

# FREEDOM

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## SOLIDARITY WITH SERBS

### Anarcho-syndicalists arrested over 'terrorist' attack in Belgrade

Solidarity Federation, the British section of the International Workers Association (IWA) held a demonstration outside the Serbian Embassy in London on 11th September in support of five anarchist comrades arrested in Belgrade on false terrorism charges. Other groups who also attended the protest to demand the immediate release of the five included members of FAU (the German section of the IWA), Anarchist Federation and the libertarian students' group Autonomy & Solidarity.

The anarchists, Tadej Kurep, Ivan Vulović, Sanja Dojkić, Ratibor Trivunac and Nikola Mitrović, who are associated with Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI), the Serbian section of the IWA, were arrested on 5th September in relation to an action against the Greek Embassy in Belgrade on 25th August in support of Greek anarchist hunger striker, Thodoros Iliopoulos, who was imprisoned during the uprising in Greece last December.

No-one was hurt in the incident when two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the exterior of the embassy in the early hours causing

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### LENS CAP HIERARCHY IS BAD...



Just to show that a lack of egalitarian social structure inevitably leads to ruthless exploitation, here are the Daleks. In *Planet of the Daleks* (DVD released on 5th October), the Dalek Supreme, pictured front, even exterminates his own deputy for failing to wipe out the peaceful inhabitants of the planet Spiradon.

## BRISTOL MUTINEERS AHOY!

The week-long festival of radical ideas and action organised by Bristol Co-Mutiny between 12th and 20th September ended in success as thousands got involved in anarchist activities throughout the city, with thousands more being exposed to radical ideas.

The Bristol Anarchist Bookfair kicked off proceedings, which was packed throughout the day with 35 stalls selling all manner of anarchist and radical literature, film screenings, discussions and workshops on workplace struggles, debt, anti-militarism and the economy, and an all day vegan café.

During the week around 100 people took part in a Repossess the Banks protest at the current level of house repossessions by banks in what started in a lively fashion, with an a successful attempt to occupy a British Telecom

office sparking off a chain of de-arresting wrestling matches with the police

There were benefit gigs and free film showings throughout the week, along with a free newspaper given away across the city, No borders picket of Trinity police station, a penguin invasion of Bristol airport over CO2 emissions and the expansion of the airport, a noise demo outside Mitie Co-operate HQ over the sacking and deportation of unionised migrant cleaners in London, finishing on Sunday with days of action in defence of squats and autonomous spaces and Bristol Indymedia films special.

A lot of hard work effort and organisation went to ensure the event was a success and people are able to engage with political ideas in an interesting way.

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## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**SCAB LORRY BLOCKADED:** People acting in solidarity with the Council Cleansing workers successfully blockaded a WCR scab lorry for 30 minutes in Edinburgh city centre on 18th September.

Waving placards such as 'No more wage cuts', around 25 people stopped the WCR lorry at the top of Blair Street, as it moved out of Hunter Square.

Cleansing workers are banning overtime and working to rule to oppose wage cuts, and Edinburgh Council have brought in private companies to do their work.

The scabs were unable to move their lorry or empty any bins, as protestors surrounded the vehicle and urged them to show solidarity with workers resisting wage cuts.

Despite frantic scab phone calls, it was only when the police eventually arrived around 6.30pm that the WCR lorry was able to escape.

Police demands for the name and address of one alleged participant were successfully resisted, and no arrests were made.

One demonstrator said: "We are very encouraged by the success of our action today. We will definitely be back on the streets very soon to take more direct action in solidarity with the Council workers under attack."

"We explained to the workers who were scabbing that what they were doing was wrong and that in these hard times people have to stick together and not stab each other in the back ... fighting for the crumbs from the rich man's table" said one of the several IWW Union members involved.

**TANK SPOTTING:** Last week's tank was a Merkava IV from Israel/Occupied Palestine as you prefer.

It should be pointed out that the Merkava is a superb example of international co-operation with a German designed engine built in the United States.

The gun and ammunition are also the product of the widespread but little publicised Israeli-German military co-operation.

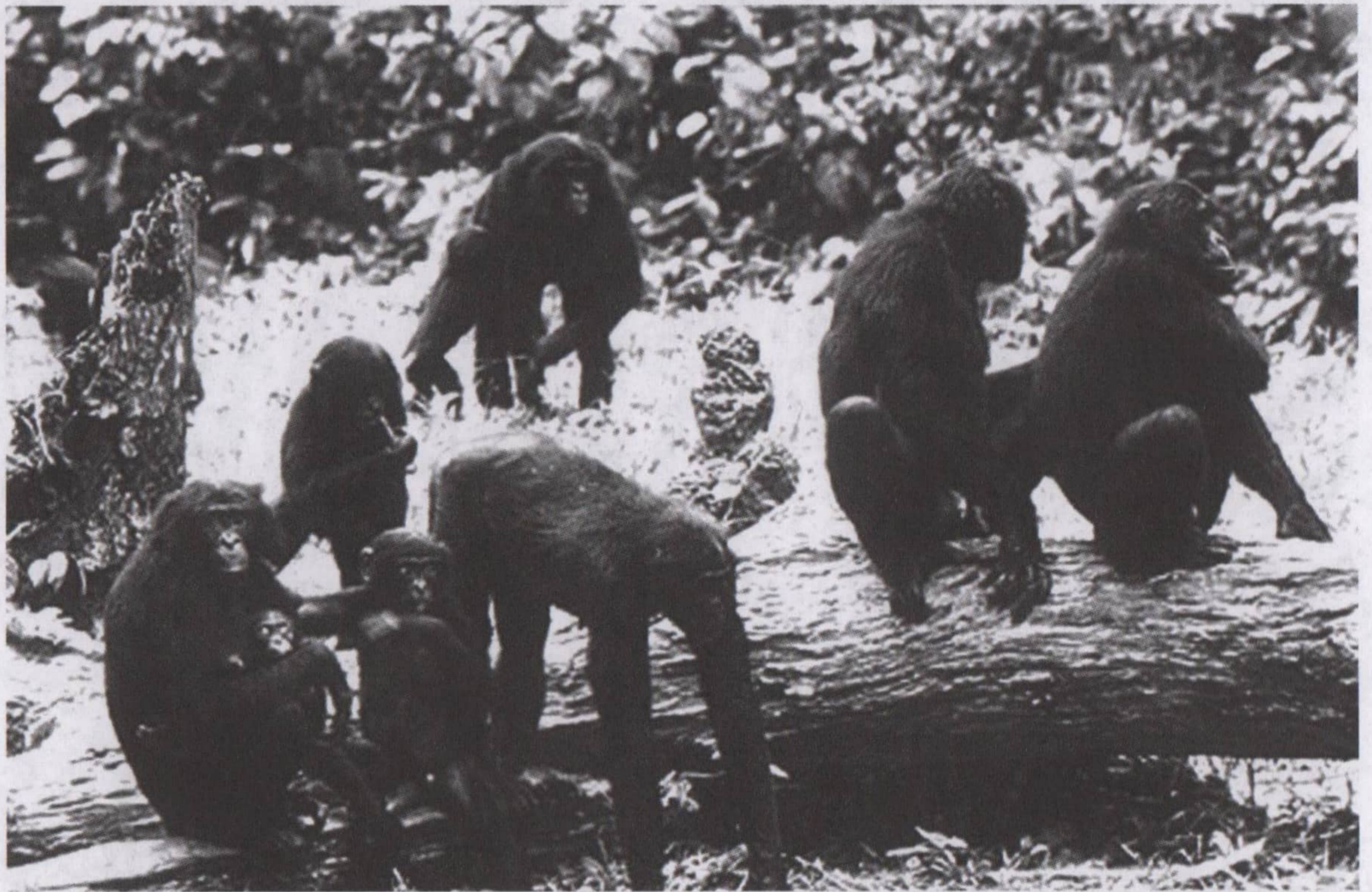
The armour is a composite matrix of laminated ceramic-steel nickel with a sloped modular design, proof against the latest Palestinian weapon, the Mk 1 stone.

**MOBY DICK:** Congratulations to all those inspired by last week's picture of the heroic anti-capitalist whale to buy a copy of Herman Melville's 1851 classic from Freedom bookshop (only £3.99 p&cp free).

For those who haven't read it, here's an excerpt from chapter two.

"I take it that this part of the bill must have run something like this: 'Grand Contested Election for the Presidency of the United States. Whaling voyage by one Ishmael. Bloody battle in Afghanistan.'" Not much change there then.

## LENS CAP ...AND MUTUAL AID IS GOOD



In contrast to the creatures on the front page, Bonobos are co-operative and their communities are bonded by mutual grooming and sharing behaviour. While many believe anarchist politics only formulate in the nineteenth century, others see the co-operative nature of our closest relative as the precursor of libertarian ideas in humans.

## EDL fails to deliver, again

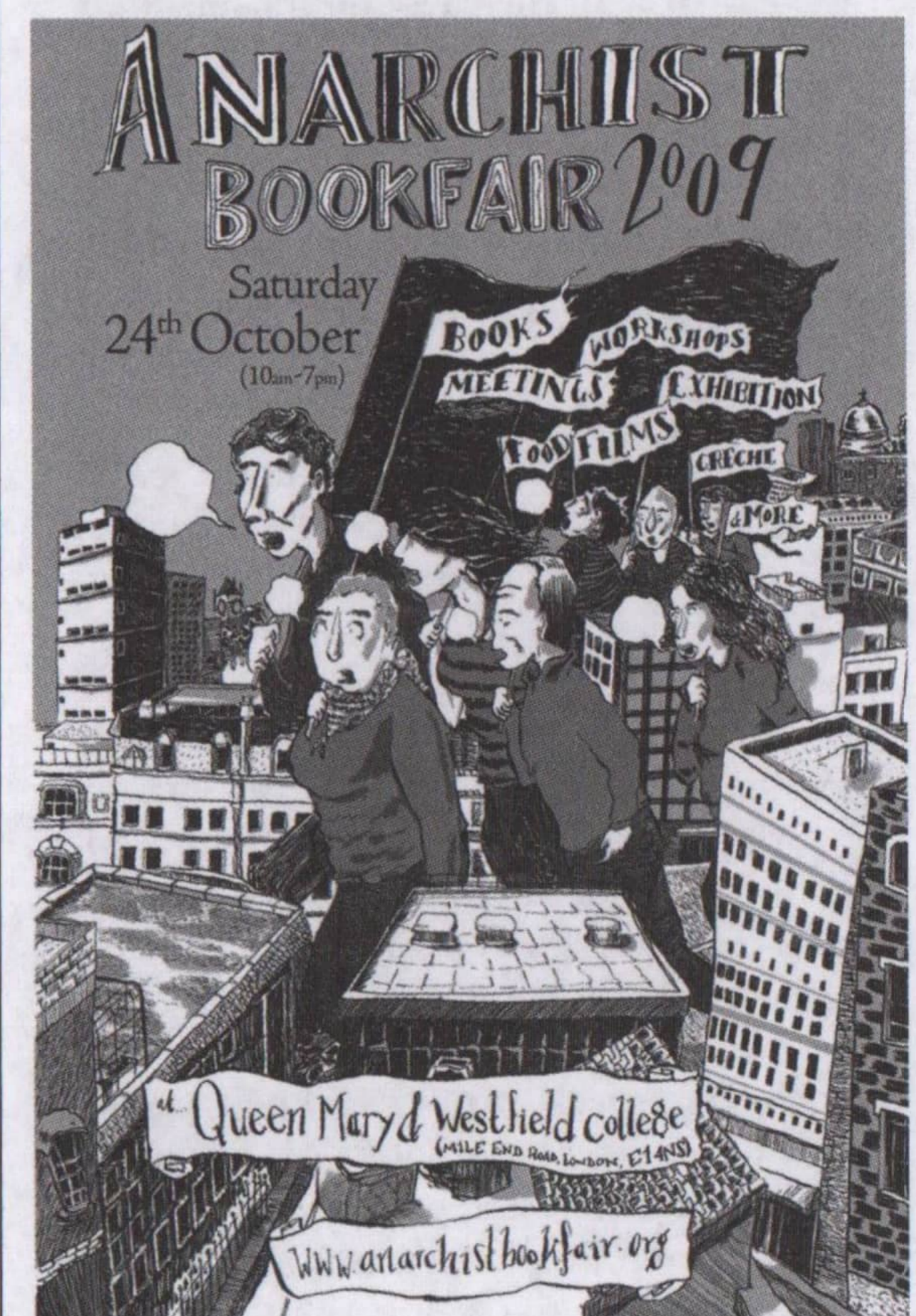
Over the past few months the English Defence League (EDL) have been attempting to capitalise on the outrage caused by the heckling of British Army troops in Luton by a handful of Salafist Islamists that prompted an angry street demonstration composed of hundreds of mainly football casuals, attacking Asian owned business and an Asian man. After which EDL protests were to face humiliating defeats in Birmingham (twice) and Harrow where over 1,000 people mobilised to prevent a demonstration against the local Mosque organised by Steve Gash, the one man army behind the obscure Stop Islamisation Of Europe.

