

Black Flag

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Theory:
Why your
wage cuts
are wrong

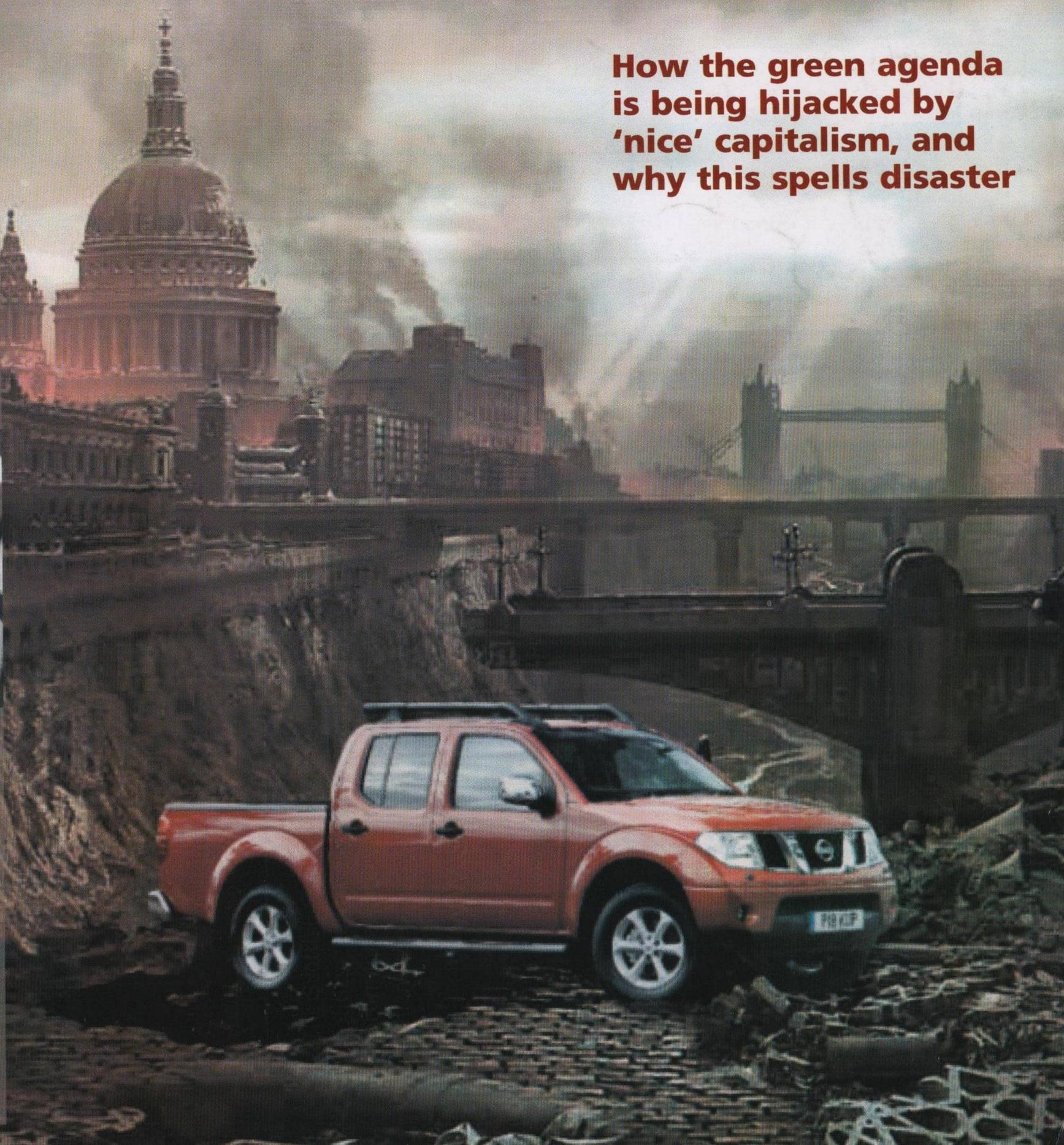
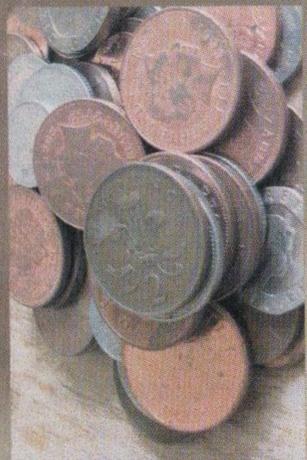
LIBERAL APOCALYPSE

**How the green agenda
is being hijacked by
'nice' capitalism, and
why this spells disaster**

In Focus:
Prisons in
the world
of today



**Also inside
this issue...**



Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of Black Flag for 2008! Yes, we have met our objective to be bi-annual. This is a great start, but much more needs to be done and, as always, it depends on our readers and their willingness to contribute articles, time and energy.

So what is in this issue? With the credit crunch slowly unravelling the debt-dependent "real" economy, we are in for hard times. As such, we discuss the economics of wage cutting, as calls for this "cure" for our economic woes increase. This ties in to our look at the weakness of the unions (an obvious area for anarchist activity). Unfortunately, we may see the rise of the far-right and so we continue our look at the state of UK fascism. We also discuss our ecological and health problems, with a discussion of the welfare state from a libertarian perspective and analysis of why an eco-capitalism is an impossibility, while an eco-anarchy is essential for our survival.

A key issue that comes out through is the need for anarchists to go beyond abstract calls for revolution and to apply our ideas today. If we do not propose practical solutions, then others (such as the right) will. As such, the lengthy review of Colin Ward's classic "Anarchy in Action" should be food for thought.

We also provide two reviews which tie in with the final part of our analysis of the Russian revolution. The one thing that is obvious is that Leninism does not offer any solutions to the problems we face.

Finally, we have contacted the various British anarchist federations with a proposal for increased co-operation. We are interested in working closely with them and any other small anarchist publishing groups or individuals to produce a high quality, frequent and regular journal which anarchists and non-anarchists alike will look forward to seeing. Next issue should see Black Flag have a section from the Anarchist Federation in it. Hopefully others will follow!



OUT ON A LIMB: Our friendly red and black mascot shows how it feels to fight in isolation
Photograph: Anya Brennan

Keyboard warriors: Some of the major anarchist and activist web groups and sites online today



PS: If you're not on this list we're not snubbing you, we just don't have much space here!

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Ethos

Black Flag is for a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation – against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

The Black Flag has been a world-wide symbol for anarchism since the 1880s. It is at base a representative of the negation of all oppressive structures.

About

Contributors/excerpts:

Ade Dimmick
Mark R
Iain McKay
Richard Griffin
Rob Ray (Freedom Press)
Kaf and Paul Stott
Jaroslaw Urbanski
Jim L
Emma Goldman
Paul Petard
Richard Alexander

Layout/design

Rob Ray (Freedom Press)

Printing

Clydeside Press,
Scotland

☎ 0141-552 5519

Contact

✉ black_flag@lycos.co.uk
Black Flag
BM Hurricane,
London,
WC1N 3XX,
United Kingdom,

Bulk Orders from AK Press

✉ AK Press (UK)
PO Box 12766
Edinburgh
EH8

☎ 0131 555 5165

✉ AK Press (USA)
PO Box 40862
San Francisco CA

☎ 94140-0682
✉ ak@akpress.org

Real change means fighting for an NHS

Analysis: Reform should be high priority

THE GOVERNMENT is again being accused of a backdoor programme of privatisation for the National Health Service. They are currently drawing up plans to bring in private companies to take over the management of 'struggling' NHS Trusts.

From October 2008 the Department of Health is declaring lists of "underperforming" hospitals and Primary Care Trusts. These will then be given nine months to improve before being labelled "challenged", and ready for takeover. They plan to appoint "turnaround" teams that could be other NHS trusts, private companies or a Public Private Partnership (PPP).

In reality, the chances of a struggling NHS Trust wanting to takeover a failing or underperforming one is highly unlikely, and the government is perfectly aware of this. The government say that such takeovers would not amount to privatisation, because the NHS will still retain control of assets and the staff will still be NHS staff.

Health campaigners and unions accuse the government of opening the door to private companies to make vast profits at the expense of the taxpayer; and there is no evidence that a private company would do a better job anyway.

A spokesman for the British Medical Association said: "Such a move would effectively see parts of the NHS become privatised. They would just aim to make a profit rather than the driver being the high-quality care our patients need."⁽¹⁾ In fact, one example of a NHS hospital that was taken over by Secta, a health care consultancy group, failed abysmally. Secta took over the Good Hope Hospital in Birmingham in 2003 and by 2006 it had a deficit of £20million on a turnover of around £100million. The financial and management problems were only rectified when the NHS regained control after Secta's spectacular failure.

There is nothing new to this governmental policy of privatisation by stealth. There is already a phenomenal amount of private investment in the NHS, which is gradually increasing each year. The government has been paving the way for the total privatisation of the NHS for years now. Way back in 1987, the Adam Smith Institute (ASI)⁽²⁾, the UK based think-tank dedicated to free-market policies, proposed a radical restructuring of the NHS, in essence its privatisation. In fact the ASI is heralded as "a pioneer of privatisation."

PPP is an umbrella name given to a range of financial initiatives which involves the private sector operating public services. In

reality it is a ploy towards total privatisation. The most common PPP initiative is Private Finance Initiative (PFI)⁽³⁾, - the procuring of public buildings with private money, as well as private construction and maintenance contracts in public sector industries. Since 1990, more than 700 projects worth more than £50 billion have been initiated.

At the moment there are PFI construction projects being delivered to the health care sector up to the value of £800 million. One PFI company even supplies purpose-built, pre-packed MFI style operating suites.

The trade union Amicus predict that private sector companies will, over the next few years, make profits of around £23 billion from PFI hospital buildings. Amicus also found that the first wave of contracting out medical procedures cost £2.5 billion, and that this is in addition to the £500 million spent on private consultancy firms.

In keeping with the anti-privatisation theme, an Amicus⁽⁴⁾ spokesman said: "People want their taxes spent on the NHS not on making healthy profits for private companies that have been brought in to provide



services." *The PFI Experience: Voices from the Frontline*⁽⁵⁾ was commissioned by the healthcare union Unison, and researched by John Lister from London Health Emergency, interviewed staff in PFI facilities. Without exception they reported: reduced levels of care; financial difficulties; bed shortages; lack of job satisfaction and low morale and serious design faults.

In an interview with Freedom back in 2006, John attacked another government initiative - the Independent Sector Treatment Centre (ISTC). The ISTC is a privately ran medical centre, where routine, non-urgent operations are farmed out to the private sector.

The ISTC was launched in two waves, initially in 2003, with the second wave starting in 2005. The programme was only to be continued should it prove to be "value for money". To date there is no firm evidence that this is the case, and the government is determined to press on regardless in its crusade to totally privatise the NHS. It is anticipated that in a new government contract, some 14 private-sector companies may manage up to 70% of the total NHS budget for care!

Still very much in the frame, champions of laissez-faire capitalism the ASI hosted a conference in 2005, which was held in the House of Commons. A senior NHS official addressed the audience thus: "We created a marketplace. It's up to you now... together we've created a new era of healthcare provision which can only get wider."⁽⁶⁾

In 2006, a secret government plan to privatise an entire tier of the NHS⁽⁷⁾ was prematurely revealed. It came to light when the Department of Health approached, amongst others, US corporations United Health Care and Kaiser Permanente.

It is not only hospitals that are at risk. The government is attacking the very heart of local communities in a bid to privatise GP practices. A number of practices in East and North London have already been taken over by private companies Atos and United Healthcare. United Health Care has recently been investigated for financial irregularities in the US.

Now, the government would have us believe, the US model of healthcare is something which can be adapted and integrated into our own public health care system. The American system is the most expensive in the world. Recent years have seen significant increases in the costs of drugs, health insurance, drugs, and medical consultations.

One in five Americans say they can't afford the health care they need. An estimated 46 million Americans do not have insurance cover; while the cartel of pharmaceutical, insurance and direct service delivery companies continue to make vast profits.

The National Center for Health Statistics state that in 2007 the US spent \$2.26 trillion on health care. Other sources state that the US spends more on health care, both as a gross domestic product and on a per capita basis than any other country in the world. Yet the system is failing those who need health care the most, while the government subsidises private companies.

Libertarian Socialist Noam Chomsky, was moved to comment: "If we take the immediate problems in the US, probably the main domestic problem we face is the collapse of the health care system, which is a very serious problem. People can't get drugs, can't get medical care, costs are out of control, and it is getting worse and worse."⁽⁸⁾

How to respond

The simplistic catch-all solution is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism - the abolition of the root cause of the problem. But is there actually a clear libertarian



position? Is there a definitive statement? Is there a revolutionary perspective that working class people can relate to?

The answer is yes, but only if we take our politics seriously and recognise that fighting for reforms, the right kind of reforms, need not be in contradiction with our longer term goals of social revolution. However, if we address the pressing social problems we face now with simply repeated calls for revolution then we can be assured that our influence will not grow and any "solutions" suggested will reflect the interests of state and capital, not working class people.

Any such position can only be developed by discussion and debate in the movement. One thing is fundamental, namely that the libertarian position has to be our consistent line of working-class people controlling their own lives, communities, workplaces, essential services, and yes, their struggles. Our watchword is independent working class organisation, workers' self-management and class solidarity.

It is imperative that workers and revolutionaries alike fight to oppose the privatisation programme of the NHS. To some it may appear to be a reformist statement, and indeed an ideological contradiction to on the one hand call for the abolition of the State, while on the other defending the NHS as a state institution.

However, it is important to fight for day to day, bread and butter, issues that are relevant

to the working class, issues that have a major bearing on our lives and futures. Fighting and winning such struggles help in the raising of class consciousness, solidarity, and empowerment. They are stepping stones towards the eventual overthrow of capitalism.

These struggles must be controlled by the workers themselves. In a recent pamphlet entitled *Towards a Cure: Radical Health Reform from the Bottom Up*, activists from the Irish Workers Solidarity Movement⁽⁹⁾, who face their own health care crisis, call for radical reforms orchestrated by workers, service-users and local communities.

They state: "We cannot rely on politicians. We cannot rely on trade union leaders. We should not, indeed, rely on any 'leaders'. What we need is to build a campaign from the bottom up – a campaign which will rely on the ingenuity and honest of ordinary people.

"We need to build a campaign which cannot be bought off or 'incorporated' – a campaign whose 'leadership' remains at grassroots level and which doesn't allow itself to become a vehicle for the massaging of egos or the grooming of wannabe politicians." The WSM advocate local campaigns and national networks to address issues and co-ordinate struggles.

One anarchist group noted: "Even the 'good' things that the State does are actually harmful. The Health Service for example, patches up just like an industrial repair shop which in a sense it is. It serves to make us

dependent on the State and, worst of all, it buys us off cheaply. It prevents us from creating the genuine, self-managed Health Service we need."⁽¹⁰⁾

As true as this may be, we need to fight where we are now – not where we would like to be. Our priority as revolutionaries is to encourage workers self-organisation as an ongoing mode of struggle, through both the workplace and community as a whole.

However, while fighting privatisation we should not be defending nationalisation. There are problems with the NHS and it is too important to be left in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. We do not seek to replace state bosses with private ones, nor vice versa. We must present alternatives to both the options capitalism prefers, namely privatisation and nationalisation.

We should, as in any industry, be raising demands for workers' self-management as well as effective patient/neighbourhood organisation and control. One possible alternative could be turning hospitals into co-operatives within a federal structure. Other possibilities can be found in Colin Ward's *Social Policy*.⁽¹¹⁾

In this way, a socialised health care system may become recognised as a viable alternative – and become a goal which inspires and informs resistance to the current neo-liberal agenda of privatisation by stealth.

By Ade Dimmick

NOTES:

1. The Times. 5.6.08

2. Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a Scottish philosopher and economist, said to be the 'father of modern economics'. His most famous work is *An Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. (1776). Unlike the Adam Smith Institute, he was aware of the limitations of laissez-faire capitalism and would be rolling in his grave at its antics.

3. A lot of research into PPP and PFI has been conducted by the unions. Check out unison.org.uk/pfi

4. amicustheunion.org

5. To read the full document check out unison.org.uk/acrobat/13383.pdf

6. *The Guardian*. 24.5.05

7. *The Guardian*. 30.6.06

8. *Chomsky on Anarchism*. Ed. Barry Pateman. AK Press. 2005. From an interview conducted by Ziga Vodovnik. 14.7.04.

9. The Workers Solidarity Movement is an Irish libertarian-communist organisation. *Towards a Cure* is available for €1 from PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland.

10. *Everything you ever wanted to know about anarchism but were afraid to ask*. The Anarchist Media Group. C1980. Currently out-of-print. Read full text on radical.org.uk/anarchism

11. Colin Ward, *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response* (London: London School of Economics, 1996; London: Freedom Press, corrected edn., 2000)

Workers Solidarity Movement

*"Freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice..
..Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality"*



In this article from the WSM, the Irish group spell out their vision for the future of health

MEDICINE today has become highly specialised and is permeated with interference from insurance corporations and drug manufacturers. It is difficult and expensive to get basic medical care (public hospitals in working class communities are being closed by the government).

Timely diagnosis and treatments seem to be myths of the medical industrialists. Ambulance services may only be available to those with money in the near future. Paramedics are attached to fire departments, many of which are voluntary. Dental, optical, prenatal, pediatric, and elderly care are even less available to those who need them.

Governments have closed public mental hospitals until the primary sources of treatment/medication for mentally ill persons are the State and County prison systems. US military hospitals are overwhelmed with patients from the latest US-Iraq War to before the US-Vietnam War.

"To each according to their needs."

■ **Medical demand:** We propose to reorganize the system around a "single payer system" (according to the principles of mutual aid and mutual risk). Employers will be collectivised. Collectivised workplaces will treat health care as part of the cost of production (labour needs periodic maintenance and repair, just as machinery does), so collectivised work places will contribute to one or more medical mutual aid funds depending on efficiency and "economy of scale".

These funds will reimburse medical service providers for medical care, medicine and medical supplies/facilities/equipment.

■ **Demand-side management:** Worker self-management will enable us to reduce the need for medical care by promoting safer and less stressful workplaces, a cleaner environment, childhood nutrition and preventative medicine, etc. We need to reduce the use of potentially harmful chemicals in food and other aspects of human life. We can also improve our general sanitation practices.

■ **No freedom without well-being** (Bakunin): All people should take advantage of available medical care. Without bosses, we hope to have more doctors and nurses. Health is a cardinal value/precursor of a free society, not a privilege for the wealthy. No person will ever be denied the health care that they need.

We need regular medical, dental, and optical exams for preventative purposes.

Reorganising Medical Services

■ **Medical workers:** Medical workplaces will

be collectivised. This will include laboratories and support services from the cradle to the grave. This will include medical schools and medical job training. Free college education based on aptitude will free doctors and nurses from a life of debt. Medical students will work in an internship and a one year residence before they can be tested or certified to practice medicine.

Some job skills and experience(s) cannot be democratised, as was discovered of medicine in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (when they killed doctors for not being "politically correct"). We will maintain a certification process (a collective) for professional expertise for medical workers like doctors and nurses with life restorative/sustaining responsibilities.

All doctors should work first as general practitioners for several years in a public hospital or military (veterans/militia) hospitals, to pay for their free education. Work errors can be minimised by reducing (avoiding, if possible) overwork. Without bosses, we hope to have less continuous work hours for doctors and nurses.

While working as general practitioners, doctors and nurses will use their knowledge and skills to help teach, before specialising in an area of medicine. Fellow medical workers will help each other to uphold the public trust in them (Medical malpractice/substance abuse by doctors is a crime, not a lawsuit).

■ **Medical services:** As a worker, you will get a medical picture-ID card which will introduce you and your family/household to medical service providers. It is also a passport for filling prescriptions. According to service planners at Kaiser-Permanente HMO in Southern California (1994), modern medicine is less invasive and requires less protracted time in the hospital. Without the cost burden of medical malpractice lawsuits and profit motives of medical corporations, we can make medical care more affordable by the way its resources are allocated; by reorganising existing facilities and building new ones.

When capitalism is abolished, social wealth will be democratised in community credit unions. We propose some of these resources be earmarked for improvements to public health/education. Each community will collaborate with their health workers to understand their health care needs and plan care using a mix of the following:

(1) The **free clinic** (neighborhood clinic) will provide outpatient care, prescription drugs [pharmacies], medical exams, women's health information, medical testing lab referrals and referrals to specialists for further examination and treatment [triage].

(2) The **urgent care hospital** (community hospital) will provide medical exams and out-

patient medical care and surgery. Facility would host general practitioners, internal medicine, sports medicine, family medicine (obstetrics, pediatrics, family planning/birth control), dental care, and optical care.

(3) The **emergency care hospital** (regional hospital) will have in patient medical and forensic laboratories. It will provide Trauma Center care, life restorative surgery, medical specialists, etc. It will serve more than one community and those communities will share in its upkeep. Rescue Ambulances and paramedics will be stationed at community fire stations. Medical equipment will be supplied when available, or shared between hospitals, otherwise. Facility would host medical school interns and first year residents.

(4) The **elderly care hospital** (built where needed) will be associated with and support existing Assisted Living facilities, Retirement Homes, and Home Bound elderly persons. Retired persons who are still independent will not need this facility until their independence becomes limited by circumstance.

(5) The **military hospital** will provide long-term medical treatment for Veterans of military service and other victims of militarism and wars.

(6) The **mental health hospital** will provide long-term out-patient and in-patient care for the mentally ill, substance abusers, and those needing counseling for other medical problems.

Besides hospitals, doctors and nurses will continue to work in a variety of medical services including private medical, dental and optical practices/offices.

Medicines

Medicines are overpriced under capitalism because they are a monopoly or oligopoly. When their production is collectivised, they will be produced for need [free or rationed] rather than profit. This will also affect whether new medicines are rushed to market for profit or for human needs; and how fast we get rid of drugs that turn out to be too unhealthful or too risky.

We must preserve traditional medicine (like home remedies) and ancient ecosystems (eg. the Amazon) from destruction, because they may be a source of future medicines. We advocate exchanging home remedies. We advocate sound new medical research.

It is important that workers should be comfortable administering First Aid on themselves and others in their workplaces and families. First Aid should be taught as part of a health class in public schools.

By The WSM





Flooding the market

WASHOUT: Fear over the future for the environment has prompted talk of change – but can capitalism deliver it?

Theory: Social Ecologist Mark R explains the flaws in green capitalism

SOMETHING strange has happened over the last few years. Ecological concerns, formerly the preserve of a few bearded hippies and lefty types, have entered the mainstream. Climate change due to human activity has been accepted as fact by government and business alike. Something has to be done.

Unfortunately this something is up for grabs. At the moment the solutions fighting it out for prominence come up pretty poorly. None of them fully engage with the wider context of our class-based, hierarchical society. All seek to work within capitalism without questioning whether this is desirable or even feasible.

Capitalism to the rescue?

Can capitalism 'solve' the climate change problem? Well, a few years ago my instant reaction would have been no. My answer now

is that it's highly unlikely to. It depends whether you're talking about a pure market system or the more complex capitalist world that we actually live in.

Capitalism by its nature is based on the need to continuously expand or die. New markets must constantly be sought, new or more efficient ways of generating (or rather realising) profit created. There is no moral dimension to capitalism. In itself does not take into account anything other than the accumulation of wealth.

There are some free market advocates that believe that the solution to environmental problems is private ownership. According to Fred Smith, president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, "Rather than the silly slogan of some environmentalists, that 'trees should have standing,' our argument is that behind every tree should stand an owner who can act as its protector"⁽¹⁾.

It's unclear what would stop the owner

from chopping the tree down if it were more profitable to do so. In this argument pollution would be fought by owners of land/property suffering pollution bringing legal claims – though proving that a particular factory is responsible for acid rain seems a little difficult.

Bar these visions of a bosses' utopia in which everything is owned for the good of all (not to mention the profit of the few) – and one in which it is hard to see how climate change could be tackled – we're left with a free market that without outside intervention would quickly lead to ecological disaster, not just through an amoral approach to growth by any means, but also through a consequence of market exchange – externalities.

An 'externality' is something that occurs as a result of a market exchange, that affects people or things other than the buyer and seller. It's in the interests of both buyer and seller



for some costs resulting from the transaction to be shifted on to others ('externalised'). Robin Hahnel gives the example of someone buying a car from a car maker.

The costs of the pollution caused through production, and the pollution, congestion, and carbon emissions caused through consumption – use – of the vehicle are not included in the price struck. The costs are borne by others. Put simply, if it's cheaper to pollute than it is to avoid or clean up pollution, market logic says pollute⁽²⁾.

So the logic of capitalism points to – if I may lapse into rock-speak – a one way ticket to hell.

The thing to bear in mind however is that we do not live in a pure capitalist system. The state and other bodies and mechanisms represent another part of the ruling elite alongside the people who fill boardrooms and senior management positions.

In a sense they are the semi-conscious bourgeoisie, who often act to save their business brethren (I use the gendered term deliberately) from themselves.

It is this part of the ruling elite that often grants reforms, as it can see that in the long run reforms are in their class interest, as they head off too much disruption from dissatisfied workers/women/black people/youth/LGBT people etc.

The potential effects of global warming – rising sea levels, food shortages, famine, death and population displacement – would present a huge risk to both profit making and the legitimacy of state and capitalist institutions.

I believe that on this level there has been recognition that we are staring a global crisis in the face. The noises coming from government bodies, quangos, media outlets and so on reveal that climate change is a genuine concern. They know that steps have to be taken.

