

# RESISTANCE

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## BA Strikes: Beat Bullying Bosses!

British Airways cabin crews have launched two rounds of strike action in a dispute which is quickly taking on the status of a set-piece battle between workers and management. With a general election weeks away, the political parties have attempted to outdo each other by laying into the strikers, with much of the media in tow.

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## Greek Fire

In a speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research, Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg recently warned that the UK could “follow Greece down the road to economic, political and social disruption”, while trying to make the case that his party was best placed to implement cuts. He also warned that if the UK ended up like Greece, the government could be “torn to pieces.” So what is it about Greece that strikes such fear into the hearts of politicians?

On Thursday March 11th, the country saw its second general strike in less than a month, with more than 150,000 strikers marching on the streets of Athens against the government’s proposed austerity measures. Transport was completely shut down, with no aeroplanes, buses, boats, trams, metros or suburban trains running, with the exception of a special service which ran for 4 hours in order to let people join the

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## Inside:

Education struggles in California,  
Sussex University occupation,  
Earthquake aftermath in Chile,  
Public sector strikes and more!

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Much media coverage has been given to the disputed amount of disruption caused by the strike. BA has claimed that 60% of its passengers have flown as normal, while Unite has said that only a few thousand passengers have been shifted. BA's spin machine has gone into overdrive, with BA chief Willie Walsh plastering himself all over YouTube (Walsh, who has described the union's offer as "morally wrong" took home an annual salary of three-quarters of a million pounds in 2009 despite BA making record losses, an increase of 6% on top of a boost to his pension fund). Management is trumpeting the supposed success of its 'contingency plans', and claiming it is largely business as normal at the company. This is an attempt to portray the strikers as an unreasonable minority whose actions are having little effect on the company.

In fact, a significant proportion of the flights BA is running are 'wet-leased' aircraft, from airlines like

Ryanair, Jet2, Titan, Euro Atlantic, Astreus and Iberia. These wet-leases represent a significant loss for BA, meaning the strike is biting for management. Much of the rest of the 'cabin crew' 'reporting for work as normal' are supervisors, managers, pilots and workers from other parts of the company standing in with only hours' worth of training in some cases. In fact the strike has a huge mandate from the membership – an 80.7% yes vote for strike action on a 78.7% turnout.

Meanwhile, management's bullying has reached new heights as BA carries through its threats to discipline anyone taking sick leave over the strike days. A seriously ill crew member on bed rest who is at risk of losing her baby has been suspended, as has a worker recovering from surgery. A worker off caring for a seriously ill child was instructed to bring the child to her disciplinary hear-

ing. A number of crew members have been signed off with stress and depression, with one being sent to an urgent treatment centre. In every instance, BA's health services have overridden the decisions of GPs.

According to Unite, bullying against BA staff has also taken the form of suspensions for activities such as:

- Receiving and forwarding e-mails from their private accounts
- Discussions on union member only forums
- Holding private conversations
- Making a joke
- Expressing dismay regarding a graffiti board set up by BA management where staff were encouraged to scribble words of support for the company, on which was written "cabin crew scum."

BA management has also undertaken a campaign of bullying against union reps. A union rep responsible for running an online

discussion forum for union members has been issued with a 45-page legal document demanding the identities of 32 crew members posting under pseudonyms.

BA bosses are also threatening to take away travel privileges from workers involved in the strike action. This has led to terror on the part of staff who rely on them to get to work – one statistic claims that a quarter of BA staff live abroad, relying on travel perks to do their jobs. The threat to withdraw these privileges is an attempt to scare workers out of taking strike action.

Though the union can't go without criticism for the paltry 'offer' it put on the table - including a 2% pay cut - this is a struggle between a management which has nothing but contempt for its staff and workers defending their terms and condition and refusing to be made to pay for an economic crisis they didn't create.

