

Red & Black Revolution

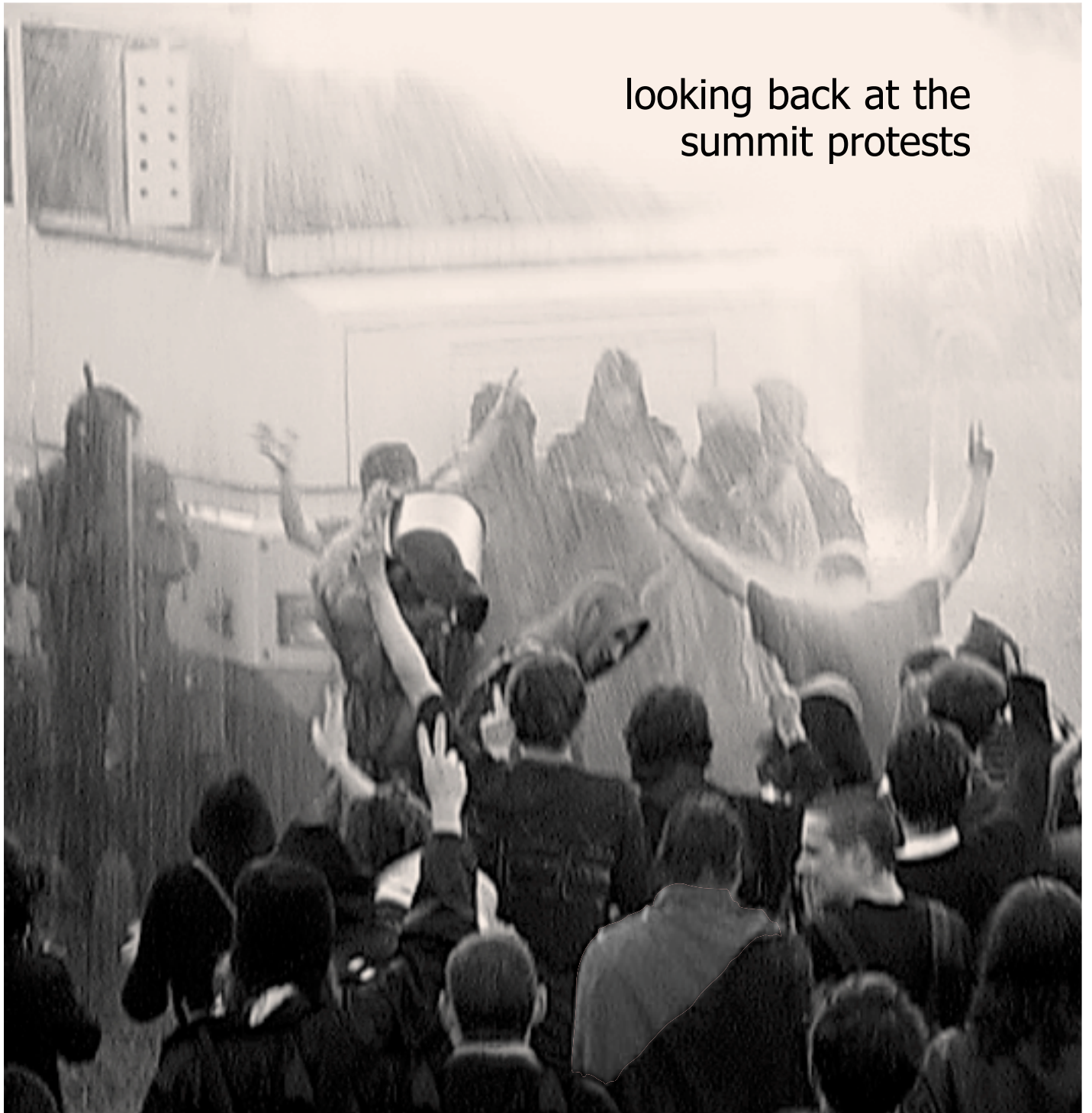
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looking back at the
summit protests



**Reflections from Prague, Genoa and Montreal
Networks and Organisation * Anarchists and Media Mayhem**

Also: Workers Self-management in Argentina, James Connolly, Ireland Against the Multinationals

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If you would like to help out in this work there are a couple of things you can do. One option is to subscribe to the magazine. Another is to take a number of copies of each issue to sell. We are always looking for bookshops or stalls that will sell this magazine on a commercial basis.

Our time and resources are limited and at times of busy activity our publications, including this one, are often delayed. So any help that you can offer would be a real help in getting our ideas out to a wider audience. If you want to help out, get in touch at the address below.

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About the Workers Solidarity Movement

The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom. We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. As Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist said, "Socialism without freedom is tyranny and brutality".

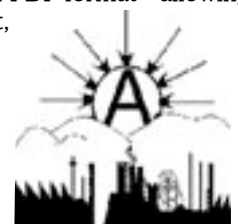
Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its ongoing reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

In the years since our formation, we've been involved in a wide range of struggles - our members are involved in their trade unions; we've fought for abortion rights and against the presence of the British state in Northern Ireland, and against the growth of racism in southern Ireland; we've also been involved in campaigns in support of workers from countries as far apart as Nepal, Peru and South Africa. Alongside this, we have produced over 80 issues of our paper *Workers Solidarity*, and a wide range of pamphlets. Over the years we have brought many anarchists from abroad to speak in Ireland. These have included militants from Chile, the Czech Republic, Canada, the USA, Greece, Italy, and a veteran of the anarchist Iron Column in the Spanish Civil War.

As anarchists we see ourselves as part of a long tradition that has fought against all forms of authoritarianism and exploitation, a tradition that strongly influenced one of the most successful and far reaching revolutions in this century - in Spain in 1936 - 37. The value of this tradition cannot be underestimated today. With the fall of the Soviet Union there has been renewed interest in our ideas and in the tradition of libertarian socialism generally. We hope to encourage this interest with Red & Black Revolution. We believe that anarchists and libertarian socialists should debate and discuss their ideas, that they should popularise their history and struggle, and help point to a new way forward.

A couple of years ago our paper Workers Solidarity became a free news-sheet, which appears every two months. With a print-run of 6,000, this means a huge increase in the number of people here in Ireland receiving information about anarchism and struggles for change. As more people join the WSM, we are able to do more to promote anarchism. If you like what we say and what we do, consider joining us. It's quite straight forward. If you want to know more about this just write or email us.

We have also increased and improved our presence on the Internet. This move has been prompted by the enormous success to date of our web site and resources. The site which includes the WSM pages (www.struggle.ws) now often gets over 250,000 hits per month. This means a vast number of people are now looking at and reading about our anarchist ideas. Furthermore, we have made our papers, magazines, posters and some pamphlets available on PDF format - allowing for material to be downloaded in pre-set format, to be sold or distributed free right across the world.



After the Dust Settles

Lessons from the Summit Protests



In recent years anarchism has had a re-emergence in the popular consciousness. For many people what was a piece of social history, a slogan used by cartoon terrorists or a word associated with punk rock is now a form of political struggle no matter how hazily understood. One of the reasons for this has been the role anarchists have played in the anti-globalisation movements and especially in the large anti-globalisation demonstrations in the recent years.

by Jack White

Despite the very real problems associated with the idea of 'summit hopping' and spectacular protest these manifestations have provided a public face of anarchism and at least as importantly have given anarchists an opportunity to work together and with likeminded groups in relatively large numbers. The impact of these demonstrations has been global, showing many that despite the end of the Cold War and the subsequent much heralded 'end of history' that there is resistance to

the neo-liberal project and that social struggle has not gone away. The rise in radical activity in Ireland, amongst other places, shows that events in far off lands can also influence and promote resistance at home.

What is often overlooked is the impact these events have in the country they take place in. Each manifestation has been different and each has affected the 'host' grouping differently. This article is not supposed to be a defini-

tive account or survey on what happens to anarchists when the face of global capitalism comes to their town rather it is a sample, a necessarily brief study of some of what certain groups went through during the organisation, participation in and fallout from these events.

The main sources for this article are interviews carried out over email with Alice Dvorska of the Czech Slovak Anarchist Federation (www.csaf.cz), Nicholas Phebus from Groupe Anarchist Emile Henry, a local affiliate of the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC www.nefac.net) and Fabrizio and Stefano of the Genovese Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici (www.fdca.it)¹. Unfortunately due to space restrictions I have had to edit their responses in places and paraphrase them in others.

Local anarchist movements

I first asked about the anarchist movements in the three cities. While the movement was relatively young and small in Prague and Montreal, in Genoa there was a longer legacy of anarchist struggle.

Prague

Historically there was an active anarchist movement in the Czech part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Originally individualistic, it was later connected with anarcho-syndicalism and mining strikes. The movement's foci were anti-militarism and anti-clericalism. It also had an important cultural dimension with several well-known poets and writers claiming to be anarchists.

Anarchist organisations and magazines were prohibited at the beginning of World War I. Some struggled for the establishment of a Czech state independent from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918 and many of the anarchists joined the Czech Socialist Party and later the Communist Party. Failed assassinations of government Ministers led to repression of the remainder and signified the end of the traditional anarchist movement. After that it was not possible to speak about the anarchist movement until the end of the Bolshevik totalitarian regime.

The first anarchist organisation, the Czechoslovak Anarchist Association, was founded in October 1989 in Prague, a month before the fall of the Communist regime. The first anarchist squats appeared between 1991-1993. The main issues of the movement were anti-fascism, animal rights, environmental issues and the alternative culture connected with squatting. In the second half of the 90s the movement became more organised and raised new issues - e. g. class war and workers' struggles. It was also in this period that the first attempts at anarchist organising began in Slovakia. In 1995 the Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation (CSAF) was established with a more specific theoretical and organisational structure. Between 1996 and 1997 there were two breakaway anarchist groups, first the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists - Solidarity (ORA-S) and then the Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA). Both of them had a considerable impact on the development of theory and on turning the movement towards social problems and social anarchism.

An important impulse for Czech anarchism was the first street party which took place in Prague in 1998 as part of a worldwide day of protest. Anarchists' reclaiming of the street turned into a radical demonstration of around three thousand people, struggles with the police, and an attack on McDonald's. This massive protest and subsequent police repression shocked the Czech public as this was the biggest protest after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. It also addressed the issue of globalisation in the Czech Republic for the first time and brought anarchists attention to the issues involved.

The public perception of anarchists never was really positive in either of the republics, with the general media image being mostly of violent radicals and extremists.

Quebec

Where? When? What? - The Protests

Seattle (1999): Meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)
Prague (2000): Meeting of the International Monetary Fund (the IMF) and the World Bank (WB) on September 26th (also known as S26)
Gottenberg (2001): Meeting of EU heads of state and anti-Bush protest in June.
Quebec (2001): Meeting of 34 heads of state at the Summit of the Americas in April.
Genoa (2001): Meeting of the leaders of the G8 countries in July.
Dublin (2004): Meeting of EU heads of state.

Alphabet Soup - The Protestors

Czech Republic

Anarchist groups

Czech Slovak Anarchist Federation (CSAF)
Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists - Solidarity (ORA-S)
Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA).

Umbrella group organising protests:

Iniciativa Proti Ekonomické Globalizaci (INPEG. Initiative against economic globalization)

Quebec

Anarchist groups

Groupe Anarchist Emile Henry. part of the North Eastern Anarchist Federation (NEFAC)

Umbrella groups organising protests

Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles (CLAC)
Summit of the Americas Welcoming Committee (CASA)
OQP-2001

Genoa

Anarchist groups

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA)
Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI)

Umbrella groups organising protests:

Genoa Social Forum
Anarchici contro il G8



The anarchist movement in Quebec is mostly a new movement emerging from a series of struggles fought around issues of neo-liberalism from the mid-1990's on. No more than a few hundred largely unorganised individuals were involved, mainly in anti-poverty, anti-police brutality and student activist issues. There were two regular tabloid newspapers with readerships in the hundreds, one a relatively new radical/insurrectionalist paper called *Le Trouble* and the other an older libertarian socialist paper bordering on reformist called *Rebelles*.

There was an old anarchist bookshop in Montreal and two groups who distributed literature. There were also a number of anarchist influenced small

single issue 'mass' organisations. There were 2 (or maybe 3) specifically anarchist groups, both of which were in NEFAC and had 6 to 10 members each. Anarchism was largely unknown to the general public, even if there was a number of public exposures and even if a book on anarchism became a bestseller around that time. Anarchists, however, were known and generally respected in leftist, youth and community activism circles.

Genoa

The anarchist movement in Genoa and in Liguria in general has always been fairly active. Between the wars anarchists controlled the local Labour Chamber in Sestri Ponente, which had 12,000 members. During the fascist

dictatorship they organised strikes in the factories and shipyards and were involved in the Resistance, in the Garibaldi and Matteotti brigades and also in autonomous groups like the SAP² Pisacane and SAP Malatesta.

After the 2nd World War, the Genoese anarchist movement entered a long period of crisis (as did the Italian movement in general) which continued right up to the late '60s. In that period the anarchist centres filled up with young people eager to become activists.

Throughout the years the libertarian communist wing set up groups such as the Libertarian Communist Organisation (OCL), the Revolutionary Anarchist Organisation (ORA), the Ligurian Libertarian Communist Federation (FCLL) and, finally, the Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA).

Before the G8 protests the anarchist movement in Genoa was similar to the rest of the country. There are two organisations, the Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI) and the FdCA which represent a minority, both in anarchism and on the local political scene. Fabrizio: "In Genoa, the FAI group is made up of a few individuals who come together on specific social campaigns or for certain historical or cultural initiatives, while the FdCA aims to rebuild an anarchist communist presence in Genoa and tries to act as an organised political force. There are also a few informal groups of comrades who usually meet in the Biblioteca Libertaria Francisco Ferrer where they organise debates, book presentations and film evenings. Then there is the Pinelli Social Centre, which is strongly libertarian and which engages in a lot of political activity in its locality."

Q. What type of coalitions were organising the demonstrations in your city?

Prague

Alice reported that in Prague the idea of organising against the meeting of the IMF and WB was first floated at a meeting of the CSAF. She said that the idea was vague at first since no-one knew exactly what the IMF was or had any idea of what big international protests looked like or how they should be organised. After gathering information a plan and schedule were developed which took until January 2000, when more structured and concrete meetings started to take place and more people got involved. This was when the idea of a loose group where people could take part on an individual base



Carlo Giuliani, a protestor who was shot dead by the police during the protests against the G8 in Genoa, July 2001

without having ideological or other problems between their particular organisations was accepted. This was called the Iniciativa Proti Ekonomické Globalizaci (INPEG, Initiative against economic globalization) and involved individuals from CSAF, Solidarity (ORA-S), Socialistická Solidarita³, Deti Zeme (environmental NGO), Amnesty International and other groups as well as non-organised individuals.

Alice: The majority of the people were anarchists however. There were some problems between the anarchists and Marxists from Socialistická Solidarita before, but we decided to work together because the whole thing was so big, that we felt we need to unify our efforts. However we refused to collaborate with other Marxist or Trotskyist organisations, that were more strict and dogmatic.

The Czech movement (even if it got help from Slovak comrades) was, and still is, quite small compared to other countries. After some time we realised that it was simply too much work for the more or less 30 Czechs who directly participated in INPEG so we asked internationals for help. Our first volunteers came in spring and were from Britain and Norway. It was also important to show the Czech public that we are organising ourselves on an international level - there was never a protest joined by internationals before in our country.

