

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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18th September 1999

50p

Bawling Allegiance?

Bob Woodward is the man who, with Carl Bernstein, broke the Watergate story and helped bury the Nixon presidency. Now an assistant editor at *The Washington Post*, he has moved from the outside track to become, as Christopher Hitchens has put it, an intimate of power, "politically conditioned to disbelieve the worst". His insider status has led to such journalistic triumphs as a

seven part series lauding Dan Quayle and articles attacking the alleged 'mis-allocation' of disability benefits. With his latest book *Shadow*, though, Woodward goes some way to retrieve his reputation for rigorous sceptical enquiry.

Shadow (Simon and Schuster, 1999) details the machinations of the Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations. Woodward contends that,

post-Nixon, "presidents not only would be subject to doubt and second guessing, they would be suspected of outright criminality". Nixon abused government power for political purposes, and in the process, killed the "myth of the big time president".

Watergate, for Woodward, changed the nature of US politics. "New ethics laws, a resurgent Congress and a more inquiring media altered the prerogatives and daily lives of Presidents ... The habit of deception and hedging practised by presidents would no longer be acceptable". In *Shadow*, Woodward relates how subsequent administrations inhabited "a new world, but ... seemed not to recognise it".

Shadow is worthy of attention. Woodward is determined to look for higher motives to explain what is often clearly mendacious practice, and so some of the book's revelations are more by accident than authorial intent. Woodward, though, remains a gifted writer and there is much here to confirm the prejudices of those of us who hold representational politics to amount to, ultimately, the representation of only those powerful enough to line the pockets of the parties on offer. Woodward chronicles how Gerald Ford withheld details from Congress and the public of his moves to pardon Nixon. He outlines Jimmy Carter's ascendancy as "the ultimate anti-Nixon", then shows how the Carter administration became mired in allegations surrounding Hamilton Jordan, Carter's Chief of Staff, and the possession and use of cocaine at the Studio 54 nightclub, CIA payments and

(continued on page 5)

'Aroid, forget bleedin' Ibiza -
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Freedom

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The Politics of Bigotry

On the weekend of 14-15th August, after months of provocations by the local media, small groups of local residents in Dover clashed with asylum-seekers at a funfair. The *Dover Express* had been telling locals for so long that their town was over-run with immigrants that someone was bound to bite eventually. Home Office minister Lord Bassan immediately asserted that the town was indeed 'overcrowded' and that New Labour's draconian powers of dispersal (under the proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill) were – entirely coincidentally – the only solution! Never mind that Dover has a population of over 30,000 and that the refugee population's access to local resources is minimal. Immigrants, as ever, provide a convenient scapegoat. Dover's economy has been wrecked by the closure of the Kent coal mines, redundancies on the ferries and the loss of construction jobs on the completion of the Channel Tunnel. Blaming asylum-seekers for the flight of capital from the area is an easy means of deflecting local anger away from those directly to blame.

Not content with the victimisation of those forced to flee NATO's destruction of the Balkans, Home Secretary Jack Straw cast around for a new target, and used an interview with BBC Radio West Midlands to attack travellers. "Many of these so-called travellers seem to think that it's perfectly okay for them to cause mayhem in an area, to go burgling, thieving, breaking into vehicles, causing all kinds of trouble, including defecating in the doorways of firms and so on and getting away with it". Straw's comments were combined with moves to introduce visa restrictions for Czech nationals, and were clearly intended to generate racist hysteria aimed at Roma asylum-seekers. Czech gypsies endure 70% unemployment in their homeland, as a direct result of workplace racism. Over twenty Roma have been murdered by far right groups in Czechoslovakia since 1990. According to Straw, though, they're 'bogus asylum-seekers'. Gypsies have been used by the Czech government as scapegoats for crime, housing shortages and cuts in benefits. Trying to find sanctuary, they're destined to serve the same ends here.

In 1993 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) described refugees as "the symptom of the ills of an age". An average of nearly ten thousand people each day are forced to become refugees. In a world population of 5.5 billion, roughly one in every 130 people on earth has been forced into flight. For all the talk within Europe of an 'asylum crisis', some 24 million people are displaced within the borders of their own countries and, as the UNHCR makes clear, the vast majority of refugees sought and found sanctuary in neighbouring third world countries, and returned home when conditions permitted.

In 1993 a UNHCR report states simply: "What sets refugees apart from other people

in need of humanitarian aid is their need for international protection. Most people can look to their own governments and state institutions to protect their rights and physical security, even if imperfectly. Refugees cannot. In many cases they are fleeing in terror from abuses perpetrated by the state." All this is absented from any discussion in the media about the 'asylum crisis'. New Labour has chosen to provide tax breaks for big business rather than allocate increased resources to public spending. When classroom numbers increase, hospital waiting lists are fiddled and benefits cut, some kind of smokescreen is inevitably needed to deflect popular anger from the real culprits. New Labour has chosen to do what every other Labour government has done – it has played the race card. The end result is that people who are fleeing for their lives may well end up paying with their lives because the only 'conviction politics' Blair's 'Christian' government has left is the politics of bigotry.

The UNHCR has described the "impulse to provide refuge to strangers in need" as "one of the most basic expressions of human solidarity". In practice, what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares as "the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (Article 14 [1]) is in practice subject to the ideological twists of governments committed not to 'human solidarity' but to avarice and the preservation of privilege. In 1918 fifteen thousand White Russian refugees were allowed into Britain while Jews and Armenians were deliberately

capitalist regimes was underway, the attitude of the Western states to the right of freedom of movement of Eastern European citizens was redefined – Italy deployed troops to deter Albanian asylum-seekers, while Austria used its army to keep out Roma gypsies.

In their magnificent history of global refugee movements, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide* (Frank Cass, 1999), Tony Kushner and Katherine Knox note that "it is all the more remarkable, and one cause for qualified optimism, that popular attachment to the concept of asylum has in the last years of the century remained strong in spite of the atmosphere created by successive governments and the popular press". In 1991 *The Sun* carried out a survey of its readers, and found out (doubtless to its horror) that half of the sample stated that they did not want the government to "turn its back on our tradition of giving haven to refugees". In a more detailed survey carried out in 1997 by the Institute of Public Policy Research, three-quarters agreed that "most refugees in Britain are in need of our help and support".

Those of us committed to a world based on what Bakunin called the "real union of free peoples" need to be in the forefront of the defence of the right to asylum, and the physical defence of those seeking refuge. The UNHCR, though, notes that "global migration proceeds across a spectrum of motivation, ranging from those who flee from persecution to those who flee from serious danger, those who are trying to escape from misery and those who wish to leave behind a

for not knowing their place. As a German refugee group, Die Karawane, note: "This contradiction is most apparent at the US-Mexico border or at the eastern frontiers of the EU, where the military clampdown on illegal migration ensures that reserve pools of cheap labour are preserved on the edges of affluent US and Europe" (*CARF* no. 51, Aug/Sept 1999).

In 1652 the Digger activist Gerard Winstanley raised the call for the battle to "take the earth to be a common treasury". That battle still remains to be won. If we are to rebuild a movement fit for the task, we have to defend the right of freedom of movement of labour – for all people to seek opportunity where they can. Racism is, in part, an ideological prop of the ruling class which is used to set those with least to gain in this society against each other. It is, further, the cultural trace of the determination of capital that we should all know our place in this world – and that place shall be defined by borders drawn up by those who see us as no more than cheap labour, a resource to be exhausted like every other resource. As A. Sivanandan observed in 1990, "today the colour line is the poverty line is the power line ... that is why you cannot fight racism without also fighting imperialism. You cannot fight for the cause of black people without fighting for the cause of working people. You cannot, in the final analysis, fight oppression without at the same time fighting exploitation" (*Communities of Resistance*, Verso, 1990).



