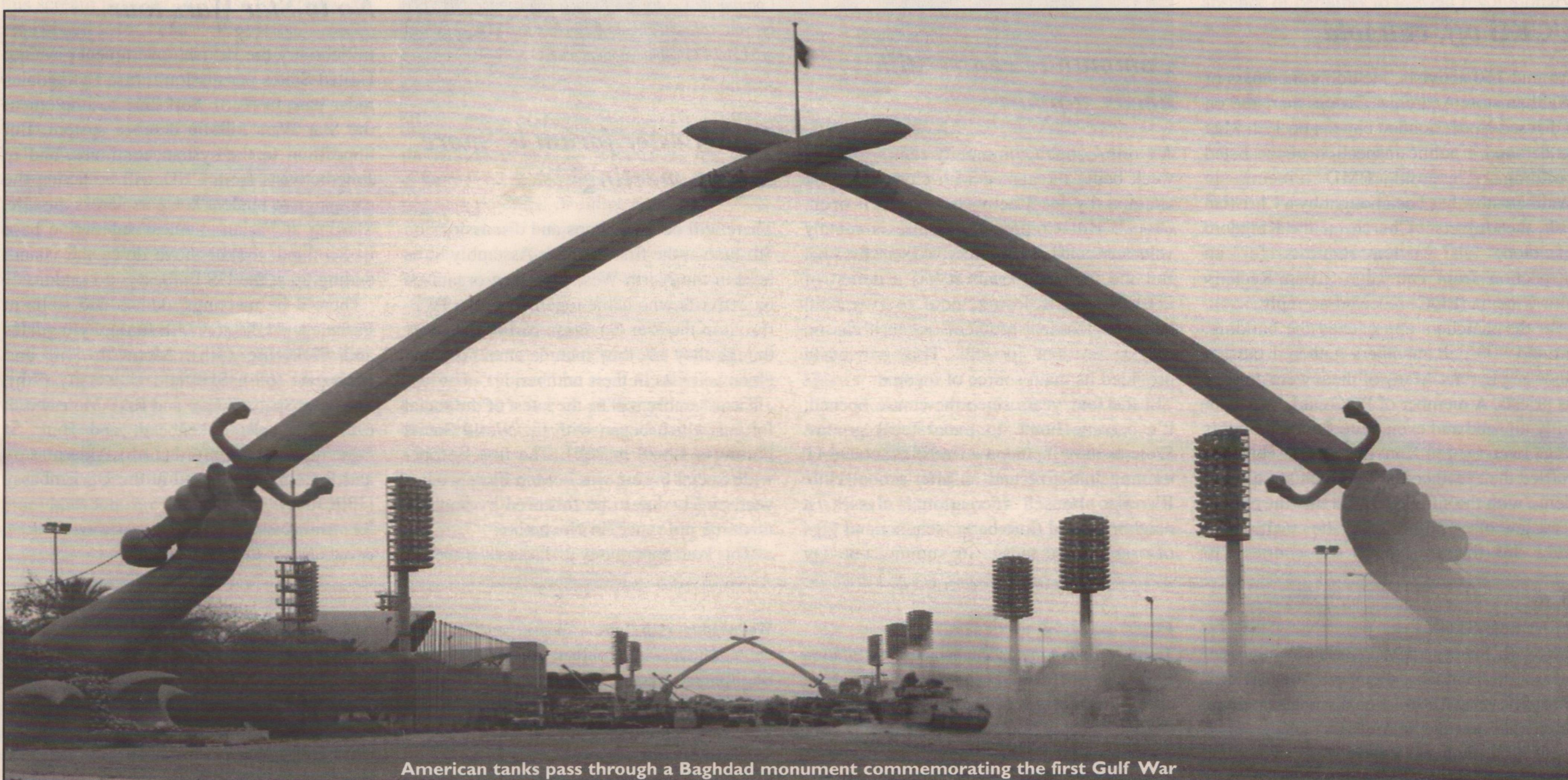


IT'S OFFICIAL

AMERICAN EMPIRE STANDS REVEALED



American tanks pass through a Baghdad monument commemorating the first Gulf War

The United States as world empire was a notion so controversial that, even a year ago, it would hardly have been whispered beyond the websites and pages of the American radical media. But now, in the aftermath of the attack on Iraq, it's something close to accepted wisdom. "We need to err on the side of being strong", Bill Kristol, editor of the neoconservative magazine the *Weekly Standard* and chair of influential think-tank the Project for New American Century was quoted as saying this month. "And if people want to say we're an imperial power, fine".

On one level this is just an adjustment of Washington rhetoric to fit what's been wholly the case for the last twelve years and

partly the case for sixty. The military incursions in Iraq and Afghanistan are only the most recent manifestations of American power. According to the Pentagon, US military personnel are currently stationed in over 130 countries, with permanent bases in over forty. At the start of this month, plans for further bases in four countries of the former Warsaw Pact were unveiled, while further expansion is planned in the Pacific and Indochina. There's even a proposal to open a base in Vietnam.

But on another level, the fact that the rhetoric is being changed at all is a sign of what's to come. America's defining ideology used to be of liberty and anti-imperialism, whatever the grubby truth of its deeds in

practice. Its identity was precisely that it wasn't an empire – it came into being by escaping from one, the British.

But there's a new tone of triumphalism in US policy, a delayed realisation that, with the Cold War finished, they've no need to take shit from nobody. As many observers predicted, the result of the Iraq atrocity is an American ruling class completely confident in its right to rule, not just the United States, but the world. And this means a quickening in America's strategy of imperialism.

The White House will no longer feel the need to invent (spurious) justifications for attacking who the hell it likes. There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but few American subjects seem to care (few British

ones too, for that matter). Next time Bush won't even bother with a pretext. There's still no democracy in Iraq, but who's holding the president to account for his unfulfilled promise? Nobody, which is why he won't trouble himself with the touchy-feely stuff again.

Johnny M.

• Up to 10,000 civilians may have been killed during the invasion of Iraq, independent researchers in the country said last week. The lowest total so far proposed, around 5,000 victims, still exceeds the 3,500 who are thought to have died during the 1991 Gulf War.

'Iraq: American imperialism unleashed', the first article in a three-part survey – see page 4.

REGIME GETS NASTY WITH ANARCHIST NEWS

An international day of protest was due to be held on 29th May, in solidarity with anarchists in Belarus. The government of the former Soviet Republic last week launched an attack on *Navinki*, the only independent newspaper left in the country. Published by anarchists for the last five years, this is the only satirical paper in Belarus. It criticises both the authoritarian regime of President Lukashenko

and the opposition movement.

On 20th May, *Navinki* editor Pauluk Kanavalchik was charged with "distribution of information, known to be unfounded, that discredits the honour and dignity of the president". This related to an article that was published in March. After a short court appearance, from which journalists were excluded, Pauluk was fined the equivalent of £440, seven times the average weekly wage.

On 21st May, *Navinki* received a written caution from the so-called Ministry of Information for its publication, in the same issue, of two photographs of Lukashenko with "comments of an insulting type". The next day another written caution arrived. This related to an article published in April.

Under Belarusian law, after two cautions a newspaper can be closed down. Supporters of *Navinki* say that this, in fact, is the state's

strategy. The country's other independent newspapers have already been shut.

The day of action on 29th May was expected to see protests outside Belarusian embassies in several countries.

For more information, visit the Belarusian Embassy, 6 Kensington Court, London W8, or give 'em a bell on 020 7937 3288. Remember, they're waiting for your call ...

Local news

Mayday witness appeal

Although Mayday was peaceful, cops still arrested about thirty people. Of these, at least twenty were charged. One pleaded guilty, all the others were released on bail. Most of them were charged with using threatening words or behaviour, or with assaulting cops. One was charged with affray. (Another was charged with possessing an offensive weapon – a multi-tool, in a pouch on a pannier attached to a bicycle).

The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group still needs to contact potential witnesses, as the trials won't take place for several months. Mail ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk or write to LDMG c/o BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX

Mayday discussion, page six

UCKG off, cult told

Around 150 activists, including members of Walthamstow Anarchist Group, marched on a disused North London cinema on 17th May to demand a public inspection of the listed building. The old EMD cinema in Walthamstow has been bought by a Christian cult, the Universal Church for the Kingdom of God, but written requests for an inspection from campaign group Reclaim Our Cinema (ROC) received no reply.

As the marchers approached the building, around 200 cult members gathered outside and sang hymns. Many of them were dressed as priests. A member of ROC said, "we were truly amazed and even quite flattered by this huge overreaction from the church. Have we ruffled their feathers? We'd organised a small demo with the simple request that the church let a few of us in to inspect the cinema. Not only did they not have the courtesy to

respond to our initial written request, but there was no representative of the church who was prepared to stop singing long enough to actually talk to us when we got there.

"There may have been considerably more of them than there were of us, but from what we can tell only a small number of them live in the Walthamstow area – we watched afterwards as they all headed back to the tube. Judging by the reaction of shoppers, the church did themselves no favours. In fact their bizarre behaviour demonstrated clearly why they shouldn't be welcome in Walthamstow, and especially not in our cinema."

There were reports that many UCKG counter-demonstrators had been bussed in from Finsbury Park, where the cult already has a church.

To find out more visit the ROC website at www.walthamstowcentral.co.uk/roc

Community centre still needs support

A North London community centre was this week being threatened with closure despite attempts by local activists to keep it open. Crouch Hill Community Centre is run by volunteers and has never received state funding. But the trust that owns it has a deficit of £10,000 and is losing more every month because electrical problems mean it can no longer hire out its hall. This previously provided its main source of income.

