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The last carnival

Could this year's Notting Hill Carnival be the last one that happens on London's streets? Yes, if the various state agencies get their way. They include Westminster council, Kensington & Chelsea council, the cops and the Greater London Assembly (GLA), all supported by the largely white yuppies who've moved into the area in recent years.

Why should this extremely popular street festival be halted, you may ask. All sorts of 'sensible' reasons are given. There's the disruption to local residents, the sporadic acts of violence, the cost of the clean-up, the enormous numbers packed into a small area and so on. The problem for these agencies is that they can't just stop the carnival. It has to happen somewhere, the question is where.

The favoured locations are large green spaces nearby, such as Wormwood Scrubs or Hyde Park. But the people responsible for these don't really want it there either, for the same reasons other agencies don't want it on the streets. Importantly, carnival participants - local residents and carnival goers alike - don't want it moved at all. After all, carnival just wouldn't be carnival if it happened in a park.

Cy Ford is the vice-chair of the Tenant Management Organisation, which manages former council housing in the area. "Carnival's a law unto itself", he says. "Who's going to make them stop? The police won't, as it'll cause a riot".

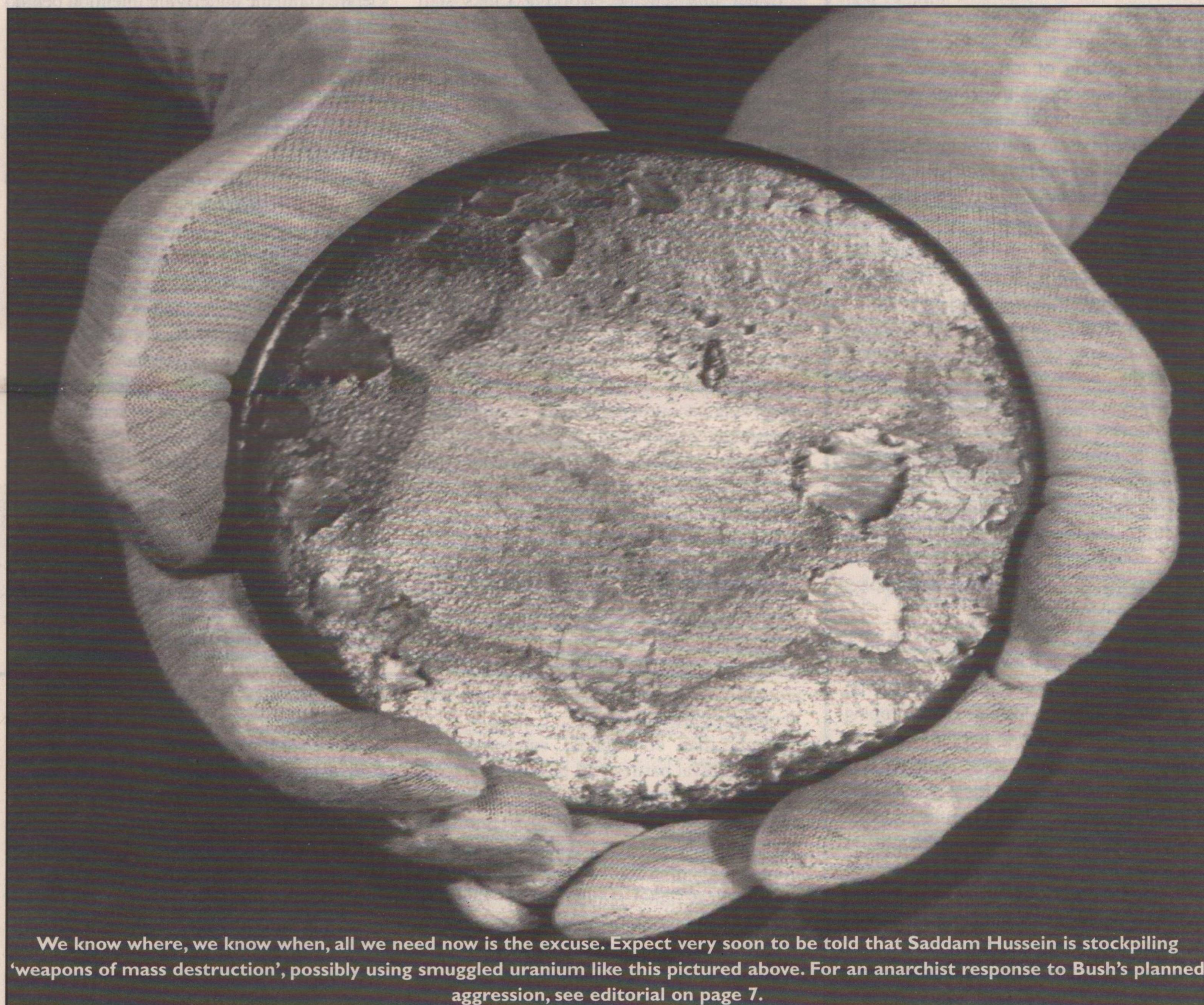
So far, political wrangling between state agencies has ensured the absence of a truly united attempt to emasculate carnival. But there's a sense that the two Tory councils and the cops actually see the arrival on the scene of a 'left' GLA as a chance to go on the offensive. Not-so-red Ken and his leftie careerist cronies are nothing if not opportunists, and they think they can see political gains to be made in sorting out carnival once and for all.

