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# **Zabalaza**

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**"From each according to ability, to each according to need!"**



# **10 Years of 'Freedom' and 'Democracy'? ... *Where?***

**Slavery can Change its form and its name - its basis remains the same. This basis is expressed by the words: being a slave is being forced to work for other people - as being a master is to live on the labour of other people. In ancient times ... slaves were simply called slaves. In the Middle Ages, they took the name of "serfs", today they are called "wage-earners".**

**BAKUNIN**

# The Political Significance of NEPAD: a Homegrown Recipe for Neo-Liberalism

## *Think Africa-wide - but organise locally*

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by the African Union in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2001, is nothing more and nothing less than a neo-liberal plan by Africa's elite to join with multi-national corporations, the IMF and World Bank to plunder Africa's labour force and resources. It is a consolidation of a range of a neo-liberal shifts by Africa's motley crew of ruling dictators, military chiefs, and capitalists.

### ONE GAME

And it signifies the new strategic goal of these elites: accommodation with global capitalism. Gone are the days when African ruling classes at least struggled - under a thick haze of revolutionary cant - to develop their own rival capitalisms. There is one game in town - global capitalism dominated by the advanced industrial countries and corporations - and Africa's local bosses want in.

### TOP-DOWN

Presented as participatory and democratic in inception and in intent, this document was drawn up by "leaders" whose actions are undemocratic in practice, and anti-working class through and through. Drawn up by South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, champion of the GEAR strategy at home, with the help of Algeria's dictator, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and of Nigeria's strongman, Olusegun Obasanjo, NEPAD has been endorsed by almost all African governments. No ordinary people, no trade unions, no community structures, no popular movements were involved.

Like all strategies of the ruling classes, NEPAD dresses itself in the clothes of caring, and makes kindly nods in the direction of the concerns of the masses of Africa's workers and peasants, the most desperately poor people in the world. It promises dramatic improvements in living conditions and employment. The issue, however, is how these aims are to be achieved.

But when we examine the methods through which NEPAD intends to work its magic, it becomes clear that the masses have little to gain but more chains.

### DEMOCRACY?

African governments, according to NEPAD, will become more democratic. No clear mechanisms are established to ensure that this is the case. The reason is simple: enforcing basic democratic rights in Africa would mean reviewing and replacing practically every government in Africa. With less than five exceptions, Africa's governments are dictatorships, whether this fact is proclaimed openly and proudly or quietly enforced through manipulating elections and jailing opponents.

### PRIVATISATION

In any case, the rhetoric of "democracy" is subordinated to NEPAD's primary objective: attracting foreign capital into Africa so that local and foreign elites can jointly enjoy a tasty meal of cheap labour and captive markets.

Section 166 of NEPAD is quite explicit on this score: African governments must create a sound and conducive environment for private sector activities, promote foreign direct investment, trade, and exports, and local business must be fostered.

To develop local infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, the same recipe is proposed: according to Section 103, there must be a drive to

"increase financial investments in infrastructure by lowering risks facing private investors, especially in the area of policy and regulatory frameworks."

Privatisation is the name of this game: there must be "policy and legislative frameworks to encourage competition" and policies aimed at "cross-border interaction and market enlargement" (section 106). Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are singled out as "a promising vehicle for attracting private investors" allowing the State to cut spending." In section 115 we learn that there must also be PPPs and "concessions" in the ports, roads, railways and maritime transportation.

The PPPs will be at the core of the alliance proposed between Western capital and the elites who run the local States. But so too will private African companies, the "domestic entrepreneurs" which NEPAD stresses as key to "development."

### CAPITAL FLOWS INITIATIVE

For NEPAD's champions, private investment is the miracle cure for all ills. In the interests of the working class and

poor, the flow of profit-seeking money into Africa must accelerate. To meet its targets, NEPAD will require US\$64 billion a year (section 147).

Part of this money will come from domestic savings, part from tougher tax laws, but the "bulk of the needed resources will have to be obtained from outside the continent." In part this will be done through trying to get the African debt reduced, with attention also being paid to "private capital flows" and "private sector investments by both domestic and foreign investors." This will be topped up with additional loans from the IMF and World Bank.

To attract private money, Africa must become an investor-friendly destination, with a proper "security of property rights, regulatory framework and markets."

"Private enterprise must be supported" and "governments should remove constraints to business activity." This includes attracting big money into mines (section 160), and factories (Section 161), plus "trade liberalisation" and (corporate) tax cuts (Section 169).

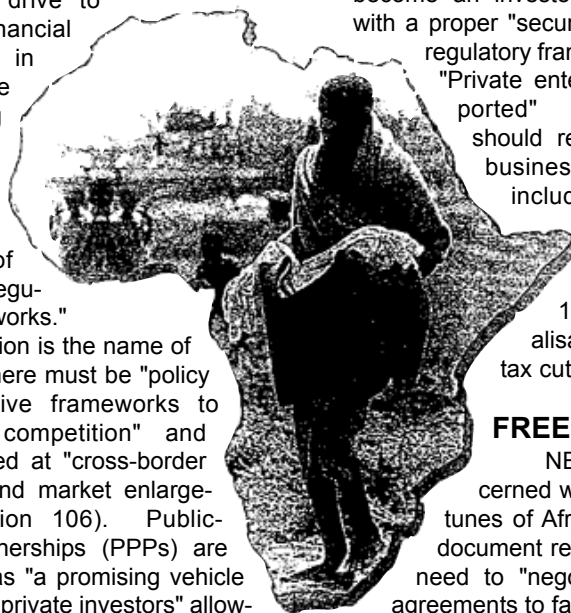
### FREE TRADE

NEPAD is equally concerned with promoting the fortunes of Africa's capitalists. The document repeatedly stresses the need to "negotiate measures and agreements to facilitate market access for African products to the world market" (Sections 169, 170) in order to "admit goods into markets of the developed countries through bilateral initiatives, and to negotiate more equitable terms of trade for African countries within the WTO multilateral framework" (Section 188).

### WHOSE DEVELOPMENT?

In NEPAD there is a straightforward assumption: capitalism is good, and benefits everybody. Therefore privatisation, the "free" market, free trade and so on are to be welcomed.

The problem with this view is equally simple: it is capitalism that is to blame for



the main problems faced by working class and poor people.

What was colonialism but capitalism backed up with Maxim guns? What was the postcolonial period from the 1950s to the 1990s but a drive by African capitalists to get rich quick whilst beating down the complaints of the ordinary workers and peasants? As Mobutu Sese Seko, former "king" Of Zaire, said of his regime: "Everything is for sale in ... our country. And in this traffic, ... any slice of public power is a veritable exchange instrument, convertible into illicit acquisition of money or other goods."

To now see in the capitalist system in its modern, most naked, most cynical and greedy form, neo-liberalism, the ordinary African's salvation, is absurd. The illness, in NEPAD's diagnosis, is actually the cure. A remarkable medicine this!

This confusion is not stupidity however. It is a mystification of the role of capitalism, and of the African ruling classes, in particular. No man can easily see himself as the problem. Neither can a social class. We could not expect these strongmen and money grabbers to be honest judges, juries and executioners in their own trials!

### THE NEW ELITE PACT

Clearly, the African elites have made peace with their older brothers in the

West.

The radical nationalists of the 1950s and 1960s, men of the ilk of Nkrumah and Kuanda, men who hated colonialism (and loved capitalism), are gone from the stage. The old nationalists played, at least, a small role in challenging colonialism, and in shaking the old Empires. They turned on their own people soon enough, sure enough, but they did play - for at least a time - a small role in the global struggles for emancipation.

The NEPAD generation are more cynical men of more pathetic stature. Unlike their predecessors who favoured State capitalism, the NEPAD generation do not adopt neo-liberalism and Structural Adjustment unwillingly - they embrace it and proclaim it an "African Renaissance." Like the slave traders of old West Africa, they parade their countries and populations on the world market.

### STRATEGY

Two things could happen at this point: foreign capital will buy into NEPAD, or it won't. In either case, the strategic implications for the working class are clear.

★ Be practical: what can we do NOW? We can fight NEPAD and the African elites through local actions.

★ To intensify local struggles against privatisation, cut-offs and evictions is the

best way you can take on NEPAD. NEPAD is the elites battle plan, but the war wages on many fronts: the army of labour and the poor must fight where it meets the enemy. And the immediate enemy is at home.

★ It is important to begin to co-ordinate our struggles across the borders, just as our rulers do, and to recognise the common basis of our different struggles against privatisation, neo-liberalism and authoritarian States. A common popular solidarity must be built, brick by brick.

★ This means practical actions - supporting political prisoners in neighbouring countries, supporting strikers and getting anarchist and radical literature into more countries.

★ The old illusions in the African elites must be done away with once and for all. If it was once at least understandable - but mistaken- to be taken in by a Nkrumah, it would be ridiculous to be gulled by an Obasanjo, a Mugabe or an Mbeki. Now, we have a golden opportunity to expose these thugs: link the daily concerns of the masses with the greed and brutality of their rulers.



## Phansi Nohulumeni, Phansi or Down with Government!

For any person who has hung around anarchists long enough, you must of heard us ranting on about how "parliament is not a means of struggle" because "people who get their asses into parliament and all the money and power start to only worry about getting more money and power" or "society is run from the board rooms of the giant companies who control the economy and NOT by a bunch of liars sitting comfortably in Parliament" etc. etc. These people feed us a whole bunch of lies to get themselves elected and then for the next couple of years sit comfortably and do nothing about anything of relevance to us (except maybe how to get more money or labour out of us). Emma Goldman speaking about her time in Russia during the revolution had this to say about the "revolutionary government" of the Bolsheviks: "Government, whatever its form or pretences, is a dead weight that paralyses the free spirit and activities of the masses."

Well, being the highly skilled investigative reporters that we are, we came across this delightful little quote from the mayor of Msunduzi (Pietermaritzburg) Local Council R.F. Haswell when he was installed as mayor on the 23 February 1995. It goes some way in proving our

point. Speaking about two of his newly-elected partners in crime, he said:

"The irony that a trade unionist, who was so effective against the municipality in the past, now occupies the position of Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee, cannot go unnoticed. Likewise, that we have, as one of the two alternating co-chairpersons of the Executive Committee, a Councillor who previously exposed some of the iniquities of our rates system, also represents a remarkable turnaround. Thus, in commending and welcoming Councillors Frans Ntshangase and Omar Latiff, I look forward to seeing them deal with strikes, and setting the rates, respectively."

So these scabs have gone from being fighters of and for our class to fighting strikes and screwing us out of the small amount of money we may be lucky enough to have. In other words they have become defenders of those with the money, privilege and power. Even sitting on the government council at a local level

puts a person on the other side of the line between oppressed and oppressor / exploiter and exploited and that is why we say that it is only when we fully control our communities and workplaces ourselves will we be able to provide decent food, clothing and housing for ourselves and our families; good education that is not brainwashing; free health care, water and electricity for all; transportation etc. - government can play no role in this. So, our struggle should not just be outside of the political parties but against the parties - it should an ANTI-political struggle. We should seek to replace all government with freely-elected councils in our workplaces and communities which are elected by those who work in the workplace or live in the community; councils that are instantly recallable; which work to strict mandates and who's members are rotated on a regular basis to stop bureaucracy catching up.

As the saying goes:

**Name one thing government does that we, the people, cannot do ourselves!**

# A Makhnovist in Africa: Shalom Schwartzbard

One of the lesser-known heroes of the Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1921 was Shalom (Samuel) Schwartzbard, whose name is alternately given as Sholem Shvartsbard.

Hailing from Besarabia (Moravia) where he was born in 1886, Schwartzbard worked periodically as a watchmaker. He became a revolutionary during the Russian Revolt of 1905 that affected all Russian-occupied territories like Besarabia - and Poland, where the political prisoner-support organisation the Anarchist Red Cross (later renamed the Anarchist Black Cross, ABC) was founded in that year.

