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Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation

Issue 76 - Spring 2011

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

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

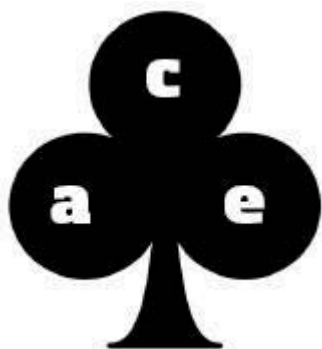
As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 14th August 2011. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!



**Anarchist Communist
Editions**

Anarchist Federation local groups and contacts

Scotland/Alba

scotland@afed.org.uk
<http://scotlandaf.wordpress.com/>

Aberdeen

aberdeen@afed.org.uk

Edinburgh & the Lothians

edinburgh@afed.org.uk

Glasgow

glasgow@afed.org.uk

Stirling

stirling@afed.org.uk

Wales/Cymru

cardiff@afed.org.uk
wales@afed.org.uk

England (and all other areas)

BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX,
England, UK
info@afed.org.uk

Birmingham AF (including West Midlands)

birmingham@afed.org.uk

Brighton AF (including Lewes)

brighton@afed.org.uk

Bristol AF

bristol@afed.org.uk
<http://bristolaf.wordpress.com/>

East Anglia AF (including Norwich & Cambs)

eastanglia@afed.org.uk

Hereford AF (including Herefordshire)

hereford@afed.org.uk
www.afed.org.uk/hereford

Hull AF

hull@afed.org.uk
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Kent AF

East Kent
eastkent@afed.org.uk

Lancashire AF

lancs@af-north.org

Leicester AF

leicester@afed.org.uk

Leeds AF

leeds@af-north.org
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Lincoln AF

lincoln@afed.org.uk

Liverpool AF (including Merseyside)

c/o News From Nowhere Bookshop 96
Bold Street
Liverpool L1.
liverpool@af-north.org

London AF

BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX,
England, UK
london@afed.org.uk

Manchester AF

c/o News From Nowhere Bookshop
96 Bold Street
Liverpool, L1.
manchester@af-north.org
<http://www.af-north.org/>

Newcastle AF (including Tyneside)

Anarchist Federation, PO Box ITA, New-
castle Upon Tyne, NE99 1TA
newcastle@af-north.org

Nottingham AF (including Notts)

Box AF c/o The Sumac Centre 245 Glad-
stone Street
Nottingham
NG7 6HX
nottingham@afed.org.uk
mansfield@afed.org.uk
<http://www.afed.org.uk/nottingham/>

Organise! editors

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

Resistance editors

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

Sheffield AF

sheffield@af-north.org
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Surrey and Hants AF

surreyhants@afed.org.uk

Worcester AF

worcester@afed.org.uk

York AF

york@af-north.org



Organise! Issue 76 - Spring 2011

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

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Subscriptions

Single issues £3.50 (£4.00 non-UK) inc. postage & packaging.

Annual subscriptions to *Organise!* (two issues) are available for: £5.00 inc. postage & packaging (£6.00 non-UK).

£10.00 supporters

£5.00 to pay for a prisoner’s subscription (£6.00 non-UK)

£15.00 institutions

£10.00 for a joint subscription to *Organise!* and *Resistance* (UK only).

£6.00 (UK only) *Resistance* sub.
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UK Un-masked and the New Kids on the Bloc.



Since around the time when we published *Organise!* #75, October 2010, it is fair to say that anarchists in Britain have been most visibly active on one issue primarily: the Cuts. The ConDems' vision for the future featured heavily in that issue and has dominated our activity since (see our website for

accounts of local activity and national propaganda). In this issue we deal initially with what was arguably the culmination of the first phase of the struggle, the huge march against Cuts on March 26th in London, the 'March for the Alternative' called by the T.U.C. We explore issues it

raised within the wider anti-cuts movement about civil disobedience and direct action, and the occupation and destruction of private property. It is written with a view to making anarchist views of the events of the day more understandable to other sorts of people on the march, such as

people identifying primarily as workers, trade unionists and service users, who are now scouring anarchist media for explanations. We also evaluate UK Uncut and the Black Bloc from an anarchist-communist perspective. We address the groups of people above as an anarchist organisation with members in all of them.

Marching for the Alternative.

Trades unionists and everyone else in the anti-cuts movement were dismayed last Autumn when the T.U.C. announced that it would wait until March to facilitate what we all knew would be the biggest march in Britain since the demonstrations against the war in Iraq in 2003. It is the only body big enough to organise something on this scale, and its constituent unions are the only groups able to lay on the hundreds of coaches, and even several trains, that brought people from the four corners of the British Isles to London. But this frustration in itself had helped to build the movement at a local level. All the T.U.C. had done by calling for a march rather than industrial action was to cop out anyway. The feeling of dismay led union activists to muck in with service users, claimants and the rest and get on with the job of fighting the cuts without waiting for anyone to lead us. By the time the march came around, the campaigns were in full swing, and so was the vibe on the day.

It almost didn't matter that no one, least of all the T.U.C., was able to express properly what the 'alternative' actually is. The overwhelming feeling on the march was that this was only the beginning. The extent of the destructive social policies being forced upon us is entirely unprecedented, and

Friends texting marchers behind them from Hyde Park were bemused; where was the real opposition? Where were those who would heckle the Labour hypocrites? Was this really the culmination of the march?

they are coming at us so thick and fast that it feels impossible to keep track of them (this is no accident of course) never mind come up with a coherent alternative that everyone fighting the cuts would agree on. Instead, the way the working class is responding is to attempt to fight the cuts and salvage what we can at a local level. But at a national level, not only does no one single strategy dominate, but this is probably a good thing at this stage. No one has managed to stitch up 'the alternative' and so dialogue about it is not only possible but still centrally important. The main point of the march, therefore, was to make our anger known, and furiously determined people did this in various ways according to what they understand the point of protest to be.

The appearance in Hyde Park of Ed Milliband and other apologists for the Cuts was incongruous on a grass-roots march of people who were screwed over by New Labour long before the Tories' new offensive. Friends texting marchers behind them from Hyde Park were bemused; where was the real opposition? Where were those who would heckle the Labour hypocrites? Was this really the culmination of the march?

Their friends were very possibly in the West End, either engaged in or cheering on the various forms of direct action striking at the heart of the problem, both symbolically and actually. As has happened on many demos, but not always with the press exposure it had on the 26th, the West End was, well, if not exactly alight, certainly warming up. The banks fell one by one, surprisingly easily. The Ritz and the elite car showrooms fell too. But these sights paled in comparison with seeing Fortnum and Mason occupied by UK Uncut. This was the mother of all short-lived occupations! The gregarious jollity of the spectacle put on for on-lookers was fantastic. Marchers saw anarchist flags waved from balconies behind which lay champagne and caviar. People pretended to open champagne bottles and plug the contents. Some witnessed a spoof 'Antiques Roadshow' as occupiers displayed pricey crockery to on-lookers from one window: "Oh, don't drop it!"... "Oh, *please* drop it!" Like Michael Jackson's baby suspended from a balcony, it was an era-defining moment.

As individuals who have chosen to speak from both UK Uncut

and the Black Bloc admit, there is a huge cross-over between them. But whilst the style and the message vary considerably, along with various other groupings with a militant anti-capitalist message present and active on the day, what we had was a multi-faceted, decentralised and horizontally-organised cry of rage, against privilege and against the people causing and implementing the Cuts and the social crisis they have engendered.

But the differences in style and message between UK Uncut and the Black Bloc, the most visible anarchist presence on the day, are there. It is no bad thing. We are in a period in which it is vital that new ideas and modes of struggle arise and test themselves. Direct action and mass civil disobedience are the order of the day. The upsurge in class anger that is reflected in the sheer size of 2011's Black Bloc – it was over a thousand people strong at times – is the result of the state's defiant indifference to the legitimacy of recent student protest. Coupled with the identification of thousands upon thousands of ordinary people – many active for the first time in their lives – with UK Uncut and its defend-services message, means that we are entering a phase not merely of highly-focussed class anger, where we have been before several times since the 1980s to no avail, but of generalised class consciousness that is becoming as fearless and creative as it needs to be to bring about real change. We are not on the brink of revolution, but we are in uncharted territory.

This is not to dismiss the vast majority of marchers, the people

marching with their trade unions and as part of professions from firemen to legal-aid solicitors, lecturers to sex-workers. Along with students, community organisations, claimants and service-user groups they represented almost everyone. As such, the majority of marchers identified with the ages-old analysis that it is the economic might of 'the workers' that is most threatening to capitalism. It is, but only if we are willing to strike and do so convincingly, together, indefinitely, and know that we have the full backing of the working class as a whole and will benefit from its unqualified solidarity. If we are a long way from revolution, we are also far from a workers' General Strike. We aren't holding our breath waiting for the T.U.C. to organise one and are advocating all kinds of other action (see our leaflet 'Everything we've won, they want it back' on the AF web-site).

The press, the demonstration and the anarchists.

Some people feel that UK Uncut and the Black Bloc stole the limelight when it came to press coverage. This supposes that had these actions not taken place, there would have been extensive coverage of the 'peaceful' parts of the march and rally. We would dispute this and make the following observations about press coverage.

First, the press cover 'violence' largely because the rest of the spectacle makes

boring press. The people who want and deserve the headlines are the people who spent their time and money travelling to London on their day off and joining hundreds of thousands of others in a mass display of militant anger, bussed in from the provinces. That is the essential characteristic of



national demonstrations in London. But it is of no more interest on the T.V. than, say, coverage of the Notting Hill Carnival is to people who were not actually there.

Second, the main march also makes slightly *dangerous* press. If



the press devoted a proportional amount of air time to it, they would be seen to be celebrating it. The more they showed of ordinary people dressed up, singing and playing music, with the most creative, witty and hard-hitting array of placards London has ever seen, the more they seemed to condone the dissent. If their job was to reflect the mood of the day and cover events as they actually took place relative to each other, the news would reflect proportionately what happened and the Black Bloc and UK uncut would receive next to no coverage. That would be fine with the bloc, because their intention is not to grab the headlines for themselves but to fight back against capitalism with a mixture of symbolic challenges to corporate greed and direct action intended actually to harm it.

Finally, any press, including anarchist press, doesn't cover events 'objectively'. It creates stories and the stories reflect the ideology behind that media. The mainstream press is owned by some of the richest people in the UK. Is it any wonder that, combined with the essential banality of watching a demo as opposed to being part of it, it writes stories about how wrong it is to damage private property? This makes for easy copy. The story is all the more exciting if there is a soft target to identify as responsible. The Black Bloc makes an easy target. More on this below.

But first, let's return to that crockery: to drop, or not to drop?

On 'violence' against property.

From the condemnatory outpourings of media commentators, on the left as well as the right, you'd think this was the first time anyone had actually raised a hand against private property in the pursuit of justice. In fact, given the social supremacy of Capitalism, it is difficult to account for what rights we do have in the modern world otherwise. A few examples follow, chosen from many but somehow relevant:

In *the Guardian* 'Comment is free' the Black Bloc was likened to the scabs ridiculed by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the period of its inception in the early twentieth century US. This has caused quite a stir, because like deputy London mayor Kit Malthouse's offensive likening of the Black Bloc to 'fascist agitators', it attempts to align us with our ideological enemies. As the alive and kicking modern-day UK IWW pointed out in response, their predecessors and other early labour activists would have achieved little without violence and the threat of violence against the bosses and their property, in particular industrial sabotage (see article elsewhere on Émile Pouget). It was the willingness of ordinary people to take such action that won above-starvation level wages and rights to work in safe environments, for no more than an eight-hour day, and so on. Fear of what the working class could do when it chose to fight back collectively was what won it the right legally to flex its muscle stopping short of actual violence – that is to say, the right to establish trades unions and the right of these to strike and picket. Trade unionists

... it was the suffragettes who tore up the West End as the Black Bloc did. On 1 March 1912 'The West End of London...was the scene of an unexampled outrage on the part of militant suffragists.... Bands of women paraded Regent Street, Piccadilly, the Strand, Oxford Street and Bond Street, smashing windows with stones and hammers.' (*The Daily Graphic*). Did they go too far also?

would do well to consider that legal unions would not exist except for the working class's willingness to use violence or sabotage. Did *they* go too far?