Having said that, this will always be tempered by the immediate needs of the business class. The recent double dealing by the Government offers a great example.

To avoid EU commitments to renewable energy, it has been seeking to have overseas renewable projects it has funded count towards its target, as well as so-called 'clean coal' carbon capture. Allegedly the real aim is to support nuclear energy over renewables, as funding both (not to mention infrastructure support for both) is not really an option.⁽³⁾

As an aside on clean coal, the government is to fund a demonstration project to assess the technology. The anticipated period for the project is 15 years. That is, it will take 15 years before they can even assess whether or not the technology is both sound and financially viable⁽⁴⁾. These are 15 years we do not have if we are to avoid the more serious consequences of global warming.

There may be a time where concrete actions are taken. The thing to remember however is that these changes will not be at the expense of class power.

Those at the top will not let a trivial matter such as climate change upset their position of dominance. By the time this happens, remedial actions may be quite drastic, presumably some form of carbon rationing where the more money you have the more carbon emitting activities you can enjoy. This would also necessitate a strong authoritarian state, to ensure there is no cheating the system (at least amongst the proles), and to

quell any social unrest the situation causes.

International agreements

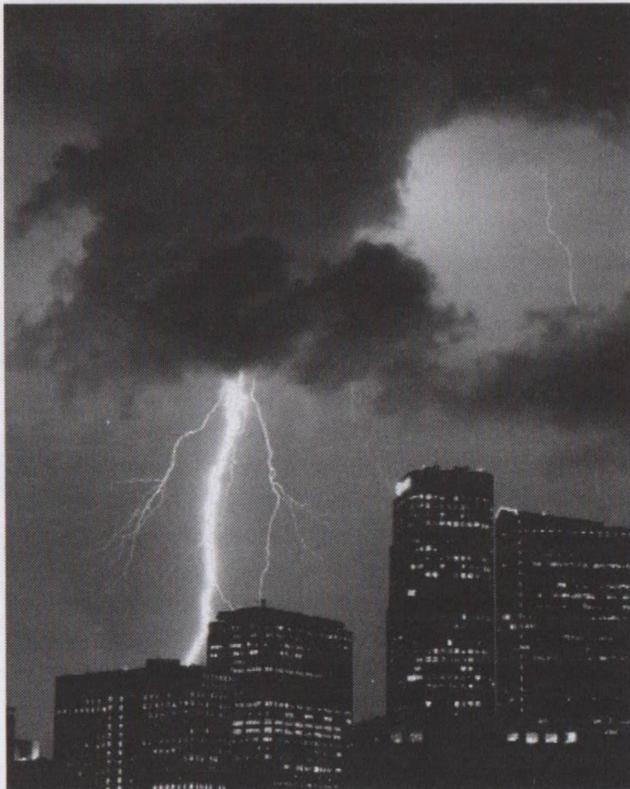
The most well-known example of elite action to tackle climate change is the Kyoto Protocol. As part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change it is an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 5.2% of their 1990 levels by 2012.

According to George Monbiot's recent book *Heat*, we need to reduce carbon emissions in the 'developed' world by 90% by 2030 to have a good chance of avoiding the worst effects of climate change.

This means keeping warming below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, or 1.4 degrees above the warming already caused. Note that this is not a 'safe' level – millions could still be at risk from water or food shortages below it.⁽⁵⁾

This should not be taken as a call for us to run back to the caves, but it does mean that we cannot be too complacent.

Some technological solutions will help us, but we cannot rely on techno-fixes alone.



STORMS: Unstable weather is more frequent

There have to be fundamental changes to the way we organise society. Yet this doesn't really figure into the current international agreements or even discussions.

Carbon Trading

A favoured market based solution to global warming is carbon trading. Companies are allocated carbon emission allowances. If their CO₂ emissions are lower than their allowance they can sell the unused portion, or similarly buy more if they are going to exceed their limit.

This approach is littered with problems. It actively encourages CO₂ emissions to be increased up to the already inadequate limits, as 'unused' allowances are sold to someone who will use them.

In the EU scheme governments have handed out huge allowances to the biggest polluting industries, leading to the price of carbon dropping by 60% (hardly encouraging anyone to cut emissions) and UK companies alone making collective profits of £940m in the first year of the scheme.⁽⁶⁾

Some trading schemes (eg, under Kyoto

and the EU's scheme) allow polluters to buy credits from overseas offsetting projects, generally in the developing world. Offsetting is a dubious practice at the best of times, (see below), and this approach does nothing to lower emissions, especially given the dubious nature of many of these projects.⁽⁷⁾

Carbon Trading also has an ideological effect – and probably motive – of yet again expanding free market rhetoric into another area of life. Once more capitalism rides to the rescue, with the magic of the market's 'invisible hand' holding back the waters and saving the poor polar bears.

I use the phrase rhetoric deliberately as, like in many other cases, the reality is not that of a truly free market – the massive handouts of allowances is hardly an example of muscular capitalism.

If anyone were in any doubt about the nature of carbon trading, the *Financial Times* again highlighted the class war credentials of such schemes:

"Both carbon taxes and markets put undue burden on the poor. Governments should counter such regressive carbon taxes by lowering taxes on labour.

"Yet most of the political appeal of markets is that they hide the true costs to consumers. That is why carbon markets exist in the first place. For this reason it is unlikely that governments would offset the invisible burden of markets by changing visible taxes."⁽⁸⁾

Offsets

Most of us are aware of carbon offsetting. The idea is that you 'neutralise' the carbon emissions from a particular activity (air travel is a common example) by paying a company to remove an equivalent amount of CO₂ from the atmosphere, generally by planting trees. Sounds like a great solution, except for one thing – it doesn't really work.

It's hard to accurately calculate how much CO₂ a tree will absorb – and for how long. Unless the tree undergoes the same processes that led to the creation of fossil fuels, that carbon isn't going to stay locked away for ever – it will be released if the tree burns or rots.

As a scientist from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research said to *The Guardian*, "Even if the trees do survive, if we have climate change and a 2C or 3C temperature rise, then how do we know those trees are not going to die early and break down into methane and actually make the situation worse?"⁽⁹⁾

Other offsets are based on projected savings caused by other schemes such as windfarms or promoting more efficient lightbulbs.

But here too calculation is an issue, not to mention a high degree of double counting, where projects that were going to go ahead anyway are counted within the offset framework. Carbon Trade Watch have produced a fine report that exposes the offsetting problem

Even if offsetting was a plausible system on its own terms, it diverts attention away from the real solution – leaving fossil fuels in the ground in the first place – and works on the basis that a clear conscience is available to those who can afford it. It's no wonder that groups such as Carbon Trade Watch have compared this system to medieval indulgences, where wealthy sinners could pay to have their heavenly slate wiped clean.

Capitalism as if profit mattered

"We need more people like Porritt ... prepared to... find the best ways to save both the environment and the capitalist system"

- Quote from the back of *Capitalism as if the world mattered*

Jonathan Porritt was a childhood hero of mine. Growing up in the days of John Craven's *Newsround* I remember him running Friends of the Earth at a time when I was getting interested in environmental issues. Then I grow up to find him running a pro-business green group called Forum for the Future and writing a book called *Capitalism as if the World Mattered*.

CWM is based on the perspective that capitalism can be made a bit nicer. This would be achieved by identifying "those characteristics of today's dominant capitalist paradigm that most damagingly impede progress towards sustainability and set out to change them through the usual levers – government intervention, consumer preference, international diplomacy, education and so on."

Despite having read the whole book, it's hard to give a clear picture of what Porritt actually envisages beyond a few examples of case studies or possible reforms. These include environmental taxes intended to reflect externalities, business accounting that would reflect environmental impact and Wal-Mart's sustainability plans.

He reprints Forum for a Future's business case for embracing sustainable development – stronger brands, customer loyalty, influence with regulator/government, enhanced shareholder value.

There is no real recognition that we live in a society which is divided along the lines of wealth and power. Imagining a little bit of moral pressure and reasoned argument will bring about reforms significant enough to make a real difference seems every bit as utopian as he accuses anti-capitalists of being.

Down with this sort of thing! Careful now...

The analysis from liberal greens is not particularly illuminating. It tends to be a mishmash of a generalised "we're all killing the planet so change your lightbulbs", anti-corporate finger pointing and calls for government to take strong action to make us all better green citizens.

The extent of the analysis on the 'I count' website's "What causes climate change" page is typical: "But who causes it?: It's simple. We all do. At home, work and play."⁽¹⁰⁾

The problem with NGOs is that they honestly believe that they are sitting on terrible information, and all they really need to do is make a large fuss about it and get government to take action. It's very much

along the lines of the Quaker idea of speaking truth to power. Yet as Chomsky has often pointed out, people in power generally know the truth already. It's just that the current situation benefits them.

Furthermore, NGOs cannot or choose not to see systemic reasons for environmental destruction. They would jeopardise their support from well-off guilty liberals. Their chief executives are after all now part of the very class they would be attacking.

The quote which most typifies this vague sentiment of anti-consumerism in place of a real demand for change can be found online in the native American proverb about "when the last tree dies... then they will realise that you can't eat money".

You could say that this at least points to an anti-capitalist sentiment, but too often the people spouting this are merely anti-corporate. In some ways this is a step on from simply blaming humans or particular levels of technology for environmental destruction, but it equally fails to get to grips with the mechanics of a hierarchical capitalist system. All it sees are bad people doing bad things.

The general outcome of this kind of anti-



DRY: Forest fires, such as this one in Greece in 2007, have become more common

corporate pressure tends to be 'greenwash', the use of PR and image to sell the idea that the particular company is actually very environmentally friendly indeed. This is typified by BP's change of logo to an abstract sun/flower design and its infamous 'Beyond Petroleum' strapline.

While the facts behind the greenwash are easy to point to, we increasingly live in the situationists' world of spectacle, where the reality is not as important as the image. The truth is whatever gets into the public consciousness. Oppositional groups have no chance of matching the marketing budgets of the transnationals, leaving aside fighting elite consensus within the media.

In any case, the point is not that certain companies are benefiting from threatening

our future. Shell do not act the way they do because they're run by nasty people. Corporations are simply following the intrinsic logic of capitalism. No matter how fluffy your intentions might be when you start a company, you can't escape this logic.

That's why the Body Shop under the Roddicks was anti-union, and why it ultimately sold out to L'Oreal.

It can make sense to point to individual acts of companies, either to stop an immediate threat, or as an example of wider structural concerns, but the futility of seeing this as an end in itself not only hides the true nature of the problem but also falls victim to PR chicanery.

Conclusion

What is needed is a thorough change in the way we generate power, produce food, transport ourselves and manufacture goods. We need to leave fossil fuels in the ground rather than create voodoo business schemes to magic away our carbon emissions.

This could be done by massive state control, but it would leave in place the hierarchies of power and control that got us

into this mess in the first place. Ironically, Jonathan Porritt has pointed out a better way: "But if one gets to the state of mind where you say that nobody can ever trust government and politicians again, then we are stuffed. What are we meant to do? Make it all happen ourselves?"⁽¹¹⁾

Ultimately that is the answer. If we are to achieve a sustainable future and a free humanity, we must make it happen. Not as consumers, not as voters. We need an economy and a society that is geared towards meeting human needs rather than accumulation for its own sake. This cannot happen within capitalism.

By Mark R

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Anarchism and

Extract: This exclusive piece on eco-anarchism from "An Anarchist FAQ",* is an edited version of the introduction to Section E. Volume One of this tome, Published by AK Press in late 2008.

*(online at anarchistfaq.org)

ANARCHISTS have been at the forefront of ecological thinking and the green movement for decades. Many key concepts of anarchism are also key concepts in ecological thought. In addition, the ecological implications of many anarchist ideas (such as decentralisation, integration of industry and agriculture, and so forth) has meant that anarchists have quickly recognised the importance of ecological movements and ideas.

Murray Bookchin in particular has placed anarchist ideas at the centre of green debate as well as bringing out the links anarchism has with ecological thinking. His eco-anarchism (which he called social ecology) was based on emphasising the social nature of the ecological problems we face.

In such classic works as *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, *Toward an Ecological Society* and *The Ecology of Freedom* he has consistently argued that humanity's domination of nature is the result of domination within humanity itself.

However, anarchism has always had an ecological dimension. As Peter Marshall notes in his extensive overview of ecological thought, ecologists "find in Proudhon two of their most cherished social principles: federalism and decentralisation."

He "stands as an important forerunner of the modern ecological movement for his stress on the close communion between humanity and nature, for his belief in natural justice, for his doctrine of federalism and for his insight that liberty is the mother and not the daughter of order." [*Nature's Web*, p. 307 and p. 308]

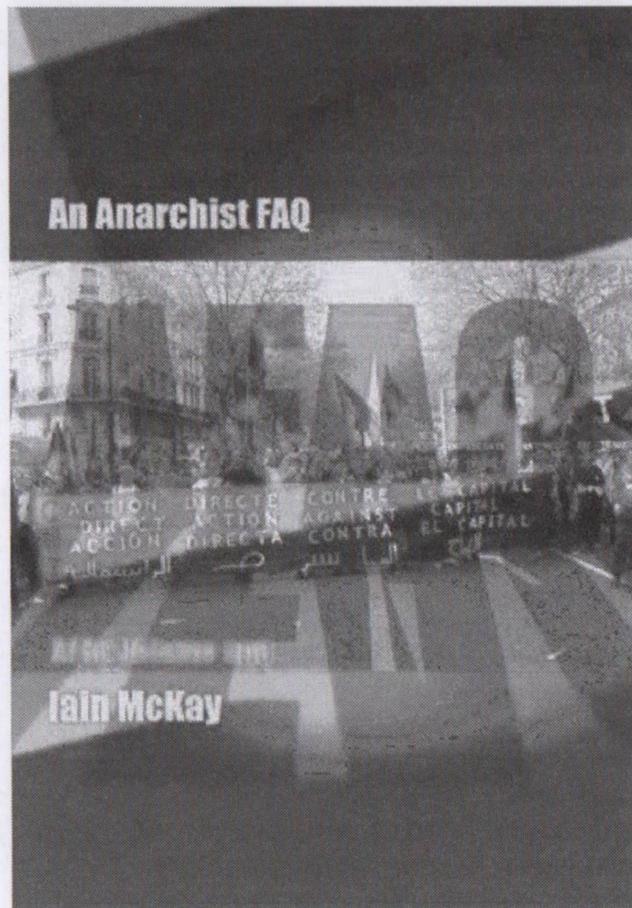
For Proudhon, a key problem was that people viewed the land as "something which enables them to levy a certain revenue each year. Gone is the deep feeling for nature." People "no longer love the soil. Landowners sell it, lease it, divide it into shares, prostitute it, bargain with it and treat it as an object of speculation. Farmers torture it, violate it, exhaust it and sacrifice it to their impatient desire for gain. They never become one with it." We "have lost our feeling for nature." [*Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, p. 261]

Other precursors of eco-anarchism can be found in Peter Kropotkin's writings. For example, in his classic work *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Kropotkin argued the case for "small is beautiful" 70 years before E. F. Schumacher coined the phrase, advocating "a harmonious balance between agriculture and industry".

Instead of the concentration of large facto-

ries in cities, he called for economic as well as social decentralisation, believing that diversity is the best way to organise production by mutual co-operation.

He favoured the scattering of industry throughout the country and the integration of industry and agriculture at the local level. His vision of a decentralised commonwealth based on an integration of agriculture and industry as well as manual and intellectual work has obvious parallels with much modern green thought, as does his stress on the need for appropriate levels of technology and his recognition that the capitalist market



distorts the development, size and operation of technology and industry.

Through his investigations in geography and biology, Kropotkin discovered species to be interconnected with each other and with their environment. *Mutual Aid* is the classic source book on the survival value of co-operation within species which Kropotkin regarded as an important factor of evolution, arguing that those who claim competition within and between species is the chief or only factor to have distorted Darwin's work. All this ensures that Kropotkin is "a great inspiration to the modern ecological movement." [Marshall, Op. Cit., p. 311 and p. 312]

As well as Kropotkin's work, special note must be made of French anarchist Elisée

Reclus. As Clark and Martin note, Reclus introduced "a strongly ecological dimension into the tradition of anarchist and libertarian social theory". He made "a powerful contribution to introducing this more ecological perspective into anarchist thought," of "looking beyond the project of planetary domination and attempting to restore humanity to its rightful place within, rather than above, nature."

Reclus, "much more than Kropotkin, introduced into anarchist theory themes that were later developed in social ecology and eco-anarchism." [John P. Clark and Camille Martin (ed.), *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity*, p. 19]

For example, in 1866 Reclus argued as follows: "Wild nature is so beautiful. Is it really necessary for man, in seizing it, to proceed with mathematical precision in exploiting each new conquered domain and then mark his possession with vulgar constructions and perfectly straight boundaries? If this continues to occur, the harmonious contrasts that are one of the beauties of the earth will soon give way to depressing uniformity..."

"The question of knowing which of the works of man serves to beautify and which contributes to the degradation of external nature can seem pointless to so-called practical minds; nevertheless, it is a matter of the greatest importance.

"Humanity's development is most intimately connected with the nature that surrounds it. A secret harmony exists between the earth and the peoples whom it nourishes, and when reckless societies allow themselves to meddle with that which creates the beauty of their domain, they always end up regretting it." [quoted by Clark and Martin, Op. Cit., pp. 125-6]

"Man," Reclus says, can find beauty in "the intimate and deeply seated harmony of his work with that of nature." Like the eco-anarchists a century later, he stressed the social roots of our environmental problems, arguing that a "complete union of Man with Nature can only be effected by the destruction of the frontiers between castes as well as between peoples."

He also indicated that the exploitation of nature is part and parcel of capitalism, for "it matters little to the industrialist... whether he blackens the atmosphere with fumes... or contaminates it with foul-smelling vapours."

"Since nature is so often desecrated by speculators precisely because of its beauty," Reclus argued, "it is not surprising that farmers and industrialists, in their own

ecology issues

exploitative endeavours, fail to consider whether they contribute to defacing the land." The capitalist is "concerned not with making his work harmonious with the landscape." [quoted by Clark and Martin, Op. Cit., p. 28, p. 30, p. 124 and p. 125]

Few modern day eco-anarchists would disagree.

So, while a specifically ecological anarchism did not develop until the revolutionary work done by Murray Bookchin from the 1950's onwards, anarchist theory has had a significant "proto-green" content since at least the 1860s. What Bookchin and writers like him did was to make anarchism's implicit ecological aspects explicit, a work which has immensely enriched anarchist theory and practice.

A key concept to remember in our discussion is that between environmentalism and ecology. Following Bookchin, eco-anarchists contrast their ideas with those who seek to reform capitalism and make it more green (a position they term "environmentalism" rather than ecology).

The latter "focus on specific issues like air and water pollution" while ignoring the social roots of the problems they are trying to solve. In other words, their outlook "rest[s] on an instrumental, almost engineering approach to solving ecological dislocations.

"To all appearances, they wanted to adapt the natural world to the needs of the existing society and its exploitative, capitalist imperatives by way of reforms that minimise harm to human health and well-being. The much-needed goals of formulating a project for radical social change and for cultivating a new sensibility toward the natural world tended to fall outside the orbit of their practical concerns."

Eco-anarchists, while supporting such partial struggles, stress that "these problems originate in a hierarchical, class, and today, competitive capitalist system that nourishes a view of the natural world as a mere agglomeration of 'resources' for human production and consumption." [*The Ecology of Freedom*, pp. 15-6]

This means that while some kind of environmentalism may be possible under capitalism or some other authoritarian system, an ecological approach is impossible. The concerns of ecology cannot be squeezed into a hierarchical perspective or private property. Just as an eco-system cannot be commanded, divided and enclosed, nor can a truly ecological vision. Attempts to do so will impoverish both.

For anarchists the root cause of our ecological problems is hierarchy in society compounded by a capitalist economy. The notion of an ecological capitalism is, literally, impossible. Libertarian socialist Takis Fotopoulos has argued that the main reason why the project of "greening" capitalism is just a utopian dream which "lies in a fundamental contradiction that exists between the logic and dynamic of the growth economy, on the one hand, and the attempt to condition this dynamic with qualitative

interests" on the other. [*Development or Democracy?*, pp. 57-92, *Society and Nature*, No. 7, p. 82]

Green issues, like social ones, are inherently qualitative in nature and, as such, it is unsurprising that a system based on profit would ignore them.

Under capitalism, ethics, nature and humanity all have a price tag. And that price tag is god. This is understandable as every hierarchical social system requires a belief-system. Under feudalism, the belief-system came from the Church, whereas under capitalism, it pretends to come from science, whose biased practitioners (usually funded by the state and capital) are the new priesthood.

Like the old priesthods, only those members who produce "objective research" become famous and influential – "objective research" being that which accepts the status quo as "natural" and produces what the

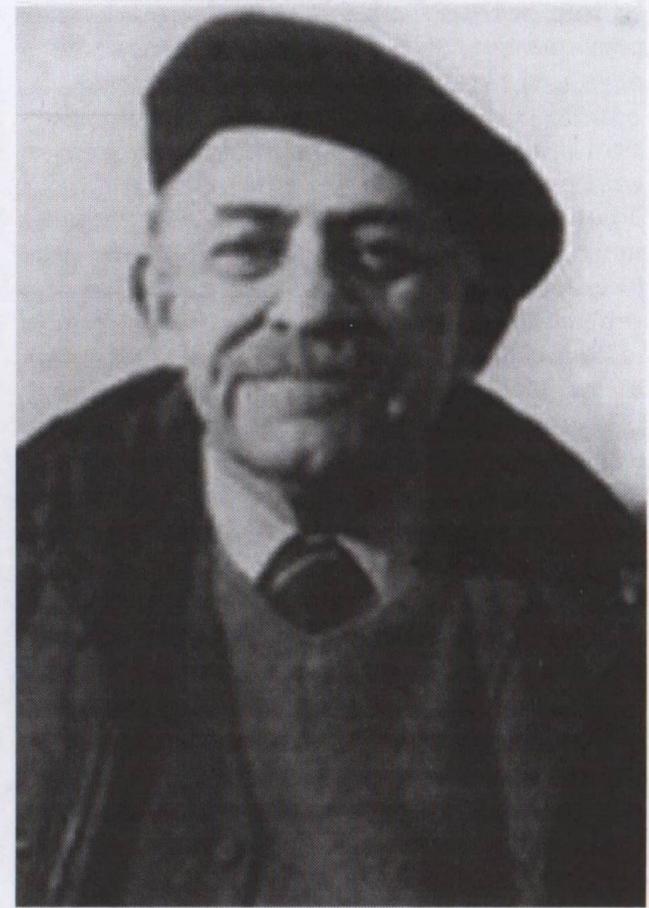
and counter-pose new ideas, more in tune with a green society.

This approach, however, misses the point. Ideas and values do not "just happen", but are the product of a given set of social relationships and the struggles they produce.

This means that it is not just a matter of changing our values in a way that places humanity in harmony with nature (important though that is), but also of understanding the social and structural origins of the ecological crisis.

Ideas and values do need to be challenged, but unless the authoritarian social relationships, hierarchy and inequalities in power (i.e. what produces these values and ideas) are also challenged and, more importantly, changed an ecological society is impossible.

So unless other Greens recognise that this crisis did not develop in a social vacuum and is not the "fault" of people as people (as



LONG TRADITION: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (left) was an early writer on green issues, laying some of the groundwork for the brilliant writings of Murray Bookchin (right)

elite want to hear.

More importantly, capitalism needs science to be able to measure and quantify everything in order to sell it. This mathematical faith is reflected in its politics and economics, where quantity is more important than quality, where five votes are better than two votes, where \$5 is better than \$2. And like all religions, capitalism needs sacrifice. In the name of "free enterprise," "economic efficiency," "stability" and "growth" it sacrifices individuality, freedom, humanity, and nature for the power and profits of the few.

Understanding the social roots of the problems we face is the key. Many greens attack what they consider the "wrong ideas" of modern society, its "materialistic values"

opposed to people in a hierarchical society), little can be done root out the systemic causes of the problems that we and the planet face.

For anarchists, unless we resolve the underlying contradictions within society, which stem from domination, hierarchy and a capitalist economy, ecological disruption will continue and grow, putting our Earth in increasing danger.

We need to resist the system and create new values based on quality, not quantity. We must return the human factor to our alienated society before we alienate ourselves completely off the planet.



The unions' long

Analysis:

Richard Griffin looks at their decline in fortunes...

IN 1981 the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm described the labour movement as "in a considerable mess". His comment was made in a Marx Memorial lecture (and subsequent book) called *The Forward March of Labour Halted?*

When Hobsbawm gave his lecture 12 million British workers belonged to a union. The previous year had seen 11.9 million working days lost through strikes.

In 2007 one million working days were lost through industrial action and just 7.7 million workers held union cards in Britain. If the labour movement was in a 'considerable mess' in 1981, twenty six years later it looks like it's in deep shit.

What has happened to the trade union movement in Britain and what does this mean for class consciousness?

Trade union membership and the levels of industrial action are not the only measure of working class consciousness. Membership of left wing organisations and readership of radical publications are also barometers and, historically, the majority of the working class have not belonged to trade unions in any country.

However union membership and strike action are important pointers of class consciousness – the extent to which the working class believes that class divisions shape their world.

This goes beyond a simple awareness that you are working class to an understanding that class matters both economically and socially. The relationship between unions and class consciousness is complex. Reformist trade unions, such as Unison and GMB, do not lead to a revolutionary consciousness amongst the working classes – in fact they act as a break on struggle.

