



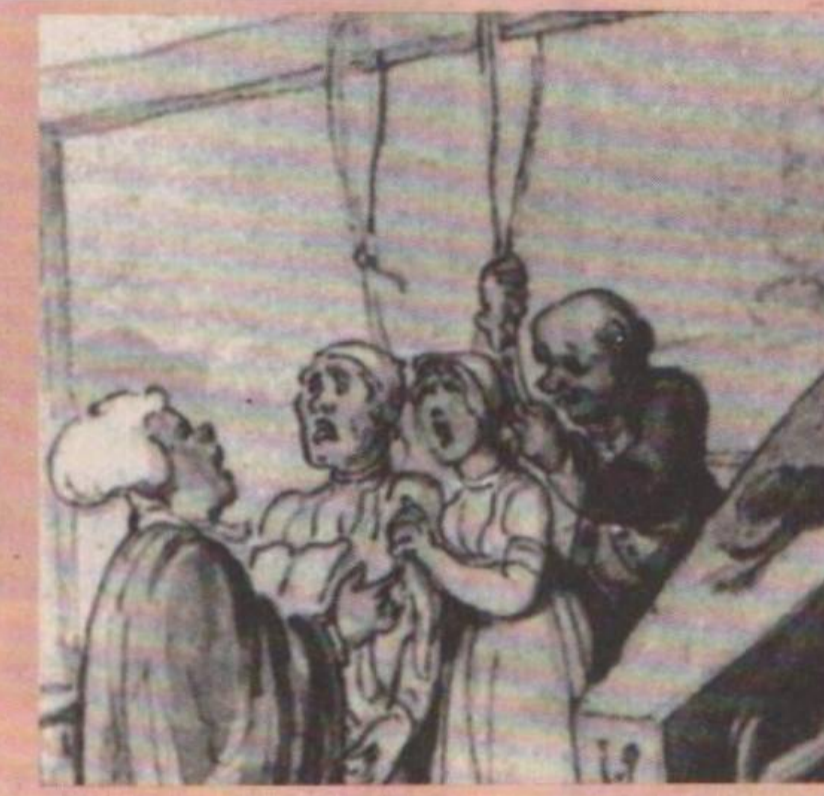
ESSENTIAL HISTORY

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SO WHAT'S ART FOR?

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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Thugs lash out in Spain

Barcelona was recovering at the start of this week following the violent scenes which accompanied the European Summit. At least ten people were hurt on 16th March, its final day, when cops unleashed a wave of violence on a peaceful demonstration. "The police presence was large and intimidating", said one protester. "Then all hell broke loose. Cops waded into the crowd hitting anyone who got in their way".

Another protester said the attack had provoked chaos in the streets around the main avenue, the Ramblas. "There were thirty vans filled with riot cops at the end of the Ramblas. Demonstrators were trying to hide wherever they could – hotel lobbies, doorways, shop entrances. The police were everywhere, trying to find them. There must have been over 1,000 cops". She went on, "I'm just glad to be alive. This was as bad as Genoa".

Up to 600,000 activists took to the streets during the two-day summit, which was intended to give EU bosses an opportunity to plot the next phase of capitalist economic liberalisation. Carrying banners with messages such as 'another world is possible' and 'millionaires can cry too', they marched from the Plaza Cataluña to the seafront. Although the police assault on Saturday was said to be particularly violent, a march on Friday had also come under attack.

Protesters were unable to approach the conference venue itself, which was guarded by armoured cars. Inside were senior politicians, including Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi. On the evening of 15th March, one of the city's parks played host to a silent, candlelit vigil, in remembrance of Carlo Giuliani. He was the anti-capitalist activist killed by Berlusconi's own police in Genoa last summer.

After recent experience of the way European states treat anti-capitalist protesters, liberal campaign group Amnesty International expressed its worries over the way Barcelona would be policed even before the summit began. Catalan police practices have already been criticised in several Amnesty reports.

The organisation also criticised Spain's decision to suspend the Schengen Agreement, allowing it to seal its borders for the duration of the summit. The move, which has become standard practice during EU bosses' meetings, led to buses being turned back at Perpignan on the French border. In another move which is becoming a regular feature of big anti-capitalist actions, two Indymedia journalists were arrested and beaten up after being targeted by police.

Editorial on page 7



Barcelona, 15th March

Seeds of revolution

Almost spontaneously they gathered on the street corners. Even before the events of December, when Argentina's economy collapsed, people in some areas of Buenos Aires had begun to come together to share their unease at the deteriorating situation and to discuss effective forms of protest. In the two weeks following the fall of president Fernando De La Rúa at the end of last year, the phenomenon of street meetings increased, with around twenty neighbourhood assemblies being set up.

New inter-neighbourhood assemblies were set up as well, meeting weekly to co-ordinate proposals from the neighbourhood assemblies. The movement has grown quickly ever since. Today, there are over fifty assemblies in the city of Buenos Aires itself, while in

Report from the Compañeros of the Biblioteca Popular José Igenieros, Buenos Aires

Greater Buenos Aires (the urban belt surrounding the city, which has the greatest concentration of people in the country) and in the rest of Argentina too, the first steps are being taken to set them up.

An average 3,000 *autoconvocados* take part in the assemblies, coming from all the neighbourhoods of the city. This is a word used here to describe people who aren't part of institutionalised political groups, but who nevertheless take part in political action (it literally means 'self-convened').

This incipient direct democracy is something unprecedented in Argentinian history.

But what lies behind it? Here are some of the issues which arise, both from the point of view of our own participation in the movement, and from that of outside observers.

- Most of the population of the city of Buenos Aires, which has been the cradle of this new development, is middle class.

- The movements of protest and resistance against the current economic model have been in the making for several years. But the middle class was generally unaware of them, preferring instead to passively observe the dictates of the financial institutions. There was an uncritical acceptance of the story told by the mainstream media, that the protest movements were marginal. Until now, people have

(continued on page 2)

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

"I have never seen the criminal justice system in such disarray. Unless we get to grips with the problem immediately, anarchy is not going to be far away."

Sir John Stevens, Commissioner of London's Metropolitan Police, explaining why he simply must have more power

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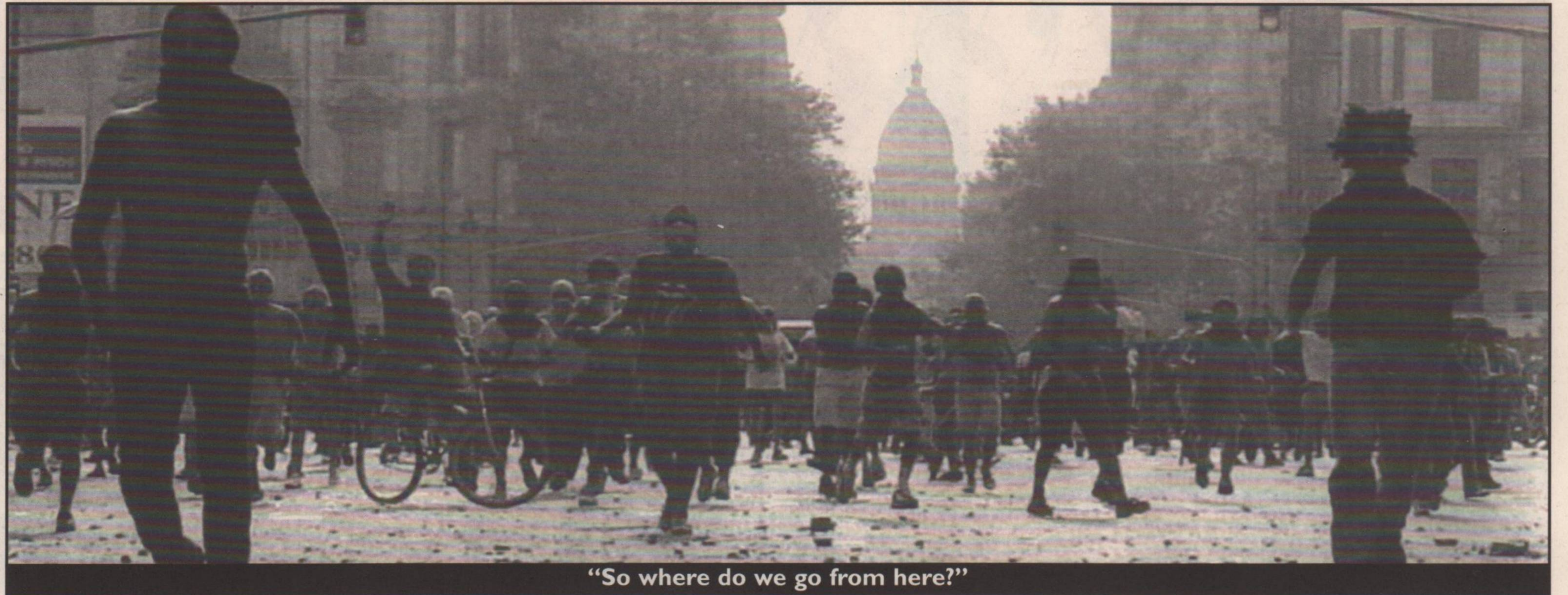
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"So where do we go from here?"