Since then, many struggles have used direct action without respect to property. Powerful women are fond of telling anarcho-feminists that the suffragettes fought for us to have the vote we scorn. It is true that working and non-working people, men and women, suffered at various points to win the vote. But it was the suffragettes who tore up the West End as the Black Bloc did. On 1 March 1912 'The West End of London... was the scene of an unexampled outrage on the part of militant suffragists.... Bands of women paraded Regent Street, Piccadilly, the Strand, Oxford Street and Bond Street, smashing windows with stones and hammers.' (*The Daily Graphic*). Did *they* go too far also?

A third example is that of direct action 'peace activists' of the 1980s. They won the argument within their movement that violence against property is a valid tactic, even for people calling themselves pacifists, against US Cruise missiles being stationed in Britain. 'Violence' cannot be

committed against an inanimate object, they reasoned, and property could be sacrificed to stop violence against people. As a result, they tore down the fences of US bases, causing hundreds of thousands of pounds-worth of damage. One group of women not only destroyed an entire US plane, but got away with it in court on the basis that they were saving lives.

But the 1980s also saw riots break out in Britain's inner cities as mainly black youth responded with violence to police brutality. The parallel upsurge in the UK anarchist movement in the 1980s had several causes but one was the disaffection of militant young anarcho-pacifists with the middle-class peace movement's hypocrisy in supporting violence against property on the one hand, but considering the violence of working class youth to be 'misdirected'. Many disaffected activists abandoned pacifism and joined other young anarchists in the class war.

It's all about context

So violence against property is fine in support of workers' rights to organise in their own interests

through trades unions, or in support of an inclusive franchise, or in opposition to war. It seems then, that violence against property is OK as long as it is 1/ in the past, and 2/ in a cause that, in a rather circulatory fashion, succeeded in shaping the present outlook of liberal commentators on the Black Bloc.

None of this is to say that anarchists or anyone else should glorify 'violence' against property for its own sake. It has its place as a tactic, but is not the message in itself. We need to address this because most of what the public thinks it 'knows' about modern anarchists is that they appear to be building up to a certain stereotype: the bomb throwing nihilist!

In our view, anarchists worth the name utterly reject once supposedly fashionable anarchist tactics such as bombing. In fact, such a movement never really existed, in Britain anyway (and elsewhere it was often the invention of agent provocateurs and the police: see review of Alex Butterworth's book in this issue). We also point out that the most fervent historical advocates of large-scale violence, anarchists such as Alexander Berkman, imprisoned for the

attempted assassination of the capitalist Henry Frick in 1892, later rejected it as a tactic on reflection on how little it achieves at such a high cost, not only to anarchists. 'Propaganda by deed', as it was known, did not advance the cause of a mass working class movement but led ordinary people to be afraid of anarchists and to assume that arbitrary violence against people was the next logical step after bombs and targeted assassination.

In fact, the Anarchist Federation and most other anarchists in groups or organisations reject the destruction of property when it is on a large scale, because this could kill people accidentally. It doesn't only scare people, but it endangers workers even when, for example, buildings are apparently empty, say at night. Fire fighters, caretakers, cleaners, and people passing by on the way to an early morning shift are our fellow human beings and our allies,

It must be said nonetheless that anarchists do have a special disrespect for Capitalist property (as opposed to ordinary people's property or even local municipal property, which we all pay for).

not 'collateral damage'.

But it must be said nonetheless that anarchists do have a special disrespect for Capitalist property (as opposed to ordinary people's property or even local municipal property, which we all pay for). We do not hold it sacred and the Anarchist Federation does not condemn anyone for destroying it. In this we possibly go further than the Solidarity Federation, or their Brighton branch at least, because in their 'A letter to UK Uncutters from the 'violent minority'', they question the use of violence against property full-stop and say

that there is a debate to be had about whether it is actually productive. An individual member in the comments on the article specifically distances the Sol Fed members from criminal damage. Closer to our own attitude to property is another comment: 'Violence and damage are not the same thing. Violence is when the Met throw the disabled out of their wheelchairs or attack and kill an unarmed newspaper vendor. Property damage -- which we can debate as a tactic -- is not the same thing and to use such terminology only serves to legitimise the ruling class narrative



being promoted by the media’.

The correspondence above was between Brighton Sol Fed and UK Uncut in the context of the police and press treatment of the latter, wrongly attributing Black Bloc activity to it. From posts on blogs it is clear that at least some UK Uncut people are not happy with violence against property. But the letter makes an excellent case that we are all in this together, and other comments to it refer to the fact that UK Uncut as much as the bloc itself went ‘off piste’ in relation to the T.U.C. agenda for the day.

On UK uncut

UK Uncut has really surprised the anarchist movement and got us all talking. Some of its early direct action was excruciatingly reformist. Anarchists stopped turning up when expected to pander to the lowest common denominator message, that all would be right with the world if a handful of, admittedly very very greedy, businessmen would only pay

their taxes. It’s not so much that anarchists oppose tax (actually we are ambivalent towards tax in the present day, but that’s another discussion). It’s the fact that none of these businessmen have broken the law in moving their assets around to avoid sharing their profits with the rest of us. The problem is that the law allows this, if you have enough money to pay an accountant to find the loop holes. The UK Uncut message is implicitly to close the loopholes, but they are there for a reason - so that the mates of the politicians stay as rich as possible. So the basic message of ‘Pay your Tax!’ is not an entirely coherent one.

But that isn’t all that UK Uncut is about. UK Uncut is the largest grass roots movement seen in recent years and if its message is uninspiring to anarchists, it is far from that to the thousands of ordinary people it mobilises. The radicalisation taking place within its ranks and its spontaneous adoption of horizontal and decentralised organisational

structures means that it has the potential to develop a more in-depth critique than at present, without being taken over by the sort of people (usually Trotskyists) who like to take these things over.

Although anarchists were involved in UK Uncut in many towns from the outset, this form of organisation is not our doing. In fact it is partly a practical matter. UK Uncut uses social media to organise, and this lends itself to decentralisation. But having said that, UK Uncut clearly likes this way of operating, and has used it to carry out genuine direct action. These actions are creative, loud and challenging and involve occupation of key businesses but stop well short of causing damage to property. They involve normal people (including the anarchists!) getting their message across in a way that does not alienate shoppers, frighten staff or break any significant laws.

Why then, have UK Uncut been dragged about and hit by security guards and police, been



In fact, whilst the Black Bloc remain anonymous and ‘get away with it’, UK Uncut are taking the heat that can be applied by the very rich and powerful, and the police are, naturally, dancing to the latter tune.

tear-gassed by police, had armed police turn up at their actions, and on the 26th March been lied to by police and treated essentially like terrorists, arrested and having mobile phones taken? This follows high level discussions treating them as some kind of domestic extremists.

As the Brighten Sol Fed’s letter to them notes, they offer a way for non-workers to engage in economic sabotage, in an ‘economic blockade’. The cost of a window broken by the Black Bloc is nothing compared to the money lost if a bank or West End shop is closed down for half a day. In fact, whilst the Black Bloc remain anonymous and ‘get away with it’, UK Uncut are taking the heat that can be applied by the very rich and powerful, and the police are, naturally, dancing to the latter tune. It won’t be long until they are infiltrated and placed under surveillance, if this has not happened already. That is a disgusting way to treat people making a point that is, by and large, shared by the majority of people being affected by the cuts. This message is still too dangerous for the state to allow it to be expressed through mass civil disobedience, even of a sort that

respects private property in a way that anarchists do not.

We have a few more points to make about UK Uncut. The first is that the way they have been misrepresented in the media is shocking, and we know how it feels. But this is only happening because they are so effective. We thank UK Uncut for their refusal to sell us out in the media after March 26th and will return the favour.

A second is that UK Uncut has spread a tactic used for a long time by anarchists - the attempted conversion of commercial space into a public space – to a much wider class-struggle activist community. This is powerful in spite of its present reformist context because of the sheer numbers engaging with it, deeming it to be legitimate activity on private property, and being radicalised by that process. This acceptance of the idea that Capitalist space is potentially a legitimate target for occupation opens up a lot of possibilities.

UK Uncut can’t substitute itself for workers’ direct action any more than the Black Bloc can. In fact both need to find a way of ad-

ressing workers more directly, in particular those working on the shop floor in businesses that we target. When we go into banks etc as UK Uncut we should more deliberately engage with workers. Staff have a role in stopping businesses too and have even more reason to hate their employers.

UK Uncut should defend its organisational structure from people who would take it over. It is directly democratic, each one answerable to the others. It chooses targets by consensus decision-making. It should not allow its actions to be a platform for authoritarian groups such as the SWP, who have begun to sell their papers on UK Uncut actions.

Finally, UK Uncut have opened the way for the return of generalised ‘civil disobedience’ in the UK. When was it exactly that the concept of ordinary people obstructing bad practices through direct action, even breaking the law but not usually property, slipped out of focus? Under New Labour, of course. This again is the fault of liberal commentators. ‘Taking a stand’, or even a seat in the road, or not paying that part of our taxes that gets spent on weapons, or refusing to pay Poll Tax, did not involve even damage to property. But once Labour got in and the dreadful Thatcherite era was over, it seemed silly to go about things the hard way. This political apathy became so entrenched that even when we marched against Labour, against the war, no one except the anarchists were interested in going off the map. What is more astonishing is that so few people took direct action even when Labour made it clear that they were going to entirely *ignore* the fact

that one-in-forty people in Britain attended anti-war demonstrations on the same day. Civil disobedience was dead, anarchists' minds turned back to the inspiring direct action of Seattle 1999, and the UK Black Bloc was born.

On the Black Bloc

But if the bloc was born of rage and frustration and contempt for New Labour hypocrisy, Saturday 26th's 'Black Bloc' was far bigger than any seen in the UK previously. Let's just set out clearly why it is what it is, because it has been badly mis-represented.

Firstly, as has helpfully been noted even in the mainstream media by people who actually understand what is going on, it is not a group or even a movement but a tactic used in pursuance of a strategy. The strategy is to hit wealth and privilege where it hurts using direct action. This is essentially symbolic – how much does replacing a window or cleaning off paint actually harm a bank's profits? – but there is nonetheless a message behind it that is the message that demos have lost; if we can do this – get to you like this – then think what a mass uprising could do.

The strategy is also to make it clear to other marchers that all the speeches by trade unionists and Labour Party members in the World is not going to fundamentally change society, and will in fact probably make things worse. The point is to get over the point that one of the 'alternatives' is to abandon the state and destroy money and privilege. We'll return to the question of the message below, but people get investigated and groups infiltrated for advocating far less, and so the strategy is

also to create group solidarity by taking action together.

The tactic then, is to do all this in such a way as to get away with it. The identification and criminalisation of (unmasked) students and others after Millbank and the Parliament Square kettle shows that this is no easy feat in the age of ubiquitous CCTV, and that this is the case whether or not you have actually 'done anything'. Just by showing your photograph on T.V., they turn you into public enemy no.

1. But if everyone dresses in the same colour and hides their faces, it is immeasurably more difficult for the police to identify and arrest someone, committing a crime or otherwise, because that person can just blend in with the crowd.

That's all it is! The colour doesn't even need to be black – there have been blue blocs, red blocs and white blocs in other contexts – but black is the easiest colour. The Black Bloc wear masks purely to hide their faces. They don't want to hide their faces from other marchers, but it would be very dangerous not to do so when committing a criminal act or being with people who the police think might. In fact

Black Bloc people pull down their masks to talk to other demonstrators, because they want to connect with other marchers. They just don't do it at the time they commit criminal acts. Furthermore, many of the people joining in the jolly chanting, giving out leaflets, marching with community or workplace groups, were in the bloc before or after these other activities. They are not distinct from the rest of the march except that they will adopt an anonymous persona and certain points.

On a *Guardian* blog a comment asked, 'Why do you have to hide your faces in black scarves? There are other ways to hide your face'. This misses the very practical point; everyone has to look the same, and black is easiest. Nonetheless, behind this comment and others like it is a more serious and less naive point. Black is to many a sinister colour. Hiding your face is a sinister thing also. Finding something sinister means finding it frightening. In fact, when we have a bloc on the scale that we had on March 26th, we need to address this as a movement: some people were scared of us. The bloc needs to reflect on itself and see itself through other peoples' eyes. Those in the bloc know this, of course.

The strategy is also to make it clear to other marchers that all the speeches by trade unionists and Labour Party members in the World is not going to fundamentally change society, and will in fact probably make things worse.



Furthermore, the bloc on the 26th maybe missed the point that wearing black is an act of self defence; it is not a uniform. What was carrying mass-produced black and red flags all about? It gave the Bloc the appearance of an army with insignia. This was both thrilling and unsettling. It also gave the impression that the bloc was centralised in some way. Someone had made and given out the flags. Onlookers might wonder, was someone therefore in charge after all? So we have to address the nature of the bloc and find ways to get our message across.

