

# The Long March Back

*Commemorating the end of the 1984/5 miners strike and the aftermath.  
A day conference with a workers Bookfair And Miners Folk Music/poetry social*

## Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2010

11-30 am at The Bridge Hotel, Castle Garth  
Newcastle Upon Tyne

### Provisional Programme

**Speakers;** Ian Lavery, President of the NUM has agreed to chair the first half and open the conference. Chris Kitchen the General Secretary of the NUM has agreed to open and chair the second part. David Douglass will launch his book Ghost Dancers, a comprehensive history of the strike and the fate of union and communities since. Confirmed.

Davie Hopper, General Secretary of the DMA along with Davie Guy President of the NE Area NUM will speak on The Durham Coalfield in the strike and the aftermath, and have confirmed

Keith Stanley, President of the Nottingham Miners and National Vice President has agreed to give a talk on the Strike and Aftermath in the Nott's Coalfield. Confirmed

Women Against Pit Closures are sending four of their prominent activists including Ann Scargill to speak. Rachael Horn, of the Pin The Pits Campaign to speak for the Post Strike Generation, & has confirmed. A discussion of artwork and projects.

Bob Crow, RMT will speak on 'Keeping the strike on the rails' the rail unions in 84/5 and 92/3 and has confirmed.

I also thought to invite a couple of national union figures to chair some sessions and introduce them. This will depend on the number of speakers and timing. I propose maximum half hour presentations per speaker.

Book Fair - <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com/> In the room opposite, we will stage a workers bookfair supported by a variety of labour movement and workers organisations, including the Notts Area NUM and the IWW, which will run throughout the conference. The free buffet will be provided in this room.

Evening Social: The Long March Back Folk/Poetry Social - We are planning a folk/poetry social for the evening At the Bridge, with a variety of top quality singers and poets. We anticipate the social will start at 7-30 pm.

Newcastle Central Unite 1901 Branch have very kindly agreed to donate funding for the publicity and expenses so the cost of the buffet and publicity will be met from this donation, donations from other regional and national unions would be welcome. The conference is organised by David Douglass of the NUM and IWW in conjunction with the NUM, North East, Nottingham and Yorkshire Areas and IWW British Isles, with the support of RMT, Newcastle Central 1901 Branch Unite, Berwick Trades Council, with other unions being invited to sponsor and endorse. I am seeking the formal endorsement of the NUM NEC.)  
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# Mayday #4

Winter 2009/10

£2

## Support the Postal Workers



## Strike to win by spreading the struggles



# Red Anarchism

Friends, this issue of Mayday, *the magazine whose content is better than its layout*, is the Extemporary Special Edition. What this means is that the decision to delay production of the next issue until Mayday 2010 was changed given the white heat of the current class struggle. If you are reading this, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition/2<sup>nd</sup> printing of this issue of Mayday 4.

New Labour, as everybody knows, are capitalist scum. Their latest attempts to enforce capitalist rule are being felt by the postal workers and the public via a worsening and more expensive service. There has been good political work and discussion from a working class point of view of what New Labour's Neo-liberal capitalism has done and is attempting to do with the firefighters. Matt Wrack of the Fire Brigades Union has already written well on this, and so have others.

## Postal dispute

However, it is the turn of the postal workers now, and Mayday leads with an attempt by a postal worker to explain the current class struggle and the depth of feeling amongst staff. It is now down to the rest of us to offer practical solidarity and join in with attempts to spread the strike. Unfortunately, if left without support the postal workers will undoubtedly suffer. It is likely that even larger numbers of scabs will be recruited, and so efforts must be made to build effective picketing. We must keep track of the whereabouts of the temporary sorting offices that are being established, as these are also bases of scab recruitment. We must **Strike to Win**. Mayday has already given large numbers of Brians the postal workers article out, free, to strikers in Co. Durham and York.

With these large numbers of scabs there will inevitably be conflict with the police, who enforce capitalist rules, ideas and laws. There has never been a serious strike and class struggle yet where the police took the side of the workers, and this one will be no different. So Mayday's article on the policing of the Miners Strike is even timelier, when originally it was conceived to coincide with the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Miners Strike. The capitalist state against the miners showed what attention working class activists need to pay to the law and their enforcers. There are those who attack the police verbally, and some physically, after the death of Ian Tomlinson who was killed by the police at the G20 in April 2009. Mayday expects more of this will follow in this current workers struggle.

## Red Anarchism (copyright pending)

Mayday's other article on EP Thompson, and Jacob Bauthumley's article on Marxism and Anarchism, continue this Red Anarchist theme. Mayday hopes to do a further special edition with the Red Anarchism theme, probably for Mayday 2010. Please send articles and letters if you wish to contribute to these debates. Jacob's article is an interesting contribution that lays the historical groundwork for future Praxis. Of course, the time pressure has meant that this issue itself will be a 'work in progress'. The Miners article needs laying out and referencing better, but it is better to be humanistic about this and relaxed, this is the preferable form of politics which Mayday encourages. Rather than pretend everything is easy and perfect, that is the myth of the ultra left/bourgeois linear narrative of history. People are not perfect, specialists in everything, and so on, it is time that we realise this in praxis.

## Let's Work together – for a change!

Mayday 4 *content*, Why we are going On Strike by Brian the postal worker, 'POPART - Public Order Policing: The Anarchists reTaliante', Policing the Miners strike. Pick up a brick and throw it at a cop: Beyond the anarchist/Marxist divide by Jacob Bauthumley. *Recognising the class struggle anarchist debt to Marxism*, Marxist Humanism today "Only the 'realists' are out of touch with humanity 'Out of Touch'? <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com/> <http://mayday-magazine.vpweb.co.uk/> This is a good site <http://www.cseweb.org.uk/>

# "Why we are going on strike"

Brian the postal worker

We think it's fair to say that you our customers are not interested in why we are once again striking. It is also fair to say that some of the problems we are going through does not affect you either.

What you are interested in is you getting your mail and whatever mail you send getting there within the allotted time depending on what service was paid for.

But we do think that it is fair to inform you of part of the reason as to why we are striking as it affects you in a big way.

But before we go on let's get one thing out 1st, it's not about a pay rise, far from it, a pay rise if we are to be truthful is in the mix but is not as a high priority as other concerns we have.

Please just take a minute to see what we have to say.

## What's affecting you then?

In 2007 we signed an agreement with Royal Mail called the Pay & Modernisation deal, in that deal there are, amongst other things, a new working practice called 'absorption'. This is one of YOUR biggest problems, whether you are a domestic or business customer! Before the deal any postal workers rounds that weren't covered due to staff sickness, holidays, or general shortage would be covered by other postal workers on overtime.

There would be no shortage of posties willing to do this, so there was never a major problem getting the mail delivered. But now we have 'absorption', what this now means is that any rounds now that does not have a postal worker allocated to it is now absorbed by the rest of the postal workers in the office.

With Royal Mail insisting that mail volumes are falling they are under the impression that we know have a lot of spare time in which to absorb other posties work. This is not the case, not only have we lost 60,000 staff in the business in the last few years (our CEO Adam Crozier has publicly admitted this) but we now have a large proportion of part-time workers which affects the way the mail pipeline works.



Mail is being delayed regularly and in vast amounts around the country in the name of absorption, so managers can report that absorption has happened and the savings have been made, some posties have to leave part of their round in the office, they also are being forced to 'cut off' or stop their deliveries as they have run out of time. Royal Mail drivers have been taken off their packet routes to help absorption, hence packets are left undelivered for days. **This is a mass abuse of the deal we signed in 2007**, and posties are being bullied and threatened with taken off pay if they either refuse to do this or happen to cut off.

## Later deliveries

A few years back Royal Mail ceased the 2nd delivery and you now only get one, but the truth is Royal Mail did not stop the 2nd delivery they cancelled the 1st. We now start our rounds at the time that we started the 2nd delivery years ago and now, Royal Mail want even later start times. So while today, if you're one of the lucky ones, you might meet your postman before you go to lunch, you will soon be meeting him just before dinner. We are aware that this causes big problems for businesses all over the UK more especially those that work from home.

But that does not seem to matter to Royal Mail, later start times and later deliveries are all down to modernisation, or in other words, new sorting machines being brought in which, would you believe, take even longer to sort the mail. This will also affect our own work/life balance and there are childcare issues, and school run problems, already rising because of it.

You may also be aware before we went to Single Daily Delivery, you could pick up any packets or signed for letters left in the morning around 2 hours or so later at your local office. That, as some of you may be aware has changed, some places you have to wait 24 hours, most 48 but there are some where you can't get the packet for nearly 72hrs. That's if your office is local instead of on some industrial estate somewhere, and of course if it does not close before lunch.

This is Royal Mail so-called 'modernisation'.

## 'If you don't like your job, then leave?'

This is what we read about all the time from alleged customers on the Internet news stories comment sections, and, regrettably Royal Mail management. **But who says that we don't like our job?** You will find that most posties love their job, but are finding it harder and harder to provide the service they want and their customers expect, not just because of the

work levels, but more so the bullying and harassment by managers at all levels of the business.

Why should we have to put up with the constant Bullying & Harassment and worsening of our terms and conditions, when all we want to do is get on with our job and provide a service to our customers. **We will not be hounded out of a job we love in the name of profit**, or be made to feel guilty because we decide to defend our current Conditions of service, instead of allowing them to be decimated because of the inherently unfair bonus culture of Royal Mail.

# National strike

The 1st strike was in London N18 Edmonton against introduction of part-time duties by executive action on 7th March. Cowdenbeath DO was the first among many in Scotland to strike against Executive Action on 27th March. The whole of London took action throughout June, and over 500 other offices around the country either went out on strike or requested a strike ballot.

Previously to all of this some Mail Centres around the country took strike action over their closures, and the lack of real consultation. London, since June have taken over 16 days of action.

During all that time we have repeatedly asked Royal Mail to negotiate with our Union about, not only the problems that you have so far read about and will read about below, but more importantly the fact that previous agreements are either being ignored or abused. It has now come to the time where enough is enough and now we have, unfortunately, the national strikes.

## 'No more efficiency changes this year?'

This is what Royal Mail have claimed but this is not the case, there are many cases on the site where Royal Mail are still pushing ahead with their changes. Including later start times, full-time positions going to part-time, Pegasus 2 revisions (flawed computer program), night staff being moved to days, full-time staff to prep part-time staff walks, more hours to go from delivery offices...

## You the tax payer

You are being misled by the media and the Government regarding Billions of pounds of tax



payers money being used to prop up Royal Mail and our pensions, this is not the case and a blatant lie by all.

For many years the treasury have taken our profits from us for their own gain, add nearly 13 years when due to tax reasons Royal Mail did not pay into our pension scheme, and yes the treasury got that money as well, you the tax payer owes Royal Mail Billions of pounds. Any money recently received by Royal Mail from tax payers has been a loan and has to be paid back at commercial loan rates which means that the tax payer has once again benefited from us.

# Privatisation

This is a simple one, the Government have said that they will take over our pension deficit only if we get part-privatised. The crux of this, is that you the tax payer will pay for our pensions, but a private investor will not have to so they will just get the profits. Our Union Leader remarked on this at the Labour Conference by saying the Government were **Privatising the Profit and Nationalising the debt.** The tax payer will have the debt, while the private investor will get the profit! We, us the humble posties do not need to tell you what happens after a company is privatised, you only need to look at your utility bills, train fares and your bank statements for that.

## Mail volumes

We agree that mail volumes are down, but not as much as Royal Mail say, we accept the recession has had an effect, but again, not as much that Royal Mail has said. **With 60,000 jobs gone**, bigger rounds, over 1 Million new homes built in the last few years with more to come, a few letters less in our post bag, when you add the mass increase in packets due to e-commerce, there is no leeway in our duties like Royal Mail think. Add the fact that Royal Mail now count the mail differently with an unagreed and flawed process, then you have false traffic figures.

What is in the boxes that they send the mail down to Delivery Offices, is very much under estimated and has been shown to be so by roymailchat members counting individual boxes.

## Independent report on Royal Mail

Last year the Government requested an independent report on Royal Mail (The Hooper report)

this found many flaws with the way the business is being run, including lack of transparency by the business with its figures and the fact that Royal Mail management were not up to the job.

### We are not against modernisation

WE ARE NOT AGAINST CHANGE - We signed up to the Pay and Mod Agreement. Royal Mail ignored Phase 4 till we started local strikes.

WE ARE AWARE THERE WILL BE JOB LOSSES - 60,000 gone in recent years.

WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR A PAY RISE PER SE - We had a pay freeze this year, which was imposed against the spirit of the 2007 agreement.

