

Aims & 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 their 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 religious belief(s).

ORGANISE!

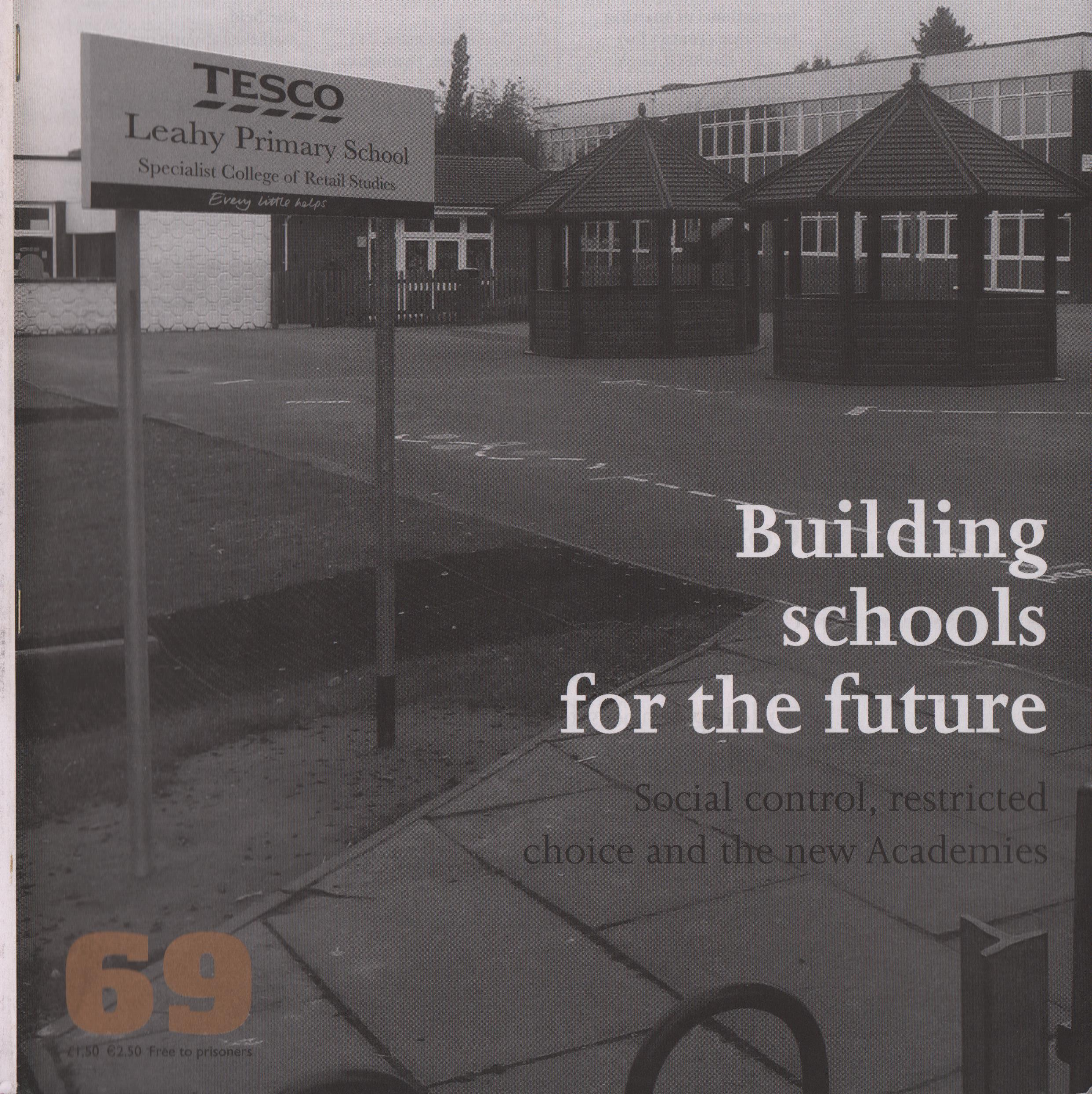
... for revolutionary anarchism

INSIDE:

Grassroots environmentalism

New York City anarchist bookfair

Defy-ID & No Borders – better together!



Building schools for the future

Social control, restricted choice and the new Academies

69

Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation
Issue 69—Winter 2007/08

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 our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of *Organise!* will be **15th March 2008**. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at 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 article 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!

Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions to *Organise!* (two issues) are available for:
£4.00 or £8.00 Supporting Sub (please add 25% for overseas or institutions)
£8.00 to pay for a prisoner's subscription
£8.00 for a joint subscription to *Organise!* and *Resistance*.

Joining the Anarchist Federation

Membership of the Anarchist Federation is open to all who agree with our aims and principles (found on the back cover). For more information write to: Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX
Alternatively you can email us at join@afed.org.uk or visit our website: www.afed.org.uk

Anarchist Federation local groups and contacts

Cardiff, and south Wales

cardiff@afed.org.uk

East Kent

eastkent@afed.org.uk

Hereford

C/o BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX
hereford@afed.org.uk

International of Anarchist Federation (contact for)

C/o BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX
iaf@afed.org.uk

Ireland

AF Ireland are a part of the *Organise!* anarchist organisation: *Organise!*, PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ
www.organiseireland.org

London (and all other areas)

Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX
info@afed.org.uk

Leicester

C/o Frontline Books, 73
Humberstone Gate, Leicester,
LE1 1WB
klasbatalo@aol.com
www.geocities.com/leicester_af

Manchester

C/o 96 Bold Street, Liverpool, L1
manchester@af-north.org

Nottingham

C/o The Sumac Centre, 245
Gladstone Street, Nottingham,
NG7 6HX
nottingham@afed.org.uk

Organise! editors

Organise!, BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX
organise@afed.org.uk

Reading

Members within Reading
Grassroots Action, c/o Risc,
35–39 London Street, Reading,
RG1 4NS
rgacollective@hotmail.co.uk

Resistance editors

Resistance, BM ANARFED,
London, WC1N 3XX
resistance@afed.org.uk

Preston

preston@afed.org.uk

Scotland

info@afed.org.uk

Sheffield

sheffield@af-north.org

Surrey

C/o BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX

West Yorkshire

westyorks_af@yahoo.co.uk

Tyneside

PO Box 1TA, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1TA
newcastle@af-north.org

West Midlands

wolvesaf@hotmail.com

Editorial –

A summer of dissent

At the time of writing, Gordon Brown is rallying the faithful at Bournemouth with talk of 'British jobs for British workers'. We know what this coded message really means. It means drawing a line between those who the ruling class want to keep happy (included in 'democratic' decision making; entitled to state support and protection; generating wealth etc.) and, by implication, those who at best don't count for anything and at worst are a danger to the rest of 'us'. That means outsiders, for example people on benefits, and the 'outsiders within'; asylum seekers, prisoners, migrant workers, people asking for more benefits or fighting cuts, workers fighting for security in the face of ever more casualised jobs, Islamic youth (in fact youth in general!) and so on. Simplistically structuralist as this may sound, it nonetheless describes what must surely be the conscious social programme of this increasingly authoritarian government.

This programme is successful in many ways. Labour still strikes a chord with many ordinary people, to the extent that they might win yet another election by promising to protect ordinary people from the undeserving poor and the trouble-makers who supposedly threaten this romanticised British way of life. But anarchists still fervently believe that it is through the same ordinary people that change has to come. This has three implications for us in the very immediate term. Firstly, we have to undermine, expose and challenge the image of 'the enemy within' painted by the state and perpetrated in the media, so that people realise that they have been taken in. We have to prove that when it comes to those 'other' people that 'we', the hard-working British, are supposed to be afraid of, there is in fact no dangerous 'them', just a global 'us' that an alliance of capitalism and the state sets up boundaries between.

Secondly, we have to encourage people to actually fight the mechanisms of repression that allow the state to control and manipulate whilst supposedly protecting 'us'. The most obvious example of this is the interrelated introduction of

data collection for both British citizens and 'foreigners', as addressed previously in *Organise!*, through new RFID chipped passports, DNA collection, databases like the NHS one and, most insidiously, identity cards 'for all'. They allow state officials to determine who is included, entitled and deserving versus those who are excluded, in brutal practice as well as symbolically. As an equally symbolic and also practical part of this, we have to target the new technologies involved; ubiquitous CCTV cameras, law enforcers' helmet cameras, tagging, mobile fingerprinting etc.

Thirdly, we have to offer alternatives to the futility of trying change society by working within 'democratic' structures where the ruling class make the rules. We need to create and support autonomous spaces where we can practice forms of organising ourselves and of taking actions that build and reinforce simultaneously social equality and personal freedom; that challenge the boundaries between us that capitalist alienation creates; that promote active participation in decision making; that don't simply impact minimally on the environment but take action to force a retreat in capitalist destruction of the planet; that explicitly exclude the cops and are willing to defend the autonomy of people using them; and which, unsurprisingly, function better on a human level than state-run spaces!

This is what this Summer of Dissent has been about, be it the amazing Climate Camp at Heathrow and No Borders Camp at Gatwick and their associated actions, blockades against the nuclear war machine at Faslane in Scotland, numerous autonomous education initiatives which deserve a future *Organise!* article in their own right, and also movements that are addressed here, including the Common Ground occupied community garden in Reading and libertarian responses to City Academies. Awareness of the lies spun by capitalism and the state are apparent in the anti-militarist, anti-ID and anti-capitalist environmentalism reflected of these struggles.

There is always a danger of course that

these movements could become exclusive rather than inclusive, by becoming ghettos (albeit mobile ones!) of professional counter-culture. In the 1980s and 1990s (for which see our retrospective on the European anti-nuclear movement) this arguably occurred. Class-struggle anarchism in Britain emerged, after all, largely in reaction to essentially middle-class peace, environmental and feminist movements that didn't give a damn about deliberate state offensives against ordinary people. But this decade feels very different. Many of the criticisms that class-orientated anarchists in organisation like the Anarchist Federation might otherwise level at this emerging new counter-culture are already being addressed by the movement itself in a deliberately structured and on-going policy of reflexive social activism, and concrete attempts to engage local communities. Indeed, the crimes of the system are felt so strongly by people of many social backgrounds that old divisions between 'middle class' reformism and 'working class' radicalism, and between people of different genders, sexual orientations and skin colour are being broken down in resistance to them. There is still further to go ... much, much further ... this is undoubtedly a Culture of Resistance!

Indeed, those movements that have failed to result in change, such as the Postal Workers' strike, the movement against the war in Iraq, or the mainstream Green movement are those wedded essentially to redundant hierarchical and reformist modes of organising. Of course anarchists should still be involved in these struggles, initiating and supporting autonomous thought and direct action within them, but no trade union, tame politician or petition is going to change things for the better.

This is why these new movements which emphasise 'anarchist' forms of organising are so important, but it is also why we need to learn inspirational and cautionary lessons from past movements such as those discussed in this issue. As Winter forces us from the autonomous campsite into our social centres, let's get as many people in there with us as possible ★

Contents

Creating common ground	p04
Defy-ID & No Borders	p07
Building schools for the future	p08
The price of green capitalism	p11
Grassroots environmentalism	p13
New York City anarchist bookfair plus interview	p17
Culture – Margaret Michaelis	p21
Book reviews	p24

Creating common ground

A squatted community garden as a strategy for anti-capitalists

In May this year, a few anarchists and other anti-capitalists based in Reading opened the squatted Common Ground Community Garden to the public for the first time, receiving support from all sides of their community, breaking an injunction and defying an eviction side by side with other local people. It has been one of the most positive experiences comrades have had in terms of working towards the sort of world we might want to live in, and finding so many people in their community who now understand better what Anarchy is about (and what local councils are like!).

Creating a space like a community garden allows normally atomised people to get together socially and chat, in itself a good thing. However, because of the way the space has been created, it also means much of that conversation focuses on the politics involved. Reading is already a highly developed town, with an economy centred on the retail/consumer and high-technology sectors. In addition to this, development is rampant with new shopping centres, posh offices and luxury hotels and apartments seemingly appearing every day. The resultant gentrification causes price increases, and long-time working-class residents are being pushed further and further out of the town. We had already squatted a building as a base for our activity. With shops, offices and luxury flats on one side, and Victorian working-class housing and council estates on the other, our squat seemed to symbolise the 'border' between the 'developed, gentrified and consumerist Reading' and the Reading where ordinary people lived their lives. As it was pretty obvious that the Council planned to sell the open space next to us to developers for yet



Reading's Common Ground garden on day of opening

more posh apartments, this seemed to be a perfect space and project to open up communication between ourselves and our neighbours about these issues.

Despite many of us being strongly concerned about ecology, this was not really the central motive for creating the garden. This is largely due to the expectation that the garden would probably be destroyed by the authorities in the not too distant future, despite our intention to resist this. However, we definitely had in mind the lack of green space in our town and the disconnection we have with our natural environment. Also, for both financial and ecological reasons, much of the garden was created using stuff others were throwing away. We received things through the 'Freecycle' network as well as by finding things lying around the streets or in skips. We even managed to get all our fencing for free from a household who had just had theirs replaced.

In itself though, this would never have been enough, or at least not in our timescale, and it is frustrating not being able to get on with the work until you get lucky and find the thing you need. So we also relied upon huge amounts of donations from family, friends and neighbours and contributed money ourselves.

While most of the garden was finished fairly early and looking beautiful, we just managed to get the last areas finished to a pretty decent standard the day before opening day. At the last minute (like usual!) we hung a banner on the fence, put up posters and distributed about 600 flyers door-to-door advertising our opening day on Saturday 19th May. Two days before this however, we were informed that the Council were taking out an injunction "preventing the opening day from taking place" and that they would be seeking a possession order for the land and buildings. Our response was immediate – we distributed another

500 letters telling our neighbours about this and making it clear we would go ahead regardless, giving the same message to the local media and inviting all to defend the garden from owners who clearly hadn't given a damn for five years, and to stand up for the community's right to decide what happens in our area.

