

ORGANISE!

... for revolutionary anarchism



71

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RELIGION
SPECIAL

Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation
Issue 71—Winter 2008

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 **20th March 2009**. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

What goes in *Organise!*

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

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

Subscriptions

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Membership of the Anarchist Federation is open to all who agree with our aims and principles (found on the back cover). For more information write to: Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX

Alternatively you can email us at join@afed.org.uk or visit our website: www.afed.org.uk

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Editorial –

What's in the latest Organise!

The Anarchist Federation present *Organise!* 71, with its themes on religion and international issues.

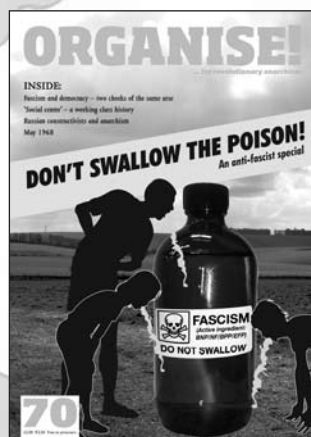
Our continuing series on anarchist influences on art and culture looks at the work and life of one of the greatest writers of the 20th century, John Dos Passos. *Organise!* has carried a number of articles on the struggle against anti-fascism in the past, not least the well-received articles on the Zazous of France and the Edelweiss Pirates of Germany. Yet another fascinating group that rejected the ideology of Nazism were the Schlorfs of Vienna. *Organise!* takes a look at this early youth sub-culture with its rejection of the work ethic and its embracing of the pleasure principle.

We continue the international theme developed in *Organise!* 70 with a report of the Congress of International of Anarchist Federations held in Carrara in Italy, a traditional stronghold of anarchism. This year was the 40th anniversary of the founding of the International in Carrara. Anarchist Federation members attended this important event and were enthused by the spirit of revolutionary zeal and international comradeship and friendship there. We also look at the situation in Oaxaca where a movement, rooted among the working class, peasants and poor has wide popular support and is now facing ferocious government repression.

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Is there anybody out there?

This is my take on religion; that some religious beliefs can be accommodated within my understanding of anarchist communism. However, these are the beliefs that remain in the realms of metaphysics. As soon as religion starts making claims about the physical world it must be questioned, as with any other system of thought. I want to argue that religion as a whole, in making the claims it does, on the foundations it has, is fundamentally detrimental to humanity. Of course plenty of religious people can have totally different interpretations of religion, but the general framework that religion establishes goes against what I understand to be Anarchist Communism.

To begin let's start on the most abstract level. Here we're simply talking about something spiritual that we believe exists beyond ourselves. This seems to be at the core of most religious beliefs. It may simply be a feeling of spiritual connection with every living creature. Here we haven't reached the point even of God, purely faith in something beyond ourselves. Now my first intuition when presented with such an idea is to jump to my Darwin, Dawkins and Davidson. My feet, I'd like to think, are set firmly in the real world. Yes I can get overwhelmed by the beauty at the top of a mountain but that doesn't mean any spiritual bond above and beyond the physical world exists. Love, friendship, humour, beauty are part of the physical world just like trees, sunshine and vacuum cleaners. Nothing about any emotional response indicates anything that transcends the bonds of the real and to think they do is nothing more than fluffy thinking.



However as time has gone on a bit my view's shifted. With regards to belief in the abstract and spiritual, whether we choose to accept it or not I now believe to be arbitrary. It isn't a question of science verses faith. We are before the point where science can play a role. The view that there is something beyond us admittedly has no evidence for it at all but the view that there is nothing beyond is equally groundless. Anything we point to to justify either side could be taken up by our opponent. It seems therefore that on this purely abstract level whether we believe in the spiritual or not is arbitrary, it's about whether you feel something beyond yourself or not.

Now to move this debate on a bit let us bring in God. By God at this point what I mean is simply something/some being, that created the universe. Now a general belief, a religious belief in such an entity, I think can be viewed as similar to the weaker view already expressed. Here whether we see the universe as created by something divine or not

still remains an arbitrary choice. I stand at the top of the mountain and see the wonders of chance; the next person sees God behind it all. Here our concept of God is still in the general and abstract, purely something that made the universe. It would seem to me therefore that as with spirituality a belief in God as so described can neither be refuted nor proved. If this is so we have two choices, either arbitrarily choose or don't make the choice at all. Most of us fall into the first category but think our decision to be founded on something more substantial. To argue that there is evidence one way or the other is ridiculous. The burden of proof falls equally onto each camp, one says: "well show me the evidence for God." The other: "show me the evidence against."

Now it's important to state that making such a choice is perfectly acceptable but it must be understood that at its core it's an emotional response either for or against something with no evidence either way. To think it is anything else is misguided.

Our next step is to introduce religion. To begin with let's look at religion in a general way. An abstract belief in God is something which can accommodate all of science, many other religious claims can't. Why is it important that religion accommodates science? Well it isn't, but when comparing the validity of beliefs the ones with all the evidence behind them, for me anyway, are the ones we should be more willing to accept. If for example one person says crystals are the best cure for cancer and mounds of evidence says chemotherapy is more effective I know which one I'd go with. So for example a belief in the age of the universe based on the bible is in direct opposition to scientific evidence. Though the evidence isn't conclusive I think it's a reasonable step to take sciences line. This clearly doesn't make religious beliefs of this nature unsupportable but whether we choose to hold them or not no longer seems arbitrary. We can't take the same stand point to religion here as we can to it on the purely abstract. We can't do this because all our best evidence pushes us one way. In the earlier sections the evidence wasn't on either side because we were discussing something beyond the physical world. As soon as religion moves into the real world we can evaluate it against science. Science is a body of evidence from which hypothesis and theory is developed. This means religion is up against something born out of mounds of evidence. If we choose to accept it we are trusting blind faith in the face of the accumulated wisdom of humanity. Now where does this take us? Well having faith is having faith. On one level it seems it has no real impact, you're merely choosing to side with faith rather than evidence.

This, though more controversial than a belief in an abstract God, doesn't seem like a bad thing, it's simply basing your metaphysics in the religious not in the scientific. It does however lead onto a more important problem, the impact of religion and religious views in the real world.

What I've argued so far is that believing in or denying the existence of spirituality or a creating being is an arbitrary choice. Religion however makes claims about how the physical world is and in doing so faces strong opponents. Basing your view of reality on faith seems fair enough, however, it suggests my first fundamental problem with religion. Making that choice involves trusting in something regardless of the proof. For this reason religion exemplifies a deeper anti-intellectual tendency which needs to be confronted. To trust in anything without thought results in power being placed in the hands of others regardless of reason. In faith we find the human capacity to follow blindly and in following blindly we become a herd that can be pushed in whatever direction the powerful want. Anything that instils in us the attitude not to look at evidence and instead trust a higher authority inbeds in us an attitude of accepting higher power over personal thought. Religion isn't simply a metaphysical system that lies at the side of the rest of the world. Religion has far reaching repercussions in the real world and it's for this reason it must be confronted. This is a general criticism of religion; it however starts to bring forward many others. In religion we find the justification for sexism, oppression, bigotry, homophobia, capitalism and a general acceptance of power as

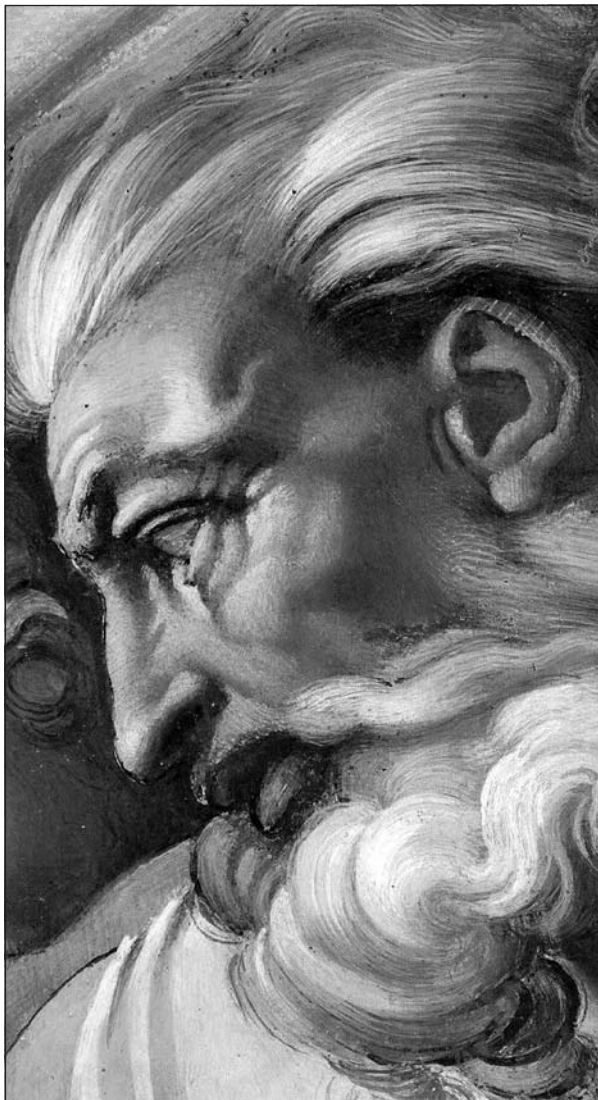
correct and the thinking individual as flawed. Religion as a philosophical standpoint would be ok but it isn't and could never be simply this. Religion makes claims about how to live, how the world is, what is right, what is wrong and I feel leads people to attitudes I fundamentally reject. It seems anyone who values the integrity of the individual and equality between people must challenge religion at this point. I may meet a racist who bases his view on the nature of reality on Moore's metaphysics, that wouldn't stop me objecting to him being a racist. With regards to religion our objection must be further reaching because it is a result of her view of the nature of reality that she does have the beliefs which I object too. It seems therefore that religious belief, though by itself appears harmless; is in fact the cause of much, that as an Anarchist I should challenge.

It could be argued that my attack on religion is based on a generalisation. In reality many branches of religion, even branches of mainstream religion, are in fact fighting for radical social change. It may be true that certain sections of some religions are fighting for radical social change but inherent in all of them is the seed of future oppression. Religion tells people how to think and how to view the world. Though some may be less oppressive than others, all have in them an authoritarian core and all must be challenged.