In the four years since the centre opened, it's become home to many local groups. Projects have included a free internet and IT training initiative and an after-school club. It's also housed recreational classes, a neighbourhood time-barter scheme and gigs of original live music. Its summer one-day

festivals have become an important part of the community calendar.

"Although the centre isn't an anarchist organisation, I think its work is something anarchists should support", one local activist said last week. "The centre caters for the community, is run by local people and it's independent. If it can survive autonomously then others can too. They're open-minded and embracing of a wide range of cultural and philosophical viewpoints. We were made very welcome when we ran an anarchist bookstall at one of their events."

"My view is that anarchists and others who are involved in activity that's community-based, independent or moving towards autonomy and sustainability, may prove accepting of, even working towards, common goals."

All offers of help to Gerlinde Rambauek, Crouch Hill Community Centre, 83 Crouch Hill London N8 9EG, or you can telephone 020 7263 6618 or email gr015b7475@blueyonder.co.uk

Manchester forum is 'more than a meeting'

There will be workshops and discussions on 7th June at the first People's Assembly to be held in the North West. It's been organised by activists who came together in the SWP-run Stop the War Coalition earlier this year, though they say they include anarchists and green activists in their number.

The assembly will be the latest of the social forums which began with the World Social Forum in Brazil in 2001. The first Europe-wide Social Forum was held in Florence last year, and is due to be followed by another, this time in France, in November.

"This is an opportunity to discuss alternatives

to the current system", the organisers say. "This is a chance for everyone to have their say – trade unionists, community groups, students, anti-racist groups, environmental campaigns, political groups and anyone else who wants to make a difference. We want this People's Assembly to be as broad and inclusive as possible. It's not just another meeting."

The day will see discussion of a wide range of subjects, including direct democracy, oil and capitalism, workplace organising, immigration, the mainstream and radical media. There will be creche facilities and autonomous spaces for women and young people.

Saturday 7th June, 1pm to 5pm at Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (behind the Central Library). For details call 07986 305 320 or email peoplesassembly@manchestertothewar.org

No to Star Wars tour

In February the British government gave the United States permission to use Fylingdales radar base in North Yorkshire to implement the Star Wars missile defence system. But opposition to the system continues, and in June activists from CND will be taking the campaign to nuclear hotspots across the UK. Starting at Faslane nuclear submarine base in Scotland, they'll move down the island, ending up at the US Embassy in London.

There'll be meetings, demos and stalls in Faslane and Glasgow (4th June), Fylingdales and Pickering (5th), Menwith Hill and Harrogate (6th), Sheffield University (7th), Leicester Space Centre and RAF Molesworth (9th), Feltwell, Lakenheath and Bury St Edmunds (10th), Oxford (11th), Aldermaston and Reading (12th) and at the US Embassy (13th June).

For more information on the tour, visit www.cnduk.org or call CND on 020 7700 2393.

ALDERMASTON

6th to 9th June Spotlight on Britain's weapons of mass destruction, organised by Trident Ploughshares at Aldermaston disarmament camp. Friday: arrivals and nonviolence training, set up women's camp at Falcon Gate. Saturday: nonviolence and disarmament training. Sunday: from noon onwards, spotlight on Britain's weapons of mass destruction everywhere. Monday: leafletting in Newbury. Tuesday: take down camp. If you can help get in touch with Sarah on 0845 458 2544 or email her at sarahlasenby@breathemail.net. For info see also aldermaston.net

BRIGHTON

Saturday 7th June Hands off the Middle East from 9.30am to 1pm at Brighthelm, North Road, Brighton. Contact Sussex Action for Peace on 01273 706820 or visit www.safp.org.uk

DARLINGTON

Wednesday 11th June regular anti-war meeting from 7.15pm to 9pm in the library of the Friends Meeting House, 6 Skinnersgate, Darlington. Contact winstanleymike@hotmail.com

DERBYSHIRE

Sunday 15th June Red Rambles meet at 11am outside the Monsal Head Hotel, Monsal, Derbyshire, for five mile circular walk via Monsal trail and Little Longstone. Contact ain@ziplip.com or call 07775 977136 the night before.

DURHAM

20th to 23rd June North East Social Forum three-day event. For more information see www.dur.ac.uk/durham.socialforum/NESF

FIFE

Tuesday 3rd June trial continues of Friarton Four, anti-GM crop protesters who have been charged with breach of the peace and malicious damage. Meet at 10am at Cupar Sheriff Court, North East Fife, Scotland.

KENT

31st May to 1st June gathering of animal rights activists near Tonbridge, Kent. For more info see www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk

LEEDS

Sunday 1st June Campaign Against Prison Slavery Conference. For more details contact 07944 522001 or markbarnsley@aol.com

LEICESTER

Tuesday 3rd June Leicester Anarchist Federation meeting at 8pm, upstairs at the Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street, Leicester LE1. See http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html

LONDON

Saturday 31st May Haringey Critical Mass bike ride, assemble at 11am, Manor House tube, finishing at Chestnuts Park Festival at 12.30pm

Saturday 31st May Chestnuts Park Spring Festival from 12 noon to 6pm at St Anns Road, N15 (free admission)

Sunday 1st June demonstrate at 'Buy Land in Israel' exhibition from 10.30am to 6pm at Marriot Hotel in Swiss Cottage. Contact the Zionist Federation on 020 8343 9756 or email zionfed@dircon.co.uk

Wednesday 4th June Indymedia.org.uk meeting for info/social/volunteer/outreach, 7.30pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel, London E1. See <http://uk.indymedia.org/contact/php3>

Wednesday 11th June a special benefit against militarisation with Conflict, Inner Terrestrials, Bug Central, Flatpig, films, stalls, and more, at the Mean Fiddler, Charing Cross Road, London WC2. Advance tickets £6.

Sunday 15th June Camden Green Fair and Bike Fest from 12 noon to 7pm at St James Gardens, Cardington Street, London NW1. Nearest tube stations are Euston, Euston Square or Warren Street. Contact Groundwork on 020 7239 1283

Tuesday 24th June Black Flag meeting at 7pm at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 4th June Manchester SolFed meeting, 8.30pm at the Hare and Hounds, Shude Hill, topic 'Globalisation and the New World Order'. See www.manchestersf.org.uk or tel 07984 675281

Saturday 7th June People's Assembly for Manchester with workshops, skills sharing and discussion from 1pm to 5pm at Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, City Centre. For more info call 07986 305320

Tuesday 17th June Manchester Discussion Group meeting, 8pm at the Hare and Hounds, Shude Hill, near Arndale Centre.

MIDDLESBROUGH

Tuesday 3rd June anti-war campaign meeting organised by Teesside Against the War at the Friends Meeting House, Cambridge Road, from 7.30pm onwards

NEWCASTLE

Tuesday 3rd June & 17th June Why Don't You, a new gathering of people who want to take direct action to stop injustice in creative, fun and effective ways. Meet 7.30pm at the Side Cinema

on Newcastle's Quayside, near the Crown Posada pub and next to the Side Café. For more info see www.sidecinema.com/whydontyou.htm

Wednesday 4th June Lost Film Festival people with an amazing selection of shorts (to get an idea see www.lostfilmfest.com) at the Side Cinema on Newcastle's Quayside from 7pm. See www.sidecinema.com

Wednesday 18th June films of Roma struggles, as part of the gypsy festival and refugee week, showing from 8pm at the Side Cinema on Newcastle's Quayside.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Friday 4th July Independence from America Day annual demonstration at Menwith Hill spy base from 12 noon to 4pm with speakers, guided walk on/around the base, food and much more. Organised by Campaign for Accountability of American Bases. See www.caab.org.uk or tel 01943 466405

OXFORD

Saturday 31st May Close Campsfield demo, 12 noon to 2pm, with community choir and samba band at Campsfield detention centre in Kidlington. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk

PORTSMOUTH

Saturday 21st June national demonstration against Haslar refugee detention centre from 11am. See www.ncadc.org.uk

WORTHING

Thursday 5th June anti-globalisation band night with 2 Finger Salute, Wilf and Thank You Terrace, from 7.30 to 11pm at the back of Vintner's Parrot, Warwick Street, Worthing. See www.eco-action.org/porkbolter

Klinghoffer beats Big Brother in war of reality TV

Emma Goldman called modern drama “the leaven of radical thought and the disseminator of new values”. She believed it had the unique capacity to communicate “truths generally ignored when presented in other forms”. This was before the world was colonised by the television, of course, and she might have been ambivalent about a medium that, while capable of reaching a far greater audience than any theatre, at the same time atomises its auditorium into millions of disparate, politically disengaged living rooms. Perhaps she’d have recognised in television the potential for both democratisation and totalitarianism.

John Adams’s *The Death of Klinghoffer*, broadcast on Channel 4 on 25th May, was a case in point. The composer’s docu-opera dramatises the hijacking of a cruise ship, the Achille Lauro, by Palestinian terrorists in 1985 (its title comes from the killing of disabled American passenger Leon Klinghoffer). Coincidentally the opera was shown back-to-back with the new series of *Big Brother*. The first was a thoughtful and sensitive attempt to portray the roots of an intractable conflict and the human motivation behind political violence, the second a piece of grotesque, soft-core voyeurism for an age of passive full-spectrum surveillance.

The Death of Klinghoffer, originally performed on stage in 1991, is unusual because it tries to politicise a form that many dismiss as a gaudy plaything of the chattering classes. Opera isn’t exactly renowned for its democratic credentials, nor is it known for courting political controversy (except in guzzling vast subsidies from taxpayers and the national lottery).