Kosovar refugees hopefully waiting in Calais for a chance to cross into Britain.

excluded. During the Cold War the West condemned Eastern European states for their denial of freedom of movement to their populations. The Hungarian government was pressured to open its borders with Austria in 1989, creating a route for East Germans into the West. The steady haemorrhage to the West was then used to undermine the stability of the East European states. During 1989 alone some 1.2 million people left the Warsaw Pact area. Once the destabilisation of the state

lack of opportunity". The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) exist ostensibly to help developing countries, but in reality do no more than facilitate the freedom of capital to exploit labour and natural resources across the globe. Free movement of labour, though, is denounced as 'bogus' (the spectre of the exploited beginning to exploit the exploiter?) and those seeking a new life are criminalised

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Allen & Unwin, 1958), Hannah Arendt is drawn to comment that "contemporary history has created a new kind of human being – the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and internment camps by their friends". For us, then, our attempts to make a different history have to begin with the need to save the refugees of today from the internment camps which the likes of Jack Straw would have as their fate again. Nick S.

For anarchist communism and critical hedonism

Dear *Freedom*,

Paul Tremlett in his reply to my letter (*Freedom*, 7th August) deploys the classic trick of the closet authoritarian in attempting to entrap and manipulate me with the label of 'individualist'. No, Paul, I am not an individualist, I reject that label totally and all the offensive shit associated with the term (that, like a corrupt drug cop, you were clearly trying to plant on me). I am first and foremost an anarchist but, like all true anarchists, I defend the freedom of the individual just as ferociously as I attack social inequality. I could adopt the same low trick myself and, reading between the lines, accuse Paul of being some kind of unreconstructed '80s class struggle anarchist, still labouring under Marxoid delusions, but I won't.

Paul also reveals his crypto-authoritarianism in his opening line, accusing the pages of *Freedom* of being cluttered with opinions he doesn't agree with. Are we to assume that you would wish to 'tidy up' the pages if you were an editor, Paul? No doubt with your accusations of intellectual sterility, blunt response and implausibility, you would see these opinions as 'counter-revolutionary'. But in fact the only truly counter-revolutionary act is division within a revolutionary movement. So either we all

adopt one stance (which of course is no longer possible) or agree to respect other anarchist opinions. Working together towards a common goal of a pluralistic, anti-capitalism based on economic equality and total social and individual freedom. Given the irreversible heterogeneity of contemporary anarchism, and in some respects society at large, anything else would be impossible and therefore truly 'impotent'.

Perhaps one of the things that Paul hates about the notion of the individual is its threat to the idea of a mass movement. But the belief in the possibility of this is no longer taken seriously by any political theorist outside the extreme fringes of the anarchist movement and a few leftist dinosaurs. The overthrow of the State and Capital will not come about by the positive mass action of a politically conscious (i.e. brainwashed) class, but by the negative ungovernability of a society of free individuals. An absolute freedom that demands absolute responsibility and total ethical discipline, something that many anarchists seem to be afraid of. A just social collective or community can only be based on the just relations of its only real component(s) – the physically embodied human being. Of course, as Paul astutely

points out, building anarchist alternatives will be a challenge – no garden of Eden ever existed, or will, but it will be one that can only be formed by fully individuated, freely cooperative, empathic individuals working intelligently (and occasionally even competitively) in new practical situations. This is my 'concrete utopia' – it is a goal which may or may not be reached (perfectly) but one for which the process is the most important. A process that should begin now. In fact has begun amongst some of us. This will not be based on the 'hard work' of those chained to a puritanical slave morality, but on pleasure. An intelligent (rather than reactionary) hedonism. An indefinitely suspended orgasm chasing a rapidly advancing climax.

But no doubt these metaphors will offend Paul's anti-hedonist stance. A stance he ludicrously calls bourgeois. Paul, my cat is

hedonistic but I don't think that even the most fanatical class warrior would call her bourgeois! But you have a point – bourgeois consciousness has, I agree, produced conscious egoic structures that did not exist before, though I view this as a positive part of the dialectic rather than a negative one. One that has enabled us to escape enslavement to the social mass and achieve some degree of freedom. Bourgeoisification is not a totally bad thing, we should not be tricked into taking the ridiculous Manichean stance of good-evil / proletarian-bourgeois, like banal Marxists. The best anarchists from Bakunin to Kropotkin have always come from a heavily bourgeoisified (if not aristocratic) background. I maintain that the abstract revolutionary class will emerge from the dialectic between the abstractions of the equally impoverished bourgeoisie and working class, not from one or the other, as the foolish Hegel and Marx thought. Even as members of the working class our solidarity is with our fellow slaves, this does not exclude us from seeking to be 'masters without slaves'. This is the only viable form of the class struggle.

Steve Ash

Some facts on the Kosovan War

Dear *Freedom*,

Nick S's strictures on the Kosovan war (21st August) show signs of the theorisation disease. This makes people see what their theories want them to see and ignore any facts that contradict this. In addition, he mixes in that inferiority complex of the Left which believes that the Right has always planned everything perfectly and knew in advance everything that would happen.

What I noticed was:

a) immense – irresistible – public pressure for Britain/Germany/France/Scandinavia/US to do something about the continual ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, which repeated that in Bosnia, which public opinion had already found tragic and shameful. To have this repeated would be too much. (The poll figures in favour of intervention speak for themselves.) It is probable that without this pressure NATO would have been quite happy to cobble together yet another 'agreement' with the monster Milosevic – and in fact this was what Milosevic expected. After all, he had already got away with most of what he wanted for Bosnia – why should 'allied' reaction now be different, particularly if braked by the UN and his Russian comrades?

b) Kosovans cheering NATO troops marching in, in spite of being involved in massacres which probably were made worse by Serb wrath at the NATO bombing. Now, moreover, they evidently regard rule by UN/NATO as the best bargain they can get. (Of course the patrolling troops are going to be in exactly the same position as the 'neutral' British troops in Northern Ireland: they will end up being hated by everyone.) In their naive way the Kosovans have directed their loathing at the people who actually raped, tortured and massacred them, instead of NATO, which the sophisticated Nick would have them loathe instead. Blaming and demonising NATO would put them, of course, on exactly the same side as Milosevic and his analysis of events. (Incidentally, Nick S. doesn't discuss Milosevic at all, presumably because he is such an unimportant figure in any consideration of Yugoslavia.) It is strange that even Chomsky

discounts the mere opinion of those who, after all, are the most involved in the war: the Kosovans (see his pathetic reply to a question in the interview published in *Peace News*). Should an anarchist do this too? Should an anarchist turn a blind eye to one of the few occasions when public opinion has forced some sort of action on governments? Reading events from day to day, it struck me not that the US was forcing its Machiavellian brilliantly clever policy on the other NATO 'powers' – at any rate at first the US was the most hesitant of the alliance. And now the occupying forces in Kosovo are largely non-US.

Any fool knows that the World Bank, IMF, etc., all control the finances of all countries whose governments have been stupid enough to plunge neck-deep into debt. Kosovo is/will be no different – what's the news? I get the impression that the real basis of Nick S's outburst comes at the end, when he speaks of the US trying to "drive a wedge between China and Europe". So this is the alliance to pit against the baddies! Good old China, the only real communist country left, the only proper opposition to US hegemony! It isn't surprising that he quotes that sectarian, non-anarchist periodical *New Left Review* as if it were a fount of wisdom. I don't know about this Cowan, but anyone who can cite the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy as a masterstroke of diplomacy has a screw loose. Personally, I am only too anxious to have a wedge driven between me and China when that country uses slave labour to undercut European wages, imprisons and tortures all opposition, and is particularly anxious to import advanced European weaponry.

