

Red & Black Revolution

A magazine of libertarian communism



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Anarchism



building a sane society in a barbarous world

inside



Islam
an anarchist view

Direct action
against the war in Ireland



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If you would like to help out in this work there are a couple of things you can do. One option is to subscribe to the magazine. Another is to take a number of copies of each issue to sell. We are always looking for bookshops or stalls that will sell this magazine on a commercial basis.

Our time and resources are limited and at times of busy activity our publications, including this one, are often delayed. So any help that you can offer would be a real help in getting our ideas out to a wider audience. If you want to help out, get in touch at the address below.

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Hi there and welcome to Red & Black Revolution 7.

In this issue of the magazine, we continue our tradition of dealing with the pressing issues of the day for anarchists and libertarians, and for all who are seriously interested in bringing about a new society. We also continue to provide a space for non-members of the Workers Solidarity Movement who wish to contribute to the development of the theory and practice needed to bring about that new anarchist society.

We are pleased to carry articles by a member of the North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) in relation to the future of the Black Bloc and related issues, and by a member of Doctors For Choice (writing in a personal capacity) on abortion rights (or the lack of them!) in Ireland. As we have said before, we want this magazine to be a forum for debate and we welcome contributions from other anarchists. So if you have something to contribute - either in relation to any of the articles in this issue or on any other topic of interest to anarchists - please get in touch.

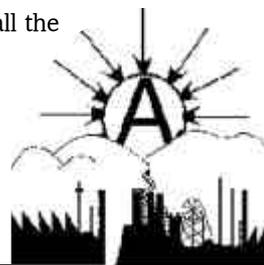
It is in looking at the lessons of the past and the present that we can develop theory and practice for the future. In this issue, we look at one of the most successful periods of anarchist history - the Spanish revolution - and, specifically, at how the workers' collectives in Spain were organised. Their success and the success of anarchism at that time remains a beacon of hope for the future. We also carry an article which argues that, if we want to create socialism it will have to be based on voluntary cooperation, not State power

In addition, we carry articles which analyse and comment on some of the ongoing issues which face the movement today. The Black Bloc tactic, the future development of the anti-capitalist movement and the links between its global and local elements are looked at.

One of the consequences of capitalist globalisation and of the 'War on Terror' has been a further tightening of border controls as Western governments build more and more barriers - both real and metaphorical - against the free movement of people. While anarchists are obviously opposed to all forms of immigration control, we don't always have all the arguments to answer the fears and worries of working class people when the right wingers issue their dire warnings about 'floods' and 'waves' of immigrants coming to take all our jobs and houses. In reviewing a book which argues the case against immigration control, we hope to provide some more of the necessary arguments for facing down such nonsense.

Islamic fundamentalism has emerged as the new 'bogeyman' and the excuse for the aggression of Western governments in their so-called 'War on Terror' in the wake of the September 11th attacks on the USA. The response of large parts of the left to the fundamentalists has been to adopt a 'softly softly' approach. In an article here however we argue that our enemies' enemy isn't necessarily our friend. We also take a look at the Irish anti-war movement during the 2003 gulf war. We carry two articles; one concentrates on the direct action movement, while the other looks at the political failure of the leaders of the mainstream anti-war movement.

We don't expect that any article will provide all the answers, but we do hope that the articles we carry will be thought-provoking and will contribute to the further development of the movement. Above all, we want the articles here to contribute to the development of a theory which when put into practice will lead us forward to a new, free, anarchist society.



if you want to create Socialism it must be based on Freedom

The terms socialism and communism are often associated with the murderous dictatorships set up by the Bolsheviks in Russia and later copied by their followers all over the world. Although these State socialists talked of creating a free and equal communist society, their authoritarian methods ensured that they ended up creating the opposite, a totalitarian nightmare. Anarchists also seek to create communism. But for us freedom plays a central role, not only in the future society, but in how we try to get there. That is why, when we talk of communism, we talk of libertarian communism.

by James O' Brien

Simply put, libertarian communism is where everybody has an equal say in making decisions that affect them and where everybody is assured of equal access to the benefits of society. It's summed up in the old phrase "from each according to ability, to each according to needs."

Liberty without socialism?

The shortcomings of liberty when one does not have the material ability to participate in that liberty are obvious. What's the use of being nominally free if you can't afford the healthcare to stay alive and enjoy it? Socialism would ensure that everyone was free, not just the wealthy.

Socialism without liberty?

Bakunin said, "Socialism without liberty would be brutality and slavery." He was referring to the prospect of centralised state socialism, specifically Marxism, which he foresaw would result in a totalitarian society, one of the social sciences' more impressive predictions. A society that doesn't allow the free development of individuals is not worth fighting for.



Anarchist Socialism

Anarchists think that we should move to create socialism as soon as the workers have taken over production. There isn't any reason to keep the wage system

after a revolution. As every product is a social product - nobody produces anything in isolation any more - the products themselves ought to be socialised. It's simply not possible to ascertain the true social value of anyone's labour, and in truth not worth the effort of finding out. Everybody's contribution matters. It wouldn't matter how many surgeons we had, if we didn't have cleaners ensuring a hygienic workplace. Both contribute to society. Why discriminate in favour of one in the future society? It'll only preserve the class nature of society

We should move immediately to a system of "to each according to need". Probably this will involve rationing, but that's basically what money does anyway, just in an unfair way. But all of this has to be a voluntary act of the working class. The working class must implement libertarian socialism themselves. If an attempt is made to impose socialism from above by a state or a benevolent few, it'll prove just as disastrous as it did in the Soviet Union. And socialism won't result anyway.

Power Versus Direct Action

If we create a society where a few have power over the rest, then the hunger for power, which is a definite tendency in human nature, is going to find an environment in which it can flourish. It doesn't matter whether the elite few are the rich or whether they're the leaders of the party. This is why anarchists place such emphasis on direct action. It is the libertarian principle in action. Direct action isn't some fancy stunt designed to gain publicity, as some Greens seem to think as they lock themselves onto

the gates of the Dáil for half an hour. It is about acting directly, without appealing to intermediaries to act on your behalf. It is the basis for true democracy, for direct democracy. Every time you participate directly in taking a decision on issues you are acting directly (discussion and deciding are forms of political action).

When we act for ourselves we learn useful lessons for the future as well as influencing the present. If socialism is to be achieved, people will need to have confidence in their own ability to run society. When we organise something useful in the present we are training ourselves for the future. Anarchism is about personal liberty. In order to act as a free person you must make decisions and act for yourself. When you are acting directly you are clearly not obeying the commands of a leader. No doubt you will be influenced by some people's arguments more than by others. But you are free to decide your own course of action. Nobody is compelling you to do anything.

Under a governmental system, whether that be a representative democracy or a dictatorship, the leaders have the authority to tell you what to do. If you don't do it then you can expect retribution. You are no longer capable of acting directly when there is a higher power controlling your activity.

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Collective Action

Direct action does not preclude collective action. In fact the opposite is the case. Anarchists emphasise the need for collective action. This isn't simply because it's more effective, which is obviously true, but also because we are social beings whose freedom is not denied by associating with our friends and colleagues, but rather enhanced when it is a voluntary act.

It is when we are forced to associate that our freedom is denied. There is a liberal myth, or rather a statist creation myth, that originally humans lived as isolated individuals at war with each other (hence the necessity for an entity above society to control it: the State). In fact we are an intensely social species who become aware of ourselves as individuals by interacting with our fellow human beings.

From the recognition of humans as social beings flows the anarchist view on organisation. Organisation is essential. Pretty much all human endeavour relies on organisation to some extent, and anarchists are usually found to be acting through organisations of some sort whether that be informal groupings which organise a Reclaim the

Streets or a more formal structure like Trade Unions or community campaigns. An anarchist society will be highly organised, but it won't be a hierarchical. We envisage that autonomous cities and industries will federate together and co-ordinate their activities. With socialism there won't be any competitive reason not to. With voluntary co-operation there won't be any need for a centralised authority.

The question is not really one of organisation or not, but rather what type of organisation: libertarian or authoritarian. By authoritarian I mean the ability to enforce your will on another. Decisions are made by a few which must be carried out by the rest. So private companies and police forces are authoritarian. States are authoritarian to the core.

By libertarian I mean direct involvement in the decision making process and actions which affect you. The right to federate is balanced with the right to disassociate. I think that only libertarianism which is permeated by a socialist mentality is viable, for the spirit of co-operation and mutual aid is vital.

Anarchism is a realistic political ideology. We do realise that most people have little interest in making a libertarian revolution next week. Or that making one in the next few decades will be easy. Far from it, anarchy being the most radical goal is going to encounter the greatest resistance from the ruling class. Many are daunted by the task and look for shortcuts, whether through the parliamentary route or via a revolutionary coup d'etat.

But if we are serious about achieving anarchism, then we have to start about it now. It isn't going to drop from the sky. The longer we wait to begin acting for ourselves the longer it's going to be till we achieve our aim. Also many people are used to letting others run society for them. Sure they might get indignant over corruption or a particularly blatant invasion of a third world country, but it's fair to say that their actual involvement in changing anything is pretty low.

Although State socialist parties do talk about the need for direct action, it appears to be another weapon in their armoury rather than directly related to the end goal of libertarian communism. The whole point of having a minority of brainy and benevolent leaders is that they will do the difficult work for you. As such it follows that you yourself don't need to change, to participate on an equal footing with everybody else, to think about why we need socialism, you don't need to get deeply involved in making it happen. This will be fatal for any revolution because the new society will face tough times. But if people have a good understanding of what they are fighting for and have made a deep personal commitment to achieving it, it's unlikely that they are going to let it go easily.



The State

Libertarian organising is incompatible with the State. What follows only touches on some of the fundamental characteristics of a State. Undoubtedly the State has modified itself in the last hundred years, but its core functions remain the same. A State reserves the exclusive right to wield force. By force I include the police forces, a courts system, and of course an army for when things get especially difficult. A State is always controlled by a select few. Note that the elite can be either wealthy capitalists or party leaders.

The elite operates using a system of hierarchical authority; i.e. orders are issued by the elite at the top of the hierarchy, which are followed by those lower in the chain of command. This bureaucratic chain of command is absolutely essential to any State, Bolshevik or Capitalist. The institutions of the State are centralised and they attempt to regulate the behaviour of the rest of society. This follows from the fact that the State is a vehicle for the rule of a minority. As a minority cannot hope to satisfy the wishes of all the people and the people aren't going to submit without compulsion, it creates a huge bureaucracy to implement the orders emanating from above and to direct and control their behaviour as much as possible. Anarchists claim that this bureaucracy becomes entrenched and a source of real power.

This is an issue of profound difference between us and Marxists. Where as we wish to destroy this system of control and replace it with directly democratic structures involving the whole population, we would see the goal of the authoritarian socialist party as the capturing of this bureaucratic power for itself. This is essentially what happened in Russia. Supposedly the bureaucratic

apparatus that is the State would be used to introduce socialism. Anarchists are not only skeptical that the new rulers of the State apparatus would succeed in introducing socialism, we are positively frightened that they would introduce a totalitarian nightmare.

Maybe seizing control of the bureaucracy and its armed force is not the goal of rank and file socialists but it's the likely result if you maintain or re-establish the hierarchical structures. Leninists might think that the problem is solved when they've got rid of the people who ran the old State, but that really is of limited importance. If the hierarchical patterns remain, the system remains fundamentally unaltered. Class society remains. Only this time the ruling class will be the privileged elite of the party who control the bureaucratic structure.

It's true that the Russians faced a terrible time after 1918, with the civil war and the toil it took on the urban working class. But there is also the vital element of the Bolshevik party taking power for itself and ruling over the population. Anarchists claim that this was a crucial element in the failure of the revolution. In fact I consider it counter-revolutionary. The revolution consists of the establishment of factory committees, popular soviets, etc. The smashing of State power in October was essential. The repair work that the Bolsheviks did on the State after October was counter to the revolution, however much they honestly believed otherwise. For example they rapidly moved to counter the growing power of the grassroots factory committees by insisting on State control of industry.

Given that it's the Marxist-Leninist goal to take control of the bureaucratic structure that is the State, it's logical that present day Marxists should use State structures to further their aims: Lenin said that the working class ought to be prepared for revolution by Marxists utilising the present State. Anarchists are opposed to the State and all that the principle of authority demands. Therefore we can't utilise State institutions, such as parliamentary elections to achieve our ends. As the conduct of some anarchists during the Spanish Civil war illustrates, anarchists are no more immune to the virus of power that using State positions involves than anybody else. We advocate instead building alternative movements which will pre-figure the type of society we want.

We are not in favour of merely disbanding the State. We favour its replacement with directly democratic institutions. The State has taken on some socially necessary work such as the provision of health care. We obviously aren't in favour of shutting down hospitals because we dislike the Minister for Health and senior civil servants. Just as we would disband private companies but not do away with production, we would disband the State structure but keep the services. We advocate that

workers manage the health service in consultation with the community. To repeat, necessary functions which are currently run by the State will be run by democratic workers' councils which will federate with each other not only because of a sense of mutual aid but also out of self-interest. These workers' councils differ from a State because they won't be under the control of a minority.

Party Rule?

Is it possible to have a dual structure of workers councils and a State structure operating simultaneously? It's unlikely. Dual-power situations are inherently unstable. The State is particularly unwilling to accommodate a challenge to its authority. Rulers tend not to step aside voluntarily and we'd be doubtful that a revolutionary socialist party is going to make history in this regard.

The presence of a party assuming control of a revolutionary situation must come at the expense of the activity of the class as a whole. Either the class is in charge or the State is. This is most starkly illustrated when the grassroots organs of the class (workers' committees, community councils) come into conflict with the State. What real power do the councils have if they can be over-ruled by the State? What's the point of a State if the workers' councils can over-rule it? The logical outcome of a party seizing the initiative in a revolution is that the role of the class becomes redundant. Why be active if the party can accomplish it for you? Why be active if the party might arrest you for going against its policy?

Anarchists think that the creative capacities of the working class as a whole far outweigh the capacities of a few individual leaders. It is our view that a truly democratic society would be more efficient than it currently is, simply because it would harness everybody's ability. Planning the economy and society generally would be far more efficient than it is now because it would include the views of everybody. It would also be far more efficient than centralised State planning, which tends to become messed up in useless, self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

One reason that I personally am an anarchist is that I don't feel confident that I know what's good for everybody. For example I'd be clueless about the health sector. What's more I'd much rather leave it to the people working there, to organise themselves in conjunction with the local communities, than for it to be run by any small group.

The revolution will not be made by anarchists. The task is too complex to be accomplished by a minority. We will of course participate, advocating a libertarian direction. A free socialist society needs the active participation of millions of people. And crucially that participation can only happen voluntarily. Socialism cannot be imposed on the people. It has to be a voluntary, organic process. It has to be a libertarian process. ♦

About the WSM

The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom. We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. As Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist said, "Socialism without freedom is tyranny and brutality".

Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its ongoing reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

In the years since our formation, we've been involved in a wide range of struggles - our members are involved in their trade unions; we've fought for abortion rights and against the presence of the British state in Northern Ireland, and against the growth of racism in southern Ireland; we've also been involved in campaigns in support of workers from countries as far apart as Nepal, Peru and South Africa. Alongside this, we have produced over 75 issues of our paper *Workers Solidarity*, and a wide range of pamphlets. In 1986, we organised a speaking tour of Ireland by an anarchist veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Ernesto Nadal, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the revolution there. In 1997 we organised a speaking tour for ex-political prisoner and Black Panther Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, a US anarchist.

As anarchists we see ourselves as part of a long tradition that has fought against all forms of authoritarianism and exploitation, a tradition that strongly influenced one of the most successful and far reaching revolutions in this century - in Spain in 1936 - 37. The value of this tradition cannot be underestimated today. With the fall of the Soviet Union there has been renewed interest in our ideas and in the tradition of libertarian socialism generally. We hope to encourage this interest with Red & Black Revolution. We believe that anarchists and libertarian socialists should debate and discuss their ideas, that they should popularise their history and struggle, and help point to a new way forward.

Our newspaper Workers Solidarity is now a free news-sheet and appears 6 times a year. With a print-run of 6,000, this means a huge increase in the number of people here in Ireland receiving information about anarchism and struggles for change. Just as important, has been the increase in the numbers of people who take bundles of each issue to distribute at work, in their neighbourhood or to their friends. A second change is that we have simplified the process for joining the WSM. Although the basics still hold - you have to agree with the WSM's democratically decided policies and you have to agree to work for these - joining is a lot more straight forward. If you want details on this just write or email us.

We have also increased and improved our presence on the Internet. This move has been prompted by the enormous success to date of our web site and resources. In March of 2002 alone, 250,000 pages were downloaded from the (Struggle) site which includes our pages. This means a vast number of people are now looking at and reading about our anarchist ideas. Furthermore, we have made our papers, magazines, posters and some pamphlets available on PDF format - allowing for material to be downloaded in pre-set format, to be sold or distributed free right across the world.