Early on the opening day morning, pixies removed the front fence, opening the garden up onto the street fully. About midday, two security guards turned up to serve the Council's injunction. After five minutes of being ignored they did the sensible thing and went and sat in their car. It's got to be said, they were great and just stayed out of the way all day, so a big thanks to them! Then we just waited for people to come along, and we weren't disappointed – the response from the public was fantastic! Through the day, many neighbours came through the garden, breaking the law to show their support and looking amazed at the difference to the area. Rumours are, we even had one local cop show her support on our petition! Overall we had about 200 people through the garden at various times, as well as the same number of signatures on a petition (supporting the garden and demanding community control over the land) and £100 in the donation bucket. The celebration in the evening was great! About 100 people enjoyed a great BBQ and plenty of alcohol late into the evening. The best thing was the diversity: activists and punks alongside neighbours aged eight to 80! And the tunes were fantastic, again ranging from grey-haired country and bluegrass artists, to gravel voiced acoustic punk rock.

After the hangover tidy up, the garden had been visited by many more neighbours over the last

few weeks, all equally supportive. Through this project we made a conscious effort to engage well with the media. Feeling that it would be difficult to represent the garden in a negative light, we figured we had nothing to lose and much to gain and, looking back, this approach has been really successful. The local press have run great articles about the garden and the surrounding court cases, and a few locals have written letters in our favour to the media and the council. We've even been on television now, as ITN Thames Valley and BBC South East have run brilliant pieces, featuring the Council sounding a bit silly, our neighbours sounding great and allowing us to get across our points about the lack of green space, the high house prices and Council neglect versus our self-organisation and direct action.

Even though the Council won a possession order and we faced eviction, that's not the point! Positivity was high, and things weren't over yet! The garden was still being opened everyday and we planned to resist the eviction, with community support we hoped. Although we stood little chance of winning in the long-term, to beat the first eviction attempt would strongly increase our collective confidence and maybe that of our community.

The conversations this project had allowed us to have with many of our neighbours has strongly encouraged us, and the garden has definitely been a space where people could at least begin to recognise commonality, and a common enemy. Certainly, whilst we have done a great thing by improving land left as a junkyard and providing a green space for our community, property rights are sacred and that we should leave when

the Council wanted to actually do something with the land. However, many more agreed outright with what we said, and it's been great to see how widely held is the view that the council's model of development – unaffordable flats, roads, posh offices, hotels and shopping centres i.e. capitalist development, gentrification and speculation – is not what local people want or need. Even some of the people living in the posh flats over the road have agreed with us! Conversations about local democracy and community control have also been very positive and to hear a couple of our neighbours use the word 'anarchist' in a positive way was really nice.

Wednesday 20th June, was supposed to be eviction day, the day when the council would take back control of our land and regain the ability to flog it off to the highest bidder, for development of yet more unaffordable prison block flats. However, it didn't go according to their plan ...

Council officials showed up early in the morning, about 9am. However, we were already busy barricading the building that has been our home for the last 9 months and our beautiful squatted garden. Reporters and television cameras showed up, taking interviews from us and our neighbours for local newspapers and regional television news. A mixture of activists and local neighbours held a picket out the front of the building, while others risked arrest to sit in the sunshine, defending the garden. The council officials made a fairly desperate offer of alternative land – rejected straight away – before disappearing for the rest of the day. So, for now at least, we had won. In the evening we held a public BBQ and absolutely fantastic

acoustic punk-rock show. Again, several neighbours stuck around all night having a drink and enjoying the music, and the tunes were amazing. Big thanks to the artists who travelled down to play for free!

Once again, the best thing about the day was experiencing how much community support this project had and still has. Lots of local residents visited during the day, telling us how much they love the garden and use it all the time. Some were even willing to risk arrest in the morning by staying in the garden past eviction time with us. Another neighbour told me in the evening how a Labour councillor canvassing the area had been desperate to get away when she passionately told him her feelings about the garden and the squatters who have made it. Some residents have even showed an interest in anti-capitalist/anarchist politics, including ex-Labour members who agreed all political parties are the same now and 'this' (i.e. community direct action like the garden) is the only alternative, plus a local couple having trouble at work who are now interested in joining Industrial Workers of the World!

In late July, the Council unsuccessfully attempted a second eviction and once again gardeners, neighbours and activists mobilised to defend the garden from eviction, defying the law and again seeing Council officials retreating empty handed (ok, so we also had a little help from the floods taking up the authorities' time!). And in early August, despite intimidation as the Council threatened unnamed organisers with jail, several people enjoyed a community picnic and arts day in the garden, creating a brand new mosaic pathway.

Maintaining the occupation of the land is not the only success of Common Ground. In a badly thought out attempt to move the occupiers, the Council offered two alternative sites. However, when the gardeners refused them, the Council were obligated to offer them to the local Residents Association. Individuals involved in Common Ground have



Music at the community garden

met with the Residents Association, and it is possible we will now help the residents to create a second and possibly third community garden for the area, this time legally. Even better, Common Ground is apparently inspiring others to take direct action to improve their neighbourhoods. On the other side of Reading, a person who had been refused permission from her housing association to create a community garden on some of their derelict land, has told people involved in Common Ground that she has now been inspired to go ahead and do it anyway! Naturally, some Common Ground gardeners will offer advice and assistance with any new projects like this.

Back in our own garden, we are getting more organised. Each Sunday we now hold a couple hours 'work session' followed by an open decision-making meeting. One of the first decisions made was the agreement of three fundamental principles:

- 1 Control of the site must rest with the entire community and cannot be given up to a minority power such as the state, council or any corporation.
- 2 This also means the project is anti-gentrification and against any development imposed from above.
- 3 This also means decision making is open to all who can abide

by these principles, and is 'directly-democratic'.

The next few weeks are going to even busier than usual, as we are trying to plan a Community Consultation, asking people what they would ideally like to see happen on the site currently occupied by Common Ground and the derelict buildings. The idea is to gather people's ideas and campaign for them and against the Council's plan for yuppie flats. On top of that, we also have events to plan (we are hosting an infonite about Oaxaca and are planning events for Halloween and Bonfire Night), murals to design (not only for the white walls inside the garden, but also to decorate the front of the derelict buildings to make the street look nicer) and a newsletter to produce. The main aim of this second newsletter will be to inform residents about our upcoming Community Consultation, as well as including information about gentrification and the South East Development Plan, and suggesting alternative ideas for our area. Wish us luck!

Common Ground is located through the alleyway, next to the ex-Womens Information Centre in Silver Street, Katesgrove, Reading, 10 minutes from the train station. Please email katesgrovegarden@yahoo.co.uk for more information ★

Defy-ID and No Borders – Better together!

This is the text of a leaflet produced by Nottingham Defy-ID in February 2007, group in which Anarchist Federation members are involved. It was also reproduced in the 'No Borders reader' distributed at the No Borders camp at Gatwick in September where a workshop was held on ID and Border control. The leaflet examines the link between the introduction of identity cards and databases resulting from the ID Cards Act of March 2007, and the British state's intention to introduce much stricter border controls though a new UK Borders Bill ...

Defy-ID

Groups and individuals in the Defy-ID network have for the last few years been campaigning against the introduction of a national ID scheme, biometric upgrading of passports, and the surveillance society in general.

At the same time, No Borders have been tirelessly protesting against maltreatment and incarceration of asylum seekers in detention centres and against repression by government (and privately run) immigration 'services'.

It's becoming clearer than ever that these campaigns should be working closely together ...

Because ID has already been tested on asylum seekers and will also be used first on other 'foreigners'.

The Home Office is now much more open about its intended use of a biometric ID database scheme to control Britain's borders. This is not completely new – we know that ID technologies have always been tried out first on asylum seekers. For example, the ARC 'smart card' that is carried by asylum seekers is used for their regular reporting and to obtain NASS payments from the post office. It is an ID card which goes hand-in-hand with their digital photos and fingerprints being stored by the Home Office. Asylum seekers are fingerprinted when they report to their reporting centre or police station. Non-European Union visitors will soon be

made to have biometric visas, including those already in Britain. Plus, the European Commission has already put in place a plan to require children to be fingerprinted and photographed for passports from at least the age of 12 years old (EU member states can decide to make this even younger). What is perhaps less well known is this was trialed on asylum seekers in Britain. Children as young as five are known to have been fingerprinted at asylum centres in Croydon and Liverpool, for example. Plus we are starting to hear about police mobile fingerprinting units being used to further harass people in cars and on demonstrations.

The plan for a new National Identity Register has also been dropped in favour of combining three existing databases to create a 'meta-database': The Home Office asylum-seeker database; The Identity and Passport Service database, and; The Department of Work and Pensions 'National Insurance' database. Although the eventual plan is to extend ID cards and a meta-database to everyone in Britain, this change of policy makes it clear that asylum seekers and other 'foreigners' are first in line for more repression.

Because of the new 'UK Border Bill'

The government seems to have put the powers given to it by last year's Identity Card Act on the back-burner (at least for now), whilst biometric passport and visas are coming very soon. A new UK Border Bill introduced by Home Secretary John Reid on 25 January 2007 now aims to formally bring together border controls and compulsory ID.

With relation to Biometric registration the Bill (amongst other things): "confers a power to make regulations to require those subject to immigration control to apply for a ... "biometric immigration document"; and to require a biometric immigration document to be used for specified immigration purposes, in connection with specified immigration procedures, and in specified circumstances where a question

arises about a person's status in relation to nationality or immigration."

Solidarity

Exposing the government plan to get a national ID scheme accepted

The single issue campaign No2ID has previously attempted to keep the right-wing on board by telling them they can be against a national ID scheme because it "won't work to stop illegal immigration". Countering this, the Defy-ID network has seen that the government's ID system will work against immigrants. ID cards and databases will be used against 'foreigners' in general as a central part of the government's plan, before they extend the scheme to everyone. The fact that ID cards and fingerprinting technology has been tested on asylum seekers shows that the state is prepared to impose ID on those people with the least voice to oppose it, before rolling it out to the whole population. Together, Defy-ID and No Borders could help get the message across that the government is trying to get its ID plans accepted by cynical scapegoating of immigrants and asylum-seekers. This would hopefully make for a stronger anti-ID campaign that is based on solidarity rather than fear.

Using the Social Centres network to widen collaboration of No Borders and DefyID

Those involved with No Borders (UK) and other refugee support groups already have a strong involvement in the emerging network of autonomous social centres in Britain. Many progressive anti-ID activists are also involved with social centres. This is true in Nottingham with activists using the Sumac Centre as a focus for Defy-ID campaigning, for example. As well as strengthening links between campaigns, social centres could also help keep an eye on the development of the Identity and Passport Service's 69 new Authentication by Interview 'interrogation' centres for passport (and ID card) applications. Email: info@nottingham-defy-id.org.uk Web: www.nottingham-defy-id.org.uk ★

Building schools for the future

Social control, restricted choice and the new Academies

Many schools in Britain are crumbling. The buildings are old fashioned. They leak heat, badly need repair and cost a fortune in maintenance. For years the state seemed to hope that the odd lick of paint and a ritual bollocking for teachers would be enough to ensure that future generations of workers gained the skills they needed to drive the British economy forward.

When that failed they tried curriculum reform and constant testing and examination of young people. Our children are the most tested in the world. They are tested on arrival in nurseries and then with a regularity that is frightening. From the age of 11 hardly a year goes by when they are not subjected to terrifying national examination.

Added to this are the education league tables which so stress teachers and parents that many children are driven to study and revise to the point of exhaustion.

Though exam results are rising every year, though the curriculum is more and more focussed to producing 'skills based' qualifications and critical thinking is discouraged, still the education system is failing to turn out young workers with the tools capital needs to continue to make healthy profits.

The Labour government has responded to this with a two fold reform programme. The curriculum is being focussed on 14-19 and schools are being rebuilt en masse as part of a programme known as Building Schools for the Future. These two are actually inextricably linked into a scheme to further intensify the skills based approach to education and to remove from educationalists what elements of autonomy exist. Under the guise of decentralisation,



Following six months squatting a threatened sports ground, teachers against the Wembley City Academy took to the trees to avoid eviction

their effect is further increase the control of the central state over what is taught in schools.

New names for old

A key element in education strategy over recent years has been the creation of specialist colleges instead of comprehensive schools. Schools were asked to get an amount of private sponsorship. In return they received additional government funding to the tune of a couple of hundred thousand pounds. They then rebadged themselves as 'technology colleges', 'arts colleges', 'sports colleges', even 'humanities colleges' and subtly shifted the curriculum to match the specialism being offered. This could mean, for example, that every child studied an art GNVQ or an ICT GNVQ. These low status qualifications with low academic standards had the effect of inflating GCSE league tables due to some very dodgy accounting¹.

This programme was the start of

the push towards an 14-19 curriculum. Young people are asked at age 13 to make choices in their studies that will determine their future working life. They are discouraged from anything that might expand their horizons or from learning a foreign language. Instead they are encouraged on to a skills based path that will last them through college and on to either a job or university.

PFI – ripping off council tax payers

When the state finally realised it needed to rebuild nearly every secondary school in the country, the decision was also taken to build on this earlier strategy. This time the role of the private sector in state education was to be enhanced. The first option chosen was simple. Private Financing Initiatives let corporations build the schools. The local councils then rent them back off the financiers. As new schools cost upwards of £25 million each this seemed attractive. However, the

rents charged would put the Council Charge up so much that many chose not to go down this road.

The state then responded by dusting down an old, discredited Tory policy of building City Technology Colleges (CTCs), called them Academies and plan to build 200 of them by 2010.

CTCs were supposed to replace 'failing schools'. This usually meant closing schools in poorer working class communities and reopening them with new management and sometimes staff. They significantly failed to raise exam results and the programme looked to be heading for the dustbin.

Fundamentalist education

The new policy was to invite private sponsors to find £2 million to invest in a new school. In return the government would find the remainder. In return for this money, the sponsor would gain control of the school's governors, control over what is taught in the school and crucially also control over the pay and conditions for staff working there and the admissions policy of the academy².

The sponsors who came forward fall into three main categories: businesses and corporations, public bodies like universities and religious groups. This latter has caused the most controversy. A number of high profile sponsors are Christian fundamentalists who object to science lessons teaching evolution. Instead they insist that nonsensical fairy tales about 'intelligent design' and 'creationism' are taught as being equally valid theories. Other sponsors include the Church of England who are using Academies as a backdoor way of gaining more control over education. Religious

sponsors include Oasis and Edutrust and car salesman Reg Vardy.