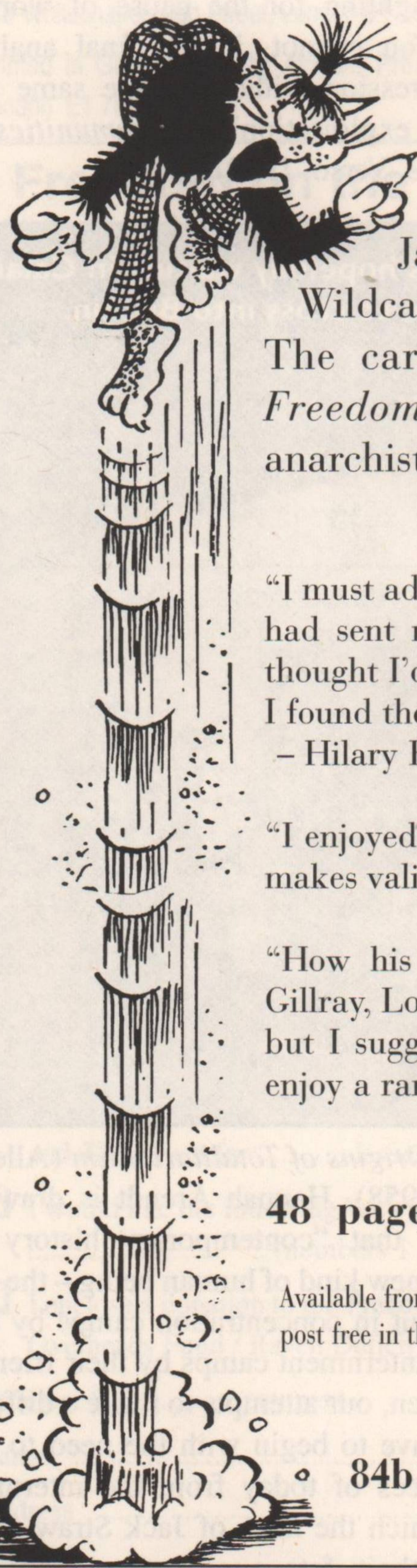
And, as I can imagine the smear that will come as a reply to this, I ought to add that – especially as I live in Brazil and have to endure US power far more directly than any European – I loathe the US and what it stands for. Naturally they would like to dominate the world, like the nineteenth century British – isn't that what anarchists expect of governments, and especially powerful ones? But I don't allow my loathing to dictate my interpretation of facts.

Jonn Roe

Another new title published by Freedom Press

Donald Room

Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat



The cartoonist Donald Room is perhaps best known as the political cartoonist of *Peace News* during its heyday in the 1960s. An anarchist since 1944, since January 1980 he has been contributing the Wildcat strip to the anarchist fortnightly *Freedom*.

The cartoons are copied and translated from *Freedom* (and the Wildcat books) by various anarchist publications in other countries.

"I must admit that my heart sank when I discovered that Matt had sent me a collection of anarchist cartoons to review. I thought I'd find them unfunny, obscure and pedantic. In fact, I found them humorous to the point of laughing out loud."

– Hilary Robinson in *Society for Strip Illustration Newsletter*

"I enjoyed this book; it's original, different and funny. And it makes valid points."

– Alex Noel Watson in *The Jester*

"How his work will stand alongside that of Rowlandson, Gillray, Low and others cannot be assessed in this present age, but I suggest that it is outstanding and that Freedom Press enjoy a rare privilege in being allowed to publish it."

– Tony Gibson in *Freedom*

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New Labour, old policy, same problems

It all sounds very familiar. Privatisation, employment policies that favour the bosses more than workers, weak unions and threats to ban strikes in essential services. Industrial relations under Labour look much the same as they did under the Tories.

In July the Employment Relations Act became law. As previously reported in *Freedom*, the Act will, after pressure from bosses, provide only limited improvements in employment law for workers. August's *Labour Research* magazine notes that "the Act has been the subject of more than 100 amendments, most of which appear to have come as a result of business pressure". Examples abound. The government has announced that it will weaken the law on the maximum working week by creating loopholes which will mean workers can legally work longer than the 48 hours a week originally set as the upper limit. Additional paternity leave will be unpaid, limiting the number of fathers who are able to benefit from it to those who can afford to take unpaid leave. So much for the government's much heralded family-friendly policies!

The Act also cannot be applied to cases current when it became law last month. GMB member David Morris, for example, was recently awarded £41,000 for unfair dismissal, however this was cut to £12,000 (the old maximum) as his case began before the new Act (which sets a limit of £50,000) was passed. The GMB is considering taking the government to court over this penny pinching.

And there seems to be more to come. A leaked letter written by George Howarth, previously a Home Office minister, has revealed that the government is considering banning strikes in the public sector. The letter, reported in *The Guardian*, came in response to the Fire Brigades Union's (FBU) threat to take industrial action in response to moves by employers to end national agreements. Howarth wrote that strike action was "outmoded and unjustified" and a "relic of an old and discredited confrontational approach to industrial relations". *The Guardian* went on to report that Tony Blair has discussed with Jack Straw the banning of strikes in the fire service and is likely to act if strike action is taken. FBU general secretary, Ken Cameron said in response that "it is an absolute disgrace that the government should be making these kind of threats to remove our democratic right to take industrial action". The FBU is affiliated to the Labour Party.

Finding examples of Labour's hostility to unions and workers is easy – the pages of *Freedom* are full of them every issue. The

more interesting question for anarchists to consider is why Labour is pursuing policies which leave British workers the least protected in Europe – a fact Blair boasts about. Put simply, Blair, like all politicians, wants more than anything to win the next general election. Power is an end not a means. To do this he needs to keep business on his side. This is why last month in a speech in the City he happily praised venture capitalists while berating public sector workers. Blair knows that under capitalism capital will always be stronger than labour. The state, as anarchists have long recognised, reflects that balance of power. Blair and his government have no intention of trying to redress the balance. That is why, for example, the draconian laws on industrial action introduced by Thatcher and condemned by the International Labour Organisation remain in place. That is why the state will intervene in disputes, as fire fighters are finding out, and consider going as far as making action illegal (something even Thatcher backed away from). In the struggle between capital and labour the state is always on the side of capital, of the owners of the means of production. Expect no government ministers on the Lufthansa Skychef worker's picket line.

And what of the unions? At his union's recent biennial conference Transport and General Workers' leader Bill Morris said that the T&G was "stronger than ever" and "prepared for the challenge of the new millennium". Once the country's largest union with well over two million members, the T&G now has 882,000. The T&G is also, of course, the union that the Liverpool dockers belong to. Unbelievably it is now trying to recruit scab labour in the Port of Liverpool. Jimmy Nolan, of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, writes "it's with our deep concern and disgust that [we have been] informed that the union had started recruiting scab labour from the Port of Liverpool. This follows an earlier decision ... to recruit similar scab labour from Magnet Kitchens whose two-year dispute ended in defeat when that work force was replaced by anti-

union, strike-breaking labour". As Nolan says the decision by the union is "an insult to the Liverpool dock workers, their families and supporters". Sacked for taking a one-day strike, T&G Lufthansa Skychef workers must be at least a bit concerned how committed the union really is to their fight for reinstatement now in its ninth month.

The T&G is, though, really no better or worse than any other trade union and for that matter Labour not much better or worse than any other government would be at present.

Faced with this how should anarchists respond? This is a crucial question as there is little doubt that the union movement is at a watershed. Some anarchists will argue that unions are a hopeless cause and will never be reformed. Others will argue that we should build alternative revolutionary unions. Both viewpoints are valid but do we really want to isolate ourselves from the mass of organised labour who seem (even the Liverpool dockers) unwilling to break from the labour

movement. In his book *Anarchism* Daniel Guerin, writing of the anarchist movement of the 1890s, said it became "cut off from the world of workers which became the monopoly of social democrats". Kropotkin echoed this point saying in 1890 that "one must be with the people ... who want men [sic] of action within their ranks".

