

ORGANISE!

...for revolutionary anarchism

Aspects of the Future Society

- Science Fiction Utopias
 - Education and Anarchism
 - Children of the Commune
- PLUS**
- In Defence of Malatesta
 - The Libertarian Socialist Movement in Egypt
 - Syria's Grass-roots Civil Opposition
- AND MUCH MORE**

81

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Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation

Issue 80 - Summer 2013

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

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

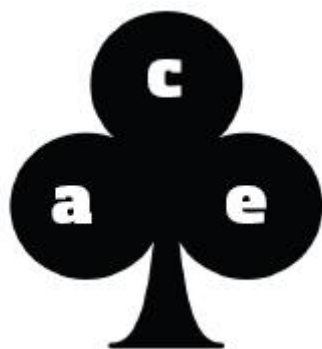
As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

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

What goes in Organise!

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

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



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It might seem a bit peculiar to have as one of our main themes the idea of Utopia, at a time when the situation both in Britain and around the world seems in many ways to be at its grimmest for many decades. We have seen deteriorating economic conditions as the ruling class and its governments impose massive austerity measures in many countries, we have seen increasing moves to States increasing their repressive powers in response to people daring to fight back against these attacks. We have seen the rise of far-right and anti-immigrant and anti-minority parties throughout Europe. We have seen increasing racism and homophobia, with homosexuality now criminalised in Russia by the Putin regime, coupled with vicious attacks on gay people there by fascist groups.

We have seen the National Health Service under increasing attack in this country, along with plans to privatise Royal Mail. Along with this are further attacks on the unemployed, the imposition of the Bedroom Tax (Poll Tax Mark Two), and massively rising food and energy prices. The increased State surveillance of our mails and phone calls has been revealed and the United States is seen as Spy-Master in Chief, with the British government as a willing accomplice.

The Arab Spring itself, which enthused many, is now turning to an Autumn of Repression; the green shoots of revolt appear to be turning into the brown leaves of repression, with the military regime installed in Egypt. Those old revolutionary hopes that re-emerged in the late nineteen sixties and endured for many decades now seem like foolish fantasies. Yes, that period was a time of great hope, and Utopia was invoked many times, but where are

these hopes now, swept away by the greyness of austerity, cuts and the growing power of the police state.

But that is *exactly* why we have dedicated some of this issue to the idea of Utopia. Even in the grimmest times we need a vision of What Could Be to sustain us. This was the outlook of the revolutionary workers movement when it emerged in the nineteenth

Editorial

What's in the latest Organise!

century. Anarchists and socialists regularly referred to a future society, where life had been radically transformed. We had works like William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, and *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution* by Pouget and Pataud, as well as *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and Workshops* by Kropotkin and *Anarchy* by Malatesta.

Now all the socialists can offer us is either praise of the market, as with the social-democrat and Labourite parties throughout the world, where it would be difficult to tell the difference between their policies and outlook and those of the Conservative, Republican and Christian-Democrat outfits; and the small Leninist groups, with their vision of a repeat of the fiasco in the Soviet Union, where one repressive and autocratic regime was replaced with another, and which are revealed in their internal practices today- witness the appalling Gerry Healey, as well as the SWP. Only the social, class struggle anarchists still offer the hope of a better world, where there are no

wars, no borders, and no inequality, where the fruits of the world are shared in common and prejudice is a thing of the past. That is what should continue to make us fight on, even in grim times. The vision of such a society, a Utopia if you will, should be seen as a lighthouse sending out its beams in the darkness. They must enthuse us to strive for something better, and they must be the inspir-

ing vision of more and more of us as we look for a way out of the social catastrophe that life on this planet now seems. We feel that anarchism can renew itself and once again act as a challenge to the system. As the song *Les Anarchistes* by the singer Leo Ferré goes, anarchists "Struck so hard, that they can strike again".

In this issue we talk about the possibilities of what education could look like in a genuine free society basing them on social experiments in education in the past and present. We look at the field of science fiction, a literary form often conducive to showing us a different point of view and of different possibilities. We look at the work of Henri Edmond Cross, one of the French post-impressionist painters enthused by the anarchist idea, who sought to represent this new society on canvas. We reprint Wayne Price's article on the idea of Utopia itself, where he argues strongly for a re-affirmation of a Utopian outlook.

Also in this issue we look at the ideas and lives of people who fought hard to bring about the birth of this new society. Carlo Tresca was imprisoned



UTOPIA 8.535 km

and persecuted for his beliefs before ending up being slain by a gunman. Errico Malatesta also suffered many years of persecution, imprisonment and exile, ending up dying under house arrest in Mussolini's Italy. Neither of them saw this new society, but we hope in the long term that what they dedicated their lives to, what inspired them in extremely difficult situations, can be realised. Indeed it must be realised if we do not want to see a world of barbarism, of the repressive strong state, of war after war, of famine, poverty, and ecological devastation.

We have included examinations of the state of the social movements in Egypt and Syria. Despite the repression of the Assad regime in Syria and the newly installed rule of the Army in Egypt, despite the Islamist threat, despite the strong arm of the police and the Army, despite the carnage and barbarity, we can see that these movements still offer hopes for the future, hopes for the masses in the Middle East and beyond. Remember, the wave of the Arab Spring was unprecedented, and Egypt was seen as an extremely docile and passive place by its neighbours. It took the determined and inspired action of a few, then many, to change this and we saw masses of people on the street there and in neighbouring Tunisia. New social movements attempting to fight the attacks on civil rights, on attacks on pay and conditions, and a whole range of other issues, were to spring up in Turkey, Greece, Brazil and Argentina. This is not the end of the struggle, it is just the beginning.

Did people believe that Louis XVI would be overthrown, that that symbol of ruling class power, the Bastille, would be razed to the ground, even a few days before the revolutionary events of 1789? And yet it happened. Did anyone envisage the end of Charles I before the 1640s? And yet it happened. The fall of the Tsar, the fall of the regimes in Eastern Europe, the fall of Morsi? Great revolutionary movements have emerged and fallen back in the course of the last two centuries, but they all offer us a vision of a new society through their original methods of organisation and their example that power can be challenged. They fell victim to bloody repression and betrayal, but they still endure as to What Can Be.

Recently the government was defeated over its war plans for Syria, with general distaste among the population for such an adventure contributing to this defeat. This was reflected among the general population in the USA and France, and the Allies, at least temporarily, have backed off. What was revealed was the general weakness of the government. This was already there, with the Conservatives, with a minority of votes, maintained in power by their Liberal Democrat allies. Now we see signs of the Liberal Democrats attempting to distance themselves from the Conservatives, in readiness to broker a deal with Labour at the next election. But if the Coalition can be defeated over war plans, surely it can be defeated over the Post Office, over the National Health Service. It only needs the emergence of a

mass movement on the streets and in the workplaces to make this come about. We have seen examples of mass movements that were capable of overthrowing regimes emerge around the world. Everywhere the ruling class has been terrified by these developments. It has employed increasingly heavy police measures, not least in Britain, to stop this coming about. Everywhere we have seen the police as brutal and willing servants of the boss class. The union bureaucrats and Labour will attempt to sabotage any such developments, but as we have seen, we need just the conscious will and determination of first fairly small numbers, then many, to give birth to a movement that can stop the Coalition in its tracks.

Finally in this issue, we have republished Malatesta's article on the need for anarchists to organise effectively. The Anarchist Federation has consistently argued for effective organisation since 1986. We will continue to do so. Anarchists here and abroad must break with their rejection of organisation and develop effective and efficient means of spreading our ideas and examples of libertarian practice. We must involve ourselves in day to day struggles in order to help with the self-confidence of the working class as a whole and to popularise anarchist ideas and practice. as Malatesta has illustrated, this has to be done through the building of a specific anarchist organisation, with effective propaganda, and the growth of mass movements.



Utopian? Guilty Your Honour

“A map of the world that does not include Utopia, is not even worth glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing... Progress is the realisation of utopias.”

- Oscar Wilde

Revolutionaries are often reproached for being utopian, of being dreamers. Yes, we are dreamers, because like children, we don't like nightmares. Yes, we are utopian. This utopia is not a heavenly paradise come to Earth. Neither is it a return to a mythical Golden Age. This other 'place' is a symbolic territory, based on our revolutionary refusal to put up with a world founded on the violence of class and ethnic or sexual domination, of the exploitation of labour and the body, of alienation. This utopia is a reply to the crisis of humanist thought. It is the place thanks to which it will be possible to organise the resistance and Revolutionise the Revolution.

The Anarchist Communist World

Capitalist society, indeed, any society which is not Anarchist Communist, fundamentally and negatively influences the kind of people we are, what we are capable of achieving, and how we relate to each other. It

is not just the State and the bosses who ruin our lives. We compete with each other, exploit each other, abuse each other and constrain each other because Capitalist society persuades us that we cannot escape 'the law of the jungle'. In fact, this is a lie. There are no 'laws' of human behaviour except those which capitalist society imposes on us. Humans have so far created their social institutions and ways of behaving according to the interests of those in charge who fool us into believing that war, poverty, the nuclear family and religion are 'normal'. After the Revolution we will find that social relations can be re-defined in creative and liberating ways. We will have a social revolution. By choosing this Revolution we will have chosen to live in a way in which we can all benefit greatly and equally - that is, to live as unique and equal individuals who collectively comprise both an immediate and a global community.

First Things First

Once Capitalism has been destroyed, we can set about the exciting task of fulfilling our individual potential and shaping this new community. Of course, in a world which has been disrupted by the process of revolutionary war, we first need to ensure that we can feed and shelter every-

one. This need not be the onerous task which counter-Revolutionaries would have us believe. In the world are more than enough buildings and food to provide for everyone, enough to survive a revolutionary war. What matters, of course, is to distribute these using the newly seized communications such as radio stations, roads and railways.

The global and local communities can then decide what organisational structures they wish to establish. It is not useful to try to determine now exactly what these will be because this will be the task of society, not the revolutionary organisation. However, as Revolutionaries we must argue for egalitarian structures accountable and accessible to all. It seems most likely that these structures will emerge from the workers and community councils which the working class created during the Revolution. We also foresee that a federal structure will emerge globally to co-ordinate such things as the production and distribution of resources, the making of decisions which concern a number of communities etc. This is the organisational basis for an Anarchist Communist society. Collective decision making leaves no room for governing authorities, and voluntary co-operation will mean that laws and policing can be done away with. Under these new

structures, all forms of exchange and money will be abolished and all land and property will be taken into the control of the community. Most of it will be used collectively to provide for the needs of its members. Some may be held by individuals for their personal use - there will be a distinction between 'private property', which exists only prior to the Revolution, and the personal possession and use of resources by the individual for their personal fulfilment - though not at the expense of communal need. No community or individual will be privileged over another in terms of resources.

The New Economic Society

On this new organisational basis, we will then re-build our communities. Again, it is not for us to determine now exactly what our world will look like. However, agriculture will of course play a major part, as will necessary industry, and both will be undertaken by communities which will be part of networks distributing their produce. Where we live and work will, however, be considerably altered. There will be less of a division between town and country. Those living in isolated places or in villages can now have both a pleasant environment and the resources to enjoy it. Some of us will still desire to live in larger social centres, but in the heart of towns there will be no offices and shops but perhaps communal meeting places, open green spaces for leisure and congregation, gardens and orchards, or whatever we choose and need. Likewise, our homes need not look like the drab boxes we are forced to live in now, but can be as exciting as resources, not profit, allow. Indeed, some of us will desire to live in our own space for the privacy

which we have been deprived under Capitalism, whilst others will relish the chance to share their lives with others and live communally. We will also have more flexibility about changing where we live, because the question of whether we can 'afford' it will not be relevant. Transport will also be geared towards social need for industry, agriculture and leisure, and not the private ownership of status vehicles as it is now, and we will thus see a reduction in motor vehicles and the social and ecological problems they create. However,



the physical appearance of our world will only be a symptom of other, more fundamental changes in human relations. The way we spend our lives in relation to each other is even more significant.

The Revolution will fundamentally transform the nature of work. We will re-organise industry so that we only produce what is socially-useful. We will introduce the ecological management of production and consumption. The renewal of the built environment will occur along-

side more efficient and sustainable systems for generating distributing and using energy. We do not propose rigid solutions but we do say that the technology for efficient and fair ways of sharing energy already exist. Massive consumption by some groups and energy poverty for millions will cease. It is likely that renewable, low-cost and sustainable methods such as solar energy, photo-electric cells, passive heating through modern architectural methods, windpower, biomass and combined heat and power systems will become commonplace. But the burning of fossil fuels may continue for a while or where no alternatives exist. All nuclear power programmes will be halted and polluting industries will be progressively abolished or minimised. Most work under Capitalism is mindless and pointless, unless you are a boss. All activity after the Revolution will take place not for profit or the maintenance of the status quo, as it does now, but for the fulfilment of the individual, although never to the detriment of society. There will be no place for useless work such as the production of consumer goods for profit, the maintenance of social control, because these 'normal' aspects of society will be irrelevant after the Revolution. Each person will

therefore have more time on their hands, but this is fundamentally different to 'unemployment' because no one will be 'employed'. This is because society is easily capable of producing enough for its needs but not its greed, the concept of having to work for a wage - or else starve and become homeless - will become redundant. The nature of work will in itself be more enjoyable, because, unlike under Capitalism it will have a point to it and because we will work in ways which maximise fulfilment, not profit. Less pleasant but none the

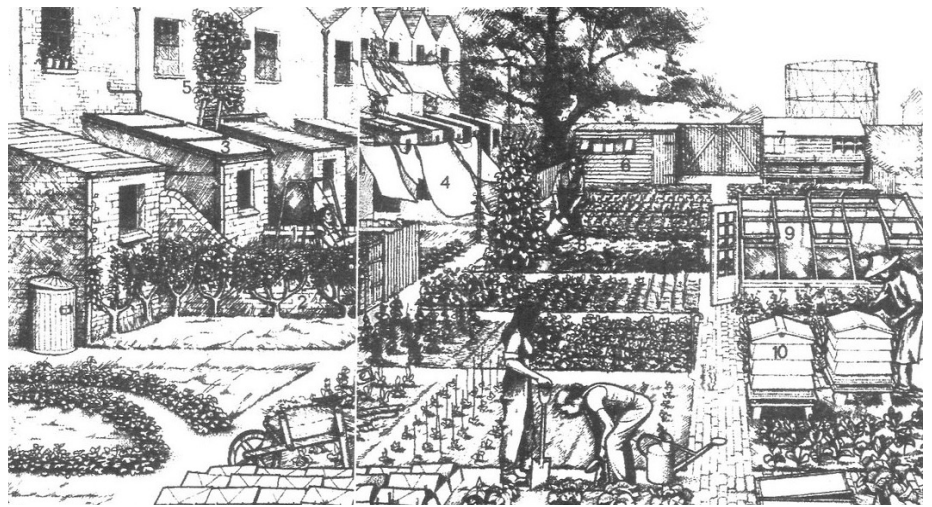
less necessary tasks will be shared out entirely equally and the rest of our time can be spent in enjoyable and creative pursuits.

Of course, fields will have to be ploughed, drains cleaned and domestic work performed, but no one will be 'a farm labourer', a 'sewage worker' or 'a housewife', because these tasks will be shared out equally and be performed in collectively run farms, workplaces, launderettes and crèches etc., and occupy the minimum of time for each person (unless they like doing them!). In addition, these tasks will no longer be performed for a boss, a council bureaucracy or a husband, because we will not be answerable to any more powerful individual but to our anarchist communist society, i.e. each other. It is a fundamental belief of anarchist communists that the working class already have all the skills needed to run society. Not everyone has all of these, of course, and equality does not mean that we all take it in turns to perform heart surgery. Neither will we all have the skills to nurse the sick back to health. Thus, some specialisation will be necessary. What will change, however, is that there will not be more prestige or status attached to one social function in comparison to another.

The Free Individual in Voluntary Society

Specific examples of changed social relations will serve to show what we mean by Social Revolution. We spell out exactly what we mean because some previous and contemporary 'revolutionary' or 'utopian' theories, even those with a class analysis, envisage an 'ideal' society which is still dependent on the physical and sexual exploitation of women, as though this is 'natural' and as though women will 'naturally' co-operate with it. Under Anarchist

Communism, women will not have the maintenance of the home and childrearing as their major social function, because such tasks will be the responsibility of the whole community. It may be that 'parents' in some communities do rear their own children within a family unit which may live within a separate house to others. Children will have a choice in how they want to live as well. It may be the case that children have no more connection with their biological parents than with anyone else and that the entire community chooses to live communally. There is no need



for it to be the 'norm' to live within a family unit. Indeed, the choice of whether to have children, how to rear them, and how the individual wishes to live once it begins to make its own choices, will be a matter for those concerned and not for social controllers. Similarly, the nature of sexual relationships, whether heterosexual or homosexual, will be determined equally by partners and need only be as monogamous or 'conventional' as the individual wishes. Just as not everyone accepts narrow-minded definitions of what is sexually acceptable prior to the Revolution, so we can be even more liberated and respectful of each other after the Revolution.

Likewise, all other forms of social relation will change. Remove national boundaries, colonial politics,

the requirements of profit for cheap labour in 'under-developed' countries and, more importantly, the State lie that certain 'peoples' are by nature inherently inferior to others, then the significance of racial distinctions will be re-defined. Our relationships within our communities and with other communities the world over will be based on the sharing of ideas and 'commodities' as needed and desired, and will not constitute either exploitation or charity. Racism itself will be eradicated both through the process by which the class unites globally to free itself from Capital-

ism, and through deliberate efforts to expose and undermine any remnants of institutionalised or personal bigotry which remains within our class after the Revolution. Whilst not denying the multifaceted origins of human-kind, in the new society concepts such as 'race' will not be as relevant as those of 'regional culture'. We of course reject the reactionary regionalism supported by sections of the New Right. Only the development of regional culture that rejects chauvinism and racism, and one that exists within a libertarian federalist framework that celebrates both internationalism and local diversity, can be at all supported. When resources have been more equally shared out and the Earth's ecology recovered from Capitalism, the only relevant differences between communities

the world over will be positive and creatively chosen ones of cultural diversity. At present it is leading capitalists who are most easily able to communicate across world-wide cultural boundaries, but the world will seem 'smaller' after the Revolution and contact and exchange with communities globally will be a common feature of our lives.

Other currently unequal relationships will change. No individual will be considered less socially valuable because of age, ability or health. The identity of the aged, the very young, the mentally and physically disabled or the infirm will not be one of 'dependent' on society but of 'contributor' to it. Although this ideal is a common 'sentiment' in this capitalist society, it can never be achieved until economic relations are taken out of social relations. Under Anarchist Communism, 'contribution' and 'social value' will not be measured in economic terms. As with other areas of social relations we do not envisage that, on 'day one' after Capitalism has been over-thrown, we will all be free of unfounded and reactionary assumptions about each other. What we see is that a conscious and voluntary policy of re-education will take place to undermine the commonplace 'truths' created by Capitalism (indeed, this work must, and does, take place before the Revolution and forms an essential part of revolutionary propaganda). Only by consciously understanding and acting on the arguments for Anarchist Communism can the individual be fulfilled, as well as free and equal, within the new society - creating the life which they wish for themselves in relation to the equally important needs of other people.

