

Race purging, and purging race

Anarchists are concerned to resist, eventually reduce and even remove certain forms of human behaviour which are considered damaging to the quality of human life. All anarchists oppose authority; anarchist mutualists and collectivists oppose competition; anarchist federalists oppose hierarchy; anarchist socialists and communists oppose property; anarchist individualists and egoists oppose conformity; anarchist pacifists oppose violence; anarchist terrorists oppose passivity; religious anarchists oppose irreverence; non-religious anarchists oppose reverence; and so on.

The trouble is that such features seem to be almost universal human characteristics, whether they are really part of human nature or merely of human culture, and anarchism is often criticised precisely because it ignores such basic facts of biology or sociology. Anarchists reply that these prevalent diseases can be cured, just as previous diseases have been or are being cured – human sacrifice, torture and slavery, oppression of women, children and homosexuals, social, racial and religious discrimination, and so on. Nevertheless we recognise that it will

always be a long hard job. Just how long and hard it will be is emerging right now in the Serbian war, some elements of which have surprised many people who should not have been surprised.

Take the practices now known as 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide'. These are relatively new terms for very old habits, coined in the context of what was then the latest and greatest example of such behaviour – the attempt by the Nazi regime in Germany between 1933 and 1945 to achieve a so-called Final Solution of the so-called Jewish Question. The German word *Rassenreinigung* (race purging) was applied to the technique of forcing a racial minority out of an area, employed against Jews first in Germany before the Second World War and then in the conquered areas of Eastern Europe during the war. The Latin-derived word genocide (people killing) was coined after the war to describe the attempt not just to expel but to exterminate a human group, specifically the Jews whom the Nazis first forced into ghettos or camps and then directly killed or indirectly left to die.

The Greek-derived word holocaust (total burning, of a sacrificed animal) was then

applied to this particular genocide, though many Jews prefer the Hebrew word *shoah* (destruction). It has often been claimed that the Holocaust or Shoah was a unique event. In fact, while it may have been unprecedented in degree, involving the deaths of between four and six million people within as many years, it was certainly not unprecedented in kind, since many human groups have been deliberately eliminated by other human groups in the past.

The ultimate crime of genocide, destroying whole groups, has become an officially recognised term in international laws and conventions. The preliminary crime of removing human groups from their homes was given the label ethnic cleansing – a euphemistic version of the earlier German term – at the beginning of the conflicts between various nationalists following the collapse of the federation of Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Majority groups of Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Albanians drove minorities of rival racial or religious groups out of the respective territories which they claimed. Most of these actions were successful, in that they resulted in permanent shifts of population and the establishment of new national frontiers, but the Serb assault on the Muslims of Bosnia eventually resulted in international intervention to halt the process. Now the Serb assault on the Albanians living (as a majority rather than a minority) in the province of Kosovo has resulted in the American-led Nato war, attempting to halt or even reverse the process.

The immediate effect of the Serbian war has, on the contrary, been the intensification of the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and the greatest movement of refugees in Europe since millions of euphemistically described 'displaced persons' were stranded all over the place



Ethnic Albanian refugees queue to receive bread and fruit in Kukes, Albania.

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Warlords and the left in war-time

There is a lazy laid-back left wing way of deciding who to support in any international conflict and that is to ask oneself who America's Uncle Sam and the West supports, and then to line up behind their enemies. It doesn't seem to matter who that enemy is, just so long as they seem to be standing up to Uncle Sam. Many in the Anglo-Saxon left can be counted on to rally to the cause of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, just so long as the foe is the United States.

Some such left wing parties in the past worked themselves up into an emotional defence of Stalin's Soviet regime and even justified the doing of deals with Adolf Hitler's Germany. In 1933 the German communists even welcomed Hitler's rise to power. The former Italian communist Ignazio Silone wrote: "The conviction that a defeat, even by fascism, of democratic institutions would be *per se* favourable to the Communist cause was so rooted in Moscow's followers that at the beginning of 1933, when Hitler came to power, the first comments of the Communist press did not report the event for what it was – that is, a dire defeat for them – but considered it a great step forward toward the final victory of the proletariat."

Those who unreservedly oppose the bombing today are a curious crew. Not only is there the predictable Socialist Workers' Party, the Socialist Party and Harold Pinter, but Henry Kissinger, the Stalinist babe Miss Julie

Burchill, her feminist rival and critic Germaine Greer, the pro-Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, the 'loony left' loather Peter Simple from the *Telegraph*, and Alan Clark who, as a Thatcher Minister, armed Saddam Hussein.

What holds this lot together is a distaste for the United States and no nose for common decency. There is something slightly Pavlovian about some of the opposition to NATO's action.

Retaining power

Some commentators seem out of touch with the situation in the Balkans. Edward Said writes: "It's time the world stood up to the American bully", but doesn't tell us what can be done to stop Serb persecution of the Albanian Kosovans.

Noam Chomsky, the left-wing libertarian intellectual, told the *Guardian* last week: "Whether the war will go on and where it goes depends on decisions made in Washington and London".

This view seems to underestimate both Milosevic and Serbia's part in the conflict. In a recent review of the book *Serbia under Milosevic* by Robert Thomas, the Balkan scholar Misha Glenny suggests: "Thomas argues convincingly that Milosevic's decision to turn up the heat in Kosovo was motivated in part by fear". Glenny claims the Thomas book shows that "for the first time since coming to power in 1987" Milosevic felt threatened. The presidential election of Milo Djukanovic, in Serbia's twin republic Montenegro, had

created an anti-Milosevic opposition inside the Yugoslav federation and he was losing his full control over federal institutions.

Misha Glenny, reviewing Milosevic's predicament, says: "When unable to sustain himself through manipulation and coercion, he responds by whipping up a new crisis". And he adds that "on this occasion he has set himself his greatest challenge yet by confronting NATO".

Mr Glenny claims the first bombs on Yugoslavia, including Montenegro, weakened the ability of the Montenegrin leadership to resist Milosevic. Then, for Milosevic, ethnic expulsion became his main weapon of war and, as Glenny says, "the torrent of refugees forced out by Serb forces in the first ten days of the war exposed the atrocious unreadiness of NATO's political leadership for the venture".

Equally Edward Said, professor at Columbia University, shows he hasn't grasped what's going on when he calls Milosevic a "racist dictator". As Mr Glenny comments, "Milosevic has not been cleansing Kosovo because he considers Albanians inferior, he is doing it because he believes it will bring him political rewards of some nature".

It is vital to understand that Milosevic, the former bureaucrat / communist / nationalist / ethnic cleanser, doesn't believe in anything so much as power itself. His own power. Describing the Thomas book, Glenny explains how Milosevic charms diplomats

and outwits opponents by having "enormous political flexibility" and having "no final goal (beyond maintaining power in Serbia)".

This is Milosevic the tactician, and not the strategist.

Political greatness

Mr Glenny ponders the exalted political status of Milosevic. Glenny tells us he has had more 'impact', both on former Yugoslavia and international diplomacy, "than any single politician from the Balkans this century" – out-stripping Ataturk, Tito, Hoxha and Ceausescu.

Here, I think, I detect a note of admiration in Glenny's summation. It is the kind of perverse and contrary attitude Richard Ingram's *Observer* diary spotted in Alan Clark when he wrote: "Like many right-wingers on the lunatic fringe, including those with links to the intelligence services, Clark has a romantic attachment to the Serbs and is even prepared to overlook the fact that their leadership is communist".

Equally, in the left wing mind, 'political impact', intrigue, craftiness and plain wickedness is sometimes admired if it is done unscrupulously on a mass scale. There is more than a hint of it in James Burnham's book *The Managerial Revolution*: "Stalin's political techniques show a freedom from conventional restrictions that is incompatible with mediocrity: the mediocre man is custom-bound. Often it is the scale of their operations that set them apart ... There is nothing unexpected in letting a few individuals starve for reasons of state; but to starve by deliberate decision, several millions, is a type of action attributed ordinarily only to gods".

There is still a good chunk of the Anglo-Saxon left that harbour instinctive admiration for that kind of political greatness. Much of the British left has lost its nose for common decency; it cannot see that a system of administration that needs a mountain of corpses every few years stinks, as Orwell said.

Bombing and purging people

As I write, NATO is justifying bombing and killing a team of make-up artists at a Serb television studio, while in Kosovo the Serbs lie about the purging of peasant villages of people. The language is euphemistic, dissembling and vague.

In 1946 in his essay *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell wrote: "In our time political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible ... Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers*".

Today we (NATO) bomb and say we are *averting a human crisis* or *upholding human rights*; the Serbs expel and purge refugees and say they're *ethnic cleansing* or falsely claim the refugees are fleeing NATO bombings.

Two years ago this week I was in Albania watching Greece, a member of the European Union, 'ethnically cleanse' or purge the EU of hundreds of Albanian gypsies. I was on the Albanian side of the frontier and photographed them being thrown out of Greece into a then socially unstable Albania. I don't recall much fuss in the press about that, though it was covered on Greek television. The Greek trucks just came up to the frontier and bundled them over the border with their few possessions.

When I tried to get the story in the British press nobody was interested. Nor were they, or the Greek Consul in London, interested in the Korroneci family whom I saw turned back at the frontier (see *Freedom*, 26th April 1997). BB

SCANDAL UNDER THE SUN

EXPULSION FROM GREECE TO ALBANIA: GYPSIES SHOWN THE DOOR

A few of the men queried my use of the camera, but most were too deeply engrossed in their own tragedy. Eventually they huddled together and crouched on the ground surrounded by their belongings.

Human beings treated like so much refuse. One couldn't help but feel a certain disgust. A self-loathing for our own smug, sleek lives in the heart of Europe. What we were witnessing was a scandal under the sun.