WE ARE NOT AGAINST MODERNISATION - But we haven't seen it in deliveries unless you count longer routes with heavier bags.

WE OFFERED A MORATORIUM ON STRIKES IF ROYAL MAIL DISCUSSED CHANGES - Royal Mail refused saying it was a stalling tactic but now they want it when unagreed systems are in place.

WE ARE NOT AGAINST WORKING HARD - The Union suggested having independent organisations help both sides come up with a fair and balanced way of measuring workload and standard - Royal Mail refused.

The 2007 agreement allowed local units to have innovative attendance patterns, and these were agreed in some units with full Royal Mail involvement. Yet without consulting the CWU (as per the agreement) they unilaterally enforced change on these working arrangements.

The agreement also allowed a local earnings package, this has been taken away by Royal Mail.

We are and we will strike against - **Bullying and Harassment** such as;

- Being suspended for pointing out Health & Safety concerns.
- Being sent home without pay when we can't complete a delivery in the time allotted especially if managers are not willing to walk test us or check individual posties frames to see how busy they are.
- Genuine overtime being struck off when you go over your contracted hours on a busy day.



- Being sent home without pay when you can't do the half hour flexibility when asked - even though personal reasons are meant to be taken into account as per the 07 agreement.
- When you do the 1/2hr flexibility not being able to claw it back or be paid it on overtime as per the 07 agreement. Or being given it back in 5 minute chunks.
- Changing our start and finish times on a weekly basis without negotiation.
- Using a flawed computer program to work out rounds with un-agreed walk speeds.
- No independent Health & Safety review after accidents at work - Staff being blamed for accidents without thorough and external review of all pertinent matters by an independent body.

## Spanish practices do not exist.

The reality in modern delivery offices is that the posties slogs their guts out everyday under the gaze of managers ready to sack them for the slightest indiscretion. Many many part-timers are bullied by managers into doing unpaid over time day in day out.

All Over Time has to be OK'ed by management and most posties are too intimidated to go see their manager to ask for it. A lot of our guys do hrs of OT per week for nothing. Give the Public a service - Yep that's Royal Mails job and guess how they do that;

1. Close 3,500 Post Offices.
2. Reduce the service at 1000s of others.
3. Allow the Government to withdraw some of the services you used to be able to get at POs.
4. Ceased Sunday Collections (now for anyone to get anything on Monday you need to send it before 1230 on Saturday.
5. Cancelled Bank Holiday Collections.
6. Cancelled 2nd Delivery
7. Made the 1st delivery later than the 2nd ever was.
8. Laid off 60,000 workers through various means.
9. Close delivery offices and amalgamate them into Super DOs on industrial estates miles from bus routes.
10. Bring in a complicated and expensive postage system. (Pricing in Proportion).
11. Increase handling fees for Import from £4 to £8.
12. Increase the surcharge of underpaid items to £1.
13. Increase stamp prices above inflation.
14. Agree a price with DSA competitors to use our network which means we subsidise them to the tune of 2p per item.
15. Take 5 years to spend half of the 1.2billion the government loaned them, but we are still yet to see the machines in use on a UK wide basis even though trials are going well according

to Royal Mail.

16. Removing Mail Cycles and replacing them with cars and then claiming they are doing everything to reduce carbon emissions.

17. Half day closing for all Callers Offices and a delay of up to 72 hours before you can collect parcels/letters after getting a "Sorry you were out Card"

All of the above is not exhaustive, but we are, thank you for taking the time to read it.

# POP TART

## Public Order Policing: The Anarchists Retaliate

It is now 25 years since the Miners strike and the left and anarchists have even failed to learn the lessons of the strike all these years later as Mayday 3 articles on the police indicated. An examination of issues within the strike, concerning strategy and tactics by the NUM and socialists is not for this article, as the chosen subject is the cutting edge of class struggle and balance and relations of force in the physical class struggle. In particular, this means that examination of the direct social control arm of the state is necessary i.e. the Police, and perhaps the army and secret services. This is particularly crucial because the 1984-85 strike was the main class struggle of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – from 1973 onwards, and the outcomes of other struggles to come may have been different, had political practice been informed by a more systematic study of and resistant practices towards police activity been followed through.

## Policing the Miners Strike

"People like my dad... a veteran of the 1926 strike, sharp on class understanding then, had heavily moderated through the 40's and 50's. Never would hear a word against the police, always believed they were only doing their job... The bad old days had gone.

Now, near the end of his life he sees the clock turned back, sees the naked partisan brutality of the police; mutters that 'Churchill's troops are back again'. The society of 'bash the miners back down their holes' is rife again.

He, like many a retired miner, will never trust the police again. He has been betrayed by a society he had been led to trust" (Douglass, 1985).



This statement from an active mining militant (David Douglass, Hatfield Main NUM) is important historically for a number of reasons. The vital issues of police legitimacy and historical periodisation contained within this statement will be examined, with reference to the development of public order policing and its impact on mining community opinion.

The nature of Public Order Policing (**P.o.p**) has changed. Many interrelated factors combined to forge the movement towards Paramilitary Policing, not all from within the limits of the police force itself. A definition of 'paramilitary' is "on military lines and intended to supplement the strictly military; organised as a military force".

The shift in **Pop** is merely part of an overall change in all aspects of policing. However, the physical changes and impact are as important as the ideology behind them. The way law is enforced, ignored or then applied in court has wide ranging implications. To understand the nature and degree of change in Pop, it is necessary to examine the origin and development of the police. The treatment of industrial disputes and living space of the working class is clearly important here if a fuller perspective of the historical impact of the police is to be achieved.

With the passing of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829, the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, the Rural Constabulary Act 1839, and the County and Borough Police Act 1856, police work, as we know it today originated. Nationwide it was only with the onset of the 1856 Act that all areas were compelled to operate a full-time police force. The New Police were not a sudden occurrence as the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of haphazard police development;

"The shift from the established system of parish constables to the institution of police stations, beat constables, and priorities for intervention was gradual and spanned most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century".

There was a lack of a centralised national programme and localised autonomy for the respective police forces is a feature of the police today. This has been constantly challenged resulting in a gradual erosion of some independent features, and this is a trend increasing in pace overtime. One of the early examples is the 1919-20 reports of the Desborough Committee, as it introduced; a strong element of standardisation, central direction, administration and conditions of service.

British society was changing rapidly as industrial capitalism took hold. With the rapid growth of the towns and cities (Briggs), there was a shift from the traditional forms of discipline and deference of rural society. According to Storch; "the mission of the new police was a symptom of both a profound social change and a deep rupture in class relations in the first half of the nineteenth century" (19 ).

The urban masses were to take on an image of dangerous and destructive intent aimed at the foundation of 'civilised' society. The threat of crime was tied in with the threat of public disorder as the new working class was only beginning to organise large-scale economic and political strength. In the meantime, working class communities were using physical force and criminal acts in the pursuit of their rights, which led to members of the bourgeoisie now being prepared to argue that a new outlook upon social control was necessary.

Previously the military were used to deal with such movements as Luddism (Thompson) and Captain Swing (Hobsbawm and Rude). It was in 1842 when Chartist activities were at their height that Scraton argues "Modern police work was initiated. The task of the police was to gain control of working class communities" (1986) and so police had to establish that civil unrest was within their jurisdiction. Only a "strong police securely lodged in the working class neighbourhood 'could preserve property – the countless millions possessed by the wealthy... the trade of the merchant... the factories of the manufacturers'" (Storch, 19 ).

The bourgeoisie had begun to recognise that the old mechanisms engendering social stability had broken down; "Unless the people are morally improved, being now brought into large masses, and possessing increased facilities for mischief, the result may sooner or later, be internal commotion if not a national

wreck" (Joseph Livesey in Storch). The upper classes showed a large degree of agreement about the mission the police were created to carry out in working class districts. It was therefore necessary to create a professional, bureaucratically organised lever of urban discipline and permanently introduce it into the heart of working class communities" (Storch, 19 ).

A low profile, legalistic stance was crucial to the construction of the "benign and dignified English police image" (Reiner) started by Peel, Rowan and Mayne. Strict rules internalised by drill and training, covered dress, deportment, discipline and the very manner of dealing with the public. It was essential for the police to be seen as impartial enforcers of the rule of law, which is why they were not put under direct political control.

The uniformed patrol helped in countering public fears about police spying, whilst performing a service function for the public. To gain legitimacy Police intervention had to be viewed as "the neutral administration of a rational system of power".

Policing working class communities "became less a question of enforcing their segregation from the upper classes than of policing their usage of social space and time so that it did not obstruct traffic of industry and commerce. The potential sources of obstruction included not only strikes, political mobilisations and organised crime, but also the development of street cultures and their irregular economies, upon which whole working class communities came to depend" (Cohen, 19 ). The upper classes were not precisely agreed upon the form of police administrative structure or the relations between, local and central authority, but the "blue locusts" were here to stay.

Critchley suggests that "the breakdown in law and order marched in step with the progress of the Industrial Revolution" (Critchley in Scraton) as the large and rapidly growing cities were breeding grounds for crime and disorder. The new police were within 10 years of 1829 (according to Critchley) to gain the goodwill and represent the collective interests of all the people by enforcing the common good. This non-political and neutral arbiter of natural order was needed to civilise moral and mob disorder, and combat crime. However, "Without the vote or the right to form a trade union or strike, working class people did not consider the rule of law or regulation of public order to be 'theirs'. The legal system had its roots elsewhere, reinforcing and protecting the structure of inequality".

Stevenson (1979) has shown many violent and large-scale confrontations between the police and political demonstrators – some demonstrations being solely directed against the police and their powers.

With the establishment of a coercive police force directed into the commercial centres and working class streets, to keep control of advancing industrial capitalism, there was a "bitter war of attrition" against the new police. This varied in intensity and often disturbances arose when attempts to impose "new standards of urban discipline" (Storch) were felt by a working class previously unused to their traditional pastimes being disrupted.

Initial introduction of the new police into previously unpoliced towns could have the most serious consequences. The police presence itself was brought into question and not some isolated grievances. In April 1840 where "The lower order of Colne are a particularly uncouthly set, and have hitherto been in possession of the place, occupying the streets, footpaths, and public places in groups at nearly all hours to the great inconvenience of the more respectable part of the inhabitants" (Colonel Constance, in Storch) 16 constables and a superintendent were introduced. They tried to impose a 'move-on system' with one newspaper reporting that the police had instituted 'a regular system of thrashing and running the people', and that they uniformly responded to the groans and jeers with which they were greeted in the streets with bludgeon attacks. Of course, this could not go on without redress, Storch documents this well leading up to the death of a volunteer constable, and the final imposition of the police by building army barracks as a permanent reserve.



Where policing had gone on for some time anti-police manifestations had; "more limited aims: to preserve popular recreations or customs, prevent interference in strikes, protect wanted individuals, protest against police interference in political activities, protest against instances of police brutality, rescue arrested persons etc" (Storch). It is difficult to judge the total extent of anti-police opinion but it was widespread, thickly packed, continuous, loud and sometimes violent. The very appearance of the police contributed to the shock, initial contact being described as "well clothed and shod, with a pair of white gloves... and a great coat for bad weather. They go strutting about... armed... with a bludgeon, striking terror through all the old women and children" (Storch, p 93). They were seen as unproductive parasites with most terms used to describe them being synonyms for men who do not do any real work for their living.

Up until WW1 and beyond the police were regarded as "executors of laws made by others, were the object of mistrust within working class neighbourhoods... Most memories are of fear engendered by their presence... Because policemen were almost invariably from working class backgrounds, their constant presence... as an alien force smarted as a betrayal. Policemen clubbed strikers and sheltered blacklegs. Policemen worked while others went on the parish" (Meacham in Storch). This was self-generating as part of their job the police were charged with the enforcement of a whole mass of regulations bearing almost entirely upon working class life in all its facets.

Significant amounts of political pressure were placed upon the police to contain the dangerous classes as they posed a challenge to the established order. Extreme poverty left whole generations of people destitute, and the struggle to survive naturally produced crime, public disorder and spontaneous violent demonstrations. Thus the priorities of police work were "directed against those sections of the working class considered to be 'rough' or 'dangerous'" (Scruton). To an extent the respectable working class sided with the other respectable classes as they did receive some protection from street crime and property theft.

Poor people were considered to have a potential as a political threat as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed. Unionism spread from craft workers (labour aristocracy) to semi and unskilled workers, and some political organisations ceased to be reformist as revolutionary socialism became a serious alternative. The 19<sup>th</sup> century ended with the police having a "clearly political function. In policing civil disorder, strikes and political demonstrations the police operated within parameters laid down by governments and interpreted by senior officers... The relationship between working class communities and the police was characterised by hostility and a 'grudging acceptance'... The political demonstration provided the government with the opportunity to show that the police were expected to provide the first line of defence of the established order" (Scruton).

