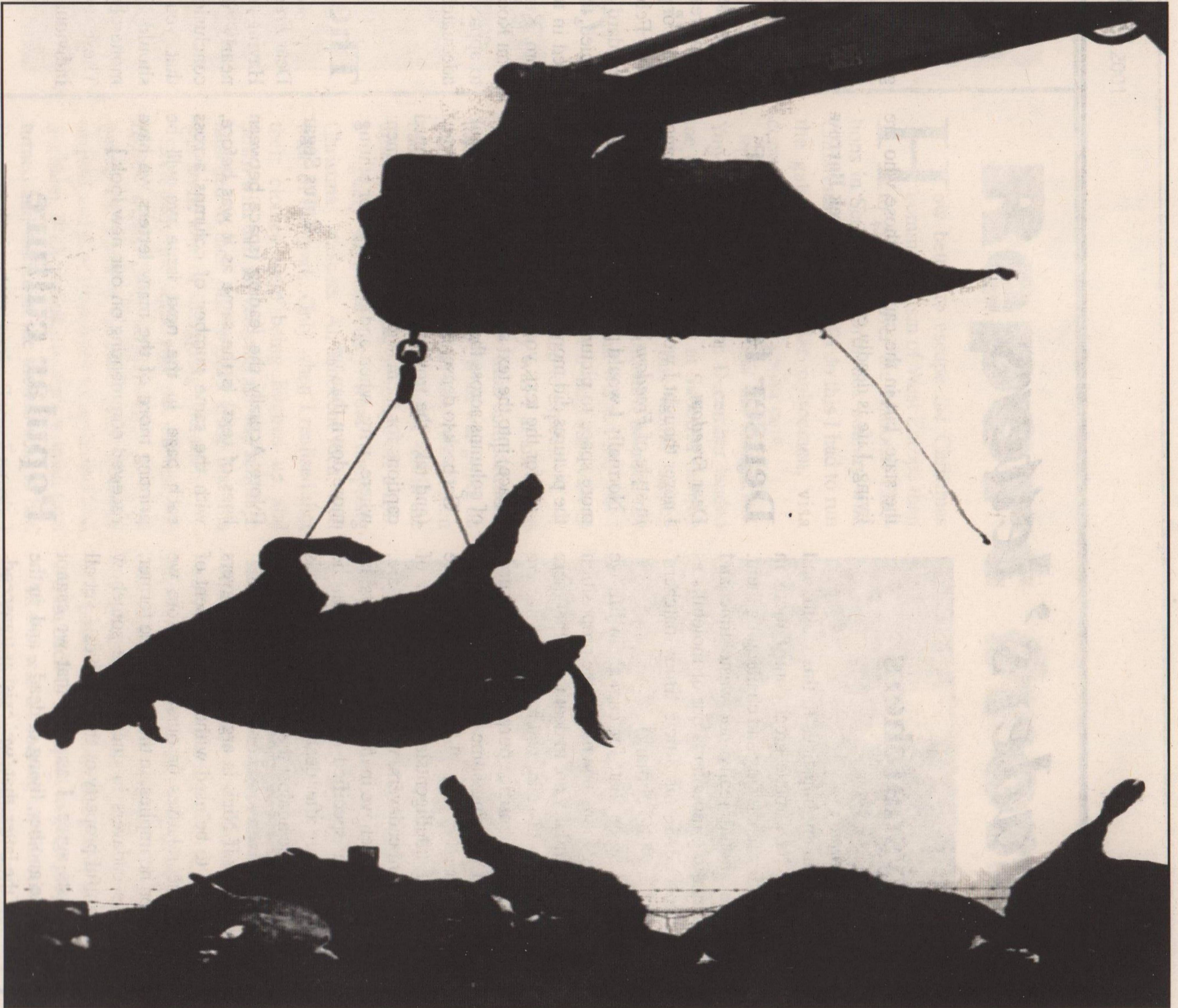


# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 62 No. 5

10th March 2001

50p



## Hypocritical killing

**T**he banning of foxhunting has been exploited hollow by this government, though it always backs away when something more substantial than words is required. Whilst the grisly fate of a few foxes sometimes attracts their attention, ministers are quite happy to allow the killing of many thousands of animals in response to foot and mouth disease.

We've all heard the lectures from the mainstream media on how, if we want to stop these health scandals from happening, we must pay more for meat and dairy products. It's all our fault, they imply, for refusing to spend more on organic food and humane farming conditions.

In the UK, wages have fallen in real terms for many years, though prices

have risen massively. These are the inevitable results of globalisation – and people don't always have the money simply to 'pay more'.

It is possible to have food which is both accessible and healthy. For this to happen we need a healthy network of social relationships, within human society and between that society and nature. In other words, an anarchist society.

# anarchist fortnightly

# Freedom

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## Mexican police riot at F26

Police unleashed a wave of violence against anti-globalisation protesters in Mexico at the end of last month. The protesters had come to the tourist city of Cancun, on the Yucatan peninsula, for a three day regional meeting of the World Economic Forum.

The meeting, which began on 25th February, was attended by around five hundred senior bosses from 22 countries. It had been set up for politicians and businessmen to plot Mexico's next moves towards globalisation.

More than 2,700 soldiers, paramilitary police and local cops were stationed around the Westin Regina hotel, where the conference was held.

On Monday 26th February, the second day of the meeting, several hundred protesters gathered for the F26 action. Their numbers swelled throughout the day, reaching as high as five thousand later on.

From their assembly point in Palapas park, they marched on the police cordon at the entrance to the tourist zone, where the hotel is located. After reaching the police lines, they stopped and a street party began. Several protesters flashed moonies at the cops. There were no arrests and police did not attempt to intervene.

On Tuesday 27th February the marchers were halted by armoured police standing behind two rows of metal fencing which had been put up overnight.

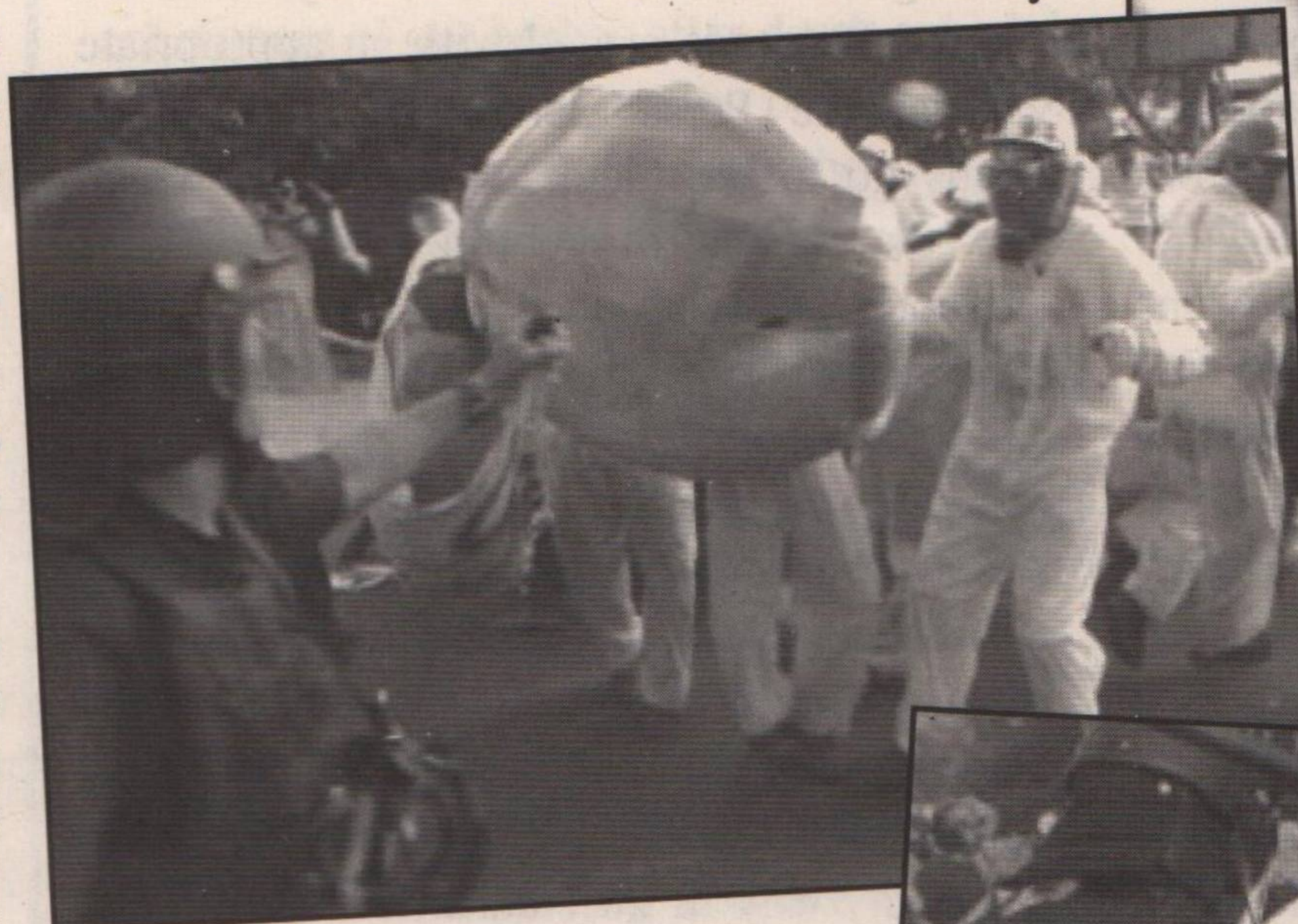
One group tried to break through the cordon, without success, while others staged a sit-down protest. A smaller group, which had managed to penetrate the police lines by another route, was caught trying to sneak into the Westin Regina hotel, and around thirty people were arrested.

