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Organise!

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FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

What's all the fuss about the G8?

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The election and after

One of the most striking things about the last election was its low-key nature; very few canvassers, very few window-posters, and a general disinterest. If the number of people who voted went up slightly from the previous election, it would be possible to think it was because some decided to vote to punish the Labour government for the war.

This general disinterest reveals a deep discontent with parliamentary democracy. This discontent is not expressed in struggle or in action. It is a general disillusionment in the political process, and stews and simmers because of the lack of any credible alternative.

The reduced minority of Labour may or may not lead to the ousting of Blair within the next few months. The Brown faction is supported by the trade union bosses, who would prefer Brown as leader in order to repair the damage caused by Blair's policies. But a push for power by Brown, backed by the union bureaucrats would mean no difference in the politics of the Labour Party. Brown is as much an architect of New Labour as Blair. He was the main actor in the drive to cut public sector jobs and to attack pensions. He is as much responsible for installing the layer of quangocrats, spin-doctors, and lawyers in the upper ranks of Labour as Blair. Any cosmetic changes cannot hide the fact that behind the Brown makeup will be the same policies as before, policies that are authoritarian and anti-working class.

The Labour regime threatens to continue its attacks with the fast-tracking of ID cards. This is one issue where anarchists need to mobilise. The "promise" to withdraw the proposed attacks on pensions supposedly won by trade union leaders will be quickly reneged on, now that the election is over. As we said in the previous Organise! Editorial, this is another issue that anarchists need to mobilise around.

The disillusionment in the whole political process, and what appears to be mass apathy and no expectations for a radical alternative, does not mean we should throw up our hands and give up. On the contrary, as we have so often repeated, what is needed is hard work from anarchist revolutionaries to create new social movements and radical alternatives in the neighbourhood and workplace.

Organise!

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

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year.

To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 31st August 2005. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

What goes in Organise!

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

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what's all the fuss about the g8?

The forthcoming Summit of the Group of Eight (or G8 to it's enemies), to be held in the Scottish golf resort of Gleneagles between July 6th and 8th, has stimulated opposition in a number of political areas. This article looks at the what's in store for the world's leaders this summer.

First, what exactly is the G8? The G8 consists of 8 of the most powerful nation states in the world. It has been in existence for over 30 years and its job is to be a forum for policy discussion for the ruling class. It is, however, primarily symbolic and an opportunity to do good PR with the media and lobbyists. The real decisions are made in other places outside the glare of the media and beyond the protests of the opposition.

Anyone for... golf?

Gleneagles itself is an excellent choice for the state as it is suitably isolated and situated in a rural area with little local political radicalism. The nearest cities are Perth and Stirling, neither of which have a large indigenous left or alternative culture. Opposition and protests have followed the G8 wherever it has met. These protests appeared to have reached both their height and their lowest point when, at the infamous 2001 Genoa events, the police killed the activist Carlo Giuliani and beat and tortured Indymedia and other oppositional journalists. Since then, however, there has been massive opposition at the G8 summit at Evian, France in June 2003 and this year's summit is far from going unopposed.

The opposition

Who, then, is leading the opposition to the G8 and why? The organised and mobilising opposition can be divided into three currents. The largest of these is the Make

Poverty History coalition.

Make Poverty History - Jesuits, union bureaucrats and the Boys Brigade?

When the G8 last came to Britain, in Birmingham in 1998, the main mobilisation was by those calling for debt relief. In this, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), charities and church groups were at the forefront and the left had a minimal profile. Though in Britain at this time groups such as Reclaim the Streets were regularly organising creative protests and street parties,the international 'anti-globalisation' and 'anti-capitalist' movements were yet to play a significant role. The descendants of that mobilisation today are the Make Poverty History coalition. This coalition, which makes no pretence of being anti-capitalist, wishes to pressurise world leaders into cancelling the debt of the 'developing' world. Make Poverty History span the entire spectrum of lobbying politics and unite the Baptist Union with the Jesuits, Islamic Relief with Comic Relief, the TUC and the Boys Brigade. It is holding a march in Edinburgh on the Saturday before the G8 comes to Scotland, a march which will possibly be the largest the country has ever seen. It is at this march that the authorities fear an 'anarchist' bloc, bent on wreaking havoc and destruction, will emerge. But more on media myths later. The main 'radical' and ostensibly anti-capitalist mobilisation takes the form of G8 Alternatives (G8Alt), a coalition involving The Scottish Socialist Party, Scottish CND, Friends of the Earth, World Development Movement, Muslim Association of Britain and others.

SWP front?

G8Alt has been dismissed as a front for the Socialist Workers Party. The truth is somewhat more complex. Rather, the SWP has managed to dominate the coalition from the beginning and maintained control through frenetic activity and paying careful attention to the appearances of open and democratic organisation. Being, in Scotland, no more than a Platform (i.e. a fraction) within the Scottish Socialist Party, it has done this through the branches it dominates and its front organisations such as Globalise Resistance. The rest of the Scottish Socialist Party has been too busy with other campaigns, notably the General Election, to prioritise the G8 and has been willing to allow the legwork to be done by the SWP, despite the unease this may bring. The SWP have thrown themselves in with an eye to recruitment and the building of a power base in Scotland, which up to now has eluded them. The other groups which have affiliated have likewise allowed the SWP to dominate, or have been too small and marginal to affect changes. The Scottish Trade Union Congress, despite the moderation of the G8Alt proposals, has declined to come on board, though a small number of individual union branches have affiliated.

So what are the G8Alt planning?

Other than supporting the Make Poverty History march, the G8Alt is organising a counter-summit in Edinburgh featuring the great and the good of the anti-globalisation/ anti-imperialist movements at the bargain price of £15 entrance fee. It is supporting a demonstration outside the Dungavel Detention centre in solidarity with asylum seekers and refugees and it is supporting a blockade of Faslane nuclear submarine base called by Scottish CND and Trident Ploughshares. It is also sponsoring a day of 'direct action' at Gleneagles itself. This day of direct action so far consists of a no more than a traditional march and demonstration, which they calculate will be about 20,000 strong. This demonstration, scheduled for Wednesday 7th July, coincides with the day of action around Climate Change called by People's Global Action. This day of action is being supported by the third oppositional current, the Dissent Network of resistance against the G8.

Dissent: a network of resistance?

The Dissent network, formed in the Autumn of 2003, is an informal network of broadly libertarian local groups, including London's WOMBLES, Cardiff Anarchist Network, several social centres and specific 'working groups'. It describes itself as " a mechanism for communication between local groups and working groups involved in building resistance to the G8 and capitalism in general. It hopes to exist long after the world leaders have returned home..." (Dissent statement in 'Days of Dissent' pamphlet October 2004. The network is open to anyone accepting the hallmarks of Peoples' Global action, itself a network, formed in 1998, international in scope and involving a diverse range of anti-globalisation groups and social movements including the Zapatistas, the Brazilian landless peasants movement and European 'autonomists'. The PGA's hallmarks commit it to a rejection of capitalism, patriarchy, religious fundamentalism and racism and to embrace a "confrontational attitude" calling for "direct action and civil disobedience" and an organisational philosophy based on "decentralisation and autonomy" (from PGA Hallmarks). So the PGA is an implicitly libertarian organisation, though not one in the tradition of class struggle anarchism Dissent are mobilising for the pre-G8 march, for the Faslane action (Trident Ploughshares are participating in both G8Alt and Dissent) as well as for the Climate Change day of action. To this end they are planning various innovative and creative ways to blockade the summit and disrupt the free-flow of hot air therein. These tactics may include approaches to the Gleneagles area via the local hills with an army of revolutionary ramblers. A People's Golfing Action network of "anarchist golfers" may appear, complimenting the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Army planned. Beyond these humorous and media-friendly approaches the Dissent network has been trying to establish a Convergence Space somewhere in rural Perthshire or Stirlingshire, where the many activists committed to direct action as well as discussion might gather. Dissent has also taken legal support, medical support and international activist training seriously. This has lead sections of the media in Scotland to paint Dissent as the likely organisers of a fearsome anarchist Black Bloc of professional rioters. There are certainly some on the left aping these tactics.

The good, the bad and the Black Bloc

Relations between G8Alt and the Dissent network are cool but Dissent supporters have attended the open G8Alt organising meetings and have suggested that the mobilisations organised by G8Alt and Dissent may complement each other and successfully argued that the state must not be allowed to paint one group of protesters 'good' and the other 'bad' in a divide and rule tactic. Whether this level of unity in diversity holds is another question. The security for the G8 events will affect local residents considerably and it is likely that people in nearby Auchterarder will be virtual prisoners in their own village. Local activists, including CND in Stirling have been subject to low-level police harassment for several months.

Media hysteria

Sections of the media have attempted to whip up a low-level hysteria that focuses upon the possibility of 'anarchist' violence and the spectre of the 'Black bloc'. Water cannon and tear gas are expected to be deployed if confrontation does take place and threats of live ammunition being used have been leaked to the press in an obvious attempt to intimidate people wanting to take direct action. One of the problems with the Dissent network is the lack of grassroots organisation in communities and workplaces in Scotland. Many (though not all) of the English based Dissent activists are highly mobile, perhaps only intermittently involved in local struggles. They are the infamous summit-hoppers, heading off to where the perceived 'action' is. In Dissent publications there is much talk of anti-capitalist movement but little focus on where the dynamic for such a movement might come from. The Dissent network seems to rarely look beyond the activist milieu of which it is a part. Although it talks of leaving behind a stronger ant-capitalist movement following the G8 protests, it isn't clear how this might come about.

So, come July the stage is set for massive protest, considerable hot air and some creative direct action. Anarchist communists from all over Europe and beyond will be there, part of a class struggle red and black contingent (not bloc!) and supporting effective direct action. But, more importantly perhaps, they must be there when the circus has left town and the day to day effects that the likes of the G8 create remain to be fought. Less media-friendly, probably less exciting but ultimately more important.

For more info see www.dissent.org.uk

a look at the libertarian mobilisation against the g8 in evian

France, June 2003. Evian, a small middle class town in the foothills of the Alps, welcomes the G8, the summit of the most powerful in the world. Scotland, July 2005, the G8 meets again.

This article revisits the libertarian mobilisation in France in Evian against the G8 summit by examining the actions of two collectives, the CLAAAC (Collective of Anti-authoritarian and Anti-capitalist struggles) and the VAAAG (Anti-capitalist, anti-war, alternative village) that took place between May 27th and June 3rd.

Why did the mobilisation take these forms?

The motivations for the libertarian mobilisation are numerous. First of all, we were not satisfied by a confrontation with the police and a unitary demonstration where the political message is superfluous and where it is difficult to see why (with what political project) we are coming together. In this case anarchists are found united with leftists, 'citizen' groups, NGOs and reformists under the umbrella of 'anti-globalisation'. The aim was therefore to make anarchist political ideas and practices visible at the G8 events by using a new way of presenting ourselves. We wanted to created a clear pole of resistance that was anti-capitalist yet at the same time involved organising an experiment in self-organisation that we would be open to everyone and where everyone would find his/her place. This project was realised through the organisation of a village that was not only a camp site but that was also a social and political space, where self-management was put into practice as much in the preparations as in the few days of its life.

The village also gave us the opportunity to see a variety of alternative forms of struggle, imagined or already existing, against the capitalist system. This was possible thanks to the discussions and presentations that were organised around alternative experiences of struggle around the world and that offered the opportunity to have a collective reflection on the state of society in which capitalism and the State produce nothing but perpetual war, inequality and misery. We hoped that this initiative would bring people together who are living and/or thinking of how to create a real alternative to capitalism.

We used the calendar of the summits of the powerful to create a moment of anti-capitalist political demonstrations and to construct a project that showed the possibility of an alternative society. For this, it is necessary that libertarians and their ideas are visible and distinctive from the professionals of the 'citizen' and Leftist movements who simply find capitalism too savage for their taste and do not question the fundamental basis of the system. It is for this reason that we chose to have these two initiatives, the CLAAAC and the VAAAG, as the focus of the anarchist movement.

What was the VAAAG?

This village, the idea of which was launched by No Pasaran (an anti-fascist group), was organised by a number of local collectives around most everywhere in France and also in Germany by people who are active in the French Anarchist Federation, No Pasaran, syndicalists and trade unionists, people attached to the autonomous movement and individuals without a label. These collectives worked for five months to think about and put into practice the VAAAG, from the logistics (material for marquees and tents, mobilisation of other necessary resources and skills, food, getting the land) to the elaboration of the Charter of the village (that would guide the self-managed functioning). All of this was down collectively, though regular meetings. The collectives also set up canteens that were to be the central points of every neighbourhood in the future village. The VAAAG was self-financed through fund-raising, forbidding any commercial activities in the village. Participants could stay and eat for free with only modest drink prices.

The village was then constructed at Annemasse, near Evian, and opened for the week of mobilisations against the G8 summit.
The VAAAG consisted of thousands of people participating in routines of a collective, libertarian life based on solidarity and equality that were self-organised through daily assemblies where everyone could participate in decisions and share out tasks. All of this took place in the 'barrios' or neighbourhoods that were organised around the canteens. At the centre of VAAAG was a bakery, a radio, medical post etc as well as a space for bars and concerts. The political content of the village, apart from the debates and discussions, consisted of various stands and booths with newspapers, pamphlets, books and magazines, where people could learn more about the ideas and practices of the anarchist movement. These activities gave people from diverse backgrounds to both clarify and reflect on what they had in common. It is this that is interesting- to meet, to exchange ideas, to create and to live a constructive and positive experience.
This was the occasion to actually realise our political idea of self-organisation, which is often evoked but unfortunately ignored. It was not only political militants that were involved but also those who only had a little political experience. It also permitted us to reach the 'man and woman in the street' of Annemasse who are watching the TV and fearing the advance of the anti-globalisation 'hordes' arriving in their precious town. They came and they saw, and began to understand and appreciate our manner of functioning and our values; another possibility is finally being sketched out. We were able to use this village experiment to make the idea of a self-managed and anti-capitalist alternative seem credible.
We can actually talk of a real experiment in self-management and organisation and it was a success. It succeeded thanks to the preparatory work done by around a hundred people, both practical and political, and because of the way that the participants took control of the village during the week of mobilisation and made it work by accepting the charter and making the village come to life. These were the elements that permitted this experiment to succeed: organisation, both in the preparation and spontaneously, on the basis of communality and solidarity that had been clearly defined together.

And the action of CLAAAC?