# Public Sector Strikes Solid

On the 8th and 9th March over 200,000 workers belonging to the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) went on strike, and, as we go to press, further strikes are expected on 24th March. The strikes are in opposition to planned government changes to public sector redundancy schemes that would see staff lose up to a third of their redundancy entitlement. This was the biggest strike in the public sector since 1987. That strike was against the Tory government under Thatcher and many expected different from a Labour government. They were wrong. New Labour has continued to attack workers on a daily basis something that has worsened since the beginning of the economic crisis. Councils are expected to cut up to 25,000 jobs in the next three to five years. Right now wages are being cut and workers are being laid off and intimidated if they take action.

The planned changes to the compensation scheme for workers earning £30,000 or less (80% of all staff) would see workers who

are laid off or who take voluntary redundancies receiving between two and three year's salary. This could mean a loss of £20,000 on some redundancy packages. All this at a time when we are paying £13 million annually to fund MP's pensions.

The first strikes successfully disrupted the workings of the state for two days. Key workers walked out of courts, tax centres and even Metropolitan Police civilian workers joined the strikes. Courts closed and the business of government suffered as crown and county court sittings in England and Wales were cancelled and the Houses of Parliament saw picket lines for the first time in a generation.

Most encouraging of all was the fact that many un-unionised workers refused to cross picket lines and took action alongside their colleagues. By siding with fellow workers and not the bosses, these people strengthened the strike no end. If the battle against cuts is to be won, we need more of this kind of solidarity. The signs in this dispute are that we may get it.



## Royal Mail Deal: Another Sell-Out

The Communication Workers Union and Royal Mail management are hailing a deal signed in the wake of winter's postal strikes as a victory for both workers and the business. However, as happened after 2007's postal strikes, the union's 'deal' gives little to workers and is likely to compound postal workers' anger and disillusionment with the CWU.

The union is hailing a 6.9% pay increase over three years as its major victory. There has been much media coverage of the lifting on restrictions for junk mail delivery that the document contains. Though this has been presented as a gift to posties, who are paid extra for delivering the mail, this is in fact a concession to management by a union which previously defended a cap of three junk-mail items per household on the grounds that it prevented posties from being given unreasonably heavy loads on their rounds. On top of this, despite the junk mail cap being lifted, posties will actually be paid less for delivering more of the stuff – staff currently are paid per item, and posties usually take home a minimum of around £30 a week. The new deal means that they'll instead get a fixed payment of £20.60. With the early shift allowance being phased out, this means a pay cut.

Other aspects of the deal include more Saturday working for staff and longer delivery spans, amounting to more intense and difficult working conditions.

The deal is about the union securing its future at the expense of its members, and side-lining their anger at deteriorating working conditions and attacks on jobs in order to become a junior partner in Royal Mail management.

# Struggles over education in California

On March 4, Californian students and education workers gave an impressive example of solidarity when, for the first time in history, teachers, support staff and student unions came together to show a united front against crippling state budget cuts in education. Across the States, as in Britain, governments are targeting public education as one of the holdouts against the privatisation of services, and California has made 60% of their budget cuts over the past two years in the education sector, amounting to over \$17 billion. The state, in combination with the federal government, is targeting 'underperforming' schools for cuts, which means that they are cutting money and services predominantly to schools in poor and ethnic minority areas. Last year, 16,000 teachers lost their jobs, according to the California Teacher's Association, which endorsed industrial action for March 4th. A UC Davis student writes, "This year student fees at UC Davis increased 9% per quarter, making it an annual increase of 36%. Many people simply cannot afford to continue their education."

Building on actions from last

autumn, students blocked campus entrances and set off fire alarms at UC Berkeley, UC Davis and at UC Santa Cruz, where campus was shut down for the day with all unions striking. The mainstream press reported widely that violent Santa Cruz students had smashed a car window, without mentioning that the window was broken when the car accelerated into a crowd of students blocking the road and one of them was thrown over the top of the car. In a separate incident, another car accelerating into protesters injured a student's leg. The President of UC Santa Cruz showed his sympathies plainly by condemning the students in the press and spreading unfounded rumors about protesters carrying clubs and knives. In Los Angeles, 500 students and professors walked out of classes at UCLA, and 2,500 gathered for a protest at Cal State Long Beach. Significantly, occupations of campus buildings were held at UC Irvine, UC Riverside and UC San Diego, none of which are traditionally "activist" campuses.

