

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►►

Morgenmuffel  
page 2

Mega union merger  
page 3

Cultural cold war  
page 5

Rudolf Rocker reissued  
page 7

## REVEALED: US NUKES ON UK SOIL

A report from America has for the first time confirmed the presence of nuclear weapons at RAF Lakenheath – with an explosive potential of 18,000 Hiroshima bombs.

US-based group the Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC), using Freedom of information laws, claim to have found a document signed by Clinton in 2000 acknowledging the existence of 101 bombs. Hans Kristensen, author of the report, said: "That document authorised the Pentagon to deploy 480 nuclear weapons in Europe. And NATO says the number has not been reduced since then."

For the past decade, Lakenheath have refused to confirm accusations that their base holds nuclear materials.

As part of a European summation documenting bombs across Europe, the group discovered that Lakenheath has 33 'Vaults' storing nuclear weaponry, with a top capacity of 132. The report strongly recommends the bombs be withdrawn. Hans told Freedom: "They could be dismantled and moved very quickly, in a day once the preparations were in place. They should. Lakenheath's resources should be focused on the type of missions that matter today – non-nuclear operations. Moreover, there are rumours the two F-15E squadrons may be withdrawn from Lakenheath as a result of the ongoing Base Realignment

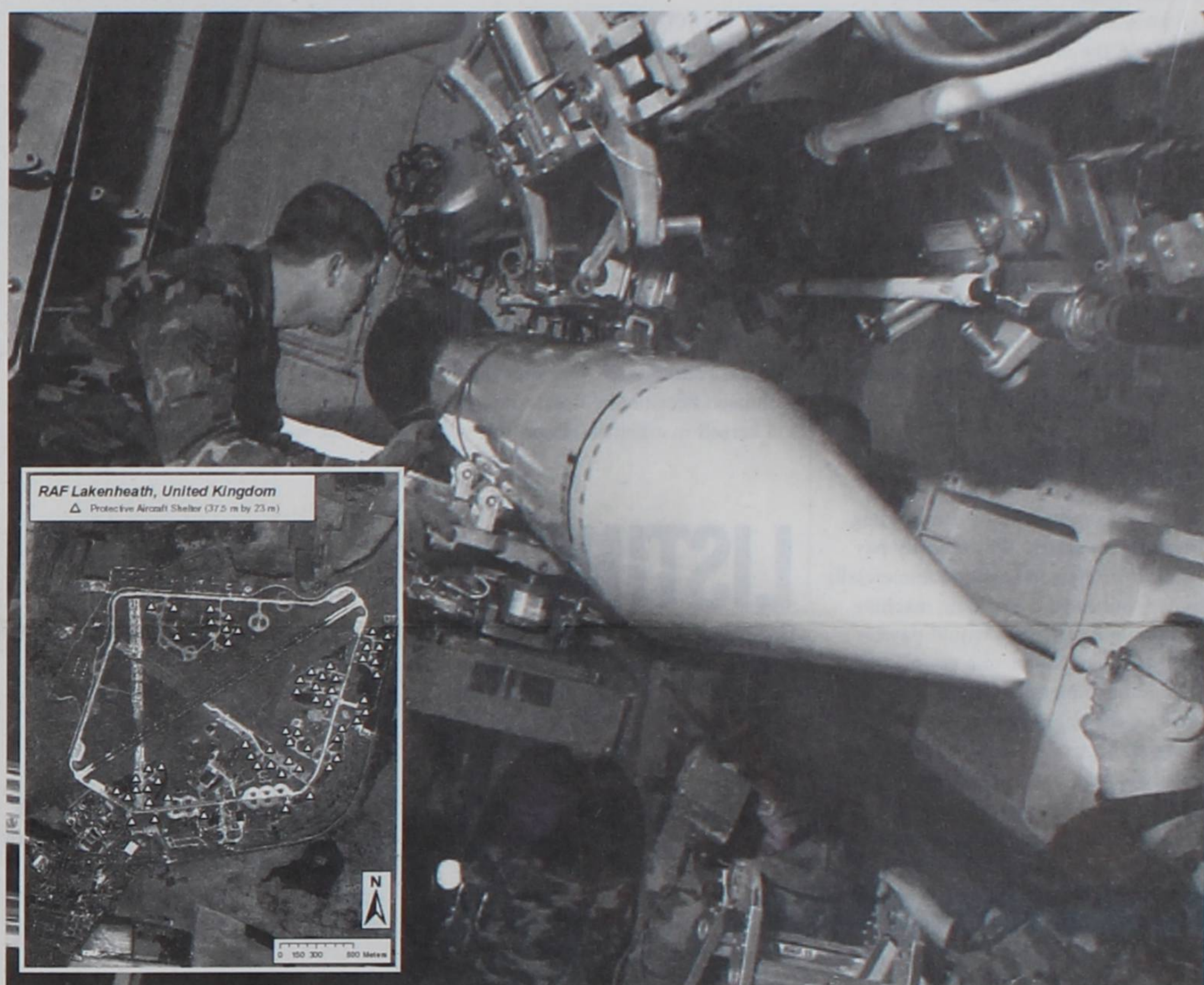
and Closure (BRAC) review."

The B61 bombs are 'free-fall' weapons, and must be carried by aircraft to their target. They have an explosive potential of 18.7 megatons. The Hiroshima bomb was one kiloton.

Before the report, it was believed that Lakenheath had moved half of them in 1996-7. The 2000 directive however suggests this never happened. Potentially, they could be used in several areas at the moment, Hans said: "They can potentially be used against targets in Russia, Iran or Syria. I would remark that even if one believes the weapons serve a legitimate purpose, the presence of such a large number on NATO's northern flank highlights the extent to which NATO has failed to adjust its nuclear strategy sufficiently to the real world."

Lakenheath-based activist group Theatre of War demonstrate at the base and campaign against its nuclear contents. They said: "We found out in October from the NRDC. They are the only place in Britain with the facilities to store them. The B61 nukes are illegal under international law. People should be fully aware of what's going on. There could be an accident at any time and we wouldn't know about it for 20-25 years – they had two accidents in the '50s and '60s."

Lakenheath refused to confirm the report's accuracy.



## McLIBEL LEGAL VICTORY

On 15th February the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg declared that the notorious and long running McLibel case was in breach of the right to a fair trial and right to freedom of expression.

The McLibel case began in 1990 when the McDonald's Corporation issued libel writs to prevent distribution of What's Wrong With McDonald's? leaflets produced by London Greenpeace (an anarchist environmental group pre-dating Greenpeace UK). The leaflet criticised McDonald's (along with other multinationals) for promoting unhealthy food, exploiting workers, children and animals and causing environmental damage. The McLibel trial lasted for 314 days between 1994 and the verdict in 1997 – the longest trial of any kind in English legal history. McDonald's spent an estimated £10m

on the trial, which was dubbed "the worst corporate PR disaster in history."

The mainstream media have widely reported that the McLibel Two (Helen Steel and Dave Morris) had 'lost' the case. In fact, they succeeded in proving the truth of many of the criticisms made in the leaflet, including 'exploitation of children', 'low pay, 'cruelty to animals' and 'deceptive advertising' – a feat made even more significant in the light of the ECHR recognition that the trial was unfair. However, because of the nature of UK libel laws, where defendants only have to fail on one point to be liable, the McLibel Two were ordered to pay damages of £40,000 to McDonald's, yet no legal sanctions were ordered against McDonald's for the damning findings against the company. The McLibel Two refused to pay, and instead launched legal proceedings against the UK government arguing that the marathon trial and UK libel laws breached the European Convention on Human Rights.

The European Court ruled there had been an unacceptable inequality of arms with McDonald's during the trial, and that the lack of procedural fairness and equality gave rise to a breach of the right

to freedom of expression. They also said that the award of £40,000 damages to McDonald's was disproportionate. The court also recognised that there was a "strong public interest in enabling campaign groups and individuals outside the mainstream to contribute to the public debate by disseminating information and ideas on matters of general public interest such as health and the environment."

Although they won the case in Europe, Helen and Dave consider that the victory for freedom of speech was really won by a campaign of mass defiance, which showed that oppressive laws can be rendered unworkable if people fight them. Thanks to the work of the McLibel Support Campaign and grass roots campaigners, anti-McDonald's leaflets were being distributed in millions all around the world in dozens of languages. The website about the case and campaign at www.mcspotlight.org has been accessed over a hundred million times.

In the next issue of Freedom, we interview Helen and Dave about their remarkable battle, and how McDonald's and the legal system were beaten.

## SQUAT VICTORY

After six months of occupation by local residents and anarchists, the nursery at 1 Bournbrook Road in Selly Oak, Birmingham, is to be brought back into social use. The Nursery Social Centre Collective squatted the building from August 2004 and resisted several eviction attempts, but last week voluntarily vacated the premises, following a deal with the council to turn over the building to a youth project.

Kidda, from the Collective and West Midlands Anarchists, said: "We've proved that the council in Birmingham can be taken on and beaten – direct action in the community works."

The former council-run community day nursery had been boarded up and left empty for over two years. It was re-opened by the Collective, which includes homeless people and children, and it has since facilitated workshops, cultural events and meetings of community interest for local people as well as much-needed short-term housing for its homeless residents upstairs.

It included a large green space called 'the secret garden', originally intended as a community project. At the Bournbrook neighbourhood forum in October, local residents consensually agreed

with the Collective that they preferred to see the building used by a social project rather than left boarded up.

The Birmingham-based RITE Project, which works with young people excluded from the education system, are set to move in in the near future. The Collective question why the previous RITE site needs to be vacated and sold off to the private sector by the council in the first place. They feel it is a waste of taxpayers' money to evict the RITE project from their building and relocate them elsewhere at great expense.

