

ORGANISE!

... for revolutionary anarchism

From then until now Anniversary Issue

PLUS

- The Anti-cuts Movement and the Left
 - The Great Unrest: 1910-1914
 - The Paris Commune: A Contested Legacy
 - The anarchist sculptor Henri Gaudier Brzeska
- AND MORE**

77

£2.50 €3.00 Free to prisoners

Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation

Issue 77 - Winter 2011

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

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

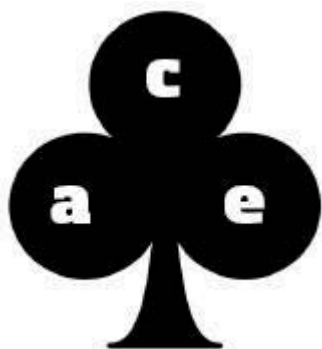
As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 1st March 2012. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

What goes in Organise!

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

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



**Anarchist Communist
Editions**

Anarchist Federation local groups and contacts

Scotland/Alba

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

Edinburgh & the Lothians

edinburgh@afed.org.uk

Glasgow

glasgow@afed.org.uk

Stirling

stirling@afed.org.uk

Wales/Cymru

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

England (and all other areas)

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

Brighton AF (including Lewes)

brighton@afed.org.uk

Bristol AF

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

East Kent AF

eastkent@afed.org.uk

Lancashire AF

lancs@af-north.org

Leicester AF

leicester@afed.org.uk

Leeds AF

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

Lincoln AF

lincoln@afed.org.uk

Liverpool AF (including Merseyside)

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

London AF

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

Manchester AF

manchester@af-north.org
<http://www.af-north.org/>

Newcastle AF (including Tyneside)

Anarchist Federation, PO Box ITA, New-

castle Upon Tyne, NE99 1TA
newcastle@af-north.org

Nottingham AF (including Notts)

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

Organise! editors

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

Resistance editors

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

Sheffield AF

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

Surrey and Hants AF

surreyhants@afed.org.uk

Worcester AF

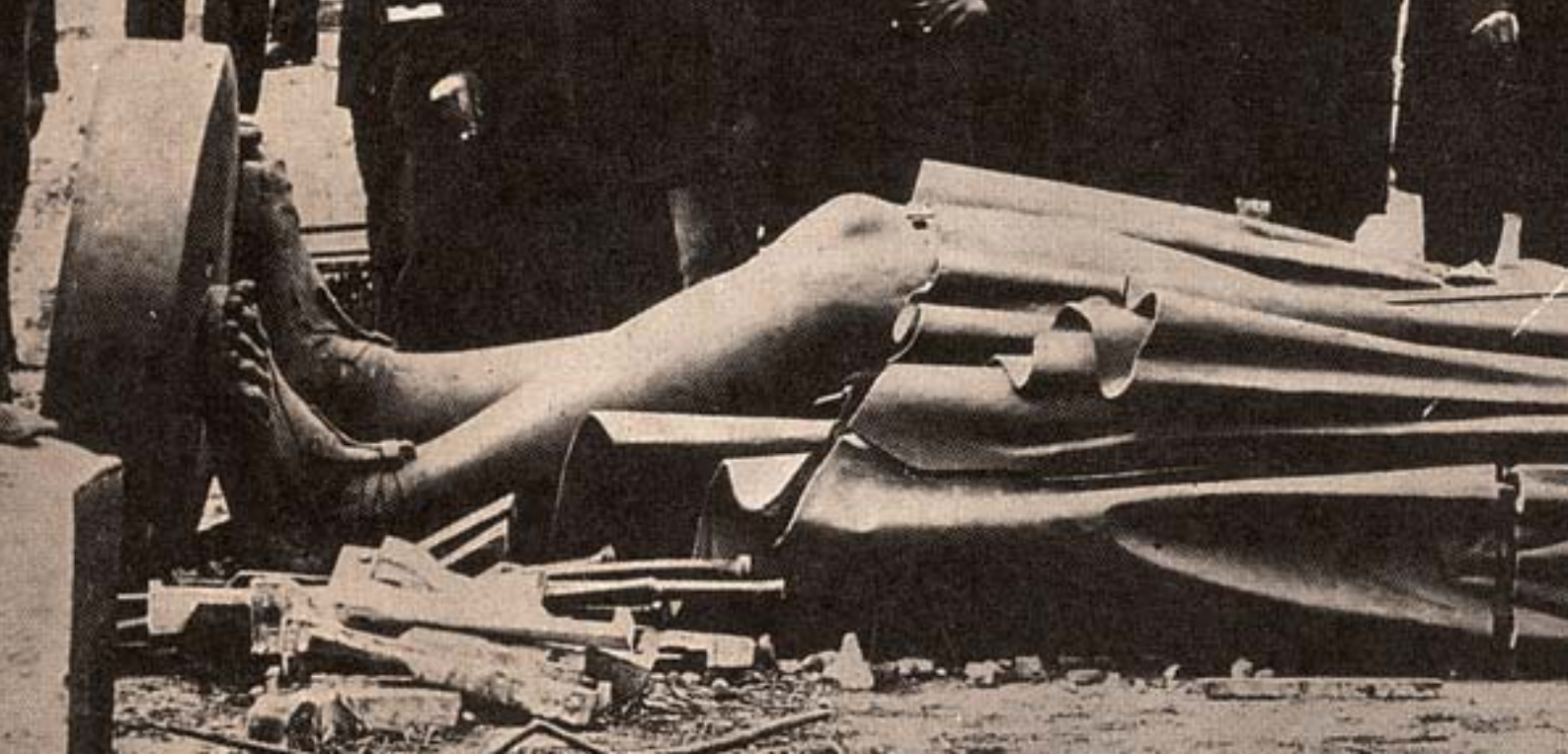
worcester@afed.org.uk

York AF

york@af-north.org

Special alternative cover edition.





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

Editorial	4
25 years of the Afed	6
The Paris Commune: A Contested Legacy	13
The Anti-Cuts Movement and the Left: a local activists perspective	22
The Great Unrest: Prelude to the Storm	29
Revolutionary Portrait: Eugene Varlin, Martyr of the Paris Commune	35
The Day Will Come: Chicago 1886	37
The Mexican Revolution	38
The anarchist sculptor Henri Gaudier Brzeska	48
Reviews	50
Obituary: Bob Miller 1953-2011	51

Subscriptions

Organise! single issue:
£3.50 UK / £4.00 EU / £4.50 rest
of world

Organise! subscription (2 issues
per year):
£6 UK / £7 EU / £8 rest of world

Resistance subscription (10
issues per year):
£8 UK / £15 EU / £20 rest of
world

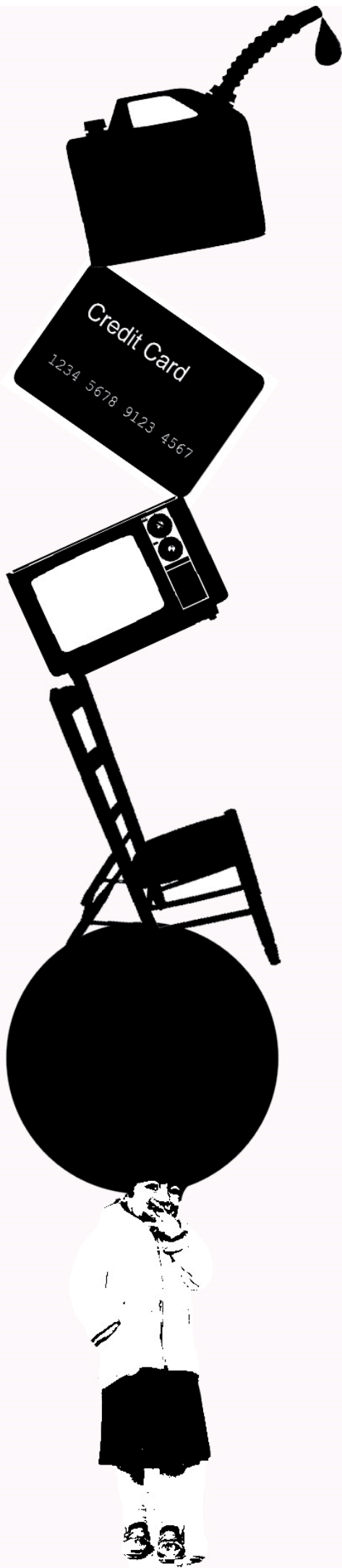
Organise! & Resistance joint
subscription:
£14 UK / £22 EU / £28 rest of
world

All prices include postage.

Cheques or postal orders
payable to 'AFED'.

Order online: <http://af-north.org>

Ask about discounted bulk or-
ders: distribution@afed.org.uk



Welcome to the 77th issue of *Organise!* In it we focus on some of the several anniversaries that fall this year, including the 25th birthday of the Anarchist (Communist) Federation itself.

As such we give you articles on the Paris Commune of 1871 and on one of its heroes, Eugene Varlin, on the Mexican Revolution that started in 1911, on industrial struggles in Britain in the same year, and on the Haymarket martyrs 125 years on. We look at the past history of our movement in celebration but also critically. We also look at present struggles through reflection on the recent

es 'violence' against property and also people in the 'August riots' of this Summer. Even socialist organisations supposedly in touch with the working class bluntly dismissed rioters as misguided and as inviting the repression of the whole class. Perhaps because there were fewer attacks on the police than in the riots of the early 1980s, for example, the upsurge in proletarian anger was interpreted as individualistic and/or materialistic by everyone from the Daily Mail to the Socialist Party. Anarchists do not sit in judgement on the working class, however. It does not sit comfortably with us that people were killed and that

Editorial

What's in the latest Organise!

activity of the AF itself in the wider anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement over the past five or six years, and an interview with a local anti-cuts activist. In addition, we bring you the reviews of recent literature and look at the life and work of the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.

In *Organise!* #76 we very much focussed on the issue of what constitutes 'legitimate' violence and the necessity of wrestling the right to define this from even the more liberal left. This was in the context of rioting by students and the 'Black Bloc' in response to the cuts. We know that we echoed the views and values of many anarchists in this. The matter continues to be important for our movement as it also address-

the lives of others, including fire fighters, were put in danger by other working class people. But how can this explosion of fury, sparked by yet another police killing of a young black man, not be seen as political? The social and economic relations that allow some to revel in luxury whilst the majority are supposed to look on passively from the sidelines underpin everything that took place. Anarchists were involved in helping our communities interpret what took place and to turn the spotlight on a state and media that, since the Blair government, has undertaken a systematic policy in demonising and criminalising the young. Anarchists have been part of amazing street meetings and community initiatives that did not seek to identify and margin-

alise rioters as 'feral', inherently 'criminal' or as some terrifying 'underclass' operating in the shadows. Anarchists are also supporting those hundreds of young people now being victimised in the courts and threatened with loss of benefits and of the eviction of their entire family from social housing.

Faced with a hostile and ignorant mass media, such grass roots initiatives are left to tell their own story, with UK anarchist bulletins and newspapers being an important medium for this. The oldest and most historically independent and respected of these, *Freedom*, has been forced by production costs to change from being a fortnightly to a monthly publication, although it still aims 'to become an essential voice of the anarchist movement, promoting UK anarchism, broadening out the range of topics to connect with a growing readership (additional sections will include sport, art, interviews, lifestyle) and reporting on the important issues of the day from a radical perspective'. To support the paper and get involved, or to submit articles, contact the editor at copy@freedompress.org.uk. Whilst the anarchist press more generally evaluates its future in a world where on-line publications and new social media are an increasingly important and more immediate way of getting an anarchist perspective on the world, it is vital that we support our printed media too. The AF prints and distributes thousands of copies of the only national anarchist free sheet, *Resistance*, but has had to downsize this because of costs. As such we direct you to our own press appeal too (p. XX).

Internationally the levels of struggle have rarely been higher.

Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets as the European economy collapses in the face of that not only exploitative but illogical system they call 'Capitalism'. Anarchists are active in all of the counties in the EU and its immediate neighbours, encouraging the emergence of mass-movements within them that are decentralised and also inclusive of migrant labour, such as the recent No Border camp in Bulgaria: <http://noborderbulgaria.org>

What has taken place and is still unfolding in North Africa and the Middle East also makes us optimistic. Issues of social class and economic inequality are emerging clearly within what are in any case relatively progressive movements against unaccountable power and tyranny. Even though bourgeois values are what drive the new 'pro-democracy' leaderships, the working class in these countries appears not to be undermining its own interests in favour of patriotic, nationalistic, clan or tribal-based values. We sense that western-backed representative democracy will triumph in the short term, but that like the regimes it replaces it will soon be tested and found wanting. This is where libertarian values must come to the fore and in turn be evaluated. Through various channels, including through the International of Anarchist Federations, we hear of anarchist organising in the southern Mediterranean and Middle East, hopefully boosting groups such as Anarchists Against the Wall, who have been struggling heroically against the Israeli state for years without succumbing to anyone's nationalism. A meeting to be convened by our own international, the International of Anarchist Federations at Saint-Imier in August 2012 (see below) aims

to bring libertarians of the European and African Mediterranean and Middle East together for the first time.

We have delved deeply into some historical events in this issue at the expense of bringing you anniversary articles on The Battle of Cable Street (1936), Kronstadt (1921) or Luddism (the first communiqué of 'Ned Ludd' was issued in November 1811). There is plenty to be read about Kronstadt from an informed anarchist perspective, although Luddism still lacks a good anarchist analysis - one not sentimentalising the 'pre-factory' exploitation of textile workers, or making anachronistic links between issues raised by modern and pre-modern technologies. The majority of Luddite activity followed the Winter of 1812, and so we hope to remedy this omission in *Organise!* #78.

Also in the next issue we will bring you more information about the massive anarchist gathering taking place from the 9th to 12th August 2012, marking another anniversary: one hundred and forty years since the founding of the first anarchist international (see advert on p. 47).

Finally, with our great sorrow but in memory of his amazing life and great contribution to Anarchist Communism, this issue of *Organise!* is dedicated to our much loved comrade Bob Miller, who we and his family lost to cancer quite suddenly over the Summer. We miss him and will always miss him, in so many ways. You will find our obituary for him inside.

25 years of the Afed

As we celebrate 25 years of the Anarchist Federation we look at the developments in our organisation over the last 5 to 6 years. Our first two decades were covered in some detail in Organise! issues 67 and 42 which can be found on our website, so we won't repeat them here.

Summit protests

Our latest chapter begins at the end of 2005, as we were moving on from the anti-G8 summit mobilisation at Gleneagles which resulted in the largest explicitly anti-capitalist event we have ever had in Britain. Afterwards, many participants were discussing the future of the Dissent network that had been responsible for the fundraising and convergence space organisation that had supported the anti-summit activities. Members of the AF were involved in a working group that was looking at the possibility of a holding a re-convergence of those involved following a couple of post-summit gatherings. We proposed that a good basis for proceeding would be an agreement that favoured the adoption of principles something like the People's Global Action (PGA) hallmarks.

In the end though, the Dissent network did not continue and activists went their separate ways, and in hindsight it is possible to understand the reasons. Some decided to concentrate on environmental action and went on to establish the Camp for Climate Action near Drax power station. It is probably true to say that those



who set up the camp were not of the political persuasion which would form a permanent or even a semi-permanent network based on a set of principles. Although some AF members engaged with CCA early on - until the lack of explicit principles meant that it was impossible to address the influx of liberals, celebrities and trots - others had thrown ourselves into anti-ID card campaigning and No Borders (including action at detention centres and local refugee support) whilst continuing to organise as far as possible in community campaigns and anti-fascist activity against the BNP. At the same time the anarchist social centres movement really took off and more AF members got involved with local centres. However, there was a perception that the anti-capitalist movement was not really making

waves outside of single issues, notwithstanding the threat of ecological collapse being seen by many as the main threat from capitalism and as an overarching rather than a single issue. Furthermore, as the US/UK led war on terror continued, the London Bombings having dominated the end of the Gleneagles summit, it was clear that there was no serious movement against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan outside of the Stop the War Coalition which was dominated by the Socialist Workers' Party. The stranglehold of the SWP on StWC eventually resulted in a split, with some of its prominent leaders leaving to form Counterfire, and the war machine has continued regardless.

Out of the Shadows

For the AF a general lack of coherence in the anti-capitalist

movement and a seemingly impregnable neo-liberalism in wider society (plus an overbearing anti-immigrant rhetoric and generally unpleasant right-wing rallying from the popular press) resulted, over the next 3 years, in some soul-searching about our role in the movement. From this an internal document *Out Of The Shadows* was written by a small number of members. The main points were that the AF needed to act more coherently as an organisation and agree on the main projects that groups would ideally be involved in (although without compulsion) based on reaching majority agreement at national conferences. OOTS stressed that we should come up with a set of positions on everyday issues such as housing and crime that might appeal to more people outside of activist ghettos, and to try to become more media friendly. A widening of involvement in our activities was to be encouraged by the formation of an AF supporters group that would include people more on the fringe of the AF proper. The document also challenged the looser basis of the AF as a collection of essentially autonomous groups that tended

to act locally and whose activism was directed at mainly single issue campaigning. The overall effect was the putting forward of a more centralist programme for the AF.

The AF took the challenge seriously and discussed the document in detail and this was to be a major input to our next conference. But for some members progress was too slow and so some (although not all) of the signatories left to form, along with others, Liberty & Solidarity. L&S aligned itself to the Anarkismo international project and also advocated a more 'pragmatic' approach to anarchist politics especially in terms of anarchist involvement in the mainstream trade union movement. Possibly this had always been the goal of some of those involved, uncertainty about which was the cause of some acrimony, since formation of a faction with an agenda is allowed in AF but must be openly announced. Members of L&S also joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Although we lost some members in the formation of L&S, the next few years nonetheless resulted in a rapid growth in the AF, increas-

ing our membership from 90 to 150, confirming us as the biggest anarchist organisation in Britain. It was quite a shock to not only have a lot more members, but that we were for the first time experiencing a turn-over in our membership. Our membership was also becoming more mobile and more international. As a result we have had to contend with groups forming (and disappearing) as members have moved town or country. On the other hand we have benefited greatly from having more members originating from overseas and a greater geographical spread in general, such that we have seen sustained growth in Scotland for example.