Montreal

Nicolas: "CLAC started to organise, in Montreal, almost two years before the Summit while CASA started maybe a year and a half before hand. Radical reformists started to organise at the

same time but it was way longer to get the mainstream left to start to do something about it. There was a large coalition called OQP-2001, which was made of local mass organisations and political groups. We started by working with them but we left early as we felt they were not democratic and they were dogmatically non-violent. We did however continue to have people there, delegated by their mass organisation, like me. I don't think OQP-2001 was dominated by anyone but the Trotskyites did indeed have a strong influence in it (but they were red-baited a number of times), at the end of the day, however, it was the bigger and richer mass organisations (unions mainly) that determined what was acceptable and what was not. While we were not that big (never more than 50) we ended up having as many skilled activists as OQP-2001 so they were forced to deal with us on an equal footing. CASA was anarchist initiated. The NEFAC local proposed it to another anarchist group. We met a number of times to write an appeal and a proposed Aims and Principles (modeled on CLAC A&P). We then held a large public meeting and proposed it there. It was not supposed to be an anarchist group, it was 'just' anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and in favour of a 'diversity of tactics'⁴ We got 75 members right away (but many of the reds left early to concentrate on OQP-2001). Unlike CLAC, however, we did not use consensus and we were a little bit more formally organised (Was this due to a platformist influence, or experience gained in mass movements? Probably both).

Although it was not officially like that, the only group we really collaborated with was CLAC. We organised everything together and held numerous joint general assemblies. The rest of the crowd was just following the plan we had set up or finding a way to fit in. We did indeed try to be super-democratic by holding two large 'consulta' conferences. But how are you supposed to organise with hundreds of people from all over the place, some of them there on an individual basis, other than with delegates? We ended up basically proposing/imposing a framework and everyone just used it, adding a special touch here and there. It was really chaotic!"

Genoa

Fabrizio: "For the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, the anarchists here started preparing well in advance. There were initiatives in many parts of Italy. Here, we could mention two: the national demonstration organised by the "Anarchici contro il G8"⁵ network and the 1st National Festival of Alternativa

Libertaria (the FdCA's newspaper). These were two particularly visible events for a movement which was, for once, united and which left inter-group rivalries aside. But they were above all two occasions when the anarchist movement was able to address the people, far from the militaristic situation on the streets of Genoa during the G8. The vast majority of anarchists, those who were not organised and those who were part of the FAI or FdCA, showed great political maturity on those occasions."

Stefano: "The Genoa Social Forum was made up of quite a mixed bunch: political parties (Rifondazione Comunista), trade unions (FIOM, COBAS, etc.), various sorts of associations (ATTAC, environmentalists, etc.) and other sections of the movement (such as the Disobbedienti, then known as the Tute Bianche). After the G8, some of the local structures remained active, such as the Genoa, Ponente and Val Polcevera Social Forums. These were mostly led by elements from Rifondazione Comunista or Catholic groups. The Social Forums, however, have basically been a failure as they haven't been able to remain independent of institutional politics and in fact are more often than not used as a springboard for aspiring politicians."

Fabrizio: "A majority of anarchists viewed the counter summit as a circus which would feature the same old comedy acts we have all too often seen, and not as a real political match. The criticisms which came out of the "Anarchici contro il G8" network were of course directed at the summit meeting, but also at the usual itinerant opposition rituals. For months, the "debate", with people like Casarini and Caruso⁶ at the heart of it, was centered on how to break into the Red Zone! Not only was that ever likely to happen realistically, it could never have represented a real political objective. The most "hard-core" elements, such as the so-called Black Bloc or the class autonomists, found themselves more or less in agreement with the Disobbedienti⁷ on this point, whereas anarchists, on the other hand, believed that the counter summit should have become a political opportunity to focus on the big questions of the day, such as social injustice, exploitation and war. To challenge the State on the streets in military fashion was pointless, especially since the battle had already been lost, given the amount of repression which was unleashed in those days. It should have been a chance to come together to develop a class-struggle, social opposition to neo-liberalism. This is why "Anarchici contro il G8" decided to take part offi-

cially in the demonstration organised by the grassroots unions which took place in Sampierdarena, quite some way from the infamous Red Zone. I believe that the anarchists' position on that occasion was serious, responsible and represented an authentic revolutionary force."

Q. In Ireland we experienced a certain level of police harassment when organising protests on May Day. What was your experience?

Prague

Alice: "There were different levels of police harassment/repression:

- Harassment of internationals at the borders - a few people were denied entry into CZ (Italians, US Americans and others)
- Policemen appearing at meetings (in uniform or "secretly")
- Using the media to create an atmosphere of fear, the police did this together with the Interior Ministry and minister."

Montreal

Nicolas: "The harassment was on many levels. Many people were followed and harassed. Some were fined, others arrested on bogus charges. That was the municipal police. The Canadian secret services tried to scare activists by visiting radicals at home (they went to several CASA people's places, including mine). The federal police tried to foment division within the broad movement, meeting with mass organisations and warning them against us and inviting them to spy on us for them. The provincial police went even further and infiltrated everyone, including NEFAC (yeah, a police officer even attended our congress). This led to more serious repression as a whole affinity group from Montreal was arrested en route to Quebec City. They got heavy convictions and spent months in prison. Several NEFAC members were arrested just prior to the action or in the middle of it and there was evidence of long-term police surveillance (one Boston comrade was told his whole travel route from Boston to Quebec City). One of our members in Quebec City did some prison time and was on house arrest and then probation for a long time after his conviction."

Genoa

In Italy, after the disruption caused by protesters in Seattle, Prague and Gothenburg the state embarked upon a series of previously unfore-

seen security measures. The centre of town (the Red Zone) was completely sealed off and a further 'yellow zone' was established where people were subject to random searches. Warships were stationed in the bay and missile arrays were erected. As if in response to these measures the Italian media began to report various bomb and letter bomb scares as well as arms and explosives finds.

Stefano: "Italy has a long history of "State" terrorism (what is known here as the strategy of tension⁸) and anarchists have always been at the centre of this repression. Most people are aware of this, and certainly all those who remember the events of the '70s. In my own experience, I have to say that most of these stories are not taken too seriously."

Fabrizio: "But I suppose we shouldn't be too surprised, after all, at the start of the last century a Japanese anarchist was accused by the government there of causing an earthquake! I don't think people really believe these stories any more."

Q. What did you decide to do on the day and what influenced your decision?

Prague

Alice: "We agreed on the basic plan in one of the international meetings before S26⁹ and it was a result of a discussion that took about 11 hours, horrible. We agreed on a carnival-like meeting on Namesti Miru (a square in the center of Prague) that would later spread into 4 marches (yellow with Ya Basta!, pink with socialists, silver-pink with people in pink and silver carnival costumes and blue with anarchists) that would surround the Congress center and block it so that the delegates inside wouldn't be able to leave it - we justified this with the argument that we will keep them inside until they decide to shut down the IMF/WB.

I think we were influenced by earlier events a lot, as this was the first protest of this kind we ever had in CZ and we relied a lot on the help and experience of internationals. On the other side we wanted to keep it understandable for the Czech public, so this was one of the reasons why we refused to do any violent actions in the name of INPEG. We got inspired by some tactics of earlier events (e.g. blocking the delegates in their hotels in the morning), the carnival-like way of doing protest actions and we agreed with Ya Basta! that they would block the Nusle bridge in front of the Congress center.

Quebec

Nicolas: "The idea was to have a colour code for the protests and geographical areas so people knew what to expect. Green was absolute pacifism and no resistance.

Yellow was non-violent but with direct actions and resistance. Red was, well, none of the above (I think we called it 'offensive direct action' but it was a code word for Black Bloc). There were a number of 'green' protests leading to the Summit. Our day of actions was on April 20. This was for 2 reasons. It was the day where most of the officials were arriving but it was also because the union had planned a huge peaceful march the day after and we wanted to respect that. For the 20th, the idea was to have a march starting on the University campus (in the suburbs) going down town. The march was Yellow because there was no way to guarantee a green march thanks to the cops. At one point it was supposed to split in 3 directions toward green, yellow and red zones.

The way the whole thing was organised was highly influenced by other anti-globalisation protest (mainly Seattle and Prague). We wanted to find a way where everyone could be comfortable, peacenik and black blockers alike."

Genoa

Fabrizio: "The feeling that a lot of comrades had was that both the summit and the counter summit were imposed on us. We wanted to protest against the G8 but we also wanted to avoid simply being a part of the no-global cauldron and getting caught up in pointless rebelling in simulated and/or real clashes. We weren't interested in any of that. The anarchists placed themselves on the field of play as a revolutionary force with our own analyses and programme. There were rumours that there would be clashes, it was a sort of open secret. The State was ready to come down on us, but was clearly in a much stronger position, militarily speaking. After Gothenburg, there was also a realisation that someone could die. So, yes, anarchists preferred to join the union demonstration (and not only anarchists) and we announced our intention to do so. Anarchism was born from the workers' struggles in the countryside and in the factories - and that is where its place lies. And three years after Genoa I still stand by that choice."

Q. Now that the dust has settled, what do you think were the successes and failures of your action?



Prague

Alice: "I think the biggest success of the actions was that the Summit of IMF and WB was brought to an end one and a half days earlier than it should have and the protests were one of the reasons. We also got a lot of media attention and despite of the negative image we got we were able to transmit one basic information to the Czech public - there is something like the IMF and WB and a lot of people here and in the world don't agree with their activities or the whole present economical system. Unfortunately the majority of mainstream media and journalists weren't interested in the reasons why we are against IMF/WB policies so we tried to transmit this information with the help of our own media. S26 was also the biggest protest action of this type ever in CZ and the number of 12,000 people is really high for our conditions.

We also had some problems of course. I think that the two biggest were:

A) The fucking socialists from Socialisticka Solidarita didn't keep their promise and did not act according to the plan of the four marches and instead of joining the pink one they joined the yellow march which resulted into a very strong yellow (maybe 6,000 people) and weak pink one (maybe some hundreds of people) and this led into an incomplete

blockade of the Congress center.

B) We knew that the most radical people will join the blue march/block, but we didn't expect this level of violence. The other thing is also that the violence in Lumirova street was completely useless and didn't make any sense from a strategic point of view. Later it was just a good excuse for the police brutality that followed. I also got the feeling that those people who were violent (mostly internationals, but also some Czechs) later just went home and left the Czech INPEG people on their own with the problems that resulted from the violence (bad image, police and Nazi harassment, verbal and sometimes even physical attacks on streets which continued for at least for half a year)."

Quebec

Nicolas: "It went pretty well as planned but there were two marches from the start. I think there was between 8 and 10,000 people (and that's for a march called for by explicit anti-capitalists and pro-diversity of tactics organisations). As soon as the march hit the wall, the black bloc tore it down. That was cool. I was in the Green zone and it was marvelous with literally thousands of people from the neighborhood out there to 'occupy it' (we - the Comite Populaire - said that the best way to protect the hood was to occupy it with a Street Party and not leave it to

the cops).

On the 21st, however, things did not go as planned. First, we had several organisers arrested. Second, most radicals did not answer our call to do an anti-capitalist bloc in the union march; many just went directly to the wall to besiege the summit and police. Third, there was a sea of people (between 40,000 and 50,000) and we where completely lost in it, unable to regroup more then a few hundred people.

Many, many, many unionists (a third of the march, half?) however did come with us to the conflict zone and participate in the fun (the union leadership led the rest to a parking lot miles away for the conflict zone!). On the 22nd, we organised some 'clean up teams' in the community. That too went well.

Genoa

Stefano: "The Genoa demos made it very clear to a wide audience that there was strong opposition to the neo-liberalist programme. In particular, many young people were drawn for the first time to the world of politics as a result of what the movement was saying. On the other hand, the powers-that-be were able to shift media attention onto the problems of "public order", thereby hiding the message that the movement was trying to project. In the days and weeks that followed, the only thing being talked about was the Black Bloc, the devastation, the repression, and so on."

Fabrizio: "The counter summits have provided publicity for the summits, that much seems clear. If the "big guys" can't meet in Paris, then they'll meet in Alaska, or they won't bother meeting and just talk to each other by phone. Whatever else they may do, they won't stop the oppression and exploitation just because a bunch of boy scouts and Tibetan monks hang off the railings of the Red Zone, or because the Black Block set fire to a few cars and smash a few shop windows.

It is difficult to say what anarchists in general thought of the Black Block. Obviously anyone who declares themselves to be anarchist is free to do what he or she feels is best regarding action. We simply thought it was better not to get dragged into a military-style confrontation, something which the government was clearly hoping for.

We did not think it was in any way productive to launch an assault on the Red Zone (like the Disobbedienti and friends) or to indulge in petty acts of rebellion, like setting fire to cars and smashing windows. From day one,



it was our intention to communicate with the people of Genoa and of the world. The problem is not to be seen, it is to be a real opposition. And we can only be that if we work within the real movements which are developing in society, in the world of labour, 365 days of the year. We are not interested in appearing to be an opposition; we want to BE the opposition."

Q. What was the effect of the protests on the public perception of anarchism in your country?

Prague

Alice: I think that it (public opinion of anarchists) got worse than it was before. I mean the media would talk about us in a bad way even if there wasn't any violence, but this gave them a brilliant excuse.

On the other hand it is very difficult to say what the public was thinking about anarchists or the protesters in general. If I can speak for my own person - the only real arguments I had afterwards were the ones with my mother. My friends, students and teachers from university or people I met on the streets/in the pubs that recognized me were more curious than hostile and were asking questions about how it was and what I think about the whole thing. So one thing was the media hysteria which was huge and the other thing was the people I met and most of them were OK. But of course I met also some hostile people and heard about problems other INPEG activists had afterwards e.g. in university.

Quebec

Nicolas: Hard to tell. We discovered that we could have a mass appeal

and that we were not forced to spread our message in the hundreds but that it could be done in the thousands and tens of thousands. We won a lot of sympathy in the public - we won the battle of ideas against everyone - but we did not have the critical mass to capitalise on this. We were over-stretched by the Summit and a lot of comrades literally collapsed after it (there were a few real burnout and some depressions leading to hospitalisation). It was intense. No anarchist institutions in Quebec City survived the Summit; everything was shaken to the foundation. It was a cataclysmic event. It took us close to a year before we started to have a stable and effective NEFAC local again (and it was no stronger then before, just not exactly the same people).

In retrospect, I think we were strengthened by it. There is now a bigger scene than before and I would say the number of anarchists activists has doubled if not more. We are now strong enough as a movement to sustain an infoshop which never happened before.

It did, however, have a catastrophic effect on our relation with the other left groups. Before that, we had cordial relations with them and we used to do a lot of stuff in coalition with all the revolutionary forces. Now we do everything on our own (and both sides have generally better results then we did together). We don't even go to each others' events. The division is there, deep.

Genoa

Stefano: There was a demo shortly after the summit (to mark the death of Carlo Giuliani) - a vigil in Piazza de Ferrari in the heart of the Red Zone, right beside Palazzo Ducale where the summit took place. The square was jammed with people, many from outside the movement. On the first anniversary in July 2002, there was a huge march in Genoa - huge not only in numbers, but also in the strength it expressed - for many, me included, it was a sort of "liberating" rite. That march was also noticeable for the size of the anarchist sector, though a part of the movement (including the class autonomists) chose to march separately on more "radical" positions.

Fabrizio: I think the anarchist movement is seen with new interest today. Anarchist communist positions in particular are viewed with greater sympathy, above all by those who have been disappointed by the neo-social democratic policies of Rifondazione Comunista. There has been a great deal of repression against all sectors of the anarchist movement, particu-

larly against the Pinelli Social Centre which has been the target of several police searches and fascist attacks.

The FdCA's website has witnessed increased traffic in recent years and we are making new contacts all over Italy. In fact, our federation has grown, both in quantity and in quality. There is a great deal of authentic respect for our political positions, positions which we bring with us into whatever area we feel is willing to listen.

Despite our growth the FdCA remains a small organisation in a big city like Genoa and in the Ligurian region and we are still unable to make a big impact in politics in the area. The people who joined our federation after the G8 did so, not only because of what we did during the summit, but also, and mainly, because of our political initiatives after the G8. I honestly don't know if the same can be said for the FAI in Genoa or for the rest of the anarchist movement in the city, because once again, I'm afraid, relations with these groups are few and far between.