(continued from page 1)

chosen to profit, as far as they could, from the 'advantages' capitalism seemed to offer.

- The impetus behind the first street-corner 'encounters' was the unanimous popular rejection of the financial ring-fence (the so-called *corralito*), set up by then Minister of the Economy, Domingo Cavallo. Broadly speaking, this was what allowed the expropriation by banks (and the large companies associated with them) of a substantial part of the capital owned by thousands of small and medium-sized savers. This measure, carried out in an attempt to save certain banking institutions from collapse, dealt a devastating blow to the impoverished middle class, even though they were originally the main supporters of De La Rúa's Alliance government. It also had a devastating effect on domestic consumption, deepening a four-year recession in the local economy. This was the situation that provoked middle class discontent – they felt let down and used by the bosses who'd used them to get power in the first place. This fed a growing distrust and rejection of the traditional forms of political participation offered up by the institutions of representative democracy.

- In the three months assemblies have existed, their fundamental concern has moved on from the specific subject of the *corralito*, to more general questions about the economic model and political system in Argentina. At the same time, a new reconciliation has begun between the assembly movement and the *piqueteros'* movement. The *piqueteros* come from a different socio-economic grouping, and have many years' experience of struggle and resistance against the model of neo-liberal capitalism (though not against capitalism as a whole). We think this new union of assemblies and *piqueteros* is one of the most interesting and positive aspects to what's happened in Argentina this year. We should also remember that the inter-neighbourhood assemblies include delegates from among the *piqueteros* as well as from workers struggling against employers' organisations and the state – people who've been left to their fate by the bureaucratic leaders of the trade unions.

- The whole assembly movement is in its very early stages. It contains local people with no experience of political participation, alongside experienced militants from the whole spectrum of the Argentinian left. There are even some (poorly camouflaged) snipers from the discredited traditional political parties.

- The assemblies operate 'horizontally', with rotation of co-ordinators and speaking times. People talk freely and listen to all kinds of speeches, from the ones made by naïve locals, who repeat the alienating discourse of the mainstream media, to others made by

'self-sacrificing' militants, who repeat the alienating discourses of their respective parties. There are also some well-known fascists. But it's the voice of common sense that prevails, together with a marked distrust and rejection of any whiff of institutions, leaderships or political parties.

- Each assembly is autonomous, and doesn't claim to speak for (or decide for) any of the others. This autonomy is reflected in the co-ordinating inter-neighbourhood assemblies, where local assemblies have equal opportunities to present their proposals. In other words, they work on a model much closer to federalism than to centralism, even when they're marked by the defects inevitable in all new movements.

- A feature of the inter-neighbourhood assemblies that needs to be highlighted is their co-ordination by rotation. Every week, local assemblies rotate the function of co-ordinating and organising the inter-neighbourhood ones.

- Finally, we have to mention the fragility of the assemblies. Indeed, it's a fragility that's constantly stressed by groups which don't benefit from direct and popular democracy, and which consequently try to undermine a movement that would make the rotten foundations of many power structures tremble, if it were allowed to take root. This fragility is demonstrated by weaknesses such as lack of patience (this in turn arises from the difficulties resulting from limited experience in 'horizontal' organisational methods). These can be seen especially when it comes to making or voting on resolutions. There have also been problems putting resolutions into practice.

Resolutions

An analysis of resolutions proposed and voted on, both in local and inter-neighbourhood assemblies, helps in developing an understanding of what's going on in Argentina. The fact that there are contradictory resolutions faithfully reflects, we think, the varied nature of the assembly movement, as well as its (understandable) immaturity. For example, in the the fourth inter-neighbourhood assembly in Buenos Aires, votes have been taken on radical proposals ("the people must govern through their assemblies") and moderate ones ("we should remove the special powers of Aníbal Ibarra, head of the city's government") all at the same time.

Looking at some proposals, it's also evident that certain groups try to steer the assembly movement for their own ends. This applies particularly to the Union of Argentinian Workers (CTA), Workers' Power (PO) and the Workers' Socialist Movement (MST), which is a United Left coalition grouping.

A clear (and pathetic) attempt at this was when, in the fifth inter-neighbourhood assembly, there as a vote in favour of a proposal to march round the National Congress

on 13th February. This was the day when parliamentary representatives were due to discuss the executive budget for 2002. When the assembly members reached Congress, they saw that a stage had been put up, from which leaders of the CTA were already speaking.

Other examples quickly come to light if we look at the proposals for votes – some of them are undoubtedly party manifestos, such as the call for a 'free and sovereign' Constituent Assembly (the platform of moribund Trot group Workers' Power).

The important and positive thing is that the proposals we find freshest and most original almost always come from assembly members who aren't involved in trade union and party structures, or at least haven't been brainwashed by them.

But we should stress the naïve character of many resolutions, like the one proposing that "covering up of information by an organ of the mainstream media must be punished under the penal code" – which ignores the fact that the media conglomerates only exist to be creators of consent.

When it comes to considering the role of the anarchist movement in the assemblies, it's difficult to outline a general description. In fact, it's also unnecessary. Many members of anarchist groups take part in the assemblies, and straight after the events of December (when the assemblies were a minuscule and isolated phenomenon) many anarchists tried to spread the idea and to promote their creation.

Just days before the fall of De La Rúa, anarchist writer Osvaldo Bayer was asked on a radio programme who should lead the imminent change in Argentina's political and economic situation. "The assemblies must do it, everybody's assemblies", he said. At the time, this left the questioner in a state of mocking and amazed silence – few then could imagine a movement with these characteristics arising and spreading with the spontaneity and force it's since shown.

As anarchists, we think we've got to defend and enrich the resource which the valuable space of the assemblies represents. As long as they keep their characteristics of horizontality, solidarity, freedom of speech, respect for other assemblies, autonomy and coordination in the various struggles they're engaged in, we in turn will be enriched by them.

Almost without realising it (and sometimes in spite of, not because of, our activities) from the very beginning the assemblies have raised long-standing anarchist flags – federalism, autonomy, and the construction of an alternative from the bottom up. We believe it's our task to prevent these principles from being lost, distorted or (in the worst case) being only that – principles instead of things which actually mean something in practice. There's a lot to learn, and a long way to go.

