

Margarita Ortega

Organise! begins a new series - *Revolutionary Portraits*. This will be devoted to revolutionaries, some well known, some little known, who have contributed so much to our movement over the last 120 years.

Margarita Ortega was a school teacher who came from a family "made up of people who were not politically conscious, but were proletarians aspiring to be bourgeois". During the unrest in Mexico in the early years of this century, she joined the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party). Despite its name, the PLM was openly anarchist communist in its views, and was very active among workers and peasants.

Margarita was an excellent horse-woman and crack shot. As *Regeneration*, the paper of the PLM noted: "More than one time her daring and cold blood saved her from falling into the hands of the forces of tyranny. Margarita Ortega had a big heart on her horse, or from behind a boulder, she could keep the Government soldiers at bay, and a little later she could be seen caring for the wounded, feeding the convalescing or offering words of comfort to the widows and orphans".

In 1911 Margarita told the man she was living with: "I love you; but I also love those who suffer, and for them I fight and risk my life. I don't want to see more men and women giving their effort, their health, their intelligence, their future to make the bourgeoisie rich. I don't want there to be men who order around other men any more. I am determined to continue to fight for the cause of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and if you are a man, come with me to the country; otherwise, you can

forget me, because I am not going to be the companion of a coward". He refused to go with her, but her daughter Rosaura replied: "Let us saddle the horses and throw ourselves into the struggle for the redemption of the working class!"

Expelled

Because of their activities, Margarita and Rosaura were expelled from the border town of Mexicali, and marched out into the desert, with the command

Let us saddle the horses and throw ourselves into the struggle for the redemption of the working class.

that they never return again... For several days they struggled under the blazing sun through the desert. At one point Margarita thought that her daughter had died, and was about to kill herself when she saw signs of life. The pair struggled on to Yuma in the United States, where Margarita was arrested by the immigration officials. She managed to escape from prison, and with Rosaura went to Phoenix, Arizona. Rosaura had been badly effected by her ordeals in the desert. She wished to return to Mexico to take part in the struggle rather than die on her sick bed but this was denied her by death.



With her comrade in struggle and love, Natividad Cortes, Margarita began to organise the anarchist movement in the northern Mexican state of Sonora, using the small town of Sonoyta as her base in October 1913. But she and Cortes were surrounded by government forces, and he was shot dead.

Margarita was imprisoned in Mexicali. She refused to name any other members of the PLM and as a result she was tortured. "Cowards!" she shouted, "Tear my skin to pieces, break my bones, drink all of my blood, and I will never denounce one of my friends". She was forced to stand up in a cage. Any time she leant against the bars she was shoved back into the middle of the cage. If she fell on the ground, she was beaten till she was forced to stand again. After 4 days of suffering, she was taken out and shot at night.

"A shot left this noble woman without life, free; her existence and example to remind the dispossessed to redouble our efforts against exploitation and tyranny".



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Kicked in the Balkans Again

AS THIS ARTICLE is being written we are close to three weeks of NATO bombardment all over Yugoslavia in the name of humanitarian intervention and



Demonstration against the Balkans War outside Aviano base, Italy, 11th April

action NATO sees fit. We are hearing warnings of world war from the Russian government, and the American CIA's calling for arming of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA or UCK). We have heard the call for ground troops, and about the illegality of NATO action under international law and its side-stepping of the United Nations. Aid of a few million pounds is being collected in Britain while £100's of millions are being spent on the NATO war effort, not to mention billions already spent on high-tech weapons and planes.

Balance

the "ethical foreign policy" of the British government. Since then, the Serbian leadership under Slobodan Milosevic has continued its military operations in Kosovo driving out hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians across the borders of Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. People are leaving the war zone towards Serbia too. A few of these displaced people are ending up as refugees in NATO countries but the great majority are still suffering in camps in the countries they have fled to. The ones grudgingly accepted by NATO are being kept in prison-like conditions out of touch with family and friends elsewhere. NATO command is insisting on its mission to "attack, pull apart, systematically and progressively degrade Yugoslavia [until] President Milosevic meets and honours international community demands".

Propaganda

In Britain, we have been subjected to a barrage of propaganda, vilifying Milosevic as a new genocidal Hitler, and claiming moral justification of whatever

the same time had neither encouraged the nationalist movements (branding the KLA terrorist), nor supported an independent Kosovo. People in neighbouring Albania have for the last few years been suffering from the aftermath of a government corruption catastrophe caused by their Democratic Party and Mafia. At the same time NATO was using the area as a base for operations since the first break up of Yugoslavia. Many workers lost everything in the financial collapse caused by investment practices allowed by the new free market, which had been propped up by aid from the European Union, resulting in countryside insurrection. Elsewhere in the region, in Macedonia which also borders Albania, Kosovo and Greece, tensions continue due to claims on its northern territory by Bulgaria. Hungary, to the North of Serbia, has recently become a NATO member. These factors may have great repercussions which NATO will surely have anticipated in its bid to control the long-term prospects of an unstable region.

Air-strikes

As Milosevic stepped up the military action in Kosovo, both the UN and NATO warned of possible military action. In the end NATO has decided to go it alone and launched air-strikes on the whole of Yugoslavia starting on March 24th, straight after 1400 monitors from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were withdrawn. Milosevic declared a state of war. People are now dying daily from NATO bombs, Serbian and KLA forces in Kosovo, and in the squalid refugee camps.

Nationalism

What can anarchists say about what is happening, and more importantly, what can we do? First of all we have to oppose the war-mongering of all sides, whether

Leading up to the present conflict, the West opposed Milosevic's plans but at

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NATO, Serbia, or the KLA, and to do this we also need to distinguish and understand the types of nationalism involved.

Milosevic's nationalism is/was one of a desire for a Greater Serbia, where Kosovo and preferably Montenegro are firmly under his control. But Serbia can in no way be compared to Germany in the second World War, nor Milosevic as a new Hitler. Germany was the second most powerful country in the world at the time, whereas Serbia is economically quite poor, especially compared to other European countries. Neither can the fascism under Hitler be usefully compared with the Milosevic regime, even if the government itself is not uniform and some like vice-president Seselj might politically be fascist. A swing to the right could well be the result of NATO's attacks, but the ludicrousness of the 'fascist' analogy is shown by the CIA's condemning of Serbia's intended court martial of captured US soldiers as "a Stalinist show-trial". Serbia both fought the Nazis and to some extent resisted Stalinism, but what better for NATO to make out Milosevic as a Hitler and a Stalin all rolled into one. Not only that but genocide - in Hitler's case a systematic attempt to eradicate the Jews from the face of the earth - was part of the Nazi's explicit plan. To use this word for any and all mass deaths in war, even the atrocities of Bosnia or Rwanda, irrespective of the motivation of the perpetrators, is to belittle the holocaust and its death camps. Equating Serbs with pre-W.W.II Germans is an attempt to make ordinary people into legitimate targets for 'democratic' NATO. All of the terms fascist, genocide or even ethnic cleaning (which is used interchangeably with genocide by the likes of Robin Cook) are just propaganda words being used to over-simplify the situation and characterise NATO's enemy as 'evil' so we

don't have to question why 'we' are in this war.

Chewing gum

On the other hand, is NATO being imperialist; another kind of nationalism? We are hearing this term used by the left and some anarchists but this is probably not very useful either. Imperialism implies a desire for state power in the region, when this situation is really more about imposition of economic dependency. In so much as the USA dominates NATO and the UN, in addition to a military show of force that can boast to be able to wage war in Iraq and Yugoslavia simultaneously ("We can walk and chew gum" in the words of a NATO spokesman), we are really seeing just another extension of capitalist globalisation, something which has come to supersede the imperialist and colonialist aspirations of individual Western states in the latter part of this century. Already the International Monetary Fund is able to hold Russia to ransom enough for it to be careful about how far it's government will go against NATO, and it seems likely that the IMF and World Bank will have a similar role to play in the Balkans when the military intervention has subsided. Other anarchists have already made the connection to the USA/EU trade wars (e.g. over bananas, presided over by the World Trade Organisation), and it seems clear that the US and Germany will soon be fighting with each other over the terms of IMF involvement when the war is over. On the other hand, the US must also be hoping that its dominance in NATO will help it put the EU in line with its economic policy.

Nationalists

What about the nationalist movements in Kosovo then? As usual, the left in Britain is divided over this one. Some in the Labour Party left are anti-NATO and want a UN solution that reestablishes Yugoslavia and do not want an independent Kosovo. Some like the Socialist Party do support independence, though like their position towards the Six Counties they insist this must be a self-determined "socialist Kosovo as part of a socialist confederation of Balkan states". Living Marxism are more

pro-Serbia whilst some of the smaller sects like the Alliance for Workers Liberty are pro-national liberation even as far as calling for arming of the KLA (just like the CIA mentioned above!). The Socialist Workers Party are much more firmly anti-NATO whilst stating that the "KLA has fallen into the trap of calling for Western intervention" and criticises their "attacks on Serb civilians in Kosovo alongside Serbian forces". However they fall short of completely opposing Albanian nationalism. An internationalist approach must oppose all sides, call for the desertion of all troops against the war, and for the revolutionary overthrow of the Milosevic regime.

Hypocrisy

If it is necessary to make comparisons with other conflicts, it is to show up the hypocrisy of NATO. Apart from its his-



tory in Ireland, both North and South, Britain has its other well known example of supporting the Indonesian government against East Timor. The US together with many of the other NATO members has a long history of supporting either government against oppressed minorities (e.g. Israel against Palestinians, Turkey against Kurds) or rebels against government particularly in the interests of anti-communism (e.g. Mojahedin in Afghanistan, UNITA in Angola). The US has no end of interventions in Central and South America, Asia and Africa, always for their own interests, often anti-Communist, often for stated "humanitarian" reasons. Also we don't see NATO picking a fight with China over Tibet or Russia in Chechnya, other superpowers with equally nasty policies. Many of these conflicts continue to this day. We can be under no illusion that the present war is any different, and that the refugees mean nothing to NATO unless their plight is to prop up their illusion of humanitarian intervention against Milosevic.

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"When the smoke from the bombs clears away, the social differences will be even bigger, the poverty even worse, the authorities even more harsh. And the matter of Kosovo WON'T be solved!", from an e-mail message by Mirko, human rights and peace activist, Pancevo, Zrenjanin (Vojvodina), FR Yugoslavia.

Just war?

We can point out that British aid organisations are raising just a drop in the ocean with their 'jumble sales' for Kosovo victims, when this could be paid for so many times over by the amount of military spending e.g. cruise missiles at a \$1m each. Also their stance doesn't necessarily entail opposing the bombings, and leaders of the Christian ideals underpinning so many charities are happy to call the NATO action a "just war".

Action not words

There's a lot we can say, but what can we do? We must have an anti-war position in this conflict, anti-bombing, anti-ground troops (whether NATO or UN). Getting drawn into accepting any sort of statist military solution is to fuel the nationalism and the conflict, which is killing people on sides. We must recognise the difficulty of our comrades in Yugoslavia, as it will become more and more difficult and dangerous for them to oppose their government's war and oppose mass mobilisation (a real possibility if NATO sends in ground troops). The danger is to fall into the trap of seeing "the Serbs" as one entity when there are a whole range of opposition forces, from our anarchist comrades, to 'ethnic minorities' in Serbia itself, to 'pro-democracy' Western-looking middle classes, many of who opposed Milosevic over Bosnia (e.g. in the Zajedno alliance which organised mass demonstrations) and who now feel betrayed by the NATO bombing. We can exchange news and solidarity greetings such as is already happening between anarchists using electronic mail, and circulate this both to show there are people in Serbia that oppose the government and to find out the extent of the bombing which we are not seeing here. Just as we are not told about the million plus people that are dying in Iraq because of sanctions, we will need to know the effect of NATO's destruction

of fuel and water supplies, since the government in Serbia will no doubt prioritise its military over the civilian population. We also need to tell them what they are not being told by their media about Kosovo and the border refugee camps, which is being tightly controlled (Serbian TV depicts the NATO logo as stealth bombers in the shape of a swastika!).

