

On Tour in Europe!

Anarchist Communist Federation

1997

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ACF comrades from London and Woking attended the large Euromarch on June 14th in Amsterdam. The organisers of the march – unemployed organisations, trade unions etc. with an input from Greens, Trotskyists and social-democrats – put forward reformist slogans around full employment and workers’ rights, the protection of welfare provision, and talked about “basic human rights” and “the focus of a much wider campaign to stir the trade union movement in defence of the welfare state”. Labour lefts like Benn backed the appeal. However, there was a large presence at the 80, 000 strong march, of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, all of whom attempted to get over an anti-capitalist and revolutionary message. ACFers were pleased to meet comrades of the Dutch ACF, who have translated many articles from Organise! into Dutch for their paper *Woorden van Rebellen*. We marched with these comrades behind a banner we had brought from Britain and distributed a leaflet in English advancing a clear revolutionary message. There were sizeable contingents of Dutch, Danish and German autonomists numbering several hundreds whilst the spectacular resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism in Europe was witnessed by the seas of red and black flags in the contingents of the French CNT, the Spanish CGT, the Italian USI and the Swedish SAC, which numbered several thousands. Also present were Greek anarchists behind their black banner, as well as Belgian, German, Norwegian, Slovenian and Japanese anarchists.

Kinky sects

Whilst the European-wide continued presence of the Communist Parties, either in fundamentalist Stalinist mode, or mutated (see if you can tell the difference between us and social-democratic parties) mode was noticeable, the Trotskyists were strikingly thin on the ground, with only the French *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire* showing any noticeable presence, with a sprinkling of Trots from various British sects. The French ‘alternative’ union structures, the SUD, organised outside the main union centrals, around railworkers, postal workers and those working in education, were also present, in particular a sizeable railworkers contingent. The Belgian Renault workers in struggle against mass sackings also formed a large bloc.

The Dutch police carried out a number of provocations during the event. At the Central Station they seized a red and black flag, saying it was “forbidden to be anarchist during the summit”. When a bank’s windows were smashed by autonomists in the demonstration, the police make attacked. A little later, a well-organised provocation was carried out. An empty police van was left out in the path of the demonstration, whilst some police occupied a building nearby, training cameras on the van, whilst passing themselves off as demonstrators by waving flags and blowing whistles. Some autonomists in the crowd respond by overturning the van and were captured on camera. The police made several baton charges, concentrating on the heads of demonstrators. They blocked 3,000 Italians arriving at the Central station. The majority of these were not released until well after the demonstration had reached its final assembly point. 200 were arrested, handcuffed, held in a prison in Amsterdam and later that night returned in a train to Italy through Germany. This seems to have been a concerted action between German and Dutch police.

Joint Action

During demonstrations on the following three days the riot police made further baton charges. As a result of all these actions, as well as the police attack on the anarcho-punk Days of Chaos event on the Friday, 609 arrests were made. This does not include the Italian action. Few of these, it seems, have been charged. The severe security measures appear to have been thought out in advance, and the blanket arrest tactic used to paralyse actions, and to gather information on those arrested. This is a taste of what Europol plans for us in the future.

Whilst the ruling class is organising through the European Union to carry out attacks on us through sackings, cuts on welfare benefits and general austerity programmes, this demonstration was very important in that large numbers of anarchists marched together on a European level for the first time. It points towards the resurgence of anarchism in Europe and towards further joint actions.

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