This feeling was not reduced when, the night after, Greek television sought to justify its action by showing the expulsion of refugees elsewhere in Europe. In Germany, where the eastern Europeans were being pushed onto trains; in Spain, where Moroccans were being forced onto boats.

On 4th April the Greek authorities moved to expel large numbers of gypsies from Greece. The rounding-up was reported on Greek television that night, and in the afternoon *Freedom's* man was there on the Albanian side of the Kakavia frontier to photograph and document how Europe disposes of what it sees as human debris into the Albanian republic.

We were there to see them discarded from Greek army wagons straight through the metal gate onto Albanian soil. Bewildered children, worried mothers, proud fathers, plastic baths, baggage, bundles of possessions, babies in arms, through the frontier they trooped. A tragic stream of humanity, Europe's rejects.

ALBANIA: TAKING CARE

The British have not sent a military contingent to Albania to help out. Some may see this as odd, given the revelations in the *Independent* in February which claimed: "Whitehall gave diplomatic and trade aid to the 'gangster state' of Albania as part of a policy that helped prop up the criminal regime".

An editorial in the same paper states: "Our government and our governing party have supported these gangsters long after it should have become obvious to them they were up to their elbows in corruption".

Britain and the west invited Albanians to join the club of heroic materialism (capitalism) and have a good life. Then in move the Italian Mafia, and the people, claims the *Independent*, "elected a pyramid-seller as president" – Sali Berisha. His slogan was "Put your investment

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Any war but the class war!



Clifford Harper

According to NATO sources, over one million Kosovan Albanians have been forced from their homes since the commencement of the NATO bombing campaign, and 3,500 Kosovan Albanians

have been killed. The received wisdom of the left is that the ethnic cleansing carried out by Milosevic's forces has occurred as a result of NATO action. According to *Socialist Worker* (10th April 1999) "many have been killed by

Serbs driven by the nationalistic fervour created by the bombing". But is any of this really the case? Amnesty International's 1998 report on Kosovo reveals that between 28th February and 6th March 1998 Serbian police killed at least eighty ethnic Albanians in the villages of Likosane, Cirez and Donji Prekaz in the Drenica region of Kosovo. Although evidence was incomplete, it was clear that many of the victims – who included at least twelve women and children – had no involvement in armed attacks.

At least eight men, two of them over 60 years of age, were extra judicially executed by Serbian police in the village of Ljubenic on 25th May 1998. Six days later, eight men from Novi Poklek near Glogovac were 'disappeared' after being detained by police.

At least 58 people, but possibly up to 200, were killed between 17th and 21st July in Orahovac, during and after fighting to capture the town. Some of these were reported to have been shot in extrajudicial executions.

In August 1998 it was estimated that there were some 170,000 people from Kosovo province internally displaced within the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Clearly, whatever 'nationalistic fervour' is leading to the violent displacement of the Kosovan people it was loosed well in advance of the NATO intervention. Milosevic has engineered his political survival through propagation of Serb nationalism. Up until now he has been aided in this by the very forces at present ranged against him.

US envoy Richard Holbrooke famously described Milosevic as "a man we can do business with, a man who recognises the reality of life in former Yugoslavia". When Milosevic took over as president of the Serbian League of Communists he declared to a crowd of Kosovan Serbs "No one should dare to beat you". Since then, as Christopher Hitchens has observed "this combined pathology of superiority/inferiority has become the equivalent of State dogma. With dismaying speed, and by a macabre

metamorphosis, the World War Two Partisan slogan of 'One Yugoslavia' has mutated into yells for a Greater Serbia and the army devised by Tito for defence against foreign intervention has been turned loose, along with various militias, against civilians and open cities. You could, without stretching things too much, describe this hybrid as 'national socialism'."

NATO's intervention is designed only to restore stability to the region, as was the intent of the propping up of the Dayton Accords from 1995 onwards. Until the start of the bombing campaign, US Secretary of State Madeline Albright referred to the Kosovo Liberation Army as "no more than terrorists". NATO's agenda still includes the disarming of the KLA, and in the discussions leading up to the bombing raids, Tony Blair's main concern was that the KLA may use the bombings as cover to attack innocent Serbs!

A statement from the Albanian Community Centre in London describes the status quo in the region: "In 1988 Milosevic came to power and abolished the fragile autonomy that Kosovo held. Albanians were systematically deprived of the most basic human rights, including the ability to use the Albanian language officially, education, health care, legal representation and the right to free speech." Any consistent democrat then would seek to support the restoration of such rights to the Kosovan people. Post-Dayton, it is clear that the West is unlikely to be the best guarantor of Kosovan autonomy.

The *Wall Street Journal* noted, in August 1998, of the fate of democracy in Bosnia, "In all, there are perhaps 10,000 foreign nation builders in Sarajevo alone; at least 40,000 others are scattered across Bosnia, including 35,000 soldiers from around the globe. A New Zealander sits as chief of the central bank. An ex-cop from Los Angeles is deputy chief of Bosnia's international police force. Mr Klein, a French-born American, serves as deputy in Sarajevo's Office of the High Representative, the closest thing Bosnia has to an executive branch."

Any Western initiatives in the region serve only to guarantee the process set in place a decade ago – the 'opening-up' of the Yugoslav economies to Western capital,

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at the end of the Second World War in 1945. Comparison has been made with the drastic attempt at mutual genocide between Hutus and Tsutsis in Rwanda only a few years ago, and may also be made with similar events in Turkish areas of Armenia, Cyprus and Kurdistan, Tamil areas of Ceylon, several parts of Caucasia, East Africa, Indonesia, and so on. Other precedents, more embarrassing for the authorities in Western countries, are the Palestinians expelled from Israel forty years ago, and the indigenous inhabitants of several Latin American countries being expelled by American companies today.

There is also a less drastic example much nearer home than any of these. In Northern Ireland, for thirty years, Protestant and Catholic families have been deliberately forced out of areas dominated by the rival communities, so that a gradual process of ethnic cleansing and segregation has accompanied the gradual development of local rule by rival armed gangs, and the withdrawal of British authority might well have been followed by much more abrupt actions.

But the most important point missed by most commentators on the tragic situation in Kosovo is that, far from being an abnormal exception, this kind of thing has been the

normal rule throughout human history. The complex mixture of peoples in Yugoslavia, and indeed throughout South-Eastern Europe, is the result of long and large movements of populations for at least two thousand years. Warlike invasions of Huns, Goths, Bulgars, Magyars, Avars, and Mongols from Central Asia, and of Arabs, Seljuk and Ottoman Turks from Asia Minor, peaceful incursions of Gypsies from the South, of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews from the West and South, and of German colonists from the West, as well as the massive migration of Slavs from the North, helped to destroy first the Roman Empire, then the Byzantine Empire, and finally the Ottoman Empire, overwhelmed one another in turn, and almost overwhelmed the indigenous inhabitants – Romanians in the East and Albanians in the West.

There is also a religious dimension; the border between the Roman West and the Greek East runs through the area, dividing Catholic from Orthodox Christians, and the centuries of Turkish occupation led to the conversion to Islam of many subjects, especially in Albania and Bosnia, whose descendants are still Muslims, even if they are relatively unobservant. The result has been a continual series of struggles and battles of all shapes and sizes, including frequent attempts at ethnic cleansing and occasional

attempts at genocide (especially of Gypsies and Jews, long before the Nazis).

Most of this history is virtually unknown in the West, except to academic specialists or to interested journalists, because we have been so much occupied with our own equally dramatic though usually less destructive histories. But anyone who looks at the current war from the perspective of the region's past sees Nato as a reincarnation of a Roman Emperor or Turkish Sultan or Russian Tsar trying to settle a dispute between quarrelsome tribes in distant colonies, with the same dangerous consequences for them and everyone else.

But anyone who looks at the situation from the perspective of human history sees what has been happening as an even wider process. The origin myth of every ancient civilisation – China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Rome – begins with an invasion from outside or an expansion from inside of a dominant group which expels or enslaves or exterminates the other groups. The Bible approvingly describes the ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Canaanites by the Israelites, faithfully copied by their descendants three thousand years later. Virtually every existing European state emerged from the same process, and the European conquest of the world during the past five centuries extended

the same process to every other continent.

It would be wrong to attribute this phenomenon to 'race', however defined, let alone to adopt the pseudo-scientific justifications of the extermination of 'inferior' races once attempted by Western intellectuals. (Some of these justifications, often by serious and sincere scholars, are quoted in the book *Exterminate all the Brutes* by the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist, recently published in paperback by Granta at £5.99.) But it is right to acknowledge that rivalry between human groups, which may be observed all the way from the horrors of the Holocaust down to the fatuity of a football match, probably played a significant part in the evolution of our species and then in the origin and development of what we still like to think of as civilisation. The trouble is that what may once have been biologically or politically advantageous has become socially and culturally disastrous.

As with authority, property, violence, competition, the human race must try to win the race against racism, and purge itself of the practice of race purging, however defined or defended. Otherwise we shall suffer either the bad fate of perishing through collective suicide or else the worse fate of triumphing through mass murder.

Trade Unions: which way forward?

Trade unions are in decline in much of the industrial world. Where membership figures have risen, (such as in America), growth has been modest. New Labour's Employment Bill, due to become law in the summer, may give British unions an opportunity to grow, by allowing them to ballot for bargaining rights where they already have 10% of workers in membership and as long as 40% of those all the workers in the factory, office, warehouse or shop actually vote for recognition. A simple majority of those who vote will not necessarily be enough, if they represent less than 40% of the work force. Employers will, though, also have the right to de-recognise trade unions if, for example, staffing levels fall below twenty.