Translation by Les

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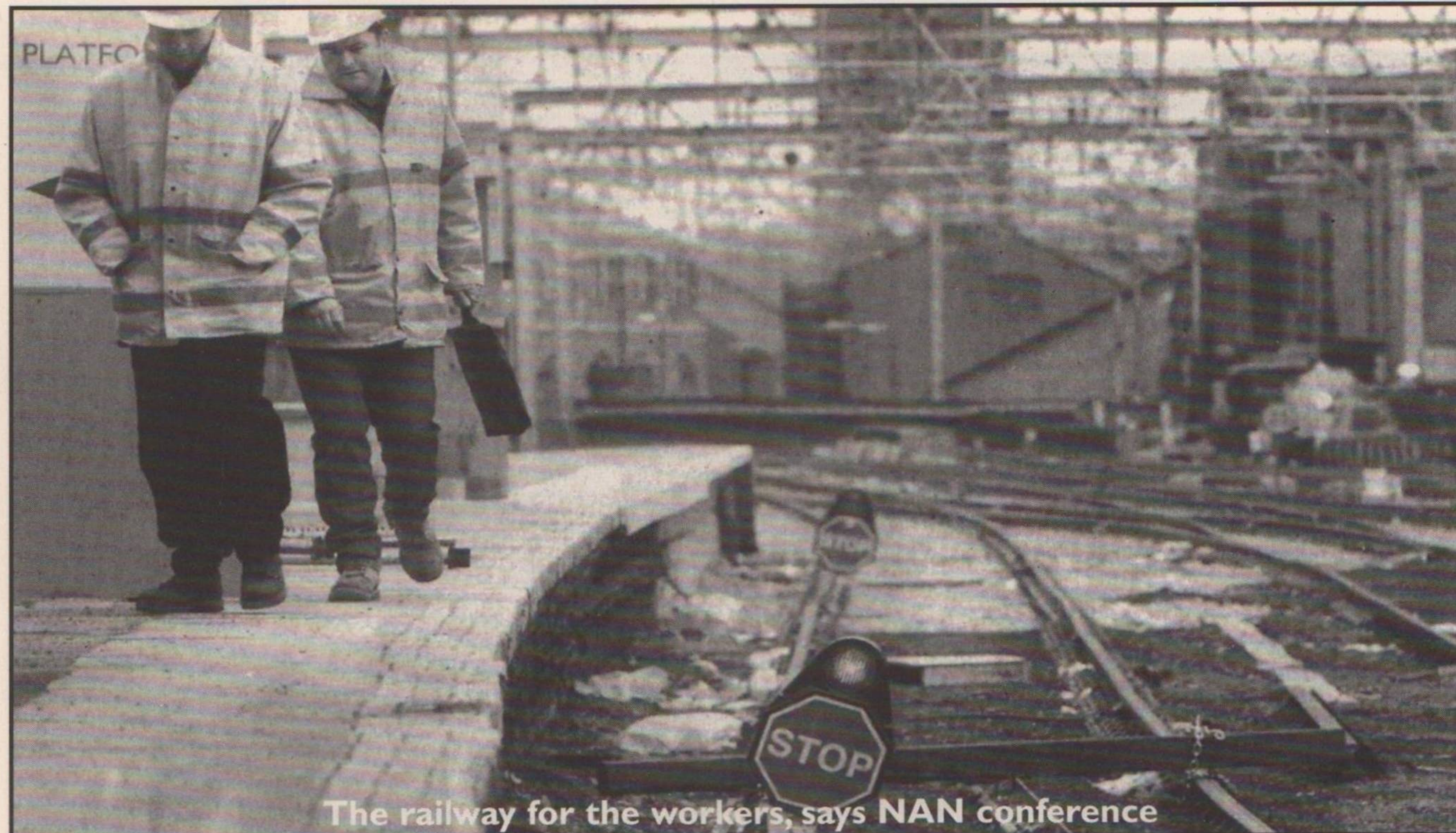
NAN meeting 'productive' say activists

Liverpool

Activists hailed the winter gathering of the Northern Anarchist Network, held in the city on 9th March, as a success. "It was a very productive meeting", one participant told *Freedom*. "Lots of anarchists from all over the north and from lots of political traditions, came together to share ideas and comradeship". Over thirty people came to the event, which was held above News from Nowhere bookshop on Bold Street.

The day opened with reports of activities from across the north of England. Clifton MacGowan described the efforts of his family to discover the truth about the deaths of his brother, Errol, and his nephew, Jason. Both men were found hanging in mysterious circumstances in Telford, after a campaign of harassment and systematic assault by racists. West Mercia Police have so far refused to treat either death as suspicious, despite a separate enquiry by the Metropolitan Police which found 57 flaws in the original investigation. At one point, Clifton said, the head of West Mercia's anti-racist unit had told the family he'd never heard of Combat 18.

Another activist, Katherine, talked about a



The railway for the workers, says NAN conference

forthcoming speaking tour by US ex-Panther Robert King Wilkerson, wrongly held in solitary confinement in Louisiana's Angola State Penitentiary for 27 years. This was followed by a discussion of how best to support political prisoners. There were also reports on actions in Newcastle and Greater Manchester.

In the afternoon, a member of Merseyside Anarchist Federation led a discussion on the situation in Argentina. He said he was

surprised at how little it was talked about by British anarchists. "How much more revolutionary can you get?", he asked. A railway worker led a discussion on workers' control of the rail industry.

The gathering finished with a long discussion of anarchist propaganda, and the role of this newspaper in it. This was led by *Freedom* contributor Brian Bamford. "Too many of our papers come over as house magazines" he said, adding that *Freedom* needed more

first-hand accounts from actions round the country. A member of the *Freedom* editorial collective, Toby Crowe, agreed that the paper had to look outward, and appealed for more information and reports on actions being carried out in the north.

He described the changes which had been made to the paper's layout in the last year, saying it was important for *Freedom* to look like a serious newspaper as well as having serious contents. He explained to Brian that contributions sometimes couldn't be included, because the editors always received more copy than they had space to print. He apologised to anyone at the gathering whose material hadn't been used.

Other participants in the discussion asked who the paper was aimed at and whether subscriptions had increased. Donald Room, another *Freedom* representative who was present, said they'd gone up over the last year.

For the past seven years, the Northern Anarchist Network has provided an umbrella for anarchists to discuss and plan future activity. The provisional date of the next meeting is 29th June, in Hebden Bridge.

Editorial on page 7

News in Brief

• **Cambridge** A social centre was opened up last weekend on the corner of Mill Road. An opening party, on Friday 15th March, was followed by two days of discussion, planning and free cafés.

• **South Lanarkshire** Activists against refugee detention were due to stage a protest outside the newly-opened Dungavel Detention Centre at the start of the week. The first group of detainees, numbering around fifty, was bussed into the centre near Strathaven on 14th March, with more arriving the next day. Many are thought to have been brought from Yarl's Wood Detention Centre in Bedford, which was badly damaged by fire in February. Activists were planning to protest outside Dungavel on Sunday 17th March.

• **London** The Carnivalistas are holding a café next week to raise funds for a new social centre in south London. The café will be held at Bonnington's on Saturday 30th March. Members of the group said last week that a permanent space was desperately needed south of the river. "We aim to create a space in which local community groups and individuals can come together to build a strong, self-confident and self-supporting community", they said. A previous café, held on 25th February, was so successful that people had to be turned away. Bonnington's Café, 11 Vauxhall Grove, SW8 from 7pm. Email carnivalista@yahoo.co.uk

• **Cumbria** Anti-militarists from Student CND and Faslane Peace Camp are planning to get together outside Sellafield nuclear plant next month, for a programme of actions and workshops. They will camp for four days, starting on 4th April.

One activist, Rachel, told *Freedom* why the camp was important. "Sellafield is still notorious for radioactive emissions and pollution. As well as its impact on the environment, the plant is involved in the production and stockpiling of plutonium, an essential ingredient in nuclear bombs".

Email info@youthstudentcnd.org.uk
Phone Heather on 020-8546 7795

• **Manchester** The city's second Radical Bookfair will be held in Ancoats, on Sunday 5th May. Although stall space is limited, we want as many people and groups as possible to attend. If anyone is interested in coming, we'd like them to let us know as soon as possible, so we can put the information in our next batch of programmes and on to the website. The day will be a celebration of grassroots co-operation, popular resistance and some really good books, covering anarchism, feminism, ecology, peace, direct action and social change.

