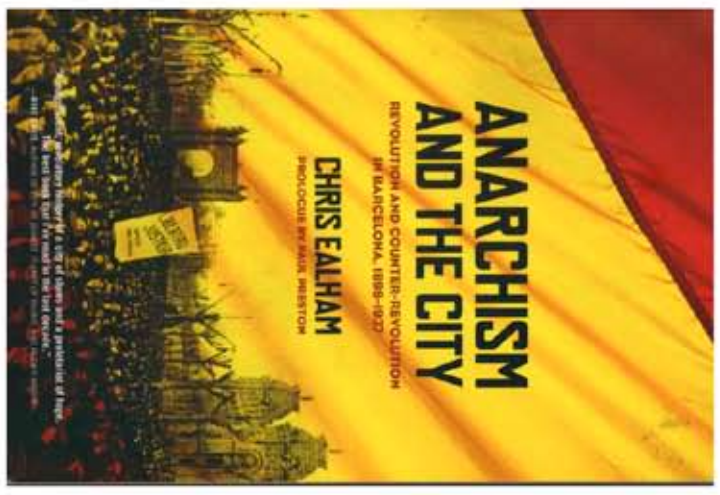


workers solidarity movement

summer 2011 issue

inside!

19th Century Resistance & why it ain't happening today/

Organising to Beat the Household Tax/

IMAGINING the FUTURE: Participatory Economics/

Michel Foucault: An Examination of Power/

GREECE - Seeds of Hope/

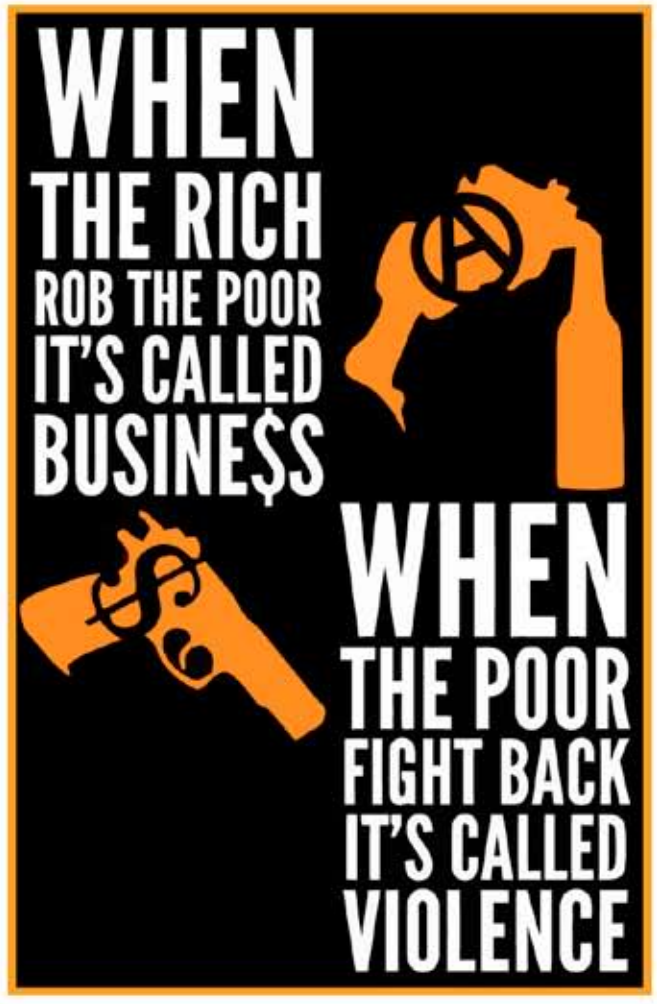
Resisting the Lure of the Freeman Movement/

Reviews/

Irish anarchist review

The Irish Anarchist Review

free!



power, resistance & possibilities

winter 2011 issue

welcome to/

.....The Irish Anarchist Review

Welcome to issue 4 of the Irish Anarchist Review, produced by the Workers Solidarity Movement. This magazine aims to provide a forum for the exploration of theories, thoughts and ideas about political struggle, and where we would like to go and how to get there from the current situation. This magazine also seeks to be a place where people interested in revolutionary politics can read first-hand reports from people involved at the 'coal-face' of working-class struggles and perhaps reply to it with an article of their own. We believe there can be no revolution worthy of the name without a genuine sharing of political ideas between people.

The political state of Ireland and the wider world today presents a frustrating yet potentially promising prospect for revolutionaries. A class war is being prosecuted by the world's richest 1% and public opposition to this in many countries including Ireland has been limited to demonstrations of mass public anger at falling living standards, by crowds of atomized individuals who for the most part remain trapped inside a narrative spoken by politicians and a mass media who are controlled by that same richest 1%. Anger is widespread among our class, but effective action by the 99% seems as remote as it was before the current crises, when the neoliberal illusion was unburst and still had a veneer of plausibility. However, active opposition to austerity and repression in countries like Greece, Chile and Egypt, and the recent protest manifestations like Occupy Wall Street/Dame Street show that resistance is indeed fertile.

Fin Dwyer writes in his essay that a key difference between people in Ireland today and their 19th-century ancestors is popular politicisation and first-person history of mass struggle. The Land War arose from a situation not entirely unlike that faced by 21st-century Irish people, but the response in the former case was shaped by political organisations like the IRB and many individuals with the reach and organising know-how to take that desire for change further than isolated and ineffectual reaction. Fin looks forward to the forthcoming anti-Household Tax campaign as a possible candidate for emulating that successful, if flawed, antecedent of the 1870s and 1880s.

This leads on to Paul Bowman's article advocating an 'organiser model' for developing the emerging campaign against the Household Tax. Paul argues that only a campaign based on increasing the engagement level of members to well beyond the levels usually achieved in most left organising here to date can deliver the scale and personal commitment of membership needed to win the campaign objectives. He outlines a method based on these principles developed by the trade union movement in the United States, where struggles to organise workplaces often have been very hard-fought.

Kostas Avramidis' piece on current conditions in Greece gives a flavour of what is going on in one of the small number of countries in Europe where there is ongoing mass public action against the austerity agenda. He draws our attention to community campaigns against unwanted capitalist projects, where the traditional political system has been bypassed. Kostas sees this as a symptom of a rising political consciousness among ordinary Greeks, but he poses his own concerns if this will be enough to transform the plight of the Greek working class in a radical way.

Donal O'Driscoll has written an anarchist critique of the Freeman Movement, which has gained some credence (and members) from among the left activist community. Donal stresses that the 'Freemen''s dependence on concepts like 'natural law' and 'common law' are antithetical to anarchism's rejection of authoritarian laws and the 'appeal to history' that is central to Freeman thinking lends itself to social conservatism, support for private property, and political reaction.

Eric Hayes's article on the Participatory Economics blueprint developed by Michael Albert and others follows on from the theme of 'imagining the future' begun in the last issue. Parecon is not universally liked in libertarian left circles, but as a fully-thought-out alternative to the current model of economic activity it is worthy of critical scrutiny by anarchists. Eric gives a description of the main features of the model, and draws the reader's attention to what he sees are its valuable aspects.

James McBarron's interview with labour historian and author Conor McCabe discusses the economic interests and agenda of the Irish ruling class since 1922, and how these have changed over that time, while noting that certain interests remain unaltered. They also discuss how the Irish working class has experienced the results of the out-working of these in government policy and in their living standards.

Cathal Larkin offers an anarchist's perspective on the work of Michel Foucault, a 20th-century French sociologist and political philosopher whose opinions on oppression, crime, punishment, power, agency, and the role of the intellectual in popular struggle has made him particularly difficult to pigeon-hole for ideologues of left and right. Cathal says that while Foucault never called himself an anarchist, much of his political stance commends itself readily to the anarchist tradition.

There are also two book reviews to whet your appetite – Cathal Larkin reviews Anarchism And The City, and Eoghan Ryan does Ramor Ryan's latest, Zapatista Spring.

We offer these ideas not solely as intellectual nourishment, but hope that these will be of use to you in your political activity and everyday life. We also intend that these writings proke others to respond with ideas of their own, and we look forward to receiving responses from you, our readers out there.

WORDS : RAY HANRAHAN

contents

19th Century Resistance & why it ain't happenir today/ 3

Organising to Beat the Household Tax/ 6

IMAGINING the FUTURE: Participatory Economics/ 9

Michel Foucault: An Examination of Power 13

GREECE – Seeds of Hope/ 15

Resisting the Lure of the Freeman Movement 17

Reviews/ 20

about the wsm/

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

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

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

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Editorial Committee

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19th Century Resistance & why it ain't happening today/

Over the past three years Ireland has witnessed unprecedented austerity. An aspect that has surprised many people has been the limited and at best sporadic resistance to what has been a savage cut in people's standards of living.

3

WORDS :
FIN DWYER

Politicians and the media have on many occasions relished the fact that resistance has been largely ineffectual and isolated, while many left wing activists have been left questioning why most people seem willing to take so much pain.

Sections of the mainstream have attempted to understand the muted response in a pseudo-racial fashion arguing that Irish people are not like our "hot blooded" neighbours in the Mediterranean. However, the explanation may be far more straight forward. If we look at the issue from a different perspective, asking the question "where would such resistance to austerity come from?" it becomes clear that resistance to austerity was unlikely to emerge. Successful resistance to oppression does not just fall from the sky, spring from raw emotion or emerge because something is wrong. Instead it emerges not only from a sense of injustice but high levels of politicisation and political experience.

Irish history has produced such large scale movements of resistance several times over the past 3 centuries but perhaps the prerequisite need of politicisation and political experience were never more obvious than in the 19th century. Twice in that century the ruling class exacted a brutal class war on the poorest in society with very different consequences. One resulted in a catastrophic defeat – The Great Famine, the other a victory of sorts known as The Land War. The difference between these two struggles may explain the lack of organised resistance in Ireland today.

19th century Ireland

19th century Ireland was marked by two periods of intense class warfare, The Great Famine (1845-51) and The Land War (1879-1882). These events were similar in that they saw recessions become potential crises when the potato crop, the staple diet of the majority of population, failed for several years in a row. In both 1845 and 1879 the poorest in society, as they faced starvation, were forced to bear the brunt of the recession as Landlords, supported by the British State, refused to stop food exports or reduce rent. Indeed many landlords tried to use both crises to evict tenants into destitution and starvation in order to replace them with more profitable ranches while continuing to export food abroad.

The Famine and Resistance

In 1845 the result was catastrophic. Already living

on the margins of society the poor could not shoulder the crisis but rather the opposite, they needed help. This aid did not come, aside from tokenistic gestures, and in the region of 800,000 and 1 million people died while 58,000 tenants and families were evicted between 1848 and 1851.

The popular view is that people did not resist these extreme measures of eviction or continued food export by the ruling class in Ireland and London. This is not true. Demonstrations, protests, armed attacks and assassinations were not unusual. Frequent protests at market and port towns where food was sold for export exploded into riots. On some occasions tenants attacked their landlords. Most famously Captain Denis Mahon was assassinated in Strokestown, County Roscommon. These forms of resistance were so common that food exports were usually accompanied by military convoy.

While anger was palpable and people lashed out, this resistance however never developed into a movement capable of stopping the human aspects of the Famine. While being widespread it was reminiscent of the resistance we have witnessed to austerity so far in Ireland in the 21st century – it was localised, isolated and on an overall level largely ineffectual.

Resistance to the famine in many ways harked back to a medieval past when a local riot could force prices down or stop traders exporting food. In 1845 - 51 the problem however was not local. Like today, Ireland was increasingly part of a system of global trade, supporting the ever growing industrial population in English cities. Just like today local solutions were inadequate - an overall economic and political solution was needed to the inequality caused by the trading system of the British Empire. Just as a protest outside Roscommon hospital alone will not end European austerity today or its effects, a riot in Clonmel, Kilkenny, Cobh or Waterford or an assassination in Roscommon did not challenge the economic machine of the British Empire. By 1851 the population was broken having suffered a famine, which if not caused by human action was certainly made infinitely worse by human action.

The Land War

Less than 30 years after the famine abated in 1851, another crisis caused by a combination of potato crop failure and economic recession provoked another crisis in Ireland in 1879. Although less extensive than in 1845, the West Coast of Ireland looked like it would revisit the horrors of the famine. By 1879 famine was declared in some areas of County Mayo as potato crops failed for a third consecutive year while cholera severely damaged an emerging poultry industry.

Economic recession plunged agricultural prices and cut off the essential seasonal work many tenants depended on to pay their rent. This created a situation where over 100,000 families found themselves in rent arrears and facing eviction in 1879 as well. As in 1845 landlords steeled themselves for a vicious class struggle with many flatly refusing abatements or reduction in rent. Lord Lucan, "hero" of the Crimea and landlord in the west of Ireland refused to help his tenants as this would mean in his words "a reduction in means". This attitude reflected the thinking of many landlords.

It seemed, in a repeat of 1845, that the poorest in society were about to shoulder the effects of the natural disaster and recession even if it meant starvation. In the situation that developed, the experience could not have been more different to 1845. Although the economic crisis lasted until 1882, as did crop failure, there was no famine and evictions never surpassed a few thousand each year, dramatically down from the figures during the famine.

The Land League

This achievement was not down to a miracle or clemency from the ruling class but it was largely the work of the National Irish Land League and The Ladies Land League, which formed a mass movement of around 200,000 people. On a local level this movement resisted attempted evictions and in some cases forced rents down while supporting famine relief schemes. Simultaneously the movement focused national attention on specific cases bringing political pressure to bear, something that was never successfully done during the famine. This was most notably done in the case of the Landlord Robert Bloose in late 1879 and Captain Boycott in 1881. These "celebrity" cases served to bring pressure on the economic centre in London while local activism staved off the worst excesses of the landlords on the ground. These activities were supported by mass meetings and demonstrations most famously Irishtown and Westport in Mayo in 1879 and Dublin in 1880 which solidified the movement.

This campaign developed new tactics including the deadly effective social ostracisation which would become known as boycotting after an early victim – Captain Charles Boycott. Through these militant protests the National Irish Land League and The Ladies Land League effectively defeated Irish Landlordism and the British Government. The movement was not revolutionary in that the poor were still poor in its aftermath and the Empire survived intact, but nonetheless its implications were immense – 1845 was not repeated, within 20 years large scale landlordism in Ireland was in terminal decline (although the solution of peasant proprietorship was far from satisfactory). For us today the pertinent question is why could society in Ireland produce a movement like this in 1879 and not 1845?

What Changed?

Before the famine the major political movements were the successful campaign for Catholic emancipation in 1829 and a failed campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union, which had seen Ireland ruled directly from London. These campaigns whilst often using many ordinary people made almost no difference to the lives of the poor. Rather than challenge the British Empire in Ireland these campaigns were essentially attempts for the Irish upper and middle classes (or in the case of emancipation the catholic upper class) to control their own fate within the Empire. If anything these served to dis-empower ordinary people.

