

Ethical gun-runners

Once upon a time the old Labour Party was determined to have no foreign policy – no gunboat diplomacy, no interference in the affairs of other nations. That was a long time ago – now New Labour, according to Robin Cook the Foreign Secretary, is delivering an ‘ethical foreign policy’.

Under this ‘ethical foreign policy’ it seems that 120 tonnes of arms were sent to President Kabbah in Conakry, Guinea, and in Freetown, to help him back to power in Sierra Leone. Though this was a breach of UN sanctions which banned the delivery of arms to persons connected with Sierra Leone, last week Tony Blair described the fuss over it as “hoo-hah”.

Mr Blair said “Let’s not forget that both the UN and the UK were trying to help the democratically elected regime to restore its position from an illegal military coup. It was a democratically elected regime that people were trying to help. They were quite right in trying to do it.”

COOK EATEN FOR BREAKFAST

Since the restoration of the democratically elected regime of President Kabbah in March *Private Eye* claims that he “has been busy closing newspapers and using a drive against alleged collaborators as an excuse to lock up hundreds of his opponents”. It seems that up to a thousand civilians were killed in the ‘democratic’ counter-coup.

Worse still, delivering ‘democracy’ involved the military occupation of parts of the country by Nigerian troops. According to *Private Eye*, “the violence and atrocities continue ... as Nigeria’s military ruler General Sani Abacha seeks not to restore the democracy he denies his own people, but to shore up his country’s regional supremacy and give potentially troublesome commanders a chance to fill their pockets with Sierra Leone’s diamonds”.

New Labour’s ethical foreign policy under the clever, clever Mr Cook has allowed Nigerian-style democracy in through Sierra Leone’s front door while the Sandline mercenaries and Foreign Office functionaries shambled about at the back door. It seems that Cook and his deputy, Tony Lloyd, despite their ethical posing didn’t know their arse from their elbow when it came to implementing policy through their Foreign Office officials. Indeed, it seems that the Foreign Office mandarins have eaten the pair of them for breakfast.

AID TO INDONESIAN DICTATOR

We note the nobility of Mr Cook’s ethics didn’t stop fifty batches of British arms being sold to Indonesia since New Labour came to power. We don’t yet know if these have been used to inflict further suffering on the people of East Timor, in defiance of international law, or to put down internal protests or simply to deny

human rights in general. Ethics in foreign policy doesn’t seem to hinder doing business with dictators like Suharto.

Years ago Harford Thomas wrote: “The arms race has been even more damaging to third world countries than to the rich ... with 95 countries importing major weapons in 1976, the countries of the third world were spending almost three times as much on arms as they received in development aid”.

The kind of double standards of Labour politics are illustrated in a quote from Anthony Sampson writing about a previous Labour Prime Minister: “In a carefully written speech at the UN ... which was much praised by other delegates, Mr Callaghan spoke of Britain’s central role in disarmament, and stressed that the suppliers of arms had a special responsibility to practise restraint. Yet only two weeks later teams of British salesmen are shouting their wares at an arms fair, to sell still more guns, tanks and ammunition to customers abroad.”

It seems that democracy and human rights are being consumed in the west after a fashion, while weapons are being sold to dictators like Suharto elsewhere. There are profits in doing this. Last week Ann Clwyd, Labour MP, claimed Hawk jets given licences by the Tories would be sent to the Indonesian regime later this month. She says that “Indonesia has a corrupt, rotten government with a terrible record on human rights and we should not be selling arms there”.

CULTURE OF CONTROL

Increasingly Mr Cook’s New Labour ethical foreign policy looks threadbare. The corpses pile up in Indonesia, misery persists in Sierra Leone. Seemingly there has been an unlimited supply of weapons to the dictator, President Suharto, to help him control his own people and

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Robin Cook, Britain’s Foreign Secretary

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Report from the May Day '98 events and conference in Bradford ...

Anarchy's True Face

The bank holiday weekend of 1st May this year saw more than holiday-makers heading for the country. The city of Bradford had the good fortune to be descended on by hundreds of social revolutionaries attending the Reclaim May Day events organised by the anarchist 'One in Twelve Club'. Socialists, left communists, radical greens, as well as hordes of anarchists, talked, partied and drank both day and night away. One of the highlights of these events was the May Day '98 Conference of anarchists and other social revolutionaries. Registration for this occurred on the Friday at the One in Twelve Club and the talks themselves continued for the following three days at a local college. What follows is a personal account of what could turn out to be an historic event.

I arrived in Bradford late on the afternoon of 1st May, unfortunately not in time to catch the Mayday parade but early enough to observe some of the day's final festivities. After depositing my bags at a local hotel, I set out to find the acclaimed One in Twelve Club. For a dumb southerner like me, used to grid-like street systems, the roads of Bradford were very confusing and I soon lost my way. Fortunately I spied a bohemianly-dressed, well-spoken, middle class couple walking in a similar direction. They must be anarchists, I thought, and followed them. My suspicions proved correct and I soon arrived at the Club.

On registration I was given a white card with two numbers on: one my registration number, the other my group number (for the ten discussion groups into which we were to be divided). "You're number two" I was told

with a smile, revealing the continuing influence of '60s libertarian Sci Fi. I don't know who was declared number six but it's a good bet they demanded to know who was number one! We were told the groups were randomly selected to separate us from friends and comrades and get a fair mix in each group. This seemed to be true, with the exception that a deliberate attempt appeared to have been made to get an equal male-female mix - something welcomed by many of us bored with all-male meetings in smoke-filled rooms. An offer of an all-female group was made by the organisers, but was not taken up. Obviously revolutionary women are far less separatist than their reactionary counterparts in mainstream feminism.

The following day we gathered with apprehension, and not a little scepticism, at the conference venue. Participants at this stage still clung to their little cliques, occasionally eyeing suspiciously at unrecognised faces. Suddenly a voice piped up asking us to make our way to the main hall for the opening session. A hater of formal meetings, I gloomily made my way there, dreading a long series of speeches by boring prats, but I was to be pleasantly surprised. The opening session was short and succinct and, most surprisingly of all, humorous. What's this, I thought, where's the solemn call for solidarity and hard work? Instead we were told to have fun and enjoy the debates. Whatever happened to good old fashioned puritan anarchism? Dead I hope. The details of the weekend's format were announced and security details given. The session was then

rounded off with an appeal for us to respect the opinions of others and be as tolerant as possible. I believe that when I see it, I thought to myself as I made my way to group five.

So there we all were, twenty strangers sitting in a circle like some naff New Age encounter group. We introduced ourselves to each other and our initial facilitators explained the 'rules'. The true purpose of our white cards was then revealed: the long-winded and the boring could be vetoed by a general raising of cards hinting they should shut up. How I wished this could be introduced at the London Anarchist Forum! The debate was then begun. It was at this point, I later found out, that many groups spent an inordinate amount of time arguing about the debating style and what should be discussed first. Fortunately we launched straight in to the first topic on the list, adopting an informal system of hand raising and queued selection. By the end of the weekend this had been abandoned and our familiarity, and sense of discipline (installed by those very useful little cards), enabled us to operate more spontaneously in a free flowing debate with very little facilitation.

'Why are we marginalised?' was the first issue. 'Most people think we're odd or crazy' was a common view. 'We are crazy or we wouldn't be here' someone exclaimed. You speak for yourself comrade, I thought. 'Perhaps we're not crazy enough' said a more perceptive soul. It was generally agreed that if we want to change society we needed to interact with it a bit more, come down off our political platforms and relate as human beings. It was also pointed out that some younger people were far more radical than many anarchists and perhaps we could learn a bit from them. Certainly how to have fun if nothing else. In the days that followed we discussed work, industry, class, consumerism, the environment and finally our utopian dreams. Most of you will be glad to hear that in the latter debate it was unanimously agreed that monolithic socio-economic systems were out and diversity (if not actual plurality) was in. And I'm also pleased to announce that it was also nearly unanimously agreed that after the revolution money will be abolished. So stop worrying about those pensions!

