

## Bombs for Peace

**B**ombs for Peace' have just been released by NATO to get the pistol-packing Serbs back to the negotiating table. Missiles and bombers unleashed to coax and soothe Serbia's President Milosevic into co-operation. One hundred Cruise missiles fired last night and no NATO casualties. Why?

The BBC's Balkan expert Misha Glenny claims NATO spokesmen have to date given five different justifications for the bombing campaign. Tony Blair claims we are "averting a human catastrophe", but Mr Glenny claims the most likely reason for the action is that the NATO powers are responding to the danger of the southern Balkans becoming destabilised by Serb atrocities in Kosovo. Bill Clinton last night, on the eve of the campaign, claimed "our national interests are threatened". If the 'game plan' of the operation is to stabilise the southern Balkans, it is not without some risks. Montenegro, which is partner to Milosevic's Serbia in the Yugoslav federations, has recently been in critical opposition to the Belgrade leadership. The current NATO bombing campaign includes bases in Montenegro, as Yugoslavia's second republic it wants no part in the war. The NATO attacks could stir the Montenegrans up and put them on the Serb side.

In the past, under President Sali Berisha, Albania has warned it would not stand idly by if fighting occurs in Kosovo. A drawn-out conflict could drag in Albania. Macedonia, to the south of Kosovo, is where the NATO ground troops are based. Now an independent republic, Macedonia has a large minority of ethnic Albanians in its two million population and the Kosovan refugees driven south are swelling this number. Because of this risk of upsetting the balance between Serbs and Albanians in Macedonia, the republic last week closed its two border crossings with Kosovo. President Kiro Gligorov, Macedonia's leader, asked NATO for guarantees of extra security. Albania, Bulgaria and Greece all

have claims to Macedonian territory. The fall of Macedonia would threaten the whole region, which explains why NATO has long had troops in the country.

### **Kosovo: Serb spiritual homeland**

The academic, Homi K. Bhabha, says "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye". The mind's eye of Serb nationalism is historically focused on the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, where thousands of Serbs died when their medieval kingdom was defeated by the Ottoman empire. Serbs celebrate this defeat as the big day in their nation's history.

It was the 600th anniversary of this battle on 28th June 1989, attended by at least half a million, that Slobodan Milosevic managed to use as a launch pad for the current political career spear-heading Serb national identity. It was a bandwagon he managed to catch control of and dominate. As Misha Glenny writes "The field of Blackbirds, as the Serbian settlement of Kosovo Polje is known in English, was turned into an infinite expanse of Serbia's imagined glory, dominated by one image over all others - Slobodan Milosevic."

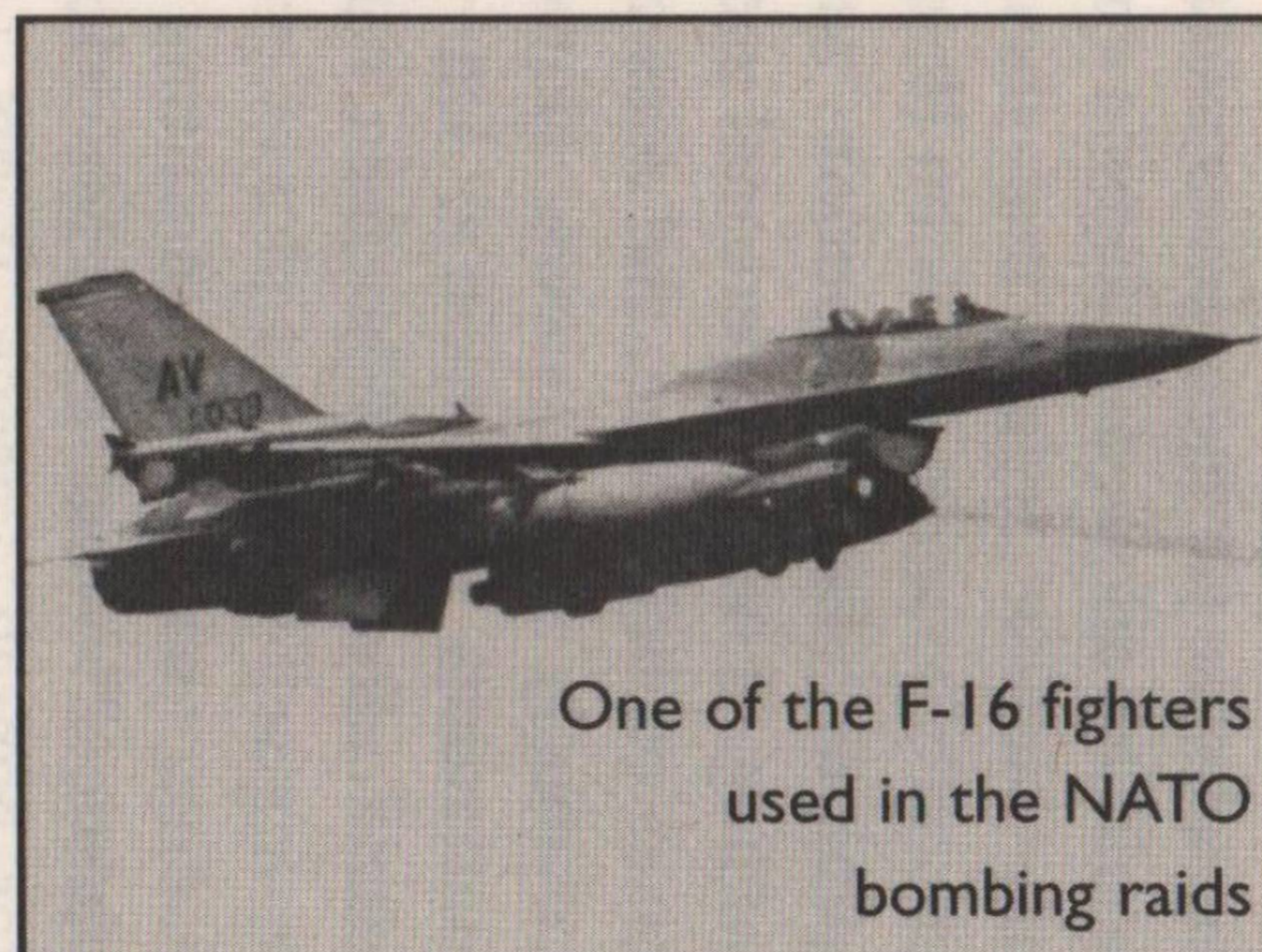
The news footage of this demo showed a wily politician who was weighing up how to ride the storm of what Mr Glenny calls "This gross display of Serbians". He writes "Milosevic's speech was carefully measured and not hysterical - but it contained some unmistakable warnings. 'Six centuries (after

the Battle of Kosovo Polje) we are again engaged in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, but this cannot be excluded yet.'" This kind of performance in 1989 didn't go unnoticed in the rest of Yugoslavia. It may have helped encourage Slovenia and Croatia to go it alone.

### **Myth of 'Yugoslavism'**

The Kosovo Albanians account for 90% of the population of the province. The Serbs and Montenegrans represent a smallish minority in Kosovo. Yet, because Serb myth sees Kosovo as the cradle of their civilisation it is clear they will not give it up without a struggle. Yet in the early 1990s Lazar Macura, the then Deputy President of Knin's Town Council, a Serb, told Misha Glenny "Kosovo's lost', he said 'why don't they [Belgrade] recognise what we all know and pull out of Kosovo now?'" Since then Milosevic and the Serb government in Belgrade have tried to tighten their grip on Kosovo. This Serb nationalist obsession of Milosevic consigned Yugoslav consensus politics to the dust-bin. Tito's plan to recognise the ethnic distinctions of the six nations which formed the Yugoslav federation, but bind it into a territorially defined 'Illyrian' homeland, with a common division of labour, common citizenship rights and common laws was to be discarded in the cause of ethnic nationalisms. And with it what the historian Anthony D. Smith calls "a shadowy common culture of 'Yugoslavism', with its non-alignment, self-management and confederalism".

There was a time when some English anarchists admired what they saw as Yugoslav self-management and 'workers' control'. All that seems to be gone for good, amid the fractious ethnic nationalisms, and the fleeing refugees. By the time you read this there will be few foreign journalists, if any, in either Kosovo or Serbia. No-one to record the atrocities and ethnic cleansing.



One of the F-16 fighters used in the NATO bombing raids

# Freedom

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## New Labour: Working all too well!

Next year will be celebrated in many ways, most of them nonsensical. One celebration will be of the centenary of the formation of the Labour Representation Committee, which soon became the Labour Party, which then replaced the Liberal Party as the main parliamentary party of the left, and which now is the dominant force in British politics. This will be one of the most nonsensical celebrations of all.

One consistent feature of the century is that Labour Governments, over the period of 75 years since the first one in 1924, have betrayed the policies of the Labour Party. They have usually done so only after achieving office, and they have generally disguised the fact by proclaiming their connection with the great figures of the past. At first they used to invoke the memory of Robert Owen and William Morris, Robert Blatchford and Keir Hardie, without taking too much notice of what such people actually said or did. Later they invoked the spirit of Aneurin Bevan, and a tattered 'Mantle of Nye' was passed from Harold Wilson to Michael Foot and to Neil Kinnock to cloak the steady retreat from the genuine if limited socialism of what remained a formally socialist organisation.

Tony Blair spoilt the pattern by discarding Party policy before rather than after coming to office, removing from the Party constitution the theoretical commitment to socialism which was preserved in the old Clause Four (even though it had no practical effect), informally adopting the title of 'New Labour' and distancing itself from 'Old Labour'. Yet the Blair Government, too, has tried to maintain a connection with some kind of historical tradition to bless its betrayal. After flirting with such things as 'communitarianism' and 'stakeholderism', which proved as unreliable as the previous Conservative Government's flirtations with 'monetarism' and 'back to basics', the tame intellectuals who generate the hot air fueling the Blairite project are now wedded to the 'Third Way' and 'New Mutualism'.