Adams’s considered treatment of the Palestinian hijackers initially drew inevitable accusations of pandering to terror. This is something Goldman would have sympathised with. “To analyse the psychology of political violence,” she wrote, “is not only extremely difficult, but also very dangerous. If such



acts are treated with understanding, one is immediately accused of eulogising them ...”

Following September 11th, US stage performances of the work were cancelled. It’s unlikely many Americans appreciated hearing one of the hijackers seething, “America is one big Jew”. Nor would they have warmed to the opera’s closing words, in which the wife of the dead Klinghoffer says that more people should have died because, “if a hundred people were killed and lay in the wake of the ship like oil”, then the world would listen.

Goldman also wrote, “it is only intelligence

and sympathy that can bring us closer to the source of human suffering, and teach us the ultimate way out of it.” And these are qualities Adams and his librettist, Alice Goodman, have brought to their work. Because of their success in doing so, and because of the opera’s documentary nature, *The Death of Klinghoffer* translates to the small screen as successfully as this art-form ever will.

For all its vaunted passion (and it was very moving at times) opera will never compete with drama as the “leaven of radical thought”, not least because it’s more mannered. But televising it does allow the inclusion of real

documentary footage, imitation newsreels and pertinent statistics (3.7 million Palestinians have been exiled by the formation of Israel), all of which provide a fitting backdrop as the chorus sings, “Israel laid all to waste”. The music in turn gives renewed intensity to worn images of suffering.

It would be foolish, of course, to make any great claims for this stuff. One televised opera won’t radically democratise the form and it’s unlikely to have been watched by many. Given the choice between *The Death of Klinghoffer* and *Big Brother*, there are no prizes for guessing which will be the hot topic over the coming weeks. But at the very least, it’s a step in the right direction. It was there to be watched if viewers wanted, without costing three figures for a ticket. And, in spite of being mannered, it was infinitely more real than so-called reality TV.

Big Brother itself is the unwitting leaven of reactionary thought. It disguises total surveillance as something playful, if not actually benign. It makes its audience collude happily in a culture of intrusive inspection. In addition, far from being about real people living real lives, it’s ‘false-reality TV’ – a game of life, the end of which is a manufactured ‘pure’ celebrity: renown for nothing more than simply being alive. In the world of reality TV, if you’re not being watched by a camera, you’re nothing. It’s a despot’s dream.

The phenomenon is the accidental disseminator of the very oldest values, those of the gladiatorial spectacle which ancient tyrants employed to pacify ‘the herd’ – with the extra advantage that the herd never leave their homes. Each week there’s the blood-thirsty glee at condemning someone to ‘die’ the most real death available to these unreal characters: taking the cameras away from them. Contrast this with a hijacker retching at the fragments of Klinghoffer’s brain and skull strewn on the deck of the Achille Lauro and it’s obvious which is more real and more democratic.

Anton Pawluk

A fresh air blows down Radical Routes

In an age when competition is praised and ‘co-op’ too often means a chain of supermarkets, Radical Routes is a breath of fresh air. This UK-wide network of small co-operatives contains, at its best, practical examples of communal living and collective management of workplaces. This is partly because the co-ops within the Radical Routes network are small, partly because they have an explicit commitment to social change.

During the last two hundred years the rise of industrial capitalism has brought misery to most people in the UK. Co-ops and mutual societies were one early reaction to this, as people pooled their meagre resources. Robert Owen, a wealthy socialist, funded many communal living projects but these didn’t survive beyond the 1830s. Although Owen is credited as one of the founders of the co-operative movement, it began to take recognisable shape more in the 1840s with the setting up of co-operatively owned shops in Northern Manchester, a place heavily scarred by industrial ‘development’.

These shops survived, not through idealism, but through their practice of giving back a dividend to customers. As the network of shops grew, they began to buy up wholesale suppliers too. Nowadays the Cooperative Wholesale Society (CWS) is the parent organisation of both the Co-op shops and the Co-op Bank. The history of the co-op

movement in the UK shows how easy it is for these ventures to become part of capitalism.

Arguably the CWS is much like any other company, but with a slightly different ownership structure and a slightly different ethos, comparable to the slight differences that exist between the Labour Party and the Conservatives. This is a fitting analogy, since the co-operative movement’s political wing – the Co-operative Party – is now an organic part of Labour and has made the same move towards ‘sensible capitalism.’ This isn’t surprising, as the CWS has had to compete in the marketplace much like any other enterprise.

The history of Radical Routes is different. As one member remarked, “we’re not the radical wing of the co-operative movement, we’re the co-operative wing of the radical movement.” Springing from the animal rights, ecology and anarchist movements of the 1980s and 1990s, Radical Routes emerged as a way for radicals to root their activity in concrete projects.

As it says in the aims and principles of Radical Routes: “We want to see a world based upon equality and co-operation, where people give according to their ability and receive according to their needs. Where work is fulfilling and useful and where creativity is encouraged, where decision making is open to everyone with no hierarchies and where the environment is

valued and respected in its own right rather than exploited. We want to take control over all aspects of our lives. However, as we are not all in a position of control we are forced to compromise to exist.”

The network is comprised of around forty co-ops, most of which are housing projects. Several are workers’ co-ops. Four social centres have recently been set up. At best, Radical Routes offers people a way to control their own housing or workplace while at the same time engaging with wider issues. The new social centres are explicitly community-oriented, and function as cultural centres, resource centres and libraries. The organisation has guidelines suggesting how much ‘social change’ work members should do, and has restrictions on how much disposable income members are allowed to earn. Radical Routes has grown out of the direct action movements, and most members are also committed to various kinds of activism.

Dangers still remain. Communal groups can become isolated experiments, workers’ co-ops can collapse or become too market-oriented. One of the things that’s lacking in Radical Routes is an overall vision of exactly how social change comes about. But since its formal establishment in 1988 the network has so far weathered the ups and downs of protest and defeat. It’s probably the best example in Britain of a movement that uses

direct democracy. Hopefully it can continue to be both a benefit to its members and also a practical example of another world.

Nedd Ludd

For more information visit www.radicalroutes.org.uk or call 0113 262 9365.

There are member co-ops around the country – why not find out about one in your area?

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Iraq: American imperialism unleashed

Can we say for certain what prompted the war on Iraq without waiting for the judgment of history? And if so, does knowing where it began tell us anything of the future? In this three-part series, *Odessa Steps* looks at the wider picture.

Part one

THE BALKANISATION OF IRAQ

The US has encouraged secular factions in Iraq to vie for power in the name of democracy (an enfeebled, balkanised democracy). This process can clearly be seen in the case of the Shia communities. Fearing the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Sciri) and the Jimaat-I-Sadr-Thani, who remained largely underground in Iraq after 1991, the US tried to foist the exile Abdul Majid al-Khoie on the Iraqi Shias. But their protégé was hacked to death by members of a rival sect as soon as he arrived, largely because of his American associations. He'd allegedly been given \$13m in cash by the CIA to bribe Shia factions to support US plans. Needless to say, most of the money went missing following his assassination.

Sciri's leader, Ayatollah Baqui al-Hakim, has called on its militia, the Badr Brigades, to come out of hiding and provide a Shi'ite defence force to resist foreign occupation and secular government. Another man with armed force at his beck and call is Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress (INC). He's been promoted despite the fact that his long years of exile, his close connections to the Pentagon and his reputation as a shady financier (sentenced to 22 years jail in absentia by a Jordanian court) make him wholly unacceptable to many Iraqis.

Chalabi's Petra Bank used depositors' money to make bad loans to his own companies, which were then siphoned into offshore accounts to fund his lavish lifestyle. In total \$160m went missing. Over the years, Chalabi and the INC have gathered support for their cause by promising oil contracts to anyone that would help to put them into power in Iraq. They've moved quickly to seize Saddam's intelligence files, which they've threatened to use against the Jordanian royal family, al-Jazeera and potential rivals in Iraq. This faultline between the high-living US-

backed Iraqi exiles who have made their fortunes from usury, and the austere fundamentalism of the Shia clerics, is one that could tear Iraq apart.

Nor is this a phenomenon restricted to the murky world of neo-conservative power politics and money-grubbing. Iraqi businessman Nadhmi Auchi, whose companies gave directorships to British politicians like Keith Vaz, and who's acted as adviser to Tony Blair as a way to smooth his path back to some place in Iraq, was finally arrested on a French extradition warrant for corruption after being protected by the British State for two years, despite one of his firms being involved in a cartel that overcharged the NHS £27m for drugs. Squeezed dry of information, and with the TotalFinaElf trial heating up, he's been thrown to the wolves not least for being Saddam's bagman, helping the regime's senior leaders smuggle money into secret accounts in Luxembourg.

Nationality, Class and Religion

The Americans have deliberately talked up Sunni-Shia tensions and rivalries but glossed over the class dimension of this ancient division in the Muslim world. As the looting in Iraq showed, poor Shias didn't turn against their Sunni neighbours, they tore into the rich suburbs, the corrupt tribal and Ba'athist leaders, those who'd grown fat and powerful under Saddam. The poor ignored the banks where many of them had their savings until it was too late; these were robbed chiefly by organised gangs from Kuwait. Instead they launched a classic strike of the have-nots against the haves. Surprisingly, the much-derided British defence minister, Geoff Hoon, praised this ancient form of redistributing wealth. "I regard such behaviour as good practice," he said in parliament.