After an hour of the sit-down protest, protesters began to drift away because of the afternoon heat. Then police tactics changed. Under the eyes of the press and several hundred tourists, the barricades opened and several squads of heavily-armoured police ran out.

The sit-down protesters took the brunt of the first assault, as cops swung their batons.

Then police pursued other demonstrators, as they ran for safety. One policeman was seen beating a man with a three metre pole as he lay on the ground; two people were surrounded and beaten up by a group of police; anybody seen videoing what was happening was targeted. Gas canisters were fired as protesters fled in panic.

Daniel Meiners, one protester who was injured, says that the police action was another example of "the state of oppression in which we live". He was hit in the face by



a rock which a cop had thrown, and kicked while he was lying on the ground.

In all, dozens of people are reported to have been beaten up, many to the point of unconsciousness, before being arrested and dragged away. Fifteen people were put in hospital. The state news

(continued on page 2)

Scenes from Cancun in Mexico on 27th February 2001



## March for Turkish prisons

A solidarity march for victims of Turkish prison repression was expected to arrive in London at the start of this week.

After leaving Liverpool town hall on 21st February, the marchers walked to Manchester, then on through Birmingham, Coventry and Oxford.

The Committee for Struggle against Torture through Isolation (IKM), which organised the march, said that their aim was to "take the campaign on this issue to people outside London".

The marchers held meetings in towns along the route, showing videos of the Turkish state's actions against prisoners, and distributing information packs to reporters from the local press and radio stations. They say that people were generally keen to learn more about the situation, particularly as the

repression has received very little coverage in the British press.

"The Turkish state says the problem has been solved almost on a day-to-day basis", says Gurkan, one of the marchers. "But it hasn't".

Thousands of police and soldiers launched an assault on prisoners in twenty prisons last December, in an attempt to force them into the deeply unpopular isolation cells. Over thirty prisoners were killed.

Many of them had already begun a hunger strike, in protest at the government's policy towards them, and several hundred turned this into a death fast as a result of the repression. They are now being kept alive by government doctors, who are force-feeding them.

There are also reports of torture being used against prisoners seized in December, while some political prisoners have not been seen

or heard of since.

There have been massive protests in Turkey itself, which the state has met with widespread arrests and attacks on human rights groups. In other actions around Europe, offices have been occupied and demonstrations held.

The march is the biggest event in the UK so far. It was scheduled to arrive outside the BBC's base in Shepherd's Bush last Sunday (4th March) although it was unclear, as we went to press, how this would be affected by the bomb blast in the area that morning. The march was due to arrive in Westminster on Monday. Further actions are currently being planned.

Turkey has been frequently criticised by Amnesty International and other human rights groups, but is a close British ally and a key member of NATO.



## Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*“Indoctrination is  
to democracy  
what coercion is  
to dictatorship”*

Noam Chomsky

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides the fortnightly newspaper *Freedom*, we also produce *The Raven* quarterly journal and many books on all aspects of anarchism. We also run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that only in such a society can human freedom thrive.

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# Report from Serbia

How better to escape the Christmas commercialism of West Europe than to go and cover the National Elections in Serbia – an Orthodox country with Christmas in January. To do this I had to run the gauntlet of frontier policemen, visa controls, smugglers and power cuts.

My first excursion across the Hungarian-Yugoslav border on 18th December landed me in the police station at Subotica railway station. I had a hunch this would happen when the Hungarian authorities boarded my Belgrade-bound train and warned me that I wouldn't be able to get a Yugoslav visa at Subotica as I had been led to expect.

So seized with anxiety was I at six in the morning, in my darkened train compartment, that I almost failed to see what was going on a few feet away. At the last stop two women had entered my compartment and had in the dimness begun stripping sellotape off a roll. I vaguely assumed they were wrapping Christmas presents. An innocent idea, well wide of the mark. Only when I realised that their clothes were being hitched up and down with deft movements and the sellotape attached to their bodies did I grasp that this was some kind of smuggling operation.

Eventually the light was put on and the ladies made final adjustments to their garments. Later a furtive ticket collector arrived and blue banknotes were pushed into his hand. With a wink, the dark woman then turned and smiled at the blonde next to her. Because the brunette spoke fluent English, I probed her about the situation in Serbia. Life was hard, but improvements were expected in the next two years. And what of the work situation? "This", she declared, patting her waist, "is the work!". Then meaningfully she added "we survive, we survive".

Minutes later the uniformed Yugoslav police arrived and I confessed to my lack of a visa. Then I was separated from my passport, and the smuggler wished me well as I was escorted to the police station. Once seated on a settee in the reception of Subotica police station, I could see the television in the office – a Serbian television broadcast of *Only Fools and Horses!* I had joined a Kosovan who'd been caught without papers en route for Germany, where he had hoped to join his family. He told me he hadn't eaten for two days.

Then there was the office horseplay. The shifts had changed, and a woman police

(continued from page 1)

agency said that three reporters had been injured as they covered the event.

Ramon, an eyewitness, argues that the demonstration was well worth the effort. "The attempted blockade was defeated, but the media coverage was a victory", he says.

The Mexican media has been full of pictures of the police response, under headlines such as 'Police Riot!' and 'Savages!'.

Many of the prisoners were quickly released after a solidarity demo in Mexico City. Even politicians have rushed to condemn the police response, after the public outcry. A rally in support of those detained, held on 28th February outside Cancun town hall, was left unpoliced, on the same day as delegates of the WEF hurried away without comment.

Ramon says "the message was clear. Even if they batter the protesters off the streets, they won't go away. Cancun is a watershed for the movement. New strategies and tactics will emerge, and the neo-liberal project continues to retreat under pressure".

Editorial on page 7



Last October's exuberance in Serbia – are they now defeated by experience?

officer came out into reception and playfully waved an automatic weapon at a cleaning woman. This weapon later went with the Kosovan, who was guarded by a man in civilian clothes; they and a driver disappeared in a police car. At noon, the police put me on a train back to Budapest to get a proper visa.

All this was a sobering introduction to life in Yugoslavia, when three days later I entered Belgrade armed with an appropriate visa at the Press Centre. The smuggled goods go to the black market stalls which line the streets in central Belgrade. The character of Belgrade is enlivened by such civic perversity as the black market and the daily power cuts.

In the daytime, people buy smuggled Snicker bars, dolls and cigarettes; by night we rushed to the candle hawkers by the bus stop in Novi Belgrad to fend off the darkness with the onset of the electric cuts. On my first night in Novi Belgrad, I had to grope my way in inky darkness to my hotel room. The next day, I was collared by two girls with a tape recorder in central Belgrade, and asked if I thought the power cuts were the normal thing to expect.

These cuts are a consequence of the war and the recent drought, but the black market has a longer history. One Belgrade Serb, Vladimir Markovic, told me recently that "the whole economy is dependent on the black market, and ordinary people have to deal in it in order to survive". He claims that

many people, those still registered as employed, had been laid off and sent home by their companies. Others, in work, have not been paid for weeks and sometimes months.