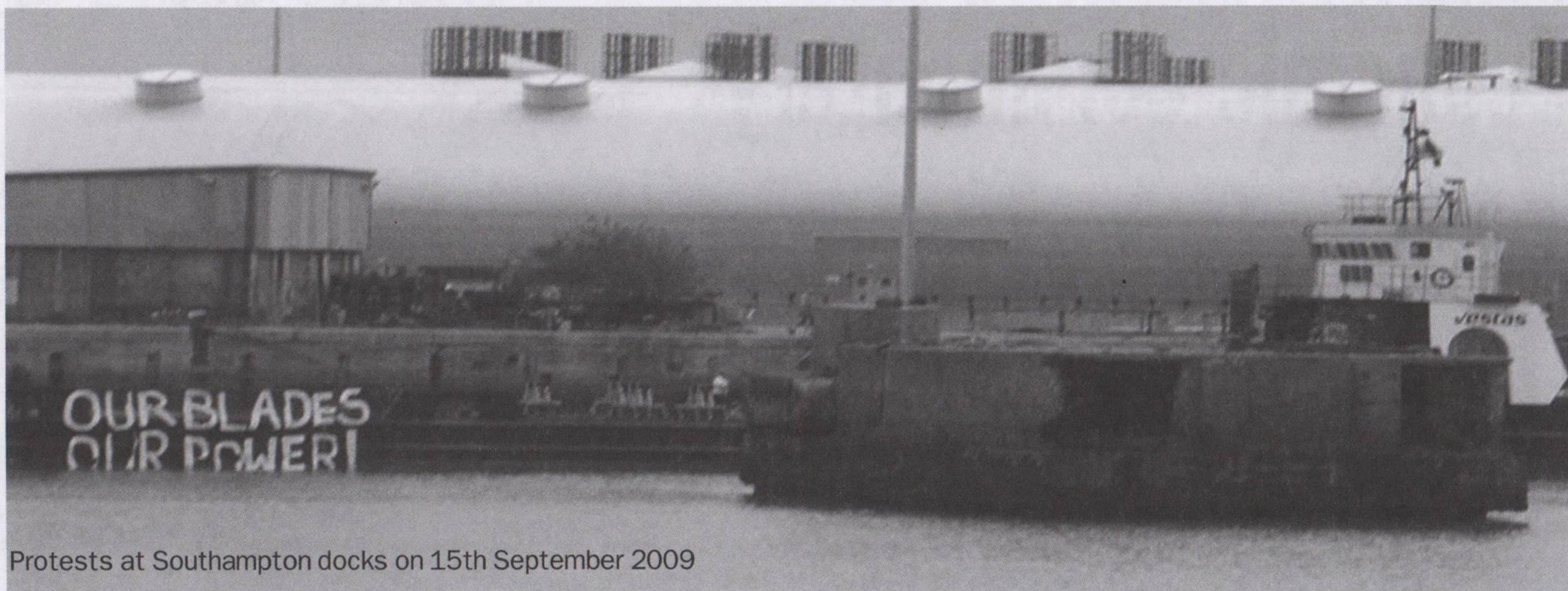
The latest in this sequence of anti-Muslim outbursts was aimed at the Iranian backed Al Quds (Jerusalem) day. The Al Quds marches occur annually after the last Friday of the Islamic fasting month Ramadan, and was created by Ayatollah Khomeini as a day of solidarity towards the Palestinian people and oppressed people across the world. No doubt by oppressed people, the Ayatollah never envisaged Muslims living under Islamic governments.

This year the demonstration in London was led by ultra-orthodox Jews from Neturei Karta, Islamic clerics and imams and hundreds of Hezbollah and Hamas supporters. The EDL numbered around 60, but only half managed the 30 metre journey out of All Bar One to the designated protest area in Piccadilly Circus, a pen flanked by dozens of police. The pen itself contained around 30 pro-Mousavi supporters. In previous years a counter demo by the Al

Quds day supporters featured exiled Iranian communists, Iranian Royalists and the leftists Alliance for Workers Liberty.

After a two-hour delay to the start of the march, around 500 protestors marched from Marble Arch to the bottom of Haymarket. The march was intended to go to Trafalgar Square but was barred due to their lack of public liability insurance. Eventually all went their separate ways. Islamist Reactionaries, 0 – English Reactionaries, 0.





Protests at Southampton docks on 15th September 2009

# Blade Runner protest

## Activists and ex-Vestas workers blockade export of wind turbine parts

September 17th saw a National Day of Action in support of the ongoing campaign to Save Vestas and demand for Green Jobs. Groups from cities around the country including Birmingham, Cardiff, Newcastle and Manchester organised a visible demonstration of solidarity for the 600 Vestas workers who lost their jobs over the summer when the government refuse to bail out the only wind turbine manufacturers in the UK despite its continued promise in investing in 'greener energy production'.

Two days prior to this, protesters occupied cranes and vessels at Southampton docks. Coming from the Vestas factory blockade on the Isle of Wight, the group aimed to prevent

the loading of wind-turbine blades from the Newport plant.

"We made these blades, and now Vestas want to take their profits and leave us high and dry," explained ex-Vestas worker Jamie Rigby, one of 11 workers sacked for occupying their factory after Vestas announced the mass lay-off in July. The occupation ended in August after 18 days, and it was Jamie who leapt uninjured from a balcony rather than be escorted out by bailiffs.

Supporters from the island's community, climate activists and workers from the mainland, hung banners saying 'Wind power to the people' and locked themselves to a crane loading blades onto the BBC Ohio in Empress Dock. Others occupied the so-called 'Blade Runner' Barge which is needed to transport the remaining blades from the St Cross factory in Newport with a banner that read 'Our blades, Our power'.

An occupier on the crane at Empress Dock, Jackie Sheedy commented: "After the factory

occupation ended, Vestas and the government hoped we'd all just quieten down. But we're united in this blockade. The island workers need those jobs, and we all need them if we want even a chance of combating climate change for our children."

Speaking from the occupied Blade Runner barge, Robin Sivapalan, a Unison member from the group Workers Climate Action, said: "Workers like Jamie were victimised and robbed of their redundancy pay for taking a stand. If Vestas want the blockade lifted, they had better start talking about reinstatement and terms. And if the government want the protests to end they had better drop the greenwash and start taking some real action for a renewable power industry in this country."

Meanwhile, other sacked Vestas workers are at the TUC conference in Liverpool, lobbying the labour movement for solidarity action and support on Thursday's National Day of Action.

## Solidarity with Serb anarchists

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minimal damage including a broken window and fire damage to the façade of the building, along with graffiti of an anarchist symbol. The five are being held in custody under severe conditions until the prosecutor can secure formal charges of acts 'international terrorism' against them which could lead to a potential prison sentence of up to fifteen years if they are convicted. A sixth person sought by police, Ivan Savic, is thought to be still on the run

The five arrested deny all connection to the incident or involvement in the previously unknown group Black Elijah (Crni Ilija) who contacted the media already claiming responsibility for the attack. ASI has distanced itself from the actions on the Greek Embassy. In a

statement issued after the arrests the group asserted: "We use this opportunity to remind the public once again that these methods of individual political struggle are not methods of anarcho-syndicalism, quite the contrary – we proclaim our political positions publicly and through our work we seek to bring masses to the syndicalist movement."

Ratibor Trivunac, who is currently delegated to the duty of IWA-AIT General Secretary, has spoken out against the arrests as an attempt by the Serbian authorities to repress and criminalise the growing anarchist movement in the country. The Serbian president Boris Tadic personally apologised to the Greek ambassador assuring him "the Serbian state would do everything in its capacity to identify

and punish those responsible for the attack accordingly". Greece is one of the key financial partners in the Serbian economy, with direct investment of 2.5 billion Euros per annum.

A European-wide solidarity campaign has already been set up demanding the release of the six and raising the much needed funds to pay for the ongoing legal costs. Other solidarity protests were held across Germany and Greece as well as in Warsaw, Melbourne, Sydney, Denver, The Hague and Vienna. Anarchists in the UK are encouraged to support our comrades in their struggle, including solidarity protests and a letter campaign to the Serbian government.

Solidarity campaign website for updated information: <http://asi.zsp.net.pl/>

## NEWS

# Economic commentary

## The second part of John Griffin's look at the financial crisis

Back in August, Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, urged that Quantative Easing be increased to £200 billion (See *Freedom*, 12th September 2009). The financial columnists wondered what-does-he-know-that-we-don't? Well, now we all know!

On 2nd September, the Bank of England revealed that bank lending to non-financial companies actually fell in July by £8.4 billion, or 1.7%, and the three months annualised rate fell by 7.8%. Despite all that Quantative Easing dosh that King has handed over, it seems the banks are still squeezing business and are unmoved by the prospects of further closures and unemployment, preferring to use Quantative Easing to increase their cash reserves (liquidity). King

**“The bankers are partying like it's 1999, and it's 2009 – Andreas Borg, Swedish Finance Minister”**

expects the banks to increase liquidity and lend more, hence his anguished call for yet more Quantative Easing.

So much for retail banking. Things are very different when it comes to speculative investment banking: profits are sharply up, and consequently so too are bonuses, prompting a predictable outcry. One wonders whether the money the banks are using to buy into oil or whatever is Quantative Easing which might have been used to help UK industry.