Birmingham City Council ignored a formal business proposal from the Social Centre Collective to continue their social project for a 'peppercorn' rent in the building. The RITE Project is scheduled to use the building until 2006, when it is due to be demolished – pending a public enquiry – as part of the controversial Bristol Road expansion.

The Collective note that social use of the building would not be on the agenda if they had not taken direct action, highlighting the misuse of public buildings by local authorities.

For more info see [www.stuffit.org/nursery](http://www.stuffit.org/nursery) or [www.wmanarchists.org](http://www.wmanarchists.org)

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Vol 66  
No 5

# Home and away

## FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 5

### Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

### Angel Alley

We are currently looking into folding Freedom ourselves. We currently pay £2,400 per year to have it commercially folded, but buying a folding machine and doing it ourselves would pay for itself over the course of a couple of years, not to mention saving several days on the paper production process. If we manage to raise the cash, and find people to help out this should go ahead, and we will keep you all informed.

One of our upstairs storage rooms is presently being cleared so that the Advisory Service for Squatters can move in, and we look forward to shortly being 'roomies' with them. For more info on what they do see [www.squatter.org.uk](http://www.squatter.org.uk)

### Donations

One-off donations for January and February 2005:

GH, £10; MJ, £20; JG, £8; MB, £28; JK, £70; JL, £4; JH, £5; TA, £10; JG, £10.

Total one-off donations from August 2004 = £1,170

Total annual standing order donations from August 2004 = £749

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### Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 19th March and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 10th March (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

# News from the inside

### Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they wish. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case or anything else!

### CAPS conference

The next Campaign Against Prison Slavery conference is to be held in the north of England on 12th March, starting at 1pm. While the conference is not 'open' for security reasons, we encourage all groups and individuals involved in the campaign to make every effort to attend. For info email [Markbarnsley@mail.com](mailto:Markbarnsley@mail.com)

### Death of Victoria Robinson in New Hall Prison

On 2nd February, 26 year old Victoria Robinson became the first woman to kill herself in a British prison this year.

Last year thirteen women took their own lives in prisons in England and Wales, three of them in New Hall, where Victoria Robinson died. Victoria's death came only two days after the inquest into the suicide of another woman prisoner, Helena Price, in New Hall.

### New American eco-prisoner

Ryan Lewis has been remanded in custody charged with arson attacks for which responsibility was claimed by the Earth Liberation Front. Letters of support can be sent to: Ryan Lewis, X-4101338 5E225B, Sacramento County Main Jail, 651 'T' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, USA.

### Prison uprising in Argentina

An uprising at the heavily overcrowded Cordoba prison in Argentina, over living conditions and visitation rights, left five prisoners, two guards, and a cop dead. Prisoners took control of the prison for more than 24 hours, and staged a rooftop protest, after taking 24 guards hostage, along with the governor. Whether or not the authorities made concessions to end the siege has not been made public.

### Two new prison pamphlets

For speakers of French and/or Spanish two new pamphlets have recently been produced focussing on repression and resistance in British prisons, the prison industrial complex and the panopticon society, prison slavery, and other issues.

The French publication is produced by the group La Breche, and entitled *Il Faut Porter des Masques de Ski!* The central text is the transcript of a talk given in Lille in May 2004 by Mark Barnsley, and besides La Breche's introduction, there are articles on repression in British prisons and the



Campaign Against Prison Slavery. For more info contact [la-breche@voile.fr](mailto:la-breche@voile.fr)

The Spanish pamphlet, *Enemigo Del Estado*, has been put together by Al Margen, and is a translation of a talk given by Mark Barnsley in Valencia in April 2004. For more information contact [atalmargen@nodo50.org](mailto:atalmargen@nodo50.org)

### Crap arrest of the week

Thirteen-year old Amy Hodges was having a snowball fight with her mates when one of the snowballs she threw broke the rear window of a car. Unfortunately for Amy the car belonged to an off-duty part-time copper who arrested her! At the police station, Amy was finger-printed, her DNA taken, and she was held in a cell for four hours. She was then told that if she did not accept a verbal caution, which will stay on her record for five years, she'd be charged with criminal damage. "My daughter now has a criminal record for throwing a snowball," said Amy's mum, Theresa. "Amy had to sit in the man's car and frankly he could have been anybody."

compiled by Mark Barnsley

## LISTINGS

### Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

### London

12th March Video premiere of *Refusing to Kill*, from 2-5pm at Maiden Lane Community Centre, 156 St Paul's Crescent, NW15. Contact 020 7209 4751 or 0780 378 9699 or see [www.refusingtokill.net](http://www.refusingtokill.net)

18th March *Refusing to Kill* showing at 7pm at Crossroads Women's Centre, 230a Kentish Town Road, NW5

### Newcastle

6th March a day of film, theatre, music and speakers to celebrate 100 years of the IWW and 20 years since the end of the miners' strike. For info contact 01302 841 365 or see [www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk) or [www.num.org.uk](http://www.num.org.uk)

### International

18th to 20th March Zagreb Anarchist Bookfair. See [www.ask-zagreb.org](http://www.ask-zagreb.org)  
21st March Destroy the arms trade,

international day of direct action. See [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org)

26th March The Tenth Annual San Francisco Bay Area Bookfair, from 10am to 6pm at Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way  
10th April Valencia Anarchist Bookfair. For info see [www.valenciailibertaria.org](http://www.valenciailibertaria.org)  
6th July Global day of action at the opening day of the G8 Summit. See [www.agp.org](http://www.agp.org) or [www.dissent.org.uk](http://www.dissent.org.uk)

### Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation  
*Network of anarchist-communists*  
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
[www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
Antifa  
*Militant anti-fascist organisation*  
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
[www.antifa.org.uk](http://www.antifa.org.uk)  
Class War Federation  
*Class struggle anarchist group*  
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX  
[www.classwaruk.org](http://www.classwaruk.org)  
Dissent

*A network of resistance against the G8*  
[www.dissent.org.uk](http://www.dissent.org.uk)

### Earth First!

*Ecological direct action network*  
[www.earthfirst.org.uk](http://www.earthfirst.org.uk)

Industrial Workers of the World  
*Revolutionary DIY union*

PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ  
[www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)

### Solidarity Federation

*Anarcho-syndicalist organisation*  
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX

[www.solfed.org.uk](http://www.solfed.org.uk)

See also [www.enrager.net/britain](http://www.enrager.net/britain)

### Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)  
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh  
[www.autonomous.org.uk](http://www.autonomous.org.uk)

### The Basement

24 Lever Street, Manchester (contact [mustsocial@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mustsocial@yahoo.co.uk) or 0161 237 1832)

### The Cowley Club

12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA  
[www.cowleyclub.org.uk](http://www.cowleyclub.org.uk)

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

### Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6JY

[www.kebele.org](http://www.kebele.org)

### Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)

The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster

[www.eco-action.org/lancaster](http://www.eco-action.org/lancaster)

London Action Resource Centre (LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1  
[www.londonlarc.org](http://www.londonlarc.org)

### The Rampart

7a Rampart Street, London E1  
SUMAC Centre

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX

[www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/](http://www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/)