In reality Labour's laws are likely to only give British unions recognition in work places where they already have significant membership but where employers currently refuse to negotiate with them over pay and terms and conditions, rather than increasing membership in sectors where unions are not present. As a result of this trade union membership is unlikely to rise much above its current levels. The vast majority (over three-quarters) of workers in Britain will continue not to belong to a union.

Outside the workplace trade unions are almost invisible. Take poverty. New Labour has said that it will eradicate poverty over the next twenty years. Unions have long campaigned for a national minimum wage (NMW) to end wage poverty. From the 1st April workers in Britain should have received a NMW of £3.60 (unless they are aged between 18 and 21 in which case they will receive just £3).

The NMW is, of course, set at a ludicrously low amount. Most unions campaigned for half average male earnings (£4.75 an hour). £3.60 is half what the European Commission says workers should be paid to ensure that they have a decent standard of living. Given that it is left to individual workers to report their employer if they refuse to pay the NMW it is very likely (particularly as there are next to no inspectors) that at least some employers will not even cough up £3.60 an hour. The clothing worker's union reports of one employer in Yorkshire that has told its workers that although their pay slips will show a wage of £3.60 an hour they will actually be paid just £3.

While unions have put a lot of energy, money and time into campaigning for an end to poverty pay their efforts on behalf of those not in work has been almost non-existent. The Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) has undoubtedly resulted in increased poverty but unions have not tried to mobilise and organise their members and resources to fight the JSA - this has largely been left to groups like Groundswell with the support of anarchists and others. If those in work should be

guaranteed a minimum income - why should those who have not got a job receive the same!

This is not an isolated example. Far from it! It is actually difficult to think of many examples of union support for general anti-poverty campaigns. In the case of the JSA civil service unions did little to link up with claimants. They often appeared hostile and unsympathetic to the legitimate concerns of those trying to survive on benefits.

One of the most important domestic political issues recently has been genetically engineered (GE) food. Again unions have had nothing to say about this important issue. By isolating themselves from the concerns of ordinary people, by being practically apolitical, unions are in real danger of becoming an irrelevance - unable or unwilling to effectively campaign on behalf of their members and uninterested in wider issues.

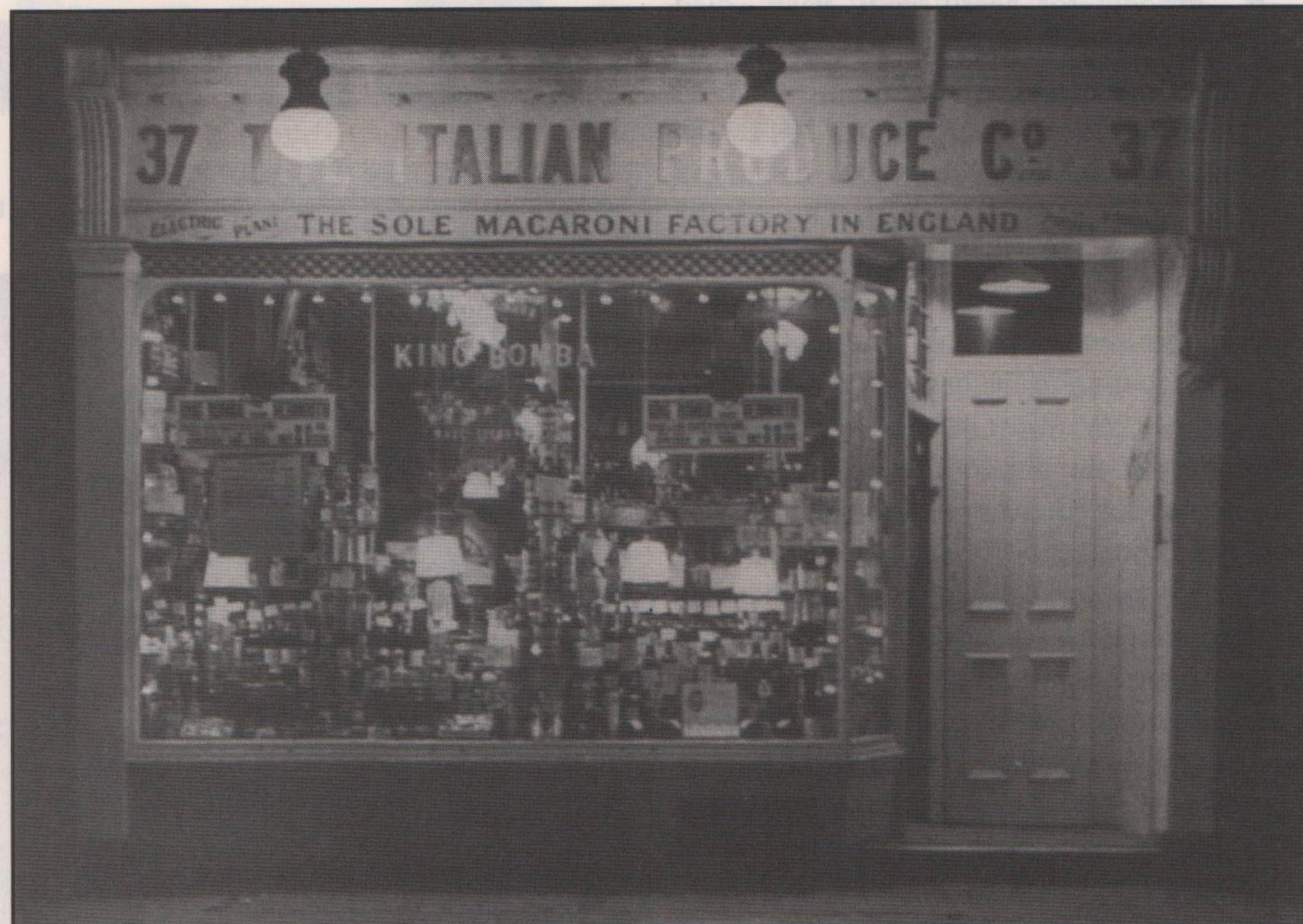
Trade unions - if they are going to survive - have to reach beyond their traditional concerns and link up with social, environmental and other campaigns. A claimant, who suffered at the hands of the JSA but who managed to get a job, for example, is unlikely to see trade unions in a particularly positive light. As a result of this she might be unlikely to join a union, even if one is recognised in her work place. It is little wonder that a recent study by the Cardiff Business School found that young people find trade unions 'unattractive'.

Anarchists in unions should be pushing their unions to not just campaign for their members' interests but for wider issues as well. Many unions, through the political fund their members pay, plough millions into the Labour Party. Anarchists should be pushing for their unions to disaffiliate. The NMW and Labour's weak Employment Bill should convince all but the most die-hard Labour loyalist that New Labour is not going to do the unions any favours.

Bakunin described trade unions as the only really effective organisation that the working classes have against capitalism. The effects of capitalism can be seen in almost every aspect of life. Unions have to lift their gaze and engage far more in wider social movements.

Richard Griffin

Anarchism in History Today



Emidio Recchioni's delicatessen shop in Soho, 'King Bomba'

The April issue of the monthly magazine *History Today* contains a short article of special interest to anarchists. 'The London Plot to Kill Mussolini' by Alfio Bernabei, a well-informed historian of Italian exiles in Britain, describes how Emidio Recchioni, an Italian anarchist born in 1864 who ran the King Bomba food shop in Soho and who had become a naturalised British subject, was involved in plots to assassinate Mussolini from 1929. In particular Bernabei uses recently released Home Office papers in the Public Record Office to give an account of an attempt by Angelo Sbardellotto during 1932 which ended in his arrest in Italy.

Sbardellotto betrayed his conspirators and the British authorities were well aware that Recchioni was one of them, but when the Italian government applied for his extradition this was refused. Similarly, Recchioni sued the *Daily Telegraph* for libel when it published an article mentioning his involvement, but when the paper approached the Special Branch for help the British authorities refused because this would reveal too much about official knowledge of subversive activities. As a result Recchioni, who had probably spent about £35 on helping the plot, won damages of £1,177. He

died in 1934. An ironical point is that Recchioni had apparently managed to obtain British nationality because he was a friend of the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, best known for betraying the Labour Party by joining the Conservatives in forming a National Government in 1931; could a foreign anarchist expect such help from Tony Blair? An intriguing point is that Recchioni was the father of Vernon Richards, who has been a leading member of the British anarchist movement for more than sixty years; is this how the revival of the Freedom Press was financed a few years later? And more general questions are why these official papers have been released several decades before would have been expected, and what official papers may be available relating to other activities by anarchists; would it be possible too for us to read Special Branch reports on ourselves and our comrades? Some hopes!

NW

History Today costs £3.25 for a single issue and £33.95 for an annual subscription. *History Today*, 20 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PE (telephone 0171-534 8000).