The other form of resistance took the shape of secret societies – militant, often informal, clandestine groups. These organisations varied from region to to region and differed massively but often attacked property or people in opposition to local injustices. They were clandestine and often intensely local organisations. They too failed to give people the skills to organise widespread opposition and probably contributed to the localised nature of the opposition to the famine.

After the famine politics changed fundamentally. The emergence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) popularly known as the Fenians had a transformative effect on politics. Formed in 1858, through the 1860's and 1870's, the Fenians became the pole of attraction for many radicals in Ireland.

Although known for their secretive and hierarchical organising method the Fenians equipped their activists with skills in popular agitation. Along with the high profile funeral of Terence Bellew Mc Manus in 1861, they were integral to the Amnesty Associations' campaign for amnesty for Fenian prisoners in the 1870's. In 1872 this organisation organised a meeting of around 100,000 people in Clontarf.

It was in the West of Ireland however that Fenian organisers broke most fundamentally with the organisation's strict focus on national liberation through armed struggle alone. They explored the possibilities of several different avenues of struggle. This saw them become the driving force behind the successful electoral campaign of John O Connor Power in Mayo in 1874. They were also heavily engaged in organising tenant rights associations most famously the fenian Matthew Harris in Ballinasloe. Through these activites the Fenians, particularly in Connaught, gained great organisational skills. Their success did not go unnoticed and by 1878 they were supported by Fenians from Dublin and the North of England as well as the highly influential Irish American John Devoy and Fenian organiser Michael Davitt when he was released from prison in December 1877. It was their activities that formed the basis of "The new departure" a policy that saw some Fenians break with the traditional militarism of the founders of the organisation.

The role of the Fenians in Irish politics in the 1860's and 70's is best seen, as the historian R.V. Comerford described, as one "not of ideology but of function". The official Fenian ideology of achieving independence through armed struggle alone had little impact on the Land League but its experienced activists formed the back bone of the movement. Their involvement in the election campaign of 1874 was one "not of ideology but of function" where the activists involved, while remaining highly sceptical of involvement in Westminster, got a crucial understanding of local politics in the area which they would soon put into practice.

In 1879 as the crisis hit, these Fenians not only had vast amounts of political skills but crucially they understood the local complexities of politics of the West through years of campaigning. When tenants in the small town of Irishtown in Co. Mayo began to agitate about local conditions they swung into action. The Fenians in the West along with others organised a mass meeting attended by around 8,000 people. Their involvement had a massive impact from an early stage – there would be no repeat of 1845 – they recognised the need for a structural approach to the problems Ireland faced. On the stage at the Irishtown meeting a left wing Fenian from Dublin, Thomas Brennan illustrated the view they had for the solutions to the crisis in 1879:

> *I have read some history, and I find that several countries have from time to time been afflicted with the same land disease as that under which Ireland is now labouring, and although the political doctors applied many remedies, the one that proved effectual was the tearing out, root and branch, of the class that caused the disease.*

From an early stage Fenians and former Fenians became influential members of the movement applying skills learned in past few decades. Many organisers of the the emerging land movement

"This is reflected in the fact that no political group today is in anyway comparable to the IRB in Connaught in terms of size or penetration into the fabric of modern society."

NO RENT!

NO LANDLORDS' GRASSLAND

Tenant Farmers, now is the time. Now is the hour. You proved false to the first call made upon you. REDEEM YOUR CHARACTER NOW.

NO RENT

UNTIL THE SUSPECTS ARE RELEASED.

The man who pays Rent (whether an abatement is offered or not) while PARNELL, DILLON &c., are in Jail, will be looked upon as a Traitor to his Country and a disgrace to his class.

No RENT, No Compromise, No Landlords' Grassland, Under any circumstances.

Avoid the Police, and listen not to spying and deluding Bailiffs.

NO RENT! LET THE LANDTHIEVES DO THEIR WORST!

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE!

including Thomas Brennan, Michael Davitt and Matthew Harris were all Fenians or former Fenians as was the treasurer Patrick Egan. Their experience and outlook shaped the emerging campaign for tenants' rights in Mayo into a national campaign. This was made possible by the active engagement of hundreds if not thousands of members and former members of the IRB in the west who threw themselves into the emerging struggle, along with their political skills and experience.

As the struggle grew, this movement named the Irish National Land League in October 1879, became one of the greatest social movements in Irish History and the political experience of the Fenians was crucial in this process. In 1880 it was former Fenians, notably Michael Davitt and Thomas Brennan, who were key supporters of the women who founded the Ladies Land League which proved to be integral to the movement's success. While very successful in ensuring that opposition to the evictions of 1879-1882 was national, coherent and strategic, the experienced activists' attempts to focus on the class division within the land movement and attempts to incorporate Dublin's emerging working class into the struggle, met with only limited success.

Decline and Compromise

After three years of struggle the movement began to decline after severe repression and a compromise made by conservative politicians, however its achievements were nonetheless notable. Not only had Irish National Land League prevented landlords evicting tenants they had contributed massively to famine relief. This was only possible due to the large numbers of activists on the ground who had political experience, an understanding of the wider political landscape and the nature of the problems Ireland faced in the 19th century.

Reflections on today

Clearly Ireland does not face the issues it did either in 1845 or 1879. The country is almost completely different in that the majority of the population now live in cities but there are some interesting aspects that are of some relevance.

While some were hopeful that the arrival of the IMF and ECB would produce a similar reaction to that of 1879, this was never going to happen. If we ask the question "where would it come from?" it's clear we could not emulate the response of 1879. It was shaped and honed by the involvement of hundreds if not thousands of experienced activists.

It's clear that any response in Ireland today is going to be limited given the comparable lack of experience. We live in perhaps the most apolitical time in generations. There are vast swathes of the country with no political activists or experience in recent decades. Conversely what political activists there are, are arguably out of touch with modern Irish society, something that was so important in 1879. This is reflected in the fact that no political group today is in anyway comparable to the IRB in Connaught in terms of size or penetration into the fabric of modern society.

Unfortunately the reactions in Ireland to austerity so far, reflect this lack of political consciousness and are in some ways similar to resistance to the famine – outdated and localised. Even if protests do emerge, it is hard to see them becoming a sustained long term movement. We need to adopt a slow burning strategy of organising. The upcoming campaign against the household and water taxes gives radicals a chance to grow in terms of members and influence and begin to grapple with how 20 years of consumerism, the Celtic Tiger and the shock of recession has shaped modern 21st century working class communities. While achieving these goals by no means guarantees success and history is not a blueprint for the future, there are some lessons we need to learn if we are to have a chance of mounting a serious opposition to austerity.

Organising to Beat the Household Tax

The new year brings a new tax from the Irish government and a new fight in the shape of the campaign against this household tax.

WORDS:
PAUL BOWMAN

6

Although we have beaten such taxes in the past, past victories are no guarantee of future success. In the light of the current low level of organisation and self-confidence amongst our class, we need to re-assess our methods of organisation if we aim to achieve the levels of mass participation needed for a victory. The argument of this article is that the existing traditional models of building local campaigns are not sufficient to the task and that we need to look to a new model of organising - the organiser model.

This article is not so much a practical handbook as a look at the concepts behind the organiser model, particularly as they differ from those of more traditional models that people may have come into contact with in past campaigning activity. Even if these models - principally the activist model and the mobilisation model - are usually not explicitly articulated, but spread by example and imitation, more or less consciously.

There is not the room in this article to explain the differences between the organiser model and both the activist model and the mobilisation model. Even though this is an anarchist magazine and the activist model is the one most anarchists are familiar with, here we are going to focus first on the difference between the organiser model and the mobilisation model. This is partly because the coming household tax struggle needs a mass organisation model, and the activist model is implicitly not a mass organisation model, even if this is not always explicitly admitted. But the other practical reason is that the majority of people who come along to join in with the household tax campaign will not be coming from an anarchist or environmental direct action movement background and will be more familiar with the mobilisation model, which is the current traditional organising mode of the parliamentary left or republican movement.

So, given that it is rarely explicitly theorised, what exactly do we mean by the "mobilisation" model? In outline, the mobilisation model is based on the correct perception that power is related to numbers. That is the more numbers the more power. Combined with the perception that past events of successful people power have been associated with events involving large numbers of people on the street, the mobilisation model often becomes the "politics of big crowds". The stereotypical photograph of a successful mobilisation model is a picture of a big crowd on a demonstration or rally against the issue of the day. There is also a more "antagonistic" version of this photograph, where the large crowd is throwing bricks and molotovs at riot police, but despite the greater popularity of this version amongst some republican and insurrectionist minded activists, this should not disguise the underlying similarity of the two versions, and the common assumptions behind them.

Leaving aside the young men with the molotovs for

now, the mobilisation model maps rather neatly onto the needs of electoralist politics. In elections also, the numbers that vote for your team are what matters, and the presence or absence of any ongoing relationship links between the voters is immaterial, invisible even. Only one kind of relational link matters in electoral politics, that is the vertical one between constituent and candidate. Where the candidate is aware of horizontal links between their constituents, they are only of interest to the extent they can be used instrumentally to further the reach of the candidate, to other members of the community. In fact there is an incentive, within the clientilist model of Irish electoral politics, to not only not help the creation of horizontal links between constituents, that might allow for mutually beneficial interchanges to take place, but actually to obstruct them. So that the candidate retains the position of fixer or middle- man or woman.

In the mobilisation model, there is a push towards the general tendency of modern consumer society, to prefer large crowds of relatively atomised individuals entirely dependent on an outside force, whether it be a rock band, a new brand of trainer or a political candidate, for their constitution as a collective force.

So what are the problems of the ”mobilisation” model?

On a practical level, the biggest problem of the mobilisation model is, ironically, scalability. Because one of the unspoken assumptions of the mobilisation model is retaining that inside/outside relation between the mass of relatively dis-empowered campaign members and the pre-defined “leadership”, there is a limit to how many organisers the campaign can recruit in the course of the campaign. Given that there is a practical limit to how many members each organiser can effectively organise, that limits the overall active membership of the campaign to a relatively small multiple of the original core organisers. Even if the combined forces of the left, anarchist, republican and community activist groups in a town like Dublin added up to 500 effective organisers (it doesn’t) and even if each organiser could effectively organise 100 members (in practice much lower numbers are possible) that still only leads to a total of 50,000 in a city of over a million people. So on the scalability question alone, the inescapable question becomes are you really trying to beat the tax, or just going through the motions to be seen to be “fighting the good fight”?

The organiser model is so-called because one of its central aims is to create a “chain reaction” of organisers finding, recruiting and training more organisers to go out and do the same until the necessary scale is achieved. The organiser model understands power to stem from the number of people who can effectively act together. This is a deeper understanding than the politics of big crowds.

Although the Organiser model is today most well-known from the American union SEIU, its history goes back to the community organising of Saul Alinsky in 1930s Chicago, passing through Fred Ross and Cesar Chavez, the Mexican-American labor organiser of the 60s and 70s, trained by Ross. In its development up until today it has continually interweaved between the spheres of both neighbourhood and community based organising, as well as workplace struggles. In fact, even though we are presenting the organiser model here as a “new” model, significant elements of its roots go back to the organising style of the early 20th century, of many of the same traditions of the early Industrial Workers of the World where James Connolly learnt his organising skills. Organising based on agitating, educating and organising people mainly through the use of face to face conversation, rather than published texts, TV adverts or Facebook and Twitter.

> The stereotypical photograph of a successful mobilisation model is a picture of a big crowd on a demonstration or rally against the issue of the day.

The model emphasises the central role of individual face to face conversations in both creating and maintaining relations of trust and confidence among large numbers of people that give them the collective strength and commitment to act together, to take risks together and to fight together. But this does require a commitment to having a high enough ratio of organisers to members to make this possible.

In the post-war period, the introduction of Keynesian or Social market mechanisms of incorporating both unions and community activist groups into corporative setups, like social partnership, meant a gradual moving away from the labour intensive organising model in favour of a more hands-off approach, based on turning the union or tenants’ groups into a more service model operation. The only remnant of face to face engagement in today’s era is the door to door canvassing for votes that political party activists do around election times. But canvassing for votes, even though it involves knocking on doors and listening to people’s issues on the doorstep, does not ultimately provide the skills needed for real organising. Organising is about asking people to make a commitment to give part of their life towards working to a common goal. Canvassing for a vote is just asking for someone to put a tick on a piece of paper.

Because of this emphasis on the power of the face to face conversation in “moving” people - that is, getting them to make a substantial personal commitment to work to a common goal - we are going to pick, as our sole example of the different tools in the organising model toolbox, the organising conversation. There are many other tools in the model such as Power Structure Analysis, Charting, Universe mapping, but this article cannot go through them all, or even give an overview. As we said at the start, this article is not a practical handbook. In fact the organiser model is a collection of practical skills that can no more be learned through reading articles or books than boat rowing can.

What is the organising conversation? It is basically the conversation that organisers have with potential members of the campaign in order to recruit them - or not, as the case may be - although it actually has a far wider application than that one task. The conversation is broken down in 7 sections, as follows:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Issues**
3. **Vision**
4. **Education**
5. **Inoculation**
6. **Call the question**
7. **Assignment**

The first part, the introduction, should be you briefly introducing yourself so that people know who you’re with and that you’re legit and not a snoop from the social, a cop or some other dodgy character.

The second part, the “issues” part of the conversation is the most important part of the conversation and should take 80% of the time, during which the other person should be doing most of the talking. The skill here is asking the right kind of open questions that will encourage the other person to do most of the talking and talk about what their issues, whether in the neighbourhood or the workplace, really are. Again there is not the space here to go into detail about what techniques are used, the point is to understand the function of this part of the conversation, which is crucial. Effectively, finding a person’s real issues (which are often not the first issues they talk about) is the basis on which they can be “moved”. By the same token, if it turns out that for whatever reason that person’s issues will not be helped by achieving the objectives of the campaign, then there is little left to do except thank them for taking the time to talk to you.

The next step of the conversation is where you ask the person to consider a “What if you could...” vision of a different situation where they could address their issues.

The education part is about what the campaign is about, how it works and how working with it can make that vision reality.

The inoculation is a vital stage, it raises the common counter-arguments of sceptics or the opposition (bosses, landlords, the council or government) and deals with them. Without this step, all the work of the conversation will be undone as soon as the person involved talks to the next sceptic they meet.

Finally we get to the crux of the conversation, the “move” point. Here you put the question to the other person as to whether they want to carry on as they are, accepting that their issues are going to

remain unchallenged, likely even getting worse as time progresses, or are they going to make the leap to commit to working in the campaign to improve their lot? This question is the one and only one that you should, and must, frame as an either/or, yes/no question. Having put the question, you then wait for the answer. The important thing here is complete silence, the next person to speak absolutely must be the person making the decision - because if they say yes, then that is a "contract" firmer than any amount of spitting on palms and shaking hands can produce.