The CLAAAC federated organisations such as the French Anarchist Federation, the Organisation of Libertarian Communists, No Pasaran amongst others, associations, unions such as the CNT and anarchist organisations from abroad, around a common political platform against the G8. The whole libertarian movement, united in a 'red and black' block of around 5-7000 people for the demonstration on June 1st, showed that the anarchist movement is a significant force in the current political and social landscape. This block allowed for an independent political and syndicalist pole, which was anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-patriarchal and revolutionary, within the reformist anti-globalisation movement of NGOs and others who just want to make capitalism more humane. The demonstration is likely to have remained in the heads of many of those who participated in this important event.
In terms of political action, there were of course blockades and joint actions with the Swiss demonstrators. The link between the VAAAG and the CLAAAC facilitated the organisation of direct action, blockades of the routes into Evian and political actions such as the impromptu protest against the Socialist Party. These actions were undertaken by those who wanted to, respecting those who did not participate in the context of excessive security put into place by the French State, which meant that the level of violence and repression became more of a focus than we would have liked. This event, this mobilisation against the G8, was a moment of direct communication and of creativity that reinforced the anarchist movement. We were able to develop federal structures on a common political platform with common objectives. Through our actions, both in VAAAG and in CLAAAC, we were able to show that not only are we a force to be reckoned with but we also offer a social alternative based on self-management. We have made progress in envisaging and putting into practice our ideals of self-organisation and autonomy in our struggles, functioning and practices. The power of the libertarian movement lies in our capacity to go from resistance to the creation of social alternatives. This is what was brought into being during those days in May-June 2003. Struggle, resist, create!

*This article was written for Organise! by Sophie, a comrade from the French Anarchist Federation in Chambery. It has been translated from the French as literally as possible in order to retain the meaning. As a result, it may read a little awkwardly

Organise! comment

In other articles in this issue of Organise!, we have taken more of a critical look at anti-G8 mobilisations. This contribution shows how these events can be extremely positive. However, the mobilisation should not so much be judged in terms of how effective it is in actually stopping the G8 summit or in how many battles with the police took place. Rather, it should be judged in terms of how effective we have been in spreading anarchist ideas and practices. In addition, as Sophie argues, a key aspect of the mobilisations should be showing both ourselves and others that it is possible to organise and live differently, without relying on hierarchal structures and leaders, whether formal or informal.

Back issues

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social centres & the g8: boxer or benjamin?

How do radical social centres view the G8 mobilisation and the relationship of mass protest to their own, local campaigns? The AF attempted to find out

In this edition we hoped to bring you a full survey of responses from social centres and related groups across Britain to the G8 Summit, their views of the current condition of the anti-globalisation movement and how worldwide movements and ideas impact on local actions and campaigns. It proved tougher than we thought so this article, based on just five out of thirteen possible replies and some comments by individuals, is by its nature subjective and incomplete. Nevertheless, we hope some insight will come out of it.

Social centres are places where individual activists can come together to develop common aims and agendas, to co-operate around issues and campaigns of common interest, trying to build *local* critical masses that can challenge local elites and politics. As collective and organisational anarchists we believe that temporary and conditional co-operation by individualists and autonomists, such as may be found in single issue campaigning or temporary autonomous zones, are important and have positive outcomes. But can social centres become the seeds of a more permanent and focussed 'unity of ideas' and purpose which could *really* challenge the ruling class, our political elites? How far can they go to form a new society in the carcass of the old, or to help overthrow capitalism? After all, there are dozens of local 'social forums' around the country, places where people come together to debate issues, raise awareness and plan campaigns and actions without the added burden of creating and maintaining a (semi-) permanent physical place that is *ours* and which acts as a *focus* for discontent. Given that the social centres provide a more stable base for reaching their local communities, and collective activity in general, might those people at the heart of this movement have different perspectives on the G8 mobilisation and protests like it compared to individual activists?

The survey attempted to probe whether there was any kind of developing consensus on the role of protest. Or whether the lessons we learned from such protest could be applied locally, *amplifying* the ability of the social centre to challenge capitalism and the state, or if such events changed or focussed local agendas in particular ways. The answers we got were thought provoking. The first and most striking response was the view that some social centres did not have a consensus view of such questions. How social centres should respond to the G8 and the relationship of symbolic or ritualised protest to the ethos and functioning of social centres provoked a mixed response. This lack of any unified view was echoed in the different opinions expressed about social centres as a whole. One activist said her/his local social centre "is simply an extension or continuation of what is always happening" and went on to say "it would be impossible, or a waste of time at best, to try to get some kind of consensus answer to such questions". Stated categorically, the fact that a social centre exists does not *create* any collective consciousness or joint activity arising from that consciousness. This is one extreme. Of course diversity and inclusiveness is a pre-condition for the creation and operation of social centres and autonomists see it as a strength, based on their own experience and of the new activist movements they have observed. As a result, though, some social centres - but not all - remain simply spaces that individuals or campaigning groups create and *use* without them being anything more, a place where a co-operative and consensual society is developing, for instance. Are social centres,

then, merely reactive, taking up the issues and campaigns of people who walk through the door but not having any longer-term perspective or developing a *programme* intended to confront the state in a coherent way?

The second was the extent to which some social centres appeared to be dominated by 'activist-ism' and were difficult to sustain. That same activist said, "I see very little on-going hard slog local work or campaigning as most people seem to skip from one exciting thing to the next. Ongoing projects always seem to suffer from low energy and involvement while people start yet more new things; always re-inventing and duplicating". Our own knowledge of, say, the Bradford 1 in 12 Club or the now-closed Red & Black Centre in Sheffield would confirm this. Yet if we look in detail at, say, the Sumac Centre in Nottingham, Kebele in Bristol, the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh or RISC in Reading the reverse is the case, with strong on-going campaigns and services underpinning single-issue campaigning or short-term actions and protests, with much intermingling of people and exchanges of ideas.

Thirdly, and happily, social centres take the injunction 'think global, act local' very much to heart. Virtually all saw a definite link between the issues we will be taking to the G8 and those that affect us all locally: privatisation and casualisation, anti-war, climate change and so on. These issues were empowering and provided a coherent bundle of ideas around which to come together, co-operate and mobilise. We did not ask a question like "To what extent are such issues *important* to the people you live and work amongst?" since that wasn't the point of the survey. We were seeking instead the view of social centre activists of the relevance of symbolic protest to what they do. At an extreme, one activist expressed the fear that we could be nothing more than "middle-class white kids playing at revolutionaries while actually doing little more than pissing, smug in our 'party and protest' ghetto". Happily, more responses were at the other end of the spectrum. One said such protest was "integrated to my own work. It is my work" and advocated "undermining the global economic system [by] personal actions such as non-financial exchange, own grown food, buying locally or fairtrade". The personal is political, the local can indeed be global. One centre had moved closer to its 'community' and as a result had begun "hosting meetings to fight post office and swimming pool closures, local anti-fascist meetings, becoming a space for food hygiene courses and gardening workshops for disadvantaged schools in the area where the centre is based, providing a cheap bar and café where you can encounter local and national radical literature, catering on local demos, collection point for food for asylum-seekers" and so on. It's a picture that closely resembles the *sindicos* of the Spanish anarchists (which had a revolutionary potential) but also many community and trade union centres (which are primarily welfarist and reformist).

What G8 protest meant locally displayed a similar pattern of divergent responses. For some their response to G8 was ritualistic and logistical; it was about getting there, doing what had to be done and coming home again. For some it was a 'distraction', for others re-energising but with the danger of deflation longer-term, for still more a means to build closer networks and relationships. But many *did* think they would return stronger in terms of their local campaigns or community work, that such protest was a necessary *extension* of local action even if its effects were chiefly in the here and now and longer-term impacts on policy less difficult to predict.

Some social centres do have common long-term political aims that provide common purpose and a unifying spirit. Others simply 'enable' political and campaigning work to occur but without themselves possessing an agenda which is consciously pursued. We're aware, of course, of centres that have collapsed or closed precisely because the core or founding group felt they were being overworked by 'the movement', people who did the exciting stuff but not the 'shit work'. And because they can be sometimes merely 'spaces' or 'zones' where things happen (or don't), there is very little practical or purposeful solidarity, merely association. Some people do some stuff together and some people don't or do other things.

The social centres and their network are important, of course, it's why we keep trying to set more and more up! They develop the organisational and practical skills of people who pass through, broadening political discourses and developing association and some solidarity. There can be support and auxiliaries to on-going campaigns, or initiators and focus points of new campaigns. Their strength lies in their permanence; when they are. When levels of mobilization fall, people or issues move on, the social centres carry on, providing a continuity of knowledge, experience, networks, association and just plain people. This enables them to survive but does it enable us to prosper, as a movement?

The Spanish anarchists developed perspectives and a manifesto that struck chords with sections of the working class. They then used their trade unions, political groups, newspapers, town, village and neighbourhood meetings and their sindicos to spread that agenda amongst any who would listen, developing centres and cultures of resistance organically but above all *coherently* and connectedly, making maximum use of the benefits of association and solidarity. This enabled them to push forward with their political agenda and gave them resilience under pressure. But many social centres today don't have any unifying vision, merely aggregates of people, co-operating or not, agreeing or disagreeing. One activist did say "we have to know what alternative system we want and try to live it". Living the alternative [if we can] can offer individual and group solutions but never a solution to the problem of our social relationship to capitalism. More important is the idea that we focus on that 'alternative system', a system that offers global solutions to war, destruction of the planet, oppression and exploitation rather than simple protest and opposition. Until such a politics becomes universal and until we develop unity around a common set of alternative systems we may continue to protest but struggle to progress.

Social centre survey

1. Name of your local centre
2. As a social centre do you participate in national or international protest actions or gatherings e.g. Stop The War, Anti G8, European Social Forum etc?
3. What positive benefits are there in participating in such events and protests?
4. If you participate, what priorities do you take with you? For instance challenging world elites, raising awareness of the issues, solidarity with other protesters etc.
5. To what extent does mass protest at such events challenge or change agendas or affect the pace or direction of change?
6. What is the connection, if any, between participation in such events and your local work and organising?
7. Does the opportunity for protest and the profile it gives our movement and issues significantly benefit local work and campaigning or is it a distraction from local work?
8. Are you planning local actions or activities to coincide with the G8 Summit? If so, what kinds of action/activity?
9. What are the main issues activists will be putting forward in opposition to the G8 that have a local importance or significance?
10. Do you think our protests at such summits and gatherings are having a bigger or smaller impact on corporate or governmental elites?
11. Do you think there are alternatives to such focussed protest or direct action? If so, what are they?

Social Centres and related groups that were sent questionnaires included Kebele, Bristol; rampArts, London; A-Spire, Leeds; RISC, Reading, 1in12, Bradford; Emmas, London; ACE, Edinburgh; Schnews, Brighton; 56a Infoshop, London; Sumac, Nottingham; Okasional Café, Manchester as well as the London ARC.

national id on the cards

The threat of introduction of a National Identity Card Scheme is still an ongoing UK government hot potato and almost an obsession for New Labour. But why?

"Anarchism ... stands for direct action, the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions, economic, social and moral." - Emma Goldman.

This article tries to wade through the mud of post-Sept 11th paranoia and to counter the fear-mongering coming not only through the electioneering twaddle of the political parties but even from anti-ID card campaigns like Liberty's. What we find is an ongoing and consistent commitment to enforced citizenship, which appears to be the real meaning behind the rhetoric.

In the private sector, especially in retail, market research technology has provided the means to help companies 'understand their customers better' thanks to huge databases created from transactions using debit and credit cards and from store loyalty cards, enabling them to target their marketing campaigns and in-store product lines. Soon we'll have widespread use of Radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags that will help them track goods and clothes we are wearing inside and outside of the store with much more sophistication than is currently possible with bar-codes, and even photograph us when we pick up products. For consumer goods then, Big Brother is surely here already (see separate article on RFID in this issue).

On the other hand, the public sector has struggled to keep up in 'understanding its citizens'. To push this forwards the Labour party has actively pursued the idea of e-Government and has attempted to create and computerise a number of systems such as the Inland Revenue and Criminal Records Bureau at great cost with varying degrees of success - the Passport Service and Child Support Agency systems being notable disasters in recent memory. But in spite of the setbacks and huge expense, Labour seems to have the will to see through a multi-billion pound National ID Card Scheme as a semi-public/semi-private initiative via the Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG) who have held events to attract a host of telecoms, security and other hi-tech companies, along with credit-checking agencies and information management consultants (see www.corporatewatch.org). This is all happening while the supposed reasons for needing ID cards are being promoted by the government, and campaigns are up and running to oppose

Fact file

The Identity Cards Bill was passed by MPs at its third reading in February by 224 votes to 64 and is now headed for the House of Lords. Labour looks determined to get compulsory cards in place by 2008, starting by biometrically updating passports and driving licenses and introducing a voluntary card. Even if they don't go all the way in that timescale, the Children's Bill amendment could easily turn into ID cards for everyone as that generation aged - one estimate is 50% of the population within 20 years. Plus, mandatory fingerprinting as well as facial scanning for all passport and travel documents is looking more likely within the EU. The time to fight is now, and even if the Bill goes through it's not over. The Poll Tax came in and was still defeated here, and ID cards were defeated in Australia and elsewhere.

To get involved with Defy-ID, there are many local groups who would love to hear from you (contact details on www.defy-id.org.uk or write to us and we'll put you in touch): Armagh & Down; Bolton; Bradford; Brighton; Bristol; Cambridge; Cheshire; Glasgow; Guilford; Herts (South East); Leeds; Leicester; Lincoln; Liverpool; London (Barnet/Brent); London (Hackney); London (Haringey); Manchester; Norwich; Nottingham; Preston; Sheffield; Stoke on Trent; Worthing.

From the Defy-ID website:

"Defy-ID is not a national membership organisation, it is a network of groups from around the UK. Local groups form the basis for resistance to every stage of the introduction of ID cards and could involve all kinds of campaigning methods. The best way to get involved is to contact your nearest group. If there is not one in your area perhaps you should think of forming one. However, the idea is not necessarily that groups would be formed specifically to protest against the identity card scheme, but also that existing groups could join the Defy-ID network. Such a group might, for example, be a community group, anti-fascist, environmental, animal rights, tenants association or asylum seekers support group."

them. The picture is quite confusing with a host of arguments coming from both sides of the 'debate', and even within the same political parties. Lest we forget, Tories Michael Howard and Peter Lilley failed to introduce ID cards during the Major government. Now as opposition leader Howard is still in favour but Lilley has taken a more right-wing libertarian position. For anarchists, being against loss of personal freedoms could be seen as a given but, as we will see, some of the tactics of anti-ID card campaigning leave a lot to be desired, so it is perhaps worth a closer look.