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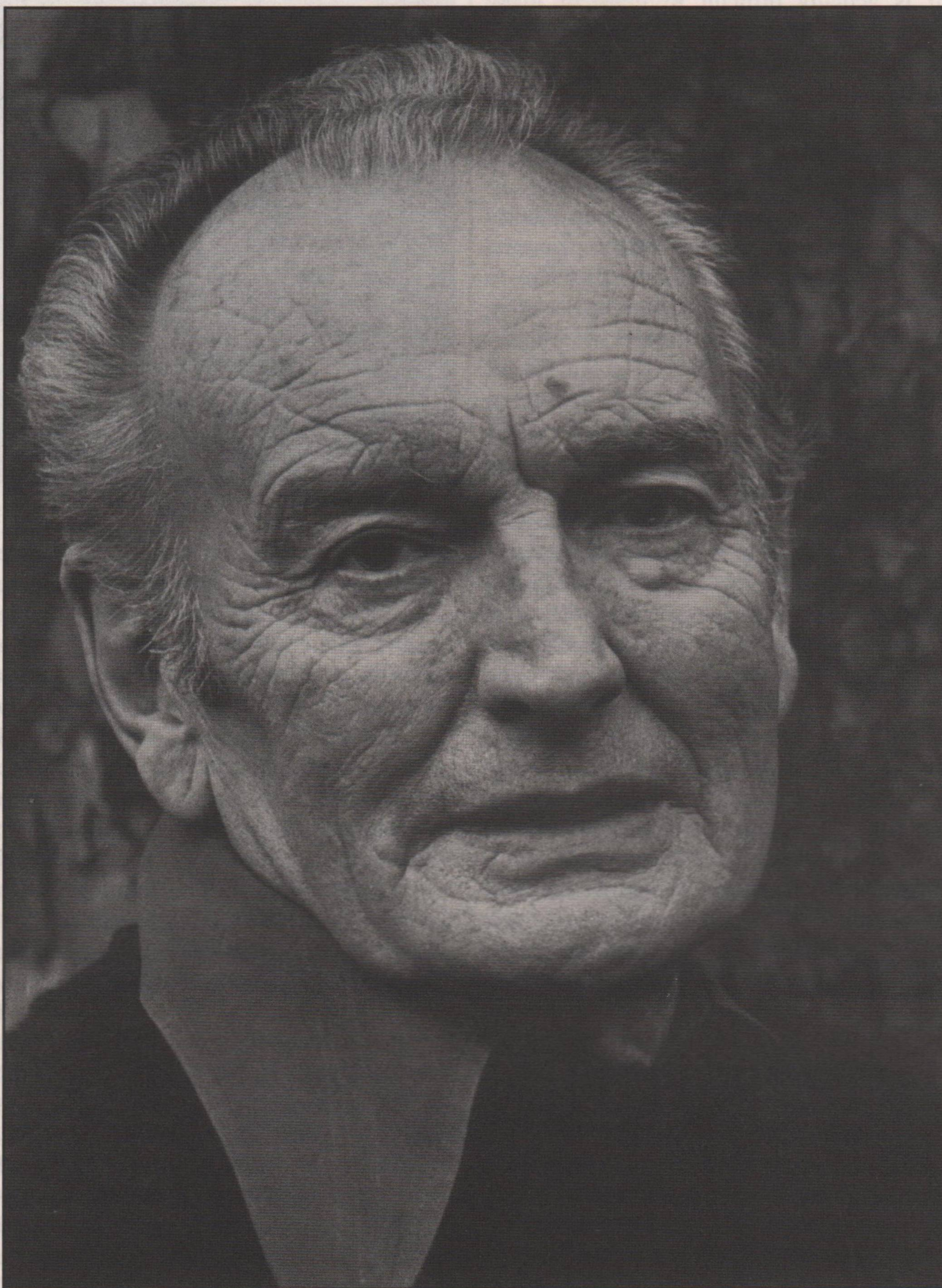
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 15th May, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 6th May.

If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

— OBITUARY —

Tom Earley

1911-1998



Tom Earley, retired schoolmaster, Anglo-Welsh poet, pacifist, and Bloomsbury resident for nearly sixty years, died recently in London at the age of 87.

Born in the South Wales mining town of Mountain Ash, Glamorgan, in 1911, the youngest of eight children, Tom became a lifelong socialist and pacifist. During the Second World War he was a conscientious objector, and worked at a refugee centre for Jewish children in the East End of London, also contributing to the newsletters *Freedom*, *Peace News*, and *War Commentary*. He was a supporter of the Peace Pledge Union, the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Committee of 100, participating during the 1960s in several Aldermaston marches protesting against nuclear weapons.

Tom trained as a teacher at Trinity College, Carmarthen, and for over thirty years taught English at St Dunstan's College, London. Here he became Head of the Preparatory Department and inspired generations of small boys to grow up revering fair play, sporting prowess and the English language in equal measure.

Living with his wife and children in a modest flat overlooking Bloomsbury Square, Tom combined a love of the area's Georgian architecture and tree-filled squares with an unwavering affection for the countryside of South Wales and its coal-mining heritage. All his life Tom continued to return to Wales regularly for holidays, to visit his family and walk in the mountains overlooking his home town of Mountain Ash.

Tom was a man with wide-ranging interests. He had a true Welshman's enthusiasm for rugby and music, especially opera. He enjoyed singing and had a deep bass voice (though he always claimed he would have preferred to be a tenor). He was fascinated by nature – trees and birds in particular, and the ritual of feeding and watering the garden birds he observed from his windows long formed a favourite part of his daily routine.

In his middle years Tom discovered France, and became a devotee of its culture: French literature, poetry, films, popular songs, French wines and cheeses, and the French language. This he assiduously learned from scratch in evening classes at the City Literary Institute in Bloomsbury, greatly aided, he

maintained, by reading all of Georges Simenon's Maigret detective novels in the original French.

A keen and able swimmer, Tom was always an active man, and even in his later years remained very concerned to keep his weight

down and stay fit. He continued to go swimming regularly at The Oasis Pool and the YMCA Sports Centre in Holborn until well into his eighties, and insisted on his daily walks through Bloomsbury up till the last.

Above all, Tom's great passion was for poetry. Particularly fond of Shakespeare and his fellow Welshman Dylan Thomas, Tom's own poems were chiefly inspired by his love of nature, both of his native Wales and London's Bloomsbury. Alongside his lyric output came poems of political comment and verses with a strong humorous touch.

First published in 1965, Tom produced four collections of poems: *Welshman in Bloomsbury*, *The Sad Mountain*, *Rebel's Progress*, and in 1992 *All These Trees*. His works appeared in all the major anthologies and magazines of Anglo-Welsh poetry, from the *Lilting House* in 1969 to the *Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English* in 1977. His poems featured in the Dial-a Poem scheme and were also read on BBC Radio 4.

In 1970 a short film of Tom's life and works was made by Harlech Television and shown on ITV. In 1971 he was elected a member of the Welsh Academy, which in 1994 organised in Tom's honour a festive birthday celebration in Cardiff of his life, his works, and his favourite music, attended by a host of colleagues, friends, and family. He was also a member of the Welsh Union of Writers and the London Welsh Association.

In his retirement Tom took up studying the Welsh language again at the City Literary Institute (the 'City Lit'), and for over twenty years he participated actively in the City Lit's creative writing classes, where he made many friends. Nevertheless, Tom was essentially a very private person, who most of all enjoyed living quietly at home in Bloomsbury.

However, throughout his 87 years the great love of Tom's life remained the landscape of Mountain Ash, his birthplace in Wales, so it is here that his ashes rest, and where his family plans a lasting tribute to his memory.

KME

Thomas Powell Earley, born 13th September 1911; married Elizabeth Alice Lorna Robinson; two daughters; died 30th October 1998.

Anarchism and Orwell's novel

In several places I have argued that there are pretty consistent indications that the wish for both independence and cooperative effort exists in us from infancy. On the one hand, we are animals whose fulfilment comes from collective experience with our kind. On the other hand, there is the neurotic wish to control others which is a direct result of our failure to find that collective fulfilment. My own view – one shared at least some of the time by Godwin, Woodcock, Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, Colin Ward, Denis Pym and others – is that the neurotic power-seekers are the minority and those, the majority, who are not taken in by the idealistic notion of the greater good are pursuing a life of concrete reality aiming at fulfilment in anonymity among the cracks in the authoritarian structure where, like weeds, they quietly and untheoretically multiply so that from time to time they produce some sort of upheaval in the prevailing system.

I have often referred to A.S. Neill and his Summerhill school, but I have never meant to suggest that he, or anyone else, was turning out fully acknowledged anarchists. I do, however, wish to insist that graduates of Summerhill were quietly trying, sometimes

succeeding in, living satisfying human lives as nearly as they could on the margins of whatever society they found themselves in because they had two important advantages derived from the more natural development of life at Summerhill: they knew more clearly what they were and what they desired as the unique individuals they are, and they saw the reality of the existing society and its neurotic shibboleths more clearly than their idealistic peers.

I call that life an anarchistic one. If the consensus of thought resolves that it doesn't somehow qualify as anarchist, it only means to me that anarchism is another mistake because the highest good, as I see it, is a full human life. And though it is not always realisable in the fluctuations of the nation-state, it is the only activity of the human animal which is not neurotic, the only activity which can grow into an anarchist society whereas armed militant revolution cannot. I doubt that the idealist who waits for the millennium to occur before life is possible, or the idealistic full time revolutionary who sacrifices his life to the struggle, can agree with my view of the natural because idealistic struggle always assumes sacrifice

which will be rewarded in the future. There is a sort of secular Calvinist's anarchism which argues that anarchists are a chosen special minority of right thinking and acting people (sometimes even intellectuals) who are oppressed by powerful authority made up of the cunning few and an apathetic and complacent many constituting a majority who must be overcome by force or argument.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* provides some examples related to the argument I have been making through his characters Winston Smith and Julia. Winston is an idealist looking for ways to topple the State or at least to remember some of its horrors for future generations to take up. His response to the first sexual encounter with Julia indicates that it must have a purpose beyond itself: "you could not have pure love or pure lust embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the party. *It was a political act*" (1964, Penguin, page 104, my italics) Thus he only stands as the other side of the coin of his wife who also saw sex as a political act, their 'duty to the Party' was to produce a child (page 57).

Winston's position is stated over and over again. He values sex because it is corruption.

