

Cronyism ... at home and abroad

Last week there were more unhappy developments for the Clinton clan when a judge ruled that Ms Lewinsky does not have immunity from prosecution in exchange for her offer to testify about any sexual relationship she may or may not have had with the US President. Writing in *The Erotic Review* Peter Clarke, a college crony of Clinton at Oxford and a writer on the *Sunday Times* in Scotland, insists: "I fear that Mr Clinton's misfortune is to live in an Anglo-Saxon culture of primness. If he was president of France or Italy, he would be praised for his stamina and contribution to tourism".

Mr Clarke recalls that Clinton thought he was lucky to be an 'Arkansas boy' in so far as "to be born in New York or California meant that the odds against you climbing those states' steep political ladders were far worse than they were in his own sleepy province".

Mr Clinton "the grinning Southern boy" was, according to Clarke, an accomplished hunter of willing women as well as a skilled political climber even at college. But he also remembers "the young Clinton's pleasures at the ancient Latin wisdom that 'no man is impotent while he has a tongue in his head'."

The Clarke analysis is that media emphasis is on 'Zippergate' – "the assumption that the President enjoys being fellated" – but from his experience he says that "I would be surprised if he were not also an accomplished and thoughtful cunnilinguist".

BLIND TRUST, NODS AND WINKS

Also last week a consultant, Dr Henry Drucker, told the Neill committee on political funding, that he thought blind trusts used by the Labour Party were 'evil'. Of these trusts Dr Drucker, a fundraiser, said: "I don't believe that these

people would give a bean unless there were enough nods and winks that Tony was, of course, very grateful, that they were assured that this was the case."

In theory these 'blind trusts' operate by taking money from benefactors and channelling it into Shadow Cabinet members' offices, while Labour was in Opposition. Those in charge of the Shadow office were not supposed to know who'd given the money, so that there would be no back-scratching or favours. Labour, now in power, no longer needs these trusts, but Dr Drucker thinks Tony Blair must have known the identities of the 'anonymous' donors to his office through the so-called 'blind trusts'.

BACK-SCRATCHING IN SPAIN

Last month saw reports in the Spanish press about Babcock Wilcox, a company in the Basque country, having committed some irregularities during the period of Felipe Gonzalez's 'socialist' government. The newspaper *El Mundo* has found an entanglement between the company and the 'socialist' party in the Basque area. It seems that under the orders of Manuel Fernández, one of the most influential bosses of Basque socialism, the company sold a firm (Pridesa) for a low price.

Many parties, including the Basque nationalists (PNV), the communists and fellow travellers in the IU, and the conservatives of the PP, are demanding answers. Trafficking in influence and scandals of this kind, which plagued the previous government of Felipe Gonzalez, may explain why the PSOE (Socialist Party) members last month rejected as their new leader Almunia, sponsored by Gonzalez, and instead elected the 'left-winger' Joep Borrell, the Catalan.

Mack the Knife

Córdoba: 'anarchist' trial



See report on page 6 for more information on this story

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While the poor get poorer, we agree with the *Sunday Times* that ...

“The Rich get Richer”

For a number of years the *Sunday Times* has published an annual supplement, ‘The Rich List’. It includes the five hundred richest – to whom two supplements ago the Editor Philip Beresford gave the title we quote in our headline – and was at pains to point out that “the meritocrats are taking over. Individual effort rather than accident of birth is now easily the biggest factor in wealth creation”, and added that “it is being rewarded as never before with a record £70 billion”.

Be that as it may, the current supplement (‘The Rich List 1998’) and the one published last year now list a thousand in their ‘rich lists’. The headline for 1997 was “Vintage Year for Wealth” and once again the emphasis is that the “enterprise culture is here at last” and that “it is the self-made businessmen who are leading the way”. The headline to ‘The Rich List 1998’ is “Rapid Rise in Fortunes” and the comment is “what a way to celebrate ... Britain’s millionaires have marked the event by collectively smashing through the £100 billion barrier in the most authoritative guide to the nation’s wealth.”

Perhaps we should add that in the millionaire (and billionaire) stakes there are the ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’. As Mr Beresford points out, “anybody aspiring to the top 100 needs £250 million” and when you consult the top 100 you realise that the ‘poor’ Duke of Northumberland – struggling to make ends meet with running the family business of Northumberland Estates with 90,000 acres and “30,000 elsewhere” as well as “forests, open-cast coal sites and 170 tenanted farms”, not to mention the art collection which includes Canalettos, Titians “and the odd Turner” – is at the very bottom of the 100. And at the very top is Lord Sainsbury and family with £3.3 billion, engaged in retailing – that is being *grocers*. At number two in the top 100 league is Hans Rausing, who is engaged in “food packaging”.

Two observations from Mr Beresford’s statistics and comments: he has upped the Sainsbury’s wealth from £2.5 billion in 1997 to £3.3 billion in a “vintage year” of “outstanding profits”. Who pays if not the public? And Hans Rausing’s family’s assets went down by a few million, but then they are going through a period of giving some of it away – not to the poor, but to universities (to be remembered for posterity?) – but one of the family bought “one of London’s most expensive houses at £20 million”.

One could fill this issue of *Freedom* with the CVs of the top 100 millionaires to attack the whole capitalist system. What have any of them *actually produced*? They have all exploited the labour of others for a profit, and have invariably sacked them when they were no longer needed or profitable. The *Sunday Times* reference to the self-made millionaires who have overtaken the hereditary rich thanks to ‘individual effort’ is really pathetic.

Are the other fifty-plus million of us lacking any effort to make our way, even to be millionaires, or to change the unequal and unjust society we live in?

One example of the self-made billionaire: Richard Branson. We are not told what he started with, but obviously at a certain stage he was in with the media hacks and now hardly a day passes without his grinning bearded face appearing in the media. He is now the boss of the Virgin Travel Group, Rail and “many other Virgin businesses ranging from Cola to cinemas and record stores with an estimated turnover of £2 billion”.

The *Sunday Times* devotes a column of the rich list 1998 to Richard Branson. “Companies House lists 179 firms with Virgin in their name, so keeping tabs on them all is difficult”. But at the same time there is the ‘great man’ having time to try and circle the world in a balloon (and failing every time, but it’s all publicity) and now the latest is that he is declared by one daily for the new post of Mayor of London. How does he find the time?

For goodness sake, when will the victims of the capitalist system realise that all the Bransons and the other ‘self-made’ millionaires are the stooges of the banks, the multi-nationals and the transnationals. Without

them they would be nowhere because if they didn’t ‘play the game’ they would soon be out.

And as to the other millionaires like Soros, they are gamblers. He has had “a bad time last year” according to the *Sunday Times*, “quite unlike 1992 when he made £600 million from the attack on sterling”. And so what? What has he lost or produced for the welfare of the working people who *do* produce all we need to maintain our health and services – which even the millionaires need? They can’t eat their money and their shares and their property.

The editor of the *Sunday Times* rich list these past ten years* has obviously nothing to say about the *exploitation* of labour. A perfect example is that of workers in the retailing trade. This is only possible because workers are their own worst enemies, partly because there are so many people desperately wanting a job to supplement the family budget. In how many supermarkets do you see students at the check-outs (and they are very efficient)? And when trade unionists are sacked because the bosses know that they can be replaced by scab labour (again by desperate people needing a job).

Until the producers of our real wealth realise that the old adage ‘we are many, they

are few’ is real power, the situation will not be changed as a result of buying tickets for the lottery or playing the City markets, as a few have managed (and how many have gone bankrupt?) and are prepared to accept that though capitalism for its own profit will seek to increase the consumerist society it will do so at the expense of an ever-increasing minority living in real poverty and squalor.

Needless to say, the New Labour lot are clobbering the poor and have not added a penny to the 40% top tax for the rich. We will go on pointing out that when the Thatcher lot took over in 1979 the first thing they did was to reduce the super-tax from 80% to 40%. The Labour lot, when brought in on a massive majority, declared that they would observe the Tory tax for two years. Equally important for jobs is that on their triumphant first year in office they have not stopped the flood of capital to the Far East, which again the Iron Lady had released the moment she came into office.

Anarchists go on saying what we have been saying for a long time. We go on saying it because we are even more sure now than ever that the capitalist system is so rotten that even some who professed to be socialists and communists have been seduced by the possibilities of ‘prosperity for all’. Forget about it. As that headline in the *Sunday Times* supplement put it, “The Rich Get Richer” and, believe us with our subhead, “we agree”. Meanwhile the poor get poorer – Workers of the World Unite!

Postscript

Somehow Dr Philip Beresford, who has been researching for these past ten years, apparently hasn’t thought of including in his top 100 his boss, Mr Murdoch. He has no excuse, for instance, to say that it is because his Australian boss took American citizenship, for business reasons, and therefore cannot be included in the *Sunday Times* rich list. After all, he includes in the first eleven of the 100 top boys no less than Mohamed al-Fayed, much better known as the boss of our very English store Harrods. Though no government has agreed to give this gentleman, worth £1.2 billion, British citizenship even though he asks for it, and the list mentions that he also owns the Ritz Hotel in Paris, so one cannot but ask why Mr Murdoch’s *Sunday Times* can include Mr al-Fayed in the ‘Rich List 1998’ but not Murdoch, who after all owns half the British press and a lot more.

Anarchists are the only ones who expose the hypocrisy not only of our media but of the capitalist system.

* Since we have quoted extensively from the ‘rich list’, we feel that in fairness to the editor and the *Sunday Times* we should mention that they have published a *Wealth Register* of the UK’s wealthiest 5,500, compiled by Dr Philip Beresford, at £1.95.