Reading through the 'Fiction and Fact' mini-booklet response to ID cards from the civil liberties group Liberty you can just imagine their discussions with a social research consultant. What do the stupid Daily Mail reading public care about? Oh yes: Terrorism, Crime, Illegal Immigration, Benefit Cheats, security of their personal information, and having to pay for the Card, so let's organise our anti-ID campaign around the issues and tell them *it won't work*. Tell them how terrorists, bank robbers, rapists and muggers *won't be deterred*, street crime is *just as bad* in countries that have cards, people smugglers will *just forge them*, 90% of benefit frauds *involve the cheat's own identity*. Some of these may be quite true, but talk about playing to people's fears and forgetting about any kind of social solidarity! When Blunkett or Clarke go on about organised crime, terrorists and failed asylum seekers, they are not interested in helping people understand their real agenda, but rather to market their plans using media-friendly sound-bites. By concentrating on this divisive catalogue of political issues (that drop so easily out of the focus-group kinds of methods which are popular for gauging support or otherwise for schemes that affect voting populations), Liberty's campaign misses the point about Labour's long term agenda which is all about social control.

So how can we really understand Labour's love of ID cards and work out how to oppose them effectively and not at the expense of unwarranted fearmongering?

As pointed out by the altogether more sensible Defy-ID campaign (see www.defy-id.org.uk), Labour's ID card bill could rightly be called the 'National Identity Register Bill' since it is more about establishing a national ID database than issuing cards. The database, as currently intended, will contain not just your current name and address and 'biometric' fingerprint or iris scan, but will track and record any address (or name) changes and include your photo, National Insurance number, driving licence number, passport number, immigration number, and the number of 'any designated document not covered by the above'. The database would be open not only to the Immigration service and Police but to public and private sector organisations. These could be the tax office, employers, banks and credit organisations (including student loans), utility companies, libraries, dentists etc. Such a database could be set up quietly without further input from individuals and without even issuing cards. Blunkett had also spoken of linking the ID database to the forthcoming NHS one for electronic patient records. Furthermore, a database for all children under 18 (to include their school achievements, health visits, DSS and police records) was proposed last year for addition to the Children's Bill following the Lord Laming report into the death of Victoria Climbié, which according to minister Margaret Hodge could 'also be used to support service planning and delivery' (see Direct Action, No.32).

According to the Regulatory Impact Assessment published alongside the current Bill, a 'terrorist' would need an ID card to 'stay in a hotel, rent accommodation, hire cars and generally carry out their activities'. As Defy-ID astutely brings to our attention, this implies we'd *all* need to have an ID card to do these things! This smacks most clearly of Labour's original idea of the *entitlement card* that Blunkett tried to get through in Feb 2002 on an anti-fraud ticket well before the terror scare really hit the UK, which gives a much clearer picture of the real purpose of a national database. Feasibility of entitlement cards was heavily criticised at the time*, but still fits well with Labour's social control agenda since they came to power which, with a good dose of religious work-ethic thrown in, has seen the imposition of workfare schemes through the New Deal and the more recent persecution of long-term unemployed on incapacity benefit. If retirement age goes up any further it looks like many more of us will be working until

spychips - already at a supermarket near you

Radio-frequency identification tagging, or RFID, is a technology that started off in stock control, motorway tollgates, fancy key-fobs and pet 'collars'. Now it's on individual items in supermarkets for anti-theft and tracking shopping behaviours. Each tag includes an aerial and an electronic chip that sends out a code when it is excited by a transmitter in the shop. Both ASDA/Walmart and Tesco tried them out a while back on "smart shelves" displaying highly nickable Gillette razor blade packs, taking your photo when pick one up. Marks & Spencer is now tagging 3.5 million food trays, and Tesco is selling tagged DVDs in some stores and is massively expanding its RFID use. Tagged clothes, another big product area for RFID, could potentially be tracked outside the shop although the cheaply made tags in common use are fairly large and not very durable. The real danger will come when these become small enough to remain as part of the clothing after sale. A proposed European Union "Intellectual Property Enforcement Directive" would actually forbid removal of embedded tags. Permanent tagging is being encouraged by the EU for limiting global movement of products, similar to regionning of DVDs, although this has been criticised by free-marketeers.

There may still be time to act. Gillette and the supermarkets suffered from bad press when they tried out RFID in razor packs, forcing a temporary withdrawal in some stores, and many privacy organisations are fighting RFID expansion. Various groups are supporting a worldwide boycott of Tesco to test the water in the latest fight against "spychips". Minimum action is shopping less at Tescos. Other retailers, with an eye on their profits, are waiting to see what happens so it's worth having a go, even if boycotting of one supermarket has its limits when they are all at it to some extent!

Not surprisingly, the state is interested in the level of control offered by RFID. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is testing "Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology" (US-VISIT) for tracking when and where people cross borders. RFID tagging is being installed in Ohio State's prison system to track its 44,000 inmates, and some schools are already trying RFID-badges on students.

Other examples of RFID creep are embedded credit cards and mobile phones - these can of course be linked directly to your personal identity and location. There have also been a few (over-hyped) reports of under-the-skin tagging, such as staff in the Mexican Attorney General's office and punters at a Spanish nightclub. If you are worried about ID-cards and other forms of control, it's vital to keep a close eye on RFID developments.

More info on the web, in addition to numerous IndyMedia reports:
http://www.boycottTesco.com
http://www.notags.co.uk
http://www.rfidgazette.org

what is it that anarchists want?

Someone said to me in the midst of an altercation over what anarchism "represented": "what really bothers me about anarchism is that anyone can "be one" and say or do "anything they like".

If you look at the history of anarchism and how and why it came to be in the 19th Century and then compare that with the activities of anarchists around the world today, you can begin to see that there is some truth in this statement. This article tries to look at where the anarchist movement is going and whether we're going in the right direction.

If we look at the achievements of the anarchist movement in the second half of the twentieth century we can see that our successes have been insignificant compared to those of the first. The Spanish revolution was a vindication of anarchist principles. The Aragon and Catalan collectives worked, and they worked well. Workplaces, services and factories were collectivized with workers controlling the organisation of them. According to Eddie Conlon's pamphlet production increased to such an extent that "In June 1937 a plenum of Regional Federations of Peasants was held. Its aim was the formation of a national federation "for the co-ordination and extension of the collectivist movement and also to ensure an equitable distribution of the produce of the land, not only between the collectives but for the whole country""; this was a huge success and although ultimately the revolution was lost our theory won it's battle against those who held it up as nothing more than an utopian idea.

After the collapse of the Aragon front, the defeat of the Anti-Fascist militias and the rise of Franco, anarchism has had little international acclaim to speak of with awe. Skeptics of anarchism could see this as a theoretical problem; that anarchism is simply not strong enough to withstand the new demands and pressures of a globalised world. In part it may be true. But the reason for this isn't because we lack theoretical conviction, but that we appear to be more divided than we actually are.

In terms of class struggle what have we achieved since Spain? Hungary 1956 when anarchist principles were adopted to struggle against the Soviet Union or the Kwangju uprising in South Korea where students fought violently with over twenty thousand riot police and soldiers who raped and murdered hundreds of people. Paris, May 1968 was one instance, an exciting and inspiring instance of tension between students, the working class and the institutions of the state. From 40 students who went on strike to demand an end to the police spies frequenting their faculty to ten million striking workers who fought back; armed with libertarian principles and common interests they demanded and won, through defiance and conflict, huge concessions. It was the largest class upheaval in an industrial country ever. Compared even to the Miners Strike 1984-85 or Argentina 2002-5, the Paris Uprising remains a shining example of working class resistance.

All this however, ended in a return to reformism. The workers went back to work and the students went back to their universities. A revolutionary spark had been lost, this time through a combination of acceptance and betrayal rather than military defeat. Much like the Miners Strike, Argentina, Hungary and Kwangju, although

ID cards from previous page

we drop dead. And Labour despises the black or grey economy they can't get taxes from, because everyone must be involved in building the Gross Domestic Product of UK, which is their real meaning of 'citizenship'. Blunkett's obsession with the idea of a card, continued by Clarke, clouds the fact that a database system would serve a very heavy state function with or without the actual carrying of one. Bringing opposition to ID cards into the arena of social struggle requires solidarity and we can learn therefore, not just from the broad-based Australian experience of defeating an ID card scheme in 1987** and other examples in New Zealand and the Philippines, but also from the Sans Papiers 'undocumented workers' movement in France that has helped show the way in a country that already has ID.

Let's face it, we already have a sizeable section of the country that is excluded - the homeless, travellers, many poor 'pensioners' or younger people unable to work for any reason, as well as our exploited illegal workers and victimised asylum seekers. Many people are forced, whether they want to or not, to live in the black economy or resort to 'crime'. These are the groups that Labour don't want to exist, since it costs them money or denies them taxes, but they are an inevitable part of a capitalist society that values only work and profit.

Anarchists, who are not stuck in the mire of moralising about a loss of GDP that could in any case be recouped in days by stopping war on Iraq and other military spending, have always worked on and applauded tactics to elude national schemes, like encouraging the thousands of people who disappeared from the poll tax registers at the end of the 1980's. By not caring about the promises of liberal (or 'illiberal') democracy we have a headstart in keeping off the electoral role but more importantly we have been at the forefront of benefits claimants' action groups against Job Seekers' Allowance (see www.geocities.com/ncajsa) and other community-based campaigns. At the hard end of campaigning like-minded activists have rescued asylum prisoners and seen off bailiffs. This is the kind of community model being used by the Defy-ID campaign, and one that should be supported. The solidarity gained in this level of grassroots activity can help build a sustainable fightback that appealing to individual self-interest on single issues will never achieve.

* FIPR response to the UK Entitlement Card consultation - foundation for information policy research: www.fipr.org/cards/entitlementresponse.html

** On Campaigns of Opposition to ID Card Schemes, 01/01/1995, Simon Davies: www.privacyinternational.org/issues/idcard/campaigns.html

concessions were won, revolution was avoided. Groups of activists have continued propagandizing and organizing the fight for liberation, but the general consensus among the workers has and is simply: "Let's get on with it."

Since all this, the Anti-capitalist movement, a decidedly libertarian movement, has emerged as one of the largest organizations of people to resist the spread of neo-liberalism. Anarchists, enviromentalists, NGO's, human rights groups and some Marxists form the base of this decentralized group, which takes its guidance from the 'Peoples Global Actions'. Any group which takes these principles as its core and which advocates resistance to global capital is in effect apart of the anti-capitalist movement. This amalgamation of die-hard revolutionaries and teacup liberals has unfortunately created an incoherence, which could lead those on the outside to ask: "What are they about?" The different groups that have emerged champion many different causes. Labour rights, enviromentalism; campaigns for indigenous people, migration, feminism, biodiversity and genetic engineering, all of which are acceptable causes in themselves. But what does the movement need in order to get where it is going? Indeed, where is it going in the first place?

The Seattle demonstrations against the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation, an organisation responsible for pushing the free trade agenda, were brought to an end by mass action by the state. The police were brought in, in their thousands to attack and dislodge what, thanks to the perseverance of the insurrectionary anarchists involved, became a huge movement of defiance. The subsequent riots put militant politics back on the table, not just for the activists involved, but also for the people who, without agitation came out of their houses to confront the police when tear gas was thrown into their communities. A step in the right direction!

After Seattle the revolutionaries and the reformers went their separate ways to fight their separate battles. The Seattle 'moment' dispersed back to its roots, affinity groups and individual campaigns, only finding some cohesion at events like Genoa, where thousands of people came together to resist the G8. The ideological and tactical differences , however, creates what? On the one side we have Black Bloc and insurrectionary, revolutionary anarchists who see these events as an opportunity to create resistance and confrontation. On the other side the reformists and pacifists who see it as an opportunity to apply "pressure". To form a base where the world and its leaders can see how angry people are. On one side we have the belief in fighting and on the other the belief in lobbying. What is to be expected of this unlikely alliance? When Bakunin sat on the First International and endured Karl Marx's endless diatribes about his overpowering role as General-Secretary and his love affair with the state, a programme for anarchist working class liberation began to take some form. It was a new time in working class struggle, especially in 19th century Europe, which was plagued with reaction and oppression. This new working class revolutionary movement had a logical base. The enemy of the workers had a face, it could be seen and its effects could be explained. It wasn't just them and us, there were reasons and it created the means for an alternative.

One has to admit that Marx is unarguably the father of anti-capitalism. With his analysis of capitalism, its historical development and its philosophical and psychological effects on humanity it is hard to ignore him; his concept and ideas on capitalism were the beginning of a new understanding of the world. When anarchism was put into theoretical form it did so from this specific basis. Bakunin himself passed comment, no doubt through gritted teeth: "Karl Marx is a man of immense statistical and economic knowledge. His work on Capital...is in the highest degree a scientific or realist work: in the sense that it absolutely excludes any other logic than that of the facts."

One of the problems now facing us in the present day anarchist movement is the split in to varying derivative philosophies and perspectives. Many anarchists see the abandonment of Marx's materialist approach as a pre-condition of individual freedom; but what kind of freedom do they mean? With all the fancy names and social and theoretical nuances, the working class are still exploited, we still work long hours for little pay and we still have no control over our lives. Class struggle anarchists believe the creation of an anarchist society can only come about through the self-struggle of the working class. With lifestyleism, the belief that anarchism can be achieved through individual pursuit, we have an almost religious opting out of capitalist society in return for a life of communal living, enviromentalism and most often militant veganism.

One underlying principle of anarchist thought is direct action, it is the means in which we see the creation of an anarchist society. Rob Sparrow calls it "...the distinctive contribution of anarchists in the realm of political method." In each variant of anarchism this principle upholds itself. From primitivism, individualism and insurrectionism, the concept of direct action, creating through doing, is paramount. Rob Sparrow says further: "Direct action repudiates such acceptance of the existing order and suggests that we have both the right and the power to change the world. It demonstrates this by doing it" Direct action has been a tactic associated with the anarchist movement since the First International. Mikhail Bakunin was famous for his passionate involvement in revolutionary and insurrectionary movements. One historian notes that while on a train ride through Italy he saw a small village in revolt. He called the train to stop, jumped out and agitated the peasants and workers to storm the villa of the Mayor. Malatesta, another First International regular was also prone to throwing himself into acts of direct action, fighting with the Egyptians against the British colonialists.

Right into the 20th century the attentant, the act of bringing "justice" directly to those who were responsible for the exploitation and oppression of the workers, was a common thing. The most notable was Alexander Berkman's assassination attempt on Henry Frick, which landed him in prison for thirteen years. Emma Goldman was implicated in the assassination attempt of President McKinley, although later released without charge. She also served two years in prison for distributing contraceptives. Another example of a famous historical direct action was the tragic story of Marinus Van Der Lubbe who burnt down the German Reichstag in retaliation to the rise of the Nazi's.