He fled Besarabia in 1906 following the collapse of the revolt and moved to France in 1910, joined the French Foreign Legion in 1914 on the outbreak of the First World War, was wounded and honourably discharged.

He returned to Odessa, Ukraine, in 1917. Although it is not known whether or not Schwartzbard was a convinced Anarchist, after the outbreak of the revolution he put his legionnaire experience to good use as a guerrilla in the anarchist-communist Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (RIAU) - known as the Makhnovists. The RIAU liberated some 7-million people in the southern Ukraine and controlled large swathes of territory in a battle on five fronts: against the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists; the Austro-Hungarian invaders; the counter-revolutionary White Armies; the Bolshevik Red Army; and roving bandit gangs.

Some historians claim that Schwartzbard was rather a member of the Red Army, which may either be the usual communist tactic of claiming key activists as their own, or may in fact have been partially true, because many Red Army members deserted to the RIAU which boasted equality among its guerrillas.

In 1919, 14 members of Schwartzbard's family were slaughtered in an anti-Jewish pogrom allegedly initiated by Symon Petliura, chairman of the bourgeois Ukrainian National Republic between 1918 and 1920 - one of the Makhnovists' primary enemies.

As many as 60,000 Ukrainian Jews lost their lives in pogroms at this time. Schwartzbard was involved as an RIAU guerrilla in organising the self-defence of Jewish rural communities against attack, much the same work that the ABC did in the cities.

Historians differ over whether Petliura was personally responsible for the pogroms, but he certainly did little to stop them. In contrast, the RIAU was sternly anti-pogromist, numbered many leading

Jewish anarchists in its ranks and publicly assassinated those - including any of its own guerrillas - that it found responsible for having conducted pogroms.

Schwartzbard returned to Paris in 1920. The RIAU was finally defeated by the Red Army in 1921 and the Ukrainian Revolution was crushed by red reactionaries - and red revolutionaries who were lied to by the Bolshevik bureaucracy that the RIAU was a white, pogromist bandit force.

Many RIAU survivors, including the brilliant guerrilla warfare strategist Nestor Makhno, also settled in Paris. Makhno went on to co-author the "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists", which re-emphasised the anarchist mass organisational tradition by calling for them to be ideologically and tactically unified in their organisations. The "Platform" has inspired numerous anarchist organisations across the world, including the ZACF here in southern Africa.

Meanwhile, Petliura, who had struck up a friendship with Polish leader Jozef Pilsudski (who later staged a coup d'etat in May 1926), fled Poland in disguise in 1923, travelling via Budapest, Zurich and Geneva to Paris where he settled in October 1924.

There, in the Latin Quarter, he headed up the UNR government-in-exile and published the paper "Tryzub (Trident)". Schwartzbard gained French citizenship in 1925.

Schwartzbard became aware that Petliura was also living in Paris and he began to stalk the UNR leader. On 26 May 1926, Schwartzbard assassinated Petliura in broad daylight as he was walking in the street, proclaiming loudly as he fired his fatal shots that he was avenging the pogroms. Schwartzbard waited quietly at the scene for the police to arrest him.

He was put on trial for murder and defended by the famed North African leftist lawyer Henri Torres. Described by one of his enemies as "a communist, an anarchist... who is never indifferent", Torres had previously successfully defended the famous Spanish anarchist guerrillas Buenaventura Durruti, Francisco Ascaso and Gregorio Jover, plus the Catalan separatist Francisco Macia, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. He later went on to defeat a charge in 1951 against CNT-in-exile secretary-general Jose Peirats (author of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT's "official" account of Spain, "Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution") and two other CNT leaders despite Torres having joined the French Communist Party.

The prosecution suggested that Schwartzbard was actually acting on behalf of Soviet intelligence, and that he

knew OGPU agent Mikhail Volodin. OGPU was the Unified State Political Administration, Stalin's restructuring of the notorious Bolshevik Cheka death-squad / political terrorism organisation that had been responsible for the murder and detention of so many anarchists during the Bolshevik counter-revolutions in Russia and Ukraine.

The prosecution alleged that Schwartzbard was a pawn in a Stalinist plot to prevent the resurgence of Ukrainian nationalism by assassinating the UNR leader. But Schwartzbard's origins make this seem unlikely. In any case, the assertion of an OGPU link was never proven and Schwartzbard was acquitted by a French jury on the grounds that he had committed a "crime of passion".

The sensational trial and acquittal was covered in the world's major newspapers and Schwartzbard became famous. But he preferred obscurity and it was as a travelling salesman for a Yiddish encyclopaedia that he visited Cape Town in 1938.

By this stage, he was well-known in Yiddish-speaking circles for his poetry and his writings, notably: "Troyemen un Virkikhkayt" (Dreams and Reality)", 1920; "In Krig - Mit Zikh Aleyn (At War - With Myself)", 1933; and his autobiography "In'm Loyd Fun Yorn (In the Course of Years)", 1934.

He had only been in South Africa for a month when he suffered a heart attack and died. He was buried with great ceremony at the Maitland Jewish Cemetery in the largest public funeral held in Cape Town to that date.

Schwartzbard had previously applied for the right to settle in British-occupied Palestine, but had been refused. So in 1967, a committee established in Israel arranged for Schwartzbard's remains to be disinterred and reburied in the Heroes' Acre at Natanya, a resting-place for Jewish military heroes. But his original grave-stone can still be visited at Maitland where every year, the local Jewish community performs a ceremony in remembrance of him.

In May 2000, South African anarchists visited the place in the Pere le Chaise cemetery in Paris where Makhno's ashes are interred and inserted a Zulu-language anarchist pamphlet into the flower-holder in honour of how far afield Makhnovist ideas have spread since the 1930s. In similar fashion, we honour the memory of Shalom Schwartzbard for the direct action he took against racist oppressors.

# Making History or just Repeating it?

Karl Marx once wrote that history repeated itself, first time as tragedy, second time as farce. The left seem intent on proving him right. How else can we explain the attempts to create yet another new party?

The history of the labour movement is happily ignored while some people in the social movements and assorted other sects want us to repeat the tactics which worked so unsuccessfully in the past. All our "comrades in government" did not appear from nowhere. They are just the latest in a long line of politicians who, upon gaining office in the capitalist state, promote capitalist policies.

This is not surprising. The state is the instrument by which minority classes use to maintain their power and privileges. It can never be used to destroy them. What is surprising is that Marxists seem to forget this, urging us to vote for radicals at election time and get outraged when they defend the interests of the few rather than the many.

## 0 MARX OUT OF 10

This is, of course, not the first time Marxists have urged us to vote. Marx himself argued for the working class to take part in bourgeois elections and institutions. The net effect was simply to prove his anarchist opponents right. The "revolutionary" Social Democratic Parties across the world quickly became bureaucratic, top-down and opportunist. Revolutionary rhetoric simply disguised a deeply reformist practice. When the First World War broke out, the bourgeois chickens came home to roost in the "socialist" parties - across the globe, the "socialists" supported their ruling class in the conflict.

One hundred years later, the German Greens followed the same path. They too argued for electioneering combined with direct action. Unsurprisingly, they arrived in the same destination. They became split between a small group who argued for principles and a majority who adjusted to the realities of power. The same sad story of opportunism, bureaucracy and betrayal - exactly the same fate that has befallen Lula in Brazil and radicals elsewhere who thought that their ideas made them immune to the realities of the tactics of parliamentarianism.

Anarchists were not surprised by this. We accurately predicted this outcome of socialist tactics. What we did not predict was the stubborn persistence of "scientific" socialists in ignoring the evidence of history. You would think that over a hundred years of using a tactic that does not work would make them think twice about it but no. They want to prove Marx right; even it is only by providing the "farce."

## AN ALTERNATIVE

Now we have a choice. Do we repeat the mistakes of the past or do we learn the lessons of history? Is there an alternative?

Yes - direct action, solidarity and self-management. We think that only working class control of our own struggles can create working class control of society. This means pursuing a policy of extra-parliamentarian struggle. It means waging the class war using federations of community and workplace assemblies.

Anarchists look to the basic mass meeting of workers at their place of work and people in their communities as the foundation of organisation and the source of labour's power. These meetings are coordinated by means of federations of elected, mandated and recallable delegates. Unlike the parliamentarian, the delegate must carry out the wishes of their electors otherwise they are kicked out and replaced by someone who will obey the people. This is organisation from the bottom upwards.

Through direct action, people create, conduct, organise and manage their own struggle. We do not hand over to others our task of self-liberation. We become used to managing our own affairs, creating alternative, libertarian, forms of social organisation which can become a force to resist the state and the bosses and win reforms. It creates organs of self-activity which, to use Bakunin's words, are "creating not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself." Workers' control of struggle is the only way that workers' control of their own lives and society becomes a possibility. And it builds the organisations that can achieve it - popular assemblies, workers' councils, factory committees, and so on.

Unlike Marxist calls for a new electoral activity. The idea that socialists standing for elections somehow prepares for revolution is simply wrong - it only prepares people for following leaders. It does not encourage the self-activity, self-organisation, direct action and mass struggle required for a social revolution. There is nothing more isolated, atomised and individualistic than voting. It is the act of one person in a closet by themselves. Voting creates no alternative organs of working class power. And Marxists slander anarchists as being "individualists"!

Electing the lesser evil does not work. We need to organise in our communities and workplaces. That is where our power lies, that is where we can create a real alternative. Unlike politicians, the mass of the population cannot be bought off and if they are willing and able to resist then they can become a power second to none. By creating a network of self-managed community and workplace organisations we can impose by direct action that which

politicians can never give us from Parliament. And only such a movement can stop the attacks upon us by whoever gets into office. A government (left or right) which faces a mass movement based upon direct action and solidarity will always think twice before making unjust decisions.

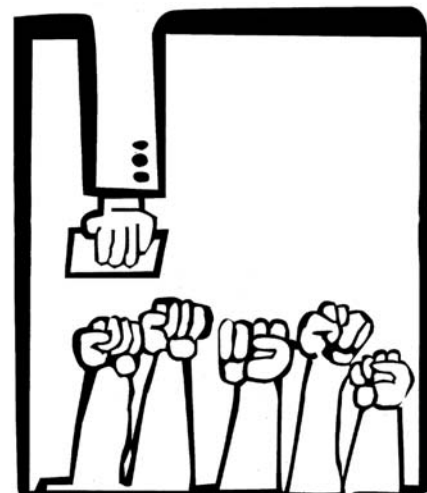
## BUILDING THE NEW WORLD WHILE FIGHTING THIS ONE

Anarchists see the framework of an anarchist society coming from the class struggle and the process of revolution itself. Anarchy is not a jump into the dark but rather a natural development of the struggle for freedom under capitalism. It will be created from below up as working class people start to resist oppression and exploitation. The class struggle transforms those involved as well as society and creates the organisational structure and people required for a libertarian society.

With that in mind, our alternatives are rooted in building the real organs of working class power in the here and now. That means encouraging a rank and file movement based on the spirit of the wildcat. It means promoting the idea of strikers' assemblies as decision making bodies in industrial disputes rather than relying on "left-wing" leaders to act for us. It means creating a network of militants who put the needs of the struggle above the recruiting needs of their party or vote gathering. It means investing the resources, time and energy wasted in supporting political parties in building a labour movement run by and for its members. Rather than voting someone to misrepresent us every four years, we should be creating community organisations which allow people to put real pressure on the state all the time. The radical unions of the 70's and early '80s and the assemblies in Argentina and of the Zapatistas today show what is possible.

Building the new world while fighting this one will be much harder than electioneering and letting a few leaders act for us - but it is something well worth fighting for.

