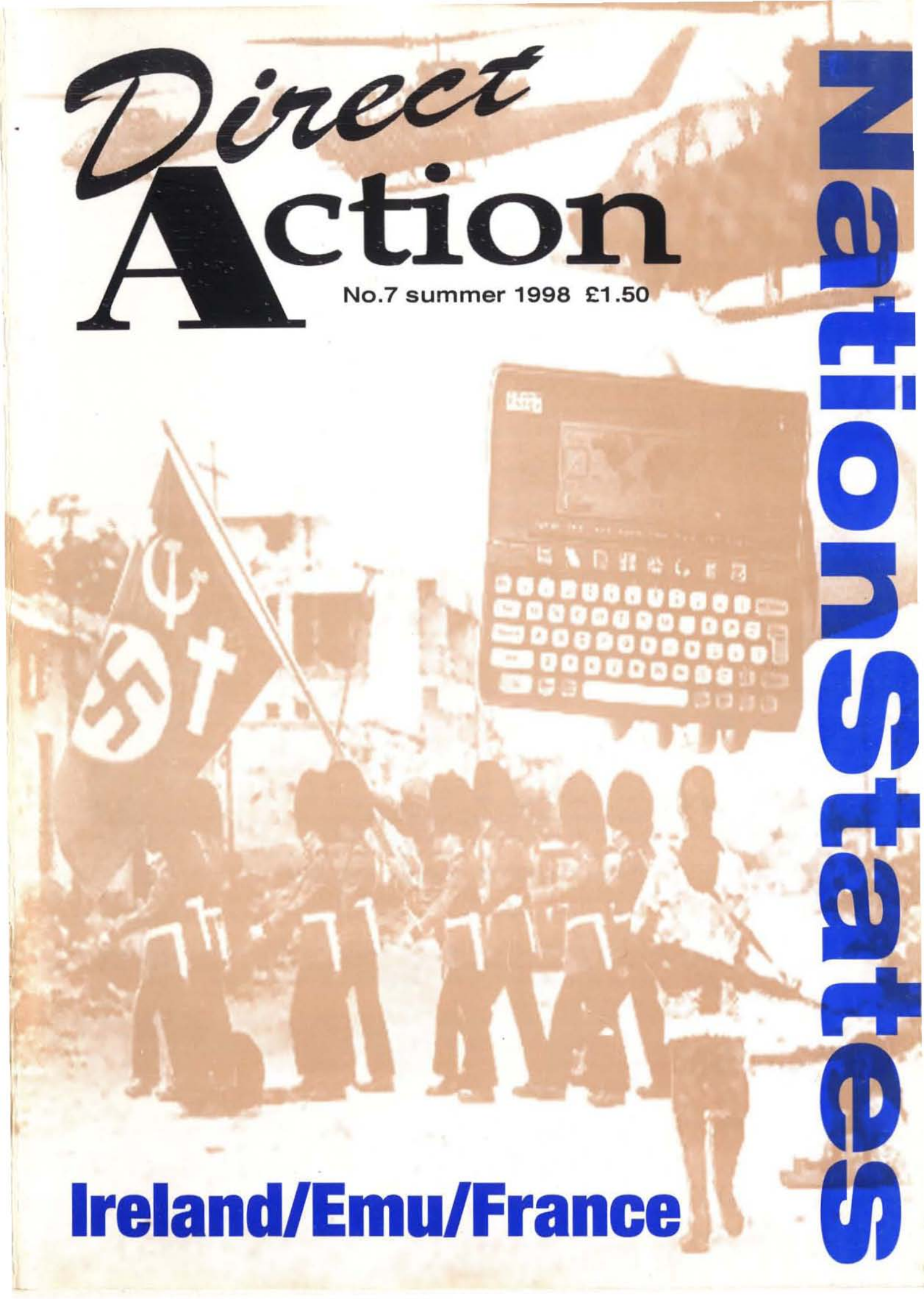


Direct **Action**

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**Nations
States**

Ireland/Emu/France



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'Discriminating against someone according to their gender, sexuality, age, race or disability, is prejudice. It is a vehicle used by capitalists to divide and rule us.' Typical left libertarian line. Not wrong, but too simple. You get the feeling there are a few things left out. Why do many working class people still pander to the continuing appeal of nationalism? Why is racism, sexism and homophobia still tolerated - no, practised - so much more amongst manual workers than middle class professionals (I think)?

At risk of terminal disinterest, let's talk semantics. The word 'discrimination' has both positive and negative meanings. For example, it refers to the ability to differentiate between things - like to tell good from bad. Secondly, it means practising or showing prejudice. Now, prejudice is pretty straightforward - pre-judging - without the facts or with inadequate facts or downright lies. It's negative.

Burrowing further into the semantic labyrinth, we find nationalism. Another multi-meaning. It can range from sentiment based on common culture that binds a population, or patriotism - exaggerated, fanatical devotion to one's national community. Worse, being pro- your national culture so easily becomes logic-twisted into becoming anti-everyone else's. Why?

The reality is, that the meaning

of these terms is steeped in rhetoric, contrivances, and downright bullshit. Common cultural identity does not mean 'everyone else' is inferior, or that they can be grouped together like androids. Sorry to ruin the worst jokes on the planet, but it is not only the French who eat garlic, the Irish are not all stupid, the Jews are not all tight or militarily inclined, and no, the 'average' WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) in N America is not like George Bush. Moving from recognising your culture to trashing everyone 'else' who is different (or simply lives some distance away) is patently wrong and illogical.

So, part of the problem is that the meaning of the words is confusing, and the concepts of discrimination and nationalism are therefore similarly confused. Let's cut the crap - differentiating is fine, making prejudicial judgements on good/bad culture is not. Recognising geographical/cultural groups is fine, but we are all 'us'. We are all working people.

This brings us back to the questions I posed before all the semantics. Nation states, as we know them, are still a relatively new concept - and it was the peasants who were most euphoric about the passing on of the old systems - barons, lords, fiefdoms, etc. Why? Because all other prospects seemed bleaker, and because it presented the illusion of status. But the nationalist machine needs a driver

(the ruler), a transmission system (the security forces) and fuel (everyone else). The possibility of dying for the driver, etc. doesn't mean much status in practice, and seems pretty bleak. It is, indeed, illusion, just as, after a day being barked at by the boss, coming home and kicking the dog may present 'better than nothing' status and power. The real nub is you can, at least, practise (or mimic) what 'they' do - you can have some power. Funnily enough, this is exactly the same mechanism of illusion capitalists use (not surprising, as politicians and bosses are basically both drivers).

Time for 2 conclusions. One, negative nationalism, like other prejudice, can only cause misery, and is rooted in a misplaced and impossible desire to have part of the driver's job. Two, we can now see the real 'they' - not other cultures, sexes, races, etc. - but the power-mongers - the drivers. They own us and place themselves apart from us.

In Ireland, people have clung to national identity, and worse still, the church. What can possibly be gained from this? A new driver?

Me, I'd say we need to dismantle the nationalist machine, share out the remaining jobs, and celebrate our differences. How? Well, first point out that the appeal of nationalism is based on a cheap illusion - just like capitalism. And, starting now, get on with the celebrations. I'll drink to that. 

Get in touch

Readers' views are welcome. Whether opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest, we want to hear from you. If you have questions for the DA Collective, or would like to know more about us or the Solidarity Federation, drop us a line. Do not expect high pressure sales, paper-selling requests or demands for this or that, do expect a reasonably prompt reply.

Notes for Contributors

If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 1500 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version not greater than 7 or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. Failing that, any decent typewritten script will do, or even neat handwriting, if necessary. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if a SAE is enclosed.

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contents

Regulars

- 6 the FAQs**
Facts on nationalism and discrimination
- 7 direct actions**
Body Shop, Tameside and Hillingdon Hospital workers, Anti-G8, Immigration, and Bradford'98
- 10 news and comment**
Vote Labour and still die horribly in Indonesia
Education workers get organised
- 11 international news**
Global action news, including review of May Day around the world, plus news from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Zimbabwe, France, Italy, Canada, Scandinavia, Russia, Poland, Denmark, Switzerland...
- 14 GlobalFocus: French Resistance**
Interview centred on the occupations of unemployed centres and other acts of resistance against austerity measures in France
- 24 letters and personal comment: Food**
An update on genetically modified foods, food poisoning, plus veganism
- 34 endpiece: 1968**
That was the year that was - or was it?

Reviews 25-29

NationStates

Liam Cahill - Forgotten Revolution
Noam Chomsky - Globalisation (lecture)

books

David Morland - Demanding the Impossible?
Brian Morris - Ecology and Anarchism
Ulrike Heider - Anarchism: Left, Right and Green
Mae-Wan Ho - Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare?
Jon Purkis and James Bower (eds) - 21st Century Anarchism: Unorthodox Ideas for the Millenium
Raghanendra Gadagkar - Survival Strategies

Features

- 4 NationStates**
An investigation of the sense of 'others', and the nonsenses of nationalism
- 16 Peace or Revolution?**
Commentary on Ireland, the peace process, and what's in it for who
- 18 Which Way Ireland?**
Major feature and interview with Organise!-IWA, Irish anarcho-syndicalist movement, on the prospects for them and Irish people
- 22 Conditions of Freedom**
Short essay redefining the cornerstone of libertarian thought - the dual concepts of 'freedom from' and 'freedom for'
- 30 CloserLook: EMU Steps Out**
Detailed analysis of the real reasons why European leaders need to make monetary union work - will they have their cake and eat it, and how much will we suffer in the process?

music

Attila the Stockbroker (gig)
Judi Bari - Who Bombed Judy Bari?
Judi Bari spoken Word.. with music too.
Mumia Abu-Jamal - Mumia spoken word.. with music by Man is the Bastard

periodicals

Anarchist Studies
Fighting Talk

NationStates

NationStates

'Statism, however camouflaged, can never be an instrument for human liberation and, on the contrary, will always be the creator of new monopolies and privileges'

SF-IWA Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism.



Nationalism, in any form, is totally incompatible with anarcho-syndicalism. As is often stated, national boundaries are flukes of history and geography. More specifically, they are the results of political machinations by robber barons throughout the last millennium or so, who use and abuse ordinary people in their search for glory, power and wealth.

The nation can be seen as the gangster's turf, an area marked by bloody skirmishes, in which the real beneficiaries rarely take part. There are some obvious exceptions to this, notably in those areas of the world where the European rulers deemed it their right of conquest to divvy up the land as they saw fit. How many boundaries between two areas? Exactly the same as the number of people you ask to draw them. An appeal to the nation is an appeal to an abstract idea that is used to cover up the fact that we are expected to support one (our) ruling oppressor over another.

The call to nationalism is a call to create an 'other' that is not 'one of us' based on the dictates of history and political expediency of the

leaders. Nationalism is not about a cultural identity, it is not about a sense of place, or of a nostalgia for home - though these will all be used in attempts to develop these 'others' (outsiders, foreigners, inferiors..).

If being an anarcho-syndicalist is about anything, it is about recognising the humanity of everyone. You cannot create a libertarian communist society in one country surrounded by other systems and accept that as a stable situation. To have borders, to have foreigners that are defined by their situation in another geo-political unit is to define ourselves by what we are not and to define them by what they are not. They are not 'us'; they are 'other' - this denies people the right to define themselves. Nationalism is the wholesale degradation of people by the defining of them as 'other'; as inferior.

On what basis is this definition of 'foreign' drawn up? I will seek to address this through the use of an example close to home, that of Welsh Nationalism. For many people, Welsh Nationalism is an almost benign form of opposition to the Westminster Government and, as such, it has proved attractive to socialists and libertarians. Now, it would be wrong to claim that many of those who are skirting around the rim of Welsh Nationalism are

actively hostile to non-Welsh, I would just maintain that they are mistaken in what they are doing. What does it mean to be Welsh? How do they define what it is to be Welsh? Is someone who moves from England to Wales, who lives there, works there and makes their life there not as affected by decisions of the Westminster Parliament which affect the 'Welsh'? If not, what is the position of the immigrant from the West Indies, from the Indian sub-continent? I know the answer of the BNP. Here, I am not talking about state decisions which seek to suppress the culture of colonised regions/states/continents. Such ethnic cleansing, whoever advocates it and on whatever grounds or level, is wrong.

So it follows, obviously, any attempts to suppress the speaking of the Welsh language should be opposed, but I am not here concerned about the long term survival of the Welsh culture and language other than its part in an evolving and developing society. If languages and cultures develop, it is up to those who are interested in them and who practise them to keep them relevant and alive. As a libertarian, it would be wrong to tell someone that in order to live in England they must speak English, as it would for an anarcho-syndicalist

The call to nationalism is a call to create an 'other' that is not 'one of us'

in Wales to insist that someone living in Wales speaks Welsh. Again, it is self-evident that if you move to an area where the language is different, it makes sense to learn the one spoken there if possible; it does greatly aid communication.

Many of the social issues which are addressed by these groups which seek a friendly nationalism, are not issues of nationalism at all. The issues of holiday homes is a problem in the Lake District, in Cornwall, in areas of the Yorkshire Dales, and I am sure elsewhere as well. It is not the imposition of the English *per se*, but of a certain class of wealthy middle-class, seeking an improvement in their already privileged life-style at the expense of the housing possibilities of those who live in the area. The problems of the imposition of rule from an unaccountable Government based in Westminster is true throughout the UK. To make it a view of English Government vs. Welsh people is to play with very dangerous ideas. The unscrupulous politician can stir up hatred based on semi-fabled stories from hundreds of years ago in an attempt to grasp power - all they need is the right environment. It serves those who would call themselves socialist and libertarians badly to contribute to this environment.

At a slight tangent, I would like to address the issue of xenophobia. The excuse often given for xenophobes is that evolutionary biology is part of our basic make up. The idea is that it is common in higher apes to be actively and proactively hostile to other troops of apes. It has been shown that chimpanzees form raiding parties to attack individuals from neighbouring groups. Similar things are known in other primates, including baboons, and other species throughout nature. The comparison has been drawn to with earlier human societies, where inter-group rivalry was characterised by ongoing low level warfare, with occasional intensifications of the fighting.

Those who have something to gain use this as an excuse for the necessity of the nation state. This denies one important fact; that we

have the capacity to learn, to consider and to make decisions based on our understanding, not only of our experience, but of the experience of others; both those we know and those throughout history. We have the ability to understand that we are no longer living in small

to develop our ideas in overcoming any lingering tendencies in this direction.

Indeed, these xenophobic apes and early humans also practised a great deal more in terms of co-operation. If you want to live in a society where you are not the one on the receiving end of xenophobic aggression, work with the part of human nature that seeks solidarity and cooperation, the part that is still relevant today - not with the part that seeks to form fights over patches of earth.

If nothing else, getting all heated over a patch of mud usually means some cozy fat bastards are about to send you and your children to work or to war for their profit.

On a final point, we do live in a world where states exist, and where differing governments interpret their job of control in different ways. It is sensible to take these states into account when seeking to defend people and promote the ideas of libertarian communism. But it seems to me not only dangerous, but patently absurd, to pretend that nationalistic rhetoric, 'however camouflaged', can ever be beneficial or progressive. When you use the Nationalistic argument, you choose to set out to identify and to denigrate the 'foreign', the 'other'. And when that happens, it is usually the powerful who get the last say over who the 'others' really are. 

Indeed, conceit, arrogance, and egotism are the essentials of patriotism. Let me illustrate. Patriotism assumes that our globe is divided into little spots, each one surrounded by an iron gate. Those who have had the fortune of being born on some particular spot consider themselves better, nobler, grander, more intelligent than the living beings inhabiting any other spot. It is, therefore, the duty of everyone living on that chosen spot to fight, kill and die in the attempt to impose his superiority upon all others.

Emma Goldman, Patriotism, a Menace to Liberty, 1911

groups, primarily of extended families, with a large amount of common genetic material. We have moved beyond the need for base genetic propagation. We have developed other things which we may wish to propagate; ideas, such as solidarity, mutual aid and compassion.

Fear of the unknown may well be part of the human make up; it would seem sensible in this dangerous world. I have no problem with accepting this, in fact I see it as a further reason for the importance of the ideas. The fact that we may once have been xenophobic apes means we have to work all the harder

If you want to live in a society where you are not on the receiving end, work with the part of human nature that seeks solidarity and cooperation



Nation the States FAQs

This issue's FAQs are adapted from an anarchist FAQ (<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931>) - an excellent source of basic ideas of anarchism. Since the issue of nationalism is impossible to deal with in one page, we have restricted ourselves to a few key questions, and supplied a reference list for your further reading and general homework. These books are available from AK, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH8 9YE, Scotland; phone 0131 555 5165, or email ak@akedin.demon.co.uk.

Are anarcho-syndicalists against Nationalism?

To begin to answer this question, we must first define what we mean by nationalism. For many people, it is just the natural attachment to home, the place one grew up. These feelings, however, obviously do not exist in a social vacuum. Nationality, according to Bakunin, is a "*natural and social fact, (as) every people and the smallest folk-unit has its own character, its own specific mode of existence, its own way of speaking, feeling, thinking, and acting; and it is this idiosyncrasy that constitutes the essence of nationality.*" It is in our interest to distinguish between nationality or ethnicity (that is, cultural affinity) and nationalism (confined to the state and government itself) as a better way of defining what we support and oppose — nationalism, at root, is destructive and reactionary, whereas ethnic and cultural affinity is a source of community, social diversity and vitality.

What is wrong with nationalism and nation states?

Nationalism and nation states cannot and must not be confused with nationality. The latter is a product of social processes, while the former are products of state action and elite rule. Social evolution cannot be squeezed into the narrow, restricting borders of the nation state without harming the individuals whose lives make that social development happen in the first place. The state is a centralised body invested with power and a social monopoly of force. As such, it pre-empts the autonomy of localities and peoples and, in the name of the "nation", crushes the living, breathing reality of "nations" (i.e. peoples and their cultures) with one law, one culture and one "official" history. "Nations" are in fact not homogeneous, and so nationality is far wider in application than just lines on maps, created by conquest. Hence, recreating the centralised state in a slightly smaller area, as nationalist movements generally advocate, cannot solve what is called the "national question." Ultimately, the nation "*is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state.*" [Rudolph Rucker, *Nationalism and Culture*, p. 200]. Every state is an artificial mechanism imposed upon society by some ruler in order to defend and make secure the interests of privileged minorities within society. Nationalism was created to reinforce the state by providing loyal people of shared linguistic, ethnic, and cultural affinities.