### Labour's failure

Then, on the next day, 3rd September, Alastair Darling urged the Europeans to stump up another £75 billions to the International Monetary Fund for further Euro-easing, promising to increase the UK's current £15 billion commitment by a further £11 billion. Clearly echoing King's fears, Darling also warned of the UK slipping further into recession. I suspect that this request is likely to fall on deaf ears, since the Europeans are now talking about how they can disengage themselves from economic stimuli. European economics are recovering more easily, because they are less dependent upon the financial sector, where our crisis is rooted.

In contrast, UK industry has been neglected and in decline for many years – Blair, and now Brown, seem to equate making things with Old Labour and the



Unions. The Banks and other City investors found earlier pickings elsewhere, until they over-reached themselves and came close to wrecking the whole economy.

Brown and Darling are cornered. The usual way to stimulate the economy is to make it cheaper to borrow money by reducing interest rates. But the latter have already been slashed to an all-time low of only 0.5%, which is why they are resorting to Quantative Easing. If Quantative Easing doesn't work, it seems to me that their only way out. is to leave the mess to the Tories after the election next year.

**“No bank should be allowed to become so big that it can blackmail governments” – Angela Merkel, German Chancellor**

When the banks were on their knees last year, with their share prices at rock bottom, and more failures imminent, Labour could have forced their break-up by Act of Parliament into much smaller, more competitive businesses. Instead, the mixture of nationalisation, bail-outs and mergers has made a bad situation worse. Now that the remaining banks are even bigger, their chances of being allowed to fail by Government are even less – market

disciplines are reduced, whilst blackmailing potential is enhanced.

### As I see it

We anarchists can all agree that the financial crisis has been brought about by the failure of a very small number of people with access to vast amounts of money: a spectacular failure of hierachies, driven by a culture of power-seeking and greed, to deliver stability and order.

As a mutualist, I want to make the additional point that the market did not fail, it merely reflected the actions of those in a position to influence it. Left to the market alone, more banks would have collapsed, instead, the state bailed them out, and then added to the mess with Quantative Easing. Markets, like all forms of human interaction, can be unpredictable; they may react slowly, rapidly, or not at all, their action may be on the grand scale or piecemeal. I believe that the operation of markets would be more effective and equitable if brought under popular control through the use of co-operatives.

### Sources

Financial Times and Guardian

### Further reading

*Fantasy Island* (Constable, 2007, £7.99) and *The Gods that Failed* (Vintage, 2009, £7.99), both by Larry Elliott and Dom Atkinson (Larry Elliott has been economics editor of the *Guardian* since 1994) *A Structured Anarchism* by John Griffin (Freedom Press, 1991, £2 post free)

## IN BRIEF

**ICE UPDATE:** Arctic sea ice appears to have reached its minimum extent for the year, the third-lowest extent since the start of satellite measurements in 1979.

While this year's minimum extent is above the record and near-record minimums of the last two years, it further reinforces the strong negative trend in summertime ice extent observed over the past thirty years.

On 12th September 2009, sea ice extent dropped to 5.10 million square kilometres (1.97 million square miles). This appears to have been the lowest point of the year, as sea ice has now begun its annual cycle of growth in response to autumn cooling.

The 2009 minimum is the third-lowest recorded since 1979, 580,000 square kilometers (220,000 square miles) above 2008 and 970,000 square kilometers (370,000 square miles) above the record low in 2007.

The 2009 minimum is 1.61 million square kilometers (620,000 square miles) below the 1979 to 2000 average minimum and 1.28 million square kilometers (490,000 square miles) below the thirty-year 1979 to 2008 average minimum.

**RIP OFF:** The big six energy companies have rejected calls to cut prices, despite a halving in the wholesale cost of gas and electricity over the past year.

A report by Ofgem, the energy watchdog, has revealed that energy companies will be earning £170 profit from each dual-fuel customer over the next year – up from an average of £110 a year over the past three years.

The big six companies will earn an estimated extra £3.4 billion in profit over the next 12 months if they fail to pass on price falls to consumers, according to energy consultants Ineco.

Politicians and campaigners said there was now scope for significant price cuts this year for more than 26 million customers and accused the energy companies of indulging in 'a chorus of excuse and self-justification'.

Alistair Buchanan, the regulator's chief executive, wrote to the six companies last month telling them that "they owe it to their customers to better explain their pricing position to them". But replies to Mr Buchanan's letter, published on 19th September, showed that the companies – ScottishPower, Scottish & Southern Energy, British Gas, E.ON, RWE and EDF Energy – have no plans to trim prices.

**BAD APPLES:** British soldiers who abused an Iraqi detainee who died in their custody were not just 'a few bad apples', a public inquiry has been told.

Rabinder Singh QC told an official inquiry that "There was something rotten in the whole barrel".

Just shows that even lawyers get it right sometimes.

# We are all Mesrines

*"If we sack the banks, it's because we have recognised money as the central cause of all our unhappiness. If we smash the windows it's not because life is dear, but because commodities prevent us from living at all costs. If we break the machines it is not because of a wish to protect work, but to attack the slavery of salary. If we attack the police it's not to get them out of our neighbourhoods, but to get them out of our lives. The Spectacle wished to make us appear dreadful. We intend to be much worse."* – Os Cangaceiros

Some beefy looking short-haired comrades arrived at Harrow last week and were immediately challenged by some local Asian lads as to why they were there. "We've come to beat up some fascists" was the reply – received with a whoop and thumbs up.

It illustrates the point that there are no 'outsiders' in the working class and people are generally welcomed to participate in local struggles wherever they are from.

One group that made this point more forcibly than most was the French group of politicised gangsters, Os Cangaceiros. I know of no other group that comes anywhere near to them in the political spectrum.

I spent a couple of months with some of them during the early days of the Wapping strike. They had come to join in the action – complete with sling-shots, rice-flails and an array of martial arts weaponry. They didn't announce their arrival, produce literature or

even take part in the mass demonstrations. They operated on the margins, seeking always to inflict damage and escalate the struggle to the point of no return. If asked who they were, however, they would reply honestly.

I was incredulous when they told me they'd been in Toxteth in 1985. Spotted by some Toxteth rioters, they were asked where they were from. Marseilles and Lyon, came the reply "to join the riot". They were received with gob smacked scouse ecstasy. People knocking on doors to get others out to hear they were from France.

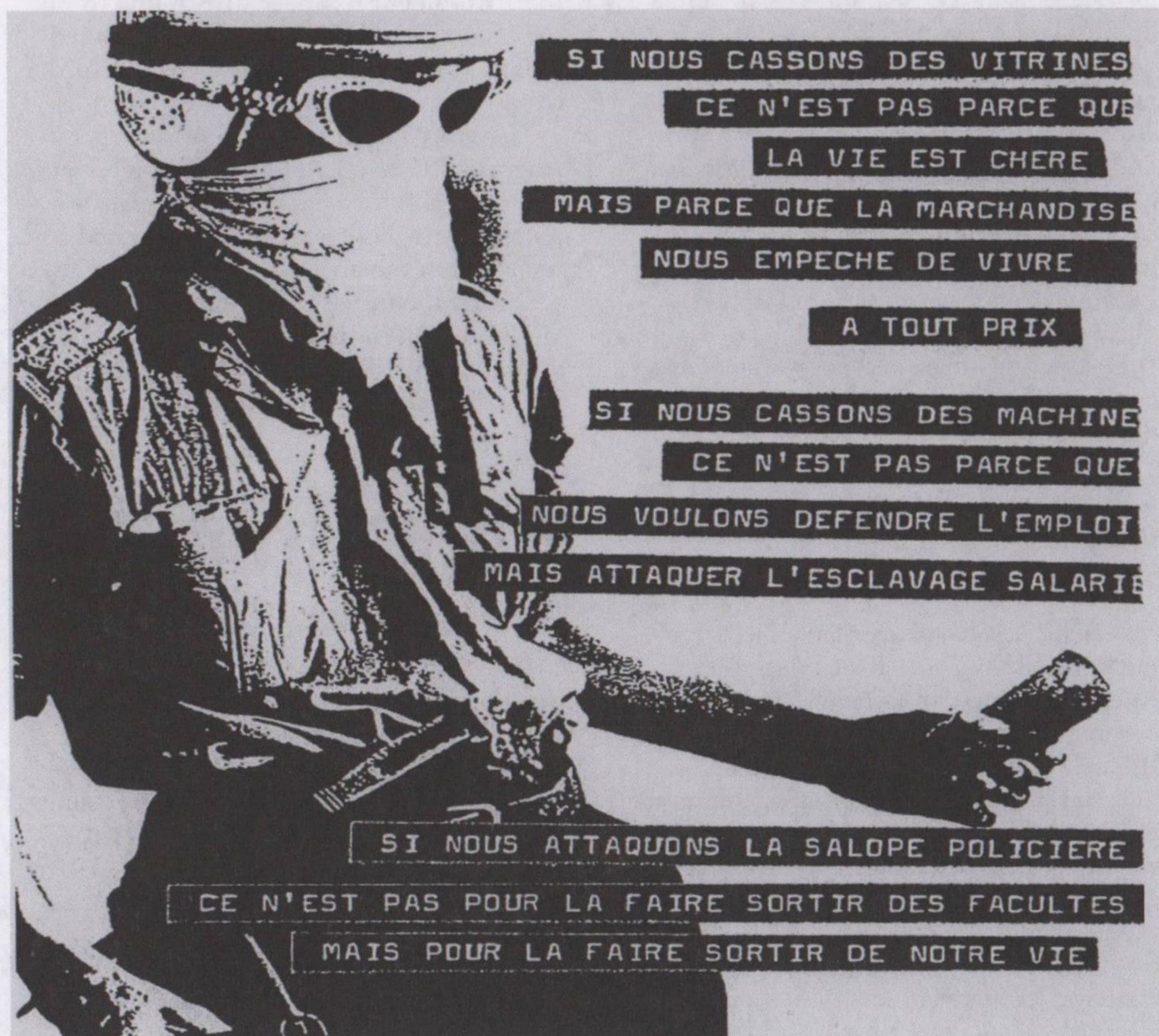
They'd also been in south Yorkshire during the miners' strike. Wherever there was trouble in Europe, they went there. They being a network of criminals who robbed, sabotaged and acted against all parties.

In 1985 a series of jail riots rocked the French prison system. Os Cangaceiros were active both in the jails and on the streets initiating a year-long campaign of sabotage on the rail and metro systems.

Two of them were sitting in my flat in Hackney in February 1986, ready for another night out at Wapping, when news came on the telly of a court hostage taking in Lyon.

"It is our comrade Abdelkharim Khalki" they said of the armed hostage taker. "He is our mate, we must go to Lyon." They went. I imagine they are still out there somewhere today. There are no outsiders in the working class.

Ian Bone



## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**ARGENTINA:** Campaigners marched on 18th September to demand the release of a man who they say the state disappeared to stop him testifying in the trial of military strongman Miguel Etchecolatz.

Julio López, now 80 years old, was disappeared in 2006 when he was due to give a statement on Etchecolatz's involvement in kidnap and torture during the Dirty War of 1976–83.

