

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 63 No. 3

9th February 2002

50p

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CONFUSION**

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**BEEN THERE,
DONE THAT**

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WEF cops turn violent

American cops were accused of launching unprovoked attacks on protesters last week, during a heavily-guarded summit of world bosses in New York. The annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), which began on 31st January, was held in the city's Waldorf-Astoria hotel. Around 2,700 WEF members, including Bill Gates, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and new Afghan boss Hamid Karzai, met to discuss prospects for the world economy.

Over 25,000 anti-capitalist activists took to the streets during the four-day event, which was being held for the first time outside Switzerland. Organisers-claimed they could no longer afford to hold the summit in the ski resort of Davos, because of the high cost of security in recent years. They said that the cost of countering protests there last year amounted to over £3m.

Fighting broke out between demonstrators and police on Saturday 2nd February, when cops moved to enforce an obscure nineteenth century law against the wearing of masks. There were reports of mace spray and batons being used, resulting in several minor injuries. Cops were enforcing a law passed in 1845, in response to attacks on landlords by tenant farmers in masks.

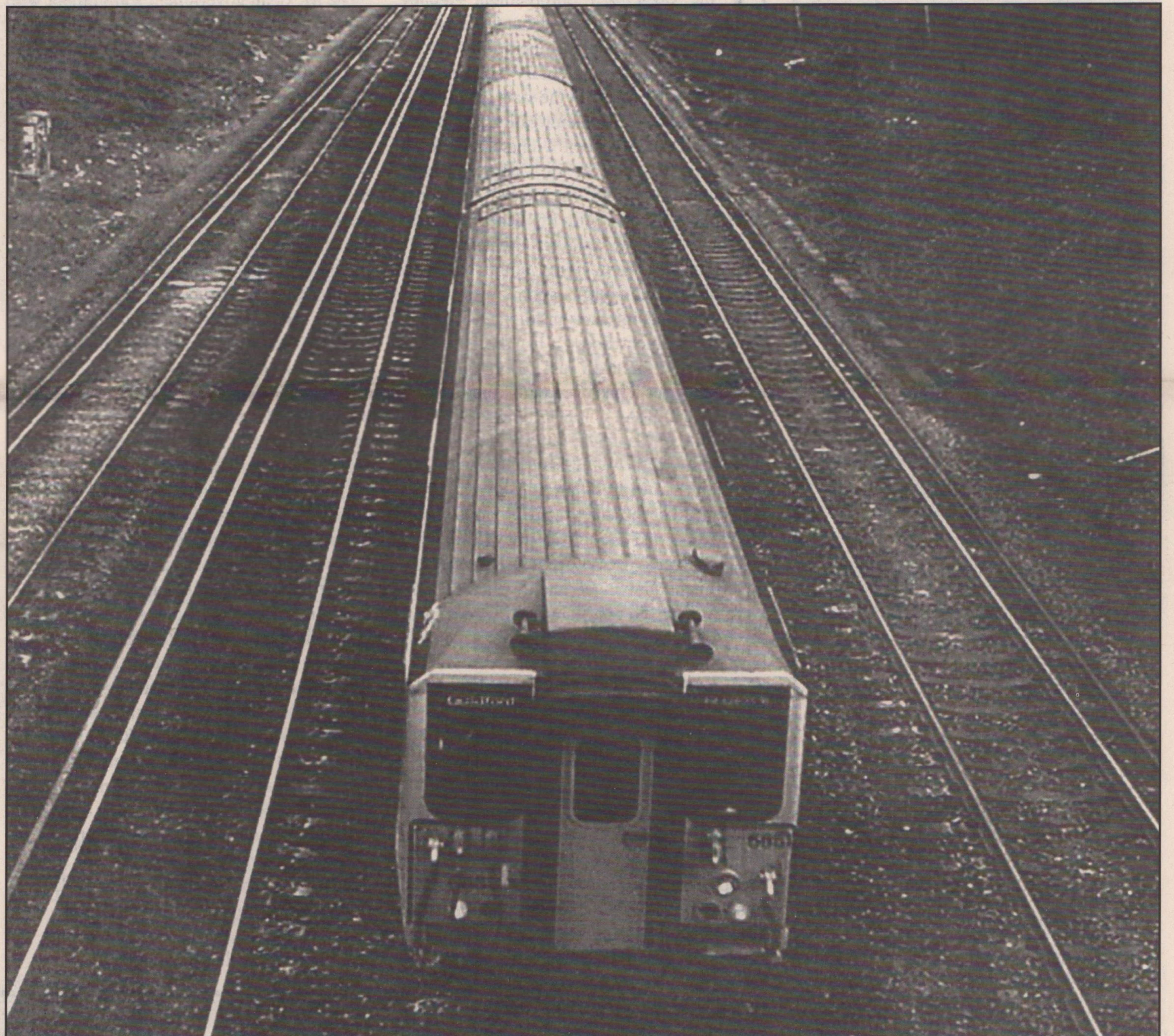
One protester, Sonia Sayers, said that cops began pushing protesters when a march organised by reform group Another World is Possible reached the junction of 5th Avenue and 59th Street in the early afternoon. She said she had been knocked to the ground by a police charge, and had to be helped away to avoid being trampled.

The march was allowed to continue when members of a black bloc linked arms and pushed police lines back. But an hour later, there was a second cop attack further down the route. Despite chants of 'the whole world is watching you', the police arrested nine demonstrators. There were a further 27 arrests outside Central Park's Plaza hotel, allegedly for 'disorderly conduct'.

Anarchists from a north American activist group, the Anti-Capitalist Convergence, last week explained why the protests were being held. "We recognise that the power of our rulers can only be maintained by terror. Both governments and terrorists are ultimately playing the same game – the manipulation of ordinary people's sense of fear and insecurity for political gain. We, on the other hand, stand in absolute rejection of any politics of terror. That is why we are taking action now, here in New York".

Editorial on page 7

Yet another rail crisis



The national rail network is in crisis yet again. Predictably, sections of the capitalist press have blamed 'leftwing' railworkers for the wave of strike actions that began last month. But ask any rank-and-file worker, and you're likely to get a very different view.

The strikes are the result of the anger and frustration built up since April 1994, when the previously state-owned railways were privatised. The privatisation programme split a deliberately rundown rail network into 25 private Train Operating Companies (TOCs), and effectively threw the railway system, and its workers, to the wolves.

The result has been staffing levels cut to the bone, and profit instead of safety as the overriding priority. In a deliberate ploy, railworkers have been playing off against one another.

Train drivers, most of them members of ASLEF, have been given much-needed pay rises. Other workers, mostly members of the RMT, have been denied parity.

This has been done cynically, within a negotiating structure – continued by 'New' Labour – which pays lip service to collective bargaining while it repeatedly screws front-line workers. This manipulation of workers is at the crux of the strike action by guards and station workers alike.

South West Trains, which serves routes round London, last year offered drivers an 18-month deal, giving a 3.8% increase with effect from last April. This was followed by a further 3.8% increase in October. Other workers were offered half as much.

Then Scotrail drivers went on strike for equality with their counterparts in southern

England. Arriva Trains Northern gave their drivers an 18.5% deal, while conductors were offered 3%.

On First North Western, station staff were due to return their ballot papers this week, to decide whether to strike over demands for pay parity with guards and a 35 hour week. They are also deeply unhappy at bullying by management.

Meanwhile, the TOCs are trying to secure contractual deals which give them the right to force other workers, such as train drivers, to scab work when guards strike. The fine print of the new contracts should be read carefully, as the faceless fat cats continue their quest for profits.

Jones the Steam

• Malatesta on the General Strike as a weapon, see comment on page 6

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

“Extreme indulgence may suit one person, extreme chastity another – though most anarchists feel that the world would be a better place if there had been a lot less fussing and a lot more fucking.”