Based on a text taken from the anarchism.ws website





## Why Mayday?

May 1st is a day of special significance for the labour movement. It is a day of worldwide solidarity, a time to remember past struggles and demonstrate our hope for a better future, a day to remember that an injury to one is an injury to all. But why Mayday? What is its history?

Over a century ago the American Federation of Labour adopted a historic resolution that asserted, "eight hours shall constitute a legal days labour from and after May 1st, 1886".

All across America in the months prior to this resolution, workers in their thousands were starting to struggle for a shorter week. Skilled and unskilled, men and women, black and white, immigrant and native were all fighting together.

Chicago was the main centre of agitation. Over 300 000 workers came out on May 1st. It was here that Mayday was born.

### THE ANARCHISTS OF CHICAGO

It was the activities of the anarchists in the Central Labour Union and on the streets that made Chicago the centre of the eight-hour movement.

The anarchists thought that the eight-hour day could only be won through direct action and solidarity. They considered that struggles for reforms, like the eight-hour day, were not enough in themselves. They considered them as only one battle in an ongoing class war that would only end by social revolution and the creation of anarchism - a "free society based upon a co-operative system of production" in the words of their programme.

It was with these ideas that they organised and fought. The anarchist unions were based on direct rank and file control from the bottom up, reflecting the type of society they were aiming for.

The American ruling class saw its profits and power being undermined by united working class direct action. They met this threat with violence.

### THE HAYMARKET

On May 1st, in Chicago, one half of the McCormick Harvester Company came out on strike. Two days later the police opened fire on the pickets, killing one and wounding several more. Outraged, the anarchists called a protest meeting at the Haymarket for the next day.

The meeting was peaceful and rain soon sent away most of the large crowd. When only 200 people remained, a police column of 180 men moved in and ordered the meeting to disperse immediately, even though, according to the Mayor of Chicago, "nothing looked likely to require police interference".

At that moment a bomb was thrown into the ranks of the police, killing one and wounding about seventy others. The police opened fire on the spectators, killing and wounding many.

A reign of terror swept over Chicago. Meeting halls, union offices, printing shops and private homes were raided (usually without warrants). Many suspects were beat up and some bribed. "Make the raids



first and look up the law afterwards" was the public statement of J. Grinnell, the States Attorney.

The raids and repression, backed and encouraged by the press, weakened the eight-hour movement. A major source of worry and fear for the ruling class was removed and both the American Labour and Anarchist movements suffered setbacks. The raids had solved part of the problem, now scapegoats had to be found.

### THE TRAIL

Eight men, all anarchists and active union organisers stood trial for murder. No proof was offered by the state that any of the eight had anything to do with the bomb. In fact, three had not even been at the meeting and another was there with his wife and children. A biased judge and jury and a hysterical press ensured that all eight were found guilty. Their only "crimes" were their anarchist ideas, union

activity and the threat these held for the ruling class. Grinnell made it clear, "Anarchy is on trail... these men have been selected... because they are leaders".

In spite of worldwide protest, four of the Haymarket Martyrs were hanged. Half a million people lined the funeral cortege and 20 000 crowded into the cemetery. In 1893, the new Governor of Illinois made official what the working class in Chicago and across the world knew all along and pardoned the Martyrs because of their obvious innocence and because "the trail was not fair".

In 1889, the American delegation attending the International Socialist congress in Paris proposed that May 1st be adopted as a workers' holiday. This was to commemorate working class struggle and the "Martyrdom of the Chicago Eight". Since then Mayday has become a day for international solidarity.

### NOW

The events that gave birth to Mayday show that its real meaning is not a stroll through the town followed by the speeches of politicians and trade union bureaucrats.

It is not surprising that the real history and meaning of Mayday are hidden. If the anarchist ideas of the Chicago Martyrs became better known and put back into practice, the trade union bureaucrats and labour politicians who run the labour movement would be out of a job! The

"Chicago Idea" of the Martyrs shows that there is a real, practical alternative to both the present labour movement and the present system. That idea is revolutionary anarchism. Labourism and Marxism have failed. Only anarchism points the way to freedom and equality.

Mayday, like the Labour movement itself, must be rescued from all those with a vested interest in the present system. Mayday must again be a day to remember the past struggles of working class people and a day to show solidarity with present struggles. But we must not stop there, we must make every day a 1st of May! The future of the Labour movement lies in reclaiming its hidden past. We must create a real, fighting alternative and build the new world in the shell of the old!

# The First of May: Symbol of a New Era in the Life & Struggle of the Toilers

- by Nestor Makhno, former guerrilla of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (RIAU), originally published in *Dielo Truda (Workers' Cause)*, May 1, 1932.

In the socialist world, the first of May is considered the Labour holiday. This is a mistaken description that has so penetrated the lives of the toilers that in many countries that day is indeed celebrated as such. In fact, the first of May is not at all a holiday for the toilers. No, the toilers should not stay in their workshops or in the fields on that date. On that date, toilers all over the world should come together in every village, every town, and organise mass rallies, not to mark that date as statist socialists and especially the Bolsheviks conceive it, but rather to gauge the measure of their strength and assess the possibilities for direct armed struggle against a rotten, cowardly, slave-holding order rooted in violence and falsehood. It is easiest for all the toilers to come together on that historic date, already part of the calendar, and most convenient for them to express their collective will, as well as enter into common discussion of everything related to essential matters of the present and the future.

Over forty years ago, the American workers of Chicago and its environs assembled on the first of May. There they listened to addresses from many socialist orators, and more especially those from anarchist orators, for they fairly gobbled up libertarian ideas and openly sided with

the anarchists.

That day those American workers attempted, by organising themselves, to give expression to their protest against the iniquitous order of the State and Capital of the propertied. That was what the American libertarians Spies, Parsons and others spoke about. It was at this point that this protest rally was interrupted by provocations by the hirelings of Capital and it ended with the massacre of unarmed workers, followed by the arrest and murder of Spies, Parsons and other comrades.

The workers of Chicago and district had not assembled to celebrate the May Day holiday. They had gathered to resolve, in common, the problems of their lives and their struggles.

Today too, wheresoever the toilers have freed themselves from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie and the social democracy linked to it (Menshevik or Bolshevik, it makes no difference) or even try to do so, they regard the first of May as the occasion of a get-together when they will concern themselves with their own affairs and consider the matter of their emancipation. Through these aspirations, they give expression to their solidarity with and regard for the memory of the Chicago martyrs. Thus they sense that the first of May

cannot be a holiday for them. So, despite the claims of "professional socialists," tending to portray it as the Feast of Labour, the first of May can be nothing of the sort for conscious workers.

The first of May is the symbol of a new era in the life and struggle of the toilers, an era that each year offers the toilers fresh, increasingly tough and decisive battles against the bourgeoisie, for the freedom and independence wrested from them, for their social ideal.



## After the Elections... the Struggle Remains the Same

By the time you read this, the elections will be over and Thabo - a friend of big business is again president. Political analysts will be working overtime to explain it all, speculating on which votes, if any, tipped the balance. In any case we will be assured that the People have spoken; that, once again, the smooth transition of power proves how lucky we are to live in a democracy.

Meanwhile it's back to wage-slavery for us; working at some job that is somewhere between tolerable and utterly miserable, for a wage that is only a fraction of the value of what we've produced; producing goods and services which we've had no say in determining and taking orders from some supervisor whom we've also had no say in hiring. We'll have to watch what we say, and to whom. If we talk union on the job, or in any other way express our dissatisfaction with the way things are, and the boss hears about it, we could find ourselves out on the street - so

much for "free speech"; so much for "democracy."

Truth is, when we punch in we leave democracy at the door. Voting for politicians, who are, after all, only the hirelings of the Master Class, changes nothing fundamentally. The decisions that most immediately affect our lives - decisions about our bread - are made by all manner of bosses, from the shop floor all the way up to the corporate boardrooms, none of whom ever come up for democratic selection.

If we want to control our own lives we've got to get control over our bread and the means of producing it. This requires organisation at the point of production. This is where we workers have the power. Our power does not lie in the street or at the ballot box. (Shouting at buildings and dropping a piece of paper into a box are signs of our powerlessness.) Our power lies where we work. We do all the work that keeps society going. Our involuntary

participation in the wage system reproduces our exploitation on a daily basis. We have to break the cycle. By organising into revolutionary industrial organisations (i.e., unions, councils, direct action committees, workplace assemblies and resistance groups, etc.) we can develop the power to take and hold the product of our toil, our bread, and the means of production, without the let or hindrance of parties and politicians. We can begin to reorganise society without wages, without exploitation, with freedom and equality.

No matter who is president, our struggle is the same: to build the new society within the shell of the old; to abolish the wage system and its enforcer, the State.

Based on a text that first appeared in the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*, No. 30, Winter 2000/2001

<http://flag.blackened.net/asr/>

# African Anarchism: Prospects for the Future

*African Anarchism: The History of a Movement* (See Sharp Press, 1997) by Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey. It is the first book-length treatment of anarchism and Africa. The authors argue that anarchism provides a coherent framework with which to comprehend and respond to the multiple crises afflicting the continent. I met with Mbah on November 4 at the beginning of his North American speaking tour.

Chuck Morse

**You state that "the overall tendency in the development of human society has been toward social equality and greater individual freedom." Do you share Marx's belief that capitalism is a progressive development in world-history and a necessary precondition of more adequate social forms?**

The Marxist position is not completely accurate. Capitalism was a progressive development during its own epoch: it provided the grounds for the radicalisation of the working class, which was not possible under feudalism and definitely a step ahead. It was based on this that the struggle against capitalism and the state-system intensified. However, I do not think every country or society must pass through this process or that capitalism is a precondition for human progress or development.

I also do not think that human history is predictable or can be tied to sequences developed by historians and writers. I believe that the capacity of ordinary people in a given society is so great that it can almost propel them to take destiny into their own hands at any point in time. It does not have to wait until capitalist development has taken root or the working class has been formed. The peasantry, for example, can also take destiny in their own hands if their consciousness is raised to a certain level. I do not believe in the compartmentalization of history into stages: I believe in the capacity of the ordinary people to struggle on their own and free themselves at any point in time.

**Your book is grounded in anarcho-syndicalism, a tradition derived primarily from European historical experiences. What distinctive contributions can the African experience make to anarchism as a whole?**

We attempted to point this out in our book. Although anarchism is not complete without the Western European contributions, we believe there are elements of African traditional societies that can be of assistance in elaborating anarchist ideas.

One of these is the self-help, mutual aid, or cooperative tradition that is prevalent in African society. This society is structured such that there is reduced individualism and a collective approach

toward solving problems and living life: reduced to its essence, I think that is what anarchism is preaching.

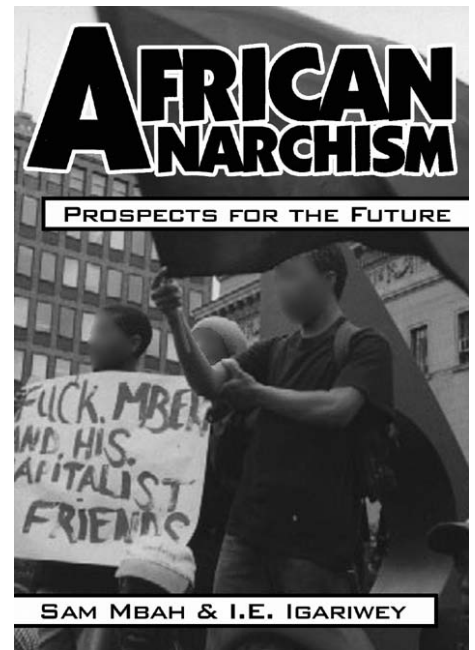
African traditional societies also offer some things we should learn from. For example, leadership - especially in societies where feudalism (and thus chiefdoms) did not develop - was horizontal and diffused, not vertical. Almost everybody in a given community or village took part in decision-making and had a say in anything that involved them. Even the elders would ordinarily not declare a war against the next village except if there was a consensus, which was really the binding force of African society. Also, the extended family system, in which your nephew could come live with you and your wife, is definitely something we recommend to anarchism. So, these are areas in which we think that African ideas could also be incorporated into anarchism. These ideas are enduring, almost in human nature as far as Africa is concerned.