Impoverished by ten years of sanctions – average earnings in Iraq have fallen to as little as \$200 a year – and facing ruin as their life savings were stolen and the Iraqi dinar was made worthless, the so-called 'orgy of violence' that followed the regime's collapse was good old proletarian revenge mixed in with a canny appreciation of the value of goods in a barter economy where cash is worthless. In Najaf looting and theft were led by a militia group that had persuaded local US military commanders to recognise

it, while in Kirkuk and Mosul American troops have stood by as Kurds ethnically cleanse homes and farms settled by southern Iraqis as part of Saddam's 'Arabisation' of the north.

This could well come to be seen as the start of a new civil war for land similar to that being waged in Palestine, Serbia and Kosovo. In case you think this unlikely, consider the situation in Afghanistan where a year and a half after Kabul was 'liberated', American special forces are still being killed while mopping up and eleven civilians died recently in a single American air raid. Back in Iraq US soldiers are still being killed in 'random' shootings, there are regular ambushes with rocket-propelled grenades, there's a city-wide curfew in Baghdad and the markets are crowded with middle-class families buying kalashnikovs at \$75 each to protect them from the armed gangs who rule the night.

Airstrip Iraq

US policy is focused on controlling Iraq's oil for as long as it takes to pay for the war and reconstruction, and to build up a large, well-equipped army to intimidate the country's neighbours. This doesn't bode well for the Iraqi people. A recent report studying oil-based economies found that economic growth was lower in them than in non-oil economies, with lower life expectancy and much higher military spending. Despite pumping 3.5m barrels of oil a day for the last thirty years, half of Iraq's population are illiterate.

The Americans have prevented Iraqis from choosing their own Interim Authority or deciding for themselves who can be trusted with government and who not. Iraqi society depends on *intisab*, the complex web of patronage and family, political and tribal affiliations that oil the wheels of government and society. Cut through this and you risk collapse. Leave it (and the Ba'athists who profited from it) in place, and you risk alienation, revolt and war. The British and US forces called back to power many of the people – including some elements of the secret police – who were part of Saddam's oppressive regime, thus sowing the seeds for future conflicts.

And yet it's these middle-ranking merchants, bankers and bureaucrats on whom the future

expropriation of Iraq will depend. Just as in the West, if you want to milk the poor, hire a taxman to do it. Though a UN under-Secretary warned Britain and the US not to treat Iraq as "some sort of treasure chest to be divvied up," Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld weren't and aren't listening. The 23 government ministries are all headed by Americans, the country is partitioned into four military zones, hand-picked but unelected Iraqi protégés have been installed in positions of power, some factions have been excluded and a rudimentary de-Ba'athising has taken place – all acts calculated to inflame Iraqi nationalism while paralysing it from within.

The result has been chaos. Weeks after the war was declared over (though it actually continues in the form of sporadic guerrilla raids and shootings), the country is still in ruins. Most of Baghdad is a no-go area at night. Aid convoys are being ambushed, looted and the vehicles stolen. Still unoccupied regime buildings are being set alight daily and left to burn. Rubbish is uncollected, electricity intermittent, public services non-existent. Many of the companies hired to begin reconstruction are still sitting in Kuwait complaining that Iraq remains unsafe. The new US administrator, Paul Bremer, has announced new rules allowing US soldiers to shoot looters on sight "to get the word around"; an order they were already carrying out.

James Woolsey, a former director of the CIA, was the US choice to head the new Iraqi information ministry – not a far cry from one of Saddam's goons heading it, when all's said and done. Woolsey is no Clinton technocrat recalled to the flag. He's long believed that Washington has a mission to use its overwhelming military power and its democratic ideals to transform the Arab world. And he pushed for war with Iraq as hard as anyone, even before September 11th. To Woolsey's mind, the United States is already engaged in what he and many of his fellow neo-conservatives call 'World War IV', a struggle that pits the US and Britain against Islamist regimes and organisations. Needless to say, Iraqis get the message.

Next issue: the role of the military industrial complex

India Some 60 million state employees went on strike on 21st May, to protest against privatisation moves and proposed anti-union laws. Tens of thousands of cops went on to the streets of Mumbai, though protests there and in New Delhi passed off peacefully. The streets of India's third city, Calcutta, were largely deserted and trains across the province of West Bengal ran a skeleton timetable.

The one-day stoppage was called by the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, the All-India Trade Union Congress and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha. "The strike is total in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal" said CITU secretary Swadesh Dev Roye.

Five of the nine main banking unions also joined the strike, and trading on the Mumbai money markets was severely restricted. Other sectors hit included insurance, mining and oil, but healthcare workers stayed at their posts.

China A gas explosion killed 18 miners in Yunnan province on 22nd May. This was the fifth major accident in May alone, in what is the world's largest and most deadly mining industry. More than 100 workers were killed this month.

In an earlier disaster, 72 miners were killed in March in a coal mine in Shanxi province. They'd earlier detected methane gas and tried to leave, but the mine's manager was concerned about the loss of production and ordered them back to work. Only fifteen workers on the shift survived, and that was because they ignored the manager's orders and ran away. In the aftermath of the disaster, 500 armed police cordoned off the site.

Activists outside China say that state and private mine owners and managers show an utter contempt for the lives of their employees. The total number of deaths in 2002 was as high as 7,000. Even official figures put the total at 5,971. The *China Labor Bulletin* listed 47 serious accidents in 2002. The worst was in Heilongjiang last June, when 124 workers were killed in an explosion.

Now activists say the situation can only get worse, because a condition for Chinese entry to the World Trade Organisation in 2001 was that barriers to foreign competition should be removed. This, activists say, means a relentless pressure on already minimal levels of safety.

Germany Tens of thousands of activists took part in rallies on 24th May, in protest at

government plans to crack down on workers' rights in the country. Under the 'Agenda 2010' proposals of chancellor Gerhard Schröder, unemployment benefit would be cut and job protection measures relaxed.

"We don't want to know the chancellor out of power, we want to wake him up and his government too", Ursula Engelen-Kefer, deputy leader of the DGB trade union confederation, told a rally in Kessel. In Hanover, DGB chair Michael Sommer insisted at another rally that the unions didn't want to break their links with Schröder's ruling Social Democrats.

German anarchists were quick to decry what they called the reformist position taken by union leaders, particularly as the cuts being proposed by the Social Democrats are far tougher than anything introduced by Schröder's predecessor, Helmut Kohl. He was the rightwing Christian Democrat who ruled Germany for sixteen years.

United States Prisoner-activist and jailhouse lawyer Harold H. Thompson has lost his most vital piece of equipment, an electric typewriter. Although it's broken beyond repair, bureaucrats from the Tennessee

'department of corrections' are denying inmates permission to replace their own property from outside and at their own cost.

Because of these measures, Harold's workload has increased enormously. This hasn't only slowed down his efforts on behalf of other inmates, it's also had deleterious effects on his health. His supporters hope polite protests will overturn what they call a "bad and draconian interpretation of prison diktat".

Please write nicely to Departmental Commissioner Quintin White, Northwest Correctional Complex, Route 1, Box 660, Tiptonville, Tennessee 38079 USA.

Another prisoner, Brian McCarvill, is pursuing a lawsuit against his jailers, the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC), challenging their censorship of radical and anarchist publications. Anarchists within the Oregon prison system have been classified as 'Security Threat Group' (i.e. gang) members, which serves as a pretext for screws to deny them access to information and perspectives from outside the mainstream.

For more information, contact the Anarchist Prisoners' Legal Aid Network (APLAN) weneversleep@ziplip.com