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Shannon/DA Timeline



December 15th 2001: 1st Grassroots protest. Shannon airport (70 ppl)

August 17th 2002: Grassroots protest. Shannon (70 ppl)

October 12th 2002: first IAWM protest at Shannon (350). Grassroots mass trespass (150)

October 27th 2002: GNAW formed at Grassroots Gathering 3. Belfast

December 7th 2002: IAWM march. Dublin (750)

December 8th 2002: Grassroots protest. Shannon (350)

January 4th 2003: Establishment of Peace Camp at Shannon.

January 18th 2003: IAWM march. Shannon (2500)

January 29th 2003: Mary Kelly disarms US warplane.

February 1st 2003: Catholic Worker 5 disarm US warplane.

February 15th 2003: National march against war in Dublin (100,000)

March 1st 2003: GNAW attempts mass direct action (300) IAWM march (800) Both at Shannon

March 20th 2003: War officially starts. IAWM 10 minute work stoppage. GNAW activists & others blockade Dáil.

Saturday 29th March: IAWM march. Dublin (15,000)

March 31st 2003: Grassroots protest buries Irish neutrality. Shannon (90)

April 2nd 2003: IAWM blockade of Dáil (800)

April 7th 2003: Bush and Blair meet at Hillsborough. Northern Ireland. IAWM protest (2000)

April 9th 2003: Baghdad regime falls. Televised war ends.

April 12th 2003: IAWM march. Shannon (470)

Note: this list is by no means comprehensive. There were many other protests and vigils at Shannon airport and marches, school walkouts and smaller direct actions around the country. This list focuses on those protests which are mentioned in the articles, deemed particularly significant, or which involved direct action. The estimates of attendances are the editor's. More:

<http://struggle.ws/wsm/shannon.html>

Direct Action against the war in Ireland

Across the globe millions of people mobilised against the war in Iraq. On February 15th 100,000 people marched through the streets of Dublin in the biggest political protest in Southern Ireland for over 20 years. Around 15,000 demonstrated in Belfast on the same day.

by Andrew Flood

The turnout on these demonstrations showed that the battle for public opinion had been won. Massive numbers of people opposed Bush and Blair's drive to war and the Irish government's role in it. But they seem to have had very little effect on the war. The governments concerned simply ignored them. In every country the anti-war movement was thus faced with the question of what to do next. After February 15th we should have expected to see the various movements internationally working on ways to stop the war despite the fact that their respective governments were ignoring them.

One obvious tactic was some form of direct action against the war. There were many forms this could have taken; from industrial strikes and boycotting of war work to mass invasions of the airforce bases and naval ports essential to the military to enable the war to take place. The mainstream anti-war movements talked of industrial action but in reality, aside from very tokenistic stoppages on Day X, the only action that took place was either the result of a few individuals taking the rhetoric seriously (as in the case of the Scottish train drivers who refused to transport munitions) or organised by the handful of radical unions that exist in Europe.¹

In Ireland, previous anti-war movements had limited themselves to marching around the larger cities and listening to speeches. This time, we saw the full range of debate and actions that have been common to anti-war movements elsewhere for some time. Recognising the huge public support for the anti-war position, significant numbers of activists argued for, organised and took direct action against the war machine.

Anarchists were amongst those at the fore of promoting direct action against the war machine. These actions were successful at driving out three of the four commercial airlines, which had been flying tens of thousands of Gulf-bound US troops through Shannon airport, before the war began. The acting head of the US Embassy in Dublin, Jane Fort, blamed the "threatening behaviour of protestors" for their decision to leave. "The combination of two back-to-back incidents of real destruction would prompt any company to ask if it would put people in harm's



way, people who might be working on planes or riding on planes."²

These withdrawals were significant because Ireland's location made it quite useful for the US war effort. Official government figures revealed that just over 20,000 US troops were flown through Shannon airport in the opening weeks of the year. The Wall Street Journal of December 19th reported that, in the January build up, "more than 50,000 US ground troops are likely to flow into the Gulf region". It thus appears that over 40% of these may have come through Shannon airport, showing the importance of this airport to the US military supply chain.

In Ireland, for this reason, almost all of the direct action protests were targeted on Shannon airport. More than half a dozen successful actions took place, ranging from a large scale breach of the fence in October, to physical attacks on planes as the build up to war escalated. Shannon has been a target of Irish anti-war movements before, for it has been used to refuel US military planes as far back as the Vietnam war. During the 1991 Gulf war, many of us marched around Dublin demanding 'no refuelling at Shannon' - to no effect. In the years since many things have changed, not least the growth of a libertarian network and a direct action culture.

Shannon - first steps

A couple of years ago, Irish anarchists in the WSM initiated the first of a series of conferences, the Grassroots Gatherings, aimed at bringing together the new groups of activists who could be described as libertarian in the broadest sense of the word. With the build up to

war in Afghanistan, it seemed obvious that it was time to move from the traditional passive opposition to the refuelling of war planes at Shannon, to taking direct action against the refuelling. At the first Grassroots Gathering meeting, held in Dublin, it was decided to call a protest for December 15th 2001.

About 70 people took part in that first protest, far less than the 3,000 at the Dublin anti-war march that took place at around the same time. This demonstrated to us that our first task would be to win the argument within the anti-war movements that Shannon should be an important location for protests and not just something mentioned in speeches elsewhere. On that occasion, as the protest was in progress, a jet loaded with US marines landed.

The protesters proceeded to the fence near the plane and some of the barbed wire atop the fence was pulled down. One courageous soul legged it across the margins towards the plane, but was tackled to the ground and arrested. The Gardai became aggressive and another protester was arrested when they advanced on the crowd, pushing people to the ground.

A report written shortly afterwards observed "what we could have done with 3,000 people will remain in the realms of speculation until those opposed to war realise that direct action is the way forward."³ This was a challenge to the other anti-war movements in Ireland as well as to ourselves.

Picking up steam

Demonstrations at Shannon started to become semi-regular from that point on. In August 2002, during another demonstration (organised at another Grassroots Gathering), the Sunday Times created the first media scare story about the protests. The local cops reacted by trying to stop us getting to the terminal building by blocking the entrance road. We simply pushed through them. At the end of the day, one person managed to get over the perimeter fence and make a dash for the runway before being arrested.

This protest were still small, again around 70 people, The SWP-controlled Irish Anti War Movement continued to "prefer marching around Dublin than taking the bother to travel to and take action at the site where the Irish state is directly aiding the US war effort. This needs to change. With war in Iraq



Mass trespass at Shannon

looming it should be possible to organise major protests at Shannon that could shut the airport for a period of time."⁴

Anarchists in the WSM consistently argued that while marches in Dublin were important, in terms of building the movement and giving people the confidence to publicly display their opposition to war, more was needed. Specifically, mass direct action protests at Shannon could have the effect of actually doing something to stop Ireland's involvement in the war effort. In October the IAWM finally organised a demonstration there. Over 300 people attended. However, problems with its organisation detracted from the protest's effectiveness.

Mass Trespass

Firstly the understanding to hold a mass meeting at the gate to discuss tactics for the day, as had been done on previous occasions, was ignored. When activists tried to get the meeting together, the IAWM stewards - most of whom were members of the SWP - announced that we were going to start marching to the terminal immediately. So the meeting never happened. This lack of discussion resulted in bad feelings afterwards, both from those who wanted direct action to happen (and would have liked a chance to organise it properly), but also from those who did not (who wanted to argue against it or at least insist that there should be a clear division between the two groups). It also set the pattern for the rest of the war, where the so called 'revolutionary' left within the 'Irish Anti War Movement' would play the leading role, not only in

undermining specific direct actions, but also in preventing any real dialogue between the movement they controlled and other activists.

The IAWM intended to confine the demonstration to a very tokenistic effort to enter the terminal building, followed by the usual speeches from the usual politicians. This was not enough for some and, as we marched out of the airport, about a dozen people left the head of the march and crossed to the perimeter fence. They started to shake the fence and it rapidly fell away from its supports. Within seconds a 50m section was down. The Gardai grabbed one activist standing near the fence but, as they did so, another jumped through the fence and entered the airfield.

After a stunned few seconds she was followed by half a dozen more and then, seconds later, another 20 or 30. As the Gardai started to chase those already on the airfield, more and more people started to stream through the fence until about half the protesters had crossed onto the airfield, while the other half watched from just behind it.

Inside, the protesters continued to a point near the tarmac where a UPS plane was parked. There was a quick discussion as to whether to move on to the runway itself, but it was decided for safety reasons not to do so. As more Gardai arrived, they initially concentrated on stopping us moving any further into the airfield. Meanwhile other Gardai, some with dogs, intimidated and shoved those between us and the perimeter fence into leaving the airfield.

With most of the protesters back behind the fence, the Gardai concentrated on the thirty or forty still sitting on the grass. They grabbed a number of people from this group and threw them into vans, possibly concentrating on those who they thought were organisers. If they hoped this would intimidate the others it failed, as it prompted a sit-in on the airfield as those remaining, said they would only leave if those

Anti-war groups

Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM): Largest of the anti-war groups. Dominated by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Also contained the Green Party, Socialist Party.

Grassroots Network Against War (GNAW): Network consisting of direct action activists, including all Ireland's anarchist groups, Gluaiseacht, other ecologists.

NGO-peace Alliance: Alliance of NGOs, charities, church groups, etc.

Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA): Group concentrating on Ireland's sovereignty, includes members of Labour, Sinn Fein, Greens.

Others: Catholic Workers, local groups (many in IAWM), Global Women's Strike ...

arrested were released.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the fence a group of a dozen or so blocked the airport road, bringing traffic to a halt. They hoped to put additional pressure on the Gardai to release the prisoners. This action was actually opposed by the SWP who ordered their more eager members off the road. Inside the airfield, two huge fire engines were brought up and the Gardai moved back a little. They clearly intended to create the impression that they were going to use them as water cannon but when the activists still failed to move they retreated again. Eventually, the police vans drove off with their prisoners and, after a discussion, the remaining protestors decided to make their way to the police station to demand their release.

Within minutes of us arriving they started to release those arrested. They hadn't been charged but were told that charges might be brought later. Obviously, someone above the level of the local Gardai would have to make the decision as to whether a messy trial, highlighting the use of Shannon as a refuelling stop for foreign war planes, was the best strategy for the state*.

That day was our first real success. For the first time, there was a trespass at Shannon involving dozens of people rather than simply a couple of brave souls making martyrs out of themselves. It also revealed just how vulnerable the airport was to such tactics, there are miles of perimeter fence, it would take hundreds if not thousands of police to protect it from a large demonstration.

The deep divisions between anti-war activists on the issue of direct action also became blatantly obvious as it was increasingly clear that the IAWM intended to talk tough about Shannon but to do nothing beyond the usual protests. Those involved in the Grassroots Gathering realised there was a need to be more seriously organised. A Grassroots Gathering meeting in Belfast resulted in the formation of the Grassroots Network Against the War. This called a 'direct action' demonstration for December 8th.

This was a partial success, in that 350 people or so took part in something at which there was intended to be direct action. But it also showed up many of the organisational weaknesses in the Grassroots Network. The Gathering had decided to leave it up to affinity groups to organise their own thing on the day, but, with a couple of exceptions, these were never even formed. This and a substantial police presence meant that people ended up standing around wishing something would happen but without the organisational structures needed to get things moving.

*Months later, after the March 1st action, the cops did finally decide to prosecute these people.

Saturday 18th of January saw a second IAWM demonstration at the airport at which around 3,000 people took part. These numbers represented the first real possibility of a successful mass action, but the IAWM took a position of non-participation in direct action in advance of the day and no real organisational efforts had been made by GNAW. The idea had been floated that we would simply meet up on the day, but even this didn't really work out and we proved unable to even march as a block up to the terminal. This was simply down to the continued failure of many activists to take the need for proper organisation seriously.

Despite the lack of preparation, two separate actions were attempted. First a group of protesters occupied the roofs of two buildings near the terminal, causing Gardai with dogs to charge the crowd beneath. Then, on the way out of the airport, a group of 30 people charged a poorly guarded entrance to



the airfield, only to find themselves trapped in a dead end. Although these actions were both poorly focused and uncoordinated, they did show that there was an increasing number of activists attempting to go beyond tokenistic protests.

Hatchets & Hammers

As well as the large scale protests it turned out that both individuals and small groups were planning their own actions. These were to have a very direct effect on the issue. On January 4th a small group of activists established a peace camp just outside the airport. Then on January 29th Mary Kelly, who had been arrested on the December 2001 demonstration at the airport and had also been part of the peace camp, entered the airfield. She found a US Navy Boeing 737 on the runway and proceeded to disarm it by whacking the nose with a hatchet. This damaged the radar and the state later claimed that this attack had caused €500,000 worth of damage.

In the early hours of February 1st, five activists from the Catholic Worker organisation entered the airfield and began to tear up the runway. They then discovered the US military jet that had been damaged by Mary Kelly, sitting unguarded in a hangar. They entered the hangar and once more smashed up the more sensitive external equipment

with a hammer. The combination of these events grabbed the headlines and Shannon was now the subject of public debate all over the country.

As for GNAW, the two failures to organise ourselves seriously - and the two missed opportunities they represented - did give us the kick up the arse we needed. Proper planning got underway for the next demonstration. On the morning of February 15th, in advance of the 100,000 strong march that day, a meeting agreed to plans for a publicly announced, direct action at Shannon on March 1st.

It was reckoned that it would now be possible to get thousands of people to take part in such an action. The public nature of the announcement was intended to make it absolutely clear that what was planned was mass participation in the direct action, and not something elitist or involving only a small group.

The plan was simple - to form a line, march over to the perimeter fence and tear it down. Its success would depend on numbers. If there were significantly more protesters than cops, it would be possible. Provision was also made for those who wanted to show solidarity but were not in a position to participate directly, by forming a second 'observer' line.

Within a day of the plan being released to the media, two of the remaining three troop-carrying airlines announced that they were pulling out of Shannon, citing security concerns. The disarming actions, along with the threat of another mass trespass had obviously caused ructions amongst the companies making profits out of the war. A successful mass action at the airport, as proposed for March 1st, had the chance of driving out all military traffic before the war was even underway. So the call went out to other sections of the anti-war movement, requesting their support for such an action.

IAWM Leadership???

We expected a cautious and even negative response from mainstream politi-



cal parties, such as Labour and the Greens, and from the trade unions and NGOs. However, we hoped that so-called 'revolutionary' organisations such as the Socialist Party and SWP, would support the action. Alas this was not to be. Their first excuse was that such an action was 'premature'. But with war set to formally break out only days after March 1st, the question asked was, "if not now, when?"⁵ The government was, after all, going ahead with refuelling despite 100,000 marching in Dublin.

Alongside this excuse, which could at least be honestly argued for, came a range of miserable evasions that did their authors no credit. With three troop-carrying airlines already gone from Shannon, some sought to assert that such actions could not work! They muttered darkly about state repression, soldiers with guns, armoured cars with plastic bullets and the special branch (secret police). What should we have concluded from this, that we should avoid effective opposition in case a cornered state strikes back?

Worst of all perhaps was the argument that direct action would alienate people from the anti-war movements. This ignored the fact that a good part of the movement-building in Ireland happened through the publicity that followed the various direct actions, in particular the physical attacks on planes at Shannon. There was a poisonous insert to this argument. Some left groups were throwing around the claim that direct actions would somehow stop workers in Shannon striking against refuelling. While all of us recognised that this form of action would be the most effective, there was little evidence that it was any more they a 'pie in the sky' slogan to pretend they had an alternative.

Some people in GNAW had been talking to Shannon workers. We knew that those who worked as cops at the airport didn't like the direct actions because every breach of security got them into trouble for failing to prevent it. We knew that most workers there feared effective action against military refuelling because some of the jobs at the airport may depend on this refuelling. For these reasons, there was little or no talk in support of anti-refuelling strike action by workers at Shannon. With the war just days away, to put all our eggs in the 'workers must strike' basket seemed foolish, to say the least, particularly if it meant avoiding action that had proved capable of driving out the troop carriers.

Farce

One of the mistakes made by the organisers made was placing too much trust

⁵After March 1st, some GNAW activists initiated a letter, eventually signed by hundreds of Irish trade unionists, to the Shannon workers asking them to take some sort of action and pledging our support if they did so. Ironically, this was the first such attempt, as the trotskyists, who had done so much talking about Shannon workers, had not even done something as basic as this to encourage them to act.



March 1st, Shannon

in the comprehension skills of journalists. The second line of our plan of action read:** "This action will be an example of mass non-violent civil disobedience in the tradition of Gandhi's salt march." We presumed journalists would understand from this that 'non-violent' meant 'non-violent'. Astoundingly, huge numbers of them decided 'non-violent protest' actually meant 'violent protest' and headlines to that effect were splashed all over the media. Chomsky's theory of 'manufacturing consent' proved to be alive and well and living in the Irish media.

Things turned to real farce at Friday lunchtime, when Sinn Fein, the Green Party and the Labour Party released press statements saying they were staying away from the protest for fear of violence. To those of us involved in the planning, the Sinn Fein fear of violence should have had us splitting our sides. But unfortunately there was little room for humour, as we knew that many people thinking of going would presume Sinn Fein 'knew something', and wonder what possible level of violence we could be planning that would frighten them off!