In Oakland, a mix of 300-400 students, public school teachers and other education workers blocked interstate highway 80 for

an hour before 150 of them were arrested. Pupils staged walk-outs at six high schools in Los Angeles, while others in Berkeley were locked into their high school so that they couldn't protest, and 30 middle-school pupils (11-13 year-olds) face disciplinary action in Natomas, California for walking out in protest against cuts. Actions and occupations were also held in 31 other states in solidarity with California and in protest against similar cuts.

We must make the connection between what is happening in California, in Greece, and what is happening here in the UK. Students occupying the administrative building at Sussex University and 10,000 teachers marching in Glasgow are engaging in the same struggle as pupils and teachers in California and workers in Athens. We are not alone, and we have an opportunity to learn from the solidarity of workers and students in California. While the Associated Teachers and Lecturers Union is writing articles about how wildcat strikes can get you in trouble, our brothers and sisters in the US and in Greece are demonstrating the power of direct action. We have to keep pushing.



# Beaten, Arrested, Suspended and Criminalised: Sussex Uni Students and Workers Fight On!

In the face of riot police and suspensions, the students and workers of the 'Stop the Cuts' campaign at the Sussex University in Brighton have further escalated their struggle. The last month has seen Sussex's highest ever turnout on a staff strike ballot and some of the biggest protests ever to hit campus. An increasingly desperate management now seem to be losing their grip on the university, as their attempts to crack down on protest just spark further defiance.

The management of Sussex University's 'Proposals for Change' are just another instance of the drive towards the marketisation of education which the state is pushing as a means of shifting the cost of the economic crisis they created onto ordinary people. Sussex University finds itself in a position mirrored in education across the country. Course closures, compulsory redundancies and non-renewal of contracts alongside attacks on student welfare (the closure of the sexual health centre, privatisation of the creche and cuts to the student union budget).

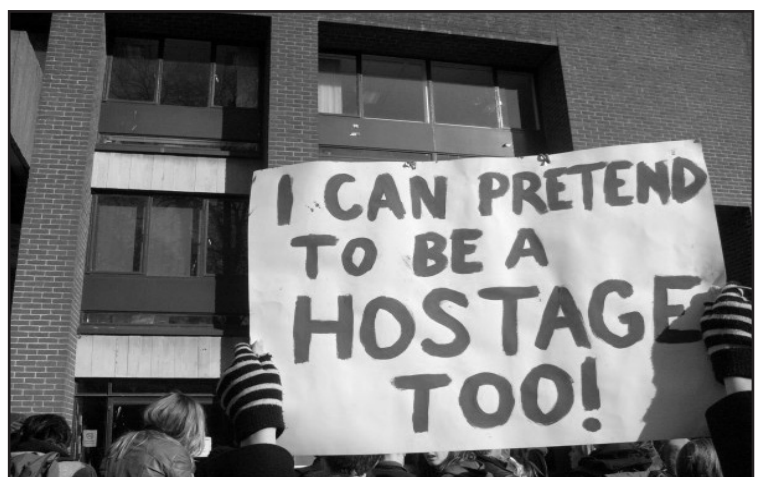
The Stop the Cuts campaign at Sussex has steadily increased in militancy over the last six months. Autumn term first saw frustrations boil over at management's refusal to allow University Senate, a body composed of lecturers and some managers, to register their concerns over the planned cuts which prompted several hundred students to storm the building on two separate occasions. Late February then saw the first challenge to management's control of the university, in the form of a 24-hour occupation of the Conference Centre. Over 100 stu-

dents seized the space to disrupt the running of the university as a business, declaring their solidarity with occupation movements around the world, and with staff, who they urged to take strike action.