The OOTS experience resulted in some internal changes, firstly to our constitution where we identified a need to more clearly describe our commitment to federalism and consensus decision-making and to explain what we meant by it. We also reduced the power of our occasional voting at conferences by changing the majority from half to two-thirds, the upshot of this being that we now vote even less than we used to.

Anarchist Federation members protest the implementation of identity cards for foreign nationals outside the EU. November 2008.



Secondly, whilst we did not agree overall with the idea of very specific position papers, which we felt might cause stagnation in our thinking, we realised that some of our theory would be better grounded by referring to practice more often. Over the next few years we produced pamphlets *Against Nationalism* in the context of the Gaza occupations and *On the Frontline*, on workplace strategy, where we explained in some detail our position with respect to syndicalism and the trade unions. These texts were widely appreciated by other anarchists, creating a level of mutual understanding that no doubt contributed to improved joint work with other organisations, notably the Solidarity Federation. We also produced leaflets and longer articles on a number of contemporary issues including environmental politics, such as *Welcome to the Green Boss*, part of an intervention at the Climate Camp mounted in the financial district during the London G20; and also against attacks on Roma people by the neo-fascist right in Italy which was produced for a joint AF/No Borders demonstration outside the Italian consulate in Manchester (attacks that can also be linked to eviction attempts at Dale Farm in Essex). A paper, *Private versus 'Socialised' healthcare*, about Obama's health reforms in the USA that was also relevant to how anarchists view the NHS, quickly became the second most read article on our website, the most read article being *Smash the English Defence League*, written in the context of EDL demonstrations that we have opposed alongside other anti-racists in many towns in England. Our newest pamphlet, *Introduction to Anarchist Communism*, was written to put our worldview along-

thanks to the Labour government's widening of participation in further and higher education, and no thanks to the introduction of loans and fees that mean you have to work whilst studying unless you have a rich family, we found more and more students identifying with anarchist communism.

side real anti-war, workplace and community struggles.

A third outcome of OOTS was that we reasserted an active commitment to our founding principle of recognising the vital importance of struggles for sexual equality within and without our movement. Unconsciously, or perhaps through lack of consciousness, this was missing from OOTS in its striving to make us more relevant to working class struggles (a perception that might, wrongly, give sexual politics less priority). In part due to our growth in membership that made it meaningful to have these groups, both a Women's and a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer (LGBTQ) caucus were formed as part of AF which now meet separately at least once a year. In particular, the AF has become a focus of radical anti-capitalist LGBTQ activism with a growth in LGBTQ members, two issues of a bulletin *What's Wrong with Angry?* and interventions at several Pride events.

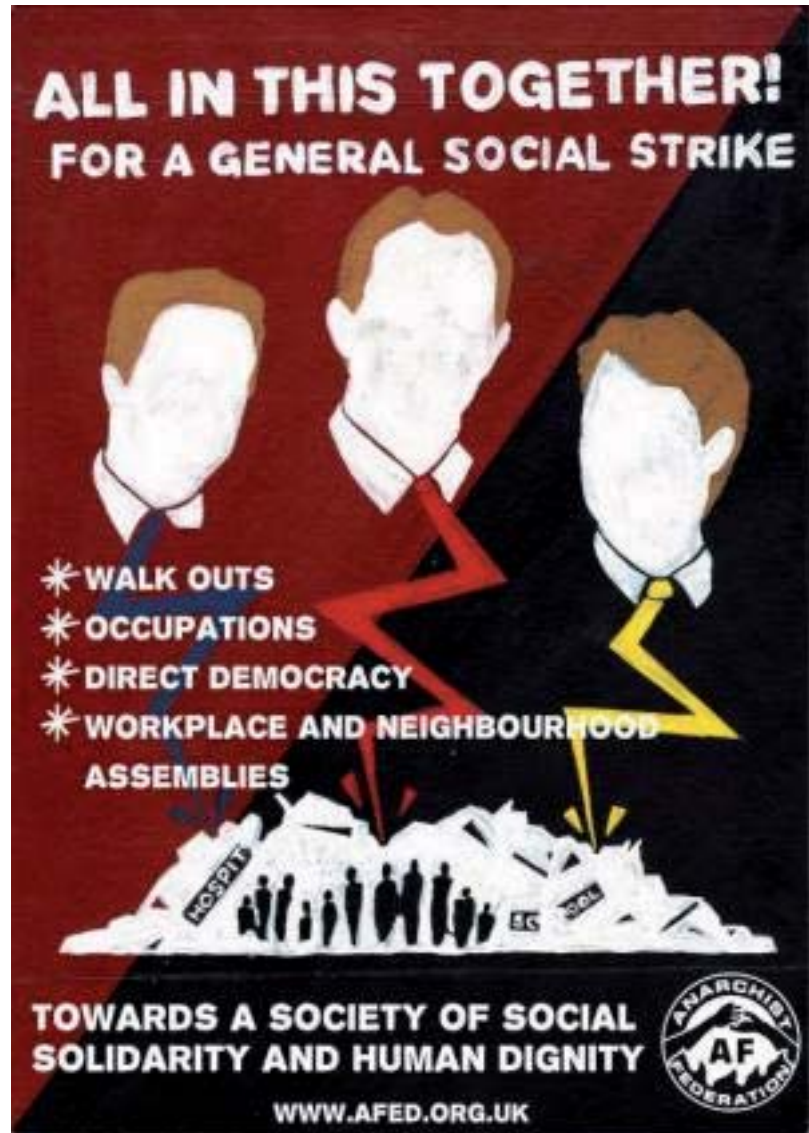
Anarchist Conference

Considering the growth of interest in anarchism being experienced since the summit protests,

the idea for a large outward-facing conference was on the minds of many within the movement. At the 2008 Anarchist Bookfair in London, we announced our intention to hold an Anarchism 2009 conference in a northern town; whilst it became immediately apparent that the Bookfair organisers and others were thinking along the same lines with an idea of 'Bradford revisited', echoing an important meeting of class struggle anarchists that we had all been involved with in 1998. We eventually decided to abandon our own conference and supported the Anarchist Movement Conference that subsequently took place in London in June 2009. It is probably fair to say that this conference was most useful in getting class struggle anarchists in London talking seriously about the future, and that it also gave a boost to anarchist-feminist organising through the intervention of 'No Pretence', both good things in themselves, but also, for AF members outside London, it did not have the impact it might have had in creating a countrywide buzz about anarchism, and so ended up being rather more inward than outward looking – a bit too much like Bradford '98 perhaps?

Students and workers

Over the last few years the AF has attracted a lot of students and this had been a key element of our rapid growth in recent years. In the 1980s especially, university students were a bit of a pariah in the organised class struggle anarchist movement as a mainly privileged and self-interested group outside the experience of most working class people. But thanks to the Labour government's widening of participation in further and higher education, and no thanks to the introduction of loans and fees that mean you have to work whilst studying unless you have a rich family, we found more and more students identifying with anarchist communism. A major effect of the most recent increases in university fees and the cutting of the Education Maintenance Allowance for younger students has radicalised education massively. During the university occupations such as the Free Hetherington, and when protest erupted into direct action at Millbank Conservative HQ, the input of libertarian politics was impossible to miss and we, having many members who are students and/or education workers, were well placed to play our part. The AF and SolFed organised a Radical Workers' and Students' Bloc in November 2010 as a direct contribution to the struggle, and the first issue of *Anarchist Student* was published just prior to this. We also participated in the January 2011 Network X conference in Manchester and a joint Radical Workers Bloc was called to take place on the 26th March TUC demonstration against the cuts, the so-called 'March for the Alternative'.



Poster for "March for the Alternative" 26th March 2011

The economic crisis, and state response to it, is of course a major turning point in general. While the Trotskyist and Labour Left see it as a chance to regroup around a left-wing agenda, the tired old politics of traditional trade unionism have had very little to offer in preventing the effects of the cuts, even on their members' jobs. Prior to this a glimmer of hope was evident in the Visteon and Vestas factory occupations. Now with the rise of UK UnCut, direct action has become everyday and anarchism is being openly discussed in the mainstream media, even if commentators mainly concentrate on sustaining a myth around the idea of a Black Block. Now, with the August Riots so fresh, and recriminations flying

about the state of our society, at least they can see that unrest cannot so easily be attributed to this or that political group. To explain our politics in regard to the cuts, we produced thousands of copies of a poster/bulletin, *Everything we've won: they want it back*, that was handed out on the March For The Alternative. These included contributions from AF members working in health and social care and students. We also produced a statement on the June 30th coordinated strike day calling for more sustained and coordinated strike action. The Trot parties' amnesia and downright opportunism continues in their lobbying the Labour Party or TUC, or seeking to influence

rank and file trade unionists within them, whilst the non-unionised unemployed who will be facing the coalition's Work Programme and those whose disability allowances are being taken away are being all but ignored, as are the majority of service users who are not within easy reach of the left as they are not workers in the public sector.

Other Contributions

One thing we have developed over the last few years is a widening of our involvement in promoting anarchism outside of our own activities and publications. This has included getting regional bookfairs off the ground in Sheffield, Manchester and Bristol and supporting others like in Belfast and Dublin. In 2008, our Nottingham group founded an anarchist cultural centre with library and

archive, The Sparrows' Nest, and this now contains a wealth of material; no small thanks to generous donations and loans from individuals, organisations and publishers as well as ongoing cataloguing efforts by non-AF members. Significantly, it is about to become home to the Solidarity Federation's historical archive. In addition we have written more than ever for other papers of the movement, including a regular piece for *Black Flag* and individual member contributions to *Freedom* and *Shift*, and we have contributed articles and interviews to overseas papers and magazines. Some of our members are involved in libcom.org which has become an increasingly important online resource for anarchist communication and publications. AF groups are also running their own blogs, publishing local papers, and have initiated

ed local publishing efforts notably in Manchester and London with Peterloo Press and Stormy Petrel. In 2008 we celebrated 100 issues of our monthly free paper *Resistance* and we are now close to 140.

As well as joint work with the Solidarity Federation, AF members continue to be involved in the IWW, seeing in it a vehicle for cooperation with other militants in workplace agitation and organisation whilst seeking to develop its potential as a solidarity unionist body.

We have not yet said much about international activities. Our involvement in the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF-IFA) has continued and we have been especially pleased to have had the chance to strengthen links with other IAF-IFA members by participating in regular international



Protest at the Liberal Democrat Party Conference, Sheffield 2011.

delegate meetings and bookfairs and hosting overseas comrades in England. We have also formed meaningful relationships with non-IAF-IFA groups including the recently formed Federation of Anarchist Organising in Slovenia and groupings in Holland, Greece and Macedonia; whilst AF members have also conducted two tours of Central and South America where they met with many groups across the region. The last few years has also seen great need for international solidarity and we have engaged in practical and moral support for comrades in Serbia, Oaxaca (Mexico), Belarus and Greece, Philippines, Indonesia, as well as Anarchists Against the Wall in Israel/Palestine.

We cannot leave 2011 without mentioning the great loss we have felt from the death through cancer of our AF comrade Bob Miller in June. Bob was instrumental in getting our publications for sale online in addition to his invaluable political contributions (see elsewhere in *Organise!* for a full obituary).

Conclusions

It feels like the next few years will be dominated by the economic climate. As surprised as the state has appeared to be about the riots and attacks on police in our major and not so major cities and towns, it has perhaps also been a surprise to see how quickly the gloves have come off, with threats of water cannon, denial of Facebook and the rest as well as the extremely heavy sentencing. The state has, in its rhetoric, moved on from the war on terror and its polarising suspicion of 'other' cultures, and now sees a much larger part of the population as a threat to stability and business as usual. It is hard for them to maintain the

Whilst Labour is in opposition, we won't hear the end of 'Tories Out' from the trots, but thankfully there have been some inspiring developments in the form of UK UnCut and a radicalised student movement. This will hopefully be something to build upon. And we are growing in number as anarchist communists, so we can potentially do more in more places.

lie that we are all in this together without completely writing off people as feral or scum, egged on by the populist press. The present government continues erosion of the right to a 'social wage' by changing legislation to make benefits or council housing even more conditional and short term, whilst threatening removal of access to these as a punishment for unrest.

This said, we have yet to see less-marginalised parts of the working class involved in political activity even though there have been a lot of job losses and welfare is under attack on many fronts, including pensions, benefits and healthcare. Whilst Labour is in opposition, we won't hear the end of 'Tories Out' from the trots, but thankfully there have been some inspiring developments in the form of UK UnCut and a radicalised student movement. This will hopefully be something to build upon. And we are growing in number as anarchist communists, so we can potentially do more in more places. But in the AF we are certainly noticing the economic climate. It costs us a lot to publish *Organise!* and our other papers, pamphlets and leaflets. At the same time a good many of our members have

very little income. Some of us have lost jobs recently. But we will support each other and keep going!

The outcomes for the wider anarchist movement are currently a bit unclear. Organised revolutionary class struggle anarchism in Britain is less sectarian than ever and its groups are working and writing well on joint projects. Bookfairs are getting bigger and more numerous and the amount of new anarchist material being written and published is phenomenal. Part of this represents an accelerating literacy in our movement as a whole, and also the legacy of access to higher education that so many more people have taken advantage of over the lifetime of the AF.

This picture of harmony and growth is not, unfortunately, the case more broadly, if we include those who define themselves as anarchists but are not in organisations. At the Bradford '98 conference, the first major meeting of minds in recent memory, one of its most exciting aspects was the coming together of class struggle anarchists and eco-activists who were calling

themselves anarchists. However, over the last 5 to 6 years there has been a divergence of the same. Some of this can perhaps be put down to the different lifestyles that allow people to put on events like Climate Camp which require bouts of very intense activity. Eco-activism has also taken a hit from police infiltration and mass arrests and this has no doubt taken its toll in terms of involvement in major new activities in the last couple of years. A meeting that took place in February decided to wind up camping as a strategy to allow “new tactics, organising methods and processes to emerge in this time of whirlwind change.” In addition to a closing statement ‘Metamorphosis’ produced at the meeting, an article ‘Climate camp is dead! Long live climate camp!’ appeared in the April 2011 edition of *Peace News* (which, incidentally, celebrated 75 years of radical publishing this year). It indicated unresolved tensions between the need for security in camp organisation and inclusiveness of decision-making, invoking Jo Freeman’s seminal text from the 1970s, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* that we in AF have often cited in our stressing the need for open and accountable anarchist organisational structures without which unspoken leaderships inevitably develop. The article finished by asking “Is it impossible to organise in large groups over the long term in a participatory, democratic way? How can we build a movement which not only inspires with its political actions, but inspires day-to-day with the way it organises?” and asked for help to achieve this. Hopefully this will encourage eco-activists to engage with anarchist organisations once again.

At the same time there has been



Radical Workers’ Bloc, “March for the Alternative”, 26th March 2011

our stressing the need for open and accountable anarchist organisational structures without which unspoken leaderships inevitably develop.

little enthusiasm amongst anarchists who are not in organisations to engage with anti-austerity politics, or indeed any kind of mass movement building, with the exception of community orientated local organisations like those in London and Edinburgh who continue to do good work around housing, green spaces and benefits. Reasons for this are not hard to find. Firstly the economic basis for the cuts is something that many non-organised anarchists have disengaged with already; in some cases having dropped out of even claiming benefits, so the idea of defending pensions is a million miles away. Secondly there is an understandable gut reaction against defence of ‘state’ services that, without an analysis that sees welfare provision as something won out of class conflict, seems like the complete opposite of a

libertarian society. Thirdly there is an ideological opposition to mass movements which sometimes manifests itself in small and secretive group organising that does not seek to explain its actions to a wider movement (a nihilist tendency is even gaining credence in some areas). For such people, organisations like the AF may seem little removed from those of the Trots, and ‘post-left’ theory only adds weight to this separation.

Internally, the AF will continue to adjust to growth and work on scaling up our activities to ensure efficiency of organising whilst maintaining maximum self-organisation in a non-hierarchical structure. We hope to attract more members and grow further. We will engage with efforts to create a united anarchist movement in Britain and across borders. All in all, we are in for some interesting times ahead

The Paris Commune of 1871 and its Impact

The Paris Commune: A Contested Legacy

Here Organise! presents two different Anarchist approaches to the Paris Commune, which flowered briefly one hundred and forty years ago, in the Spring of 1871. The first, whilst acknowledging that the Commune was an important lesson in early socialism, warns us not to fall into the trap of fetishising historical events and evaluates what was achieved in the light of subsequent anarchist thinking. The second takes the Commune on its own terms and on those of anarchists who were its contemporaries, celebrating what was achieved by libertarians in this, ultimately flawed, early attempt at social revolution.



Lessons of the Commune



The Paris Commune of 1871 was an exciting time for the workers' movement and provided valuable lessons for the class struggle after its fall. However, whilst the event was spectacular and many social reforms occurred and were adopted by the Third Republic that followed it, a lot of it has been exaggerated for lazy historical propaganda purposes to supposedly prove that socialism is possible through these means. As social anarchists we should analyse it without fantastical generalisations so that we may draw upon the

experience of the workers during the Commune and gain understanding for our own future struggles. It does us no good to overstate the importance of any revolutionary event.

The backdrop to the insurrection was the Franco-Prussian war and the German siege of Paris, 1870-1, during which period France underwent a Republican coup deposing Emperor Napoleon III in September 1870, ending the Second Empire which had lasted since 1852. A hushed up

election in February 1871 brought to power unpopular monarchists and conservatives who signed for peace with Prussia. From this period the National Guard, the organised militia formerly under the command of the French Republic, gained in strength and influence and held onto the arms provided to it for the defence of Paris during its siege. By the 3rd March, the proletarian battalions of the Guard, angered by the attempted triumphal entry into their city by the Prussians defected from the government of Adolphe Thiers to

form its own Central Committee with elected commanders.

This dual military power would not do for the government. Thiers sent in battalions of regular troops to disarm the Guard on 18th March. Parisian workers famously resisted at Montmartre in the north of the city, where an attempt to seize the cannon of the Guard was halted after the regular army, fraternising with the Guard and local residents, arrested their generals, Clement-Thomas and Lecomte, and had them shot. Upon hearing of the insurrection, the order was given for the evacuation of the city, although some regular battalions chose to remain.

The Guard was not united in its support for the insurrection, however. As a commander from one of the thirty bourgeois battalions had put it to the old commanding officer on the eve of the insurrection, 'The National Guard will not fight against the National Guard'. Thus, the Central Committee took provisional control of the city and made plans to organise elections to the Commune, which were held on 26th March.