He is happy to hear that Julia's 'animal' sexual instincts are fully active. He wishes her to be "corrupt to the bone", to have had sexual encounters with many men, "not merely the love of one person but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces", "If he could have infected the whole lot of them with leprosy or syphilis, how gladly he would have done so!" (page 103).

Orwell doesn't develop his characters very much in this novel. He is a political journalist more than he is a novelist: as is partly evidenced by the two 10-page long readings from Goldstein's revolutionary handbook during which Julia tellingly falls asleep. Most of what we know of Julia's values and understanding comes through Winston's summaries. But there is something important in her position.

Orwell tells us that "Julia made no general criticism of [the Party]. Except where it touched upon her own life she had no interest in Party doctrine." She tried to live as full a life as possible by avoiding discovery: 'any kind of organised revolt against the Party, which was bound to be a failure, struck her as stupid. The clever thing was to break the rules and stay alive all the same' (page 108). Orwell calls this act of creating as full a life as

(continued on page 5)

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

The Mabey Manifesto

I probably owe more than I ever realised to the natural historian Richard Mabey. I learn from David Goodway's chapter in the book *Richer Futures* that I must have met him first when I talked to the Oxford Anarchist Group in 1963. By 1970, as editor of the Connexions series for Penguin Education, he had commissioned my first two books, on *Violence* and *Work*, intended for reluctant readers aged 13 to 16. (Penguin Education began in 1969 as a radical venture to change the climate of education by providing dazzling alternative schoolbooks. It lasted until 1974 when it was abruptly closed by Penguin's new owners, Pearsons.)

Mabey's own first book outside of Connexions was his wildly successful *Food for Free* in 1972, a guide to edible items we can gather from fields, woods and hedgerows. He followed it in 1973 by *The Unofficial Countryside* describing his wanderings and discoveries in suburbs, on factory sites, reservoirs, docks and railway tracks, canals, churchyards, allotments, parks and rubbish tips – all those bits of open space that have

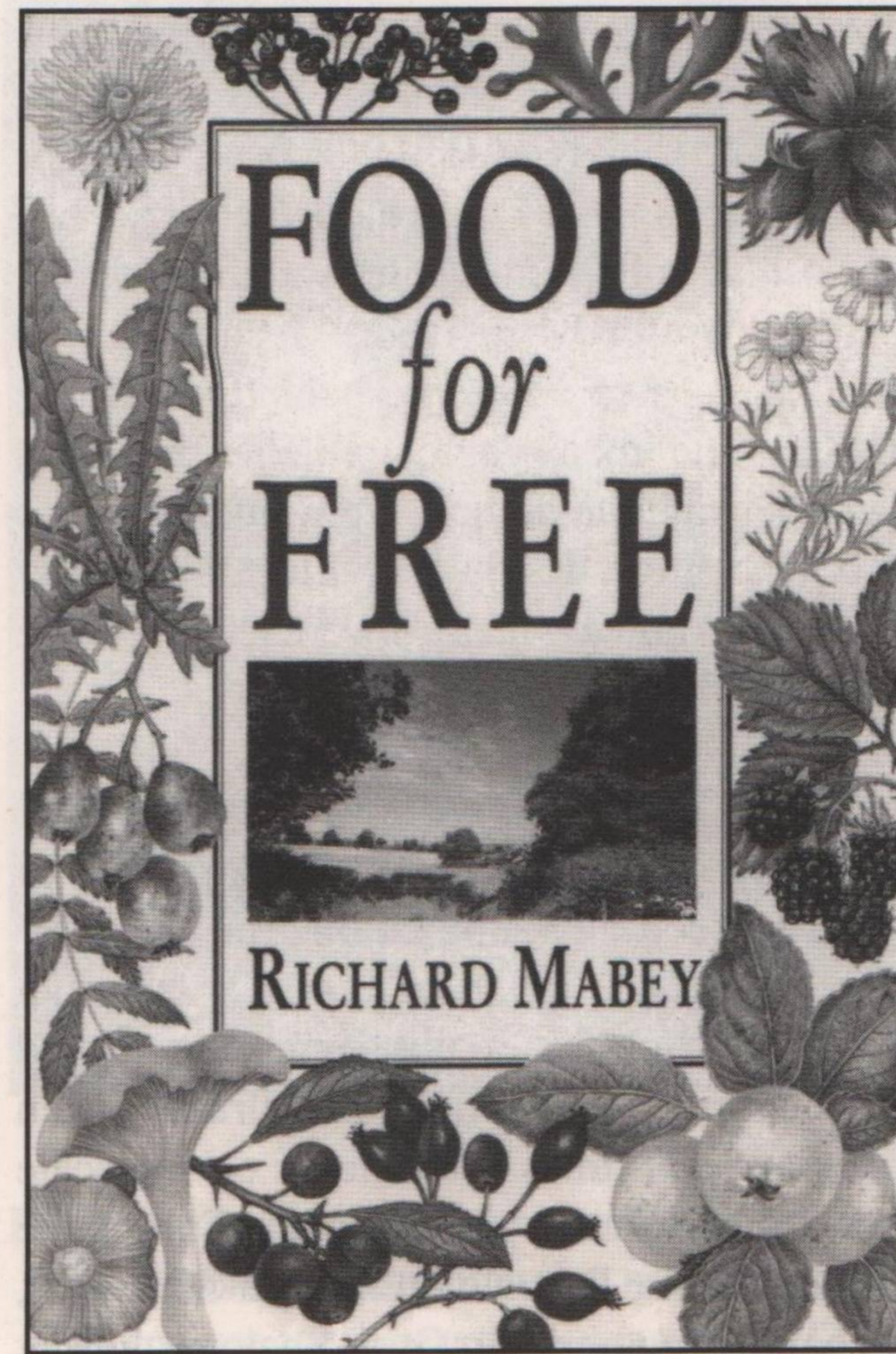
not been doused in pesticides and herbicides by the subsidised agricultural industry.

By the end of the century we have learned to take it for granted that many species of plants, animals and insects can no longer be found in the agricultural counties, denuded of 130,000 miles of hedgerows. In October 1997 the British Trust for Ornithology reported that a greater variety of bird species are recorded in urban and suburban, rather than in rural, Britain. It is important that we should confront current fraudulent crusades for the countryside, promoted by vested interests which have focused upon the ignorant urban population, rather than the farming industry as the enemies of wildlife.

In one of his contributions to *The Guardian's Country Diary* this year, Mabey moved into the discussion of new settlements in rural England, with practical and attractive suggestions rather than with the usual misanthropy: "Could we imaginatively resurrect some older models of rural settlement? How about being more tolerant of temporary dwellings (huts and tents) for the young and mobile? And for the more settled young and singletons, why not developments on the monastery model, with apartments clustered round a quadrangle and perhaps a communal refectory? ... A community forest would help shield and mellow the development, soak up pollution and provide an escape route for the citizens."

Like me, he is influenced by the careful work of Simon Fairlie of the Rural Planning Group of The Land is Ours, calling for changes which would actually enable local councils to foster experiments in low-impact developments, "some of them", Fairlie explains, "carried out at the margins of society, others designed to cater for more conventional people."

What I like most of all about Mabey's approach to rural England has to do with him and his wood. The policy of selling publicly-owned land which was forced on the Forestry Commission by the Thatcher government meant that the ordinary public was excluded



by the new owners. In her book *A Right to Roam* (discussed in *Freedom* for 3rd April 1999), Marion Shoard reports that public access was safeguarded in only 1.5% of the woodland sold by the Commission between 1991 and 1995.

Mabey made his own experiment in reversing this attitude. The success of one of his books enabled him to buy a small and neglected ancient wood and to become a reluctant land-owner himself. In the introduction to his book *The Common Ground* (Cape, 1984) he describes how "I still do not feel easy in ownership and find that in the wood I sometimes hide from strangers just as I did when I was a footloose child. Yet the experience is revealing much about the relationships that are possible between a community and its natural resources. The wood is now a parish plot again. Many people, local and visitors of all ages and backgrounds, come to work in it, helping to redress the effects of forty years of mismanagement, cutting their own firewood, or simply walking and enjoying the bluebells

that flood the ground in May. The children build camps and watch badgers and are gradually picking up some of the principles and skills of renewable cropping."

Last month a bumper book appeared from Chatto & Windus of Richard Mabey's *Selected Writings 1974-1999*. Naturally I turned first to the book's very last item, an essay 'On Stewardship', about the experience of managing his sixteen acres of neglected woodland. Yes, it has yielded marvellous dividends, but not in money. His verdict is to express distaste for the word we all use as a supposed guide to rural conduct: 'stewardship'. He concludes that "the consequences of our supposedly altruistic but arrogant grand stewardship schemes for nature form a hideous trail from English farmland to Amazonia. A modest and benign programme of self-interest might be a whole lot better".

How much more civilised he sound than the phoney crusaders defending their Range-Rover habitats behind the slogan of stewardship.

