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Rebel alliances: the means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms

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Abstract

This thesis examines, classifies and evaluates the tactics and organisational methods of British and Irish anarchist groups, which operated in the period 1984-1999 (although reference is made to groupings and events outside of this period). The thesis explains how class struggle anarchism, which was a minority trend even within the libertarian milieu, has developed into a significant and lively (anti-)political movement. This thesis examines recent groups through their own publications and their accounts of their recent actions.

Previous studies have attempted to assess anarchist methods through either liberal or traditional Marxist categories. This thesis develops a mode of assessment that is consistent with the methods of evaluation used by anarchists themselves. This prefigurative ethic is used to build up an ideal-type of anarchism that is consistent with the main characteristics of libertarian theory.

Anarchist prefiguration - which demands that the means must be synecdochic in relation to the ends - requires that the oppressed become the agents who bring about change. Oppression is irreducible to capitalism alone, but in most contexts, economic oppression will be a significant force in the creation of the oppressed agent's identity. Anarchists' preference for 'direct action' captures their commitment to the means being in accordance with the ends, and the primacy of the oppressed in resisting their oppression.

The anarchist ideal is used as a standard to assess the operations of existing anarchist groups. Consistent with prefiguration, anarchist organisation and tactics have to be multiform and flexible, without strategic priority being given to any single organisation or structure. Anarchist tactics must also involve a variety of oppressed subjects, while undermining hierarchies of power. It will be shown that certain organisational methods associated with anarchism; such as old style syndicalism is incompatible with the prefigurative ethic. Similarly certain organisational structures, often dismissed as inconsistent with anarchist principles, such as temporary small groups carrying out selective propaganda by deed, can, under certain conditions, be consistent with anarchism.

The growth of class struggle anarchism is shown to be a result of its prefigurative and multiform organisation and its corresponding diversity of tactics.

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question of non-hierarchical organization, of violence, of non-hierarchical ways of struggle, etc. All of these are debated intelligently and sympathetically. The author does not try to impose his point of view, but present This is an excellent book. While its focus is the contemporary British anarchist groups, it is much more than that. Rebel Alliances offers an applied philosophical perspective on contemporary class-struggle anarchism in Britain. It identifies the main principles distinguishing this tradition from competing Leninist, liberal, and social-democratic groupings. From these key characteristics, Franks constructs a consistent anarchism, which both shares characteristics with politically-engaged post-structuralisms and has a distinctive ethic. Many of the central themes of anarchism are consequently subject to original scrutiny: the nature of the revolutionary subject; workplace and community organizing; violence and pacifism; the meaning of direct action; and propaganda by the word and deed. "No one is better placed to examine the contemporary British anarchist movement than Ben Franks. account of contemporary anarchist movements and a discussion of. prefigurative ethics. From the historical survey Franks broadens the focus of. the study from class struggle anarchism to the rebel alliances of the title -. networks of environmental, animal welfare, unemployed and anti-racist groups. 'means and ends are irreducible parts of the same process' (99). Not only. does this principle serve to distinguish class struggle anarchism from. Leninism, it also points to a rejection of the "utopian", totalising systems which. exercise postanarchist critique. Franks' attempt to subject British anarchisms to serious analysis is. itself something to celebrate, all the more so given his concern to speak. through these movements by drawing on their literatures and practises. This book offers applied philosophical perspective on contemporary class-struggle anarchism in Britain. It identifies the main principles distinguishing the tradition from competing Leninist, liberal, and social-democratic groupings. You must log in to comment. \$20.00 \$10.00. Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms is a book-length study of philosophy applied to contemporary British class-struggle anarchism. Philosopher Benjamin Franks compares this tradition with competing political groups such as Autonomist Marxism and describes a consistent, "ideal" anarchism. (Subscription required.) (Subscription required.)