Nicolas Walter in *About Anarchism*

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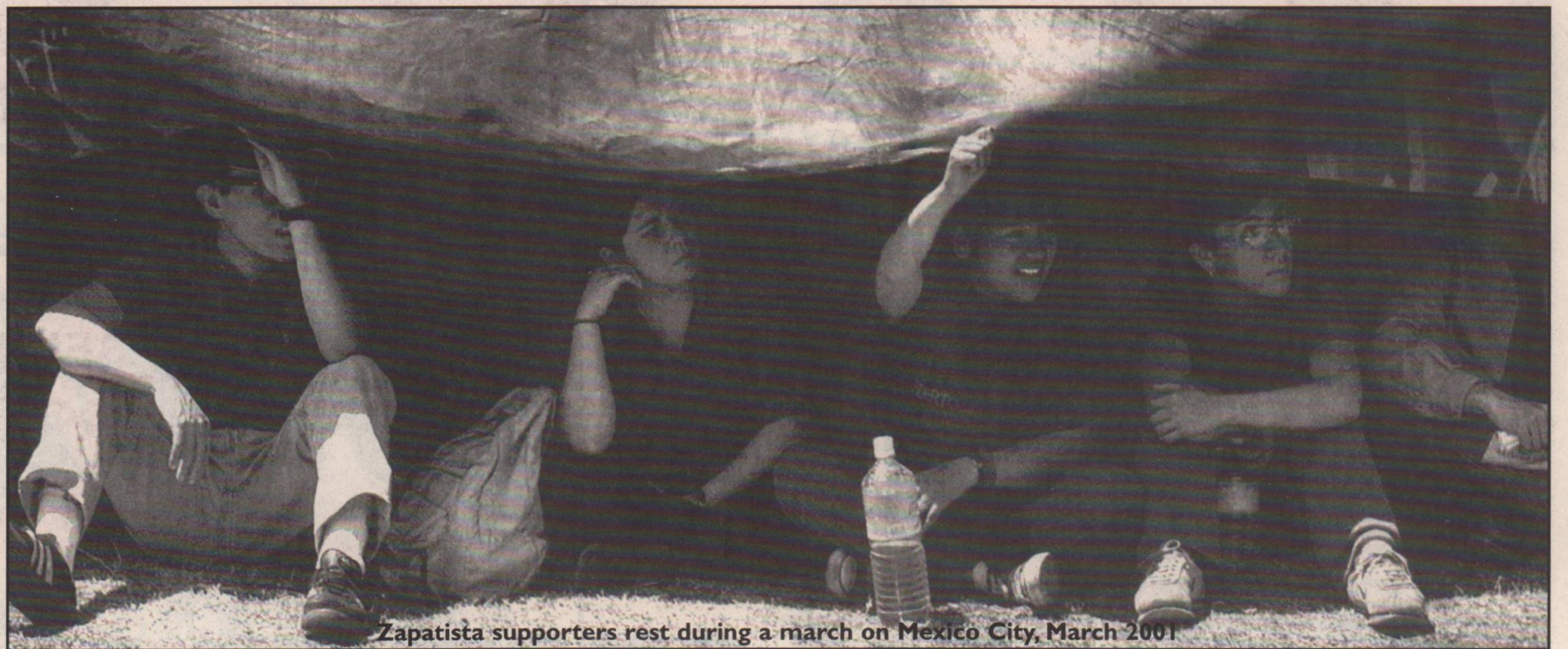
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Ignorance and delusion



Zapatista supporters rest during a march on Mexico City, March 2001

Chiapas

The US Drugs Enforcement Agency (DEA) has suggested that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), both of which operate in the state of Chiapas, could be linked to the cultivation of opium. This has certainly been a characteristic of guerillas elsewhere, in Colombia and Afghanistan (where they now form the government). The strong implication in such a claim is that the Zapatistas are terrorists.

Could this be the opening gambit of a more generalised campaign against perceived enemies of US interests in Mexico? The US State Department doesn't list the EZLN as terrorist, and this isn't just through political expediency (as it has been with other groups, such as the IRA) – the leftwing FARC in Colombia are named, but so too are the rightwing militias which are responsible for more civilian deaths than the FARC. It's a sound bet that these are funded from some of the \$1.9bn the US gives the Colombian military every year. Last October, the US government announced that its planned 'war on terrorism' did not include moving against the FARC. Indeed, they might consider this base to be covered. So what's different in Mexico? Put simply, it's the back door to the USA. The two countries already have a treaty of mutual defence, so a legal framework for the US to undermine the Zapatistas exists.

Luis H. Alvarez, the Mexican government's peace commissioner, has expressed the view that the EZLN can't be considered terrorists. Even the governor of Chiapas, Pablo Salazar Mendiguchia, has rejected the DEA position. Last year, he was quoted in a national newspaper, *la Jornada*, saying the Zapatistas "are not a group of armed terrorists, on the contrary they are involved in a social struggle, seeking a positive solution to their problems of marginalisation, poverty and exclusion".

He went on, "the EZLN had the vision to vigorously defend their involvement in social struggle and distance themselves completely from any links with terrorism". This is the same man who was named last September, on a leaflet distributed by peasants marching from Chiapas in Mexico City, as heading the politics of repression in Chiapas. So even if he's an enemy of the people, he still seems to be worried about what the US might have in store for the state of which he's boss.

Many in the US over the last six months have demonstrated an Orwellian instinct for when to cheer and when to boo, and their government wants to export this totalitarianism over the border to little brother in the south. For Mexicans, it's a case of realising

they have to drink coke with their beans and tortillas.

The Mexican government's alignment with the US over its war on Afghanistan provoked claims that the country's constitution and peaceful tradition had been violated. But in published opinion polls, while three quarters of the middle class said they didn't like the war or think it would improve the world and reduce terrorism, half those polled still thought it was right for Mexico to take the alignment it did. This pragmatism surely stems from the fact that most Mexican industry is foreign-owned with 80% of exports going to the United States.

There are remnants of pluralism still in Mexico, even if it's mainly the pluralism – in mainstream politics, that is – of patronage, clientelism and the hangovers from one party rule. But there is also the pluralism of collectivism, the market and insurgency. In comparison, the USA seems to be a country of one idea, where unknown ideas can't exist.

Whether we accuse the ruling elites of doublethink or wickedness, whether they believe their own propaganda (as Blair in Britain seems to), we have here a fundamentalism of the most powerful. If the CNN worldview truly reflects the American worldview, we're looking at a nation that considers no argument in its determination to delude itself. There is simply no other way of organising a decent society, they'd have us believe, but by rights of property and profit. These rights, they tell us, need to be defended militarily. Even to think differently is wrong, as we saw from the frantic efforts of most commentators to precede critical comment on the Afghan war with declarations of how the attacks on America were such a terrible thing. For or against the United States is the only choice.

Mexicans now find themselves between a rock and a hard place. The middle classes understand business and the way of the world, but they're still dismayed by what the US is doing. People are responsive to the idea that the structure of things might be wrong, but when I ask them what the solutions to their own problems might be, they don't have much of an idea. They understand what they've been told, that the market and a bigger economy is the best way to proceed. After seventy years of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), other forms of economic organisation mean bribery, corruption, patronage and stagnation.