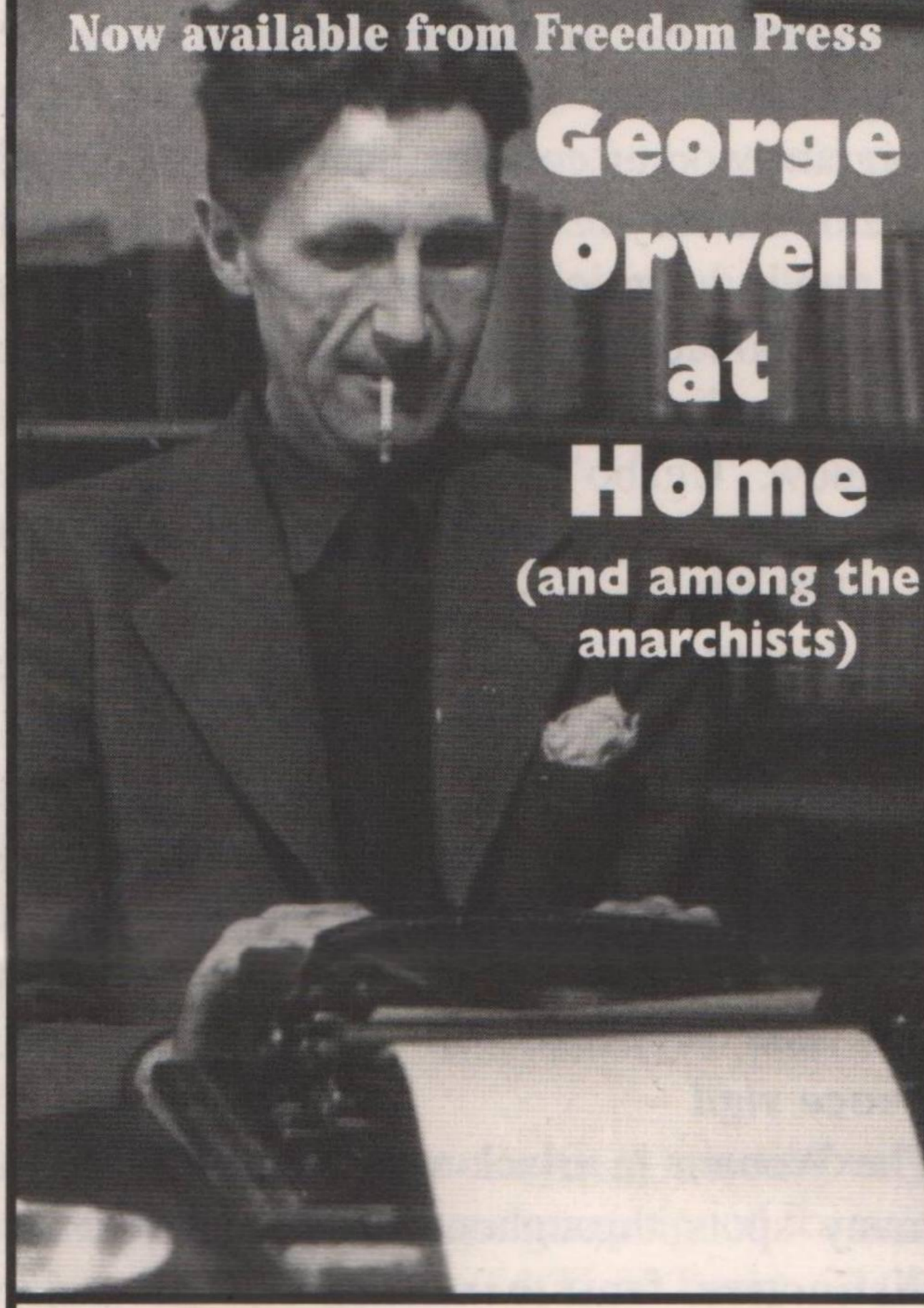
Colin Ward

Some of our readers may have noted the feature on Colin Ward which appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement Friday Magazine* for 16th April entitled 'Our Friend the Anarchist' by Aleks Sierz, which reviews the book *Richer Futures*, a collection of essays by various writers edited by Ken Worpole, published to celebrate Colin's 75th birthday later this year.

Freedom's review of *Richer Futures* appeared in our issue of 20th March, prematurely it would seem since we are still waiting for copies from the publisher. Copies ordered from Freedom Press will be despatched as soon as it is available.

In our issue of 17th April the picture of the children accompanying Colin Ward's article was taken from *The Streets of East London* by William J. Fishman. The photographer was Nicholas Breach. This book is unfortunately out of print although we understand there are plans to reprint it in the near future.

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(continued from page 4)

possible having 'a good time', but Julia's position is much more than that and more difficult at the same time as is illustrated by Comfort in the two novels I will mention later.

Orwell (or Smith) describes Julia's position as follows: "With Julia, everything came back to her own sexuality. As soon as this was touched upon in any way she was capable of great acuteness ... It was not merely that the sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside the Party's control and which therefore had to be destroyed if possible. What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship" (page 109). Winston can recognise this much of the truth of her position, but he sees it only as part of the condition, one of the devices, for gaining revolutionary zeal and power in the distant future. Julia wants to live for the present as fully as possible. Winston dismisses that view as an inability to have the necessary understanding of the Party as a prerequisite for revolution (page 128). Julia shocks him with her assertion that the Brotherhood doesn't actually exist, that it is a creation of the Party for their own purposes, which is, of course, true in this melodramatic structure. She also shocks him with her assertion that

the war is not actually going on, that the Government of Oceania fired rocket bombs daily on London just to keep people frightened and patriotic. Though this is not affirmed in the novel, it seems more likely to be true that what is offered (page 125). Julia tells Winston that she is "quite ready to take risks, but only for something worthwhile", but her definition of what is important is much different from Winston's ideas.

Eventually he rejects her 'life centred' values by telling her that she is "only a rebel from the waist downwards" (page 127). These conflicting sets of values are presented in chapters two to six, Part 2, of the novel, but Julia's saner position is not given much chance since Orwell's fascination lies more nearly in the revolutionary fervour of Winston and his view that he is heroically sacrificing himself (and Julia) for the benefit of future generations and by the long process which O'Brien uses to bring Winston up to the level where he is worthy of torture and brain-washing.

Though Julia has acutely recognised that The Brotherhood is an invention of the Party for the control of people like him, Winston fastens onto it with a passion, dismissing Julia's intuitive awareness as an absence of understanding resulting from a lack of interest in public events. In an interview with O'Brien he answers questions as follows:

O'Brien asks, "You are prepared to give your lives?" Winston, answering for both himself and Julia, replies, "Yes". O'Brien: "You are prepared to commit murder?" Winston: "Yes". O'Brien: "To commit acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people?" Winston: "Yes". O'Brien: "To betray your country to foreign powers?" (Are there any such or is Julia right about the appearance of war?). Winston answers yes again. O'Brien: "You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases – to do anything which is likely to cause demoralisation and weaken the power of the Party?" Winston: "Yes". O'Brien: "If, for example, it would somehow serve [the interests of the Brotherhood] to throw sulphuric acid in a child's face – are you prepared to do that?" And, of course, Winston answers, yes, again. His only "No" comes when Julia interrupts the questioning to say they will not separate from each other, and that echoing "No" from Winston is a struggle for him, so fervently does he wish to follow the assumed leader of the Brotherhood.

How much effect these conflicting values have on the novel as a whole would have to be worked out in a longer discussion of the novel, but I venture to guess that Julia's

position serves only as a minor distraction to Orwell's creation of the melodramatic fantasy of total authoritarianism which masks the more realistic authoritarian patterns of 1948 and of the present, allowing us all to sleep more peacefully up to and after 1984 since the prophecy didn't come true as predicted.

As I noted, Julia's 'life centered' values as opposed to O'Brien's and Winston's 'power centered' ideas are not given a fair hearing in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, but they are in Comfort's novels (the quoted terms are borrowed from Comfort's *The Pattern of the Future*) *The Power House* and *On This Side Nothing* where the anarchist ideas are more explicit and incisive. It is a telling comment on our society to realise that *The Power House* was published in 1944 (1945 in the US), a year before *Animal Farm*, and an *This Side Nothing* in 1948 (1949 in the US), a year before *Nineteen Eighty Four*. Both Comfort novels were out of print shortly after publication, but Orwell's more melodramatic and simplistic tales have never been out of print. Worse still, their vague extremism has allowed the supporters of 'our side' to claim them only as criticisms of the USSR and other State Socialist countries, a claim which could never be made for Comfort's novels, which may help to explain why they are not in print.

John R. Doheny

Rebuilding against the odds

Passover. A holiday traditionally associated with the ideal of freedom, with the memory of ancient Hebrew slaves released from bondage in Egypt. Passover, celebrated this year against the backdrop of the terrible images of war and ethnic cleansing from Yugoslavia.

Israeli peace activists, like those in other countries, are divided – opponents of war under all circumstances versus those who feel that ‘something had to be done’. On the other side of the spectrum the settler pirate radio, Arutz 7, is openly praising the policies of Slobodan Milosevic and his example of “steadfastly defending the homeland against Muslim terrorism” – and Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister of the State of Israel, refused point-blank to condemn the ethnic cleansing going on in Kosovo.

Milosevic's Israeli admirers may well be dreaming of getting rid of the Palestinians on the West Bank in a similar way. Meanwhile, they content themselves with a relentless effort to change the West Bank's demographic character by less draconian methods – which are still quite drastic: the ongoing confiscation of Palestinian lands; the ever-widening extension of Israeli settlements upon them, while restricting the Palestinians to narrow, isolated enclaves; the demolition of Palestinian homes built ‘illegally’ outside these overcrowded enclaves. The pace of such activities has greatly accelerated in recent months – getting hardly any attention in the international or Israeli media. Nor is this an issue in the ongoing elections campaign – though Netanyahu and the settlers clearly aim at presenting whatever government emerges from the 17th May polls with as many ‘facts on the ground’ as they still can create.

On 27th February several dozen activists of Gush Shalom, the Peace Bloc (info@gush-shalom.org), toured the Bethlehem district at the invitation of the Palestinian Parliamentarian Salah Ta'amri: witnessing new settler roads torn through the Palestinian fields and new barbed wire fences barring entrance to those who had held the land for generations.

