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This means not only talking to those who have already made an effort to research what mechanisms may one day overthrow capitalism, but also acting in situations where there is a good chance of the escalation of genuine class struggle (rather than radical posturing).

ference to things. What might have happened if Durruti had acted on his reservations about the CNT policy of fighting for the bourgeois Republic instead of fighting for the revolution in Spain in 1936? If 'revolutionaries' are wrong, or stupid, or too timid, then they can become more of a threat to the working class than an aid.

We have to understand just why groups such as the AF always have small numbers of members. We have to realise that this fact is not a sign of 'failure'. Indeed, if the 'masses' flocked to the AF tomorrow, asking to join, then that would be a failure. The working class becomes revolutionary in action, and only in action. Revolutionaries will be there when this event occurs and act as an aid to the revolutionary impetus. At present, it seems that our main role is to try to keep a rigorous class analysis alive amongst the entire radical network and to thus to attract as many fellow travelers to revolutionary positions as possible. Although it is essential that we try to increase the numbers of conscious revolutionaries we cannot expect a mass revolutionary movement to arise until the economy finds itself in serious trouble and the bosses start losing control of us. The success of this revolutionary mass movement will depend in large measure on the work we continue to do now. This is why our work always has an urgency and why those who hold revolutionary positions need to work together.

If we waste our time then the only thing that will suffer will be our revolutionary critique. As ever, we need to seriously reflect on what we are really doing and what it is we are likely to achieve. We need to constantly evaluate what it is we consider revolutionary, or potentially revolutionary, and what we don't. We should not be afraid of saying what we think, and we should not be afraid of criticising present trends in global radical chic. We should not be afraid of realising that 'the revolution' may not happen tomorrow, and that we are likely only to be able to keep a revolutionary critique of society alive by a constant dialogue, of words and interventions, with those who will listen.

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news stands are obliged to sell 'revolutionary' papers, it is, of course, the case that the grumpy masses have not gone berserk with revolutionary fervour.

Everywhere it is the case that the ruling ideas (in the heads of people) are the ideas of the ruling class, until, that is, everything starts going physically wrong for the ruling class, and the credibility of the ruling class becomes suspect. This fracture in the armour of credibility will usually come when there is large scale industrial rebellion, when the workers begin to cotton-on to the fact of where their power lies, as in France 1968, when ten million workers went on strike and President De Gaulle felt the need to make certain that he had the backing of the army through a meeting with a General Masou. (French capitalism after WW II remained in a precarious state and in 1958 De Gaulle headed a peaceful coup and made himself President, the working class did little to oppose this because maybe things would improve, but they didn't and so the working class backlash of 1968 was set in motion. May 1968 showed that a major insurrection was possible in a 'modern' state. But what is often overlooked is the fact that it happened because of the specific problems and fragility of the French economy, not because of the usually overstated wave of youthful radicalism and protest that seemed to be emerging towards the end of the 1960's. May 1968 was not a symptom of the 'radical myth' that has been created around the events of the late 1960's and early 1970's, but it has been relentlessly used to consolidate that myth.)

A major task of an organisation like the AF, in its literary as well as practical capacities, and which it achieves in varying degrees at present, should be to combat the ideology of the left. Revolutionary ideas are not left wing, or social democratic, or Leninist ideas. Although the numbers of 'professional' revolutionaries will necessarily always be small we want them to be as clued-up as possible (e.g., as anti-left wing as possible, as anti-authoritarian, as anti-nationalist, as anti-capitalist, as anti-mystification as possible, etc.). Individual people do make a dif-

of The Guardian to readers of The Sun because they think Guardian readers are more 'advanced', and they cover everything they see with their sickly moralism and cultural tyranny. They think that people of a left-wing outlook are more potentially 'revolutionary' than those with a rightwing outlook. This makes Tony Blair more potentially revolutionary than a working class van driver. Or it makes a working class voter for Labour more potentially revolutionary than a working class voter for the Tories. This sort of reasoning is for people who see themselves as morally superior to the rest of us and who have little understanding of the dynamics of class conflict, and the way the economy works. Do strikers need to go through some sort of cultural conversion, whereby they pick up the rules of political correctness, before they are able to show themselves to be a real threat to the ruling class and State? Or do they just go on strike?

Final Thoughts

We can only communicate with those people who will listen to us and understand us. We can involve ourselves in struggles at our workplaces, for example, and make an impact. We can try to have a dialogue and working relationship with people in our living areas over issues that affect us there. And we can try to talk to those who sense that everything needs to be changed but haven't made the mental leap that makes them view the world in revolutionary class terms, these people will already be involved in 'politics' in some way. But there is little point trying to make people on the street, who pass us by, and have no other contact with us, take a copy of our paper, read it, understand it and act on it. If revolutionary publications were popular reading material then the shelves of WH Smith's would have been packed with revolutionary journals for years now. Even in countries like France and Italy, where

"Revolutionary actions are directed against the system as a whole — for its overthrow. This pre-supposes a general disruption of society which escapes political control. Thus far, such revolutionary actions have occurred only in connection with social catastrophe, such as were released by lost wars and the associated economic dislocations. This does not mean that such situations are an absolute pre-condition for revolution, but it indicates the extent of social disintegration that precedes revolutionary upheavals. Revolution must involve a majority of the active population. Not ideology but necessity brings the masses into revolutionary motion. The resulting activities produce their own revolutionary ideology, namely an understanding of what has to be done to emerge victoriously out of the struggle against the system's defenders."