David
5th May, 1pm - 5pm, MERCi, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, M4 7HS
Email manchesterbookfair@hotmail.com or visit www.radicalbookfair.org.uk

Action for Mark Barnsley

Report from the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign

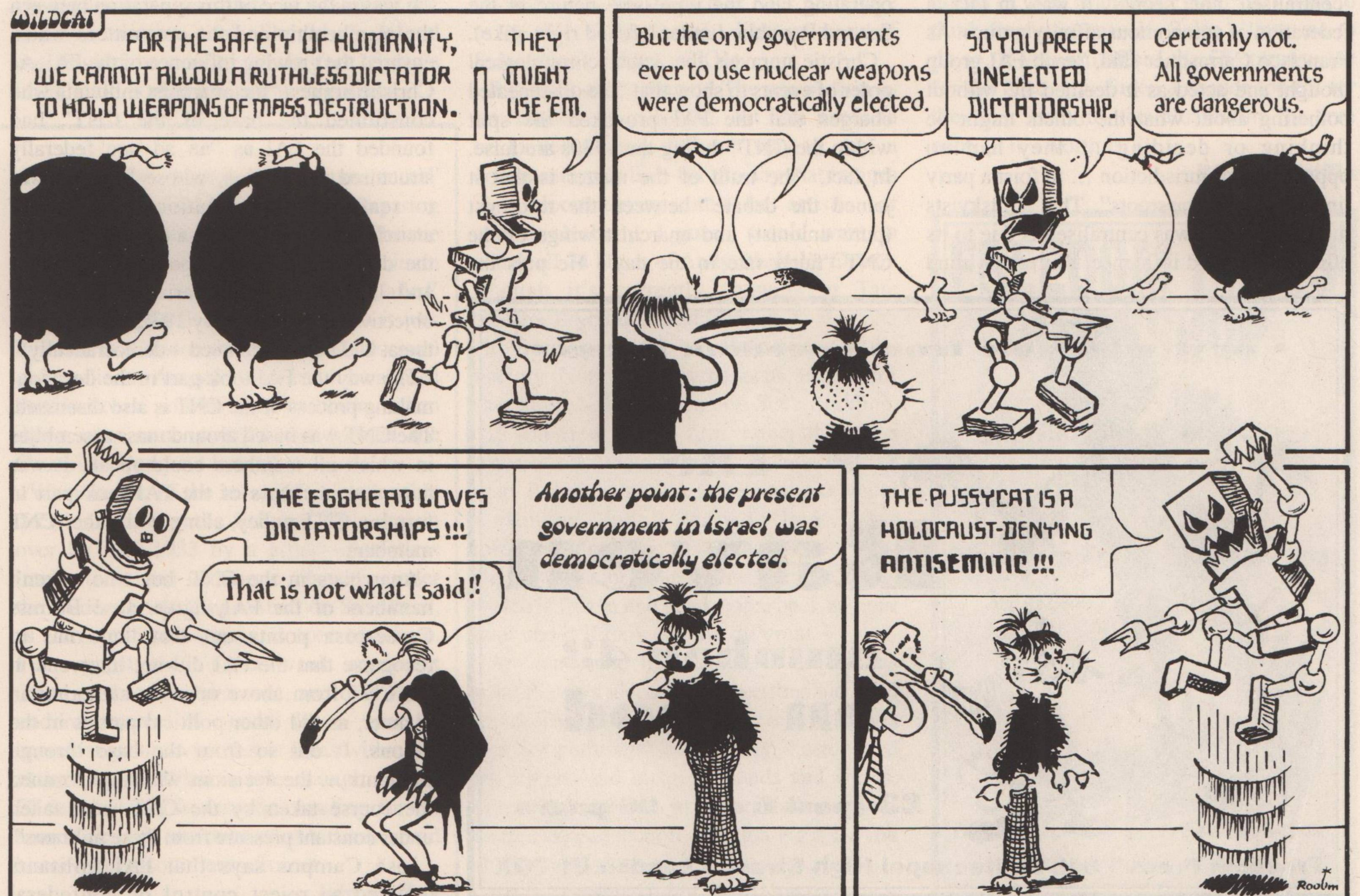
Sheffield-based political activist Mark Barnsley has been behind bars for over seven years, for a crime he didn't commit. Mark was attacked by a group of drunken students, brutally assaulted, then charged and jailed for attacking them!

A militant activist and founder of *Sheffield Anarchist* newspaper, an active supporter of striking miners and a campaigner for prisoners' rights, Mark has made solidarity a governing principle of his life, continuing to fight both for his own rights and for those of others throughout his imprisonment.

Beaten up and fitted up, Mark's conviction

still hasn't been considered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission, even though they've had his application before them for almost two years. Happy to see a fighter for working people's rights behind bars, local MPs (like David Blunkett) continue to ignore the case. Mark Barnsley has been a tireless fighter for social justice. It's time he received some solidarity in return.

On Saturday 13th April, Justice for Mark Barnsley will be holding a day of action in Sheffield to protest at Mark's continued imprisonment. Please mobilise to support us. Meet at Meadowhill bus station, 11am sharp. Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield, HD1 3XX (tel 07944 522001) Email barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com www.freemarkbarnsley.com



Essential reading

We, the Anarchists: a study of the Iberian anarchist federation (FAI) 1927-1937

by Stuart Christie

The Meltzer Press, 136 pages, £7.95

(available from The Meltzer Press, PO Box 35, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 2UX, plus £1.50 p&p)

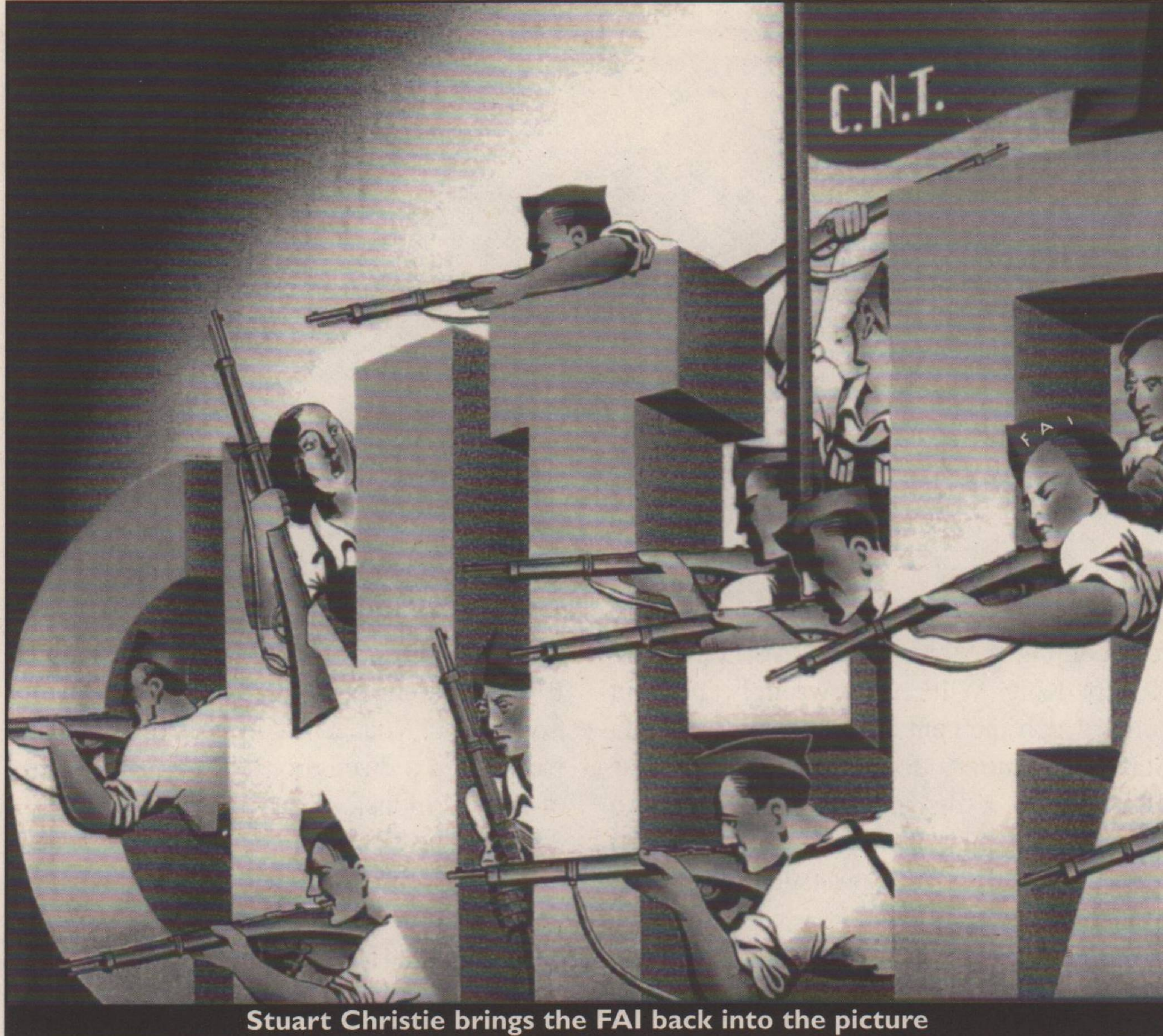
This is an important book, and veteran activist Stuart Christie has done a great service in producing it. The Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Iberica, or FAI) was one of the most famous anarchist organisations ever, as well as one of the most misrepresented. This book is essential, both for refuting the misrepresentations and for understanding the successes and (ultimately) the failure of revolutionary anarchism in Spain during the 1930s.

