

ORGANISE!

... for revolutionary anarchism

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our resistance**

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Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation

Issue 83 – Winter 2014

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.

For the next issue of *Organise!* 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!



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ORGANISE! Issue 83 – Winter 2014

<i>Editorial</i>	4
<i>Chinese Workers Shake the World</i>	5
<i>The Arab Spring? Could it turn into the Arab Summer?</i>	11
<i>Morocco Unbound</i>	15
<i>Statement of the Egyptian Libertarian Socialist Movement</i> ...	17
<i>Slovenia – what happens next?</i>	19
<i>Balkan Anarchist Bookfair</i>	21
<i>The Phoenix of Anarchism</i>	23
<i>French Silk Workers’ Revolt of 1834</i>	26
<i>Frans Masereel</i>	28

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War, War, War ... and the only real solution

It's extremely rarely that we anarchists would agree with the Pope but this recent pronouncement is accurate enough: "We are discarding an entire generation to maintain an economic system that can't hold up any more, a system that to survive, must make war, as all great empires have done. But as a third world war can't be waged, they make regional wars... they produce and sell weapons, and with this, the balance sheets of the idolatrous economies, the great world economies that sacrifice man at the feet of the idol of money, are resolved..."

Since the ending of the Cold War the United States as Great Power No 1 has sought for new enemies in its quest to maintain world dominance, gain control of important resources and maintain its arms economy. It found these enemies in the form of Saddam, Al Qaida, Gadhafi, the Taliban and now the Islamic State. This has resulted in a piecemeal and regionalised new World War, spreading to new areas all the time. Not only are the US and its allies engaged in wars in the Middle East-Syria and Iraq, it continues to support its Israeli ally in its murderous campaign against the Palestinian people. More and more Western powers, including France, Holland, Australia and Britain, are being drawn into the conflict. Meanwhile its Arab allies conduct air raids in Libya whilst US special forces have intervened there and in Somalia. War continues to rage in Nigeria. The US-backed regime in Afghanistan appears increasingly unstable, while the US continues to intervene in Pakistan through its drone attacks on Islamists and of course its

special forces intervention to kill Osama Bin Laden.

Meanwhile the US's old enemy Russia, concerned with maintaining its influence in the region and fearing covert US encirclement on its Western flanks, is itself engaging in war in

Indeed, the promise of the Arab Spring remains to be fulfilled and could burst forth once more in North Africa and the Middle East. The discontent in Europe from Greece to Spain still remains as it does in the USA with the recent Ferguson events being a sign of things to come.

Editorial

What's in the latest Organise!

the Ukraine and continues to support its Syrian ally.

Another old enemy of the US, China, is meanwhile increasing its economic influence throughout the world. It is becoming territorially more assertive in the South China Seas, clashing with local powers like the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam and South Korea. Its neighbour North Korea remains a potential belligerent threat in the region. Its relationship with the USA, which is in heavy financial debt to China, remains ambiguous, moving between denunciation and promises of cooperation.

War on the Working Class

At the same time the war on the working class throughout the world continues apace with no sign of an end to cuts in services, attacks on pensions and austerity package after austerity package. At the same time State powers are being increased at an accelerating pace, and everywhere from the USA to Spain and France civil liberties are under threat. Capitalism and the State know that increasing discontent can lead to unrest, riots and even insurrection, which is why the strong State is increasingly to be seen.

In China, workers have unleashed a wave of strikes and have won many victories against the bosses.

One way that the ruling class will attempt to divert attention from internal discontent over the worsening economic situation is through the manufacture of an external enemy and this is already being built with its wars in the Middle East. In the same way, the "War on Terror" is being used to justify attacks on civil liberties in Europe and North America.

Reforming this rotten, brutal and violent system is not possible. The collapse of the social democratic parties- Labour and their fellows throughout the world- as a supposed solution for the working class opens the way to the construction of a real social alternative. Whether it be Dongguan, Slovenia, Ferguson, Madrid, Athens or even London, uprisings are breaking out or could break out anywhere in the coming years. The only long term solution is a thoroughgoing social revolution around the world that will topple this foul system and create a new just and equal society.

The rapid rise of China as the new economic superpower is one of the key events of the 21st century. All predictions point to China becoming the largest world economy, both in terms of production and consumption, in a few years. China's entry into the world economic stage, after being a closed economy for centuries, has already had a major impact. It is gobbling up world resources, for example contributing to 40% of the increase in the demand for oil in 2004, and being the major cause of the rise in the price of commodities (Jacques: 2012). To ensure its supply of resources, China is now a major investor in mines and other resource-based industries in other countries. It is now known as the 'world's factory' and its cheap exports, mainly to the west, has meant reduced prices for consumer goods. This has led to a huge trade surplus with the US and other western countries. This surplus has been used to buy into the US economy to the extent that in many ways the US is hostage to China.

Countries that have economic dominance tend to eventually assert their influence in other spheres: political, military and cultural. The past century was the Century of the US, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many assumed that the world would become like the US, with capitalism and democracy considered to be both American and universal systems. Globalisation seemed to mean Westernisation. However, China's rise indicates that this process may not continue. There may be more than one way to become 'modern'.

We anarchists need to consider the challenge that will come from China becoming a world power.

As with the US, the rise of a superpower is not a positive thing for the working class. Workers around the world are already having to fight exploitation by Chinese companies, whose main aim is to secure cheap resources for China. However, the key factor in resisting the

Chinese Workers Shake the World

dominance of a world superpower is to have an internal resistance, from the Chinese working class itself. Fortunately, it is not only China's growth rate that is the highest in the world. The number of strikes and acts of resistance over the past two decades is massive. The Chinese Minister for Public Security recorded 8,700 incidents of unrest in 1993, 74,000 in 2004 and 87,000 in 2009.

However, resistance in itself will not lead to the creation of an anarchist society. It depends on how resistance is organised and what its aims are. This article will look at the waves of strikes and other acts of resistance that have been sweeping the main export area of south-eastern China, the Pearl River Delta (PRD). It will discuss the potential for creating anarchist resistance – anarchist in the sense that it is anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchy and anti-patriarchal as well as being for equality, freedom and communism, in the real meaning of the word.

Anarchism and China

A number of books about China have stressed the differences between western political and cultural values and those of the

Chinese (e.g. Jacques: 2102). The reasons for the differences are said to lie in China's existence as a single entity for centuries and its perception of itself as an enduring 'civilisation' rather than as a mere 'nation-state'. Its political system, despite the existence of so-called communism, is essentially based

on Confucianism. Confucianism is a hierarchal value-system that leads to a social structure that is the antithesis of anarchism. In addition, it is argued, the Chinese are notoriously racist. They see themselves as superior to the point of even arguing that they are not descended from the same African ancestor, but evolved from a different branch of *homo erectus* in order to become *homo sapiens*. Anarchism, it could be argued, is a western political ideology which grew out of the ideas of the Enlightenment and the western workers' movement. Arguing that the Chinese working class should become anarchists could be considered to be ethnocentric, assuming that ideas that are developed in the west are superior to those developed elsewhere.

However, this article will argue that this is not the case. Anarchism should not be seen as some kind of abstract belief system but as a political articulation of resistance to exploitation, hierarchy and injustice. Throughout human history individuals have acted both alone and in groups to challenge those who seek to dominate. Humans are social

creatures and can only flourish in community, one which also allows freedom for the individual. There is considerable evidence that it is human nature to want both freedom and association. However, we do not need to rely on assumptions based on human nature. We know that humans have managed to transcend their biology and have created culture. To a large degree, we can consciously choose how we want to live. Our movement is mainly a struggle to convince others through argument and example that an anarchist communist society is both preferable and necessary in order for both us and the planet to flourish.

Moreover, there is considerable evidence that these ideas are not alien to the Chinese in any case. The Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s was explicitly anti-Confucian and argued for the emancipation of women. The 1930s and the years leading up to the Chinese revolution saw a large organised anarchist movement with multiple organisations, papers and even a bookshop, plus a flowering of literary culture based on values of freedom and the rejection of feudal society. In fact, Chinese migrant workers were partly responsible for the spread of anarchism in the USA through propaganda, education and workplace struggles in the garment industry and elsewhere. <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/wdbsxk>

This article will not focus on the evidence of an anarchist movement in the past, but instead will look at the recent strikes and workers unrest. These movements may not be explicitly anarchist, but there is considerable evidence that they are in fact the expression of anarchist ideas and methods of direct action and direct democracy.

Chinese economic development and the exodus from the countryside.

Chinese economic transformation is in many ways similar to the Industrial Revolution in Britain, though much more rapid. In just a few decades it has become one of the leading industrial producers, now known as the 'factory of the world'. You only have to look at all the products we buy to realise that this is the case. It represents a change in strategy from the Chinese state, making a conscious decision to facilitate capitalism, the market and foreign investment as the vehicle for economic development. Money-making is now being promoted by the Communist Party as the main value rather than political ideology. In many ways, the Party is more of an administrative party, very different from the stress on correct political ideology that has characterised its style of government since 1949. Many politicians have moved into business. It is a strange hybrid of authoritarian government and capitalism, showing that capitalism and liberal democracy do not necessarily go together.

The area around Hong Kong, known as the Pearl River Delta

(PRD) has been the focus of the industrial development. In 1978, the Taiping handbag company of Hong Kong opened its first factory in Dongguan. However, the influx of foreign investment accelerated first in 1992 with the market reforms and then again in 2001 when China joined the World Trade Organisation. Most of the factories are owned by companies from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, but the output is destined for mainly western markets. In many ways, the PRD is Hong Kong's industrial base.

Rural migrant labour is key to the success of these factories. Under Mao, one of the main strands of the development strategy was to focus on rural development and keep people on the land with small-scale industry and large communal farms. The *hukou* system was established in which families were registered as either rural or urban dwellers. This was a way of keeping people on the land, as migrants to the city had no rights of settlement and could not send their children to school. However, the strategy of creating an export zone needed cheap labour. Some of the labour force could come from those who had been made redundant from the state-owned enterprises, but these workers would have had





higher expectations as well as being settled in different parts of the country. Therefore, the main source of labour was rural migrants. They were eager to come and work because the rural areas no longer needed their labour. This was especially the case for young women as they could not inherit the family farm.