Over seven million people belong to unions. For most workers and for all their faults unions like the T&G represent the only real protection workers have against their employers, a point Bakunin made. There is also little doubt that industrial action, which does still happen, raises political awareness and increases solidarity and, as Sam Dolgoff said, mutual aid. Now is the time to start trying to reclaim trade unions. If we do not try it may be too late soon.

Richard Griffin

Donations, messages of support and campaign material in support of the Lufthansa Skychef workers can be obtained from: T&G, 'Woodberry', 218 Green Lanes, London, N4 2HB. Anyone wishing to send letters of protest to Bill Morris about the union's decision to recruit scab labour at the Port of Liverpool should write to: Bill Morris, General Secretary, T&G, 16 Palace Street, Victoria, London, SW1E 5JD, fax: +44(0)171 630 5861, e-mail: tgwu@tgwu.org.uk.

Appeal Court confirms: 'election promises are not binding'

"I think it is a damning indictment of our society that my daughter is now having to face that you cannot trust any word spoken or written by a politician, let alone a secretary of state or prime minister."

So said Mrs Begbie, the wife of a Cambridge clergyman, who had just lost a case against the government at the Appeal Court. Until this year her daughter, Heather, had been attending a fee-paying school, fees paid for by the Ministry of Education. Now aged eleven, Heather is about to change schools and if her parents cannot pay the school fees themselves now that the 'assisted places' scheme is ended, she will have to mix at big school with people whose parents can neither pay school fees nor work the system. The point of the court case is that when the

Labour Party announced, as part of their election manifesto, that they would abolish the assisted places scheme, they said exceptions would be made of people already on the scheme who would be enabled to "finish their education". What they meant, as they explained when they were in power, was that the Ministry of Education would continue to pay school fees until the beneficiaries left the particular schools they were at. But that, as the Appeal Court judges agreed, is less than they promised.

The point for us is that the case confirms and clarifies a provision of the unwritten British constitution which we already knew. The court upheld Mr Blunkett's argument that "pre-election promises are of no legal effect, and post election statements cannot be relied on."



— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 2nd October, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 23rd September.

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).

Encyclopedia of Political Anarchy

Encyclopedia of Political Anarchy
by Kathlyn Gay and Martin K. Gay
published by ABC-CLIO, £39.95

The literature on anarchism is very variable. There are many excellent specialist biographies of leading individuals and histories of national movements, but most of the general books on the subject over more than a century have been execrable. One of the most disgraceful aspects of this situation is the unsatisfactory

treatment of anarchism even in reputable reference books (at least in English, unlike impressive examples in other languages). Thus the entries on anarchist topics in the very ambitious and very expensive *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published in ten volumes last year, are scandalously inadequate; and the equally ambitious and expensive *American National Biography*, published in twenty-four volumes this year, omits several of the most important American anarchists.

In this context there is a genuine need for a reliable dictionary or encyclopedia of anarchism to give basic information about the subject. The only really worthwhile example of such a publication was the four-volume *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, which was produced by Sébastien Faure during the late 1920s and early 1930s (and was never translated into English); in English, Stuart Christie's projected *Anarchist Encyclopedia*, which was started during the late 1980s, ceased after a few instalments. Unfortunately the latest attempted addition to the genre is a disastrous example of quasi-academic pseudo-scholarship. Kathlyn and Martin Gay are prolific American authors who evidently have little knowledge of anarchism or experience of producing serious reference books; their record in these fields consists respectively of a biography of *Emma Goldman* (1997) and an *Encyclopedia of North American Eating and Drinking Traditions, Customs and Rituals* (1996). They are sympathetic to anarchism, but they are so ignorant and careless that their efforts to explain it are worse than useless.

To begin with, the *Encyclopedia of Political Anarchy* isn't really an encyclopedia in the proper sense. It consists of only 256 pages and contains only 172 entries, together with a short preface and introduction, a bibliography and index (and an appendix on the Internet). The authors don't seem to have done much background reading or original research, or even to have taken expert advice or ensured editorial integrity.

The principle of selection appears almost random. A substantial minority of entries have little or nothing to do with anarchism (Berrigan, Black Panthers, Blanqui, Debs, Gandhi, Guevara, Haywood, Huxley, Jacobins, Luxemburg, Marti, Marx, New Left, Robert Owen, Shelley, Stone, Wollstonecraft, Zasluch), whereas a substantial majority of significant anarchist individuals and topics have been ignored (Abed de Santillan, Aldred, Argentina, Armand, Arshinov, Ba Jin, Bellegarrigue, Bonnot, Brazil, Brousse, Cafiero, Carpenter, Cherkezov, Christie, Coeurderoy, Collectivism, Comfort, Communes, Cornelissen, Costa, Déjacque, Delesalle, Fabbri, Graham, Guillaume, Harman, Hess, Holmes, India, Japan, Keell, Landauer, Lane, Le Guin, Libertad, Marsh, Mella, Mirbeau, Montseny, Nihilism, W.C. Owen, Pouget, Primitivism, Read, Reitzel, Rexroth, Schwitzguébel, Segui, Serge, Seymour, Shifu, Situationism, Souchy, Terrorism, Traven, Ward, Wilson, Woodworth, Yvetot). The total absence of any reference to the work of Max Nettlau is perhaps the single most telling omission in a reference book on anarchism.

The level of scholarship is uneven. While the references in some entries on individuals are to standard biographies, those for most entries on national movements or general topics are to secondary or even tertiary sources; there is little reference to the most authoritative books, let alone primary sources, and most of the bibliographies are just embarrassing.

The standards of accuracy and balance are disappointing. There are too many elementary errors as well as omissions. The crucial entry on *Anarchism* itself states that "William Godwin was the first person to call himself an anarchist and to use the term *anarchism*"; the terms, which had been used

during the English Civil War 150 years earlier, weren't used by Godwin, and the first person to call himself an anarchist was Proudhon 50 years later. It adds that the term *libertarian socialism* was used during the eighteenth century; it didn't appear before the twentieth century. Bakunin is said to have died in Rome; it was Berne. He is described both as a collectivist and as a communist; he was never the latter. The New Left is said to have been anarchist; most of it wasn't.

The coverage of such topics as collectivism and mutualism, federalism and municipalism, situationism and primitivism, is missing, and that of communism and syndicalism, propaganda by deed and direct action, feminism and libertarianism, is inadequate. The treatment of American anarchism is ambitious but unreliable; the treatment of British anarchism is almost non-existent. For light relief, see the entry on Albert Meltzer; on the other hand, for a good entry, see the demolition of *The Anarchist Cookbook*.