Anarchists through out history have never shied away from confronting the institutions of the state. In the 1970's the squatters movement directly resisted the capitalist classes greed plans. There were mass takeovers of luxury flats and empty hotels in London to protest against housing policies. This led to organised workers going on strike in support of the occupations. The road protest camps were another example of libertarian direct action, where people resisted the creation of motorways and the destruction of the environment.

But such campaigns and movements are hampered by their individualist origins and methods. Yes, lifestyle anarchists and individualists have built up a partially successful model of co-operation and solidarity. They have created a network of individual direct actions. Radical Routes and other housing co-operative networks allow people to take control of their lives

and create a new way of living. In some instances they have been remarkably successful. The Sumac centre in Nottingham has created an extremely valuable resource that is used broadly by the community. The café, social clubs, children's events and workshops are so popular that it continues to expand and combined with the campaigns for social issues it makes the Sumac centre a prime example of individualist community direct at work, building a sense of political and alternative understanding,

Another example is the social centre in Leeds, which recently opened where you can buy vegan food, use it for a political or social space or use the internet, read a book and generally relax. The atmosphere is great, the people appear quite cliquey when you first meet them, but they are all good people. The social centre is another example of libertarian inspired individuals building something for themselves. It's direct action at work. "Anyone can do it" is the motto and a motto which is inspirational; but who does this ultimately extend to? Co-operation and solidarity of this nature, although desirable usually extends to the inner circle and not the working class at large. Although workers co-operatives can and have been set up, how realistic is this as an overall goal? Can such initiatives, small as they are, provide the means to demolish capitalism?

The working class still have sub-standard housing, they are still forced into mind-numbing jobs which exploit and are betrayed daily by the politicians and businessmen that rule over them. Hyper capitalism has sent people into a consumer frenzy and the weekend seems to be the only escape. Drug taking and alcohol consumption is at an all time high, millions of hours are being lost through people being ill, stress rates are going up and all the while there is the latest this and that to buy. The stress of modern day living and the effects that capitalism has on people are as much the same, if in different form, than a hundred years ago. The community is being lost by the scare-mongering about immigration, the rise of the far right and the depression and alienation created from having nothing but the small possessions you lock in your house, away from the rest of the world. In recent statistics it was reported that more than 3m people in the UK alone were reported as depressed, with many cases relating to financial worries. Working class communities are run down, worn out and full of nothing. Anti-social behaviour has become so bad nowadays that the government has had to introduce Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, which effectively punishes children for being bored. Young people need activity and stimulation. The tiredness, wariness and disenfranchisement of parents and families at large means young people are not getting the attention they need to grow. Instead of dealing with the real reasons for anti-social behaviour and investing money into building social centres and youth clubs for young people the government is waging wars and giving subsidies to the rich. In one working class community I know, well a ghetto if we're honest, there is one school to educate hundreds of children. Every time it rains however, the roof leaks onto the kids below it or collapses altogether. The school has no money to rebuild it, and the council claim they don't either. What is to be done?

The G8 summit is on its way to Scotland. The richest and most powerful leaders of capitalism in the world will meet at Gleneagles to discuss how to protect themselves and free trade from the apparent ever-increasing global risk of terrorism and social upheaval. The agenda at the G8 this year is simply about cutting crime. Terrorist crime, organised crime, immigration crime, document forgery and narcotics crime. But not war crimes, or human rights abuses or the murder of trade unionists or the destruction of the environment and mass poisonings of helpless people. Leaders who have human rights records, war crimes records and who have lied, cheated and betrayed us, while at the same time destroying the planet we live in will meet and shake each others hand, congratulating each other no doubt on a job well done.

The G8 symbolises the elite of capitalism. They are the harbingers of neo-liberalism and the protectors of the multi-national corporations that exploit the vulnerable and profit from suffering, misery and alienation. Resistance to it is vastly important. Genoa was a sign that people were sick of the lies and hatred caused by their agenda. Tony Blair dubbed the anti-globalisation movement, "The G8 circus" in an attempt to belittle the only truly democratic and participatory movement challenging the neo-liberal consensus he supports.

"Creating modes of direct action is crucial to our chance of liberation, no matter how confrontational."

The atmosphere of defiance at Genoa is almost exclusively attributed to the Black Bloc and the insurrectionary anarchists who trained, prepared and organised themselves to irritate, unhinge and provoke the authorities. This idea and tactic is an important one. Coming out in force and unflinchingly challenging and confronting the agents of the state is a valuable tool for fighting the state and capitalism. Wolfi Landstreicher tells how "...anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded." Mutiny and subversion was precisely what the authorities got. Although some groups like the post modern communists 'Ya Basta' and Pink Block wanted to use non-violent means to get inside the Red Zone, Black Block proposed violent resistance. From one personal story of someone involved it is inspiring to see how large, committed and organised they were: "I formed up with the infamous black bloc. The black bloc of autonomists and anarchists proposed to mask up, pad up and take the police on directly. Our black bloc set off about 2000 strong and succeeded in meeting up with about another 4000 activists from Cobos."

Critics within the anti-capitalist movement saw this as a prime example of the "bankruptcy" of anarchism. Marxists and reformists alike were disappointed at the "violent tactics" employed by the anarchists, and saw them as counter-productive and alienating for the actual anti-globalisation cause. This patronising attitude is all-too common; , the stuffy closet reformists disguised as Marxists will always try and make those who resist authority look unreasonable because it serves their authoritarian purpose. Regardless of any mistakes, the black bloc managed to create tension and aggravated the police to the desired effect. Tragically one anarchist, Carlos Guiliani, was murdered after being shot by a soldier.

The organisation for Genoa was, for all intents and purposes, relatively secret. The Black Bloc and the white suited 'Tutte Blanches' kept their activities to themselves before the actual event. But this time the organisation has been far reaching and on a massive scale. The Dissent Network, which was created in 2003 out of those involved in ecological direct action, the anti-war movement and the anti-capitalist movement have done masses of work. It has adopted the 'People's Global Action' principles and has set to work creating what it calls a 'Network of Dissent' to the July G8 meeting. The Dissent Network is a decentralised organisation of affinity groups who have gone full steam ahead to work out logistics and training. Throughout the last year workshops have been organised for activists to teach activists. Research, information and fundraising have been passed to the different working groups who organise themselves. . It appears to have been a massive operation with people from all over the country and the world participating in co-operation.

The Dissent Network has adopted , "a confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations." Good step. Dissent Network, compared to the Socialist Worker Party front groups like 'the G8 Alternative,' is by far the biggest and most organised group and will pose a real threat to the G8. It will no doubt manage to shut it down and create defiance with the authorities on the scale of Genoa and maybe even Seattle. The effects of such confrontations will once again put militant politics back on the table, how long and to what effect will be the

biggest test of it's existence.

On the left, the Dissent Network is criticised by the elitist of the materialist realm. These stodgy old Marxists, authoritarian or otherwise, who see these activities as a waste of time by "youngsters" with nothing better to do, can patronise all the want. This attitude, that 'naivety makes the impressionable youth grow angrier', comes about because of the symbolic nature of the G8 resistance and largely because the working class are not involved. Fine, but the objective of the Dissent Network is not to liberate the working class, it is to resist the G8.

The Dissent Network is most likely made up of young people, mainly individuals with no affinity to a libertarian organisation with wider class perspectives, but that does not suddenly make it irrelevant. Resisting the G8 is an important part of being an anti-capitalist and extending leftwards, as an anarchist. Creating modes of direct action is crucial to our chance of liberation, no matter how confrontational. Emma Goldman points out quite poetically "Anarchism therefore stands for direct action, the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions, economic, social, and moral" and we should agree with her.

So if we agree that the G8 is important in terms of creating resistance and that it is merely symbolic, does that mean the Dissent Network goes without criticism? No. The Dissent Network has done well. We can admit that, but maybe it has done too well? There is a difference between believing the G8 demonstrations to be symbolic and believing that the main contention of the anarchist movement or anarchists in general should be towards this symbolism.

The Dissent Network has spent vast amounts of time, effort and money on building this network, for a symbol. How can this be justified? Individualism? The working class are undergoing continual bombardment from the state and capitalism and instead of building a dissent network to resist the day-to-day fights of working class people, the Dissent Network has spent thousands of pounds, man power and resources aimed at pissing of the police. Was all of it really necessary?

As a class struggle anarchist the picture for me is clear. The G8 summit, no matter how much we fight, how many police we manage to get past, aggravate, confront, inflate and resist the demonstration and inescapable riots that no doubt will ensue are without argument pure symbolism. Regardless of the ability of those involves in the organisation of the Dissent Network, any one who believes that it can be an actual force for change are deluding themselves. They have done well in doing what they are doing, and the days of action will invariably be something to remember; but then what? Going back to the Landstreicher quote,"...what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded" The exploited and excluded are not involved in the Dissent Network to any significant degree. The majority of those involved are lifestyle anarchists who have opted out of society in order to be anarchists. Their way of life is already defined and while they indulge themselves in organising what is nothing more than a gesture, the working class have to deal with state repression without the means to fight back. Once the riots have died down and the media have got bored of the story the G8 leaders will still be in control and the exploited and excluded will be no better off.

"...no matter how many police we manage to get past, aggravate, confront and the inescapable riots, [these actions] are pure symbolism."

At the moment the anti-capitalist movement, the Dissent Network included, is a theoretically unorganised mess. This is where the statement "anarchists... anyone can "be one" and say or do "anything they like"" find's its truth. Anyone can get involved with the anti-capitalist movement and can say and do what ever they like. This may live up to some ideal dream of non-partisan politics but the reality of it is confusion and inconsistency. The anti-capitalist movement has no unifying direction or purpose other than being broad based and anti-capitalist. If it is to go somewhere this agenda has to become specific and clear. The destruction of capitalism and the state can only come about through the propagation of a revolutionary ideal, in context with what society is. Class analysis has undergone many tests, but has never failed in providing a clear answer to society's problems.

What will come after the G8? There is nothing in the Dissent literature that suggests anything. The individuals involved will continue with what and go where? The lifestyleism of the twenty first century will no doubt continue to thrive, pursuing the chimera of an alternative means of living. Class struggle anarchists will have to pick up the pieces and continue attempting to build a wider resistance to capitalism; wider than the G8.

If that's to happen though we need a dialogue. The lifestylists need to get a perspective on material analysis and the class struggleists need to get out of the habit of being so righteously patronising.

We need to work together. The huge amount of finances, time and resources gone in to building the Dissent Network were, in my opinion, a waste of time. Having said that, what we do have now is a model that can and should be replicated. Working class communities are in dire need for assistance. Dissent and the anti-capitalist movement is made up in part by lifestylists who want to challenge capitalism and the state by creating a practical alternative. We can do this. But instead of building a forum of debate and organisation for resisting the G8 and the WTO, what is necessary is to combine that idea with a class perspective. Building a forum for debate within working class communities and organising practical alternatives for all of us that will resist capitalism and the state on a local, more humble level.

The time and resources, money and effort that went into building the G8 would have been better directed to those communities where young people are tearing each other apart because of boredom, and school roofs are falling in because they can't afford to repair them. Providing community spaces for working class people to combat illiteracy or helping families resist the debt collectors and the racists. . Going from symbolic messages, which I admit are valid, to practical involvement in communities are where the anti-capitalist movement should be going. Its focus should switch to things it can do, right now. How do we justify anything else? Those revolutionary and individualist anarchists who are involved in the anti-capitalist movement need to do what they have done to build resistance to the G8. Opt out of an unlikely alliance with reformists, disguised or not, and build a network which resists capitalism and the state on a day-to-day basis. The Dissent Network has proved it has the energy, ideas, talent and knowledge to do just that. They can build networks of resistance within and not outside of local communities..

It is not just us, as anarchists, who want an anarchist society, it is every single working class and unemployed person who is tired of being treated like a slave or like shit, tired of losing out on dreams, tired of having nothing and paying out everything to a system they hate. For every person who wants a better world, for those people embattled in a day-to-day struggle against drudgery, frustration and insanity; for all of us a network of resistance is everything. Dissent must develop towards where it really matters. To achieve liberation against the G8, the working class, the unemployed, the struggling and the tired need to be inspired. They need to realise that change is possible, that confidence in our abilities to fight back is what's required for us to change our world.

After the dust has settled over Gleneagles and we have come back with stories to tell of confrontation and defiance, we have to remember what we are doing. Why we were there in the first place and what can come next. In order to effect any real, significant change, the anarchist and anti-capitalist movement has to become pro-active where it matters. If we can resist the G8, we can resist our bosses too. If we can beat the police, we can beat the degradation of our communities. If we can remember to fight, we can remember what life should be like, and ultimately what anarchists want.

casualisation and flexibility

Casualisation not only leads to lower wages and benefits, but also increases the ratio of unpaid to paid labour, and the intensity of work.

It is a process where a dual labour market develops, stratified and mutually isolated: a core of permanent workers with a periphery of workers on fixed-term contracts, or contracted as self-employed individuals. This article attempts to introduce the topic, giving a broad overview of casualisation, and pointing to some of the broader implications of the forced "flexibilisation" of the labour market.

Any discussion of this must start with how workers subjectively experience the process. The workers who are at the sharp end are almost entirely atomised, forced to use agencies as mediators between themselves and the employer. The assignments are variable in length, but generally grant less that a days notice before the work finishes, the worker either returning to unemployment, or being sent to another workplace. This is an effective barrier to the development of solidarity with other workers, and frustrates workplace organising.

The agency receives a portion of each hours work, leaving the worker doubly exploited, with two sets of parasites extracting value. Temps don't qualify for the most basic of benefits: maternity pay, sick pay, pensions and holiday entitlements are all denied. As a result of EU temp-work legislation, agencies were forced to extend rudimentary benefits to their workers, like holiday pay. However, this was largely a PR exercise. What happened in reality was an incorporation of holiday pay into the hourly rate that a worker received, a paper exercise in shuffling numbers around. Capital seems to have brought about 'just-in-time' employment to go with its 'just-in-time' production.

Low-skilled and manual jobs have become almost totally the preserve of the agency, and here "flexible" results in dangerous work often being undertaken with little or no training. The death in 1998 of 24-year old Simon Jones in a shipyard only hours after starting work (with several minutes "training") was the first well publicised example to bring this to peoples' attention. The trend continued of course, with current rates of more than 200 workers killed at work each year (with over 2 million being killed worldwide). The recent case of the Chinese cockle-pickers illustrated how use of illegal migrant labour, leaves such workers in a hyper-exploited position existing outside any regulatory framework at all. Little is known of the true extent of this but sectors known to be heavily reliant are garment manufacture, restaurants (and associated food industries like the meat-packing plants in Norfolk), construction and sex-work.