Apart from a tendency to blindly accept power, the justification for racism, sexism etc religion plays a functional role in society. It legitimises the way the world is by suggesting that though 24,000 children starve to death every day, though we live in a world of

exploiters and exploited, God's got a plan and we'll all end up where we deserve to be. In this, religion prevents people from challenging what's wrong in the world and instead focus on their faith in a life after death. It breeds complacency through hope and stabilises a fundamentally unjust system. My point here isn't that once religion falls capitalism would as well, it's simply that religion like many other ideologies legitimises and stabilises the world in a fundamentally detrimental way. I acknowledge that many religious people do care about the world and don't blindly accept authority but that doesn't justify a theoretical framework that does on the most part damage the world in these ways.

The final point that needs to be elaborated on is born out of my first discussion. That of belief in something beyond the universe whether it be God or any other transcendent force. Belief in such a thing wouldn't require us to worship anything, put our trust or faith in anything because it would be something fundamentally spiritual and not in need of worship. It seems in fact, that to worship something so detached from the physical world would be meaningless. No morality, no view of the universe can be constructed out of such an abstract foundation. For this reason faith in something this general poses no problems for me because it could never have any real impact on anything. It would be there, and that would be as far as we could go. Beyond this we start to slip into religion as argued against in the previous section. As soon as we start to build a belief system above and beyond the intangible we move into the real world and in doing so have



God: just a figment of the imagination

an impact which must be analysed.

So what do I think I've argued? Well faith in something beyond the universe is perfectly fine. Whether we choose to accept it or not is arbitrary and being on such a general level would have no impact on any other belief we have or form. The mistake people make is that they see all religious belief as characterised by this first discussion. Many try to understand them as something purely spiritual and if this was so they may appear reasonable, such analysis is flawed. Religion influences action and influences it in a way that I find fundamentally harmful. For

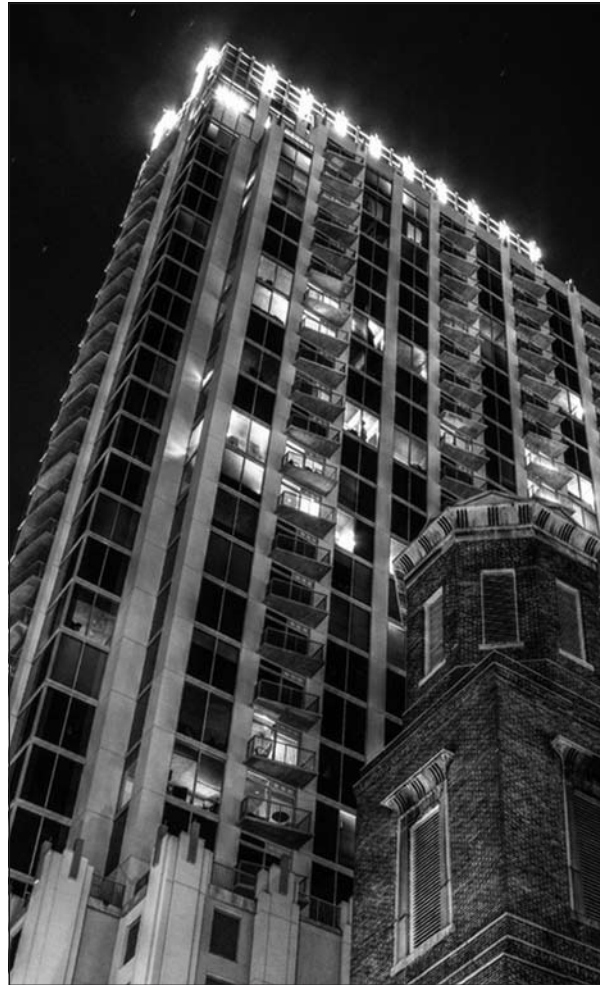
this reason regarding the purely spiritual, I am arbitrarily atheist. Beyond this, though at first whether you're religious or not seems like an irrelevant personal choice, it's in fact the cause of some of the most damaging political and moral actions people have carried out and so I stand an anti-theist. As an ideology it leads people into anti-intellectualism, trust in authority and an acceptance of oppression, I've barely even touched on what religious institutions have actually done. Clearly this isn't true for everyone who has religious beliefs but religion does establish a framework within which oppressive and submissive tendencies don't just flourish but are encouraged.

How does this explain the debate? Well those who support religious views as acceptable within Anarchism seem to be suggesting something equivalent to either a purely transcendent spiritual feeling or religious beliefs that don't have a further reaching impact. It seems that this second stance is misguided. Religion more often than not bleeds down into all thought and in doing so helps to legitimise authority and oppression in its many guises. For this reason religion should be challenged by Anarchists as something detrimental to the development of everybody. It's important to make clear that I am not opposing people's right to believe in what ever they want whether it be a man walking on water, coming back from the dead or delivering presents to kids down a chimney. What I oppose is the beliefs themselves and the institutions that perpetuate them. I believe that if you can stick in the metaphysical you're fine, as soon as you move into the real world Religion can and should be questioned.

The rise of the new mega-church

Those who have found their local places of worship sadly lacking in the entertainment and luxury aspect and are tired of getting down on dirty floors to pray to plain wooden ceilings can now turn to the ultra modern and hyper branded megachurch in their hour of need.

Creeping up on the outskirts of towns and following business models by the likes of Wal-mart these churches were rooted in the 1950s with a few small venues mostly located in the United States. With humble beginnings catering for only a few thousand, there are now over several thousand megachurches dotted around the globe with the Yoido in South Korea which has the dubious honour of being the largest 'Disney church' in the world and is capable of seating over 830,000 people (since 2007). The alarming growth of these typically non-denominational churches has not gone unnoticed even among other churches who have criticised the megachurch's lack of depth, its reliance on entertainment as evidenced by their concert style shows with even the 'smallest' of these types of churches having a mixing and sound desk to cater for their contemporary Christian acts and perhaps the biggest criticism has been that the ministry of these massive churches focuses more on personal gain and individualism rather than social justice in any meaningful way. By building in wealthy urban areas to boost donation and merchandise sales the church has 'gone Las Vegas' to quote one of its detractors with only tokenistic concern for people whose last refuge was the church community centre. The megachurch like any other business destroys free space and environments leaving a wreckage of plastic packaging and



spiritual alienation in its wake so it can broadly cater to its vast number of attendees, placing itself as a source of faith and hope in a secular world despite cynical marketing tactics.

In spite of the estrangement felt by some church goers thanks to the vast expansion of these places with their incessant revenue generation and their messages of 'wealth creation' and 'Christian prosperity' this is only symptomatic of the far reaching tentacles of capitalism and its ability to subsume all that it sees fit. McChurches practice a doctrine of 'Religion Lite' choosing to place greater emphasis on promoting the consumerist and hollow ideals of capitalism.

Although this megachurch

movement is still relatively new it is one that should be strongly opposed along with all the other hideous aspects of capitalism and is a perfect example of how organised religion and religious beliefs can easily be adapted to indoctrinate followers to blindly subscribe to an all pervasive system of greed and globalisation; branding and active ignorance under the banner of faith where all the sinister aspects of the corporate church can be explained away. We as anarchists and anti-capitalists should together seek to take back our lives, our space and our minds from the influence of the church and all its various off shoots like the megachurch and build spaces that are truly social and decentralised. The social centres movement is vital in encouraging personal and societal development advocating instead of the corrupting structures of the church which preys on (among many others) working class people in their weakest, desperate times to keep them invested in the chains of capitalism by tapping into their natural way of thinking and destroying or disfiguring that thought process with promises of salvation and riches in 'heaven'. What is important are spaces where one can truly feel individual growth and growth in their community without having to succumb to the pressures of religious faith. We must fight for spaces that are determined by the needs of the people and not any hierarchal institution which has systematically failed those who rely on it. We do not need church whether it be mega in size or whatever, we need a new mode of engagement, mutual aid and non coercive co-operation by continuously celebrating and agitating for these spaces and resisting the expansion and development of corporate institutions on our common ground.

The Spanish Taliban

The threat of religious fundamentalism today seems far-away; physically and politically marginalised on the bleaker shores of 'civilisation'. But fifty years ago, an extreme religious nationalist group, a minority in its own country, took control of a western democracy and ruled it by blood and bigotry for over forty years: Franco's Spain

The roots of fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism is not moral or philosophical but a social phenomenon. It takes root amongst socially dispossessed classes and feeds on the profound alienation and loss felt by the dispossessed. This is true of the white underclass of the mid-West, the exiled tribesmen of the Taliban or the aristocratic-military clans of Nationalist Spain. Though dripping with the sacred, it's aims are always profane: the recovery of lost 'place' or moral supremacy. Where it has a political dimension—and it often does—its followers will also seek the recovery of political power and economic privilege. This was true of both the Spanish Nationalists in 1936 and the Taliban in the 1990s. In 1939 the Falangist ruling class and its religious allies took control of the State, its institutions and functionaries, running the country as one vast monopoly board. Banks and trading houses, industry and commerce were controlled by allied families; pulpit, blackboard and the means of mass communication by the Church. Although the restoration of democracy and the revival of a free civic life in Spain since the 1980s has quite broken the hold of the Church on most people, many of the economic alliances, (and with them cultural and political power), still persist.



Paradise lost

Shattered by a profound sense of displacement and loss, fundamentalists look back to a supposed time of purity and moral rectitude. Archaism is a source of strength, whether inspired by Bible or Q'uran. The terrorist repression which crushed the Spanish people after Franco's victory revealed the backwardness of social and human relations, a backwardness hailed as a virtue in those days of triumphant fascism and Nazism. Two barbaric systems, that of the past and that of the present, combined and encouraged one another.

Fundamentalism—because of its origins in the lust for power through moral ascendancy—brings together forces seeking moral, cultural and economic revanchism; a return to social relations based on older customs and power relationships. In Spain, people were forced into Church-sanctioned and defended roles: the all-powerful husband and father, the obedient and fecund wife, the dutiful child etc. State, Church

and Family were the pillars of an imagined Spanish golden age, which would return if people remained loyal to the Falangist State, obedient to the Church and kept their economic and social place. Just as the Taliban prescribed modes of social behaviour, (men to wear beards, women the burka and so on), in a conscious reaching back to the supposed purity of earlier times when Islam was a unified and imperial force, sweeping away the decadent societies on its borders.

Because of this, fundamentalism takes root most easily in societies and communities that are stagnant or decaying, where ruling forces are losing their sense of power and purpose but new political and social forces have not arisen. This explains the rise of fundamentalist and socially-conservative religious movements in Europe between the wars as much as it does fundamentalism in the Islamic world; more concerned with overthrowing corrupt and stagnant dictatorships in Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia than challenging the West.