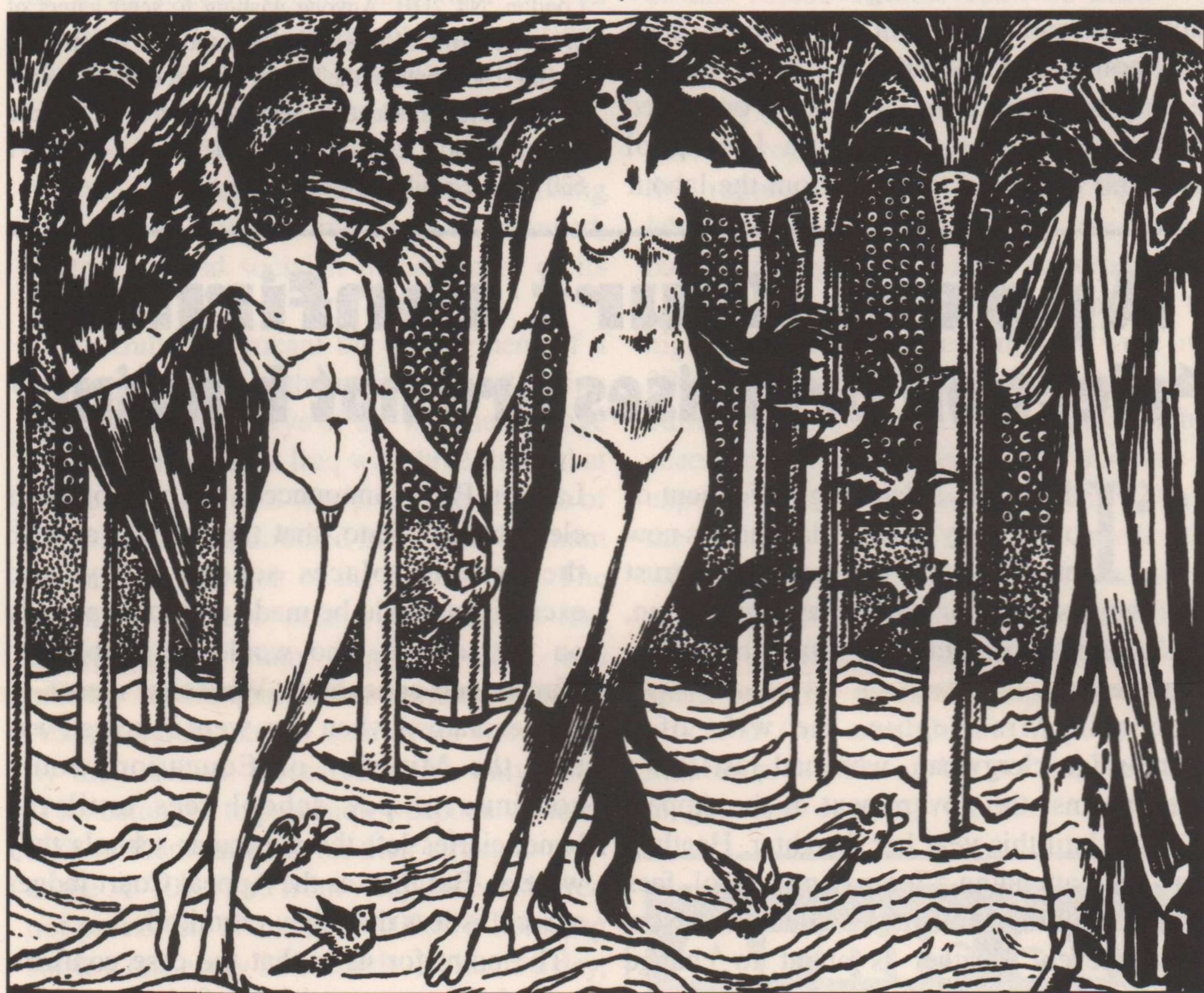
On a parochial level, the very superficial entry on the Freedom Press is drawn from an American website rather than from ourselves. Indeed many references are made to websites, and many more are added in the appendix; the latter is inevitably already out of date. This makes for an unreliable and inaccurate coverage of many topics, but it also suggests a superior source of information than this book. In almost every case, if inquirers can't be bothered to find the really authoritative sources, they would actually do better to search the Internet than to consult the *Encyclopedia of Political Anarchy*.

The electronic coverage of anarchism, as of everything else, contains a great deal of misleading or irrelevant rubbish, but it also includes a fair amount of reliable information. Thus the remarkable "Anarchist FAQ", designed to answer many of the eponymous "Frequently Asked Questions" on the subject, which has existed since 1996 and has been repeatedly updated, is despite its defects probably the handiest single source of quick cheap material. As a result of this situation, any reference book on anarchism must work harder than ever to reach the necessary standards of authority and clarity, coverage and accuracy; this example signally fails to do so. There are no illustrations, apart from Emma Goldman speaking in New York on the cover.

The official price is some kind of joke. The final verdict is quite unprintable.

NW

Art and Society



Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*
edited by Gary Zabel
published by George's Hill, Medford, Massachusetts, 1993, paperback, £3.99 (reduced from £9.95), distributed by Freedom Press (post-free in UK)

William Morris was one of the few leading socialists who were sympathetic to anarchism, spoke at anarchist meetings, and were published by anarchist publishers (including the Freedom Press). His political writings appeared in many single editions and small collections over half a century, and were immortalised in the superb edition produced by his daughter May long after his death. They continue to appear in several forms, and this is a convenient collection of his main writings on art and socialism.

It contains eight items dating from the period

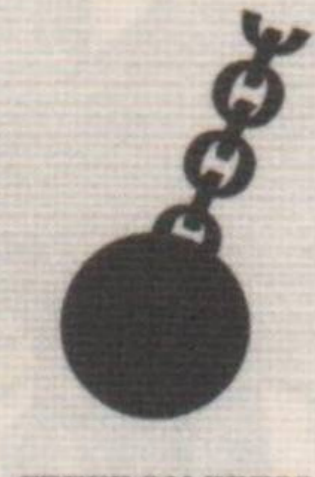
between 1883, when Morris as a leading writer and artist came out as a revolutionary socialist, and 1890, when he virtually withdrew from political activity because of disillusionment and ill-health. They include both some of his finest major essays and lectures and some minor but still interesting discussions of various aspects of the subject.

The editor, an American academic writer on aesthetics, has added an introduction, a short biography and some bibliographical material. This editorial apparatus is rather spoilt by an obtrusively Marxist bias and by some careless mistakes and misprints (especially in dates), but the meat of the book is Morris's own texts, which remain as fresh as when they were written or spoken more than a century ago. If you don't have access to the old editions or can't afford the current reprints by the Thoemmes Press, this is one of the handiest collections of Morris's writings on art.

MH

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Brian Martin



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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

A mountain anarchy

Knowing my interest in vernacular architecture, a relation from Zürich on holiday in the Ticino Canton of Switzerland sent me a brochure describing a district there that I had never heard of, the Valle Bavona. It is a deep glacial furrow in the Alps, with an arable floor scattered with huge boulders, too big to move, which the inhabitants would burrow under for shelters and woodsheds, and would drag up baskets of soil to build gardens on top, safe from flooding and goats. It had a stable population from ancient times until natural cataclysms and environmental deterioration led to a movement down the valley. "Thus in the sixteenth century began the arduous seasonal migration of livestock and herders to the little villages, to the hayfields and all the way up to the high pastures. This annual migration continued until the middle of our century and persists even today for the few who still raise livestock in the valley."

There are twelve villages along the valley floor, composed of groups of houses and barns, eloquently described: "Every building has dimensions and proportions suited exactly to its specific function: the modest but adequate house, the barn nearby, the woodshed; the loom, each in the right place to avoid useless steps. The houses touch each other, the doors face each other, the courtyards are common space for several families and everyone passes through them. The community spirit which animated the settlements emanated from their nuclear structure: to live near to one another, to help each other out in difficult situations. Brotherhood was vital to survival. Only with the united efforts of all the members of the community was it possible to face the daily difficulties."

The builders used local stone and timber and very little mortar, since lime had to be carried on their backs from far away. There were no community ovens since the inhabitants lived on *castagnaccio*, a bread made from chestnut flour baked in the hearth in front of the fire. "Notwithstanding their simplicity, the buildings are by no means

In the Valle Bavona, Ticino.



monotonous, and looking at them closely one notices infinitely varied solutions, due to particular needs or taste. Rural dwellings include other spaces: the woodshed, the public urinal (there was neither running water nor sanitary services), the cellar dug under boulders, the chicken house and the pigpen, the barn and fountain with drinking trough and the public wash-house. The building also consisted of a workshop for woodworking, basket-making, knife-grinding and a blacksmith's forge."

And before describing the huge hydro-electric installations that now utilise the valleys ("the generating plants are hidden in caves, as large as cathedrals, excavated in the mountains") the account of the Bavona valley concludes that "this human landscape still awakens our admiration nowadays".