The first step, because of the way the press and to some extent other marchers responded to it, is to make it clearer *who* the bloc is? As noted, the core of it used to be anarchists taking up direct action at street level because of the sham that was civil society under New Labour. We had to wake people up to the fact that Thatcher may have gone, but still no one in power gave a damn about what we thought. As also noted, many of those newly identifying with

the tactic are students radicalised both by witnessing bloc activity on the student demos of 2010-11, most definitely by having their voices ignored after those demos by the state, and also by being condemned by both the lecturers' union (UCU) initially and then by the Student Union itself.

But their credentials as young people willing to stand up to the Tories does not endear them to the same trades unionists, lecturers and teachers and parents who spoke up for them after the students demos. This is because now the children are out of control! They have gone too far! Now they are wearing black and calling themselves anarchists! And somehow it has become the case that by wearing masks and hiding their personal identity, members of the bloc have waived the right to determine their own collective identity. So, whereas people without masks at Millbank and kettled Parliament Square were 'ordinary, hard-working students' fighting for the future, liberal commentators now observe that members of the bloc are 'middle class', by which

they mean, 'representative of no one but themselves'. And along with the press, they also throw in the idea that they are 'unemployed' rather than students, as though through their own choice.

We take issue with this idea that the Black Bloc consists of middle class layabouts not only because it isn't true, but so what if it was? The premise rests on a very outdated understanding of class composition and the student economic experience, which are far more complex.

The new kids on the bloc are the same people who won't be able to go to university if fees are raised. A large percentage is really young in terms of the traditional Black Bloc demographic, Further Education students, who are contesting the end to Education Maintenance Allowance. And a large number are current HE students including many who also work, having no other way of housing and feeding themselves at university. Indeed, only a relatively small number



of students even from relatively well off backgrounds sail through their degree without worrying about money. So, none of these groups in the bloc are privileged. It is no wonder that they share the belief that most 'radicals' abandoned long ago - again under New Labour - that FE and HE and ALL education should be FREE. At Millbank, this ideal was expressed in placards but felt hopelessly optimistic. The presence of this idea now in the Black Bloc shows us that the students are deadly serious about this and mean every word of what they say.

In addition, the bloc contains workers, with the same sort of demographic as non-bloc workers on the march. Some are in skilled and secure jobs (if any jobs are secure at the moment). But most take action in the context of threatened redundancy, family members losing their jobs, and the severe forms of exploitation and underpayment at work that the young experience most severely.

Many are also trade unionists.

This might surprise some non-anarchist readers, but anarchist workers are more likely to join a trade union than many other workers. There is a very high level of consciousness about the need to organise collectively in an economic context as a means of defeating the bosses. So whilst anarchists have very specific critiques of traditional unions, we also consider that if there is a union in our workplace, that is where we will meet other militants and it is with these people that we need to organise. Anarchists will often also be members of workers organisations such as the IWW the Solidarity Federation that are based around specific industries, rather than dividing works according to their function and workplace status, as traditional unions do. It is also often anarchist workers who run the risk of attempting to unionise workplaces that are not unionised. It is increasingly in this latter kind of industry that young workers are employed.

Then there are those who first

got involved after taking part on the G20 demonstrations in 2009. Many attended that in order to express in a creative way their frustration at greed and inequality and, very largely, at the destruction of the environment. They were kettled for hours and beaten arbitrarily, and the death of Ian Tomlinson scarred and changed them forever. So they are sick of being patronised since then and told to wait their turn and leave things to the reformists. What has that achieved? Everything just got worse. So don't tell us to sit quietly in the corner anymore. Throw in the inspiration that was the Greek Winter of 2008 into the mix, and you have today's Black Bloc.

Finally, so what if some of them did turn out to be from middle class backgrounds and are unemployed by choice? Work for most of us is one of the worst aspects of life under Capitalism. Is it only wealthy university students who are allowed to take a 'gap year'? In their case it is between school and HE, and they might travel round the world at their parents'

expense. Given the low cost of JSA to the tax-payer, is it so bad that some might want to be unemployed for a time before, as they inevitably and increasingly must, they attempt to join the rat race. Isn't it the ideas that they come up with and the radical structures they create in this hiatus that their critics really resent and even fear? Their backgrounds could be middle class in some cases, but their identification, demonstrably, is not.

Again, it's about context. Many on the bloc come from inner city London estates and have no money, no prospect of a job, no way of accessing education and, with the new cap on Housing Benefit, even less chance of leaving home. But if these kids were rioting on their estates, many people who have recently criticised the bloc would sympathise with their frustration as unemployed, discriminated against victims of the police and the state. If those kids were masked, they'd be relieved, for their own safety, because we all know what happens to kids in police stations. At the same time, as in the inner city riots of the 1980s, commentators from anarchists through the whole spectrum of the left and to liberal commentators wondered why they were trashing their home area, asking, "Why don't they take it to the rich?" Well now they are. Deal with it.

Anarchist Communism and the Black Bloc

The student movement has transformed the established anarchist movement within the space of a year because of the breath-taking lack of compromise in its vision of equality of opportunity, and the speed with which it took this to

its logical conclusion – we must bring down inequality. Students now joining the movement might be shocked to learn how 'anti-student' the anarchist movement was until relatively recently. There was a perception that students – university students that is - were privileged and apathetic. Class War took the piss and talked of beating them up; a magazine was launched called 'Anti-Student'. In the Anarchist Federation, if a student joined, by and large we expected them to disappear off home in the first holiday and that we'd never see them again. What a different material circumstances make!

But how good is the bloc at representing anarchism more generally? The rest of the movement is small and does not have anything like the impact that the bloc now has. So the bloc is our ambassador. What people think of the bloc, is what they think of anarchists. So again we return to the issue of Black Bloc strategy. Is it enough? Isn't it necessary to build into it somehow the full scope of the anarchist message and have a strategy not just for the bloc but a strategy for changing society? This has to be through generalised class-consciousness and it isn't clear yet how the bloc contributes to this. Is the bloc aware that it

can't substitute itself for the class? It can't start the fight for us, and neither can it win it.

As the article in this issue on Greece demonstrates, rage at the police murder of a young man that turned into a Winter of Rage, fire and fighting, and even to the tragic death of some workers in a bank, was not nihilism or insurrectionist posturing. It has breathed life into a popular movement that, even though it looks nothing like our anarchist movement, is coherent, self-reflexive, and building a better world with workers and others in Greece's inner cities. All anarchist movements are highly literate. It's just something that goes with the territory. But the Greeks use literature in a different way and every action that looks like a Black Bloc action is accompanied by a leaflet explaining what has been done and why, to help people understand who anarchists are and to encourage the public to come to their social centres and squats and see for themselves which, by all accounts, they do.

The bloc makes it impossible to miss anarchists, just as is the case in Greece. So how does the bloc communicate what anarchists believe to ordinary peo-

in the inner city riots of the 1980s, commentators from anarchists through the whole spectrum of the left and to liberal commentators wondered why they were trashing their home area, asking, "Why don't they take it to the rich?" Well now they are. Deal with it.



ple? How can those people 'find' us if all they see of us is masked and anonymous. We still need to work on that, but part of it is certainly having a non-secret face, by being a group or organisation that people can meet, debate ideas with and hopefully join. Can the bloc point people in the direction of more easily accessible anarchism?

Conclusions

People who condemn Black Bloc violence on demos, or question why they did this on 'someone else's' demo, are missing the point about demos. In themselves nowadays they mean nothing because in our obsession with this disempowering parliamentary democracy their purpose has been unclear. Demos began as expressions of collective class anger and they were effective because of the implicit threat of violence that lay behind them. The message was, "We are giving you a warning", and often it served the state best to take heed of that warning, because next time we might not just listen to a few speeches and then go home.

Nowadays it is as though the 'threat' is nothing more than that we might not vote for you. And we didn't anyway! People in their droves *didn't* vote for the Tories and they didn't *win* the election, and *still* they are doing this, and doing it *legally*! How much more evidence do we need that parliamentary democracy is nothing of the sort.

As if we hadn't got the message, on Sunday 27th Vince Cable told us that marches of this sort wouldn't change the government's mind. Let's rise to that challenge! Let's become the violent majority. If we did that, the irony is that we would need to use very little violence at all even to property, let alone against people.

Violence, past and present.

Finally, we shall celebrate the anniversaries of the Paris Commune (1871) and the Mexican Revolution (1911) properly in Organise #77, but tempt you here with two brief pieces in 'The Paris Commune of 1871 and its Impact' and a review of a new book on the Mexican anarchist

Flores Magon. We also analyse the recent revolts in North Africa with an article on the new movement in Tunisia in its historical context.

Each of these struggles for the advancement of freedom and equality have been/ are being applauded by socialists and others interested in meaningful change towards social as well as political freedom and equality. Whilst these struggles were/are undoubtedly contextualised by far greater repression than we experience in the UK, their exultation by some of the same sorts of people who condemn the Black Bloc begs reflection. It is the case that in Paris, Mexico and Tunisia people have taken up arms against their oppressors in self defence. They have declared the sort of society they want, been then attacked by the state or other oppressor, and in all cases become prepared to use violence against police and soldiers if they have to: violence against people, in other words. Why may the Black Bloc not use violence against property in our 'lesser' struggle?

If the bloc may not use violence because it is the case they we don't have it as bad as people in historical societies did, or as people in far-removed places still do, then that needs to be made clearer by commentators. It is therefore anarchist goals that are in question, the fact that in spite of our relative good fortune we wish to abolish more benevolent states too, and go far further than the relatively greater economic equality within our society. Let's be clear about that then, and begin discussion about whether anarchy is a solution. Let's start with just how badly 'liberal democracy' has to let us down before we become disillusioned enough to

effect meaningful change. Let's not wait to start this discussion until the working class is brought irrevocably to its knees.

If the free, affluent world has to be like this, we defend our right to challenge it through direct action

against property undertaken as part of building a mass movement of resistance to the state and capital. Along these lines, in this issue we also note an element of why this should take place ('Throw a TV at your Boss'), of how it should not be done ('A Doorway') and

that such struggles should not get diverted by the sometimes apparently parallel struggles for national liberation or 'fairer' economic systems (review of Richard Mann Roberts's book on Carlo Piscane).

Let us know what you think!

Forward to the General 'Social Strike'

As we go to press, education unions are discussing co-ordinated strike action for June 30th. This can take place legally because of the stage that the UCU is at in its dispute with employers, but there is talk of un-related unions taking action then too. This is a long way from the general strike that which we know the TUC will never call. However, that makes it is all the more important that anarchists - trade unionists and otherwise - should support local activists taking action. Aside from members of the unions in question observing the strike day, it is just as important (and maybe more so) that we begin to put into practice more concerted and generally tactics that anarchists have been discussing. We need to do this from the perspective of a movement able to co-ordinate action and mobilise nationally, as workers, students, claimants and service users. We have a hugely significant role to play whilst the trades unions work out what to do about the fact that most workers are still too afraid to undertake even legal action. That means arguing for interlinking tactics such as

- **Economic blockades**, for example disruption to and occupations of businesses and commercial communications (everything from roads to e-mail). This is the sort of action UK Uncut and the Solidarity Federation have been advocating and undertaking. It includes also mass non-payment of, say, bus fares (see the article on Greece elsewhere in this issue), and occupations and solidarity pickets of workplaces where workers face redundancy or victimisation.
- **Social strikes**, which go beyond the concept of workers downing tools and support for economic struggles. We need these because workers, even those in unions, have very little clout in the current legal climate. Why should we wait for them to kick-start action on issues that affect us anyway? Tactics include sit-ins, read-ins, teach-ins and even work-ins where services are threatened, such as old peoples' homes, libraries, NHS buildings, and voluntary sector projects such as the CAB, homeless shelters, women's services. Also, it means support by workers for people without economic power, for example by dole office workers in support of claimants, including people in receipt of incapacity and disability benefits.
- **General assemblies to co-ordinate this action**, involving everyone affected by the cuts, regardless of whether they work or not. These may be in town centres, colleges, day centres, communities or wherever people identify their collective interests as lying. If they take over contested spaces such as universities or wasted space such as empty Job Centres – both of which have happened – so much the better. They must be horizontally structured and avoid organisational models that would allow authoritarians to take over.

These things are already taking place and being planned. But we are arguing for anarchists making every effort to help co-ordinate such action, because collectively we are so much more threatening to the state and empowering to the working class than we are alone. As such we need to be part of generalised anti-cuts campaigns, because it's all very well us organising horizontally, but we need to make it clear why non-hierarchical structures are more effective, full stop.