Its importance lies in its demolition of what can be called the 'bullying militant' analysis of the FAI, and of its influence within the larger Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT). Basically, the FAI (usually a "highly centralised and secret" FAI at that) managed to take control of the CNT in the early 1930s, expelled the moderate leadership and then pursued a revolutionary line. This helped destabilise the Republic and accelerated the rise of Franco. Or so the myth goes.

How the FAI actually did this is usually left very vague. Trotskyist writer Felix Morrow, for example, asserted that Spanish anarchism "had, in the FAI, a highly centralised party apparatus, through which it maintained control of the CNT", without any references or evidence. Unsurprisingly, this assertion has become a standard Leninist 'fact'. Other historians have painted a similar picture.

But Christie presents more than enough evidence to show that this 'standard' picture of the FAI is false, a product of historians "cynically or unintentionally distorting the available historical evidence". He stresses (quoting Chomsky) that what passes for an analysis of Spanish anarchism and the FAI is supported by "ideological conviction rather than history or investigation of the phenomena of social life".

As his book proves, the FAI was neither 'centralised' nor 'secret'. It was, in fact, a federation of autonomous affinity groups. As Francisco Carrasquer said, "each FAI group thought and acted as it deemed fit, without bothering about what the others might be thinking or deciding ... they had no opportunity or jurisdiction ... to foist a party line upon the grassroots". That Trotskyists thought the FAI was centralised is due to its effectiveness and influence. With their blind



Stuart Christie brings the FAI back into the picture

insistence that centralism must be more efficient, how could the FAI be decentralised and federal, and at the same time successful?

As for 'secret', Christie argues that this was based on a misunderstanding. "As an organisation publicly committed to the overthrow of the dictatorship, the FAI functioned from 1927 to 1931 as an illegal rather than a secret organisation. From the birth of the Republic in 1931 onwards, the FAI was simply an organisation which, until 1937, refused to register as an organisation as required by Republican law".

The FAI had a very successful newspaper and was an extremely well known organisation, so it's difficult to see how it could have been considered 'secret'. Moreover, given the repression directed at the anarchist and labour movement between 1927 and 1936, being an illegal organisation made perfect sense. In other words, most attacks against the FAI simply fail to understand both the (revolutionary) social context in which it was operating, and the repressive nature of the Second Republic (under left and right alike).

Christie unravels the actual chronological order of events to show that "the oft-repeated charges that the FAI provoked the split within the CNT" during the 1930s are false. In fact, "the truth of the matter is that it joined the debate" between the reformist (pure unionist) and anarchist wings of the CNT "fairly late in the day". He puts the

debates of the 1930s in terms of a conflict between the higher apparatus of the CNT and its more radical membership. The 'moderate' CNT unionists so beloved of the liberal historians were moderate simply because they were turning into bureaucrats.

Part of the problem, of course, is that the 'standard' accounts are "distorted by their insistence on judging the CNT against their own authoritarian model of the ideal union, one firmly controlled by an elite, 'moderate', centralised leadership". But the CNT wasn't organised in this way, even though the 'moderate' leadership tried to make it so. In early August 1931, the National Committee of the CNT issued a statement attacking its own militants for provoking "excessive conflicts". It proposed that, in future, all member unions should obtain the agreement of the local, district or regional federation before going on strike. This 'abuse' of autonomy was, in fact, what the union membership had decided.

It was in the face of this separation between the membership and the committees which ensured the growing influence of the FAI. As Christie argues, "the anarchist militants who constituted the base of the CNT" had founded the FAI as "an ad hoc federally structured association, whose function was to reaffirm the revolutionary nature of anarchism and to provide a rallying point for the defence of the anti-political principles and immediate Libertarian Communist objectives of the CNT. By 1932, the reformist threat had been eliminated - democratically!"

The way the FAI took part in the decision-making process of the CNT is also discussed. The CNT was based around mass assemblies in which all members could speak. It was here that members of the FAI took part in forming CNT policy, along with other CNT members.

Anarchists in the CNT, but who weren't members of the FAI, agree. José Borrass Casarosa points out that "one has to recognise that the FAI did not intervene in the CNT from above or in an authoritarian manner, as did other political parties in the unions. It did so from the base through militants ... the decisions which determined the course taken by the CNT were taken under constant pressure from these militants".

José Campos says that FAI militants "tended to reject control of confederal

committees, and only accepted them on specific occasions ... if someone proposed a motion in assembly, the other FAI members would support it, usually successfully. It was the individual standing of the *faista* in open assembly".

Clearly Christie's book is essential reading for anyone interested in learning about the CNT and FAI in the early 1930s, and for those trying to refute the many myths associated with these organisations. In addition, his account of the early days of the 1936 revolution is important for understanding why the CNT and the FAI made the decision to collaborate with the Republicans against Franco, rather than encourage the social revolution. As he puts it:

"The higher committees of the CNT-FAI-FIJI in Catalonia saw themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma: social revolution, fascism or bourgeois democracy. Either they committed themselves to the solutions offered by social revolution, regardless of the difficulties involved in fighting both fascism and international capitalism or, through fear of fascism (or of the people), they sacrificed their anarchist principles and revolutionary objectives to bolster, to become, part of the bourgeois state ... Faced with an imperfect state of affairs, and preferring defeat to a possibly Pyrrhic victory, the Catalan anarchist leadership renounced anarchism in the name of expediency and removed the social transformation of Spain from their agenda."

But what the CNT-FAI leaders failed to grasp was that the decision whether or not to implement Libertarian Communism was not theirs to make. Anarchism was not something which could be transformed from theory into practice by organisational decree."

A spontaneous, defensive movement had developed a political direction of its own. By fully providing and discussing the context in which this dilemma was discussed, Christie has provided the key work by which to judge all other accounts of the Spanish Revolution. Unlike most accounts of this historic decision, his analysis is grounded in the objective circumstances facing the CNT and FAI at the time. This is a breath of fresh air compared to the superficial (and usually inaccurate, not to mention frequently non-materialist) analysis, both of liberal historians and Trotskyists.

Just as important is his discussion of how this decision came to be made. Rather than being made by a regular plenum of Catalan unions, with a published agenda and mandated delegates, it was made by an 'extraordinary' plenum of militants. It was over a month before a regular plenum was held, so the membership was presented with a *fait accompli*. This break with traditional procedures was the first of many, and the resulting centralisation of power within the CNT aided the collaborationist position of the leadership. This first break with anarchism, provoked under "exceptional circumstances", soon became the norm with the CNT and FAI.

Ironically enough, rather than show that anarchism was flawed, the experience of the Catalan CNT after it had rejected anarchist theory confirmed the principles of anarchism. In Catalonia, centralised, hierarchical organisations hindered and ultimately destroyed the Revolution. Put simply, it's ironic to blame anarchism when anarchists ignored its recommendations!

As Christie makes clear, "the higher

(continued on page 5)

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In defence of modern art

Warte Mal! Prostitution after the velvet revolution

by Ann-Sofi Sidén

video installation until 1st April
at the Hayward Gallery, Belvedere Road,
London SE1 8XX (tel 020 7960 4242)
www.haywardgallery.org.uk

Reviewing the Hayward Gallery's excellent Paul Klee exhibition recently, Nick S. certainly made clear his views on Swedish artist Ann-Sofi Sidén's video installation, *Warte Mal! Prostitution after the Velvet Revolution* (Freedom, 23rd February). Nick says Klee is "forced to share space" with Sidén's work. *Warte Mal!* apparently displays "all the current sicknesses of art".

Harsh words indeed, betraying (I suspect) a distaste for contemporary art. Frankly, I found Nick's brushing aside of Sidén's installation perplexing. Having seen it for myself, I can say it worked on two levels – one political, the other aesthetic.

First, though, the charge of voyeurism. Nick writes that Sidén's work "makes no attempt at analysis" and is "salacious voyeurism". But Sidén challenges us to think for ourselves about her subject matter, and confronts directly the issue of voyeurism by her creation of viewing booths that look like they come from peep shows. Unlike at the Klee exhibition downstairs, we're not passive spectators here. There's no chance of seeing these images as just 'interesting'.