I was reminded of the passage by the Ticino writer Francesco Chiesa, used as a superscription to Jonathan Steinberg's book *Why Switzerland?* He recalls how "the shepherds, who spent the summer in the Alps,

came down from time to time to restock with supplies, and these were bread, wine, salt and newspapers. And in some of their thatched huts up there, like so many troglodytes, in the acrid smells of curdled milk, smoke and dung, more than once I have happened to find them discussing the last minute details of cantonal and world politics, with me addressing them in dialect while they took care to reply in the literary language."

This was just like Kropotkin's experience among the peasant-craftsmen in the Jura Canton in 1872: "I was asked to take a seat on a bench or table, and soon we were all engaged in a lively conversation upon socialism, government or no government, and the coming congresses".

Both were describing a world that has gone. Writing in *The Guardian* for 25th August 1999 of the disappearing peasant, Tim Salmon warns us not to romanticise traditional Alpine life "which seems to us full of beauty, harmony, community and intimacy with nature". What for us seems like a primitive anarchy was something to be rejected, and he tells us how "all over the Alps, Pyrenees, Abruzzi, Alpujarras, you see that valley after precipitous valley — where the soil has been laboriously husbanded into tiny but cultivable terraces by untold generations of peasant farmers — has been abandoned at the first opportunity".

I often think about the implications of a remark of Orwell's. He wrote that "if one considers the probabilities, one is driven to the conclusion that anarchism implies a low standard of living. It need not imply a hungry or uncomfortable world, but it rules out the kind of air-conditioned, chromium-plated, gadget-ridden existence which is now considered desirable and enlightened".

Life in the Alpine valleys was no doubt a rural anarchy, but was just too endlessly difficult and uncomfortable.

(continued from page 8)

favours to King Hussein of Jordan, and Carter's breaking of "his most basic promise ... He did not always tell the truth". We get Woodward's inside view of Iran-Contra, see the Bush Presidency shredded by the scandals that engulfed it, and watch the Starr investigation enter into a state of 'permanent war' with the Clinton administration.

Fascinating as *Shadow* is, the response to it by Peter Preston, former editor of *The Guardian*, ought to be more surprising. *The Guardian*, so it would have us believe, is a scourge of bad government and a champion of freedom of information. Writing in *The Observer* on 1st August, though, Preston notes that "Here's a book which ought to make journalists proud ... And yet, in the end, you feel vaguely soiled in the reading of it". That Preston would attribute such contamination to the teller, and not the tale, is perhaps, strange enough. Preston, though, goes on to attack a "hostile, alien landscape peopled with flyblown lawyers, axe-grinding politicians and journalists who habitually take a flame-thrower to the wood as well as the trees". The culture of accountability, for Preston, has gone too far. It is not the abuse of power which is at issue, he claims, but the lack of it. Politics has become a club "that

doesn't admit human beings any longer". One can imagine Neil Hamilton and Jonathan Aitken reaching for the same defence.

We are faced with a Labour administration which is moving to undermine even the limited commitments to freedom of information set out by the Major government. Peter Mandelson's loan from Geoffrey Robinson was revealed not by Labour acting as Woodward encourages ("If there is questionable activity, release the facts, whatever they are, as early and completely as possible") but through the investigative efforts of *Mirror* journalist Paul Routledge. Mandelson pulled every string available to him to stymie the story's appearance in our 'free' press. The Editorial Policy Unit of the BBC ordered its journalists not to repeat Matthew Parris's subsequent 'revelation' that Mandelson was gay. The Mandelson story gives some indication of the extent to which a purportedly free press blends into the New Labour establishment. As we note Preston's plea to leave the business of government to the politicians we should note also that the LWT managers Melvyn Bragg, Barry Cox and Greg Dyke were major contributors to the Blair leadership campaign, that the then

current BBC Director General John Birt was knighted by Blair, that the Express Group is headed by New Labour peer Lord Hollick. On and on. As Nick Cohen puts it: "Do you begin to see the outline of a political class? A bickering and faintly risible elite, whose ranks are filled with old Thatcherites, down-sizing executives, ageing media monopolists and New Labour modernisers smelling slightly stale after less than two years in power?" (in *Cruel Britannia*, Verso 1999).

Reading Preston on Woodward one is reminded of the real extent to which we need the critical, sceptical journalism of which Woodward remains, on the strength of *Shadow*, a champion. Watergate, as Woodward shows, gave the US a journalistic culture which, at its best, "was going to dig deep and incessantly because much had been hidden before". *Shadow* doesn't reveal how, too often, the US press, as too its UK counterparts, have courted those it should have exposed, but it is a useful reminder of why the "doubt and second guessing" Woodward employs encourage democracy, not diminish it. As to Preston, we should, perhaps, recall Wilfred Owen's observation that "the scribes on all the people shove / And bawl allegiance to the state".

Nick S.

Colin Ward

— IRAQ —

Nine years of genocidal sanctions

We are publishing the following translation from the current edition of the Basque libertarian journal *Ezkintza* because of its informative content rather than for any perceived sympathy with the Iraqi regime which we do not share.

Between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers sits Iraq, cradle of the first civilisation – Mesopotamia. It has 22 million inhabitants, 70% of which live in urban areas. Iraq nationalised its oil industry in 1972. Its history of turmoil since the overthrow of the monarchy at the beginning of the fifties, followed by the establishment of a republican regime and later several *coups d'état* with different organisations alternating at the helm and even within the Baas – the current ruling party, determine that what goes on in Iraq is a single party regime, for sure, but with a strong socialising component. By this we mean a planned, centralised and socialist management of its economy.

The Gulf War meant the deployment of a military machine without precedent. "During the first nineteen days of the war the tonnage of bombs fired over Iraq was three times that of the total in World War Two. The volume of bombs over Iraq doubled that of the Vietnam war and tripled that of the Korean war. The majority of those bombs were much less discriminatory than what the civil and military media qualified as surgical strikes". About 90,000 tons of explosives were fired by the coalition forces of which only 7400 (7%) belonged to precision weapons. At least 20% of them failed to hit their target, as well as the 50-70% fired from weapons considered not-precision. There were 109,876 bombing sorties: one every 34 seconds, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The second phase of the air attacks had as their specific objective the Iraqi civil infrastructure, such as bridges, electrical plants and other essential installations. An additional 20,000 to 30,000 tons of explosives were fired by artillery and missiles. According to official Pentagon sources, most of the destruction was unnecessary from a military point of view, meant only to amplify in the long run the economic and psychological effects of the sanctions on Iraqi society. This is the New World Order, according to which it is permissible to invade, blockade, sanction, intervene, kill and/or punish anywhere in the world depending on the interests of the USA and the West.

Since August 1990 Iraq has suffered economic sanctions and an international blockade that has a terrifying human impact. This genocide of the Iraqi people can only be explained, in the words of James Baker (ex-Secretary of State of the United States) as an attempt to 'send Iraq back to the Middle Ages'.

Resolution 986 'oil for food', in force since 1996, has barely alleviated the humanitarian crisis in Iraq since it doesn't even cover 20% of the country's minimal needs. Resolution 986 authorises Iraq's export of \$5,000 million worth of oil per semester. This revenue goes into a sequestered account. From that account the UN allocates a third to pay the war debt, another portion goes to pay the disarmament commission's expenses and another to pay for the expenses of UN's humanitarian help organisations. Because of these payments, plus the fall in oil prices the

\$5000 million per semester has been reduced to little over \$1000 million for the purchase of essential products.

The 1972 nationalisation of the oil industry started a process of social investments in the country. Iraq had a regime of centralised, planned and socialised economy, with free, efficient and universal social services.