**The inability to combine a coherent critique of the state and capitalism with a critique of racism has exacted an enormous toll on anarchism. In what sense must an analysis of racism and white supremacy complement a class analysis?**

The capitalist system we inherited thrives on the exploitation of workers and other non-dominant classes and also exploits racial differences. It has instituted a permanent racial dichotomy among workers, where there is a group of privileged workers and another, not so privileged group. There is a double exploitation: an exploitation of the working class in general and an even greater exploitation of the non-white working class. This was not properly addressed even by Marxism, because it assumed a unity of interests among the working class without reference to the specific kinds of exploitation and deprivation faced by workers.

Racism is a key factor in this world and any working class analysis that seeks to deny this is only being escapist. Racism is simply endemic in capitalism.

It is for workers to comprehend this, as a basis for unity within their own ranks and to move forward. This must be recognized by anarchist activists and social move-



ments, so as to integrate blacks and whites to face a common enemy, which is capitalism and the social relations of production that it puts in place.

## Africa: Helpless & Hopeless?

*No, the Ogoni people and Ken Saro-Wiwa were not the exception to the rule. Yes, Africa is fighting back against capitalism, ethnicism and nationalism. This interview with Sam Mbah of the Awareness League in Nigeria reveals the reality of African resistance. It was always a myth. The archetypal liberal view that Africa is a continent without hope or the spirit for resistance to its western exploiters - imperialist, colonialist or global marketeers - never held true.*

**So, are you curious to know how a resistance group in Nigeria views the outside world and the task ahead? How they view the involvement of Shell in the Ogoni heartlands? Samuel Mbah was interviewed during his recent speaking tour of the United States. This is what he said.**

**Mbah is a member of the Awareness League, the Nigerian section of the International Workers Association (IWA) - sister organization to the Solidarity Federation in Britain.**

Members of the Awareness League do not often get the opportunity to travel outside Nigeria. And inside, they are regularly hounded by the paranoid military regime that governs the country by brute force and blatant corruption. Survival of an organization in these conditions is itself an achievement - steady growth is near-



miraculous. The Awareness League is living proof that - in Africa as well as anywhere - resistance can flourish in the face of adversity.

**The Awareness League describes itself as anarcho-syndicalist. What does that mean in the Nigerian context?**

The Awareness League proclaims itself to be anarcho-syndicalist. It has not always been so; originally the Awareness League was more or less Marxist-Leninist, but following the turmoil and the collapse of state communism, we reassessed our position. The Awareness League is a social movement; it is not an official labour union. In Nigeria today there is a lot of frustration among the working class at the official labour unions because almost always they betray the cause of the workers at the last minute and so more voluntary unions like the Awareness League have begun to emerge. What we essentially do is we have outreaches in industrial organizations, the public service, the universities, and others. We take a stand on certain developments in the country, political, economic, and social. At times we just have to network with other left groups on specific issues. In the workplace, of course, our members are very active in trying to do political education, enlightenment, and lead in actual campaigns on issues - and these campaigns are usually against government because in Nigeria and Africa we find that the government is the largest employer of labor. Salaries are not paid for upwards of three months or more, and the official unions seem incapable of doing anything, so we come in and fill that gap and try to mobilize with the workers; maybe embark on a strike, maybe a demonstration, things like that.

**Are you trying to build your own unions, or are you trying to invigorate and inspire workers in the existing unions?**

We are trying to invigorate and inspire workers in the existing unions, but it has become apparent to us that we just have to build a beginning, an alternative to the official unions. It will take quite some time for it to be able to really mobilize and convince the workers of the need for this, but I think it is almost becoming inevitable in the context in which we find ourselves. Unions are supposed to exist for the interest and welfare of workers, but we find that the contrary is the case in Nigeria. People actually see unions and union positions as a stepping-stone to becoming a part of the elite, because once you get there the government gets to court you and give you bribes. It is no longer enough for us to just go ahead and reinvigorate the existing unions; we are mov-

ing beyond that to build an alternative union for the workers.

**Could you describe the Awareness League?**

Our membership is about 600 nationwide, that is, members who are paying dues. There are also people who come in and join in our activities. They are not really members but you could describe them as being friends or associates of the League. Now, if you call a meeting in Nigeria in a university, students will come. Although they may sympathize with your position and ideas, it does not mean that they are members. We find also that we can rely on them occasionally. If we're embarking upon a demonstration and they come it is good for us.

We have about 11 branches in different parts of the country, with at least 20 members in each. We try to see that each branch is autonomous, in the sense that it makes its own decisions within the specific environment. Then we have a working conference that brings together all the branches, and we have a national conference, which meets once a year. At this national conference we review the previous year's activities and set an agenda for the upcoming year. It is only where a decision taken by a branch is in conflict with our charter that it can be reversed; otherwise the branches are free to take their own decisions.

**The government allows you to meet without too much interference?**

No. You wouldn't expect that, honestly. The government does not really allow people to meet freely. In the past five years it has been particularly difficult, but with the death of the former dictator Abacha, who died in June, the new man has been a lot more tolerant of activist organizations. We are now beginning now to meet openly but, prior to June (1998), most of our meetings had to contend with the activities of the security operatives who were all over the place. But this is not to say that unions and groups did not exist. In fact, the opposition groups in Nigeria are not just organizations like our own; there are pro-democracy groups and ethnic sub-national groups who are campaigning for autonomy, and the same treatment is given to all these groups. The government cannot possibly kill off all these organizations. So in our own way we continue to organize in defiance of government repression.

**Could you say a few words about the political and economic conditions in Nigeria?**

The economic situation in Nigeria today is very bad indeed - inflation is beyond control; there is massive unem-

ployment; schools and hospitals are in very bad shape. In the midst of all this, the government and the military, which have been in power 31 out of 38 years of independence, we find that the military, the generals and top government functionaries are living in affluence. There is a lot of corruption. The defining characteristic of the Nigerian government is primitive accumulation by means of corruption. A report in 'The Economist' in 1995 said that the then-government of Abacha was trying to achieve corruption parity with its predecessor; by 1998, when Abacha died, he had got around £3.6 billion over a 5-year period. So you can see the kind of looting and thieving that is going on in Nigeria.

If you want to really understand the economic problems in Nigeria you have to go back to the period of colonialism, and how the colonial powers sought to integrate Nigeria into the global capitalist system through the instrumentality of trade, investment, social-political interaction. By the time Nigeria and other African countries attained independence, the incorporation into the capitalist system was already halfway done, but the governments that came with independence - some of them were nationalistic - still tried to fight against it. The incorporation process was re-ignited again in the mid-1980s by the IMF and the World Bank, through the Structural Adjustment Program, which is an austerity program designed to re-colonize African countries once again.

The major plans of the Structural Adjustment Program are the deregulation of the economy, liberalisation of trade, devaluation of our currencies and withdrawal of subsidies. Two-thirds of Africa is under some form of this program, even the so-called leftist regimes that have no option but to submit themselves to the IMF, and the results have been anything but cheering; increased unemployment, no drop in inflation, and massive corruption on the part of the government. So that is the situation we find ourselves in today on the African continent.

On the political side, what we are seeing is a crisis of the capitalist system and the failure of the state system on the African continent. Most of what you call African states today were creations of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, where colonial powers divided Africa amongst themselves. We know that these divisions were arbitrary, they did not take into consideration the cultural, ethnic, religious and language differences among different groups; they just welded groups together.

The attempt to construct liberal democracy in Africa has not worked either. Too much of what goes into liberal democracy is alien to Africa. The whole concept of elections, a government party and an

opposition is not in sync with our culture, because we find that, when you elect people, the only point at which the electorate comes into contact with the representatives is at the point of elections. For the next four or five years the representatives can do whatever they like, and the people have no means of sanctioning or recalling them (sounds familiar?! - DA).

In Nigeria today, there is an attempt on the part of the military to hand over power to civilians. Irrespective of the outcome of elections, I think the critical problem in Nigeria today is economic - the poverty of the people, the inability of most families to have three square meals a day - and this is manifested everywhere in Nigeria. 90% of our foreign exchange revenue comes from oil, but over the past six or seven years there's been a lot of tension in these areas, which led to the trial and killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1993, who was trying to mobilize his people against Shell and against government and the other oil companies.

Even with the killing of Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues, tension in the area is because the oil companies have succeeded in despoiling the environment. This area has a very difficult terrain; we're talking about a multiplicity of islands, swampy vegetation. The activities of the oil companies have only worsened this. They virtually wiped out the farming and the fishing, so that people have virtually no means of livelihood. People who went to school cannot get jobs, and meanwhile the oil companies and the Nigerian government make millions of dollars from this region. And so people are shutting down the flow stations, holding the staff hostage, and the government has responded by pushing more security into the region. A lot of people get killed and a lot of people get wounded in the process. Most of those who get killed we never hear about because the terrain of the region is such that there are areas that you cannot reach even in a day's time, sometimes you just have to rely on boats and ferries to reach them. So the crisis in the oil-producing region goes to underline the political and economic crisis in Nigeria.

The government is in alliance with the multinational oil corporations - notably Mobil, Shell, Chevron - especially Shell. Shell accounts for almost half of Nigeria's oil production. It is no longer a secret that Shell even purchases arms for the Nigerian military, they also arm the police. As a matter of fact they have their own police who guard the oil installations.

#### **What's your goal for the kind of society you'd like to build?**

We want to see autonomous communities, self-managing, self-accounting

communities managing their own affairs. This is an approximation of the African village system that was in operation before colonialism. These villages were autonomous and independent, and functioned on their own to decide what to produce and distribute. The decision-making process was such that no single individual lorded over others. In fact, decision-making was by means of consensus. You did not have vertical structures enforced by force.

So we strive to elaborate on the relationship between anarchism and the village systems in Africa, because by and large the village systems were democratic and autonomous and they delivered the goods. You know, the state system in Africa today has failed in delivering the goods. It has instead become an instrument of repression and the denial of freedoms of individuals and groups. So our focus is upon this basic principle of organization of society, and we find that an attempt has been made in the past by the Tanzanian government to create these African traditional systems in what they called Ujamaa villages, where villages were invited to farm among themselves and shared the produce. Of course, whatever government attempts always ends up in corruption and bureaucracy. Corruption and bureaucracy are the two basic factors that led to the collapse of the Ujamaa system. But we believe that if government is removed from this process, it is surely going to work.

#### **Would this work in the urban setting as well?**

Yes, in the urban settings, actually, you still find elements of the village system, but of course the urban setting has its own logic. When people move to the urban area, life becomes governed by capitalist principles, but there are of course other aspects of their life. When people in a town lose their jobs, they still rely on the extended family to cover for the period they are out of a job. In a situation where salaries are not paid for upwards of six months, what sustains them basically is the extended family. You find that even in urban areas you still have town meetings, village meetings, going on as a way of keeping in touch with the village.

There is a tendency in the west to see every crisis in Africa as being ethnic or tribal in character. But essentially, most of these crises actually are economic in character. The tribe in Africa was constituted very much after the colonial state had come into being. Prior to the coming of colonialism, groups were organized on a village basis. But with the coming of colonialism and the imposition of the capitalist economy, with the cutting of community ties, all the groups begin to come together

because you had a situation where every social group within the state was in direct competition with each other. The larger you were the more able you were to compete. So it was this capitalist system and colonialism that led to the rallying of all these groups into what we now have as tribes and ethnic groups.