Miller argues that with the exception of the suffragettes, problems associated with pop did not re-emerge until the late 1960's. Apparently by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the police had become honest, impartial and non-violent; well suited to the needs of a liberal democracy. There is a great deal of evidence that contradicts this. In 1910-11 police and troops, one baton charging, the other giving "a little gentle persuasion with the bayonet" (Scruton), told the South Wales Miners a different story. Elsewhere "Clydeside was in turmoil, as was Liverpool and much of the North of England... police at this time tactically knew no other way of tackling industrial unrest other than marching at it head on... All their methods and training were aimed at strike breaking rather than impartial preservation of the public peace" (Bowden).

WW1 calmed the industrial situation, but when armistice was declared unrest started brewing again. Lloyd George thought that his country was close to Bolshevism. In central Glasgow a strike leader recalls that "the police made a savage and totally unexpected assault on the rear of the meeting, smashing right and left with their batons, utterly regardless of whom or what they hit" (Gallacher in Scruton). The Government later despatched troops in support of the police. In 1920, the unemployed were attacked in Whitehall, best explained as anxiety felt by a government "unable to meet" (Weinberger) the unemployed's demands. Superintendent Parker decided to clear the crowd "who were obviously composed of the lower class of alien Jews" (in Weinberger P 152). This began a long tradition of justifications of attacks on demonstrators "not because they were said to be breaking the law but because of the motives or character imputed to them"

(Weinberger). This is crucial because it was precisely the very acceptance by government authorities, and their support for, or instigation of, such reconstructions which exacerbated the violence between the police and the groups with whom they were in conflict in the period" (Weinberger). This is an especially important reason useful for explaining the vast quantity of police violence during the 1984-85 strike. 'Lower class' being the traditional urban poor including 'troublemakers', and 'alien Jews' being people of non-British heritage, loyalties, origins and/or 'values'.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) endured an "enormous amount of police time and effort in reporting NUWM speeches, in infiltrating their organisation, in arresting their leaders and baton charging their demonstrations" (Weinberger P. 155). Paranoia fed this; "the organisation of unemployed communists acting under Russian inspiration", and "the distress arising from such a large amount of unemployment, coupled with a flood of inflammatory communistic oratory would be conducive to a great increase in dishonesty" (Chief Constable of Sheffield in Weinberger, P. 156). Thus linking crime, communism and unemployment in one sentence.

Since the police do tend to be insular (Reiner, 1978), and locked into their own ideology, most police do not perceive their actions as political (Harrison, 1978). In 1921, the Police Chronicle stated; "There never was a time when public interests stood more in need of a police independent of and uninfluenced by party politics... The Bolshies in this country must be reckoned with and their defeat is assured if we see to it... every policeman should devote himself quietly to a hunt for communists and other extremists". The extent to which those ideas were carried out and the amount of police officers involved is difficult to determine, but it is likely to be considerable.

With the General Strike and the onset of the long depression of the 1930's confrontation was inevitable, and the police set about the hunger marches and strikers with relish. The brutality vividly being depicted by Milliband, Hutt, Farman, Shallice, and others. The General strike also "served as the occasion for the enactment of a far more directly repressive measure" (Coles in Scruton), namely the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Act of 1927. General strikes and strikes in sympathy were made illegal and it challenged the right of picketing which had won some measure of legal status. Old legislation such as the 1817 Seditious Meetings Act was used to stop meetings or demonstrations near Parliament and the 1829 Police Act invoked to break up political meetings on the grounds of obstruction.

As the "Policeman functions in an authoritarian disciplined hierarchically organised and cohesive unit" (Bowden) certain personalities are attracted to the Force in the first place and attitudes are generated from the perceived experience of Officers. This is important in everyday conduct and especially in times of crises. The Police Officers must be willing to use force on behalf of the state and is in an exposed dangerous position for some of the time. All this creates a culture, which "both reflects and perpetuates the power differences within the social structure it polices" (Reiner).

The debate about the importance of the Police personality is a complex one. However, with reference to Pop there is an increased chance that reduced police/public contact will escalate the negative aspects of the police personality and behaviour; suspicion, perceived threats, insults and dangers, and the encouragement of more forceful methods in Pop.

According to Reiner, Police were needed to deal with; "Conflicts, disorders and problems of coordination which are necessarily generated by any complex and materially advanced social order" (Reiner, ). This is stating that the police were and are dealing with structural problematic situations and contradictions which are inevitable, whether the advancing society is either capitalist or state socialist. Universal interests of "social order, cohesion and protection" (Reiner) are seen as being provided by legal rules and the means of their enforcement.

This is generated by a universally experienced sense of morality, justice, and necessity to arbitrate these modern societies. According to this 'Neo-Reithian' framework; "Due weight to the success of the police



reformers and the tradition they created" must be given. Unfortunately there is an intrinsic class character in law and it is exacerbated by the way the supposedly neutral police force polices a society of radical inequality.

Traditionally in times of crisis, the police have responded aggressively, especially against the unemployed, labour movements, people of ethnic origin and Irish Nationalists. It is clear that in "Crises politics the lesson of history teaches that police intervene... on the side of conservative forces" (Bowden). In reality, the police are the "first line of defence for the state against any challenge which might emerge" (Bowden). When upholding the law of the land and maintaining peace and security they are in fact a "double edged weapon" which protects and controls (Bowden).

After WW2 the wide gulf between '2 nations' had supposedly closed as "the post war 'mix' of welfarism, job security, relative affluence and consensus politics provided a safe passage from the depression of the 1930's". According to Reiner the 1950s saw "the high point of police legitimation". From here on however, the "tacit contract between police and public, so delicately drawn between the 1850s and 1950s" began to fall apart.

With the 1964 Police Act the position of Chief Constables and the Home Office was strengthened at the expense of local police authorities. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Home Office has been responsible for the maintenance of law and order and as a result the Home Secretary's powers have increased in range and scope as the trend towards centralisation has increased in pace. Even in 1962 the clarity of the situation was apparent to the Royal Commission on Police; "for many years there has been, under the guidance of the Home Departments, a centralising process which has steadily gained momentum. As a result the police service cannot with any precision be described simply as a local service... Much of the evidence we heard indicated that the influence of the central Government is now dominant" (in Northam).

In analysing changes in Pop, it is essential to understand the changes in government at an ideological and policy level, which gives rise to the conditions that have generated the "move towards paramilitarism in the police" (Imbert in Northam). Many changes in the establishment can be seen as due to the confrontation between state and police, and the organised working class at the Saltly coke depot in 1972. Massed pickets forced the closure of the gates which meant the "miners secondary picketing enabled them to control power supplies... which meant that one union in the 1970s could do what the Triple Alliance and the General Strike had failed to do in the 1920s" (Beynon).

The impact of this is well illustrated by Brendan Sewill, special advisor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1972; "At the time many of those in positions of influence looked into the abyss and saw only a few days away the possibility of the country being plunged into a state of chaos... This is the power that existed to hold the country to ransom: it was fear of that abyss which had an important effect on subsequent policy" (In Beynon). The Heath Government then made the mistake of taking on the Miners without sufficient preparation.

*Article continued on the next page.*

The Long March Back.....

Miners folk and poetry social

Commemorating the end of the 1984.85 miners strike and aftermath.

# Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2010

7-30 pm Upstairs Lounge, The Bridge Hotel, Castle Garth, Newcastle Upon Tyne.  
(under the lee of the Norman Keep, on the toon side of the High Level)

folk group 'beeswing', residents at bridge hotel. dave@culturequarter.org

Marie Little

Gary Miller of The Whisky Priests

folk group 'kiddar's luck' colin.lena@btinternet.com

pitman David Douglass.

With a cameo performance by Mike Elliott. Of *The Laughing policeman* fame

poets confirmed are paul summers paul.liarincltd@sky.com , william martin win1928@talktalk.net , katrina porteous katrina@beadnell.demon.co.uk Lisa Campbell.

and Master of Ceremonies.. Tyneside Poet Keith Armstrong,

## *Policing the Miners article continued;*

Realising this, 'civil defence' was put under review. The Emergency Committee (which has a history of strike breaking activities dating back to WW1) was to be strengthened and renamed the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) and the National Reporting Centre (NRC) was set up to coordinate mutual aid between police forces – this is where police forces can lend officers across regional force boundaries. Heath was dislodged after more threatened strike action by the Miners, and an 'Who rules Britain' election in 1974 which the workers won. Although you would never know it, as the Queen invited Heath to Buckingham Palace so he could consider the offer of running a minority government. The challenge to 'consensus politics' was therefore abated, for a while at least.

Indirectly however and in opposition "From the beginning Thatcher had been anxious to break the old consensus; this became her boast" (Beynon). After consideration of a report by Carrington in 1976 she ordered Nicholas Ridley to produce a further strategic document. Leaked to the Economist in 1978 it was attuned to the prospect of political threats in key industries, and as it turned out, a blueprint for future organisation by the Conservative state form. The point of special reference to Pop is the stated wish for "a large, mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing" (in Beynon). Beynon states "the extent to which the report has been followed as a blueprint by the Thatcher Government is vital to an understanding of the 1984 Miners Strike" (1985).

In 1981 there "was a moment of critical historical importance" (Beynon) when a dramatic pit closure programme was withdrawn after spontaneous strike action in several areas, the groundwork had not been laid, yet. After this climbdown the "CCU's secretary, Brigadier Tony Budd, headed a team to report to MISC 57, a secret Cabinet Committee set up by Mrs Thatcher to prepare plans to combat a future miners' strike" (Striking back). Major urban riots gave further impetus to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) conference in 1981 and as a result of discussions, together with a lecture from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Hong Kong Police on crowd control techniques, the 'Community Disorder Tactical Options Inter-Force Working Group' was set up to review British Riot control tactics.

By February 1982 "a massive volume of paramilitary and other manoeuvres" (Northam) was prepared, called the "Public Order Manual of Tactical Options and Related Matters". Formally bringing colonial style policing to mainland Britain. A total of "238 tactics and manoeuvres are set out in its 32 sections, arranged in order of escalating force, from normal policing up to plastic bullets, C.S. gas and live firearms" (Northam). The objective was to provide an "integrated approach, under which common patterns and standards should enable forces to combine more effectively and enhance the success of mutual aid arrangements".

The principle of mutual aid between police forces is an old one dating back to 1890, what is relatively new is the central coordination of this activity in times of civil unrest by the NRC. The Police Support Units (PSU's) are the units of force the NRC deploys consist of 20 constables, 2 sergeants, and an inspector who only form into their PSU for training or operations. Simultaneously formed along with the NRC in 1972, but these have been developed so that training and equipment are now standardised. As the ACPO President controls



the NRC there is what Scraton calls a 'Third Force' capability for central direction. Liaison between the ACPO and the Home Office is frequent and the preface to the Public Order Manual states that it was drawn up with Home Office i.e. Central Government, support.

The ACPO forms "in effect, a national leadership for the 52 separate police forces in Britain" (Northam) as it issues guidelines for members which include Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables, and Assistant City Constables. In the police force, "their influence in practice has become decisive" (Northam). From the standpoint of this narrative, the point is that by 1983 the effects of the ACPO Public Order Manual had filtered into the Institutional arrangements of the police. The effects of police training and retraining e.g. 5k Metropolitan Police "received specialist riot training for periods of 4 days" (Kettle in Fine and Miller) in 1983, and new equipment and technology had signalled "the arrival in mainland Britain of a highly organised and blatantly aggressive mode of policing public order" (Scraton).

### The Miners 1984 – 1985

"On a warm summer day... thousands of battle dressed police officers lined up, truncheons drawn, behind a solid wall of riot shields. Suddenly, on the command of a senior officer the wall parted and through the gap powered mounted police in riot gear. As the charged through the fields they chased and truncheoned anyone in their path. The pickets, dressed mainly in summer clothes and training shoes, ran for their lives" (Scraton). This was Orgreave, 1984.