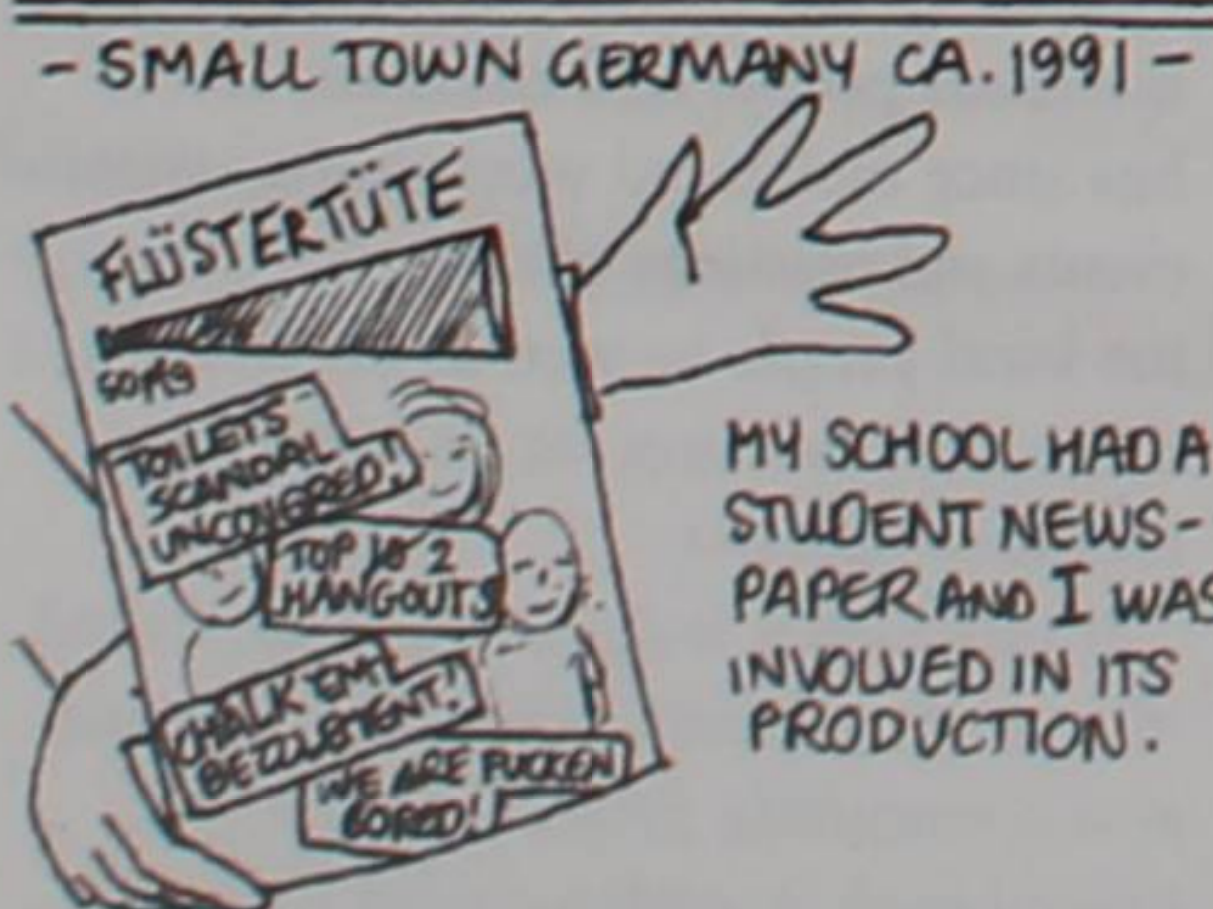
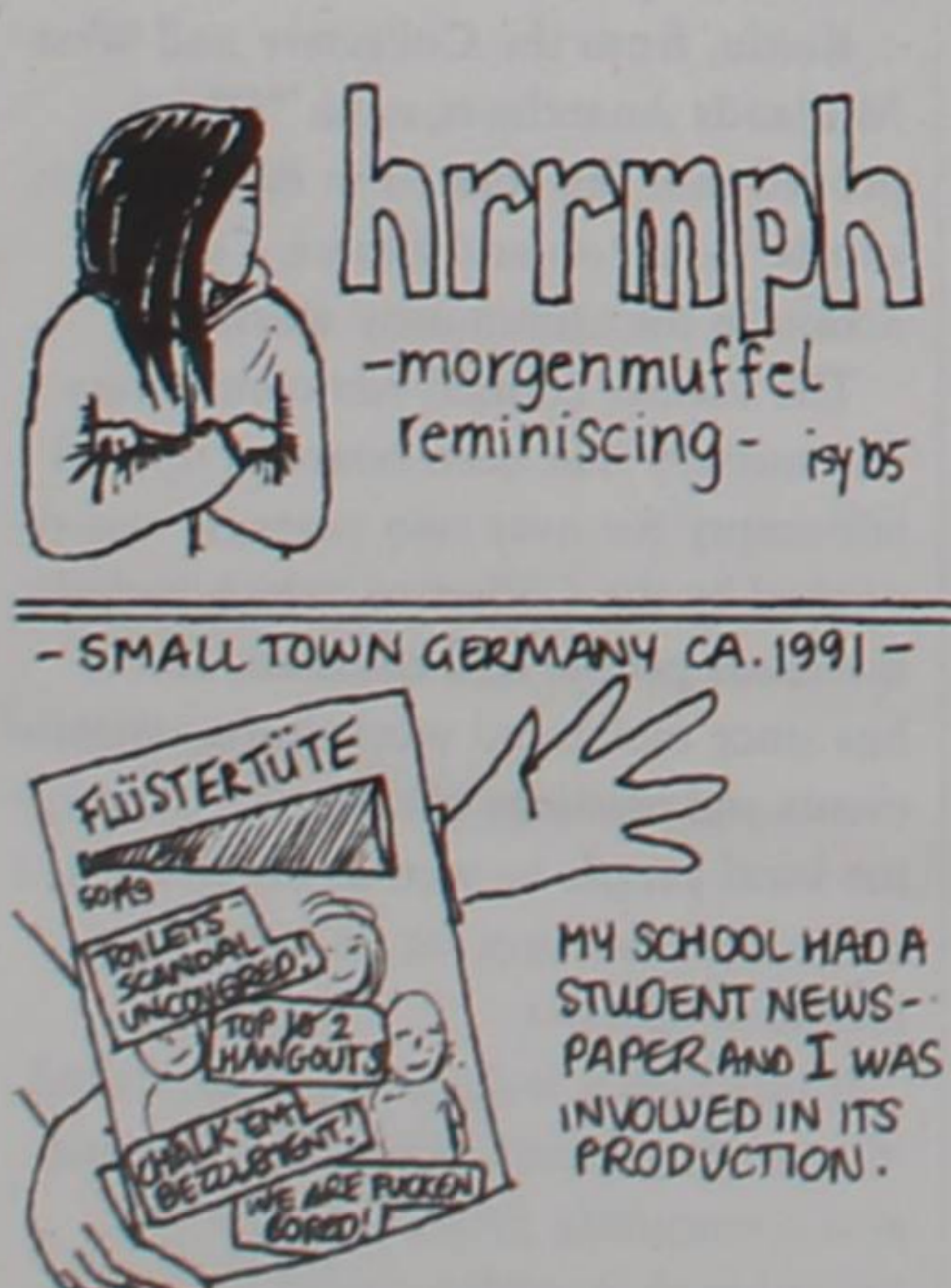
### 1in12 Club

21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY

[www.1in12.com](http://www.1in12.com)

### 56a Infoshop

56 Crampton Street, London SE17  
[www.safetycat.org/56a](http://www.safetycat.org/56a)



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# News

## In Brief

### Anti-gel action

A check-in clerk at Stansted is fighting a suspension he was given for allegedly having too much gel in his hair. The measure, taken after John Graham had already sported a punk hairdo for two years, prompted workmates to come in the next day wearing Mohicans as a protest. A union shop-steward, John has never received any reprimands before now and his union, GMB, have complained to employer Swissport.

Swissport UK, based at Heathrow, went into administration in November 2004 and laid off thousands of jobs shortly after a negotiated 2.5% pay rise, a measure which GMB bitterly criticised at the time as the media found out before employees.

### Homelessness in mining towns

Many old mining towns have seen an explosion of property speculation which has seen locals priced out of the market. There has been a rise in the number of homeless applications, with over half of the top 20 rises being recorded in the ex-miner communities. The largest rise took place in Strathclyde region, on the outskirts of Glasgow up 70% from £60,988 to £103,928.

The Glasgow area is one of the poorest in Scotland, with between 4.5 and 6.6% of people claiming benefits.

### New South London group

A new anarchist initiative is starting up in South London. A meeting on 8th March will hopefully see the formation of a new branch of the Solidarity Federation (SolFed), adding to the established North East London branch.

At a test meeting this month, members decided to convene the group as a SolFed local. The meeting identified several broad areas the group could concentrate on. One attendee said: "Issues identified were the crackdown on incapacity benefit and the sell-off of social housing under the guise of the 'Decent Homes Standard'."

Contact details and affiliations have not yet been decided, but organising is taking place partially on enraget.net's forums.

### Warms the heart

The energy group Centrica, which owns British Gas, announced an increase in the profits of its domestic energy business of some 83%. The company admitted that the "required customer tariff increases" which raised gas bills by 19% since January 2004 were among the main reasons for a rise in profit margins. Nearly a million customers went to its competitors after the domestic price rise, only to see their new suppliers also raise their prices.

Thank Thatcher the gas industry is not one of those evil nationalised industries who charge their unfortunate customers high prices and pass the risk and burden of the wholesale gas price on to customers!

### If it's good enough for them...

James Dyson, the inventor of the self-named vacuum cleaner, justified sacking his 800-strong UK workforce and replacing them with cheaper labour in Malaysia because "wage levels doubled" over here and he "would have gone out of business." In 2003, Dyson and his wife paid themselves £17m in dividends. He has declined to say what level of payout they could be in line for this time, but the doubling of profits in 2004 to £102m suggests the figure could be well over £34m. Now that his own wages have doubled, will he be sacking himself?

# One big union?

## Is the T&G, GMB and Amicus merger talk positive, or just staving off their demise? Joe Jacobs Jnr reports

**A**fter many months of rumours, the first step towards a possible merger between the biggest trades unions in the private sector was taken at the beginning of February.

The Transport & General Workers Union and Amicus announced that they were in talks to create a new union, with the hope it would be approved by members by the end of the year. Although the GMB are not formally involved at the moment, they are being 'kept informed' of developments, with a view to joining in due course.

None of the unions are in any immediate difficulties over membership or finances (the GMB's have been precarious in the recent past, but this has been largely solved through disposal of assets) but long-term decline leaves them unconfident of reversing that situation except by merger – as all three General Secretaries have explicitly said.

"We don't need to organise – that has failed. The way to grow our union is through mergers" (Amicus leader Derek Simpson).

"Our unions have failed our membership, so need to join together to become bigger" (Tony Woodley, TGWU).

"Unless we turn membership decline around, we will never regain our passed strength. This has not happened, so we need to pool our remaining strength" (Kevin Curran, GMB).

None of them note that unions win members when they are actually fighting. All three have dodged fights to defend their members' interests since their election (e.g. Woodley at Rover and Jaguar), and see any future only as managers.

The position of the unions has weakened, T&G membership has declined by 70,000, whilst the workforce has increased by a million people. The

number of unionised workplaces with shop stewards in them has fallen from 16% to 10%. In many cases the unions are gaining new members from each other rather than from non-unionised workers. Whilst all three unions retain membership in the public sector, they are dwarfed by Unison, and the PCS, the Civil Servants union.

In the long-term, the leadership hope that even more unions join in (UCATT and the NUM are both plausible candidates), ending up with one union for the private sector, and one for the public sector. One former General Secretary has even talked of turning the entire TUC into 'one big union'.

Although there are clearly many benefits to all workers being a member of the same union, and it is agreed that inter-union rivalries have a poor effect upon wider recruitment of members, the danger of such a union being even more removed from the membership, and even more bureaucratic are also obvious.

Two other factors come into play as to why the merger has been announced now. All three unions have 'left' leaderships – once called the 'awkward squad'. They haven't seemed so awkward since the 'Warwick Agreement' last year, when they agreed a peace with New Labour in exchange for some small improvements in labour laws. As a merger is seen as inevitable in the long-term, the leadership wants it now, when the terms would be slightly more favourable to the membership than they would be under a right-wing led merger.