Eventually millions of workers came from the countryside. At first, they were treated as illegals, despite the fact that the factories needed the labour. Due to labour shortages, the government was forced to relax restrictions and in 2003 passed a law banning discrimination. However, the *hukuo* system remains in place.

The Chinese industrial workforce is now the biggest in the world (300 million in 2008: Mason), with migrant workers the majority. It is estimated that there are 250 million migrant workers (BSR), most of these in the PRD. The migration from the countryside to the urban-based factories is the biggest migration in human history, with three times the number of migrants in a few decades than over a whole century from Europe to the US. The government has now recognised migrant workers as the key to Chinese economic development.

Migrant workers: life and resistance

Migrant workers are exploited, oppressed and suffer from alienation. In 'Factory Girls', Chang (2009) gives an example of one young woman, Min, just 16, who comes to work in Dongguan in a Hong-Kong-owned electronics factory. She works 13 hour shifts on a mind-numbing production line for weeks on end without a day off, earning the equivalent of 50 dollars a month. But the company is not satisfied with simply extracting huge profits from the work of Min and others. Min lives in a 12-bedded dormitory. It is near the toilets and smells. She knows no one there and it is very lonely. The girls hardly ever go out as they are either working or too tired. The company has total control over their lives.

There are millions of other stories like this, some much worse. However, despite the oppression these workers suffer, there is resistance on both a small and large scale. In fact, the big strikes will be the result of thousands and thousands of acts of small resistance as these young people struggle to take control of their lives. They are largely educated, coming straight from school. The reason to come to these factories

is not just to earn money to send back home, though that is important, but to escape the countryside and take advantage of opportunities to change their lives. Min is an example of how resistance begins and what it can lead to.

Factories prefer to employ young women because supposedly they have 'nimble fingers' and are willing to put up with the tedium. However, Min did not settle easily into the routine. She thought when she was going to work in a factory that she would be able to chat to the other workers and that it would be quite sociable. The reality was completely different. It had seemed that she would not have any choice but to put up with the situation, but this is not the case. Many workers do change jobs regularly, seeking out the factories that have the better wages and conditions. One day, after only a few months of working, Min went to see the boss and told him she wanted to leave. She told him she had no intention of wasting her youth working in this factory. He at first said no. He could hold on to her because they still owed her two months' salary. But in the end, after offering her promotion and her refusing, he agreed and also gave her all the money he owed.



She ended up finding a job as a low-level clerk in another factory with much better, although still poor, wages and conditions.

Another story illustrates what Pun Ngai (2005) calls 'fissures for transgression within the grids of discipline and power'. In the course of her anthropological research among the women migrant workers of the Pearl River Delta, she came across many acts of resistance to the discipline and control of the factory regime. In one factory, management turned off the radio on the production line with the aim of speeding up the work. However, this had the opposite effect. The women slowed down, started chatting and singing. The manager had to stop work for the night and sent them home or his authority would have been undermined. The next night, the radio was back on.

Despite very difficult working conditions and a system that aims for total control of the individual, the factories are awash with people willing to defy the system. Eventually, the small acts come together to create the more visible actions such as strikes and street protests, that bring together thousands of workers.

Strikes: The recent wave

One of the first strike waves was 1993-1994 at the Canon factory in Zhuhai and the government used the *hukou* system to deport people. In 2002 there was a strike at Liao Yang Allay enterprise which also mobilised workers from other enterprises. Then in 2003-2007 there were more wildcat strikes. The 2008-2009 crisis led to dismissals but by 2009-2010 there was a labour shortage again. The past few years have seen strikes on an even larger scale that are also

receiving much more media coverage both in and outside of China.

The Honda strike in from May 17th until June 4th, 2010 was one of the biggest seen. More than 50% of those who struck were former high school students and interns. The workers not only wanted higher wages but also reorganisation of workplace trade unions. It had wide-spread coverage in the mainstream media and even when the state ordered suspension of coverage, the local press carried on. The first strike triggered a wave of industrial action in other foreign-owned car plants, 11 strikes in all. The two week strike at Honda won a 35% increase in wages. Also, interns, used as even cheaper labour, won a 70% rise (Ness: 2014). The official unions did not support this strike. Demonstrated by the assault on workers associated with the local union.

This year saw another high profile strike at Yue Yen show factory in Dongguan. The Taiwan-owned factory has a contract to manufacture for the big brands, such as Adidas, Reebok and Nike. 70,000 work at the Dongguan factory with better than average conditions: pay is minimum wage, 11-hour days, 60 hours a week and Sundays off. 80% of workers are women, mainly in production.

It is the biggest strike of migrant workers so far with 50,000 workers taking part at different shoe factories. Unlike some of the other strikes, this one started when it was discovered that the company had not been paying full contributions into social insurance for years. This gives an indication of how the migrant workforce is changing. As a result of labour shortage, opportunities for

promotion to lower level management, and previous actions on the part of migrant workers, there has been a tendency for some workers to be more settled and live in family units. Therefore, many workers have spent years in the factory and issues like pensions are becoming concerns. Of course, there were still demands for wage increases and the strike began in the sole plant, where the majority of the production line workers are women. The first action was on April 5th when the workers blocked a bridge followed, by thousands going on strike when demands were not met. The police attacked strikers and many were arrested. The strike spread to other Yue Yen factories. As with the Honda strike, the official trade union played a negative role, trying to stop the strike. Some gains were made but the arrival of troops in the factory itself led to most people returning to work by 25th April.

Why the strikes were successful

These are but two of the successful strikes that have been waged by migrant workers over the past two decades. There are a number of reasons why they have been so successful.

One is the fact that apart from the recession in 2008-2009, there has been a growing labour shortage. Workers are able to move from factory to factory and therefore the bosses have to make their factory more attractive to keep workers. Workers can go on strike with the confidence that they will be able to get another job. This is supported by the fact that the migrants still have ties to the rural areas and can always return home.

A second reason is the nature of the connections between the

workforce. People from the same local area, and even kinship group, will tend to work in the same factory. Therefore, there is already a connection that makes it easier to organise collectively.

A third reason is the fact that the State has not intervened heavily in stopping the strikes. Most of the strikes have targeted foreign-owned private companies from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. The workers are directly challenging the Chinese state but are in fact taking action against companies from countries that were once seen as enemies. The Chinese State is not necessarily against workers getting higher wages; they are keen to create a market for the consumer goods that are being produced. As long as the workers are not asking for political rights, then the legitimacy of the State is not challenged.

A critical reason for the success has been the way in which the workers have organised themselves. The fact that the official trade unions have not supported the strikes, even trying to sabotage them, has meant that workers have to organise themselves and find their own strategies. These 'wildcat' strikes are much more effective than trade-union controlled ones as the workers' militancy and anger is not reined in. They have been helped by the increase in mobile internet and the difficulty the State has to control it. Social media has been crucial in spreading word about the strikes, using connections that are already there as a result of the ethnic and kinship groups that exist in the factories.

Lastly, the very success of each strike fuels the next one. Each victory gives workers confidence, both for the same workers to go

on strike again and others to use the strike weapon to fight back in their factory.

Dagon-mei

Most writing about the strikes and the factories uses gender-neutral terms. However, it is important to understand that there is a sharp division of labour between men and women and that the fact that China is an extremely patriarchal society is relevant in understanding the motivations for the strikes, how they are carried out and their limitations. Apart from the fact that all the main bosses are men, the lower level management and the skilled workers, such as mould design and machine repair, are also men. There are some women in the lower level clerical jobs and there are men in low level jobs such as driver and security guard. However, the majority of production line workers are women. This is a deliberate policy on the part of the companies as rural women are supposedly more docile, have nimble fingers and willing to give attention to mind-numbing detail. Clearly, the stereotype of female workers was

mistaken! Though it is difficult to tell from the accounts of actions, women must have played a major role from the beginning as they make up the majority of production line workers and it is these workers who make up the majority of strikers. The Chinese Labour Bulletin reported that in 2013 most of the strikes took place in factories with a majority of women.

Though the bosses may have thought the young women would be easy to control, they do not understand the motivations for coming to work in the factories. Most of the women will have come straight from school. There is nothing for them in the countryside as the patriarchal family structure gives any land to the eldest son. They have ambitions and want to extend their opportunities. Their only option is to become 'dagon-mei', meaning 'she who works for a boss'. Though they are pressurised to send money home, the young women want to buy consumer goods as well as save for courses that could help them get a promotion. These





ambitious and dynamic young women, liberated from the oppression of life in the countryside, as in the case of Min above, are not willing to put up with the exploitation and oppression to the degree that the bosses had hoped. According to Leslie Chang (2010), 'The turning point in a migrant's fortunes is when she challenges the boss.'

However, it is unclear the extent to which women are leaders of the strikes. In the recent Yue-Ye strike, all leaders identified were men (*Business Week*). But this is likely to have been the case as the strike did include a lot of management who would all have been men. Although women may not be taking a visible front line role, they are said to be key in using the social media to communicate and organise. In addition, some of the demands of women have gone beyond the economic. In the Honda factory in Zhongshan it was mostly a female workforce, who won wage increases as well as the right to choose their own union representatives (*Economist*, 11th May 2013).

Still, women face many pressures that make it difficult for them to take a leading role. They are in

the less skilled jobs and have less options. In addition, they face the pressures from the patriarchal family system and, once they reach a certain age, their families expect them to come home and get married. Interestingly, according to Bloomberg Business Week, there is a shortage of female workers, partly as a result of them returning home and partly because the one child policy means there are fewer women in the labour pool.