As one anarchist message from Belgrade said, "you are probably more informed about what is going on". We can also support comrades elsewhere in the region like the Zagreb Anarchist Movement in Croatia, who have relaunched their Zaginflatch newsletter and put it out on the internet in opposition of the bombing of Serbia. We must expose the hypocrisy of the British government's treatment of refugees (destined for open prisons if they come here), and its attitude to asylum-seekers in general. Perhaps a more difficult task is to be able to support anti-war activities in Kosovo itself against both Serbian and Kosovan Liberation Armies. If we cannot give direct help, we must show in Britain that we are against NATO, whilst at the same time not being confused with being pro-Serbian nationalists. This means organising and attending demonstrations with a clear "NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR" stance. Other protests in Europe have been much larger and have happened much sooner than those in Britain, as the US, Britain and France are the strongest supporters of the NATO war-mongering. Big public demonstrations are needed in the interests of internationalism and to try and reverse the propaganda war by our governments. This must happen quickly because it will become all the more difficult to counter a rising patriotism, if/when British troops start dying in any numbers.

For further anarchist news and views on the war, including Zaginflatch newsletter and articles on the US/EU trade war connections such as "NATO goes bananas in the Balkans", visit the A-Infos on-line Anarchist News Service (and archive) website: <http://www.ainfos.ca>

All the photos used in this article are taken from the following website: <http://www.sherwood.it/aviano/fotoaviano.htm>

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One year on since the Good Friday agreement -

The Peace of the Cemetery



AS 'PEACE PROCESSES' go, the one in progress in the North of Ireland has been a pretty violent one. From the sectarian slaughter before and after the death of Loyalist Volunteer Force boss Billy Wright in December 1997 to the murder of human rights lawyer Rosemary Nelson in March this year, via the Omagh bombing last August, it's been a vicious period since the main paramilitaries called their 'cease-fires'.

Little spoken of in the Brit media, the continuing harassment of Nationalists by the RUC/Army, the sectarian attacks upon isolated (and not so isolated) Catholic families by Loyalist gangs and the on-going siege of the residents of the Garvaghy Road points to a situation of constant, unspectacular but demoralising violence. This uninterrupted, day to day brutalisation is only broken by more 'news-worthy' acts of violence, such as a murder by the Red Hand Defenders or a grenade attack by the Orange Volunteers.

The on-going 'punishment beatings' by both the IRA and the Loyalists, used by

Unionist politicians as a stick with which to beat Sinn Fein and to delay things, are another insidious form of violence which both groups of 'defenders of the community' cannot function without. The working class, Protestant and Catholic are stuck between 'anti-social' elements and would-be police forces, both drawn from their own communities but both equally uncontrolled by them.

The overall situation is one of a violent, sectarian stagnation. One year has passed since the Good Friday Agreement. The March 10th deadline for the setting up of the Assembly Executive has come and gone. Sinn Fein accuses David Trimble and his Ulster Unionists of "obstructionism" and of using the Unionist Veto. In an assembly which not merely reflects but strengthens the sectarian divide, this is hardly surprising. The question is, how long can this go on? As ever, the 'electorate' watches the show drag on with an increasing sense of déjà vu.

If the whole 'Peace Process' is an example of bourgeois Realpolitik, of inter-imperialist politics (British and American) painted upon a local canvas then perhaps we should be looking at the 'alternatives' which may exist. If we look at the political critics of the Good Friday Agreement then they can be divided into the Unionist, the Republican and the Left.

What has happened to them since, and what sort of forces do they represent?

The Unionists

The anti-Agreement Unionists represent the 'No' alternative, otherwise known as the "No alternative at all" alternative. In the run-up to the vote, the 'No' alternative went under the label 'United Unionists'. This pact consisted of Ian Paisley's *Democratic Un-*

ionists and Robert McCartney's *UK Unionists*. As we have argued before (*Organise!* 47: *If You Want Peace, Prepare For...*), these dinosaur elements have become less important since the election of the Labour government in 1997. Their rejection of the Good Friday document and their refusal to give support to David Trimble hasn't actually harmed the 'peace process' at all. Rather, their intransigence has served to make the Ulster Unionists appear the party of peace, progress and moderation. As headbanging religious fundamentalists, their politics were and are echoed paramilitarily by the *Loyalist Volunteer Force*, who, alongside the Orange Order, were the other 'hard-line' voice opposing the Agreement. The DUP will continue to be a depository for good old fashioned anti-Catholic hatred but its political constituency is unable to grow. The Loyalist Volunteer Force remains on 'cease-fire', even attempting to gain some sort of credibility by being the first paramilitary group to decommission (a few rusty weapons, probably 'decommissioned' by the group themselves when they were still part of the UVF!). The *Red Hand Defenders* and the *Orange Volunteers*, the two Loyalist groups who have emerged since the LVF called its cease-fire are, effectively, the LVF and sympathetic elements in the *Ulster Freedom Fighters*. Like the DUP, the rump of Loyalist Paramilitarism will continue to function, not least because of the collusion of elements within the British state itself. Politically, this bloc stands for a return to the golden days of a submissive Catholic community in a Protestant state. Those days are long, long over.

The Republicans

The major elements in the Republican Movement who have opposed the Agreement have been *Republican Sinn Fein* and the *Irish Republican Socialist Party*.

Within mainstream republicanism. The *32-County Sovereignty Movement* had, until very recently, been in the 'No' camp. The attempts by the Irish state to criminalise this tendency following the Omagh bombing has led to their expressing support for the IRA cease-fire and the 'Peace Process' despite continued disagreements with the Sinn Fein leadership over the issue of sovereignty.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party rejected the Agreement but supported the Irish National Liberation Army's decision to join the 'cease-fire'. The IRSP appears to be going through a period of reassessment and re-orientation at the moment and recently re-launched its newspaper *The Starry Plough*. Since its formation in 1974 the IRSP have been through various political crisis and, sometimes violent, changes of leadership. The direction of the organisation seems to be towards an involvement in community-based struggles as a distinct Republican Socialist tendency within the broader Republican movement. Although the IRSP derides the Provos for having "accepted the capitalist system" and of having a different (presumably bourgeois) class analysis to themselves, they continue to call for "maximum Republican unity". What can this mean other than unity with the mainstream Republican movement i.e. Sinn Fein? The eventual destination for the IRSP is likely to be a re-affirmation of Leninism, although with the general crisis of the Left in Europe, who knows? Whatever path the IRSP take, their past as little more than an ancillary of the feud-ridden INLA, will weigh upon them like a nightmare. As before, their politics will not offer an independent working class alternative.

Part of the broader "Republican unity" the IRSP would like to see is Republican Sinn Fein (RSF). RSF, however, have little fondness for the IRSP and approaches by the latter to build a united "No" campaign during the Agreement referendum were rejected by the former. Despite their talk of a 'Federal Democratic Socialist Republic', RSF are a traditionalist Republican organisation to the right of the Provisionals but sorely lacking Adams and Co.'s political acumen or flexibility. Their politics reflect their origins as an abstentionist split from Sinn Fein in 1986 and for Republicans they constitute either an anachronism or the last defenders of true Irish Republicanism, depending upon the in-

dividual Republican's perspective on the Peace Progress. What is important about RSF is their relationship with the *Continuity IRA*, the only Republican armed group not on cease-fire. Both RSF and CIRA deny any official relationship, but without doubt there is a unity in terms of perspective. Individuals in or around RSF have been subject to serious harassment from police both sides of the border and also from supporters of the 'peace process'. Despite growth since the second IRA cease-fire, Republican Sinn Fein, without any alternative but a return to the armed struggle, are likely to remain marginalised.

The Left

Most of the left in the Six Counties called for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum. The *Workers Party* (WP), what's left of it, supported and continues to support the Agreement. Wracked by splits and violent feuding the Stalinoid/Unionist WP has had little input into the 'peace process' as it continues on its irreversible decline. The *Socialist Party* (the party formerly known as Militant) critically supported the Agreement and stood in the elections to the Assembly, arguing that a 'Yes' vote would allow a period in which class politics (or rather their own Trotskyist version of 'class politics') could develop.

The most notable Left opposition to the Agreement came from the *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP). The SWP called for a 'No' vote on the grounds that the Assembly would "institutionalise sectarianism" (*Socialist Worker*, May 1st 1998). The SWP in the North of Ireland is a reflection of its 'mother' party in Britain, albeit much smaller. Despite this smallness, the SWP intends to stand candidates in forthcoming elections in the North. Elections to...sectarian institutions!

The Anarchists

The anarchist movement in Ireland as it stands today consists of the *Workers Solidarity Movement*, based in Dublin and the anarcho-syndicalist *Organise!* group, the local section of the *International Workers Association* (IWA), based mainly in Belfast. Outside these groups are various individuals active on both sides of the border. The Work-

ers Solidarity Movement called for a boycott of the Referendum whilst *Organise!*-IWA was actually split on the issue. Some comrades argued in favour of a 'Yes' vote, in the hope that a space might be opened up for an anti-sectarian, working class politics, whilst others argued for abstention. A dissatisfaction with this lack of unity has led to the creation of a discussion group bringing together militants from both groups and none, to analyse the entire issue of the Peace Process and the anarchist response.

The conclusions to most articles on the Irish 'peace process' written by libertarian communists and anarchists usually amount to the obligatory call for the creation of independent working class organisation, a struggle against Orange and Green nationalism and workers unity. All of these are indeed necessary but their realisation is still far away. Working class resistance to the state, when not in the form of spontaneous outbursts of anger, mainly takes place through the Republican Movement (in the broadest sense). At the beginning of the modern stage of 'The Troubles' the Provisional IRA filled a politico-military vacuum, defending the working class Catholic community from sectarian attacks by the RUC, Loyalists and, eventually, the British Army. The recruiting sergeant for the Provos has been the reality of sectarianism and state violence. The hegemony of Republicanism over active resistance to state repression has rarely been seriously challenged. Within the context of an Imperialist sponsored 'peace process' which promises both a continuation of sectarian division and a *continuation of sectarian violence*, those who would create an alternative based upon an authentic revolutionary politics need to build a base in their communities and workplaces in order to make anarchism a alternative that can be taken seriously by our class.

Any readers interested in joining discussions on the way ahead for anarchists in Ireland should contact the co-ordinators at:
WSM, P.O.Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland.

Organise! Index

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Genetix can really spoil your day



HARDLY A DAY goes by without some new article or revelation in the press about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in food or Genetic Engineering (GE). The fight against this pollution of our food is growing and international. The whole issue brings into stark relief many of the less pleasant features of life in modern neo-liberal capitalist society. It shows how the power of international capital is becoming more powerful than that of many states. It shows how these companies use their power and influence to ride roughshod over the needs of working class and peasant people the world over. Furthermore the whole debate has become caught in up in a trade war launched by the USA aiming to remove from the scene such minor imperialist powers as Britain and France.

What they are doing?

Despite claims to be producing new variants of crops that will enhance productivity and crop yield, improve resistance to pests and save millions from starvation, the truth behind the biotech companies efforts the simple effort of all capital to produce more profit.