Magnet strike over ... Trade unionism terminally ill?

Britain's longest running official strike ended last month in a defeat both for the sacked furniture workers and British trade unionism. No militant, without a tongue firmly in his or her cheek, could describe an agreed compensation package of £850,000 (£8,500 each) as anything other than sugar on a bitter pill.

The workers at Magnet Kitchens had been sacked twenty months ago when they went on strike over pay freeze tactics by Berisford, the company which owned Magnet. Then the sacked staff had demanded 3%. At a total cost of £114,000, this was less than Berisford's chief executive awarded himself last year with a £124,000 pay rise.

Of course the company was embarrassed by the round-the-clock pickets, the widespread publicity, the trail of national personalities like John Monks of the TUC and even some redundant Derbyshire miners showing their faces on picket duty, and even a union chicken farm was set up alongside the £1.5 million home of the Berisford chief executive to annoy him and by-pass secondary picketing laws. In the end this forced the compensation deal with the firm which had held out against doing a deal and recognising the dispute.

FAIRNESS AT WORK?

Following on, as it does, from the unhappy end of the Liverpool dockers' dispute earlier in the year, this must raise the question of where does British trade unionism go from

here? Of course the unions are placing the blame on the consequences of Tory anti-union laws, which they are claiming are depriving labour of human rights at work and giving a free hand to irresponsible bosses.

Phil Davis, national official of the GMB union, claimed Magnet was a "classic example of why the current labour laws should be changed to protect strikers. It is outrageous that a group of workers who had conducted a legal ballot should be dismissed for taking action over a derisory pay offer".

The New Labour government is at present consulting with the employers in the CBI, and the unions, before producing its 'Fairness at Work' white paper. Workers' rights to union recognition and to compensation claims for unfair dismissal during legal industrial disputes are under discussion.

It looks like the Tory anti-union laws are going to get a face-lift under New Labour to make them look more human.

NEW FORMS OF STRUGGLE

Many, if not most, British anarchists have looked to the labour movement for some sort of salvation. "Everything will depend on the Proles" as Winston continued to remind himself in Orwell's *1984*. Yet today the trade unions are increasingly regarded as little more than benevolent societies by their workers.

Donovan Pedelty, in his book *The Rape of Socialism*, argues that: "In the final analysis, the options the trade unions were faced with,

from their formation, were to adapt to the capitalist realities – by making themselves, in effect, just another kind of interest group in a highly competitive world – or to react by forging themselves into revolutionary forces". A few unions, like the CNT (national confederation of labour) in Spain in the 1930s and the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies) in the USA, were revolutionary, but most were not.

As with other labour movements, British unions have always had strife between what Don Pedelty calls "democrats and autocrats". "Both the shop-steward movement and the industrial democracy movement", writes Pedelty, "strike [in the 1990s, one feels more inclined to say 'struck'] at the dominant twin traditions of political and industrial labourism: centralism and paternalism".

Mr Pedelty, who has made a study of the British labour movement and left-wing politics from an anarchist and libertarian syndicalist viewpoint, clearly senses the onset of decay. The Liverpool dockers' militancy, according to a 'Subversion' source close to them, were treated sympathetically like some relic or rarefied life-form by many people. Something of quaint fascination, rather than the threat perceived in January 1979 when Peter Jenkins wrote: "In the last few weeks we have seen the coming of age of syndicalism". On the Liverpool docks the main threat, so far as Britain was concerned, was to come from actions by the Reclaim the Streets activists and others of an anarchist

streak – although internationally support was given by labour organisations in Australia, America and elsewhere.

RAISING THE DEAD?

Anarcho-syndicalism has had rather over-much coverage in recent weeks in this paper, but the question the anarchist might ask today is not 'What is anarcho-syndicalism?' but rather it is 'What does the syndicalist do in contemporary Britain?' – is it not a job description past its sell-by date?

What we want is a movement with serious job descriptions for its members, not petty-fogging policies for passing the time or half-baked ideas about building revolutionary movements. Forms of anarchism are now more central to left politics and thinking and criticism in this country, so it is all the more important not to form sentimental attachments to ideas which now have only marginal relevance to the lives of people in our country.

We are wary about diagnosing the unions as being terminally ill but, to those of us still involved in them, it's like being in an elephants' graveyard. We are ever aware of historical examples of miraculous resurrections too. Only two months before May 1968 the former editor of *Le Monde*, Pierre Viansson-Ponte, wrote an editorial headed "When France is bored" in which he mocked what was thought to be the apathy of French youth. He claimed that French students are only concerned if girls can freely go into boys' bedrooms, while students elsewhere "have conquests to undertake".

Eight weeks later the riots of students which rocked France hit the streets. In the case of the British trade unions, miracles like that seem increasingly far fetched.

Sacco and Vanzetti

'The Friday Play' on BBC Radio 4, broadcast on 17th April 1998



Bartolomeo Vanzetti (left) and Nicola Sacco at Dedham courthouse, 1923

taken from the book *Sacco and Vanzetti: the anarchist background*, by Paul Avrich (available from Freedom Press at £11.95 plus p&p 10% inland, 20% overseas)

Trust the BBC's new schedule timings to do its Charter-bound duty to the progressive left. It was recommended in the *Morning Star*, had me ringing up my contacts – enough gripe, to the play.

Bill Brydon, who wrote the play, chose to base it on the relationship of Sacco, the less articulate of the pair, and the jailer, an Irishman who believed Sacco to be innocent, with Vanzetti taking a less prominent part. It was not made clear that Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists. This was fudged as "anarchist-communist-IWW-wobblies".

Much was made of the pair having fled Mexico to avoid the draft. What was not made clear was that they were framed for being conscientious objectors. That they did not want to kill their fellow men for the betterment of the rich was made clear. No mention of the worldwide demonstrations on Sacco and Vanzetti's behalf. Once again, a missed opportunity – but perhaps not all is lost as the line "as long as one prisoner remains in prison I am not free" came out loud and clear.

Paul Rothwell-Hartmann

Ban on hormone treated beef

The European Union at present is appealing against a World Trade Organisation ruling against its ban on hormone treated beef. The ruling, by a special panel, found the European Union to be in violation of its international obligations by establishing a ban on beef raised with growth hormones.

The panel ignored scientific evidence and declared (no less) that the "right of governments do not include paramount decision making on the level of protection for their citizens".

So beef raised with hormone growth will literally be forced down people's throats by the World Trade Organisation. The recent agitation against multinational trade impositions now is shown to be a protest against what is practically in place.

The European Union may have to reimburse US and Canadian 'producers' for loss of revenue. This despite the fact that the EU scientists consider such beef products are dangerous. The US-led World Trade Organisation is, however, adamant that it does not favour compensation, wanting the European Union to open its beef market instead. This is a worldwide conspiracy to rob people of even a modicum of protection.

The lengths multinationals go to it illustrated by a story received through a-infos from Tampa, Florida. This concerns the Fox Television affiliated radio station WTVT and their sacking of two reporters, Jane Akre and Steve Wilson, because they refused to broadcast "lies about Monsanto's controversial bovine growth hormone (BGH) now being used by many American farmers". Their radio programme alleged, among other things, that

supermarkets in Florida have been selling milk from cows injected with BGH despite the objections of independent scientists that drinking the milk poses health risks.

Such concerns have led the European Union, Australia and New Zealand to prohibit the use of BGH in cows.

Wilson says that just prior to broadcasting, Monsanto's libel attorney sent a threatening letter to the Fox Network, which successfully killed the story. The script was re-worked by Fox's lawyers. The two reporters were given the ultimatum 'you will either broadcast this story *the way we're telling you to broadcast*, or we will fire you'.

The station also offered a vast sum (£200,000) to the reporters to toe the line and keep it from public knowledge through the Federal Communications Commission. The reporters stood their ground and were fired.

Wilson and Akre have since filed a lawsuit against the station and said in a statement that: "We set out to tell Florida consumers the truth a giant chemical company and a powerful dairy lobby do not want them to know. That used to be something investigative reporters won awards for. Sadly, as we have learned the hard way, it's something you can be fired for these days whenever a news organisation places more value on its bottom line than on delivering the news to its audience honestly".

Freedom may well be the first newspaper to break this story, which should be widely known. The editorial silence on this subject in the national press on this and related matters must stop. This paper was founded by Kropotkin in 1886 and will never allow itself to be gagged.

John Retey

The New Hand-Loom Weavers

The Institute of Directors (ID) is part parliamentary lobby, part think-tank (rather like the CBI). Under the heading of 'The Hub Initiative', on 1st April they held a public forum in Manchester at Granada television studios. This was a most apt setting, combining those two forms of phantasy. Some four hundred people attended this forum. Its purpose, as explained by the urbane Director General (that really is his title) of the ID, Tim Melville-Ross, was to give the public a better perspective on how business works in order to improve its image through trust and understanding.

This was the smiling face of capitalism with impressive hospitality in a posh banqueting room. The seating arrangements gave good opportunities for me to express opinions and still enjoy the excellent sandwiches. We sat at tables in groups of between six and eight. Outlining the methods to be used for this meeting, Tim asked us to be 'constructive' in our comments. Each table had what our hosts called an 'ambassador' (a Hub volunteer who acted like a chairperson for that small group). In responses to set questions such as "what do you like and dislike about business" we wrote on slips of paper. Collated onto a large wall chart the final result very quickly looked like a consensus. You may have seen this type of 'brain-storm' exercise done elsewhere.