The strikes and anarchism

Though the workers are not self-identified anarchists, there are many aspects of the struggles that could be seen as anarchist.

- Self-organisation: The strikes are organised by the workers themselves with no mediation from trade unions. Though leaders may emerge, the nature of the struggle makes them much more equalitarian. The use of social media ensures all are informed of what is going on.
- Direct action: The workers do not just go on strike, they take the struggle to the streets.
- Demands are not just economic: Though the main aim of the strikes is to win higher wages, they represent resistance to

hierarchy and alienation. Also, in some cases, they challenge the State by questioning the way that the official trade unions are organised.

The most promising aspect of the strikes in terms of developing an anarchist movement is that behind all the actions is a general urge for freedom. The migrant workers are largely young, with a majority of women. These young people come to the cities in order to be free of the constraints of rural life. Once in the city, they fight to be free of the constraints of factory discipline. It remains to be seen whether these workers will join with those struggling on other fronts- for political rights, against corruption and against environmental destruction. If they do, then the Chinese State is in trouble and we have some important allies in the fight against capitalism, patriarchy, and the State on a global scale.

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The Arab Spring?

Could it turn into the Arab Summer?

The great expectations unleashed by the events in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East seem to have turned into an Arab Winter, with the apparent ending or at least hibernation of the movements that emerged there, with, in Egypt, the military back in the saddle.

But three years after the Arab Spring, the situation remains as explosive as ever. The uprising against the Assad regime in Syria has resulted in a civil war in which many thousands have been killed, injured and made homeless. In the region the regimes supported by Russia-Syria, Iran and the Hezbollah in

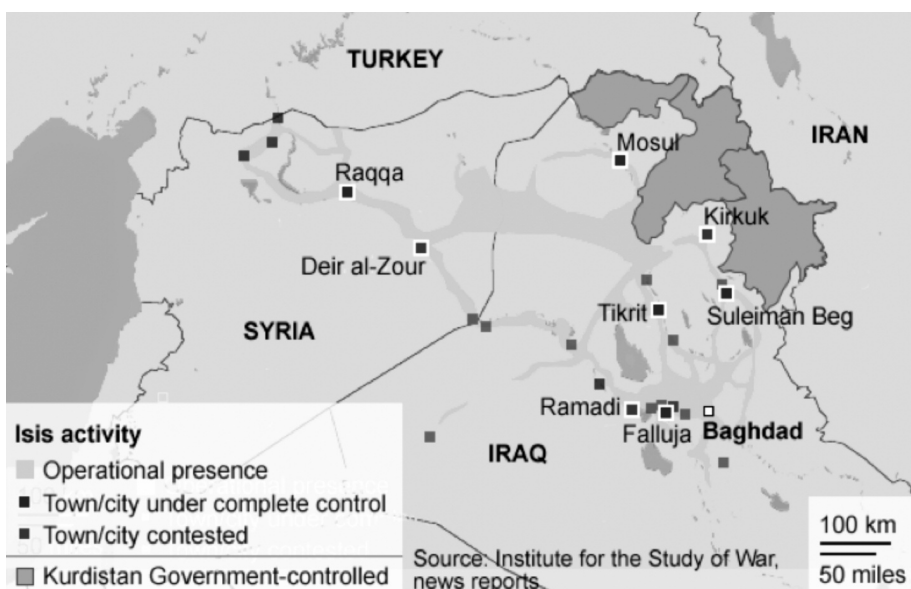
Lebanon, are in bloody conflict with the petrol autocracies of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, etc and with the Turkish state which are supported by the Western powers. However, whilst the regimes supported by Russia are relatively united, in part because they are fighting for survival, the regimes supported by the West are divided and in disarray. Syria has the direct military support of Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and units of Iraqi Shiite militias.

This is apparent in the region in particular in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates funded the Salafist groups of the Syrian opposition, whilst Qatar funded the Muslim Brotherhood. This echoes the situation in Egypt where the Saudis supported the crushing of the Muslim Brotherhood government by the military, whilst Qatar and Turkey denounced it.

The Saudi monarchy knows that the Muslim Brotherhood has a republican rhetoric and wishes to topple all the monarchies of the region. In addition, for the Wahhabi rulers of Saudi Arabia, the Brotherhood presents a rival for their hegemony over the Sunni Muslims of the region. Qatar has long had an enmity for Saudi Arabia and has allied with the Brotherhood in order to increase its own influence in the region. This led to worsening relations between Saudi Arabia and its local allies Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates on one hand and Qatar on the other.

Islamic State (IS)

The situation has been further aggravated by the meteoric rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. In Iraq the local Al Qaida leader Al-Baghdadi sent some of his forces into Syria to attack the Assad regime. These forces became Jabhat Al-Nusra and developed as elite forces among the Syrian groups attacking Assad. This all changed when Al-Baghdadi decided to set up his Caliphate of the Levant. This was not condoned by the Al Qaida leadership and its supreme head Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the heir to Osama Bin Laden. The resulting bloody clash between Al Nusra and IS resulted in major losses on both sides. This in turn led to the birth of the mostly Salafist Syrian Islamic Front with strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria, also in conflict with IS, and with Al Nusra taking the side of the Front in certain localities.





Al Qaida has always seen the USA as its main enemy. The fact that now IS may be creating some sort of alliance between the US and Iran is deeply disturbing to Al Qaida as until now Iran, despite being Shi'ite, was outside the US bloc. They are also worried that

the scope for a fight against the US will be inhibited by IS concentrating on local fights against the Shi'ites of Iran, Hezbollah and the Iraqi Shi'ite militias, and their murderous drive against the Kurds in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the Al Qaida

leadership, having read various guerrilla manuals, are concerned that the establishment of a Caliphate in the region would mean that it could be surrounded and annihilated, which goes against the strategy of a fluid guerrilla war.



The Islamic State is an embryonic gangster state, one based on extortion, terror and torture. It intends to wipe out any local rivals, even if they see themselves as Salafist. Hence their hatred for Al Nusra and the Islamic Front in Syria and for various Islamist armed groups in Iraq who they see as rivals in their drive to complete hegemony over Sunni Muslims.

Whilst US military strikes seriously weakened Al Qaida in terms of wiping out much of its leadership, the dispute between IS and Al Qaida is much more serious and has the potentiality to fatally cripple it, whilst the

tactics of IS in attempting to set up a Caliphate may well lead to defeat and annihilation.

US Aggravation of the Situation

Whilst the Islamic State is a major threat to the masses in the region, the development of Shiite armed militias like the Peace Brigades and the League of Righteousness also pose threats. In all of this the US role has proved to be one of further aggravating the situation in the region when they armed Islamist groupings opposed to the Assad regime. In fact the US role in the region has proved to be disastrous from the beginning, not least damaging the US itself.

The overthrow of Saddam meant that the Sunni minority which ruled Iraq since the fall of the Ottoman Empire have been marginalised, opening the way for IS to forge an uneasy alliance with old Baathist military and ex-administrators and with Sunni tribes. Meanwhile a pre-

dominantly Shiite government in Iraq has grown closer to Iran, itself ruled by a Shiite theocracy. The US has emerged from the Bush adventures weakened as have its allies in the region, whilst its sworn enemy, the Iranian state, has been strengthened.

The US policy of sanctioning and encircling Iran has been shown to be a complete failure, with Iran actually extending its influence in the region. It has good relations with the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai whilst Iraq has become an important market for Iranian exports, including energy, food and tourism. Iraq turned a blind eye to Shiite militias going to the aid of the Assad regime and to Iranian aid for Assad crossing Iraqi borders.

The economic sanctions carried out by the USA and the EU against Iran, whilst hitting it economically, have not seriously affected the regime there. China, India, Russia and Turkey have

ignored these sanctions and have continued to trade with Iran. By 2013 the US had to start changing its policies towards Iran and begin negotiating over sanctions and Iran's nuclear programme.

This is an indicator of the decline of the USA as a world power. It has had serious setbacks in Afghanistan and Iraq on a military level. It now has an enormous debt, not least because of its massively expensive military adventures. Its economy is still in crisis and it no longer has the funds to maintain global domination. An indication of this loss of power is that the latest Pentagon budget only envisages a ground force of just under 500,000 troops, the lowest since 1940.

Before the USA concentrated on the menace of the Islamic State, it was pre-occupied with countering its opponents on a world scale, and had plans on moving its forces and resources



further East with a concentration on eastern Asia in order to counter China. This meant a certain marginalisation of Saudi Arabia, which feels itself abandoned by its old ally, and deeply concerned by the US's readiness to talk with Iran. Similarly the US military adventure in Afghanistan sorely vexed both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, another ally of the USA, who were well disposed towards the Taliban.

This means that both Russia and China have taken advantage of the situation, both in the region and elsewhere, as in the Ukraine with Russian military intervention there, and the beginnings of a new accord between China and India.

Unresolved Issues

The Palestinian question has still not been answered and has indeed been aggravated by the recent murderous campaign in Gaza by the Israeli state, a key ally of the USA. The Kurdish question, where greater cohesion, under very painful circumstances, is developing between the Kurds of Syria, Iraq and Turkey and where greater autonomy is being called for by the Iraqi Kurds is extremely important for the region. The relatively strong secularist tradition among the Kurds is important for the region. Conflict could easily break out between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) based within the Turkish state, and the ruling parties in Iraqi Kurdistan.

We remain sceptical about the apparent libertarian rhetoric of the PKK but are always ready to support any grassroots movements for popular assemblies, for greater emancipation of women and for communalisation.

The promise of the Arab Spring of 2011 still remains unfulfilled. There are certain signs that a new spring may burst forth and lead to further popular revolts that could threaten the militarist regimes, the monarchies and theocracies of the whole region from the Atlantic to the Gulf. Speed the day, speed the day when all these blood-sucking gangsters are swept away on a tide of popular discontent.