The most famous of the GMOs being used at the moment is soya produced by the American food giant Monsanto. Their soya has been 'engineered' to make it resistant to the insecticide Roundup - also produced by Monsanto. The idea is simple. Farmers who plant Monsanto's soya can spray the crops with no fear of them being damaged by the chemicals employed. Only bugs die. Monsanto then profit twice. Firstly they sell the seeds, then they sell the insecticide! Farmers are locked into a cycle of only buying from Monsanto.

Another well-known GMO is tomatoes. These have been altered by the incorporation of a fish gene. The effect is to keep them "fresh" longer. This was sold to consumers as a way of ensuring longer shelf life and hence reducing the chances of buying rotting food. In practice, agricultural businesses switched production of tomatoes away from high wage US farms to low wage South American areas. They were still able to pay to transport the tomatoes to the American market and still make extra profits.

A third and less well known example is the use of "Terminator" genes in seeds. This gene has the effect of stopping the plant producing fertile seeds. They claim that it will increase the yield of the crop and will provide more choices for the farmer by selecting high yielding seeds. The reality, of course, is to tie the farmers into dependency on Monsanto. Farmers are not able to save part of their seed crop to use to grow new crops the following year. This technology is being applied to cotton, particularly in India. It represents the final triumph of agribusinesses attempts to produce sterile crops.

The dangers

Some of the dangers of these crops are obvious:

- Pollen from GMOs can cross fertilise with non-GMO crops. The result is that all crops are GMO.
- Gene pollution cannot be 'recalled'. Once out there, it is there for good.
- GM crops can take more pesticides. This leads to greater pollution of the waterways.
- If all the bugs that feed on the crops are killed, what happens to the birds that feed on the bugs - or the other animals in the food chain?

Other dangers are less apparent:

- Genes cannot simply be inserted into plants. They need some means of getting inside the plants' cells. Often this is done by first attaching them to viruses. Scientists involved claim that the viruses are themselves modified to prevent dangers to health. There has already been evidence that some of the viruses used retain harmful effects. How will this effect the human immune system?
- Genes can spread from one species to another. This can lead to the growth of super-weeds.
- Genetic engineering is often linked with efforts to make plants and ani-

mals resistant to bacteria. The result can be the emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Resistance

Peasant farmers in India have recognised the dangers posed by the efforts of Monsanto. They have a long history of saving seed for use the following year and of giving seed to neighbours in need. As Monsanto have patented the seed and claim to hold copyright over it, they are now saying that the farmers are breaking the law if they try to retain some for future use. In Canada and the USA Monsanto have successfully prosecuted farmers. The reaction in India of the farmers has been to launch a Cre-mate Monsanto campaign, which has taken direct action and burned whole fields of GM cotton!

In Britain a campaign is well underway. Genetix Snowball have adopted the non-violent tactic of digging up some GMO crops. They have done so in the attempt to gain publicity and have courted arrest in their actions. So far they have been quite successful in getting their message across. They have also entered supermarkets and walked off with GMO food-stuffs, saying it was contaminated. Their actions in Manchester have caused embarrassment to Marks and Spencer who subsequently became one of the growing band of supermarkets to say they will source from non-GM suppliers. Other spectacular actions are planned. Other campaigners, often around local Earth First! Groups have gone in for the less public but equally effective tactic of simply trashing fields which contain GM crops.

The Government

Monsanto are now privately admitting that they are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the British public. They are relying heavily on their friends in the government. The British New Labour Government has close links with biotech companies. This caused serious embarrassment to Lord Sainsbury, but less obvious are the efforts the biotech companies put into lobbying. The majority of the public may be against genetic engineering but 70% of MPs are said to be in favour!

Despite all the opposition, the state is only talking of a voluntary moratorium for a couple of years. Even this has less to do with worrying about us and more to do with nationalism and the looming

trade war between Europe and the USA.

Banana Wars

In recent years, US foreign policy has aimed to displace British and French imperialism from Africa and replace it with US domination. This was the reality behind their support for the Tutsis in Rwanda and for the uprising in the then Zaire. These areas were within the French sphere of influence, now they are coming under US domination. Now they have turned their sights on the Caribbean. Here they aim to take the area out of British domination by the destruction of that region's main export, bananas. The destabilisation that will bring will provide the US with the excuse it needs to intervene financially or militarily, whichever is most convenient. Not only does this give the US the chance to get rid of the Brits; it also serves as a warning to the increasingly integrated European Union, which the US fears will become a real rival in years to come.

Hence the Banana Wars. The European response has been to increasingly adopt the line of a moratorium on the introduction of GM crops. This has a number of advantages for them:

- It is a stick to hit the US with, whilst at the same time being popular with populations already scared by BSE, E-Coli and Salmonella and who are understandably hostile to GM food.
- A moratorium allows them to pretend to do something but also to allow GM crops in at a later date when all the fuss has died down.
- It gives European biotech companies a chance to catch up in the development of new crops.

Against this background it becomes easy to see why the media, including an almost united press and the Tory Party are playing the anti-GM card whilst at the same time using it to whip up nationalist, anti-US feeling.

The danger is that popular opposition

will fall victim to this con and will accept the almost inevitable moratorium when it comes as a victory. This will allow GM food in at a later date.

What can we do?

It is important to keep the campaign going. We would suggest that readers get in contact with their local Earth First! Group or Genetix Snowball and get involved with what is already going on. There are plenty of opportunities for action and they don't have to be scary direct action if that is beyond a person's abilities. Campaigns need support in many forms. Even collecting petitions outside supermarkets can be an effective way of talking to people and serves to further embarrass the shops and local government.

Above all, we must not be conned into thinking that a temporary halt in the planting of GM crops in this country is going to change anything. The fight needs to be to get rid of all GM foods before it is too late. Workers in Britain could do well to follow the lead of the Indian peasant farmers!

However, GM foods are just another example of the way that capitalists contaminate the food of working class people. Writing in the 19th century, Karl Marx noted that workers' flour was frequently mixed with chalk by shopkeepers. At the end of the 20th century the bosses have just got more clever! Most of the GM contaminated food is the cheaper processed food that busy working class people buy.

The only way we will ever be able to ensure that our food is healthy enough to eat is to get rid of the profit based system that encourages production to make money for the few rather than to satisfy the needs of all of us. When we have created a libertarian communist society, it will be the responsibility of the human community to make decisions as to whether science should be allowed to tinker with the basic genetic make-up of food. No doubt those will be difficult decisions to make, but we can be sure that they will be made on the basis of what is in the interests of the planet as a whole not to make a fortune for private investors or corporate employees.



Whose land is it anyway?

Get Off My Land!

Part 2

THIS IS THE message the landowners of Britain have been giving working people throughout the centuries. And this message remains the same today. With the government backing down (what a surprise!) on its Right to Roam legislation the mass of the people remain not only excluded from the land unless the landowner deigns to grant access, but also excluded from any decision-making about what is *done* with this land. We need to question this myth of land 'ownership'. For, in fact, the whole land-owning system is based on theft. To understand this we need to go back to the times of the Norman Conquest.

Without romanticising the Saxon period (slavery was wide-spread and it was clearly a class system), peasants before the Norman conquest had a certain control over the land. Free, independent peasant owners called *ceorls* cultivated their own areas. They owed certain duties to the king, but there were no non-cultivating landowners. This situation started to deteriorate even before the Normans arrived. As a result of various military campaigns, lords were granted control over certain territories. The treatment and extent of the peasants' exploitation depended on the whim of the particular thegn (lord). Some peasants found themselves forced to sell land to the thegn and had to become wage labourers. However, there was still extensive common land which was available for grazing, fuel collecting and gathering.

The Norman Conquest fundamentally changed the Saxon system. The land was taken from the peasants and put firmly in the hands of a land-owning class whose sole aim was to manage the land for the benefit of themselves. William, who now claimed to own all the land, needed to reward the military. As a result he gave the barons and other knights the rights to tracts of land on the condition that they provide soldiers for wars. The *ceorls* lost their position as freeholders and became serfs. They

could only use the land if they paid for it by providing free labour. Worse than not owning the land, they themselves were now owned by the barons. The whole basis of land ownership in Britain is thus based on conquest, the consequences of which are still with us today. Some landowners such as the Grosvenor family (present Duke of Westminster) trace their ownership back to this time. Their ancestor, Hugh Le Gros Veneur, was given major land holdings by William.

Blood Sports

It is not just a grossly unequal system of land ownership that dates from the Norman Conquest but also the tradition of blood sports, so dear to the hearts of the present ruling class. In many respects, this obsession with hunting is one of the primary influences on the way the land has been managed and developed. William was a passionate hunter and set aside huge areas of land for this purpose. 'Royal Forests' covered almost a quarter of England by the mid-12th century. And these 'forests', which included much more than forests, were subject to Forest Law, designed with the sole purpose of protecting and breeding game which William and his cronies could then kill. Forest officials made sure that grazing animals were kept out and even barons couldn't plough up the land. Poaching, of course, was a serious offence, often resulting in the death of someone who dared interfere with the King's pleasure. The barons and knights, eager to ape the King, also took to hunting and set up areas that were called 'Chases'. The most highly controlled areas, 'Deer Parks', were fenced and maintained by serf labour. Many of these places still exist and are often the main areas that the public is denied access to e.g. the 3,000 acres of Hulne Park owned by the Duke of Northumberland.

This system of land management was



developed purely for the satisfaction of the blood sports obsession. Not only did the peasants not benefit from it, it was hardly a productive use of land for the country as a whole. And the problem is that very little has changed. Though much land has now been turned over to agriculture and forestry, there are still huge areas, for example much of Scotland, where hunting is the main use of the land. It is still accepted that the ruling class can do what they will with their land, regardless of the impact on the rest of the community or on the land itself. But as we have seen, this 'tradition' is based on conquest and usurpation.

Struggles

Peasants did not succumb passively to the exploitation of the landowners. (See accompanying article). As a result of their struggles, some reforms were made. But the past 900 years have been a history of continuing exploitation. Reforms would be made and then a new form of exploitation would emerge, causing further resistance. By the 14th century there was a sort of social contract. Common land and common rights had been reduced but still existed. Peas-

ants also had a right of passage over any land that was uncultivated, except deer parks and other hunting areas. Landowners had an obligation to see that the main tracks were maintained. The Forest laws were relaxed and Henry III started allowing the felling of the Royal timber, the killing of game and the cultivation of certain tracts of forest. Penalties were also reduced.

The development of agrarian capitalism in the 15th-17th centuries was the cause of some reforms but also created new forms of exploitation. Peasants could now sell food on the market rather than being tied to their lord, but with the decline of feudalism many were left in a position of insecurity. Landowners no longer had an obligation to the peasants. Between the 11th-17th centuries, the commercial motive predominated and this changed the nature of the land owning class to a certain extent. Henry VIII sold much of the confiscated church land to the emerging bourgeoisie and this process was accelerated under Cromwell. As capitalism became the dominant economic system, all landowners were forced to look for ways of increasing income from their land such as growing grain, raising livestock, forestry and land leasing.