So if June 30th looks like happening, be there! If not.....let's start something.

Sketch

A Doorway

A doorway, empty. The door?

Rusting in a corner.

"Security pretty tight then, eh?" a voice- young, arrogant.

"Well, its not like we're gonna be moving in. Look at the place, it's like a fucking prison" another voice, weary.

"A post-apocalyptic prison. Like where all the police have been rounded up by an angry mob and been shot" The third voice, with a certain disturbing edge to it. Nothing more was said. They got to work.

Four hours later. Somewhere else.

"Man, I'm knackered. I need a fucking spliff, a glass of water and my fuckin' blanket" - arrogant.

"Whoah, someone's got to stay up, remember?" The weary voice

again, much wearier in reality than the first voice, whatever it might have said.

"You've been fucking lurching out all day and now you're gonna fuck off" – edgy.

"Biatch, I ain't gonna take this shit much longer, I'm gonna collapse. I'm just doing this as a fucking favour to you anyway"

"I can't believe your egotism. You call yourself a revolutionary?"

"Oh shut up you guys. There's people sleeping upstairs. I'll just stay up then if it'll shut you both up. I need to collect my thoughts." Ratcheting up the weariness levels yet again.

"You ok man?"

"Yeah, I'll be fine. I never sleep that much these days. Just go ahead, see you at breakfast."

The next night. A punk gig in a squat. Scores of young people taking illegal substances, with hair and clothes each deliberately distinctive, blurring into an intense mess of black and dark colour.

"Alright geezer?" a mad grin from a bouncing, studded giant.

Attractive and intimidating girls everywhere. Girls who look like they'd be really interesting to talk to. Who look like you could develop a years'-long obsession with. Are they making eye contact because they like you or because they want you to stop looking at them?

"What you been up to?" A legitimate inquiry from an old acquaintance, not seen in months. Images of smashing glass, blurred roads. The smell of blood and sound of



sirens. Waves of rage, fear and melancholy. The numbing terror of injustice triumphant.

“Nothing much, just you know, chilling” lies, falseness. Who is left who you can be honest with? False friendships feel false. All warmth temporary.

“Oh yeah, what you think about this new government eh?” Mumbling something about how they’re all the same. Do you even realise what you’re asking me? Do you realise what I’ve done?

“Yeah, but this lot are a right bunch of bastards. That’s why they’re tryin’ to kill em. Too bad the fucking idiots shot a worker instead. What nightmare. Now we got the media blaming it on violent anarchists. Can you believe that? As if we would do something like that.”

A burning desire to escape.

“Yeah” A weak voice. But how weak? Noticeably so?

“Just need a piss, good to see you.”

As if we would do something like that.

“We”. The people? The movement? The scene? Our friends?

“Diversity of tactics”. What a joke. A phrase to make you sound enlightened in front of liberals and pacifists when you’re trying to smash something and they’re trying to stop you.

But we don’t condone terrorism.

“WE are not terrorists, THEY are terrorists” Who has not said this?

Those others who use the same language as us, of revolution and insurrection, they are terrorists.

But they are not our comrades, we condemn them. OUR comrades, well, they do... cultural work. Civil disobedience, non-violent direct action. Perfectly legitimate. Of course, if a revolution started, we would join in. Of course, we idolise the warriors of



the past, we would love to be like them. But not literally. Not here, not now. Not in the real world. So who to go to for comradeship? When those who do not wish to be condemned will still condemn? Maybe they would not, if they knew who they were condemning. But comrades have been excommunicated before, on less evidence. The informal processes of judgement by gossip, justice by individual initiative. Sometimes so terrifying that you longed for the old men in their stupid wigs. At least they took the time to think. Of course, that wasn’t an option in this case.

An old follower of Marx and Lenin, a real stickler. Lecturing the room of youngsters who’d long since grown used to his rhetoric. No-one any longer saw him as a threat. He’d had his heyday thirty years ago when he’d single handedly managed to convince some striking workers to ignore the anarchists and put their faith in the union bureaucrats, after which the city-wide labour movement had gone into inexorable decline. But that was long ago. The anger at him had past and the new generation loved to hear his unique perspective on events.

“Counter-revolutionary! I cannot stress this enough! These people



are enemies of the working class!! They have spilt proletarian blood in pursuit of an infantile notion of being able to skip ahead to the revolutionary event from a position of low class strength! Only the careful development of the revolutionary party and it's gradual dominance over the workers' movement is the way forward! Let us denounce these deviationists!" Class enemy. Traitor. First against the wall when the revolution comes. Do people really still think like this? No-one's telling him to shut up. But then... murder is murder. Shit.

An opinion poll in a tabloid newspaper. Glimpsed over someone's shoulder in a café.

"85% of YOU believe capital punishment should be brought back for Treason".

Treason. Plot. Gunpowder. Heads on spikes, bodies hanging from scaffolds.

A sub-heading: "Police chiefs shock claim: This was not the work of Muslim terrorists." Oh shit.

"16 subjects released, 4 still held for further questioning."

20 people arrested, because of us. Because of the colour of their skin, and the scaremongering generalisations made about their religious heritage. And those supposedly fighting the same fight as them, against racism and imperialism, using them as

scapegoats just the same as the fascists. And it didn't even work! When have we actually reached out the hand of friendship to such people as these?

We denounce them as backwards, sexist, as terrorists. Just like our enemies do.

When someone feels the burden of oppression, of injustice, weigh down on them until their mind burns with a pain that only blood-lust can relieve, who can they go to for friendship? Terrorists Anonymous? How anonymous can you ever be? Anonymous enough to admit to murder without fear?

"I think the three of us need to talk" Trembling.

"Why? Are we in danger?" a voice never more serious than now.

"No, just... I have to get this off my chest."

"Shhh. Shut up. We aren't discussing anything, least of all here.

That's what we fucking agreed."

"Yeah, fucking hell man. You're psycho".

Psycho???? What the fuck do you expect?

Comrades? Hah!

No wonder they giggle when the word is used. They think it's a relic of the past, as if modern life is synonymous when individualised atomic alienation. Like fucking liberals.

An analysis:

In the struggle to defeat the bourgeoisie, the spectacle of representative democracy must be ruptured in the face of the masses in order for class consciousness to flourish. The people's natural sense of justice at the death of tyrants will be reawakened when they realise that their supposed democratic representatives are actually upholding the tyranny of capitalist oppression. The death



of a representative will spark the inquiring minds of the proletariat into seeking the cause of the hatred that led to the murder. This train of inquiry will lead to the discovery of the exploitative reality, and its mass rejection. In this case, the assassination was a failure, with the unexpected death of an innocent worker. This led to a contrary effect to that intended: the revolutionaries were seen as enemies rather than allies of the people. The theory still holds, though the new conditions mean it will not be feasible to put it into practice again for some time. The death of the worker is unfortunate from a tactical point of view, but in itself must be considered a natural consequence of the class war, which after all, was started by the enemy. Out-moded religious ideas of absolute morality play no part in revolutionary struggle. So why do I feel like this?

This newspaper is almost one hundred pages long. Almost thirty of them are about me. About how they are coming to get me. About how all right-thinking people should want me dead. About how by the very fact of my actions all those who share my political opinions should be considered suspicious and dangerous. About how the Minister is taking it all in his stride, somehow twisting the event into rhetorical reasons to support his policies. No analysis of these policies. No speculation

as to the true intentions behind them. No warning of the irreparable harm they will inflict on the working population both here and in the war zones, thousands of miles away.

No reminders of the history of pain, exploitation and death that this very man played so recent a role in. No insight into the social reality of today, a reality shaped by the past efforts of men like him to ensure the security of capitalist expansion at the expense of all other considerations. No mention of the thousands who died today of hunger, war and curable disease. Of course not. It's a newspaper.

The face of the dead worker, inches away. Not dead? How did he find me? Fuck! Escape! "Wa!"

"Don't worry, I'm on your side" A wink. Waves of relief.

"They faked your death for the papers?" Hopeful...

"Of course!" a hearty chuckle.

"Boy, we really spooked 'em, eh?" Reality melts...

"Oi! You're talking in your sleep! I need to be up early, pack it in!"

A dream. Typical. I remember when I used to dream of utopia. At least, I'm sure I must have done once. Or else what is all of this about? What indeed?

A doorway. The door? Rusting in a corner. The gun? Hidden under rubble.

Escape.

"Victim of the welfare reform." A sign hung round the neck. A neck specked with blood. A limp finger wrapped around a trigger. A head spilling its contents on the road. A road leading up to a government building. A few dozen journalists. Three police forces. A symbol.

A punk gig in a squat. A funeral theme. "RIP Johnny" on a banner hanging from the ceiling.

"What a fucking idiot. Sad really. Still, he opened a lot of people's eyes to what's been happening. I guess that's what he wanted" A studded giant, without a grin.

"A true martyr to the cause"

Edgy.

"I'm just glad the heat's off us now for killin' that old bloke" arrogant.

"What?"

History

Either We Will bow Our heads or We will take Our future in Our hands

a brief history of Greek anarchism

The history of anarchism in Greece can be divided essentially into two periods; an early movement active from roughly the period 1860 to 1944, and a modern movement from the late 1970s to the present period. The years in between marked not only a general decline, thanks to the growing influence of Marxism following the Russian revolution, but the bloody experience of World War II, the Greek Civil War, the Metaxas (Ioannis Metaxas was the prime minister who, following industrial unrest in the country and gains by the Communist Party, declared a 'state of emergency' and dissolved parliament and sought to model a regime along the line of Mussolini's Italy: 1936-1941) and Military dictatorship (1967-1974) meant the effective severance of any links between the two phases of the movement. Accordingly, in a situation perhaps unique to European anarchism, historians of the contemporary movement cannot claim to find any common heritage with the early movement, 'either through struggle, experience or theory', as it is put in *Eutopia* (a journal published by contemporary Greek anarchists describing itself as 'libertarian municipalist').

Anarchism made its first appearance in Greece in the 1860s. An article published in September 1861, entitled 'Anarchy (Part 1)', for the newspaper '*Fos*' (Light) marks the first recorded trace of the movement ('Part 2' never materialised: shortly after the publication of the article the newspaper offices were raided and copies of the paper confiscated). Early anarchist groups appeared to have been heavily influenced by Italian migrants who had entered Greece in great numbers over this period as a result of the War of Independence. In the city of Achaëa, for example, a centre for the developing movement, the Italian colony accounted for around 10% of the city's population. Emmanouil Dadaoglou, a merchant from Smyrna, along with an Italian anarchist, Amilcare Cipriani, organised one of the first groups which would participate in the revolution against King Otto of Greece in 1862. Over the coming decade groups emerged in Athens, Syros, Messini, Aegio, Filiatria and Patras. Anarchists in Patras formed the 'Democratic Club of Patras' in 1876 which attempted to co-ordinate all anarchists in the Greek territory and form a section of

the Anti-Authoritarian International. In 1877 the Club expanded into a regional socialist federation titled the 'Democratic League of the People' publishing Greece's first anarchist newspaper, *Hellenic Democracy*. Around the same time an anarchist workingmen's club was formed on the Island of Syros which was reportedly instrumental in the island's 1879 tannery and shipyard strikes. State suppression, however, forced much of the organised movement underground which, along with the dissolution of many of the Bakuninist sections of the International, led to a general period of decline.

From the late 1800s to the early 1900s the only notable activity was that of the 'Boatmen of Thessaloniki', an illegalist group which, inspired by similar activity in Europe, carried out deadly attacks on banks, hotels, theatres and light and gas pipes. Nearly all of the group's members were caught and executed. Similarly, Alexandros Schinas, an anarcho-syndicalist, assassinated King George I in 1913. But leading up to the Second World War anarchism had no real organised presence in Greece. Individual anarchists were, however, instrumental within the

development of the socialist and trades union movement and anarchism was still reported to have a strong influence on socialist thinking. Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) led an anarcho-syndicalist tendency that participated in the foundation of the GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers – Greece’s first national trade union). Yiannis Tantakos, an anarchist cobbler, was implicated as a key instigator in a mass strike in Thessaloniki in 1936. Many anarchists were also to participate in the Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki and later the Socialist Workers’ Party of Greece, a precursor to the Greek Communist Party.