Also, it's seen as the creation of a major bloc within the Labour Party – one that (they argue) will return it to its roots, but which in reality, will act as the major backer of Gordon Brown once Blair resigns. There aren't the large scale moves to completely break



with Labour we've seen from the RMT, FBU, or CWU, (though the GMB has dramatically cut its donation to the party, and the T&G have made the bold step of insisting its delegates to party bodies vote in accordance with union policy!). The leadership wants to head off any such move by retaining some influence within the party of government. The union would have a significant percentage of the votes at Labour conference, but that means little as regards Labour Party policy in government.

Despite urging from Curran, the GMB executive hasn't been keen so far and demand further information around questions of lay democracy, organising culture, and relations with the Labour Party. These are questions which activists in the T&G and Amicus are raising as well. Tony Woodley has promised that at least 10% of the new union's budget

will go to organising, and that his proposed new 120 organisers will go ahead, but many are not convinced that even with a union office in every town, the officers and leadership will not be even more removed from the membership. One proposal had it that the new union's conference would only have one delegate for every 7,000 members.

One big union controlled by its members (or even just more controlled by its members) would be a great step forward, but as it stands, the proposals offer no such thing. There is no principled reason for opposition to a merger – unlike with the formation of PCS or the AEEU none of the unions involved are 'management unions', nor are they 'radical' unions being forced to adopt to right-wing policies and structures. But any merger must be on our terms.

## Hunt ban defiance washout

**T**he government's ban on hunting came into force on 19th February, and all was quiet on the Eastern front. Freedom asked around East Anglia to see what the general atmosphere was like after the partial success of a campaign that has been heavily supported by anarchist activists in recent years.

Hunt Saboteurs (sabs) in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex turned out in above average numbers to, in the words of one sab, 'flounce around for a bit', and were greeted by colourful, large but subdued hunts across the region.

Tug, in Norfolk said: "Special branch were out on the day. We'll see what happens in a couple of weeks' time because I think the police were there today to show they were taking it seriously, as a keeping order thing."

Across the region hunts came out on individual farms but packed up after just a few hours.

In Suffolk they stayed on one farm and left in just an hour-and-a-half, much to

the delight of the wary sab group. A Suffolk sab said: "We had a really good day, there was lots of support out."

The story was similar for the Essex and Suffolk, but in East Essex, the situation became more volatile for a travelling London sab group, who were stopped by a group of around 40 hunt supporters, and had to be protected by police.

Across the country, the Countryside Alliance claimed 91 kills from 240 hunts, although it acknowledged that most of these were through shootings rather than pack kills.

On average, the number of fox kills per hunt per day is 1.1, according to government statistics, making the total average 264 for a national day of that size.

Despite this extremely weak fulfilment of pro-hunt threats of civil disobedience, it was generally agreed by both sides that the day was not the end of the affair, and the beginning of the new season later this year will be a truer test of the ban's effectiveness.

## Plutonium is 'lost'

**I**n a statement, the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) has admitted that 29.6kg of plutonium is missing from Sellafield – 'unaccounted for'. The group stressed that this is simply an accounting issue – along with the loss of 16.4kg of depleted uranium.

It said: "The material unaccounted for 2003/4 were all within international standards of expected measurement accuracies."

According to Charles Barnett, of the Shut Down Sizewell Campaign, this isn't the first time such discrepancies have occurred: "They weigh the fuel rods as they go in, robotically because they're so highly radioactive, and then weigh them again when they come out. There is often a discrepancy. It's normally kept secret because of corporate law but someone got hold of the precise figures because of the Freedom of Information Act. It has happened before but never as much as 30kg. It's technically within the marginal error of accountancy

but I'm not so sanguine as that. Bear in mind that Sizewell B is the flagship of nuclear power, and they store fuel rods on site for some thirty years while they think of what to do with them. You have to store this stuff for 240,000 years and no-one knows where to put it. They're owned by the same people."

In 2003 the British Nuclear Group said the plant had lost 19kg. There have been several other scares in the area in recent months. Sizewell faced fines for the unauthorised dumping of materials off the Suffolk coasts, and a recent malfunction shut down the entire plant for several months late last year amid a cloud of steam, costing the company millions in repairs.

British Energy, the company behind Sellafield and Sizewell, have recently been in emergency talks with American investors to try and save the financial future of the company, leading to fears that corners may be cut in safety procedures.

# News

## A licence to cheat

### Walmart use child labour and that's okay, says America's Labour department. Jack Ray reports

US retailer Walmart is entitled to fifteen days notice before Labour Department investigations in a sweetheart deal struck with the Bush administration. The agreement, which also permits the multinational giant ten days to correct any violation, was struck as part of a January settlement over 85 breaches of US Child labour laws mostly concerning minors operating hazardous equipment.

Teenage workers in stores in Arkansas, Connecticut and New Hampshire are alleged to have used industrial cardboard balers, and chainsaws to trim Christmas trees. It is equipment that the United Food and Commercial Workers Union associate with a potential for "maiming, amputation and death" The arrangement with the Department of Labour will end the investigation into Walmart's malpractice, which occurred over a four-year period from 1998 to 2002.

In exchange Walmart will accept a \$135,540 fine without admitting responsibility for any wrongdoing. The fine equates to 15 seconds of Walmart sales during 1994 and can be deducted from the company's tax bill as a business expense. The new agreement will effectively grant immunity to the retail giant, with employee complaints on a range of issues – child labour restrictions, wages and hours violations – only being investigated after the Department of Labour tells the store of the complaint and management has been given fifteen days to correct it. In the event that the store is still not compliant it will then

be entitled to ten more days before a further inspection can enforce punishment.

Gus Whitcomb, spokesman for Walmart, defended the agreement. He said: "We're confident the inspector general will conclude the agreement is fair and reasonable." He claimed the company was being victimised, "what is truly unfortunate is that the attention focused on the agreement has now moved from being about compliance ... to being a new forum for people who simply don't like us."

The 25 day honeymoon period is thought to be unique in US labour relations. John Fraser, a top official in the Department of Labour for both Bush Sr and Clinton, commented that "It appears to put Wal-Mart in a privileged position that to my knowledge no other employer has." Senator Christopher Dodd (Democrat, Connecticut) observed "the police wouldn't phone a thief to give him time to leave a crime scene."

Walmart have recently been involved in further labour relations controversy across the border in Canada. Their store in Jonquiere (Quebec) became the first North American Walmart to be unionised when a ballot was upheld by the Labour relations Board in September last year. Walmart announced its intention to shut the store earlier this month, with the company citing "business reasons" for 6th May closure. The branch's first collective bargaining agreement had



gone to arbitration and was set to be implemented in the Spring.

Walmart employs more than a million workers in the United States, of

which roughly half leave each year. On average its employees earn \$8 an hour (around £4.20). Profits for the year ending 28th January 2004 ran to

\$284.8bn, up on \$255bn the year before. The company was the 11th biggest donor to the Republican Party from 1999 to 2004.

## In Brief

He even lies about books!

We all know that Bush is a liar, but this takes the biscuit. Children's writer and illustrator Eric Carle is famous for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. A Democrat, he has an unexpected fan in Bush, who nominated that very book as his favourite story when he was a child – even though George W. was 24 when the book first came out. The man cannot even tell the truth about what books he claims to have read. Incredible.

Kyoto treaty becomes law

The Kyoto treaty, which limits the amount of pollutants countries can emit, is now in effect. The treaty, widely derided for its weak policies and its failure to include the USA, Australia, China or India, affects 141 countries around the world. It aims to cut greenhouse gases by 5.2% below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

On the same day as the treaty was signed on 17th February, Greenpeace activists broke into London's petroleum oil exchange and halted some of the international trade for several hours.

Other protests included marches and rallies outside US embassies, street parades and Critical Mass bike rides.

The cost of war

The war in Iraq has cost the US over \$156 billion (and counting). This is the same price for ensuring that every child in the world was basic immunisations for 52 years.

Bush Unplanned

President George Bush likes to have what are called 'town hall' style meetings to meet with average people. They were quickly dubbed 'Stepford meetings' as they were by invite only and attendees had to pledge support for the Republican party. Anyone deemed not enthusiastic enough were barred.

When he visited Europe, Bush wanted to do the same. He had declared that a 'town hall' style meeting was to be the cornerstone of the brief trip to Germany in an attempt to get in touch with the German people to convince them of his policies.

## Fighting eco-terrorism

Eco-terrorism is alive and well in the United States: environmentalists generally agree that the Bush administration has done more in its first four years to damage the world's ecosystem in the interests of corporate greed than any other government throughout the country's history has managed in a comparable period of time.

One of the more effective environmental organisations, the Natural Resources Defence Council, lists one form or another of government or corporate attack on the world roughly every hundred hours since 2001.

From profligacy with energy to accelerated climate change; habitat destruction to greater pollution; from wider, inequitable, consumption of finite resources to faster extermination of endangered species; and from a dirtier atmosphere to greater proliferation of nuclear weapons and waste, the Bush brigades are relentlessly terrorising life on our planet. And they're proud of it.

In mid February the chair of a senate environmental committee was accused of

intimidating critics of Bush's proposed 'Clear Skies' (= more highly polluted) pseudo-initiative. Earlier in the month two national organisations (the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials) had criticised Clear Skies. It is their job to watch such measures – they represent state and local agencies which monitor air pollution. In keeping with Bush's zero tolerance policy, senator James Inhofe directed the two organisations to turn over their financial and tax records for the past six years as well as provide a list of members.

When challenged, the Republicans claimed that it was necessary to know whether the groups are 'secretly' being subsidised by any outside interests such as environmentalists or foundations. The senator must have got the idea of 'outside interests' from the millions of dollars from industry devoted to lobbying for environmentally-destructive measures without being either fully disclosed or acknowledged. Congressperson Henry

Waxman of California described the threat by the Republicans as "a blatant attempt at intimidation and bullying so that experts will be afraid to speak out about a bill that rolls back air pollution protections for all Americans."