As Bakunin pointed out long ago in *The Programme of the Alliance* (contained in *Bakunin on Anarchism*), the hierarchical structure and role of the unions ensure that this happens.

The trade union bureaucracy frequently sells the rank and file out. Union officials mediate between capital and labour, being divorced from the workplace and having considerable power over their memberships as a result.

This is why anarchists call for the building of autonomous rank and file workplace organisations and self-managed

From 10,000 at Saltley Gates



SOLIDARITY: In the miners' strike of 1972, Birmingham saw 40,000 down tools in support, and 10,000 stand on the picket, forcing the Saltley Gates coke depot to shut and winning the strike.

revolutionary unions.

Membership of a trade union does though show that workers recognise that their interests differ from their bosses', and a willingness to take strike action shows a desire to fight. It is in industrial struggle that class consciousness grows. The anarcho-syndicalist Sam Dolgoff, echoing Bakunin, described trade unions as natural

“ Where unions like Unite have grown in membership it has been through merger with other unions ”

organisations of the working classes.

The fact that nearly eight million British workers belong to a trade union means that anarchists should take them seriously.

What shape though are trade unions in?

Trade Union Membership

Historically trade union membership has grown during periods of industrial militancy such as 1910-4, 1916-20, 1939-45 and 1968-74. During the late 1980s and 1990s many trade union leaders and the TUC argued for what they called "social partnership", arguing that labour and capital could have shared

interests and work together.

Conflict was meant to be a thing of the past. They argued that partnership was the way to attract people into union membership. However the opposite turned out to be the case. Those unions like RMT and FBU that continued to adopt more militant tactics have done better than those who called for partnership.

Where unions like Unite have grown in membership it has been through merger with other unions rather than attracting new members. This trend is clearly shown in the decline in the number of individual trade unions in Britain since 1970. In 1970 150 unions were affiliated to the TUC. By 1988 this had fallen to 85 and currently there are just 58 separate affiliated unions.

Trade union membership in Britain peaked in 1979 when 13.4 million people belonged to a union. Membership has been falling since then – to 11.6 million in 1982, to 9.8 million in 1990 and now to 7.7 million workers.

This decline partly reflects the collapse of Britain's old manufacturing (and highly unionised) industries like coal and steel but also reformist unions' failure to recruit to the areas of the economy that have grown.

Just 5.6% of workers in the hotels and leisure industry are union members and only 11% in the retail sector. This compares with 55.1% in education, 43.4% in health and 57.3% in public administration. In fact the vast majority of trade union members work in the public sector. More manual workers do not belong to a union than do.

Unions are present in only 32% of private

fall from power

sector companies. Cutbacks in public expenditure feeding through to further job losses (which will accelerate if the Tories get back into power) will see further inroads into the last remaining power base of unions – the public sector.

The decline in union membership is not necessarily a sign of decline in class consciousness though. There may be a number of practical reasons why workers do not join unions. In over half of British workplaces unions have no members. This reduces the opportunity to join. Bosses can directly or indirectly discourage workers from joining unions. Workers may also quite simply not see the point of joining, particularly giving unions' reluctance to fight to preserve pensions, pay levels or seriously take on the Labour government. Many may be unwilling to join a union given that the officials have betrayed them in the past or seem unwilling to fight now.

Industrial action

During the 1970s an average 12.9 million working days a year were lost as a result of strike action and while 27.1 million days were lost during the 1984 miner's strike, the last thirty years have seen low levels of industrial action, falling to an all time low of 0.3 million in 1998.

Last year saw levels back over a million days lost, as public sector workers fought back against threatened job losses and pay cuts – indeed 96% of strikes in 2007 involved public sector workers. The current wave of industrial action in the civil service, education and local government means that this trend is likely to continue.

“Strikes are rarer than they used to be. It is the really big set-piece confrontations that have tended to disappear. The average has been getting shorter” says Professor Edwards of the Warwick Business School. Most strikes now are for just one or two days. This does not reflect a lack of militancy amongst union members but timidity on behalf of their leadership.

Earlier this year teachers across England went on strike for a day. In London over 10,000 of them marched with striking further education workers and civil servants. What did the union do next? Nothing.

In the NUT's magazine *The Teacher* the union told its members after the strike to write to their MP! This is bound to lead teachers to ask what the point of striking is. “All the union has done” one teacher told me “is cost me a day's pay”.

The majority of workers taking industrial action in recent years are relatively privileged – they have professional jobs like teaching, are paid above the national average, have a pension (which most private sector workers do not) and are degree educated.

This is nothing new as the industrial relations expert John Kelly has pointed out – “the most class conscious and militant sections of the working class have often been those whose earnings, job security and

status placed them in a position of considerable privilege relative to many of their fellow workers”.

While industrial action has declined in the last three decades, strike action is not the only way that workers can express their anger. And people aren't happy at work. Job satisfaction has declined. In the 1970s 56% of American workers said that they were satisfied with their job. By the 1990s this had fallen to 47% according to a study by Warwick University.

This research found that one of the main reasons for people not being happy at work was the pressures that bosses put on workers, such as increasing the pace of work. As unions have declined, bosses have had a freer hand to exploit workers. This has, for example, led to greater stress at work.

Workers aren't passive though. While strike action has fallen in recent times sickness absence has risen. Between 2006

summer, general secretary of Unite, called on the government to “intervene, intervene, intervene”.

A feature of the 1970s – the peak of trade union power – was the growth of rank and file organisations. Although some were fronts for the CPGB and SWP others were genuinely autonomous.

More recently in 1995, the Liverpool Dockers provided another example of workers organising themselves to protect their interests. In recent years anarchists have been active in organising autonomous groups on the tube in London and there has been a substantial growth in the membership of the IWW in Britain to around 500.

Class struggle ebbs and flows, particularly after workers have suffered big defeats.

Recession and a squeeze in public sector pay are both likely to see a rise in militancy, as workers are meant to be the price for the government's and capitalism's

To a bare few hardy souls



FEW: Anti-union laws have restricted the number of people who can stand on the picket line, and falling interest has cut the numbers willing to come out. *Photo: pcsshropshire.selfip.org*

and 2007 for example 4.1 million days were lost due to sickness absence amongst civil servants – four times more than all the days lost through industrial action.

The way ahead

Anarchists fundamentally oppose reformist trade unions because they are hierarchical, they help prop up capitalism; indeed it is in their interest to keep capitalism going.

Unions also see the state as an answer to worker's problems, not part of the problem.

Following Labour's defeat in the Glasgow East by-election Derek Simpson last

failure.

Trade unions have not gone away and millions of workers join them. Anarchists need to engage with workers in struggle. We need to be critical of reformist unions and offer alternatives. The question we need to discuss is how we help develop a libertarian workers movement from where we are now, with a small anarchist movement and a labour movement which, while reformist and bureaucratic, is still seen by many as a defender of their interests.

By Richard Griffin

Prison through

PLANS for a series of three "Titan" prisons built along the lines of major jails in the US are going through consultation and look set to be implemented within the next six years.

£2.5 billion has been set aside to cover spending plans for extra prison places in the next spending cycle, which will include an upgrade of current facilities to include the introduction of biometric scanning and bar-coding of inmates.

The prisons, which have been slated for the Southeast, Northwest and the Midlands, were announced as part of an initiative to build 15,000 more places and bring the overall prison capacity to 96,000 people by 2014.

Labour has increased the number of prison places by around a quarter since it came to power in 1997, largely using private services to build and staff the new facilities despite a series of public failures both in the UK and the US, where the system was pioneered.

The number of people in prison looks set to hit 84,000 shortly, and at current trends could pass 102,000 by 2014. This is up from around 61,000 when Labour came to power and does not include the likely future effects of a major economic downturn on desperation and subsequent crime levels in working

class communities.

These figures are parallel to only one other western country – the United States, which now has the largest percentage of its population in prison of any first world nation.

In the US, imprisonment has increased exponentially over the last three decades, with over 7.2 million people now part of the penal system – more than three in every 100 adults – up from 500,000 in 1980 when tougher prison sentencing was first brought in as part of president Nixon's war on drugs.

In the prisons themselves, prisoners and staff alike have repeatedly been injured due to massive cost-cutting and poor conditions within the closed environments, including the rise of organised crime within the prison walls, rampant corruption and extraordinarily high levels of drug addiction.

Critics have noted that the US system, which emphasises incarceration as punishment rather than providing education, training, detoxification or mental health support, has not acted to reduce crime but has instead forced more people into repeat offending on release – hence a 1,200% rise in population.

By contrast, Finland is pointed to as being the country with the lowest prison population in Europe and the smallest police force – it remains one of the lowest crime areas in the west.

Labour's own state reports on the situation in the UK make grim reading. In preparation for their expansion plans, the government have done a series of official investigations into the sector.

Abandoned at the gates

The report *High Hopes: Supporting ex-prisoners in their lives after prison* focuses on the treatment of prisoners in the run up to and directly after release. It suggests that in particular, resettlement support is inadequate, problems with drug addiction are not addressed, that the transition to benefits for those without work is too slow, and there is a lack of aid in finding people work when they have a criminal record.

It said that both internal

and external staff found prison a difficult environment in which to attempt the provision of such support, complaining that a shortage of dedicated spaces to talk in, lack of availability due to the prison regime, and activities such as lockdowns for cell searches all disrupted any attempt to work with prisoners prior to their release.

It was found that prison work schemes, which have been repeatedly attacked by activist groups for paying almost nothing and being aimed at profit rather than training, are not fulfilling their stated role.

The report noted: "Prison resettlement staff identified a mismatch between the types of workshops available in prisons and local skill shortages, and felt that the experience prisoners gained from working during their sentence did not increase their employability on release."

The news deals a further blow to the controversial working programmes currently being implemented in prisons, which activists discovered have been supplying labour at far below minimum wage, effectively using them as a way to undercut other companies.

Once prisoners come to their release, the transition depends heavily on the ability of offenders' friends and families to help them out, failing to provide a solid route into work or new accommodation, and in the case of drug users, offering little post-prison support.

While an initial release grant of £46.75 is offered to prisoners, it was found that in several cases the newly-released were not able to claim benefits, leaving some people vulnerable and with little means of supporting themselves beyond their first week of freedom. In some cases, benefits payments were delayed for three months or more.

Letting down the vulnerable

Meanwhile in women's prisons, two separate reports have been urging significant changes both nationally and internationally to the way women are being treated in prison.

The Cornston Report found "radical changes" needed to be made. In an official reaction to its recommendations in mid-2008, Ministry of Justice spokesperson Maria Eagle said that strip searches could be replaced with less invasive measures.

She also said a pilot system would be attempting an integrated approach to incarceration providing community and residential facilities, specifically for vulnerable women, alongside a possible expansion of the "turnaround" system, where several agencies combine to try and integrate offenders back into society.

These measures have come under fire however both for their timidity and for the slow speed at which they've been implemented.

Proposals to shut down larger facilities and replace them with smaller community jails, a key part of Cornston's manifesto for change, has been rejected out of hand, while funding

a lens of liberty

In focus: How Labour's plans to expand the penal system are exposing the continued inadequacy of a justice policy founded on incarceration

and direct wide-scale support even for the measures the government agrees with has not been secured.

Corston pointed to a number of factors which need to change within prison, including the need for specific funding streams to deal with differences such as the increased probability that women will be primary carers for children, may have a history of domestic or sexual abuse, could find that prison conditions designed for men are difficult to cope with and a substantially higher level of suicide and mental health problems.

Her findings come alongside a report by the International Centre for Prison studies, which concludes that worldwide, women inmates of prisons come from the most deprived backgrounds – significantly below the levels of the male population – and that most imprisonment was drug related and non-violent.

In most cases, women were being held in far higher security facilities than they warranted, suggesting possible human rights breaches, and were being treated as “an afterthought” to the male population.

In most cases the study found that health care was the single most pressing need, with most facilities being male-dominated and unable to deal with a woman-centred approach.

Calls for major change have been growing as prison numbers have gone up alongside a significant number of suicides, deaths and self-harm. Around 4,500 women are currently in prison, hovering around record levels.

In particular a number of deaths at Styal prison, including the death of campaigner Pauline Campbell's daughter, Sarah, in 2003 sparked a sustained direct action campaign led by Pauline, who sadly died in early 2008.

Criticism and a different path

Prison studies over the last decade have repeatedly pointed to poor quality living conditions, endemic drug addiction and abuse, high levels of racism, overcrowding, violence and mental disturbance. Over 90% of prisoners in England and Wales are believed to have at least one mental health disorder.

Over half of prisoners re-offend within two years of release, despite a raft of changes brought in specifically to bring the rate down, leading to the continued recreation of what has been termed “the university of crime” – where long term or repeat prisoners normalise and effectively train newcomers in

damaging and anti-social behaviour.

While the option of reform of the existing system to improve the efficiency of its role as a rehabilitator has a strong following, more radical measures have been suggested by the anarchist movement.

The Anarchist Black Cross, active in several towns and cities around the UK, most notably Brighton and Leeds, notes that 94% of recorded crimes are against property – one third is tax-related.

“Such crime is not prevented by prisons. The system we live in encourages competition, power relationships and self-interest,”



SOCIAL DISASTER: The rate of incarceration has been heavily criticised, with Human Rights Watch saying it: “wreaks havoc on individuals, families and communities”

say Brighton ABC. “This system is also anti-social; while it remains intact there will always be violence. Calling the shoplifter, the person on the picket line and the rapist all criminals as if there were no difference between them uses most people’s horror of anti-social violence against the vast majority.

“It should be up to us, in our communities, to deal with anti-social elements in our own ways; we don’t need their so-called justice system to control us in the name of fighting crime.”

Alongside “post-revolutionary” ideas such as the creation of community-controlled courts or councils to deal with a level of crime which would be much reduced without the corrupting effect of property clashes, in the here and now it is argued that the greatest creator of anti-social behaviour is the desperation caused by a hopeless situation – the knowledge of the working and unemployed classes that there are few legal avenues by which to escape their position.

The rise in anti-social behaviour and crime against working class communities can be directly linked to the economic fortunes and atomisation of the class itself. The cult of the individual and the destruction of community following Thatcher has come alongside a freezing of social mobility not seen since before the second world war, amid relentless attacks on the social safety net.

Yet some of the most recognisable criticisms of prison as the solution to this problem are not new ones.

In 1887, the anarchist theoretician Peter Kropotkin wrote: “Our penal institutions

have been nothing but a compromise between the old ideas of revenge, and the modern ideas of “detering from crime,” both softened to a very slight extent by some notions of philanthropy.

“What most of those who are now sent to jail are in need of is merely a fraternal help from those who surround them, to aid them in developing more and more the higher instincts of human nature which have been checked in their growth either by some bodily disease – or, still more, by the abominable conditions under which thousands and thousands of children grow up, and millions of adults are living, in what we call our centres of civilisation.

“But these higher faculties cannot be exercised when man is deprived of liberty, of the free guidance of his actions, of the influences of the human world.”

Written word

In the world of libertarian publishing there exists what could only be described as a cottage industry of small press publishers.

Publishers who are independent of any organisation, group or federation; who specialise in publishing pamphlets, mainly of a radical and historical nature, which, in their own estimation, are of relevance to present-day workers and revolutionaries.

In the main, they are self-funded and operate on a not-for-profit shoe-string budget. Their pamphlets are usually short-run and are relatively inexpensive to purchase.

The word pamphlet, as we know it today, was first used in the 14th century to distinguish a short booklet from a book. The word originates from "Pamphilus, seu de Amore", which describes a Latin poem published in this format in the 1100's.

The invention of the printing press saw the pamphlet develop into a medium for topical issues of a polemical and propagandist nature, both radical and agitational, which could be published on a large scale and distributed accordingly. American Professor of History Bernard Bailyn wrote in his work *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967):

"It was in this form - as pamphlets - that much of the most important and characteristic writing of the American Revolution appeared. For the revolutionary generation, as for its predecessors back to the early sixteenth century, the pamphlet had peculiar virtues as a medium of communication. Then, as now, it was seen that the pamphlet allowed one to do things that were not possible in any other form"

However, I much prefer the description given by George Orwell in his introduction to *British Pamphleteers Vol.1: From the 16th Century to the French Revolution* (1948).

"What is a pamphlet? Is rather like asking "What is a dog?"

We all know a dog when we see one, or at least we think

we do, but it is not easy to give a clear verbal definition, nor even to distinguish at sight between a dog and some kindred creature such as a wolf or a jackal.

"The pamphlet is habitually confused with other things that are quite different from it, such as leaflets, manifestoes, memorials, religious tracts, circular letters, instructional manuals and indeed almost any kind of booklet published cheaply in paper covers.

"The true pamphlet, however, is a special literary form which has persisted without radical change for hundreds of years, though it has had its good periods and its bad ones. It is worth defining it carefully, even at the

“ The true pamphlet is a special literary form which has persisted without radical change for hundreds of years, ”

risk of seeming pedantic.

"It is written because there is something that one wants to say now, and because one believes there is no other way of getting a hearing. Pamphlets may turn on points of ethics or theology, but they always have a clear political implication. A pamphlet may be written either 'for' or 'against' somebody or something, but in essence it is always a protest."

There are those around who believe that the printed word is all but dead, and who place great emphasis and faith in the 'online revolution'. One of the founders of libcom.org, an online libertarian communist resource, stated in an interview last year with *Freedom*, the fortnightly anarchist paper:

"Some of us tried print publishing but we became frustrated with the

medium. With online publishing we could slash running costs, attract a massively increased readership, remove the pressure of deadlines and to allow all content to remain published permanently. Using the web also means that people who might never see an anarchist publication can stumble across articles on our site."

He went on to say that the site:

"Is a constantly expanding online resource that seeks to promote working class self-organisation through publishing news, theoretical texts and historical articles. In the last year, site traffic has risen from 40,000 visits per month to over 100,000 and there are now 2,600 active users. The site contains over 7,000 articles ranging from brief reports to full books and has recently seen a major upgrade."

When it comes to revolutionary propaganda, the dissemination of radical thought and the exchange of information, who can disagree with such figures? Even as a 'traditionalist', I have to applaud the efforts of all those involved at libcom.org, and other anarchist websites, for providing a fantastic resource for research, news, information and communication with fellow revolutionaries.

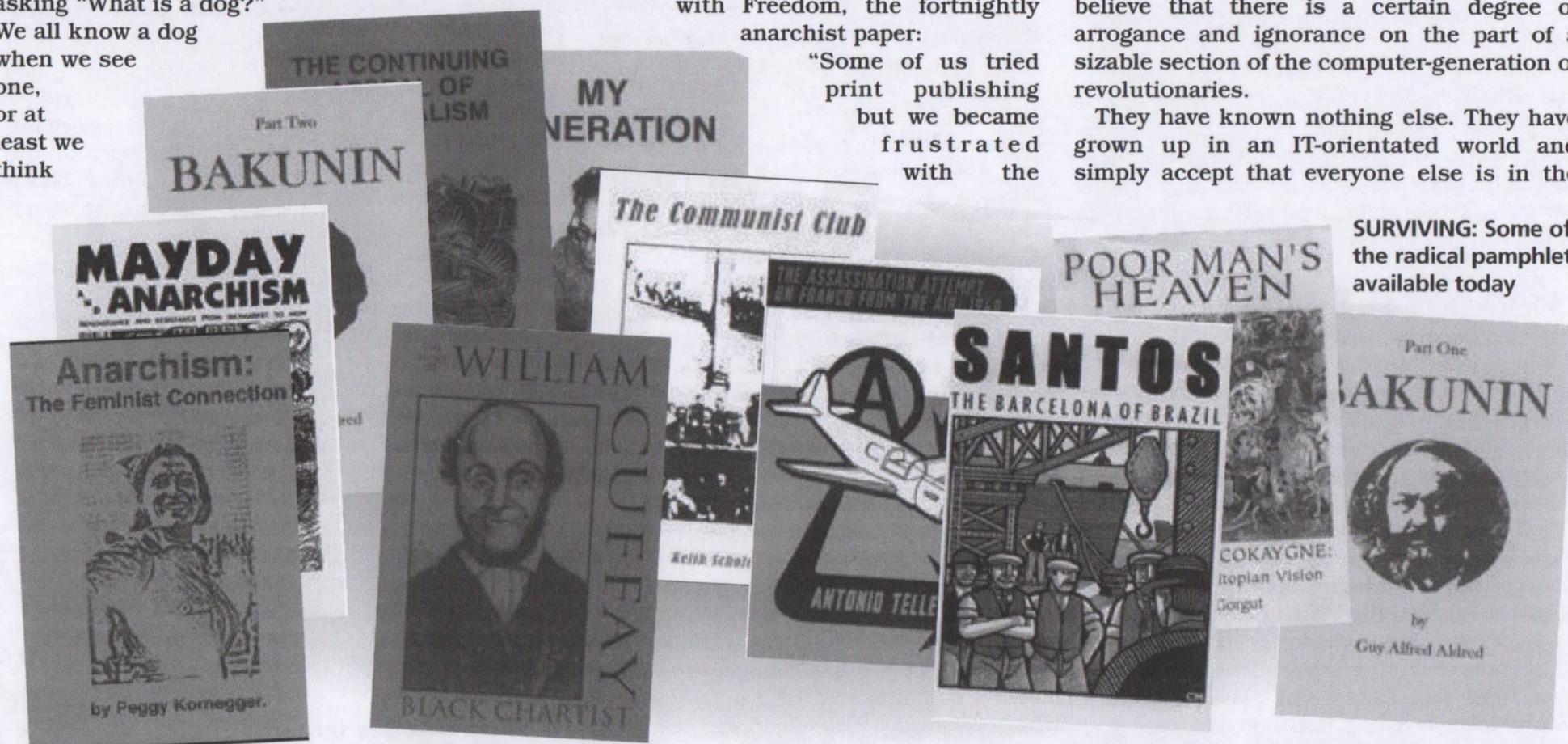
On the other side of the coin, however, I believe, along with many others, that print is a long way from dead. People still like to sit down and read a pamphlet, book or magazine; whether it be on the train or bus, or simply relaxing at home. Likewise, imagine a world without bookfairs!

Consideration should also be given to those who do not have access to the internet, those who are simply not IT literate, as well as those who can't afford a computer or those whose lifestyle and/or social circumstances don't permit such luxuries.

This cross-section of society amounts to hundreds of thousands, if not millions in this country alone, and billions worldwide. I also believe that there is a certain degree of arrogance and ignorance on the part of a sizable section of the computer-generation of revolutionaries.

They have known nothing else. They have grown up in an IT-orientated world and simply accept that everyone else is in the

SURVIVING: Some of the radical pamphlets available today



on the streets

Analysis: Radical pamphleteering in the UK today

same boat as themselves, without thinking very much about it.

On Dan Bricklin's website, bricklin.com, the co-founder of VisiCalc, the first electronic spreadsheet, wrote:

"To me, the pamphlet is analogous to the personal website. It can vary in size and is controlled by the author."

This comment provoked some interesting responses which also warrant consideration. Chris Daly, a Professor of Journalism; referring to pamphleteering, and its relationship to countries today where the internet is used for purposes of would-be political insurrection stated:

"The pamphlet was preferred by the rebels because it did not provide any target for retaliation by the Crown. This was in contrast to the more established printers.

"Typically, the printer owned his shop, his press, his tools and all his stock. If he antagonised the Crown, they knew just where to find him, and the king's agents could easily shut him down. The hit-and-run, anonymous pamphleteer, on the other hand, was almost impossible to find and, thus, to stop."

Likewise, in the early part of the 20th century, anarchists and revolutionary socialists regularly had their presses closed down by the authorities, along with numerous commercial printers, who allowed their presses to be used for printing material deemed to be 'seditious'.

How easy then, would it be to close down subversive websites? In recent years there have been numerous examples of the authorities and service providers closing down websites they didn't like, in particular, so-called pirate music and movie sites. I'm no expert, but I imagine it is almost as simple as flicking a switch or pulling the plug out! Another example of the State's power, for instance, is how countries like China, Saudi Arabia and Cuba control internet access.

Another contributor to Dan Bricklin's website wrote:

"We have a much better chance of being able to read some of those pamphlets 200 years from now than we have of being able to read any of today's personal websites at that point:

- Pamphlets had large printings (compare even 1,000 paper copies of a pamphlet to a website that exists on only one server)

- Paper is a durable, autonomous material (compared to a website that depends on the existence of an organisation to support its server, to say nothing of the possibility of datawipe (accidental or intentional)

- Paper and ink are and were a stable, autonomous technology (compared to a website that is inaccessible to roughly everyone in the absence of a particular technological base)."

Another aspect of the printed word is the actual visual presence it commands. As an

Factfile: Radical publishers

The following profiles take a brief look at the small press radical publishers and their activities.

Past Tense Publications

Past Tense Publications was founded in 2001, and is a publishing project based in South London, specialising in the radical, subversive and working class past. Their publishing remit is focused mainly on the London area, but, they have recently cast their publishing net further afield. They state: "We see our interest in history not just as an academic exercise divorced from our own time, but as relevant to current struggles and including our own experiences". Titles published this year include: *A Glorious Liberty: The Ideas of the Ranters*, by A. L. Morton in which Morton recounts the ideas, activities and fate of this anarchic and heretical 17th century sect; and *Symond Newell and the Kett's Rebellion: Norfolk's Great Rebellion against Enclosures*, by Peter E. Newell. Author Newell, is a descendent of Symond Newell, one of the leading personalities involved in this revolt which took place in 1549.