The last year has seen intense negotiations between these agencies and the Notting Hill Carnival Trust (NHCT) which has 'run' the carnival since the 1980s. While they're not yet in a position to move it, the clampdown that started as long ago as the early 1970s continues.

This year, the route has been widened in an attempt to thin out the crowds and get the floats and mass bands out of the area more quickly. A 7.00pm shutdown of sound systems and pubs will be heavily enforced. There'll be strong attempts to stop unlicensed locals selling food and drink more
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As war against Iraq looms, you'll hear all about what this person is holding ...

Excuse for a new attack



We know where, we know when, all we need now is the excuse. Expect very soon to be told that Saddam Hussein is stockpiling 'weapons of mass destruction', possibly using smuggled uranium like this pictured above. For an anarchist response to Bush's planned aggression, see editorial on page 7.

Media stars play safe, again

Is anyone at all surprised by the lack of outcry from 'celebrities' regarding the war in Afghanistan and, soon, Iraq? Or is this merely a symptom of our (pop) culture today? To his credit, Damon Albarn wore a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament t-shirt at the MTV awards. While he was collecting his gong, he made a speech in which he said, "bombing one of the poorest countries in the world is wrong. You've got the voice, use it".

On his new album *The Eminem Show*, Eminem doesn't criticise the war. But at least in 'Square Dance' he tries to paint a picture of army life.

"Yeah you laugh 'til your motherfuckin' ass gets drafted / When you're in bed here

thinkin' the draft can't happen / 'Til you fuck around getting anthrax napkin / Inside a package wrapped in saran rap wrappin' / Open the plastic, and then you stand back gaspin' / Fuckin' assassins hijackin' anthrax crashin' / All this terror, America demands action / Next thing you know, you've got Uncle Sam's ass askin' / To join our army, or what you do for their navy / You just a baby getting' recruited at 18 / You're on a plane now eatin' that food and that baked beans / I'm 28, they gon' take you 'fore they take me".

At least he's talkin' about the war. In his call-and-response, he shows a great understanding, both of sociology and of the idea of scapegoating and moral panics:

"Crazy insane or insane crazy? When I say Hussein, you say Shady!"

Funny how it's such a prime 'banger' and I've only heard it once on the radio - not Radio One, suffice to say. For all their 'roll another fat one', the BBC's flagship station is still very conservative..

Alec Baldwin and Arundhati Roy have also spoken out against the war, in the intellectual contexts of a university lecture and the *Guardian*. But they're not in our tabloid world and so they don't fully exist. Paul Heaton and Norman Cook, ex-Housemartins and now both Fat Boys, should be ashamed of themselves.

Chris Byrne

Murdered by the state



A demonstration for Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston, Massachusetts, on 1st March 1925

On 23rd August it will be 75 years since the killing of Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco in the United States. They were executed in 1927 for a crime they didn't commit. Or perhaps it'd be more accurate to say it was for a crime they did commit – though ostensibly on trial for murdering two men in a payroll robbery, they were really condemned for the crime of being foreign, poor and anarchist in America.

The years after the First World War saw a spate of robberies across New England. The police were under pressure to get results. The popular feeling was that the forces of law and order were more like the Keystone Cops, then playing on cinema screens across the country. To make matters worse, the crimes were taking place in small New England towns where the low crime rate was a source of personal pride to police chiefs.

During one robbery at South Braintree in April 1920, two people were gunned down. Initially, the police didn't have a clue who was responsible and the Pinkerton Private Detective Agency, which had been set up by capitalists to defend capitalists, was called in. The dick (never was a word so accurately applied) turned up very little. What evidence he did find was contradictory and useless.