Land, blood and bigotry

Because of the yearning for lost power and wealth, while fundamentalism masquerades as a movement aiming to re-establish a moral or theological society, its leadership group is usually seeking to protect or acquire control of economic, cultural, intellectual and social life. By 1936, a powerful anti-clericalism had taken root in Spain, threatening the power, privilege and economic survival of the Catholic Church. The Church was (and remains) a big landowner and the violent movements for land reform threatened this concentration of power and wealth: where peasant

poverty was most extreme and widespread, the illiterate rural classes looked on [the Church] as an instrument of oppression. In the same way in Afghanistan, before and after the Russian invasion of the 1980s, the stable tenure of the opium fields broke down; struggle for the land—*latifundia* in Spain, poppy fields in Afghanistan—became inextricably linked with a war for the soul of the nation.

One powerful emotional prop of the Falangist regime was the ‘pact of blood’, the bond between those who had fought and then carried out the mass reprisals against the ‘vencidos’, the defeated. Another was the myth of martyrdom, especially the Falangist leader Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, but all the other ‘absent ones’ too. Blood cemented together the disparate groups who inherited power in Spain after the Nationalist victory and ongoing pogroms, mass executions and summary killings were aimed at keeping them united. This idea that blood and loyalty is owed to those who have sacrificed themselves, martyrs and prophets, is of course a powerful current within jihadist Islam, including the Taliban. In both, there was and is a conscious effort to infuse the nation and community with the idea of (dutiful and obedient) suffering and sacrifice, to enable those who control the message to control the people.

The ideology of the *Movimiento Nacional* which was forced upon the Spanish people after the Nationalist victory in 1939 was infused by fear and hatred of a supposed Judeo-Masonic-Marxist international conspiracy, whether the western democracies (in the 1940s) or—after Spain had entered the US camp in the 1950s—international communism. Fundamentalism

thrives on the fear of the ‘other’, who is not primarily an economic or military threat but a moral disease, a cancer of immorality and licence. Even with victory the philosophy of fundamentalism requires new enemies to be conjured up: “Nevertheless the struggle of Good against Evil is not ended. It would be puerile to believe the Devil has yielded. He will invent new snares and new masks and he will take new forms in keeping with the times” – Franco 1959.

Morality and control

The institutions of fundamentalism use ‘morality’ as a tool to seize power and then control society. In Spain the *Asociacion Catolica Nacional de Propagandistas*, founded by the Jesuit Ayala, consciously aimed to conquer power. It believed that if the church did not enter politics then politics would enter and destroy the church. As such it had an ideological—not moral—antagonism towards secularism, the irrational belief that a moral crusade had been forced upon the faithful by an alien progressivism; just as the Taliban and other regressive movements often believe, propagate and feed upon.

In Spain, all literature, media, newspapers and education were in the control of the Church. Bishops issued legally-sanctioned decency regulations. What gave them force were the variety of state-funded institutions, laws and executive agencies established by the *Falange*. In Spain it was the *Guardia Civil*, the *Social Brigades* (active everywhere repressing ‘subversion’ but also given special, summary powers to crush strikes or student agitation), town mayors, provincial governors and the like. In Afghanistan, the

Taliban relied on a religious police force—the *munkrat*—under the control of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice to enforce rules regarding appearance, dress, employment, access to medical care, behaviour, religious practice, and freedom of expression. People who violated the edicts were subject to summary punishment: beatings, detention or both.

The Jesuits returned and took over the education of students. New laws had to conform to Catholic doctrine. Primary education was put under the control of the Church, which required pupils and teachers to attend Bible classes. Teachers were watched over by parish priests and candidates for the professions had to have good churchgoing credentials. But though the Church wanted to control education, it did not see a point in peasants being educated at all. In 1950 only 58% of children attended primary school and 8% secondary school, where they were brainwashed about the degeneracy, immorality and unclean nature of the ‘reds’ (in fact any progressive). This echoes of the worst Islamic propaganda, which regularly portrays the unbeliever as degenerate and unclean. With impurity—of course—came censorship, taken to extreme lengths: books banned, poets imprisoned or exiled, satellite dishes banned. In Spain films were re-touched: a bare-chested boxer must be given a vest, the word thigh banned, an actress’s breasts made smaller. In Afghanistan floggings, loppings and executions for possessing or distributing banned books, music or films; a flight from reality in the pursuit of purity.

Immorality is frequently equated with political treachery. Both the

Nationalists in Spain and the Taliban in Afghanistan believed that moral depravity (adultery, sexual licence and homosexuality) would so rot society it would easily fall prey to its enemies: In any Islamic country where adultery becomes common, that country is destroyed and enters the domination of the infidels because their men become like women and women cannot defend themselves. In Nationalist Spain, tens of thousands each year were condemned for being a ‘red’, which implied moral depravity. Under the Law of Social Danger, homosexuals were declared *grandes pecadores* but also *rojos* (reds). The Republic had recognized women’s right to divorce and, to a certain degree, to sexual liberty. With the triumph of Franco in 1939, affectionate and sexual relationships returned to the traditional model. Sex was considered wrong, love was eternal and only within marriage and a moral double standard between the sexes reigned: men could have extramarital relationships but husbands were allowed (indeed expected) to beat and kill wives suspected of adultery. Anything which suggested sexual non-conformity or defiance of church laws was construed as political deviancy, leading to arrest, torture, imprisonment and execution. Tens of thousands were imprisoned or killed.

Another aspect of this control and a parallel between Spain of the 1930s and Afghanistan of the 1980s, was the preparation of young men and boys for crusade or jihad in all-male environments with high levels of authoritarian and religious indoctrination. In Spain it was said that “... the young must train for the struggle, must worship violence. In the young, patriotic violence is

‘Without strong movements or social ideas of progress, Afghanistan risks a return to fundamentalism and with it the death of society’

just, necessary and desirable. We must wholeheartedly accept a moral code based on violence and a warlike spirit” – Onesimo Redondo, right-wing Libertad group, 1931. By segregating and excluding women, perpetuating a blood-soaked machismo based on the pillars of patriotism, piety and ignorance became profoundly easier: “... They had no memories of their tribes, their elders, their neighbours ... They admired war because it was the only occupation they could possibly adapt to. Their simple belief in a messianic, puritan Islam which had been drummed into them by simple village mullahs was the only prop they could hold on to and which gave their lives some meaning.” – Rashid.

The death of faith, the beginning of freedom

Why then, is Spain today a place of vibrant culture and sexual freedom? Because the desire for freedom and social justice had been driven underground—the message to us today of *Pan’s Labyrinth*—but not eradicated. In the 1960s and 70s it gained new champions: students, poets, intellectuals, the remnants of the old labour movement and—to their credit—Christians inspired by the new creed of liberation theology. Social change too played its part: tourism, labour emigration to other

European nations and economic development introduced more liberal customs to society, though not without a fight: one newspaper declared tourists a ‘grotesque cavalcade’ and called for ‘Christ’s scourge on these desecrators’. The car and student apartments facilitated sexual encounters without commitment. The contraceptive pill became available, despite the opposition of Franco’s government. The boundaries of freedom were widened by the courageous action of millions of people, not all agreeing on all things, but desperate for a return to an open and tolerant society purged of the grotesque institutions of repression and control.

In this we understand the plight of Afghanistan. Unable to break free from Islam as the fundamental basis of all institutions and social behaviour, without a free civil society or strong movements for progress and, more importantly, without any intellectual or social idea of progress, Afghanistan risks a return to fundamentalism and with it the death of society.

Social progress comes about through struggle against oppressive forces and institutions. The hundreds of thousands of courageous men and women who fought in Spain for thirty years—and carry on fighting today—have earned the measure of freedom they have. In Afghanistan—and Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia—the struggle goes on because the idea of fundamental religion, that religious belief must be the basis of civil society, has not been finally discredited and defeated.

Extracts taken from:

Spain: *Dictatorship To Democracy* by Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi; *Spain Under Franco* by Max Gallo; Taliban: *Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* by Ahmed Rashid

Fan controlled football clubs

There has previously existed a tradition amongst some anarchists and Marxists to perceive sport as an ‘opium of the masses’; a distraction from the more pressing concerns of the working class—similar to religion. This argument could feasibly be extended to any pastime, from celebrity gossip, art and stamp collecting to poetry, theatre and cinema. The attitude of some anarchists towards sport (and usually any pastime that is not high-brow art, music or poetry) reflects that of the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill, who, despite his belief that all pleasures are intrinsically good unless they result in harm, maintained that there exist ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ pleasures (*On Liberty*, 1859, London: Penguin Books). The opinion that sport, particularly football, is pointless and that enjoying it is a submission to the bourgeoisie smacks of elitism, and also raises the question as to whether sport would still be ‘permitted’ in a future anarchist society. Of course, the answer to this has to be ‘yes’, given our desire to live life for pleasure not profit, and requires us to discuss the issue of sport within an anarchist framework.

Sport provides people of all ages, races, cultures and genders with an opportunity to interact voluntarily with individuals outside of the workplace in a leisure environment. Like art and music, there are many different ways to take part in sport, either as spectator or player. Rather than look down upon sport, anarchists should view sport as an opportunity to meet other working-class people and to organise amongst ourselves for change. This article will thus document how working-class people have organised independent football clubs in place of corporate-



dominated clubs in recent history.

In 1992 the clubs of the Football League First Division set up the FA Premier League to replace the former as the highest echelon of professional English football, bringing the 22 founder clubs (reduced to 20 for the 1995/96 season onwards) a huge influx of money due to an unprecedented television rights agreement with Rupert Murdoch’s ‘Sky Sports’ station. In the sixteen years since, both the commercial and popular appeal of football, particularly the Premier League, has skyrocketed. Top clubs such as Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool and more recently Chelsea can count their fans in the hundreds of millions, United alone boasting a third of a billion fans worldwide (‘Man Utd’s 333m fans’, *Daily Mirror*, 8 January 2008). The Premier League ‘brand’ is now touted as the best league in the world, the result being that each week’s round of games are seen as the next chapter in a soap opera, plugged relentlessly on satellite television. Matches are no longer a

place to go and meet with friends, but a spectacle to be witnessed, either with potential corporate clients in a VIP suite, or in the safety of your own home on the television. Echoing the gentrification of many city centres, the traditional working-class base of the terraces have been replaced by members of the upper classes, with clubs only too happy to entertain them with luxury bars and expensive restaurants inside stadiums. For many working-class fans, the only option left for any sort of communal solidarity is to go to the pub and watch the game on a big screen TV.