In this situation, the black market, he tells me, becomes part of everyday life in a bid to make ready cash. The UN sanctions introduced against Serbia in 1992 enabled the Belgrade mafia "to seize control of important sections of the economy, especially imports, which were normally the preserve of ordinary businessmen", as Tim Judah has written (in *The Serbs: History, Myth and Destruction of Yugoslavia*).

Neither the Federal Elections in September, which ended in scenes akin to Eisenstein's film *October* with the storming of the Federal Assembly building on 5th October, nor December's national election changes any of this. Because, as Markovic says, "the government has changed, but the economy remains the same".

It was clear to me in Belgrade that, despite the excitement of last October, with the downfall of Milosevic and his Socialist Party of Serbia, the typical Serb is more fascinated with day-to-day survival than with elections. The coalition Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) got a clear overall majority in December, with more than two thirds of seats in the national assembly. But voter turnout had fallen to 58%.

Brian Bamford

A new publication from Freedom Press out now

### Charlotte Wilson Anarchist Essays

edited by Nicolas Walter

Charlotte Wilson was the principal founder of Freedom Press and the first editor of *Freedom* in 1886. Like the work of her better-known contemporary Peter Kropotkin, whom she invited to England to join the *Freedom* group, her anarchist writings are scholarly, original and clear.

Nicolas Walter finished editing this compilation for Freedom Press a few days before his untimely death.



96 pages

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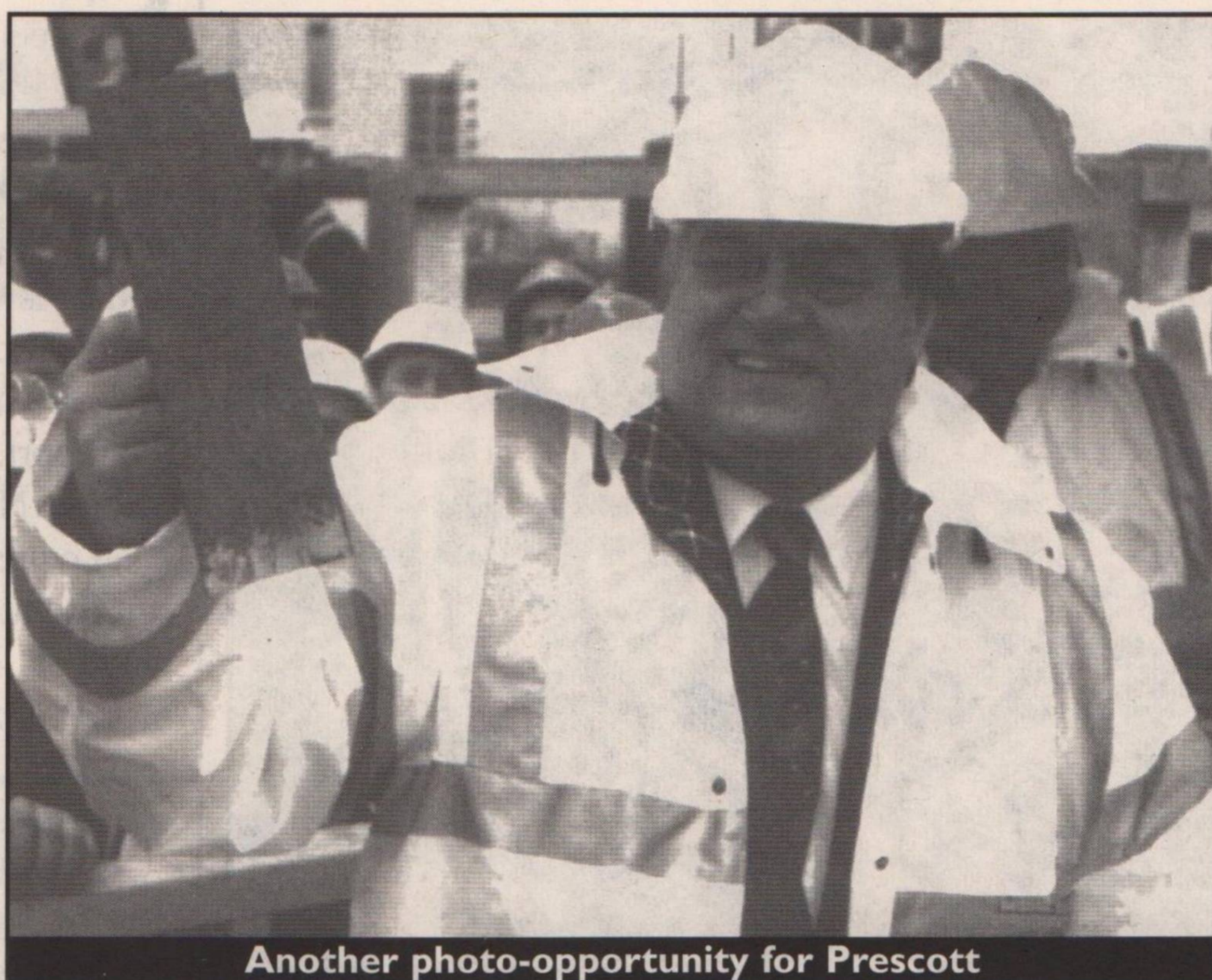
# Profits over construction safety

No changes were expected to the massive number of deaths in the UK construction industry, after a high-profile 'Safety Summit' held in Westminster last week.

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott was joined at the three hour meeting on Tuesday 27th February by senior figures from many of the big building contractors. This followed a record 86 deaths in 1999, which is likely to have grown to over a hundred in the year 2000.

Originally designed as a full day conference, it was downgraded to what independent lobby group the London Hazards Centre has described as a 'photo-opportunity' shortly beforehand. This move was greeted with disgust by trade unionists and activists, who were forced to cancel a planned march from Euston in the afternoon. This would have arrived long after the end of the conference, which now finished at midday.

The planned lobby outside the conference centre still took place in the morning,



Another photo-opportunity for Prescott

following a vigil which began at 7am. The construction industry has always been notorious for the number of deaths amongst its workers. One inspector from the state's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says that many construction workers are "treated like animals". Mark Shearon, who has inspected sites for a decade, says that in all that time he has seen only one site that he regards as "a

hundred percent safe". More than half of workers who die every year fall from scaffolding, ladders or roofs. Other common causes of death are electrocution, industrial machinery and objects dropping from above. Mark Shearon says that the problem stems from the need to cut costs to maintain profitability. "The problem starts with the client who chooses the cheapest price. Contractors have a constricted budget and want to save money to make a reasonable profit". He goes on "all the subcontractors doing specialist work are then put under pressure to do the job cheaper".

Trade unions such as UCATT point out that this works in more subtle ways too, because one way for firms to save money is to force workers to become self-employed. This "leads to corner-cutting, risk-taking, people doing jobs they are not trained to do, and cash-saving at all costs", says a UCATT representative.

Editorial on page 7

# Towards Mayday 2001

In our issues leading up to Mayday 2001, Freedom will run this regular column, featuring the more ludicrous/obvious plants by Britain's finest.

The scare stories have been running for a while already. On 29th January, the BBC's *Newsroom Southeast* reported on the "hardcore, well-organised, violent element" which took over 1999's J18 and later anti-globalisation protests. Reporter Fergal Parkinson interviewed a top London plod against a montage of Mayday 2000 scenes.

He continued with a report of the Ruckus Society's camp in California, where activists from around the world (including Britain's RTS, he said) are trained in non-violent resistance.

Some people who watched the programme didn't see how the two halves of the report added up. The first part, about bloodthirsty violence-seekers was unrelated, they said, to the second part about non-violent activists learning how to make protest more effective.

"The piece was disgusting scaremongering, made up by shite journalists" said one activist, busy preparing for this year's Mayday Monopoly in London.

# Close Oakington



Oakington welcomes refugees

in over 45 regular prisons. David Babbs is unimpressed by the government's policy on refugees. "There clearly was and is a problem with public hostility towards refugees, in Dover and elsewhere", he says. "But the way to tackle racist prejudice is not to lock up the victims. Jailing refugees, forcing them to live on below subsistence voucher allowances, and continually talking about a need to 'get tough' all further stigmatise asylum-seekers". Meanwhile, the Conservative Party has said that it would like to imprison all refugees pending settlement of asylum claims.