Of course I would rather have nice, 'listening' employers but I went to this meeting with questions like 'when will the recession be over?' and 'is the suicide rate related to the numbers being kicked off the dole?' The 'ambassador' at our table turned purple when he saw my slips of paper but still put them on the wall chart. Concern for the environment was expressed but the questions were so phrased as to rule out anything that was not 'constructive'. No doubt the ID will encourage us to pick up our sweet wrappers but do not ask them about pollution.

The Hub, we were told, is supported by some huge firms like the Co-op Bank and

British Telecom. However, I strongly suspect that many of those present were from small businesses. Many working people today are employed in tiny firms. At one time they may have worked with large numbers of people in big industries which are long gone. These days you do not need much more than a fax machine and a small computer to be 'a small business person'. It is too easy, with revolutionary zeal, to dismiss such people as capitalists. They can be seen as the new hand-loom weavers whose forebears were destroyed in

the nineteenth century by the mill owners. Is it too pessimistic to say that a similar fate awaits many small businesses today due to technological changes?

A precarious existence was also enjoyed by chamber masters. I last heard that term forty years ago when I worked in London's clothing trade. It referred to people who would rent a work space to make up orders from manufacturers. Occasionally tools, labour and materials would be lent by those manufacturers to the chamber master. They

were little more than employees but no doubt considered themselves a cut above those who only had their wages to rely on.

We can make a comparison between hand-loom, sewing machines and lap-tops as essential but accessible items for small business. The end result is the same, the strongest and most ruthless will survive whatever, camouflage the ID recommends. The grants for small business are just a trendy way of rearranging the dole queue.

Summing up, Tim suggested that the Hub Initiative was going to contact thousands of people in the Manchester area and would be holding similar forums in other parts of the country over the next ten years. Potentially, these meetings will provide good venues for exposing bullshit and getting our points over, perhaps in more dramatic fashion than I did. Phone the ID on 0171-451 3377 or write to 116, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5ED, asking when they are visiting your city and for an invitation.

Martin S. Gilbert

Somebody out there loves us!

The electronic news exchange Green-net was put out of service for two weeks due to outside interference. Green-net has over two thousand subscribers and is a facilitator for many radical news services, including a-infos. It was rumoured that whoever shut down the service was either a whizz-kid or a political opponent.

Labour Net's webmaster claims in an astounding communiqué that the hacker's attack was aimed at Labour Net. On 20th April, within 24 hours of the service being restored, Green-net was served with a solicitor's letter which threatens legal action concerning a news item contained in a Labour Net bulletin which was carried by Green-net.

The item concerned was actually a press release from a major trade union (not in Britain) in support of an official campaign being carried out by their national trade union federation. It carried a reference to an allegation made by other named sources concerning a particular company, and it is the repeating of this allegation that is the subject of the solicitor's letter.

The London-based solicitors do not appear to be threatening action against the union involved, or against Labour Net itself or against Chris Bailey, Labour Net's webmaster. They are holding Green-net responsible because "our investigations have shown that you are the service provider for

the website upon which this press release appears". Green-net have been given seven days to remove the item involved or they will face action for substantial damages. This could be crippling in every respect.

The web space, as it happens, was given by Green-net for free as an action by Green-net in support of the Liverpool dockers.

Holding a service provider responsible for substantial damages because of the content of the information is clearly designed to silence those few service providers who are willing to publish controversial information.

Freedom agrees that there is an important issue of internet democracy at stake here.

John Rety

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 23th May, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 14th May.

Picket of Irish Embassy: 25th April

Comrades from the Anarchist Communist Federation (London group) called for a picket of the Irish Embassy in solidarity with actions initiated by the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland and carried out world-wide. The action was to protest against the Irish government's attacks on asylum seekers. Whilst the rich are allowed to settle in Ireland, those fleeing political or economic pressures are refused admission, harassed and deported.

The picket took place for one hour between 1 to 2pm and was attended by five members of the Anarchist Communist Federation, two members of the Solidarity Federation, a *Freedom* seller, a few unaffiliated and about six or seven members of the Socialist Party (the new name for Militant). The picket passed off without incident. ACFers distributed a leaflet and brought along two placards ('No Refuge for the Rich: Asylum for All' and 'No Borders, No States, Asylum for All').

London ACF

New Freedom Press Booklist

With the last issue of *Freedom* you should, if you're a subscriber, have received our brand new booklist with more than 35 new titles added and improved descriptions of many others. A number of old favourites which were unavailable for some time are also now back on the list. At any one time we have far more books, magazines and pamphlets in stock than we can possibly get on the list, but it does give a general indication of the range we cover. If you still have old booklists please don't use them to order from as much of the information, such as availability and prices, is now out of date. Non-subscribers can get a free copy of the booklist by phoning or writing to us, and anyone who requires an extra copy is asked to help us with our overheads by supplying an A5 stamped addressed envelope. As usual, the vast majority of the literature we supply is sent post-free to mail-order customers in the UK, making it cheaper to order through us than through most other radical mail-order suppliers, and we only charge overseas customers a percentage of the actual postage and packing costs. The turnaround time on most of our mail-orders is also rapid by normal standards – about a week for most titles, and often much quicker. We trust you will find many hours of stimulating and rewarding reading on our new list.



A History of the Hanging Industry

Apart from recommending this thoroughly-researched history of the abolition of capital punishment in Britain, I find the title, *Hanging in the Balance*,¹ is not realistic. The book appears when all kinds of cases of murder have been thrown out on appeal years after the unfortunate victims of so-called justice were hanged – Hanratty for instance – and all the recent cases of those who escaped the hangman's noose but spent years in prison. They too might have not escaped the hangman's noose. I no longer think that hanging is in the balance (in spite of so-called public opinion, which I'm convinced is as bloodthirsty and vindictive as it ever was in history).

For an anarchist to recognise the work done by a group of politicians and others to finally end the death sentence for those rightly or wrongly accused of murder is something I have no hesitation in welcoming – as well as the publication of this book. We at Freedom Press were all involved in the campaigns against capital punishment. The authors

confirm what Callaghan (now Lord of Cardiff) says in the Foreword, namely that: "The undoubted hero of the campaign was Sidney Silverman – small in stature, uptilted head, erect carriage, a quick pattering foot-step and a prominent pointed beard which was almost a weapon in itself."

But apart from the politicians (and it included Tories, otherwise the vote for abolition would not have succeeded), I regret that the authors seem to have not taken account of the anti-hanging propagandists, including Charles Duff (whose *Handbook on Hanging*, first published by the Bodley Head and thereafter in a large edition by Freedom Press). There is not a word in their bibliography, nor a reference to Charles Duff in the Index.

It doesn't matter. After all, we at Freedom Press know that before the historians recorded a history of the abolition of capital punishment in Britain for another generation of academics, dear old Charles Duff and Freedom Press had been doing it for a long time – but apparently this is of no interest to the historians.



Charles Duff

Photo: Vernon Richards

Despite this it is still a good book, but too expensive for you and me so get your library to stock it.

VR

1. *Hanging in the Balance: A History of the Abolition of Capital Punishment in Britain* by Brian P. Block and John Hostettler (Waterside Press, 288 pages, £18.00).

Freedom Press Bookshop Readers' Round-Up

"It is a sad paradox of Jewish history that Jews should have acquired their own statehood only on the middle of this century when the obsolescence of the nation state is becoming more and more obvious" wrote Isaac Deutscher on Israel's 10th anniversary. He warned that Israelis should "beware of being carried away by their new-fangled and red-hot nationalism ... their state is not above criticism: it is an earthly creation not a biblical sanctity". Alas, the warning went unheeded, and the terrorism from which the state was born became far worse despite being wrapped in the cloak of legal legitimacy – or more accurately because of it.

Now on Israel's 50th anniversary the spring issue of *Jewish Socialist* (£1.50) dissects the state and its Zionist founders, contrasting them with the workers' Bund, the organisation of Jewish socialists founded 100 years ago but which fought for economic equality and justice, not political power, and condemned the Zionists plans for a Jewish state as a dangerous fantasy. The prediction proved correct: despite being dominated by Zionist ideology the Jews are not the majority, so the state may be Zionist but not Jewish; and there can be no dispute about its dangerous nature – witness the many thousands of dead on all sides since it was imposed on Palestine and the 3.2 million Palestinian refugees who lost their homes, land and livelihoods in the process.

The British involvement in, and responsibility for, Palestine after World War One (and consequent responsibility for many of the events since) is clearly demonstrated in the Freedom Press Centenary Series title *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis** (£1.95) whose value lies in the fact that it records the origins and background to the current tragedy through contemporary articles and letters in the journals *Freedom*, *Spain and the World* and *War Commentary* during the crucial period of 1938-48, including the first year of the Israeli state. It contains several excellent articles by the late

Albert Meltzer, demonstrating the high quality of his writing prior to his bitter split from Freedom Press, some lively jousting between Reg Reynolds and Emma Goldman, a table of official figures on the victims of British rule, both Jews and Arabs, a postscript on the situation in 1989 since the beginning of Palestinian resistance in the Intifada, and much else besides.