The Third Way is offered as an alternative both to state socialism and to market capitalism. It is intended to appeal to the many people who fear the state on one side and the market on the other. It looks backwards to an imaginary golden age of a balance between private and public enterprise and forwards to a utopian heaven of a capitalist system with popular control, an interlocking network of commercial companies and democratic councils in which everyone wins and everyone shall have prizes. New Mutualism is offered as a philosophical structure to support this Janus-like policy.

Tony Blair himself looks both backwards and forwards – backwards when speaking at the annual conference of the National

Council of Voluntary Organisations earlier this year, recalling the Labour Party's "roots in self-help, friendly societies, co-operatives and voluntary organisations" and referring to "the insights of Robert Owen and William Morris"; forwards, when writing a foreword to Peter Kellner's new Demos pamphlet, *New Mutualism: The Third Way*, which offers 'mutualism' as a non-political 'post-socialist' ideology.

A representative figure is Peter Hain, who began as a radical exile from South Africa during the apartheid period. When he was the leader of the Young Liberals, he appealed to libertarian socialist (and even anarchist) ideas. But he rapidly realised that he had no prospects in the Liberal Party (let alone with the anarchists), and eventually joined the Labour Party. He became a Member of Parliament for a safe Welsh constituency, and is now an Under-Secretary of State for Wales. However, he is still attached to his past as well as his future, and in a *New Statesman* summary of his new Tribune pamphlet, *A Welsh Third Way*, he argues that the so-called Third Way "can be seen as a modern extension of the 'libertarian socialist' tradition".

Hain condemns "the statist, or top-down, vision of socialism", which was shared by Marxist-Leninists and Social Democrats and intended to bring change, dictatorially or bureaucratically, through the centralist state. He praises 'libertarian socialism', which "emphasises decentralisation, democracy and popular sovereignty". He traces its 'pedigree' from the Levellers, Agitators and Diggers in the English Revolution, through trade unions, co-operatives and friendly societies, on to the syndicalists before the First World War. He then leaps onward, claiming that "not until the 1960s did the 'new left' revive libertarian socialist ideas", ignoring not only the fact that the so-called New Left dates from 1956, but also the fact that libertarian socialist ideas were advocated (and practised) by many individuals and groups – including the small but active anarchist movement – throughout the present century.

He compresses all the struggles of the past forty years into vague references to workers' control, feminism and municipal socialism (significantly omitting the events he was personally involved in), belatedly admits that the Labour left "lost its way during the 1980s", and insists that "a recovery of the broader libertarian socialist tradition is now imperative".

Hain concludes with a call for "a distinctive Welsh Third Way" with "a positive libertarian socialist platform that works in partnership with interest groups such as business, the trade unions, the voluntary sector and environmental organisations", "local government and community

councils", that "has a vision of a modern self-confident Wales with a dynamic, high-quality economy and a culture that is proud of its past but not trapped in it".

However, the trouble with the Third Way is that, whatever the theory, in practice it is not so much an alternative to as a combination of socialism and capitalism. Similarly, the trouble with the New Mutualism is that, unlike the old Mutualism of Charles Fourier and Pierre Joseph Proudhon, it resembles the mutual relationship between a cat and a mouse. The whole tendency of the actually existing New Labour regime is towards the centralisation rather than the decentralisation of political power, and towards the bureaucratisation and commercialisation rather than the democratisation or liberalisation of social activity.

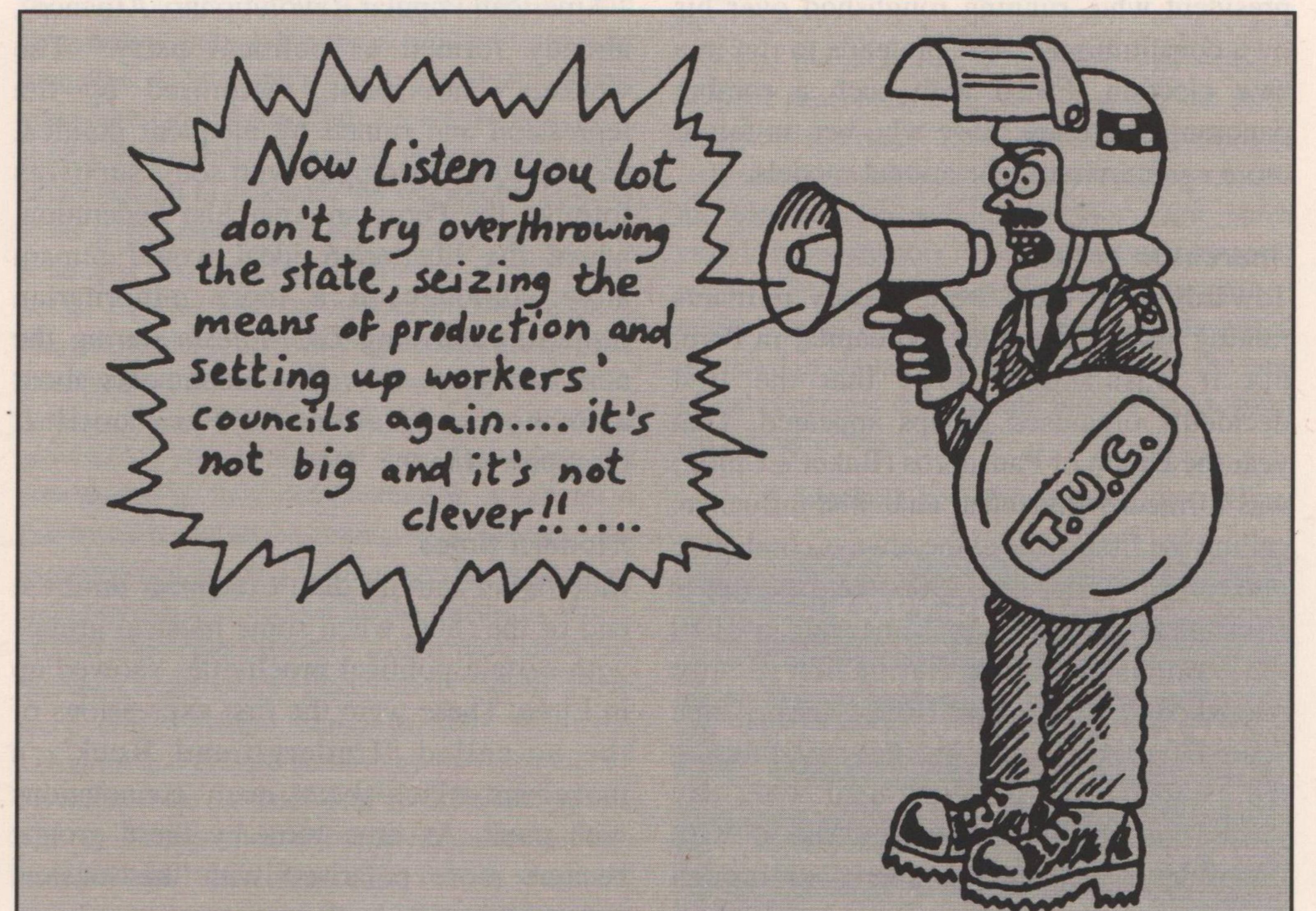
Consider the coming constitutional reforms. The removal of hereditary peers from the House of Lords is intended not to make the Upper House of Parliament more representative of the people but to make it more subordinate to the Government. The devolution of administration to Scotland and Wales, to Northern Ireland and London, is intended not to distribute power to the people of the Celtic fringe or the metropolitan areas, but to extend personal cronyism more efficiently. Hence the great care taken to ensure that the provincial government in Northern Ireland will be paralysed by a condominium of official representatives of the two communities, that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly will be dominated in general by the Labour Party and in particular by Labour leaders who belong to the Blairite fraction, and that London and later other cities will get Labour Mayors who also belong to the Blairite fraction (hence the campaign to exclude Ken

Livingstone who, despite his unreliability in the old Greater London Council and his involvement with Trotskyist entrists, is the most popular candidate).

Much more important than these constitutional changes is the overwhelming tendency towards what may be called democratic centralism in more and more areas of political and social and commercial life. Once a Government is elected by an increasingly presidential campaign and with an increasingly presidential mandate, it seizes control not just of Parliament but of more and more institutions. The Blair Government exerts more power over the media, local councils, over industry and trade, over education and culture, over health and social security, over insurance and pensions, and so on, than any previous peace-time government. And its technique is not to free anyone but to use examinations and audits, league tables and 'naming and shaming', inquiries and reports, to bully everyone into surrender.

Indeed the Blair Government is hardly a peace-time regime, since abroad it operates as a junior partner of the United States in waging war against selected foreign countries outside the United Nations and against international law, while at home it operates as a more efficient version of the Thatcher system. It is symbolic that it has abandoned its commitment to a Freedom of Information Act, and that the numbers of mail and telephone interceptions, of people in prison, of expulsions from school, of people without proper homes or jobs are all higher than ever before.

The Conservative slogan in the 1979 General Election was 'Labour isn't working'. The trouble in 1999 is that New Labour is working all too well.



New Labour: bullying everyone into surrender

# The validity of libertarian ideals in Peru

Peru ends the present century under the rampant authoritarianism of a president who rigorously applies the precepts of the most savage neo-liberalism. The auto-coup that Alberto Fujimori (aka 'El Chino' – the Chinese) perpetrated in 1992 has allowed him, during the following eight years, a free hand to undertake all sorts of antisocial economic measures and to exert a ferocious repression against any inkling of radical political activism.