Hobnail Press

Hobnail Press was founded in 2003. Publishing essays and extracts from the work of 19th century and early 20th century freethinkers and radicals, Hobnail Press believes that "reclaiming the past is the key to building the future." Hobnail Press also specialise in republishing the works of anarchist-communist Guy Aldred (1886 -1963). This year Hobnail Press has published three titles by Emma Goldman: *The Philosophy of Atheism*, *The Failure of Christianity* and *Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure*. A number of other pamphlets are also in the pipeline for 2008. They also publish Hobnail Review.

■ A vast array of worthy pamphlets are also published by other groups and organisations, such as the Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation and the Anarchist Black Cross, as well as the larger anarchist publishing houses; but these are not counted here as small press publishers.

The Kate Sharpley Library

The Kate Sharpley Library is named after a First World War anarchist and anti-war activist. As well as publishing a phenomenal number of pamphlets, primarily on anarchist history, the library is one of the foremost anarchist archives in the world. The KSL published their first pamphlet in 1992. Recent pamphlets include: *Rebellious Spirit: Maria Occhipinti and the Ragusa Anti-Draft Revolt of 1945*, which features details of anti-fascist and anti-draft resistance in wartime Italy; and *Salvador Puig Antich and the MIL (Movimiento Iberico de Liberacion)*, a look at the Iberian Liberation Movement and the life and death of activist Salvador Puig Antich.

In the Spirit of Emma

In the Spirit of Emma is linked to Active Distribution. In the Spirit of Emma, however, is an imprint in its own right. It was launched following the tragic death of Emma Cray, who was killed in a road traffic accident on 14th September 1995. They publish a wide range of anti-authoritarian and anarchist pamphlets. One of their recent pamphlets is *Marriage and Love & Jealousy: Causes and a possible Cure*, which comprises of two short essays by Emma Goldman.

Black Cat Press

Black Cat Press was founded in 2007 and was born out of the Anarchist Open Forum. They specialise in freethought and secular texts. To date they have re-published *Pagan Christs and Christianity and Slavery* by, catholic priest turned radical atheist, Joseph McCabe; and *Slavery Ancient & Modern* by Terry Liddle.

agitational tool of physical propaganda it cannot be beaten. Likewise, you can never replace that feeling of excitement and eager anticipation, when the latest newsletter, pamphlet or periodical drops through the letterbox; and from a publishing point-of-view, you can never replace that feeling of satisfaction, creativity and sense of achievement when you hold the finished item.

I would like to end by appealing to readers, to give their support to the small press publisher – The printed word and the 'art' of radical pamphleteering must be kept alive – it is a revolutionary tradition that cannot be allowed to die.

■ For booklists and further information:
Past Tense Publications, 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton Street, London, SE17 3AE
Hobnail Press – c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX, UK
Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX
In the Spirit of Emma, c/o Active Distro, BM Active, London WC1N 3XX
Black Cat Press, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

By Ade Dimmick

Welcome to y

THE "free market" capitalist argument is that unemployment is caused by the real wage of labour being higher than the market is prepared to pay.

The basic argument is that the market for labour is like any other market and as the price of a commodity increases, the demand for it falls. In terms of labour, high prices (wages) cause lower demand (unemployment).

From this comes the argument that if workers were allowed to compete 'freely' among themselves for jobs, real wages would decrease and so unemployment would fall.

State intervention (e.g. social welfare programmes, legal rights to organise, minimum wage etc.) and labour union activity are, according to this theory, causes of unemployment, as such intervention and activity pushes wages above their market level and so forces employers to "let people go."

The key to ending unemployment then is simple: cut wages. Wages must fall as profits provide the motive power for business activity. Yet this is advocated despite workers not setting interest rates, nor making investment decisions. Working class people pay the price of the profit-seeking activities of their economic masters who not only profited in good times, but can expect others to pay the price in bad ones. In the current economic climate, it is useful to explain the flaws in the economics which rationalises this position in order to better combat such arguments and present an alternative to bolster our activity.

Flexploitation

While this attack on the wages, working conditions and social welfare is conducted under the pre-Keynesian notion of wages being "sticky" downwards (ie. not adjusting by falling in response to a recession), the underlying desire is to impose a "flexibility" which ensures that wages are "sticky" upwards too.

While the labour market is to be made more "flexible" and in line with ideal of "perfect competition", on the owners' side there is no attempt to bring it into line with that model.

Perfect competition (the theoretical condition in which all resources, including labour, will be efficiently utilised) states that there must be a large number of buyers and sellers.

While this is the case on the sellers' side of the "flexible" labour market, it's not on the buyers'. Most who favour labour market "flexibility" are also against the breaking up of big business and oligopolistic markets or attempts to stop mergers between dominant companies. Yet to work the model requires *both* sides to be made up of numerous small entities without market influence or power.

So why would making one side more "flexible" have a positive effect on the whole?

There is no logical reason for this to be the case - in an economy with both unions and big business, removing the former while retaining the latter will not bring it closer to the ideal of perfect competition. With the resulting shift in power on the labour market



things will get worse as income is redistributed from labour to capital.

Which is, we must stress, precisely what has happened since the 1980s amid the much lauded "reforms" of the labour market.

What must be recognised is that "flexibility" just means weakening the bargaining power of labour in order to increase the power and profits of the rich. A "flexible" labour market basically means one in which workers are glad to have any job and face increased insecurity at work.

Keynesianism versus Keynes

The chain of logic in this explanation for unemployment is rooted in many of the key assumptions of neo-classical economics. Sadly for these arguments, the assumptions required to reach it are absurd as the conclusions - namely, that there is no involuntary unemployment as markets are fully efficient.

This perspective suffered during the Great Depression and the threat of revolution produced by persistent mass unemployment meant that dissident economists had space to question the orthodoxy. At the head of this re-evaluation was John Maynard Keynes, who presented an alternative analysis and solution to the problem of unemployment.

Keynes took the assumptions of neo-classical economics on the labour market as the starting point of his analysis, namely that unemployment was caused by wages being too high. However, he was at pains to stress that even with ideally flexible labour markets, cutting real wages would not reduce unemployment.

Keynes argued that unemployment was not caused by labour resisting wage cuts or by sticky wages. Taking neo-classical economists at its word, Keynes analyses what would happen if the labour market were perfect and so he assumes the same model as his neo-classical opponents, namely that unemployment is caused by wages being too high and that there is flexibility in both commodity and labour markets.

As he stressed, his "criticism of the accepted [neo-]classical theory of economics has consisted not so much in finding logical flaws in its analysis as in pointing out that its tacit assumptions are seldom or never satisfied, with the result that it cannot solve the economic problems of the actual world."

What Keynes did was to consider the overall effect of cutting wages on the economy as a

your pay rise

Analysis: Would attacking wages cut unemployment?



whole.

Given that wages make up a significant part of the costs of a commodity, "if money-wages change, one would have expected the [neo-]classical school to argue that prices would change in almost the same proportion, leaving the real wage and the level of unemployment practically the same as before."

However, this was not the case, causing Keynes to point out that they "do not seem to have realised that... their supply curve for labour will shift bodily with every movement of prices."

This was because labour cannot determine its own real wage as prices are controlled by bosses. Once this is recognised, it becomes obvious that workers do not control the cost of living. Therefore trade unions "do not raise the obstacle to any increase in aggregate employment which is attributed to them by the [neo-]classical school."

So while workers could, in theory, control their wages by asking for less pay (or, more realistically, accepting any wage cuts imposed by their bosses as the alternative is unemployment) they do not have any control over the prices of the goods they produce.

This means that they have no control over their real wages and so cannot reduce unemployment by pricing themselves into work by accepting lower wages. Given these obvious facts, Keynes concluded that there

was "no ground for the belief that a flexible wage policy is capable of continuous full employment... The economic system cannot be made self-adjusting along these lines."

As he summarised: "The contention that the unemployment which characterises a depression is due to a refusal by labour to accept a reduction of money-wages is not clearly supported by the facts. It is not very plausible to assert that unemployment in the United States in 1932 was due either to labour obstinately refusing to accept a reduction of money-wages or to its demanding a real wage beyond what the productivity of the economic machine was capable of furnishing... Labour is not more truculent in the depression than in the boom - far from it. Nor is its physical productivity less."

This means that the standard neo-classical argument is flawed. While cutting wages may make sense for one firm, it would not have this effect throughout the economy as is required to reduce unemployment as a whole.

What may work with an individual worker or firm will not have the same effect on the economy as a whole, for cutting wages for all workers would have a massive effect on the aggregate demand for their firm's products.

And if wages are cut?

There were two possibilities if wages were cut. One possibility, which Keynes considered the most likely, would be that a cut in money wages across the whole economy would see a similar cut in prices. The net effect of this would be to leave real wages unchanged.

The other assumes that as wages are cut, prices remain unchanged or only fall by a small amount (i.e. if wealth was redistributed from workers to their employers). This is the underlying assumption of "free market" argument that cutting wages would end the slump. In this theory, cutting real wages would increase profits and investment. This would make up for any decline in working class consumption.

However, in order to make this claim, the theory depends on three critical assumptions, namely that firms can expand production, that they will expand production, and that, if they do, they can then sell those extra goods. These assumptions can be questioned.

The first assumption states that it is always possible for a company to take on new workers. Yet increasing production requires more than just labour. Tools, raw materials and workspace are all required in addition to new workers. If production goods and facilities are not available, employment will not be increased. Therefore the assumption

that labour can always be added to the existing stock to increase output is plainly unrealistic, particularly if we assume with neo-classical economics that all resources are fully utilised.

Next, will firms expand production when labour costs decline? Hardly. Increasing production will increase supply and eat into the excess profits resulting from the fall in wages (assuming, of course, that demand holds up).

If unemployment did result in a lowering of the general market wage, companies might use the opportunity to replace their current workers or force them to take a pay cut. If this happened, neither production nor employment would increase. However, it could be argued that the excess profits would increase capital investment in the economy (a key assumption of neo-liberalism). The reply is obvious: perhaps, perhaps not. A slumping economy might well induce financial caution and so capitalists could stall investment until they are convinced of the sustained higher

“ No ground for the belief that a flexible wage policy is capable of continuous full employment – Keynes ”

profitability will last.

This feeds directly into the last assumption, namely that the produced goods will be sold. Assuming that money wages are cut, but prices remain the same then this would be a cut in real wages. But when wages decline, so does worker purchasing power, and if this is not offset by an increase in spending elsewhere, then total demand will decline.

However, it can be argued that not everyone's real income would fall: incomes from profits would increase. But redistributing income from workers to capitalists, a group who tend to spend a smaller portion of their income on consumption than do workers, could reduce effective demand and increase unemployment. Moreover, business does not (cannot) instantaneously make use of the enlarged funds resulting from the shift of wages to profit for investment.

In addition, which sane company would increase investment in the face of falling demand for its products? When wages decline, so does workers' purchasing power and this is unlikely



to be offset by an increase in spending elsewhere. This will lead to a reduction in aggregate demand as profits are accumulated but unused, so leading to stocks of unsold goods and renewed price reductions. This means that the cut in real wages will be cancelled out by price cuts to sell unsold stock and unemployment remains. In other words, contrary to neo-classical economics, a fall in wages may result in the same or even more unemployment

Unemployment and high wages

Even ignoring the theoretical problems, the facts are that high wages are generally associated with booms rather than slumps and this has been known to mainstream economics since at least 1939 when in March of that year *The Economic Journal* printed an article by Keynes about the movement of real wages during a boom, in which he evaluated the empirical analysis of two labour

cal real wages his argument did not depend on it and given the empirical evidence provided by labour economists he accepted that real wages were pro-cyclical in nature.

The reason why this is the case is obvious. Labour does not control prices and so cannot control its own real wage. Looking at the Great Depression, it seems difficult to blame it on workers refusing to take pay cuts. The notion of all-powerful unions or workers' resistance to wage cuts causing high unemployment hardly fits these facts.

Since then, economists have generally confirmed that real wages are procyclical. As Hugh Stretton summarises in his excellent introductory text on economics: "In defiance of market theory, the demand for labour tends strongly to vary with its price, not inversely to it. Wages are high when there is full employment. Wages – especially for the least-skilled and lowest paid – are lowest when there is least employment. The causes chiefly run from the employment to the wages, rather than the other way. Unemployment weakens bargaining power, worsens job security and conditions, and lowers the pay of those still in jobs.

"The lower wages do not induce employers to create more jobs... most business firms have no reason to take on more hands if wages decline. Only empty warehouses, or the prospect of more sales can get them to do that, and these conditions rarely coincide with falling employment and wages."

Will Hutton, the British neo-Keynesian economist, summarises research by two other economists that suggests high wages do not cause unemployment:

"the British economists David Blanchflower and Andrew Oswald [examined] . . . the data in twelve countries about the actual relation between wages and unemployment – and what they have discovered is another major challenge to the free market account of the labour market. Free market theory would predict that low wages would be correlated with low local unemployment; and high wages with high local unemployment.

"Blanchflower and Oswald have found precisely the opposite relationship. The higher the wages, the lower the local unemployment – and the lower the wages, the higher the local unemployment. As they say, this is not a conclusion that can be squared with free market text-book theories of how a competitive labour market should work."

Unemployment was highest where real wages were lowest and nowhere had falling wages being followed by rising employment or falling unemployment. Blanchflower and Oswald stated that their conclusion that employees "who work in areas of high unemployment earn less, other things constant, than those who are surrounded by low unemployment." This relationship, the exact opposite of that predicted by "free market" capitalist economics, was found in many different countries and time periods, with the curve being similar for different countries.

While this evidence may come as a shock to those who subscribe to the arguments put forward by those who think capitalist economics reflect the reality of that system, it fits well with the anarchist analysis.

For anarchists, unemployment is a means of disciplining labour and maintaining a suitable rate of profit. As full employment is approached, labour's power increases, so reducing the rate of exploitation and so

increasing labour's share of the value it produces. Thus, the fact that wages are higher in areas of low unemployment is not a surprise, nor is the phenomenon of pro-cyclical real wages. After all, the ratio between wages and profits are, to a large degree, a product of bargaining power and so we would expect real wages to grow in the upswing of the business cycle, fall in the slump and be high in areas of low unemployment.

So, in summary, the available evidence suggests that high wages are associated with low levels of unemployment. While this should be the expected result from any realistic analysis of the economic power which marks capitalist economies, it does not provide much support for claims that only by cutting real wages can unemployment be reduced.

Ultimately, most laissez-faire economic analysis is unpersuasive both in terms of the facts and their logic. While economics may be marked by axiomatic reasoning which renders everything the markets does as optimal, the problem is precisely that it is pure axiomatic reasoning with little or no regard for the real world.

Economics in more than one lesson

So, as radical economists have correctly observed, such considerations undercut the "free market" capitalist contention that labour unions and state intervention are responsible for unemployment (or that depressions will easily or naturally end by the workings of the market).

To the contrary, insofar as labour unions and various welfare provisions prevent demand from falling as low as it might otherwise go during a slump, they apply a brake to the downward spiral. Far from being responsible for unemployment, they actually mitigate it. For example, unions, by putting purchasing power in the hands of workers, stimulates demand and keeps employment higher than the level it would have been.

Moreover, wages are generally spent immediately and completely whilst profits are not. A shift from profits to wages may stimulate the economy since more money is spent but there will be a delayed cut in consumption out of profits.

Given the dynamics of the labour "market", any policies based on applying "economics 101" to it will be doomed to failure. As such, any book entitled *Economics in One Lesson* must be viewed with suspicion unless it admits that what it expounds has little or no bearing to reality and urges the reader to take at least the second lesson.

Of course, it is much easier to demand that workers' real wages be reduced when you are sitting in a tenured post in academia. True to their ideals and "science", it is refreshing to see how many of these "free market" economists renounce tenure so that their wages can adjust automatically as the market demand for their comments changes.

When economic theories extol suffering for future benefits, it is always worth asking who suffers, and who benefits. The notion of wage cutting emerges from theoretical claims that price flexibility can restore full employment, and it rests on dubious logic, absurd assumptions and on a false analogy comparing the labour market with the market for peanuts.

By Iain McKay



ECONOMIST: Keynesianism draws its name from John Maynard Keynes.

economists.

These studies showed that "when money wages are rising, real wages have usually risen too; whilst, when money wages are falling, real wages are no more likely to rise than to fall." Keynes admitted that in *The General Theory* he was "accepting, without taking care to check the facts", a "widely held" belief.

He discussed where this belief came from, namely leading 19th century British economist Alfred Marshall who had produced a "generalisation" from a six year period between 1880-86 which was not true for the subsequent business cycles of 1886 to 1914. He also quotes another leading economist, Arthur Pigou, from 1927 on how "the upper halves of trade cycles have, on the whole, been associated with higher rates of real wages than the lower halves" and indicates that he provided evidence on this from 1850 to 1910.

Keynes conceded the point, arguing that he had tried to minimise differences between his analysis and the standard perspective. He stressed that while he assumed countercyclical



BNP: There's no justice

Reportage: If their vote reflected their record, they'd be in trouble. So why is the far right group's vicious creed still gaining ground?

In a follow-up to their piece in the last issue of Black Flag, Kaf and Class War's Paul Stott look again at the British National Party, and opposition to it in the United Kingdom.

THE London Mayoral election and the national local elections of May 1st this year saw the BNP continue their steady progress of the last six or so years.

They could justifiably claim a really significant breakthrough in winning their first ever London Assembly member when Richard Barnbrook was elected to that body on the top-up system. This was not a total shock to those who have been keeping a keen eye on the rise of the far right, as they came within a whisker of achieving the feat in the previous election only to be undermined by an unexpectedly strong showing from UKIP.

This time around, with the UKIP in public disarray in London, and a consequent

collapse in their support, the BNP successfully met the minimum threshold by achieving 5.2% across London – 130,714 individual votes. To this total can be added the 18,020 (9.82%) votes picked up in the City and East ward, where they ran their only candidate.

London-wide there was a 0.6% rise in their vote, not amazing but when placed against the across the board attacks from the mainstream parties media hostility, not to mention the resources pumped into “Don't vote Nazi” style campaigns this figure looks a little more impressive and suggests that they may be on the road to a sustainable vote.

The mayoral election also produced results that the BNP could only see as encouraging. Their candidate (Barnbrook again) picked up 69,710 (2.84%), not a great performance but with some indications that certain areas are now returning a solid BNP vote on a regular basis (more on that below).

Added to this total is 128,609 second

preferences – bringing the combined total of people prepared to vote for a BNP mayor in London to 200,000. This year's election is likely to have seen more people voting for one of the major parties due to the close nature of the battle between Livingstone and Johnson – a factor which also helped to increase turnout and so raised the number of votes that the BNP needed to gain a top-up seat.

This last factor being the main hope of mainstream anti-fascism of stopping the election of an Assembly member and the approach they based their whole London strategy around.

Needless to say this approach doesn't even begin to deal with the motivations of why people are voting BNP, merely seeking to out-flank them in a mainstream political game – a tactic that will never effectively deal with the far-right, but conveniently serves to add a boost to the declining fortunes of the Labour party.



A Fascist MP?

Worryingly, ward level data clearly demonstrates that there are now two constituencies (Dagenham and Rainham & Morley and Outwood) in which, when votes amongst all the parties are totalled, the BNP are the largest party. This opens up the possibility of a BNP MP being elected in the future if their vote holds up or expands. That said, people's behaviour in general elections is noticeably different from that of local elections. Nevertheless, this situation would have been dismissed as an utter impossibility at almost any point post-war.

Nationally, the picture was slightly more turbulent with some disappointing regional results in areas that until recently looked very promising but with an overall gain of 13 seats and a further consolidation of votes in the wards stood originally in the 2004 elections. The national average being 13.4%

Again, mainstream anti-fascism argued that any successful candidates would prove utterly incompetent and driven from office at the first opportunity, and developed a strategy of exposing this incompetence (which undoubtedly exists).

That people are prepared to vote for BNP candidates despite incessant media attacks is very telling and could indicate a hardening of attitude into a bloody-minded vote for someone who is becoming seen as "their" candidate against the establishment, rather than a simple protest vote.

This might apply to Stoke for example where the BNP now have all six councillors in two neighbouring wards and nine on the Council in total. Voters here seemed impervious to the sort of tactics mentioned above, and which are still being put forward despite clear evidence of their ineffectiveness.

Stoke is actually a rather good example of where a lot of other areas might be in a few years' time if the current dynamics continue. A town where most traditional working class industry has collapsed, where local populations have all but been abandoned by the Labour party – written off as a safe vote or politically worthless and who are struggling to make ends meet, to meet their health needs, their kids' schools are failing etc.

As pointed out many times, the BNP can easily enough racialise these frustrations. Locally this has all added up to a collapse in the Labour vote with the BNP successfully filling a large part of the vacuum this has left.

This is a microcosm of what is happening in many areas across the county – a rise in inequality (and all that entails) coupled with political abandonment leading to a collapse in the Labour vote and the far-right moving in. We might see one, two or many Stokes if this continues.

Going Down?

A few sources have been arguing that the BNP vote actually collapsed regionally, due not only to in-fighting but because of general lack of support and a growing realisation that the BNP will do nothing for those communities that have supported them.

The full results show that whilst there was an inability to put up full slates in a couple of areas due to the internal problems, nationally the picture was nothing like that, and instead demonstrated, again, growth, and crucially in areas where the BNP were standing for the second or third time (the election

cycle meaning this was their return to the seats contested in 2004). A number of new regional bases have appeared almost out of nowhere (Nuneaton and Bedworth, Tameside, Wakefield) and old centres of strength have at the very least consolidated their position. The re-election of councillors is also now more common, though still outnumbered by those losing their seats (seven to 13).

Looking at England alone (London excluded as well) they had 343 seats where their vote was over 10%, the majority of them 15% or more, and 82 seats in which they came second. Here are the city/town percentages in those areas where they've either had past success or stood large slates:

Factfile: Seats

Pendle (7) 30.43%
Rotherham (5) 27.9%
Amber valley (7) 26.25%
Stoke (11) 25.9%
Burnley (11) 21.89%
Tameside (8) 21.75%
Thurrock (19) 21.7%
Nuneaton & Bedworth (12) 20.77%
Wakefield (12) 20.48%
Barnsley (21) 17.36%
Sandwell (12) 17.26%
Oldham (5) 16.8%
Carlisle (5) 16.3%
Calderdale (9) 16%
Epping Forest DC (12) 15.5%
Epping Forest Loughton (14) 15%
Broxbourne (12) 15.35%
Sheffield (8) 14.83%
Basildon (14) 14.6%
Dudley (11) 14.5%
Kirklees (20) 14.3%
Solihull (12) 13.47%
South Tyneside (13) 13.18%
Salford (9) 12.48%
Lincoln (5) 12.14%
Gateshead (12) 11.8%
North Tyneside (5) 11.56%
Newcastle (12) 11.37%
Leeds (34) 11.2%
Coventry (13) 11.2%
Wigan (7) 11.2%
Bury (8) 11.11%
Sunderland (25) 10.97%
Stockport (6) 10.5%
Durham (30) 10.48%
Southend (17) 10%
Liverpool (11) 9%
St Helens (5) 8.5%
Birmingham (40) 7.5%

Figure in brackets = seats contested, followed by average vote across city.

Note: we've also compared these figures to the results in the 2003 elections, these being the same wards that were up for election then.

They bear out our general argument of consolidation or steady growth of level of vote combined with expansion into new areas and that steady vote then also appearing in the newly contested areas.

Where Next?

The short-medium plans of the BNP now turn to the European and Stoke Mayoral elections next year. They have high hopes of picking up at the least one MEP in the former. They have been picking up 10-15% in local polls for the last few years (the average in the May elections was 13.4%). The highest percentage needed to pick up a seat in any region in the European election is circa 18%, the lowest around 6%, the others all around 11%.

The BNP picked up an average of 5% last time around, but the now-struggling UKIP picked up 16%, a combined total well over every single regional threshold. The BNP in 2004 was just starting its upward climb – a BNP vote was still pretty much seen as wasted. Today a BNP vote is well on the way to being normalised.

How the UKIP performs is going to be crucial – and all the signs point to their internal disintegration being mirrored at the polls. The UKIP do have a habit of doing well in the European elections regardless of other factors though, so it should not be imagined that anything is writ in stone.

One MEP is do-able, maybe more. Griffin clearly thinks the North-West region is winnable as he's selected himself to stand there. To make doubly sure of no internal problems has also appointed himself BNP North West England regional organiser – even though he lives in Wales. The three seats where it's possible they could return MEPs are: North West (need 8.5%, got 6.4% last time); Yorkshire and Humber (11.5% and 8%); and West Midlands (11.5% and 7.5%). All winnable if enough UKIP voters come across and the rise in a simple pro-BNP vote of the last few years continues.

The Stoke mayoral election is another opportunity for the BNP to put their name on the national map, and one where they have a reasonable chance of doing well.

Responses To The BNP's Rise - Us

Any visitor to websites populated by anarchists, such as urban75.com or meanwhileatthebar.org will find hours and hours of debate and discussion about how best to counter the far-right. There are always plenty of people willing to talk the talk! Perhaps the most eccentric contribution came courtesy of an article in issue two of *Mayday* magazine "Anti fascism, the BNP and the local elections". The gist of the argument here is that the BNP are over-hyped, anti-fascists are giving them and Griffin too much credit, and some anarchists are too sympathetic to the ideas of community activist group and political party the Independent Working Class Association.

Apparently written to discuss the BNP's 2007 electoral performance, *Mayday* actually came out immediately after the 2008 May elections – where the BNP achieved some of the best results ever by British fascists.