Q. Hindsight is 20:20. If you were going to do it all over again what would you do differently?

Prague

Alice: Apart from some details I would change three things and I think that also the other INPEG people would change this:

1. To deal with the violence question before the protests more carefully, this means to be more careful in what we

are going to tell the media. Now there also appears the idea of media boycott during protests - simply to refuse any contact with them (this is not my personal opinion, but some people like it).

2. Not to work with any socialists/Marxists again (after September they were kicked out of INPEG).

3. To think more about the strategy after the day of action - all our plans and thoughts ended with S26 and we didn't think about how to deal with the consequences.

Quebec

Nicolas: I would not put all my eggs in the same basket (but did we have the choice?) and I would try to defend the integrity of the organisation (NEFAC) so that we have continuity. But then, I am not sure that would have been possible at the time.

Genoa

Fabrizio: As far as we are concerned, very little, if anything. If it were possible, we would have tried to succeed in convincing our comrades of the uselessness of getting involved in what proved to be a trap - the demonstrations where it was known there would be trouble, and which eventually led to the death of Carlo Giuliani. The various police forces and the government were simply waiting for it to happen. What we have to do is forget all that, ignore the provocation and above all, patiently work towards the building of a class-struggle anti-capitalist movement, rather than a free-for-all anti-globalization movement with eve-

rything but the kitchen sink. ♦

Footnotes

1. All unreferenced quotes are taken from these interviews. I also used previously published texts, see rest of footnotes for details.
2. SAP stands for "Squadre di Azione Partigiana" which could translate as "Partisan Action Squads"
3. Czech sister organisation to our own Socialists Workers Party.
4. Diversity of tactics: respect for and pursuit of a wide variety of actions from marching, through civil disobedience to property destruction and beyond.
5. "Anarchici contro il G8" was made up of: 14 FAI groups, FdCA, FAS (Sicilian Anarchist Federation), Circolo Durruti (anarchist group connected to USI syndicalist union) and about 40 other "non-aligned" anarchist groups from all over Italy. Its structure was the typically libertarian horizontal form, with assemblies making decisions. Interestingly enough it had one typically "platformist" feature - collective responsibility. This feature strongly characterized the network throughout its existence".
6. Casarini and Caruso: leading figures in the Disobbedienti.
7. The Disobbedienti are a group with ideological roots in 1970's Italian autonomist politics and Zapatista solidarity. Heavily involved in social centres and squatting they have also become a large part of the Italian anti-capitalist movement and are into defensive and symbolic acts of resistance.
8. The name "strategy of tension" usually indicates the period roughly from 1969 to 1974, when Italy was hit by a series of terrorist bombings, some of which caused large numbers of civilian deaths. The authors were right-wing extremists maneuvered by intelligence and military structures aiming at providing a pretext for reactionary elements to strengthen themselves against an increasingly strong and effective working class movement.
9. S26 stood for September 26th.

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Summit Protests and Networks

With the emergence of the summit protest movement into the public eye after J18 and Seattle, anarchism gained an influence way beyond what the numbers of anarchists and the level of anarchist organisation might have led you to predict. Quite quickly in the English speaking world, anarchism emerged from being a fairly obscure and historical critique of the left to become one of the main poles in the globalisation movement.

by Andrew Flood

It was not the long-existing anarchist organisations that achieved this. For the most part it was a new generation of activists using much more informal methods of organisation and communication. Rather than seeking to build one powerful and united organisation, they built thousands of small, informal and often quite short-lived ones. In fact 'built' is probably too strong a word for a process that in many cases consisted of a few friends coming together to travel to a protest and act together during it.

The Internet and why this form of organisation came to the fore

Revolutionary politics has always been strongly influenced by new technology. The emergence of the mass democratic rebellions in France, American and Ireland in the closing decades of the 18th century were linked to the advent of widespread literacy and access to printing. This allowed the rapid spread of quite complex republican ideas around the world. At the start of the new millennium it was the internet that allowed for a model of organisation of highly decentralised networks. Previously both international communication and one to many communication needed significant resources and so required mass organisation and a centralisation of resources. The web and email meant that for first time huge numbers of people could directly communicate internationally on a day-to-day basis.

This allowed the coming into being of very large and informal networks. In terms of debate and organisation these could be no more formal than an email list. A single mail sent to one list could be picked up and forwarded to many others so the ideas of one individual or small collective could spread rapidly to large numbers of people whom they had never met. This tended to bypass

existing organisations many of whom tended to see the internet as a threat rather than an opportunity. For a time it also threw the various state spying and police forces into disarray as they were used to a model where infiltration of one or a small number of centralised organisations could give them a very accurate picture of how many would attend something and what they were likely to do.



Zapatista Encuentro. Chiapas. 1996

Simply put these new methods initially allowed activists to seemingly appear from nowhere and either shut down summits as in Seattle and Prague or, as in Quebec, force the state to imprison itself behind high walls and fences. It was suddenly possible for a small and poorly resourced group to communicate with and seek aid from people all over their continent. It was possible for those thinking of travelling to a protest to get quite detailed local information in advance through web sites and email lists. After a decade where the only thing of significance happening on the left was the Zapatistas the initial success of the summit protests seemed to represent an enormous leap forward.

The advantages of this form of organisation

The major advantage of this form of organisation is that it allowed the rapid development and growth of a movement

of tens of thousands from a tiny base without significant resources. Almost without exception groups formed spontaneously, copying what they perceived as the success of what others were doing elsewhere. Their knowledge of the process was obtained not from individual contact or even books but from what people were writing on a multitude of web sites and email lists.

In the first years it was also possible for network organised summit protests to have a real impact on the various global capitalist summits. The business of both the 1999 World Trade Organisation (WTO) summit in Seattle and the 2000 World Bank summit in Prague was disrupted, in the case of Prague leading to the abandoning of the entire event as delegates fled the city. This was possible because initially the various state security forces who are used to dealing with top down, centralized organisations didn't know who to watch and what to take seriously. On a more local level the initial Reclaim the Streets events that were held in many cities around the globe also caused confusion amongst police forces unused to such organising methods.

Of course the state has enormous resources at its disposal and after some pretty disastrous experimentation - the Quebec NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) summit, also in 2000 - it adjusted to these new forms of organisation and developed new policing methods to deal with them. These new policing methods included an intense level of repression which saw the shooting of protesters at the Gothenburg and Genoa summits. Many of the Summits were also moved out of the big cities where protesters could easily gather to isolated locations and in the case of the World Bank to Qatar, a dictatorship!

In particular, after the September 11th terrorist attacks, when security became a very plausible excuse in the mind of the general public, the effectiveness of attempts to actually shut down or disrupt the summits of global capitalism plummeted. Protests and confrontations still occur at many summits but the summit delegates now see these on Sky News rather than right outside the buildings in which they meet. As such, the protests have become purely symbolic even if there are often frequent scuffles with whatever police force has drawn the short straw of protecting the world's elite that month.

The network form of organisation is effective but also rather ruthless when it comes to experimentation with new methods and tactics. Each local group is free to go out and try out new ideas without consulting with anyone else first. If something obviously works then it is reported on and can be rapidly replicated elsewhere. The ruthless element is that this freedom to experiment without consultation also means that obvious failures that would have been spotted at

the discussion phase in a more formal organisation slip through and people have to learn the hard way all too frequently. And the hard way can mean jailings or losing all local support for an action that was never going to make any difference anyway. In contrast a formal organisation would first need a formal geographically widespread debate over strategy and tactics before they could be implemented. While this may eliminate repeating the mistakes of the past it may also result in missed opportunities and certainly limits the number of new strategies that can be tried at any one time.

In the 1990's, with the bankruptcy of the old authoritarian left, it was precisely this space for experimentation and replication that allowed the rapid appearance of a new movement with new tactics and a new strategy created through 'walking the road' rather than studying the books.

What are the limitations it faces?

The state may be slow to respond but it is a massive structure of power with billions of dollars of resources and hundreds of thousands of dedicated personnel. So no single form of organisation, unless it is one that involves the majority of workers, will ever be able to take it on in a straight fight. This includes not only formal organisations but also informal decentralised methods of organisation.

Many of the things that make network forms of organisation useful are also disadvantages in other respects. Their informality means that 'members' have a relatively weak commitment to them so for finance and resources they are often dependant on donations and loans from more formal organisations. The ease of getting involved (perhaps no more than signing up to an email list) also means they are easy for police, journalists and fascists to infiltrate and, if they are smart about it, to disrupt by carrying out provocations in the name of the network or issuing statements from what claims to be a node of a network designed simply to discredit the network as a whole. In the recent past we have an example in this in the letter bombing campaign carried out by an Italian group that nobody had ever heard of but which used the same initials as the largest Italian anarchist network, the FAI. In a network that has no formal structure it can be very hard to even issue a statement pointing out that such actions are not part of the network.

Beyond networks and protests

Network methods of organisation have proved to be very effective at organising one off summit protests. They have also played a vital role in building international solidarity, in particular with the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas in the mid-1990's. But the experience

of those organising the summit protests suggests that in the aftermath the networks proved fragile and were unable to sustain a local impact.

In Argentina network forms of organisation proved capable of getting several presidents out of power and were able to help organise the occupations of dozens of factories but appear not to have made much progress towards overthrowing capitalism. The slogan was 'they all must go' but the reality was that there was always another candidate in the wings to fill the president's chair when it became vacant.

This does not prove that the network form or organisation is useless, nor that there is an alternative form of organisation that is better in all circumstances. But it does suggest a need to look at models of organisation beyond networks. Or rather at models intended to complement the network form of organisation and address those areas where it is weak.

The old left often took the attitude that there was one ideal form of organisation that could be scaled down to fill all needs and all circumstances. For the Leninists that was often democratic centralism, the idea that putting a smart leadership in charge was the way forward. For some anarcho-syndicalists it was syndicalism but most anarchists have always favoured a plurality of organisational forms.

From the late 19th century anarchists have advocated a number of forms of organisation. Sometimes given the nature of the debate these were put forward as polarised alternatives to each other. But some, like Bakunin, argued that all these forms of organisation should exist side by side and that anarchists should be involved in all of them.

What is needed is that committed anarchists also organise in anarchist political organisations that seek to provide the continuity, theoretical depth and tactical unity that networks, because of their advantages, lack. The main goal of networks is to organise lots and lots of people around a limited project (e.g. a single day's protest). Trying to develop any agreed theoretical depth in such a project would just limit the number of people who can be involved.

The role of anarchist organisations

Anarchist organisations have the resources to develop theoretical depth out of their experience across a range of networks and then take these ideas into individual networks and argue for them. Anarchist organisations also have the time to enter into the sort of historical and theoretical discussion that are not possible in a broad meeting that seeks to sort out the concrete organisational details of a specific event.

This sort of analysis is needed if we are to

move from confronting the worst aspects of capitalism as they arise to building an alternative to capitalism. The creation of an alternative is a long term project that needs to be able to deal with capitalism in all its different phases from social democratic to neo-liberal to fascist. In the past capitalism has been able to disband or suppress protest movements by simply shifting phase and either giving an apparent, if limited, victory (with a new social democratic government) or imposing repression that people are not prepared for (with fascism).

When it comes to doing work in trade unions or in communities where we can expect that many of those we are addressing and seeking to involve will be around for many years there is a real advantage in having a stable formal organisation. This can build up credibility and trust amongst those it wants to work with in a way that an informal network that comes and goes simply cannot sustain in the long term.

There is something of a false debate facing the anti-capitalist movement. At one pole some put forward tight organisation. The Leninists of course want tightly centralized parties but even some libertarians see the answer to increasingly effective policing of protest in a turn towards more disciplined and perhaps semi-clandestine organisation. At the other pole most activists continue to put forward loose organisations as a solution in themselves, with some 'post-leftists' even arguing against any form of more co-ordinated organisation.

Both see the two organisational methods as in competition with each other. This need not be so, in fact for anarchists both forms should be complementary as the strengths of one are the weaknesses of the other and vice versa. The rapid growth of the movement has strongly favoured the network form, it's now time to look at also building its more coherent partner. That is to build specific anarchist organisations that will work in and with the networks as they emerge. ♦

Footnotes

1. The term English speaking world is clumsy; in particular as in many parts of it sizeable minorities do not speak English as their first language. However in terms of oppositional politics and anarchism in particular the countries of USA, Britain, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada outside of Quebec share a lot more in common than they do with the movement in the rest of the world.
2. Widespread literacy not in the sense that a large percentage of the population could read but that a significant minority could, and could thus communicate news and ideas to those around them.
3. Famously in 1994 the International Socialist Tendency went so far as to close down a number of email lists that had been spontaneously set up by ordinary members of individual IST sections to allow them to communicate with ordinary members elsewhere.

Media Mayhem

Anarchists and the Mass Media

On one level the phrase “the media” simply refers to the various modern technologies for transmitting ideas to large populations, such as newspapers, television, magazines, radio and the new kid on the block, the Internet. These are extremely useful tools. They allow people to know what’s happening in the world and hence share some common understanding with strangers. A fundamental precondition for achieving the type of revolutionary change that anarchists seek is that a large number of people actively desire it, or at the very least are open to it. Indeed, communicating “our beloved propaganda” to the masses has always played a major part in anarchist activity and hence we require the media. However, today, when we talk about the media, we also implicitly refer to the corporate machine that comes very close to operating monopoly control over mass communication.

by Chekov Feeney

This article examines the mainstream media and looks at the various factors which ensure that it effectively works as a propaganda tool for the powerful. It looks at ways in which anarchists can deal with this situation, by creating our own media, but also by challenging the hostility that they habitually encounter from the mainstream. It is mostly based on the experience of the 2004 Mayday protests in Dublin, which saw a huge smear campaign against the organisers, and looks at some of the ways in which they tried to respond.

Part One Mainstream Media - The Propaganda Factory

A critique of the role of the mainstream media has long been a central part of the global anti-capitalist movement. Noam Chomsky's book and film, "Manufacturing Consent," can probably be considered a core text of this new movement. It provides a very detailed critique of how news is created and disseminated according to what Chomsky calls the 'propaganda model': a series of information filters which serve to tailor information to the needs of the powerful. This section simply presents some of these important factors in outline. I strongly recommend Chomsky's text for a much more detailed analysis, includ-

ing a wealth of empirical evidence.

Ownership

With the increasing pace of corporate globalisation, the ownership of mainstream media resources like newspapers, television channels and radio stations is concentrated in the hands of an ever smaller number of enormous companies. As a result, the tiny number of individuals who own and control these companies enjoy effective control over a huge percentage of the information that is seen by the public. Naturally, the owners tend to favour news that reflects their own worldviews. So, for example, news items that are critical of the concentration of ownership in the media industry are unlikely to be very popular in their productions.

Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi are two of the better-known global media moguls, but there are lesser-known figures who exercise a large degree of control within particular areas or industries. For example, Tony O'Reilly's company, Independent News and Media, owns Ireland's best-selling daily broadsheet, best selling daily tabloid, best selling Sunday broadsheet, best selling Sunday tabloid, best selling evening paper as well as owning more than 50% of all local newspapers and radio stations in the country. This naturally gives

him enormous ability to shape the news agenda in the country.

Advertising

The primary source of income of virtually all mainstream media comes from advertising. This has created a situation where the media's core role is not to sell news to consumers, it is to sell demographic slices of the public to advertisers. As a result of this focus, the news content of the media tends to tailor itself to the needs of advertisers. For example, a publication that tends to be very critical of large corporations will soon find it difficult to attract advertisers.