Since 1957 it has been the United States that has made the running all over the Middle East, following the Eisenhower Doctrine "whereby the US government conferred upon the US government the remarkable and enviable right to intervene militarily in other countries. With the stroke of a pen, the Middle East was added to Europe and the western hemisphere as America's field of play" says William Blum in *Killing Hope: US military and CIA interventions since World War Two* (£14.99). In this updated and expanded Black Rose edition of his earlier *The CIA: a forgotten history* he documents, in very readable style and with nice irony over 457 pages, the arrogance, impertinence, terror and impunity with which the US state has imposed its 'solutions' on other countries' problems'. Mainly, but by no means exclusively, third world countries, and usually countries that were naively unaware of even having problems until Uncle Sam turned up either in military fatigues or in CIA-issue suits and sunglasses.

Beginning with China and Korea in 1945, each chapter is devoted to a particular country or region, depending on the amount of attention it has received from its US problem-solvers. Apart from all the usual suspects – the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, etc. – Blum covers many African countries including Algeria under French rule, and almost the whole of Latin America. Western Europe gets a chapter, but Italy, targeted so often and for so long, gets a further two separate chapters which broadly confirm and greatly expand upon KM's remarks about Operation Gladio in a recent review in *Freedom*. There are also two

chapters on Iraq. The results vary from tragic and obscene to farcical and grotesque – but they're mostly tragic and obscene. Blum calls it the American Holocaust, causing millions of deaths and condemning millions of other people to lives of misery and torture. The US military-industrial-intelligence complex he shows has for many years dictated a society on a permanent war economy. *1984* is getting closer all the time: "There are, after all, always new enemies out there who threaten us – America, the perpetually aggrieved innocent in a treacherous world ... our rulers do their best to make sure that we shall never be at peace".

There is a wealth of valuable information here, including copious source notes, a detailed diagram of who gets CIA funding and by what routes, eight pages of small print summarising acts of US military aggression in the 150 years prior to 1945, and two passionate introductions.

Many of the early victims of US aggression were pirates and privateers (who also raided unprotected foreign merchant ships and post, but with the blessing, either official or covert, of their home government), especially in the Caribbean. Much has been written, often in highly fanciful or outright fictitious accounts, of pirate life, the pirate economy or the better-known pirate personalities. The recent Black Rose book *Women Pirates: and the politics of the Jolly Roger* is the first I've seen about the subject from this perspective, and it makes a refreshing read. Written by Ulrike Klausmann, Marion Meinzerin and Gabriel Kuhn, it debunks many of the myths about pirate life and shows that many pirates were women, often dressed as men. Covering four seas and three thousand years, it challenges the traditional version of pirate history and the last chapter, 'Life under Death's head: anarchism and piracy', is especially interesting. The 280 pages contain many biographies and numerous delightful illustrations. £13.99.

'Four Eyes'

Freedom Press reprinting programme

Thanks to increased demand for Freedom Press literature, from both individuals and the trade, over the last few years, stocks of several of our books have recently run down to the point where some are now out of print and others are almost out of print. We shall, of course, make sure that such important anarchist titles are not allowed to disappear from circulation, and to this end we have already started on what may well be Freedom Press's biggest ever reprinting programme.

Naturally you would not expect us to be able to have them all done at once – firstly there are always minor alterations and corrections to be made, then there is the cost of printing and binding, and lastly our printers have to find a gap for each of our titles in their busy schedule when normally they would expect only one or two reprints a year from us, on top of any new titles. However, we are pleased to say that we have already taken delivery of three of the reprinted titles and the others are being done just as fast as they can be found a printing slot and we can afford to pay for them (even anarchists printers have to eat).

Below is a list of the books in the current programme of reprints, along with the new prices. Due to the sharp rise in the price of paper and the sizeable increase in binding costs, we have regrettably had to increase the cover prices by more than usual, as you will notice if you compare the new with the old prices (in brackets). The increased costs are being charged across the industry, not just by our printers, and there is nothing we can do about it, but it is worth remarking that the old prices reflect the much lower printing costs at the time of the last printing – and in some cases this was in the 1980s. Sharp-eyed observers will have noticed today's increased costs reflected in the prices of all our new books, and ours still compare very favourably with commercial publishers' equivalents.

There is a silver lining to this dark-tinged financial cloud, however, which is that we have found a few copies – in some cases very few – of these titles in odd corners left over from their last printing, and at the old prices. So while they last, individual customers (not the trade or groups) who want copies at the old prices, please state this when ordering and save money. Stocks should last a few weeks, but if your order arrives too late for the lower price copies we'll let you know. Needless to say, if you can afford the new prices now by ordering the new copies you'll be helping out those with shallower pockets, not to mention helping us out with the printer's bills.

- José Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, £11.95 (was £6.00)[◊]
- Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: a factor of evolution*, £8.95 (was £6.00)
- Mikhail Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, £3.50 (was £1.50)
- Peter Kropotkin, *Act For Yourself*, £5.95 (was £2.50)[◊]
- Souchy, Peirats, Goldman, et al, *The May Days Barcelona 1937*, £5.95 (was £2.50)[◊]
- Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow*, £7.95 (was £4.00)

[◊] indicates that the reprint is not yet ready.

Rich and Poor



Some people have more rights than others. Travelling people in this country have practically no rights at all. Laws are made without any regard whatsoever to their nomadic lifestyle and ethical values. The Tory government especially hounded them from their established meeting places and the police and bailiffs were encouraged to hound them and trash their vehicles and minimal possessions.

Travellers moved from fair to fair and followed an ancient itinerary. Among them were not just ordinary conurbations but sites of ancient historical interest. Who knows how much it is owed to these aural historians in keeping the memory of ancient traditions alive.

Other individuals and groups have of course also taken an interest in the very same places so well known and used by the travellers. Many of us have stood in front of ancient monoliths and wondered vainly who put them there, and some of us who are anarchists even contemplated that they were some reminders of an ancient pre-historic anarchist society, for the simple reason that all of them can be regarded as a gift to us from past generations. A communal gift which is ours in perpetuity. Ours to keep and look at and to admire. Nothing to do with commerce, with rich and poor, nothing to do with laws and regulations. Something beyond the power of temporal rulers. Our ancestors left them for us, as simple as that.

Not so in the opinion of governments, quangos and quasi-scientific outfits like English Heritage which, according to the latest issue of the Stonehenge Campaign's newsletter, is about many hundreds of pounds for some stale entertainment by the Stones, whereas only a few years ago anyone may have walked about unhindered. It was never meant to be a museum, but it is now. The photograph (right) of Stonehenge from the north-east was taken only 40 years ago, before the re-erection in 1958 of Stones 57, 58, 158, 22 and 122. A photograph today would show a scene more resembling a prison.

Every ago may be judged by how it treats its past. The responsibility shifted through the ages from the local community, perhaps the local farmer on whose land it was, to bodies such as what used to be called the Officers of Works to the Department of the Environment, and more recently to English Heritage and the National Trust.

Some Trust. Stonehenge itself was bequeathed to the nation, a remarkably short-sighted if generously motivated action by the local farmer about a hundred years ago, with the stipulation about freedom of access. Well, there is such if you are prepared to pay, but not if you are a traveller or rambler or the ordinary Joe wanting to gaze at what I termed as an unconditional gift from our anarchist ancestors.

Each year a walk starts from Battersea Park on 1st June from London to Stonehenge, which goes at a leisurely pace and stays on subsequent nights at such places as Runnymede where the Magna Carta was signed, at Windsor where Ma'am has grace and favour residence, to Caesar's camp and finally to Avebury and Stonehenge in Wiltshire where in the past few years the local constabulary and English Heritage's security force have been at their repressive worst. We shall know more about the present government's treatment of its minorities and freedom of movement allowed to the people by the time this Solstice is over. At the moment I'm dipping into a lovingly produced book on Stonehenge by Barbara Bender, the present Reader in Material Culture at University College, London, one of the many archeologists who brought their wisdom and knowledge to the very frontiers where people and authority meet at the Exclusion Zones of our past present and future.

John Rety

If you look behind the title-page of a number of Freedom Press books of the last twenty years you will find an acknowledgement to Hans Deichmann, whose generosity made publication possible. There has never been any indication of who he is, or why he should be a patron of anarchist publishing.

Personally, I know that this man exists, as many years ago we met him, his partner and their dog in Milan, and he told me, since we were discussing not anarchism but municipal management, that his grandfather had been Lord Mayor of Cologne. Beyond that I know nothing of his background in Germany and Italy, although I now learn that he published his story in a bilingual German/Italian edition a few years ago.