Control over what is taught is increasing the number of 'specialist' schools. In Manchester, for example, Manchester Airport has an Academy. A key aspect of the curriculum there is 'leisure and tourism'. Others teach engineering. One in Sunderland has installed a mock call centre. The list is endless. The effect is to produce a generation of young people pre-programmed for particular industries with limited visions of the world.

This curriculum control comes through control of the governing body. The sponsor is able to nominate over half of the governors. They are not just a rubber stamp for the head. Aggressive governing bodies actually do control their schools.

Staff at all levels stand to do badly at these new institutions, except of course the Head and Deputies (nowadays called the Senior Leadership Team). Currently wages and conditions are nationally negotiated. This means that education workers in low cost parts of the country earn the same (outside London) as those in the south east. The new Academies will do away with this. We can expect a general lowering of wages and a worsening of conditions in these new schools. In at least one, Salford Academy, the new owners clearly sought to head off opposition. They explicitly decided when building the school to have no social areas for staff. So for example, there is no staff room. This removes from teachers, technicians and teaching assistants the opportunity to get together and talk about their workplace and plan ways of resisting worsening conditions.

Learning difficulties, no thanks

Control over admissions means the

Academies can pick and choose who they let in. They don't have to take anyone. This means it is harder for children with learning difficulties to get in, which can mean they are denied the chance to go to their local school with their friends and can add the further burden of travelling to other schools further away. Further this control means they can suspend and expel more freely. Academy schools already have.

The Anti-Academy Alliance report on their website that, "According to the 2007 national Audit Office report, permanent exclusion rates in Academies are nearly four times higher than the national average".

This is possible because the Academies are outside the control of the Local Authorities. It may seem strange that anarchists are concerned about which part of the state controls education, surely all are bad? Whilst this is on one level true, it also means that the new schools are removed from opportunities for staff training and development. Local Authorities provide training packages for teachers and teaching assistances. Although the provision of these is becoming increasingly market driven, they are comparatively accessible and give staff the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge. Academies will have no recourse to these, unless they choose to negotiate them and pay for them. We firmly expect to see the growth of an industry of private consultants growing fat off the training needs of these institutions, but providing a package that lacks the variety or depth that is currently available. We also expect to see staff being forced to undertake training in their free time, rather than being released during the day.

Inspection 24/7

Clearly, Academies being outside the control of the Local Authorities will not mean they escape state control. They will be under the scrutiny of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) who will be inspecting every two or three years. This means the only real control comes from the central state. To make the regime of inspection more draconian, schools are already being put through a process of 'self-evaluation' coupled with regular 'performance management' targets. Rather than being an example of more self-management, these mean that every person in the school has a permanent inspector in their own head, doing the work of OFSTED for it.

A final note on the way these schools will treat young people. They are planned to be large institutions. They will have many open communal areas that are easily spied on either by CCTV or by staff. The students will find it hard to escape the glaze of a disapproving adult. Secondly we are aware that in some authorities they will have seriously reduced areas for sport and leisure activities. In Oldham, for example, there are plans to shut schools with swimming pools, Astroturf and other pitches. These will not be replaced in the new schools which will be on significantly smaller sites. Not only will this risk the health of young people, denying them the opportunity to play and exercise, it also removes valuable resources from already poor neighbouring communities.

Unions – for or against?

Academies are unpopular with education workers and there are a

number of campaigns against them. This is something we, as anarchists, should be firmly supporting. The problem lies in the nature of the campaigns and the responses of the unions to academies. The campaigns are relying heavily on demonstrations and lobbying, rather than in trying to build industrial and community opposition. The view of the main teaching unions firmly supports this approach. When confronted in Oldham with the need to take industrial action to secure working conditions, the General Secretary of the NUT, Steve Sinnott, became apoplectic and launched into a tirade of abuse against the speaker who had suggested it. The unions don't like the idea of academies, but they see their main task as being to gain representation within them when they open. They even rule out of the possibility of strike action in the new schools for fear of alienating parents, even though this would be the most effective way of ensuring decent pay and conditions for workers there.

The opposition had hoped that Gordon Brown would ditch the programme when he became leader. At a meeting sponsored by the NUT in Manchester, the writer of this article clearly heard this fantasy proposed by local NUT officials and even backed up by the SWP, although their line was that he needed to be 'forced' by a popular demonstration

with big name speakers to do that. Brown has certainly not scrapped the plans however.

Clearly we need to be organising both in our workplaces, as staff and students if we are in education, and in our communities to fight this. It needs to focus on the effects on those working in education, on the effects on young people and on the way it will deprive communities of existing resources. It should be led by those involved themselves and needs to understand the motives behind the plans for academies as well as realising that relying on officials is unlikely to succeed. We also need to be wary of support from opposition politicians. Experience shows that this is likely to evaporate as quickly as it arises, especially after an election has returned them to power.

Finally, we should point out that this article does not begin to tackle the question of what anarchists think education should really be like. We have tried to show how the current government's plans are leading to even greater control and more restricted learning opportunities for young people which are aimed at making industry more profitable. Education in an anarchist society would clearly look nothing like any of the current systems on offer, whether the old comprehensives or the new academies. But, discussion on that area is for another article ★

1 Intermediate GNVQs are supposed to have the equivalence of 4 GCSEs at Grades A*-C. There is considerable debate as to whether this is true. Schools manage to teach them in between three and five hours a week. We know of at least one school which has taught GNVQ Art, then entered the students for Art and Graphic Design GCSE. Amazingly their results soared. This has been mirrored across the country. Most of the 'improvements' recorded by the new Academy schools have come from this route. 2 The government quickly backtracked on the requirements for this £2 million. First they announced that it could be cash, in-kind or services provided. So, instead of spending anything, a PC company could donate ICT equipment at market rates. Companies could provide the services of executives as in-kind aid, at inflated salaries. All these are, of course, tax deductible. Recently the government has announced that it is thinking of removing the need for any contribution whatsoever. They are merely going to give the new academies to the sponsors.

Environmental surveillance: The price of green capitalism

It's clear that the state is going to make us pay for capitalism's disregard for the health of the planet by tracking our every move. Using initiatives such as road-pricing and bin-chipping, national and local state bureaucracies want us to pay for everyday living, out of our pockets and by us having to endure micro-control over our consumption. Fighting social control of this kind is not straightforward because many environmentalists, who anarchists might otherwise agree with, are in favour of schemes that monitor individual usage of resources and promise to change behaviours. On the other hand you only have to read the mainstream press to see that opposition to road-pricing and bin-chipping are part of a wider right-wing backlash against 'Nu-Labour' by half-crazed motoring lobbyists, anti-tax libertarians, anti-EU political parties and climate change deniers.

Road rage

Many environmentalists are in favour of road-pricing and congestion charges to discourage car use. If car drivers pay in proportion to usage, the hope is we will use them less and choose to use public transport more often. Nice idea? Not really, not least because the rich will just pay and carry on regardless. Higher road taxes don't exactly seem to be reducing the number of SUVs on the road either. But whatever, to make these schemes work, cameras that read number plates (or other proposed schemes using satellite tracking or roadside tag readers) have to be linked to the car's 'keeper' through the DVLA database that is used to tax vehicles.

Over 6,000 digital camera systems already exist on motorways and busy roads for enforcing speed limits. In



**Twenty-four
hour surveillance:
London's congestion
charge cameras**

addition, hundreds of petrol stations and parking enforcement companies have access to the DVLA database, under licence. Whilst a lot of speed cameras like the GATSO ones at road junctions use loadable film which has to be replaced after 200 pictures, these are now to be upgraded by digital ones. This, and expansion of the digital camera scheme on to many more roads, will allow the police to achieve their goal of a national network that gathers number plate data continuously, information that they will have unfettered access to at all times.

Should we be worried? Well, as revealed last year in the documentary Suspect Nation, Transport for London's congestion charge cameras are switched on 24 hours of the day even outside of congestion charging periods! It is known that police regularly request this number plate data for law enforcement, a good example of 'function creep'. But in July this year home secretary Jacqui Smith lifted Data Protection Act

restrictions to give police real-time transfer of number plates of all cars entering or leaving the central London congestion charging zone, for anti-terrorism work, we are told. If, and most likely when, a digital camera network is set up across the UK, the police will be able to track whoever they like, wherever we go by car. We already know that the police do not need encouragement to use anti-terror laws against activists during events like the Camp for Climate Action or to use their Forward Intelligence Teams to photograph activists outside social centres and detention centres, so we can be such that a digital camera network will be used against us.

Pay as you throw

Bin-chipping (or 'Chip n' Bin') is a different example of how individual identification and surveillance is fast becoming part of everyday life. This is already being trialed in Britain. It involves weighing wheelie-bins to work out the amount of waste individual households produce. An RFID chip on the bin enables the refuse collector to make a record of the weight whenever the bin is collected, identify it with an address and so link it to a council tax payer. The carrot offered to those producing less waste is that they will pay less, and a stick for the rest. Bin taxes (or 'pay as you throw' schemes) are, not surprisingly, seen by many as just another way for councils to raise money to make waste collection pay for itself (and also make it ripe for privatisation), in the same way as utility companies benefit from water metering. As a result, it's all too easy for revolutionaries to concentrate our arguments on the potential unfairness of bin taxes. But this just plays into the

single minded anti-tax agenda of the libertarian right. A much better platform to fight on as a class struggle anarchist is the sheer hypocrisy of the idea that persecuting individuals is going to make much difference to the destruction of our environment. Furthermore, it can only weaken community cohesion, since it will greatly discourage sharing of bins (needed after a spring clean, for instance) which is perhaps one of the few communal activities that exists between neighbours in our atomised communities, to be replaced with an individual relationship to the local authority.

Capitalist rubbish

It's fine to advocate avoiding wasteful consumption by carrying reuseable bags, eating local unpacked food and choosing biodegradable products. This shows we are conscious about our relationship with the natural world and looks forward to future sustainable non-capitalist world. But in environmental campaigns anarchists need to get across that we shouldn't feel guilty about individual contributions to waste in the here and now, since so much of it is created at the front end by producers who package stuff to the hilt and sell us products that are made to be disposable or so badly made that they break down unnecessarily, whose sell by/use by dates on food often make no sense, processed food that goes stale a day after it's bought – just so we are encouraged to buy more of their crap. All this rubbish is sold to us by capitalists who profit at the expense of the environment ... and then we are expected to pay to clear up the mess? No way! Environmental campaigns need to be as antagonistic as possible and not let anyone feel guilt-tripped

in anyway. Spying by national and council authorities is just one more kind of divide and rule – dividing us into good and bad citizens. We need to turn this thing around and point the finger at the system, making it clear that if they introduce bin-chipping we'll empty our bin bags outside the local council building (being careful to remove envelopes and personalised junk mail first!).

Just as with identity cards, we shouldn't write off opposition to the surveillance aspects of road pricing or bin charging as paranoia or as a side issue to taxation. Class struggle anarchism/libertarian communism is not just about economics, but about recognising attacks on freedom by an overpowering state. We are not talking about some high-

minded civil liberties opposition either – more a hatred of civil service bureaucrats who think that it's fine for them to measure our lives when the excessive consumption of the rich goes on regardless. Neither is it the duty of revolutionaries to find solutions for better dealing with pollution or waste when the root cause is capitalism and our being forced into a way of living that is inherently wasteful of the world's resources. If we had more social living, local production, transport pooling and stored things in bulk this would reduce pollution and waste to an extent, but to make real difference we'll need to get rid of money and a growth economy based on profit, and for that a revolution will surely be needed ★

"All this rubbish is sold to us by capitalists who profit at the expense of the environment ... and then we are expected to pay to clear up the mess? No way!"



Grassroots environmentalism

In this article we examine the significance of popular participation as a form of revolutionary self-activity in environmental struggles in the last century. Grassroots environmentalism was central not only to the success or strengths of individual struggles affecting single communities, but also to the building of generalised, self-consciously confrontational movements for resistance and change. In this sense it was more significant than leftist ideology or mobilisation. Some of the examples offered seem all the more relevant and interesting in the context of the current growth and success of environmental activism in the British Isles and its ability to reflect constructively on its own strengths and strategies.

"It was not only in connection with industrial disputes that the people demonstrated their readiness to take direct action. The August 1892 issue of *Commonweal* reported that 3,000 people had first pulled down the railings protecting a railway that had been run across common land at Leyton, near London. They then proceeded to wreck the railway itself."

Conventional histories of environmentalism tend to be somewhat top down, focusing on the publication of particular popular science books, or on the expression of particular theories or on the establishment of high profile lobby groups. Key events for instance would be the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, or the founding of Greenpeace, or the election of the first Green party politician. Antecedents to environmentalism are, in these histories, to be found in the early 19th century intellectual trend romanticism, or, perversely, in Malthus, the arch justifier of inequality, who maintained that population pressure was responsible for the poverty and hunger of industrialisation.

However another history of environmentalism can be written, a history of environmentalism as a popular grassroots movement, whose different parts are variously referred to as 'environmental justice', 'eco-populism', or 'environmentalism of the poor'.

Environmentalism is a word used to mean many different, often contradictory, things.

We have the environmentalism that is the state's effort to manage environmental problems and environmental conflicts, in the interests of the continued garnering of profit. For instance in early September this year the 'Environment Ireland 2007' conference took place, with representatives from various government departments and state agencies, and from a consultancy company working for Shell on the Rosport pipeline. Then we have 'the environment' as an investment opportunity, these days investment magazines are full of the joys of the returns on putting your money into wind farms, or into carbon off-setting.

Finally we have environmentalism as a lifestyle trend and marketing niche. Witness organic food and eco washing machines and a whole plethora of similar 'save the planet' consumer goods. As an aspect of 'environmentalism', the political movement (ie lobby groups, political parties, et al) feed into this. See for instance books like 'The Armchair Environmentalist' or the 'Green Consumer Guide'. A lot of this is simply greenwash – as with British Petroleum, BP, changing its name to Beyond Petroleum. It is beyond the scope of this article, but we shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking these fashions represent the successful adaptation of capitalism to meet ecological crises.