Political Pressures

Media companies generally depend upon their relationship with centres of political power. This is especially the case with state broadcasters, where the government of the day often has the power to fire senior figures who insist on presenting information in a way that is deemed unfavourable to the political power. When the BBC made a small, routine mistake in reporting on the Iraqi 'dodgy dossier', the chairman was forced to resign after a government witch-hunt - despite the fact that the content of the report was substantially accurate. The mistaken detail was apparently serious enough to cause heads to roll at the BBC, while the mistake in going to war with dodgy information was not serious enough to prompt any internal action by the state!



Graffiti painted on the side of the RTE satellite van during the May 2004 protests in Dublin. RTE is Ireland's state broadcaster

Political pressure is also applied to commercial media who depend on access to information from the state (e.g. invitations to press briefings, leaks from government and security sources...) to fill their pages. Political parties and other powerful groups employ large numbers of people whose job it is to put pressure on media companies. For example, Alaister Campbell, New Labour's press secretary, used to phone the BBC to complain about their coverage on the Today programme every single day, regardless of the content. The reasoning behind this was that it would cause the BBC producers to shape the news in advance, as they knew that anything unfavourable would be the subject of strenuous and wearying complaints. Similarly in Ireland, IBEC employs several full time PR staff who spend much of their time harassing journalists and lodging complaints when they think that any coverage has been 'unfair' (code for anything that is critical of them or their members).

Finally, most states have various pieces of legislation which effectively discriminate in favour of corporate-owned media. Strict libel and copyright laws and the attendant risks of costly court action can be very effective means of excluding non-commercial radical publications. For example, in Ireland the libel laws allow the victim to sue the distributor. Easons, the company which exercises near monopoly control over print distribution in the country, thus requires that all distributed media should pass a costly legal check before it can be distributed. This effectively excludes virtually all radical and non-commercial publications.

Sensationalism and 'infotainment'

As the central task of the media is to deliver audiences to advertisers, the educational value of the content is a much less important consideration. The news media, therefore, tends to present information in as 'entertaining' a way as possible in order to maximise market share. This focus on 'infotainment' lends itself to sensationalist reporting, designed to catch the attention of the public rather than inform them. Thus, a fantasy about a shadowy group plotting a major atrocity at a protest is much more likely to grab the headlines than an examination of why the people concerned are protesting - despite the fact that the former generally has no informative value whatsoever.

Soundbites

The focus on sensationalism and



A sample of the coverage that anarchists received in the Irish media in the run up to the protests against the EU summit in Dublin on May Day 2004.

entertainment lends itself to short segments composed of 'sound-bites', designed to be digestible to the lowest common denominator among the audience - meaning somebody with little attention-span and no knowledge of the subject. As a result, it is extremely difficult to introduce any concepts that fall outside the 'accepted wisdom' on a particular issue (the accepted wisdom being roughly equal to the points of view that are most favourable to advertisers and owners). Accepted wisdom can be repeated indefinitely, but any sound-bite that contradicts it tends to sound crazy. For example, if you were to state the fact that the US is a leading terrorist state on US television, most viewers would assume you are barking mad. On the other hand, anybody can say that "Cuba is a terrorist state" and it will be accepted by most without a second thought. Thus, in the era of the sound-bite, it is virtually impossible for anybody who has an opinion markedly different from the mainstream to present their ideas in a way that will

appear credible.

The position of reporters

In line with developments across the board in modern capitalism, the internal structure of many media companies has changed quickly. The number of full-time news staff has declined sharply and they have been replaced by freelancers, either working on short term fixed contracts or with no contract at all. This has led to a situation where editorial staff have less and less time to research news stories. As a consequence, much of the content is cobbled together directly from press releases and other such pre-packaged forms. Furthermore, without the time to adequately investigate any issue, content is considered newsworthy only if it can be squeezed into a well-known angle. Any news item that does not fit into one of these cliches is just "not news". Protestors can be presented as violent hooligans or harmless utopian hippies but otherwise they can be ignored.

The increasing preponderance of news-staff who work in insecure positions has also contributed to the decline in the quality of news content. Working in a highly competitive environment, with future employment depending on breaking of high-profile stories, the temptation to embellish and sensationalise stories often proves irresistible to those who are desperate to establish themselves in the industry. Attending a public meeting where reasonable people discussed plans for a protest is a story that is unlikely to grab the front pages. On the other hand 'infiltrating a secret meeting where fanatics plotted to bring chaos to the city' might.

Self-censorship

Possibly the most insidious factor that shapes the mainstream media is what Chomsky calls 'self-censorship' or the 'internalisation of values'. This refers to the process whereby media workers internalise the filters that apply to the publications that they work for. This creates a situation where many will strenuously proclaim their freedom to write whatever they like and deny the existence of any censorship of their work. In general, journalists start on the bottom rungs of the media ladder, producing commercial features or lifestyle pieces. By the time they rise through the system to work on more politically sensitive pieces, they will be very familiar with the dominant ideologies espoused by the publication and industry that they work in. Anybody who fails to internalise the correct values will either fail to rise, or will face so much turmoil and conflict that they will be driven out.

For example, it is unlikely that the editors of Ireland's *Sunday Independent* have to refuse too many articles on the grounds that they are too sympathetic to Sinn Fein. Anybody who finds themselves in a position as a political writer for that publication will already know well that only criticisms of Sinn Fein are likely to be published. Furthermore, it is likely that only those writers who demonstrate a personal dislike for Sinn Fein will ever be given a job as a political commentator.

Part Two

Building Alternative Media Institutions

For all of the reasons given above, anarchists and other radical critics of the current social order are never going to be given a fair hearing in the mainstream media as it is now constituted. On balance, the media coverage they receive will be overwhelmingly negative. They will be ignored,

belittled, mocked, misrepresented, slandered, vilified and abused. There is nothing that can be done about this in the short term - it is a consequence of the structure of the entire industry and is outside of popular control. Therefore, in the long run, the most important task is to create alternatives; media that is not controlled by powerful corporations; that does not depend on advertising revenues; that primarily aims to inform rather than entertain; that is independent from political pressure coming from the powerful.

In the past there have been many extremely successful examples of people doing just that. There is a long tradition of radical grassroots publishing with roots that go back at least as far as the late 18th century, when Thomas Paine's pamphlet *The Rights of Man* was influential in popularising the ideas of the republican revolutions and uprisings around the world. During the 19th century, a workers' press flourished, producing numer-



Dublin Grassroots Network poster, responding to the media hype in the run up to the Mayday 2004 protest in Dublin

ous popular daily newspapers in new industrial towns in Britain and the US. In 1930's Spain the anarcho-sindicalist CNT produced over 30 daily newspapers, including the national best-seller. Sadly, with the growing importance of advertising revenues and the decline of radical workers' organisations, alternative, non-commercial publications found it impossible to compete with the corporate products and their number dwindled. Generally only those publications which were run by well-organised and committed political groups survive today. Their circulation is mostly tiny compared with the mass distribution that the workers' press achieved many decades before.

New media technologies such as television and radio that were introduced in the course of the twentieth century tended to be even more tightly controlled by government and large cor-

porations as they require greater capital investment. Today, there are only a small number of community radio stations and public access television channels that are truly independent of corporate and state control, and they have tiny audiences and minuscule resources to cover news stories when compared with the corporate competition.

To appreciate the marginality of non-commercial media today, consider the example of Ireland. In terms of print publications, it is only the newspapers, magazines and 'zines produced by small left wing groups and individuals that are fully independent of the various filters in the propaganda model. There are less than 100,000 copies of libertarian publications and maybe twice that number of Marxist and other radical publications distributed in Ireland each year. This figure is easily surpassed by every single issue of several corporate Sunday newspapers. In other media, such as television and radio, the situation is worse still. A couple of community-controlled radio stations compete against a huge array of state and commercial offerings with vastly greater resources and audiences.

However, the situation is not entirely hopeless. No matter how hostile and powerful the mainstream media is, radical political movements can still overcome the barriers put in their way. For example, in the 1970's Sinn Fein claimed to be able to sell up to 45,000 copies of their newspapers', *An Phoblacht* and *Republican News*, each week. Although their populist nationalist politics are hardly radical, their military campaign was in full swing at the time and they were utterly reviled by the mainstream. Despite the fact that the corporate world wouldn't touch them with a barge-poll, they managed to build an impressive network of supporters to distribute their ideas to a mass audience.

A more recent, if limited, example was seen during the recent campaign against the bin-tax in Dublin. The mass opposition to this tax was completely ignored by the mainstream media for three years. During this time the campaign distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets and newsletters to Dublin households, through an impressive network of volunteers. By the time that the government decided to act to crush the opposition to the tax, large swathes of the city had been won over to support the campaign. The huge leafleting network was crucial in creating a common understanding of the issues among large numbers of workers across the city. The mainstream media did eventu-

ally start to cover the campaign, but only when the city was on the verge of being shut down by the campaign and then their coverage was a good example of how the media can act in unison when the interests of the powerful are threatened. Virtually every single piece of coverage in the mainstream media was overtly hostile to the campaign. Yet, despite the media smears, the long process of building a campaign and distributing information was strong enough that it took the full might of the state to crush it.

However, it requires a huge investment of resources for radical groups to be able to create and distribute their own media. In general the time, money and energy involved means that it is only relatively coherent, well organised and committed groups who are capable of reaching large numbers. This is one area where anarchists have often fallen down, especially in comparison with authoritarian socialists. Very few anarchist publications reach large numbers of people. Indeed anarchists often mock Trotskyists for their concentration on selling newspapers. Certainly the politics that their papers advocate and the forceful recruiting that tend to accompany their sales pitches deserve to be mocked, but not the fact that they sell newspapers, which is simply part of the hard slog of trying to build up alternative media.

However, the situation is not entirely depressing for anarchists. For one thing it is possible for anarchist organisations to expand the circulation of their publications significantly with hard work and organisation. For example, the circulation of *Workers Solidarity* has increased by a factor of at least ten within three years. Now about 6,000 copies are distributed, mostly delivered door to door, every two months. In addition to the publications put together by organised groups, advances in technology have created something of a boom in DIY publishing of anarchist zines, mostly assembled by individuals or small groups of friends. Although these publications normally have very small circulation and tend not to be aimed 'outwards' at the general public, together they do serve to circulate ideas and debate among a wider group than would otherwise be possible. But most importantly, the development of the Internet has created a new distribution and publication method for radical media, one that has yet to fall under the absolute control of corporate or state power and one that is particularly favourable for anarchists.

Revolution in Cyberspace?

Despite the overblown hype about the



The Indymedia centre in Dublin, set up in order to provide access to voices excluded, marginalised and demonised in the run up to the protests in Dublin on May Day 2004.

potential of the Internet to replace all traditional forms of communication, its emergence has still had important effects. It has significantly reduced the costs of distribution of information to mass audiences, thus lowering the financial barrier to entry in the industry. This has allowed organisations without huge financial backing to attract large audiences to their sites without the need to depend heavily on advertising revenue. For example, the web site of the WSM probably attracts significantly more traffic than many of the mainstream political parties in Ireland, despite the fact that we are thousands of times poorer.

The inherently trans-national nature of the Internet has had important effects. By allowing people to communicate without any penalties for physical distance, radical political currents, which were previously too geographically dispersed and thinly spread to form themselves into effective movements, have been able to come together and organise in cyberspace. The global anti-capitalist movement, which exploded onto the TV screens in Seattle and Genoa, had a long incubation period on the Internet before it was capable of coalescing in the real world. The anarchist movement too owes much of its current growth to the Internet. Not only have anarchist ideas been revived in their traditional

bases, they have spread all over the globe, often carried by popular websites and mailing lists to countries without any anarchist tradition, or one that was long dead.

The Internet's trans-nationalism has also allowed non-corporate media to somewhat circumvent the various legal impediments that states have devised to impede radical media. National copyright and libel laws are difficult to enforce when the website is physically hosted in another country. As an international entity, there is no single legal system which has authority over the whole Internet. Unsurprisingly, the US government have been taking steps to remedy this. They have effectively attempted to legislate for the entire Internet, through the promotion of multi-lateral agreements, like the treaties on intellectual property rights agreed at the World Trade Organisation, or through unilateral measures like the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, where the US attempted to prosecute foreign companies for breaking US copyright law. Although such legal control is still limited, it is a constant threat to free communication on the internet. History tells us that the more that states can legally control the information distributed on the Internet, the more dominated by the corporate sector it will become.

In addition to its low financial barrier to entry and its trans-national, geographical distance-collapsing nature, perhaps the most important development of the Internet is a consequence of its fundamental communication paradigm. Traditional media facilitate few-to-many communication. This means that a relatively small number of people produce the information, while a large number of people consume it and there is a clear division between the two. This model is favoured when there is a relatively high cost involved in producing and distributing the information. In the early years of the Internet, this was the predominant model for web sites, with sites being managed by individuals and small groups and passively consumed by viewers.

However, unlike a newspaper or a TV broadcast, there is virtually no cost involved in adding and distributing new information on the Internet. There are few of the same constraints on the size and volume of the information distributed. This feature has facilitated the development of many-to-many communication models, sources of information created by participatory, voluntary communities where the lines between consumer and producer of the information are blurred. This type of community stretches back to the birth of the internet and has migrated through the various Internet communication tools from usenet newsgroups to email lists to the World Wide Web.

Probably the most impressive child of the Internet is the free software movement, a vast and nebulous community of computer programmers, spread all over the globe, who use a production model that is much closer to pure communism than to capitalism - the vast majority of work is voluntary and the products are given away for free. This community is responsible for much of the software that runs the Internet itself and its creations have been crucial in the development of internet communities where information rather than software is the product. With the development of software tools to facilitate the creation and distribution of information by large groups of co-operating people, enormous repositories of information have been developed by ever-growing communities. The increasing sophistication and ease of use of the tools has been closely followed by larger, more diverse and more sophisticated examples of community organisation.

Radical political currents have been able to take advantage of these developments. In the English-speaking world, it is almost certainly true, if

difficult to measure, that vastly more information written from a radical left-wing point of view is distributed electronically than on paper today. The nature of the Internet's communication model has also meant that those political movements which are more libertarian in their organisation, with considerable autonomy within broad agreements on principle, and more democratic and participatory in the way in which they produce information, have tended to take advantage of this opportunity much more effectively than the traditional, authoritarian left. Highly hierarchical groups are organised so that a small number of specialists produce the information, or at least closely scrutinise it before distribution, which is more suited to traditional few-to-many communication.

“vastly more information written from a radical left-wing point of view is distributed electronically than on paper today”

Many of the collectively produced, politically radical information sources on the Internet are intended for a particular niche audience and serve mainly as a means of developing the community internally, by providing a forum in which people with similar views can identify each other, get some sense of themselves as a collective movement and develop their ideas through debate and argument. Bulletin board systems, like urban75.com and enrager.net, based in the UK, are good examples. Although these communities are very useful, they aren't aimed at a general audience and will never compete with the corporate world as a primary source of information about what is happening in the world.

Other communities have taken the first steps towards taking on the corporate media. Sites like Znet, and comondreams.org gather together a wealth of high quality radical analysis of current affairs. While these sites have a large number of contributors, they still generally rely on a small group of people to choose what to include and what not to.

Some Internet information communities have attempted to go beyond this and facilitate as wide an involvement in the process of information production as is possible. Due to the fact that different participants have different

level of commitment to the goals of the community, it is probably impossible and undesirable to ever eliminate the position of members with particular privileges that allow them to regulate the distribution of information. However, there have been several hugely successful examples where this principle is taken to its logical conclusion. Communities like Slashdot, Kuro5hin, Indymedia and Wikipedia are entirely managed by the community that uses them, and these communities number many thousands.