Nice theories, Sir Herbert, shame about the knighthood

Circles of Influence: Herbert Read

at Tate Modern

Holland Street, London SE1 (020 7887 8888)
until 10th June • Admission free

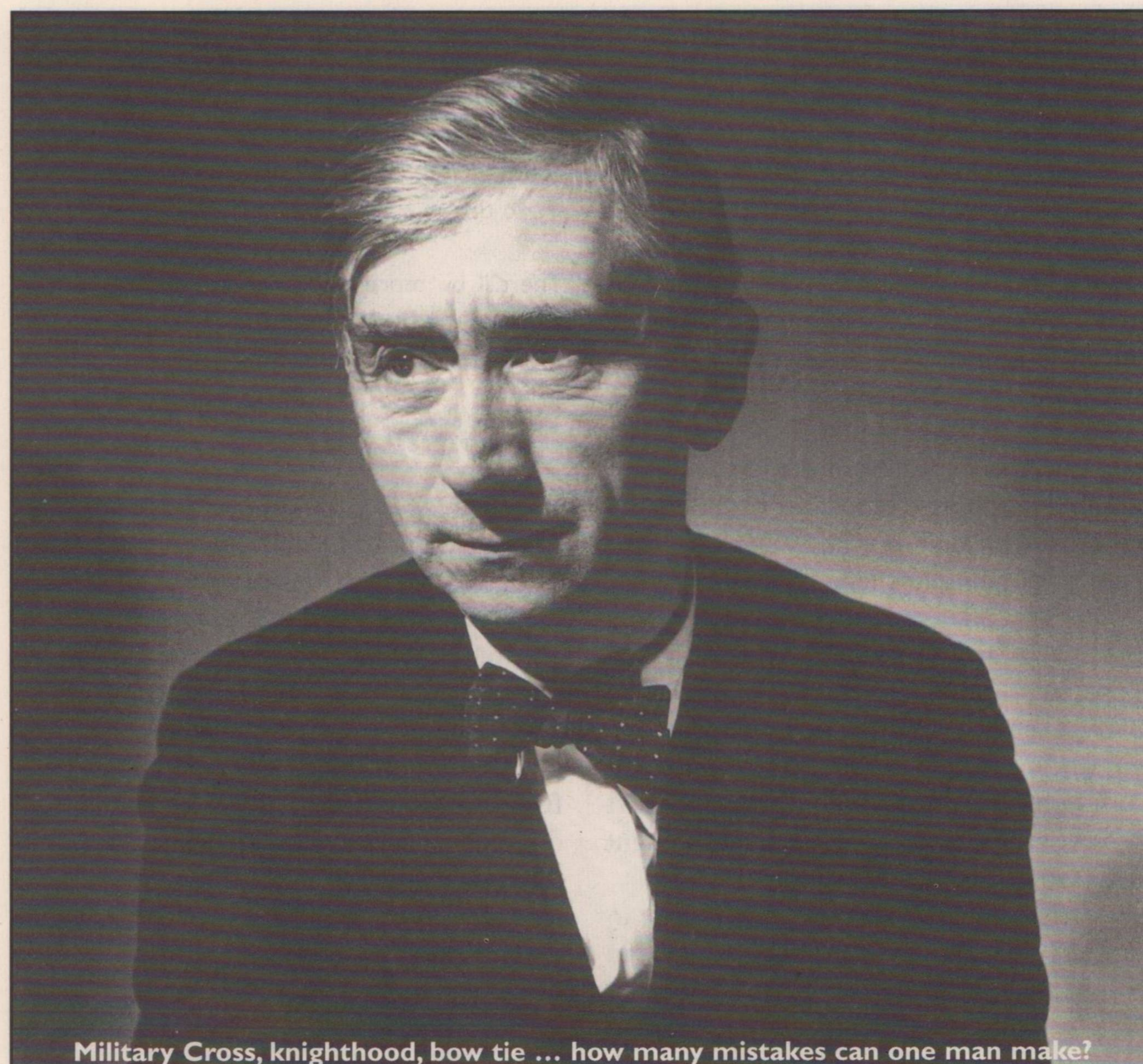
Tate Modern has devoted an exhibition room to the work of Herbert Read, not as an artist – he wasn't one – but as a pundit, “the most influential British writer on art from the 1930s to the 1950s” it says in the blurb. The works on show are by the abstract artists he promoted: Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson in the 1930s; Kenneth Armitage, Lynn Chadwick, Terry Frost, Bernard Meadows and Naum Gabo in the 1950s. The labels include his critical comments on them. Not everyone would accept his assessments (do the lively metal sculptures of Chadwick and Frost really express fear?), but as an establishment art critic he provided the bemused with something to say and think.

A cabinet of books by him shows some of his other interests. These included surrealism, industrial design, children's art and, of course, anarchism. Between 1937 and 1953, he wrote pamphlets for Freedom and a book on anarchism, *Anarchy and Order*, for Faber and Faber. When the editors of this newspaper were arrested in 1945 and charged with conspiracy to spread disaffection in his Majesty's forces, he helped set up the Freedom Press Defence Committee.

But he never abided by anarchist orthodoxy, to put it mildly. In 1915, already an anarchist (so he claimed), he joined the army as an officer. He even listed his Western Front medals in *Anarchy and Order*. He finally cut himself off from the anarchist movement for good in 1953, when he accepted a knighthood.

History hasn't been kind to his disingenuous and self-serving explanation (“daily and continually, almost every one of you accepts an order of living which is integrally bourgeois ... every glass of beer you drink, every cigarette you smoke, helps to sustain the bourgeois society which (in theory) you so rightly despise”), but neither were his critics at the time. But before his act of infamy he produced theoretical works that still have something of value to say about the role of art.

A.K.



Military Cross, knighthood, bow tie ... how many mistakes can one man make?

photograph by Vernon Richards

Herbert Read's anarchism emerged from his aesthetic concerns. The “concretisation and vitalisation of ideals is one of the main tasks of the aesthetic activity in man,” he said. The appeal of his ideas is the way in which he tried to show, through his writings on art and education, how people could liberate themselves from authoritarian ways of seeing and being. He saw freedom and culture as intrinsically linked and emphasised the necessity of creating a democratic culture in order to create a democratic society.

Read saw traditional education as an important source of the repressed nature of society, while an emancipatory education would encourage the growth of the creative and autonomous personality. As he saw it, the human instinct for freedom has been suppressed by authoritarian modes of social organisation, evidenced in the lack of individual creative spontaneity. “A power structure is the form taken by the inhibition of creativity; the exercise of power is the denial of spontaneity.” In order to reinvigorate the instinct for freedom, the aim of education

(he maintained) should be individuation.

The drive for creativity and spontaneity which children demonstrate must be allowed to flourish, for it's in the practice of creativity that individuals develop themselves and their social tendencies. So, Read argued, social virtues necessary for a free life are more likely to be encouraged by developing an aesthetic sensibility in the young than by inculcating prescribed science and knowledge. He felt that anarchism was the only political philosophy to advocate the kind of freedom necessary for creativity.

Creativity, as he once said, is the only way to train ourselves to freedom (or rather, the only way to make sure we aren't conditioned out of freedom), so the concepts of freedom and creativity must be tightly bound together. “Freedom is the ideal polity as conceived by poetry; liberty is a political ideal and is expressed in social organisation.”

It seemed as important to him politically to destroy the established bourgeois ideals in literature, painting and architecture as it was to destroy the established bourgeois ideals in

economics and politics. He claimed that “a parallelism exists between the social and the artistic processes. Both depend on an innate creative energy, one in the mind of the artist, the other in the body politic.”

His concern with the development of true individuality occupies a significant portion of his thought. He defined progress thus: “progress is measured by the degree of differentiation within society ... by richness and intensity of experience – by a wider and deeper apprehension of the significance and scope of human existence.” It's the natural creativity of individuals which justifies the claim that authority must be eliminated. He says, “we affirm our superiority to mere existence because we dare to create... creation is the extension of consciousness itself, the conquest of new areas of awareness”.

There's more to be said. Read locates, in the intellectual tradition of Nietzsche and Freud, an assertion of the development of individuality as an evolutionary significant process. He identifies in psychoanalysis a discourse which indicates that the devotion of a group to a leader expresses the immaturity of the individuals who constitute it.

The attachment is the result of an unconscious symbolism which causes the transference of an emotional relationship to a political ‘father’ (his term). Read describes Freud as identifying, in the desire for independence, the origins of the heroic myth in the imagination of the poet.

But the anarchist defies the boundaries between imagination and action, comes of age by disowning the father and realises his individuality. In this way, he describes obedience to authority as evidence of the undeveloped, childlike character of the individual. “I would define the anarchist as a man who, in his manhood, dares to resist the authority of the father,” he says, “who is no longer content to be governed by a blind unconscious identification of the leader and the father and by the inhibited instincts which alone make such an identification possible.”

So it is that anarchism is equated with maturity and human development, and this relationship is one mediated by the creative power of the human imagination.

Carissa Honeywell

All quotations taken from Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order*.

Herbert Read on art and education

Each individual begins life as a dynamic unity. Into that original unity tensions and distortions are introduced by an unconscious and largely alien environment. It is alien because it is unconscious and largely motivated by hatred towards the human race, we could not consciously introduce those abstract systems of law and morality on which the evolving body and soul of the person, born to potential unity and beauty, are disastrously stretched and deformed ...

Art is a discipline which the senses seek in their intuitive perception of form, of harmony, of proportion, of the integrity or wholeness of any experience. It is also the discipline of the tool and the material – the discipline imposed by pencil or pen, by the loom or the potter's wheel, by the physical nature of paint, textiles, wood, stone or clay.

But the point about such discipline is that it is innate: it is part of our physiological constitution, and is there to be encouraged and matured. It does not have to be imposed by the schoolmaster or the drill sergeant: it is not a kind of physical torture. It is a faculty

within the child which responds to sympathy and love, to the intelligent anticipation of impulses and trends in the individuality of the child. For this reason the teacher must be primarily a person and not a pedagogue, a friend rather than a master or mistress, an infinitely patient collaborator. Put in a drier and more pedantic way, the aim of education is to discover the child's psychological type and to allow each type its natural line of development, its natural form of integration. That is the real meaning of freedom in education.

The art of children is supremely important for this very reason: it is the earliest and the most exact index to the child's individual psychology. Once the psychological tendency or trend of a child is known, its own individuality can be developed by the discipline of art, till it has its own form and beauty, which is its unique contribution to the beauties of human nature. This, of course, is the antithesis of those totalitarian doctrines of education (not confined to totalitarian countries) which strive to impose

a unique concept of human nature on the infinite variety of human persons.

A child's art, therefore, is its passport to freedom, to the full fruition of all its gifts and talents, to its true and stable happiness in adult life. Art leads the child out of itself. It may begin as a lonely individual activity, as the self-absorbed scribbling of a baby on a piece of paper. But the child scribbles in order to communicate its inner world to a sympathetic spectator, to the parent from whom it expects a sympathetic response.

Too often, alas, it receives only indifference or ridicule. Nothing is more crushing to the infant spirit than a parent's or a teacher's contempt for those creative efforts of expression. That is one aspect of a crime which disgraces the whole of our intellectual civilisation and which, in my opinion, is the root cause of our social disintegration. We sow the seeds of disunity in the nursery and the classroom, with our superior adult conceit. We divide the intelligence from the sensibility of our children, create split-men (schizophrenics, to give them a

psychological name), and then discover that we have no social unity.