When addressing the policing of the miners we have to look at the oral and written evidence of the miners themselves to locate the feelings generated by police 'activities'. Most miners and their communities had come to believe that the police were a necessary evil, that they were only doing their job. The events of 1984-85 have shattered whatever myths or images of mutual respect and fair play the miners thought the police embodied – forever;

"The Pub was already full... the police had their truncheons drawn and some were in riot gear... they started running straight into the public bar... they went straight for Michael Connor... Truncheon blows rained down on him... Police shouted to everyone: 'If you don't want any fucking trouble, fuck off out!' They then proceeded to block both the front door and the fire exit, causing absolute panic... Anyone in the way of the police was beaten with a truncheon... But worse still incidents happened outside the pub... He stood still with his hands up... the 2 policemen grabbed him and another 2 knocked him to the ground. They proceeded to beat him up so badly that he had to spend the night in hospital... they began to herd the crowd down a terrace... Michael Connor was arrested in this push... the people decided to fight back and began throwing bricks and stones... The last police van drove away at about 11.15pm after an abortive attempt had been made by the police to rout the villagers... had been repelled... the end of that assault by the police was not however the end of the violence and intimidation acted out by the police in Fitzwilliam that night... 30 or 40 policemen in full riot gear... laid siege to a house where a young miner lived" (State of Siege, P. 155).

In the course of the strike, the police were active every day in maintaining a capitalist version of law and order, and/or public order. It was a distinctly one sided view, more akin to a police state, rather than the policing normally associated with liberal democracy. As one miner put it; "No policeman, no court of law and no government can tell mining communities in South Wales that a scab has an inalienable right to work (particularly in Merthyr Vale) and that our union has no right to defend our jobs and our communities" (Striking Back).

From the start of the strike the police were placed in the front line as the decision was, in effect, to; "call out hundreds and thousands of police" (Denning in Scraton, P. 152). The attempt to criminalise mining communities completely was made;

"in such circumstances 'criminalisation' can provide the justification for political containment. 'Criminalisation' is a particularly powerful weapon, when used in this way, because it mobilises considerable popular approval and legitimacy behind the state. People are more likely to support state action against a 'criminal' act than they would the use of law to repress a 'political' cause" (Hall and Scraton in Fitzgerald).

The NRC was activated on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1984 under the direction of David Hall (then President of the ACPO). The objective was to provide instant mutual aid to areas of 'high tension' from forces throughout the country. This meant the NRC identified places to deploy the PSU's, supposedly formally requested by Chief Constables off other Chief Constables. Police Committee's are supposed to have full consultation with the Chief Constable of their force but as George Moore's of the South Yorkshire Police Committee stated that as of the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1984 "onwards we have had no consultation only information passed onto us. I believe that the Chief Constables have surrendered their operational independence to the NRC; in other words, the creation of a paramilitary police state." Scraton argues "it is naive to assume that when it [NRC] is operational it is accountable to local police authorities. Under the direction of the President of the ACPO it has the power, endorsed by the Home Secretary, to make autonomous decisions about the deployment of police officers from other constabularies to force areas of 'high tension'. PSU's, trained in public order control and riot tactics for this purpose, are moved across force boundaries without the knowledge or consent of local police authorities" (Scraton).

Chief Constables, through the ACPO can participate in a nationwide organisation which delimits policy and operational practice. Hence the "ACPO, in fact has become an executive limb of the state, without any authorisation and without being under any control" (Simey in Scraton). As this related to the heart of mining communities it must be realised that in times of normal working practice people go about their business with no or limited presence or intrusion by the police and can recognise the policeman as local more often than not. The police are thus engaged in "consensus policing" (Lea and Young). During the miners strike it was to be turned into the exact opposite, "military policing" (Lea and Young). This policing in "incompatible with freedom and the rule of law and as a general form of policing to be closely linked with the authoritarian state" (Lea and Young).

The strike began with an attempt by 'solid' regions trying to picket out the less solid, mainly Nottinghamshire. At the beginning of the strike, Monday March 12<sup>th</sup> 1984, the police "were great, they'd stand there laugh and joke. You'd push them and they'd push you back, but they'd be laughing and joking about it" (@ Thurcroft). By the Wednesday however "things changed. The police moved the pickets across the road from the gate... Picketing was now at arms length, or further".

Numbers of police in Nottinghamshire rose from 2260 to 9760 between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March initiating what was to become a common practice of arbitrary arrests. Over 1000 pickets were arrested in 4 weeks leaving an impression upon 'Thurcrofters' that was "of disbelief at police behaviour. Never having thought of themselves as criminals or picketing as criminal behaviour, it was difficult to come to terms with being treated in this way... throughout March people were arrested for shouting 'scab' (threatening words and behaviour) and for not obeying police instructions fast enough (obstruction). At the Babbington (April 9<sup>th</sup>) mass picket, the police had made preparations for mass arrests. Snatch squads were sent in for the first time".

Actually getting to Nottinghamshire caused problems and arrests. Kent miners were stopped at the Dartford tunnel in London, "we were escorted back from the toll gate, the police holding up traffic to allow us to reverse, turn back and leave for home. My own personal circumstances are that I have never been inside a police station in my life and have no criminal record. To be threatened with arrest on the basis of assumed future actions, by the police, I found disgusting and hard to believe" (miner in State of Siege). On other occasions there were actual arrests for obstructing a police officer in the course of his duty, ie. Refusing to



turn the car around and go home, arrests for the above with violence and damage to the car, impounding cars and taking drivers keys away, escorting miners out of the county and other incidents and harassments.

Even though some argue events like Orgreave and the "excesses of the Gwent police with their dogs and riot equipment chasing and beating people in the river at Merthyr on November 20<sup>th</sup>" (Striking Back) should be looked at "in the context of everyday experiences of police violence on picket lines" it was felt that "Policing and picketing entered a new phase with Orgreave". As the Thurcrofters saw it, Orgreave was the point where the police "had gone over to a more aggressive strategy (constant use of truncheons)" and the "policy of 'taking prisoners' was now associated with bringing charges of severely deterrent character... keeping people on restrictive bail conditions on minor charges" effectively keeping people off picket lines.

Interviews reported "One episode dominated the interviews: Orgreave. When ever we met lodge members who had gone on that picket they were most concerned to talk about it... from the East to the West of the South Wales coalfield mining communities will long remember the horror and fear generated at Orgreave... They were shaken and changed as a result of that picket" (Striking Back). It was felt that by the police allowing miners to get to Orgreave (no roadblocks) and helping them park their buses that "it was an exercise aimed at giving us a real pasting" (Striking Back). Behind the gruesome catalogue of injuries, there is a story of unlimited licence for the police to behave as they please. There were no proceedings against police officers during the entire miners strike, and not for lack of evidence.

Sheffield Police Watch reported on May 29<sup>th</sup> there were 3 mounted police charges into the crowd before any missiles came out of the crowd "if you were in front of the horses you were dead. I saw a man hit 10 yards with a police horse truncheon" and "I saw one man about 50, sitting on a wall trying to get his breath. A mounted copper came along and hit him on his forehead right over the wall" (Striking Back). The small shield riot police would run behind the horses and dogs were used off their leases, "horses, dogs, and paramilitary police acted in concert, each supporting the other... violence spread beyond the picket line and into the village". "I saw police throwing bricks from behind police lines. They were using truncheons hitting men, charging horses, using dogs... it was like a battlefield".

After Orgreave mass pickets still occurred but not of the same scale. As the strike drifted on towards winter the solid areas began to experience one or two (and then a few more) scabs going into work. This had great effect on communities already hearing reports of police brutality and arbitrary arrests "there was already bad feeling from what happened in the picket lines and the new police brutality just made our blood boil" (State of Siege P. 157). Evidence indicates the police were well informed of a return to work and turned out in large numbers with riot equipment to ensure this occurred.

August 21<sup>st</sup> 1984, and the first scab was escorted into Hatfield Main Colliery "they [police] set about pushing, kicking and jostling the pickets out of the pit lane, they shouted 'go home' to men who had been born and bred in that village" (Douglass). A few scuffles and police reinforcements started arriving "massive numbers of riot vans started pouring into the village, school kids stood and jeered, women shouted as police poured by, the police shouted obscenities and stuck 2 fingers up at the kids" (Douglass). Villagers assembled in their hundreds and "running skirmishes here and there" kept the action going. Meantime "small squads of police patrol the streets, pointing truncheons at people in their gardens, grabbing youths sitting on walls and pushing them around" (Douglass). To get the scab out the police had to clear the pit lane and "the snatch squad police in boiler suits dived out and started grabbing youths from the sides. In an instant all was chaos, truncheons flaying left and right, and a major push forward by the police. A few bricks and bottles were hurled to steady the advance and give the lads a chance to get away, but the police were in full charge to get away, but the police were in full charge. Women and children scattered, old folks were hit and some lay in gardens, the police were determined to wipe the people off their streets" (Douglass).

22nd August; Markham Main Colliery in Armthorpe was approached by 52 transit vans with police in 3 columns, "the police view was that 'law and order' had broken down in Armthorpe and their intention was to 'retake' the pit gates and the entire village... Police officers in riot gear wore boiler suits concealing their

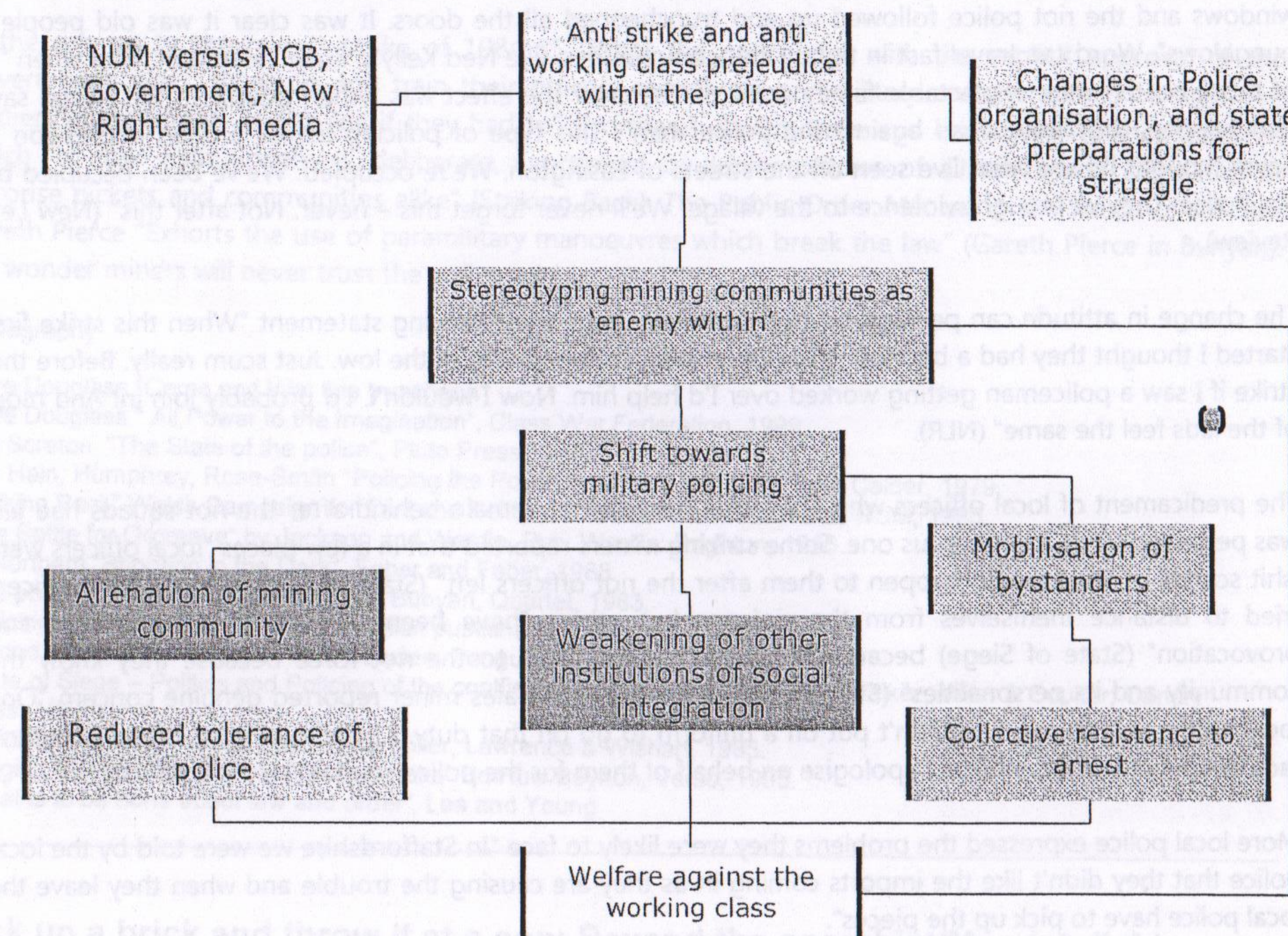
numbers and chased pickets through the quiet village... Police officers in riot gear wore boiler suits concealing their numbers and chased pickets through the quiet village. They went through gardens, kicked down doors of houses, entered without warrants and swore at women who demanded to know why they had entered their houses" (Douglass).