In the few weeks before the Commune was put down, in what came to be known as the 'Bloody Week' (21 - 28 May), progressive transformations took place in social, economic and political relationships. But the insurrection was fragile, not least in military terms. After an agreement was made with the Prussians to release French prisoners of war to aid in the re-capture of Paris, the French army entered from the west of the city taking each district one by one. Workers erected barricades to defend themselves and the Commune executed a few of its hostages in desperation including

Georges Darboy, the archbishop of Paris. As the soldiers retook Paris, known and suspected communards were arrested, whilst others swept through the city setting fire to important buildings to hinder the re-occupation of the city by the state. Those that survived Bloody Week were put on trial. Many were executed whilst others were imprisoned or exiled to New Caledonia. It is unclear how many communards were murdered and executed; the figures range from 5,000 to 50,000. Many ex-communards escaped and sought asylum in countries like the USA, Britain and Belgium and continued their political struggle there. Amnesty was not granted until 1880.

The influence of existing political forms

The 18th March is hailed as the date of the insurrection and has many similarities to the beginnings of subsequent revolutions such as that of Russia 1917, Spain 1936 and Hungary 1956, in that they were spontaneous proletarian events reacting to the conditions capitalists in power had imposed upon them. They were neither planned, nor sparked by the propagandising of political

organisations. Mass membership of political organisations was merely representative of the already-existing desire for social, economic and political transformation of society. In the case of Paris 1871, a report to the International Workingmen's Association (IWA) by the Corresponding Secretary for France on the General Council, Auguste Serrailier, stated that the International was in disarray, its organisation weak and unwilling to act as an association in some cases. It should be noted that the IWA in France was largely of the Proudhonist tradition, being mutualists who believed they could make capitalism irrelevant through supposedly ignoring, undermining and finally supplanting the state and business. The French section was not in a position to exert much political influence anyway. The International constituted less than one-third of the political Commune; Jacobin bourgeois republicans, conservative and oppositionist held the rest of the seats. Anarchist communists hold that you cannot escape capitalism: it must be abolished. But the Commune overlooked the necessity for the seizure of political power from the bourgeoisie.

In the few weeks before the Commune was put down, in what came to be known as the 'Bloody Week' (21 - 28 May), progressive transformations took place in social, economic and political relationships. But the insurrection was fragile, not least in military terms.

Achievements and limitations of the Commune.

This is not to say that the social revolution occurring in 1871 would have inevitably failed simply because the IWA were a minority faction in the political Commune. A strong desire for socio-economic change was held by the population as a whole. It must be kept in mind that the Commune was a living, and therefore continually developing, example of class struggle and important social questions were being raised in the proletarian quarters of the city as well as by their 'representatives' in the political Commune. It was because of the grassroots desire for change that the political Commune enacted its decrees around social reform.

But the political Commune was ultimately built on the legality of the old regime and on the old republican traditions which had dominated French revolutionary thought. It was itself a bourgeois republic, albeit more decentralised. For instance, the Central Committee of the National Guard, originally intending to hold elections to the Commune on 22nd March, had to delay until the 26th after negotiations with the old mayors of Paris who ran the voting lists and had the authority to call elections.

Workers' cooperatives and economic life

One of the major reforms that leftists and revolutionaries point towards was the April 16th decree requiring that abandoned factories were to be handed to the 'cooperative association of the workers who were employed in them.' But in reality, this was com-

patible with capitalist economics. Worker/producers' cooperatives exist to this day and are not exempt from being exploiters themselves.

L'Ouvrier de l'Avenir, a newspaper of the time, reported fifty workers' cooperatives, mainly within the skilled trades, existing in Paris in the weeks before the March insurrection. Indeed, the Government of National Defence, which took over authority from Napoleon III when he was deposed, encouraged the setting up of workers' cooperatives during the Siege of Paris, through the handing out of large contracts to textile workers to make uniforms for the French army. During the Commune, attempts were made to seek out the private owners in order to compensate them for the loss of their factory after its expropriation, and in some cases, the private owners worked hand-in-hand with the cooperatives, receiving rent, lending equipment and offering business advice to the management of these cooperatives.

Although the formation of forty-three worker cooperatives is sometimes quoted, there were only two of significant size: the Société Cooperative des Fondateurs en Fer (Cooperative Society of Iron Founders) and the Association des Ouvriers de la Métallurgie (Association of Metalworkers). The latter had its munitions factory in the Louvre. The former had already been set up the day before the 16th April decree at a public meeting of iron founders, and so was not the result of the political Commune itself. The society was in fact set up with the support of the War Delegation for the purpose of producing armaments for the Na-

tional Guard, as were many of the other cooperatives founded during this time. Even though the iron founders received a requisition order for a factory, they chose not to expropriate it from its former master but to rent it from him. The chief organiser, Pierre Marc, was a business owner of eight years standing and was selected to the role because he knew how to run a business. The average wage in the factory was half of what it was before the Commune and half that of the workers in the association at the Louvre. Even there, the metalworkers' demand for a wage increase for dangerous work in the front line was rejected; the cooperatives could not compete with private firms for contracts unless they became exploitative themselves.

The fact that cooperatives were still employing the wage system as a means of distribution shows their limitation in socialising the means of production, distribution and exchange. When on the 19th May the Labour and Exchange Delegation called for a meeting of representatives of the cooperatives, only twenty-seven cooperatives were represented out of ninety-three eligible. For the Commune to have been a success, the workers would have had to remove their own political 'representatives' and business owners and managers. In a revolution, capitalists and their supporters must not be allowed to re-take any ground. Workers must control and direct the movement of production and distribution within the economy of the new society as a priority and destroy wage slavery and private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Kropotkin also criticised the Com-

muned for failing to expropriate private property, especially factories and the gold that was stored in banks within the Paris city walls, due to 'prejudices about property and authority'. Many communards seem to have seen economic changes as secondary to political revolution. However we must learn from the lessons of struggles in the past and see the two as inseparable. The Parisian workers failed to seize their workplaces, control the economy themselves and make irrelevant the power of capital.

Political organisation

While those elected to the Commune were, in theory, recallable, they still had the power to make decisions and were relatively centralized and cut off from the people. They were representatives rather than mandated delegates. The former is familiar to us now; we elect people on the basis of what they say or their declared political allegiance and they then make decisions for us. Throughout history this form of organisation has led to abuse, corruption and inequality. The latter system, of mandated, recallable delegates is a libertarian form of political organisation. Rather than giving power to make and enforce decisions to a minority, we retain power at a local or workplace level and mandate delegates with the decisions we have made. The delegates are recallable if they go beyond their mandate.

Kropotkin criticised the political organisation of the commune for maintaining a governmental system of representatives, which then became separated from the day-to-day realities of the wider Commune, becoming conservative

and paralysed by endless discussion, confirmation of the Anarchist critique of representative systems. However, if representation is the only form of political organisation experienced or witnessed by the wider class, there is a danger that this is what will be defaulted to during insurrectionary times. It is therefore vital that we are arguing for, and practicing libertarian forms of organising during these pre-revolutionary periods when we are active in community groups, workplaces, student struggles and tenants' and residents' associations, both because they are the best way to organise democratically, and also because this gives confidence and competence in libertarian practices necessary to maintain revolution.

In the end, perhaps the biggest problem with the Commune's political system of representation was its inefficiency. Only a small number of people were trying to cope with the huge volume of issues, resulting in the representatives being inundated and not able to cope. On the one hand they showed how well ordinary working people can take over the running of things, without needing specialized bureaucrats, but they needed to go further and have autonomous sections of the city run things. Federalism would have been more efficient!

Women and the Commune

Women were involved within the struggle, famously initially confronting the soldiers who had been sent to take back the cannon on the first day. However they faced discrimination both within the Commune and from the victorious Government.

Some progressive policies were adopted by the Commune, notably establishing day nurseries, raising the salary of women teachers to be equal to that of male teachers and improving availability and accessibility of education for girls and women. However the commune was too short lived for these initiatives to be brought to fruition and women's inequality was only partially addressed. While men gained their suffrage, this wasn't the case for women. Some women had an active part in the defence of the commune, for example in Place Blanch where one hundred and twenty women erected and defended a barricade. However, the role of women was largely one of domesticity and care, many working as nurses, such as within the Women's Union for the Defence of Paris and Care of the Injured. Most women were kept away from the barricades and front lines, but others acted as cantinières, whose official role

was to cook, feed and nurse the male troops, although some also fought alongside the men.

After the fall of the commune, misogynistic attitudes within Paris and France were exploited in order to discredit the communards with descriptions of 'petroleuses' - women setting fire to buildings, to argue why order needed to be restored and to justify the horror of the slaughter that followed. Such imagery of 'unfeminine' women, which is rooted in sexist attitudes to what female behaviour should be like, has been used at other times to demonise radical movements often with some success even amongst those who are progressive on other issues. This is just one reason why Anarchists must tackle sexism within our wider class. Radical movements often remain macho and male dominated.

Conclusions and lessons

Although much was spontaneous and unplanned, the influence of Proudhon on the communards

gave it some libertarian flavour. However events moved so fast, and decisions and structures developed by necessity so quickly, that there was little time for theoretical arguments. Without the previous discussions, and the libertarian and socialist organising that had been taking place within the working class of Paris, which meant that much radical thought was already understood, the Commune may have looked even less progressive. However there were still many mistakes made, notably allowing a representative political system to emerge and to fail to carry out an economic revolution within the city walls. Both of these errors are easy to spot if you understand Anarchism, but during an insurrection it is too late! It is vital that libertarian thought and ways of organising are understood and familiar to the wider working class in pre-revolutionary times, so that these same mistakes are not repeated.

Memories of assemblies from previous revolutions gave the Parisians inspiration and models

that they could draw upon, just as in Russia the experiences of 1905 meant that the concept of forming soviets within workplaces was familiar to the Russian working class in 1917 and forced the Bolsheviks to adopt the Anarchist slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets' (although obviously this was soon betrayed by authoritarian centralism).

Finally, it is significant that a festive atmosphere apparently flourished within the city during the period of the Commune. This joy, energy, creativity and high-spirits can be felt in many liberated spaces. Emma Goldman argues that culture, festivity, music and of course dancing are an essential part of revolution. When we are in a space that feels freed from the shackles of capitalism and authority - even just temporarily such as during an occupation - this flowering of creativity contrasts with everyday life and nourishes the feelings of solidarity, affection and comradeship that is both the natural product of struggling together, and it is that which keeps us going during the dark times.



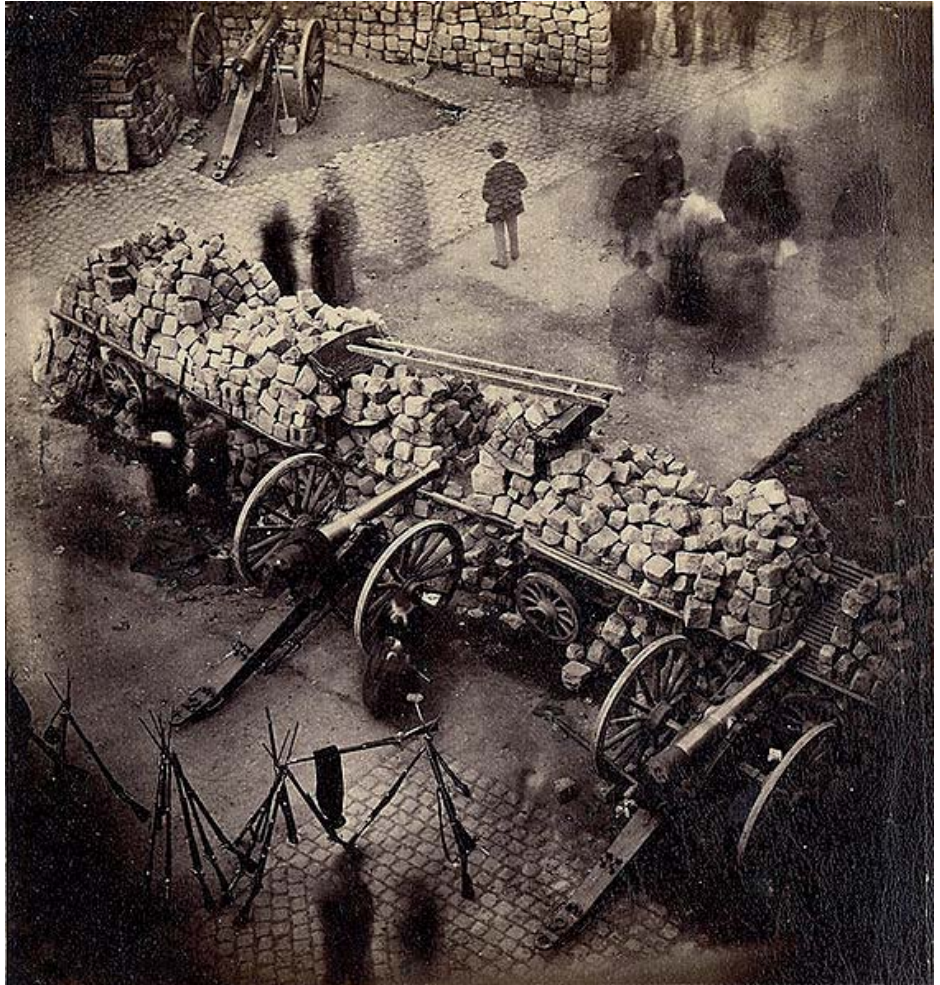
“Vive la Commune!”

This article is dedicated to all those who will turn their guns on their officers.

‘We revolutionaries aren’t just chasing a scarlet flag. What we pursue is an awakening of liberty, old or new. It is the ancient Communes of France, it is 1703; it is June 1848; it is 1871. Most especially it is the next revolution which is advancing under this dawn.’ Louise Michel

‘The Commune was the biggest festival of the nineteenth century. Underlying the events of that spring of 1871 one can see the insurgents’ feeling that they had become the masters of their own history, not so much on the level of “governmental” politics as on the level of their everyday life.’ Situationist International

This year marks the 140th anniversary of the Paris Commune. This momentous event marked the spectacular and agonising beginning of the period in which the working class has made consistent attempts, through revolutions around the world, to break with the system of exploitation and inequality and to usher in a new society and a new civilisation based on equality and freedom. The forms of organisation developed by the Parisian masses, be they artisans, workers, unemployed, artists and writers, youth and children, women and men, are demonstrated again and again in the revolutions that were to break out throughout the twentieth century and into this one. They are the heralds of a new way of organising socially and of behav-



Barricade, Paris 1871.

ing honourably and nobly towards each other. They are an inspiration to all those who wish to clearly break with this society of corruption, brutality, and of the most despicable and venal apologies for human beings running the show. As Louise Michel one of the finest and most magnificent revolutionaries who ever drew breath was to remember of those communards she had survived: ‘To those who in falling, have opened so wide the gates of the future, through which the revolution will pass!’

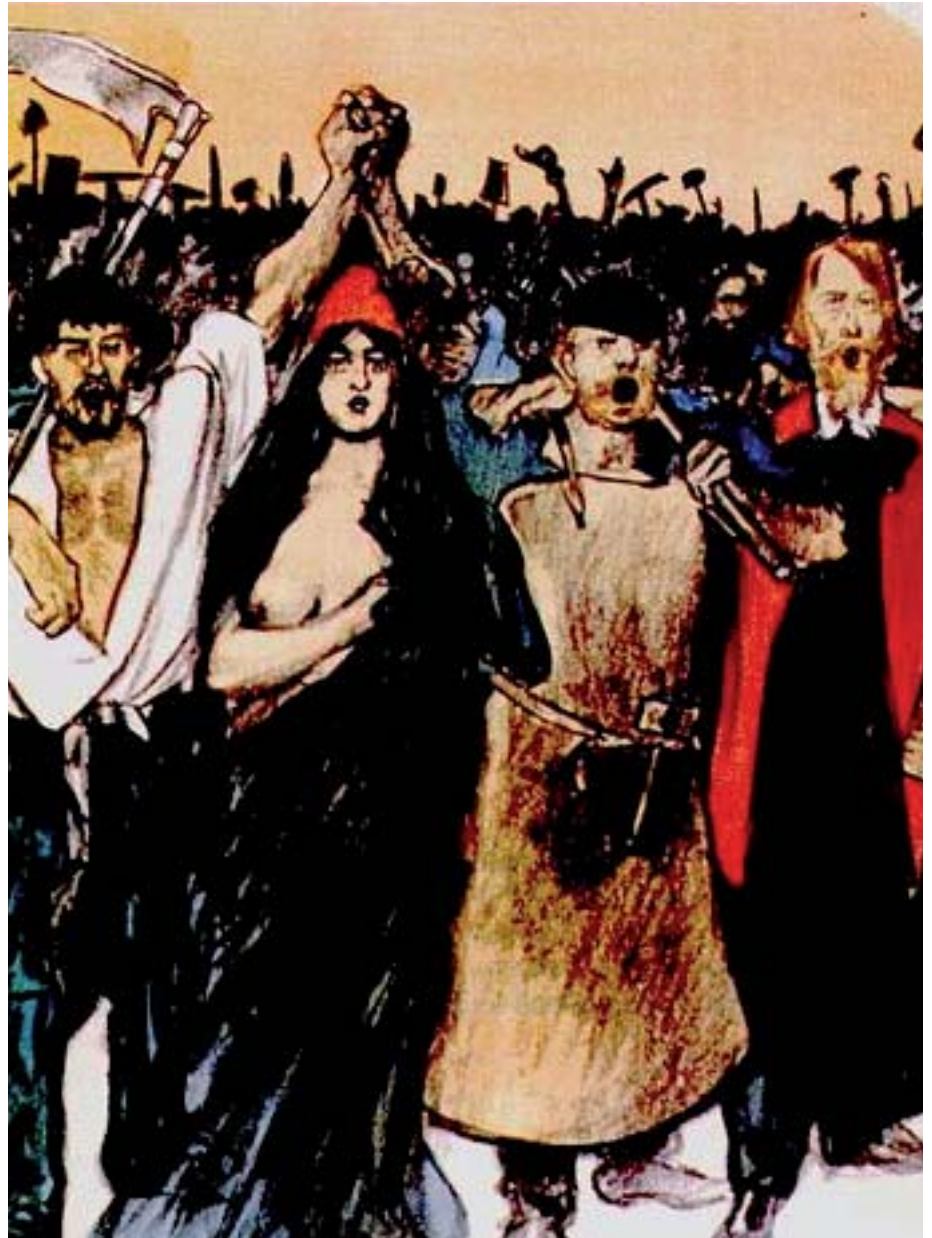
After the disastrous Franco-Prussian War and the adventures of Napoleon III, France was defeated by Prussia. The Prussians

advanced to the outskirts of Paris. The National Guard, a sort of home army/militia supported by public subscription refused to countenance the surrender of artillery to the Prussians, as connived at by the new republican government that had replaced the old imperial regime. This government sent in troops to regain the artillery. They were confronted by a crowd that refused to relinquish the guns situated on the heights of Montmartre. The officers barked out orders to fire on the crowd but the soldiers refused and turned their guns on their officers on March 18th 1871. This was the birth of the Paris Commune.