Sudden news of a confrontation between Palestinians and settlers near the 2,000-year old fortress of The Herodion brought the activists rushing to the spot. We arrived to find a tense stand-off: angry Palestinian villagers on one side, settlers protected by soldiers on the other. In the middle, an elderly Palestinian was lying unconscious on the ground, tended by an army medic.

The story came out in bits and pieces: on the land of a small Palestinian village, several settler mobile homes had been set up. Palestinian ownership of the land had been admitted by the authorities – which nevertheless stationed a military detachment to protect the settlers. The settlers then introduced to the spot some juvenile delinquents who were supposed to be ‘rehabilitated’ by life at this spot. Several of these misguided youths had set dogs on Palestinians working their land nearby; more and more villagers had arrived

on the spot; our own arrival apparently defused what may have developed into a bloody confrontation.

As it was, a joint Israeli-Palestinian rally was improvised on the spot. Speeches were made and hands warmly shaken, and the unconscious man – a landowner who had suddenly collapsed while shouting at the settlers – slowly revived. Meanwhile, the soldiers formed a cordon, behind which the settlers and their young protégés retreated into their mobile homes. We went away with mixed feelings, despite the villagers' friendly waving – knowing that we were leaving these people still in a deep predicament.

The most effective way so far found of challenging Netanyahu's policy of ‘creeping annexation’ is to have Israeli peace activists and Palestinian inhabitants jointly rebuild homes demolished by the army. Such actions had already taken place several times – but never on the scale now undertaken by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (halper@iol.co.il), a coalition comprising Gush Shalom, the Bat Shalom women, and the Rabbis for Human Rights which was recently swelled by the adhesion of no less than nine additional peace groups and organisations. On the weekend of 12th to 13th March, several hundred Israelis – joined by a similar number of Palestinians, organised by the Land Defence Committee – simultaneously rebuilt houses at three different spots on the West Bank: the home of Salim al-Shawamreh, his wife Arabia and their six children in the village of Anata, which was already several times rebuilt only to be re-destroyed by the army; the home of Husam Abu Yakub and his family at Kifl Harith, whose forcible eviction from the house and its subsequent demolition last December were captured by television cameras and broadcast all over the world; and the house of 60 year-old Hassan Dahoud, his wife and their twelve children at a small village in the extreme south end of the West Bank. In addition, 300 olive seedlings were planted at the village of Beit Dajan, on a spot where trees had been uprooted by the army on the previous week.

With the help of local Palestinian guides who pointed out side roads, the buses and cars bearing the Israeli activists were able to evade the military roadblocks and reach the building sites. The scenes of smiling Israelis and Palestinians passing on cinder blocks figured prominently on that night's television news and in the next day's mass-circulation papers. At least for a few days the issue was placed on the public agenda, with activists Uri Avnery, Yoav Hass and Jeff Halper invited to speak at length on television talk shows.

This public attention apparently served to impress the military authorities. The three houses were not re-demolished, and work on them continued apace in the weeks since – though the military did uproot the seedlings planted at Beit Dajan, and Hassan Dahoud

was detained for a single night in an attempt at intimidation. The finishing touches on the three houses, making them ready for habitation by the families, is scheduled to take place next Monday (5th April), once more with Israeli participation.

In recent weeks, Netanyahu has intensified his attack on the Palestinians of East Jerusalem, an attack designed to arouse a nationalist hysteria among the Israeli population and serve as the central plank of the Prime Minister's elections campaign. In addition to the ongoing policy of confiscating identity cards from Jerusalem Arabs, effectively depriving them of the right of residence in the city, highly-publicised closure orders were issued against three Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. The government and extreme right waxed vitriolic against the Orient House, the Palestinian headquarters in East Jerusalem, whose de-facto extra-territorial status makes it a living challenge to the government's claim to rule the Palestinian part of Jerusalem.

This Saturday (3rd April), the Orient House will be the centre of protest action initiated by Gush Shalom: a protest march from the American Colony Hotel to the Orient House, with signs reading: ‘Jerusalem – capital of two states’; a ceremony in which the Manifesto supporting the right of the Palestinian nation to proclaim its state will be officially handed to Palestinian Minister Faisal Husseini. The text of the manifesto had been repeatedly publicised as and with ever new signatories; some prominent representatives of them will participate in a joint Orient House press conference. (Further details: info@gush-shalom.org).

In February members of Peace Now were brutally stopped by police and military forces on their way to demonstrate in Hebron, and several of them were detained. After tough negotiations with the military authorities and a threat to appeal to the Supreme Court, Peace Now has finally won an official permit to hold a demonstration in Hebron on 9th April in protest of the expansion of the religious-nationalist settler enclave in the midst of this Palestinian city (peacenow@actcom.co.il).

Lebanon

The 1st April 1999 marked a whole year since the Netanyahu Cabinet adopted a solemn resolution to withdraw Israeli forces from South Lebanon. The resolution, which was never implemented, had been evidently no more than a propaganda ploy. (‘Fools Day Resolution’ read one of the placards at the protest outside Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem).

A new wave of ‘Lebanon protests’ followed the death of seven Israeli soldiers and officers at the futile guerrilla war – one of them General Erez Gerstein, the Israeli military governor of South Lebanon (euphemistically called ‘Chief Liaison Officer’). Aside from the already well-established ‘Four Mothers’ Movement (lindabz@post.tau.ac.il), which hitherto organised most of the protests, a more radical group emerged under the name ‘Red Line’ (yona@netvision.net.il) – undertaking such actions of civil disobedience as blocking the road in front of the Defence Ministry and getting arrested in front of the international cameras.

This week, there was considerable attention and much public sympathy for the two bereaved mothers Orna Shimoni and Lala Parnas, whose soldier sons were killed in Lebanon and who undertook a bicycle journey from the northern border to Jerusalem. Being joined by dozens of other cyclists and stopping on the way for rallies and meetings with mayors of towns

along their route, the two mothers hoped to arouse public for the need of withdrawal and spare other soldiers the fate of their sons.

The grassroots protest over Lebanon did influence the themes of the elections campaign. Labour leader Ehud Barak was induced to pledge ‘bringing the boys home’ within a year of being elected – a pledge so positively received that it marked the beginning of an upturn in what was until then a badly flagging Labour campaign.

Migrant workers

On the eve of Passover, a coalition of human rights organisations (phr@netvision.net.il) took up the case of the migrant workers in Israel, doomed to spend the Holiday of Liberty either working under conditions of harsh exploitation or in jail awaiting deportation. Originally brought in to replace Palestinian workers, the migrant workers from all over the world are now the target of an openly racist campaign conducted by such politicians as Interior Minister Suissa.

At a rally held last Monday in central Tel-Aviv under the slogan ‘There Is No Such Thing As An Illegal Human Being’, the Nigerian Sonny Ugabo – a leader of the migrant worker community in Tel-Aviv and one of the very few willing to expose himself to public attention – spoke of life spent in fear of police raids, of a friend killed when he tried to escape the police and fell from a high window. Ugabo's words were shockingly underlined when he was suddenly hit and wounded by a stone thrown from a nearby building (the police was not able to trace the perpetrators). He later told *Ha'ir Weekly* – the one Israeli paper which takes a consistent position in support of the migrant workers – “I am not intimidated. I will continue to speak for my community”.

Peace vigil

The Women in Black weekly vigil, held at many spots throughout Israel, had been a distinctive feature of the Israeli peace movement since the outbreak of the Intifada. In some of the places they still persist, standing at their accustomed street corners and highway junctions every Friday noon, for the eleventh consecutive year. The Israeli women inspired many similar group in other countries – some of them active in solidarity with the Israeli Women in Black, others addressing their own local or regional problems. A notable example were the Women in Black groups in the early 1990's in the former Yugoslavia.

Adam Keller Beate Zilversmidt
(‘The Other Israel’, briefing nr. 8)

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Campaigning for Votes

Dear Freedom,

Thanks to John Cartwright for pointing out the error in my piece in *Freedom* on left wing parties standing in elections (Reader's Letters, 3rd April). I was aware that the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) was aiming to stand candidates in every constituency when they were first formed. I am afraid I did not follow the election closely enough to know that in the end they only stood candidates in 64 constituencies. Apologies. However, I think this actually underlines the point I was trying to make in my article about the waste of energy, time and money groups like the SLP, Socialist Party, SPGB, the Green Party, Scottish Socialist Party *et al.*, waste in pursuing elections. Presumably the SLP chose the constituencies they stood candidates in carefully so as to maximise their vote. Yet only three of their candidates saved their deposits. Sixty one deposits (and thousands of pounds) were lost along with a lot of effort which, I argue, could have been used more profitably directly campaigning for change.

I am not intending to pick on the SLP. The point I wanted to make in my article was that the prospect of proportional representation in this year's European and national elections, coupled with growing disillusionment with New Labour, has resulted in a plethora of new left parties entering electoral politics.

Six organisations with the name 'socialist' in their title alone have tried to register their names under Registration of Political Parties Act. These parties will often be competing with each other and the Greens for votes, (although to be fair in some areas such as the North West, Socialist Alliances are being formed). Most of the debate on the left from *Democratic Left* to *Red Pepper* now seems to be about filling the electoral gap Labour's lurch to the right has created rather than exploring all the options open to radical politics.

My article was a reaction to this. As an anarchist it frankly depresses me that in the face of rampant global capitalism, environmental destruction, war, human right violations, massive social deprivation and exploitation of animals the response of the authoritarian left is to create new political parties and, once again, campaign for votes. Anarchists have long argued that this simply props up the status quo by fighting on capitalism's own terrain. Elections are about gaining power not challenging and ultimately dismantling it. They offer no alternative vision of how society could be run or organised.