Of course, even under Anarchist Communism, we cannot all live harmoniously with each other all the time. However, the vast major-

ity of 'crime' relates to material need or greed, neither of which should occur under Anarchist Communism. For example, no money means that there will be no need for burglary, mugging, fraud or extortion. Drugs will not be 'illegal' because there will be no law, but a major change in the extent to which we respect ourselves and each other will necessarily mean that anti-social drug use will be virtually unknown. Other 'crime', involving the abuse or exploitation of one human being by another, will be minimised in a society which teaches that we are all equal. Some such anti-social behaviour may remain, however. For example, some people may still be psychologically unfitted to behaving with respect and care for others. How such people will be restrained from anti-social behaviour must be a matter decided by the community affected by them.

The transformation of social relations between people - the Revolution - must be accompanied by a change in how humans relates to other life; other animals, plants, and the ecosystem. This is because all life is interdependent e.g. plants produce the air we breath and our food (directly or via plant-eating animals) whilst in turn, plants are nourished by our excrement and dead bodies. All life (excepting humans at present) exists in a certain dynamic equilibrium with other life, since plant and animal populations interact and adjust to changes between themselves and their environment in order to maintain a stable, though changing, system. Post-revolutionary society will therefore need to establish a way of life in a similar equilibrium with the rest of nature, rather than the present relationship of domination and destruction which has resulted from industrial capitalism and class society. Practically, this would mean an end to the industrial methods of Agribusiness, such as large scale

monoculture (single crop growth) with the accompanying poisoning caused by chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the abolition of factory farming which is harmful to both animals and people (e.g. foot and mouth disease, salmonella, B.S.E.), and the cessation of industrial fishing which is decimating fish populations and harming the environment. In place of such dangerous techniques there will have to be a system of sustainable agriculture, smaller scale, largely or wholly organic, with, for example, crop rotation to restore and maintain the soil. These changes would, for practical reasons, stimulate a move to a far less meat-dominated diet. The global trend is currently in the opposite direction, as the 'under-developed world' seeks (with the help of the advertising industry) to emulate the diseased, fat and additive-sodden West. Not only is this diet fundamentally detrimental to human health, it is unsustainable (and possibly unachievable) due to the vast amounts of resources (energy, land etc.) that are consumed by animals, as compared to arable (plant) production - larger areas of land are required to grow plants which feed animals to feed people. It seems obvious that the vast majority of animal experiments will end with the abolition of the profit motive (e.g. those connected with cosmetics, arms production etc). A new ethics arising from the future society's desire to achieve a sustainable relationship in and with the rest of nature will also surely lead to a desire to minimise/abolish the exploitation of animals wherever possible, and it will rest with post-revolutionary society to decide whether any animal experimentation should be allowed to continue.

From Beyond Resistance: A Revolutionary Manifesto for the Millenium (see AF pamphlets on page 47 for details).



Beyond Perfection: What we can learn from science fiction anarchist utopias

One of the major criticisms levelled at anarchism as a political philosophy is that it is utopian. Many would argue that this is a misunderstanding of anarchism, that the basis for an anarchist society does not rely on naivety, impracticality or a simplistic and overly positive view of humanity. I want to argue that this is a misunderstanding of utopianism. Of course anarchism is utopian. Anybody who thinks their own ideology is not utopian either hasn't thought it through properly or, for some reason, wants to live in a society that's doomed to inequality, misery and eventual self-destruction. And anybody who thinks utopianism is simplistic, impractical or naive clearly hasn't read enough utopian fiction. There are a plethora of distant worlds that can boast anarchist societies as complex, as pragmatic, as inspired and inspiring, as troubled and as troubling as any historical or contemporary

earth-bound revolution, and they all have utopian characteristics.

Then again, those critics may have a point when it comes to some of the 19th Century utopias (e.g. William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*), but as a science fiction reader I have a greater criticism to level against these than their naivety or even their comically dire gender politics: they're really dull stories. Which isn't to say they aren't interesting utopias. As portraits of the utopian ideals of anarchists and socialists of the time, they're a fascinating insight, and there's plenty that's still relevant in their lengthy and technical explanations of the organisation of labour and property. But in terms of plot, character and a sense of place with more depth and veracity than the stage set for a school pantomime,

they pretty much fail. Take *News from Nowhere*, the most anarchist of these early utopias: it's a guided tour of a pre-industrial pastoral idyll, with no nations or borders, no heavy industry or money, all produce shared freely, all objects beautiful and practical works of artisanship, where the words "work" and "play" mean much the same thing. Fair enough, as holiday brochures go. I'm sold on the week's stay, but if I'm looking to take up residence in a utopia I generally want to dig a bit deeper and cast a more cynical eye. I might ask questions like: "What happens if the harvest fails?", "What if a natural disaster requires the speedy need for mass-produced tools and shelters?" and "If child-rearing and home-making are such highly respected, rewarding professions, haven't any of these sexually free and socially emancipated women ever wondered why there aren't any men doing them?" There's

something about those unflappably amiable, instant responses the tour guide has to all the protagonist's questions that suggests a script, or at least a party line, recited by rote and possibly under threat. You want the protagonist to, just once, say something like: "I don't buy it, beardy. It's too perfect, and the 'work is play' crap sounds distinctly Orwellian to me. Put down the exquisitely carved pipe and tell me where they're hiding the gulags."

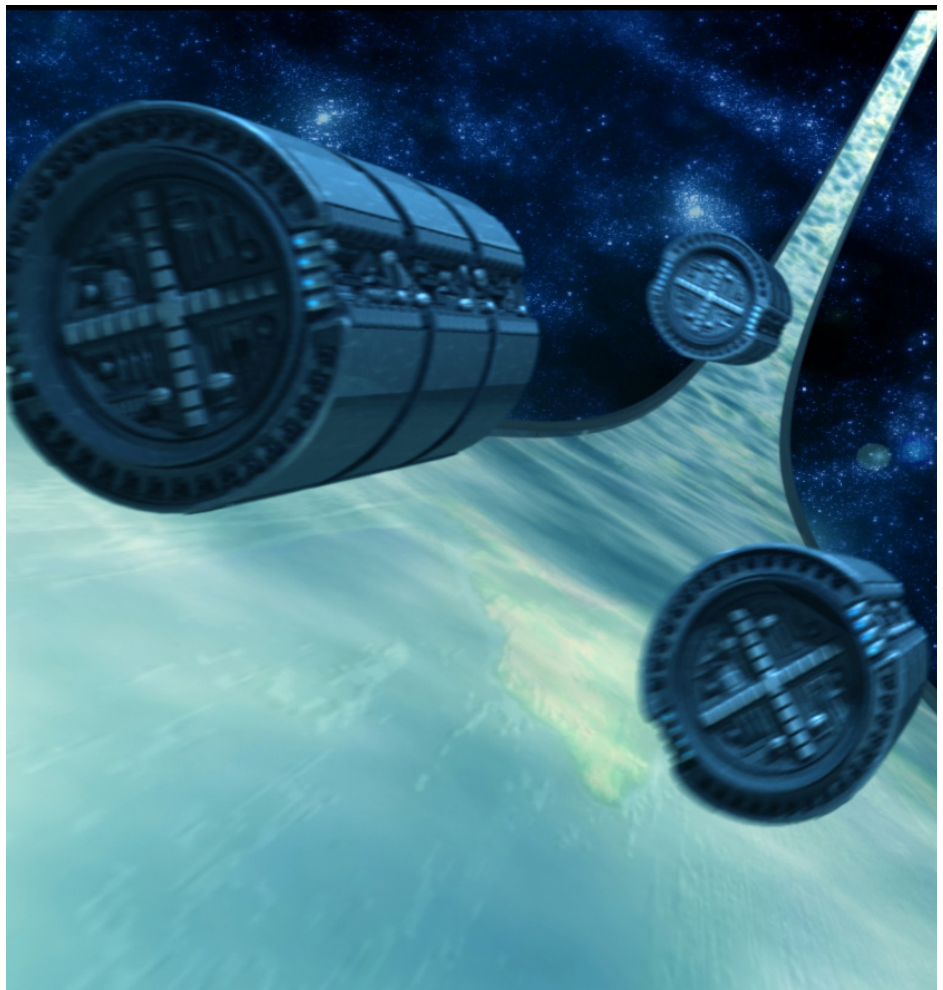
This might be a little unfair. News from Nowhere was written to explain how an anarchist society can be productive and stable in the conditions of the time and place it was written, not to explore its responses when faced with environmental crisis or massive social change. But you've got to admit, answering those questions would make it a much more interesting novel. The utopias that really capture our imaginations are those that are less concerned with the solutions an anarchist society can offer than the problems it might face.

If you're wondering whether a story exploring problems within an anarchist society is really a utopia, let's do definitions. The word "Utopia", coined by Thomas More, comes from a pun on the Greek for "no place" and "good place". So really, the essential qualities of a utopia are just that there's something desirable about the society, and that it doesn't exist. Anybody who thinks that establishing a better society will instantly bring blissful contentment to all is destined to spend the revolution forcibly re-educating dissenters (and until then, they'll probably be selling you *The Socialist Worker*). A utopia doesn't have to be a flawless place, where day to day problems are entirely eliminated. It's about demonstrating an alternative and preferable way of living. You can do

that with a guided tour of a perfect society, but it's more interesting and more persuasive to show how that society deals with imperfection and conflict, both from within and without.

Iain M. Banks sets his Culture novels in a context that gives his advanced anarchist society something to kick against, namely a universe full of distinctly less utopian societies. The Culture is post-scarcity, high-tech, wish-fulfilment utopianism at its most decadent. Resources are near infinite, labour is unnecessary, and infallible sentient computers (the Minds) with a wry sense of humour and impeccable ethical judgement ensure the smooth running of all environments. The enhanced humanoid residents of The Culture's many worlds have nothing to fill their near-immortal existences except for games, sex, drugs, the pursuit of intellectual and creative fulfilment, and interference in the development

of other societies. This last is the job of an organisation known as Contact, a popular career choice with those who remain strangely unsatisfied by the literally limitless opportunities The Culture has to offer, and take to the stars to see and ultimately save less fortunate worlds. These are the most interesting characters, as their stories tell us most about The Culture itself, and about our own ambivalence towards utopianism. We fear and mistrust perfection even as we strive for it, because it will ultimately leave us with nothing to strive for, no jeopardy to brave, no cause to defend, no meaning to our existence. The Culture, like *Nowhere*, is a static society, but unlike Morris' utopia it isn't merely holding itself in place with a distaste for further development, it has reached the peak of its possibilities – of all possibilities – and has nowhere to go. This is the problem that leads to the restlessness of those who join Contact, and who then struggle with the ethical



dilemma of what they do, of whether the worlds they visit even want to be saved, of whether they are, in fact, saving them or dooming them to their own state of existential stasis. It would all be quite angsty if it weren't for the humour of the Minds, who inhabit armed spaceships that can be as large as planets and give themselves names like Prosthetic Conscience, Of Course I Still Love You, You'll Thank Me Later, Jaundiced Outlook, Frank Exchange Of Views, Honest Mistake, Zero Gravitas and God Told Me To Do It.

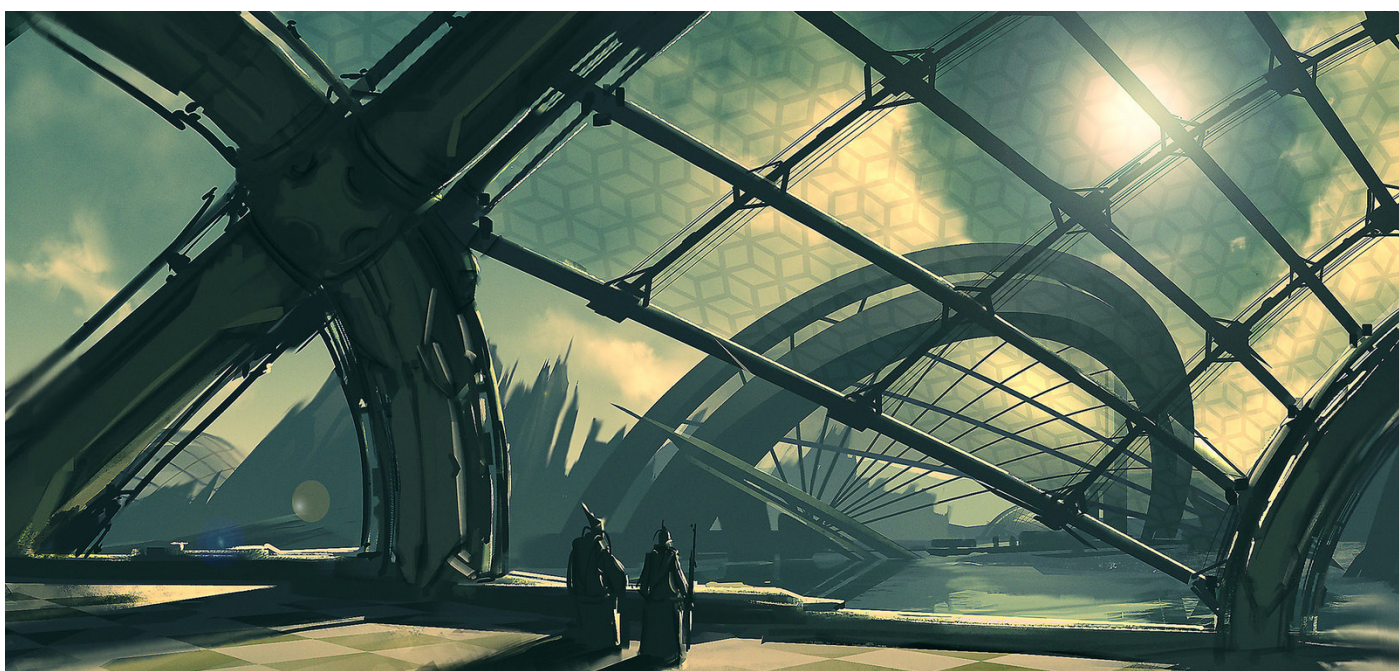
Don't be fooled by the presence of warships and conflict into thinking this is a trick utopia. There are no false walls here, and the Minds are not secretly megalomaniacal controllers who keep humanity enslaved in luxury for their own ends. They are, themselves, complex and sympathetic (if somewhat ineffable) characters, as caught up in the ethical dilemmas of utopian life as their human companions. While some of them can be manipulative, they seem to be genuinely trying not to be, though they're so much more intelligent and aware of action and consequence than their organic friends they can hardly help it. The point of this anarchist utopia is not that there's some

ignored power relation at work that compromises its integrity, or even that you can have too much of a good thing. It's a more subtle and complex message about inertia and entropy, of the nature of power and privilege, and the need for change and development, personal and societal, even in the face of seeming perfection.

At the other end of the scale is Anarres, a scarcity society set on a near-desert moon in Ursula Le Guin's universe of the Ekumen. It is most fully explored in *The Dispossessed*, which is subtitled "An Ambiguous Utopia". Anarres is neither the simple idyll of Morris' *Nowhere* nor the paradise of Banks' *Culture*. An isolated community, self-exiled from its capitalist neighbour Urras, the Anarresti have built their utopia in far from ideal conditions. This anarchist society suffers famines, labour shortages and social upheavals, and has plenty of technological development still to strive for. Because we see Shevek both growing up on Anarres and explaining his homeworld to those he meets on Urras, there are some good, clear demonstrations of how labour, property, security, family and institutional decision-making work in a world without money or leaders.

There are easy parallels to draw with our own world's revolutions and the founding of Anarres, which reflects the society many Russian revolutionaries envisaged, and might have built if they weren't trapped in the context of a capitalist economy. Even the language and names sound a little bit Russian. It's a great utopia for showing how anarchism can build a society as stable as any other system, but also how isolation and ideological orthodoxy breed stagnation, and the importance of revolution as a social value, not a one-off event or a means to an end.

For all these reasons, *The Dispossessed* tends to be the go-to utopian novel for anarchists trying to explain to the cynical how a society without money or authority could actually work. We see a society in which children are taught from the earliest age that they can't keep possessions to themselves (though there's little for them to keep) but are free to do as they choose (and there's much for them to do.) They learn together through play and discussion, and education continues into adulthood through self-directed research. Work is not compulsory and resources are not rationed, but contribution to the community and distaste for excessive



consumption are strong social values. Personal freedom and social duty exist in a balance that is, for the most part, healthy, rational and fulfilling, but this can change with a bad harvest. The story follows Shevek's career as a physicist whose momentous discovery could affect all the known worlds of the Ekumen. His desire to follow anarchist principles, to avoid proprietarianism and unbuild walls, leads him to Urras, which looks a lot like contemporary western democracy (except for those countries that look a lot like contemporary state communism). On Anarres, Shevek battles environmental and social upheavals, informal power structures and the appropriation and censorship of ideas, and yet the anarchist society still manages to come out favourably in comparison with Urras, in which the power structures are even less clear to Shevek, and a great deal more dangerous. Protest and defiance of convention meets with violence on both worlds, but ultimately both have the possibility of revolution, of growth and change, and hope for the future.

Nobody does alternative societies better than Le Guin, and she has created a few besides Anarres that could be viewed as ambiguously anarchist, and more ambiguously utopian. They tend to get less attention than Anarres, probably because they're less useful for anarchists having arguments. They're interesting, though, for more subtle discussions of anarchist society and utopianism, ones that explore not the society that anarchists would necessarily wish to build but the many varieties of anarchist society that are possible, the many ways in which human societies could reject hierarchy. One of the most acclaimed is *Always Coming Home*, but though there is no particular hierarchy of individuals in the societies of the Kesh, there are a great many customs that dictate

social status of various kinds, and the reliance on the spiritual and the rejection of technology (aside from some sort of internet that they don't use much) sends it into a static state. In this way it would resemble *News from Nowhere* if it weren't for its much more sophisticated investigation of cultural differences and interactions, and its acknowledgement of various forms of conflict, both personal and societal.

More unusual, and less frequently explored, is the world of *Eleven-Soro* in the short story *Solitude*, a world in which a post-cataclysm society has developed social arrangements that go to extreme lengths to guard against the mistakes of the past. Any exercise of power by one person over another is taboo, referred to as "magic". This includes any attempt to manipulate another's behaviour, to make them feel guilty or duty-bound to follow a course of action for another's sake. The men live alone and the women in circles of houses known as "auntrings", where they educate each other's children but do not enter one another's homes and rarely speak to other adult women without good cause, in what seems to be the ultimate expression of anarchist individualism. Nobody asks for or offers help with any task, though women are watchful of one another's health, send their children with food to the sick and assist each other in childbirth. Only children can ask questions or be taught anything. No adult tells another what to do, or even offers advice except in the most roundabout of ways and the direst of circumstances. Looked at as a society, *Eleven-Soro* is brutally dystopian (especially for men), but individuals within it can find a kind of utopia that is achieved through the fulfilment of total self-awareness, becoming "a self sufficient to itself", and in many ways the lives of the Sorovians are rich and happy beyond

imagining. It is a strange, sad, beautiful story that consistently challenges gut responses and judgements on the nature of power and community. I highly recommend giving it a read, not as a model for an anarchist society but as a challenge to some of our ideas on interpersonal relationships and social duty.