The psychology of the game off the field has also changed drastically, with club executives and chairmen now more inclined to view fans as ‘customers’ of the club, rather than supporters with a right to a say in the club’s affairs. This attitude was most starkly demonstrated in the takeover of Manchester United by Malcolm Glazer, an American hedge-fund entrepreneur who left the club in \$850m of debt after taking over as owner in spring 2005. In an effort to make back the money, Glazer has subjected season-ticket holders to a series of price increases, and led to a group of fans setting up a ‘rebel’ club, FC United of Manchester (FCUM), in protest at price hikes and the autocratic nature in which the club was being operated. The club’s founders drew up a manifesto outlining its opposition to the commercialisation of the Manchester United, the Premier League and the sport in general, and held a democratic vote to decide on the name of the club, with each of the potential names having varying degrees of relevance to the club they broke away from. FCUM’s policies of direct democracy and developing links with the local community, as

well remaining a non-profit organisation and refusing to display a sponsor on club shirts will appeal to anarchists; “members have so far set season ticket prices, decided how much membership will cost, voted on how often the team’s playing strip will change and whether it will carry a sponsor or not” (Membership section of the FCUM website).

FCUM were also offered advice and support from AFC Wimbledon, another breakaway club who had formed after Wimbledon FC were taken over and relocated north to Milton Keynes. The plight of the Wimbledon fans was well-publicised, and to this day the fanzine ‘*When Saturday Comes*’ refuses to acknowledge the existence of the Milton Keynes Dons football club. The decision to move the club was unprecedented in League football (although non-league side Enfield were relocated to Borehamwood in 2001, spawning the formation of Enfield Town), and drew comparisons with the practice of ‘franchising’ that is evident in American sport, where a club can be moved to a new city if there is evidence for a more fertile market in this area. Thus, the NHL ice hockey club Québec Nordiques, sandwiched between two traditional hockey powerhouses, the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Canadiens du Montréal, was moved in the early 1990s to Denver, Colorado, where

there was not another major hockey club for hundreds of miles in any direction. The system of franchising has already extended to rugby league, where from next season clubs will have to meet strict criteria before entering the Super League, and the last decade has seen constant rumours of a breakaway continental Super League for European football based on a similar system. Only the richest and most profitable clubs would enter, severing their ties completely with the established domestic and European club competitions that are so popular with fans. Much of the protests against a Super League and franchising are characterised by a passion to retain what many fans love about the game. An entire culture of banter and rivalry has grown up around football, some unique to clubs, some widespread across the entire game. Outrage was rife when Manchester United chose not to defend the FA Cup in 2000, instead attending a World Club Challenge tournament in Brazil. The FA Cup retains a magic all of its own amongst English fans, and the club owners seemed oblivious to this, preferring to attend a tournament that, whilst sanctioned by FIFA, holds little value amongst fans. Similar protests were voiced against the Premier League’s proposed plan for a 39th round of games to take place in a number of locations worldwide. The plans were met with derision from

across the British media, and many football federations voiced opposition to the arrogance of the Premier League. Fans have an acute sense of the money talking in football, and many are desperate to keep the traditions and culture of the game despite the ever-tightening grip that global capitalism holds on the game.

It is in this light that independent, fan-controlled clubs have sprung up. While the cases of AFC Wimbledon and FC United present anarchists with glamorous, anti-capitalist examples of fan-controlled clubs, other examples, notably AFC Liverpool and a raft of lower league teams such as Exeter City, Cambridge City, Notts County and Stockport County provide equally pragmatic examples. Despite season-long protests against the American owners at Liverpool football club, the formation of AFC Liverpool in spring 2008 was touted as an ‘affordable alternative’ rather than a new club, and sought to retain ties with Liverpool. Like FC United, AFC Liverpool operates according to a democratic vote from the membership and is not-for-profit, but has sought to distance itself from much of the anti-capitalist rhetoric of FC United and AFC Wimbledon. Nevertheless, the nature of the club represents an attempt by fans to organise alternatives to the ‘Big Football’ of the Premier League that is no longer affordable to the

working classes. This strategy has indeed borne fruit; Exeter City was taken over by a fans' trust following relegation to the Football Conference (the first tier of English football below the Football League), and was taken out of administration two years later, and promoted back to the Football League in May 2008. Even more remarkable is the rise of FC United, who started life in the second division of the North West Counties League—the tenth tier of English football—and will start the 2008/09 season in the seventh tier Northern Premier League, having been promoted every season since their inception.

However, it is not just on the field success that drives fan-controlled clubs. As stated above, FC United's manifesto seeks to develop links with the local community and the youth of the area. Most notable was a 'fan day' held in 2008 as part of an anti-racist campaign where the club sold Fair Trade food, and the club emphasised that "...any activity such as 'Kick Out Racism' week has a strong element of being merely symbolic. However, we wish to stress our anti-racist and inclusive approach. We are a young club, and aim to ensure that our day will be the springboard to further activity." (People United Day section of the FCUM website)

The club goes on to confirm its opposition to xenophobia and

homophobia, as well as stating that "football is, today, central to many people's ideas of community—and encouraging a sense of belonging is crucial if minorities are to feel included" (ibid). Clearly, the club wishes to actively involve itself in struggles that affect working class people, and the fact that a number of the club's supporters are featured on the fascist Redwatch website is a testament to their efforts!

For football fans who despair at the influence of money on the game, the progress that fan-controlled clubs have made proves that the process of direct democracy and not-for-profit football is successful. The day has yet to come when a fan-controlled club reaches the Premier League, but perhaps Big Football and the money behind it will prove too strong for clubs such as Exeter City and Notts County who would not be able to compete financially for world-class players. Instead, the ambition for clubs such as AFC Liverpool, FC United and AFC Wimbledon is undoubtedly to reach at least the Football League, and many fans of the breakaway clubs would love to be drawn against the club that they broke away from in an FA Cup tie. The latter of these goals is merely the luck of the draw, but the former appears to be a not-too-distant prospect for AFC Wimbledon, who could be playing League football as

early as 2011. For anarchists and fans alike, these clubs represent an aspect of everyday life that has been wrestled from capitalist hands and returned to the people, truly an example of creating a new 'society' inside the shell of the old. Apart from the largest Premier League clubs, the formation of a supporters' trust that can gain control of a majority of club shares and turns the club into a not-for-profit organisation is not an unrealistic prospect; this has occurred at Cambridge City, Exeter City, Stockport County, Raith Rovers (albeit with the help of Gordon Brown!) and Notts County, and is perhaps a less extreme version of a traditional factory occupation! Making the connections between fan-control and anarchism and stressing the damage being done to football by capitalism to fans could result in an increase of anti-capitalist sentiment amongst working-class football fans. Football and other sports are a part of the community, and as a part of the community, anti-sport anarchists need to be engaging with fans, not looking down on them and trying to force them to 'better' themselves by rejecting sport. These alternative clubs are often defined by their solidarity with each other and their resistance to capitalism, something that anarchists should be congratulating and encouraging.



CRUNCH TIME

As the credit crunch hits the economic system worldwide, we see governments frantically attempting to put blocks in front of a run-away train to economic catastrophe.

In the United States, the Bush regime has stepped in to buy up the failing mortgage giants, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The *Financial Times* correctly called this “nationalisation by another name”, an unheard of move by a neo-conservative government, going against all that they stand for.

The US Treasury supremo Henry Paulson was stampeded into making this move when banks in China and Europe, main investors in these two mortgage corporations, the largest in the USA, threatened to call in their debts. This would have led to an even more serious situation if Paulson had not acted. This move was followed by the Bank of America being forced to buy another failing investment bank, Merrill Lynch, for the knock down price of \$50 billion (US). This was a consequence of the collapse of another big investment bank Lehman Brothers.

However government intervention either in the USA or in Britain cannot head off a slump in the housing market, nor the collapse of banks and indeed the airlines! Many economists are predicting a further collapse of US banks and of many airlines. The USA hoped to find a way out of this mess with increased exports, thanks to a weaker dollar, but with the economy slowing down simultaneously in Europe, China and Japan, this is unlikely.

As a result unemployment climbed to 6.1 per cent in the USA whilst in Britain it was predicted in some quarters that unemployment could rise to two million. In September the



campaign group Credit Action released staggering figures on the levels of personal debt in Britain. One person is declared bankrupt or insolvent every five minutes and 660 people became unemployed every day during the June-August period and an average of 104 homes are repossessed every day! The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates this figure will rise to an average of 123 a day by the end of this year and citizens advice bureaux are dealing with 6,600 debt problems on a daily basis.

Britain's economy froze between April and June this year for the first time since the early 1990s, according to the Office for National Statistics. Almost 16 years of economic expansion is at an end.

With a pound weaker against the dollar and the Euro there is a likelihood of increases in inflation. Recession in the British economy is now predicted by economic analysts at Commerzbank and by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For its part the Bank of England predicted that 2,000 people would lose their jobs every day until the end of December 2008.

The weaker pound will mean an increase in imported goods, in particular fuel. At the same time the Brown government is standing firm on any significant wage increases for public sector workers. After years and years of wage restraint, tempers are rising among workers. The doctored lap-dog of the Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress, is now forced to snap at its masters' heels, with pressure increasing from union members. Workers should realise that we cannot rely on either the TUC, Unison, Unite! or any of the other unions to realistically struggle for better wages. Their solution is in our own hands. The bus workers strike in London in September was an early sign of growing wage discontent.

Anarchists should argue the case for action around wage struggle in the workplaces. At the same time, they should increase their agitation and propaganda in general, both at work and in the neighbourhood, with the message that life does not have to be like this and that a different future is possible. If we do not offer both an inspiring vision and encourage and support radical answers to the economic slump on a practical level, then the vacuum opening up in society, with the collapse of the Left, will be filled by the radical right.

Oaxaca: overcoming the fear

The long struggle for dignity

By Silvia Gabriela Hernández, Kiado Cruz,
Rubén Valencia*

'This is not a movement of leaders, but of bases'

The APPO has never been an organization but rather the name for a movement. The current crisis does not represent a rupture in this convergence, between the actors or groups within the APPO, but rather, is a feature of the essence of the movement. It is the natural result of a process in which some of its actors have wanted to define this movement as if it were an organisation or a political party; pretending to appropriate for itself the right to represent the movement. The struggle of the APPO has not only been against the government of Ulises Ruiz, but against all authoritarianism remaining in the pueblos, neighbourhoods and social organizations themselves. This struggle against authoritarianism extends to many spheres, including, to use just one example, Section 22 itself, when, in their moment, the teachers repudiated the leadership of Rueda Pacheco.

In order to understand what is happening in Oaxaca, we need to return to its recent past. Firstly, we need to remember that we are the most culturally-diverse state in the country, with a majority indigenous population; of 570 municipalities, 418 are governed by internal organisational customs (assemblies). By means of the struggle for indigenous autonomy, a partial recognition of these systems of governance was achieved; nevertheless, the struggle continues for the full right to self-governance. This notwithstanding, Oaxaca is a state which, historically, has generated diverse social movements.