To get back to environmentalism from below, a number of different strands can be identified. Firstly, opposition to what are jargonistically known as 'locally unwanted land uses', that is particular sources of pollution, either existing or under development. Secondly, in situations where commonly held resources are sustainably used, and where communities are dependant upon them, environmentalism from below includes 'defence of the commons' from expropriation by private landlords or the state for high yield exploitation, or for new developments. This can be seen historically in England, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries, but as late as at least 1816 as well, with riots against the 'enclosure' of fenlands and forests. It is now, obviously, more prevalent in the global South, most famously with the Chipko peasant movement in the Himalaya, India, resisting the take over of their forests for commercial forestry, forests people depend on for animal fodder and firewood and to which they have a sustainable approach. Thirdly, there are workplace based and struggles around pollution related health and safety threats.

Some less typical strands are no less significant. While 'wilderness' conservation is often dismissed as elitist or esoteric, and not without grounds, there have been popular struggles around access to the countryside for recreation and in defence of areas of natural beauty. A tradition of this can be traced back at least as far as the Kinder Scout mass trespass in 1932, which was one of the things that led to the establishment of national parks. Another faint and rare but significant strand is those workplace struggles which have raised the question 'what is produced & to what end'. Notably in Australia in the 1970s 'green ban' boycotts were placed by construction workers on developments judged destructive, and there were strikes against uranium mining and uranium transports. Something similar to this happened in Ireland in regard to planned nuclear plants. At the same time in Britain the Lucas Aerospace alternative development plan was proposed by the Lucas workforce, which put forward a switch from military production to socially useful production.

These are ideal types, generalizations. In fact these strands may be present in the same struggle. For instance, the practises of the Raybestos Manhattan company's plant in Cork, Ireland, were opposed by both residents' groups and its workforce. The aforementioned Chipko movement contained both 'defence of the commons' aspects, and an element of opposition to locally dangerous environmental destruction. Likewise the trends focused on in conventional histories of environmentalism interconnect with environmentalism from below, for instance, the writings of Barry Commoner have an influence in American 'eco-populism', while local 'citizens initiatives' and mass national anti-nuclear power protests fed into the development of the German Green Party, and some Friends of the Earth sections have an 'environmental justice' perspective. On the other hand there was Friends of the Earth participation in the 'Environment Ireland 2007' get together mentioned above. In addition some local oppositions to particular developments can contain dubious elements, for instance when major players in the tourism industry, or wealthy stud farm owners, object to projects that they think will cut into their profits.

The rest of this article is going to look at environmentalism from below through two instances, the environmental justice and anti-toxics movements in the United States, and the European anti-nuclear power movement. It should be stressed these are just two examples of the many possible. These examples help show us what is possible and probable in the contemporary West. The global South is replete with further instances of environmentalism from below, important, interesting and admirable, but of less practical import to us here.

Anti-nuclear Europe

In the 1970s, across what was then the nine states of the European Common Market, the predecessor of today's European Union, a massive expansion of nuclear power was planned. Initially this was to involve 160 new nuclear facilities, but the French state alone planned for to have hundreds by the end of the century. Growth in the nuclear sector was also on the cards elsewhere, such as in Sweden, the United States, and Spain. Opposition began in the early part of the decade, reaching a crescendo in 1977, and at a highpoint for a few years after that.

In 1977 German New Left publication Kursbuch saw these struggles as a way out of the ghettoization of the far-left commenting:

"In the movement against the nuclear power stations ... it seems possible to overcome this isolation. These initiatives came into being quite independent of the left. The left only took notice when they began to mobilise the population ... Wyhl was certainly no affair of tourist demonstrators, that was a people's action, a people's movement. The citizen didn't just fall into line this time, they took the initiative themselves."

Wyhl was the location of the first big battle of the movement, where the construction site for a nuclear power station was occupied first by a few hundred people, and then, a few days later, after the first occupation was cleared by 650 police, a second occupation took place involving over 20,000 demonstrators. Campaigners built a hüttendorf, a protest camp, on the site. These protests were multi-national, Wyhl being near to France and Switzerland, and successful, as the courts ordered a halt to construction.

Following this the governments moved in a more repressive direction. A reactor construction site at Brokdorf, Germany was turned into a fortress over night, and one demonstrator was killed and two disabled, in a police ambush in Creys-Malville, France.

The 60,000 strong demonstration in Creys-Malville was against the proposed construction of the type of 'fast breeder' reactor which would produce the fuel for nuclear power plants. As well as the conventional tear gas and batons, police used grenades which left metre wide craters and were of similar explosive force to military issue grenades. The prefect, or local governor, in charge, had experience of running repression in Algeria, and openly stated that he was ready to deploy live ammunition against the unarmed crowd. The other establishment reaction to the Creys-Malville protest was to attempt to divide people on nationalist lines. It was described as 'the second German invasion and occupation' and Germans were particularly singled out for arrest, imprisonment, and other violence. Ironically enough the reactor itself was actually a pan-European project, with German, Belgian, Spanish and Italian involvement.

The international co-operation against the nuclear machine was presaged by other struggles along the Rhine. Previously, a successful campaign had been waged against a lead plant next to a

village on the French side of the border with Germany. A rota was drawn up so that each week the site would be occupied by groups from different villages from both countries.

The violence in France, and associated internal dissension, had a demobilizing impact, except for in the case of successful position to a nuclear development in Plogoff, Brittany. But state violence did not have quite this impact in Germany. A banned demonstration at Brokdorf in February 1981 was 100,000 strong, despite police blocking people from getting to the area and the train service being shut down. The highpoint was reached in 1980 at the proposed nuclear power station at Gorleben, which again saw a protest camp occupation of a construction site. It took 8,000 police to clear it, at that time largest post-war police deployment. These protest camp occupations also involved setting up 'peoples' colleges' which featured a wide range of workshops and discussions.

The Gorleben campaign continues to this day. The almost annual transportation shipments are met with blockades in both France and Germany, even though in 2004 one young protester in France was killed after the waste carrying train failed to halt before the piece of rail track to which he was chained to. The protests have restricted but not entirely halted the area being turned into a hub for the nuclear industry. There is an active temporary storage area for nuclear waste there, but the planned nuclear power station, waste reprocessing plant, and permanent waste storage facility have not been built.

In Wackersdorf, Bavaria, Germany, in the late 80s, another prospective nuclear waste reprocessing project was defeated. The response of an unsympathetic observer highlights the social basis of the protest:

"Stunned Germans watched unprecedented scenes on their TV screens as old ladies led masked Autonomomen away to hide them from the police, and farmers wielded shovels and pitchforks against the police."

In Carnsore, in the south east of Ireland, the state planned to build four nuclear power stations. The site was temporarily occupied in August 1978 with perhaps as many as 25,000 people attending a free festival there. The plans for a nuclear Ireland were defeated. In part, particular circumstance led to this. The controversy around the project coincided with the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster in the United States, and economic downturn also pushed the nuclear plan down the agenda. However the prospect of mass direct action was clearly a major factor, given what was happening on the continent. One opposition politician counselled that the Government should at least hold an open public inquiry lest they end up with "something like the new Tokyo Airport shambles on our hands at Carnsore". This was a reference to the long running battle against the expansion of Narita Airport, Tokyo, Japan. The minister responsible for the Irish project talked about sending the army in against "20,000 hippies". In addition some of groups involved in the anti-nuclear movement clearly and unambiguously took a 'by any means necessary' stance. At the same time as this was a campaign against uranium mining in Donegal, in the north east of Ireland. This campaign successfully employed a wide range of tactics from the most respectable to the highly illegal.

The European anti-nuclear struggles were formed by a confluence of relatively strong post-68 New Lefts and mobilisations by communities adjoining the sites of proposed plants. The latter led the way in the early days. This movement

was also the greenhouse for the development of ecological politics. The oil crisis was the pretext for nuclear expansion, and this led to a questioning of 'growth economics', which was variously interpreted as either the inherent 'grow or die' nature of capitalism, or a 'growth ideology' without any social context. The nuclear power issue also provoked a further questioning of technology. Traditional left-wing politics was focused on the apparent inefficiency of capitalism when it came to increasing production, and was unquestioning of particular technologies. Now it became clear that more and more production and more and more growth was in fact a threat to survival.

The anti-nuclear cause was also related to increasing state repression. 'The nuclear state is a police state' went the slogan and, obviously it was related to nuclear weapons. Often, but not always, the anti-nuclear movement went forward meeting the opposition of traditional left parties, and trade unions. It should also be remembered that the anti-nuclear struggles were not a singular phenomenon, very similar struggles took place around other issues, such as the expansion of Frankfurt airport in Germany, or the expansion of Larzac military base in France, and the final of the four Carnsore gatherings was much taken up with the issue of non-nuclear toxic production. Although we do not live in a nuclear free Europe, the movement considerably impacted on the extent of the blossoming of nuclear power.

Environmental justice in the United States

In the United States recent decades have witnessed the development of two overlapping, but distinct, movements; anti-toxics and environmental justice. It should be stressed that by movements here we mean the linking together of particular local struggles across space and time into a unity. With regard to opposition to local sources of pollution, this movement forming process seems much more advanced in the U.S. than in Britain or Ireland.

The situation in the United States is also often extreme, as can be seen in Pellow's description of the environmental injustice experienced by a black community in Chicago:

"Built on a landfill in 1945 on the edge of an old industrial and 'sanitary' dump (or 'sewage farm'), Altgeld Gardens is now home to 10,000 residents. The neighbourhood is 97 per cent African American, 62 per cent of whom live below the poverty level, and is surrounded by more than 53 toxic facilities, including landfills, oil refineries, waste lagoons, a sewage treatment plant, cement plants, steel mills, coke ovens, and incinerators."

The anti-toxics movement got going in the wake of Love Canal, which was a school and residential development built on land which had been a dump, and in which hazardous wastes were still buried. One prominent activist from the campaign to compensate Love Canal residents, who were forced to move, went on to form the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW). She, Lois Gibbs, was getting more and more people in similar situations contacting her after mass media coverage of Love Canal. CCHW is a networking and support node for campaigns against local pollution, or proposed hazardous developments. By 1988 the CCHW group had networked with 4,687 local groups, and by 1994 over eight thousand. Characteristically this movement is working class and often led by women.

The seminal event for the environmental justice movement was a campaign against the establishment of a dump for PCP contaminated soil in Warren County, North Carolina.

This culminated in a direct action blockade and the arrest of five hundred people.

Warren County's per capita income was the lowest in the state, and 60% of its population was black, Afton, the community adjoining the proposed dump, was 84% black. Environmental justice therefore brings some of the themes and ideas of the civil rights struggle to bear on environmental issues. Its main focus is on the disproportionate impact of environmental problems on low income ethnic minorities, in the context of the racial hierarchy within the American working class, resistance to it, and the consciousness formed through these factors. However, it states that:

"... all of the issues of environmental racism and environmental justice don't just deal with people of color. We are just as much concerned with inequities in Appalachia, for example, where the whites are basically dumped on because of lack of economic and political clout and lack of having a voice to say "no" and that's environmental injustice." (There has been long running opposition to strip mining and to mountain top removal, which is a more pronounced version of strip mining, in the Appalachian region).

Another part of the context is the fact that the big environmental lobby groups and NGOs in the United States have been exceptionally conservative. In one instance their lobbying efforts involved producing a plan as to what each federal government department should be doing, excepting the housing and labour departments, these apparently having nothing to do with the environment. Also it seems to be the case that the radical alternative to these groups, Earth First!, was, in the 80s at least, almost exclusively concerned with 'wilderness' preservation.

What the environmental justice movement focuses on, the disproportionate exposure to environmental risk, shouldn't be thought of as peculiar to the United States. Such local struggles against polluting plants or dangerous developments are to be found in many places. In 1999 a Friends of the Earth study in the UK found that 660 sources of industrial pollution were in areas where the average annual income was below £15,000 while only five were to be found where the average annual income was over £30,000. They are to be found earlier in history also. For instance in southern Spain in February 1888 the army carried out a massacre of people demonstrating against the Rio Tinto Zinc mining company, the victims included striking miners, and peasants angry at the company's pollution. The singular nature of these American movements, singular in terms of the English speaking world, isn't to be found in the particular local struggles, but in the fact there is a movement which unites them.

Moving Forward

The opening passages of this article spoke of the many different types of environmentalism. In the case of histories this is in part an attribute of the bias of the intelligentsia (after all many histories of anarchism will focus on theoreticians to the detriment of movements). In addition the more long lasting a group is, and the more formally organised, the more historic record it will leave behind it. However in the different variants of environmentalism what we can see is different class interests.

State centred and market centred forms of environmentalism express the needs of capital. The focus on individual consumption allows the opening of new market opportunities, through new products, obscures the social roots of environmental crises and allows environmental rhetoric to be used as a weapon in the class struggle against the working class. This is seen in the water and

bin charges battles in Dublin. The state's imposition of this double taxation on ordinary people, while the super rich got tax evasion amnesties and corporations the lowest tax rate in the EU, was justified in terms of 'paying our way for our waste' and 'preserving resources'. This does not mean that a libertarian socialist society would not involve marked alterations to consumption. It means that the focus on individual consumption within capitalism actually has the opposite impact from that intended by genuine, but mistaken objectors.

However, much of this 'consumption spotlight' originates not in error but in the deliberate intent to obfuscate, as with greenwash, or to sell products, as with 'green consumerism'. Similarly the 'we are all responsible' line, from the most powerless to the most powerful, conveniently obscures causes. In addition, as environmental crises threaten the profitability of at least sectors of capitalism, the state as the management system of capitalism, must attempt to address the problems. (Whether it can, which is doubtful, is beyond the remit of this article).

The state must also manage environmental conflicts, head them off from the path of popular struggle, and divert them into labyrinths of bureaucracy and 'consultation'. In contrast, the environmentalism which by direct action stops a road or a nuclear plant is an expression of our needs for a viable living space against the needs of capital for particular developments. An expression of this is the desire to move towards a post-capitalist society, where production is based on fulfilling social need rather than shareholder gain, and that need of course includes a habitable and pleasant environment. This is an expression of the interests and the needs of another class; of another form of class struggle, from below. This is not a glib response to the 'revolution versus reform question', not a proposal to wait for the glorious day. It means maximising disruption from below because this forces reform but is also a building block of revolution.