Do anarcho-syndicalists support national liberation struggles?

Successful "national liberation" movements replace foreign oppression with a home-based one. This is unsurprising as they deliver power to local ruling classes. As a result, they can never deliver freedom to the working class (the vast majority of a given "nation"), so anarcho-syndicalists oppose them. Moreover, such movements argue that all people must unite around their supposedly common interests (as members of the same "nation"), which ignores the existence of hierarchies and classes. Its function is to build a mass support base for local elites, angry with imperialism for blocking their ambitions to rule and exploit "their" nation and fellow people: "*(W)e must not forget that we are always dealing with the organised selfishness of privileged minorities which hide behind the skirts of the nation, hide behind the credulity of the masses (when discussing Nationalism). We speak of national interests, national capital, national spheres of interest, national honour, and national spirit; but we forget that, behind all this, there are hidden merely the selfish interests of power-loving politicians and money-loving businessmen for whom the nation is a convenient cover to hide their personal greed and their schemes for political power from the eyes of the world.*" [Rucker, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 252-3]. While we oppose nationalism in all its forms, we also oppose all forms of exploitation and oppression, including imperialism. It follows that struggles against such domination may be fought alongside those non-anarcho-syndicalists fighting for national liberation.



What's in a name?

Further Reading: nationalism and racism

Rudolf Rucker. *Nationalism & Culture.*

A seminal work of Anti-Nationalism, Anti-Fascism and Anti-Racism. It devotes an entire chapter to dismembering European white supremacist/racist theory. It asserts that racism was invented to justify monarchism, the European Class System and European Nationalism/Colonialism, and that economic problems cited by racists in attacking ethnic groups are products of capitalism.

Freddy Perlman. *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism.*

Short, but excellent essay on nationalism, past and present.

Michael Bakunin. *On Anarchism.*

A huge and comprehensive anthology of his writings on organisation, the state, class, Marx, etc.

Daniel Guérin. *Fascism & Big Business.*

Describes how the capitalists put the Nazis in power and used fascism to attack the working class.

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin. *Black Autonomy.*

Asserts that people of colour must organise themselves to overcome racism. Applies Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas to the liberation of people of colour in the workplace and community.

Peter Kropotkin. *Mutual Aid.*

An attack on Social Darwinism and Malthusianism, which are the basis of white supremacist theory. Racists and nationalists often assert that racism/nationalism is "natural" tribal behaviour.

Bradford '98

The May Day weekend saw hundreds of anarchists from all over Britain (and beyond) converging on Bradford, West Yorkshire, for what has become an annual week of marching, talking, meeting, and doing various arty things - to name a few.

Events were organised by the 1in12 Club, the local libertarian club, which has a great 4-storey building, housing bars, cafe, library, office and gig venue.

This year, there was the added attraction of the MayDay98 conference, a 3 day group-based discussion event centred around libertarian ideas, issues, strategy and tactics. Like the other May Day events at Bradford, it was pronounced a resounding success. The open minded, non-sectarian discussion was refreshing - and dozens of new or re-invigorated faces showed up!

There are plans for follow up activities to the conference - if you are interested, contact DA and we'll put you in touch. 

Next Issue: Report on Birmingham

Northern Relief Road protests.

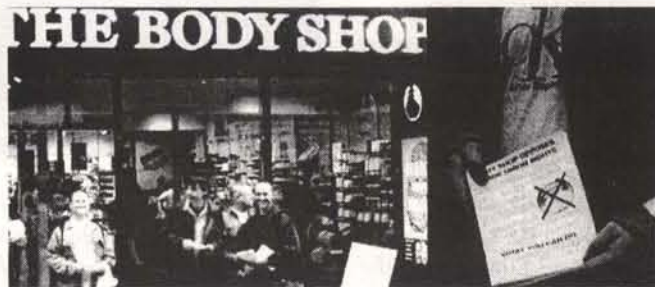
Meanwhile for info, visit Green Wood, next to ARC Quarry, A38 N of Sutton Coldfield, or Phone 0797 030 1978



Body Shop

Over the past few weeks, SolFed locals up and down the country have been leafleting the Body Shop, bringing attention to their stance on human rights. The Body Shop still oppose union recognition in the company. On Saturday 23rd May, the Body shop produced a counter-leaflet, which they made workers give out inside the shop, arguing that they fully supported Labour's White

Paper 'Fairness at Work', and therefore supported Union recognition. Also, DA has learnt that the Body Shop management sent out a circular during the same week - along with thousands of counter-leaflets, telling them to brief Body Shop workers that their jobs would be at risk if the SolFed and London Greenpeace campaigns succeeded (the latter are running a parallel campaign criticising the Body Shop's exploitation of indigenous people's and green consumerism in general).



SolFed are now distributing information directly to workers, inviting them to contact us and start getting organised to defend their jobs, pay and conditions. Join in the action, get some leaflets and 'do' your local Body Shop. Remember, 200 of the 270 Body Shops are franchises, and it will get most attention if you

target the company shops - invariably the ones in big cities and in the most lucrative shopping locations.

Failing this, do them all. Note, the SolFed campaign is not a boycott - we simply want to blow the whistle on Body Shop's hypocritical caring, sharing, (selling) human rights image.



London Greenpeace Body Shop campaign leaflets are available from London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX.

For leaflets and info. on the campaign, or to get involved, contact SolFed, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN.

Who Cares?

Workers at Tameside Care Group Residential Homes have been on strike since March 30th.

The strike started when the owners of the privatised Care homes proposed new wage rates. These meant a pay cut of between 85 pence and £2.05 per hour, plus cuts in sickness and maternity benefits. On Thursday 21st May 1998, the offices of Apex Nursing and Care Services Ltd in Manchester were occupied by striking workers and their supporters, including members of the Solidarity Federation. A high-profile demo followed on 28th May. Apex is one of a number of scab outfits recruiting for Tameside Care Group, thereby allowing them to remain in business.

The occupation appeared to be totally

unexpected, it being obvious that they believed such behaviour to be a thing of the past. A supervisor ran around the office like a headless chicken complaining that it was secondary picketing. The chant was presumably deemed enough to exorcise the demons of working class direct action. The struggle continues. Apex and other agencies will be visited regularly.

Other agencies involved in hiring scab labour include; Meridian (Ashton under Lyme) and Allied Medicare Ltd (Stockport).

To give your support to the strikers, financial, moral or practical, contact SF, PO Box 29, Manchester M15 5HW or phone 0161 232 7889.

To donate money and/or send messages of support, phone the strike office on 0161 308 2452, or write to SF and we will forward stuff. 



Success in Sight

Meanwhile, long abandoned by their union, the Hillingdon Hospital workers have continued their fight against low pay. Sacked over 30 months ago for refusing to take a £40 a week pay cut, old employers Pall Mall have finally accepted that they unfairly dismissed them! Donations needed desperately; c/o 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middx., HA6 1TG.

Phone 0956 13531. 

Anti-G8

In Mid-May, Birmingham played host to the biggest collection of international criminals since err.. well, the last big collection. Yes, it was the G8 summit.

The whole sickening charade was made worse by the antics of the local council. They are in the midst of savagely cutting local services, yet still found the money to throw around on tarding up the city. One of the more bizarre decisions was to paint the grass verges because they were deemed not green enough. Then, some bright spark decided to book Bill Clinton into the somewhat appropriately named Swallow Hotel.. ahem! Anti-G8 antics got off to a good start on the day before Blair and co. were to arrive. Someone took the national flags from the poles outside the NIA.

The antidote to global power games continued with graffiti and posters, and reached



its climax on Saturday afternoon (16th May), when thousands of people reclaimed the streets in the city centre. The police were completely wrong-footed and withdrew in confusion as all traffic was brought to a standstill. In the shadow of the bullring, we created a brilliant street party with fancy dress, sound systems and frenzied dancing. People shinned up lampposts and scaffolding and hung huge banners across the roads while the party raged and the sun shone.

It made such a contrast to those boring lefty demos, I never want to go on one again. Reclaiming the streets is liberating in its defiance of authority, yet not an end in itself, as RTS themselves admit.

Rather, it is an opportunity for all anti-authoritarian to get together and experience our collective strength, and to learn and develop tactics. Let's have more actions like this. Direct Street Action - you know it makes sense! 

Taking over the Asylum?

Ireland is cool and trendy. Its "Celtic Tiger" economy, thriving tourist industry and friendly people are well known images of modern Ireland. However, behind the picture postcard scenery lurks a more sinister image.

Racism and prejudice are rising, fuelled by a government which is deporting asylum-seekers, cheered on by sections of the media. There have been attempts to set up a racist party; attacks on asylum-seekers and the Irish Refugee Council's office has been vandalised and sprayed with anti-immigrant graffiti.

However, far from being something new, intolerance of "outsiders" has long existed, and has grown hand in hand with so-called modernisation and industrialisation. Travellers are seen as "criminals", against whom the settled communities must be defended. National and local administrations, spurred on by propertied interests, have implemented increasingly harsh measures to socially exclude them from settled areas. Traveller families in many parts of Ireland now literally live in fear; there are feelings of inferiority and social problems associated with living in urban slums and constant eviction from traditional roadside sites.

It's not hard to see how the "new" anti-immigrant racism has sprung forth. An already intolerant Irish society now has another group of "outsiders" to persecute. Yet, it all seems at odds with Ireland's traditional role as a net exporter of people. There are over 8,000 Irish passport holders in Munich alone, nearly twice the number seeking asylum in Ireland.

Deportations started in early March; 16 people had been deported at the time of writing. These have been carried out under the Dublin Convention, EU legislation under which asylum seekers must apply in the first EU country they arrive in. This allows the Irish government to deport people back to that first country.

On Saturday April 25th, the first major mobilisation of the anti-deportation movement in Ireland took place with a 1,200 strong march in Dublin; 600 in Cork; and gatherings in Ennis, Galway, Limerick

On Wednesday 29th April there was also a lively picket at the Crown Prosecution Service demanding that charges against the Campsfield Nine be dropped. The Nine are asylum seekers charged with riot, after protests against the injustice of their imprisonment without trial in the detention centre at Campsfield, near Oxford, and against conditions at the privately-run jail. The West African refugees, two of whom are minors, are due to be tried at Oxford Crown Court from Monday 1st June. The Campsfield 9 Defence Campaign can be contacted c/o 111 Magdalen Road, OXFORD; or on (01865) 558145/726804/240075.

and Roscrea. In Belfast, Dublin-bound trains were leafleted. The events were co-ordinated by the unity committee, involving The Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Anti-Racism Campaign, Immigrant Solidarity and Anti-Fascist Action, as well as the Workers' Solidarity Movement and Organise!-IWA.

The call for simultaneous international action was also heard. There were protests at Irish embassies in Paris, Bonn, Stockholm, Brussels & San Francisco. Also, affiliates of the Solidarity Federation took part in a picket of the Irish Embassy in London. 

Condemn the Irish Government's actions by writing to: Minister John O'Donoghue, Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 72-76 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2; phone: 353-1-6028202; fax: 353-1-6615461; e-mail: info@justiceirl.gov.ie. For more information contact: ARC, 10 Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2, Ireland (flag.blackened.net/revolt/arc.html) AFA, PO Box 3355, Dublin 7, Ireland. Organise!, Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ.

Sorry, we got it wrong!

In DA6 we wrongly reported that detainees were released without charge after the Dover anti-BNP demo - indeed, charges are pending. We would also like to note the primary role of AFA in the demo. For updates contact Anti-Fascist Action, BM 1734, London, WC1N 3XX. -ed.

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Vote Labour & still die horribly in Indonesia

The new emphasis on human rights in Labour's "ethical" foreign policy has brought about some significant changes in the finding of places at British universities for officers from the Indonesian armed forces.

The main beneficiaries are from Kopassus, the Indonesia army's special forces, who have raped, tortured and murdered their way across East Timor ever since it has been occupied by Indonesia in 1975.

Despite being a blueprint for Iraq's more recent invasion of Kuwait, Indonesia's actions have repeatedly been discreetly approved of by virtually every western government. A third of east Timor's total population are estimated to have been killed by Indonesian troops in the last 23 years.

Under the Conservative government, the number of Indonesian officers being trained

at the Royal Military College, Shrivenham, dwindled from one in 1993, to none between 1994-97. In 1997-98, under "new" Labour, the number has risen to 10.

In addition, there are 10 more Indonesian army officers on a "security studies" course at Hull University. At least seven of these are senior officers in Kopassus.

Protests about Labour's new policy of welcoming and increasing the "skills" of a brutal and illegal occupying army have not moved the Labour MP for Hull East, "old" Labour and trade union "friendly" John Prescott. Even the Indonesian security forces' grim record regarding their "disposal" of awkward trade unionists doesn't present a problem for New Labour.

Indonesia has recently witnessed a change of administration, following violence and widescale popular unrest against its long-time ruling president and good UK and US capitalist trading partner,

Suharto. In the build up, armed forces used live ammunition in order to intimidate protestors demonstrating against the government's recent price increases (for example, 71% on fuel). The revenue raising measures were designed to squeeze the \$40 billion they owe in international loans to western capital. Incidentally, the Suharto family's fortune is estimated at \$40 billion. Needless to say they have no intention of dipping into the family coffers to repay the state loans which financed their personal wealth, power and repression of all opposition in the first place.

As usual, the world's press talked of a country plunged into chaos. Well, it has been just that for years under Suharto's "law and order" regime that has been such a good trading partner, particularly with British and US defence firms, and killed so many Timorese, unionists, etc. It is hard to see the end of the Indonesian government as anything but welcome.

It would be unreasonable to judge the Labour government by the company they keep. However, Tony Blair has made a habit of pointing to Asian economies (Indonesia included), as a model for New Britain. These are economies based on the criminalisation of unions, sweatshop conditions and the raw exploitation of the working class. We should be thankful that in Britain this is not to be introduced wholesale but phased in over a number of years (it having started under the Thatcher regime).

Further protests at Hull, Shrivenham and against our "ethical" Labour government are recommended. 

Name'em an' shame'em

The Education Workers Network recently held a national meeting at Norwich Solidarity Centre to sort out priorities for the coming year. Attended by support staff, teachers, lecturers and students, the discussion was around issues currently faced by those in education.

The EWN, as one of SolFed's industrial networks, is organised both nationally and locally. The meeting agreed that EWN should organise in two sub-sections, one of those working in schools (primary and secondary), the other in higher/further education.

EWN members are currently preparing a thorough analysis of recent educational development and the effects of government education policy, alongside a programme for improving methods of resistance to these effects. The meeting felt very strongly that the

Over 1,000 students at the Barking Univ. of East London (UEL) squatted the campus finance department in protest over £2.4 million education cuts, which will put 80 people out of work. With the support of the NATFHE teachers union, the students lobbied board meetings and set up picket lines. While UEL sits in the bottom 10 on the Times Higher Education League Table, its fat-cat manager, Frank Gould, is the fourth richest vice chancellor in Britain.

current trends in commodifying education have not been analysed at either a political or educational level by trade unions, nor have they adequately addressed the high level of workers' confusion and demoralisation.

EWN members in schools have produced a "name and shame the inspectors" questionnaire on the

experiences of those at the receiving end of the Ofsted circus (contact EWN for a copy).

Members in Norwich are in touch with striking workers at City College, where the shit is nearing the fan regarding the loss of lecturers jobs, increasing workload and big cuts in funding. They have recently gone to arbitration, but the dispute is worth mentioning as it seems to be a national trend - East London for one example (see inset) - as government quangoes are trying to shoehorn a big biz approach into the education system. The over-zealous management are also likely to threaten other workers, especially if they think they can get away with it. Watch this space.

Education workers contact: EWN-SF, P.O. Box 1681, London. N8 7LE. Phone 0181 374 5027. 

MAY DAY AROUND THE WORLD

May Day '98 saw millions take to the streets in rallies, marches and demo's for workers' rights across the globe - here's just a tiny sample.

Turkey

In Turkey, there were the biggest workers' demonstrations for many years - that in Sisli attracted nearly 80,000 people. The police attack resulted in hundreds of injuries and arrests.

Spain

The CNT was out in force across Spain, from Granada in the south, to the Basque Country in the north (see photo).



Denmark

500,000 people participated in the Copenhagen May Day march, amidst a spreading General Strike (partially a lock-out) across most of the private sector, involving over 20% of the country's entire workforce. The 'pay and conditions' demands centred on 6 weeks of holiday and 6 hour days for shiftworkers.

Mexico

May Day was marked in Mexico with three separate mass demonstrations, reflecting both divisions and new trends in the country's labour movement.

The official Congress of Labour (CT), held a mass rally in the Zocalo, the national plaza in Mexico City. 100,000 and 250,000 workers attended, chanting "salaries that contribute to the productive effort", and "defence of the country's sovereignty, resources, and integrity", etc., reflecting the CT's slavishly pro-government orientation. The high attendance is not considered noteworthy, since most participants are forced to attend, and are threatened with loss of a day's pay, or worse, if they don't.

The second demonstration (100-150,000) was called by the National Workers Union (UNT), which is under six months old, and comprises independent unions and those that have broken with the

CT. The UNT called "For a Combative and Democratic May 1st" and stressed the "priority to construct a labour movement different from what has existed in Mexico for several decades because its structures, practices, and relations with the government, business and society no longer represent the Mexican workers." Slogans rejected neo-liberalism and called for a new economic policy; salary increases, an end to corporatist labour practices and full trade union autonomy.

The third rally was that of the radical left May 1st Inter-union Coordinating Committee, which also concluded in the Zocalo. The Intersindical unites independent unions, dissident tendencies in other unions, social organisations such as the El Barzon debtors movement, the National Indigenous Congress, the left Independent Proletarian Movement (MCI) and the Francisco Villa Popular Front (PPFV), neighbourhood groups, and political currents such as the Zapatista National Liberation Front and smaller left parties. 75-100,000 attended, calling for cancellation of Mexico's foreign debt, a new constituent assembly, freedom for political prisoners, and opposition to government policy in Chiapas.

Korea

30,000 people participated in the march demanding immediate abolition of the anti-worker laws including the layoff bill and the workers dispatch system. The police stopped the demonstration firing teargas, while the workers and students tried to defend themselves with stones and steel pipes. More than 30 workers and students were injured and taken to nearby hospitals, and 4 workers were arrested by the police.