The evening of the election count saw a large attendance by Anarchists outside the Greater London Assembly building. This followed several weeks of hard leafleting and stickering to build a large counter demonstration under the banner "No to the Crook, the Toff, the Cop and the Fascist" reflecting the appalling choice offered to Londoners – Ken Livingstone, Boris Johnson, Brian Paddick or Richard Barnbrook.

At one level the event was a success – the

London Anarchist movement was back on the streets, and pretty much all the activists who are able to work with one another did so. A lively picket was held as journalists and politicians entered the GLA for their canapés prior to the results being announced. Significantly a series of all-London anarchist meetings also emerged from the new found vibrancy.

That should not however deflect from the negatives. Putting anarchists on the streets also results in large numbers of police officers being brought out. Ever since J18 in 1999, the Met has shown itself committed to throwing what appears to be unlimited resources at countering us.

On the evening of May 1st, some 80-odd Anarchists were policed by 21 vanloads of officers, many from the Police's "firm" – the Territorial Support Group. Out-muscled on the day, activists were soon dispersed, along with BNP activists who had come into the area spoiling for a fight.

The second failing is that for all the populist rhetoric, the Anarchist intervention in the Mayoral campaign was marginal. Whether the aim was to counter the Boris and Ken show, or to counter the support for Richard Barnbrook, neither was achieved. The number of new faces on the evening of May 1st was also disappointing. In specific anti-fascist terms, the loudest voices speaking against the BNP were to be heard from the 'establishment' anti-racist left – the trades unions, *Searchlight* et al.

Since Mayday the clearest public response from Anarchists to the BNP has been the campaign, with Antifa heavily involved, against the BNP's Red, White and Blue festival held on the weekend of August 15-17 in Ripley, Derbyshire at the farm of BNP member Alan Warner. The RWB festival is certainly a pale imitation of that held by the Front National each year in France, but as the biggest gathering of British fascists it is a worthy target.

There is little doubt this year's efforts put both the BNP and Derbyshire Police under real pressure. Opposition close to the BNP site on the 16th August saw some 33 anti-fascists arrested (all were bailed to return to Derbyshire Police in November) and by the time the BNP were packing up their belongings the local press was loudly demanding they never be allowed to return. It is tempting to speculate what would have happened had such robust opposition been applied to the RWB when it started.

There are however limits to this approach. Rattled as both the BNP and Derbyshire police have been (BNP blogs in particular were noticeable for their demands of action on a police force that would clearly prefer them to go away) it is not yet clear to what extent such actions will damage the fascists overall growth, especially in terms of their success at the ballot box.

Take an example from South Yorkshire. In Barnsley, the BNP's town centre stall was smashed up by anti-fascists in October 2007. On another occasion the BNP carelessly lost their newspapers before they could even sell any. Come this year's elections one of the other staple methods of countering the far-right was also used in the town – a detailed newspaper expose of Barnsley BNP candidate Simon Goodricke.

Not only is Goodricke an ex-cop but he is an ex-cop with convictions for perverting the course of justice and swindling £1,000 out of

a Pensioner. Just the sort of person you want running services in your community!

Despite this, the BNP emerged in May 2008 with a strong set of election results in Barnsley, even though the picture was complicated by the candidacy of BIG (Barnsley Independent Group).

Is it that anti-fascist tactics such as the above no longer work, that they do work but need to be sustained, or that they will only work if attached to a more detailed community presence? Time will tell.

The Established Left Wobbles

In June *Searchlight* published an open letter "Where now for anti-fascism?" Written by Nick Lowles, this recognised the redundancy of much of *Searchlight's* political campaigning in recent years. "A simple 'Don't vote Nazi' is an irrelevant slogan that needs to be discarded immediately" – this after years of



UNPOPULAR: A view of the BNP's 2008 RWB festival

Photo: Hedgehopper (indymedia.co.uk)

Searchlight not only using just that slogan, but using their vast influence over the left and the mainstream media to ensure that others did just that as well!

It is hard not to see Lowles piece as a sign of desperation. Having hitched themselves to the Labour party (and in particular Notting Hill resident and Dagenham MP John Cruddas) *Searchlight* have worked tirelessly on opposing the BNP in local, national and European elections. They have backed a loser, and the harder they work trying to get the democratic (usually this means Labour) vote out, the more exhausted they are likely to become.

Discredited on much of the left by their admitted links to the police and security services, *Searchlight* has also been weakened by its historical Zionism. A brief falling out with Unite Against Fascism's leadership was as much about *Searchlight's* inability to tolerate Respect's pro-Muslim stance as the ostensible fact that Respect is opposed to the Labour party.

Although *Searchlight* can still use its resources to mop up local anti-fascist initiatives (it seems, disappointingly Lancaster UAF is one example) and several "Together" groups emerged in time for the 2008

elections, *Searchlight* appear stuck between a rock and a hard place. Unable to develop a radical critique of fascism, and wedded to a political party drowning in front of our eyes, Lowles, Gable et al are perhaps secretly hoping for a general election which repeats that of 1979 – a Tory hammering of Labour, with a collapse of the racist vote, as it heads to the Tories. It may happen, but no one can guarantee it will happen.

Searchlight on Griffin

In their analysis of the failure of the 2007 BNP split, Nick Lowles (*Searchlight*, July 2008 p.12-13) fails to recognise two of the most important reasons behind the failure of the anti-Griffin forces. Lowles may be correct that the rebels over-egged their claims against Griffin, and failed to press the flesh with the organisation's rank and file.

Yes, Griffin could not be defeated by

blogging alone. But other factors were crucial.

The first is clearly Griffin's high degree of national public recognition – his is the (rather bloated) face of the BNP. Matt Single hardly compares. Knowing this Griffin was able to simply ride out any "split", content in the knowledge that the party would still be achieving some strong election results.

The second is the political confusion of the rebels. Although united by the fact they disliked Griffin, they came from both Nazi and euro-nationalist wings of the party. (Something *Searchlight* could hardly point out, given their eagerness to brief interested observers that the split was between those who wanted a Euro-nationalist party and those who were basically Nazis) Those dependent on *Searchlight* for their understanding of fascism (such as Unite Against Fascism's Weyman Bennett) were to be heard repeating this line ad nauseum.

Building a coherent political strategy, or even a new organisation was always likely to be beyond forces as diverse the stiff right-armers in Scotland around Warren Bennett and those in the east Midlands, like Sadie Graham, who had always aimed to modernise the party.



Our Enemies In The North

One tactic for the BNP in towns like Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham, and even whole counties such as Durham or Cumbria may be to gradually build up support and to simply "wait out" the old left. Those radicalised by events like the miners strike of 1984-5, or the fight against Thatcherism in the 1980s are not getting any younger.

To many people of that generation the BNP will always be anathema – one of the few things worse than Mrs Thatcher's Tory party. When the BNP tried to book the Thorne Social Club in Doncaster for a meeting in September 2006, the steward threatened to resign and the bar staff refused to work if the meeting went ahead. It was quickly cancelled. The same year the landlord of the Kings Arms in Maryport, Cumbria took similar action after the BNP booked his upstairs room without admitting who they are. Buy that man a pint! Welcome as these instances are, only a fool would bet on such principled acts being the norm in 20 or 30 years time.

Labour is undergoing a catastrophic haemorrhage in its former heartlands. The wider left is in as bad a state, if not worse. This is evident not just in Labour by-election defeats in places like Crewe and Glasgow East, but perhaps more importantly in the long term in party membership. To take one example in Cumbria, membership of Workington Constituency Labour Party, was around 860 in the late 1990s but is now approximately 140. That is a lot of canvassers to lose.

Putting aside the new Labour careerists, if you consider the core of the trades union movement and 'old' Labour, it is clearly ageing. This is particularly true of groups closest to the revolutionary left such as Durham Miners' Association. Anyone hanging their hat on an old Labour/trades union revival to see off the BNP is certainly taking a gamble. There is not a 50-year-old version of Dave Douglass out there, or a 40-year-old version, nor a 30-year-old version and there sure as hell is not a 20-year-old version. That world has gone, and it is not coming back.

It is also the case that some of the 'old Labour' heartlands targeted by the BNP lack the sort of multi-cultural social scene that so undermined the National Front in the late 70s and early 80s.

Instead of an easy interaction of young black and white people around music and football, many such towns either have tiny ethnic populations, or Asian communities with far lower degrees of integration, interaction and inter-marriage than we saw between white and West Indian communities thirty years ago. What will undermine the BNP culturally in old Labour heartlands?

There is some hope, but so far it comes from outside of the revolutionary left, and outside of the anarchist movement. Cumbrian blogger Duncan Money makes the point that in the previously staunch Labour town of Barrow, the May elections saw four seats fall to the local Socialist People's Party, and another four to the Our Schools Are Not For Sale group.

Significantly the BNP flopped in the midst of this activist wave. Could such developments, coupled with well placed militancy from groups like Antifa, plus continued exposure of the fact that the BNP are not a radical alternative, shift things significantly away from the fascists?

Lost In The Wilderness

For the neo-Nazi right, 2008 has so far been a disaster. There appears no steady stream of recruits seeking refuge from a 'reformist' BNP. Although the National Front performed well electorally in the London Assembly elections, totalling 26,901 votes in five constituencies, with two votes over 5%, (out-polling the SWP's Left List front by 10,000 votes in one seat and by 5000 in two others in their three head-to-head contests).

This appears to have been based solely on the historical appeal of the group's name in certain parts of the city, but also highlights that even unrepentant racist groups are capable of profiting from the ongoing disgust and alienation with mainstream politics.

Other political interventions appear unlikely – a march by NF Youth in south London on April 19th pulled in less than 20 people, and the NF appears incapable of functioning as anything like a political organisation. Those wishing to pursue electoral politics may as well join the BNP and be done with it.

Under pressure from opponents such as Antifa, the British Peoples Party has at least been consistent – consistently second best. On the same day as the National Front were humiliating themselves, the BPP were turned over by anti-fascists in Victoria. As usual with the flakier elements of Nazism, bitter recriminations soon followed, as did needless arrests of Nazis seeking 'revenge'.

With former head honcho Sid Williamson



BIG MAN: Nick Griffin remains safe at the top

pushed out, Adrian Brookes led an attack on what he claimed was "Anti-Fascist Action" in Manchester, but was in fact the Marxist-Leninists of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), selling their newspaper *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism!*

Even this was far from convincing as the RCG fought back, and the police grabbed the retreating Nazis. A BPP 'show of strength' in London on 27 July merely resulted in a day's harassment by the Met, plus further time in the cells, with Antifa wisely allowing the BPP to roam London in a huff.

The last few years have now seen a steady trickle of fascists being arrested and/or convicted for terrorist offences, most notably the BNP's Robert Cottage in October 2006.

Most disastrously of all for the neo-Nazi right was the conviction of BPP member Martyn Gilleard. Receiving 11 years for bomb making may have been expected to boost the BPP's credentials but for the five years also received for possessing 39,000 indecent images of children.

This later conviction was skilfully kept quiet until the end of Gilleard's terrorist trial, resulting in several fascists making even bigger fools of themselves than usual by attaching their wagon to Gilleard right up until the moment he was found guilty of the terrorist charges.

What is not clear yet is whether such incidents represent isolated cases of oddballs attempting to fulfil their fantasies, a response to political hopelessness from a position of abject defeat and weakness, or that a small minority of Nazis are responding to a more charged racial atmosphere by looking to carry out terrorism as a viable tactic.

Should Nazis look to match the involvement of British Muslims in terrorist outrages by successfully carrying out attacks of their own, things could become very unpleasant indeed.

Conclusions

It is not hard to find apocalyptic tendencies within the BNP. Usually these concentrate on race, but they also centre on issues such as peak oil and environmental collapse, and, as the credit crunch bites, on the economy. Certainly the BNP themselves see great opportunities unfolding.

In April, their newspaper Voice of Freedom (sic) commented that the "decline in the availability of easy credit" would see an "awakening of the British people" as "money will have to be earned and the fact that migrant workers are taking the lion's share of the jobs available will become the political issue of the day" and the BNP "will have the policies that the British people will be demanding".

Those predicting imminent economic collapse often make themselves look idiots (look at any old issue of the WRP's *Newsline* paper from the late 1970s to see this) but there is little doubt we are heading for some difficult times with rising unemployment, inflation, and ever more pressure on affordable housing.

The BNP's solutions to these issues are wrong, but they do actually propose something. The question is, apart from a vague call for revolution and solidarity – do we?

The importance of winning Budryk

Reportage: How a miners' strike has given an example to the rest of Poland during dark times

THE strike in Budryk was one of the most important events at the start of 2008 – and Poland is generally not a very calm place nowadays.

The Polish liberal press has described, with some exaggeration, the recent wave of strikes and workers' demonstrations as the biggest since 1989 when the communist regime fell.

This is not true. Poland had already seen a wave of protests in 1992-1993 against privatisation and the effects of capitalistic transformation. In 2002-2003 more protests (with a long struggle in Ozarów at the centre of them) were a reaction to the bankruptcy of many enterprises and massive unemployment.

In the current wave of strikes, workers are demanding better wages and conditions. This is very new in the Polish workers movement of the last 20 years. Particular workplaces or whole branches are winning pay increases of 30% or more, (eg. the health care workers).

Strikes in the mines and from health care workers, protests by truck drivers and teachers, calls by trade unions to take to the streets with demands of dignified wages for all, show social discontent is growing.

Just a few months after the parliamentary elections the newly ensconced Civic Platform party (PO), a liberal party which had gone to the polls promising to "rescue" our democracy, started looking at radical solutions to the problem of rising militance, such as throwing trade unions out of workplaces altogether.

Janusz Palikot, parliamentarian of the PO, a millionaire, chief of one of the most important parliamentarian commissions, has said directly that the present government is... "too civil and too modern" in its approach – he sees the situation as a burgeoning war.

It is in this context then that the events in Budryk mine should be examined. Rather than being looked at as an individual protest, it has been a test of strength.

The miners have been demanding their rights under local labour law, which in Poland as well as in EU says clearly: workers working in the same positions under the same employer have to earn the same. Yet the miners of Budryk were set to earn far less under their new owner than workers of other mines in the same holding. They demanded an equalisation of wages, which would mean a pay rise.

Most of the mines in Poland however are owned by the state, so when an agreement between the striking workers and the firm was ready in January of this year, the government decided to block it. It has forbidden the management of the mine to sign this agreement. From the very beginning there was a

tendency for confrontation and miners were threatened with the use of violence.

This again should be a clear signal for all workers that the government is going to take a hardline position against the increasing number of strikes, and will not allow, even at the price of using violence, any further increase of "the social spirit of demands".

These complex conditions of the Budryk miners' struggle make any prediction of its outcome difficult.

in January saw public opinion broadly supporting the strike. Voices raised in solidarity by Dario Fo, by Ken Loach and the French CNT found resonance in the Polish press.

From the anarchist movement, among others Workers Initiative and some sections of the Anarchist Federation became involved. In Poznan the local press were partially cowed in their attitude as they dealt with questions raised over their accuracy.



SOLID: The Budryk miners pose for a picture around Christmas last year

From the perspective of their mine alone and the main issue they have been fighting for – equalisation of the wages – there have been major problems.

There were many complaints, that the strike was run till the end by a minority of the crew, a maximum of 500 out of more than 2,000 employed miners. But even smaller numbers have been mobilised by strike-breakers which were supported by the two biggest mining trade unions: Związek Zawodowy Gornikow (Trade Union of the Miners) and NSZZ Solidarnosc.

We can surely state that great majority of the miners' crew was silently supporting protest action, shown by a referendum in which they rejected an agreement signed by ZZG and NSZZ Solidarnosc.

But in the wider context, despite massive attacks conducted by rightwing media, a campaign of slander, hostility from politicians and betrayal by some trade unions, the Budryk miners did not allow this to break them down and after 46 days they forced the directors of the mine to sign an agreement which, while not perfect, was a big step forward. A wide solidarity campaign conducted

In the Silesia region activists from Workers Initiative organised benefit concert for the families of the striking miners. Anarchists have been collecting money for the strikers and distributed thousands of flyers with an appeal for support.

What conclusions can we make here? From today's perspective, the strike in Budryk seems to be an important experience. It saw a difficult alliance made between anarchist movements and activists of the "August '80" trade union, which initiated the strike. It is an alliance which has prompted criticism from part of the anarchist spectrum.

Yet in moments of confrontation, like in Budryk, despite our differences, as anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists we must say with one voice: "We will not let government crush the miners' strike, we will not tolerate lies in the media, and we will not drop our rightful demands".

■ *Adapted from an original article in Abolishing the borders from below.*

By Jaroslaw Urbanski (AF)



Visions of a left

THE left has always had something of a love affair with art. From the mural paintings of the Mexican revolution, to the Bolshevik Constructivists and Left Front of the Arts, to the Situationist International.

They themselves looked back approvingly at the Paris Commune's Federation of Artists, which, chaired by the painter Gustave Courbet, pulled down the Vendôme Column, a monument to Napoleonic Imperialism. "Art" is seen as integral to the history and traditions of the movement, including the libertarian wing this paper comes from.

This continues in today's anarcho-scene, with squatted "art spaces" and exhibitions common. Several such exhibitions opened during April's days of action on squats. With the increasing professionalisation of graffiti, becoming the "Street Art" now

accusations of fascism.

Such an attitude is also visible in the publications of American lifestylist, anarchist and on-off primitivist group Crimethinc.

The fourth issue of their magazine *Rolling Thunder* contains some pretty risible politics: condemnations of video games, "adventure movies, romance novels and the comedy channel", and the argument that hygiene is an invention "designed to weaken children's immune systems, discourage them from interacting with the natural environment, and deprive them of the information and pleasure otherwise communicated by pheromones."

But just as striking is their article on art, flagged up in the magazine's editorial. Crimethinc's core politics are that people should "drop out" of capitalism, and it is interesting that they should attack working

framed as class-conscious populism."

This isn't the first time that Crimethinc have thrown accusations of fascism around. We should ask why groups like this can compare all workers with jobs to the Nuremberg war criminals (*Rolling Thunder* #2, page 21), whilst dismissing anti-elitists as fascists.

Just as a logical criticism, it is interesting that they should attack libertarians who believe in workplace struggle on the grounds that everyone who works is complicit in The System, making class struggle irrelevant, whilst at the same time valorising art (or in the case of issue #5, the "anti-art" of Brener and Schurz) for its critical potential, even if it is complicit in elite culture and ideology.

But ultimately, the fact that they see no contradiction in dismissing the left critique as "borderline fascism" whilst condemning anyone who drinks alcohol, watches tv, reads lowbrow books or enjoys trashy films makes sense if put in the context of the unfortunate influence of art on the left movement.

Art, contrary to the assertions of its apologists, is not a timeless and universal category of human activity. It was invented as a recognisable concept during the long bourgeois revolution(s) – the change to capitalist production in Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries.

This process is well described in Larry Shiner's *The Invention of Art and Roger Taylor's Art, An Enemy of the People*. An "art", for both antiquity and the middle ages, was a rule-bound activity requiring skill and training – the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas saw shoe making and cooking as arts as much as painting or sculpture.

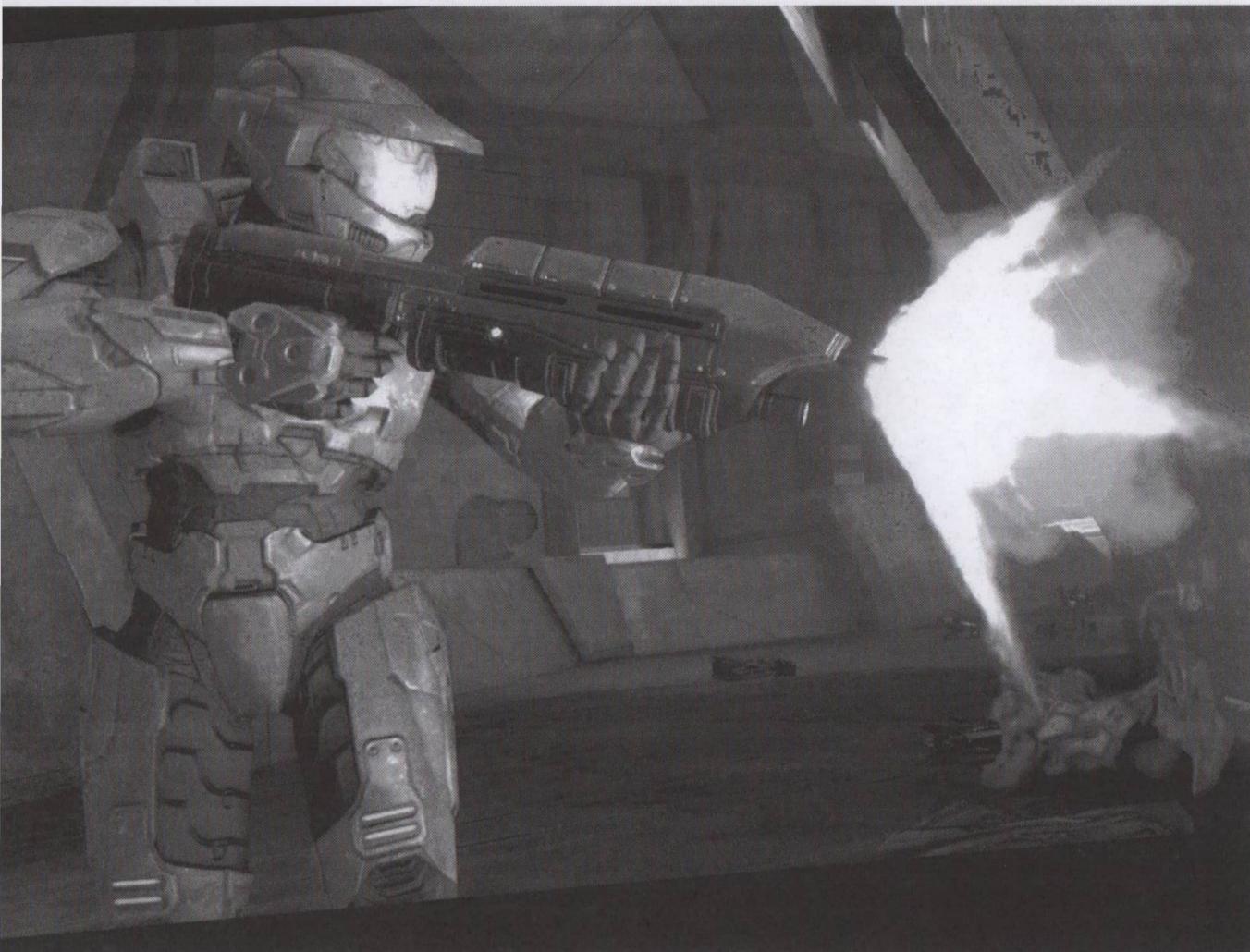
Despite the prestige of painters and sculptors in the Renaissance, the culture had no word for "artist" as we would mean it, as there was no hard and fast distinction between artists and artisans, beauty and utility, looking and using.

This split took place in the second half of the Eighteenth century, with the development of aesthetics as a unique category of human experience. This new "sense" was originally based on the mystified standards of taste and decorum of the aristocracy.

This elitist common culture passed into the hands of the capitalist class, as developing changes in production brought them to power.

They adapted it accordingly. Painting went from being something integrated into design to the production of individual commodities meant to be viewed as self-contained objects. The increasing importance of artists as unique individuals developed at the same time as bourgeois individualism.

Unsurprisingly, this change involved the exclusion of their class enemies. Working



POPULAR: Yet touchstones for mass culture, such as Masterchief (above) a character from the hugely successful *Halo* computer game series, are routinely condemned

hawked by dealers and the art press, witty stencils and "interventions" increasingly take up page space in anarcho publications.

AK Press produce books about "Art Against Authority". Meanwhile, the left critique of art – that it was conceived as an elitist institution and will always remain so – is both longstanding and long marginalised. It can still receive hostile treatment from self-styled radicals.

I remember a conversation with a stranger at last year's bookfair, where the suggestion that Art be abolished was greeted at first with bemusement and then with

class people for propping up the system while at the same time writing apologetics for elite culture, such the issue's article *Entartete Kunst*, ("Degenerate Art"), named after the Nazi exhibition of "deviant" painting and sculpture in 1937.

The article acknowledges the left critique of Art once, in a shallow and facile way: "In every charge that art is incomprehensible and elitist, there is an echo, however faint, of the Nazi accusations of decadence and degeneracy... any implication that all art should be accessible and amenable to all people is borderline fascism, even when it is

without "Art"

Critique: Crimethinc and the corruption of true creativity

class people, women, non-whites, and the idle rich were excluded from the capacity for aesthetic sense.

Aesthetic ideology contrasted the work of artists, who were supposed to create freely, through the pursuit of their artistic concerns, with that of workers, who copied and imitated, and produced for use.

The most important distinction was that artists were seen to create irrespective of

International's (SI) theory saw revolution as "the realisation and suppression of art".

Though for them Art as a professional activity would be abolished, its generalisation to the population is still problematic.

The SI saw the distinction between pre- and post-revolutionary work as the distinction between art and labour. The revolution and work following it would be "poetry made by all", as free, joyous and

drawn from the myth of the struggling artist: their manifesto-like article *Déclassé War*, in their propaganda newspaper *Harbinger*, compares anarcho-dropouts to the novelist Henry James struggling in aesthetic poverty in Paris, and abuses class-conscious workers as "indignant and materialistic".

The point is not to criticise images, writing and so on, but their use. What makes the distinction between art and popular culture?

Why is Stockhausen art and Dizze Rascal not? Why are Braque's collages art and not CD covers?

Art is what can be co-opted by the ruling class institutions that provide the elite with a common culture, and this is as true now as ever.