Perhaps the most farcical of all were the reactions of the SWP and SP. The least we could have expected would be that, if they didn't support the action, they would say nothing. Instead things went so far as to have Richard Boyd Barrett, chairman of the IAWM and a prominent member of the SWP, publicly belittling the action on national radio, and various members of both parties criticising the action vociferously in debates on indymedia and other media outlets.

The sheer level of hysteria, which ran right down to suggestions that the army might shoot people, seems a little unbelievable now, after the event. Despite all this and the stopping and searches of coaches travelling to the protest, over 300 people decided to take part in the GNAW action. As agreed with the IAWM, we explained what we intended to do to all those at

**Full details are still online at: <http://grassrootsgathering.freesevers.com/gnaw.html>

the meeting point and then left for the airport building ahead of their march. One of the IAWM activists later told me that our departure was pretty embarrassing for them as every single one of the large force of Gardai, who had been waiting at the meeting point, followed us.

We had expected most people with us would be joining the observer line rather than the direct action line, but this turned out not to be the case. At least two thirds of those with GNAW chose to march up to the fence. Approaching the fence, we saw there were a couple of hundred Gardai waiting for us, including the riot squad. The decision to publicly deploy the riot squad in the first line in this manner was very unusual in southern Ireland. Normally, at demonstrations they are sitting in vans, out of sight, on stand by. It was all the more extraordinary given that the vast majority of the population of Ireland were opposed to refuelling. The only conclusion is that the image of the riot squad confronting peaceful protesters was manufactured not for domestic consumption, but to keep one man in a White House in Washington DC happy.

Outnumbered

Arriving at the fence the agreed plan was put into action. The protestors linked arms and then slowly walked forward until we came into contact with the line of Gardai. We had hoped that at this point we would massively outnumber them and be able to simply walk around them. They were obviously worried about this as well, as their senior officer was quoted before the protest as saying that it would be impossible to guard 7km of perimeter with 500 men but they would try their best.

In the event, he needn't have issued this disclaimer as there was pretty much one cop for each protester. Plus, they had enough to spare to have a cop every 5 metres or so running up either side of us and dozens more visible inside the fence. Still it was obvious that, with two or three times the num-

ber, the cops would simply not have been able to keep us all away from the fence.

After a long period facing the cops, we decided to try something different and got the whole line moving parallel to the fence. Surprisingly, this caught the Gardai on the hop and quite a few of them just stared at us moving off, until their senior officers ordered them to follow us. This meant one end of our line suddenly found they were no longer facing a wall of cops, but that there was only one every 5 metres or so. Seizing the opportunity, people walked up to the fence and threw home-made grappling hooks onto the top of the fence and started to pull it down.

In the space of a couple of seconds, the fence had started to peel off from the top and cops had come charging in, rugby tackling people to the ground, grabbing the ropes and generally shoving people around. Most of the arrests happened at this point as cops randomly grabbed people out of the crowd and threw them into vans. There were further arrests of the few brave souls who attempted to stop these vans moving off, despite the fact that a sea of cops surrounded them. But, on our side at least, things remained calm and we offered no violent response to this Garda provocation.

We formed up and marched back to the entrance of the airport where we had a short meeting in the car park outside, to get details of all those arrested for the legal support team and to discuss how people felt about the action. Both here and on the coach back to Dublin, the overwhelming feeling was very positive. Most people reckoned they felt more positive returning from this protest than from any of the other ones. In the end, the direct action at Shannon was foiled in its intention to get onto the airfield. But it demonstrated to us that such an action is possible to organise and that is a major step forward. Indeed, were it not for the week of 'its going to be violent' hype from the media, the bishops and even some other sections of the anti-war movements, we almost certainly would have succeeded. However, in the days afterwards it emerged that not everyone was so happy with how things went.

Differences & Disagreements

After March 1st, the anti-war movements found themselves in a difficult place. The direct action proved to be a catalyst, around which all the differences simmering within and between the movements surfaced, often in pretty ugly forms. Within GNAW disagreements arose between those who thought that with a more determined effort we could have broken through police lines and those of us who thought, given our small numbers on the day, such an effort would have simply resulted in lots of arrests and serious charges.

Disagreements also arose about the role played by individuals, including the author, on the day. The failure of some local groups to appoint any delegates meant both that democratic decisions making was impossible, but also that the Dublin delegates, playing out their roles, were seen to dominate proceedings.

This meant the ability of GNAW to organise future mass actions had been weakened rather than strengthened after March 1st. Many of the core activists had been excluded from the whole county of Clare. And the fact that none of the actions went to plan had inevitably resulted in some internal tensions as some sought individuals to blame for this. This would seem to be pretty inevitable in broad networks that lack both detailed agreed aims and formal organisational structures. When such rows occur, new initiatives are inevitably stifled as the focus is directed inwards rather than outwards.

So the immediate aftermath of March 1st and the outbreak of the war saw a move towards more local actions and internal work to both increase the numbers involved in GNAW and improve communication and organisation. Talks started about calling another mass action in the future - but this time where we had much more time to organise ourselves. The rapid nature of the war, however, meant that US soldiers had taken Baghdad before serious discussion of this had even started.

Diversity of tactics Unity of opposition

Going forward, there is a need for all those who oppose war to do things very differently next time. A few things seem essential. This includes a clear acceptance that, although we disagree on tactics, we must unite in opposing the war. The situation where some organisations used their media access to attack the plans of other groups should not be repeated. All they succeeded in doing was damaging the movement as a whole and damaging their own credibility.

In terms of those involved in the Grassroots Gathering, we now have to recognise that being able to build on this in future requires that we convince some of the far, far wider forces in the anti-war movement that they also need to be willing to act. The general model,

however, has been shown to work. In countries where the libertarian movements can claim thousands or tens of thousands of adherents, it should be possible to organise similar actions on a far, far larger scale. Above all else GNAW demonstrated that if we take ourselves seriously we can move from complaining about the tokenism of the left's opposition to the war to demonstrating an alternative.

Unfortunately the government has won the battle of Shannon, at least for now. Up to now Irish aid to US wars has been a dirty little secret. During the Afghan war, the government was trying to deny that there was any military material or men bound for that war coming through Shannon. The US Marines in desert camouflage, spotted during the December 15 2001 protest, we were told were coming back for Christmas from West German bases. As we all know these are surrounded by extensive deserts. Through the dedicated work of the anti-war plane-spotters and the Dubskey⁵ court case, the reality was blown wide open for the Iraq war. We knew tens of thousands of troops were pouring through Shannon. This in itself was a considerable victory - it's very hard to organise people to oppose something they are unaware of.

But getting this out in the open should never more have been more than a first step. The point was to stop it. And here is where the government's victory lies. On February 16th the state must have been worried. 100,000 people had marched in Dublin, polls were showing that an overwhelming majority opposed the war and there had been a series of militant direct actions at the airport which had seen over 100 people trespassing and 3 separate attacks on military planes.

But Bertie and co. kept their nerve. They gambled that they could split the movement by attacking the direct action wing as 'violent' and demanding that the respectable wing distance themselves from it. The Green Party had already revealed it was vulnerable to this sort of pressure when Trevor Sergeant had gone on air to attack the Catholic Workers after they had disarmed the same US Navy jet that he had praised Mary Kelly for attacking days earlier!. The secret police were presumably telling McDowell that they reckoned that even those trotskyists whom he so hated were unlikely to actually do anything.



The Irish state gambled and won. For the most part the anti-war movements reacted to the government ignoring the huge Feb 15 march and the fine speeches by organising more marches and more speeches. When the small minority who were Grassroots Network Against War took the only logical route and called for mass civil disobedience at Shannon, things went like a dream for the government. They played the violence card and won big time. Not only did the NGO's and respectable parties queue up with the bishops to denounce the planned 'violence', so too did McDowell's dreaded trotskysts. Gleeful laughs must have echoed around government buildings on the last day of February when the news came through that Sinn Fein was telling people to stay away from Shannon the next day for fear of violence.

Among activists

In advance of the war there was a lot of 'look at how big the demonstrations are before the war' talk from activists, with the implication that the outbreak of war would make them even bigger. I reckoned this was unlikely. The demonstrations before the 1991 Gulf War in the US were bigger then those during it. Before the First World War millions demonstrated and it took three years of horrendous bloodshed before opposition once more reached the pre-war peak. This isn't surprising. When war breaks out all those who opposed it because they reckoned it was bad for the national interest will end up backing 'our troops'. As it is, many of the 100,000 who marched on F15 will wonder why they bothered. They marched, the government ignored them and that was that. The (wrong) lesson that many may take is that marching is a waste of time.

We could have called the government's bluff. All we had to do was show them that allowing refuelling to continue was going to meet with actual resistance. Out of the initial arrests at Shannon last year there were no charges - obviously the state hoped the issue was just going to go away. They were then willing to arrest and process ten or so at a time, probably aware that this was a good percentage of those who had declared a willingness to act. But could they have survived arresting 100's or even 1000's in order to allow refuelling to continue? We have not only let a real opportunity slip through our fingers, the government has also managed to bring refuelling into the public sphere. It is perhaps fitting that the last GNAW action at Shannon to date was based on finally burying the well rotten corpse of Irish neutrality. ♦

1 For example, the Spanish CGT called a 24 hour general strike against the war: <http://www.ainfos.ca/en/ainfos1616.html>

2 Quoted in the Irish Voice, <http://www.irishabroad.com/news/irishinamerica/news/olstory.asp?article=1963867>

3 <http://struggle.ws/wsm/news/2001/shannonDEC.html>

4 <http://struggle.ws/wsm/news/2002/shannonAUG.html>

5 Eon Dubsky was convicted of criminal damage to a US warplane. He spraypainted anti-war slogans on it at Shannon in Sept. 2002

A critique of the politics of Trotskyism

The IAWM's dismal leadership



A character in Dermot Healy's novel *Sudden Times* remarks "Politics makes me dizzy. They're cat. If you're paranoid about government then the psyche is unsettled. You're not well. Next thing is you're standing in Saint Columba's in your pyjamas talking to some bollocks about the phallus and chewing something to bring you down. No sir. No way." Well after months of regularly attending the Irish Anti-War Movement's marches and particularly after months of listening to the speeches of the leading lights of the IAWM, I can sympathise with these sentiments. My head is buzzing with cant and rhetoric and I have that dejected feeling you get when you know you have just lost a chance that won't be coming around again for a long time.

—by Dec McCarthy

Now credit should be given where credit is due. The IAWM did invaluable work in mobilising people. They played a central role building a very large anti-war movement. They undertook all those necessary but thankless tasks that make any social movement happen - poster, distributing leaflets, setting up local branches, holding meetings and the like. They called for marches and faithfully shunted their megaphones, placards and banners to the demos. They created a media profile for the anti-war movement and Richard Boyd Barrett in particular made a very good fist of making the anti-war position clear and coherent on the national airwaves. Groups such as writers against the war produced with incredible speed an anthology of writings against the war. Local groups like the Fairview anti-war group, and I'm sure many local groups that I do not know about, excelled themselves in organising anti-war activity in their area. Finally and most importantly, the IAWM can claim with considerable justification to have been the main moving force behind the largest march in Irish history about an international issue. It was an extraordinary day and the IAWM can be proud of their role in making it happen.

However, despite this unprecedented show of public support for the peace movement the IAWM failed to achieve any of the realisable aims that they set themselves. The IAWM was incapable of devising an effective strategy to disrupt the logistical support offered by the Irish state to the US war machine. Then when Bush and his cronies shored up in Hillsborough and worked themselves into a lather of self-congratulation, the Irish anti-war movement was given an opportunity to show the world that we were not taken in by this revolting spectacle that aimed to legitimise their warmongering. Once again, the leadership of the IAWM failed to rise to the challenge.

Why did the leadership of the IAWM do so little with so much support? The

answer lies in the politics of the Trotskyist groups that effectively ran the IAWM, namely the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party (who played the more low key role of the two groups). Their approach to politics can be characterised as a peculiar and off-putting blend of opportunism and dogmatism. Both of these tendencies are clearly discernible in the direction the IAWM took over the past few months.

The scale of anti-war sentiment surprised everyone and perhaps understandably the Trotskyists in the IAWM did not want to lose their hard won credibility by doing anything too radical. The anti-war movement gave them unprecedented access to the media, the unions and a large swathe of potential new recruits, so despite a revolutionary anti-capitalist analysis of the causes of war the SWP and the SP became strangely timid. They displayed a prissy respect for legality that would usually only be found amongst the faithful at a PD Ard Fheis. The result was a paralysing lack of nerve. This makes good sense when a movement is in its infancy but after February the 15th and after the government signalled in its own inimitably unclear way that they were going to blather a bit and then continue to offer full support to the US war effort, the IAWM should have gone on the offensive with a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience. However, the IAWM decided to continue to rely on demonstrations to stop the war.

I have no problem with marches and I think they are important but it was abundantly clear that in this case marches alone were not sufficient. These events became highly ritualised and banal events and created the sense of a peace movement Ground Hog day. The pervasive atmosphere of these events was not of anger or sorrow but of aimlessness. The only discernible difference between each march was that the speeches seemed to become longer and the march routes shorter, as if verbiage from union bureaucrats and



SWP stewards face the crowd at Hillsborough - the 1st line of police? (photo redjade)

Parliamentary parties could halt the juggernaut of US imperialism. This lack of courage and imagination damaged the development of the anti-war movement in qualitative terms if not perhaps in quantitative terms. Once the state announced that it was happy to ignore public opinion, other tactics should have been considered but politicking was deemed more important than taking effective action against the war.

This lack of nerve had to be balanced with some radical posturing to keep their own members happy. Empty gestures became the order of the day from early on in the campaign. In February organisers had decided to march down Grafton street on a Saturday afternoon. The Gardai said this was not on but the IAWM said that they would march up Grafton street anyway. Following some totally meaningless and ludicrous grandstanding by the SWP at the end of Grafton street the class warriors shuffled off. There was similar nonsense on the day the bombing of Iraq began outside the British and US embassies. At the end of the demonstration, the IAWM initiated a road blockade. But the sharper eyed of the demonstrators noticed that the road had already been closed off by the Gardai, making the gesture entirely pointless.

The IAWM did eventually shift their emphasis to civil disobedience, announcing that they intended to blockade the Dáil. A large number of people turned up and refused to be intimidated by a show of strength by the police. The atmosphere was angry and resolute and in media terms it proved an effective way of highlighting the government's complicity in the US war effort. However, the way the event finished showed once again that the IAWM leadership was unwilling to take even the smallest risk to register their disgust at the war. The protest was called off after some meaningless concessions from the cops. As people moved off for some more edifying speeches, a dozen cars came out of the front gate of the Dáil. No doubt the life of a public representative is stressful enough without being unduly delayed from getting home for cocoa.

This type of choreography was followed to its ignominious end in Hillsborough where an attempt was made by protestors to circumvent police lines by jumping into an adjacent field. The response of the stewards to this made the PSNI's day. In the following days a number of SWP members left the organisation revolted by the "if in doubt do nothing" stance of their party.

Now your average Bolshevik will have a go at a rolling doughnut but will then claim that history and their analysis show that the doughnut was by rights theirs anyway. In other words they are dogmatic about their right to be opportunistic. This manifested itself in a number of ways. The SWP and SP attitude to direct action as an anti-war tactic is a case in point. Both groups paid lip service to the tactic of direct action and the SWP was even calling for mass direct action against the war late in 2002 but when they were confronted by a small, disorganised group trying to effect a mass direct action against US military refuelling in Shannon they did everything in their power to undermine them. Both groups, employing clunky and formulaic ideology, called the attempted direct action "premature" and "elitist" and made dark predictions that the event would end in violence. The SP went out of its way to point out that the only valid form of direct action in Shannon was strike action initiated by the workers in Shannon and Joe Higgins thunderously denounced the attempt in, you guessed it, yet another speech. This empty workerist rhetoric was both disingenuous and lazy as neither of these groups did anything to facilitate strike action in Shannon and even refused to lobby the ICTU to oppose the war.

The marginalisation of other elements of the anti-war movement is in keeping with the Trotskyist analysis that capitalism can only be defeated by one big, centralised organisation with the "correct ideas." Any social movement that these groups can manage to dominate will function according to this model. This hostility to diversity became acute after February the 15th. Flushed with their own importance, the Trotskyists in

the IAWM behaved as if they owned the 150,000 people who turned up to protest against the war. It was noteworthy that they showed no interest in events, pickets and demos that they had not called themselves. It is also worth noting by the way that many of the most interesting and imaginative initiatives of the peace movement came from outside the orbit of the IAWM. For instance the establishment of the peace camp, the smashing up of the US planes, the plane spotting, the blocking of the entrance to the Dáil on Day X and the cacerolazo, were all forms of protest devised by small groups outside of the IAWM.

There is of course a ludicrous side to all this. There is the laughably predictable second rate political machinations and the committee room shenanigans, the inability to count correctly how many people attend any given event, the whiff of desperation that marks their recruiting techniques, the dull rhetoric and the incessant paper selling.

During a blockade of the Dáil this compulsive ideology peddling reached hitherto unimaginable farcical levels. The sit down protest became a bit heated when the riot police began to forcibly remove protestors from the road. Most of the protestors resisted the police non-violently but, amongst all the heaving and shoving, one brave evangelist from the SWP was not distracted from his revolutionary duty and continued to loudly offer his newspaper to those in the middle of the melee. This is not too important in the grander scale of things but it does pose the question of whether it is the most effective way of opposing imperialism and war.