The amazing thing about these debates was that they were actually productive, a dialogue was building up between people of diverse views, not all of them anarchist, and agreements were being achieved. While a pure consensus was never actually obtained (some contentious issues were 'swept under the carpet' and the group had shrunk from about twenty to twelve by the final day) an honest attempt was made to develop compromises and much common ground was reached. For those of us used to finicky arguments, point scoring and bickering, this was stunning. I was genuinely gob-smacked, to say the least. Of course there was a down-

side, we had all been entreated to be tolerant and respectful and, like good little children, we were very well behaved in this (perhaps conditioned by our classroom environment). This meant conflict and passion tended to be avoided, leading to the glossing over of some of our differences. But as was made clear throughout the conference, the event was not about reaching a global consensus, it was about initiating a dialogue and showing that we can all work together towards a common goal. This was certainly achieved and some concrete proposals for both more dialogue and coordinated practical activity were given at the summing up session by group representatives in the final plenary meeting.

Not everyone attended the debates however. Some preferred to take part in or watch the football tournament outside the venue, presumably in a gesture of anti-intellectualism, or perhaps mere pessimism. This event had the side effect of producing the first recorded instance of a 'UFO sighting' at an anarchist conference, as bored spectators suddenly became aware of a strange white object apparently hovering over the venue! Some declared this interloper to be nothing more than a 'bin-liner caught in the wind', 'No, it's a structured object' claimed others. More sober observers suggested the more convincing explanation of a police surveillance device. Who knows?

On the whole the conference seems to have been a success (of the nine groups it was said that only one couldn't reach any kind of real consensus and one split, though without recrimination). The sense of accord achieved should be carried over into practical activity. Certainly more conferences are planned and several working groups were initiated, including one for a possible 'Anarchist Day of Action'. We live in hope ...

Steve Ash

Crystal Palace Park protest camp



Environmental activists at Crystal Palace Park, South London, which is under threat from a proposed entertainment complex - see John Rety's report on page 2

Nuclear explosion in Pokharan, India

On the site of the 1974 nuclear underground tests, only 350 miles from New Delhi but within five miles of inhabited villages, new tests have taken place. This complete disregard for poor people is typical of the new administration.

On the principle of the dog that did not bark, Britain and Russia stand accused of either knowingly abetting these tests or secretly encouraging them. As it happens, political assassinations are rife in India - a thousand have been killed in Hyderabad alone and six hundred committed suicide last week (see also report on page 6).

The deafening silence of national CND is also remarkable, although the regions - especially Yorkshire CND - are urging protests and demonstrations.

source: a-infos

Rich and Poor



Architecture from an anarchist point of view is not all that easy to define. We are not all that enamoured by the concept of the master builder. Certainly there have been comrades, such as Brian Richardson and others, who have written about architecture from an anarchist point of view. But as Land is Ours will point out succinctly: the land is not ours. Castles in the air perhaps, but where do we build that anarchist building if we have no land to build it on?

Not that we have not tried wherever we could to put up edifices of one kind or another. There was even a very able architect in the '60s, whose name escapes me, who suggested that never mind the buildings let us establish service points where you could plug in and stay there as long as you wish – service meaning water, gas, electricity, telephone. Just plug in and move on to the next service point, so in turn your own home could be anywhere, a few sockets and you are at home.

Interesting idea, whose time has not come yet. Many of you still remember the Wandsworth eco-village, a huge bit of contaminated land by the Thames which was occupied by comrades and transformed into a really beautiful place to live. But it took time. The water, for example. It was not just left intact, the pipes were smashed by the delinquent owners, Guinness, who brew the black poison to some profit. What a profusion of anarchist architectural styles there were there – a veritable paradise on earth until the bailiffs and the hired thug police erased every building and burnt everybody's home and possessions. A year later the ground is still vacant. Only in memory do those buildings and vegetable plots flourish, and those boats powered by bicycle wheels which went as far as Battersea and never sank. For if government and the rest of the time-wasters would go to sleep for just a little while, the people themselves could create a world shining from talent.

More the pity that anarchist efforts are hampered. And yet yesterday Wandsworth, today Crystal Palace. There underneath the BBC mast a new village has arisen. Comrades (environmental activists) have set up camp on the proposed site for a monster development by a weak-brained architect of an entertainment complex with a parking lot for nearly 1,000 cars. The plan had been to chop down over 150 trees. The people who live around there are furious with the local council planners.

At the top of Crystal Palace Park they are, and it was a pleasure to visit them. I was lucky to have come just at the time of their evening meeting. The sun was setting, but it was still warm. Such good company and good humour is not to be found anywhere else in London. And factual information, for example about the latest surveillance digital cameras which are snooped on them and almost instantaneously their picture is on the snoopers' internet. There is a wish-list at the camp of things that they need, such as food, warm clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, tools and building materials. They are already getting a lot of support from the locals and they are going to open the gate to visitors on Saturday 30th May. I suggest that all those chivvying each other on the letters pages would learn a lot about anarchism and, dare I say it, love.

Life continues even against the wishes of Johnny Prescott, who has decided that Bromley Council can build their giant commercial complex in the twelve-acre top site at Crystal Palace Park without a public inquiry. But they haven't reckoned with those brave selfless activists, braver than all and deserving everybody's support. And how these people can build and how all our futures depend on them.

John Rety

The Economic Anarchist Community is one of the components in the Gand libertarian centre, next to the squats, of the anarchist Collective (a group of students) and the ABC. Gent, a bookshop/distributors since the summer of 1992 when the Anarchist Economic Community (AEC) was set up, was supposed to represent a concrete alternative, even on a small scale, to the enormous and monstrous European Economic Community. Along with direct action and exchange of information, we thought that libertarians should introduce into their daily lives those ideas they uphold (including in the economic field). Waiting for the fantastic revolution is a pointless exercise; the revolution is here and now. From its origins the AEC wanted to be a living experience where we would work together, and seize back control over our existence by breaking the artificial boundaries between the economic, the political and the private.

In practice this has come about by the setting up of a network of work groups, organised along anarchist federalist principles (absence of hierarchy and the value of autonomy and mutual aid) whilst everyone had the same aim which was to work for the blossoming of a self-governing community which would be healthy both in a social and an ecological sense.

The work groups are as follows: a gardening collective (a large urban vegetable garden whose produce, when not eaten by the rabbits, is distributed), a food co-op (collective buying of quality food allows for savings), a mobile kitchen (logistic support for action groups who are involved in campaigns and strikes), a collective to produce food supplements (marmalade and wine from fruits), a collective kitchen (vegetarian meal once a week followed by more convivial encounters at the bar). Other plans have been dreamt up but have never really taken off: car-sharing and recycled clothing, for example.

A PROJECT WHICH BEGAN WELL

During the first three years (1992-95), the anarchist economic community developed well. Despite the highs and lows common to this kind of project we managed to rent a house and set up our collective kitchen there.

The energy generated by the project attracted many others and the house became a meeting and debating forum where other actions came to the light of day. In the heat of preparing the food a women's group was formed which in turn led to the setting up of a men's group.

Other people of an anarcho-syndicalist persuasion had thought of setting up a section of the autonomous confederation of workers (CAT, the Belgian equivalent of the CNT) and others set up a refugee support group. During this period we also established overseas contacts (notably via the internet, with help from refugees and also with the increased mobility of our members). These evolutions along with the permanent discussions and debates made us reconsider the aims and strategies of the project. From the beginning some of us had our doubts about how we would actually realise our ultimate goal. They felt we had too many illusions about the possibility of setting up a real autarkic economy.

How could you really be independent from the omnipresent capitalist economy? How could we practice self-management without making concessions to the system and to capitalist values? Should we, for example, pay some of our volunteers so they would be independent from state aid? Who, how and on what basis should such payments be made? What would be the relationship between the waged and the unwaged? How

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A Belgian Collective

would we take into account our hatred for derisory wages? In a nutshell the risks of being recuperated into the system were always present and we didn't want to end up in the alternative green-capitalist camp!

THE CRITIQUE OF IDEALISM

In practice, the notion of 'stifling' – seeing the AEC as a node in the development of a network which one day would stifle the capitalist system – was too idealistic. In any case what is the value of an independent economic community? Wouldn't the AEC risk becoming an island in a sea of misery? To abandon a strategy of offensive confrontation would surely be, in point of fact, an attitude of surrender faced with the hard reality of exploitation, growing poverty, racism, repression?

Would not such an initiative lead to depoliticisation rather than radicalisation? Moreover, wasn't this project a reflection of the origins, values and bourgeois attitudes that many of us had and shouldn't we try to disengage from them? By asking all these questions we had also in a way provided our own answers which would grow out of our own practices. The different collectives which had appeared at the margins of the AEC – undoubtedly because they couldn't find a home in the heart of the project – was no more and no less than the outward expression of these criticisms. As a group we had to be aware of this.