On the other hand, liberalisation moves inaugurated by the ruling National Action Party (PAN) of President Fox mean rationalisation, efficiency, reduction in subsidies and more impoverishment before economic growth kicks in, and they understand this too. In order to deal with the contradictions, they can only depend on delusions. I'm no longer surprised, for example, when I hear people express opinions as facts. I've heard it said that the EZLN are funded by the mainstream parties, even by the PRI itself. That the poor simple indigenous folks are being bamboozled by Marcos, who isn't even an Indian. That indigenous people are ignorant and that therefore their claims are wrong. That there's no word from the EZLN about the widely reviled Indigenous Law passed last year, because Marcos is sulking. Why, they ask, didn't Marcos make concessions to Fox when he visited him early last year? And so on.

Ignorance and self-delusion are very useful, both for the rulers and the ruled. Over the border in the United States, they're being tested to ridiculous levels. But there's no impunity here in Mexico either.

Jo L.

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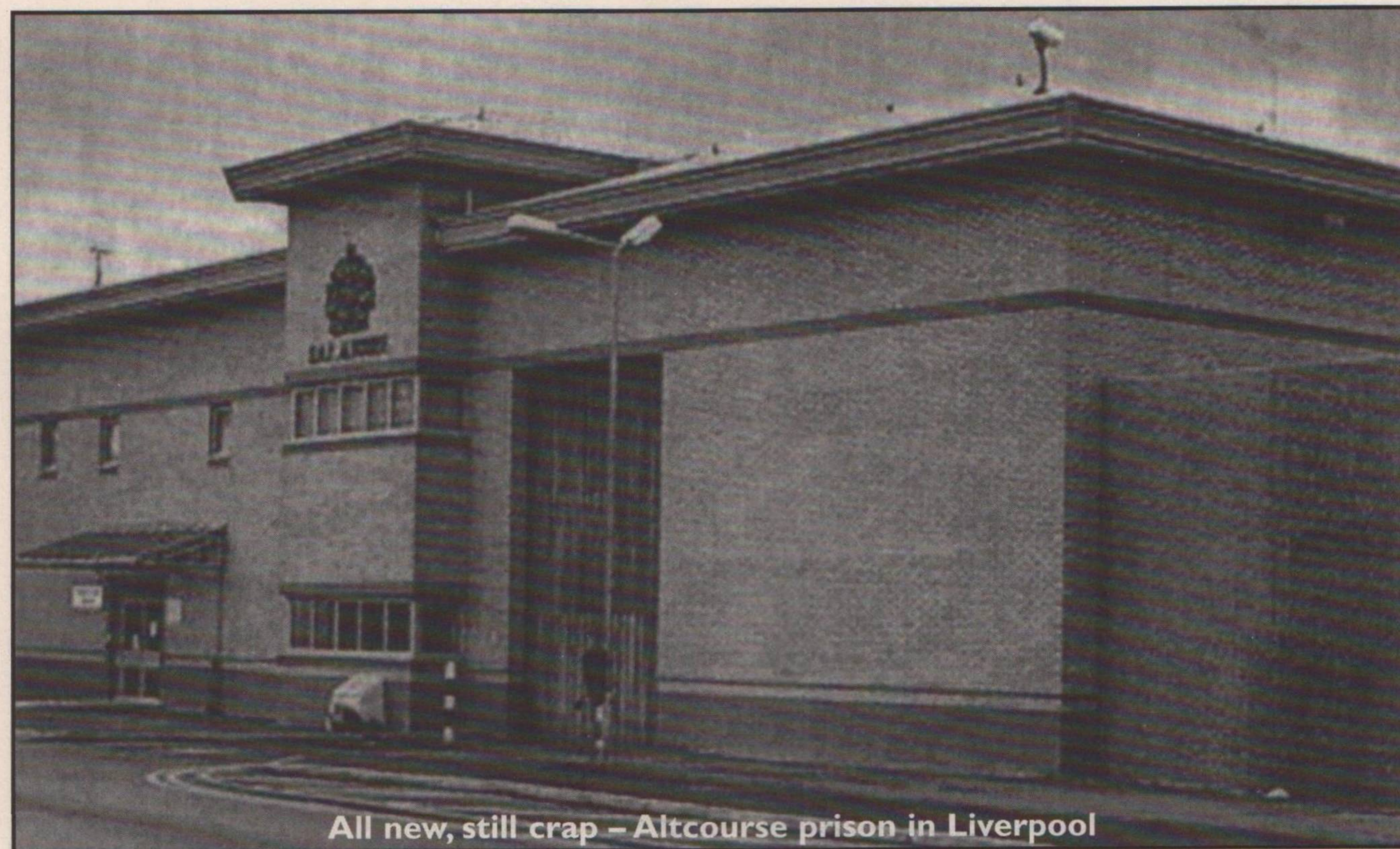
A beginning rather than an end

London

Over a hundred people met in Holborn's Conway Hall on 26th January, to plan strategies for putting prison abolition on to the mainstream political agenda. The conference, 'Prison abolition or more prisons?', began with talks from Martin Wright and Joe Sim. Martin, the author of *Restorative Justice*, argued that there were better ways of addressing anti-social behaviour than imprisoning people. He suggested a system of 'criminals' being brought face-to-face with their 'victims' as one such alternative. "Facing your victim is not an easy option", he insisted.

Joe, an anti-prisons activist who also works as an academic criminologist at John Moores University in Liverpool, argued that by any criteria except a desire for revenge, imprisonment is a failure. "All the literature indicates that deterrence lies in the fear of getting caught, not in the fear of going to prison", he said. "Most people wouldn't know what the punishment for most crimes is, any way".

He said that the use of imprisonment is part of a clear political programme, based on exercising control over others. "Mass imprison-



All new, still crap - Altcourse prison in Liverpool

ment is about incapacitating certain groups, especially Afro-Caribbean males". Messages of solidarity were read from serving prisoners, including John Bowden, Dave Frooms and Reg Wilson.

During the afternoon, there were workshops on prisoner resistance, the meaning of justice, the politics of imprisonment and the social context in which 'crime' is committed.

Participants and organisers agreed that the day had been a success. "It was really useful", said one. But a few sounded a cautionary note. "Despite all the hard work which was put into setting it up, it won't have achieved a lot if we leave it there", another attender said. "We'll only know it's been valuable if some positive anti-prisons action comes out of it".

• Screws around the country last week threatened strike action, following the announcement that a 6% pay rise will be awarded in two parts. If the £55m package were to be paid in its entirety straightaway, prison bosses insisted on 30th January, it would mean cuts to the state's huge prison-building programme.

The strike threat came just a week after the 30,000 members of the Prison Officers' Association (POA) elected Andrew Darkin as their new leader. Darkin was last year accused of obstructing change at a notorious Young Offenders' Institution. He was removed from Feltham and his job as chair of the POA branch there, following a report by the Chief Inspector of Prisons which accused him of blocking progress on improving conditions. Even the prison bureaucrats agree that Feltham is failing to achieve the Prison Service's own minimum standards.

• The new Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, last week condemned a Devon jail for its treatment of inmates. She called Dartmoor "the prison time forgot".

Editorial on page 7

Festival of alternatives

Report from the London Mayday Collective

Planning is underway for this year's Mayday celebrations. In addition to an event on Mayday itself, we hope this year that there will also be a Festival of Alternatives taking place before and after Mayday. For this to happen, we need help.

The Mayday Festival of Alternatives is inspired by a month of dissident art and cultural events in France, held in response to the irrelevance and media saturation of the General Election last year. It is also a model used worldwide to encourage political awareness and expression (for example, the Festival des Pueblos in Boston last May).

We hope that the festival will consist of between seven and fourteen days of events, designed to show the diversity and creativity of our movement. We are therefore asking groups to consider organising something.

The more events we have, the greater the profile and impact we can have, particularly on people outside the anti-capitalist movement. We feel it is vital to show our collective resourcefulness, resilience and solidarity in practice, given the multiple attempts there have been since 11th September to write us off as a disorganised fad with no vision for the future.