Contract killing

This amounts to a ratcheting up of the discipline applied to labour, something that applies equally to those in longer-term work. There has been a long-term change in hiring strategies, with the widespread introduction of fixed contracts in place of the "job for life", reducing job security and forcing workers into having to periodically renegotiate their positions. The teaching profession experienced this in the mid-80s, and it later spread throughout the public sector, often as a prelude to privatisation. Agencies are integral to the process of privatisation and are being extensively used in the NHS, especially in care-roles, administration and support positions. Self-employed subcontracting has long been used as a way of undermining workers organising abilities (for example in construction), and this has now spread to many other sectors. This uncertainty has lead to the longest working hours and highest levels of work-related stress in Europe as workers compete with each other to retain their jobs. The benefits of this to the bosses are obvious: higher intensity of work at lower costs, with the added gift of regular unpaid overtime (according to the TUC, to the tune of £23bn last year alone) and a disincentive to "be difficult". According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the productivity per worker has more than doubled in the last 30 years. There has also been a massive rise in the number of workers as women (by choice or necessity) rejected their traditional roles and entered the job market, and the heightened disciplining of the unemployed marshalled many into low-wage service sector jobs. Deregulation of labour markets (e.g. through weakening legislation that once protected job security) makes it easier for employers to eliminate jobs or replace workers with others on less secure contracts. It becomes easier to pit workers against each other, extracting more labour at times and places more convenient to the process of production. Casualisation and "labour flexibility" have the overall effect of making it more difficult for workers to improve or extend their conditions.

Casualisation as process: there to here

The phenomenon being described must be understood as a product of the class struggle. It is very difficult to disentangle the complex interdependencies of cause-and-effect, as every economic development is a result of the manoeuvrings of both sides. It seems that the process of casualisation is largely a result of three factors:

1. the shift from a manufacturing to a service based economy
2. decomposition of the working class as a political actor
3. increase in investment capital flows

The shift away from manufacturing (with it's traditional high levels of unionisation and strong collective bargaining) and towards services (small workplaces, higher ratios of management to workers, low levels of unionisation) has been a feature of the post-Thatcher era, with an attendant shift of power from labour to capital.

This facilitated the destruction of organised labour, alongside anti-union laws and manufactured set-piece confrontations. A non-unionised worker in the UK gets an average of only 23 days holiday a year, compared to 29 for a unionised worker, and levels of unionisation have consistently fallen. The now full integration of business unions into the capitalist structure has reduced industrial militancy, and consequently the leadership has failed to put up a significant fight to defend their members' interests. This has been a product not only of the historic defeats of organised labour, but also the collaborationist nature of business unions as mediator between capital and labour.

Accumulated finance capital was used to fund both the investment and development of manufacturing plants abroad and the transfer of capacity to these areas. The ability of this capital to be rapidly extracted and redeployed elsewhere - enshrined in neo-liberal financial policies - has brought massive pressure to bear on any remaining knots of organised labour. Workers' demands are countered with the very real threat of the outsourcing of their jobs. The bosses have used this to cut back on wage costs, attacking the wages and conditions of unionised workers, and by reducing the number of workers capable of being unionised further decomposing working class power.

A new role for the reserve army?

It is possible that the shift towards a casualised workforce denotes a restructuring of the terrain of the class struggle. The "reserve army" that capitalism has historically created seems to be under new orders, and is being redeployed as casual labour. The massed ranks of the unemployed have ceased to be as useful to capital now that the working class has been politically weakened. Their historic function was to keep wages down by providing a constant entry pressure on the job market. The effect of this supply glut was mitigated by the power of collective bargaining. As the strength of the unions (and by proxy the ability of workers to collectively force higher wages on the capitalists) has been reduced, there is less collective pressure keeping wages up, so a portion of the unemployed can be siphoned back into work.

The dole arose through the inclusion of working class needs in the social democratic state. With the retreat of social democracy, the state has repeatedly sought to 'reform' welfare. The introduction of the jobseekers' allowance in 1996 spearheaded an increased disciplining of the unemployed through social policy. The New Deal and associated programs have been very successful in forcibly shifting unemployed workers into low wage, low security "McJobs", often socially subsidised (according to a June 2000 Tory attack on Labour, to the tune of around £20K per job). Workers are regularly conditioned to tone down their expectations and be prepared to accept lower paid or skilled work than they had hoped for. The benefits system is used as a stick to make it increasingly difficult to refuse low paid work or anti-social hours, and a carrot is profferedin the guise of the tax system. Through benefits such as the Working Family Tax Credits, people are structurally encouraged onto the job market, often into part-time work, with workers subsidising low wage employers through their income tax. This greater regulation of the unemployed is the flip side to the deregulation of the labour market.

Prospects for resistance

The last 30 years have seen a rapid increase in the amounts of speculative capital flowing around the global capital markets, which has placed another weapon in the armoury of the capitalist class. The globalisation of capital places pressure on all capitalist states to deregulate labour markets and facilitate cuts in labour costs. Attempts to radically alter the structure of UK capital markets as part of a reformist agenda would risk provoking a rapid outflow of capital, something the domestic state is never going to allow.

The prospects for effective resistance to casualisation therefore do not lie in abstract campaigns intended to put pressure on the state to legislate against the bosses' interests. There are three main strategies that may hold some promise.

Worker-Run Temping Agencies

One possible model for mitigating the effects of casualisation is for workers to set up their own agencies, outside the control of the capitalist class. It has been suggested that these could be directly run by unions. In a mature economy with intense internal competition, companies mainly concerned with reducing costs could respond well to an agency able to provide workers at or below the cost of workers from other agencies. A co-operatively managed agency would have much lower overheads than a private-sector equivalent being able to provide higher direct wages and benefits to its workers and possibly providing a site of political re-composition.

There are historical precedents for this. The beginnings of the labour movement in Italy saw the formation of labour cooperatives amongst agricultural workers, which resurfaced in the movement of the Italian "organised unemployed" in the 80s. Similarly, the early French syndicalists set up (or more accurately took over) the "Bourse de Travails"- labour exchanges that provided a forum for political agitation. Aside from the distaste engendered in contemplating managing our own exploitation, there are issues associated with entering into competition with capitalist enterprises. One of the factors that caused the co-operative movement to fail was that it was subject to all the same pressures as traditional business. Over time hierarchy and bureaucracy developed and the radicalism ebbed. For a union to take on such a role may exacerbate the contradiction already implicit within what Negri calls "its traditional function as half-party and half-merchandise". However, the class struggle must take precedence over squeamishness: the question is whether these forms would help or hinder the self-organising of casualised workers.

The Development Of New Subjectivities

Some initiatives have accepted the new terrain of atomisation and are seeking to develop a collective identity based on the shared experience of casualised work. The idea seems to be to attempt to develop a class-consciousness based not on proximity to other workers but on the insecure conditions experienced by temporary workers. Apart from the use of wanky rhetoric like "existential precarity", my personal opinion is that this project is of limited usefulness beyond raising the profile of casualised workers.

Restoring the ties that bind

As described in the previous section, there has been a long-term shift in hiring practices by the business class. As the form of the labour commodity changes, the organisational forms that struggle take must also change. Casualisation presents a threat to the whole working class, not just those affected by it directly. The slow encroachment of fixed-term contracts, forced overtime and the reduction of job security are threats to everyone. If a casualised worker finds a better job, they leave behind a position that another worker must fill. The most promising route for struggle is the development of much stronger links between temporary and permanent staff within each workplace. There are many positive examples of this, for instance the Workmates group on the London Underground and the Telegraph workers who brought temps in on all future wage demands and negotiations. This route would develop solidarity between workers, reduce the isolation experienced by the casualised, and increase the chances of both segments of the workforce winning better conditions.

A long term goal should be developing class forces to the point where there are strong alliances between employed and unemployed workers, leading to the organisation of workers before they even enter the productive process. This would also be a method of organising workers within a community framework, encouraging class solidarity on another front. This was successfully accomplished in Sweden and Norway during and just after WW1, where workers in construction, logging and mining won better conditions through threatening pre-employment strikes.

women's struggles in iraq

The Islamist victory at the Iraq elections of January 2005 show that political Islam is not just an opposition force to the Allied occupation but also a powerful force for collaboration, putting in place a reactionary regime where women will be some of the first victims.

In relationship to other countries in the Middle East, Iraqi women benefited from a greater amount of liberty, without of course a true equality with men. This was not due to the "secular" nature of Baathism, but to the struggles of women themselves in the 1950s, before the coming to power of Saddam. The law on personal status of 1958 passed by the Baathists, guaranteed education, divorce and the right of women to keep their children but suffered from amendment after amendment. In fact Saddam spelt out that in the cases unforeseen by law, the sharia (Islamic law) would take precedence.

The degradation of women's rights really got under way with the Iran-Iraq war started in 1980. The Iraqi feminist Huzan Mahmud explains:" Iraq," said Saddam, "has need of women at home, making food for their husbands and children, making economies and not spending too much, they must help the country to overcome." All that ended up in permanently violating women's rights. In particular during the war between Iran and Iraq, women represented more than 70% of the civil service, but when the war ended women were sent home". Women's organisations were banned outside of the Union of Iraqi Women, the female branch of the Baathist Party.

With the first Gulf War, the situation deteriorated further with Saddam adopting a style that conformed more with Islamic values, in order to win the support of Islamic regimes and organisations. He started the "Campaign for Faithfulness" which led to the elimination of prostitutes by beheading. At least 130 women were beheaded in one year alone, and the figure probably ran much higher than that. Most of those executed were not prostitutes but women who criticised the regime or were wives of oppositionists. Among them were wives of Shi'ite imams, TV presenters, doctors and gynaecologists.

Another symptom of the attack on women was the rise of illiteracy during the period of embargo between 1991 and 2003. Literacy,which had risen from 75 [per thousand?] to 755 with the proclamation of the Republic, fell to 255 [per thousand?]by 2000. This was not just due to the politics of the regime but to the hard conditions of the embargo, where everyday survival came first. War widows and the poorest women suffered the most. In 1998 a survey showed that out of 4,600 women and girls in Baghdad, 16% suffered from severe malnutrition and 41% from chronic malnutrition. This resulted in a fall in women's height. Men and boys suffered far less from the embargo. Saddam put through measures legally tolerating "honour killings". A law passed in 1990 exempted men who had killed women "to defend the honour of his family". So men could kill their wives, their sisters or their daughters suspected of adultery, immorality or for having let themselves be raped!

In the Kurdish region of Iraq that had in effect become autonomous from 1991 to 2003, Baathist legislation on women continued for a long time, despite the participation of women in civil society, in government and in the *peshmerga* (militia forces). Officially, the law on honour killings was not abolished in the zone controlled by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan until 2000. In the zone controlled by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, more than 500 honour killings took place in 2000 alone, and the Baathist law appears not to have been abolished. The Kurdish nationalists have tolerated this practice and have made no effort to alter it. On the contrary the offices of the Independent Organisation of Women (IOW), and the shelter set up by them at Sulemaniah to protect women fleeing from honour killings, were shut down by the Patriotic Union. Opened in 1998, this shelter was supported by European women's organisations and sheltered more than 4,000 women while open.

On the 14th July 2000, the armed forces of the Patriotic Union invaded the IOW offices and the shelter, arrested some militants, seized its archives and funds. Three of the shelter guards and the shelter's residents were imprisoned. A day later a man murdered his sister. A few days after that, a former resident of the shelter was murdered by her brother.

Since the occupation

Despite the boasts of the Americans and their allies of introducing "democracy" into Iraq and liberating women, the situation has not got any better. The veil, considered old-fashioned before, has become a necessity if women want to go out in the street. The Islamists have used insults and violence to intimidate women, including throwing vitriol in women's faces. Rape has multiplied, as well as the kidnapping and sale of women. Price on the market: $200 for a virgin, half if she isn't. The puppet government put into place by the Allied coalition is under pressure from the Islamist groups who take part in it. These parties, linked to the regime in Iran (al'Dawa, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), share with their opponents of the religious resistance the project of establishing an Islamic state in Iraq, even if their tactics differ. The attempt to introduce the sharia was met by demonstrations called by 25 women's organisations, despite the danger this represented. Yannar Mohammed, one of the founders of the Organisation for the Freedom of Women in Iraq (OFWI), received death threats from the Army of the Companions of the Prophet, a pro-Taliban group. Honour killings have not disappeared with the occupation. The kidnapping of young girls for prostitution are equally common. These supply networks of prostitution, particularly in the the Yemen. The OFWI is involved in setting up shelters for women who are victims of violence and threatened by honour killings. Two were set up, one in Baghdad and one in Sulemaniah, in the North. Here the Patriotic Union has made threats against it.

The Kurdish situation

The Patriotic Union is considered more progressive than its rival, the Kurdish Democratic Party, notably because of the number of women involved. But they have not forgotten the March 1991 insurrection, when workers councils were set up. The two nationalist parties regained control of the situation, re-establishing control of the

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alliances between employed and unemployed workers, leading to the organisation of workers before they even enter the productive process. This would also be a method of organising workers within a community framework, encouraging class solidarity on another front. This was successfully accomplished in Sweden and Norway during and just after WW1, where workers in construction, logging and mining won better conditions through threatening pre-employment strikes.

writers for anarchism

The man of letters: Octave Mirbeau

At the end of the 19th Century, many French writers were attracted to anarchism. Some of them were fascinated by the bomb attacks of Ravachol and Emile Henry and wanted to write a book that would be a literary bomb, destroying the foundations of religion, the family and the nation state. For example, the Symbolists celebrated "free verse" as "anarchist verse". Many, after achieving fame, abandoned any notion of anarchism.

One who did not was Octave Mirbeau. For him, anarchism was not a fashionable phase, or part of a misspent youth. He discovered the ideas of Proudhon and Kropotkin quite late in life after having been a writer for Bonapartist and anti-Semitic newspapers. From 1883 he began to change tack, editing *Les Grimaces*, a biting satirical journal. From 1885, he began to adopt more and more openly anarchist positions. He regularly supported the work of the anarchist-communist Jean Grave. He was one of his best defenders in print, following Grave's trial over his work, *The Dying Society and Anarchy*. He gave financial aid to anarchists in difficulty. He used his position as an influential writer to popularise the ideas of anarchism. He wrote "The Strike of the Voters" in the daily paper *Figaro*, where he called for abstention at the ballot box.