- Paul Mattick, from an interview with Lotta Continua, October 1977.

As radicals and revolutionaries what is it that we are really doing? Who are we really talking to? Who are we engaging with? What effect are we having? What effect should we be aiming to have? Why are there so few of us, and what is our purpose?

This article is a small exploration into the exploits of people like us. It is about what we are trying to do and what we actually do. Revolutionaries are more dangerous, more effective, and more intelligible when they are clear about what it is they are doing and where their effectiveness lies. It is hoped that those who read this will respond to it, creating a debate from which we can all learn something useful to our daily lives and thus also to our interventions in the class struggle.

There are two basic theoretical models of how a revolution (that can overthrow capitalism and replace it with a free human society) will transpire. These are broad descriptions of theoretical models, it is unnecessary at this stage to examine particular political groups who may adhere in differing degrees to either model. If we have had any involvement in political, class strug-

gle or revolutionary activity then we will recognise what is being said here (although we may not like it, or agree with it).

Model I

I will refer to this model as The Consciousness-Raising Model. In something like its purest, or crudest, form the idea of this model is that radicals try to educate and inspire 'the masses', or the working class. These radicals hope to gain mass acceptance of their ideas so that eventually the majority of the population will be able to change the way we all live. Proponents of this model tend to have a conflicting view of those they hope to influence. On the one hand they may feel intellectually superior to 'the masses', and despair that the 'ordinary folk' will never reach a high enough level of understanding (because of their almost willful stupidity!). On the other hand these radicals tend to have what might be called an almost religious faith in the 'goodness' of people in general. They base their hope that everyone will one day change their minds about things because only the Devil himself could deny the truth of their propaganda forever.

The use of 'religious' allusions here is deliberate. The main reason this model is so popular, perhaps, has to do with traditions of organised religion. I am thinking here in particular of Christianity and all its myriad sects. Christianity is a recruiting religion, other important religions, such as Islam are also recruiting organisations, but it can perhaps be argued that Christianity has provided the basic tactics for other recruiting religions, certainly, so far, no other religion has been quite so successful (or quite so murderous). Organised recruiting religions base a lot of their activity on consciousness-raising; they aspire to show people, of all stations in life, 'the light'. They aspire, as they see it, to bring the mass of the people to a higher moral level, a level at which a certain degree of peace and harmony

among other examples. (The role of the CNT in Spanish history is often misrepresented in anarchist histories. The CNT was a reformist industrial union organisation which, like other unions of the early part of the century across Europe, used 'revolutionary' rhetoric. The Spanish revolutionary period of the 1920's and 1930's proved itself to be against the CNT. In 1936 the CNT tried to hold back a revolutionary impetus that, rather than being the product of CNT propaganda and organisation, was in fact the result of the living and working conditions of the Spanish proletariat and the disastrous way that the governments had been handling events for many years).

Mass movements can be created in society, but they are never revolutionary. Take for example the ecological movement, this movement has been building up for years now, and has plenty of support from sections of the capitalist class. It is not however a movement that demands the abolition of work or the abolition of classes. Although the activist fringes of it are recently beginning to grapple with the fundamental nature of what makes the world economy tick, there is no sign as yet that this 'anti-capitalist' rhetoric will escape from the left-wing reinvention of anti-imperialism that it is at the moment. In fact, the reverse process looks more likely, as the old-fashioned lefty groups (eg, SWP, in Britain) get on the bandwagon, and the leaderships of the new 'anti-capitalist' groupings (eg, RTS, in Britain) struggle for respectability and more control of 'their' activities.

'The masses' will only become revolutionary (or there will only be a revolutionary mass movement in society) when society is crumbling under the pressure of industrial unrest, economic collapse and political instability. Look at any revolutionary period in history and this is what you will see. The time when the proletariat came closest to creating a world communist society was at the end of the First World War.

The ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class. The worst proponents of consciousness-raising prefer readers

class to a revolutionary consciousness, not propaganda. But it is at this point that their will becomes the dominant factor, as they decide how to act on their new consciousness, in the circumstances that they find themselves. It is only in the hurley-burley of serious, collective working class action that change will happen; changes of consciousness and changes in our real lives.

What of the long-standing 'revolutionary' in this situation? Well, it is at this point in the class conflict (when the possibility of destroying the economy becomes real and imminent) that it is essential for revolutionaries to make themselves heard. It is also at this point that a whole host of other pleas to the working class will be made by all shades of those who want to save capitalism. Having long studied the nature of the counter-revolution and its leading players it will be the revolutionary who points all this out and will be involved in the suppression of any initiatives which threaten to harm the autonomous activity of the revolutionary workers. We can transpose this strategy to moments of intense class confrontation that occur without any sign of generalised insurrection around the corner. It is good for our class to be used to class struggle and industrial conflict and we should be intervening where we can to provide the same sort of foresight that we would hope to provide in a revolutionary situation.