So which of these societies, if any, comes closest to what we as anarcho-communists aim for? For me, any society claiming utopian status has to be convincingly resilient; show that it's not going to crumble at the first sign of change or challenge; that its systems are robust enough to undergo cultural, ecological and technological developments without compromising its ideological foundation. Static societies are neither believable nor desirable. Who wants to live in a world where nothing ever changes?

This is the mistake many make about utopianism and about revolution. They think it means embodying an ideal within society and then trying to hold back the tide of human fallibility and outside influence to preserve that moment of perfection. No wonder so many people think it's a completely unrealistic perspective. That kind of utopianism is not what we strive for, either in life or science fiction. I read utopias and work towards anarchist communism not because I believe in a perfect world but because I believe in a better world. The most inspiring and persuasive utopias are the ones that, like *Anarres*, don't just ask, "Where do we want to be?" or even "How will we get there?" but "Where will we go next?" That's something important for science fiction writers and activists alike to remember. Revolution is not an event but a process, and utopia is a journey, not a destination.

Anarchism: Utopian or scientific

Wayne Price

Organise! is reprinting this article by Wayne Price which originally appeared in the US anarchist magazine The Utopian, because we feel it raises a number of important issues.

Together with the revival of anarchism in the last decades, there has been an increased interest in Utopia. This is largely due to the crisis in Marxism, long the dominant set of ideas among the radical left. After the Soviet Union imploded and China turned to an openly market-based capitalism, Marxism became discredited for many. This resulted in a revived interest in Utopia from two apparently contradictory directions, for and against. What these views have in common is that they take utopianism seriously. Utopianism must be taken seriously if socialism is to get out of the dead end it has reached through established Marxism, but what revolutionary socialists need is much more than simply a return to Utopia.

On one side, there has been an increased desire to find utopian aspects of socialism, including Marxism (Geoghegan, 1987). This includes looking at the work of Walter Benjamin or Ernst Bloch. There is a greater concentration on Marx's critique of alienation and of his scattered hints of what a communist society might look like, as in his Critique of the Gotha Program. More and more, socialists refer to the utopian meanings of their socialist faith, the original vision of a liberated humanity. From this point of view, the failure of pseudo-socialism in the Communist-run countries was supposedly due to their downplaying utopianism.

Recognition of the value of utopian-

ism was made by the reformist Marxist, Michael Harrington: "Utopian socialism...was a movement that gave the first serious definition of socialism as communitarian, moral, feminist, committed to the transformation of work, and profoundly democratic. If there is to be 21st century socialism worthy of the name, it will...have to go 200 years into the past to recover the practical and theoretical ideals of the utopians" (quoted in Hahnel, 2005, p. 139).

Especially interesting has been the revival of the utopian project, that is, the effort by radicals (influenced by both anarchism and humanistic Marxism) to work out how a libertarian-democratic socialism could work—what a post-capitalist society might look like without either markets or centralised, bureaucratic, planning. This includes the "libertarian municipalism" of Murray Bookchin and his "social ecologist" followers (Biehl, 1998; Bookchin, 1986) and Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel's "participatory economics" or "parecon" (Albert, 2003; Hahnel, 2005).

On the other side, there are those disillusioned ex-Marxists and ex-socialists, who blame the totalitarianism of the Marxist states on a supposed utopianism. The goal of Marxist socialism was of a classless, stateless, cooperative society, with production for use rather than profit, without alienated labour, without national boundaries or wars—the realisation of solidarity, equality, and freedom. This goal (which is the same as socialist anarchism) is condemned as an impossibility, a Utopia, which contradicts inborn human nature. Humans are supposedly naturally competitive, aggressive, and

unequal. Attempts to force them to fit a cooperative, benevolent, society, it is said, can only be done by totalitarian means. Therefore, by this view, the failure of socialism was due to its utopianism. So this anti-socialist trend also focuses on the inherent utopianism of socialism.

Political critics have denounced me as a utopian myself, perhaps because I write for a journal titled The Utopian. And indeed I am a utopian...among other things. My earliest political influences were such books as Paul Goodman's Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals (1962) and Martin Buber's Paths in Utopia (1958), and other works on Utopia and utopian socialism. These works started me on a path toward anarchist-pacifism, and then to a libertarian-democratic version of Marxism, and finally to revolutionary anarchism (in the libertarian socialist or anarchist-communist tradition, which has been referred to as "socialist anarchism").

In common speech, "utopian" means ideas which are fantastically unrealistic, absurdly idealistic, and impossibly dreamy. The anti-utopian spirit is expressed in the movie "Rudy," when a priest sneers at Rudy, a working class youth who wants to play football for Notre Dame University (I quote from memory), "You're a dreamer. Nothing great was ever accomplished by a dreamer." Actually, nothing great was ever accomplished except by dreamers—even though dreaming, by itself, is never enough.

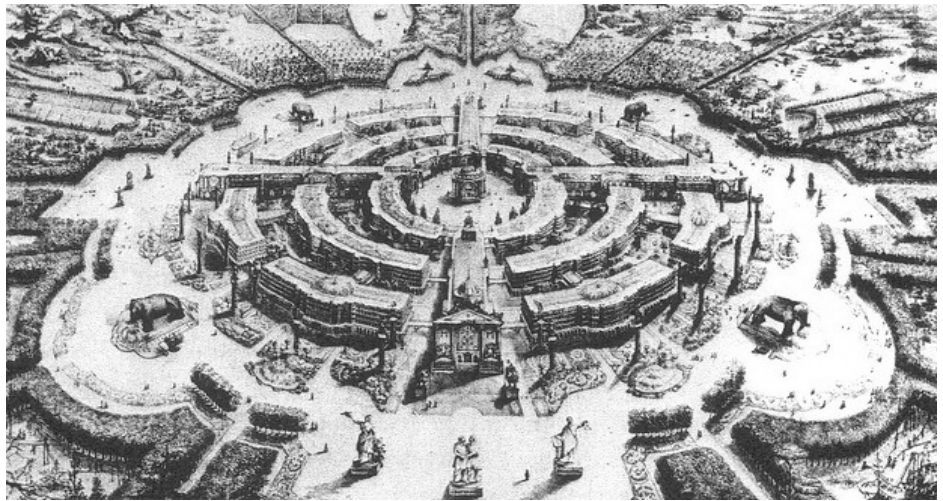
Originally, "Utopia" was the title of a 16th century book by Thomas More, which presented an ideal society, partly seriously and partly humorously. It comes from the Greek words

for “no place.” The idea is the same as Samuel Butler’s Erewhon, a picture of an ideal society whose name is “nowhere” spelled backwards. It is as if the utopian authors agree that such an ideal social system does not exist anywhere and perhaps will not exist anywhere. But the word is also close to “eutopia,” which means “the good place.” It took the horrors of the twentieth century to produce negative-utopias, or “dystopias,” such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, George Orwell’s *1984*, or Jack London’s even earlier *The Iron Heel*.

Utopia may be rejected as a program for a perfect society, without conflicts or mistakes, managed by perfect people. There never will be such a society; humans are inherently finite and fallible and will always be so (and right after a revolution, a new society will have to be built by people deeply marked by the distortions of the old one). However, it is possible to think of Utopia as a program for a society which makes it easier for people to be good, which makes their self-interest be in relative harmony with that of others, and which limits the opportunities for people to become corrupted by having power over others. Utopia may be a vision based on trends and possibilities which exist right now in society and which could come to fruition under different social circumstances. If we wish people to risk their lives and families for a fundamental change, socialist-anarchists have to be able to present a vision of a new society which is possible, workable, and worth risking everything for.

Marxism and Utopianism

Much confusion has been caused by the Marxists’ use of “utopian” in a specialised way. This was first



Fourier's Utopia

spelled out in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (or *Communist Manifesto*) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848) in the section on “Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism.” Their concepts were elaborated in Engels’ *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (1894). Parts of this book were taken out during Engels’ lifetime and made into a famous pamphlet, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Sentences and paragraphs which Engels added to the pamphlet were then typically placed in brackets in later editions of *Anti-Dühring*. (There has been a controversy over this book, with some Marxists being embarrassed by the mechanical flavour of Engels’ exposition of dialectics; they claim [absurdly in my opinion] that Engels did not really understand Marxism, or not as well as they [the critics] do. In fact, Engels went over the whole of the book with Marx beforehand, and Marx wrote a chapter for it, which he would hardly have done if he had disapproved of it. This is not to deny that Engels was a different person from Marx, and more of a populariser of their joint views. But the mechanistic aspects of Marxism which appear in *Anti-Dühring* are a real aspect of Marx’s thinking.)

Marx and Engels claimed that, at the beginning of capitalism’s take-off,

there were a few brilliant thinkers who had insights into the evils of capitalism and the possibilities of socialism. Such thinkers included Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen. Because the class struggle of capital versus labour had barely begun, these could not have had a well-rounded theory of how society operated. But, said Marx and Engels, they could and did have sharp insights into the evils and problems of capitalism. They developed their insights into systems of thought, which their later followers organised into closed, quasi-religious sects. Unable to make a fully “scientific” view of the world, they tended to start from moral precepts and then work out how a society might be built on such ethical rules.

By the mid-19th century, Marx and Engels argued, capitalism had developed much further. There was now a large industrial working class (the proletariat), engaged in class struggle, and a new industrial technology which potentially made possible a world of plenty for all. It was now possible to have an objective, “scientific,” analysis of how capitalism worked, how it would develop, and how the working class would replace it with socialism. In this view, the earlier socialists had been “utopian,” not because they were idealistic but because they were premature, unable

(yet) to make a scientific analysis.

It has been often noted that Marxism is a synthesis of three traditions: German (Hegelian) philosophy, British economics, and mostly-French socialism (the utopian socialists and also Proudhon the anarchist). Readers of Marx are often surprised to discover that he did not condemn the so-called utopians for their advocacy of ideal societies in their time. On the contrary, Engels and he praised them as pioneers of socialism. They praised Saint-Simon for raising the end of the state, which he discussed, in Engels' words, as "the future conversion of political rule over men [sic] into an administration of things and a direction of the processes of production" (Engels, 1954, p. 358; this formulation has problems which I will not get into). They praised Fourier for his condemnation of capitalist "civilisation", for his "dialectical" approach, and for his criticism of the oppression of women under capitalism. "He was the first to declare that in any given society the degree of woman's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation" (same, p. 359). (They did not go on to discuss Fourier's support for homosexuality and other sexual variations.) They praised Owen for his materialist philosophy, his vision of communism, and his criticism of marriage under capitalism.

Engels and Marx noted that both Fourier and Owen had proposed the end of the current division of labour, replacing it with a variety of occupations for each person, making labour attractive, and developing everyone's productive potentialities. Similarly, the two utopians had raised the goal of an end to the division between city and countryside, proposing the spread of industry across the country, integrated with agriculture, in communities of human scale. Engels

noted the ecological implications: "The present poisoning of the air, water, and land can be put an end to only by the fusion of town and country..." (same, p. 411). Like anarchists, he believed that this could only happen in a socialist society; unlike anarchists, he believed this required centralised planning, needing "one single vast plan" (same).

However, Marx and Engels critiqued the earliest socialists because they did not (and could not yet) base their programs on the struggle of the workers and oppressed. Instead they looked to upper class saviours to come along and aid the workers.

"...Marx...did not condemn the so-called utopians for their advocacy of ideal societies in their time. On the contrary, Engels and he praised them as pioneers of socialism."

The infant class of workers existed for them as a suffering class, not as a class capable of changing the world. Along with these criticisms of the utopians (with which I agree), Marx and Engels also, unfortunately criticised them for their moral appeal. Rather than making an appeal to the self-interest of the workers, Marx and Engels complained, the utopians made broad appeals to justice and moral values, which could attract anyone from any class. Marx and Engels rejected moral appeals. "From a scientific standpoint, this appeal [by the utopians—WP] to morality and justice does not help us an inch further; moral indignation, however justifiable, cannot serve economic science as an argument, but only as a symptom" (Engels, 1954, p. 207). In their voluminous writings they never say that people should be for socialism because it is good, just, and

moral. Indeed, they never explain why anyone should be for socialism at all.

The Marxist Hal Draper accurately summarizes Marx's views: "Marx saw socialism as the outcome of tendencies inherent in the capitalist system...whereas the utopians saw socialism simply as a Good Idea, an abstract scheme without any historical context, needing only desire and will to be put into practice...."

"Marx and Engels habitually stated their political aim not in terms of a change in social system (socialism) but in terms of a change in class power (proletarian rule)...For Marx the political movement was in the first place the movement of the working classes to take over state power, not primarily a movement for a certain scheme to reorganise the social structure" (Draper, 1990, pp. 18, 44; his emphasis).

But if socialism is just a matter of class interest rather than the vision of a better world, then the interest of the capitalists is as justifiable as that of the workers. Why should anyone from the capitalist or middle classes go over to the working class (as did Marx and Engels)? Why should not individual workers go over to the side of the capitalists (as so many do, such as union leaders)? Why should workers risk a revolution without some moral (and political and economic) goals? Why should they fight for "class power" (let alone "to take over state power"!) without the goal of "a change in social system (socialism)"?

Contrast the Marxist view with that of Kropotkin: "No struggle can be successful if it does not render itself a clear and concise account of its aim. No destruction of the existing order is possible, if at the time of the overthrow, or of the struggle leading

to the overthrow, the idea of what is to take the place of what is to be destroyed is not always present in the mind" (Kropotkin, 1975, p. 64).

Engels justified "proletarian morality" because "in the present [it] represents the overthrow of the present, represents the future..." (Engels, 1954, p. 131). But why should we automatically support something just because it leads to the future? How do we decide that the future will be good, will be what we should want? Engels declares that it will only be in a classless society that "a really human morality" will be possible. This may be so, but it again begs the question: why should we commit ourselves to the goal of a classless society of freedom and equality, of really human values? None of this makes sense unless we accept, in some way, the historical values of justice, compassion, and kindness, as well as equality and freedom.

Instead, the founders of Marxism argue that their "science" tells them that socialism is inevitable and therefore, they imply, should be accepted. The Communist Manifesto declares, "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (Marx and Engels, 1955, p. 22). To advance beyond the utopian socialists, Engels wrote, "...it was necessary...to present the capitalistic method of production...and its inevitableness during a particular historical period and therefore, also, its inevitable downfall..." (Engels, 1954, pp. 42-43).

Marx's determinism, or (as I will call it) "inevitabilism," is defended by his claim to have created a "scientific socialism." Some excuse Marx's scientism by pointing out that the German word which is translated as "science" (Wissenschaft) means any body of

knowledge or study, including not only chemistry but also philosophy and literary criticism (Draper, 1990). While this is true, it is also true that Marx and Engels repeatedly compared their theories to biology or chemistry, saying that Marx's discoveries were comparable to those of Darwin. Engels' *Anti-Dühring* (1954) itself is the best-known example of this equation of Marx's theories with the natural sciences.

The Limits of Marxist Inevitablism

Sometimes this inevitabilism is modified by statements that there is an alternative, either socialism or the degeneration of society, the destruction of all social classes. The Communist Manifesto states in its beginning that historic class struggles "...each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes" (Marx & Engels, 1955, p. 9). They were probably thinking of the collapse of the Roman Empire; however, that these alternatives exist is not repeated in the Manifesto. Engels declared, "...if the whole of modern society is not to perish, a revolution in the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class distinctions" (1954, p. 218; my emphasis). Rosa Luxemburg summarized this as the alternatives of "socialism or barbarism."

In this day of economic decline and the worldwide spread of nuclear weapons, these probably are the alternatives. For example, to a great extent the economic crisis of capitalism has turned into an ecological and environmental crisis. One report concludes, "It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in

essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing" (Kolbert, 2005, p. 63). It may still be possible to permanently reverse this biological self-destruction, if we replace capitalism with a cooperative social system. But this is a choice, not an inevitable future. It is hard to see how it can be addressed without an appeal to the very moral standards which Marx and Engels had ruled out.

From the beginning, the Marxist view of utopianism and scientific socialism had certain limitations. For one thing, with all his rejection of moral appeals, Marx's writings breathe with a moral indignation, a deep love of freedom and justice, and a burning hatred of suffering and oppression. This does Marx credit, but it makes his objection to moral appeals into hypocrisy. This weakness of Marxism, its lack of an explicit moral viewpoint, has often been pointed out, by supporters and opponents of Marxism, on the right and on the left.

For another thing, these early socialists did not call themselves utopians. They emphasised that they were being scientific and materialistic. Saint-Simon is usually recognized as one of the founders of modern sociology. "The utopian socialists saw themselves as social scientists. 'Utopian' was for them a pejorative term....Time and again in their work they asserted their hard-headed, scientific, realistic, and practical approach to society....The description of their work as 'utopian' is therefore a retrospective judgment and not a self-definition" (Geoghegan, 1987, p. 8).

Anarchist thinkers, who were politically closer to these early socialists than were Marx and Engels, also emphasized how scientific they were. Proudhon insisted he was being sci-

entific. Unlike Marx, Kropotkin tried to develop a naturalistic ethics. But Kropotkin (who had been a geologist) also claimed that anarchism was the conclusion of scientific understanding of the world, as he wrote in his essay “Modern Science and Anarchism.” “Anarchism is a world concept based on a mechanical explanation of all phenomena, embracing the whole of nature....Its method of investigation is that of the exact natural sciences” (Kropotkin, 1975, p. 60). Therefore he rejected describing anarchism with “the word ‘Utopia’” (same, p. 66).

Malatesta was to criticize Kropotkin for this very scientism, which he felt left out the importance of will and consciousness. “Kropotkin, who was very critical of the fatalism of the Marxists, was himself the victim of mechanistic fatalism, which is far more inhibiting....Since, according to his philosophy, that which occurs must necessarily occur, so also the communist-anarchism he desired must inevitably triumph as if by a law of nature” (Malatesta, 1984, pp. 263, 265). So, rather than being simply utopian, anarchists were just as capable of scientism and inevitablism as Marxists, although there were some, such as Malatesta, who opposed this approach.

The Rejection of Scientific Socialism

The revival of moral and utopian thinking has been based on a rejection of Marxist “scientific socialism.” Robin Hahnel, co-inventor of “parecon,” has concluded, “...New evidence from the past 30 years has weakened the case for scientific socialism even further and greatly strengthened the case for utopian socialism...” (2005, p. 390). It has been argued that Marx’s suppos-

edly scientific predictions did not work out as he expected, that his so-called science has been a bust. The capitalist countries have (it is said) become prosperous and stable, with attenuated business cycles and a well-off working class—at least in the industrialised, imperialist, countries. The working class has not become revolutionary. There have been no workers’ revolutions. The revolutions led by Marxists which did happen, became miserable totalitarian states, oppressors of their workers, and nothing like the socialist democracies Marx and Engels had envisaged. These criticisms of Marxism have led many to accept capitalism and others to look for alternate approaches to socialism—including the present spread of anarchism.

There is a great deal of truth in these criticisms of “Marxist science.” World War II was followed by a capitalist boom, up until the late sixties. The great revolutions of Russia and China, as well as others led by Marxists, ended up with new bureaucratic ruling classes, rather than human liberation (although they did not become a new type of society but were, rather, stratified versions of capitalism). There have been no successful working class revolutions, since the ambiguous Russian revolution of 1917. There is no longer a working class with a significant revolutionary movement, anywhere, certainly not in the United States.

