

# Organise!

No.66 - Spring 2006 | £1.50 - €2.50 | Free to prisoners

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

## Defending anonymity

"...anyone concerned about threats to our freedom should be worried by the Identity Cards Act." Page seven.

Also inside:

### Rosspport solidarity camp

A village's fight against Shell on  
Ireland's west coast.

### A different kind of media attention

From G8 protests to Peter Stringfellow: how anarchists are being  
courted by the media.

Don't let the government steal your identity



**SAY NO  
TO ID CARDS**

Anarchist Federation | www.afed.org.uk | info@afed.org.uk

# Organise!

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 readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 15th August 2006. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at [organise@afed.org.uk](mailto: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 articles and nobody else.

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

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# contents

- 03 - Editorial
- 04 - Venezuela 2006: anarchism against all odds
- 05 - Empowering prisoners through contact
- 07 - Fighting Labour's Identity Card and database plans
- 10 - Rossport solidarity camp
- 12 - A new world in our hearts
- 16 - How do anarchists gain

- influence?
- 20 - The struggle against mountain top removal in Appalachia
- 23 - Ramón Acín Aquilué
- 24 - Reviews and obituaries
- 26 - Revolutionary portraits: Tom Bell and Louisa Sarah Bevington
- 28 - Aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation

The Anarchist Federation is now in its 20th year and we are especially pleased to bring you the first of this year's Organise! magazine. Thanks to all those who have read and contributed to the paper, and supported the press fund.

The end of our second decade coincides with a number of other important anniversaries: the General Strike in Britain 1926, the high point of the Spanish Revolution in 1936 and the Hungarian Revolution against the 'Soviet' invasion of 1956. We will keep the full celebrations for next issue with articles on Hungary and the General Strike. For this issue we offer a piece about the legacy of Spain in the 1930s, one of the most important examples of the influence of anarchist ideas and action in living memory. We also provide a host of revolutionary portraits, pamphlet reviews and sadly, further obituaries, of both lesser and more well-known anarchist lives.

But Organise! is not only about the old - in this issue we report and analyse a vibrant community campaign against a oil pipeline in Rosspoint on the West coast of Ireland, and interview an IWW member about opposition to 'mountain top removal' strip-mining in West Virginia, USA. We also reproduce an interview with the Venezuelan anarchists who are attempting to come to terms with the Chavez 'revolution' which is becoming more and more statist and militaristic by the minute. There too, indigenous communities are coming to further realise the reality of state dependence on the profits of powerful multinational mining companies like Anglo-American (Tarmac in UK). This environmental destruction is being continued and promoted by the leftist Chavista regime just

as before under the right-wing. At government level, money always talks, whatever the colour of the flag.

In Britain, as western warmongering continues in the Middle East, our freedom to speak out and act against our increasingly authoritarian state has been weakened by new laws, bans, and the looming threat of a national identity scheme. Anarchists need to do more to help make the ID scheme into Labour's 'Poll Tax', and to this end we provide both analysis and some thoughts for action. Likely imposition of more nuclear power and weapons will require additional efforts by our movement, and this is sure to be a newsworthy issue in the coming year. But as our article on the media and academia will assert, we will have to be careful not to be sucked into struggling through second-hand propaganda

and spectacular stunts. As the state gets more oppressive, neither must we forget the prisoners who are fighting the system from within their cages, and we print an impassioned call for more prisoner support.

As we write this editorial, widespread protests and other anti-government activities have continued in France against the 'Anglo-Saxon' (read Thatcherite) austerity measures which are threatening the livelihoods of young workers, now the government has proposed to allow companies to sack you after 2 years for no reason, if you are under 26. The fight is on within Europe to protect past gains, whilst we must ensure solidarity with migrant workers who are being exploited by the current economic system, and highlight the class war over dangerous racist and religious diversions.



**A mass meeting of anarchists and socialists in revolutionary Barcelona. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish revolution.**

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**Please return to Organise!  
address on page two**

# venezuela 2006: anarchism against all odds

By Comisión de Relaciones Anarquistas (CRA), Venezuela

**“Our friends from abroad continuously ask us to explain our views about the current situation in Venezuela. This reply is based on two\* recent texts by the editing team of El Libertario, already published in their entirety in the internet (in Spanish), and from which we extract our main points.” Talking about the Venezuelan situation, from an interview with La Rosa Negra – counterinfo from Mexico in January 2006.**

**RN:** We know that you fight in three fronts: a) against pseudo-leftist Chavista groups in power; b) against the anti-Chavez opposition directed by the social democrats and the right; and c) against groups or parties of the traditional left. Could there be a ghetto imposed by the state, the right and its social democrat allies and the traditional left for anarchists in your country, or is a retreat necessary?

**CRA:** Whatever the socio-political situation in any given country is, those who wield or want to wield power will try to curb any symptom of consistent libertarian struggle by building “ghettoes” of repression, open or hidden, where to confine it. It is natural for the anarchist militant to confront the intentions of the powers that be, it is a task we must carry on without fail, and above all, without resigning ourselves to the supposedly inevitable condition of being excluded. In no way does the CRA retreat or hide within our shell waiting for better times, and whoever has direct contact with our activities or simply reads El Libertario with due attention and frequency, will find enough evidence that we’re not a group who stares at its own navel.

**RN:** We get the impression that the triumph of abstention in the past elections (12/4/05) and the retreat of civil struggle groups towards “no participation” is fertile ground for the forceful imposition of state (Chavista) initiatives. Is this perception true?

**CRA:** We make clear that according to the government’s own statistics abstention, understood as the no participation in an electoral process of sectors of the popula-

tion that could rightfully vote by virtue of being Venezuelan citizens and having the age to vote, has been the norm in all elections in this country since 1989, even during the referendum to recall the president in 2004, when the gangs from the political opposition and the demagogue government made a supreme effort to bring the incredulous masses to the polls. It is an error to qualify as civil struggle groups certain figureheads of the opposition that opportunistically gamble with abstention today, they aren’t in any way representative of real social forces in Venezuela. As to the rest, no doubt the Chavez regime tries to impose state control mechanisms everywhere, but being such a corrupt and inept government, blinded by thinking that is building solid popular support turning part of the poorest people into clients dependent on the state’s dole, it’s going to cost them plenty to make any advances in that contradictory chimera that it calls “XXI Century Socialism”, which is nothing but an underdeveloped capitalism of the XIX Century.

**RN:** Likewise, we think that the Venezuelan anarchists’ struggle became trapped in a sea of supposedly anti-imperialist propaganda, promoted by what we at LRN call the Kirchner-Chavez-Morales-Castro axis. Is this true? And if it is, will the Venezuelan anarchist resistance need to double its effort?

**CRA:** We can’t understand how that perception exists, anybody who’s followed our actions and our thinking will find that we have not been duped by the fallacious “you’re with Chavez or else you’re with Bush”, as we have clearly shown evidence

to dismantle this farce. It hasn’t been easy to uphold this position that smashes the simplistic schemes that have led the Latin-American left from failure to failure for over 80 years, and multiplying our efforts to keep our position has been the order of the day, but our consistency begins to produce results, undoubtedly modest but full of hope that fall within the renewed activity and presence of anarchism in South America, still a minority political expression but one that has made advances between the decade of the 90’s and today that are, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking, very important compared to what happened during the five or six previous decades. The challenge is to transform this modest renaissance into the ability to make a significant mark on the process for positive social change sorely needed in our continent.

**RN:** The Kirchner-Chavez-Morales-Castro axis has several faces: it presents itself as the triumph of parliamentary democracy and conversely, as the standard of struggle against the empire, as mediator of popular social movements and consequently, as the catalyst for civil resistance. What defensive wall do the Venezuelan anarchists have?

**CRA:** You’re asking us about our main proposal for action right now. Let’s quote a paragraph from our editorial of El Libertario #44: “We are not, nor do we want to be, contenders for the control of institutionalized power: we are anarchists and we aspire to the disappearance of state power and any other oppressive hierarchical structure. This is not just a profession of faith; our actions here and now mean assuming the commitment to promote and empower the autonomy of any social movement consistent with the ideal. Therefore, we are not interested in building ‘anarchist social movements’ that would prove as useless to collective progress as the Bolivarian circles or those opposition parties disguised as NGO’s. We bet on social movements that build the dynamics for independent action and organization, based on the widest participation on all levels that will allow the formation of



different modes of direct action and self-management away from the state's control or any other instance of oppression, it is the only way to consolidate spaces of freedom, equality and solidarity that will be the seed and support of the future we struggle for. Our position can be summarized with these words from John Holloway: to change the world without taking power".

**RN:** In view of this, does the CRA-El Libertario think a wider effort to spread anarchist ideas is called for?

**CRA:** Considering Venezuelan history, this educational task is a priority, because we have an environment where ignorance of libertarian ideals was almost totally absolute. After 10 years of activity we can

point at some successes in this area, but they are hardly the beginning and there's still much to do, so the spreading of anarchist thought is still a constant problem for those of us in this collective, and we invite all to get to know our work, getting in touch with us, personally or via email, visiting our locals and social clusters where we do our activities – such as the Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios of Caracas, [www.centrosocial.contrapoder.org.ve](http://www.centrosocial.contrapoder.org.ve) and getting information about the CRA and El Libertario.

\*We include only the second of the texts. The first, Neither shameful anarchism nor shameless anti-imperialism: a reply to P. Moras, can be found online.

Email CRA-El Libertario:  
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Some recent news from a UK source: The indigenous 'anti-mining coalition' in Zulia have been demanding a hearing with Chavez. Last April, when a mobilisation of thousands went to Caracas to speak to Chavez about the threat of coal mining, Chavez was unable to see them because he was meeting the football legend Maradona! Lobbying is not enough. Anglo-American mining giant is a major player in the plans the Venezuelan Government has for Zulia which will destroy tropical forests and contaminate the water supply of the entire population. Their AGM is in London in April. Lusbie Portillo is a key figure in the anti-mining resistance. He appreciates international letters of solidarity, and passes them on to the indigenous communities affected (Wayuu, Yukpa, Bari and Japreria). His address is Prof. Lusbi Portillo, Homo et Natura, Calle Carabobo No. 7-34 Maracaibo, Zulia Venezuela. Email [homoetnatura@cantv.net](mailto:homoetnatura@cantv.net) See also: The Alternative Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela: A World Made of Many Worlds (Feb 2006): <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/view/198/1/> which states, "...behind the anti-imperial rhetoric of the Bolivarian government, Chavez has in fact signed over the biggest concessions since the 1940's to transnational corporations and oil giants such as ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, Repsol, and Shell."

## empowering prisoners through contact

Most of these 'instructors' didn't get convicted as a result of direct actions against government, nor are they there by way of astute political consciousness. But, all prisoners are political, as incarceration is a major component of the state. Concomitantly, many prisoners thirst for a re-energising awareness of self and society. It's a two-way street: we must learn from them and help teach those looking to learn. To do this we must collaborate with revolutionary prisoners regardless of when they acquired their insightfulness and support them in struggles against their captors which is the common class-enemy of us all, inside and out. Oppressed people have a natural

**Amidst the suffering and oppression, prisons are schools and the most important teachers of rebellion are prisoners.**

awareness and desire to combat their oppressors whether they belong to a political grouping or not. Revolutions require committed, fearless participants and prisoners fit the bill perfectly. With burgeoning prison populations in the West (2.2 million in America alone), there is a huge pool of potential revolutionaries to be drawn from prisons in any country. So it's no wonder that censorship is so heavy and political activity is dealt with so harshly

by 'gulag' authorities. It used to be illegal to educate slaves because of fears that their enlightenment would lead to revolt. The same still holds true today, hence the restrictions on permitted reading material in many jails worldwide. The relatively few imprisoned in the Western hemisphere specifically for their political ambitions deserve respect, attention and, of course, our support. Then again

**continued on page six**

continued from page five

so do all the other prisoners, especially those putting themselves in harm's way to fight the system head on, to educate and assist their fellow prisoners whilst attempting boldly to work with activists on the outside. To take just two renowned examples, Malcolm X and George Jackson didn't enter the prison gates as political incendiaries; their crimes were being young, male and black. But it is irrefutable they both became political doing their time. It is a premise that applies universally to black and white alike.

As (hopefully!) serious anarchists focussing on prisons, it behooves us to extend support to all prisoners, irrespective of their political development, to work closely with the agitators in spreading the truth far and wide, inside and out. Perhaps more important on a personal level is to absorb these lessons ourselves and have this heightened awareness drive our activities even harder. For the truth is revolutionary, empowering and motivating; an invaluable lesson for everyone that can help overcome fear in face of seemingly overwhelming odds which is typical of the oppression experienced by prisoner comrades each and every day of their term, long or short.