But the US state eco-terrorists seem at times to be healthily outnumbered for determination and drive by activists and pressure groups. These fall into three broad categories. Firstly there are those which appeal to the very wreckers who are responsible for the damage – the petitioners and lobbyists like the Audubon and Wilderness Society. Although such groups have few illusions about the extent and nature of the damage, their methods are reformist; they raise awareness nicely but rely on the state working against itself.

Then there are those whose protests are well-directed and carefully-organised like Greenpeace and WorldWatch. They work alongside the state and have hopes somehow of transforming it.

Most significantly, there are those who

## Feature

# The cultural cold war

Last century's silent battle over control of the arts continues under New Labour in contemporary Britain, writes Nathaniel Catchpole

State and corporate funding of the Arts is well known as a way of supporting culture which reinforces the status of the political and corporate elite. In the US and UK, opera, symphony orchestras, the ballet, museums, art galleries and the infrastructure that supports them, all get significant funding from both sources. Usually targeted towards an upper or upper-middle class audience and serving both their taste and social interests.

What is less known is the systematic state subsidy of corporate sponsorship and philanthropy, which has been going on in some form or another since the 1950s. Direct state subsidy is quite easy to trace and quantify, but in the US, and to a lesser (though increasing) extent in the UK, the State has supported many forms of cultural activity either covertly via intelligence services, or indirectly via the tax system. This has made public art institutions dependent on corporate sponsorship for their existence, and allows companies to get a significant kick-back from the state for what is already a very targeted and cost-effective form of advertising.

In 1950, the CIA set up an organisation called the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which existed until 1967 as the main body of their cultural wing. Run by Michael Josselson, at its peak the Congress had "offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organised high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances."<sup>1</sup> It was originally set up with the primary purpose of funding cultural activity in Western Europe, one of its earliest major activities being the Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century festival in Paris, 1952. This month long festival included the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, the West Berlin RIAS Orchestra, and works and appearances by as many composers as possible who's works had been banned or denounced by, or had physically fled, Nazi Germany and the USSR.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom wasn't set up to directly promote US foreign policy. Its purpose was to build up the reputation of artists in the West who's work could in some way be viewed as supportive or at least uncritical of American foreign policy and free trade, and to show Western Europe as somewhere where the arts were both supported and allowed to flourish uninhibited by the ruling elite. Due to its secrecy, it managed to fund artistic activity which would never have received US State Department funding – the abstract impressionists, serialist composers, and many other 'progressive' artists loosely aligned to the Non-Communist Left (NCL). "The

CIA estimated the NCL as a reliably anti-Communist force which in action would be, if not pro-Western and pro-American, at any rate not anti-Western and anti-American."<sup>2</sup>

In order for all this to remain covert, CIA money had to be funnelled through private cultural foundations – notably that of Nelson Rockefeller who was for many years the president of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). Money was deposited into the accounts of a number of real and front foundations, and eventually into institutions like MoMA to fund specific projects and exhibitions. One of the main focuses of the Congress for Cultural Freedom was Abstract Impressionism (described as "free enterprise art" by Nelson Rockefeller), which it supported with exhibitions and purchases for a number of years: "We recognised that this was the kind of art that didn't have anything to do with socialist realism, and made socialist realism look even more stylised and more rigid and confined than it was. Moscow in those days was very vicious in its denunciation of any kind of non-conformity to its own very rigid patterns. So one could quite adequately and accurately reason that anything they criticised that much and that heavy handedly was worth support one way or the other."<sup>3</sup>

The Congress for Cultural Freedom was therefore characterised by two main approaches: channelling state money through private sponsorship in order to prevent any artists involved noticing the CIA's involvement, and funding 'progressive' art, loosely aligned with the non-communist left (NCL). Both to show how culturally progressive the West was, and to try to increase the status of artists aligned with the NCL over those who supported the Soviets. It also artificially inflated the power and prestige of 'private' cultural institutions such as MoMA and the Guggenheim foundation, supplying them with ample support towards their already considerable resources.

The Congress was shut down quite quickly in 1967, after revelations came out about agents in its employ and its source of funding, mainly concerning the flagship Encounter magazine. Ironically its major opponent following the revelations was the then president, Lyndon Baines Johnson – "[I] won't have anything more to do with [the CIA intellectuals]. They all just follow the Communist line – liberals, intellectuals, Communists. They're all the same."<sup>4</sup>

However, since then, individual and corporate philanthropy and sponsorship have still been receiving significant state subsidy through the process of tax expenditure. Most large arts organisations, no matter how elitist, are registered charities, and donations to them are tax-deductible. In short, if a donor (private



or corporate) pays a tax rate of 40%, £1 donated to a charity will give them a tax break of 40p, with only 60p of the donation coming out of pocket; the state therefore contributes an additional two-thirds over and above their out of pocket donation. Due to the graduated tax system in both countries which has been in place to a greater or lesser extent over the past 20-30 years, those on lower incomes get considerably less subsidy for their donations to arts organisations and charities in general. Corporate donations are similarly tax deductible.<sup>5</sup>

The common liberal or anti-corporate reaction to this sort of activity is that tax-loopholes should be closed up and the money spent directly by the state to make it accountable. All that would do would be to restore the bureaucratic elite to a central position of resource control for cultural activity instead of the corporate one. In fact, the same people with the same interests; many politicians, ex-politicians and high-level civil servants serve on the boards of charities and non-profit Arts organisations in the same way they are often also company directors. Quangos and other government agencies are by no means accountable, and an attack on corporate sponsorship can very easily end up supporting them as an alternative.

Creative Industries Development Agencies, are one of the most recent ways that the State and Capital are co-opting art towards their interests. People have been well aware for some time that artists are often the first to move into deprived areas and start the process of gentrification – opening small galleries or craft shops, giving deprived areas a veneer of cultural and artistic activity, and taking over and renovating disused industrial spaces for workshops and studios. Usually this is an organic process as many artists are simply unable to afford to live or work anywhere else and are attracted by cheap rents and empty space. With the advent of Creative

Industries Development Agencies, the State is now targeting areas (East London, Brixton, Yorkshire/Humber region for example) to actively support this process. The agencies use money from regeneration budgets to provide business advice, accommodation, marketing, and other services to people involved in 'creative industries' – already a loaded term for cultural activity of any kind, placing it firmly within enterprise culture and commodity exchange.

Rent and property value, at least in areas of East London, has overtaken the capacity of artists and even those in the new media industries to afford accommodation easily. Many redevelopments, including those with 'live/work' planning permission (often a thinly disguised excuse for massive luxury studio apartments instead of either affordable housing or viable work space) are aimed at City workers in the financial sector, with corresponding prices. This leads to a polarisation where local residents can clearly see the priorities of developers, and begin to mobilise against it – the State is therefore having to artificially inject artists into these areas in order to give some kind of cultural authenticity and public service veneer to the development process.

Projects include housing Arts projects in derelict spaces for short periods to prevent them being used for squatting before redevelopment, and generally trying to reduce the negative effects of gentrification for cultural workers in order to prevent them being pushed out along with the wider working class (the same can be said for key worker housing). Although this kind of activity temporarily ameliorates the difficulty of finding appropriate space for a small number of approved artists, and those artists are rarely in a position not to take advantage of them, it doesn't deal with the issues of private land ownership that cause those problems in the first place. It also serves as a means to divide the interests

of the working class – local residents (quite rightly) point to the money being spent on 'creative industries' development, which isn't being spent on repairs to council accommodation, building cheap general-use housing, or infrastructure, often ignoring the fact that many artists are also on low-incomes with low-paid casual day jobs in order to pay these higher private rents. This becomes a smokescreen for the true nature of gentrification, which will eventually push out both artists and local residents in favour of luxury residential and retail developments.

The only way that artists and musicians can gain control of their activity without reliance on the State or corporate sponsorship, is to develop self-managing structures to work towards a society which will not leave their livelihood dependent on the State, Capital, or patronage by the rich. This involves recognising that their interests lie with the wider working class, and building solidarity between themselves and their communities in order to further their interests outside bureaucratic and sponsorship mechanisms. It is in all our interests to work towards a society where we are not required to take low-paid work or rely on benefits and patronage in order to meet basic needs, and where all individuals are able to reach their full potential through the liberation of work and cultural activity from Capital and commodity production.

## Footnotes

1. Introduction to *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* by Frances Stonor Saunders, Granta 1999/2000.
2. James Burnham, Notes on the CIA shambles, National Review, 21st March, 1967, cited *ibid.*
3. Donald Jameson (CIA), interview, 1994, cited *ibid.*
4. Quoted *ibid.*, page 401.
5. Page 59, *Privatising Culture*, Chin Tao Wu, Verso 2002/2003.

# Editorial

**C**ampaigning in the general election has effectively started. Tony Blair has been on Channel 5. Ministers have been cold calling voters. Brace yourself for three months of yawn inducing tedium as the political parties go through their five yearly ritual of pretending that they actually care what we think. Elections expose the way politicians try to manipulate what happens to make them look as good as possible.

Take three stories from last week, one involving public spending, one the council tax and one the NHS.

When appointed Chancellor, Gordon Brown set his so-called 'golden rules'. One of these says that the government should only borrow to invest. Falling tax revenues mean that the government faces a shortfall in public finances and the prospect of having to raise taxes to keep to Brown's golden rule. Increased taxes of course are not good for votes, so buried away in a press release from the Office of National Statistics last week was an announcement that the way public finances are calculated is to be changed. Money spent on roads will no longer count as revenue and therefore the shortfall in public expenditure will remain within limits! Like magic the need to raise taxes disappears. As the Financial Times put it the timing of the statistical change by the supposedly independent ONS was "supremely convenient".