The US state is in the process of marking out a new, aggressive and very dangerous geopolitical strategy. The little Caesars of the state department intend to reshape the world as they see fit and they do not care how high the pile of corpses will be. Opposing them effectively will demand more effort and courage than we, the IAWM and the broader anti-war movement, have shown to date. Radical politics, such as it is, in Ireland is still dominated, in both form and content, by Trotskyism and this is a serious obstacle to successful opposition to capitalism and imperialism. The spectre of outdated, formulaic and authoritarian politics haunts the Irish left and we have to develop more open and attractive forms of politics and thinking in response to this. We cannot let radical politics in the hands of those who have a true Shidas touch - everything they touch turns to shite.

The last significant event called for by the IAWM was a march in Shannon. The numbers had dwindled into the hundreds as the IAWM leadership led the faithful into an enclosed area, a sheep pen of sorts, to listen to the same old collection of shop worn clichés. So one last question- will it be two legs good, four legs better next time round? ♦

Repressing Abortion in Ireland

The Republic of Ireland has one of the most draconian abortion laws in the world. At present abortion may only be performed where continuation of pregnancy poses a 'real and substantial' risk to a pregnant woman's life - about 5 cases per year of 50,000 pregnancies. In reality a woman must be dying before a lifesaving abortion can be performed.



by Mary Favier (Doctors For Choice)

The long-standing ban on abortion was strengthened in 1983 by a constitutional referendum. However in 1995 the Supreme Court ruled that a minor in the care of the state could travel to England for an abortion because her life was at risk from suicide. Right wing groups saw this as a breach of a total ban on abortion and further attempts at restricting abortion were introduced as a constitutional amendment in March of 2002. This attempted to include in the constitution a specific prohibition on the provision of an abortion for a woman whose life was at risk by suicide.

Yet in spite of the ban on abortion and continued attempts to make all access virtually impossible, approximately 7000 Irish women every year exercise their right to choose abortion and travel to England to access legal abortion there, largely through charities providing abortion services and private clinics. This figure of 7000 includes only those who are documented in English statistics by the giving of an Irish address. It does not include those who use UK addresses for reasons of confidentiality or those who travel to other countries. There has been about a 10% rise in the figures every year. An interesting statistical fact is that the majority of Irish women who have had abortions are married and already have children. It is estimated that about 150,000 Irish women have had an abortion - this averages about 1:10 of adult Irish women. Thus for Irish women abortion is common and important.

Unlike previous abortion referenda which had focused on religious issues (1983), and legal issues (1992), the public debate on the 2002 refer-

endum was largely about medical issues, particularly women's mental health and foetal abnormality. This was a significant change from abstract religious and legal arguments as it involved issues people could themselves identify with. With considerable effort and organisation across a broad range of groups the referendum was narrowly defeated. This was significant in a number of ways. It was a defeat of the conservative forces of the Right that were attempting to further restrict non-existent abortion access in this country. Pro-life organisations had been particularly successful in getting

the majority of Irish women who have had abortions are married and already have children. It is estimated that about 150,000 Irish women have had an abortion - this averages about 1/10 of adult Irish women

their message heard in political circles in Ireland in the 1980's and 90's. Successive governments have buckled under the well-funded pressure and agreed to regressive referenda. Most recently a minority government relied on the support of four independents that were actively 'pro-life' and their agreement to support the government was traded for another referendum to further restrict access to abortion particularly in the area of suicide risk.

Silence

The referendum was actively supported by the main government party, Fianna Fail and by the Catholic Church. The significance of the defeat of these combined forces by the Irish people should not be underestimated. It marks a turning point in

the Irish church/secular divide and in the Irish urban/rural divide. The considerable ability of the church to influence national political debate was eroded and exposed as being a waning force. Furthermore all significant urban areas such as the main cities and towns defeated the regressive referendum while it was substantially carried in rural areas. This marks the end of the historic dominance of rural culture and politics in Ireland - a welcome development for progressive politics.

A further important result of the referendum debate was the ending of the silence around abortion. Until now the thousands of women who have had abortions and returned to their lives and families in Ireland were a silent group who have had no voice and whose experiences were never heard. This changed with a number of women making public statements about their abortion experiences. With an approximate ratio of 1:10 Irish women having had an abortion, there is someone in everyone's family who has had an abortion yet nobody knows them, as it is not discussed. For the first time, abortion as an important public issue was discussed without the usual 'baby killer' name-calling,

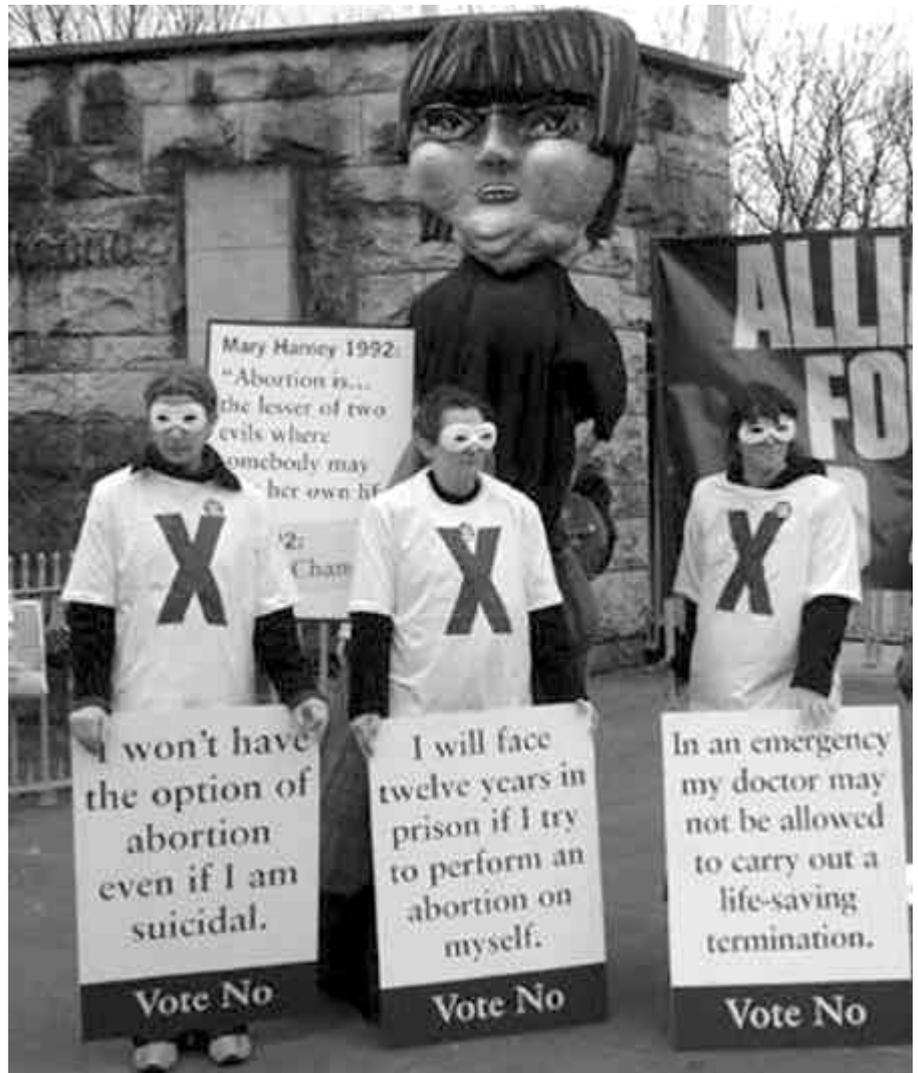
(probably a sign of a change of strategy by pro-life groups rather than evidence that they have gone away). It is now apparent that one of the positive results of the referendum for those who support a woman's right to choose, and a huge setback for those who reject it, is that the genie is out of the bottle as regards publicly discussing and considering abortion. The ending of the silence has been slow and is by no means complete, however its progress is inexorable and is to be celebrated as a coming of age for Irish political debate.

A further benefit of the referendum was the emergence of organisations that actively support a woman's right to choose. Some groups also went on to publicly support the right of Irish women to access abortion services in Ireland. One such organisation was

Doctors for Choice. The emergence of Doctors for Choice isn't that surprising. While there is a constitutional ban on abortion in Ireland, women's lives are not any different to those who live in countries where abortion is legally available. Wherever they live women need access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion. For better or worse, women have always used abortion as a way of controlling their fertility. If it is not legal, they will, in desperation, seek it illegally. In many developing and fundamentalist countries doctors see the results of this desperation every day, in the form of infection, infertility and agonising death from botched abortions. In Ireland, women are fortunate that they live close to a country that has legal accessible abortion - England. If this escape route did not exist we would also see the horrors of back street abortion here. However, one of the down sides of our proximity to the UK is the safety valve it has provided to successive right wing governments who refuse to acknowledge the need for abortion services yet acknowledge that 7000 Irish women travel to England every year. As one prominent politician (Mary Harney) who supported the failed amendment, stated in 1992 'if we were an island in the middle of the Atlantic we would have an abortion service by now in this country...'

Low Pay

In their daily work family doctors see the reality of the failure of the state to legalise abortion. They see the palpable horror of the woman who awaits a pregnancy test that she fears is positive. She must face this situation in the knowledge that she can not have an abortion in Ireland. Most often, women who have unwanted pregnancies make decisions about abortion without support and in silence. In spite of this many women chose abortion as the best option for them. However it is not always as simple as that. As with so many other health issues, class issues have a significant impact on any decision that will be made. It costs approximately €1000 to travel to England from Ireland for an abortion, covering clinic costs, and travel and accommodation costs. This amount of money is rarely immediately available to women in poverty or low-paying jobs or who are raising children alone. Family doctors have seen women get credit union loans, not pay the mortgage, take the Holy Communion savings, the holiday



money and money from under granny's mattress. Money lenders have been involved, with the woman eventually paying several times over - such is the desperation of women to control their fertility as they see fit. Child-care issues are highly significant for many women particularly in a silent community where excuses must be made for why one is away for the weekend. Teenage women are particularly vulnerable to cost issues and many opt to continue the pregnancy as the costs become insurmountable.

A direct consequence of the financial issue is that Irish women have more late abortions than the average English woman. Late abortions after 14 weeks involve more invasive procedures, general rather than local anaesthetics and a greater risk to health. The delay is contributed to by difficulties in getting good information about abortion services in the England, delays in raising the money and the need to arrange the trip in secret. Airline strikes and bad weather on the ferries take on a new meaning on Monday mornings when the distraught woman rings the surgery

to see if she still has time to reschedule. Similarly an asylum seeker must be told that if she travels to the UK for an abortion she is likely to forfeit her asylum application. The result is she must now face an enforced pregnancy. These are examples of the silence around women and abortion in Ireland - their distress is not documented or considered valid.

Doctors have traditionally expressed a conservative voice on abortion. In reality many doctors have been dealing with the issues of abortion in their daily work and have formed opinions not usually expressed publicly. In the past, public statements have been left to those doctors who have generally adopted a pro-life position. This has become the safe, acceptable position on abortion for doctors. With the advent of Doctors for Choice this has changed. The group developed from an ad hoc group of pro-choice doctors that felt an alternative medical position needed to be strongly stated in the debate around the referendum. The organisation quickly grew from there. Doctors for Choice represents all the specialities of medicine but particularly general practice, proba-

bly because this is the group of doctors who actually see the female patients that abortion impacts on. The aims of Doctors for Choice are to give a voice to doctors who support a woman's right to choose and to work towards the provision of comprehensive reproductive health care services including abortion in Ireland. We see this as a basic health entitlement of women resident in Ireland. To do this there needs to be provision of quality abortion services that are accessible regardless of ability to pay. To this end medical education must include abortion provision training and abortion must not be excluded from public hospitals by the religious governance of the hospital. Similarly, doctors who provide care to patients seeking abortion must be protected by law.

Open and public

Doctors for Choice has been considerably more successful than initially expected. What was thought of as a long haul to encourage doctors to join a pro-choice organisation was met with many messages of support and membership subscriptions. It is notable that as doctors we had also internalised the silence around abortion in Ireland. We had allowed the agenda to be set by right wing doctors. To do otherwise was to risk being labeled an abortion doctor and to suffer the subsequent silent professional discrimination considered inevitable in Catholic Ireland.

As an organisation we plan to ensure that our message is heard amongst the medical profession so as to provide support to those doctors who thought they were working alone. We also aim to give support to those women who thought the medical profession in Ireland did not include doctors who respected their right to make their own decisions about their reproductive health. The organisation is small but growing steadily. Our immediate priority is consolidating our membership. By being open and public, we will make the subject an easier one for doctors to express a pro-choice opinion on. This task will be slow, and hasn't been without difficulties. Not all groups working to defeat the recent referendum agreed with our unequivocal statements about the right of Irish women to access abortion in Ireland. It is an unfortunate fact the even those on the left have internalised the message of silence - that the unmentionable of abortion in Ireland is too radical to be

discussed at this time. It is our contention that this plays in to the hands of the conservative, Catholic right wing who have, to date, set the agenda - one where we can't talk about the right of Irish people to a quality reproductive health care service, including abortion. As pro-choice advocates we must be prepared to publicly identify with the 7000 women who access abortion in England every year - we must state that this service should be available in Ireland. To do otherwise is defeatist and hypocritical. It is frustrating and undermining for all the women who travel to England every year, to see political groups support their right to do so, but not take the next logical step of publicly supporting abortion provision in Ireland. By shying away from this statement women's choices are not being fully respected and validated.

Reality

To change this reticence will be slow, however Doctors for Choice as a group would argue that only by doing so can we build strength and unity for what will be a long campaign to achieve abortion provision in Ireland. However, we don't doubt it will eventually be successful. Ireland is changing in spite of the efforts of the Catholic Church and the main political parties. This social and cultural liberalisation will be much faster in the next twenty years than the last twenty. With hard work and committed campaigning by pro-choice groups it is likely that in twenty years time there will be some form of legalised abortion in Ireland. An important part of this transition will be informing and changing the opinions of the medical profession, as their participation is intrinsic to any abortion provision. To date this has been easier than expected but a lot of work remains, particularly as pro-life organisations are likely to regroup after their recent defeat and may now choose to target specific influential groups such as doctors. However the medical profession is also changing and becoming less conservative and isolationist. It is this momentum for change that Doctors for Choice will work with and encourage.

It is likely that there is going to be minimal political will to change Irish abortion laws. Commitments made by political parties to legislate along the lines of the X case are likely to evaporate as they seek to distance

themselves from this contentious issue. Furthermore, any change to allow for suicide risk and foetal malformation would involve only a very small change in the law and would not substantively affect the lives of Irish women seeking abortion. The Labour Party has supported such a change in the law, if they were returned to government. They argue that this is all that can be achieved now and is thus better than nothing. It serves their private expressions of a pro-choice position while publicly sitting on the fence. Pro-choice



anti-abortion confusion

activists need to be cautious about being drawn in to any broad alliance of support for such a limited legal change. Doctors for Choice would argue that this is a mistake as it continues to deny the reality of the 7000 women travelling to England every year. At all times this issue should remain the focus of any campaign to change the law. Scarce energy and resources are better spent on creating an acceptance of abortion as a reality in Ireland. Any campaign should start with where it means to end - Irish women have a right to access abortion services in Ireland and the law needs to be changed accordingly. ♦

Since this article was written, there have been several developments in the fight for abortion rights, including the formation of the alliance for Choice. To get in touch, email: youngbren@eircom.net

More on the struggle for abortion rights in Ireland:

<http://struggle.ws/wsm/abortion.html>

Industrial Collectivisation d

Although it was in the countryside where the most far-reaching anarchist socialisation took place, the revolution took place in the cities and the towns too. At that time in Spain almost 2 million out of a total population of 24 million worked in industry, 70% of which was concentrated in one area - Catalonia. There, within hours of the fascist assault, workers had seized control of 3000 enterprises. This included all public transportation services, shipping, electric and power companies, gas and water works, engineering and automobile assembly plants, mines, cement works, textile mills and paper factories, electrical and chemical concerns, glass bottle factories and perfumeries, food processing plants and breweries.

by Deirdre Hogan

It was in the industrial areas that some of the first collectivisations took place. On the eve of the military uprising a general strike was called by the CNT. However once the initial period of fighting was over it was clear that the next vital step was to ensure the continuation of production. Many of the bourgeoisie sympathetic to Franco fled after the defeat of the insurgent armed forces. The factories and workshops owned by these were immediately seized and run by the workers. Other sections of the bourgeoisie were reluctant to keep the factories going and by closing them attempted to indirectly contribute to Franco's cause. Closing factories and workshops would also lead to higher unemployment and increasing poverty, which would play into the enemy's hands. "The workers understood this instinctively, and established in almost all workshops, control committees, which had as their aim to keep a watch on the progress in production, and to keep a check on the financial position of the owner of each establishment. In numerous cases, control was quickly passed from the control committee, to the directive committee, in which the employer was drawn in with the workers and paid the same wage. A number of factories and workshops in Catalonia passed in this way into the hands of the workers who were engaged in them."¹

Also of the utmost importance was to create, without delay, a war industry in order to supply the front and to get the transport system moving again so that the militias and supplies could be sent to the front. Thus, the first expropriations of industries and public services took

place in order to insure victory over fascism, with anarchist militants taking advantage of the situation to push immediately for revolutionary goals.