After this period the results, according to Human Rights organisations, have been more than five hundred innocent people deprived of their freedom, accused of ties to the guerrillas by military tribunals whose only worry is to jail anyone in the opposition or simply suspected of being in it. This indiscriminate prosecution yields good results for 'El Chino', leaving the once powerful armed organisations very weakened: The MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru – Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) doesn't seem to have recovered from the blow at the Japanese Embassy in Lima while Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) finds itself divided ever since its top leader Abimael Guzman issued orders from prison to cease the fighting, probably after being physically and psychologically tortured (among the juiciest declarations by 'comrade' Abimael it is worth mentioning this one: "Do not pay attention to the anarchist propaganda appearing in certain places"). Thus freed of encumbrances, Fujimori and his team dedicate themselves to the job of oppressing the population with all kinds of burdens through the SUNAT (sort of a local Treasury). It is common throughout the country to find a commercial establishment out of business, with large 'closed' signs for failure to give a customer a sales receipt. The feared SUNAT's motto is very specific: 'Closer to you every day'. El Chino still has one more subject to master: to soften the dictator image he enjoys internationally. To that end he recently ordered the withdrawal of military squads who since 1992 have occupied the roofs of the country's universities with the goal of 'eradicating subversion' on the part of the young students. A measure which, among many others, seeks only to attract foreign capital, which begins to take strong roots, notably with Spanish capital (Telefonica, BBV, Banco de Santander ...) which, finding it impossible to compete in Europe, sinks its claws in these lands. It is a Latin American country whose people deal as best they can with the economic fluctuations and the messianism of a president who, running roughshod over his own constitutional laws, pretends to run in a new election. Faced with such a sombre panorama there are those who bet on fairer, more egalitarian organisational models.

## Anarchism in Peru

Towards 1870 there were already militants ranting against the state and capital in Peru, but it wasn't until 1904 that the first decidedly organised groups appeared. That year the Union of Panaderos (Baker's Union) was formed, with a clear anarchist influence, calling the first strike at the always combative port of El Callao. In 1906 the newspaper *Humanidad* appeared in Lima and in 1910 the Francisco Ferrer Rationalist Centre published *Paginas Libres* (Free Pages). Three years later there was a general strike during the campaign for the eight-hour work day started by the Journeymen's Union with important participation by anarchists through the groups 'Luchadores por la Verdad' (Fighters for Truth), 'Luz y Amor' (Light and



The battle of Ayacucho in December 1842 at which the Peruvian nationalists under Sucre defeated the Spaniards and secured Peruvian independence.

Love) and the editors of the most important libertarian newspaper in Peru: *La Protesta*. This campaign achieved its objectives trade by trade until 1919 when, overrun by the development and magnitude of the struggle, the government was forced to establish the mandatory eight-hour work day throughout the country. The next step would be the creation of the Committee for the Reduction of the Price of Staples, seeking reductions to the cost of basic commodities, transport and taxes, this struggle giving birth to the FORP (Federacion Obrera Regional Peruana – Peruvian Regional Federation of Workers) clearly anarchist, who would obtain important victories for the workers. Important militants of that time were Delfin Levano, Carlos Barba and Nicolas Gutarra among many. No doubt the most relevant figure and the most influential in workers' circles would be Manuel Gonzalez Prada, still remembered by today's activists. Gonzalez Prada edited, among other texts, *Paginas Libres* (Free Pages, 1894) and *Horas de Lucha* (Times of Struggle, 1908). During the early twenties a new organisation guided by anarchists appears: The Union of Civil Construction Workers, publishing *El Nivel* (The Level) and *El Obrero Constructor* (The Construction Worker). During these years the non-stop workers' activism suffered repressive response by the government. Printing presses were put out of commission, centres were closed and a good portion of the movement's infrastructure with anarchist majority is destroyed, with the murder of many of its members. There was an uprising in the city of Trujillo, organised by anarcho-syndicalist day workers, later co-opted by the APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana – American Popular Revolutionary Alliance), already formed as political party.\* The workers' movement, victimised by the repression and ruined by incipient political parties, lost its strength, with some survivors forming the Peruvian Anarchist Federation, where the libertarian ideal would remain alive, although in a more minoritarian fashion, publishing *La Protesta* during the next two years as well as documents about anarcho-syndicalism in Peru until it disappeared in the '60s.

## Modern times

Libertarian activity didn't reappear until the end of the '80s, when some musical groups with certain political proclivities showed up in Lima. These were the first expressions of the so-called 'Underground Rock', a movement which shares many connotations with punk. As time went by these groups became more polarised with the musical aspect taking the back seat, ceasing to be an end to become only one of many possible

means. At this time the guerrillas (MRTA and Sendero Luminoso) would recruit, thanks to better propaganda, infrastructure and preparation, many militants among the libertarian sympathisers of this movement. Anti-terrorist laws in large measure limited the growth and development of these anarchist groups causing among them a certain self-limitation in order not to be identified with armed groups. In 1989 CAJA (Colectivo de Juventudes Autonomas – Autonomous Youth Collective) was created bringing together many from the so-called 'underground movement' and which, without being openly anarchist (although with many anarchists within) would have an ephemeral life. At the beginning of the nineties new militants appeared who do not come from that musical base who, together with those who evolved from underground rock, create better defined groups, coming under the influence of libertarian propaganda from abroad, mainly from Spain. *Autonomia Proletaria* (Proletarian Autonomy) and *Colectivizacion* (Collectivisation) appear in Lima, both still active at present. *Autonomia Proletaria* works in the anarcho-syndicalist field, although it no longer believes anarcho-syndicalism to be as effective a weapon as before. It works to spread the ideals among the workers with a publication which bears the same name, making commentaries about everything related to Peruvian and international syndicalist struggles. They changed their name in 1996.

Outside the capital and beginning at the north of the country we find libertarian representation in Piura with the collective Reconstruir (Reconstruct) and the publication *El Inconforme*, as well as fanzines and musical groups 'underground'. In Huancayo ecological groups distribute alternative and libertarian material while in Huancayo Proyeccion Popular (Popular Projection) does its works and publishes the *Reacciona* (React) fanzine which has reached issue number 12. To the south, in Arequipa there is *La Lucha* (The Struggle) and the magazine *Yaiyarguarta*, which means 'the blood of the people' in Quechua language, with some pages in this tongue, bringing to memory the work that the Federacion Obrera Regional Indigena del Peru (Peru Indigenous Workers Regional Federation) performed during the '20s and '30s, linking Peruvian anarcho-syndicalism with the indigenous peasant movement in the southern part of the country. Also in Arequipa there are many musical groups and protest fanzines. In Cuzco, the ancient Inca capital, we find the MAP Movimiento Anarquista del Peru (Peruvian Anarchist Movement) in reality a small collective with a publication by the same name and which changed its name to El

Obrero when its members began to feel under vigilance and qualified as 'foreign elements' by the political apparatus. Colectivizacion publishes a magazine by the same name and links its activities to the university environment, makes historical and sociological balances regarding the current Peruvian situation, stating the libertarian ideal with renovating intentions. 'Avancemos' (Let's Advance) is yet another collective that tries to transcend the musical aspect that still surrounds some of the sympathisers, bringing the debate to a more political terrain. They organise concerts, talks, debates and other acts whose proceeds revert to the organising of new activities. A while later Avancemos became the Coordinadora Sonidos the Accion (Sounds of Action Coordinator), a groups that aims to be the nucleus of a movement which, in autonomous fashion, will extend throughout the different neighbourhoods of Lima and other cities. The Coordinadora prints *Barricada* (Barricade) and *Despierta* (Wake up). Other collectives are 'Cambio Radical' (Radical Change) active in the northern area of the city and the group Ikaria which proclaims a 'nihilist' anarchism. There is a great number of fanzines (*Buscando un Camino* – Searching for the Road – *Cultura* – Culture – and a long etc.) and musical groups which sympathise with the ideals, among the last *Autonomia* (Autonomy), *Generacion Perdida* (Lost Generation), *Al Margen de la Ley* (Outside the Law) and *Los Recios* (The Strong Ones). Restless university students organise talks about the Labour Movement, Gonzalez Prada and other topics with participation of libertarian comrades. There are also sympathisers among the animal rights activists who periodically organise campaigns against bullfights and for animal liberation. It is not strange that all this activity in Lima is being done by militants who multiply themselves among the various collectives so we can not speak of a very large number of militants. A big amalgam of groups and publications which try to coordinate and achieve greater efficiency but which face not a few obstacles. Fujimori's coup in 1992 forced the Peruvian comrades to take precautions. According to Peruvian repressive laws, anarchists are classified as 'independent terrorists' since they don't fit under the typical 'terrorism' – something which can bring hard prison sentences. Thus, local libertarians are forced to change meeting places, to be discreet when talking anarchism, change the names of their publications when they think they are being detected and other measures in that direction. Another serious problem is the lack of meeting places, being forced to gather in public and so getting undesired attention. More recently they have suffered from the overtures of the until recently marxist-leninist-maoist element with the goal of obtaining political advantage out of their labour and the libertarian ideals in general. In spite of the obvious difficulties, the Peruvian comrades are optimistic about their work and hope to advance the ideals they consider more just.

Address for anarchist contacts in Peru: Ediciones Musicales, Aptdo. C. 330062 Lima (Peru).

translated by Luis

## Note

\* The APRA was characterised at that time by their taking advantage of Gonzalez Prada's image as well as of anarchist ideas in their discourse, acting as a 'degenerative' agent in the worker's movement. In more recent times they have performed outrageous acts of corruption (as under the APRA government of Alan Garcia) and today some of its members collaborate in the Fujimori government.

# Freedom Press on the Net

Speaking on the telephone the other day to one of our more faithful readers, I was advised that "Freedom really must get its act together on the web". More and more readers (I was informed) were coming on line and it would be a good idea to bring them all together in some way.

This conversation, and I suppose others, brought home to me the fact which I was already aware of, that I had to write something for *Freedom* telling readers (on and off line) what we have been up to for the last four years or so using short sentences without too many sub clauses and commas.

I am, clearly, a miserable failure.