There is very little record of anarchist activity during the Axis Occupation or the Civil War. However, it is known that during the *Dekemvriana* (“the December events”, 1944, when a pro-national liberation demonstration came under fire from the occupying British army, leading to fighting between communist aligned forces and pro-monarchist and British forces in the Capital, a key event in the escalation towards Civil War) the Communist Party used the opportunity of escalating military conflict to eliminate political opponents. They dispatched ELAS (Greek People’s Liberation Army, military wing of the National Liberation Front largely under the direction of the Communist Party) hit squads against known Trotskyists, Left communists and anarchists. It is likely that many were killed or fled during the conflicts. The National Resistance movement, combined with the Russian revolution and the spread of Communism across the East, also consolidated the dominance of Marxism and the Communist Party over the Greek Left from this point.

The first signs of a re-emergence of anarchism were during the military Junta where, inspired by the events of May 1968 in France, many Greek students began to turn towards libertarian and counter-cultural ideas. During this time the ‘International Library’ (*Diethnis Vivliothini*) publishing collective was established and printed works by Guy Debord, Rosa Luxemburg, Bakunin, Ida Mett, Murray Bookchin, Max Nettlau and other libertarian authors as well as its own periodical *Pezodromio*. The collective’s founder, Christos Constantinidis, was a participant in the students’ anti-Junta protests and also among those involved in the Polytechnic Uprising of November 14. Nonetheless, it was not until after the fall of the Junta that anarchism began to resurface on a larger scale.

Following the dissolution of the dictatorship many Greeks (mainly students) returning from Italy, France, England and Germany brought back the radical ideas they had encountered abroad. The main influence was Italian Autonomism but the French situ-

ationists and the ideology of the urban guerrilla groups active at this time also had some influence. Practically the key focus of anarchists and anti-authoritarians at this point was building the continuing student occupation movement. Insurrectionary anarchism was also a popular current and, as *Eutopia* note, the practice of ‘insurrectional violence’ (although often contentious) continued to be a key focus for large sections of the movement;

As is cited in a text written during the riots of December, ‘the basic element of the anarchist movement in Greece, since its very beginning is the question of the state’s legal monopoly of violence’.

Insurrectionalism not only challenged bourgeois justifications for the state as the only legitimate arbiter for the use of political violence (and argued that the oppressed were just as entitled to use violent means to pursue their political goals) but also directly challenged a Left current which, since the Civil War, had internalised feelings of



passivity and defeat in the face of widespread state suppression.

An alternative, more organisational current also existed and there were a number of attempts to establish more permanent anarchist organisations through the late 1970s – the ‘Group of Council Anarchists’ (*Omada Synvouliaikon Anerxikon*) and the ‘Anarcho-sindicalist Group’ (*Omada Anarxosindikaliston*) – and later an attempt to form a synthesist anarchist federation between 1982-3. These were, however, unsuccessful in coalescing into national organisations and between the 1980s – 2000s individuals identifying with these traditions were largely orientated towards small publishing collectives or localised groups. Overwhelmingly the general preference was for activity to be organised through informal affinity groups or “cells” which could change and re-form according to the specific circumstances.

The movement throughout the

1980s was also far more counter-cultural, influenced quite heavily by the punk sub-culture, which, along with its embracing of violent tactics (used as a point of differentiation from the rest of the Left), meant that the movement often lacked a social dimension. It is as a result of this reputation that the media began to refer to sections of the anarchist movement as the ‘known unknowns’ (‘Gnostus Agnostous’). During this period violent clashes between police and members of the anarchist movement were commonplace, particularly around the 17th November commemorations. It was at one of these clashes in November of 1985 that a 15-year-old anarchist, Michalis Kaltezas, was shot dead by a police officer, prompting further riots, occupations and demonstrations. The 1980s, however, saw a more general shift in the political and social climate, as the election of the Socialist Party with the aid of the Communist Party signalled

the end of a long period of antagonism between the post-Junta state and the Left, leading to a short period of decline for the anarchist movement.

Through the 1990s the movement was renewed through its involvement in the student and teachers’ movement with members of the extra-parliamentary Left and anarchists playing a critical role within these struggles. Involvement in these mass movements also signaled a general shift in focus and from this point anarchist initiatives became more inclusive and much more influential socially. This also signalled a greater use of universities and spaces in education institutions as hubs for anarchist activity in a number of social spheres. State suppression at the end of the 1990s, particularly following the 1998 November commemoration march, put a temporary stall on organising as activists were forced to re-group. However this was followed by a quick recovery alongside the international

growth of the alter-globalisation movement with a strong Greek anarchist presence on the anti-G8 demonstrations in Genoa (2001) and a 5,000-strong anarchist demonstration for the European Union leader summit in Thessaloniki (2003). As a result of preparations for the latter the 'Anti-Authoritarian Movement' (*Antiexousiastiki Kinisi*) was formed. Over the next few years the 'Anti-Authoritarian Movement' expanded into a national network with sections in Athens, Xanthi, Komotini, Ioannina, Agrinio, Larisa, Heraklion and within the student movement. The network was based on unity under three broad principles and co-ordinated via local assemblies (which were generally open to the public) as well as publishing a monthly paper *Babylonia*. The Anti-Authoritarian Movement is, however, very loose in its organisation and acted as more as a framework for activity than an organisation co-ordinating action itself.

Due to the fractured, and often quite divisive, nature of contemporary anarchist activity many anarchists prefer to speak of the 'anarchist space' as opposed to a movement as such. There is often quite bitter sectarianism between activists of the Anti-Authoritarian Movement and the insurrectionary anarchists. This is reinforced by the spatial nature of the activity many anarchists involve themselves in which is often based around the development of social centres, occupied educational buildings or squats. There are only two late attempts to form more formal organisations, a Platformist group – the 'Federation of Anarchists of Western Greece' (*Omospondia Anarxicon Dytiki Ellada*) – which was founded in 2002 and folded in 2008 and

an Anarcho-Syndicalist federation – the 'Libertarian Trade Union' (*Eleftheriaki Syndikalistiki Enosi*) – formed in 2003 and active to the present time.

The majority of anarchists continue to be organised around loose networks of affinity groups and the collectives which co-ordinate the various initiatives. Students' struggles and activity in the universities, the creation and maintenance of free spaces in squats

and social centres, public assemblies, the publication of counter-information and independent media (for example, the national *Indymedia* collective), prisoner support and solidarity actions are amongst the common areas of focus and activity for contemporary anarchists. Environmental and ecological issues have also been taken more seriously in recent years, especially since the Olympic developments of 2004.



For the more socially orientated anarchists this has been in the form of broad based networks promoting community self-organisation and critiquing the ideology of development, while some of the more insurrectional groups have been influenced by covert, direct action organisations of Europe and North America (e.g. the 'Earth Liberation Front'). Compared to the European anarchist movement, armed expropriations and bank robberies (as well as armed struggle in general) are also regarded much more sympathetically. There has been vocal support, for example, for Vassilis Paleokostas a Greek fugitive convicted for kidnapping and robbery. Although expressing no clear political sympathies Paleokostas has built up a reputation as a modern-day Robin Hood for his reputation for giving stolen money to poor families. He famously escaped by helicopter twice from a Greek prison. This is, however, more common to the insurrectionist groups and continues to be, along with attitudes towards the use of political violence in general, a divisive issue. Divisions relate to the appropriate time and application

of political violence, i.e 'when?' and 'how?'. Political violence is almost universally accepted as a necessary tool for social change, as well as being a practical necessity in the face of violence from fascist organisations and police suppression.

The dominance of PASOK (Pan-hellenic Socialist Movement) and the Communist Party of the trade union movement, and the desire to create workplace organisations autonomous from the political parties, has also led anarchists towards activity within the primary unions (rank-and-file organisations which may operate autonomously of the national unions and can be formed with minimal legal formalities) In recent years anarchists and members of the extra-parliamentary Left have played an active role in organising trades along these lines, having notable success in the courier/delivery industry and amongst bookstore and publishing house workers. Anarchist community spaces (e.g. reclaimed parks), social centres and squats continue to act as an important bridge between the

anarchist groups and the communities they organise within. As well as promoting self-activity, anti-capitalism and acting as spaces for counter-information, social centres offer cheap food, alcohol and entertainment (film screenings, music). Public assemblies are also frequently used as a tool to encourage greater participation and to agitate around a specific social problem. On a more day-to-day level the anarchist presence in a city or village is often made clear by the posters and graffiti that adorn the walls of public spaces.

Of course no history of Greek anarchism would be complete without mention of its most defining movement – the 'Greek December'. It would be no exaggeration to talk of December 2008 as a shock to Europe's political elites. What had initially seemed like a violent, widespread outbreak of anti-police and anti-establishment sentiment prompted by the murder of a teenager began to show signs of a real challenge to the post-credit crunch Neo-Liberal order. According to a mid-December poll, 60% of Greeks categorized the events to be part of a popular





uprising. Europe's political commentators expressed fears that the spirit of insurrection would spread in the wake of a global recession, the first effects of which had begun to hit Europe's working classes. President Sarkozy opted to delay university reforms in his own country for fear that existing student protest could escalate into 'Greek-style riots'. Anarchists were at the centre of these events, not necessarily representative of the rebellion but certainly a catalyst for the widespread riots and occupations were that to follow. December saw a number of anarchist initiatives quickly expand into popular movements, with the occupations of town halls in particular proving to be a popular strategy.

Since 2008 the movement has evolved in a number of ways. Groups have expanded, especially in terms of the inclusion of younger people, and there are a number of social centres, squats and community centres emerging directly out of the December events. The experience of the rebellion has also brought greater unity and while the anarchist scene is still quite fractured there is a general desire to work towards unity. Anarcho-syndicalism is becoming a more popular current and

groups like the ESE (Libertarian Trade Union) are more active than in the past. The involvement of immigrants in the December riots forged connections between them and the anarchists that remain strong to this point. Migrant struggles have been a key focus, particularly in the wake of a right-wing backlash that blamed foreigners both for the riots and Greece's continuing economic troubles. The parliamentary Left is also less inclined to offer support for fear of damaging its electoral chances. The recent successful hunger strike of 300 migrant workers was a key victory for the movement. In response to austerity measures imposed by the IMF a new mass movement, 'We Won't Pay', has emerged which also involves many anarchists. 'We Won't Pay' uses direct action to challenge spiralling costs in public transport and on privatised toll roads. Tactics include holding barriers up at toll booths, the sabotage of ticketing machines (a practice also used in December) and organising mass, free bus rides.

Anarchism in Greece had evolved from a minority current within a Left dominated by Stalinism and, later, the influence of Social Democracy to a growing and dynamic force in an escalating class

conflict. There's no real way of telling whether scenes like those witnessed in December 2008 will return in the recent future. What is clear, however, is that if this was to happen, Greek anarchists would be solidly at the front of this struggle.

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Throw Your TV At Your Boss! (TYTVAYB!): The alienation of work and leisure in capitalist society



What do we mean by capitalism? A society in which capital is the most powerful agency - a society dictated by capital.

What then, do we mean by capital? Money spent with the intention of making more money, through investment in profitable enterprise. Thus, capital by its definition must constantly expand.

How is it possible for capital to expand? How can you get more money out of something than you put in? How can you get more value out of something than you put in? Only if you buy something that creates value by itself, thereby increasing the total value of everything else you've bought.

So what creates value? In a word: Labour. Human labour transforms material things, making them more useful, or at least seemingly more valuable to other human beings.

But how can you buy human labour? Only if there's someone willing to sell it.

And why would anybody sell their labour just to make someone else rich? Only if they have no other choice.

Why do they not have a choice? Why can't they just

work for themselves, or with other people on an equal basis? Because the means of production belong to someone else.

What are the “means of production”? All the material things you need to produce other things, or to add value to existing things. Factories, machinery, tools, even the earth itself, the soil, the minerals, the water.