The greed and rapaciousness of capitalism is sickening; few remain ignorant of its consequences nor of how dire the situation is, nor that it will inevitably get worse as globalisation seduces and sedates people by brainwashing, drug addiction and a vacuous consumerist culture saturated largely by the omnipotent brainmelt of television and through mass stunts such as Live8\*. What better way to get the message across to people in general by a reality-check on how society's refusers are brought to heel and locked away and out of sight in the hellholes which are its prisons? Who is best equipped to articulate these truths that brothers and sisters wrung from the ghettos, barrios, reservations and working-class neighbourhoods, forced to deal with this constant nightmare day in, day out, who are friendless if we don't bother to support them? As Malcolm X said "America means prison". Well, the ideology has been exported now; to protest or buck the system anywhere leads to invisibility - if we let it! Gaining respect of the militantly conscious prisoners is not only very important, it legitimises anarchist political engagement. But it can only occur through dedicated, constant, consistent and reliable work. It also has to be unqualified and authentic; comrades in prison must have complete freedom to express themselves without



political colouring from us, solidarity being a founding principle of anarchism. Prisoner support is solidarity in action. That doesn't mean we can't offer our own opinions, analysis or indeed anything else as occasion demands. People deserve to have their say without being subject to interruption. Everyone can decide in their own minds where they derive insight and how they want to approach revolution. By taking this tack anarchy stands upright and strong. Non-anarchist revolutionaries will gain respect for what anarchists do when we reach out to them without imposing conditions or behaving like preachers and know-it-alls.

As those who have had any length of contact with prisoners on a regular basis know, prisoners excel in all facets of knowledge and culture. The most powerful writers, artists, psychologists, researchers, poets, letter-writers and so forth, all emanate with profundity from behind bars. Hitherto hidden, undiscovered creativity flourishes out of the depths of even the most brutal environment. It is utterly rewarding to help a prisoner friend develop a genuine anarchist understanding and perspective. Seeing their gratitude and brave determination to mount a challenge to their own deprivations, go beyond superficial divisions of race and colour, recognise the class to which they irrevocably belong and resist the torment of government-sanctioned punishment is inspiring stuff. It can be among the main building blocks of 'thinking and doing' resolve which is, of course, the very root of anarchism. Inside and out, we are all prisoners of the state, of authority, in myriad countless ways and, at the end of they day, if things are ever going to change, we're all in this together. We have to deal with it. It's people helping each other self-educate, stretching out a hand in the direction of a comrade and vice versa. It's crucially important.

Incarceration is the black hole of society. Prisons are the concentrated core of states everywhere. It can be presumed for the

present-day crystalline image of the dominant state on Earth - America - that its inhuman face is Abu Ghraib\*\*; the whole world knows that it is far from a pretty sight. That much is visible. That much we know. Our comrades in prisons already knew this and they could have told us for the asking. Next week, next year, a decade hence, it may well be us. The stakes are the same for us all.

It must not be allowed to become intimidating. Taking a lead from our unfortunate imprisoned comrades we can stand together against the monster devouring all in its path and in its wake. Resist! There is a whole world of humanity and defiance buried away unseen in the gulags of 'civilisation'. Reach out, and you will find once you start to write to prisoners and connect with them on various levels and deepen into a person taking serious reality-checks on what is going on all around concealed and camouflaged, that there is a common bond and few differences between us. The same enemy - capitalism - confronts us all. Mutual aid, respect for one another, can win us the world we want.

Special thanks to Anthony Rayson of Chicago ABC for a lifetime's service to the fallen amongst us.

Contact the AF about getting involved with prisoner support or email the 325 collective at [325collective@hush.com](mailto:325collective@hush.com). Check out links to prisoner support organisation through our website [www.libcom.org/hosted/af/prison/](http://www.libcom.org/hosted/af/prison/) Organise! is free to prisoners. You can also buy a subscription to support a prisoner and help the AF at the same time. See page three for more information.

\* so called anti-poverty concert but actually pro-G8 event in UK.

\*\* Saddam Hussein's torturous prison, built by Britain in the 1960s, currently in the service of Western military forces and the new Iraqi authorities. Now set to close, but where will the prisoners end up?

# fighting labour's identity card and database plans

**The Labour Party has steamed ahead with its national identity scheme and anyone concerned about threats to our freedom from an increasingly authoritarian state should be worried by the Identity Cards Act, which has been passed with little change from what the government wanted in spite of all the 'write to your MP' lobbying by No2ID and optimistic hopes of House of Lords amendments.**

The so-called electronic identity, eID, is just one part of European and American efforts to impose national identity schemes across the western world. Bush has already pushed this through the US Senate as an enhanced driving license known as RealID, tacked on to a military spending bill that was unlikely to get voted down in the middle of a war, and is demanding biometric passports for non-visa entry to the country. This side of the Atlantic, European paranoia about borders is helping to drive EU-wide developments of passports, ID cards and databases.

## Creeping compulsion

In Britain, Labour was determined to get compulsory cards in place within the next few years, starting off by forcing you to have an ID card when you apply for a passport. This will now be the case from 2010. Until then applicants will be able to 'opt out' of having an actual card, but from 2008-9 personal information will still be placed in the National Identity Register, which is in many ways worse than being made to have a card. Identity and Passport Service offices for in-person applications, vetting and biometric scanning will be built around the country starting this year. Plus, it's not only about one government Act. State officials have taken advice from their industry partners that they will need to tread carefully and bring this in step-by-step. Plans are already in place to create a 'co-ordinated online role of electors' (CORE) and to encourage payment of council tax through an internet scheme called Government Connect. These will both involve gathering local lists into national ones, ideal for building the National Identity Register which is a core part of Labour's ID scheme. Moreover, the new Children Act allows creation of separate databases for all children, that



could easily turn into ID cards for everyone as this generation ages – one estimate is 50% of the population could be covered within 20 years! Mandatory fingerprinting as well as facial biometrics (which will start to be gathered later this year in UK) are looking more likely for all passport and travel documents within the EU. Even if you don't need a passport, only one more act of parliament will be needed to force ID registration and cards on everyone over 16 years old.

## Standing up and not being counted

Although ID is coming through in an incremental manner, the time to start fighting is now. The Poll Tax came in and was still defeated here from taking notice and learning from opposition to the initial trials in Scotland, and applying them to build a countrywide campaign. ID schemes have already been defeated in Australia, Canada, Korea, Taiwan and elsewhere. We would do well to look at how these ex-

amples of opposition worked before, since an international effort may well be needed. If it is to succeed, the campaign now needs to move beyond complaining what is bad about ID and prepare for concerted refusal and outright revolt.

Unfortunately the situation is not exactly like the Poll Tax of 15 years ago, when there was a clear benefit to individuals refusing to pay, because the government has strongly linked the scheme to national security as well as to the emotive threat of 'identity theft'. They hope they will convince many law-abiding citizens it will be a price worth paying. The high cost to individuals may well help convince a lot of people to fight the scheme, but to beat ID we really need to win the argument that the state cannot provide security or any bogus idea of respect, whether by ID cards, cameras or ASBOs. Society has been made rotten by the growing inequalities that are permitted by the system called capitalism

**continued on page eight**

**continued from page seven**

that allows a small minority of people to own most of the resources and organise our lives.

ID is a class issue – the rich will ensure their anonymity by their limited need for the welfare state. We must preserve ours by downright refusal to accept ID, not because it's too expensive and not because it won't work, but simply because we won't let the state invade every part of our lives. Out of struggle, as we have done before, we can strengthen our own idea of community that one day will overthrow the dominant systems of state and capitalism.

**Common arguments against ID, and their limitations**

For anarchists, opposition to ID cards might feel so obvious that it's beyond discussion, a 'no brainer'. But the number of dodgy anti-ID arguments coming out have only served to confuse matters.

*“ID cards will cost loads, even more than a passport, and hurt those of us who can least afford it”*

The ID database and card scheme will cost many billions of pounds. Much of this will end up lining the pockets of the private companies who will set up and run the computers and card-reading technology, and to pay the personnel involved in running the scheme. A figure of £300 per person has been determined by dividing the likely cost of the scheme by the population, and it is likely that a lot of this cost will be passed to individuals when we are asked to register for a card or make changes to our records - a kind of tax to pay for the fear and insecurity created by our scaremongering rulers. But it's important to remember the principle that we wouldn't want it even if it was free. Neither should the large fines scare us into registering. One of the strongest weapons against the Poll Tax was the campaign of mass non-registration by the public burning of forms or simply by ignoring council letters.

*“ID card and database technology won't work”*

There are huge technical problems with making ID work - no government has attempted a database scheme on the scale of the one proposed for ID in Britain. The story of public/private Information Technology projects has generally been one of massive delay and many additional years of expensive tinkering which have mostly benefitted only the companies that have the contracts. Home Office sponsored trials by

Atos Origin showed unbelievably bad results for biometric registration and validation that would clearly discriminate against disabled, black and older people. A Dutch trial involving RFID passports showed that encrypted personal information could be read and the codes cracked in a very short time. These might seem like a good basis for opposing ID, but it's really not our problem. Let's not get drawn into arguing for a 'fair' or 'secure' system. We need to stand together and be clear we don't want any system, and try to use government incompetence to our advantage. Registration booths could become an important focus for direct action against the scheme, as could the companies involved.

*“ID cards won't solve crime or terrorism”*

The government has been sneaky to lump terrorism and organised crime in with any kind of credit card and welfare benefits fraud. But why should we care if a few of us are working the system when corporations and rich individuals continue to benefit from massive tax-avoidance and the government is spending millions on arms? A lot of us depend on 'petty' crime to overcome poverty in our class-divided society. Organised crime and the terror threat are mainly diversions to scare us into believing we need the state to be secure when it's state-imposed social inequality, warmongering and religious bigotry that are the problems. Many of the people who threaten us most through fear of poverty or violence, whether they are fraudsters,

terrorists, bosses or generals, are rich people who can buy anonymity and freedom of movement. So the bleatings of Liberty and others in the 'It won't work' brigade end up just adding to the confusion, because the very act of going on about crime or terrorism just propagates fear of each other. This is another form of 'divide and rule', keeping us down when we should be fostering solidarity amongst ourselves to fight oppression together. Anarchists refuse to be drawn into worrying about a state initiative from the state's own perspective.

*“ID cards will lead us into a police state”*

Well maybe, since the police will have access to the database and will have powers to demand to see ID cards, but even this sort of misses the point. The ID scheme is much more than information to help the police know who we are. If you're being denied healthcare or a driving license because you're not on the national register, is it not really enforcement that's the problem, it's the whole system. The real issue is the government's original idea of entitlement and its flipside - economic discrimination. The global capitalist economy relies on inequality so our governments are lying every time they say they don't want migrants working in Britain. They want cheap goods and labour from wherever they can get it and always have done, whether from the spoils of colonial rule, raw materials or sweatshop products feeding multinationals, from migration of workers with lower wage expectations, or by the driving down of wages in general.

Running this kind of capitalist system involves managing production and consumption for the mass of us. An electronic ID database will help to parcel up the majority of people in our 21st century society into economic units whose wages or welfare benefits, and the way these are spent, are tightly controlled. Plus, many workers are already being tagged and tracked in the workplace - a national ID could help extend this capability to all of us. All this is going on whilst the rich and higher-earning middle classes, especially those benefiting from the property boom or stock market income, can afford private healthcare and pensions along with the relative anonymity that goes with those privileges. That leaves those of us who depend on resources like state or low-paid occupational pensions and the NHS to have our entire life history put under detailed scrutiny from government bean-counters and private companies.



**Page seven and above: anti-ID stickers produced by the Anarchist Federation. For copies, send donations to our national address.**

ID cards also take away our ability to create our own social and economic sphere. Labour (and some of the socialist Left who traditionally love social planning) hate the 'Grey Market' they can't track and tax, and so roll out the usual scare-stories of organised crime and terrorism. No surprise then that we are now seeing adverts telling us that buying cheap DVDs will buy guns for terrorists! They want us to feel guilty about everything from biodiesel, media piracy and cheap booze, while at the same time are promoting free-market policies for the rest of the world and helping companies make millions from the poverty of the majority of people on earth.

### Ways to fight ID

Like the Tories' poll tax, ID cards are Labour's own version of a 'tax on being alive'. We can scupper ID cards as soon as they try and force us to register, but only if we start preparing now. Once the scheme is in place it will be harder, although certainly not impossible, to beat it. We cannot allow the state to get away with becoming more authoritarian than it already is.

### Get involved

One way to fight the national identity scheme is to get involved with a local anti-ID group (or set one up) and help get the message out by producing and distributing information against ID in community & social centres, libraries, health centres and door-to-door. There is still a lot to do to explain the basic facts of the scheme, as well as its likely effects, and to work out effective forms of direct action.

### Get informed

ID will affect different groups in society in many different ways. We know that applications to the Student Loans Company will be linked to ID, probably so they can keep tabs on any address changes, and university students may even need to have an ID card to get a loan. Charles Clarke also wants to gather ID information on other students and school leavers through the Connexions Card scheme for 13-19 years olds. There are likely to be big changes in levels of police harassment for minority groups, and ID records could easily be used to control access to benefits or healthcare.