Firstly, may I atone for some of my guilt by pointing out that the editorial in *The Raven* on 'Communication and Language' tells the story of the early days? Yes. Please. But this is perhaps not good enough and I must confess that my excuses ring hollow from that point onwards and given that those who use the net know how fast things can change in that environment it is simply a truism to say that a lot has happened since then. Indeed, a lot will have happened since when I typed this and now, dear reader, when you are reading it.

## Working with others

We are of course anarchists – social, lifestyle or, in my case, social-lifestyle – and have this habit of wanting to work with others of a similar mindset. Unfortunately, some comrades consider Freedom Press to be 'liberal', 'bourgeois' or 'fascist' and so it is useful to use a new name sometimes even if we are only doing what we always do. This was why in the early days we set up the a-infos news network and a measure of our success was when *Black Flag* started carrying advertisements for the service clearly unaware that we had set it up.

A-infos today continues to do its work virtually without our input. There are many reasons for this but most importantly we would identify the issue of quality of material. Back in 1997 we felt that a-infos was, by then, awash with the digital diarrhoea which the internet encourages and that there was little point in posting messages to a list with some twenty pieces a day when one moment you were reading about a forthcoming meeting of a feminist group in Vancouver, followed (instantaneously) by the Anti-Fascist Internet Daily, followed (again instantaneously) by a report about a weird genetic mutation of some obscure Soya bean in India. Important issues all. But there seemed to be no planned development of stories and the main message each day was a simple one: information overload. A-Infos is still a chameleon like beast. Some days good; some days bad. It really needs someone to love it and nurture it.

We at Freedom Press continued (and continue) to work with others but at that time we felt it important to establish our own areas of concern more systematically. This was why we set up fpi.

**FPI**  
We needed our own mailing list and so we asked our good friends in Toronto (without whom all our activities would have been well nigh impossible) to set it up for us with a discussion list alongside called fpi-d. The acronym fpi (lower case please – computers are stupid) stands for Freedom Press International. Anyone with internet access can subscribe to the list and currently we have some 250 subscribers. 'Traffic' is low, you are unlikely to receive more than

two e-mails a week. So why have we never mentioned it in *Freedom* before? The simple reason is that we didn't feel you would be interested. Fpi carries extracts from Freedom Press publications (in particular the journal you are reading) and it seems unnecessary for you to read it twice. Sometimes we include extracts from *The Raven* and once or twice we have included an extract from a book we have published (Harold Barclay's *Culture and Anarchism* was very popular).

However, things are changing and it would now seem appropriate to talk about the list a little on these pages for two reasons.

Firstly, it is the nature of the internet that any information you receive via your computer can be forwarded to others. For this reason it would make sense for folk who

read *Freedom* and have access to the internet to subscribe to the list and help us make others aware of what we are doing – Americans call this outreach. Secondly, *Freedom* is, of course, a fortnightly. As we have become more sophisticated in using the internet it is now the case that we can respond more quickly to events in the world and so now we sometimes include information on the mailing list that doesn't get into *Freedom*. Two examples.

Back in 1995 there was what came close to being a general strike in France. The French are good at blowing up quickly and fading just as fast. The whole thing was over in the space of a couple of weeks. *Freedom* only came out once during this period whereas the a-infos news service was carrying sometimes

some ten files of information about events on a daily basis in multiple languages (this was a-infos at its best). Another, more recent, example was the general strike in Ecuador in March 1999. We were able to bring information to people about what was happening as it happened both on our web site and on the mailing list. By the time it would have been published in *Freedom* it would have been archaeology.

## Non access

We can already hear the criticisms from our dear friends Colin Ward and Libertarian. What of those who do not have access to the internet? As we go into the 'digital age' will there be a social substrata of information poor citizens who will be ignorant of what their info rich cousins enjoy? Is the internet responsible for the demise of the biro and rural postal services?

I think much of this criticism is unfair. For sure these are important issues and I hope to return to them at some time in the future using short sentences all will understand (don't hold your breath, as I say it has taken four years to get around to writing this piece) but for me the essential is that we cannot forgo this opportunity whilst we have it. The Freedom Press web site and its parallel mailing lists allow us to reach out to a large number of people (probably tens of thousands over the last four years) who would otherwise be happily ignorant of our activities. In turn if even a small percentage subscribe to one of our journals, buy a book or visit Angel Alley we all benefit.

But perhaps ultimately it boils down to a generation divide between those who have to face the fact that they will be around for a few years in the forthcoming millennium (whenever it starts) and those who, sadly, won't. We, the younger ones, have to live with this, for good or ill, and the only thing we would ask of those who have helped guide us in the past as we have taken our first tentative steps on a long road is that they will now encourage us to walk on our own and write pieces like this in sensible, short sentences and with few sub clauses.

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## THE FREEDOM PRESS WEBSITE

The Freedom Press Website now has hundreds of files of information available to the public. Here is a list of our main indexes.

<http://freedom.tao.ca>

Our main home page

<http://freedom.tao.ca/FIN>

International News

<http://freedom.tao.ca/Raven>

The Raven

<http://freedom.tao.ca/Books>

Brief extracts from some of our books

<http://freedom.tao.ca/writers.html>

Articles indexed by author

<http://freedom.tao.ca/topic.html>

Articles indexed by theme

<http://freedom.tao.ca/Trans>

Freedom archive

<http://freedom.tao.ca/luddling>

Special section on Culture and Technology

## GUEST APPEARANCES

<http://freedom.tao.ca/ain>

Anarchist Information Network

<http://freedom.tao.ca/totlib>

Total Liberty

<http://freedom.tao.ca/NELL>

The New English Learning and Languages Review

## MAILING LISTS

Anyone who can use e mail can join these. Send a message to: [majordomo@tao.ca](mailto:majordomo@tao.ca)

Leave the subject line blank and in the body of the message type: subscribe fpi  
subscribe fpi-d

You will then receive instructions asking you to confirm your subscription. *Do as you are told – you will be talking to a computer.*

The principle is the same for any list. So, for example, the message subscribe a-infos will get you on that list. If you send the word help to the majordomo address you will get... ummmm... 'help'.

If you would prefer to deal with a human being simply send a message to [freedom@tao.ca](mailto:freedom@tao.ca) saying whatever you like. You'll be talking to me and I'll simply ignore you if you are rude.



# Freedom to Roam?



photo: Ramblers' Association

There they were, walking (ramblers don't march) on a sunny Sunday in March, across the 9th Earl of Macclesfield's land, in the Chilterns near Oxford, a mile long column, maybe two thousand of them. They had come in coaches from all over England and Wales. But they were not trespassing because, constantly reminded by the sound system, they kept to the footpath, the only bit of land they could legally walk on. An amazing sight, a photographer's delight, a column of men, women and children five to six deep winding through the middle of a broad green swathed valley between two modest hills, Shirburn to the north and Pyrton to the south, watched at a safe distance by a Macclesfield minion in his macho four-wheel drive.

This was a celebration organised by the Ramblers' Association (RA), with full media attendance, of an unexpected announcement in parliament on the previous Monday 8th March. To every one's surprise including the media's and despite many leaks to the contrary, Michael Meacher, Secretary of State for the Environment, had stood up in Parliament and proclaimed that the government would introduce legislation to allow walkers to roam freely over some four million acres of open countryside (10% of England and Wales), of mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. After all, this had been promised in Labour's election manifesto and governments always keep their promises, don't they? Students of party politics might care to speculate, what if Meacher had said, as suggested by the leaks, these landowners are kind and generous people, of course they will let you walk on their land, you only have to ask, the voluntary approach is best. No matter that the RA has been asking for the past fifty years. Would twenty thousand have turned up, too many for the footpath to contain, so that they overflowed on to the hillsides? By pure coincidence, on 26th March, Gordon Prentice, Labour MP for Pendle, was down to introduce the second reading of his Freedom to Roam private member's bill with every expectation of winning the vote. In the circumstances he said he would not press his bill to the vote so the government keeps control.

## But not yet

"As soon as parliamentary time allows", the second part of Meacher's statement, was almost drowned by the Labour applause which greeted the first part as he went on to describe how maps must first be agreed and then drawn of the areas involved and local forums of landowners and local authorities

and other interested parties set up to try to achieve voluntary agreements, make the necessary arrangements and police the long list of restrictions and limitations involved. Much of the responsibility for inaugurating the scheme will fall on the Countryside Agency and this will be headed by Ewen Cameron, a former president of the Country Landowners' Association, who is an outspoken opponent of increased access and who has already been accused of serial path blocking on his land in Somerset. "He will have a key role in the implementation of the regulations. His quango will rule on exemptions from the statutory right to roam, and he can be expected to take a much tougher line with ramblers than with estate owners" said a *Times* columnist. Like putting an alcoholic in charge of a pub, said one campaigner.

## Is this really class war?

The government statement had Gillian Shepard, the shadow Environmental Secretary, calling benign-mannered and avuncular Meacher a class war warrior, dividing town and country, whilst the Country Landowners' Association just screamed in anger and despair because there was no mention of money in it for them. But they will find ways. With a proper sense of proportion they

are threatening to take their case for access by voluntary agreement to the European Court of Human Rights, conveniently forgetting that the modest reform proposed is already commonplace in much of Europe, including Scotland.

## What the papers also said

The broadsheets responded to the news much as one might expect, with *The Guardian* and *The Independent* being moderately favourable, but those further to the right were much more entertaining. *The Times* gave a fairly balanced account although its editorial regretted that the government's approach was confrontational, not consensual, wandering towards an unnecessary rural dispute. *The Financial Times* was surprisingly tolerant of Meacher's proposals even in its editorial, "Town dwellers must be allowed to exercise ancient rights to visit the farmland for which they have paid such huge subsidies". *The Yorkshire Post* moaned that this was not New Labour but Old Labour at its worst, but it was left to *The Telegraph* to really excel itself. Its editorial described "a walk in the country as more an act of aggression in the class war than a chance to enjoy the smell of country air and the twittering of the birds." Has the editor been there recently one wonders. One of its columnists talked of mob rule (walkers not landowners) and recommended planting fields of stinging nettles.