Sheep

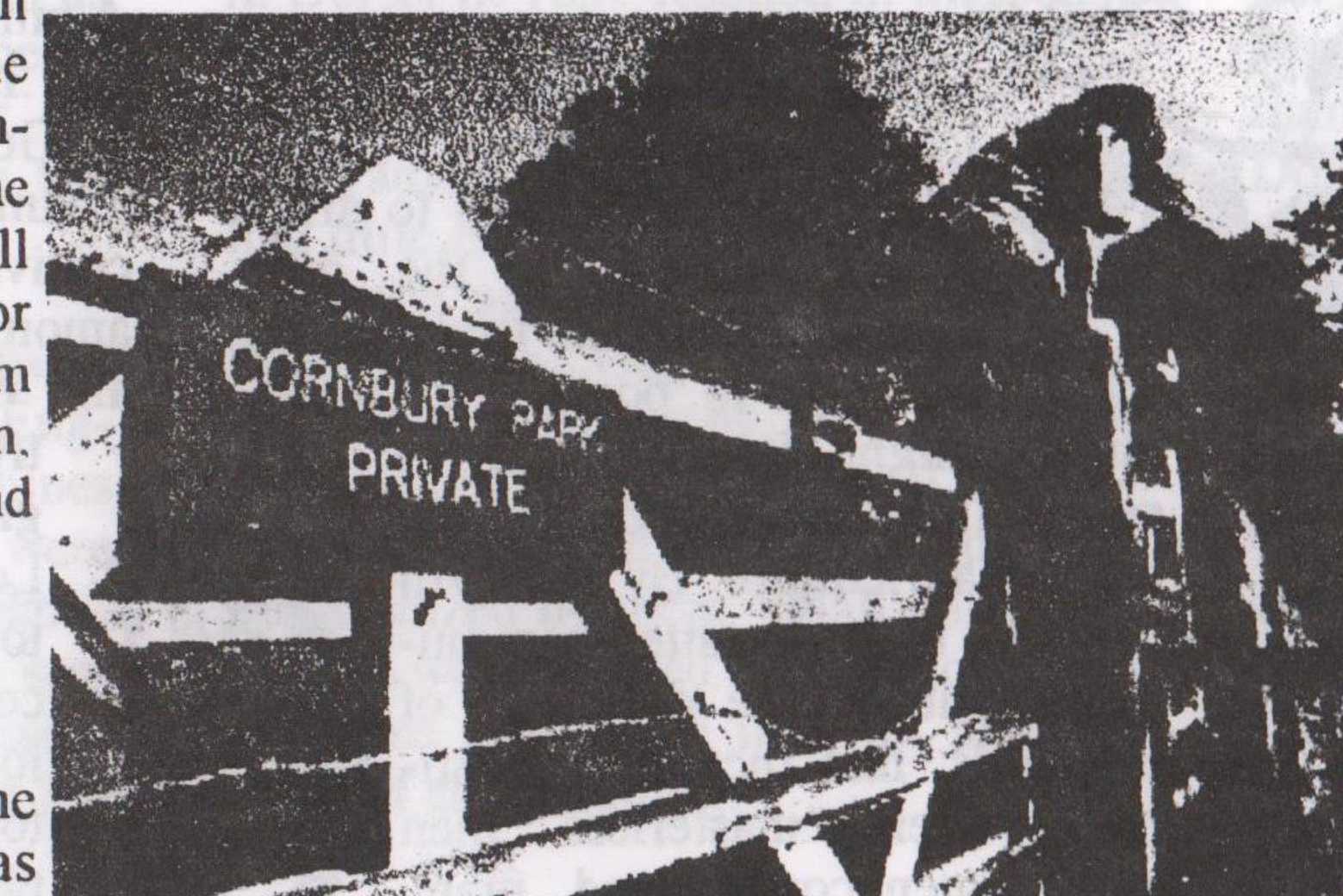
One of the main sources of income discovered by landowners was sheep, and this was to cause the erosion of the few rights the peasants did have, and would eventually contribute to the demise of the peasantry. The desire for sheep-grazing land led to an encroachment on common land, and an increased disregard for this peasant right. Common land was increasingly fenced off and used for sheep grazing. As they did not want to give up any of their hunting land, it was the common land they enclosed. The so-called English revolution, in fact, strengthened the position of the landowners. Half the members elected from the Midlands in Cromwell's Parliament had been fined for throwing people off common land or belonged to families who had. In 1646 the King no longer had ultimate control of the land and this was passed to the landowner, without giving any power to the peasants, causing further peasant revolts.

Capitalism, supposed to represent the overthrow of the feudal system by the

new capitalist class did not change but instead reinforced many features of the old system. The power and ideology of the land owning class fused with and influenced the development of capitalism. Accumulation of wealth and the protection of private property was now an even stronger ideology perpetuated by the state. Parliament was dominated by landowners. The hunting obsession continued with renewed vigour: the landowners joined by reinforcements from the bourgeoisie. Sir Robert Walpole was Prime minister for 21 years and oversaw many of the enclosures. He was a keen hunter and would open the letters from his gamekeeper in Norfolk before the state papers.

Poaching

For the peasants, the situation seemed to get even worse under early capitalism. Laws against poaching were



tightened and deer stealing was punished by hanging. It was even forbidden for smallholders to own hunting implements like snares in case they took game that strayed onto their land. The Black Act (named after the poachers who blackened their faces) passed in the early 18th century created 50 new offences which were punishable by death. Common rights were also attacked more vigorously than they had been under feudalism. Landowners wanted their privately 'agreed' enclosures to have the backing of law. During the 18th and 19th centuries 7 million acres of land was enclosed. The enclosed land was used for sheep, mining and cattle rearing. In addition, access to the countryside was curtailed. The old tracks were blocked by enclosures. Traditional recreation activities of the peasants such as fairs and football couldn't take place because there was no available land. This was of

course welcomed by the Calvinist capitalists who thought such activities detracted from a disciplined workforce. The end result was the end of the peasantry and their transformation into an urban working class or emigrant labour.

Corn Laws

In the 19th century, the urban middle class gained strength both economically and politically and there were moves toward the reduction of the influence of the landowners. The controversy over the Corn Laws symbolised this conflict. It was against industrial interests to have import restrictions on corn and there was a major campaign to repeal the Corn laws which had imposed these restrictions. This, of course, was opposed by the landowners. The eventual repeal of the Corn Laws was seen as a victory of the industrialists over the landowners. However, the power of the landowners

was never effectively destroyed. As we saw in the last issue of *Organise!* there was too close a connection between the industrialists and the landowners. The redistribution of land and the emergence of more small farmers did not alter the fundamental system or its ideology. In many respects, the new owners were even more committed to the old ideology, including the interest in blood sports. The industrialists often were landowners themselves but they didn't need to own land to adopt the culture of the land owning aristocracy. They rented shooting rights, with the London rich taking hunting boxes in the shires. According to Sutherland (an academic writer on land ownership), "By the 1930s, however, foxhunting was completely unrepresentative of the countryside".

The 20th century brought considerable pressure for reform. But despite the passing of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 1949, in terms of the mass of the people having any real access to the land itself or decisions about how the land is used, nothing has changed. Whether it is said by the Duke of Westminster or his ancestor the Norman bandit, the message is still the same: "Get Off My Land". It's about time we did something about it.

This is the second in the series on the Land which will continue in future issues of Organise!

The Struggle for the Land

Far from the bucolic picture of Arcadian bliss, of paternalistic big farmers and contented farm workers, the history of the countryside, and the struggle of classes in that countryside, is far, different.

When a poll tax (!) was introduced in 1381 to pay for the Hundred Years War with France, this acted as a spark to light the tinder of rural unrest. All taxes would be passed down to and be paid by those who toiled in the fields, and this was fully understood by them. 5,000 men armed themselves and attacked the King's tax collector in Brentwood, Essex. This inspired other uprisings throughout Essex and Kent.

Yeoman veterans of the war joined with the serfs. Wat Tyler, one of these ex-soldiers and an eloquent orator, was elected commander-in-chief in Kent. Capturing Canterbury, the movement liberated John Ball from prison. This wandering priest had been touring the country for 20 years preaching radical doctrines of levelling and the land to be shared in common. He was reported by the chronicler Walsingham to have preached: "Once the great ones had been cut off, men would all enjoy equal freedom, rank, and power, and share all things in common".

The peasants marched on London from both Kent and Essex. On the way they opened prisons and burnt records, some particularly hated lords and officials being killed. The original calls for the abolition of the old bonds, the right to commute services to rent, and all the other restrictions, began to escalate into an idea that the whole land owning class could be toppled. Unfortunately, through trickery and the lack of maturity of the movement, the uprising was crushed and its leading lights, including Tyler, Ball and Jack Straw, with 110 others were slaughtered. The promises of the King (to abolish serfdom, all feudal duties, the removal of all restrictions on freedom of

labour and trade and a general amnesty for the rebels) were revoked. The last of the rebels were hunted down in East Anglia.

Uprising

Though the uprising had failed, the discontent continued, with serfs doing their feudal duties reluctantly, forcing the landowners to change over to rent from the serfs for cultivating their strips, using this rent to hire "free" labour.

With the relaxation of the forest laws in the mid 1300s, the rural poor began to drive their cattle into the deer parks and to take timber from the forests, and to poach, by stealth and by night. People began to squat in the forests and clear areas for agriculture. By the 17th century, these squatter communities, outside the dominion of the lords, had increased drastically. There 'masterless' men and women congregated, many driven out of their houses on the landowners' estates.

Unrest continued to simmer in the countryside. During the Jack Cade revolt against Henry VI in 1450, levelling elements met in the woods outside Hastings led by a carpenter, John Clipsham, demanding that all goods and the land be held in common.

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries there were hundreds of revolts against enclosure. In May 1607, for example, there was a month of widespread and continuous rioting in Northamptonshire where enclosure had been carried out on a massive basis. The landowners as lord lieutenants of the counties raised their own armies and put down the rebellion and many insurgents were executed. Despite this, disturbances continued in neighbouring counties.

In general, actions against the enclosures were on a guerrilla level, wildcat and uncoordinated. Fences and hedges, symbolising enclosure were broken down by the rural labourers in many areas over the course of 200 years.

The Civil War meant that the Parliament of Cromwell was dominated by landowners and this increased the rate of enclosure and the war of the landowners against the rural poor and landless. At the same time, this period of ferment also threw up new radical ideas.

A small group of unemployed labourers and landless farm workers gathered at St. George's Hill near Walton-on-Thames in Surrey in 1649, and began to cultivate the common land. Notable among them were Gerrard Winstanley and William Everard, who had been active as a Leveller in the Army. This group, known as the Diggers or True Levellers, issued a call for the people to have access to the forests and common lands. Harassment from the local landlords forced them to move to another site, and continued attacks resulted in their settlement being destroyed. Other Digger settlements sprung up throughout the southeast and midland counties. Winstanley, the Diggers' chief theorist, argued against the whole idea of private property. He attacked the notion that the landowners had a right to the land and declared that they had stolen it from the mass of the population.

Poaching

The Diggers thought they could bring about a revolution and communism of the land through peaceful reasoning. The repression unleashed against them broke them up and by 1660 all radical publications were banned. In 1662 the Justices of the Peace were allowed powers to stop migration, effectively sabotaging the setting up of new Digger settlements.

The war of the landowners against the

rural poor continued into the next century. Equally, defiance of enclosure continued, in small ways with the gathering of firewood, and in large-scale poaching and attacks on the landowners' property.

In the 1720s gangs of men with their faces blacked up invaded deer parks in the Home Counties, in particular the Royal forests. The death penalty was brought in to deal with the 'Blacks' and 16 were hanged in the next 2 years. Two gamekeepers were shot dead by the Blacks. Many Blacks died in prison, and many others were transported and about 40 became outlaws.