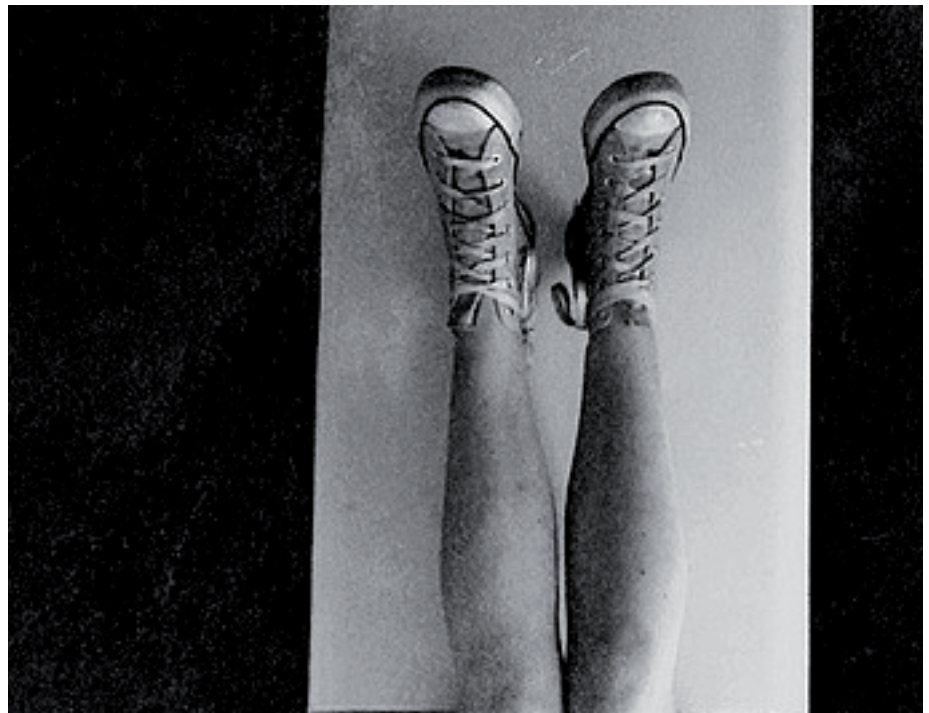
If the means of production include the earth itself, why do they not belong to everyone? Because for thousands of years hierarchical armed groups have violently taken control of almost the entire world, fighting amongst themselves for control and enslaving the rest of humanity by denying it access to nature.

If the majority of us are the slaves of these murderers and thieves who deny us access to the earth’s resources, why do we not rise up against this injustice? Sometimes we do. But so far our efforts have not been successful. We have not managed to join forces and become strong enough to overthrow all the various hierarchies that exist. And many of us do not even realise we are slaves.

How is it possible for people to be slaves and not realise? Because they are pacified and hypnotised by the very things that their slavery helps to produce: commodities.

What is a commodity? Commodities are material objects that we exchange money for, or sometimes just the promise of a material object, a digital substitute for a material object, or a “service” that is sold as if it’s a material thing.

Why do commodities hypnotise



people? Because when we buy them we do not usually know anything about how they were produced, or by whom, so we don’t see them directly as products of an oppressive system. We just see them in their commodity form. They seem almost magical, as if they’ve come from nowhere just for us, especially because the people selling them usually try to make them seem that way. But usually they stop being magical as soon as we have actually bought them.

If they stop being magical when we’ve bought them, why don’t we see through the illusion? Because there are always many more commodities on the horizon. We are surrounded by people trying to sell them to us. We see images of them everywhere, and hear poetic descriptions of them everywhere. All these millions of lies about commodities combine into one massive spectacle which hides the true nature of society from us.

How can we fight against the spectacle? In many ways. We can highlight the lies behind the magi-

cal appearance of commodities by showing people the real conditions of production. We can remind people that material things can be viewed in other ways than the commodity form. We can remind people that they are slaves, and that they have a right to the fruits of nature without having to pay for them.

What happens if people stop believing in the spectacle? More of them will be able to see who their enemies and oppressors are. They will not see their bosses as useful people who give them wages to buy magical commodities with, and instead see them as oppressors who exploit them. They will see the armed hierarchies that keep the means of production away from them as tyrants denying them of their birthright, and forcing them to earn wages to survive rather than live freely. They will want to fight against Capital and Hierarchy. And hopefully, one day, they will win.

Sabotage

The ideas of Émile Pouget

Émile Pouget (1860-1931) was a French anarcho-communist member of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) who advocated sabotage as a form of working class resistance. In the English translation of his pamphlet *Sabotage*, published in 1913, he describes how the term is derived from French slang meaning 'to work clumsily as if by sabot blows'. A sabot is a wooden shoe or clog which was once worn by many workers. Scottish workers also used sabotage as a weapon against bosses but called the tactic 'go cannie'. In an 1898 edition of the periodical, *Almanach du Père Peinard*, Pouget writes: 'the English have been doing this for a long time – and they find it a terrific fucking thing'. For Pouget the idea is straight forward: 'for bad pay, bad work'. He succinctly demonstrates the historical reason for the existence of sabotage which 'as a form of revolt is as old as human exploitation' and goes on to describe the nature of class conflict as 'the irrepressible antagonism that arrays Capital and Labour one against the other'. Pouget cites the French playwright Balzac who described how the silk spinners in the French city of Lyons ruined silk by handling it with oil on their fingers. This was in revenge for the brutal repression they had suffered after a failed revolt against their bosses in 1831, during which 'the workers raised a flag with this motto: Bread or Death'. In 1889 the Glasgow dockers used the go cannie tactic after



dock bosses used scab workers. The dockers decided to return to work but act as clumsily and inefficiently as the farm labourers that the company had employed. The bosses backed down and the dockers soon got their hourly pay increase.

Pouget gives more examples from his time. At an American coat factory in Philadelphia, striking pattern cutters changed the designs by less than an inch before leaving the factory. The scabs were unable to produce properly sized garments. The livid managers capitulated to the

strikers demands. Workers who stuck-up adverts for a Parisian corporation had their wages cut, so they added candle wax to the glue. The posters were pasted up but two hours later they peeled off. The boss soon 'regretted his cowardly action'. Around the same time, striking tram drivers in Lyons poured cement into the rails at junctions to prevent the movement of trams driven by scabs. In July 1908 railway workers in the French region of Medoc went on strike. They cut the telegraph wires between stations and removed screws and bolts from the pumps on water reserves. Pouget

applauds the French building workers who utilised sabotage 'abundantly.' They succeeded in increasing wages and reducing their working hours.

In the late 1890s the tactic of sabotage was to 'take its place amongst the other means of social warfare, recognised, approved, advocated and practised by the labour unions'. The 1897 congress of the CGT met in Toulouse and at Pouget's instigation it commissioned a specific Boycott and Sabotage committee. They produced a report that stated that 'this tactic comes from England, where it has rendered a great service in the struggle of the English workers against their masters'. The report continued: 'being unable to strike under conditions of extreme misery and disorganisation the workers must often bow their heads and submit. With sabotage, instead, they are no longer at the mercy of their bosses - they are no more a heap of nerveless flesh to be trampled upon with impunity'. Mapping-out the antagonism that exists between workers and bosses Pouget explains how capitalists consider human labour just as any other commodity or raw material; they must buy that labour for the lowest price possible. For their money they also demand 'the intrinsic labour power, the whole strength of the worker...body and blood, vigour and intelligence'. However, unlike machines, workers possess 'a will and the capacity to resist and react' so are able to deploy sabotage to hinder the 'voracity of the capitalist'.

Attacking moral or ethical objections to sabotage Pouget explains concisely that 'Capital and labour are two worlds that violently clash together' so 'it would be

“Capital and labour are two worlds that violently clash together ... it would be very strange if everything were different between the toiler and the capitalist except their morals”

very strange if everything were different between the toiler and the capitalist except their morals'. Obedience and hard work are promoted by capitalism as moral and virtuous, in short all that is 'to the advantage of the boss is loudly glorified'. But Pouget warns that any ideas, action or resistance by workers which disrupts 'production and whatever attitude tends to reduce the exploiter's benefit is qualified as immoral'. He is also able to negate moralistic criticisms of sabotage by comparing the tactic to a military ambush: 'It is a recognised means of warfare, just as admissible as open and face to face battle'. Pouget compares saboteurs to guerilla fighters and he writes about how the tactic develops the qualities of initiative, courage and determination in workers. For him, the tactic of sabotage encourages 'ingenious and bold action'. He promotes it as a way to reinforce strikes because work stoppages are not always effective unless the machines and tools are paralysed. If scabs can operate the equipment then a strike is undermined, if not lost. He quotes the secretary of the Paris Bakers' Union who suggests how to put equipment out of use during a strike with 'a little sand or emery powder in the gear of those machines'.

Pouget argues that class conscious workers who are prepared to use sabotage may be in a minority but they understand the

urgency of putting manufacturing equipment (you repeated 'machines and tools) out of action during a strike to increase the chances of victory. Making another comparison to combatants in war he sees that with direct action these workers are able 'to check desertion and cut off the retreat'. He outlines how capitalists use a form of sabotage which 'fills the hospitals and the cemeteries'. He highlights examples of the intentional contamination of products to squeeze more profits from various commodities: 'saboteurs are the millers and boss bakers who, by mixing talcum, chalk or other cheap but harmful ingredients with flour, adulterate the bread, a nourishment of first necessity'. He sharply contrasts the bosses loss of profit caused by workers' sabotage to the suffering generated by the social system of capitalism: 'from the wounds produced by the proletarian sabotage only gold flows out...from those inflicted by the capitalist sabotage, it is human blood which gushes out in streams'. He writes that the widespread working-class use of sabotage will be to 'capitalism more dangerous and incurable than cancer and syphilis are to the human body'. Émile Pouget offers a vivid image of capitalism as a shark which sabotage will assist in killing: 'it shall tear and bleed it until the shark turns the final somersault'.

The Tunisian Revolt



At first sight, the recent revolt in Tunisia seemed as unexpected as the following revolt in Egypt. Here was a “modern” North African state, which boasted of its stability and its prosperity.

Looking back at the history of Tunisia and to the regions of the centre-west where the insurrections first broke out, we should consider the popular insurrections against the installation of the French protectorate over Tunisia in 1881. The reign of the Tunisian leader Habib Bourguiba, long as it was, was marked by periodic disturbances. For example in 1972 student demonstrations were harshly repressed, whilst at the same time Islamists were sponsored by the Tunisian State in order to sabotage any revolutionary movement. In 1978, there was the Black Thursday of 26th January when 200 people were

killed following the demonstrations called by the Tunisian union the General Union of Labour. The future Tunisian leader Ben Ali was directing the security services at this time. Then again there were the bread riots of 1984 which were also brutally repressed. However, the primary roots of the Tunisian insurrection can be traced to the revolt in the mining basin of Gafsa in 2008. This area is in the south west of Tunisia, up by the Algerian border. Here a series of riots broke out. The principal employer was the *Compagnie Generale du Phosphate*. Its employees were well paid, earning an average of 1,000 dinars which was five times the minimum wage. Restructuring and liberalisation launched by the company reduced the number of workers by a third in 20 years, leading to an unemployment figure in the region of 30%. Meanwhile the price of

phosphates was increasing (from 125% plus between 2007 and 2008). The educated young unemployed organised themselves within an organisation, the Union of Unemployed Graduates, and it was this group which launched the movement of 2008. Sit-ins, demonstrations and blockades of roads and rail tracks to stop the transportation of phosphates were carried out. There were confrontations with the police. The lack of support outside the region and the inexperience of those involved and above all the repression carried out by the Tunisian government halted the movement but it would be true to say that the seeds of the recent insurrection were planted in the desert in Gafsa.

Ben Ali

When General Ben Ali took

power on 7th November 1987 the regime that had come to power with independence from France had become weak and feeble. Bourguiba, who had made himself President for life, was showing signs of senility. The Islamist movement was strong at this moment and the situation was tense. The overthrow of Bourguiba was welcomed with relief by many. Ben Ali promised reforms, democratisation, and to protect reforms instigated by the Bourguiba regime such as women's right and access to education for all.

But very soon the general and security chief launched a campaign of repression. In the process Ben

Ali smashed the Islamist movement and imprisoned 30,000 with the approval of all the political parties. He then turned this repression on the same political parties, forcing them to dissolve and driving their leaders into exile. He received the support of the Western powers as a an attacker of Islamism, as a moderniser and as a so-called defender of the rights of women. He enthusiastically adopted the suggestions of the International Monetary Fund and launched a programme of neoliberalism, becoming a favourite of the United States and of France. To prop himself up he strengthened the police and constructed a political

party which supported him, The Constitutional Democratic Assembly, built out of the old party of Bourguiba. At first things went well, with the strong development of tourism, a low birth rate, and the arrival of many foreign-owned industries, attracted by a docile and cheap work force. Relative economic prosperity and the encouragement of consumerism smothered the disquiet at the authoritarian grip of the Ben Ali regime. This was reinforced by the example of Tunisia's neighbour, Algeria, where a horrific civil war was taking place.

Ben Ali made sure that his party had a cell in every village and every workplace and every local government. It was able to offer 'jobs for the boys' and claimed a membership of 2 million. Most of these had joined to get a job or a place to live. At the same time Ben Ali employed up to 180,000 in the police, in his militias and in the networks of informers that were created.