## What now?

The RA's campaign for legislation is now emasculated by a promise, and once the excitement and jubilation has died away they will be left wondering what else it can do but wait, dropping the occasional reminder, for something that may never happen once the

Earls, Dukes and Barons have a private word in T. Blair's ear. RA members must behave (and in such a large organisation it must be admitted that some of its members don't even want increased access) so as not to provide the government with an excuse to renege on its promise. With maps to be made, local agreements to be attempted and, not least, money to be found (£3 million a year, £8 million in the first year) did I hear someone say this could take for ever? We shall see. This was never going to be a revolution. Whether it will ever be anything more than an astute political exercise only time will tell.

## This Land Is Ours

These large landowning families choose not to remember that they obtained their estates by robbing the peasant farmers of their land during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries using Parliamentary Acts of Enclosure enforced by the King's soldiers, which conveniently provided workers for the new factories of the industrial revolution. But they didn't call this class war. Before this happened people walked freely over much of the countryside now denied to them and a path was just the most convenient route not the only permitted way. We will not get it back, even just to walk on at weekends, without at least the threat of direct action. With the RA relatively quiescent it is left to other groups such as This Land Is Ours (TLIO) to keep up the pressure. The TLIO campaign with its non-hierarchical grass roots structure will appeal most to anarchists and deserves our support in its campaign against those Dukes, Earls, Barons and business people who own, control and exclude so much of the uncultivated countryside from the recreational needs of the rest of us. We must give the lie to CLA stories of thousands of anoraked figures trampling through the herbaceous borders of urban gardens and the allotment cabbage patches in the towns.

The land is for all to enjoy, not just the wealthy few. How to achieve this could not be better expressed than in the words of an RA member in a letter to *Rambling Today*. The only way to get anywhere – literally – is to go there personally, in large numbers and often.

HS

Harold Sculthorpe's book *Freedom to Roam* is available from Freedom Press at £3.50 (post free inland, 15% overseas)

# Excluded from what?

Last week, Tony Blair made a speech in which he pledged to end 'social exclusion'. The government would give "a hand up to the poor" but not, determinedly, a "hand out". There's nothing new in any of this. New Labour has postured about creating "a decent minimum quality of life and fair life chances while permitting greater individual freedom of choice" ever since Blair became leader. No-one ever, though, asks 'who is excluded – from what – by who?'

Blair made his first post-election speech at an Information Technology Training Centre on the Aylesbury estate in Southwark. The Aylesbury was built in the 1970s. It houses over 12,000 people in 2,400 flats. Unemployment on the estate is over 20%. Blair's message to the media representatives who had abandoned Westminster for the day? "There is a case not just in moral terms but in enlightened self-interest to act, to tackle what we know exists – an underclass of people cut off from society's mainstream, without any sense of shared purpose ... We should reject the rootless morality whose symptom is a false choice between bleeding hearts and

couldn't care less, when what we need is one grounded in the core of British values, the sense of fairness and balance between rights and duties. The basis of the modern civil society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty. It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take out if you put in. That's the bargain." So the message for the media was that the 'underclass' in places like the Aylesbury hadn't kept to their side of the bargain. The poor were getting something for nothing! "In the absence of a clear philosophy of rights and duties, the welfare system can discourage hard work and honesty ... we must make absolutely clear that our challenge is to help all those people who are not working with the jobs, the training and the support they need. I am asking social security ministers to look at all the key benefits and apply a simple test: do they give people a chance to work, or do they trap them on benefits for the most productive years of their lives?"

Anyone who wasn't sure what the 'underclass' might be – or whether they might be part of it and might even be 'socially

excluded' – has a handy definition provided by our own dear Prime Minister himself; those "without a clear philosophy of rights and duties". Most of us would think our duties might be to our families and those around us, and that we should seek the best means of securing their livelihood, whether that be through taking up work or staying on benefits. Not according to New Labour; our duty is not to cheat our lords and masters of "the most productive years of our lives".

For New Labour, social exclusion means exclusion from the workplace, nothing more. The poorest members of society are excluded from access to health care, education, transport, childcare ... everything that money can buy – from decent food, decent housing, to holiday homes in Tuscany. You or I might feel that we are excluded from access to all the trappings of wealth sported by the Christian Family Blair – New Labour is only concerned that we might not take up our role as cheap labour without coercion. In their book *The Blair Revolution*, Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle provide a

(continued on page 5)

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Ramblers and their roamings

Readers will remember Harold Sculthorpe's delightful rambling notes in *Freedom* and rejoice that most of them found a permanent home in his book *Freedom to Roam* (Freedom Press, 1993, £3.50). Its niche on the anarchist bookshelf is now shared with a contribution from an author admired by him and the rest of us, Marion Shoard. She was the writer of *The Theft of the Countryside* and of *This Land is Our Land*. And many of us watched her, as a lone figure facing up to grotesque dukes and their bailiffs in Channel Four's documentary on *Power in the Land*.

Her new book is *A Right to Roam* (Oxford, £8.99) and it displays the same mastery of rural history, from the Norman conquest onward, with key opinions on the way, from Winstanley and John Clare. She describes both that access to land which has been taken away from the poor by the rich over centuries, and the struggles of our predecessors to win it back.

Her book reminds us too, that we have had more than a century of legislation attempting, on both sides of the Scottish border, to provide for popular access to land, and that the strength of the land-owning interest has defeated or distorted all these efforts. And she believes that the argument has been further advanced in the public mind in Scotland than further south, since "an awareness of the ownership of rural land and of folk history and culture far greater than in England give Scottish people a new cause of grievance about the land crimes of the past and make them readier to contemplate action than the English." By a nice accident of timing, *A Right to Roam* was published just in time for the announcement on 8th March of its intended legislation for a "right to roam", to open up "the preserve of the few" as the environment minister Michael Meacher called it, for "the delight of the many".

However, he gave no indication about how soon or how late the laws would be introduced, and he announced to the astonishment of his audience, what *The Guardian* called "the almost unbelievable decision to make the former president of the Country Landowners' Association the first head of the new Countryside Agency". The paper's comment went on: "Here is an agency charged, among other issues, with protecting the public's right to roam and its leader is a rich farmer with a record of

having planted potatoes across one of his own farm's footpaths. The idea that he was the best candidate is absurd."

Ewen Cameron's deputy is to be Pamela Warhurst, the Labour leader of Calderdale council. It was reported in *The Times* on 9th March 1999, that "she is no right-to-roam activist. Harold Sculthorpe, of the Calderdale Ramblers' Association, said that she was not an active campaigner but he thought she backed their efforts to improve access to the Brontë moors in her borough."

Those rural landowners who are aghast at the thought of ignorant town-dwellers walking on their land, are delighted to let them in for a fee. As Marion Shoard puts it, "the notion of charging others to walk on British soil arises logically from the existence of a right to exclude". And she cites a series of examples of turnstiles at cliff-tops and waterfalls.

The paid professionals of the land-owners' lobby are working overtime to persuade us that access will destroy rural Britain, and Marion Shoard devotes a quarter of her 438 pages to the key mundane issue of *making it work*. The assumption of that section of her book is that we *want* to make access work in, for a start, the ten per cent of England and Wales which is moorland, mountain, heath, downland and common land to which the promised legislation applies. She demonstrates, from the experience of other European countries where free access is taken for granted, that the fears of vandalism, littering and disturbance of wildlife are



Photo: Ramblers' Association

unfounded.

She argues too, that the very limitation of the categories of land to which a right of access is proposed, brings its own problems. In farmland, for example, pastures, field edges and cropland after the harvest were recognised walking routes in the 1940s. Today, access to every footpath has to be fought over by local activists. This is simply because farmers, in hilarious numbers, are importing battery-reared pheasants for shooting by City gun-men.

Woodlands present an even more acute dilemma. The Forestry Commission gave access to its holdings, but was obliged by the last two governments to sell off many of them. Public access was safeguarded over only 1.5% of the woodland sold by the Commission between 1991 and 1995

But neither of these categories, quite apart from lakesides, riversides and seashores, are covered by the proposed legislation. There is

a huge uphill task ahead of us in persuading the British that they have a right of access to their own land. Meanwhile a skillfully managed public relations campaign has sought to convince us that the typical land-owner keeping them off his land is "not a large-scale, heavily chemical-dependent agribusinessman but a small tenant farmer of agreeable disposition."

The cheering news from other countries is that the very illogicality of partial rights creates a demand for their extension. This may be exactly what the land-owning lobby fears, but Marion Shoard's careful study of the experience of other nations like Germany, Switzerland and Denmark suggests that it is inevitable.

For her, the modest intentions of current policy in Britain are important as a first step towards a shift in power and privilege in our own rural environment.

Colin Ward

(continued from page 4)

definition of welfare reform which tells us all we need to know about Blair's plans for welfare: "The government can help tip the balance in favour of the labour market outsider against the insiders and thereby increase general pressure for responsible pay ... Policy should address the barriers in the existing social security system which hold people back from taking up low paid work". The 'responsibility' of the 'underclass' is to take up low-paid work and hence hold down wages. That's it – the Blairite project in its essence. Of course, put so bluntly, no-one would buy it, so New Labour has to demonise the poor to gloss over its intentions. We are expected to believe that the problems we face are caused not by the 'grasping rich' but by the 'grasping poor'. The 1995 Rowntree Inquiry Into Income and Wealth noted that during the 1980s "more people became dependent on state benefits like Income Support as a result of ... higher unemployment". Between 1961 and 1979, real net incomes improved most for the poorest tenth of the population. From 1979 to 1992, while the benefits system remained basically unchanged, the changes in net income were negative for the bottom tenth

and above average only for the top 30%. So the 'grasping rich' get richer, while the 'grasping poor' get a lecture on rights and duties. Nearly one third of the poorest 20% of the UK population are in work or self-employed. The Rowntree Inquiry noted that "other things being equal, self-employment raises the chances of an individual being in the bottom tenth of earners by a factor of 3.7." New Labour's latest target is housing benefit spending. As a result of the sell-off of council housing and the lifting of rent controls on private landlords, housing benefit paid to tenants in the private sector increased from £100 million in 1976 to £3.8 billion in 1995. Will Blair attack private landlords or private tenants? Go on ... take a guess.