Freedom has reported that public sector workers are facing attempts by the state to slash the value of their pensions. Last week the Liberal Democrats leaked a memo from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The memo stated that the government wanted to see cuts in 800,000 council worker pensions to "stave off council tax rises." Better apparently to screw workers than risk the wrath of voters. MPs by the way have the best pension scheme in Europe.

The government has made much of its attempts to reduce NHS waiting lists, unfortunately the lists have not been coming down as quickly as they would like – potentially embarrassing in the run up to an election. So what is the government going to do? Spend about £1 billion so that long suffering NHS patients have access to private sector diagnostic tests and the private sector can make nice profits. If you are going to fall ill make sure you do it during an election campaign – you are bound to get better care.

The electorate are not fooled by these stunts. Trust in politicians is at an all time low. Turnout in May's election is likely to be the lowest ever. Quite an achievement given that the turnout last time was lower than at any time since 1918 when many voters were busy getting themselves killed on the Western Front. It is very likely that more people will not vote than vote for the winning party. People don't vote because they are lazy or ignorant. They don't vote because they know it makes little difference. The election is an opportunity for anarchists – we have a ready audience!

# Commentary

## Criminal dissent

On 23rd February 2005 the Home Secretary Charles Clarke finally published his proposed Prevention of Terrorism bill, to replace the detention without trial powers deemed illegal by the House of Lords. The new proposals relate to the control orders, to be introduced against anyone – British or foreign national – suspected of 'terrorist activity'. The control orders will allow the Home Secretary to impose conditions on any individual, including ban on internet or mobile phone use, restrictions on movement and travel, restrictions on associations with named individuals, curfews and tagging.

It is one of the ironies of the ongoing 'war on terror' that those who claim to be the armed advocates of democracy appear able to pursue democracy only through its suspension. Thus, 'freedom' is honoured only in the breach – and those who champion 'Western democracy' institute detention without trial at Guantanamo Bay and Belmarsh, and regimes of torture at Guantanamo and Abu Graib.

By a now typical sleight of hand New Labour has used the furor over detention without trial – which applied to non-UK nationals only – to change detention to house arrest, and extend it to all UK residents, British or foreign nationals. The liberal left meanwhile hail this as a 'victory', and seek only that the powers be invoked by the judiciary rather than the Home Secretary, as if the chauffeur-driven products of Oxbridge are likely to be more sympathetic to the cause of 'terror' than the government.

All of this suggests a government intent upon the criminalisation of any and all effective resistance to its agenda, with 'terrorism' the excuse rather than the cause, and 'terror' redefined as any resistance to the aims and means of capital which strays beyond the limits of purely passive protest. To respond to this by seeking to barter with the state the terms of its criminalisation of protest is to abandon all claims to militancy. None of this should surprise us – after all, the same liberal left hailed the proposed repeal of the double jeopardy rule as an anti-racist victory! It should, though, make us question what our response ought to be instead.

The UK state has moved to embrace a doctrine of 'permanent emergency' – the suspension of the ordinary rule of law on the pretext of civil emergency.

The obvious lesson to draw from this is that we should no more fetishise the rule of law than do the likes of Clarke and Blair. Our problem, then, is simple. The state, and the class it serves, act as if we are in a state of civil war and grant themselves emergency powers to deal with the threat. The left, though, behaves as if nothing has changed. Our best response should be to seek to bring about the real civil war – the real state of exception – that capital has armed itself to oppose. In so doing, we should not allow ourselves to respond to the threat of criminalisation by retreating to conspiracist sects. Part of the process of criminalisation is the criminalisation of ideas. Instead of retreating from public life, revolutionaries should seek new outlets for our ideas and seek to build stronger roots within working class communities. It is our isolation that is our weakness, and that we should seek to overcome. The only effective response to the threat the Prevention of Terrorism Bill represents,

though, is a commitment to rebuilding the working class militancy it is designed to prevent.

John Shute

## Good riddance

Early spring light casts long shadows across the fields of the Mendips and sheep baa peacefully in the knowledge that packs of excited dogs will not be disturbing them today. The Mendip Hunt is otherwise engaged, parading through the centre of Wells, assuming with all the arrogance of the local elite that such a display will bring a sob to the throats of onlookers at the thought that this noble and ancient pastime is to end, ostensibly. Local hunt hooligans have been out spray-painting the country roads with rather pathetic 'Hunt On' slogans and last ditch posters exhorting the faithful to 'Fight Prejudice' adorn the odd hedge and tree.

Recently the anti-hunt Blairite clone MP 'Desperate' Dan Norris was confronted by a pack of out of control Beaufort Hunt supporters one of whom claimed Badminton villagers' lives had been 'ruined' by the ban. "How dare this man come to our village?" she barked, adding that the violence shown "was definitely not from a drunken minority." A touch of honesty in the debate for a change. The moral arguments were lost by them years ago and justifications for the barbarous practice have altered like the west wind.

Captain Ian Farquhar, joint master of the Beaufort Hunt, intoned that he could understand why people were angry. "I don't condone violence, and I don't condone what has happened." Violence against wildlife excepted of course.

Roger Scruton, the right-wing obfuscator, held a 'mouse hunt' around his property in 'defiance' of the law. A BBC camera crew dutifully turned up to film this momentous challenge to authority.

A quarter of hunts operate in the South West and there has been concern within the higher ranks of the local plods that it might not be possible to police the new legislation, which the misnamed Labour Party has deliberately delayed for eight years. Police chiefs have had 'good links' with the equally misnamed Countryside Alliance, not to mention that the adulterer of Highgrove (their terminology, used against us when it suits them), his mistress and his asinine sister are keen on the shredding of animal flesh and regularly turn out to bounce their large arses around the countryside. Royalty involved could bring considerable embarrassment to plod and co. in the event of a confrontation behind a hedge. Not necessarily due to jodhpurs being down as he and Camilla have a quickie.

No, some of the ranking plods are themselves involved in hunting. You don't get to be a member of an elite and not be asked to social functions at which contacts are made and backs scratched. That's the point of an elite, wherever it operates. So the notion was put forward of acting in a 'sensitive' manner concerning the law, i.e. the likelihood of anyone being banged up for breaking it seems remote. 'Specialist wildlife crime officers' (ratcatchers?) will be on hand to investigate complaints and no doubt that will take as long as it now takes them to investigate a burglary, if they can be arsed: the result will be forwarded to that bastion of working class justice, the Crown Prosecution Service. Don't hold your breath.

I. Hodge

## Eco-terrorism

page 4

have recognised that this can't be done and have seen the efficacy of usually nonviolent direct action and 'civil disobedience'. These vociferous and frankly brave groups are as active as ever. They aim to build community support, to go directly to the sources of distress and destruction – and they do make a tangible difference. Many – like the Ruckus Society, whose strap is 'actions speak louder than words' – also offer training and manuals for others motivated to draw attention to the destruction of the only environment we have.

Amongst the more prominent direct action groups are Earth First!, The Earth Liberation Front and Greenaction. Each of these operates internationally now and each does sterling work, with some overlap, in its fields. They also have active prisoner support programmes.

### Earth First!

Earth First! is in some ways a 'reformed' anarcho-environmentalist group with a solid following and high reputation. For the most part this comes from a thorough understanding of the interdependency of all life and the need to organise well, publicise success and attract lasting and committed support. They have a very well-produced, varied and informative journal ([www.earthfirstjournal.org/efj/](http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/efj/)).

Recent work has included blockading attempts to desecrate Siskiyou Wild Rivers; affording physical protection to seals in La Jolla, California; collaboration with Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) and exposure of an Environmental Protection Agency's (the government-funded EPA) project to pay low income families in northern Florida with \$970, a video camera and a T-shirt for participating in the ongoing CHEERS (Children's Environmental Exposure Study) experiment to have their homes regularly treated with toxic chemicals to observe the effects. The American Chemistry Council (whose members include Monsanto, Dow and Exxon) donated \$2m to the EPA to conduct the study.

Well-known for 'monkeywrenching' (tree-sits, blockades and public non-violent direct action), EarthFirst! acts as a resource for others who want to disable or remove inanimate but strategic targets.

### Earth Liberation Front

The Earth Liberation Front is also organised non-hierarchically and with a distributed structure that uses direct action to sabotage corporations and government agencies which profit from the systematic destruction of the natural environment. Since first becoming active in the US in 1997, it has been suggested that the ELF has been associated with over \$45 million of expenses to profiteers and polluters. The most recent activities which may be the work of the ELF are firebombs east of Sacramento, California, for which arrests have been made. In earlier cases it has later turned out that those arrested were not responsible for the actions of which they were accused. The FBI is thought to regard the ELF as the US' number one direct action organisation.

### Greenaction

Greenaction is already working in California, Arizona, and Nevada despite being relatively new. Its mission is to 'mobilise community power to win victories that change government and corporate policies and practices to protect health and to promote environmental

justice'. Working in Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco, for example, a neighbourhood with atypically high rates of asthma and cancer, Greenaction has targeted air polluters and built significant community support. A new campaign in Arizona and Mexico is also exposing the waste industry's 'incinerators in disguise': harmful incineration-like technologies such as gasification, pyrolysis, plasma arc and catalytic cracking for treatment of hazardous, solid, medical waste and tyres are sited inappropriately.

Greenaction has also achieved recent victories in Hanford in the San Joaquin Valley, California, bringing plans by Plastic Energy LLC for a plastics catalytic cracking plant to a halt; in Alameda, San Leandro and Oakland – also in California – grassroots activity recently forced the Alameda Public Utilities Board to stop considering a garbage gasification plant which would have emitted dioxin and toxic metals into the air. Working with tribal members in the Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment in Arizona, Greenaction also won a victory late last year when Romic, a hazardous waste company operating on the reservation without proper permits and an appalling track record of violations, announced they had stopped handling the most toxic solvents.

