

SOLIDARITY WITH SIMON

Simon Chapman was fitted up by Greek police during the EU summit in Thessaloniki in June. Police were filmed beating up the London-based anti-capitalist before putting molotov cocktails and weapons into a black bag which they gave him. Now he writes about his ordeal.

I was arrested during a march on 21st June. The protesters had set off in militant style and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass. The first gas came, but so far my goggles and half-face gas mask were working fine. The crowd surged and I headed over to the rest of my affinity group. We ended up all squashed together, with maybe 600 people, and clouds of gas coming from front and back.

My skin was starting to burn, my eyes were streaming. The crowd was all crushed together, people wailing for water for their eyes, pushing this way and that. Though I knew the safest place in that type of situation was in the middle of the crowd, I decided to go to the edge to see if I could see the people I'd come with. Then a huge cloud of gas enveloped me and I couldn't see a thing.

So I'm at the edge choking, blind; a voice inside me is saying "be cool, be cool" and I kept it together. And then crunch. Everything went black and sparks of light shone in the darkness. At first I thought a badly aimed brick had hit me, but only a second later there was another bone-crunching blow to my head and I knew it was cops.

I go to run but I'm already falling, scrabbling along the wall through broken glass, still blinded by gas. As I move, the batons are raining down, sometimes three or four hitting simultaneously across my body. I feel boots kicking me as well. I think I can crawl back to the crowd, but when I look up all I see is an empty smoky street and cop boots coming towards my face.

Bang go my goggles and glasses, and I realise I'm in deep, deep shit. I try to get up, but at that moment a hand comes down and pulls my cap and gas mask off and a final blow smacks me where my hair meets my forehead. I feel a splash of blood run down my face and everything goes black.

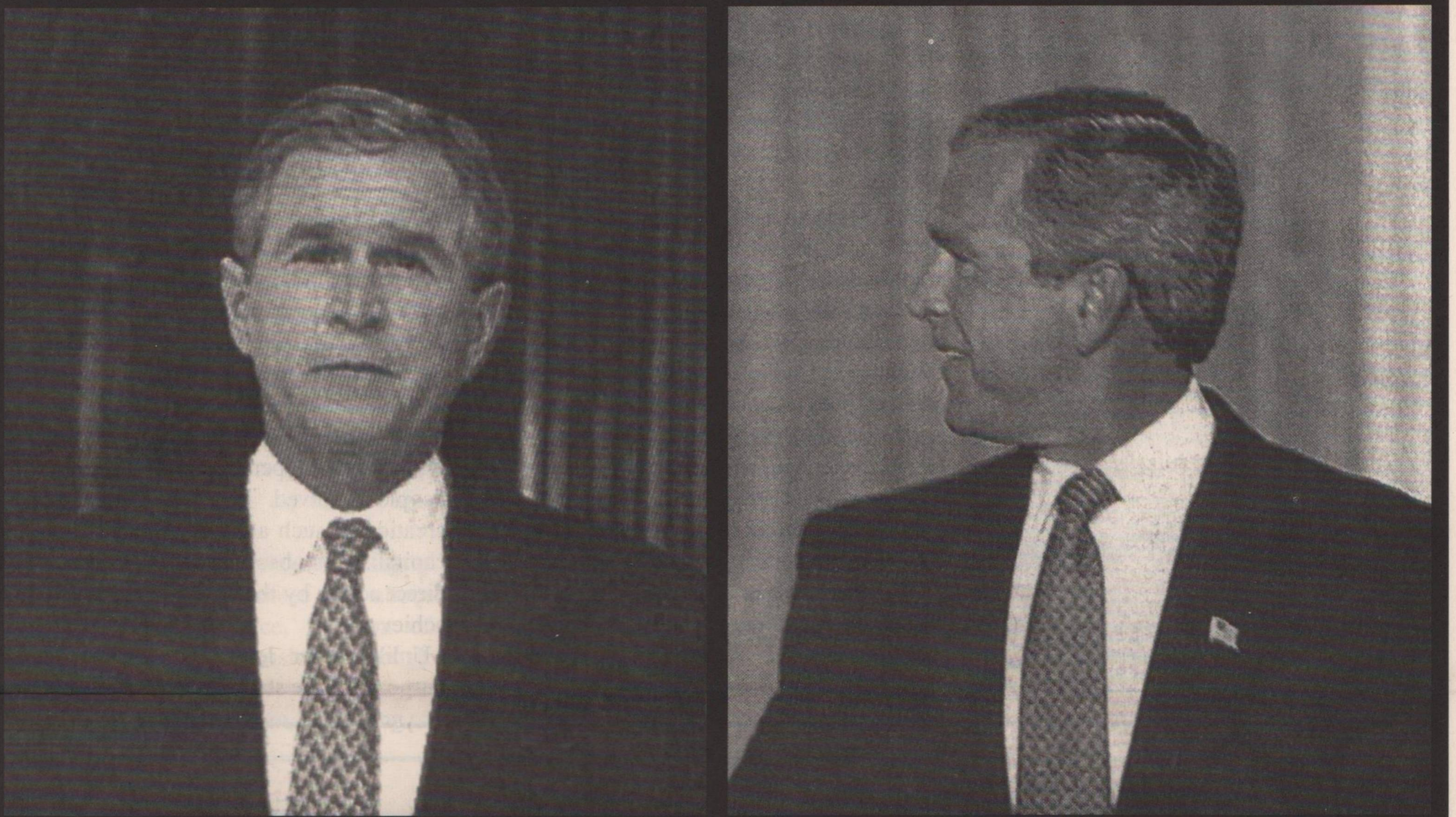
I was only unconscious for a few seconds I think. I'm dragged to my feet, and boots and batons are still coming, mainly at my shoulders and legs. Five cops have hold of me, dragging my rucksack off my back. They hold me and search it, then take me to the side of the road and sit me down.

A cop comes up behind me and smacks me across the back with his baton, then kicks me at the base of the spine. (This still hurts now). My face is a sea of blood. I can feel it leaking from several places, running down my neck. Then the cops are bringing the bags of molotovs to me. I can feel a fit-up coming on!

The next two hours are truly terrifying. I'm cuffed with two bags of molotovs strapped to me. Some are leaking. The cops lead me into the road where rocks and molotovs are landing among us and present me to the rioters like

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GEORGE W. BUSH: ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE



Earlier this month, an unelected head of state called on groups he'd labelled 'terrorist' to attack US troops occupying Iraq. His name was George Walker Bush. "There are some who feel like conditions are such that they can attack us there", he told reporters at the White House. "My answer is, bring 'em on. We have the force necessary to deal with the situation."

Not content with ordering young men and women into combat (which he himself avoided during the Vietnam War), Bush has now taken it upon himself to dare the Iraqi resistance into attacking them. It's easy for him to talk tough because, unlike the soldiers, he's safe in Washington behind his Secret Service bodyguards. And doesn't inviting 'the enemy' to attack Americans constitute incitement to terrorism? Doesn't it violate some provision in Bush's own Patriot Act?

His list of crimes against the American people is lengthening day by day. Whether it's boosting corporate America against working America or eliminating basic rights and civil liberties, Dubya has shown himself to be the real enemy. How long will the American people tolerate this dangerous individual?

Iain McKay

NOW THE ANARCHIST ALTERNATIVE

The issue of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' just won't go away. Whatever hope Tony Blair and his good pal Alastair Campbell might have had that it would soon drop out of sight were squashed completely by the death last week of David Kelly. For the first time since 1997 the Downing Street vultures are licking their lips in serious anticipation.

And what's the anti-war movement doing while Blair squirms? The SWP/Stop the War Coalition long ago called a national march ... at the end of September! Truly, this shows the efficiency of centralised, Bolshevik methods of organisation!

Blair's under pressure now and the 'official' anti-war movement is, well, probably off on holiday after busying itself with organising Marxism 2003. Obviously the SWP can't walk and talk at the same time, suggesting that the party is more stretched than its apparatchiks like to admit.

The flaw of their approach is clear. They didn't stop the last war which was, after all, their stated aim. Rather than draw the obvious conclusions from that, they're now proposing

more of the same, namely marching from A to B. This is good for paper-selling, but bad for anti-militarism or for promoting a sense that we can change things by our own actions and activity.

And what about the rest of us? It's easy to criticise, but what do anarchists offer as an alternative? I'd have liked to think we could call people to assemble across the country to raise their voices under a slogan such as 'Blair lied, people died'.

We could have called a London demonstration of our own, with similar events elsewhere - in Glasgow's George Square, in Edinburgh outside the Parliament and so on. But the necessary organisational infrastructure doesn't exist in the anarchist movement. This is our problem. Ultimately, groups like the SWP get away with their domination and deradicalisation of mass movements just because the libertarian alternative is so weak and disorganised.

Yes, we have our moments and things aren't all bad. But ultimately we must do more than just complain about the reformism and bureaucracy of the SWP. We have to

provide a better, self-managed alternative.

Are we up to it? A step in the right direction would be to produce another 'anti-war' issue of this newspaper for 27th September, the date of the next march, as well as a leaflet to hand out. Perhaps we could join the call for international protests against Bush, to coincide with the Republican party convention at the end of August. Either way, hopefully this time we can coordinate a joint approach, building on previous cooperative activity. Who knows, it may even work.