Education was (and continues to be) free, non-religious and co-ed, from kindergarten to university post-doctoral. At the end of the '60s 68% of the population were illiterate, today only 6% of the adult population are illiterate. Today, due to the embargo, 21% of the children do not go to school in order to work to help their families' economies. Half of the 10,000 schools can't be used. The sanctions forbid the importation of pencils (because of their graphite core) and paper (the Security Council says it could be used to publish propaganda or newspapers in favour of the regime). School supplies, furniture, laboratory supplies, books, etc., are needed, but the embargo doesn't allow importing them.

Regarding health, Iraq had one of the highest indexes in the region; there were over 30,000 hospital beds housed in very modern buildings. In 1989 93% of the population had access to free public health, and Iraq was an exporter of medications. Today only 39% of the patients are able to obtain medicines, whoever needs an operation must obtain anaesthesia in the black market. Half of the 30,000 hospital beds can't be used. Today spare parts for medical equipment can't be procured (for example the importation of incubators is allowed, but not the equipment to generate oxygen). Doctors can't attend

symposia nor medical seminars, nor can they receive specialised medical journals. They can't import nitroglycerine to prevent heart attacks, nor ammonium nitrate nor chlorine. A person needs about 2,500 daily calories; before the embargo the average was 3,500 daily calories per person. Now, at best they can barely get 1,100 daily calories. The price per calorie of food stuff has multiplied over 500 times since the beginning of the sanctions, salaries have increased only by 1.3 times. Before the embargo, 7% of the Iraqi children were obese. Today infantile malnutrition is comparable to that of the African Sub-Sahara. Over one million children suffer malnutrition (over 60% of those under 5 years old), of which 200,000 are acute cases. If they survive they'll never achieve normal physical or intellectual development. Due to their mothers' nutritional deficiencies one of every four babies are born with low birth weight, five times more than before the embargo. Infant mortality has increased six times. Of a total population of 22 million Iraqis, the embargo has caused the death of 900,000 children (5,000 per month) and a similar number among the most vulnerable sectors of society.

The embargo, together with the continuous bombings is taking the country to an extremely dire humanitarian situation. Per capita income in 1989 was \$2,800. Today 70% of the population live below the poverty line. In 1990 an Iraqi dinar was worth \$3, today \$1 is equal to 1,700 dinars.

The embargo doesn't allow the importing of spare parts and machinery for oil exploitation causing many wells to become irreversibly

unusable.

Solidarity with the Iraqi people is not just a humanitarian necessity due to the genocidal effects caused by the embargo and the continual yankee aggression; the end of the sanctions should be a key objective, necessary for the reconstruction of a more just order in the Middle East, a region that, as Mahmud Darwiish says, is the laboratory for a 'New World Order' that equates peace with humiliation, death, dependency and misery for the people. Beyond the political nature of those in power there is the international solidarity of the people, Iraq doesn't need humanitarian help but a lifting of the embargo suffered for nine years, that is our struggle and accusation.

Eva Mañez

**Radio Klara, free and libertarian
Valencia – Spanish State**

For more information:

- Magazine *Nación Árabe* number 18 'La mujer iraquí frente al bloqueo', Bela Bhatia, Mary Kawar y Mariam Sharin.
- Report of the second delegation to Iraq (Campaign for the lifting of sanctions to Iraq) edited by the Comité de Solidaridad con la Causa Árabe and the Ayuntamiento of Coslada (Madrid), 1995.
- *Guerra y Sanciones a Irak: Naciones Unidas y el (nuevo orden mundial)*, Carlos Varea and Angeles Maestro (editors)
- The books by Catarata y CLSI, Madrid, 1997.
- *Iraq un genocidio políticamente correcto*, Cuadrúptico, edited by Campaña por el Levantamiento de las Sanciones a Iraq, Madrid 1999.
- Report to the secretary general on humanitarian needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the immediate post-crisis environment by a mission led by Mr Marti Ahtisaari, United Nations, Ginebra, March 1991. Castellano translation in *Nación Árabe*, VI,15.

Arms and oil: a strategic region

The Gulf (i.e. the Arabian Peninsular and Iran) is home to some 65% of world oil reserves and 33% of its gas reserves. In this region we find the five countries with the biggest reserves in the world, all of them are members of OPEC (The Organisation of Petrol Producing and Exporting Countries): Saudi Arabia (26.1%), Iraq (10%), The UAE (United Arab Emirates) (9.8%), Kuwait (9.7%) and Iran (8.9%). To extract a barrel of oil in the region costs between five and ten times less than in other parts of the world, a figure which does not assess reserves or export costs. In the first decade of the 21st century the area will provide to the rest of the world about half the oil it will consume. This figure is rising and will include China, India and Iran. The dependency of Saudi Arabia on such energy exports is a higher figure at 70% according to official figures.

Iraq's oil 'recolonised'

In 1990 Iraq was exporting more than 3,000,000 barrels of oil a day. Despite the fact that Iraq was expelled from Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War, the economic sanctions which were imposed on the country in August the previous year by the Security Council are still in place. The sanctions forbid Iraq to export oil. This embargo has brought losses to the Iraqi economy amounting to some US\$140,000,000,000 since 1991. The Security Council resolutions force Iraq to send one third of its oil export revenue to pay the indemnities for damage

caused during the Gulf War: since its nationalisation in 1972, Iraqi oil has been recolonised. Iraq has already paid US\$2,800,000,000 by way of paying for the humanitarian programme 'oil for food' set up in 1997.

Sharing out the Iraqi quota

Since the implementation of the embargo on Iraq, her oil quota has been exported by Saudi Arabia and, in lesser amounts, by Kuwait and the UAE. In this way Saudi Arabia has succeeded in raising its oil sales from 5.2 million barrels a day in July 1991 to more than eight million today. Thanks to these extra earnings, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have successfully recovered some of the payments they made to the USA during the Gulf War (between US\$34 and \$55,000,000,000) and to offset the reduction in quotas and earnings which resulted from the fall in oil prices (more than 40% between 1997 and 1998)

The arms trade

Between 1990 and 1997, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE (the so-called oil-monarchies) signed military contracts with the USA to a value of US\$36,000,000,000, amounting to a third of all US arms exports.

The Saudi monarchy is the biggest buyer of arms in the world: of the US\$45,000,000,000 earned from oil sales in 1997 \$11,000,000 was spent on arms (in the main fighter planes and bombers).

A circular trade

Thanks to the prolongation of the embargo against Iraq, the kings and princes of the Gulf states have been able to swell their family fortunes and pay for the military security that the USA supplies them with to ensure their political survival, spending for the US fantastic sums on arms. For its part the USA controls world energy supply and today funnels the financial flow from the Middle East (the petrodollars) to its industrial-military complex thus greasing the wheels of her economy.

Paying for the American deployment

In order to maintain this lucrative flow of petrodollars and arms the US has been forced to maintain the Iraqi oil embargo and its direct military control of the region thus generating a permanent climate of instability and threats which justifies the expenditure on arms and the presence of its forces. The US is selling arms to the oil-monarchies which the Saudi military needs in order to maintain the deployment and improve the rapid deployment capacity which is now reduced to 72 hours. Qatar is now home to the biggest deposit of US arms in the world. Neither the US nor the oil-monarchies have any interest in Iraq returning to the oil market. By maintaining the embargo and attacking Iraq's oil infrastructure they are achieving their aims.

**Committee for Solidarity with the Arab Cause
Apartado 14.180, 28080, Madrid**

Playing the technology card

Dear *Freedom*,

Steve Cullen's letter (21st August 1999) putting BB right on the relative technical strengths of the republicans and nationalists in the Spanish civil war seems, by its very length, to mask a more important point that goes beyond 'the facts'.