A witness states "They caught up with one of the lads outside my front hedge. There were 6 policemen and the lad they were chasing was on the floor. They were knocking hell out of him." The combined effect of police behaviour on miners, their wives and their communities completely alienated the police from the people. It was not isolated either, but occurred in pit villages, picketing targets, both pits [and others such as steelworks, railways, and docks]; towns and cities where there were demonstrations, speaking tours and money collections (Scruton, ed).

Lea and Young suggest a vicious circle-effect on the development of (military) policing in Britain in recent years. With adaptation, the model fits the descriptive evidence of policing in mining communities.

## Policing the Miners

Interaction flows between these points



When the community begins to experience harassment, knowledge of this spreads, and if the police sense that they are outsiders, there has been a break down in relations. That is if they were established at all. This trend can either be stopped, and/or reversed by constructive efforts on the part of the police - or it follows that the alienation of the community from the police leads to a further stereotyping of that community, with sometimes catastrophic consequences. In the mining communities case, the labelling of them as 'anti police, and/or 'communists', led to hardening of political positions towards the left. The spread effect of this



harassment, initially directed against one part of the community (pickets), was soon to include other sections of the mining community.

Next in the vicious circle a 'mobilisation of bystanders' takes place. This is where "massive and indiscriminate police response" often has the effect of provoking people who would not otherwise have joined in. The experience of the mining community as a whole became equal to that of criminals, as the distinction between offender and 'non-offender' broke down and became indistinguishable. Thus, the police perceive everybody to be against them, which leads to ever more military policing type responses, as it is 'needed to control the population'.

The policing of mining communities provides the conditions for the serious decline in police legitimacy. At Armthorpe, when the police literally go through the village like "a dose of salts" (Douglass) breaking into houses and "hitting anyone they could find... there was 6 riot officers in my kitchen" (Witness, in Scraton) all confidence in the Police can be shattered, never to return. The vicious circle can operate both slowly and quickly depending upon the rate of experience of incidents. In Armthorpe this led to a situation where "hostility towards the police... is now universal in the village" (Scraton). Examples of mining community harassment abound, at Kiveton on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August "They chased us off into this housing estate. There was an oldish lady stood on the front garden, calling the police pigs, dogs, all sorts. She said 'You want to bugger off back to where you come from' to them" (Thurcroft) and "Horses charged right under their windows and the riot police followed up and truncheoned all the doors. It was clear it was old people's bungalows". Word can travel fast in tightly knit communities, like Ned Kelly's 'Bush Telegraph', and when "3 of those beaten were respectable family men" of Thurcroft the effect was "when people in the village saw that happen, they were dead against the police then". This type of policing leaves a deep impression "I never thought I'd see what I've seen on the streets of Easington. We're occupied. We've been occupied by the Police. They've brought violence to the village. We'll never forget this – never. Not after this" (New Left Review).

The change in attitude can perhaps be best summed up by the following statement "When this strike first started I thought they had a bad job. Now I think they're the lowest of the low. Just scum really. Before this strike if I saw a policeman getting worked over I'd help him. Now I wouldn't. I'd probably join in! And most of the lads feel the same" (NLR).

The predicament of local officers who knew that they had to remain behind after the riot squads had left was perceived to be a dangerous one. Some striking miners reported that in a few places "local officers were 'shit scared' of what would happen to them after the riot officers left" (State of Siege). A few local officers tried to distance themselves from the violence but others "have been identified leading attacks and provocation" (State of Siege) because they are "indispensable to the riot force because they know the community and its personalities" (State of Siege). One South Wales miner reported genuine concern "One local bobby said to me 'I wouldn't put on a uniform to go on that duty. I believe in your cause. I couldn't face the people of this village. I apologise on behalf of them for the police conduct' (striking Back).

More local police expressed the problems they were likely to face "In Staffordshire we were told by the local police that they didn't like the imports coming in as they are causing the trouble and when they leave the local police have to pick up the pieces".

In November 1984 even the Home Secretary spoke of how "when the strike is over, we will have to consider very carefully, exactly how we can repair the damage that has occurred" (Beynon photocopy). A further consequence of military policing is that vigilante squads begin to appear to protect the community, "now there are groups of youths wandering around looking for police to attack" (State of Siege, P. 149). The vicious circle is complete.

In assessing Pop and its impact on the Miners, it is important to realise that the assumed neutrality of the police was broken. A police inspector wrote "whilst trying to maintain public order in the coalfields, the

police service has unwittingly allowed itself to be portrayed as Margaret Thatcher's puppet... the police service has been... used to pursue a political goal rather than one of public duty".

Around Orgreave thousands of riot police ensured that, the strike breaking operation was carried out without the interference of picketing miners. These police officers were equipped with all the technology of a "modern police state" (State of Siege) and the officers "are paramilitary police officers" (State of Siege). Often they stayed at National Coal Board (NCB) premises thus making the connections within the state between the NCB, Government and Police extremely clear. At Thurcroft the undermanagers office became an 'incident room' and "other officers and canteen were used for the rest and recreation of the rank and file... By day and more especially by night the village was patrolled by transits". As McIlroy states; "the evidence of mass military style policing intended not to regulate picketing, nor to guarantee peaceful picketing, but clearly aimed at stopping all picketing is impressive" (in Beynon).

It was not only the brutality and harassment that troubled the communities, but also the arbitrary character of 'justice'; "The Police did effectively as they pleased, by virtue of their numbers and their superior organisation and equipment... Cast to one side were 'community relations', judges rules and traditional freedom" (Thurcroft). To a group of people who were not previously treated like the black communities and urban poor, and who were incorporated into the political machinery of Keynesian welfare state (Lea) it was a "life changing experience" (Douglass, Ç & WTT).

In the run up to the miners strike of 1984-85 "What the police did, with the explicit approval of the Government, was... to equip and train their officers secretly as paramilitary units, prepared to fight like soldiers in the streets and to kill if they had to" (Northam). At Orgreave and elsewhere violence occurred which "is now institutionalised, deliberate, sanctioned by senior officers of all ranks and calculated to terrorise pickets and communities alike" (Striking Back). The Public Order Manual in the words of solicitor Gareth Pierce "Exhorts the use of paramilitary manoeuvres which break the law" (Gareth Pierce in Bunyan). No wonder miners will never trust the police again.

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#### Pick up a brick and throw it at a cop: Beyond the anarchist/Marxist divide Jacob Bauthumley

*Where would we be today without those 'defeats', from which we draw historical experience, understanding, power and idealism ... There is but one condition. The question of why each defeat occurred must be answered. R. Luxemburg (1919)*

It is no coincidence that the Paris commune of 1871, the split in the First International, Russia 1917 and Spain 1936 are all key reference points for modern Marxist and anarchist theory. Similarly, the historical



conflicts between anarchists and Marxists cannot be understood in isolation from these events. They are rooted in the experiences and lessons drawn from a real, continuing tradition of class struggle. Whilst it is true that the polemics exchanged between Marxists and anarchists have often degenerated into caricature, the better of these have always dealt in the common currency of history. In light of this, it is the purpose of this study to explore a peculiar condition of theorists of in a revolutionary tradition in the West, in a period of advanced capitalism. For Luxemburg and other traditional proponents of revolutionary theory, the question was clear cut: what was the most appropriate analysis to be derived from the failures, and limited successes, of the working class movement? However, in our age, the line between what the working class movement has gained and what it has lost is becoming ever more blurred.

This blurring is due to recuperation, capitalism's ability to incorporate and contain radical movements. In the United Kingdom, radical ideas have never been so accessible. This stands in stark contrast to the experiences of the early pioneers of anti-capitalist criticism. Following the revolutions of 1848 Marx was periodically exiled from most mainland European states due to his radical activity and writings, Bakunin would spend six years rotting in the infamous Peter and Paul fortress for his part in the May insurrection in Dresden (1849), while Kropotkin was able to escape arrest in 1876 only to spend forty-one years in exile from his native land. All three experienced censorship, suppression and often incarceration because of their writings and activity in the revolutionary movement. Nowadays the teachings of all of these, and many others, can be found throughout University courses in Sociology, Art, Economics, Political Science, Philosophy and others. Even school students studying in the UK, whose experience typically contrasts with the critical thought encouraged at undergraduate level, can be taught, for example, how the anarchist view of the state differs from the Marxist one or the Marxist approach to religion (Mcnaughton, 2009). Our ideas have not only become acceptable, they are state sanctioned.

In light of this, this essay intends to explore a number of key questions; What do these developments mean for us as revolutionary theorists and for our capacity for social criticism? Is it even possible to be a revolutionary theorist? Can and do we pose a critical challenge to the existing social order?

Materially, nothing substantive has changed in the condition of the vast majority of working people across the globe. Capitalism still exists, exploitation still exists, waged labour exists and the state and class violence still exists. If anything the permissibility of radical ideas in the academic sphere has accompanied an equivalent intolerance, even outright attack upon, basic notions of workplace solidarity, critique and political dissent in the "real world". Permissibility in academia has also not been without its costs. Marxism and anarchism have become institutionalised to fit the mould of existing and acceptable bourgeois systems of education. It is no longer necessary (or desirable) to elaborate these ideas in the spirit of their original context - as a guide for revolutionary action. Instead they merely represent a commentary, an added perspective, which serves to augment understandings of existing social phenomena such as class, economics and political authority. Their key quality, their ability to mobilise, has been stripped away.

It is true to say that this process in itself, is not a unique phenomenon. There has, after all, been a long tradition of bourgeois intellectuals writing, discussing and utilising radical ideas. In fact, the sociologist Von Stein was to comment as early as 1850 that, "It is the great merit of socialism to have made us aware for the first time of the relationship of labour to the free personality and to have discovered the existence and the power of the social order over men, as well as the contradiction between the social order and the free personality (Von Stein, 1850: 279)".

This was the language of what Marx and Engels would describe as "Bourgeois" or "conservative socialism" in the *Communist Manifesto*. That is, it represented efforts by the bourgeois intelligentsia to redress social grievances caused by capitalism while still preserving its privileged class status. Moreover, academia has traditionally been the forum in which these ideas have been articulated. However as Cleaver (1983) has noted, bourgeois reformism does not simply consist of what Marx (1848: 43) identified as "hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind" working their thought into "complete systems", but there has also been a wider tendency towards the appropriation of profitable aspects of Marxist and anarchist theory itself. As Cleaver is also keen to emphasise, neither should this be understood simply as an exercise in Marcusean "repressive tolerance" whereby insurgent ideas can be safely contained within the academy. These social

ideas, albeit in a distorted form, can play a real role in the maintenance and continuation of bourgeois hegemony. In the West, Dauvé is keen to emphasise the university structure as integral to this process:

One of the natural channels of this evolution is the university, since the apparatus in which it is a part backs a considerable part of the research on the modernization of capital. Official "revolutionary" thought is the scouting party of capital. Thousands of appointed functionaries criticize capitalism from every direction. (Dauvé, 1979)

Marx's analysis of economic cycles, crises and surplus value are widely incorporated into many modern courses in economics. Any savvy stockbroker will be sure to have a copy of *Capital Vol. 1* alongside the *Wealth of Nations* on his bookshelf. Cleaver (1983) even points to the role of explicitly anti-capitalist thought in bolstering the analysis of the business community, as evidenced by the increasing space given over in professional economic journals to radical ideas.

This process is also apparent in more subtle ways. For example, much of the Green movement in Europe has its origins in the radicalism and radical movements of the 1960s. Yet the revolutionary social ecology pioneered by anarchists such as Murray Bookchin is becoming increasingly marginal and with it the centrality of an anti-capitalist critique. The Green challenge that is posed today is not one that calls for the abolition of the capitalist system but, by-and-large, a reform of it into a carbon-free economy. A conflict between two competing alternatives - a Green, sustainable system vs. a carbon-based one - in fact masks a shared goal: the continued, stable functioning of the capitalist system. Equivalent developments can be seen in the contra-globalisation movement.

The autonomism of Italian Marxists such as Negri and Tronti, "filtered via Deleuze and Guattari" (Wright, 2002: 2) has resulted in key components of anti capitalist criticism, for example, the class relationship, the capitalist state etc. being replaced with more ambiguous concepts such as "global power" and the "multitude". The result of which is to replace a theoretical narrative that was originally concerned chiefly with class power on the factory floor, with one that has as its central concern the *regulation* of global economic development in all of its excesses - summitry, unchecked free trade, sweatshop labour, lack of accountability etc. Simultaneously, Marxism and anarchism can be, and have been, utilised as ideological "friend" and "enemy" of the political order while leaving the base cause of injustice - the *social* order - untouched by their criticism.