Already in its past it has removed three governors from office, the last being at the end of the seventies. The six-year term of Jose Murat, the "governor" prior to Ulises Ruiz, ended in a politics of "money or lead". In other words, you will be bought, or you will be punished. Similarly, prior to this, the term of Diodoro Carrasco also utilised heavy-handed tactics. Nevertheless, many pueblos, organisations and entire regions fought for their right to self-government; for example, Loxichas, Unión Hidalgo, San Blas Atempa, Xanica and Benito Juárez in the Chimalapas. Social organisations suffered political repression from state governments. In short, the movement and parts of the struggle lived through a phase of demobilization and disarticulation. In this tense scenario, Oaxaca saw, for the first time, the presence of a "centre left" candidate who had been an apparatchik of the state government, and who had run against Ulises Ruiz for the position of governor.

In evident fraud, and in the midst of popular discontent, Ulises Ruiz arrived in power with the slogan "no marches, blockades or encampments" and, in an authoritarian and clearly pre-



meditated action, moved the executive and legislative seat of power to a town half an hour from the capital. Continuing along these lines, the government constructed their judicial city in the municipality of Reyes Mantecon. In this manner, they paved the way to convert Oaxaca into a city at the service of tourism, a sort of colonial Disneyland, continuing with a series of renovations to remodel the urban landscape; most visibly in the Zocalo, where, flushed with money and power, they cut down trees and raised spaces to create areas more in tune with the extravagant tastes of the governmental class. Furthering the multi-million theft of cultural heritage and governmental funds, the government also gave the go-ahead to the expansion of the bus terminal into the Jalatlaco barrio, one of the oldest in the city, thus generating a great unrest that gave birth to the citizen council in this neighbourhood.

In addition, the government of Ulises Ruiz began a campaign of aggression against the newspaper Noticias, including the occupation of their warehouses and buildings; revenge for its director's support for he opposition candidate who had already won in the minds of the people.

It was in this context that Section 22, representing the Oaxacan teachers, began on the 15th May, as they do every year, to issue a series of demands, such as higher wages to cope with the higher cost of living. This mobilization of the teachers was not supported by the people, for various reasons. Nevertheless, when the state police entered the Zocalo on the 14th June to evict them through brutal repression, it provoked an uprising of spontaneous solidarity, on a scale that had never

seen before.

Political parties and vertical organisations

On the 5th of August 2007, the people of Oaxaca returned to show that they are not prepared to participate, and far less to believe, in bourgeois and capitalist “democracy”. And they did so with a greater forcefulness than on previous similar occasions; the day of the elections for the state congress saw more than 80% of the population abstain. In the face of these undeniable facts, some detractors prefer to search for excuses for what happened, despite understanding perfectly well the message sent by the people through their massive and deliberate electoral abstention: that nobody believes any longer in institutions which serve, in the name of the people, those politicians and their friends, working in favour of private interests.

We do not care about the lawsuits against the fraud of the PRI, nor the disputes between the parties over the supposed legality or illegality of a congress made up solely of members of one party which serves only one interest. Rather, we believe that what really matters is the fact that the system is a fraud in its totality. Is it not the case that we have here is a political system which gives power to people other than the citizens it supposedly represents, and that its intent is to legitimise that which only 20% of the electorate “chose”? This is without discounting further those who voted for the PRI under threats and tricks, bought votes, and without taking into account the falsification of figures. It is clear that the government knows they are illegitimate, and they know that the 5th of August represented another step forward for

the Oaxacan people in their struggle to free themselves from tyranny and for respect of their dignity.

Currently in Oaxaca, the internal debate of the APPO and the social movement has polarised. And the mass media has accomplished its mission of clouding the motives of this debate: positioning at its’ whim, the “moderates” on the one side and the “radicals and intransigents” on the other. Conveniently, they emphasize the division between the electoral block of the APPO and

‘We need to find forms of participation that guarantee the articulation of all the pueblos; what we have in common is many times more than what divides us’

those groups “out of control”, as they call them. But for us, there is no such simple division. On the contrary, the process of reorganisation is far more diverse and complex than that. There is no doubt that there are honest people who believe that participating and putting forward candidates can eliminate the tyranny in Oaxaca, or that proposing laws can change the relation of society to the State. Nevertheless, in a movement of movements such as that which has developed since 2006, we believe intuitively that the process has gone beyond cosmetic change and reform of so-called ‘democratic’ laws and institutions. What is being confronted here is a vision of ‘development’ and ‘progress’ which is poised to rob

everything from us, and this is being challenged through the construction of extremely diverse paths toward a dignified and fair life, just as much in the countryside as in the city.

There are organisations that concentrate on the ‘democratisation’ of existing institutions. What is meant by this? For nearly two decades, talk of socialism has been abandoned in order to roll over to capitalism, and in this way began the ‘struggle’ in the name of ‘democracy’. However, if we are to understand this concept, it is necessary to re-examine its origin.

The original meaning of the word democracy comes from Greek and signified the “power of the people”. Needless to say, it now has nothing in common with its’ original meaning. Capitalism and its’ proponents have attempted to make us believe that the form of ‘democratic’ government it presents, supposedly based on the participation of the people in decision-making, was, and remains, the only form of political organisation, or at least the least imperfect. Yet, amongst the same Greeks from whom came the concept of democracy, that which was called “the people”, was nothing more than a class from ‘high society’, ‘enlightened’ because they were supposedly the only ones capable of deciding the common good. This they purported to do so, whilst simultaneously marginalising and oppressing the rest of the population. This form of politics that the rich and powerful call ‘democracy’ robs the people of their voice and of their capacity to make decisions over their own lives. This idea is based on the notion that the people ‘don’t know’ what they want and ‘don’t know how’ to govern themselves, and as such, constitutes

one of the fundamental pillars used to justify the repression that supposedly serves to safeguard 'law and order' and 'peace'.

However in Oaxaca, the majority of the people, and above all the indigenous pueblos, are already aware of this. In reality it has always been this way. And their response has always been the same: the full right to govern themselves, through methods which, whilst imperfect, attempt to subordinate power to collective decision. In the same way, the organizational practice and the spirit of the barricades during the popular mobilization also re-create the self-organisation that, in spite of the times of repression and alarm in which they took place, demonstrated a vitality and confidence in self-defence far removed from the sort of organization based on the 'democracy' that concentrates power and decision-making in the hands of a few.

Vertically-controlled organisations have attempted to appropriate and control the movement and impose their vision. These organisations betrayed the movement. They allied themselves with political parties which represent neither the struggle nor the principles generated in 2006. These opportunist organisations, such as the FPR and the FALP accepted the distribution of support and credit financed by the system, through proxies such as motor taxi licences and other crumbs. Many have been co-opted by the State and have returned to their habitual behaviour: their shady negotiations and receipt of resources as a sort of palliative to poverty, they institutionalize the struggle in order to regain their status as intermediaries between Power and the people. As such, the

key challenge that faces these so-called civil organizations, which began as intermediaries and now have the opportunity to accompany this struggle for the people's dignity, is clear.

It is evident that the structure of the APPO Council is not useful for the movement's reorganisation. Neither the provisional leadership, nor the media leadership, directed the path of the movement. There cannot and should not be an imaginary structure, which from some office or hotel, deigns to make decisions on behalf of the pueblos of Oaxaca. We need to find forms of participation that guarantee the articulation of all the pueblos; what we have in common is many times more than what divides us. If our principles are upheld, and the respect is there to unite us in our diversity, it is possible to cross to the next stage in the struggle stronger and better organised. We do not forget the graffiti collectives that repeat in their slogans: This is not a movement of leaders, but of bases. The debate that seeks only changes in the law and 'democratisation' of existing institutions provokes the belief that all we can achieve is modifications in the law and that an 'enlightened' minority will do the work. In terms of facts, laws are useless for the people from below; they are created for the powerful and rich. Over many years, we have become accustomed to seeing legislative assemblies as the centre of power, but we consider this to be a grave error caused by inertia or deceit. A superficial vision of history has made us believe that power comes to the people via the Parliament. Nevertheless, power resides in the people, and is entrusted momentarily, periodically,

to those the people choose as their representatives.

All these arguments cannot make us renounce the importance of those "umbrella" laws that exist and contribute to the strengthening of previously debilitated processes of self-organisation in the pueblos and neighbourhoods; mainly in urban areas, due to individualisation and the development model which excludes the majority to benefit a few. Without a doubt, it is important to support the citizens with actions to revoke the mandate, the participatory budget, the referendum, the plebiscite and all the proposals approved in the Forum Constructing Democracy and Governability in Oaxaca, held by Section 22, the APPO, civil organizations, traditional authorities and individuals, in August 2006, in which more than 1000 people participated in reflecting on the changes that are required in Oaxaca.

Equally, we recognise the importance of the proposals of the Constitutive Congress of the APPO in November 2006 and the resolutions of the regional assemblies in 2007 in the framework of the movement. We also stress the importance of the regional assemblies such as the Istmo assembly held in Ixtepec, the Guelatao assembly in the North Sierra, as well as the Autonomies in Tlahuitoltepec Forum in the Mixe and the State Forum of Indigenous Pueblos.

Community as resistance and liberation

In reality, the APPO Council does not represent the wide and diverse social movement. That which some call dispersion, is in fact the process of reorganisation taking place in various spaces and specific territories. A new phase is starting, the outcome of

which no-one can predict. In the round tables and in the last plenary of the Third State Assembly, in which the electoral block did not participate, the APPO was defined as a movement of movements, its main organ as the General Assembly, and its principal characteristics as Community and pluri-culturalism. The APPO has to fight from the bases for the construction of popular power. If it moves forward with concrete definitions, it will not be merely one resolution more, but a real construct that could restructure the APPO. The struggle then, is not only for the overthrow of the governor, but to create the conditions for autonomy and popular power in every corner of the state. These are some of the accords that came out of the Third Assembly. Although this assembly was not fortified and built on it is important that the communalist character of the movement was recognised; it clearly goes beyond what is being called the APPO or social movement. What is important now is an analysis from below and clarity in the changes we wish to see.

On the other side is the APPO of the streets, of the soul; those who identify themselves not with the name, but rather with the work to be done. Those who continue marching forward but who are often unseen, creating alternative types of organization through *tianguis populares* (popular markets), caravans, marches, meetings, building of compost toilets, vegetable gardens and the sharing of roles and knowledge. These are the invisible things that do not appear in the media, yet finally achieve a strong voice that generates human relations of a collective nature, which break through the structures of capitalist individualism.

