

ORGANISE!

...for revolutionary anarchism

Make Space for Resistance

- **Fighting for our environment**
- **Struggling against nationalism & reformism**
- **Understanding the workings of austerity**

85

£2.50 €3.00
FREE to prisoners

PLUS
analysis,
reviews,
our regular culture feature,
and much more.

Organise!

Issue 85 – Autumn 2015

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). As anarchist communists we fight for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst communities, and people are free to reach their full potential. We do this by supporting working class resistance to exploitation and oppression, organise alongside our neighbours and workmates, host informative events, and produce publications that help make sense of the world around us.

Organise! is published twice/year with the aim to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We will try to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, then feel free to contact us through any of the details below.

The articles in this issue do not represent the collective viewpoint of the AF unless stated as such. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air! We hope that this publication will help that debate to take place.

For the next issue of Organise! articles can be submitted to the editors directly at:

organise@afed.org.uk or publications@afed.org.uk
or sent to the post box
BM Anarfed, London
WC1N 3XX.



AF Contacts

We have members throughout the whole of the UK so if you do not see a full group in your area then please use the general enquiry details, or contact the nearest regional secretary.

All General Enquires

Post: BM ANARFED,
London,
WC1N 3XX,
England, UK
Email: info@afed.org.uk
Web: <http://www.afed.org.uk>

Alba (Scotland)

Regional Secretary
scotland@afed.org.uk

Aberdeen (in formation)
aberdeen@afed.org.uk

Edinburgh & the Lothians
edinburgh@afed.org.uk

Glasgow
glasgow@afed.org.uk

Inverness and the Highlands
inverness@afed.org.uk

North England & Gogledd Cymru (North Wales)

Regional Secretary
north@afed.org.uk

Liverpool & Merseyside
liverpool@afed.org.uk

Manchester
manchester@afed.org.uk

Midlands

Regional Secretary
midlands@afed.org.uk

Leicester
leicester@afed.org.uk

Nottingham (including Notts)
nottingham@afed.org.uk

South East England

Regional Secretary
southeast@afed.org.uk

London
london@afed.org.uk

Surrey and Hants
surreyhants@afed.org.uk

South West England & De Cymru (South Wales)

Regional Secretary
southwest@afed.org.uk

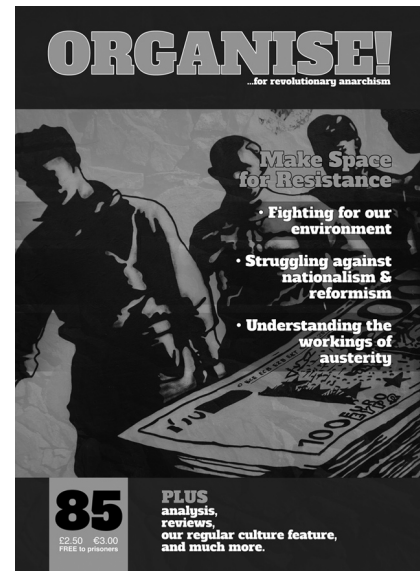
Bristol
bristol@afed.org.uk

ORGANISE!

Contents

Editorial: Making space for resistance	3
The SNP, Scottish Nationalism, and the Class Struggle: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.	4
Guide for collective survival in times of mass destruction	10
They say cut back, we say... what?	13
Austerity & Debt: An interview with Kim from Critisticuffs	17
Fight for the City – Part Two	21
The Working Class Needs Who?	26
Upcoming Speaking Tour Dates	28
Boycott your graduation ceremony if you really care about the class divide	29
A reply from a member of the Anarchist Federation	30
Carbon Games: The fossil fuel divestment campaign	31
Deleuze and Guattari – An Investment for Combat	33
Culture Feature – Jules Vallès–Child Student, Revolutionary, Journalist, Novelist	37
Book Review – Underground Passages	39
Book Review – Franco's Crypt	41
AF publications	42

ISSUE
85



Anarchist Federation
Organise! back issues available from:

WEB <https://afed.org.uk/publications/organise/>

POST
BM ANARFED,
London,
WC1N 3XX,
England, UK

Please contact us for information regarding subscriptions to the magazine.



Editorial: Making space for resistance

Ever felt the walls closing in on you? In this issue of *Organise!*, we look at how the spaces that working class and oppressed people have to live and resist are under attack – from the government and from the State, certainly. But also from movements, groups and organisations that pretend to be on our side.

In the second one of our series of articles on the politics of the city, we explore how public space is being privatised across the UK. Sometimes this privatisation is literal – whole areas of cities like London, Liverpool and Manchester are now in private hands, with private security guards to match. Often, the theft of public space is more subtle, with new forms of regulation and surveillance. This links with the processes we looked at in the last issue of *Organise!*, when we saw how cities are increasingly transformed into places to consume rather than places to live.

Moving on to other potential sites of resistance, the article “They say cutback, we say... what?” offers an account, not only of austerity, but also of how the fightback against austerity is often channelled into the same sterile routines of protest. We look at how this happens, and also how people are resisting on two fronts – against austerity, and against those who would co-opt the fight against austerity for their own ends. Since we began compiling this issue, Jeremy Corbyn has been elected leader of the Labour party. Whilst the resulting convulsions of the right wing media are amusing, we don’t think it really matters, and present an account of another recent electoral sideshow, the Scottish referendum. Tracing the recent history of the Scottish National Party, we look at how nationalism has become entwined with radical politics in Scotland, and how many have succumbed to the empty promises of “progressive nationalism.”

It’s not all doom and gloom, however. Elsewhere in this issue, you will find reflections by people fighting back. We have some comradely words about the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), looking at both the opportunities and risks offered by the Wobbly brand of industrial unionism. There is also a critical account of the campaign to get institutions such as universities to stop their investment in fossil fuels. And speaking of universities, we have an article urging students to boycott their graduation ceremonies.

As anarchists, we have a rich social, cultural and theoretical tradition to draw on. In this issue, you’ll find an account of the life and work of an often-neglected figure from the Paris Commune, Jules Vallès, as well as reviews of books on anarchist engagements with art and culture, and Franco’s Spain. And in a first for *Organise!* (and possibly everywhere else!), there’s a readable introduction to the thought of philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, written with anarchists in mind. Since we started by thinking about walls, we’ll end with a quote from those two – “A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window.”

The SNP, Scottish Nationalism, and the Class Struggle: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.

Scottish nationalism, and symbiotic to this the Scottish National Party, have transformed from outside forces in the political consciousness of Scotland to become deeply embedded in everyday politics. This change acts as a perfect example, and warning, of how electoral politics and nationalism are used to divide the working class, poison radical politics, and secure the position of the ruling class.

However, the events taking place in Scotland are too often viewed in isolation from one another, even by those of us that live there. This has led to a lack of appreciation of the social and economic forces at play and given rise to analysis of the political landscape in Scotland that present the situation here as something to aspire to.

This piece aims to give a feel for the over-arching sweep of events in Scotland since the mid-nineties, contextualise the rise of a nationalism that is as divisive as any other, and show how faith in electoral state solutions has cast shadows in the form of reforms that will easily vanish in the proposed new dawn of an independent Scotland.

The Calm before the Storm

Scotland from the Nineties

Nationalism in Scotland was a fringe element; many people's only real awareness of nationalists was as a bunch of weirdoes who harked back to a quasi-mythical time where Scotland was 'free' of English rule, fanatics that held an ongoing vigil for Scotland in a hut at the bottom of Calton Hill, while people pushing for more widespread use of Gaelic and Scots were treated as a joke.

Mainstream nationalist political expression came through sentiment to protect Scottish farmers and fishing rights. In more urban and industrial areas it was socialist sentiment (mainly channelled towards the Labour Party) that was seen as a way to protect Scottish industry. The main exception to this was in the notion that North Sea oil belonged to Scotland. In the social sphere an often violent hatred of anyone seen as English existed despite often being strongly denied.

As the nineties ground on the fortunes of the Conservative Party were in steady decline. The SNP could see that a

change was in the air and had already began a polished style of presentation that has served them well to this day. Their general outlook is to present a different face to the different regions of Scotland, playing to the needs of their electorate.

The North of Scotland has them put farming, fishing, and big business (mainly in the form of the oil industry) at the heart of any campaign. To the East-coast and Central Belt they put forward more progressive conservative ideas as their own. In the West they take up the mantle of Old Labour, discussing the need for a social safety net and generally coming across as centre-left.

This presentation style was to pay off. The SNP gained three seats in the 1997 general election (doubling the number held), before going on to form the official opposition to the LibDem-Labour coalition that would be formed as the majority body of the Scottish Parliament after its first election in 1999.

The devolved bodies in Scotland and Wales had been set up by Labour with an eye to a dispersal of power that would mean that even when they would lose Westminster to the Tories, they would likely gain back some power in these venues as a reaction to Tory rule. This would also help cement Scottish seats in Westminster, many of which had been held by Labour for generations. The thought that Scottish nationalism in general, and the SNP in particular, could become a strong enough force to upset this balance seemed unlikely. Meanwhile, the only element on the left to give any serious time to idea of an independent Scotland was the Scottish Socialist Party.

Clouds Gather

The pre-referendum build-up

The initial wave of concessions given by the Labour Party in the wake of their landslide victory of 1997, such as the minimum wage and working tax credits, started to wear thin. Parallel to this, the role of the government to manage capitalism within the state led to the massively unpopular second Iraq War, the acceleration of privatisation schemes (most notable within public transport and the NHS), and the sharp increase in racist narratives around immigration, refugees, and asylum seeking.

The left, in the form of trade unions and Trotskyist front-groups, confined their opposition to the Labour Party to hot air speeches and symbolic acts, such as A to B marches. One million people marched against the Iraq War before being effectively dismantled by the SWP's Stop the War Coalition. Labour's policies were no different in their antagonism to the working class than anything the Tories could dream up, but were given a free pass.

It is against this mounting disenchantment with Labour that a second wave of elections in the Scottish Parliament led to many smaller parties (such as the Greens and the SSP) winning seats. It was dubbed the rainbow parliament, a moniker that was to prove apt. While there was a huge variety of voices, and many from the socialist left, they were to do little more than act as the vocal social conscience of parliament, free to stand up and denounce any ill, before being sidelined. Democracy had taken place and those fringe elements that wanted to make gains would have to compromise their ideals to do so.

Just like its namesake, the promises of the rainbow parliament were to provide an illusion that could never be reached no matter how much energy was used to try, while those seeking an independent Scotland pointed to a pot of gold that the working class will never see. However, this set-up went a long way to help reinforce the idea that Scotland was somehow more democratic and more fair, helping legitimise both electoral/reformist politics and those who were building towards independence.



Within this setting of the first two Scottish parliaments the SNP were able to forge for themselves a legitimacy that they had been denied in any other venue. With no Tory party to speak of they took up the mantle of the opposition with perfect form. As Labour increasingly relied on scare tactics to try and hold onto voters, the SNP started to make the case that they were the progressive alternative not only to Labour but also to a distant Westminster. Political relevance was linked to a narrative of physical closeness. No room was given to the thought that the halls of Westminster had no relevance to the working class of London, let alone any other part of the UK.

The SNP were left as the only voice in Scottish politics acting in the traditional role of the opposition, able to talk

big and attack the government for any woes to take place. Even positive policy put in place by the Scottish Lib/Lab government, such as free NHS prescriptions, could be used by the SNP opposition as an illustration of the strengths of having an independent Scottish state.

Hand-in-hand with their play for legitimacy in government circles came a push for the legitimacy of Scottish nationalist sentiment within the social sphere. Recognition and display of the multiple languages in Scotland, and ideas that Scotland has its own unique Scottish culture, and narratives of being a fairer and just people all started to be repeated.

This narrative led to the adoption of the jingoistic idea of 'civic nationalism'. Proposed as an acceptable form of nationalism, the claim is that it is based upon ideals and that it stands in contrast to a cultural or ethnic nationalism. However, taking a look at 'civic nationalist' North European countries who are already independent (such as Norway or Sweden), we can see there is no easy division between cultural/ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism. Citizenship is not determined by ideals, but by meeting the cultural expectations and economic needs of the nation-state.

The backdrop of a legitimate form of nationalism taking up space public discourse, of nationalist ideas being cemented in the public sphere, and of the SNP being seen a legitimate opposition to the doom-and-gloom offered by an increasingly unpopular Labour Party, all combined to provide the nationalists with a win in the Scottish Parliament (forming a coalition alongside the Scottish Green Party).

By this point the SSP had self-destructed around the scandals to hit Tommy Sheridan, while the Labour Party carried on seemingly blind to the mounting opposition they faced. Thinking that this was simply their time out of Parliament while they had power in Westminster, they reasoned behind the scenes that when the Tories eventually pushed them out of the UK Government that their supporters would usher them back in the North.

The SNP, however, were able to still able to play the part of the opposition even while in power. Positioning themselves against the UK Government they took a longer-term view of first cementing their position before a move for an independence referendum. Labour, Tories, and LibDems all carried on as normal, unable to adjust to the new angle of nationalist rhetoric, despite constantly being outmanoeuvred by the SNP.

The Sky Opens Up

The independence campaign kicks in

With the prospect of a referendum looming the possibility to be able to hold politicians feet to the fire opened up. Even now, if independence were to occur then the working class in Scotland would probably see some temporary concessions that would later be stripped away or made redundant while the government followed something akin to the pattern of the Isle of Man in terms of becoming a banking haven while pandering to the oil industry. This would be in much the same way Tony Blair gave some concessions when New Labour swept to power in order to clear the way for a highly accelerated privatisation programme.

The option opened for radicals to call for changes to be made in areas the Scottish Parliament had some oversight, and keep pushing the envelope on these areas. A radical left campaign making noise on specific issues and demanding change before the referendum could have been a big enough thorn in the 'Yes' campaign that its leaders would have to cater to in some way.

Unfortunately the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) was set up by the ISG, a mainly-local split from the SWP, with the goal of them forging a new party of the left to replace the stump of the SSP in the political class of Scotland. By providing a degree of autonomy to local campaigning groups while keeping the focus solely on electoral politics, RIC it was able to forge a space for talk of a 'new party of the left' while also making the completely erroneous claim that what they were doing was somehow radical. RIC (along with most of the left in Scotland), started the independence campaign with a whimper and did little more than play the role of the left wing voice of the 'Yes' campaign.

Because of this, as the date of the referendum crept closer, RIC was effectively subsumed into the 'Yes' campaign as their voice of the left, in much the same way the SSP played their part in the to legitimise the rainbow parliament. 'Yes' and RIC would share the same platform, agree on most points, and back one another in support of a common nationalist goal. As the referendum got closer RIC activists often dropped the distinction, canvassing directly for the Yes camp.

Increasingly electoralism in general, and an independent Scottish nation-state in particular, were pushed as only true way to enact radical change. Even large swaths of the anarchist movement in Scotland started to see the referendum as a means to radical change, abandoning the anarchist analysis of referenda as a means to offer legitimacy to the social relations of the state.

The SNP, already a party who had already made large moves to entertain capitalist interests, found that they were given a free hand by the Scottish left and so were to go largely unchallenged even when making overtures to their suitability to lead a nation-state. This was most visible when they dropped their commitment to leave NATO should they end up in charge of a newly-formed state, an action that had more vocal opposition from inside the party than from without.

As the campaign gathered a pace the SNP carried on presenting themselves as the opposition, now as the counterpoint to the ConDem coalition. Without anyone pressing them hard on putting in place concessions, the SNP were able to target emergent areas of militant class struggle and disarm then co-opt working class movements that could harm their nationalist programme. Struggles around the bedroom tax, fracking, and the independent living fund, all of which led to militant direct action south of the border, were given concessions by an SNP eager to have smooth publicity around the referendum.

While it is good that these concessions have been made, we need to be clear that they were granted without the formation of a militant and self-organised working class and so without that build-up will be easier to dismantle once their usefulness had passed. These concessions also act as an indication of how fragile the nationalist campaign was in the run-up to the referendum, showing an opportunity missed,



and a disappointing lack of initiative and a complete lack of class analysis from self-declared radicals. Many who would normally have engaged in agitation for working class struggle had been swayed enough by the ideas of nationalism that they didn't build for confrontation out of a sense of shared interest in the founding of a nation-state (no matter how critical they claimed their position to be).

The struggle between competing nationalisms, British and Scottish, has created one of the most worrying changes in ideological outlook in Scotland.

On one hand, the media bias against an independent Scottish State was so blatant that many of those who started the road to the referendum mildly in favour would become strongly entrenched nationalists out of a sense of embattled outrage over the coverage given. The reputation of the BBC, once given a large degree of trust, is now often questioned as a result. A huge political campaign swung into gear, with 'Yes' posters, stickers and badges far outnumbering the 'Better Together' efforts in terms of visibility.

The reality of civic nationalism also came to light as the SNP backed an Australian-style points-based immigration system which would act as an incredibly racist, exclusive form of immigration selection. This isn't to deny that an SNP government is more likely to accept an increased number of immigrants, but rather than being out of some civic sense of fairness it would be selecting those seen as needed to a Scottish economy in order to offset an ageing population and ensure a competitive labour force.

In terms of foreign policy, the SNP's civic nationalism is concerned with uniting the country in order to out-compete on the global market, and to be a strong ally for the US, NATO and the EU. Presumably it seeks to support a 'civic', 'inclusive' rather than 'jingoistic' imperialism.

On the other hand, loyalist sentiment and a reactionary Protestant undercurrent awoke from its dormancy, pushing to

remain part of Britain under the Queen. The Orange Lodge, and its supporters, would become increasingly vocal as time wore on, and while not as visible as the 'Yes' campaign, their long-term place within many communities would provide an undercurrent of British nationalist influence across Scotland.

The mainstream British nationalist campaign, 'Better Together', was its own worst enemy. 'Better Together' could simply sit back and claim that anything coming out of the independence camp was a fantasy and that they were getting on with keeping a firm hand on the tiller. Instead, it followed in the footsteps of a Labour Party keen to scare voters away from the SNP. Condescending, patronising and paternalistic scare stories came out of the 'Better Together' camp on what seemed like a daily basis, pushing people into the 'Yes' camp and helping entrench the newly formed, and exceptionally close positions. Possibly the best example of this is the advert of the 'Better Together Woman', which instantly became a source of national mockery.

The mass engagement that took place around this campaign, lauded by so many, was totally encompassed within these nationalist paradigms. Grassroots groups and coal-face campaigns were diverted to discussion of nationalist ends. People were putting their energy into supporting one form of state or another, and leaving the real problems facing them here and now unchallenged. Nationalism and electoralism had combined to keep mounting class tensions focussed on helping mediate a dispute within the ruling classes.



The Red Hand of Ulster and the fascist salute were raised side-by-side as loyalists and fascists celebrated together.

Eye of the Storm

The direct aftermath of Indyref

The morning after the referendum the disappointment was palpable. A huge feeling of a missed opportunity was talked about openly, and many who voted 'no' started to talk openly about how they, both personally and collectively as a nation, had messed up. Alternately those in the 'yes' camp often presented the outcome as a generational division made up of younger voters, with less to lose, voting yes and the older generation, with more at risk, going the conservative route and voting against change.

In any case, the real winners were the SNP and to a lesser extent the Scottish Green Party, as membership of both parties soared. The Green Party website crashed first thing in the morning with the number of people trying to join while the SNP themselves starting along a path that would lead them to having over 100,000 members. Working class families that had been Labour supporters for three or four generations now burned their membership cards (literally, posting the videos and photos on Facebook). Even some anarchists, breaking with anything close to a prefigurative politics, would join these neo-liberal parties in an 'ends justify the means' mind-set of somehow holding these parties to account.