The experience of the SLP and all the other left of centre parties who have stood in elections over the last hundred years shows clearly the futility of this. In fact the most successful left party in Britain has, of course, been Labour. Look where voting for them gets you!

Richard Griffin

Mobilising against war

Dear comrades,

On recent mobilisations against the war in the Balkans (and the continuing 'low-intensity' war against Iraq) in London there have been few anarchists and libertarians. We have consistently made an appearance at these events with our flags, banners and placards on which was the uncompromising message 'NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR'. There have been few other militants from the libertarian movement at these demonstrations and rallies, and no one behind any banners from either local groups or national organisations represented in London.

We are not, most definitely not, trying to point score and show how super militant we are. What we are saying is that more anarchists/libertarians need to come out and mobilise. This war mobilisation is very serious indeed and all anarchists should take seriously any attempt to show that there is far from a consensus of support for it.

Yes, we know that it is sometimes very unpleasant having to stand near Serbian nationalists trying to hijack these events for their own purposes or near various Leninists who give tacit support to Serbia because they see it as possessing some attributes of a 'worker's state' (!) or indeed near other Leninists who are calling for support for the KLA. But a contingent of revolutionaries

putting over a clear and visible internationalist position and not supporting either bunch of nationalists or some position of 'self-determination' would create more of a pleasant and supportive atmosphere and draw people towards us on these events. This happened to a certain extent on the last demo in London on 17th April. The next demonstration in London against the war is on 8th May. All anarchists should make an effort to turn out for this event.

Yours for revolutionary anarchism

Ron Allen
ACF, London
(in a personal capacity)

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(continued from page 2)

when, as John Pilger has observed, "the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund set about destroying the multi-ethnic federation with lethal doses of debt, market reforms and imposed poverty" (*Guardian*, 20th April 1999).

The KLA, seen by most Kosovar Albanians now as 'their' army, believes that it can use the NATO intervention as cover for a ground engagement with Serbian forces. Their judgement is wrong in this, but it is also clear that the greater the military independence of the KLA from NATO, the greater the chances of preserving Kosovan autonomy against the imposition by NATO of the Rambouillet agreement, which gives the Kosovars less freedom than they had under the Yugoslav federation. Simple enough, you'd think. Not for the left. According to *Socialist Worker* again: "An Albanian nationalist army, hardened by war and enjoying mass support in refugee camps throughout the Balkans, could threaten the integrity of half a dozen states throughout the region". Aside from the fact that the tone used mirrors that formerly employed by the US State Department in denouncing pro-Palestinian forces engaged in armed struggle against Zionist expansion in the Middle East, it's nice to know that the SWP share NATO's goal of ensuring regional stability, regardless of the democratic wishes of groups like the Kosovar Albanians, even if they disagree with the methods employed. (How long will it be before they start ranting about 'non-historic peoples' in the region?)

For the majority of the left, opposition to NATO manifests itself as no more than liberal pacifism. It is nonsense to suggest that the aerial bombardment will not stop Yugoslav troop actions on the ground. The destruction of Yugoslavia's infrastructure will, obviously, affect Milosevic's capacity to act outside his borders while his economy crashes around him. To disagree with the actions or its intent is one thing, to try to suggest it is strategically ineffective in relation to NATO's aims makes those

advancing the argument look like fools to most people.

Similarly, the contention put forward by John Pilger that the NATO intervention is illegitimate because similar barbarism in Rwanda, and East Timor went unchecked makes no sense at all, amounting to an argument that "it is wrong to ignore tyranny and because you have ignored it before, your assertion that you oppose it now is worthless". Reduced to pacifism, the left is prepared to sacrifice the Kosovars on the altar of Little England. The SWP is against a ground war because "it would not be a walkover like the war against Iraq in 1991". According to Alex Callinicos there is no Kosovar left to defend.

The truth of the NATO intervention is that it is not done to meet the needs of the Kosovars. KLA guerrillas have pleaded with NATO to hit Serb guns which have shelled refugees starving to death in the mountain regions of central Kosovo. As the *Guardian's* John Hooper noted that "the KLA appeal for NATO support from the air highlighted an unexplained aspect of this war - the seeming reluctance, or inability, of the allies to protect or supply the vast numbers of displaced ethnic Albanians reported to be still inside Kosovo ... In the 27 days since NATO began its bombardment and the Serbs launched their campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, there have been no airdrops of humanitarian supplies to the fleeing civilians. Nor has there been much evidence that the alliance's planes have targeted the forces said to be threatening these internally displaced peoples" (20th April 1999).

Clearly, NATO is moving towards Dayton mark two, a partitionist solution in which a fragment of Kosovo becomes an international protectorate, while Milosevic retains the north and west, including, critically, for the west, the Trepcja mining region. Stability of exploitation would thus be secured, with Milosevic brought to heel and the KLA disarmed. For this to take place, NATO needs the displacement of peoples to be complete, in order to present partition as a

fait accompli. The KLA has allowed itself to be manoeuvred off the map, like a condemned man asking his executioner to aid his escape.

The left, meanwhile (and 'left' here is meant to encompass the anarchist movement) has begun to recognise its own redundancy. Generals without armies, each outfit has been reduced to shouting orders from the sidelines, secure in their inability to influence events. Whether they believe the bombings should be stopped, the KLA armed, or NATO defeated, is irrelevant - they/we can do nothing to make a difference. Three men and a dog do not a socialist alternative make, as someone should have said (long ago). Our irrelevance now is the result of years of self exile from the needs and lives of ordinary people. 'No War But the Class War' we shout, but in truth, except on paper, we've fought every war but the class war since about 1968. The result of focusing our energies on the university campus, instead of the council estate, the football crowd? As Bakunin wrote of the German socialists around Marx "Vanity, malevolence, gossip, pretentiousness and boasting in theory and cowardice in practice. Dissertations about life, action and feeling - and complete absence of life, action and feeling ... the epithet 'bourgeois!' is shouted *ad nauseum* by people who are from head to foot more bourgeois than anyone in a provincial city".

In North Defoe ward in Hackney recently, a number of formerly opposed left organisations stood a 'Socialist Unity' candidate. Her result was described as a 'qualified success' - 37 votes! We can console ourselves with wise words about the dead end of electoralism but in truth, however much those canvassed in the run up were seen to be 'anti-Labour, or very disillusioned', their disillusion with what passes for a revolutionary alternative is far greater.

The 1996 British Social Attitudes survey found two thirds agreeing that 'there is one law for the rich and one for the poor' and that

'ordinary people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth'. In 1995 81% of Gallup's sample replied 'yes' to the question 'do you think there is a class struggle in this country or not?'. How many of those 81% would wish to identify with what passes for the revolutionary milieu in the UK today? The North Defoe result should give us a clue.

In 1937 George Orwell wrote "I do not think the Socialist need make any sacrifice of essentials, but certainly he will have to make a great sacrifice of externals. It would help enormously, for instance, if the smell of crankiness which still clings to the Socialist movement could be dispelled. If only the sandals and the pistachio-coloured shirts could be put in a pile and burnt, and every vegetarian teetotaler and creeping Jesus sent home to Welwyn Garden City to do his exercises quietly ... It is fatal to let the ordinary enquirer get away with the idea that being a Socialist means wearing sandals and burbling about dialectical materialism. You have got to make it clear that there is room in the Socialist movement for human beings, or the game is up."

Is the game now up? If all we have to offer are slogans and newspapers then, frankly, yes! Unless we can demonstrate that our politics are able in practice to give people back control of their lives then we have no right to their respect and trust. If we cannot show we can make a difference today then we'll never be able to oppose the warmongers of tomorrow. It's easier on the sidelines, but it means nothing. We have to go back to basics to go forward. There are enough examples even now to show us the way, from the militant involvement of groups like AFA, the IWW and the Solidarity Federation in organising support for asylum seekers in Dover, to the Independent Working Class Association's role in campaigns against anti working class crime in Newtown, Birmingham, and Labour council corruption in Hatfield. If we want to leave the sidelines, the days of 'any war but the class war' have to be over for good.

Nick S

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**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 —

- 30th April** General discussion
- 7th May** Symposium on Women in Anarchism
- 14th May** General discussion
- 21st May** The Contribution of Norbert Elias to Libertarian Thought (speaker Peter Neville)

Anyone interested in giving a talk or
leading a discussion, please contact Peter
Neville at the meetings giving your subject
and prospective dates and we will do
our best to accommodate.

Peter Neville
for London Anarchist Forum

RECLAIM MAY DAY '99

Saturday 1st May
6.00 pm - 11.00 pm
The Oyster House
(Function Room)
Locksway Road, Milton, Portsmouth, Hants
(Wheelchair accessible - No adapted toilets)
£3.00 waged, £2.00 low/unwaged
featuring live bands and DJs:
DELTA WAVE
HAWKIE
SONIC INSURRECTION
The Mighty Snorting Powder Rangers
Cheap vegetarian and vegan food available between 6.00 pm & 8.00 pm
Proceeds will go to workers in dispute

Two-day Socialist Conference organised by the
Revolutionary Socialist Network to be held on 5-6th
June 1999 in Bristol. Fee £3 waged, £1.50 unwaged.
Booking: send name, address and payment (cheques
payable to 'RSN') to 1 Blake Place, Bridgewater,
Somerset TA6 5AU.

Reclaim May Day 1999

May Day Party

Tower Of London
2pm Saturday 1st May

Please bring friends & family, food & drink, musical instruments, party decorations, toys & games, masks, banners & flags. There will be a social in the evening - watch out for details.

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 30th May

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

Telephone Vivienne for more info:
01509 230131 or 01509 236028

Come and celebrate May Day at the

MAY DAY
social

Steve Cope
(from the 1926 committee)

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