### Get the inside information

Those in work can try and find out about any ID-related developments there. Anti-ID groups will be pleased to hear from any council workers or anyone else who can help the campaign find out when ID data

collection starts to happen locally, especially in areas that may be chosen as a trial area for ID registration. A word of warning: local councils, who are likely to be involved with collecting additional personal data from the electoral role or council tax registers, are in general very authoritarian against anyone taking autonomous action. They also hate local people turning up in their cosy council houses to protest, especially when they would rather maintain the illusion that they are victims of a scheme instead of an integral part of it. Workers in companies implementing the scheme, like Experian, may know details about how their employer is planning to operate their part of it.

### Get your passport

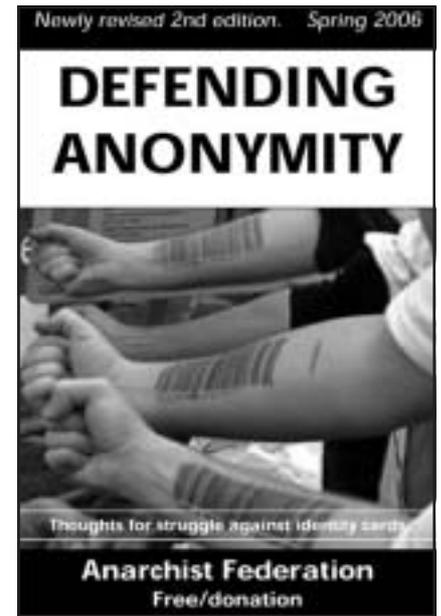
Personal information from passport applications will be used to build the National Identity Register from 2008-9 although you can 'opt out' of having an actual card until 2010. Some data collection has already started, taking face dimensions from passport photos. Later on, applicants will have to attend in person to get fingerprints or eyes scanned (69 Identity & Passport Service centres will be set-up around the country from October 2006 for in-person applications). So, for anyone who needs a new passport, it would be a good idea to get one now before the new systems are up and running properly, making sure the photo is not too clear so it is harder for the Passport Office to extract facial data. One Post Office service for the newer photo ID driving licence has your photo pre-checked so you can see what you can get away with (postage is also included which can work out cheaper than paying for this separately) - this may also be the case for passports. There must be lots of individual ways to confound the ID scheme and these can be shared in anti-ID groups, and even better, by telling friends and neighbours. This will help build a mass refusal campaign, because a scheme like this won't be prevented by small numbers of individuals helping themselves.

### Get angry

Remember that local politicians of whatever colour cannot be trusted. Under the Tories, Labour council leaders enthusiastically issued poll tax demands and court orders, sent in the bailiffs and condemned local and national demonstrations as mindless riots. But as local people, we supported each other, we defied the courts and saw off bailiffs. We were angry and we fought back. Many of us disappeared off

the registers for good. There may be a local MP against ID in some areas, but lobbying has been shown to be useless. We know that governments do not listen and that ID will be beaten on the streets or not at all. Read the second edition of the AF's pamphlet *Defending Anonymity*-thoughts for struggle against identity cards, available on our website or for free (with SAE) from our usual address.

## SECOND EDITION OUT NOW



# Defending Anonymity

ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies are available FREE (donations welcome). Please send a stamped addressed envelope) from our national address. Also downloadable from [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

# rossport solidarity camp:

grassroots anti-capitalism in the west of ireland

**Rosspport is a very small village on Ireland's western Atlantic coast. It is a part of Erris, a sub-region of county Mayo, and is a very remote area characterised by small holdings on poor land, small scale fishing, low population, and, Celtic Tiger or not, high rates of outward migration.**

Over the last year its name has become synonymous with the struggle against the plans of Shell, Statoil, Marathon, and the state, to construct a gas refinery and a raw gas pipeline of a kind hitherto never built on land. The development, a 9 km long pipeline and a 400 acre refinery site, plus an off-shore pipeline to the gas field itself, actually takes in a much larger area than just Rosspport. It has been halted thus far by a variety of means including mass picketing, a protest camp on the pipeline route, and the planned blockade of a pipe-laying ship by fishing boats.

In this article I'll not be looking at the health and safety concerns, or environmental and economic issues concerning this development, or at the actions to date, but specifically at elements of the libertarian left's involvement, which is Rosspport Solidarity Camp, participation in the national Shell to Sea campaign group, and the organisation of two gatherings in Erris. I'm going to attempt to draw out what lessons can be learned from this experience.

## Community based environmental struggles

Perhaps the first lesson of the Rosspport experience is that just because it is not on the activist radar screen doesn't mean it isn't happening. In February 2005 it would have been quite easy to have been unaware of what was happening in Erris, as it got next to no coverage in the mainstream media. This is in no respect different from many campaigns of a similar nature against unnecessary developments, both in an urban and rural context.

There is a long history of this in Ireland and elsewhere. For instance in the United States in the 80s the 'environmental justice movement', born of opposition to strip-mining, toxic waste dumps, and other assaults on communities and ecologies, consisted of between 2,000 and 5,000

autonomous local groups, mostly displaying a far more radical political agenda than mainstream environmental lobby groups or their deep ecology offspring (1). This due to both the racial and class bias of the location of hazardous industry making class and race an obvious part of the 'issue', and the class position of the resisting communities making for an interest in raising a wider agenda.

Likewise in mainland Europe, "Mass direct action by communities (occupations, sabotage, pitched battles with police) prevented nuclear power stations and reprocessing facilities being built at Plogoff in France, and at Wackersdorff in Germany in the 1980s." (2). This is not new to Ireland. For example, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork, where a struggle against a proposed incinerator has been underway for the last few years became, in 1979, in the words of one local campaigner, "a police state" as the police battered their way through pickets to allow the construction of an asbestos dump (3). While it would be naïve to see radical potentials as being in all opposition to any development (which can sometimes emanate from the ranks of privileged, who will not bite the hand that feeds them), this would be a lesser evil than ignoring this arena of struggle altogether.

## Rosspport solidarity camp

The camp came out of the Solidarity Gathering which was held in Rosspport in early June 2005.

It was possible because of networking in previous years, particularly around anti-war activism, and to a lesser extent around summit protests. An important hub of such networking in Ireland is the Grassroots Gatherings, get-togethers which happen 2 or 3 times a year, moving location and organising team each time, and embracing a wide spread of tendencies orientated towards bottom-up participatory forms of

organising.

However, the camp soon demonstrated the limitations of the loose network as a form of organisation.

Building a camp is very much a resource heavy operation, it needs large tents, kitchen equipment, communication tools, some form of electricity supply – we have had the loan of a wind turbine. Most of this individuals do not own, or if they do, not in sufficient quantities. Indeed it is only relatively recently that we have acquired a van for our use. The acquisition and long term management of resources requires formal organisation. Apart from a lot of this stuff being expensive, how else would it be managed accountably and collectively, as opposed to being a source of personal power as it would be if it were someone's personal property?

The political make up of the camp is also instructive, with participation, in so far as it was coming from already existing political networks, more 'activist' than 'workerist'. Partly this reveals the limitation of the class struggle critique of activism, in that it ignores the absence of permanent communities and the absence of permanent workplaces, for much of what makes up the activist milieu. The model employed here, both in terms of the camp itself and solidarity actions elsewhere, allows a rootless scene to engage in a community based struggle.

## The perception of the camp

The only mention of the Solidarity Gathering in the national press, was a 'positive' article in the Sunday Times, which read in part: "The landowners received training in protest tactics a month ago from the veteran demonstrators... Protesters, some of them veterans of other environmental protests at Carrickmines Castle and the Hill of Tara, briefed members of the local community on effective ways to halt construction and gain media exposure for their campaign."

In reality all of the workshops and talks at the Gathering, had, deliberately, been given by local residents, apart from one about Nigeria given by someone who used to live in the Delta. There was no 'training' and if there had been it would have been of little

use value given that the subsequent campaign of direct action over the summer, predominantly coming from residents, was above and beyond anything in the experience of anyone who had travelled to the Gathering, or participated in the camp. Moreover, rather than being ‘veterans’ of anything, much of the mainstay of the camp has been people hitherto uninvolved in campaigning.

It is not just a matter of superficial perceptions and portrayals. We live in a society of hierarchy and specialisation, which has as its ideological corollary the notion of social change being brought about by specialists ranging from clientist politicians to guerrilla armies, to charismatic leaders, to political parties, to eco-warriors. But direct action does not have to mean militancy. It means the maximum number of people taking self-determined practical steps to resist capitalism’s impositions. It follows that the role of the camp has been something along the lines of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the Southern U.S. in the early 60s; that is, to support a community based struggle.

Anything else was a practical impossibility anyways, because of limited numbers and resources. But the strength of the notion of professional activism is so great that it is always necessary to critique it. Professional activism only makes sense from a reformist single issue point of view, if you want to be doing something other than putting out fires, then how you achieve victory in a particular struggle is of as much importance as victory itself.

**Activism**

Much criticism of activism revolves around spectacular summit protests, which generate more heat than light (as opposed to ‘more light than heat’). Hence I’m going to outline what I mean by activism aside from summit protests. The following is a generalisation, but it represents a distinct observable tendency. Firstly the determinant of what action is taken is moral outrage over a particular issue as opposed to a strategy aimed at contributing to a process of social change, which must by necessity involve massive numbers of folk. Following from this, priority is given to defending some wilderness or agitating around some issue in a far away place rather than an issue of generalised immediate concern. If the issue in question has popularity this is incidental. The main orientation is towards maximising militancy as opposed to maximising participation; that is, a radicalisation of technique rather

than seeking to mobilise more people. The result of this often is a very inward looking perspective.

We need to orientate ourselves to where we can have mass participation, to where we can have a reasonable prospect of success, and to where possible, ongoing struggles with radical potentials. The set of principles adopted by the first Grassroots Gathering reads in part: “Organise for the control of the workplace by those who work there. Call for the control of communities by the people who live there”.

This can only be realised through conscious mass participation. A political party (electoral or insurrectionary) or guerrilla sect can not produce this by its nature, and seeing social change as coming about solely through activists is the logic of the party or the army. Should the present order of things simply collapse, or be brought down by such an organisation, no alternative society would result, all the old shit would reassert itself – notions about the rationality of hierarchy, traditional gender relations, and so forth, as this would be peoples’ understanding of normality, of the way things must be. Furthermore not only would we not have the idea that things could be different, we wouldn’t have the confidence or organisational capacity to make them different. Hence any positive transformation of society requires conscious mass participation and it requires mass numbers



of people capable of making the change. So how do we get there? The necessary ideas, confidence and organisational capacity are developed in the here and now through struggle. As was outlined by Subversion: “the seeds of the future struggle for communism are contained within the working class’s struggles of today. The types of working class resistance to the attacks of capitalism we support, like strikes, riots, organising against the Poll Tax, and so on, all interrupt the routine of capitalist ‘normality’. In overcoming the practical problems which crop up in the course of these actions, those working class people actively involved find themselves having to develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation. The development of these powers - all stifled by capitalism - is essential for the working class if it is to transform society”.(4)

Winning a struggle contributes to people’s belief in their capacity to make change. Moreover, we can see how in the course of a struggle radical ideas are developed, for instance the changing perception of the nature of the state experienced during the 84/85 Miners Strike, or the changing role of women produced in the same struggle. At particular high points of popular struggle we can see organisational capacities develop to the point where bodies are developed – workplace and community councils - which have the potential to be embryos of a new society, for instance the sections of the Great French Revolution, the shoras of the uprisings in Iraq in 1991, and the barrio assemblies of contemporary Argentina.

Consequently we need to orientate our campaigning to where it has the greatest relevance to people’s day to day lives to produce the optimum amount of mass participation from the point of view of contributing to the potential for social change. It follows from the above argument – which essentially is about empowerment – that in such contexts we must favour direct action rather than representative politics, that is that our goal must be to support and encourage people to sort it out for themselves, as opposed to looking to politicians, lawyers, or professional activists.

Because of the sparse population in Erris, and the major nature of the development, the camp is an appropriate action, but it does not follow that in every campaign such a tactic is useful. It also follows that how the camp is promoted is of great impor-

**continued on page twelve**

continued from page eleven

tance, e.g. on activist e-mail lists, or with mass leafleting. That is to say, who are we trying to attract? The relative inaccessibility of this form of action, together with the associated media ‘eco-warrior’ spectacularisation, intensifies these issues.

### The camp and anarchism

The camp has been a working model of anarchism in action, in that it involves a group not only organising campaigning as a collective of equals, but organising day to day living and activity in such a way.

As it is a living space this necessitates dealing with issues such as sexual violence. This is not something which has happened on the camp, but we felt we would give it attention to inhibit the possibility or, failing that, so as to address it rather than ignore it. The camp has been predominantly male, but is very much not male dominated, or so I’m told. It is also organised in an ecological manner, with recycling, and energy from wind power. A criticism of the camp could be that it hasn’t put forward an explicitly anarchist case against Shell’s development. However, while being organised in a libertarian form, the camp is an open, broad-based campaigning tactic, not an anarchist organisation. Nonetheless, there is a need for its formal organisation, not only to manage resources but to build links between struggles, and also to make explicit the role of capital and the state in unnecessary developments like the one at Rossport and the need to undermine both of them.