April 2014 saw a massive wave of protest in Morocco. This wave of struggle began on 6th April with a demonstration at Casablanca called by the Moroccan Union of Labour (UMT), the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT) and the Democratic Federation of Labour (FDT). At least 30,000 workers joined the demonstration. It mobilised around a call for a general strike against the attacks on the working class and on the standards of living.

The government led by the Islamist Abdelilah Benkirane has supervised the raising of prices of petrol and foodstuffs like bread, semolina, and sugar. He has refused to respond to the demands of the Association of Unemployed Graduates and has passed a law against strikes in the public sector.

The practice of the trade union bureaucracies has been to collaborate with the Mazhken, the monarchical regime, and to urge class peace. This did not stop the large turnout for the demonstration. During the course of the demo, the police mounted several attacks with batons and made many arrests. This is

nothing new in recent times in Morocco and is sanctioned by the highest powers in government. The repression has been targeted at the most dynamic section of this new movement, the Movement of 20th February, which initially developed among young people about three years

ago when the Arab Spring swept through North Africa and the Gulf states.

The section of the march assembled around the Movement of 20th February banners was suddenly attacked violently without warning and with no provocation. The pretext was that whilst other sections of the march confined themselves to slogans hostile to the government, the Movement of 20th February also chanted slogans against the King Mohamed VI. In the eyes of the police this is a crime as the King is

seen by them as untouchable. Several militants were arrested. Those arrested went on hunger strike on 16th April after a judge refused to grant bail and received prison sentences of up to a year. One of these was Wafaa Sharif who received a year in prison. When Bourker Kamlichi of the

Morocco unbound

organisation Democratic Way highlighted Wafaa's case, he in turn was arrested. In addition an activist of AMDH (Moroccan Human Rights Association) has been sentenced to one year in prison after denouncing torture.

The Miners

Another area where unrest broke out was in one of the State enterprises, The Cherifian Office of Phosphate (OCP) at Khourbga in central Morocco. The OCP is a valuable asset of the regime, representing 25% of exports from Morocco. It is under the direct control of the King, who nominates its director. This accounts for the difficulty winning any gains experienced by the workers employed in this enterprise.

Five years ago, a very bitter strike went on for 8 months and resulted in the sacking of 850 workers. This time the miners of OCP affiliates went on strike. Many of the most active in this movement are workers sacked by OCP three years ago. Their demands were for the recognition of union rights, the raising of wages and the integration of the affiliates in the main OCP organisation which



Strike in Beni Tadjit in the province of Figuig



Rapper

would allow workers to have work contracts of a permanent nature. The first strike happened on 16th and 17th April and was followed by other days of action and demonstrations.

The nature of the class struggle in Morocco is characterised by strikes breaking out here and there, with no coordination and outside the control of any trade union or political party. At Beni Tadjit in the province of Figuig in eastern Morocco, known as forgotten Morocco because poverty there has reached record levels, the mass of the population went out on strike on the 15th April. All cafes were closed, as were the small shops and bakeries. Simmering discontent in the town was expressed in the demands against the marginalisation of Beni Tadjit, and for the building of a hospital and the electrification of the poor neighbourhoods on the edges of the town.

In Tangier on 27th April workers went out on strike for union rights, “for unity, solidarity and struggle”. Unlike Beni Tadjit and Figuig province, Tanger is one of the most dynamic regions of

Morocco where a number of transnational corporation have set up, including Renault, with an ultramodern factory. This was a result in part of relocation from Douai and Cléon in France.

On 24th April, after a clash between Islamist and secular students at Fez University in which an Islamist student reportedly died of a bullet wound, the student Mustapha Meziani was arrested along with two others. They were placed in preventive detention and not allowed to sit university exams. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and other high officials attended the funeral of the Islamist student. Mustapha stated that he was completely innocent of murder and went on a 72 day hunger strike which led to his death. He was not given medical attention until he went into a coma.

In another incident Mouad Belghouat, who performs as the rapper Al Haqed, was arrested for assaulting a police officer and for public drunkenness and sentenced to four months. This appears to have been a pretext to detain him once again because of

his influential songs. His song “Stop the silence” was very popular amongst rebellious youth during 2011 and he recently served a one year prison sentence for insulting the police in his song “Dogs of the State.”

As the Moroccan anarchist Brahim Fillali noted in 2011, the monarchy and the Islamists are in close alliance, and Islamism and Arabism are promoted as the ideologies of the State. Thus, no space is given to those in Morocco who speak Berber languages. The Saharawi people of Western Sahara, which is occupied by Morocco, have no right to self-determination. Like the Palestinians, they live behind a fortified wall that is 2,700 kilometres long. Many live in refugee camps. Demonstrations and public meetings are banned.

With globalisation, the regime encouraged transnationals to set up shop in Morocco. In addition to Renault, mentioned above, we can also mention the Spanish company Nufribel where workers went out on strike in 2012. Another company, also packaging fruit and vegetables like Nufribel, is the French outfit Soprifel Idyl. Wages with these foreign employers are low, work is short term and precarious and there are many accidents at work, as well as sexual harassment of female workers. Many workers are also excluded from insurance and pension schemes. When workers organised at Soprifel they were sacked. The Moroccan State came to the rescue of Soprifel, invoking Article 288 of the Penal Code, which criminalises the right to strike. The French and Moroccan farm bosses have been saying that there are too many strikes and that the unions are not controlling their members. In



February 20th movement

desperation, six workers went on hunger strike and were threatened with legal action.

In addition to welcoming in the transnationals, the King and his Islamist government are believed to be doing a deal with the USA which would mean the setting up of an American military base in Tan

Tan in southern Morocco. For years, despite many protests, Moroccan troops and US marines have been carrying out joint military exercises. The Moroccan regime has also proposed the setting up of another US base in occupied Western Sahara. This was embarrassing for the USA because of the ongoing war between the

Polisario Front of Western Sahara and the Moroccan state.

Morocco, like the rest of North Africa and the Gulf States, remains a powder keg that could explode at any time. The Arab Spring of 2011 could prove to be a mere improvised rehearsal for what is to come.

Statement of the Egyptian Libertarian Socialist Movement

General al-Sisi, a former army chief (and now Egyptian leader - Organise! editors) must grapple with the country's economic problems as with infighting in the circles of power.

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi seems to be a victim of his own success. He who

in July 2014, seemed to hold a "supernatural" power and popularity supported by a ferocious media machine devouring everything in its path, is now trapped in his post as the strongest man in Egypt. It is even ironic to see him drown in the same defects as those that

toppled the President that he overthrew: An empty and populist discourse, measures to capture executive and legal authority in Egypt (while having put Adli Mansour as malleable puppet at the head of the state), etc. Likewise, the socio-economic problems on which he relied to

bring down the government of the Muslim Brotherhood have not been solved: power cuts are back at the same rate as at the time of the Muslim Brotherhood, the geopolitical crisis from the construction of the Annahda (Renaissance) dam on the Nile by Ethiopia is nowhere near being solved, (which could have disastrous effects on Egyptian agriculture-Organise! editors) the prices of staple goods are rising, not to mention the crisis in the important area of the economy which is tourism.

Crisis of the ruling class

The hesitation of al-Sisi in standing for the presidential elections was due only to refusal of the old guard of the army to acknowledge this child prodigy, who rose quickly through the ranks to take power. The current crisis in the power of al-Sisi is the crisis of the entire Egyptian ruling class, both civil and military, and of its internal conflict. The populist discourse of this ruling class, a sort of remake of the Nasser years, cannot conceal the class war it waged against workers when they go on strike, with the use of the army.

While al-Sisi asks the people to sacrifice on the altar of austerity, he replenishes the coffers of the horrendous Ministry of the Interior. Adding to that the second nature of the economic predator of the Egyptian military institution seems to take precedence over its “constitutional” activities: the army wants to take over every corner of the economy by expanding its grip on public companies, which is not without its problems with “civil” capitalism and especially the ultraliberal (those in favour of an unbridled free market-Organise! editors) financial circles close to

Mubarak, especially as they have contributed to financing and organising the army coup last June. In fact these circles want to regain their position of before the revolution of January 2011, when they shared power with the army, and they have no intention of being happy with the position the military has deigned to give them.

Maybe the hollow discourse tinged with nationalism, of al-Sisi will create an illusion for a longer period than that of the equally hollow tinged with religiosity of Morsi, but al-Sisi will not be spared by a popular uprising, as he begins to say that he must sacrifice one or even two generations so that Egypt can live in opulence. The people who rose up to say “Down with the power of the military” cannot accept this contempt. One can easily imagine that this slogan will resound in the streets of Egypt against al-Sisi in his turn.

Yasser Abdelkawy (Libertarian Socialist Movement, Egypt)

Translated from the Arabic by Marouane Taharouri, adapted by Organise! editors

Message on Egyptian situation from Anarchist Network

With the last contact we had with Egyptian Anarchists, they are in an emergency situation. Fascist military regime of Al Sisi / Mubarak has been more aggressively seeking to arrest all anarchists and any other radical left activists. According to the fascist government’s newspaper, more than 41,000 people have been arrested. Among them there are: Alaa Abdel Alfatah, very well-known blogger, and Mahienour El-Massry, a great woman human rights activist,

women’s and workers’ rights activist, and also a progressive lawyer and campaigner against class society.

These huge numbers of arrest has happened within less than one year!! It was between July 2013 and May 2014. Repressive military regime continues to arrest all anarchists and any other radical left activists, who were involved in organising any kind of rallies or actions against fascist/military regime, who is supported by CIA-Zionism and other bloody Western powers.

The intensity of the past few days has subsequently put so much pressure into the life of our dear comrades, so that the rest of them have been forced to live hidden and going underground.

We Middle Eastern anarchists are asking for any kind of supports and solidarity, even if it is only a wide spread of this news.

Down with military rule of Al Sisi /Mubarak!

Abolish the reactionary forces of all religious organizations and religious rulers!

Destroy all the power of warmongers, including CIA/USA, Zionism, Western powers, Russia and China!