He explained the actions of Ravachol, pointing to the social reasons for them, whilst underlining their political limitations. At the same time, he helped out struggling writers like the clothing worker Marguerite Audoux, Neel Doff and Charles Vildrac. During the Dreyfus Affair he was extremely active, organising many meetings in Paris and throughout France, never retreating before the threats of the anti-Dreyfusards. In these actions he certainly made up for his previous life writing for anti-Semitic papers. For Mirbeau, anarchism did not just mean revolutionising literature, but giving himself, his time and his money to it. He was the main financial supporter of the anarchist newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

His works were the reflection of his anarchist commitment. Many of his works describe deprived lives, the absurdities of bureaucracy and the corruption of power. *L'Abbe Jules* and *Sebastien Roch* were two extremely anti-clerical novels. *The Diary of a Chambermaid* is not just the tale of the corruption of the upper classes but of the rise to power of an anti-Semite. Luis Bunuel, the Spanish filmmaker understood this, and in his film of Mirbeau's novel, he shows how the rise of fascism is linked to the ideas and values of the ruling class.

Mirbeau's most notorious novel *The Torture Garden* is often dismissed as nothing more than a decadent novel of sado-masochism. In fact this misunderstands its political message. Its dedication, "To priests, soldiers, judges, men who educate, lead and govern men, I dedicate these pages of Murder and Blood" gives the game away. Why are certain crimes illegal and not others? Mirbeau lists industry, colonial commerce, war, hunting and anti-Semitism as legal forms of murder.

Mirbeau often deals with power in his books. Not just how it is exercised over the individual but how it is internalised and how those who govern us use it. A passionate writer, he was one of those rare individuals who were able to reconcile social commitment with a total freedom of creation.

The activist writer: Ernestan

Ernestan was the pen name of Ernest Tanrez (1898-1954) who came from a middle class family, with a French speaking father and a Flemish mother. Deeply effected by the slaughter of the First World War, from 1921 he began writing for the Belgian libertarian press, for *Bulletin Libertaire* and *l'Emancipateur* and then for the international anarchist press (*le Libertaire*, *Combat Syndicaliste*, CNT). He also published several pamphlets like *Socialism Against Authority* and the *Libertarian Socialist Manifesto*. To support the Spanish Revolution, he started a paper *Rebellion*. In 1940, taking refuge in France from the Nazi invasion, he was denounced to the Vichy government and spent 3 months in the concentration camp at Vernet. Freed from there, he returned to Belgium. There, he was arrested by the Gestapo as a supporter of the Communist Party (a joke, but a very unpleasant one) and interned. His imprisonment had a terrible effect on his health and he emerged physically diminished.

After the war he continued with his conferences where he explained his libertarian ideas and his collaboration with the anarchist press, writing for *Volonta*, the Italian paper and for *Pensee et Action* (Thought and Action) a review published in Brussels. His last pamphlet was the *Value of Liberty*, and the one before that was *You Are An Anarchist*. In this pamphlet, Ernestan uses the technique developed by the Italian anarchist Malatesta in which a conversation takes place between two people. Here, an anarchist, Francois meets an acquaintance, Pierre, who is vaguely socialist and out on strike. Francois talks about the great socialist ideas: anarchism is not disorganisation it IS organisation and free association, Leninism is the dictatorship of a minority, there can be no socialism without liberty. Little by little, Pierre is convinced and ends up feeling more anarchist and revolutionary than Francois!

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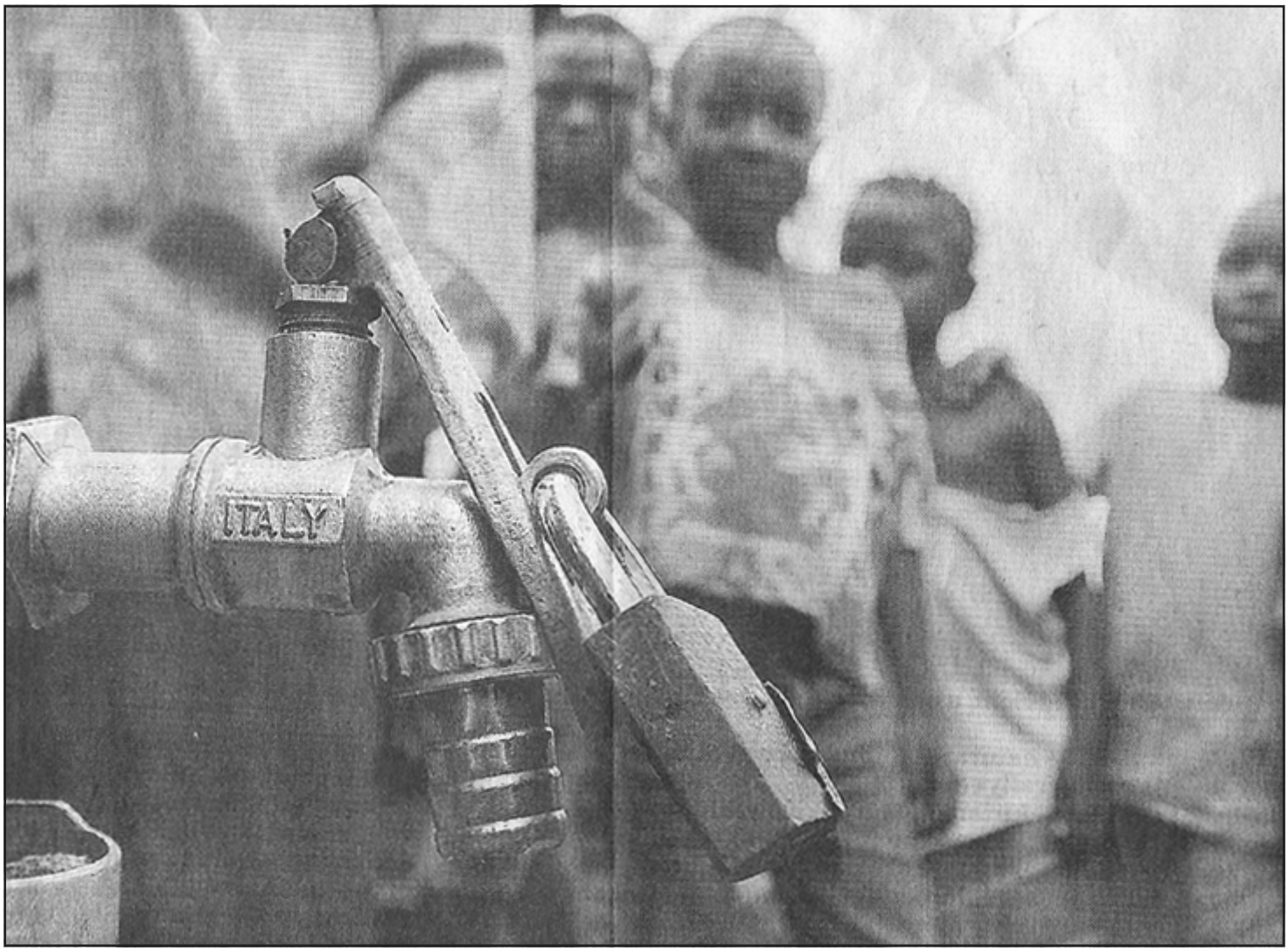
factories. The militant feminist Sakar Ahmed was beaten by her brothers as she was in the process of writing a book against honour killings. Her father approved this act. The dancer Hinadi, member of the dance group el-Portoqala, was murdered during Ramadan by an Islamist gang who regarded her videos as "pornographic", because they evoked love between boys and girls. Other women have been beaten for wearing jeans, or for going to the hairdresser rather than hide their hair under a veil. More than 1,000 female students have abandoned university since the campaign by the Islamists for control of the universities. At Mosul, the dean of the University of Law was shot dead then beheaded, along with her husband. The director of the Department of Translation suffered the same fate, as well as a dozen women in public life who were doctors, vets, and civil servants.

Hatred of women is to be found equally in the religious resistance groups as in the parties allied with the Americans. The Iraqi State is unable to put an end to the endemic violence. This violence is proportionally due more to the criminal gangs than to the religious resistance. And even where they are able to act, the governmental forces are unwilling to do so, because they often share the same outlook towards women, as with the regional government of the Kurdish nationalists.

Only the autonomous action of women allying themselves with the Iraqi radical workers movement shows any possibility of progress on this front. The so-called "democratisation" and "modernisation" promised by the Allied forces has proved to be a sham.

Adapted from an article in the French magazine Courant Alternatif.

the water wars



Water is essential for all life, a finite, but endlessly renewable resource. One third of the world's population do not have access to a supply of safe drinking water, consequently, a third of deaths globally are from water-borne diseases.

The water crisis is worldwide however, affecting (over) developed countries too, whether they are 'water-rich' (such as Britain) or not. Examples from the Middle East and Europe show the depth and breadth of this problem.

The lower River Jordan in the Middle East is symptomatic of this global water crisis. This stretch, which runs between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, has been turned into a drainage ditch by dams and pumping stations which divert almost 90% of the water. Parts of the surrounding valley and the Dead Sea are currently on the brink of an ecological disaster, a 70 mile zone of crisis.

The Israeli-Arab war of 1967 was triggered by attempts to divert the sources of the river in South Lebanon and the Golan Heights. Afterwards, the Israeli state began to appropriate water supplies to support new settlements, as well as towns and settlements within Israel. 30% of Israel's water supply (600 million cubic metres a year) comes from aquifers lying wholly or partly under the West Bank. Since 1967, the West Bank Palestinians (1.4 million in the mid 1990s) are allocated 115 million cubic metres a year, and have been barred from digging new wells, or renovating old ones. In contrast, the Jewish settler population (130,000) are allocated 30 million cubic metres. The remainder (455 million cubic metres) goes to Israel. Egypt offered Israel 400 million cubic metres annually to settle its conflict and assist the Palestinians, but the conflict remains unresolved.

The lower stretch of the Jordan is now little more than a drainage ditch; 50 years ago the annual flow was 1.3 billion cubic metres, today 200 million constitute a good year. Nearly half of that consists of raw sewage from the Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements, the effluent from commercial fish farms, and other untreated wastewater. Gidon Bromber, of Friends of the Earth of the Middle East (FoEME) commented "Ironically, it is sewage that is maintaining what little biodiversity there is along the Jordan. Right now the river is so desperate, the sewage is the only thing keeping the river flowing at times. It feeds life there". At the lower end of the river the pollutants spill into the Dead Sea, compounding an

environmental crisis where the sea level has fallen 25 metres since Israel dammed the river, and industry began to suck water out. Munqeth Mehyar (of FoEME Amman) asks ironically "Is it a competition; who can damage the river more than the other?" As Bromber correctly points out - "Each side tried to grab as much of the resources as they can without consideration of the consequences. It started in the 60s with Israel ceasing the flow of the upper Jordan into the lower Jordan. Syria tried to build a dam at the same time to stop water coming down...[The state of] Jordan in the 70s built a canal to capture the main tributary into the river. It escalated from there" The current problems are compounded by Amman's construction of a new dam on the Yarmuk river, which is the Jordan rivers' largest tributary. The straightforward practical solution is to divert less water. FoEME, is a cross border group, and brought together officials from Amman and Jerusalem in early March of this year to pressurise them into action. No progress was forthcoming, however - "Unfortunately, environmental policies are governed by politics" admitted Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan. Faced by the refusal of both governments to restore the rivers supply of natural water, FoEME is pressing for the sewage to be treated, so that it is pumped into the Jordan as clean water.

Encouraged by a surge of prosperity in the 1960s, the Spanish ignored the fact that they live in a semi-arid country that is prone to periodic, lengthy droughts. Water-hungry Golf courses were built for tourists, swimming pools for themselves, and lawns and gardens that require daily watering proliferated. Farmers diversified from their traditional drought resistant produce, such as figs and olives, into 'thirsty' crops such as rice and strawberries. The result is that Spain is now the world's fourth highest per capita consumer of water, after the U.S, Canada, and Russia. Now it has to build huge dams, and pay the cost to divert rivers to over-developed areas, amid growing environmental and community opposition. Many factors (which apply elsewhere also) conspire to support this. These include laws that give the producers the right to squander resources so long as there is a consumer demand to be satisfied (big farmers have the same licence in Britain). The role of the centralised State is also crucial. Largely controlled by business influences, it arbitrates the management of resources through its control of revenue, command of resources, expertise, and the power to enforce policy on citizens.

In contrast to Spain and the Middle East, Britain is a water-rich area with a high rainfall, and only occasional water shortages. Until the 1990s, water was seen as a common good, and water planners saw any form of supply restriction, such as a ban on the use of hosepipes, as an admission of failure. The regional water authorities pooled access to water resources, and made long term plans for a London ring main, recharging aquifers from winter river water. People and organisations co-operated to manage water resources relatively effectively, and to save water when it was needed e.g. during the drought of 1975/76 when only 76mmn of rainfall fell all summer.

"There are plans for eight new or enlarged reservoirs in the south-east of England. What is needed is conservation and sensible use of water, however."

The Conservative government privatised water in 1989, increasing water costs to the average household by 67% between 1989 and 1995. Company profits rose by an average of 20% to 1993, and remain high. The profits of these companies are subsidised by the poorest people in Britain, those least able to pay. Thousands of households now regularly have their water supply cut off. In 1991/2, in the Sandwell Health Authority (in the West Midlands), 1400 households were cut off, leading to a ten-fold increase in cases of hepatitis and dysentry. In 1994 2 million households fell into water arrears, 12,500 were disconnected. Water companies in England and Wales are increasingly introducing pre-payment meters. This increased use of metering, which occurs more often in poorer households, results in either increased water bills, or forced cuts in water supply by those who need it most. The response of the water companies to increasing criticism of their disconnection policies has been pure PR(public relations). A tiny proportion of their inflated profits is given to charitable trusts that help the poorest customers. This tokenism also gives these corporations tax advantages. In London, the 19th century sewer system is understaffed (water companies slashed jobs after privatisation), and struggling with a vastly increased workload; it is unable to cope with 'flash floods' from road runoff which is diverted into the system after heavy rainfall. The result is periodic discharges of raw sewage into the Thames, which kill much of the river life, and threaten human health.

Britain is facing the strong possibility of another drought this summer, according to climatologists. It has just experienced the second driest winter in 50 years, and the driest since water privatisation in 1989, and a long dry spell is predicted for the summer. This will be compounded by the huge amount of water that is being lost every day through broken and leaking pipes - a fifth of the 15 billion litres that the UK water system supplies daily. On the 1st of April, household water bills in England and Wales rose by an average of £29 in an attempt to fund the necessary investment required to tackle the leakage: they would not consider funding it from their large profits, of course. The water industry is seeking deals with bottled water companies to keep supplies going, and the government appointed industry regulator (Ofwat) could impose supply restrictions if there is a lengthy drought. There are plans for eight new or enlarged reservoirs in the south-east of England. What is needed is conservation and sensible use of water, however. Scientists warn that such droughts will become increasingly common, with globak warming creating more extreme weather patterns with lengthy dry spells interspersed with intense storms.