Indymedia is of particular interest to anarchists due to its political roots as well as its open participatory nature. It was born in Seattle in November 1999, during the famous protests there against the WTO and has remained heavily influenced by the radical libertarian ideas current in the global justice movement. Today, it has expanded to be a global network of open publishing news sites, with 150 collectives of varying size in over 70 countries. “Open publishing” means that all of the users of the site produce the news collectively, rather than it being a job of a small group. The members of each collective are responsible for enforcing basic editorial guidelines and choosing which articles to highlight as ‘features’. The network of collectives agree to a basic set of goals and principles as part of the process of joining. These network wide agreements amount to a statement of basic anarchist organisational principles - emphasising democracy, accountability, openness and non-hierarchical structures. However, beyond the basic agreement of principles, the collectives are autonomous. This creates a great diversity within the network, which is particularly obvious when examining the editorial policies of the various different Internet sites. Some sites, predominantly in the US, practice a policy of free speech, where all contributions are automatically distributed, irrespective of their political point of view, which normally has the unfortunate consequence of a large amount of the content being made up of deliberate disruption and abuse. Other sites apply much tighter guidelines, even going as far as banning hierarchically organised groups from distributing information through the site, or only allowing participation by registered users. Most sit somewhere in between, removing disruptive content and personalised abuse, but allowing input from all political points of view as long as they do not contain hate-speech such as blatant racism, sexism or homophobia.

Although communities like Indymedia do eventually aim to challenge the

mainstream media as the dominant way in which people inform themselves about the world, it is obvious that we are a long way from there. However, given their apparently utopian principles, their networks have flourished and grown. Although there are huge differences in the quality of the information produced on Indymedia sites, some of them have managed to become important sources of news in certain fields. For example, although the audience of Indymedia Ireland is undoubtedly mostly confined to people with left wing sympathies and it has in no way managed to become a real alternative to the corporate media for most subjects, with 50-100,000 hits on an average day, its reach dwarfs that of other radical publications. When radical political movements are particularly active in the real world, during campaigns, protests and disputes, the local Indymedia sites become invaluable sources of news that easily rivals the coverage of the corporate media. For example, in Ireland, Indymedia provided the best source of information about the anti-war movement, the recent battle against the bin tax and the mayday anti-capitalist mobilisation and during all of these periods, the readership increased enormously, peaking at 900,000 hits on Mayday 2004. Similarly, the New York city Indymedia site provided unparalleled up-to-the-minute coverage of the protests there during the 2004 Republican party convention to appoint George Bush as their candidate for the presidency.

However, while it is clear that communities like Indymedia are extremely useful in distributing radical information to large audiences and the Internet continues to be an extremely powerful communication tool, it is important to remember that the vast majority of the world's population have either severely limited access to the internet or none at all. For the foreseeable future we must resign ourselves to the fact that only a small minority of the population, even in the richer parts of the world, will have sufficient access to the Internet to make it a viable source of news, no matter how high the quality of the material that we produce. If we want to change the world, we need to win over large numbers of people who will never have access to the Internet. So it remains of paramount importance to produce and distribute information in traditional formats. The Internet gives radical left wing movements

access to a huge range of ideas and information. The process of distributing this information back into the real world through traditional media is a crucial part of the cycle. Newspapers, radio shows, leaflets, magazines and so on will be with us for a long time yet. Many Indymedia collectives and similar Internet projects are already addressing this problem and are making great efforts to transfer the information from the internet onto the streets, through printable pdf news-sheets, screenings of downloaded video productions, running radio shows and stations and hosting workshops, but the distribution of information from the Internet back in to the real world will remain the bottleneck for the a long time to come.



The Sun manages to win the competition for most outlandish smear during the media hype before Mayday 2004 in Dublin

Part Three

When anarchists swim in the mainstream

Having stressed the paramount and primary importance of building an alternative media that is open, democratic and transparent, it is important that we recognise our limitations at the current time. An article that is published on Indymedia or in *Workers Solidarity* might be read by a few thousand people at best. An article that appears in the *Irish Independent* might be read by a few hundred thousand. A story that appears on national television news might be seen by a million.

Building up audiences for our media is a very important task, but it is one

that will not happen overnight. The model by which our media is produced - participatory, democratic and open to radical opinions - represents a paradigm shift from the passive consumption that is usual with mainstream news. People are used to reading news that is written to appear as if it is written by an authoritative, objective and well-informed writer, with careful balance between the various opinions represented. In general, since they lack access to alternative points of view and are not aware of the forces that shape the process of news production, most people will tend to accept that these articles are genuinely objective and balanced. When they encounter alternative publications, they will tend to see them as biased and 'unprofessional' and will

not trust the information that they carry. Therefore, even if we can succeed in making people aware of our alternatives, only a minority will be won over at first. Therefore, we have to reconcile ourselves with the fact that the vast majority of people are going to continue to get their news about the world from the mainstream media. This is something that we simply have to accept for the moment. We wish it was otherwise, we work towards changing it, but it exists and we can not forget that.

We also cannot forget that as anarchists we are attempting to change society. We are not interested in creating our own little niche cut off from the mainstream where we can live outside of the confines of capitalism. Nobody is truly free as long as one person is enslaved and even though it is sometimes possible for small groups of radicals to create their own cultures cut off from mainstream society, when you

consider that this space only exists in the West due to the extreme exploitation of the poorer parts of the world, it is quite clear that for us to withdraw into our activist bubbles would be a clear denial of anarchist principles. We have a responsibility to try to convince as many people as possible of our ideas and this means that we have to do whatever is possible to reach those people. Every time an anarchist is quoted in a mainstream media outlet, no matter how atrocious the article, large numbers of people probably learn for the first time that anarchists exist. And if we can attract any honest coverage at all, we will probably reach more people in a single blow than we would with years of our own publications. Therefore, we simply can't ignore the mainstream media and

concentrate on our alternatives, rather we should look for intelligent ways in which we can attempt to influence the coverage that we receive.

When I say 'influence', I do not mean that I think that anarchists will ever receive anything other than shamefully dishonest and hostile coverage from the media as a whole. However, Rupert Murdoch has yet to emulate Stalin's control of information. There are opportunities that we can exploit. Although almost all professional journalists do labour under the same structural conditions and within the same corporate framework, there are big differences in their ethical and professional standards. There are some journalists who will not set out to deliberately distort what we say and will make some attempt to portray an accurate representation of our goals and aims. There are even some rare ones who have somehow retained their ability to comprehend or even sympathise with our ideas despite the mind-numbing and narrowing experience of working in corporate media.

Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that the media is divided up into several sectors and there are significant differences between them. Local media and upmarket newspapers can't get away with the same indifference to fact that the tabloids enjoy. This is not to say, however, that 'serious' broadsheet newspapers are much more likely to paint an accurate picture of anarchists than tabloids are, or that state broadcasters are any more likely to sympathise with us than Rupert Murdoch's news channels are (although news is far from an accurate description of their content). However, the different sectors of the media can sometimes be played off against each other. The broadsheets and state broadcasters like to engender a sense of superiority in their audiences. When the tabloids whip up scare campaigns, spaces can open in the more respectable media for us. Suddenly, a realistic portrayal of anarchists can become a story, with an angle that focuses on the irresponsibility of the tabloids.

In some cases sympathetic interviews, that would be unthinkable in most circumstances, can get by editors in an atmosphere of tabloid hype. In 2004 anarchists in Dublin, Boston and New York received positive exposure in parts of the mass media during the hype surrounding major protests. In all three cases the positive coverage was dwarfed by the negative. We had "anarchists planning to gas 10,000 Dubliners" on the front page of the Irish Sun. But the outlandish scare stories were generally produced by



Aileen O'Carroll, DGN spokesperson, became the target of personal smears in *Ireland on Sunday* after appearing on television and declaring herself an anarchist

the police and printed by "crime correspondents" dependant upon them. There is nothing that anarchists could have done to avoid these. However, the audience for the positive coverage that anarchists managed to achieve probably rivalled that which they could reach through several years of distributing their own publications. By engaging with the media in a careful, planned and intelligent way, they at least managed to turn the slanders to some good.

Anarchist Pitfalls

But even if we do try to influence how the media portrays us, there are major pitfalls for anarchists who decide to talk to the media and unless the groups and individuals involved are well prepared, it can turn out to be more damaging than helpful. The media are used to dealing with traditional hierarchical organisations, whose spokespeople are also normally leaders of their organisation. The media tends to identify this spokesperson with the organisation and focus as much on their personality as their politics. For most hierarchical political organisations this is not problematic, as they both want and need to build up the personal profile of the leader. They also have the advantage of being able to produce statements and responses at short notice as they rarely have to seek a mandate from their organisa-

tions to do so. If anarchists attempt to engage with the mainstream media on its own terms, we will find that the inherent hierarchical model that is assumed will start to rub off on us and we will emerge from the experience damaged internally, even if we do manage to put across a good public face.

Individual anarchists often have very personal problems with the media. As soon as any named individual is publicly associated with "anarchism" in the media, they become a target for character assassination by the gutter press. These types of attack can be vicious and can be very upsetting for whoever has put themselves forward. They can also lead to serious problems with parents or relatives and employers. It is not unknown for people to lose their jobs and seriously jeopardise any chances of future employment as a result of such attacks.

Taking part in the media spectacle that surrounds summit protests can have corrosive effects on the politics of the group. Even when people have a strong commitment to acting as a delegate of the group and not becoming a leader, they can become entranced by being part of the spectacle. Media exposure affects the ego. A desire for publicity and celebrity is a very common feature of our culture and people

can become addicted to it. It is a very flattering experience to have hundreds of thousands of people seeing your picture or reading your opinions in the media. The lure of the media spectacle is dangerous for groups as well as for individuals. A key aim of anarchist activity is to break down the division between the actors and the spectators in society. Getting a few positive stories about anarchism among the celebrity features, while useful, is far less important than the task of building alternatives.

We need to develop structures that allow us to engage with the mainstream media on our own terms. The question of how we can do this was one that was explored in depth by activists in DGN, during the run-up to the Mayday 2004 protests in Dublin. Despite the fact that we were caught unprepared by the biggest media smear campaign that we have ever experienced, we managed to develop a model for dealing with it which eventually proved crucial to the protest's success. See the box beside for an outline, or the online version of this article for full details.

Non Engagement

Several groups within the anarchist and broader anti-capitalist movement have adopted a position of eschewing all contact with the mainstream media, refusing interviews, avoiding photographers and even on occasion physically repelling over-inquisitive reporters. In the UK the Wombles and other anarchists have adopted this policy, after a long history of the media inventing plots as evidence of their utterly evil and sinister nature and mounting witch-hunts against individuals. A broad consensus emerged in much of the direct action movement in London that there was little point in talking to the media as it made little difference to their coverage - they would stitch you up regardless.

However, there is a serious problem to this approach. In general, journalists are only interested in talking to anarchists when anarchists are doing something that is destined to attract media coverage. This means that they are going to write about you whether you talk to them or not. Refusing to talk to them whatsoever means that they pretty much have carte blanche to make up whatever they like. They don't even have to take the trouble of picking a two-word quote out of your half-hour interview to fit in with whatever fantasy they have constructed to sell papers. In general, it is probably true that including comments from real and named people rarely makes an article worse from our point of view

Playing the Media Game

'If you sup with the devil use a long spoon'

The Dublin Grassroots Network put a number of structures in place to avoid some of the pitfalls of dealing with the media.

Perhaps the two biggest problems in dealing with the media are firstly that the media can, through the questions they ask and the pressures they bring, begin to set the political agenda of the group. Secondly servicing the media machine can take up all a group's time and energy (to the detriment of the other activity).

One way Grassroots dealt with this problem was to set up a media working group comprising both spokespeople and those who helped draft statements. This was a sub-group of the larger organisation, so the number of people working on media issues was limited. In addition it meant that policy decisions were made by the larger group of all Grassroots activists, with less concern for how the media would interpret those decisions.

Media spokespeople were elected and could be recalled if they had failed to represent Dublin Grassroots Network in accordance with the network's wishes.

Talking to the media places a number of other pressures on the individual. On the one hand the media can flatter the ego, on the other they can ridicule and humiliate. It is not good for one's mental health to be a media spokesperson. In order to share the burden therefore for each event a number of spokespeople are usually nominated (usually two men and two women).

The person most affected by the media's political pressure, is not surprisingly, the spokesperson. It is they who are pressurised to make commitments and to answer questions that are often unanswerable. Furthermore the media often describes spokespeople as 'leaders of the movement' and influenced by the attention, it is all too easy for spokespeople to allow themselves to be put in this role. This is obviously a problem for a non-hierarchical organisation.

In order to minimise these effects, in the Dublin Grassroots Network, the spokespeople are rotated. After each event, the spokespeople resigned, handing over the burden to a new team.

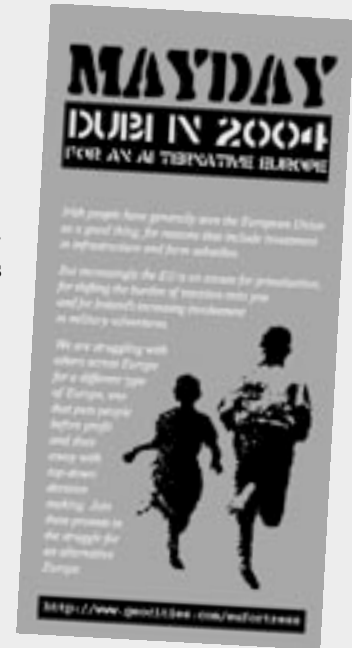
Rotating spokespeople has the additional advantage of increasing skills levels and thus the confidence of the group.

To ensure that the spokespersons represented Grassroots' opinion (rather than just themselves) spokespersons were instructed that their statements had to follow certain guidelines. During the Mayday protests in Dublin those guidelines were:

1. We do not criticize other groups
2. We speak only on behalf of the Dublin Grassroots Network i.e. we don't give our own personal opinions.
3. We use DGN leaflets as a guideline to the Grassroots' position. If we are asked about anything outside the guidelines, we say 'no comment'.

The media often mis-report and this can cause conflict if the group feels that errors arise from things the spokespeople haven't actually said. In order to minimise this, a section of each meeting was open for all to discuss the work of the media group and the media group's meetings were open to all who wanted to attend.

by Aileen O'Carroll



and it often makes it better. For one thing, as soon as they include quotes from a real person they have to start worrying about libel laws. If they are just writing about anarchists in general, they have no such worries. Despite their policy of non-engagement, the fact that they are named after a fluffy toy and the fact that their worst atrocity has been pushing a policeman, the media has still made the Wombles sound like a gang of crazed terrorists.

Another factor is that the act of refusing to talk to journalists is very commonly used as corroborating evidence of the evil and sinister nature of anarchists ('shadowy' is a favourite adjective). Furthermore, given the open and public nature of many anarchist organisations and events, it is in practice impossible to ensure that there are no journalists present. This especially holds true for public protests and demonstrations but also extends to public meetings. In this context, attempts to filter out journalists will only succeed in rooting out the more honest ones who are willing to admit their occupation and are much more likely to write less offensive stuff, while the tabloid journalists who are 'infiltrating' the public meeting will simply adopt some guise and remain.

I should also add that attempting to physically attack or intimidate journalists is counter-productive and self-indulgent. It obviously ensures that they have good material with which to attack you and the rest of the anarchist movement. It has exactly zero effect on the dominance of the mainstream media, which the attacks are presumably aimed against. Journalists, particularly photographers, do often act in an extremely provocative way, pushing cameras in protestors' faces and so on. In this case it is quite likely that they are attempting to provoke a response. As an anarchist you are part of a collective movement and you have a responsibility to your comrades to learn enough self-discipline not to fall headfirst into this simple trap like an idiot.

Another important disadvantage of the strategy of not engaging with the media is that there is always somebody there who will happily talk on your behalf or about you and normally misrepresent your ideas to suit their own agenda. This can be a liberal protest group who will happily weigh in to the scare campaign in order to gain a bit of publicity for themselves, or more commonly one of the poisonous varieties of Leninists who will use the opportunity to promote one of their own cult-recruitment sessions, advertised as a rival protest.