However, there is also a great deal of untruth in these common views. In particular, the post-World War II boom has been over for some time. From the seventies onward, the world economy has been going downhill—with fluctuations up and down, and with lopsided and uneven development in different parts of the world. But the overall direction has been negative. Writing about the decline of the U.S. economy, the edito-

rial page of the New York Times, the voice of a major wing of the U.S. ruling class, predicts a general worsening of the U.S. economy. Under the headline, “Before the Fall,” it wrote about the weakening of the dollar and the U.S. economy, and predicted, “The economic repercussions could unfold gradually, resulting in a long, slow decline in living standards. Or there could be a quick unravelling, with the hallmarks of an uncontrolled fiscal crisis. Or the pain could fall somewhere in between” (April 2, 2005). One libertarian Marxist, Loren Goldner, has written of the breakdown of capitalism in our time, “If there is today a ‘crisis of Marxism,’ it cannot be in the ‘analytic-scientific’ side of Marx’s prognosis of capitalist breakdown crisis, wherein current developments appear as a page out of vol. III of Capital” (Goldner, 2000, p. 70).

The image of a fat and happy capitalism with a fat and happy working class comes from the fifties and sixties (and was not fully true even then). It became the dominant conception of the left during the radicalization of the sixties. It justified the liberalism and reformism which was the main trend among U.S. leftists. It also justified the Stalinist politics of the many who became subjectively revolutionary. These revolutionaries admired Cuba, China, and North Vietnam. In these countries middle-class intellectuals led revolutions in which the workers played minor roles at best, and then established the leaders as new, bureaucratic, classes who exploited the workers (and peasants) in a state-capitalist fashion. These radicals regarded themselves as Marxists, as did such theoreticians as Herbert Marcuse, while more or less consciously abandoning any belief in a working class revolution in either the industrialised nations or the oppressed countries.

While the image of a perpetually prosperous capitalism has been shown to be false, this does not “prove” that “Marx was right.” However correct Marx was in his “analytic-scientific analysis” of capitalism, it should now be clear that socialism is not inevitable. There is no way to be absolutely sure that socialism will come before nuclear war or ecological catastrophe or perhaps a perpetual capitalism that grinds on and on until it produces “the common ruin of the contending classes.” At best we are dealing with probabilities, which are almost irrelevant in terms of making commitments to one side or the other. “Marxist scientific socialism” is not the issue, in the abstract, but whether or not to make a class analysis of current society and to commit to working class revolution for a better social system. Loren Goldner concludes that the real crisis of socialism is not in terms of Marxist science. Rather it is “...a crisis of the working-class movement itself, and of the working class’ sense, still relatively strong in the 1930’s, that it is the class of the future” (Goldner, 2000, p. 70).

A Revival of Utopian Socialism and Its Class Limitations

The rejection of “scientific socialism” has often led to a socialism which claims to be based essentially on moral principles, on a universal appeal for a better society, rejecting appeals to class self-interest. This is a return to utopianism. In rejecting the weaknesses and strengths of Marxism, these thinkers revive both the strengths and weaknesses of utopianism. Such views have been developed by theoreticians with Marxist backgrounds, sometimes giving themselves good-sounding names such as “post-Marxists,” “pluralists,” or “radical democrats” (there is a thorough

review in Wood, 1998). Similarly, the theoreticians of “participatory economics” start with abstract moral principles and develop an economic system which would fulfil them, without any discussion of how such a society would develop out of capitalism (Albert, 2003). I have heard Michael Albert presenting his system (at a work-shop at the Global Left Forum 2005), beginning by describing “parecon” (he rejects the label “socialism”) as happening “after the bump.” The “bump” is his term for the change of systems, covering reform or revolution or whatever. How the change happens is not important to his vision.

There are also many who come out of the anarchist tradition who reject a “scientific” approach for one based solely on morality and abstract values. Perhaps the purest example is the “social ecology”/“libertarian municipalist” program developed primarily by Murray Bookchin. These views are clearly summarised by Chuck Morse (2001). Writing in opposition to reformists within the global justice movement, he rightly proposes a revolutionary perspective. However, he also rejects the class perspective of “many anarcho-syndicalists and communists” who accepted “the analysis of capitalism advanced by late 19th century and early 20th century socialists,” presumably Marx as well as the anarchist-syndicalists. They believed, he claims, that “capitalism creates an industrial proletariat that must, in turn, fight for its interests as a class... not only...for immediate benefits but also against the social order that has produced it as a class...” (Morse, 2001, p. 26).

Instead, “it is possible to imagine revolution in a democratic populist sense, in which people draw upon shared values (as opposed to class interests) to overthrow elites. This

vision of revolution is not premised upon the exacerbation of class conflict, but rather the emergence of a democratic sentiment that rejects exclusive, non-participatory social institutions ... focusing on the ideals, not class positions, of activists within the movement.... This value-based approach is a precept of any revolutionary democratic politics” (same, pp. 27, 29).

As Morse says, the views of Marx and the anarchist-syndicalists were indeed developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Therefore they bear the imprint of their time, including their scientific and determinist concept of social science. Nevertheless, the social system which they first analysed, at the time when it took off, remains the basic social system of today—despite its development and changes. Morse still calls it “capitalism” rather than calling it some new form of society (such as “neo-feudalism”) or claiming that the problem was not capitalism but something else (such as “industrialism” or “civilisation”). This is not to deny that the analysis of capitalism has to be expanded to cover later developments and must be integrated with analyses of gender, race, sexual orientation, ecology, and other areas, but capitalism remains as a system of commodity production, market exchange, competition of capitals, the law of value, the selling and buying of the human ability to labour (treating working capacity as a commodity), and the use of workers to produce a surplus for the capitalists (that is, exploitation). In its essence, capitalism, as capitalism, remains the capital-labour relationship as it was analysed a century and a half ago.

Morse notes that this 19th century theory postulated a working class “that must fight.” The “must” is the important point. Implicitly

but correctly, he is criticizing the dominant interpretation of Marxism (one rooted in Marx's work) that it is "inevitable" that the workers will come to fight for socialist revolution. It is not inevitable. Such determinism is essentially authoritarian. How can an oppressed class create a self-conscious and self-organised society through the automatic processes of history? To fight their exploitation, the workers need to want something new. If they are to be free, they must cease to submit to the laws of history and become conscious of what they can achieve.

This does not mean a rejection of all objective analysis, however. Sailors may take a sailboat to different ports, depending on their goals, but only by using their knowledge of wind and seas, not by ignoring this scientific knowledge. But the seafarers' knowledge does not decide their goal.

Marxist analysis (consistent with anarchist goals) may be interpreted (or re-interpreted) differently than in an inevitabilist manner. It could be said that Marx demonstrated that there is a tendency for workers to rebel against their exploitation—what else? But there are also counter-tendencies. For example, better-off workers tend to become bought off and to accept the system. Poorer, worse-off, workers tend to become overwhelmed and demoralized, to give up. Bookchin argues that factory discipline itself teaches the workers to accept hierarchy. Which tendencies will win out: struggle, to the point of revolution, or acceptance of capitalist authority? We do not know; it is not inevitable. As Morse writes, "many anarcho-syndicalists and communists" have believed that it is inevitable that the workers "must fight," and eventually make a socialist revolution. Others, such as Bookchin, argue that it is inevitable

that the workers, as workers, will not make a revolution. Both are wrong. It is a living choice for the workers.

Elaborating on the ideas of Bookchin, Morse, as quoted, rejects a working class orientation. Instead he calls for a "vision of revolution... premised upon...the emergence of a democratic sentiment...focusing on...ideals, not class positions..." (same, p. 27). As stated here, this is rather vacuous, but this would not be a valid criticism, since Bookchin has elsewhere worked out a utopian vision of a post-capitalist, (small-c) communist, society—a federation of communes managed by directly democratic assemblies (Biehl, 1998; ***"Lacking a social analysis, the ethical vision approach lacks a strategy for implementing its (worthwhile) goals."***)

Bookchin, 1986). This is done in much greater detail than Marx or Engels ever did. Bookchin deserves credit for this.

However, the social ecologists' ethical approach, as described here, has certain weaknesses. To begin with, it has no study of how capitalist society works, what are its contradictions and conflicts. This is not a matter of reviving the mechanical "science" and determinism of the worst of Marxism. It is making a theoretical analysis of society, including economic and other factors (race, gender, ecology, etc.), laying the basis for a strategy for bringing utopian goals into reality. It is true that Bookchin has made an analysis of society in terms of a supposed conflict, the remnants of town and community versus the national state, but it is hard to take this seriously as the basic conflict of society.

Lacking a social analysis, the ethical vision approach lacks a strategy for implementing its (worthwhile) goals. More specifically, it lacks an agent, a social force which could overturn capitalism and replace it with a new society. All it has are people who are idealistic, of every class and sector of society. From this point of view, there is no reason why socialism could not have been implemented at any time in human existence, from hunter-gatherer society until now, since people have always had moral values and visions of a better world. Bookchin has argued that a free society is possible now since it is only now that we have the technology to possibly create a society of plenty for all, including enough time without toil for people to participate in the managing of society (a view which was raised by Marx). However, this still leaves the question of who will make the revolution.

As opposed to this vague appeal to idealists, Marx and Engels, and later the anarchist-syndicalists as well as most anarchist-communists, looked to the struggle of the workers. This did not necessarily mean ignoring the struggles of other sectors of society, such as women and "racial" groupings. I have already noted how Engels valued the utopians' criticisms of the oppression of women. In the same work, he commented, "It is significant of the specifically bourgeois character of these human rights that the American constitution, the first to recognize the rights of man [sic], in the same breath confirms the slavery of the coloured races existing in America; class privileges are proscribed, race privileges sanctioned" (Engels, 1954, pp. 147-148). Not that Marx and Engels had a sufficient analysis of either gender or race, but it is now possible to see the interaction and overlap of racial, gendered, and other forms of oppression with the economic exploitation of the

working class.

However, the working class has a particular strategic importance for revolutionaries. Of all the oppressed groupings, only the workers can stop society in its tracks, due to their potential control of the means of production. And only the working class can start society up again by occupying the workplaces and working them in a different way. This does not make workers, as workers, more oppressed than, say, physically disabled people, or women, as women (two categories which mostly overlap with the working class). It just points up the workers' potential strategic power.

Unlike the capitalists or the "middle class" managers who work for them, the workers (that is, most of the population, when they go to work for some boss) do not have anyone under them to exploit. They do not live off of the exploitation of others. The workers have a direct interest in ending the system of exploitation—that is, the pumping of wealth from them to the capitalist rulers. Ellen Meiksins Wood argues against the views of certain ex-Marxists who have rejected a working class orientation in favour of an ethical- only approach similar to that of Morse and Bookchin (Bookchin himself being an ex-Marxist who has rejected a working class orientation):

The implication is that workers are no more affected by capitalist exploitation than are any other human beings who are not themselves the direct objects of exploitation. This also implies that capitalists derive no fundamental advantage from the exploitation of workers, that the workers derive no fundamental disadvantage from their exploitation by capital, that the workers would derive no fundamental advantage from ceasing to be exploited, that the condition of being exploited does

not entail an 'interest' in the cessation of class exploitation, that the relations between capital and labour have no fundamental consequences for the whole structure of social and political power, and that the conflicting interests between capital and labour are all in the eye of the beholder. (Wood, 1998, p. 61)

Contrary to the middle class myth of working class quiescence, workers do struggle against capital. Every day there is a tug-of-war, a guerrilla conflict, in every workplace, sometimes breaking out into open rebellion but mostly kept at a low simmer. From time to time there have been great eruptions when workers rose up and demonstrated the possibility of overthrowing capitalism and its state, of replacing these institutions with the self-management of society. I will not review the history of workers' revolutionary upheavals here, but workers have shown more ability to struggle in the brief history of industrial capitalism (about 200 years) than any other oppressed class in history. Without slighting other oppressions, the struggle of the workers should be a major focus of any revolutionary strategy.

Utopianism or Science...or Both?

In Utopianism and Marxism, Geoghegan concludes, "The distinction between utopian and scientific socialism has, on balance, been an unfortunate one for the Marxist tradition" (1987, p. 134). He demonstrates how both wings of Marxism—social democracy and Leninism—have been affected by their mechanical scientism and their rejection of visionary utopianism. He recommends that Marxists look into the alternate tradition of anarchism, as well as other traditions, such as democratic liberalism, feminism, and

Gay liberation. However, it seems to me that a Marxism which accepts utopianism and the insights of anarchism, radical democracy, feminism, and Gay liberation would cease to be Marxism, even if much remained of Marx's project (especially his class analysis). That is, the particular synthesis of ideas which Marx created would be drastically reorganised. Anarchists too have historically sometimes been too scientific or have more often been anti-theoretical and anti-intellectual, but it is anarchism which has been more open to both a moral vision and a theoretical analysis of capitalism. However, there is a great deal of overlap between class-struggle anarchism and libertarian Marxism.

I reject having to choose between either utopianism or science (using "science" to mean an analysis of society, done as realistically as possible, and not an attempt to treat society as if it were chemistry). I will not choose between raising moral issues and appealing to the self-interest of oppressed people. I reject the alternatives of either a moral vision or a practical strategy. I refuse to choose between Utopia and support for workers' class struggles.

What is the Utopia of socialist anarchism? It has many interpretations, but some things seem central: It includes a cooperative economy with production for use, which is planned democratically, from the bottom up. It means the end of the division (in industry and in society as a whole) between mental and manual labour, between those who give orders and those who carry them out. This would be part of a complete reorganisation of technology to create an ecologically sustainable society. It includes an economy and polity managed by direct democracy, in assemblies and councils, at workplaces and in communities. It has

no state, that is, no bureaucratic-military machine with specialised layers of police, soldiers, bureaucrats, lobbyists, and politicians, standing above the rest of the population. If defence of the people is needed, this would be done by the people—the armed people—in a popular militia. Instead of a state, local councils would be federated at the regional, national, continental, and international levels, wherever needed. In this freely federated world, there would be no national borders. The socialist vision has always been that of a classless society and the most exploited class has an interest in winning this. Whether the working class will seek this vision remains an open question, in my opinion—neither a guaranteed outcome nor a guarantee that it will not. It is a choice, not an inevitability.

In his *Paths in Utopia*, the Jewish theologian Martin Buber (1958) compares two types of eschatological prophecy. One is the prediction of apocalypse, an inevitable end of days which is running on a strict timetable. God and the devil will fight and God will win. Human choice is reduced to a minimum... people may decide individually to be on the automatically winning side or to be on the guaranteed losing side. That's it. Such a view is presented in the *Left Behind* novels, expressing a conservative interpretation of Christianity. In a secular fashion, it also appears in the mainstream interpretation of Marxism (and also in aspects of Kropotkin's anarchism). In comparison, Buber says, the prophets of the Old Testament presented the people with a collective choice. Disaster was looming, the prophets warned, but it could be averted. To do so, the people would have to change their ways and follow an alternate path. Prophecy was a challenge, not an inevitable prediction. Human choice could make a

difference.

Leaving theology aside, today there is a prophetic challenge. It is both "utopian" and "scientific." Humanity faces probable disasters: increasing wars (including eventual nuclear wars), ecological and environmental catastrophe, economic decline, and threats to democracy and freedom. But an alternate society, a utopian goal, may be envisioned, with a different way for humans to relate to each other—if not a perfect society

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than one that is much better. There exists the technology to make it possible. There exists a social class whose self-interest may lead it to struggle for this goal, alongside of other oppressed groupings. Those who accept this analysis, and who believe in the values of this goal, may choose to take up the challenge—and to raise it for others. It is a matter not only of prediction but of moral commitment.

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Children of the Commune

“You must understand that once we have property in common, and establish on a solid moral and material base the principle of social solidarity, the maintenance of the children will be the concern of the community, and their education will be the care and responsibility of everyone.

Probably all men and all women will love all the children; and if, as I believe is certain, parents have a special affection for their own children, they can only be delighted to know that the future of their children is secure, having for their maintenance and their education the cooperation of the whole society.”

- Errico Malatesta, At the Cafe

This piece will be a very brief glance through squinted eyes at what early life could look like in an anarchist utopia. While we may seem a long way from communal life, it is important to have some conception of the ideals we are trying to prefigure in our lives here and now. Speculation on the early stages of someone’s life in a society led by anarchist communist principles, far from being a waste of time, can help make our groups more accessible to those with a duty of care today. Many instances of communal childcare and alternatives to early life exist to point the way towards a better world.

The Kibbutz

A kibbutz (plural kibbutzim, originally meaning a cluster or gathering) is the name for what was tradition-

ally a Jewish communal community. While it is impossible to sum up the history of hundreds of settlements formed over a hundred years in a neat package, the first kibbutzim were established early in the twentieth century, primarily as farming communes that aimed towards the agricultural settlement of the land of Israel. While in recent history most have changed their ideology towards one of capitalist individuality and nationalism, many of the initial pioneers did not want to recreate the old order of settlements where



Jews acted as bosses and Arabs were brought in as workers but instead sought to forge new paths in the Zionist movement based on a utopian socialist programme.

Part of this drive led to the tasks of childrearing, both social and economic, being seen as a responsibility of the whole kibbutz. As such, all the children were given the same opportunities and options without the economic situation of the parents giving rise to bias towards one child or another. Children would live collectively in a separate building to the

parents, share the same meals and enjoy the lifestyle.

After being weaned a child would be assigned to a nanny whose job was not only to watch over a small group of children, but to also teach them the social skills of co-operation, mutual support and compassion. The nanny would also support visiting family members in learning essential parenting skills “on the job”. The nanny would be joined in helping the children by a formal teacher when the children turned seven, and this

group would stay together up until teenhood. After this point the youngsters would move into larger dormitories, visiting home several times per week, while the nanny and teacher would separate from the group and a new wave of teachers would take responsibility for the group’s development.

Children would become responsible for maintaining elements of their environment such as their living space, vegetable gardens and even assistants to young nanny groups. A multidisciplinary approach to education was offered so

that everyone would pick up some practical skills while at the same time nurturing those with a particular aptitude to excel in their chosen field.

While this method of child-rearing has ended in the kibbutzim, echoes of this method can be seen in modern speculative fiction, such as *Embassytown* by China Mieville.

Alternate Education

There are many alternatives to the current mainstream option for education. While it is outwith the scope

of this piece to give a comprehensive list of all possible options, or to even go into any great depth on any one, it is worth mentioning a few of the different modes developed that have elements more suited to anarchist communism.

Unschooling / Autonomous Education

This method of home-schooling assumes that children have a natural disposition to wanting to learn. It also works on the basis that, as each child will have their own preference on how to search for and digest information, it is the child themselves who should pick the methods by which they undertake this task. Youngsters are encouraged to pursue subjects they have an interest in, with parents sharing in the task of looking into areas of enquiry with them and helping the student find the information they seek. Parents provide resources, make suggestions, provide text and create learning plans. Though as the child gets older, the parents pass more and more of the responsibility of these tasks onto their child.