Nigeria

During mass protests against Sani Abacha's military regime, Nigerian police killed at least 7 anti-dictatorship demonstrators and arrested many others in Ibadan. 

Pakistan

Forced child labour is rife. In the latest scandal, young Pakistani children have spent months stitching soccer balls bearing the official World Cup logo. The children are believed to receive around 30 US cents each for balls which sell overseas for up to US\$75.



Last March, a journalist investigating children labour for the unions visited houses and workshops in villages near Sialkot, Pakistan, where most of the world's soccer balls are made, and filmed whole families stitching them. In Jarawalli village, he filmed young boys stitching footballs, and interviewed a family with six young girls, aged between 5 and 12. The five-year-old was punching holes in the leather pieces, which were then sewn by her sisters. 

Bangladesh

Bangladeshi riot police stood by in Dhaka as home-made bombs exploded during clashes between supporters and opponents of the general strike back in April. Police said four people died in the unrest. 



Mexico

Railroad workers in Sonora returned to work in the first week of March, ending a remarkable strike that shut down the Pacific North line for over two weeks, paralysing freight and passenger movements throughout much of western and northern Mexico. Workers struck to protect their
(Cont'd on page 12.)

(Cont'd from page 11..)

jobs, their union contract and their working conditions, all of which had been threatened by the privatisation of the railroad.

The strike, which began as a wildcat and then became an official strike by the national union, saved some jobs, but many problems remain and sporadic outbursts of resistance continue among workers and retirees. 

Zimbabwe

Robert Mugabe's government is drawing up plans to "delegalise" the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) which, for the last few months, has been leading the protest against the government's economic policy and corruption. Since the general strike in early March, trade unionists say, they have been under constant surveillance and fear for their lives. Civil servants in the Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Affairs have been ordered to examine the legal means of "delegalising" the national trade union centre.

The government had already referred to the possibility of delegalisation on the eve of the strike of March 3 and 4. The success of the strike antagonised the Mugabe team, who now look upon the ZCTU as an opposition party. While the ZCTU has a total of 400,000 members, nine tenths of the country's 1.2 million workers stayed away from work on March 3 and 4. In Harare, the capital, and in the country's principal towns, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo, the movement was widely supported. The ZCTU was protesting against the 2.5% increase in VAT, which accompanied the rise in the price of basic consumer goods. The extra tax was levied to finance the President's promise to 45,000 former soldiers that they would be given generous pensions.

The ZCTU has repeatedly called for social dialogue with the government, but its appeals have fallen on deaf ears.

In the wake of the general strike, and in the absence of any conciliatory moves by the government, the ZCTU called for a boycott of the government's daily paper, "The Herald", which it accuses of disinformation. The Herald's chief editor, Charles Nikerma, just happens to be President Mugabe's nephew. In response to the boycott, the government ordered the State media to stop reporting the activities of the trade union centre.

France

As partial solution to rising unemployment, the French unions have proposed to spread the work around by implementing a slightly shorter working week. But such proposals do not face the *fundamental irrationality* of the whole social system based on market relations. While reacting to one manifestation of this irrationality (the fact that some people work long hours while others are jobless), they tend at the same time to reinforce the illusion that most present-day work is normal and necessary, as if the only problem were that, for some strange reason, it is divided up unequally. The absurdity of 90% of existing jobs is never mentioned.

In a sane society, the elimination of all these absurd jobs (such as those that produce or market ridiculous and unnecessary commodities, and those that promote and protect the whole commodity system) would reduce necessary tasks to such a trivial level (probably less than 10 hours per week) that they could easily be taken care of voluntarily and co-operatively, eliminating the need for the whole apparatus of economic incentives and state enforcement. Recent actions in France make a refreshing change from the usual "progressive" appeals for equal wage slavery.

In December and January, tens of thousands of jobless people demonstrated in dozens of French cities, in many cases occupying unemployment and welfare offices, utility companies and repossession agencies, invading posh stores and restaurants, and making collective raids on supermarkets. This movement unfortunately remained largely under the control of the official unemployment associations (dominated by the leftist parties and labour unions). Many of the occupations, however, were carried out on the initiative of individuals who began bypassing the official spokespeople and speaking and acting for themselves.

This radical tendency came to the fore in mid-January, when jobless people briefly occupied the Paris Trade Centre and the elite École Normale Supérieure, and then, upon being forced out by the police, took over an amphitheatre at the nearby Jussieu University. Though this latter occupation was also clearly illegal, the university authorities refrained from calling in the



police, and daily assemblies of 100-200 people were held there over the next two or three months.

While most of the official movement's occupations had been brief, bureaucratically controlled and purely symbolic (designed merely to pressure the government into passing certain reforms), the Jussieu occupiers wanted to create an ongoing forum for public debate. They opened up their assembly to everyone instead of limiting it to jobless people and began seeking linkups with other terrains.

Two basic principles were generally agreed on by the participants, that: (1) struggles should be carried on autonomously, and (2) wage labour needs to be replaced by self-organised activity.

The Jussieu assembly did not claim to represent anyone; it simply served as a meeting place where people could discuss whatever they wanted to. In some cases, whole series of more or less impromptu actions were carried out by roving bands of a few dozen people, who might, for example, go downtown to disrupt a fashion show or toss rotten tomatoes at a repossession officer; then hop the sub-way to another part of the city to hand out leaflets or spray-paint graffiti ("You never get back the time you've sold!"; "We don't want part of the cake, we want the bakery!"); and then make it back to Jussieu in the evening to report on the day's adventures (see article on p.14-15). 

Italy

On March 24th the Italian government approved a measure to shorten the workweek from 40 to 35 hours in an effort to create new jobs and reduce unemployment. The proposal, which must still be approved by Parliament, would take effect in 2001. Italian news reports said the 35-hour rule would not apply to companies with 15 employees or less, and that overtime would be paid only after the 40th hour. 

Scandinavia

For the past 2 years, the 17th of May, Norway's day of Independence has seen increased nazi violence and antifascist resistance as Norwegian nazis attempt to make it a day of nazi celebration. This year, Norway's nazis mobilised throughout Scandinavia and honed in on Oslo.

Antifascistisk Aksjon - Oslo organised a demonstration against a fascist gig on the 16th. 2,000 unionists, leftists and antifascists from various Scandinavian countries participated in the demonstration. The police realised that they could not guarantee the safety of the nazis and evacuated the concert venue. Later in the evening, 40 nazis were arrested in central Oslo and 10 Swedish nazis were deported. In addition, no demonstration was held in Oslo on the 17th. Instead, thousands of anti-fascists participated in an outdoor concert unhampered by nazi violence. 

Russia

The continuing collapse of the rouble and lack of wages for miners, and a wide range of public employees has led to an escalating series of strikes and demonstrations. In just one example, 12,000 students and teachers demonstrated against education cuts on 20th May in Moscow. 

Canada

Hundreds of people took over Bloor Street in Toronto on May 16th, in an effort to bring attention to a world free from cars and exploitation. The party continued until 5:00 o'clock, turning part of the downtown of the capital of Ontario a car-free zone for 4 hours. However, the police conspired to sour the tone. In the afternoon, officers went through the crowd with knives, cutting streams and bursting balloons. A group of over 100 people kept to the published agenda of the day and insisted on continuing to reclaim the street that the organisers had led the participants to. Although the event had been organised legally, some of these people were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly. 

Poland

In April, 100 employees of a christmas decoration factory struck after they hadn't received a salary for 4 months, and 40 were fired for organising a protest. 24 pickets and hunger strikes, plus practical support from the local anarchist federation, and (eventually) good press reports, led to a management back-down. Back pay was paid and re-instatement of all workers followed a successful court case. 

Global Anti-Nationalism

There is a global war against immigrants and refugees. As governments and corporations are making it easier for capital to travel from one country to another, they are also making it harder and harder for working class people who have to deal with enormous barriers in order to do the same.

In response, groups across the world are actively opposing the new immigration laws which are rapidly institutionalising a particularly nasty form of nationalism. In Canada, May 29th saw a National Day of Action with a massive demo in Toronto, against Government plans to fingerprint, detain, deport, and otherwise criminalise refugee claimants. Perhaps most deplorably, even the semblance of fairness presented by the right for claimants to legal representation and assessment is being removed. This is a familiar set of proposals to many Europeans, where many countries are pursuing similar anti-immigration strategies (see DA6 and p.8 of this issue).

On May 26th, about 50 activists from Denmark, Germany and Sweden occupied the 2 main border stations between Denmark and Germany (Padborg and Kruså). They installed themselves on the roof of the stations. The action was to demand that more refugees be allowed to enter Denmark and to protest against "Fort Europe". Unconfirmed sources said that a smaller border station has been physically destroyed.

Sources include Direct Action Media Network: <http://damn.tao.ca> 

Geneva, Switzerland - People's Global Action

People danced in the streets as, inside the secure walls of Birmingham's G8 conference hall, Clinton, Blair and the global summit team danced away to "All you need is love" (see report, p. 8). By Monday, the G8 globalisation tour moved to the Palais des Nations in Geneva for World Trade Day. Here, hundreds of protesters were arrested, beaten and deported by the Genevan authorities. For four days, this small city was under siege, as the leaders of the 132-nation World Trade Organisation (WTO) met for their 50th anniversary at the United Nations building.

Even before the Ministers had stepped off the planes, the city had erupted. Five thousand people came to Saturday's Street Party and by midnight, it had turned into a full scale riot. One car was set alight and thousands of police charged the main encampment, firing tear-gas into the crowd.

Lots of damage was caused to banks and corporate offices, and the disturbances went on until 5am. Genevans awoke on Sunday to a tense atmosphere of confusion, and a city resembling a war zone. On pavements, phone boxes and walls the graffiti message was clear: "WTO ASSASSIN"... "WTO vs THE PEOPLE"... "REVOLUTION '98".

From the moment the world leaders sat down on Monday morning to the conclusion on Wednesday evening, the streets were filled with riot police and demonstrators, with the constant noise of sirens and low-flying helicopters.

From occupations of Lockheed, the arms traders, to more demonstrations, attempts to enter the building, activist meetings and regular clashes with the hyperactive police, it was non-stop until the end of the fourth day. Not without casualties. Police attacked Artamis, a huge

squatted alternative Centre, and there were numerous arrests. In total, around 300 people were detained, and over 60 a day were being taken to hospital with truncheon wounds, etc., some requiring major surgery.

As Clinton, Castro, Mandela and Blair flew out, they left a city in shock after the worst riots seen in Geneva since 1932.

The demonstrators have since been organising demonstrations against the police brutality.

The next meeting of People's Global Action will take place from April 1st 1999 in Bangalore, India.

See <http://www.agp.org/>. SchNEWS and Squall have produced a little booklet 'United Colours of Peoples Global Action' - interviews with people involved in global resistance from East Timor to India. For a copy send SAE to SchNEWS, PO Box 2600, Brighton, BN2 2DX, England.

For more on anti-globalisation action, contact A SEED Europe, PO Box 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, Netherlands. 

French Resistance

The unemployed movement in France, which led to widespread national actions and demonstrations against poverty (see DA6) contributed much to the debate in France and elsewhere about how to build resistance to unemployment. But it went further than this.

It also saw a new awareness in France, by all workers and unemployed, of the nature of work and how it should be organised, and started a national questioning of the economics of employment.

Below is an edited interview with a former member of the Paris section of the French CNT, who now lives in London, giving her own thoughts and views about the situation. The interview took place at the Bradford May Day weekend, at which the Solidarity Federation held a public meeting on the subject.

DA: How did the protests start?

Clare: The protests started in Marseille in mid-December 1997 and came about for two main reasons. Firstly, there is currently a national debate about reducing the working week from 39 to 35 hours, with obvious implications for unemployment, which the Communist-controlled CGT union is pushing for. Secondly, the CGT had recently been beaten in local union elections. They wanted to do something dynamic to increase their profile and recruit members.

DA: How were the protests organised?

Clare: The initial protests - occupations of several benefit offices in the Marseille area - were organised and heavily controlled by the CGT and had very limited aims - a 3,000 Franc (£300) "xmas bonus" for the unemployed. If this had remained the extent of the protests, the Government would have ignored the issues or stitched up a deal

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locally with the CGT. It was only when other actions took place on a national level in the following weeks - many of them organised within a few hours - that the Government started to react. And what was also good was that the extent of the movement meant that they could not find any "leaders" at first, with which to stitch up a deal. While many of the protests - blockades of railway lines and roads, and occupations of a wide range of companies and organisations - took place at short notice, many of the groups behind them were well-established.

DA: How did the unions react?

Clare: They tried to control the situation. We have to remember that the welfare system works on a joint system composed of the unions and the Government. All of the reforms in the welfare system - the

disappearance of the emergency payment funds, etc., and general lowering of benefits - have been possible with the agreement of the unions. The CGT played an ambiguous role because they were fighting to re-establish their power within the administration of the benefit system.

DA: Which groups other than the CGT were involved in the occupations?

Clare: A.C. (Agir Contre le chômage) was one of the main non-party controlled, unemployed groups behind the protests. It was actually composed of working union members. A.C. met with the Government towards the end of the action, along with the CGT.

DA: What were their demands?

Clare: There were many, ranging from free transport for the unemployed to demanding that benefit be given to 18-25 year olds, who currently do not receive it in France. They also called for the eight "social minimas" (minimum benefits), such as single parent and incapacity benefit, to be increased by 1,500 Francs (£150) a month. There were also demands for an end to the cutting off of electricity supply for those who could not pay, and the wiping off of these debts.

DA: What was the significance of the demand for the 35-hour working week, and what has been the reaction of the bosses??

Clare: In the press, it appears that the bosses in France oppose the Government's proposals for the lowering of the working week from 39 to 35 hours. This needs explaining. The French bosses are not actually against this in principle as long as, in return, they can stitch up a deal to reduce the power of organised labour through "flexibility." The reality is that the 35-hour week could turn out, if the bosses get their

way, to be an average spread over the year. So it actually means that, under the proposal, the bosses can get workers to work any number of hours in any particular week. Also, there are currently strict agreements about payment for overtime. The bosses will accept the 35-hour week if this agreement can be scrapped. This is just one example of how the bosses are attempting to push through attacks on workplace rights as part of the reduction in working time. So it's actually a bit of a con.

DA: Do you think that this will actually have any effect on unemployment?

Clare: There is no guarantee or evidence that this will reduce unemployment.

DA: Tell us about your own experiences during the occupations.

Clare: Just before xmas, around 35 of us occupied one of the Council's benefit offices in northern Paris. The Council, which is right-wing and undecided as to how to react, did not interfere and we stayed there for ten days altogether. It was one of the few occupations which the police attempted to blockade. Also, the workers still came in and we talked to them. Management put pressure on them not to talk to us. It was a 7 storey building, with faxes, telephones, photocopiers, etc., so we communicated our message quite effectively and the media actually reported that there was a temporary food blockade and we were able to pressurise the authorities to let food in. It was very stressful, not having access to proper hygiene or basic facilities for such a long time. Still, the police did not move in, even when only 12 occupiers remained. I think that this was because there were still occupations going on nationally and the movement was seen to be strong. It was also xmas and New Year, and a difficult time for the Government to evict people protesting against poverty.

The types of occupations varied. When the bosses told workers not to come in, claimants still turned up expecting the offices to be open. It was other claimants who were in occupation that helped with their forms, etc. and discussed issues with them.

DA: How did the demands materialise, and what effect did they have on the movement?

Clare: In France, at the beginning of the year, the interesting thing was that the protest movement was a catalyst to a national debate about the unemployment

issue. Although the CGT is a reformist union with limited demands, its demands for a xmas bonus for the unemployed struck a cord. At the height of the protests, people were questioning capitalism and the meaning of work.

DA: Are the unemployed and employed more united in France than they are in Britain?

Clare: It's not about the two being united, it's about all workers and unemployed recognising that we're all in the same boat, and that there are no divisions. Such awareness has been increasing in France. The word "Precaire" has now entered the French language, reflecting the new need for a noun for 'precarious' - and an acknowledgement that we are all increasingly in the same boat - in insecure "flexible" employment, in and out of work. There is much discussion in France currently about the plight of casual workers. The whole notion of a distinct difference between employed and unemployed is becoming blurred. If this situation does one thing, it focusses people's minds on making demands for conditions and income both in and out of work. To unite these two demands is not easy, but it's the direction we have to go if we want to build the movement of all workers and unemployed. In France now everyone could be seen as a "Precaire".

DA: Is there also a different attitude to poverty in France?

Clare: Yes, I think there is. I am amazed at the number of charity shops and collections in Britain. The charity industry is on a much larger scale in this country than in France and people seem to accept it a lot more. Also, the attitude to loan sharks and pawn brokers. For instance, when the first and only "Cash Converter" shop was opened in France about five years ago there was a national outcry that this company was profiting from people's misery and poverty. And during the protests, a Cash Converter shop from one of the poorer suburbs in northern Paris was occupied by the unemployed, who attempted to redistribute the goods that people had had to sell to the Company.

DA: What do you think the unemployed groups in Britain are doing wrong, and why are they not growing?

Clare: There are no easy answers. The first point to make is that the movement in France is not actually as big as many people think.

But, when I read leaflets of political groups in Britain, I think they lack a demand for a better quality of life. Many groups are hung up on the idea that to be working class is to live in a high rise flat and to be poor. For instance, the ideas that Class War had a few years ago of going and burning down Hampstead. What I would say is let's burn down our own estates because they're crap, take over Hampstead, and de-gettoise it. Everyone should have a garden, a decent house and decent food. We shouldn't be asking for peanuts. This attitude was reflected in some of the protests in France when people went en-masses into luxury food shops and started giving the food out to people. It shows an attitude of "The rich have got it. So why haven't we?". At the meeting (in Bradford), I remarked that we should all be able to have access to so-called "luxury" products which would no longer then be luxuries, and I said we should all be able to drink champagne and there's no reason to be ashamed of it, and people looked at me as if I'd said something outrageous.

DA: Do you think that Direct Action is just a French thing?

Clare: People talk about the French tradition of Direct Action. While there is a tradition, it doesn't mean it can only happen in France. What happened in France (and is still happening through on-going struggles) could happen anywhere. The demands - and most importantly the actions that were being taken to achieve them - were determined. Those involved didn't wait for mass support, they just did it.