The role of the CNT



The social revolution can be best understood in the context of the relatively long history in Spain of workers' organisation and social struggle. The CNT, which was the major driving force of the collectivisations, had been in existence since 1910 and had 1.5 million members by 1936. The anarchist syndicalist movement had existed in Spain since 1870 and, from its birth to the (partial) realisation of its ultimate ideal during the social revolution, had a history of constant engagement in intense social struggle - "Partial and general strikes, sabotage, public demonstrations, meetings, struggle against strike-breakers., imprisonment, transportation, trials, uprisings, lock-outs, some attentats..."²

Anarchist ideas were widespread by 1936. The circulation of anarchist publications at that time gives us some idea of this: there were two anarchist dailies, one in Barcelona, one in Madrid, both organs of the CNT with an average circulation of between 30 and 50 thousand. There

were about 10 periodicals, in addition to various anarchist reviews with circulations of up to 70,000. In all the anarchist papers, pamphlets and books, as well as in their trade union and group meetings, the problem of the social revolution was continuously and systematically discussed. Thus, the radical nature of the Spanish working class, politicised through struggle and confrontation, as well as the influence of anarchist ideas meant that in a revolutionary situation anarchists were able to obtain mass popular support.

The CNT had a very strong democratic tradition at its core. Decisions on all local and immediate matters such as wages and conditions were in the hands of the local membership who met regularly in general assembly. Mutual aid and solidarity between workers was encouraged and posed as the central way of winning strikes. The CNT organised all workers irrespective of skill. In other words, workers were encouraged to form one general union with sections based on a particular industry rather than separate unions for each different job within an industry. Both the democratic tradition and the industrial nature of the trade union greatly influenced the structures of the revolutionary collectives, which generally, grew out of and were shaped by the industrial unions already in place.

Another important aspect of the CNT that accounted for the strength of the revolution was its use of direct action. "The CNT had always advocated"



During the Spanish Revolution

'direct action by workers themselves' as a means of solving disputes. This policy encouraged self-reliance and self-confidence within the union and membership - there was a prevailing culture of 'if we want something sorted out, we have to do it ourselves.'¹³ Finally the federal structure of the CNT which was based on local autonomy and which created a stable but highly decentralised form also encouraged self-reliance and initiative, indispensable qualities which greatly contributed to the success of the revolution.

Gaston Leval highlights the importance that this culture of direct democracy and self-reliance has when it comes to a revolutionary situation when he compares the role of the CNT with that of the UGT in the collectivisation of the railways. Describing the highly organised, efficient and responsible manner in which the railway industry was put back into action under revolutionary control in only a few days he writes "All this had been achieved on the sole initiative of the Syndicate and militants of the CNT. Those of the UGT in which the administrative personnel predominated had remained passive, used to carrying out orders coming from above, they waited. When neither orders nor counter-orders came, and our comrades forged ahead, they simply followed the powerful tide which carried most of them along with it."¹⁴

This history of struggle and organisation and the anarcho-syndicalist nature of their union gave the CNT militants the necessary experience of self-organisation and initiative which could then be put to use naturally and effectively in the reorganisation of society along anarchist lines when the time came. "It is clear, the social revolution which took place then did not stem from a decision by the leading organisms of the CNT... It occurred spontaneously, naturally, not ...because "the people" in general had suddenly become capable of performing miracles, thanks to a revolutionary vision which suddenly inspired them, but because, and it is worth repeating, among those people there was a large minority, who were active, strong, guided by an

ideal which had been continuing through the years of struggle started in Bakunin's time and that of the First International."¹⁵



People's Diner, San Sebastian

Anarchist democracy in action in the collectives

The collectives were based on the workers self-management of their workplaces. Augustin Souchy writes: "The collectives organised during the Spanish Civil War were workers' economic associations without private property. The fact that collective plants were managed by those who worked in them did not mean that these establishments became their private property. The collective had no right to sell or rent all or any part of the collectivised factory or workshop, The rightful custodian was the CNT, the National Confederation of Workers Associations. But not even the CNT had the right to do as it pleased. Everything had to be decided and ratified by the workers themselves through conferences and congresses."¹⁶

In keeping with the democratic tradition of the CNT the industrial collectives had a bottom up delegate structure of organisation. The basic unit of decision-making was the workers' assembly, which in turn elected delegates to management committees

who would oversee the day-to-day running of the factory. These elected management committees were charged with carrying out the mandate decided at these assemblies and had to report back to and were accountable to the assembly of workers. The management committees also communicated their observations to the centralised administrative committee. Generally, each industry had a centralised administrative committee made up of a delegate from each branch of work and workers in that industry. For example, in the textile industry in Alcoy there were 5 general branches of work: weaving, thread making, knitting, hosiery and carding. The workers from each of these specialised areas elected a delegate to represent them in the industry-wide administrative committee. The role of this committee, which also

contained some technical experts, included directing production according to the instructions received at the general assemblies of workers, compiling reports and statistics on the progress of work and dealing with issues of finances and co-ordination. In the words of Gaston Leval "The general organisation rests therefore on the one hand on the division of labour and on the other on the synthetic industrial structure."¹⁷

At all stages, the general assembly of Syndicate workers was the ultimate decision making body. "all important decisions [being] taken by the general assemblies of the workers, . . . [which] were widely attended and regularly held. . . if an administrator did something which the general assembly had not authorised, he was likely to be deposed at the next meeting."¹⁸ Reports by the various committees would be examined and discussed at the general assemblies and finally introduced if the majority thought it of use. "We are not therefore facing an administrative dictatorship, but rather a functional democracy, in which all specialised works play their roles which have been settled after general examination by the assembly."¹⁹

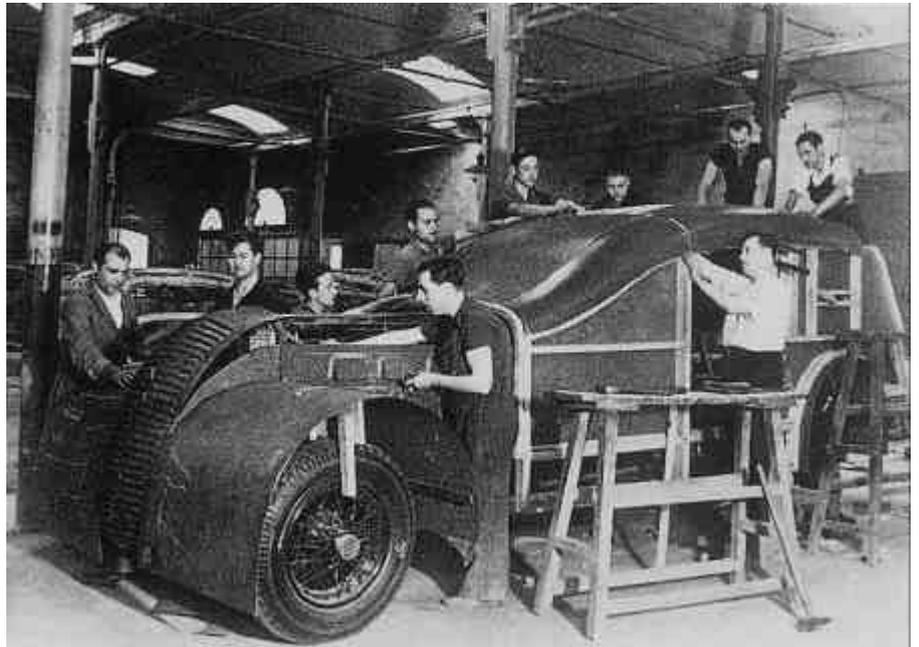
Advancing along the road of Revolution

The stage of industry-wide socialisation did not occur overnight but was a gradual and ongoing process. Nor did the industrial collectives proceed in the same manner everywhere, the degree of socialisation and the exact method of organisation varying from place to place. As mentioned in the introduction, while some work places were immediately seized by the workers, in others they gained control of their workplaces by first creating a control committee which was there to ensure the continuation of production. From this the next natural step was the take over the workplace entirely by the workers.

Initially, when the continuation of production was the most pressing task, there was little formal co-ordination between different workshops and factories. This lack of co-ordination caused many problems as Leval points out: "Local industries went through stages almost universally adopted in that revolution . . . [I]n the first instance, committees nominated by the workers employed in them [were organised]. Production and sales continued in each one. But very soon it was clear that this situation gave rise to competition between the factories. . . creating rivalries which were incompatible with the socialist and libertarian outlook. So the CNT launched the watchword: 'All industries must be ramified in the Syndicates, completely socialised, and the regime of solidarity which we have always advocated be established once and for all.'¹⁰

The need to remedy this situation - where although the workers had gained control of the workplaces the different workplaces often operated independently and in competition with each other - and to complete the socialisation process and so avoid the dangers of only partial collectivisation was a task of which many workers were keenly aware. A manifesto of the Syndicate of the wood industry published in December 1936 stresses that the lack of coordination and solidarity between workers in different factories and industries would lead to a situation where workers in more favoured and successful industries would become the new privileged, leaving those without resources to their difficulties, which in turn would lead to the creation of two classes: "the new rich and ever poor, poor."¹¹

To this effect increasing efforts were made by the collectives not to compete with each other for profits but



Vehicle being fitted with armour at the Hispano-Suiza works, Barcelona, 1936

instead to share the surpluses across whole industries. So for example the Barcelona tramways, which was particularly successful, contributed financially to the development of the other transport systems in Barcelona and helped them out of temporary difficulties. There were many cases of solidarity across industries too. In Alcoy, for example, when the printing, paper and cardboard Syndicate was experiencing difficulties the 16 other Syndicates that made up the local Federation in Alcoy gave financial assistance that enabled the printing Syndicate to survive.

However as well as bringing an anarchist society a step closer it was also a question of efficient industrial organisation. In the manifesto published by the wood industry Syndicate it was stated "The Wood Syndicate has wanted to advance not only along the road of the Revolution, but also to orientate this Revolution in the interests of our economy, of the people's economy."¹² In December 1936 a plenum of syndicates met and made analyses on the need to completely reorganise the inefficient capitalist industrial system and press onward towards complete socialisation. The report of the plenum stated:

"The major defect of most small manufacturing shops is fragmentation and lack of technical/commercial preparation. This prevents their modernisation and consolidation into better and more efficient units of production, with better facilities and co-ordination. . . . For us, socialisation must correct these deficiencies and systems of organisation in every industry. . . . To socialise an industry, we must consolidate the different

units of each branch of industry in accordance with a general and organic plan which will avoid competition and other difficulties impeding the good and efficient organisation of production and distribution. . ."¹³

The effort made to do away with the smaller, unhealthy and costly workshops and factories was an important characteristic of the industrial collectivisation process. As was the case with land cultivation, it was felt that with the running of workshops and factories "the dispersal of forces represented an enormous loss of energy, an irrational use of human labour, machinery and raw materials, a useless duplication of efforts."¹⁴ For example, in the town of Granollers "All kinds of initiatives tending to improve the operation and structure of the local economy could be attributed to...[the Syndicate]. Thus in a very short time, seven collectivised hairdressing salons were set up through its efforts, replacing an unknown number of shabby establishments. All the workshops and mini-factories on shoe production were replaced by one large factory in which only the best machines were used, and where necessary sanitary provisions for the health of the workers were made. Similar improvements were made in the engineering industry where numerous small, dark and stifling foundries were replaced by a few large working units in which air and sun were free to penetrate...Socialisation went hand in hand with rationalisation."¹⁵

The creative drive unleashed

The Barcelona Tramways

As was the case with the collectives in

the countryside, workers self-management in the cities was associated with remarkable improvements in working conditions, productivity and efficiency. Take for example the achievements of the Barcelona tramways. Just five days after the fighting had stopped, the tramway lines had been cleared and repaired and seven hundred tramcars, which was a hundred more than the usual six hundred, appeared on the road, all painted diagonally across the side in the red and black colours of the C.N.T. - F.A.I. The technical organisation of the tramways and the traffic operation was greatly improved, new safety and signalling systems were introduced and the tramway lines were straightened. One of the first measures of the collectivisation of the tramways had been the discharge of the excessively paid company executives and this then enabled the collective to reduce the fares for passengers. Wages approached basic equality with skilled workers earning 1 peseta more a day than labourers. Working conditions were greatly improved with better facilities supplied to the workers and a new free medical service was organised which served not only the Tramway workers but their families as well.

The Socialisation of Medicine

The socialisation of medicine was another outstanding achievement of the revolution. After July 19 the religious personnel who had been administering the sanitary services disappeared overnight from the hospitals, the dispensaries and other charitable institutions, making it necessary for new methods of organisation to be improvised immediately. To this effect the Syndicate for Sanitary Services was constituted in Barcelona in September 1936 and within a few months had 7000 skilled medical professional members, over 1000 of which were doctors with different specialities. Inspired by a great social ideal the aim of the Syndicate was to fundamentally reorganise the whole practice of medicine and of the Public Health Services. This Syndicate was part of the National Federation for Public Health, a section of the C.N.T. which by 1937 had 40,000 members.

The region of Catalonia was divided up into 35 centres of greater or lesser importance, depending on population density, in such a way that no village or hamlet was without sanitary protection or medical care. In one year, in Barcelona alone, six new hospitals had been created, including



Collectivisation of the trams in suburb of Ciudad Lineal, Barcelona

two military hospitals for war casualties as well as nine new sanatoria established in expropriated properties located in different parts of Catalonia. Whereas before the revolution doctors were concentrated in rich areas, they were now sent where they were needed most.

Factories and workshops...

In the factories, too, great innovations were made. Many workplaces, once in control of the workers, were converted to the production of war materials for the anti-fascist troops. This was the case of the metal industry in Catalonia which was completely rebuilt. Only a few days after July 19th, for example, the Hispano-Suiza Automobile Company was converted to the manufacture of armoured cars, ambulances, weapons, and munitions for the fighting front. Another example is the optical industry which was virtually non-existent before the revolution. The small scattered workshops that had existed before were voluntarily converted into a collective which constructed a new factory. "In a short time the factory turned out opera glasses, telemeters, binoculars, surveying instruments, industrial glassware in different colours, and certain scientific instruments. It also manufactured and repaired optical equipment for the fighting fronts. . . .What private capitalists failed to do was accomplished by the creative capacity of the members of the Optical Workers' Union of the CNT."¹⁶

A good example of the scale of some of the industrial collectives is the textile industry which functioned efficiently and employed "almost a quarter of a million textile workers in scores of factories scattered in numerous cities... The collectivisa-

tion of the textile industry shatters once and for all the legend that the workers are incapable of administering a great and complex corporation."¹⁷

One of the first steps towards building an anarchist society is the equalisation of wages. This is necessary in order to finish the divisions within the working class, divisions which only serve to weaken the class as a united whole. In the industrial collectives often this did not happen immediately and there sometimes existed relatively small differences in wages between technical and less specialised workers. Wages were decided by the workers themselves at the general assemblies of the Syndicates. When wages differences, between workers with technical responsibilities and those without, were accepted by the majority of workers this was often seen as a temporary measure to avoid provoking conflicts at this stage of the revolution and to ensure at all costs the smooth continuation of production. Highly paid executive wages, however, were abolished and ex-bosses given the option of leaving or working as one of the regular workers, which they often accepted.

With private profit as the main motivating factor in the organisation of industry gone, industries could be reorganised in a more efficient and rational manner. For example, there were many electricity generation stations scattered all around Catalonia which produced small and insignificant outputs and which, although suited to private interest, were not in the public interest at all. The electricity supply system was completely reorganised, with some of the inefficient

stations closed. In the end this meant that the saving in labour could be used on improvements such as a new barrage near Flix constructed by 700 workers which resulted in a considerable increase in the available electricity.

Participation of women in the collectives

One major change brought about during the revolution was the large scale incorporation of women into the workforce. The CNT began seriously to push for the unionisation of women workers. In the textile industry, piecework for women was abolished and homeworkers incorporated into the factories, which generally meant improvement of wages and hours worked. The responsibility for childcare and housework was, however, still left to women and many women found it difficult to balance their multiple roles. Sometimes childcare was provided by the collectives. For example, the wood and building trades union in Barcelona as well as building a recreational area with a swimming pool, also reconverted a church into a day-care centre and school for workers' children.

Mujeres Libres, the women's anarchist organisation, organised secciones de trabajo with responsibilities for specific trades and industries which cooperated with relevant CNT syndicates. These secciones de trabajos helped set up childcare centres in factories and workshops as well as running schools and training programs to prepare women for work in factories. These training programs helped women access work which had previously been restricted to men. For example, one of the first women licensed to drive trams in Barcelona describes her work there: "They took people on as apprentices, mechanics, and drivers, and really taught us what to do. If you could only have seen the faces of the passengers [when women began serving as drivers], I think the companeros in Transport, who were so kind and cooperative toward us, really got a kick out of that."¹⁸

However it is not true to say that women achieved equality with men in the industrial collectives. Wage differentials between men and women continued to exist. Also, except for a few exceptional cases, women were under-represented in the factory committees and other elected positions within the collectives. The continuation of women's traditional domestic roles was no

doubt one of the factors which contributed in preventing the more active participation of women in the collectives and these issues, as well as others that effect women in partic-



Food Distribution, Barcelona, August 1936

ular (such as maternity leave), were not prioritised. Although large numbers of women entered the workforce during the revolution, equal participation in the paid workforce was not achieved and because the anarchosindicalist vision of social organisation was based around the workforce, people not in the industrial collectives were effectively excluded from social and economic decision making.