The war saw the Argentine dictatorship arrest or murder 30,000 political opponents.

**ARGENTINA:** Employees on the Buenos Aires subway freed turnstiles for two hours earlier this month as part of a campaign to legalise their union.

Under Argentine law only one union on each trade or activity can be granted legal status and therefore, participate in wage bargaining or legally call for a strike.

However the leadership of the existing UTA union as been accused of deliberately undermining democracy and militancy.

**CZECH REPUBLIC:** Activists in Prague say they have been attacked in one of the most violent police squat clearances of recent times this month. A report from the city noted: "The police attack was really brutal, the worst since the anti-IMF protest in 2000. Batons, telescopic batons, tear-gas, sound grenades... Many people were beaten up and about 100 were arrested."

**GERMANY:** Around 2,000 police weighed in to an anti-fascist demonstration in Hamburg on 12th September after initial scuffles, leading to widespread rioting and at least 60 arrests. The unrest came after an all-night street festival in Hamburg's Schanzenviertel district and a demonstration against a rally held by the far-right NPD party. Officials used batons, pepper spray and water cannons to disperse rioters.

**MEXICO:** A leading figure in the two-year long Cananea copper strike has had a warrant issued for his arrest over the alleged improper use of a union trust fund.

Napoleon Gomez and accomplices are accused of using the fund to hide 'illegally obtained' resources.

The warrant was issued as an appeal by Cananea owners Grupo Mexico to allow the firing of all workers at the mine draws to a close

**POLAND:** Twelve people have died in a methane explosion at Ruda Slaska-Kochlowice mine in Poland. Dozens of others were injured, some very seriously.

Shortly after the incident, a miner released home-made videos showing how management had routinely ignored warnings when methane levels rose to dangerous levels.

Methane is considered explosive at levels over 5%. At the time of the recording, the methane level is 9.1%.

### LENS CAP AUSTRALIA



Campaigners have hailed the direct action Switch Off Hazelwood, held on 12th and 13th September, as a 'huge success' for the climate change movement in Victoria, Australia. Over 500 people attended the non-violent direct action. Police arrested 22 people over the weekend. Hazelwood is Australia's biggest single source of carbon emissions and one of the dirtiest coal plants in the world.

## Massacre report buried by state

Human rights lawyers are demanding the full release of a government report into an army massacre of around 200 people in Zimbabwe's Marange diamond fields.

Zimbabwe Lawyers For Human Rights say the government has been attempting to bury the report, which has already been leaked online, to avoid pulling the army out of the region.

The army began the spree of murders in August 2008 as part of an initiative by senior army chiefs to take control of the area's potentially highly-lucrative resources and have remained in the area ever since.

During the initial raids, dubbed Operation Hakudzokwi, thousands of civilians were displaced and at least 200 people murdered. Since then, the army has been repeatedly

accused of looting the diamonds having effectively declared martial law.

In reports brought out shortly after the killings, it was alleged that government figures were colluding with soldiers on the ground to use local villagers as forced labour to extract the diamond. By November of that year, helicopter gunships had allegedly been brought out to force army officers who were unwilling to order their troops to use deadly force against villagers who weren't co-operating.

The carve-up of the region is thought to be the driving force behind the government's reluctance to release the report, which would put it on a collision course with the army and elements of the administration as the recommendations contained within include a total army withdrawal.

## Notes from the United States

The founder of the world's largest and most controversial mercenary army, Xe Services (previously known as Blackwater), has been accused of committing murder.

Last month two whistle-blowers, one a former member of Xe's management team, alleged Erik Prince may have murdered or facilitated the murder of individuals who were co-operating with federal authorities investigating the company.

These charges are contained in sworn affidavits filed in the Eastern District of Virginia as part of a 70-page motion by

lawyers for Iraqi civilians suing Xe for alleged war crimes.

What makes this all the more chilling is the weight which one of these witnesses attaches to Prince's religious fanaticism: "[He] views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe. [Prince's companies] encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraqi life."

In their testimony, both men allege that Xe was smuggling weapons into Iraq on Prince's private planes.

# Exposed as state-sponsored killers

## EXCLUSIVE

### Assassins from Spain's Dirty War go to court over violent drug offences

Recently-arrested drug traffickers in Spain have been connected to state sponsored death squads from the 1980s – and activists say the story is being buried by national media outlets.

Earlier this year seven allegedly heavily-armed cocaine traffickers were detained in a Madrid-based operation which saw widespread coverage from mainstream sources. However links between several of the men and the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Group (GAL), which assassinated dozens of members of left-wing Basque independence organisation ETA during the '80s, have been routinely ignored. ETA activists identified the men after their pictures appeared in the press as being among some of the most notorious killers of the period.

#### THE DIRTY WAR

The conflict of 1983–1987 saw the first socialist government since Franco spend significant resources on building a secret network of nationalist death squads which engaged in kidnap, torture and assassination to undermine ETA.

GAL followed on from a series of similar groups which had been operated by the Spanish security services since 1976 and which had already killed at least 48 people to 1982. GAL itself was proven to be behind 27 murders.



**GAL PALS:** Civil Guard General Enrique Rodríguez Galindo, who was implicated as a senior GAL protector and allegedly linked to the killing of two Basques

Former civil guard Jose Manuel Velázquez Soriano was arrested for his role in a sophisticated operation in which his crew robbed other traffickers, then cut and resold the proceeds.

Velázquez, who was also a bodyguard of President Franco Arias Navarro, is known to have participated in bombings and riots staged by the ultra-rightist Fuerza Nueva and belonged to the so-called Viking Youth organisation.

Also detained was Laborda Jorge Porta, who had allegedly been trying to smuggle 405 litres of liquid cocaine into the country.

Laborda, founder of the far-right Catalan Militia, had recently been released from jail after his botched 1985 murder of Frenchman Robert Caplanne, who he had mistakenly identified as a Basque political refugee.

That killing was overseen by Ismael Gutiérrez Miquel, the leader of GAL Catalan who has since himself been jailed for drug trafficking in Thailand. It is thought the pair retained contact during this period.

The GAL Catalan plot recruited ultras close to the neo-Nazi CEDADE in a failed attempt to divert attention and pretend that the dirty war came from the ranks of the extreme right. GAL's old network is widely believed to be the kernel of some of the largest drug-smuggling operations on the Catalan coast, having established trafficking to fund the organisation while it was still engaging ETA. The group remained largely untouched after its 'closure' in 1987, with only one in ten of those linked to it seeing jail time and many receiving substantial payoffs and pensions from the government.

## Notes from the Unites States

### ◀ page 6

They also charge that Prince and other Xe executives destroyed incriminating videos, emails and other documents and have intentionally deceived the US State Department and other federal agencies.

Prince allegedly intentionally deployed to Iraq certain men who shared his vision of Christian supremacy, knowing and wanting these men to take every available opportunity to murder Iraqis.

The affidavits state that Prince's executives would openly speak about going over to Iraq to "lay Hajiis out on cardboard".

Obama plans to expand the company's use in Afghanistan by 30%.

- Regardless of Xe's situation, pundits are beginning to talk of an end to the recession. However in a report from the US Census Bureau in August it emerged that nearly 40 million people now live in poverty here.

Real median household income meanwhile fell 3.6% – the biggest annual drop since 1991

– to \$50,303 (£30,378) in 2008. The family poverty rate rose to 10.3% in 2008; 8.1 million families were in poverty. This compares with 9.8% and 7.6 million respectively in 2007.

Poverty was higher among blacks, Hispanics and children: roughly 14.1 million children under the age of 18 lived in poverty last year, up from 13.3 million in 2007. The current definition of poverty equates to an annual income of \$22,025 (£13,303) for a family of four, \$17,163 (£10,366) for a family of three and \$14,051 (£8,486) for a family of two.

By the end of last month, the unemployment rate was at 9.7%, the highest in over a quarter of a century. Almost seven million people had lost their jobs since the start of the recession 18 months ago.

Official levels of health insurance suggest that 46.3 million Americans were without health insurance last year compared with 45.7 million the year before.

Louis Further

## Administration sacked in Oaxacan town

Section 22 of the teachers' union in Oaxaca, Mexico, seems to have won a partial victory in its campaign to oust the existing government in San Pedro Jicayan.

The Oaxacan Legislature agreed to remove powers from the town's administration in an extraordinary session and declared the town to be in a "state of ungovernability".

Salary payments to teachers of the break-away Section 59 have also been suspended.

The victory looks set to be undermined however by plans to allow hated Oaxacan governor Ulises Ruiz Ortega powers to appoint a new administrator to take charge.

The local population has rejected the decision, with a majority saying they wish to choose their own council.

The 'disappearance of powers' was first demanded after the assassination of Beatriz Lopez Leyva, an activist with the social democratic PRD party who was shot in her home on 6th April.

# DSEi 2009 disarming the arms trade

**Sophie Williams reports on all the action and analyses the police response**

Normally, I wince when people start shouting 'Whose streets? Our streets!', mostly because the chant is generally accompanied by hordes of riot police battering us into a kettle, and it is painfully obvious who really controls the streets. However, when Disarm DSEi visited The City on 8th September, the streets and indeed the buildings belonged to the protesters as the police sat back and impotently watched proceedings.

Around 200 people gathered outside RBS in Aldgate, including two sound systems and three reinforced banners, to protest against Defence Systems Equipment International (DSEi) – the world's largest arms fair.

DSEi itself was opening at the ExCeL Centre in the Docklands, but protesters chose to highlight the investors and backers in the trade by visiting The City (see *Freedom*, 15th August 2009). There were various reasons for the change of focus, not least with people fed up with being kettled and chased away from the ExCeL Centre – and the ExCeL Centre, located in Newham, one of London's poorest boroughs, meant that once pushed away from the centre, there was a dearth of targets. At least in The City, if protesters were kettled, there was a target on every corner.

Protesters needn't have worried. Headed by the three banners and around thirty black bloc types, the protest formed up in the road without opposition. There were no TSG trying to force people back onto the pavement, no flash photography from the FIT, no cops, in fact, anywhere near the



demo. The protest made it to the first target, Barclays – the largest investors in the arms trade with £7.3 billion shares – shoes were thrown at the building, and the freshly painted banners made a nice red mess on the windows. Still there were no cops.

This pattern was repeated throughout the day – even when protesters invaded the BT building (£59 million in shares) and smashed a window at AXA (£6207 million in the international arms trade) there was no sign of the police. The one cop guarding the AXA building had to make a quick tactical retreat as she was swarmed by protesters – and jeering City workers soon lost their leering grins when they saw protesters making serious assaults on the buildings in which they were hiding.

'We should have done more', was the biggest criticism of the day. However, whilst I agree – and the route was certainly much quicker than anyone thought given we didn't have to fight through lines of TSG to get where we wanted – we had an impact, we caused damage and, after years of repression, it took a while for the group to gain confidence. Everyone attending the evening debrief of the action felt empowered by the event – something I've never heard anyone say in relation to DSEi protests – and people were enthusiastic about generating a long term campaign against some of the investors.