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) website at [www.ncadc.org.uk](http://www.ncadc.org.uk) (e-mail [ncadc@org.uk](mailto:ncadc@org.uk)) Contact CARD at [card@zensearch.net](mailto:card@zensearch.net)

Opponents of the state's attitude to refugees will rally in Cambridge today (10th March) demanding the closure of Oakington Detention Centre.

The demo, organised by Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention (CARD), marks the anniversary of the centre's opening a year ago. Over 3,000 refugees, adults and children alike, have since been imprisoned at Oakington while their asylum claims were processed under the government's 'fast-track' system.

But CARD says that the system has in practice been anything but fast. "Contrary to the government's original plans, few are having their claims fully processed during their 'fast-track' stay in Oakington", they say.

They also report that 87% of detainees are moved on into the national dispersal programme, to other detention centres, or even into the state's official prisons.

David Babbs of CARD stresses the importance of today's demo against this background, and with an election coming up. "We can expect to hear a lot of negative rhetoric about refugees, so it's important to mobilise people who are opposed to using refugees as scapegoats", he says. "A large procession through Cambridge will raise awareness of the refugees' plight, force people to confront their racist prejudices, and put pressure on politicians".

The Labour government is committed to a programme of expanding capacity in the detention centre network, and is building new ones. In addition to places in existing centres (1,800 beds), refugees are also held

# Dudley NHS strike

Midlands activists marched through the centre of Birmingham last week, in an attempt to stop major changes to Dudley's healthcare provision.

After gathering in Chamberlain Square last Saturday, they moved to nearby Edgbaston, where they picketed the surgery of local MP and health minister Gisela Stuart.

Six hundred NHS workers, all members of UNISON, have been on strike in Dudley since last August. This followed an announcement by Dudley NHS Trust that they planned to privatise the jobs of healthcare workers under the government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The scheme, which is being backed by the Department of Health, also involves the closure of one hospital and the decommissioning of wards in another.

The strikers say that many trade unions,

together with Dudley Borough Council's ruling Labour group, have been less than supportive. At a Labour Group meeting last summer, councillors refused to send a message of support to UNISON, preferring to work towards what they called a 'social partnership', involving all sides.

But the strikers claim the support of people in the area. "I think the public, if they are aware of what's going on, will support us", says Sharon Aitcheson, one of the strikers. "People that I've spoken to and explained the situation, they are supporting us. So far I haven't had any negative responses at all".

An anarcho-syndicalist who has been supporting the Dudley workers told *Freedom* that a strike was the most powerful weapon they could use. "A strike is the best form of direct action" he said.



## New US 'hate crimes'

A member of the state senate in Oregon, USA, has introduced a Bill that would extend hate crime legislation to cover violence against multinational companies' property by anti-capitalist protesters.

Senator Gary George, a hazelnut farmer from Newberg, says that if people can be singled out for crimes motivated by racism, then they should also be liable for extra punishment when they carry out crimes motivated by hatred of capitalism.

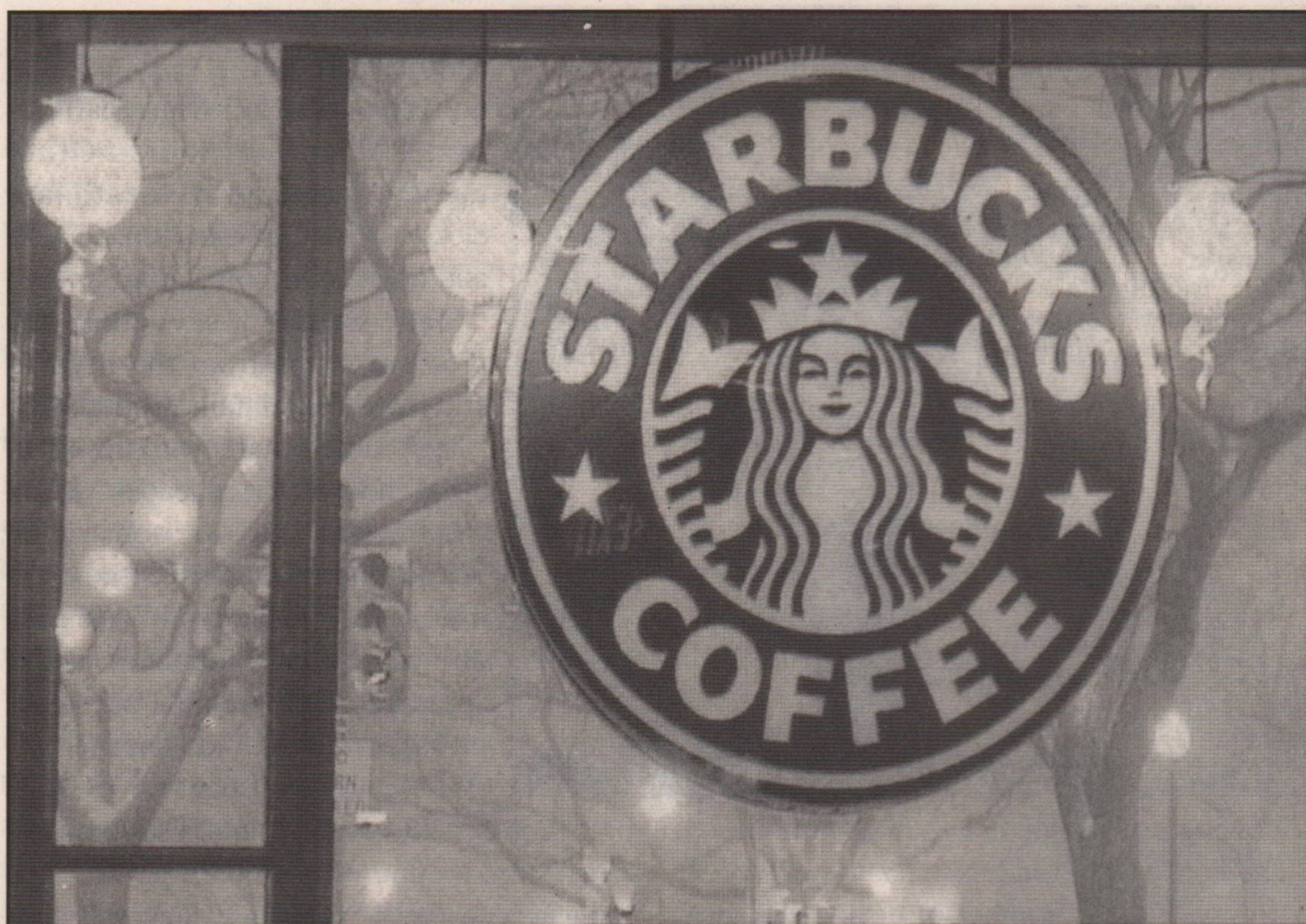
The Bill calls for an extra five years in prison for an offender whose crime is motivated by "a hatred of people who subscribe to a set of political beliefs that support capitalism and the needs of people with respect to their balance with nature".

The Oregon state legislature has passed a series of laws covering more conventionally recognised hate crimes. Those convicted of vandalism and assault can face tougher sentences if their actions were based on the victim's perceived "race, color, religion, national origin or sexual orientation".

But Randy Blazak, an academic from Portland State University, says "these categories are based on our identity, not our ideology, but who we are as a person".

All is not quite as it seems, however. The idea for the new Bill came from Eric Winters, a Portland lawyer and self-styled 'libertarian', who wants to retain capitalism but claims to favour abolishing the state.

George says that his real target is what he



"... a hatred of people who subscribe to a set of political beliefs that support capitalism"

calls "political correctness". He says he wants to discredit the whole notion of "hate crime".

"Even the scriptures tell you not to judge a person's thoughts but their actions, and that's what's always bothered me about this crime".

His attempt to scupper existing laws has drawn criticism from liberals. Blazak argues that judges have always taken into account the motives of convicted people when sentencing them. "The fact is, we punish people for what they are thinking", he says. "We say, 'did you plot to kill this person or

were you drunk?'"

He has also been criticised by other pro-capitalist politicians. Lane Shetterly, another senator, is trying to steer his own law through the legislature in a genuine attempt to crack down on anti-capitalist campaigners. He is hoping George's Bill won't cloud his own efforts. "I'm not sure it's particularly helpful to the Bills we've just started to advance through the house", he moans.