Difficulties and Weaknesses

Limitations

The revolution in the countryside was more advanced than the collectivisations that took place in the industrial areas. Many of the agricultural collectives succeeded in reaching a stage of libertarian communism, operating on the principle "from each according to ability, to each according to need". Both consumption and production were socialised. "In them one did not come across different material standards of life or rewards, no conflicting interests of more or less separated groups."¹⁹ This was not the case with the collectivisation in the towns and cities, where aspects of the capitalist money economy still existed along with a fair proportion of the bourgeoisie, state institutions and traditional political parties. Collectivisation was limited to workers' self-management of their workplaces within the framework of capitalism, with workers running factories, selling goods and sharing the profits. This led Gaston Leval to describe the industrial collectives as a sort of "a workers' neo-capitalism, a self-management straddling capitalism and socialism, which we maintain would not have occurred had the Revolution been able to

extend itself fully under the direction of our Syndicates."²⁰

What happened...?

The revolution, however, was unable to extend itself due mainly to the fact that while the rank and file seized control of the factories and pursued the work of socialisation, there was a failure to consolidate these gains politically. Instead of abolishing the state at the outbreak of the revolution, when it had lost all credibility and existed only in name, the state was allowed to continue to exist, with the class collaboration of the C.N.T leadership (in the name of anti-fascist unity) lending it legitimacy. Thus, there existed a period of dual power, where the workers had a large element of control in the factories and streets but where the state was slowly able to rebuild its power base until it could move against the revolution and take power back. The economic shortcomings of the revolution: the fact that the financial system was not socialised, that collectivisation lacked unity on a national level, that the industrial collectives did not go further than, at best, co-ordination at the level of industry, is inextricably linked to this major political mistake and betrayal of anarchist principles.

In order to achieve libertarian communism with production based on need and communal ownership of means of production as well as of what is produced it was necessary to replace the entire capitalist financial system with an alternative socialised economy based on federative unity of the entire workforce, and a means of making collective decisions for the entire economy. This required the setting up of workers congresses and a federal coordinating structure which would unify collectives all over the country and allow for effective coordination and planning for the economy as a whole. This new system of economic and political organisation must replace the government and capitalist market economy. As Kropotkin said, "a new form of economic organisation will necessarily require a new form of political structure."²¹ However, as long as the capitalist political structure - state power - remained, the new economic organisation could not develop and full coordination of the economy was held back.

Counter Revolution

The industrial collectives were hindered from advancing in the same

manner as the agricultural collectives "as a consequence of contradictory factors and of opposition created by the coexistence of social currents emanating from different social classes."²² In the industrial town of Alcoy, for example, where the Syndicates had immediately gained control of all industries without exception, the organisation of production was excellent. However Leval points out: "the weak point was, as in other places, the organisation for distribution. Without the opposition of tradesmen and the political parties, all alarmed by the threat of complete socialisation, who combated this "too revolutionary" programme, it would have been possible to do to better....For the socialist, republican and communist politicians actively sought to prevent our success, even to restoring the old order or maintaining what was left of it."²³ The counter-revolutionary forces were able to unite in their opposition to the revolutionary changes taking place in Spain and use the power of the state to attack the collectives. From the start the State remained in control of certain resources, such as the country's gold reserves. Through its control of the gold reserves and its monopoly of credit the Republican state was able to take aspects of the economy out of the control of the working class and thus undermine the progress of the revolution.

In order to gain control over the collectives, to minimize their scope and to oppose moves made by the working class in the direction of economic unification and overall economic regulation from below, the Catalan State issued the Collectivisation Decree in October 1936. The decree which "legalised" the collectives, prevented them from freely developing into libertarian communism by obliging each workshop, and each factory to sell that which it produced, independently. The state attempted to control the collectives through the decree by creating administrative

committees which were answerable to the Ministry of Economy. The decrees also allowed only factories of 100 or more workers to be collectivised.

As mentioned earlier, the C.N.T. militants fought against this system and for greater inter-workplace co-ordination. In their press and within meet-



ings in their unions and collectives they worked at convincing their fellow workers of the dangers of partial collectivisation, of the necessity of keeping the control of production entirely in their own hands and of eliminating the workers' bureaucracy which the collectivisation decree attempted to create. They were partially successful, and the industrial collective tended towards greater socialisation. However, they suffered from the increasing difficulty of obtaining raw materials as well as from the continuing counter-revolutionary attacks. Attempts were made to sabotage the functioning of the collectives. These included deliberate disruptions of urban-rural exchanges and the systematic denial of working capital and raw materials to many collectives, even war industries, until

they agreed to come under state control.

Then in May 1937, street battles broke out as government troops moved against urban collectives such as the CNT controlled telephone exchange in Barcelona. In August 1938, all war-related industries were placed under full government control.

"In all cases where the collectives were undermined, there were substantial drops in both productivity and morale: a factor which surely contributed to the final defeat of the Spanish Republic by the Francoist forces in 1939."²⁴

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the Industrial revolution in Spain, it demonstrated clearly that the working class are perfectly capable of running factories, workshops and public services without bosses or managers dictating to them. It proved that anarchist methods of organising, with decisions made from the bottom up, can work effectively in large scale industry involving the coordination of thousands of workers across many different cities and towns. The revolution also gives us a glimpse of the creative and constructive power of ordinary people once they have some control over their lives. The Spanish working class not only kept production going throughout the war but in many cases managed to increase production. They improved working conditions and created new techniques and processes in their workplaces. They created, out of nothing, a war industry without which the war against fascism could not have been fought. The revolution also showed that without the competition bred by capitalism, industry can be run in a much more rational manner. Finally it demonstrated how the organised working class inspired by a great ideal have the power to transform society. ♦

(1) Gaston Leval. Collectives in Spain.

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/leval/collectives.html

(2) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. chapter 2, pg54.

(3) Kevin Doyle. The Revolution in Spain. http://www.struggle.ws/talks/spain_feb99.html

(4) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 12. pg 254

(5) *ibid.* chapter 4. pg 80.

(6) Flood et al. Augustin Souchy cited in. I.8.3.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/sec18.html#seci83>

(7) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 11. pg234.

(8) Robert Alexander cited in the Anarchist FAQ. I.8.3.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/sec18.html#seci83>

(9) Gaston Leval. Collectives in Spain.

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/leval/collectives.html

(10) Gaston Leval quoted in the anarchist FAQ. I.8.4

(11) From the Manifesto of the CNT Syndicate of the wood industry, quoted in Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Gaston Leval. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 11. pg231.

(12) *ibid.* ch 11. pg230.

(13) Cited by Souchy, cited in the Anarchist FAQ, section I.8.3.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/sec18.html#seci83>

(14) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 12. pg259

(15) *ibid.* ch 13. pg287.

(16) The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-management in the Spanish Revolution, 1936-1939, ed. Sam Dolgoff. Free Life Editions. 1974. ch 7.

http://www.struggle.ws/spain/coll_innov.html

(17) Augustin Souchy, Collectivization in Catalonia. http://www.struggle.ws/spain/coll_catalonia_dolgoff.html

(18) Pura Perez Arcos cited by Martha A. Ackelsberg. Free Women of Spain, anarchism and the struggle for the emancipation of women. Indiana University Press. 1991. ch 5. pg 125.

(19) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 11. pg227.

(20) *ibid.* ch 11. pg 227.

(21) Kropotkin cited in the anarchist FAQ. I.8.14.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/sec18.html#seci814>

(22) Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution. Freedom Press. 1975. ch 11. pg227

(23) *ibid.* ch 11. pg239.

(24) Lucien Van Der Walt. The Collectives in Revolutionary Spain.

http://www.struggle.ws/spain/coll_l.html

The trouble with Islam



The September 11 attacks, the Afghan war that followed from it and the ongoing war in Israel/Palestine have once again raised the issue of Islam in the minds of many anarchists in Ireland and Britain. Not just because of the role Islam has in shaping those conflicts but also because militant Islam has become a far more noticeable presence on solidarity demonstrations.

by Andrew Flood

In Ireland we have seen the Hezbollah flag flown on demonstrations in Dublin and chants of 'God is Great' raised. On some London demonstrations it has been reported that chants of "Slay the Jews" and "Death to the socialists" have been raised. Another report on the same demonstration revealed that "ultra-reactionaries of such organisations as Al Muhajiroun, ... held placards reading, 'Palestine is Muslim'. They chanted, "Skud, Skud Israel" and "Gas, gas Tel Aviv" .. In Trafalgar Square they hurled abuse (and a few missiles) at Tirza Waisel of the Israeli group, Just Peace."¹



Hezbollah flag (middle), Dublin, March 2002

The left in general has not responded to this. Some groups like the British SWP have gone so far as to describe left criticism of the Islamic religion as 'Islamophobia' echoing the official line of their government which insists "The real Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance and understanding." While there is a real need for the left to defend people who are Muslims from state and non-state victimisation in the aftermath of 9-11 this should not

at any time imply a defence of the Islamic religion. Freedom of religion must also allow freedom from religion! At a SWP organised anti-war meeting in Birmingham, England it was reported that Islamic fundamentalists there "segregated the meeting, guiding/intimidating Muslim women into a women's only section, apprehended a Muslim looking woman because she had allegedly been drinking, prevented the critics of Muslim fundamentalists from entering the meeting and used violence against them."²

The left in Ireland has been unsure how to rise to this challenge, although on the Palestine solidarity march in Dublin on April 27th 2002 anarchists did march with placards reading 'End the occupation: Support Israeli refuseniks' in English, Hebrew and Arabic and chanted 'No Gods, no Masters, no States, no Wars'. But otherwise fundamentalist chants have remained unchallenged.

Over 130 years ago the anarchist Micheal Bakunin wrote "I reverse the phrase of Voltaire, and say that, if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him." Writing of the Christian churches in Europe, he said "In talking to us of God they propose, they desire, to elevate us, emancipate us, ennoble us, and, on the contrary, they crush and degrade us. With the name of God they imagine that they can establish fraternity among men, and, on the contrary, they create pride, contempt; they sow discord, hatred, war; they establish slavery." These words today are applicable to Islam.

This hostility to organised religion and the promotion of a material rather than spiritual understanding of the world is common to most of the anarchist movement, although there are exceptions. It was developed in the face of Christian state-church systems that often bore similarities to the Islamic State rule found today. Anarchist hostility to religion tended to be strongest in those countries where the church and state were almost inseparable, in particular in Spain.

Islam in general believes that no "division between matters social, political and religious should exist." The idea of Islamic government and Islamic law is not something confined to what is called 'Islamic fundamentalism' but is an expected belief of all Muslims. Under Shari'a (Islamic) law the penalty for Apostasy (Muslims who reject Islam, for instance they "might state that the universe has always existed from eternity"), is execution for men and life imprisonment for women. So, if anything, Islam today attempts to maintain a much tighter control of the thoughts in people's heads than Christianity has done since the time of Galileo.

Like most 'holy books' [the Quoran] is full of absurdities and cruelties

Islam insists that the Quran is almost entirely a document dictated by God to Muhammad. Like most 'holy books' it is full of absurdities and cruelties which are well documented on the web by Muslim apostates. For instance in Quran 5:33 God commands "The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut

off, or will be expelled out of the land." God also dictates that women are second class citizens, in Quran 4:34 he dictates "Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted, Great."

Of course anyone who is familiar with the Old Testament of the Christian and Jewish religions will know there is nothing in the Quran that is any worse than what is found there. Even the Christian New Testament contains justifications for slavery e.g. Matthew: 24:46 "Blessed is that slave whom the master finds at work when he comes. ... But if that evil slave ... begins to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with drunkards, then the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not foresee, and will cut him in two, and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The difference is that the attempt to impose a Christian state has been defeated almost everywhere. The fundamentalist movements that seek to promote the idea may be influential (as shown by their attacks in the US on the teaching of evolution) but in general do not attempt to impose their complete religious program.

Blessed is that slave whom the master finds at work when he comes

Matthew 24:46

With Islam however we see the continued existence of religious states in Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan to name three. We also see a growing movement that seeks to create new Islamic states, even in multi-faith countries like Lebanon, Egypt and Israel/Palestine and which actively seeks to impose Islamic law on Muslim communities everywhere. In Northern Nigeria this has resulted in high profile cases where Islamic

courts have sentenced women to death by stoning for 'adultery'. About 1 in 5 of the world's population is Muslim.

The general label applied to this movement is Islamic fundamentalism. It's not a great label for a wide range of reasons, not least because it lumps together some very different



Muslim pilgrims perform the Hajj in Mecca

trends and ignores the fact that many of the most objectionable elements are part of mainstream Islam. That said I'm going to use it anyway because there are no better alternatives that people will readily understand.

The rise of fundamentalism in the modern period owes much to the struggle against colonialism and the failure of the Arab nationalist projects to deliver a better life for the working class, including the peasantry of the region. Frequently it is based on a revolt against colonial control on the one hand and the westernisation of the country on the other. The failure of successful national liberation struggles to relieve the desperate poverty of the masses on the one hand and the obvious growing enrichment of the westernised elites on the other leads easily to the idea that the answer lies in a return to 'traditional values'.

The first of these movements to be successful was Wahhabism which brought Ibn Saud to power in what was to become Saudi Arabia. In this case, as with the early spread of Islam across North Africa, Wahhabism was to provide essential glue to hold together a society created by conquest in a manner similar to nationalism. Wahhabism was imposed by force with massacres on the taking of Mecca and widespread destruction of religious sites that were considered un-Islamic. Religious police raided homes, beating those they suspected of smoking tobacco.

Wahhabism was also pretty much the only genuine 'primitivist' version of Islam as it was anti-industrial. When they rose against Ibn Saud in 1927 one reason for their revolt was Saud's allowing of telephones into the country! Modern fundamentalists may talk of a return to traditional values but the societies they seek to create include aspects of advanced modern technology, in particular if it is of military use!

Saudi came to play a similar role in relation to the export of fundamentalism that the USSR played in the spread of Leninism. Particularly with the growth of the oil industry in Saudi large sums of money were provided to finance the infrastructure of fundamentalist groups in other countries and a huge network of religious schools in Saudi itself. Saudi, like Moscow, became the place of training, support and refuge for fundamentalist activists. And funds could be exported which provided schools, meeting places and even religious based welfare systems to the increasingly desperate working class of the cities and countryside in the Arab world. In the conditions of desperate poverty that exist this creates the infrastructure that fundamentalism grows out of.

One Lebanese Marxist, writing of this and the failure of the somewhat more secular Arab nationalism of Nassar, described the situation. "Then came the October war [against Israel] with its parade of intense Islamic propaganda, and the oil boom which



enabled Libya and especially Saudi Arabia to distribute their petrodollars to the integralist (fundamentalist) groups everywhere in order to undermine left-wing extremists, or pro-Soviet groups as in Syria. Even at the time when the modernist statist bourgeois faction was still credible, Saudi Arabia was used as the prototype by repressed or persecuted Islamic archaism; and its emergence following the October war on the ruins of Nassar's Egypt as the leader of the Arab world gave the Brotherhoods of Sunni Islam not only more subsidies, but the model of an Islam true to itself. The propaganda

pounded out by western media - depicting Saudi Arabia as the new giant with the power of life and death over western civilisation - stimulated, in old and young alike, the nostalgic old desire for the return of Islam to its former strength."³



The role of the west in relation to fundamentalism has been quite complex. Up to the Iranian revolution in 1979 it was simple, promoting fundamentalism was seen as a way of advancing the western agenda by undermining Soviet influence and the various nationalist leaders of the region who wanted to re-direct some of the wealth towards development. "M. Copland, the former chief of the CIA in the Middle East, revealed in his book *The Game of Nations* that from the 1950s the CIA began to encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to counteract the communist influence in Egypt." Even after the Iranian revolution, "French president Giscard d'Estaing, confided to members of his cabinet before taking the plane for the Gulf in March 1980: "To combat Communism we have to oppose it with another ideology. In the West, we have nothing. This is why we must support Islam."⁴

The facts of western support for the Afghan mujheedeens and the more limited support for the Taliban that followed have been so well documented since 9/11 that I don't intend to repeat them here. But it is important to realise that this does not mean that the fundamentalists are simply a creation of the west that has gotten out of control. They have their own dynamic and their own wealthy backers in Saudi Arabia. Lack of western support would have hurt their war against the Soviet occupation but the war would still have gone on.