Genuine environmentalists who take up the state and market centred strategy of lobbying for change, or promoting alternative technologies, are repeating the error Marx identified in early socialists

"The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, causes Socialists of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all class antagonisms. They want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without the distinction of class; nay, by preference, to the ruling class. For how can people, when once they understand their system, fail to see in it the best possible plan of the best possible state of society?"

Even Murray Bookchin, one of the foremost of the left greens, saw ecological crises in terms of a 'general human interest'. If this is the case, it is an interest mediated through class into contending interests, contending ways of managing the problem. One way strengthens capitalism, and hence, from our point of view, maintains the environmental problem, the other way undermines capitalism, and hence makes a small step towards dealing with the problem. These different tendencies are not necessarily clear cut and distinct in the real world. They can exist in the same movements, same actions, and even the same individuals. This is the ideological dominance of the ruling class and also how our own ideas are formed and shaped within capitalist society and hence the replication of features of that society, or of ideas congenial to our rulers, within opposition movements. Many opposition movements form structures mirroring the hierarchy of capitalism.

A class struggle interpretation of grassroots environmentalism faces two possible arguments. Firstly that, in the anti-nuclear case, the developments were situated in rural areas, with a predominantly 'peasant' or 'petit-bourgeois' population, although it has long been held that a movement to socialism involves the leading role of the working class and the participation of other subaltern classes. Secondly there is the idea at large, mostly spread from academia, that environmentalism is a creature of a 'new middle class', that is of white collar employees. Apart from the fact that such strata are a part of the working class, there is evidence for the exact opposite, with, in some instances, greater support for environmental goals found among people in blue collar occupations.

What the experience of the two examples of environmentalism from below can tell us in regard to moving forward today, is particularly how durable and popular environmental movements are formed. The experience of the anti-nuclear movement is especially relevant here. As we have seen it came about through the combination of two factors, firstly a staunch mobilisation among residents of the most immediately effected areas, and secondly a relatively strong anti-capitalist political scene, with at least some propensities towards direct action and libertarian forms of organisation. These two strands combined in a common willingness to fight together.

It is of course impossible to lift from one moment in history a form of struggle and plant it in the present. There was a particular context, such as a general higher level of class struggle and hence wider politicisation, confidence, solidarity and combativity. However, it is surely from the recent past and from similar societies that we can draw lessons for today. In addition we shouldn't underestimate the difficulties faced then. The movement in Germany in the mid-70s faced trade union organised counter-demonstrations. Ireland was then a markedly conservative country, as it had been for much of the 20th century. In France the combination of state violence and a turn to electoral politics seems to have collapsed much of the movement.

From drawing this lesson from the European anti-nuclear experience we can see part of the significance of this year's Convergence for Climate Action, the North American sister camps to the Camp for Climate Action at Heathrow. The two North American camps explicitly stated among their aims that of promoting "environmental justice by supporting communities that are fighting dirty energy developments in their backyards". One was part of the annual Mountain Justice Summer against mountain top removal in Appalachia, and the other in an area of Oregon, where there is local community opposition to a liquefied natural gas terminal. The Heathrow camp was less explicit about this, but nonetheless deliberately organised in conjunction with residents opposing the expansion of the airport.

Similarly Rosspoint Solidarity Camp involves supporting a community based resistance to Shell and the state's destruction of a part of the West of Ireland. Likewise with the camps and occupations and actions in Trebanos, Milford Haven, Cilfrew, and the Brecon Beacons national park, all on the Welsh leg of the route of a high pressure gas pipeline. This isn't to be blind to the many problems with these events and campaigns. However a perfectly formed movement isn't going to arise from our nice thoughts. We have to work with the existing possible sparks of new movements ★

The first annual New York City anarchist bookfair

Friday 13 April 2007 – Monday 16 April 2007 By Daniel

"New York City, a centre of anarchist life, culture, struggle, and ideas for 150 years, has never hosted an Anarchist Book Fair. That's about to change!"¹

With these words the New York City Anarchist Bookfair Collective announced their intention to organise an anarchist bookfair. The Anarchist Federation (AF) and International of Anarchist Federations (IFA) were invited to take part in what was, according to all known records, the first ever Anarchist Bookfair in New York City. The AF ran a stall with members of the Grupo Anarquista Albatross from our sister organisation Federación Anarquista Ibérica - FAI, distributing newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, stickers, and CD's from Britain and Spain.

By the close of play it was pretty obvious that the event had been a success. Having decided to aim big with over 40 vendor tables, an art gallery, numerous panels, and presentations, as well as workshops, and skill shares and various other events such as book and 'zine readings, as well as parties spread over four days, their commitment to this project was to pay off.

The mainstream newspapers around New York had advertised the event in the days leading up to the Bookfair, and the following day the New York Times ran a favourable review of the event, including mention of the 'Anarchist Aspirations' Panel Discussion in which I had been a contributor, along with Aragorn! (Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed) and Wayne Price (North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists).

The Bookfair began on Friday with a film festival, where the anarchist community paid their respects to the New York based Indymedia reporter



Brad Wills, who had recently been murdered whilst reporting from Oaxaca. The main bookfair kicked off on Saturday, where a large hall contained over 40 vendors, and several meeting rooms hosting a wide range of panel discussions. On Sunday the panel discussions continued elsewhere in the city, unfortunately severe torrential rain reduced attendance. Monday saw a smaller event, with a book reading and discussion evening.

Moe Fishman
(left) with bookfair
organiser, Patrick

Moe Fishman 28 September 1915 – 6 August 2007

Sadly Moe Fishman passed away on August 6th 2007. It was an honour to have met and talked to a man who travelled half way around the world to fight alongside the people of Spain against the tyranny of fascism. A man who served his life in the anti-fascist cause, having been wounded in Spain, he returned to New York where he participated in the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, and would later serve in the Merchant Marine during the Second World War. After the war he became the General Secretary of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and would serve in that capacity throughout his life. He was instrumental in that organisations defence against the House Un-American Activities Committee, actually winning on appeal, quipping "maybe we better do something subversive and get back on it". His life and struggle for the anti-fascist cause was a true inspiration, the title of the talk he gave in New York just a few months ago comes back to me and with these few words I wish to remember and pay my respects to a hero.

My personal highlight of the weekend was a meeting on Saturday entitled: 'Remembering Spain, Remembering Heroes!' during which two anti-fascist veterans of the Spanish Revolution spoke to a packed audience. To some present the stories of the revolution were an unknown history, which illustrated the extent to which the bookfair had drawn in New Yorkers new to the anarchist workers movement, whilst for others the two pensioners are heroes. The first of the speakers was George Sossenko, who at 16 had left his home in France to fight in the Durruti Column. Today George travels speaking about his time during the revolution, and spreading his vision for an anarchist society. The second speaker was Moe Fishman who volunteered for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade², the American section of the International Brigades. Serving as the General Secretary of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade throughout his life, disseminating information about the important role the International Brigades played in the international anti-fascist struggle.

The First Annual New York Anarchist Bookfair was a great success, drawing in a large crowd, beyond the anarchist Milieu, and by all accounts has led to increasing confidence for the anarchist movement in the city. We present here (p18) an interview with one of the organisers of the event, and hope that next years bookfair can grow upon the success of this years, once again making it the "place to be" that the local newspapers listed it as ★

1 The bookfair announcement: www.anarchistbookfair.net/index.php?title=Announcement

2 The Abraham Lincoln Brigade website www.alba-valb.org/

Interview with Patrick of the NYC Bookfair Collective

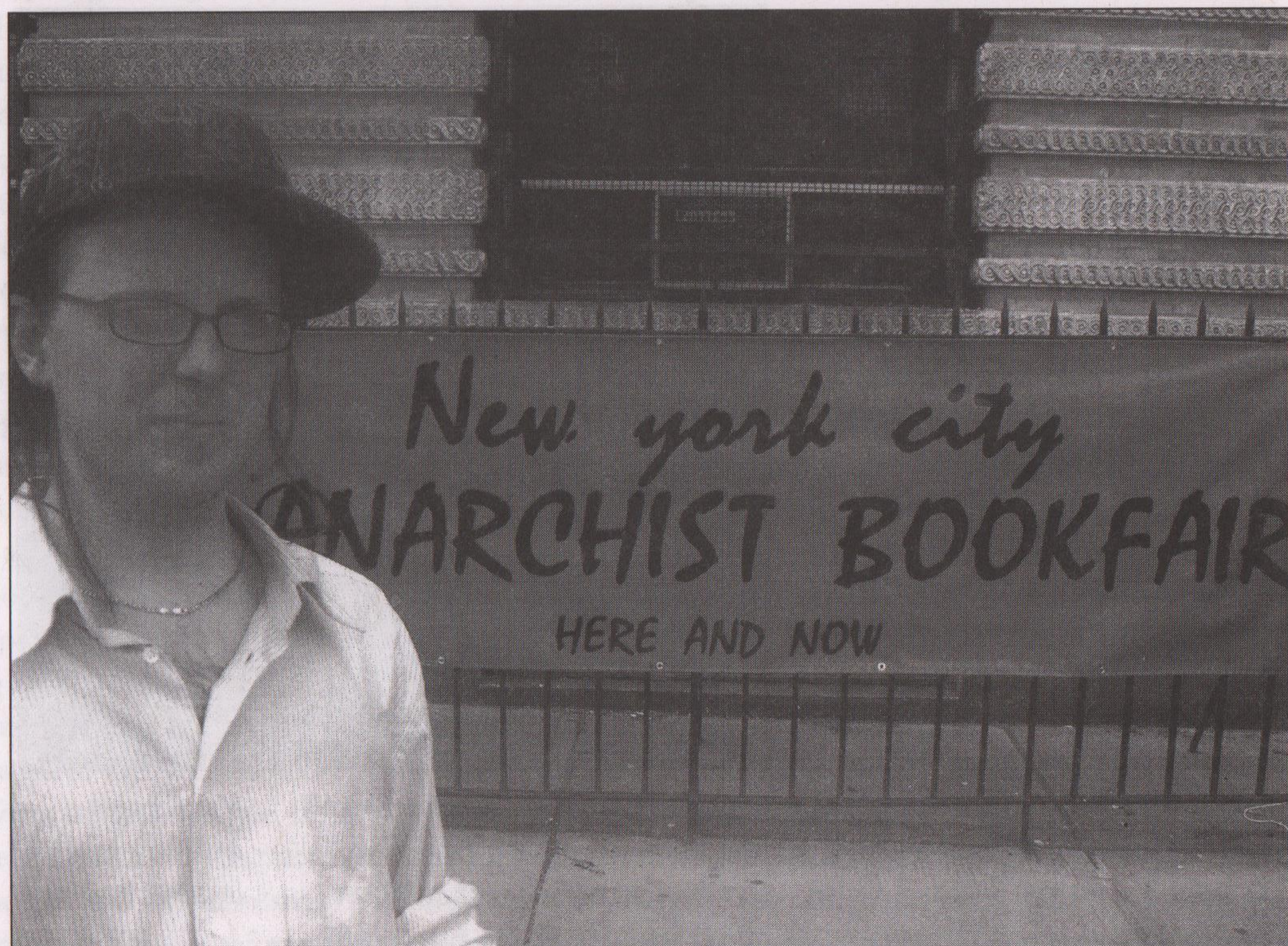
Conducted by Daniel on behalf of Organise!

Organise!: Please introduce yourself, and tell us a little about yourself, and how came to be part of the bookfair collective.

My name is Patrick. I am originally from Baltimore, Maryland. Which was where I first got introduced to Anarchist politics in, or around, 1997. Later I was a member of the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) for a brief couple months in 2000 or 2001 but the collective I was in split up and I went travelling for a bit. I lived in London for about seven months around 2002 and was running with the Anarchist Youth Network kids and also volunteering at Freedom about one day a week. I have been in New York City for two and half years. I am in the Bookfair Collective and also a part of New York Metro Alliance of Anarchists (NYMAA), which are two different things.

This being the first ever New York City Anarchist Bookfair, it appears to have sprung up out of nowhere. Please inform us a little about the recent history of Anarchism in New York City, and as the Bookfair came out of the NYMAA group, tell us how NYMAA came about.

Since the break up of the Love and Rage Federation, there have been different splintered groups, and many individuals not tied to any group, it seemed that they were all aimlessly existing, and where not visible to others within New York City, or out of town. Since the Republican National Convention was held in New York City, anarchism has been developing a more active presence in the city, but still nothing I wanted to be involved with. Then about a year and a half ago NYMAA came out of a weird 'Anarchist Circle' in which



Patrick, one of the bookfair organisers

about a hundred people showed up. I was truly inspired by the lack of the 'life-stylist' tendency and the commitment to class, and other important struggles, that most of the people there had. NYMAA developed out of this meeting, as some of those present decided to form a more structured group that would act as visible 'face' of anarchist politics, struggle, and action in New York City, so that people from out-of-town knew where to plug into, and for people in town to plug into.

Does NYMAA follow any explicit anarchist tendency? Or what currents are within NYMAA, and have there been problems with competing currents?

Well I think this is becoming a problem. There is no political backbone to the group. Although, the structure is pretty well organised and most people are of a red/black tendency, it is not in paper. People in NYMAA came from,

or are in, various groups, such as: Anarchist People of Color (APOC), Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Direct Action Network (DAN), NEFAC, and others I am leaving out. These groups are all pretty class focused, which is why NYMAA leans, a lot, towards the politics of class war anarchists. The group is a little over a year old and politics are definitely getting worked out. So far there hasn't been that big of a problem with competing currents, so wish us luck!

So How is NYMAA structured/organised?

NYMAA membership is based on fulfilling 2 out of 3 criteria: paying dues, attending the two previous last GAs (or 2 out of 3 of them) and being in a working group. So most people do the latter 2, meaning NYMAA is hardly getting enough money to rent the spaces for the meetings. Now that we have t-shirts

maybe we will get rich off the sales, but I do not think so! This being the fact, we really need to work out a way of having some money for projects we would like to do.

We hold GAs every three to four months. These are organized by the 'Nuts and Bolts' working group, which rotates people almost every assembly. The agenda is usually decided by items we 'benched' last GA and new items brought forth. We have a brief break out session in the beginning, with a couple proposed questions/problems, and people meet up in groups and try to solve/talk about them. This is pretty new, and a bit weird, but it does get the blood and brain working, which is really important for a six hour meeting.