DA: Did the unemployed gain anything, and is the movement still continuing?

Clare: The Government rejected all of the demands on the basis that any rise in the different benefits would blow the state budget and threaten France's involvement in the single currency. But they were forced locally to pay out emergency fund payments because of the protests.

Perhaps the main gains can be seen individually. Unemployed people who got involved and haven't been involved in any kind of movement before started to build an identity and broke out of their isolation. The movement is still going on on a really low level. Poverty and unemployment is not going down in France, so there is the continual possibility of it starting up again at any time. 

Peace or Revolution?

The Northern Ireland peace agreement is now accepted in referenda north and south of the border.

It introduces a Northern Ireland Assembly, North-South bodies, and a British-Irish council.

Where is the peace process going, and what does it mean for the traditional beneficiaries of sectarian violence - the politicians?

Northern Irish politics have hitherto been fought on the basis that a gain for one side is a loss for the other. So, getting Loyalists and Republicans to accept this deal has been greeted as the achievement of the impossible. Countless column inches have sung the praises of the politicians involved - we've read of "Blair the peacemaker", of Trimble's "great statesmanship", even of the "pragmatic" Sinn Féin leadership.

DA refuses to go along with this hype. We remember Trimble and Major stalling at every opportunity during the first IRA ceasefire, when first its "permanence", then "decommissioning" of weapons, became excuses to delay talks and eventually led to the ceasefire breaking down. We remember the long line of sanctimonious politicians refusing to talk to "the men of violence", not accepting that peace would have to include those who were at war. We remember the long years it has taken for it to dawn on the Republican movement that a

million unionists were not going to be forced into a united Ireland, or that the British army was not going to be driven back across the Irish Sea. We remember politicians, some of whom are now saluted for their great vision, whipping up sectarianism whenever it suited their purpose.

For us, therefore, peace has been held back by incompetent, stubborn, and downright sectarian political parties and politicians who, with their predecessors, must share the blame for agreement not being reached after the August 1994 IRA ceasefire, if not earlier. This point has been ignored amongst all the back-slapping.

Back to the so-called miracle. The apparent unionist/nationalist harmony is the result of a massive fudge that allows some Loyalist parties to portray the agreement as strengthening the Union with Britain, while Sinn Féin can simultaneously paint it as a step forward for Irish unity. But herein lies a potential hurdle - what happens when either the Union or Irish unity appears to be under threat? However before we reach that particular pass, there are many more rivers to cross.

remember 1690

The Protestant King William of Orange crossed the River Boyne in 1690 to defeat the Catholic King James II. This is commemorated all over Northern Ireland by the Orange

Order every 12th of July at parades which celebrate "Protestant" supremacy over the "defeated" Catholics. Where parades pass through nationalist areas, the population is forced to endure a torrent of sectarian abuse and threats. In recent years, Drumcree, where Portadown's Orange Lodges exercise their "God-given" right to march along the nationalist Garvaghy Road, has become a Loyalist rallying point. This 12th of July, "Drumcree 4", promises to be a focus for all those Loyalist groupings for whom the agreement is yet another concession to the IRA - Paisley's DUP, the Orange Order, and the paramilitary Loyalist Volunteer Force among them. The LVF is based in Portadown, and its opposition to the agreement has already resulted in the random murders of Catholics. Little wonder then that Portadown has been dubbed "Ireland's most bigoted town".

remember 1916

The Easter Rising of 1916, when a small force of Irish Republicans occupied key buildings in Dublin, declaring independence from the British Empire, is celebrated every Easter. This year's commemoration followed the agreement by 2 days. Since then, the Republican movement has split. There is a new political grouping, The 32 County Sovereignty Committee, and an

peace has been held back by incompetent, stubborn, and downright sectarian political parties and politicians

armed wing, the Dissident/Real/True/Anti-Agreement/Anti-Treaty (delete as appropriate) IRA. This, among the three Republican paramilitaries now opposed to the agreement, seems the most serious threat. They, along with the INLA and Continuity IRA, are wedded to the mistaken idea that the border can be bombed and shot out of existence. They see Sinn Féin's recognition of partition, and the changing of Articles 2 & 3 of the Irish Republic's constitution as selling-out those who died in 1916, as well as the more recent "martyrs", whose memory is aroused by the presence of Bernadette Sands-McKevitt in The 32 County Sovereignty Committee.

The existence of this unholy, if unrecognised, alliance of Loyalist and Republican groups threatens the agreement's chances of long term survival. Add this to the potential strife of prisoner releases, decommissioning, policing reforms, let alone getting the assembly and the North-South council to work, all in a continuing sectarian atmosphere, then it's easy to be cynical about those survival chances.

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anarchism and republicanism

There has been a small tendency within anarchism to view the IRA's armed struggle as somehow revolutionary. This may result, on one hand, from confusing Irish Republicanism's enmity for the British government for a kind of anti-statism. On the other hand, it may be accounted for by the love common to many anarchists for things that go bang in the night. Either way, they are mistaken in viewing the Republican movement, or any particular faction of it, as revolutionary. Merely changing British rulers for "better" Irish ones, as Republicans intend, is not anarchism - nowhere near it.

Having said that, we do agree that the partitioning of Ireland is anti-working class. It has divided the working class north from south, and has further deepened the sectarianism that already existed between the "nationalist" and "unionist" working class in the north. However, the border is a

reality and cannot be wished, or bombed, out of existence. For anarcho-syndicalists, the ending of partition must be part of a strategy aimed at winning working class minds away from sectarianism, a strategy that fights all attempts to divide the working class, be it worker against worker, employed against unemployed, man against woman, Protestant against Catholic, or northerner against southerner.

Just maybe the peace agreement will take the gun out of Northern Irish politics, or at least limit its impact. A sectarian political scene without guns will be preferable to one with guns. Perhaps this is the best we can hope for from this agreement. Nevertheless, it is of more use to Irish anarchists than armed struggle. It would therefore be more helpful if anarchists outside Ireland, who feel they have a contribution to make, were to help their Irish comrades than to get embroiled in Republican in-fighting. As for SF, we will continue to give our unconditional support to Organise!-IWA, our sister organisation in Ireland. 

Burdens of History (# 7,895,436)



Which way

Organise! - Irish sister organisation to Solidarity Federation - have a membership which spans the sectarian divide, and which includes people from both the north and south. DA asked them to comment on Irish politics, the peace process, and prospects for the future.

About Organise! and Irish History

DA: Could you please briefly outline who Organise! is and give a brief history of your development?

ORGANISE!: Organise! are an Anarcho-Syndicalist propaganda group and the Irish section of the International Workers Association. Our history is closely related to that of our publication 'Organise! - The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism', which goes back to August 1986, when the first issue was produced by the now defunct Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Group. In the Spring of 1992, 'Organise! Irish Anarchist Bulletin' appeared. This bulletin was produced by a more broadly based 'class struggle' anarchist group with members from across the north, including one of the members of the original Ballymena group. Over a period of time, discussion led to the re-adoption of Anarcho-Syndicalism and the name of the publication, which became a magazine in the Autumn of 1995.

The survival of a small Anarcho-Syndicalist group over this period has been precarious. In the north, especially in periods of heightened sectarian tension, it often seemed that it was all we could do to hold onto our identity and small membership. However, we are now starting to grow as an organisation.

Members of Organise! are ordinary working class people who are spread across Ireland and who, in the north, come from both 'sides' of the community, who have come together to help create an alternative to the capitalist exploitation, sectarianism and oppression which is destroying the lives of working class people in Ireland.

We have been involved in various campaigns in the past few years, including the Campaign Against Nuclear Testing, the Liverpool Dockers and Families Support Group, Anti-Job Seekers Allowance work and opposition to the 'New Deal', as well as the important work we did in support of the Montupet strikers last year. Members of Organise! are also involved in struggles in their workplaces and communities, areas where we wish to increase our activity and bring the relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism to bear on people's everyday lives.

In doing this, we continue to support strikers when and wherever we can. We also see the possibility of an opening for Anarcho-Syndicalist politics and methods

developing in the increasing move towards wildcat action in workplace struggles. We need to do a lot more groundwork if we are to be in a position to be able to take advantage of these developments and are working in the meantime towards establishing ourselves as an effective alternative to the conservative Trade Union movement. This will be a long and hard process but, as a step in this direction, we are working toward the setting up of a solidarity centre in Belfast. Providing access to resources and information, a space where militant workers can meet to discuss and begin to set their own agendas, with solidarity and mutual aid as its cornerstones, are some of the things we would like to develop with the opening of a Local in Belfast. In a city which is divided along sectarian lines, it would also provide a neutral venue in which workers from different parts of the city could meet and begin to break down barriers. The main obstacle is of course finance, and we have sent out an international appeal to help raise much needed funds.

We are also working with other Anarchists throughout Ireland to promote our ideas and, although differences exist between different Anarchist groups across the country, we are working together to help build a broad libertarian movement in our country. Some effective steps were taken towards this at the recent 'Ideas and Action' conference hosted by the WSM in Dublin. A similar event is to be hosted by Organise! in Belfast next year.

DA: You recently joined the IWA; what made you join?

ORGANISE!: We, along with six other sections (from Portugal, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Russia, Chile, and Nigeria), affiliated to the International Workers Association at the 20th Congress in December 1996. At the time, we saw this as the natural next step for an Anarcho-Syndicalist organisation such as ourselves. The IWA, its aims, statutes and principles represented the ideological 'home' for Organise! on an international basis. As workers, we exist as a class across national boundaries and we must organise across these boundaries if we are to be effective in our struggle against capitalism. Although work at a local level - the building of an effective Anarcho-Syndicalist movement

in Ireland, based in the realities of our situation both at work and in our communities - is our main concern, the international bond of solidarity that is the IWA is of great importance to us. We also believe that it is the work on the ground, the building of strong Anarcho-Syndicalist sections across the globe, that will lead to the IWA becoming a more powerful and effective international.

DA: Syndicalism has roots in Ireland which go back a long way. Can you briefly outline some of the major milestones?

ORGANISE!: While Anarchism has little history or tradition in Ireland beyond the last couple of decades, Syndicalism has had a sometimes pivotal influence on the development of the working class movement. Most significantly are the Syndicalist influences which were at work in the early ITGWU (Irish Transport and General Workers' Union), set up at a period in which revolutionary and Anarcho-Syndicalism were to the fore of the revolutionary labour movement. Although there was no self professed 'Syndicalist' organisation, the ITGWU borrowed much of its organisational strategy and ideological vision from the American IWW (Industrial Workers of the World). The union regarded itself as the Irish One Big Union, organised by industry and had a, perhaps somewhat vague, vision of the 'Industrial Commonwealth' as an alternative to capitalism.

Connolly and Larkin's visions and methods were greatly influenced by Syndicalism. Connolly had been active in the IWW during his years in the USA; Larkin spoke at the funeral of IWW organiser Joe Hill.

It is also important to note that many Irish workers became involved in revolutionary or Anarcho-Syndicalist unions outside Ireland. Capt. Jack White, who trained the Irish Citizen Army (the militia formed in 1913 to defend the Irish labour movement and made up of members of the ITGWU), went to Spain with the International Brigades to fight fascism. In Spain, he was much impressed with the work of the CNT and the Anarchist militias, so much so that he became an Anarchist and left the International Brigades to both train members of the militias in the use of arms and raise money for arms for the CNT abroad.

Ireland?

The Peace Process

DA: While the politicians are now lining up to pat themselves on the back over the peace talks, what about the general mood among the people of the north - are they optimistic, cynical or confused?

ORGANISE!: People are generally hopeful that there can be a better future created for themselves, their children and their grandchildren in the north. This was shown in the exceptionally high turnout for the referendum. There is also a certain amount of uncertainty, many are uneasy about various aspects of the Agreement, and there are of course those who are intent on wrecking any possibility of 'stability' (in relation to sectarian politics) in the north. There is also a cynicism about the ability of the sectarian politicians to deliver, about the intentions of gunmen, and those of government on demilitarization. Different considerations weigh differently for different people.

It must be pointed out that while 71% voted yes for the 'Agreement', there is precious little agreement in our places of work, as the recent wildcat action in NIR (Northern Ireland Railways) in the north and throughout the health board in the south has shown. The result, in terms of the wishes of the majority of people in the north, must be seen as a desire for change.

DA: How far is it possible for Organise! to have an impact, given that people must be generally cynical about politics, especially in the north?

ORGANISE!: People may well be cynical of the politicians' ability to deliver some semblance of peace, but it must also be remembered that politics here goes far deeper than casting a vote every few years for many people. The 'constitutional question' is still a big consideration, and a lot of the 'political mindset' is conservative and communal on both sides. It is the sectarian nature of our politics which, more than cynicism, makes our job all the harder.

How far we have an impact cannot be blamed on other people's cynicism, it is more related to our small size and limited resources. We need to start the slow process of building a credible alternative. As this develops, and is seen to be gaining at least some results, then we will start to make an impact.

DA: Would you like to guess how the public are likely to view developments in the peace process? How might it affect the communities in the longer term?

ORGANISE!: We cannot really predict what reactions to developments in the peace process will be, simply because we are not sure what those developments will be. Sectarianism has not been eradicated, and the marching season is going to see an escalation in sectarian tensions and clashes. An amount of goodwill may help steer it clear of the more major incidents of the past but this doesn't really appear to be a realistic aspiration.

In the longer term, we may indeed see the breaking down of some of the sectarian barriers in our society. This may initially be seen through the emergence of a reformist labour party in the north, coupled with cooperation between working class loyalist and republican parties on issues such as education, jobs and housing - nothing too radical though. But really it is too early to say and things are still far too delicate for any speculation to be more than a shot in the dark.

DA: How do Organise! members in the south feel the process is viewed by working class people there?

ORGANISE!: In the south 94.4%, in a turnout of 56%, voted in favour of the 'Agreement'. This shows a sentiment in the south that there should be 'peace' in the north. It is perhaps a sentiment which was largely driven by media and politicians with little real consideration of the politics or parties involved.

The south is not the nationalist place it once was. As long as the RUC isn't beating shit out of Catholics on the TV, or the Provo's blowing up English children, most people are happy. The peace process is viewed as an extremely positive development. Only the 'extremist' minorities - the republicans and the pro-unionist 'West Brits' - are very concerned with events north of the border. For the majority, apart from the occasional emotional outburst of 'give peace a chance' or 'a nation once again', we have our own problems to be concerned with. As with the working class people of England, Scotland and Wales (or elsewhere), 'its got little to do with us' is the prevailing sentiment - and hope for 'peace'.



DA: Is 'The Agreement' likely to work? How far do you support it? What would you like to see come out of the current process?

ORGANISE!: This Summer's 'Marching Season' will be the first big test of the 'Agreement', and one which will make or break it. Whether or not it works depends largely on the political will present to make it work coupled with the degree to which people are prepared to compromise. The 'Agreement' does not go any way towards dealing with sectarianism as this would undermine the respective power bases of the parties who will make up the Assembly. It may well work after a fashion, so long as the 'No' men are further marginalised by events and are not allowed to destabilise the entire process.

The degree of support for the 'Agreement' as a social democratic, or rather a sectarian political initiative has not been uncontroversial for Organise! The 'Agreement' does after all institutionalise sectarianism; it is about choosing the form of government which will have an active role in the oppression of working class people well into the next century. Anarchists from the Workers Solidarity Movement adopted an abstentionist position on the referendum; it is a position which some members of Organise! support. Other members of Organise!, like many working class people, voted yes to the 'Agreement', not because they in any way support

Continued on page 20.. ➔

sectarianism, or want anything to do with choosing the form of government which oppresses us, but because of a simple desire to see the guns removed from the sectarian politics in the north.

Sectarian politicians agreeing a format in which to argue is better than the prospect of continued or worsening sectarian violence being counted in the lives, maiming and imprisonment of working class people.

Organise! has in the past criticised the British government for not moving on the issue of prisoners, both Loyalist and Republican; it was clear that only with the release of political prisoners could there be any hope of the cease-fires being maintained. That remains our position, no matter how emotive the issue, there could have been no progress whatsoever without at least the beginning of a process of release. We have also pointed to the issue of decommissioning, used as a stick to beat the 'representatives' of, or those with an 'insight into the thinking of', paramilitaries, and have stated that any decommissioning can only be practicable within the context of a complete demilitarization of the situation - that means security force's guns must be included.

These positions have been based on the desire to see guns taken out of sectarian politics - this is the most that can be expected from the 'Agreement'. Social issues, the position of workers and the unemployed at the bottom of society, etc., will not and cannot be tackled through this agreement - but surely at least a vast reduction in sectarian violence must be welcomed. Beyond this, we may also see the development of an atmosphere in which anti-sectarian working class politics may be given some room to develop.

It must be remembered that those opposed to the 'Agreement' had precious little to offer. The likely outcome of a successful No campaign would have seen a continuation of direct Westminster rule with Dublin involvement. This is a set up which neither people nor the political and/or paramilitary players in the north would have been happy with.

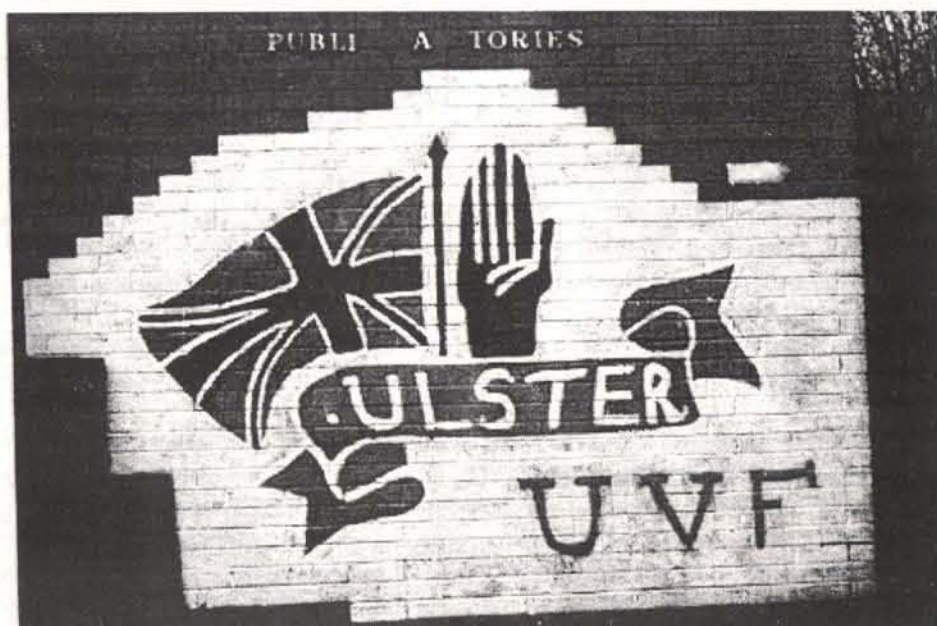
'No' campaigners on the Republican/Nationalist side see the Agreement as a sell-out. They are called on people to vote no and, as one poster puts it, 'Smash British rule'. This is a sentiment with which Anarchists (if we couple it with the smashing of Irish rule) should have very little problem, except when we look at it in the harsh reality of the north. This is a call to continue the war, one which quite conveniently fails to address the fact that nearly one million people who live in the north consider themselves British.