We begin our life in unity – the physical unity of the mother and child, to which corresponds the emotional unity of love. We should build on that original unity, extending it first to the family, where the seeds of hatred are so easily and so often sown, and then to the school, and so by stages to the farm, the workshop, the village and the whole community. But the basis of unity at each successive stage, as at the first stage, is creativity. We unite to create, and the pattern of creation is in nature, and we discover and conform to this pattern by all the methods of artistic activity – by music, by dancing and drama, but also by working together and living together, for, in a sane civilisation, these too are arts of the same natural pattern.

Excerpt from *The Education of Free Men*, Freedom pamphlet, 1944, which was reprinted in Herbert Read, *A One-Man Manifesto*, available at £6 (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere) from Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

What we say ...

If you want to gauge the state of the trade union movement in Britain, look no further than its response to the introduction of Foundation Hospitals in the National Health Service. Pushed through by health secretary Alan Milburn and prime minister Tony Blair despite opposition from nearly 70 Labour MPs, these institutions will mean a return to the Tories' 'internal market' in the NHS. They'll be able to set their own payrates, contract out 'non-core' activities (which could include some clinical services), borrow money and take on patients from other hospitals.

No wonder the unions oppose them, and with good reason. Jobs will be lost, land and nursing homes sold off and hard-won national rates undermined. Foundation Hospitals are bad news, and NHS staff (Britain's most highly unionised workforce) don't want them. Even moderate unions like the Royal College of Nursing have come out in opposition. Jack Dromey, rightwing candidate for the post of T&G general secretary, has described them as "Labour's Poll Tax".

So how do Britain's trade unions, including Unison, Amicus, the GMB and T&G propose to fight them? Not by taking industrial action, organising marches and rallies, withdrawing money from the Labour Party or asking their members not to cooperate with management in the 29 hospitals due to be given Foundation status next April. No, of course not.

All was revealed in an article in the *Guardian* last week. Under the encouraging title, 'Unions step up campaign against Foundation Hospitals', it was announced that public sector unions were going to – wait for it – submit motions to this year's Labour Party conference. Naturally this will clobber Blair hard, as we know how much attention he pays to what his party's conference says.

The need for trade unions is greater than ever. While bosses keep their fat-cat pensions many workers are finding their own schemes closed down. Even where they remain in place the benefits are being cut. Staff at Axa, for example, can't retire at 60 any more but have to work a further five years instead. Not that this applies to Axa bosses, obviously – well, we know how hard people with six-figure salaries have to work, don't we?

The obvious response would be for workers to flock to join their unions, but they're doing no such thing. In 1991, 37.5% of British workers belonged to a trade union. In 2001, the last year for which figures are available, this had fallen to 28.8%. Seven out of ten workers are outside the unions. In the private sector, this figure rises to eight out of ten, a decline mirrored in other European countries. (In America, the situation is even worse. Just 8.5% of private sector workers there are unionised).

What makes the British decline particularly alarming, though, is that Labour has introduced legislation to force employers to recognise trade unions if enough workers wanted them (last month *Daily Telegraph* journalists voted for the NUJ to be recognised).

There are many reasons for the decline of industrial organisation and militancy in the West. Poor leadership by union bosses, including leftwing ones like Andy Gilchrist of the FBU, is a major factor. If trade unions are unwilling to take on the capitalists over pensions, fat-cat salaries and Foundation Hospitals, workers will see little reason for joining them in the first place.

Anarchists have differing attitudes towards reformist trade unions (better in than out is the position of *Freedom* put in a nutshell). But all anarchists recognise the importance of workplace organisation and militancy. Good work to build both has been done by the national anarchist federations and by individual activists. The Anarchist Trade Union Network is being re-launched soon, which will help. For ourselves, we'll continue to support all their efforts in any way we can.

Readers' views

Mayday reconsidered

We're glad Iain McKay and others from *Freedom* ensured a revolutionary presence at the Mayday trade union march ('Nice weather, shame about the demo', 17th May). In previous years a few people from the London Mayday Collective were tasked with attending it in order to hand out free papers and other propaganda, but it didn't happen this year largely because it was known the *Freedom* crew were going. But why Iain's amazement at the antics of the left sects and the mind-numbing tediousness of the march and rally speakers? It's like that every year and it's not going to change.

That's why, after years of attending the trade union event, five years ago a sizeable bunch of anarchists and others started an alternative yearly event in an attempt to reclaim the spirit of Mayday. Across Europe it's not unusual for there to be specifically anarchist and revolutionary events, and it was thought about time there was one here too.

So why should we encourage others to participate in the union event? So they can be surprised like Iain was? To be exposed to the lefty rants? Over the years the Mayday Collective has approached the march organisers, both formally and informally, to discuss ways of co-operating. They're not interested. It only needs a dozen anarchists to sufficiently cover the event, so why waste everyone else's energy? Unless there's a plan to storm the stage of course, to put a real revolutionary message across!

Iain suggests that we need a basic Mayday leaflet. Most years the collective and others have produced leaflets or free papers to hand out to passersby. This year West London Anarchists & Radicals (WAR) and others produced 5,000 'Mayday Greetings' leaflets and handed them out across central London. (We dropped off a few hundred at *Freedom* to be taken down to the union march.) The OurMayday website has a fair bit on the history of Mayday, which Iain says needs to be covered.

As for the idea of a Mayday conference, does he remember the Mayday 2000 one, attended by some 2,000 people? Another conference could be good, but not at the expense of taking action on the day. Who would commit to organising and funding it? Is there enough agreement across the movement to give it an agreed focus? For instance, would we let in those who see a future in the trade unions alongside those who see them as an obstacle to genuine change?

We agree that Mayday needs a rethink. At the same time, revolutionaries need to consider whether they want to be genuinely involved and committed or not. We won't be around as a group next year, but as individuals we'll continue to back direct action, solidarity, and self-organisation.

West London Anarchists & Radicals
war1921war@yahoo.co.uk

So let me get this right. Faced with a choice between the revolutionary and the reformist Mayday events, Iain McKay chose the latter only to come away disappointed by the lack of militancy. Seriously though, his article reveals his illusions in the trade unions (which I suspect many 'class struggle' anarchists share). He equates the trade unions with the working class and views them as potential – if not actual – sites of class struggle.

This is most clearly revealed in his favourable comparison of Colombian trade unionist leaders with their British counterparts. The fact that Colombian trade union leaders are murdered doesn't demonstrate that

they're pursuing the revolutionary needs of the working class – it simply shows the general level of repression in Colombia. As many Colombian workers have discovered, often to their cost, we need to go beyond the trade union form.

Ricky Elbourne

There'll be more discussion on Mayday and its aftermath in the next issue of *Freedom*.

Reaching out

Reading the report of the *Freedom/Black Flag* meeting made me doubly sorry that I couldn't attend ('Constructive discussion at media meeting', 3rd May). It was good to see consensus on the importance of reaching out beyond the anarchist movement, something I've long advocated and try to practise in my own way. We must never forget, nor underestimate, the amount of discontent and actual distress that exists throughout our society. Many people may simply lack a vocabulary of dissent that would enable them to give a name to their disquiet and to communicate it to others. That, and the knowledge that there's already a constituency of thought out there in which it's permissible to voice such discontent.

A.J. Todd

The anarchist press, part two: A second discussion meeting hosted by *Freedom* and *Black Flag* will be held at *Freedom* on Tuesday 1st July. Last time we discussed the future of both papers and how they could support each other. This time our focus will be on how each of them should develop in the next year, with a particular view to encouraging new contributors to take part. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for readers to discuss the forthcoming *Freedom* redesign.

7.30pm on Tuesday 1st July at *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 (nearest tube Aldgate East).

Not in my name

The assault on Iraq saw unprecedented numbers of people on the streets of British, American and European towns and cities. Banners were marked out by the recurring slogan of 'Not in my name'. As an anarchist I shared this sentiment, but not just as regards the war. More importantly and particularly, I feel it towards government and the state.

This is an issue particularly relevant to anarchists. In my experience, when most people become aware of my anarchist politics I'm bombarded with the usual set of incredulous questions. But what about work, criminals, order, pollution ...?

I've found this to be the case even from peace and leftwing political activists, who perhaps should be better informed. When I say I don't vote, I usually get either 'you'll let the Tories in' or 'then you can't complain about the actions of the government', both of which show a total misunderstanding of the principles behind anarchist abstentionism.

These people seem unable to grasp that it's the principles involved in the electoral and political process, as well as the immediate outcomes and actions of government, that we object to. By this I mean that, if I vote, I'm giving my consent to the process of politics and the structure of government and state in its entirety, no matter who's in power.

The politicians of the party in power are able to use my vote as a means of legitimising a series of acts by state and government which, if performed by individuals against another individual, would be commonly

accepted by most people as a crime. For instance, killing people is okay if it's done by the forces of the state, be they police or the armed forces. But if an ordinary person kills a neighbour, this would normally be regarded as murder or manslaughter.

Taking money against the wishes of someone is called taxation when it's done by the state, but theft if committed by an individual against another individual. Of course the state goes on to use the money it's obtained to pursue a variety of purposes opposed by most anarchists and ordinary people – war the arms trade, subsidies to Big Business and the corporations, politicians' salaries and pensions, the 'Civil List' payments to royalty, royal palaces and so on.

Now, if we could transfer the understanding conveyed in the slogan 'Not in my name' from the limited purpose of opposing warmongering to the wider context of opposing all the anti-societal actions of state and government – indeed to opposing the institutions themselves – then we'll have succeeded in awakening the instinctive anarchist in us all. So I say once again, War and Government: not in my name.