Fighting Back

In the 1980s, and between 1994-96, anarchists played a key role in direct action community campaigns which defeated attempts to introduce water taxes in Dublin, in Southern Ireland (issue 3 of 'Red and Black Revolution', gives an excellent account and analysis of this).

For thousands of years legal and informal systems accepted and insisted that water was a communal asset that could not be privately owned. There is a long history of human societies that have developed elaborate systems that ensure fair access to water. In Spain the water communities on the Genil, Segura, and Ebro rivers are examples of solidarity and social co-operation that were created on foundations laid by the Phoenicians, the Roman Empire, and the Moors. The modern technology of pipes, pumps, and motive power makes these schemes easier. For irrigation, local control of water is all-important and can be achieved in many ways. In the small-scale irrigation schemes of eastern Spain under the Moors, water belonged to the community and was sold with the land. Continual disputes about its use in times of scarcity were regulated by a communal organisation, the huerta, in places such as Aragon. Here water belongs to farmers through whose land it passes, each water user belongs to a comunidad de regantes (association) that elects a sindico, the combination of sindicos from each zone constitutes the Water Tribunal. These meet to judge rations during scarcity; no lawyers or state laws are involved, fines are sometimes imposed, and always paid.

Conclusion

If the price mechanism continues to determine the allocation of water, the poor will die of thirst. If it decides which crops are irrigated for the market, they will starve. If it determines the availability of water for personal hygiene, vast numbers of children will die before the age of five, from illnesses such as diarrhoea. There are however many examples from around the world which show that people can co-operate to share water resources sensibly and fairly, for themselves and the environment, but only where there is common ownership and control of water.

reviews

A Day Mournful And Overcast by an "uncontrollable" from the Iron Column

Kate Shapley Library - £2, 21 pages

The Spanish Revolution of 1936 initially defeated the Fascist uprising. Militia columns put together at a moment's notice like the Iron Column were formed to fight the Fascists. But soon the Revolution began to go wrong. The Communist Party was one of those forces that undermined the Revolution. It attempted to destroy the militias and put them under state control. As the foreword to the pamphlet notes: "Militarisation was not about discipline or uniforms but about restoring power to the state."

A Day Mournful and Overcast was written by an anonymous member of the Iron Column. This column was made up mainly of "criminals" who had been released from prison with the outbreak of the Revolution. He was imprisoned when he was 23 and liberated when he was 34. He had revolted against his conditions and killed a political boss in his home village. "Many prisoners who had suffered as I had from bad treatment received since birth, were released with me. Some of them, once on the street, went their own way. Others, like myself, joined our liberators, who treated us like friends and loved us like brothers. With them we gradually formed the Iron Column, with them, at a mounting tempo, we stormed barracks and disarmed ferocious Civil Guards..." The Iron Column was one of the anarchist columns that drove back the Fascists and changed the mode of life through which they passed, wiping out the political bosses there.

This lyrical text, imbued with revolutionary fervour, is a complaint against the militarization that was being forced on the columns. As he says "Our past opposition tomilitarisation was founded on what we knew about officers. Our present opposition was founded on what we know about them now. Professional officers form, now and for all time, here and in Russia, a caste.." The Iron Column was the most intransigent of the anarchist columns against militarization. Alas, the Revolution for which they had sacrificed so much was being destroyed and swept back.

The Early Days Of Greek Anarchism: 'The Democratic Club of Patras & Social Radicalism in Greece' edited and translated by Paul Pomonis

Kate Sharpley Library - £2, 26 pages

This pamphlet charts the emergence of anarchism in Greece from the 1860s when Emmanuel Daoudoglou, under the influence of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) of Naples, where he was then staying, became an anarchist. The Russian anarchist Bakunin was living in the Naples area at the time. A number of other Greeks started developing anarchist ideas around the same time and this further developed with the influence of the Paris Commune of 1871.

Patras, a port town, had good links to Italy, and anarchists there were able to maintain links with anarchists from Italy and other parts of Europe. They attempted to form the first local section of the First International. State repression set back these endeavours for a decade. The Democratic Club of Patras included workers and intellectuals. It established contact with other groups and individuals throughout Greece. Soon after it produced a newspaper at least 4 of its members were imprisoned in 1877. Later they were acquitted of all charges against them but this caused some of them to retreat from further involvement. The remaining members had to work secretly during a long period of clandestine activity.

Later on at the end of the 19th century/ beginning of the 20th century anarcho-syndicalist groups emerged. Although Greek anarcho-syndicalism never became a mass movement (like it did in several other countries) it contributed significantly to the first major strikes in Greece and worker's organisation. Groups like the League of Anarchist Workers of Athens emerged. Anarchists were also involved in strike activities in the Lavrio mines. Meanwhile anarchism was propagated among the peasants, especially in the Peloponneseus and Thessaly. Raisin workers organised large demonstrations as a result of many of them losing their jobs and anarchists were involved in demonstrations organised by them in Achaia and Ilia. The anarchists of Pyrgos were also involved in peasant revolts and organised public debates in the villages. However, reformist ideas became dominant in this period in Greek history, and anarchism never took off the way it had in other Mediterranean countries. This little known chapter of anarchist history describes the pioneers of anarchism in Greece, where a new anarchist movement began to emerge and grow after the fall of the Colonels' dictatorship in the 70s.

The London Years by Rudolf Rocker

AK Press/Five Leaves - £14.99, 228 pages

This book, long out of print, has made a welcome return, and is published at the same time as another reprint, Bill Fishman's East London Jewish Radicals. It was written by Rudolf Rocker, a gentile German who became involved in the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement of Britain. Not only did Rocker animate the highly popular newspaper *Der Arbeter Fraint*, he was also involved in setting up the monthly *Germinal* which dealt with anarchist theory and culture "to acquaint its readers with all libertarian tendencies in modern literature and contemporary thought". Interned during the First World War he spent the rest of his life in Holland, Germany and the USA. The thriving movement that he had helped build (in London, but also in Leeds, Manchester and other northern towns) was devastated by the war, by the number of anarchists returning to Russia to assist in the Revolution, many perishing there, and by the upsurge of the Communist Party. But for several decades there was a vibrant anarchist movement among the Jewish working class in Britain.

Here is described the strike that broke out among the tailoring workers of the West End in 1912, with over 8,000 attending a meeting addressed by Rocker and others. Following this successful strike, many Jewish families took in the children of London dockers who were also on strike. This was one of the great triumphs of Rocker and the Jewish anarchist movement. This active solidarity broke down the barriers between the dockers, predominantly of Irish Catholic background, and the Yiddish speaking working class of the East End. It was a hammer-blow against anti-semitism. As Colin Ward says in the introduction: "Rudolf Rocker's own story, that of an immigrant, deprived of citizenship in his country of origin, and deported from Britain after years of internment, has its own message for another generation struggling with the dilemmas of a multi-cultural Britain".

A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism (1867-1973) by Mairtin O Cathain

Organise! (Ireland) - £2, 42pages

This fascinating pamphlet produced by the Organise! grouping in Ireland charts the history of anarchism in Belfast. It examines anarchist influences within branches of the Socialist League in the 1890s. The first specifically anarchist group in Belfast did

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reviews

Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack. The struggle for free soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921 by Alexandre Skirda

AK Press - £13.00, 415pages

"We part with the feeling that we have done our revolutionary duty. Long live solidarity and unity of the toilers! Long live the third social revolution! My thanks to all of you for everything."
Nestor Makhno's farewell address to the Makhnovist movement, July 17, 1921
The French historian Alexandre Skirda has long been an admirer of the anarchist peasant Nestor Makhno. No academic divorced from reality, he has participated in the anarchist movement from the time he fought on the barricades of Rue Gay-Lussac in the Latin Quarter of Paris in May 1968. He is an historian devoted to anarchism and this is probably his greatest book.
In an exceedingly well-researched book, Skirda uses his knowledge of both Ukrainian and Russian (his father was Ukrainian, his mother Russian) to source material in those languages. The book, first written in 1982, went through three editions with revisions and this English translation is of the 1999 edition with its substantial additions from material that had recently come to light.
Nestor Makhno was born into a poor peasant family in the town of Gulyai-Polye in the Ukraine in 1888. His father died when Nestor was only 11 months old, and his mother had to raise him in straitened circumstances. He and his four brothers worked as farmhands. Nestor moved on from this to work in a local foundry as an apprentice, and then as a sales assistant for a wine merchant. During the Russo-Japanese War, Nestor's older brother Savva was called up. The 1905 Revolution broke out and Savva started reading revolutionary literature. In 1906 he make contact with a group of peasant anarchists in Gulyai-Polye.

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not appear until1910, when John McAra, who may have discovered anarchism within the Socialist League in Edinburgh, visited Belfast to propagandise for anarchism. Whilst speaking on the steps of the Custom House he was arrested for sedition. He was sentenced to 3 months jail. The conditions there had a bad effect on his health and shortened his life by a number of years. His courage and anarchist politics were well received in Belfast. As a result of his determined work, an anarchist group was set up, supported by anarchists across the sea in Scotland.
Colourful characters like Captain Jack White, who came to anarchism through his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, and 'Slumdom' Jack McMullen, with his hatred of slum landlords, are dealt with in some depth.
The modern Belfast Anarchist Group which appeared in 1967 with the civil rights movement in the North, gathered about 20 people together. It had an often difficult relationship with Peoples Democracy, the broad civil rights movement. Eventually a split emerged among those who took an internationalist position and those who gave some support to the IRA. The Belfast Libertarian Group, who had broken with the latter, continued its criticisms of republicanism, and was threatened with kneecapping for their pains by both republicans and loyalists! Soon after the group disappeared. There this interesting little pamphlet ends. Organise! sums up: "Anarchists have our work cut out for us and many battles to fight, but fighting in the knowledge that we inherit the name and spirit of those working class militants who went before us under the banner of anarchy should encourage us, in Belfast and wherever else we may be found today".

The Almost Perfect Crime: The Misrepresentation of Portuguese Anarchism by Julio Carrapato

Kate Sharpley Library - £2, 13 pages

Portuguese anarchism was a little known movement that reached mass proportions. Anarchism started to spread through Portugal around 1870, but really took off around 1886 with the visit of the French geographer and anarchist Elisee Reclus. It started making strong inroads among workers circles in the cities but also in rural areas like the Alentejo where many rural labourers came over to anarchism. By 1914 a large syndicalist organisation had emerged. The syndicalist daily newspaper *A Batalha* was launched in 1919 and survived up till1927 and the Salazar dictatorship, and its sales ranked number two or three across the country!
Anarchists were extremely active in many social struggles. During the First World War, the anarchosyndicalist and anarchist organisations urged workers to desert and rioting and shootings followed. Many anarchists were deported to deadly African penal colonies during 1922 to 1926, and this repression continued with the fascist dictatorship of Salazar.

Despite the atmosphere of severe repression and a detachment of Don Cossacks quartered on the town, 10 to 15 anarchists met at least weekly. Nestor himself started attending group meetings and he said appreciatively of its founder, Voldemar Antoni, the son of immigrant Czech workers and a lathe operator himself, that he had rid Nestor's "soul once and for all of the lingering remnants of the slightest spirit of servility and submission to any authority".
Nestor served 10 months in prison for his activities. Undeterred, at the age of 18, he returned to work with the Gulyai-Polye anarchist-communist group. He set up an anarchist study group of 25 in a nearby village. The Gulyai-Polye group was informed upon and surrounded by gendarmes. They managed to shoot their way out. Nestor was again arrested. Four members of the group were hanged, another poisoning himself to escape the hangman. Nestor himself was sentenced to hard labour for life. In Butyrki prison in Moscow, he met another anarchist activist, Piotr Arshinov, with whom he was to have a long association.
The February Revolution of 1917 freed Nestor and he returned to the Ukraine to help set in motion a mass movement of peasants, imbued with anarchist ideas. It fought the German and Austro-Hungarian occupiers, fought the puppet Ukrainian

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The insurrectionary general strike launched in 1934 by the CGT, the mass anarchosyndicalist union, was defeated. Many hundreds were arrested, the Tarrafal concentration camp was set up and the CGT was dismantled. Secret anarchist organisations continued their work of resistance and propaganda. The Communist Party refused to support the insurrection, and in 1935 its militants were ordered to enter the Salazarist unions!!
Portuguese anarchism re-emerged in 1974 with the Portuguese Revolution and the fall off the fascist regime. Anarchists started organising again. In fact the only unmistakably anti-militarist demonstration held in post-fascist Portugal, against the Iberian Agreement and in solidarity with Spanish workers, was organised by the anarchists. Unfortunately Portuguese anarchism has as yet not managed to turn itself into a mass movement again. This handy little pamphlet tells the story of a chapter in anarchist history which should be better known.

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government, fought the forces of the Tsarist Whites. They soon clashed with the Bolsheviks. Although sometimes in military alliance with them against the Whites, the Makhnovist doctrine of free, anti-authoritarian soviets was anathema to the followers of Lenin. As the anarchist Boino said at the second regional congress of peasants, workers and fighters in Gulyai-Polye in 1919; "Whatever the cost, we must set up soviets which are beyond pressure from any and every party. Only non-party soviets of workers, freely elected, are capable of affording us new liberties and rescuing the labouring people from enslavement and oppression."

The Makhnovists fought bravely against the Whites. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks prepared to attack the Makhnovists, surrounding them without warning and shooting many of them on the spot. Their behaviour was shameful and appalling and Trotsky, the leader of the Red Army, distinguished himself with his bloodthirstiness, arrogance and deviousness. Skirda mentions in an afterword a secret order from Trotsky that the "Makhnovschina be mopped up without prevarication or hesitation and with all firmness and severity" and that this amounts to "a veritable indictment of Trotsky who stabbed the insurgents in the back and had them gunned down, whilst they were trying, with scarcely any arms or munitions, to hold the line against the White offensive". As he says these secret orders deserve to be publicised as they highlight Trotsky's role in the repression.

Sometimes Skirda's enthusiasm gets in the way of a critical analysis of the Makhnovists. Just what was the relation between the military groups of the Makhnovists and the mass of peasants? How did the peasant soviets and committees relate to the military groups and to Makhno himself? Makhno's haste in shooting down insurgents guilty of infractions without having looked into their cases thoroughly are touched upon and Skirda agrees that this is the most considerable of charges against Makhno.

Skirda goes into great length about the animosity between Makhno and the anarchist activist and historian Voline. Whatever Voline's faults (not least his cooking up of Synthesist anarchism) he was a sincere revolutionary and adopted a courageous internationalist position during World War II, when he was forced to live underground in southern France (which led to a premature death due to malnutrition and TB just a few days after the Liberation). Much of what Skirda says about Voline may be true, but he surely does not deserve this consistent attack on him that adds up to a virtual character assassination.