So, for example, if we look at the history of Marxism, while Marx's intention to develop a critical and revolutionary theory of political economy is central to understanding his contribution, equally, to fully grasp the revolutionary *potential* of his theory, its subsequent recuperation cannot be ignored. Dauvé shows this problem at work in two key areas. Firstly, in Marx's tendency to outline the functioning of the economy "in itself", that is to attribute the economic system with certain laws of motion that lead to a teleological reading of history or a conception of history which is essentially "agentless". Secondly, in Marx's tendency, despite his insistence on the need for an explicitly communist movement, to articulate reformist demands, i.e. those later associated with the parties of Social Democracy. So, for example, the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* includes, "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax", "free education for all



children in public schools" and the "centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state"<sup>1</sup> Crump (1976) situates these tendencies in their historical context. He points particularly to the commentary of Engels in *Marx and the Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848-9);

If we did not desire to take up the movement from its already existing, most advanced, actually proletarian side and push it further, then nothing remained for us to do but to preach communism in a little provincial sheet and to found a tiny sect instead of a great party in action. But we had already been spoilt for the role of preachers in the wilderness; we had studied the utopians too well for that. We had not drafted our program for that. (Engels, 1884)

While Marx's prime objective was to put forward an adequately scientific analysis that privileged class struggle within an international socialist movement dominated by the ideology of bourgeois reformism this, in practice, was no easy task. Marx and Engels were caught, on the one hand, between their own communist principles and, on the other, the actual reformist behaviour, and involvement in the bourgeois revolutions of Europe, of the majority of the working class.<sup>2</sup> What resulted was a mixture of "starry eyed romanticism and hard headed realism", the worst aspects of which were seized and recuperated by practitioners of bourgeois theory. Something which can be seen most concretely in the development of "dialectical materialism" as an ideological by-product of this vulgarized Marxist theory.

Dialectical analysis was a method of critique common amongst Marx's generation and can be clearly traced from the radical discussion circles that emerged around Hegel's thought and German Romanticism. However, Marx himself, in comparison to some of the other issues he wrote about, rarely gave the dialectical method space to match the weight and import that it had in his seminal works. He devoted a chapter of his economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844 to a materialist critique of Hegel's philosophy and emphasised the utility of the dialectic as a method for comprehending the reproduction of humanity's alienation by labour. He raised this again in his critique of Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the dialectical character of economic development continually resurfaced as a metaphysics of political economy throughout his works. However, the ontological status of this dialectic was largely unqualified aside from a few short remarks in his correspondence. It was, Engels, not Marx who attempted to reach a positive resolution of this issue in *Anti-Dühring* (1877) and later in his posthumously published *Dialectics of Nature* (1883). This was the first articulation of what came to be known as, "dialectical materialism". This meant that, as Callinicos (1976) explains;

interpreting the dialectic not simply as providing the structures specific to Marx's analysis of social formations like capitalism, but as actually representing the laws immanent in all reality,

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Bakunin and other anarchists of the period were also equally prone to such reformist demands throughout their lifetime.

<sup>2</sup> Crump (1976) attributes this problem specifically with the impossibility of communist revolution in Europe during the Eighteenth century. This is an analysis that I believe does require greater critical evaluation relying as it does on certain teleological assumptions on technological and historical development. On a discursive level, however, I do agree with Crump that we can say with certain authority that radical theorists do now have, "the opportunity of constructing a theory of communism with minds which are relatively uncluttered with the baggage which belongs to the bourgeois revolution".

natural as well as social and in the reflection of thought ... For Engels, then, the dialectic laws Hegel had discovered were the general governing nature, history and thought. Marx's worth was the triumphant application of these laws to history. (12-13)

Philosophically, this was the completion of the Enlightenment project – the application of rationality to all living things – and, consequently, to use Marx's own critique of idealist thought, a reproduction within Marxism of the continued alienation of humanity as *subject* to not *master* of the laws of their social universe. Politically, such an interpretation, served as a legitimising discourse for the social democratic programme of the Second International. The intellectuals of the German SPD in particular – Bernstein, Kautsky and Plekhanov – who arguably exercised a hegemonic influence over the Western European workers' movement were able to utilise Engel's formulation to justify an incremental and reformist strategy. If "dialectic laws" predicted the inevitable victory of the proletariat through a pre-ordained course of historical development then the task of the Marxist party was to forward the so-called "bourgeois revolution", even if this aim happened to conflict with those of the proletarian class. The leaders of the Second International were effectively able to contain the aspirations of their proletarian members while diverting their efforts towards capitalist development as part of a "bourgeois revolution". This was "starry-eyed romanticism and hard-headed realism" taken together and to their extreme. Marxist theorists could justify the continued preservation, even the active development, of capitalist society as justified by a theoretically abstract vision of communism that had little relation to human endeavour and everything to do with the progressive development of hidden, scientific laws.

The theory of Lenin and his followers during the Russian revolution was merely the strategic application of these principles to a moment of class insurgency. The theory and the goals elaborated by the Second International were essentially retained, advocating state-capitalist reforms and preaching theoretical leadership of the party over the working class. Although Lenin would engage in many sustained polemics against Kautsky and his followers he would never deviate from the original philosophy and political goals of the second International (Dauvé, 1977). The innovations forced by the Russian context and the conditions of heavy repression under the Tsar merely led to a particularly authoritarian brand of communist organisational practice. Moreover, after the Bolshevik seizure of power it became almost immediately clear that the factory councils' and peasant committees' desire for workers' self-management over production would conflict with Lenin's understanding of workers' control as a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, extremely precise and extremely scrupulous *accounting* [emphasis in original] of the production and distribution of goods (Lenin, 1917).<sup>3</sup>

It is this role that "revolutionary thought" has historically played as an ideological smokescreen for capitalist development that leads Debord in his *Society of the Spectacle* to make the distinction between revolutionary *theory* and revolutionary *ideology*. It should be made clear, however, that such a distinction has not come as the result of persistent "mistakes" made by radical intellectuals and academics or the existence of deviant doctrines. It is rather a natural consequence of the continued functioning of capitalism and the continuing expression of class interests. As a consequence, to attempt to seek a methodological

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive history see "The Bolsheviks and Workers Control" In: Brinton, M. (2004) *For Worker's Power*



remedy to this problem, as many radical intellectuals have done, actually misses a far more fundamental issue. Capitalism is, after all, a real living system containing conflicting interests and, as Marx once observed, in every epoch, the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class. Accordingly, as much as radicals operating within the academic sphere may hope to escape or evade it, they cannot ignore the material conditions that frame, mutate and transform the products of intellectual labour.

The rehabilitation of radical theorists is a seemingly rational goal in the face of a social system that has continually recuperated and vulgarised revolutionary thought. Faced with these theoretical failures an intuitive response is to reassert the original qualities that were so integral to the "true" Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin etc. However, ultimately, without any appreciation of the material and historical conditions that framed these theories in their original context this is an exercise in futility. What weighs upon us now as revolutionary theorists is not simply the historical failure of anarchist and Marxist theory, but the accumulated experience of the repeated failures of proletarian revolution.

Recuperation is, after all, a defensive mechanism. Only after revolutionary actions have failed and the ideas that accompanied them have lost their material substance is it possible for them to become a useful tool for the bourgeoisie. The "original" Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin are useless to us precisely because their teachings have been absorbed into the ideological apparatus of the state and the bourgeoisie. In this respect, it is no surprise that Marxism and anarchism are now on the school curriculum; they are both components in the ideological management of the proletariat. That which cannot be absorbed and used in the practical management of the working classes, i.e. in economics, management theory and in the provision of social reforms, can instead be safely diffused within the universalistic grasp of bourgeois history or ethics. Students may come to a more critical appraisal of the role of the state, even the functioning of the class system, but ultimately they are dealing with relics of failed revolutionary projects – dead theory. Recuperation is just an expression in ideas of what has already occurred in practice. It is an indication of how and why revolutionary projects have already failed. Subsequently, while it is important to recognise the distinction between ideology and theory and the interests they serve, to attempt to limit or even cut off aspects of revolutionary thought from recuperation, as the situationists attempted to, represents as fruitful course of action as attempting to think oneself out of capitalism.

Radical writers and intellectuals may work outside of a revolutionary context, but it is only in a revolutionary context, or at least in an analysis of past episodes, that their work has true critical value. It is only in unity with the working class movement that the work of theoreticians can be understood to be genuinely revolutionary. Theorists, in other words, should accept recuperation for what it is and instead of desperately attempting to keep the revolutionary flame alight during periods of reaction they focus instead on critically evaluating the limited successes of the working movement. The role of communist theorists therefore is to

represent and defend the general interests of the movement. In all situations, they do not hesitate to express the whole meaning of what is going on, and to make practical proposals. If the expression is right and the proposal appropriate, they are parts of the struggle of the

proletariat and contribute to build the "party" of the communist revolution. (Dauvé and Martin, 1974)

Our ideal should be of a permanent bank of revolutionary theorists whose ideals are brought into unity with the progressive development of the communist movement.

To concentrate more specifically on what this offers in terms of the capacity of revolutionary theory I think it opens up a number of points for development. The utility of this approach is ultimately on taking head on the often awkward position that theorists have to negotiate between their capacity to forward social change and the constraints that are put upon them by their given circumstances, an idea that Marx famously expressed in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances of their own choosing, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

From this position it is possible to understand recuperation as an indication of the far more serious constraints that weigh upon us both historically and materially. The ideological forces of the state and the bourgeois class will always attempt to divert and contain revolutionary ideas, and recuperation is the successful end product of this process. It is also necessary to recognise theorists and actors (for want of a better word) as elements of the same process. It is critical to reject the Leninist formulation of socialist intellectuals outside and somehow immune to the alienating effects of the class system. In many respects, this is an idea that has been common currency in anarchism for some time, The Dielo Truda group, for example, state in the *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)* that,

Anarchism ... developed, not from the abstract reflections of some scientist or philosopher, but out of the direct struggle waged by the working people against capital, out of their needs and requirements, out of their psychology, their desire for freedom and equality, aspirations that become especially vivid in the most heroic stages of the working masses' life and struggle. Anarchism's outstanding thinkers - Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others - did not invent the idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it among the masses, merely helped develop and propagate it through the power of their thought and knowledge. (Dielo Truda Group, 1926)

It is nonetheless an important point for unity. In doing so, we reaffirm the original sentiment of early pioneers of both anarchism and Marxism that it is activity – solidarity, organisation and education – that is the revolutionary component of revolutionary theory.

The kind of Marxism and anarchism that those operating from this perspective hope to develop is one based on a continual and evolving dialogue between intellectuals and working class militants. Practically, this has to be rooted in the grassroots conditions of every historical struggle, building from concrete experiences upwards. We should see it as possible at all times to continually critically re-appraise the condition of our theory in communication with the existing, most advanced expressions of anti-capitalist resistance, however minor these may seem. Moreover, Anarchism and Marxism need this relationship to avoid stagnation. Without it there may be anarchists and Marxists, but there won't be revolutionaries. So many attempts to address recuperation have proceeded from a flawed assumption, that it is somehow



possible to articulate *the* perfect theory, immune from co-option, relentless in its criticism and articulate in its guide for revolutionary action. However, such an endeavour starts from an idealist perspective - that somehow theory is a force in itself that can be shaped and moulded by intellectual effort alone. Theory, however, is nothing but a relic of past struggles. Whether this is in the form of the terms and concepts we draw from, the historical events at the core of our analysis or even the recuperated terms and notions we have to struggle against, they are all essentially material in character. The corpses in our mouths are those of murdered revolutionaries. If we are truly to take on the magnitude of recuperation then we also have to acknowledge that the only theory that has true critical value is one that is rooted in real and continuing social struggles.

We have, therefore, to take alternative courses of action. On the one hand, we can wait, speculate, analyse and anticipate. On the other, we can participate. Education is a powerful weapon, it no coincidence that it has historically been such a central component of socialist organising. Self-education has always been an important base of our movement. The difference now is that, in the West, contemporary students of anarchism and Marxism are not only confronted with traditional obstacles; poverty, lack of time and resources - but also the added difficulty of having to surpass the vulgar Marxism and anarchism that is taught in mainstream education.