"Aggressive begging of winos, addicts and squeegee merchants"; "families from hell"; "an underclass of people cut off from society's mainstream"; "the first stage of decay has already been reached when the stolid, god-fearing puritan of two and a half centuries ago has given place to the shallow, hysterical cockney of today" (okay, the last quote was from 1912, but anti-working class prejudice, like the poor, is always with us). Writing in the *New Statesman* (19th March 1999) John Lloyd commented that "the

bourgeoisie have defeated the working class – in power, income, taste, and increasingly in numbers. Those who cannot be counted as middle class are split up into groups without natural affinities, pursuing their own lives often in a fragmented way, with a spell of work here, a spell of part-time work there, a spell of idleness somewhere else ... Can new Labour moderate these trends? On the one hand, of course not: it wants to intensify them. Since modernisation is its goal, flexibility is a means to attain it – and flexibility, when taken out of the glossy pamphlets, is about how to get women into work at midnight to pack tin-foil trays with beef stew, without paying too much overtime." A century of orientation around a strategy of progressive reform through social democracy has resulted in a viciously anti working class New Labour government and a situation where, as Lloyd has it "the would-be expropriators have been expropriated". If we want to move on from this, if ordinary people are to make their own history again, then the precondition for that has to be working class independence – from Labour. We should recognise our enemies and treat them as such. If Blair wants the battleground to be estates like the Aylesbury, then all the

better for us. If the Job Centre and the DSS Office are going to be used to force us onto New Deal schemes – fine. John Lloyd tells us that "the knell of collective property sounds everywhere". If we are to drown it out, we need to rebuild tenants' and claimants' self-organisation, to prepare to resist New Labour's agenda. When Merseyside Chief Constable Kenneth Oxford said in 1977: "The freedom and way of life we have been accustomed to enjoy for so long will vanish; what we are experiencing is not a passing phenomenon but a continuing process of change in our way of life ... our customary ways of behaving and our traditional values are being radically modified" he was speaking out of fear, at a time when riots and strikes seemed to be always in the headlines. When Blair speaks of traditional values, he intends to ram them down our throats. We've a long way to go before "the British way of life" is put at serious risk again, but either we try, or we accept that, as John Lloyd says, "the bourgeoisie have defeated the working class" and we can be "socially included" as cheap labour "to increase pressure for responsible pay."

Nick S.

# Is it a crime to be a Kurd?



lead to prison or death. The Kurdish people are caught between feudal structures of exploitation and the Turkish denial of their existence. We do not support the PKK but rather we are trying to draw attention to the crimes of the Turkish regime against the Kurdish people in the same way that we drew attention, too late, of similar crimes committed by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. We also want to say that it isn't nationalism which leads to freedom but rather social struggle. This is the case not only for Kurdistan but also for Tibet, Kabyle, the South American Indians, East Timor and so many others.

## Ethnocide

If, by chance, you were to consult a Turkish population census you would find no reference to Kurds. However, you know that there are between ten and fifteen million of them. If you also know that Kurdistan is a largely mountainous country you will quickly understand who the ten million 'mountain Turks' are.

landowners who, in order to conserve their privileges, are prepared to kow-tow to any authority. In exchange the Turkish regime allows these traditional Kurdish elites to rise to all levels of power (the former Prime Minister in the 1980s, Ozal, was of Kurdish origin) provided they abandon any reference to their roots. This Turkish will to eradicate all reference to the existence of the Kurds, their collective identity, makes Turkish policy on this front a veritable ethnocide.

We must not sit on the fence here: the Kurdish majority have national demands which are not simply cultural and which could make anarchists shiver. Our analysis (which we believe to be correct whilst recognising the limits of our understanding of the problem) remains difficult to explain to a people who are finding their very existence denied by a state and who are finding that it is only via nationalist organisations that they can reassert their identity. Let us not be too quick to judge. We have no lessons to hand out but nor are we complaisant faced with a PKK which would certainly persecute us as anarchists if we were Kurds.

## From the GAP to Mossad

What role can the Israeli secret service, Mossad, have in all of this? The Kurds have accused them of helping the Turkish secret services in the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan which is probably true. We can reflect that Turkey and Israel are the two main, trustworthy allies of the US in the region and that their shared hostility towards their Arab neighbours should bring them together. This is also probably true but it is insufficient as an explanation. The real reason, almost certainly, is water. Israel needs it just as much as oil. Now Turkey controls the biggest source in the region and this is none other than

the Kurdish mountain region. The two big rivers in the region, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which irrigate both Syria and Iraq, start there and are fed almost totally within the region. Thus the Turks have launched out on a policy of building a huge dam system in the region which has been baptised the GAP. It is the real stuff of Turkish development crossing six departments and combining hydro-electricity, industrialisation, land irrigation and transport development. The first aim was to settle the Kurds in the region because their migration from this poverty stricken region towards the more affluent Western cities was concerning the authorities. The second aim was to set up an El Dorado for Istanbul and Ankara's capitalists alongside the local Kurdish lords whose support the government needed to undermine the popular revolt.

This wish to pacify (in the same way France pacified Algeria) is made clear by the reinforcement of the administrative structure, with the setting up of two new departments and the only centralised police service in the whole of Turkey. In addition the GAP plays a powerful role in Turkish foreign policy. It literally allows her to cut off Iraq and Syria's water supply.

This threat (which could easily lead to war) has led to an agreement signed in 1987 between Turkey and Syria which, in exchange for ceasing to give protection to the Kurds of the PKK, would guarantee 500 square metres of water from the Euphrates. And Israel? She makes up the last piece in

the jigsaw and is keen to cash in on Turkey's offer to sell her water, carried like oil by an underwater pipeline baptised by the Turks the 'Pipeline of Peace'. From there to imagine that Israel gives aid in the war against the PKK becomes a step it seems reasonable to take. The overrunning of the Israeli embassy in Frankfurt which the unarmed Kurds intended to occupy peacefully, seems to be the final signature on a treaty we might name 'blood for water'.

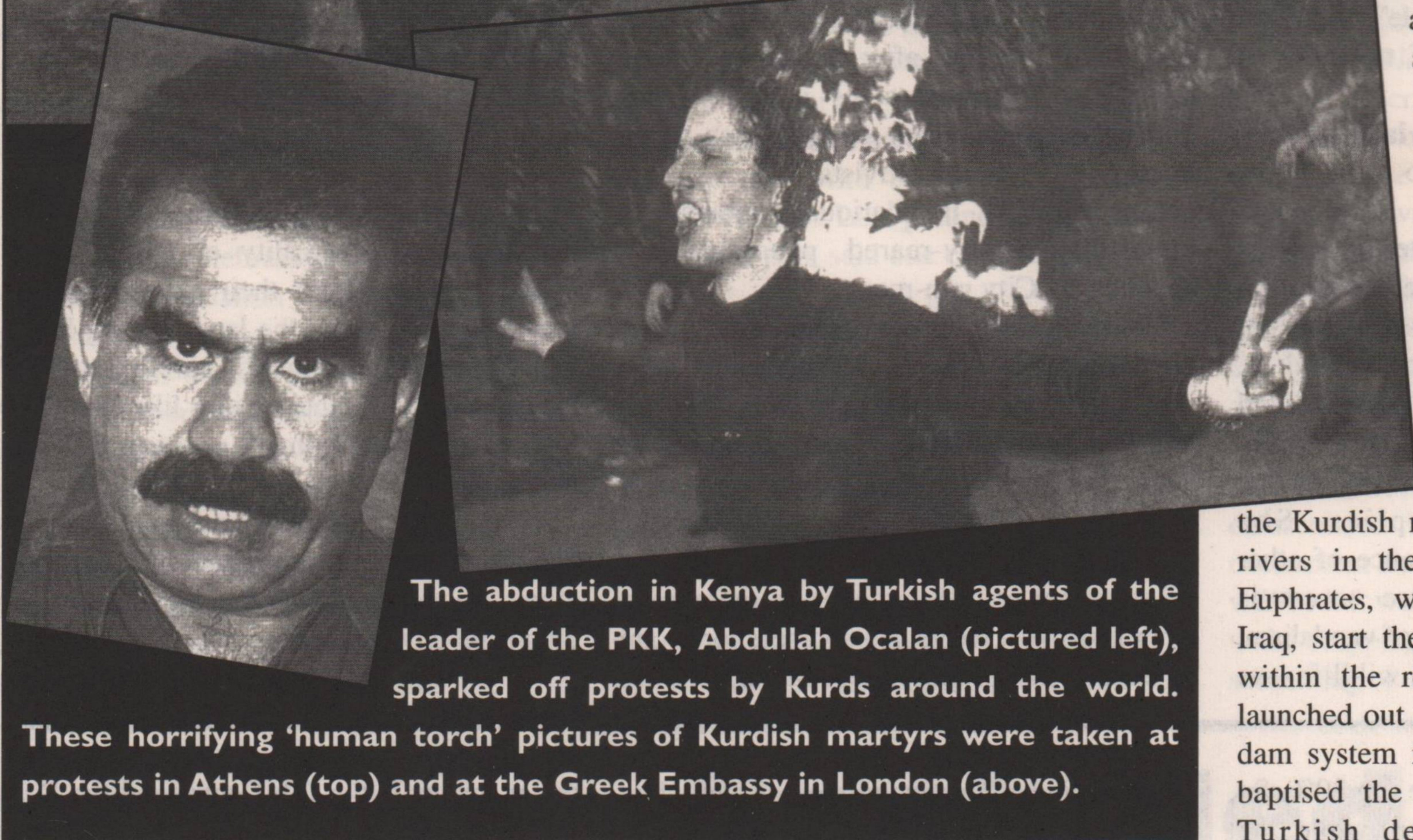
## The next stage in the struggle?