George Woodcock wrote that many artists have been attracted to anarchism because of the "anarchist cultivation of independence of mind and of freedom of action and experience". Sidén's video work seems to embrace this ethic more than Klee's does.

The first part of the exhibition has two screens next to each other. The one on the left shows a prostitute's client, who describes why he buys sex. It's clear that, for him, it's a transaction, a money exchange for a commodity – just like buying a Coke. He's no feelings for the women he's buying sex from. All he's interested in is gaining satisfaction and control.

On the screen next to him, a prostitute talks about the economic circumstances which forced her into prostitution in order to support her children. She also describes the



Ann-Sofi Sidén: *Legs, Motel Hubert*

reality – absence of feeling, pain, danger, humiliation – of having sex with men like the one on the screen next door. She doesn't sell her body because she wants to, but because she has to.

I found the juxtaposition of these two images very powerful. There's nothing salacious about it. One is bound to ask questions – should I see the prostitute as victim? Is the client a victim too? Should I defend prostitution or oppose it? In fact, Sidén's installation is shot through with politics.

answer to the "exceptional circumstances" facing the Spanish anarchists. By comparing events in Catalonia and Aragon, Christie refutes those who argue that anarchism failed in Spain. How could it have 'failed' during the Spanish Revolution when it was ignored in Catalonia (for fear of fascism) and applied in Aragon? How can it be argued that anarchist politics were to blame, when those very same politics had formed the Council of Aragon? It can't.

Whether one of the reasons for this terrible decision was that the FAI had been "taken over by mid 1933 by a group of rootless intellectuals and economic planners under the leadership of Diego Abad de Santillan", as Christie in part argues, is open to debate. I'd suggest that it's a weak argument (compared to his main one), and one which underestimates the need for a specific anarchist group to spread its ideas within the class struggle. What is true, though, is that Christie's book is essential reading for all anarchists who not only want to understand history, but also to learn from it.

Iain McKay

The growth of prostitution in eastern Europe is a result of the triumph of capitalism over state socialism. Economic insecurity, a more liberal regime and an increased use of drugs have all contributed. The exhibition also makes clear the raw patriarchy of much prostitution – men (clients and pimps) dominate women. Aren't all these themes of interest to anarchists such as Nick S.? I have to say that, as an anarchist, I got more out of Sidén than I did out of Klee.

But what about the art? The use of film as art remains controversial. Art film needs to be looked at in a different way to, say, a documentary (which isn't to say that images in a documentary can't be artistic, of course). Nobody, I guess, would want to watch all 24 hours of Andy Warhol's *Empire* (though it's currently showing at Tate Modern if you do). The film was shot over a day from one of the windows of the Silver Factory. Nothing really happens, except for shot after shot of the Empire State Building.

If you view it as a film, rather than as a piece of art, you can only conclude that it's crap. But view it in the same way you would a painting, and it starts to look rather different. You begin to see the shades, light, shapes and colour – and better than a painting, which is frozen and dead, come back an hour later and it'll look slightly different.

Art can come from celluloid as well as paint. Sidén's videos are interesting and valid as art. They work individually and (which is rare for paintings) collectively. Surrounded by screens and images, sounds and words, you are immersed in the installation – a degree of connection you don't get as you shuffle around peering at Klee's work.

Art is a personal thing. Proudhon thought it

should always be realistic, an idea that emerged big time in the social realist movement. But anarchism has most inspired Dada and the surrealists, the people working beyond the boundary of what (in their time) was regarded as conventional.

As an anarchist, I hope I'm able to step aside from conventional, socially-constructed norms of what is and isn't good art. I want to think freely for myself. Sidén allows me to do so. If you can afford the £8 entrance fee for the Klee, give Sidén a chance too (or try the door next to the cloakroom for free entry!). It's worth it.

Richard Griffin

(continued from page 4)

committees of the CNT-FAI set aside traditional anarcho-sindicalist reliance on the creative spirit of the people and their capacity for self-organisation". It was this act which ensured the defeat of the Revolution.

"By imposing their leadership from above, these partisan committees suffocated the mushrooming popular autonomous revolutionary centres – the grassroots factory and local revolutionary committees, the identifying feature of all great revolutions – and prevented them from proving themselves as an efficient and viable means of co-ordinating communications, defence and provisioning. They also prevented the local committees from integrating themselves to form a regional, provincial and national federal network which would facilitate the revolutionary task of social and economic reconstruction".

Christie correctly argues that the path pursued in Aragon – to implement anarchist ideas and encourage popular power and organisation from below – was the only real

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The law's brutal reality

In the eighteenth century, capital punishment for property crime was the norm. Between 1688 and 1820, the number of offences punishable by death grew from about 50 to over 200, almost all of them for crimes against property. Surprisingly, as the possibility of death increased, its proximity (measured by the number of executions actually carried out) remained the same. Judges often exercised their 'prerogative of mercy', substituting transportation for execution on an increasing number of occasions.

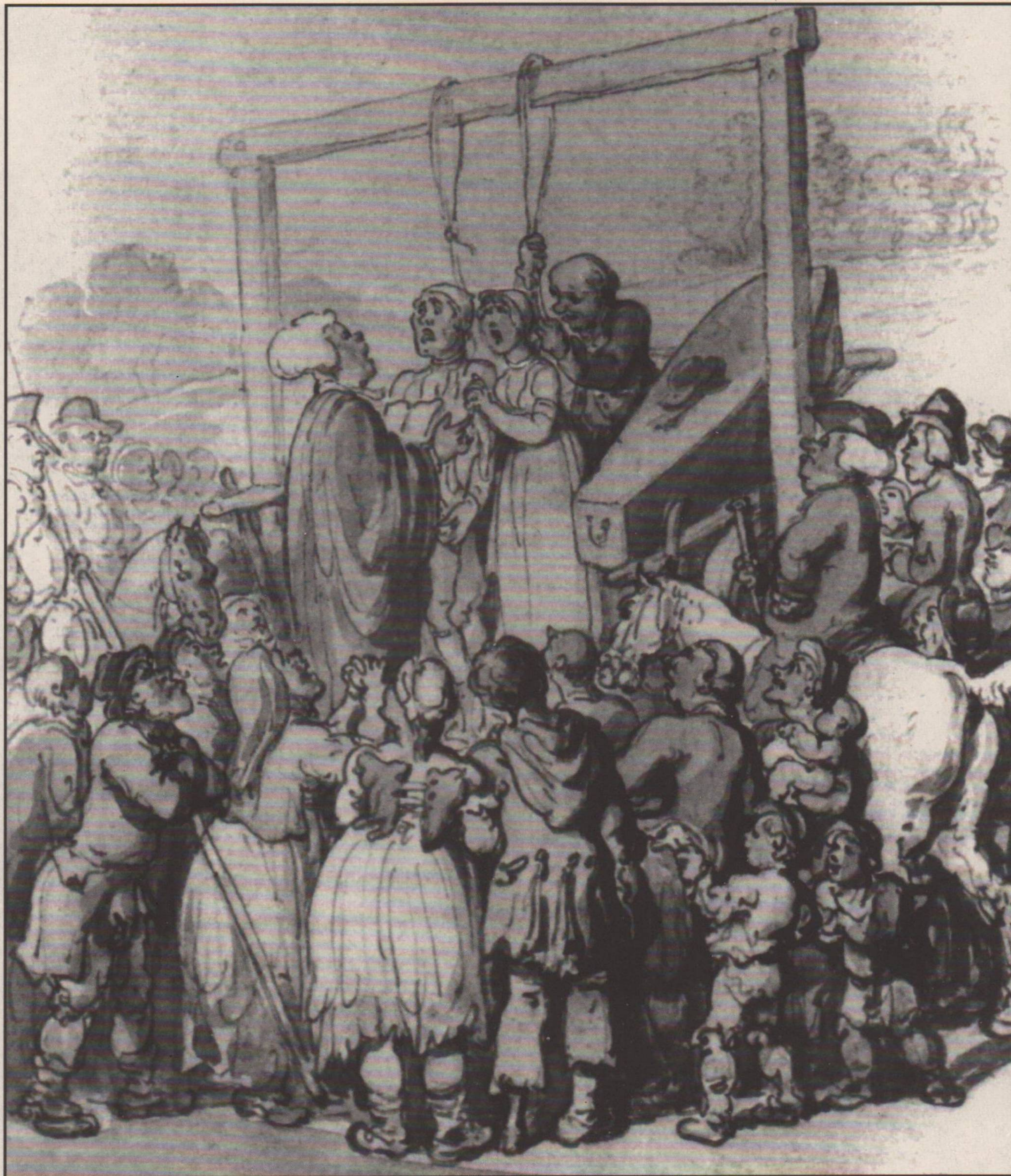
When you think about it, the reasons are obvious. Legal ideology – and the rituals of punishment which underpin it – obscures the fact of inequality by the fiction of equality before the law. However much ideology is underwritten by force, it still requires the consent of the mass of people for it to secure its own function. In other words, for the ideology of law and punishment to be effective, it has to be believed.