(1) Szasz, Andrew, ‘Ecopolitism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice’, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994, page 158.

(2) Anarchist Federation, ‘Ecology and Class: Where there’s Brass there’s Muck’, 2004, page 34.

(3) Allen, Robert, and Jones, Tara, ‘Guests of the Nation: The people of Ireland versus the Multinationals’, Earthscan Publications, 1990, page 109.

(4) The Best of Subversion, [www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/bestof10.html](http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/bestof10.html)

For more information see:

[www.indymedia.ie/mayo](http://www.indymedia.ie/mayo)

[www.struggle.ws/rsc/](http://www.struggle.ws/rsc/)

[www.shelltosea.com](http://www.shelltosea.com)

RosSPORT Solidarity Camp welcomes more volunteers. People can come and stay for as long or as short as they like. The camp can be contacted at:

[rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com](mailto:rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com) or 00353 9720944.

# a new world in

**“We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeois may blast and ruin it’s own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.”**  
(Buenaventura Durruti, anarchist militant, 1937)

2006 sees the 70th anniversary of one of the most important episodes of European working class history – the Spanish Revolution.

Because the Spanish anarchist movement was historically such a large and important one, anarchists have had a reputation for idealising the Spanish events of 1936 – 1937 and the role of libertarians in it.

Unlike, for example, Britain or Ireland, anarchist ideas had been at the forefront of socialist politics in Spain since the 1860s.

The libertarian movement had deep roots amongst both the peasantry and the emergent industrial working class for more than half a century prior to the 1936 revolution.

### CNT-FAI

Most of that movement could be found in the revolutionary syndicalist National Labour Confederation (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo - CNT), a union which in May 1936 numbered over half a million. By no means all CNT members were anarchists, many had joined for the simple reason that the union was the strongest and most effective in their workplace. But the organisation was at least nominally committed to a libertarian communist future and was regarded as a *de facto* anarchist union. Partly in order to maintain the CNT’s libertarian and revolutionary perspectives, anarchist militants had in 1927 created the Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Iberica - FAI). This latter organisation had a structure based upon affinity groups and in 1936 claimed something in the region of 30,000 militants.

It is easy to see how the libertarian movement was a major player in Spanish political life, vastly outnumbering the Communist Party and challenging the social democratic party, the Workers’ Socialist Party and their industrial wing, the General Workers Union (Unión General

de Trabajadores- UGT), for the allegiance of the urban and rural working class. It was, therefore, inevitable that the anarchists would play a major role in the social upheaval sparked by an attempted military – clerical – fascist coup in July 1936.

### July 1936

The July revolt by a large section of the Spanish army, led by General Franco and supported by the Catholic Church and the fascist Falange party, might be described as a pre-emptive counter-revolution. A ‘Popular Front’ government had been elected in February, bringing to power a coalition dominated by the Left Republicans, a middle class democratic party with a programme of modernisation and moderate reform. Despite their involvement in this front, the Socialists would not take part. Even so, this was enough to prompt the reactionary forces of the traditional ruling elite to immediately prepare for civil war. On July 17<sup>th</sup> what became known as the *Nationalist* revolt kicked off in Spanish Morocco, quickly spreading into Spain itself. As town after town fell to the militarists the Republican government vacillated, talked of coming to an agreement with the rebel military and generally appeared paralysed in the face of the revolt. As the initiative for resisting the Nationalists was falling to the workers’ organisations, particularly the CNT and UGT, the government slowly authorised the arming of the union militias. In the capital, Madrid, the revolt was rapidly disarmed by armed UGT militants alongside those security forces who remained ‘loyal’ to the government. In Barcelona the CNT took effective control. Though large parts of Spain were in the hands of the Nationalists, their overall advance was temporarily halted and the large cities of Barcelona and Madrid were in the hands of the unions. In Barcelona the CNT and FAI emptied the barracks and

# our hearts



distributed arms to groups of members across Catalonia and beyond. So, in the midst of civil war and chaos, began the Spanish Revolution.

In Catalonia and Aragon, the two regions with the greatest concentration of libertarian workers and peasants, there began a social transformation. Real power was being taken into the hands of the working class as the government looked on, temporarily powerless. The distribution of food, the maintenance of public services, the opening of collective restaurants and the organisation of defence against the Nationalist forces were all being undertaken by strictly unofficial elements! Human creativity was being unleashed and the state was nowhere to be seen, though undoubtedly it was there, waiting to regain strength.

Collectivisations of industry and the expropriation of the land, initiated by CNT and, to a lesser extent, UGT members, were taking place throughout these areas. Often, anarchist militias such as the famous Durruti Column, would actively promote and defend collectivisations as they travelled to the frontline. The collectivisation of land has been described as “Probably the most creative legacy of Spanish anarchism” by the writer and historian Daniel Guerin. As large landowners abandoned their estates their workers took over and ran them collectively. Where landowners stayed, those who had appeared sympathetic to the militarist revolt were kicked off the land whilst ‘good republican’ landowners were

often invited to join the collectives! In total it is estimated that possibly 3 million people were involved in collectives in the ‘revolutionary period’ of 1936-37.

The collectives variously attempted to put into practice libertarian communism based on the principle of ‘from each according to ability, to each according to need’ but, more commonly, collectivism where a ‘family wage’ was paid by the collective.

## The social revolution

Socially, the revolution began to cast-off centuries of mental servitude to the ruling class and the Catholic church. Working people began to discard formal and deferential speech, common in Spanish. People spoke to each other as equals. Churches found themselves under attack, often being requisitioned for practical use and sometimes simply burnt down as symbols of centuries-old oppression. New groups involving themselves in artistic, musical and cultural activities emerged in a surge of creativity unleashed by the possibilities the revolution offered.

## The industrial collectivisations

In the industrial areas of ‘Loyalist Spain’, particularly Catalonia, large parts of manufacturing and most public services were immediately taken over and managed by the workers. The collectivised factories and workshops were, for four months after the July events, run without state involvement. The revolution in Russia in 1917 had faced the problem of the desertion of skilled technicians to the

counter-revolution, and although this was not as widespread in Spain, where many technical staff were themselves active syndicalists, it was still a factor. Unlike the agricultural experiments in self-management, the industrial efforts were faced with having to reorganise the factories to produce armaments and military vehicles. Added to this was the successful attempt by the state to co-opt the collectivisations.

In October the Catalan regional government ratified the socialisation of industry. The state was attempting to both control the collectivisation process and to use it to its own advantage in building the war effort and disciplining the workforce. The state decreed that all factories employing more than 100 workers were to be brought under the joint management of a Council of Enterprises. This Council was to include both the workforce and a representative from the Catalan regional government who would act as ‘controller’. The Collectivisation Decree of October 1936, however, transferred all real power to the state’s General Council for Industry. Although the workers who had taken control *through direct action* in 1936 remained nominally in control, their role was in reality only to be consulted and, naturally, *to work*.

How did this happen? In July 1936 the state was impotent and almost invisible, yet a few months later it had returned and had usurped power from the working class.

## The CNT-FAI betrayal

The reason can be found in the fact that whilst the rank and file of the libertarian organisations were engaging in collectivisations and land seizures, the ‘leadership’ of the movement saved the government from complete eclipse. And it began this process as early as the 20<sup>th</sup> July, the day following the halting of the militarist rising. On that fateful day Luis Companys the President of the Generalitat, the regional government of Catalonia, summoned representatives of the CNT and the FAI. Companys offered to resign from a government which existed in name only, its ability to ‘restore order’ non-existent. At this meeting the CNT and FAI, representing the armed and mobilised masses, decided that a new administration could be established between the revolutionary workers movement and the leftist forces of the Popular Front. The new structure was the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias and it was this

**continued on page fourteen**

organisation which oversaw the social re-organisation in the weeks following the effective collapse. It was this committee which helped co-ordinate the establishing and supplying of militias to fight at the front, the collectivisations and the maintenance of social services. But the vital breathing space gave the government the opportunity to recover and re-establish its power. As the dissident anarcho-syndicalist group 'Friends of Durruti' were to reflect later: "There can be absolutely no common ground between exploiters and exploited. Which shall prevail, only battle can decide. Bourgeoisie or workers. Certainly not both of them at once." (Towards a Fresh Revolution, 1938)

So, with power in the hands of the working class, why did the leadership of the CNT-FAI not simply dismiss the government and maintain workers power? The betrayal cannot be blamed upon reformist or moderate elements in the CNT, after all, the militant FAI was also there. Indeed, the FAI's Garcia Oliver, present at the meeting, stated that the choice was between: "Libertarian Communism, which means the anarchist dictatorship, or democracy, which means collaboration." (quoted in Lessons of the Spanish Revolution, Vernon Richards 1953).

This false dichotomy ignored the possibility of maintaining and extending the gains of the working class without an

'anarchist dictatorship' but through the suppression of the republican democratic bourgeoisie, which was already in disarray.

### The 'anarchist' politicians

The choice of collaboration sealed the fate of the revolution. Dual power could not last very long. On September 27<sup>th</sup> representatives of the CNT entered the new Council of the Generalitat, the reorganised regional government of Catalonia and the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias, in which the CNT had placed so much hope, was gone. The decision to enter the government appears to have been taken a week earlier by the National Committee of the CNT, which was supposed to be answerable to the union as a whole. The CNT had called for a Regional Defence Council which would co-ordinate without being a government per se, but when offered places in a coalition with bourgeois parties they did not hesitate to cross the class divide. The 'hard-line' FAI militant Garcia Oliver was to say "The Committees of the Anti-Fascist Militias have been dissolved because now the Generalitat represents all of us." This amazing statement shows how quickly both anarchist principles and class analysis were thrown away. The stage was set for the 'anarchist' politicians to enter the National Government of Spain, led by left socialist Largo Caballero, two months later in

November 1936.

### The rise of the Communist Party

The growth of the Communist Party throughout what became the Spanish Civil War was phenomenal. Two main factors promoted that growth. Firstly, the Spanish Republic looked to the Soviet Union for material aid and support and secondly, the Spanish Stalinists opposed any revolutionary activity which might jeopardise the bourgeois republic and thereby recruited heavily from all those who might be inconvenienced by collectivisations. The Communist Party, adept at infiltration and manipulation, took control of the Socialist Party's youth section and, through the importation of Russian military advisors and their own political commissars, rapidly gained an influence in the military of the Republic out of all proportion to their size. In 1936 the party united with the Catalan socialists to form the Catalan United Socialist Party (PSUC), which it dominated. The Communist Party was the main sponsor of the famous International Brigades, the tens of thousands of volunteers who came from across the globe to 'defend the republic'. This added to the Party's kudos.

### Militarisation

The communists were also at the forefront



of the campaign to integrate the militias of the CNT-FAI and the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), a large anti-Stalinist left socialist grouping, into the 'Popular Army' of the Republic.

Opposition to militarization of the militias came mainly from the grassroots of the CNT-FAI and, naturally, from the anarchist militias which had emerged in July – September 1936 during the existence of the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias. The militias were not opposed to co-ordination of the physical fight against the nationalist military, but of being forced into a traditional army which would be controlled by whoever was in charge of the state.

However, the military situation in the period following the entry of the 'anarchists' into the regional and central governments was dire for the Republican forces. The government left Madrid for Valencia as the capital was besieged in November and the pressure increased for the dissolving of the militias into a regular army. The increasing militarization of the Republican area was another sign that the revolution was being strangled and that the working class was becoming used in a conventional war between two rival factions of the ruling class.

## The May events, 1937

The last gasp of the Spanish revolution came in May 1937. Throughout April the Generalitat, complete with 4 'anarchist' ministers, including the Minister for Justice, had been escalating harassment of 'uncontrollable elements' in the CNT and the POUM, disarming workers patrol groups, raiding offices. On the morning of May 3<sup>rd</sup> a provocation occurred that would signal the final defeat of the Revolution and the capitulation of the CNT to the state. The Barcelona Telephone Exchange had been under the control of its workers, mainly CNT members, since the July days. At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Monday May 3<sup>rd</sup> the police attempted to occupy the building but could not advance beyond the first floor due to resistance from the workers. News of the assault spread and rank and file CNT, FAI and POUM militants responded, arming themselves and organising to resist. The leadership of the CNT called for calm and the removal of the police from the building. But events were overtaking the leaders and a general strike developed in Barcelona as barricades were erected by the working class across the city. Shooting started in the early hours of the next day and continued sporadically.

Still the CNT called for negotiations to end the stand-off. Exactly 24 hours after the occupation of the telephone exchange the CNT-FAI called for the workers organisations to unilaterally lay down their arms in a radio broadcast. "Workers of the CNT! Workers of the UGT! Don't be deceived by these manoeuvres. Above all else, Unity! Put down your arms. Only one slogan: We must work to beat fascism! Down with fascism!"