The principal of Community as a source of inspiration for the strength of the APPO and the social movement has been so important that it is necessary to focus on its meaning. Floriberto Díaz, an indigenous Oaxacan activist and intellectual proposed the concept from his experience with the indigenous pueblos, and to attempt to shed light on a way of life based on their communitarian model. Floriberto observed that Community is built

‘We believe that it will be from the neighbourhoods and communities that the energy of change will emerge, as well as the strength necessary for this profound transformation.’

on four fundamental elements, which are indigenous laws: communal territory (use and defense of collective space), communal work (interfamilial through mutual aid and communal by means of ‘*tequios*’, gratuitous work carried out for the benefit of the community, communal power (participation in assemblies and in the carrying out of the various civil and religious offices that make up their governmental system) and communal recreation (participation in festivals and sponsorship thereof). This characteristic of the communities and indigenous pueblos’ political organisation is based on their own concept of power as service to the pueblo, and assemblies as political decision-making process. Jaime Luna says, “The meaning of power in indigenous populations is very different from a mestizo rural or urban world. In our communities the power is a service, the execution of an

assembly’s norms, of the collective. In the other, it means the execution of decisions by the authority itself, elected through electoral mechanisms with little control by society. An authority in community is an employee in the service of all, an employee with no payment, he cannot make his own designs and when he must do so, it can only be realised after consultation. On the contrary, the political power in rural or urban mestizo societies is the possibility of executing their own ideas and satisfying their personal interests, no assembly exists”. Luna explains: “the assembly is the maximum authority in the community. It always works by consensus, but in some cases for practical reasons the vote is used. The election of the authorities does not reflect any political parties’ intentions because it is founded in prestige, in work”. This conception of power makes us understand that “our immediate obstacles are the political parties”.

From its conception, the idea of Community has been related to the concept of autonomy, which is the exercise of the power of the people. Community constitutes and creates the necessary conditions towards a full self-government. Benjamin Maldonado tells us that the idea of Community as the governing principle of indigenous life, arises and is developed through means of discussion, agitation and mobilisation, although not as an ideology of combat but rather an ideology of identity, demonstrating that the indigenous specificity is their communal identity with its own ancient, historical and cultural roots, and from which it attempts to orientate the life of the people, as a People.

Communality is a concept understood by a large part of the teaching body and amongst indigenous Oaxacan intellectuals, through their experience in communities of which the majority are indigenous, as well as their exercises of systematization to explain their immediate reality. Communality, in its' present context, does not indicate solely the recognition of our indigenous pueblos' way of life and its influence on the inner life of the movement, but it is also a readiness to act critically and collectively against imposition, intolerance and an electoralism that seeks only to reproduce the same schemes of domination from which our people have suffered.

The proposal of Communality can be understood as the equality of rights and obligations of all members of a community to participate in the decision-making process (and where the community is headed), so as to enjoy its goods and produce.

In the APPO, this principle is recognised as the inspiration of the movement; the difficulty in its' implementation in the Council was precisely that there was no defined territory. The city of Oaxaca and the offices in which the Council met did not permit each one of the pueblos, organisations and sectors to achieve consensus in the short, medium or long-term. But by this stage, many have been inspired by this proposal. What remains is to see what the people from the colonias and urban spaces have to say.

The reorganisation of the movement

It is necessary to peer a little into the future to visualise part of the profound change that is needed in

Oaxaca, and which we all yearn for. What seems most realistic and likely to succeed, is if we continue with the regeneration of an opposition movement based on present Oaxacan reality, starting with the fact that no-one supports Ulises Ruiz Ortiz or his band of people. There are many difficult elements, but these could also serve as bridges linking a broader and more united movement, because the pressures suffered by the neighbourhoods and communities are very acute and the necessities of everyday life both intense and diversified. It is often observed that the initiatives to organize mobilizations and to present demands to the authorities do not truly reflect priorities or authentic needs, but rather circumstantial factors that attend to the urgent, but disregard the important.

It is thus necessary to reflect on action; if our movement is purely ideological or if we are a movement with a face and a heart which we intuit come from the profoundest depths or our way of thinking, feeling and acting, inherited from our ancestors, and which seeks the common good in We, who are the community. If this intuition is confirmed by all, we could define the constructive routes of action and learn from the past when, for lack of clarity in a project of the country, state, barrio, colonia or community, after the Revolution, the reformist bourgeoisie came to power. This is to say that in the past, the necessary time was not taken to reflect on proposals which would attack problems from the root to move beyond the established order and the chaos generated by the lack of a constructive programme.

It is an annoyance to many that new barricades flourish. Not exactly

those of self-defense but more those of decision-making spaces of the communities, from which are born creative and novel forms of self-organisation. We believe that it will be from here, from the neighbourhoods and communities that the energy of change will emerge once again, as well as the strength necessary for this profound transformation. We must give this the necessary time, listen and engage in dialogue with all possible senses, and not only where ideologies, some already bankrupt, prevail.

We think that the social movement, the pueblos, colonias and barrios, in their diverse scenarios of struggle, in their declarations of regional assemblies or public manifestos, are building the power of the people to govern ourselves autonomously. Popular power and autonomy come together to build this path, but it is the way in which it has been built that has generated these differences. For us, what remains of the APPO Council does not advance with the same tempo as the people's initiatives or actions. For that reason, the confusion outside our immediate communities has spread, and the richness of the process through which this movement journeys, as plural and diverse as society itself, has not been clearly shown.

All these problems notwithstanding, we wish to emphasise that the movement in Oaxaca remains alive, even after the repression of the 25th of November, where there were more than 25 deaths, and more than 300 compañeros incarcerated. There are disappearances, political and military harassment, and there are still political prisoners. It has become known that prior to 2006, there were more than 30 political

prisoners. It is undeniable that as a result of this, people do not take to the streets as they did before, but it is also true that the APPO and the social movement have been unable to reach agreement in this period of reorganisation.

From before 2006, Oaxaca had more community radio stations than anywhere else in the country (more than 50), and more have since been appearing in different pueblos and communities. The number of Internet pages announcing actions and proposals of the movement have also grown. There are neighbourhood bakeries, organic gardens, and workshops for children, to which are invited many other collectives or individuals. These are just some examples of the many initiatives. In the continuance of this struggle, women have created other spaces, such as the Encuentro de Mujeres, in which neighbourhoods, collectives and organisations meet. At the moment, an artistic and cultural market is being held and used as a space for reorganisation in which organic vegetables, handicrafts, and other things are being sold. The demand for freedom for the political prisoners continues apace. And young graffiti artists from various collectives are meeting to reclaim public areas for political and artistic initiatives that generate exchange and spread the struggle further.

The Encuentro de Joveñes, made up of organisations, collectives and spaces of youth, organises caravans to pueblos and communities in resistance, to learn and exchange ways of resisting and how to mutually support one another. As well as this, there are different places of learning which generate spaces for reflection on the movement's actions, capitalism, and how to

realise different ways of life that regenerate scope for community in the city.

We are not romanticising. We say

'No form of police or military coercion can weaken the firm will of the people. From the depths of our heritage we have learnt to overcome fear. We have learnt to heal ourselves.'

that on a march it is impossible to take decisions in assembly, and up till now there have only been marches or political actions that do not provide the opportunity for the people to give their opinion of what is happening and take on a role or obligation within the movement. By this, we do not mean to say that it was only in the barricades that assemblies were created. They were also convened in sectors of civil organisations and other spaces, such as the more than 10,000 assemblies that exist in Oaxaca, and which struggle towards a collective existence.

At present, in Mexico, we can identify three reference points still worthy of mention and of being paid attention to: the citizen's movement headed by Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, the Other Campaign initiated by the Zapatistas, and the APPO, or rather, the Oaxacan social movement. To us, it will be the last two, due to their historical depth,

that will continue and endure, and without a doubt, live on as historical references of the social struggle in Mexico. For those that know Oaxaca through the APPO, it is necessary to look deeper into the historical memory of our state and to remember that it has always struggled. An elderly lady participating in the APPO said before the cameras: "We are not prepared to carry on resisting for another 500 years, we are fighting for our freedom". Oaxaca, in its abundant regional, municipal and communal diversity, has its own stories of struggle to tell.

Meanwhile, the repression continues. Under the guise of security, the police presence has risen, and with it, petty crime, violent assaults and mob attacks. Intimidation against opposition continues and political prisoners are still held as hostages of the system. No form of police or military coercion, however, can weaken the firm will of the people. From the depths of our heritage we have learnt to overcome fear. We have learnt to heal ourselves.

We believe that the struggle is with and comes from the pueblos, neighbourhoods and communities, in the organisation beyond the system and the political parties, whose interests will always lie in achieving and maintaining power. We believe that the so called "democratic" structures are designed precisely to impede what profound change can bring, because the people themselves are their only legitimate representatives and only a political organisation arisen from plurality and based on freedom, can realise the profound transformation that all the people of Oaxaca long for.

This article was prepared for a special edition of the magazine "La Guillotina" dedicated to the topic "Re-thinking the Left in Mexico"

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The Schlurfs – youth against Nazism

Schlurfs, no, not little blue gnomes but young people in Austria who rejected what the Nazis had to “offer” – the whole package of militarism, the work ethic, authoritarianism and race hatred.

In Organise! 59 we had an in-depth look at the French equivalent of the Schlurfs—the Zazous. We also looked at the German opposition among young people to Nazism – the Edelweiss Pirates (Organise!53). This article will build upon these.

The Schlurfs were working class youth who were not afraid to engage in street battles with the Hitler Youth, growing up in the streets as they had. Peter Treumann, a member of the Hitler Youth writes about clashes with the Schlurfs in his memoirs. He was shocked by their outlook, their refusal to perform well in school or work and contempt for “achievement”, their imitation of American styles of clothing and liking of American music, their antimilitarism. “In his imagination Peter Treumann projected what he had warded off for himself on to the Schlurfs; apart from their consumerism and their refusal to perform in school or at work, it was above all their relations to girls and their liberal approach to sexuality which indicated their social inferiority. They embodied, so to speak, the negation of the Hitler Youth ideal and therefore appeared to be the natural enemies.” Sieder, ‘A Hitler Youth from a Respectable Family’ quoted in: Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (eds.) ‘Between Generations. Family Models, Myths and Memories, Oxford 1993

The typesetter Fredy Pietsch described some Schlurfs in his reminiscences: “When we walked in there we saw a few Viennese men in the group, whom we called ‘Wiener Schlurf’ ... ‘Wiener Schlurfs’ wore their

hair in a certain style very high in front, long hair, very high in front, to make the so called ‘Lahmwelle [in Viennese dialect] and at the neck, the ‘swallow tail’. The long hair was put on top of the other part, and greasy brilliantine was rubbed into the whole thing, so that the hair would keep shape. And there were about 5, 6, 7 of these so-called ‘Schlurfs’ with this hairstyle with us.