Equality before the law, which is a fundamental premise of bourgeois rule, demands that those who administer the law act as if justice and mercy were real properties of it. If too many people were hanged, the likelihood of revolt would increase and the system would be seen as unjust. Its worst aspects would expose the sham of the whole. Equally, if judges were seen to be merciful in spite of their fearsome statutory armour, belief in the 'justice' of a fundamentally unjust system would be preserved.

We can easily enough dispose of the idea that there's some connection, however occult, between crime and punishment. If the threat of prison (which replaced the threat of the gallows for most crimes by the end of the nineteenth century) was intended as a deterrent to crime, the ruling class would have dumped it as a waste of money years ago.

Prison now – like the gallows before it – is intended as a manifestation (real and symbolic) of the violence of the state within the daily life of the working class. As such, and like every threat, it becomes useless when overused. If everybody knows someone who's been banged up, if most working class kids under the age of 25 can expect to have mates go away (if they're not away themselves), then the threat loses its force.

Now the prison population's topping 70,000 (even as crime rates are falling), the manifest injustice becomes all too apparent and the vaunted connection between crime and punishment comes to be seen as a lie. This explains the comments of Lord Woolf,



a senior judge, to the sentencing courts recently – "imprisonment only when necessary and for no longer than necessary". The result of all this is supposed to be the restoration of faith in the 'fairness' of law, as well as in the grace and mercy of Woolf and his friends at the law lords' fancy dress ball.

When a government so given to talking tough on the merits of imprisonment resorts to a strategy like this, can we doubt that the size of the prison population is causing a sweaty fear to wash over prison governors? Fear of riot, fear of the unmanageable mob, fear that (as numbers rise) the ideology of equality before the law begins to come unstuck.

Meanwhile, having come under pressure to abandon the attack on defendants' rights proposed by the official Auld Report, Home Secretary David Blunkett (and top cops such as Metropolitan Police Commissioner John Stevens) has been busy with a quick bout of scaremongering. He wants to get the Auld

recommendations back on track.

Stevens in turn says the job of the police is now impossible – criminals are untouchable, defence cross-examination is over-aggressive and juries are biased against the police. At the same time, he says, the use of stop-and-search powers is inhibited by fears that cops will be accused of racism. Unsurprisingly, "we must do something" is Blunkett's response. The 'something' in question is to implement the Auld Report.

During the next year, New Labour will move to abolish the right to trial by jury for offences which could be tried by magistrates, stop-and-search will be regulated and its use stepped up, hearsay evidence and evidence of previous convictions will be put before juries and oral evidence (that is, evidence which can be tested by cross-examination in front of a jury) will be replaced by witness statements in some elements of criminal proceedings.

Stevens's media ploy comes at a time when the number of young black people getting stopped and searched has gone up (which contradicts the idea that cops are intimidated in the wake of the Macpherson Report into the death of Steven Lawrence). Yet crime has fallen by a third since 1995 (as the British Crime Survey makes clear) and violent crime was down by a fifth last year.

The idea that the bleating from politicians and police has anything to do with crime ought to be out of the window once and for all. Governments (particularly this one) aren't given to throwing money at problems which don't exist.

It's significant that debate in the last few weeks has focused on stop-and-search powers, because the real issue is the policing of the working class as a class, and particularly of working class teenagers. Stop-and-search in working class areas is the most direct manifestation of the power of the state in its interaction with working class kids. It's the State-in-your-Face. This is its sole purpose. The debate around stop-and-

search is really a debate about how best to keep the rabble in line.

Jail sentences may be less necessary if it's possible to boost the deployment of the state's policing power within working class communities. The point is to set boundaries round the life of the working class through the repressive capacity of the state. Crime is the excuse, but it's policing the everyday existence of the working class that's the real end.

Whether the real and symbolic violence of the state is best manifested through swamping estates with cops doing stop-and-search or by rigging the trial process so that more of us get put away for longer is the only thing being debated. The difficulty for the left (including the anarchist movement) is that they're so far removed from the terrain of everyday working class life that the issue escapes them completely.

Instead of prattle about prison reform, our task ought to be the relentless exposure of the ideology of law and punishment as the gloss on a system which depends for its existence on the act of criminal deception perpetrated against the working class. Exposing the workings of that law might be a good place to start building an effective anti-capitalist politics.

That would have to involve some recognition that these politics make more sense in Moss Side or Woolwich than on the route of the latest Globalise Resistance r-r-revolutionary package tour. I guess that sounds too much like hard work and not enough fun-in-the-sun for most of our undergraduate militants and their failed academic gurus.

Nick S.

Well, we've finally done it. We've managed to imprison 70,000 people. Home Secretary David Blunkett is a bit perturbed that this mass warehousing has relatively little effect on the national recorded crime figures, but who cares? Senior prison chiefs are pleading for magistrates' powers of imprisonment to be curbed, in an attempt to halt the flooding of Britain's jails. They should only be able to issue community penalties, it's said. And what is the government's response? The Home Office has no intention of reducing magistrates' powers, while Blunkett himself said recently that he'd like to introduce part-time prisons for weekend-only prisoners, along with more electronic tagging.

This would reduce the prison population, he said, by allowing sentences to finish three months earlier. Though on the other hand, too many young offenders are apparently not complying with the set conditions, so an extra 400 places are needed to meet the demand. Even police cells are expected to be used to take up the overflow.

As if this wasn't enough, the Prison Service last month announced plans for eight new 'super jails', designed to incarcerate 1,500 people each as part of a plan to swap old prisons for new ones. It's what an American abolitionist called "the running tap syndrome", and it's exactly how the penal system works in the USA (where they've got 250,000 prisoners).

Tony Blair last month said that leftwingers needed to back his plans for introducing longer sentences and for holding more people on remand. I don't think he's got anything to worry about – it's obvious the majority of the so-called 'left' harbour as many prejudices as the right.

Lee H.

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This woman's been boss of notorious global gang 'the state' since 1952.

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Don't approach her.

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She's deadly and she's got to be stopped.

Part six in our continuing series on those crazy, zany royals

What we say ...

Shove it, copper

Many anarchists used last week's London demo by off-duty cops as an opportunity for making propaganda. Activists certainly didn't miss the irony of people whose usual job is to beat up, frame and generally intimidate protesters staging a protest of their own. Neither, presumably, did the police. This was the first big demo in years whose participants weren't photographed, pushed, spied on, attacked – or at least generally annoyed.

We couldn't care less if the government, in its desire to save money, makes cops more miserable. Let them get demoralised. Maybe it'll encourage a few of them to resign, or spend more time off sick. We live in hope.

Tell any activist in Barcelona last week that the police aren't our enemies, and you'd get a hollow laugh. The society we live in is a divided one. We are the powerless. The cops are willing servants of the powerful. They've chosen which side they want to be on, and it sure as hell isn't ours.

It won't be easy

Nobody knows what's going to happen in Argentina. Our comrades in Buenos Aires, whose perceptive and detailed report we publish in this issue, make clear that whatever's going on there now, it's still only the beginning of something that mightn't bear fruit at all.

But the people of Argentina are breaking new ground, as the people of Spain did in the 1930s. The lessons of that brave experiment have been picked over many times, and no doubt (whatever happens) Argentina will provide some more for us to reflect on. One thing the Spanish experience makes clear is that there's no standing still. The revolution may not happen this time, but the way to guarantee its failure is to waver.

The assemblies won't work, Argentinians will be told, it's time to bow back down before legitimate authority. Most cheekily of all, they'll be told by the same people who openly backed the military junta that it's time to restore 'democracy', that by preferring their own authority to that of the (democratic) government they're opening the door to another Galtieri.