This act of solidarity paid off. On the 3rd of March, despite heavy intimidation from management, UCU (the lecturer's union) voted 80% in favour of strike action. The same day saw a second occupation attempt by students, this time of Sussex House, the main administrative building. After a lively 'Carnival against Cuts', 100 students wearing animal masks rushed in through an open fire-door, barricading internal doors and seizing the office of the Vice Chancellor's (the official head of university management).

Management seized this opportunity to crack down on opposition. Despite students handing out leaflets asking staff to leave, two members of management locked themselves in their own office, claiming that they were held hostage. This false claim that there was a hostage situation was used to justify the violent break-up of the occupation and an injunction against student protest. Sixteen police vehicles were called to campus and the police used dogs and batons to break up the demonstration, beating back students attempting to control the door. Two students were arrested before the occupiers took the decision to leave the building, in fear of further brutality.

Claiming that they were taking a 'precautionary measure' against further occupations, management followed up with two further measures. Firstly they took out a high court injunction against



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occupations, criminalising any future actions. Secondly, they arbitrarily suspended six students, believing that they had singled out and punished the 'ringleaders' of the campaign. However, they completely misunderstood how the campaign worked. Stop the Cuts organises without leaders: all the decisions of the campaign are made openly at meetings that welcome everyone. The campaign therefore has no head to cut off, and is all the stronger for it. This was proven days later when students staged the biggest occupation so far, showing that they, like staff before them, wouldn't succumb to management intimidation.

On the 11th March, 700 students demonstrated in support of the suspended six. 300 of them then went on to occupy a lecture theatre, openly defying the injunction and demanding full reinstatement of the 'Sussex Six'. Management, powerless to enforce their injunction, were humiliated into picking up a petition of 1700 names supporting the suspended students and crumbled and conceded a conditional reinstatement of the six. Sensing their power, the suspended students and occupiers unanimously rejected the half-measure of conditional reinstatement, and were rewarded – management gave in after just 8 days of occupation, proving that direct action gets the goods.

Unlike the previous occupations, this one managed to open itself up to all students and staff and was able to provide the campaign with a space of its own on

campus. This was used to host teach-ins, debates, open-mics, film showings and a general assembly of students and workers on the eve of lecturer's strike action on the 18th March. The occupation stood as an example of how people can organise together not only in opposition to attacks on their well-being, but also to create alternative structures. Management's single-minded self-interest has spurred a desire for self-management among students and workers on campus. Students, in seizing an organising space, provided an open forum on what education might look like were it freed from the constraints of hierarchy and profit, and staff in the departments facing cuts have produced counter-proposals, detailing how they would like to see their departments run.

What started as a campaign to minimise the damage that management (as representatives of the state and bosses) threatened to do to the university has now become pro-active, seeking to disrupt and displace management (as seen in an overwhelming vote of no-confidence passed at an Emergency General Meeting of the students union), and demanding that students and workers should get a say in the running of their university. The fight is still far from over, but the solidarity and unity recognised between students and workers, and between the campus community and other communities in struggle, has gained them their first victory, and shown the way that the campaign might be won.

## Sheiks, Sunnis, Strikes and Struggle

**A** bitter dispute at one of the most popular Islamic websites in the world was brought to a dramatic new level on Tuesday the 16th of March, as staff employed by IslamOnline.net occupied their offices in Cairo. The website was recently taken over by a new board of directors based in Qatar, who have made moves to restrict the independence of staff and the range of topics covered by the site, as well as making attacks on pay and conditions.

Employees of the site have traditionally enjoyed a relatively high degree of journalistic freedom, but this came under threat in February when they were criticised by the site's directors for running articles on subjects such as Valentine's Day. When management, who are headed by Sheikh Yousef El-Qaradawi, announced plans to lay off much of the workforce, over 250 workers replied by going on strike and spontaneously occupying their of-

fices. Fathi Abu Hatab, a journalist employed by the site, declared that "we will all resign. They may own the offices and the URL, but they don't own us." His words were proved true when, two days into the occupation, over 300 workers - the vast majority of the staff's workforce - announced their resignations.