Finally some words on the translation; Paul Sharkey has done a good job translating over 400 pages into English, but the standard of proof-reading means some blinding mistakes are produced. For instance, the fiery female anarchist Marussia Nikiforova becomes male on page 100! What's worse, she becomes a Bolshevik commissar on page 97! A careful reading of the original French text would have revealed that the commissar and Nikiforova were two different people especially as later in the book there is a whole paragraph on her and her anarchist beliefs.

That said, the Makhnovist movement and Makhno himself are extremely important, interesting and inspiring, and deserve the in-depth treatment that Skirda has given them. Everyone should read this book, especially all Leninists (go on, maybe it will finally open your eyes!).

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these:

SchNEWS - Direct action news sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX

Direct Action - Anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation. £2.00 issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW

Freedom: Anarchist Fortnightly - Under new management! Now more anarchist-communist influenced and worth a read. From Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. Send a pound for an issue.

Earth First! Action Update - Monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12 issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich, NR2 3AL

Collective Action Notes - Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists - Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St- Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them from our website (www.afed.org.uk).

Resistance

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of Resistance means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of Resistance, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to:

'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL.

Better still, take a bundle to distribute!

obituaries

Antonio Téllez Solá

1921-2005, anarchist militant and historian.

Born in Tarragona in 1921, Téllez saw action on several fronts as a young anarchist militia man at the ripe old age of 18, during the Spanish Civil War. He took part in the French maquis during the Second World War. In 1944 he took part in a resistance invasion of Spain via the Aran Valley. He was involved in clandestine organisation in Spain after 1945. He was also a comrade of many of the legendary anarchist fighters against Franco, people like Francisco Sabaté Llopart and José Luis Facerias. Having turned to journalism to earn his living in exile, he began a career as a prolific author in the "Fight for History", rescuing the story of the anti-Franco resistance from obscurity. As well as biographies of Sabaté and Facerias, he produced books on Francisco Ponzán Vidal (the "Anarchist Pimpernel"), The MIL, Puig Antich and numerous articles for the libertarian press.

Téllez himself said, in an introduction to "The Anarchist Resistance to Franco: Biographical Notes": "Any small selection of names among hundreds of thousands of victims is arbitrary.... [But] with the presentation of some names, with their physical image, we would like to remember all those who fell in the struggle against tyranny, in defence of Freedom."

Chris Pallis

Chris Pallis came from a wealthy Anglo-Greek family. Born in Bombay, he received most of his schooling in Switzerland and was fluent in English, Greek and French. In 1941 he began to study for medicine. He joined the Communist Party and was expelled almost immediately for its positions on the Second World War. He gravitated towards the Revolutionary Communist Party which united practically all the Trotskyists in Britain at that time (it included in its ranks people like Ted Grant, Tony Cliff, and Gerry Healy, all of whom went on to found their own parties).

In the mid-50s he took up an appointment at Hammersmith Hospital. He joined the Socialist Labour League, set up by Gerry Healy, which later became the Workers Revolutionary Party. He served on its national committee. In 1960 he participated in the expulsion of Ken Weller, a young London engineer and shop steward, who had grave doubts about the authoritarian behaviour of the SLL. This was part of the ongoing fight by Healy to purge the organisation of its critics, grouped around Brian and Celia Behan. Within a few months, Pallis too had left the SLL. He and Bob Pennington started having grave doubts about the SLL themselves and were summoned to a meeting of the London Executive Committee, where Pennington was subjected to a 20-minute diatribe from Healy, consisting entirely of personal abuse. When he and Pallis tried to leave, they were forcibly prevented and physically assaulted. Disgusted with Healy's methods, Pennington and Pallis renounced Trotskyism and founded the Socialism Re-Affirmed Group, which got into contact with the French libertarian socialist group Socialisme ou Barbarie and then changed its name to Solidarity. Pennington was to return to Trotskyism but Pallis grouped a number of other ex-SLL members around him like Weller, Bob Potter and John Lawrence.

The Solidarity group began to publish a duplicated magazine of the same name around 3 to 6 times a year. The group also produced some 60 pamphlets and 4 books. As well as providing some interesting translations by Pallis of Paul Cardan (the pen name of Cornelius Castoriadis, one of the leading lights of Socialisme ou Barbarie) the group produced many in-depth analyses of various strikes. As a result Solidarity had some respect and circulation among industrial militants.

Pallis had a direct, accessible and often humorous style. He produced interesting accounts of the Belgian General Strike of 1960-61, May 1968 in France and the Portuguese Revolution in 1975-6. But his most remembered works will probably prove to be the Irrational in Politics (which was really a popularisation of some of Wilhelm Reich's ideas) and the Bolsheviks and Workers Control.

As a neurologist and brain surgeon, Pallis made many important contributions to medicine, especially on brainstem death. It is rumoured that Rudi Dutschke, the radical German student leader, who had been shot in the head by a right-wing would-be assassin, trusted only Pallis to remove the bullet from his head when he was operated on in Britain.

In the last 20 years or so, Pallis moved away from active politics as the result of the onset of Parkinson's disease. He left a lasting impression however, and his funeral was attended by many who had been in Solidarity or who had come into contact with him through the anarchist movement.

Pallis and the Solidarity group had an important and mostly positive influence on the British libertarian movement, and produced some of its most important theoretical contributions between 1960 to 1980.

John Crump

John Crump died at the beginning of March at the early age of 60. Best known to Anarchist Federation members and Organise! readers as the author of our pamphlet *The Anarchist Movement in Japan*, he had been active in the socialist and libertarian movement since the early 1960s.

He started his political life in the Socialist Party of Great Britain and for some time was one of the editors of their magazine the Socialist Standard. In the early 1970s a significant number of younger members began to develop a libertarian communist critique of the SPGB. John was involved in this current and eventually left the SPGB after a number of others had been expelled. He helped form the libertarian group Social Revolution and wrote a number of articles for its publications, Libertarian Communism and Social Revolution. He eventually went to live in Japan, but continued to contribute articles from there. In the late 1970s he wrote a pamphlet, A Contribution to the Critique of Marx, which was published jointly by Social Revolution and Solidarity. This pamphlet can be found on our northern website, www.af-north.org.

John was unhappy with the eventual merger of Social Revolution and Solidarity and took no further part in those groups. His next important contributions were two books. In 1986 he helped write a critique of the Russian economy "State Capitalism: The Wages System under New Management". He co-edited with Maximilien Rubel a book "Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (1987). In this he argued that there exists a "thin red line of non-market socialism", which includes all those tendencies arguing for a stateless, moneyless, classless society.

When the Subversion group was formed in the late 80s, he again helped. This time he wrote a pamphlet on the Japanese economy and delivered a seminar at a day school in Manchester.

Those of us who knew John valued him for the basic sense of his views and the straightforward way he expressed them. He made many in Britain aware of the contribution of Japanese anarchists, whilst at the same time doing much to argue against sectarianism and narrow mindedness. His lasting contribution was to help others see the links that unite those of us in "the thin red line". He will be missed.

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letters

Dear Organise!

The article in the last issue which sketched some of the anarchist activity of the last 20 years was very interesting for those of us who've been active throughout that period. In addition to the groups, papers and issues that were flagged up there's a very wide range of anarchist and anarchist-influenced activities which could and should also be acknowledged. For example, off the top of my head (many from my own knowledge): Claimants Unions (at least up to the early '90s); London Greenpeace (a strong anarchist social/ecological group active for 30yrs) including its offshoot the successful international anti-McDonald's/McLibel campaign; the Stop The City anti-capitalist protests ('83-4); the anti-militarist mass blockades and camps in the early/mid 80s; Reclaim The Streets and their inspirational street takeovers which morphed into the international anti-capitalist days of action including putting Mayday back on the map; 20 yrs of the Earth First! movement (including direct action campaigns, and inspirational annual gatherings) plus the whole anti-road building movement and direct action camps; SchNews of course (weekly for 10 years); the animal liberation movement; regional anarchist networks/ conferences (eg the Northern @ Network); anarcha-feminist networks and events; social centres and bookshops networks; the incredible anti-poll tax mass campaign, in particular the independent tendencies and the highly significant Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (which also led to the still-existing Legal Defence Monitoring Group); other anti-repression campaigns and prisoner support (including the Anarchist Black Cross). And of course the annual Anarchist Bookfair (and a number of local ones too) attended by thousands ofpeople, a testament to the wide range of anarchist publications and distribution networks (also including music, videos etc) etc.

Many of the above groups and movements have also worked hard to form local, countrywide and international alliances and networks, and to promote informational and communication channels, and also general debate. But most importantly there are dozens of local anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups (like in Bristol, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Haringey, Walthamstow, Norwich, Nottingham, Worthing...). These are the backbone of the anarchist movement, active week in and week out, with a loose, total 'membership' of maybe 2-3000 people at any one time. Over the last 20 years local groups have produced between them an average of maybe 300,000 leaflets and local agitational newspapers each year, plus organising regular local meetings, mailouts, e-lists, centres, protests, strike support, stalls, support for single issue campaigns and forming links at a community-based level etc.

Let's all recognise, support and encourage those involved and the work they are doing, and look forward to an active local anarchist/solidarity collective in every borough, town and village. By being involved in local issues, campaigns and communities - including promoting workplace and community self-organisation as a prelude and preparation for people taking control of all decision-making and resources themselves - the anarchist movement will earn the respect and influence that we all strive for.

In solidarity to you all out there, beavering away...

Dave, of Haringey Solidarity Group

Writing to Organise!

Send your letter to Organise! by writing to
Organise!, AF-IAF London, BCM ANARFED, London, WC1 3XX
Alternatively you can email us at: **organise@afed.org.uk**

Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

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

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies? German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Other Anarchist Federation publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

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

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.50 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

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

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

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

Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto - £1.50 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

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

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

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti - 75p (plus p+p) - writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence - 50p (plus p+p) - an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society.

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

Aims and principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

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

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aim and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps just would just like to be put on our mailing list.
Whatever you want to find out from us, please get in touch.
Write to our national contact at:
AF-IAF London, BCM ANARFED, London, WC1 3XX
Alternatively you can email us at **info@afed.org.uk** or visit or website: **www.afed.org.uk**

afanasy nikolaevich matiushenko, the potemkin mutineer

revolutionary portraits

Afanasy Matiushenko was the son of peasants from Kharkov province in Russia. Born in 1879, he served in the Russia Navy in the Black Sea Fleet from the age of 21. He started as a machinist and became a non-commissioned officer. He was a member of a secret group of the Social Revolutionary Party. He was called up as a naval reservist on the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. He kept in contact with his group on land and served on the Battleship Potemkin as torpedo quartermaster. He spread propaganda among the crew of the Potemkin and other ships of the Black Sea Fleet and succeeded in forming several revolutionary cells. Rudolf Rocker, who met him, describes him as a "good-natured, smiling Russian peasant type; about medium height, and powerfully built."

When the crew of the Potemkin complained to the ship's officers about the poor food being served, Matiushenko called for an armed uprising on June 14th, 1905. Here are Matiushenko's own words on the start of the Potemkin mutiny. "Hearing of the unrest among the crew, the Captain of the Potemkin... sent the senior surgeon of the ship...to examine the meat. He approached the meat, put on his pince-nez so as to see the maggots better, twisted it around in front of his face, sniffed and said that the meat was very good, that the crew was merely faddy and therefore did not want to eat it. All that was necessary was to wash off the maggots with water, and the meat would be excellent... Captain Golikov ordered a sentry to be stationed by the meat...the sentry was instructed to write down the names of all who came to look at the meat, and afterwards to report them to the Captain."

The captain ordered that the ringleaders be shot. Matiushenko appealed to the guard with the words: "Comrades, don't forget your oath, don't shoot at our own men." The muzzles of the rifles dropped to the deck - they had refused to shoot. Matiushenko shouted: "Comrades, look what they are doing to our fellows! Grab rifles and cartridges, shoot them down, the swine." The sailors rushed to the gun deck, seized rifles, loaded them and ran out to their comrades who stood surrounded by the guard. Captain Golikov threw himself on Matiushenko with the order "Drop your weapons". Matiushenko replied "I will drop my weapons when I am no longer a living being but a corpse. Get off the ship. This is the people's ship and not yours." Matiushenko found Chief Officer Giliarovsky with a rifle in his hand, standing over the corpse of the sailor Vakulinchuk, who had been killed by him, and had been among those sentenced to be shot. Gilliarovsky shot at Matiushenko, missed and turned to run. Matiushenko shot him down. The officers were thrown overboard. Matiushenko was elected chairman of the Ship Committee. The Potemkin sailed into Odessa harbour. A revolt had broken out in the city. A mass of workers welcomed the Potemkin. Vakulinchuk's body was brought on shore and surrounded by a huge crowd. As events unfolded, soldiers and police fired on the crowd, killing 2,000. The following morning, the funeral of Vakulinchuk took place. The authorities, terrified at further unrest, agreed immunity to sailors' delegates to head the procession, including Matiushenko. In the evening, the Potemkin fired five shells at the Town Theatre where the Military Council was meeting. A spy on board deliberately misaimed the shells. The Black Sea squadron was now sent from Sevastopol to quell the mutiny. The Potemkin ship committee went by their accompanying torpedo boat to one of the cruisers, the George, arrested the officers and put them ashore. The crew of the George joined the mutiny. However, unreliable petty officers left on board the George succeeded in persuading the crew to change their mind. The Potemkin was forced to sail to Constanta in Romania, where the mutineers scuppered it and sought refuge ashore.

After the revolt ended, Matiushenko moved from Romania to Switzerland. He became a member of the United Sailors' Committee and lived in Romania in 1906. In 1907 he went to France, where he became involved in anarcho-syndicalist activity in Paris. He visited London and met with anarchists like the Russian Piotr Kropotkin and the German Rudolf Rocker, who organised among the Jewish workers of the East End of London. Kropotkin's Russian language paper, Listki Chlieb I Wolia had its printing office in the same apartment block of Dunstan Houses in Stepney where Rocker and many Jewish anarchists lived.

Matiushenko felt unhappy and out of touch in London. He moved from there to Canada but felt driven to return to Russia. He returned to England. His friends there warned him of the dangers he would face if he returned to Russia. He refused to listen to this advice. In June 1907 he returned to Russia, intending to carry out anarchist communist activity in the city of Odessa. On July 3rd of that year he was arrested in Nikolaev. A military court convicted him of being an anarchist-communist and sentenced him to death (he was one of the 167 anarchists and anarchist "sympathisers" tried in Odessa during 1906-7 of whom 30 were hanged). He was hanged in Sevastopol on October 20th, 1907. He died like the brave man he was.