CREATING AN IDENTITY

We also felt in these debates the need to have a more transparent identity in order to simplify contact with others, notably those who were overseas. It was at that time that we decided to change the name of our group; the AEC became the anarchist centre. This simple name was chosen because it better reflected who we were and what we wanted.

This period of intense debate allowed us to affirm more explicitly what we had in common: our commitment to anarchism as an alternative and viable alternative to the existing society. Without hiding our differences, which still exist, we no longer want them to divide us. On the contrary, the respect of different views was for us a central tenet of the anarchist position. As in life in general, we need to make these differences explicit, discuss them and go beyond them. Concretely this meant we had to face up to these contradictions as complex interactions which exist in society. We felt that anarchism had always tried to seize this complexity. Although historically anarchism plants its roots in the nineteenth century in the struggles of the workers for a socialist ideal and although her greatest successes and defeats were in the anarcho-syndicalist movement our current of thought had founded itself in the critique of other means of domination than just those of work and capital, for example relations between men and women, children and adults, blacks and whites (this latter of more recent importance).

We realise that when we put it on paper in this way it all seemed very abstract; we hope to develop some of these ideas more systematically in a future article. Let us

simply add that it isn't simply a case of calling for more tolerance: we are all aware of some of the more condescending and repressive sides of 'tolerance' along with the 'idealism' which goes with it. What counts for us is that we should not end up divided over points of principle. We have seen too many examples of sectarianism, endless schisms which led to the collapse of groups. We instead wish to place the emphasis on those things we hold in common in order that we may regain our collective identity by putting ourselves in an historic setting. All this without losing sight of our objective, to make anarchism a coherent force and a synthesis which can start to have an effect on the world.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Today the anarchist centre seeks to become an organisation which incarnates the idea of unity in diversity. To achieve this aim we have organised ourselves by setting up a secretariat; not a centralising organ but rather a committee which can provide the necessary logistic support and to reinforce and develop our relations with the outside world. The AEC as it originally was has not disappeared but has become a part of the overall picture. It is the economic base on which we have built our self-managing political actions. Thus the groups have been brought together.

Alternative Libertaire Bruxelles



New readers start here

A-infos (details of how to subscribe see back page) is an ever-increasing bulletin board of news from practically every location of the globe. In the past week alone sixty different despatches have come in from comrades writing first-hand information from countries as far apart as India, Poland and Australia. What is astonishing is the level of repression opposed by anarchists of courage, intelligence and concise factuality.

Environmental struggle in Poland

Hundreds of demonstrators are trying to stop a road through a nature reserve near Opole by Mount Saint Anna, and Newbury-style tree dwellers and tunnellers are resisting the road contractors who are backed up by the police and the military.

At the same time there is a great protest movement against the 'ski business', an international tourist industry which is deforesting the slopes near Krynica. In retaliation trees have been planted in the middle of the ski paths.

Civil liberty violation in California

For three decades a state-authorised committee has been spying on at least twenty thousand left-wing activists and documenting their personal habits, social lives and political and professional relationships. This has come to light when one member of the committee realised that he was also spied upon.

The Writers Guild of America is demanding that the files be opened, even though this might mean the revelation of 'unsupported innuendo and character assassinations'. The purpose of this spying was partly to intimidate 'civil rights workers'.

JR (source: a-infos)

Report from the Bradford Conference

Organised by ex-Class War on the back of the Reclaim May Day events, the conference was generally acclaimed a resounding success by participants. Summing up speeches at the end of the three-day gathering emphasised the positive and highlighted some themes of common concern; namely the need to network more, especially on a local level and help break down the habits which lead to marginalisation of anarchists from everyday struggles; to build tolerance and co-operation between the various anarchist strands; to make better use of existing resources and organisation. One woman from Leeds said this was more like the true face of anarchism than anything she had previously seen in the movement.

Based on the 'encuentra' model favoured by the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, the conference allowed 220 people to discuss a wide range of issues while remaining in the same small groups for the duration. With the aim of exploring new ideas and approaches in the struggle for social change, any controversies and divisions would have to be worked through in the group – there was no other way! At the very least we would have to exercise tolerance and respect.

Speaking with participants from other groups, I get the impression that people had similar experiences. The organisers hope to produce a full report of the proceedings to be compiled from the rather too voluminous summaries produced each day by each of the ten groupings. In the meantime I will try to provide a brief personal impression of what went on in my group. We were eighteen men (there were two such groups to offset the gender imbalance in other groups) from London to Glasgow to Liverpool, California to Germany, of various anarchistic persuasions, and most of us had not previously met. We had one member of the International Communist Current along too, as had several groups, whose announced intention was to steer us all out of the swamp of anarchism and onto firm Trot territory. We followed the four main themes provided by the organisers, starting with:

Marginalisation. Everyone experienced this in one way or another, but it was obviously a complex question. The man from the ICC suggested a simple answer, namely to sacrifice ourselves for the revolution in the name of class struggle and educating the masses was the only way forward. That provided some room for discussion. People felt there was a use for traditional analyses, but that things had become more complex and less clear-cut. Complexity had led to division and diversity, and if we are to move on we must embrace this complexity and not hanker after simple formulas. We want a revolution, but there might be many ways to get there, we need to respect other ways, the personal, the

lifestylist, the class struggler and the eco-warrior, and try to overcome the marginalisation amongst ourselves. The Reclaim the Streets and Liverpool Dockers collaboration was the best example of this. The man from the ICC was of the opinion that this only diluted the workers struggle, and staged a walkout just before the end of this first day, co-ordinated with the rest of his comrades.

Work. There is general disdain for the work ethic now being used by the capitalist rulers to beat the workers. This is easy to understand. It is more difficult though to sort out the oppressor from the oppressed. Society is now a complex hierarchy of overlapping and mobile classifications. Some people want to abolish work, others see it as a necessity – both perhaps can learn from the other. Abolitionists are lifestylists who live happily without the consumer garbage of everyday life; others have jobs, families and mortgages. It dismays me how some have little conception of economics and trade, how these are seen as bad things by eco-anarchists. They don't seem to want to consider the complexity of organising a modern technological society. Do things just happen? **Land, ecology and environment.** We are assured by men from Earth First that few hold to the 'Green Anarchist' primitivist position, that Earth Firsters do think about organising a society to fulfil the needs of everyone. What is crucial here is the starting point. People react against the rape of the planet and this brings them to a kind of anarchism with a different focus. Others get attracted to the historical anarchist tradition with its different emphases. What is needed is more talk and more working together, which means us going to their meetings and actions and them coming to ours. This is happening all the time, of course, but its worth stating, for there is always a danger that anarchists remain in a ghetto of their own choosing.

Dream Time. It's good to dream, but let's face it we all have different dreams. That's why politics teachers cannot deal with the phenomenon of anarchism which doesn't easily allow itself to be packaged for easy

consumption, but is subject to periodic bouts of hibernation and re-invention. The principles on which anarchism is built read like a list of moral exhortations which don't easily fit into standard political texts, but they are nevertheless worth repeating: free association, mutuality, solidarity, respect for the freedom of others, consensus, inclusivity, basis-democracy, a hatred of dogma and the domination of ideologies. They are worth

repeating because they will be the strength of anarchism if we learn to apply them among ourselves.

Some of the above are my personal feelings which I took to the conference, but I honestly feel that they were expanded and strengthened by the good will of the people I met in the pleasant and uplifting atmosphere. Well done to the organisers.

JL

Reclaim the Streets in Leeds

Amazed bystanders witnessed the Battle of Bouncy Castle in Leeds City centre when on Saturday 9th May activists took to the streets to reclaim them from the enclosed property dominated culture, and liberate them for the free expression of joyous anarchy. The Bill were out in force exercising a policy of 'prevention' as one plod put it. But they were totally hoodwinked by the cunning organisers who had two columns of three hundred revellers marching separate routes through the town, weaving in and out of malls, up and down escalators and through crowds of shoppers where the riot cops could not follow, before converging on a pre-arranged location in Albion Street.