For a Free Egypt, Free Middle East and a Free World

Anarchist Network

(Anarchist Network is a collective of websites and actions coordinated by both anarchist sympathizers within the global public as well as an increasingly wide group of autonomous anarchist coordinators residing around the globe in areas such as various regions of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Scandinavia, Morocco, Egypt, Germany, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France and other localities.)

Slovenia

Uprising in Europe – what happens next?

GOTOVI SO!

They are all finished!

In November 2012 people in Slovenia (an ex-Yugoslavian country bordering Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary, EU member since 2004 and in Schengen area since 2007) rose up in a massive and widespread decentralised revolt that marked an intense and largely self-organised resistance to the economic crisis and cronyism. The uprisings started in the industrial city of Maribor against the corrupt mayor and city council, initially sparked by their introduction of a punitive traffic camera system which clocked up 5000 traffic tickets in its first 36 hours, with minimum fines a third of the average worker's monthly salary for going even slightly above the speed limit. They were in reality born out of more than 20 years of transition politics from the break-up of Yugoslavia with capital accumulations and privatisations that had further increased inequality and powerlessness. Protestors readily torched the new cameras, which were such a visible and real act of municipal corruption during a time of austerity measures and privatisations, and then took to the streets.

The local anti-corruption protests, which had already grown in numbers to tens of thousands by early December 2012, quickly spread from Maribor to other cities, towns

and villages throughout the country. During the uprising, state and municipal responses to the protests were harsh, with the use of riot police, and their attacks on demonstrations even included tear-gassing from the air by helicopter. The protests carried on until March 2013. Following the uprisings, the mayor of Maribor, Franc Kangler, the leader of the right-wing government, Janez Janša, and the leader of the opposition, Zoran Janković, were all officially accused by a Commission for the Prevention of Corruption.

A strong feature of the uprisings was the response of anarchists who included the Federation of Anarchist Organising, a sister organisation of the AF in the International of Anarchist Federations. AF members later participated in the 2013 Balkan Anarchist Bookfair, held in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, and

were most inspired by the activities of the anti-capitalist bloc that had been formed to bring together libertarian efforts during and following the uprisings. *Organise!* asked a member of FAO about developments since the uprisings.

When and how did the uprising end? Were there political concessions/changes?

This is hard to say. For sure, the window of opportunity closed after first three weeks. By this we mean the time when the impossible is possible, when the protests and riots were uncontrollable because they were simultaneously happening in many cities around the country and there were protests in small towns and villages that never saw them before. When the protests became more centralised they were more predictable, less





dangerous for the system and therefore started to lose strength even though there were more and more people on the streets. For many it ended in the beginning of 2013 when the right-wing government fell. The anti-capitalist bloc that included many anarchists finished with the uprising in April 2013, after a protest during which an abandoned suburban community cinema was occupied for a few hours. Some structures like neighbourhood assemblies in Maribor have survived until today.

Did police/state repression continue after the end? Was there a support campaign?

Repression hits hardest at the end, when there are no more people on the streets. Hundreds of people were arrested, some already in jail sentenced, some still waiting for the trial. We try to keep in contact with everyone and there are several groups involved with the support campaign for them, demanding the release for all political prisoners and an immediate end of all legal processes around the uprising.

Can you name the organisations and groups involved in the

uprising? Which organisations or groups still exist after the uprising? What are they doing now? Do they have continued discussion with FAO?

The uprising was egalitarian, decentralised and spontaneous in the sense there were no political parties or unions involved in it, and not even (mostly) any NGOs. People formed connections on the streets and new groups were emerging every day. Some are still active, others not. We tried to take the opportunity to make connections with as many as possible to find ways to co-operate to this day. The anti-capitalist bloc is one such structure that has survived and has still organises. Some who were not as progressive turned their energy into political party organising (like Syriza in Greece). That is unfortunate of course, but also expected that people find it easier to trust their faith in the hands of (new) politicians, who will eventually disappoint them again, than in self-organising.

Do you think public attitudes have changed about anarchism since the uprising?

This is always hard to tell. What we know is that during the

uprising people were ready to talk to us. Our tactics, ideas, strategies and methods, slogans, banners etc. were widely adopted. So this certainly contributed to the building of a culture of resistance. Whether we managed to transfer this collective experience into the next phase of struggle can only be told in time.

What is the situation like now with respect to political corruption? Has there been any social-democratic response?

New elections brought to power new parties and faces. The official left invented them in order for things to stay the way they are. Even if they parties were not planned - let's not spread conspiracy theories! - they are a logical result of a ruling class that is fighting for their privileges. They are promising the rule of law but of course those laws are laws that keep the privileged, privileged and the poor, poor.

What is the economic situation like in Slovenia now?

More and more unemployment, more people in precarious jobs, bad atmosphere, no hope for future, the division among poor and rich is growing... Although the uprising didn't change that it's important we learned what we could have done better in order to be prepared for the future.

Have there been any other (smaller) actions from people since the end of the uprising?

Several, there have been strikes, protests, direct actions, debates... the atmosphere is bubbling and people are fighting at the level of everyday life to make their lives better.

What are the most positive things to come out of the uprising? Any negative things?

It was the biggest adventure of our lives (so far). Nevertheless, we don't fetishise it. Events of such magnitude made us humble in the sense that we know now even better that even such great upheaval is only one dot in a long struggle against capitalism and all forms of domination. We try to change fear, depression and disappointment into strength, our mistakes into lessons for the future and our victories into courage to reach further. The best thing that came out were new connections, new lessons and experiences, the feeling the change is possible and the taste of a revolutionary moment that gives you strength to carry on.

Will there be discussion of the uprisings at the Balkan bookfair (September 2014 in Bosnia)?

Comrades from FAO joined forces with the US anarchist collective Crimethinc as part of their ongoing investigation and speaking tour 'After the Crest'. Comrades from Slovenia and US will therefore present a talk at the bookfair that addresses questions

of lifecycle of movements aimed at sharing, among other things, experiences we got during our uprising in order for all of us to be better prepared when the next one comes along.

More information

- Federacija za anarhistično organiziranje/Federation of Anarchist Organising (FAO): <http://www.a-federacija.org/english/> (the site includes articles and many excellent photos and videos of the uprisings)
- Eighth Balkan Anarchist Bookfair, Mostar Bosnia, 5th-6th September 2014: <http://bask2014.wordpress.com/>
- Crimethinc: <http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/2013/09/09/after-the-crest-the-life-cycle-of-movements/>

Exciting new development in the Balkans, announced in June 2014

Croatian anarchist group joins FAO

FIVE YEARS OF FAO & ANTI-NATIONALIST FEDERALISM Federacija za anarhistično organiziranje (FAO) – member federation of IFA that unites autonomous anarchist groups in Slovenia held its VI Congress from 20-22nd June 2014 at which they celebrated five years of existence.

At the Congress the anarchist group from Croatia – MASA (Rijeka) – joined the federation which means that FAO is no longer a 'Slovenian' anarchist organisation but is building structures beyond national borders. We see this as a practical expression of anti-nationalism that is one of the key principles of anarchism.

The Congress analysed the activities of groups and federation in the last year and decided its aims and strategies for the future. It discussed criminalization of social movements, financing of autonomous structures, the role of anarchist organisations in the broader political space and social movements and international activities. A resolution on 'Elections, parliamentarism and self-organisation' was drafted and a 'Commission against repression' was established.

LONG LIVE ANTI-NATIONALIST INTERNATIONALISM!

- MASA (Rijeka) on affiliation to FAO: <http://masari.noblogs.org/prikljucenje-masari-u-federaciju-za-anarhisticko-organiziranje/>
- FAO: <http://www.a-federacija.org/>

Over the Walls of Nationalisms and Wars

by anarhistickisajamknjiga

Statement of participants of 8th Balkan Anarchist Bookfair

It is clear that nationalism is a tool used against the exploited classes. In the Balkans, (especially in the region of ex-Yugoslavia) the rise of nationalist ideology in the 1990's helped enable the brutal capitalist attack against society. It further atomized the population and destroyed established networks of cooperation and solidarity.

The need to confront nationalist ideology from a radical and anti-authoritarian perspective gathered us in Mostar on the 5th and 6th of September 2014, for the 8th Balkan Anarchist Bookfair. We came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Albania, Romania, Greece and other countries outside the Balkan area.

The true nature of nationalism is nowhere more obvious than in Mostar, a city divided in two, with the signs of wartime brutality still evident in the streets of the city.

It is essential to realise that this division was not the cause of war, but the consequence of wars and nationalist ideologies created by the ruling class. This was clear to the demonstrators in Tuzla who wrote the graffiti “Death to nationalism” as well as to demonstrators in Mostar who burned down the headquarters of both nationalist parties in February.

Still, in other parts of the world new nationalisms and conflicts are being created on similar lines and with predictable consequences.

Many in the Ukraine today think they have to respond to the false choices of war posed by states and corporations (amongst them are even some anarchists and “anarchists”).¹ We, however, maintain that nationalism is always an ideology that reproduces the State, a system of repression and exploitation, and pits the exploited and oppressed against one another. Today we see in the Ukraine the same mechanism that was used also in the war(s) in

former Yugoslavia: Nationalism is the tool of those in power to push people into war for the interests of capital. As anarchists, we opposed all war efforts in former Yugoslavia through solidarity that continues to this day. Far from liberal pacifism or obsessions with left-nationalist guerrilla armies, our struggle will never take the side of militarist politics and the destruction that all states are based on.

Against nationalism, militarism and war! Against all governments and states! For solidarity and autonomy!