In order to draw more attention to their action, the company's tech-savvy employees set up webcams broadcasting live footage from the occupation, as well as posting frequent updates on social media sites such as Twitter. In much the same way as British bosses and politicians try to convince us that "we're all in this together", the website's managers would like to promote the idea that all Muslims, no matter what their social condition, somehow have common interests. These events show just how false that idea is.

## Anarcha-feminist weekend, Manchester

**A**narcha-feminists in Manchester, including the Anarchist Federation Women's Caucus, present two days of discussions, workshops, skill-sharing and fun for people of all ages and genders!

Whether you're a committed activist, dipping a toe in

the waters or just interested in finding out what anarcha-feminism is, there will be something here for you.

We are hoping to run self-defence and assertiveness workshops over the weekend, as well as discussions from an anarcha-feminist perspective on education, health, ar-

chaeology, history, childcare, trafficking, "choice", prostitution legislation, gender and sexuality, family and capitalism, anti-religion, domestic violence, racism, women and asylum, feminism in the anarchist movement and the role of men in anarcha-feminism.

Start Time: Saturday, 10 April 2010 at 10:00

End Time: Sunday, 11 April 2010 at 16:00

Location: Manchester Student Union

# March for Jobs

**O**n Saturday 6th March in Brighton, the local Trades Council staged a 'March for Jobs' demonstration, aimed at highlighting the mass redundancies taking across the workforce. The trade union representatives and socialist parties were joined by a radical workers bloc organised by Brighton Solidarity Federation and supported by the AF and many others. The march, blessed with sunny spring weather, started at the The Level and snaked its way through Brighton ending outside the Town Hall with speeches from representatives of various groups.

Various groups and individuals delivered speeches, some good, some not so good. The highlight was a speech from Tom Willis, head of the student union of Sussex University, in support of the suspended students (see elsewhere this issue for a full account of the struggle at Sussex). The outrage in the audience was clear and bodes well for the future.

The 'March For Jobs' was a welcome expression of workers' solidarity unseen on such a scale in Brighton for quite some time, let's hope this sentiment continues to spread within Brighton and across the country, uniting workers' groups in the face of the disastrous budget cuts which loom on the horizon, regardless of which party wins the next election.

# Earthquake in Chile: Attack on the poor follows the natural disaster

**T**he earthquake and tsunami in Chile was a tragic disaster – it is likely that the final death toll will exceed 1,000, and millions are likely to have been displaced as a result of the destruction of homes and the demolition of unsafe buildings. Powerful aftershocks in the days after the earthquake added to the unfolding tragedy.

However, the earthquake itself wasn't the only disaster to hit the people of Chile. The skewed priorities of the Chilean government in the aftermath of the earthquake have caused outrage in Chile and beyond. The government has placed private property and the rule of law before the urgent needs of the survivors, while in Cities like Concepcion local government openly denied the poor aid.

The sluggish humanitarian response which followed the earthquake contrasts markedly with the military operation to 'prevent looting and defend law and order' which followed. Under its Socialist president, the Chilean government has used the earthquake to launch what is effectively a military occupation of working class and poor districts. A strict curfew was imposed, and in some areas, such as Maule, shoot to kill orders were issued by the generals in charge of 'aid' efforts.

Much of the media coverage has portrayed the looters as vultures taking advantage of the disaster to steal televisions, dvd players and computers from wrecked stores. While such events did take place, the vast majority of looting was people doing what was necessary, logical, and entirely defensible – with the economy effectively ceasing to exist, food and other essentials were distributed from shops and warehouses. In many cases



spontaneous and collective food distribution efforts were undertaken, with earthquake survivors liberating food and cooking it in open kitchens. Nonetheless, these attempts were condemned by Chile's 'Socialist' President Michele Bachelet as 'pillage and criminality'.