The question is why accept these terms, why aspire towards inclusion in institutions and an ideology based on class exclusion, the terms of a system we see as unjust?

Criticisms of elitism are not "borderline fascism"; the belief that the institutions of the ruling class have an inherent worth and need to be defended against hordes of philistines is.

The controversy around "impenetrable" art is seen by the likes of Crimethinc as "borderline fascism"; I'd say that its the anger of people against institutions which exclude them being exploited, warped and sold back to them by the editors of reactionary tabloids.

Those of us who stand for a society of self-management, equality and direct democracy, should ask what place art would have in this system.

"Creativity" would not be ghettoised into a class of "gifted" individuals and institutions full of speculative capital, but would become part of everyone's daily lives.

The pleasure of making something which looks and feels good would be both part of self-managed production, and likely also part of people's social life – either way not a rarefied class of commodities and the elitist institutions that trade in them.

The abolition of this separation would not be "art made by all" but the end of art and its replacement with something more egalitarian, honest and rewarding.

■ To contact the author, email skumbot@gmail.com

By Jim L



DEVIANT ART: Crowds stand outside the Entartete Kunst exhibition in Germany. The exhibit was an attempt by the Nazis to vilify art which deviated from their ideological values

financial pressures, whereas workers act because of the need for money.

The parallels of this attitude to contemporary anarcho-lifestylism are striking. However, artistic ideology has long infected revolutionary movements.

The Commune's artists actually proposed rebuilding the column somewhere more discrete, though the people of Paris had other ideas. The syndicalist CNT organised squads to protect art from the class anger of their own militias during the Spanish revolution.

The Situationist International explicitly viewed revolution in artistic terms. The philosopher Hegel put art at the level of philosophy and religion, and likewise the Hegelian-Marxist Situationist

rewarding as art.

In the same way, they saw their art activities of "drifting", a revolutionary inversion of the Nineteenth century aesthetic flaneur, as having a critical potential.

All of Crimethinc's belief in dropping out of capitalism and living freely now can be seen embryonically here. While the SI rightly advocated class struggle and workers' democracy, Crimethinc take their belief in the revolutionary content of counter-cultural activities and make it the cornerstone of their politics.

With this in mind it is unsurprising that they can fawn over art and "anti-art", which is nothing but a parasitical inversion long co-opted by the art industry.

Their iconography of "resistance" is



Talking about anarchy

ANARCHISTS are looked upon as a herd of uncombed, unwashed, and vile ruffians, bent on killing the rich and dividing their capital. Anarchy, however, to its followers actually signifies a social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all government of man by man; in short, it means perfect individual liberty.

If the meaning of Anarchy has so far been interpreted as a state of the greatest disorder, it is because people have been taught that their affairs are regulated, that they are ruled wisely, and that authority is a necessity.

In by-gone centuries any person who asserted that mankind could get along without the aid of worldly and spiritual authority was considered a madman, and was either placed in a lunatic asylum or burned at the stake; whereas today hundreds of thousands of men and women are infidels who scorn the idea of a supernatural Being.

The freethinkers of to-day, for instance, still believe in the necessity of the State, which protects society; they do not desire to know the history of our barbarian institutions. They do not understand that government did not and cannot exist without oppression; that every government has committed dark deeds and great crimes against society. The development of government has been in the order, despotism, monarchy, oligarchy, plutocracy; but it has always been a tyranny.

It cannot be denied that there are a large number of wise and well-meaning people who are anxious to better the present conditions, but they have not sufficiently emancipated themselves from the prejudices and superstitions of the dark ages to understand the true inwardness of the institution called government.

"How can we get along without government?" ask these people. "If our government is bad let us try to have a good one, but we must have government by all means!"

The trouble is that there is no such thing as good government, because its very existence is based upon the submission of one class to the dictatorship of another. "But men must be governed," some remark; "they must be guided by laws." Well, if men are children who must be led, who then is so perfect, so wise, so faultless as to be able to govern and guide his fellows.

We assert that men can and should govern themselves individually. If men are still immature, rulers are the same. Should one man, or a small number of men, lead all the blind millions who compose a nation?

"But we must have some authority, at least," said an American friend to us. Certainly we must, and we have it, too; it is the inevitable power of natural laws, which manifests itself in the physical and social world. We may or may not understand these laws, but we must obey them as they are a part of our existence; we are the absolute slaves of these laws, but in such slavery there is no humiliation.

Slavery as it exists to-day means an external master, a lawmaker outside of those he controls; while the natural laws are not out-

side of us - they are in us; we live, we breathe, we think, we move only through these laws; they are therefore not our enemies but our benefactors.

Are the laws made by man, the laws on our statute books, in conformity with the laws of Nature? No one, we think, can have the temerity to assert that they are.

It is because the laws prescribed to us by men are not in conformity with the laws of Nature that mankind suffers from so much ill. It is absurd to talk of human happiness so long as men are not free.

We do not wonder that some people are so bitterly opposed to anarchy and its exponents, because it demands changes so radical of existing notions, while the latter offend rather than conciliate by the zealotry of their propaganda.

Patience and resignation are preached to the poor, promising them a reward in the hereafter. What matters it to the wretched outcast who has no place to call his own, who is craving



AUTHOR:
Emma Goldman

for a piece of bread, that the doors of Heaven are wider open for him than for the rich? In the face of the great misery of the masses such promises seem bitter irony.

I have met very few intelligent women and men who honestly and conscientiously could defend existing governments; they even agreed with me on many points, but they were lacking in moral courage, when it came to the point, to step to the front and declare themselves openly in sympathy.

We who have chosen the path laid down for us by our convictions oppose the organisation called the State, on principle, claiming the equal right of all to work and enjoy life.

Once free from the restrictions of extraneous authority, men will enter into free relations; spontaneous organisations will spring up in all parts of the world, and every one will contribute to his and the common welfare as much labour as he or she is capable of, and consume according to their needs.

All modern technical inventions and dis-

coveries will be employed to make work easy and pleasant, and science, culture, and art will be freely used to perfect and elevate the human race, while woman will be coequal with man.

"This is all well said," replies some one, "but people are not angels, men are selfish."

What about? Selfishness is not a crime; it only becomes a crime when conditions are such as to give an individual the opportunity to satisfy his selfishness to the detriment of others. In an anarchistic society everyone will seek to satisfy his ego; but as Mother Nature has so arranged things that only those survive who have the aid of their neighbours, man, in order to satisfy his ego, will extend his aid to those who will aid him, and then selfishness will no more be a curse but a blessing.

A dagger in one hand, a torch in the other, and all his pockets brimful with dynamite bombs - that is the picture of the anarchist such as it has been drawn by his enemies. They look at him simply as a mixture of a fool and a knave, whose sole purpose is a universal topsy-turvy, and whose only means to that purpose is to slay any one and every one who differs from him. The picture is an ugly caricature, but its general acceptance is not to be wondered at, considering how persistently the idea has been drummed into the mind of the public. However, we believe Anarchy - which is freedom of each individual from harmful constraint by others, whether these others be individuals or an organized government - cannot be brought about without violence.

The popular demand for freedom is stronger and clearer than it has ever been before, and the conditions for reaching the goal are more favourable.

It is evident that through the whole course of history runs an evolution before which slavery of any kind, compulsion under any form, must break down, and from which freedom must come.

From this it follows that Anarchism cannot be a retrograde movement, as has been insinuated, for the Anarchists march in the van and not in the rear of the army of freedom.

The weal of mankind, as the future will and must make plain, depends upon communism. The system of communism logically excludes any and every relation between master and servant, and means really Anarchism, and the way to this goal leads through a social revolution.

As for the violence which people take as the characteristic mark of the Anarchist, it cannot and it shall not be denied that most Anarchists feel convinced that "violence" is not any more reprehensible toward carrying out their designs than it is when used by an oppressed people to obtain freedom.

The uprising of the oppressed has always been condemned by tyrants: Persia was astounded at Greece, Rome at the Caudine Forks, and England at Bunker Hill.

Can Anarchy expect less, or demand victories without striving for them?

Review: Introducing an anarchist classic

Anarchy In Action
by Colin Ward
Freedom Press
ISBN 978-0-900384-20-2
Paperback 184pp
Price £7.50

ALTHOUGH it is an old anarchist favourite read by thousands, and has been an important influence to many anarcho-activists from the 70s onwards, I have never actually read Colin Ward's *Anarchy In Action* myself before.

So I am reading and reviewing this new 2008 edition, conscious of the world as it is today, without being influenced by any previous memory of having read it before in the 70s or 80s. As a result I can discover for the first time how immediately relevant Colin Ward's message might be to our world right now.

Colin Ward states that there are two basic historical approaches that lead to anarchism as a conscious set of political ideas. "Anarchism as a political and social ideology has two separate origins. It can be seen as an ultimate derivative of liberalism or as a final end for socialism". I think it would be fair to say Colin Ward himself comes a bit more from the "liberal" approach to anarchism, and he was for many years involved with Freedom Press and the anarchist paper *Freedom*, often dismissed in the past by the then more militant and "socialist" *Black Flag* as "liberal".

I remember, particularly in the 1980s, the cold war rivalry that sometimes went on between *Freedom* and *Black Flag*. But the two approaches, "liberalism" and "socialism", to anarchism, are in fact closely related as modern ideas of socialism were very much a product of the evolving contradictions and developments of classical liberal ideas and the conditions that went with them. So we shouldn't just dismiss what Colin Ward has to say in his book.

Ward makes clear that *Anarchy In Action* is not about strategies for revolution and it is not about speculation on the way a future anarchist society would function.

It concerns itself more with continual social struggles for self-organisation by ordinary people that go on all the time. The book, as he puts it, "is simply an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid*".

The core argument of *Anarchy In Action* is that an anarchist society, a society which organises itself without authority is always already in existence, although half-hidden

and buried under the weight of state and bureaucracy and capital. The book attempts in a readable way to bridge the gap between present realities and anarchist aspirations.

Ward uses a wide-ranging analysis drawing on many sources and examples. With chapters on a range of subject areas including education, urban planning, welfare, housing, the workplace, the family, and the environment, he demonstrates that the roots of anarchist practice lie very much in the way that people have always tended to organise themselves when left alone to do so.

Ward talks

second edition, 1982, only brings us up to the early days of the Thatcher regime.

Colin Ward talks a significant amount about workers' self-organisation, workers' control, and sometimes about class struggle.

He touches briefly on some of the great workers' struggles in history. But he is not particularly concerned with class stereotypes and reductionist class positions, and he doesn't walk around wearing the ideological label of "class struggle anarchist".

The first chapter, "Anarchy and State", gives a strafe-forward restatement of the classical anarchist criticism of government and the state, and then it outlines the historic division between anarchism and marxism.

Marx, as Bakunin pointed out, wanted to achieve socialism through centralisation and a despotic provisional government, with the state as sole owner of land and capital.

Bakunin argued instead for the reconstruction of society from below upwards, by the free federation of all kinds of workers' associations liberated from the state.

Ward describes how by 1918 in Britain the Labour Party had already committed itself to a "socialism" based on the unlimited increase of the state's power in the form of the giant managerially-controlled public corporation.

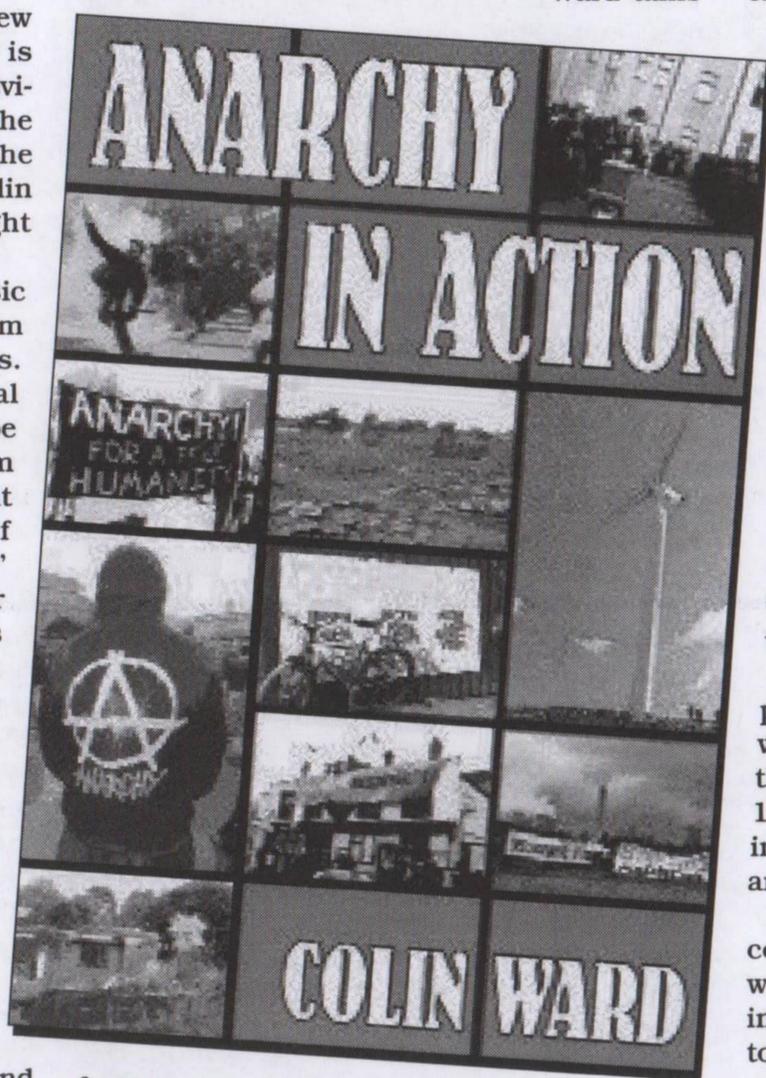
Elsewhere, when state socialism achieved power it created monopoly state capitalism with a veneer of social welfare. Ward argues that the criticism of the state made by the 19th century anarchists increased in validity in the 20th century, the century of total war and the total state.

Today, in the 21st century, we see state corporations openly operating hand in hand with private multinational corporations, imposed "privatisation" and state power go together.

In opposition to the state Ward favours the approach of Gustave Landauer who said, "The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a... certain relationship between human beings... we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently."

I would argue that Landauer's approach does have some basis in social reality, but at the same time it is a bit weak. Even when masses of workers and people do make conscious attempts to contract other relationships and behave differently, it doesn't necessarily mean they have the strength to successfully break out or that the state will fully wither away and just disappear as a result.

The entrenched state also involves



from a 70s perspective and there is a significant emphasis, as one might expect, on sociology. He also talks primarily but not exclusively from a British perspective.

He wrote the book very much in the context of the wave of radical ferment and revolutionary optimism that followed on from the late 60s.

The events of 1968, the general strike and student uprising in France, the Prague Spring, protests, riots and revolts in Mexico City, Rome, London, U.S. cities, and many other places all being an inspiration.

Looking back from today's perspective, it seems like Ward was almost still writing in an age of innocence.

His subsequent introduction to the book's



bureaucratic and despotic elites with stored up surplus power. There is no easy answer to this. Squadism and instant insurrection don't immediately end the state either. The struggle is currently stuck in an ongoing "struggle of many struggles". As Landauer admits, there is no final struggle, only a series of partisan struggles on a variety of fronts.

War is the health of the state, and eventually the state will find its perfect expression in total war.

The weakening of the state and the strengthening of different modes of human behaviour is now essential argues Ward, but where do we begin? Obviously we don't begin by joining the state, or joining political parties. Instead, he argues, we have to build networks instead of pyramids.

The classical anarchist thinkers envisaged the whole of social organisation woven from an extended network of individuals and groups, such as the commune or council as the territorial nucleus, and the syndicate or workers' council as the industrial unit. These units would federate as a fluid network of autonomous groups.

The second chapter puts forward the theory of "Spontaneous Order", and to illustrate he draws on real historic experiences of social revolutionary situations and the examples of working-class self organisation they temporarily threw up, before a new hierarchical order had managed to impose itself in place of the previous one.

Ward describes the libertarian aspects involved in the uprising in Hungary in 1956, during the Prague spring 1968, and in part of the workers' movement in Poland in 1980. Most importantly he returns to the Spanish revolution of 1936,

In particular he quotes the example of the village of Membrilla where the land was expropriated and the village collectivised by its own people; "Food, clothing, and tools were distributed equitably to the whole population... The necessities of life were distributed freely..." Here self-organisation breaks out, combined with a basic libertarian socialist agenda addressing the material needs of the community.

I think it is often the case that the strength of the spontaneous order in such examples will significantly depend on how self-ordered the community was beforehand while still struggling under the shadow of the authorities, the landlords, and capitalists.

In the 1930s in many agrarian communities in Spain the domination of capital and state, although repressive, was still "formal" and "stand-off" and somewhat external. Internally the community itself was still likely to have a strong autonomous social fabric, together with a strong sense of solidarity, both of which it depended on for survival.

When the state and bosses suddenly buzzed off, the vacuum could be filled with a flowering of the spontaneous order, self-organisation, and solidarity that was already there contained under repression.

A problem with a theory of spontaneous order today is that many communities, particularly in the developed world, are so penetrated by the state, and so subsumed and commodified under the predominant capitalist economy, that the social fabric of the community is shattered, fragmented, and broken up.

In these circumstances, in a freak situation, if the authorities suddenly buzz off

for a while, there is a danger of outbreaks of anti-social violence, spontaneous bullying and abuse, gang war, sectarianism, and so on. But nonetheless mutual aid will also emerge, and it will start to fight back.

Chapters three, four, and five use a variety of non-anarchist sources, including material on some African tribal societies, to set out three key principles of anarchist organisation: leaderless groups; diversity rather than unity; and federalist organisations without central authority.

In reply to those who might say anarchism can only work for small isolated simple communities, Colin Ward is quite right to point out in chapter four, "Harmony Through Complexity", that "Anarchy is a function, not of society's simplicity and lack of social organisation, but of its complexity and multiplicity of social organisations."

From a hard "socialist" anarchist point of view, the "dodgy" bits in *Anarchy In Action* are perhaps to be found somewhere in the pages of chapter seven on housing, and also maybe later in chapter 12 about welfare.

On housing, Ward starts by celebrating the big history of autonomous urban squatter settlements surrounding many big cities across the world.

In the UK he looks at the big squatting movement in disused army camps in the 1940s, the radical revival of squatting in the 60s and 70s, and also mentions the

“ Necessity may reduce the rate of resource-consumption but the powerful and privileged will hang on to their share ”

cooperative housing movement. But he falls into an over-enthusiasm for private housing and the owner-occupier.

This, together with his slagging-off of public housing and stereotyping of council tenants, is bound to provoke a few grumbles, particularly with today's crisis in both public and private housing.

In the chapter on welfare Ward points out that "there is an essential paradox in the fact that the state whose symbols are the policeman, the jailer, and the soldier, should have become the... organiser of social welfare." And he describes the failure of the big traditional Victorian welfare institutions, like the workhouse, the mental asylum, the orphanage, the care home, the old style hospitals, etc.

Meanwhile it is symptomatic of the 1970s flavour of the book that he optimistically sees claimants unions as an anarchic way forward in the community's struggle to transform the welfare state into a genuine welfare society.

Today there are not many claimants unions, despite unemployment and benefit-dependency being far higher than in 1973. Many unemployed and claimants today are too weakened, fragmented, and demoralised to be able to commit time, energy, and enthusiasm to help running unemployed groups and claimants' unions.

Sometimes the situation is not so much that we are weak because we are

disorganised, but that we are disorganised because we are weak. Part of their role, like benefits advice and legal support has been hijacked by the growth in state welfare agencies anyway. In the introduction to the second edition Ward admits some of the issues he was raising were "unfashionable" and the original arguments had become complicated by the emergence of mass unemployment.

When we read the chapter on work and the demand for workers' control, we are struck by how the period in which Colin Ward was writing was such a different world from today.

Then life for many in an industrial country like the UK was still dominated by mass centralised fordist production and manufacturing, which directly employed many millions.

Writing later at the beginning of the eighties, with industries shutting down, unemployment rocketing, and power shifting to finance and the city, he was moved to comment, "This is the chapter which is most in need of bringing up to date."

It is not just that most of the factories have gone to the other side of the world, it is also that many of them have changed shape and been restructured. Much production has been dispersed, heavily automated, and is globally coordinated "just in time" by information technology.

Ward looks at the idea of being self-employed, being your own person, and setting up your own trade. This was quite a popular ambition of many workers in the seventies, and is still an inspiration for many today.

But now we see technical "self-employment" being imposed on many by the economy and the state as a way of cutting employers' admin costs, or of massaging the unemployment figures. Many are now pushed to survive by "setting up trade" in the illegal economy, selling dodgy goods, or dealing in drugs! Is this what is meant by a "self-employed society"?

Ward shows how over the years in industry the idea of workers' control, whether in the form of guild socialism, cooperativism, syndicalism, workers' councils or assemblies, has always tended to resurface.

He also shows how there has always been a battle to coopt parts of these ideas by the employers in the forms of "workers' participation", "joint management", "works councils", and so on.

Today many "professional" workers are expected to take responsible control of their own work and self-manage their own exploitation, and be good self-motivated "team players".

There have always been debates around the notion of "workers' control"; control by which workers? of what production? and for the workers in the workplace alone or the wider community?

But then what do such questions mean in the harsh face of real history? What do demands and debates about workers' control of the mines mean, for example, if Thatcher and Co. have no hang-ups about shutting down the whole mining industry including profitable mines, and then smashing up the miners' communities in the process? How do we keep the idea of "workers' control" meaningfully alive when only a smaller proportion of the population is involved in any meaningful productive work in the first place?

In my opinion, in the future, until there is super-abundance of all needs and resources, there will still be a transitional need part of the time for some social rationing involving some kind of social exchange with some self-managed "necessary" labour, such as half a day a week or whatever. Puritan ultra-leftists might not like this, it isn't perfect communism, but nothing ever is.

The closing chapter, "Anarchy and a Plausible Future", raises questions, already being asked at the end of the 60s, about environmental and resource limitations on the growth of the existing economic system eventually forcing dramatic change.

But he points out: "Necessity may reduce the rate of resource-consumption but the powerful and privileged will hang on to their share... Power and privilege have never been known to abdicate. This is why anarchism is bound to be a call to revolution. But what kind of revolution?"

Ward returns to the Kropotkinite vision of "industry decentralised, and the competition for markets replaced by local production and consumption while people themselves alternate brain work and manual work."

Then, in an odd but accidentally relevant political clanger (page 169), he suggests this was already being realised, at the time he was writing his book, in a political climate different to anarchism, in China! Well not today it isn't! If you want to sum up much of the traumatic social developments, industrial and economic restructuring, and neoliberal globalisation that has affected us all in the last 30 years in one symbolic word, then it might well be; 'China'.

Colin Ward doesn't see anarchism developing in the context of immediate total social unanimity, but in the context of pluralist development; "So we don't have to worry about the boredom of utopia: we shan't get there." Meanwhile in the present he reminds us: "There are vast areas of capitalist societies which are not governed by capitalist principles,... you might even say that the only thing that makes life live-able in the capitalist world is the unacknowledged non-capitalist element within it..."

As a book, *Anarchy In Action* makes a good propaganda tool because in a clear, coherent, lucid way it begins by telling people what they already know.

The book illustrates the arguments for anarchism, not just from theories, but from actual examples of tendencies which already exist in peoples' lives and communities.

Anarchy In Action is clearly a product of its time and place, the UK in the 1970s (my favourite decade), but the basic message of many of the chapters stands the test of time.

It remains a good radical social-libertarian propaganda book, and it still beats some contemporary "anarcho-introduction" works. It will continue to have an influence, - even for people under 40.

Colin Ward is still very much alive and kicking today, and having only just read what he was thinking in the 1970s it leaves me itching to know what he thinks NOW, about de-industrialisation, the illegal economy, the internet, carboot sales, ASBOs, post-modernism, mobile phones, freecycle, credit boom, credit crunch, the minimum wage, food riots, peak oil, global warming... and all manner of subjects...



Review: Re-Reading Read

ReReading Read. New Views on Herbert Read

Edited by Michael Paraskos.

Pub. Freedom Press,

ISBN: 978-190449-1088

Paperback. 238pp. Illus.

Price £19.99

WHEN I first received this book I had to double-check that was really published by Freedom Press in London. For so long they have followed a utilitarian aesthetic (to keep publications affordable for their working class audience) and here was a book that had "Design" written all over it.

A quick glance reveals full colour illustrations, fashionably spaced text with lots of the white stuff showing, an unusual book size, typography used as a design element with large pull quotes and a general feel that this book is aimed at art-aware audience, as befits



QUIETIST TRADITION: Herbert Read in 1958

its subject, one of the most influential writers on literature, art and aesthetics in Britain from the early 1920s until his death in 1968, Herbert Read.

So why is an anarchist publishing house, issuing an expensive, glossy book about an art critic? Well the said art critic was also a well-known anarchist for most of his adult life, a few of whose texts were published by Freedom Press (until his falling out with the influential Vernon Richards and many other anarchists when he accepted the offer of a knighthood for his services to the arts).

So is this book solely devoted to an examination of his politics, will it help the class struggle? Er no. However one should let such philistine considerations dissuade the prospective reader.

The book is actually a collection of essays by a selection of academics, whose writing on Read is gathered into four main sections:

"Political Contexts"; "Pluralist Frameworks", "The Object of Sculpture" and "Literary Frameworks", each section having an essay from four different writers.