Anarcho

FREEDOM FORUM No 1 THE BOOKSHOP

Come along and have your say on the future direction of the Freedom Bookshop
Saturday 2nd August at 3pm
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX
(nearest tube Aldgate East)

Solidarity with Simon

(continued from page 1)

I'm a trophy. If one of these molotovs lands too close, I'd end up a ball of flames faster than you could say 'human rights'.

Over the next two hours I was beaten with batons, fists and a hammer; whacked across the head twice with a length of wood, head-butted, kicked, slapped and constantly exposed to teargas. I could hardly walk or breathe.

The whole left side of my back was purple, yellow, black, blue and I was covered in cuts, bruises and lumps. I never thought I'd be so glad to finally get stuffed – well kicked – in a cell with ten other demonstrators. Oh thanks be to God – I'm in jail! Safe from the psycho cops!

THE AUTONOMY CLUB ANARCHIST SOCIAL CENTRE



at Freedom
84b Whitechapel High Street • London E1
(nearest tube Aldgate East)

In the original attack, Simon received injuries to his head and body. These were exacerbated by further attacks while he was in custody. Yet he was denied medical treatment for over 24 hours.

He was later charged with riot, resisting authority and possessing explosives. He was refused bail and is being kept in a maximum security prison. He faces between seven and 25 years in jail if he's convicted.

He's appealing against the refusal of bail, and this appeal should be heard in the next two weeks. If it fails, he faces up to eighteen months in prison before his case comes to trial.

The Thessaloniki campaign group, which is supporting Simon and seven other anti-capitalist prisoners from around the world, says that each appeal it sponsors costs £410, and that a successful bail application would need around £3,000.

- To contact the support group for more info, mail thessaloniki.prisoners@yahoo.co.uk
- Donations can be sent to BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX (payable to 'ABC').

During Simon's arrest, photographs were taken which show him wearing a blue rucksack. The incident was also captured on film by a Greek television crew, who later broadcast their footage of cops putting a hammer, an axe and molotov cocktails in a black rucksack. This was then taken over and given to Simon. They later said that he'd been carrying this all along. This is the only evidence cops have offered for Simon's 'guilt'.

- To get copies of the film on CD or VHS, mail pete_tpsg@hotmail.com
- Write to Simon: Kratoumeno Simon Chapman, Dikastikes Fylakes Diavaton, TK 540 12, Thessaloniki, Greece. Put your name and address on the outside of the envelope, otherwise it won't be allowed in.

Anarchist groups

The past year has seen a growing anarchist movement around the country, with a number of local groups springing up. Local anarchist groupings are what make networks and federations such as the Anarchist Federation, Class War and the Solidarity Federation stronger. They bring the destruction of capitalism and the state that bit closer. Here, a member of Herefordshire Anarchist Group provides a guide to setting up your own local group.

First off, it's always best to get in contact with existing anarchist organisations to see if they know of any groups or individuals in your area. Get anarchist propaganda out on to the streets. Make sure people can see posters and stickers around. Perhaps hand out leaflets to raise the anarchist profile. But remember to add a local contact address – people are more inclined to get involved with local projects.

Once you've started to generate a bit of

interest, it's best to call a meeting to set up a local group. It's best to draw up a set of principles, even if it's a short paragraph, perhaps a mission statement, perhaps criteria which other people who want to join have to agree with. Discuss local issues or whatever takes your fancy, but get to know people. Most importantly, decide on something, even if it's only the date of your next meeting. People don't want to feel the meeting didn't have a purpose.

Once you've set up a local group, tell people about it. There may be other anarchists or people who are keen to get involved who you've just managed to miss. Publicise your activity in the bulletins and papers of the anarchist press, perhaps even in your local newspaper. When your group is established, it's up to you to do what you want. You could publish a paper of your own, support struggles that are already going on, distribute anarchist literature ...

We're a group of local anarchists coming from all parts of Herefordshire with the aim of creating a global anarchist society. We have a vision of a classless society where people would live free from authority and oppression of any kind. Such a world would demand organisation on a horizontal (non-hierarchical) level and would rely on the mutual aid, cooperation and solidarity of the people involved. We believe that for the creation of such a society the destruction of capitalism is absolutely vital, and that only direct action by the entire working class can achieve this.

Unlike other leftist groups, we see no purpose for the state, no matter what stage of

the revolution or whoever's controlling it.

While the Herefordshire Anarchist Group was established to create a global anarchist society, we organise around local issues and promote anarchism in our own cider-swilling, straw-chewing county. As part of this work we produce our free sheet *Rebel Bull* every two months.

To get more information on the Herefordshire Anarchist Group write to them c/o Box 7, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 8YB or visit www.herefordanarchists.cjb.net

The new issue of *Rebel Bull* is now out. To subscribe send £2 well-concealed cash or stamps to the address above or an empty email to rebel-bull-subscribe@yahoo.com

Forthcoming events

ARUNDEL

Saturday 9th August Arundel bypass campaign walk on the route of the now-rejected bypass. Meet outside Ford railway station at 1.15pm.

BRADFORD

Saturday 2nd August Radical Bookfair and Film Festival at 1 in 12 Club, Albion Street. For more info see www.lin12.com

Sunday 3rd August Leeds/Bradford Disarm DSEi meeting at 1 in 12 Club, Albion Street. More info at www.leadsef.org.uk or www.repressed.org.uk

BRISTOL

Saturday 6th September Radical Bookfair at The Cornubia pub in Temple Street from 12 noon to 4.30pm. This will be the first of Bristol's regular monthly radical bookfairs. For more info email gardsteingang@yahoo.co.uk

COULPORT

Saturday 2nd to Friday 15th August Trident Ploughshares disarmament camp at Coulport, Scotland. See www.tridentploughshares.org or call 0845 4588 366

DERBYSHIRE

Sunday 24th August Red Rambles walk, meet 11am at Hurt Arms pub car park, Ambergate, for five mile walk and picnic through mixed deciduous woodland

ESSEX

22nd to 24th August Permaculture weekend for beginners in North Weald, covering all you need to know about a sustainable existence with practical hands-on activities. Cost £75. For further info call 01702 303259 or email landandliberty@ukonline.co.uk

GALLOWAY

Saturday 9th August Nagasaki Day and anti depleted uranium protest at Dundrennan ranges in Kirkcudbright, Scotland. See www.cadu.org.uk

LEEDS

Tuesday 29th July European Social Forum organising meeting at 8pm, Adelphi pub, Hunslett Road, with speaker from Genoa Social Forum. For more info contact leedsSF@yahoo.co.uk or tel 07949 570771. See <http://www.fse-esf.org>

LEICESTER

Tuesday 5th August Leicester Anarchist Federation meeting upstairs at Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street. See http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html

LONDON

Friday 25th to Sunday 27th July Anarchist Youth Network Summer Gathering with social events, film showings, workshops, etc., at a venue near central London. See www.anarchistyouth.net or call 07814 629780

Saturday 26th July Queer Mutiny II (a free DIY alternative to Pride in the Park). Meet at 11.30am in Parliament Square to join the Pride march then go to Hyde Park for pirate-themed fun with DJs.

Saturday 26th July Disarm DSEi public meeting, 2pm at University of London, Malet Street, WC1. See www.dsei.org or contact Disarm DSEi, c/o 11 Goodwin Street, N4 3HQ, tel 07817 652029, email disarm@dsei.org

Sunday 27th July Palestine (ISM) benefit at The Windmill, Blenheim Gardens (off Brixton Hill) SW2 from 3pm until late. For more info see <http://www.eyellessingaza.org.uk>

Sunday 27th July Disarm DSEi fund-raiser, film night from 5pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. See www.dsei.org or contact 07817 652029

Monday 28th July Free the Weed! meet 2pm outside St James Park tube for rally at the Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, then chill in St James Park. Contact Tim Summers on 020 7737 6289

Tuesday 29th July Performance Club downstairs at the King's Head, Crouch End Broadway, N8, from 8pm. See www.newagenda.org.uk

Thursday 31st July London Rising Tide protest against Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline outside head office of EBRD (Liverpool Street station, Bishopsgate exit, turn left) from 4.30pm every Thursday. See www.burningplanet.net or email london@risingtide.org.uk or baku@gn.apc.org

Thursday 31st July The Situationist International and After exhibition at The Aquarium Gallery, 10 Woburn Walk, WC1. See www.vortexbooks.com

Friday 1st August Support Simon Chapman and Thessaloniki prisoners events at Eton Mission Social Club, 91 Eastway, Hackney Wick every Friday. For details of events call 020 8986 4966

Tuesday 5th August Anarchist Discussion Group at Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 at 7pm. Topic: Imperialism. These discussion meeting will be held monthly.