1 From anti-colonial nationalists of “Mlada Bosna” from Sarajevo of 1914 influenced by anarchism, and especially to the case of posers like the “anarcho”-nationalist group “Slobodari” from Sarajevo of 2014, all attempts of combining anarchism with nationalism, have shown that the result is simply: nationalism. “Slobodari”, are a small group from Sarajevo who pose as anarchists but are in contact with Nazis from the Ukraine (the so called autonomous nationalists “Autonomous resistance”). They have many websites which created a lot of confusion, including a Balkan anarchist black cross website, more on this here: <http://www.sabotagemedia.anarkhia.org/2014/03/on-self-styled-libertarians-and-antiauthoritarians-from-bosnia/>



Below we document the rebirth of anarchism around the world. Not only has a movement re-emerged in many countries that had a historical tradition, including where many decades of repression had apparently extinguished it, like Eastern Europe, but a movement appears to be taking shape where it either never had a presence or had a very feeble one. Here we look at the statements of two new groups, one in Iceland, so much affected by the economic crisis of 2011, and one in the Caribbean. Whilst the Icelandic anarchists appear to have defined themselves as anarchist-communists, the comrades in the Caribbean seem to not want to attempt such a definition at this stage. We welcome, nevertheless, the consolidation and increasing communication between the groups in the region (it should be remembered that Cuba was home to a strong anarchist movement which whilst it was able to exist under the dictator Batista was almost eradicated under the Castro regime).

Note: A phoenix is a mythical bird that is regularly reborn.

ICELAND

Uppræting Bandalag Anarkista (*Uppræting Alliance of Anarchists*)

Background

Uppræting is an informal organization of revolutionary anarchists in Iceland. The group is really in its birth and has been meeting every one or two months since late 2012. How that came to be was the Occupy movement in Reykjavík in November 2011, brought together a group of mostly young people to start meeting in a

consensus-based direct democracy assembly. Most had not known each other before and had very different experiences with activism and some had just begun. Being fascinated by a real democratic process and drive for change in society most of the Occupiers continued meeting

after Occupy Reykjavík ended. That led to the forming of Hópurinn (The Group) which was supposed to carry on the struggle. That attempt failed and Hópurinn dissolved, probably due to lack of aims and general direction.

Since the end of 2011 nothing happened until August 2012 when people were called back together to attempt to form an revolutionary organization that would never be a part of the political process in Iceland. Aside from that, nothing was really decided beforehand on how to

do this, so meetings were held every fortnight in the beginning to decide on how it should be. First the decision process was decided which was consensus-based direct democracy with the option of a majority vote. Then the aims decided were pretty simple: propaganda and actions

The Phoenix of Anarchism

and lastly the name was decided – Uppræting. When discussing solutions for our society a comrade of ours suggested we looked into anarchist-communism, so we organized a reading group on Peter Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*. We finally saw a glimpse of how to practically achieve a revolution that had nothing to do with politicians, a real revolution of the people. Next step for the group was to promote the revolution. Two of our members agreed to have a talk at the Radical University (A Marxist summer school) and that also



Occupy Iceland

gave us the opportunity to talk about anarchist-communism on a radio station that was covering the Radical University. To make a long story short though the cooperation with the Marxists did not work out in the end. There were some fundamental disagreements that we had not foreseen.

Since then meetings have continued, a Facebook page was created for propaganda, the core members grew, we further educated ourselves on anarchism, strengthened our bonds and expanded our contact network.

Activities: irregular/regular meetings, radio promotion, promotion at the Radical University, social media propaganda, social gatherings, graffiti, distributing leaflets, flag making, some participation in protests, participation in 1st May.

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/stjornleysi/posts/1493536514191208>

CARIBBEAN

For the Caribbean Anarchist Federation

Kiskeya Libertaria (Dominican Republic) and Taller Libertario Alfredo Lopez (Cuba)

The Caribbean has been one of the privileged settings where the so called modernity, that explosive mixture of capitalism and statism, has shown its least respectable face to the world. That persistent and well distributed barbarism, among the agents of the Spanish, English, French, Dutch... empires has created, centuries later, a

world of detached islanders, attentive to the signs of the old and the new colonial metropolis and castrated, in many cases, from the possibility to talk among ourselves without tutelary mediators.

The second half of the twentieth century brought to the Caribbean the frenzy for decolonization and [the creation of] "sovereign states" that in sum have become another step toward the lack of communication, apparently mitigated in later years by the unions and alliances among the Caribbean states. But in any case, it is the union of the heads of states that they present to us as "the unity of peoples." It is not, and has not been, except for few and beautiful occasions, an alliance of concrete communities or of people united in an arduous liberating and anti-authoritative ideal.

The compas from Kiskeya Libertaria in the Dominican Republic and from the Taller Libertario Alfredo Lopez in Havana, have decided to join forces to come together and organize ourselves in a Caribbean Anarchist Federation. This Federation aims to combine purposes here and now for a society based on the principles we want to apply of self-management, voluntary association and mutual aid opposing all social relations based on hierarchies, authoritarianism and forms of discriminations such as statism, capitalism, classism, sexism, racism, colonialism, urbanism, industrialism, academicism, among innumerable manifestations of power more or less institutionalized.

In the face of this framework of dominations we also want to

counterpose our response of mutual aid, self-management and solidarity with a clear anti-authoritarian and libertarian spirit. This federative project will not promote a particular form of anarchism beforehand, because we don't see anarchism in any of its currents as a dogma; rather, we see it as a movement of cohesiveness, of free learning and dedicated towards the world we want without oppression, exploitation, sacred authorities or paralyzing orders.

In that sense, this Federation will work for solidarity and self-management and for the creation of cooperative projects among those peoples and collectives that coherently self-identify as "anarchists," but also among those who without proclaiming an anarchist condition, live and work on a daily basis and in any setting, under the community-driven and liberating spirit shown in their actions without shepherds and flocks, or leaders and followers.

Defining the geographical limits of the Caribbean has been a difficult for various social sciences. However, for us this isn't a problem, but a possibility. The Caribbean region is not only formed by its islands or the adjacent mainland territories, the Caribbean exists there where there are those who feel and suffer its contradictions and inequalities. The Caribbean also exists where there are friends and compañerxs who share its ideas, feelings and struggles.

For this reasons, those of us who encourage this Caribbean Anarchist Federation will work hard toward integrating with compas from Central American,

from where in 2010 the first attempt towards a federation that we know of in Central America and the Caribbean was born, through the compas from the Colectivo La Espiral and their magazine *La Libertad* in San José, Costa Rica.

From the Colectivo La Espiral we should carefully take on the suggestions that to create a regional federative process “it’s important to first strengthen the local processes of formation and influence of a libertarian practice and mentality”, but as

they themselves point out, the regional federation can be “a means to invigorate and strengthen our identity (...) always having our feet on the ground”

What is the meaning of anarchism in our region...? What are its possibilities? Which are its limitations and difficulties...? Those are some of the questions that the compas from Central America left us four years ago and that could be the subject of dialogues in assemblies in any locality as the base of this

new effort for regional organizing.

What we dream of is not escorted by the glory of any “objective possibility;” contrary to others, we don’t believe that negotiating disfigured fragments of our ideals, or putting them to indefinite hibernation for better times, we could move forward beyond what we already know. We deem necessary every kind of effort that could transfigure into reciprocal affection and trust that could in turn become factors of firmer alliances from where our federative effort could grow in a safe way.

For all this we propose a constitutive meeting of the F.A.C.-C [-Central American] (Caribbean and Central American Anarchist Federation) in the Dominican Republic in March of 2015. We call individuals and “delegates” of anarchist collectives in the region to join us in this meeting that will be an initial decisive moment to compare and coordinate actions, ideas and supplies based on the topics/themes that would emerge from each collective according to their location.

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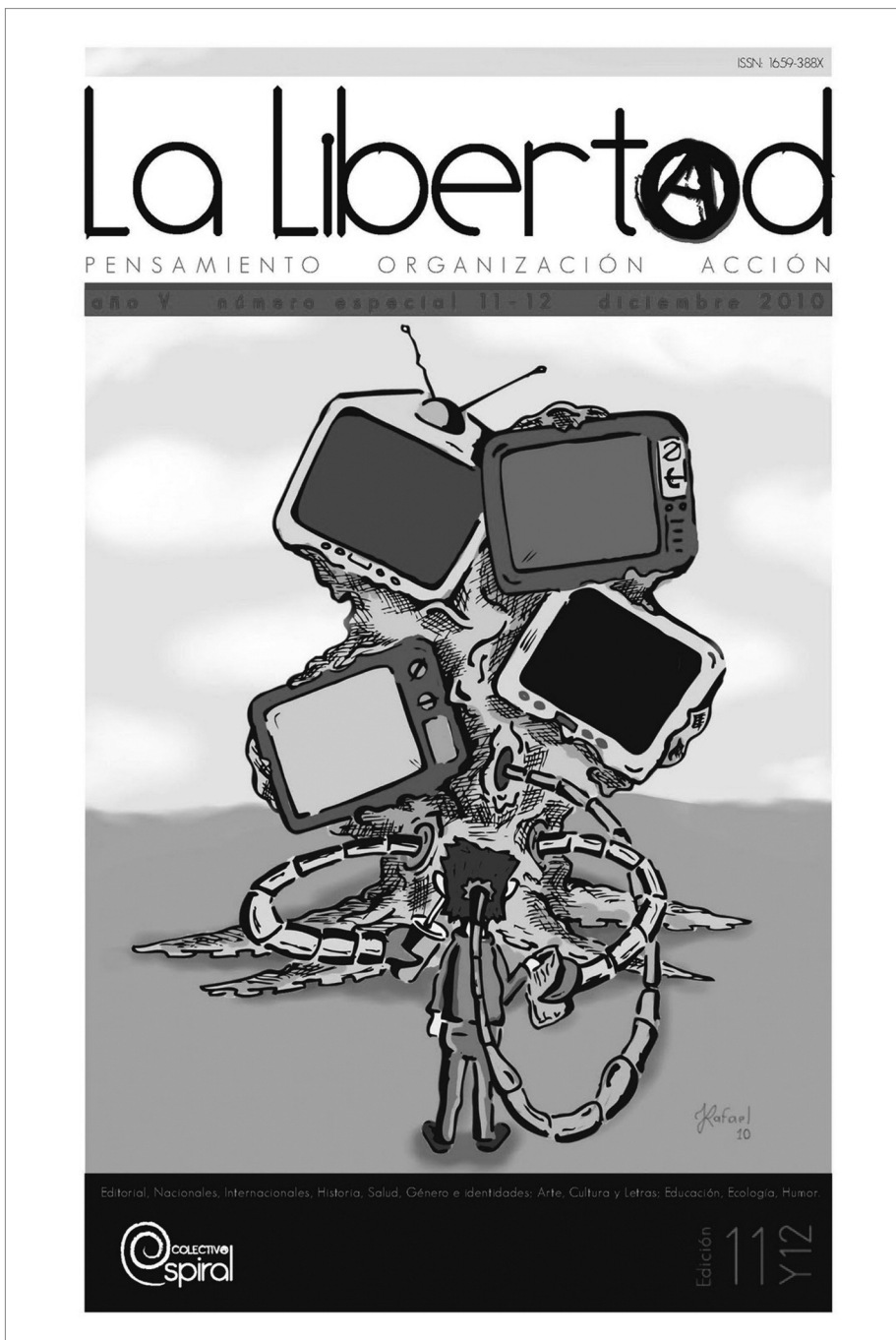
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“Anarquismo en Centroamérica: una pequeña radiografía actual” En: *La Libertad*. Número Especial 11-12. San José de Costa Rica. Diciembre 2010, pág.10.