Activists in the US are not really in the forefront of ecological direct action when considered against work in other parts of the world, but in an increasingly repressive state with polluting, consumption-oriented and destructive industries doing ever greater damage, their strength of purpose is to be admired and supported.

Louis Further

### Sources

Earth First!: [www.earthfirst.org/](http://www.earthfirst.org/)  
 ELF: [www.earthliberationfront.com/](http://www.earthliberationfront.com/)  
 Greenaction: [www.greenaction.org/index.shtml](http://www.greenaction.org/index.shtml)  
 NRDC: [www.nrdc.org/bushrecord/](http://www.nrdc.org/bushrecord/)  
 The Ruckus Society: [www.ruckus.org/](http://www.ruckus.org/)

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## Quiz answers

1. From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.
2. The plight of women working in sweatshops making tiny pieces of wood look like seeds for adulterated raspberry-free raspberry jam.
3. Luigi Calabresi, the Milan copper who was interrogating Giuseppe Pinelli when he 'fell' from a window to his death. Calabresi was killed by Marxists in 1972. Liberazione, a left wing paper, has suggested Pinelli should be similarly honoured.
4. Top scientist Ronald Reagan. And this was before he went senile!

enrager.net



# REVIEW

## Rudolf Rocker's book *The London Years* is a good read, but not essential reading, comments Martin of the CAG

**R**udolf Rocker's *The London Years*, originally published in 1956, is an extract from his biography focusing on his time in England between 1895 and 1918. This new edition, published by AK Press and Five Leaves, features an introduction by Bill Ward and is dedicated to Rocker's son Fermin who died while it was in printing. Rocker is by many considered to be one of the most important figures of the anarchist movement, most famous for his involvement in Jewish labour struggles and his main works *Nationalism and Culture* and *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*.

Originally from Germany, Rocker was forced to flee the country of his birth for his involvement in left wing organisations, passing through several European countries to eventually settle in the UK like many radicals of that era, and it is here where *The London Years* begins. Often living in conditions of near poverty, constantly busy, usually writing from dawn til dusk each day, Rocker dedicated himself to the workers struggles in turn-of-the-century London. Despite not being of Jewish origin himself, he became something of a spokesperson for the burgeoning Jewish Socialist movement, almost by accident becoming editor of *Der Arbeiter* (The Workers' Friend), the country's leading Yiddish-language theoretical journal. A great communicator and political theorist, Rocker soon became something of a respected community figure for the London Jewish population. Despite facing anti-Semitism from white

workers and the conservatism of organised Judaism the Jewish radicals managed to secure a number of victories in this period, most notably the abolition of the Sweating system of labour in 1909.

Aside from chronicling the events of the socialist movement in that era, Rocker also here and there takes time out of the narrative to profile leading anarchist theorists with whom he came into contact during his time in London. So for example there are few pages on Kropotkin, a few pages on Malatesta, a few on Emma Goldman and so on. As well as being a basic introduction to the life, times and theories of these figures, the book also recounts Rocker's personal experiences with them, many of whom were his close friends as well as his comrades.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the book is the section which deals with Rocker's incarceration during the First World War, which takes up the best part of the final third of the book. In the first year of the war Rocker was sent to a prison-style detention camp, as were most German expatriates living in the country. During this internment Rocker's skills as an organiser and speechmaker became invaluable. At first holding secret talks among his fellow prisoners on the basics of radical politics, he soon gained the respect of his fellow prisoners and even the British officers in charge of the camp. Over his four year imprisonment Rocker educated and helped unify the internees and, through demonstrations of the force of this unity as well as skillful negotiations with the camp commanders by Rocker himself, they

managed to gain improvements in conditions, such as increased food allowances and greater access to families. In 1918, just months before the end of the war Rocker was able to be moved from the internment camp to live with his family in neutral Holland. It is here that *The London Years* ends.

One problem I had with this book is that, however much of a great theorist or public speaker Rocker may have been, he was by no means a great storyteller. That didn't bother me too much for the chapters on Rocker's involvement in workers' struggles and radical journalism where a simple factual account of events does the job, but some of the more personal, autobiographical sections fall totally flat. For example, an entire chapter devoted to Rocker and his wife Milly's aborted attempt to emigrate to the US is so devoid of emotion and narrative skill it's simply boring to read. For this reason *The London Years* works much better as a document of a particular time and place in anarchist history than it does as an autobiographical work.

*The London Years* is by no means an essential anarchist book, if there even is such a thing. However it is an often interesting, sometimes funny, always informative piece of work. It would work as an introductory book for someone new to class struggle politics as it contains many examples of how we can organise in communities and workplaces, as well as pointing the reader towards the work of other class struggle anarchist writers. On the other hand it could also be key text for anyone wishing to study in depth the workers struggles and anarchist



Rudolf Rocker

organisations of London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whichever the case it should

be a good read for anyone with an interest in revolutionary working class politics.

## ONLINE AND OFFLINE

### Help Build the Ruins of Democracy

Bob and Roberta Smith  
Baltic, Gateshead, until April 2005  
This exhibition surrounds a copse of birch trees adorned in sketchpad pages with jumbled banners, plaques and furniture. 'Degraded' materials, found objects and amateurish typefaces refuse conventions of beauty or the sublime, and the personal identity of Patrick Brill is effaced by the multiple-gendered open-ended fictional Smiths – an identity supporters are encouraged to inhabit like a "cultural virus" spreading worldwide. Various conceptual art strategies mobilise DIY aesthetics into creative expression as part of everyday life rather than the preserve of elites and geniuses, and viewers add their sketches and sayings to the artist's own texts. The latter – cast in cement or painted on plywood lining walls and sofas – combine the absurd and irrational with bile towards New Labour, the media, celebrities and art heroes. Alongside, a video replays a performance event staged in the parliament of Bremen, Germany, with actresses improvising histrionic debate among Jesus Christ, Mozart, Jacques Tati, Churchill, etc. All of this is mildly

amusing, while Eileen – a new commission – clads a shed's exterior with concretised fragments of a North of Ireland biography beset by communal cleavage, false ethnicity and "the stupidity of prejudice".

Unfortunately, history is reduced throughout to mere accumulations of individual attitudes and attributes. The satirical offensiveness and Little England eccentricity therefore resolve the fascination with fame and leadership (in both politics and art) into timid



liberal whingeing about today's "flaws in democracy" – guaranteeing the artist safe passage into globetrotting art stardom and lecturing at fashionable Goldsmiths. No more profound than public opinion surveys sampling the momentary whims of passive publics, the "participation" of viewers amounts to a few hastily-scribbled cartoons and slogans chosen by gallery staff (using criteria of political correctness) – but if punters attempt to remove any they are frog-marched out. Brill will then cannibalise the archive of used and unused contributions for future projects – mirroring his recuperation of utopian Dada, Lettrism and Fluxus desires. Touted as 'oppositional' – even "anarchic" – this whole sordid deception is lent populist gloss with mantras like *Make Your Own Damn Art* (book accompanying the exhibition) and "Create Your Own Reality". Ultimately, Bob and Roberta Smith practise neither – instead inoculating a largely contemptuous contemporary art scene against the "catalyst for change" that radical artists hope their germs will mutate into.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

The quotes are taken from the exhibition blurb and catalogue.

### Prole.info

<http://www.prole.info>

Prole is a brand spanking new site with a slick and simple design. The site's aim is to bring to the reader a selected collection of subversive and anti-capitalist writings on theory and history. The site is divided up into simple categories using neat artwork, making it easy on the eye. The articles are all hosted on site and presented in easy to read formats. Although some people have criticised Prole.info for being a bit simplistic, it makes a great introduction to a host of ideas. As it grows, this could become a really useful resource for both the seasoned theorist and the confused newcomer alike.

### OpenGuides

<http://openguides.org/>

The OpenGuides network is a collection of community-maintained open publishing sites to which anyone can contribute. The sites are each based around a different town or city and allow people to add information on all aspects of life in their towns – from shopping to eating, drinking and travel in the city. These prove a valuable resource for local inhabitants and tourists alike. The project is pretty new and doesn't cover that many towns,

but the fact that anyone can contribute ensures that it will grow as more people discover it. The site is based on wiki technology, a system which allows anyone browsing the site to edit and contribute pages. This is becoming increasingly popular on the internet. The implications of a project like this are great from an anarchist viewpoint – allowing the people who use an area to craft its image, rather than relying on profit-making companies or individuals.

### The Bureau of Public Secrets

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/>

The BoPS is probably the best Situationist resource on the web. The online counterpart of the Bureau's Situationist publishing project, it contains hundreds of articles, books, pamphlets and images relating to Situationist ideas and history. These are translated, collected and sometimes written by Ken Knabb. Much of the content is original work by the situationists, but the site also contains work by other theorists in eight languages. While the site design may leave a little to be desired, its simplicity definitely does it a favour and is well worth a visit (even if its just to brush up on your May 1968 graffiti slogans).

## Strikewatch

• Around four hundred T&G members working for Michelin's tyre plant in Stoke have voted to take industrial action short of strike following rejection of a 3% pay offer. Workers will stop doing overtime and withdraw cooperation with management. There will also be a work to rule. The union's convenor at the plant Rob Taylor said "there is anger at the factory. There is frustration at the offer."

• The dispute at Glasgow airport over fire cover, previously reported in Freedom, continues. T&G members have now been on strike for a month in response to British Airport Authority's (BAA) withdrawal of fire services at Glasgow. Three hundred and eighty T&G fire fighters at seven other BAA airports are now putting pressure on the company to resolve the dispute. A T&G spokesman said "The dispute at Glasgow has opened up other issues and BAA is having to consider how they manage fire fighter services across the UK."