When the state's aid distribution efforts did begin, four days after the earthquake, it showed its priorities in a striking manner. In Concepcion, City Hall declared that it would prioritise districts where looting hadn't taken place for deliveries of food and water. In practice, this meant rich areas of the city got aid first, along with army families. Chile is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America, and unsurprisingly this move provoked outrage. The Municipal Council was unrepentant: according to Carlos González Sánchez, the Cabinet chief of the municipal council, 'The first food deliveries were for the middle class, because the lower class had been stealing from the supermarkets ... On the first day 13,000 plastic shopping bags of supplies — rice, vegetables, oil, cereal, nappies, milk and coffee — were delivered to middle-class areas.' Meanwhile, those in areas deemed too 'lawless' for aid

risked being shot if they attempted to find food themselves.

The people of Chile didn't just risk being shot by the army – they also face armed gangs in SUVs who are using the earthquake to rob goods which they can then sell on. These mafia-like lumpen capitalists have been reported to have broken into people's apartments to steal their belongings.

The earthquake and the following repression has also seen the Chilean anarchist movement badly hit. The earthquake and tsunami destroyed a number of anarchist social centres; la Fabrica social centre in Concepcion has been ruined, while the social centre Claudia Lopez in Penco was damaged by the tsunami. The state followed with some wrecking of its own – La Idea squat in Santiago was occupied by special police who arrived under the pretext of "recovering stolen goods", but who brought along a bulldozer which they used to flatten the building. The Odio Punk Squat in Concepcion was evicted by police. The whereabouts and wellbeing of a number of anarchist prisoners incarcerated in prisons destroyed by the earthquake are unknown.

# Greek Fire: the struggle against austerity measures in Greece

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mass demonstration. Hospitals were running with emergency staff only, and all other public services were shut down. Even police officers struck. In total, more than 3 million people, out of a total population of 11 million, are estimated to have joined the strikes.

There were mass clashes between striking workers and riot police, provoked by an attempt to cut off a large anarchist bloc from the

march. Demonstrators replied to the police's tear gas canisters by throwing back molotov cocktails, and when the motorised Delta team were sent in to try and control the march they were surrounded and had several of their motorbikes destroyed. The number of people arrested remains unclear, but there were about 16 people detained and 13 cops hospitalised.

In Salonica, six different marches

took place, organised by different unions. The Worker's Centre march, which numbered 7,000 people in total, attacked corporate and church-owned shops on Egnatia avenue, while two super-markets were looted and had their goods redistributed. The march continued, despite police firing tear gas on it, and attacked the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace with paint and rocks before reaching the Worker's Centre.

Similar marches took place across Greece, with the strikers showing clear contempt for anyone they saw as trying to control their struggle, as at Volos, where union bosses were heckled and forced to leave the demonstration.

Tensions were raised still further when it became clear that the police had killed Lambros Foundas,

a 35-year-old anarchist, on the morning of March 10th. The circumstances surrounding his death are still unclear, but it seems unlikely that this death will make public anger any easier to contain. Ten days after his death, around a thousand people marched to the spot of his killing in remembrance.

While it was unusually large and united, the general strike on the 11th was in no way an isolated incident, but is just one part of an ongoing pattern of mass struggle. For instance, on March 23rd, lawyers, doctors, and train drivers were all on strike, while Athens saw separate demonstrations by judicial officers, firemen, pensioners, and public servants, as well as an anti-racist demonstration called by anarchists. Mass protests against austerity measures also took place in Salonica, Volos, Heraklion and Ioannina. If Nick Clegg's warning comes true, Britain's bosses have a lot to worry about.



## Trade Unionists Attacked in Chávez's Venezuela

On 12th March 2010, at 4:45pm local time, the Police attacked a Trade Union and workers' rights protest in Venezuela arresting a number of workers and trade unionists, anarchists among them.