(Anarchism in Central America: a brief radiography of the present.” In *La Libertad* Special Number 11-12. San Jose de Costa Rica. December, 2010. page 10.)



The French Silk Workers Revolt of 1834

It is now 180 years since the silk workers revolt in Lyon in France in 1834. This and the preceding revolt there in 1831 were some of the first workers uprisings at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the working class.

Lyon had become the silk weaving centre of France by the beginning of the 1830s. More than half the population was employed in the silk industry and silk workers were known as canuts. In 1831 the production of silk in Lyon was still organised in a pre-industrial way. 1,400 bankers and traders ruled the industry. Below them were 8,000 craftsmen who in their turn employed 30,000 apprentices who generally lived, ate and slept in the homes of the craftsmen. Women were employed at a lower wage, as were the apprentices and errand boys. Most of the production took place in craftsmen's homes with only one factory employing 600 workers.

Because of an economic crisis in 1831, the demand for silk goods dropped drastically. Wages were cut, so the canuts asked the departmental Prefect (Regional governor) to negotiate with the manufacturers for a fixed price. This was not appreciated by the manufacturers and 104 of them refused to implement it. This was met with mass anger among the silk workers. They formed a semi-secret paramilitary organisation, The Rhone Volunteers.

On 21st November, several hundred workers toured the workshops in the Croix Rousse municipality. They convinced the few workers still working in their workshops to stop work, set up barricades and then marched to Lyon with a black flag of revolt at the head of their procession.

In Lyon they stormed the fortified police barracks at Bon Pasteur and armed themselves with weapons from the arsenal. There were then clashes between the workers and the military. The National Guard, a sort of state militia and in Lyon recruited in the main from the canuts, refused to fire on the workers and changed sides.

After pitched fighting which left 100 dead among the forces of the State and 69 among the workers, with barricades being built everywhere in the streets and with many black flags flying, bearing the slogan Live Working or Die Fighting, Lyon fell into the hands of the insurgent workers. Both the mayor and the local military commander fled. The leaders of the insurgents seemed unsure as to how to proceed, insisting that the struggle was still around the fixed rate for silk goods.

Troops sent

In Paris the revolt was met with consternation by central government. King Louis Philippe and the President of the Council of Ministers blamed the revolt on republican and socialist agitation. Twenty thousand troops were

sent to Lyon. They entered Lyon without meeting any resistance. The fixed rate was abolished, the National Guard was disbanded, and a garrison was installed. In addition a fort was built to separate Croix Rousse from Lyon. The first revolt had failed, with the arrest of 90 workers.

Radical republican groups now began to agitate in Lyon establishing links with local silk workers organisations. Workers in Lyon had realised that Louis Philippe and his government were supporters of the silk bosses. The next 28 months saw a growth in class consciousness among the Lyon workers.

The Le Chapelier Law of 1791 forbade the forming of unions so the Lyon workers organised secretly. They rose from 250 members at the end of 1831 to 2,400 members in 11 different bodies in 1833. In addition there was a society of ferrandiniers (manufacturers of silk and wool) with 400-420 members. The government now threatened these unions. The silk workers newspaper *L'Echo de La Fabrique*, influenced by socialist ideas, warned that the workers had had enough and would reply in kind. *L'Echo* encouraged workers to join these associations and to form links with other groups of workers.

Attack on Wages

By the end of 1833 there were good economic conditions and a boom began in the Lyon silk industry. As a result, the

government felt that the chances of another revolt were slim. The employers were now concerned that workers were earning too much. They tried to drive down wages. This unleashed a period of unrest. On 14th February sixty thousand female and male silk workers went on strike in Lyons. This was one of the first general strikes in an industry anywhere in the world. Ten days later there was a vote to return to work. In the aftermath 13 workers regarded as ringleaders were arrested.

The trial began on April 5th. This coincided with the Chamber of Peers meeting to pass a law leading to further repression against republican groups. The following day up to 10,000 workers turned out for the funeral of a silk worker who had been active in one of the unions. On 8th April a general strike was called for in Lyon by the workers associations for the day that the trial had its next hearing. It was also decided that they would reply to any armed attacks by the police and military. The State replied with a massive show of

force with soldiers and artillery surrounding the main public buildings. When a large crowd gathered, soldiers fired at will on them, killing several people including children.

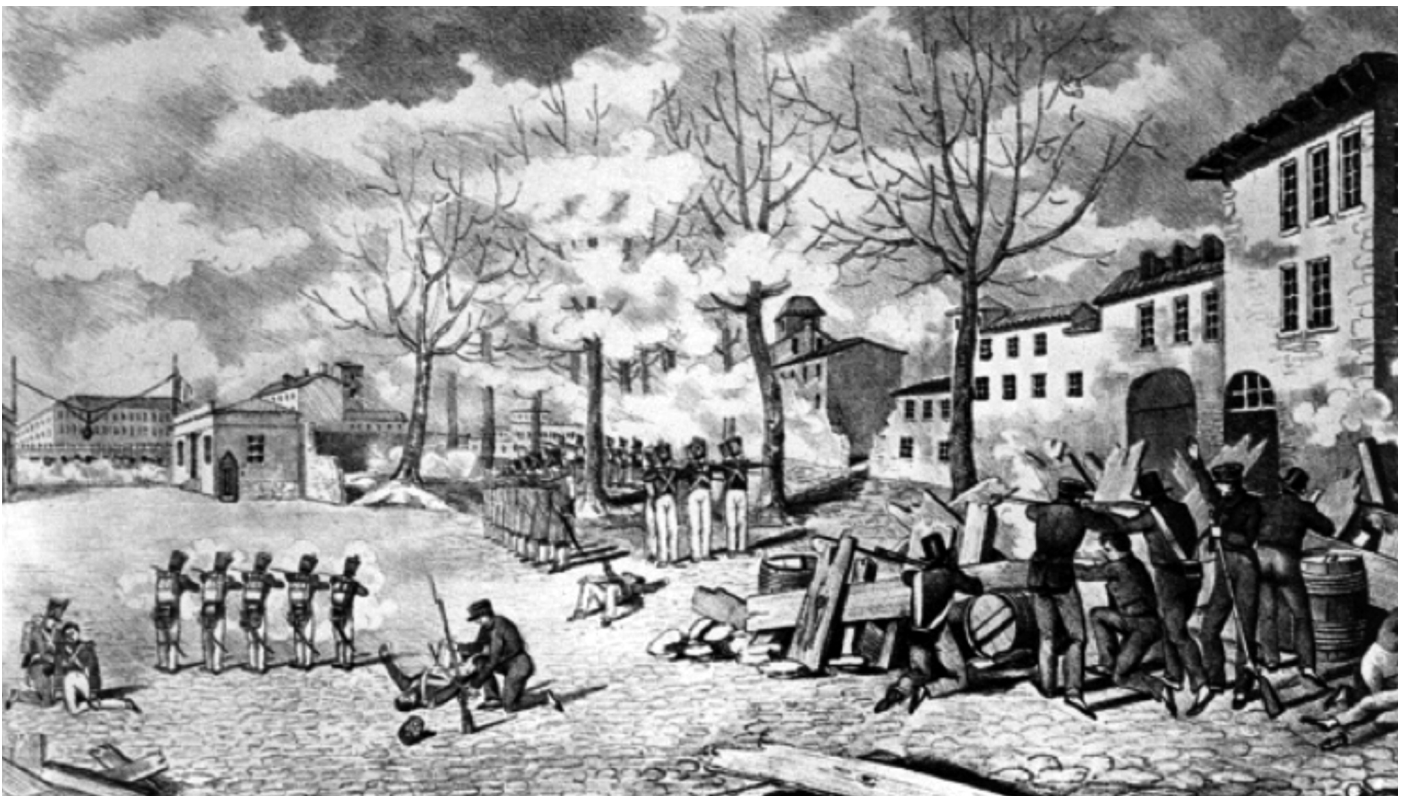
Insurrection

In reply, barricades went up all over Lyon. One military barracks was seized by the workers and became the HQ of the uprising. During the night of 9th April one of the main republican groups planned on an insurrection for the following day. Faced with the well organised workers, Adolphe Thiers, the Minister of the Interior, withdrew all the troops from the centre of the city and had them encircle it. The workers now occupied the telegraph office and the nearby town of Villeurbanne. Black flags were raised in many of the workers districts. Meanwhile, uprisings broke out in towns near Lyon, Saint Etienne and Vienne. The military bombarded the workers' stronghold of Croix Rousse. By 14th April, the military had retaken Lyon, massacring many workers in the process. The

casualty figures give 131 military dead, with a minimum of 200 workers killed and 600 wounded. More than 500 were arrested and many sentenced to long prison terms or to deportation

In the following years, the silk bosses attempted to defuse revolt by locating their workshops in the countryside. This did not stop a further uprising in 1848 in Lyon. However, this was just one of many throughout Europe in that year of revolution, so it was less remarked upon.