The first section is the most concerned with his politics, with Dana Ward and Alan Antliff discussing his relationship to anarchist artists, both contemporary and of his time. Michael Paraskos contributes a useful piece on how Marxist academics effectively wrote Read out of their account of Modernism in Britain. Jerry Zaslove finishes off the section with a discussion on Read and "Anarcho-modernism" which takes in the views of Theodore Adorno and T.J. Clarke amongst others.

Next up, Nannette Aldred describes the importance of the Leeds Art Club in his intellectual formation, and how he attempted to build similar set-ups (with permanent premises, discussions and talks as well as exhibitions and a library) culminating with the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

Benedict Read uses the popular music-hall song "I'm Burlington Bertie" as a way into a discussion of Herbert (Bertie) Read's time at the influential *Burlington Magazine* (he became editor in 1933) and contrasts the upper class toff of the song, with the orphaned farmer's son from Yorkshire, as well as discussing Read's activity among London's intellectual elite in the 1930s.

Riann Coulter investigates the connections between Read and Irish Art, and notions of cultural nationalism and regionalism. Finally Tom Steele uncovers the role played by Read in the dissemination of Marxist art history, in particular the work of Arnold Hauser.

The third section relates to sculpture and wider aesthetic concerns. Soon after the First World War Herbert Read engineered a transfer from the Civil Service to take a post at the Victorian and Albert Museum. Lee Beard describes his time as a curator in the Ceramics department, where Read undertook research into domestic glass, pottery and stained glass, a base from which he would build his views on sculpture (along with his reading of theorists such as Wilhelm Worringer and T.E. Hulme).

Margaret Garlake then takes us to the post-second world war period, where Herbert Read was involved with the British Council's Pavillion for the 1952 Venice Biennale, where he wrote the catalogue essay on the sculptures which featured his phrase "the geometry of fear" and she covers the background to this, a theme taken up again by David Hulks in the following essay, which covers, amongst other topics, Read's appropriation of psychology as a way of understanding the artistic process and output. The section is finished off with David Getsy's fascinating account of the competing understandings of contemporary sculpture championed by the US critic Clement Greenberg and Read.

To round out the book's "montage" portrait of Herbert Read, there is a section of his literary output. Kieron Winn shows the relationship between Read and T.S. Eliot, and how although they had many differences, they maintained a degree of closeness and support which helped sustain them both.

One major area of difference is covered by Jason Harding's text, which returns us to the psychological aspect of criticism, something Read found very illuminating but to which Eliot was much opposed.

For those with an interest in Fortean, Leena Kore Schroder essay on Herbert Read's novel *The Green Child* – partly based on the well-known 12th century mystery of two green children who appeared in Suffolk having apparently come from an unknown land – provides another way of interpreting the original story as well as, of course, helping the reader understand what Read was doing in the novel itself, using the notion of the "uncanny" and seeing it partly within a context of Read's return to his childhood. To finish off the book there's Michael Whitworth's piece on Read's poetry and the relation of it to both metaphysical poetry and contemporary science.

The nature of the book means it isn't one you can and sit down and read in one sitting. I found I could only cope with one essay at a time as each was intellectually stimulating in its own way, and it certainly opened up the world of artistic theory and criticism to me.

Read's anarchism was unexceptional, he combined a collectivist economic basis with an individualism that befitted artistic expression, and in some ways is the least interesting aspect of his life and works.

The book best serves as a reminder of a time and culture that seems familiar but of which the details are almost unknown by most people today. Read has been unfairly erased from the memory banks regarding the position he held in English cultural life. In a way the anarchists disowned him and the Marxists fundamentally disagreed with him, so there's been few willing to champion him. Yet hopefully times are changing with there now being sufficient distance from the 1930 – 1960 period for a more objective approach.

Reading this book has been both an eye and mind-opener and I have certainly been forced to re-evaluate my opinion of Read. Maybe I'll get round to reading some his books that have been sitting on the bookshelf for years waiting for me to open them.

The illustrations were the main frustration. They are very fine but there is no list of the. Coupled with the lack of an index, and the fact that most of the illustrations are not tied into the text, it means there's no easy way to work out where, or even if, the illustration is explicitly referred to in the text. Given the effort that went into putting the illustrations in there, that's rather a shame.

Although the price may seem expensive for a Freedom Press book, one has to remember that not only would this cost two or three times as much as a dull academic press hardback, it wouldn't have the illustrations either.

I hope the target audience – presumably students of 20th century cultural history – is large enough to make the book a success. I fear the modern anarchist movement will pass on this one, which would be a pity.



Review: Bolsheviks in power

The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd

Alexander Rabinowitch

Indiana University Press

ISBN: 0-253-34943-5

Hardback: 494pp

Price: £17.99

(NB// 520pp paperback released 25th November 2008 – £12.99)

THIS is an important book. It describes in great detail the evolution of the Bolshevik regime over the first year of its existence.

It recounts how during that time it went from being a relatively popular government to, in effect, forming a party dictatorship. It makes good use of the archives which the fall of Stalinism has made available to scholars across the world.

Professor Alexander Rabinowitch is continuing an ongoing look at the Revolution which started with *Prelude to Revolution* (about the July Days revolt in 1917) and *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (about the October Revolution). These works helped expose the myth that the Bolshevik Party actually operated on a "democratic centralist" basis.

In reality, it was initially relatively democratic and decentralised. Nor was it, at least at the base, an organisation of professional revolutionaries – it had an open and mass character. All this is a striking contrast to the traditional model so beloved by Leninist parties today.

It is a useful destroyer of the false notion that the October 1917 was simply a coup by an unpopular minority. By the time the Bolsheviks seized power, as Rabinowitch (and others) show, they did have popular support in working class areas, particularly in Petrograd and Moscow.

The Bolshevik revolution can be classed as a popular coup – though the Bolsheviks, using their Petrograd soviet majority as their basis, did conspire to seize power by presenting the second all-Russian Congress of Soviets with a fait-accompli. This was much against Lenin's will, who preferred not to tie Bolshevik assumption of power to a specific event (and a very public and obvious one at that).

Rabinowitch begins his book with a discussion of the activities of the Bolshevik moderates (who, at this time included Zinoviev) as they try to forge some kind of joint, all-Soviet party government.

While the Bolshevik aim was always party power, initially they worked within a government elected by and accountable to the national congress of democratically elected soviets.

While not a solely Bolshevik government, this tied in with a relatively common position in radical circles at the time. Indeed, without the support of the Left-Social Revolutionaries (an influential socialist grouping at the time) for such a system the Bolsheviks would not have had a majority at the Second Congress.

In addition, the Bolsheviks framed the new regime as provisional, with the results of

elections to the Constituent Assembly determining the final regime. This was a long-term goal for Russian Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries and one the Bolsheviks supported throughout 1917, until such time as the election results came in.

Rabinowitch shows that this pattern, of supporting institutions until they were no longer useful for increasing the scope of Bolshevik power, repeated itself in 1918. This can be seen from the postponing of elections to the Petrograd soviet until such time as it was gerrymandered to ensure their majority.

Before the election, the Bolshevik Soviet confirmed new regulations "to help offset possible weaknesses" in their "electoral strength in factories." The "most significant change in the makeup of the new soviet

fifth All-Russian Soviet Congress in July 1918 when the Bolsheviks gerrymandered it to maintain their control.

They ensured their majority in the congress and, so a Bolshevik government, by manipulating it as they had the Petrograd soviet. Thus "electoral fraud gave the Bolsheviks a huge majority of congress delegates." In reality, "the number of legitimately elected Left SR delegates was roughly equal to that of the Bolsheviks."

The Left-SRs expected a majority but did not include "roughly 399 Bolsheviks delegates whose right to be seated was challenged by the Left SR minority in the congress' credentials commission." Without these dubious delegates, the Left SRs and allies would have outnumbered the Bolsheviks by around 30 delegates. This ensured "the Bolsheviks' successful fabrication of a large majority in the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets." (p. 396, p. 288, p. 442 and p. 308).

This provoked the Left-SR assassination of the German ambassador, which Rabinowitch proves beyond doubt, was not an attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks.

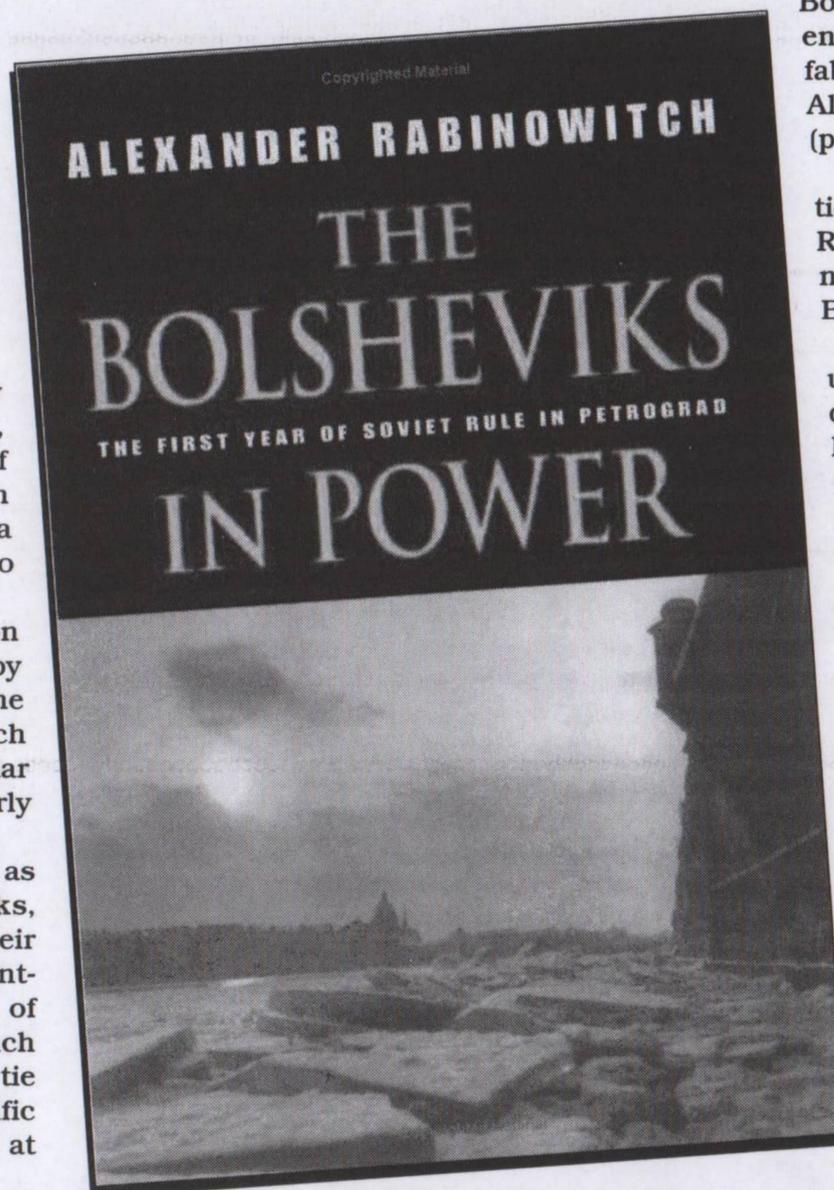
Of course, Lenin proclaimed it so, using it to destroy his rivals. With the destruction of the Left-SRs, the Bolsheviks severed their links to the countryside, with devastating impacts on the revolution itself. In fact, the Left-SRs were the only influential political party which could have ensured a democratic socialist regime (anarchist influence was nowhere near as great).

Their ideas were genuinely socialist, unlike the Bolsheviks, and tailored to a revolution in a predominantly peasant country. Hopefully Rabinowitch's book will provoke further research into them.

So within six weeks of the start of the civil war, all opposition parties were banned from the soviets. It should be stressed that at this stage the civil war was Bolsheviks against the SRs, who used the (easily avoidable and Bolshevik-provoked) rebellion by the Czech Legion to create a government based on the Constituent Assembly (the democratic counter-revolution).

The Whites' forces were marginal, and Kolchak's coup against the SRs occurred in November 1918. In terms of allied intervention, Rabinowitch correctly notes that its numbers were "relatively small". In fact, British intervention was a mere 170 marines who landed in Murmansk in early March, until an additional 600 were added in the beginning of June. August was the real beginning of Allied intervention, although "their forces were puny." (p. 319)

Rabinowitch's account focusses on how the Bolsheviks responded to developments after they seized power, including significant losses of support. In this he covers a substantial amount of



was that numerically decisive representation was given to agencies in which the Bolsheviks had overwhelming strength, among them the Petrograd Trade Union Council, individual trade unions, factory committees in closed enterprises, district soviets, and district nonparty workers' conferences."

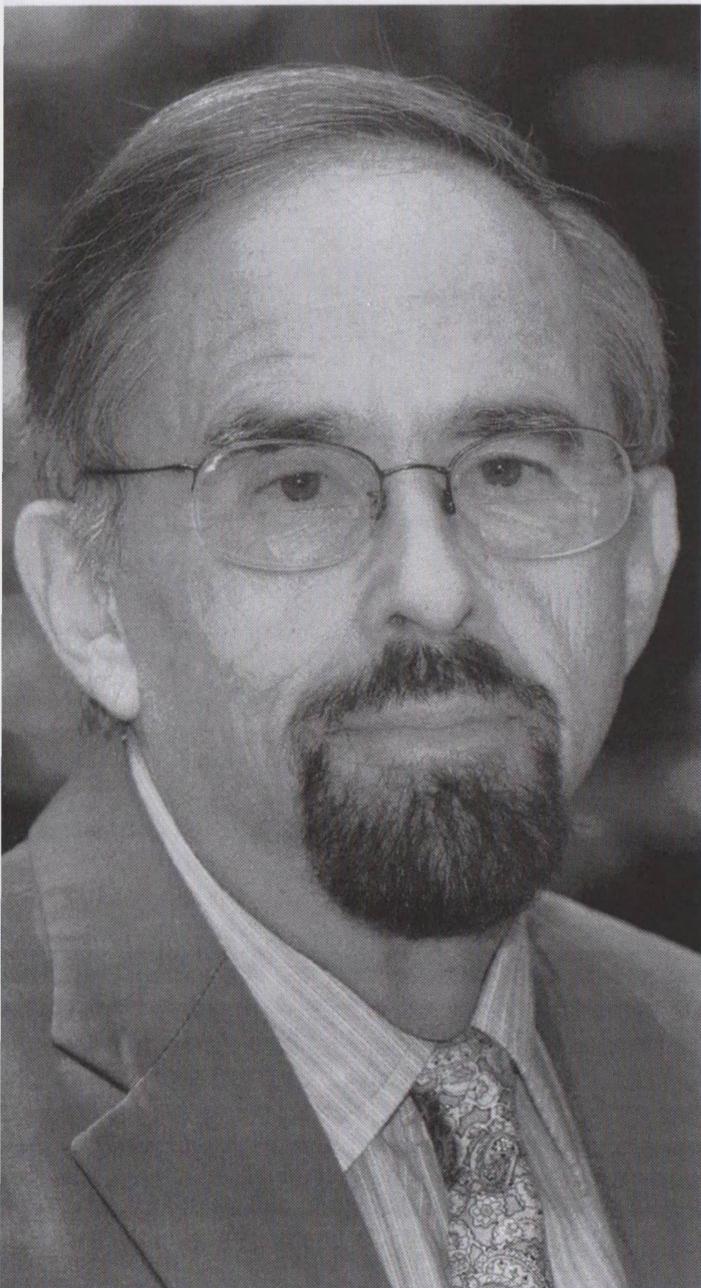
This ensured that "[o]nly 260 of roughly 700 deputies in the new soviet were to be elected in factories, which guaranteed a large Bolshevik majority in advance." The Bolsheviks "contrived a majority" in the new Soviet long before gaining 127 of the 260 factory delegates and even here, the result "was highly suspect, even on the shop floor." (pp. 248-2)

The same contempt was expressed at the



ground and does so in an accessible and well-written manner. It is predominantly a "political" account, in that it concentrates on the ins-and-outs of the Bolshevik regime rather than on what was going on in the workplaces, neighbourhoods and barracks. These are not ignored, of course, and his accounts of popular rebellions during the period are excellent. I think anarchists will be particularly interested in these.

He discusses the Menshevik-inspired, but independent, Extraordinary Assembly of Delegates (EAD). "The emergence of the EAD", he notes, "was also stimulated by the widespread view that trade unions, factory committees, and soviets... were no longer representative, democratically run working-



AUTHOR: IU Bloomington professor Alexander Rabinowitch. *Photo: newsinfo.iu.edu*

class institutions; instead they had been transformed into arbitrary, bureaucratic government agencies. There was ample reason for this concern." (p. 224)

To counter the EAD, the Bolsheviks and Left-SRs organised non-party conferences which, in itself, provides evidence that the soviets had become as distant from the masses as the opposition argued. District soviets "were deeply concerned about their increasing isolation... At the end of March... they resolved to convene successive nonparty workers' conferences... in part to undercut the EAD by strengthening ties between district soviets and workers... Amid unmistakable signs of the widening rift between Bolshevik-dominated political institutions and ordinary factory workers." (p. 232)

The turning of popular organisations into parts of a state soon resulted in their growing

isolation from the masses. The state, with its centralised structures, is simply not designed for mass participation - and this goes doubly for the highly centralised Leninist state.

The EAD, argues Rabinowitch, was an expression of the "growing disenchantment of Petrograd workers with economic conditions and the evolving structure and operation of Soviet political institutions." (p. 231)

Zinoviev, back in the Bolshevik mainstream, considered "that existing Bolshevik-Left SR controlled soviets had become isolated from their consistencies... In Zinoviev's view, nonparty workers' conferences... composed of workers elected directly in factories and red Army units could provide a means of rebuilding grass-roots support for Bolshevik-dominated Soviet power." (p. 232)

The rise of the EAD and the isolation of the state and party from the masses were combined with a "free-fall of party membership." (p. 397)

These factors were also reflected in the rise of state repression, including the rise of the Cheka. Early May saw Red Guards shoot protesting women in Kolpino, after which they fired on a meeting called to protest this repression.

This was no isolated event, as "violent incidents against hungry workers and their family demanding bread occurred with increasing regularity." (p. 230)

The EAD tried to control the demands for a general strike, finally calling one for the beginning of July. However, it was far too late and the state acted quickly to repress it:

"Factories were admonished that if they participated in the general strike they would face immediate shutdown, and individual strikers were threatened with fines or loss of work.

"Agitators and members of strike committees were subject to immediate arrest.. Beginning on 1 July, printing plants suspected of opposition sympathies were sealed, the offices of hostile trade unions were raided, martial law on lines in the Petrograd rail hub was declared, and armed patrols with authority to prevent work stoppages were formed and put on twenty-four hour duty at key points around the city." (p. 254)

Rabinowitch describes this as "the brutal suppression of the EAD's general strike." (p. 259)

He also recounts a revolt by sailors at the end of September, demanding a "return to government by liberated, democratic soviets - that is, 1917-type soviets." (p. 352)

As such, his book adds valuable material on working class opposition to Bolshevik rule and helps show that even in the face of difficult economic circumstances workers could, and did, take collective action.

As this action was against the Bolsheviks, it was repressed - so creating the "declassing" and "atomisation" later used to rationalise and justify Bolshevik authoritarianism.

It is the little details that stick in the mind. Like, for example, the fact that the cholera outbreak which finally happened in the spring of 1918 was delayed because the harsh winter meant that the piles of rubbish and dead bodies were frozen and hidden in the snow.

Or the fact that the abolition of the death penalty did not deter Trotsky from having the

popular Captain Aleksei Shchastny executed on extremely dubious grounds after an equally dubious trial.

In fact, Trotsky "single-handedly organised an investigation, sham trial, and death sentence on the spurious charge of attempting to overthrow" the regime. (p. 243)

Rabinowitch recounts the red terror promoted by the Bolsheviks against the bourgeoisie in the wake of Lenin's assassination ending up targeting doctors as well as pro-Bolshevik intellectuals.

Terror is indiscriminate, and is never socialist in nature. Then there is the account of the celebrations for the first anniversary of "soviet power" with which the book ends, which were centrally planned!

Nothing like state mandated fun and frolics to create a sense of woe for those who think revolution is more than changing who the boss is.

There are other interesting bits of information. For example, the Kronstadt soviet was first disbanded by the Bolsheviks on July 9th, 1918, in the wake of the Left-SR "revolt".

As in 1921, the Left-SR and allied-controlled soviet was replaced by a Bolshevik revolutionary committee (p. 302).

In a strange parallel to the Stalinist role in the Spanish Revolution, the Bolsheviks turned their attack on the Left-SR controlled Pages School into an accusation that the Left-SR were occupying the school as part of a plot to overthrow "Soviet Power".

In the May Days in Barcelona 16 years later, the Communists would portray their assault on the CNT-controlled telephone exchange as an anarchist attack on it.

Rabinowitch also puts the creation of the Cheka in a new light, as an attempt by the Bolsheviks to create a new state police force outside of Left-SR influence (the Bolsheviks were rightly concerned that the Left-SRs would introduce moderation and a respect for the rights of the accused into it).

He notes that its first headquarters was at Gorokhovaia 2, which under the Tsar housed his notorious security service, the Okhrana.

While Rabinowitch has enriched our understanding of the Bolshevik regime in his excellent books, there are a few areas which could be improved.

His early work on 1917 indicated the important role the anarchists played in radicalising the revolution, often forcing the Bolsheviks to move leftwards to retain influence. In this book they disappear.

What happened to them? What impact did the Cheka raids in April 1918, which Rabinowitch sadly fails to mention, play in any decline in influence? Then there is no discussion of vanguardism and how its privileged role for the party impacted on Bolshevik actions.

Surely the various activities the Bolsheviks used to retain power, which Rabinowitch documents so well, did not spring from nowhere? And more accounts and discussion of working class protest would have been better.

Still, these are minor points. Rabinowitch's book, like his early works, enriches our understanding of the Russian Revolution. It adds to the growing mountain of evidence which proves that a social revolution which hands power to a Leninist power is doomed to utter failure.



How revolution lost its way (part 3)

Analysis: In the concluding part of Iain McKay's look at "How the Revolution was Lost" by Chris Harman, the 1920s and Stalin's 'deviation' go under the microscope

WHILE Chris Harman notes that the idea of extending the revolution abroad was "Bolshevik orthodoxy in 1923," he fails to comment on that other Bolshevik orthodoxy of the time, namely dictatorship by the party.

Harman notes that "in 1923 when the Left Opposition developed, it was still possible for it to express its views in Pravda, although there were ten articles defending the leadership to every one opposing it." He claims "there can be no doubt that in terms of its ideas" it was "the faction in the Party that adhered most closely to the revolutionary socialist tradition of Bolshevism..."

"It retained the view of workers' democracy as central to socialism." One of their "three interlinked central planks" was that "industrial development had to be accompanied by increased workers' democracy, so as to end bureaucratic tendencies in

the Party and State."

The only problem with this is that it is not true. He fails to mention that in 1923, Trotsky (leader of the Left Opposition) was arguing that "if there is one question which basically not only does not require revision but does not so much as admit the thought of revision, it is the question of the dictatorship of the Party, and its leadership in all spheres of our work."

He stressed that "our party is the ruling party... To allow any changes whatever in this field, to allow the idea of a partial... curtailment of the leading role of our party would mean to bring into question all the achievements of the revolution and its future."⁽¹⁾

Trotsky was just stating mainstream Bolshevik ideology, echoing a statement made in March 1923 by the Central Committee (of which he and Lenin were members) to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party. It

sums up the lessons gained from the revolution and states that "the party of the Bolsheviks proved able to stand out fearlessly against the vacillations within its own class, vacillations which, with the slightest weakness in the vanguard, could turn into an unprecedented defeat for the proletariat."

Vacillations, of course, are expressed by workers' democracy. Little wonder the statement rejects it: "The dictatorship of the working class finds its expression in the dictatorship of the party."⁽²⁾

Harman fails to mention this particular Bolshevik orthodoxy (which dates back to at least 1919). He also fails to mention that the 1927 Platform of the Opposition (a merger of the Left and Zinoviev Oppositions) shared this perspective, ironically attacking Stalin for weakening the party's dictatorship: "(The) growing replacement of the party by its own apparatus is promoted by a 'theory' of Stalin's which denies the



Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realised only through the dictatorship of the party." As Harman does not bother to mention this particular "principle," we cannot discover how party dictatorship and workers' democracy can be reconciled.⁽³⁾

Given this Bolshevik orthodoxy, it seems strange when Harman states: "if at home objective conditions made workers' democracy non-existent, at least there was the possibility of those motivated by the Party's traditions bringing about its restoration given industrial recovery at home and revolution abroad."

After all, party dictatorship was the prevailing Bolshevik orthodoxy. Those Bolsheviks, like Miasnikov's Workers' Group, who stood for real workers democracy had been expelled and repressed.⁽⁴⁾ Ida Mett shows a greater appreciation of reality: "When one considers the enormous moral authority of the Russian Revolution throughout the world one may ask oneself whether the deviations of this Revolution would not eventually have left an imprint on other countries. Many

historical facts allow

such a judgement. One may... have doubts as to whether the bureaucratic deformations of the Bolshevik regime would have been straightened out by the winds coming from revolutions in other countries."⁽⁵⁾

A "new" class?

Harman's article is an attempt to show how Leninism and Stalinism were different, that the former was a new class (state capitalist) system. However, he fails to prove his argument. As Harman himself acknowledges, the class structure of "state capitalism" already existed under Lenin.

In 1921 "it was objectively the case that power in the Party and State lay in the hands of a small group of functionaries." He argues that "these were by no means a cohesive ruling class" and "were far from being aware of sharing a common intent." However, these groups were "cohesive" enough to resist working class and peasant revolt in order to defend their rule. During the 1920s, he argues, this changed: "the bureaucracy was developing from being a class in itself to being a class for itself." Thus the class structure did not change during this time.