A second diversionary tactic attracted the enemy to a ruck over the erection of a tripod. Police reinforcements were tied up here while the main business went on further up the street. A bouncy castle was produced, and led to the ludicrous spectacle of a tug-o-war between the disciplined force of order obeyers and those who prefer to think for themselves. Despite the presence of children, the boys and girls in blue brought out their batons and started laying about themselves in complete panic. There were some nasty plain clothes police types there too, particularly active in causing trouble, and people were beaten, prodded and sprayed with CS-gas. Helmets flew and a police radio was borrowed. One officer even had a whiff of his own gas canister and had to be taken to hospital. Undismayed, the admirable people refused to be moved and staged a sit down,

which completely stumped the coppers, who cast about themselves not knowing who to hit. Sensibly, then, they decided to call it a day, and resorted gradually to their other smiley, foot-tapping mode. It is worth adding that only a small proportion of people were involved in contact with the police so those wishing to avoid this because of kids or any reason can easily do so. On the other hand there is a distinct lack of understanding of how effective non-violent tactics can be in such situations. De-arresting can be as simple as a few people walking between a copper and its victim. Arm-linking, sit-downs and chanting can really dis-arm authority too.

Police had to settle for fourteen arrests, yet found it hard to come up with arresting officers! The usual brutality was applied with handcuffing, but perhaps the worst cause for complaint that we have is against the pathetic macho sense of humour that the police hide their inadequacies behind. They had to swallow a bitter pill, though, because the liberation of the street went on despite their best efforts. It is hard for them to see the sacred law flouted in such an enjoyable fashion! But the crowning glory came when at 5pm the party began to leave in procession and march in good order to nearby Hyde Park. This foils the Mr nice cops who tend to turn nasty and round up stragglers if the party breaks up bit by bit.

Those arrested were mostly released with cautions, others were charged with assault, possession of an offensive weapon, and drugs.



— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 6th June, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 28th May.

That ol' devil Person

But a few minutes walk from the tomb-like Holborn Underground station is an area meant for sad and silent weeping if one so wished. A world of ancient Victorian housing long meant for decay or property speculation, its silence has the unsought air of people eating, shitting and murmuring cloaked in shrouds of their own desire for a physical end to their lives lived out within a world in which they were born as strangers. Like the leavings of every empire damping its camp fires and kicking the cat out of the folding tents, they are the colonial-trained native administrations to be left to the slaughter of the Freedom Fighters mob killings. Yet within these tall houses that seem to carry the stench of abandoned graveyards, they are white of skin and, within private schools that 'the family' could ill afford, they are there embalmed within large faded photographs hanging on walls where in place of honour is written the names of staff and childish scholars killed off in various minor and major wars. And those within that world who survive wear their indifference of we, her Majesty's majority, but it was ever so.

Here within this area, wherein every footfall seems that of a stranger, are what is known as the shops and to the final indignity the supermarket wherein neatly tailored old men carry their wire basket and gently finger their purchases as neatly dressed old women whose late husbands were in administration peer not at the prices on the packets but the worth of the contents, for they are the last ebb tide of a long dead social culture for man, this is now Cool Britain.

Here within a stone's throw, if one should be so crass, is the October Gallery at 24 Old



Gloucester Street, WC1, and the exhibition that we honoured or honoured us was 'The Art of Aleister Crowley' and it was pleasure most rightly as we climbed the stairs to the upper gallery within the gallery. We were

there for the wine and the screaming heebie-jeebies for Aleister, the fallen star of the afternoon, found all his metaphysical problems solved by going back to earth or his maker fifty years or so ago. This was a man who made the front page of a Sunday tabloid by being called the most evil man in the world, and he loved that reputation.

No Byron, for he wrote the most awful poetry, yet on entering a room he expected to have the men screaming and the women shaping their gin glasses in the shape of the Cross for this, it was held, was Dracula made manifest minus top hat and evening dress.

A man born out of time in that he belonged to Marlowe and the Devil-seekers, he spent over half his life seeking that non-physical world in open conflict with the Christian ace supremo, and Aleister's lottery ticket never paid off. He had his small stone abbey within the Mediterranean wherein he sacrificed a stray cat as the forerunner to the suicide of Mudd, his one male disciple, and the branding of the female 'mit the name that shall not be spoken', but in all of fun and games Old Nick never dropped in for a glass of stomach-churning home-made wine or a spaghetti lunch.

I do not mock Crowley, for I was a devotee of his and boasted that I had seen the old man twice but no one believes, and I sat through the 1973 film *The Exorcist* grinning as 'de Evil One caused the young girl to spew up all that coloured porridge to the agony of the Catholic exorcist 'no night calls'. Yet Crowley deserves to be judged on his work as an artist, and on that judgement he fails lamentably for, as with all naive paintings they're crude in the draftsmanship and brash in the colouring. Like most people with a

message that they try to illustrate in coloured paint or in prose or poetry, wherein they use over-emotional few repeating words, this is Crowley's fault. And then the major fault in that the crude coloured daub has to be explained in its title, and Crowley does just that, as with 'Four monks carrying a black goat over the snow to nowhere', and what you get is a small group of what appear to be figures carrying something against a white background. But on display were his drawings/paintings of his claimed mistresses plus, within our living midst, Kenneth Anger who gave the intelligentsia his underground movies such as *Scorpio Rising*, etc., etc., plus Crowley's case-contained Magic 666 wand, but we are old, we are old, and we definitely wear our trousers rolled, to re-quote the late Eliot, man. Yet Stalin, Hitler, Crowley or Pol Pot were not evil, but the cause of evil in others in that they signalled which sluice-gate should be opened in the slaughter-house of the world. They were the clerks of history and they sprawled their signatures at the bottom of endless death certificates and took the credit or the curses according to the academic of the day. I doubt if any one of this baleful quartet ever killed an individual in cold blood.

Who is evil, you will ask, and I tell you this – that it is those who mentally and physically torture and kill for that singular pleasure that it gives them. Do I wrong dear old Aleister by naming him with Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot? Maybe, but I can never forgive him for sacrificing that poor old moggy in the cause of metaphysical science in its search of the unobtainable.

Show me how to transmute lead into gold and I will produce another mass metal for the mob to sweat over in the factories. Grow me another ear of corn and I will feed the hungry.

Arthur Moyses

Matt Ridley studied Zoology at Oxford before becoming a journalist and author. He currently lives in Northumberland and is chair of The International Centre for Life. His recently published book *The Origins of Virtue* is a well written and erudite examination of the origins of both co-operative and competitive behaviour within human societies. His work is very much a continuation and development of the debate prompted by the works of Darwin, Huxley and Kropotkin in the late nineteenth century.

Ridley's prologue gives an account of Kropotkin's escape from the St Petersburg military hospital jail, and how the help he received in so escaping was in part one of the inspirations behind his writing of *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*.² Ridley describes Kropotkin's book as a prophetic work. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* owed its genesis to his decision to counter the arguments of Thomas Henry Huxley, who argued that nature was an arena for pitiless struggle between self-interested creatures. This intellectual tradition goes back to the likes of Malthus, Hobbes, Machiavelli and St Augustine and viewed human nature as basically selfish unless controlled by culture. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, on the other hand, viewed co-operation as an ancient animal legacy and one with which humanity was also gifted.

Ridley's own book draws not only on biology and sociobiology, but also on game theory, evolutionary psychology, anthropology, history, economics and political philosophy. He develops an argument which, while not in agreement with Kropotkin's attempts to establish mutual aid as a factor in human evolution. The distinction is not pedantic. Ridley argues that Kropotkin was being anthropomorphic in his development of mutual aid as a theory as there are few examples of true altruism in the natural world. Many examples of co-operative behaviour within insect and animal societies are effectively co-operation within large families, related individuals and not unrelated

The Origins of Virtue

strangers. Beehives, ant colonies, termites' nests, meerkats, prides of lions, troops of monkeys are all examples of such. As Ridley points out, all worker bees are sisters, they share half their genes and the motivation for their behaviour is most likely genetic. The same applies to most other examples of co-operation in the natural world. According to Ridley there are some genuine examples of mutual aid in nature, but they are few in number and not anywhere near as widespread as argued in Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. Ridley argues that Kropotkin got it the wrong way around. Co-operation is not something we share with a largely co-operative natural world. Humans who co-operate are very frequently *not genetically related*. Ridley argues that it is the capacity for *strangers* to co-operate as well as to compete that makes us truly human, and that this capacity for strangers to co-operate marks the difference between humans and much of the rest of the living world.