Free elections called by the National Guard followed. They elected a council made up of a majority of old style Jacobin revolutionaries (harking back to the 1789 Revolution) and a minority of working class socialists, mostly left-wing Jacobins, influenced by Auguste Blanqui and those under the sway of Proudhon, who had envisaged a more libertarian and federalist form of organisation. The Commune of Paris proclaimed Paris to be autonomous and called for the creation of a confederation of communes throughout France. The Commune itself was, in theory, recallable, and paid an average workers' wage. It had a mandate to report back to those who had elected it. At the same time, a whole host of clubs and associations in the Paris neighbourhoods began to develop, concerned both with the administration of the local areas and with visions of how a new society should operate.

The anarchist movement, which was developing at this point in history, was enthused by this, as its thinkers had predicted just such a development. The Russian anarchist Bakunin commented at the time, 'Revolutionary socialism has just attempted its first striking and practical demonstration in the Paris Commune'.

The Commune called for the re-opening of workplaces run in a cooperative fashion and by May 1871, forty-three workplaces were operating in this way. The Engineers Union voted at a meeting on 23rd of April that since the aim of the Commune should be 'economic emancipation' it should 'organise labour through associations in which there would be joint responsibility' in order 'to suppress the exploitation of man by man.'



Similarly Marx and his followers hailed the coming of the Paris Commune. Marx was to write that the Council of the Commune 'was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town.' This majority in the final days of the Commune voted to establish a Committee of Public Safety which would act to defend Paris against the advancing counter-revolution. Those of a more libertarian bent within the Commune opposed this arguing against the dictatorship of this 'majority'. As the anarchist Kropotkin noted, the Paris Commune did not 'break

with the tradition of the State, of representative government, and it did not attempt to achieve within the Commune that organisation from the simple to the complex it inaugurated by proclaiming the independence and free federation of the Communes ...if no central government was needed to rule the independent Communes, if the national Government is thrown overboard and national unity is obtained by free federation, then a central municipal Government becomes equally useless and noxious. The same federative principle would do within the Commune'.

The Paris Commune faced two ways: backwards towards the old ways of functioning of the 1789 Revolution, with its centralisation, authoritarianism and terror; and forwards to a libertarian, decentralist and humane way of functioning. The old ways as represented by the central administration of the Commune hindered and crippled the new ways as represented in the clubs and associations that had developed at the grassroots level. The State was not abolished and representative government remained in place. As Kropotkin was to note, 'instead of acting for themselves . . . the people, confiding in their governors, entrusted them the charge of taking the initiative. This was the first consequence of the inevitable result of elections' with the central council acting as 'the greatest obstacle to the revolution'. He went on to note that, 'immobilised there by fetters of red tape, forced to discuss when action was needed, and losing the sensitivity that comes from continual contact with the masses, they saw themselves reduced to impotence. Paralysed by their distancing from the revolutionary centre - the people - they themselves paralysed the popular initiative'.

In addition, again according to Kropotkin, the central council, 'treated the economic question as a secondary one, which would be attended to later on, after the triumph of the Commune . . . But the crushing defeat which soon followed, and the blood-thirsty revenge taken by the middle class, proved once more that the triumph of a popular Commune was materially impossible without a parallel triumph of the people in the economic field'.

The council of the Commune

The Paris Commune faced two ways: backwards towards the old ways of functioning of the 1789 Revolution, with its centralisation, authoritarianism and terror; and forwards to a libertarian, decentralist and humane way of functioning.

become more and more isolated from the people who elected it, and thus more and more irrelevant. And as its irrelevance grew, so did its authoritarian tendencies, with the Jacobin majority creating a 'Committee of Public Safety' to 'defend' the 'revolution'. The Committee proved to be inept and ineffectual and in practice was ignored by the Parisian masses as they fought to defend their gains against the armed forces of the French government which had advanced on Paris. On May 21st, government troops entered the city, and seven days of fierce street fighting followed. The army and armed units of the upper classes roamed the streets, shooting down batches of Communards,

women, men and children. At least 30,000 people were killed in the street fighting, many executed after they had surrendered. Their bodies were thrown into mass graves, some of them still alive. Many fled into exile, whilst many others were imprisoned for long periods of time. The appalling massacre of the aftermath of the Paris Commune left deep scars in French society which still exist today.

The Paris Commune was the preface to whole chapters of revolution. Let the final words soon be written and let the gates swing wide for the birth of a new, free and fair society!

The Communards' Wall (Mur des Fédérés) at the Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris.



The Anti-Cuts Movement and the Left: A local activist's perspective



The way to defeat the cuts, or to get close enough to rattle the State, is clear to the Anarchist Federation. It maps neatly on to our strategy for encouraging a 'culture of resistance' in everything we are involved in. This means struggle in many types of arena, and at different scales: neighbourhoods, cities, communities of identity, as recipients of welfare, in the workplace, and service user groups, for example. It means people fighting to defend their own interests but through this activity, realising that the state cannot provide for us; and if the State does make concessions, it does not do so because they are in our interests. Through struggle and through analytical reflection on the futile process of beseeching the state, it becomes clear that we have to link up in a mass movement of generalised resistance. Resisting in the interests of our own cause alone only

wins temporary gains that can be taken away again. Common cause and mutual solidarity, if structured on a mass level, take us one step closer to a society that recognises that social revolution – the collective abolition of property and hierarchical social relations - will eliminate the need to have to struggle ever again.

The anti-cuts movement is an obvious example of a culture of resistance; it is where pockets of resistance meet, all the better because it is happening spontaneously. Once again the class is ahead of the propagandists! Anarchists have to point out to the everyday heroes of the struggle that they are acting like anarchists, free from the constraints of reformism and representative democracy, practicing direct action and direct democracy. Except that mass resistance is

being potentially ruined, once again, by the authoritarian Left! As usual, it is the Trotskyists who, having won influence within the struggle because of their numbers and resources, are now set to derail it. As the Alliance for Workers' Liberty say on their website: 'Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups'. But that's not where this struggle will be won. Workers' organisations of any sort are only part of the picture, and trade unions are legally castrated and effectively self-interested at that. We can't afford to let the Left divert the efforts of grass-roots activists into helping them win influence within the trade unions, which seems to be the latest turn in this experiment with working with the Left.

The Left

We say 'experiment', because it has been just that. The vast majority of anarchist activists wouldn't touch the authoritarian Left with a bargepole. Many Left parties openly admit that on the eve of a 'successful' revolution, they would have to eliminate anarchists! But that's not the real reason we don't enjoy working with most of them. It's because of their manipulative and deceitful attitude to the working class (it's difficult to come up with a better definition of the 'Transitional Demand' than that). Also, it's because they fetishise the state to the extent that they willingly collaborate with it at the

same time as 'Fighting the Tories', or the EDL and BNP.

Lots of them fetishise the Labour party too, being in it or hoping to get back in, to influence it from within (Alliance for Workers' Liberty) or building in parallel to it (Socialist Party) and much of their activity is in response to Labour rather than in response to class interests. Often there is naked sectarianism, for example in the acrimony between the 'Right to Work' campaign (Socialist Workers Party) and National Shop Stewards Network (effectively Socialist Party). Other problems include their propensity to duck in and out of struggles in ways that make it clear that they subordinate local struggles to national initiatives. This is alien to an anarchist way of thinking, in which national movements and initiatives are built from the base up.

And, at the end of the day, they run terrible meetings that exclude people not trained (often formally) to dominate the content of the discourse (reformism, substitutionism, obsession with the workplace, etc.) and the nature of that discourse (motions, amendments, formal hierarchy, informal deference shown to leaders, packing meetings and block votes, wilfully misrepresenting what other people say, and so on).

So why the experiment, when we can reliably predict the result? Firstly, because, except in major cities, it is very difficult to launch an anti-Cuts campaign that will attract ordinary people to political activism unless it is at once big, dynamic, socially and culturally diverse, resourceful and welcoming. Anarchists cannot provide this. Let's face it, we don't have the numbers, come from a narrower



Nottingham students protest against cuts to Education Maintenance Allowance.

cultural background (a generalisation, but there's truth in it), and don't have the recent track record. We state our politics up front and sometimes that scares people. On the face of it, we aren't as attractive.

Second, because loads of members of Trotskyist organisations are hard-working, reliable, straightforward and personable. You can actually look forward to going for a drink with them after the meeting. They offer to help you with a task you've just taken on because, as usual, no one else offered at the time. They are entirely genuine about the struggle and are the hardest working in their party and union. They have a sense of humour, skills to share, and get on with similarly non-sectarian members of other groups. They've never heard of Kronstadt; so you tell them, they look horrified, go away and read up on it, come back and say sorry (it's actually happened a few times!).

Most importantly, this struggle is simply too important to miss the opportunity of building a genuinely large, broad-based campaign.

If we can't reverse the cuts, the working class is screwed. Even though we know that at some point things will probably turn sour with the Left, we know that it won't be us who proves impossible to work with; it will be the Trots. And the people who came to the campaign to be grass-roots activists will remain as non-sectarian as they can, and will remain activists long after the Trots realise that they can't take the group by sheer force of numbers, belligerence, deceit and manipulation. Instead the Trots will leave the broad-based campaign in favour of struggle for power in the unions. We have to play a part in not letting them take over, as we did in the Poll Tax struggle (v. Militant, now Socialist Party), but failed in Stop the War (v. Socialist Worker Party), for example. There follows an interview with an Anarchist Federation member in Nottingham about the anti-cuts struggle there and the AF's experience of working in a genuinely broad-based campaign with the Left in it: Notts Save Our Services.

Setting up a structure with a Chair – people who will make statements and decisions for you – doesn't ever seem to have been considered by these groups, whereas ten years ago that was the norm. It's not non-hierarchical in quite the way anarchists mean it - sometimes it's more like a reflection of the structures of social media - but it's non-centralised and directly democratic, in that people don't speak or make decisions on other people's behalf without their permission.

How did Notts SOS start, why were you involved, and why was it so immediately successful?

In October 2010 the Anarchist Federation nationally had decided against trying to set up either a national campaign or specifically anarchist-based campaigns in our towns. Anarchism then didn't have the interest and respect that it has since gained. So Notts AF had been trying to get local people interested in a campaign against the cuts. We were doing our own thing, as were other anarchists in Nottingham, and often we were doing them together. But it wasn't getting anywhere. Loads of people we spoke to thought it was great that someone was making a stand, but they didn't help us make an impact. I think people were too overwhelmed at the scale of what we faced. We almost managed to play a part in getting a claimants group set up, but I think we peaked too soon!

It was bad timing for us too, in that we had just set up the Sparrows' Nest and wanted to establish a focus for the serious study of Anarchism. We weren't going to neglect that. It just meant that we were working ourselves into the ground. But it would be worth it if we could help establish a broad-based campaign against the cuts locally.

So, when the Trades Council set up a public meeting, we went along to see if there were 'real' people there who we could work with. They were there in droves. We also went to slag off the Labour MPs they'd invited to speak. That went down very well indeed! In fact no one has ever spoken on behalf of the Labour Party at a Notts SOS meeting since, and it hasn't necessarily been us blocking it. So, loads of people we'd never met before were wanting to get something going, and some of the people on the Trades Council who are nice as people and genuinely hard-working were there. Although we planned never to work formally in alliance with the Left again after the Poll Tax, we had done anti-BNP and EDL work with some of the Alliance for Workers Liberty and Socialist Party and that had gone *sort of* OK. And the Trades Council were going to kick start it with some cash for meeting rooms and leaflets. So, we got on board.

Meetings

Within a few weeks, two-thirds of people at meetings - often of 40+ people, which is amazing for Nottingham - were people we'd never met before. From our first

demo in November 2010, people joined SOS who have worked consistently hard and gone on to form Notts Uncut and a couple of initiatives around the NHS. Those people also worked for threatened projects, e.g. housing support, and were teachers, retired people, job-centre workers, activists on disability issues etc. Lots of them have since lost their jobs but are still active protecting what remains. Along with these sorts of people, we fought hard for a non-hierarchical structure for SOS, which it has retained very effectively.

The spin off campaigns also organise non-hierarchically. This is really important. Setting up a structure with a Chair – people who will make statements and decisions for you – doesn't ever seem to have been considered by these groups, whereas ten years ago that was the norm. It's not non-hierarchical in quite the way anarchists mean it - sometimes it's more like a reflection of the structures of social media - but it's non-centralised and directly democratic, in that people don't speak or make decisions on other people's behalf without their permission.

Sherwood Forest

Anyway, we've done some great

stuff. There would have been no presence at the Labour-controlled City Council meeting that set the budget in April if not for SOS. We managed to stop the meeting and gave the council leader Jon Collins a really hard time. We've also helped more local anti-cuts groups set up, and campaigns around libraries and to save Sherwood Forest. We set up the best anti-cuts website ever: <http://nottssos.org.uk>. OK, I'm biased 'cos someone in the AF set it up and maintains it. We use it to support and publicise campaigns such as ones to keep schools open and to preserve ESOL provision. We also helped link up the students in Nottingham Students Against Fees and Cuts with activists in the city. Staff and students at both universities work together all the time now. The students inspired so much further activity. We helped them with a demo in support of EMA, and this brought even school and college students into the struggle. In fact that feels normal now, but

then it was incredible: sixteen-year-olds chasing Collins all over the town centre, even though cuts to EMA weren't actually his fault. They were so up for it! They made the connections: actually, *he could have* spoken up for students, but *he didn't*. Also, we ran a conference attended by over 70 people, out of which grew groups working on the NHS, benefits, education cuts and others that still exist. SOS supported fire stations, libraries, the list goes on. SO much work! I was really proud to go on the London March 26th demo as a member of my profession alongside Notts SOS and workplace colleagues. Colleagues helped us carry our brilliant SOS banner, made by teachers in SOS. I chose attending the demo with these people over meeting up with the AF. And afterwards, SOS people defended the 'black block' action just as they had the Millbank students. I thought we might have to argue the toss over those events, but no one in Notts SOS had the

slightest problem with what happened.

What went wrong?

Well it hasn't gone wrong yet as such. It's just starting to, and we know the signs. We managed to ride out the first thing that nearly wrecked the campaign. It was a case of 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger'. It was when we got into trouble with the Communication Workers' Union. Notts SOS were running a modest stall every Saturday in the town centre. One Saturday, down the road there was going to be a big national CWU demo in support of their dispute. On the e-mail list someone pointed out that this would mean that we might be short on volunteers for the stall. The main guy in the CWU went ballistic that we weren't going to cancel our stall for their rally! This was even though the implication of the e-mail was that most people who usually volun-

Members of Notts "Save Our Services" protest the Health and Social Care Bill, 6th September 2011.



teer would be at the rally instead. The CWU guy took his complaint to the Trades Council. He was basically saying that SOS was being anti-union. The TC passed a motion supposedly unanimously (although we know that isn't true) making it clear that we had to tow the TC line or they'd stop bank-rolling us.

This implied that they think social struggles should be subordinated to TU-controlled workplace struggles. We see the two as equally valuable in theory, and certainly the Left don't deny that the two are connected. But there is a whole world of difference between the 'workplace struggle' and 'the trade unions'. We have to be realistic; the days when the trades unions could make or break a government are gone. They don't control the Labour Party anymore. Capitalism has been far cleverer than the unions. Effective industrial action is now almost illegal, but the unions won't defy the law. So why should they be able to tell people engaged in direct action in social struggles what to do? But SOS was on a roll by then and the campaign so broad-based that even though the AWL championed the TC motion and made sure it got accepted, everyone else decided to effectively ignore it. We all thought it was a bit silly really. What was the worst that they could do in practice? The people who ran the stalls carried on doing stalls and supporting workers. We also started making collections for rooms and the NUT and NUM retired chapter started printing leaflets for us! So it wasn't the case that trade unionists as a whole felt threatened by our increasingly autonomous campaign.

Meanwhile other initiatives were springing up. Everyone knew

One of the best local victories was anarchist-inspired. It prevented the cutting of outpatient services at Hayward House, a hospice. The campaign sprung up overnight and mobilised terminally ill people, which scared the shit out of the Primary Care Trust. It went for the jugular on financial, ethical and legal grounds, and forced the trust to back off and even admit they had made a mistake. It took a massive amount of work over a very short time and won by being a full-on, uncompromising onslaught of common sense!

how serious things were. Some anarchists in SOS wanted a specifically anarchist campaign, and others wouldn't touch SOS with a bargepole anyway. The result – Anarchists Against the Cuts – is small but has done creative stuff, made an intervention with propaganda, and brought some people out of the woodwork. We've been involved since the beginning, even though its strategy doesn't make as much sense to us as being in an organisation that people can actually meet, work with and join if they agree with it. We sometimes do the same theoretical groundwork twice, in AF and then in AATC, and feel a bit constrained by synthesis groups anyway. But there are spin-off campaigns where AATC, AF, SOS and UnCut etc. overlap, and Left and non-aligned people know that the anarchist movement in Nottingham isn't just AF (which it certainly isn't).

One of the best local victories was anarchist-inspired. It prevented the cutting of outpatient services at Hayward House, a hospice. The campaign sprung up

overnight and mobilised terminally ill people, which scared the shit out of the Primary Care Trust. It went for the jugular on financial, ethical and legal grounds, and forced the trust to back off and even admit that it had made a mistake. It took a massive amount of work over a very short time and won by being a full-on, uncompromising onslaught of common sense! But victory had not a little to do with the fact that the people initiating the campaign – volunteers and fundraisers for the hospice – were also long-standing anarchist activists who know how to win. This all happened before SOS had even undertaken any support work! So there is evidence that anarchists don't necessarily fight the cuts best as part of SOS.