At the same time Ben Ali and his family and that of his wife, Leila Trabelsi laid their hands on the economic wealth of the country. Industrialists, bankers and business people, whether Tunisian or foreigners, were embroiled in this racket. Corruption increased enormously throughout society. This spread to extortion by the police of civilians for imaginary offences. Everywhere, in all public places, there were portraits of the great leader Ben Ali. Everywhere there was a climate of fear, with people always looking out for the informers in their midst. To prettily decorate this extremely authoritarian society, there were a few political parties that were tolerated and had seats in Parliament. This loyal opposition, chosen by the Presi-



dent himself, made excuses and called for votes for their supposed political adversary Ben Ali. At the end of these electoral farces, Ben ali ended up with 95% of the vote. In all of this he was supported by his foreign backers in the USA, the UK, and France. Where necessary the regime imprisoned those who opposed it, resorting to murder where it was deemed necessary.

Rupture with the old regime

What led to the overthrow of this seemingly immovable regime was the self-immolation in the town of Sidi-Bouazid of Mohamed Bouazizi, who was forced to live by being a peddler of fruit and vegetables, and who was harassed by the police. This galvanised the Tunisian masses, uniting the youth of the towns and the countryside, the unemployed and those in work. What started out as an initial riot quickly transformed itself into a massive insurrection, which unlike the Gafsa uprising of 2008, was not localised, but spread to all of Tunisia. Despite scores shot dead by the police and army, in particular at Kasserine where snipers unleashed a terror on 8th and 9th January, despite the many wounded, imprisoned and tortured a movement was developing. Within this movement many workers came out on the streets and called for a general

strike. Whilst the first slogans of the regime concentrated on the rising unemployment in Tunisia and the absence of civil liberties, these were quickly followed by those calling for the overthrow of Ben Ali and his regime.

Spontaneously mass assemblies and meetings, independent of political parties took place. Despite the televised promise of Ben Ali on the 13th January to stop the police firing on the crowds, demonstrations took place all over Tunisia. There was more bloodshed from the State forces. The regime shook, Ben Ali resigned and some of the Trabelsi clan were arrested. For the first time in the Arab-speaking world a dictator was forced to resign.

The local bourgeoisie want a development of democracy in Tunisia, a representative democracy policed by a strong government. However other forces are at play. Indications of this can be seen in the wave of spontaneous strikes calling for wage rises, for the cleansing of the administrations and both public and private industry. The population is split. There are those who want to re-establish order and ensure that tourism is protected, through the party created by Ben Ali, the Constitutional Democratic Assembly, now cleansed of its most compro-

mised elements, in alliance with a “responsible” opposition. These groupings support the provisional government of national unity, whose aim is to demobilise the uprising and channel it into institutional processes.

Then there are the militant workers and the bodies of self-organisation created during the uprising. There has been a flowering of base committees and councils. Committees of neighbourhood vigilance are controlling various aspects of daily life. In certain towns and villages in the interior, councils of defence of the revolution are running affairs with a total absence of the provisional government. Initiatives to co-ordinate these committees and councils could be the embryo of a revolutionary counter-power, able to give the revolution a more radical bent.

In this struggle the Tunisian masses have to beware of the supposed radical forces like the Union leaders of the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) who first of all whilst condemning police violence also condemned that of the demonstrators, and who called for calm after Ben Ali promised 300,000 jobs.



The Paris Commune of 1871 and its Impact

Maximilien Luce: Neo-impressionist painter and anarchist

It is one hundred and forty years since the heroic struggle and brutal massacre of the communards in Paris who, in the context of war, attempted and came close to establishing a society that was more free and egalitarian than any seen previously. Anarchists and other anti-authoritarian socialists helped shape it. What it attempted was so advanced that the ideas of great Anarchist thinkers like Bakunin and Kropotkin were themselves shaped by it.

*Organise # 77 will feature an article on the Commune, but to get us in the mood, there follows this issue's Revolutionary Portrait: Maximilian Luce, and a review of Alex Butterworth's book *The World that Never Was*, about the impact of the commune on international anarchism.*

Maximilien Luce was born into a modest family in 1858 in Paris. From early youth he mixed with impoverished artisans and workers constructing major roads and other works. At the age of thirteen, he was an appalled witness of the massacres carried out by government forces against the revolutionaries of the Paris Commune of 1871. This was to haunt him for all his life. The following year, to ensure his survival he had to go to work. The illustrated papers were coming into their own at this time in Paris, and Maximilien's father placed him as an apprentice in a wood engraving workshop, where he became a skilled worker. At the same time



he began to draw and to paint scenes from the working class neighbourhoods, especially of Montrouge where he lived, taking night courses in painting.

It was in 1887 that he began to reveal his talent. He joined the Society of Independent Artists, of which he remained a life-long member, and exhibited at their Salon. He was welcomed by the painters Seurat, Signac and Pissarro. The latter two were avowed anarchists, and whilst Signac was sympathetic, Seurat remained reticent. He also knew the journalist, art critic and anarchist Felix Feneon. Feneon described Luce as a 'barbaric but robust and plucky painter'.

Luce was no theoretician but he absorbed the ideas of Seurat on painting, which became known as neo-impressionism. The neo-impressionists painted in pure divided tones in a 'scientific' fashion, not mixing colours on the palette or the canvas. By dividing tones

the small spots of pure colour came together in the eyes of the observer, creating harmonious and vibrant masses of colour. Luce took liberties with the theories of Seurat. He contrasted areas of the canvas where the spots of colour were thickly gathered together with other areas of the canvas where the colour spots were separated by white spaces. This gave his paintings a vibrant dynamism. He marked himself out by his refined use of the spectrum and his frequent use of a range of violet colours to produce superb effects of light. However, from 1897 he moved away from this 'divisionist' style towards a more classic impressionism, whilst retaining his use of vibrant colours and thickly crowded spaces.

He had contempt for the art dealers and journalists who he felt were totally ignorant of the aims of the neo-impressionists. He wanted to be a witness of the



times he was living through, painting the busy streets of Paris at the same time as landscapes and indicating the dehumanising effects of industrialisation.

Encouraged by the cobbler

Eugene-Frederic Givort, whom he had first met during military service, and by the worker Eugene Baillet, he joined them in participating in the activities of the anarchist group of the 14th arrondissement. At the end of the 1880s he became a friend of the anarchists Émile Pouget (see article elsewhere) and Jean Grave. Pouget edited the anarchist paper *Le Pere Peinard* and Grave edited the anarchist paper *La Revolte*. Luce, not surprisingly given his past experiences, detested the army, the clergy, and the royalists and nationalists. He began to contribute to the anarchist press, being one of the first artists to come to the aid of Pere Peinard, providing more than 200 designs or lithographs right up to 1914. He was also the principal illustrator

for Grave's new paper *Les temps Nouveaux*, from 1895 to 1914, supplying its first poster in 1896, '*L'Incendiaire*' ('The Incendiary').

In July 1894 Luce was arrested and imprisoned at Mazas with Feneon, Grave and another notable anarchist, Sebastien Faure, following the wave of repression against the anarchist movement. Luce was accused of inciting the people to revolt through his sketches. But due to insufficient evidence he was acquitted and freed on 17 August, after forty eight days in jail. Far from deterring Luce, this only strengthened his anarchist convictions. He published an album of ten lithographs on prison life at Mazas. Every prisoner depicted in the lithographs had either the face of Feneon or of himself. The finishing text of the album was 'Open the cells, beat down the walls of the prison galleries..'

For a while he exiled himself to Charleroi in Belgium, but was

again arrested and imprisoned for several days in 1896 during the visit of King Alfonso XIII of Spain. Apart from his portraits of Feneon, Pissarro, Signac, Louise Michel and his studies for the execution of the Communard Eugene Varlin, Luce created many paintings of the mining area of the Borinage between 1895 and 1900. He was fascinated by the blight of industrialisation on this region, depicting the furnaces and mines. With Signac he journeyed deep down in a mine to gain some experience of the life of miners. In *L'Acierie* (the Steelworks) executed in 1895 he contrasts fire and light with shadows, with the labouring workers silhouetted.

From 1903, and more than thirty years after the events, he began to a series devoted to the Paris Commune. One of them, '*Une rue de Paris en Mai 1871*', he depicts the corpses of four shot Communards, one of them a woman, lying alongside piles of cobbles. He exhibited this at the Salon of the Independent Artists in 1905. During the First World War, he produced many paintings of the horrors of war and of returning and wounded soldiers. In the 1930s he concentrated on landscapes and on urban scenes depicting the life of dockers, building workers, labourers and fishermen

He succeeded Signac as President of the Society of Independent Artists in 1935 but resigned his post in 1940 to protest against the racial laws passed by the Vichy regime which banned Jewish artists from all official groups. He died the following year. Certainly his anarchist convictions led to his lack of recognition as an important painter during his lifetime.

Alex Butterworth's *The World that Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists and Secret Agents*. The Bodley Head, 2010. £25.00 hb & £7.99 pb. 482 pages.

The World that Never Was tells the story of international Anarchist 'terror' in the decades around 1900, a phenomenon which, as the title implies, was both less typical of the movement and less real than credulous contemporary commentators assumed. Butterworth discovered that Anarchism was less nihilistic, its targets less arbitrary, and its exponents less callous and cynical than the press had people believe. But the police knew this, because they were not merely infiltrating anarchist circles and attempting to disrupt them, but inciting them to violence as agent provocateurs. As Butterworth says, 'throughout the period in question a silent, secret clockwork of intrigue and manipulation was in operation to protect the status quo, just as it is today' (p. viii). The negative stereotype of the anarchist – with his long dirty beard, black cloak and bomb – was as a reflection of the fear of the state itself.

Butterworth is not an anarchist. In a sense this strengthens the book's significance, because he has no reason either to defend or understate the significance of anarchism's violent past. Butterworth also discovered that the state is *still* trying to suppress the truth about its role. He sought access for several years to police documents on the early infiltration of British anarchism, documents that the police had once insisted did not exist but which surfaced in a Special Branch policeman's PhD thesis. Finally Butterworth gained access through a



freedom of information request, and what he received was heavily censored, with names removed.

The story begins with Louise Michel and Elisée Reclus, the Paris Commune of 1871, and the hopes that were dashed there. Execution, prison and lengthy exile banished the dreams of anti-authoritarian socialism for those also being outmanoeuvred by Marx and Engels in the International (Butterworth notes that Marx initially opposed the Commune and that Marxists played no significant role in it: p. 61). Regrouping most immediately in Switzerland, notably at Saint-Imier in 1872 (see elsewhere in this issue for notice of its anniversary in 2012), and then operating in a remarkably international context, the anti-authoritarians developed anarchist ideas. However, the 'control, suppression and ultimate demonization of their fiendish sect appeared to many a moral imperative, and was clearly as much a

pleasure as a duty for many official defenders of law and order' (p. viii).

Butterworth demonstrates that radicalisation can result from re-

Saint-Imier International 140th anniversary August 15th-18th 2012

Just as this year is the 140th anniversary of the Paris Commune, next year is the anniversary of the founding of the Anarchist international at Saint-Imier, Switzerland, where we picked up the pieces and out of which anarchist communism organisation began.

The Francophone Anarchist Federation, our sister organisation in the International of Anarchist Federations is organising an anniversary event in Saint-Imier itself. Watch this space for more information...



pression, citing the movement of idealistic, radical youth that soon characterised Russian cities after the Commune's suppression. The dream of these naive 'narodniki' was to go into the countryside and help serfs to throw off their servitude. In 1873 up to 4,000 young people were arrested for this subversive aspiration and hundreds suffered prison until 1876. Reactionary university lecturers condemned the narodniki, and so Saint-Petersburg students pelted their worst teachers with eggs and gherkins. This was the start of a riot that caused the university to close for some months. When Pavel Chernyshev, a medical student arrested in error, died in prison, the violent student response resulted in more severe repression.

In 1876, Vera Zasulich, outraged at the beating of her imprisoned student lover Bogoliubov for refusing to acknowledge the rank of General Trepov of the 'Third Section' of the Russian police, got a pistol and attempted Trepov's assassination. This was no spur of the moment thing; it took planning and patience and she waited until all of the students of 1873

had been released. Even though she merely wounded him and the job had to be finished off by Sergei Kravchinsky, 'propaganda by deed', says Butterworth, was born. Within a short time Kravchinsky had stabbed to death General Mezentsev too in broad daylight (he escaped riding 'Varvar', the black racehorse who had recently pulled the carriage in which Kropotkin made his famously daring escape from the Peter and Paul Fortress).