The Lyon revolts of the 1830s inspired further revolts throughout Europe over the following decades. They also inspired the great Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin when he wrote his *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*. As for Adolphe Thiers, he was to head a government that would crush the most important workers uprising of the 19th century, the Paris Commune of 1871, with much greater ferocity and bloodshed.



Frans Masereel

We featured an article on the woodcut artist Alexandre Maitret in *Organise!* 82. In this issue of *Organise!* we take a look at the artist who had a major influence on Maitret, the great artist Frans Masereel.

Frans Masereel was born in Blankenberg in Belgium on the 30th of July 1889. Blankenberg is a seaside resort and Frans was

born into a middle-class family. The middle class in the area spoke French among themselves and Flemish to their servants or the local peasants. He received an education at Ghent and later went to the École des Beaux-Arts (Academy of Fine Arts) there.

He had only been there less than a year when his teacher advised him to travel and “see the

masterpieces of the world” and that he should work on his own as the Academy could add nothing more to his education. Round about the same time Masereel met the master engraver Jules de Bruycker and he was seriously influenced by him, above all in his taste for graphics and pen and ink drawings.

In 1910 Masereel travelled to Tunis. The following year he moved to Paris and falling in love with the City of Life, decided to settle there. He was above all attracted to where crowds gathered and loving drawing scenes of the street, the café, and along the Seine, even though he himself was a withdrawn and shy character. He became influenced by illustrated magazines which were very popular at the time, and also by medieval woodcuts which he discovered during visits to libraries. When the World War came he was not conscripted. He volunteered to work for the International Red cross, and as a result moved to Geneva in Switzerland, where he worked as a translator of Flemish.

It was in Geneva that Masereel discovered draft-dodgers, deserters, anti-militarists and revolutionaries, artists and writers appalled and disgusted by the mass slaughter.

In these circles he met the French writer and novelist Romain Rolland who was one of the founders of the anti-militarist paper *La Feuille*. Attracted to these advanced ideas, Masereel devoted three hours of every evening to producing a political



cartoon. Masereel, together with Rolland and Pierre Jouve, writer, critic and anarchist, and Marcel Martinet, one of the pioneers of the ideas of proletarian art and culture, published a pamphlet *Salut a La Revolution Russe*, in May 1917. Masereel then illustrated a Rolland satire, *Liluli*, and woodcuts for a film that was never to be produced, *Revolt of the Machines*.

Masereel remained in Switzerland until 1922. Whilst most of those in the Geneva circles in which he had participated had returned to their homelands by 1920, Belgium

considered Masereel as a draft-dodger because of his anti-war activities. In the end he moved to Montmartre in Paris. Here he met the German artist George Grosz who produced savage and angry works against war and capitalism. Like Masereel, Grosz was fascinated and at the same time repelled by the big city. As Masereel wrote to Rolland: "He too thinks that art should as far as possible be a gesture (action) and that the artist must not be indifferent to the social question."

His friend Stefan Zweig wrote: "I know nothing on earth that this

impassioned friend of humanity hates more than institutions that tend to reduce the richness and abundance of life to coldness, uniformity, immobility, to enclose and stifle living matter within fixed bounds. He is the enemy of the State when it favours coercion and injustice; he is the enemy of despotic, conservative 'society', and while he does not adhere to any party (he rejects them all as a fetter to inner freedom) he is on the side of the weak, the oppressed, the victims." In some accounts of Masereel he is portrayed as an anarchist. Whilst remaining essentially libertarian



he was for too long, like his friend Rolland, a fellow traveller of the Soviet state between the two world wars and his ambiguous attitude to the State should be seen in this light.

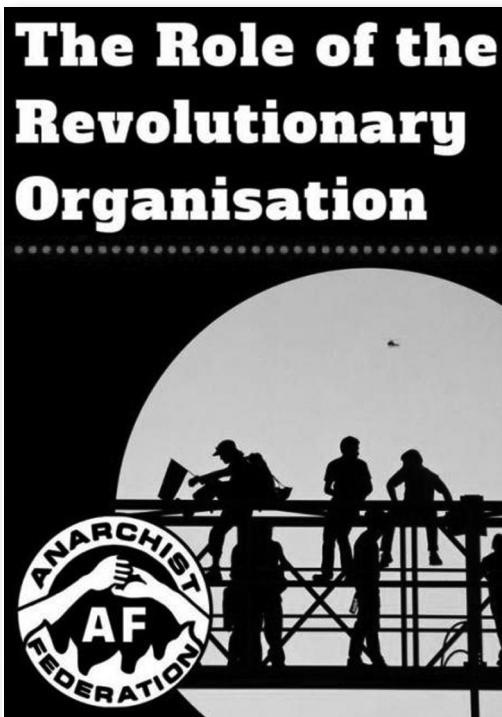
Nevertheless it is his powerful books of woodcuts, precursors of the modern graphic novel, that have remained popular with many, including anarchists. The anarchist and proponent of proletarian culture Henri Poulaille used Masereel's works in the 1930s and just after the war in his magazines and he has deeply influenced artists of an anarchist persuasion like Clifford Harper. The first of these was *The Passion of Man*, published in 1918, followed by *Passionate Journey* and *The Sun* (both 1919) and *Story Without Words* and *The Idea* published in 1920. *The Idea* is perhaps one of his greatest works where a writer gives birth to *The Idea* illustrated as a tiny naked sprite. The authorities try to suppress her nakedness, the writer defends her and is put in front of a firing squad for his pains. Too late, *The Idea*

reproduces herself on a mass basis through the printing press. On one level *The Idea* represents the power of political ideas and how they continue to exist despite repression, whilst on another level it can be interpreted as the way in which women pose a threat when they wish to express themselves freely and are subsequently derided and their image manipulated by the media. Other woodcut novels followed including the astounding *The City* in 1925. Here the mass basis of the city and the loneliness that coexists alongside it are powerfully portrayed, as are political unrest, poverty, opulent riches and degradation and illness. These works were so successful that

some of the editions had imprints of over 100,000.

During the Second World War Masereel took refuge in the Free Zone of France, then settled in Nice in 1949 until his death in January 1972 in Avignon. As mentioned earlier, Masereel was popular in the inter-war years but since World War Two was almost forgotten until recently, perhaps partially because of his openly hostile stances to war and capitalism. His influence on American artists like Lynd Ward, who then started work in a similar style, Art Spiegelman, creator of the graphic novel *Maus*, the great cartoonist Will Eisner and a host of others, as well as his great importance in the development of the graphic novel should mean that he should be re-evaluated.

“Should everything perish, all the books, the photographs and the documents, and we were left only with the woodcuts Masereel has created, through them alone we could reconstruct our contemporary world, one would know how one lived in 1920, how we were dressed, one would understand the whole dreadful war on the front and behind it, with all its devilish machines and grotesque silhouettes, understand the stock exchanges and factories, railway stations and ships, men of all kinds and, what is more, the spirit, the moral temper of our times.”
Stefan Zweig



THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION (APRIL 2014 EDITION)

We in the Anarchist Federation seek the abolition of capitalism and state in favour of bringing about a society based on the guiding principle 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.' This is anarchist communism. In order to achieve this we need a revolutionary organisation to undertake a certain role as part of the working class. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. Read/download free online or order a print copy (£1.00 +p&p). Translations of an older edition of *The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation* is also available in French: *Le rôle de l'organisation révolutionnaire*, and Serbo-Croat (print-only).

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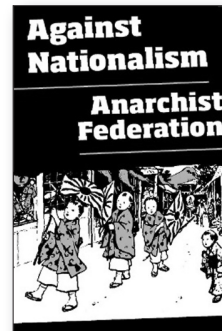
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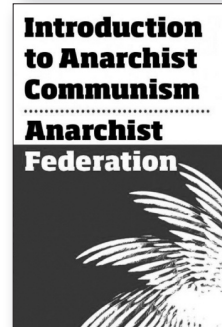
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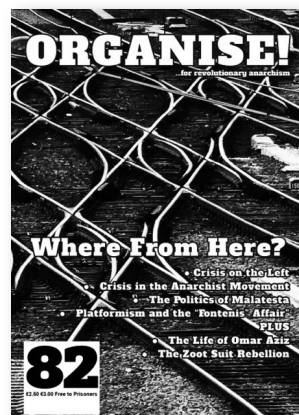
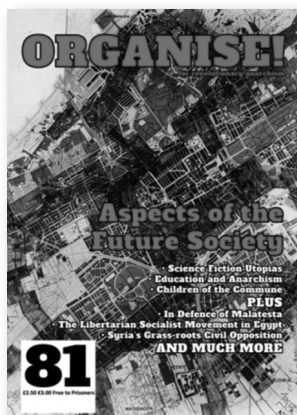
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Resistance

Resistance is the free agitational paper of the Anarchist Federation, whose aim is to spread anarchist ideas more widely. Each *Resistance* has a theme. The last issue was Against War. Six thousand copies of the last issue were distributed and is now sold out, but is still available for download.

The current issue focuses on gender, Angry Women Win. It is available for download on our website. For individual printed copies please write to: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX or email publications@afed.org.uk. Send a Stamped Addressed Envelope to get a free sample, or you can send a donation payable to AFED.

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Aims and Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

3 We believe that fighting systems of oppression that divide the working class, such as racism and sexism, is essential to class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while these inequalities still exist. In order to be effective in our various struggles against oppression, both within society and within the working class, we at times need to organise independently as people who are oppressed according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. We do this as working class people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for us. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

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

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

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

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so

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

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

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

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