despite these tortures Erich remained intransigent to the end. Finally he was tortured and murdered on the night of 9th July 1934. After beatings, a Stormtrooper leader administered a lethal injection and then a suicide by hanging was faked.

## Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

**Issue 27:** LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcom X.

**Issue 50:** GM foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland - the 'peace' process.

**Issue 51:** War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor.

**Issue 52:** Mass direct action; East Timor; Youth resistance to the nazis; Workplace notes.

**Issue 54:** Civil war in Colombia; Humans and animals; Giving up activism; Dissent.

**Issue 55:** Land and ecology; Kropotkin and tribal society; Mental health.

## Organise! ...on the net

Articles from Organise! can be found on the internet at [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
You can also e-mail us at [organise@afed.org.uk](mailto:organise@afed.org.uk)

## Stormy Petrel pamphlets

**Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti**, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

**Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence**, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless

**Issue 56:** Anti capitalism; Riots in Oldham; Anarchist culture.

**Issue 57:** The war against terror; Class war in Argentina; ADD; Primitivism.

**Issue 58:** Argentina: growing resistance; Paganism; Immigrant labour; Angola 3; US anarchist poets; Yellow House

**Issue 59:** Anarchism and Sex; Class Struggle in China; Arditi del Popolo; Scottish nationalism; Prison Industry; Zazous in Vichy France; Ito Noe.

**Issue 60:** Iraq War; Argentina; White Boys in Ireland; Fatherhood; Yelenski's fable; Senna Hoy.

**Issue 61:** Anti-war action; Argentina autonomous movement; New Economy; Airline strike; Punk Rock; Paris Commune; Prison Human Rights.

**Issue 62:** Participatory economics; Anarchist movement in Argentina; Camille Pissarro; International or Anarchist Federations.

**Issue 63:** Anarchist movement in Argentina - part two; Nanotechnology; Resistance in Iraq; School strikes.

**Issue 64:** G8 special; Casualisation; ID cards; Women's struggles in Iraq

**Issue 65:** International special. Reports from Australia, Belarus, China and Croatia.

**Issue 66:** The fight against ID cards; Rossport; Mountain top removal; Empowering prisoners; Spanish revolution 1936.

destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

**A Brief Flowering of Freedom:** The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

## Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

**As We See It:** Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

**The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation:** Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p. If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-

Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

## Other Anarchist Federation publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage. **NEW EDITION: Defending Anonymity** - Free - ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies Donation + SAE.

**NEW: Working Class Resistance to the Nazis** - £1.50 - a major new pamphlet detailing the resistance of young and old to the rule of the Nazis in Europe.

**Beating The Poll Tax (online only)** - a relevant 'blast from the past', our out-of-print pamphlet that encouraged and analysed the rise of mass revolt against the Community Charge in 1989/90. Available from [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

**Anarchism As We See It** - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

**The Anarchist Movement In Japan** - £1.80 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story. **Aspects of Anarchism** - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

**Against Parliament, for Anarchism** - £1 - Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.

**Basic Bakunin** - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

**The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation** - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

**Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto** - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

**Work - Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us** - £1 - The title says it all really.

**Ecology and Class: Where There's Brass, There's Muck** - £2 - Our newly-revised and extended pamphlet on ecology.