Is that why you are despondent about the broad-based campaign?

In part. But it's also because we've entered another phase in which the Trotskyists have regrouped and decided they haven't been focussing on the workplace enough. I was on a sort of ad-hoc committee that was organising

the Nottingham events on June 30th. Representatives of the three striking unions were part of it: NUT, UCU and PCS, and other people supporting us, notably Nottingham Students Against Fees and Cuts (although they quickly realised that they were being patronised and could support the strike better in other ways).

At the end of the day, when it comes to the crunch, trade union activists have to be more concerned with their members' sectional interests than in wider struggle. NUT members weren't very interested on the whole in anything other than their pensions (I'm not saying that's not important; we are rightly supportive of workers with good terms and conditions maintaining them as a way to encourage less privileged workers to make a stand for their own rights). Their officers include AWL members, who are politically miles ahead of those narrow sectional interests. The officers agreed to a demo that would march past places like the homeless shelter, NHS direct, ATOS, Office Angels and the banks.

Then the NUT officers started messing us around and changing the arrangements, because when they'd gone back to their members they'd had a right telling off! They'd made decisions *for* their members – see what I mean? They had to come back and tell us that no, they were going to have the usual A-B march and then have an indoor rally. The biggest demo Nottingham had seen for years, and they wanted to take it indoors to discuss NUT pensions! The NUT also started making up stuff about the police and council being obstructive about logistics for an outdoor rally, which wasn't true. The UCU and PCS activists



were furious. One meeting got so acrimonious that the chair had to intervene at one point and tell a particularly belligerent person to "take it outside!"

The official and unofficial representatives of both UCU and PCS crossed over massively with SOS, Notts. Uncut, NSAFC, and were completely in agreement with the idea of making the march and

rally an 'in-your-face-Cameron' protest about the Cuts generally. Given that it was on a weekday too, so places were open, this could actually have terrified ATOS out of business! I really think so. We had some good stuff planned. Instead, the only aspect of social struggles that got a look in at the rally was SOS and the NHS campaign. We were allowed to speak on the platform, but last, when

almost everyone had gone home

We haven't really recovered from that demo. We worked so hard as SOS to support the striking unions, but I don't think either we or the PCS and UCU will work with the NUT again. And the AWL came out of it looking like opportunists. To be honest, I think we also lost credibility as anarchists. I wasn't able to argue our corner, and I was there informally representing our workplace campaign group. To be honest, I felt too intimidated to say anything much.

Straight after, it was the Bombardier stuff. All the Left groups wanted us to drop everything and pile over to Derby, there even before we'd established that this wasn't going to be some nationalistic German-bashing thing (which it wasn't). We actually had a really good discussion and I was impressed by the unforced internationalism of all three Left groups. But again, they wanted influence in there. I think they wanted to 'take Notts SOS' over to Derby to get kudos. We couldn't go anyway, but we'd have gone as anarchists, not in some Trot 'rent-a-demo'.

And at the same time, every meeting started getting TU focussed again, discussing how bad the internal politics of, for example, Unison are, and how we need to get socialists elected within them. Don't get me wrong, there are Notts SOS activists I'd far rather have represent me or have influence within my union than some New-Labourite. In particular, there are several people in Unison in Nottingham and Notts. who are in or around Left Parties who are genuinely great people. But at the end of the day everyone (else) knows that the Left's struggles for control of the unions means

nothing at all to the rest of the working class, who either can't unionise or don't see the point. I would say to any of them, you should join a union to protect your interests, and if there's anyone in your workplace up for a fight, that's where you'll meet them. But if they asked where the potential for class struggle really is now, I'd point them in other directions.

So is that it for Notts SOS, as far as you are concerned?

Not at all. There's still loads of potential. There is a tendency at the moment for non-aligned people or people in political minorities to be despondent, and several have effectively and even officially left the campaign. But I don't think there's been a time when anarchist ideas have had more influence. It no longer feels utopian to call for occupations, mass assemblies, blockades, sabotage, non-compliance etc. People in Nottingham are not afraid of these things. I was amazed how much support the students had last year, for example. Notts SOS had people in it very new to political action and they thought the student riots and occupations were brilliant. Notts. UnCut shuts down 3 or 4 business of a Saturday in and gets a really good crowd. People stand and listen to them. The NHS campaign occupied a huge roundabout in town for hours (it also hung a life-size effigy of Andrew Lansley, which was a bit controversial!).

I think Notts SOS should be a hub and a support for these and even more daring sorts of direct action. In itself, it can't be radical because it can't seem to do

anything public without informing the police and Labour City Council at some point. That's because the Left still have this split personality where they both critique and fetishise the LP at the same time, insisting that its membership is better than its leadership. That's only a meaningful analysis if the membership can control the leadership, which it can't. That's what happens when you elect people to make decisions on your behalf! Some of the left activists actually stood as Labour councillors and got in, and we haven't seen them since at SOS; inevitably, because they are now representatives of a party that is pro-cuts!

At the end of the day, when you look at the website – which you should - we haven't actually done our most impressive work as SOS. Rather, it's been the groups SOS has spawned, fostered and championed. We bring these together in one place in a way that no other organisation possibly can. But at the end of the day, SOS is a little too timid. It's clear that even though people will say they support the idea of, say, a student-led occupation of a city centre building, they might wander along, but they won't commit to anything that might marginalise workplace-focused activism. They don't really get it. So SOS should continue, but either try to free itself from this inertia or maintain its role as a focal point. It can't go down the reformist route and be beholden to the trades unions. Members of the Left organisations have a choice. They have to ask themselves where their priorities lie and be honest about it.

The Great Unrest: Prelude to the Storm



Miners waiting to go into the mass meeting at Empire Theatre, Tonypany, 9th November 1910

The 'Great Unrest' refers to the period between 1910 and 1914 when the western world was convulsed by social and industrial strikes and disorder, reaching a peak in 1913 and only ending (though not entirely stifled or silenced) by the beginning of the Great War of 1914-18. The wave of strikes in Britain saw millions

of workers fight over wages and conditions with the most militant methods. Total union membership grew from 2,477,000 in 1910 to over 4 million by the end of 1913 and brought state rule to breaking point.

Industrial militancy in the 1910s reached a new level. Strikes rose

from 389 in 1908 to 872 in 1911 and over 1400 in 1913. In 1909 only 170,000 British workers had struck, in 1911 the figure rose to 961,000. 91 percent of transport workers and 62 percent of miners participated in strikes between 1910-13. In 1911 the first national rail strike was called and in 1912 the first ever national coal

strike. The printers' strike of 1911 led to the establishment of a new workers' daily newspaper - *the Daily Herald*. This mass wave of strikes and protests spread across all industries and all classes of workers. In Bermondsey, South London, 15,000 women workers from over 20 factories - many in food processing, a notoriously low-paid and sweated occupation - came out on strike in 1911, one of the biggest strikes by women workers in the Unrest, winning better terms and the right to organise in a union.

First shots

The first shots in this class war had been fired in 1910 when over 300,000 miners in South Wales struck and remained on strike for almost twelve months. It was triggered in September by 70 miners in a dispute over tonnage rates paid by the 'Cambrian Combine'. It was a bitter dispute with pitched battles between strikers, troops and police brought in from London, who were assisting scab labour to break the strike. In Tonypany one striker was killed and 500 injured. Though eventually defeated, the example of the miners and how they organised, from the bottom up and led by socialist militants, inspired other workers. In May 1911, seafarers started unofficial strikes over union recognition and working conditions. In June a wave of strikes broke out over pay and conditions on the docks in Southampton, Cardiff and Hull, joined by workers in Manchester and London. The London dockers were faced by an alliance of bosses and the state: Winston Churchill threatened to dispatch 25,000 troops unless the workers accepted defeat to which dockers' leaders warned

of armed conflict if troops were used to break the strike. Daily mass demonstrations were held throughout East London in support of the strikers, some numbering over 100,000 strong. The strike was solid and won.

Dockers

In Liverpool this victory spread confidence and 4,000 Liverpool dockers walked off the job in June. Other groups of workers followed. By the end of the day 10,000 were out. The seafarers came back out in support of the dockers. The dockers won the strike, prompting tug boat and ferry workers, coopers, labourers, porters, brewery workers and workers at the rubber plant to strike in turn. The strikes united Protestant and Catholic workers in a city riddled with sectarianism. In July and August a wave of unofficial rail strikes broke out as wage negotiations (workers called them 'confiscation boards') broke down. These strikes were largely spontaneous, wildcat strikes. 50,000 workers were out on unofficial action before the union leaders even got involved. Mass working class resistance, driven by rank and file workers and influenced by socialist militants such as Tom Mann, Ben Tillet and James Connolly, combined across industries, gaining confidence from each other and with each victory. Lenin observed, 'the workers have learned to fight. They have discovered the path that will lead them to victory. They have become aware of their power'.

What Was The Cause Of The Great Unrest?

By 1910, citing financial constraints, the Liberal government's earlier reforms were coming to an end. Industrial grievances were building over poor working conditions, discipline at work, and the failure of wages to keep pace with rising prices. Yet unemployment remained low, meaning there were fewer people available to the bosses to be used as blackleg labour. Low wages and the sense that an enriched middle class was holding down pay, a third of the population below the poverty line, ill health, infant mortality, and oppressive government and police were real and inflammatory grievances.

At the same time, the struggles of women for the vote and for Home Rule in Ireland were reaching a crisis point. In the course of the struggles these movements raised questions about the position of the working class and disenfranchised under capitalism and the legitimacy of the capitalist state. One of the crucial years in this period was 1911, a year when the country came close to the collapse of the ruling elites, will to govern and the replacement of a free market capitalism with then-current forms of socialism and syndicalism. The historian George Dangerfield, in his book, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, says the working class 'took a revolutionary course and might have reached a revolutionary conclusion'. Trotsky agreed: 'In those days a dim spectre of revolution hung over Britain'. The tragedy of the period is that it did not lead to any significant change in social relations but rather intensified them and made WWI possible by the depletion of the working class'

will to fight its enemy, the capitalist ruling class.

The Llanelli Railway Strike

1911 saw the first ever national railway strike and the last time that soldiers fired on striking workers (killing two) though not the last time that strikers have been murdered by those defending the status quo. One of its most important events occurred in Llanelli in South Wales, but the 'Llanelli Riot' was just one of a series of strikes and militant action by workers that make the recent events look like a tea party.

Merseyside rail workers began unofficial strikes in July 1911, and soon 15,000 workers were out. 8000 associated transport workers joined the strike in solidarity. The strikes arose from the increasing impoverishment of railway workers and families, and the long hours and dangerous working conditions they faced. A third of railway workers were paid less than £1 a week. It was usual for them to work sixty hours a week and sometimes seventy hours or more. Overtime was compulsory and frequently unpaid. Between 1897 and 1907 more than 5,000 had been killed and 146,000 injured in industrial accidents.

Rail union leaders were cautious but could not resist the anger and militancy of their members. Unofficial strikes occurred in Swansea, Hull, Bristol and Manchester and then spread. Faced with this situation and an absolute refusal to consider the workers' demands, the leaders called a national general strike on the railways. 200,000 railway workers joined the strike. The general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, announced the



Troops camped near Llanelli during the Railway Strike, 1911.

strike emphatically enough: 'War is declared, the men are being called out'.

Troops

Immediately groups of up to 1,000 workers attacked signal boxes manned by scabs, tore up track, blocked the lines and destroyed the railway telegraph. In Chesterfield, strikers set the station ablaze. 50 troops of the West Yorkshire regiment reinforced the police and made repeated bayonet charges into the workers. The government then mobilised over 50,000 troops. In a rare outbreak of honesty, the general in charge intoned 'Nothing could have been more harmonious or easier than my relations with the railway magnates'.

In Llanelli, strikers had seized railway buildings to halt any movement along the line, action supported by broad sections of the working class locally, especially in the tinsplate factories which dominated the town. Some members

of the government panicked. Home Secretary Winston Churchill declared, 'The men have beaten us. We cannot keep the trains running. We are done!'

But the ruling class was not done quite yet. In a day long battle including a bayonet charge against unarmed strikers, 700 troops took control of the railway. But the next day, the workers hit back. They stoned police and soldiers and blocked the tracks. A detachment of 80 soldiers under Major Stuart tried to clear the line at bayonet point. The crowd, rather than disperse, surged up the embankment and hurled abuse and the occasional stone at the troops. The Riot Act was read and Major Stuart ordered his troops to open fire. Leonard Worstell and John John were killed. John John - Jac as he was known - was a local rugby star. Leonard Worstell, who had just left a sanatorium where he had been treated for TB, had simply left his kitchen where he was shaving to see what the fuss was about.

Children

Rather than cowering the workers, this led to an explosion of anger. Pickets halted a train carrying supplies to the army and wrecked the carriages. The goods yard was destroyed. Almost 100 railway carriages were burnt and soon the strikers were attacking the homes and businesses of the magistrates and town council. There was looting in Market Street and dozens of shops had their windows smashed and goods stolen. A wagon carrying explosives blew up, killing one man and severely injuring several more, three of whom died soon after. Children at Bigyn School in the town decided to strike as well, boycotting lessons to mark the unjust killing of John and Worstell.

Eventually however, the union leaders sought compromise and were bought off with a commission and concessions, provoking anger but also fuelling the sense of the latent power of industrial organisation and militancy. Three unions merged to form the National Union of Railwaymen and had soon recruited a further 90,000 members. The strikes demonstrated that even workers with no tradition of militancy and with timid or bureaucratic leaderships can explode into action. Militants of the time, anarchist and syndicalist, understood the violence of the state, but they did not fully grasp the way bureaucracy could stifle militancy.

The Young Take To The Streets

The boycott of lessons in Bigyn School to mark the deaths in Llanelli was the forerunner of more serious resistance among young people. Schools in Britain, little more than factories to



School students on strike at Bigyn school, Llanelli, 1911.

Children were not isolated from events around them, their parents would have been directly affected by the strikes and they fully understood that their own prospects in work depended on victory or defeat in the present struggles.

produce industrial labour, were organised on the basis of severe discipline, physical punishments and rote learning. On 5 September 1911 thirty or so boys marched out of Bigyn School, this time to protest over a caning. Within days, pupils in more than sixty towns throughout Britain had taken to the streets to express their own grievances. By the end of the week the strike had spread to schools in Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, London, Glasgow and other cities.

The school strikes of 1911 were not unique. The first nationwide strikes occurred in 1889 and took place during a time of widespread industrial unrest. Children were not isolated from events around them, their

parents would have been directly affected by the strikes and they fully understood that their own prospects in work depended on victory or defeat in the present struggles.

Strikers actively sought to unite the whole community - including children - in their struggles. And the students on strike actively debated the merits of the strikes and what should be done. The students chalked demands on the pavement: the abolition of home lessons and the cane and an extra half-holiday in the week. While some protests were violent - boys in the East End of London armed themselves with sticks and iron bars - most were not, but are important because of the way young people gathered together to



Strikers at the 'monster demonstration' of 13th August 1911, before the police attacked.

discuss, articulate and then press demands, not just about discipline but also hours, leaving age and holidays.

The Liverpool Transport Strike

In June 1911, seafarers had won major concessions from the bosses as a result of mass, co-ordinated strike action, backed by sympathy action in other ports and mass rallies by workers in support of the strike. Understanding the lessons to be learnt, 4,000 dock porters struck on 7 August, followed by another 6,000 coal-heavers and carters. A city-wide strike committee—including, vitally, the rail workers—agreed that all transport workers would add their support through sympathy strikes. The next day, 4,000 railway workers struck; the docks were closed and no goods trains ran. Soon, the strike committee had taken the leadership of the

70,000 strikers in Liverpool away from the union officials and controlled most of the city's industrial life. Goods could only be moved with the agreement of the committee and factories ground to a halt. The authorities were powerless. But the committee allowed the movement of food, coal, petrol and other necessities to keep hospitals and other vital services operating. It wasn't anarchy, but a city being run on different principles nonetheless.

Detachments of police and military were despatched to the city from Leeds and Birmingham. 200 officers from the Royal Irish Constabulary together with 400 troops of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment were greeted with boos and catcalls outside Lime Street Station. The Lord Mayor asked for additional police, and troops, from the Scots Greys, the Hussars and The Yorkshire Regiment arrived in the city. In total an extra 2,400 police and 5,000 troops were in the

city while HMS Antrim anchored in the Mersey, its guns trained on the centre of Liverpool.

These 7,000 troops and special police had turned the city into an armed camp. One observer recalled 'the stench of the unscavenged streets - the corporation workers had come out in sympathy – and of the truck loads of vegetables rotting at Edge Hill Station. I remember bits of broken bottle, relics of battles down by the docks, the patter of feet walking the pavements when the trams ceased to run, the grey HMS Antrim lying on guard in the Mersey, the soldiers marching through the streets'.

When the strikers held a 'family day' on Sunday 13th August, police and troops attacked it, sparking several days of street fighting. The movement soon reached civil war proportions. Residents of working class districts in north Liverpool erected barbed wire

barricades. A mass demonstration at St George's Hall in central Liverpool was brutally attacked by the police and pitched battles spilled into the streets. Mounted police officers charged the crowd and, after a lengthy resistance and numerous baton charges, cleared the area. The Liverpool Echo reported the fighting as 'a scene which reminded one of the turbulent times in Paris when the Revolution was at its height'. The Liverpool stipendiary magistrate, surrounded by troops of the Warwickshire Regiment, read the Riot Act.

Trouble erupted nearby with police and troops pelted with missiles from roof tops. Police cleared the rooftops and ordered that public houses be closed. The events of this Bloody Sunday were followed by three days of guerrilla warfare in the streets and neighbourhoods of the city. Five prison vans carrying some of those arrested at the rally, escorted by cavalry, were attacked in order to rescue the prisoners. Two dockers, Michael Prendergast and John Sutcliffe, were killed by soldiers guarding the convoy. The following day virtual martial law was imposed on the city - as it had been in London - but still the strike continued and by the end of the month, after threats of sympathy action from other sections, the employers gave in and sued for peace on the union's terms.