In stark contrast to the mainstream parties, grass-roots working class campaigning groups did not see any real change in numbers. If anything there has been a slight decline as those leftists who have been involved in pushing for independence under the RIC banner carried on in nationalist campaigns and building towards a 'new left' fringe party in the style of Syriza and Podemos.

In Glasgow the 'Better Together' celebration was something that had been a worry for long-term anti-fascists. British nationalists in the form of loyalists, football casuals, and fascists linked up in the streets and were seen for the first time acting side-by-side. A violent right-wing riot took place where people were attacked for wearing 'Yes' badges, while the police did little more than ensure that shops and business interests were protected. *The Herald*, the only newspaper to come out in favour of independence, was the target of an arson attack.

As a reaction, many who had been 'Yes' voters started to refer to themselves as "The 45%". This came along with cringe worthy slogans such as declaring themselves the "democratic minority and moral majority" and repeatedly referring to George Square in Glasgow as "Freedom Square" (laying claim to the Glasgow majority in favour of an independent Scottish state). More clear-thinking political campaigners were able to curb most of this, however, seeing in it a defeatist element.

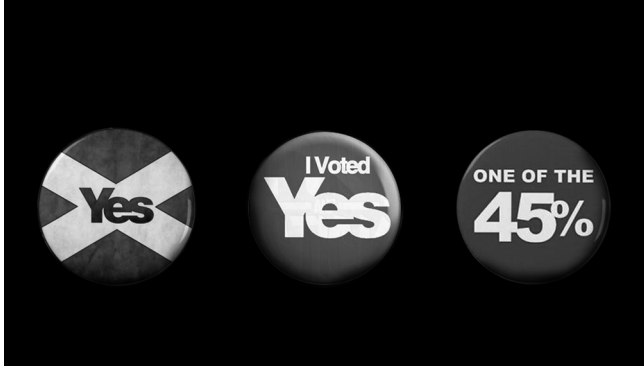
A huge amount of 'Yes' propaganda remains visible to the present day. People kept the posters in their windows and stickers in their cars. People wearing 'Yes' badges is commonplace. The general feeling from those who voted 'Yes' is that there will be another referendum at some point soon and they want to be ready for it.

Riding the Deluge

Surrounding the 2015 General Election

The General Election came at the perfect time for SNP. With their fresh membership eager to do something for the party they held planning meetings to rally branches that were full of people swept up in an ideology that said that what they were participating in was in some way new. The party sent every new member a pack with a poster for the window (now going up beside the 'Yes' material), and a badge. Members were encouraged to engage people on the question of who they were voting for.

However this discussion went far beyond members pushing a party line. General chat in the street was that nobody,



honestly nobody, was going to vote for the Labour Party (in much the same way people turned their back on the Tories). The LibDems and SSP had died while the Greens didn't have the numbers. Everyone who was voting seemed to be voting for the SNP.

On the west coast the reaction to this was for Labour to give more concessions to unionists of the Orange Order in the form of approval of their marches and the rubber-stamping of 'Orange Fest', a day-long celebration of protestant culture in the centre of Glasgow that mainly involved old men getting up on a stage to decry the Catholics in our midst. Elsewhere in Scotland the letterbox scare stories that had failed to help keep the Scottish Parliament in Labour hands and had so spectacularly backfired during the referendum campaign were deployed once more. If it seemed like nobody in the Labour Party had taken note of what had been happening in Scotland over the past decade it would be because nobody in the Labour party had been paying attention as to what had happened in Scotland for the past decade.

As a result the SNP swept into all but three Scottish seats.

Talk in the run-up to the general election had been of the Labour/SNP coalition as a possibility, and while Labour ruled it out (fantasising about a win), the SNP made overtures to working in coalition on a case-by-case basis. While this might seem to the new supporters to have been the SNP's preferred outcome a Tory win was the best possible result and what the SNP leadership had been hoping for. The near clean sweep of Scottish seats gave a feeling of victory to the party membership, showing that after a narrow defeat there was victory to be gained from electoral politics in general and the SNP in particular.

At the same time they were able to put any blame for their lack of ability to make changes on several external factors. First, they were able to blame being in opposition of the failures of the Labour party in England, criticising them for abandoning the working class while at the same time making public overtures to forming up an effective opposition with them (that they know won't be accepted). At the same time they can say that the lack of change is down to being a minority in an unfair Westminster system that they are seeking a break from.

The SNP are playing the role of the political opposition to the current government in a way that seems to have been lost to others. They blame the government, (or Labour, or Westminster, or something else) for the bad things that happen. They can also talk up small differences in how services run to make them seem like huge gains for Scotland, and generally say whatever plays well.

To keep people on-side they present a centre-left position and are still making the tactical choice to give minor concessions to any working class social movements forming before they have secured an independent nation-state, while quietly shoring up police and bureaucratic power. A great example

of this was when a rumble of opposition to a new woman's prison they closed it off as an anti-prison movement started to be discussed, however have done nothing to stop the conditions that have led to the proposal and instead have suggested use of other punitive measures.

The main narrative of the SNP can be summed up as:

- "A stronger voice for Scotland" - A move to give the SNP increased democratic legitimacy
- "Getting what was promised" - Appeals to justice, so that whatever further powers are devolved can be both welcomed but also written off as not enough or shy of the mark.
- "An end to austerity" - a popular call, but completely at odds with the attacks on working class communities that SNP-led councils are undertaking.

This has been happening so much so that leftists in England look to them and talk of them being somehow left wing. The play by Jeremy Corbyn to reinvigorate the Labour Party and become leader of his party follows much the same idea of being seen as a valid opposition to those in charge that the SNP has used to gain their legitimacy. Much like Labour would talk up Tony Benn as a paradigm of socialism while ignoring his vicious attacks on the working class, Corbyn was able to push a neo-liberal economic policy while being seen as standing up for the working class.

In all these cases of an alternative being presented, regardless of if it was SNP or socialist in origin, we can see the old trick of an opposition party giving an all-things-to-all-people public face, while pursuing a moderately progressive yet mainly 'small-c' conservative social agenda that isn't too far removed from the 'compassionate' conservatism of some Tories and the centre-right of the Green Party. However, all parties will head up an economic policy of a neo-liberal capitalism that will give concessions to big business, and follows very strongly in the third-way politics of New Labour despite the denials.

The SNP in particular position themselves as neither left-wing nor right-wing, but a party of national interest. This rhetoric is frightening to any class struggle anarchist, as the civic nationalism that was originally presented as harmless now drops its facade and outright folds popular support into a nationalism that openly divides the class.

Those groups on the frontlines of struggle still have not seen the boom in activity or engagement that left nationalists claim to have taken place. Attempts to consolidate grassroots opposition, such as the 'Action Against Austerity' network, now not only have to contend with the actions of those in power, but also attempts by authoritarian leftists to join under the guise of them taking direct action. However, they are not doing this to build a self-organised working class counter power but to co-opt working class action for their own party building. At the same time grassroots groups are having to fight against the calls within their own ranks to get behind any nationalist program and even calls to give the SNP a chance, as if they were not the cause of many of the problems being faced. If such groups and networks succumb to party-builders and nationalist sentiment then they will be doomed to failure.

Rain, Rain, Go Away

Next steps

It is always dangerous to speculate on the future of social and political trends. However, between the first draft and the final version of this piece being written one of the predictions came true, so with the dangers of prediction in mind...

The Scottish 'new party of the left' finally stitched itself together from the stumps of the SSP and the ISG. It's called Rise. I reckon this is an appropriate name, given that parliamentary socialism is a zombie that refuses to just fuck off and die. I wouldn't be shocked if some Scottish anarchos jump onto their ship, citing pragmatism while following a plan of action that has been conclusively shown to fail on its own terms. Lefties are talking about this being a Scottish Syriza and I couldn't agree more. They are a dangerous diversion against class struggle, set to create political apathy through their failure.

The upcoming Scottish parliamentary elections are likely to be a consolidation of power for the SNP, and while not as heavy a sweep as for Westminster it will be a strong victory. The Green Party are likely to pick up seats from the parliamentary list system while the other parties will scramble over the remains. Again, the SNP will be able to point at this as representative of a fairer Scotland and use it as leverage to push their agenda.

If the Green Party do well and Rise put in a decent show, then we may see a return to the 'rainbow parliament' in four years' time; and with both these parties standing on a platform of independence the scene may be set for another referendum earlier than folks expect. There is already a push for 'Yes2' in 2018, which on one hand sounds far too optimistic (as it is usually at least a decade between repeat referenda), but on the other it may be pushed by the new wave of party members (SNP, Green and Leftists)

In any case Scottish independence now seems inevitable, it is just a question of when. The longer the SNP can hold off the more young voters (who are generally Yes-leaning) come of age while the older generation (which voted in a conservative No) dies off. However, the longer they wait, the more times they will have had to choose between implementing austerity measures and losing popularity or giving concessions. This means that until independence takes place there is still the opportunity to really push for large gains for the working class. Unfortunately, the way in which nationalism has divided us as a class and the huge re-establishment of electoral politics are preventing effective movements from forming.

Many speculate that upon independence that the SNP will fragment and disappear. While there would be some inevitable breakaways, on the whole the nature of power and hierarchy suggests to me that the SNP will weather the storm under the guise of protecting their gains from old enemies, then under the notion of doing the best for Scotland. In doing so it will finish its transformation into the 'small-c' conservative party for Scotland.

Authoritarian Trotskyist and Leninist groups will be leeching onto any eruptions of spontaneous class activity they can in order to take control and bleed them dry for members. While they make lots of talk about building grassroots movements,

they have no interest in helping develop working class self-organisation. Instead they simply want to insert their party at the head of any emerging struggles. We have already seen the disgraced Socialist Workers Party buying their way back into campaigns and trying to use front-group tactics to give an air of legitimacy to their actions, while the Revolutionary Communist Group continue to parachute into areas while claiming their move to take charge is an act of solidarity.

Where does that leave anarchists and other libertarians?

I reckon we will, as ever, be involved in the struggles that affect our lives. In doing so we need to be aware that electoralism and nationalism will need to be faced. Diversions towards campaigns to simply replace one local mob of crooked politicians with another will be strong, while electoral options and nationalist futures will try to turn our heads.

To win the leadership of ideas I feel anarchists need to ensure that we are always putting our principled end goals into effect through our current calls for action, and making sure that we challenge others to do the same. If someone says they are voting for the SNP or are wanting to see an independent Scotland then find out why. Often it will be for an end result we hold in common, such as ending poverty or dismantling the detention system. We can argue the case for their involvement in groups founded on the principle of collective self-organisation, that take direct action over elections, and that reveal the perils of a nationalist ideology though securing their active participation in class struggle.

Additional Points

WSM on the Orange Order

<http://www.wsm.ie/c/orange-order-history-parades>

Mhairi Black's maiden speech was widely touted as a positive sign, however it is simply the SNP acting in opposition. Making overtures to a Labour Party set to rebuff the SNP is nothing but showboating, while still supporting a neoliberal party.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZAmhB55_-k

Compare this speech with the following:

"[Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh] said that [the SNP's] economic stance was a mix of pro-business ideas which would "traditionally be thought of as centre or centre right," with a strong sense of social responsibility. When challenged that she was therefore a Blairite, Ahmed-Sheikh replied: "Absolutely not." She suggested that the SNP's landmark election victory has shifted the political landscape away from the traditional axis of left and right. "We are an inclusive party with a civic nationalism that puts nation first," she said."

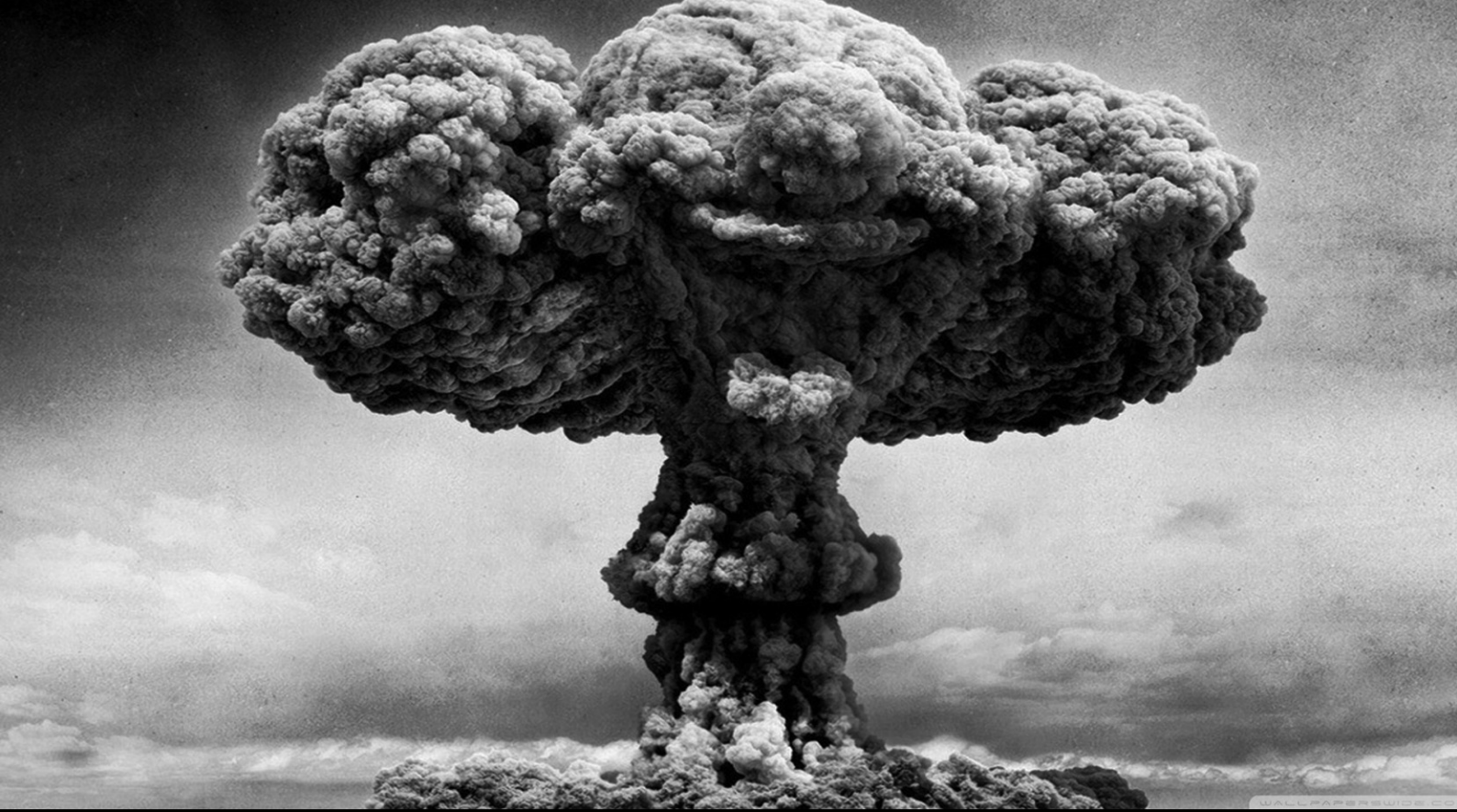
<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/opinions/interview-tasmina-ahmed-sheikh-the-snp-has-a-right-wing-and-here-she-is>

More overtly the SNP openly call for lower corporation tax amongst a raft of right-wing policies.

Action Against Austerity network

<https://actionagainstausterity.wordpress.com/>

An interview on this with AF member for Anarchist Radio Berlin: <http://aradio.blogspot.de/2015/09/18/a-radio-in-english-anarchist-federation-in-glasgow-about-their-work-the-referendum-and-the-rise-of-nationalism/>



GUIDE FOR COLLECTIVE SURVIVAL IN TIMES OF MASS DESTRUCTION

**AN ARTICLE FROM THE ASSEMBLY FOR THE CIRCULATION OF STRUGGLES
ABOUT THE RECENT REFERENDUM (05/07/15) IN GREECE.**

We are living in historic times; thus, let us get a couple of things out straight. First, this crisis is not an exclusively Greek phenomenon and is not just an economic crisis. It is a global crisis that affects the profits of bosses as well as a crisis of capitalist social relations in general. Second, the crisis is not just a moment of disorder and a chaotic collapse (although such moments do exist), but rather a historic process for the capitalist restructuring of social relations in favour of capital. Therefore, the so-called measures for overcoming the crisis are nothing more than what the bosses of this world have in store for us. Third, this crisis is not going to be resolved to our benefit through high politics; it cannot be surmounted in our favour at the state level. Thus, it is not a matter of governmental decisions that will “cut off the debt”, “repeal austerity measures” and “ensure growth”; On the contrary, the answer to the crisis for those from below lies in class struggle and social antagonism against the intensification of exploitation and oppression.

As of 2010, a new cycle of struggles against the politics of austerity and the devaluation of our lives emerged. Struggles took place within the public and private sector, as well as at the level of social reproduction (e.g. transport, education, health, energy, etc). The most massive and confrontational moments of this cycle of struggles took the form of militant demonstrations, either in the context of an officially called strike or without it. These struggles showed their potential and limits almost simultaneously. On the one hand, there was mass participation in a determined and confrontational manner; these struggles triggered political instability and caused cracks on the surface of the austerity programs through the creation of a number of self-organized open assemblies and solidarity structures in the neighbourhoods of Athens. On the other hand, struggles such as these remained tied to an anti-memorandum rhetoric and evidently fuelled by the expectation of the ‘big night’ that would force those in power to call off all austerity measures (or even to flee the country). In sum, however, these struggles did not manage to bring immediate, material results that improved the everyday living conditions of the exploited.

In this context, after the movement’s gradual retreat over the past two years due to Samaras’s terrorist repression, the coalition government of SYRIZA-ANEL was formed in January 2015. The coalition government supported the anti-memorandum, patriotic rhetoric by bringing its right and left-wing variations under the same roof. Furthermore, SYRIZA’s tactics prior to the elections were raising significant barriers for social struggles, since it explicitly or implicitly postponed their ultimate justification for the day after a possible electoral victory. This persistent promise of an electoral solution to class struggle in essence undermined the class content of many of these struggles as well as the possibilities for autonomous organization from below. In the same direction, the electoral promise of SYRIZA was to formally abolish the memorandum and its subsequent implementing legal acts right after its rise to power. The content of the pro-SYRIZA vote had characteristics similar to those of that particular cycle of struggle: it was at the same time a class-oriented vote, but also a nationalist and populist one. The ideological surface of SYRIZA’s calls for “national unity” under the “first

ever left-wing government” was concocted to underline its electoral victory, and occluded its attempt to express class interests and social relations which were in profound conflict. In essence, it took it upon itself to reconstitute the state as political mediator in times of crisis, ultimately aiming to achieve a temporary social peace. In order to achieve this, it had to gamble on (and win at a considerable level) the support of workers and unemployed people, as well as on the support of parts of local capital as well as larger fractions of capital. Additionally, it was required to integrate a part of PASOK’s state bureaucracy and political establishment (together with its weakened patronage network), but also to ensure the co-operation of the ‘deep state’ bureaucratic and clientelist mechanisms, by exploiting the willingness of ANEL to form the coalition government. In this way it aimed at the continuity of the state both as a mediator of class interests and as political form.