Sudbury Schools

These are schools where the staff and the pupils are all part of the same directly democratic learning establishment and have an equal say in how it is organised. It is assumed that children already possess the main behaviours needed to advance in society and so by engaging in directly democratic methods of organisation the child will find the best way for them to be part of a directly democratic society. While there are no formal rules to begin with and rooms of these schools are not designated for particular tasks, weekly collective meetings allow for new rules to be introduced, learning programmes started or altered, areas of the school

designated to certain activities, complaints heard, and staff hired or fired.

Montessori Education

This mode of education looks to guide children along certain developmental paths. This is done by having a “prepared environment” that has features that are of interest to most people in the specific age band as well as features specifically introduced to suit those learning in the space with an eye to bringing forward the qualities that the community wish to foster in their youth. Lessons are presented by teaching staff, however it is the students who pick which topics of enquiry to follow up upon, and student-led trips outside the classroom to find new information (known as “going out”) is a key element of this style of education.

Becoming a Grown-up

A final question that has to be asked of communal society is at what point are you considered to have full responsibilities as a member of the commune? Even more fundamental, are the ideas of grading personal responsibility by age overly arbitrary or proscriptive? At what point does a duty of care impinge on another’s freedom of choice?

Concepts of free association would suggest that any individual should be free to apply to join, or leave a community or workplace as they feel inclined to do so, and the community should be free to associate or dissociate from individuals as it sees fit. Extending this logic to the youngest members of our society, they are in a position where they are subject in many ways to the communities choices, until either party decide otherwise.

At this point someone may call for

the ward of the community to be emancipated and free to be a full part of commune life, perhaps mainly considered after a certain period of learning. Conversely if a person felt that their freedoms were being hampered in one community they would always be free to leave and join another.

Living the Dream

All this utopian thinking leaves a lot for the anarchist groups to act on in the here and now. We can’t just wait for a member of the group to pop out a sprog or hope that parents will fit social revolution around the childcare. Instead we should make our groups seem inviting and supportive of those with children, starting our drives for social change with the social groups closest to us. The examples of support from the kibbutz can be taken not only to offer childcare in meetings, but to offer support to carers at other times when they need some space. We must understand that even our closest comrades now have a whole new focus in life when they take on the duty of care to a young life. They require us to undertake self-education and skill-sharing, rather than shirking at the idea of children being near to us.

We must also look at the question of at which point the children have a say in decisions that will effect their lives and can take on responsibilities as part of our groups, because if we cannot show our wards the same respect we would show a stranger, then what hope do we have of them taking forward ideas of social change in their lives? The children of today are revolutionaries of tomorrow. If we are serious about future generations growing up in an anarchist communist world then we have to prefigure that outcome today.



Education in an Anarchist Society

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

- Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Throughout history, education has been a force used for both oppression and liberation. The fact is, as with today’s education system, it can be both; an inspirational teacher, classmate or neighbour can teach invaluable skills, unlock a passion for learning and help mould inquiring, independent and creative learners. By the same token, education too often reinforces the logic of capitalist society, burdening kids with arbitrary rules, unquestionable and infallible authority figures and a training course in quietly accepting their future roles within class society

(‘Ain’t it funny that the factory doors close ‘round about the time the school doors close’ as Rage Against the Machine succinctly put it!).

When looking at what an anarchist education may look like, we will not focus on the structure of the school for the worker. In an anarchist society, as with all workplaces, schools would be self-managed. To describe the process by which education workers could self-manage their own workplace in terms of negating hierarchy, oppression and exploitation is no different than the process by which any worker would achieve such a goal. Class struggle anarchists have written on (and demonstrated in practice) adequate examples of the power and efficiency of workers self-management. The school is a factory, and as such, the organisational methods of education workers in an anarchist society would not have to differ radically from that of any other worker (other than the fact that the ‘product’ in education is human, and as such needs to be incorporated into the decision making process!). With that in mind, we will be predomi-

nantly focussing on pedagogical approaches to anarchist education; that is, how, what and why would young people learn?

Anarchist education has a long and proud history, opening doors for hundreds of thousands of working class youth to explore, question, learn and confront on their own terms. But before we begin looking back at the historical precedent for anarchist education, we should begin by looking at what it is not.

In recent years, free schools have gained prominence in the press. Some loosely defined ‘anarchists’ and ‘radicals’ have even suggested that free schools provide an opportunity for rolling out a more libertarian curriculum. This is wrong for a number of reasons. Free schools represent the marketisation of education. Any group or individual with enough cash can set up a free school. They have complete control over the curriculum as well as admission policies. Already, free schools for the offspring of posh hippies are cropping up in urban, working class areas. Do you

kids of the local people get a look in? Any education system allowing such a level of exclusivity needs to be rejected outright by class struggle anarchists. Free schools around the country are already grooming our kids to accept extreme religious dogma; some are owned by corporations who refuse to teach climate change, militarists who push unfortunate youth towards the armed services and fanatics who refuse to teach contraception, evolution or recognise homosexuality as anything other than a perversion. Any attempt by anarchists to take advantage of a government supported and sponsored system that allowed for such inequality and reactionary teaching and designed to open the education system to the financial markets is flawed in the extreme. So, while it would theoretically be possible for an anarchist group to fund and operate a free school, giving a rich and exciting education to the few kids involved, to do so would be lending tacit support to the oppressive, exclusive and market orientated education suffered by pupils in the majority of free schools. By the same token, independent schools such as Summerhill, so often lauded as anarchist education in action, can offer us little help when attempting to offer a

genuinely emancipatory educational experience. After all, the wealthy, liberal parents of the lucky few who attend Summerhill fork out between £3-5,000 a term for the privilege; reinforcing the very class inequality that any truly anarchist education must seek to at the very least question, and preferably destroy. While there is much interesting to be learned from the pedagogy of Summerhill, the elite nature of its pupils, and elitist model of its admissions render it, like free schools, invalid as a genuinely 'free' educational experience. As consistent anarchists, we must rule out any education system with the power or inclination to exclude pupils on any grounds, including economic. Our education will be inclusive, or it will be bullshit!

Now that we have had a chance to look at, and hopefully dismiss some dead end roads on the route to an anarchist education, we can begin to look forward to how such a system may function. On this subject, in looking forward, the best way to start is by looking back; specifically back to the early 20th century, when a wave of anarchist 'rational' schools, emanating from Spain, but spreading across the globe made an anarchist education a reality for hundreds of

thousands of young people.

While anarchist schools - who had as their teachers and founders figures such as Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, the Catalan anarchist eventually executed by the state, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman and thousands of forgotten but equally dedicated anarchist educators - were diverse in their approaches and pedagogy, there were several factors that united them.

An emphasis on learning by doing was a central factor. To the anarchist teachers, exploring, experimenting and pupil-led processes of trial and error were infinitely superior to desk bound, fact based learning. The focus on hands-on-skills extended beyond the school to involve the whole community in the education of the child. Who better to teach a young person to build than the carpenter and bricklayer or to prepare food than a local baker or chef? In this way, the anarchist idea of community self-management was extended to provide pupils with real life learning opportunities, taught by the working class experts that surrounded them.

Encouraging critical thinking was a key part of anarchist education. All the assumptions of society, from the institutions that governed countries, to the church and capitalism were put on trial and held to scrutiny by pupils encouraged to question and where necessary confront, a far cry from the quietly acceptance of society and its norms bred by traditional education.

Creating and developing the 'whole person' was an important part of anarchist education. Rather than seeing academic knowledge, or suitability for obedient employment as the end goals of education, anarchist teachers fostered independence, interdependence, problem solving skills



and social skills; prioritizing the development of happy, emotionally and socially balanced, enquiring and co-operative young people. As a part of this approach, anarchist education included a large number of group collaborative projects, showing that we are capable of more amazing feats when working together than when sat isolated behind a desk, in the intimidating silence of an exam hall. Anarchist educators recognized that the strict, fact and exam based learning of traditional schools served only to more efficiently categorize pupils into appropriate bands of 'ability' and determine future employment. The exam hall was detached from reality; a tool to make life easy for employers when selecting employees, whereas group work allows the truly cooperative and collaborative nature of young people to make engagement, success and real, practical learning a reality. In the spirit of this collaborative approach, assessment did not take the form of an end of term exam or other alienating, divisive experience. Rather pupils were more likely to be constructively assessed based on projects, coursework and productions, during the creation of which, the pupil would have been free to draw on the experiences, skills and knowledge of those around them.

But as well as being a highly communal system, the anarchist school placed high importance on nurturing the talents, skills and interests of the individual. The purpose of education was the pursuit of truth, interest and happiness and it was recognized that, while a sound understanding of key aspects of literacy, numeracy and the

world around them was vital, this could best be achieved through a pupil focusing on the aspects of learning that most engaged and interested them.



In addition to providing a libertarian education, anarchist schools often modelled the form of democracy they wished to extend to wider society. Attitudes differed from school to school and examples of pupil-inclusive self-management varied widely. However, it was not uncommon to find the administration and curriculum of the school managed through meetings in which pupils and staff had an equal say. In some cases, pupils successfully overturned unpopular punishments, subjects or rules, or forced apologies, or even resignations from unpopular teachers. In some schools, justice was administered by a rotating jury of pupils who would hear any disputes before reaching a verdict. Any 'punishment' was made to be relevant to the 'crime' and a focus on restorative justice and reconciliation was a central aspect of this self-managed student justice system.

That much of this article has been

written in the past tense should not be a cause for dismay. While it is true that anarchist schools all but ceased to exist in relation to the decline of the vast anarchist movement of the first half of the 20th century,

there are still thousands of schools across the world practicing a rational, creative, co-operative and democratic educational curriculum. That many of these, especially in the global North have lost their anarchist roots and either abandoned or never considered class struggle by charging admission fees and operating an elitist intake system does not detract from the soundness of their pedagogical approach. In fact, many pedagogical approaches pioneered by the founders of the rational school movement have found their

way into mainstream state education (although it goes without saying that, while these approaches have created a more creative, interesting learning environment for young people, a curriculum that democratizes education and teaches pupils how to challenge the status quo is still lacking). The society that the early anarchist teachers sought to bring crashing down still exists and the validity of their creative, rebellious, democratic and cooperative approach to education still as vital now as then. These teachers saw and nurtured the uniqueness of every pupil while allowing them to grow and develop in a communal context that allowed them to foster respect, solidarity and interdependence with their fellow pupils and the wider community. Our ideas have stood the test of time, the real task for today's anarchist pupils and teachers is to take those ideas and turn them into an inclusive, revolutionary modern day curriculum.

In Defence of Malatesta

“Let there be as much class struggle as one wishes, if by class struggle one means the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters for the abolition of exploitation. That struggle is a way of moral and material elevation, and it is the main revolutionary force that can be relied on.”

- Malatesta

Recently, there has much discussion of the ideas of the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta, in books and pamphlets and on blogs. One example is Scott Nappalos’ article at libcom.org: ‘Anarchism and the unions: a critique of Malatesta’s ahistorical perspective.’

I quote in length from that article:

“There are three main errors in Malatesta’s argument that will lead us to different conclusions. Malatesta botches the role of history in union’s structure, the function of struggle in transforming the consciousness of its participants, and the variations in the forms of workers organizations.”

1. Ideology is less a product of will than of history.

In his reply to de Santillan, Malatesta claims he recognizes this point. It may be that he did, but he fails to see the problem for his argument. The basic idea is that unions can be revolutionary to the extent that the class or sections of the class are revolutionary. This is a historical matter. History and society develops unevenly, there will always be sections of the working class moving into and away from various revolutionary praxis embedded in their organizations. Likewise the success and failure of these movements depend on their context, i.e.

The ruling class, the other workers organizations, the region’s position in global capital, etc. When we move away from the abstract and timeless perspective Malatesta uses, one leg of his argument crumbles (that it is not possible to have mass unions that have revolutionary ideas and practice).

2. Malatesta misses the role of struggle radicalizing workers consciousness.

This makes growth without watering down principles possible, since workers in participating can be radicalized (not saying it will, just that it is possible, which destroys the fork in his argument). This is a similar issue as above with Malatesta’s lack of understanding of struggle across time. Workers’ ideas are not static, but rather shift in a dynamic between the notions they have, their activity, and the ideas they encounter. Throughout history workers have built libertarian organizations not necessarily from anarchist agitation within movements so much as being radicalized by the dynamics of struggle itself (though of course there are other examples too). This means that it is also possible for workers in libertarian unions to develop revolutionary consciousness without being required to be anarchists before joining. Since libertarian unions’ structure/principles are voluntarily built, there is always a struggle around the orientation of the union. That doesn’t mean however (as Malatesta argues) that unions by their nature will cease being revolutionary when struggle progresses. Otherwise we would not have seen libertarian institutions grow at all, they would have turned reformist while growing and never had the chance to be repressed. This



isn’t negated by the fact that the CNT or whoever did in fact turn towards reformist activities, since in fact that was true by default. All revolutionary movements either produced reformism or were destroyed. There are other factors that explain cooptation (and this was not in fact Malatesta’s argument, he argues unions will become reformist before reaching revolutionary conclusions).

It is also worth pointing out that alternative libertarian institutions such as anarchosyndicalist unions, workers councils, militias, peasants’ councils, etc., formed perhaps the only significant anarchist movements. Given this history, the burden of proof falls on those who claim Malatesta’s strategy, which as of yet has no significant historical precedent.

3. Not all unions were created equal.

Since Malatesta died before seeing the integration of unions into the social partnership of the state and capital, it is not useful to view Malatesta’s unions as identical to ours. For that reason, it is likewise naïve to think that one can merely exist within organizations that are

setup for and schooled in repressing radical organizing and carry out propaganda effectively. Over 80 years of communist infiltration into the unions failed to produce any significant shifts in the unions nor revolutionary movements. Again the burden of proof lies with anarchists who think otherwise, and who have next to nothing to show for anarchist attempts at such.

Malatesta's arguments rely on the idea that all unions are the same, some just want ideology. But in fact the structure, methods, and aims of unions vary considerably. The fundamental division in our time is between unions (or workers' organizations) that seek to mediate between capital and workers, and those that are spaces for autonomous organizing that don't exist beyond the activities of workers. The former is the traditional American union, which exists mostly as a bureaucratic layer of paid staff with specialized skills who negotiate a contract for the workers. The contracts exchange workers control for largely economic gains. Workers interact with the unions, and struggle for changes through (and sometimes against it), but the union remains a third party with separate interests of its own. The 20th century is filled with examples of the unions are highly efficient repressive organizations for class cooption and collaboration.

We can likewise show our own fork. If you try to bore within the existing repressive unions, either you do so autonomously (with workers' own separate structures to organize with) or you don't. If you work within the union's framework, you work on their terms and must fight against their superior resources both economically and in alliance with the boss and the state if you are successful. If you build a parallel structure, then you are pursuing

what Malatesta argued against, it is a union of one form or another."

Now in fact, Malatesta believed the opposite of much of the above. In fact, it was he who provided an inspiration for many of the leading lights of the foundation of the French syndicalist union the Confederation General de Travail (CGT) and the parallel Bourses de Travail (labour exchanges controlled by workers), like Emile Pouger and Fernand Pelloutier.

Between 1885 and 1889 he was living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Here, he took part in helping organise the bakers' union, which was founded by Ettore Mattei and Francesco Momo. He drew up the charter and programme of the union and supported its successful strikes. "His and Mattei's roles in the union were fundamental; they fought so that the union would be an authentic society of resistance, an organization that moreover could be labelled as "cosmopolitan", instead of yet another mere mutualist society" (The influence of Italian immigration on the Argentine anarchist movement, Osvaldo Bayer).

In 1889 Malatesta moved to London and remained there, off and on, for the next decade. Shortly after his arrival, the Great Dock strike broke out. This ran from 14th August to 16th September. Like his fellow anarchist Kropotkin, Malatesta was much impressed by the action of the workers. As DiPaola notes, he had: "close contact with anarchist, labour and trade union militants. ... Thanks to his deep knowledge of British trade unionism he could examine both its positive and negative aspects, particularly those arising from the danger of greater bureaucracy in the labour movement. This contributed to the development of his ideas about the organisation and politi-

cal role of labour and trade unions in Italy. He used the experience he achieved in Britain when he published the newspaper L'Agitazione in Ancona in 1897, and later when the Italian anarchists led the Unione Sindacale Italiana."

In the paper he brought out in London L'Associazione, Malatesta began to consider the implications of the great strike. Issue 1. contained an article by him, A Proposito di Uno Sciopero (Regarding A Strike). He noted that as soon as the casual workers strike was called, all other trades connected to loading and unloading of cargoes stopped work, some of them purely in sympathy. Simultaneously other trades not connected to the docks put forward their own demands and went out on strike, amounting to a total number of 180,000 on strike. The gas workers offered to come out on strike, with the prospect of London "plunged into darkness at night" and the homes of the bourgeois "exposed to great danger". He was deeply impressed by the self-discipline and "remarkable" ability to get organised. Feeding a population of half a million, managing donations and collections, organising meetings and demonstrations, and keeping watch on the bosses' attempts to employ scabs, "All this was done marvelously and spontaneously, by the work of volunteers". Above all, the workers' collective action earned his admiration. "Those workers were not lacking a broad and often instinctive notion of their rights and social usefulness, nor did they lack the combativeness required to make a revolution; a vague desire of more radical measures arose in them..."

Turcato notes that: "The positive implications of the Great Dock Strike and the tactics of new unionism can hardly be over-estimated. He (Malatesta) came to regard strikes as

the most promising path to revolution, in contrast to any other means that anarchists had practised until then". As Malatesta himself wrote in his article after considering both movements originally initiated by the bourgeoisie, and wars as catalysts for social unrest, where reliance on them led to fatalism: "Fortunately there are other ways by which a revolution can come, and it seems to us that the most important among them are workers' agitations that manifest themselves in the form of strikes... The most fruitful lesson of all was the huge dock labourer strike which recently occurred in London".

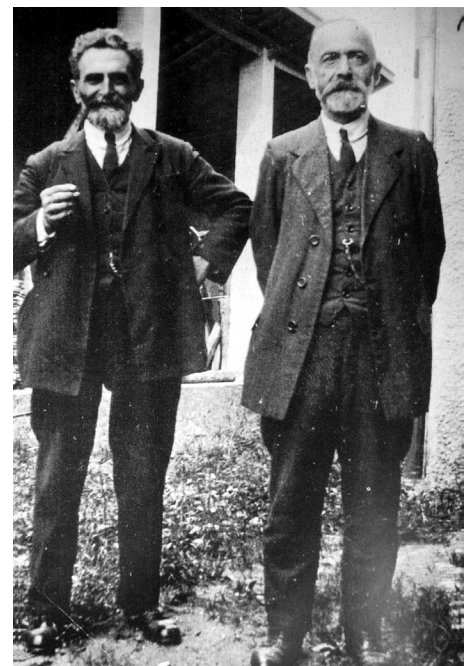
Malatesta further expanded these ideas in his paper, calling for the intervention of anarchists in struggles for immediate economic gains. Further, he stated that the Revolution was a longer process than anarchists had believed. What was needed was a daily and long term involvement in unions, cooperatives and educational societies.