As for the Unionist No campaigners, they also talk the language of continued confrontation and aggression. They claim to see the agreement as

undermining the union, but what these people really want is a military solution all of their own. Paisley and McCartney will only be happy when the British state moves to 'eradicate' republican terrorism. Of course, any such move would only lead to an escalation of the conflict, not an end. Their views on loyalist terrorism are of course more ambivalent. The DUP claim to be 'embarrassed' by the LVF claiming to be 'Paisleyites' - strange when they supported Billy Wright in his early days, and have shared

fill the political vacuum. This is not something to be looked forward to.

It must also be pointed out that socialism at present is not an alternative to the Agreement, nor is Anarcho-Syndicalism. We are not in the position to carry out a social revolution, we must deal with the situation honestly, while trying to build the type of organisation which can one day offer a REAL alternative to working class people throughout Ireland and Britain.



The loyalists do not look likely to act as stooges for what it is to be hoped are the representatives of 'has been' unionism.

platforms on various occasions.

There are also those on the left who called for a No vote. These people preach about how the Assembly will not end sectarianism - anyone who ever thought an agreement reached by sectarian politicians could achieve this has precious little grip on reality. We are told that sectarian violence will not disappear, and the CIRA, INLA, LVF and 'Real' IRA are pointed to, often almost with relish, as proof of this. Recently, the LVF declared a cease-fire to allow people the opportunity to vote no. As to whether they return to violence after the referendum, they claim they will respect the decision of the majority of people in northern Ireland but want history to know that they were never a part of the 'sell-out'.

How long the other 'dissident' paramilitaries can continue their campaigns after a 'Yes' vote is far from clear. The longer the cease-fires remain, the less support there is for sectarian warfare, and pressure may also be brought to bear from former 'comrades in arms'.

Of course, if the Assembly was to fall apart at any point, if it proved unworkable, paramilitary violence could well return with a vengeance to

DA: The Protestant communities appear pretty split - or is it just the political parties? What is the root of the split and how may it develop?

ORGANISE!: The 'Protestant community' has always been much more diverse than many people have given it credit for. This is becoming more apparent as the working class loyalist parties give expression to ideas and aspirations outside the traditional concerns of the Unionist establishment, and distinct from the pseudo-religious rantings of the Free Presbyterian 'Paisleyites'.

There have been many 'splits' in the 'Protestant community'. The 'conservative force' loyalism of the LVF opposed the 'leftward' trends of the PUP and 'Belfast based' UVF leadership to continue a sectarian murder campaign. The split in the Unionist Party prior to the referendum over the form of the 'Agreement' was, to a large extent, indicative of a 'split' in the 'Protestant community' or, to use a more accurate term, 'grass roots Unionism'.

'No' campaigners on the unionist side ludicrously claimed that the 28.88% no vote

represented the 'majority of pro-union people', as the hours after the referendum went by, their assertions increasingly looked like blind desperation. It is estimated that a narrow majority of the unionists who voted, voted yes - around 55% according to one poll.

That is not to say that all the unionist no voters were rabid Paisleyites, there was a great deal of concern about the issue of prisoner release, 'terrorists' entering government, law and order and 'democracy', the undermining of the

DA: The IRA and various strands of republicanism have apparently moved a long way in the talks process - why? What do they expect to gain?

of a great many unionists to making things work and the emergence of the working class loyalist parties. They do not appear in a hurry to allow some dissident Unionist Party members, the DUP, or McCartney's UKUP to plunge them back into a conflict in which they have the experience of going to jail, of killing and being killed, while

they were effectively marginalised as a 'single issue' Brits out party. At the same time, we saw the defeat of various 'third world' national liberation movements and the collapse of the Berlin wall heralding the end of 'communism' in the east. This created a different international scene to that of '68 - '72, when the Provo's arose.

The subsequent development of Sinn Fein, and its pan-nationalist strategy, went hand in hand with a growing recognition that the 'long war' was not working. The armed campaign was not going to get any better. It must also be remembered that the strategy of the 'long war of attrition', which was designed to sap the British government's will to stay was to have negotiations as its natural outcome. There could be no military 'solution'. It is also true that they could not be defeated militarily by the British state, at least not without hugely escalating the conflict. The only option presented in the face of this was negotiations and ultimately a place in the 'talks process', which has led us to where we are today.

They have not moved that far, they have simply dropped all the pseudo-radicalism and socialist pretensions. No more talk of neo-colonialism, economic imperialism or American imperialism, no more vilification of the Dublin establishment. Sinn Fein are on the verge of 'respectability' and international statesmanship, in bed with the multinationals and southern politicians. Sinn Fein are still an Irish Nationalist party, only its means have changed, and it has thrown out some of the old socialist baggage in order to better pursue its political intrigues.

It is very important to remember that Sinn Fein's role in the peace process is completely leadership driven - they run the show lock, stock and barrel, and are almost worshipped by the rank and file. A huge cult of personality has arisen around the travelling salesmen of the 'Agreement', such as Adams. Ironically, or perhaps inevitably, this is in stark contrast to one of the arguments for the development of Sinn Fein in the early '80s, i.e., the need to overcome 'spectator politics', whereby the average republican's involvement was to hear of IRA activity through the media and cheer.

As to what they expect to gain, they have been promised demilitarization at some point in the future, release of prisoners, some form of policing reform, cross border bodies dealing with such things as 'welfare' fraud and fisheries, and that most important of considerations for politicians; power in the new Assembly, along with a commitment from the British government to withdraw when the majority want it. All of these concessions are dependant on stability and unionist acquiescence. One would imagine they hoped for more, but their lack of real success in the peace process points out the abject failure of

(cont'd on page 23.) ➔



Sinn Fein are on the verge of 'respectability' and international statesmanship, in bed with the multinationals and politicians.

RUC, etc. As to the idea of an Assembly restoring 'democracy' to the north, there is precious little opposition to this. The majority of unionist no voters felt they could not vote Yes to the package in its entirety. The danger that the 'No' parties, the DUP and the UKUP, could present in the future is to successfully discredit the entire 'Agreement' in the hope of chipping away at the confidence of those who had expressed a will for change. Of course they are past masters at this sort of thing - and the rabble rousing which goes hand in hand with it.

The difference now lies in the commitment

middle class unionists shit-stir, remaining cosily out of harms way. The loyalists do not look likely to act as stooges for what it is to be hoped are the representatives of 'has been' unionism.

ORGANISE!: There are of course those on the republican side, and many on the left, who see Sinn Fein's position as one of 'sell out'. To those who cannot contemplate compromise there may be something in this, but not much. Sinn Fein's recent political career started during the Hunger Strikes, which saw them adopting an electoral strategy. In the north, they failed to make any real inroads into the SDLP vote, while in the south

DA: What is in the peace process for the British and Irish governments?

ORGANISE!: Stability is their main concern, that and the possibility of investment, which will be of benefit to both economies. The Irish government would also be quite happy for prospective German or American tourists not to hear the word Ireland linked with the word violence. The leadership of Fianna Fail also have the nationalistic sentiments of their grass roots to contend with, so on occasion it suits them to give the appearance of wrapping themselves in a (light) green flag.

On the British side, it must be noted that it is hardly coincidental that the opening of secret communications with the republican movement in 1990 followed the onset of the Provo's bombing offensive in England. This undoubtedly pushed 'Northern Ireland' much higher up the British governments agenda.

The appeal of playing 'saviour' (one which seems particularly close to Tony Blair's heart) and international statesman should not be underestimated. This can distract attention from domestic politics and win votes.

Conditions of Freedom



Throughout history, people have fought and died for "freedom", often only to exchange one form of slavery and oppression for another.

Yet, freedom is a goal we continue to strive for. It is fundamental to our very humanity. Its opposite, oppression, stunts and distorts human nature and restrains, if not prevents, progress. That we don't have a society in which freedom is fully realised arises as much from confusion as to exactly what freedom is, as from the effectiveness of repression.

There are two aspects to what we call "freedom", a negative one and a positive one - a "freedom from" and a "freedom for". There is also the nature of the individual or people seeking freedom. These factors are mutually dependent. Because our history has been one of struggle against tyranny, freedom is usually only conceived of in the negative sense, namely the absence or minimising of such tyranny. However, "freedom from" some restriction must be in order to achieve "freedom to do or to be". Freedom does not produce a vacuum.

It could be said that the degree to which one person interferes with another's activity is a measure of the amount of freedom someone has. Political freedom, therefore, is viewed as people living how they choose, unobstructed by others. However, because we live in society, this must be qualified. If the well-being of everyone in society is to be

assured, then it is not acceptable that the psychopath, for example, be "free" to exploit, use or bully others. Therefore, freedom is value-laden, and entails responsibilities towards others. This implies that the cultural values of the society as well as the nature of the individual enter the equation.

Beyond a certain point, preventing people from doing what they would choose is coercion, the deliberate interference by the powerful in the activities of those within that power. In modern society, based on an ideology of power, overt coercion limits people's "freedom". However, imposing the will of the dominant does not merely depend on overt coercion alone, for this would promote rebellion among the coerced. Rather, compliance is sought through "legitimacy", through inducing people to believe that authority is necessary "for their own good". Once this is indoctrinated in people's minds, they can contribute to their own repression. In a capitalist society, where the privilege of the ruling class is based upon the exploitation of labour, this is the all-important factor for its continuation. People are made to believe they are already free within the confines of a social necessity.

John Stuart Mill, in his famous work "On Liberty", recognised that there must exist an area of personal freedom which on no account must be violated. Such violation restricts the development of the individual's

natural faculties, which make it possible to conceive of and pursue the ends which humans hold to be good and necessary for their well-being.

Those who justify such violation claim that legal restraints are necessary due to the evil that is basic to human nature. This myth, originally proposed by the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, upholds the interests of the privileged. Such reactionary thinkers argue that, if we are not to resort to "the law of the jungle", we must be controlled by the law of government. This becomes ironic considering the slaughter that has been perpetrated by governments and how they preside over a system that threatens all life on the planet. Furthermore, those who govern are not ethically different to those who are governed. In fact, due to their privileged position they are often more corrupt.

Libertarians do not advocate licence, that is, freedom at the expense of others. This is a feature of today's society, where the values are those of robbery and domination, where getting the better of someone else is a virtue, where the greatest liberty is limited to the fewest number. Furthermore, such behaviour, as exhibited by our "betters", is emulated by the so-called "lower classes" through daily indoctrination by the media and

There are two aspects to what we call "freedom".. "freedom from" and a "freedom for"



advertising.

Economic slavery has, during this century, given rise to the idea of economic freedom. Freedom to possess bread is pointless if people lack the economic freedom to buy it. This inability to obtain the necessities of life by means other than those authorised by law has resulted in widespread deprivation, poverty and insecurity among working class people. It makes freedom under capitalist constraints an illusion and a mockery, considering that capitalism produces commodities that many are not free to obtain. Through a set of unfair arrangements and relationships the ruling elite has been able to plan, impose, and maintain this status quo.

This, however, is not to advocate a society of mediocrity, but one of increasing diversity. What we have now is a society which threatens people with deprivation and persecution, unless they submit to a lifestyle that withers their capacities and the contribution which their uniqueness as an individual could enable them to make, a society which results in hidebound individuals, cramped and warped in their relationships with each other.

*"permanent revolution",
an on-going,
ever-developing
society in
which
people are
not
restricted
by
conformity
in order to
survive*

For human society to thrive, there must be respect for one another's rights and freedoms, based on equality, which certainly isn't the case in a society based upon privilege, exploitation and domination. A society built around its people's needs would see greater experimentation in lifestyles. This concept is sometimes called "permanent revolution", an on-going, ever-developing society in which people are not restricted by conformity in order to survive. In such an open and free society, mutual respect would naturally evolve, because there would be no privilege to be gained at the expense of others.

Every plea we make for civil liberties and individual rights; every protest against exploitation, humiliation and oppression; every rebellion against the encroachments of authority, springs from this evaluation of human beings. Libertarians have always stressed freedom to create, freedom to achieve, freedom of self-determination, freedom to participate in the decisions affecting our lives, freedom to add colour and diversity to life.

So what is this condition we call freedom, this horizon which constantly eludes us? Fundamentally it is the capacity to be your own master, to determine your own destiny, to have your life and the decisions affecting it firmly in your own hands. It is the right to be a person, not an object or statistic or tool to be used or abused, discarded or destroyed. It is the ability to be a rational creature, responding to rational argument, exhibiting compassion, formulating conscious rational purposes, and not simply responding to outside causes. It is the facility to be a unique individual, yet with the ability to co-operate for the mutual benefit of all, and not to be considered as a thing, animal or wage slave incapable of such rational behaviour. For it is this rationality which distinguishes us from other species.

We can think and behave in rational, social ways. We are responsible for the choices we make, and can refer to knowledge and experience to explain them. We can reach consensus with our fellows. As Michael Bakunin once said, "No man is good enough to be another man's master". 

(cont'd from page 21...)

armed struggle and the simple reality of a well-armed unionist majority in the north.

While many still see the problem solely in terms of British occupation and jurisdiction, others recognise that they cannot 'force' these people into a united Ireland, that it is unlikely that Sinn Fein will ever convince them that a united Ireland is in their interests, and they want to see the British government itself become the persuaders of unionism.

There is a belief that as the nationalist vote and Sinn Fein's share of it gradually increases, and as cross border links are strengthened, we will find ourselves with a nationalist majority and only a few adjustments will be necessary in order to unite Ireland. Realistically, if they ever want to achieve a united Ireland within the framework of the 'Agreement', it will be about 'demographics', about substituting the 'long wait' for the 'long war', or the papes outbreeding the prods - not particularly progressive. Nor realistic.

Conclusion - The Future

DA: Where do you see Organise! being in terms of developing an Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in Ireland in 2 years, in 5 years, and beyond?

ORGANISE!: 'Our' politicians may well have come to some sort of 'Agreement' on Good Friday, one which may even lead to a very welcome reduction in paramilitary violence, but for the North's working class, 'unity' seems as elusive as ever. The goal of a united Ireland or maintaining the union with Britain are of course nothing to do with the sort of unity we are talking about in Organise!

Our communities are still sectarian ghettos and, with perhaps the most segregated education system in the world, how can we ever hope to break down barriers of mistrust, bitterness and suspicion?

The one hope for our future, for the future development of Anarcho-Syndicalism in Ireland, surely lies in the fostering and development of 'workers unity'. We must draw lessons and inspiration from the united struggles of the Montupet strikers, of DSS workers opposing LVF and INLA death threats, of the railway workers of NIR and of southern healthworkers using 'wildcat' action to make an effective stand for our rights. This is not something which can be demanded or called upon by placard

waving lefties, it is something which must be built. It is built in very concrete ways around the common problems workers face at their workplaces and in their communities. It is something which occurs naturally when workers as workers are faced with a new attack from their bosses, it is built around the response to 'bread and butter' issues.

Such a task is never easy - why do you think it is called class struggle? It is because it is exactly that, a struggle which must be fought long and hard for and must be won.

We have no rigid 2 or 5 year plans, but we do have short and medium term goals which we are striving to achieve. These are aimed at making our ideas and activity relevant to the realities of working class life in Ireland. More than anything else, it is about putting in the effort and hard work which, when people are more ready for real change, will stand us in good stead as a credible, revolutionary alternative to the bosses, and the nationalist and sectarian crap workers here have had to endure for too long. 

For info/contact, and to send money for their community local fund, write to:
Organise!-IWA, PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ, N Ireland.

Eat WHAT?

Monsanto, the US Chemical giant, is facing mounting European opposition to its headlong rush into so-called 'hi-tech' foods. It was prepared to mount a £multi-million exercise to convince European consumers of the benefits of Genetically Modified (GM) crops. Monsanto now admits to having underestimated the ethical and scientific opposition to GM foods, and to pushing its products onto the market without any discussion on the moral and ethic opposition to these types of foods. Phillip Angel, director of Corporate Communications, is quoted as saying: "We made mistakes which we regret. We should have listened more carefully". The only sound they have listened to so far is the cash tills. The scale and speed of the growth of GM food industries has astonished and alarmed food scientists and observers, who see this acceleration of growth as leading to a situation where there is little or no consumer choice. Monsanto now has some 50 million acres of soya, maize and cotton under cultivation in the US, compared with 2 million in 1996. They expect this to double within the next 2 years, as GM potatoes, oilseed rape and cassava become available. Early in the next century, GM rice and wheat will be available. Monsanto will spend over £2 million in Britain alone on their PR campaign. However, opinion polls, while showing considerable confusion over GM foods, show that, once GM technology is explained to people, there is a strong resistance to them. In fact, opposition is strengthening.

Recently, the Iceland supermarket chain has announced that there will be no GM ingredients in their own brand products as from 1st May 1998. Iceland will obtain soya beans from Canada and Brazil, to avoid US Monsanto products - giving the lie to the claim by the food industry that it is impossible to obtain GM free ingredients.

So: Demand all foodstuffs are well-labelled, and: Boycott products with GM ingredients and the food outlets which support and push them.