The Duke of Newcastle's steward wrote in 1763 (in Sussex) that: "I have got a list of about 10 poor wretches chiefly women and children that have been pilfering the woods this cold weather and intend having them all before a magistrate at the first proper opportunity and if I can prevail upon the justices to act as they ought shall get them whipped". Four months later another "stealer" of wood had his house torn down by the steward!

In 1830 country labourers rose in revolt throughout southern and eastern England. The hated threshing machines were smashed, ricks and barns were burnt down, all under the cover of darkness. Many threatening letters were sent to landowners. This movement became known as Captain Swing because of the signature on many of the letters. The revolt centred around low pay, piecework and the new technology of the threshing machines, which threw many out of work. Large crowds gathered protesting against these wrongs. In the following repression, 19 were executed and 552 transported to Australia, many others receiving prison sentences.

Solidarity of the urban workers with the rural poor was often expressed- after all, urban workers were rural workers or their descendants who had been driven from the land. In London, Thomas

Spence, seen by some as an ancestor of anarchist communism, argued in the 1790s that "We must destroy not only personal and hereditary lordship, but the cause of them, which is Private Property in land". One of his disciples, Thomas Evans, at the end of the Wars wrote: "All the land, the waters, the mines, the houses, and all permanent feudal property, must be returned to the people".

The heavy repression after Captain Swing meant that never again was there to be violent uprising on a mass scale. This step back from insurrection resulted in a turn towards the creation of unions. Even these attempts were met with persecution. The attempt by farm workers to organise in Tolpuddle in Dorset in 1834 resulted in the transportation of six of them.

The radicalism of Spence and Evans had little effect on the rural poor. They had little aspiration to seize the land from the rich. They were set on gaining some concessions, and were not very successful in that. Small concessions were gained. Instead of the land being seized by them, small parcels of ground were allowed them- allotments. And this only came in 1906 after 50 years of campaigning. Joseph Arch.

In 1872 a new union was formed by agricultural workers. Under the leadership of Joseph Arch, a Warwickshire labourer, farm workers were organised all over England. Wage increases were gained in many areas.

The National Agricultural Labourers Union was short-lived. The years of bad harvest and agricultural decline reversed the gains of the union. The farmers set up a blacklist of those who were members. In 1877 the first shiploads of prairie wheat from North America put many of the labourers out of work. A disheartened Arch began to campaign for farm workers to emigrate to Australasia and the Americas, and in fact many did, further depopulating the countryside.



Anyone got the cheesewire?

In Scotland those Highlanders who did not emigrate because of the Clearances settled on coastal smallholdings (crofts). The landowners put the squeeze on the crofters. The crofts were not large enough to maintain a whole family, so they were forced to work for the landowners. But there was a widespread belief that the land belonged to all. In 1881 some Skye crofters put out a petition demanding that the landowner Lord MacDonald return the land of Ben Lee to them. This was immediately rejected and the crofters started a rent strike. When a sheriff tried to serve notices on the crofters, a crowd of 150 physically attacked him and burnt the notices. The Sheriff of Inverness-shire sent 50 police to arrest the crofters. They were surrounded by local people and stoned, but the police managed to arrest 5 men regarded as ringleaders. The Highland Land League which grew out of these events rapidly gained support, and the government was forced to make some concessions like a rent tribunal and security of tenure as long as the rent was paid. Riots continued, however, because no extra land was granted to the crofters.

Rebecca Riots

In Wales in the 19th century, there was widespread destruction of enclosure fences as well as bread and corn riots. The most important of these were the Rebecca riots. From 1839 till 1844 throughout Wales hundreds of actions took place. Many tollgates along the roads were smashed, salmon weirs were destroyed because the game laws stopped the poor taking fish from the rivers, haystacks were burnt and poorhouses attacked. 150 police and 1800 troops were

(Continued on page 14)



(Continued from page 13)
sent to quell this uprising.

New disturbances erupted in the 1880s in Wales caused by tenant farmers and labourers being charged high rents by the landowners. This time though, the Welsh Land League that resulted from this crisis was thoroughly constitutional and no direct action on a large scale took place.

From time to time, the old practice of smashing down enclosure fences re-emerged. In 1908 a landowner at West Preston Manor in Sussex decided that a lane running by his property was an inconvenience and had two gates put up at each end of the lane. The local villagers destroyed the gates. Again the landowner reerected them. This time the villagers turned out in force, accompanied by the village band and broke them down again. Local postcards of the event were produced!

During the 19th century, the idea that city dwellers should enjoy the countryside spread from the professional and artisan classes to the working classes. The open countryside and clean air were a solace to many used to crowded conditions and foul air. By the 1930s this had become a massive movement, with an estimated 15,000 people from Sheffield and 15,000 from Manchester visiting the Peak District on an average Sunday.

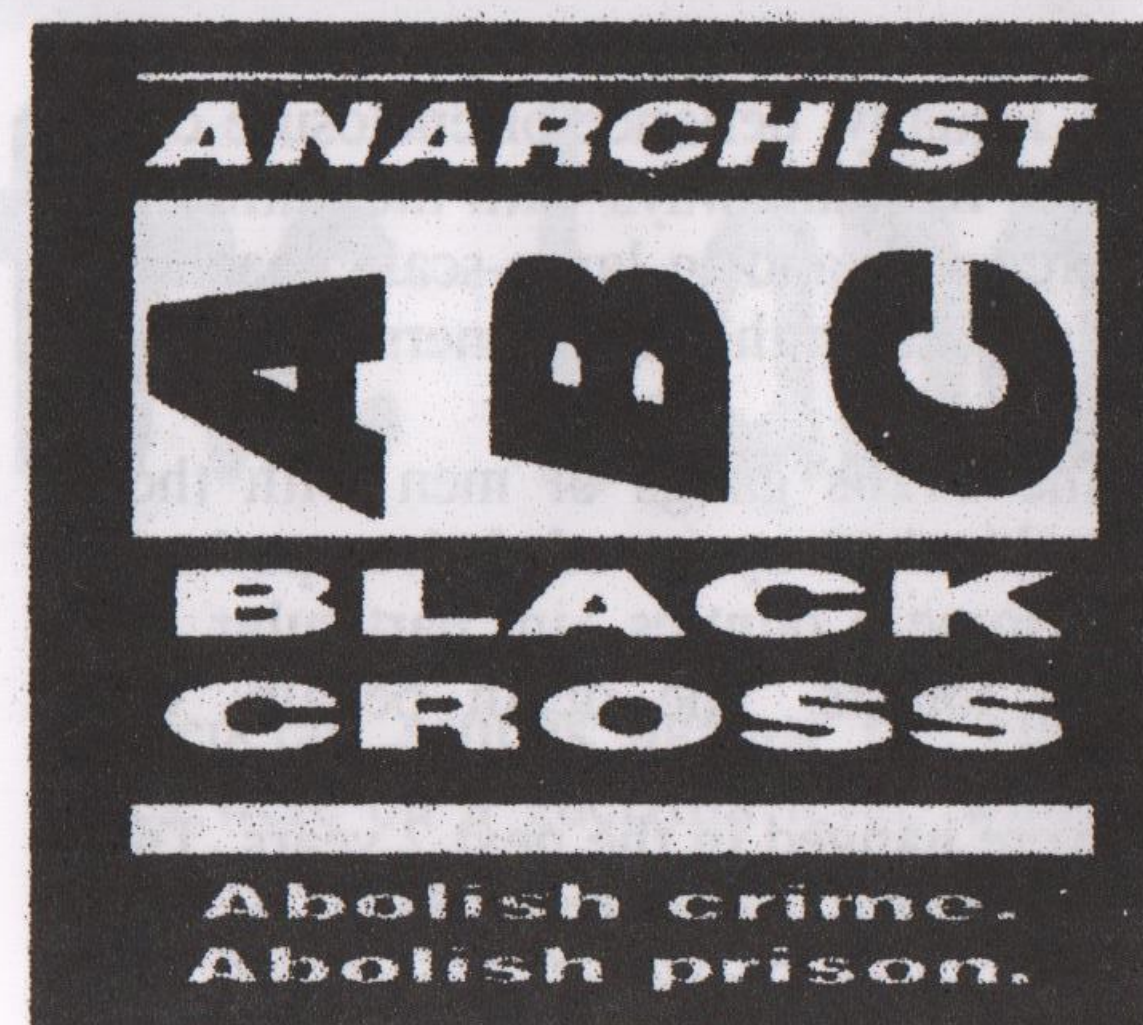
However, large tracts of land were cut off from the ramblers. In 1935, there were only 12 footpaths in the Peak District. The best walking land, including Kinder Scout and Bleaklow Ridge, were fenced off. Ramblers started to organise annual rallies in the Peak District. In 1932 a new organisation, the British Workers Sports Federation began to organise rambles for young people in the north. It began to organise mass trespasses. In 1932, 400 ramblers organised a mass trespass of Kinder Scout. 5 ramblers were imprisoned and in response thousands joined two more mass trespasses.

The history of the British countryside is a history of struggle. The mass trespasses, the militancy of farm labourers, the repression are all things that should be known and learnt from, as we once again make the land an important issue that can mobilise thousands.

Henry (Hank) Skinner

For every 79 people charged with murder the death penalty irrevocably claims, one of those executed is an innocent person. Is such a price too high? Would you volunteer yourself as that person? It happens with all too depressing frequency in America, particularly so in the death dispensing state of Texas. For once again an innocent person's life is under severe threat from political imposition of the death penalty. Henry (Hank) Skinner, on death row since 1993, has friends on the outside so utterly convinced of his innocence that they spent thousands of dollars of their own money in trying to get the case re-opened. There is growing international concern too as the pressure in Texas mounts to 'legally' snuff out Hank's existence. A great deal of new evidence has been unearthed which proves that he could not have done that which he is accused and falsely convicted of, including a sworn affidavit from a key prosecution witness who confesses to having made "inaccurate and untruthful" statements, both to the police and to the jury trial. Compelling forensic evidence is also available to add weight to Hank's testimony. But nothing of this may stand to be taken into account as Hank Skinner fights desperately for his life. Texas District Attorney John Mann, in order to see Hank killed quickly is saying publicly: "It may be 12 to 18 months before we get a final decree in the case. That's not unduly lengthy by today's standards...if the death penalty is going to work as a deterrent, it's going to have to be handed down and imposed in short order." American politicians thrive on this heartless rhetoric and believe it makes them look tough in the voters' eyes. It doesn't matter that the votes are bought with blood. For Hank, it's simply a race against time now to raise sufficient funds to demonstrate against his conviction.

Effective legal representations in complex US murder cases are measured in dollars and vast sums are needed in or-



der to hire legal and forensic expertise necessary to achieve this aim. Furthermore, according to recent Texas legislation, all available proof must be gathered and submitted now, before the first State habeas writ is filed, otherwise that evidence will be procedurally barred from consideration by any court in a subsequent writ and no amount of money will help matters- Hank Skinner will simply be executed. As a matter of utmost urgency, because Hank is forced to rely on public charity to help him establish the real facts of his case, many thousands of dollars are needed if he is to have even the slimmest chance of avoiding execution. Those who know Hank to be innocent have exhausted their own finances trying to save his life. There is nothing more financially they can do except to appeal to as wide a public as possible on behalf of an innocent man's life. If anyone can help in any way contact:

Pastor Albert Maggard PO Box 1451, Pampa, Tx 79066-1451 USA and Henry Skinner 999143, Ellis One Unit, Death Row, Huntsville TX 77343 USA.

For information via the Internet: www.cyberspace-inmates.com/skinner.htm and www.cdinet.demon.co.uk.