There is much else in this work which will be of interest to anarchists. However, it will not always make comfortable reading for ideologists and dogmatists. Primitivists and Green Anarchists may be surprised to learn that the peoples of the world of hunter-gatherers lived a life not in peaceful harmony with the natural world, but were responsible for mass extinctions of native wildlife on every continent which humans reached (page 217). At the same time anarchists who do not reject modernism, monetary exchange and the freedom to participate in the market can find support for their position in Ridley's argument that even the earliest hunter gatherers, predating both the state and modern capitalism, lived in societies which made use of and benefited from divisions of labour and trade between individuals and groups on a market basis (page 177). Peace activists may be alarmed at Ridley's claim that hostility to outsiders and even war itself is a by-product of our evolutionary tendency to co-operate.

Like many other contemporary biologists and anthropologists, Ridley sees the driving force behind evolution as being developments which directly benefit the individual rather than the group. However, Ridley does arrive at conclusions which, while not anarchist, do lean in an anarchist direction. In his final chapter titled 'Trust' he makes a statement about the negative effects upon both community and society of state provision of social and other services, a critique which echoes that of Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action*: "In Britain, the welfare state and the mixed-economy 'corpocracy' replaced thousands of effective community institutions – friendly societies, mutuals, hospital trusts and more, all based upon reciprocity and gradually nurtured virtuous circles of trust – with giant, centralised Leviathans like the National Health Service, nationalised industries and government quangos, all based on condescension. Because more money was made available through higher taxes, something was gained at first. But soon the destruction wrought to Britain's sense of community was palpable. Because of its mandatory nature the welfare state encouraged in its donors a reluctance and a resentment, and in its clients not gratitude but apathy, anger or an entrepreneurial drive to exploit the system. Heavy government makes people more selfish not less" (page 263).

Ridley's vision of an alternative is also one with which anarchists may have some sympathy: "But I do believe there have been glimpses of a better way, of a society built upon voluntary exchange of goods, information, fortune and power between free individuals in small enough communities for trust to be built" (page 263).

In the same chapter he also gives qualified support to Kropotkin's anarchist vision: "If we are to recover social harmony and virtue, if we are to build back into society the virtues that made it work for us, it is vital we reduce the power and

scope of the state. That does not mean a vicious war of each against all. It means devolution: devolution of power over people's lives to parishes, computer networks, clubs, teams, self-help groups, small businesses – everything small and local. It means a massive disassembling of the public bureaucracy. Let national and international governments wither into their minimal function of national defence and redistribution of wealth (directly without an intervening and greedy bureaucracy). Let Kropotkin's vision of a world of free individuals return" (page 264).

Ridley's book is not an example of determinist socio-biologist thought. It provides a plausible theory of how individuals find it in their interest to co-operate, and an explanation of the variety of behaviours which result. It challenges some long held anarchist dogmas. It has for too long been too easy an option for anarchists to reply 'mutual aid' to people who question how and why anarchism can work. Ridley's book re-focuses 'mutual aid' as a term which has meaning for human society. In short it no longer over-reaches the term and rescues it from obloquy.

Jonathan Simcock

1. *The Origins of Virtue* by Matt Ridley (Penguin, £8.99).

2. *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* by Peter Kropotkin, with an introductory essay 'Mutual Aid and the Social Significance of Darwinism' by John Hewetson (Freedom Press, £8.95*).

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Anarchism in the Americas and China

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Claude's survival story

I met Claude Doubinsky only twice. The first time was at the endlessly hospitable Hewetson household in Vauxhall Bridge Road in 1948, when he was fourteen. On that occasion I simply used my repertoire of welcoming and friendly phrases. The second time was in 1997, when he had come to Suffolk to commemorate Peta Hewetson, even though he too, at only 63, had reached an advanced stage in the cancer that killed him last month.

So I never really knew Claude, who wasn't an anarchist but was a teacher of English Literature, and in 1948 I had been far too well-mannered to ask a boy how he managed to survive the determination of the Nazis and their French admirers to eliminate him. This I could ask in 1997. Over the decades in between we had learned just a little more about the French wartime experience, and its effect on the variety of people who had taken refuge in that country, like the Spaniards around Toulouse, and the endless colonies of escapees from Stalinist Russia and Hitler's Germany, as well as from Mussolini's Italy.

Nestor Makhno died in Paris in 1935. Volin (V.M. Eichenbaum) died there in 1945. Claude's father and mother were friends of both. Jacques and Rosa Doubinsky, who came from Bessarabia and Romania, were anarchist refugees, whose lives were threatened yet again by the Nazi occupation of Paris in 1940.

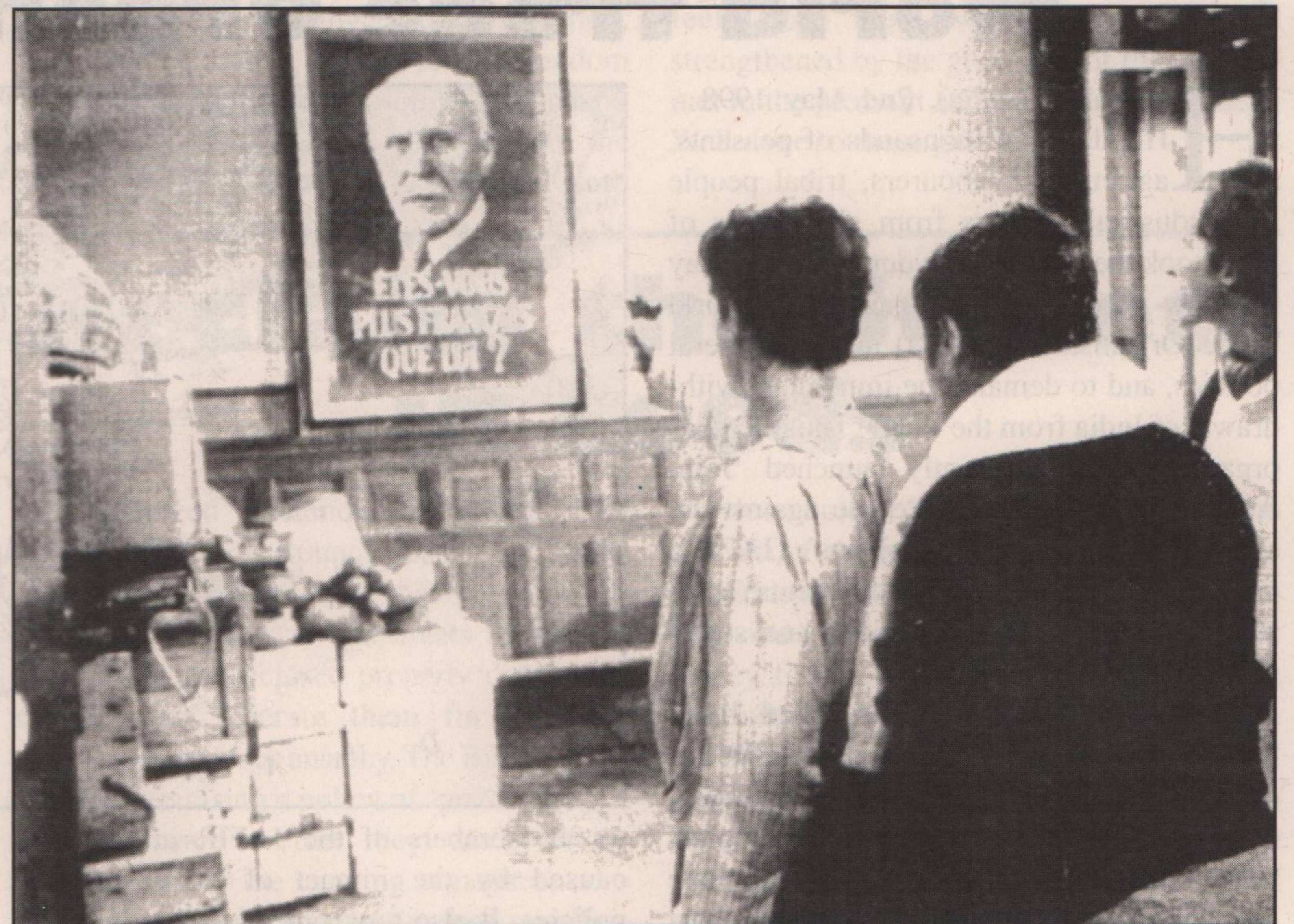
The events that followed were as well-known in 1948 as they are today, but last year I could ask Claude the key questions which were about the way that he and his parents managed to survive. We talked about two celebrated films, made years later, that traced out the paths of both escape and doom. Both were directed by Louis Malle, who had declared that "what they teach French schoolchildren about the Occupation period is a bunch of lies". The first was *Lacombe*,

Lucien, tracing the history of a farm boy who failed at school and at the few boring jobs available to him.