Friday 8th August Cuba from an Anarchist Perspective, talk by Barry Odea followed by open debate with London Anarchist Forum at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, 8pm

Every Wednesday LARC Library open from 1pm onwards, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 6th August Manchester SolFed meeting at the Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Arndale Centre, at 8.30pm. Topic will be Casualisation. See www.manchestersf.org.uk or call 07984 675281

Tuesday 19th August Manchester Discussion Group meeting at the Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Arndale Centre, at 8pm

Saturday 30th August Respect Festival at Platt Fields Park, Rusholme from 1pm to 11pm. For info contact Nadine Andrews, Ear to the Ground on 07977 515977 or nad@fusedmusic.co.uk

NEWCASTLE

Wednesday 30th July Unite Against BNP and National Front meeting at Mea House, Ellison Square. Open to all committed to fighting racism and fascism. For more info call 0191 2116980

Saturday 3rd September Roma and Asylum in Britain: Global Issues, Local Concerns, one-day conference at Newcastle University, The Fenwick Room, Castle Leazes Halls of Residence, Spital Tongues. See www.ncl.ac.uk/geps/ or contact 0191 222 8362/8368 or Colin.Clark@ncl.ac.uk

OXFORD

Saturday 26th July Demonstration outside Campsfield Refugee Detention Centre, 12 noon at the main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington, near Oxford (buses from Oxford city centre). This is a regular event on the last Saturday of every month. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk

SOMERSET

30th July to 3rd August Big Green Gathering on a new site near Cheddar, Mendip Hills. For more info see www.big-green-gathering.com or call 01458 834629

WORTHING

Tuesday 5th August Eco-action meeting, all welcome upstairs at Downview pub, opposite West Worthing station, 7.45pm

YORKSHIRE

13th to 17th August Earth First! Summer Gathering in Yorkshire. See www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk or contact summergathering@yahoo.co.uk

Anarchists should be cautious about heralding a rise in militancy, says Richard Griffin

The unions have bark but little bite

Industrial action is on the increase. Last year, according to government figures, the number of working days lost through strike action was at 1,323,300. This was twice the previous year's total and the highest for a decade. Some 940,000 workers were involved in action, the largest number since the miners' strike in 1984. But the number of actual disputes (146) was the lowest since 1891. Just two disputes accounted for 60% of all days lost. Fewer and fewer strikes account for more and more days. Moreover half of disputes lasted only a day and most were in the public sector.

This last point reflects the fact the union membership in the private sector is in decline. Despite talk of a new breed of 'awkward' trade union bosses like Tony Woodley of the T&G and Mark Serwotka of civil service union PCS there seems little sign of any attempt to build on growing worker discontent. So perhaps it's little surprise that Aslef members last week replaced left-leaning (but pro-Labour) Mick Rix with moderate Shaun Brady.

"It doesn't matter who we have as general secretary" a public service union member told *Freedom*. "There's a lot of talk, but nothing changes. The government continues to privatise services, pay is still low and they've now told us we have to work longer. In France when the government there tried to increase the retirement age unions took to the streets. What is the TUC doing? Nothing."

If the awkward squad fails to deliver, union members will reckon there's little to gain from having left-wing general secretaries in post. Anarchists agree. At the end of the day, trade unions aren't there to rock the boat.



British Airways flights from London Heathrow were disrupted on 18th July, when workers staged an 'unofficial' strike. Around 250 baggage ticket and baggage-handling staff stopped work in protest at a new swipe-card entry system which allows bosses to monitor their working hours. They said they were concerned it would lead to workers being sent home during quiet periods.

Union bosses left or right have their careers to think of. Although highly critical of the government, outgoing T&G general secretary Bill Morris was quite happy to take a peerage and now sits in the House of Lords.

This September's TUC Congress will see a string of motions critical of the government. Although these will be passed, the vast majorities of affiliates have no plans to make the break with Labour and none plan to break with electoral politics. Funding the SWP-dominated Socialist Alliance, Plaid Cymru or Green Party candidates – as the RMT plans to – is unlikely to advance the interests of their members. As recent local elections

and the experience of, for example, the Greens in power shows, this is a dead end.

Unison, Britain's biggest union, opposes Foundation Trusts in the NHS, and with good reason. As *Freedom* has pointed out, these are little more than a return to the Tories' 'internal market'. Unison has a motion at TUC Congress this year condemning Foundation Trusts, yet they've done nothing to organise active member opposition to this policy. Most NHS employees oppose Foundations. Many would demonstrate against them. So why haven't Unison and the other NHS unions even organised a demo?

Because at the end of the day they're scared

to take the government on. Motions to the TUC are in fact an excuse not to take action. Last year unions defeated the government on private sector involvement in delivering public services, yet the government continues with this policy with an enthusiasm that would have made even Thatcher blush. Actions speak louder than composite motions! Unison pumps millions of pounds into Labour. This is wasted money. Peerages for general secretaries aside, members get nothing out of it.

In fact Labour is launching direct attacks on union organisations. Union reps in the civil service are finding it harder and harder to get time off to represent members. "Labour is far worse than the Conservatives ever were" one activist said. "They're really cutting back on facility time. They don't want active trade unions".

Contracting out is another way this government, like the Tories, weakens unions. As the FBU found out, and the miners before them, the government will do almost anything, including putting the lives of the public at stake, to beat powerful unions.

The left in Britain is undergoing fundamental change as it comes out of the shadow of social democracy and state socialism. For all their faults, around eight million workers belong to unions. Nearly a million of them went on strike last year. More took other forms of industrial action. Relations between Labour and the unions are getting worse. Anarchists need to push in their workplace for greater radicalism and for a break, not just with Labour, but with electoral politics.

Industrial news

• **Manchester** Electricians have been locked out of a city centre site since May. The eleven, all members of the T&G, walked out from the DAF Electrical site in Piccadilly Gardens when managers refused to address their grievances against the company. These included the firm's failure to pay wages on time, an unfulfilled promise to employ workers (rather than treating them as self-employed), continued victimisation of union activists and an insistence on using unskilled labour to carry out dangerous electrical work.

Bosses refused to meet workers to discuss these issues on the grounds that they didn't recognise the union. Matters were brought to a head on 16th May, when DAF Electrical announced redundancies despite the fact that unskilled workers were still being used to carry out electricians' tasks. The eleven walked

out, but managers refused to negotiate and insisted that they'd never have them back.

Activists say that the stand taken by the Manchester electricians is of national importance. "The use of unskilled workers for skilled tasks is of paramount importance and must be stamped out," said one. "The union has been successful in forcing the Health and Safety Executive to investigate this unsafe practice, but it's becoming so widespread that the stand in Manchester is being undertaken on behalf of all skilled workers". For information on the fighting fund, contact 07813-456831

• **London** Over 1,200 Unison members across the capital began a rolling campaign of industrial action on 14th July, in a bid to persuade council bosses to pay a £4,000

London weighting allowance. The campaign involves workers in 22 boroughs. "We all want the same thing, decent pay," said Brian Butterworth, an activist from Brent. "United we stand, divided we fall." Council workers in the capital currently get allowances of between £1,500 and £2,580.

• **Devon** Hundreds of bus drivers marched through Exeter on 15th July to mark the third day of their strike against bosses at Stagecoach. Altogether, seven days of action were planned, with the last to take place on 26th July. The drivers, all members of the RMT, were demanding a wage rise from £5.93 to £6.50 per hour. On 11th July, the day of an earlier strike, one picket was slightly hurt when a manager ran over him as he passed through the picket line in his car.

• **East London** Activists in the NHS workforce celebrated a small victory on 18th July, when workers were given what bureaucrats in their trade union, Unison, called 'significant' payrises. This followed a 'campaign for a living wage', launched last year by contract staff in several East End hospitals. Staff employed at Whipps Cross hospital by private contractor ISS Mediclean had staged a five-day strike before the new deal was finalised.

Some there had previously been paid under £5 per hour. Now they've been guaranteed at least £5.35 by next April. At Homerton hospital, ISS workers got a rise to £5 per hour, with an extra two days holiday pay and the introduction of sick pay. Medirest employees in Tower Hamlets were offered £5.16 after they threatened to strike.

Degenerate and disturbing, hardly radical

Guy Bourdin

at Victoria & Albert Museum
Cromwell Road, London SW7 (020 7942 2000)
until 17th August • £8 (£5 concessions)

"At the heart of Guy Bourdin's fashion photographs", the exhibition notes say, "is a confrontation with the very nature of commercial image-making." Bourdin offers, we're told, a radical alternative to the sort of photographs you normally see in magazines like *Vogue* and the Sunday supplements.

While Bourdin's images are certainly luxurious – colours are rich and vivid – they're also degenerate and disturbing. Particularly

unsettling is his playing with pornographic and death imagery, something that directly confronts you as soon you enter the exhibition and see a 16mm film of a model dressed in a red bikini, provocatively swinging on an office chair against a red back drop.

Another image echoes Andy Warhol's car crash prints. A further one from 1979 shows a partly opened door. Inside the room a woman looks dead, slumped over a chair, again wearing a bikini. Outside the room, a man's hand can be seen about to switch the light off.

This is about as far away from fashion photography as you can get (except that the woman looks like a fashion model), but what

the hell does this say about Bourdin's attitude to women? Or that of the magazines that commissioned him, come to that?

While Bourdin succeeds in undermining classic fashion photography, at the end of the day there's little radical about his work. The women he photographs are still object, not subject. The images may be strong, but in his playing with lust, death and desire he reinforces an image of women fulfilling a voyeuristic and submissive role for men.

A second room shows images of objects rather than people. They're disjointed pictures of everyday things: doorways, fields, hedges, dining rooms, pavements, lampposts, signs

and buildings, and they're more satisfying. Bourdin has a clear eye for shape, texture and colour. These images are also more accessible. Anyone with a camera could wander round their hometown and take them.

Bourdin said that "photography is a way of celebrating the poetry of nature and melancholy of passing time." The pictures of objects achieves this. They're interesting, but they're also mundane and ordinary. The 'fashion' pictures are anything but. I found them deeply sexist, so in the end, I didn't find it difficult to view this exhibition politically. Bourdin left me with no choice.

Richard Griffin

Côte d'Ivoire – the squadrons of death

It's not always easy to understand all the ins and outs of the Ivorian crisis, but it's certain that the concept of *Ivoirité* developed by the regime there has had disastrous consequences in terms of human life. In Abidjan and zones under the control of Laurent Gbagbo's regime, a real business of death has existed since before 2000. Since the military-political crisis last September, it's shown a particularly hideous face.

The militias regularly commit crimes that are never cleared up, like the case of Dr Benôit Dacourey-Tabley, arrested in his clinic in November last year and found dead

two days later. This crime shocked public opinion, yet numerous executions have been carried out in similar circumstances. Take, for example, the killing of ... Émile Tehe, president of the Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien.

He'd taken a risk and criticised the regime in the first hours of the rebellion. The circumstances of his death, again, haven't been cleared up. We know only that he was arrested by the gendarmes and that his bullet-ridden body was found on 2nd November, on the edge of the forest of Banco.

"The deaths always follow an arrest by the

regular security and defence forces," it's said. "And the targets always have the same profile – citizens from the north or Muslims, foreigners or oppositionists, at odds with the leaders or presumed to be such". In the more 'fortunate' cases, an enquiry into the death is announced, but more often than not this just goes through the motions.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire goes back some time. Numerous similar murders were carried out in the months leading up to the September rebellion. The killing of M. Iboudo is an example. Arrested in his Adjamé home late at night, this Ivorian

student of Burkinabé origin, who was a well-known sports supporter, died at the hands of the judicial police in Abidjan in April 2002.

Shortly before the military rebellion blew up, an Ivorian oppositionist who was a refugee in Burkina Faso was also mysteriously assassinated. The situation leaves the ethnic and repressive drift of the Ivorian government completely clear ...

Diomande Adama

Association pour la Défense de la démocratie et des libertés (ADDL)

Translated from *Afrique XXI*, available from CNT, 33 rue des Vignoles, Paris 75020, 2.5 Euros

Belgrade bureaucrats feel the heat

Milenko Smiljanic, president of the largest trade union federation in Serbia, the Confederation of the Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia (SSSS in Serbian), isn't a happy man. During the last few months, he's constantly warned the government that, if they refuse to cooperate with him, there'll be a radicalisation of protest, the creation of anarchist syndicates and consequently, raving mobs on the streets.

To anyone who knows about anarcho-syndicalism, it's clear he's spreading the cheap propaganda of a bureaucrat who's left without support, and whose position is under attack from a dissatisfied membership. Anarchist syndicates have never propagated unplanned violence. But we've pointed out many times that, if we can't win our rights in a nonviolent way, we're not going to allow the barbarians on the other side to direct our lives for us. On the contrary, we're going to react in the only way they understand.

That's why workers from Kragujevac, who tried to hold 'discussions' with government representatives, reacted the way they did (workers at a car and guns plant there tried to beat up the finance minister during a recent visit). It's easy for politicians to continue their criminal activities after they've left office, but the worker who's sacked after years of employment doesn't get a look-in.

The anarchist ideal is a society without

violence. Our goal is a society of equal, self-aware individuals, ready to practise mutual aid. During every war, anarcho-syndicalists have been slandered, locked up, tortured and killed for their antimilitarism. So to us violence isn't a fetish. But this doesn't mean that we're going to sit on our arses and allow our lives to be squashed under the juggernaut of privatisation. We're going to use any effective measures that don't contradict our ethics and that help workers and other oppressed people achieve their goals.

Any way, let's turn the story round. Let's ask the state and the bosses what they think of violence. Who starts the wars and why? Who uses police to get even with people who don't think the same way? Who brings in private security guards when they're laying off workers and taking over factories? Who promotes an economic model that keeps millions of human beings in a position of constant exploitation? This is what violence looks like, very obvious and harsh. But it's the violence the politicians and bosses use to keep their interests intact.

Union bureaucrats are misrepresenting anarcho-syndicalism to scare the government into giving them support. In return, they offer dialogue and the prospect of keeping the workers quiet. We don't expect politicians to think well of us, nor do we care what they think any way (if they think at all).

This is the other reason why union bureaucrats misrepresent our methods of fighting for worker's rights.

Members of the 'big' unions, aware of the fossilised nature of the union bureaucracy and disgusted at the mountains of lies, are starting to abandon the 'official' federations. Through their new understanding the ineffectiveness of the hierarchical, authoritarian unions, several local and regional councils of the SSSS have contacted our anarchist syndicate, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative.

It's clear that people's voices can best be heard in non-hierarchical, directly democratic syndicates in which decisions are made by members only, and not by bureaucrats appointed from above. Unlike the mainstream unions, decisions in our group aren't made by leaders who've been bribed (which is the case in the SSSS), by the government or foreign investors.

During a protest on 25th June, Smiljanic and his clique were constantly trying to separate the anarchists from the main demonstration and calling on other workers to ignore us. But they were confronted by hostile workers who could see their real motives. In particular, angry gunmakers from Kragujevac almost resolved the matter physically.

We repeat: we didn't choose to attack anybody. But we're living in a permanent war between state and society, the bosses

against the workers. This is clear in the attitude of the state towards the media. The Serbian government recently issued several lawsuits against magazines and broadcast media outlets which have criticised it.

The anarchists are only defending themselves. Politicians and bosses are working together to keep their privileges. Let's leave them to their fights and focus on our goal: a better life here and now.

Does this mean protests in the streets? Blockades of the roads? Occupations of the factories until we get what we want? Demands for a four-hour working day? A general strike until our demands are met? Milosevic's dictatorial regime was brought down like this, three years ago. But a new regime grew out of the chaos. We can't let the politicians and bosses exploit our struggle again.

We don't need to work with political parties. We don't need their support. We don't need shepherds or leaders, just a little bit of self-respect. Postmodernists tell us that ideals no longer mean anything, but we don't agree. It's human dignity we're fighting for.

For more information, mail info@inicijativa.org. This report is an edited translation of an article published in the *Weekly Information*, Serbia's largest weekly newspaper, on 10th July. This was a response to heavy criticism from various bureaucrats and bosses.

• **Belarus** At the end of May the Ministry of Information closed a satirical newspaper down for three months (*Freedom*, 31st May). The editorial staff of *Navinki* appealed against this decision, saying it was "groundless and tendentious". The first hearing of the appeal was due to be held on 23rd July.

On the 20th May, editor Pauluk Kanavalchik was summonsed and charged with "distribution of information known to be unfounded and which discredits the honour and dignity of the president". This related to an article published in the paper in March this year which had poked fun at President Lukashenko.

After a short court appearance from which journalists were excluded, Pauluk was fined around £440, equivalent to seven times the average weekly wage. This led to his property being seized for non-payment and he was declared bankrupt.

The next day, 21st May, *Navinki* received a written caution from the Ministry of Information. This followed the publication, in the same issue, of two photographs of Lukashenko. The caution alleged that these fell foul of the same law, because the photographs were accompanied by "comments of an insulting type".

On 22nd of May *Navinki* received yet another written caution, this time for two other

OTHER INTERNATIONAL NEWS

articles which allegedly "encroached on the people's morality". Under Belarusian law, the Ministry of Information was now entitled to close the paper down for a period of three months, which is what officials decided to do.

Now it's thought the state is trying to shut *Navinki* down for good, which it is legally entitled to do when two cautions have been issued.

Pauluk Kanavalchik said last week that the state's tactics represented yet another attack on freedom of speech in a country where several other independent newspapers have already been shut.

"We won't give up and we're going to defend ourselves in court", he said. "We're appealing for support to everyone who opposes authoritarianism and attacks on human rights. The only independent youth political newspaper in Belarus needs help." Protest faxes (preferably on letterheads of organisations and media outlets) can be sent directly to the Ministry of Information on +375-17-2233435

• **Venezuela** Employees took over a Pepsi bottling plant on 9th July. The plant, in Villa de Cura, south west of Caracas, is in Aragua

state. The workers and their union say the company has plans to close the plant and lay hundreds of workers off in an effort to eliminate a militant trade union. They've called on other sectors to come to the plant to show solidarity.

Local people have supported the occupiers, saying that the company was behind with paying its taxes and has a record of pollution and of stealing water from the municipality. Although the company claims to be in crisis, the mayor of Villa de Cura, Estefano Magione, says that managers threw out 600,000 cases of soft drinks last December to support a nationwide civic strike against the left-populist president, Hugo Chavez Frias. Last week the plant's owners were still negotiating with a view to being readmitted.

Around fifty workers occupied a bankrupt textiles factory in nearby San de los Morros, last summer. They said the "experience of Argentina" was a model for workers' self-management at abandoned plants.

Joe R. Golowka

• **Croatia** Utopias and utopian ideas have left a strong mark on human history ever since the first civilisations. While some of

them have come true in one way or another, all of them provided a basis for some form of social change. Utopias have always represented human hopes for a better tomorrow as well as visions of the past, present and future.

Today, when utopias are only a dream that most people have forgotten, and every utopian effort is just a scream in the society of fast living, fast production and even faster consumption, it's time for them to be rediscovered. This is why we've decided to look at stories long and short about utopia, and to launch an international competition to this end.

We're soliciting stories for publication in a book, *Rediscovering Utopia*, which will be published next year. All stories can be individual or group work. They have to deal with utopias or anti-utopias concerning past, present, future, parallel worlds, anywhere in space or outside it. All texts received before the deadline of 15th December will be considered for publication.

Markos

Texts should be sent in digital form, preferably with some information on the writer. The book will be published in Croatian, at least to begin with. There's no limit on the number of words. *Sto citas?*, P.P. 5051, 10040 Zagreb, Croatia. For more info mail stocitas@zimir.net or visit www.stocitas.org

John Andrews on the political implications of a classic experiment

Liberty and the psychology of obedience

The pathological need of a few to have power over the rest of us would be little more than a harmless obsession if it weren't for the fact that obedience is willingly given by most people. In order to study the psychology of obedience, Stanley Milgram, a professor of psychology at Yale University, set up an experiment in 1962 and 1963 in which hundreds of subjects took part. The experiment was disguised as a study of the effect of punishment on learning.

Two people come to a psychology lab to take part in a study of memory and learning. One of them is designated as 'teacher', the other as 'learner'. The experimenter explains that the study is concerned with the effect of punishment on learning. The 'learner' is strapped into a chair with an electrode attached to their wrist.

He or she is told they're to learn a list of word pairs. Each time they make an error they'll receive electric shocks of increasing intensity. It's the 'teacher's' job to read out the questions and administer the shocks. The 'teacher' is a genuinely naïve subject. The 'learner' is an actor who actually receives no shock at all.

The focus of the experiment is the 'teacher'. During the experiment this person is in control of a 'shock generator', which has a row of switches, ranging from 15 volts to 450 volts. These are labelled from 'slight shock' to 'danger severe shock'.

The 'teacher' is told they must administer a 'learning test' to the 'learner'. Each time the 'learner' makes a mistake the 'teacher' gives them an electric shock, starting at the lowest shock level and increasing the level (by 15 volts) for every error.

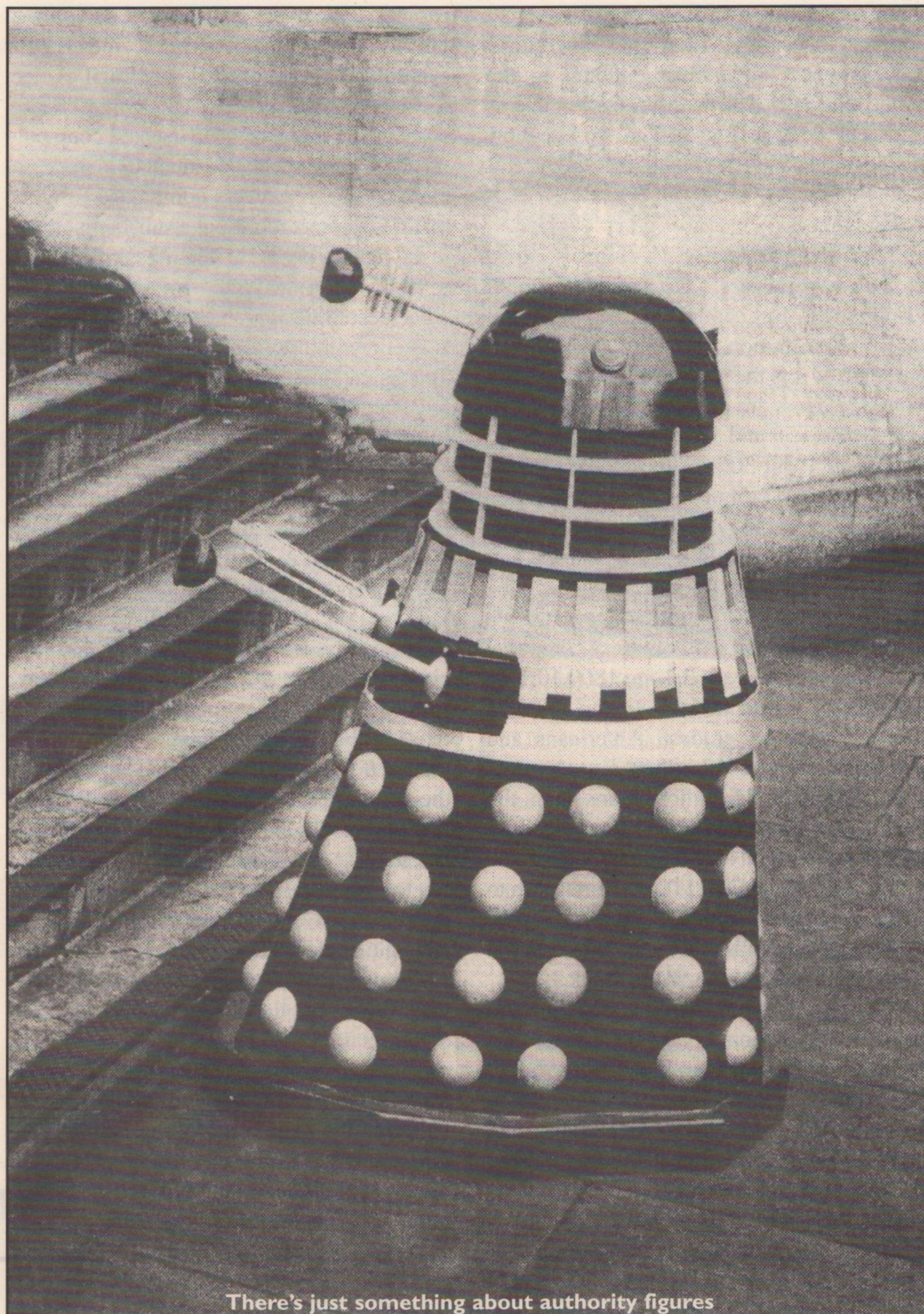
Conflict arises when the 'learner' receiving the shock begins to indicate first that they're experiencing discomfort and later begins to emit grunts, crying out and demanding to be released from the experiment. The experimenter tells the 'teacher' to continue in spite of the protests of the 'learner'.

The point of the experiment is to see how far people will proceed in a concrete, measurable situation in which they're instructed to inflict increasing pain on a protesting victim. How far will ordinary people go in complying with the experimenter's instructions? Milgram found that most ordinary people would give electric shocks at what seemed to be a dangerous level when ordered to do so by an authority figure.

"It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of authority that constitutes the chief finding of the experiment", he concluded. This finding was true for people of different classes, education, gender, occupation and so forth. Most gave shocks at levels they wouldn't themselves be willing to undergo. The experiment was later repeated in Princeton, Munich, Rome, South Africa and Australia, with similar results.

Milgram suggested that the factors which keep people obeying the experimenter were politeness, a desire to uphold the promise of aid to the experimenter, being absorbed in the narrow technical aspects of the test, awkwardness of the denial and seeing themselves as not responsible for their actions.

One theoretical interpretation of the behaviour in these experiments holds that people harbour deeply aggressive instincts and that the experiment provided institutional justification for the release of these impulses. Milgram tested this assumption in a variant of the experiment in which the 'teacher' was given



There's just something about authority figures

complete freedom to choose the shock levels given to the 'learner'. The result was that the great majority of subjects delivered the lowest level of shocks to the 'learner' when the choice was left up to them.

In a further variant the experiment was changed to make the 'learner' the source of the commands and when the experimenter called a halt, no subjects continued, in spite of commands from the 'learner'. Clearly authority was the crucial factor, not aggression. Milgram commented, "whatever leads to shocking the 'learner' at the highest level cannot be explained by autonomously generated aggression, but needs to be explained by the transformation of behaviour that comes through obedience to orders."

Do these experiments show us anything about how power can be resisted? A variant of the experiment that was most effective in undermining the experimenter's authority was one in which a group influence enabled the subject to defy authority.

In this variant, there are three 'teachers' and one 'learner'. All except one of the 'teachers' are actually confederates of the experimenter, acting out prearranged roles. The task of teaching is divided amongst the three 'teachers' so that the naïve subject is given the task of administering the shocks.

As the experiment proceeds, the experimenter orders the subject to increase the shock level until, when the 150 volts level is reached and the 'learner' protests, one of the confederate 'teachers' objects and withdraws from the experiment. At 210 volts the second confederate 'teacher' also objects

and refuses to continue. The experimenter then orders the naïve subject to continue taking on the tasks of the other two, as well as administering the shocks.

In this variant 36 out of 40 subjects (90%) defied the experimenter (as compared to 14 out of 40 in the basic experiment). Significantly, most of the subjects denied that the confederates' action was the critical factor in their own defiance, although the results of the experiment suggest otherwise. Milgram commented that "the mutual support provided by men for each other is the strongest bulwark we have against the exercise of authority".

Writing about the results of the experiments in general Milgram said, "the disappearance of a sense of responsibility is by far the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority". Of the subject he said, "his moral concern shifts to a consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that authority has of him".

He also stressed that the results didn't apply only to exceptional societies. "To focus only on the Nazis, however despicable their deeds, and to view only highly publicised atrocities as being relevant to these studies is to miss the point entirely. For the studies are principally concerned with the ordinary and routine destruction carried out by everyday people following orders ... In democracies, men are placed in office through popular elections, yet once installed they are no less in authority than those who get there by other means."

Human beings aren't inherently cruel or

aggressive, except in a minority of cases. Their fatal flaw consists in being obedient and, all too often, those who get into power over them are from the cruel and selfish minority, whose values and wishes then come to pervade social relations.

Perhaps the most significant thing about these experiments is that people have found them so surprising. We don't know how obedient we are. We submit more than we think we will and when we resist authority we don't know why. We tell ourselves that we don't obey because we're obedient but because there were specific reasons for any particular bit of obedience. The experiment creates a context in which this is no longer possible: our obedience is surprising and we can't deny it.

In rationalising obedience, we persuade ourselves that of course we wouldn't be so obedient in different circumstances. But the experiments show that we're wrong. The ideas we advance as justifications for obedience are just that – justifications.

Alexander Berkman was wrong when he wrote that "our social institutions are founded on certain ideas: as long as the latter are generally believed, the institutions built on them are safe". Social relations aren't founded on ideas at all. Like all human behaviour, they're determined by unconscious motives, the result of basic human needs or appetites, combined with the conditioning produced by experience.

The real foundation of the structure of authoritarian social relations is in the conditioned mental state of the persons who submit. The influence of this conditioning begins to be undermined once a person notices it's happening and ceases rationalising his or her behaviour.

Obedient behaviour doesn't depend on the idea that's used to rationalise it, rather the other way round. The belief in the rationalisation depends on the unconscious motive for submission. As long as this motive exists, it will be hard to effectively reject any idea which is used to rationalise it and, if it's rejected, there'll probably be no change in behaviour.

It will simply be replaced by another idea (rationalisation) that allows the same behaviour to continue. This may sometimes involve rejecting an existing authority in favour of a new one, but not an absolute rejection of authority. This may explain why liberation movements (or revolutions) often lead to new tyrannies. The answer is to become aware of what's going on in our heads, to notice our submissive reactions and to be surprised by them – to stop rationalising them.

Many believe that the struggle for freedom is an external one, between one person or group and another. Such struggles are real enough, but the first struggle is one that goes on inside us between obedience and self-emancipation from obedience. To the extent that we fail to win this inner struggle, any victory over oppressive groups will be only temporary, because we'll find that our need to be led simply finds another focus.

Until this is understood rebellion will probably just take the form of the substitution of one power for another. When we discover that the politician or leader fails to satisfy as a parent substitute we reject them and replace them with someone else. This is the position reached by contemporary representative 'democracy', a step beyond 'divine right', but not yet emancipation from the habit of obedience.

Self-determination is a democratic demand

In the last issue of *Freedom* (12th July) we published two articles about imperialism. Now **Paul Maguire** replies to one of them.

Monsieur Dupont's article was one of the most dispiriting I've encountered in an anarchist publication. It was politically confused and historically inaccurate. The left-wing theory of imperialism wasn't, as Monsieur Dupont thinks, "devised after the Russian Revolution to underpin the Bolsheviks' dubious claim to be operating within the proposed developmental framework set out by Marx." In fact, Lenin wrote *Imperialism – the highest stage of capitalism* in the first half of 1916, drawing on the writings of English economist J.A. Hobson.

It was, in part, an objective analysis of developments in capitalism – principally monopolisation and the export of capital – in the years since Marx had set out his analysis. As such, it was a revision of Marx's thought. It was also an attempt to explain the capitulation of social democratic political parties to national chauvinism on the eve of the First World War. It made an analysis of capitalism as a world system of "colonial oppression and financial strangulation."

What did happen after the Russian Revolution was the abandonment of any revolutionary challenge to international capital, in favour of deals with factions of capital in the interests of the USSR. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution represented an attempt to retrieve this revolutionary challenge to imperialism, proposing that "democracy and national emancipation" could only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

As anarchists we're opposed to the oppressive practice inherent in this, but I'd have thought the idea that only the revolutionary overthrow of capital could remove the fetters of

colonial oppression was unexceptionable all the same.

Worse, Monsieur Dupont actually seems to argue that imperialism doesn't exist. Certainly he believes that anti-imperialism and bourgeois nationalism amount to the same thing (I'll deal with the errors in this argument below). It's difficult to see how this position can be maintained in the face of economic reality, and M.D. doesn't even try to defend it.

It's true that parts of what's clumsily called the Third World have seen periods of rapid development. But capitalism doesn't lead to an even distribution of wealth. The growth experienced by the Japanese economy and the Asian tigers are exceptions.

Between 1850 and 1950, north-south trade comprised about 30% of the global total. If present trends continue, by 2020 the share of world trade going to Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Central Eastern Europe and the countries of the former USSR will be down to about 5%. The ratio of real income per head in the richest countries compared with the poorest was 3:1 in 1800, 10:1 in 1900 and 60:1 in 2000.

To put it at its crudest, Americans and Europeans spend \$417 billion a year on pet food, which is \$4 billion more than the estimated annual additional total need to provide basic health and nutrition for everyone in the world. Wealth still flows from south to north. Imperialism today is represented, not by British battleships, but by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

It's legitimate to propose that anarchists in Third World countries should oppose the proto-bourgeois leaderships of national liberation struggles, arguing instead for revolutionary solutions to imperialist and capitalist oppression. But it's wrong headed for anarchists in the west is to sit on the sidelines and join in the criticism.

Monsieur Dupont doesn't seem to grasp the democratic essence of the demand for self-determination. It's simply the right of peoples to decide their own fate without interference from outside. It means, for example, the right of Chile or Brazil to elect social democratic governments if they choose, without the threat of a US-backed coup.

The US now spends as much on defence as the next twelve powers combined. To argue that this doesn't represent a substantial threat to the right of people in non-Western countries to decide their own fate is more than naïve.

The best thing anarchists in the west can do is get on with fighting their own bourgeoisie. To suggest that this ought to be the only task for anarchists in Iraq as well, when the Iraqi ruling class is weak and dependent on the US to maintain something like 'order' and where Iraq's new governing council can be overruled at any time by the US Chief Administrator, is nonsense.

The struggle against national capital and the struggle against imperialist capital are irretrievably linked, but to suggest that circumstances in the Third World don't give rise to tactics and strategy different from those in the north is bizarre.

What if Lula or Chavez decided to repudiate their countries' international debt? We might argue that these men are compromisers, potential sell-outs and so on, but given the likely response from the west are we to say their actions would have no tactical or strategic consequences for us?

Monsieur Dupont suggests that, in struggles like those of the Palestinians for self-determination, we ought to ask what's the role, background and business interest of the representatives of 'the people'. Well, in Palestine the most respected militants in the *intifada* come from the dirt poor refugee camps of the West Bank. In the Irish struggle after 1968 it was working class militants

from the nationalist estates.

To suggest to Palestinians stripped of land and identity that they should really be fighting for "freedom from capitalism for everyone" is an insult (doesn't it occur to Monsieur Dupont that some of them are struggling to establish what they consider a socialist Palestine?). People fight against oppression wherever they happen to be, and against the form it takes there.

If they're in the Third World, their route out of poverty involves not only a struggle against their own ruling class (in some African states the disaster caused by structural adjustment programmes means that there isn't a ruling class, just armed gangs fighting for the right to form one). It's also a struggle against the IMF, the World Bank and the guns of the United States, Britain and other major capitalist players. Whether the fight is for a socialist Palestine or 'freedom from capitalism everywhere' the enemies and their responses are likely to be the same.

Lastly, I've some questions for Monsieur Dupont. The interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States and Britain have been based on a tearing up of international law. Instead of sovereign equality and the right of nations to self-determination, we're left with the pretext of humanitarian intervention which all too often provides a pseudo-ethical cover for American self-interest.

If Monsieur Dupont says that self-determination is an illusion under capitalism, on what basis does he oppose 'humanitarian' intervention? If the "construct of imperialism ... isn't undisputed fact", to what does he attribute the parlous state of so many (particularly African) economies? If this isn't down to the impact of the IMF and World Bank, is the particular venality of the African bourgeoisie to blame? Surely not, but where does that leave him?

Readers' views

Argentinian links

I enjoyed the interview with Neka ('Autonomista – Argentina's rebellion of the grassroots', 12th July). It was informative and up-to-date. I'm sure everyone wishes the *piqueteros*, their projects, the assemblies and occupied factories, every success against the repression.

What I did find depressing, however, was the apparent absence of any activity to get out of the areas of insurrection and into the worlds of other Argentinians. I could be wrong but, historically, I think those who have allowed themselves to be penned in, or who haven't managed to get their message across to the population, have been easy for the military to defeat.

The message is that it's in the interests of everyone to support the *piqueteros*, because if they're defeated the government will turn next on the population at large. But perhaps this is already being done. Can anybody clear this up or say why they think it's wrong?

Alan Woodward

Thwack, thwack

Thanks for publishing my review of the film, *Secretary* ('A study in S&M reveals tenderness beneath', 12th July). Unfortunately it was wrongly attributed to Hilary Spurling. Looks like someone is asking for a spanking.

Hilary Searing

Ooops, sorry. See you later for a smack.

Orthodoxy again

Is there an anarchist movement? Apparently not, at least according to J.D., who doesn't even know what this 'recently adopted term' means ('What orthodoxy?', 12th July). I think he's searching for problems where none exist.

The 'recently adopted term' was used by Vernon Richards (who was elsewhere quoted approvingly by J.D.) in his introduction to Malatesta's *Anarchy*, written thirty years ago. Max Nettlau used it in his history, completed in the 1930s (assuming that the word translated 'movement' in the Freedom Press edition was originally *movimiento*). Recently adopted it ain't.

Lexicography aside, the easiest and most natural way to understand 'movement' is as 'the total of anarchist activists'. J.D. accepts that there are unbreakable conditions which allow us to say who is or isn't an anarchist, so I don't understand where his problem is (though I allow that it sometimes makes sense to talk of anarchist 'movements' rather than of a single anarchist movement).

Incidentally, I don't think a 'fundamental refusal of the authority of the state' is enough to define what anarchism is about. My own short-hand focuses on opposition to coercion. But let that go. Even by his own lights, can J.D. really think that for Herbert Read to accept a knighthood was merely 'a mistake'? To say that 'refusal to abide by orthodoxy is pretty much an anarchist

characteristic' to excuse Read's decision, which J.D. comes perilously close to doing, is trivial to say the least.

Can't we accept that Read the intellectual wrote articles which are still valuable, yet as a human being took a course of action that put him, if not beyond the pale then certainly in need of severe criticism, even contrition?

Next issue

The next issue will be dated 9th August, and the deadline for copy will be 31st July. Contributions can be sent to FreedomCopy@aol.com

Donations: 6th to 19th July 2003

PD, Valencia, £1; JL, Wolverhampton, £4; MG, Ulverston, £2; LR, Loughton, £6; TB, Bristol, £50.

Readers' meeting: a report

A *Freedom* readers' meeting was held in the Autonomy Club on 1st July. It was generally felt that *Freedom* was the paper of the traditional anarchist movement – not just our gossip column but also reporting on our activities, both national and international. It was suggested that there should be more reporting of this nature, and that the various anarchist organisations should be encouraged to send material for publication.

It was further felt that the advent of the Autonomy Club, *Freedom*'s own social centre in London's East End, provided scope for more activity around *Freedom* itself (paper, press and bookshop).

Peter Gold

The weakness of David Goodway's essay, quoted by J.D., is that it gives almost no hint of the one from Goodway or the other from Read. It treats Read's decision intellectually, not politically, which is how it has to be judged.

Johnny M.

(continued on page 8)

Schnews appeal

The folks who produce the not inconsiderably outstanding *Schnews* freesheet in Brighton are appealing for help. They've had free office space for the last nine years, but this is due to end soon. They're going to need more lolly to pay the bills, and would be delighted to have standing orders made out to them.

Their bank is the Co-operative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP. The account name is 'Justice', number 50084500, sort code 089025.

Answers to Anarcho-quiz (back page)

1. He called it "an elite institution". Most of the world's population has never made a phone call.
2. The Zurich-based financiers who controlled the International Monetary Fund. They were called this by Labour minister George Brown during a sterling crisis in 1964.
3. They publicised their upcoming tour as the 'Jesus is a Lie' tour, after the Post Office refused to take their slogan.
4. *Poison Pen*, Hastings.

Sidewalk surfing, a revolutionary pleasure

Walk out of Angel Alley where Freedom Bookshop is tucked away, turn west and in ten minutes you're in Bishopgate, the heart of the City of London. Do this walk during the week and you'll have to fight your way through a mass of people and traffic as the largest financial centre in the world busies itself making money. But at the weekend it's a very different story. The Beast is quiet. The pavements are deserted and the roads are empty. The main railway station is closed, not a single shop is open. The only people in the office blocks are poorly paid security guards. Public transport hardly bothers to wend its way through the still streets.

There's some activity, though. Under arches, in the walkways between office blocks, in squares, parks, car parks, down steps, across tables and benches small groups of mainly teenage boys and girls skateboard. It can be pretty amazing to watch: a set of thirteen concrete steps with an iron hand rail alongside. A skater gathers speed, gets to the edge then nosegrinds the board along and down the handrail flipping off at the end. If they're really good they'll get their board to flip right over mid air and land right way up as it and they hit the ground.

Right across central London, from Trafalgar Square to the Royal Festival Hall, kids skate. And it's not just London either. In your town, in its shopping centres, supermarkets, car parks, schools, churchyards and parks there'll be skaters. And it's not just Britain. Worldwide there are some 35 million skaters, a hell of a lot of people.

At one level skateboarding is like any other leisure activity under capitalism – an opportunity to make money. A good deck



(the board, without the wheels) will cost £70. On top of that you'll need the wheels (£30). You also need to look the part. A pair of Globe trainers (£60), a £50 Zero hoodie and £25 t-shirt plus jeans. It all adds up. No wonder skating mags are full of adverts. There's a lot of money to be made. There are big stars as well. Tony Hawks is a multi-millionaire. And then there are tie-ins, like the computer games.

At another level, though, skateboarding is pretty radical. This is because it's about freedom. Freedom of space, freedom of movement, freedom of expression. Although some local authorities provide official skate parks most skaters ignore them, preferring to

climb over a fence to get into a school or office car park. Skateboarders reclaim private space, turning it into something else.

There are plenty of stories of private swimming pools being drained while their owners are away, the empty bowl being used to skate on instead. There's been more than one rich person coming home surprised to find their swimming pool empty of water. Inevitably skaters come across authority in one form or another, trying to tell them what, or what not, to do.

Skateboarding goes back to the 1950s. But it was only in the 1970s that the modern sport was born, when a bunch of poor kids in the unfashionable part of LA called Dog

Town decided to give up surfing around a decaying pier that had once housed a fun fair and started skateboarding instead. Before then it had been pretty much dead. The most exciting it got was a bit of swerving between traffic cones.

The Z-Boys, (who included women) the skating crew from Dog Town, infused skating with the skills and athleticism they had learned surfing. And with little respect for public or private property, and little money, they skated wherever they could, literally taking skating to the streets. This was real underground stuff.

Along with punk, skateboarding by 1977 was all the rage. But like punk it faded before the decade was out. Although there was originally no direct link between skating and punk (it's pretty tricky trying to skate wearing bondage trousers), the resurgence of skating (and bmx riding) in the last decade or so has been more closely linked with an increased interest in punk, particularly on the west coast of America. The two seem pretty much made for each other.

Like punk and other cultural and social activities, skating operates on a number of levels. Commercial culture and counter-culture exist side by side. Big business and small independent companies like Howies co-exist selling gear. Skaters aren't anarchists but they know about anarchy. Skateboarders aren't revolutionaries but they don't mind sticking a finger up to authority and skating in some rich person's back yard if they get a chance. Skaters aren't going to bring down the City of London, but at least they're making some use of the space, which is more than can be said for the stockbrokers who work there.

Richard Griffin



Northern Voices
summer/autumn, £1.20

In the first issue of this new journal, Tim Jones of Sheffield writes about the casualisation of labour in bogus self-employment, and about the appalling fate of his brother, Simon Jones, killed within two hours of starting work at Shoreham Dock. He describes the efforts to get some kind of recognition of the offence of 'corporate killing through gross management neglect'.

James Petty describes the issues brought to the surface by the 2001 riots in Burnley.

'Northern Earth First!' describe the militant campaign to end the excavation of peat bogs for the trade in growbags and sales of compost in supermarkets and garden centres.

Other contributors explore sport, food, films, art and drinks in the north of England.

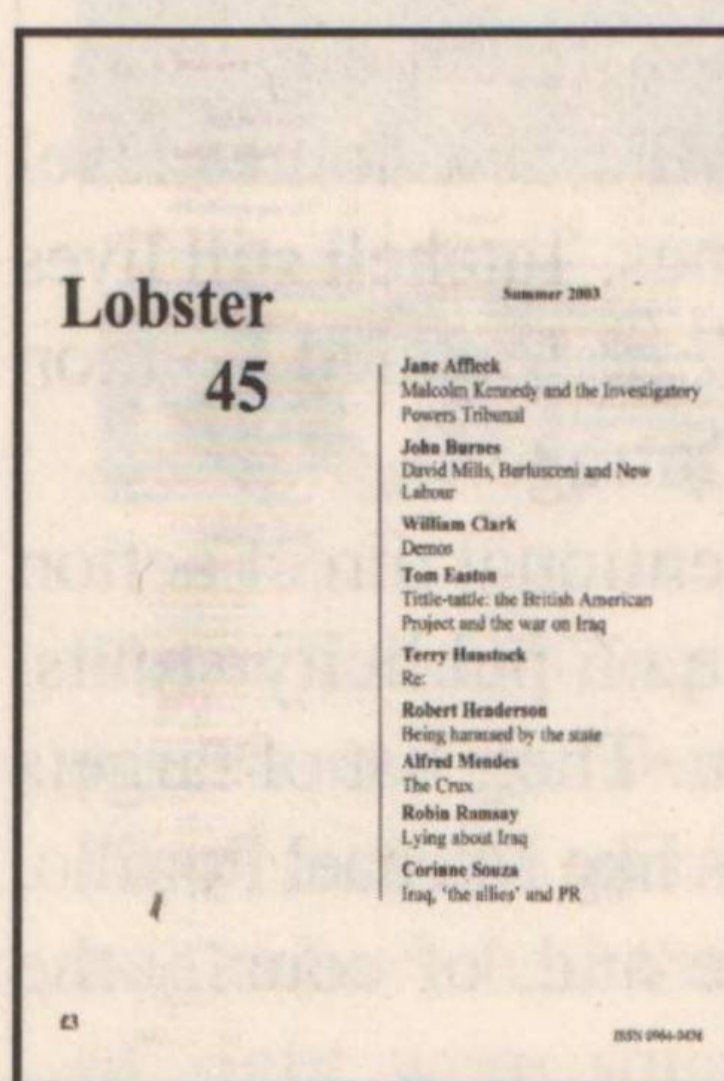
In a feature on 'The way we live now', Christopher Draper discusses the kind of land deal set up more or less as a conspiracy between developers and local authorities, in schemes of "utter, breathtaking financial appeal and moral bankruptcy".