When early agitators conceived their task as "bringing revolution to the masses" they made an error. Their task was not simply to disseminate anarchism and Marxism amongst the working classes, but also to learn from them. Revolutionaries, whether they concede the idea or not, are representatives of a continuing tradition of class struggle, they are the past meeting the present confrontation with capitalism. Our criticism should not be seen as taking place between theoretically privileged "outsiders" and naive "insiders" (as is the case with much positivistic social science), but as equals within the same struggle. We outline critical perspectives as developed from our own principles while simultaneously forwarding a wider discourse as based upon our collective experience. It is correct to criticise intellectuals for agonising over their "relationship" to the working class. The fact is that there is no relationship, they are components of the same movement or they are not. This is a perspective, even just looking briefly at some contemporary events, that is desperately lacking in our discipline.

On the afternoon of Saturday 6th September 2008, Greek police shot dead a 15-year-old student in the central Exarchia district in Athens. Police routinely clashed with immigrant and working class youths throughout the poorer districts of the capital, however, this time the confrontation would turn fatal. The events that followed came to be known in the mainstream media as part of the "Greek December". Public outrage at the police, along with continuing attacks on working conditions following the economic crisis, caused widespread mobilisations. Police stations burned, luxury shops were ransacked, roads blockaded and the centre of Athens saw continuous running battles with aggressive riot police. The first work to come out of academia on this subject was from the Hellenic Observatory in LSE. They published a collection of essays on the riots titled, *The Return of Street Politics?* in April 2009. The contributors were varied, from professors and economists throughout the UK and Europe to journalists and professional analysts, they even managed to squeeze in a few radical post-structuralists. Yet, despite the variety of political positions that were being drawn from there was a single methodological aim displayed throughout the collection.

Every writer struggled to describe the events through the lens of their own ideological narrative, whether this meant seeing the events as an indication of the awakening of a democratic "multitude", a mass psychological display of youthful rebellion, a nihilist glimpse into a bleak future or even a cry for privatisation and freer economic markets. Not one of the authors chose to give those participating in the rebellion a voice. This was, even for those defending the actions of the rioters, an entirely one-way process. Even the analysis of so-called revolutionaries resorted to simple and arbitrary abstractions. For the Leninists it was the age-old "crisis of leadership" resurfacing, as naive and "insurrectionary" youth were "betrayed" by the failure of the political Left and the trade unions to take up the mantle. In the end, the most articulate expression of the energy behind the events was not to come from the sociologists, political scientists or even the radical theorists of European universities. It was to come from inside the insurrection, from the testimony of a "hot-headed" youth;

*Until I turned eighteen, they thought I was on their side. Excellent behaviour, excellent marks, certificates in foreign languages, you know, all these make them call you a "good girl". Meaning that you will attend a good college, you will have a good job, you will make a nice family be a peace-loving individual. On Saturdays you will be going to the supermarket and on Sundays for a drive to the countryside. They have dug their own grave. A great slap was necessary for me to wake up. And here it is. I'm sorry, all you dearest. But you'll find me against you once again. I am just 1.70 of height and 55kg. But you don't have the slightest clue of what I am capable of.*  
A good student girl

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## Only the 'realists' are out of touch with humanity

# 'Out of Touch'?

There are 2 poles of anarchism, which deserve criticism; one of the saddest things about 'fashionable anarchism' is that it tries 'the most radical gesture', or sometimes judges on supposed fashion/relevance, and 'respectable' 'opinion'. This was and is very largely true of the old guard leaderships and wannabe followers of an imaginary respectable holy grail. There are those 'melancholy realists' too, who never escape from bulletin boards, who write nothing which is published, nor do they participate in any serious politics beyond the web, who police the rest of contributors with their self appointed and self referential holier than thou attitudes. Their ultra leftism paralyses them into inaction. They must be; got around, ignored, or usurped, if politics is to develop more naturally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So here is a reply to issues such as these, it is necessarily 'unfinished business' and this is borrowing very heavily from the tradition that Class War originated in and developed with, and that is in the work of E.P. Thompson. Whose classic "The Making of the English working class" is probably the most, or amongst the most influential history books in the world.

Like Thompson, if you look for simplistic answers and those that are 'moderate' you will not find them. Largely, because both he, and I, *reject such an act of intellectual and political closure*. Behind every statement lies the more fundamental creativity and an unwavering commitment to refuse analytic boxes *within which political practice incarcerates humanity*. This is our politics, and the poetics of life. Thompson wrote against the weight of prevailing orthodoxies, and we are developing work alongside or against left & anarchist ones, amongst others. **Constantly clarifying positions, not with propositions, but with counters and challenges.** Thompson self-deprecatingly referred to himself as an extinct mythological species, a great bustard, and claimed opposition alone could never gag him. 'For the great bustard, by a law well-known to aeronautics, can only rise up into the air against a strong headwind. It is only by facing into opposition that I am able to define my thought at all'.

**"To leave error unrefuted is to encourage intellectual immorality"**

Karl Marx

This is an historical tradition too; Thompson was in an antinomian tradition that reached through the ranting impulse of 16<sup>th</sup> century dissent into sects such as the Muggletonians - a continuity that touched William Blake... "Never, on any page of Blake... is there the least complicity with the kingdom of the beast" [Babylon].

Thompson was a man of feeling, reason and commitment, a standard of what should be. *Against* the capitalist right, and orthodox left (CP, SWP, SP, RA, IWCA. etc), whose understanding of human need was and is ordered by 'things'. To the point where the creative, intellectual, and moral foundations of life, are not discussed and de facto outlawed. Thompson and us take and expect no quarter from such *miserablists*.

From Marx, William Morris, and Blake, Thompson and we see the absolute necessity of countering 'intellectual error', of refusing to abstain from battle;

***"Where is the battlefield... if it is not within human reason and conscience"??***

This is a socialist and anarchist humanism and agency of choice. Choice itself was struggle, discovered by open-minded people who experience the rich tapestry of social life available. Uncertain in its outcomes, related to past choices and campaigns, but in ways that were not always logical progression. It was driven by the possibility of possibility, not by promises or assurances of success, or laws of historical motion;

*"And at last I raise my voice  
In the teeth of the swarming wind:  
I declare that man has choice  
Discovered in that place  
Of human action where  
Necessity meets desire"*

Within the moving relationship of opposition and choice, Thompson looked to the past to renew the present, the better to recover possibility in the future. Reason and Reasons were found in history that encompasses internationalism and insight, forcing appreciation of a body of historical writing guided by a politics of socialist humanism and embattled engagement, insistent integrity and the imagination of the poet. Thompson's awkwardness marked him as alien, but this was forced on him against the weight of bourgeois and orthodox 'Marxist' hegemony. ***Nothing was to be gained by mere imitation, by lying prostrate before the theorist or orthodoxy of the month;***

***"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword". Matthew 10:34.***



# Popular front Anti Fascism

Thompson saw active service during World War 2, and this was to be integral to his later thought. His scarred memories were in the place between necessity and desire, where human agency found a resting place of honour, however diminished by later events and machinations;

"We were disgusted by war but we assented to its political necessity, a necessity which might –  
Although we hoped most ardently that it would not – entail our own deaths'.

His older brother was a Communist party member too;

"Then as now there was an active democratic temper throughout Europe. There was a submission of self to a collective good. Then as now there was a purposive alliance of resistance to power, 'a popular front' which had not yet been disfigured by bad faith. And there was also an authentic mood of internationalism which touched the peasants in the Umbrian (Italy) villages and the troopers in our own ranks".

There was a new theatre of democratic, socialist, and internationalist symbolism, and the powerful were made defensive; political mores, at least publically, were mindful of class inequalities and the need for welfare provisioning. The most socialist economy ever seen in Britain during World War 2, the wartime internationalism and sacrifice that the struggle had forged were all lost through the partition of Europe and the onset of Cold War.

**Thompson remained convinced until he died that many who fought in WW2 were conscious anti-fascists and anti-imperialists, infused with socialist ideas and purpose.** Part of his life's work would be to liberate the 'intentions of the dead', one of which was his brother, and to keep the memory alive of those who fell in battle for freedom and the defeat of fascism. His brother, Frank, was proclaimed a national hero in Bulgaria after the liberation. Later in 1947, Thompson and his mother would retrace Frank's steps and visited the villages where Frank was remembered with affection. Later that year he served in the Youth Brigade on the Yugoslav Youth Railway construction project, in which socialist peasants, workers, soldiers, and students built a 150-mile railway. Finishing ahead of schedule, without supervision, and using only the most primitive tools. The socialist meaning that lay behind this stayed with him too, pointing directly to the alternative values of a co-operative and collective social order, a new *socialism* bound up in a fresh emphasis on people's obligations to his/her neighbours and society.

Inspired by the insurgent popular anti-fascist mobilisations of 1943-47, Thompson was guided by the unfolding possibilities of struggle, protest, and resistance. His 'popular front' had nothing to do with theoretical, neat Communist party or Stalinist proclamations, it was an **informal popular front of the sensibilities working people carried with them**; in Italy, India, Iraq, & Egypt - Thompson had such positive experiences with comrades. One friend of his, a sergeant major, was able to second himself to

work for some weeks with the Communist party in Calcutta – against British rule! Many American comrades too were fired by internationalism and optimism, there must of been millions of informal transactions and discourses going on in those years.

After the war when Thompson settled in Yorkshire. His vision was still one of poetic imaginative possibility that could liberate humanity from capitalism, which informs consciousness and conflict in the present so as to create a future of socialist beauty. William Morris;

"I can't help it, the ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest..."

One must turn to hope, and only in one direction do I see it

*on the road to Revolution."*

William Morris was like Blake, whose revolutionary zeal was driven by anger, which was cut with satire, polemic, mockery, hyperbole, abuse, provocation, framing a personality that was humorous, brusque, shy, meditative, and vehement. This was Edward Thompson too.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, working class politics - socialist, anarchist and communist - never faced pure localist issues, but have been immersed in ineluctable political contexts characteristic of those **any** empire/metropolitan imperialist power would produce. This is not counting the many national strikes across industries throughout Britain and the solidarities that engendered. It was Rudolf Rocker who was engaged in organising Jewish migrant workers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the East End of London. There was; opposition to war, responses to the Russian revolution (British Dockers refused to load boats that were being prepared to support the White counter revolutionary armies). The International Class War Prisoners Association in the 1920s that had 50000 on its events in London supporting the case of Sacco and Vanzetti in the USA (they were anarchists who were framed, and then executed by the state). The independence of India, the rise of fascism, the Spanish civil war, the second front, the cold war, German rearmament, the Kenya and Cyprus wars, and much more in later years that Ex-Wombles and/or class warriors will be able to fill in. Marx in the Internationals and in "Capital", spoke of the 'new international division of labour', and was one of many who realised the importance of an international class-consciousness, and indicates some of the politics any serious organisation should have.

The leftists (inc. some anarchist/left communists) we are arguing against today who say this was all wrong have been confined in a **prison like reality** of their own imperfect historical understanding. Triumphs of course, have been rare, as they have been in other countries, but only sectarian headbangers suppose that politics is an arena in which the enlightened can pursue, in a single-minded way, only teleological and abstract ends. There are those who are oppressed and suffering today as well as in the past, and a politics that ignores solidarities demanded of such situations is particularly theocratic, ruthless, wilfully ignorant and ultimately self-defeating. DO those purists recognise the scale of human suffering in the last and present century? The situation in Columbia today demands our attention, and we are sure Dave Douglass will be very willing to talk about the amount of working class activists/trade unionists, who have been executed by



death squads. This is NOT the same as Britain true, but that does not mean we should selfishly and/or expediently ignore comrades. The new world cannot be built like that. Indeed, many remember the degree of solidarity from workers around the world in support of the British miners.\*

In Crook, County Durham, the mining county par excellence. There is a charity called 'Crook for Chernobyl' (the Russian nuclear reactor that exploded in 1985) *families*, with premises on the main shopping street. Every year around 25 children from Kiev come to stay for approx 3 weeks with families from Crook and its environs, and we had 2 in our house the other year. The result? It prolongs their lives by approx 18 months 'cos they are the 'forgotten generation' with an average life expectancy of 45 years. It leavened the heart, whilst playing pool in the pub HQ with the kids, when 3 women gave some money to the boys. It is far better to give than to receive and this example IS practical socialism/anarchism. Examples such as these run directly counter to the image of the British working class as insulated, and only concerned with the locality.

Largely it has been possible to protest, to inform the public, to mobilise in order to try to mitigate the excesses of imperialist rule, and/or to express solidarity with other countries. British democratic structures, although very good at absorbing, recuperating, and deflecting class struggle, have nevertheless exceptional opportunities for registering partial and oppositional pressures. Every RA/left communist/purist anarchist will tell you charity/solidarity IS the problem itself, that it would have been better had state power been seized/destroyed. However, this presupposes that there is a pure working class, with an ideal untainted identity, which is merely slumbering and waiting for the right elite viewpoint so it can immediately effect revolutionary change.