All events will be publicised under the name Mayday Festival of Alternatives. The kind of event people choose to put on is obviously up to them, but we have listed some suggestions as food for thought.

- Workshops (both practical and theoretical);
- Film showings (in parks, on buildings, squatted buildings, community centres);
- Art exhibitions and installations in 'strange locations' (outside supermarkets, in trees, on commons, carparks, outside and inside art galleries, shopping centres, the streets);
- Radical history tours;
- Actions which address local struggles;
- Theatre;
- Gigs, raves, street parties;
- Mass picnics;

We would ideally like to have a different event happening every day all over London

and elsewhere for two weeks. If enough groups contribute, this is easily achievable.

It would be helpful if organisers of events tell us what they are planning. Details will then be put on the website and on leaflets.

If you want to get involved in the overall planning, come to the meeting on Sunday 10th February. The planning process is open to all those committed to organising anti-capitalist events on and around Mayday, and to working in a non-hierarchical way.

Mayday Festival of Alternatives
 BM Mayday, London WC1N 3XX
 tel 07989-451096
 festivalofalternatives@yahoo.com

• Planning meeting at 2pm, Sunday 10th February at the London Activist Resource Centre (LARC), corner of Fieldgate and Parfett Street, London E1 (nearest tubes: Aldgate East, Whitechapel).

Network for success

Manchester

Around 100 people met at the central Friends' Meeting House on 26th January - participants and stallholders at the Networking for Success event. As a visitor from outside the area, I was impressed by the effort put into the organisation and by the variety of groups and campaigns present.

Scrap Trident Now were giving out leaflets and calling for support for two CND activists due in court in April. Another campaigner, Mike Koefrman, was demonstrating his hydrogen fuel cell - I can't pretend to understand the science, but it looked good. The Vegan Organic Network were present, as were a local humanist group.

Steve Booth was there with the new issue of *Green Anarchist*, and there was a range of other literature too, including local papers *The*

Loombreaker and the *Networking Newsletter*. Produced by the event's organisers, this tries to bring together local campaign groups and individuals.

Events like this can and should be organised by anarchists in their own localities. It's an effective way of educating ourselves about other issues and campaigns, meeting new friends and comrades, and also bringing our ideas to new people and groups.

Such work is certainly vital in the current climate, both international and local. Walking through the city centre and seeing the masses of shoppers on my way back to Piccadilly, I was reminded how thousands of people live in Manchester alone, who have yet to hear of anarchism and its liberating ideas.

JPS
Networking Newsletter, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS



Ground Zero to Baghdad

Iraq

The 'war on terrorism' seems to be on hold for the moment, as the Bush administration reels under the weight of the Enron scandal. But we can expect the world's only superpower to ready itself for an assault on another defenceless third world enemy soon. One possible target is Somalia, with Iraq some way down the line.

The justification offered for these terrorist attacks by the US is the suffering caused by the atrocities of 11th September. It is of great significance, then, that relatives of people who died on that day have spoken out publicly against war and retaliation, have demonstrated, have gone on peace walks, have even visited Afghanistan to voice their support for nonviolent alternatives and for reconciliation and justice.

In December, I was privileged to join the last leg of the 'walk for healing and peace' in New York – it had started in Washington DC, within sight of the Pentagon – and to hear clear, brave anti-war speeches from several people who lost loved ones in both cities. David Potorti, who lost his brother Jim in the World Trade Centre, said, "I believe we really do need a strong show of force, but there are different ways of showing force. You can be legally strong, morally strong, spiritually strong".

Amber Amundson, who lost her husband Craig Scott Amundson, called on her national leaders to "find the courage to



respond to this incomprehensible tragedy by breaking the cycle of violence".

Voices in the Wilderness US, which had organised the walk, then led a joint US/UK sanctions-breaking delegation to Iraq, in which Matt Barr and I represented Voices in the Wilderness UK. While we were there, we witnessed the Ground Zero of 11½ years of economic sanctions. We visited hospitals in Baghdad and Basra.

We saw modest signs of rehabilitation in the wards, but also evidence of continuing

high rates of malnutrition and disease among children under five years of age. The last estimate of chronic malnutrition in the country, the result of a joint survey by the UN World Food Programme and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, put the figure at "at least 800,000" children under the age of five. Chronic malnutrition in childhood can lead to lifelong physical and mental impairment.

Iraq needs foreign investment and foreign loans to repair its public health infrastructure.

Iraqi businesses need to be able to export goods other than oil, to earn their way in the world and to bring foreign exchange back into the country. This in turn would generate jobs and purchasing power.

But foreign investment, foreign loans, exports other than oil and direct access to foreign exchange are all banned under sanctions – and will continue to be banned under the so-called 'smart sanctions' due to be introduced in May. Despite this, we can expect a wave of official and media propaganda about 'the end of sanctions' to burst out when the new UN resolution is passed.

Economic sanctions are a weapon of mass destruction, and they probably kill more Iraqis every month than died in the World Trade Centre. But they are wielded each and every day of the year by those who claim to be 'liberating' the world from terrorism.

The children of Iraq, like those who died on 11th September, deserve justice not vengeance. Voices in the Wilderness will continue breaking the economic sanctions on Iraq until they get it.

Milan Rai

• Voices in the Wilderness UK are honoured to be hosting Ryan Amundson, who lost his brother Craig in the Pentagon on 11th September, when he visits London later this month to speak out for justice in place of vengeance. For more info visit www.viwuk.freeserve.co.uk or call 0845 458 2564 (local rate call).

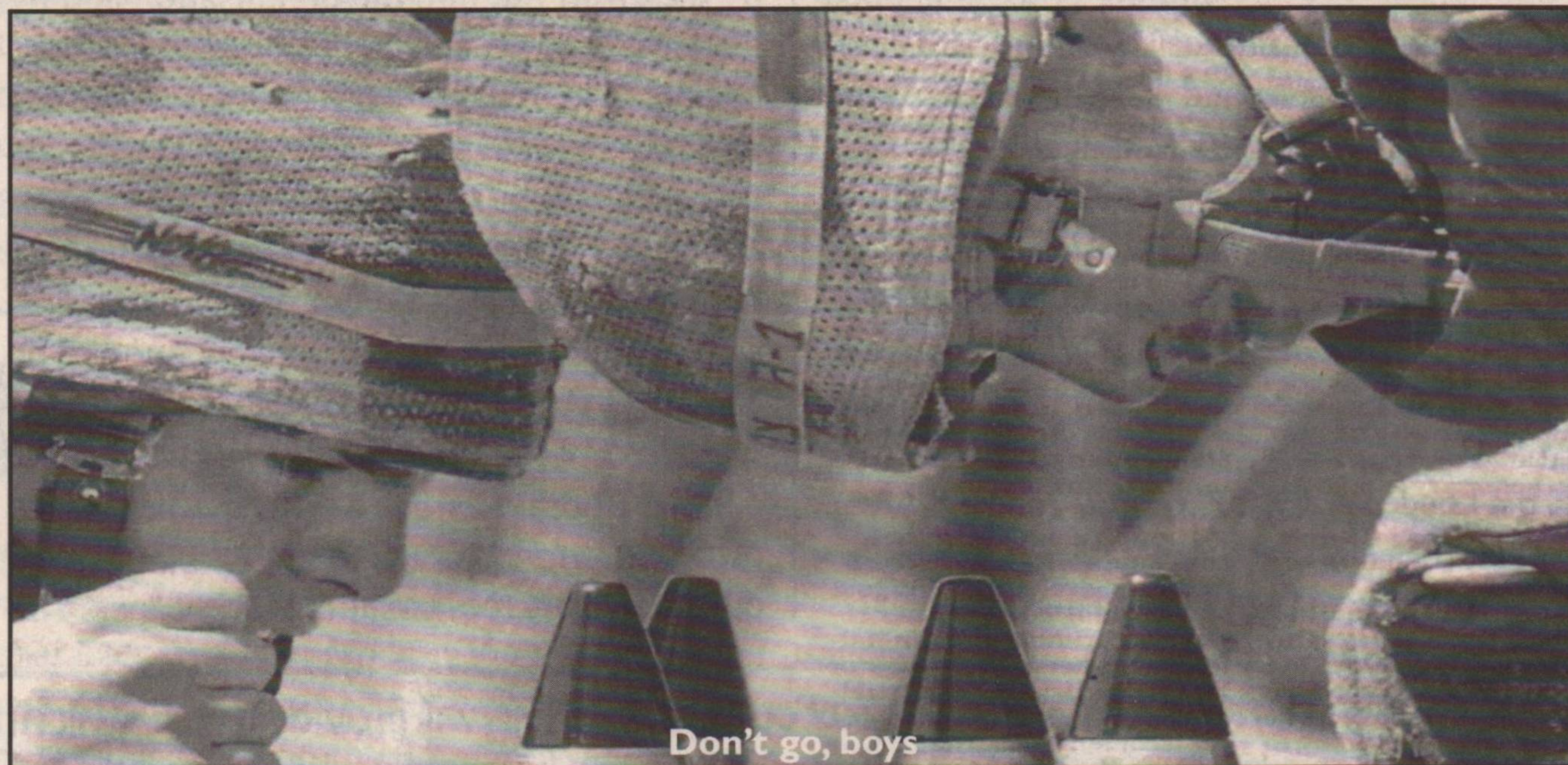
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An army with mutiny in mind