Militancy

What explains this militancy? Large areas of Liverpool consisted of poor properties, back-to-back terraced houses, occupied by large families, sometimes two families to a room. They had communal sanitary and washing facilities, poor sanitation, and associated



Tom Mann, syndicalist and chair of the Liverpool Transport Strike committee, addresses a mass assembly of workers.

diseases like diphtheria and tuberculosis were rife. Working conditions in Liverpool were extremely poor, with most of the labour employed in the docks, warehousing and transport. Unlike other major towns, Liverpool did not have a manufacturing base and people were employed and discarded on a casual basis. Decades of Tory rule in the city, an authoritarian police and municipal government, grievances ignored, workers scorned and to be disciplined by the Bible, hunger and the police truncheon, these provided fertile ground for social unrest. But it was the powerful rhetoric and organising power of syndicalist militants which directed the working class against its enemy - the owning classes - and gave them the means to challenge them: the industrial mass strike.

Lessons

What lessons can we learn from the events of 1911? Firstly, that no matter how 'beaten' the working class appears to be, how disorganised, ill-led or divided within itself, it has a tremendous

capacity for sudden and spontaneous, organised and collective action, led from below and with terrible strength. Secondly, that such movements gain their power from anger and grievances grounded in the objective facts of everyday life: poverty, ill-health, authoritarian governments and elites, unfair treatment in work and other aspects of life, the enrichment on one group of people (the ruling class and its allies) and the relative impoverishment of the rest. Thirdly, that such movements will be weakened and may ultimately be defeated if they rely on representative leadership rather than direct democracy. As syndicalists pointed out in 1911, based on bitter experiences in the South Wales miners' strike, 'The possession of power inevitably leads to corruption. All leaders become corrupt, in spite of their own good intentions. No man was ever good enough, brave enough or strong enough to have such power at his disposal as real leadership implies'.

The Paris Commune of 1871 and its Impact

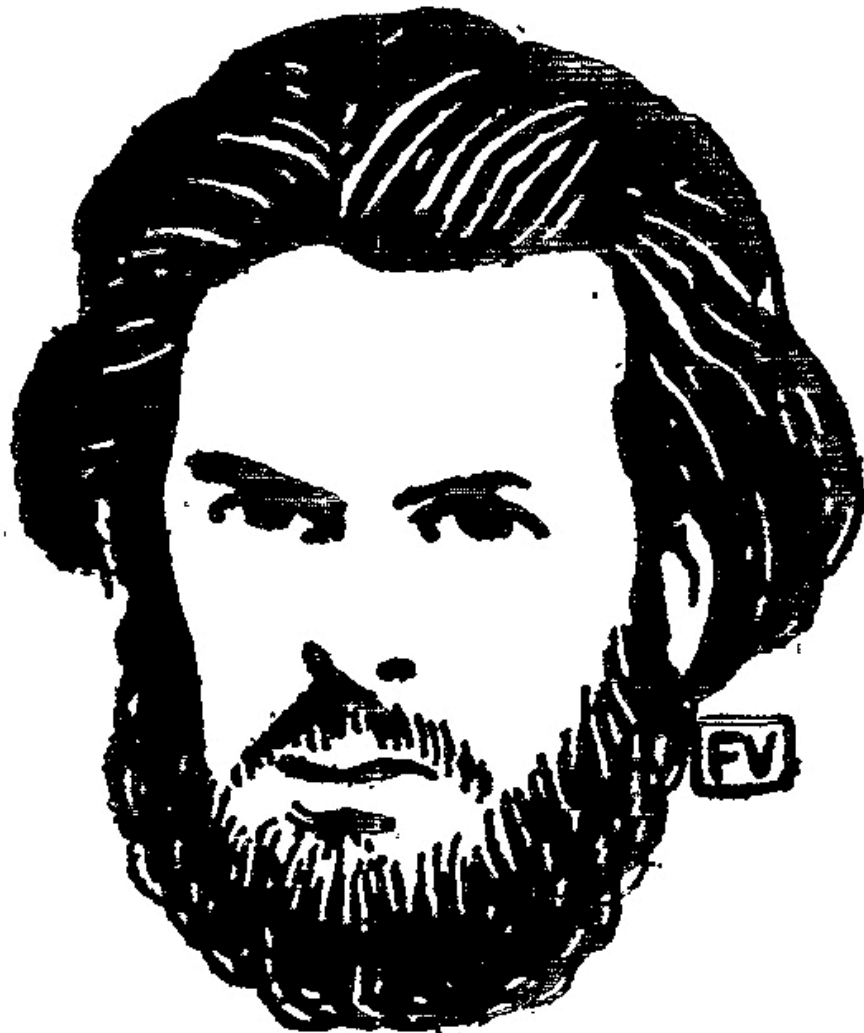
Revolutionary Portrait: Eugene Varlin, Martyr of the Paris Commune

Eugene Varlin was born on 5th October 1839 near Cluses-Souilly in France, into a poor family. His father, an agricultural day labourer, also had a small piece of land to grow vegetables. His grandfather on his mother's side had supported the 1848 revolution and he suffered under Louis Napoleon. His stories had a big influence on Eugene.

Eugene's father hoped that his son would study and not be condemned to hard toil all his life like so many others in the neighbourhood. He attended school until 13 and then took an apprenticeship as a bookbinder with his uncle in Paris. He took evening courses at the same time, even learning Latin and distinguished himself in his studies.

Varlin became conscious of the need to organise and joined the Bookbinders' Society at the age of 18. This society concerned itself with sickness benefits and retirement sums and he sought to make it more militant. In 1864, already on police files, he took part in his first strike and became a member of the strike committee. His agitation in the Society led to his expulsion from it and he now set up his own bookbinders' association which grew to three-hundred members by 1870. At the same time he organised a cooperative restaurant and a cooperative shop.

In an attempt to turn the workers' societies in a more militant



direction he called for the creation of a Federation of Parisian Workers' Societies which was created in 1869. During the strike wave of 1869 he set up a strike fund, not devoted to one trade but for all workers on strike.

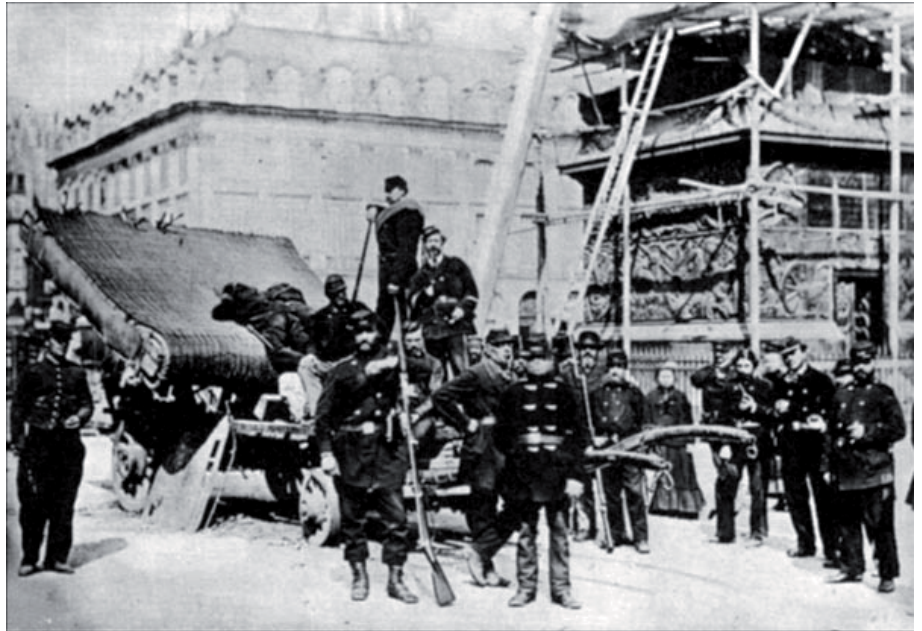
Eugene became a socialist, adopting the mutualist outlook of Proudhon, situating himself on the left of that current and act-

ing among the anti-authoritarians within the First International which he joined in 1865. He advanced the ideas of federalism within it. He began writing for the weekly paper of the First International, *La Tribune Ouvriere*. He was one of the four French delegates at the London conference. He was unimpressed by the London leadership of the International, preferring the company of

Marx's daughters to that of their father, and waltzing with them throughout the last evening!

However, Varlin felt the need to continue to work within it. He was opposed to the Proudhonist position which said that women should stay at home and not work in the factories. He had meetings with Bakunin and James Guillaume, representing the libertarian current within the International. With the banning of the International in 1868 he was fined and served 3 months in prison. He developed a collectivist position, becoming coordinating secretary of the workers' societies. He believed the societies could be a place to train people for a future society. At the end of 1870, after having set up sections of the international in Lyon, Lille and Creusot, he had to flee to Belgium.

With the fall of Napoleon III and the setting up of a government of national defence in Paris, he returned there and founded the vigilance committee of the Fourth Arrondissement. He became delegate to the central committee of twenty arrondissements, where he was in charge of finance. Head of a Garde Nationale battalion, Eugene, with his libertarian outlook, felt that this had to be aligned to the workers' movement and that its leaders be elected and subject to instant recall. However he resigned from the battalion when it failed to accept his suggestions. He saw that the new government was prepared to make a deal with the Prussians and to flee Paris for Versailles. When this government attempted to seize the cannons at Montmartre, Eugene Varlin was among those who took part in the subsequent insurrection, with the battalions of the Batignolles district taking control of the area.



Communards about to destroy the Tour Vendôme in Paris, 1871.

On the 26th March, as a member of the International, he was elected to the Council of the Commune, being the only delegate to be elected in 3 arrondissements. He served on the finance committee, finally passing to the committee for military supply.

With his experience of cooperatives he now set up clothing workshops, one of which was directed by Louise Michel. He also became secretary of the Council of the International, maintaining links between the Commune and the workers' societies.

As a libertarian he was opposed to the moves to set up a Committee of Public Safety to defend the Commune, reminding himself of the role of such an organisation in the 1789 Revolution. He saw in it the danger of a dictatorship in opposition to the grass roots organisations of the masses. He signed the declaration of the minority, flyposted throughout Paris protesting against these moves.

During the Bloody Week, with the advance of the troops of the Versailles government, he led the defence of the Sixth and Tenth Arrondissements, fighting from barricade to barricade. The Versailles troops began massacres, but Varlin denounced the attempts by some Communards to retaliate with similar massacres, and tried unsuccessfully to stop the execution of fifty hostages.

Recognised by a priest in the street on 28th May, Varlin was arrested. He had made no attempt to flee or to hide himself. He was tortured and beaten and then finally put up against a wall and shot, his body lying on the ground for several hours. In front of the firing squad he cried out "Vive la Commune!"

The day will come: Chicago 1886

“The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today”.

Last words of anarchist August Spies on the gallows on November 11th 1886.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Haymarket events and the judicial murder of anarchist activists. *Organise!* looks at the background to the events, the incident and the repression that followed. This was the main reason, often obscured and forgotten, sometimes deliberately, that workers began to celebrate May 1st every year.

In the summer of 1884 the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions called for May 1st, 1886 to be the starting point for agitation for an eight hour day. As a result Chicago, with the largest group of organised workers in the USA at that time, had the largest demonstration, with 80,000 workers marching. This stunned the employers. Some feared a coming revolution and others quickly signed agreements for shorter hours with the same pay. Some of the organisers of the Chicago event were anarchists like Lucy and Albert Parsons. Lucy had been born a slave in Texas, with a black, native American and Mexican background. Her husband Albert edited the paper *Alarm* and was one of the founders of the Chicago Trades and Labor Assembly.

Albert travelled to Ohio to speak at rallies there on May 2nd. However, in his absence, on the follow-



Lucy and Albert Parsons.

ing day, Chicago police attacked and killed picketing workers at the McCormick Reaper Plant in Chicago. A protest meeting was called for the following day. The meeting was almost over when it was attacked by police carrying rifles. A dynamite bomb was hurled into police ranks and in the aftermath the police began firing, killing four workers.

Martial law was declared the following day and anarchist organisers were rounded up. Many of them had not even been at the incident in the Haymarket. The two-month trial resulted in verdicts of death for seven of the defendants and fifteen years hard labour for another. Subsequently, two had their sentences changed to life imprisonment. One of the anarchists, Louis Lingg, escaped the noose by apparently killing himself in his cell - although some have cast doubt on this as he was waiting for a pardon that day and regard his death as ‘mysterious’. Adolph Fischer, George Engel, August Spies and Albert Parsons were hanged on November 11th of that year, crying out defiant anarchist slogans from the scaffold. In 1893 Governor Altgeld pardoned the three defendants still

alive and condemned the process that had led to the legal murder of the others

Lucy Parsons continued to fight for the memory of her murdered partner Albert. The event radicalised many and some like Voltairine de Cleyre, who had initially been hostile to the Chicago defendants, became anarchists as a result.

Today a memorial to the martyrs stands in the old German cemetery in Chicago. Alongside those executed are many anarchists who chose to be buried alongside the martyrs, like Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre and Lucy Parsons.

Chicago 1886 is a reminder both of the key role that anarchists have had in workers’ struggles and of the ferocious and murderous repression that the employers and the State are prepared to use. In these times of radicalisation of struggle, the memory of the Chicago Martyrs needs to be re-emphasised in forthcoming May Day processions so that the parades are not left to the union bureaucrats and their pals in the Labour Party.

The Mexican Revolution

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution. Organise! investigates this extremely important and much-misunderstood event in three articles.



The land belongs to those who work it.

Mexico in 1910 was a land where an emerging working class was adopting radical forms of organisation and struggle, where the indigenous peoples were still continuing their resistance against three hundred years of rule initiated by Spain, and where the bourgeoisie itself was attempting to develop and consolidate its power against the establishment institutions of the old regimes and the Catholic Church.

The regime directed by Porfirio Diaz represented the interests of the small group of rich owners of vast agricultural estates, and in addition served the interests of foreign capital, including that of the USA. It was opposed by various groups within the liberal bourgeoisie who wanted a national revolution to institute bourgeois democracy. This agreement was at first led by Madero and Carranza. Carranza represented a group of landowners in northern Mexico who had been excluded from the regime. In addition, there was the movement around the Magon brothers, which was evolving in an increasingly anarchist direction, a workers' movement to a lesser or greater extent influenced by the Magonistas, and strong rural movements around Emiliano Zapata in the south and Pancho Villa in the north.

The aging Diaz, in power for 34 years, announced his impending retirement which started off the period of unrest. The bourgeois opposition advanced a candidate to the Presidency and pushed it through, rather than giving in to



Soldier during the Mexican Revolution.

the customary compromise with the regime that was frequent in Mexico. The opposition turned to mobilisation of the masses to help this come about.

Throughout Mexico conditions were wildly divergent. There were still the free villages based on traditional Indian ways of organising, where land was farmed on a collective basis; there were the labourers on the big estates and in the timber industry in the jungles,

who were virtually slaves; there were the cowboys and ranch hands in the north, and the small farmers. Discontent had been slowly building long before the bid of Madero for power. The free villages were increasingly under threat and the big estates were expanding, propelled by the development of mills and of the sugar cane industry.

Madero was a typical modernising member of the bourgeoisie,

whose aims were solely the departure of Diaz and the introduction of democracy. He now made himself popular with a promise of land reform, having the financial backing of several Mexican and American capitalists, as well as relying on his own personal fortune.

The Magon brothers and the PLM

The movement led by Ricardo Flores and Jesus Flores Magon had had a much longer record of opposition to Diaz. They had founded an opposition journal *Regeneracion* in 1900 and soon formed the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party) which essentially advanced a programme of civil rights. Gradually, under the influence of Ricardo, this party orientated itself towards the indigenous free communities and the poor peasants. The Magon brothers were forced into exile in the USA, whilst maintaining contact with PLM members in Mexico. In exile Ricardo met the American anarchist Emma Goldman and established a friendship with the Spaniard Florencio Bazora, a friend of the Italian anarchist Malatesta. Links were formed with the Socialist Party of America and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The PLM, despite its continuing to retain the same title, started to transform itself into an anarchist communist organisation. The Magonistas began to smuggle *Regeneracion* into Mexico and massive agitation took place among the workers and peasants.

The PLM attempted two insurrections, in 1906 and 1908, both repressed. For their part, the USA interned some of the PLM leadership in 1907 for conspiracy and violation of the laws of neutrality between Mexico and the



English section of *Regeneración*, 1914.

USA. When Madero called for an uprising against Diaz on 20th November 1911 the PLM mobilised its forces. They were in favour of a tactical alliance on the ground with the Madero forces against Diaz, but were categorically against a political alliance with them. Indeed, the PLM hoped to win elements of the Maderistas over to more radical positions. Unfortunately the Madero uprising failed, and it was only in late December that the movement renewed itself. PLM forces under Praxedis Guerrero crossed the border and marched through the state of Chihuahua. The PLM

rose up in nine other states in Mexico, orchestrating joint military activity with the Maderistas and inflicting big defeats on the old regime. In Baja California (see article below) the PLM seized Mexicali and this deeply disturbed the regime. The PLM hoped in the long run to expropriate the big landowners there, but in the meantime, forced them to hand over large sums of money. The PLM, in addition, hoped to use Baja California as a base from which to support other PLM units.

PLM units gained many victories,

in contrast with the poor military record of the Maderistas. Internationally many socialists, syndicalists and anarchists began supporting the cause of the PLM.

Thanks to Silva, a PLM guerrilla commander, Madero returned to Mexico from the States, but on the following day, declared himself commander in chief of the insurgent forces, and after another PLM commander came over to his side, he arrested Silva for refusing to recognise his authority. The situation was compounded by the split between the leadership in exile in the States, clearly anarchist communist, and some of the PLM membership in Mexico, not as politically developed, and leading to compromises with Madero. For his part Madero denounced PLM militants to both the US and Mexican governments, and profited from lack of communication to peddle the myth that the two movements were in alliance. This destroyed PLM unity, leading to splits towards Madero. Madero had eight leading Magonistas arrested in Chihuahua and one hundred and forty seven members of their units were disarmed. At the same time a campaign of slander began against the PLM on both sides of the border. On the American side they were portrayed as mere bandits. On the Mexican side they were portrayed as tools of American interests. This situation was facilitated by the large number of American volunteers swelling PLM ranks, be they socialists, anarchists or IWW.