It's a truism, when you ain't got the resources you've got to be resourceful. The simplistic assumption that technology is the critical factor in determining competitive advantage is also just another slogan for capital, whether as drugs for athletes, calculators or dictionaries for kids taking exams, or sophisticated weapons for the military. Those who lack the wherewithal to equip themselves with the 'best money can buy' just don't use the absence of resources as an excuse for not trying. Anyway, history is on the side of the 'little battlers' and replete with the conquest of the mighty by 'inferior' forces (i.e. those with lousy numbers, gear

and equipment) who just happened to have a good cause, use their brains, have good mates, enjoy some amazing circumstantial luck, or whatever combination of these and other factors. Try another slogan: 'Never give up'. There are chances and changes helping the hopeful, a hundred to one.

We've just had a re-run of the 'equipment is all' myth in Kosovo. These days young people join the military to avoid the usual consequences of warfare. Clinton and Co. knew our boys didn't want to fight. The western way of warfare has been sorely tested of late. It is highly vulnerable to guerrilla tactics, as we know after Vietnam, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, etc., and the Serbs don't play by the rules either.

Clinton and Co. also knew that the soldiers' mums didn't want their boys coming home in body bags, so they played the technology card.

We finally 'defeated' the enemy by precision

bombing at night, confining our attack to military targets. When the cease-fire came, we saw it all on television, the Serbian 'combatants' drove home arms aloft giving the victory sign, their inferior gear apparently all intact. None of our boys died and there were plenty of civilian casualties and busted buildings to prove the wonders of technology.

Anybody who knows anything about the desperate condition both of capitalism and the western way of warfare would not be surprised by these events. In this sort of rotten game the official combatants don't want to be there and are terrified. Only a minority (typically less than 10%) are capable of operating effectively regardless of their weaponry. Tactically the human side of *this* conflict was simple: just a question of avoiding the risk that those who were pissing themselves most might botch it. The rest was good for capitalism, like it was in Spain.

Denis Pym

Pay and inflation

Dear *Freedom*,

Re Richard Griffin's letter in *Freedom*, 21st August, more should be said about the role of the RPI. The RPI is merely an index of changes in retail prices. All it tells you is the rate at which prices are rising (it has never been a negative figure to my knowledge). It is not a cost of living index. The old Ministry of Labour stated in *Method and Construction of the Retail Price Index* back in 1967: "It is important to understand that the index is an index of price changes and not a cost of living index. It does not measure changes in the kinds and amounts of goods and services people buy or in the total amount spent in order to live, nor does it measure differences in living costs between different localities."

It was Charles Wilson, President of General Motors, who in 1948 came up with the scheme of linking wages to price increases. The logic behind it was that a policy of no wage increases was not realistic in a climate of rising prices so how to devise a way to ensure that the rise was as small as possible, seemed fair and encouraged complacency about pay? The view is put forward that if you get pay increases in line with the RPI you must be okay. Yet the RPI has as much to do with cost of living increases as the claimant count has to do with unemployment - there is a connection but it is only an indicator. It ignores the crucial question of 'what do workers really need?' and the discussion of this in the workplace to decide pay policy. Issues such as increased productivity; profit levels and other demands, such as improved conditions of service and a shorter working week also need to be considered in drawing up a pay claim.

Percentage increases are another way of obfuscating the issue. A flat rate claim leaves no doubt as to what is the aim; provides the basis for uniting the whole union around it and maintains existing differentials. Percentages claims are misleading and divisive - they do not readily translate into cash; give a false impression and widen differentials.

The way to succeed is by a campaigning pay policy based on the membership. They need to be involved, informed and able to decide what to do at every stage. It is not really the amount that matters but the campaign and support for it among the members that counts. If expectations are raised and members feel the campaign is their own, justifiable and want it enough, the employer is in for a hard time.

It is true we no longer have formal incomes policies. But 'mind forged manacles' can be just effective as actual ones.

Martin Spellman

Another film about Spain

Dear *Freedom*,

In his 'afterthoughts on Jim Allen and Spain' (7th August 1999), Brian Bamford quotes some experts from a "symposium on modern Spanish film" explaining why there haven't been more films about Spain and the Civil War. About three months ago, here in Vancouver, I went to just such a film. It is called, *Libertarias*, and it was done by a young Spanish director in about 1997 (I no longer have the flyer on the film and I can't remember his name or the date of the film). It was a film about CNT/FAI action with the major part of the drama concerning a group of women, three of whom as members of the *Mujeres Libres*, closed down a warehouse and, after a rousing speech by one of them which manages to convince several of the prostitutes to join in the revolution bringing along a young nun who, without knowing the nature of the house, sought refuge there when her nunnery was sacked or burned, set out on

a carefully arranged plan to acquire some machine guns and to join a column setting out for Saragossa, and since the women have the machine guns they overcome the initial reluctance of the men and eventually prove their mettle and their ideals in action. All but two or three of the group suffer a tragic and brutal end at the hands of the Moors before they get to Saragossa

As a film it is certainly the equal of *Land and Freedom* and is much better at revealing the anarchist cause as well as in its character development and relationships. The nun, now passing as one of the group, is given classic anarchist books to read before they leave Barcelona. She learns the lessons well, and even though it doesn't commit her to anarchism, she has taken in the values. When asked how she is able to find supplies for the group, she answers that while she had money, she bought food at very low prices from the peasants, and when she ran out of money she told them what she had read, and they gave her the food. She also takes her turn on a megaphone message to the fortified enemy not far away but is embarrassed by their rude reply.

Durruti makes a cameo appearance as the military strategist worrying about strategy. His agent who arrives later to order the women back to Barcelona to clean and to cook is soundly sent packing by both the women and the men whom they are fighting with. The characters as idealists fighting for their cause develop throughout the film, and the CNT/FAI is always at the centre of the film.

I assume from Brian Bamford's comments that the film never got to Britain on its way over here, which is a pity because it is a very good one and well worth seeing if you can get it. The local experts must be either out of touch or well behind the times in their research.

I would also like to add a footnote to the comment quoted from the late Jim Allen. While I agree that one can't fully understand twentieth century history unless one can understand what happened in Spain in 1936, I would also argue that one can't understand twentieth century history and what happened in Spain in 1936 without understanding Spanish Anarchism from 1868-1936. Bookchin writes in his 'Preface' to his excellent book, *The Spanish Anarchists* that "it became clear to him that the CNT-FAI

leadership suffered a tragic decline in its principles and practices after the late summer of 1936 ... Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism in Spain had attained their most striking and heroic heights over the course of their pre-1936 history, in the insurgency of their militants in the July uprising, on the Aragon front immediately after the outbreak of the civil war, and in the early efforts of their most devoted rank-and-file supporters to form the nuclei of a collective society" (page 8).

At the end of my review, I listed six of the seven books which Bookchin says are important to understanding the period 1936-1939 (plus two others). They were left out of the review in *Freedom*, but I list them again because I think they are essential to an understanding of 'what happened in Spain in 1936' and would have been a great help to Jim Allen and Ken Loach.

- Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution: The Left and the Struggle for Power During the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1979) an expanded version of *The Grand Camouflage* (1961).
- Pierre Broué and Émile Témime, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (Cambridge, MA, 1970).
- Ronald Fraser, *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 1979).
- Gastón Leval, *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*, translated from the French by Vernon Richards (London, 1975).
- José Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, translated from the Spanish by Mary Anne Slocombe and Paul Hollow (Detroit, 1974).
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- Jerome R. Mintz, *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas* (Chicago, 1982).

Three of these were listed in that issue of *Freedom*, perhaps because they are in stock while the others are in libraries.

John R. Doheny

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— PROGRAMME 1999 —

- 17th September General discussion
- 24th September Class and Class Struggle:
A Critical Analysis (speaker Peter Neville)
- 1st October General discussion
- 8th October Getting Anarchist Ideas Over
(symposium)
- 22nd October General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or
leading a discussion, please contact Peter
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Peter Neville
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Walk leader Ray.

Sunday 28th November

Derbyshire walk to Alport Heights. Meet at
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Sunday 19th December

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**Telephone Vivienne for more info:
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If anybody in the area wishes to
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