Desperate for excitement and status, Lucien seeks to join the Resistance, only to be rejected by the local organiser, who chances to be his schoolmaster. Pure chance leads him to the local Gestapo, which needs an informer who had been won by the thrill of handling a gun. He falls in love with the daughter of a Jewish tailor, a fastidious craftsman who is appalled by the company his child is keeping. Lucien (played by Pierre Blaise) brings disaster merely from "apolitical and often petty motivations" as Guy Austin puts it in his study of contemporary French cinema. "As an uneducated peasant who ignores the radio broadcasts of both sides, who loves a Jewish woman and who uses Petain's image for target practice, Lucien is as apolitical as an active collaborator can be."

Louis Malle's other film on this theme was *Au Revoir les Enfants*, about Jewish boys who are smuggled into a Catholic boarding school and have to learn very quickly how to conceal their identity. They are betrayed by accident, and are rounded up, to be taken to the assembly point at Drancy and put on the train for extermination.

When I talked last year to Claude, knowing that his father had been obliged to learn the art of forging papers and that his parents had similarly had to change their address every two weeks, I asked how he had survived, as a child. First of all he explained that when he was a teenager Peta Hewetson had become a second mother to him. But his answer to my question was that, one day, the representative



A still taken from the film *Lacombe, Lucien* directed by Louis Malle

of the Swiss Red Cross called for him. They announced that they were providing a fortnight's holiday in Switzerland for delicate children.

So Claude was put on a train with a Swiss *laissez-passer* pinned to his coat. By a strange chance all those delicate children shunted off to Switzerland came from Jewish families in peril.

Before the fortnight was over, Claude was bored with Switzerland and demanded to be sent home. His hosts explained, as kindly as they could, that he had to stay and that they couldn't post his letter to his parents since

they would have moved again (something very much easier for a pair without a child in tow).

That is how he survived the war, unlike a terrifying number of Jewish people living in France in those fateful years. And he remarked how far his personal history was from the stories that filled the British press at the time which alleged that the wartime role of neutral Switzerland was the exploitation of European Jewry. It is the kind of anecdote that, in a few years' time, nobody will remember.

Colin Ward

— VISIBLE HANDS —

Kennedy's question remains

An important modern book of economic analysis opens with a story about Robert F. Kennedy, then Attorney General of the USA in his brother's Administration, on a visit to Indonesia in 1962. During his visit, Kennedy addressed a student body. At the end of his speech, he later told the annual luncheon of the Associated Press, a 'boy' got up and asked a question, in the course of which "he described the United States as a system of monopolistic capitalism".

"And when he said that expression", related Kennedy, "half the student body applauded ... So I said, 'Well now, I'd like to find out. I am a representative of the United States here. What is it that you mean by monopolistic capitalism. What is that defines that description in the United States?' ... And he had no answer. And I said, 'Well now anybody who clapped, anybody who applauded when this gentleman used that expression - what is it that you understand by monopolistic capitalism?' And not one of them would come forward."

Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, the authors of *Monopoly Capital* (first printed in Britain in 1968), remark, after presenting this self-effacing tale, that Indonesian students no doubt knew a lot about monopoly capitalism, "having seen its ugliest face and suffered the consequences of its global policies in their own lives".

Baran and Sweezy suggest that the students might have felt that it was "too serious a subject for glib definitions or clever debating

points", but go on to concede that "Kennedy's questions remain, however, and we may pay him the compliment of assuming that they reflect a state of genuine ignorance which is shared by most of his countrymen".

Baran and Sweezy wrote as Marxists, but as Marxists who were prepared to concede at the outset of their book that "Marxists have too often been content to repeat familiar formulations, as though nothing really new had happened since the days of Marx and Engels - or of Lenin at the latest", and that as a result "Marxists have failed to explain important developments, or sometimes even to recognize their existence"! They deplored the "stagnation of Marxian social science, its lagging vitality and fruitfulness", and attempted, by presenting an analysis of modern US capitalism, to make a significant contribution to socialism and indeed to the social sciences.

The point of such analysis is to make clear the sources of many modern problems. Baran and Sweezy comment: "Declarations that what the United States needs is a 'spiritual revival' or a clarification of 'national goals' are as symptomatic of the pathological condition they are directed against as of a profound inability to comprehend its nature and origins. When a writer as sensitive and observant as Paul Goodman truthfully states that 'our society cannot have it both ways: to maintain a conformist and ignoble system and to have skilled and spirited men to man the system with', only to conclude that 'if ten thousand people in all walks of life will stand

up on their two feet and talk out and insist, we shall get our country back', one gets the full measure of the failure of even our best social critics to face up to the real character and dimensions of the crisis of our time."

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the events of 1968 (regretting the sexist language of the period among other things), it is worth reflecting on the nonsectarian dimensions of the New Left. It may also be appropriate to rededicate ourselves to the serious work of understanding as well as changing the world.

Baran and Sweezy end their book (which we discuss further next issue) by remarking that "even if the present protest movements should suffer defeat or prove abortive, that would be no reason to write off permanently the possibility of a real revolutionary movement in the United States ... more and more Americans are bound to question the necessity of what they now take for granted. And once that happens on a mass scale, the most powerful supports of the present irrational system will crumble ... In the meantime, what we in the United States need is historical perspective, courage to face the facts, and faith in mankind [and womankind] and [their] future. Having these, we can recognise our moral obligation to devote ourselves to fighting against an evil and destructive system which maims, oppresses, and dishonours those who live under it, and which threatens devastation and death to millions of others around the globe."

Milan Rai

Ethical gun-runners

(continued)

colonise East Timor. In Sierra Leone a 'Dad's Army' outfit, Sandline, was dispatched with the apparent blessing of Foreign Office officials, while seemingly ministers of the Crown were left in ignorance.

The Indonesian issue raises general questions about arms sales. The Sandline case in Sierra Leone is more novel in that it seems to involve privatisation and contracting-out to mercenaries of engagements in foreign parts. The SAS operation against the IRA agents in Gibraltar ten years ago was an in-house job controlled by government departments according to 'official guidelines' and 'rules of engagement'.

Fly-by-night operators like Sandline are likely to operate under much slacker procedures. This is what happened in the continuing GAL scandal in Spain where, in the 1980s, mercenaries were employed by the Socialist government to kill Basque members of ETA. When market mechanisms start to operate on relationships between government officials and private firms of mercenaries, we have cause for concern.

This mixture of Foreign Office mandarins and free market mercenaries may be deadly if it goes on unchecked. Last week an editorial in *The Observer* declared "a disturbing culture of disdain for politicians and loyalty to a departmental world view has been allowed to grow in a key ministry ... ministers of either party may come and go, but officials see themselves as custodians of a departmental line and the true initiators of policy".

Like the *Observer* editor, we must ask who runs the show in our government departments - the mandarins at the ministry or the politicians?

BB

INDIA

Massive mobilisation against the World Trade Organisation

Hyderabad (India), 2nd May 1998 – Hundreds of thousands of peasants, agricultural labourers, tribal people and industrial workers from all regions of India took the streets of Hyderabad yesterday to show their rejection against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and neo-liberal policies, and to demand the immediate withdrawal of India from the WTO. The rally was organised by the recently launched 'Joint Action Forum of Indian People against the WTO and Anti-People Policies' (JAFIP), composed of fifty peoples' movements representing a wide range of regions and social groups.

The demonstration was preceded by a three-day convention in which the JAFIP was officially launched. The convention and rally – convened by a number of Indian peoples' movements, including the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS), the All-India People's Resistance Forum (AIPRF), the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) and others – took place against the backdrop of a growing wave of suicides of peasants which, according



to all members of the JAFIP, are directly caused by the impact of WTO-imposed policies. It also took place in the context of increasing state violence against peoples' movements all over India. The convention and rally were held in Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh, because of the particularly high rate of suicides and killings in this southern state, where more than six hundred peasant activists have been killed by the Indian army from 1992 to 1998, and more than four hundred suicides have taken place in the last five months. The assassination of peoples' movements' activists in Andhra Pradesh was intensified in the weeks leading to the convention, in what amounts to a very clear signal of the way in which the Indian government will deal with peaceful opposition to the WTO.