Email: Alandmary@netjava.com

OUT AGAIN!

The Anarchist Movement in Japan. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese Anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. The ACF have just reprinted this popular ACE pamphlet. £1.80 plus SAE from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Brandon, lies, slanders and prisoner support

A statement by the ACF

Mark Barnsley is an anarchist prisoner inside for defending himself against a gang of students (see issues 47 and 50 of Organise!). Letters from Brandon of the Justice for Mark Barnsley Leeds support group have accused Mark Rebel from Sheffield ACF of trying to sabotage the Mark Barnsley defence campaign, and Frankie Dee the ACF's prisoners liaison officer of conspiring with Mark Rebel in this and of lying about it. Brandon has spent a lot of time criticising, and indeed hurling abuse, at anarchists. He vented his spleen on Chumbawamba, then ex-Class War people grouped around Smash Hits, amongst others. Now he is using his support of Mark Barnsley as a way of attacking the Anarchist Black Cross and the ACF as apparently we don't match up to his high standards. We are writing this statement in support of the ACF's national and international prisoner support work and the work done by our Prisoner Liaison Officer, and in protest at Brandon's condemnation and criticism of the ACF. In doing so we make a number of points, though we speak only for ourselves, as anarchist communists.

Firstly, the ACF as an organisation does not offer unconditional support to all prisoners. ACF members spend a lot of time on prisoners support but we are not primarily a prisoner support organisation. While we may be working for the day when all prison doors are thrown open, this is a far cry from working to free all prisoners now, no matter what their crime and the circumstances that made them prisoners. This means that as an organisation, we consider all requests for support, including Mark Barnsley's on merit and according to the resources we have available. We do not make judgement on whether a prisoner is 'guilty' or 'not guilty' as capital and the state decide what is a crime. If we do not choose to support any particular prisoner, it does not mean that we consider him or her 'guilty', or not worth our support, nor does it make us 'class traitors', 'middle class wankers' or 'dickheads'. We support Mark Barnsley and hope he will be released soon.

Secondly, as a non-hierarchical federation of anarchist communists we work together in solidarity but we cannot order what our members do like a Leninist party would. So, if on the one hand an individual member wants to give unconditional support to a prisoner while another gives other prisoners higher priority or refuses to support a particular prisoner that is up to them.

You might find this contradictory but we are not a monolithic organisation compelling members to toe a party line.

Rather we are a group of people sharing certain basic principle of thought and action in solidarity, which we call, proudly, anarchist communism.

Thirdly, nothing about our principles compels us to work in solidarity with people who oppose and constantly criticise our views or ways of working, though we may be willing to debate areas of disagreement. Nor are we, as anarchist communists, compelled to support every cause embraced by others in the movement. As free individuals we make those judgements for ourselves and speak only for ourselves when we do so, allowing others to take different positions and act in different ways. This is as much a principle we apply to prisoner support work as to all other aspects of the class struggle.

On that basis a member of the ACF is free to state that they are not supporting Mark Barnsley's fight for freedom (if any members have said such a thing) and neither you nor we can compel them to say why. Freedom not to speak is as much a basic tenet of the free society as intimidation and coercion to tell all is of the police state. One of our members has been accused of hindering support for Mark Barnsley but not how or in what way. There have been many accusations but few facts. Another ACF member has been accused of colluding in this, of knowing things he could not know and does not know without saying what these things are. This is the language of the show trial: invent a crime and then get



the defendant to explain how they came to be guilty.

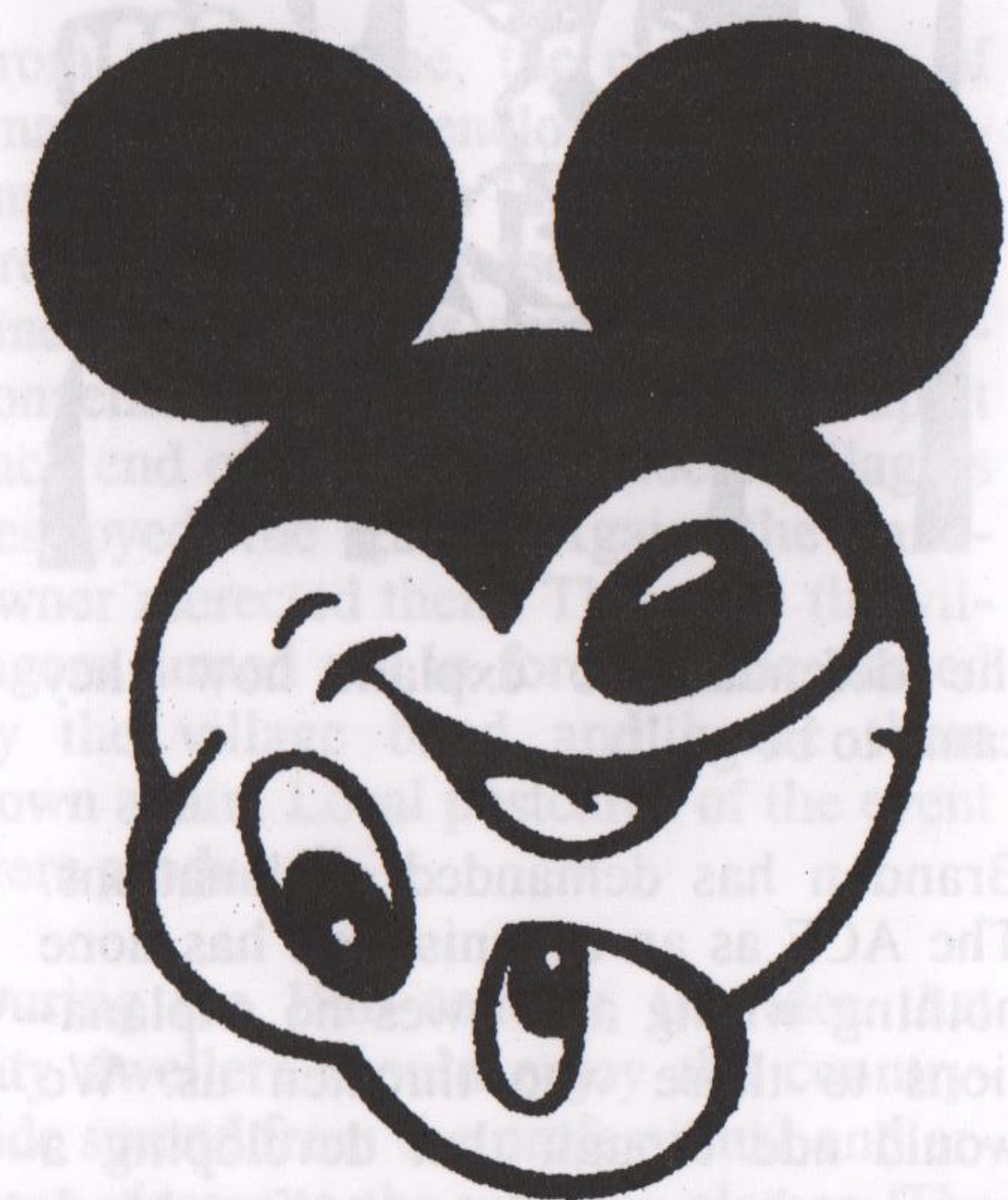
Brandon has demanded explanations. The ACF as an organisation has done nothing wrong and owes no explanations to those who threaten us. We would add though that developing a broader base of support for Mark Barnsley is more likely to be achieved by propaganda and campaigning than by digging dirt or demands that we fall into Brandon's party line. Our article in Organise! 47 stated our position. We believe Mark Barnsley to be a victim of an injustice. We commended his courage and solidarity with the Hungry For Justice campaign. We encourage people to help Mark by contacting a support group. We may do more. But if we do it will be because Mark deserves our support and not because his so-called supporters threaten us with broken legs or a 'weeding out'.

In the class struggle truth is often the first victim but it is always the innocent who suffer. We have not enjoyed spending our precious time responding to malicious slanders when our time could have been spent more constructively (for example discussing the Balkans war or the Mumia Must Live! campaign). The record of the ACF on prisoner support speaks for itself and that is our final word.

This statement was written by the National Secretary of the Anarchist Communist Federation, based on a letter written by Merseyside ACF and as instructed by the National Delegate Meeting of 10.4.99

DISNEYFICATION

Nostalgia ain't what is used to be



DISNEY IS ONE of the world's biggest and most influential corporations. In this article we focus on the movies and theme parks, which they specialise in, and look at the effect of Disneyfication - the process of turning the real, physical world into a sanitised, safe, 'entertaining', predictable but profitable 'hyper-real' replica.

The introductory plaque at the entrance to Disneyland, written by Walt Disney himself, reads 'Here age relives fond memories of the past...youth may savour the challenge and promise of the future'.

Nostalgia is fundamental in understanding the appeal of Disney products for many people. It was an explicit part of Disney's original vision of Disneyland as 'an extremely sentimental and nostalgic place'; later he declared that it would be a place where the older generation would reminisce about the nostalgia of earlier years. It is, however, nostalgia for a mythical past.

'The whole idea is escape from reality into a place where you can simply have fun. Life is full of problems, but it is our job to stop harsh reality intruding.... Euro-Disney has a turn of the century feel...research shows that it is an era that most nationalities feel most com-

fortable with...we're trying to design what people think they remember about what existed' (Fred Beckenstein, senior vice-president of Euro-Disneyland Imagineering).

Nostalgia is a key element also in the tendency to disregard conflict - there is no politics, tragedy or poverty. Nostalgia is deployed to create a feeling of childhood innocence and naiveté, which legitimises ignoring the historical (and current) realities for many Americans - including children- those of class conflict, exploitation, racism, poverty and abuse. It is a white, conventional, middle class view of childhood that disempowers and exploits children. Visitors participate in the park as passive spectators, reduced to the 'ideal' child-like condition of being acted upon rather than acting. The sense of a return to childhood is the basic appeal of many Disney products, the essence of this nostalgia. A deep nostalgia for one's personal past is engendered because it is hard, even for children, to fully enter the pretence - 'I wish I were still a baby! I wish I were younger!' was the response of a six year old girl to Disneyland. It is probable however, that even if her wish were granted, that she would still not have experienced it as totally real. This is a created longing for a past that never existed.

For adults there is probably also often an additional layer of nostalgia in the parks, the longing for a return to the nation's (mythical) childhood innocence. In spite of the fact that artefacts are frequently dislocated from their historical contexts, there is a sense of historical progression from an exciting and misty past to an even more exciting, but still misty, future. There is an ambiguous sense of the present as deficient in the Disney parks; the essentially optimistic pictures of the past and future act to reconcile people to the barely outlined present. This sense of deficiency is a fundamental part of the consumerist impulse: it can only be

addressed (within capitalism) by buying a product or service, though satisfaction is only temporary and fleeting.

The deletion by the Imagineers of the negative features of reality is an admission that something is not right with the status quo. Many park visitors view them as places of safety in a world of danger; they may also fear the future. The combination of these two feelings results in a celebration of the certainties of the past. This nostalgia allows the present to be cast in a more favourable light, and the future, since it is represented in the Disney parks by unremarkable features that people have some familiarity with, so that they can feel nostalgia forwards too! Nostalgia here is also about people accepting their present position; the way in which past, present and future are dissolved into one another helps to render the present more agreeable. The growth of deliberate, synthetic nostalgia is closely linked with consumption; capitalism, which must constantly change and expand or die, destroys the past at an ever faster rate, then strives to sell back a version of it. Disney's fabricated nostalgia such as Main Street (which was not a clean, commercially prosperous strip) is also a mask for the commercial realities behind it.