The working groups have regular meeting in the time between the GAs and make announcements to the list and on the website, so that other NYMAA members can get involved. There are more in the structure, but it is, almost, always changing. So go to website (www.nymaa.org) to find out yourself!

From an outsider's perspective, the class struggle focus of NYMAA seems a bit of an anomaly for the US anarchist scene, would this be fair to say?

No, I don't really follow. As I said before, most individuals in the group are pretty class focused, most luckily due to the other groups that they are involved in or came from. I think it is an East Coast thing though. Most people didn't have time, or care, about eating out of bins or other life-stylist trophies. Not to say some don't do it, but it is as important to the change we want to see as building model airplanes. I also think that most people that got on the

bandwagon of the early 2000s are realizing this now, which is really good. NYMAA does have all kinds in it, including transit workers, activist, students, etc.

So how did the Bookfair Collective come about, out of NYMAA?

One of, if not, the main purpose of NYMAA is for ideas to develop into working groups, who in turn will execute these into projects. The proposals to form such working groups are generally proposed at the General Assemblies (GA) and developed in-between each GA. The bookfair was simply a proposal brought up at one of the GAs.

So the Bookfair collective and NYMAA are separate entities, the bookfair being simply a working group first developed at a NYMAA-GA, does this mean that there were people involved in the collective who were not part of NYMAA?

Well, again, the Bookfair Collective is separate then NYMAA. The main Bookfair collective group was only four to five people, with others contributing things here and there. Only about three people involved were a part of NYMAA, the others were in Books Through Bars and Radical Reference.

Were other bookfairs elsewhere an influence on you in anyway?

I think the main motivation was that Providence, Rhode Island, had one and that burned us up! We felt that New York City should have anarchism institutionalised somehow, I mean if a city the size of Providence can then surely NYC should, right! Since it was the first time it was nice not to try something completely 'out of tradition', in a sense, so that we could guarantee people would come.

Organising a big event like an Anarchist Bookfair is a pretty ambitious project, for a newly established group, and then to complicate matters it became a four day event ... any comments on your sanity, or how this came about?

Officially the Bookfair Collective only organised Saturday and Sunday, the weekend format made sense, I mean we knew we would have people coming from far and for a one day event? Forget about it! The film fest was organized by another person and the afterparty was organized by myself and the blackkat collective. It was pretty stressful but I figure it was well worth it.

I think many Anarchists in the UK would be surprised by the amount, and positive nature, of the mainstream media coverage the Bookfair received. Could you elaborate on this, and other media approaches that were undertaken.

Yeah that was ridiculous! Most New York papers and magazines actually gave a pre-write up by some editor, telling their readers to go. We just emailed and did mad press releases. The NYMAA props working groups is also subscribed to a lot of US anarchist, and regular activist, groups from NYC to Texas, and we emailed all of them. I am a little curious as to why NEFAC never put it on their calendar!

Another thing that may surprise UK readers, is the lack of anonymity of the organisers, you were very open about who you were, and chose to identify yourselves both on the website and booklet. Did you feel this was a necessary step? Did this have any known positive or negative outcomes?

I don't know. I didn't really want

Interview with Patrick of the NYC Bookfair Collective

Conducted by Daniel on behalf of Organise!

to do it, but didn't really care. Probably got me a good spot if you google my name!

Could you tell us how was the bookfair structured, and organised? Was there an overall aim, in the choices for panels? Was there a conscious choice to have 'panels of experts' with speakers from various backgrounds, rather than giving spaces over to groups or specific projects?

Well the panels were on a first come first serve type basis. When we got applications for talks or workshops of the same content we tried to put them together onto a panel, this was mostly due to the severe lack of space. We didn't try to make a 'panel of experts' we just tried to cram together whatever applications came to us. As the applications came in the bookfair collective decided which ones would be appropriate and got them. However, I did invite George Sossenko to speak though.

The tables were also organised on a first come first served basis. However, we tried to keep an almost equal balance between groups from NYC and out of town. Our next priority was zines, and then we also gave tables half price to groups that sold nothing more than five bones. This was an attempt to get zines, but, some groups just left everything at home over \$5 and then got a discount table, we might have to re-examine this for next year. But there will still be discount tables for groups that need them, as I feel this is an important aspect of the bookfair.

I thought the titles/descriptions of some of the panels were a bit milieu jargon heavy, sort of hippy meets liberal academic, how were

they developed?

Well this the panellists made up and sent them in the applications, so we couldn't change the titles they gave them, are you kidding me? I actually thought the titles were pretty good, maybe I am a hippy?

I saw George speak at the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair and invited him up, simple. He is a truly amazing person and one of the kindest people I ever met.

What was the standout moment of the bookfair for you? Mine would have to be seeing George Sossenko (of the Durruti Column) and Moe Fishman (of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade) discuss their time during the Spanish Civil war. This talk was inspiration to many, and informative to many others new to the period of history. So I would like to know how this meeting came about?

I saw George speak at the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair and invited him up, simple. He is a truly amazing person and one of the kindest people I ever met.

My stand out moment however is my mother, who knows little about anarchism, asking Wayne Price a question about Canada; and, at the party, my brother trying to pick up my good friend from phillies 'significant other.'

So what's the feedback been like?

Are you kidding me? It was great. The tables were all on one floor so I didn't get yelled at by groups saying '... you gave me the shit spot, change the location'! That is stressful.

Also, I was told that the people were 'intelligent' here. Don't really know what that means, but it sounds good. I reckon of those present it was about 35% of people come in off the street!

How do you think having an annual event such as this will effect the NYC anarchist movement?

I think it would be great. It is a great location and there are so many anarchists in the city that are burned up, and pissed off at other anarchists, and, for some reason, this seems like a stress valve. People seemed really re-energized post-bookfair.

Do you have any advice for any groups/individuals who may want to replicate what you did?

It's not nothing! Just be confident and do it. Be tough, and do it your damn self. Well, it is a bit stressful at times, and anarchists really annoy you sometimes, but in the end it is really worth while.

What do you see as the future for NYMAA, and the bookfair.

Well NYMAA seems good. People are into it. The bookfair will hopefully become an annual event and become thousands of people. I really would not like to make just another stop in the anarchist 'event hoppers' circuit, but I don't mind that too much, but the hope would be that people in NYC would get something out of it.

Any major plans for next year's bookfair, should the revolution not intervene!?

Well I would tell the revolution to come to the after party!! But the space already welcomed us back and we are booked! See you there ★

Visual chronicler of the Spanish Revolution

Margaret Michaelis

Margaret Michaelis's prowess as a photographer has been until recently hidden away. Recent exhibitions in Canberra, Australia in 1988 and 2005 and in Valencia, Spain in 2005 have begun to dispel this cloud of obscurity. Her best photographs from her stay in Spain between 1932 and 1937 are now beginning to be admired and recognized and rightly seen as moving and striking depictions of the period.

Margarethe Gross was born into a Jewish family in Dzieditz in what was then Austria, in 1902. Dziedzitz is now Dziedzice in southern Poland near Krakow. Her liberal upbringing led her to be given every educational opportunity by her parents. She studied photography at the Institute of Graphic Arts and Research in Vienna. During the 1920s she worked in leading Viennese studios, including the prestigious Studio d'Or, as copyist, retoucher and photographer for adverts, fashion and industry. These years of apprenticeship made her conscious of the use of modern styles in photography and sparked a lifelong interest in photographic portraiture. Women of her generation were beginning to see photography as a possible career and Margaret appears to have seen herself as a *neue frau*, a modern woman challenging established convention and morals.

In 1929 she moved to Berlin and a few months later she met Rudolf Michaelis. Born at Leipzig in 1907



he became an anarchist in his teenage years and was an important member of the anarcho-syndicalist union, the FAUD (Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands – Union of Free Workers of Germany). He wrote under the name of Michel and worked in the State Museum of Berlin restoring antiquities from the Near East. He also took part in archaeological expeditions, including one to Uruk in Iraq for six months in 1932–1933. Rudolf was the main animator of the GFB (Corporation of Libertarian Booklovers) a book club set up by the FAUD. He had been one of the

Paramatta River, 1948

German anarchists who met with the outstanding Spanish anarchists Francisco Ascaso and Buenaventura Durruti, when they stayed in Berlin in 1928.

Margaret and Rudolf became close and were to marry in 1933. The poor economic situation meant that she could secure only short-term jobs in various photographic studios as an assistant. She set up her own studio Foto-gross in 1931. In 1932, she visited Barcelona. She lodged in a hotel in the poorest and shabbiest part of town, the Barrio Chino. She began to photograph the local people with a little Leica camera,

She began to photograph the local people with a little Leica camera, taking pictures of gypsies, card players, children, street musicians and sailors

taking pictures of gypsies, card players, children, street musicians and sailors. However, there was mistrust in that neighbourhood towards outsiders, and she was mistaken for a police informer and forced to take shelter in her hotel with her German compatriots. She wrote movingly on her experience in the Barrio Chino and how statistics pointed to between 90% and 95% of neighbourhood children being affected by congenital syphilis. She had seen a street accordionist start playing outside her hotel, who became surrounded by local children, with noses eaten away, bald, blind and on crutches—"A sad and terrible image ... the Barrio Chino is the shame of all Catalonia. The children are a silent denunciation". Her images from this visit are both a record and a savage social critique.

Hitler

The rise to power of the Nazis in Germany spelt danger to both Jews and anarchists. Rudolf had secretly attended the congress of the International Workers Association (IWA), the anarcho-syndicalist international, in Amsterdam. His anarchist and antifascist activities and his refusal to recognize the new regime meant that he was soon to be sacked from the museum. He was imprisoned for

five weeks and only freed with the intervention of the museum director. For her part Margaret was arrested on a flimsy charge of book theft. They both decided to leave Germany in November 1933, and chose Barcelona as their destination.

In Barcelona they met up with other German anarchists and formed the DAS (German Anarcho-syndicalists) group. But life was hard for them in Spain. They spoke neither Spanish nor Catalan and lived in poverty. They were suspect in the

She acquired a knack of getting people on the street to be relaxed at having their picture taken

eyes of the authorities as either anarchists or as German spies! This difficult situation led to the break-up of the relationship between Margaret and Rudolf in 1934, although they remained in contact throughout their lives.

In the same year Margaret opened a studio, Foto-Studio, which later became Foto-Elis. She made contact with the avant-garde architects of the GATPAC (Group of Catalan Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture), led

by Jose Luis Sert and worked with them between 1934 and 1936. These architects wanted to revitalize and rehabilitate the Barrio Chino, a project that was never realized. She took many photographs of Barcelona on their behalf and contributed to their exhibition *Nova Barcelona* (New Barcelona) in 1935. Her photos appeared in the modernist magazines AC (Documents of Contemporary Activity) and *D'ací e d'allà*. She acquired a knack of getting people on the street to be relaxed at having their picture taken. She used techniques of taking pictures of streets and their inhabitants from rooftops and attic windows and buildings from low on the ground. Her images of dilapidated and grimy dwellings, poverty-stricken interiors, rubbish-strewn courtyards and sick and diseased children were accompanied by graphics, statistics and diagrams which further dramatized them. Her photomontages were arranged in a similar fashion, combining images with texts and statistics.

She accompanied Sert and the painter Joan Miro to Andalusia and her photos of this tour were published in AC. She made photos of Miro's paintings. She made architectural studies for individual architects of the new modern buildings being built in Barcelona.

The coming of the revolution

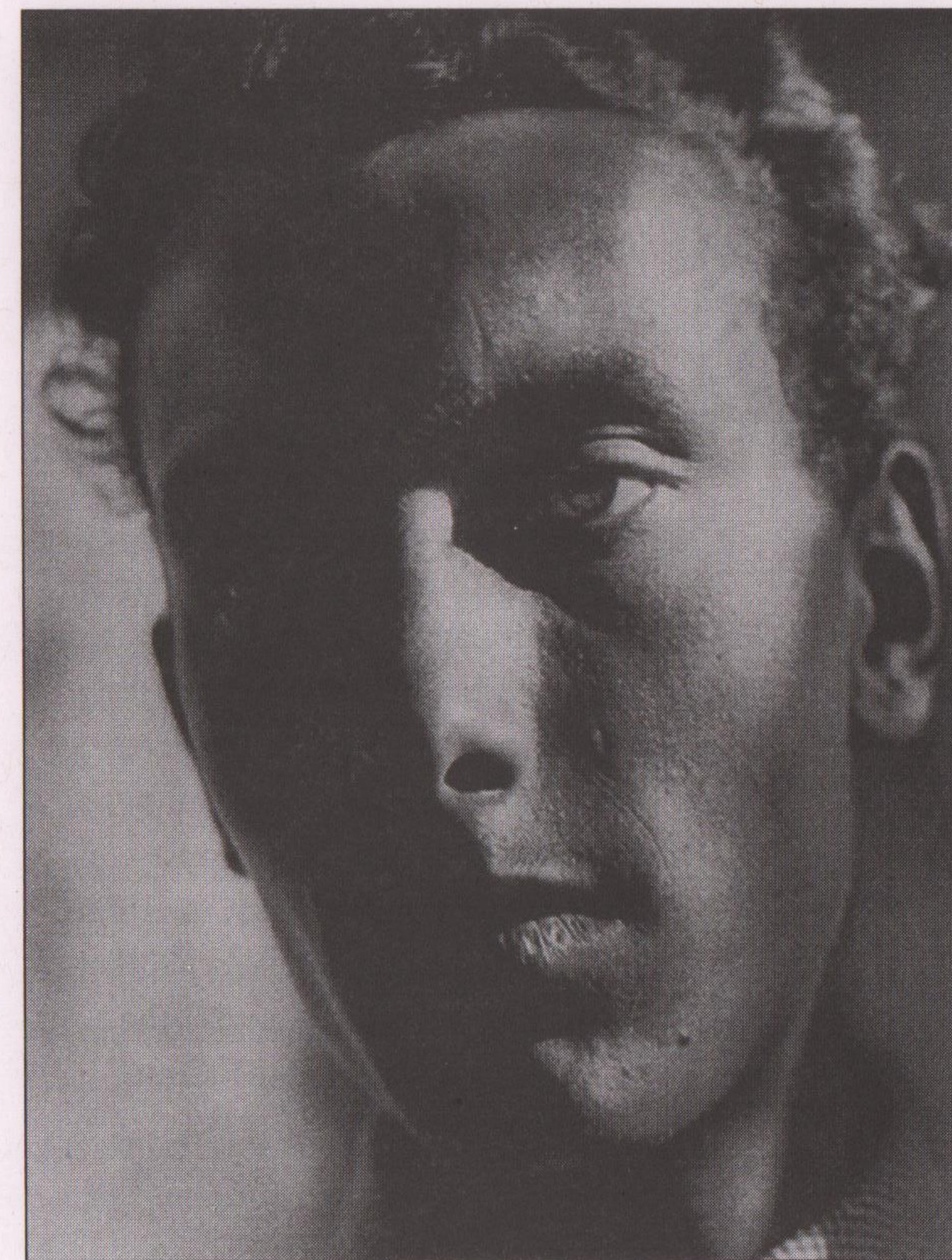
The coup d'état organised by right-wing forces in the armed forces, the Church and in the far right and royalist parties and its initial defeat in parts of Spain unleashed a revolution in 1936. Rudolf for his part became delegate of the German anarchist unit, the Erich Muehsam Group, named after the famous German anarchist murdered by the Nazis in 1933. This became

part of the anarchist militia column, the Ascaso Column, where Spaniards fought alongside Germans. The DAS became part of the local federation of anarchist groups in Barcelona and Rudolf took part in the occupation of the German Club in that city, which had been a notorious nest of Nazis.