#### **What brought the Awareness League into the International Workers Association?**

The IWA is the anarcho-sindicalist international, so we put in an application. The IWA Secretary had come to Nigeria in 1994 to assess our work. I believe they were impressed with what we were trying to do given our own limitations, the fact that we had a rough time with the security forces. In one of our meetings, they swooped on us and we had a number of people arrested. We were able to come out of it, and the determination and solidarity displayed by our members in the face of this assault was something that really impressed them. It was about two years after that the Awareness League was admitted into the International.

#### **How has this worked out?**

It has given us a kind of understanding, and exchange with the affiliates around the world in trying to exchange ideas, information, and they have also tried to assist us. WSA (US Section of the IWA) did a campaign to help us buy a computer. We had thought that by now we would have an email facility but acquiring a telephone is a difficult matter. We hope as time goes on we can acquire a telephone so that we can be in electronic communication with all groups, including the IWW.

We do not really want to be dogmatic about what we are trying to do. We believe that there is a need for working in co-operation among workers' groups around the world, all workers' groups that are opposed to capitalism, anti-authoritarian, and opposed to the state system. That should be enough common ground, instead of splitting on issues of ideology and doctrines that don't seem to advance the cause of the working class. That is our position.

Contact the Nigerian Awareness League at:  
P.O. Box 1920 Enugu, Nigeria.

These interviews taken from the  
enrager.net site.

A South African edition of the book is available from Zabalaza Books for R35 (incl. p+p). See contact details on back page.

# Fire-Ants & Flowers

## Revolutionary Anarchism in Latin America

### THE SOCIAL QUESTION

The most crucial issue facing the global anarchist movement today is not only how to win the battle for the leadership of ideas among the anti-capitalist movement, but how to ensure that direct action, mutual aid, collective decision-making, horizontal networks, and other principles of anarchist organising become the living practices of the social movements. We will examine the examples of Latin American anarchist organisations to see how they ensured what they call "social insertion" - that they as militants and revolutionaries are at the heart of the social struggles and not mere (cheer-)leaders in the margins.

This is a core question not only because it demands a definition of the role of the revolutionary organisation, but also because it focuses on how revolutionary anarchists define their relationship with non-anarchist forces originating in the struggles of the working class, peasantry and the poor.

To put it another way, the key is how we approach the oppressed classes and how we contribute towards the advancement of their autonomy from political opportunism, towards the strengthening of their libertarian instincts and towards their revolutionary advance.

Globally, the working class has changed dramatically since 1917, an international revolutionary high-water mark, when South African anarcho-syndicalists (anarchist unionists) of all "races" like Thomas Thibedi, Bernard Sigamoney, Fred Pienaar and Andrew Dunbar founded the first black, coloured and Indian trade unions in South Africa. Today, trade unions, the old "shock battalions" of the working class are decimated, compromised or bogged down in red tape. The once-militant affiliates of Cosatu have been silenced, restructured, bought off with investment deals and enslaved to their "patriotic" duty to support the ANC elite.

The inevitable resistance to the ruling class' neo-liberal war on the poor has provoked resistance. But although the new phase of struggle began with the SA Municipal Workers Union fighting a water privatisation pilot project in Nelspruit, it swiftly moved beyond the unions.

Today, most observers agree that together, the progressive United Social Movements (Landless People's Movement and Social Movements Indaba) embrace about 200,000 supporters - compared to the SACP's 16,000 seldom-mobilised membership.

Which is why the regional anarchist

movement, in founding the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation on May Day 2003, has oriented itself towards anarcho-communism that goes beyond the factory gates. Anarcho-communism has its ideological origins in the Pan-European Revolt of 1848 and the writings of house-painter Joseph Dejacque, who opposed the authoritarian communism of his contemporary Karl Marx. But it only really became a genuine mass working class movement within the First International. Essentially, it is the practice of social revolution from below rather than political socialist revolution from above, and it calls for a movement located in the heart of working class society.

Of course there are conservative, right wing and even proto-fascist forces within the majority-black oppressed classes, which hobble their ability to challenge the elite. Which is why anarchists, autonomists and other anti-authoritarian socialists are directly involved in the progressive social movements.

### ANARCHIST DAYS 2: BRAZIL

Since the dark period of opposition to apartheid in the 1980s, the southern African anarchist movement has, because of language barriers, largely drawn inspiration from the North American and Western European movements and far less from our comrades in the rest of Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, Austral-Oceania and Latin America. But social, economic and political conditions in the global North are very different to those in the South and our orientation has consequently shifted southwards.

Countries like Brazil not only suffer US imperialism, but also act as regional policemen towards less powerful neighbouring states. This is similar to South Africa's subservient position to British imperialist interests, and its role as regional enforcer: remember the 1998 invasion of Lesotho to crush a pro-democratic mutiny?

Other similarities between SA and Brazil are that both countries have recently come out from long periods of military dictatorship (Brazil's ended in 1985), both have militant social movements (the MST landless movement in Brazil for example, which has occupied some 2-million hectares) and both now have left-talking, right-acting governments (the Workers' Party came to power in Brazil in 2002) that push anti-working class neo-liberalism.

Which is why I was sent as a delegate of the Bikisha Media Collective (BMC) - a founder organisation of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and a member collective of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) - to the Anarchist Days 2 congresses in Porto Alegre in Brazil in January 2003. Run in parallel to the mostly reformist and authoritarian-socialist World Social Forum 3, the event was a follow-up to the first Anarchist Days meeting organised in 2002 by the Gaucha Anarchist Federation (FAG) of the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU) and Libertarian Struggle (LL), an anarchist collective based in the city of São Paulo that has since transformed itself into the Insurreccional Anarchist Federation (FAI). The first Anarchist Days was a truly international event, with participation from the hosts, plus 15 autonomous organisations of the base from across Brazil, the Central Workers Organisation (SAC) of Sweden, the Anarchist Communist Unity Congress (CUAC) of Chile, Anti-Capitalist Struggle Convergence (CLAC) of Canada, the Libertarian Socialist Organisation (OSL) of Switzerland, and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) of the United States.

The follow-up was more of a Latin American continental affair, with delegates from the hosts, 22 Brazilian autonomous social organisations of the base, Black Flag (BN, Chile), Tinku Youth (TJ, Bolivia), the Workers' General Confederation (CGT, Spain) and myself. Considering that Brazil is the size of the USA excluding Alaska, with Africa-like difficulties in communication and travel, the Brazilian representation was itself a coup for the organisers. Other groups present, but not as del-

## OPR 33 y 22 de Diciembre: Anarquistas y Cortoplacistas Actúan Conjuntamente

De nuevo celebramos que el 21 de Diciembre sea día de un gran triunfo de los revolucionarios. En esta ocasión se celebró el día de la Anarquía y el día de la Cortoplacista. Este día de la Anarquía y el día de la Cortoplacista se celebró en la ciudad de Talna, en el departamento de Maldonado, Uruguay. Este día de la Anarquía y el día de la Cortoplacista se celebró en la ciudad de Talna, en el departamento de Maldonado, Uruguay. Este día de la Anarquía y el día de la Cortoplacista se celebró en la ciudad de Talna, en el departamento de Maldonado, Uruguay.



Foto: para del pasado invierno en la CIE 21, en el momento de la presentación, que desemboca a las discusiones y debates. (Foto: J. J. J. J.)

Armas incautadas que constituyen parte de la Operación Talna. El título y el artículo del periodista aquí carece de fundamento y es antojadizo.

egates, were the ex-Workers Solidarity Alliance (ex-IWA, United States), the Central Workers Organisation (SAC, Sweden), and the No Pasaran Network (RNP, France).

The events comprised two mass marches of social movements through Porto Alegre, the second one being a demo against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA, the Latin American version of NEPAD); two public workshops on revolutionary anarchism at the Workers' Museum (a similar facility to the Workers Library & Museum in Johannesburg); a meeting of the Brazil-wide Forum on Organised Anarchism (FOA); a meeting of International Libertarian Solidarity (ILS) affiliates (including BMC); and the First Meeting of Autonomous Latin-American Organisations of the Base (ELAOPA).

### BRAZILIAN & ARGENTINE ANARCHISTS & THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The FAG of Brazil was founded in 1995 with the help and inspiration of the FAU of Uruguay. Since 2002, the FAG and other "specific" anarchist movements from Brazil such as the Cabocla Anarchist Federation (FAC) of the Amazon have worked together in the Forum on Organised Anarchism. In Latin countries, "specific" anarchist organisations adhere to the lessons of the "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists" (drawn up by veteran Ukrainian guerrillas in 1927): federalism, tactical and ideological unity, and collective responsibility, principles that the ZACF is also based on.

On the ground, the FAG mobilises among the garbage-collectors (catadores), pushes for the opening of universities to the poor, networks together a number of autonomous "Popular Resistance Committees" in working class communities and works with the Independent Media Centre and with community radio stations. Its position regarding the social movements, in its "FAG Declaration of Principles", is that "[o]n the political-ideological level, political groups including the FAG, should enhance the social and popular movements, to make them more militant, without trying to make them 'anarchist'. The social movement should not have a political ideology, but its role should be to unite, and not to belong to a political party. In the social movements, it is possible to unite militants and build a unified base, which is not possible at an ideological level."

The FAG then takes its non-sectarian stance further: "Because we know that we are not going to make the revolution by ourselves, we need to be aware that we need to unite with other political forces without losing our identity. This identity is

the anarchist organisation and is the avenue by which we want to build unity with other political forces in the social movement."

Through the FAG's policy of "social weaving", it reunites community organisations of the oppressed classes, whether unions, soccer clubs, community radio stations or neighbourhood associations. "This way we try to form a solidarity group between all the organisations in the community, increasing strength mutually in direction of the struggle."

In Argentina, a country with a proud



tradition of mass anarchist organising (and anarchist trade union dominance) in the first three decades of the last century, neoliberal policies pushed through by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank provoked the collapse of what was once one of the strongest Latin American economies. This led to a popular uprising in 2001 that saw five state presidents ousted in rapid succession, the occupation of factories and the establishment of Popular Autoconvened Assemblies across the country.

Auca (Rebel), an Argentine anarchist organisation based in the city of La Plata to the south-east of the capital Buenos Aires, was founded in 1998. Having deeply involved itself in the United Popular Movement (MUP), Auca takes a similar position to the FAG on what in Latin America is termed "social insertion": "Our organisation is not the only one inside the popular organisations that is struggling for revolutionary change, and surely in the future it will also not be the only one. Historical examples have shown us that different political models of the working class and the people have converged in the different revolutionary processes throughout history..."

"Within revolutionary efforts, it should be understood that the model of the Single Revolutionary Party is exhausted. It has demonstrated its lack of flexibility against the different political manifestations of our

class.

"As anarchists, we believe that our proposal embodies the true interests of the proletariat, and it is in anarchy where we find the final goal of human aspirations, but we are aware that the comrades of other organisations believe the same thing regarding their ideologies."

### FOR A FRONT OF OPPRESSED CLASSES

Auca's position is that they "are not rejecting the imperative need for the unity of revolutionary forces under a strategic project. Rather, we believe that the main body for the gathering together of popular power is the Front of Oppressed Classes where syndicalist, social and political models which, in general, struggle for revolutionary change will converge.

"It is there, in the heart of the FOC, where a healthy debate of political tendencies and positions should be engaged in, so that the course the FOC takes is representative of the existing correlation of popular forces. The FOC should not become a struggle of apparatuses."

Calling the FOC "a strategic tool", Auca states: "Obtaining a victory over a more powerful opponent is only possible by tensing all the forces and obligatorily applying them with meticulous wisdom and ability against the smallest 'crack' amongst the enemies, and in all contradictions of interests amongst the bourgeoisie of the different countries, between the different bourgeois factions and groups inside each country. It is necessary to take advantage of the smallest possibilities to obtain an ally of masses, even when they are temporary, hesitant, unstable and uncertain.

"The backbone of the Front of Oppressed Classes is based on the (strategic) alliance of the peasant workforce where the majority and leading force is the proletariat..."

The concept of a Front of Oppressed Classes as an idea is totally different to the authoritarian communist concept of a Popular Front, which communist parties around the world have used as a Trojan horse means of first welding together popular opposition into a hierarchical umbrella organisation, then inserting themselves into the leadership of the organisation.

This is what happened with the organisations within the United Democratic Front (UDF) during the final struggle against apartheid, which suddenly found themselves being dominated by a grafted-on ANC-SACP "leadership", even though UDF members were drawn from a variety of political traditions. Their final fate was the illegitimate and unilateral disbanding of the UDF by the ANC-SACP after the unbanning of the liberation movements in 1990, and the subsequent bloody political



ascendancy of the conservative nationalist agenda over the very community and workplace structures that had defeated apartheid in the first place.

Instead, the Front that Auca supports is a revival of the proud, militant traditions of progressive and radical class organisations, wiser this time and divorced from opportunistic political parties, being focused instead on working class autonomy and self-management. Only a horizontally linked, community co-ordinated network of class organisations is diverse enough and resilient enough to not only bear the assaults of the neo-liberal elites, but launch its own raids on the bases of capital.

A truly egalitarian FOC with every active member equally empowered with the ability to make policy decisions at a collective level is a very tough organism because it has no centre for reactionaries to destroy or for opportunists to seize.

This, and not the tried-and-failed approach of trying to hammer the United Social Movements in South Africa into some kind of shabby and marginal "Workers Party" (a contradiction in terms) that will pathetically try to contest bourgeois power within the halls of bourgeois power itself. Instead, the FOC would establish an increasingly strong "dual-power" situation to first undermine the authority of bourgeois power, and then assume many of its functions, devolved to community level (as we did in the 1980s with popular civics, for instance).

## **SOCIALIST "GOVERNMENT" FROM BELOW**

Auca's position statement goes on to state that the creation of revolutionary change means achieving precisely this type of popular power: "We will call the tool that allows us to make an initial bid for power the Government from Below. This will basically consist of directly building power through solid criteria of unity and strategic alliances.

"To guarantee the efficiency of this, it is crucial to increase grassroots participation, focusing the different sectors around specific programmatical questions. This tool will be set up and consolidated through three organisational stages that will gradually go forward and overlap one another."

Auca's three-stage approach is: 1) a greater co-ordination of popular organisations around a consolidated joint plan of struggle, based on joint class interests; 2) the regionalisation of the struggle so that municipalities can be controlled at grassroots level and so that joint demands can be drawn up at regional plenaries and be presented to bourgeois power; 3) consolidate regional grassroots power, not through elections, but by a dual-power

"Government from Below".

Auca state that "we are not in a revolutionary situation" - although Argentina is closer to it than South Africa - "but are rather creating the foundations of socialism and that the Government from Below will operate within the general framework of the bourgeois state."

The general idea would be to use dual-power to train the class to assume both the running of collapsed social services at local level and to counter-act state repression of the social movements. The ZACF may well adopt a similar strategic approach, with its township food gardens and community libraries - and its Anti-Repression Network, respectively.

Auca states its aims as "giving more power of decision to the grassroots groups that are born in the heat of the struggles, and are the current incipient bodies of dual-power - mainly the popular organisations with territorial power and popular assemblies. The democracy will be structured starting from a new approach that involves the shape of political representation.

"After economic exploitation, this point is the second in importance in relation to the struggles that are currently going on. We must break definitively with bi-partisanship, but also, and fundamentally, we must give shape to the development of a new form of DIRECT AND POPULAR democracy [capitals in the original text].

"This means that decisions will no longer pass through the hands of a few enlightened politicians, but rather through the hands of all the people struggling in the streets. It is essential to struggle for a federalist character of democracy that means that the decisions that affect the social body are made by one and all, through an operation that expresses the thought of the social base of the country. Guiding this practice will be one of the maximum requirements of the Government from Below, a first taste of the society in which this is the official organisational approach."

## **FIGHTING DIFFERENTLY TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT ENDS**

The CIPO-RFM of the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, which borders on Chiapas, was founded in 1997. Today it is an organisation of about 1,000 indigenous American members, named after Mexican revolutionary anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon and now boasting its own radio station. Where the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Chiapas used arms, initially, to create space for social dialogue, CIPO-RFM is an unarmed movement. Instead it relies on innovative non-violent tactics that have proven successful even though they face state-backed death-squad attacks on their

members. Importantly, these tactics have allowed the CIPO-RFM to make nonsense of the state's claims that they are a dangerous or terrorist faction.

One of the tactics is that when they are confronted with riot police on horseback, instead of pelting the cops with stones, they throw bags of tiny ants at the horses. The ants have a vicious fiery bite and drive the horses wild, sowing confusion in police ranks and defeating attempts to suppress the organisation.

Another tactic involves moving entire communities that have been cut off from their neighbours by police / army roadblocks through the roadblocks peacefully. The women approach the cops and soldiers armed with flowers that they present to their oppressors. Delighted, embarrassed and confused, the armed forces allow the flower-givers and their children to pass them by, trailing men from the community in their wake.

Of course the state forces learn and adapt to these fire-ants & flowers tactics, but the point is that non-violent tactics have achieved far more than a frontal armed attack ever would - and it builds up a grudging respect for the anarchist forces among foot soldiers and cops who are largely drawn from very similar social backgrounds to those they are forced to go up against.

A fundamental anarchist ethic is that "means are ends-in-the-making", which is to say that the means that we as revolutionaries adopt in our struggles at all levels and in all phases will directly determine the nature and quality of the lives we build for ourselves and our class. It stands to reason that one cannot repress in order to create freedom or resort to terror in order to lift the clouds of fear off our horizons.

Probably the best expression during the Anarchist Days 2 meetings of how anarchists should engage with the social movements was given by CIPO-RFM delegate Raul Gattica, who said that that anarchists "do not come like an illuminating god" to the social movements, but rather as comrades who live humbly alongside and within the movements, assisting the autonomy of the movements to the best of their abilities.

This non-vanguardist, non-sectarian attitude will be the ZACF's guiding principle in relating to our own social movements.

*Continued on Page 17*



# Your Factory, Under Worker Control

## Argentina, Neuquen, alt. Media

Every day, the 330 workers of Zanón Ceramics Factory (Cerámica Zanón) who both work at and run the largest ceramic floor-tile factory in Argentina are, legally speaking, usurping the factory and its machinery. That they have been able to sustain this legally precarious situation for two years is due to the incredible solidarity they have garnered from their local community, Neuquén, a desert city of 300,000 in the south of Argentina. While an outstanding order to evict these work-



ers has existed for nearly a year, the government will not order the police to fulfill it because the political costs would be too high-groups ranging from the teachers' union to the petroleum workers' union to the Catholic Church have said that if there is an eviction they will call a general strike throughout the province until the situation is resolved.

### CREATING A DEMOCRATIC WORKPLACE

Even before the Argentinian economy collapsed completely in 2001, workers in factories and businesses that had gone bankrupt began the practice of continuing production even after their businesses closed.

Thousands of workers in hundreds of workplaces-ranging from ceramics factories to print shops to hotels-are currently running their businesses better than their former bosses were able to do.

The initial challenges to restarting production include everything from very specific concerns, such as internal sabotage from a small group of workers allied with the former boss, to workers simply wondering how a factory will operate without anyone ordering them around.

A common tactic used by workers to self-manage occupied factories - and used at Zanón - has been to replace a management structure with a group decision-making structure, referred to as an assembly.

Each department or work unit elects a representative to convey department concerns during assemblies, which are attended by all the workers. There, workers vote to approve or reject the departments' proposals. This ensures that each department is able to propose solutions to its problems and that all of the workers are informed of the actions of each unit.

So, the decision making process at Zanón is transparent and representative. While there are 30 elected "coordinators," each is elected by their sector and all of their decisions are made in an open assembly-any worker or member of the community can ask at any time to see the financial statements.

There are also two elected "coordinators of the coordinators" who perform many managerial functions, with the difference being that all of their decisions have to be reviewed by all workers, and they are recallable.

Assemblies are held every week, one per shift, and when there are important decisions to be made a shift is given up to a long assembly, with all workers in attendance. These

"extraordinary" assemblies are not only about the strategy of running the factory and winning their demands, but also about how to work on joint campaigns with other community groups.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Zanón has won considerable support from all sectors of the Neuquen community because they are committed to creating a factory that is at the service of the community. Their goal is to get the government to expropriate the factory and let the workers run it, and the workers will prioritise production for state and community institutions.

But instead of waiting for the state to act, they are already donating tiles and supporting the struggles of other groups, not just in the street, but having joint political discussions with their allies.

Their openness to support from all sectors and their struggle against corrupt government, bad bosses, and unemployment resulted in solidarity early on in the struggle, with families living below the poverty level donating food or money during the interval between the takeover and the restart of production.

One key factor in creating such a strong wall of support is that Zanón is a large factory in a small city. Almost everyone knows someone who works at Zanón,

and while in a large city campaigns come and go, Zanón is the backbone of the labor activism in Neuquén.

Additionally, Zanón's press office doesn't just produce internal bulletins, but rather publishes periodicals for the entire community and produces three weekly radio shows. The factory is open to any group who wants a tour, and past groups have ranged from international visitors to the local kindergartens.

They have also allied themselves with the struggle of local native peoples, who have donated clay from their lands to the factory.

Zanón's workers donate tiles to community centers and hospitals. As a result, the nurses union donates a nurse during each shift to supervise the health of the workers. Most importantly, each group that supports Zanón receives jobs as they become available. So far, Zanón has opened 90 new positions.

They have turned over security operations (about 30 jobs in total) to members of an unemployed workers group-people who have been marginalized and deemed as untrustworthy by the rest of society due to their long term unemployment.

Zanón serves as a lesson to all workers that community support cannot only be built during times of crisis, but must be maintained day in and day out.

### WEIGHING THE RISKS

Why would anyone want to take over their place of work? The key reason is lack of other options-the risks appear smaller when compared with long term unemployment in an economy that shows little likelihood of improving. In this situation, taking over the workplace could serve to solve a



problem, namely the preservation of jobs.

The Zanón workers began their struggle to improve conditions within the factory in June 2000 when a worker died there due to employer negligence and their

union-Sindicato Obreros y Empleados Ceramistas del Neuquén (Union of Ceramic Workers and Employees of Neuquén)-did not respond strongly enough to the crisis.

Despite the inaction of union leadership, Zanón's workers led a nine day strike that ended with workers winning a joint commission of workers and managers to oversee production and safety within the factory. However, the union continued to be unaccountable to the rank and file, doing such things as holding meetings during the middle of shifts when workers could not attend.

Later, in May 2001, management stopped paying full wages, claiming that the factory was not turning a profit. After a 34-day strike (again, an action not supported by the union), the workers won the right to review the accounting books, which clearly showed that the factory was turning a profit.

Due to the strong internal organization that built during this strike, workers from Zanón and other factories ran in opposition to the union leadership and won.

However, on September 5, 2001 the factory's owner locked out the workers, claiming that there was not enough money to pay their salaries due to outstanding debts and that, despite receiving huge state subsidies, the factory was unable to

turn a profit.

The workers camped outside of the factory in protest and, on the 1st of October, entered the factory to prevent the owner from removing the machinery. Soon after, a group of 20 workers proposed that they restart production. After a brief discussion, the majority of the workers agreed that it was the only way to contin-



ue to earn a living.

### KEEPING PRODUCTION GOING

On March 2, 2002 the factory began producing again, with only one line of production open. Initially, the workers decided to start off producing about 10 percent of what was produced before the lockout and slowly increasing production as not to

undermine the quality of the product.

However, by implementing their own ideas to improve production, and with help from engineers from the local university, within a year the workers were producing more than 50 percent of what the factory made before the takeover.

Currently, they are looking to exporting tiles once again, and have become recognized as a not-for-profit organization, as all of the profits are used to improve production or make donations to the community.

Before the takeover, some workers earned twice as much as others; now everyone earns the same (\$800 pesos, or about \$270 dollars, a good salary in Neuquen). Workers report feeling less stressed as they can take breaks when they need to and, most importantly, accidents, once common, are now rare occurrences.

As one poster says "Now, there are no bosses. Safety is the responsibility of all of us."

**The A-Infos News Service**

News about and of interest to anarchists  
SUBSCRIPTION: send mail to [lists@ainfos.ca](mailto:lists@ainfos.ca)  
with command in body of mail "subscribe (or  
unsubscribe) listname your@address".

## From Self-Managed Movements to the Self-Managed City

In the early 20th century, radical workplace activists put forward the idea that, in building workplace organisations or unions self-managed by rank and file workers, and in challenging the bosses for control of production, they were "building the new society in the shell of the old." They envisioned rank and file self-management of the union or organisation of workplace struggle as foreshadowing grassroots bodies through which workers would manage production in a non-market, post-capitalist society.

The assumption here is that self-management, having control over your life, having a say over the decisions that affect you, should be central to our vision of a post-capitalist future.

But self-management isn't relevant only to our control over our work, the sphere of production, but to the sphere of consumption as well. What sorts of housing do we want to live in? What sorts of services do we want available in our neighbourhoods? What do we want the layout of the city to be? What products do

we want produced? Our economic vision needs a means of providing people with say over consumption decisions that affect them.

This idea is reflected in the Participatory Economics vision that proposes both workers councils and neighbourhood consumption councils as building blocks of self-management. For cities, Participatory Economics poses the possibility of a horizontal, self-managing regionalism in planning investment in transportation and other infrastructure as well as in meeting social needs such as housing, childcare, and health care.

Participatory planning would mean that people, starting in their local neighbourhood councils, would develop proposals for what they want to be produced. Both as individuals, for private consumption, as well as for items of collective consumption, we figure out what we want to consume, and what work we want to do. These proposals filter outward through organisations over a larger geographic scope insofar as they have impact on a larger area.

Through a process of give-and-take between workers and consumers, proposals would be refined into a comprehensive agenda for social production.

Land use decisions are also a part of this give-and-take process, and issues like the relationship between housing and worksites becomes a negotiated process among production groups and neighbourhood councils. For example, would most people prefer to move back more in the direction of the pre-capitalist artisanal city, with work and housing in close proximity? Well, if so, we would expect that to be reflected in decisions about investment in the built environment.

Participatory economics implies the elimination of some of the main forces that have shaped the capitalist city.

Work site decisions would not be simply a question of what the CEO thinks best. The spatial sorting of the population by class and race in the capitalist city is built on huge disparities in income and power, which would no longer exist in an economic system where remuneration is



based on work effort or sacrifice and corporate-style hierarchies no longer rule.

From a participatory economic point of view, the principle of self-management says that each person is to have a say over decisions that affect them and in proportion as they are affected. This implies that there can no longer be external negative impacts like air pollution that are simply imposed dictatorially on people without those people having a say about it. The huge environmental burden of polluting uses, such as over-reliance on private auto transport, will have to be properly taken into account in a self-managing, participatory economy.

We can envision participatory economics emerging as a real alternative through the development of mass, self-managing social movements, from a resurgent, self-managed form of worker unionism, in the sphere of production, to self-managed tenant organisations and mass organisations of all kinds.

Housing is a major area of consumption that is also a source of much conflict, from people securing shelter by squatting in vacant buildings, to renters organising tenant unions and rent strikes. Within capitalism, the status of land and housing as a commodity, and the cycle of investment in the built environment, generates both periods of decay and deterioration of working class neighbourhoods as well as re-investment and displacement, when professional and business people use their higher incomes to outbid the working class for housing.

Peter Marcuse has written: "The opposite of gentrification should not be decay and abandonment but democratisation of housing." An interesting tactic for democratisation of housing that has emerged in the U.S.A. in the last two decades are community land trusts, which are typically formed in response to either rising rents and displacement or in response to deterioration and decay.

Community land trusts are land co-operatives that enrol members in a geographic area and act as a non-profit developer of resident-controlled housing. As a democratic membership organisation, the community land trust can empower people in a neighbourhood to control what is done with the land there, what services are provided in the neighbourhood, and ensure that an adequate supply of housing is provided at prices working people can afford.

The basic concept is that the community land trust holds land in a community in perpetuity, taking it off the speculative market. Dwellings are typically sold to residents in some form of limited equity ownership. The long-run affordability of the housing is enforced by a ground lease. A departing household must sell their house or apartment back to the community land

trust at a restricted price, to keep housing prices low. The community land trust approach thus works at decommodifying both land and buildings.

Self-management is implemented along two dimensions: Residents have control over the buildings they live in, but the community is empowered to control housing prices and land use.

At various times labour unions and other groups in the U.S.A. have formed limited equity housing co-ops to provide



working class housing at affordable prices. The community land trust model was developed in the '60s to overcome problems that have tended to destroy limited equity housing co-operatives in the U.S.A.

The problem is, someone who owns a share in a housing co-op has a personal self-interest in getting the maximum possible price when selling. For this reason, co-op shareowners eventually figure out ways to break the limits on equity. The housing then becomes just another real estate commodity.

This happens because the larger working class community, who have a stake in preserving low housing prices, are not a party to the market transaction between seller and buyer. In fact, this is a case of a negative externality.

The community land trust solution to this problem is to organise the people who

would be externally impacted so that they do have a say over this decision. Community land trusts have separate categories of membership, owners of limited equity dwellings versus others in the community who are not owners. Each elects the same number of representatives to the council or board of directors and split votes can be taken in general assemblies on major issues. The effect is to ensure that people who would be adversely impacted by breaking the limits on equity are represented, and can prevent conversion of the housing into unrestricted commodities.

There is a second problem that limited equity co-ops have encountered in the U.S.A. Given the concentration of expertise about economic management at the top of the social pyramid and huge inequalities in U.S. society, not everyone has the opportunity to acquire knowledge that would be relevant to effectively managing buildings. If low-income people are set loose in a stand-alone co-op, they may be taken advantage of by unscrupulous building contractors or property management firms. Management by untrained amateurs sometimes creates problems like this even for condominium associations of professional people.

The more traditional approach to social housing, either run by state entities or by non-profit community development corporations, overcomes this problem by concentrating the expertise and decision-making in a corporate-style hierarchy. The problem is, the relationship to the tenant is paternalistic, and the residents have no control over the places where they live or the shape of the built environment around them.

By contrast, the community land trust solution to this problem is to do training of residents and develop in the residents the skills for effective management of their buildings. The community land trust is there to provide guidance and backup in case problems are encountered. The "you're-on-your-own" approach of the market is replaced by a more collaborative approach in which knowledge and risks are shared.

The community land trust thus acts as a buffer to protect the housing co-ops against the corrosive effects of the surrounding capitalist economy.

We can imagine various ways in which the community land trust model could be



### Anarchism and the Spanish Revolution

The Website below has hundreds of documents and photos produced during the time and afterwards about the revolution, its successes and failures and why it was defeated.

<http://www.struggle.ws/spaindx.html>



extended. People who are going to live in buildings could be actively involved in the design of the buildings, so that the new buildings are customised to meet their particular needs and tastes.

Community land trusts can try to secure powers of eminent domain, to dislodge properties from speculators and absentee landlords. For example, through political struggle, Dudley Street Neighbours, a Boston community land trust, was able to get a limited power of eminent domain

In cities where large-scale squatting of buildings has occurred, community land trusts could be used as the means to regularise or legalise the resident's control of their buildings, in a way that prevents the land and buildings from becoming real estate commodities.

Tenants organised in tenant unions could work with a community land trust to buy out the landlord and gain control, collectivising the building.

In situations where public housing projects are under threat of being privatised, the tenants could use the community land trust approach to keep the land off the speculative market and gain control over their buildings.

These last several examples illustrate ways that community land trusts can be used as a tactic in the ongoing class struggle over the built environment.

Some community land trusts in the U.S.A. have provided spaces for health clinics and childcare centres. Space could also be provided for work collectives.

The principle of self-management can be applied to services that are developed for communities so that immediate gains are consistent with the long-run vision of a self-managed society. A citywide network of community land trusts might provide spaces for a citywide network of worker-collective grocery stores or worker co-op childcare centres, for example.

The example of the community land trust suggests that we can develop organisations that begin to play, in an embryonic way, the sort of role envisioned for the Neighbourhood Council in Participatory Economics, where we have a participato-

ry, democratic body to decide what sorts of services or what sorts of economic development or what sorts of housing we want in a neighbourhood.

Right now funding for social housing in any form is scarce in the U.S.A. The prospects for changing this depend upon the trajectory of social change; it depends upon the balance of forces in the U.S.

The workplace organisations of struggle, the unions, will continue to be a crucial potential force for change, because of their size and position in the economy.

I would envision an alliance - a people's alliance - of unions, tenant groups, and other mass organisations coming together around a multiplicity of concerns that affect city dwellers in their daily lives - not only housing but health care, transportation, childcare, schools, and other issues.

If organisations are not to be simply run by professional cadre or reduced to a hardcore of committed activists, we need to figure out ways that make it easier for the average working person to be involved in movements. When people must work two jobs or 60 hours a week to make ends meet, it's hard for them to find the time to be involved in organisations. This brings out the importance of efforts to gain more free time for people, such as reviving the movement to shorten the workweek without loss in pay. Quality, affordable childcare is also important if parents are to find the time to be involved in community organisations.

The way in which we organise for change is important in shaping what the outcome will be down the road. If we develop organisations that simply implement a corporate-style hierarchy internally, how is that consistent with participatory self-management as a goal? That form of organisation sends the wrong message, develops the wrong habits of thought.

If our aim is a society based on self-management, we need to work to develop movements and organisations now that are self-managed, organisations based on participation and democratic control, such as unions self-managed by rank and file workers. Through the experience of direct

control of these organisations, people can develop skills and self-confidence and better knowledge of the system they are up against.

We build the self-managed city in the process of the struggle for change.

Tom Wetzel

Text taken from the website of the Workers Solidarity Alliance  
<http://www.workersolidarity.org/>

**Continued from Page 13**

**POST-SCRIPT: ILS MEETING**

At Porto Alegre, there was also a meeting of the International Libertarian Solidarity (ILS) network of which most ZACF groups are members. The ILS was established in Madrid in 2001 to link the largest and most active sectors of the global anarchist movement together.

The meeting was attended by ILS delegates from BMC, FAG, FAU, LL, LEL, CIPO-RFM and CGT, with delegates from BN, the ex-WSA and BN as observers (Auca was accepted into the ILS in February). The meeting felt that the lack of presence of the Libertarian Mutual Aid Network (RLAM) of Spain, the OSL of Switzerland, Libertarian Alternative (AL, France/Belgium), RNP and the Libertarian Communist Organisation (OCL, France) - together with the then up-coming ILS meeting prior to the G8 Summit in Evian, France, in June 2003 - meant the meeting should be brief. As a result, all organisations present simply gave a description of the challenges facing them, particularly in terms of money and resources.

Of interest to Africans was the presentation by LEL, which operates within the favellas (squatter camps) of Rio de Janeiro, in conditions of grinding poverty and gangsterism - not dissimilar to the conditions ZACF members know in the townships of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town - yet which has built community meeting centres and a vibrant press.