It was also good, as has been shown on other, mostly anti-militarist events, to see a strong black bloc at the head of the march. This is something which has been missing from our demos for too long – and something going back to our mobilisations against the Iraq war, was sadly missing and seemingly impossible to organise. It is also good to see these blocs happening on anti-militarist events such as Smash EDO/ITT and DSEi because there is a common misconception that an anti-militarist stance is akin to pacifism. However, being anti-militarist is about being against the military industrial complex which maintains and tightens state control, ensuring the rich get richer and the poor are kept in their place by deprivation and violence. Many anti-militarists support armed struggle and the presence of militant blocs on anti-militarist events ensures any possible pacifist paradigm of anti-militarism is not prevalent.

Actions continued throughout the week. On Wednesday, a group of around fifteen travelled to Custom House station and held a noise demo outside one of the entrances to the ExCeL centre, overlooking the platform and the travelling arms dealers. Watched by very grumpy cops, who were obviously unhappy at the Met's new found desire to facilitate protest – this was the nearest we've ever been allowed to DSEi and protesters spent several hours challenging the dealers directly.



On 8th September 2009, a banner drop off an overhead bridge in The City; below left, the smashed windows of the AXA building.

Hotels housing the delegates were also targeted by night and early morning visitors brandishing the world's first ever totally biodegradable cardboard weapons. Helium balloons attached to rape alarms were also released in one of the hotels.

However, it was also at the Hilton Hotel where the Met began to act in a way reminiscent of tactics of yore. After some brief confusion over location, a group of around sixty gathered outside the hotel where the richest of the delegates were attending a swanky banquet. Although we were allowed nearer to the hotel and for longer than in previous years, after a couple of scuffles with sound system, spoon-stealing security goons, the police were quick to impose a Section 14 conditions on the assembly. Given there was only one condition, to stand in the protest designated pen, it was clear there would be arrests if it were to be enforced.

For the first time that week, Fitwatch's favourite photographer Neil Williams was wheeled out, armed only with a small camcorder equipped with a large tripod arm to attempt to evade the quickly assembled

Unfortunately, this victory is accompanied with a note of caution – we haven't achieved anonymity on our demos, we have rid ourselves of intrusive harassment. The cops still have CCTV and every covert means available to monitor our movements and actions. Not having cameras in our faces may inspire more people to take action, but people must mask up, and take the same security precautions. It is also worth noting that the minimal police presence at Tuesday's protest was made predominately of FIT cops, including Chief Inspector Matt Twist, who claimed he knew everyone present. If we fail to take security seriously, this victory will be soured by more good people serving unnecessary prison time.

There is a common consensus amongst activists that we only have a limited amount of time before this cuddly new Met reverts to its old ways. Some are even suggesting they are playing a PR game with us – giving us enough rope to hang ourselves with, and forcing us into a lose lose situation. Either we play the good little protesters and eschew effective action for minimal policing and positive press. Or we kick off, cause economic damage, and risk the police using our behaviour to justify their repression.

I think we can use this opportunity – we can use the confidence we have gained at DSEi and other events to assert a militant street presence over the coming months, a presence which will also hopefully be able to resist any return to repression. However, we cannot do this without organisation and strategy. We need to find ways to assert our control over the situation and ensure we are not being manipulated by the State. We have a unique situation where we can assess what we hope to achieve from these mass actions, put these ideas into practice, and build a protest movement worth defending – let's ensure it doesn't go to waste.

For further information see [dsei.org](http://dsei.org), [smashedo.org.uk](http://smashedo.org.uk) and <http://natowc.noflag.org.uk/>

Fitwatchers. Cops surrounded the protesters in front of the hotel, and attempted to push them towards the pen – around ten sat down, and initially all those caught in the cordon were kettled, with anyone attempting to leave being thrown onto the people sitting down. After a half hour standoff where people were allowed to leave the cordon, the people refusing to move were arrested, alongside a couple of others who the cops just didn't like. Draconian bail conditions for a non-imprisonable offence included not entering the M25 area, residency, and not associating with others arrested, and show that once away from the public gaze, the cops are still willing and able to assert their control.

The lack of cameras at DSEi, both on the demos, at the convergence space, and the pre-meetings, was a real victory for Fitwatchers.

Fitwatch was started outside a DSEi meeting and, whilst publicity and liberal campaigning has helped, the fact there were no cameras at DSEi is a victory for direct action. The cops aren't flashing cameras in our faces because it'll look bad in *The*

*Guardian*, but because they realise their presence will provoke disorder. We have come full circle, with the cameras originally deployed to deter disorder being withdrawn because they are causing public order problems.





## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

On Saturday 19th September we held a benefit at the bookshop for the Tower Hamlets Education Workers. Around £80 was raised and a fun time had by all. Our next major event will be the post Bookfair Party on Saturday 24th October.

As we approach the Anarchist Bookfair we are particularly looking for any donations of second-hand books that can be recycled to a new generation of activists while keeping *Freedom* ticking over with a little extra income.

Apologies to comrades who have been getting the paper later than it is normally late. The Climate Camp Special suffered a few printing problems while the praiseworthy militancy of postal workers is also contributing to delays. Our next experiment with bringing the paper closer to breaking even is to fold it to A5. This will enable us to send it out first class at less cost than the current second class large. If you need your copy in a A4 envelope text us on 07913 865 928 and we'll send it as usual. This will only apply to UK subscribers.

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 10th October 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 1st October. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

A friend of mine alerted me to an obituary last month, tucked away in the pages of *The Guardian's* 'Other Lives' section. Will Fancy, who was branch chair of Lewisham Nalگو when I joined it, died aged 76. While I only came across him for a short time, I have much to thank him for.

He was a lifelong socialist, at various points in the Labour Party and the Socialist Workers Party and all its forerunners. He retired to Bristol and took up various socialist and environmental causes there. As his obituary, by his son Colin, records, he was dubbed "the most dangerous man in Britain" while he was an SWP member on the Nalگو National Executive, by *The Daily Mail*.

Lewisham Nalگو had been a well-organised, militant branch in the late 1970s and early '80s. Colin notes that Will broke with the SWP when he became a full timer for the union, having been involved in the rank and file Nalگو Action Group. But when I joined Nalگو older heads always referred to him as the key man who'd negotiated the enhanced terms and conditions that the workers there enjoyed.

These were quite significant – they included inner London weighting (which made a difference between a salary of £5,800 and £7,200 when I started work) and additional leave. But Will Fancy was just one part of the team that delivered these conditions. It would not have been possible without a level of workplace organisation to back it up, something he himself would have acknowledged.

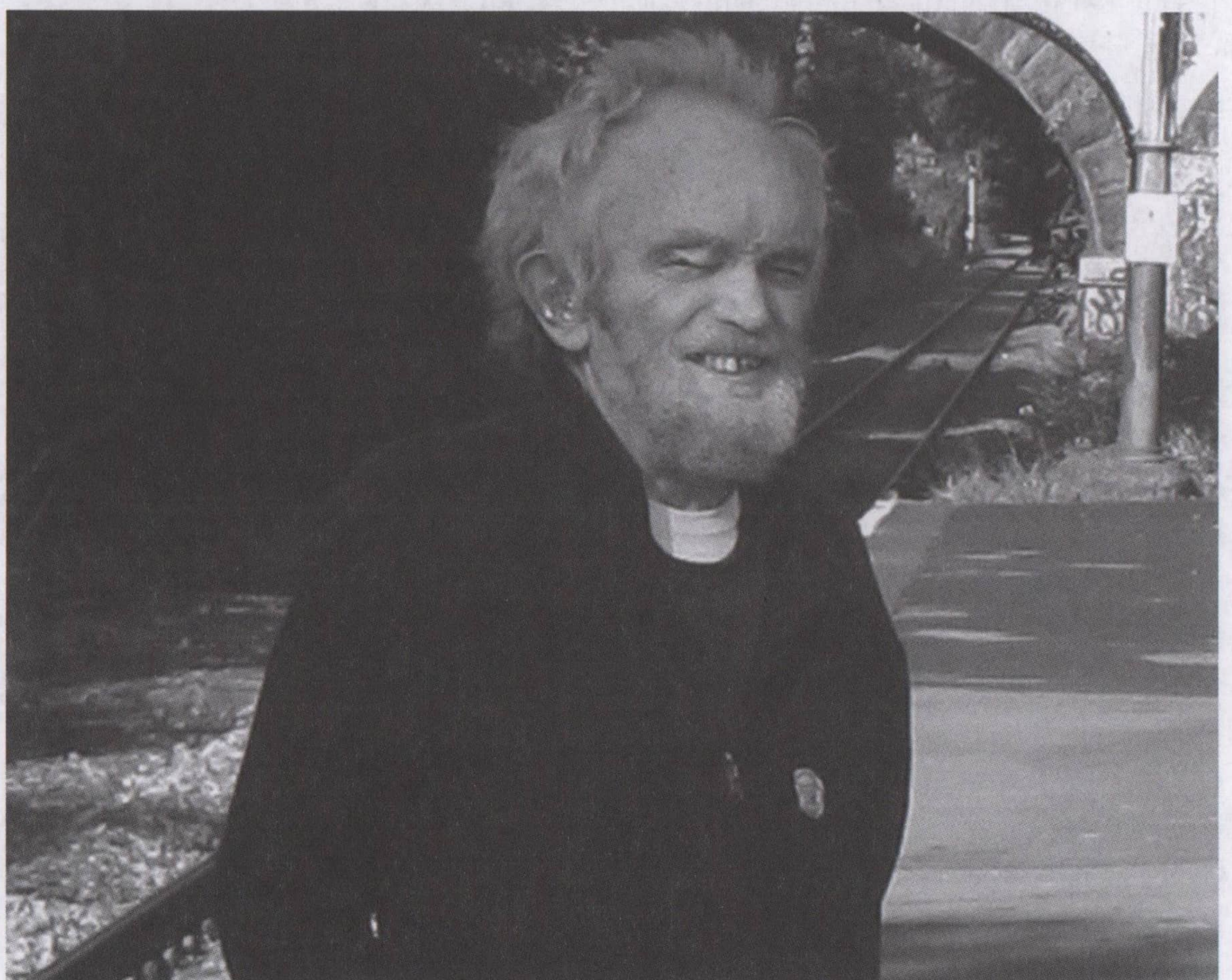
The organisation was such that in 1986 the council set out to break the union. It provoked a strike by removing safety screens from the Housing Advice Centres. The strike

lasted five weeks, but was undermined by the actions of scabs in Nupe and ended in defeat. From then on, the union organisation at the council was in decline. Typically I came in after all this – so have lots of experience of seeing the memory of successful collective action gradually dissipate.

That said, for the first few years I worked there, organisation still existed, in one housing office in particular, which prided itself on wearing out junior and middle managers and only negotiating with senior ones. When the unions merged into Unison in 1993, there were four branches for a while, as the differences between Nalگو and the white collar Nupe officers were so big. In the end, the regional office forced them to merge, and the member-led bottom-up organisation typical of Nalگو was lost, in favour of the top-down approach of Nupe. It's a particular irony that the current Unison branch secretary is the same one who instructed Nupe members to cross Nalگو picket lines during the 1986 strike.