Israel

Over 600 reservists have been imprisoned for disobeying orders or desertion in the last few months, while rumours have grown that certain units of the Israeli Defence Force are in a state of near-mutiny rather than serve in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The government of prime minister Ariel Sharon was further embarrassed last week, when more than fifty reservists very publicly refused to continue serving there, and called on other soldiers to refuse as well.

The men, half of them officers and all of them combat veterans from Israel's many wars, placed an advertisement in a national newspaper, explaining their decision not to cross the line of control between Israel and the West Bank. The advertisement, published in *Ha'aretz* on 29th January, said "we will not go on fighting beyond the 'Green Line' for the purposes of domination, expulsion, and humiliation of an entire people".



Don't go, boys

The men have added their voices to a well-established peace and anti-draft movement, though one heavily dominated by liberal reformists. "Many peace organisations have never stopped explaining that occupation and peace are not compatible, and have relentlessly kept up their day-to-day protests, vigils, tree-plantings, home rebuildings, checkpoint monitoring, blockade dismantling

and so on", explained Gila Svirsky, a pacifist from Jerusalem, on reading *Ha'aretz*. "But recently, we have seen more and more in the media and even on the streets".

Welcoming the advertisement, she went on "this is an unprecedented call by soldiers to other soldiers not to serve. It is an incredibly courageous act, but also a very powerful statement".

But many Israeli anarchists have denied that the men should be treated as heroes. "These are men who want to do their duty to the state, and see speaking out now as the best way of doing it", one Tel Aviv activist told *Freedom*. "Look at what the advertisement also said – 'we declare that we shall continue to serve the Israeli Defence Forces in any mission that serves the defence of the state of Israel. The mission of occupation and repression does not serve this goal'".

Since the second *intifada* broke out in September 2000, hundreds of Israelis have refused to serve in the occupied territories and several thousand are thought to have gone absent without leave. Many thousands more have become what are known as 'grey objectors' – people who fabricate medical or personal reasons for escaping the draft.

Under Israeli law, every male must do three years' national service from age 18, followed by a statutory period of service in the reserves every year, usually for about thirty days. This continues up to the age of 45.

Thousands defy NATO ban

Germany

Police and mainstream media came under intense criticism at the start of this week, for their part in supporting a gathering of known killers in Munich. The NATO Security Conference, which opened on 1st February, is held in the southern city every year, to provide a forum for senior officers to exchange ideas and information. This year's event was attended by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and NATO Secretary General George Robertson.

As many as twenty thousand people took to

the streets to protest, in defiance of an official ban on demonstrations introduced the day before. There were at least seven hundred arrests, as police made repeated attempts to halt demonstrations during the two days of the conference. Some three thousand cops, equipped with both water cannon and armoured personnel carriers, had been deployed for the purpose. Special commando units were also reported to be standing by.

Senior police claimed beforehand to have evidence that several thousand demonstrators were 'bent on violence'. Protesters rejected the claim. "Everything that has been said

about predicted violence is a lie", said one.

The mainstream media this week also faced criticism this week for their coverage of the protests. "The local media have played their well-known role of stirring up fear of 'violence' by 'leftwing extremists', who allegedly want to make Munich a 'second Genoa'," said one activist. "They've tried their best to justify heavy-handed police actions – the ban on protests and the criminalisation of the protesters. They've effectively turned reality upside down by accusing anti-war protesters – and not the generals and officials having the meeting – of 'violence'."

MISUSES OF THE WORD 'ANARCHY'

Number Three in an occasional series

"Britain's relations with Robert Mugabe plunged to their lowest depths since independence last night, when the government called for Zimbabwe to be thrown out of the Commonwealth and millions of pounds of funds to be seized", declared journalists Kamal Ahmed and Andrew Meldrum breathlessly (*Observer*, 27th January).

And why is the British government so concerned with what Mugabe gets up to? Because it fears "further anarchy ahead of elections in its former colony". As if.

Nerdz nite out in London

Merz Nite

organised by Goldsmiths College
electronic music studio
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
25th January 2002

The handout for this event told us that *merz* was how 1920s Dadaist Kurt Schwitters "described all his work". The word was derived from his random tearing up of a poster for the Hanover Kommerz und Privat-Bank.

It has no meaning in German but, as far as 'Merz Nite' goes, 'shit' would be a good translation. There was a man walking about on crutches, with a torch dangling between his legs. There was improvisational noise-making with musical instruments. Several people sat at a table, cutting up pictures and sticking them back together again at random. There was, in the words of the handout, unconstrained spontaneous expression.

Was there? Like fuck there was. It was just another tame, pointless event of the kind London's *arteratti* circulate around. The museum guards, fetchingly dressed in green jackets like oldtime waiters on British Rail trains, looked on bemusedly and reminded the Dadaists and improvisers to smoke outside, please. The bulk of the museum was roped off (the event was held in the V&A's entrance hall).

It was a pleasant enough evening. I met some old friends and made some new ones. The Becks and wine was overpriced, but not outrageously so. I occasionally had the feeling



Is modern art in for a hard landing?

I'd stepped into a timewarp, and next day would see the Stones playing free in Hyde Park, or maybe go to a demo against the Vietnam War.

But what was it all about? Did the organisers

really believe that they were "bitterly opposed to commercial and institutional compromise"? Did they really believe that they were breaking with "today's cravenly commercial megalomaniac art world"? I'm

sure they did.

It was hyperironic that this celebration of Dada was held in a museum, and in the V&A of all places. The point that subversive art movements have been incorporated and institutionalised has been made so often, by Situationists and others, that there's no need to labour it here.

It's as if there is a 'surplus appropriation' – an appropriation of once subversive movements, over and above that which is required by the needs of the Propaganda Apparatus. There seems to be almost pleasure, a revelling in the humbling of the opponents of capital, a need to drag captives of the cultural imperium through the streets in chains, yet again.

The only sense I can make of the organisers' motives is that they had unconsciously accepted the notion that Dada was nothing but an art movement from the beginning, and that Schwitters's actions were carried out with material (the bank's poster) which he believed to be merely aesthetic.