Editorial on page 7

## Nike

Sportswear multinational giant Nike has been embarrassed by a report which details how workers in its Indonesian plants are sexually and verbally harrassed, have limited health care, and are forced to work long hours.

Nike is a member both of the Fair Labor Association, and of the Global Alliance for Workers and Communities, which compiled the report.

Some Nike workers are reported to have been punished for lateness by being forced to run around the factory grounds or by being made to clean toilets. The alternative was instant dismissal.

## Spain

Fourteen prisoners in Spain's Puerto I Prison have been on hunger strike since 19th February, in opposition to the beatings and torture which they say are routine in Spanish prisons.

This followed the beating of prisoner Francisco Maduro Delgado by thirteen screws armed with sticks. After losing consciousness, he received no medical attention.

Four days later, another two prisoners in the jail were beaten up by their guards.

## Holocaust

Multinational computing giant IBM advertises itself as 'the solutions company', so its senior executives have been embarrassed by a new book which charts the role the company played in helping the Nazis with their 'final solution'.

Researcher Edwin Black's new book, *IBM and the Holocaust*, details how IBM ran the German censuses and surveys through its subsidiary, Dehomag, on its unique punchcard tabulators. The infrastructure it set up proved to be crucial in helping the Nazis find and exterminate their victims with a sickening precision.

## Police brutality day

Thursday 15th March is the fifth international day against police brutality.

This began in 1997 as an initiative of Switzerland's Black Flag collective and Montreal's COBP (CitoyenNEs Opposés à



la Brutalité Policière, or Citizens Opposed to Police Brutality).

The date was chosen because it was the anniversary of a notorious case in which Swiss police detained and beat up two children, aged 11 and 12.

The COBP say that the day "shatters the myth of unanimity about the virtues of the police, the positive values promoted especially by television cop shows, Hollywood films and the mass media".

The Anarchist Black Cross Federation, which supports prisoners around the world, says the day is an important one. "Many revolutionaries who organised for freedom and against police brutality are in prison for their efforts. These sisters and brothers were targeted by the authorities for consciously standing up against oppression".

The ABCF go on to say that "the struggles against police brutality as well as the movement to free Political Prisoners and Prisoners

of War are critical to the overall liberation struggle".

In recent years, international events to mark the day have included street theatre, murals, publications, demos, conferences, posterings, workshops, exhibitions, radio and television shows, and cultural events.

## News from Naples

International campaigners against capitalism have been invited to Naples next week, for the third global forum of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This runs from 15th to 17th March.

Following their earlier meetings in Brazil and the USA, politicians and delegates from around forty different states are expected in the southern Italian city, to discuss the modernisation of state administrations and the implications of e-government.

The right to host the meeting, which is being run jointly by the OECD and the World Bank, is thought to have been given to the Italian government as a reward, for their willingness in letting US and British warplanes fly from bases in the country during the Kosovo conflict in 1999.

Opposition to the meeting is being coordinated by the No Global Forum group in Naples. A representative of the group says that because of globalisation, "the rights and

guarantees obtained by the past struggles of workers are being sacrificed at the altar of international competitiveness, flexibility and deregulation. Life and working conditions are becoming more precarious, while wages are falling even lower".

Naples has a long history of resistance to oppression from outside, and a long history of poverty as well. The organisers of the No Global Forum want to draw on both histories in making their protest next week. "We want to connect the opposition to this international meeting with other struggles going on, and we want the OECD forum to become a focus for everyone who is struggling against the effects of globalisation on people and the environment".

Anyone intending to travel to Naples is advised to take their sleeping bag to the information point at the occupied lab SKA in Calata Trinità Maggiore, 15, fifty metres from the Piazza del Gesù. They will then be fixed up with accommodation for their stay.

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March 17, 2001 ~ Gent, Belgium

# The lessons of Paris



Louise Michel

The 18th March marks the 130th anniversary of the Paris Commune. The Commune of 1871 played an important role in the development of both anarchist ideas and the movement and so should be remembered and, equally as important, learnt from.

The Paris Commune was created after France was defeated by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian war. The French government tried to send in troops to regain the Parisian National Guard's cannon to prevent it from falling into the hands of the population. The soldiers refused to fire on the jeering crowd and turned their weapons on their officers. This was 18th March; the Commune had begun.

In the free elections called by the Parisian National Guard, the citizens of Paris elected a council made up of a majority of Jacobins and Republicans and a minority of socialists (mostly Blanquists – authoritarian socialists

– and followers of the anarchist Proudhon). This council proclaimed Paris autonomous and desired to recreate France as a confederation of communes (i.e. communities). Within the Commune, the elected council people were recallable and paid an average wage. In addition, they had to report back to the people who had elected them and were subject to recall by electors if they did not carry out their mandates.

Why this development caught the imagination of anarchists is clear – it has strong similarities with anarchist ideas. In fact, the example of the Paris Commune was in many ways similar to how Bakunin had predicted that a revolution would have to occur – a major city declaring itself autonomous, organising itself, leading by example, and urging the rest of the planet to follow it. The Paris Commune began the process of creating a new society, one organised from the

bottom up. As Bakunin commented at the time: “revolutionary socialism [i.e. anarchism] has just attempted its first striking and practical demonstration in the Paris Commune”

### Free Association

Many anarchists played a role within the Commune – for example Louise Michel, the Réclus brothers, and Eugene Varlin (the latter murdered in the repression afterwards). As for the reforms initiated by the Commune, such as the re-opening of workplaces as co-operatives, anarchists can see their ideas of associated labour beginning to be realised. By May, 43 workplaces were co-operatively run and the Louvre Museum was a munitions factory run by a workers' council. Echoing Proudhon, a meeting of the Mechanics Union and the Association of Metal Workers argued that “our economic emancipation ... can only be obtained through the formation of workers' associations, which alone can transform our position from that of wage earners to that of associates”. They instructed their delegates to the Commune's Commission on Labour Organisation to support the following objectives: “The abolition of the exploitation of man by man, the last vestige of slavery ... The organisation of labour in mutual associations and inalienable capital.”

In this way, they hoped to ensure that “equality must not be an empty word” in the Commune. The Engineers Union voted at a meeting on 23rd of April that since the aim of the Commune should be “economic emancipation” it should “organise labour through associations in which there would be joint responsibility” in order “to suppress the exploitation of man by man”

Thus in the commune the theory of associated production expounded by Proudhon and Bakunin became consciously revolutionary practice.

In the Commune's call for federalism and autonomy, anarchists see their “federative alliance of all working men's associations”, in Bakunin's words, which will “constitute the Commune” and be the basis of “the federation of insurgent associations, communes and province” which will “organise a revolutionary force capable defeating reaction ... [and for] self-defence”. This can be seen by the Commune's ‘Declaration to the French People’ echoing anarchist ideas. It saw the “political unity” of society as being

based on “the voluntary association of all local initiatives, the free and spontaneous concourse of all individual energies for the common aim, the well-being, the liberty and the security of all”. The new society envisioned by the communards was one based on the “absolute autonomy of the Commune ... assuring to each its integral rights and to each Frenchman the full exercise of his aptitudes, as a man, a citizen and a labourer. The autonomy of the Commune will have for its limits only the equal autonomy of all other communes adhering to the contract; their association must ensure the liberty of France”. With its vision of a confederation of communes, Bakunin was correct to assert that the Paris Commune was “a bold, clearly formulated negation of the State”.

Moreover, the Commune's ideas on federation obviously reflected the influence of Proudhon on French radical ideas. Indeed, the Commune's vision of a communal France based on a federation of delegates bound by imperative mandates issued by their electors and subject to recall at any moment echoes Bakunin's and Proudhon's ideas (Proudhon, like Bakunin, had argued in favour of the “implementation of the binding mandate” in 1848 and for federation of communes). Thus both economically and politically the Paris Commune was heavily influenced by anarchist ideas.

### Anarchists and the Commune

But for anarchists the Commune did not go far enough. It did not abolish the state within the Commune, as it had abolished it beyond it. The Communards organised themselves “in a Jacobin manner” (to use Bakunin's cutting term). They did not organise “solely from the bottom upwards, by free association or free federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal.” By using statist forms, the Commune would inevitably clash with those who had elected it.