Further Info:
GenEthics
Genetic Engineering Network: www.dmac.co.gen. Or write to:
GEN, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY.
Direct Action against GM foods: www.envirolink.org/orgs/shag/genetix.html
Indigenous People's Coalition Against Biopiracy:
www.niec.net/ipcb

Food Poisoning

In the next few months, Britain will experience its annual huge outbreak of food poisoning. When temperatures rise, bacteria multiply. For every one degree centigrade rise, we see a 7% increase in food poisoning cases. The blame is usually heaped on poor kitchen hygiene. However, recent research is increasingly identifying the horrendous conditions on factory

farms as the real culprit. Hot weather, a n d overcrowded a n d unhygienic conditions on

such farms are a deadly combination. The farming lobby and the government try to blame cooks and those who prepare food. But the time lag between the commencement of hot weather and outbreaks of food poisoning show that the problem originates in the earliest stages of food production on the farms.

There were approximately 83,000 reported cases of food poisoning in 1996. According to Hugh Pennington, bacteriologist at Aberdeen University, only about 1 in 30 cases are reported, suggesting around 2.5million actual cases. The commonest germs are salmonella and campylobacter, which account for 80% of cases, both germs being common in poultry, cattle and pigs. Salmonella is serious - 1 in 1000 cases are fatal in Britain and W Europe. Campylobacter can lead to arthritis and in rare cases, paralysis.

Poor farming and animal husbandry were identified as the cause of BSE - but for food poisoning, the wrong people - cooks and other end-users- are still being blamed.

The problem is political. The farming industry is far too engaged in the rush for profit to concern itself with public health. We have recently witnessed a hysterical response from Tories and farmers over BSE, as they refuse to accept any criticism for their culpability over this nightmare. While the Countryside Alliance is overtly about fox hunting and the continuation of field 'sports', the subtext was to protect the country way of life from 'townies'. This means townies (consumers) should buy their (British) produce without criticism or complaint. We are expected to prefer their wares to those from abroad, which may be cheaper, more efficiently, or more hygienically produced. Indeed, the NFU and the beef industry considered the beef ban an act of war, and demanded that the government should more-or-less force our fellow Europeans to eat British beef too.

The solution is also political. Only with the facts can we make informed choices about what we eat. The appeals to nationalist sentiment have to be seen for what they are. Most importantly, we must collectively oppose being manipulated into buying dangerous, unlabelled and unsafe food. 



From When Humans Roamed the Earth: Cartoons by Chris Madden (Earthscan/WWF, £8.99, published September)

letters

Veganism - a reply

Dear DA,

I found the FAQs on veganism (DA5) and the accompanying opinion article interesting and quite 'balanced' and avoiding guilt-tripping, but feel some points need addressing. First, surprisingly the FAQs article failed to present any reasons against eating meat per se. I assume the Planet Vegan article was felt to supply this. This states that it makes environmental sense to go vegan, claiming it takes less work, waste and environmental destruction to eat plants than feeding them to animals, with only a fraction of the plant matter turning into meat, the rest becoming "polluting animal waste" - also known as manure/bone meal, etc - but this can be returned to the soil, closing the energy circle far more efficiently than modern agriculture, with its attendant high-energy inputs of fertilisers and pesticides.

The claim that livestock agriculture ruins the environment far more than intensive plant agriculture, belies a history of mixed farming practices that have kept most of the human species alive for the last 12,000 years (in a fairly stable and sustainable way). Having vast herds of animals living off cereals is a wasteful and irrational mode of production, but advocating the eradication of livestock is equally unecological.

Talking about land, energy and water resources the way the article did can be misleading. It is true that the calorific output is vastly different between eating meat and directly eating vegetables, but such simple calculations leave out the wider context; based on such a premise, we should refrain from eating cereals, as these use more energy than root vegetables.

To attribute most of the world's soil erosion and deforestation to eating meat, when plant agriculture is just as complicit in this process, shows a certain myopia on the author's behalf. The American dust-bowl of the 30's was created by intensive plant agriculture (on prairies that had sustained enormous herds of buffalo). The fuelwood crisis would be disastrously aggravated by stopping livestock agriculture, since cow-dung provides fuel for millions of Indian peasants.

Most of those who advocate not eating meat, so as to reduce the exploitation of Third World peasants, and slow the destruction of the bio-sphere, surprisingly don't also advocate not eating avocados, bananas, cashews, peanuts, Soya beans, tea, etc. As to whether not eating meat actually helps people in the Third world, Susan George in "How The Other Half Dies" argues that it may actually make things worse.

The two articles were not so much compelling reasons for veganism, but for changes in farming practice, animal husbandry and food production, towards compassionate organic farming, agro-forestry and real free range meat and egg production, and a reduction of meat products rather than elimination.

But ultimately, we come up against the issues of land and industrial ownership and control - Who produces what, for whom and why? DM.

Send your letters to:

DA-SF (letters), PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR
ALL letters are welcome but we get lots and we cannot print them all. Make yours incisive, brief and questioning if you want it printed. Apologies to those letter writers who missed out in this crammed issue of DA - we will try to print them in the future -Ed.

Forgotten Revolution

Forgotten Revolution - Limerick Soviet 1919

Liam Cahill.

O'Brien Press, Dublin, ISBN 0 86278 194 9



There are countless books in print on Irish politics and history. Very few, however, are written from anything like an Anarcho-syndicalist viewpoint. This book is no exception, although it is better than most. It is not offensively partisan and gives a straight but slightly dry account of the Limerick Soviet. There is still the need to read between the lines sometimes, but with so few books dedicated to the study of the independent Irish working class action, it is worth getting hold of.

A little slim at only 150 odd pages, the book is dedicated to a detailed, almost hour by hour account of this little known episode. While the ebb and flow of insurrection is covered pretty well, my main criticism is its lack of background detail.

For instance, there is very little about the influence of syndicalist ideas on Irish workers. James Connolly was a strong influence; not only had he led the Workers Militia, the Irish Citizens Army, in the Easter Rising of 1916, but he had also been an IWW organiser in America. Connolly's writings were widely circulated in the Labour movement and his attempt to marry the revolutionary struggle for a workers republic with the fight for Irish independence were well known. Connolly reasoned that there was little point in forcing the British to leave Ireland only to have native capitalists take power. He also believed that by standing aloof from the national question, the working class movement allowed reactionaries to dominate the struggle.

The Russian Revolution had a big influence on many workers, as did the insurrections of 19th Century Ireland and the tradition of direct action, like that employed during the Land War of the 1880's.

Another important influence on events in Limerick in 1919 was the policy of the British Government. Faced with growing turmoil after the 1916 rising, Britain employed increasingly coercive measures to

maintain control of the country. British terror tactics in Limerick unleashed popular anger to the point where on April 13th 1919 the Limerick Trades Council called a strike to protest at military excesses. 14,000 workers were involved as the Trades Council took over the running of the City of 38,000 people. No goods were moved or services rendered without a Council permit.

At the very first sign of profiteering, a schedule of permitted prices was drawn up and posted throughout the city. Prices were substantially lower than normal, for example, milk dropped from 7d to 3d a pint. The local Mayor and Sinn Fein councillors were forced to become mere followers as local currency was issued and a 'Workers Bulletin' was printed with the legend 'Issued by the Limerick Proletariat'.

It wasn't only the organised workers who took action. Local people were far

from passive. On April 20th, a large crowd gathered to test the army's resolve. A military picket line had been thrown around the city and passes were needed to move through the barricades. The people of Limerick confronted the troops and, after a tense stand off lasting all night, they finally pushed the military cordon aside.

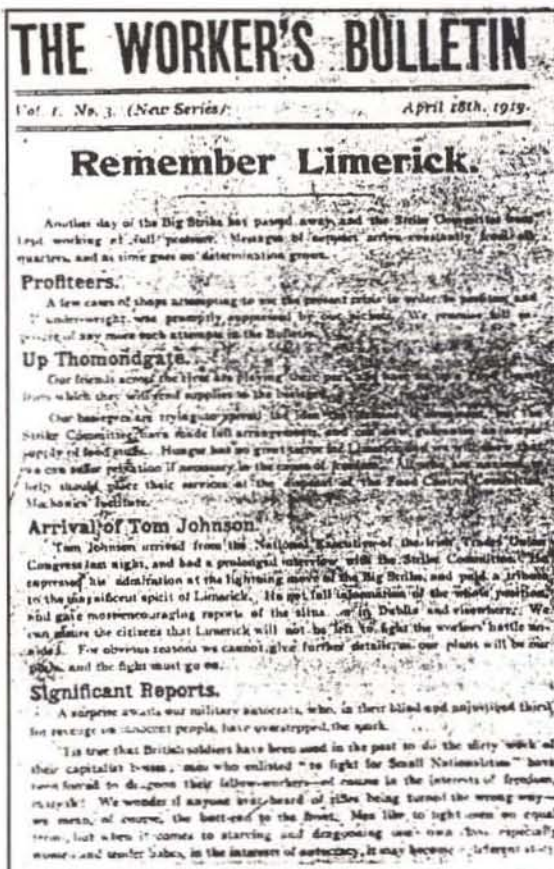
Cahill describes this incident as the 'high point and watershed' of the Limerick Soviet. Thereafter, things began to deteriorate as the workers failed to get the support of the other unions. Solidarity strikes were resisted by the bosses of the mainly British based unions. Of particular importance in this was the railway Union, the NUR. The call from Limerick for a general strike was not heeded. Union bureaucrats spent their energy on looking for a compromise solution. Instead of escalating the struggle, the union bosses sought to end it and thus, after 14 days, the Soviet was abandoned. The Irish Times had described the efforts of the Limerick workers to spread the strike to other parts of Ireland as a 'very bold and candid experiment in Irish Syndicalism'.

And here the book all but ends. You will have to look elsewhere for any mention of similar action by Irish workers. 'A History of the Irish Working Class', by Peter Beresford Ellis, fills in some of the gaps, though be warned, he manages to dismiss Anarcho-syndicalism with a single sentence - and a footnote at that!

Yet the Limerick Strike had echoes throughout Ireland. Strikes and occupations were numerous and widespread. While some workers took unofficial action in support of their Limerick Comrades, the next big flash point was May 1st, when a general strike was called. It was well supported in many parts of the country.

In the wake of these actions, the

(cont'd on page 26..)



The Workers' Bulletin began simply enough, as a single page propaganda leaflet. But it ran for at least seven issues and in its final format was very much like a local newspaper of the time in format and content.

Too close to home

Noam Chomsky Lecture, Institute of Education, Bloomsbury, London, 5th May, 1998.



The libertarian writer Noam Chomsky is perhaps best known for his exposure of the "official ideology" of the United States and its allies, particularly in the field of foreign policy.

His speech included the novel and unlikely suggestion that the Indonesian financial crisis could be solved by using the \$40bn Suharto family fortune to pay off the \$40bn debt! Actually, on the agenda of big business is an "agreement" which would allow multinationals to sue governments for carrying out policies, such as not brutally suppressing workers' organisations, spending on welfare programmes, etc., which might hit their profits. This is called the MAI. Be afraid, be very afraid!

Perhaps of interest more to those of us (a tiny minority of the audience) whose politics do not begin

at Britain's borders, was his take on domestic economic policy, also known as class warfare. He identified job insecurity, squeezing the "pampered lifestyles" of us proles, as the source of America's economic "boom" (read share profits, this kind of economics stunts growth worse than Woodbines!).

This might not have gone down too well among those present, whose lifestyle looked pretty pampered. Radicalism is all very well, as long as it does not draw attention to one's own class privileges! Good liberals and Hampstead socialists object to human rights abuse and blatant exploitation because they make the system which delivers their liberal freedoms (which are actually class privileges) visible. Chomsky's ideas highlight unwelcome facts, setting him aside from the bulk of his audience.

Bizarrely, the printed literature franchise had gone to Bookmarx, the SWP's bookselling business. In true leninist fashion, they forbade anyone else to sell literature indoors. This meant AK Press & Distribution, who publish some of Chomsky's work, could only sell CD's! To help promote free speech (at least that's our excuse!), we flogged lots of DA's inside after the gig, which means we probably sold some to bourgeois! An Arsenal bomber jacket and a nasty accent did not go down too well! The trots said nothing, ironically, because they've just moved from Finsbury Park - home of the Arsenal World of Sport - to Bloomsbury, so the students can pick up party literature demanding the TUC leads us into class collaboration, on their way from London University union. 

(cont'd from page 25..)

British banned the flying of the red flag, which only led to more red flags appearing as people flew it as an act of defiance. Banners calling for a 'workers' republic' were common place. Later, in 1920, owners of small farms and landless labourers began occupying untenanted land, which in Roscommon alone amounted to 60,000 acres. There were cattle drives, uprooting of fences and, after a landlord was shot, the struggle spread 'with the fury of a prairie fire'.

In Mayo, Roscommon beyond Connaught to West Leinster, North Munster and even parts of South Ulster ranches and demesnes were seized by people and cultivated.

In the same year, there was the Knocklong Soviet, where the local creamery was occupied by the workers. Creameries were local trading centres for the farms of a district and distribution centres for the towns. Knocklong was one of the biggest in Ireland. The strikers seized the factory and mill under a banner 'We make butter, not profits!', and ran it as a co-operative.

The following year the miners at Arigna, Leitrim, took over the mines and ran them, while in September the port of Cork was taken over and the red flag hoisted. More land was seized and communes set up in Clare, while Soviets were declared in

Mallow, Cashel and Ballingarry.

All this feverish revolutionary activity was a considerable embarrassment to the Labour bureaucrats, though they were not the only forces ranged against the workers. British troops were employed to crush any sign of revolt. The Knocklong Soviet creamery and many others were destroyed by this means.

More significant, however, is the attitude of Republicans to the workers' initiatives.

Many Republican leaders and their supporters simply wanted rid of Britain in order to better exploit Ireland's resources. Arthur Griffin, Sinn Féin President, was rabidly anti-worker while Michael Collins, the IRA's Director of Organisation and Intelligence, was little

better. Eulogised in a recent film by Neil Jordan, Collins pledged to 'put down brigandage, protect life and property and enforce the payment of taxes', once in power in the new Free State. He defined 'brigandage' as 'seizure of factories and the red flag'. During the war against Britain, the IRA were sometimes employed to smash workers occupations and land seizures. Beresford-Ellis notes that, in areas where the IRA helped workers' actions, the support for the National Struggle was more solid than elsewhere.

In 1922, a peace treaty was signed with

Britain, which gave Collins and his cronies control of 26 counties of Ireland, while a border separated 6 northern counties which remained under British Rule. The new Free State army was systematic in its suppression of working class gains. Succeeding where the British State had failed, they destroyed the last Soviet at Tipperary on July 30, 1922.

All this has resonance today as the current peace process develops. Then, as now, the Republican movement is a coalition of class forces. In 1922, the interests of Irish capitalists and a new ruling class came out on top. The next 70 odd years saw the Labour movement north and south hopelessly crippled. The border meant that the National question could dominate. Workers' interests could be diverted when the nationalist or religious card was played. Politicians of all hues made use of the border to divide and rule.

In 1922, former 'revolutionaries' fought to get their noses in the trough. One has only to ask, 'what have the self appointed leaders of today got their eye on?' Maybe South Africa is their model? There the peace deal has promoted one time heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle, like Cyril Ramaposa, to the status of millionaires. The real winners in Ireland in 1922, north and south, were the middle and upper classes. Ditto South Africa today - and Ireland tomorrow? 

Conor Kostick's book, 'Revolution in Ireland' is another key text on the period 1917-23. It is reviewed in 'Organise! - The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism', V2, No. 8. For a Copy, send £1 to Organise! PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ.



Demanding the Impossible? Human nature and politics in 19th century social anarchism.

David Morland.
£15.99, Cassell, London, 1997, ISBN 0-304-33687-4.

David Morland's book is an exploration of the ideas of three nineteenth century 'social anarchists', Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, with regard to their ideas on human nature. Morland argues that all political ideologies hold as central some view on what makes up human nature, whether it can be changed or not, and whether it is desirable to attempt to change it.

In the author's survey of these three anarchist figures, he believes that their ideas on human nature are in contradiction with the kind of society that they believe can and should be created. Social anarchists saw human nature as both good and bad in present society and in the future libertarian alternative. In present society, however, statist institutions and authoritarian regimes exacerbate the negative aspects. Therefore, the libertarian society, on doing away with authoritarian structures, will allow the good side to flourish. Morland dismisses their optimism as unfounded, since they believe that egotism and authoritarian tendencies will carry over into anarchist utopia and ultimately render it unfeasible.

Morland's book is closely argued and his analysis of each nineteenth century anarchist is extensive. Clearly, he focuses on a major point in anarchist theory - how to cultivate the social rather than the anti-social tendencies in humans. His argument, however, is tempered by his small base of theorists. By relying on these three thinkers, and drawing his conclusions from them, Morland does not consider how anarchist theory on these points has moved on since the last century. L. Susan Brown's work springs to mind. Brown argues that we should do away with the idea of human nature and its link with social structures.

After all, what is human nature? How can we possibly tell that there are intrinsic aspects (either good or bad) in human nature? To what extent is 'human nature' made by the society in which we live?

Unfortunately, Morland's book does not broach these subjects in depth. He clings to a nineteenth century concept of human nature and assumes that anarchist theory, and wider social theory, must obey the lines laid down by these theorists one hundred years ago. Surely the challenge of any social thinker is to jettison old ideas which have out-grown their use and embrace new, more useful ones. 

Ecology and Anarchism Essays and Reviews on Contemporary Thought. Brian Morris.

£14.95, Images Publishing, 1996.

Wide in scope and refreshing in its clarity, Brian Morris's 'Ecology and Anarchism' is a must for anarchists and environmentalists alike.

The book brings together in one volume, for the first time, a collection of 23 articles that have been published over the last twenty years. There are wide-ranging and incisive critiques that take in mysticism, deep ecology and vegetarianism, and a range of more political critiques, which touch on Marx, Ghandi, Chomsky, and the Social Ecology of Murray Bookchin.

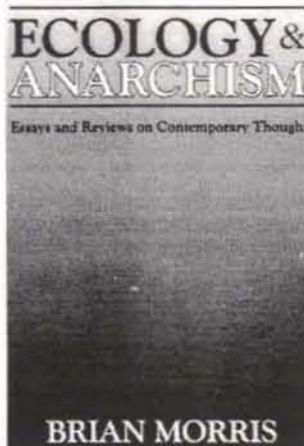
There are also a host of articles engaging wider philosophical and anthropological studies, such as the fate of Forest Tribes and deforestation in India, or the anarchist elements in the radical Chinese philosophy of Lao Tzu.