So we have a paradox. While ("objectively") Lenin's regime was state capitalist, Harman argues that it was not. This is because the "policies they [the bureaucracy] implemented were shaped by elements in the Party still strongly influenced by the traditions of revolutionary socialism." Thus Lenin's regime was not state capitalist because, well, Lenin was a "revolutionary socialist" and he was in charge of it! Does this mean that a capitalist state becomes less so when a Labour government holds office?

Harman's argument rests on the good intentions of those in power. Eschewing any discussion of changing social relationships and class structures, we are left with an example of philosophical idealism at its worse, i.e. that ideas somehow determine the nature of a regime.

Harman argues it is "often said that the rise of Stalinism in Russian cannot be called 'counter-revolution' because it was a gradual process... But this is to misconstrue the Marxist method. It is not the case that the transition from one sort of society to another always involves a single sudden change."

"While this is the case "for the transition from a capitalist State to a workers' State," it is not the case in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the transition to capitalism, there are "a whole series of different intensities and at different levels, as the decisive economic class (the bourgeoisie) forces political concessions in its favour."

He argues that the "counter-revolution in Russia proceeded along the second path rather than the first." Of course, the bourgeoisie was fighting against an existing ruling class and its class position was already well defined. Thus, Harman's analogy undermines his argument as the bureaucracy also built on its existing class position.

Harman acknowledges this by arguing the "bureaucracy did not have to seize power from the workers all at once" due to the "decimation of the working class" and so its "members controlled industry and the police and the army."

As such, it was already the ruling class ("It did not even have to wrest control of the State apparatus to bring it into line with its economic power" in Harman's words). The "new" ruling class "merely had to bring a political and industrial structure that it already controlled into line with its own interests" and did so by changing "the mode of operation of the Party" to bring it "into line with the demands of the central bureaucracy."

"This could be achieved "only... by a direct confrontation with those elements in the Party which... still adhered to the revolutionary socialist tradition."

In other words the bureaucracy was already (objectively) the ruling class and so 1928 did not mark any change at all in the class structure of Russian society and so does not, obviously, signify any change in the nature of the regime. If Russia was state capitalist in 1928, it had already been so under Lenin and Trotsky.

Harman's "analysis" of the rise of Stalinism concentrates on the rhetoric of those in charge, not the class structure within society (which he admits had not changed). In 1928, nothing changed beyond the names of some of the management. This can be seen from Harman's assertion that Stalin "had a social basis of his own. He could survive when neither the proletariat nor the peasantry exercised power." Yet this was true of the Bolsheviks under Lenin (to re-quote Harman, "direct workers' power had not existed since 1918"). Thus his attempt to justify the SWP's argument that Stalinism represented a new class system fails.⁽⁶⁾

Harman ends by arguing that "there can be no doubt that by 1928 a new class had taken power in Russia. It did not have to engage in direct military conflict with the workers to gain power, because direct workers' power had not existed since 1918."

Indeed, "direct workers' power" had been broken by the Bolsheviks long before 1928. In early 1918, "direct military conflict with the workers" had taken place to maintain Bolshevik power, which had raised the "principle" of party dictatorship to an ideological truism in 1919.

Not that you would know this from Harman's account. As such, when he argues that "the one class with the capacity for exercising genuinely socialist pressures - the working class - was the weakest, the most disorganised, the least able to exert such pressures" we are not surprised as

the Bolsheviks had to repress it to remain in power.

Discussing the tactics used against the Left Opposition, Harman states that they were "likely to find themselves assigned to minor positions in remote areas" and in 1928 Stalin "began to imitate the Tsars directly and deport revolutionaries to Siberia.

"In the long run, even this was not to be enough. He was to do what even the Romanoffs had been unable to do: systematically murder those who had constituted the revolutionary Party of 1917."

However, all this also occurred under Lenin. For example, "Anarchist prisoners... were sent to concentration camps near Archangel in the frozen north" after Kronstadt.⁽⁷⁾ Mensheviks were also banished to remote locations, including Siberia. During the Civil War, "Yurenev... spoke at the (Bolsheviks') Ninth Congress (April 1920) of the methods used by the Central Committee to suppress criticism, including virtual exile of critics: 'One goes to Christiana, another sent to the Urals, a third - to Siberia.'"⁽⁸⁾

Given that the murder of anarchists and other opposition socialists by the Cheka under Lenin was commonplace, Harman seems to be complaining that Stalin implemented within the party policies which had been used outside the party by Lenin.

A new class had taken power in Russia long before 1928, a class of party leaders and bureaucrats who repressed the workers to maintain their own power and privileges. What should be explained is not the rise of Stalinism under these circumstances but rather how Trotsky could still argue for party dictatorship in 1937, never mind in 1927, and why the SWP consider him a leading exponent of "socialism from below"!

Conclusion

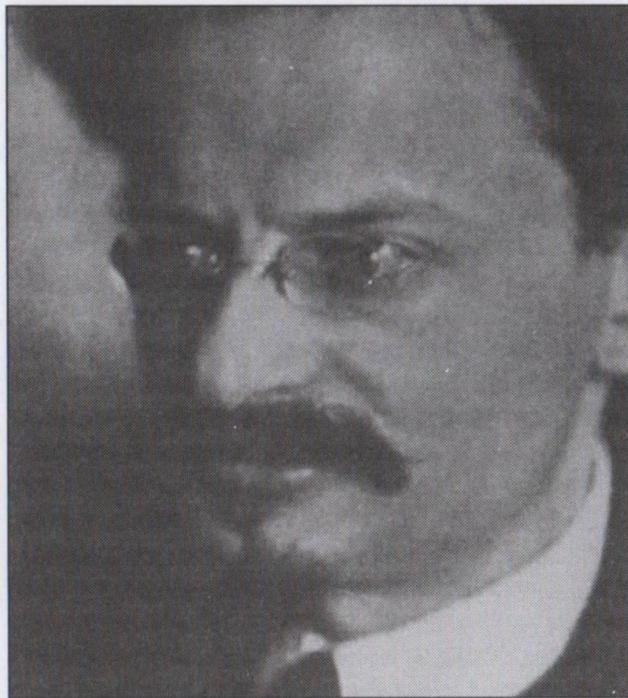
Harman's account of the degeneration of the Russian revolution leaves much to be desired. He misuses source material, fails to mention that the apparently "democratic" Left Opposition supported the Bolshevik "principle" of party dictatorship and that Lenin had advocated "one-man management" since early 1918.

His accounts of Kronstadt and the death of soviet democracy have failed to survive more recent research (unlike anarchist accounts). The attempt to exonerate Bolshevik politics for the rise of Stalinism simply fails. Bolshevik politics played a key role in the degeneration of the revolution.

Once the distortions of Harman's account

are corrected and supplemented by further research, it is not hard to agree with Maurice Brinton's conclusion that "there is a clear-cut and incontrovertible link between what happened under Lenin and Trotsky and the later practices of Stalinism..."

"The more one unearths about this period the more difficult it becomes to define -- or even to see -- the 'gulf' allegedly separating what happened in Lenin's time from what happened later. Real knowledge of the facts also makes it impossible to accept... that the whole course of events was 'historically inevitable' and 'objectively determined'. Bolshevik ideology and practice were themselves important and sometimes decisive factors in the equation, at every critical stage of this critical period."⁽⁹⁾



SWP POSTER BOY: Trotsky

Part of the problem is that Harman considers as "the essence of socialist democracy," namely "the democratic interaction of leaders and led."⁽¹⁰⁾

It's a vision of "socialism" based on the division between leaders (order givers) and led (order takers). Rather than seeing socialism as being based on self-management, the Bolshevik tradition equates rule by the party with rule by the working class. Combine this with a perspective which sees class consciousness as resting in the party, we are left with a very small jump to the Bolshevik orthodoxy of party dictatorship.

After all, if the workers reject the party then, clearly, their consciousness has dropped, so necessitating party dictatorship over a "declassed" proletariat. Which, of course, is exactly what the Bolsheviks did do and justify ideologically. As Noam Chomsky

summarises:

"People who want to justify (the elimination of workers' councils) say 'The Bolsheviks had to do it' -- that's the standard justification, because of the contingencies of the civil war, for survival, there wouldn't have been food otherwise, this and that.

"Well, obviously the question is, was that true. To answer that, you've got to look at the historical facts: I don't think it was true. In fact, I think the incipient socialist structures in Russia were dismantled before the really dire conditions arose... But reading their own writings, my feeling is that Lenin and Trotsky knew what they were doing, it was conscious and understandable."⁽¹¹⁾

Chomsky is right on both counts. The attack on the basic building blocks of genuine socialism started before the civil war. Moreover, it did not happen by accident. It was rooted in the Bolshevik vision of socialism.

The lessons of the Russian Revolution are clear. Working class power cannot be identified or equated with the power of the Party -- as it repeatedly was by the Bolsheviks. What 'taking power' really implies is that the vast majority of the working class at last realises its ability to manage both production and society and organises to this end. As Russia shows, any attempt to replace self-management with party rule "objectively" creates the class structure of state capitalism.

There is a counter-example which shows the impact of Bolshevik ideology on the fate of the revolution and that alternative policies could exist. This is the anarchist influenced Makhnovist movement.⁽¹²⁾ Defending the revolution in the Ukraine against all groups aiming to impose their will on the masses, the Makhnovists were operating in the same objective conditions facing the Bolsheviks.

However, the policies the Makhnovists implemented were radically different than those of the Bolsheviks. While the Makhnovists called soviet congresses, the Bolsheviks disbanded them. The former encouraged free speech and organisation, the latter crushed both.

While the Bolsheviks raised party dictatorship and one-man management to ideological truisms, the Makhnovists they stood for and implemented workplace, army, village and soviet self-management. This shows the failure of Bolshevism cannot be put down to purely objective factors like the civil war, the politics of Marxism played their part.

By Iain McKay

NOTES:

1. Leon Trotsky Speaks, p. 158, p. 160
2. "To the Workers of the USSR" in G. Zinoviev, History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline (New Park Publications, London, 1973), p. 213, p. 214. It should be noted that Trotsky had made identical comments in 1921 at the Tenth Party Congress (see Brinton, p. 78).
3. Trotsky's comment that the "revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution" fits in well with Bolshevik ideology in the run up to Stalinism. [Writings 1936-37 (Pathfinder Press, New York, 1978), pp. 513-4]
4. Paul Avrich, "Bolshevik Opposition to Lenin: G. T. Miasnikov and the Workers' Group", Russian Review, Vol. 43, No. 1; G. P. Maximoff, The Guillotine at Work: twenty years of terror in Russia (data and documents), (Chicago Section of the Alexander Berkman

5. Fund, Chicago, 1940), pp. 268-71. The response of Trotsky to the state repression of the Workers' Group is significant, given that for most modern Leninists he raised the banner of "authentic" Leninism against the obvious evils of Stalinism. Tony Cliff notes that in July and August 1923 Moscow and Petrograd "Unofficial strikes broke out in many places... In November 1923, rumours of a general strike circulated throughout Moscow, and the movement seems at the point of turning into a political revolt. As the "strike wave gave a new lease of life to the Mensheviks... the GPU carried out a massive round up, and as many as one thousand were arrested in Moscow alone." When it was the turn of the Workers Group, Trotsky "did not condemn their persecution" and "did not support their incitement of workers to industrial unrest. [n]or was Trotsky ready to support the demand for workers' democracy" [Trotsky, vol. 3 (Bookmarks, London, 1991), pp. 25-7]
6. The Kronstadt Revolt, p. 82
7. It should be noted that Tony Cliff, the SWP's

8. founder and main ideologue, considered Stalinism to be "state capitalism" not because of capitalist social relationships within production but because it was in competition with the capitalist West.
9. Paul Avrich, The Russian Anarchists (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1978), p. 234
10. E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, vol. 1 (Pelican Books, 1966), p. 184
11. The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, p. 84
12. "Party and Class", contained in Tony Cliff, Duncan Hallas, Chris Harman and Leon Trotsky, Party and Class, (Bookmarks, London, 1996), p. 66
13. Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky (The New Press, New York, 2002), p. 226
14. Peter Arshinov, The History of the Makhnovist Movement (Freedom Press, London, 1987); Alexandre Skirda, Nestor Makhno Anarchy's Cossack: The struggle for free soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921 (AK Press, Edinburgh/Oakland, 2004); Michael Malet, Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War (MacMillan Press, London, 1982).

Review: Non-Leninist Marxism

Non-Leninist Marxism: Writings on the Worker's Councils

By Gorter, Pannekoek, Pankhurst, Rühl

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I HAVE a particular penchant for council communism; its proponents, its organisational methodology and theoretical perspectives. Therefore I never miss the opportunity to promote its latest contribution to the revolutionary milieu and ongoing discourse.

Non-Leninist Marxism: Writings on the Workers Councils is a selection of writings from councilist luminaries, Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Sylvia Pankhurst and Otto Rühl, written between 1908 and 1923.

The book is split into four parts, one part for each of the afore mentioned writers, and an introduction written by an unnamed editor from Red and Black Publishers.

By way of an introduction to the book I quote the editor:

"This volume is a collection of writings from the council communists. After the collapse of Leninism in the former Soviet Empire, these writings are more relevant than ever. Leninism, in all of its various forms, cannot serve as a model for a successful anti-capitalist revolution – and Leninism in all its forms needs to be opposed by working class militants to the same extent as the capitalists.

"It is my hope that, by rejecting Leninists and Leninism, the working class movement can return to its roots and transform socialism from a regimented work camp into a society with freedom and democracy within the workplace as well as outside it."

Part one starts with Hermann Gorter's classic, and mammoth, *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* (1921). Gorter's letter was written in response to Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*. It is a scathing attack on Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Not only does this essay reflect the mood of the time, and the dissent within the ranks of the communist movement, it is still highly relevant today. One example in particular is Gorter's views on the trade union movement. He wrote:

"Under a more developed capitalism, and to a greater extent even in the age of imperialism, the trade unions have ever more become gigantic unions, with a trend of development equal to that of the bourgeois State bodies themselves.

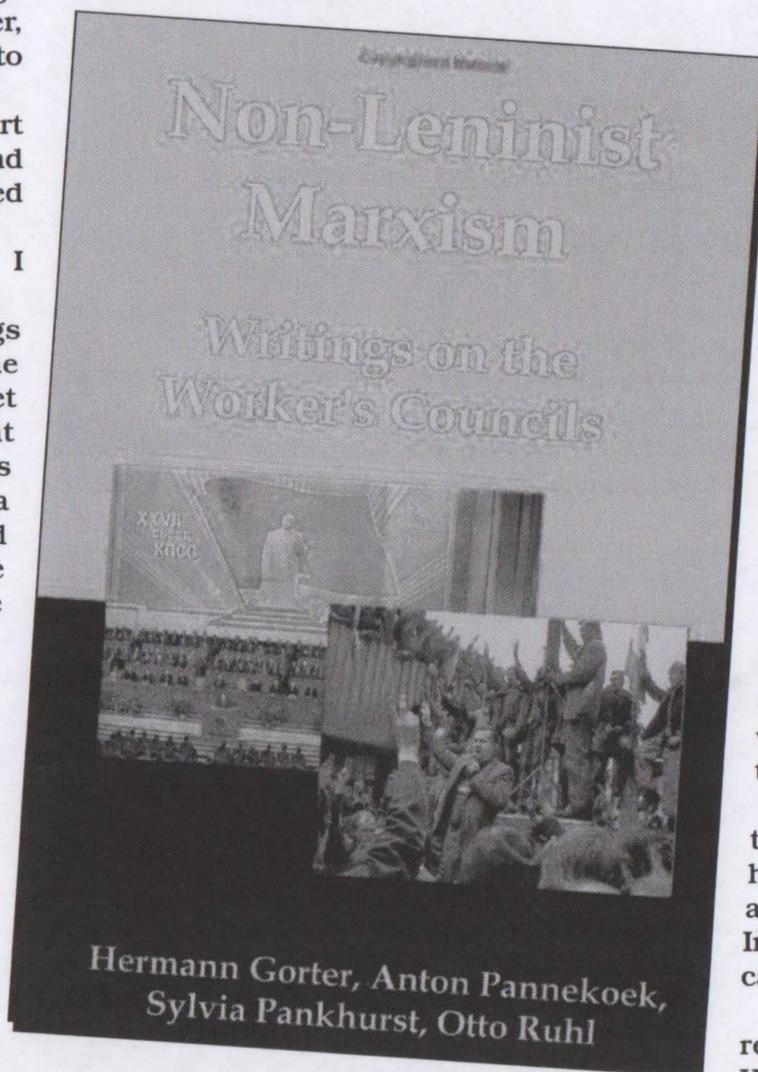
"They have produced a class of officials, a bureaucracy, that controls all the engines of the organisation, the finances, the press, the appointment of the lower officials; often it is invested with even greater powers, so that from a servant of the rank and file, it has become the master, identifying itself with the organisation. The trade unions can be compared to the state and its bureaucracy, also in this: that, notwithstanding the democracy that is supposed to reign there, the members are unable to enforce their will

against the bureaucracy; every revolt is broken against the cleverly constructed apparatus of official ordinances and statutes, before it has been able to shake the highest regions".

Whatever would Gorter think of today's vast bureaucratic monsters, other than "we told you so"! Gorter goes on to eloquently argue the case for anti-parliamentarism.

Part one contains another essay by Gorter which is entitled, *Why we need a Fourth Communist Workers International* (1921). Now, while this essay holds historical-interest value, I'm not sure how relevant it is for workers in 2008.

Part two introduces us to the work of Anton Pannekoek. Here Red and Black chose



The Labour Movement and Socialism (1908) and *The German Revolution-First Stage* (1918) from Pannekoek's sizable portfolio. Again, I have to question their relevance, in comparison to, say, his *Workers' Councils* legacy.

Part three brings us to Sylvia Pankhurst's classic work *Communism and its Tactics* (1921-1923); originally published as a seven-part serialisation in the *Workers Dreadnought* paper. In a brave and ambitious, albeit idealist, project Pankhurst looks at how she believes a communist society would work: "Under communism all shall satisfy their material needs without stint or measure from the common storehouse, according to their desires.

"Everyone will be able to have what he or she desires in food, in clothing, books, music, education and travel facilities. The abundant production now possible, and which invention will constantly facilitate, will remove any need for rationing or limiting of

consumption. Each individual, relying on the great common production, will be secure from material want and anxiety.

"There will be no class distinctions, since these arise from differences in material possessions, education and social status – all such distinctions will be swept away.

"There will be neither rich nor poor. Money will no longer exist, and none will desire to hoard commodities not in use, since a fresh supply may be obtained at will. There will be no selling, because there will be no buyers, since everyone will be able to obtain everything at will, without payment.

"The possession of private property, beyond that which is in actual personal use, will disappear."

Last but not least is Otto Rühl. Most of us will be already be familiar with his classic rendition *The Revolution is not a Party Affair* (1920); also included is his *Report from Moscow* (1920).

Rühl writes on the German situation of the day: "The revolution is not a party affair. The three social-democratic parties (SPD, USPD, KPD) are so foolish as to consider the revolution as their own party affair and to proclaim the victory of the revolution as their party goal.

"The revolution is the political and economic affair of the totality of the proletarian class. Only the proletariat as a class can lead the revolution to victory. Everything else is superstition, demagoguery and political chicanery."

Report from Moscow describes Rühl's trip to Moscow to attend the Congress of the Third International, as part of a delegation representing the German KAPD, with a view to joining. After a series of meetings the KAPD decided against it, declaring:

"We decline with thanks participation in the Congress. We have decided to travel home, to recommend to the KAPD a wait-and-see attitude, until a truly revolutionary International has come into being, which it can join. Adios!"

I enjoyed reading this book, although I had read most of the writings previously. However, I gained no new insights from the introduction. In fact I found it a little lightweight and somewhat generalised.

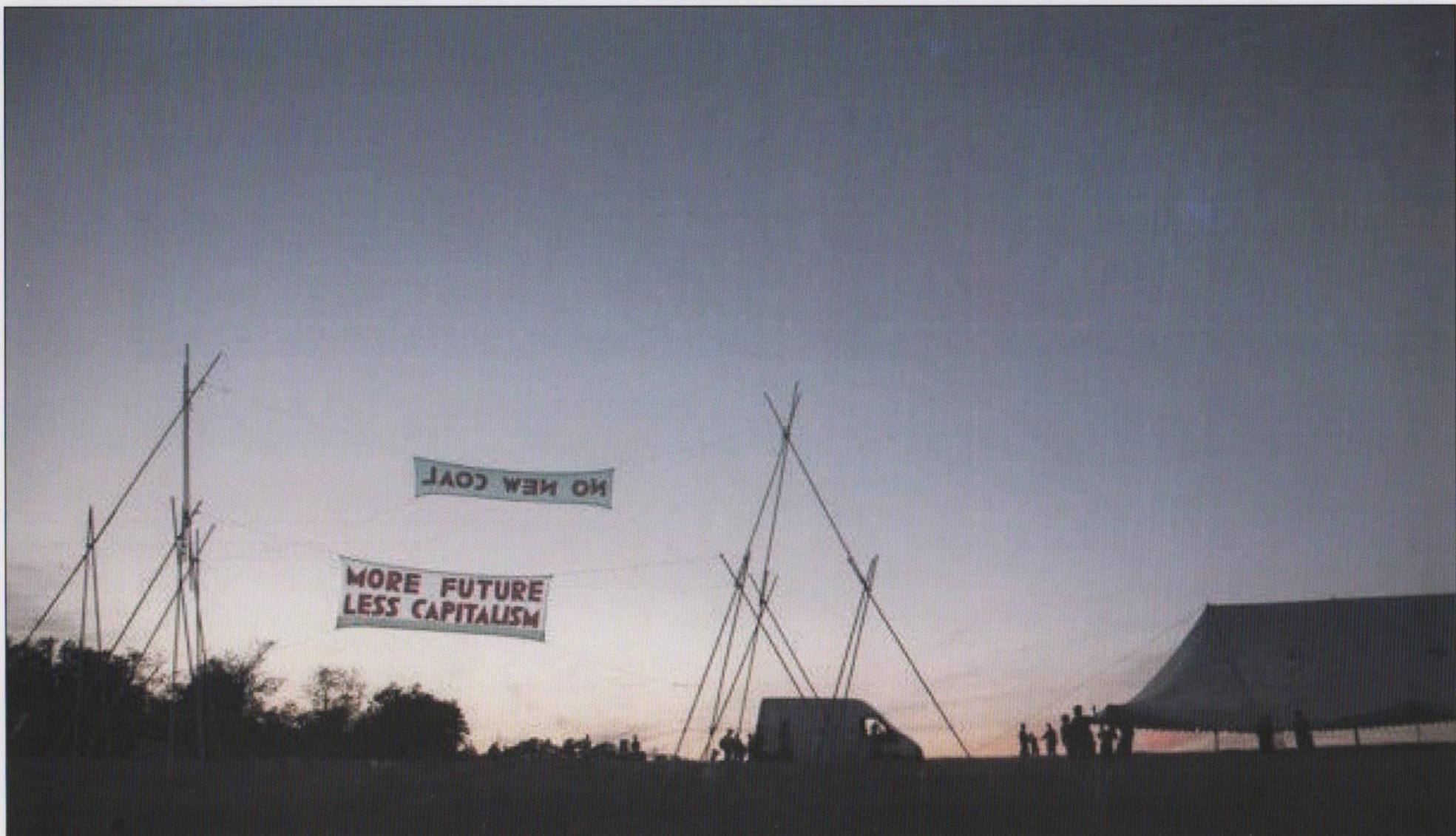
I also felt the essays picked could have done with an introduction and a bit of background information. Anyone reading this subject for the first time will find the references made to the personalities and political organisations of the day more than a little bemusing.

My only other criticism is that I found the content disproportionately balanced. More than half the book was taken up by Gorter, while the remaining three writers shared the other half. Pannekoek's contribution was deemed to be only worth 17 pages!

Despite my grumbles I would still recommend this book. Any contribution to the ongoing critique of the Leninists and Leninist socialism, whether it be contemporary, or in this case historical, is welcome.

By Ade Dimmick





GREEN DAWN: Clockwise from above, setting up at the site just outside Kingsnorth powerstation which would be the base for protests against new coal, using the first barrier fence blocking the site as a ladder over the second, a major march, climate camp activists scale high voltage pylons carrying electricity from the power station, and one of the rebel rafts makes it to the jetty of the power plant. *Photographs: Indymedia*

In colour: Climate Camping 2008



The BIG PICTURE: Immigration to the EU



MIGRATION MACHINATIONS:

Fences recently built between the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta (see map) and Melilla in Morocco. Morocco is being employed as the first line of defence for 'Fortress Europe', stopping economic migrants from Africa from entering Spain. The new fences, topped with razor wire, include cameras, sensor pads and sound detectors in their arsenal to aid a rapid

armed response.

Migrants have been attempting to circumvent Morocco after it was found they had been dumping hundreds of people into the Sahara without food or water.

Inset, Immigrants being held in a camp in Andalusia in mid-2008.

Activists investigating the conditions of detention camps holding migrants who

had managed to dodge Moroccan security forces have expressed horror at the living conditions found there. Inmates reported a lack of access to legal or social aid, bad food, cold and a shortage of medical care. The police-controlled camps, set up to hold migrants awaiting decisions on their status, do not have any operational standards in place, relying on NGOs to provide basic care in the facilities.