Fundamentalism remains a mass movement. In almost all of North Africa and the Middle East it is the only mass movement that threatens the stability of the regimes there in any way. It is nakedly hostile to the left in all its forms, Hezbollah for instance has carried out attacks on

even the tame Lebanese Communist Party, bombing its offices. The Iranian revolution in 1979 saw a movement of workers councils (Shora) emerge that sought to take over the management of production. "The regime introduced a law aimed at undermining worker self-management by banning shora involvement in management affairs - while at the same time trying to force class collaboration by insisting that management must be allowed to participate in the shoras."⁵ Since then, according to the Iranian Revolutionary Socialists' League, the "following groups have all been attacked throughout the reign of the mullahs:

- workers, trade unionists, left-wing and socialist activists
- women and women's/feminist groups
- national and religious minorities
- political oppositionists, including various monarchist, Islamic and liberal groups
- writers, journalists, artists, intellectuals and students;
- peasants and tribal groups;
- homosexuals and others who follow an 'un-Islamic' life-style."⁶

For opportunistic reasons sections of the western left are happy to build alliances with Islamic fundamentalist groups that are not only essentially uncritical but that discourage others from raising criticisms. This is sometimes defended by the straightforward observance that such groups oppose 'western imperialism' and in countries with large Muslim populations sometimes succeed in attract-

ing the masses to their organisations.

The problem with this position is that it fails to recognise the hostility of such groups to the left - a hostility that includes physical attacks and murder- in the countries where they are strong. This is not terribly different from the situation with fascist groups in the west. Of course for the western left with no basis in immigrant Muslim communities this is easy to ignore - they are not the targets of such activities themselves.

Anarchists have a long and proud tradition of fighting the power of organised religion, including in countries like Spain fighting fascist gangs formed on a religious basis. While we recognise the freedom of people to hold a religion we also recognise that there has to be a freedom from religion - an idea that runs against the basis of Islam. Anarchists in the Middle East and beyond will need to determine for themselves the most effective ways of counteracting the influence of the fundamentalists there. In the west we can at least make sure their attempts to impose themselves on the immigrant communities are opposed. ♦

- 1) Peter Manson, weekly worker 433, May 2002.
- 2) Salman, ISF journal, November 2001. <http://www.isf.org.uk>
- 3) Latif Lakhdar, Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle East. (1981)
- 4) ibid
- 5) Michael Schmidt, Religious fundamentalist regimes: a lesson from the Iranian revolution 1978-1979. Zabalaza Journal, South Africa, Number 2, March 2002
- 6) <http://www.kargar.org/english.htm>

<http://struggle.ws/stopthewar.html>



This article, written by a member of the American anarchist organisation, NEFAC, responds to an article by Ray Cunningham in Red and Black Revolution no. 6.. Both it and the following one, *Anti-capitalist protest: global and local*, were written last year. Unfortunately this publication is a year late (our apologies) and some of the references may appear dated. However, the central points of each article are just as relevant and valid now.

Has the Black Block tactic reached the end of its usefulness?



As class struggle anarchists who recognize the importance of a diversity of tactics in order to attack Capital, the State, and oppression in an effective manner, we see the black bloc as an important tool of struggle. Only one tool among many, but an important one nonetheless. However, this by no means implies that we feel it to be in any way above criticism. Indeed, we are very troubled by how black blocs often operate, the manner in which actions are sometimes carried out, and the direction that some black bloc elements seem to want to head in.

by Severino (Barricada Collective)

It is for this reason that we were glad to see the text by our comrades from the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM). Particularly refreshing was the fact that, unlike many other texts critical of the black bloc, this one was clearly written in a comradely, honest, and constructive fashion. This is the only way in which an effective and useful dialogue on the subject can be had, and our response is with the same spirit and intentions in mind. With that said, we do in fact have several important disagreements with the WSM text, and will attempt to clarify some of our positions in this article.

Has The Black Bloc tactic reached the end of its usefulness?

This is the first question posed by the WSM article, and it is a question (and sometime assertion) that we are starting to hear quite often in some anarchist circles. The reasoning behind it tends to vary, involving anything from the symbolic nature of the confrontations black blocs often engage in, to issues about whether or not it can serve as a tool to encourage empowerment, self-organization and the construction of dual power. In the case of the WSM text, the argument is

centered to a large extent around the issue of constantly heightened security and enlarged police presence at large summit type events, which hinders the ability of the black bloc to act in an effective manner. In our opinion, this argument is flawed on two important levels.

The first, is that it places all the responsibility for the failure, or at least controversial nature, of several recent black blocs on the actions of the police. To us, while indeed greater preparation and numbers on behalf of the police are part of the problem, they are actually a much lesser concern than the role played by the opportunist, reformist, and moralist tendencies in the "movement" in isolating the black bloc, and the tactical consequences for us of their actions.

In both Quebec City and Prague, resounding successes in our opinion, the police knew to expect a black bloc, often made reference to how dangerous it was in the press, and tried to stop black bloc participants from arriving. There was no element of surprise, just as in Genoa. However, the difference between those two mobilizations and Genoa, was not the police, but rather the relationship between militant anarchists in the black bloc and the larger organizing groups.

In Prague and Quebec City, through INPEG and CLAC respectively, the space of activists choosing to use militant tactics was respected, allowing for mutual cooperation and coordination in the days before the action. In both cases this took the shape of different zones for particular types of action or levels of risk, thus allowing all tactics to work together effectively and complement each other, while lessening internal strife. However, when organizers try to isolate black bloc anarchists in order to gain favor with the press, politicians, and cops

problems will inevitably arise, hindering the ability of all involved to act in an effective and respectful manner.

This is exactly what occurred in Genoa with the actions of the Social Forum. The GSF divided the entire eastern part of the city (the only part reasonably accessible to demonstrators) into three blocs for the main day of action, July 20th. These were the Network for Global Rights, composed of some moderate social centers and grass-roots trade unions; the civil disobedience bloc, composed of Ya Basta!, the Communist youth, and a few others; and the pacifist/White hands bloc, primarily composed of Lilliput network people. All these blocs were within the GSF structure and had agreed to a "no sticks, no stones, no fire" clause. A space for those with militant tactics was nowhere to be found. What was implied? That we should go elsewhere. When asked why this was, GSF people responded with the very shaky excuse that, since anarchists were not in the GSF, they were simply not taken into account. Furthermore, when anarchists began meeting, to address the problem and begin effective organizing in Carlini stadium (Ya Basta! headquarters) it was immediately made clear by the Ya Basta! people in charge that they would have to go somewhere else. Finally, to top it all off, even though the GSF claimed to respect and desire to work with groups and people who chose to go outside of its structure, only a few hours after the posters for the International Genoa Offensive (i.e. black bloc) had been put up at the convergence center, people wearing GSF staff passes could be seen taking them down. There was no co-ordination, no respect, and no solidarity.

Despite this, black bloc participants did manage to coalesce and hold several mass meetings beforehand. However, since the GSF refused to co-ordinate efforts, or even accept the black bloc as a legitimate section of the mobilization, choosing instead to defame and slander, on the day itself people with very differing tactics found themselves in the same geographic locations and the inevitable problems ensued, with black bloc members being accused of being police officers, being the tool of the police to justify repression, mindless hooligans, Nazis, etc.

All this was not a simple accident, but

rather the logical conclusion of the relationship between the reformist and authoritarian sections of the anti-globalization "movement," in this case exemplified by Ya Basta! and ATTAC (under the umbrella of the Genoa Social Forum), and the revolutionary anarchist movement.

The fact is, these reformists and opportunists are merely using the anti-globalization "movement" as a vehicle to increase their power and influence and gain their so badly desired "seat at the table" of global capitalism. At one point they needed anarchists and direct action as a tool to gain attention in the media and assert themselves as part of the debate on the globalization of Capital. With this achieved, the relationship between them and us has radically changed, and it is this that has made the difference at the large mobilizations, not the role of the police.

**we are indeed an
ungovernable force
content with
nothing less
than a total
social revolution**



We, as anarchists, are not interested in watered down demonstrations, false declarations of war, or ritualistic spectacles. We are not interested in, and believe there to be no such thing as, common ground for dialogue with the rulers and exploiters of the world. Likewise, we have no interest in political maneuvers and schemes. We are indeed an "ungovernable force", content with nothing less than a total social revolution with the aim of creating a new society based on the principles of mutual aid, workers' self-management, decentralization, direct democracy, freedom, and communism.

As such, we are a danger to the reformists and opportunists. We are a bad influence on the drones, we ruin their parties, destroy their spectacles and rituals, we expose realities which they seek to hide, and most

importantly, by truly confronting the State and capitalism we make their phony "wars" all the more real everyday. The politicians and reformists in the anti-globalization "movement" realize this, and have for this reason begun treating us as their enemies, never hesitating to try to isolate us, hand us over to the police, or send their "pacifist thugs" to physically attack anarchists. Furthermore, a massive whitewashing of history has begun which intends to sell the lie that the anti-globalization "movement" has grown despite the negative influences of militant anarchists, when in fact it has grown precisely because of us.

In light of all this many comrades are starting to see "anti-globalization politicians" as the enemies that they are, but their suggested solution to the problem is simply to withdraw from the anti-globalization struggle, and particularly the mass mobilizations. We feel that this approach is both incorrect and dangerous, as it would only serve to further isolate anarchists and anti-authoritarians, while at the same time leaving the road wide open for the total co-option of the tide of discontent with capitalism that is currently sweeping much of the world.

In opposition to this, we suggest a battle against these elements within the framework of the anti-globalization "movement" on multiple fronts which include the following:

- Combating the constant attempts of whitewashing history which seek to attribute the emergence and influence of the international movement of resistance to capital to the work of the mainstream NGOs and political parties.
- Constantly denouncing through propaganda and example those who seek to manipulate the popular rejection of the current system in order to advance their own ambitions of power. We must make clear that reformists, the vast majority of NGOs, mainstream trade unions, and 'institutionalized oppositions' are enemies, not only of anarchists, but of all those who struggle for the creation of a radically different world.
- Clearly denouncing all those who seek to reign in and institutionalize the growing tide of resistance and vigorously work to expose as the enemies that they are all those who seek to 'dialogue' and/or find com-

mon ground with' the exploiters of the world (for example those planning to 'debate' with the IMF). There is no debate to be had, and no possible common ground. Only total rejection and war.

- Constantly go where they go. We must ruin their parties, crash their debates, and turn their futile attempts to appeal to power into insurrectionary events where people are encouraged to think and act autonomously, thus freeing themselves from the chains, if not yet of Capital and the State, at least of the reformist party/NGO apparatus. This way we simultaneously present alternatives (be it by speaking at their events, radicalizing a demo, breaking a window, or simply distributing a flier) and avoid the political and tactical trap of isolation which they place for us in order to discredit us and leave us open to state repression.

- Making clear that, while black blocs and other forms of mass militant confrontation are important aspects of the anarchist struggle, they are certainly not the only ones. Anarchists, and anarchist influences, are everywhere in the resistance (as medics, in Indymedia, in non-violent civil disobedience, as cooks, and everywhere else) and anarchists accept and embrace people of all tactical outlooks as long as they are respectful of others.

- Most importantly, we must build, develop, and coherently present the anarchist alternatives to the project of the parties, NGOs, and reformist unions by continuing to develop the anarchist culture of resistance and self-management. From autonomous collectives of struggle on particular issues, to squats, to cooperatives, revolutionary unions, federations, community power organizations, and all other projects which serve to render the NGO / party / boss / union / state / capital apparatus irrelevant while at the same time building anarchist alternatives.

In order to be successful in this task, we will need all the tools and tactics available to us, and this very much includes the black bloc. Clearly, there are reforms that need to be made in the black bloc if we are to heighten its effectiveness and defend against some of the problems that are beginning to arise (infiltration, contradictory actions, etc.), but that is a different article altogether.



The Black Bloc Beyond Anti-Globalization Protest

The second level on which we find the arguments made in the WSM text flawed is that of what context black blocs are viewed as operating, and being effective, in. The analysis of black blocs in the WSM text seems to be centered wholly around the anti-globalization "movement," something which to us (and we know that the WSM agrees), should only represent one part of the anarchist struggle. We believe that the black bloc should be a tactic that transcends struggles. In fact, we feel the largest potential for future black bloc lies precisely in not being limited to summits, but becoming a regular staple of community and workplace struggles, adding an often much needed militancy and power to such conflicts.

The black bloc carries enormous potential as a tool that, rather than being limited to primarily symbolic action around mass convergences, is used to reinforce class struggle at the grassroots level. Indeed, this is not something unheard of, as, for example, the historical significance of the role of black blocs and street-fighting in the struggles for housing, against gentrification, and against street-level fascism in Europe (primarily, but not limited to, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy) and in struggles in South Korea (not waged by anarchists, but in terms of tactics, clearly black blocs) cannot be denied. Other recent examples include the tactics employed by the Anti-Expulsions Collective in Paris during the immigrants' struggle of '97-98, which included storming police offices, using mass militant action to stop trains being used to deport immigrants, and inflicting massive damages on hotels used as temporary

immigrant detentions centers, or the black bloc in the U.S. which recently took action against Taco Bell in solidarity with workers struggling for union recognition.

These are all clear examples of black blocs, or at the very least black bloc tactics, being used to reinforce class struggle through the use of methods and tactics that other people, for a variety of reasons, are either unwilling or unable to use. This by no means is to imply that other tactics cannot be as, or more, militant. Nor are we arguing that black blocs are any sort of vanguard of struggle. Clearly, this would be an exceedingly narrow conception of militant struggle. We see them rather as an appendage to struggles that, because of its militant and anonymous character, can at times be used to advance and intensify struggles.

Revolutionary Cells?

The WSM text, in our opinion, presents us with a false dichotomy by pitting effective and organized direct action against mass actions of a participatory nature. As anarchists, we believe firmly in the ability of people to take mass militant action in a fashion which is simultaneously effective and participatory, democratic and decentralized.

Again, drawing from our experiences in the anti-globalization "movement," we can see examples of incidences where, despite all the harassment from the forces of repression (both the state's and the anti-globalization "movement's") many hundreds of militant anarchists were able to come together and organize their actions in a participatory and democratic manner via general assemblies. This was the case in Prague, Gothenburg, and

Genoa, to give some recent examples, where the black (or blue as the case may be) blocs were organized in an open manner with very broad (as far the anarchist movement goes) participation and involvement.

This said, we do agree that the real victory lies not in the "military" feat of shutting down this or that summit or gathering of the rich, but rather in forcing them to cower behind thousands of armed thugs, denying them legitimacy, and bringing forward the contradictions that exist in class society. We further agree that the most important and significant aspect of mass mobilizations lies in the large scale experiences of self-management and direct democracy that they provide, not only for us as anarchists, but for those who believe these ideas to be dreams unworkable in reality. So indeed, we must strive to maintain that character of participation and anti-authoritarian democracy. However, again, to us, it is the stifling influence of the political elites that seek to build their future on the back of "anti-globalization" (the ATTACs, Ya Bastas. and Bonos of the world) that is killing that spirit, not black blocs or militant confrontation.

All this having been said, we do believe that there are also times when other tactics and methods of organization are warranted, because of the risks involved or other security concerns. We firmly believe that actions of this sort can still be very much positive in the advancement of anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas when organized with a strong regard for security culture, via networks of trusted affinity groups, and in line with anarchist principles of voluntary association. The critical difference between anarchists organizing in this fashion and Marxist-Leninists is the conception that the particular group has of itself. Evidently, Marxist-

Leninists see armed or underground formations as revolutionary vanguards. On the other hand, anarchist or anti-authoritarian influenced groupings try to serve as appendages to struggles, to complement them through other means, much like the Autonomous Commandos of the Basque country, who carried out actions to aid striking workers or against the forces of repression, or Direct Action and the Wimmins Fire Brigade in Canada, who also sought to advance ongoing struggles by bringing attention to them, while at the same time radicalizing their character.

In Conclusion...

We are indeed opposed to the fetishization of the black bloc, which leads, among other things, to the phenomenon of black bloc spectators as well as "black bloc as fashion." We further agree that the black bloc, being but one tool of many available to us, is not appropriate for all circumstances. Indeed, for it to remain effective, it is imperative that it be used intelligently. Also, like the WSM, we see some serious problems developing within the black bloc tactic that merit serious attention and open discussion.

However, while we cannot stress enough that we are open to discussions of militant tactics and strategy, we feel that discussion around the issue is often tackled from an exceedingly narrow and short-sighted perspective. This often leads to an analysis that we deem to be significantly problematic and that could have important consequences for anarchism as a serious political movement.

First, this analysis views black blocs solely within the context of the anti-globalization struggle, and more pre-

cisely, the mass convergences that often come with it. To us, these mainly provide outlets for symbolic action, while the greatest strength of black blocs, when used appropriately and organized effectively, is real direct action used to advance day to day class struggle, in the form of strikes, housing occupations, anti-fascist struggles, immigrants' rights struggles, etc., all of which are fronts on which the black bloc tactic has already proven its efficiency and value.

Furthermore, this line of thinking places a dichotomy between effective militant action and participatory and directly democratic forms of self-managed struggle and organization. This is dangerous in that it threatens to dissuade anarchists from using what is very likely our most powerful weapon: our disregard for legality and our willingness to engage in militant mass confrontations, coupled with confidence in the ability of people to organize themselves to take back power and control over their lives.