The convention, attended by more than nine hundred representatives of peoples' movements, produced the 'Declaration of Indian People against the WTO' which states that "We, the people of India, hereby declare that we consider the WTO our brutal enemy. This unaccountable and notoriously undemocratic body called the WTO has the potential not only to suck the sweat and blood of the masses of two-thirds of the world, but has also started destroying our natural habitats and traditional agricultural and other knowledge systems ... converting us into objects of Transnational Corporations' economy of consumerism ... The WTO will kill us unless we kill it".

The declaration also targets the national elites: "any struggle against the WTO-IMF-World Bank trinity has to go along a simultaneous struggle against the local ruling classes". Finally, the JAFIP also offers alternatives: "While opposing the WTO, we, the Indian people, have resolved to build a pro-people egalitarian social order through a genuinely democratic process".

This declaration was accompanied by six specific resolutions demanding pro-people agricultural policy, expressing solidarity with other peoples' movements, opposing the invasion of agriculture by multinationals, condemning the repression of peoples' movements, denouncing the wave of suicides of peasants all over India, and expressing the anti-WTO struggle of the Indian working class. All these documents will be soon available at <http://www.agp.org>

The JAFIP made a call to all peoples' movements of India to take part in PGA's decentralised days of action against the WTO that will take place from the 16th to the 20th of May, parallel to the G8 meeting (Birmingham, 16th to 17th May) and the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of GATT at the second WTO Ministerial

Conference (Geneva, 18th to 20th May). Professor Nanjundaswamy, president of the ten million Karnataka State Farmers Association (KRRS), announced at the Hyderabad rally that several hundreds Indian peasants will be present at the protest actions in Geneva, representing Indian peoples' rejection of the WTO.

Peoples' Global Action

Demonstrations on 1st May in Turkey

On 1st May many people walked in demonstrations which were organised in different cities of Anatolia and Kurdistan.

In Istanbul there was struggle between Stalinist groups and the police. About 250 people were arrested during the events. Anarchists in Istanbul were in fact not so happy to walk with leftists on 1st May and after a short time they decided to go away (before the events began). This time Istanbul anarchists were much more 'organised' and there were also comrades coming from other cities for this demonstration. The ones who were arrested were often the members of Stalinist groups (DHKP-C, MLKP, etc.) and none of our comrades were arrested.

In Ankara there was not much of an event (so some people said) – 39 demonstrators were arrested after the demo so it may not be quite true. Anarchists were more than fifty in number, but they were not 'cheerful' or better than last year – the main reason was that some of our more 'active' comrades were in Istanbul.

Also in Diyarbakir, the police did not let people walk and they were forced to end the demonstration.

LIBERTY WILL WIN!!!

Mutlu (Ankara, Turkey)

NET WATCH

South African water privatisation

Green-net (see *Freedom* 9th May, 'Somebody out there loves us') has been repaired after about a month of being out of action due to the action of 'hackers'. Two people had to fly in – one from South Africa – with the technical skills to be able to repair the communications system. Curiously enough, communications by Labour Net imply, as we reported in the last issue, that it was due to an item in their bulletin that a large industrial organisation had resorted to a two-prong attack on Green-net, one through the electronic hackers and the other through lawyers' threats. Green-net has capitulated to the extent that it is not issuing a statement on the subject, whereas they should stand up. It is like a householder who has been robbed and is afraid to complain in case this would invite a new robbery.

Labour Net has also been forced to put out their communications through Holland to avoid British jurisdiction. What is being said is that the old South African BOSS methods are still alive and well and that gangsterism backed up by the solicitors is now tolerated in this country. Labour Net alleges that the news item involves a South African water privatisation by a British firm (a protégé of Madame Thatcher) against which the local trade union is campaigning. All the 'newspapers' and their 'investigative' reporters are aware of this, but there is a 'D notice' (don't print) in operation. Green-net at least should know that this paper would want to know the truth of the matter.

Russia: News from Minsk

From our own correspondent: Horrible attacks and murders took place in Moscow in the run-up to May Day. Although the victims were not strictly speaking comrades, nevertheless this homicide is outrageous and must be stopped. Two members of the Left Anti-Fascist resistance (Trotskyists), both young women, Olga Fradkina and Elena Labinskaya, were murdered. One machine-gunned outside her home, the other 'committed suicide' while in police custody. Olga's father was denied a police investigation.

Another member of the group escaped and even saw that his attackers were in black military dress, which indicates that they were members of Pamyat (an alliance – shades of Hitler and Stalin – of fascists and bolsheviks). Even worse is that the police are co-operating.

Beware also of a man called Svetkov (the editor of the Bolshevik Party newspaper) who wants to pass for an anarchist.

JR (source: a-infos)

Sadness and Rage in Italy

For two years the inhabitants, with the exception of the local politicians and bosses, of Val Susa, a protected Alpine valley of rural communist tradition, have opposed the construction of a high-speed railway line. This project is part of the European economic development and also foresees the proposed hosting of the Olympic Games in Turin in 2006. This line will bring with it, as always, the expropriation and destruction of river zones. After many demonstrations and the usual petitions, those opposing the line turned to more direct types of action – mainly sabotage – and thus delayed the construction of the line.

The police and above all the special branch began their enquiries by placing bugs in people's homes and watching the mail of those who are close to anarchist groups.

On the night of 5th/6th March the police launched an operation in Turin taking over three occupied houses: l'Alcova, l'Asilo and La Casa. l'Asilo was in particular victim of repressive violence. The whole building was gutted, above all the library which was available for anyone to use, and, to finish the job, the police even went so far as to urinate on the beds of the occupants. However, as from Friday the 6th March l'Asilo was re-occupied.

More seriously, at La Casa three people were arrested as they were named in the legal documents which accused them of criminal association with terrorist aims and keeping and making arms and explosive devices. In fact, even though they went to the basement unaccompanied in order to look for explosives and detonators, they only found a smoke bomb. However, since then these three occupants of La Casa – Edoardo Massari, Silvano Pelissero and Maria Soledad Rosas – have been kept in custody accused, without proof, of being members of the phantom independence organisation 'The Grey Wolves'. One is left with the feeling that, as a consequence of the powers they have recently been given, the judges aim to reduce to silence all opposition other than

that accepted by the overall consensus. Thus only those occupied buildings which had refused to come to some kind of arrangement with the state were busted. Those centres who had signed a contract with the state became social centres who paid some rent to the state after agreements had been reached.

We understand that in Turin, having put forward its candidature for the Olympic Games in 2006, the local authorities, with the backing of local businessmen, wish to operate a systematic purification of all possible opposition, squatters being the first target. Following on from their arrest and having been further detained by the Tribunale della Liberta until a further judgement is reached, which may take all of two years, Edoardo was found hung in his cell on the morning of 28th March in the prison at Vallette a Cuneo.

His friends Sole and Silvano started a hunger strike. The Anarchist Defence Committee had disbanded in January 1998 but, all the same, on Saturday 4th April a demonstration consisting of many anarchists and Italian, French and Swiss squatters, along with the Italian Anarchist Federation, brought together some six thousand people. Twelve occupied social centres in Turin organised the demonstration which called for the liberation of Sole and Silvano along with an explanation of how Edoardo met his death in prison. The demonstration also protested against the vulture-like attitude of all the journalists, police and justice officials. Also whilst the demonstration was taking place the windows of the High Court, which had not yet been opened, were smashed and stones were thrown at the police and at prison officers.

Turin businessmen now want to take care of their own defence: warrants have been issued for demonstrators who appear in films and photographs. There is also trouble in political circles because Stefano Alberione, a member of the Rifondazione and an employee of a communal trade union, took part in the demonstration.

JB

Sanctions against Iraq: a crime against humanity

Dear *Freedom*,

Jonh Roe makes a number of points regarding sanctions against Iraq. I suggested in my last letter (4th April) that the fundamental point in the debate over sanctions is "whether it is morally justifiable (and legally sustainable) to kill half a million children to achieve particular political and military objectives". As has been done in Iraq. (The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated in December 1995 that 567,000 children had died as a result of sanctions.) Unfortunately, Jonh Roe has still failed to answer this central question.