Numerous other students joined the ranks of those prepared to undertake such action. One of the most significant was the science student Nicholas Kibalchich (whom Butterworth notes invented a rocket engine that made space travel possible whilst in prison awaiting execution in 1881). His grenade made for the group 'The People's Will' killed Tsar Alexander II. However, the movement had already been infiltrated by Peter Rachkovsky, an experienced undercover police agent.

When she returned to Paris from her exile in New Caledonia,

in 1880, Louise Michel, the last of the pardoned Communards to return to France, found that anti-authoritarian socialism in Europe had been radically transformed since 1871. Her response was ambivalent. At her reception, which was unsurpassed in size and enthusiasm, she called for 'no more bloody vengeance' but also declared 'Long live the social revolution' and 'Long live the nihilists'. But although People's Will had sniffed out Rachovsky by that time, a new informer, Egide Serreaux was soon at the heart of Michel's own circle, trying to persuade it to more violent acts and that anarchists should abandon moral scruples. This time it was Malatesta and Kropotkin who exposed him (the story is complicated, but it's a must-read for people who like junk shops: p. 167).

By then they were all in London. The last of the Communards to return had in fact gone there, in 1880, to find a pretty inactive movement. By the 1890s, however, it was a hot-bed of anarchist sedition. The story of the British anarchist movement is well-known, so I shall focus here on the actually quite marginal influence of nihilism and 'terror', in Walsall in 1891 and London in 1894.

The agent Auguste Coulon was a man whose activity 'might have been conceived with the very purpose of effective provocation' (p. 295). He recruited people to radical organisations and secured the young anarchists Fred Charles and Victor Cailles employment in Walsall. As such, they owed him a favour. In the Winter of 1891-2 he gave them a bomb-making manual and involved them and another anarchist, Joseph Deakin, in a plot to make an egg-shaped device for use in Russia. The three were wary

and it seems they did not actually make the bomb. Certainly they did not deliver it. This was to the frustration of the Special Branch who needed a big bust; its budget was being cut and four jobs were to be lost. The three were arrested and, naturally, the 'evidence' of 'anarchist terror' told widely. Special branch funding was of course restored. Coulon received a bonus and moved on to infiltrate other groups, possibly being behind the 'discovery' of bomb-making equipment in the cellar of the free school Louise Michel had by then established in London.

Most tragic is the affair of the young and impressionable Martial Bourdin. By 1894, the movement in France had become even less discriminating and bombers – most notoriously Emile Henry – attacked people purely on the basis of them being bourgeoisie. In London, on 15th February the young Bourdin evaded a police tail that he probably didn't know about, but which stemmed from his supposed association with Henry, and stepped down from a tram at Greenwich. He was carrying a bomb that was maybe intended to be a response to Henry's arrest, or was maybe to strike symbolically at the tyranny of time under Capitalism, or was perhaps intended to be passed on to another plotter. No one knows, because Bourdin accidentally blew himself up, and died quite horribly. What he did not know was that his brother-in-law, Henry Samuels (usually referred to as H. B. Samuels), who had given him the bomb was, from then on, thought to have been an agent-provocateur working for the police.

In short, there is no convincing evidence of any great anarchist bombing conspiracy in Britain,

So whilst on the one hand we should be angered about the extent to which the state has committed violence in our name, we should not try to wriggle out of the fact that violence is part of our history and that the emerging class-struggle anarchist movement was not 'peaceful'.

only what instead turned out to be a network of police spies with links even to the Russian Okhrana, tracking and inciting the anarchists as they moved throughout Europe. Butterworth points out that anarchist émigrés in London in fact condemned Bourdin's activity. Police were also sending bomb-making equipment unsolicited to anarchists whom they would then, shortly after, raid. Even Bourdin's supposed meeting with Emile Henry was probably a fiction.

There are very few things to criticize in this absolutely fascinating book but there is one big one. Frustratingly, the author gives no references for his sources. That means he does not prove what he says. Also, propaganda by deed may have begun in 1876, but Zasulich was not an anarchist. She in fact became a leading Marxist (later to be marginalised by Lenin). Even Kravchinsky did not yet call himself an anarchist. Neither were all of the the subsequent attempts on European leaders that Butterworth lists carried out by self-proclaimed anarchists. The clear distinction between 'Marxists' and 'Anarchists' had not yet been made, and it might be safer to say that those advocating propaganda by deed were of the 'anti-authoritarian' tendency.

Finally, Butterworth's case puts anarchists of something in a quandary. We have always known that half of what people say anarchists of that era did, they did not do and were framed. Haymarket is the most famous example. Furthermore, anarchist 'murderers' from Kravchinsky to Berkman later rejected this activity, for some of the reasons we do now. But we did *indeed* once advocate and *commit* some violence of an arbitrary sort. So whilst on the one hand we should be angered about the extent to which the state has committed violence in our name, we should not try to wriggle out of the fact that violence is part of our history and that the emerging class-struggle anarchist movement was not 'peaceful'. By stressing the astounding level of state involvement, Butterworth's book almost makes it too easy to forget this.

But this book is a brilliant read and anyone interested in the origins of anarchism should read it alongside histories of the more 'noble' aspects of our movement.

Tierra Y Libertad

Dreams of freedom: a Ricardo Flores Magon reader. Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter (eds.) 420 pages. £12.00. AK Press.

In this year of the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, the figures of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa are the personages that are perhaps best remembered. But equally important in the development and carrying out of the revolution was Ricardo Flores Magon, who developed anarchist communist ideas and with his brothers and other associates was the founder of an influential movement the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM). Despite its name, the PLM was a thoroughgoing revolutionary anarchist organisation that began to gain great popularity among Mexican workers and peasants both north and south of the Mexico-US border.

Always under great pressure from both the governments of Mexico and the USA, Flores Magon was often forced to move from place to place, and often imprisoned and the Magonista movement encountered severe repression with many important militants murdered. Flores Magon was to die under mysterious circumstances in Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1922, and many believed that he had been murdered. His influence has persisted throughout Mexico and beyond, right up to this day. In this anniversary year it is worth recalling the life and works of an important and influential revolutionary, little known outside Mexico.

This book gives a lengthy sketch

of Flores Magon's life and then continues with a collection of his writings. Apart from personal letters and documents of the

of the revolutionary, anarchism and politics, philosophy, war, as well as stories illustrating anarchist ideas. Flores Magon writes

with great passion, using the Spanish language to construct a poetic and inspiring vision of what life could be and how to achieve it. His writings are fiercely infused with empathy for the plight of the oppressed and down-trodden and with an equally fierce hatred for what he called the three-headed hydra: capitalism, the state and the clergy.

Flores Magon made several tactical mistakes by remaining in California rather than either moving to Texas or back

to Mexico to give inspiration to the movement, and he incurred several criticisms for this. His frail health may have been the principal reason for this. Set against

PLM, these writings are grouped together under the following headings: The revolution, expropriation, class war, racism, political repression, feminism, figure



“We are free, truly free, when we don't need to rent our arms to anybody in order to be able to lift a piece of bread to our mouths.”

this is his tenacity in refusing any collaboration with the successive Mexican authorities and the US government. Flores Magon was a personal inspiration to many Mexican and American radicals, not least among other radical prisoners in Leavenworth.

Spanish is a language that lends itself to poetic flights and flourishes and Hispanic anarchist literature is often characterised by this. Sometimes this can be inspiring, sometimes it can be found to be unnecessarily high-flown and wordy depending on the reader. The writings of Flores Magon have these characteristics although it can be seen that they are directed straight at the Mexican worker and peasant, appearing in the PLM paper *Regeneracion* as they did.

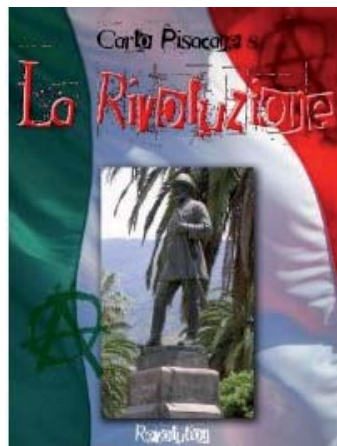
His articles on feminism show Flores Magon's great desire to rally women to the revolutionary cause, but they are marred by a certain patronising tone that seems to reduce women to an auxiliary role. "Are you mothers? Are you wives? Are you sisters? Are you daughters? Your duty is to aid man: be with him when he vacillates-inspire him; fly to his side when he suffers to soothe his pain; and laugh and sing with him when triumph smiles". In contrast is his understanding of the subordination of women, both economically and sexually, and he acknowledges the double work load of women workers. His exhortations to women to join the revolution seems to have worked as large numbers of women rallied to the PLM.

Above all Flores Magon calls for workers and peasants not to leave things to a few revolutionaries but to take the struggle and the

organisation of society into their own hands. His consistent anti-elitism is a key element of his ideas.

As Mitchell Verter says in his preface: "Even though Ricardo Flores Magon, the apostle of anarchism, was martyred for his prophecy, he spread his dreams of freedom through his writing and his actions. Across the infinity of time, hope shall spring eternally from his words and his life".

Carlo Pisacane's 'La Rivoluzione'. Revolution: an alternative answer to the Italian question. Richard Mann Roberts. £12.99. 218 pages.



Carlo Pisacane was, alongside Garibaldi and Mazzini, one of the leading figures in the Risorgimento, the struggle for Italian liberation from French and Austro-Hungarian rule and for unification. He was chief of staff in Mazzini's Army of the Roman Republic. In 1857 he sailed with a small armed force of Republicans from Genoa to the coast of Calabria. Unfortunately, local insurgents did not rally to him and he was defeated by the Bourbon forces, killing himself rather than be captured by them.

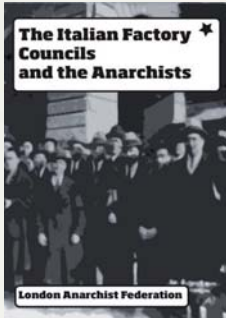
After his death his political essays were published in Paris and it became clear that he was developing

some kind of libertarian politics. Between 1848 and his death he had been reading many socialist writers, including Fourier and Proudhon. He had entered into debate with Mazzini over what a post-Risorgimento Italy should look like, believing that a national revolution should be combined with a social revolution. He believed that the peasants must be involved in this revolution, and he went beyond Proudhon in advocating collectivism. He believed that both industry and the land should be held in common, and administered by the communes for the good of all. He sought to avoid the outcome of previous bourgeois revolutions, advocating a socialist revolution and the involvement of the masses.

At the same time he developed libertarian views on the State, and opposed himself to dictatorship and centralised States believing that the only just system was 'the anarchy of Proudhon'. He combined this with the old ideas of previous revolutionary groups, and indeed of those groups involved in the Risorgimento. Pisacane's ideas appear to have had no effect on younger republicans and had nothing to do with the welcoming reception given to the anarchist ideas of Bakunin from 1864 onwards. However they were re-discovered by anarchists in the mid and late 1870s, in particular by Cafiero and Merlino.

Here for the first time in English are the collected works of Pisacane as well as a sketch of and evaluation of his life and works. This book is a testimony to one of the founders of Italian socialism and precursor of the Italian libertarian current within it.

Stormy Petrel pamphlet series

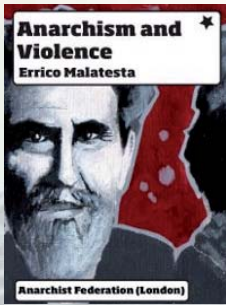


The motif of the Stormy Petrel has a long association with revolutionary anarchism. Stormy Petrel was the title of a German anarchist paper of the late 19th century, it was also the name of a Russian exile anarchist communist group operating in Switzerland in the early 20th century. The Stormy Petrel was the title of the magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation in Russia around the time of the revolution. Writing in 1936, Emma Goldman referred to Durruti as "...this stormy petrel of the anarchist and revolutionary movement..."

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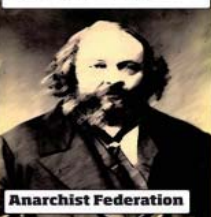


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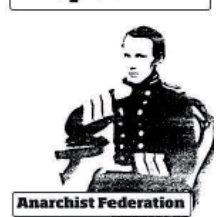


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Manifesto of Libertarian Communism - George Fontenis

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Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade

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

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

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

10 We oppose organised religion and cults and hold to a materialist analysis of capitalist society. We, the working class, can change society through our own efforts. Worshipping an unprovable spiritual realm, or believing in a religious unity between classes, mystifies or suppresses such self-emancipation / liberation. We reject any notion that people can be liberated through some kind of supernatural force. We work towards a society where religion is no longer relevant.