Finally, by identifying the battle between police and militant elements as the prime motivation for the increasing difficulty of revolutionary anarchists to find a place for themselves in the anti-globalization "movement," this outlook ignores the quite blatant reality of a "movement" being rapidly hijacked. A "movement" being hijacked by power seeking reformists and opportunists, who need to isolate and discredit revolutionaries and all those who maintain that a profound change in society is not only desirable, but possible and viable, in order to harness the growing power of the anti-globalization backlash. These are the Lenins, Trotskys, and Stalins of our day, willing and able to persecute, betray, discredit, and isolate anarchists in order to advance their ends. Movement criticism and analysis are indeed important things, but this is a case where looking inwards by placing responsibility for the State's escalation of repression on militant tactics risks making us blind to the challenges we face from within the "united front" of anti-capitalist groups. This has been one of the most painful lessons of anarchist history, and if we are truly striving for an authentic anti-authoritarian revolution, rather than another change of masters, we should endeavour to not make the same mistake again. ♦



Anti-capitalist protest - global and local

Where to Now?

Debate on the effectiveness of the Black Bloc tactic could well go on forever. At the end of the day, in relation to the question of why its effectiveness has waned somewhat, it is probably true to say that both the original article by Ray Cunningham and the article in this magazine by Severino have some of the answers.

by Gregor Kerr

What is not in dispute is the fact that the big 'set-piece' anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation demonstrations appear to be becoming less effective and attracting less media coverage than earlier demos such as Seattle, Prague and Genoa.

June 2002 saw one of these demonstrations - against the EU summit in Seville, Spain. A general strike across the Spanish state on Thursday 20th June was a resounding success. Posters, graffiti and banners advertised the general strike in all the major towns and cities. Even on the tourist coast most shops and restaurants closed. Large demonstrations of 100,000 and more took place in many Spanish cities, with the Seville demo attracting up to 100,000 participants including a sizeable red and black contingent. Union figures estimated support for the strike at 84%. All of the Spanish trade unions, including the big reformist unions - the UGT which is linked to the Socialist Party and the Communist Party dominated CCOO - put a huge

effort into building for the general strike.

The June EU summit planned to set up a Europe-wide anti-immigrant police force - another brick in the wall of Fortress Europe. It further aimed to continue the project of building Europe for the bosses, a Europe where workers will be forced to compete in the 'race for the bottom' and where power will be more and more

anti-globalisation protests that avoid direct action will kill off the movement

centralised. An additional item on the agenda of specific interest to Irish workers was to find ways to force Irish voters to vote yes to the Nice treaty, which had been rejected in a first referendum twelve months previously.

Damp squib

Up to 100,000 people turned out in Seville on Saturday 22nd June to demonstrate their opposition to this agenda and to further globalisation of capital. Despite the size of the demonstration however it turned out to be something of a damp squib, having been planned from the start

as entirely non-confrontational (the demo actually taking place after the summit had concluded, thus ruling out any possibility of a blockade). This was mainly due to the fact that the protest was principally organised by the Socialist Party who are actually in government in the Andalusia region of Spain, although they are in opposition in Spain. From the start, the Socialist Party made it clear that confrontation and direct action - in reality anything which would make the demos effective - had no place in their plans.

If you were to rely on the Irish media for your information you would be forgiven for thinking that the Seville demonstration never actually happened. (Indeed the demonstrations which had taken place in Barcelona in March and had attracted an estimated 500,000 participants received just as little coverage in the mainstream media.) In fact you could have been a delegate to the EU summit in Seville and remained unaware that any protests took place. It was surely a testament to their ineffectiveness that they passed by relatively unnoticed outside of Seville.

Without doubt the reason for this lack of coverage was the absence of any form of direct action on the protests and the fact that they seemed to have reverted to the old-style stage-managed protests of pre-Seattle days. The staging of the main demonstration after the EU summit had already concluded showed that the organisers were actually going out of their way to ensure that direct action aimed at blockading the summit or at least making life slightly less comfortable for the delegates, did not happen. While the protests can be said to have had a degree of success in that the vast majority of participants were members of the local working-class, the ritualistic nonsense of staging demonstrations so far from the summit venue makes it all seem something of a waste of time.

Serious questions

The fact that the protests 21 months earlier in Prague (against the World Bank meeting, September 2000) had attracted less than 20% of the numbers who protested in Seville and yet received far more coverage - and led to much more debate in Ireland and elsewhere - raises serious questions for the movement. For us in Ireland, these questions must be answered in



Protecting the EU summit. Seville, June 2002.

the context of preparing for the EU summit due to take place here in 2004. In this regard, the domination of the protest organisation in Seville by reformists is a major problem (the effects of this are adequately dealt with in Severino's article, even though it was written before Seville).

It is certainly hard to avoid the conclusion that anti-globalisation protests that avoid direct action will kill off the movement, or at least greatly reduce participation in it. The severity of the state repression that took place at the Genoa protests in 2001 succeeded in pushing large sections of the movement onto the defensive, from the NGOs to the Trotskyists. After Genoa, many of these groups dedicated acres of newsprint to not alone distancing themselves from but also directly attacking 'direct action' protestors from the Black Bloc to the White Overalls. Since Genoa - both as a result of increased state repression and as a result of these reformists 'taking over' the organisation of protests - the protests that have taken place have adopted a passive, non-confrontational tone. The result has been that protests such as those in Brussels and Seville have seemed to be merely token.

Direct Action

This is not to say that all that is needed is for every protest to adopt Black Bloc or White Overall tactics. Indeed Genoa also demonstrated that these tactics were no answer to the increased militarised violence of the state. The Black Bloc's isolation from the rest of the protestors in Genoa meant that in the aftermath many protestors fell for the slander that it was entirely a state creation intended to provide an excuse for the repression. This despite the fact that the Italian police were to admit that they had infiltrated every section of the demonstrators. Whether Ray Cunningham's article in R&BR6 or Severino's in this magazine has the correct analysis of why the Black Bloc was so isolated in Genoa - or whether, as I suggested earlier, each of them has part of the reason - is only important in so far as it helps us to

answer a much more important question: how do we win large numbers of people away from the non-confrontational line of the Trotskyists and the



Anarchists protesting at the EU summit. Copenhagen, December 2002

reformists? And in the first instance, how do we win working-class people who are not currently part of the movement over to becoming part of the anti-capitalist struggle?

The one lesson that can certainly be learnt from the success of the anti-capitalist demos to date has been that it is possible to involve 'ordinary' working class people in coming out to participate in them. It can certainly be argued that the principal thing which has brought people out to demonstrate has been the feeling that the demos have been effective, that they have involved a degree of

wandering up and down through city streets has given people a reason for taking part. Compare these two figures, for example: in 1996, protests against the G7 Conference in Lyons were attended by about 5,000 people, 4,000 of whom were anarchists. In March 2002, 500,000 people - a very large majority of whom were ordinary working class people from the city itself - protested against the EU summit in Barcelona. This surely proves that the anti-capitalist movement has begun to attract huge numbers of ordinary working class people. The principal reason why it has done

so can be put down to the change of tactics which emerged in Seattle and Prague - direct action/confrontation has given people a feeling of power and a belief that there is a reason for protesting.

The lesson of this is that if the protests revert to ritualistic walking up and down, if they are seen to be something of a waste of time, a lot of these people are likely to stay at home. The challenge therefore is to find a way to keep people involved, to find a way in which the tactics used are seen to be effective and therefore attract the maximum number of people to participate in whatever protests are held. Furthermore, it is necessary to look for ways to establish structures which will allow for maximum participation in discussions as to what these tactics should be.

In this context, it is clear that the most successful aspects of demonstrations to date have been the use of direct action as in Seattle and the breaking up of demonstrations into different zones as happened in Prague and Quebec. This allowed people to participate at the level with which they themselves felt comfortable - be that direct confrontation, passive resistance, or participation in a totally non-confrontational way. This is what we must look to replicate in future demonstrations if they are to be effective. As we in Ireland look towards the EU summit here in 2004*, this is our challenge.

"it is clear that the most successful aspects of demonstrations to date have been the use of direct action as in Seattle and the breaking up of demonstrations into different zones as happened in Prague and Quebec"

confrontation and direct action. Perhaps more importantly, the fact that they haven't involved ritualistic

*It now seems that this summit will not take place in Ireland. The points made still hold true in general terms however

In addition any protests organised here must have a definite focus and an immediate aim or achievable objective. This might be to blockade the summit venue, the delegates' hotels, their route from the airport or whatever. In other words, something should be done to disrupt the event in some way or at least make life more difficult for those attending it.

Meaningful and Relevant

The breaking down of the isolation between 'the movement' and 'the people' will require us to use all our abilities to communicate our ideas, and to make these ideas meaningful and relevant to working-class people's day-to-day lives and struggles. It means explaining clearly and precisely the links between refuse charges, privatisation, pollution in the form of incinerators and the agenda of the EU bosses, for example. It means exposing the hypocrisy of a system that wishes to dismantle all borders to the flow of money, capital and business while at the same time making it ever more difficult for people fleeing poverty and injustice to gain entry to the 'developed world'.

What is needed is that the anti-capitalist movement takes seriously the slogan "Think Global, Act Local". The tens of thousands of people refusing to pay the double tax refuse charges can – if the arguments are properly made – form the backbone of the anti-capitalist movement. When the Euro Summit circus comes to Dublin in 2004, these should be the people prominent in the protests. The organisation for this must start now. The focus of that organisation must be on using the opportunity to build a mass self-organised anti-capitalist movement as well as getting the numbers out on the actual protests.

From the outset there must be open and frank discussion and debate about the type and form of protests which will be organised. Anarchists and libertarians should argue against the 'one size fits all' model being pushed by the Trotskyists and reformists, and which would amount to little more than a parade up and down O'Connell Street. Instead, as happened in Quebec and Prague, there should be space created for a diversity of tactics with people being able to choose an area that meets their need. ♦

More on the global anti-capitalist movement:

<http://struggle.ws/global.html>

Open Borders (continued from back cover)

When she does get on to some of these arguments she deals with them well. There are several examples of countries which had open border arrangements with former colonies. For example the USA allowed open migration from the Caribbean. Between 1950 and 1980 when borders were closed only 0.6% of the Caribbean population moved to the US and England, despite the obvious economic attractions. If this figure were to be applied world wide now the figure would be about 24 million per year or a growth of about 2.4% in population of the industrialised countries - probably under the anticipated labour demand in several European countries. The truth is just because people can go doesn't mean they will. In general no matter how bad things are, very few people have the desire, the ability or the wherewithal to just uproot, leave every thing and move. Often the pattern is small groups of young able bodied men (usually) who can get the fare move over for a number of years, send money back and then return home in their old age. Ironically when England decided to take away citizenship rights for former colonies there was a huge last minute increase in migration as people realised this was the last chance.

Immigration Yes Welfare No

What about jobs? Unemployment is mainly a cyclical problem associated with the boom and bust system in which we live. It reached its highest level in Europe in the 1930s with almost no movement of peoples but there was barely any unemployment in the post war boom despite massive immigration levels. Developing economies absorb labour voraciously. When Algeria gained independence in 1962 - 900,000 white settlers moved back to France. Unemployment in Marseille rose to 20% within in months but was back down to 6% within a year and 4% in two years. Right now according to the OECD by 2050 the ratio of working people to over 65s will be 2:1 to keep this ratio at its current level of around 4:1 Italy would need 2.2 million immigrants - Germany 3.4 million. In fact it looks like the capitalists are already well aware of this and wish to keep large numbers of "illegals" around as a cheap and easily exploitable labour source. The Financial Times of 23rd February 2000 went so far as to attribute to economic boom at the end of the 1990s to the "illicit angels of America's Economic miracle" specifically the 3-12 million Mexican and South American "illegals" doing all the shitty jobs. "Immigration Yes welfare No" is the unspoken watchword of Wall Street.

There's a lesson here for workers in the host countries as well. If they feel their wages are being devalued by immigrants it is surely in their interests firstly to argue for full union membership and to fight for equal terms and condi-

tions but secondly to smash border controls and end the situation where people can be made "illegal" and subjected to sweatshop conditions..

The cost

Finally the North is spending vast amounts on keeping the borders shut. This cost is massive, both financially and in terms of human rights. The Schengen Information System was set up by the EU in 1985 and now has more than 30,000 terminals with vast amounts of personal information. 90% of those on it are termed "unwanted immigrants." According to OECD estimates from the early 1990s European governments spent between \$4 and 8 billion per year on refugee control and assessment. Meanwhile the cost of detaining 800 people in British detention centers and prisons, based on government figures, is estimated by Hayter at £48 million per year or twelve times what it would cost if they were on income support and housing benefit!

Similarly in Ireland a system of direct provision is administered at massive cost to the tax payer. In fact governments are prepared to spend many times more on making life difficult for refugees than they would gain under full welfare entitlements! The idea that people would travel thousands of miles, pay over every penny they have to smugglers and give up well paid jobs to "milk our system," living in a bed and breakfast on less than 20 euro a week, hardly merits discussion especially in the light of the above figures.

The cost in human lives is also rising. Between 1993 and 2000 an estimated 2063 people died trying to get into Europe (<http://www.united.non-profit.nl/pages/List.htm> for the full, gruesome list). Without doubt this rate of death is accelerating. It's not just asylum seekers who bear the costs. In England fingerprinting and ID cards have been introduced for asylum seekers. The system is in place and now it is quite easy to begin to introduce it for other groups. According to the Guardian (12/09/02) this "salami slicing" approach is the way to introduce "entitlement cards." Mean time the massive Schengen Information System contains information not just on immigrants and asylum seekers but "political subversives" and other undesirable. The crack down will effect us all EU or non-EU!

To sum up, this is a well written non-academic book. But it focuses too much on making the moral case for abolishing immigration controls and too little on refuting the scare stories. Also at €21 it is fairly pricey though I would still highly recommend it as a collective purchase for anti-racist groups who wish to begin to open their minds as a prelude to opening the borders. ♦

<http://struggle.ws/wsm/racism.html>

Open Borders: The case against immigration controls

by Teresa Hayter (Pluto Press 2000)

"Excellencies, gentlemen - members and those responsible in Europe. It is to your solidarity and generosity that we appeal for your Help in Africa. If you see that we have sacrificed ourselves and lost our lives it is because we suffer so much in Africa and need your help to struggle against poverty and war... Please excuse us very much for daring to write this letter"

Note found on the body of one of two teenagers from Guinea who were found in the landing gear of a plane when it arrived at Brussels airport in August 1999

reviewed by Conor McGloughlin

I suppose it goes without saying that anarchists are opposed to all borders and frontiers. These things could never form any part of a free society. However every activist realises there is a difference between long term ambition and what is immediately possible. The question for many anti-racist and pro-immigrant groups is if such a demand can be realised in the context of the system we now live in. Most mainstream groups eventually come down clearly in favour of immigration controls and deportations, though arguing for "generosity." This book takes a position that so far has only won over a small but growing minority and argues for the immediate ending of all border controls.

Migration in History

Migration has always been a part of human history but population borders and the nation state are a relatively new development. From the sixteenth century to the present day twice as many Europeans have moved to America and Africa than people from there have arrived in Europe. In the process they wiped out Tasmanian aborigines, most of the peoples of the Caribbean, decimated the Australian population by 80% and wiped out between 33% and 80% of native American people. In total there have been roughly 4 major periods of movement since the beginning of capitalism in the Sixteenth Century.

The first was the mass forced transportation of between 10 to 20 million people as slaves from Africa to assist in

Open Borders

The Case Against Immigration Controls



the development of everyone's favourite free world democracy. Up to 100 million slaves, in total, are estimated to have been transported from Africa throughout the world. The second wave was that of bonded or indentured labour from India and China. Though they signed a contract with their bosses, in practise they were little better than slaves. 30 million of such "workers" left India up to World War One and provided the work force for mines and plantations in Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, South Africa, Guyana and Jamaica.

Several million Chinese were moved through South East Asia, the Pacific islands, the Caribbean and South Africa. Ironically the main use these workers and slaves were put to was to replace the peoples already wiped out by European colonists in the first place! The third major wave was the mass economic migration from Europe to America which began in the eighteenth century and peaked in the Twentieth. A total of about 60 million Europeans moved (or were transported) to America and Australasia. The fourth major migration has been the beginnings of movement from South to North. According to UN estimates roughly 35 million people from the third world, including 6 million "illegals" have immigrated to Europe between 1960 and 1990. Though this figure seems relatively large it amounts only to 1% of the 1990 population of the third world moving over the entire 30 years and increased the population in the receiving countries by only 0.2% each year.

Open Your Borders

This sets the context for present day movements from South to North. As can be seen they are still relatively small (especially given that the present total world population is over 6 billion). What would happen if border controls were to be dropped?

Most of Hayter's arguments against border controls are political and moral. The book dwells in depth on how immigration controls are by their nature racist (in that they always aim to exclude particular distinct groups) in that they cause massive suffering, cost billions and promote racism. This is indisputable and it is passionately argued from the perspective of an activist closely involved in struggle for example around Campfield detention centre in England. Only in the last chapter does she examine other arguments commonly put forward by the other side as to how we would be swamped by tides of immigrants etc. I think that a book addressed to the case against immigration controls would be much better ammunition for activists if it took some of these arguments at length.

Continued on inside cover