These days, most workers can only dream of defending what they already have, let alone improving terms and conditions and pay. The lesson from Will Fancy's life is that it takes commitment and organisation, but that you can improve things. Sometimes.

If the situation looks difficult, it's worth remembering that Nalگو was built into a militant union from a conservative staff association in a relatively short time. Its first strike was in 1970 – and a few years later one activist was being called the "most dangerous man in Britain" as the union won better pay and conditions across the country. Organising can take years, but it can be done.



## Getting to the bottom of the League

I'm a big fan of your paper, especially recently, but I feel my first letter *has* to be complaint about something or you won't realise it's a letter.

'Out of their League' (front page, 12th September) gets it a bit arse-about-tit really.

The EDL [English Defence League] are not 'ex' football hooligans in anything but their own press; this is just an attempt by them to pretend they are hard / have links to lots of hard people. It's been the same 30 to 50 people at every EDL demo, there is no significant support from local firms or any firm in particular: if there was numbers would triple, and they marched on match day in Brum once – no significant difference.

Islamic Extremists did *not* attack the funeral parade in Luton, they picketed it. All twenty of them, with some hand-drawn signs.

The EDL clearly *do* have links with the BNP, though they and the BNP deny it as it is mutually beneficial that they maintain distance. Various links have been discovered, some as straightforward as BNP organisers running their facebook group. Yes UAF are muppets and, worse than that, muppets for the state, but if they hadn't been in Birmingham that day it would have been purely clash between the EDL and young Asians. By being there it was seen as a clash between the right and antifascists, even if most of the people turning over the EDL were just young Asians who turned up completely separately.

In conclusion then: your article gives the impression that the EDL are a group genuinely concerned about Political Islam being attacked by dishonest UAFers inciting Muslim mobs, and antifascists should stay well clear. No, no. EDL are a classic group of thick racists (who yell 'paki cunts' on their demos) who are using concern about Islam to mask their attempts to start race riots; if they can be isolated and taken on by antifascists then it will do a world of good.

I'm glad to say fellow L&S [Liberty & Solidarity] members have been out to oppose them repeatedly – along with many many anarchists. In the last sentence – "others feel..." – which others? Anarchists, socialists and trade unionists oppose the EDL, and will continue to. I know you are trying to call-out knee jerk multiculturalism, but this is not it.

Bill Stickers

*The editors reply: Bill, you are quite correct to say the troop's parade wasn't attacked by Muslim extremists. Perhaps 'attempted to disrupt' would have been more appropriate. But even Searchlight, who are never known to shy away from exposing phantom far-right organisations have tempered their hyperbole: "Some commentators have dismissed these gatherings [EDL protest] as fascist events. This is inaccurate and misunderstands the relationship between football hooligans, nationalism and fascism... While there are*

*undoubtedly fascists involved in these protests they owe more to the racist and nationalist mentality of hooligans than to any real fascist undertones".*

## A response to No Pretence

No Pretence began their letter ('The anarchy-feminist intervention', 15th August 2009) by referring to "A radical and widely supported anarchy-feminist intervention [that had] gone down in the *Freedom* newspaper (6th June 2009)" and subsequently referred to "the author of the article". The only article in that issue about the intervention is the feature 'Anarchist movement conference report' by Andy Meinke. Consequently I assume that they referred to his article.

No Pretence made four accusations and a pronouncement in their letter.

One accusation is that the intervention had "gone down ... as a mere interruption". In fact references were made to: "the feminist intervention", "the interruption of the feedback", an "action" and a "disruption". None of these references were qualified with 'mere'. Consequently their accusation that the intervention had "gone down ... as a mere interruption" is unfounded.

Another accusation is that the acceptance of the intervention had been "attributed solely to the good humour and paternalism of the movement". In fact the following two comments were made: "The good humoured reception they got made this action seem

## LETTERS AND COMMENT

like a planned part of the programme" and "there is a disquieting paternalism that this disruption was not challenged in the way we would expect others to be". Neither of these comments constitutes an attribution.

Consequently their accusation that the acceptance of the intervention had been "attributed solely to the good humour and paternalism of the movement" is also unfounded.

The other two accusations are that "the author of the article" misrepresented and misunderstood the objectives of 'the action'. Unfortunately No Pretence omitted to tell us what the objectives were. If and when they tell us what the objectives of 'the action' were, we can decide whether their accusations are valid. Until they do so their accusations are unsupported.

The pronouncement is that: "No Pretence ... merely opted for a different and perhaps more effective approach". But No Pretence also did something else. They relied upon the successful execution of the planning process, without which the conference would not have happened. Consequently, No Pretence resorted to a rationalisation.

No Pretence tried to defend the intervention/action/approach of No Pretence in two ways. They made four accusations, two of which are unfounded and the other two of which are unsupported. And they resorted to a rationalisation. Given these attempts, the conclusion of their letter – "We expect more from a paper that calls itself *Freedom*" – is hypocritical.

John Desmond

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

#### Italian prison protests

Italy's prisons are at bursting point and with new, ever-more repressive legislation such as the Bossi-Fini law on immigration, the Fini-Giovanardi drugs law and the Public Security law, hitting the statute books, the prison population is set to increase further.

Currently Italy's prison population stands at around 64,000, the highest total since 1946, and is back to the levels that triggered an amnesty in 2006 which cut three years off some sentences and led to the release of almost 27,000 prisoners.

This is despite the fact that Italy's imprisonment rate is about average for Western Europe, 97 in 100,000 of the population (up from a low of 77 in 2007) compared to 153 in 100,000 in England and Wales.

The problem is that that number of prisoners are crammed into a prison system designed to hold just 43,000, and that overcrowding is increasing by 1,000 new prisoners every month. According to a recent report by the prisoners' rights group Antigone, this has led to a breakdown in health care, forced relocation to prisons far from home and a lack of educational and exercise.

Protests at Sollicciano, the main prison in Florence, have been the longest and most widely reported. Sollicciano currently holds 955 prisoners, including seven children, three or four to a cell in facilities designed for only 483. The prisoners, as in most jails in Italy, spend 22 hours or more a day in their cells. There are shortages of infirmary staff, showers, fridges for storing food and the daily budget to feed each prisoner is just 1.53 euros.

On the night of 17th August, after being served mouldy bread for three days running, prisoners at Sollicciano started prolonged protests. They started burning sheets and bedding and throwing objects out of cell windows.

The prison authorities responded by cancelling family visits. This provoked even more disturbances, which were still going a month later. Similar scenes have been played out all across Italy.

On 9th September a six-day strike was announced in 48 prisons across the country, with up to 50,000 prisoners refusing food and work. Support for the protests has been widespread outside the prison walls too, and following a demonstration outside the prison in support of the prisoners on 29th August, more than 50 people were arrested for taking part.

It seems that no one believes claims by the Justice Minister Roberto Castelli that Italian jails compare favourably to luxury hotels!

#### Don't like Mondays!

Brenda Ann Spencer (now 47) was refused parole on the 13th August and will not be eligible for another hearing until 2019. Bob Geldof has shown no sign of supporting the woman who made him rich.



● The last nine months have seen the gradual emergence of a network for local, community-based anti-authoritarian groups throughout London coming together under the title of **Radical London Network**. Following a meeting at last year's Anarchist Bookfair, a handful of existing groups, including Action East End and Hackney Solidarity Network, started meeting every couple of months to swap ideas and support each other.

These meetings have been positive affairs of mutual encouragement, as well as taking forward an achievable plan of publicising the network and the importance of pro-working class resistance groups.

Recent activities have moved on to providing practical advice and support to groups that are having trouble getting going or are at some difficult stage of their development. And the Radical London network has expanded from a core of four groups to a possible nine, the newest of which are based in Islington and Croydon.

A meeting to publicly launch the network is planned for the Anarchist Bookfair, where the groups involved hope to build on this slow, but steady progress.

Co-coordinating website at [radicallondon.net/](http://radicallondon.net/)

● The people were responsible for much of the infrastructure for this year's Climate Camp at Blackheath, **The Activist Tat Collective**, are holding a maintenance and training week in Nottingham from 5th to 11th October. There will be workshops during the week and training at the weekend to teach people how to put up and mend marquees, cook in a field kitchen (pictured above), install solar power lighting, paint toilets and install shelves. In the last year they have

helped on the three Climate Camps as well as Earth First, Peace News Camp, Radical Routes and No-Borders Camp.

People interested in getting involved need to contact them in advance so they can organise accommodation and food. Contact: [atcollective@googlemail.com](mailto:atcollective@googlemail.com) or check website: <http://atcoop.org.uk/>

● Once again the **Full Unemployment Cinema** returns after a summer break with a full programme of free film screenings for autumn and winter. Run by 'a bunch of no-good commies and anarchists', they specialise in showing films about work and the struggles against it, this month there is a 'Men With Carts' double-bill featuring *Man Push Cart*, an American independent film by Ramin Bahrani that tells the story of a former Pakistani rock star who now sells coffee and doughnuts from his push cart on the streets of Manhattan, and *Borom Sarret*, the cinematic debut of Senegalese novelist and Moscow-trained filmmaker Ousmane Sembene.

See <http://unemployedcinema.blogspot.com/> Sunday 27th September at 6pm, at 56a Infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE. The 56a Infoshop is an anarchist social centre in South London that's been running for 18 years.

● *Freedom* would just like to congratulate **Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM)** on their 25th anniversary this autumn. Prior to the formation of the WSM there was no anarchist movement in Ireland to speak of, and they have over the years built themselves up into a committed and respected part of the political community. Long may they continue to successfully promote anarchist ideas and action.

# 'Bloody Thursday'

## An account of the 1934 West Coast Waterfront Strike

Two black draped trucks, bearing a coffin each, headed the 1,000 strong funeral procession as it made its way slowly through the San Francisco streets lined with 50,000 people who stood in silence out of respect for the two strikers killed by police just four days before on 5th July 1934, a day forever recognised amongst longshoremen as 'Bloody Thursday', the most violent in San Francisco's industrial history.

San Francisco's maritime strike began 9th May 1934 when longshoremen in every West Coast port walked out, closing down the entire port system. It lasted 83 days, but was to have a lasting impact on how American dock workers chose to organise themselves. Intensive organising began in the spring of 1934 with West Coast union representatives forming a federation of maritime workers to negotiate with employers coast-wide, rather than independently, port-by-port. The rank and file, however, preferred to place their trust in young militants who set up a strike committee transferring the authority to strike from corrupt leaders to the longshoremen themselves. Longshore workers demanded a coast-wide contract, wage and hour improvements, an end to the speed-ups and the shape-ups, and the establishment of a union hiring hall. The strike remained solid with intensive picketing and constant confrontations with police and private security forces over a two month period. It only escalated out of control when the Industrial Association, made up of employers and business interests who were determined to break the strike and the growing confidence and militancy of the workers, decided to start moving goods from the piers to warehouses on 3rd July.

The employers recruited strikebreakers under the constant protection of the police, housing them on moored ships or in secure compounds, amongst them many from the universities. In addition to student scabs employers recruited African Americans, who had been used as strikebreakers since 1916. Though some worked as scabs early in the 1934 strike, many supported the union and joined the picket lines. In recognition of their significant support and the desire to end the use of African Americans as strikebreakers, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) opened its membership. The 1934 strike was a turning point in race relations among longshoremen.