But the counter-revolution, spearheaded by the PSUC and the local Catalan Nationalists, was determined to humble the anarchists. Libertarians were shot in cold blood only yards from the headquarters of the CNT. On the 5<sup>th</sup> the state escalated the provocation by an assault on the local Libertarian Youth centre and the surrounding of CNT headquarters. On the same night the Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri and his comrade Barbieri were abducted and murdered by a joint police and PSUC squad. Berneri, editor of 'Guerra di Classe' (Class War) was one of the most intelligent and constructive critics of the anarchist collaboration.

## Again capitulation

At this time The Friends of Durruti group issued a proclamation calling for a 'Revolutionary Junta' (Council) to be established, which would include the POUM. The POUM, however, remained indecisive and awaited the leadership of the CNT-FAI. The leadership could only counsel 'serenity' and calm, calling for a return to work and a ceasefire whilst the Catalan government called in reinforcements from around Republican Spain!

Despite the encouragement not to abandon the streets which came from the Friends of Durruti, the rank and file of the CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth complied with the leadership. The majority of syndicalists and anarchists continued to trust those who had been their most ardent militants in the years before. By Friday 7<sup>th</sup>, the fighting in Barcelona had ended. The Catalan and national governments, however, took this as a sign that the CNT would now accept almost anything in the name of anti-fascist unity and despite agreements to the contrary, occupied the entirety of the telephone exchange and continued to harass, intimidate and arrest anarchists.

## Aftermath

The aftermath of the May Days saw the power and confidence of the state reinforced and the morale of the

revolutionaries sapped. In June the state outlawed the POUM, which subsequently disappeared from the scene, mainly into Stalinist prisons. In July the anarchists were excluded from the reorganised Catalan government and from August onwards the state carried on a programme of de-collectivisation. The revolution, in the sense of working class power and of a libertarian reorganisation of society, was dead. The revolution dead, the defeat of the Republic followed as the nationalists, supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, crushed the 'Peoples Army'.

## An impossible revolution?

The Spanish Revolution of 1936 was born in the midst of a period of darkest reaction. Italy and Germany were under the jackboot of fascism, their working class subdued by repression. The Soviet Union, at the height of Stalin's dictatorship *over* the proletariat, dominated the left through the Communist International. Stalinism internationally served to defend the Soviet Union and the policy of the Communist Parties twisted and turned depending on the needs of the 'Workers' Fatherland'. It is no exaggeration to say that the working class was in a position of international defeat. When the workers of Spain spontaneously moved to crush the nationalist – militarist uprising they were alone, isolated and far from being part of an international movement. What they had in their favour were mass organisations, built over many years and having come through repression and illegality.

From the very beginning the anarchist and syndicalist movement's 'official' leadership acted like politicians and played the political games of the bourgeoisie. Paralysed by the fear of establishing an 'anarchist dictatorship' they instead effectively accepted the dictatorship of the democratic, anti-fascist ruling class. And whilst the rank and file of the anarchist movement strove to proceed towards libertarian communism, they failed to challenge their own organisation's integration into the historical enemy of classical anarchism – the state. The Friends of Durruti put it clearly when they said that "Democracy, not fascism, defeated the Spanish people".

An incredible creativity and capacity for creating a new world was exhibited, in the worst possible conditions, by millions of Spanish workers and peasants. This, tragically, was not enough to actually make the new world, held deeply in their hearts, realised.

Perhaps after the high profile given to anarchists in anti-capitalist actions against the G8 last year we should be grabbing those 15 minutes of fame while we have the chance. Or is our distrust of the media and academia well-founded? This article is presented for debate since not every AF member is in agreement with all of the views expressed here. To date, AF members have limited ourselves to writing letters to local newspapers, talking to programme makers and doing the odd radio interview, all in an individual capacity, but we have discussed whether to do more.

### **A different kind of media interest**

From the "Face of Hate" tabloid headlines about Class War in the 1980's to the hysterical "Anarchist 'gallows' to disrupt G8" in the Sunday Times last May referring to their 'discovery' of an anarchist plot to hang ourselves off bridges, we are used to reading alarmist, ill-informed or blatantly fabricated articles in the daily newspapers, whether these are directed at specific organisations or at "anarchy" in general. But since the Gleneagles G8 summit and in the few months preceding it, the AF has been inundated with a different kind of press request that is more open and seemingly more respectful of our viewpoint. First we were asked to participate in what became a BBC4 documentary "G8 - Can You Hear Us?", a story made up from following various groups at (and on their journey to) the summit. Then Channel 4

News contacted us to ask if we'd "got any events or actions planned" for the summit. In recent months we've even been invited on to that scary BBC1 religious Sunday TV programme "The Heaven and Earth Show" to debate the Christian work ethic, and ITV youth series "It's My Life" asking us to argue 'wealth can't buy happiness' against Peter Stringfellow! Then BBC TV Newcastle emailed to find someone who had received "but did not pay" a fixed penalty notice, to form part of a debate about their use by local councils to punish graffiti and littering, and apparently to give it a civil liberties flavour. Even our views on football seem to be of interest, at least to one Guardian sports journalist, judging by a quote from one of our Resistance bulletins about FC United. We're just waiting for that call to ask us for our racing tips.

A related issue is a heightened interest in anarchism from the academic direction. As well as contact from the mainstream media, the AF has had numerous requests from students of media studies or critical theory who want to get our views about direct action and misrepresentation of anarchism in the media for their essays or projects. We've also had an interview request from a student newspaper for their "In Ideas" section (does that mean we're really cool?). All of these approaches offered an opportunity to overcome misconceptions. This is presumably in response to 'intellectual' articles written by journalists and academics in magazines like the Economist "For

jihadist, read anarchist" and on various websites like Aljazeera's "Al-Qaida: The wrong answers", who think it's clever to liken anarchist theory and tactics to those of Islamic terrorists. Our Aims and Principles have also been quoted, and misrepresented, in an academic paper in the journal "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism" called "Anarchist direct actions - a challenge for law enforcement".

Should we be taking this heightened interest seriously and attempt to engage better either as an opportunity to promote anarchism or to defend our views when misrepresented? Should we be talking as often as possible to journalists and academics, or perhaps go even further and try and get on Big Brother? I will argue that there are good practical and theoretical reasons for shunning both the press and approaches by academics.

### **The media monolith**

The problem with media made and presented by professionals, however sympathetic a particular writer or programme maker may seem, is that it's not going to promote the necessity of destroying the State and capitalism, far from it. From Murdoch's TV and newspaper empire (Sky, Times, Sun etc.) and the BBC, to various smaller news outfits like the Guardian Media Group, together with a heavy reliance on global news agencies like Reuters and Associated Press, our mainstream media is very much a corporate

# how do anarchists gain influence?

## media, academia and class struggle

**Anarchists, in Britain at least, have traditionally been hostile to using the mainstream media and academic press to spread our ideas. But are we missing out on the chance to reach a wider audience?**

monolith in the hands of a small number of powerful 'barons' who are interested in both money and power, the kind of power that claims to control the fate of governments (unless like Berlusconi's Italy you also run the government!).

Media's other reasons for being are a greater or lesser mixture of State control and 'public service' which effectively means either presenting us with blatant propaganda or force-feeding us with a diet of opinions on what makes a good citizen. These roles of the mainstream media are good for propping up the status quo, and very bad at taking seriously any attempt to destroy it, even if some of them come out against the government from time to time, or may themselves become victims of censorship (or even get bombed during a war). The media will always act to defend democracy however they define it, cannot go very far to expose its limitations and failings, and in fact creates a facade over what is really a ruthlessly anti-democratic underbelly.

Whilst the sacred cow of investigative journalism may claim to have occasionally helped changed 'public' views on Vietnam and various other nasty wars and atrocities, physical change did not come about without sustained struggle domestically and, in the case of the Vietnam war, by insubordination, desertion or mutiny of soldiers.

Furthermore, investigative programmes, rather than confront the powers that be, more often aim to expose or engage in

character assassination of groups or individuals not liked by the mainstream whether it's Fathers for Justice, members of the British National Party, 'radical' Imams, Michael Jackson, or animal rights groups engaged in economic sabotage against vivisection.

Many more television hours are filled with programmes about civil servants catching benefit 'cheats' or the outing of dodgy workmen or petty criminals. It does not really matter whether we would support or oppose certain groups or individuals (or not care either way), the democratic approach will always be one of appeal to the legal process of the State, never to encourage self-activity. It's more than a bit ripe to hear them go on about defending free speech when the same media cannot countenance direct action by anarchists, anti-fascists or any working class person against those who seek to deny the freedom of others.

Plus we know that investigations of big business corruption, governments 'misleading the public', or military 'misdemeanours' rarely change anything just on the basis of exposure, because there are wealthy and powerful interests at play. The real nature of our ruling class is rarely revealed, or if it is, only years after an event and presented by the media as a shock surprise. A recently documented example of selective media is press indifference to overt British and US support for the bloodbath meted out in Indonesia by the Sukarno regime in the 1960s and the subsequent invasion of East

Timor, that was vigorously campaigned against by activists at the time, but is now presented only as a hard-to-find footnote of unsavoury history rather than an atrocity that was perpetrated and covered up by politicians that are still in power today (see Mark Curtis' book "Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World"). Media reporting of conflicts in the Balkans is another good example. Today this carries on with the reporting of events in Iraq, which ever more quickly become historical news items rather than current affairs, and are in turn justified by a patriotic fervour continually fed to us by the press to create support for whatever military action is going on in the here and now.

Most seriously for activists, the mainstream media, if they bother to mention us at all, will deliberately misrepresent the revolutionary movement and try to identify and discredit the "extremist elements" - that's us! The risk of misrepresentation is extremely high, whether by misunderstanding or deliberate manipulation by editors and producers, or by a journalist with a political agenda (as was experienced recently by Noam Chomsky when he was smeared through a Guardian interview as the denier of a massacre during the Bosnian war, by means of creative editing). It can also be very difficult to come across well in a live situation especially if you are confronted with 'hostile interviewer' techniques. Never mind that journalists are being paid to help a media business and its shareholders sell



papers or advertising space, and that they have an interest in furthering their media careers. They are really not likely to be sympathetic of our aims, so we should not be flattered by their apparent interest in our principles.

Consumption of TV and newspapers alienates us in such a way that the events we see and read about become detached from real life. The more extreme a group is, compared to the cultural norm that the broadcaster or newspaper editor is appealing to, the more it will come across like an act in a freak-show (although played to advantage by the Clown Army in "G8 – Can You Hear Us"). For example, producers of "The Heaven and Earth Show", mentioned above, made it clear to us that they wanted someone who had dropped out of the 'rat-race' because of their politics - a preconception if there ever was one and a clear message that the narrative of the show had been decided in advance. As soon as anarchists become the subject of debate rather than being seen as active participants in a struggle, we become an easy target for those who may wish to caricature us as naïve fools or violent thugs, rather than rational opponents of a oppressive and violent social system.

### Fluffy vs Spikey

Unfortunately, not everyone in the anti-capitalist movement agrees with this analysis. Fluffiness, a non-violent approach to protest, which has as one of its tactics the gain of favourable media coverage, became quite prevalent in anti-globalisation actions from London J18 onwards and especially since Seattle N30. These both took place in 1999 preceded by actions around the time of the Criminal Justice Act in the mid-1990s. Disagreements about the pros and cons of fluffy vs. spikey have caused divisions in the wider anti-capitalist movement. Although it's probably true to say that anarchism in Britain has remained more on the spikey side of things, many activists continue to be convinced that media-friendliness is the way to go, or at least a useful addition to our own propaganda.

But we know from experience of past struggles that States can be extremely violent against dissenting movements - think of Genoa G8 - never mind the reality of armed response and covert assassinations that governments have used and continue to use in many parts of the world. You don't have to be being violent yourself to get beaten up or killed by the State, a situation that would become more and more likely if

mass uprisings or revolution started to look likely.

Once you believe that violence is an inevitable part of the class struggle, knowing that the worst violence is perpetrated by nation states and corporations, there is just no point trying to use the mainstream press to justify your position. The experience of Class War speaking on TV (BBC Newsnight if I remember rightly) after the 1990 Trafalgar Square anti-Poll Tax riot is instructive. After calling the rioters "working class heroes" the spokesperson was immediately victimised by bosses at his local council workplace (although happily defended by his workmates).

We should also be careful not to give away tactical info of any kind. Confusion amongst the ruling class of our strength and aims can be a great advantage for a small movement. Talking to the media before, on, or after actions is always risky in this respect bearing in mind that some journalists may have links to the cops, or could even be cops. Especially beforehand, it's important not to hand the media/police on a plate what we may or may not be doing, or even to let them know we are supporting or attending an action. Even by saying you are just speaking as a individual can still impart information about your group's approach to an event. It's perhaps better if they think none of us are involved and make it hard for them to plan their response!

Many anarchists including the AF have also argued against bringing any cameras or

recording devices on demos even by do-it-yourself (DIY) media outfits, because of the high risk of them getting into police hands or confusing them with undercover police equipment. Bravado remarks like 'the Special Branch know about us already so why should we worry' are not well-founded. If that was the case, why would police have used a court order to view and then seize TV footage of last summer's anti-G8 actions from BBC Scotland (15 tapes) and Scottish Television (10 tapes) and obtained a warrant to take tapes from Sky?