Morris draws on an incredible range of knowledge, and approaches his writing in a spirit of critical appreciation, with a style which is free of posturing and point scoring. He cuts through the tendency of current 'new age' thinking to wander about the spiritual supermarket, picking up superficial fragments of different world religions and 'spirituality' at whim and, in so doing, bringing to bear a wide knowledge of the culture and history of indigenous peoples. Some of the key contradictions of sentimental

approaches to nature and ecology are explored. Morris points out that these often misappropriate the ecologically minded traditions of indigenous peoples, but equally, he criticises the tendency to just see nature as a resource to be exploited, something Marxist approaches are often guilty of.

The one weakness of the book is also perhaps a strength; the diversity of articles gradually add up to support a point that Brian often makes - that Anarchism is the only political philosophy that is consistent with the principles of ecology. However, nowhere does Brian really spell out and develop the full implications of his arguments and it leaves you wishing he had developed fully his own thoughts and theories.

On the other hand, the articles cover a wonderfully wide range of areas and many of them are quite short, so that you can dip into the book, and apply its arguments across a wide field. 



HALF PRICE OFFER!!

Direct Action can offer a limited number of copies of 'Ecology and Anarchism' in hardback at the amazing bargain price of £5 plus £2.50 postage and packaging. Send Cheques/POs (to 'Direct Action') and your address to: DA, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

Attila the Stockbroker

The Yard Theatre, Hulme, Manchester
1 April 1998, £5, (£3 conc.)

This was my first time, and I wasn't sure what to expect. I've had some dodgy experiences of performance poets in the past, and the thought of 'comedy political songs' makes me worry about things like that Richard Whatsisname who used to play the piano on 'Nationwide'. But I went along and paid me money anyway and am I glad I did?! Top entertainment, at an ace venue.

Attila's poetry covers a wide range of stuff, including Zen Stalinism, gardening, football, anti-fascism, fetid sleeping bags and creepy crawly things. His songs are in an eclectic variety of styles - train-spotter rap, Albanian country & western and Libyan thrash metal to name a few, plus a great Hulme favourite, 'Doggy on a String' - all played on the mandolin. Many of his observations on politics are spot on and very funny, but it is a bit sad to think that he's been at this for nearly twenty years



and so much of his early material is still relevant now. Respect is definitely due to a man who has been doing political comedy for so long (and has been in the forefront of the campaign to save Brighton & Hove Albion FC) and is still relevant and sidesplittingly funny.

I am not now going to provide a detailed critique on the failings of Attila's political analysis from an anarcho-syndicalist perspective. You might not agree wholeheartedly with his Zen Stalinist world view, or his admiration for Comrade Enver Hoxha of Albania and his pet flounder Tristan (the first flat fish to run a Stalinist state, after Comrade Enver passed on to the great tractor factory in the sky), but get along and see him next time he's in town. Unless you're a fan of Tony Blair or Crystal Palace FC, you'll have a great night out and you can do your own political critique afterwards if you must. Me, I just think he's great. After all, if you only go and see people whose political views exactly coincide with yours, you probably won't get out much. If you can't get to a gig and want to read Zen Stalinism, try his new book, 'The Rat Tailed Maggot', just out. 

Who Bombed Judi Bari? Judi Bari spoken word...With music too!

CD, Alternative Tentacles Records 1997, Virus205CD

Mumia Abu-Jamal spoken word; with music by Man is the Bastard

Alternative Tentacles Records 1997, Virus206CD

Two spoken word CD's (with a bit of additional music) from two people who have been attacked for struggling for a better world; one of them someone tried to kill with a car bomb; the other is sentenced to death.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an African-American journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. He was sentenced to death at a dubious trial where the prosecution demanded the death sentence on the basis of his political beliefs - Abu-Jamal was a one time Black Panther and a supporter of MOVE, a black militant group who follow the work of John Africa. (MOVE were the victims of a police massacre on 13 May 1985, when the block of houses they were barricaded in, in Philadelphia, became the centre of a police siege, and later bombardment by rounds from automatic weapons, smoke bombs, explosive charges and finally a bomb dropped by police helicopter. Only two of the thirteen people in the house survived, the blaze from the bomb quickly spread and consumed another sixty houses.) Abu-Jamal's voice is deep and smooth, calm and clear. It really is one of the most relaxing voices I have ever heard, until you listen to what he is saying.

For DA readers, I assume the general ideas on this disc will not be new - that the US legal system is racist and anti-poor, that the cops and the courts would rather convict a convenient political activist, particularly one who criticises them, than actually bother looking at what really happened. A few more specific facts do illustrate the US system of oppression, e.g. the juries for capital crimes - those that can result in the death penalty - explicitly and specifically exclude all those who do not actually support the death penalty; death row is the fastest growing area of public housing in the US. Abu-Jamal has spent over fifteen years in prison. The CD and the accompanying booklet detail the court case and the bias of the judge. Not content with consigning Abu-Jamal to Hell whilst waiting to kill him, the Government has sought to silence him. Initially punished for writing the book *Live from Death Row*, he is now being stopped from communicating at all. The response to his refusal to buckle down is not only to isolate him and to seek to murder him, but to gag him whilst he waits for his murder.

At the end of the CD are four tracks by *Man is the Bastard*. They are VERY shouty and loud. Not sure if this is grindcore, with a bit of thrash or what, but I expect many people to stop the CD at the end of track twelve. Personally (in the right mood) I think it's all rather fun, but it does sit oddly with the clear and structured tones of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On 6th March 1997, Abu-Jamal issued a Statement for the Memorial of Judi Bari from Death Row: *'Live from the Redwood Timber Wars of Northern California... Judi Bari was a key rabble rouser in the*

Speaking Rights

battle to save the forests of the Pacific Northwest... When you hear her words, you'll know why King Timber and the FBI wanted to get rid of her.....' The trash novel blurb on the back of the Judi Bari CD quoted above is the sort of thing many activists may secretly dream could be written about them. In order to overcome this, they should listen to this CD or read a little about Judi Bari; it takes a lot of commitment to be a successful 'rabble rouser', and it's much easier to live your life without the attentions of the FBI.

Judi Bari was an Earth First activist, and a member of the Industrial Workers' of the World (Wobblies), fighting against the clear fell logging of untouched redwood forest in northern California. Her methods were direct action of the type we in the Solidarity Federation advocate - decentralised and non-hierarchical. She and the people she worked with sought not only to stop the logging by the timber

corporations, but to unionise and organise the industries workers



and the community which depended on it. They identified that the clear fell method was detrimental not only to the environment, but also directly to the workers. On 24 May 1990, she and Darryl Cherney were blown up by a pipe bomb placed under the seat in her car. Amazingly neither was killed, but Bari was badly injured. Now, the FBI had run a training camp on bombs (on land owned by the logging corporations coincidentally), which dealt with the exact same type of bomb that which blew up Bari and Cherney, and the fact that the trainer and those from the FBI and local police that attended the sessions were amongst the first on the scene should have resulted in a quick understanding of what had happened and thorough investigations into who had planted the bomb? but no! Apparently the FBI's best theory was that Bari and Cherney were terrorists who were carrying an anti-personnel device wrapped in nails and which was primed and set off by a tilt mechanism in their car under the seat in order to do some industrial sabotage - blow up a pylon or something! This theory was sold to the media corporations who swallowed it greedily, and regurgitated it out in the blaze of publicity like they never gave Earth First before. The media corporations don't seem to be so interested in following up on the gaping holes in the FBI story, nor reporting

on the ongoing court case against the FBI. Neither Bari nor Cherney were put off organising and taking on the logging corporations, and they continued the fight to save the Redwoods.

On 2 March 1997, Judi Bari died of cancer. This compilation was put together with her approval. It consists of 28 tracks, 4 of which are folk style songs, the rest are spoken word extracts taken from a variety of sources. Given that there are a wide variety of sources and a wide variety of themes, the whole CD is put together extremely well. The tracks flow one to another in a sensible fashion and order. There is enough variety and detail to keep the attention of all but most fidgety of listeners. It is informative and inspiring. It covers the environmental movement, the bombing, patriarchy of science, the media and the 'Earth First! Logging Rules'. The booklet includes a piece by Bari titled 'Revolutionary Ecology', which is one of the best articles on 'deep ecology' I have read, and whilst I won't pretend that I see eye to eye with everything it says, I don't want to nit pick; the thrust and spirit of the article I agree with. I am glad that Judi Bari was around and sad and mad that she was treated so badly. I am even more glad that there are many, many more people like her out there, people willing to get out and organise and defend the planet and the people on it. Judi Bari wasn't an activist to get CD's of her words released and to become a hero, neither was she an activist to become a martyr; she was an activist because she cared and wanted to do something about it.

It doesn't take the courage and commitment of Bari or Abu-Jamal to do something about today's society, and the destruction of the world and the people on it by governments and corporations, but it does take some time and energy. I can't promise you a CD of your pearls of wisdom, and I hope that it is unlikely anyone will try to blow you up and blame you for it or sentence you to death; you will however make a difference.

If you have net access, the official Judi Bari site is at <http://www.monitor.net/~bari/> - I have no idea if this means there are loads of unofficial sites out there, perhaps there are. Maybe the FBI have set one up full of dodgy rhetoric and exhortations so environmentalists bomb themselves and save the Feds some money? There are a number of sites for Mumia Abu-Jamal; this one is the Refuse & Resist site, which at least I know is relatively current: <http://mojo.calyx.net/~refuse/mumia/index.html>. It has a whole load of connections and seems to be well maintained. Here's just two of the addresses from CD booklets:

Judi Bari: Redwood Justice Fund
PO Box 14720 Santa Rosa CA 95402 US.
Mumia Abu-Jamal:
International Concerned Friends & Family
of Mumia Abu-Jamal P.O. Box 19709
Philadelphia PA 19143 US. 

Anarchism: Left, Right and Green.

Ulrike Heider.

City Lights Books,
1994. £11.99

Generally, I would recommend this book as a good introductory read. The book starts with a concise resume of anarchosyndicalism, but also does justice to other traditions which come under the rubric of anarchism. Until I read this book, I had little idea of the so-called anarcho-capitalists, or what they stood for. My prejudices were fully confirmed.

As an anarchosyndicalist I have, ironically, profited from the ideas of Murray Rothbard, an 'anarcho-capitalist'. It strengthened my anti-capitalist resolve and gave me some ideas on how to fight the 'market' and market economies.

While Heider discusses the ideas of Noam Chomsky, the book gives little in the way of the current debates within the international anarchosyndicalist movement, and how to deal with the opportunity given by the collapse of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, without falling into a reformist trap of seeking numbers by diluting the ideals and making compromises with the state.

The book, though, is useful on many counts. I would certainly prescribe it for informing and strengthening anarchosyndicalist ideas and providing positive impetus for change. 

Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare?

Mae-Wan Ho.

£9.95, Gateway Books, ISBN 1 858600510

I was so impressed I couldn't wait 'till I'd finished reading Ho before writing a glowing review (is this allowed?).

Following the BSE epidemic saga, we have the prediction from various genetic engineers and scientists that the release of hundreds of genetically modified crops presents no significant threat to humanity. Ho predicts a different case. If biotechnology continues its current course, it will lead to a 'critical genetic meltdown' which will put an end to humanity, at least as we know it, Ho argues.

Bearing in mind that this year is the bi-centenary of Malthus' Essay on the Principle of Population, which urged radical checks in population size, there is likely to be continued discussion on the number of mouths to feed. It is appropriate that Ho dismisses the claim that genetic engineering of food crops is the only way to feed the world's burgeoning population. 

Fighting Talk #19

£1.50 to "Anti-Fascist Action", BM 1734, London, WC1N 3XX.

It's been a few years since I reviewed an issue of Anti-Fascist Action's magazine, 'Fighting Talk'.

Since then, the anti-fascist scene has significantly changed. Where now, the massed ranks of the ANL/SWP, Militant's YRE or the Anti-Racist Alliance, all of whom parachuted into the arena at least partly on the backs of AFA's excellent work against the BNP, etc.?

Now, as in previous years, AFA are largely alone and the relatively low level of fascist activity, certainly at street level, has left AFA with opportunities to extend its work into other areas. This issue of 'Fighting Talk' illustrates the situation. There's info on the good international links AFA has built in recent times. This includes the founding statement of the Militant Anti-Fascist Network. And, in common with many recent issues of F.T., there's discussion on AFA's opportunities to develop the ideological side of their dual ideological/physical opposition to fascism. This is where AFA needs to tread carefully. As a single issue organisation, AFA has to avoid identifying with any single group which could fill the "political vacuum" it correctly identifies. It usually succeeds at this and F.T. invariably gives the whole of the left a fairly even slating (although it still cuddles up to Irish republicanism, given the chance) but it's difficult to see how they can get beyond this critique without becoming unduly partisan.

Anyway, this issue includes the usual regular features "in the area" (general news), "levelling the score" (football news), stuff on the far-right, the Gandalf trial, anti-fascist history and music/literature reviews, readers' letters and plenty more. 

Anarchist Studies

Volume 6, number 1, March 1998,
£14 subs (2 no.s) ISSN 0967-3393.

Anarchist Studies, established over five years ago, is an academic journal which covers anarchist theory, history and culture. In some editions, there are themes such as the environment, otherwise they are a collection of different articles and a large number of reviews.

Many anarchists tremble in fear or rage over an 'academic' journal which makes our movement's name its own. However, anything which publishes and debates anarchist, libertarian and syndicalist ideas which treats them fairly is surely a good resource. This issue has articles on Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, a polemic on Bookchin, and a more classical piece on Locke and liberal theory. Usually, it is well written and clear if you are reasonably well informed and interested in political theory and practice. 

**FIGHTING
TALK**

Twenty-First Century Anarchism: Unorthodox ideas for the millenium. Jon Purkis and James Bower (eds).

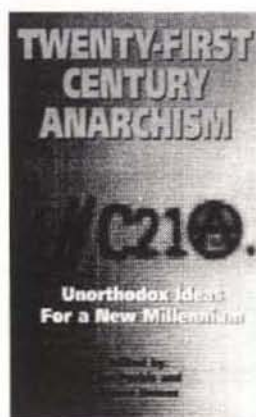
Cassell, ISBN 0 304 33743 9.

The new millenium approaches and every philosophy and belief should be reconsidering itself - so we are told. We must be prepared, but for what?

Always expect the unexpected! Will the new millenium be a sharp break with the past? I think not. Christ will not return, will he? Neither will there be a new Jerusalem.

The future will be made by us or not at all. We must have a clear idea of what we want to do, then do it. Therefore, collections of essays such as this are to be welcomed. Hopefully, the politics of the twenty first century will be the politics of direct action, since the present century has shown that all party based politics are bankrupt.

Consequently, the essay "In defence of radical direct action" interested me, as did the chapter "Neither State nor Market". The book itself seems to be rather self-conscious with a section in the introduction "How to read this book", a glossary at the end, and a conclusion after many of the essays, and seems unsure of its audience. These are not necessarily bad things, though, and I found some parts to be extremely interesting, even though others just left me cold. Maybe I should go away and write my own book on the next century, perhaps with the title "Notes towards a history of the 21st Century", in which anarchism, direct action and new tactics would form a major part. 



Anarchist Studies



Survival Strategies. Raghendra Gadagkar.

£14.50, Harvard University Press.

Kropotkin's Mutual Aid was a book that exerted a major influence on my thinking. This book by Gadagkar examines animal behaviour, identifying what are usually considered to be human characteristics, in animal social behaviour.

The author discusses in a compelling manner the most recent evolutionary explanations and theories in relation to animals and their survival strategies. It is, then, a useful update to Mutual Aid, and makes you think, is human nature (behaviour) all that unique, and do societies precede the arrival of human kind? 



Emu steps out

Emu is all set for take-off. Will it spread its wings and fly, or crash-land predictably? More importantly, what dark secrets lurk behind emu's innocent facade?

Despite widespread scepticism that the project was doomed to fail, it is now certain that the European single currency, the Euro, will be launched next January.

The fact that European monetary union (emu) has got this far, is itself a tribute to the combined political will of European leaders.

The politicians' road to emu has been a tortuous one. The struggle to meet the arbitrary conversion criteria has caused mass unemployment. At the same time, the whole convergence process descended to the level of farce, most notably when the German government attempted to re-value its gold reserve, only for the move to be blocked by the Bundesbank. At the final hour, most countries only met the conversion criteria by resorting to a large dollop of highly imaginative creative accounting.

*just why are
European
leaders
prepared to
push so
hard?*

Undeterred, the leaders of 11 European countries have driven the whole project forward, often against the wishes of their own electorate. However, when politicians go to such lengths and are prepared to take such risks with their own careers and reputations, a healthy dose of scepticism is called for. We have to question just what they are up to - just why are European leaders prepared to push so hard?

Unfortunately, we cannot hope to find the answer in what passes for the debate in Britain. The debate here has been dominated by crude nationalism. Emu has been portrayed as little more than an attempt by "Johnny foreigner" to rob Britain of her sovereignty. This nasty racist approach has been encouraged by a Labour Party fearful of losing support by appearing unpatriotic.

It is no surprise that the level of debate in Britain has been so moronic. Behind the 'free market' thinking, which sadly now underpins all the mainstream parties' policies, all are deeply divided on the issue of emu. Being undecided, they are unable to take part in any real debate. The result has been a descent into little more than a squabble among

academics
and various
factions
among
Britain's elites -
a squabble often
motivated more by petty
self-interest rather than logic.

Thus, we have seen senior mandarins within the Foreign office, fearful of becoming isolated from Europe, pushing for Britain to join, while the bank of England, fearful of being reduced to merely a branch of the new European central bank, have been campaigning against entry.

The failure of free market ideas to give a clear lead is an important point. In principle, free market orthodoxy favours the setting up of broad currency zones such as that intended under the Euro. This not only reduces the cost of exchanging money, it also tends to lead to lower interest and inflation rates. The issue that has divided the free market camp, is not whether there are gains to be had from emu (there is broad agreement that there are), but the key point of difference is whether emu is feasible within the European union.