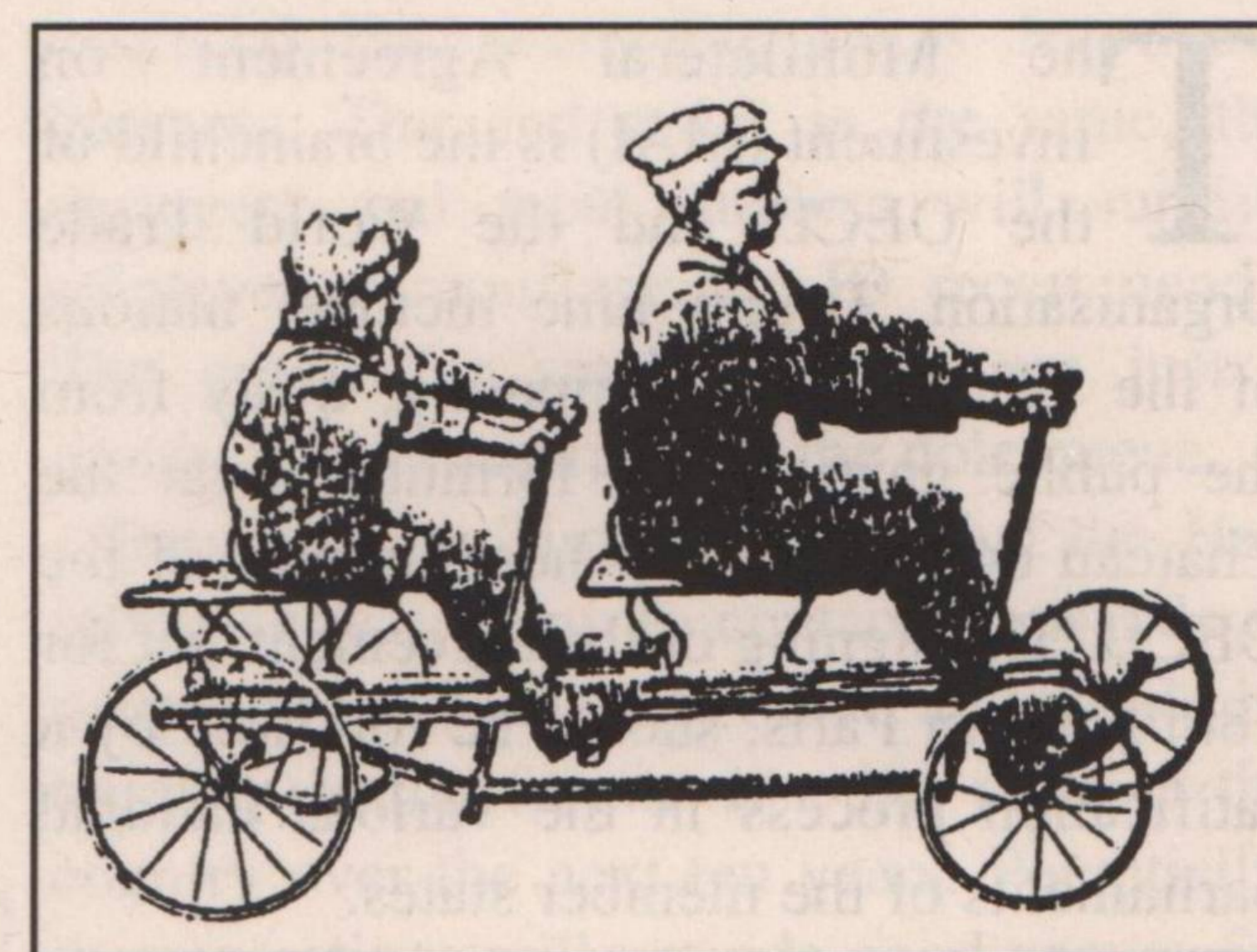
Now an English translation has appeared. The title is *Objects: A Chronicle of*

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

The Benefactor's Story

Subversion in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The translation is by Peter Constantine and Peter Glassgold, and the book comes at \$22 from Marsilio Publishers, Suite 600, 853 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, USA.

Hans was born in 1907, so most of his life has been spent in his city of adoption rather than that of his birth. But the beginning was fascinating. The posh household encompassed one world for the parents, another for the servants and yet another for the children. Hans, his brother and friends, had a vehicle called the Flying Dutchman, for one child or two, and he had to contact the Nuremberg Toy Museum for an illustration which "made



The Dutchman: an illustration provided by the Nuremberg Toy Museum for Hans Deichmann's *Objects*

me wish the story of the Dutchman would never come to an end". They evolved a three-seater, and learned from using it "what riches there were in living dangerously ... not to mention the pleasure of catching the smell of the horses under their bellies and their steaming excrement". He is grateful to the people who tolerated the children's use of urban space and remarks that "The three one-seaters, ridden by their three seven- to eight-year-old drivers, had begun a normal existence in the form in which they were designed, constantly scooting up and down the courtyard of the family house ... (But) with this three-seater, we felt ourselves masters of the street, and essentially were: all the pedestrians who were bothered or simply amused by the little vehicle that disdained any of the usual games were nevertheless mindful of the safety of these curious children. I cannot stop admiring my mother for permitting the long rides. Perhaps she thought it better to allow what she could not prevent and instead use the opportunity to stir our sense of responsibility."

To me the delicious accounts of childhood experience are the high point of this book. Everything that happened later is the story we have all experienced, of coming to terms, as best we can, with the regimes that rule us. And we glimpse him in Paris in the mid '30s when the pianist Rudolf Serkin was playing at the Quaker Meeting House: "The recital took place in a small hall, and the lights were dimmed as Rudi played. The audience was made up almost exclusively of exiles - all one heard was German. Many were crying, overcome with emotion and gratitude. H.D. also wept; he too, felt exiled, exiled from a world he had believed up to that point was progressive. There he was, with two friends who could no longer set foot in Germany. Things, they already suspected, would get worse, and this could only be overcome after Europe lay in broken pieces."

Needless to say, Hans Deichmann owed his subsequent survival to the fact that the Nazi bureaucracy classified him as a 'drafted civilian', the meaning of which was that he "was sworn-in like a soldier but not in uniform and not on active military service". Much of the book describes, in the light of this, his adventures as an employee of I.G. Farben. Those of us who owe to this fact his generous gifts to Freedom Press should, no doubt, rejoice. He relates how, at several crucial periods of his life, the bicycle has been his salvation. It happened in Mussolini's Italy as the petrol ran out. It happened in the German occupation since anyone who mattered travelled by taxi, and it happened in the post-war years, when as we all remember, the bicycle was important, "not only as a means of transportation, but as a concrete symbol of a regained freedom that had been almost completely forgotten."

It's an intriguing story, with overtones.

Colin Ward

— VISIBLE HANDS —

Trading Places

John Stuart Mill wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, "Economists now recognize that they are asking the same question when they ask what is the advantage of trade between two individuals, between two groups, between two regions or between two countries." After quoting this observation, Richard Lipsey proceeds, in his respected textbook, *Positive Economics*, to bulldoze through the "fallacious protectionist argument" that trading with countries with low wages can undermine European standards of living. He invites us to "stop and think what the argument would imply if taken out of the international context and put into a local one, where the same principles govern the gains from trade" (emphasis added). "Is it really impossible for a rich person to gain from trading with a poor person? Would the local millionaire be better off if he did all his own typing, gardening and cooking? Why then must a rich group of people lose from trading with a poor group?"

Lipsey and Mill are here both demonstrating the analytical failure that comes from political correctness. The example of the local millionaire is indeed a useful one, but only if we recognise the fact that in both European and Third World countries, society is divided into classes, and that these classes have different interests and receive different benefits from different social arrangements. If we widen the example of the local millionaire to include the local village community, the question of benefits from trade is transformed. Would the local community as a whole be better off if the local millionaire

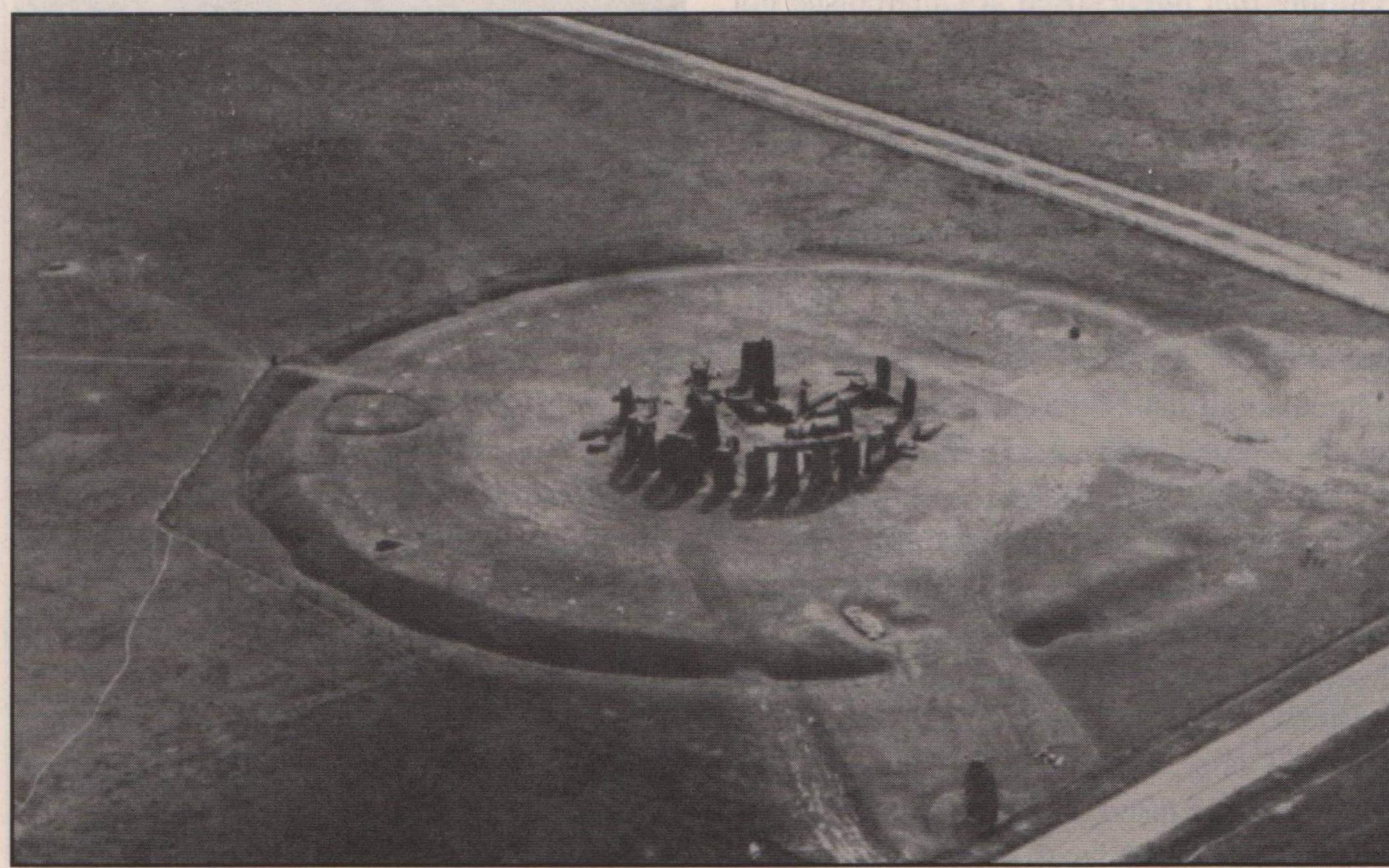
decided to farm out his typing to a bureau in a nearby town, if he transferred his garden to another county, and flew in his meals from the nearest city?