### Academia

Study of the history of anarchist thought and practice has been important for our movement and there are academics of anarchism who are good comrades. Furthermore, anarchism modules in university degrees seem to be more popular than ever. But does this mean we should be engaging more with the academic community to get anarchism talked about even more widely? Would it be useful to have our aims, strategies and tactics discussed in academic journals and specialist conferences, and perhaps infect the Zeitgeist with positive features of anarchism? The answer must be found in the audience of such journals. Not all academics who are interested in anarchism will be committed activists and working within our movement to make knowledge available to the masses. The academic publications themselves are unlikely to be freely available to the 'lay-person' who doesn't have access to online



subscriptions to journals. Even when printed versions of academic journals are available, access is being made worse by restrictions of free entry to university libraries.

Moreover, many academic studies are intended to gain and disseminate understanding in order to control dissent. Just look at papers devoted to protest, especially of violent ones like riots. Some of these might be by those who claim to be well-meaning social scientists devoted to understanding the motivations of protesters, and may even paint protesters in a positive light. But these and many much less sympathetic academic studies feed directly into State policy, for example, informing crowd control strategies of the police who both read and contribute to such journals. This specialist knowledge is intended for an elite, does very little to contribute to the struggle against the system, and more often than not will act against our interests and security.

Lastly, many anarchist writers and translators, often self-taught, have contributed to our extensive body of knowledge that is available in libraries and freely available on the internet. Others have created more accessible and cheaper versions of longer texts, or contribute their knowledge to open meetings. This all helps to take anarchism out of the academies so we have less need for them than we might have otherwise.

### Media by us, for us.

Anarchism is about self-activity and so, when we do use media, it should be our own. DIY media is part of a process of active participation in struggles. It involves people acting not as subjects but as those making change, learning to demystify the process of presenting news and ideas, and very importantly choosing if and when it is useful to speak. For sure, the internet has transformed communication in our movement, but again it's about self-presentation. We could spend all day contributing to high-profile online forums like those on the BBC News website and achieve very little, when many of the same ideas can be found on our own websites or other publications. So anarchist communist organisation is about being involved with and learning through class struggle. Revolutionary commitment isn't going to be got across through media spectacle, but by meaningful human interactions. To try to get 15 minutes of fame (or infamy) in our celebrity-worshipping culture - perhaps 15 or more years with the help of a massive marketing machine if you are rich and lucky - involves

impressing either an elite, or least a sizable number of passive consumers. Even the new approach of 'viral marketing' that involves active participation in social networks is only interested in targeting an elite group of persuaders to sell a product or idea on its 'coolness'. These approaches are bound to fail to achieve the spread of revolutionary ideas. Furthermore, complex ideas are best debated when they have real meaning, not in the isolation of an academic discipline. The ideas of Bakunin for example, had most meaning in the late 1800s when the possibility of immediate social revolution was real. Today they serve as a historical lesson of what happens when other ideas like the Workers' State are forced on the masses, and can now be used to warn against trusting the authoritarian left in contemporary struggles.

It's also a matter of safety. A personal experience in a local anti-poll tax group is relevant to this. At being denounced as a violent anarchist after the Trafalgar Square demonstration by the local Militant (now Socialist Party) hack, whose party had publicly condemned the riot and whose leaders had promised to "name names" to the police, other non-aligned members of our local anti-poll group defended me knowing that I was a solid member of our group involved in all levels of campaigning. Never mind the fact that anarchists had, in reality, nothing to do with 'organising' a riot as was being portrayed in the media (a view that was unhelpfully backed up by Class War's appearance on TV in my opinion). The myth of an anarchist-organised riot was dismantled by people's first hand participation in the demonstration, and such was the strength of solidarity in local groups that a local defence fund organisation formed in my town in addition to the national one. This supported and raised money for all those facing court cases after the riot, with the principle that there was to be no judgment as to what they had been arrested for. This degree of support came out of direct experience of a mass-participation riot in the context of a sustained community campaign, something that would never have come out of a press appeal. It's also worth stressing how far away this is from the tactics used by terrorists, who go out of their way to advertise themselves using the mainstream press in order to heighten the fear they want to create.

### "The revolution will not be televised"

Anarchist communists do not wish to be seen as a group of experts in insurrectionary

principles. An organisation of less than 100 members is not going to change the world on its own and we have no pretensions of leading a revolution, unlike the authoritarian left. Even if we succeeded in getting across so well on TV that 1000 potential new members contacted us the next day just because they liked our ideas, if they had no experience of revolt in their workplaces or communities, an organisation like ours would surely collapse! For the same reasons we don't spend every week on a stall in town, trying to flog our papers or recruit new members. Anarchism will only gain influence if it shows itself to be effective through application of theory in practice (praxis) by people in the course of struggle. If through this process a person finds they want to know more about anarchism or join the AF we would consider that a bonus.

Mainstream media is either about caricaturing us to a passive audience, or explaining us to an elite, and we should not help them. Why would we even want to be considered respectable in their eyes? It's all to the better if they get it wrong or have to make it up so we can laugh at them rather than get annoyed about being misrepresented! To demystify and ridicule the mainstream media is to weaken it, towards the day when it will be swept away with the rest of the State and capitalism. At that time the grip of the State on the media will tighten, as it does during a war. Anarchists should therefore continue to prioritise production of our own media, reflecting on real experience in workplace and community struggles, rather than waste our efforts with broadcast and press. Further to this, we should preferably rely as little as possible on big events to spread our ideas, as these are here one day and gone the next (like Make Poverty History whose media campaign was ended at the end of 2005). And rather than getting too bogged down with academia we would very much encourage students who are interested in anarchism to join or form anarchist groups, to publish their own papers, and get involved with struggles where people can work together as equals. Our ideas mean nothing if we are not involved with real people in real-life situations.

For a good set of online anarchist and independent news sources, check our website News section: <http://www.libcom.org/hosted/af/news/>

If you don't have access to the internet, you can also write to us for printed copies of all of our publications including our monthly news and views bulletin, Resistance.

# the struggle against mountain top removal in appalachia

## Interview by an AF member in

**Ireland.** I came across Mountain Justice Summer while browsing, and was interested in the parallels with Rosspoint Solidarity Camp. Both appear to be premised on the idea of attracting youth radicalised through anti-globalisation and anti-war activism into travelling to an area to support a struggle based around a local community's opposition to environmental devastation. I was interested in learning from the difficulties faced by, and potentials of, this campaign. Mountain Justice Summer is based in Appalachia, historically a place that has seen intense class struggle, quite different from Mayo, and I was interested in how that influenced the current situation. I interviewed Joe, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), aka Wobblies, who is involved in Mountain Justice Summer, for the perspective of someone from one of the more workplace orientated parts of the libertarian left, as those parts, in general, are often uninterested in matters environmental.

## **AF:** What is Mountain Top Removal and what effect is it having on communities and ecologies in Appalachia?

Mountain Top Removal (MTR) is a form of strip mining that has existed since the 1970s. Its use was increased about ten years ago in West Virginia, and in the past three years its use has been accelerated to an all-time high. Instead of starting from the top and digging down to the coal seam, in MTR huge drills are used to bore holes into the sides of a mountain until they hit coal. Then the hole is packed with explosives and the top of the mountain is literally blown off. In most cases, the rubble, or "overburden," is then pushed over into the surrounding valleys, burying the any headwaters that were there. So far over 1200 miles of headwater streams, in West Virginia alone, have been buried by this process, know as valley filling. Geologically speaking, the coal seams that exist in these mountains also play an important part in maintaining the water table by creating an impermeable layer that disperses water into the surrounding area instead of letting it sink. The combined effect of the loss of streams and



the removal of the coal has led to a drop in the water levels, which has taken quite a toll on local communities, many of which rely on wells for their water. Water quality has also been declining because of the chemical runoff created by coal washing. Another danger around MTR sites is slurry spills. The waste from these processes is stored in large slurry ponds, which are often simply surrounding valleys dammed up with over-burden. Last December there was a spill from one of these dams, operated by Massey Energy's Marfork Coal Company, in which 10,000 gallons of heavy metal-laden sludge was dumped into a stream, affecting a five-mile area. In October of 2000, a spill occurred in Kentucky that the Environmental Protection Agency has called "the worst environmental disaster ever in the Southeast." One site where Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) focused a number of its actions was at the Marsh Fork Elementary School which sits below an over 2 billion gallon slurry pond. The end product of MTR, of course, is that Appalachia is disappearing. Even the most lauded reclamation efforts look more like a golf course than the incredibly diverse mountain forests that existed before the mining. The mountains are being topped

off, and in the process the people and communities that existed there are being driven away. Degrading water supplies, constant blasting, huge clouds of dust, dwindling numbers of jobs, and overloaded trucks barrelling down tight mountain roads are just a few of the factors that force many families to leave. And as more and more land becomes vacant, the coal companies just buy the land up cheap and expand their mine.

**AF:** In Britain the move to electricity generation through nuclear power, and later the development of strip-mining, was a means to break the power of mining communities which were a source of resistance to capital, is the story in Appalachia a similar one in regard to the technique of Mountain Top Removal?

Absolutely. The switch to Mountain Top Removal has allowed the companies to greatly reduce the number of employees that they require. In the 1960s coal employed 150,000 West Virginians. Today, despite much higher levels of coal production, it employs less than 15,000, many of who are still employed in deep mines, which continue to disappear as cheap MTR

coal makes deep mining uncompetitive. There are even instances of workers being brought in from other states to fill jobs on MTR sites. This tactic is employed so that the workers won't worry about the long term effects of what they're doing and so that the company can provide as few jobs as possible, speeding the evacuation of the community and the expansion of their mine. The current excuse that the coal industry is using is that they need to start bringing in an immigrant labour force because there aren't enough qualified West Virginians who want to work in the mines, which is simply untrue.

**AF: What sort of actions took place during last year's Mountain Justice Summer?**

The spectrum of actions was pretty wide. There were lots of rallies and demonstrations outside the offices of coal supporters and government buildings. We have done lots of information gathering and distributing, like the listening projects, where volunteers went into the communities to ask people about their experiences with MTR and the coal companies, or flyering and distributing our publications while doing street theatre. We had a number of coal sludge lemonade stands, showing folks outside the coalfields what the by-product of coal washing looks like. During our actions in Lexington we served the President of the Kentucky Coal Association a bowl of coal sludge, which he actually dipped his finger in and ate! On two different occasions we had folks arrested for refusing to leave the offices of the Massey Energy Corporation until they were allowed to deliver demands. We had a two-day march across West Virginia, and there was a march and rally for the international day of action against climate change outside the Massey Headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. There was a hunger strike at the Governor's office in West Virginia. And at the end of the summer we blockaded one of the mine sites in Tennessee.

**AF: Two particular parts of Mountain Justice Summer interested me, the emphasis on training for participants, and the "listen-in" where residents told participants of their experiences, can you tell us more about these?**

We had the beginning-of-summer trainings so that we could get all of our volunteers on the same page in terms of our commitment to non-violence, to educate them on what was going on, and to ensure that they respected the communities in which we

worked.

The listening projects, as we called them, were probably one of the best things we did all summer. The idea was to go into the communities and get the locals to start talking because they knew more about the effects of MTR than we did. All the volunteers that I've spoken with have really positive stories about the listening projects. It helped give many of our volunteers perspective on the history and experience of the communities in which they were working, and it definitely helped ease many of the community members to the presence of a crew of out-of-towners in what are normally pretty isolated communities.

**AF: Mountain Justice Summer seems to have been forged through an alliance between Earth First (EF!) and some community groups. Other community groups seemed more wary of Earth First!. Why was that, and how did that change over the course of last summer?**

There was some hesitation with a few of the community groups. With some groups, such as Coal River Mountain Watch, there wasn't any tension. They did state initially that they didn't want any violence or property destruction and the EF!ers said that they didn't see property destruction as appropriate in this campaign, so it went really smoothly. Other groups, Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM) being the extreme, didn't want to have anything to do with EF! and therefore MJS. There was also a spectrum of groups in between the two extremes. It is interesting, though, that after last summer we gained a lot of credibility through the effectiveness of our campaign and now groups like SOCM are much more willing to work with us. It should be interesting to see how that plays out this coming summer.

**AF: Is there a direct link between the resistance to mountain top removal and the long proud history of labour struggle in Appalachia?**

I think many of us MJS volunteers view ourselves as decedents of that struggle. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), once one of the hotbeds of radical labour in this country, hasn't exerted much power to try and save Appalachia. To my knowledge they don't have a firm position on MTR, but they do have a general "pro-coal" stance despite the obvious effects that MTR has on jobs and especially union jobs. I feel like their resistance to change has really led to their

failure. The face of the struggle has to change when the company changes its tactics. After 100 years of big coal exploiting the people of Appalachia and robbing us of our rich resources, they've decided that they don't need the people. Its not just about extracting greater value from our labour now, it's about literally driving out the communities that have existed here for hundreds of years. If the UMWA can't recognize what's happening then its up to another movement to pick up the struggle to preserve the strength and dignity of Appalachian communities. I like to think that that's us.