• Over 200 museum staff PCS and Prospect members in London, York and Bradford went on one day strike in a dispute over pay and funding. The action closed London's Science Museum as workers refused to cross picket lines and disrupted the railway museum in York and photography museum in Bradford. Museums are facing a funding crisis. The government has failed to increase resources to make good the shortfall which followed the ending of admission charges. Union members are also angry over a below inflation pay offer. "The government urgently need to plug the funding gap," said PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, "to ensure decent pay levels."

• University lecturers have joined the ranks of public sector workers campaigning against pension cuts. The AUT are considering balloting for industrial action in March against the government's attempts to slash the value of pensions. AUT members who belong to the Teacher's Pension Scheme face, along with civil servants, health, council workers and others a rise in their retirement age from 60 to 65 and a cut in benefits. The GMB has calculated that if the government push their changes through workers in councils could be between £200,000 to £400,000 worse off. Nearly a million members of Unison, PCS, Amicus and other public service unions are set to strike on 23rd March, bringing local and government services to a standstill. Unfortunately health service unions are not organising action in the NHS even though their members face the same changes to their pensions. Last month thousands of public sector workers' joined the TUC's day of action in protest against pension cuts. Rallies and marches were held across the country.

• AUT members at Brunel university, Uxbridge, have voted to take industrial

action to fight management plans to cut sixty jobs. Management have ignored collective agreements with the union and have tried to push the job losses through as quickly as possible. Half the redundancies will be compulsory. "The AUT will not tolerate members being treated in this disgraceful way" the union said.

• There are still those in the trade union movement who claim that unions should work with management in partnership and that militancy is a thing of the past. The transport union, the RMT, is one of Britain's most militant unions. Last month its membership passed 70,000. Growth has come from the union standing up to management rather than getting into bed with them and fighting for their members' rights. The RMT is balloting its 600 members at Caledonian MacBrayne after the maritime company failed to give assurances over redundancies and pay after it announced it planned to tender one of its routes. The union has given the company notice that it will ballot for strike action.

## Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 8th March 1947 on the demonstrations by American anti-militarists against conscription:

"American anti-militarists are using a new form of demonstration against conscription. They are holding meetings at which people are requested to destroy their draft cards or other military papers. As such destruction is an act of illegality, and as it involves the destroyer in the possibility of imprisonment for 'draft dodging', it constitutes quite a serious step in defiance of the state.

At the first meeting, held in New York, the authorities took such a serious view of the campaign that thirty police agents were present among three hundred people. At this meeting - which was addressed by, among others, Dwight Macdonald the editor of Politics - more than sixty men came forward and destroyed their draft cards.

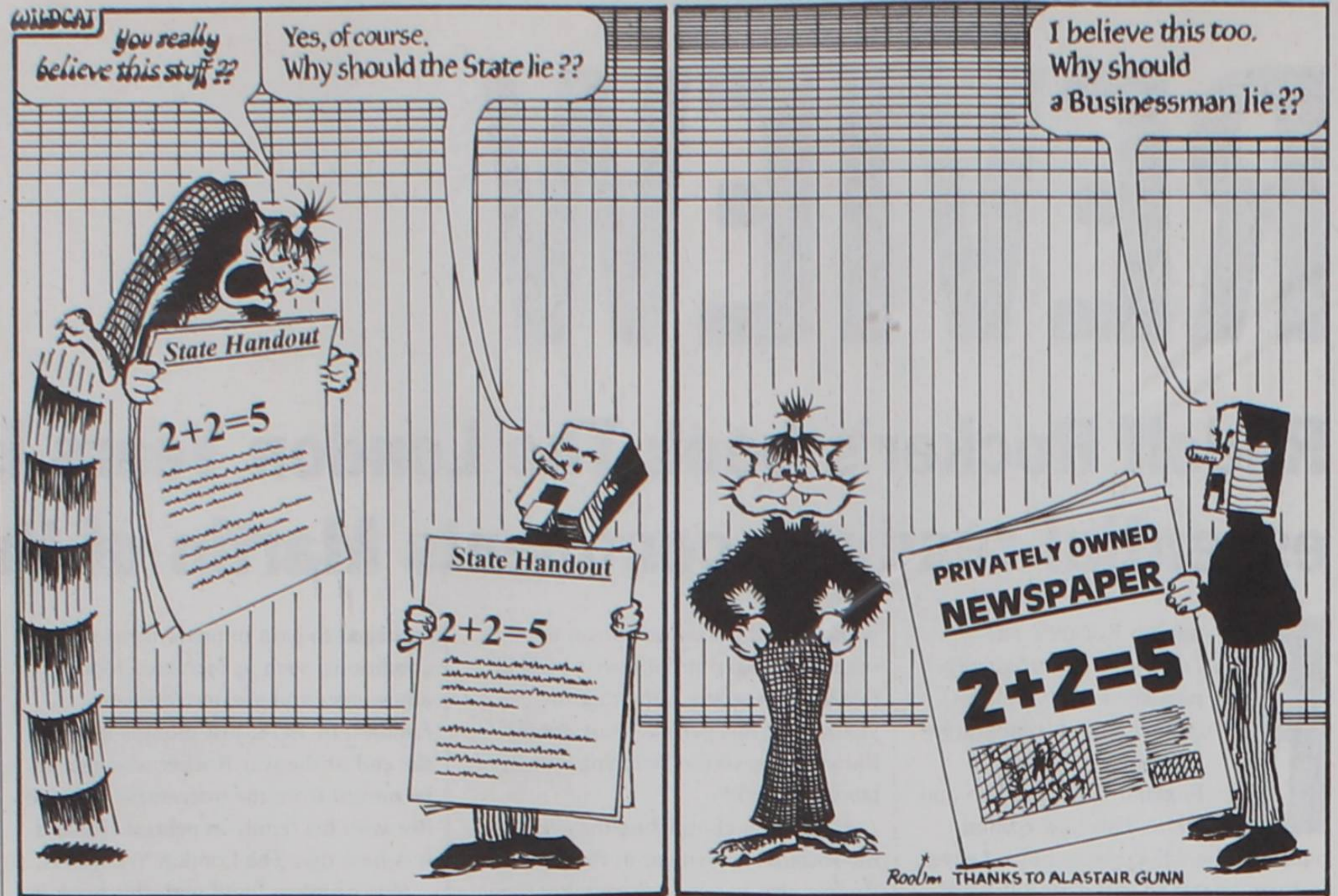
Another demonstration was held outside the White House in Washington, and there have also been public burnings of credentials in Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. So far about four hundred men have taken part."

### £59,000

Profit per employee made by the Royal Bank of Scotland in 2004 (pre-tax earnings were £6.9 billion, a 14% increase).

### £23,300

The average salary at the Royal Bank of Scotland, even including the profit-share element.



## A Sideways Look

It used to be one of the most barbed put-downs to suggest that someone had had their hair cut by the council. I don't know of any municipal barbers in Britain but it's not too much of a stretch to think their only customers might be bald. However, council housing, for years a pariah service derided by those who had to live in it and those who could look down on it, now finds itself with plenty of defenders.

In part this is because tenants up and down the country refuse to buy into the warped bean-counters' logic that says money can only be invested in their homes if they are privatised by one of three routes. Of the three, stock transfer is often the council's favoured one, the others being the subsidies to big business of the Private Finance Initiative or the back-door stock transfer of an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO).

Huge amounts of money are poured into selling these schemes, as it has been customary for there to be a ballot before any go ahead. And it's not just money directly spent on consultants and tame tenants reps. When they fail, Labour have been vindictive, such as when they tried to prosecute a Defend Council Housing activist in Camden for putting a poster on a bus shelter about the campaign. Of course, Camden council hadn't given their opponents any space to put their arguments. The government are determined to get rid of council housing, but don't want to say that (it's a bit of a vote-loser in most working class areas). The other week Blairite journalist Polly Toynbee used her Guardian column to attack Defend Council Housing's campaign on an estate she had stayed on briefly as part of some research. It's all about fear, she said, which of course is very easy to say

for someone paid huge amounts of money for their opinions.

Comrades in Haringey are involved in fighting their council's plans to transfer everything. They thought they had a good campaign, even if the direction was a bit too much centred around winning over left-wing councillors and union hacks. However, it turned out that the councillors were in favour of the ALMO, they just hadn't told their Respect groupies, who promptly announced the campaign was over. I have a tad more faith in the abilities of working class people to manage without left-wing councillors, with or without illusions, so I hope they do a bit better.

South of the river, Lewisham council, fresh from demolishing schools where they are needed, then planning to demolish swimming pools for new schools, where they aren't, are sneaking through their plans. Their legal advice is that a ballot is only needed for stock transfer. Tenant reps have their own budget to spend, which they do, mainly on taxis to and from meetings, and seem to have 'taken on board' the council's arguments in favour of PFIs. Their reluctance to hold a ballot is understandable, given that last time they lost overwhelmingly in areas they picked to be pro-transfer, and with a lack-lustre split campaign dominated by the usual suspects (and I don't mean Kevin Spacey).

Two things get forgotten, which is one reason council housing should be of interest to us all. First, there are the obligations a council has to the homeless. If there's a rise in the number of home-less people, the council will have some flexibility in using its own properties - the alternative is bed and breakfast, which costs thousands per person per week. Second, running a housing department as part of council services offers economies of scale - put

bluntly it's cheaper. It's not just the obvious things like building services and cash offices - it has a knock-on effect on the vehicle fleet, IT, accounts and purchasing. No wonder everything costs more when it's privatised.

So, who cut your hair, the PFI?

Svartfrosk



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## The quiz

1. A version of which phrase is attributed to French writer Morelly in 1755, Saint-Simon in 1841 and Marx in 1849, while also regularly used by anarchists?
2. What inspired Sylvia Pankhurst to help open a jam factory?
3. Which murdering fascist has Italy recently commemorated with a postage stamp?
4. Who claimed in 1980 that coal-fired power stations released more radioactivity than nuclear ones?

Answers on page 6

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