Could the actual Dadaists have been scooped up and timewarped to the event, what would they have done? Wrecked the museum perhaps, or raided the booze store and chatted up women – they were notorious sexual predators, after all.

Of course it's easy to be critical, so the conservatives and conformers tell us. But an event like this does raise major questions. Is any subversive art practice possible at all? What would its presuppositions be? What might it do? What might it make? Comments and thoughts are invited.

Nicky Ludd

Footnotes on Vernon Richards

Vernon Richards, founder of the modern Freedom Press (where he was always known as Vero), died in December. Here we print various tributes, the last of which is from the Catalan village of L'Escala, where he took photographs over a period of forty years.

There are many people who had far more to do with Vero than I did. But I have two special memories of him. The first is from when I first knew him 59 years ago, the second from one of the last letters he wrote me, about two years before he died.

The first is of how, in their flat, he and Marie Louise Berneri played me the finale of Beethoven's third symphony. Beethoven was my new-found musical hero at that time. Vero explained that the 'anthem' of the Spanish anarchists during the Civil War had sounded just like one of the variations.

Many years later, I 'confessed' to him that I felt an old-fashioned respect for and courtesy towards women. In his reply, Vero wrote "as for conflict between anarchism and the 'admiration' of men and women for each other, I started life with a mother I adored, in spite of the fact that there were occasions when *her* boy did something awful, and she would chase him round the dining room and lashed out! And yet I have a photograph of when I was probably 13, sitting on her lap and cuddling her! And I'm sure that this love influenced by lifelong love of my companions and, how shall I put it, *respect* of women. I see it even now. When I walk down the street, the pavement is narrow, I always *enjoy* letting the women pass. And in the Co-op I keep the door open

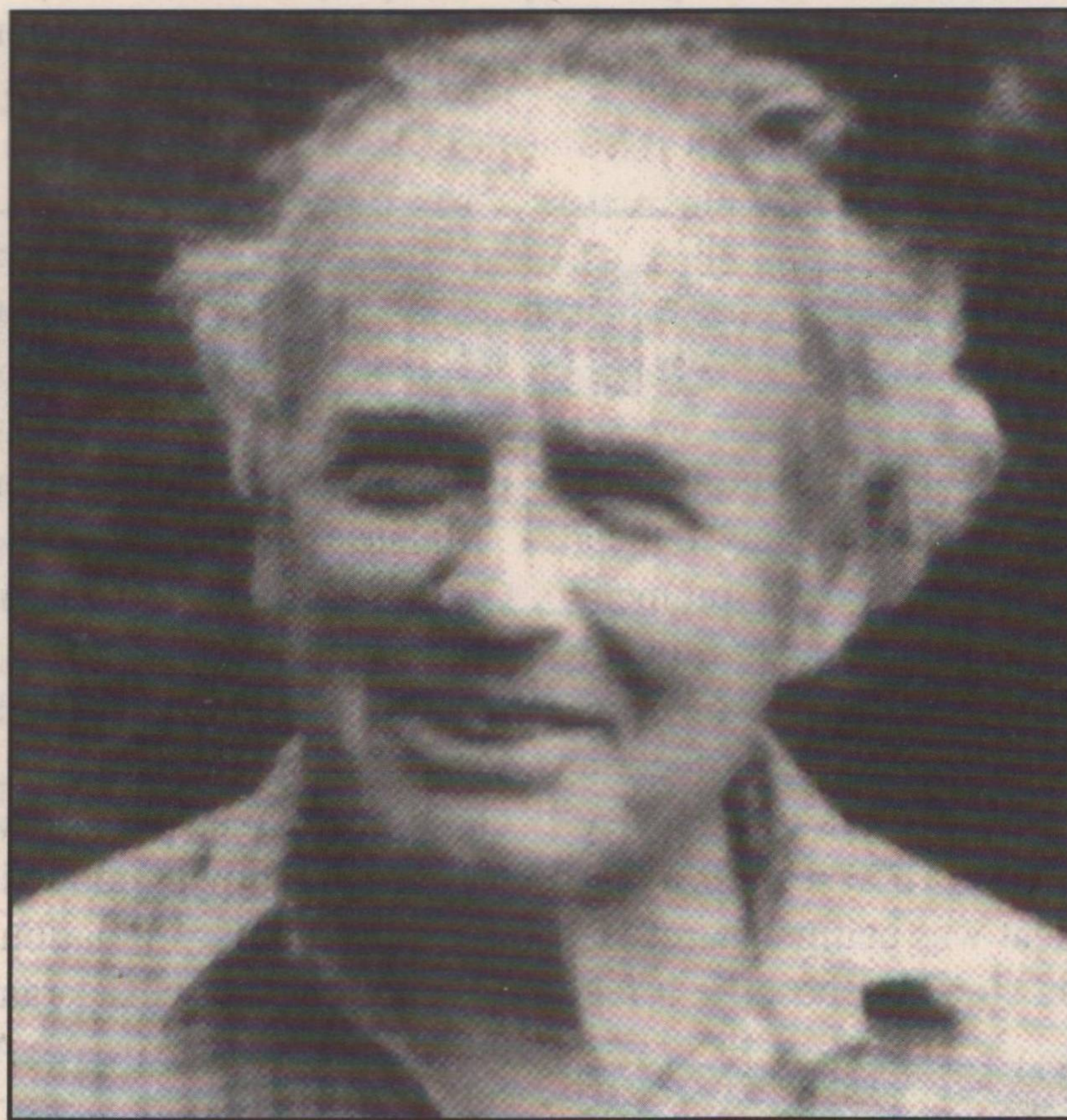
for any of them to come in, and occasionally the elderly women say 'you don't often have this nowadays'. And of course I love it ... what other joys can this ancient chap have?"

My impression of Vero was of a person with many sides to his character. They included irascibility and contempt for contrary opinions. But for me, one of the strongest was his humanity.

Amorey Gethin

I would like to add my voice to those who have written about Vernon Richards since his death, to fill one small gap in a rich lifetime of struggle. Of the many ways in which Vero worked tirelessly for the cause, one stands out in my mind because I was, and still am, intimately involved.

Anarchist publishing and propaganda had always the main purpose of Freedom Press, but after the demise of Express Printers in the 1972, all printing had to be sent out. By the late 1970s, when I was an editor of *Freedom*, our most pressing problem was that the printing of the newspaper was done in Margate. The logistics of despatching the artwork, collecting the printed paper and then sending it out was a great drain on our resources.



Vero recognised this, and knew that amongst the editors there were those who, if encouraged, could be trusted to do something about it. He raised money from a friend overseas, and entrusted me with the project of setting up Aldgate Press. We started trading in June 1981, and are still here. We began as a

collective of three, with old machinery, limited skills and a lot of enthusiasm. Twenty-one years later, two original members are still here along with a dozen others. We print *Freedom* and other Freedom Press publications at a very reduced rate, and work for a lot of other relatively like-minded organisations in order to make ends meet. We still operate as a collective, with everyone paid the same daily rate, and though not many members of the collective would necessarily call themselves anarchists, they are all sympathetic to the cause!

During all these years, Vero never interfered with the way we ran the press or the investments we made, however much he may have disagreed with our decisions and even though he had raised the money himself. For example, at one stage we printed most of the regular anarchist papers published in London, including those with whom Vero and Freedom Press had strong disagreements. This was

always seen as the correct thing to do, and nobody ever censured us. Throughout the next twenty years, Vero sang our praises to any that would listen, drummed up work for us including books which he paid for himself, and remembered us in his will.