Actually Blair Mountain, the site of a battle in 1921 between 10,000 union miners and company thugs supported by local law enforcement, is an MTR site. Our allies in West Virginia are trying to stop the mining by getting the mountain registered as a historic landmark.

**AF: Why was there such a strong emphasis on non-violence and on not committing acts of sabotage on the part of Mountain Justice Summer? It seems at odds with what little I know of the traditions of popular struggle in Appalachia, see for instance the massive amount of sabotage during the wildcat strikes of the 1960s and 1970s.**

We decided that the decision to use sabotage and other forms of property destruction should be made by the communities. From our position, as a regional coalition, it wasn't our right to escalate the conflict when the violence would certainly fall on the shoulders of the community residents. Since most of the volunteers that came into our campaign were from out of state, we decided that it wouldn't have been right to start a fight that we wouldn't have been around to accept the consequences of.

**AF: What specific class based approach did the IWW bring to this campaign, or did you need to bring such an approach, is it more wide-spread than your group?**

The IWW wasn't officially involved in the campaign. Appalachia isn't a place where we're very strong, unfortunately. The involvement of the union was in some publicity, a front-page article about the environmental and working class implications of MTR in our paper, and the personal involvement of between half a dozen and a dozen Wobblies in the campaign. There definitely wasn't the kind of organizing that was being done during Redwood Summer,

**continued on page twenty two**

but the reason that I think this struggle drew Wobblies into it was that it already had strong community and working-class roots. Many of the folks in the community groups we are working with are ex-coal miners. The strength of the community support for the campaign is one of the most important things about it, and it isn't uncommon for our allies to talk about the history of their family's struggle against the coal companies. There is definitely more that needs to be done, though, to reach out to labour because the need for jobs is still the main argument that pro-MTR locals tell us, despite the long-term effect that MTR is having on jobs.

One good example of future work that's in the planning stages is a conference that's going to be happening in Kentucky. It will focus on creating a post-coal economy in Appalachia. Hopefully, as organizing for sustainable non-coal jobs continues, it will move in the direction of worker control.

**AF:** The IWW is often thought of as just a workplace orientated group, yet some Wobblies are involved in this campaign, and were involved in Redwood summer, why is this?

I personally can't see how it's so easy for so many environmentalists to disconnect labour and community struggles from environmental struggles. In the end it's always the working class that bears the brunt of environmental devastation. The coal companies have lots of money for ad campaigns and rallies that are supposed to convince us that working class folks in the coal fields like MTR, but we've seen polls have shown that most folks in West Virginia, for example, don't want MTR to be happening in their state. Middle-class environmental groups, with their inability to speak the language of community members, and their often-arrogant attitude towards working class locals, have created a rift that shouldn't exist.

MJS is really about community self-determination and challenging the history of feudal control that the coal companies have had in the region. Despite its resources, the state of West Virginia is one of the poorest in the US, and the poorest counties in the state are the ones with the most coal. This is a matter of robbery by the capitalist class any way that you look at it, and it makes sense for Wobblies to stand in solidarity with these communities.

Wobblies involved in Redwood summer went a step further to actually organizing timber workers. The environmentalists and working locals have the same enemy, and

the less we allow ourselves to get pitted against one another the better we will all fare. The working class locals want sustainable, good paying jobs so that they can support their families, and the IWW (and other labour groups) need to be involved to help workers realize that they have the power to protect their communities AND provide jobs that will exist for future generations.

**AF:** Did the effort to interest radicals in the struggle in Appalachia catch much criticism of the 'this is just a N-I-M-B-Y (not in my back yard)' sort? Were there other problems along those lines? For instance I get the impression of some emphasis on visitors needing to respect the norms of the host groups.

I haven't heard anyone use that criticism. In terms of our organization I don't think that we have a NIMBY mentality at all. Mountain Justice Summer was created to connect the struggles against MTR that existed across Appalachia both because of the strength that a regional campaign grants local struggles and because groups in each state want to put an end to MTR for good and not just push the destruction over to another community.

In terms of respecting local norms, last summer there was a great emphasis placed on dispelling many of the myths about Appalachian people and culture. Many, if not most, Americans, think of Appalachians as backwards, violent hillbillies. The hillbilly stereotype was created by coal companies as an explanation for the violence and destitution that their rapid industrialization had created. The image was picked-up and run with by national media and missionaries, who returned to their middle-class congregation to get funding for their efforts by telling stories about violent, wild people desperately needing to be saved. Talking about these myths, their origin and their effects allowed us to try and prevent folks coming in from another region and looking down on the locals we were trying to work with. It's also easier for folks who live outside the coalfields to accept the devastation when they can dehumanise the people it is directly effecting. I actually had someone in a city where I was distributing information say to me, "As long as I get cheap power, I don't mind pissing off a bunch of hillbillies."

**AF:** Unlike in Ireland at the moment, people in this sort of campaign in the United States seem to be subject to

quite a bit of non-state harassment, violence, and counter-protests. Can you tell us a bit about that?

The coal companies have a long history of violent intimidation tactics and its no different now. Larry Gibson, a very active anti-MTR community member, has been subject to over 100 instances of violent harassment, including the shooting and hanging of his dogs, vandalism of his solar panels, and arson of buildings on his land, and he has personally been shot at and driven off of the road. This is all because the coal company wants his land on Kayford Mountain, West Virginia, which is a 50-acre oasis in the middle of a 10,000 acre Mountain Top Mine.

The other egregious instance of violence was against activists involved in a blockade on Zeb Mountain in Tennessee. The local law enforcement turned their backs while company employees tried to run over folks involved in the blockade. We have tape of the confrontation with their truck, but at this point the police forced everyone not in the blockade to leave, and a company employee stole the only remaining video camera. Several company employees also pushed over a tripod that was suspending an activist 35 feet above the road, and kicked one of the activists there supporting the blockaders to the ground. The police then gave these company employees, who clearly had no problem with injuring activists, the cutting equipment to get people out of the car that was part of the blockade, rather than removing the activists from the car themselves. The company employees then dragged the car out of the road with one person still attached to it, clearing just enough room for their trucks to pass within inches of her body.

**AF:** What are the plans for Mountain Justice Summer 2, to take place in the summer of 2006?

We're making a few changes in the structure of the campaign. Last year there was a main body of MJSers that moved from state to state, but this year we're going to focus more on placing people in each state for their whole commitment. Instead of a big group travelling around, folks will be more involved in a specific locality and will come together for a few big actions during the course of the summer. We're also going to try to do more solidarity work with other communities struggling against the coal companies. We've already been reaching out to the indigenous community in Black Mesa that is also fighting coal extraction on their land.

# ramón acín aquilué

(Born Huesca 1888- d. 1936)

**“We have as our flag the love of culture, the cult of fraternity and liberty”**

Apart from the usual names - Velásquez, Goya, Miró, Picasso - many Spanish artists remain little known throughout the world. Among those who do deserve better attention is Ramón Acín Aquilué. He was a man of many aspects, a committed anarchist militant, a libertarian teacher, a writer and an artist of the avant garde.

Ramón Acín was born in Huesca in northern Aragon, Spain, in 1888. It was then a small town. In 1913 he was in Barcelona and helped set up the magazine ‘La Ira’ (Anger). Its subtitle was “organ of expression of the disgust and anger of the people”. In that year he got a grant to travel round Spain and to create large oil paintings, including ‘A View of Granada’.

He was a producer of droll cartoons, informed by a biting political humour, against the Church, war and bullfighting.

He was also a gifted sculptor who used metal and magic lanterns in his work. He exhibited in Madrid with his sculptures composed of cut-up metal plaques (‘The Dancing Girl’, ‘The Garrote’) which were met with acclaim. He also produced large “origami” paper sculptures of birds.

Inspired by the libertarian educational theories of Francisco Ferrer, Joaquín Costa and Célestin Freinet, Ramón Acín endeavoured to continue in this form of education when he gained the post of teacher of design at the Escuela Normale in Huesca in 1916. He organised free evening classes for workers and in 1922 set up his own academy of design in his house, informed by libertarian theories of education. He organised the first National Teachers’ Conference in Huesca in 1932, where he expounded the theories of Freinet alongside Herminio Almendros (father of the film-maker). A second conference was organised in 1935.

Ramón Acín contributed to many anarchist magazines in Aragon and in Catalonia: *Floreal*, *El Talión*, *Cultura y Acción*, *Lucha Social*, *Solidaridad Obrera*. He attended many conferences of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT, the mass anarcho-syndicalist union) speaking for the sections in Huesca. His popularity there meant that he could easily have run for mayor, but he refrained from this because



**Above: a plaque commemorating the lives of Ramon and Conchita. Right: Conchita and Ramon with paper bird.**



of his anarchist convictions. He wrote over a hundred articles. Alongside the straightforward political pieces could be found his interest in the environment and ecology, his arguments against bullfighting, art commentaries, autobiographical pieces etc. He also organised various conferences on a whole range of subjects: Russian children; the writer Gómez de la Serna; anti-electoralism.

His articles earned him several stretches in prison. Participation in some of the anarchist uprisings meant that he had to seek exile in Paris in 1926 and again in 1931, where he met artists of the avant garde. A friend of Picasso and Dali, he published several artistic manifestos, including one on Goya in 1928, which criticised the official commemorations of that artist. With a large sum of money that he won in a lottery, he financed a film by Luis Buñuel, ‘Las Hurdes’ (1933), which depicted the spiritual

and material poverty of the area around Huesca. He and his compañera Conchita Monrás educated their daughters Katia and Sol themselves.

In 1936, the authorities in Huesca refused to arm the people and the army and Guardia Civil were easily able to take power. In the massacre that then took place, Ramón Acín and Conchita were among many to face the firing squads. The film maker Buñuel wrote that, “When the war started, in 1936, an extreme right group turned up to arrest him at Huesca. He managed to easily escape them. The fascists then seized his wife and announced that they were going to shoot her if Acín did not present himself. The next day he did. They shot the two of them”. All his works of art at his house were destroyed by fascists too, and other sculptures were hidden by them. In 1980 a recognition of his artistic work led to exhibitions in Huesca and Barcelona.

**Konstantinos Speras: The Life And Activities Of A Greek Anarcho-syndicalist, by Leonardos Kottis.**

**Kate Sharpley Library - 2006, £3, 10 pages**

Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) was born on the Greek island of Serifos. Whilst working in Egypt as a tobacco worker, he came into contact with anarchists, who were mostly Greek and Italian immigrants. On his return to Greece he became extremely active organizing amongst the workers. He took part in the big tobacco workers strike in Kavala in 1914, and was imprisoned for his activities.

He returned to his home island and supported the miners strike there in 1916. There was bloody repression and four miners were killed by the police. He was again imprisoned in the aftermath, writing a pamphlet on the strike whilst in jail. He advanced anarchosyndicalist ideas in the unions, calling for independence from political parties. Like many anarchists of the period around the world, taken in by Lenin's 'libertarian rhetoric' and the seeming triumph of the working class with the Russian Revolution, he joined the emerging Communist Party (then called the Socialist Workers Party). He was soon expelled as an "anti-party element" in 1920. The Communists also attempted to expel him from the unions, but failed.

In 1921 Speras was again imprisoned after the tram workers strike. Communist persecution of him continued and he found it difficult to get a job because of this. In the end they succeeded in expelling him from his union in 1926. He continued supporting strikes in the 30s, and wrote a History of the Working Class Movement, which was never published and has now vanished. He was arrested, imprisoned or sent into exile 109 times! His last spell in prison was during the Metaxas dictatorship when he was sent to the island of Skopelos. He was released half-dead in 1940, but fortunately was saved by a doctor who treated him free.

In 1943 Captain Orestis, one of the leaders of ELAS, the Communist guerilla front, called him to a meeting outside of Athens. He was beheaded and his remains scattered. He was one of dozens of Trotskyists, anarchists and left communists murdered by the Communist Party. This pamphlet tells his story, one which deserves to be rescued from obscurity.

We present summaries of three new excellent value pamphlets from Kate Sharpley Library, plus one of their slightly older pamphlets.

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**With The Poor People Of The Earth: A Biography Of Doctor John Creaghe Of Sheffield & Buenos Aires by Alan O'Toole.**

**Kate Sharpley Library - 2005, £3, 32 pages**

This is an account of the colourful life of the Irish doctor John Creaghe (1841-1920). He emigrated in the mid-1860s to the United States and from there to Argentina in 1874. He was destined for a brilliant career. However, the grinding poverty he saw in Argentina brought him round to a radical outlook. The Italian anarchist Malatesta, who was then living in Argentina, was involved in organising amongst workers and Creaghe became involved in this himself.

In 1890 Creaghe moved to England and settled in Sheffield. Here he got in touch with the anarchists. His first public appearance in that city was his fiery speech at a public meeting held to commemorate the deaths of the Chicago anarchist martyrs. Creaghe earned his living as a "sixpenny doctor" administering to the poor. He also engaged in a series of rent strikes. He founded the paper The Sheffield Anarchist which had quite an influence on the Sheffield scene.