These siren voices, if heeded, would destroy the hope of an Argentinian revolution. All that Argentinians have to pit against them is the new world in their hearts. But hearts in politics are of limited use. The new world has got to be torn out of hearts and brought into the world we live in. It won't be a job for the squeamish.

From the frontline

The meeting of the Northern Anarchist Network in Liverpool a fortnight ago was a useful and businesslike event, all the participants seemed to agree. For *Freedom*, of course, the most useful part was the discussion of, well, *Freedom* itself. Everyone agreed that we need more reports from the frontline of struggle. But while the editors can do many things, we can't write engaged reports from actions we've not taken part in ourselves.

We've said it before, but we'll repeat it – the success of the paper depends on the readers and contributors. If you're involved in an activity, tell us about it. If you think your own version of anarchism never gets a look-in, write about it. *Freedom* is only as good as the breadth of anarchist opinion and news it publishes. This paper belongs to everyone who treats it as their own.

Readers' letters

On individualism

Dear *Freedom*,

In attacking what he assumes is my position, Derek Barrow makes an excellent statement of the argument against the 'we-know-best' tendency – the use of authority by a few to bring the revolution for the many (letters, 9th March). I couldn't agree more. That's why I reject such a utopian (communist, socialist) vision of the establishment of an anarchist society.

I rarely propose an absolute position, because one counter-instance knocks it down. But I will do now – without genetic alteration or brainwashing or both, there's absolutely no possibility of the whole human race deciding as one that anarchism is a jolly good idea. It will never happen. Nor would we be happy if it did, because the resulting lack of variation would be as dangerous to us all as Derek's external authority. We shouldn't seek a final result, only a mutually acceptable way of arriving at one.

My discovery of Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* gave me the immediate impression of my own arguments being expounded to me, only much better than I could manage myself. I still think this, but I refuse to follow anyone blindly, even Stirner. What's the use of proposing an ideal with no visible means of arriving there? This, I maintain, is what Derek's doing. We need his use of individualism, but we need everybody's practice of anarchism. But we won't be preaching to the converted, and success isn't guaranteed.

Every issue of *Freedom* carries news and views of a multitude of groups and groupings, all interested enough to be doing something. I don't agree with most, actively disagree with one or two, but applaud them all. They're not just hoping or trusting, and they

all come together in *Freedom* to serve their own purposes. That's how it should be.

Paul Campbell

Dear *Freedom*,

Isn't 'individualism' a statist term? We should uphold the beliefs of common ownership, as the Diggers did during the English Civil War. Holding everything in common for the common use is a basis for collectivism in 2002.

Mike V.

Unfair advantage

Dear *Freedom*,

Your last issue gave front-page prominence to a list of muddled demands from the Global Women's Strike ('Women on Strike', 9th March). While I don't object to many of them, some seem rather impractical and, in any case, unanarchistic.

Take the first one, for example, "payment for all caring work". Partners surely do this for each other already. Should other people have to give support too? This is a demand for a state subsidy, which would be paid in the long run by taxes.

How about equal pay? I agree, if it's for equal work, but claiming additional benefits means the work isn't equal. This is unfair.

Giving unfair advantages to one category (in this case women) at the expense of others isn't the answer.

Peter Neville

Naïve comment

Dear *Freedom*,

What are you guys playing at? You're showing dangerous political naïveté in the

extreme. I refer to your decision to give us a political purity lesson in 'Misuses of the word Anarchy' (9th March), by citing a review from the *Observer* about "Zimbabwe's descent into anarchy".

I'm probably not the only one to share with you a hope that philosophical anarchism should be dictionaryally respected as words in the proper sense. But your sarcasm at the *Observer*, here and on a previous occasion (9th February), comes too late. The situation in Zimbabwe has passed the stage of such abstract trivialities.

Your triviality aids the political programme of the UK mainstream media, about our endangered white racist 'kith and kin'. The white west wants to remove Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF party from Zimbabwe altogether. And that means ending all African land redistribution. African socialism's survival is at stake.

Larry Iles

Accountability

Dear *Freedom*,

Mark Barnsley's comments on the ABC touch a raw nerve ('Lessons from the ABC', 9th March). The modern anarchist movement has long harboured individuals who see no need to be accountable to anybody. Mark's examples of unanswered letters and the misuse of funds have an all too familiar ring to them. Anarchism is no easy option. Mutual aid is dependent on personal responsibility, and a respect for the other simply because the other is, well, other. Sadly I'm of the opinion that an acceptance of such responsibility would scare the knickers off some who claim the proud status of anarchist.

Doreen Frampton

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NEWS AND REVIEWS

A new feature in *Freedom* this year will be a regular reviews page, with the latest on books, 'zines, CDs, games and videos.

If you're interested in becoming a *Freedom* reviewer, or if you have a specific publication you want to review or think we should, email us at FreedomCopy@aol.com or write to us at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. We'd also welcome review copies and news from any small anarchist publishers and distributors. In particular, we want to review and publicise small-circulation local papers and freesheets (such as *The Cunningham Amendment* and *Porkbolter*) that are often unknown off their home turf. So get in touch and let's get publishing!

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• Friday 22nd March: Anarchy and the Third World (symposium)
• Thursday 4th April: Anarchism and Sport
• Friday 19th April: General discussion (bring food and drink to share)

LONG MARCH FOR THE CLIMATE
Saturday 23rd March
One year after Bush dumped the Kyoto treaty, march from Exxon-Mobil headquarters near Leatherhead to the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, London
tel 020 8855 3327 or 07903 316331
www.campaignagainstclimatechange.net

DEFEND ASYLUM SEEKERS
Conference on Saturday 23rd March, 10am to 6pm
Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester M2
Arming activists with the arguments, building greater coordination across campaigns, working with refugees and migrants' organisations. Speakers and workshops.
BCM Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX • tel 07905 566183
email info@defend-asylum.org

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

YARL'S WOOD DEMO
Saturday 30th March
Meet at 12 noon outside Yarl's Wood detention centre, then at 2pm at Bedford shopping centre
contact: 07786 517379

NATIONAL CND DEMO & RALLY
Saturday 30th March
Assemble from 12 noon in Hyde Park, London
Don't let them start any more wars!

CARNIVALISTA CAFÉ NIGHT
Saturday 30th March from 7pm
The Carnivalistas invite y'all to enjoy some vegan loveliness at Bonnington's Café in Vauxhall Grove, London SW8.
Benefit to purchase space for a south London social centre.
contact: carnivalista@yahoo.com

'STOP SELLAFIELD' CAMP
from 4th to 8th April
Sellafield is a nuclear processing plant in Cumbria, notorious for its radioactive emissions and pollution, and involved in the production and stockpiling of plutonium – an essential ingredient for nuclear bombs. Join us at this international camp to demand an end to reprocessing. Break the nuclear chain!
contact: Heather on 020 8546 7795
on-site mobile (during camp & week before) 07950 567 099
info@youthstudentcnd.org.uk

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Meeting on Sunday 7th April at 2pm
at the London Activist Resource Centre (LARC) corner of Fieldgate and Parfett Street, London E1
This is a chance for you to network your groups ideas and find out what's else is happening in the capital.

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. Walk leader Mike.
for more information call 07775 977136
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THE NOUGHT FOR CONDUCT FILM CLUB
Thursday 11th April at 7.30pm
at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn
Mujeres Libres (Free Women)
Film showing and a discussion on the Spanish anarchist women's organisation
admission £2 waged / £1 unwaged
convened by Anarchist Federation (London)
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

JUSTICE FOR MARK BARNESLEY
Saturday 13th April at 11am sharp
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A day of action in support of the Sheffield-based activist
contact: barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com or 07944 522001
www.freemarkbarnsley.com

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from 19th to 20th April in Nottingham
Arrivals will be met at The Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX on the evening of 19th from 5pm.
A direct action gathering to build resistance to the new roads programme and the corporate dominance it fuels ...
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• Saturday 20th: up to date briefing on new road schemes and corporate links, planning tactics and response.
• Sunday 21st: no formal organisation, but meeting space will be provided for those wishing to take the opportunity to build further on the day before.
contact: 0781 350 5480 or endoftheroad@hushmail.com

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Saturday 20th April from 10am to 6pm
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books • food • music • story telling • campaign groups
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The day will be a celebration of grassroots cooperation, popular resistance and some really good books covering anarchism, feminism, ecology, peace, direct action, social change, etc.
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