Instead, Roe diverts attention by accusing me of having avoided discussion of 'the point of the sanctions'. This seems to imply that the ends ('the point of the sanctions') justify the means (the killing of children). Roe does not actually discuss (or refer to) the severity of the humanitarian crisis at all, which suggests that the ends not only justify the means, they obliterate the means from view.

Even on the subjects which it does cover, Roe's latest letter is inaccurate and misleading on a number of points. His first statement, that sanctions "replaced war as a means of getting Saddam to disarm", is not correct. War was waged to expel Iraq from Kuwait, not for disarmament. There was actually a hiatus after the war, between UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 686 on 2nd March 1991, which reaffirmed sanctions without specifying any justification for them, and UNSCR 687 on 3rd April 1991, when the disarmament programme was instituted and sanctions mandated for that purpose.

Roe suggests that sanctions, compared to war, are "an improvement from the point of view of both the cannon-fodder and the targets". If he is pointing out that sanctions kill civilians rather than soldiers, this is indubitably correct. How this is an 'improvement' in moral or legal terms, Roe does not explain. The laws of war specifically forbid the deliberate targeting of civilians and Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions states that: "It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and

irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive." These acts are illegal, 'whatever the motive'.

In other words, whatever the behaviour of the Iraqi government, it cannot justify attacking the civilian population or depriving the civilian population of the necessities of life (which amounts to the same thing). Roe's points concerning Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, or the government's treatment of Marsh Arabs, Kurds and Iraqis now in exile, cannot justify sanctions. Whatever the behaviour of the Iraqi government, it cannot justify our massive violation of the human rights of the people of Iraq.

Roe suggests that Iraq ought to be able to manufacture antibiotics and other basic medicines (as Brazil, a much poorer country, does). Quite true. Former Attorney General of the USA Ramsey Clark wrote to the Security Council on 1st March 1996 that the "huge pharmaceutical plant" at Samarra in Iraq (which he had just visited) was producing at 10% of capacity "because of the lack of raw materials, machine parts, and packaging materials". He wrote: "The domestic industry provided 50% of Iraq's pharmaceutical needs before the sanctions, producing more than 250 different products. Today it produces less than five. Machines capable of producing tablets costing pennies which could save a child from dehydration stand idle, wrapped as if in burial shrouds for want of raw materials."

Iraq could have produced many of the medicines it needs, if it had had the raw materials and spare parts which have so far been denied by the sanctions regime. (It remains to be seen how things will be changed by the enlarged oil-for-food deal.) The example Roe selects demonstrates forcibly that access to foreign currency is crucial to the meeting of humanitarian needs in Iraq.

Jonh Roe suggests that my critique of sanctions against Iraq are flawed by their "passivity in relation to capitalism". I seem to him to believe that 'we can do nothing against the forces of capitalism' which are devastating societies elsewhere, and therefore we must concentrate on UN sanctions against Iraq. This is a deliberate distortion.

What I pointed out was that while children in many other countries are also suffering terribly, the causes of their sufferings (which generally include international and local forms of capitalism) cannot be eliminated by a single resolution of the UN Security Council, something which could be passed within minutes. We should certainly struggle for the elimination of world poverty, but the existence of comparable deprivation in such countries as Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil cannot justify the imposition of subhuman standards of life on the 22 million people of Iraq.

We should certainly struggle for the elimination of capitalism, but the children of Iraq cannot wait for us to overthrow monopoly capital. They need relief today.

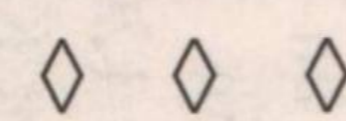
Lifting sanctions is not a question of 'trusting' the Iraqi government. The international community must stop violating the human rights of the Iraqi people. That is our responsibility. If, sanctions having been lifted, the Iraqi government for some reason did not meet the basic needs of the ordinary people, then that would be the responsibility of

the Iraqi government. We cannot justify torturing a hostage on the grounds that if she is returned to her family she may be maltreated by them.

Jonh Roe asks why Iraq should be allowed to trade and gain foreign currency that could be used for nefarious purposes. Surely the question is rather more general. To use Roe's language, why should the United States be allowed to trade and invest abroad, "without any guarantee at all (from a convicted liar) as to how this money will be used, and without at least laming [sic] its capacity for evil"? Or Britain? Or Israel? States which have each attacked more countries and which each possess more weapons of mass destruction than Iraq has ever done.

I've stood in hospital wards by the beds of children with only hours or days of life left in them. I've seen despairing parents and grandparents struggling to make sense of the horrors being visited on their families. These are not academic arguments to me. Children I met in Iraq in February are now dead. Because of the policies Jonh Roe attempts to justify.

Milan Rai



Dear *Freedom*,

Jonh Roe (Letters, 9th May) seems to share the same apparent breakdown in logic in regard to the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq which afflicted many commentators in the mainstream media a couple of months ago when trying to justify the continuing imposition of sanctions and the then possible bombing of Iraq. He comments that the sanctions could have been lifted any time in the past seven years had Saddam wished, but instead seems unconcerned at the misery and suffering of 'his' people. To demonstrate this lack of concern Mr Roe then goes on to mention the Kurds and Marsh Arabs, both of whom have been gassed by Saddam, and those who have suffered torture at the hands of his regime. This list could be extended to further demonstrate Saddam's complete disregard for the lives of the Iraqi people. But to me these two points don't seem to add up. On the one hand we are being told that Saddam cares nothing for the Iraqi people or

the oppressed minorities within Iraq, while on the other hand we're told that the suffering sanctions are inflicting could be ended if Saddam complied with UN resolutions, something which I would have thought relies on his giving a damn about the ordinary people of Iraq. To continue to impose sanctions is, to paraphrase Charles Glass, to carry on beating up the people Saddam beats up.

Sanctions don't seem to affect Saddam or his elite, but they do provide a rather good weapon in his propaganda offensive against the West. Correspondents who were inside Iraq, for instance Maggie O'Kane for the *Guardian*, found that many people did not blame Saddam but America and the West for their suffering. Not, one might think, a very good way of fomenting an uprising against the Ba'ath regime.

Mr Roe also suggests that sanctions are 'an improvement' on war as a means of getting Saddam to disarm, but it is hardly an improvement for the 1,211,285 children who have died of embargo-related causes between August 1990 and August 1997 (figures verified by UNICEF). The replacement of a brutal, bloody war by a slow genocide may be more acceptable to the politicians' media and the intermittent conscience of the Western public, but its long-term effects are equally horrific.

Unfortunately I don't know how Saddam and the 'weapons of mass destruction' he may have, can be 'dealt with' if not by the continued application of the UN embargo (which I oppose), something which I need to answer to meet the implicit challenge of John Roe's letter. But it does seem to me that to concentrate on Saddam's weaponry and the iniquities of his regime without an adequate analysis of the agendas of America and the West which helped support and arm him and perhaps even give him the confidence to believe that the invasion of Kuwait would be unchallenged, and the subsequent hypocrisy of then making the people of Iraq suffer for the actions of someone whose position was encouraged and bolstered by Western support; and without examining the role of the UN and how it could be made, with the political will, not just a front for US interests, but a real international force which could oppose lawlessness and human rights abuses, whether the country was Iraq, or America, or Britain; without this analysis the 'problem' of Iraq won't begin to be solved because the root causes will be left unchallenged.

Duncan Hunt

History repeats itself ...

Dear *Freedom*,

The old one about Marxists and teabags ('because proper tea is theft'): Only a couple of years ago I had to report correcting Jules Holland (a popular entertainer) on Jazz FM. This week I had to correct Paul Jones (a popular entertainer) on the same radio station about the same joke. History repeats itself ...

David Peers

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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 —

- 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

Merseyside Port Shop Stewards

The second march for Social Justice Saturday 30th May 1998

Assemble: 12 noon at
Thames Embankment (Temple tube)

As you know, after 28 months we were compelled to settle our dispute, but privatisation and casualisation remain, as do the state laws which have removed the right of trade unionists to strike and to take solidarity actions in support of fellow workers. Therefore the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee has decided to remain in being to carry forward the fight, and as a first step we are organising a second March for Social Justice in London on 30th May 1998, and we are continuing the publication of the *Dockers Charter* as our campaigning paper.

for further information on the March for Social Justice, send an s.a.e. to: London Support Group, 31b Muswell Hill Place, London N10 (tel: 0181-442 0090)

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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