Jonathan Simcock

More about Bernard

It wasn't just his modesty that made Bernard Miles stick to the edge of demonstrations (Obituary, 17th May). From his teens at least, Bernard was hampered by severe asthma. If this hadn't been the case, he'd have been as well known a peace movement and anarchist activist as others with whom he worked in the Committee of 100.

In the late 1950s, a dozen of us found ourselves in the cells. Fair enough, and par for the course, but Bernard was with us and the police had confiscated his inhaler and pills on the pretext that they might contain illegal drugs. Bernard's asthma was so severe that he had to carry a powerful inhaler at all times and he always had a letter from his doctor for any hospital to which he'd been taken, clearly stating his condition and the medication he was on.

The police had ample evidence that the drugs were prescribed, and this was clearly an attempt to break him. In fact it nearly broke the rest of us, who were worried Bernard would die. Despite twice losing consciousness and being rushed to hospital, Bernard himself took it stoically. That settled for Bernard what had been a worrying issue: could he take part in direct action rather than just come on the supporting marches? Or would his disability damage the movement? He learned then that, though his morale was good enough, that of his cellmates wouldn't be.

Laurens Otter

Next issue

We'll put the donations list in the next issue, which will be dated 14th June. The deadline for all copy will be Thursday 5th June and contributions can be mailed to FreedomCopy@aol.com

Black Flag

Our comrades from *Black Flag* are holding an editorial meeting on 24th June. They positively encourage people to come and get involved. 7pm at *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street.

Correction

The Manchester Social Forum wasn't on Wednesday 21st May as we seemed to suggest in the last issue. It's actually on 7th June – see page 2. The email address we gave for this event was also baloney. Apologies.

Dry text offers screams but little passion

Change the World Without Taking Power: the meaning of revolution today

by John Holloway

Pluto Press, £15.99

If one were to judge John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* by its cover, one might expect a flashy account of the current anti-capitalist movement. Instead we get a book that's primarily concerned with Marxist theory, specifically situating the ideas of Open Marxism within the present state of resistance to capitalism. And, although it perhaps fails to live up to the expectations it creates, it does provide a lucid and insightful examination of the state of Marxist theory today.

Holloway's account opens with the idea of "the scream", an act of rebellion and personal subjectivity. He emphasises that this scream is an act "we" use to express our opposition to and alienation under capitalism. In chapters two and three, he proceeds to examine the state and how it's bound up with the exercise of what he calls "power-over" which in turn represses the individual's "power-to". Rooted in Marx's concept of alienated labour, this theme underlies Holloway's argument throughout, often expressed in relation to doing: he calls social relations under capitalism "as a doing dominated by the done, as a doing alienated from the doer".

Chapters four, five and six all centre on the concept of fetishism, which (Holloway argues) has been smothered by scientific, orthodox Marxism, a tradition he examines in chapter seven. In chapter eight, he redefines the original "we" of "the scream", the "critical-revolutionary subject". Chapters nine and ten are concerned with "anti-power", with nine giving a critique of Autonomous Marxism and ten outlining the historical changes and restructuring of capitalism in the last century. He concludes with a chapter entitled, simply, 'Revolution?'. Holloway directs his arguments against two main opponents: postmodernism and Marxist theories which compete with his own. His relation to postmodernism is a curious one, since he's generally hostile towards it without adequately acknowledging certain affinities between it and the Open Marxism he espouses. For example, his attack on identity is reflected in postmodernism's anti-essentialism. His criticism of post-

modernism is that, in proclaiming the death of the subject, it also destroys the revolutionary, negative potential of subjectivity. "To confound subjectivity with identity and criticise subjectivity in an attempt to attack identity leads only to a total impasse, since subjectivity, as movement, as negation of is-ness, is the only possibly basis for going beyond identity and therefore beyond the bourgeois subject," he says. Another example is Holloway's use of grammar, such as his distinction between the indicative (what is) and the subjunctive (what could be). This recalls postmodernism generally, and in particular Derrida's emphasis on grammar. Despite his unfavourable tone towards postmodernism, at least some of Open Marxism seems to be directly influenced by its concepts.

In his explication of Marxist theory, Holloway champions, first, utopian over scientific Marxism and, second, Open over Autonomous Marxism. He poses the utopian Marxism of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin against the scientific, objective character of Marxism which, he argues, is more a product of Engels's interpretation of Marx than of Marx himself. The error of scientific Marxism, he says, is that it looks at things as concrete instead of as a process (the 'inevitable'



Open Marxism in practice or some Zapatistas out for a stroll – you decide

proletarian revolution, the definition and identity of the working class itself).

Holloway's main opponent from Autonomous Marxism is Antonio Negri, and *Change the World Without Taking Power* can be seen as his version of Negri and Hardt's *Empire*. Both works try to situate the anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movements of recent years in their authors' frameworks of Marxist theory. For Holloway, the primary weakness of Autonomous Marxism is that it promotes a positive rather than a negative understanding of rebellion, while he takes negation as rebellion's starting point. He also opposes Negri's concept of regulation, whereby crises in capitalism are seen merely as the restructuring of domination instead of giving potential for rupture.

But what exactly is Open Marxism itself? For Holloway it's based on the claim that "a crisis is essentially open," that since capitalist social relations aren't fixed, but constantly in a process of being actively produced and reproduced, each moment is one of potential crisis whose outcome is never certain. He alternately defines Open Marxism in practice as the moment when "the hardness of all categories dissolves and phenomena which appear as things or

established facts (such as commodity, value, money and the state) are also revealed as processes. The forms come to life. The categories are opened to reveal that their content is struggle.

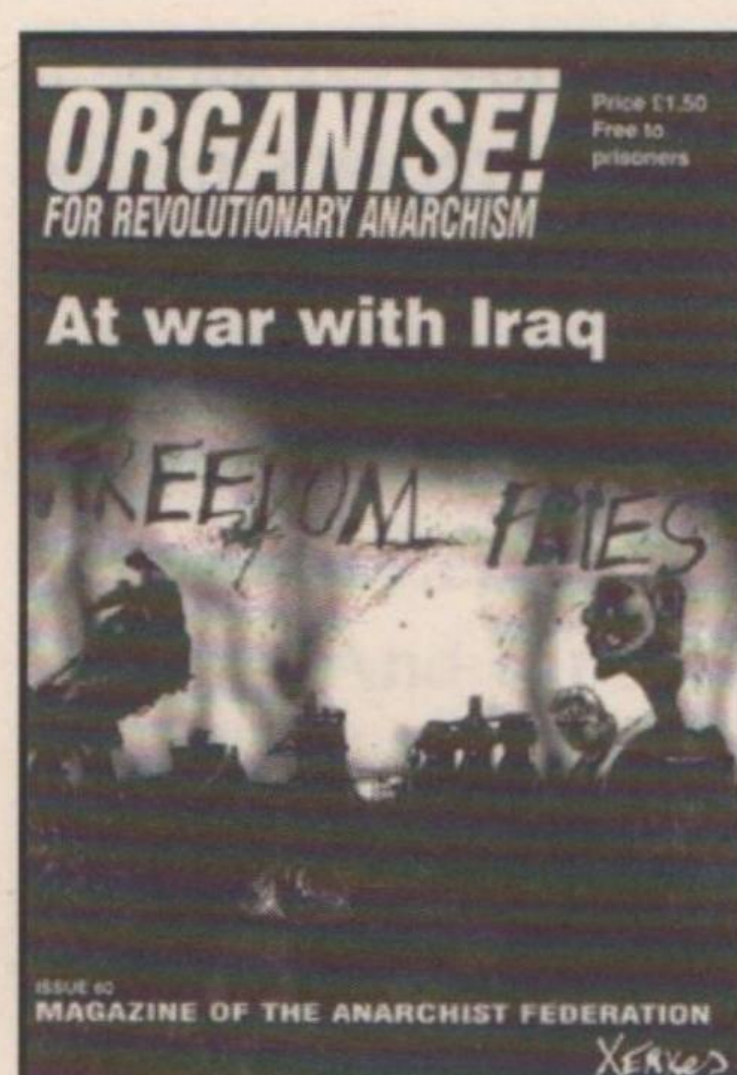
For Holloway, the Zapatistas are the example of the practice of the concepts of Open Marxism (he himself teaches at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla in Mexico). He points to them as a model in confronting identity and in exemplifying "the scream". In terms of identity, the Zapatistas define themselves, not merely as indigenous, but as that and more, a definition which is based not on being (existence) but on doing (constitution). Holloway quotes Subcomandante Marcos, who says the Zapatistas are "people who are quite ordinary, that is to say rebellious". This is 'our' scream and, instead of allowing the absence of certainty to prevent revolutionary action, the Zapatistas merely say "asking we walk".

Stylistically Holloway has rendered many complex theoretical points into readable prose. His attempt to fashion the book with a general reader in mind is obvious. But because of this, *Change the World Without Taking Power* can also seem repetitive. Despite all it's got to recommend it, the book's style points up how it fails to achieve what it aspires to. Holloway has been mostly successful in translating the text from the idiom and jargon of the academy to the language of the general reader, but in doing so the text has retained all the dryness of academic writing.

One way to demonstrate what the book is not is to contrast it with a book to which much of its structure and argument bears an uncanny resemblance: Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Vaneigem's text is infused with the emotion, vivid imagination, passion and profound alienation that makes Holloway's theoretical approach to the same end seem sterile. The message of Vaneigem's book bleeds through its pages and drips on to the reader, while the arguments in *Change the World Without Taking Power* can be safely stored within its pages, contained within the confines of the library shelf.

bea

Available from Freedom at £15.99 (add £1.60 towards postage and packing in the UK, £3.20 elsewhere)



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Issue 60

£1.50

The latest issue of *Organise!*, magazine of the Anarchist Federation, is with us, majoring on the war with Iraq. And straightaway we see the perils of trying to second-guess what is just about to happen. The main article was written just as war started when there was a flurry of anti-war protests which, after the million strong anti-war march in February, made it look as though there was a substantial body of people in Britain about to take to the streets.