The final part of the conversation is the assignment of work, the meat of participation. In a housing tax context, that can include putting a poster up in the window, coming to the next meeting, or getting the rest of the neighbours in the street to put up window posters or come to the next meeting. The important thing here is to agree work that the new member is confident they can do, and above all, agree a follow up time where the organiser will contact them to review progress and continue the participation in the campaign.

Having examined the basic function of the organising conversation, many people might find the idea of such a planned conversation difficult because it sounds much like the sort of sell you get on the doorstep from chancers selling broadband or cable TV. Is this not just another form of manipulation? It's an important question, and one worth answering properly as it allows us to see a deeper aspect of the whole model.

What is manipulation? Manipulation is the use of techniques of influencing people in such a way as to make them do things that are ultimately against their real interests. That statement has two parts, the second of which bears some examination. In order to get people to act against their own interests, generally some degree of deception is involved. Maintaining deceptions, for any length of time, gets increasingly difficult the more time passes and the more people are party to the deception. Consequently, doorstep hard sellers, con artists and other professional manipulators tend to keep the number of their targets small, focus on the most easily dominated or manipulated targets, try and keep them as isolated as possible from the rest of the world, limit the opportunities of the target to ask awkward questions of the manipulator and finally, usually limit the length of time the deception lasts to a short duration with a sharp exit after the "payoff" point is hit.

First of all, let's look back at the structure of the organising conversation. The point that was repeated throughout the above, is that you must find the other person's real issues - you cannot try and replace their issues with the issues you think they "should" have, because, quite simply, they will not be moved on the basis of issues that aren't really theirs.

Secondly, we want to continue a lengthy campaign with as many members as possible, where members are talking to as many of their neighbours and colleagues as possible and that direct one-on-one communication and questions between all the members and organisers of the campaign is continual. More than that, when we are looking for new organisers and street reps, we are looking for the people whose judgement is most trusted by their peers - that is to say, the most independent-minded, sceptical and least easily cowed individuals. Simply put, no deception can survive for any length of time in that environment.

So that was the inoculation part of this article which also partially follows the 7 step structure above. Do you feel manipulated by being told that? Does having the structure of an argument explained necessarily make it less valid? Not necessarily. In fact it would be self-defeating if the tools and techniques of organisers needed to be kept hidden as some kind of "secret sauce" in order to be effective. Remember that one of the central aims of the organiser model is precisely to train as many people as possible in the use of these techniques. Any tool that relies on secrecy for effectiveness is useless to us for the same reasons of scalability we mentioned at the start.

So, to return to our original question above, does the organiser model involve manipulation? Well, if we accept that in the demands of an extended campaign involving mass participation, that making people do things that are against their real interests is not practicable, that leaves the question, is this the use of techniques of persuasion to get people to act in the furtherance of their real interests? Sure it is. But is that manipulative? Well, let's examine people's options in relation to the furtherance of their real interests. They can choose to do something about it, or they can choose not to act. Now if we were trying to persuade people to make the choice not to act in their own interests, then yes, that would also be manipulative. But to persuade people of the benefits of acting in their own interests, while always leaving the final choice - to act or not to act - to them alone? How can that be manipulation? Unless that term means not only to persuade people to act against their interests, or to refrain from acting in favour of them, but also, at the same time, to do the opposite. And any term that applies both to one thing and its opposite at the same time, ceases to have any meaning.

One of the reasons for slightly belabouring this point is, as we mentioned before, that most people's experience of people doing political door to door, face to face conversations these days, is of people canvassing for votes. Now we all know that politicians will happily go down the road and tell a different lie at every door in order to try and get people's votes. But that's the difference between a canvassing conversation and an organising one. The canvasser just wants a very small ask, a tick in their box rather than the other fella's. Because it's a short term ask before the "payoff" point on voting day, and there's no intention to get ongoing participative engagement, the quick and dirty solution for politicians is to use every deceptive or manipulative trick in the book. But the organising conversation is not asking the other person to give you something, but to become something - an active participant in an ongoing campaign - and that is why the two conversations need to be so radically different.

As we said above, the organiser model is not something that can be learned theoretically by reading texts like this. Instead the only way to learn it is through engagement with a campaign, participating in organiser trainings and applying the practices in the work of the campaign. The campaign against the household and water taxes presents that opportunity. Within the campaign groups of the Independent Workers Union we have a body that is committed to providing organiser model training to the activists of the campaign. Not only with the aim of bringing the campaign to victory, but also to spread as widely as possible the skills needed to win future campaigns and build working class power in our neighbourhoods and workplaces. If you want to be part of that project, join your local campaign group and sign up for the organiser model training.

IMAGINING the FUTURE: Participatory Economics

In the last issue we had a missive from the future. It told us of the great changes in the post-revolutionary anarchist world.

Editors' Note:

In issue 3 of the Irish Anarchist Review we carried an article entitled "Imaging the Future in a post-revolutionary world" in what we described as "…the first of what we hope will be a series which will attempt to look into a post-revolutionary future and imagine what such a society might look like." In this contribution to that series the writer presents an analysis of Participatory Economics (often more commonly referred to as Parecon).

None of us can know what the future holds and for every anarchist that believes that Parecon offers a potential route to a society built on solidarity and equality, there will no doubt be at least one who fundamentally disagrees with its approach. But it is by analysis, debate and discussion of ideas that we will ultimately find a path to a better way of organising society. It is in that context that we present this article.

WORDS :
ERIC HAYES

In this article of the future society series, I will focus solely upon an anarchist vision of a future economy. This is called participatory economics, often abbreviated parecon, a classless economic system proposed primarily by activist and political theorist Michael Albert and, among others, economist Robin Hahnel. The model was developed through the 70s and 80s and the first exclusively parecon books were published in 1991. Many of their early writings concentrated on what they perceived as flaws in Marxist and Marxist-Leninist theory.

Unfortunately, for all its emphasis on class analysis, Marxism blinded many fighting against the economics of competition and greed to important antagonisms between the working class and the new, professional managerial class – or as Albert and Hahnel termed it, the coordinator class. While consumer and worker councils are familiar to libertarian socialists, as are analyses of the poly-labelled managerial class, Parecon's round-by-round participatory planning, balanced job-complexes, and a remunerative system not based upon output are less familiar.

These institutions are designed to create a classless libertarian socialist alternative where everyone will have the opportunity to develop all of their creative capacities. To quote:

> *"We recognize that council communists, syndicalists, anarchists, and guild socialists fell short of spelling out a coherent, theoretical model explaining how such a system could work."*

They continue:

> *"Our predecessors frequently provided stirring*

comparisons of the advantages of a libertarian, non-market, socialist alternative compared to capitalism and authoritarian planning. But all too often they failed to respond to difficult questions about how necessary decisions would be made, why their procedures would yield a coherent plan, or why the outcome would be efficient."

The aims and values of participatory economics will be familiar to many and are:

Solidarity

An economy should not produce anti-social behaviour or a lack of empathy. This should not be controversial, so I won't overdo it. I think most people would agree with more solidarity from an economy, not less! So our economy should actively promote solidarity, not only attempt to provide structures for its expression.

Diversity

This essentially means valuing options – not narrowing options. Instead of homogeneity we should have diversity. We can all benefit vicariously from other peoples diverse activities, and there is not just one correct way of doing things. People should have many choices.

Equity

There is no justification, neither in terms of efficiency or morality, for remuneration of property, land or machines. It is theft from everyone else. Power should not be remunerated for similar reasons. The self-serving myth that such inequalities are justified based upon merit are addressed in the words of Edward Bellamy in the 19th Century:

"You may set it down as a rule that the rich, the possessors of great wealth, had no moral right to it as based upon desert, for either their fortunes belonged to the class of inherited wealth, or else, when accumulated in a lifetime, necessarily represented chiefly the product of others, more or less forcibly or fraudulently obtained."

But output should also not be remunerated. Should we reward genetic endowment? Should we reward better tools? Or more desired products? Well no, it is also unfair. If two people are cutting corn with the same tools and level of effort there is no reason, neither on the basis of efficiency or morality, to reward them differently. It would reward a host of things that people have no control over. So if we reward for effort, then the coal-miner earns more, much more, than a manager in an office, or say, a worker in a publishing house. If we are to reward equitably, we should reward only effort at socially valued labour.

The way a parecon works, income differentials beyond average income could not disrupt solidarity or self-management. But what if you're sick or if you can't work? The answer is that a parecon is a mixed economy which has distribution according to need for calamities, health, and other related similar facets of consumption such as say, education, housing, special needs, and so on.

Self-management

People should have an input into decisions in proportion that they are affected by them. This doesn't mean using the same system, for example, one-person one vote, consensus or dictatorial, all the time. Rather, the method is decided depending on the nature of the decisions.

Say, if someone puts up a picture of a family member in their workspace, who decides? This is a dictatorial decision for that person. But, how about a ghetto blaster where everyone can hear it nearby? Well those people affected then decide. If we don't do this then one person will have more of a say than another person. I am the world's foremost expert on my own preferences, so we should each be responsible for expressing them.

Efficiency

Many leftists are afraid of this word, but stripped from its capitalist context, efficiency just means not wasting things. Under capitalism, it means not wasting things capitalists desire. It doesn't matter that you destroy people's lives, or that you pollute the environment. Efficiency is a word whose meaning depends on the values and aims of the people using the word. It is good not to waste things when producing socially valued goods and services. In this context efficiency incorporates environmental responsibility, and is in accord with our values.

These values are attained through the following institutions:

Worker and Consumer Councils (WCs and CCs)

An economy is a mixture of ingredients to fulfil production, consumption, and allocation. Instead of money or power dictating the use of resources, ordinary people would deliberate in relatively small councils in order to decide what is best for their community.

This means democratic groups, called worker and consumer councils, using self-managerial methods for decision-making. Say we start with neighbourhood groups. Each is part of a bigger community, and larger council, which will represent the councils within, when choices in one affect more than just their members. Everyone has a say in services and goods according to the impact on them through this federated system of nested WCs and CCs. This ensures that power doesn't come down from the top but is nested up from the bottom: from the neighbourhood, to the ward, city, county, province, continent and so on, with personal and public consumption and production being addressed as appropriate. Personal consumption is purely private and anonymous and can even be transferred to a different council from where you live if you prefer. While a type of credit card technology can aid consumption and updating.

Balanced Job Complexes (BJCs)

All economies need people to do work, and all workplaces tend to organise this work into bundles of tasks we commonly refer to as "jobs". In a class-ridden society, jobs are organised to maintain a hierarchical structure. People towards the top of the hierarchy (the coordinator class) will have jobs composed of tasks that are empowering whilst those towards the bottom of the hierarchy (the working class) have jobs made up of dis-empowering tasks.

This corporate division of labour is an institutional feature found in both capitalist and coordinator economies. A feature that systematically maintains workplace hierarchy whilst undermining self-management through a monopoly on empowering labour. If we want everyone to have an equal opportunity to participate in economic decision-making, and that a formal right to participate in meetings translates into an effective right to participate; does this not require balancing work with empowerment?

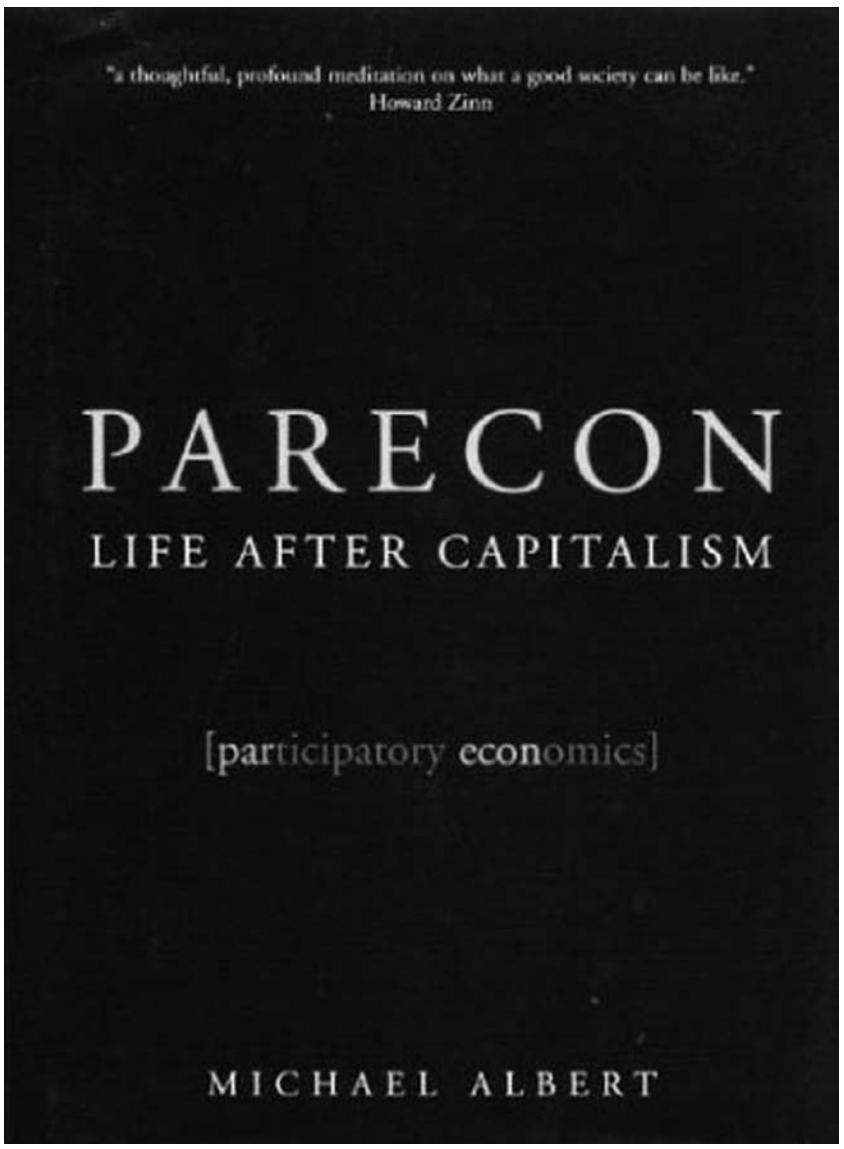
There is no justification, neither in terms of efficiency or morality, for remuneration of property, land or machines. It is theft from everyone else.

Parecon rejects the corporate division of labour as incompatible with self-management. But what is the alternative? Parecon says:

"let's make each job comparable to all others in its quality of life and even more importantly in its empowerment effect ... From a corporate division of labour that enshrines a coordinator class above workers, we move to a classless division of labour that elevates all workers to their fullest potentials."

This classlessness is achieved with the creation of a new institutional feature called "balanced job complexes", meaning jobs are re-designed throughout the economy so that they are balanced between, on the one hand, skilled and design work, and, on the other, the physical, less desirable and less empowering work. The education system is changed to democratise access to expertise, information and training, and integrate this with the system of production itself.

It should be noted that each individual's job complex will contain a very few tasks and, of course, there is a division of labour. People would still be trained and educated to be doctors or engineers say. However, nobody's mixture of tasks will be significantly more empowering than others, or significantly more desirable than others. The economy would also have delegation (e.g., heads of work teams). But not people who are always the order givers and others who are always the order takers. Each person will experience both being in authority and being under another's authority in different



situations and at different times.

Job complexes are not balanced by a national bureaucracy but through each WC balancing committee, just as they have an effort rating committee. The time any individual spends on this committee is treated as one task in their job complex. Balancing is not onerous and could be done once a year. There is no outside agent who oversees this operation with power to dictate or veto outcomes.

Remuneration for Effort and Sacrifice

In a parecon, private ownership of economic institutions no longer exists. Effort and sacrifice is proposed as a morally sound alternative criteria for remuneration: "If you work longer, and you do it effectively, you are entitled to more of the social product. If you work more intensely, to socially useful ends, again you are entitled to more social product. If you work at a more onerous, dangerous or boring, but still socially warranted, tasks; again, you are entitled to more social product."

But what about: "From each according to ability, to each according to need."? Albert and Hahnel think that this maxim has more to do with compassion and humanity than economic justice and it "is our humanity that compels us to provide for those in need". In a parecon, those unable to work receive a socially average income of items and services of their choosing (of course those with special needs would get more, such as medicine). In fact, everyone gets this socially average income.

So in a parecon, the criteria for remuneration are (1) how many hours you work, (2) the intensity of your work effort (3) the onerous circumstances or harshness of the type of work you do. Yet (3) is not really relevant, due to the job balancing of BJCs. While (2), remuneration, is best assessed by one's work colleagues and peers, there's no one right way to do this. One workplace might assume everyone is at average by default and just remunerate according to hours worked, with deviations from it registered in only special cases, and only with a minimal and few grades of ratings. Indeed while Albert is loath to blueprint, this is the expectation he believes most workplaces would take, and indeed favours.

Remuneration would also need to be regulated in terms of the total compensation one workplace receives with what others receive. In effect, this sets an objective standard for the assignment of effort ratings while productive resources are taken into account. We will touch upon the participatory planning process later where the socially planned quota of the WC is set, in which, of course, the council participates proportionally.

However, let's look back at the slogan: "From each according to ability, to each according to need." The Wikipedia article, quoting Marx, claims that the slogan, when used in this context, is originally Marxian, and is meant for a society without onerous labour: "Marx delineated the specific conditions under which such a creed would be applicable—a society where technology and social organization had substantially eliminated the need for physical labor in the production of things, where "labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want".

Marx explained that, in such a society, everyone is motivated to work for the good of society because work would have become a pleasurable and creative activity. Now unless we can automate every task and job, it is perhaps unlikely we could ever remove all onerous, rote, and dis-empowering labour. If that is the case – and we wish to achieve

classlessness and not violate our libertarian and participatory aims and values – then those onerous jobs should surely be shared.

There is nothing new in socially valued work effort being a condition of above average consumption entitlement. The Spanish CNT economic program of the 1930s is an example. Similarly, libertarian communists like Malatesta argued: "The only possible alternative to being the oppressed or the oppressor is voluntary cooperation for the greatest good of all." The Italian argued that able-bodied people who refused to work, yet consumed the benefits of people labouring for them, were probably developing a taste for privilege!

In other words, our values are affected by this. Solidarity is reduced through resentment, and likewise for efficiency by rewarding sloth. The implications for self-management are to diminish it, giving non-workers more say than they should have. Diversity does not appear to be affected.

While the "according to need." maxim was a part of the sentiment of anarchist Spain, it was not the only or even the main operative norm; in fact, it could not possibly have been. Some levels of work, timing of participation, actual activity and so on, would have been found acceptable, and others not acceptable.

In this sense, what many actually mean when they think of an economy with remuneration "according to need", actually equates with remuneration according to effort and sacrifice, tempered by need.

Albert has also pointed out how having this remuneration to an economic system without classes, and over a few generations, may have different implications and is certainly not the same as doing so from the very start. Both authors suggest an evolution towards more remuneration based upon need as the economy moulds behaviour and endogenous preferences over time. But even then, such an auditing/price mechanism and round-by-round coordination may still be needed to have an efficient modern and complex economy.

Participatory Planning

In addition to re-designing jobs to facilitate self-management, we also need to abolish markets as a means of allocating goods and services. This is because, like the corporate division of labour, markets destroy solidarity and self-management; "This occurs not only due to disparities in wealth translating into disparate power, but because market competition compels even council based workplaces to cut costs and seek market share regardless of the ensuing implications." Workers will eventually appoint un-recallable managers to compete and increase output. For recent examples of this see market socialist Yugoslavia, the occupied factory movement in Argentina, or the history of the Mondragón co-operative in Spain.

As an alternative to both markets and central planning, parecon proposes allocation through "participatory planning". "We say that the alternative is to have the entire population directly create the plan themselves" and that "the education system and the availability of information should be such as to facilitate this."

Planning is conceptually quite simple, and is part of everyone's BJC. The participants are the workers councils (WCs) and federations, the consumer councils (CCs) and federations, and an Iteration Facilitation Board (IFB - a group of BJC workers providing information to participants in each round).

This yearly planning procedure (say, two weeks or less) can be broken down into 4 steps:

1 "The IFB announces what we call 'indicative prices' ('prices indicating the social costs and benefits associated with the use of goods and services' or preliminary estimates) for all final goods and services, capital goods, natural resources, and categories of labour.

2 Consumer councils and federations respond with consumption proposals. Worker councils and federations respond with production proposals.

3 The IFB then calculates the excess demand or supply for each final good and service, capital good, natural resource, and category of labour, and adjusts the indicative price for the good up, or down, in light of the excess demand or supply.

4 Using the new indicative prices, consumer and worker councils and federations revise and resubmit their proposals.

The planning process continues until there are no longer excess demands for any goods, categories of labour, primary inputs, or capital stock; in other words, until a feasible plan is reached."

Classes of goods and services are grouped together into categories according to the interchangeability of the resources, intermediate goods and labour required to make them, as well as some of the easily predicted variation of optional features. Producers provide quality items that people will like. If people don't like some, they don't provide more of that and this is recorded over time. If producers offer up sweaters people don't like, (despite using focus groups, or statistics and sample sizes to obtain size, style, colour and so on), people won't purchase them at distribution centres, and styles will be changed. Choices can be changed as the year progresses and producers can adapt their products.

To simplify updating during the year and after the yearly planning period, "slack" is used. Industries produce more and plan excess capacity so they can expand output if needs be. The US has 15-25% unutilised capacity; this is easily 2 to 3 times more than what would be needed in a parecon. Only affected regions or federations of industries need adjust for any change. Processing and meeting time is not zero in capitalism and corporations are already planned economies, using estimations of consumer demand and statistics in terms of fine detail of final products.

So parecon does not take the "one big meeting" approach to economic planning with endless large-scale meetings resulting in chaos and stagnation. "Many of the procedures we recommended were motivated precisely to avoid pitfalls in the naïve illusion that 'the people' can make all economic decisions that affect them in what amounts to 'one big meeting'...Our participatory planning procedure is one that literally involves no meetings at all." So any meetings to decide on proposals regarding one's own activities are meetings within, not between, councils and federations. Instead the proposal is a procedure in which councils and federations submit proposals only for their own activities, receive new information including revised estimates of social costs, and resubmit proposals, again, only for their own activities. A parecon might decide that people act individually during the majority of planning rounds. Each production unit must only prepare detailed proposals about its own self-activity; which any production unit must do in any economy.

Parecon not only eliminates the perverse incentive inherent in central planning to disguise one's true capabilities, it provides all councils with information to easily find if any work or consumption proposal is socially responsible, i.e. fair and efficient. Because 99% of the votes are "no brainers," this does not need to be contentious or time-consuming. If a WC's social benefit to social cost ratio is one or higher (SB/SC > 1), then we are better off if they are given permission to do what they've proposed, otherwise we are worse off. There is a similar "no brainer" rule for how to vote on CC proposals. Because, say, 99% of the voting can be done automatically, and 99% of the votes can be taken care of by federations rather than individual councils, (votes only have to be on proposals of councils within their worker and consumer federation), all this voting really takes up very little time.

Nor do we have to do this for millions of different proposals from councils in distant cities and states. If there are 10 neighbourhood CCs in a ward federation, then only the other nine councils in that ward federation need to vote on each of their proposals. If there are 10 ward federations in a city federation, then only the other nine wards in that city need to vote on each ward proposal. Wards will need to check on other ward averages, and cities will need to check on other city averages, but this still eliminates 99% of the proposals any single entity must vote on. In other words, most of the voting can be decentralized and taken care of within federations.

While computers would save more time facilitating planning and credit-card technology can aid consumption and stock levels, computers are not required by participatory planning making it more efficient than central planning in this regard. The only calculations required are adding individual proposals into aggregate proposals and comparing aggregate supply and demand for each item. The percentage excess supply or demand indicative prices could be adjusted without the aid of computers.

I believe parecon warrants serious attention and investigation by those who wish to see a coherent classless economy, where workers and consumers cooperatively, and efficiently, negotiate economic outcomes with no class divisions. The main advantage of parecon is that the power to plan is no longer exclusive to elites, or, as in a market socialist system, unevenly distributed among elite conceptual and manual workers, but rather open to all. Participatory economics has the potential to transcend capitalism and also market and centrally planned socialism by establishing core institutions that promote solidarity, equity of circumstance and income, diversity, participatory self-management, classlessness, and efficiency in meeting human needs and developing human potentials. To quote the late Howard Zinn, "Participatory economics is an imaginative, carefully reasoned description, of how we might live free from economic injustice." There is an alternative.

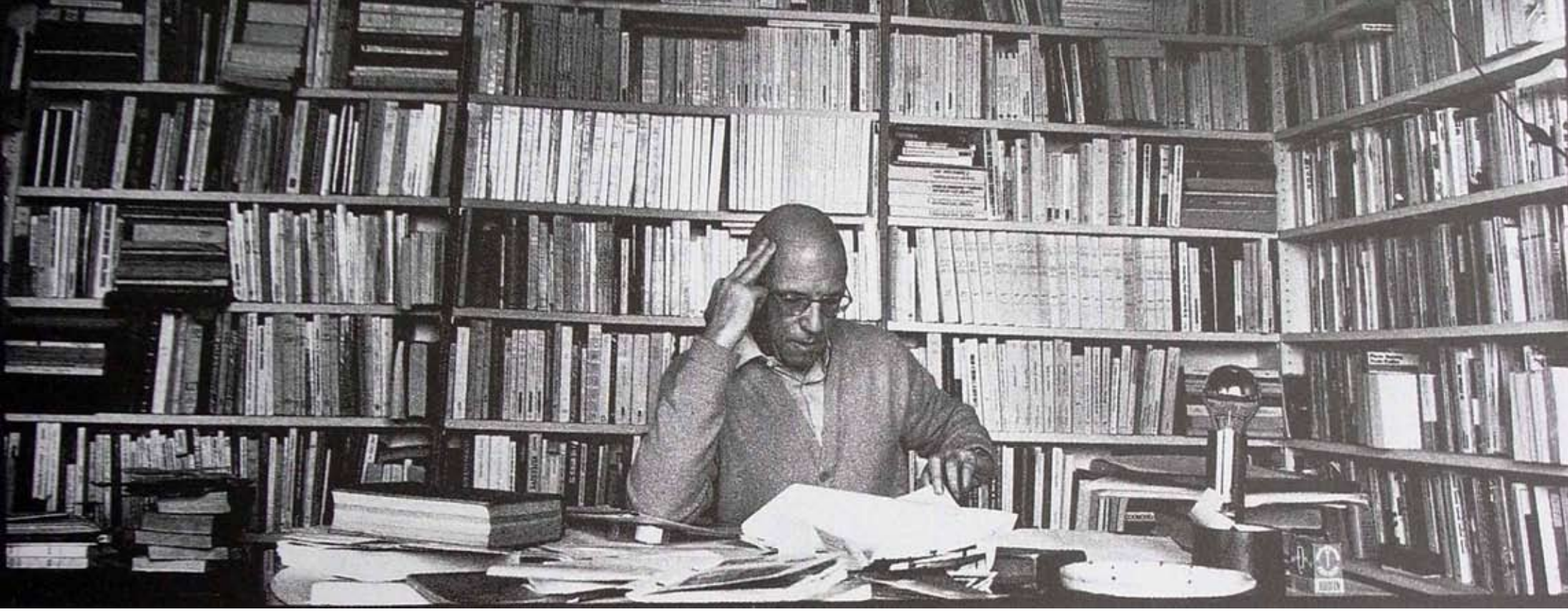
Related links:

http://www.zcommunications.org/zmi/readparecon.htm

http://www.zcommunications.org/anarchist-planning-for-twenty-first-century-economies-a-proposal-by-robin-hahnel-1

http://www.zcommunications.org/topics/parecon

http://libcom.org/library/workers-power-and-the-spanish-revolution-tom-wetzel



Michel Foucault: An Examination of Power

Michel Foucault is a philosopher whose politics everybody seems to have a differing opinion on.

WORDS :
CATHAL LARKIN

He has been called a disguised Marxist, both a secret and explicit anti-Marxist, a nihilist, a new conservative, a new liberal, a neutral interpretivist, a crypto-normativist, a principled anarchist as well as a dangerous left-wing one, and even a Gaullist technocrat. An American professor complained that an obvious KGB agent like Foucault was being invited to talk at his country's universities and the Eastern European press of the Soviet era denounced him as being an accomplice of the dissidents.

A socialist even wrote that the thinker he resembles most closely was Adolf Hitler in Mein Kampf, and others on the left have claimed he is a danger to Western democracy. What could the man have done to receive such a variety of labels? A simple answer to that question is that he analysed power.

Foucault starts one of his seminal works, *Discipline and Punish*, with a graphic description of a torture scene from 18th century France. A regicide called Damiens is publicly drawn and quartered, after having the skin peeled from his body and a combination of sulphur, oil and lead poured into his wounds. The book then jumps ahead 80 years to a description of the new way of dealing with criminals, the prison. Instead of public execution we now have a time-table. The prisoners' day involves time for prayers, reading, workshops, meals and recreation; a reflection of a more enlightened, humanist form of governance one would assume.

Not so, argues Foucault. The problem with the old public torture and executions, what he calls 'the spectacle of the scaffold', was not their cruelty, but that they didn't have the intended effect. The victims became the heroes of folk tales and pamphlets. Breeding more resentment than discipline, the scaffold, the great displays of power and brutality, were replaced by disciplining and normalising institutions of less visible, more discreet, and most importantly, more 'efficient', power.

The technology of power

The prison, and its panoptic architecture, was for Foucault a perfect example of these new technologies of power. In the panopticon, the prisoner can be observed at any time. However, because the observation tower in the middle of the prison is also a source of light, he doesn't know when he is actually being watched, therefore acts with the assumption of an omnipresent observer.

Along with other methods such as the examination of a parole board hearing, the prisoner is slowly normalised back into society. The same panoptic principles of normalising judgements, examination and omnipresent, hierarchical observation – that have their ideal model in military camps where soldiers were made from the 'formless clay' of a peasant – were also incorporated into the schools, factories, asylums, working class housing estates and hospitals of the era.

That this also coincides with the expansion of capitalist economic relations Foucault does not see as a coincidence: "the industrial system requires a free market in labor and, in the nineteenth century, the role of forced labor in the mechanisms of punishment diminishes accordingly and 'corrective' detention takes its place." [1] To aid capital accumulation these 'discreet' forms of discipline produce "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)." [2]

Resistance?

Such a conception of power in the modern world seems to leave little space for agency or resistance from those subject to it; this is one of the most common critiques of Foucault coming from the left. People, according to Jurgen Habermas' interpretation of Foucault, are merely "individual copies that are mechanically punched out". However Foucault is not so pessimistic and does not have an exclusively negative definition of power. Power for him is simply the ability to create change in society or in the behaviour of individuals, be it positive or negative.

Power is then everywhere, in every relationship; we are constantly subjecting it and being objects of it. Take for example a male worker. He is obviously an object of his boss's power; but if he joins a union and goes on strike, he subjects his boss to the collective power he and his co-workers possess. If the union bureaucracy then calls off the strike against his wishes, he is now an object of their power. Now let's say he is the sole breadwinner of a traditional family but he drinks a good portion of his wages; he has then subjected his family to his power as patriarch in a patriarchal world.

That power, coming from multiple sources, means there must be multiple sources of resistance – in contrast to the Marxist-Leninist conception of power as emanating from one source, capital, with all other struggles secondary to, or a product of, that primary battle. If one fails to tackle the multiple sources of power, "one risks allowing them to continue to exist; and to see this class power reconstitute itself even after an apparent revolutionary process". [3]

This forms the basis of Foucault's objection to vanguardism; instead he argues for many struggles by "women, prisoners, conscripted soldiers, hospital patients, and homosexuals against the particularised power, the constraints and controls, that are exerted over them...these movements are linked to the revolutionary movement of the proletariat to the extent that they fight against the controls and constraints which serve the same system of power." [4]

Lessons

Although the conception of power as coming from many sources is not something new to anarchists – Bakunin wrote of the power of capital, the state and the "savants" in a technocratic society – Foucault seeing it as present in all relationships and as both positive and negative is something we could learn a lot from. Even in our ideal classless post-revolutionary world, power would still exist in such ways as the power of possessing certain knowledge, or the power of being able to make a good argument in a meeting.

This doesn't mean we are all little dictators, rather that we must exercise power with ethics, "a practice of the self" as Foucault calls it, to avoid domination. For example, on the student-teacher relationship Foucault says:

> *"I don't see where evil is in the practice of someone who, in a given game of truth, knowing more than another, tells him what he must do, teaches him, transmits knowledge to him, communicates skills to him. The problem is rather to know how you are to avoid in these practices – where power cannot not play and where it is not an evil in itself – the effects of domination which will make a child subject to the arbitrary and useless authority of a teacher, or put a student under the power of an abusively authoritarian professor, and so forth."* [5]

As a professor, Foucault has quite a unique view on the role of intellectuals in militant practice. We may be used to left-wing intellectuals who publish tomes on exactly what movements should do, but wouldn't be seen within a mile of a direct action protest; Foucault, however, does the opposite. During his life he took part in occupations of university buildings and other protests, but as for his status in such movements, he was always quick to point out that he was participating as just another person, not a leader. The intellectual, for Foucault,

"no longer has to play the role of advisor. The project, tactics and goals are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is provide instruments of analysis...a topological and geological survey of the battlefield – that is the intellectual's role. But as for saying, 'Here is what we must do!', certainly not." [6]

Likewise, another anarchist intellectual, Noam Chomsky, expresses similar reticence whenever he is asked about the path toward a revolution. Of course, most other anarchists have no problem (nor should they) saying, 'Here is what I suggest we should do! What do you think?' However it's easy to see how mere suggestions from intellectuals of the status of Chomsky and Foucault could be seen as gospel, thus the quite relevant viewpoints of those suffering the oppression would be overlooked, and the development of their own strategic thinking hindered.

Although at no point during his life did Foucault claim to be an anarchist, he nonetheless gives us an incredibly useful conception of power with which to support our championing of non-hierarchical relations. What Bakunin and Kropotkin wrote about the State and hierarchy has been proven correct in Russia and every other country where Marxists have taken power; however, just pointing to historical examples and saying 'we told you so' only gets our ideas so far. Examining power in as in-depth a manner as Marx did to capital should be a priority for anarchists; as should, of course, putting the results of these analyses into practice.

"That power, coming from multiple sources, means there must be multiple sources of resistance – in contrast to the Marxist-Leninist conception of power as emanating from one source, capital, with all other struggles secondary to, or a product of, that primary battle."

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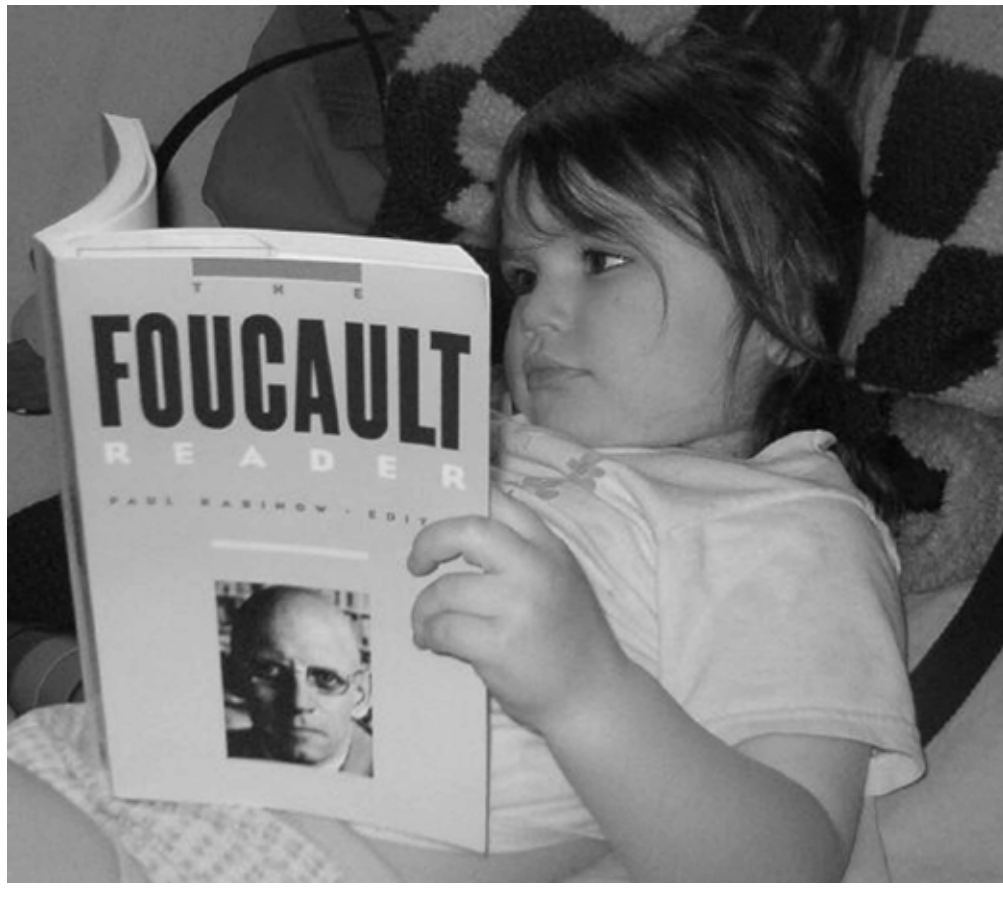


GREECE – Seeds of Hope/

There is no doubt that the political history of Greece is full of oppression and political struggle - from dictatorships to political prosecutions, jailings, exiles, shootings, torture, civil war, and countless strikes, demonstrations, occupations and protests that are put down by extreme state violence.

WORDS :
KOSTAS AVRIMIDIS

But no matter how much the people are trying their best, again and again they end up falling short of pulling off a full scale revolution, even though the potential to do so is there – or so it appears.

In my opinion there are two main reasons for this: Firstly, the massive patronising of the people by the political parties and especially by the parties of the left and secondly, the lack of political education of the people that will help them to build political thought and judgement.

But now it appears, for the very first time, that things may have changed. It seems that in recent times many more people don't buy the rhetoric of the parties and they are beginning to try to understand politics for themselves. One of the big stumbling blocks that remains is the lack of political education – in that it should have started at least 3 decades back, so that when people came across the current political and social situation they would have been able to cope relatively easily. This did not happen so people are trying to understand so much in so short a time.

Another very important aspect of the current political climate is the grassroots campaigns that have been built by communities of people that lead the way outside the influence of political parties. It's worth mentioning a few of them. Starting with Keratea, where a town of 16,000 people, situated southeast of Athens, are opposing en masse the decision of the state to build a huge open dump to accommodate Athens city's needs in the near by archaeological site of Ovriokastro. The beauty of the villagers' struggle is the manner in which they have organised - direct democracy- and the length of time, militancy and effort that they have put into fighting the campaign.

All of this has occurred in the face of massive pressure from the state with hundreds of riot police attacking people with tear gas and beating them with clubs. They have faced media dismissal - mostly pretending that is not happening at all, and a great deal of mocking when their struggle is commented on at all. Nevertheless the people of Keratea are still winning.

Another battle of significance is the struggles of small communities in Northern Greece, and more specifically in the 'counties' of Chalkidiki and Komotini where people are opposing on health and environmental grounds the extraction of gold which was found in their areas. Again they have had to face a massive campaign against them by the media – both state owned and private - and they have had to balance things between the dilemma of the potential job creation- in areas of Greece with the highest unemployment and emigration for decades now - and serious health and environmental concerns.

Again their tactics of choice have been mass mobilisation of communities, open public meetings, demonstrations, the closure of main road arteries - and all these from people with little or no experience in political struggle. In the face of all this they have managed

substantial victories, built political awareness for themselves and set an example for other campaigns.

Another very different but nevertheless very empowering campaign is the refusal of payment of motorway tolls, that has created a movement of thousands of people actively involved from all walks of life in defiance of the private companies that operate the tolls and the state. This campaign is amazing both in its strength and in the general knowledge and understanding of the purpose behind it. What we have here is the state assigning the construction of massive motorways to private companies and giving them the right to levy enormous amounts of tolls on the people using them - Direct private taxation on the public with the blessings of the state!

Last but not least is the Real Democracy Now movement, with the mass occupation of town squares that ignited like fire from town to town all over Greece and gave hope to people in a society were people have started to realise, to an extent, that parties and unions are not going to deliver the goods for them and that the social and political problems that they are facing have to be resolved in a more "DIY" manner.

One of the main problems of Greek politics and culture, quoting from an old comrade that has followed things for the best part of the last 50 years is "institutionalised misery". No matter how cornered people become, the vast majority of them stop short of doing something about it by moaning and accepting their fate as if it is predetermined from someone or something from high above. Recently I saw on the back door of a toilet a piece of graffiti that reads "All it takes is one wheel to start a revolution - or a fucking backbone". That actually is very close to what people are lacking in Greece and indeed in the world in general.

I don't know if the people in Greece can pull off a full scale uncompromising revolution even though everything at present is heading in the right direction. What is against them is time - all these movements and campaigns and more, should have started a long time back, from a smaller neighbourhood level and in relatively less pressured times.

But having said that, I'm not implying even for a second that the governments and politicians that have humiliated and continue to humiliate the Greek people so much over all these years will find it easy to maintain their seats and status. One thing is for sure - they will need a whole fleet of helicopters to escape with their lives intact, them and their families, when the shit does hit the fan!

Resisting the lure of the Freeman movement

The last few years have seen a significant growth in the Freeman of the Land movement. Increasingly, its voice is being heard at environmental and other anarchist based protests and events, from the various UK climate camps to Rossport Solidarity Camp.

WORDS :
DONAL O'DRISCOLL

Nebulous in its nature, its promise of ways of claiming back power from the state is clearly seductive. Indeed, on a superficial level, it even looks quite like anarchism in action.

The aims of the Freemen movement is to use a particular interpretation of the legal system against the government in the name of gaining back freedoms and advantages.

Its mixture of family, moral conservatism and individualism has given it the appearance of an apolitical movement that can easily hook up with both the left and right. So while you can find the Freemen at protests camps, where its apparent anti-government stance will fall on fertile ground, you can just as easily find them being supported by right-wing groups with racist agendas, whose critique of government is more it does not represent their own jaundiced views.

As I will hopefully show, the Freemen agenda is already falling into the sort of bastardized political thinking that gave rise to the likes of anarcho-nationalism. If anything, what it is, is individualist libertarianism, and as such acceptance of this movement needs to be challenged by anarchists.

Origins

The 'Freemen'[1] are a movement in the sense that they have a set of ideas that are promoted and followed in a way that amounts to a belief system. Their origins can be traced to the US based Redemption movement, which has since developed into the Sovereign Citizens movement [2]. As such, it is rooted in right-wing, white supremacist groups, whose anti-government stance is variously based on anti-Semitism, anti-tax and appeals to Thomas Jefferson's quote that "the government which governs best is the government that governs least." Much of the justification for their stance, in the US, comes from conspiracy theories of all kinds, many of which allege Jewish control of government and corporations or secret plots to alienate rights. Those who have been following the Tea Party movement will recognise many of the same sentiments. For more information on its origins see the report by the Southern Law Centre.[3]

As the Freemen movement evolved, both in the US and as it crossed the Atlantic, these origins have been somewhat forgotten in many places. For instance, the biggest set of followers of the movement in the US is drawn from poor African Americans. However, it is clear that much of the ideological baggage of its origins remains in the texts and attitudes of those pushing this movement's agenda. In particular it has preserved an evangelical Christian world-view with a patriarchal outlook. Often this is focused around the 'inviolability' of the family. Other materials focus on the "tyrannical nanny state"[4], a phrase more commonly associated with right-wing commentators.

Crossing the Atlantic

Given the emphasis on legal rights, the movement's basic ideas have successfully made the jump to the UK and Eire, both of whose legal systems are grounded in the same Anglo-Saxon model as the US. However, in doing so, it has shed a little of its baggage and adapted to the different conditions. It has also resulted in the underlying ideology becoming even more obscured, allowing it more traction among the left wing, albeit it retains followers among those of a right-wing libertarian bias. In this article I will focus on the Irish and British

variations.

The Freeman in theory

For convenience I shall cite the work of Prof. John Kersey of the Libertarian Alliance, who attempts to draw out the common principles shared by most in the movement.[5]

The common law of England and Wales is universally applicable to those people (natural persons) within that jurisdiction. A natural person is endowed with a number of inalienable, God-given rights. That natural person is referred to as a Freeman on the Land.

By contrast, civil or statute law, the majority of which is considerably more recent in origin, is not universally applicable but instead, because of its commercial basis (in the law of the sea), rests upon a contract between two parties, the first party being the state, and the second party being the legal fiction representing a given individual.

The instrument that is held to represent a given individual entering into such a contract with the state is a birth certificate.

The validity of such a contract is questionable because the contract as represented by a birth certificate is entered into between a minor (who cannot validly contract) and the state, and because consent is therefore assumed rather than established.

It follows that if the contract is deemed void, it may be possible to separate the natural person (common law) from the legal fiction (civil law). As a result, whereas the birth certificate (as a piece of paper) is evidence of the legal fiction contracting with the state, that birth certificate is not the same as the natural person represented by the living individual.

In Ireland a key text is the Freeman Guide, which was produced for the 2011 Freeman Festival (Tir na Saor) in Cobh.[6] It reflects much of the above concepts.

Applying an anarchist critique

a) Underlying Ideology

While most campaigns have critiques of the legal system and of rights to various degrees (depending on their political outlook), Freemen documents tend to be focused on how this can be used to the advantage of the individual. Indeed, much of the material produced by the Freeman movement covers how to challenge the government agencies, to assert rights to not pay taxes and fines, to maintain the right to private property against intrusion by the state. Much of this is based on the fact that the legal system gives words different definitions from everyday usage (for example, 'peaceful'). However, I will step back from this to look at the underlying ideology.

Anarchism is about creating a society without a state. The Freemen are about resisting that state, but they do not makes calls for its abolishment. It is a subtle but important difference, that gives rise to different practices. The Freeman depends on the notion of rights, a problematic concept in itself. And in doing so, ties itself tighter to the system that it opposes. This is why there is so much focus on re-interpreting the law rather than recognising that it is the concept of the law that is the problem. This is something that comes up again and again.

Laws, states and rights are all products of the Enlightenment, the era of political development over the 18th and 19th Centuries that gave us representative democracy, the modern state, nationalism and the liberal market place / capitalism. Thus, behind notions such as rights are ideological assumptions that are not necessarily in accordance with anarchism, something we should be very wary of. Laws and rights are not stand-alone creations, but reflect the dominant ideology, shaped by political and intellectual elites. There is no right that is not be taken away, no law that cannot be changed.

Laws need states to grant, sustain and enforce them; and in turn states use them to justify their continuing existence. Rights are social constructs, not universal principles, and as such they are produced by communities. This can be done by a collective discussion or imposed by a minority who hold power. Neither rights or laws are enforceable by individuals, but require a larger authority or community to impose or validate through its principles of justice.

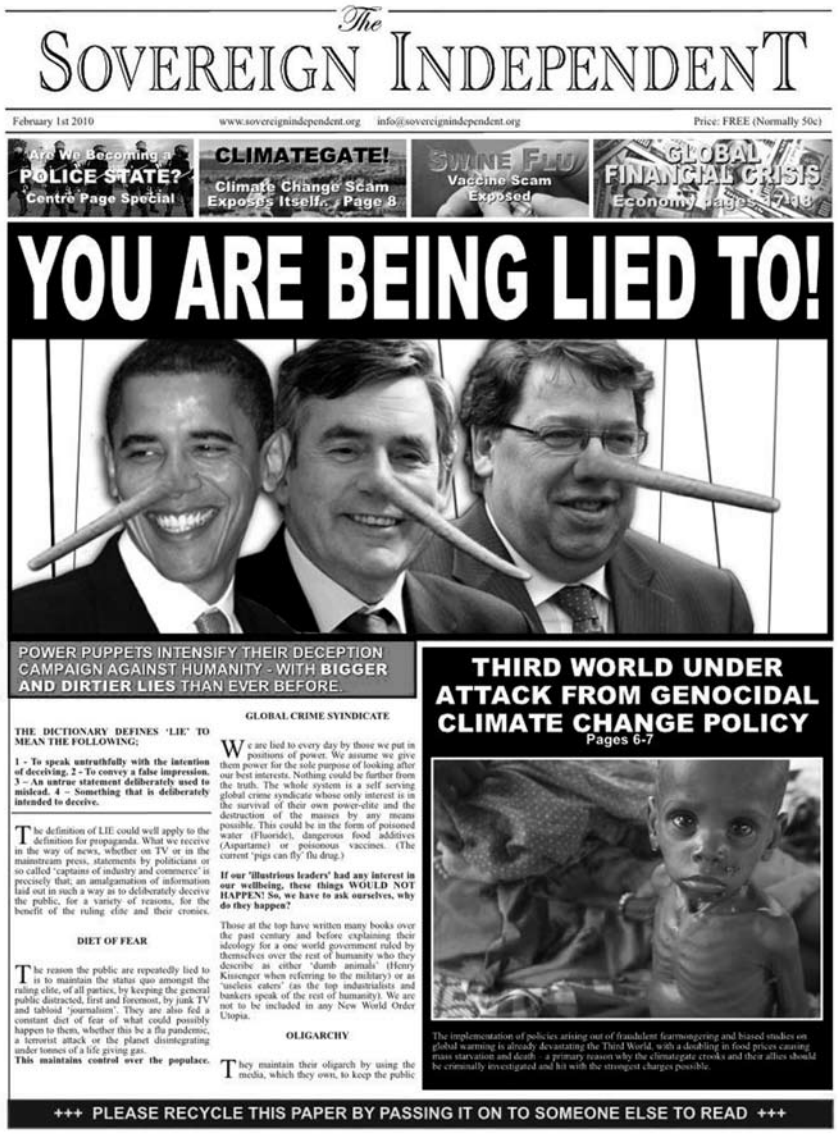
Where the anarchists realise that rights and laws are only valid where there has been a collective discussion and agreement with them, most other political ideologies treat them as a given, as something from the past that cannot be changed nor questioned. It is this trap of conservatism that anarchism seeks to challenge and the Freemen fall into.

The way of the Freeman is to appeal to natural or common law. Natural law is an appeal to god, or some other higher spiritual moral authority that stands above all humanity. This is one of the places where the movement betrays its origins. Anarchism does not recognise this higher authority, or that there is a natural law above all others. The morality of the anarchist is not about appealing to another authority but defining social relationships in the here and now, in solidarity and mutual aid as the situation requires, not as an imposed notion dictates.

Then there is the problem of whose 'natural law'. As JS Mill argued over a century ago[7], it is a phrase without meaning, open to every interpretation possible, or so vague as to be useless. The Freeman Guide sums it up as harm none, yet, for others it could just as easily be the law of 'red in tooth and claw', that is, survival of the fittest and all the dubious patriarchal baggage that comes with that phrase.

The other problem with 'common law' or 'natural law' are that they are purely reflections of the dominant ideology, in the same way that 'common sense' often is. What we accept in day to day life is the unacknowledged effect of liberal ideology - so commonplace it is effectively invisible (just as motorways are the banal structures of modern capitalism). Again, the anarchist challenges the various assumptions of modern society and seeks to uncover the hidden oppressions; the Freeman movement has no such tools to carry out this analysis and so far is simply repeating them. This is further enforced by the focus on individualist politics.

'Common law' is a term used inconsistently across the texts. For some it is interchangeable with 'nat-



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Are We Becoming a POLICE STATE? Centre Page Special

CLIMATEGATE! Climate Change Scam Exposes Itself... Page 8

SWINE FLU Vaccine Scam Exposed

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS Economy Pages 17-18

YOU ARE BEING LIED TO!

POWER PUPPETS INTENSIFY THEIR DECEPTION CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUMANITY - WITH BIGGER AND DIRTIER LIES THAN EVER BEFORE.

THE DICTIONARY DEFINES 'LIE' TO MEAN THE FOLLOWING:

1 - To speak untruthfully with the intention of deceiving. 2 - To convey a false impression. 3 – An untrue statement deliberately used to mislead. 4 – Something that is deliberately intended to deceive.

The definition of LIE could well apply to the definition for propaganda. What we receive in the way of news, whether on TV or in the mainstream press, statements by politicians or so called 'captains of industry and commerce' is precisely that; an amalgamation of information laid out in such a way as to deliberately deceive the public, for a variety of reasons, for the benefit of the ruling elite and their cronies.

DIET OF FEAR

The reason the public are repeatedly lied to is to maintain the status quo amongst the ruling elite, of all parties, by keeping the general public distracted, first and foremost, by junk TV and tabloid 'journalism'. They are also fed a constant diet of fear of what could possibly happen to them, whether this be a flu pandemic, a terrorist attack or the planet disintegrating under tonnes of a life giving gas. This maintains control over the populace.

GLOBAL CRIME SYINDICATE

We are lied to every day by those we put in positions of power. We assume we give them power for the sole purpose of looking after our best interests. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole system is a self serving global crime syndicate whose only interest is in the survival of their own power-elite and the destruction of the masses by any means possible. This could be in the form of poisoned water (Fluoride), dangerous food additives (Aspartame) or poisonous vaccines. (The current 'pigs can fly' flu drug.)

If our 'illustrious leaders' had any interest in our wellbeing, these things WOULD NOT HAPPEN! So, we have to ask ourselves, why do they happen?

Those at the top have written many books over the past century and before explaining their ideology for a one world government ruled by themselves over the rest of humanity who they describe as either 'dumb animals' (Henry Kissenger when referring to the military) or as 'useless eaters' (as the top industrialists and bankers speak of the rest of humanity). We are not to be included in any New World Order Utopia.

OLIGARCHY

They maintain their oligarch by using the media, which they own, to keep the public

THIRD WORLD UNDER ATTACK FROM GENOCIDAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Pages 6-7

The implementation of policies arising out of fraudulent fearmongering and biased studies on global warming is already devastating the Third World, with a doubling in food prices causing mass starvation and death – a primary reason why the climategate crooks and their allies should be criminally investigated and hit with the strongest charges possible.

+++ PLEASE RECYCLE THIS PAPER BY PASSING IT ON TO SOMEONE ELSE TO READ +++

ural law'; for others it refers to the legal system. What the latter ignores is that these did not simply appear but are the creations of government (whether of kings or the modern state) and their legal appointees, the judiciary, and in turn are based on property rights and norms of behaviour that are imposed by elites, with all their inherent biases. The confusion is further compounded because to get around this some Freemen try to rely on the older legal systems, such as, in Ireland, the Brehon law system which existed prior to the English conquest.[8]

Ultimately, it is an appeal to history and the structures it has created over time. It looks backwards rather than forwards to the re-shaping of society that anarchism desires. As anarchists we want to change the basis of social relationships according to our needs in the here and now, not look to the ossified past.

Any law is an act of violence and coercion; it is imposed by others, from above. It is not the creation by consent that anarchism seeks. If there is to be 'law', it must be based on the autonomy of communities to create it themselves according to their needs, and not on control of territory and hierarchies, or requiring the enforcement of states. 'Law' should be a conscious creation of rules the community agrees to and can change. The only authority to appeal to is the authority of the individuals coming together to create their own community, something perpetually renewable and ever changing.

b) Property Rights

Private property is another key concept underlying the Freeman movement, replicating a key foundation of the modern state. Much of the Anglo-Saxon legal model is based on property rights – encapsulated in the saying "an Englishman's home is his castle". It is also part of the foundations of the modern capitalist system, a number of studies showing how the modern state developed to protect the rights over property that capitalism required. The Freeman movement does not challenge this.

Using property in its narrower sense, the Freeman movement is quick to assert the right to private property, whether land or 'the house' (identified interchangeably with the home). It does not question how this land was acquired or its distribution. It does not matter in the Freeman ideology whether this land is more than is needed by a family or individual – absolute entitlement to it is what matters. All this assumes that the right to own land is a given, when in fact these concepts of ownership have been shaped by capitalism and the modern state.

This is antithetical to anarchist theory, where land and property are resources to be held in trust by the community. If there is to be a head-on clash between the movements it is likely to be found here.

c) Libertarian or Libertarian Communism

One definition of anarchism is libertarian communism. It is useful to return to this as it points out probably the single biggest difference in the ideologies. The Freeman movement is all about the primacy of the individual (or at a push, the family). While some Freemen might espouse mutual aid, this is secondary, left to the individuals to decide, rather than being a central principle. Libertarianism puts the individual at the heart of its political analysis, rather than the community or collective. This puts it close to the political ideology of capitalism and the liberal state which seeks an atomised public in which the only arbitrator of values is the state or market. Anarchism rejects this approach through its analysis of power.

The emphasis on personal ownership and absolute right over land owned is also dangerous. It grants too much power to the individual to do as they want without any concern for the consequences. While many of those espousing the philosophy on the left will have an environmental bent, there are no mechanisms within Freeman ideology to stop those who own land from exploiting it or abusing it. There is nothing to prevent someone from drilling for oil or extracting all the water from an aquifer, because there is no way of challenging their right to do so, without appealing to a greater authority... such as the state.

d) The Freemen as a Patriarchal Movement

It is unclear why so much of the language and approach of the Freeman Movement remains patriarchal in nature. For example, the focus on the family in the Irish texts, and of a Judaeo-Christian concept of 'God' betrays this inherent conservatism.

I would suggest that this comes from the libertarian focus on the individual rather than social relationships in general, a problem not just of the Freeman movement but something to be found in many anarchist groups that have failed to step up and recognise how patriarchal power is repeated in our everyday actions. For those that have come to 'us' through the Freeman Movement, there is even less awareness of these issues.

For instance, there is much emphasis within the Irish form of the movement (albeit not replicated in the UK) on Section 41.1 of the Irish constitution:

> *"The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.*
>
> *The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State."*

What is outlined in the Irish constitution and adopted widely by the Freeman movement is a very traditional view of the family. The danger of this narrative around the family has been the subject of much criticism from feminist and queer movements. An anarchist critique of this should be fairly obvious, not just of the conservatism, but the emphasis on the family as opposed to the community. Given its attitudes to land ownership, the Freeman movement will struggle to address this concept.

The intermingling of the Freeman Movement and anarchist movements thus has the potential to undo much work that within the anarchist movement around patriarchal behaviour.

Summary

This has been a very brief overview of the Freeman movement that has tried to capture with broad strokes its nature and possible responses. There is room for much more work, including a more in-depth analysis of the various flaws in the approach to the law. The greatest danger however is allowing a movement to develop within anarchist circles that ignores the principle of mutual aid and implicitly promotes private ownership of resources, that by granting absolute right to individuals gives them the ability to ignore their responsibilities to the wider community and ecology that sustains them. In more traditional terms, the movement is one all about negative freedoms, ignoring positive freedom as a concept.

It should be said that many of the criticisms of the Freeman movement are symptomatic of a wider problem within anarchism – its troubled relationship with the dominant ideology of liberalism and patriarchy which we absorb from the moment we are born.

The allure of the Freeman movement is very real, and this should be acknowledged because, in part, there is a potential within it. It would be a shame if all the ideas it has managed to uncover were lost. The problem with the Freeman movement is that it needs a political depth to it; in some ways it does not go far enough, in others it goes in the wrong direction altogether.

In talking to people involved, I get the impression that they are excited by the space to challenge the status quo that it gives them. This is, for the most part, a good thing, but anarchists need to be challenging them in turn on all their other assumptions, to point out that it is not an end-in-itself, that community, land-ownership and language are just as important issues, that resisting the state through challenging its laws is only part of the wider struggle.

Thanks to Tommy, Sam, Cath & Sophie for discussions and comments.

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While more progressive in nature than subsequent systems, it is still a very flawed system.

Anarchism and the City

REVIEWED BY CATHAL LARKIN

Seventy-five years ago, in Barcelona and across much of the rest of Spain, anarchists and other radical workers, in order to stop Franco's attempted coup, stormed army barracks, took over the factories and kicked off "the greatest revolutionary festival in the history of contemporary Europe."(p.173). A familiar story no doubt, however, unlike many ostensible working class histories of the period, that are often just histories of workers' organisations, Ealham's engaging writing and theoretical fluency give us a complete view of proletarian life, from community centres in the city's slums, to unemployed groups of shoplifters, to general strikes and uprisings.

The book starts with the growth of Barcelona due to its industrialisation from the 1850s onwards. As the newly formed proletariat were housed in slum-like *barris* without social services, an "anarchist-inspired workers' public sphere" (p.34) began to develop. This consisted of community cultural and social centres (called *ateneus* in Catalan) of which 75 were formed in Barcelona between 1877 and 1914. These were the heartbeat of working class life and where theatre, choral, Esperanto, hiking, naturist, sports and musical groups would meet.

A vibrant culture of debate and discussion in the *ateneus* was kept alive with libraries that contained "a broad selection of the classics of European post-Enlightenment political and literary writing, ranging from Marx and Bakunin across to radical bourgeois writers such as Ibsen and Zola."(p.45). Co-operative run shops, crèches and cafés, brought basic needs within the budget of working class families, as did the de-hierarchised modern schools many *ateneus* also housed. In times of heightened class conflict the *ateneus* were often the victims of state repression. That the schools were viewed as particularly subversive could be evidenced when, after the Barcelona uprising of 1909, anarchist educational writer and teacher, Francisco Ferrer, was executed by the state even though he played no part in the rebellion.

Out of the failed uprising grew the anarchist trade union, the CNT. Their militant strikes and revolutionary agitation won Spain the eight hour day before any other country in Europe. However the organised and radicalised working class precipitated a state backlash that culminated in a military coup in 1923. The *ateneus* proved vital in keeping anarchist ideas alive during the period of the dictatorship, when the CNT was illegal and other trade unions state controlled.

Not only were workers organised by the CNT, so too were the unemployed; and their often ignored political activity makes for great reading. Coming from such a class conscious proletariat, the unemployed suffered no moral judgements for robbing from the bourgeoisie to secure what they called their right to life. 'Eating by force', as not paying in restaurants was referred to, and group raids of shops, were also common.

The culture of proletarian self-empowerment was such that when a beggar once asked the now (in)famous anarchist Durruti for some change, he responded by handing him a gun, giving the advice: "Take it! Go to a bank if you want money!" (p.126). Ealham points out the normative dimension to the crime of the unemployed: the bourgeoisie were exclusively the victims of it; intra-class proletarian crime was virtually non-existent.

With the *barris* being no-go areas for the bourgeoisie and the police, the mainstream press ran stories intended to provoke a moral panic about working class life. Readers heard of the innocent youth being exposed to anarchist orgies while on hiking trips and of the dangerous TB gangs who roamed the streets. The working class port area of the Raval, where there were many bars, cabarets and dance halls as well as a large population of single, unskilled, migrant labourers living in cheap hostels, was renamed 'Chinatown' (*Barri xino*), after inner-city Los Angeles.

The 'foreign' nature of the 'bad' working class was emphasised more and more with the rise of Catalan nationalism amongst the bourgeoisie (responded to by many Catalan anarchists by proudly identifying as Murcian). Not coincidentally this followed Spain's loss of its last overseas colonies in 1898 and the economic disaster it provoked, as the industrialists of the country, mostly concentrated in Catalonia, lost their access to lucrative protected overseas markets.

The drop in the profit margins that followed, as well as the subsidising of a backward looking Madrid central government, meant Catalonia could not afford a welfare state to calm working class discontent. We therefore see, like in the early twenties, a spiral of mutual class radicalisation after the declaration of the Spanish Second Republic in 1931. In response to repression of the CNT, anarchists engaged in a series of failed insurrections and *grupismo*: a campaign of urban guerilla warfare involving bombings, bank robberies and killing some strike-breakers and particularly nasty employers.

The needs of the radicalised Barcelona working class could simply not be met by 1930s capitalism. That this would be a hard job for capital under any conditions could be seen as early as the night of the 1931 declaration when, refusing to wait for the republicans to fulfil their election promise, CNT members successfully stormed the local jail to release political prisoners and burn records.

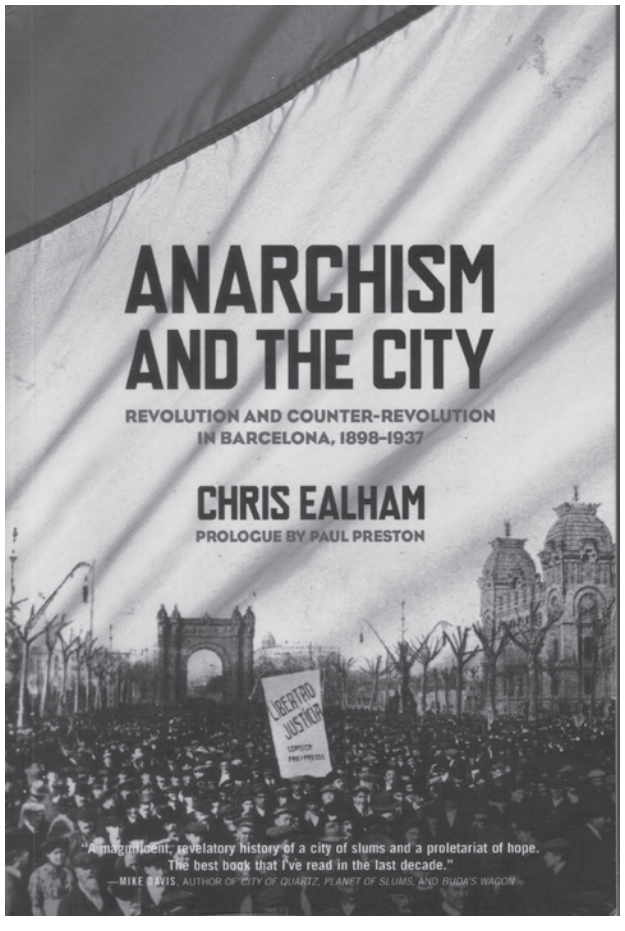
Ealham gives an exciting account of the army's attempted coup and the revolution it provoked. However be warned, while reading the great stories from a Barcelona now in working class control, many anarchists may also feel the need to shout 'idiots!' several times at our CNT comrades who made some terrible mistakes which led to the "definitive eradication of revolutionary power" (p.193) after May '37.

Throughout the book Ealham doesn't fail to criticise the Barcelona anarchists when necessary – for example, for the exclusion of women from most *ateneus* activities, and for the negative effects of *grupismo* and the cycle of insurrections – however, when the revolution's premature ending is critiqued his analysis could go deeper. The anarchists' defeat is not critically related to their understanding, or, as I would see it, misunderstanding, of anarchism – this is all the more surprising given that Ealham competently, and quite accessibly, relates lots of the rest of the history to theoretical frameworks, participants' consciousness of these, and how this effected group behaviour.

Mike Davis, a Marxist I believe, calls *Anarchism and the City* the best book he has read in a decade. I'd come very close to concurring; it certainly does stand out as a fantastic example of how working class history should be written. Instead of presenting an alphabet soup of trade unions and political organisations or, as other histories from below sometimes do, losing sight of the bigger picture in masses of stories from ordinary people's lives, Ealham gives us a gripping historical sociology of a city going through some of its most revolutionary years – a complete portrayal of working class life in that place, at that time. That is real people's history!

Dig It Out!

Title: Anarchism and the City
Publisher: AK Press
Available online from Amazon, etc.
Cost €20 (approx.)



Zapatista Spring

REVIEWED BY EOGHAN RYAN

Editors' Note: In this issue of the IAR we have the all too rare pleasure of reviewing a book by a fellow Irish anarchist. It's Ramor Ryan's *Zapatista Spring*, one of the most honest books yet published about the Zapatistas.

While Ramor Ryan's "Clandestines" detailed the myriad adventures of a peripatetic revolutionary, his follow up book, "Zapatista Spring", concerns itself more with the minutiae, and frequent tedium, of weeks spent in Chiapas demonstrating "practical solidarity". In his own words, he is "attempting to portray the Zapatistas as they are at the grassroots, beyond the mythologizing of [Subcomandante] Marcos and the public face of the rebellion." However, it can also be seen as a companion piece to "Clandestines" in that his Spartan surroundings while there allow him time to reflect on the motivations behind his revolutionary activities, as well as those of other volunteers.

Initially Ryan visited Chiapas as part of the "accompaniment" strategy, whereby international activists immersed themselves in Zapatista communities, living and working with the peasants. This was "tactically successful throughout the late 90', as the[ir] presence … might well have staved off the worst of the military excesses, serving as eyes and ears to monitor human rights in the conflict zone. However, in consolidating the rebel project of building autonomy [it] was lacking." Hence the move towards "practical solidarity", encompassing, amongst other things, water projects.

He and a number of other volunteers form a "water team" who help to build a basic water supply in a remote Zapatista village, Roberto Arenas. They comprise Ryan, Maria from America and Praxedis from Mexico City, which may as well be a different country as far as the villagers are concerned. There is no indication when this episode took placed although it is probably around 2002/3.

Contradictions

Contradictions abide for a committed anarchist. Deep-rooted patriarchy within the village is highlighted and challenged, within certain limits. While the gender based division of labour (men do the construction work, women the field and house work) remains, the women did finally get some input into the design of the water system to make it easier to fill their predestined roles. Anarchists must take on roles of authority, delegating manual work to the villagers (not very successfully in Ryan's case!).

Ideology aside, there are other complications. Revolutionary village *campesinos* continuously enquire about the possibilities of work abroad. Racist, sexist truck drivers are hired to transport the vital equipment to rebel held territory. The "water team" must pass through neighbouring government held territory where the equally poverty stricken peasants remain PRI (the governing party) supporters. International vegetarian volunteers object to the shooting of wolves that threaten the villagers' chickens and children. Communities sometimes switch sides depending on the opportunities that varying their allegiance can bring, with outlying Zapatista aligned villages sometimes having a somewhat adversarial relationship with their compatriots in bigger towns. Particularly instructive, in an Irish context, are some of the parallels with the ongoing Garda occupation of Erris in Mayo. Communities are bought off by state handouts and investments in much the same was as Shell have attempted to do.

A conversation between Ryan and Praxedis explores the rationale behind their presence in the area, as an act of solidarity with the base of the Zapatista movement, notwithstanding their devout religious beliefs, social conservatism and frequent nationalism. Whatever the conflicts between they (urbanised, socially liberal and atheistic) and their hosts, they ultimately conclude that, as anarchists, this is the "coalface of the struggle". Ryan views himself as a Celtic Tiger refugee, seeking revolutionary possibilities, away from a place where "everything just seemed to be sucked up into the economic boom, and everybody became mesmerised by Ireland's new wealth and capital and forgot about solidarity and collectively building communities based on hope and reciprocity."

A Zapatista In Your Own Country

One of their EZLN guides suggests that the visiting activists "should be working in [their] own community, fomenting rebellion." This line of thought seems to have become more widespread within the EZLN, resulting in their recent call for no international visitors to their area and they having broken almost all links with NGO's. So, this "practical solidarity" strategy seems to have backfired somewhat with, in this instance, the villagers continually viewing the "water team" as some type of NGO despite our protagonist's best efforts to explain otherwise. Ryan eventually concludes the divide between the internationals and the indigenous may perhaps be too great a one to bridge, they can always leave while the campesinos are stuck.

On a more micro level, anarchist activists will recognise the difficulties mentioned between competing tendencies described in Mexico City and the tensions between the activists themselves in Chiapas. In describing this and the sometimes strained relations with the *campesinos*, Ryan illustrates problems almost all activists will have encountered albeit perhaps in different contexts.

There are some problems with this work, the most obvious being the disclaimer on the insert that "while this book is based on true events, some characters and scenes have been fictionalised". So what is true and false? Are characters merely introduced as a device to illustrate a particular problem? For example, when a Mara gang member from Honduras stumbles into Roberto Arenas having lost his way on the long trek north to the US, did this actually happen or does it merely allow Ryan to spin a parable on the harshness of urban existence across Central America?

Given the professed aim of the book, it detracts significantly from the finished product if the reader cannot be sure if it portrays the Zapatista base in any way accurately. There are a number of typos and there is the occasional resort to cliché, the children are rarely anything other than sweet, the locals are stoic and the countryside bucolic.

This is not a primer in Zapatismo and, as someone not overly familiar with the Zapatista movement and revolution, I didn't gain any particular overarching insight into the situation in Chiapas. But, first and foremost, "Zapatista Spring" is a story, a simple yet engaging one, in no small part due to Ryan's succinct prose and easy humour. He illustrates some of his thoughts by reference to themes explored in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and Albert Camus's "Myth of Sisyphus", a device that works well in clarifying his position on his role in Chiapas. The author also doesn't gloss over his own failings; he loses his temper on occasion and can be anti-social.

While the overall premise may appear slight, the complications involved in transporting equipment through army controls and difficulties in relations with the locals make for a page-turner. Finally there is a twist in the tail that ties everything together in a peculiarly satisfying way.

The Zapatistas have recently re-emerged in public last May after a five-year hiatus, participating en masse in a rally in San Cristobal pushing for a political solution to the narco-trafficking problem in Mexico rather than the infinite war pursued by the government. Ryan's ultimate conclusion is that they are a force for good and thus this can only be a positive step.

Dig It Out!

Title: Zapatista Spring
Author: Ramor Ryan
ISBN: 1849350728
Publisher: AK Press
Available online from
Amazon etc.
Cost €12 (approx.)

Sins of the Father

INTERVEW: JAMES MCBARRON

Journalist and writer Conor McCabe's book 'Sins Of The Father' attempts, in the author's own words, "... to shine a light on the reasons why Ireland has the businesses it has, and why banks and speculators yield so much power and influence." The book has been acknowledged as a significant contribution to the analysis of the political and economic decisions that have brought the Irish economy to ruin. James McBarron interviewed McCabe for Irish Anarchist Review

The chapter dealing with government policy on housing makes fascinating reading. To what extent do you think that the various housing action and squatter campaigns of the 70s effected any change - if only temporarily? Did the Trade Union movement at any point challenge the dominant direction of government policy?