For her part Margaret's work became more and more closely associated with the burgeoning revolution. She accompanied the American anarchist Emma Goldman on a tour of Aragon along with the German anarchists Hans Erich Kaminsky and Anita Garfinkle and Arthur Lehning, the secretary of the IWA and they visited the collectives being set up in the countryside. She realized a heroic portrait of Emma Goldman during this tour. At the end of the year she photographed the funeral of Durruti. In 1937 she worked for the Propaganda Commission of the Catalan Government, recording scenes from everyday life in Barcelona, with reportages on public health and support to children. Her quick and propagandist documentary images were used in magazines and papers. She undertook a series of photo shoots in the Barrio Chino, this time being able to snap away without being driven off. Her rapid image taking, as mentioned above, is apparent in these photos, including one of a pickpocket dipping into a handbag! Some of these images were later

seized and used by the Francoists in a publication *Homage from a Freed Catalonia to its Caudillo*, without, obviously, Margaret's permission.

With the worsening situation in Spain, Rudolf was arrested several times by the Stalinists in 1937. The couple was divorced that year. Whilst Rudolf stayed on to fight, Margaret left for France and then visited her parents in Poland in



Rudolph Michaelis

1938. She photographed some graphic views of the Jewish ghetto in Krakow. She then obtained a visa from Britain and then moved on to Australia, having in the meantime secured the release of her equipment and photographs which eventually reached her in Australia.

Rudolf had crossed over to France with the defeat in 1939. He returned secretly to Spain in 1939, was arrested and imprisoned until 1944.

Exile in Australia

In Australia, German incomers were viewed with suspicion and kept under surveillance. Margaret arrived in Sydney a few days after the outbreak of the Second World War. She worked first as a housekeeper and then in 1940 opened Photo-Studio. Her work from this period was strictly bread and butter, with the usual studio portraits, although they were mostly of artists, dancers and

writers, like her, European and Jewish refugees. She undertook very little open air photography. In these war years she experienced a "very, very sharp, loneliness" in her own words.

Margaret was forced to close her studio in 1952 because of her failing sight. She married Albert Sachs in 1960 and worked with him in his window framing business in Melbourne. In the years after the war she began the agonizing process that many others experienced of hunting for her family and friends back in her home town. All had perished in the Holocaust. One rare open air shot, a kind of self-portrait, from this period, *Paramatta River*, taken on 14th June 1948, shows her in the middle distance facing away from the camera looking out over a landscape of industrial desolation.

She renewed contact with Rudolf in East Germany in the post-war years. He, like a number of other surviving German anarchists, had been under the illusion that he could join the Communist Party and spread anarchist ideas from within. Instead he became its captive and was forced to write denunciations of anarchism. She visited him in East Berlin in 1967 and remained in correspondence with him until 1975 (he died in 1990). Grete (as she was known to Rudolf and other close friends) kept the letters, dried flowers, maps and photographs she had received from Rudolf in a large envelope on which she had written Michel in large black letters. She kept these until the end of her life.

Margaret kept her collection of photographs from the Spanish period hidden throughout her sojourn in Australia up until her death in 1985. With her death her photographic collection and archives were given to the National Gallery of Australia ★

Anarchist Prison Library – books needed

Cassidy Wheeler is spending seven years in an American jail for stealing a pair of socks. He is a committed anarchist and is gathering material from around the world to try and set up a prison library. If you have any old books on anarchist politics you can donate, please send them to Lawrence ABC, PO Box 1483, Lawrence, KS 66044, USA. Email: abclawrence@riseup.net

For letters of support only contact Cassidy Wheeler 14282456, Two Rivers Correctional Institution (TRCI), 82911 Beach Access Road, Umatilla, OR 97882, USA.

What's left? How liberals lost their way

By Nick Cohen (Fourth Estate, 2007)

The left meets the right

On the face of it, a book with such a title does not have much to say to anarchists. But I believe it does. Firstly, because the book is in fact questioning the modern history of what he views as “the Left” (broadly speaking, Marxist groups, liberals and middle-class Labour supporters), and in doing so raises some uncomfortable questions for us also. Secondly, by taking the measure of the arguments of someone like Cohen, it could strengthen our ideas and their practical application.

It initially concerns the experiences of a courageous Iraqi Trotskyist named Kanan Makiya, and his struggles to alert the world to the nature of Saddam Hussein's regime. By Cohen's account, the Left hailed him in the 1980s for exposing the reality of life under Baath Party rule and the West's support for Iraq as a counterweight to the militantly Islamic Iranian regime which had come to power in 1979. However after Iraq's attempted annexation of Kuwait led to defeat in the Gulf War, and the US and Britain subsequently established partial control over Iraq in the form of no-fly zones and the sanctions regime (the UN's “oil for food programme”), Makiya was then spurned by many of his former supporters because he believed that the war should have been carried on so as to overthrow Saddam. Their hatred for US imperialism overrode everything else, even the recognition that Saddam's Iraq was a modern form of fascism.

Cohen links this attitude of significant parts of the Left back to the 1930s, when the British Communist Party dutifully followed Moscow's line after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 and were more committed to struggling against



the British government than the Nazis. He sees it paralleled in recent years by leftists praising the Iraqi resistance to the American-dominated “coalition of the willing”, even though this resistance is in large part made up of Islamists, Baathists and al-Qaeda supporters. Further examples of Marxist organisations he denounces on various grounds are the Workers Revolutionary Party (for the abuse of members by its leader Gerry Healy and support for Middle Eastern dictatorships in return for money), the Revolutionary Communist Party (which denied Serbian ethnic cleansing) and the Socialist Workers Party (for their alliance with the reactionary Muslim Association of Britain in the Stop the War coalition).

Anarchism

What he has to say about anarchism is in the context of Noam Chomsky's adoption of it at the age of 13. Cohen describes it as “an honourable political philosophy that did not implicate itself in any of the criminal ideologies of the twentieth century from colonialism to Islamism, but also a facile one because its supporters could never put its theories into practice”. Taking the first half of that sentence, since the book details an appalling litany of political crimes, it should surely have given Cohen more pause for thought as to why and how anarchists were consistently on the side of freedom and not implicated in those crimes. The second half is mistaken in its blanket assertion about lack of practice. The efforts of such as Makhno in the Ukraine, Durrutti in Spain, and a host of attempts at communal living, free schools, etc in many countries

should not be simply dismissed. However the uncomfortable truth is that some of our greatest examples are many decades old, and overall anarchism has historically largely existed on the margins, the way it is treated here showing how that marginalisation continues today. The problem remains how to make it relevant and practical for vast numbers of people, for of course anarchism could never be imposed or decreed in the manner of even the most “democratic” governments.

A leftist who went west

Cohen is an example of someone from the “democratic” Left (Christopher Hitchens and Francis Wheen are other prominent examples) who see the world opened up by the admittedly terrifying objective of Islamists—a global theocratic dictatorship—as the overriding political reality of our time. It is certainly true that in its full flowering Islamism is a totalitarian movement with no room for dissent. It is also true that this was not widely understood for some time because legitimate grievances (e.g. the oppression of Palestinians or Chechens) were and continue to be confused with the underlying political objective of a “godly” dictatorship.

But the stance of Cohen and others overrides any sense of logic or history. What he and his ilk are asking us to believe is that current British and American policy has cut itself free from a history that includes “imperial wars in Kenya (and) Malaysia...the saturation bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos...the American-backed overthrow of the democratic governments of Iran, Guatemala and Chile” (pages 160–161). This

partial list in itself is revealing of the background of politicians and writers such as Cohen. They know about this history, and it can be assumed that such knowledge went into their political formation as people of the Left. Yet somehow governments with this sort of past are supposed now to be only interested in freedom and humanitarianism.

The break-up of Yugoslavia through the ethnic slaughters of the 1990s, followed by the cataclysm of 9/11, the event where Islamism went global and which does indeed demand fresh thinking from all of us, has seen them only able to view the alternatives as being “the West” or Islamism. Even though some of the book rightly locates the malaise of what passes for the Left in the West in its decades-old divorce from class-based politics (so old-fashioned, unlike today's nineteenth century-style exploitation in the “developing world” or the resurgent bigotries of nationalism or religion) it cannot imagine anything beyond “democracy”. But since this term is never defined, it can only be assumed that Cohen sees no need to do so because he actually regards the present system—despite the concentration of economic power and widespread sense of powerlessness—as something that really does serve the people in general. In fact any notion of economic democracy is absent from the book, that very absence which makes parliamentary democracy so hollow.

Similarly he has little time for anti-globalisers and anti-capitalists. This stems in part from his notion that countries such as America and Britain are only “allegedly capitalist” because

they are “mixed economies”.

It's good of him to show us this mistaken denunciation of a system organised for profit, which depends on private ownership (or state ownership which increasingly imports the working practices of the private sector) and generates a class-ridden society. Perhaps labels are less important than concrete consequences: “a billion people (live) in abject poverty... access to adequate sanitation (is) unknown to 2.4 billion”.

Where Cohen is on stronger ground is in attacking the inchoate ideas of “anti-capitalism”. It is true that these still need to become more of a positive programme rather than simply exposing the injustices of the present order. This is an international movement still in its infancy, albeit one of the most significant examples of resistance in recent history not least because it is so self-critical of its own emerging programme. But he downplays how the incessant attacks of the ruling class and the mainstream media on anything outside the “centre ground” of politics, and how collapse of so-called communist and socialist parties has meant younger generations of activists are largely cut off from the past and consequently lack so much of what needed to understand the present. He also shows not a trace of understanding a politics in which all are involved rather than voting for others to run their lives.

Any war but the class war

Where Cohen is at his most challenging and troubling is in his rejection of neutrality in the actual, and often literal, battlegrounds of the day. That said, for a thoughtful writer, he seems to have a

remarkably untroubled approach to war. For him, rearmament to oppose the Nazis should have happened much sooner; bombing the civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved the lives of thousands of troops; in the Gulf War, the US should have pushed on to Baghdad; the rest of Europe should have opposed Serbia militarily, or at least armed the Bosnians; and, in quite the most disgusting passage in the book, he accuses the millions of anti-war protesters who marched in February 2003 of doing so “to oppose the overthrow of a fascist regime”. The prospect of massive slaughter presumably had no influence.

Nonetheless, if it is true that the Marxist left or the various shades of liberal have preferred to ignore the current plight of the Iraqis except insofar as it can be blamed on the Western forces, anarchists cannot continue on this path. For among our core beliefs are freedom, class unity and internationalism. However I am not aware of any organised, sustained effort to support or encourage anarchists in Iraq, or in the region generally. Yet this area of rampant authoritarianism and religious lunacy is precisely the kind in which a mass anarchist movement is both least likely to thrive and most in need of it.

The problem for anarchists of how to respond to wars can be traced back to the First World War, at a time when it could be reasonably hoped that international working-class unity might stop the war in its tracks. Subsequently most anarchists, such as Malatesta, held to this position. This standard anarchist position is a coherent one: ‘No War But The Class War’. This isn't a cop out. War is essentially the result of competition over resources, which is

What's left? How liberals lost their way

By Nick Cohen (Fourth Estate, 2007)

seen as natural in capitalist societies, to whom war is therefore tolerable. Conversely, anarchists see scarcity or competition over resources as a fundamental social and economic failure caused by the ruling class, and we therefore reject involvement in or responsibility for their wars. The idea that we should be called upon to solve problems modern capitalism has created, without the removal of capital itself, is therefore nonsensical to the committed anarchist. We feel no responsibility for resolving capitalism's problems, instead giving whatever help we can to relieve suffering resulting from wars and attempting to change the world before any more break out.

But that is very easy in a hypothetical situation and it is well known that one of our otherwise most coherent theorists, Kropotkin, supported Britain and its allies against Germany in World War One. Another example is that of participation in the Spanish government by some anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, along with Republicans battling Franco's fascists. We look back on these episodes with some embarrassment because those anarchists failed to act as anarchists and support 'no country'. Maybe, given the analysis above, we could account for them with the benefit of hindsight and suggest these mistakes were made at the point where war was still only emerging as a vital tool of capitalism, or that a clearer position on wars was reached only after those earlier mistakes had been made. On the other hand, no small number of people moving towards anarchism from socialism will have asked, 'how can anarchists help those really being oppressed in the here and now if they don't support



Anti-war demonstrators ... 'opposing the overthrow of a fascist regime'

wars defending the weak from the strong?' Many anarchists have faced these questions, and so maybe it would be useful at this point in the development of our theoretical analysis to explore another line of argument.