History?

The past is often displayed as zany/humorous. Household gadgets of previous times are made to look unfeasibly quaint and inefficient; in the *Carousel of Progress* Mum marvels that her new washing machine takes only five hours to do a wash. Bicycles are shown to be inefficient because their riders are vulnerable to attacks from dogs or falling off into mud, the first traffic jam is depicted by a horse upending a cart. Thus the problems of the past were either insignificant, or can easily be overcome by current knowledge and expertise. Another strategy is to leave out all elements of history (and the present) that would detract from the intended upbeat message/white middle class worldview. So,

no mention of depressions, strikes, labour wars, factory or mine workers, mass protests: none of the squalour in which immigrants lived, lynchings, ghettos and apartheid for the black population, the treatment of Native American Indians: nothing of crime, wars, acid rain, the arms race. Tokyo Disneyland omits Japan's wars with China and Russia, Nanking, Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The problems caused by corporations are mostly ignored or glossed over: ecological horrors, dehumanising work, weapons production, 'third world' exploitation. Another 'experience' in Disney World, EPCOT's (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) *Future World* is more realistic, acknowledging that there are problems. The horse overturning the cart locates traffic jams safely and humorously (sic) in the past however; the film *Symbiosis* shows dust bowls, pollution, and despoiling of forests, but then veers off into fantasy to show corporate solutions to these mistakes as fish return to cleaner rivers etc. Difficulties are turned into opportunities. Jo Consumer can relax in the knowledge that the Corporations have the present and future safely in hand.

Family Favourites

For Disney, 'the important thing... is the family...that's been the backbone of our whole business, catering to families'. The family was (and is) an important theme of many of the studios most important films such as *Bambi* and *Snow White*. The characters in the various rides in Sleeping Beauty Castle (in Disneyland) are subject to frightening adventures when they are separated from their traditional family situations. When they are punished it is for naughtiness rather than sin. Happy endings are achieved by the fantasy figures with their safe return to their families (Alice, Pinocchio, or Wendy), or when family life is about to be romantically established (Snow White or Sleeping Beauty with their Princes). Everything is OK within the protective embrace of the patriarchal family freed from enemies within such as stepmothers (the evil older woman) or outside like Fire-Eater the Showman.

Disneyland was founded on the premise of an amusement park for adults and children i.e. families. Disney attractions are full of happy couples and families: in

EPCOT's *Horizons* ride guests are taken on a ride looking at how the future was conceived in the past, then transported to the future in the form of Future Port, meeting a family and their home. The future is seen through the experiences of a gradually ageing father and mother who have children, who in turn have children. In the *Carousel of Progress* the family is the focus for seeing changes in material circumstances over time. While waiting for the S.F. rock fantasy, *Captain EO*, the crowd see a sickly series of Kodak sponsored photos showing the cycle of the couple, babies, growing up, courtship, marriage, and back to babies. The conventional nuclear family is secure and will survive; in many attractions adults only appear as parents.

What of 'unconventional' families such as single parent or gay, and divorce, separation and death which are also part of many childrens' experiences? The crucial point here however, a continuous theme in park attractions, is that family is the context where consumption takes place: the family buys the electrical gadgets in *Horizons* and *Carousel of Progress*, and the cameras and film outside *Captain EO*.

The association of the family unit with consumption provides a powerful image which connects the purchase of the sponsors products with the family, the context in which most people visit Disney parks. It is also the context in which products at the theme park will be consumed in the merchandise shops, restaurants etc., reinforcing the consumerist goals of the parks. It is debatable whether the parks are for children; the ratio of adults to children is 4:1.

Adverts for Disneyland are often aimed at adults, arguably the construction of parks so that the "outside world" of work and humdrum existence is invisible, is more likely to appeal to adults. They are the ones who pay, and the parks' nostalgia is far more likely to appeal to them. Disney books and films similarly use symbols from the adult world, such as heroes looking like Cary Grant, and heroines like Hollywood starlets. The appeal of the parks to adults has been crucial to their success. In the middle of despair at the losses of Euro Disney in 1994 (nearly £500 million in the year to September 1993), the company tar-

geted the older generation of over-55s, after finding that the park had a significant appeal to them (nostalgia). Adults enjoy the memory of discovering the new, such as Peter Pan, Swiss Family Robinson, Cinderella etc., and the nostalgic recollections of (mythical) place such as Maine Street. EPCOT is cloaked in emphases about corporations and the future: in World Showcase children are almost totally displaced, as most of the attractions are models of buildings (Eiffel Tower, St Mark's Square) and landscapes. Similarly the British pub, German Beer Hall and waitress service restaurants, the demystification of the Animation Tour and nostalgia of the Great Movie Ride are adult oriented. Engaged parents are more likely to revisit, and to consume - merchandise, drinks, and food.

One of the main appeals of the parks is that they are safe havens in a world of fear and threat (real and imagined). They are successfully targeted at a white, middle class audience through close association with bourgeois values and interests through cleanliness, safety, concern for the customer and the relatively high entrance fee.

Reel Nature

As the world becomes increasingly urbanised, many people's main or only experience and understanding of the rest of nature is via films, television and packaged tourism. The Disney corporation has been - and remains - one of the main mediators.

For Disney the main value of the natural world is as a source of exploitation for profit. In the early days this took the form of praising the virtues of logging, mining and urban development, now it is the right to define nature that Disney (& other corporate capital) covets. In the earliest Disney productions nature appeared as deadly threat, or in the anthropomorphic form of humanoid animals. *Bambi* (1942) saw the beginning of the current form of portrayal, the animals no longer lived human lives, but had nevertheless transformed into people; the killing of Bambi's mother by the Hunter becomes murder. Bambi was the forerunner of Disney's later wildlife films, particularly the pseudo-documentaries such as *True Life Adventures*. These used captive animals which were coached to follow human scripts.

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These distortions can be seen as part of a North American artistic tradition. Writers such as Ernest Seton Thompson had a huge readership for their exciting, detailed fictions about the lives of wild animals. By 1910 they were exposed and discredited as the 'nature fakers'; naturalist John Burroughs suggested that Seton's masterwork should have been called 'Wild Animals I (Alone) Have Known'. Disney admitted the ruse from the start saying the intention was entertainment rather than education; but was still blasted by critics. Animals were labelled 'courageous', 'jolly', 'lonely', 'treacherous' etc. Animal mothers were praised or condemned using the ideal WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) human family as a yardstick. The film *Bear Country* showed the never-in-nature feature of a bear family consisting of 'den-wife' mum, and breadwinning hunter dad: in fact, fathers quite often eat the cubs if mothers aren't careful - an inconvenient fact that does not fit Disneyfication.

In *White Wilderness* (1958) the filmmakers put a handful of lemmings on top of a large snow-covered turntable, and filmed their movements from different angles; later they were herded over a precipice above a river. In the film the lemmings actions were depicted as a suicidal migration to the sea (in landlocked Alberta). Consequently, although this behaviour is unknown in nature, many people now 'know' that lemmings commit mass hari kiri, and their name has become synonymous with thoughtless mass self-destruction.

In the 1960s, work moved from 'mockumentary' to Seton-style animal story. The formula was the adoption of a young male animal by a soft-hearted human; the animal grows up in the household until the destruction caused by its wild energy and instincts forces its release. The now adult animal finds a wife, cue credits. Resource extraction is depicted as part of nature, though wild animals need to be managed and kept out of the way in sanctuaries so as not to

interfere. Another film type (e.g. *The Horse In The Gray Flannel Suit*) depicted very anthropomorphised animals; in the 'Incredible Journey' three marooned pets made their way home across the 'threatening' wilderness. Millions saw these films, through cinemas, television serialisation, and in school, making their messages very influential.

The 'wilderness' parts of the Disney theme parks reinforce these messages for example *Jungle Cruise* and *Mine Train Through Nature's Wonderland*. Disney World is a huge park in the Everglades of Florida, basically a major city in a fragile ecosystem. It has caused great damage for example 'Wilderness Lodge' a pseudo National Park Lodge without the dirt and insects, and with 725 rooms and 4 restaurants. In the newly opened 500 acre Animal Kingdom in Orlando, everything is way over the top, which must be why David 'corporations are alright' Bellamy endorses it. The centrepiece is a massive synthetic baobab Tree of Life, 14 stories high, made from steel and painted rockwork. The 8000 branches sway in the wind generated by giant expansion units; the 103,000 leaves have all been sewn on by hand. The roots house a zoo, the tree a tiny 430 seat 3D cinema. There is a torrent of detail - even the details have details, and the incidentals have incidentals pasted on. The 'authenticity' is based on miracles of effort and expense: the landscape artist travelled through 37 states and 28 countries to find the right greenery, collecting over 600 species of tree, 350 different grasses and 1800 shrubs, vines, mosses, epiphytes and perennials. The flat, featureless sea level landscape was supplied with mountains, gullies, savannah and jungle with the import of a million cubic yards of rock, and the shovelling of 4.4 million cubic yards of earth; 1000 animals were imported. Predators such as the lions appear to be able to prey on giraffes and antelope, they are in fact separated by an invisible moat (and returned to pens at night).

The Washington Connection

The nature attractions of the theme parks borrow the films' pacing as well as their themes. The endless hours of silence, slow changes in sky and light,

heavy progress up gradients of true wilderness experience are banished as boring. Seasons cycle before you finish your popcorn. The consequence of this 'industrial nature' (a form of hyper-reality that is more 'realistic' than what it represents) is that when people encounter a natural unenhanced environment, it seems flaccid and lifeless. The resident wildlife is uninteresting (and won't appear to order) and devoid of musical accompaniment. In 1995, Disney reached an agreement with most of the US federal land management agencies to supply interpretative services for visitors to public lands. It has since provided tour guide training to federal land managers. As part of the corporate sponsored American Recreation Coalition Disney is pressuring Washington to actively promote commercial recreation on public lands. The majority of park visitors favour industrially-oriented tourism, so this could foreshadow an avalanche of heli-skiing sightseers, snowmobilers, powerboaters and camper vans heading for the newest Disney Wilderness Lodge and Visitor Centre, with the accompanying despoliation and destruction.

All Power to the Imagination

Disney's influence derives from its association with playfulness based on animation, films, parks as films, and its promise of making childhood dreams come true - for both children and adults.

This playfulness consists of predictable, controlled experiences - the negation of play which is unpredictable, spontaneous and controlled by the participants. The corporation's misty nostalgia serves to disguise consumption, obscure the inadequacies of the present and bridge the gap into a higher future care of technological progress managed by General Electric, General Motors, Coca Cola and their corporate mates.

The myths of childhood, family and progress are a powerful drug. We need to wake up to the smell coming from these maggot-eaten corpses and collectively seize and create the present and future.



The East End Years: A Stepney Childhood. Fermin Rocker. Freedom Press. £7.95 192 pages

RUDOLF ROCKER WAS one of the foremost anarchists of the early Twentieth Century. His work amongst East London Jewish workers in his capacity as editor of the Yiddish language radical periodical ARBETER FRAINT (Workers' Friend) has become almost legendary, whilst his international reputation as a propagandist was, at the time, probably second to none. Unfortunately, little of what he wrote has been translated into English, the only exceptions to this being the magisterial Nationalism and Culture and his seminal and widely read Anarcho-Syndicalism. London Years, a drastically abridged and, in Rocker's eyes, badly translated edition of his own several thousand page autobiography is unfortunately no longer available. Bearing this in mind, Freedom Press's recent publication of the East End Years is all the more welcome. An autobiographical account of life in the Rocker household by Rocker's son, Fermin, the book opens with the author's first memories of life in Stepney at the turn of the century, and ends with his eventual reunification with his father after years of imprisonment for anti-war agitation.