There should be no more doubt that the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition is just a continuation of the politics of capitalist restructuring. This doesn’t mean that its approach on administration is identical to the administration of ND and PASOK. First, SYRIZA was willing to make some concessions ensuring civil rights and free up some political space on its left, as long as this didn’t question the core of capitalist restructuring. Secondly, SYRIZA tried to handle the situation not in terms of a ‘state of emergency’ and mass repression as its predecessors did, but aiming towards social consensus through a discourse of “humanitarian crisis management”. At the same time, it cultivated a public profile of ‘tough negotiator’ in EU bodies, even if at the same time it was gradually retreating in negotiations; inside Greece and abroad it was following a “promises for all” tactics by gambling on EU stability and supposed initiatives for finding political alternatives.

After the negotiations ran ashore, it has become clear that the political line of SYRIZA to manage the crisis via a “soft” memorandum has failed. After the memorandum drafts exchange with the European “institutions” (which differed on specific class goals) the call for a referendum looks like an effort to remain in power, rather than a well-planned political move that takes into account the repercussions of every option. In other words, SYRIZA was driven to a referendum since it couldn’t “sell” a new memorandum to Greek people without collapsing and losing power. The spasmodic and highly contradictory management tactic that followed the referendum announcement, and its inability to foresee the banks’ lockout and its practical consequences, shows that SYRIZA’s role as a political manager of capital’s restructuring is currently running ashore paving the way for a long-anticipated state default.

In regards to the referendum itself, we should clarify that it is an imposed top-down dilemma set in a context where the movement’s processes are in retreat. It is more than clear what voting for YES stands for and what political results it will produce: an affirmation of a strict neoliberal restructuring and a rapid devaluation of labor and the standard of living; the next steps after a YES would be elections, formation of a pro-memorandum coalition government, implementation

of the new austerity measures and, most probably, extreme repression. It is evident also, who are for this choice: the vast majority of bosses, who are blackmailing and threatening workers in their workplaces, the mass media mob, who spreads terror on a 24/7, the political personnel of the bourgeoisie, but also a fraction of the exploited that have still something to lose, or have been won over by fear. On the other side, things at the NO vote barracks are way less clear, since it will aggregate refusals of the austerity measures that come from very different or possibly conflicting contexts: ranging from NO votes from grassroots class movements, to explicitly nationalist NOs from people who are not against political mediation but just “don’t want the (foreign) creditors to be in charge”. What is clear though, is the way that SYRIZA is going to manage a NO after the referendum: as another negotiation card, to achieve a deal, i.e. a new memorandum that will not bring any substantial improvement for the everyday life of the exploited. Even if developments are difficult to predict, we can’t attribute to a referendum meanings that it cannot carry. For instance, to assume that a NO vote will definitely lead to the release of a social potential through ‘mass spontaneity’. At this moment, when the forms of class organization of a previous cycle of struggles are in deep crisis, it is too optimistic to believe that a NO vote will magically solve all the pre-existing problems.

In any case it is necessary to clarify the following for the purposes of grassroots social movements: First, that the referendum has intensified class polarization, refracted through state politics and, at this moment, disconnected at the grassroots level. Second, although both options lead to a new memorandum a possible victory of YES vote, after five years of a predatory capital restructuring, will be a symbolic victory of the class enemy that could damage the collective morale of the exploited and could cast a shadow in the class struggles for several years to come. We consider it a serious mistake to underestimate the practical consequences of this symbolic victory.

For us, however, it is equally short-sighted to say that the political issue of this period is condensed exclusively in the referendum. We do understand the dilemma posed to us as political subjects between supporting the NO vote and abstaining from elections. But whether the developments that follow lead to new elections and subsequent implementation of the EU’s strict memorandum or a ‘lighter’ memorandum enforced by the existing government, the game seems to be lost for capitalist normalcy and social stability. The queues in front of ATMs, the lack of liquidity and the widespread panic is not going to disappear as if by magic. The question posed to us is urgent: how do we manage to survive and keep sane at the same time? How do we stand collectively in the streets next to each other? There is a number of pressing class and social tasks to which we must respond to immediately, in an organized and collective way, so that fear and (state or diffused) brutality won’t answer first on our behalf. First, we must find a way to ensure we get paid our working wages, claiming what is owned to us directly from our bosses, without accepting any pretences. Second, we must work to ensure a default from below, so that we do not pay a single euro (or a drachma or a ruble) for telephone, electricity, rent, transportation and healthcare bills. Third, we must find a collective way to cover the lack of drugs and essential supplies, to impose to bosses their free distribution on supermarkets and pharmacies. Finally, we have to take advantage of the wealth of our social relations to create (or expand already existing) communication and debate networks, empower assemblies in spatial and temporal terms, thus, to achieve real communities of sharing and struggle. We have to support each other, to find direct collective ways to meet our needs, before these needs crush us.

Assembly for the Circulation of Struggles

<http://skya.espiv.net/category/international/>

July 4, 2015



They say cutback, we say... what?



Introduction

It's now six years since David Cameron's statement of intent at the 2009 Conservative Conference in Cheltenham, where he said that a new Tory government would usher in "a new age of austerity."^[1] "Over the next few years, we will have to take some incredibly tough decisions on taxation, spending and borrowing – things that really affect people's lives," said Cameron. Whenever anyone talks about "tough decisions" or "hard choices," the first question to ask is "Tough for who?" As we shall see in the first part of this article, the choices made by the Conservatives – with the support of the LibDems (remember them?) and most often the Labour Party – have been tough for working class people across the UK.

After a brief overview of the economic reality of austerity, we will take a step back from the stats to think about what austerity actually is – or rather, how it is used as a tool to redistribute money and resources from the working class to the ruling class. We will then look at the "official" responses to austerity from the TUC, and groups like the People's Assembly and the rest of the Left.

Finally, in an article that looks pretty thin on good cheer, we will look at how groups and communities are fighting back against austerity in ways both more imaginative and more fruitful than Saturday afternoons spent traipsing through central London with a speech by Jeremy Corbyn at the end. As we will see – and as you might expect – the way that you think about austerity has a big impact on how you fight it.

Austerity by numbers

According to The Financial Times (and they should know, right?), “austerity measures refer to official actions taken by the government, during a period of adverse economic conditions, to reduce its budget deficit using a combination of spending cuts or tax rises.”^[2] In other words, austerity does not necessarily equal cuts. In France, for example, the 2013 budget made most of its €30bn savings by taxing big companies and the wealthy, avoiding the severe cuts imposed in Spain, Portugal, Greece and the UK.

This should not come as a surprise when the Tories have always presented themselves as a tax-cutting party – at least when it comes to taxes on the rich. In the same speech as the one announcing an “age of austerity,” Cameron ridiculed the idea of proposals for a higher rate of income tax as “distraction burglary” from the then-Labour government.

So we would expect a Conservative regime to rely on spending cuts. And they certainly haven’t disappointed. We are now half way through a nine year austerity programme, and the amount of cuts has increased from an original plan of £120 billion to £210 billion. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), real per capita spending on public services will be cut by 23% between 2007/8 - 2018/19. This will reduce spending on public services and administration to its lowest share of GDP^[3] since at least 1948.^[4]

However, it looks as though the Conservatives have learned a lesson from the Poll Tax in the 1980s. With the Poll Tax, it was clear who the bastards were – the Conservative government. In the spirit of outsourcing, they’ve now made local authorities – often Labour-led – bear the brunt of cutbacks.

Most government departments have had their budgets cut by about a quarter. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is being cut by over a half. So the “tough decisions” are pushed further down the line, and the government gets to score political points about what a mess of things local councils are making. According to a report published by the TUC at the end of last year, this means that “core areas of service delivery, including Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and Waste Management, will increasingly soak up the majority of resource. Other local services, including leisure and cultural facilities, school support services, road maintenance, building new homes and promoting economic growth will shrink by 46% by 2020.”^[5]

But as we shall see, there’s a lot more to austerity than cuts.

“Never let a good crisis go to waste”

These words, sometimes attributed to Winston Churchill, sum up one of the ways that the government uses austerity to screw us over. This happens in big ways and small ways. Often the small ways are the sneakiest, seeking to create an atmosphere of fear and the perception that resources are scarce and under threat.

For example, earlier this year, the NHS started texting people to remind them about their hospital appointments. Nothing wrong with that. Except these texts tell you how much missing your appointment will cost the NHS. My partner had one of these texts (and an email, and a phonecall), and it talked about it costing the taxpayer £180 if she didn’t show up.

This innocent-looking measure (a “nudge”, as Cameron would no doubt call it) serves to shift responsibility for NHS funding shortfalls to the individual, rather than the government where it belongs. These small-scale gestures go hand-in-hand with what Noam Chomsky identifies as a “standard technique of privatisation: defund, make sure things don’t work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital.”^[6] And sure enough, when she did turn up on time for her appointment, my partner waited for two hours before being seen. As someone else in the waiting room commented, “They never see you on time unless you kick off.” Clearly, he’d read some Chomsky. And meanwhile, the perception of scarcity allows the government to use a crisis of their own creation to repeatedly float the idea of charging for more and more NHS services, or allowing parts of the NHS to be run for profit.

What price benefit cuts?

All politicians seem to be in love with hardworking workers who work hard at work. Indeed, just before this year’s election, Cameron stopped talking about hardworking workers and started talking about “people who do the right thing” (that is, work hard at work). This language has been picked up across the Tory front bench.

On the day I started writing this article, Cabinet Office minister Matt Hancock announced a government plan to send young unemployed people to “boot camps” to prepare them for work. Not as a form of punishment, obviously.^[7] And people who “do the right thing” have nothing to fear. Similarly, in the 2015 “emergency budget” (see? Another emergency!), there are plans to remove a whole range of benefits from younger workers – and if you can blame Europe, all the better.

There is a sense in which these clearly are cuts – it’s taking away money that people need to live on. But in another sense, they’re not cuts at all. First, these measures cost a fortune, and second, the private sector are coining it in off the back of them.

Take Iain Duncan Smith’s “flagship” policy, Universal Credit, which was designed to reduce the amount of benefits paid, and make it harder to claim without going on enforced “work experience.” In June this year, there were 65,000 people on Universal Credit. And it’s cost £15.8 billion so far – most of it on computer systems that will have to be replaced before it goes nationwide (if it ever does). That’s a cost of over £24,000 per claimant. I’d rather have the money, if it’s all the same.

It’s a similar story with the Work Programme, where people who don’t “do the right thing” are sent on a range of so-called training courses or work placements (which can involve sitting in a room with nothing to do all day). If you refuse your course

or placement, benefits are cut. But meanwhile the private sector “providers” are paid up to £600 for everyone who walks through the door, and up to £3,500 if anyone actually finds a job. Nice workfare if you can get it.

As with the example of the NHS, we start to see austerity in a different light. Not simply as taking away money and services from people who need them – but also as a way of making massive investments in the private sector. And all in the name of cuts!

They say ‘cutback,’ we say... what?

In October 2011, half a million people took part in the TUC’s “March for the Alternative” in London.

In October 2012, thousands marched through London to hear Ed Miliband tell them a Labour government would have to make “hard choices” if elected, while Len McCluskey of Unite called for a general strike (but has yet to take any action to back it up).

In June 2014, about 50,000 people went on a march and Trafalgar Square rally with Russell Brand.

In October 2014, tens of thousands went on a “Britain needs a payrise” march through London, organised by the TUC.

Most recently on 20 May 2015, 150,000 people went on an “End Austerity Now” march through London, organised by the People’s Assembly.

At the rally at the end of the most recent demo, John Rees of the People’s Assembly (and SWP split-off Counterfire, and the Stop the War Coalition) said, “This is a magnificent demonstration, but it’s only a beginning. We can’t win with only one demonstration.” Now, we’re not sure if John Rees has received a bump to the head, but not only has he not won with one demonstration, he hasn’t won with five. There may have been more big set-piece demos in London for all we know, it’s just hard to separate them out in a google search because they all look the same.

The tactics of the TUC and the Left are restricted to big demos and token one-day strikes. This lack of imagination is captured nicely by the Deterritorial Support Group in their Official Guidance for TUC “March For The Alternative” Demonstration (pictured above right).

Of course, Tony Benn is dead now, but his place has been taken by the outlandish figure of Russell Brand and more recently by veteran leftist Jeremy Corbyn. The timing of so many of the demos in October is enough to make us think that they’re more to do with enabling Leftist groups to engage with new student recruits (“Take a leaflet! Build the demo!”) than they are to do with building meaningful resistance.

In fact, these big demos often seek to neutralise or silence meaningful resistance – sometimes literally. In January 2014, there was a march on London’s City Hall, organised and



YOU



BENN

GO!

Tony Benn probably has more life in him than any proposed march

supported by local housing campaigns, trade unions and tenants groups. It was a small demo, maybe 5,000 people, but for once the march and rally afterwards was an opportunity to meet and make links with others fighting back against social cleansing. Even though it was freezing and pissing down.^[8]

“We’ll have some of that,” thought the politicians, charities and housing associations, “there’s an election coming up and everything.” So two months later, there was a far more orderly “Homes for Britain” rally addressed by unlikely bedfellows Ken Loach and Nigel Farage.^[9] The Focus E15 housing campaign – who had taken part in organising the January demo – were invited to send their banner to the rally, no doubt to give things a veneer of authenticity, but not invited to speak.

That’s an example of how authorised, respectable protest can literally deny a voice to those fighting back. But it happens all the time in a number of ways – especially around election time. “Oh, your housing group wants to have a conference to talk about resisting social cleansing? We’ll organise one for you, but you only get one speaker – and by the way, there’ll be a top table of speakers, with questions from the floor at the end.” “We can support that, we’ll even get leaflets printed for you, but we can’t really do direct action, it’s divisive.” “Of course we need to involve the Labour Party, we need to build maximum unity on this issue.”

These are all things we have personally encountered from the Left in one city in the past few months. And if you complain, you’re accused of...

Sectarianism: bro, do you even Marx?

Leftists – Marxist or otherwise – love to accuse anarchists of sectarianism, or of being “divisive.” But we’re all about working class unity, we just don’t think that unity should extend as far as groups and individuals who pursue an anti-working class agenda. Inviting Ed Miliband to an anti-austerity rally to talk about the “hard choices” that a pro-austerity Labour Party would have to make, for example.

The accusation of sectarianism is so frequent, it’s worth dusting off *The Communist Manifesto* to see what Marx actually says:

“The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.”

So the next time someone calls you a sectarian for refusing to buy their party’s paper, you can quote that at them.

We also don’t like the way that appeals to “unity” (which often mean “Shut up and do as you’re told”) can serve to silence people who experience different kinds of oppression – whether based on race, gender or disability. One of the things that a repertoire of protest restricted to big demonstrations does is exclude people who – for whatever reason – cannot take part, as the many people who took to Twitter using the hashtag #wecantmarch were keen to point out.

Austerity and the social wage

As we’ve seen, austerity is about more than cuts. It’s an attempt to adjust the economy even further in favour of the ruling class – by driving down wages, by creating new opportunities for private profit, by taking away everything that we need to do anything other than simply survive and be hardworking workers who work hard at work, by making it harder to fight back.

The official account of austerity – shared by both left and right – would have us believe that governments give things to the working class because the government is nice. Like housing. Or libraries. Or decent childcare. And then another government is elected who are mean and horrible, so they take it away. The name of the game then becomes to get rid of the mean government and elect another nice one. Or make the government sorry for being horrid by marching through Central London on a Saturday. Or something.

In reality, what we have is a result of class struggle – concessions are granted by the ruling class because of the relationship of class forces, and the willingness of the working class to fight in its own interest. To quote the Anarchist Federation’s Introduction to Anarchist Communism:

“When we talk about a social wage we’re talking about all the different ways that working class people receive services

from the state and the ruling class that are in effect part of their share of the profits of industry. Healthcare, subsidised and social housing, transport and utilities like water and electricity, libraries and social services, benefits and many other things can be seen as part of the social wage. Like wage increases and shorter working days these services are often the result of previous rounds of struggle, victories won by the working class in the past. They are also, just like the benefits we receive at work, often used to control us.”^[10]

When we see housing as part of the social wage, we can see that the post-war Labour government did not embark on a programme of social house-building because they were nice people. They did it because of a wave of mass squatting after the Second World War and a fear of civil unrest. On a single day in 1946, 1,500 people squatted flats in Kensington, Pimlico and St.Johns Wood in what was called “The Great Sunday Squat.”^[11]

As the Anarchist Federation put it in the run-up to the 2011 “March for the Alternative,” “Everything we’ve won, they want it back.” In 2015, we can say “everything they want to take, we’ll fight them for it.” The tactics and spirit of the 1946 squatters are still alive across the UK. You won’t find them on the big demos – or if you do, the paper-sellers, placard hander-outers and vacuous “maximum unity” enthusiasts will be doing their best to drown them out.

We’ll give the last word to one of them, who wrote on Facebook the day after this year’s election result:

“We have been creating our own power at Sweets Way and it is not a power that was phased, one way or the other by the election results. It is a power that has emerged in spite of politicians, and which will continue to grow without them.”^[12]

- [1] <http://web.archive.org/web/20090429083220/http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/apr/26/david-ferguson-conservative-economic-policy1>
- [2] <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=austerity-measure>
- [3] Gross Domestic Product defined as the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period.
- [4] https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC%20Final%20Report%20Dec'14_1.pdf
- [5] See note 4.
- [6] <http://www.chomsky.info/talks/20110407.htm>
- [7] <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/aug/17/unemployed-young-people-work-boot-camp-tory-minister>
- [8] <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/31/hundreds-gather-london-march-for-homes-protest-city-hall-affordable-housing>
- [9] <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/mar/17/homes-for-britain-housing-election-construction-activists>
- [10] <https://afed.org.uk/introduction-to-anarchist-communism/>
- [11] Webber, H. ‘A Domestic Rebellion: The Squatters’ Movement of 1946’ in *Ex Historia* (2012) 4 pp125-146.
- [12] <https://sweetswayresists.wordpress.com/2015/05/09/post-ge2015/>

Austerity & Debt

An interview with Kim from Critisticuffs

Austerity is something we are constantly hearing about. It is discussed by everyone from Tories and right-wingers through to those on the Left. We were lucky enough to catch up with Kim from Critisticuffs to find out more about their insightful analysis and critique of common thinking about austerity.

Could you tell us something about some of the groups and projects you are involved in?

I'm a member of the London-based group Critisticuffs. Some of us in Critisticuffs are also involved in the Kittens journal, together with some people from 'Gruppen gegen Kapital und Nation' (groups against capital and nation). Our project is to explain and criticise capitalism, the nation and the wrong ideas that people have about them and each other, such as racism, sexism, antisemitism. For this, we mainly do workshops, seminars, reading groups and produce texts. This is because we observed that many people are aware of, say, the poverty around us, but unfortunately, they then also have wrong explanations for why this is, which leads to wrong practice.

Thinking about this, what are we encouraged to think about austerity?

Austerity is actually a good example of wrong explanations being in circulation. Many people will know that austerity produces hardships but most people will misunderstand why. Most people on the Left dismiss austerity as a (misguided) political project by conservative, 'neoliberal' governments without any basis in economic necessity ('Tory cuts'). Against this, those who support austerity say it is a simply given necessity. In this narrative, sovereign debt (as in debt owed by a country) is a result of frivolous spending, a deviation from good, sober governance. The argument usually put forward is an analogy to credit card debt. We are encouraged to think of the state's finances like consumer credit: you have to pay it off or the debt collectors take your TV: "you can't live beyond your means forever".