We might start by suggesting that the point in both the cases of WW1 and the Spanish Civil War is that an actual situation of life or death struggle was not a case of clear-cut revolution versus reaction. Let's consider that if anarchist politics mean anything they have to deal with such muddled situations and make a difference, and that only this sort of response can hope to attract and build support. What happens if we pursue this line of thought rather than rejecting it out of hand?

In the present day one of those situations is Iraq, and Cohen would reasonably ask if we prefer the political suffocation of Baath

totalitarianism to the limited room to breathe in which, for example, socialists and communists can to some extent be visible again. Yet this has come about not through mass revolution, but because of an invasion by imperialist powers with dubious motives. This is not to support the invasion, with all of its slaughter, but to recognise that there is a real dilemma. If we believe that the kind of democracy and economy being implemented in Iraq are a fraud which ultimately will only really benefit the ruling class (both domestic and foreign), what are we doing to relieve the suffering, to seek allies and to offer a constructive alternative? Similar questions were asked of Anarchism in recent conflicts in the Balkans, and of course it was another of these which was the spark for the imperialist war in 1914.

Whether or not anarchists

should be challenged by Cohen's accusations, we are not doing 'nothing'. An important example of concrete action by anarchists is away from the front line, in support of asylum seekers from repressive regimes, for example of Iraqi Kurds, Afghanis, Congolese and Darfuris, and as part of this putting forward a No Borders position. Anarchists have supported community-based movements of war-resisters & war-survivors in countries ranging from Serbia, which Cohen would consider an aggressor state and therefore 'legitimate target', to the Lebanon, a 'victim' in recent years. This is at the same time as taking a principled anti-war stance.

Naivety

Much of what Cohen writes is criticism, whether it be of Marxists, liberals, anti-capitalists, impenetrable theorists like Michel Foucault, or Noam Chomsky (Chomsky's anti-Americanism is such that, allegedly, he has been an apologist for authoritarian regimes like Cambodia's Khmer Rouge and Milosevic's Serbia. I think his position is rather more complex than that). His own stance seeps out from time to time, chiefly in the form of support for democracy and universal human rights, and concludes in support for the Euston Manifesto (available at www.eustonmanifesto.org). This document, although Cohen did not contribute to it, well illustrates certain strands of contemporary social democratic and liberal thinking. Much as the McCarthy-era in America produced a reaction in the form of what was called anti-anti-Communism, these thinkers hold to anti-anti-Americanism. While it is of course mistaken to

hold America responsible for all the problems the world faces, this absurd position tries to uphold it as a beacon of freedom and yet not deny its war crimes, support for dictators and right-wing parties, and the obscene gulf between the rich and the poor the economic system it promotes results in. To this mindset it is not possible to criticise both America or Britain to anything like the degree such regimes as China, Sudan and the Middle Eastern dictatorships merit: this would be "moral equivalence". Being bombed to destruction or being tortured produces the same agony everywhere, yet to the Eustonians these are "lesser (though all too real) violations of human rights" when they are "closer to home, or are the responsibility of certain disfavoured governments"; what we should really turn our attention to is "other violations that are flagrantly worse". This moral equivalence line is a great favourite nowadays. So Israel should not be criticised because of Hamas, nor America because of al-Qaeda. Or if there is an admission of the justice of what critics say, it will be quickly minimised by directing our attention to "other violations that are flagrantly worse" (even if, say, Chinese exploitation of workers is actively assisted by Western investment).

The desperate situations throughout the world today demand more far-reaching solutions than the continuing election of elites (miscalled democracy), and an economic system that generates parallel elites, can ever hope to produce. The blindness of Cohen and his cohorts to this is their own form of the naivety of which they are so quick to accuse others ★

George Brown, the cobbler anarchist of Philadelphia

By Robert P. Helms (Kate Sharpley Library)

The life of an anarchist shoemaker from Freethought in Northamptonshire, England to the burgeoning anarchist movement in Philadelphia. As described by another anarchist, George's "whole soul is in the cause. He is a most genial companion, with a warm, human heart, but rigidly uncompromising in his devotion to anarchist principles".

George was born in Raunds in 1858, one of 17 children! Around 1881 he got work in a boot factory in Cawnpore, India. Here he noted the resistance of the Indian population to capitalism and factory regimentation. He started thinking about this.

He moved on to Chicago and was caught up in the events that led to the deaths of the Chicago Anarchist Martyrs. He was one of those that the police fired on on May 4th 1886. George already had formed his own opinions like the anarchism he now had come in to contact with and he became an enthusiastic supporter of the movement.

He settled in Philadelphia by 1892 or early 1893. A vigorous anarchist movement had been in existence here since 1883 and George became one of its most respected and persistent standard-bearers.

He was active as an anarchist for 28 years until his death, and often spoke at public meetings in Philadelphia.

Like many members of the anarchist movement, George was almost entirely self-educated. The Jewish anarchist Joseph L. Cohen describes him as a "very important and active member ... a highly educated man and a powerful speaker on the platform, like an erudite professor with a fine sense of humour ... his imposing appearance made a very fine impression on the audience".

As the author notes: "... when Emma or Voltairine, or Peter Kropotkin, or some other respected anarchist writer of the time arrived to give a lecture, they were not alone on a street talking to strangers ... When a squad of policemen lumbered onto the scene, scores of people would feel the truncheon crash down on their heads. It's these smaller, local anarchist figures that make the fabric of the story, whereas the star characters make for wonderful embroidery." George was one of those important, 'local' figures, and his life and times are portrayed vividly in this fascinating pamphlet ★

Bakunin: the creative passion

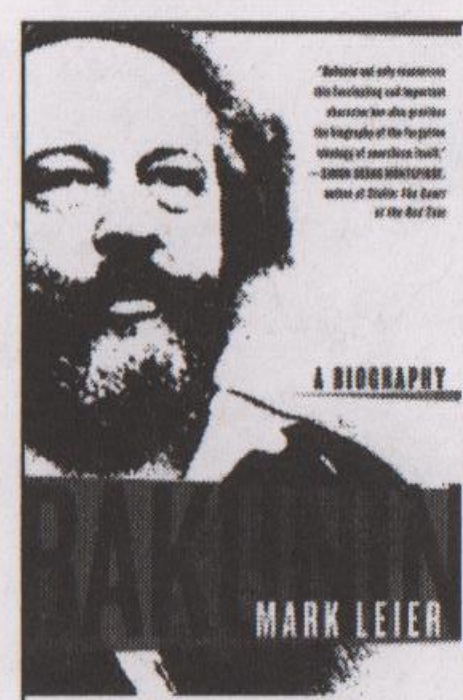
By Mark Leier (St. Martins Press) Review by Brian Morris

"Liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality" Bakunin (p.190)

As I intimated in an earlier review, more than a decade ago I was prompted, indeed provoked, into writing a little introduction to the life and work of Michael Bakunin. My motivation for doing so was that I was not only incensed by the harsh, derogatory and unfair criticisms of Bakunin produced by liberal and Marxist scholars – who dismissed Bakunin as an intellectual buffoon bent on nothing but violence and destruction – but by anarcho-primitivists and Nietzschean individualists who completely repudiated Bakunin's social anarchism. For such fundamentalists Bakunin was a "leftist" and not a real anarchist like themselves, and was thus best forgotten.

In his admirable study of Bakunin's philosophy, Paul McLoughlin has already done a great deal to restore Bakunin's intellectual integrity as a political thinker, underwriting his seminal importance in the development of social anarchism, as well as affirming that Bakunin is less of an historical curiosity than an anarchist whose ideas have a freshness and originality and a contemporary relevance which we would do well to examine and learn from. Complementing this work we now have Mark Leier's biography of Bakunin – subtitled "The Creative Passion". It is an excellent biography of the real Bakunin, not the caricature invoked by the likes of Aileen Kelly, Isaiah Berlin, Hal Draper and Francis Wheen – a biography long overdue.

Well researched and full of good scholarship Leier's biography is written in an engaging style, a style that is informative, insightful and



full of zest, as Leier relates the many incidents and events in Bakunin's colourful and fascinating life. It is thus extremely readable, free of the kind of scholastic jargon that one usually encounters among so-called postmodern anarchists. In fact, Leier's biography is a delight to read, and at times quite entertaining, although occasionally his quips jar a little, especially if, like me, you have little interest in pop culture, comic strips and the Jerry Springer show.

What is helpful about Leier's biography is that not only does it offer an absorbing account of Bakunin's life, writings and political activities, but that it also provides a lot of useful background material regarding the socio-historical context in which Bakunin lived and thought. There are, for example, extremely enlightening accounts of the following: Russian serfdom, the nature of capitalism as an economic system, the Paris Commune, and German idealist philosophy – in which Leier delightfully summarizes the metaphysical ideas of Fichte and Hegel; as well as wonderful vignettes of Bakunin's contemporaries – Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Wilhem Weitling and Sergei Nechaev. Interestingly though, Bakunin's more immediate comrades, Carlo Cafiero, Errico Malatesta, James Guillaume and Elisee Reclus – all committed anarchist communists – get no more than a passing mention.

The main contours of Bakunin's turbulent life are perhaps well known, but Leier treats his subject with an unusual critical sympathy, giving a lucid and balanced account of the key issues and events surrounding Bakunin's life as a revolutionary anarchist. There are thus poignant discussions, by no means uncritical, of Bakunin's

relationship with his immediate family, as well as his young wife Antonio; of Bakunin's penchant for secret societies; of the nature and context of his anti-Semitic outbursts; and of Bakunin's participation in the political insurrections in Dresden (1848) and Lyon (1870). Leier also gives a sympathetic and enlightening account of Bakunin's many years in prison (1849-1857) – two years of which were spent in solitary confinement in the infamous Peter and Paul Fortress. It was there that Bakunin penned his famous confession to the Tsar.

Throughout Leier's text there are also interesting insights into Bakunin's rather flamboyant personality; not for nothing did Richard Wagner and the Konigstein police describe him as a "colossal". By all accounts Bakunin had a warm, generous and outgoing personality, loved Beethoven's music, was seriously overweight, smoke and drank to excess, and unlike Marx was generally free of rancour, deceit and political intrigue. Leier affirms that Bakunin, given his generosity of spirit, had no ability as a political intriguer, despite his fondness for secret codes and imaginery organizations. He thus argues that there is absolutely no evidence at all that Bakunin ever wanted, or even tried, to take over or destroy the First International.

Besides providing us with a sensitive and poignant account of Bakunin's life and activities, as well as of the wider context, Leier's biography also gives succinct outlines of all Bakunin's major writings. These range from his early article "The Reaction in Germany" (1842), which had a tremendous impact on his avant-garde contemporaries, to his last work "Statism and Anarchy"

(1873). The former article, on reactionary and reformist politics in Germany in the 1840's, ends with those famous words: "The passion for destruction is at the same time a creative passion". But as Leier makes clear this did not imply for Bakunin mindless violence or that he was prepared, like Attila and Robespierre, to "wade through seas of blood" – as Isaiah Berlin churlishly put it – but rather it indicated the negation of the present social order (the overcoming of capitalism and the modern state) and the creation of a decentralized society based on voluntary associations. Moreover, as Leier emphasizes, this for Bakunin did not imply some apocalyptic vision – which is how Bakunin still continues to be understood, or rather misunderstood. Leier thus offers a clear riposte to those self-proclaimed postanarchists, like Richard Daly, who, putting new labels on old wine bottles, follow Bakunin's liberal and Marxist detractors, in seeing Bakunin as lost in some millennial or apocalyptic vision. And certainly, though Bakunin was an advocate of direct action and propaganda by the deed, and had sympathy for Russian brigands, he was never an advocate of assassinations, revolutionary violence or terrorism (unlike the youthful Engels). As Bakunin clearly put it: "Liberty can only be created by liberty, by an insurrection of the people and the voluntary organization of the workers from below" (p.287). This entailed overcoming capitalism, and a complete break with all governments and bourgeois politics – a social revolution. As Leier writes: Bakunin "insisted that revolutionary violence was to be directed against institutions not people, and nowhere did he advocate terrorism or assassination" (p.208). In fact,

Bakunin offered warnings against the harm caused by revolutionary violence, and had nothing but contempt for Nechaev's revolutionary nihilism and Jacobin politics. Bakunin's "passion for destruction" did not then entail a cult of violence but a call to build gradually a new world free of oppression and exploitation. Bakunin's anarchism thus implied a philosophy of freedom, morality and solidarity; and the aim of a social revolution was not to kill individuals but to destroy "property and the state" (p.199).

Bakunin had a warm, generous and outgoing personality, loved Beethoven's music, was seriously overweight, smoked and drank to excess

Running through the book, almost like a silver thread, at least for the last two hundred pages, is a discussion of the complex relationship between Karl Marx and Bakunin. Leier, to his credit, tries not to take sides, and seems to act as a kind of broker, intent on bringing together Marxism (authoritarian socialism) and anarchism (libertarian socialism) – or "collectivism" as Bakunin described his own brand of revolutionary or class struggle anarchism. Leier emphasizes that Marx and Bakunin had much in common besides their hirsute appearance; both came from privileged backgrounds and were radical democrats in their

youth; both were philosophical realists and historical materialists; both were atheists, but sympathetic to the fact that religion often provided meaning, solace and consolation for the oppressed; both were committed members of the First International; both were essentially anti-capitalists – although Marx and Engels both sanctioned capitalist imperialism in relation to Morocco, India and the invasion of Mexico by the United States – Engels viewing such imperialism as in the interests of "civilization"; and, finally, both remained dedicated revolutionary socialists to the end of their days. All this, despite the animosity that developed between the two men and their political differences. For Bakunin was always critical of Marx's authoritarian politics.

Director of the Centre for Labour Studies at Simon Fraser University, and author of several books on labour history, Mark Leier is to be complemented for providing us with a readable and very useful biography of Bakunin. Indeed, Leier specifically offers an interpretation of Bakunin's life and ideas that can be used by anyone interested in anarchism and social change. For Bakunin's critique of capitalism and the state has lost none of its force, and that today, more than ever, Bakunin holds out a vision of a world of freedom, equality and fraternity against which the "present reality" of global capitalism may be measured and found wanting. Such are the concluding words of this insightful biography. The book is indeed a timely affirmation of class struggle anarchism. It is a pity therefore that the book is only referenced with "notes", and so there is no useable bibliography or even a listing of Bakunin's writings ★