But further police investigations uncovered the fact that the robbery had been the work of 'foreigners'. To police minds, that meant working class, which in turn obviously implied (to them) the involvement of political

rabble rousers. Now they'd got a clearer idea of who to look for, the police began to put names to their assumptions. Somewhere along the line it was decided that two Italians, Boda and Orciani, fitted the bill. Boda was an anarchist.

Following the death in custody of Andrea Salsedo, one of those types who tries to escape from police by throwing themselves out of 14th floor windows, the New England anarchist movement had decided it was time to go undercover. Boda and other comrades were entrusted with the responsibility of moving papers from individuals' houses to a secure hiding place.

But he fell into a police trap when, with other anarchists, he went to the house of a mechanic who'd recently repaired his car. Instead of handing over the keys, the mechanic followed police instructions and sent his wife to call cops while he stalled his client. The anarchists, suspicions aroused, made their excuses and left.

Fearing they'd be arrested, they decided to split up. Some went off on foot, some on motorbikes. Two comrades were seen catching the tram. Acting on information received, the police boarded the tram and arrested the only two men on it. Their names were Sacco and Vanzetti.

The state's prosecutor, Frederick G. Katzmann, was an ambitious politician with his eye on higher prizes. This trial, he decided, would be the making of his political

career. He was helped along in this by a bent judge, Thayer, whose hostility to non-patriots, ungrateful foreigners and "anarchist bastards" was astonishingly evident throughout. Katzmann was helped along some more when the jury was selected. All the jurors, it soon became clear, were fine upstanding patriots who'd answered a call to fulfil their obligation to god and their country.

When the trial itself commenced, it quickly emerged that witnesses for the prosecution couldn't convincingly identify the two accused. A number of them placed Vanzetti behind the wheel of the getaway car, despite the fact that he didn't even know how to drive. Both the accused also had rock-solid alibis. Vanzetti was able to produce over twenty witnesses to say he'd been selling them fish in a town several miles away while the robbery was taking place. Sacco produced a witness from the Italian Consulate in Boston, where he'd gone to get a passport for his return to Italy.

His story was corroborated by another witness, who'd actually been called to provide expert evidence about street works in the area where the crime was committed. He'd been shocked to see that one of the defendants was the man he'd travelled next to on a train from Boston, the day the robbery took place.

The prosecution had a double-pronged attack. Where possible, they highlighted the fact that many of the witnesses were foreigners and therefore inherently untrustworthy. When this didn't work, they ignored the evidence and redirected jurors' attention to the political convictions of the men in the fortified cage which served as a dock.

Whenever Katzmann got tongue-tied in his zealotry, the judge kindly stepped in to summarise for the jury on his behalf. It was left perfectly clear to the jurors that this wasn't a trial about murder. It was a trial in defence of American capitalism. They were all loyal citizens and didn't waver. Sacco and Vanzetti were found guilty, a verdict that left even the bourgeois press with their mouths agape.

A number of appeals followed, which kept the process open for another seven years. A great number of these were dealt with by a local judge named Thayer – the same man who'd mishandled the original trial.

He found repeatedly that he'd conducted their trial according to law, that he hadn't misdirected the jury, that he'd allowed the

defence to play its role to the full, that he hadn't misdirected jurors, that he hadn't sided with the prosecution, that he'd had no personal interest in seeing the defendants executed, that he'd no personal feelings about the defence lawyers (despite having referred to them as "long-haired anarchists from out west" and "stupid").

In the meantime, the stress and horror of living on death row, innocent of the charges against him, left Sacco a broken man. Separated from the things that made life worthwhile to him – his wife, his children, his trade – he began to despair. He decided he'd rather death arrived quickly than humble himself before a system that would never be able to show mercy to somebody like him.

Vanzetti fought on, using all the resources the system placed at his disposal. As each chance was used up, it became clear that the system cared not a fig for justice, but only for keeping its face clean.

After seven long years, the state of Massachusetts decided it would no longer pay for the upkeep of the two radicals. They were brought to the death cell and murdered in the electric chair, an instrument which has since been categorised as a "cruel and inhuman punishment". Sacco's last words included the cry, "viva la anarquía".

Vanzetti protested his innocence of robbery and murder until the end. "I struggled in my modest way to bring an end to the crime that is carried out mutually amongst men, and I fought for the freedom of all", he insisted.

Diarmuid Fogarty



Vanzetti (left) and Sacco, Deedham courthouse, 1923

Hello Fans!! Wildcat is now on the back page!!!