He describes how, "the local authority sells a developer one of its prime school sites surrounded by nice green playing fields in a highly desirable central position and in exchange the developer cleans up the contaminated site. Of course the kids from the demolished school have to go somewhere, so developers build them another school, guess

where? Yes, on the old contaminated site. Of course it will have first been cleaned up, well a bit any way. Unbelievably regulations allow developers to leave higher levels of toxins to remain if a site is being reused for a school than would be required if houses were to be built!"

Colin Ward

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Lobster
no. 45, summer 2003, £3

The topics covered in previous issues of *Lobster* have ranged through the Kennedy assassinations, the far right, conspiracies throughout the world, the murky world of spying, covert ops, EM and non-lethal weapons and related topics.

As might be expected, a major focus this time round is Iraq. Robin kicks off with an excellent six-page article looking at state-sponsored lying in the run-up to the invasion. *Lobster* went to press before the latest bout of media interest in the story, so I look forward to part two in six months' time.

Corrine Souza backs up Robin's piece with a take on PR and Iraq. Her Iraqi father was once an SIS ('MI6') agent in Baghdad and later in London, so she has a unique view on events. Tom Easton follows this up with a long article on the British-American Project and the war. If you ever want to explain why

the New Labour Government so slavishly follows the line from Washington, this is as good a place to start as any.

Any discussion on Iraq will eventually lead on to the subject of oil, and Alfred Mendes's piece, 'The Crux', deals with US penetration of the republics of the former USSR, in particular those with oil reserves and strategic importance.

Another key area of interest are 'think tanks', and in his article William Clark gives a detailed biographical account of those working under the Demos flag. These include people such as Martin Jacques, Geoff Mulgan, Anita Roddick, David Marquand and Stuart Hall. Think tanks (whoever thought that name up?) are where many government policies first get aired and 'thought through' (obviously not very far in many cases), and this particular bunch of lefty intellectuals, bureaucrats and capitalists aren't in business to benefit the working classes.

More 'not-quite-sleaze' is discussed in John Burnes's article on David Mills (Mr Tessa Jowell) and his links with Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi, which fleshes out the brief flurry of articles that appeared in the mainstream media a couple of months back. Another major focus of *Lobster* 45 is the harassment of individuals by covert agencies of the state. In this issue the cases of Robert Henderson and Malcolm Kennedy are highlighted, including an extended (and for those not up to speed on this area of the law, pretty unintelligible) look at the secrecy ruling on Malcolm Kennedy's case.

There's also a short item on the Force Reconnaissance Unit in Ulster, which (again) looks as though it went to press before the latest revelations came out of the Stevens Inquiry. This is especially true insofar as the article relates to British military collusion,

not only with Loyalist but also with Republican paramilitary outfits.

Robin Ramsey and Terry Hanstock both contribute sections of smaller items. There are updates on stories featured in earlier issues, a couple of letters and the magazine is finished off with an excellent eight-page section of book reviews (including Corrine Souza's memoir of her father, which looks very interesting).

Lobster remains required reading for anyone who wants to peer below the surface of events and the flim-flam of the mass media.

Mal Function

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(continued from page 6)

He's watching us

Thanks for publishing my article, 'New reality show' (12th July). But in the second line you mistakenly italicised 'Big Brother'. This suggests that I was referring to the television show. I wasn't. I was using the term in its original, Orwellian, sense.

Dean

Proto-hominid

Over five million years, since our proto-hominid ancestors broke with the great apes, we've lived in groups of fifty plus until civilisation, life in towns, began some mere ten thousand years ago. That means a dozen men, a dozen women and two dozen children. So during the time we acquired our present genetic programming we took decisions in small groups.

We can't cope, naturally, with more than that. If we have to try, we're obliged to set up authoritarian and hierarchical relationships. It's nobody's fault, it's just how we are made.

What are the implications of this for anarchists? It means that every activity has to be based on small, interlinked groups.

Peter Cadogan

Mayday defended

The only person who was completely wrong in the London Mayday discussion was Steve Fisher ('More on Mayday', 28th June). We shouldn't forget Mayday. It's a celebration, not only of anarchist history and philosophy, but also for the whole labour movement. Some anarchists are part of this movement.

This year, some of us sold copies of *Freedom* and gave out hundreds of leaflets to many people who were genuinely interested. We weren't in competition with other events which had been organised, but in tandem with them. I'm not a lot of good on a Critical Mass but I'm more than prepared to give out their propaganda.

Pete Ford

Save the trees

I agree with Amorey Gethin's judgement on the Evian actions ('Anarchism vs violence', 28th June). Unlike him, I'd formed my opinion before I got beyond page two. The writers perhaps regarded their actions – the kicked-in shops, chainsawed trees – as propaganda by deed. But what did they think they were saying? And to whom?

Mightn't it have been more revolutionary to devote some of their energy and time to the formulation of a coherent idea, and the communication of it to all those boring people out there struggling with their lives? Millions of them are inwardly desperate, but



they never hear anything that seems to speak to their condition from anyone who seems to care about it.

It's when all these people feel they have somewhere else to go and start to redirect their energies accordingly that things will change. When the state gets wind of this, it may well be necessary for people to mount a vigorous defence. Until then, and without the whiff of anything like an idea in evidence, the activities of people fetishising themselves as 'black bloc', 'fluffies', 'Anthraxite', 'dark grey' or 'pink/silver/samba' (who cares?) will leave most of their fellow human beings wondering what it all has to do with them.

James Clancey

Situationist error

I'd like to point out that *King Mob Echo* wasn't the organ of the English Section of the Situationist International ('Readers' digress', 14th June). *King Mob* was set up after three members of the English SI were excluded.

When Vaneigem went to New York he met one of the Motherfuckers and wasn't pleased at their mystical interpretation of his work. In Britain, Chris Gray and his associates sided with the Motherfuckers and a split quickly became inevitable.

The circumstances surrounding this will be debated during the forthcoming exhibition, 'The Situationist International and after', which opens at the Aquarium Gallery, 10 Woburn Walk, London WC1 at the end of the month.

Michel Prigent

For details visit www.vortexbooks.com

A sideways look

A friend of mine remarked recently on the similarity between Tony Blair and Peter Tatchell. Both have recently turned 50. Both joined the Labour Party during the last Wilson government. Both have toothpaste advert smiles. Both like to be centre of attention. And both are supremely confident that they're right in what they're doing.

But it's the differences between them that are crucial. Since he failed to become Labour MP for Bermondsey in 1983, in a by-election characterised by rampant homophobia, Tatchell has followed a very different path to others of his generation.

During the 1970s the huge energy from the student revolt and the diverse social movements that characterised it took a turn towards the Labour Party. Why this happened is beyond the scope of this piece; that it was a backwards step is clear.

The presence of former Trots and Communist Party members so close to the heart of the government, as well as throughout Labour's hierarchy, shows that Tatchell was one of those who bucked the trend. While the left began its "long march through the institutions", Tatchell headed off in a different direction.

While most Labour MPs at Cabinet level seem to own several homes, Tatchell still lives in a council flat. In 1987 he founded London ACT-UP, and in 1990 Outrage.

Outrage aren't a conventional direct action group. They concentrate on publicity stunts, or zaps as they call them. Their list of targets is impressive – hypocrites like Michael Portillo, dictator Robert Mugabe and, of course, the

turbulent priests of the Church of England.

The recent homophobia within the Church over the attempted appointment of a gay bishop (sorry, I should say honest and openly gay bishop) has been a gift to Tatchell. He and seven other Outrage members stormed the General Synod of the Church and had a stand up row with some of the evangelicals.

I particularly liked his use of the quote from Leviticus 20:13, which baldly states that men who have sex with other men should be put to death. He challenged the assembled bigots to act on their all-too-literal faith. None did.

Mind you, verse nine says you should be put to death for cursing your mother or father. Can't imagine Mrs Blair doing that! And verse ten does for adulterers.

And if Ron Davis had survived being put to death for being gay, his predilection for badger-spotting might well have got him in verse 15, and – somewhat unfairly in my view – the badger as well.

This belief in the literal truth of the Bible, or at least the bits that suit their agenda, says a lot about members of the Church of England. Have they no sense of irony? Or even the Church's own history?

Tatchell left Labour in 2000, though sadly this was so he could pursue election as mayor of London.

Blair's closest political ally is George Bush, whose backers include bigots who make those in the Church of England look like liberals. He plans to bring in more religious schools and allow religious groups to discriminate in who they employ. He won't even condemn the teaching of creationism.

Blair is corrupted by power. Tatchell attacks power, for its hypocrisy and its repression, and in a principled way. I know who gets my principled rejection of electoralism, every time.

Svartfrosk

Anarcho-quiz

1. How did Chomsky describe the internet in 1996?
2. Who were the Gnomes of Zurich?
3. In the late 1980s the Post Office allowed advertising slogans to be part of the mail franking. When a christian fundamentalist paid to have 'Jesus is Alive!' on people's post, what was the response of radical Scottish band The Shamen?
4. In the early 1980s one English seaside town boasted a weekly anarchist paper. What was it called and where was it based?

for answers see page 6

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