In order to be effective in all this it is necessary that we have as many revolutionaries around as possible, but we must realise that these numbers will never form a mass movement. Events make revolutions, not the numbers of card-carrying politicos. An organised mass movement, by its nature, can never be revolutionary in this society. It just doesn't happen. To see why a revolutionary mass movement in non-revolutionary times is impossible we can look at the early history of the 'revolutionary' trades union movement, the rise of the 'revolutionary' social democratic Parties in Europe, particularly in Germany, and the rise and fall of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in Spain,

between believers could be achieved. Having grown up under the shadow of a recruiting religion such as Christianity or Islam, as many of us who reside in these isles have, it might be all too easy for an atheistic proponent of the class struggle to take on board this mass recruiting idea, this consciousness-raising model.

One clue to the 'religious' nature of the consciousness raising model is the response that is engendered in some people when we radicals and revolutionaries are foolish enough to argue our case with 'non-political' acquaintances in social situations. They think that you are like a Jehovah's Witness, and they wish you'd shut up. What do you think when a Jehovah's Witness type gets you into a corner and tries to shove 'the truth' down your throat?

Another reason the Consciousness-Raising model is still popular today amongst those radicals who want to change the way 'the masses' think is because of its continued use by the authoritarian left across the globe. Radicals right across the spectrum have traditionally been heavily influenced by the tactics and success of organisations of the authoritarian left. We only have to look at the sycophancy of anarchists and libertarians all over the world for such anti-proletarian organisations as the IRA, the ANC, ETA, and the present fashionable enthusiasm for the authoritarian and pro-capitalist Zapatista movement in Mexico. A lot of anarchists can't help suspending all their critical faculties as soon as they see any grubby tyrant-in-waiting wield a gun in the name of national self-determination and bourgeois democracy. The reason organisations of the authoritarian left love the Consciousness-Raising model is because of the ease to which it can be put at the service of building the Party and making compliant supporters. For the left, consciousness-raising really means educating people about the necessity of their particular Party taking power.

Model 2

The opposite of the model described above might be termed the Economistic Determinist Model. This model is materialist in its essence rather than moralistic or 'religious'. It has no interest in arguing about the 'goodness' (or 'sinfulness') of people. It says that people are moulded by their circumstances and what they are forced into doing. It says that there is no point in trying to change the minds of 'the masses' with propaganda of a literary or deed type. It says that sections of the populace (that is, sections of the working class) will only become able to change society when economic circumstances force a reaction. Basing their ideas on historical facts the proponents of the Economistic model argue that the consciousness of large parts of the working class will only change when society is confronted with political and economic crisis. This kind of thinking emerges partly from an understanding of where major political (or rather, revolutionary) ideas have come from. For example, it was the workers of Paris in 1871 who came up with the Commune as a practical, revolutionary form of organisation, Karl Marx only documented and championed it after the event. And when politicos were calling for the establishment of Soviets in Russia in 1917, they were only able to do so because Russian workers had invented them in 1905. Outside of revolutionary situations the proponents of this model still see the value of dialogue and propaganda however, but primarily as a way of building up the (always small) numbers of revolutionaries, and their abilities, so that when major class confrontations occur they will be able to exert a positive influence on events.

(This model starts losing its usefulness when a kind of naive determinism becomes the dominant analytical tool. Victims of this phenomenon might be a group like the International Communist Current in Britain, for example. This group takes determinism so far as to believe in 'laws of history'. Thus, to them, the historical law that dominates our lives today is the one that

states that Capitalism is in its Decadent phase and that the increasing number of economic and political crises will soon bring it to its knees. But their picture of the world doesn't fit with reality. To adhere to the Economistic Determinist model you don't have to re-write history and current events to fit some fairy story synopsis that you want to be true.)

Human Will

Advocates of consciousness-raising will be alarmed at the seeming disregard of 'human will' that exists in the second model. They will argue that a 'revolution' will not be able to occur without the conscious and enlightened actions of a majority (or large number) of the people. For this to happen, they may argue, years of education will have to be embedded in the heads of the working class. This reasoning is flawed, and we only have to look at history and the world around us to see why. Firstly, if the masses haven't picked up revolutionary politics by now, after 150 years of propaganda, and many historical examples, then when are they going to, maybe next year? Secondly, if we take a cursory look at previous revolutionary events (and I mean revolutionary, not nationalist coups) then we see that the majority of the participants are not 'professional' revolutionaries. They are people who, over a very short period of time, and in the midst of political and economic disintegration, have realised the practical need for working class emancipation and got on with it. Their 'education' has been the result of witnessing real events, not years of reading propaganda (which they didn't read, of course).

Peoples' ideas can change very quickly depending on the circumstances they find themselves in, a revolution will be impossible without a large section of the working class going beyond events and creating their own future by their own will. It is, has been, and always will be, events that bring the working