Why is that last bit wrong?

A capitalist state is not constrained in what it can spend in the way, say, a private household is. Furthermore, unlike a company, it does not earn money by partaking in capitalist endeavours: investing in order to make a profit. Instead, the state has the power to decide on its earnings itself – by collecting taxes.

So the state could just collect what it wants in taxes?

The way the state arranges its tax regime is that it participates in the economic success within its territory. Any economic activity gets taxed, from companies' tax, to income tax and sales tax (VAT); the state takes a percentage of the economic activity of companies and private citizens. The income of the latter in turn again being dependent on the success of companies. In this way, the state makes itself dependent on the economic activity and success of the companies active on its territory, an activity which it neither controls nor wants to control.

At the same time, imposing taxes on companies means that they have less money available for investments which stifles their growth. Collecting taxes is detrimental to capitalist growth.

Is that an argument for lower taxes from the state's point of view?

Well, taxes are used to spend on infrastructure, the military, the police, education, healthcare, research and so on. Regardless of the popularity of the individual expenditures, they all aim to serve a common purpose: to create the conditions for and the continued success of the national economy. The police and judicial system make sure that the foundation of capital accumulation – private property – is protected through the maintenance of law. Education and healthcare are supposed to provide capital with a sufficiently healthy and competitive workforce, now and in the future. The creation of industrial areas and business parks allow new businesses to settle and to expand. Roads and public transportation allow the workforce, materials and goods to reach their destinations. Hence, in order to provide the capitalist economy with the infrastructure it needs to function, the state spends money, which is why it can be precarious to implement massive spending cuts. From the standpoint of facilitating growth, therefore, cutting spending can be rather counter-productive.

So that's an argument for higher taxes from the state's point of view?

Indeed, the state has to deal with the following self-made dilemma: It uses taxes to provide the conditions for capitalist growth on its territory and its tax income is dependent on the success of the capital operating on its territory. But at the same time, these taxes also stifle growth, a purpose of the whole exercise in the first place: taxes are used to create the conditions for capitalist growth and taxes are detrimental to capitalist growth.

So we see, when it comes to the national budget it is not easy, arguments can be made both against higher taxation and against reduced spending. It is quite neat then that there is another way for a state to pay for the expenditures considered necessary, without immediately taking the money out of the economy: debt.

Debt allows a state to finance what it wants without impairing its capital's capacity to invest: now credit is used to finance the conditions under which future resources of revenue, e.g. taxable profits, are supposed to develop. For example, the state takes on new debt in order to finance high speed train lines to connect the South of England with the North, hoping for a revitalisation of a sluggish area. If this speculation works out then the new bit of infrastructure is a tidy boost for the national economy allowing it to grow. More debt in this sense then hopefully means more growth, which then justifies this debt.

The mounting debts of nation states are hence not the result of frivolous spending. Because there are always good reasons to spend, and because it is an apt way to pay for these things, we find that most states have a huge amount of outstanding debt and have had so for some time. This way successful capitalist states live permanently 'beyond their means': so that their means develop in the future.

Austerity is a policy to tackle sovereign debt. What is the relationship between the two?

The point of austerity is not pay off the debt, but to reduce the absolute amount of debt a state owes. Actually, no successful capitalist state would be able to pay off its debt obligations from taxation – contrary to popular belief that the taxpayer has to shoulder the burden of debt – unless it would be willing to severely impair its economy and ruin it. Instead, when states have to pay up to one investor they borrow the money from another (or the same) investor – a process called refinancing. Whether this works out, crucially depends on that they find investors who are willing to buy these debts.

States borrow by issuing bonds. Bonds are a form of loans. By purchasing a bond the buyer is lending money to the state – with the promise of repayment in full, at a certain time, with regular interest payments in between. In addition to having this entitlement on repayment, the bonds can also be sold to other people on the so-called secondary bond market. The secondary market is simply the name for the fact that those who bought these bonds trade them as well. The buyers of bonds are mostly financial institutions such as banks and pension funds on the one hand and other states on the other hand. Financial institutions buy bonds as a form of investment, in order to make profit, either by taking the interest paid or by reselling the bonds at a higher price. What makes bonds issued by successful capitalist states particularly interesting for financial institutions is that, firstly, they were and are considered comparatively safe investments, even though usually at the expense of paying only low interest. Secondly, successful capitalist states have issued a lot of these bonds and many investors are interested in them, which means there is a huge secondary market where these securities are traded. These two qualities of state bonds taken together mean that financial institutions hold on to rather safe titles of revenue streams that they can sell at any time – usually for a price which does not fluctuate much. To them it is almost like having money which also pays interest – the best kind of money.

Indeed, this is how these banks use state bonds and this usage is encouraged by state regulation. However, this also means that any doubt about the quality of a state as a debtor is of immediate relevance, not just for when its bonds mature (Will the UK be able to repay me in 10 years' time?)" Instead, the question affects the ability to sell these bonds on the secondary market now and hence can undermine their money-like quality (can I sell my bonds at any time for a stable price?).

Since investors rely on other investors buying and selling bonds, they do not only have to consider their own assessment of safety of these bonds but also what the general market's verdict is. They speculate on the speculation of other investors. Doubt about whether other investors would be willing to buy a certain bond makes the bond less attractive, possibly leading to a downward spiral of devaluation.

In response to declining trust in its quality as an investment – expressed through changing assessments by rating agencies – states implement measures to boost confidence in themselves as debtors and/or have to offer higher interest rates to their creditors. So, when financial institutions distrust each other's willingness and hence their own ability to trade a state's debt, that debt becomes more expensive to maintain for the state. Therefore, the ability of a state to find someone to buy its new bonds at a good price (that is low interest), in order to be able to fulfil their old obligations and to spend money on future growth, is heavily dependent on the verdict that they are able and willing to service their debts.

And this is then what led to the consensus about why there was no alternative to austerity. In the past, the risk of sovereign defaults was generally seen as low for successful capitalist states. However, the financial crisis and subsequent sovereign debt crisis changed that. The growing deficit in most states, because of the bailouts, because of reduced income due to the recession, and because of increased spending to combat its effects on the economy led to an increased concern about the security of sovereign debt even of successful capitalist states like the UK. The shrinkage or stagnation of economic performance of their respective national economies only added to that concern. Even worse from the perspective of their creditors was that the states just spent all that money to secure bad debt of businesses which have failed in their purpose of capitalist growth. That is, money was spent unproductively – not on the development of national economies but merely to preserve the status quo – and it was put into question whether these states were still good investments. Austerity programmes are therefore mainly measures to boost trust from investors so that they keep on lending.

How does cutting spending restore trust from investors when state spending is necessary for the economy?

The key data point that investors use to gauge the quality of a state as an investment is the often referenced ratio of gross debt to GDP. This relates the total debt a state has with the Gross Domestic Product. This figure is meant to express the overall economic output of a national economy. The debt/GDP ratio is hence meant to express how much a state's debt is in line with the growth of its national capital. If the ratio remains steady both grow at the same rate, if the ratio increases – say from 60% to 100% – a state's debt has grown faster than the national economy.

While investors and (mainly) commentators use this ratio to assess a state's credit worthiness, it should be noted that none of the ratios discussed in the media for themselves express a 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' relationship. Regardless of whether the ratio is 60% as stipulated in the EU Maastricht treaty or 150%, no state could or plans to pay off its gross debt by confiscating 60% to 150% of its economy's output. As explained above, states rely on investors lending them new money whenever they have to pay back some other investor.

Still, regardless of whether these numbers are in themselves meaningful, a state now is concerned with managing capitalist growth of its national economy on credit where that economic growth justifies that credit. In this situation the point is not so much to achieve a specific debt to GDP ratio or certain absolute saving in expenses, but to demonstrate to investors that the government does everything necessary to restore growth to justify debt levels.

In this situation the state is especially self-critical in its spending. When it looks at all the areas it might want to spend money on, it always decides where to spend it based on considerations of what it considers most important. No expenditure is safe from this consideration. Creating a national budget means to compare the benefits of such wildly differing expenses as the NHS (keeping the population healthy enough so that it can function as human resources) and the nuclear warfare programme (for respect from other states in international competition). The questions simply are: will the potential target of expenditure be worthwhile in comparison to other priorities the state might have? And: will the potential target of expenditure justify the burden on the economy through taxation of deficit? Often the decision where to spend money and how much is not without tension: a lot of disagreements between political parties and factions are about what part of the budget is more important than another one. This is not different in an austerity budget, except that every item in the budget has to survive even more scrutiny regarding its usefulness for the power of the state and the growth of the economy.

Why does it always seem to be welfare spending which is targeted by cuts? What does the bedroom tax, or any other cut, have to do with the UK's AAA global credit rating?

Welfare spending is a common target of cuts. This is partly because it is a good chunk of state spending and also because it is easily identified as an unproductive expenditure. Merely providing for people who are not used by the national economy to produce profits – so that they can in the future – is considered a waste of good money. The bedroom tax is a good example of this. It sends the signal that the UK is revisiting all its expenditures and cuts those deemed superfluous for the purposes of a strong economy and state. In contrast, cutting down on nuclear weapon spending decreases the imperialist respect from other state directly, whereas cuts in the welfare sector 'only' lower the standard of living of those on benefits.

Cutting welfare spending has another benefit. It does not just save money but simultaneously signals to creditors that the state will only spend money on what is now seen as productive projects. In addition, a reduction of welfare benefits will also put pressure on the unemployed, people with disabilities, or low income earners to accept (second) jobs. That is, to accept jobs regardless of how bad the pay is, working conditions are or the suitability of the job. By making it even harder to survive on benefits, the state can 'persuade' people to accept worse jobs under worse conditions. This puts additional pressure on wages which in turn is a basis for increased profits for capital. Working 40 hours a week for

less money than the dole makes little sense and hence out-of-work benefits effectively establish a minimum wage. More generally, if more people are competing on the labour market, this drives down the price of labour. Cutting benefits means worse conditions for those with a job.

The left frequently criticises austerity measures for punishing the poor and vulnerable. However, you state that “proposing alternative ways for the state to save money is missing the point: mass impoverishment is not a side effect but a deliberate goal of these policies”^[1] – could you expand on this?

The hardships of austerity are not a fact of life, a by-product of stripping away excess or an expression of a misguided policy. They are the direct result of:

1. A programme which is intended to show to the financial markets that their concerns are being taken seriously, by cutting costs which are now considered superfluous. This way the government demonstrates that the costs of the state remain in balance with a nations' capital growth as demanded by the markets.
2. A programme which is intended not to burden the growth of capital. On the contrary, states improve the conditions for companies to accumulate, not least by making people more desperate jobseekers.
3. A programme which is intended to serve – if necessary – as a signal to express the government's willingness to implement even painful and unpopular measures against popular discontent in the interest of servicing the debt: servicing debt obligations is and will remain the highest priority.

Would there be any difference in the fiscal policies of an ostensibly Left wing government?

The Left response has been one of Keynesian measures: counter cyclical spending, deficit spending or stimulus packages. This is not completely off. For example, spending has been a response to the crisis from the very beginning. The government knows that state spending can be useful for the economy. However, in the left-wing variant, spending would go directly to the people in the form of increased welfare and tax cuts for the poor. This money then is supposed to generate demand for various goods and services which in turn stimulate the economy to meet this demand. This increase in economic activity then is supposed to allow the repayment of debt or to justify the increased sovereign debt when more is borrowed later. In short, what makes this variant of Keynesian ideas so interesting to people on the left or people campaigning against cuts to services is that they promise to bring about capitalist growth by giving poor people money – win-win, so to speak.

Note, though, that potential welfare programmes and hence welfare recipients play the role of a means not an end. Money spent on them ought to stimulate the economy; they are a



means to the economy instead of the other way around. The end of this endeavour is economic growth and the state's ability to maintain the services it deems necessary through debt. These reformers campaign for a plan in which the role of those addressed is that of being material for the sake of capital and the state.

In fact, this topsy-turvy relationship of economic growth and provision for those producing it expresses itself in the moderation of the proposed demand. If state spending on poor people was such a great means to get an economy going, why not increase benefits massively? Why not give everybody on the dole £5,000 each month? That would surely generate much more demand than simply maintaining the meagre current benefits. By restricting their demands to the current poverty level these reformers indicate that they too have not found a convincing argument why material provision for everyone would make sense according to the principles of capitalist economic growth. They implicitly recognise that widespread poverty and national economic success belong together. It also implies that these Left reformers understand that the dole is a means to convince people to find a job with a company – it is only meant as a 'safety net', a means to maintain the poverty of a worker – and not a means to end it.

That's the contradiction of the Left which, on the one hand, campaigns against poverty but does this via well-meaning suggestions on how to reform the welfare state to be better at what it is for. They know that their demands are demands against capital, but they think if they moderate them enough they can make them compatible with its accumulation. We do not claim that this cannot work, but it always means committing to a situation where the premise of economic success is generalised poverty.

Thanks very much for taking the time to speak with us. We encourage our readers to look at their website or go to one of their meetings.

Info at: <https://critisticuffs.org/>

Kittens Journal is available thought: <http://antinationa.org/en>

[1] See: <https://critisticuffs.org/events/poverty-of-the-state-the-state-of-poverty-glasgow/austerity/>

Fight for the City



Part Two

No place to run: control of space by capital and the State

In this series of articles, we are looking at the ways in which the city is a site of class struggle. In the last issue of Organise we looked at how capital has made massive profits out of investment in housing developments, resulting in a serious housing crisis and social cleansing for the working class. In this issue, we examine how capital, with the State's support, is seeking to control all aspects of city life such that every inch of ground is a source of profit for someone.

We are already exploited at work. Wages are as low as the bosses can get away with in order to maximise their profits. But we are exploited in other ways. Increasingly, all aspects of our non-working lives involve the spending of our wages on things that make profits for others: landlords, banks, and all the companies providing the goods and services that we buy. It wouldn't matter if it was an equal exchange so that we worked 40 hours a week in exchange for goods and services that also took 40 hours a week to produce. But it doesn't work that way; at every stage, whether in the act of producing or consuming, more surplus is creamed off our wages, creating profits and wealth for a few. The fight for the city is therefore a class struggle- a struggle against those who want to squeeze everything they can from us, to the point that individuals are nothing but a 'resource' or a Lego brick.

The Smart City

It may sound like something out of a science fiction novel, but the concept of the 'smart' city is one of the latest new ideas from companies like IBM and Cisco. Songdo in North Korea is a city built according to this concept. Using sophisticated technology, the whole city can be run by an impersonal 'brain'. All buildings are climate controlled and have computerised access. Traffic, waste, accidents, electricity etc are all monitored centrally. Electronic sensors allow the city's brain to respond to the movement of residents. The buzz words are efficiency, optimisation, predictability, convenience and safety. Everything 'works' as long as people are doing what they are meant to do- go to work, come home, shop and engage in some leisure activities that are acceptable- and that most likely cost money. If there is an accident or something unexpected happens, then the 'brain' can dispatch the relevant 'services of order'. Is this the future?

Private, Public and the Commons

The UK may not have gone this far yet in the engineering of the city but there are a number of trends that indicate we are going in that direction. We are used to cities as places where people freely wander, meet up with people, have a rest on a bench and read, play games, explore new places, gather to protest and a host of other activities which may or may not involve spending money. The spaces where we do this are often referred to as 'public'. However, we can also distinguish between what is public and what might be called the 'Commons'. Public spaces are still regulated by the State, which is meant to represent the public. The Commons refers to areas which are more autonomous, which different groups of people may take over at different times and use the space

for their own ends. The history of land has been the history of the gradual diminishing of anything that we would refer to as common land. The State has introduced a range of measures over the years to the extent that what we do on any piece of land is carefully regulated, even if it is considered public space.

Nevertheless, public land, is meant to be land used by the public and therefore should have free access and greater freedom of use than private land. Unfortunately, even public space is now passing into private hands. And, public space itself is being increasingly regulated and controlled. This makes the distinction between the 'Commons' and the 'public' even sharper.

The Walled City

When we think of a city in the Middle Ages we think of one enclosed by walls. Inside those walls is the seat of political power (the castle) and all the commercial activity. It is also where the well-off live. Outside the city walls are the peasants and the poor. If they want to come into the city, they have to line up outside the city gates and ask permission from the guards. Only if they have 'business' inside, are they allowed in. Our cities are becoming increasingly like these walled cities. Key public parts of the city are being handed over to private companies. Manhattan in New York has been turned into one vast gated community. Similar things are happening in Britain. There may not be one big wall, but a number of enclaves that are owned by private interests. Similar to the 19th century when London was divided up between various members of the aristocracy, not only London, but also Liverpool and Manchester, are being divided up amongst various private developers, whose main aim is to make money out of the property. It is hard to know how much of our cities is in private hands; Britain does not have a proper record of who owns what, unlike in other countries. The Forestry Commission and local authorities are still the biggest landowners as far as we can tell. But in the 21st century corporations have increased their share. Moreover, sale of local authority land is a major plank of government policy, so we can expect the share of land owned by corporations to dramatically increase.

The financial areas of London, Canary Wharf and Broadgate, were some of the first places to become privately owned. As their tentacles spread out, more and more space is being swallowed up. Canary Wharf is now owned by the Qatar sovereign wealth fund, led by Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani. It already owns other London landmarks such as the Shard skyscraper and Harrods department store. Canary Wharf is worth billions to the owners, mainly for office rentals but increasingly for luxury residential towers.

Shopping centres are another example of privatised space. The new Australian-owned Westfield Shopping Mall in Stratford is the biggest in Europe. Liverpool 1, full of up-scale shops catering for well-off suburbanites, dominates the centre, covering 34 streets. Manchester city centre has also been turned over to a private company. The centre has now been transferred into a giant shopping complex and luxury apartments. The Free Trade Hall, an important part of different stages of the city's history, is now part of a hotel

chain. This trend came about under Labour legislation that introduced Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). This meant that a private company could take over the running of an area with the sole purpose of making it as profitable as possible for businesses. The company who has control will tax local businesses and use the revenue to create a 'trading environment'. This policy was copied from the US and implemented uncritically in Britain.

The gated residential community is another example of an internal wall in the city. The Bow Quarter in East London in what was once the Bryant May match factory (site of the famous 'match girl' strike) was the first one, opened in 1988. We discussed how these communities are designed to isolate the well-off from the working class in the area in the last issue (eg the Poor Doors campaign). However, we are seeing not just gated residential areas, but whole towns created within the city. One example is the Shard in London. Its architect called it a 'vertical city' because of the mixture of different uses. Eight thousand people work there but there are also flats and restaurants. Westferry Circus in Canary Wharf, set to be Britain's second tallest building, has a gym, a library, shops and even a play area for children. Kingdom Tower in Saudi Arabia will have 35,000 people and be three times the height of the Shard. These developments, as well as being exclusive, are completely inward-looking and cut off from the community. Shopkeepers near the Shard have commented that no one from the Shard shops locally. There is a direct corridor from London Bridge station to the Shard. Workers will come off the train and go straight into the Shard, and then back again at the end of the day.