By now Creaghe had given up any hope of a revolutionary situation in Britain in the short term and he returned to Argentina in 1894. Here he brought out another anarchist paper, the monthly El Oprimo (The Oppression). Later he was involved in the setting up of the FORA (Federación Obrera

Regional Argentina), a mass workers organization with an anarchist-communist line. Creaghe had a key role in the emergence and continuation of the anarchist paper La Protesta which had a distinguished role in Argentinian history.

In 1911, the developing Mexican revolution led Creaghe to go to Los Angeles, where he joined the editorial board of Regeneración, the paper of the Mexican anarchists. He visited Mexico on several trips, and brought the attention of Latin American and US anarchists to the Zapata movement in southern Mexico.

Joint repression by the Mexican and US governments came down heavily on Regeneración. Creaghe was involved in a campaign with Emma Goldman to free the leading Mexican anarchist Flores Magón who had been arrested by the US authorities.

Creaghe moved to Washington where he died in poverty in 1920. He had given 30 years to the anarchist movement. Another anarchist veteran, Mat Kavanagh, was to remark: "He was one of those remarkable personalities that Anarchism alone seems able to produce, who, seeking not place or power, live to serve the cause of Human Emancipation".

**Against All Tyranny! Essays On Anarchism In Brazil by Edgar Rodrigues, Renato Ramos and Alexandre Samis.**

**Kate Sharpley Library - 2003, £3, 32 pages**

Yet another fascinating pamphlet on Brazil from the Kate Sharpley Library, currently out of print but should still be available elsewhere. This is an historical outline of the Brazilian anarchist movement. Many people emigrated to Brazil from Europe and with them came the anarchist idea. Brazilian - as well as Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Russian and German - workers contributed

to the movement. Among them was the black worker Domingos Passos, nicknamed the Brazilian Bakunin, who perished after being exiled to a jungle area in the late 20s; the German activist Friedrich Kniestedt; and the teacher, writer and poet Maria Lacerda de Moura who looked beyond the winning of female suffrage to real liberation for women.

**Paul Avrich**  
1931-2006

Paul Avrich, historian of the anarchist movement, died on February 16th 2006 in New York as a result of complications from Alzheimer's disease, from which he was suffering for the last few years. He was born in Brooklyn in 1931. His mother was an actress in the Yiddish theatre



and his father, a dress manufacturer. His family had origins in Odessa and Avrich was able to go there to study after Kruschev, leader of the Soviet Union, authorised student exchanges in 1959. There, whilst working on his thesis 'The Russian Revolution and the Factory Committees' (published in 1961) he discovered the Kronstadt uprising and the role of anarchists in the Revolution. This interest in anarchism was strengthened when he met anarchists at a meeting convened by 'Der Freie Arbeiter Stimme', the Yiddish anarchist paper.

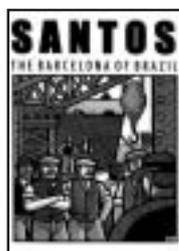
Paul Avrich's first book was the massively informative 'The Russian Anarchists' (1967, soon to be republished by AK Press). Over the course of the years he wrote ten more books, as well as articles for reviews. Another book on Russian anarchism was his 'Anarchists in the Russian Revolution', a collection of documents from the period, with his commentaries. His 'Kronstadt 1921' examined all the available evidence on the sailors uprising against the Bolsheviks.

He next tackled the anarchist movement in the United States. He wrote *The Haymarket Tragedy* in 1984, about the events that led up to the State murder of a number of anarchists who had organised among the Chicago working class, and in 1991 wrote 'Sacco and Vanzetti', about the Italian American anarchists framed and murdered by the State. Others of his works were 'An American Anarchist: the life of Voltairine de Cleyre' (1978), the biography of a woman who devoted her life to anarchism after the deaths of the Chicago anarchists, and 'Anarchist Portraits' (1988), which not only looked at the heavy hitters like Bakunin and Kropotkin, but also chose to

sketch out the lives of lesser known individuals like the Englishman Charles Mowbray and John "Chummy" Fleming, active in Australia. But perhaps his finest work was 'Anarchist Voices'. He conducted over 200 interviews with veterans of the movement in the States, and then brought out a selection of these with his notes and commentary. The anarchist movement springs to life in this book, with many intriguing stories about fascinating personalities. Fervour and conviction jostle with the disillusionment and tragedies of those who witnessed the ebb of the movement and the problems of poverty, infirmity and old age (the full length version has just been published by AK Press, 2005).

Avrich was a likeable and friendly person and it was this conviviality that opened up many veterans, sometimes suspicious and lonely, to his probings. Above all, he let these old anarchists talk. Not only that, he put them in contact with each other, and became a friend of many, visiting many of them on a regular basis, and seeing them vanish from this life. He never openly called himself an anarchist, but he had great admiration and affection for those who had given so much of their lives for 'the Idea'. He donated 20,000 of the documents he had collected to the Library of Congress. He gave generously to CIRA (Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme), the anarchist archive and library based in Switzerland both financially and with contributions of documents, as well as the Russian publication of Voline's *The Unknown Revolution*. He did so much to save many anarchist lives from obscurity, lives that were worth recognizing and recording. Now he himself has gone. The anarchist movement has lost a great friend.

**Santos - The Barcelona Of Brazil: Anarchism And Class Struggle In A Port City by Edgar Rodrigues.**  
Kate Sharpley Library - 2005, £3, 16 pages



In the late 19th and early 20th century the Brazilian town of Santos was a centre of unrest, with many strikes. The first general strike was in 1905 and a number of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups appeared. This proved victorious and Santos began to be called the Brazilian

Barcelona because of the strength of the working class movement and the strength of the anarchist movement. This was reinforced by the arrival of anarchist orators and activists of Italian and Spanish origin. Not only did anarchists organize in the workplaces but they set up Social Cultural Centres with well-equipped libraries, amateur drama and music groups, literacy classes, and trades education. They staged

revolutionary and anti-clerical plays which spread their idea far and wide. Vicious repression came during the general strike of 1921. Many strikers were arrested. The anarchist and syndicalist movements bounced back the following year but the foundation of the Brazilian Communist Party caused splits in the movement. The police seized this opportunity to close down the anarchist groups and syndicalist organisations. This pamphlet tells a tale of a fascinating period in Brazilian history, full of accounts of extraordinary anarchist personalities.

# tom bell

1867-1942

Thomas Hastie Bell was born in Edinburgh in 1867. He should not be confused with another Tom Bell, fellow Scot, Red Clydesider and one of the founders of the Communist Party. He acquired fluency in French, Italian, Spanish and German thanks to his job as a ship's engineer, visiting all the Mediterranean countries, South Africa, the United States and South America. As a young man he joined the Scottish Land and Labour League and in the 1880s became an anarchist through his association with the Socialist League. He was active in the Freedom group in London. In 1892 he returned to Edinburgh and carried on intense anarchist propaganda with J. Blair Smith and McCabe. He established a friendship there with Patrick Geddes, the biologist and town planner and persuaded him to bring over Elisée Reclus, the anarchist and geographer, to lecture at Edinburgh University. Emma Goldman mentions Bell "of whose propagandistic zeal and daring we had heard much in America".

Staying in Paris he had urged French anarchists to have open-air meetings, but they were reluctant. He went to the Place de la République, one of the most central and busiest squares, after having distributed

handbills about meeting there the following Sunday afternoon. There was a big crowd there, also plenty of policemen. He climbed up a lamp-post padlocked to a crosspiece and started speaking. The police called for a file, but he continued speaking till his voice gave out and then nonchalantly produced the key. Police then threatened him with prosecution for "insults to the Army and the law" but all Paris laughed and the authorities decided not to prosecute. After 2 weeks in jail he was expelled as "too dangerous a man to be allowed loose in France". He married the anarchist John Turner's sister Lizzie.

On the visit of Tsar Nicholas II to Britain, Bell went with McCabe to Leith where he was landing. Separated and although surrounded by Highlanders, territorials and infantry, Bell and McCabe got through to the Tsar's carriage and shouted in his face "Down with the Russian tyrant! To hell with all the empires!". Again the authorities were not inclined to prosecute, because a Scottish jury would probably throw out any charges.

In 1898, Bell, who suffered from asthma all his life, went back to London and got a job as the (long-suffering) secretary to the man of letters Frank Harris, famous for his friendship with Oscar Wilde and his womanising, as revealed in his *Life and Loves*. Harris is suspected of stealing Bell's experiences as a cowboy near the Mexican border for his own fake cowboy memories. Through Harris, Bell got to know Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, George Bernard

Shaw and others. Bell wrote a book about Wilde in his *Oscar Wilde Without White-wash* in memory of those times, unfortunately never published. After 7 years in that position, he had a disagreement with Harris over the latter's biography, which he thought was unjust to Wilde. He went to New York in 1905, and in 1911 finally settled in the United States for good, becoming a farmer in Phoenix, Arizona. He spent the last 20 years of his life in Los Angeles. Both Bell's wife Lizzie Turner and his sister Jessie Bell Westwater emigrated with him to the USA and were involved in the movement. Throughout his life he remained active in the movement, maintaining lifelong friendships with Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Rudolf Rocker.

Rocker said, "I saw him again in Los Angeles, when he was an old man. He was ill. His mop of red hair and his bushy beard were now white. His giant frame (he was well over six foot) was bent. But his mind was active; he was still working and speaking for the movement".

In a letter to the Yiddish anarchist paper *Die Fraye Arbeter Shtime* in 1940, Bell declared, "We become in our old age crabby, blind, deaf, lame or asthmatic. And our movement is now completely overwhelmed in a gigantic world-wide wave of reaction. But, ah, when I look back to the glorious days and the glorious comrades of our young movement, I am stirred to the depths by affection and pride".

Tom Bell died in 1942 at the age of 75.

# louisa sarah bevington

1845-1895

Louisa Bevington was born into a Quaker family on 18th May 1845, in St. John's Hill, Battersea. The occupation of her father was described as a "gentleman". She was the oldest of eight children, seven of whom were girls. She started writing verse at an early age. Not long after she published her second volume of poems in 1882, she went to Germany and in 1883 married a Munich artist Ignatz Felix Guggenberger. The marriage lasted less than 8 years and she returned to London in 1890. She began to frequent anarchist circles, restarting her career under her maiden name.

By the mid-1890s, Bevington knew many London anarchists and was recognized as

an anarchist poet. She probably became acquainted with anarchism through meeting Charlotte Wilson, who had jointly founded the anarchist paper *Freedom* in 1886.

Rejecting the tactics of the bomb and dynamite being espoused by some anarchists in Britain, she associated with the anarchist paper *Liberty* (subtitled: *A Journal of Anarchist Communism*), edited by the tailor James Tochatti from January 1894. She wrote many articles and poems for it, as well as for other anarchist papers, like *The Torch*, edited by the two young nieces, Helen and Olivia, of the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She was involved in efforts to set up an organisation, the Anarchist Communist Alliance and wrote an Anarchist Manifesto for it, which was

distributed on 1st May 1895 (the Alliance appears not to have survived long).

At the age of 50 in 1895, Bevington was still active but was suffering from bad health, namely heart disease that had been afflicting her for years. She managed to write some articles for *Liberty* in that year and her last collection of poems for *Liberty Press*. She died on 28th November 1895 in Lechmere, as the result of dropsy and mitral disease of the heart. Whilst her poems, very much a product of late Victorian times, have not aged all that well, the articles and pamphlets she wrote in which she strongly argued for anarchism, still bear a look.

You can find some of her pamphlets and poems on the web [www.mantex.co.uk/ou/aa810/vww-08.htm](http://www.mantex.co.uk/ou/aa810/vww-08.htm)

# Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

**Issue 19:** The poll tax rebellion.

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**Issue 62:** Participatory economics; Anarchist movement in Argentina; Camille Pissarro; International or Anarchist Federations.

**Issue 63:** Anarchist movement in Argentina - part two; Nanotechnology; Resistance in Iraq; School strikes.

**Issue 64:** G8 special; Casualisation; ID cards; Women's struggles in Iraq

**Issue 65:** International special. Reports from Australia, Belarus, China and Croatia.

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**As We See It:** Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

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**Organisation:** Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the

countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

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Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

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All pamphlets include the cost of postage. **NEW EDITION: Defending Anonymity** - Free - ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies Donation + SAE.

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**The Anarchist Movement In Japan** - £1.80 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story. **Aspects of Anarchism** - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

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**Basic Bakunin** - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century founders of class struggle anarchism.

**The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation** - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

**Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto** - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

**Work - Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us** - £1 - The title says it all really.

**Ecology and Class: Where There's Brass, There's Muck** - £2 - Our newly-revised and extended pamphlet on ecology.

# Aims and principles

## of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

3. We believe that fighting 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 the 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 beliefs.

## Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps you would just like to be put on our mailing list.

Whatever you want to find out from us, please get in touch.

Write to our national contact at:

**Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX**

Alternatively you can email us at [info@afed.org.uk](mailto:info@afed.org.uk) or visit our website: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)