Like a good anarchist, I can't pretend to speak for other members of the collective, but my personal legacy to Vero will be to pursue the aims of Freedom Press with renewed vigour. He didn't want speeches at his funeral, nor a hagiography now – he wanted the world to change. It is now up to those of us who remain to try and turn that dream into reality.

Steve Sorba

Vero was still making a weekly trip to London from his Suffolk home in the early 1990s. At that time, we shared premises at 84b Whitechapel High Street. We had the ground floor, second floor and attic, while Freedom Press occupied the first floor.

During the day, we all took our turn in putting our heads round the door to say hello. His pleasure in seeing us was genuine and heartfelt. He was an outrageous (but never offensive) flirt, with his beautiful blue eyes. His passion and charm lit up the room. That is how we will remember him.

Aldgate Press

We are writing to express our most sincere condolences on the death of the appreciated photographer, Vernon Richards. We would like to express our gratitude for the love and generosity he showed to L'Escala, where he will always be remembered with love and respect.

Josep Ma. Guinart i Solà
Mayor of L'Escala

Jail those pesky phone thieves

Ten years ago, almost nobody had a mobile phone. If you were one of the few who did, it was built like a railway sleeper and people would piss themselves laughing when you used it. Now, almost everybody has one and Lord Woolf, the Lord Chief Justice, thinks that people who steal one should get at least eighteen months inside (five years or more when weapons of violence are used).

The con trick is of the essence of capitalism. The products of our own labour are sold back to us for profit, as the products of corporations. We are deceived into believing we need things which yesterday we had no use for. Desire is reduced to a craving, sated (for now) by things we're told are the solution to a problem we didn't know we had.

With the defeat of organised labour in the 1980s, capital saw a chance to increase the exploitation of its human resource. This meant that life, in and of itself, was subjected to a process of speed-up, with digital technology changing the nature, pace and place of work. Laptops, email, mobiles and faxes began to make the workplace inescapable, and the work environment became anywhere you happened to be. Life began to grow faster and less secure, and we responded by anchoring ourselves with the products that generated the process of acceleration in the first place.

If we're told that the mobile phone is an essential survival tool in the 21st century, that we need this model or network, this colour and that range of ringtones, is it any wonder some want phones they can't afford, or more than one, or one particular model but at half the price? Is it any wonder when a network of crime develops to meet the need, a network mirroring the one that's arisen in the legal economy to meet the original manufactured desire to own a mobile?

Crime becomes a shadow of the market, supplying the same goods but cheaper, a way



of beating the market at its own game. Mobile phone theft is a manufactured crime, in that (like its legal counterpart) it exists to satisfy a desire we didn't know we had, until Motorola told us so. But more than that, because it's a crime invented to tell us that life is less and less secure, that we can't trust the person next to us, it excludes any possibility of solidarity, and leaves little chance of effective revolt.

Mobile phone crime is mostly about kids stealing other kids' mobiles. The risk of phone theft among children is five times greater than it is for adults. All of this tells us that the manipulation of childhood desire has matched that of adult desire, only the counter-network – the illegal market – is much greater because the capacity of children to satisfy their desire in the legal market is so

much less than that of their adult counterparts. Children can't buy mobiles, so the market in stolen mobiles continues to outgrow the legal market.

This is bad news for Virgin, Orange and BT Cellnet, because it puts the idea of property-as-commodity into question and (given the cost of mobile phones) puts it into question in a more profound way than if kids were stealing each other's football cards or yoyos. It reveals the extent to which the market has penetrated the everyday life of childhood, and it also tells us that capital will never pass up the chance to create a moral panic to take our eyes off the ball. Instead of being horrified at the rise in phone theft, we'd be better concerned at the commodification of childhood it exemplifies.

Nick S.

Lord Woolf's comment seemed to get little reaction in the mainstream media, other than a short piece I saw in the editorial of the *Guardian*. But his ruling affected an 18 year old almost straight away – at first given a probation order, this was swiftly replaced with a 2½ year custodial sentence.

Woolf, known as a 'liberal' judge, was the man who produced the biggest report on the treatment of prisoners yet, following the Strangeways Uprising of 1990 (though most of his proposals were never intended to be implemented). He has been vocal about the damaging effects prison has on people, and he's argued that the number of people being incarcerated has to be cut. Now he seems to be contradicting much of what he's said over the last decade.

The Strangeways riot was not just about overcrowded prisons (though this was a factor). It was more to do with the brutality and degradation experienced in British prisons, and to stand up for some basic human rights. David Bowden, who was being held there on remand for stealing a pair of curtains, got a twelve year prison sentence for going up on the roof.

The technology already exists to disconnect mobiles when they're stolen. A few companies use such equipment already, but as the *Guardian* reported last week "Vodafone and Cellnet are resisting. It is claimed they make up to £100m from the use of stolen phones" (31st January).

Woolf's decision will ultimately affect many young people, and goes against New Labour's self-declared plan of steering young people away from Young Offenders' Institutions. It's just as well they're building a new one near Woolwich's Belmarsh jail, as the one at Feltham is full to bursting point. We really need to warehouse all these potential thieving kids!

Lee H.

Malatesta and the General Strike

In his article on Vernon Richards last issue (26th January), Brian Bamford said Errico Malatesta was "hostile to the idea of a General Strike". This wasn't the case, as the following quotation (about Italian factory strikes) shows: "the metal workers started the movement over wage rates. It was a strike of a new kind. Instead of abandoning the factories, the idea was to remain inside without working ... Throughout Italy, there

was a revolutionary fervour among the workers, and soon the demands changed their character. Workers thought that the moment was ripe to take possession once and for all of the means of production. They armed for defence ... and began to organise production on their own.. it was a right of property abolished in fact ... it was a new regime, a new form of social life that was being ushered in. And the government stood by, because it felt

impotent to offer opposition".*

Malatesta never believed that a traditional General Strike, where the workers stayed out of their workplaces, would be effective - the workers would eventually be forced back to work. But he thought that an expropriating General Strike, where workers start to organise their own production, would be part of a revolutionary situation.

He and the anarchist organisation in which he was active, the Unione Anarchica Italiana (UAI), supported the factory councils, as did the USI, the syndicalist union in which the UAI and other anarchists had some influence. But he was endowed with a sharp critical sensibility, and he knew these actions wouldn't be enough. It was necessary to capture the workplaces, sure, but it was also necessary to capture the streets.

It was necessary to take on the forces of the state and of reaction, to sweep away the last remaining vestiges of the state with an insurrection, coupled with a subversion of the armed forces. To characterise Malatesta as being opposed to strike tactics, in other words to put forward a polarity between General Strike and insurrection, is mistaken.

Nick Heath

* Taken from page 134 of *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, compiled and edited by Vernon Richards, available from Freedom Press at £5.00 (post free in the UK, please add 75p towards postage and packing for overseas orders).

There's no point arguing over how the Revolution will happen. We're too far away from a revolutionary situation. All the distinctions – communist or syndicalist, individualist or social anarchist – are meaningless. What form the Revolution takes is something we'll see when it happens. My hunch is that it'll be an amalgam of all the different ways anarchists have talked about.