So we stood in front of this man with his patent-leather boots and all of a sudden he says, “I would like to introduce myself. My name is ‘Unterfeldmeister’ Wiawalla and I am a true Prussian and you are bloody Viennese wimps. We will teach you how to waltz.” And we were all completely silent for a moment and really almost shocked, and suddenly one of the ‘Schlurfs’ at the back says, “You know, you can kiss our ass.” (in Viennese dialect) – I’m sorry to say this so frankly, but (laughs), that’s how it was. We were all laughing because that was so to the point, this answer to his affected behaviour, he says, “You know... and so on.” But well, we didn’t laugh for that long. We didn’t laugh long and he (the Unterfeldmeister) didn’t even understand what the young man had meant and what he had said. Since he said it in Viennese dialect and so (laughs) fortunately the Unterfeldmeister didn’t get it.” This



was when Fredy had been summoned to work for the Reich Labour Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst) in October 1942, and where young Austrian workers experienced the authoritarianism and humiliating conditions imposed on them by the Nazis. As one Schlurf, Alexander Mejstrik was to comment: “Then it all started: being giving overalls and uniforms, getting a haircut. Our hair had to be cut to a length of three fingers wide, or two fingers wide above the ears. A cropped hairstyle—the ‘Lahmwelle’ and the ‘swallow-tails’ were gone of course.”

The origin of the word “Schlurf” can be traced back to the spoken word Schluaf, an old Viennese put down of boys and men who prefer fun to responsibility. The written word Schlurfe was used in official public documents for the first time in 1941. As early as the 1930s, there were apprentices, young auxiliary workers and schoolboys who showed a preference for the sharp clothes which could be seen in the new Hollywood movies, for a particular hair cut, for swing music and swing dance. All of these later became trade-marks of the Schlurfs, as they did with the Zazous in France. Young people who strived for this look used different means to look sharp, depending on their social background or moral outlook. Some might save for a long time to buy a sharp coat or shirt, whilst others would be able to procure a stolen suit, whilst others had to alter their older brother’s clothes. Old hats were moulded to the desired shape by applying steam. Large single-breasted suits were converted to double-breasted versions by adding additional buttons. Plaid and pinstripe were the preferred patterns. White scarves were worn, as were thick-soled shoes. Schlurf women or ‘Schlurf kittens’

In 1941, the Nazis began to

implement their social and cultural policies in Austria. This meant they had to pinpoint a group which would be the opposite of what they desired and to then persecute that group. The Schlurfs were defined as “immature youngsters whose way of being is deficient and who strive for superficial leisure, dance, jazz music and women”. This artificially created group combined a number of different practices or ways of behaving, seen as undesirable by the Nazis, into a unity. Whereas only one or two of these characteristics might be seen in the way of life of particular individuals, the Nazis combined all of these into a united uniform whole. All of these tastes involved fun, something that was anathema to the Nazis. So now the Nazis could use the artificial construct of the Schlurfs to develop their official policies. In fact they started a “campaign against the Schlurf menace”.

As a result some young people began to actually identify with this “bad” role as defined by the Nazis. They accepted the definition and reclaimed it as their own developing it on the streets, in cafes and through their dress and social activities—dances, gatherings in flats, but also in their street opposition to the Hitler Youth, their slang and nick names, and their use of the black market to dress in their preferred style.

“BdM (Nazi organisation for young women) and HJ (Hitler Youth) watch out for your lives. When the Schlurfs wake at night and come out of the Zweites café. They will swing their knives and St. Louis Blue will sing his songs again. Police, Filth, stop shaving our heads bald” – Schlurf song recorded in a Nazi archive.

The Schlurfs began congregating at weekends at the bar-restaurant-café the Zweites Kaffee in the Prater district of Vienna, where they drank, smoked,

and listened to live music (practices that were forbidden for young people under the Nazi regime). As noted earlier they were predominantly working class, and they began to attract many apprentices and young armaments workers to their ranks, as well as “misfits”; those rejected by the draft because of disabilities. Above all, there were the weekends in the Zweites Kaffee, at least as long as it was not raided. In this bar-restaurant-café located in the Prater, the largest entertainment area of the city, the youngsters could dance to live music, drink and smoke even though at times it was forbidden. The Schlurfs were predominantly working class, but class did not matter to them, those most respected were they who could look the sharpest and be the most laid back.

In the Prater district itself street clashes broke out between the Schlurfs and the Hitler Youth. It was compulsory for young people to attend Hitler Youth meetings but they subverted this through absenteeism or open mockery. Concerts of Nazi ‘folk’ music were disrupted by the Schlurfs. Planned attacks on Hitler Youth units took place, with the response of police raids and Hitler Youth attacks. In November 1941 the Gestapo arrested 3 Schlurfs who were destroying an HJ poster which depicted caricatures of young men and women drinking, smoking, dancing and generally having fun, which had the slogan ‘We Reject These’ above it. On one occasion in 1942 50 Schlurfs attacked a HJ house. As with the Vichy youth organisation attacks on the Zazous in France, where Zazous had their hair forcibly shaved, so too did the HJ forcibly shave Schlurf scalps. The Schlurfs replied with attacks on the HJ, ripping and shredding their uniforms. The police tried to plant spies and the Schlurfs responded with the daubing of pro-

Schlurf slogans on walls.

The Nazis wanted to educate the youth in a “Völkisch” manner, that is, their concept of what a good German should be. This combined indoctrination in the school with indoctrination in the family to produce a youth with “Charakter”. One of the instruments used to impose this upon Austrian youth was by means of the HJ. However, the more there was a fightback against these impositions, the more the Nazis turned to stricter policies, the more the youth fought back, leading to the final collapse of these social policies in 1944. The Nazis tried to eliminate the pleasure principle from everyday life. For them the concepts of “duty”, discipline and efficiency were in direct opposition to the search for variety and fun in order to chase away boredom and monotony. The Nazis saw the slack behaviour of young workers as a threat to the imposition of their social and cultural policies. The Schlurf phenomenon, as with the French Zazous and the German Edelweiss Pirates, was a herald of the counter-cultures that were to develop in the post-war period, not just in Western Europe but around the world, counter-cultures that implicitly challenged the old order and its discipline and work ethic. The word “Schlurf” was used as an insult for several years after the end of the war against young workers who refused work discipline and authority, a sign that this kind of behaviour was as unacceptable to the new “Free World” as it was to the Nazis. The newspapers of the new Austrian democracy denounced the ‘weed’ of the Schlurfs that threatened the healthy tree of Austrian democracy. It appears that the police continued their repression against the Schlurfs. Read the AF pamphlet *Resistance to Nazism for more about the Zazous and Edelweiss Pirates.*

Forty years of internationalism

From July 4-6, 2008, the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF) held its Congress in Carrara, Italy, the city where it was originally founded forty years ago in 1968. The International has expanded considerably since then and now includes federations in Germany and Switzerland, Great Britain, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Belarus, France, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria and Argentina. This Congress was also attended by invited observers from Mexico, Venezuela, Turkey, Australia and The Netherlands. The Secretary of the IWA-AIT, from Serbia, also attended in his official capacity.

The Congress was held in difficult circumstances for the Italian Anarchist Federation in Carrara. Their historic hall and meeting room had been closed by the local council on the grounds that the building was unsafe. Of course the council had refused to do the necessary work over many years and the local group has been holding regular protests, fearing that this is just an excuse to remove them from a centrally located property that the anarchists had seized from the fascists after WWII.

Fortunately, anarchism has a long tradition in this city dominated by the marble quarries, whose workers have historically been associated with anarchism, and an alternative meeting place was found. The Congress was opened in a public



square with speakers from the Italian Anarchist Federation, the Secretary of the International (from AF Great Britain), and representatives from each member federation and the invited observers. We marched through Carrara and staged a short protest in front of the condemned meeting place in the central square.

We then proceeded to the theatre where the main sessions of the Congress were to be held. The business was opened by the Secretary who dedicated the Congress to Alphonso Nicolazzi, an Italian comrade from Carrara who had been a key figure in the International from 1968 until his death in 2005. The Congress had two main aims:

- 1) to discuss and agree on an analysis and strategy for the next four years for the IAF and
- 2) Share ideas and practices on a number of key issues and campaigns.

1968, Carrara's Congress – Daniel Cohn Bendit and Alfonso Failla.

To encourage maximum participation of delegates and observers, the Congress was organised on the basis of workshops. Member federations were involved with official IAF analysis and strategy and both IAF members and observers participated in the workshops on issues and campaigns. These included nationalism and immigration, the environment, education, gender and sexuality, poverty and exploitation and religion. Workshops put together texts that were then presented to the whole Congress, with further opportunities for member federations to suggest amendments.

The formal sessions of the Congress were enhanced by the 'apres' Congress socialising, with excellent food, wine and the singing of revolutionary songs in the square. This was mainly led by the Italians and the Spanish, with the British and others having nothing to contribute! There was also a chance to see the film made by the Italians about the 1968 founding Congress and to visit the many anarchist monuments of Carrara.

The sight of so many social anarchists, from many different countries, was an inspiration to all who attended. The chance to meet face-to-face with anarchists around the world, sharing experiences, and planning for future co-operation across borders is an important and irreplaceable event.

'Anarchism has a long tradition in this city dominated by the marble quarries, whose workers have historically been associated with anarchism.'

Culture – John Dos Passos

Organise! looks at the work of John Dos Passos, one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, who moved from magnificent works that took the side of the common people, the working class, the disinherited, to Cold War rhetoric and a diminishing of style. “I regard John Dos Passos as the greatest writer of our time,” remarked Jean-Paul Sartre.

John Dos Passos was born in 1896 in Chicago, the love child of an important corporation lawyer and a widow, whose estranged Catholic wife had rejected divorce. His mother took her son abroad to Belgium, where they remained until 1901. He was then looked after by his father who adopted him as a stepson. He attended Harvard University from August 1917 until summer 1918, when he was sent back to the States because of his anti-militarist views, he was an ambulance driver in the war, first in France, then in Italy. But was sent back to the USA, again for his anti-militarist views. The war confirmed his radicalism and antimilitarism and led him to attend several anarchist meetings in New York in 1917, one of which was addressed by Emma Goldman. John felt very close to the revolutionary union the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – nicknamed the Wobblies.