Therefore the Paris Commune did not “break with the tradition of the State, of representative government, and it did not attempt to achieve within the Commune that organisation from the simple to the complex it inaugurated by proclaiming the independence and free federation of the Communes”. In other words, “if no central government was needed to rule the independent Communes, if the national Government is thrown overboard and national unity is obtained by free federation, then a central municipal Government becomes equally useless and noxious. The same federative principle would do within the Commune”

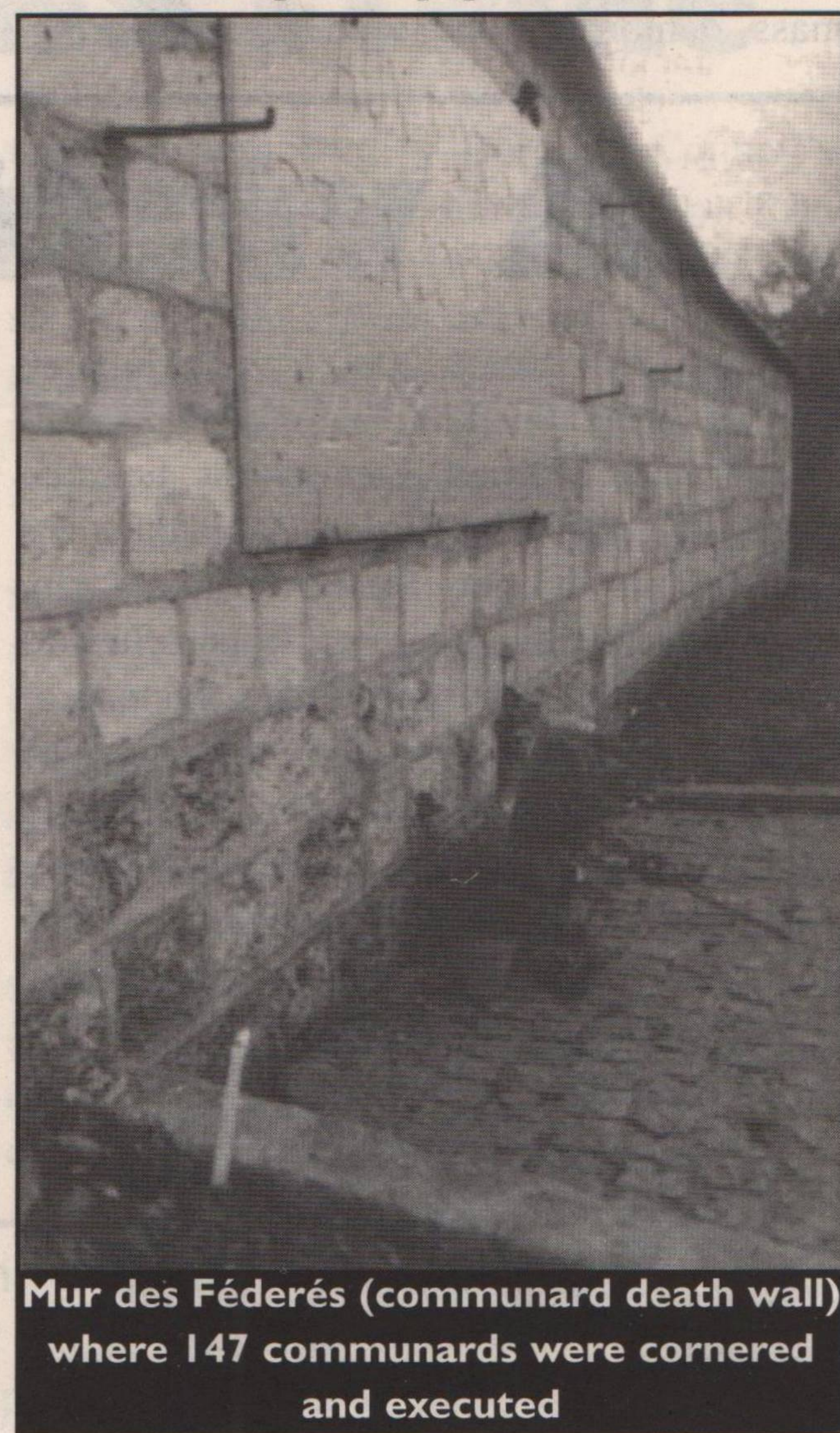
Instead of abolishing the state within the commune by organising federations of directly democratic mass assemblies, like the Parisian ‘sections’ of the revolution of 1789-93 (which Kropotkin wrote about in his *Great French Revolution*), the Paris Commune kept representative government and suffered for it. “Instead of acting for themselves ... the people, confiding in their governors, entrusted them the charge of taking the initiative. This was the first consequence of the inevitable result of elections.” The council soon became “the greatest obstacle to the revolution” thus proving the “political axiom that a government cannot be revolutionary”

Kropotkin had lambasted those who had argued “Let us first make sure of victory, and then see what can be done.” His comments are worth quoting at length: “Make sure of victory! As if there was any way of

transforming society into a free commune without laying hands upon property!

As if there were any way of defeating the enemy so long as the great mass of the people is not directly interested in the triumph of the revolution, in witnessing the arrival of material, moral and intellectual well-being for all! They sought to consolidate the Commune first of all while postponing the social revolution for later on, while the only effective way of proceeding was to consolidate the Commune by the social revolution!”

In addition, the Commune's attempts at economic reform did not go far enough, making no attempt to turn all workplaces into co-operatives (i.e. to expropriate capital) and forming associations of these co-operatives to co-ordinate and support each other's economic activities. As the city was under constant siege by the French army, it is understandable that the Communards had other things on their minds. However, for Kropotkin such a position was a disaster: “They treated the economic question as a secondary one, which would be attended to later on, after the triumph of the Commune ... But the crushing defeat which soon followed, and the blood-thirsty revenge taken by the middle class, proved once more that the triumph of a popular Commune was



Mur des Fédérés (communard death wall) where 147 communards were cornered and executed

materially impossible without a parallel triumph of the people in the economic field”

For anarchists, the lessons of the Paris Commune were threefold. Firstly, a decentralised confederation of communities is the necessary political form of a free society. Secondly, “there is no more reason for a government inside a Commune than for government above the Commune”, as Kropotkin said. This means that an anarchist community will be based on a confederation of neighbourhood and workplace assemblies freely co-operating together. Thirdly, it is critically important to unify political and economic revolutions into a social revolution. “They tried to consolidate the Commune first and put off the social revolution until later, whereas the only way to proceed was to consolidate the Commune by means of the social revolution!”

Iain McKay

For more anarchist perspectives on the Paris Commune see Kropotkin's essay ‘Revolutionary Government’ in *The Raven* number 14 (£3.00\*) and Bakunin's *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* (£1.00\*).

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## A communist turned comedian

According to Chris Harman of the SWP ('Street fighter turned salesman' in *Socialist Review*, no. 249), we can learn a lot from the history of Germany's foreign minister Joschka Fischer. The street fighter turned Green can be seen as a warning for certain elements of the 'new anti-capitalist movements'. Ironically, he directs his comments to the Black Bloc when, in fact, they should be applied to his own party.

He argues, correctly, that radicals like Fischer "found in practice that street fighting by an isolated minority could not budge German capitalism". This isolation, Harman argues, lead to some of the radicals embracing terrorism (as in Red Army Faction) and others to become Green Party parliamentary candidates. Once "they found that they could get no more than about 5% of the vote" the Greens transformed and the 'realists' argued that they must embrace hierarchical organisation, tone down their politics and so gain more votes. The net effect, of course, was collaboration with the very system they had originally organised to transform.

A sad tale. Unfortunately, as analogies go, it hardly supports the politics of the SWP. While inflicting a history lesson on us, he seems incapable of understanding it. After all, the SWP are now urging us, as the Greens did, to combine direct action and mass demonstrations with electioneering.

The degeneration of the Marxist Social Democrats is likewise unmentioned. They, following Marx and Engels, had used elections to spread their message into "the organised working class". The result? Like the Greens nearly a century later, a sorry story of reformism, betrayal and bureaucracy.

Not that anarchists were surprised. Harman's history lesson simply confirmed Kropotkin's argument that "in proportion as the socialists become a power in the present bourgeois society and State, their socialism must die out". Just as the experience of Social Democracy confirmed it. And, undoubtedly, the experience of the current Socialist Alliance's will confirm it. The SWP will be working within the capitalist state, trying to influence it from within and, by necessity, subject to the same institutional pressures that generated reformist tendencies in the Social Democrats and Greens. Unless, of course, the SWP argue that it is the *ideas* of the party leaders that are the decisive factor rather than the social environment in which they operate. But, unfortunately, such a position would be pure idealism.

Anarchists are well aware of the importance of (in Harman's words) carrying "political argument into the organised working class" (and disorganised, of course). As Kropotkin argued, "to make the revolution, the mass of workers will have to organise themselves.

Resistance and the strike are excellent means of organisation for doing this". He stressed that "the Anarchists have always advised taking an active part in those workers' organisations which carry on the *direct* struggle of Labour against Capital and its protector, the State". This "better than any other indirect means, permits the worker to obtain some temporary improvements in the present conditions of work, while it opens his eyes to the evil done by Capitalism and the State that supports it, and wakes up his thoughts concerning the possibility of organising consumption, production, and exchange without the intervention of the capitalist and the State."

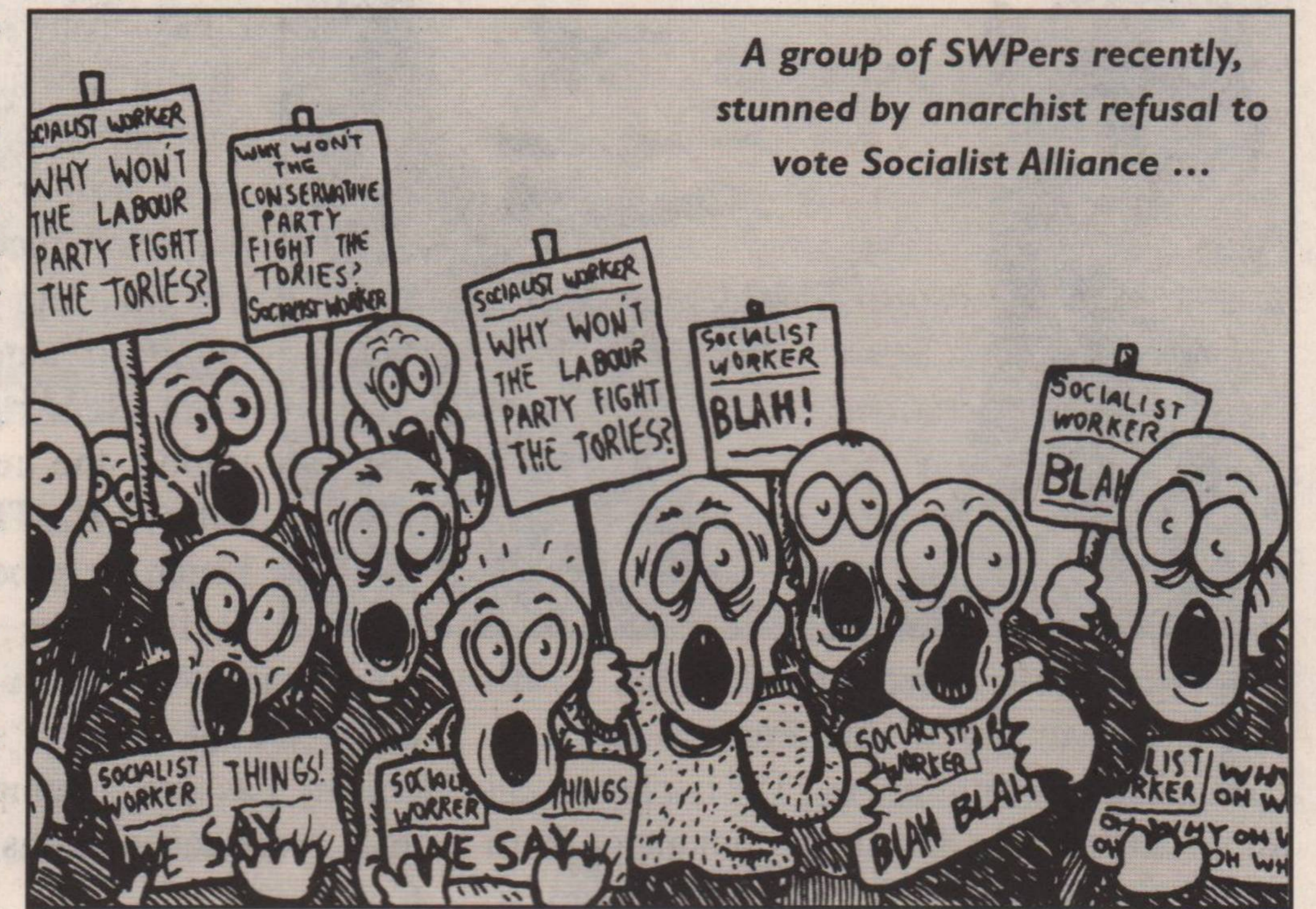
Harman is hardly saying anything which anarchists had not been arguing for over a hundred years. We are well aware that demonstrations are not enough and that we need to organise in our communities and workplaces to challenge and overcome the state and capitalism.

Thus, Harman

creates a straw man with which to argue with. Anarchists, whether in the 'Black Bloc' or not, are well aware that an anarchist revolution will be a mass revolution and so are well aware of the importance of "involving the mass of working [class] people". The *real* lesson of the history of Joschka Fischer is lost on Harman – electioneering, even 'socialist' and 'radical' electioneering, inevitably results in betrayal. It happened to the German Greens. It happened to the 'revolutionary' Marxists of the Social Democracy. And yet the SWP urge us to join them at the ballot box! Incredible.

As a certain German once said, history repeats itself, first time as tragedy, second time as farce.

Iain McKay



## A victim of the prison project

On 21st March 2000 Zahid Mubarek was clubbed into a coma by his cell-mate, Robert Stewart, at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution. Zahid died as a result of his injuries. Stewart battered him eleven times with a table leg. Robert Stewart was a racist psychopath with a history of violence and self-harm. On the night he killed Zahid he wrote six letters, and signed them all with a swastika. In a letter written a month before the killing – and intercepted by the prison authorities – Stewart had written:



Zahid Mubarek

"If I don't get bail on the 7th I'll take extreme measures to get shipped out. I'll kill me fucking pad mate if I have to. Bleach me sheets and pillowcases white, make myself a Ku Klux Klan suit and walk out of me pad holding a flaming cross."

Zahid Mubarek's death is, as has been recognised, testament to the 'institutional racism' of the prison service. The screws at Feltham knew Stewart's views – and banged him up with Zahid Mubarek regardless. Racism, we should recognise, is essential to the functioning of the modern-day penal system. It is the case that a large number of

POA members hold explicitly racist views, and that National Front branches are known to have been established by POA members within Brixton and Wandsworth prisons, among others. It is also the case that all of this has been known to the Home Office since at least 1985, when it suppressed an earlier report into racism in prison. It is not though simply a matter of individual POA members holding racist views, and prison management failing to challenge them. With a prison population of 65,000 and rising, playing off black prisoners against white (as for instance, in Winson Green in Birmingham, where screws routinely spread rumours that black prisoners on particular wings are rapists, then stand back and watch the violence that results) is a management strategy in itself, a means of dividing an other wise potentially disruptive prison population. What gets neglected in all the reporting of the Mubarek killing is that the jail was on a 23-hour lock-up when Zahid was killed, and that Stewart had also written out that the 23-hour bang-up was driving him 'mad'. During Stewart's trial, prisoners at Feltham rioted over the 23-hour bang-up. The protest went unreported. Stewart was never medically screened at Feltham, or seen by a psychiatrist. In August, the former deputy governor of Feltham resigned in disgust at conditions there, which he described as "still more suitable for a Dickens novel than the 21st century."

Zahid Mubarek was in Feltham because he had been sentenced to ninety days' imprisonment for shoplifting £6 of razor blades and 'interfering with a motor vehicle' – his first offence!