For Malatesta economic struggle implied a political one. He used the First of May mobilisations to illustrate a point. The most important thing was for workers to collectively assert themselves, not the limited reforms they demanded. Furthermore, it was a mistake to dismiss agitation around the eight hour day, as Malatesta admitted a poor reform, because struggle would produce class consciousness. Commenting on the joint congress of the CGT and Bourses de Travail in Toulouse in 1897 he wrote: "The conscious part of the French proletariat, even when they do not comprehend or accept our general principles, can devise the way that must lead to the end of human exploitation. Malatesta repeatedly emphasised that these forms of struggle were means towards social revolution. This flies in the face of the statement of Nappalos' that

Malatesta misses the role of struggle radicalizing workers consciousness, as even a cursory look at Malatesta's ideas proves the falsity of this statement. Further, we have to address the assertions made in the Solidarity Federation booklet *Fighting For Ourselves* that: "early anarchist-communists did not focus primarily on the labour movement". Apart from the fact that anarchist communists of the period also engaged, quite correctly, in agitation among what was then a sizeable class, the peasantry, careful observation reveals this not to be true. The booklet includes Malatesta among these early anarchist communists. As we have seen, Malatesta was an early advocate of involvement in the labour movement. Turcato underlines this: "Organisation was a worker's means to gradually and collectively approach anarchism through class consciousness". He then quotes Malatesta, "To become an anarchist for good, and not only nominally, he must start to feel the solidarity that links him to his comrades; learn to cooperate with the others for the defence of the common interests; and, struggling against the masters and the government that supports the masters, understand that masters and governments are useless parasites and that workers could manage by themselves the social enterprise. When he has understood all this, he is an anarchist, even if he does not carry the denomination". Furthermore, Emile Pouget, who was an architect of French syndicalism, travelled to London and had meetings with Malatesta in 1893. The following year he was again in London, living at the house of the Italian anarchist Defendi family, where Malatesta also resided. Both of them contributed to the British anarchist communist paper, *The Torch*. The August 1894 issue had articles from them both, but significantly Malatesta's was *The General Strike and The Revolution*,

where he advocated the general strike as a revolutionary weapon. It is apparent that Pouget had become influenced by the Italian's ideas on the subject. In 1895 he and Fernand Pelloutier, described by Max Nettlau as an "intransigent anarchist communist" went on an intense propaganda drive to introduce these new syndicalist methods to French workers. Indeed Pelloutier in his 1899 *Lettre Aux Anarchistes* (Letter To the Anarchists) praised Malatesta, "The words I am going to say have a perfect illustration in propagandists like Malatesta, who knows how well to unite an indomitable revolutionary passion with the methodical organisation of the proletariat".

It should be recognised that it was in this context that Malatesta, who as we have seen was instrumental in advancing the idea of the general strike among anarchists, criticised it at the 1906 Amsterdam anarchist congress. He stated that the general strike on its own could not overthrow capitalism, but that what was needed was complementary insurrectionary action to destroy the State. In fact he had emphasised this in his first article on the subject back in 1889. He was aware that some syndicalists were substituting the General



Strike for generalised revolutionary action. Indeed, this spurious notion reached its apogee with the General Strike being seen as a non-violent alternative to the failed uprisings during the German Revolution, by the leadership of the Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands, which included Rudolf Rocker.

On the subject of the unions which Nappalos addresses. Malatesta was aware of the differences between different types of unions. In his articles on the New Unionism of 1889, he heavily criticised the “old” unions. When he attempted to introduce these new tactics in Italy, he was accused by some anarchists of *inglesismo* (Englishism). He replied: “Forget about *inglesismo*. If this term means anything at all, it means economic resistance for its own sake, as it was practised by the ‘old’ trade unions, which - though they wanted to improve the workers’ conditions - accepted and respected the capitalist system and all bourgeois institutions”.

Malatesta was an extraordinary pragmatic and flexible activist and thinker, adapting to situations as they unfolded. Thus, after the founding of the USI in 1912, Malatesta gave support saying that it corresponded best to anarchist ideas and tactics. He did emphasise that there were still many anarchists in the mainstream union central, the General Confederation of Labour (CGL), and what was needed was unity of action between these comrades. The organisation created by Malatesta and other organisational anarchists in 1920, the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* (UAI), worked closely with the USI in the period of social unrest that gave birth to the Italian factory council movement. Malatesta did not have the hindsight that modern day anarchists may have about the role of the unions, as Nappalos seems to think he

should have, but he was aware from the start of the general drift of trade unions towards pure economism, reformism and bureaucratisation.

Finally, on the question of will versus history. Malatesta was highly critical of Kropotkin’s rigid determinism and his elevation of anarchism as a science, influenced as he was by positivist ideas. “Science, like any other system of ideas, must not be blindly accepted as infallible; it is a study that only concerns itself with what is, and not with what ought to be, that is, with the aspirations, desires and wants of humanity”. For Malatesta, anarchy is a product of the will, not of necessity. As such, science cannot embrace it, because science “stops where inevitability ends and freedom begins” (Julius Gavroche, *Autonomy No1*). On the other hand he was equally critical of Bakunin’s belief that the masses had a natural tendency towards anarchism. As he wrote:

“The great majority of anarchists, if I am not mistaken, hold the view that human perfectibility and anarchy would not be achieved even in a few thousand years, if first one did not create by the revolution, made by a conscious minority, the necessary environment for freedom and well being.

“We do not want to “wait for the masses to become anarchist before making the revolution,” the more so since we are convinced that they will never become anarchist if the institutions which keep them enslaved are not first violently destroyed. And since we need the support of the masses to build up a force of sufficient strength and to achieve our specific task of radical change of the social organism by the direct action of the masses, we must get closer to them, accept them as they are, and from within their ranks seek

to “push” them forward as much as possible.”

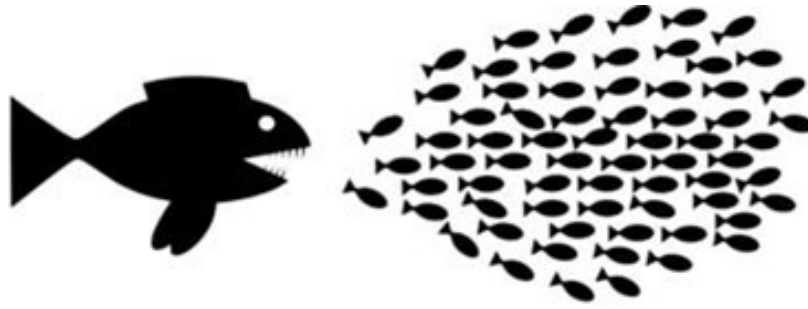
As Turcato remarks on the concepts of Malatesta as regards will and material conditions: “To the extent that Malatesta committed revolution and anarchy to conscious choices, he correspondingly refrained from comforting analyses that committed social progress to allegedly empirical trends, be they kropotkinian evolutionary laws or marxist historical necessities. Malatesta held a realistic outlook on class consciousness formation. He realised that propaganda had limited power on masses constrained by harsh material conditions. At the same time, he did not expect capitalist development to create the proletariat as a revolutionary force, nor mere economic interests to unite the working class into a compact army.”

We do not bow down to Malatesta as some sort of tin idol; he had his faults, which should be recognised. But a false representation of his ideas does no favours to those anarcho-syndicalists who wish to argue against Malatesta’s ideas on specific anarchist political organisations and syndicalism. In the next issue of *Organise!* we will take a more in-depth look at Malatesta’s concepts of the relationship of conscious anarchist groups to mass organisation

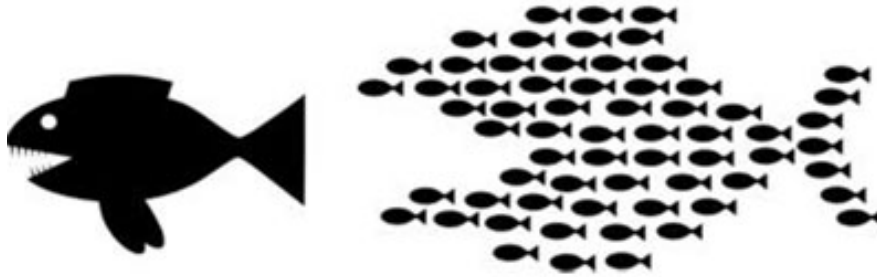
Further reading:

Malatesta: Life and Ideas . (ed) Vernon Richards
 Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta’s Experiments With Revolution. Davide Turcato.
 Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism. Paul McLaughlin.

Scott Nappalos’ full article can be found at: <http://libcom.org/library/anarchism-unions-critique-malatestas-ahistorical-perspective>



ORGANISE!



Anarchism and Organisation

Errico Malatesta

Organisation which is, after all, only the practice of cooperation and solidarity, is a natural and necessary condition of social life; it is an inescapable fact which forces itself on everybody, as much on human society in general as on any group of people who are working towards a common objective. Since humanity neither wishes to, nor can, live in isolation it is inevitable that those people who have neither the means, nor a sufficiently developed social conscience to permit them to associate freely with those of a like mind and with common interests, are subjected to the organisation by others, generally constituted in a class or as a ruling group, with the aim of exploiting the labor of others for their personal advantage. And the agelong oppression of the masses by a small privileged group has always been the result of the inability of the oppressed to agree among themselves to organise with others for production, for enjoyment and for the possible needs of defense against whoever might wish to exploit and

oppress them. Anarchism exists to remedy this state of affairs ...

Now, it seems to us that organisation, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A human being in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast, for they would be unable to obtain nourishment for themselves, except perhaps in tropical regions or when the population is exceptionally sparse; and they would be, without exception, unable to rise much above the level of an animal. Having therefore to join with other humans, or more accurately, finding themselves united to them as a consequence of the evolutionary antecedents of the species, they must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his/her will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity.

Admitting as a possibility the existence of a community organised without authority, that is without compulsion – and anarchists must admit the possibility, or anarchism would have no meaning – let us pass on to discuss the organisation of the anarchist movement.

In this case too, organisation seems useful and necessary. If a movement means the whole – individuals with a common objective which they exert themselves to attain – it is natural that they should agree among themselves, join forces, share out the tasks and take all those steps which they think will lead to the achievement of those objectives. To remain isolated, each individual acting or seeking to act on their own without coordination, without preparation, without their modest efforts to a strong group, means condemning oneself to impotence, wasting ones efforts in small ineffectual action, and to lose faith very soon in ones aims and possibly being reduced to complete inactivity.

A mathematician, a chemist, a psychologist or a sociologist may say they have no programme or are concerned only with establishing the truth. They seek knowledge, they are not seeking to do something. But anarchism and socialism are not sciences; they are proposals, projects, that anarchists and socialists seek to realize and which, therefore need to be formulated as definite programs.

If it is true that organisation creates leaders; if it is true that anarchists are unable to come together and arrive at an agreement without submitting themselves to an authority, this means that they are not yet very good anarchists, and before thinking of establishing an anarchist society within the world they must think of making themselves able to live anarchistically. The remedy does not lie in the abolition of organisation but in the growing consciousness of each individual member. In small as well as large societies, apart from brute force, of which it cannot be a question for us, the origin and justification for authority lies in social disorganisation.

When a community has needs and its members do not know how to organise spontaneously to provide them, someone comes forward, an authority who satisfies those needs by utilising the services of all and directing them to their liking. If the roads are unsafe and the people do not know what measures to take, a police force emerges which in return for whatever services it renders expects to be supported and paid, as well as imposing itself and throwing its weight around; if some article is needed, and the community does not know how to arrange with the distant producers to supply it in exchange for goods produced locally, the merchant will appear, who will profit by dealing with the needs of

one section to sell and of the other to buy, and impose his/her own prices both on the producer and the consumer. This is what has happened in our midst; the less organised we have been, the more prone are we to be imposed on by a few individuals. And this is understandable. So much so that organisation, far from creating authority, is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each one of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in the collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders.

But an organisation, it is argued, presupposes an obligation to coordinate ones own activities with those of others; thus it violates liberty and fetters initiative. As we see it, what really takes away liberty and makes initiative impossible is the isolation which renders it powerless. Freedom is not an abstract right but the possibility of acting; this is true among ourselves as well as society as a whole. And it is by cooperation with our fellow human beings that we find the means to express our activity and our power of initiative.

An anarchist organization must allow for complete autonomy, and independence, and therefore full responsibility, to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it useful to come together for cooperative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfill ones pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme. On such bases one then introduces practical forms and suitable instruments to give real life to the organisation. Thus the groups, the federation of groups, the federations of federations, meetings, congresses, correspondence committees and so on. But this also must be done freely, in such a way as not to restrict the thought and the initiative of individual members, but only to give

greater scope to the efforts which in isolation would be impossible or ineffective. Thus for an anarchist organisation congress, in spite of all the disadvantages from which they suffer as representative bodies, are free from authoritarianism in any shape or form because they do not legislate and do not impose their deliberations on others. They serve to maintain and increase personal contacts among the most active comrades, to summarize and encourage programmatic studies on the ways and means for action; to acquaint everybody with the situation in the regions and the kind of action most urgently needed; to summarise the various currents of anarchist opinions at the time and to prepare some kind of statistics therefrom. And their decisions are not binding, but simply suggestions, advice and proposals to submit to all concerned, and they do not become binding and executive except for those who accept them and for as long as they accept them. The administrative organs they nominate – Correspondence Commissions, etc. – have no directive powers, do not take initiatives except for those who specifically solicit and approve of them, and have no authority to impose their own views, which they can certainly hold and propagate as groups of comrades, but which cannot be presented as the official views of the organisation. They publish the resolutions of the congresses and the opinions and proposals communicated to them by groups and individuals; and they act for those who want to make use of them, to facilitate relations between groups, and cooperation between those who are in agreement on various initiatives; each is free to correspond with whoever he/she likes direct, or make use of the other committees nominated by specific groupings.

In an anarchist organisation individual members can express any

opinion and use every tactic which is not in contradiction with the accepted principles and does not interfere with the activities of others. In every case a particular organization lasts so long as the reasons for union are superior to those for dissension; otherwise it disbands and makes way for other, more homogenous groupings. Certainly the life and permanence of an organization is a condition for success in the long struggle before us, and besides, it is natural that every institution should by instinct aim at lasting indefinitely. But the duration of a libertarian organization must be the result of the spiritual affinity of its members and of the adaptability of its constitution to the continually changing circumstances. When it can no longer serve a useful purpose it is better that it should die.

We would certainly be happy if we could all get along well together and unite all the forces of anarchism in a strong movement; but we do not believe in the solidity of organizations which are built on concessions and assumptions and in which there is no real agreement and sympathy between members. Better disunited than badly united. But we would wish that each individual joined their friends and that there should be no isolated forces, or lost forces.

It remains for us to speak of the organization of the working and oppressed masses for resistance against both the government and the employers. Workers will never be able to emancipate themselves so long as they do not find in union the moral, economic and physical strength that is needed to subdue the organized might of the oppressors.

There have been anarchists, and there still are some, who while recognising the need to organise today for propaganda and action, are hostile to all organizations which do not have an-

archism as their goal or which do not follow anarchist methods of struggle. To those comrades it seemed that all organized forces for an objective less than radically revolutionary, were forces that the revolution was being deprived of. It seems to us instead, and experience has surely already confirmed our view, that their approach would condemn the anarchist movement to a state of perpetual sterility. To make propaganda we must be amongst the people, and it is in the workers' associations that workers find their comrades and especially those who are most disposed to understand and accept our ideas. But even when it is possible to do as much propaganda as we wished outside the associations, this could not have a noticeable effect on the working masses. Apart from a small number of individuals more educated and capable of abstract thought and theoretical enthusiasms, the worker cannot arrive at anarchism in one leap. To become a convinced anarchist, and not in name only, they must begin to feel the solidarity that joins them to their comrades, and to learn to cooperate with others in defense of common interests and that, by struggling against the bosses and against the government that supports them, should realize that bosses and governments are useless parasites and that the workers could manage the domestic economy by their own efforts. And when the worker has understood this, he or she is an anarchist even if they do not refer to themselves as such.

Furthermore, to encourage popular organizations of all kinds is the logical consequence of our basic ideas, and should therefore be an integral part of our programme. An authoritarian party, which aims at capturing power to impose its ideas, has an interest in the people remaining an amorphous mass, unable to act for themselves and therefore always

easily dominated. And it follows, logically, that it cannot desire more than that much organization, and of the kind it needs to attain power: Electoral organizations if it hopes to achieve it by legal means; Military organization if it relies on violent action. But we anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves. We do not believe in the good that comes from above and imposed by force; we want the new way of life to emerge from the body of the people and correspond to the state of their development and advance as they advance. It matters to us therefore that all interests and opinions should find their expression in a conscious organization and should influence communal life in proportion to their importance.

We have undertaken the task of struggling against existing social organization, and of overcoming the obstacles to the advent of a new society in which freedom and well being would be assured to everybody. To achieve this objective we organize ourselves and seek to become as numerous and as strong as possible. But if it were only our anarchist groupings that were organized; if the workers were to remain isolated like so many units unconcerned about each other and only linked by the common chain; if we ourselves besides being organized as anarchists in a federation, were not as workers organized with other workers, we could achieve nothing at all, or at most, we might be able to impose ourselves ... and then it would not be the triumph of anarchism, but our triumph. We could then go on calling ourselves anarchists, but in reality we should simply be rulers, and as impotent as all rulers are where the general good is concerned.

Syria: The Struggle Continues

Syria's grass-roots civil opposition

The following was written by Leila Shrooms, from Tahrir-International Collective Network, a group of Middle East anarchists.

The discourse on Syria has been dominated by discussions of militarisation, Islamisation, sectarianism and geopolitical concerns. Conversely there has been relatively little focus on Syria's grass roots civil opposition. This has led to a lack of knowledge outside of Syria for activists who want to stand in solidarity with Syria's revolutionaries but don't know where to start. This article attempts to provide an introduction to some of the many civil resistance initiatives taking place on the ground and efforts at revolutionary self-organisation. It is by no means a comprehensive overview.

It focuses on initiatives that are non-party political or religiously aligned. It must be remembered that prior to March 2011 there was not a functioning civil society in Syria as rights to free expression, assembly and association were highly restricted with severe consequences for those who failed to comply.

Who are the grass roots civil opposition?

The core of the grassroots civil opposition is the youth, mainly from the working and middle-classes, in which women and diverse religious and ethnic groups play active roles. Many of these activists remain non-affiliated to traditional political ideologies but are motivated by concerns for freedom, dignity, social justice and basic human rights.



Local committees and local councils

The main form of revolutionary organisation in Syria has been at the local level, through the work of local committees and local councils. These were influenced by the work of Syrian anarchist Omar Aziz. He argued that it was inconsistent for revolutionaries to participate in protests by day and then return to living within the hierarchical and authoritarian structures imposed by the state. Aziz believed that revolutionary activity should permeate all aspects of life and advocated for radical changes to social relationships and organisation. He called for autonomous, non-hierarchical organisation and self-governance, based of principles of cooperation, solidarity and mutual aid.

Together with comrades he founded the first local committee in Barzeh, Damascus.