Report of a scuffle between a cameraman and a protestor. Mayday 2004. Dublin

We should remember that the reason that they want to talk to us (and slander us) is because we are news. There is a growing ideological vacuum at the heart of capitalism. In its arrogance, Western capitalism has dispensed with the trouble of convincing its subjects to internalise the ideologies of the ruling classes. Abstentionism in elections is rife and pervasive. Trust in our leaders and public figures is practically non-existent. Authoritarian socialism has collapsed into a tiny shadow of its former self and either remains rigidly fixed into an antiquated theoretical framework, frantically spinning in ever decreasing circles, or has completely capitulated and signed up to the doctrines of the global elite. It is for this reason that we increasingly find ourselves, often unwillingly, cast under the media spotlight. Despite its minuscule size and negligible influence, the anarchist movement is increasingly the only source of real ideological opposition to the seemingly inexorable march of this corporate world order. Ours is an opposition that goes to the heart of the problem and rejects the system in its entirety. Most importantly, our opposition has steel. We do not shy away from confrontation with the state or with corporate power. We do not respect their stinking laws. We are a flag of principled resistance to their entire world-order and this is why they come looking for us in order to vilify us. And it is because of the depth of our opposition that we should always seek to prevent the various fools looking for a job in a city-council or parliament chamber from speaking on our behalf. We should always seek to speak for ourselves and let our difference and resistance be known.

Conclusion

The various filters of the propaganda model of mainstream media do effectively ensure that the media will be overtly hostile to anarchists and will publish material that is as damaging as possible to us. However, there is an important limit on how far they can go in their lies and distortions. Basically, they depend on the fact that most people believe most of the things

that they write. Although there is a widespread understanding that much news is sensationalised and closer to entertainment than information, especially in the tabloids, very few people have any idea of the process by which news is created and are ignorant of the powerful forces that consciously distort information in pursuit of their own agendas and will tend to generally believe news reports unless they have a good reason not to. Once the illusion of the credibility of the mainstream media is shattered, it is difficult to reforge. People who become aware of the depth of the manipulations and distortions can be difficult to win back, so the media, particularly those sections that have greater pretensions about their own worth, are cautious about publishing information that is seen as clearly false by a large number of people.

The most effective thing that we can do in the long term to limit the lies that the mainstream media tells about us is to create our own alternatives and give people access to information that we produce. In addition to creating our own media, by being active as anarchists in our communities, workplaces and campaigns, blatant media lies about our movement will prove more costly to the corporate media and will tend to push people towards us. However, in the current situation, with our small size and tiny circulation of our publications, these factors are only really significant in very localised campaigns or struggles on relatively marginal issues. When the might of the state and corporate sector decide to attack us - as is becoming par for the course in the run up to large protests that challenge the fundamental concepts of our capitalist world order - our own media and local connections only reach a negligible proportion of the audience. In these cases, if we refuse to challenge the slanders in the mainstream media, the vast majority of people will have absolutely no reason not to believe the rubbish that they are being fed. On the other hand, even by showing a willingness to argue our case in the mainstream, we place limits on their lies. If the media is full of reports about violent hooligan terrorist anarchists, but the anarchists who appear in the media seem to be sane, rational, well-informed and articulate, the chances of the public smelling something fishy are increased many times. ♦

A longer version of this article, including references and a case study of the DGN Mayday media campaign is available online at: www.struggle.ws/rbr

Book Review

No Global

The People of Ireland Versus the multinationals

By Robert Allen, Pluto Press 2004, £14.99/€21.45



Reviewed by Kevin Doyle

No Global is based on Robert Allen and Tara Jones's *Guests Of The Nation* (1990). Essentially it is an account of the various environmental clashes that have taken place in Ireland since the mid-70s when the Irish Government's policy of attracting multinational corporation into Ireland - in particular in the chemicals and pharmaceuticals sector - moved into full swing.

In terms of being a record of these many struggles, *No Global* is a very useful compendium with a lot of first hand information as well as useful analysis. The author was involved in some of the events he addresses and this adds a particular validity to the account.

No Global is a departure from *Guests Of The Nation* in terms of its scope. It covers new ground and updates the reader on what has happened since 1990. But Allen also attempts to re-position the context of the various struggles that have taken place in Ireland in the past 30 years within the much more recent 'anti-globalisation' movement. Although this may be useful in seeing the conflict within the larger picture of modern capitalism it never seriously adds to the analysis.

Environment versus jobs is a theme running through the book and anyone who knows anything about recent Irish history will not be surprised as to why this is so. The Irish State's policy of attracting foreign multinationals into the country - with lucrative tax breaks and set-up grants - had much to do with the ongoing crisis of employment-creation and emigration. Different class interests were at play. For Irish workers unemployment and emigration had been an ongoing disaster. For the Irish bourgeoisie there was the simple economic need to become a player in the developing international capitalist economy. Also, unemployment and emigration were huge and probably unsustainable long-term burdens on the State. Attracting foreign multinational was vital.

The arrival of a series of major multinationals in the 70s (Pfizer was one of the first) galvanised the newly emerging environmental movement. *No Global* documents a series of hard-fought victories at Raybestos Manhattan, Merck Shape Dohme and Merrell Dow (to name just a few). Although a lot of detail is given - in some cases too much,

it must said - it nevertheless becomes clear what an important role the environmental movement has played in forcing the Irish State to tighten up on environmental licensing and effluent discharge laws - which were even laxer than they are.

But *No Global* also indicates, to me at least, that overall the Irish State was able to outmanoeuvre the environmental movement and push ahead with its plans. The reasons for this are interesting and in the long term very useful to look at. Also, they are undoubtedly the subject for much debate. Clearly, in terms of the overall confrontation between the State and the environmental movement, the climate of emigration and unemployment was key. But equally relevant (and ultimately debilitating) was the class nature of the environmental movement. Although often composed of people from many classes it was fundamentally dominated by those with little or no appreciation for working-class difficulties. Very often the workers in the noxious industry area were ignored or abandoned to 'the other side' - to bring them on board the environmental movement was simply seen as impossible. But this failure seriously weakened a number of the protest struggles as well as leaving a longer term legacy that continues to hamper the oppositional movement and its ability to take on the Irish State.

No Global does well to draw attention to the somewhat spontaneous and local nature of many of the struggles that it documents. Often communities had little time and few resources when facing the combined might of the Irish State, the multinationals and the various local Chambers of Commerce (who were, needless to say, pro-multinational). Struggles, moreover, emerged piecemeal and many vital decisions had to be taken on the move. In many respects it is a great credit to the participants that what was achieved was done so at all.

But *No Global* is less clear and less persuasive when it comes to dissecting the political ideas within the environmental movement and the problems these caused. References are made to activists 'living in green bubbles immune from the harsh social realities of modern Irish life'. This was partly about class politics but it was also about what

differing sections of the environmental movement wanted. In this sense the difficult matter of 'the alternative' is often side-stepped or not addressed at all. At one point reference is made to alternative State policy that might favour small industry and craft based employment (rather than multinationals) - but what is one to really make of this? Resonances of De Valera and dancing at the crossroads?

Although the overall thrust of *No Global* seems to underline the schism between jobs and environment, there are important exceptions to this that are examined and described. For example at Penn Chemical plant in Cork (now Smith Kline Beecham) the struggle between the workers and the management eventually spilled over into a major struggle within Cork Number 2 Branch of the SIPTU trade union. But this led on to the embattled Penn workers finally whistleblowing on some of the environmental practices within the plant. (Interesting to note in passing that the workers saw fit to approach the media first and not the very active environmental movement in Cork harbour.)

A second and more important example of the link between workers' interests and the environmental struggle was at the Raybestos Manhattan plant near Ovens outside Cork in the late 70s/early 80s. This early (and successful!) struggle saw the workers out on strike on a number of occasions in pursuit of their 'environmental' health. Important in this struggle was the activities of the much (at the time) maligned Noxious Industry Action Group (NIAG) which consciously sought to link the community's opposition efforts to the interests of the plant's workforce, particularly around health risk at the plant. Pilloried by the 'official' trade union movement, NIAG's activities paid off handsomely in a series of work stoppages that eventually forced Raybestos Manhattan out of Ireland (although to where, one wonders). The Raybestos Manhattan dispute is clearly important as an example of what is possible when an anti-capitalist rather than anti-industry perspective informs the environmental struggle. On a minor point I can't agree with the author that NIAG was anarchist in nature. It had a socialist focus, but the dominant ideas were still authoritarian Marxist.

As is pointed out in the introduction to *No Global*, the war over the environment is far from over. Capitalist production and the realities of profit making will ensure this. Here in Ireland the next stage of the struggle will focus on the issue of incinerators. In this sense *No Global* appears at a vital time. Anyone who wants to see how the bigger picture has unfolded to date can read in detail about the numerous struggles. The author is to be congratulated for such an achievement. This book is well worth a read. ♦

The ideas of

James Connolly

the single most important figure in the history of the Irish left

James Connolly is probably the single most important figure in the history of the Irish left. He was an organiser in the IWW in the USA but in Ireland is best known for his role in building the syndicalist phase of Irish union movement and for involving the armed defence body of that union, the Irish Citizens' Army in the 1916 nationalist insurrection. This left a legacy claimed at one time or another not only by all the Irish left parties but also by the nationalists of Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein.

by Oisín Mac Giolla Móir

Connolly is one of those historical figures who can seem to have been both everything and nothing. People claim him for a myriad of political ideologies, many of which are irreconcilably opposed to one another. At times it can seem like he was little more than a confused revolutionary who was never sure what he was for or what he was against. Connolly held diverse opinions, (many of which I, unfortunately, will not have the space to go into here). At the same time his analysis is unique in that it possessed remarkable depth and clarity. Because of this, quotes can be found in his work to enable almost anyone to claim him as an advocate of almost any political cause. In this article I will attempt to look at the long neglected anarchistic aspects of Connolly's thought and ask the question was Connolly a libertarian?

Connolly was, of course, not an anarchist. He advocated parliamentary action, at times advocated a form of State Socialism and considered himself a nationalist. These positions are contradictory to anarchist thought.

Syndicalist

First and foremost James Connolly was a Socialist. And when asked to elaborate on his Socialist theory, he would always advocate Revolutionary Syndicalism. Readers of James Connolly may react by saying that almost nowhere in Connolly's work can any mention of Syndicalism be found. This is simply

because Connolly preferred to use the term 'Industrial Unionism' to Syndicalism.

Leninists are very fond of claiming that Connolly was only a syndicalist in his innocent youth and by the time of the Easter rising (his role in which secured his place in history)



he had abandoned syndicalism. C. Desmond Greaves, the author of the definitive biography of James Connolly *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, wrote that by the beginning of 1916 'no more than a faint echo of syndicalism remained'¹. This is quite strange seeing as that in Connolly's last major work the pamphlet *The Reconquest of Ireland*, published on the 14th of December 1915, Connolly fervently advocates Syndicalism or as he calls it 'Industrial Unionism'. Connolly writes:

The principle of complete unity upon

the Industrial plane must be unceasingly sought after; the Industrial union embracing all workers in each industry must replace the multiplicity of unions which now hamper and restrict our operations, multiply our expenses and divide our forces in face of the mutual enemy. With the Industrial Union as our principle of action, branches can be formed to give expression to the need for effective supervision of the affairs of the workshop, shipyard, dock or railway; each branch to consist of the men and women now associated in Labour upon the same technical basis as our craft unions of today.

Add to this the concept of One Big Union embracing all, and you have not only the outline of the most effective form of combination for industrial warfare to-day, but also for Social Administration of the Co-operative Commonwealth of the future.

A system of society in which the workshops, factories, docks, railways, shipyards, &c., shall be owned by the nation, but administered by the Industrial Unions of the respective industries, organised as above, seems best calculated to secure the highest form of industrial efficiency, combined with the greatest amount of individual freedom from state despotism. Such a system would, we believe, realise for Ireland the most radiant hopes of all her heroes and martyrs.

This is syndicalism pure and simple, and no amount of historical acrobatics can change the fact that Connolly was a life long Socialist and a life long Syndicalist².

Nationalist

As I mentioned earlier Connolly called himself a nationalist. This has enabled generations of Irish nationalists from every side of the political spectrum to lay claim to Connolly's legacy.

Because nationalism is the dominant ideology of capitalism and has profoundly affected every one of us who lives under capitalism, thinking about it objectively is quite a chal-



lenge.

Nationalism is the ideological justification of the nation-state. It imagines that capitalists and the working class share a common political interest; it imagines that the oppressed and their oppressors, the exploited and their exploiters share a common political interest just because they share the same nationality! It advocates the strengthening/creation of a nation-state to protect this common interest. It seems strange that Connolly, as a socialist, would identify himself with this ideology.

I believe Connolly's mistake was that he never made the distinction between national liberation and

nationalism. Libertarian socialists are, in all circumstances, opposed to oppression. Libertarian socialists, therefore, defend all liberation movements, whatever their form. As such, libertarian socialists should (although they often don't) defend national liberation movements. Where people are being oppressed due to their nationality, all socialists and all progressive people in the world should defend their right to fight this oppression. But does not mean we see them as a solution. Although racial liberation movements are rarely racist and sexual liberation movements are rarely sexist, unfortunately, most national liberation movements are nationalist, and as they campaign

against oppression of one kind they advocate that of another, namely the oppression of the nation-state. Libertarian socialists must be at all times conscious of this complexity, Connolly unfortunately wasn't.

Connolly was a nationalist of sorts, but he never believed a national revolution could act as a substitute for a social revolution. He harshly ridiculed those that did in his pamphlet *Socialism Made Easy* when he wrote:

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the

sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic.

Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the Poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the Poorhouse door to the tune of St. Patrick's Day.

Oh, it will be nice to live in those days...

Now, my friend, I also am Irish, but I'm a bit more logical. The capitalist, I say, is a parasite on industry...

The working class is the victim of this parasite - this human leech, and it is the duty and interest of the working class to use every means in its power to oust this parasite class from the position which enables it to thus prey upon the vitals of Labour.

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

Clearly Connolly did not believe in ignoring class division in the name of nationalism, nor did he think he needed to, due to his unique theory of what a nation is. He wrote a mere sixteen days before the Easter rising:

We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute press-man - the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.

The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that

an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil. Labour seeks to make the free Irish nation the guardian of the interests of the people of Ireland, and to secure that end would vest in that free Irish nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual, with the end in view that the individual may be enriched by the nation, and not by the spoiling of his fellows.

As can be seen, Connolly believed that the true Irish nation is the Irish people; he once said, "Ireland without her people is nothing to me."⁴ He believed the Irish nation did not include capitalists. It is clear that for Connolly the Irish nation and the Irish working class (in the broadest sense of the term) were synonymous. However, by this logic George W. Bush is not an American and the Queen of England is not English. But that is not the only inconsistency in Connolly's nationalism.

First of all, when Connolly says 'Ireland for the Irish', what does he mean?

'We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute press-man - the hired liars of the enemy.'

Does he mean Ireland for those that live in Ireland? Surely not, many people who live in Ireland aren't Irish. There are many people living in Ireland that would identify themselves as American or British or Canadian or Chilean or Chinese etc. So, unless Connolly thought that these people are Irish but they just don't know it, this is not the correct interpretation of his slogan.

Does he mean Ireland for those that identify themselves as Irish? I'm confident he doesn't. I'm sure Connolly would find the idea of workers not being given equal rights because of their national identity detestable. It seems to me that Connolly hasn't fully thought out what he is saying.

Some might say that this is an unfair criticism. They might argue that it is

only in recent times that a lot of people living in Ireland aren't Irish, a phenomenon Connolly had no experience of. And they'd have a point but not a very strong one.

Connolly was a migrant. He grew up an Irish man in Scotland and spent 8 years in America, living in Ireland for only 12 years. Connolly should have appreciated that the nation-state cannot be the form of workers self-emancipation.

However, when a nation is being politically oppressed that nation is politicised and a national liberation movement emerges. Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century was a nation in the grip of a national liberation movement.

On the one hand Connolly believed that in the Ireland of his day you had British imperialist capitalism and on the other hand you had the Irish fighting against imperialism and for a new way of living. Connolly believed that that new way of living must be socialist, and he believed that all the forces fighting capitalism and imperialism in Ireland should unite and struggle together.

In *Labour in Irish History*, his greatest work, he writes that the working class are 'the inheritors of the Irish ideals of the past - the repository of the hopes of the future'⁵. Socialism being the hope of the future.

Unity

Connolly was a great advocate of left unity. He believed that to create Socialism all the people struggling for a new social system should work together and offer one another support and solidarity. Even if such a union diluted the political message of Revolutionary Syndicalists like himself, he believed that

'the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation; that, indeed, the most theoretically perfect organisation may, because of its very perfection and vastness, be of the greatest possible danger to the revolutionary movement if it tends, or is used, to repress and curb the fighting spirit of comrade-

ship in the rank and file.’⁶

Connolly believed that the struggle for socialism, for the co-operative commonwealth, for a workers’ republic, for the re-conquest of Ireland; for the new social system, should be conducted on every front. He saw the revolutionary potential in all autonomous working class organisation. He gave his full support to the co-operative movement and argued that it was part of the same struggle as syndicalism. He even went as far as supporting the Irish language movement. Despite rather cynically observing that ‘you can’t teach a starving man Gaelic’⁷, Connolly appreciated the fact that the Irish language movement was a movement ‘of defiant self-reliance and confident trust in a people’s own power of self-emancipation’⁸.

Of course Connolly’s main concern was with the most rapidly growing section of the Irish population, the industrial working class. He argued that the industrial working class (wage-earners) should unite in Industrial Unions. He said:

“The enrolment of the workers in unions patterned closely after the structure of modern industries, and following the organic lines of industrial development, is par excellence the swiftest, safest, and most peaceful form of constructive work the Socialist can engage in. It prepares within the framework of capitalist society the working forms of the Socialist Republic, and thus, while increasing the resisting power of the worker against present encroachments of the capitalist class, it familiarizes him with the idea that the union he is helping to build up is destined to supplant that class in the control of the industry in which he is employed. The power of this idea to transform the dry detail work of trade union organisation into the constructive work of revolutionary Socialism...It invests the sordid details of the daily incidents of the class struggle with a new and beautiful meaning.”⁹

He argued strongly against craft unionism, that is when workers are divided into unions by craft despite working in the same industry, and struggling against the same bosses. He points out that if only one section of the workers in a workplace go on strike the strike will be ineffectual, and argues that all workers in a workplace need to be in the same

union. He also points out how craft unionism creates and encourages craft snobbery. Examples of craft snobbery would be when, office workers sneer down at office cleaners, or middle managers doing the same to those below them, or manual workers dismiss the grievances of intellectual workers. Connolly

‘The fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry’

argues that all crafts should be united, and workers should be organised industry by industry in One Big Union.

As well as believing in a united social struggle Connolly believed in the need for a united Socialist force with in that struggle. He almost always treated the socialist movement as if it was a homogeneous whole, which it of course is not. After a century of ‘socialists’ such as Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Trotsky and Lenin on the one hand and the likes of Blair and Schroeder on the other, we know better than to feign unity where there is none.

Parliament

Connolly never lived to see the poverty of ‘social-democracy’ nor did he live to see the barbarity of Leninism. He never saw how quickly people abandon their principles once placed in a position of power. In part because of this, although a Syndicalist, he was never an Anarcho-Syndicalist.

In 1908 there was a split in the IWW (the ‘Industrial Workers of the World’, a mainly American organisation to which Connolly devoted much time and energy). The split was essentially between the Marxist

Daniel De Leon and his followers and the Anarcho-Syndicalists. It is well worth noting that Connolly sided with the Anarcho-Syndicalists and against the Marxist Daniel De Leon.

De Leon was a major influence on Connolly, he considered himself a De Leonist for many years. However, while in America, Connolly was repulsed by the sectarianism and dogmatism of De Leon. De Leon argued that to achieve socialism the working class should elect a socialist party backed by a strong Industrial Union into parliament so as to create a socialist government, he believed that by doing this the working class could control the State and usher in Socialism. He believed that the working class should elect his ‘Socialist Labor Party’, a party that he believed was the only true socialist organisation in America. He believed that socialism could be achieved through the ballot box, provided the ballot was backed by a strong industrial union. He wrote: “The might of the revolutionary ballot consists in the thorough industrial organisation of the productive workers organised in such a way that when that ballot is cast the capitalist class may know that behind it is the might to enforce it.”¹⁰

To Connolly this seemed bizarre, why create industrial unions capable of enforcing a revolution and capable of being the organisational loci of a socialist society and then not use them? Why create a revolutionary movement capable of revolution and then expect it to wait for ‘the revolutionary ballot’? Connolly thought this was ridiculous. He believed that:

“The fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry, and the gauge of the progress of that battle is not to be found in the number of votes making a cross beneath the symbol of a political party, but in the number of these workers who enrol themselves in an industrial organisation with the definite purpose of making themselves masters of the industrial equipment of society in general.

That battle will have its political echo, that industrial organisation will have its political expression. If we accept the defi-

...nition of working-class political action as that which brings the workers as a class into direct conflict with the possessing class AS A CLASS, and keeps them there, then we must realize that NOTHING CAN DO THAT SO READILY AS ACTION AT THE BALLOT-BOX. Such action strips the working-class movement of all traces of such sectionalism as may, and indeed must, cling to strikes and lock-outs, and emphasizes the class character of the Labour Movement. IT IS THEREFORE ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE FOR THE EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE WORKING CLASS ALONG CORRECT LINES THAT ACTION AT THE BALLOT-BOX SHOULD ACCOMPANY ACTION IN THE WORKSHOP.”¹¹

As you can see Connolly was no anarchist but instead advocated a kind of reversed De Leonism. De Leon argued that the party must usher in Socialism, and the role of the Industrial Union was to support the party. Whereas Connolly argued that the Industrial Union must usher in socialism, and the role of the party was to support the union. This is an important distinction.

De Leon was arguing for a revolution that involves seizing control of the State, a revolution lead by politicians. Connolly was arguing for a revolution that gives immediate power to new form of social organisation, a revolution lead by the workers themselves. De Leon was arguing for a political revolution that could lead to a social revolution. Connolly was arguing for a social revolution straight out.

Connolly dismissed the idea that socialism could be ushered in by seizing State control. He didn't think that the political institutions of today could be used to achieve socialism. He wrote:

“The political institutions of today are simply the coercive forces of capitalist society they have grown up out of, and are based upon, territorial divisions of power in the hands of the ruling class in past ages, and were carried over into capitalist society to suit the needs of the capitalist class when that class overthrew the dominion of its predecessors.

The delegation of the function of govern-

ment into the hands of representatives elected from certain districts, States or territories, represents no real natural division suited to the requirements of modern society, but is a survival from a time when territorial influences were more potent in the world than industrial influences, and for that reason is totally unsuited to the needs of the new social order, which must be based upon industry...

Social democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to begin in the workshop, and proceed logically

“As we have shown, the political State of capitalism has no place under Socialism; therefore, measures which aim to place industries in the hands of, or under the control of, such a political State are in no sense steps towards that ideal”

and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organisation until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction. In other words, social democracy must proceed from the bottom upward, whereas capitalist political society is organised from above downward...”

“Under Socialism, States, territories, or provinces will exist only as geographical expressions, and have no existence as sources of governmental power, though they may be seats of administrative bodies...”

*“As we have shown, the political State of capitalism has no place under Socialism; therefore, measures which aim to place industries in the hands of, or under the control of, such a political State are in no sense steps towards that ideal; they are but useful measures to restrict the greed of capitalism and to familiarize the workers with the conception of common ownership.”*¹²

As can be seen Connolly was no ‘Social Democrat’,¹³ he was an avid socialist, dedicated to the achievement of socialism. Nor, as can be seen from the above quotations, was he a state socialist. However, this must be said with reservation.

Connolly did write:

*“Socialists are bound as Socialists only to the acceptance of one great principle - the ownership and control of the wealth producing power by the state.”*¹⁴

This is clearly a state socialist claim. It is, however, directly contradicted by another thing he wrote:

*“State ownership and control is not necessarily Socialism - if it were, then the Army, the Navy, the Police, the Judges, the Gaolers, the Informers, and the Hangmen, all would all be Socialist functionaries, as they are State officials - but the ownership by the State of all the land and materials for labour, combined with the co-operative control by the workers of such land and materials, would be Socialism.”*¹⁵

To explore Connolly's understanding of the State fully would extend beyond the remit of this article as it would require an in depth consideration of the differences between the Marxist

and Anarchist understanding of the State. It should suffice to say that both anarchists and Marxists agree with Connolly's claim above that the State is ‘simply the coercive forces of capitalist society...’¹⁶

It would, of course, be ridiculous for me to claim that Connolly was an anti-statist, he wasn't. I merely want to point out that Connolly's idea of the Workers' Republic was not the same as the ‘Socialist Republics’ that existed in any of the world's Leninist countries. Nor was it the same as the ‘Irish Republic’ of today.

Connolly advocated a ‘co-operative commonwealth’. A society in which all productive property is owned in common and managed by democratic co-operatives, which in turn are organised along co-operative lines, industry-by-industry, region-by-region. Connolly demanded a real ‘Social Democracy’ as opposed to the sham ‘Political Democracy’ we have today. He wanted all of society to be run and organised democratically for the benefit of all of society.

Legacy

Readers may be quick to note that Connolly's mistakes are the same as those that have plagued the Irish left ever since his death, and they would be right. His incoherent opinions concerning the national question were parroted ceaselessly until the seventies when they began to be questioned by a number of socialist groups. And his acceptance of the flawed Marxist theory of the state is only beginning to be questioned. These mistakes have resulted in disastrous policies often advocated by the revolutionary left; policies that have varied from advocating Stalinism (Communist Party) to advocating/participating in terrorism (IRSP). His mistakes have also provided a shield for the impotent 'labour must wait' policies of the reformist left in Ireland.

It is often queried why Connolly fought in 1916 when he knew that they were 'going out to be slaughtered'¹⁷ and when he knew that a national revolution could not easily be turned into a social revolution? There is a widespread anecdote that he told the socialists fighting in 1916 to hold onto their guns because after the rising they may well have to fight against those they had just fought beside. The simple answer is he thought that a national revolution needed to be a social revolution in order to succeed. Ireland couldn't be free until the working class of Ireland was free. And because of that, he felt that a national revolution

could lead to a social revolution. Quite clearly the social revolution never happened but it very nearly did.

It is worth remembering that both the influence of Connolly and the part that Labour played in the Irish National Revolution ensured that the Democratic Programme of the Irish Republic, agreed at the first sitting of the first Dáil (Irish Parliament) on January 21st 1919, read:

We declare in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland...we declare that the nation's sovereignty extends ..[to] all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, ... declare it is the duty of the Nation that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties in the service of the people. In return for willing service, we, in the name of the Republic, declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the Nation's labour...

It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek ... a standard of Social and Industrial Legislation with a view to a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour...

We declare and we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all...

If this seems radical the draft democratic programme was more so. It

included the passage:

*It shall be the purpose of the Government to encourage the organisation of the people/citizens into Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies with a view to the control and administration of the industries by the workers engaged in those industries.*¹⁸

These passages from one of the founding documents of the Irish Republic give an indication of the revolutionary intentions of many republican activists during the Irish National Revolution, a revolution that involved widespread working class militancy with Soviets being declared in Cork and Limerick and workers frequently seizing their workplaces. All this when 5 years previously the seeds of a socialist movement scarcely existed in Ireland!

This shows how close Ireland came to the Social Revolution that Connolly dreamed of and gave his life for. This revolution can't be achieved by means of a lobby, or a parliament or a coup d'etat. This revolution will only be achieved when the ordinary people of the world, us, the working class, get up off our knees and take back what is rightfully ours; namely, everything. ♦

Footnotes

Most of Connolly's works quoted in this article can be found on the internet at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/index.htm>

1. C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, (Seven Seas Publishers, 1971), p. 398.
2. Although before he went to America his syndicalism was less developed, as were his politics in general.
3. *The Irish Flag*, James Connolly: Selected Writings, (ed.) P. Berresford Ellis (Pelican Books, 1973), p.145.
4. *ibid.*, p.38
5. James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*, (New Books Publications, 1973), p.124
6. *Old Wine in New Bottles*, James Connolly: Selected Writings, (ed.) P. Berresford Ellis, p.176.
7. James Connolly: Selected Writings, (ed.) P. Berresford Ellis, p.47
- 8, *The Language Movement*, *ibid.*, p.289
9. James Connolly, *Socialism Made Easy*, (The Labour Party, 1972) pp.43-44.
10. C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, p.190
11. James Connolly, *Socialism Made Easy*, p.51
12. *ibid.*, pp.41-43

13. By Social Democrat I am referring to the politics of those party organised in or around the Socialist International. In Ireland these parties are Labour and the SDLP, in Britain; Labour, in Germany; the Social Democrats, in France; the Socialist Party etc.

14. *Labour Nationality and Religion*, James Connolly: Selected Writings, (ed.) P. Berresford Ellis, p.68.

15. *State Monopoly versus Socialism*, James Connolly, *Erin's Hope: The End and the Means and The New Evangel: Preached to Irish Toilers*, (New Books Publications, 1972), pp.27-28.

16. Where we differ, however, is that Marxists believe that to achieve a social revolution you need a political revolution that puts the working class in control of the State, making them the ruling class. Anarchists object to this saying that the transition from a class based society to a classless society must not involve the creation of a new ruling class. It is argued that to create Socialism new forms of social organisation that enable everyone in society to have an equal say must be created so as to enable the everyday running of a classless society. The aim is a social revolution to empower these organisations. Some Marxists, libertarian Marxists, believe that this is a false dichotomy, they argue by creating new socialist forms of social organisation anarchists want to give power to the working class. By giving power to the working class they make it the ruling class, this, they say, is what they mean when they refer to a Socialist State.

17. He whispered this to his William O'Brien on the day of the rising.

18. S. Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, (The Academy Press, 1980), p.322.

Workers Without Bosses

Workers' Self-Management in Argentina

The last 30 years in Latin America have seen the introduction of neo-liberal policies - structural adjustment programmes, austerity measures, a shift from the industrialisation and "internal accumulation" model to one that favours promiscuous financial capital, free trade agreements and an increasing economic dependency of the region on the USA. As usual, the people have suffered the worst part of these policies - high levels of unemployment and depression of wages and the standard of living. People's most immediate and basic needs were expendable when it came to the real priorities of local governments: the payment of the fraudulent external debt & the maintenance of high levels of profits for both the local and the foreign bosses.

by José Antonio Gutiérrez D.

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In Latin America, due to the bosses' onslaught of the 80s and 90s, we've reached a situation which is in sharp contrast with the political scenario of the 70s and early 80s. We have moved from a situation in which the working class was on the offensive, to one in which the working class and the popular movement in general is on the defensive. The 90s, in particular, have been characterised by a fragmentation of struggles and by the lack of a sense of unity in the fight of the different popular actors, and by an offensive of the ruling class. But signs that a crisis is brewing for a model that has run out steam are revealed by the different uprisings all over the continent, in Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Perú and Argentina.

All these upheavals have a common sign: they indicate, in a looming fashion, a new scenario, in which the popular movement has the possibility once more of going on the offensive. The experiences of the Argentinean people over the last three years are inscribed in that context, and show, with all of its internal contradictions, the potential and the limits of the current context of agitation in South America. And, undoubtedly, the emergence of a new popular movement expresses the strengthening of regional opposition to the economic dictates of the international financial bodies. They show a new favourable moment for the spread of revolutionary politics, signalling a new path for the deliverance of the exploited and

the oppressed throughout the region.

The "Argentinazo"



Argentina surprised the world on December 20, 2001, when a spontaneous popular uprising obliged the former president, Fernando De La Rúa, to resign. It seemed that all of a sudden the most prosperous economy of Latin America was on shaky ground. But the reality is that the symptoms of the Argentinean crisis were felt well before that, and what happened was nothing but the expression of an accumulative crisis that erupted into a "volcanic" popular anger on that day.

The popular anger was the expression of a deep economic crisis, common to all of Latin America, that sprang from the dictatorships of the 70s and their process of de-industrialization, which worsened in the 90s with the frantic introduction of neo-liberal policies by the government of Carlos Saúl Menem. By the end of the decade the crisis was indisputable: unemployment was well

over 20% and steadily growing, there was total stagnation of the productive activities of the medium and small industries, a persistent recession in the period between 1996-2001 and an external debt that was out of control. These were all clear symptoms that something was not working in the 'model economy' of Latin America.

The development of the crisis throughout the 90s led to the emergence of the unemployed workers movement as a new dominant player in the popular struggles in Argentina. The Piqueteros, as they are called, emerged in the middle of the 90s, as a new type of organisation, demanded work through blockading of roads. They were pretty much inclined to direct action and, in many cases, to horizontal forms of organisation. Soon they became a real alternative to the bureaucratised trade unions and to the increasing problem that an important segment of the working class was not represented in the unions (due to them being marginalised through their unemployment). This movement was the first ring in the bell of a deep social crisis that was becoming deeper and deeper.

Apart from people's deteriorating living standards and the increasing difficulties of the successive governments in dealing with the worsening economic situation, it is necessary to consider a new factor in order to understand the political crisis of that year: the internal frictions between sectors of the bourgeoisie (ruling class). One was represented in the new governing party (UCR, a liberal party) and the other by the Peronists (PJ, a nationalist movement, with populist strands, but with strong rightist trends). From the very beginning of the De La Rúa government the PJ started to use all of their forces to oppose and destabilize his government (bosses' confederations, unions and parliamentary opposition), as they saw in this a plausible way to recover their lost power and political influence, and pave the way to become the next government.

That explosive mixture of inter-bour-

geois conflict - deep economic crisis, suffocating external debt, middle class unrest, the bankruptcy of the banks (which made the government impose a "corralito", a "fence", on the savings, as the people were running to get their savings out of their accounts) and the unbearable conditions of life for the working class - all exploded on the 19th of December of 2001, when different actors (the unemployed, middle classes, neighbours, etc.) came out to demand the end of "corralito" and the resignation of the government. Suddenly prosperous Buenos Aires was under siege by the suburban morochos and negros (in posh Argentinean jargon, anyone whose colour of skin happens to be darker than marble) coming from the poor slums, from those sectors of Argentinean cities that certainly doesn't look like a South American Italy.

The movement took over the streets, and after 48 hours of struggles and clashes with the police, they toppled the unpopular government of De La Rúa. Immediately, popular assemblies flourished in almost every neighbourhood in Buenos Aires while the piqueteros went on the offensive. And the left felt over confident about an achievement in which really no group or party merited hardly any credit at all. Many in the left went further and tried to decipher in the events of December a new revolutionary subjectivity, a new way of doing a "revolution",

confusing the toppling of a government with the deep changes required to overcome capitalism in revolutionary terms - this in fairness, was nothing but recycled old spontaneism. But that revolutionary fight won't be won by the working class in the streets, but in the factories, in the fields, mines and workshops; not by toppling presidents, but by affecting the logic of capitalist society and expropriating the bourgeoisie while destroying the State and all other bourgeois institutions, building at the same time, from the bottom up the new institutions of direct democracy.

The new economic situation

Some people definitely thought that the December upheaval had gone further than it really had and that the

revolution was around the corner. In reality the political scenario is far more complex, with the ruling classes returning to the offensive while the situation in Argentina has not improved at all: 40% of the population is still living in poverty while hunger affects the stomach of 25% of the population. Unemployment is still no less than 21% and precarious employment affects 70% of the working class. 10% of the population takes 51.7% of the national income, and inequality is increasing - in 1991, the richest 20% in Buenos Aires was 17.5 times richer than the poorest 20%; in 2003, it was 52.7 times richer. The external debt, keeps growing, and was U\$114,600,000,000 in May 2002, early this year it was U\$178,000,000,000. In this context, Argentina is still drowning in a lasting crisis, with no hope of



Workers at the occupied Brukman factory

an end in the short term, not even in a reasonably long period of time.

When De La Rúa was toppled by the popular uprising (followed by the short government of Rodríguez Saa), Duhalde, assumed the presidency, and the whole mission of his government was to preserve "normality", i.e. to preserve the institutions and the economic model; in short to guarantee a transition....to more of the same. And the new president, Kirchner, who was inaugurated in 2003, has followed this trend: keep denouncing neo-liberalism, but leave capitalism untouched. Denounce the international pressure on the poor countries yet keep prioritising the payment of the external debt over raising the living standards of the population. And most of all, he keeps repressing the popular movement, playing the game of divide and rule as well as demonis-

ing the protests. Despite the illusion of some leftists, who internationally see a progressive trend in Kirchner's style of politics, his government is actually more of a desperate attempt to preserve the old world and its institutions, albeit an attempt disguised in different clothes.

The experience of the factories under self-management

As a product of the last few decades of the neo-liberal model and its financial emphasis, industrial activity has fared poorly and this has naturally meant the decline of Argentinean industry. The first experiences of "fábricas recuperadas" (reclaimed factories) happened seven years ago, in the moments of deepening economic crisis in Argentina, well before the social explosion of the 19th and 20th of December.

They were the expression of a working class on the defensive, trying not to lose their jobs, trying not to fall into unemployment. They were far from being the expression of a working class on the offensive.

The first of the occupied factories, the cold-storage enterprise Yaguané, was taken in 1996; then, in 1998, came IMPA, and then in the year 2000 90 metallurgist workers from the Buenos Aires district of Avellaneda seized the GIP metal company.

They formed the Cooperative "Unión y Fuerza" (Unity and Strength), and in January 2001, after paying compensation, opened a factory in a place which over the last years had seen more than 1,000 enterprises go bankrupt. That year, the tiles company from Neuquén, Zanón, and the textile factory Brukman in Buenos Aires, were both abandoned by their respective bosses and seized by the workers. Brukman was seized on December 18th, just one day before the "Argentinazo". Zanón has increased productivity and created new working posts (250 workers now run the factory). Jacobo Brukman, the ex-owner of Brukman, expelled the workers on April 18th last year, but in October 2003, the company was finally declared bankrupt, expropriated and given back to the cooperative of workers "18 de Diciembre", so the workers could start production

once again, while singing "Aquí están, estas son, las obreras sin patrón" (Here they are, these are the workers with no boss)...

In the meantime, the owner had destroyed the machinery, and the workers were camping for six months outside the factory, preventing the attempts of the boss to restart production with scab labour. Today, there are some 170 seized enterprises, and 10,000 workers are taking part in that experience of collective work. In all of them managerial hierarchies have disappeared and the income is shared equally by all workers. In the past, some companies spent 65-70% of their revenues on bosses' and managers' wages.

When the "Argentinazo" came, in December 2001, the seized enterprises started weaving a network of solidarity around them through the many activists that started giving them strong support. The popular assemblies opened their doors to them as well. Soon they started to organise to fight collectively for the demands that they had in common. The first thing was to change the law regarding bankruptcy. This law states that, after an enterprise is declared bankrupt, its machinery and facilities should be auctioned in no more than 4 months time, in order to pay the creditors. And in the cases where workers have seized the factories, where compensation has been requested and otherwise, the owner can reclaim his property after a while. The workers claim that this law favours the payment of the debt over the right to work or the continuity of production.

The government currently is preparing a modification of the law, widely rejected by the workers as it would allow a shareholder model in the enterprises, which attacks the demand of the workers that every one of them should enjoy a working condition free of dependency.

The enterprises organised in the MNER (National Movement of Seized Enterprises), that have taken the legal form of cooperatives, demand modifications to this law. Some enterprises that aren't organised in this movement demand the application of Article 17 of the Constitution (the most prominent of which is Zanón - Brukman was also among them, before switching to form a legal cooperative last year). This article states that expropriations can take place when the public benefit demands it. They declare that, just like when there is an expropriation to build a road there should be expropriations of some enterprises in order to create more employment.

This is the main controversial issue in a broad movement that is united by the will of the workers to keep their employment, but at the same time, of changing radically the relationships of dependency, hierarchy and exploitation, into relationships of mutual aid and equality (wages are all equal in those factories).

Thus, in the middle of a crisis, under the motto "Ocupar, Resistir, Producir" (To Seize, To Resist, To Produce), the workers have spontaneously showed the world their skills to keep society going, once the employers have fled.

Problems and prospects

a. Relations between the political actors and the new emerging social movement

The Argentinean upheaval in December 2001 wasn't headed by any of the leftist parties. Many of those parties and groups undoubtedly had a presence in many of the working class organisations but the rebellion happened spontaneously and was autonomous of those organisations.

This opened a new scenario for organisations born right out of that revolt, like the popular assemblies, that tried to search for a type of politics quite different to the one of the traditional parties (both to the left and right). But remaining with spontaneity, they were unable to develop a political project that could have given coherence in the long term to the whole experience of organisation from the bottom up. And on the other hand, most of the leftist parties insisted in assuming the traditional link between political groups and social movement - one in which the social movement assumes a passive role, and the "political" actor

is the one that assumes all responsibility.

The intuition of the people rejected this; but intuition is not enough, and sooner or later, they ended up "accepting" the traditional role of the official or leftist parties, or the experiences they had built were drowned in their own contradictions. This was, dramatically, the case with most of the popular assemblies. Thus, the original battle cry of Argentinean people "Que se vayan todos" - We want all of them out - that expressed the will to break with the corrupt bureaucracies, with the political class, turned out with all of them staying in the end.

And at this point, an anarcho-communist alternative has a lot to say, for this current is the one that, in rejecting the State and traditional forms of politics, in advocating direct democracy and direct action, had more to offer to the Argentinean people. And anarcho-communism was the political current that could have played a key part in giving a political framework to the development of a strategic revolutionary and political programme for the people, based on their own experiences, but using the resources given by previous revolutionary international experience, from which anarchism is nurtured. Such an alternative is still to be built, but definitely many comrades are working on that task in Argentina.

b. Property and management.

One of the main debates in the left around those enterprises is what immediate solution to follow which would be in harmony with a revolutionary project - should the factories be in the hands of the workers themselves as cooperatives, or should they should be managed by the workers,



but owned by the State. A quote from an article in EN LA CALLE, paper of the Argentinian anarcho-communist group OSL (Socialist Libertarian Organisation), poses the problem in very accurate terms and links it to the anarchist alternative:

“In this context, various leftist currents tried to install the debate workers control vs. cooperatives. ‘We fight for nationalisation... we don’t want cooperative... thus, we don’t have the ghost of competition haunting us...’ said Celia Martínez, of Brukman’s internal commission (then candidate for the Trotskyist PTS), confusing the legal status of cooperative, needed for expropriation, with the political prospects of cooperativism. Their proposal consists of demanding expropriation with no payment, that the State provide initial capital, that takes the task of paying salaries and, in some cases, that it buys production. In other words, that the State gives, but the workers plan and manage. Expropriation makes necessary that workers adopt a legal status like, for instance, cooperative. But despite Brukman, Zanón, Ghelco, Panificación 5, Grisinópolis, among other 150 seized factories adopted this status, the problem is far from being a legal one.

Statisation under worker’s management is only possible in the context of a State subject to the workers and people’s power (to understand this strategy doesn’t mean to share it). To demand to the bourgeois state that expropriation wouldn’t be a solution in the capitalist context, but that would transform it into exercise of workers’ power by giving the factories back to the workers themselves, taking charge over wages, giving an initial capital, taking into account that the same State-government was the architect of the situation in which those workers are now, and also that the workers’ movement is in a purely defensive phase, is nothing but an illusion.

On the other hand, Cooperativism is not a project that gives a definite solution to the workers’ problems. It is far from giving an answer to the bulk of the workers, according to their interests. It never questions the capitalist relationships of production, it only questions superficial features (monopolies, competition, etc.) it is less feasible to create, through a network of cooperatives, a subsystem parallel to capitalism.

The idea of workers’ management of production and society implies that the only power in a revolutionary society is that of the organisations of the working class. This workers’ management should be understood as the abolition of all power exercised by a minority, the aboli-

tion of bourgeois power, that is to say, the abolition of any form of State. We, the workers, shouldn’t just assume the workers’ management in the fields, factories and workshops, but also, in the rest of society”

Thus, according to the comrades, the solution was not in one or the other as political projects (cooperativism, or workers’ management with Statisation), but in providing the conditions for workers not to lose their jobs - i.e. by assuming the legal status of cooperative (without politically assuming cooperativism) - to retain the capacity for self-organisation and in the collective search of a global alternative way of organising society, understanding that whatever reforms we can win now are only partial steps that need to be complemented by the struggles given by other actors in the popular struggle.



C. Towards a Society Free of Managers and Capitalists?

The Argentinean experience, despite the many contradictions and problems they face, shows unequivocally the superfluous nature of a ruling class, or of a class of managers. Whenever the bosses proved unable to administer the industry and to keep it producing, the workers organised and demonstrated that they can do it as well - and better. The history of the exploited’s movement is full of such examples (Chilean industrial networks, Spain and its industrial and rural collectives during the Revolution, Soviets and Workers’ Councils in Russia in 1917, etc.) and the Argentinean experience shows us once again that the working class has lost nothing of its intrinsic capacity after a century and a half of proletarian struggle. It shows us the fundamental factor of production: without workers, bosses are unable to run industry; without bosses, workers can do it better.

These experiences also highlight many of the problems anarchists elsewhere face in the wake of popular risings and they show us that the building of a libertarian society is not a matter of repeating clichés and slogans. There are no easy answers, and the experiences will vary greatly

according to the local factors, taking into account the much-dismissed legal problems, economic limitations and local history of working class resistance. The revolution doesn’t happen overnight, but it is the accumulation of different factors, happening in different places and times. We have to link them all in a coherent way with a revolutionary and anarchist strategy, which demonstrates the importance of building an anarchist organisation, as we anarcho-communists advocate to serve as a catalyst for the people’s struggles. Pure spontaneity is not enough.

We have to start thinking seriously of the sort of problems faced by the experiences of working class resistance in the pre-revolutionary period (the relationship between property relations and management of production, for example, as clearly posed by the experience of the seized factories; the relationship between the popular movement and the political organisations). We have to consider the concrete conditions of the struggle and the particularities wherever the struggles are happening, in order to have clear policies and practical answers. And at the same time, being able at a programmatic level to understand the different struggles and to link them together in order to pave the road towards the libertarian revolution.

All of these experiences prove that the anarchist aspiration of a society free of managers (both economically and politically) and capitalists is not a lofty utopia, but a real possibility, rooted in the present, in the capacities of the working class itself. Again and again history proves that the moment for social justice and freedom is ripe, here and now, and that all we have to do is prepare the moment, organise and fight to make it a reality sooner rather than later. Therefore, when anarchists demand the impossible, all they show is that the realm of the possible is wider than what the bourgeoisie would like us to believe. And we demonstrate that every social experience, every revolutionary action in the constant movement of the oppressed against their oppressors, which requires the organised forces of anarchism to take a paramount role, highlights new problems, new perspectives, while laying, in the very corpse of the capitalist regime, new bricks in the building of the society free of managers and capitalists. ♦

Footnotes

Footnotes are included in the online version

Red & Black Revolution



“Here They Are, The Workers With No Bosses”