The first serious running battles between unionists and police began early on Tuesday, 3rd July. There was a lull during the 4th July holiday, but disturbances picked up again the following day when The Industrial



Association tried to open the port even further and was met with hostile resistance from the strikers. As spectators watched, police shot tear-gas canisters into the crowd, followed with a charge by mounted police. Picketers threw the canisters and rocks back at the police, who charged again. The police fired shotguns in the air, then fired their revolvers at the crowd. One of the policemen fired a shotgun directly into the crowd, killing a striking seaman and a strike sympathiser, Nicholas Bordoio and Howard Sperry, whose deaths came to symbolise the struggle for union recognition.

In this explosive atmosphere, the Waterfront Employers eventually agreed to recognise the ILA on July 21 and arbitrate all outstanding issues with maritime unions if the longshoremen would accept arbitration. They voted to return to work on 31st July.

Today the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union continues to recognise 'Bloody Thursday' by shutting down all West Coast ports every 5th July. The ILWU has frequently stopped work and refused to handle goods in solidarity with, among other things, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, fascist intervention in Spain's civil war, South Africa's system of apartheid and the Iraq War.

Below is a report by the *San Francisco News*, 3rd July 1934, of the first day of the rioting:

**POLICE BATTLE STEVEDORE MOB, ARREST MANY**  
To the accompaniment of widespread rioting, fist fights and popping of tear gas guns and bombs, the Industrial Association of San Francisco carried out its promise today to begin moving freight from the waterfront piers, blockaded since May 9 by the marine strike. About a score of persons were injured severely enough to require hospital treatment. Two men were shot and slightly wounded, a half dozen

motor trucks were turned over and many persons suffered burning eyes from the gas.

But on the outskirts of this area bellowing crowds of strikers and sympathizers were hurling rocks at policemen, fighting through clouds of tear gas and damaging and overturning trucks.

### Clubs Used Freely

Police used their clubs freely and mounted officers rode into milling crowds. The strikers fought back, using fists, boards and bricks as weapons. Rioting was widespread but was centred in the area surrounding the Southern Pacific Depot at Third and Townsend Sts. Several shots were fired in a battle near the railroad station. One bullet struck Eugene Dunbar, union seaman, in the left ankle. He was dragged out of the melee, tended by members of the crowd until an ambulance arrived and removed him to Harbor Emergency Hospital.

### Bricks Hit Police

One of the bloodiest bits of fighting occurred near the King St. warehouse. Suddenly the strike pickets broke through the police lines and surged around a pile of bricks. Soon the air was filled with missiles. Another riot broke out at Second and Townsend Sts. Police charged the crowd, but it did not move. The officers resorted to tear gas. Members of the mob, coughing and choking, picked up the smoking grenades and hurled them back into the police lines.

Windows of nearby buildings were crowded with onlookers. The gas began filtering through the windows and those watching the riot fell back, tears streaming from their eyes.

Police have a consignment of the new nauseating gas used so effectively in eastern riots, and Capt. Arthur DeGuire, head of Harbor Station, threatened to put it to use unless the rioters quieted down. Another crowd tried to break through police lines along Second St. They streamed through South Park toward Third St. Police met them and drove them back slowly.

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## OCTOBER

1st Bath Activist Network meeting from 7.30pm until 9pm downstairs at the Hobgoblin, James Street, Bath, see [myspace.com/bathactivistnetwork](http://myspace.com/bathactivistnetwork) or get in touch at [bathactivistnetwork@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bathactivistnetwork@yahoo.co.uk).

3rd Guantanamoitis, a demonstration on behalf of the 229 Guantanamo Bay detainees to show how much needs to be done to free them from illegal detention – join us and hold one of 229 placards to show your solidarity, from 1pm until 5pm in Parliament Square, London SW1, contact Sophie on 07813 786829, email [sophie786@hotmail.com](mailto:sophie786@hotmail.com), [facebook.com/event.php?eid=125219212389](http://facebook.com/event.php?eid=125219212389)

12th Agrofuels Don't Roc(k), demonstration against government 'renewable energy' subsidies going to agrofuels, meet at 6.30pm outside the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), 3 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2AW, for details call 01224324797, email [info@biofuelwatch.org.uk](mailto:info@biofuelwatch.org.uk), see [campaigncc.org](http://campaigncc.org), [foodnotfuel.org.uk](http://foodnotfuel.org.uk) or [biofuelwatch.org.uk](http://biofuelwatch.org.uk).

17th Anti-arms demonstration at Brimar, manufacturers of a range of screens and viewing equipment used for military applications, at 12 noon in Manchester, see [targetbrimar.org.uk](http://targetbrimar.org.uk) for further details.

17th and 18th The Great Climate Swoop, a mass blockade of at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire, one of the UK's biggest coal fired power stations, called for by The Camp for Climate Action, Plane Stupid, Rising Tide and Climate Rush, call 07932 096677 or see [thegreatclimateswoop.org](http://thegreatclimateswoop.org).

23rd Pre-Anarchist Bookfair special at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, downstairs will be screening of the new documentary *Colin Ward in Conversation with Roger Deakin*, upstairs the Revolutionary Anarcha-feminist Group from Dublin will be launching the latest issue of their magazine, both events from 7pm until late, call 020 7837 4473 or see [housmans.com](http://housmans.com) for details.

24th London Anarchist Bookfair at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, from 10am until 7pm, see [anarchistbookfair.org.uk](http://anarchistbookfair.org.uk) for details.

30th SchNEWS 15th Birthday benefit, celebrating 15 years and nearly 700 issues of the weekly direct action newsheet, at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA from 8pm, entry £4, call 01273 685 913 or see [schnews.org.uk](http://schnews.org.uk) or [cowleyclub.org.uk](http://cowleyclub.org.uk) for more.

31st CAAT National Gathering from 9.45am until 5pm at Toynbee Studios, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6AB, see [caat.org.uk/events/nationalgathering](http://caat.org.uk/events/nationalgathering) for details.

## NOVEMBER

12th to 17th NATO not welcome, four days of action in Edinburgh to shut down the NATO parliament assembly, see [antimilitaristnetwork.org.uk](http://antimilitaristnetwork.org.uk) for more.

## FILM

**Mesrine: Killer Instinct**  
**Mesrine: Public Enemy Number One**  
directed by Jean-François Richet

By the time you read this the two part biography of the legendary French bank robber Jacques Mesrine will have disappeared from cinema screens. In any case, it was only shown at trendy cinemas like Screen on the Green in Islington. On the other hand it comes out as a double DVD at Christmas and I suggest you try and see it.

Few people these days have heard of Mesrine who was gunned down by the police in Paris in November 1979. There was no attempt at arrest, just a public execution of a man who'd taken the piss out of the French police for years.

Mesrine's story defies belief. Bank robberies, shootouts with the police, escape from high security prison in both Canada and France and more.

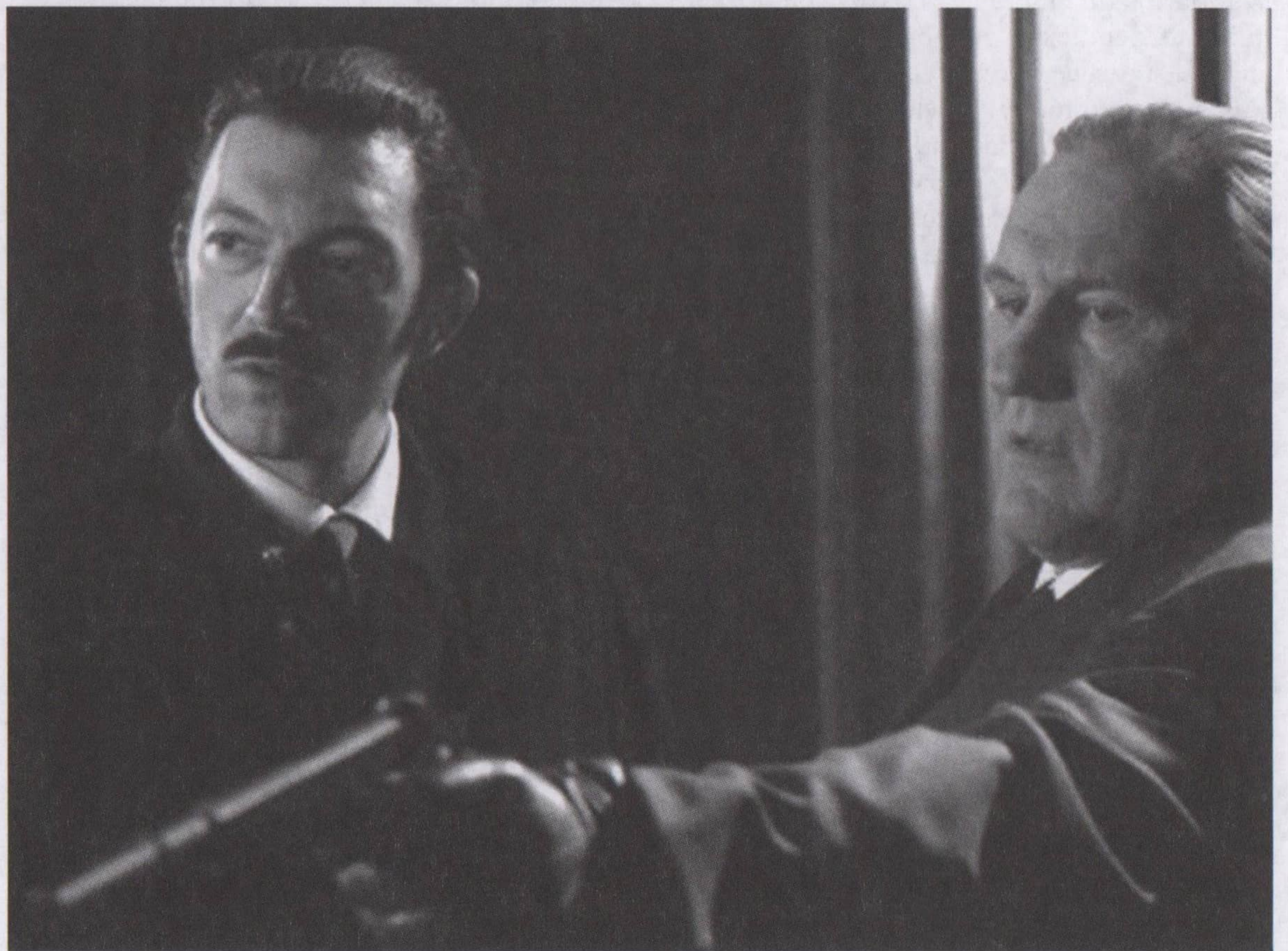
Does this two part film do justice to Mesrine? Yes and no. On the one hand it shows him as the larger-than-life, violent nutter that he was. On the other hand he's portrayed as a hardcore racist, which I don't

think he was, and his attempt to break back into the Canadian prison he'd escaped from is exaggerated to absurdity. What happened in reality was that Mesrine and a partner approached the prison, a police car moved towards them and there was an exchange of shots with Mesrine's partner getting wounded but the two of them managing to escape. The truth is remarkable enough. What sort of loony tries to break back into the high security prison they've just escaped from in order to let everybody else out? The film has two prisoners and two warders getting shot dead and this didn't happen.