The official media seem almost surprised that when Öcalan was seized that there should be such a violent reaction from the Kurdish diaspora. We must say that the determination of the PKK militants sometimes turns to fanaticism as, for example, when they burn themselves alive. We imagine ourselves having stepped back twenty years back to the Iranian revolution when the cult of the martyr contributed to the fall of the Shah. The differences are however marked and lead to the conclusion that an Iranian scenario is not on the cards. Firstly (it would seem) it is outside the country that the reactions seem most strong.

In addition the weight of Shiite Islam and the cult of the martyr isn't there. Finally the repressive nature of the Turkish military machine seems to be stable. We are left thinking that the PKK is in a bad position. The Ankara regime has effectively won a battle and seems intent to continue with its policy of terror until all opposition has been overcome. The regime accuses Öcalan of being responsible for 30,000 deaths in the war he has waged with the PKK. The inflation of this figure in the days to come will unfortunately reveal that it is rather the Turkish state which is responsible not only for these deaths but also for the very existence of the PKK with its questionable practices and ideology.

Can other forces, closer to those we could subscribe to, emerge in Kurdistan? This is the question.

**Franck Gombaud, groupe Sabate**  
(translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 3rd March 1999)



The abduction in Kenya by Turkish agents of the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan (pictured left), sparked off protests by Kurds around the world.

These horrifying 'human torch' pictures of Kurdish martyrs were taken at protests in Athens (top) and at the Greek Embassy in London (above).

The arrest of Abdullah Öcalan raises once again the question of freedom in Kurdistan. His abduction is certainly a victory for Turkish dictatorial power in its to the death struggle against the Kurdish people. It demonstrates both the absolute intransigence of the Ankara regime and the disinterest of States elsewhere for the Kurdish question. The successive dropping of the PKK by Syria, Italy, Holland, Kenya and even Greece – a self-declared enemy of Turkey – is evidence enough. Western powers have no shame in demanding a 'fair trial' in Turkey whilst being fully aware that it will be nothing of the kind and that as they make their calls the television is transmitting Turkish propaganda showing a haggard Öcalan visibly drugged.

Without going any further and without getting off subject we must say that the whole question goes well beyond the simple one of Abdullah Öcalan. We are not trying to decide if he is a 'freedom fighter' or a 'criminal with blood on his hands', nor indeed are we concerned with whatever ideology he professes, but rather we are asking for how much longer being a Kurd in Turkey will

In effect the construction of modern day Turkey has been achieved by the pure and simple negation of the Kurds and in more general terms all that isn't Turk: the massacre of a million Armenians, the forced exile of more than a million Greeks. The master builder of this ultra nationalist and also (and this is important to understand the Western position) secular policy was Mustapha Kemal, nicknamed Atatürk (the Father of Turkey). His ideology has been that of all Turkish administrations since independence in 1923. It was inaugurated with speed and violence. Since 1924 the Kurdish language has been forbidden both in the school and in the street. Dress customs have been submitted to legal control, Kurdish songs have been banned apart from during a five hour period on wedding days. The Turkish state has embarked on a policy of enforced acculturation with a mixture of brainwashing and almost constant repression. It has also enforced population displacements and the setting up of Turkish colonies on the most fertile lands. It uses collaborators who it pays to denounce any sign of subversion and leans on a medieval aristocracy of large

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# Anarchism and Communism

Dear *Freedom*,

There are a number of logical errors in the responses to me. The first involves that sentence, now quoted so much, from *The Conquest of Bread*. Mr Iain McKay pointed out part of *Conquest* in which Kropotkin claims that those that have saved enough to buy a house for themselves and their families would be allowed to keep it (pages 95-96). Iain McKay argues that this shows that (contrary to mine and John Henry MacKay's opinions) that Kropotkin supported the holding of land for personal use. I think that this is probably true, and does contradict my previously stated views. However, it also contradicts Kropotkin's. On page 90 he specifically says "Who, then, can appropriate for himself the tiniest plot of ground in such a city, without committing a flagrant injustice?" What does Mr McKay believe 'for himself' means, if not personal use? "Someone who has contrived to buy a house just large enough to hold his family" is deciding personally, and thus for himself, how that house shall be used, and who shall benefit from its usage. Make up your mind, Mr McKay. Either the passage on pages 95-96 shows that Kropotkin did accept holding land for personal use, and I was wrong, or page 90 shows that he didn't, and I was right. Either way, between pages 90-96 Kropotkin has contradicted himself.

The second logical failing lies in the fact that the free communists responding to me have said that anarchist communism is voluntary, but have still asserted that we don't have a right to own property privately.

'Voluntary' communism implies that people have the right to choose not to own property privately. This necessarily implies the right to choose to own property privately, which is the same as a right to privately own property. Therefore, whilst it is possible that throughout the world everybody will adopt free communism, the idea that communism should be voluntary logically implies the right to own property privately.

Iain McKay suggests that both Kropotkin and Proudhon want the abolition of rent. However, the abolition of rent does not necessarily imply the abolition of property. Benjamin Tucker makes a similar point over interest. He says that when my hat is hanging, it is on a hook. Without a hook, my hat would not be hanging, but it does not follow that in order to abolish hanging hats we must abolish hooks. Without property there would be no rent or interest, but it does not follow that property need be abolished in order to abolish rent and interest. In an anarchist society (therefore one without council tax) if I privately own the house I live in, I would have private property, yet would not be paying rent. Likewise, housing cooperatives own houses as corporate property, and members effectively pay no rent (as rent goes back to the co-op).

Richard Garner



Dear *Freedom*,

I would like to reply to Richard Garner's critique of Kropotkin on worker's control and property in the 20th February issue.

Kropotkin was right to focus on the act of 'appropriation' as an injustice. What he was surely criticising was any individual *unilaterally* claiming higher or better rights than other human being and asserting a *unilateral* claim to any part of the common wealth. In an anarchist communist society the needs and aspirations of individuals will be balanced through dialogue, debate and negotiation against other needs and aspirations. Rather than individuals appropriating land surely one group of individuals should say to another 'We have no land, can you help us?' to which they might get the reply 'Why don't we work together to reclaim some unused land?' And what if a third group were to say 'We will not give you the tools to perform an appropriation we disapprove of' – whose 'rights' are being violated? Anarchist communists oppose an exclusive or monopolistic (workers') control of the means of production. As an example, consider a group of people who go to their local bakery and say to the workers, 'We are concerned that by only producing white bread because it is easy you are harming our health'. If the workers refused to change, the first group would have the 'right' (i.e. be able to obtain the means to) campaign for change or learn the craft of bread-making and establish a bakery making something else. The workers *alone* cannot decide how to dispose of their product. Rather they must constantly make themselves aware of society's changing needs and be open to challenge about what what is produced and how. The danger of a closed syndicalism is that (rigid) institutions would begin to claim this exact 'right'. Suppose a group of individuals were to go to our bakery and say

'There is a drought, we are starving' and the syndics were to reply 'But we have a contract, our policy is to supply bread to the town'. In an anarchist communist society these free individuals would surely say 'Why don't we ask all the bakeries in our district to work longer hours to supply both town and land'. This is not 'free enterprise' nor 'interference'. Anarchist communists challenge the assertion that 'workers' control' implies notions of (private) property or the free market. We reject all means of exchange because this implies that individuals or groups have a title to the product of their labour which they have the 'right' to exchange for title over other products. Rather than a 'medium of exchange', anarchist communists propose equitable methods of sharing. Anarchist communists have successfully explored these problems and proposed workable solutions and methods that fairly balance the needs of individuals 'in society' and 'of society' – within anarchist communism there is room for both.

Jerry Spencer

## Campaigning for Votes

Dear *Freedom*,

I was surprised to read (20th February) that the Socialist Labour Party had stood candidates in 'every' constituency in 1997, and that it had lost 'all' of its deposits. In fact the SLP had only 64 candidates, three of whom held their deposits.

John Cartwright

Everything was started off again with a non-confirmed piece that appeared in the Italian press: "in the first nine days of 1999 nine inoffensive Italians were murdered by dangerous illegal workers". And thus an xenophobic and paranoid anti-immigrant debate hit the headlines in the media supporting the current regime (public television and papers close to the coalition parties) and in the opposition camp (private channels and papers owned by Silvio Berlusconi). All this hit its high point with a demonstration organised on Saturday 16th January in Milan by the opposition parties: the new-look fascists of Alleanza Nazionale, the correct-thinking businessmen who have converted to the politics of Forza Italia and one of the several breakaway groupings from the defunct Christian Democrats. About 20,000 responded to an appeal to turn out and call for more police, the expulsion of illegal workers and, in this way, criticising the perceived laxity of the government.

### An envied country

Such an event is no novelty. In fact, for several years, normally in the summer, Italian television and newspapers have been throwing the shit against the fan with regard to the invasion of the beautiful Italian peninsula by hordes of illegal immigrants. But what is the real situation with regards to immigration in Italy? In comparison with France and Germany, immigration is relatively new and not as high. In effect, a census carried out in 1997 put the proportion of immigrants in Italy at 2.4% of the overall population (6.3% in France and 8.8% in Germany in 1995). And if we go back to 1992 the comparable figure for Italy was under 1%. This is easily explained by reference to the economic reality in Italy over the last fifty years which has meant that for a long time it was Italians themselves, particularly from the South, who moved towards Northern Europe or Northern Italy looking for a means to earn a living. With economic expansion and the relative improvement in living conditions, Italy has started to become, over the last decade, a country with some appeal to immigrants and above all a country whose economy is in need of an injection of workers who can demonstrate 'flexibility'.