Today hundreds of local committees/coordinations have been established in neighbourhoods and towns throughout the country. In the local committees revolutionary activists engage in multiple activities, from documenting and reporting on violations carried out by the regime (and increasingly elements of the opposition) to organising protests and civil disobedience campaigns (such as strikes and refusing to pay utility bills) and collecting and providing aid and humanitarian supplies to areas under bombardment or siege. They operate as horizontally organised, leaderless groups, made up of all segments of society. Whilst organising on the local level, they have built up networks of solidarity and mutual aid across the country.

At the city and district levels local councils have been established. There are 128 throughout Syria. They are often the primary civil administrative structure in areas liberated from the state, as well as some areas that remain under state control.

These ensure the provision of basic services, coordinate with the local committees, coordinate with armed resistance groups and maintain security. They mainly follow some form of representative democratic model and free local elections have occurred in areas where they have been established, something that has not happened in Syria under four decades of Baath rule. Some councils change their elected representatives every three months and there is no leader amongst them. As the humanitarian situation has deteriorated they have taken on an increasingly vital role but they face many challenges. The scarcity of resources has meant that some have had to suspend work, such as happened in Aleppo. In an appeal for support to local councils, human rights activist Razan Zaitouneh says “We cannot continue to demand local councils to play their role without support and employment plans that assist them to do the simplest actions helping civilians to survive under siege and shelling. These plans include providing potable water, collecting garbage from residential areas, and supporting projects that provide food from inside the besieged area exposed to hunger.” She also highlights that lack of resources make local councils susceptible to influence by armed groups and that help is needed for them “to be independent from supporting parties that try to arm the region to establish their authority on the ground, rather than enable [them] to have neutrality- as much as possible- and make independent decisions.” At least one Local Council in Manbej, Aleppo, suspended work in protest against the excess of the militant Jihadi group ISIS in the town. Some local councils have been more successful and inclusive than others which have been plagued by infighting or found themselves unable to displace the bureaucratic structures of the old regime.

Whilst the main basis of activity is very much at the local level, there are a number of different umbrella groups that have emerged to coordinate and network on the regional and national level. These include the Local Coordination Committees (LCC), National Action Committees (NAC), the Federation of the Coordination Committees of the Syrian Revolution (FCC) and the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC). None represent the totality of local committees/councils



and they have different organisational structures and differing levels of engagement or non-engagement with the formal political opposition. For example the Local Coordination Committees comprises 14 local committees. It is a decentralised network of youth activists from different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds that focuses on organising civil disobedience campaigns and doing media work and also provides humanitarian aid, such as the

distribution of food parcels and basic medical equipment for which it relies on individual donations. It is opposed to both local armed resistance and international military intervention. Though non politically aligned, it is one of the few grass-roots opposition groups that participates in the Syrian National Coalition (bourgeois opposition in exile). The LCC’s most recent campaign, following the chemical attack in Ghouta in August 2013, was denouncing chemical weapons use and calling on the United Nations to implement a full investigation and at the weekly protests participants carried signs with those messages on them. In July 2013 they ran a campaign calling on people not to deviate from the original goals of the revolution and condemning the actions of war lords which they said act solely for personal gain and have become as bad as the regime.

Syrian Revolutionary Youth Coalition

The Syrian Revolutionary Youth, founded on 1 May 2012, is comprised of young people who consider themselves leftists but are not affiliated to any political party. According to one of their members, “The revolution is largely spontaneous. It is not a revolution of political groups, a traditional opposition, or specific ideological groups ... we continue to work for the revolution as the whole, participating in demonstrations and in other forms of protest.” They focus their activity on promoting both the political goals of the revolution (the desire for freedom) with the socio-economic goals (social justice). They organise throughout the country, but their main presence is in Damascus and Homs. Women play an active role in the group’s activities and participate in protests.

Union of Free Syrian Students

Students have played a key role in the revolution and have organised protests on campus demanding the downfall of the regime since the first days of the uprising. Political organisation on campus (apart from the Baath Party) was banned by the regime, and students that have participated in the uprising have been persecuted by the security forces, with the collaboration of university authorities. Many were arrested and detained. For this reason students began to organise in secret and the Union of Free Syrian Students (UFSS) was formed in September 2011. Their founding statement lists their goals as being; to coordinate amongst students and universities, to organise peaceful demonstrations and strikes, to coordinate with unions, committees and other revolutionary groups and to work on building a civil, democratic and pluralistic state that ensures freedom, justice and equality for all citizens. The UFSS has organised many protests on campuses throughout the country, and especially at Aleppo university. They distribute information and have founded their own magazine called 'The Voice of the Free'. They document human rights violations carried out against students and campaign for the release of student detainees. They participated in many nationwide campaigns such as the campaign in solidarity with the female prisoners at Adra who went on hunger strike to protest their conditions of detention in July 2013. There are also other revolutionary unions such as the Union of Free Syrian Professors, the Union of Free Syrian Doctors and the Union of Free Syrian Artisans.

The Kurdish Youth Movement (TCK)

Syrian Kurds have suffered decades of denial of their political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as their right to self-determination at the hands of the Baath regime. The largest Kurdish youth group is the TCK. It was established in 2005, following the Kurdish uprising the previous year in which many were killed and more than 2 thousand were arrested by state security forces. The TCK advocates for human rights and justice for Kurds and for a federal solution for Syria's Kurdish population. The TCK has played an active role in anti-regime protests since the first days of the uprising. In recent weeks it has also been organising demonstrations against the Democratic Union Party (PYD) which is now the main party in control of the Kurdish areas, in protest of the PYD's authoritarian policies, including arrests of Kurdish youth activists. Kurdish youth activists participate in the activities of local committees, have established their own committees in Kurdish areas, and play an active role in other grass roots opposition initiatives. Recently protests have been held in Aleppo, in which hundreds of Kurds and Arabs participated calling for unity and condemning the recent atrocities carried out by militant Jihadi groups against the Kurdish population.

Newspapers, Magazines and Social Media

Prior to the revolution there were severe restrictions placed on media and the right to information. Only three government controlled newspapers existed and the internet was highly restricted and use monitored. These factors led the Committee to Protect Journalists naming Syria as the third most censored country in the world with one of the highest number of

arrests for bloggers. Today, an independent media is flourishing with 59 revolutionary newspapers and magazines. For example, 'Oxygen' a weekly magazine established by youth in Zabadani, publishes articles about the Syrian uprising and peaceful resistance, promotes 'revolutionary ethics' and members collectively decide on content. Another magazine 'Local Grapes' was established by women in Daraya, near Damascus, which targets those who don't have internet and is distributed on the street. A number of radio stations have been established such as Radio ANA and Free Yabroud Radio. Citizen journalism has flourished such as the Photography from Lens Youth which is a network of photography collectives existing in different cities to document life and war in Syria. Kayani project is one of a number of independent media projects which produces short documentaries about Syria's revolutionary movement with English subtitles. Qama (wheat) is a group of citizen journalists who focus on building Syrian society rather than the revolution. They say, "Change stems from society, and not from replacing political and military authorities with other political and military authorities. Revolutions must end eventually, but societies live on." They produce animated videos and radio programs to promote civil disobedience, non-violent resistance strategies, and civil rights. In one campaign, they dyed the fountains of Damascus red to symbolise lives lost during the uprising. They also held campaigns to promote respect for all religions and put an end to incitement to revenge and hate speech. They are self-funded and rely on the work of volunteers to maintain their independence.

Other non-violence civil resistance groups

Freedom Days: Is a collective established in October 2011 that brought together a number of non-violent groups including the Local Coordination Committees, Syrian Non-Violence Movement, Nabd and the Syrian People Know their Way. It aims to overthrow authoritarian rule and establish a civil state through civil non-violent resistance and is the largest non-violence initiative in Syria. One of their most important contributions to the Syrian Uprising was the Dignity Strike held between 14 and 30 December 2012. It comprised a number of components:

14-16 December: Roads and streets were closed and people did not go to work between midday and 6pm

16-20 December: Strikes in stores and shops

21-23 December: Strike at universities

24-26 December: Roads connecting the city and countryside were closed

27-29 December: Strike by civil servants

30 December until demands (the end of the regime) were met: Ongoing civil disobedience.

It was the first general strike held in four decades of Baath rule. Unions are dominated by the Baath party and a climate of fear had previously prevented worker's organisation apart from very few localised strikes. The Dignity Campaign was advertised on social media and through SMS messaging. It was an overwhelming success in terms of participation. The LCC documented more than 600 places which participated in the strike and it was observed across 10 governorates. A large section of the economy was paralyzed.

The response of the regime was brutal. Arrests were wide-spread and government troops attacked those

that participated in the strike, burning down 178 shops in the city of Deraa and a factory in Aleppo. Security forces damaged shops which participated in the strike. In the following two months Assad closed 187 factories and laid off more than 85,000 workers (according to official figures) in an attempt to crush the protest movement. It didn't succeed and Freedom Days has continued its work. Recent examples include publishing information on how to overcome the loss of a loved one or stay safe during an airstrike, establishing assemblies to plan community-based initiatives, organising cleaning campaigns in destroyed areas, protesting against militant Jihadi groups and religious extremism and supporting initiatives for co-existence.

Nabd (Pulse): Is an organisation established to fight both against the regime and against all forms of discrimination including on religious, ethnic or gender grounds, reinforce the diversity of Syrian society and promote peaceful coexistence. It is one of the largest civil groups in Syria, established in June 2011. Nabd organises protests which include members of all sects particularly in secular strongholds and mixed communities such as Homs, Yabroud, Salamiyeh and Zabadani. Nabd activists from minority groups such as Alawite and Ismaili communities also smuggle humanitarian aid and supplies into areas under siege. Nabd also reaches out to people that are pro-regime. A recent demonstration they organised was on 23 August in Homs and Salamyah, protesting the chemical attacks in Ghouta.

Conclusion

Syria's grassroots, civil resistance lives on, despite the increased militarisation of what is now, not only

a revolutionary struggle, but also a brutal conflict between an increasing number of actors. This article has outlined just a few of the many revolutionary initiatives that are currently ongoing. Most of those mentioned above have a nationwide reach, but there are also hundreds of other initiatives happening on the local level as people try to organise both the continuation of revolutionary activity and their lives in areas where the state has collapsed. Undoubtedly such initiatives are the most positive thing to have emerged from the Arab Spring and they have provided hope and energy to a generation which was born and raised under repression. But the civil resistance faces many challenges. It is now fighting on numerous levels; against a tyrannical regime, against militant Jihadi groups, against increasing divisions within Syrian society. As the humanitarian and security situation has worsened, many civil initiatives have had to scale back their work or switched from revolutionary activities to providing humanitarian assistance. Some have had to stop organising altogether. Most of all these initiatives lack the support and solidarity, from outside Syria, that is needed for them to continue, threatening all hope for a future that is brighter than the present.

For full notes and sources for this article visit
<http://tahriricn.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/syria-the-struggle-continues-syrias-grass-roots-civil-opposition/>

Statement from the Libertarian Socialist Movement (Egypt)

The text below does not take into account the Army takeover in detail, but gives a libertarian perspective on events leading up to the coup. The army was as much concerned, if not more so, in heading off a wave of popular action, as they were in muzzling the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been conveniently used as a pretext to silence the movement on the streets and in the workplaces.

More than two years after the fall of Mubarak, the political situation is a fool's game between predators: the Muslim Brotherhood, the institutional opposition and the army. The economic situation is the archetype of neoliberal disaster. In response, social struggles are self-organising and trying to break the cynicism of politicians and state repression.

The neoliberal zeal of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is a secret to no one. The latest to date, Morsi's support for the celebrated businessman Amer Fajr. He had indeed requested arbitration (read: support) of the state after the "blackmail" of striking workers at the Fajr Allah factories last February. Nothing surprising about that: we still remember the famous words of Hassan Malek, a businessman and a major figure of the Muslim Brotherhood, who to give evidence of good conduct to Uncle Sam, told the American Chamber of Commerce that "the former regime did not make the wrong choice in economic policy, but the policy was poorly implemented."

The neoliberal arsenal therefore continues to rage, and state repression practiced diligently against any attempt for demands from all the Egyptian working class.

Between neoliberalism and state repression

Overwhelming evidence again of the full power of the army: the theft of Qursaya island by the army, with the blessing of the constitution concocted by the Muslim Brotherhood. The



police are not left out either: it reinforced the iron hand with which it held major cities during the Mubarak era, and has largely targeted popular discontent since the beginning of the protest against the deposed president. This iron hand meant an active carrying out of massive and targeted arrests of political activists, as well as violent actions against strike pickets across the country.

In such a situation, the forces of institutional opposition are limited to a "realistic" analysis and "pragmatic" response to power, and thus shape the legitimacy of the latter. Ultimately, these politicians' calcula-

tions reflect the fierce power struggle between coalitions.

Popular protest

The popular response to this situation is found in examples such as that of Port Said. The city has since the beginning of 2013 seen a bubbling up of unprecedented protest, where protest turned into a broad movement of general civil disobedience.

The political and economic marginalisation of the city by the central government since the fall of Mubarak, the passivity of the army and its role in the drama of the Port Said Stadium in February 2012, and the convictions of the city youth as scapegoats of this drama, pushed the population of Port Said to actively take control of their city. First action: hunting down of all police units and the creation of defence units in neighbourhoods. The measures

that followed revealed a developing spirit of self-management. Thus, the "official" schools were boycotted, and parents and teachers began to implement new educational media and a school curriculum relevant to the city. Obviously, the bills received by the State ceased to be paid, and all taxes. Whether in Port Said in Egypt and elsewhere, the struggles of the Egyptian people cannot be reduced to a demand for bread from the hungry classes; through their practices, they express a desire for freedom that makes us take example.

Libertarian Socialist Movement (Egypt) translated from Arabic by Marouane Taharouri

Culture Article:

Henri Edmond Cross: Painter of Utopia

“Of all of Seurat’s disciples, he was the one with the liveliest imagination, the deepest feeling and the most accomplished spirit.”

- Emile Verhaeren

Organise! has featured a series of articles on artists who identified strongly with the anarchist movement. There have been articles in its pages on Pissarro, Signac, Luce, Steinlen, and Delannoy. This time we look at the work of the French painter Henri Edmond Cross.

Henri Edmond Delacroix was born at Douai in northern France on May 20th 1856, into a well off family of shopkeepers. A cousin, who was a doctor, noticed his interest in painting and helped him, even paying for his first drawing lessons. He went on to attend art school in Lille.

At first he painted in a realist style. Not wanting to be mistaken for the famous painter Delacroix, and with his English mother in mind, he changed his name to Cross, the English translation of the “croix” component of his surname.

In 1883 he took a trip to the southeastern corner of France and painted many landscapes. It was on this trip

that he met the painter Paul Signac, who became his friend and was later to have a deep influence on him, both artistically and politically.

In the following year he co-



founded the Société des Artistes Indépendants (Society of Independent Artists), which revolted against the hidebound traditionalism of the official Salon and organised its own exhibitions. There he met many members of the Neo-Impressionists,

like Georges Seurat and Charles Angrand. However he continued to paint in a style influenced by Manet. Gradually, his colours became lighter and brighter, inspired as he was by the sunny landscapes of southern

France, where he wintered every year because of his chronic rheumatism. By the late 1880s he was painting landscapes influenced by Monet and Pissarro.

He moved full-time to southern France in 1891 because of his illness and began to paint in a neo-Impressionist style. Here he was visited by the art critic Félix Fénéon, and by the painters Théo Van Rysselberghe and Paul Signac among others. It was significant that all three were very much identified with the anarchist movement in France. His first painting in this style was a portrait of his future wife, executed in the divisionist style, where colours are separated into dots and brush strokes.

Fénéon had become director of an art gallery, and he helped his friend and comrade by organising exhibitions and publishing his sketch books after his death.

Like the other artists that Cross exhibited with - Luce, Petitjean, La Rochefoucauld, Van Rysselberghe, Signac, Angrand, Seurat and the two sons of Pissarro, - he had become an

anarchist and subscribed to the ideas of the anarchist theorist Kropotkin. They believed that science and technology would help liberate humanity both materially and spiritually. He painted landscapes where human figures blend with nature in harmony. He evoked a future anarchist utopia in these paintings. As he said: "I want to paint happiness; happy beings that men (sic) will become in a few centuries when pure anarchy will have been realised". Signac had already painted a vast canvas depicting this future society first entitled *Au Temps d'Anarchie* (In The Time of Anarchy) and then *Au temps D'Harmonie* (In the Time of Harmony). Carefree work for the good of the community, free love, and the joys of doing nothing are depicted. Cross undertook a similar painting with his *L'Air du Soir* (The Evening Air) in 1894.

Like the other painters mentioned

above, Cross contributed to the anarchist movement by donating illustrations to the anarchist paper, *Les Temps Nouveaux* (New Times), edited by Jean Grave. He provided the cover illustration for the pamphlet, *À Mon Frère le Paysan* (To My Brother The Peasant), written by the anarchist theorist and activist Élisée Reclus in 1899. The following year he did the same for Jean Grave's booklet, *Enseignement Bourgeois et Enseignement Libertaire* (Bourgeois Education and Libertarian Education). He provided an illustration for the book of lithographs published by *Les temps Nouveaux* in 1905 and a drawing for the book, *Patriotisme, Colonisation*.

However, he was conflicted by the need to provide propagandist illustrations and his reservations about compromising his artistic ideas, feeling constrained by the nature of the pieces he offered. This did not stop

him on several occasions donating his works as prizes in fund raising lotteries for *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

Cross's health was worsening, with increasingly poor eyesight and painful arthritis, and he died on the 16th May 1910 of cancer at the age of fifty four. His fellow anarchist painter Van Rysselberghe provided a medallion for his tomb.

Signac saw him as an 'impassive and consistent thinker, who is simultaneously a passionate and strange dreamer'. Cross, despite his painful illnesses, had revelled in the joy of painting and appreciation of great art works. His sensuous painting exerted an influence on a new generation of painters like Kandinsky, Derain and Matisse. Unlike Signac, whose children promoted and preserved his works, Cross had no such help and after his death his paintings were scattered.



Henri Cross's "The Evening Air" - showing a libertarian future

“I come to you like the beggar man...”

A review of Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*

As part of our utopia theme, we’ve included a new review of an old classic of the anarchist utopian genre.

When I first sat down to write this review all I could think of saying was along the lines of “The Dispossessed is about two worlds divided by a wall, and what it means to be a beggar on either side of this divide. Go read it!” Unfortunately that isn’t much of a review, but with that in mind...

The *Dispossessed* is a work of speculative science fiction exploring two different societies living in orbit to one another:

Urras. The Blue-Green world of plenty. This is a world of class, a world of division. The place where the rich are rich and the poor are poor. Where workers take the brunt from the bosses wars and wants, no matter if the boss claims to be a capitalist or a communist. It is our world presented to us in another name.

Anarres. A moon colony of idealistic anarchists in exile. Now several generations old, it sits in isolation from the rest of humanity and the worlds beyond. Life here is tough and resources are scarce. When crops fail or disaster strikes the hardships leave deep scars against the egalitarian psyche. Although the ideals of anarchism are spoken of, the local conditions are helping the world sleepwalk into bureaucratic syndicalism that sacrifices individual will to the collective.