Victory over Diaz

Madero finally came to power in November 1211, signing a treaty with Diaz. Officially, the Revolution was over, and everyone

Emiliano Zapata organised armed bands to take back communal lands seized by the estates ... He represented a new generation willing to fight.

should lay down their arms. The PLM refused this, and saw that a social revolution was continuing within Mexico. However, many insurgents now thought that the Madero regime would lead progressively towards greater social justice. The American Socialist Party withdrew its support from the PLM, and transferred it to Madero. Only a section of the IWW and the anarchists continued to support the PLM.

Despite these setbacks Regeneracion released a new manifesto to replace that of 1906, calling for struggle against authority, the Church and capitalism, and for the establishment of a free society. However, some influential members of the PLM, including Jesus Flores Magon, had rallied to Madero. And, in June 1912, Ricardo and other important PLM militants were arrested by the US government and sentenced to 23 months in jail for breaking the neutrality laws.

Peace only lasted a few weeks after the signing of the treaty and several movements, including that of Zapata, took up the cry of Land and Liberty. Madero himself was murdered by the reactionaries and a new phase of unrest began. When Ricardo Flores Magon came out of jail in January 1914, he renewed his agitation. Criticising the successive regimes, he denounced the manipulation of the masses by the different factions of the bourgeoisie. He castigated Pancho Villa for acting as their servant, but praised the Zapatistas for

maintaining their principles and behaving as anarchists, whilst not using this title.

However repression was falling more and more upon the PLM. Ricardo and Librado Rivera were again arrested by the US government and sentenced respectively to 20 and 15 years in jail!! In 1922 Ricardo died in prison, with strong indications that he had been murdered by the US authorities. Released in 1923, Rivera returned to Mexico where he was a leading light in the anarchist group, Hermanos Rojos, maintaining his convictions until his death in 1932.

Zapata

In the south, Emiliano Zapata organised armed bands to take back communal lands seized by the estates, spurred on by Madero's bid to challenge the old regime. He represented a new generation willing to fight and the village elders accepted this situation, standing aside to let them take over the village councils. The movement around Zapata was distinguished by its determination to restore communal land. As a result it increased from a small band to a large movement. It forced the Madero regime to talk about widespread land reforms. The Zapatistas established the Plan of Ayala calling for the return of seized lands, and further, that a third of land owned by the estates be distributed to the landless. This was



Otilio Montano the former school teacher who introduced Zapata to anarchist ideas.



Emiliano Zapata, his brother Eufemio and their wives.

drafted by Zapata and a local anarchist teacher, Ottilio E. Montano. After Huerta, representing the old regime, seized power and murdered Madero, many Magonistas and syndicalists fled south and made contact with the Zapatista movement. Among these were Octavio Jahn, a French anarchist communist, and the brothers Ignacio and Antonio Diaz Soto y Gama.

The Huerta coup meant that opposition was coming from the liberal bourgeoisie, the workers' movement and the rural movements. In the north the movement of cowboys and ranch hands around Villa adopted the Plan of Ayala, effectively uniting the movements in the countryside. Huerta was defeated. In the process, the peasant groups dismantled many big estates and killed or expelled many officials of the old regime. The Zapatistas fought a classic guerrilla campaign, making sudden appearances, and then disappearing again. The move-

ment came to include tens of thousands. When Huerta was smashed the Zapatistas controlled the south. At the Convention of Aguascalientes in September 1914, the different forces involved in the smashing of Huerta met up. Peasants and workers from the revolutionary units forced through the Plan of Ayala. Carranza and his group refused to accept this and set up their own government. These Carrancista then began to co-opt insurgent leaders. One of these, a Zapatista leader called Jose Rouaix, who had become governor of Durango, joined Carranza and together they set up a committee on agrarian reform. At the same time Carranza sought to buy off the workers' movement by promising labour legislation and organising rights (see the separate article 'A Grave Error').

The Carrancista smashed Villa in the north, and in the south, isolated the Zapatistas. The

intelligentsia and many workers' leaders made their peace with Carranza. The Zapatista movement continued in the south, with Zapata issuing many denunciations of the new regime, but by now he had lost most of his intellectual supporters, some of the insurgent leaders who had been won over by promises of non-interference in Zapatista territory.

On 9th April 1919 Zapata was lured into a trap and gunned down.

The final phase of the revolution took place when some of Carranza's generals, who represented a more radical approach of a section of the bourgeoisie, revolted, and in the following hostilities, finally defeated him. In this conflict the new contender for power, General Obregon, received the support of many remaining Zapatistas and those who had earlier joined Carranza.

The triumph of Obregon meant the institutionalisation of the revolution reflected in the title of the new ruling party, The Institutional Revolutionary Party. The hopes and aspirations of workers and peasants had been dashed.

Why Was The Revolution Defeated?

The PLM put the military and insurrectional question before the political education of its militants. As a result there was a lack of ideological unity, as seen in the succession of splits and defections. The 1906 and 1908 insurrections had resulted in the deaths or imprisonment of many of the most active and politically advanced militants. The PLM, in its progression towards anarchism, began to accentuate the importance of the working class over that of the peasantry. However, the working class in Mexico was still in development and too weak and numerically small to have a decisive influence. For its part, propagation of PLM ideas among the peasants was hindered to a certain extent by widespread illiteracy. Recruitment to the PLM had been difficult, and the influx of foreign volunteers had distorted the situation. The leading lights in the PLM had in the main remained in Los Angeles when they should have been on the ground in Mexico. They had believed that the production of *Regeneracion*, enabled by being in the States, was of first importance. This removal from the scene clouded their judgement and their lack of clarity led to a debate on the international level as to whether or not they were truly anarchist (they certainly were) robbing them of a certain amount of international solidarity. The PLM suffered from



Badge of Partido Liberal Mexicano.

lack of finances, whereas Madero, for example, was able to call on millions of dollars.

To end on a positive note, the PLM had influenced the struggles of both workers and peasants with their anti-authoritarian ideas, radicalising them from the Zapatistas in the south to the formation of unions heavily under the influences of anarchism. Today still in Oaxaca, the PLM has inspired the present-day Magonistas.

As to the Zapatista movement, whilst most effective in its military activity and its land occupations, it failed to actively form an alliance with urban workers, only gaining the support of a small number of anarchist workers and intellectuals. Like the PLM, its lack of political education, led to the defection of people like Rouaix and others. When the forces of Villa and Za-

pata arrived in Mexico City they failed to take the initiative. They failed to form an effective and lasting alliance among themselves, failed to establish links of solidarity with urban workers, and failed to confront Carranza and to attempt to dismantle State power. Nevertheless the influence of the Zapatistas echoes down to the present day.

As to the workers movement, lack of experience and numerical weakness does not excuse an inability to link up with the agrarian movements, and the support given to Carranza against those movements. Revolutionaries, both in Mexico and elsewhere, need to reflect on all these mistakes, and be prepared to fight against cooption and compromise in future social struggles.

Uprising in Baja

Baja California (Lower California) is the long finger of land that stretches down into the Pacific south of the border with California in the USA. The border towns of Tijuana and Mexicali and the coastal town of Ensenada are its chief towns. Here for six months during 1911 a major insurrection took place. *Organise!* Looks at this little-known event, in which the famous Wobbly, Joe Hill, is rumoured to have been involved.

On 29th January 1911 twenty armed Magonista militants, led by Jose Maria Leyva, seized the town of Mexicali. Leyva called himself the General in Chief of the Insurgent Forces and was assisted by Simon Berthold. This act threatened the rich agricultural estates as well as the water resources used by the US farmers of Imperial Valley. The Magonistas were soon joined by many volunteers from the USA, boosting their numbers to 80. A column of soldiers was sent from Ensenada to drive them out.

At the same time in the US press an eccentric businessman, Dick Ferris, with backing from important bankers, began to make announcements about creating an independent Baja California, and to recruit one thousand men to carry this out. The US press began to falsely amalgamate the Magonista actions with Ferris's plans.

The government troops were defeated and the insurgents increased their numbers to 200. The socialist John Kenneth Turner brought them a delivery of arms over the border. A few days later,



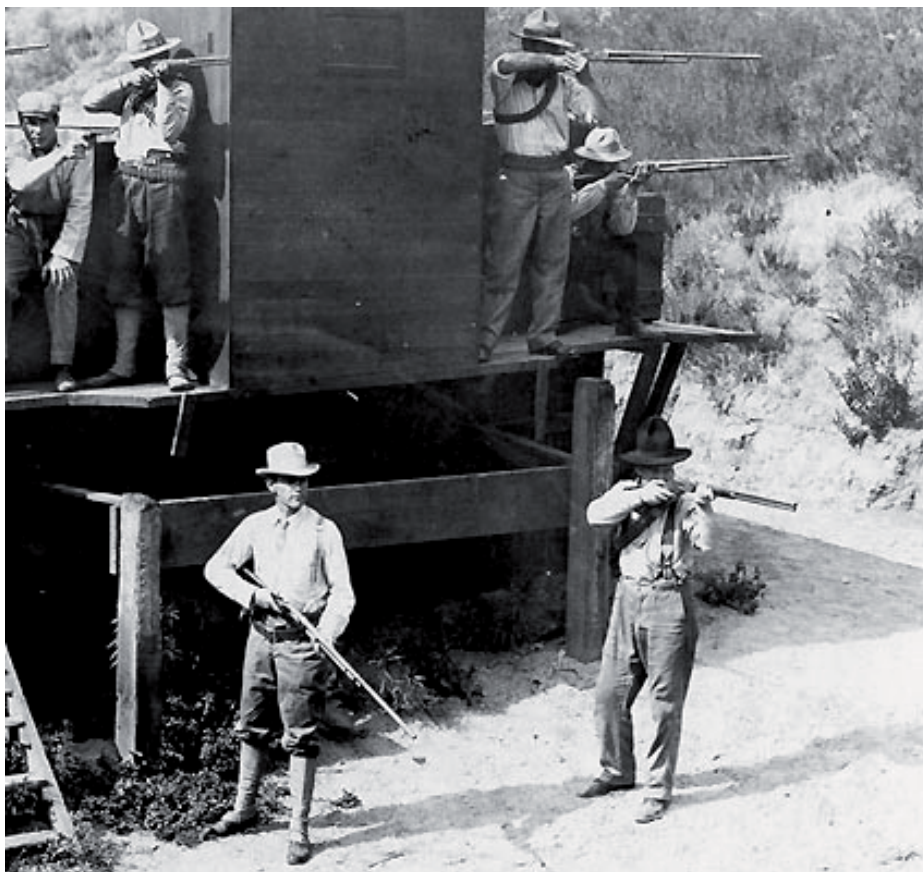
Magonistas in Tijuana after the first battle at the border town, 1911.

thirty Americans led by ex-sergeant William Stanley seized a border post to the east of Mexicali. The following day, Leyva and Berthold declared the foundation of a cooperative commonwealth in Baja California. The insurgents now numbered 300 at Mexicali, with two thirds of them from the USA. On 1st March another Magonista column led by Francisco Vasquez Salinas and Luis Rodriguez crossed the border into Baja California and started requisitioning the big estates near Tecate.

Indecision within the insurgent ranks at Mexicali led to serious disagreements, with Stanley attempting to strip Leyva of his command, which was countered by Berthold. Stanley then crossed the border into the USA with the aim of convincing the Magonista leadership in Los Angeles that he should lead an

independent expedition.

Luis Rodriguez seized Tecate on 12th March, whilst Stanley again seized the same border post and built up his forces to a hundred. Meanwhile the US government, affrighted by the perceived threat to its interests, massed 20,000 soldiers on the border. Fighting now broke out between the government troops and the insurgents, Tecate was retaken and Leyva and Berthold failed to regain it. Antagonisms between the Americans and the Mexicans within the insurgent ranks continued, with Leyva being blamed for the defeat. He was dismissed as commander and replaced by Salinas. Disobeying Salinas, Stanley launched an attack on government troops and was defeated dying a day later. He was replaced by Caryl ap Rhys Pryce, a Welsh 'soldier of fortune' who accused Salinas of having betrayed Stanley.



Volunteers in the Magonista foreign legion pose for the cameraman in May 1911.

On 13th April Berthold died of an infection of a wound he had sustained in the previous month. The election of a new commander aggravated the conflicts between Mexicans and Americans and a group of Indians, led by Emilio Guerrero, quit the detachment. Meanwhile the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) delivered arms to the insurgents.

Salinas arrived in Los Angeles to meet with the Magonista leadership but was arrested by the US authorities. Francisco Quijadas replaced him. Meanwhile Mosby was wounded and replaced by Sam Wood, who was joined by Pryce at the retaken town of Tecate. They seized Tijuana after fierce fighting. Tijuana was, and still is, a playground for Americans to come over the border to spend their money in saloons, casinos, brothels and at the racetrack. The

capture of Tijuana led to great enthusiasm in radical circles with 30 deserters from the US Army crossing the border to join the insurgents.

However media attention went to Pryce's head. He set up a system where for 25 cents American tourists could visit the sights of battle. He allowed the saloons and gambling dens to continue their activities, taxing them and sending 850 dollars to the Magonista leadership. Pryce became more and more out of control and started talking about uniting Baja California to the USA, in several interviews to US papers. He regularly crossed the border, dining at the best restaurants in San Diego and establishing contact with the businessman Dick Ferris.

The Madero regime had now come to power on 21st May. The Magonista leadership refused to

cease hostilities, and Pryce, who was favourable to a ceasefire, went to L.A. to argue for this. He was dismissed. His place at Tijuana was taken by Louis James, also under the influence of Ferris. James called for an independent republic and the new regime used this as a pretext of accusing the Magonistas of serving US interests. Fortunately, James was ousted and forced to flee. Mosby attempted to control the situation and closed down the saloons and casinos. However he still looked for tourist revenue and set up a Wild West Show in the style of Buffalo Bill!

The Mexican government convened with the US authorities, which allowed 1500 Mexican troops to cross and re-cross the border and attack the insurgents. The detachment of Guerrero was massacred. For their part the US authorities arrested the Magonista leadership in Los Angeles. Leyva, who had gone over to the Madero regime, negotiated a surrender of the insurgents at Mexicali. Leyva later made a career in the Mexican army.

The forces led by Mosby at Tijuana refused to surrender and were attacked by government troops. The insurgents fled, Mexicans and Indians disappearing into the countryside and the Americans fleeing over the border where they were disarmed by the US Army.

The attempt at revolution in Baja California, had proved to be a fiasco, with the insurgents crippled by dissensions between Americans, Mexicans and Indians, and with opportunism and lack of political principle rife among some of its leading actors.

A Grave Error: the Mexican Syndicalists

The birth of the workers' movement in Mexico was profoundly influenced by anarchism. This movement proclaimed independence from the political parties and the State. Yet in 1915 a pact was signed with the Constitutionalists led by Carranza. *Organise!* Looks at why this might have happened. The workers' movement in Mexico was relatively young and inexperienced. At the time the population counted eleven million who lived in the countryside as opposed to four million who lived in urban centres. A comparison with Russia during the 1917 Revolution could be made.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were marked by a radicalisation of the Mexican workers' movement, with an influx of Spanish immigrants, bringing with them new forms of organising. The traditional forms of organising began to give way to new and radical unions based on the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. When Madero came to power in 1911, the legislation workers' organisation that had existed under the regime of Porfirio Diaz did not disappear. However the fall of Diaz had encouraged this movement and strikes of transport workers, bakers, clothes makers and the dockers of the port town of Tampico broke out during that year.

A Colombian anarchist, Juan Francisco Moncaleano, arrived in Mexico in 1912 and with seven others set up the Luz (Light) Group, formed mostly of manual

workers. They founded a paper of the same name and proposed the setting up of a free school modelled on the principles of the Spanish anarchist, Ferrer. The paper was suppressed and Moncaleano was expelled by the Madero regime. However those remaining set up the Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the International Worker), the name being also used for a local federation of unions. New papers supported by the Casa began to appear in 1913.

The Casa carried out intense activity, advanced the ideas of direct action and rejected the intervention of the Ministry of Labour created by the new leader of Mexico, Huerta, in conflicts between the workers and the employers.

However, a section of the movement began to ally itself with another contender for power, General Carranza. The Casa

building was closed down by the authorities with the planned demonstrations of 1st May 1914 being used as a pretext. With the fall of Huerta, Carranza now intervened and allowed the Casa to establish itself at a commandeered convent.

The Carranza regime inaugurated a period of normalisation into the Mexican revolution. Intrigues multiplied, a whole host of careerists and profiteers inserted themselves into the administration, and norms were established controlling negotiation with the employers, demonstrations on the streets, political meetings etc. The State now became the legal arbiter in workplace disputes. In this climate, the Casa established a pact with Carranza on 17th February 1915 and workers organised by the Casa in Red Battalions and Anarchist Sanitary Battalions reinforced Carranza's troops. They were used to counter the detachments of the peasant revolutionaries of Zapata and Villa! Seven thousand Mexico

Carranza and representatives of Casa del Obrero Mundial.



City workers went to the Constitutional military training centre and their participation was significant in victories over Villa and Zapata. The Casa justified this on the grounds of the religiosity and the primarily 'agrarian' outlook of the Zapatistas and Villistas, accusing them of being backed by the Church and bankers!! In exchange, Carranza gave the Casa some offices and allowed the publication of their papers. Eulogies to heroic Constitutional leaders started appearing in these papers with such comments as, 'The triumph of constitutionalism is the triumph of liberty'! All of this did not stop

Carranza shutting down the Casa H.Q. one year later when the Casa attempted to start organising again in the workplaces.

This appalling mistake was argued against by the Magonistas and by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the USA, and was rejected by the railworkers, the oil workers and the textile workers of Puebla and Veracruz. An attempt was made to set up a revolutionary central of anarcho-syndicalist unions in July 1915, and a little later, a workers' conference took place in Veracruz and the CNT (Mexican region) was created.

However, this organisation was stillborn and after an attempt at a general strike in August 1916 it was savagely repressed by the Obregon regime. This now set up an official union central the Regional Workers' Confederation of Mexico (CROM). This new organisation was completely corporatist, tightly aligned with the State, with a well-paid and large bureaucracy, acting as a direct control by the politicians over the workers. Even a large number of old activists active within Mexican anarcho-syndicalism entered its ranks.



ANARCHISM - AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT

9th - 12th August 2012 St. Imier, Switzerland

Conference - Meetings - Concerts - Theatre

Workshops - Exhibition - Cinema - Bookfair

Full programme www.anarchisme2012.ch

Press Fund Appeal

If you like *Organise!* and would like to see it continue, then as a reader who sympathises with the politics of this magazine you should seriously think of donating money.