Oh they had quite a positive result. The various housing action committees of the 1960s in Derry, Dublin, Cork and Galway, the Mountjoy Square occupations - they all immediately spring to mind. Their effectiveness I would say is gauged by the degree to which they've been left out of the mainstream historical narrative. Have a look at Reeling in the Years and it's all Neil Blaney and Ballymun and the protests to save Georgian Dublin, and virtually nothing on activists such as Dennis Dennehey, Patrick Stanley, Seamus Rattigan, Mairin De Burca or Sean Dunne.

The same goes for the successful rent strikes of the early 1970s which were organised by the National Association of Tenants' Organisations. There are lessons to be learned there, in terms of protest and organisation, which of course is why they've been left out of the mainstream historical narrative. I mean, the rent strikes alone provide a working template for any future mortgage strike – people paid their rent into a collective fund which was then used as a bargining chip once it came to settle arrears, legal assistance was provided, and test cases were put forward with the full backing of the collective resources of the protest movement.

In terms of their effect on government policy, there is little doubt that the last great wave of public housing construction in Ireland, which took place in the mid-1970s under a Labour party ministry, was influenced by the various protests and grassroots organisations. However, although the government was building public housing, it was selling off more by way of the tenant purchase scheme which had been brought in by Fianna Fáil in 1966.

In 1971 there were 112,320 local authority rental housing units in the State, which amounted to 15.9 per cent of the total households. By 1981 this figure dropped to 111,739 and now constituted 12.4 per cent of total households. Yet, there were 64,170 new local authority units completed between 1971 and 1980. The State was selling its public housing stock to its tenants quicker than it could replace it. The amount of households in urban areas in 1981 that either owned their property or were buying their house from a local authority was 65.5 per cent. In 1961 that figure was 37.9 per cent. The tenant-purchase scheme had been heavily utilised, and resulted in dramatic heavy selling of local authority housing. This practice, of course, was later copied by the Conservatives in Britain in the 1980s.

I think the trade union movement did influence government policy in terms of new public housing, especially during the 1970s Fine Gael/Labour coalition, but the game was already rigged by that stage, if you know what I mean. The move to create a debtor class by way of the mortgage market was already well under way. The scrapping of local authority rates in the late 1970s pretty much ended the presence of city and county councils in the mortgage market – up to then local authorities provided 'affordable' mortgages to those who wished to buy but did not have the wage levels or job security demanded by private mortgage lenders – but once that income stream was cut off, along with the privatisation of public housing, the only realistic option open to a young couple starting out was the purchase of a private mortgage at commercial rates. The amount of taxpayers' money that successive Irish governments have spent in order to keep wages low in Ireland is quite staggering when you think about it. Partnership, of course, actively embraced that process.

Given the current glut of housing available in Ireland, how is that the rental sector has seen only minor falls in rent? Is this market being manipulated to suit the interests of private landlords and investors?

Yes, it is. The Irish government spends hundreds of million in taxpayers' money every year in subsidising private landlords. The effect of privatising local authority housing has been that those who can not afford to buy a mortgage are pushed deeper into the unregulated, but deeply subsidised, private rental market. I'm afraid I don't have more up-to-date figures but in 1999 almost 40 per cent of all tenants in private rented dwellings were in receipt of rent allowance. It cost the government £115 million, or €146 milion, that year in payments.

In 1981 that figure was £6.1 million (around €7.7 million). By 2005 it had risen to an estimated €380 million. The Irish State had gone from a policy of eradicating slum dwellings in the 1930s to actively subsidising private landlords and sub-standard dwellings. The expansion of the private rental market is official government policy. It is, after all, one of the criteria for Section 23 Tax Relief – that is, the construction of apartments for rent. The State has encouraged the expansion of landlordism, again with taxpayers' money. The effect of privatising public housing is that the funding which would have gone to local authorities now went to private individuals and businesses – and all the time using public funds to force the closure of public housing, and all the time calling it 'investment'.

But again, this is the grand theme of the Irish capitalist class. It is a *comprador* class. And rent, in all its forms and guises, is its business.

How do you see the current picture in agriculture; is the big farmer lobby still a major force or has its influence declined with the expansion of the economy into other areas; or is the recent rise in agricultural prices increasing the influence of this lobby?

There is still a huge class dynamic to Irish agriculture – Larry Goodman, for example, is still one of the biggest recipients of EU subsidy funds – so that the lobby that is there lobbies mainly in the interests of the ranchers and big farmers, rather than in the interests of the small and medium farmer. The various EEC and EU deals over the past forty years simply bear that out. However, there is a perception,

particularly among the urban working population, that farmers are just that: 'farmers'. No distinction is made between the size and income of the farms – or even that farming is a part-time occupation for many small and medium farmers, not because of any 'lifestyle choice' but because they have to work at another job in order to pay the bills.

The lack of awareness of the realities of the rural working class in Ireland - that there even is a rural working class in Ireland – has allowed the ranchers and big farmers to pretty much hold sway. The agriculture lobby is making minor gains, but its influence is dwarfed by that of the retail sector which pretty much bleeds farmers dry. Irish retail profits are simply off the map.

Irish Industrial policy is hindered by the demands of vested interests right throughout the period you write about. The advent of the foreign direct investment policy does, in one sense, bring about a sea change with a noticeable rise in living standards and an expansion in employment. Did this create a tension with workers in the multi nationals enjoying higher wages and depending on those industries for their living, while others saw their traditional industries slowly decline?

It's a really good question and one I'm afraid I'm not quite sure I can answer and still do it justice. That tension, between those employed in multinationals and those employed in the rest of the manufacturing and services sectors, is definitely there, and can be seen in the rugged defence of Ireland's corporation tax rate not only by trade unions but by ordinary workers. Yet, Ireland's corporation tax rate acts as a drain on the rest of the economy, as those sectors not covered by it have to cover the shortfall in income in order to pay for the maintenence and development of the State's infastructure. But, it's not seen that way, and certainly the Irish Financial Services Centre is seen as a talisman instead of the albatross that it is. But, a great question. I just wish I could answer it with more depth.

Do you think the overall direction of government policy was thought out on a fairly planned basis, or was it simply a case of vested interests fighting their corner and the consequences flowing naturally from that?

The Irish economy is a planned economy, no doubt about it. It has been since the foundation of the Free State in 1922. The plan has been to serve the interests of the particular type of capitalism which took root in Ireland – that is, a certain kind of *comprador* capitalism. I'm in danger of oversimpifying here but the type of business activities which dominated the Irish economy in the twentieth century – cattle exports to Britain and financial investment in London; the development of green-field sites and the construction of factories and office buildings to facilitate foreign industrial and commercial investment; the birth of the suburbs and subsequent housing booms predicated on expanding urban workforce – saw the development of an indigenous moneyed class based around cattle, construction and banking.

These sectional interests were able to control successive government policy, much to the detriment of the rest of the economy, which had to rely on whatever scraps it could pick up from quasi-committed multinationals and government-funded grants and tax breaks. In 2008 the construction and banking sectors of that class closed ranks in order to protect themselves from oblivion, resulting in the bank guarantee and the creation of the National Assets Management Agency.

There has been a logic to everything they have done, and once we see that Irish capitalism is a 'meet-and-greet' capitalism, then the decisions begin to make sense. Of course, that is not how the history of Ireland in the 20th century is portrayed. Take, for example, Fianna Fáil.

The image of Fianna Fáil as ruthless and politically brilliant has a long tradition within Irish journalism. The rise of the 'mohair suits' in the 1960s – the party's post-revolution generation - and the apparent sophistication of its most controversial leader, Charles Haughey, brought a new lexicon into play which helped define the organisation in the public eye. Haughey was a republican who lived an aristocratic life. He had silk shirts flown in from Paris and made speeches of stoic patriotism. His party knew him as The Boss; his media advisor, P.J. Mara, referred to him as Il Duce. His protégé, Bertie Ahern, was described by the master as 'the most skilful, the most devious, and the most cunning of them all'. The head of Fianna Fáil was often seen as like a Godfather who ruled through a mixture of patronage and (political) assassination. He was Marlon Brando, slowly rubbing his cheek while plotting a murder, immaculately dressed with manicured nails.

However, the proper analogy is not with Vito Corelone or his cold, calculating son, Michael; it is with Fredo, the middle son who is sent to Vegas to make sure all the high rollers are kept happy. It is Fredo, sweaty and unsure, desperately trying to please the powerful, who best fits the role of Fianna Fáil in Ireland. The party spent decades in service to particular business interests in this country, while doing just enough to convince the electorate to return it to office. That was its role because that was (and still is) the type of busineess that the Irish capitalist class engage in.

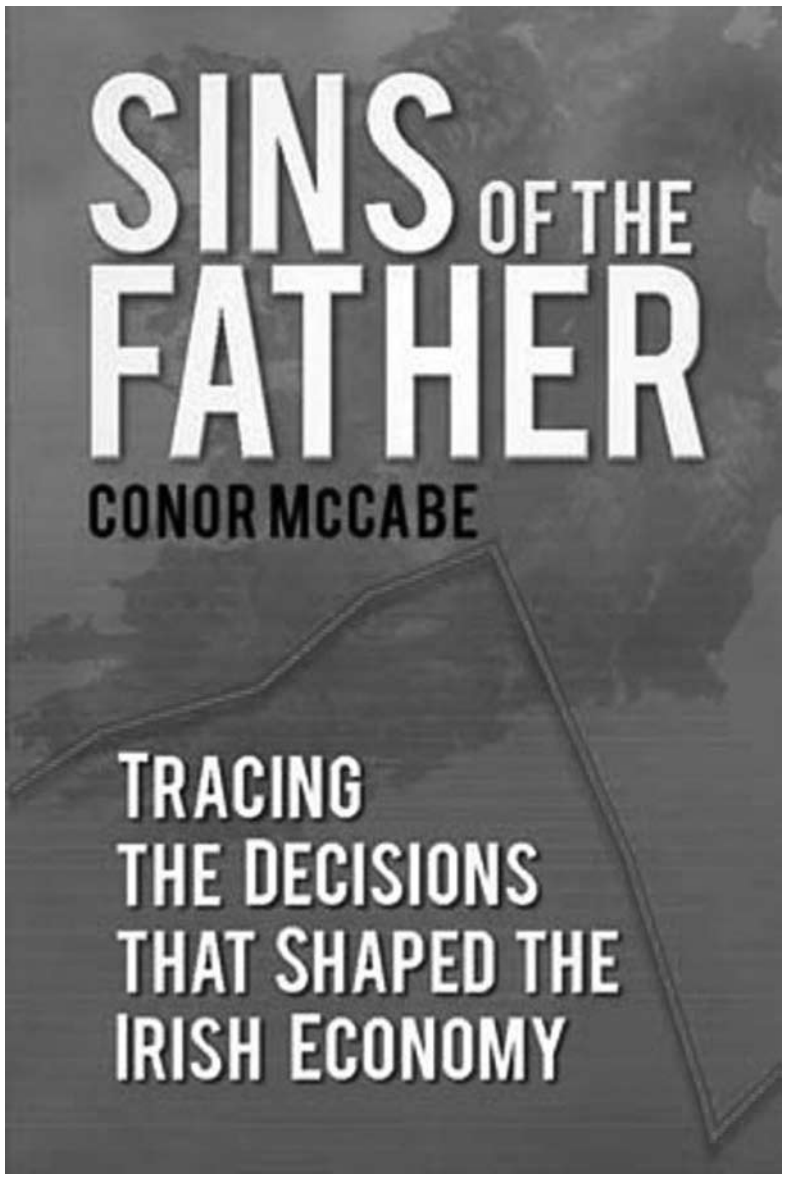
Conor, your book has been very well received on the left, provoking a lot of positive reviews and favourable comment. Has it got any comparable feedback in the mainstream media?

Not really, but I don't see any great conspiracy there. The Irish Independent picked up on the book, particularly the chapter on housing, calling it myth-busting, and I've been asked onto a couple of radio shows, but really I have a very low profile anyway - I'm sure the first that people would have heard of me is through the book - so how would they pick up on me in the first place, you know?

As you said, the book is slowly making its way through the Irish Left, and really I'm so happy with that. Sins of the Father contains such a lot of previous research by other Left writers and activists - I'm thinking of people like Ray Crotty, Kieran Allen, Tara Jones, Chris Eipper and Robert Allen, as well as those associated with Left publications and organisations such as Ripening of Time, Resources Study Group, The Workers' Party, The Communist Party of Ireland, Workers Solidarity Movement, Militant and Socialist Workers Movement, even the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) – that hopefully it will lead to a re-discovery of the works I've drawn upon, that the Irish Left can actually look to its own history and its own body of work in order to make sense of this island we live upon. I look at the Irish Left and I see over 100 years of research and analysis. It's an impressive body of work and I was so lucky to be able to use it. My 'day job' is that of a labour historian, so I not only knew the work was there, I had already engaged with a sizeable part of it. Hopefully the book will raise the profile of that body of work that is already there.

Dig It Out!

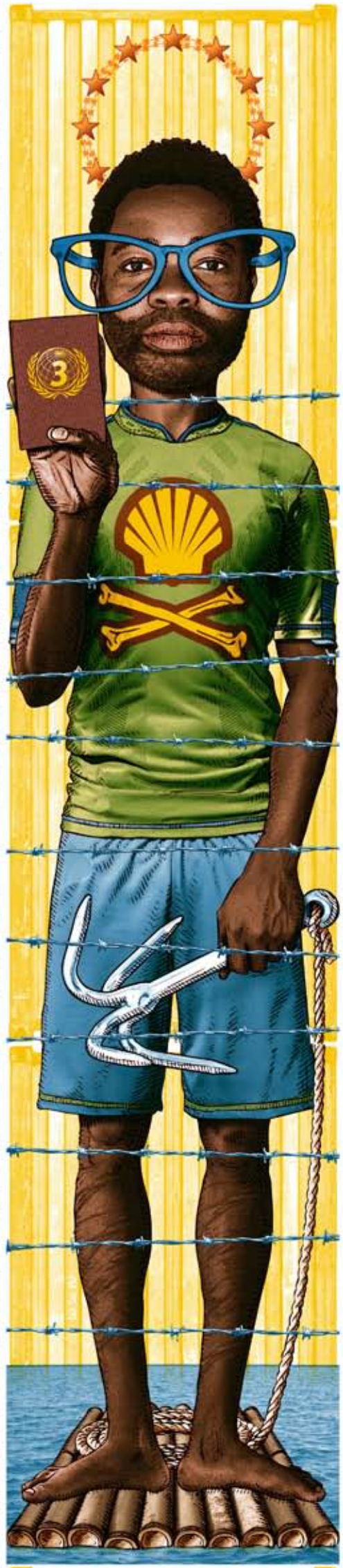
Title: Sins of the Father
Author: Conor McCabe
ISBN: 1845886933
Publisher: The History Press Ltd
Available online from
Amazon etc.
Cost €15.00 (approx.)



St. Spekulatius

St. Abusu

St. Redundus



St. Cargo