Lipsey and Mill ignore the obvious fact that working people, when considered in local, regional, national or international contexts, do not necessarily obtain the same benefits and disbenefits from 'trade' as their employers. They ignore the fact that those who make investment, trade and employment decisions do so not to benefit the community as a whole, but to benefit themselves. Decisions made on such a basis, given the conflicting interests of workers and capitalists, are likely to cause disbenefits to workers if they reap benefits for owners and managers.

To put it at its simplest, trade can undermine the terms and conditions of workers in rich countries. Lipsey seems almost to concede as much when he considers only the benefits to European consumers from trading with low-wage countries.

These truisms are almost embarrassing to have to repeat, but their absence from the theoretical underpinnings of mainstream economics causes systematic analytical failure, and much confusion. To be blunt, mainstream economics obscures fundamental facts about society, to the benefit of those who control the private economy. Economics is now, and always has been, largely devoted to justifying the ways of Mammon, as theology is devoted to justifying the ways of God. Truth and Righteousness are generally assumed in both enterprises to be on the side of the high priests.

Milan Rai



Aerial photograph of Stonehenge from the north-east before the re-erection in 1958 of stones 57, 58, 158, 22 and 122

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is the brainchild of the OECD and the World Trade Organisation. Twenty-nine member nations of the OECD are participating, away from the public gaze, in its formulation at the Chateau de la Muette – headquarters of the OECD. The signing of the agreement, set for 18th April in Paris, should be followed by a ratification process in the various national parliaments of the member states.

Thus, in those nicer districts of Paris, six hundred business and governmental experts are spouting on in order to nail together a system where labour will be even more flexible, job security even more ephemeral, where a minimum wage is presented as the cause of unemployment (because it sets up a category of privileged workers who prevent the employers from taking on staff at a level below the minimum wage) and where more and more privatisation is the order of the day.

Experts from set-ups like the OECD are grossly overpaid, don't pay taxes, receive hand outs for their children's education, are irremovable and don't have to come up with any results – that is to say they live a world of conditions which are the direct opposite of those they would impose on the rest of us. Those on low wages and the unemployed in France seem unaware that the state gives 110,000,000 French-francs (£311,000,000) to this organisation every year so that it can reproach the former as one of the main causes of unemployment and the later for claiming too much in the way of benefits.

The signing of this treaty would signify the end of any control of Multi-National Companies (MNCs) in all areas of interest. In effect, the signatories agree to set up automatically the most favourable conditions for the MNCs for their investment in what is known as the 'most favoured investor' clause.

The definition of investment is particularly wide: 'it amounts to any type of financial interest held or controlled directly or indirectly by an investor'.

The MAI is none other than another step taken since the Maastricht treaty and then the Amsterdam agreement and then the Luxembourg summit and on down the line getting rid of regulation, legislation and national controls to allow MNCs to come and go at will. The texts put together at Luxembourg demand that European governments put into place the legal framework so that business agreements supersede national laws and conventions.

ABOVE THE LAW

The treaty would be superior to national law. A parliament could no longer pass legislation which went contrary to the demands of the MAI. National laws would be subordinate. As an anecdote the states which are negotiating this agreement signed another treaty at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, which said, notably, that, 'every nation has an inalienable right to regulate foreign investment and exercise control over these investments'.

Negotiated only by the 29 member states of the OECD, the treaty will be called upon to encompass all other states. Why have the negotiations not included a wider base for discussions as was the case, for example, with the WTO?

A former member of the French delegation explains that, "the negotiations were launched and continue under the auspices of the OECD, among those member states who provide capital, these countries being

convinced that only such an internal process is capable of coming up with a text which would be binding and therefore useful, which could than be progressively applied to non-member states who wish to attract foreign investment". The author adds that the presence at the heart of the OECD of member countries, "hostile even in principle to a binding treaty on investment", would make a successful outcome of the negotiations, "very uncertain".

IRREVERSIBLE

The treaty foresees those most perverse measures aimed at preserving the status quo or dismantling the agreement. Every state which signs up must, "provide the public inventory of all its legislation, regulations, procedures, administrative rules and judicial decisions which one way or another could obstruct the treaty", that is to say, list all those laws which do not conform to total investment freedom. These non-conforming rules or 'reservations' which could continue to be applied until their progressive extinction must be very precisely identified since no other dispensation will be recognised.

All measures which do not conform to the MAI will be reduced and finally eliminated: "Dismantling is the liberalisation process by which those measures which do not comply to the MAI will eventually be reduced and finally eliminated. This is a dynamic process linked to the status quo which is the starting point. Linked to the status quo it will produce a 'domino effect' thanks to which any liberalisation measure will be 'locked in' and cannot, over time, be overridden or invalidated".

Any renunciation by a state will be irreversible whatever the views of its citizens.

CULTURAL EXCEPTION

These considerations say it all for the so-called cultural exception which our artists and intellectuals are clinging to. The exception, within the framework of the treaty, is an area which avoids freedom for

investment. These periodic negotiation cycles are aimed at suppressing or limiting the, 'non-conforming measures'. For the cultural exception proposal from France to be accepted it has to be accepted by all the other 28 member states. This is far from in the bag.

The MAI foresees that, "all payments with regard to current investments in a designated country can be the beneficiaries of transfers within and outside the territory without delay" and without control or any restriction. These transfers are concerned with the initial capital investment, additional investment, benefits, all profits from loans with regard to the investment, all products of sale or liquidation of all or part of the investment'. Foreign exchange would obviously have to be done using freely convertible currency.

This treaty once ratified amounts to the abandonment of all national sovereignty.

In a case of litigation the MNCs can call on an international court of justice to demand respect for all aspects of the treaty. The decisions of such a court would be mandatory for all contracting parties.

Currently, within the framework of the WTO, when a firm wants to confront a state it has to use its own state as intermediary. Thus it was the US government which opposed the EU which was banning the import of hormone treated meat. With MAI a tobacco firm can bring a case directly against a government.

If a strike or a consumer movement lowers the profit of an investor the government will have to pay indemnities. And the MNCs will have the right to choose the tribunal of its choice, in particular the International Chamber of Commerce. The various states will be judged by the business community.

The MAI foresees "protection for inconvenience" – that is to say an indemnity for investors when they are prevented from making a profit. The government is therefore responsible for investors who lose money through 'civil disturbances', revolutions, states of emergency, "or other similar events" – in a nutshell any disturbance that can affect profit to investment: protest movements,

boycotts and strikes are exempt. But that is nothing new. When the French lorry drivers went on strike, the European companies got damages from Brussels. This practice will simply be generalised.

In a similar way NAFTA has forced Mexico to revise its constitution to allow agribusiness to acquire land which was given to the peasants.

The possibility that the behaviour of investors themselves will be responsible for disturbances which can affect civil rights is not considered. In any case, the contracting governments must restrict social and even political freedoms.

The sovereignty of the state, but also the right of peoples to decide certain political and economic options will be totally subordinate to the treaty's requirements. The MNCs, the private investors will have a voice on a par with governments and can force the later to apply aspects of the treaty. Governments must, in effect, "accept without condition putting the case to an international arbitrator".

Business and investors can therefore bring forward a case but this can't be done by individuals or associations. A state however can't take action against an investor since the latter has no obligations.

The irony of it all is that, for a long time, France has refused to accept International Jurisdiction in respect of Human Rights.

TRADE UNIONS

Those trade unions represented in the OECD by international organisations are happy to demand that the MAI include a 'social clause', unsuccessfully, but not challenging the basis of the agreement.

This is not the position held by numerous consumer, human rights and environmental groups and also some unions.

The paradox is that the US has said they don't want to sign the agreement because it was "not treating the US interests fairly", according to the trade secretary. "A lot of effort is needed before the US can sign up".

This is standard fare from the US when a treaty is in the process of being negotiated, be it the Uruguay Round, the NAFTA or the GAT. The policy is to incite the business community to apply pressure and force other governments to the negotiating table with proposals which are more acceptable to the US.

THE EFFECTS OF LIBERALISATION

"The Ultra-liberal Trojan Horse has entered Brussels", says Jack Lang. With the MAI, "we have a sort of Soviet economic model controlled by the heads of big concerns and beyond the control of the people". (*Le Monde*, 10th February 1998)

Jospin proclaims we mustn't sign the treaty if there is not a cultural exception, yet we know this is highly provisional and we'd be surprised if Jospin is not also aware of this.