## ITALY: Immigration policies

With regard the current 'invasion' the facts are dramatic but nothing justifies the phobias being whipped up by the media. The peninsular nature of the Italian region and its geographic location in the middle of the Mediterranean lends itself to a continuous flow of immigrants arriving by sea. The crossing is 'assured' by organised crime who, after having extracted colossal payments, have no qualms about throwing men, women and children overboard when intercepted by the Italian authorities. Who are the new 'boat people'? Coming from the East of the Mediterranean, above all Albanians from Albania and Kosovo and also Kurds along with immigrants from North Africa. What are the numbers involved? Last summer whilst the media, probably in ignorance, were speaking of an invasion the figure stood at about 1,000.

### French policies repeated

Faced with such an 'invasion', the Italian state which has signed the Schengen agreement has taken measures which complement perfectly with the construction of 'Fortress Europe', aiming to ensure that the influx is made to reflect the demands of the ruling classes. On the one hand it has taken moves to deal with a judicial backlog with a new immigration law which is just as draconian as that introduced by Jean-Pierre Chevènement in France. At the same time detention camps have been set up to hold the new arrivals which are no more than improvised prisons in which they are shut up under appalling sanitary conditions. Finally, joining in with a strategy common throughout Europe, the Italian state has signed economic agreements with the countries in question, which will give money in return for controls of migratory movements at source. In effect this summer the Italian foreign minister went to Algeria, well known for its human rights, in order to ratify such an agreement and, given how 'urgent' the present situation is in Kosovo and Albania, similar discussions are under way with the Albanian administration.

In conclusion: nothing new under the sun. We are looking, no more and no less, at exactly the

same secular policies that are being implemented elsewhere in Europe, with one important difference – Italy, now well integrated into the Maastricht system, must show her partners that on the economic front she can deliver on her promises and, above all, is able to deliver social control. The figures on this last point leave no room for doubt: in 1996, with a population of 60,000,000 there were 325,825 employees in the police service. This gives a ratio of one representative of the forces of law and order for every 175 inhabitants. This is a European (and possibly) world record. Similar figures for other countries are: France 1/250, Spain 1/350, UK 1/390, Germany 1/420 and the US 1/280.

### A necessary solidarity

So as we were saying, nothing new under the sun – maybe not. The reaction of the Italian people to the media discourse on immigration and government policy has been up until recently mitigated. Apart from humanitarian organisations, often catholic and therefore always ready to offer solace, it has been anarchist organisations who have been left to denounce the xenophobic policies of the government and in particular the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation), Grassroots Collectives, Social Centres and the editors of *Manifesto*, a Marxist, leftist group which promotes ideas quite close to the LCR in France. In any case the racist demonstration of the 16th January in Milan provoked a strong reaction from the immigrant community in Italy. Responding to a call for a European day of action calling for a closure of the detention camps, on 23rd January demonstrations were organised in various Italian towns. In Milan, 20,000 were in the streets – a clear indication that the town is not simply inhabited by racists. There were other smaller demonstrations in Turin, Livourne and Rome. Those who participated can be categorised as belonging to different groups. The well-intentioned left (I speak of individuals not political parties), who felt a sense of indignation because of the demonstration which took place on the 16th and who suddenly wanted

to proclaim their existence and demand that the government change policies – after all the prime minister is an ex-communist!

Then there were the social centres which have espoused a 'neo-zapatista' strategy aiming at institutional dialogue. And then there are those who want to have nothing to do with the authorities (and these include the FAI) who are calling for the camps to be closed and the frontiers to be opened. And, last but not least, there were the immigrants themselves – illegal or otherwise – who came out of the shadows to be counted as real individuals rather than infinitely flexible workers or scapegoats for the social degradation which affects the majority of the population. Among the absentees, no surprises here, were the confederated trade unions, the political parties who are in the ruling coalition since the Social Catholic Democrats came to power. Another absentee was Rifondazione comunista which has had a bit of trouble finding its place after having withdrawn its support for the government but who, although outside the coalition, has given its support to the anti-immigrant politicians these last few years.

Whilst the mobilisation in support of workers without papers has been in full swing for some time now in France, these latest developments in Italy lead us to hope for a new air of hope to cross the Alps and that a European movement which aims to bring together 'indigenous' and immigrant peoples – be their status legal or otherwise – might emerge and which can challenge the social model of exploitation and repression that the new global economic order would impose on us under the banner of the euro.

Nicola (La Sociale group, Montpellier)

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## Meetings & Events

### The London Anarchist Forum

Meet Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall,  
25 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 1999 —

**2nd April** General discussion

**9th April** Deconstructing the State: Derrida  
and Bakunin (speaker Steve Ash)

**16th April** General discussion

**23rd April** Symposium on Anarchy and  
Racism

**9th April** Deconstructing the State: Derrida  
and Bakunin (speaker Steve Ash)

**16th April** General discussion

**23rd April** Symposium on Anarchy and  
Racism

Anyone interested in giving a talk or  
leading a discussion, please contact Peter  
Neville at the meetings (or telephone him  
on 0181-847 0203) giving your subject and  
prospective dates and we will do our  
best to accommodate.

Peter Neville  
for London Anarchist Forum

Organised by Clydeside Anarchist Circle, Autonomous  
Centre of Edinburgh and Counter Information, with  
support of Smash Hits

### Easter Event

on 3rd to 4th April at Govanhill, Glasgow

in the spirit of Bradford May '98

for further info telephone 0141- 427 6398

or view programme by e-mail request at

[radfest@yahoo.com](mailto:radfest@yahoo.com)

[www.geocities.com/capitolhill/1931/radfest.html/](http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/1931/radfest.html/)

### Rochdale Anarchist Group

are holding fund-raising disco for a coach to  
the Smash Blair / Minimum Wage demo in  
Newcastle (10th April) at the  
**Phoenix Pub, Whitworth Road,  
Rochdale on 3rd April from 8pm til  
late. £1 unwaged / £3 waged.**

### Red Rambles

A programme of guided walks for Libertarians,  
Socialists, Greens, Anarchists and others. Bring  
food, drink, suitable footwear and waterproof  
clothing. A rota of cars will be used - full cars  
will travel to walks.

#### Sunday 25th April

Derbyshire walk (Hartington and Upper  
Dove). Meet at Hartington village duck pond  
at 11am. Walk leader John.

#### Sunday 30th May

Mount St Bernards, Blackbrook. Meet at the  
John Storer House car park, Wards End,  
Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

#### Sunday 27th June

Borough on the Hill. Meet at the John Storer  
House car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at  
10am. Walk leader Ray.

#### Sunday 25th July

Derbyshire walk in Shining Cliff woods and  
Alderwasley. Meet outside Hurt Arms,  
Ambergate, Derbyshire at 11am. Walk leader  
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Telephone Vivienne for more info:  
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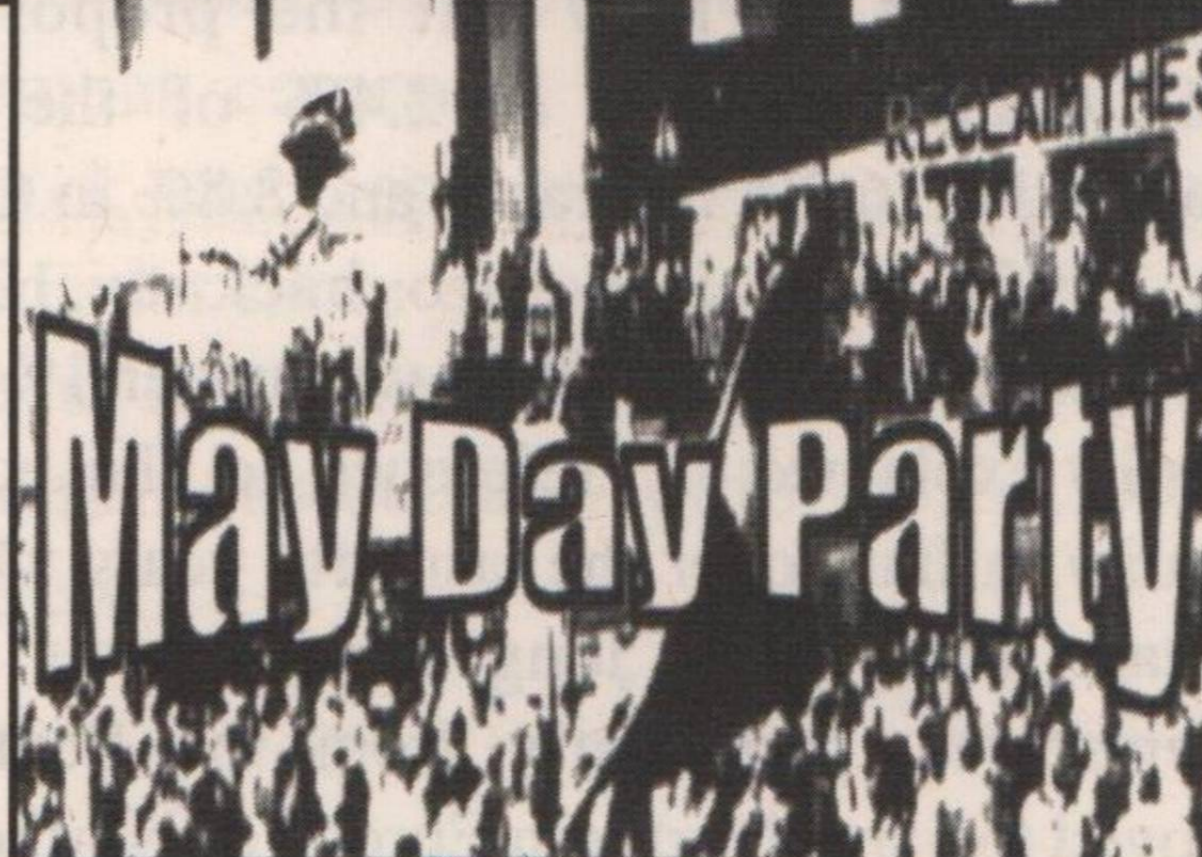
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