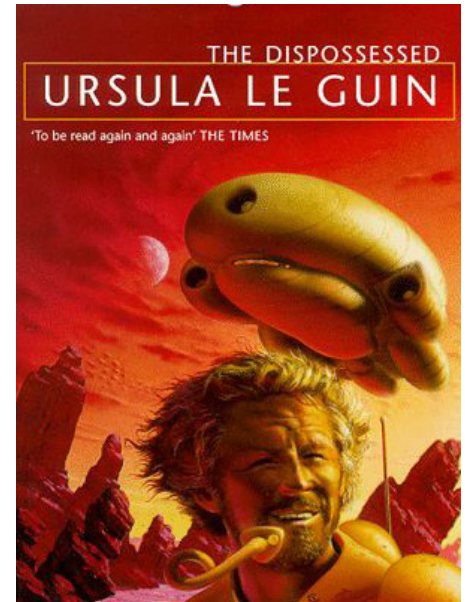
Each is presented in a spiral of op-

pressive behaviours, each holding the redemptive key to the other’s doom. The spirit of Anarres shows what can be achieved if society is reordered along the principles of horizontal organisation, free association, solidarity and mutual aid. The resources of Urras can break the bane of economic scarcity that is choking anarchism to death in the face of collective survival.

The opening of the book presents to us a wall.

The wall keeps one world in. The same wall keeps the other world out. This applies no matter which side of the divide you look from and it is this wall – constructed not only of stone but of the material conditions of the two societies – that is examined in great detail. Le Guin does not present this in dry terms however. Her deft characterisation of Shevek, our ideal anarchist cypher and lead character, is able to explore and reveal to us the words as they are lived, rather than simply providing us with dry exposition or simple narrator-descriptions, which could be read but not felt. Alien planets beyond the entwined orbit of Anarres and Urras give warnings of other possible futures. Terra has been destroyed by self-created environmental catastrophe. Hain shows a disinterested world dying in spirit due to a lack of creative passion. The wall that separates and acts as the doom of Anarres and Urras is shown to also be the foundation to the downfall of these not-so-distant places.

A special note must be made towards the use of language to convey



the morals, philosophy, thought and behaviours of the people of Anarres. Their language sets up what they can or can’t put into words and communicate and commonly conceive. These altered boundaries of consciousness let us understand for ourselves in the way their society behaves, and in doing so invites the reader to think in a different way, one that goes out-with those presented in the mainstream of our day-to-day lives. In short, it is consciousness raising.

Like the anarchist ideals the book so deftly explores, the story itself does not leave us with an ending so much as a staging point for our own journey. To use the ideas of the books, it comes to you like a beggar man, relying on you for all that it requires and leaving you enriched by realising you would be better with nothing but what you carry as long as all needs are met. By the end of reading it I was stood at the wall between two worlds with the choice over whether I help to dismantle it, and by choosing to do so build a greater whole.

Review

Carlo Tresca: portrait of a rebel.

Nunzio Pernicone

387 pages. AK Press. £14.00

“I declare that bourgeois society must be changed by attacking the pillars that support it. A revolution is needed to change it, not a fascist revolution that is regressive and reactionary, but a proletarian revolution, one of slaves against slavers, of civilisation against obscurantism. I declare that I feel my spirit and strength reinvigorated every time the interests of reaction attack me with their persecution. I affirm my libertarian faith”.

- Speech by Tresca in 1925

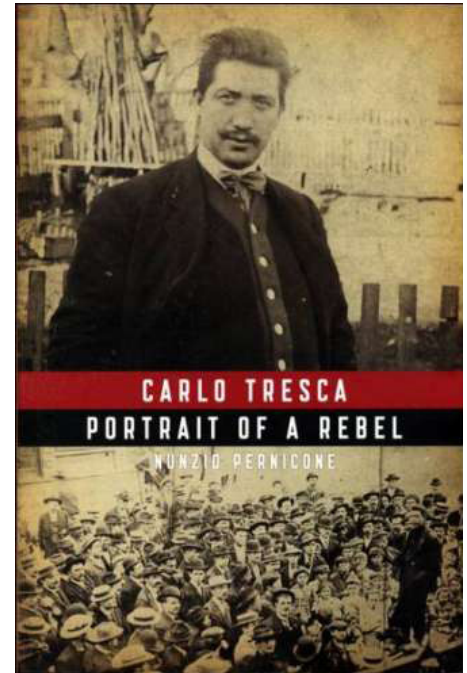
Nunzio Pernicone, the author of this book died of cancer on May 30th 2013. He was a colleague of the late Paul Avrich, and like Avrich contributed much to historical research of anarchism. His other major work, *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* appeared in 1993. This particular volume is an expanded and corrected version of the first 2003 edition. It involved many years of research tracing obscure old Italian immigrant anarchist militants in the United States.

In some ways this book is a tribute to Pernicone's father, a great admirer of Tresca. Salvatore Pernicone imparted anarchist ideas to his son, and was an actor and director in various amateur theatre groups that put on plays as benefits for Italian-American radical papers that included Tresca's *Il Martello*. Indeed some of the plays that were performed in the 1920s and 1930s were written by Carlo Tresca himself.

Carlo Tresca was born in Sulmona in the Abruzzo region of Italy. He

was the sixth of eight children unto a well-off family which owned land and a carting business and stationery shop. However an economic slump in the 1890s effected the fortunes of the family. His older brother Ettore became a doctor and joined the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) after witnessing the appalling health and living conditions of many workers and peasants. Carlo himself had by the age of fifteen developed an intense hatred of the Catholic Church and began to engage in anti-clerical activity. He then began attending PSI meetings where he met many rail workers, Sulmona having developed into a major rail centre in the Abruzzo in this period. By 1902 Tresca was propagandising for the PSI among the artisans of Sulmona. He followed this up with organising drives among the peasants in the surrounding area. He capped his reputation by giving the final speech on the May Day rally that year. His talents as organiser and orator were being honed by his activity, and soon he received a sentence of thirty days for his socialist activity. He aggravated the situation by calling the carabinieri captain who had arrested him a drunk, who had arrested him to please the city's "cancerous criminal clique", ending up serving seventy days.

He now applied his skills to radical journalism, working on a local socialist paper and finally being brought up on a charge of insulting the army. He had now attracted the enmity of a local baron, who sued him for libel. Tresca had few illusions that he would be convicted for this, and in Italy at the time this meant five years in prison and a heavy fine. He



decided to emigrate to the USA.

He arrived in New York in August 1904. Here he involved himself with the immigrant Italian socialist movement. He stood on its revolutionary wing. Very soon he became editor of its paper, *Il Proletario*. He perfected the agitational literary skills he had developed in Italy, attacking the Catholic Church and the consular representatives of the Italian state, accusing them of parasitism and corruption.

Tresca's exposure to the Sulmona rail workers had developed a taste for direct action among Italian workers. He involved himself in a hat makers strike, delivering fiery speeches on the picket line. By now, he was following the development of revolutionary syndicalism in Italy, which spread its ideas to the Italian American community. He agreed with the statement that "five minutes of direct action were worth as many years of parliamentary chatter". Another development was the emergence of the industrial unionist Industrial Work-

ers of the World (IWW). Tresca welcomed its development and became a very visible supporter, although curiously he never actually joined it. He did publicly declare himself a revolutionary syndicalist.

By now, the reformists among the Socialists were tiring of his revolutionary ideas. He had tried to establish an alliance with the Italian American anarchists but as the result of an incident between the two currents, Tresca was meant to attack the anarchists in the pages of *Il Proletario*. He declined to do so and was forced to resign in 1906. He resigned from the Italian socialist section itself after the vicious attacks on him by the reformist leadership. He now launched an independent paper *La Plebe*.

In this period he suffered a first attempt on his life when a small-time Mafiosi tried to slit his throat, most likely under contract from an owner of a conservative Italian newspaper.

Tresca went on to taking a leading role in the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, organised by the IWW. He went on to take part in further strikes throughout the USA, including two textile workers strikes, a hotel workers strike, and a miners' strike. He was always fearless and was arrested several times. He carried on anti-militarist agitation through a new paper *L'Avvenire* (The future) and was fiercely opposed to the First World War. The authorities closed down the paper when the U.S. entered the war in 1917. A massive repression began against members of the IWW and against anarchists. Tresca was arrested along with the IWW leadership, even though he now felt lukewarm about the IWW because of "centralising tendencies" initiated by Big Bill Haywood. In the end the charges were dismissed, but Tresca narrowly avoided imprisonment and/or deportation. Whilst by now Tresca had

increasingly anarchist convictions, he did not profess them openly and underlined the point that his new paper, *Il Martello* (The Hammer), was an independent voice. This won him no friends around the anarchist current organised around Luigi Galleani. Whilst professing anarchist-communism, they were strongly opposed to effective organisation, sneered at involvement in workplace agitation which they dismissed as reformist, and adopted the use of armed force, engaging in bombings and bank robberies. They felt that Tresca should have openly expressed his anarchism and to prove it should have risked deportation. Tresca tried at first to get along with this current, but faced growing denunciations from them.

In 1923 he printed an ad for a birth control pamphlet in his new paper *Il Martello*. For this he received a prison sentence of a year and a day!

He became a driving force in stopping the growth of fascism amongst the Italian immigrant population. He actually forged an alliance with some

of the Galleanists, and between 1923 and 1924 anarchists were in the forefront of anti-Fascist activity, along with old allies from the IWW. Tresca also became involved in the defence of the Galleanist anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, who were eventually murdered by the State on flimsy charges. There though, Tresca faced Galleanist suspicion (although Vanzetti himself sent him a letter of thanks for his defence work).

In 1926 Tresca narrowly avoided death at a rally as the result of a bomb, which prematurely exploded and killed all three of the fascist bombers. The anti-fascist agitation eventually led to the dissolving of the Mussolini-sponsored Fascist League in 1929.

He was now gaining other enemies. He had at first welcomed the Russian Revolution, however it soon became apparent that the Soviet Union was nowhere near the ideals of socialism and anarchism, and he became a staunch opponent of the Communist Party. They turned on him and launched vicious attacks in



Massachusetts militiamen with fixed bayonets surround a group of strikers at the Lawrence textile strike of 1912

their newspapers. He served on the Dewey Commission which exonerated Trotsky of all charges from the Moscow show trials. He accused the Soviet secret police of the disappearance of Juliet Poyntz, who had been involved in the Soviet underground apparatus in the USA, and disgusted by the situation in Russia, was now preparing to issue a denunciation and publish a book on her experiences in both the US and Russia. Indications are that she was murdered by NKVD agents and buried in the woods near New York.

Tresca had to face the combined attacks of both Communists and Galleanists. When Armando Borghi, one of the chief proponents of the organisational anarchist communism of Errico Malatesta and who had been a leading light in the Italian syndicalist union USI, came to the USA, he foolishly took the side of the Galleanists. From house arrest in Italy Malatesta pleaded for these vicious polemics against Tresca to cease.

By now, other enemies of Tresca were becoming more concerned about his activities. He had been opposed to the Mafia from soon after his arrival in America. Now he began a public campaign against them in Il Martello. On January 11th 1943 Tresca was shot dead by an unknown gunman as he was crossing Fifth Avenue.

Was it the NKVD who had ordered his death? Was it the work of Mussolini's secret police? Pernicone and others believe that it was in fact a hit ordered by a Mafia notable, Frank Garafolo. Undoubtedly Tresca's fearlessness resulted in his death, whoever was responsible.

Pernicone paints a warts and all portrait of Tresca, examining his colourful love life, and his sometimes dubious use of funds. He broke a tenet of anarchism that one should never provide information to the government when he testified to the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney about

Poyntz. Many U.S. anarchists, not just the Galleanists, were shocked by this act, and many old friends and comrades broke off relations with him after this. Equally Tresca's anti-Fascism in the end led him to support for the Allies in the Second World War, though he qualified this with the hope that a social revolution would break out at the end of the war. As Pernicone asks: "Did Tresca not see the contradiction between these two objectives? Did he seriously believe in the possibility of a social revolution emerging from the war, or was he merely engaging in formulaic anarchist rhetoric?"

This book describes a fascinating and larger than life individual, in the process shedding light on the state of the Italian-American anarchist movement, a movement crippled by vicious personal polemics and rivalries, and by a failure to go beyond either anti-organisational Galleanist insurrectionism on one hand and ad hoc labour organising on the other.

Spanish Civil War Tour, Barcelona ***Three Hours for €20/€10 (U15s)/Free (U11s)***

I really don't want to spoil anything, however this three-hour winding route through the heart of Barcelona at the time of the revolution is an absolute must. The tour begins in the (usually) sun-drenched Playa de Catalonia. This large circular plaza is both the heart of the city and was site where the CNT led defence of Barcelona was victorious, and thus the point from which the revolutionary Catalan defence rippled out from. It also acts to set the scene of the forces at play with the Communist Party HQ to one side, and the telephone exchange that was key to the CNT on the other.

The tour then walks down the famous tourist thoroughfare of La Ramblas before winding through the

narrow streets and alleyways of the gothic city. Use of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* along with the photography, artwork and music of the time helped to give a vibrancy and relevance to the whole experience while Nick Lloyd, a Londoner who has lived in Barcelona for many years now, acted as the perfect tour guide who's wealth of knowledge is evident.

The tour comes to an end almost where it began, but with the flow of events having already turned sour for



the revolution and an overview of the fascist victory and what it has meant for Catalan and Spanish culture as a whole being touched upon before a more up-beat Q&A session over a light lunch in La Libertaria bar.

The flow of the tour mirrored the

flow of events during the revolution, letting the facts and events speak for themselves. You start in the bright sun and the warmth of revolution, move through the winding paths of war and uncertainty, then at the harsh acts of counter-revolution, before being able to reflect upon the lessons of the city's past and look towards a better tomorrow.

Letters

Dear Organise!

I went into Waterstone's bookshop the other day and there on display - no less! Was John P. Clark's recent text *The Impossible Community: Re-aliasing Communitarian Anarchism* (Bloomsbury 2013).

The book consists of a useful, worthwhile and engaging collection of essays, mostly on substantive philosophical issues relating to anarchism, that is libertarian socialism. But sadly John Clark seems distant to distance himself from his early mentor, and several essays display a marked tendency to denigrate and decry the work of Murray Bookchin.

With little real acknowledgement, Clark embraces much of Bookchin's own legacy, specifically relating to Bookchin's advocacy of social ecology, dialectical analysis and social anarchism (or communalism). Clark, however, does not merely engage in a scholarly critique of Bookchin's oeuvre - a perfectly legitimate exercise - but rather never loses an opportunity to discredit, belittle or defame Bookchin as an abstract theorist, and as quite incapable (unlike Clark!) of understanding the profundity of Nietzsche's (utterly reactionary!) philosophy.

Take, for example, Clark's discussion

of Barcelona is hot, so take water and snacks, and not all locations are wheelchair accessible. Though I didn't have time, there is a six hour version of the tour that takes in more locations and has a deeper look at the cultural echoes of the civil war still heard in the city today. I can't recommend going on this tour enough. The guide is vibrant and knowledgeable, shining a new light

of Bookchin's well-known critique of radical individualism: *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (1995). This discussion can only be described as a complete fabrication and misrepresentation of Bookchin's anarchism. For Bookchin in his polemics made a radical dichotomy between radical individualism and social anarchism, not, as Clark quite falsely contends, between freedom and social solidarity.

Social anarchism, as for the libertarian communists Bakunin and Kropotkin, entailed a unity of liberty and equality, liberalism and socialism, freedom (and self-realisation) and social solidarity. This was encapsulated by Bookchin in the concept of social freedom. Bookchin's social anarchism, otherwise known as libertarian socialism or anarchist communism, is thus wilfully distorted by Clark.

As anarchy (and anarchism) had, in the United States at least, come to be identified with primitivism and radical individualism - whether that of the anarcho-capitalists (Murray Rothbard), Stirnerite individualists (Jason McQuinn) or Nietzschean aesthetes and post-ideologists (Hakim Bey), Bookchin in his last years renounced the term "anarchism" and embraced instead that of

on popular city locations and makes use of superb handouts, photos and music to set the mood. The Q&A at a CNT run bar surround by period photos and art is an amazing way to end the experience.

<http://iberianature.com/barcelona/history-of-barcelona/spanish-civil-war-tour-in-barcelona/>

"communalism" - by which he meant, of course, libertarian socialism, or anarchism, as understood by generations of radical anarchists, past and present.

Clark, however, in contrast, putting a new label on an old wine bottle - in typical academic fashion - describes the anarchism of Kropotkin and Reclus as "communitarian anarchism". Attempting to maintain his distance from Bookchin, Clark therefore makes a rather facile and unwarranted dichotomy between libertarian socialism and communitarian anarchism.

It is rather a pity that Clark does not engage with Bookchin in a more appreciative, scholarly and dialectical fashion - though in a footnote he does admit that he was attempting to re-affirm Bookchin's "vision". He has an odd way of going about it!

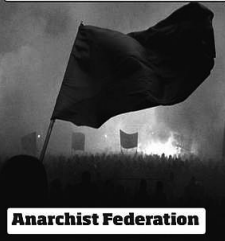
Few social anarchists, of course, have embraced Bookchin's libertarian municipalism as a political strategy - or insurrectionism, for that matter - but this is no reason for denigrating his legacy in the manner of this rather ungracious philosopher, who like every media celebrity these days, proclaims his "activism" from the roof tops!

Brian Morris

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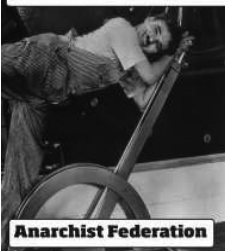
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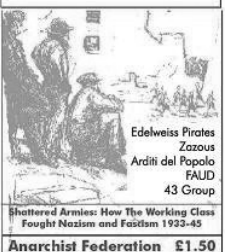


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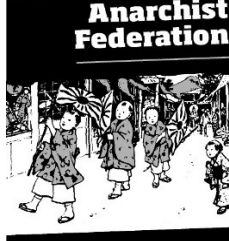


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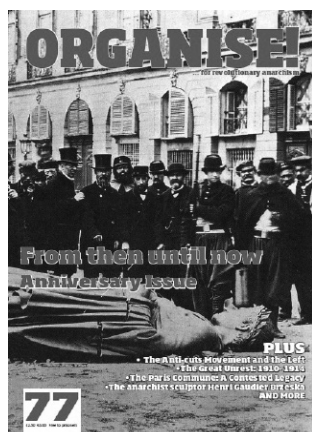


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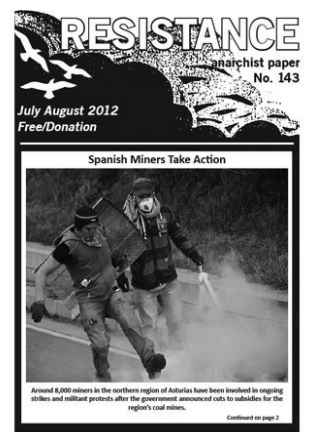
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Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

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

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

3 We believe that fighting systems of oppression that divide the working class, such as racism and sexism, is essential to class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while these inequalities still exist. In order to be effective in our various struggles against oppression, both within society and within the working class, we at times need to organise independently as people who are oppressed according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. We do this as working class people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for us. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

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

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

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

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot

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

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

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

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