Arron

2002: Happy Jubilee Ma'am

Bess and her corgis took the throne fifty years ago this week (on 6th February 1952)



Episode three in our heartwarming celebratory series on ordinary royal folk

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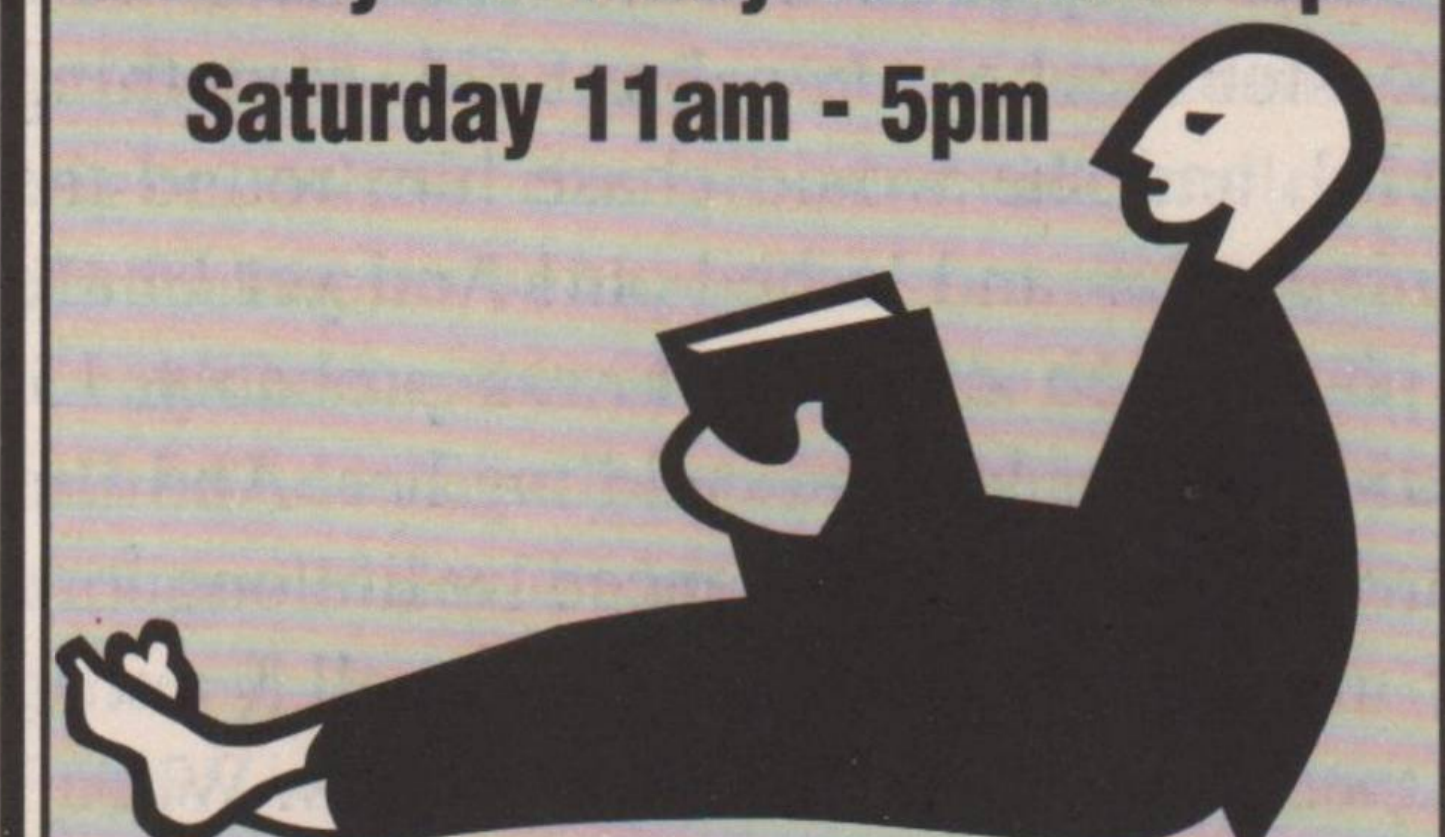
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Books can be ordered from the above address.
A booklist is available on request.



NCADC MEETING

9th Feb • 12 noon to 5pm • Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester

To bring together families and individuals who are campaigning/ fighting against deportation to enable them to exchange experiences and plan future strategies.

There will be a coach leaving from London (booking: John Stewart on 020 7701 5197)

REMEMBERING MIKA TALVILAHTI

On Saturday 9th February two events will be held for Mika. In the afternoon some of his comrades will plant a tree dedicated to him in Walthamstow. From 8pm there will be a memorial gathering at Conway Hall in Holborn. Call 07810 288 889 for more info

MAYDAY 2002 PLANNING MEETING

Sunday 10th February from 2pm at London Activist Resource Centre
London Activist Resource Centre (LARC), corner of Fieldgate and Parfett Street, London E1
see festivalofalternatives@yahoo.com

FASLANE: THE BIG BLOCKADE

11th to 13th February at Faslane Peace Camp
Join us for three days of protest and nonviolent action at the Trident base on the Clyde, just thirty miles north of Glasgow. On Monday 11th February we will begin with a mass blockade of the base from 7am. On Tuesday 12th, join the jericho rumpus with din and mayhem from 10am. Bring drums, whistles, etc. On Wednesday 13th the invitation to a valentine's ball at noon goes to all those who love this planet and are willing to dress up to prove it. Plus nonviolent direct action every day. Come to all or any of the times during the three-day period. There will be overnight accommodation close to Faslane from Saturday 9th to Thursday 14th February.
action line: 0845 4588361 • big_blockade@hotmail.com
coach from London to Faslane contact: faslanecoach@hotmail.com or tel 07833 393325

SINGING WORKSHOP AT MR GLUCK'S

12th and 19th February from 7pm to 9pm
held at Mr Gluck's Radical Dairy Community Centre, 47 Kynaston Road, London N16
for more info call 020 8809 1352

BUILDING LIBERATION MONTHLY FORUM

Wednesday 20th February from 7.30pm
at The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington • forum for those involved/interested in social centres

LONDON ANARCHIST FORUM

Meets at 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).
• Friday 22nd February: Do we need more immigration or less? (speaker Peter Neville)
• Thursday 7th March: The War Against Terrorism (symposium)
• Friday 22nd March: Anarchy and the Third World (symposium)

WELSH NATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR PEACE

Saturday 23rd February at 6pm • Great Hall, Aberystwyth Arts Centre
To address issues from the US war on terrorism and prospects for international peace and justice
info: Olwen Davies 01970 611994 • Medi James 01970 832725 • Helena Earnshaw 01654 702375
Aberpeacegroups@hotmail.com

WAR ON TERRORISM • STOP SANCTIONS ON IRAQ

Conference 23rd to 24th February, Kingsley Hall, Bruce Road, London E3
An opportunity for the anti-war and anti-sanctions movements to re-group and be re-inspired
info: voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk or 0845 458 2564

WOMBLES CAMPAIGN MEETING

Wednesday 27th February from 7.30pm
at The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington, London (nearest tube Highbury & Islington)

WOMEN SPEAK OUT

National Anarcha-feminist gathering on 8th to 10th March
at Radical Dairy Community Centre, 47 Kynaston Road, London N16
Workshops, discussion, action, films, food, fun, frolics, cabaret, music
contact 020 7249 6996 for more info

NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK

Saturday 9th March from 10.30am to 5.30pm
at the News From Nowhere bookshop, Bold Street, Liverpool
for more details contact Martin on 0161 707 9652

INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE BOOKFAIR IN BELGIUM

Saturday 9th March from 10am to 8pm (gig from 9pm onwards)
Intercultureel Centrum 'De Centrale'
Kraankinderstraat 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium
After the enthusiastic reactions of both stallholders and visitors to our first bookfair, we're pleased to announce our second International Alternative Bookfair in Belgium.
for more details contact aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com
website: http://www.Xs4all.be/~verdan/aboek

RED RAMBLES 2002

Red Rambles is a group who meet in Derbyshire and the Peak District.
Anyone from a left libertarian background is welcome.

Sunday 7th April at 11am

Meet outside the Hurt Arms Public House, Ambergate, Derbyshire, for a five mile circular walk through Shining Cliff Woods in springtime. The walk leader is Mike.
for more info call 07775 977136 or email ain@ziplip.com

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