Family Life

The book itself is written in a clear, simple and attractive way, and is illustrated throughout with a series of Fermin's own line drawings. Other than the closeness of the Rocker family, several themes quickly emerge, the most obvious of which being the strength of the predominantly Jewish radical community at that time, and the importance that they

Books

in turn placed upon respect for culture and the development of strong international links. The sheer passion and intensity with which activists conducted their day-to-day business also shines through, the anarchist message having an optimism and vibrancy which has since been partially lost. Similarly, although Fermin paints a warts and all picture of the Anarchist movement and is in fact quite open about sectarian divisions, unity against the common enemy seems to have been the consensus with well developed support networks for those falling on hard times being the norm rather than the exception.

What makes Fermin's account unusually readable however, is his ability to place both politics and the life of his family within the context of East End society at that time, a context which, in turn, gives the narrative much more

body and depth than is typically seen in political writings. We learn as much, for example, about colourful local characters on the streets and about Fermin's friends in the tenements as we do about Anarchist ideology, so much so that when the "outside" world enters in to beat strikers and imprison activists, its cold, profit-driven brutality is felt all the more.

Towards the end of his life, Rudolf Rocker was to lose much of his earlier militancy, his support for the Allied cause in World War II, and his grudging acceptance of the "need" for social democratic and reformist organisations in the absence of more revolutionary currents being particularly indicative of this. Nonetheless, Rocker has no doubt earned his place in the Anarchist hall of fame, and Fermin's heartfelt account serves as a fitting testimony to that part of his life anarchists would wish to remember him by. A readable and moving account, it can't be beaten.

No Gods, No Masters. Edited by Daniel Guerin. AK Press Vol. 1 £11.95 294 pages; Vol. 2 £11.95 276 pages.

THE LATE DANIEL Guerin, librarian communist veteran active in several French organisations, intellectual and gay activist, put this anthology of writings together in French in 1965. A revised edition appeared in 1980, of which this is an English translation. We should be grateful for this collection which assembles many important texts, some familiar to British Anarchists, some, and very important ones at that, never before translated into English.

And yet...and yet, the collection assembled by Guerin points to a certain amount of confusion in his own thought. It is rather surprising to find the begin-

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The arrest of Rudolf Rocker

(Continued from page 19)

ning sections of Volume 1 devoted to the grandfather of individualism, Max Stirner. Guérin regularly affirmed the class nature of anarchism. At this point in time when the book was assembled, Guérin was under the influence of the oppositional Marxism that had influenced his early life and which he never entirely shook off and the anarchism of synthesis (which attempted to reconcile individualism, anarchosyndicalism and anarchist communism in the same organisation) that he had come across when he joined the Federation Anarchiste in the 60s.

In his foreword to the last book he wrote *A La Recherche d'un communisme libertaire* he acknowledged his mistake and noted having distanced himself from classical anarchism. Some class struggle anarchists still persist with the idea of a common heritage encompassing both Stirner, Emile Armand, Zo D'Axa alongside Bakunin, Kropotkin, Makhno and Durruti. But the individualist current entered into the anarchist movement at a time of defeat and weakness, and was indeed a sign of that defeat and weakness. Ever since, throughout the world, it has continued to weaken anarchism, sabotaging organisation, serious agitation amongst the mass of the people, clear analyses and development of anarchist programmes. For a self-avowed libertarian communist and devotee of class struggle anarchism to have started off such an important collection is a sign of chronic confusion!

Proudhon

The same with the next section on the French activist and thinker Proudhon. For too long Proudhon has been seen as the real founder of the anarchist movement. It is true that he used the expression anarchist on a number of occasions. But he is equally one of the pioneers of socialism in general. Marx owes a lot to him, even though the German philosopher was to turn on him as time went by. Proudhon has many reactionary ideas, including praising the patriarchal family and a strong contempt for women. Many anarchists were to be deeply embarrassed by these ideas - for example Elisee Reclus. Proudhon believed in a peaceful evolution to a society of mutualism, which retained many of the characteristics of the market under capitalism. In no way was he a collectivist or com-

munist. Whist he developed ideas around federalism, which did have an influence on the anarchist movement, his ideas on abstention from elections, which also profoundly influenced the anarchist movement, were contradictory and far from being a constant (Proudhon did use the electoralist tactics on some occasions)

It would have been far better if Guérin had started off with the foundation of international anarchism within the growth of the international workers movement (the First International) and then made some references to Proudhon, to whom far too much of Volume 1 is devoted.

These failings are in part made up by the inclusion of texts by Bakunin, Cesar de Paepe, Schwitzgubel and Guillaume and finally Kropotkin in Volume 1. In particular, the previously untranslated texts of De Paepe, Schwitzgubel and Guillaume are very interesting and are correctly grouped under the title Direct Action and Libertarian Construction. Guillaume's essay on Ideas on Social Organisation is indeed an anarchist programme, clearly revolutionary in its outlook. Indeed Guillaume is seen to be clearly breaking with his much admired friend Bakunin on the subject of anarchist collectivism and developing towards an anarchist communist position. This means that instead of work being the criterion of distribution, it would be need. From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. The idea of the federation of communes as the basis of the new society comes to the fore, although Guillaume is ambivalent about who will "own" the workplaces, those who work in them or the whole of society.

And Finally...

In Volume 2 we have a far better selection, from the great activist Malatesta, to various texts on anarchosyndicalism and the experiences of the Russian and Spanish Revolution. It is unfortunate that Guérin's past confuses his analyses. Guérin had a long association with the group around Marceau Pivert, organised in the left of the SFIO (forerunner of the French Socialist Party) A bit like the British Independent Labour Party, this group had a particular, and sometimes critical, relationship with the Trotskyists. So Guérin

talks about the "respect due to the memory of a great revolutionary such as Leon Trotsky" while in the same breath talking about the repression and slaughter he unleashed against the Makhnovists and anarchists in the Ukraine. Trotsky and Lenin get off a bit too lightly, in my opinion, for their involvement in the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. Also notable by their absence are any writings by the Platformist tendency of revolutionary anarchism or any mention of the Friends of Durruti, the important anarchist current which emerged during the Spanish revolution. No mention of the Platformists is particularly odd as Guérin was more than familiar with their contribution to French anarchist communist thought.

Also, some sloppy proof-reading is apparent throughout the two volumes, something noticeable with other AK publications. (Unlike with *Organise!*, of course... proof-reader) Nevertheless, an important and interesting work that, in general, enriches the body of anarchist writings available in English.

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage. London ACF are proud to announce the appearance of a new pamphlet in the Stormy Petrel series:

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

Coming next: *The Italian Factory Councils 1920-21*.

Letters

Dear Anarchist Communist Federation comrades,

I am Silvano Pelissero and I am enclosed in a house prison.

I write only French and Spanish. I can write to you in English because today I have a friend that helps me.

I received with pleasure your magazine, *Organise!*. I read your article, the Repression in Italy with interest. But I must bring to your attention a big mistake. On 6th March 1998 the police arrested 3 anarchist squatters: Silvano Pelissero, Eduardo Massari and Soledad Maria Rosas. Massimo Passamani was arrested, if I remember well, in the spring of 1996. He was arrested in a Paris street and he was accused of giving a false passport to the police. In Italy Massimo was accused of being a militant in the 'Revolutionary Organisation of Anarchist Insurrectionalists (ORAI). We anarchists know that the ORAI is an imaginary creation of Judge Antonio Marini. Comrade Massimo is actually at liberty, on parole.

I was arrested on the streets of Valusa. Soledad and Eduardo were arrested in the squat in Collegno city called "The House". Edo and Sole were held in the prison of Torino city. On 28th March 1998 Edo Massare committed suicide in Vallette Prison (Torino). Sole was released from prison and was put under house arrest in a village near Cuneo called Benevagienna. After

Edo's death I was transferred to a special prison in Novara city where there are other anarchist comrades and a lot of comrades of the Red Brigades.

I want to remind you that in Novara prison there is also the well known Swiss comrade, Marco Camenisch

In June 1998 I started a hunger strike in protest against the repression and against the manufactured 'VALSUSA-TAV-GREY WOLVES'. On 11th July 1998 Maria Soledad Rosas committed suicide. After a new state murder and my hunger strike I was transferred to Sanponso.

The situation now: The trial against me starts on 22nd February. I am accused of terrorism and of being a militant of the 'Grey Wolves'. My defence is very difficult because there is a lot of forged evidence against for the prosecution. This evidence is the work of a secret service infiltrator. The same forged evidence determined 5 year prison sentence for Pratzia Maria Grazia Cad-eddu. The Marini ORAI trial is continuing in Rome in spite of made-up evidence. International solidarity is very important however because this trial goes unnoticed by the European community. I send you a document for my liberation. Please translate it and spread it. See you soon.

A revolutionary salutation.
Silvano Pelissero



Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* you might be interested in these:

Counter Information. Quarterly new-sheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP, Scotland.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

RESISTANCE

THE ACF HAS now produced 3 issues of our agitational *Resistance*, keeping to our bi-monthly schedule. The latest one (No.3) has articles on the "low-intensity" war in Iraq, GM foods, the Czech anarchist Michal Patera, and the Diggers. A supplement on the war in the Balkans was also rushed out for this issue and will at the time of writing be available for the demonstration against both the war in the Gulf and the war in the Balkans. For the second issue a London supplement on the threatened eviction of the 121 Centre in Brixton was also produced.

ACF comrades have been incredibly active in distributing *Resistance* (as well as selling *Organise!*) on the recent Civil Rights demo, anti-immigration controls demo, a Civil Rights demo and a demo against repression in Turkey - both in Haringey, 2 anti-war demos and street sales in Barking and Camden, at the Critique conference and a rally against repression in Turkey in Trafalgar Square (all in London) as well as the anti-war demo in Cardiff and the low-pay demo in Newcastle.

Resistance has appeared at an important time. Our widespread distribution of our agitational bulletin means more and more people are coming in contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when there is growing disgust at the Labour Party, and the Stalinist and Trotskyist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged work. Unfortunately, on too many occasions, ACF comrades are often the only anarchists to be seen on mobilisations, often with the only organised anarchist contingent. When other anarchists do appear, they are few in number, and sometimes choose not to march in a united bloc with us. Ah well, we're not discouraged.

If you would like the next 6 issues of *Resistance* send POs, cheques payable

to 'ACF' to ACF c/o84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley) London E1 7QX. Better still take bundles of *Resistance* to distribute in your area.

ACF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian Esperanto and Spanish translations of our *Aims and Principles* are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

A black and white illustration depicting a scene of domestic violence. In the foreground, a man in a light-colored shirt and a woman in a light-colored dress are shown from the chest up. The man is holding a wrench in his right hand, and the woman is holding a hammer in her right hand. They are both looking towards the right. In the background, a small child is running away from them, carrying a bag of money. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The background is dark and indistinct.

aims and principles

- We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

£1,000 press fund appeal

As you can see, we are a long way off of our target. Please think about us if you have a little money to spare (we know that's a tall order at the moment but still!) With the bombing of Serbia and Iraq and the gearing up of NATO and the US to a war footing, the rampant racism throughout society, the continuing despoiling of the environment, the scummy carryings-on of Labour it is all the more vital that a clear revolutionary anarchist voice is heard loud and clear. So give! give! give!