Sadly it didn't happen, the war carried on to a 'successful' conclusion without many of the doomsayers' predictions coming true and (as some of us predicted) consent was

manufactured to give the appearance of public approval of what could be seen as an illegal war. And now the war's over we have to analyse why the anti-war movement was so popular and then simply faded away. Which isn't to say that the analysis of why the war was fought is wrong (er, it was all about the oil, one way or another), just that we didn't have enough clout to stop it being fought.

Then there's the firefighters' dispute (the "Great Firefighters' Strike of 2002-03" as *Organise!* would have us believe). Whilst making many valid points over the tactics involved in the dispute, and recognising that the war was used as a stick to beat the firefighters with (some of them even got called up as reservists), the basic fact is that the use of traditional industrial action by public sector workers rarely works against an intransigent government. Especially when the military provides a 'Scabs-r-Us' service which can minimise the effects of the dispute.

Anyway the rest of the paper is worth reading, though the piece on Argentina

seems unduly over-optimistic regarding the popular struggles there, and needs updating. The item on the Whiteboys in Ireland ("the class struggle in Ireland 1760-1840") is an excellent introduction to the topic; there's a piece by a Radical Dad and a brief history of the Anarchist Black Cross. The reviews are dominated by Geert Dhondt's look at Alexandre Skirda's *Facing the Enemy* which unsurprisingly is very enthusiastic coming, as it is, from a Platformist position. It therefore ducks some of the more awkward questions raised by the practice of certain Platformists, especially in post-war France (we'll gloss over ORA here in Britain lest we open that can of worms again). There's also a review of a new (but by all accounts not brilliant) biography of Victor Serge and sundry letters and other items.

Whatever your views on the main articles, if nothing else they should stimulate debate. The magazine is well worth getting and is yours for a measly £1.50.

Richard A.

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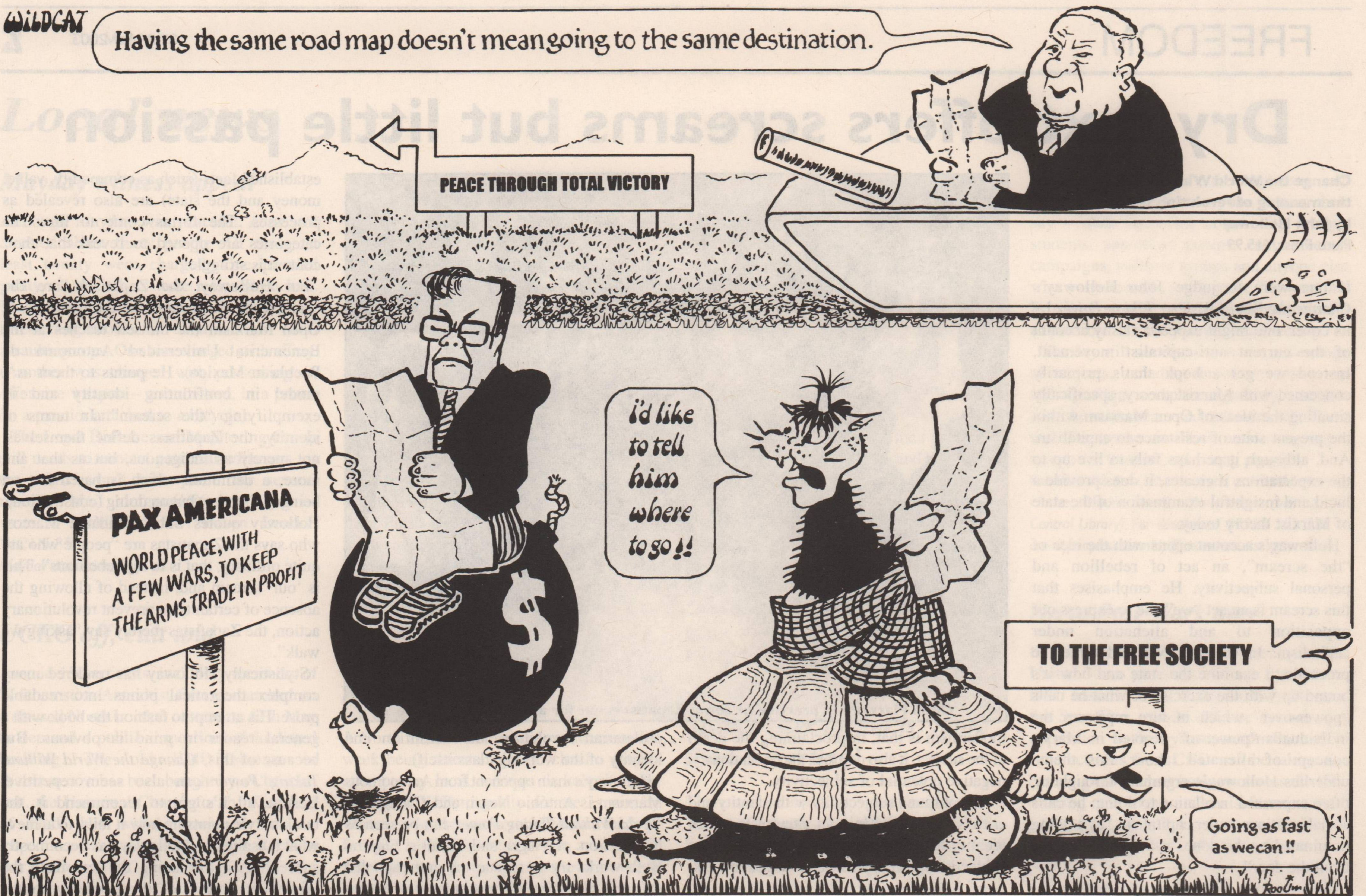
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Freedom is aardvark

Many people considered Melanie to be a very odd girl. She would annoy her family and friends by regaling them with tales about how she would find the man of her dreams by kissing an aardvark. Frogs were far too mundane for Melanie. Of course, she didn't really believe such things were possible but at least it made her sound interesting.

Nevertheless, one day while walking alone on a patch of deserted moorland, an angel appeared before Melanie and granted her a single wish. Rather than wishing for the handsome prince that she had yearned for since she was a tiny child, she instead asked for an aardvark.

The angel was surprised (and slightly put out) by this bizarre request. However, s/he had no choice but to grant the wish. With this in mind, s/he mumbled some incoherent nonsense and lo and behold an aardvark appeared. Now that his/her work was complete the angel disappeared once more into the ether.

Melanie was overjoyed at this development. "At last", she thought, "my prince is merely a kiss away". Leaning over this slightly grotesque termite-eater, she placed her lips on to its

Readers, digress

long snout. In an instant the creature disappeared - leaving in its stead a pair of bolt cutters. Without the expected princely protection, Melanie instead had to content herself with the metaphorical tools required to cut through a lifetime of social conditioning.

Imitation of life

Life was too much for Eric Bloodwing. His wife nagged him incessantly, his children lived promiscuous lives that he could not understand and his boss gave him too much work to complete. On top of all this he found himself sexually attracted to his young secretary and jealous of his neighbour's success.

One evening, after completing the work that he had brought home from the office, Eric relaxed in front of the television. On screen was his favourite situation comedy. The main character was a man whose wife nagged him incessantly while his children lived promiscuous lives that he could not relate to. Meanwhile, this overworked man desired his young secretary and envied his

neighbour's success. He also liked to relax in front of the television.

Eric laughed at the foolishness of this man's escapades. During the advertisement break, Eric was bombarded by sexy messages of desire, success and freedom. He was mesmerised by these messages and the television character laughed at such foolishness.

Alan's adventures in Advertland (or Interpellation for beginners)

Alan prided himself on being a cool, trendy cynic. Every day he would drive his motorcycle past the advertising hoardings and declare that they would never be able to ensnare him. "Don't they get it", he would boast. "I'm far too cynical for their mind games". Of course, it was this very arrogance that would prove to be his undoing.

It was a warm Spring day and Alan looked up at the hoarding. He did this every day in an effort to prove to the world how cynical and untouchable he was. However, there was

a new advertisement today. It depicted a supercool cynical young man (not unlike Alan) staring blankly at the passersby. Most people just ignored him. They didn't 'get it'. Alan, on the other hand, felt the need to stop and stare at the hoarding a little closer.

Although the bulk of the poster consisted of the aforementioned young man, there was a small, slightly blurred figure in the background. "That's me!", shouted Alan, pointing frantically at the blurred figure. "I'm in the fucking photo". Naturally, the fact that he was only in the background didn't please him too much. He felt that he should have been the star of the show. Likewise, this relegation to mere supporting role began to sow seeds of doubt into a previously confident mind.

Fearing that he wasn't hip enough, Alan began adopting the posture and mannerisms of the supercool cynic. As he did this, his lookalike in the picture began to grow fainter and fainter. In a similar manner, the Alan in the real world also began to slowly disappear - only to be replaced by a replica of the supercool cynic in the picture (completely decked out in the latest wares of capitalist mediocrity).

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Shamelessly lifted from *Readers Digress!*, an "irregular freesheet for the irregular mind". For copies send SAE to Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX