

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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11th August 2001

50p



Farrakhan ban lifted

Louis Farrakhan, whose famous respect for Adolf Hitler is a lesser eccentricity, was last week granted permission to visit the UK by a British court. Government ministers immediately announced their intention to appeal, saying that a visit by the religious leader could seriously threaten what they called 'racial harmony'. Various liberal groups were quick to give their support

to the government's attempts, in view of Farrakhan's attacks on Judaism as a 'dirty religion' and his madcap theories of human development.

Farrakhan is certainly eccentric and many of his opinions are obnoxious. But should he be banned? We say no. Other dangerous eccentrics are allowed in. Dammit, every four years a dangerous eccentric gets to be prime minister.

Surely the problem couldn't possibly be that Farrakhan is black?

Let him come and spout his nonsense. Our problem isn't with one man, whatever he says, but with all those others who do what he tells them because he is boss. To tackle this problem, of obedience and submission, is the anarchist project. To ban Farrakhan is to look for solutions in the wrong place.

anarchist fortnightly

Freedom

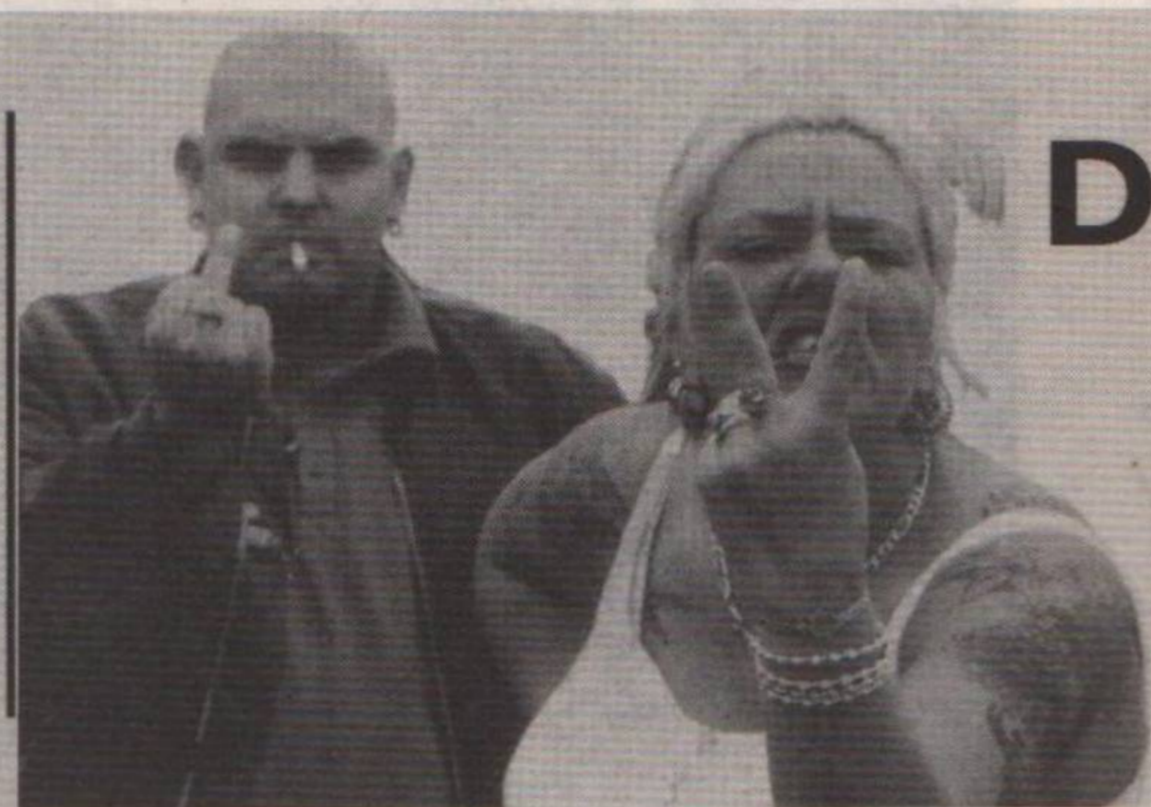
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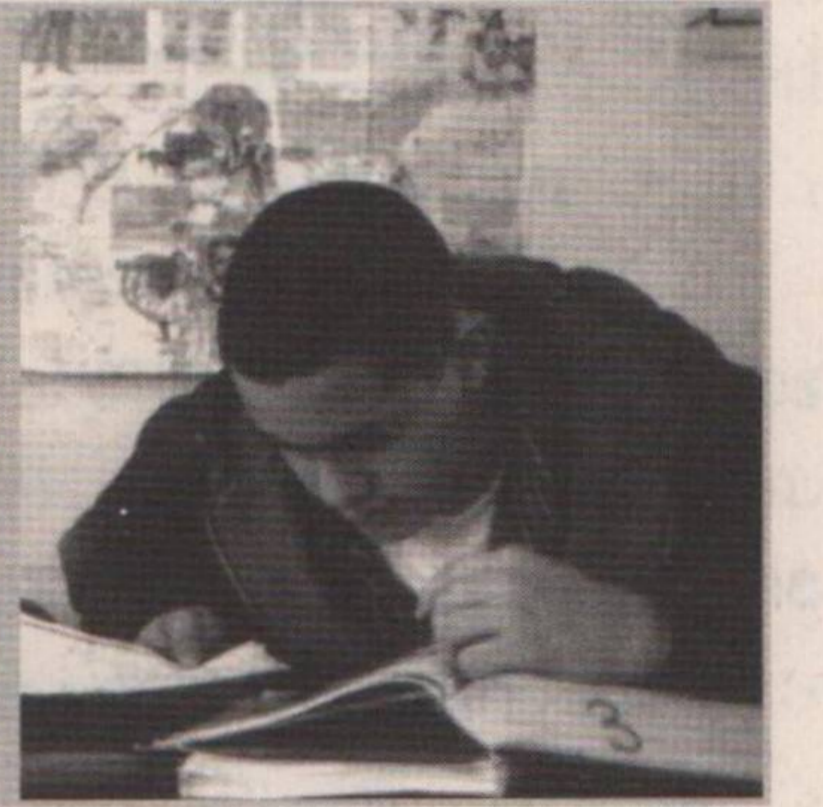
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**GENOA
CONTINUED**
page 3



**DEFEATING
FASCISM**
page 4



**LIB ED
IN CHICAGO**
page 6

Genoa: the anger continues

A campaign has been launched to turn Monday 20th August into an international day of action against capitalism, one month after the killing of Carlo Giuliani in Genoa.

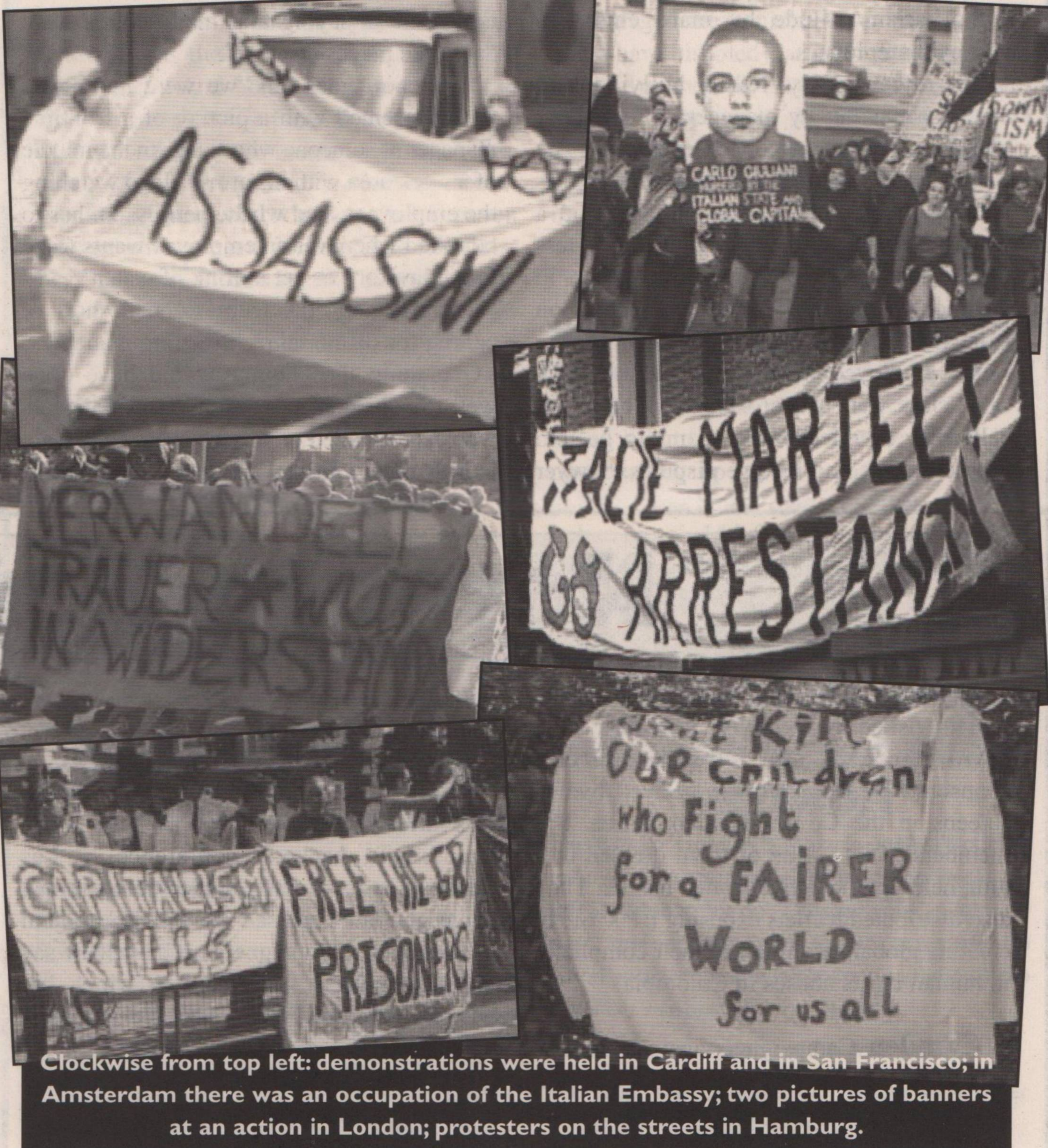
One activist who took part in the call said, "everyday, people who fight for a better life are tortured and killed all round the world. The western democracies are not an exception. If the ruling class faces effective resistance, they respond with police terror. This repression makes it clear that they do not act in the name of the people, but to maintain the structures of oppression".

Carlo, 23, was one of over 100,000 people who demonstrated at the G8 summit, held in the Italian city in July. He was shot dead by a member of the paramilitary carabinieri and then his body was run over by a police van.

The call for a global action day was made last week as protests over the death continued around the world. These have now taken place in over 140 cities in Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. At the same time, anarchist groups in many countries were publishing declarations and position statements, as attempts were made to plot the future course of the anti-capitalist movement.

On 2nd August, the Italian government of media boss Silvio Berlusconi yielded to the international outcry, when three senior cops were removed from their posts. But the sackings were roundly criticised by activists for being a political manoeuvre, designed to save the job of interior minister Claudio Scajola.

"This just serves to save the conscience of the minister and the G8", said Luca Casarini, of the Tutte Bianchi anti-capitalist group. "It doesn't mean anything".



Clockwise from top left: demonstrations were held in Cardiff and in San Francisco; in Amsterdam there was an occupation of the Italian Embassy; two pictures of banners at an action in London; protesters on the streets in Hamburg.

Pressure has been building on Berlusconi, as more photographic, video and eyewitness evidence of police brutality has come to light.

Within days of Carlo's death, an anonymous cop was quoted in Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, describing the treatment of

prisoners held in the Bolzaneto jail. His description of beatings and rape threats, of protesters being refused permission to use toilets and of being forced to sing fascist songs, matched accounts of people who had been detained there.

He said that on 16th July, a special squad of prison police had moved into Bolzaneto and set up a special jail within a jail, specifically for G8 protesters. On arrival at the unit over the following week, detainees were lined up and their heads beaten against walls. Some of them were pissed on. His account corroborated that of prisoners such as Alfonso de Munno, arrested on the afternoon of 22nd July, who said that he had been forced to learn fascist songs by heart.

Bourgeois politicians in Italy have joined in the criticisms, labelling the abuses as 'fascist'. However, bosses from other G8 states have refused to condemn police violence.

At the start of this week, 51 prisoners were still being held by the Italian state, while a further ninety people had been deported. In addition, an unknown number of demonstrators were still missing, but Italian officials were still refusing to accept responsibility for their disappearance. Foreign minister Renato Ruggiero suggested that they had probably "gone to the seaside" for a holiday.

Many activists have now begun to describe missing protesters *desaparecidos*, a reference to those who disappeared during Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s and '80s.

Please mail details of any actions planned for 20th August to genovalibre@yahoo.com

Editorial on page 7

Demonstrations across Britain

There have been solidarity demonstrations in major cities throughout Britain. Up to three hundred people gathered outside the Italian embassy in London on 28th July. They were soon joined by more protesters and a samba band, who had marched from an earlier demo at the US embassy against Bush's rejection of the Kyoto treaty.

Activists were wary because of the police response to another solidarity protest at the same place, on 22nd July. On that occasion, cops had used section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act to hold around a hundred protesters within a cordoned area, as they had done on Mayday. But this time, senior cops assured demonstrators that section 60 would

not be used, and the afternoon passed off without any violence from police. Banners read 'murdered for wanting a better world' and 'another world is possible'. A wreath was placed by the embassy door.

At the same time, also on Oxford Street, ten members of the Wombles carried out their own action at the Benetton store. Several went inside to hand out leaflets, while others outside unfurled a banner which

"One week ago, I was kidnapped and tortured by the Italian police and the Italian state for the crime of demonstrating against the G8. One of the many reasons I went to Genoa was because of climate change and the refusal of the leaders of the world's richest countries to take any form of social responsibility. This picket of the Italian embassy is to protest against the torture and the brutality endured by the anti-G8 demonstrators, and to show that the movement is strong and powerful. I am not intimidated, I am not scared, despite what happened to me - I am strengthened"

Norman Blair, Genoa detainee, speaking outside the Italian embassy on 28th July 2001

said, 'castrate G8'. There were no arrests.

The Italian embassy was visited again in the early hours of 31st July, when paint was thrown over the front of the building. Although the area is heavily policed, nobody was arrested. The paint was removed later in the day.

Since Carlo Giuliani's death, protests have also been held outside Italian consulates in other cities, including Edinburgh, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea.

In Manchester, the consular offices were occupied on 23rd July. Leaflets were distributed, walls were covered with graffiti, and the fire alarm was set off, causing the building to be evacuated. Other activists handed out leaflets on the street outside.

Freedom anarchist fortnightly

"If some of the protesters choose to use violence it is because they have read some history books and know that no cause has ever got noticed which has not contained at an early stage some form of street violence."

A.N. Wilson commenting on the violence at Genoa's G8 summit, London's *Evening Standard*, 23rd July 2001

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'Macho' bosses to blame

A wave of industrial unrest has swept Royal Mail over the last couple of years. This erupted in a massive walk-out earlier this year, and an enquiry into industrial relations within the industry was called for by rank and file members of the Communications Workers Union (CWU) as a condition for returning to work.

Five areas were chosen to become part of the investigation – Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool, Watford and Oxford, all seen to be 'failing areas' in industrial relations.

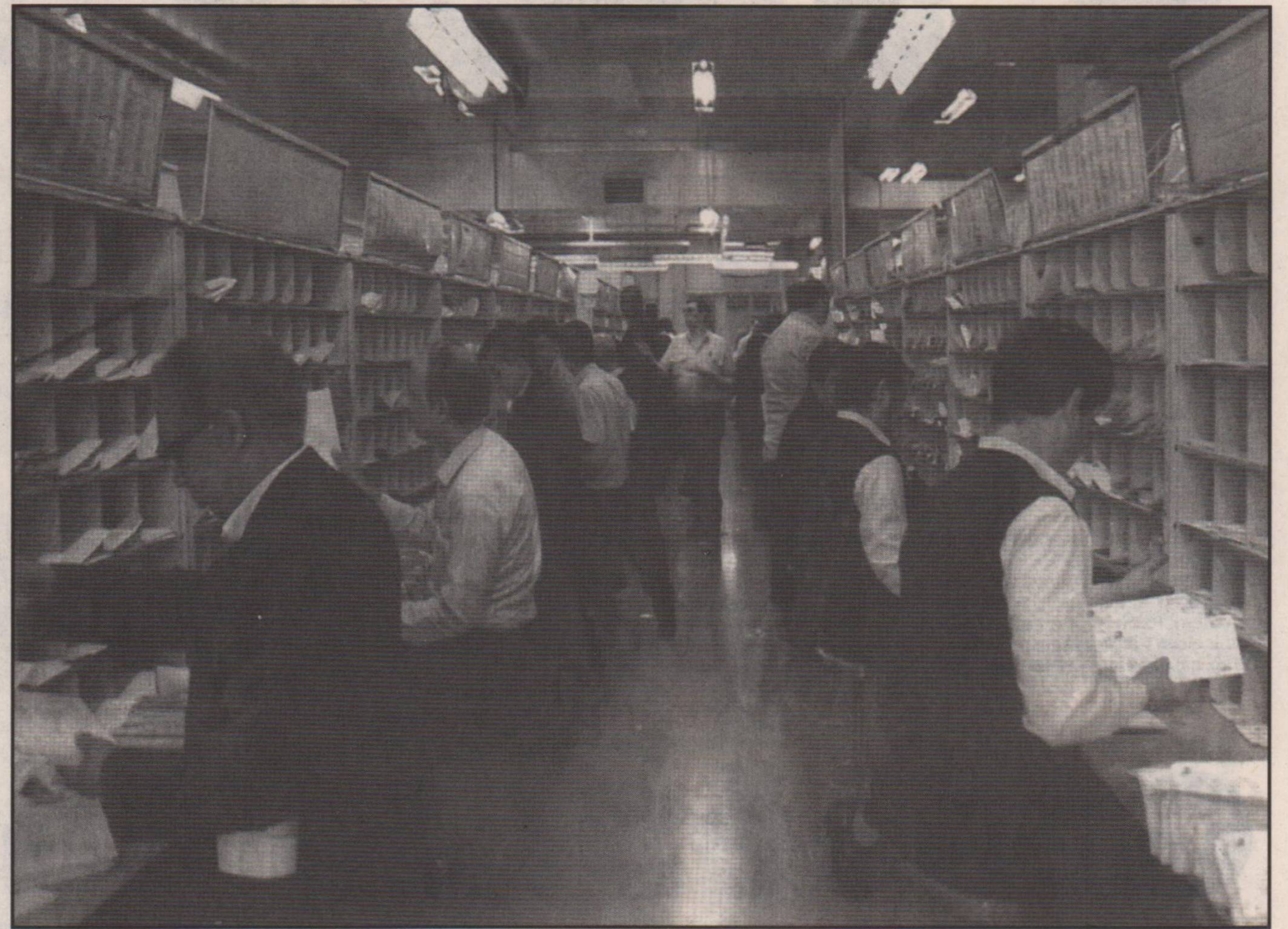
The enquiry was headed by Tom Sawyer, former general secretary of the Labour Party and, in true Labour style, now Lord Sawyer.

The independent review body has now made its report public, and although critical of what it sees as the union's 'hardline' approach, firmly blames management for the number of strikes which have taken place in recent years.

Blame for the strikes, which have crippled the postal service, is laid at the door of an authoritarian attitude by management to low-paid employees.

The review body found bullying and macho behaviour by managers to be rife at all levels, with no concept of team work. The CWU have long rejected 'teamworking' as nothing more than window-dressing and a way to squeeze more work out of staff in less time. The idea that workers and managers in any industry can have something in common is laughable.

One employee interviewed by the team said 'class war' had broken out. The report called for troubleshooting teams to go into problem areas and resolve disputes. Sawyer



is quoted as saying that mail centres were "not nice places to work".

The report goes on, "we were more than once presented with a picture of a frontline manager as someone who stands in the middle of a work area with his arms folded watching the employees, and whose permission has to be asked whenever an employee wants to go to the lavatory or get a drink of water".

Unfortunately, the team stopped short of calling for dismissal of offending managers.

One thing the enquiry would have done well to consider is the number of managers who can be called on to scab every time there is a dispute. During one dispute in Cardiff,

150 were drafted in. This raises the question, what are they doing for the rest of the time when there is no strike to break? Do Royal Mail employ a pool of managers, who do nothing but sit on their backsides until a dispute breaks out?

Perhaps they do, as *The Courier* management mouthpiece recently reported each Royal Mail employee is making only £7 per week profit for the company's bosses.

Royal Mail said it needed time to consider the details of the report. Don't leave it too long, chaps, Christmas is just four months away.

Liverpool Postie

News in Brief

• **London** Activists from Reclaim the Streets visited the opera on 30th July, for a performance of the ballet *Swan Lake* sponsored by BP. This was relayed live to screens in the Covent Garden piazza. Six members of RTS, one of them dressed in a tutu, held up a 'bye bye planet' banner. They also distributed leaflets exposing BP's role in creating global warming and their complicity in human rights abuses in Colombia.

• **Camden** Campaigners against the new Terrorism Act held a meeting at Camden Town Hall on 31st July, to hear various speakers describe the effects of the new law on themselves and others.

The meeting was organised by the Campaign against Criminalising Communities (CACC), a coalition of groups working against the Act.

Activists from within the Kurdish, Tamil, Algerian and Sikh community described the ways in which their own activities against repressive regimes had been affected. There was general agreement that the legislation was part of an international trend towards suppressing opposition.

So far, 21 groups have been outlawed under the Act. The CACC says it aims to oppose the present bans, as well as demanding the repeal of the law itself.

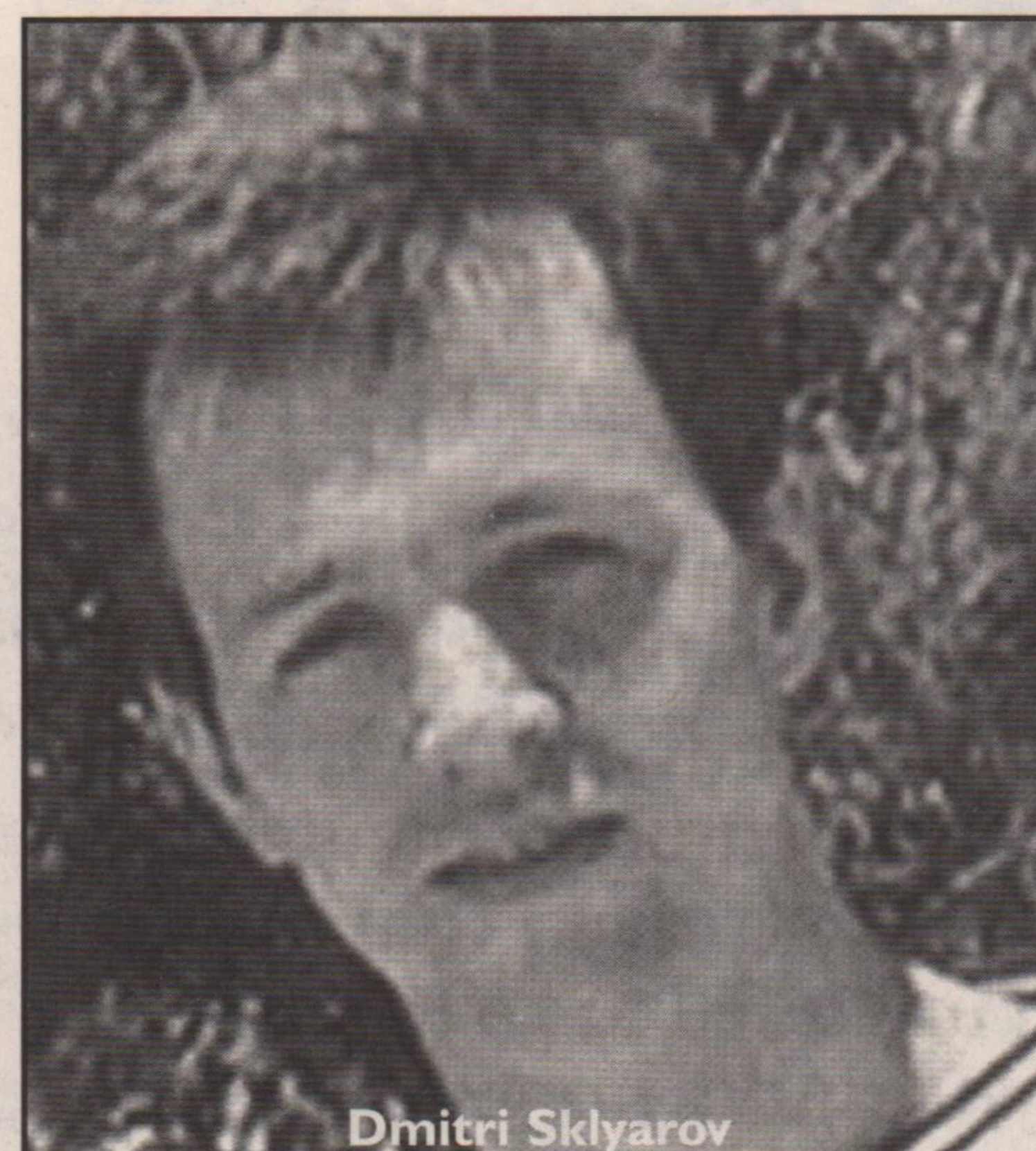
The CACC have arranged a meeting for those interested in actively opposing the Act. This will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London at 7pm on Monday 20th August. Contact 020-7586 5892 or see www.cacc.org.uk

• **London/Edinburgh** Protesters on behalf of Russian hacker Dmitri Sklyarov gathered outside the US embassy in London's

Grosvenor Square on 3rd August. At the same time, other demonstrators held a protest in Edinburgh's Princes Street.

Dmitri, a computing student from Moscow, was arrested by the FBI in July while attending a hackers' conference in Las Vegas. His arrest came under controversial copyright laws, passed by the US federal government. Campaigners on his behalf say the case reveals the extent to which big business dictates what laws governments pass. Dmitri was arrested after software giant Adobe complained that he had created a program designed to bypass copyright protection on one of its products.

The UK protests followed demonstrations in eighteen US cities. These forced Adobe to drop its demands for Dmitri's prosecution, and the company has now begun to call for his release instead. But the decision on whether to prosecute lies with the US attorney-general, and officials have given no sign that they intend to back down.



Dmitri Sklyarov

• **Liverpool** Merseyside activists staged a demonstration outside HMP Liverpool last week, in solidarity with asylum seekers imprisoned there.

Around seventy people attended the demo on Saturday 4th August, including a number who had travelled by minibus from Hull. One of these, himself an asylum-seeker, addressed the protesters.

Refugees are held in several prisons around the country, pending processing of their asylum claims. Despite their official status as 'remand prisoners', they say they are frequently locked up 23 hours a day, denied access to education facilities and forced to wear prison uniform. The Liverpool detainees began their own protest at the end of July, when several of them went on hunger strike.

For breaking news on the struggles of Liverpool refugees, see www.labournet.net

• **West Sussex** Students in Worthing's schools are reported to be planning an action at the end of next month, in protest against increasing CCTV surveillance of pupils. According to *The Pork-Bolter*, the town's community news-sheet, morning break on Friday 28th September has been chosen as the time for a protest walkout. This follows a similar action at a Horsham secondary school on 27th June. On that occasion, over 100 students at Tanbridge School left their lessons.

One Horsham student told the *West Sussex County Times* (29th June), "there is no privacy. We cannot go anywhere without being watched. We've just had enough of them". Education officials from West Sussex County Council denied that the walkout had occurred.

Were the black bloc all they seemed?

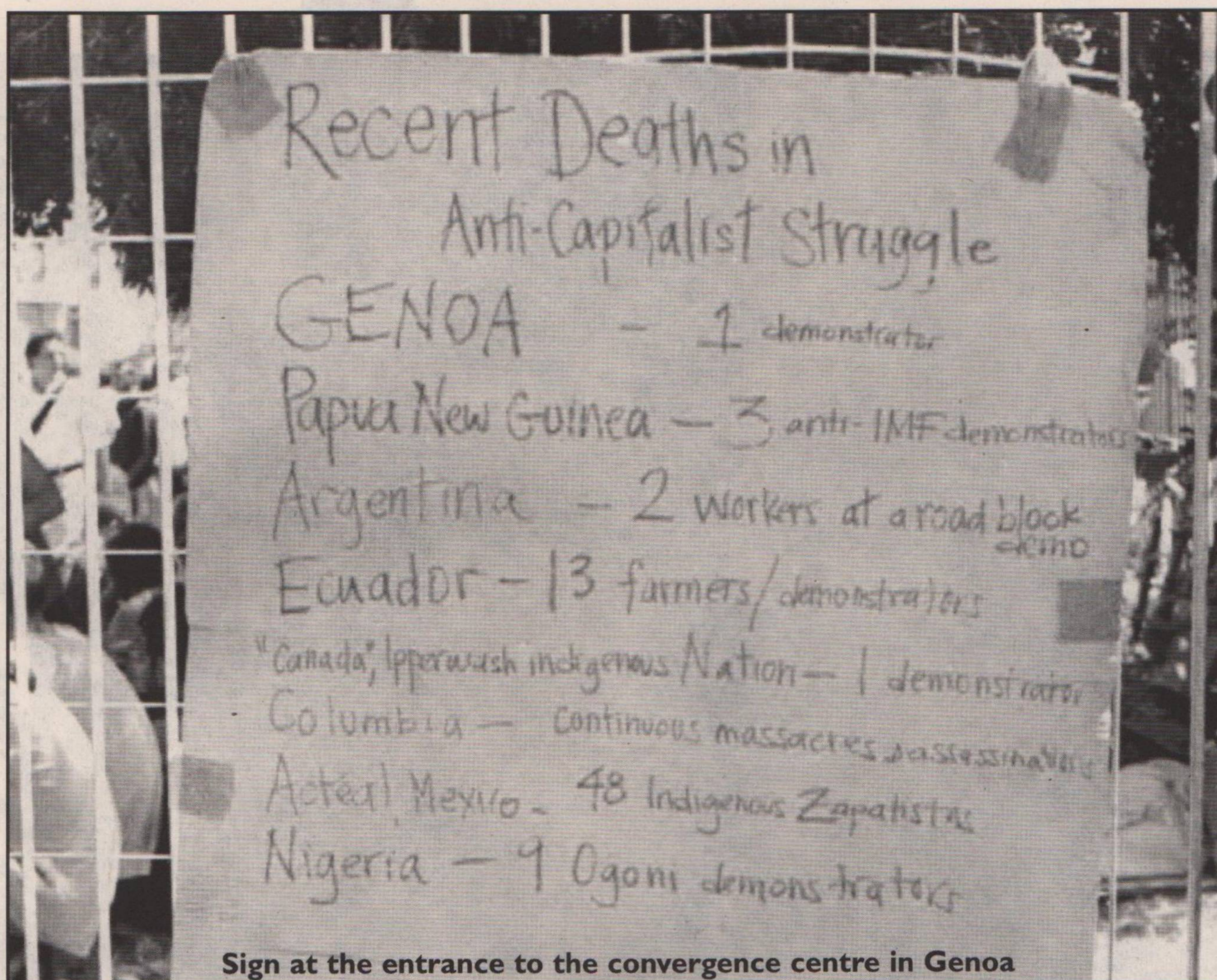
Friday 20th July:

Even before we set off, billows of black smoke hung over the town and we could hear teargas or rubber bullets being fired.

Soon we heard shouting in nearby streets, and through the intersecting roads we glimpsed masked figures in black clothes. My first sighting of the black bloc, so vilified by the trots who had organised the train down.

Our column came to an abrupt halt, and we saw a bizarre if brutal sight. On one side of the small buildings with shuttered windows, someone had erected a stage. On this, a woman stood in front of a band, singing in English a song very popular a few years back, love for all the people or something like that. Under the raised platform where she stood, people were having the shit beaten out of them by hordes of black-helmeted police. Milling about like so many lethal beetles, their batons were swinging at anyone within reach.

Some of us made a left turn through a passageway, only to retreat from clouds of teargas. Eyes smarting, my throat so raw it hurt, a burning sensation on my neck where not so long ago I had spread factor 25 – not a good idea, as gas sticks to the lotion. Panicking, I shoved my inhaler into my mouth but found no respite. Seeing a protester with half a lemon in his hand, I held out my inhaler, muttering "citrus, please, citrus". He soon caught on, in spite of the language barrier, giving a little relief to my skin. But the respiratory problems continued for about half an hour, and ropes of yellow snot



Sign at the entrance to the convergence centre in Genoa

plagued me for the next few hours.

Later on, we tried to find an alternative route back to the convergence centre. Three helicopters overhead, the police forced us back across the dried-up riverbed. Crossing over the stone bridge, we could look down over the smoky, violent and noisy town. What would a photographer like Flavio Costantini have done with all this visual, I mused. But my own camera was my head, the lense was in my eyes.

We did all finally get back that evening.

Now we ate and drank, and bedded down on the hard tarmac to face a chilly night. Carlo Giuliani had been killed that afternoon, another victim of police brutality in the name of the state. Some people say that Giuliani was a beggar, with a criminal record for violence and carrying weapons. All I can write is that the policeman who shot him is the bigger criminal. And people like Italian prime minister Berlusconi and the bosses of the corporate industries, they are the biggest villains of all.

No alarms went off when the windows shattered, which mystified me (unless they were wired up to the local police station, in which case contact with the helicopters would soon pinpoint the building under attack).

Again and again, my path seemed to cross that of the bloc. Sometimes, people tried to stop them from breaking things up by linking arms in front of the target, because the damage to property attracted the police to an area – the men in black had invariably gone by then, agile and fit enough to run; so we got the hassle from police instead.

Burning cars and commercial wheeled bins were used for barricades. My thoughts on this are mixed. I do like to hear bank glass disintegrate (not like our windows, that loudly shatter on impact). But on the other hand, most of the burning cars had belonged to the less well-off – not the best way to win hearts and minds.

The cops, with their black carapace-like helmets were everywhere. My guess was that they were brought in from all over Italy specially for the occasion, something which I had confirmed by the British press when I got back home.

The future

So, what does the future hold? Some people say we ain't seen nothing yet. The pessimist in me says that people never learn from history, but the optimist says there are many more fronts to fight on. I intend to be there with like-minded people.

But we cannot keep alienating the poor by trashing their transport and property. The black bloc, if it was them (there are persistent reports of police agents and infiltrators) should be more careful about who they target. For example, I saw about half a dozen masked men breaking into a shop and coming out with soft drinks and ice-cream: a poor person's building if ever there was one. Okay, as an ex-burglar many is the time I've cleaned out the contents of tobacconists' shops and off-licences, but a lot richer than the ones in Genoa. If it weren't so tragic, it would be laughable. We need these people's solidarity if we're going to get organised. Leave their property alone.

Mick Cropper

Saturday 21st July:

The day was hot and sunny. I chose not to eat a heavy breakfast, but managed to get a bottle of water from the now declining stock. I decided to join the groupings solo again, joining first one and then another. There were two demos, and the one I was on was all different nationalities, which suited me fine as my mood was not for talking.

My first contact that day with the black bloc (or at least, people dressed as if they were members of it) was as they were staving in the windows of Bank Italia. They had to be quick before the helicopters spotted them.

Lynx

Divide and conquer

While the police beat us, torture us, imprison us and kill us, all we hear from the left is the same tired rhetoric about the 'mindless destruction caused by the black bloc'.

I am a black bloc anarchist, but I do not speak for anyone other than myself. I am at this moment ashamed to be part of the 'anti-globalisation' movement, and not because of the actions of the police who infiltrated the bloc in Genoa (a sign of our effectiveness). I am ashamed to be part of a movement that would allow the state and the police to divide it so easily.

It seems certain that there were fascists and undercover cops actively infiltrating the bloc in Genoa, and doing most – if not all – of the damage against small businesses. They could just as easily have infiltrated and discredited the white overalls or the fluffies or any other group, it could just as easily be anyone else getting the finger of blame pointed at them.

The black bloc comes under fire because we are not just another group of protesters. We are revolutionaries, who are engaged in a

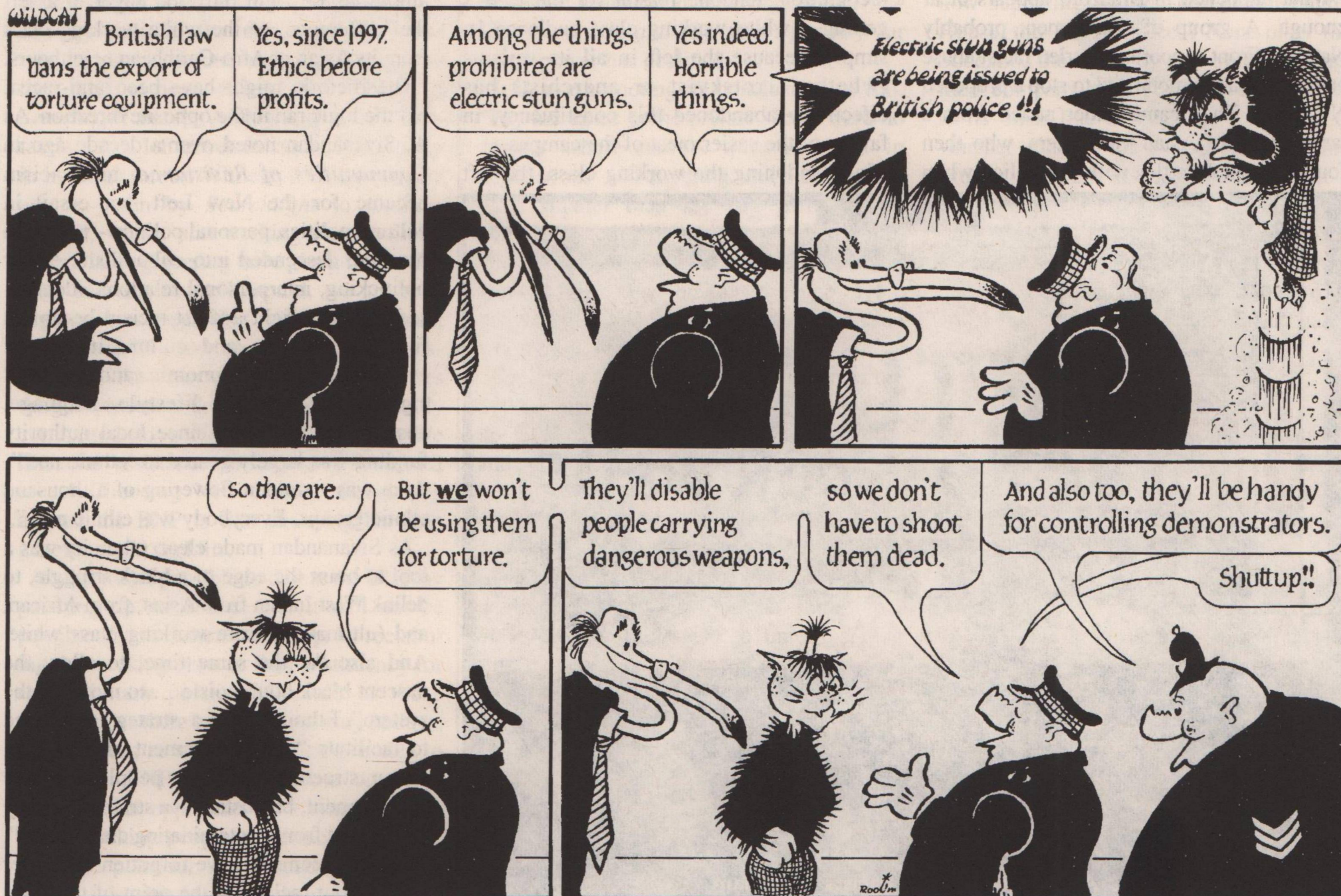
war for the survival of our class and planet.

Time and again, the people who talk so loudly about 'diversity' and 'democracy' have attacked us. But we are not only an integral part of this movement, we are among those who laid its foundations. Other people stand on our shoulders and spit on us, just like the politicians they claim to oppose. Solidarity is our strength: don't throw it away.

We are gathering evidence of police infiltration of the black bloc in Genoa. Witnesses report 'protesters' climbing in and out of police vans, or leaving protests only to return in police uniform. They also say that police agents were instrumental in leading marchers away from the 'red zone' and into working class areas, where they began to destroy property.

We've seen a photograph of one man putting a police uniform over 'black bloc' style clothes, but we need a photograph of him protesting.

Anyone who is willing to share their Genoa photographs with Freedom is asked to contact us, in confidence, at FreedomCopy@aol.com



The left's anti-fascism

For years, the British left has bought itself a quiet life by ignoring the link between the resurgence of far right groups across Europe, and the steady growth in support for the British National Party (BNP) in the UK. Occasionally, its 'see no evil' strategy would take the odd knock, with the BNP winning a council seat on London's Isle of Dogs, for instance, or an Anti-Nazi League (ANL) stall getting overturned; but for the most part, 'business as usual' was the chosen response.

The streetfighting which has exploded in Oldham, Bradford, Burnley and Stoke on Trent, and the strength of the BNP's vote in June's election, have put paid to that approach once and for all. BNP leader Nick Griffin took 16.4% of the vote in Oldham West and Royston – the largest vote ever for a fascist party in a British general election. In Oldham East and Saddleworth, the BNP took 11%; in Burnley, it took 11.25%.

Given the dismal performance, across the board, of the Socialist Alliance, the idea that all was well and that the parliamentary road to socialism (though perhaps potholed and in need of repair) was still straight and sure, came to look like the pipe dream some of us have always said it was.

Still, thus far, little of any value seems to have been learned from recent events. The ANL, for instance, which has decided to relaunch itself on the back of the clashes in Oldham and Bradford (never one to let its own lack of anything useful to say stand in the way of rank opportunism), has little idea of what an effective anti-fascist politics might be. It tries to cobble together alliances between the left and the Labour Party on a broad, liberal, anti-fascist ticket, but fails to realise that the politics of collusion it proposes cannot be a solution to a crisis this collusion helped bring about in the first place. It also fails to recognise that a Labour Party beginning to implode locally, with working class voters deserting it in droves, might have little to gain from any active anti-fascist agenda, however weakly pursued. Thus, less than a week after being courted by them, Bradford West MP Marsha Singh was calling for the ANL to be banned.

What happened in Bradford appears clear enough. A group of white men, probably National Front supporters, hurled racist abuse at demonstrators mobilised to stop a proposed NF demo. They came under attack from a large group of Asian youngsters, who then fought pitched battles with the police when



Bradford: recruiting ground for the BNP and National Front

police tried to drive them out of the city centre. All of us who claim to stand for working class self-determination ought to recognise the right of the Asian community to self-defence against fascist mobilisations, racist attacks and police brutality; and moreover, we should be prepared to stand with them in such situations as part of the means of reforging solidarity on the basis of class, rather than racial lines.

In order to move towards a solution which aims at recovering the ground stolen within working class communities by the far right, we have to begin to understand how we ended up here. Such understanding has to involve a recognition that one reason for the BNP's getting a white working class audience is, simply, because the left in all its variants (whether Trotskyist or anarchist) has effectively abandoned this constituency, in favour of the easier meat of the campus.

In abandoning the working class, the left

also abandoned (except in some of its rhetoric) any commitment to a politics based on class, in favour of a liberal multiculturalism which gave up any attempt at forging active solidarity between communities. This would be a solidarity based on recognition of a shared reality of poverty and exploitation, instead of a celebration of 'difference'; a celebration which ultimately ceded the argument both to those 'community activists' who tried to build a power base for themselves by bidding for resources for 'their' community at the expense of others, in the battle for the ever-dwindling pot of local authority gold, and (ultimately) to an ambitious far right only too eager to assert the 'difference' of the white working class from its Asian or Afro-Caribbean neighbours.

The rhetoric might have been anti-racist, but the logic ran in the opposite direction. As A. Sivanandan noted over a decade ago in *Communities of Resistance*, anti-racism became for the New Left "an essay in cultural politics, personal politics – which, in practice, descended into culturalism, ethnic politicking, interpersonal relations, identity-seeking. The fight against racism became a fight for culture, and culture itself was evacuated of its economic and political significance to mean lifestyle, language, custom, artefact. And since local authority funding was largely geared to 'ethnic need', there was a sudden flowering of a thousand ethnic groups. Everybody was ethnic now".

As Sivanandan made clear, ethnicity was a tool to blunt the edge of a black struggle, to delink West Indian from Asian, from African, and (ultimately) from working class white. And also "at the same time, to allow the nascent black bourgeoisie ... to move up the system". Ethnicity was a strategy employed to facilitate "the development of a parallel power structure for black people, separate development, bantustans – a strategy to keep race issues from contaminating class issues".

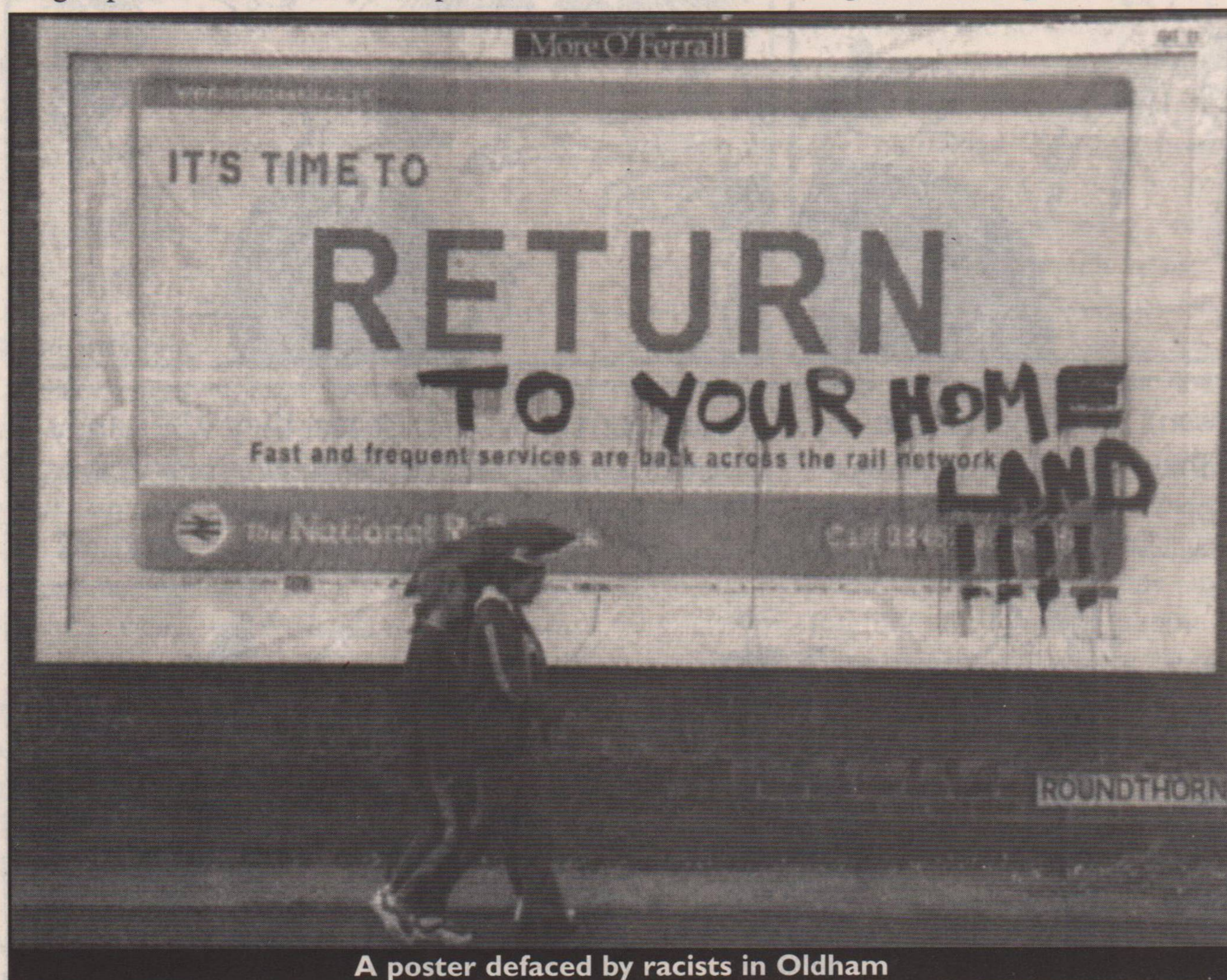
The left seems to have forgotten all it ever knew about racism. If the point of the 'race

card', when deployed by politicians, is to get the working class to take its eye off the ball – to look at what the family next door, or the family on the 'Asian estate' has – instead of the steady surge of wealth from poor to rich under both the Tories and Labour, then to focus on difference is to fall into the trap. 'Racial identities' are, in a real sense, constructs of the state. Thus, for instance, the engineering of a debate around the question of 'citizenship' and 'coloured immigration' by successive Labour and Conservative governments after 1945, culminating in the passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. So too the more recent manufacture of a 'crisis' around the issue of asylum seekers. Recent opinion polls have shown that "race relations" are a more pressing concern for the majority of us than 'poverty' or 'unemployment'. Which, after all, was the point of playing the race card in the first place.

The size of the BNP vote in white working class areas must then, contrary to the popular frontist fantasies of the Anti-Nazi League and the like, be cause for relief in New Labour circles. Rather than working class dissent, focused on Labour's role in further accelerating the transfer of wealth from poor to rich, any anger has collapsed in on itself: in place of a war between classes, we have the beginnings of what the Italian fascist Gianfranco Fini calls, "the war of the poor against the poor". Far from being the radical opposition they pretend to be, the BNP are a pressure valve, a useless outlet for anger at Blair and his pack of thieves.

There is, though, more to it than that. While New Labour has (with repeated success) deployed the race card as a diversion from its anti-working class agenda, it isn't the case that the BNP voters are motivated solely, or even mainly, by race. If your main motivation in casting your vote was that you thought the country was awash with illegal immigrants, for instance, surely you wouldn't vote

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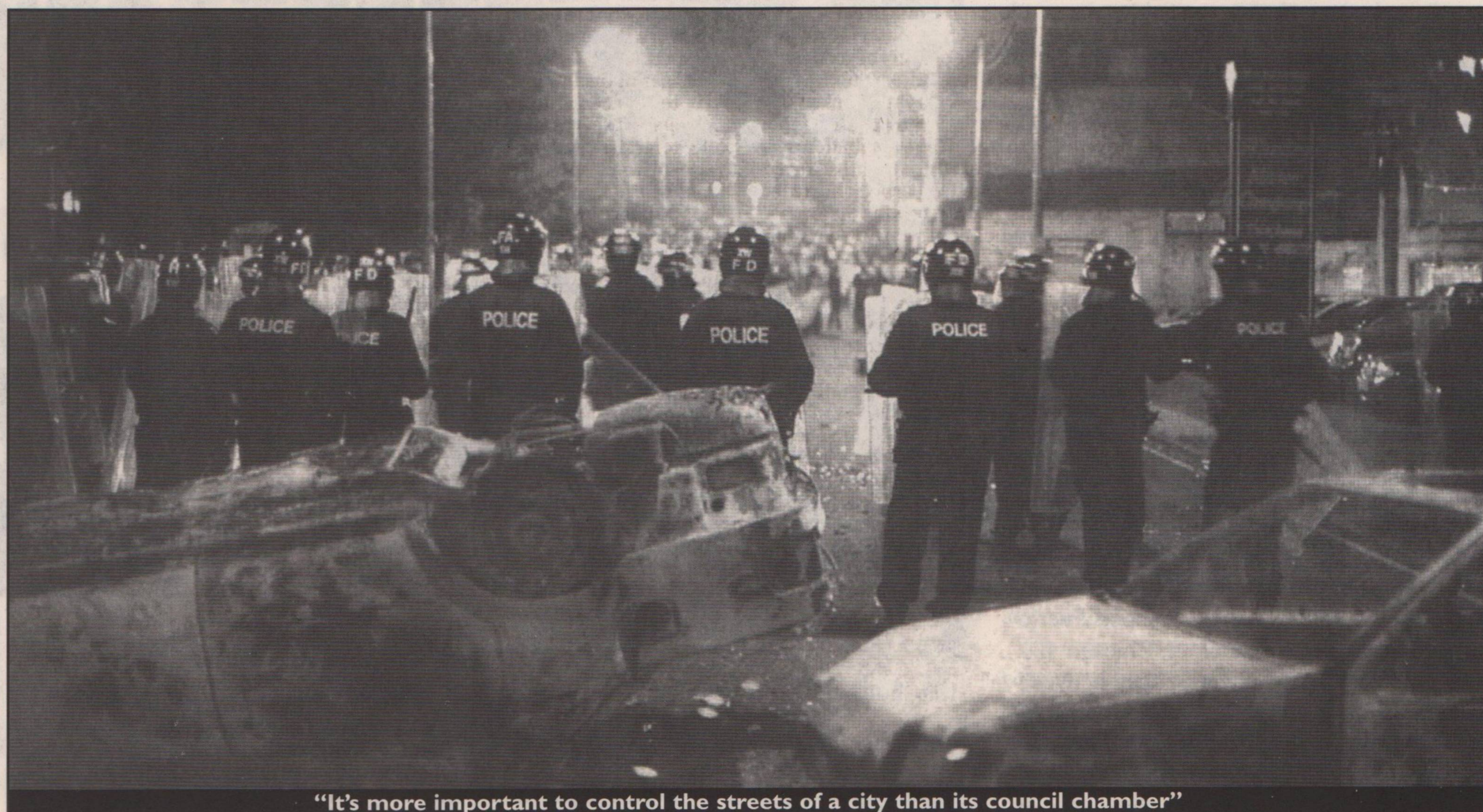
A poster defaced by racists in Oldham

... pissing in the wind?

(continued from page 4)

for the party least likely to get elected? You'd vote for the racist best-placed to beat up on your chosen scapegoat. If the BNP's votes were solely about race, Jack Straw would walk all over Nick Griffin every time. In fact, as the BNP makes clear in its FAQs (albeit with some degree of political licence), "we don't 'hate' blacks, we don't hate 'Asians' ... we are against a system ... which forced immigration on us". It is the pretence of being against the system that separates the BNP from the Premier League racists, Blair and Hague. What gives Griffin his credibility is simply that he's pissing in from outside the tent. BNP publications, such as *The Voice of Freedom*, are stuffed full of rhetoric about "the callous disregard for real people shown by head-in-the-clouds liberal 'do-gooders'." Questions which are really about class are blamed on the 'multiracial experiment' and white working class voters are offered a racial 'identity' instead of any identification on the basis of class.

The BNP appropriates the stand against the system, which should be the stance of the left, in order to drag it off down a blind alley of 'racial difference'. But in doing so, it outflanks the left, because it takes seriously what should be the natural constituency of the left at a time when the purportedly revolutionary leftwing and working class communities have never had less contact and less in common. Moreover, in talking the language of 'identity', it steals the clothes of the multiculturalists (and at least shows us where the logic of their position washes up). The BNP succeeds because it tells the white working class that they are 'second class citizens in their own land'. It tells them that this bottom-of-the-ladder status is down to a hierarchy of race rather than class, but it gets an audience for being the only political force that bothers to talk to such communities at all. That the BNP are able to be seen by a section of the working class as Labour's opposition outside parliament is a testament to the failure, the sheer gutlessness and lack



"It's more important to control the streets of a city than its council chamber"

of ambition of supposed revolutionaries in the UK.

In the latest issue of *Searchlight* (July 2001), Nick Griffin is quoted as saying, "it is more important to control the streets of a city than its council chamber". This is printed as a warning of the BNP's 'contempt' for democracy. It ought instead to serve as a warning of the parliamentary cretinism of liberal anti-fascism. It used to be the case that the anti-fascist left battled the far right for control of the streets; that, after all, was the point of the mobilisation of thousands of working class militants at Cable Street in 1936 and at Lewisham 41 years later.

It also used to be the case that some of us knew that meaningful social change could only be realised through the mobilisation of our class in the streets. Now anti-fascism in its liberal guise – one worn proudly by the bandwagon chasers of the Socialist Workers Party and their front, the ANL – is reduced to defending the rotten con of local democracy, with its council estate sell-offs and profiteering, evictions and disrepair. Defending things which should never have been defended is a strategy only in the minds of fools and opportunists; and fools and opportunists are the BNP's best allies. The likes of *Searchlight* and the ANL would reduce anti-fascism to a left-cover for social democracy in its death throes. Witness, for example, the advice given by *Searchlight* to Oldham council, whose anti-working class policies and racial engineering have given the BNP a clear run: the council should, we are told, make a "concerted effort to integrate different communities" and show "greater transparency". And see what *Searchlight* advises the government to do, a government explicitly committed to social inequality: "provide financial assistance to regenerate" riot-hit areas! Choosing New Labour as an ally against the BNP is like choosing between gangrene and syphilis.

It will not be possible to defeat the BNP by patching up the status quo. It will not be possible to defeat the BNP except by reclaiming the working class as the constituency for revolutionary politics. Outside of these communities there is no revolutionary politics, only playing at it. It will not be possible to defeat the BNP unless we prove ourselves more radical opponents of a system which offers working people of all races no future save cheap labour and permanent damage. All of this should be obvious; that it has

ceased to be so is the reason why the BNP can pretend to be a radical alternative to the enduring misery of capitalism.

We have to work to re-establish a revolutionary tradition within the working class, to identify militant anti-fascism with the needs of our class, not the defence of the status quo. Anything less is just pissing in the wind.

Rebuilding a working class revolutionary movement will necessarily involve physically confronting the BNP and the National Front in working class communities – but if the physical challenge is mounted as a precursor to a popular front with Labour, the challenge may as well not be made at all.

Nick S.

Industrial commentary

Power in the union?

During the 1980s, Thatcher had two things to say about trade unions. As act after act was passed to claw back the freedom workers had won a decade earlier, the Tories claimed that unions pushed up wages and cost jobs. In one sense, they were right. Trade unions, through collective bargaining, did raise pay compared to non-unionised workplaces. This, of course, was a good thing. As the old socialist song goes, 'there's a power in the union'. Or at least, there was.

A recent report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The Impact of Trade Unions on Jobs and Pay*, shows just how far union power has declined.

It is worth quoting its conclusions in full. "Pay increases in the private sector were no greater where unions were involved in negotiations ... if anything, union settlements were smaller than the pay increases by employers acting on their own". Worse still, "in the economy as a whole, non-union workplaces grew by an average 1.4% between 1990 and 1998, whereas unionised workplaces shrank by an average 1.8%".

So, if you belonged to a trade union in the 1990s, chances were that your pay was going up less than in non-unionised workplaces, and you stood a three times greater chance of losing your job.

So, what's going on? Jobs first. Since the second world war, trade union strength in the private sector lay in manufacturing. The workers who built ships and cars, mined coal or forged iron belonged to unions. These smoke stack industries were slaughtered by the Tories in the 1980s, and their decline continues today, to the point where they are almost extinct. No wonder then that union members lose their jobs at a faster rate than non-unionised workers. What is so depressing, though, is the complete failure of reformist unions to organise in the new growth areas like the service sector.

No explanation is given in the report as to why unions no longer get bigger pay rises for their members. We can't help noticing, though, that the period covered by the report coincides with the union movement's love affair with partnership. Could it be that cosy-ing up to the bosses, endless compromise and concession don't deliver the goods?

Sorry tale from TUC

When the government proposed introducing vouchers for asylum seekers, trade unions were vocal in their opposition. So who is this now supplying tea and coffee at Congress House, the TUC's offices? None other than Sodexo, the catering and events management company, which can now add the TUC to its other line of business – running the voucher scheme for asylum seekers! John Monks showed his real commitment to partnership when he ignored a vote by TUC staff who didn't fancy buying their tea and cheese rolls from Sodexo, limply claiming that the deal had been signed before the voucher scheme was introduced, and that the company was nice to unions.

McExploited

Child labour is one of the most disturbing aspects of capitalism. Government officers recently swept into two restaurants and found a schoolgirl who had worked 16 hours in a day. Another worked until 2am. Eight other children were also found to be illegally employed. It won't surprise *Freedom* readers to learn that the restaurants were franchises of McDonalds, the self-styled "best employer in each community in the world". The company which owns the franchises was fined £12,400, after it admitted twenty offences of illegally employing children. In response, McDonalds said that the franchise would no longer employ people who were below school-leaving age. Oh well, that's okay then.

R

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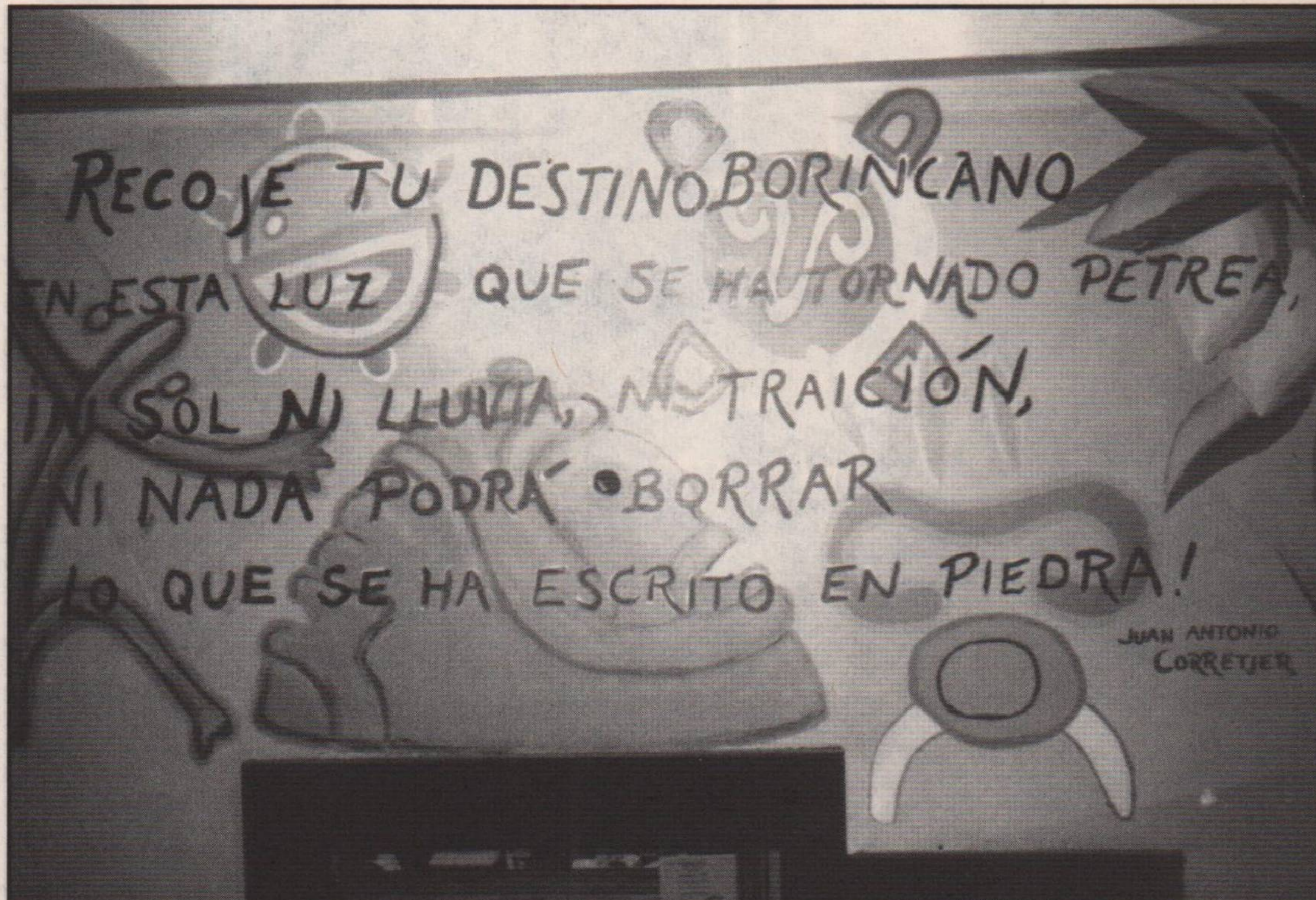
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Hope and freedom in Chicago



A quotation from Juan Antonio Corretjer painted on a wall above a doorway

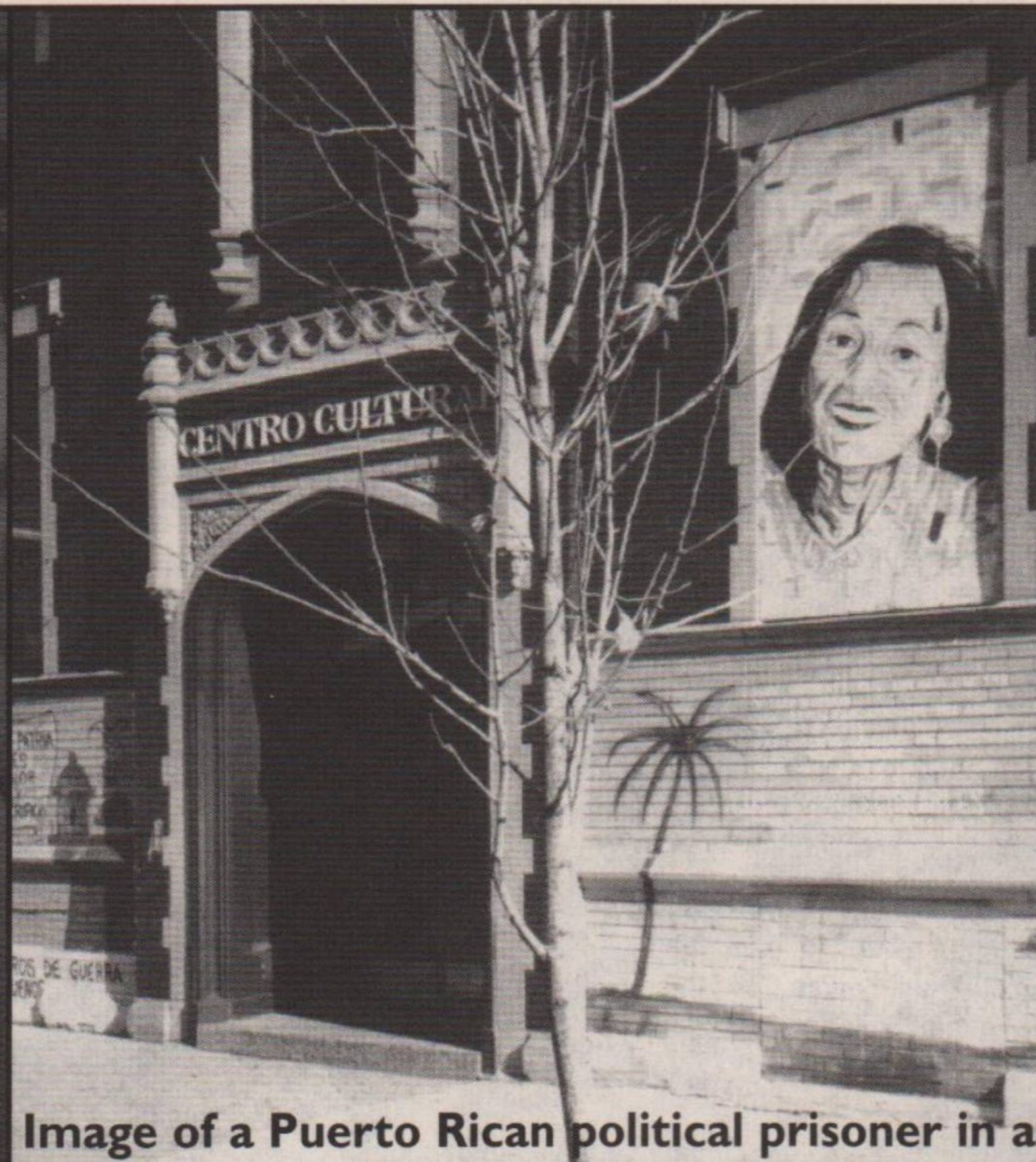


Image of a Puerto Rican political prisoner in a bricked-up window frame at the entrance



Two young men doing their schoolwork

The Dr Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School in Chicago has about seventy students, aged between fourteen and twenty. Most students and staff are Puerto Rican, but there are also Mexicans, African-Americans and whites. The atmosphere is boisterous, friendly and informal. It is difficult to distinguish staff from students. Twice a week there is a class called Unity, when the whole school comes together to listen to announcements, make plans and solve problems. 'Here we are', you might think, 'back in the typical cosy middle-class refuge with nothing new but a different ethnic mix'.

Here are two extracts from interviews with students:

Student 1: By where I live there was this one lady that had a little girl – she was into alcohol and drugs and her little girl was about to get raped by another man, older man, and the police came and took the little girl from her. And now, the years passed and she is like too much into alcohol and drugs and she passed away – last year.

DG: How old was the girl that the man wanted to rape?

S1: The little girl? She was like five or six.

Student 2: The reason why some of the students won't be able to go over there [to a new site for the school] is because of other gangs, violence and all. Misunderstanding between the gangs. Most of us, like myself, we used to be in gangs, and now that we're out of that they still know us out there and especially on Division, there's a lot of people that recognise our faces, so it would be a danger to us, and mainly to the other students of the school if we keep on going to the school while they move over there on Division.

DG: So who are these gangs?

S2: They are the Dragons, the Jivers, the Almighty Imperial Gangster Nation, the Manialand Disciples, the Gangster Disciples, the Milwaukee Kings and the Spanish Cobras.

DG: Have you suffered yourself from what these gangs have been doing?

S2: Yeah. I used to be an IG and I used to gangbang* and I've been shot, stabbed. I've seen my family, most of my family die. All around me my best friends getting killed. Just this week, on Wednesday, my cousin, eleven years old, he just got killed, and all through this, over little misunderstandings and everything. And even just because of the gang colours that people don't know that they're wearing. They get shot over stupid things.

Marvin Garcia, the principal of the school, illustrated the situation like this:

Jesse Mumm met David Gribble, author of *Real Education: varieties of freedom*, at the Summerhill conference and told him that researchers into alternative education should stop spending so much time on cosy refuges for the children of the wealthy, liberal middle class and visit the school where he worked in Chicago. David took up the challenge and spent a week there.

"I remember a young woman that she told me that she was running money for cocaine from the stock exchange into the drug dealers. All these people, all these rich people getting high, and what she was doing was bringing the money to the drug dealers, and she was making good money doing that. Who can compete with that? There she is, fifteen years old, she had nice clothes, she had nice gym shoes, a nice jacket, and all she was doing was running the money. That's it. She was really open about it.

"But there's one thing, though, that we have going for us, and that's the ethical struggle. 'Look, maybe there isn't an option, but let's understand that when you're doing this you're bringing down the community, poisoning the community. You're destroying life. You're doing the opposite of what we're trying to do. We're trying to uplift the community. We're trying to help people to take control of their lives, and live their lives with dignity, and what you're doing is objectifying our community, enslaving our community. It's a reality that it's very hard to get out of. We can't compete. We'll help you, we'll help you go to college, we'll help you, but it's very difficult', we say."

There are four main threads to the help that the school gives. Firstly, the school provides a safe environment, where students are treated with respect and affection, and are able to behave naturally. Secondly, it provides a straightforward route to conventional qualifications and entry into college. Thirdly, it builds their self-esteem by teaching Puerto Rican and Mexican history and Latin-American literature. Fourthly, it gives an opportunity for the students to become agents for change.

The school does not just discuss social problems and come to agreements about them. It also takes action. Students and staff have participated in demonstrations in support of funding for young people, particularly young people who have been expelled from school; they have campaigned for funding for alternative education; they have participated in rallies against police brutality, and helped to create programmes to raise awareness around HIV and AIDS in the community. As Marvin said, "It's about moving from the language of critique to the language of possibilities."

This is how one student described this process: "When I was taught Puerto Rican history, they didn't only teach me the history of Puerto Rico as, you know, the Spanish invasion, and all of that, they also taught me about the struggles that are happening in our day. It's really unfair, what the US government is doing, colonising Puerto Rico, and it really interested me that the school was actually doing something about the Puerto Rican political prisoners and all of that. The teachers always tell us, if you're not interested in it, you don't have to go on the marches. I was interested, I've been to lot of marches. I went to New York, that was last year, and it was about the political prisoners, and I've been to Washington too, for the political prisoners, and now that they're out, we feel that we have accomplished our goal."

The students at the High School learn that they can achieve for themselves, and that they can change the world. I asked those I interviewed what they hoped to be doing when they were twenty-five. They hoped to become an actor, a mechanical engineer, a journalist, a cop (to help the community), an accountant, a marine biologist, a student at

an art college, a family man and a doctor. Some of these students come from extremely hard backgrounds; one young man, for instance, told me he had been living on the streets at the age of eight because his mother had turned him out of her house. They all live in an area of gang warfare.

"This is not really what you would call a school," said one student. "It's more like a second home for most of us."

Jesse Mumm describes the school not as progressive, or democratic, or free, but as liberating. It was not founded to demonstrate some educational philosophy, but to help to solve urgent problems. You could say it was to provide a second home for people who hardly had a first home. The fact that the home provided so closely resembles other schools that describe themselves as progressive, democratic or free, demonstrates that such education is far more important for those from poor backgrounds than it is for the well-off. For the well-off it is merely appropriate and agreeable: for the underdog it is salvation.

David Gribble

* 'Gangbang', in this slang, does not have any sexual connotation. It means simply to take part in gang activities.

Lib Ed are currently setting up a new and improved website which can be found at www.libed.org.uk

David Gribble is working on a sequel to *Real Education*, which will be published by Lib Ed in 2002.

— OBITUARY —

Jeanne Smythe

Jeanne Smythe died last month, following the rapid growth of an inoperable brain tumour. Hospital treatment failed to check it, and she returned to the care of her five devoted daughters until, surrounded by her whole family, her life came to a peaceful end on 2nd July.

Jeanne had very many warm friends in the anarchist movement and beyond. She was modest in her public life; while being active in radical politics, she sought always to be in the background. Typical was her role as tireless supporter of peace activists. Countless demonstrators from the Committee of 100, arrested during the great non-violent actions of the 1960s, benefited from the work she and her welfare group put in on their behalf at courts and prisons up and down the country.