Paul Boateng has stated that he accepts the prison system is 'institutionally racist'. He 'regrets' the death of Zahid Mubarek. New Labour's ultimate response though is – far from seeking to ensure such circumstances are never replicated – to move deliberately to bring about more such tragedies. Part I of the recently published Criminal Justice and Police Bill contains "provisions for combating crime

and disorder" which are in effect, the bracketing of a range of criminal offences as 'penalty offences', i.e. ones where a fixed penalty can be paid or the matter set down for trial. Thus, not only will those targeted now run the risk of being tried for such threats to 'public order' as being drunk in a public place, throwing fireworks in a public thoroughfare, trespassing on a railway, buying or attempting to buy alcohol for/while under 18, consumption of alcohol in a designated public place, and threatening, abusive or insulting words or disorderly behaviour – they will also run the risk of jail for fine default for such 'crimes' too. New Labour is seeking to reverse the trend away from jailing large numbers of people for whom a custodial sentence was thought inappropriate who end up jailed for fine default – by increasing the number of fines issued and pushing the courts to be more ruthless in their enforcement. (The Bill also contains provision for the seizure of passports and imposition of travel restrictions on anyone convicted of drug trafficking offences with a sentence of four or more years imposed – welcome to the New Labour war on drugs – disclosure of information by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise for the purposes of any criminal investigation, extension of search and seizure powers such that a 'constable' or relevant person with warrant could, under the Bill, seize anything which he believes may be or may contain something for which he is authorised to search.)

So, Martin Neary is ready to resign over the condition of UK jails and Lord Woolf thinks most of those banged up could be safely released, but 'dirty' Jack Straw insists that the prison population might need to rise still further. If we look back twenty years we might find the reason why. The uprisings in Brixton, St Pauls, Toxteth, Southall, Moss Side, of summer 1981 had, by the weekend of 10th to 12th July spread to over thirty towns and cities, and represented, as Lee

Bridges noted at the time, "a revolt against persistent police harassment ... and a rejection by youth, both black and white, of a future of mass unemployment and social and environmental degradation" (*Race and Class*, vol 23, 1981/82). The state's response was the institution of measures of 'authoritarian democracy' (as Statewatch's Tony Bunyan has described them) – an increasing militarisation of policing, and incarceration moving to the foreground of the criminal justice system, with a consequent rise in the prison population. Prison, as Michel Foucault once put it, represents a "pedagogy of work" – a site for the imposition of the discipline of labour on the workless. With New Labour offering mass employment at poverty-level wages as an alternative to mass unemployment, such disciplinary strategies become more essential as a means of securing the docility of those both in low-paid work and without work. As the criminologist Roger Matthews has explained "inside the prison, prison labour performs a number of functions. It provides goods and is a source of revenue. It provides training and the possibility of rehabilitation through work. It provides a vehicle for instilling time and work discipline in those who were unable or unwilling to find proper paid employment, and is a mechanism of control, providing a way of ordering time and keeping prisoners occupied" (*Doing Time*, Palgrave, 1999).

In any second term, a rising prison population will become ever-more essential to New Labour's project of a hi-tech, low wage economy. Suicide, self-harm and the death of young kids like Zahid Mubarek are seen as a price worth paying to get a compliant labour force and keep the Party's backers in profit.

Nick S.

The National Civil Rights Movement is campaigning for a public inquiry into the death of Zahid Mubarek, and can be contacted at 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA. Telephone: 020 8843 2333.





## The Anarchist Alternative

### Presidents and people

**R**obert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe ever since its official independence from Britain, is in Europe this week to meet with his counterparts in France and Belgium, and with the European Development Commissioner in Brussels. He will not be visiting Britain, where the government plainly disapproves of him and hopes that he will be deposed by his political rival when the presidential elections are held in a few months' time.

Although we are asked to suppose that Mugabe is solely responsible for the occupation of farmland by 'war veterans', it seems more likely that he is trying to cling onto power by running ahead of the crowd.

What seems to have happened is that a mass of poor and hopeless people (and nearly 70% of Zimbabwe's population works in agriculture), in the conditions of a collapsing economy, have occupied farmland which is admitted often to be of little value, with the intention of growing food for themselves.

Mugabe's crime, in the eyes of the world, has been to approve of the seizure of land without compensation and to purge the judiciary so that nobody can say the land occupations are illegal.

And what does the opposition have to offer? The same British press which is demonising Mugabe is currently eulogising his main opponent, Morgan Tsvangirai, but it can only tell us that his wife, unlike Mrs Mugabe, doesn't have an account at Harrods. What, if elected, can he do but accept the status quo?

The only interest the British government has in Zimbabwe is as a source of minerals and cash crops, such as tobacco. This is, after all, why Rhodesia (as Zimbabwe used to be called) was occupied by the British over a century ago.

When independence was due to be granted to the African people in 1965, a white farmer called Ian Smith, with overwhelming support from white voters (black people couldn't vote), declared independence. As a result Britain imposed sanctions, including an oil embargo. The British government of Harold Wilson came under pressure to use force to depose Smith, both from other African states and from liberal elements in Britain, where the Archbishop of Canterbury said that the forcible overthrow of Smith's government would have the support of Christians.

In the event, not only was no force used but we now know that oil had been reaching Rhodesia through South Africa, with the connivance of subsequent Conservative and Labour governments. The situation dragged on until 1980, when only civil war brought about independence.

Mugabe, a member of the majority Shona, brought the rival Ndebele into the government, and one might have thought that he would be given credit at least for ensuring stability for the country. But it now seems that, having served his purpose, he is to be dropped.

The mess that Zimbabwe is in today is the end result of British colonialism, and nobody has any interest in the fate of the ordinary African people.

The squatters may learn that they will gain nothing by replacing one president by another, and we should learn that neither 'African socialism' nor 'free market' policies can aid the tottering economies of African states, which can only be assisted by the rejection of international capitalism.

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## Meetings & Events

### London Anarchist Forum

**9th March** Women and Anarchy (symposium)

**16th March** Talk cancelled – replacement to be announced

**23rd March** The Poverty of Workerism (Devil's Advocate: Steve Ash)

**30th March** Why I am an Anarchist (Speaker: Peter Neville)

The weekly discussion forum of the London anarchist movement now in its eighteenth year. Every Friday from 8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. For more information see: [www.trak.to/LAF](http://www.trak.to/LAF) or [LAF@anarchic.co.uk](mailto:LAF@anarchic.co.uk)

### Reclaim the Streets

General information on RTS: 020 7281 4621 or [rts@gn.apc.org](mailto:rts@gn.apc.org)

**London meeting every Tuesday at 7pm**

(check RTS answerphone for venue)

For info on RTS subscribe to [allsorts@gn.apc.org](mailto:allsorts@gn.apc.org) specifying 'subscribe RTS only'.

To receive info on general direct action, etc., stuff subscribe to [allsorts@gn.apc.org](mailto:allsorts@gn.apc.org) specifying 'subscribe allsorts'. To have your news action reports, etc., sent out to hundreds of like-minded people all over the country (and bear in mind probably cops too) e-mail it to [allsorts@gn.apc.org](mailto:allsorts@gn.apc.org)

**Reclaim the Streets, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY**

[www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

### Close Oakington Detention Centre

**Demonstration and Rally**

**Saturday 10th March**

*assemble at 12.30pm, Parker's Piece, Cambridge city centre*

Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention (CARD)

[card@zensearch.net](mailto:card@zensearch.net)

### Belgian Anarchist Bookfair

**17th March 2001**

e-mail [aboekenbeurs@hotmail.com](mailto:aboekenbeurs@hotmail.com) for details

### Anarchist Federation Day School

**Saturday 7th April from 10am to 5pm**

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn

*£2 waged, free or donation unwaged, disabled access*

Anarchist Federation, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

e-mail [anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com](mailto:anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com)

### We're planning Human Rights as our theme for International Labour Day (Mayday) 2001

We are planning and organising events for the day now, and we'd welcome suggestions, help, comments and co-operation from your group.

Perhaps you would like to get involved. What do you and your members think.

Contact us at:

Lancaster & Morecambe Trade Union Council, 178a Lancaster Road, Morecambe

Tel/Fax: 01524 413600

### Red Rambles 2001

Red Rambles walks and rambles for Radicals, Libertarians, Anarchists, Greens, Socialists, Syndicalists, et al. See <http://members.tripod.co.uk/ainema/index-2.html>

**Mayday bank holiday 7th May 2001**

Meet at 12 noon outside Hurt Arms Hotel, Ambergate, Derbyshire, on the A6 road (also on bus route R1 for Nottingham to Manchester, 100 yards from Ambergate railway station) for a short and easy walk four miles in length through Shining Cliff Woods. Walk concludes with a Mayday picnic, so bring food and drink to share, musical instruments, blankets to sit on, etc. Walk leader Jonathan.

Telephone 07939 440548 / 01773 827513 or e-mail [ain@ziplip.com](mailto:ain@ziplip.com)