## Politics

One of the continually reoccurring points of disagreement is the politics of Red Action<sup>4</sup> and the IWCA. Thompson originally had his disagreements with Anderson and Nairn in the New Left Review in the 1960s, Thompson was accused of being a "Little Englander" by 'know it all' British Marxists who appreciated Althusser and the French Communist Party. In the "Peculiarities of the English", an essay in Thompson's book, "The Poverty of Theory", and originally published in the Socialist Register. Thompson derided those types of people for whom actual history was an inconvenience for their pure ideas. Today the position has reversed somewhat, in that we are defending internationalist and dynamic ideas against Red Action reductionism, in my opinion they have a type of Marxism that belongs more with Stalin than the libertarian project, and there was an observation, by Glynn Rhys, to this effect in an issue of The Heavy Stuff<sup>5</sup>. Innovations here are part of the updating of the anarcho/socialist humanist project.

Characterising Red Actions approach is easy, they see themselves as enlightened Leninist elite, remember their view of Welling, 1993. A large demo was organised and most of CW went on it, it was after the poll tax. This was *Popular Front anti fascism*, with approx 50000 people, and some of whom battled with the police as the demo tried to get to the BNP HQ. The cult Red Action said, 'aha! The fascists were nowhere

near, if you want to have a go at them we knew where they were/are...' elevating themselves above everybody else who participated and protested. Back to today, and their politics now. I can see how they believe what they do, but to pretend it is 'the best' is not only wrong it is ignorant too. While Red Action were concentrating on AFA in the 1980s, even though the Fascists had a 'march and grow' politics they had no chance of growth or power because of the right wing government (Thatcher). So, it's ok to 'bash the fash' when it doesn't matter. *During this time, substantial numbers of people were experiencing crap Labour party politics and sellouts, and many theorists and activists were re-thinking politics.* This mattered not to Red Action at the time though, if they read widely they might have even discovered that many others had bemoaned the political situation facing the working class as early as the 1950s. Nevertheless, if they acknowledged such things as this they would have to exercise humility, which is something Leninists cannot, and do not, do.

Red Action then endorsed the 'reflection theory' of anti fascism, in that they say we must 'mirror what the fascists are doing' now that they have adopted a clean cut respectable approach, like some European Fascists – 'Euro-Nationalism'. Now the fascists are growing in the UK, **now is not the time to fight them** apparently, just when it is becoming **significant**!! Thus contradicting their politics of the previous decade plus. Lets build the 'Independent Working Class Association' instead they say – never mind that the IWCA is the crapest clichéd title they could think of. A mirror image itself of the clichéd routine and orthodox 'leftist electoral politics without illusions' that is meant to be the only thing working class people are capable of engaging with. They say this is what opposition to fascism today demands! Despite this they have only stood in one council ward against the BNP, in May 2007 and 8, in 15 years! Losing the election both times and losing to the BNP, recently in May 2008 the IWCA vote crashed down to around 98 votes. This is no alternative to the BNP.

The presentation of themselves as the enlightened elite stinks worse than Lenin's corpse. It is also deeply patronising to the many working class people out there who have struggled, fought the class war, and still are struggling/fighting but are outside the RA loop. *Even a broken clock is right twice a day* though, and they are not without some observations. But to pretend they are unique is wrong, and even if they acknowledge their ideas aren't unique, they are not really interested in ideas, developing them, or learning from others, as they would have a more inclusive approach.

Instead, they have a one-dimensional viewpoint, a la Leninism, that their way is all there is. In reality their way is THE JOKE. That, they are the 'incarnation of the new way ahead for the working classes. *It would be funny if it wasn't so tragic.* Forget the workplace they say with approx 30,000,000 workers! More than at any time in British history, and they also by definition write off the many previous theorists and activists who have been thinking through working class politics. They say they consult 'working class people about politics', but they should say that the Zapatistas were doing it well before them, and that anarchism and libertarian varieties of Marxism such as Autonomism are by their very nature about discussing and developing ideas in struggle rather than imposing them a la Leninism. One of the most interesting ways to conceptualise conservative Leninists and those who seek uniformity was by Oscar Wilde who wrote the following;

<sup>4</sup> Who claim to have disbanded recently.

<sup>5</sup> Produced by Class War in the late 1980s and early 1990s.



"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions,

their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

Another huge problem/contradiction with the IWCA is the perception of what the working class is, how class is experienced, and how class is formed. The limited ambition of their ultra localist transitional demands, which as everybody knows, has been hierarchical/Leninist politics. And this IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION, almost as if the computer had not been invented, and as if culture/experience was only a local construction. **There are no outsiders in the working class**, something Ian Bone has said. For the first time in history, anarchism is now possible, though it has always been necessary. The skill and knowledge sharing necessary for an anarchist society is within reach technologically.

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

If we wish to save people from death, then we must win them for life. It is not enough to engage in representational politics. We cannot wait and impose socialism later, or 'develop' it later, any more than the vain hope that Marxism/communism would be created in state socialist countries. We must change people now, for that is the essence of our cultural work. Moreover, in this work, all the forces of health within society are on our side (informal popular front sensibilities) all those who have warmer ambitions rather than those of decay, bigotry, conservatism of all sorts, stupidity, environmental blight, or imperialist war. **Desire, possibility, urgency, struggle, imagination and experimentation would be the watchwords in the battles to come.** Against reformist electoral Leftism (regardless of its declared allegiance), turgid politico's that regard theory and internationalism as a poisoned chalice, and in contrast to such Leftism. **Governed as it is by anti intellectualism, and the denial of creative human agency.** *We (me & people like me) regard internationalism, ideas, ethics and the value of the individual in the historical process far far higher.*

Rather than privileging one sector, and/or community/ies, the job of revolutionaries is to work everywhere they can – in factories, call centres, shopping centres, day-care centres, tenants associations, popular campaigns, to appropriate authority and sustain working class and popular forms of control. Thompson believed that "A break-through at any one of these points... would immediately help in precipitating a diffuse aspiration into a positive movement". All publications should be part of the renewal of popular working class politics; "there will be Left Clubs [social centres] discussion groups, conferences, educational and propagandist activity".

This was against orthodox leftist practice that had lost the ingredient of humanity, and does not let moral and imaginative faculties affect its one-dimensional bureaucratic politics. That also eliminated values such as internationalism from the sphere of political judgement, feared independent thought, encouraged anti-intellectual trends, and finally had stereotypical views of what the 'working class was, what its' views were, and what it needed'. It is the spirit of freedom that has been so widely praised by revolutionaries, authors and poets across all cultures and corners of the globe. In addition, it is part of the heartbeat of Marxism; it is a utopian and missionary belief in the righteousness of working class struggle - **this virtuous and dramatic pose of revolutionary defiance and action**, an essential part of the socialist dynamic and revolutionary way of being. Bureaucrats seek to extinguish these flames, or tone down, and recuperate into the weary self-sacrificial time-served routine of stale ideological purity that is merely self-important philistinism, a convenient excuse to do nothing, and/or the myopic 'realism' of the career politician.

Zizek (2007) indicates that these struggles are old ones, Mao too was writing against 'dogmatic Marxists', and/or those who fail to understand the nature of contradictions, and that is true of some who have failed to understand the inclusive and utopian nature of Marx's theories. Such as Left Communists or Anarchist Communists, who also fail to have Marxist theory because they only have Marxist ideology (as the Situationists would say). Marxist philosophy has characteristics such as its' class nature, the other essential part is its practicality, theory depends upon practice and in turn works for practice, or it should, because otherwise it is not Marxist. Thus we work towards truth (Negri, 1985) based upon objective results in social practice and not by subjective feelings or pre written ideological ultra leftist principles such as the 'Trade unions are reactionary FULL STOP'.

A quote from a London organiser;

"the only thing smelling of alienation is the separations being thrown up by politico's and what they call 'ordinary' people. Ordinary people of course, being those not currently signing up to the (anarchist or any other) ideology of the day. It's the fear that "People will laugh at us because we don't look serious", (read: seriously drab). "Workers will run a mile and we mustn't offend them with stuff that doesn't look (properly) 'Political'. We must be wary of straying down far down the path of trying to appease every 'stereotype' of what is and isn't working class. Because there is *no* template that brings instant success. Believe me, because I've been there and done that. The only thing is just putting in hard work and getting on with it."

Raphael Samuel, part of Thompson's circle, noted that being communist is not just as a card-carrying member of 'the party', 'Association', [or Federation] but **it is the commitment to the revolutionary idea.** Thompson reacted consciously against formulations that saw working class formation in a determined process; 'steam power plus factory system equals working class', and that included 'local representational activity' aimed at supposed immediate 'working class needs'.

Thompson's energy was driven by passion and commitment, "history is the memory of a culture, and memory can never be free from passions and commitments". Consider the emphasis on the anonymous 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century threatening letters Thompson freely quoted. Such as "As for this litel fire. Don't be alarmed it will be a damd deal wors when we burn down your barn", and Thompson was not bothered whether the barn was subsequently burnt down or not.

**What mattered was the struggle, trying, & perhaps failing, but trying again.** Class-consciousness is constructed on the battleground of class struggle. Thompson thanked those who organised by night, who fell at Peterloo, who hawked the radical press, who resisted and protested in thousands of ways, and thought thousands of thoughts against capitalism, and stood tall for liberty;

"We cannot impose our will upon history in anyway we choose. We ought not to surrender to its circumstantial logic. We can hope and act only as 'gardeners of our circumstance'... I have been meditating not only on the meanings of 'history' but on meanings of people whom I have known and trusted. I have been encountering the paradox that many of those whom 'reality' has proved to be wrong, still seem to me to have been better people than those who were, with a facile and conformist realism, right. I would still wish to justify the aspirations of those whom history, at this point in time, appears to have refuted."

It has been said that high politics is 'the art of the possible', but I prefer to reverse the formulation to get the 'Possibility of art in politics'. Like Morris I prefer the beautiful to the drab, and appreciate skill at work to monotony, I can envisage our future no other way. Oscar Wilde would of agreed "I made art a philosophy and philosophy an art" (*De Profundis*).

**'Triumph of the Will' Class for itself not the *class in itself***



Where Class War had its advantage is in the articulation of working class ideas in practice, *the class for itself* in its basic instinct. That is why I got involved even though I could not articulate it, and why I still am now I can articulate it. It is not mediated leftism like Red Action/IWCA, or any of the other leftists who try to construct an idealised and localised *class in itself*. If we look at what arises spontaneously within the working class we have to look at Thompson, Christopher Hill, Hobsbawm, and our very own Dave Douglass amongst others for the historical experience. In brief, it is class struggle and working class attempts to protest that are important. Those who forget that and do not encourage it do not have the true interests of our class at heart. We should give no time to those who pretend that there is a simple answer to the complex problems the working class faces today. Real struggle is not perfect; it is how we learn to deal with attempts to build working class protest and resistance that is important.

We cannot impose mediated leftism/stasis on working class organisation that is yet more reactionary elitism, which is easily recuperable, apart from perhaps being easily absorbed into neo-Leninism. Thus, Thompson says in "The Poverty of Theory", and which I have updated;

"It is the cumulative attribution, in orthodox left/@, libcom and especially RA/IWCA writing, of identity, volition and even notions of inner destiny, which evoke suspicion. They have gone down to 3 small areas and with a great deal of huffing and puffing in 10 years have, so they say, have found out that they haven't been able to find and classify a class. They can only find people who reflect suggested local concerns. They don't find different workers with Nike gear, who might go to Spain on holiday. In fact they don't find class at all, nor today's, yesterdays or tomorrows feel and spirit of the present times (zeitgeist) either. Class is not this part or that part of the machine, but the way the machine works once it is set in motion – not this interest and that interest, but the friction of interests – the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise. Class is a social and cultural formation that cannot be defined abstractly, or in localised isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes, and ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time – that is action and reaction, change and conflict. When we speak of a class we are thinking of a very loosely defined body of people who share the same categories of interests, social experiences, traditions and value system. Who have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups of people in class way's. Class itself is not a thing, it is a happening."

"The Peculiarities of the English" page 85, in "The Poverty of Theory, and other essays" by E.P Thompson, Merlin Press, 1978.

Thus in the end of "The Making of the English Working Class" we find the words of James Morrison, who reflected on the new industrial capitalist society in 1834 – "**Orphans we are, and bastards of society**". Thompson comments 'The tone is not one of resignation, but of pride', or 'no one likes us and we don't care' as Millwall fans were later to sing - class war, *by all means necessary*.

Oscar Wilde and I agree - No regrets, ever;

**"To regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development. To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's life. It is no less than a denial of the soul."**

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