Strauss-Kahn claims the MAI will create jobs! But from 1993 to 1995 the one hundred biggest concerns reduced their workforce by 4% per annum and in the next two years GM will lay off 42,000, Hyundai 40,000, Kodak 19,900, Electrolux 12,000, etc. Does Strauss really think jobs will be created?

The setting up of the MAI doesn't only mean the loss of national sovereignty; it means also that populations will no longer have, in any way, the possibility of influencing the decisions of their governments. The concept of 'democracy' takes on all the meaning attributed to it by anarchists when it is limited to the framework of capitalism. The citizen disappears completely behind the consumer.

Rene Berthier

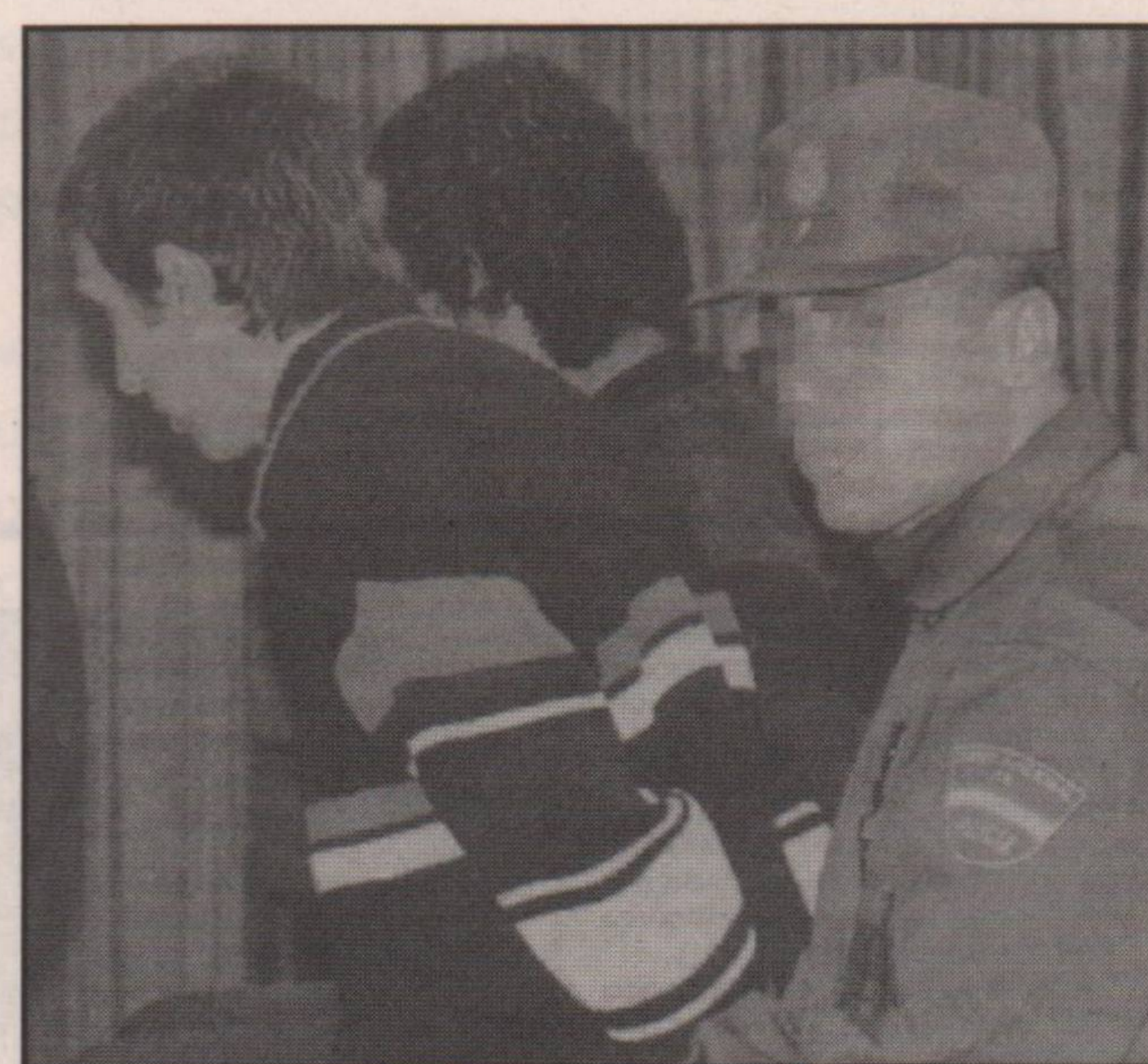
(translated from *Le Monde Liberaire*)

Córdoba: 'anarchist' trial

Last month the trial of three Italians and one Argentinian began in Andalucia. They are accused of assaulting an officer of the Córdoba branch of the Bank of Santander and killing two women police officers on 18th December 1997. Some thirty-odd anarchists turned out to protest, claiming that the accused are anarchists, not assassins, and demanding total amnesty.

According to the newspaper *El Pais*, the young protesters were members of the CNT (national confederation of labour) and the organisation Cruz Negra Anarquista. This group demonstrated at the entrance to the court house watched by a heavy guard of police. The defence solicitor, Luis Kraunel, complained about the court's refusal to allow the anarchist protesters access to the proceedings. He also objected to the continued handcuffing of his clients during the trial. One of the accused claimed this was a form of torture.

The jury was formed of seven women and two men. Christopher Robinson of the CGT (anarcho-syndicalist union federation) tells me that when the incident happened last December it caused a stir in the media as it seemed that these local policewomen were the first women police officers to be killed in these circumstances in Spain.



The prosecution is asking for 157 years jail in total for the four accused – Claudio Lavazza, Michelle Pontolillo, Giovanni Barcia and Giorgio Eduardo Rodriguez. Later in evidence it was claimed that another participant in the attack on the bank had got away. The description of this individual was given as a brown-haired man, small, with curly hair.

The evidence of one of the local police present at the scene of the killings confirmed that one of his female colleagues, who was later killed, began firing first before Claudio Lavazza opened fire.

The case continues ...

Sanctions: are they a crime?

Dear Freedom,

As I have already said, I thoroughly support Milan Rai's individual attempt to help Iraqis with medical aid. I have admired his contributions to *Freedom* and *Peace News* in the past, and can understand, and even agree with, the heart's overruling the head in certain cases. It is when the heart tries to pretend that the head is on its side that the trouble starts.

His letter (4th April) carefully avoids discussing the point of the sanctions about which he is so indignant. In the first place, they replaced war as a means of getting Saddam to disarm. Unless one takes the egregious view of the editors of *Peace News* that sanctions are as evil as war, this is an improvement from the point of view of both the cannon-fodder and the targets.

Secondly, sanctions have been in place for seven years for one reason only: that Saddam refuses to allow UN inspectors to verify his stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. At any time in those seven years sanctions could easily have been lifted, had Saddam wished. Why did he not so wish, preferring to see 'his' people's children dying? Any fool knows the answer: because his power rests on the arms he has ready. So

much for his government's urgent desire to bring in medicines, equipment, etc.

As regards Saddam's previous wonderful provision of hospitals, schools etc., perhaps Milan Rai should ask Kurds and Marsh Arabs what they think about this. Perhaps his heart should bleed a little bit for those who died hideously under Saddam's ethnic cleansing (ignored in the West). He could also have a word or two – as I have – with Iraqis exiled in other countries after being tortured and now afraid to return, and agonised by threats to their families. How do they feel about giving Saddam a free hand again?

He suggests that only with foreign currency can medicines be acquired. Brazil is another third world country (and certainly does not have a national health service that is "the envy of the Middle East"), yet there is a national laboratory there that makes antibiotics and other basic medicines at a fraction of the multinational companies' price. Is Milan Rai saying that this has been impossible for a country that was formerly much richer than Brazil? I leave readers to think what they will of Milan Rai's defence of Saddam spending millions on conspicuous religion – the so-called Saddam Hussein

Mosque – while 'his' people starve.

My last point about this letter, which to me sounds far more Liberal than Anarchist, concerns its curious passivity in relation to capitalism. The argument that "we can do something about sanctions" and not about other starving children in other countries is based on an acceptance of capitalism. The capitalist system, and its iniquitous distribution of resources, is responsible for the plight of the starving children elsewhere. But, as Milan Rai evidently believes, we can do nothing against the forces of capitalism so we had better concentrate on attacking the UN (since Saddam has refused to give way) – and this without even insisting that Saddam destroy this terrifying stockpile of germ and chemical agents which, in the hands of a megalomaniac like him, can rapidly be used either to torture 'his' people or to invade anywhere he wishes.

I would very much like to hear what makes Milan Rai trust Saddam's government – any government – to the extent of turning on the money taps without any guarantee at all (from a convicted liar) as to how this money will be used, and without at least laming his capacity for evil.

Jon Roe

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January to March 1998

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Total = £484.00

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

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Total = £304.00

Raven Deficit Fund

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Total = £306.00

Anarchism and tomatoes

Dear Freedom,

I am mystified by Donald Room's mis-interpretation of some of the comments in my historical account (in two parts), 'Anarcho-Syndicalism: an English Eclipse'. He is factually wrong about me ever being a full-time union official. I have always been an electrician except on those occasions when I have found an easy life in the dole queue (see Mr Room's letter in *Freedom*, 7th March).

There are other inaccuracies in his second letter (25th April), but of more concern for one who in his 'Wildcat' cartoons normally rails against strait-laced respectability is a hint of political correctness in his letters. In the paragraph of mine upon which he focuses an almost self-righteous passion, he seems to be laying down laws for telling jokes. Bumper tomato crops and being 'business-like' are, it seems, unmentionable terms.