In 1922 Dos Passos published a collection of essays, ‘Rosinante to the Road Again’, about his travels in Spain in 1916. This fine book, often overlooked, attempts to tackle the character of the Spanish people and the libertarian currents within Spanish society are touched upon several times. Speaking of the novelist Pio Baroja, close to the anarchist movement, he seems in many ways to be talking about his own subsequent



career. “The anarchism of Pio Baroja is of another sort. He says in one of his books that the only part a man of the middle classes can play in the reorganization of society is destructive. He has not undergone the discipline, which can only come from common slavery in the industrial machine, necessary for a builder. His slavery has been an isolated slavery which has unfitted him forever from becoming truly part of a community. He can use the vast power of knowledge which training has given him only in one way. His great mission is to put the acid test to existing institutions, and to strip the veils off them. I don’t want to imply that Baroja writes with his social conscience. He is too much of a novelist for that, too deeply interested in people as such. But it is certain that a profound sense of the evil of existing institutions lies behind every page he has written, and that occasionally, only occasionally, he allows himself to hope that something better may come out of the turmoil of our age of transition.” Whilst he was travelling through Spain he met another young Spaniard with radical ideas, Jose Robles, a student at Madrid University whom he maintained a lifelong friendship with.

When the Communist Party was first set up in America, he saw it as a continuation of the IWW, which had by now been battered down by the American state. However, as he later remarked in 1935, he started having misgivings about the Soviet Union with the suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt, the banning of the Social revolutionaries, the abolition of the factory committees, the massacres of Bela Kun in the Crimea, the New Economic Policy, etc.

Dos Passos first established a literary reputation with his well-

received novel ‘Manhattan Transfer’ (1925). Here, he first started using the collage techniques he perfected with his later trilogy USA. Interior monologues jostle with snatches from songs and excerpts from newspaper articles. Manhattan transfer is not so much about the central characters like Jimmy Herf, who are somehow incidental, than about New York itself and its predominant characteristics of corruption, alienation, conformity and materialism. It was a brilliant novel, only to be excelled by his forthcoming trilogy. He also wrote powerful writing plays like ‘The Garbage Man’, ‘Airways’ and ‘Fortune Heights’. Dos Passos also wrote for the left wing press, such as for the paper ‘the New Masses’.

Sacco and Vanzetti

John became involved, with other intellectuals, writers and artists in the campaign in 1927 around the Italian-American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, charged with murder in a robbery in South Braintree, Massachusetts. On the basis of circumstantial and often conflicting evidence, they were found guilty of being accomplices in a robbery and murder. From this he went on to write the pamphlet ‘Facing the Chair’ which argued their case that year. As he said later: “I had great sympathy for the Anarchist movement at the time”. He was also to say that “In Boston the work of the Defence Committee was hampered by continual patient efforts of the American C.P. to take charge of the agitation.” The fact that Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to death and executed was a sign of the utter moral corruption of U.S. Society and he later spewed out his anger against their execution in his

trilogy USA. He was one of those arrested in the demonstrations on the day of the executions.

He began writing the first novel of the USA trilogy in 1927—*The 42nd Parallel*. One of the main characters is a member of the IWW, Fenian McCreary, who we last read of in Mexico mixing with local anarchists (McCreary was based on the real-life Wobbly Gladwyn Bland, a tall muscular migrant worker, whom Dos Passos had met on a stay in Mexico). It is interspersed with biographies like that of Edison, and “newsreels”, extracts from speeches and snatches from popular song. It evoked the turmoil of the United States in the early twentieth century and all of its conflicts. It is the most uplifting of the three novels of USA, and a radical optimism pervades it. However one senses the breaking of a revolutionary wave by its end, with the bowing out of McCreary, who does not re-appear in the subsequent novels.

Shot down

Dos Passos followed it with two more outstanding novels, ‘1919’ and ‘The Big Money’. In 1938 they were published together in a trilogy, *U.S.A.*, which received widespread acclaim. Again the techniques first developed in *Manhattan Transfer* were employed. However, by now Dos Passos was moving away from a radical position, and his doubts about the Communist Party began to accrue. The last straw for him were the events that unfolded with the Spanish Civil War. Dos Passos supported the Republic against the forces of Franco and visited Spain to lend his support, as did Ernest Hemingway and others. He discovered that his old friend Jose Robles, who had taken the side of the Republic had “disappeared”; executed by the secret

police under the control of the Soviets and their agents in Spain. He was disgusted by the behaviour of Hemingway, who gullibly swallowed all the lies that his Communist friends dished out. He was revolted by the repression that began against the anarchists and the independent Marxist party, the POUM.

Whereas before the Communists had written favourably of Dos Passos, they now began to attack him in their press. They began to sing the praises of Hemingway, a lesser writer, who had a far poorer grasp of politics than Dos Passos. Hemingway acted like a performing seal by his attendance at the Writers Congress, a Communist front, and his dutiful serving on sixteen C.P. controlled committees. The novelist Mike Gold (who incidentally had started out as a committed anarchist in New York before later joining the Party) lambasted him in the Communist Party paper *The Daily Worker*, revising his early opinions of Dos Passos’ works. He had earlier praised Dos Passos, he claimed, because he was “going somewhere” and because “we recognized in him a powerful if bewildered talent”. Now, re-reading the trilogy Gold in classic hatchet-man style felt that it was imbued with disgust for the world and the human race.

Dos Passos’s trajectory moved further and further to the right, as he developed a politics based on Jeffersonian democracy, and gave up all hope of any real social change driven by the masses. It sounds pat and glib to say that his rightward turn resulted in a weakening of style, but that is the case, accepted by many, as his novels became more and more clichéd starting with ‘*The Adventures of a Young Man*’ (1939) and ‘*Number One*’ (1943) and

ending with the tawdry ‘*MidCentury*’ and ‘*Century’s Ebb*’ by which time Dos Passos had embraced the right of the Republican Party.

The tragedy of Dos Passos was that he had not been strong enough to resist the tumult of the twentieth century. He was never prepared to commit himself completely to a movement, and his justified disgust at the manipulations of the Communist Party had not led him to return to his old political friends – the anarchist movement and the IWW, both then spent forces in America, but to embark on a journey that ended with his seeking of allies amongst people he had earlier despised. Others avidly joined the Communist Party or became its fellow-travellers, dutifully turning a blind eye to Stalin’s terror, whilst he took the option of embracing the enemy he had so much hated in his earlier years. A once great talent that had produced some of the finest works of literature had flickered out. As Stephen Koch comments in his ‘*The Breaking Point*’: “...almost all the genuinely great writing in Dos Passos— and there’s a lot of it – rides on the surge of an esthetic and social radicalism that in the early twentieth century became as momentous as the Romantic Movement had been a hundred years before ... The driving force behind his life as an artist, the dazzling medium that had once lifted his talent into genius and inspired a generation of radical artists around the world, had been maybe fatally wounded ... Somehow the great modernism of *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* had died in Valencia. The bullet that murdered Jose Robles had also shot down the soul of his art”.

Atamansha. The story of Maria Nikiforova – the anarchist Joan of Arc.

Malcolm Archibald. Black Cat Press, Edmonton, Alberta. 47 pages

Kontrrazvedka: the story of the Makhnovist intelligence service.

Vyacheslav Azarov. Black Cat Press, Edmonton, Alberta. 78 pages.

Both these booklets deal with aspects of the revolution in the Ukraine between 1917-21, and with the movement around the insurrectionary army of the Makhnovists and the extraordinary personality of the anarchist Nestor Makhno. But perhaps as equally remarkable was the figure of Maria Nikiforova, born in the Ukrainian city of Alexandrovsk, a factory worker who became an anarchist communist in the early 1900s. Imprisoned for her revolutionary activities, she managed to escape in an epic flight from Siberia, via Japan and the USA, to Western Europe. She

took an active part in anarchist agitation in Russia just after the February Revolution, first of all in Petrograd, and then in the Ukraine where she organized her own armed detachment, which linked up with Makhno. This band fought against all invaders including the Germans and the White army of Denikin. She was eventually captured by the Whites in 1919 and shot.

Kontrrazvedka deals with the intelligence service set up by the Makhnovists to counter the Whites and the Bolsheviks, protect itself from assassination attempts, procure funds through expropriation, and

generally gather information to help the Makhnovists in their attempt to set up a free area in the Ukraine. The Kontrrazvedka is notorious for being used by critics of the Makhnovists to argue that they were no different to the Bolsheviks in having a secret police force. This pamphlet offers previously unavailable information which gives a clearer view of what the Kontrrazvedka actually did, allowing readers to make up their own minds about its role.

Both pamphlets are available from Black Cat Press at www.blackcatpress.ca

Emilio Canzi: an anarchist partisan in Italy and Spain

Palo Fini et al. Kate Sharpley Library. 50 pages.

Emilio Canzi was born in Piacenza in Italy in 1893, the son of a clerk. He was drafted into the army in 1913 and served in the war. Demobbed in 1919 he was active in the post-war wave of discontent that swept through Italy and joined the anarchist movement. He was a leading light in the Arditi del Popolo, the combat organisation set up to fight the fascists and helped train its militants. Following the killing of a fascist he had to flee to France. In 1927 he returned to Italy to undertake underground work but was arrested. He managed to explain away his presence and left the country illegally in 1928. In France he joined an exile group of Piacenza anarchists, the Anarchist Communist Union of Piacenza. In October 1933 he served on the Anarchist Committee for political Victims based in Paris that maintained links with militants still in Italy. He was a main organiser of protests against the expulsion of Italian anarchist militants from France in 1935.

In 1936 he fought with Italian anarchist volunteers in Spain on the Aragon front.

Returning to Paris he contributed to the exile anarchist press and organised aid for Italian anarchist volunteers who had ended up in French concentration camps. With the German invasion, Emilio was arrested by the Nazis, spending 3 months in a German prison and then he was sent to a concentration camp. In March 1942 he was transferred to Italy to receive a sentence of five years of internment on the prison island of Ventotene. From here he was sent to the concentration camp of Renicci D'Anghiari from where he and other anarchists organised a daring escape in 1943. He organised a partisan detachment in the mountains. He was arrested by the fascists in 1944 but was freed in a prisoner exchange.

The Communists tried to neutralise his importance in the partisan movement and to discredit him and

he was arrested by them. Another partisan unit freed him and he took part in the fighting to liberate Piacenza.

He threw himself into activity in the anarchist movement again, taking part in the congress of the FCL (Libertarian Communist federation) and then at the founding congress of the Italian Anarchist Federation in Carrara in September 1945. On the 2nd October 1945 he was struck by a British Army truck and he died in hospital several weeks later. The nature of the accident remains mysterious.

Here is the story of this brave and little known anarchist

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All available from our London address (see page two)

Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 We oppose organised religion and religious belief(s).