Any amount, no matter how small or how large (!) is very welcome. The more we get the more we will be able to think about increasing the size of our magazine and appearing more often.

If you want to see *Organise!* providing libertarian communist analysis then donate by sending cheques or postal orders made out to "AFED" to BM ANARFED, London WC1N 3XX.

We will acknowledge any donations and keep readers informed of the amounts we receive.

Alternatively you can donate electronically by going to www.afed.org.uk and clicking on the Donate button on the left of the screen.

The anarchist sculptor Henri Gaudier Brzeska



The Tate Gallery in London recently hosted an exhibition on the radical art movement the Vorticists. Organise! looks at the political convictions of one of its members, the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska.

Henri Gaudier was born in 1891 at Saint Jean de Braye on the eastern outskirts of Orleans in France. The district was part rural and part urban. He wanted to become a carpenter like his father but showed great talent at school, immersing himself in books, school work and drawing and becoming a solitary individual isolated from his sisters and mother. The award of a grant meant that he was able to study abroad in England for

two years at the age of sixteen, taking on business studies at first in Bristol and then Cardiff, all the time drawing and reading more and more. He then continued to study at Nuremburg in Germany between April and September 1909. Returning from Germany he decided to interrupt his studies and moved to Paris where he got a job as a translator with a publisher. He made use of a local library and in his spare time hung out in student and artistic circles, becoming acquainted with anarchist militants. He took part in the enormous demonstration in Paris on 14th October 1909 against the announcement of the death sentence on the anarchist

educationalist Francisco Ferrer by the Spanish state, a demonstration which ended in a riot. The many strikes and demonstrations of 1910 pulled him more and more into the orbit of the workers' movement and the anarchist movement and he became acquainted with the ideas of syndicalism. Among these demonstrations was the funeral of the anarchist Cler, murdered by the police during a strike in June of that year. Another demonstration attended by Gaudier was the huge demonstration to protest the execution of Liabeuf. This young worker had falsely been accused of being a ponce when he fell in love with a prostitute. As a result he was jailed. Coming out of prison he had decided to avenge himself and had attacked a police patrol killing one cop and wounding seven others. He went to his death crying "I am not a ponce!" The demonstration, supported by many workers, artists and writers, also turned into confrontations with the police and Gaudier might well have been involved with these. The fate of Liabeuf was to have an effect on Gaudier, as will be seen(1).

He began to produce sculptures in this period. In May 1910 he met a Polish woman, Sophie Brzeska, twenty years older than himself, and fell in love with her. In an attempt to introduce Sophie to his family, the pair thought it a good idea that Sophie got lodgings in a village near his old home. There was an anonymous denunciation to the police and she was accused

of being a prostitute, and she was forced to return to Paris. Remembering the example of Liabeuf and the strictures put on free love, Gaudier passed Sophie off as his sister, even to his close artistic associates. His convictions on free love, in addition to his anti-militarist convictions, pushed him more and more towards the anarchist movement, and Sophie herself appears to have had anarchist convictions. He was influenced by Malatesta but most of all by the anarchist theorist Kropotkin. He tried to meet Kropotkin in December 1912 in London, describing him as "the great anarchist". He wrote to Sophie that he would have been delighted to execute a portrait of Kropotkin. He admired the work of the great illustrator Aristide Delannoy, whose sketches appeared in the libertarian papers *Temps Nouveaux* and *L'Homme du Jour* and mourned his death in 1911. He was also an admirer of Steinlen, another noted anarchist illustrator. He himself had an inclination to become an illustrator for the anarchist press to the extent of sidelining his sculpture.

He assiduously read the French anarchist papers and the London anarchist journal *Freedom*. Fleeing the draft in 1911 he left France for London in January of that year. There he met up with Sophie again and they attempted to earn a living, often having to be separated for long periods because of work. Henri found a job with a wood merchant in the City, and began to develop his sculptural skills, at first modelling himself on Rodin, and then influenced by his visits to the British Museum, falling more and more under the influence of the tribal arts of Africa and Oceania. In 1912 his drawings appeared in a magazine of modern art, *Rhythm*, signed

Gaudier-Brzeska.

During 1913 and the first part of 1914 he produced some of his finest work, compared to the most advanced works of the time being produced by Archipenko, Modigliani, Zadkine, Epstein and Brancusi. As a result of several commissions, he was able to open a workshop and to buy supplies of marble. He left his job in autumn 1913 and devoted himself to his art. He became connected with the London Group of avant garde artists, differentiating himself from the Futurist movement. In four texts published after his death in the Vorticist magazine *Blast*, he outlined his differences with impressionism and futurism. He became a participant in the Vorticist group, and a friend of the poet Ezra Pound. Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska had many arguments about the latter's anarchism. Pound, as is well known, later became a supporter of fascism and a notorious anti-Semite. Gaudier-Brzeska made an analogy of his technique of directly carving into marble with the anarchist idea of direct action! One of his works, 'Two Women Running', unfortunately now lost, is described by Gaudier-Brzeska as an allegory of the spirit of Liberty urging on Woman to a nobler life.

So what then compelled this committed anti-militarist to suddenly renounce his convictions on the outbreak of the First World War? Why did he return to France to enlist to be subsequently slaughtered on the front on 5th June 1915? Malatesta was to rage, 'Have the anarchists lost their principles?' Gaudier-Brzeska, like many socialists, syndicalists and an anarchist minority which included Kropotkin, were to enthusiastically support the Allies against Germany,

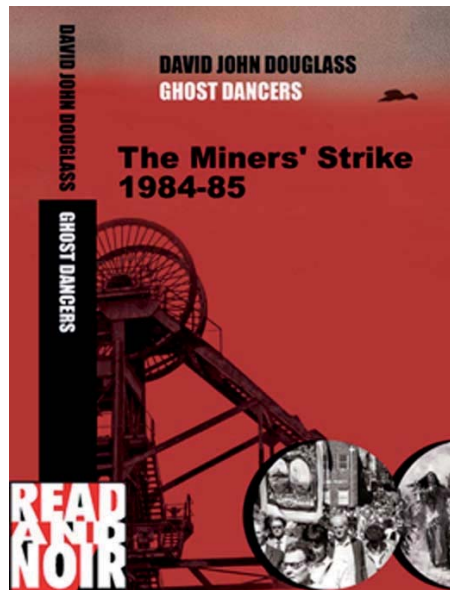
justifying this appalling about-face with a need for a defence of 'civilisation' and 'culture' against the forces of a barbarous and authoritarian Germany. Gaudier-Brzeska was to write in 1912 that he was chastened that 'the youth of France had not revolted en masse against the abominable conscription' and that he did not 'recognise any patriotic duty' to join the draft. Two years later he was to justify his new stance by stating that, 'It is a matter of saving civilisation before these bastards destroy all works of Art.' Further reading: Mark Antliff, 'Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's Guerre sociale Art, Anarchism and Anti-Militarism in Paris and London, 1910–1915' in the journal *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 17, Number 1, January 2010, pp. 135-169.

(1)Victor Serge in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* gives a graphic description of the Liabeuf affair... 'Shouts and angry scuffles broke out when the guillotine wagon arrived, escorted by a squad of cavalry. For some hours there was a battle on the spot, the police charges forcing us ineffectively because of the darkness, into side-streets from which sections of the crowd would disgorge once again the next minute... At dawn, exhaustion quietened the crowd, and at the instant when the blade fell upon a raging head still yelling its innocence, a baffled frenzy gripped the twenty or thirty thousand demonstrators, and found its outlet in a long-drawn cry: Murderers!... When in the morning I returned to that part of the boulevard, a huge policeman, standing on the square of fresh sand which had been thrown over the blood, was attentively treading a rose into it'.

David John Douglass, *Ghost Dancers: The Miners' Last Generation* (Christie Books, 2010).

Paperback: 540 pages ISBN-10: 1873976402 ISBN-13: 978-1873976401

Ghost Dancers is the third and arguably the best of Dave Douglass' autobiographical trilogy *Stardust and Coaldust - A Coalminers Mahabharata*. In it Dave documents the great miners' strike 1984–5, the years immediately before, the conflict itself and then the fall out. It is a long and in many respects detailed account but it needs to be; the strike was recognised by many at the time as of fundamental importance for the fortunes not only of the miners but of the organised progressive British working-class in its entirety; its impact stretched even to far flung Penzance, where Labour Party activists received a generous response when passing round the collecting bucket in the town and conducted a war of words in the local press with Roman Catholic priests and others. But in achieving this status, the strike has also attracted a lot of myths, often media invented, that have little or no bearing in reality. Dave does a very admirable and effective job of nailing very many of these myths. A good deal revolved around the apparently poor tactical decision over the timing of the strike and the leadership of Arthur Scargill. Dave shows that, while Arthur might have fed the myth of his own omnipotence himself, the heavily decentralised NUM (like the old Miner's Federation before it) was not easily led into a strike it did not want. In fact areas came out in support of other areas, thereby building a *de facto* national strike from the



response of regional elements of the NUM to pit closures in their areas. Dave gives a detailed and nuanced discussion of the issues around whether or not to hold a national secret ballot, something the press made an awful lot of. He shows it was a decision of the rank-and-file after exhaustive debate and discussion, and not some instruction from Arthur Scargill as is now universally believed. He also shows how the miners came close to securing some sort of victory on several occasions, only for the Thatcher government to harden their resolve and fight on. The discussion of organising the flying pickets by one of those most responsible for it is also makes for fascinating reading, as do the details of the various debates and conflicts that arose as the hunger set in. These of course include the humorous (and not so humorous) picket-line anecdote as well as detailed excerpts from the set-piece conference speech.

Finally, Dave shows how the defeat did not demoralise all miners. Many kept on fighting, though they had to do so now

also with their erstwhile comrades who were looking for a pay-off and a way out of the industry. This did not prevent another chance to fight in the early 1990s, when massive public sympathy and, oddly enough, brief media support for the miners gave them another chance. But as Dave argues, the general mood was not for another outright fight, contrary to the claims of many of the 57 varieties of lefty. The Major government finished what Thatcher had started and much of the left is still coming to terms with the consequences of this watershed. *Ghost Dancers* is told with Dave's customary honesty, humour and anger. It is a committed and largely convincing account by someone who was significant in the events described, but who manages very well to keep their own role in perspective and to talk engagingly and independently about other persons and forces in the struggle. This includes the anarchists who come out very well... written with Dave's unique libertarian but un-sectarian and un-dogmatic perspective, *Ghost Dancers* is essential reading for anyone who wants to better understand what happened to the miners in the 1980s and early 1990s and why we are still coming to terms with the consequences.

Ghost Dancers is available from: Freedom Bookshop, Angel Alley, Whitechapel High Street, London; Housemans Bookshop, Caledonian Road, London; and ordered from all branches of Waterstones; online from centralbooks.com and AK distribution. *Class War* readers can also get a personally signed copy, direct from the author on djdouglass@hotmail.co.uk (£13.50 post paid).

Bob Miller (1953-2011)



Goodbye Comrade Bob.

On June 17th this year Bob Miller died after a brief and intense fight with cancer. This was a tragic blow not just for his family, friends and comrades, but also for the revolutionary movement which in Bob, lost a dedicated and committed contributor to its past, present and its future.

Bob was inspired like many of his generation in the late 60's and early 70's by the intensity of the class struggle against capitalism and its superpower conflicts by proxy in Vietnam and throughout the 'developing' world. Not falling for the mesmerising range of false choices offered to young revolutionists then to side with one state or another – liberalism or

state socialism, Maoist populism, or the despotic leaderships of the national liberation movements - Bob found his home amongst the Libertarian Anarchist Communists

From the point he joined the group Social Revolution in 1972 he began a contribution as activist, writer and theoretician that shaped the course and character of the revolutionary movement for the next 40 years. Those of us active today are aware of the seminal contributions to our thought and practice that came from the organisations Bob dedicated himself to in those years: Solidarity for Social Revolution, Careless Talk, Intercom, Wildcat, Subversion, and for the last 13 years the Anarchist Federation. As editor and author at various

times of the publications of this movement he helped sustain and develop our presence and role to this day, ensuring that the voice of the revolutionary minority had a place to be heard.

Bob was no paragon of virtue, nor hero, nor icon. On the contrary, it was exactly his normality, his open and accessible humanity that allowed him to achieve so much. A warm generous individual, his ability to make friends, be open to discussion, his recognition of the potential and goodness of people around him - those he considered comrades, and those not necessarily 'fellow travellers' - gave him the ears of many. Confident and clear in his own revolutionary ideas, he was non sectarian and warmly

welcomed the contribution of others. His funeral, attended by more than 300 people included not just friends, family and work colleagues (though Bob had recently retired), but comrades and revolutionaries from a range of traditions and viewpoints from around Europe.

As a worker Bob fought his corner for his colleagues and class. As a teacher supporting largely working class children from migrant communities for whom English was not their first language, he was well known in and respected by the diverse ethnic and religious communities of his home town of Oldham in the North West. He also gained the attention of those who revile our class interests, the racist thugs and fascists of the National Front in its turn, and the British National Party and its successors and off shoots. Bob had a secret pride in appearing on the Nazi thug site 'Red Watch' as a key enemy of nationalism and the white supremacists. Without machismo or an instinct for violence, Bob was not afraid of defending our class and his communities on the street and in his neighbourhood.

Whilst a key mentor and organiser in the Anarchist Federation, especially in its North West section, he

edited our national publications *Resistance* and *Organise!*, along with others, always ensuring a rallying point and visibility in the North West of England, so vital at times when pessimism, illness or exhaustion affected some of us around him. Latterly he had been instrumental in the organisation's regeneration and growth giving our movement a firm and stable foundation into a future no one imagined he would be removed from in such untimely fashion.

In his last year, along with his long time partner, wife, comrade and constant companion Sally, he fought a famous campaign on behalf of a young refugee Rabar Hamed, an Iraqi school student, whom the British State threw on to the streets and destitution as a precursor to deportation. The campaign achieved rapid success and national attention, gaining recognition from Human Rights organisations and earning him and Sally the Human Rights Activist 2010 award for Rabar's defence in their local community. While this, as so many other struggles, continues, Bob remained committed and active up to losing consciousness in his last few days.

It is a small mercy that Bob was

unaware of the seriousness of his illness until the last month of his life. A devout atheist and humanist Bob bore the news and prospect of death with a realism and stoicism that inspires his friends and his family. His partner and comrade Sally barely left his side in those last weeks, loving, caring and supporting even of his determination to ease the pain of those around him with his continuing mentoring and realism. In his death both grief and celebration of a great life go hand in hand. We love, appreciate, miss and thank our Comrade Bob for all the things he brought to our lives and movement.

From Sally

Bob died quietly and bravely which was how he lived his life. He was a quiet hero to me and to our kids, Katie and Tom. He gave us an unconditional love based in kindness although anyone who knew him was aware he could be a "grumpy bugger". It isn't possible to say how much we miss him, but we were so lucky to have known and loved him and to have been loved by him.

Also available from the Anarchist Federation

Pamphlets

In The Tradition



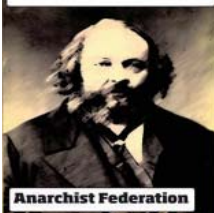
Anarchist Federation

In the Tradition

Explaining where our politics comes from. Articles from the pages of *Organise* from 1996 on the First 10 years of the Anarchist Communist Federation (as we were then known) and from 1999-2004, the series "In the Tradition" which documents many of the earlier revolutionary groups that we draw some inspiration from.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Basic Bakunin



Anarchist Federation

Basic Bakunin

This 2007 updated edition of our first pamphlet outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

£1.50 (UK) and £2.00 (overseas)

Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Anarchist Federation



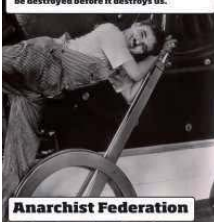
Introduction to Anarchist Communism

This pamphlet is made up of two parts that run alongside each other. The main text lays out the fundamental ideas of anarchist communism. Various boxes throughout the text give examples from history to illustrate the ideas described in the main section.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Work

Anarchist Federation



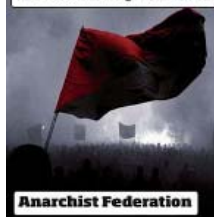
Work and the Free Society

The name says it all. Why work is so terrible and why it must be destroyed before it destroys us!

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Beyond Resistance

a revolutionary manifesto



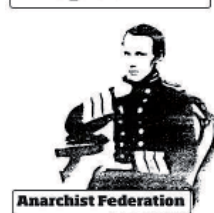
Anarchist Federation

Beyond Resistance - a revolutionary manifesto

The AF's in-depth analysis of the capitalist world in crisis, suggestions about what the alternative Anarchist Communist society could be like, and evaluation of social and organisational forces which play a part in the revolutionary process.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Basic Kropotkin



Anarchist Federation

Kropotkin and the History of Anarchism by Brian Morris

A new pamphlet introducing the ideas of one of the most influential anarchist communist writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Against Nationalism

Anarchist Federation



Against Nationalism

Published September 2009, an analysis of nationalism and why anarchist communists are fundamentally against it.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

Role of the revolutionary organisation

Anarchist Federation



Role of the Revolutionary Organisation

Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter-revolutionary. This new edition explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

£2.50 (UK) and £3.00 (overseas)

We recommend online ordering of pamphlets through <http://www.af-north.org>

Printed publications are available by post from: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX. England, UK

Cheques and POs are payable to *AFED*.

Back Issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are available from the London address (or email distribution@afed.org.uk) for £1.50 inc. p&p. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you whatever we can find lying around.

For complete list of back issues - <http://www.afed.org.uk/publications/organise-magazine.html>



Foreign Language Documents

Translations of various AF texts are available in Arabic, Français/French, Deutsch/German, Español/Spanish, Português/Portuguese, Ελληνικός/Greek, Hollands/Dutch, Русский/Russian, Gàidhlig/Gaelic, Cymraeg/Welsh, Esperanto, and Turkish. For complete listings:

<http://www.afed.org.uk/organisation/international-iaf-ifa.html>

As We See It

70p plus postage Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German, Spanish and Portuguese.

Beyond Resistance

70p plus postage Available in French.

Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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