Perhaps I should have said 'workman-like' to please Mr Room.

When I referred to the "cult of the dilettante" I made it clear I was referring to English anarchists – not to the Italian son of Soho shopkeepers, who I identified with Wittgenstein who said "I am the son of a businessman, and I want to be businesslike about philosophy". Wittgenstein, of course, was not English either, but Austrian – I mention this in case Wittgensteinians too should get hold of the wrong end of the stick.

All of this may make me an Anglo-phobe or a racist, but not the kind of skunk Mr Room portrays me as being. As an allotment holder who annually fights a losing battle against weeds and diseases, I could never call cultivating tomatoes or market gardening a task for dilettantes. Only an urban idiot would think like that.

Brian Bamford

NET WATCH

Soviet reactors threatened by 'meltdown'

The millennium bug is a glitch in many of the world's computers that is expected to make them malfunction at midnight on 31st December 1999.

There are 65 civilian nuclear plants in Russia and in the former Warsaw pact countries which might malfunction in interpreting the 00 date at 1900 instead of 2000. The *St Petersburg Times* (26th April) is not satisfied at Moscow's reassurances and says that Russia's nuclear industry is in desperate straits – a giant Chernobyl may be on our hands. The control room display systems, radiation monitoring and emergency response are particularly at risk. There are also not enough computer experts to go round to rectify the system in time.

Many of the nuclear plants are similar models to the one that exploded at Chernobyl, which released two hundred times as much radioactivity as the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The oldest Chernobyl-style power plant is the Leningrad nuclear power plant just eighty kilometres west of St Petersburg (the old Leningrad, if you must know). The Leningrad plant has been plagued with problems ranging from a hunger strike by unpaid engineers – who have continued to work monitoring the reactor's safety despite dizziness and fainting spells – to an over-burdened nuclear waste storage facility.

Racist border control in Slovakia

The Slovakian government refuses visas at the frontier to nationals from Africa, India and the Philippines (among others) and requires *police clearance* for each visitor before visas are granted from one of the few Slovak Embassies in the world.

This has come to light as a conference was scheduled by the United Nations in Slovakia, of all places, for a 'Convention on Biological Diversity'. No 'northern' country participant needs a visa (shades of Hitler). With less than a week to go, all those requiring visas from 'southern' countries are unlikely to get into Slovakia. This means 'government' representatives from Africa, the smaller island states, India (among others), as well as indigenous people and non-governmental organisations. This is indeed remarkable that such a conference should be held in Slovakia, whose government's policy has made thousands flee to the west and to find themselves in Dover or in Rochester jail due to a different form of racism by the Blair government.

JR (source: a-infos)

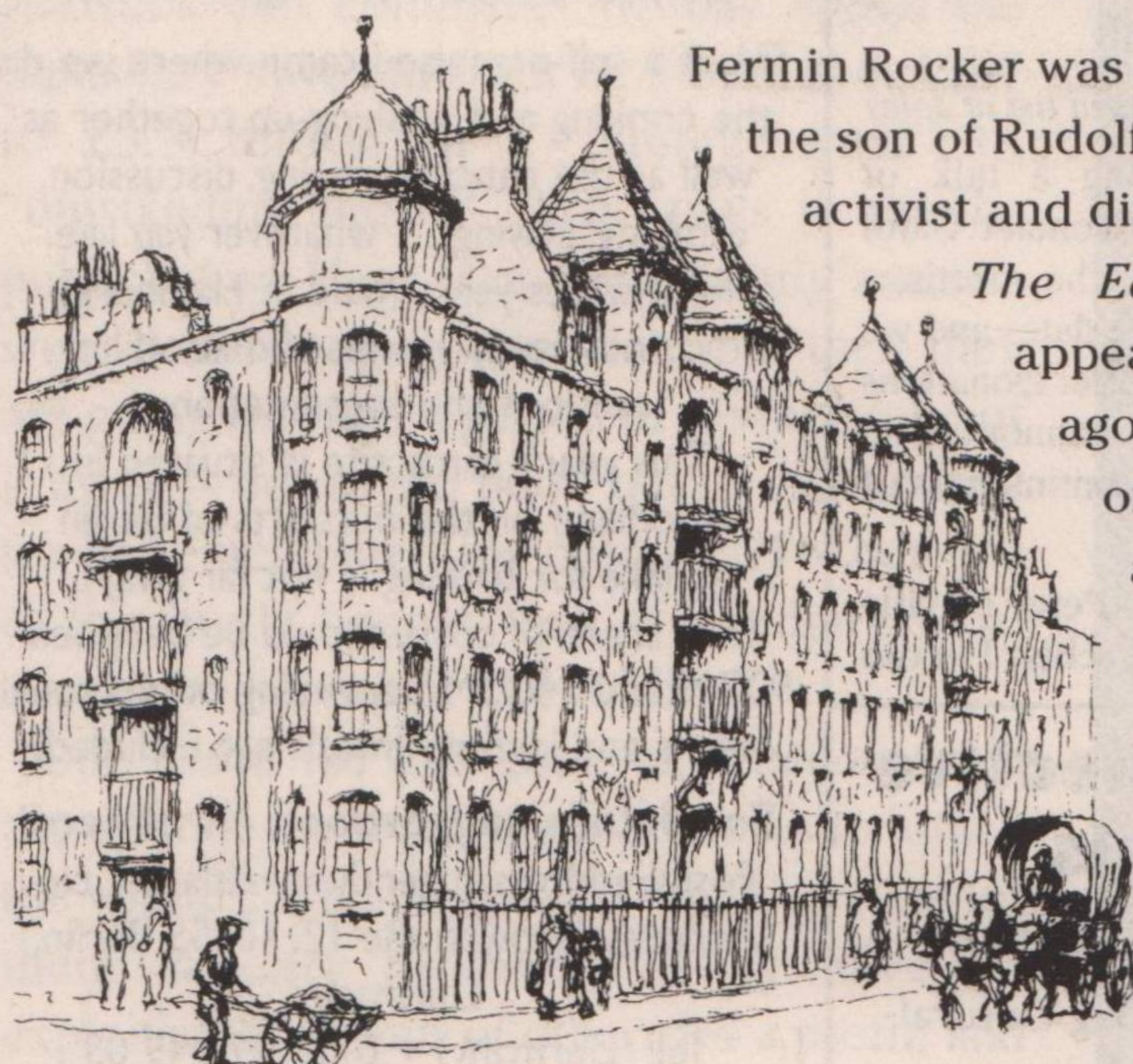
Fermin Rocker

The East End Years A Stepney Childhood

with drawings by the author

Fermin Rocker was born in the East End of London in 1907, the son of Rudolf Rocker the famous anarchist theorist, activist and disciple of Kropotkin.

The East End Years: A Stepney Childhood appeared in German translation a few years ago. This is its first publication in the original English. In exploring his origins as an artist, Fermin Rocker conjures a moving and colourful picture of his remarkable father, anarchism and of the Jewish East End. Rocker's story reminds us that the visionary topography of his paintings has its roots in a lost world.



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Meetings & Events

The London Anarchist Forum

Meet Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL
(nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free
but a collection is made to cover the cost of
the room.

— PROGRAMME 1998 —

8th May 'Anarchist Alternatives'
(symposium)

15th May 'May '68 in Paris by a
Participant' (speaker Sebastian Hays)

22nd May General discussion

29th May 'Anarchism and Science Fiction'
(symposium)

5th June General discussion

12th June 'Does Social Class Matter?'
(symposium)

19th June 'What I Want is Facts' (speaker
Nicolas Walter)

26th June General discussion

Please note that this is an amended list of dates

Anyone interested in giving a talk or
leading a discussion, please contact Carol
Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings
giving subject and prospective dates and we
will do our best to accommodate. Donations
are accepted from those who cannot attend
regularly but wish to see the continuation of
these meetings.

**Carol Saunders / Peter Neville
for London Anarchist Forum**

Anarchist Collective in Brussels

A new collective has taken a house in
Brussels and are organising cultural,
social and political activities.
They would like to communicate with
groups and individuals.

They give an e-mail address:

<http://perso.infonie.be/den11/>

Red Rambles

A programme of monthly guided walks in
Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire for
Socialists, Libertarians, Greens, Anarchists and
others. All walkers are reminded to wear boots
and suitable clothing and to bring food and
drink. Walks are 5 to 8 miles in length.

Sunday 31st May

Loughborough Countryside

Meet 11am outside Forest Gate Pub, Forest
Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, for five mile
circular walk.

**Telephone for further details
01773 827513**

Third Anarchist Summer Camp in Berlin

**This year the Anarchist Summer Camp
will be held in Berlin from Friday 31st
July to Sunday 9th August 1998.**

This is a self-organised camp where we do
the cooking and washing-up together as
well as the dancing, singing, discussion,
climbing, playing ... whatever you like.
In previous years (held in Hamburg)
various study groups and also film
sessions and presentations.

This year's camp site is situated in
woodland on the outskirts of Berlin
(a lake for bathing is not far away).
Your share of costs should be between
90DM and 140DM depending on personal
means and income (meals are included).

For details, suggestions, enrolment:

Postal address: Jugendumweltladen, c/o
Andreas, Jagowstraße 12, 10555 Berlin,
Germany

Tel: (Germany) + 0177 27 249 03

Fax: (Germany) +030 40 533 639

e-mail: acamp@jpberlin.de

For enrolment we require the following details:
your address (postal or fax), the number of persons
enrolling, details of any planned study groups,
projects, if you wish to play in a band, etc.

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