Tony and Jeanne's home was open house to people fleeing from oppression abroad. They had had close ties to War Resisters Inter-

national since Tony's early involvement as the organisation's general secretary.

In recent years, Jeanne found a way of expressing her profound commitment to anarchist principles, in her job at Haringey social services.

She worked among children with disabilities, and helped establish the Markfield Project. She was active in her local branch of MIND.

Jeanne was a wonderful hostess, and took great pleasure in providing vast quantities of beautifully cooked food to all comers. So many people knew and loved her, and found her generous spirit, her beauty and her loyal comradeship inspirational.

Brian Richardson

Jeanne Smythe asked for donations in her memory to be made to Haringey MIND, the Markfield Project and Freedom Press.

What we say ...

The honest truth

In our last issue, we said that Carlo Giuliani was one of six people who attacked a police van, smashing the back window with a heavy fire extinguisher. This wasn't true. The van was attacked, but Carlo never smashed the back window, with a fire extinguisher or anything else. The real sequence of events was as follows.

The police van was trapped and attacked by a group of protesters. Then the cops inside threw the fire extinguisher out of the back window, and one of them began waving his gun. Carlo picked the fire extinguisher up as other protesters (seeing the gun) began to run. Finally, Carlo himself saw the gun and held up the fire extinguisher before being shot twice in the head.

We don't know any more than we did a fortnight ago of Carlo's motivations that day. We don't know, for example, whether he was holding up the fire extinguisher as a puny shield against the bullets that would kill him, or as a weapon, ready to hurl at police. Either way, it does not stop us saluting him and his courageous stand against capitalism.

What does matter is that we are as clear as possible about what happened in Genoa last month, which is why we publish this clarification. It's only politicians and other supporters of capitalism who are forced to obscure the truth, because they are engaged on the dishonest task of trying to defend the indefensible.

There was a determined campaign of distortion waged before and during the G8 summit, and it has continued ever since. This has been done by the capitalist media misreporting the facts (the biggest media boss in Italy is prime minister Berlusconi himself), by politicians like Blair misrepresenting the reality of what happened, and by police agents provocateurs creating facts which would not otherwise exist (need pictures of the black bloc attacking small businesses? Go create).

Capitalism is sustained on lies, and it's the system's supporters and beneficiaries who tell them. We, their enemies, can be honest. The best anarchist propaganda of all is the most simple, because it means doing nothing more or less than telling the truth.

Future resistance

Carlo's death has led to some of the most widespread demonstrations ever, a sign of the revulsion his killing has provoked around the world. A month before, state forces in Papua New Guinea killed three protesters; dozens, if not hundreds, have been killed this year while resisting globalisation and its effects, in countries as far apart as Bolivia and India.

How come the death of one brave protester in Italy has led to a response that all those other killings could not?

The difference this time was that it happened on the doorstep of the world's bosses, which meant it was right in front of the world's media. The international press had no choice but to take note, however imperfect their reporting of it turned out to be.

The lesson is clear. Although we can achieve a lot in our own communities, a key tactic for the future must be to carry on taking our resistance to the bosses themselves.

Our rulers know this only too well, which is why the next World Trade Organisation summit will be held in protest-unfriendly Qatar. The challenge now is to find new ways of taking our struggle to them. These days, it is us – the anti-capitalists, the anarchists – who set the agenda. And our message must always be, 'you can run, but you can't hide'.

Readers' letters

Editorial influence

Dear Freedom,

Further to Jonn Roe's letter (14th July), has anyone out there ever experienced an editorial which did not attempt to influence opinion and feeling by stating its own?

That must be another basic contradiction. However coy or pious – surely not unwitting – the editors of Freedom are about it, they have an agenda to spread the gospel according to St Anarchism. Otherwise, they could choose to keep their wordprocessors on standby.

In writing this letter, I am not just airing my views, I'm provoking a thought-process – perhaps even stirring up passion – in anyone who happens to read it.

That aspect of Jonn's complaint seems hardly worth making. Of course an editorial is attempting to influence both what and how its readers think. It's when it tries to whip up too much emotion and thoughtless reaction that it adopts the mob-inciting tactics of the gutter press. And here I think his complaint may be justified. Perhaps there has been a subtle increase in attempts to whip up reactionary fervour in Freedom in recent months. Perhaps the boundary line between rational influence and incitement to mindlessness has been nudged a little, now and then.

Ewton

Spreading pity?

Dear Freedom,

Nobody wants martyrs (editorial, 28th July) – but we need to realise that the state will not give up its power without a war. Therefore, whilst it is right and proper to mourn, we should realise that there will be much more in the long war to come. I am not talking here

about an elitist terrorist war, but the class war. Freedom, you need to get real about this and stop spouting off your idealistic and romantic notions.

Phil

This response from Phil, like the two below, was originally published on Indymedia at <http://uk.indymedia.org>

Dear Freedom,

Throughout history, the elites have sent common people to fight wars on their behalf. The conscript who shot Carlo is an example of this. But, while he may have been terrified, to shoot a fellow human in the head is a crime, and he has to be partly to blame. The G8 leaders did not pull the trigger.

Vine

Dear Freedom,

Has anyone ever considered that this 'young conscript', who had his gun pointing out of the back of the vehicle for a minute or so, could have disabled Carlo by shooting him in the leg or even in the arm to prevent him from holding on to the fire extinguisher? Shooting him twice in the face could have been avoided. Let's not spread too much pity by calling this cop a 'victim'.

Living Entity

Slavery in the USA

Dear Freedom,

I find it hard to believe that the UK is just now waking up to the issue of the prison industrial machine ('Tougher sentences, bigger police force', 14th July).

We have a tragic epidemic here in the USA called 'legal slavery', and it is well hidden inside the corrections industrial complex and the corporate media's fear campaign (with

programmes like America's Most Wanted).

The fact is that prison is extremely big business here. Incarceration creates massive economic wealth, at the expense of misery for most non-violent drug offenders, alcoholics and addicts.

The US has turned a social/health problem into a terrible crime problem. The so-called 'war on drugs' here is actually a war on US citizens.

Prison labour is cheap, profitable and does not need health benefits or a retirement plan. Hence it becomes a pure profit scam – for the oppressive, greedy, upper class, corporate-driven few, who believe that US society is actually 'safer' if a criminal is making software for Microsoft behind a prison wall for 14 cents per hour!

Wake up Europe, you are next. Slavery is alive and well in the USA.

Troy Brown
US prisoner

Hereford anarchist

Dear Freedom,

I have read the last three issues of Freedom, which I just noticed they have in my local library. It's an absolutely fab paper.

Are there any anarchists out there in or around Hereford that want to start a local anarchist group?

If so, please could they e-mail me at the address below.

Spaniel
dodgydeals@tesco.net

Correspondents are asked to keep their letters short. Letters may be cut for reasons of space.

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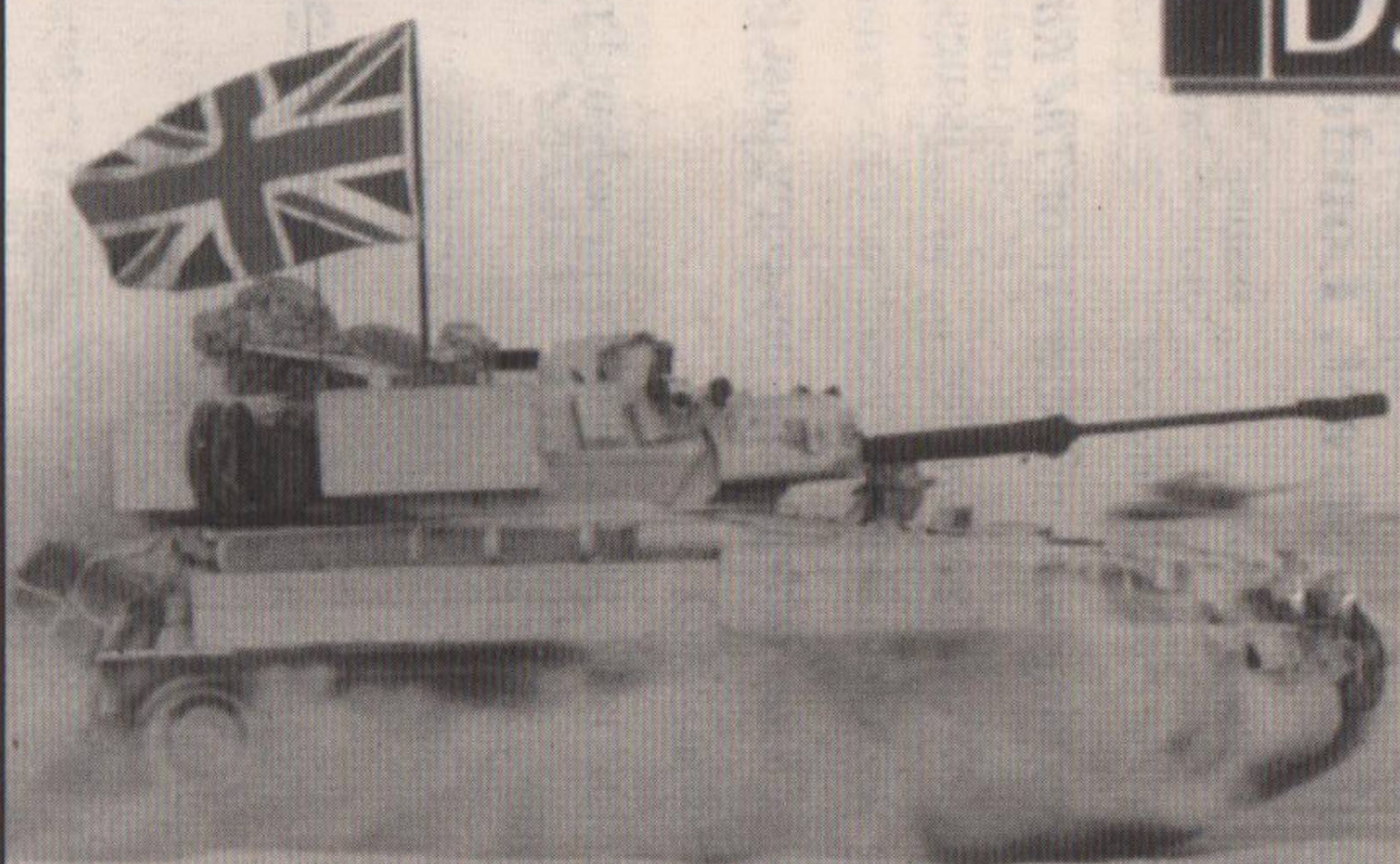
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16th August Monthly free discussion (debate, analyse, plan or just gossip) in a convivial setting with food and drink

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Repton: Viking, Saxon and Medieval remains, 6 miles. Meet at Repton Village
Church at 11am. Walk leader Ray.

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