The rest of the film is accurate enough. Mesrine did kill two policemen in Canada, he did beat his wife up, he did kidnap and torture a journalist who'd annoyed him, he did walk into a police station pretending to be a senior policeman at a time when he was the most wanted criminal in France. (He then went to the nearby casino and robbed it.)

You think I'm making this up? I'm not. See in the New Year with a home viewing of the most remarkable criminal ever.

Mo Moseley



## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The Cayman Islands, hedge fund capital of the world, levies virtually no tax on the corporate vultures who use it. With a collapse in revenue from tourism in the recession, they have failed to pay their own staff bill.
2. Nalگو, the National and Local Government Officers union, started out as a staff association founded by Herbert Blain, later Sir Herbert, who became Principal Agent for the Tories in 1924. Nalگو was
3. Kaminski, of the far right Law and Justice Party, has a documented past as a homophobic and anti-Semite. He is also in favour of such Tory favourites as the Lisbon Treaty and keeping the Common Agricultural policy.
4. Philip K. Dick. The whole world is anarchist, until a micro-government is discovered run by a robot, which is then destroyed by anarchist agents.

# Cantona's ghost

**Genre-bending postmodern agitprop, or hamfisted hackneyed magic-realism? Tom Jennings reckons responses depend on how generous you're feeling**

Wayward 1990s footballing genius Eric Cantona pitches a story of friendship between sports legend and fan: veteran director Ken Loach and regular writer Paul Laverty decline. But, attracted by the Frenchman's renowned refusal to suffer fools – especially those in authority – as well as cheek, artistry, genuine gut socialism and working-class pride, they offer instead a barbed tribute which also requires Cantona to lampoon his own star persona. The result is *Looking For Eric*, easily Loach's most light-hearted film despite tackling salient sombre social issues around family and community breakdown and the parallel erosion of the cultural commons. It's also the first film I've seen for some considerable time to receive a sustained round of delighted applause afterwards from a full arthouse crowd. Most in attendance, I'm sure, weren't Manchester United supporters or even particularly interested in football – though anyone who's either will enjoy a rare treat – but were simply impressed by an unexpected match of grit and fantasy which, while far clumsier than its celebrity draw ever was, is equally winningly entertaining.

Eric Bishop (Steve Evets) is a Manchester postman whose worship of his Gallic namesake is the sole constant in a life falling apart. A second ex-wife has left behind out-of-control teenage stepsons after he abandoned the first with their newborn twenty years ago, and now guilt and depression are escalating panic attacks into suicidal urges. Loyal workmates, led by Meatballs (John Henshaw), rally round with one-liner barrages and ersatz morale-boosting, culminating in a hilarious self-help session evoking a superhero dream-team (or central committee from hell?) of Mandela, Castro, Gandhi, Sinatra and Cantona – but to no avail in Little Eric pulling himself together. Sneaking a spliff for relief, he hallucinates his idol combining gnomic homilies with good sense, but also sincere humility – as in the challenge: "You think my friends are better than yours?" Better yet, his prime motivation was the desire to offer 'gifts', citing his favourite moment as not a goal, but an improvised chipped assist, adding, "You must trust your team-mates. Always." Thus deriving useful advice from his own subconscious (conveniently undercutting the risk of patronisation), Bishop eventually resolves his libidinal impasse to win back his first love



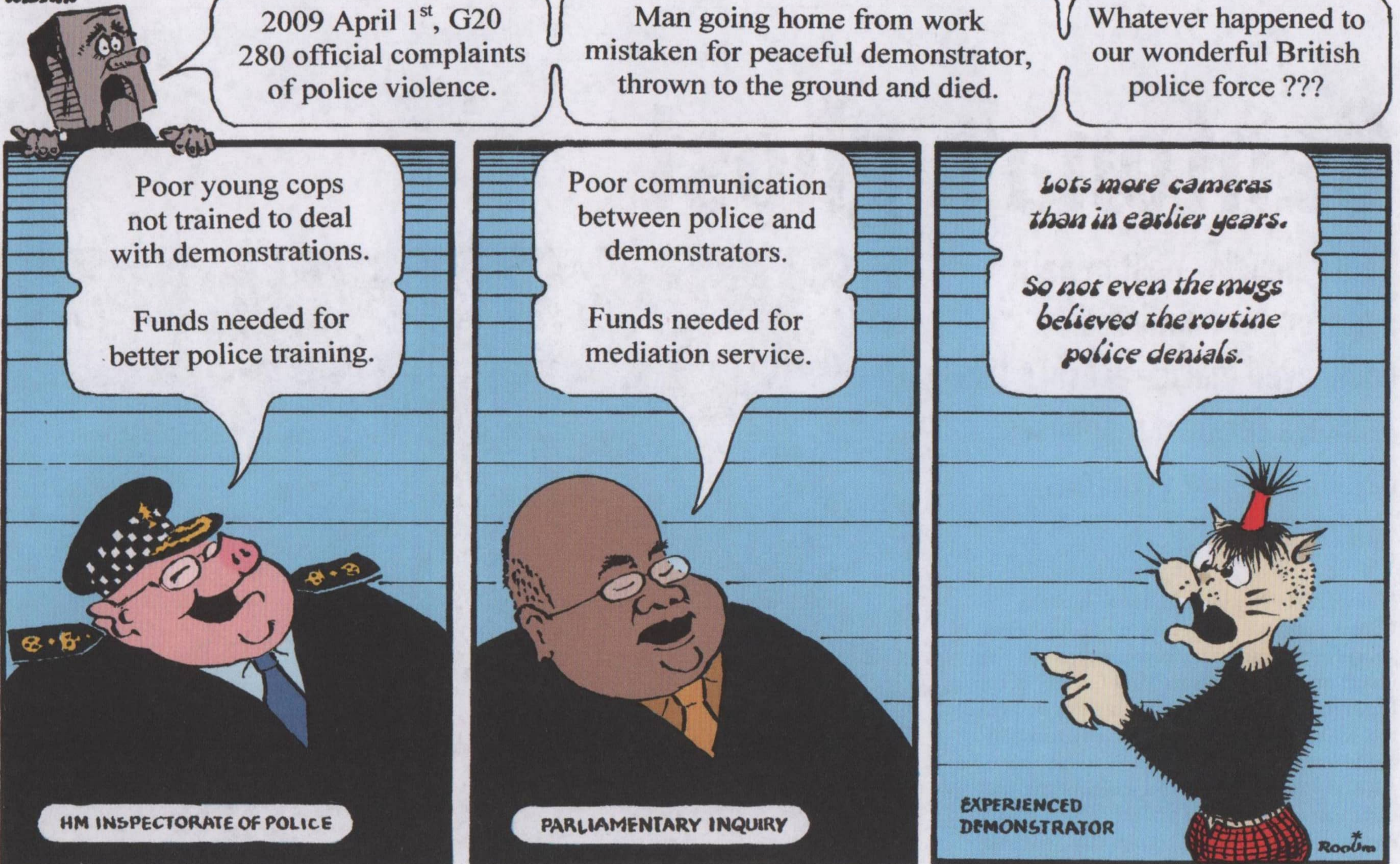
and – helped by massed ranks of posties with bravado-bolstering Cantona masks in a glorious finale – repels the mortal danger posed by neighbourhood psychos his lads were embroiled with.

Excellent committed naturalistic performances carry the film through narrative implausibilities and oversimplifications arising from the awkward juxtaposition of rom-com, urban melodrama and knockabout farce which increasingly threatens to trivialise the baleful situations so carefully contrived. Still, the underlying theme of lost private and public dignity effectively connects alienation, work and pleasure, redirecting humiliation and ridicule away from otherwise abject separate selves now able to resist exploitation, drawing on the social glue of heartfelt joint endeavour. The football metaphor focuses the attention surprisingly well – with a comic interlude deploring its corporate colonisation and namechecking Manchester's grassroots FC United – if less subtly and satisfyingly than in Walter Salles' recent allegory of the beautiful game in *Linha de Passe* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 8th November 2008). And though the choice of generic formulae may appear strange for a director usually implacably opposed to fanciful whimsy, this too is intelligible in the context of the general failure of post-Thatcher British social realism to avoid backward-looking laments or empty victories disguising defeatism.

## Team spiritualism

The 1990s cinema of working-class uplift encouraged its characters' surrender to the social forces assailing them – whether *Brassed Off's* heritage triumphalism, *The Full Monty's* self-commodification, or *Billy Elliott's* traditional self-hatred. Recent underclass escapisms like *Mischief Night* or *Shameless* exploit a more soap-operatic open-endedness, leavening gamuts of grim problematics for which individual answers won't wash with perfectly serious surreal flourishes. Then, crowd-pleasing plot gymnastics furnishing provisional happy endings represent explicit artifice colluding with audience fantasies. In such cases what's pivotal is the plausibility, coherence and utility of developments among protagonists which make even minor advances conceivable at all. Conversely, *Looking For Eric's* wish-fulfilments make it much too easy for Bishop to escape depression, repair his family romance, and overcome the gangsters. Nevertheless the tactics used ring true in all three narrative strands, which themselves only mesh thanks to the overarching daftness of seeking one's hero within who turns out to be a clown ... But immensely artful with it – which is probably why the final mobilisation of grass-roots forces humiliating the enemy's narcissism (also nicely foregrounding the dark side of celebrity charisma as well as

WILDCAT



## Review

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its Achilles' heel) is so irresistibly funny.

Loach's work always has the knack of capturing the benevolence of male working-class culture in hard times – especially in the banter and camaraderie of *Riff Raff* (1991) and *The Navigators* (2001) – but the wit often downplays the negativity, isolated instead in flawed individuals in *Raining Stones* (1993) and *My Name Is Joe* (1998) or evil outsiders in *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and this film. Here too the healing power of friendship is overstated, marginalising women as props for masculinity's vicissitudes and framing vulnerability and weakness as problems needing abolition rather than basic ingredients of shared solutions. But despite

sentimental nostalgia for idealised manifestations of proletarian conviviality, which was always more complex and ambiguous – functioning for regulation and catharsis as well as solidarity and synthesis – the film's trust in ordinary working folk still retains valuable political valency against the grain of mainstream complacency. On that score, a planned subplot referencing the current Royal Mail privatisation offensive was dropped since it couldn't be done justice. So celebrating fictional autonomous rank-and-file power outwitting local criminal thugs will have to serve as sly cheerleading for today's postal-workers in their continuing fight against the official managerial variety. Let's hope all those applauding this film support that struggle too.

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

## THE QUIZ

1. Which tax haven has had trouble paying its civil servants?
2. Which union, noted for its militancy in the 1970s and '80s, was founded by a future Conservative Party national agent?
3. When the Tories in the European Parliament formed their own anti-federal Europe group, they gave the leadership to the Polish MEP Michal Kaminski. How has this embarrassed them?
4. *The Last of the Masters* was a 1954 science fiction story about an anarchist society. Who was it by?

Answers on page 14

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