Consequences

The growing privatisation of space in the city has a number of serious consequences, both for what happens on the private space itself and the general attitude towards public space. The first obvious consequence is the fact that as these spaces are private, they have the right to exclude who they want from their 'property'. Like with the 'Smart City', technology in the form of CCTV cameras are used to ensure that the only people who are in a private space are those that belong there, which effectively means that you can only be there if you work there or if you are spending money. Manchester gained the title of ASBO capital of the UK because of all the people it was excluding from the city centre. This is because the main aim of the BIDs is to make the space 'safe and clean'. In the US BIDs have meant the exclusion of the homeless from city centres. In New York, where the BID concept was first introduced, there have been stories of BID employees beating up the homeless. This attitude towards the homeless is now spreading in Britain. Walking around Liverpool city centre, there are no homeless to be seen in the Liverpool 1 area. It is like crossing an invisible line- on one side there are still signs of the homeless begging and then all of a sudden there are none.

The latest initiative designed to protect the so-called majority against an undesirable minority is the new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). This shows that measures to control and exclude are not confined to private property. This

was part of a patchwork of measures that came from the *Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act* which became law last year. Because the spaces are officially 'public' they cannot exclude people but they can ban certain forms of behaviour. Councils can decide what behaviours they will ban depending on local circumstances. Some examples include:

- Making it a crime to have an open alcohol container in Cambridge
- A ban on the consumption of alcohol and legal highs in public spaces in the city centre by Lincoln Council
- Making it a crime to beg for money in certain areas of Poole, Dorset
- Hackney's attempt to ban begging and sleeping rough (the inclusion of rough sleepers has now been withdrawn after a big campaign)
- Other proposals include, use of amplified music, busking, pigeon feeding and the sale of lucky charms

The law is so broad that councils could ban just about anything. This means that even so-called public space is now being taken over. The aim is supposedly to improve the quality of life of the majority but the end result is the building of another wall that has far-reaching implications for not only the poor, the young and the vulnerable but for political activity.

Protesters unwanted

Whether it be a privatised shopping mall or a closely regulated public space, it is becoming increasingly difficult to engage in any public protest. One example was when the Occupy movement wanted to protest against the financial activities of the City of London. They found that protests were illegal throughout the area, by decree of the Corporation of London, the local authority responsible for the 'Square Mile'. They ended up camping outside St Paul's which is just outside, and even then the government made it clear that they wanted them removed for upsetting the tourists who are a major source of income for companies. So even though the City has supposed 'public' spaces, they are privately managed and therefore access can be controlled, making it impossible to organise any protest against those who caused the austerity we are now facing. The same goes for Canary Wharf and Broadgate. When a group of activists wanted to organise a protest in Canary Wharf, they were contacted by an advertising company which told them that the space was an 'experimental advertising space' and the daily rate was £4,750. It is clear that space is being used as a place to make money and not as an open space where people can exercise any rights we have to protest.

Street stalls are one of the main ways that people get a chance to talk, share, and exchange ideas, publicise campaigns and give out or sell publications that challenge the system. However, it has become increasingly difficult to do so. Any political group who has tried to set up a stall in Liverpool 1, Manchester city centre or by Stratford Westfield will know what it is like. They will soon be approached by security guards and

asked to leave, told it is private property and that they have no right to be there. With the new PSPOs, so-called public spaces could also be forbidden. One could easily imagine local authorities, fed up with protests and pickets aimed at their own policies, deciding that any stalls were detracting from the quality of life for the majority (eg Robin Wales in Newham, London who can't be too happy about the weekly stall organised by the Focus E15 campaign!).

Transformation of Parks

Parks have always been a place for people to gather. All sorts of people come to walk, picnic or just sit, getting away from all the other places that are dominated by traffic or consumption. However, this is also changing. The new Olympic 'park' is one example of a new style of park. There is hardly any space to actually sit and have a picnic on grass and the 'wild' parts are confined to a narrow strip along the channelled and controlled river. Most of the park is taken up with huge sport facilities (eg the West Ham stadium) and cafes. And, the easiest way of getting to the park is through Westfield shopping centre. Most of the space that the Olympics once occupied is being turned into offices and apartment blocks- none within reach of the average local. But the tendency to use parks as a money-maker is not confined to this one example. With the cuts in government funding those who run the parks are looking for ways to make money. A report just published called Rethinking Parks, produced by Nesta, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund (<http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>) aims to find "new business models" for the nation's parks in order to 'create a more sustainable future'. Due to drastic cuts in funding from national government, more and more parks are looking to such a model. The report suggests various 'income-generating' models.

Generating income through:

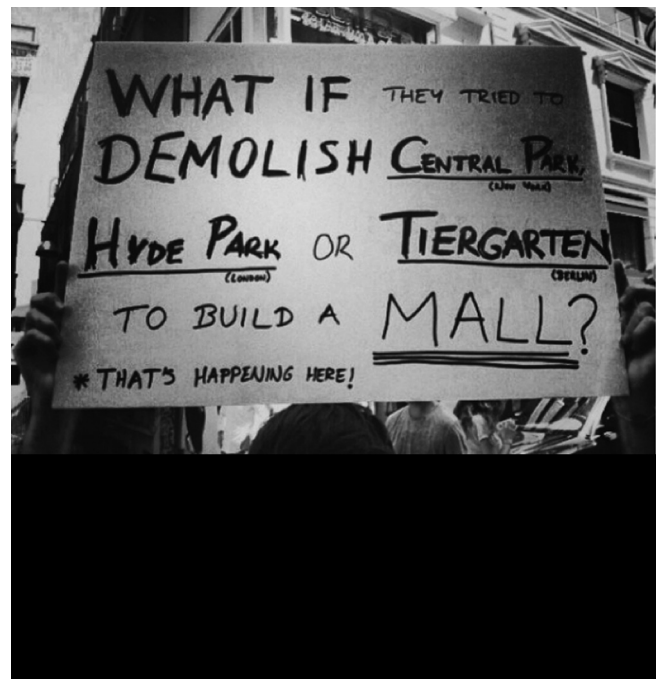
- Concessions and events
- Taxation
- Eco-system development
- Commercial development

We have already seen our parks turned into venues for high-priced music festivals and fun-fairs. But this model is being extended to a range of activities. For example, Hackney is proposing the idea of 'pop-up meeting spaces' which will be offered to local businesses.

Parks have also been used as places for people to gather in assemblies or political rallies. It is still possible to do this as long as the gatherings are not too big. However, with the trend in control of public spaces, it is likely that there will be attempts to limit such gatherings. Instead, priority will be given to those who will pay money for the use of the park. And of course, everyone will be affected if park authorities decide to 'tax' people or even charge people for the use of the park. One way this is happening already is by charging for the use of toilet facilities.

Tourism

We have all been tourists somewhere so it may seem unfair to criticise tourists for what is happening to our cities. However, the massive growth in tourism is having a significant effect on places all over the world. People travelling to places because they are remote ensure that the place is no longer remote, affecting the culture of many once-isolated tribes. People travel to the world's most famous cities because of their history and culture. But with so many coming, the place itself is no longer a repository of that history and culture- but takes on a new identity as a place where there are tourists and no one else. For example, tourists rushed to see Prague and other beautiful cities of Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall. These cities were interesting because they had been 'untouched'. But it didn't take long for those places to become something else. The centre of Prague was essentially bought up by foreigners and has become the mecca for stag and hen parties, with drunken foreigners making fools of themselves in what was one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. The locals who used to flock to the centre, now remain in the outer neighbourhoods, only venturing into the centre if they have visitors who want to be shown around.



The same thing is happening to British cities. London is rapidly changing its character. What is happening to Soho is a case in point. The originally bars and music venues are being shut down to make way for both Cross-rail and the creation of a shinier new Soho, one that will have completely lost the bohemian atmosphere that people come to Soho for. There will soon be new hotels, restaurants and clubs, claiming to be keeping the old traditions but in fact being a lifeless copy of the original. This is what excessive tourism means- the changing of a place into something that has lost its character that was developed from centuries of people interacting in a specific place. That character cannot be artificially engineered- but that is in fact what developers want to do. The aim of course is to make a place into something that can be **consumed** and therefore be a source of profit.

In order for a city to make money out of its history and culture, it has to package it in such a way that it creates symbolic capital. In other words, it is seen as having something special that attracts people in order to experience whatever it is that is seen as special. Some cities such as London and New York have always been places that people have wanted to visit. However, other cities, such as Liverpool and Manchester, have had to work at it. Liverpool has transformed itself in the past decade, with the new, shiny city centre. Derelict areas are now shopping centres or 'heritage' sites, such as the Liverpool Docks. Tourists wander the area, visiting the museums and sometimes catching glimpses through a hole in the ground, of the actual docks themselves. Quiggins, a cultural icon was demolished, as part of the Liverpool 1 development, obviously not enough of one to attract the tourists. But the city repackaged their sordid history of involvement in the slave trade and created a museum of slavery. There is nothing wrong with having such a museum to reveal the horrors of that period but it is the way the target audience seems to be the tourists. Slavery thus becomes part of Liverpool's symbolic capital- another way for the city to profit from the traffic in human beings.

Films have also had a role in remaking a place. Notting Hill Gate and the Portobello market was largely a market for Londoners but is now a major stop on the tourist itinerary since the release of the popular film. One example of the extent that a place can be made into something to be consumed is what happened to the 'blue door' that was meant to be the house of the main character. The actual owner of the house was constantly pestered by people knocking on his door and wanting to take photos. In the end, he took up the offer of an American tourist and sold his door for an incredibly high price. The tourist can now look at the door whenever they want and the owner of the house has solved his problem, making sure his new door was any colour but blue! A more extreme example of the commodification of aspects of city life is the film *City of God* which was filmed in Rio's shanty towns. There are now tours of slums, both in Rio but also in the slums of Mumbai in India. Even poverty is something that someone can make money out of, selling the city to the tourists.

What do we want the future of cities to be?

Difficult question. Cities are constantly changing and different groups of people come and go and with the movement of people comes changes in culture and in the character of the city. There have been many attempts to control what happens in the city. The whole concept of city 'planning' is about this. Many of the initiatives appear to have been for good reasons. We cannot argue with trying to make a place more pleasant to live in, to improve the environment, to have a functioning transport system and to make sure everyone has a place to live. However, something is also lost when there is too much planning. The idea of the completely sanitised and perfectly engineered city would be one that has lost its soul. In addition, planning might appear to be about what is best for everyone, but in fact it is not a neutral tool, but one that is firmly in the hands of the ruling class. In 19th century Paris, Haussman demolished whole neighbourhoods and drove through huge boulevards, the aim being to make it easier to control a restive population. Planning therefore is one of the many tools used as a way of increasing the surplus that can be extracted from the city by making it a place money-making can safely take place, without the interference of the potentially rebellious and discontented masses. Therefore, however we answer the above question, the future of the city must come from us, the working class. The future of the city is therefore a key component of the class struggle.

References

- David Harvey (2013) *Rebel Cities*. London: Verso.
Mike Davis (2006) *Planet of the Slums*. London: Verso.
Anna Minton (2009) *Ground Control*. London: Penguin.
Ben Campkin (2013) *Remaking London*. London: IB Tauris.

In the next issue of Organise! we look at alternatives and the resistance. This will include a discussion of the anarchist perspective on housing and the city as well as the ways groups and individuals are fighting for freedom of movement and for control of space.

NOT UP OUR ALLEY!

Local councils in London have been letting go various alleys, lanes and courts over the last few decades to private developers. It remains unclear as to whether they were even given a price for relinquishing these public thoroughfares. Alleys and lanes that have been handed over include Greek Court, Ivy Bridge Lane, Miles Place, Man in the Moon Passage, Dunn's Passage, Heathcock Court, Prince's Circus, Castle Place, New Inn Yard and King's Arms Court.

Dominic Pinto, a one-man campaigner against the stopping up or gating of alleys writes: "becoming aware of some stopping up, and gatings, that have taken place, some perhaps of long vintage, and on what basis is not clear. Council policies are vague, and details not easily found on their web sites or more generally. Proposals do not seem to be widely publicised, and some policy documents I've seen suggest that developers and building owners may have been encouraged to seek blocking up of what are ancient rights of ways, alleys, courts and passages in Central London. The absence of a definitive map under the rights of way statutes in Central London hampers efforts to establish these rights, and it may not always be clear if a path, alleyway, etc., is adopted highway".

These alleys and lanes have existed for centuries. Now developers are seizing them with hardly a whimper from local councils and having them stopped up or gated. Alleys that were part of the public thoroughfare are under siege as much as other parts of our public space.

Alleys and yards are often taken away from us with the excuse that they are sites for urinating and vomiting. Such was the case with New Inn Yard in Shoreditch, possibly the source of the lost river Walbrook. The yard is now gated and the buildings that line the old cobbled thoroughfare are all luxury flats. So the ruse of public nuisance was used to provide a gated enclave for the rich. The benefits of opulent apartments in this now gated yard are often touted on the Internet by estate agents.

THE WORKING CLASS NEEDS WHO?

Dave Pike is the new general secretary of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, aka the wobblies or the wobs) and he has a mission. Touring the UK under the slogan "The Working Class Needs You!" he is hoping to get people to join the IWW.

Rather than review what Dave has to say (I highly recommend getting down to his tour and hearing what he has to say for himself), I want to examine whether anarchists should join the IWW in order to undertake their workplace agitation.

The answer for me lies in looking at what the IWW is and make any decision based on the tactical use of the IWW and its influence on class struggle.

MEMBER LED

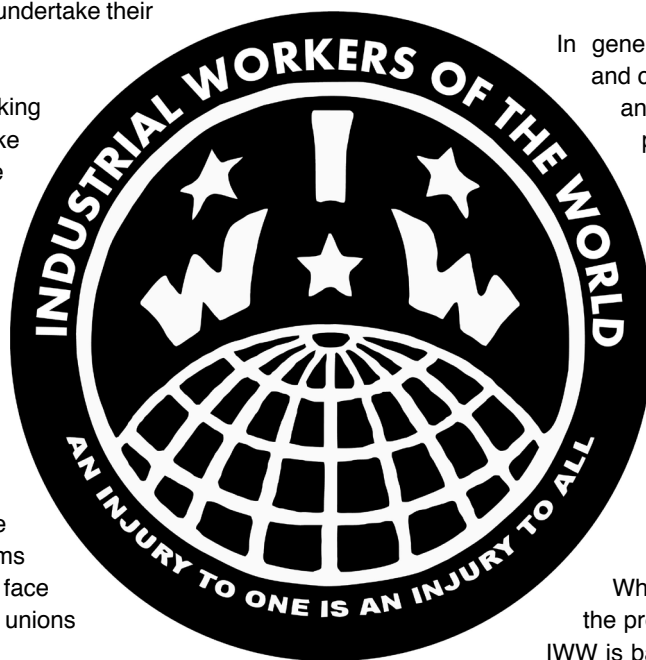
One attractive thing, especially to anarchists, is the idea that the IWW is a "grassroots" and "democratic" union that is "led by the membership"^[1]. However claims of this type can't be taken at face value, as they are made by all unions in Britain.

Let's be perfectly clear: the IWW isn't, as some romantic notions have it, an anarchist union. Even though it has a high number of anarchists in its ranks it certainly isn't structured in a federal fashion.

The IWW in Britain has branches electing delegates to a national council for a one year term. These delegates do not go into the role with specific mandate on issues and so while they are supposed to represent their branches views, there are few checks on this.

Going beyond the UK there is a centralisation around North America. IWW HQ is still seen as the Chicago office, and when discussion of organisation-wide activity takes pace the lack of federal structure means that certain regions and certain voices dominate. In terms of on-the-ground struggles here in Britain it is good that we have a means to communicate and learn from struggles in North America, but in terms of many of the decisions being taken, they might as well be talking about activities taking place on the moon.

In general there is higher awareness and consideration of self-organisation and following directly democratic principles, however on a structural level alone there should be the a wariness about the IWW in a similar (though somewhat reduced) way that that most anarchists approach the general trade unions.



UNITED IN CLASS STRUGGLE?

While the structure may not be ideal, the preamble to the constitution of the IWW is bang'n! Ending the wage system, fighting capitalism, and class struggle all play a predominant role.

Unfortunately there are no checks upon whether a new member actually agrees with, or has even read, this blurb. This has led to at least one boss joining the IWW and being booted out once the mistake came to light. There is nothing stopping people joining and treating the IWW just like any other union, making the revolutionary rhetoric all for nothing.

To be clear, I'm not talking about creating an 'ideologically pure' membership, or making sure everyone is doing the same things, but anyone going into the IWW should be aware that there are some unresolved questions over what most people would see as fairly core practices and objectives. This includes:

- Does the IWW want paid admin staff? Paid organisers? A paid legal team? Should branches pay stipends to their secretaries? Should it be an employer in any sense?
- Now that the IWW has registered with the State as a trade union, what is its relationship with the State apparatus?
- Should it act as a service union, a solidarity union, or focus on direct action?
- How does the IWW relate to other organisations? Should it work with them? Can it work with them given the constitution?
- What does the IWW mean when it says it is building the One Big Union?
- What does it mean to be a 'purely economic' organisation? What is the difference between that and a political organisation? When the union says it is anti-political what does this mean?

Any one of the issues above can divert the time and attention of active members of the union.

While some of the conditions of these internal struggles are favourable to anarchists at the moment, many of them are not, and worse yet most can drag us into fight over an organisation rather than just getting on with the struggles at hand.^[2]

These questions are not just abstract theory, but have led to serious divisions between the membership, the IWW becoming a target for entryism^[9], and are reflected in Dave Pike having recently joined the Labour Party!

ONE BIG UNION

There is even disagreement within the IWW as to the meaning of one of its key slogans – that members are building towards the One Big Union (OBU). The ideology of the OBU is to build a single large organisation that the working class join in order to fight capitalism. This stands in contradiction to more typical anarchist conception of class struggle, where class solidarity is built up through the struggles of autonomous groups building bonds of mutual aid and solidarity in shared struggles.

This does not mean that IWW branches can't be part of this kind of struggle, or that they couldn't be a place where we can learn the skills, build our collective confidence, and gain a better consciousness of our class position, but it does mean that the ideas of OBU can become an ideological lens

which misdirects our energy and shifts our focus away from revolutionary goals.

Should the IWW lose its radical edge, the OBU would immediately face the issue of being too small to act as a service union. We already have the GMB, Unite and any number of other unions taking that role. To prevent this turn away from radical anti-capitalism means weighing up the worth of that time and energy being diverted from other activities.

Where members of the IWW don't take the idea of the OBU as a literal single union, but more as an analogy for how all working class struggles are linked and should fought together in bonds of class solidarity, we have another conundrum. The role of the IWW in this way of thinking is to create industry-wide networks of radical workers who will act as a radical minority and help facilitate mass activity in times of struggle.

The down-side to this is that, as previously mentioned, the IWW lacks enough internal cohesion in outlook for this to take place. Unlike something like AFed or SolFed, where members consider themselves part of a radical minority and put in place structures to prevent them from substituting the organisation for the class struggle, the IWW does not do this. If membership is as simple as filling in an online application form, then what is making these networks radical? And if members start to form their own networks based on political persuasion, then how is this informal hierarchy going to be addressed?

COMPETENCE, CONFIDENCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS

So, should anarchists join the IWW at all? Well, if it is of material benefit to furthering class struggle then I'd say yes.

And it is here that the IWW can be worth-while. It has the ability to provide the kind of training and radical solidarity that we might otherwise lack, especially at a time where the mainstream unions are just trying to flog you cheap insurance while keeping the bosses true to their word (and nothing more).

The IWW is able to win fights with the bosses that might not have even been taking on without them.

The workplace organiser training can build up the confidence for people to take action where they would otherwise have felt like there were no options. It can also impart the ability to pick competent lines of attack. Involvement in struggles, either those we personally face or when giving our solidarity when asked, is the way in which we expand our class consciousness and even start to foster a revolutionary consciousness in ourselves.

However, it is in the area of raising class consciousness that I feel anarchists should be most critical of the IWW. The substitution of the OBU for the class struggle is something that isn't just of concern in revolutionary times, but also in

our struggles today. Energy that could have been put into building resistance at the points of our lives where we are most heavily exploited are instead poured into a structure that is ill-equipped to produce the outcomes we are hoping for. In the words of Rudolph Rocker:

"But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment and on the independent thought and action of its supporters, centralism could but be a curse by weakening its power of decision and systematically repressing all immediate action."

In this respect an anarchist would do better to dust off their little red songbook^[4], grab a copy of the Wobblies graphic novel^[5] then go join an anarchist-principled revolutionary organisation^[6]. That said, if the wobs are close at hand and would help take the fight to the bosses, then I'd go for it, but I'd do so wary of the internal pitfalls.

If you want to catch Dave Pike on tour then the following dates/ locations are still to take place at the time of writing Check the web page or e-mail for details of forthcoming dates.

- [1] <https://iww.org.uk/about/main>
- [2] I highly recommend re-reading the section in the AF's Introduction to Anarchist Communism that talks on prefiguration and dual power strategies.
- [3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entryism>
- [4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Red_Songbook
- [5] <http://www.versobooks.com/books/98-wobblies>
- [6] Examples in the UK would include ourselves in the Anarchist Federation, the Solidarity Federation, not to mention a whole host of smaller groups and projects. For more on this idea see: <https://afed.org.uk/the-role-of-the-revolutionary-organisation-2/>

UPCOMING SPEAKING TOUR DATES

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD
'YOUR CLASS NEEDS YOU'
2015 NATIONAL SPEAKING TOUR

The National Secretary of the IWW, Dave Pike, introduces the fighting union, what it stands for and how it is winning victories for the working class - like higher wages for cleaners, permanency for temps and safety at work for fast food workers. The IWW sees the world as divided by the boss class and the working class, and no-one will fight for our class other than us. We organise so that workers can win for themselves and are not reliant on Union full timers or politicians to fight for them.

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD
YOUR CLASS NEEDS YOU

Come along to this event and find out what the IWW is doing in Europe and around the world, and how you can get involved. Fight for your class.

IWW - A RADICAL UNION FOR ALL WORKERS

CENTRAL COMMUNITY CENTRE,
THE RAILWAY VILLAGE.
SWINDON - 11 OCT - 7.30 PM
READING@IWW.ORG.UK

SEPTEMBER

13TH - LEEDS
15TH - MANCHESTER
30TH - LONDON

OCTOBER

3RD - HEBDEN BRIDGE
9TH - BRISTOL
10TH - READING
11TH - SWINDON

NOVEMBER

19TH - BIRMINGHAM

TBC

BRADFORD
CARDIFF
SHEFFIELD
WREXHAM

**HTTPS://IWW.ORG.UK/EVENT/
SECRETARY@IWW.ORG.UK**

Boycott your graduation ceremony if you really care about the class divide



The following piece has been submitted to us from Rachel E. Brown, and while not a member we are posting this piece in order to open up a discussion on the matters raised. To that end one of our members has added their reply underneath (with Rachel's blessing).

Boycott your graduation ceremony if you really care about the class divide

This summer, thousands of students will attend their graduation ceremony which traditionally marks the completion of an undergraduate degree at university. But this ceremony is not just some innocent celebration of achievement. Finalists seem to regard it a "must do" event, something you can't afford not to do. But with gown hire around £40, Champagne costs and eye-watering professional photography charges, many students can't afford it, literally. Student journalists have long complained these costs could mean students "miss out on such an important day". Yet all this grumbling about prohibitive costs for an essentially self-congratulatory event is hardly compelling in a society facing £12bn in welfare cuts and more Foodbanks than ever.

That doesn't mean the grievances of less advantaged graduates should be disregarded. The sacrifices made to attend the graduation ceremony - despite the costs

- indicates the importance of the occasion. But why is it "such an important day" to them? Students and parents tell themselves it's about the acknowledgment of three years' hard work. Yet students aren't the only ones to work hard. The worker collecting dustbins in all weathers on minimum wage doesn't get an audience applaud or to wear the prestigious black robe and cap after three years' labour. We seem to let this differential treatment go unnoticed even though we would notice the loss of refuse workers far sooner than fewer graduates! The graduation ceremony is not simply about achievement. It tells the world your educated work is worthy of a special occasion. But there is no ceremony for the refuse worker. What is presented as acknowledging achievement is actually a ceremony dividing the worthy educated from the unworthy - that's the real reason why students are so keen to attend. It's a rite of passage into worthiness.

The real importance and, the real problem of the graduation ceremony is how it reinforces the class divide. Graduates and parents want it so badly, not as an acknowledgement of achievement, but because attendance is about admittance. For parents, their dear child graduate crowns the family mantel of social mobility - along with shopping at Sainsbury's and having a second car. For the established middle-class, it merely cements their social position. The graduation ceremony is a secular Confirmation ritual for the established middle-class and a symbolic rite of passage for the aspirational.

The effects of the problem were shown recently on my campus, the University of Exeter. Organise Exeter^[1] – a new activist group responding to the disappointing general election - held their first meeting in the grandly named, University “Alumni Auditorium”. Attended by students and locals, the meeting marked a juncture between town and gown. During the discussion, a local made a striking request. She asked for future meetings not to be held at the University because “she had never been to university herself” and found just the act of walking onto campus intimidating. Her experience should compel us to identify what makes the university an intimidating place for those without a degree and to do something about it. If we continue to associate education with class, prestige and worthiness, we will simply reproduce education as an instrument of class divide.

A meaningful step is to resist the signifiers of prestige associated with university education. The most flagrant display of prestige is found at the graduation ceremony. Prestige symbolism in drinking Champagne, wearing black gowns and the general formality of the occasion – what we know as “pomp and circumstance” - all contribute to the problem. It’s no coincidence that similar robes are donned by lawyers and judges who are probably the longest standing prestigious power-holders in the country.

For the working class like myself, there’s a further reason not to attend. In my four years at university, I have seen the campus population diversify beyond the private school “Exetah” (as

they are known here) crowd. But there is a difference between inclusion and assimilation. It’s not genuine inclusion if we less privileged merely assimilate to ceremonies designed by and for the elite, to the exclusion of the workers. Inclusion means changing things so you accommodate rather than culturally transform and homogenise the once marginalised. If we simply assimilate to the practices of the elite, we only become one of them. We become part of the problem.

Social equality demands us to release education from these class ties. Education is not working when - rather than emancipation - it’s an instrument of intimidation and division. We cannot have the upward mobility of the educated few at the expense of all those who did not go to university. I’m seizing my chance to resist the prestigious rituals of the elite that continue to make groups in our society feel unworthy or intimidated by “the educated”. I’m boycotting my graduation ceremony. It’s an individual act of solidarity with the refuse worker, the intimidated local activist and the cause for the inclusion, not assimilation, of the marginalised. Ceremonies are made for the worthy, don’t pretend you are more worthy or work harder than others. Boycott, refuse to wear the robe – whatever you do, resist this elitist ritual. If you’re an egalitarian, you will join me in this statement against education as worthiness, prestige and ultimately, class divide.

[1] See: <https://www.facebook.com/organiseexeter?fref=ts>

[2] See: <https://libcom.org/library/fields-factories-workshops-peter-kropotkin>

A reply from a member of the Anarchist Federation

This piece is certainly thought-provoking, acknowledging the education system as reinforcing the existing stratification of society into class lines. While it is admirable that certain overt aspects of this division are rejected, it has to be accepted that power does not renounce itself – for which it is necessary to make explicit the form of class rule which we experience. That is, one in which the course of our lives are largely determined by those with the power to hire, fire, evict and convict, powers primarily exercised over those without such powers. The group without these powers are often referred to as the “working class” (regardless of whether they are receiving unemployment benefits, studying, retired, hospitalised, or finding other means of supporting themselves). We can also expect that financial capitalists, those with large investments, though no direct means to hire or fire, will ally themselves with the industrial capitalists. A boycott of graduation ceremonies does not substitute a positive program of working class organisation or self-education, nor do working class organisations seem to have clamoured for it. Only the beneficiaries of a tertiary education can boycott their graduation. Of course, while agitating for such a boycott and referring to the nature of class society, valuable contacts can be made.

It is worthwhile to consider the form of education we would like to see in a free society of equals (as lavishly described by Kropotkin in 'Fields, Factories and Workshops'^[2] for instance, involving joint discovery to a greater degree than pedagogy) and consider the obstacles we face in approaching such a society. Among the impediments are the inaffordability of journals and software, which there are current campaigns to ameliorate, such as with the Open Access movement and the Free Software Foundation. Likewise, there are platforms such as Khan Academy which make tutorials for subjects available for free (though this has notable criticisms, such as the requirement to associate an online account in order to access the content, increasing the capacity for surveillance). Inspiration can be drawn from examples such as Perelman's “Physics can be Fun”, Hogben's “Mathematics for the Million” and Voline's engagement in Prolecult – each was an attempt to anticipate the future society and diffuse the privileges endowed by education.

Ultimately, a social revolution will be required to alter the mode of production in order to achieve an emancipatory education, however we should not ignore the role of education in achieving this revolution. Our ends will be reflected in the means we use here and now. It is for this reason that the symbolic actions (as discussed above) need to go hand-in-hand with solidarity through collective direct action. Students may be able to act in ways that would be too risky to other staff, such as bolstering picket lines or helping confront the bosses. It is these manifestations of solidarity and mutual aid, taking place through participation in shared struggles, that will meet the task of destroying the class divide.

CARBON GAMES

The fossil fuel divestment campaign

In order for the world to meet the IPCC's 2°C target for maximum warming, two-thirds of global fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground. Valuations of oil and gas companies are based on burning all of these reserves so limiting this will burst the carbon bubble of current stock market prices. The oil and gas industry accounts for around 5% of the global economy and anyone who pays into a workplace pension will indirectly own shares in these companies. Nearly every industry is reliant on the artificially cheap energy they provide. This is an important point as it is not just individual companies that can be targeted by the divestment movement – the entire economy is dependent on cheap energy.

Fossil fuels are cheap because carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a negative externality; that is, the cost of emitting it, namely the threat of global environmental change, is not borne by the companies responsible but by society at large. Private companies, therefore, have little incentive to reduce CO₂ emissions and the costs of their products are kept artificially low by this societal subsidy. In this sense, the issue of carbon emissions leading to climate change is one of the failures of the capitalist system as these emissions have no market value – they add nothing to the cost of a product and yet have huge ramifications for the global climate.

The fossil fuel divestment campaign^[1] seeks to put pressure on companies and governments to act by making CO₂ emissions the next item on the responsible capitalism agenda. The movement can't raise the cost of capital for the oil and gas industry or influence it in any direct way so is instead hoping that a swell of divestment will demonstrate public support for government legislation and global agreements on CO₂ reductions. Negotiations between states are an interesting example of game theory – one where it is in the interests of all parties to stop emitting CO₂ but there will be negative consequences for the first to act as they will be at an economic disadvantage compared to those who remain in a fossil fuel economy for longer. Although interesting as a textbook example to theorise over, the outcome of this game will affect the lives of billions and disproportionately hit those in the developing world.

Governments have been slow to put a price on emitting carbon that would significantly affect the fossil fuel industry. This is due to a mixture of neo-liberal ideas of minimal state intervention, a well-funded misinformation campaign and lobbying effort by the main polluters, geopolitical concerns whereby the main superpowers do not want to risk losing economic strength relative to one another, and the fact that

many states themselves own vast fossil fuel reserves or large parts of their economy are dependent on them. This last point is particularly relevant given that 70% of oil reserves are owned by states or nationalised state companies (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Norway, Qatar) so that the main targets of divestment, such as Shell and BP, are actually relatively small players in the field.

In the current capitalist system where economic actors compete against each other for limited resources there is no place for environmental concerns. The owners of fossil fuel reserves are incentivised to produce as much as possible before any potential legislation curbs this activity and to try their hardest to limit or delay any such legislation. No thought is given to the system as a whole while individuals fight to enrich themselves – the system in question can be economic, as systemic risk was ignored in the run up to the 2007 financial crisis, or ecological, as is currently happening with CO₂, over-fishing and depletion of groundwater resources. This is where the divestment movement fails in its aims – it cannot succeed in constraining fossil fuel use without addressing both the huge reserves in state hands and the system which allows a wealthy elite to control environmental and economic policy for its own gain.

Calls for green capitalism are flawed; they would rely on the same economic, political and social systems of power that are currently in place and would therefore simply perpetuate a series of further environmental crises. Changing the fuel that capitalism is propelled by will do nothing to change the system of environmental exploitation for private gain which has led us to the current state of affairs. No more than one third of fossil fuel reserves may be burnt if we are to meet the IPCC target but the oil and gas industry still invests billions every year in finding new resources. They know this is not compatible with an outcome that provides a climate and ecosystem that future generations can live sustainably from. They know this but are choosing their fiduciary responsibility to create a return on investment for shareholders over the environment. Profit is triumphing over people at every board meeting as plans are laid for further exploration. The inherent stupidity of the system is laid bare when capitalists are investing in their own planet's destruction and lobbying governments to be allowed to compound the problem.

The divestment movement has had some success and there are lessons to be learnt from its campaigns. It has re-invigorated campus activism: thousands of people worldwide have signed petitions, held sit-ins and chained themselves

to buildings for the cause. It has also made many people aware of how interconnected the global capitalist system is: the pension they pay into invests in oil, arms and child labour and therefore escaping tacit endorsement of those industries is difficult. Campaigners have done this by firstly having a clearly defined goal which seems achievable when compared to the complexity of the global climatic system. Secondly, they have made it easy for affiliated campaigns to spring up independent of any central organisation – this has been done through a downloadable toolkit which provides information, resources and suggested strategies for public engagement, protest and actions. Finally, they have managed to create guilt surrounding inaction. Often when campaigns encourage supporters to join them they are met with indifference. This campaign has been successful in changing the terms of debate so that indifference becomes support of the status quo, a continuation of university and pension funds supporting the fossil fuel industry. This has been a significant factor in

gaining the support of the general student body rather than just a few activists.

Despite these positives the divestment movement is itself backing a system of exploitation and oppression of which one of the outcomes has been anthropogenic climate change. Without tackling the capitalist system the cause of ruthless exploitation of people and the environment remains and we are doomed to stumble from one ecological crisis to the next. All the movement aims to achieve is to ensure that the next ecological crisis will be powered by cleaner energy. In this sense the divestment movement is distracting time and effort from more effective and more radical forms of protest. Action is desperately needed that tackles both the immediate problem and the root causes of environmental exploitation.

[1] See: <http://gofossilfree.org/>



Deleuze and Guattari

An Investment for Combat

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari were a pair of French philosophers who came to prominence around the uprisings of May 1968. Their experiences of those events led to their two-volume work 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', in which they laid out a wealth of tools for analysing the dynamics of capitalism and the state. They drew upon a massive array of sources, blending the philosophical concepts of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, with insights from chaos theory, evolutionary biology, geology and anthropology (amongst many others). Whilst this variety of sources means there are many different ways to engage with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, anarchists will likely be most interested in their emphasis on creating freedom from all forms of domination, both material and psychological.

Like many of their academic peers of that era, D&G's use of language was deliberately opaque, which has unfortunately meant their ideas have mostly remained locked within academia. I hope this article goes some way to bridging that gap, by presenting just a handful of their bewildering array of concepts in more accessible language. Some who are familiar with D&G may disagree with how I've interpreted these concepts, but that was always their intention with the difficult language: they detested the type of 'State philosophy' that tries to control what is to be considered the truth, and subsequently used to the benefit of dominant powers. Instead they saw the task of philosophers as the creation of a conceptual toolbox that people could draw from, and connect to their own lives and struggles in their own ways. The deciding factor was not truthfulness, but usefulness. In a conversation with Foucault, Deleuze said (paraphrasing Proust): "treat my book as a pair of glasses directed to the outside; if they don't suit you, find another pair; I leave it to you to find your own instrument, which is necessarily an investment for combat."

Before we begin, one basic concept is worth explaining to help understand D&G. They often talk in terms of 'flows': flows of money, flows of people, flows of information, flows of thought, flows of speech, flows of history - even 'flows of shit'. For them, nothing is static: all of the universe is in constant flux, albeit at different speeds. From the slow movements of the earth's crust over millions of years, to the rapid changes in an explosion. Likewise they apply this idea of flows to social change, in both the gradual development of social structures through history, to the rapid changes that come about during a revolution.

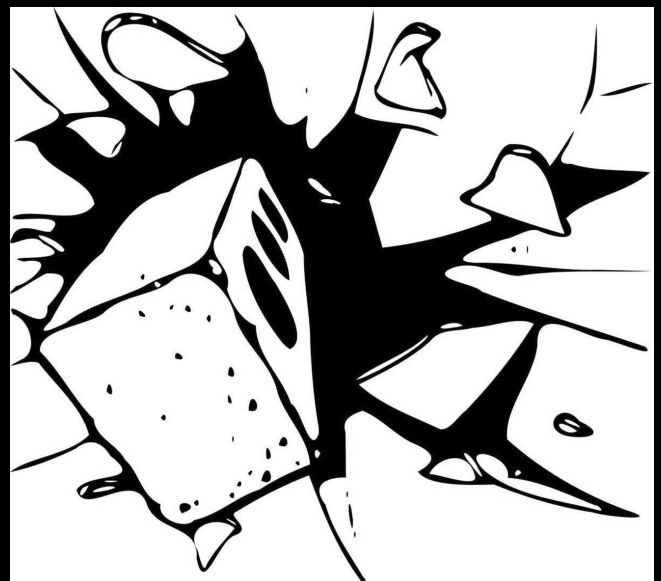
With that in mind, let's see if we can make Deleuze and Guattari useful for anarchist communism by comparing what we have to say with their analysis.

Freedom and 'smooth space'

"A state is a machine for controlling people and can never be anything else." - Introduction to Anarchist Communism

A key function of the state is what D&G call 'striation': taking the commons ('smooth space'), where free movement is possible, and cutting this up into plots with strict borders ('striated space'). When applied to land, this process creates the possibility of rent by creating discrete areas that can be owned and traded. Anarchists will be familiar with examples such as the enclosure of the English commons, the expropriations by colonial powers across Africa, as well as modern state land grabs such as those currently underway in places like China and Ethiopia.

But this 'striation' is not restricted to land. The state is involved in the striation of other common assets: the smooth space of the sea is carved into territories, as is the smooth space of the air. The smooth space of public squares become privatised and regulated, with certain actions (even certain people) forbidden. There are more abstract examples, such as intellectual property, where the smooth space of ideas and concepts has been striated, and its ownership enforced. And 'net neutrality', the smooth space of the internet, is also under sustained attack by the state, attempting to divide it up to allow preferential treatment to the highest bidders. Striation is one of the ways in which the State clears the way for capitalist exploitation.



The only smooth space the state can tolerate is where it's created as a tool in the service of further striation, such as in maintaining the integrity of state borders. So for example, how modern states use anti-terror legislation to create a smooth space of communications surveillance, where state agents can slip in and out of communication networks without restriction. Or the smooth space of warfare, where normally observed 'state sovereignty' is dissolved, and all terrain becomes subject to violent cleansing.

Striation therefore relates to how movement through space-time is constrained or otherwise, whether of human bodies, capital, information, products, armies; all 'flows'. Anarchism could be said to seek a world of smooth space, that is, not just a world without borders, but without coercion in our movements, thoughts and expressions. D&G apply smooth space to work in a way similar to an anarchist perspective, counterposing the striated, coercive 'work' with the smooth, creative 'free action':

"Where there is no State and no surplus labour there is no Work-model either. Instead, there is the continuous variation of free action, passing from speech to action, from a given action to another, from action to song, from song to speech, from speech to enterprise, all in a strange chromaticism with rare peak moments or moments of effort that the outside observer can only "translate" in terms of work"

We must be careful however, as smooth spaces are not in and of themselves liberatory. As mentioned, they can be used directly in the service of the state, such as in warfare. They can also exist in the cracks of striated spaces, creating an individual and temporary sense of liberation that doesn't disturb the social order. The urban explorer constructs a smooth space in their movement through a city, traversing the locked, boarded up and hard to reach places. But this doesn't remove the striations themselves, it merely allows an individual the thrill of working around them.

Smooth spaces can have a powerful effect however, particularly when as part of collective action. We might distinguish the smooth space of a militant protest, that spontaneously reclaims space from the hands of the state and spreads out unpredictably, versus the striated space of the police-sanctioned A-B march. The smooth space of a non-hierarchical neighbourhood assembly, versus the striated space of union bureaucracy. Or on a broader scale, the smooth space of a new society created through direct democracy, versus the striation of the five year plan.

The State and 'rigid segmentarity'

"Schools, whilst providing an important service, also indoctrinate children and prepare them for a life as workers rather than as human beings. Prisons, immigration authorities, dole offices and on and on and on, all intrude into our lives and control our actions. Some of these things, like schools, hospitals and welfare benefits, we sometimes depend on for our lives. It is often this very dependence that these organisations use to control us." - Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Social space is divided along different types of line: in dualisms (child/adult, man/woman, this class/that class), expanding circles (the individual, the couple, the family, the town, the city) and linear lines (I pass from home, to school, to army, to work). Each of these ways of division is operative in all forms of society. But where pre-state societies tended towards segments which are supple, and interlink in multiple ways around numerous centres, State societies make these rigid, and organise them hierarchically around a single centre. What was a dynamic web of different centres of attraction becomes a single hierarchical 'resonance chamber' through which power can flow.

Through this hierarchical chamber, state organs are made to resonate together with the same neoliberal ideology: schools and universities acting as factories to produce workers; prisons used as sources of labour, housing those who fail to adapt to the harshness of neoliberal society; benefits being given only on condition of unpaid work; politicians shaping policy to best help big business, all public services being stripped, marketised and privatised; the continuity of the interests of the financial, industrial and military sectors. Ideology is able to resonate through all these social segments as one.

The more the state interferes with our lives, the more we as individuals are also made to resonate with these state organs. We are hailed by the state as individualised legal and political subjects, supposedly equal under the law, ignoring the inequality of our social circumstances. We are treated as customers, eroding the expectation of unconditional civic rights and replacing them with payment-conditional consumer rights. We are compelled to dress and act with increasing homogeneity, with deviation from the ideals of 'smartness' and 'speaking properly' being a danger to our ability to find work, even now extending to our conduct on social media. Families reproduce and normalise hierarchy and the 'work ethic' in their children. Even relationships are judged in terms of 'marriage markets' and 'investments'. This level of insidious social control would be impossible without a system of rigid segments, arranged to act as a single resonance chamber through which an ideology could flow.

Domination within the working class: the unconscious 'syntheses'

"[T]he ruling class works hard to divide us against each other. It does this in two ways, partly through trying to control ideas and the way we think about ourselves, and partly through creating small differences in power and wealth that set working class people against each other" - Introduction to Anarchist Communism

D&G also aimed to analyse more precisely how capitalism and the state affect the way we think about ourselves and others at a subconscious level. For them, 'ideology' was too vague and deterministic a concept, and needed more specific elaboration of how State processes like striation and rigid segmentation affected thought. They refer instead to three 'syntheses' of the mind. This is how our minds connect together the chaos of sensations around us, then divide them into discrete objects, then put together all these separate

objects and understand them in context, against a ground. These then are the syntheses of *connection*, *disjunction* and *conjunction*.

Where it becomes politically useful is that D&G add an ethical dimension: each of these syntheses has a *legitimate* and an *illegitimate* form. In short, the legitimate syntheses of the mind are partial, inclusive and fluid. The illegitimate are global, exclusive and rigid. This means that:

We **connect** *legitimately* in our awareness of how people, minds, events, social systems and so on are complex and contradictory, and made up of an array of unique parts. We connect *illegitimately* in our simplification of human and social complexity, in treating everything and everyone as an already determined whole object.

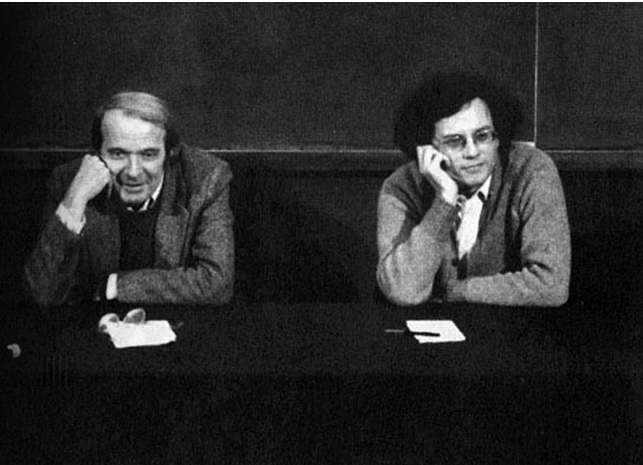
This process is constantly active in the media, such as in the representation of Muslims or asylum seekers, who are presumed to be explained by that label, rather than being complex people for whom that is only one constituent part. It also happens to anarchists, where instead of being approached as complex human beings for whom 'anarchist' is only one element, we are instead taken as simple whole objects that are entirely summed up by that word, and all the misinformation attached to it.

woman, and you remain that way for life ... A man is attracted to women and a woman to men ... Men dress and act like this, and women like that ...' In contrast, a legitimate disjunction accepts that woman and man are two perfectly legitimate categories, but do not form a restrictive pair. There is space for a proliferation of further identifiers to understand a person's sex/gender: trans woman, queer man, non-binary person, intersex person – who may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, monogamous, polyamorous – who may dress and act normatively or otherwise. So where the illegitimate disjunction forms an exclusive pair 'either A or B', the legitimate use forms an inclusive series 'A and B and C and D and ...'

We **conjoin** *legitimately* in being open to the shifting of our horizons, to the finding of a new position. We conjoin *illegitimately* in always referring back to a rigid and unchanging ground, which generates segregation. Nationalism is a perfect example of such an unchanging ideological ground. After arriving at the idea of 'immigrant', this is placed into the rigid, pre-determined ground of 'Britain'. It sets up a segregative 'us vs. them' distinction which is carried through all judgements. It doesn't matter how open and respectful think they are, so long as they rely on this rigid ground of the nation, their compassion will ultimately be overruled by the desire to protect the state.

But again, we must be careful that anarchist ideas do not also suffer this. We have to always be ready to hone our expectations and analytical tools to adapt to a changing world, and remain open to creating contingent links on this ground. We can't simply fall back on dogmatic assertions based on the grounding of classical anarchist thought, and segregate ourselves from other working class struggle. In other words, we have to maintain our principles without isolating ourselves. A successful example has been the London AFed group finding ways to act within the housing movement. On the whole it's operated on non-hierarchical principles familiar to anarchists, but has sometimes required working alongside people with divergent political views. By maintaining our autonomy as anarchists but forming contingent, temporary bonds with others, we've been able to assist in actions like eviction resistance, we've added an extra voice in arguments for keeping action at a grassroots level, and allowed us to create links with and have influence in parts of the movement we otherwise wouldn't have.

To bring these three syntheses together, we can look at the idea of 'community'. It can be a difficult term for anarchists: community in the one sense is where we act against the State, yet we can't be uncritical of it, as much inter-working class oppression occurs within communities. So how do we express what kind of community we want? Using the three syntheses above, we might say we are for community based on a complex interweaving of parts, such as real local links of emotional and material solidarity between people (legitimate **connection**). This is in contrast to the way the word community is often used, which can mean little more than lots of individuals living close by who don't interact – community merely presumed by the name. We are for inclusive community, where all are welcomed in their myriad



But we can also be guilty of this ourselves. For example, seeing people such as Daily Mail readers or UKIP voters as totally explainable by the label, rather than a complex blending of parts in their own right. This doesn't mean taking a woolly liberal perspective of 'everyone's opinion is equal' – it's about trying to understand why these oppressive positions come about. By looking at people as a complex array of parts rather than simple objects explainable by a label, we leave open space to try to understand the social processes that have produced them. That way, we stand a better chance of learning how to counteract the social and psychological forces that create racism, nationalism and fascism.

We **disjoin** *legitimately* in recognising difference and treating it inclusively. We disjoin *illegitimately* in tying difference into strict binaries, and excluding that which doesn't fit. For example, the distinction between 'man and women' is often used to exclude and oppress queer, trans and intersex people. The illegitimate axioms go: 'You are either a man or a

differences (legitimate **disjunction**), rather than a community which excludes on normative grounds of gender, race, disability, etc. And we are for stable but flexible community (legitimate **conjunction**), where people have a sense of collective identity but which never excludes on the basis of 'us vs them'. A community which maintains unique character and tradition but where people have an openness to gradual, consensual change, always shaping itself to find better ways of living together.

Revolution and deterritorialisation

"Both the destruction of what exists now and the construction of something new are part of the revolution." - Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Finally, something that may be useful for anarchists in thinking about revolution is D&G's concept of 'de-territorialisation'. It's a bit of a cumbersome word, so it's worth breaking down a bit. It refers to 'territory', but this isn't necessarily a physical territory: it can also apply to conceptual or social territories. This might seem odd at first, but we actually use this in everyday language already. When the Tories came into power with a majority, people may have said something like: 'We've entered new territory', implying a new dominant ideology, a new combination of laws, ideas, statements, practices etc.

So if these are territories, then territorialisation is just any process which produces these social and material territories. *De-territorialisation* therefore refers to processes which disturb and transform these systems. It gets useful when D&G set out the different types of deterritorialisation, to describe different types of system change. Where our usual contrast of 'reform vs revolution' gives us only one broad axis of change, deterritorialisation uses two different axes: absolute vs relative, and positive vs negative.

Absolute and Relative refer to whether we totally break away from dominant social ideas, or merely create a momentary rift which is then easily re-absorbed by the State. A relative change brings to the surface some existing possibilities in the social system, but an absolute change *creates entirely new possibilities*.

Positive and negative doesn't mean 'good and bad', but rather refer to whether the change acts against the formation of a dominant power (positive) or if it's a change which ultimately *supports domination (negative)*.

Combining the two axes gives us four broad types. (Though it should be stressed that these are fluid types, and whilst some situations will demonstrate one dominant type, others can involve a mix)

A **negative relative** deterritorialisation means that the system is upset, a change occurs, but this doesn't go very far to challenge the system, and if anything it actually strengthens dominant power. Elections are an example - a period in which a certain amount of chaos comes into play, but only so much as the state expects and is completely capable of recovering from. The State in fact emerges stronger because of its refreshed 'democratic mandate', and with some weaker

links of the system having been cast off. At the same time, no processes were in place to work against the reformation ('re-territorialisation') of State power after the election.

A **positive relative** change on the other hand, does actually create connections to ward off the creation of domination, but doesn't in itself present enough of a challenge to the whole system to create a revolutionary break. Isolationist lifestyle anarchism tends to fall within this type. It may be positive by actually working against internal domination through non-hierarchical relations, and by creating a 'smooth space' that the state can't appropriate for itself. But it is only a *relative* deterritorialisation because ultimately the State-capitalist system as a whole isn't really that bothered by it. It's a minor irritation that the State will either attempt to crush, or like Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen, will allow to continue existing in isolation, causing no further disturbance to the capitalist system.

Only **absolute** change can be revolutionary. This involves a serious rupture in the social system which the state cannot absorb. But like the relative axis, there is a negative and positive type. An example of **negative absolute** change might be the kind of militarised insurrectionary revolution which itself turns tyrannical, failing to stop itself from turning into a new tool of domination. Authoritarian communist revolutions would also fall under the **negative absolute** type: whilst they may well challenge one current dominant power, they nonetheless produce an alternative system of domination through hierarchy and the repression it necessitates.

This is exactly why anarchist communists argue the need for prefiguration: the creation of institutions and organisations that can begin to constitute a new society free of domination *prior* to a revolution. These organisations would enable a **positive absolute** change, by creating connections which continually act against the reformation of the state or any other form of dominant power, before, during and after a period of revolutionary rupture.

There are countless other concepts that could be of use to anarchists that there's no space to go into here. These will either have to wait for another time, or else you'll have to brave the source texts themselves – so check the references below for some guides and interpretations. Finally, I'll leave it to Deleuze & Guattari themselves to illustrate the merits of their philosophy for anarchists:

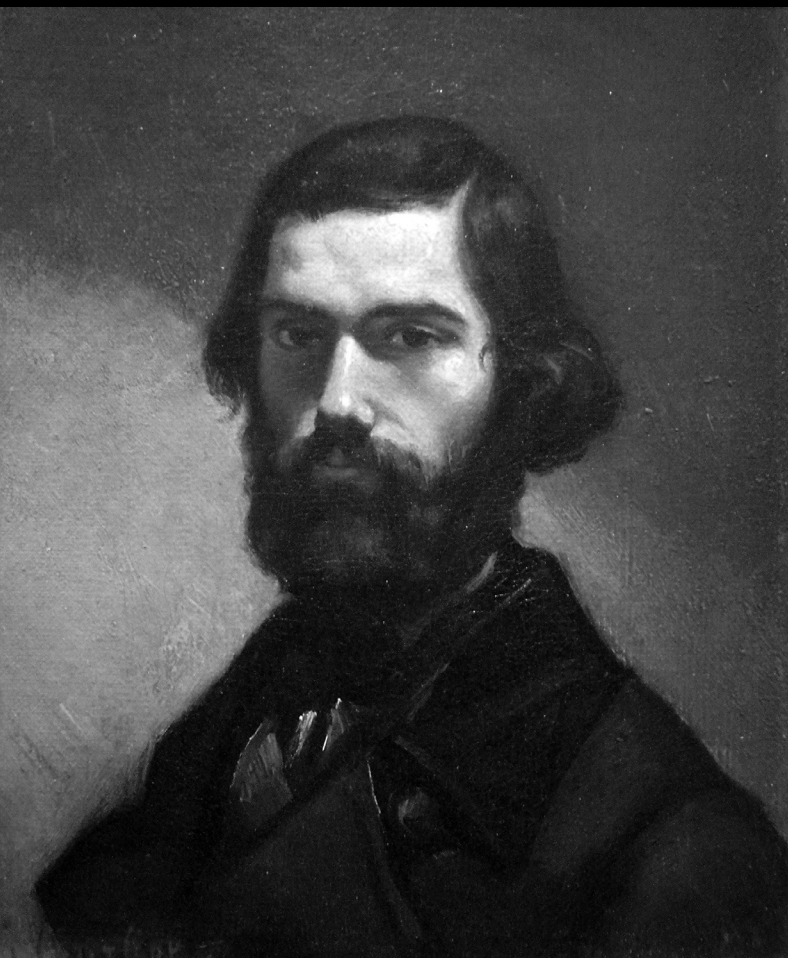
"A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window."

References

- Colebrook – Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed
- Deleuze and Guattari – Anti-Oedipus
- Deleuze and Guattari – A Thousand Plateaus (especially chapters 9, 12, 13 and 14)
- Holland – Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis
- Nail – Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo
- Parr – The Deleuze Dictionary
- Thoburn – Deleuze, Marx and Politics

Jules Vallès—Child

Student
Revolutionary
Journalist
Novelist



Vallès was born Louis-Jules Vallez in Puy-en-Velay, in the Auvergne, in France, on June 11, 1832. Vallès's last name was wrongly entered on his birth certificate, and in young adulthood he embraced this mistake and used it as a revolt against his father.

Jules's father was a pion, a teaching assistant or class supervisor who descended from a farming family, and pursued a career as a teacher in order to obtain social status. He was never able to rise above the lowest level of the teaching profession. His mother came from a peasant family of even lower social standing. The family atmosphere was one of bitterness. This was in the context of a France ruled by Louis-Phillippe known as the "bourgeois king" who defended the interests of that class and called on people to enrich themselves. This is what the Vallez family sought to do but with little success.

From an early age Jules was brutally beaten by his mother and these beatings continued into his teens. Later on his father started administering beatings too. At the same time his father made sure that he received a classical education, as part of the family plan for social aspiration, and as a child Jules was an excellent student, doing very well in Greek, Latin and rhetoric. Jules was deeply unhappy at home, but inwardly he harboured a spirit of resistance to the harshness and cruelty of his life. It was not surprising that he was to develop as an intransigent enemy of authority and oppression, that he was to generalise his own desire for kindness, freedom and justice to freedom and justice for all. He also developed caustic and cutting senses of humour and irony which sustained him through his childhood and indeed the rest of his life.

Jules witnessed with enthusiasm the fall of Louis-Phillippe whilst in Nantes. The establishment of the Second Republic led on to an uprising of the workers and Jules' enthusiasm turned from delight to consternation as he saw captured workers being marched down the street, especially in the wake of the 1848 uprising of students, artisans, and unemployed workers in Paris. He took part in the unrest of 1848, joining a republican circle and putting forward motions, tellingly, on the abolition of the baccalaureate and the absolute liberty of childhood. He increasingly rebelled against his father's insistence on the need to pass the baccalaureate and pursue a career in teaching.

He was sent to Paris in September 1848 to study. He became increasingly involved in republican groups. He had a deep seated love for the masses, for the downtrodden and oppressed. At the same time he rejected revolutionary idols such as Robespierre and was later to write that he was the elder brother of Bonaparte, that is a betrayer of the Revolution. He similarly disliked another idol of the republican revolutionaries, Rousseau, who he regarded as a hypocrite.

He increasingly neglected his studies and by necessity started living a bohemian existence. With the coup d'état by Louis Napoleon in 1851, Vallès attempted to rally resistance and fought on one of the rare barricades at that time. Fleeing to Nantes, he ended up being sent to a mental asylum by his father. This may have been to protect him from pursuit by the authorities, but nevertheless Jules managed to be released early next year. He then passed his baccalaureate and returned to Paris. However he could not obtain any

worthwhile job and returned to a bohemian existence, becoming part of the expanding "intellectual proletariat" of the period, graduates unable to obtain work and forced into unemployment or low-paid jobs.

He tried to get a job as a bricklayer but was rejected, the employer realising that he was educated. He worked at a number of secretarial and tutoring jobs and started writing to obtain the odd bit of money, putting his hand to dictionary entries (where he made up literary references!), jingles, tour guides, and articles in newspapers. It should be remembered that Louis Napoleon who had now proclaimed himself Napoleon III, kept a tight grip on the press and all articles were heavily censored.