About 200-300 people gathered in Maracay, Aragua state, from over 30 separate unions and social protest groups, to take a stand for human rights and the return to collective contracts. Before the march moved off, large numbers of police gathered and started

blocking off the roads, preventing the march from leaving. Eyewitnesses describe the police presence as "confrontational" and "provocative". Before the crowd had time to react, several tear gas grenades were detonated and the police started arresting people indiscriminately. It was initially reported that 43 people had been arrested, although that figure was revised down to 27 soon after. Amongst the detained are three members of the human rights organisation,

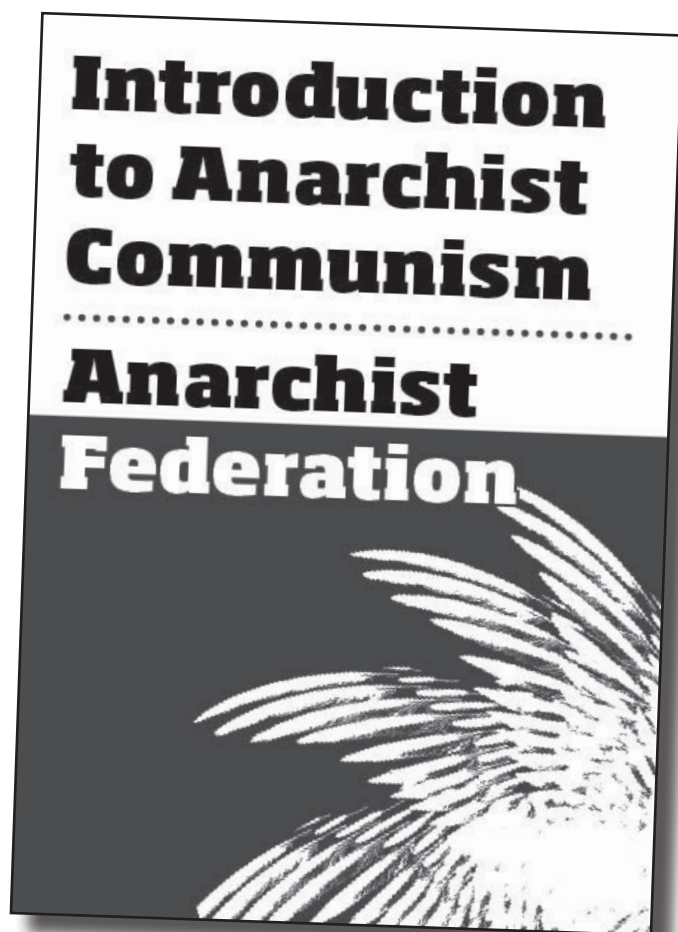
Provea, and an editor of the anarchist newspaper El Libertario.

The mainstream pro-Chávez media failed to report on the demonstration, attack or arrests, but news quickly spread via independent and online resources such as Twitter. People the world over began sending messages of solidarity to those arrested and ringing the police station where they were being held. Soon the reality of holding three human rights activists in jail began

to weigh down on the authorities and the "Public Defender" rang the local police authority to demand their liberation. All were released and all charges dropped.

If there's one thing this event shows it's that however much Chávez offers lip service to the left wing, he's still as authoritarian as any other ruler, and cannot be trusted. Another thing to take away is that the power of messages of solidarity sent to prisoners, even those overseas, cannot be doubted.

# New AF Pamphlet



## New from the Anarchist Federation: *Introduction to Anarchist Communism*

In this brand new pamphlet we lay out what's fundamentally wrong with the world we live in, how we can fight to improve our lives in the here and now, and what kind of world we should struggle to build.

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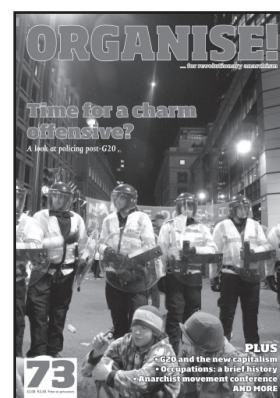
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## ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is a growing organisation of class struggle anarchists which aims to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: **the ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and **the working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction, the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and

ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

**Organisation** is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

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