Free market orthodoxy argues that, for a currency zone to work,



there have to be a number of social and economic conditions present. For example, there should be no cultural, linguistic or legal barriers to hinder labour mobility across frontiers. On this, and almost all the other conditions, the EU fails to qualify as a candidate for a new currency zone.

This has led to a war of words breaking out amongst economists within the academic world over the viability of emu. Amidst all this petty squabbling, the real issue of what is on offer from emu has been largely lost. This is a pity, because on closer inspection of what free market orthodoxy claims can be gained from emu, it quickly becomes clear that it is risky, the sums do not add up, and emu should not go ahead.

healthy wealthy emu?

According to market theory, the main prize to be had from emu is low inflation and interest rates. However, viewing these supposed gains from the perspective of the prime instigator of emu, Germany, it immediately becomes clear that there is no logic in its favour. Germany has enjoyed both low inflation and low interest rates for many years.

Far from gaining economic stability, entering emu with unstable economies, such as Spain and Italy, is in fact putting Germany's cherished post war prosperity at risk. For what reason? To reap the saving gained from doing away with the cost of exchanging money? The European Commission estimates these savings will amount to no more than 0.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Is it really feasible that Germany's leaders are abandoning their precious mark to gain 0.5% of GDP? Let's be serious. The truth is that the answer as to why Germany is pushing ahead with emu cannot be found within the narrow confines of free market economics.

So, we need to look beyond Britain's free market pre-occupations for a moment, and examine the issue with a somewhat broader economic and political

outlook. However, this does present a problem. Free market ideas now exercise such a stranglehold on Britain's political life, it has become hard to discern even a squeak of an alternative view. One of the few examples of such commentators is William Hutton, editor of "The Observer", who has been mounting a rear guard action against free market orthodoxy. Through his paper, Hutton has not only railed against Britain's jingoistic approach to the single currency debate, he has also presented

a much more plausible argument as to why the Euro is going ahead from a social market perspective.

Hutton's thesis is that emu is being introduced in order to establish a European super-state, powerful enough to challenge the political and economic power of the USA. He argues that a challenge to the US's "world leader" status is needed because the political power currently wielded by the US no longer bears any relation to its economic strength. Furthermore, the US uses this disproportionate political power to make up for its economic failings - to the cost of European and world stability.

emu-boxing the \$

Thus, US political power is maintained by the status of the dollar as the world's trading currency. The US uses the dollar strength both as a lever to exercise political power over dollar-dependent nations and to insulate its economy from the rigours of the free market. This enables the US to devalue the dollar at will, making US goods cheap, free from the fear of speculative attack and the need to raise interest rates. In effect, the US is using cheap money to export unemployment to Europe, while ignoring its structural trade deficit by simply printing dollars to pay for expensive imports.

Hutton goes on to argue that these two advantages are the reason the US blocks any moves to introduce regulation of the world's volatile currency markets. Regulation would mean pegging the value of the dollar, making US exports expensive, which would mean the spectre of US recession.



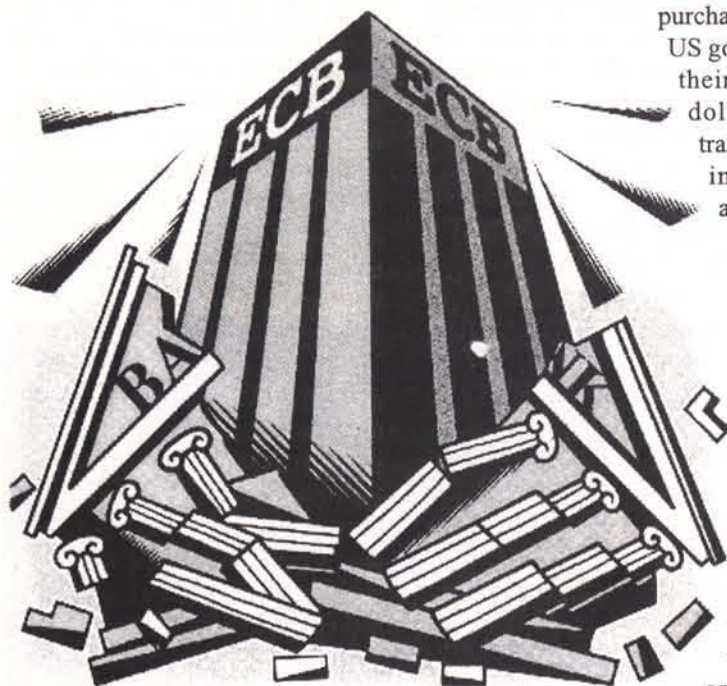
Equally, regulation would restrict the ability of US financiers to move capital around the world, thus threatening their dominance of the financial markets.

Following this logic, the introduction of the Euro will provide a competitor to the dollar, bringing to an end the many advantages the US gains by the dollars near-monopoly position as the world's trading currency. Countries who are currently forced to accept US "leadership" through their dollar-dependency, would be able to switch their foreign currency reserves away from dollars into Euro's, as well as starting to trade in Euro's. This would lead to dollars being exchanged for the Euro, imposing market discipline on the US economy and opening it up to speculative attack. The result? Regulation of the currency market suddenly becomes in the US interest, which then ends the economic instability caused by speculation.

Euro-dominance

Thus, in Hutton's view there is much to be gained from emu. The Euro will reduce US political power to a level into line with its declining economic power, bringing stability to the world currency markets in the process. Conversely, European political power will increase

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and world
stability.*



proportionately with its growing economic power, enabling Europe to pursue its own independent global strategy, leading to the opening up of the world's markets to European exports. In short, emu will turn Europe into a new economic and political superpower capable of competing with the US.

Heady stuff indeed. If Hutton is right, not only will emu restore world wide economic stability, it will ensure an economic boom that will allow Europe to maintain its social market base, which is now under threat as a result of the long European recession. From this viewpoint, it is easy to understand why Germany is willing to sacrifice its mark to ensure a wider European currency zone is established. However, a look at Hutton's ideas from a revolutionary perspective exposes flaws in his thinking, and also offers us some more real reasons for emu going ahead.

emu-roots

Short history lesson - are you reading attentively? The US emerges from the Second World War with its economy intact and the long battle for economic supremacy with Britain and Germany won. By 1950, the US economy accounts for 47.8% of total world production. Everyone wants dollars, both to

purchase better quality and cheaper US goods, and as a safe haven for their currency reserves. The dollar becomes the world's trading currency, as enshrined in the Bretton Woods agreement (the dollar was given a fixed gold value, with the world's currencies in turn being fixed to the dollar). A system of fixed exchange rates is established.

However, as modern technology rebuilds the war-torn German and Japanese economies, the US economic and technological dominance begins to falter, leaving it with a major dilemma. In order to compete, US goods must be made cheaper by devaluing the dollar, but devaluation risks the dollar's world currency status. A compromise is sought. The dollar is to be gradually devalued, in an attempt to retain market confidence, ensuring retention of world dollar-dominance. But slow devaluation, by its very nature, implied the ending of the fixed exchange system.

Finally, in 1971, the dollar's link to gold is suspended, in effect floating the dollar on the world's currency markets, and bringing a flexible, market based exchange rate system.

free market stability and other myths

It is here that we part company with Hutton and with social democracy in general. Hutton's argument is that the US attempt to engineer a "soft landing" for the dollar, through gradual devaluation, succeeded. This apparently threw the currency market out of equilibrium, resulting in too many dollars being in circulation, giving the US an unfair advantage. He argues that the introduction of the Euro will restore competition, bringing market forces back into play and so breaking the dollar's near-monopoly position.

With the market forces back in operation, it is then only a question

of European and US governments bringing in regulation for currency order to be restored. This reflects Hutton's social market view that, although the free market system is flawed, it remains the only option for economic organisation, and that it can be made to function through state regulation.

Hutton's belief that restoring market forces will lead to currency stability is wishful thinking. The reality is the exact opposite. Capitalist economic stability can only be maintained when market forces are excluded from the process of currency exchange by a fixed rate system. Here, currencies remain stable for long periods of time, allowing less room for speculative activity. For 18 years, between 1949-67, the value of the pound against the dollar remained unchanged.

However, for a fixed exchange system to function it has to be underpinned by a single dominant economy, ensuring the presence of a dominant currency, against which all other currencies are fixed - as during much of the post-war period. But under capitalism, economic supremacy is not indefinite - at some point a competitor will emerge to challenge the dominant economy, leading to the breakdown of the fixed exchange system, and an increase in speculative activity as currency speculators make money, by "betting" on currencies losing their value. The example here is the late 1960's onwards, as the German and Japanese economies increasingly came to challenge US economic dominance.

Currency speculation is only a symptom of the real cause of instability; the market-led flexible exchange rate system. When a flexible exchange rate system is in operation, speculative activity cannot be regulated. The power of currency speculators is too great. Order will only be restored when a dominant economy once again emerges and a fixed exchange rate system can once again operate.

The reason why social democratic commentators, whether free market or otherwise, have difficulty in accepting this argument

capitalist economic stability can only be maintained when market forces are excluded from the process of currency exchange by a fixed rate system



is that to do so would mean accepting that capitalism is itself fatally flawed. For, as we have seen, under capitalism, a fixed exchange system is the only one that offers the desired stability; but competition ensures that, at some point, a challenger will emerge, throwing the currency markets into chaos.

beyond "free" markets

There are two ways to bring this process to an end and ensure long term economic stability. Either establish a world-wide economy, based on a single global currency, or bring capitalism to an end and replace it with a system based on co-operation. Needless to say, neither will ever be accepted by social democratic commentators, which is why the world still awaits a social democratic solution to the current currency chaos.

the real emu-agenda

Returning to emu, we can now see it as the start of a bid by Europe, led by Germany, to become the world's dominant economic and political power and make the Euro the world's trading currency. It has been apparent for sometime that the German economy is too small to begin to challenge US dominance, and that, to be successful, it would have to broaden its economic base. This is what is now occurring through emu and this is why Germany is willing to risk its post war stability to ensure emu succeeds.

That there should be a challenge to US dominance at this time is no coincidence. German unification alarmed the rest of Europe, fearful that an already dominant Germany would become even more dominant. France, in particular, has pushed for emu as a way of exercising broader European control of German political and economic decision making. An even more important factor is the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

After the war, the threat of Soviet power led countries to accept US dominance, as they relied on the

support of its massive military arsenal. It is very doubtful that emu would be going ahead if the Soviet army remained camped on Germany's doorstep. Now the Soviet threat has gone, we are seeing a return to the normal state of play under capitalism of competing economies vying for economic dominance.

emu - not the people's friend

Europe's bid for world leader status will have severe repercussions for Europe's working class, already paying the price of emu in the form of a fresh wave of mass unemployment.

Uneven economic development will remain, ensuring the continued existence of national economies within the broader Euro currency zone. However, in the past, weaker European economies could maintain competitiveness through devaluation of their currencies, whereas in future this will not be possible. Instead, weaker economies will have to resort to trying to extract more value from workers by making them work harder for less.

This will not be possible if Europe's labour markets remain restricted through regulation. As emu proceeds, the pressure to deregulate Europe's labour market will grow, leading to falling wages and ever-increasing cuts to welfare spending.

trade union wrongs

This perspective sheds some light on the British trade unions' backing of emu. It highlights the fact that they have accepted as irreversible the deregulation of the British labour market. It also shows that they are hoping to gain from the competitive advantage the unregulated British economy would gain, in the short term, over a regulated Europe. In so doing, they are undermining any attempt by European organised labour to fight

off deregulation. In short, a disgraceful act of betrayal.

emu-wars?

However, the implications of European economics go much further than the effects on Europe. The creation of three super-state trading blocks, based on the US, German and Japanese economies, are beginning to struggle with each other for economic supremacy. If past experience is anything to go by, this economic struggle will, at some point, turn into a struggle of the more physical kind; a terrifying prospect.



Indeed, a prospect that takes the issue of emu well beyond the petty squabble about British sovereignty, which is all our party politicians seem to have managed to produce on our TV screens. This emu is a big one. It is no white elephant, and it is of concern to us all. Watch the growing pains carefully. 

as emu proceeds, the pressure to deregulate Europe's labour market will grow, leading to falling wages and ever-increasing cuts to welfare spending



Note: Closer Look articles are a regular feature of DA - they are designed to probe deeper into key contemporary issues and to offer an anarchosindicalist/alternative viewpoint. If you want further or background information on the issues raised in Closer Look articles, you can contact the researchers who produce them. They can explain terms, clarify points, or provide more references and context. Write to: DA-SF, Closer Look, PO Box 1095, Sheffield, S2 4YR.

The year that nearly was

-or was it?



As we are in a year ending in 8 it is to be expected that we should be treated to a flood of left-wing nostalgia for the events of 1968.

Tarig Ali has been doing his normal media rounds recalling Europe's youths finest hour, the '68 Paris uprising. No doubt those few who have remained active will allow themselves a few moments of quite contemplation, remembering the time that, for a brief period, it looked like a revolution in Europe was about to happen.

However, all that revolutionary potential was to come to nothing. By 1979, the Thatcher government was in power and a revolution of the right began - coincidentally, a right wing revolution that had started in 1968.

For it was in 1968 that Milton Friedman of Chicago University gave his seminal address to the American Economic Association outlining the monetary explanation for inflation. It was to be Friedman's ideas that were to form the cornerstone of Thatcher's crusade against inflation in the late 1970s. The same year saw the then

obscure Institute of Economic Affairs published papers on privatisation and trade union reform.

These ideas were taken up by Keith Joseph and his disciple Margaret Thatcher, who both started to extol the virtues of free market capitalism. At the Conservative Party conference in 1968, Thatcher delivered her first recognisable Thatcherite speech proclaiming the end of state power. As the right's ideas and confidence grew, the first storm clouds of the economic recession were beginning to gather. Thatcher was able to exploit the growing fear of unemployment and inflation to capture first the Tory Party and then the country, to launch the right's counter offensive against post war Keynesian state interventionism.

It has been argued that history could have been different if the 1968 revolt by youth, aimed at winning greater personal freedom, could have somehow spilled over into full blown revolution. At the heart of this argument lies the notion of spontaneity. The idea that single events can lead to people casting aside their social democratic blinkers and discovering revolutionary ideals in a

blinding flash of revolt.

Reality is different. Revolutionary movements are not created overnight; they have to evolve. A long term alternative to capitalism, able to alter the lives of people for the better, will only come about by first establishing a social and economic political organisation. Only then can we expect a revolutionary movement to grow which is capable of overthrowing capitalism and, just as importantly, able to organise an alternative society.

The idea that Europe's working class of the 1960s casting aside capitalism at the drop of a demonstrating students hat, is both utopian and impractical. It was steeped in social democratic politics and organised in reformist unions - and generally not interested in student protest. As the heady '60s passed into the recession-hit '70's, it was the right who were able to offer explanations, and it was the right who were able to exploit the uncertainty caused by recession. Meanwhile, the only alternative at the time, the Marxist left, continued its slow decline, as the true horrors of its economic alternative, Soviet Russia, became ever clearer. 

Who is Solidarity Federation?

Solidarity Federation is the new solidarity movement. Formed in March 1994, it consists of a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland & Wales. The basic foundation of Solidarity Federation is the Local.

Getting down the Local

People are getting together to form Locals – Solidarity Federation groups. Locals put solidarity into practice. In time, each Local will have a premises as a base for solidarity action in the local community. Locals are organising or getting involved in local campaigns across a wide range of issues – both in the community and in workplaces. Issues are wide-ranging: defending our natural and local environment and health; opposing racism, sexism and homophobia; in fact, anything which defends or contributes to our mutual quality of life. It all forms part and parcel of the building of a solidarity movement.

Direct Action

Apart from being the name of this Quarterly, Direct Action is the tool which Locals use in all their work. At a basic level, this can be simply the spreading of information through leaflets, local bulletins and public meetings to raise awareness and involvement locally. However, Direct Action is not limited to spreading information; it means a physical presence in defending and promoting a better quality of life. Fundamental to Direct Action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals. While we reserve the right to take opportunities to fight for improvements to our quality of life now, the solidarity movement must always remain independent from those we are demanding from. Solidarity Federation will accept neither leadership, charity, nor guidance from government or business – instead, we must couple our principle of solidarity with the practice of self-reliance.

Aims and Principles

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of people who seek to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit world-wide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege.

In their place, we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism. That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on similar principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trade Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our

oppression.

We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Industrial Networks and Locals which are the nuclei of future revolutionary unions and centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through direct participation of the membership. We welcome all who agree with our aims and principles and want to work to achieve social revolution. We recognise that the class struggle is world-wide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association (IWA), whose Principles we share.

Networks

Solidarity Federation members who work in the same work sector have formed Networks. Their purpose is to promote solidarity amongst workers. Networks also use all the tools of Direct Action at their disposal, to fight for better pay and conditions. Networks form the basis of a completely new labour movement, nothing like the Trade Unions, which are weakened by having to abide by ridiculous laws, and by hierarchical power structures and self-interested paid officials. The fundamentally different nature of Networks fits their fundamentally different aim.

Where to?

As Locals and Networks grow, they practise community and workers' self-management. Eventually, industries will be run by producers and consumers. In other words, by workers (in Networks) and people in the wider community (Locals), who want the goods and services they provide. And this is no flight of fancy or text-book dream. As the solidarity movement grows in members and influence, so does the scope for action. Both the Locals and Networks have already established a reputation and are showing real results in membership & effectiveness.

Global Solidarity

Capitalism is international, so we need to be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative. Nationalism and patriotism lead to pointless and false divisions, used as tools to fuel economic and bloody wars. Solidarity Federation opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity.

Solidarity Federation is the British section of the International Workers' Association (IWA), the anarcho-sindicalist association. This gives it essential international solidarity and experience from much larger sections such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). Founded in 1922, the IWA has a long history of solidarity in action; by the 2nd World War over 5 million people worldwide were affiliated. A combination of war, fascism, and soviet 'communism' all but destroyed the movement, but after the Spanish CNT re-emerged in the late 70's, the IWA had a new lease of life.

Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the last IWA Congress in Madrid, another 7 new sections were affiliated from South America, Africa, Ireland, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Getting Involved

A global solidarity movement can only gather strength as many more people who share the same aims get involved.

Contacting Solidarity Federation offers the possibility of contributing to this growing momentum. It is not like joining a club, union, or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience.

It might just be worth it.

(See inside the front cover for contact details.)

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