Jules's father died in 1857 and he was deeply affected by this. Despite the harsh treatment he had received from his parents, he still retained a love for them and was to recognise in his novel *Le Bachelier* (The Graduate) that his father was just as much a victim of exploitation as himself and others.

Vallès continued to be involved in republican activity and in several abortive plots against Louis Napoleon. He became an admirer of the thinker Proudhon, opposing himself to Jacobin currents. He had a fierce hatred of religion and of the police and this often got him into trouble. He got various jobs working for liberal dailies and produced a book called *L'Argent* (Money), financed by an industrialist, which made out it was about how to use the stock exchange but was in fact a disguised attack on finance that was full of sarcasm and irony.

Vallès became an early pioneer of reportage, writing a series of articles in various papers on *Les Irreguliers* (The Irregulars), people marginalised by society and including musicians, tumblers, jugglers and boxers. He also began a series on *Les Réfractaires* (Objectors) people like him who refused to follow the careers they were meant to, bohemian outcasts who lived lives on the edge.

Vallès was a great walker and used his observations of street life to put together a number of articles that were collated in the 1866 book *La Rue* (The Street). Between 1867 and 1871 he established seven newspapers that had short lives because they were shut down by the authorities because of what were seen as subversive articles. In fact Vallès served a sentence of a month in prison and then later in the same year of 1868, two months of prison for his articles.

Vallès opposed himself to the outbreak of the war between Prussia and France in 1870, standing as one of the minority against the mass war hysteria. The war was disastrous for the French regime and Napoleon III was overthrown. The new regime at Versailles attempted to remove artillery paid for by public subscription from the heights of Montmartre. This led on to the declaration of the Paris Commune in that year of 1871.

He was one of the editors of *L’Affiche Rouge* (The Red Poster) which proclaimed the Commune in January 1871. He founded a new paper *Le Cri Du Peuple* (The Cry of The People) which became very popular in Paris and he served on the education commission of the Commune. He was one of the minority who opposed the setting up of a Committee of

Public Safety (shades of the hated Robespierre!) alongside others like the painter Gustave Courbet and the worker Eugene Varlin (see *Organise!*⁷⁷ for a biography of Varlin). The Committee banned all newspapers and *Le Cri* was one of those shut down, despite its revolutionary message of self-organisation. During the Bloody Week of May 1871 which led to the crushing of the Commune and shootings of thousands of Communards, Vallès fought on the barricades up to the last.

He fled to London in October, and was sentenced to death in his absence. He spent nine years in London, often in dire circumstances. There he started writing the first book of what was to become his masterpiece, the Jacques Vingtras trilogy. This was *L’Enfant* (The Child) where he described his unfortunate childhood. He dedicated the book "to all those who were bored stiff at school or reduced to tears at home, who in childhood were bullied by their teachers or thrashed by their parents". Despite the scenes of brutality the book is laced with humour and brimming with humanity.

After the amnesty for the Communards in 1880, Vallès returned to Paris and began publishing works he had written in exile, including *Le Bachelier* (The Graduate) dedicated to "those who nourished by Greek and Latin are dead of hunger". This book has never been translated into English unlike the other two books of the trilogy. In this writer's opinion it stands as tall as the other two books, describing a bohemian existence, often with days without food, an experience that was lived not just by Vallès but by many other members of the "intellectual proletariat". It has not received as much recognition as it should.

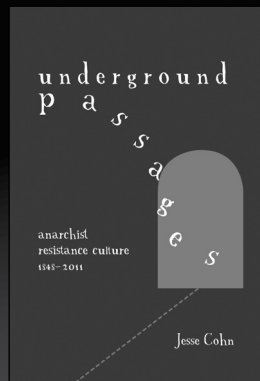
Vallès now began to suffer from the years of ill-treatment and bad diet and contracted diabetes. He died after many weeks of pain, saying on his deathbed that "I have suffered very much" a comment that could be applied as much to his whole life as to his last days. A few days before his death the hated police raided the flat where he was being nursed, even searching under the mattress where he lay. We can imagine that Vallès might have appreciated the irony of this event!

The funeral of Vallès was attended by 10,000 and the appearance of the coffin greeted by cries of "Long Live the Commune! Long Live the Social Revolution! Long Live Anarchy!"

The third book of the trilogy was released after his death. This is *L’Insurgé* (The Insurrectionist) which describes Vallès's growing powers as a writer and the unfolding and then crushing of the Commune. It is dedicated "To the dead of 1871. To all those who, victims of social injustice, took up arms against a badly made world and formed the great federation of sorrows beneath the flag of the Commune."

Vallès deserves to be discovered. His literary innovations predated many modern writers like Sarraute, Céline, Queneau, and Beckett. He is a thoroughly modern writer, with his self-referencing and his ironic asides addressed to himself. He speaks to us over the centuries, to all of us who feel profoundly ill at ease in this society, who are agonised by injustice and inequality. He celebrates the resistance of the human being to such injustice and inequality. As Charles Stivale wrote in 1992 Vallès "forcefully introduces the possibility of resistance and the necessity of history."

Book REVIEW



Underground Passages anarchist resistance culture 1848-2011 Jesse Cohn

AK Press
421 pages
paperback
£18.00

Jesse Cohn is extremely widely read. An academic and author of *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics* he now in this book tackles anarchist influences on and in art, whether it be fiction, poetry, songs, plays, illustrations, painting and cinema. He has read everything from Vallès to Ursula Le Guin, Stéphane Mallarmé to Kenneth Rexroth, listened to everything from John Cage to punk music.

This present work is staggeringly encyclopaedic and comprehensive. Not only does he range across the vast territory of culture in most of its forms but he breaks out of Eurocentric preoccupations and includes China, Japan, Argentina, Brazil and Cuba.

As the blurb on the back cover states: "What anarchists demand from art is what they demand from all aspects of their political lives: that it should, as much as possible, embody the principle in the practice, the end in the means.

While prefiguring a post-revolutionary world, anarchists simultaneously created a vividly textured "resistance culture" to sustain their ideals and identities amid everyday lives defined by capital and state, allowing an escape from domination even while enmeshed in it."

As Cohn told an interviewer^[1]: "When I was in grad school studying for my Ph.D. in literature, I was struck by the fact that we were being introduced to a huge spectrum of literary theory, much of it derived from radical political traditions, but that anarchism was conspicuously absent from any discussion, as if it had never existed, much less contributed any insights into literature and culture."

Cohn certainly succeeds in producing the most complete study of anarchist culture so far with sections of the book dealing with different aspects of culture with poetry, songs and music, fiction, drama, art and illustration and cinema dealt with in order.

Now, art and politics have often been uneasy bedfellows as the individual artist wrestles with the need for artistic expression versus what can be a straitjacket of adhering to the right political line. The avant garde by its nature was not something that could be readily adapted to political and social movements. Cohn accepts that and draws attention to the "deliberately obscure" poetry of Mallarmé and the "entirely undecipherable" sound poetry of Hugo Ball (both identified as having anarchist influences and sympathies). As Cohn notes: "...the anarchist movement, which refused to nullify social commitments in the name of the autonomous individual, was not, on the whole, welcoming towards these experimenters, whose work, they often saw as wilfully obscure at best, more suited to the narcissistic enjoyment of a self-appointed elite than to the needs of working-class people in struggle". He states that there is little trace of the avant gardes- be they Dada, Imagism, Futurism, Surrealism- in anarchist literature at the time of the flourishing of these movements and that anarchists developed their own art forms in their journals, with widespread use of poetry, but admits that the poetic forms were very often traditional. For example the anarchist Voltarine de Cleyre was producing political poetry in a "genteel" Victorian form at a time when modernist movements were in revolt against such gentility. Cohn does acknowledge the contribution of the French Surrealists to the anarchist weekly *Le Libertaire*, though he notes that some militants were concerned about the "hermeticism" (read closed-off world) and "originality for originality's sake" that they thought was intrinsic in modern art. He signally fails to mention the German example of Franz Pfemfert and his political-artistic journal *Die Aktion* which had close links with Expressionist artists whilst pushing revolutionary anarchist and left socialist views, and ignores Expressionism and anarchist influences on it completely. He also ignores the quite close relation between the bohemians of Greenwich Village and leading members of the Industrial Workers of the World and the resulting artistic contribution to such struggles as the Paterson strike (see *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* by Christine Stansell).

This problem of avant garde versus accessibility is tackled full on in Cohn's concluding chapter. He addresses the period of 1945-1973 when the working classes of the wealthier nations were effectively co-opted into the apparent economic success and consumerism of that period. In response "anarchist resistance culture increasingly began to borrow from the styles that had developed in the bohemian counter-cultures of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth centuries, which had themselves grown up in the shadow of the anarchist movements".

He rather harshly describes the main tenets of the merging of modernist movements and anarchism as Noncommunication, Nonsense, Nonutility, Noncollectivity and Nonpopularity where there is a deliberate turning away from accessibility and the popular to the dramatic gesture, absurdity, abstraction, and aesthetic individualism. He seems to associate the period of what he incorrectly identifies with that of "propaganda by the deed", that is the period when some anarchists used assassinations against members of the ruling class, as one when the connection between "aesthetes" and anarchists was strongest and that this waned once mass anarchist movements emerged. As a look at the lives of many anarchist artists shows, this was not strictly true as they maintained their allegiance through the rise of syndicalism and beyond.

Similarly, just to take poetry as an aspect of culture. Some Poets in the period of 1945-1973 (which he describes as "valley times" as opposed to the periods of mass anarchist organisation before and the period of a turn towards huge attacks on the working class) like Kenneth Rexroth and Phillip Levine DID produce accessible poetry, alongside perhaps less accessible work.

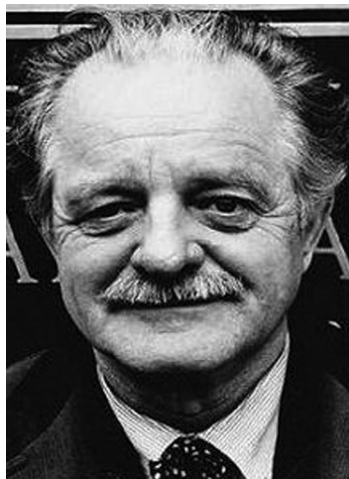
He feels that once these mass movements had been destroyed then "anarchist poets like Robert Duncan and anarchist dramaturges like Judith Malina recovered the tradition of the aesthetes...In so doing, they constructed a more self-contained, hermetic, opaque counterculture." And here is the problem, he feels. Can such countercultures now evolve again to "provide the symbolic framework for a new anarchist movement that would stand in the public square, that would have broad popular appeal and institutional staying power." He points to the inwardness of the punk music scene as an example, as well as the punk zines and concludes that the political message is often lost because lyrics cannot be heard, articles are spoilt by "teeny-tiny handwriting...deliberately crude photocopying, words crossed out, corrupted, blurred, misspelled."

However he comes to no fully worked out conclusion as to break out of the subcultural ghettos that he feels are self-imposed, other than posing "mutual aid, direct action, participatory democracy, cooperation etc" to a movement that he feels appears to be "ridiculous, inconceivable, unintelligible, nonsensical". All he can fall back on as an alternative is citing groups like the British Reclaim the Streets of the 1990s where collective action is coupled with individual enjoyment and to the hackneyed concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, designed to avoid confrontation with the State "And to remain

only as a shared memory." Now as we know, RTS actions DID come into confrontation with the State. Other examples he points to are long established infoshops, bookshops, social centres, though he acknowledges that these too do not always successfully open to a wider and more varied public.

Unfortunately at times Cohn lapses in academic and "hermetic" ways of expressing himself which he criticises some of the avant garde movements for. But all in all, the book is a massive compendium of an enormous number of contributors to anarchist culture in all its forms and has certainly inspired this reviewer to look at some artists and writers I had not heard of before and certainly asks the right questions about breaking out of the anarchist ghetto.

[1] See: <http://www.panthernewsnetwork.com/top-stories/2014/09/19/underground-passages-anarchist-resistance-culture/#sthash.aC5Rc6bu.dpuf>



Book REVIEW



Franco's Crypt Spanish Culture and Memory since 1936 Jeremy Treglown

Chatto & Windus
320 pages
paperback
£16.99

This book starts from the premise that an awful lot of post-civil war Spanish culture has been ignored by the rest of the world because it originated in Spain itself. The writers, filmmakers and artists under Franco were seen by many as tainted by the regime, their art compromised in order to impress the censors, and therefore were not as valued as the work of the literary exiles living abroad. Those who stayed in Spain were judged to be either Francoists themselves or willing to accept the censorship of the regime.

Treglown quite correctly points out that Franco's regime lasted nearly 40 years and so many artists who were working in the 1960s and '70s were born under his rule, in time and it could be argued that they had little choice in the matter. Even immediately after the civil war there were still Republican artists who managed to produce work that either passed censorship or which was published abroad and distributed in Spain through underground bookshops. The level of censorship also varied during the regime, becoming less strict in the later years when a number of social-realism style films were produced to highlight urban and rural poverty.

One particularly interesting case of censorship highlighted by Treglown is that of Luis Buñuel, co-writer and director of *Un Chien Andalou*. Buñuel worked as a spy for the Republic and produced propaganda films during the war and eventually left Spain for the USA where he worked at MoMA in New York until he was fired during the McCarthy era for his communist links. Buñuel returned to Spain in 1961 when censorship was being relaxed and co-wrote and directed *Viridiana*. The film passed Franco's censors and went on to win the Palme D'Or at Cannes. And then the embarrassment began. The Vatican saw the film as a satire of authoritarian Catholicism and condemned the film, leading to a hasty blacklisting in Spain. The story serves to show that although censorship existed, it was still possible to get subversive material out, particularly as the censors were often dealing with abstract and surrealist works whose meaning was open to interpretation.

The central thesis of the book, that Spanish culture lived on through the Franco regime, is hard to deny but in attempting to assess the impact of the regime Treglown makes some odd decisions in terms of which topics to discuss. In the first half of the book he covers themes that have had an impact on Spanish cultural identity and collective memory. For one of these themes he chooses Franco's dam building programme which brought irrigation and hydro-electric power to many parts of the country. Treglown focusses on the cultural effect of the programme on the displaced villagers who made way for the new lakes and reservoirs; a group that represented a very small proportion of the rural population. Given that only a few topics are considered in the book this seems a strange choice given that dam building was hardly a feature exclusive to Franco's regime – similar reservoir building was occurring in Devon and Cumbria in the UK around the same time.

The attempts to find Franco's mass graves and identify bodies in order to give those individuals proper burials are covered in detail and through this we get a sense that Treglown, and many of the Spanish people, are trying to move on from the years of the regime. Given, however, that the book is a study of culture since 1936 there appear to be some glaring oversights. After spending much time on villagers displaced by dam building, it seems strange to not cover some Francoist policies which had a massive impact on Spanish culture, namely the attempt to stamp out regional identities. No space is given to the suppression of Catalanian or Basque language and culture, the resistance against this or indeed any armed resistance which occurred throughout the regime.

Overall the book seems flawed in the aspects of Spanish cultural life explored but it covers some interesting ground: the projects to discover Franco's mass graves and the yearly commemoration of his birthday which still goes on at his crypt are two examples. The second half of the book gives short reviews of key books, films and works of art which would be useful to anyone wanting to approach modern Spanish culture. Treglown, however, seems to gloss over some of the more radical parts of Spanish culture and goes so far to say that anarchism was an ideology that appeals 'to the lazy as well as the rebellious and individualistic'. When anarchism has been such a strong force in Spanish cultural life for over a century, this seems like a deliberate attempt by the author to downplay the influence of a group he does not agree with.

AF PUBLICATIONS

OUT NOW

BASIC BAKUNIN

"We are convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality." This pamphlet will examine the anarchist ideas of Mikhail Bakunin. These ideas were a huge influence upon the 19th century socialist movement. We hope that it will become apparent that Bakunin has a lot to offer us today, that his ideas make up a coherent and well-argued body of thought, and show that there is good reason for him to be described as the grandfather of modern anarchism.

A5 - £2 (+p&p)

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN

The compatibility of anarchism and women's liberation is clear: opposition to all hierarchy is a requirement of any movement demanding emancipation and equality. Despite this, everywhere that women joined the early anarchist movement they were forced to fight against the prejudices of their male comrades. Not only did they fight, they prevailed, becoming the spearhead of many revolutionary situations. This pamphlet provides a biographical account of some lesser-known revolutionary women of the past.

A5 - £2 (+p&p)

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism. This abridged version of our key pamphlet sets out to introduce what all this means and how we think we can do it.

A6 - Free / Donation (+p&p)

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

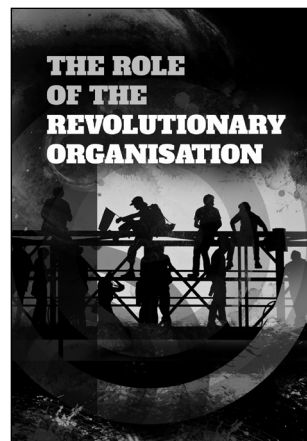
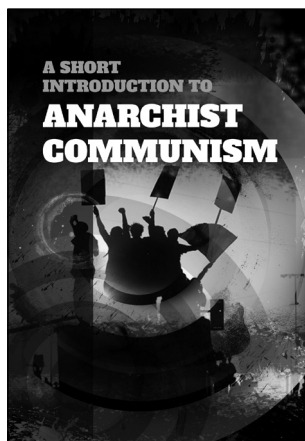
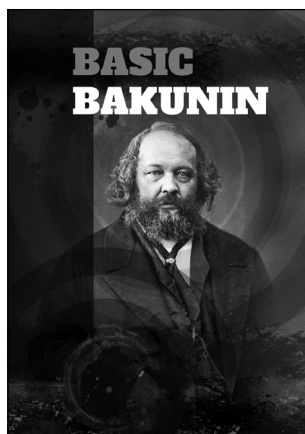
We in the Anarchist Federation seek the abolition of capitalism and state in favour of bringing about a society based on the guiding principle 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.' This is anarchist communism. In order to achieve this we need a revolutionary organisation to undertake a certain role as part of the working class. This pamphlet will explain why.

A6 - £1 (+p&p)

WORK

We live in a society where the activities we engage in for most of our life are not based on being useful to society or fulfilling to ourselves, but are based upon getting money to have our needs met. Our work is the driving force behind capitalism. The activities we're required to perform are either detrimental to society or have their full worth undermined by the drive for profits. This pamphlet will explain why we must abolish work.

A6 - £1 (+p&p)



FORTHCOMING

RESISTANCE TO NAZISM

INTRODUCTION TO ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

AGAINST NATIONALISM

ECOLOGY & CLASS

**Anarchist Federation
pamphlets and other publications available from:**

WEB <https://afed.org.uk/publications/>
please contact us for p+p costs

POST BM ANARFED,
London,
WC1N 3XX,
England, UK

All publications can also be purchased from AFed stalls / events as well as direct from Active Distribution and AK Press & Distribution.

THE AIMS & PRINCIPLES

of the ANARCHIST FEDERATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 We have a materialist analysis of capitalist society. The working class can only change society through our own efforts. We reject arguments for either a unity between classes or for liberation that is based upon religious or spiritual beliefs or a supernatural or divine force. We work towards a world where religion holds no attraction.