- Michael Schmidt (ZACF)

**Southern African Anarchism Online**



**www.zabalaza.net**

Links to local groups, education material, email discussion lists, PDF leaflets for you to distribute etc. etc.



**T-SHIRT - R30**

**Front Says:**  
 Freedom for All: Power to no one and to Everyone. To each, power over her/his own life and no other

**Back Says:**  
 Everything for Everyone!  
 (with ZACF)

# Basic Principles of Anarchism

**Anti-Authoritarianism:** Anarchists are extremely sceptical about the need for any kind of authority. At minimum, all anarchists believe that hierarchy should be abolished. Instead of hierarchy, everyone should have control over their own life and an equal say in group decisions.

**Free Association:** Everyone should be allowed to associate freely with those they choose and to disassociate themselves when they choose. Individuals should not be forced into social relations against their will. Society should be based upon free agreement, rather than coercion.

**Mutual Aid:** Instead of attempting to dominate each other, social relations should be based on solidarity and voluntary co-operation. When individuals come together to help each other they can accomplish more than when they work against each other.

**Freedom:** Freedom means the ability to control one's own life instead of being controlled by others, as is the case with hierarchy. This is sometimes called liberty or autonomy. Controlling other people's lives is not freedom but a restriction of freedom.

**Self-Management:** In groups, decisions should be made in a manner so that everyone has an equal say. People should govern themselves, rather than dividing people into some who give orders and some who obey as in hierarchical organisations.

**Radical Egalitarianism:** Anarchists believe in an equalitarian society. This does not mean some totalitarian society where everyone is identical or lives identical lives. It does not mean denying individual diversity or uniqueness. Rather anarchists believe in equality of both wealth and power - a natural consequence of the abolition of hierarchy.

**Womens Liberation:** Anarchists favour social, economic and political equality for men and women. The domination of men over women must be abolished and all people given control of their own lives.

## What An Anarchist Society Would Look Like

There have been many different visions of what an anarchist society would look like. Any vision that abolishes the things anarchists are opposed to and is consistent with the earlier stated principles of anarchism is compatible with anarchy. There are, however, many institutions that have been proposed by anarchists to run a non-hierarchical society. Most of these are not based on idle speculation but by looking at how actually existing anarchist societies have worked. Some of them are:

**Popular Assemblies:** Also called general assemblies or mass assemblies. In any organisation people can come together to

meet and discuss whatever common problems or activities they face. At these assemblies everyone should have an equal opportunity to participate in both the discussion/debate and the final decisions. These can be formed in workplaces where they would take over the running of all workplaces. Worker assemblies would then meet regularly to plan production, divide up the tasks that need to be accomplished, etc. They can be formed in each neighbourhood in order to deal with whatever particular issues confront that neighbourhood and organise to deal with them. These are based on free association so whenever a group of people wants to get together to accomplish some goal they can simply form a general assembly to organise it. Free association also means that no one would have to participate in an assembly if they did not want to. Such assemblies can be formed to organise around anything - not only around workplace and neighbourhood issues but potentially also universities, clubs, space exploration, etc. Worker assemblies, neighbourhood assemblies, university assemblies, community assemblies and the like can all be formed to run society without hierarchy, based on self-management.

**Councils:** The different assemblies can co-ordinate their activities through the use of a council system. This is done by each assembly assigning a contact person(s) (sometimes called a spoke or delegate) to meet with other contact people from other assemblies which they want to co-ordinate things with. The meeting of contact people is called a council or spokescouncil. Position of contact person should rotate frequently. Each contact person is mandated, meaning that they are instructed by the assembly that they come from on how to deal with any issue. The contact people would be given binding instructions, committing them to a framework of policies, developed by their assembly, within which they would have to act. If at any time they violate their mandate their assembly would instantly recall them and their decisions revoked. Decision-making power stays in the assemblies; contact people simply convey and implement those positions. Contact people do not have any authority or special privileges. Councils are organised from the bottom up, with control staying in the assemblies. They are not hierarchical organisations but simply co-ordinate the activities of the assemblies without authority. Instead of hierarchy there are decentralised confederations and networks. This differs from representative institutions in that decision-making power stays in the assemblies whereas representatives can make whatever decisions they want and have authority over others.

These councils can be formed to co-ordinate the activities of assemblies on whatever level needed. Worker councils can co-ordinate the activities of the worker assemblies; neighbourhood councils can co-ordinate the activities of different neighbourhood assemblies, etc. They can also do this on a regional scale - forming regional worker councils, etc - and those regional confederations can use the same method to co-ordinate with each other. In all cases, decision making power stays with the assemblies upon which the councils are based - the assemblies would be the core of any organisation.

## Decision Making Processes

Any decision making process in which everyone has control over their own life and all members have an equal say, rather than dividing people into order givers and order takers, is theoretically compatible with anarchism. Although there are many different ways in which this can be done, there are two main methods of non-hierarchical decision-making which are advocated by anarchists:

**Consensus:** In consensus, everyone in the group must agree to a decision before it can be put into action. All contributions are valued and participation is encouraged. Any member can block consensus, stopping a decision they strongly object to. Members may also "stand aside," allowing a decision they do not like to be made without blocking or supporting it.

**Direct Democracy:** Decisions would be made by directly voting on the options - the option with a majority of votes is implemented. Anarchists who advocate direct democracy do not believe in a mechanical process whereby the majority just votes away the minority and ignores them. It is intended to be a dynamic discussion process where different people listen to each other and exchange ideas. Direct Democracy is combined with free association as well - meaning that anyone who is out-voted does not absolutely have to abide by the decision. They can simply leave the group.

These decision making processes would be used in the popular assemblies, councils, etc. There are many variations on them and it is also possible to synthesise consensus and direct democracy. Some groups could use direct democracy but require that the majority be of a certain size (such as 2/3rds or 3/4ths) instead of a simple majority. Another variation is to attempt to achieve the largest majority possible.

# Understanding "Direct Action"

The idea of 'direct action' needs some explanation. Every time somebody puts a brick through a window or organises a minor protest there will almost inevitably be someone else who describes it as direct action.

Direct action is about empowering people, it's about breaking from dependency on others to run our lives. Rather than pleading with our bosses or electing 'better' politicians to make decisions for us, it means ordinary people coming together to win change through our own efforts.

In work this can mean using work-to-rules, strikes and occupations to win improvements rather than trusting in the Labour Relations Commission or Labour Court. In our neighbourhoods it means organising mass non-payment of the bin tax rather than passively hoping our local councillors will eventually vote to abolish the double tax.

The point is that action is taken, not indirectly by 'mediators' or 'representatives' over whom we have little control, but directly by those effected. It is action intended to succeed, not just to gain publicity.

It is a rejection of the notion that ordinary people are powerless, and so must leave the important decisions to someone else. It holds that most improvements are not benevolently handed down by generous rulers and bosses, they have to be fought for. That is how we gained much of what we have today, from the 8 hour day to paid holidays.

As well as being the most effective way of hanging on to what we have and gaining a bit more, direct action is also a preparation for bigger things. Anarchism will not become a reality through the actions of any small minority or elite.

If we are to create a free socialist society based on the grassroots democracy of workplace and community councils, a lot of people will have to be involved. A lot of people will have to believe that together they are capable of not only overthrowing the present system but of building and sustaining a much better one.

Through engaging in direct action we learn, through experience, that there is no need to leave things to 'experts' or professional politicians. We learn how to manage our own struggles, to build our own structures, we learn that we need to link up with others. After all, there is no point in

getting your neighbours to boycott the bin tax if people in all the other areas are unaware of the campaign and continue paying.

Ideas of solidarity and mutual aid become real. There is no pre-condition for anarchism more important than working class self-confidence. If most people

don't feel capable of running society themselves, this task will be taken up by whatever Party or group can con us into thinking that they are the 'professionals' and 'experts' we should place our confidence in.

When that happens we are on the road to changing our rulers but not the system we live under. There will still be a division of people into rulers and ruled. And rulers always look after their own interests, not those of society as whole. This has happened every single time a minority has been trusted to rule a country after a revolutionary upsurge.

Alan MacSimóin

This text first appeared in the Irish Anarchist paper 'Workers Solidarity'.



## HELP SUPPORT FREE PRISONER SUBSCRIPTIONS

We offer free copies of *Zabalaza: A Journal of Southern African Revolutionary Anarchism* to those held hostage by the state. We feel this service is important, because most prisoners are not in a position to afford such luxuries as information from the outside. If you can contribute, please contact the Federation Secretary to work out payment options.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PRISONERS

You have received this issue of *Zabalaza* because you have recently written us requesting a copy, or because we heard about you from another prisoner. In order to receive the next issue you must write back with a request for the next issue, as we currently lack the resources or means to maintain a permanent prisoner subscription list.

## THATS CAPITALISM...

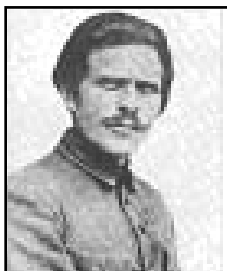
On the 5th of May, the United Nations said that almost 21.9 million South Africans are living below the national poverty line of R354 a month (a loaf of bread costs between R3 and R5).

## Definitions

**RACISM**, n. A sign of idiocy indicating that an individual believes that other racial groups can be even worse than their own.

They can shoot us now. Go ahead.  
 They can put us in jail. Feel free. They can beat us. Do it, I've paid for better.  
 They can throw us out of first-floor windows. But we can fly. They can say how it ain't on their monopoly media. Please do. They can equate our justice with their violence. Of course they will. They can draft in liberals to steal ideals. You know they'll try. They can ban us. Stop us. Fight us. Scare us. Kill us. They can close airports, stations, roads and minds. They can provoke and scheme. Cheat and prosper. Distort and destroy. They can create laws, more laws and by-laws to suit themselves. They can build bigger and better weapons to attack us with and to enrich their pals. They can sell us crap, sell us fear and sell us out. They can call us consumers not citizens. Apathetic not angry. Disinterested not disillusioned. They can make us despair and weep, fear and loathe, run and hide. They can take our work, our money and our lives. But we come with justice and fire. We come with honour and ideas. We come with decency and desire. We come now and we come as unstoppable as the rain. They can shoot us now. Go ahead.

Adam Porter, Year Zero



### Anarchism in the Russian Revolution

<http://www.struggle.ws/russia.html>

### Anarchism in the Ukainian Revolution

<http://www.nestormakhno.info/>



**WHERE WE STAND**

We, the working class, produce the world's wealth. We ought to enjoy the benefits. We want to abolish the system of capitalism that places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers self-management and socialism. We do not mean the lie called 'socialism' practised in Russia, China, and other police states - the system in those countries was/is no more than another form of capitalism - state capitalism.

We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society that will be run in a truly democratic way by working people, through federations of community and workplace committees. We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up - not the top down.

All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be co-ordinated, organised and planned by the federation of elected and recallable workplace and community committees, not for profit but to meet our needs. The guiding principle will be "from each according to ability, to each according to need".

We are opposed to all coercive authority; we believe that the only limit on the freedom of the individual is that their freedom does not interfere with the freedom of others.

We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power "on behalf of the working class". Instead, we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.

We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it cannot be made to serve our interests. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority. We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.

We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many countries because it serves our interests - not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.

In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of our class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of a free and equal (anarchist) society.

The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionaries from the southern regions of Africa who identify with the communist tradition within Anarchism. The federation is organised around the principles of theoretical and tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. Our activities include study and theoretical development, anarchist agitation and propaganda, and participation within the class struggle.

As anarchist-communists, we struggle for a classless, stateless and non-hierarchical society. We envision an international confederation of directly democratic, self-managed communities and workplaces; a society where all markets, exchange value systems and divisions of labour have been abolished and the means of production, distribution and communication are socialised in order to allow for the satisfaction of the needs of everyone, adhering to the communist principle: "From each according to ability, to each according to need."



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