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HOT AIR FOLLOWS ISRAEL PIRACY

In the wake of the shooting of scores of people in Israel's disastrous attack on the Free Gaza flotilla, *Freedom* editor Andy Meinke was down at the gates of Whitehall to observe the spontaneous gathering unfold.

Inside, he talks about the unique opportunity protesters had to really make an impact as police were caught on the hop – and how it was successfully diverted into another 'speeches and marching' session, drawing the sting out of the event.

Thousands of people turned out to the demonstration, but so did an organised leninist presence, with a stage and sound system quickly being set up to drown out alternatives to a 'disciplined' and easily ignored protest.

Meanwhile as the situation becomes clearer over what actually happened on the high seas, Rob Ray sums up the response of the international community in the face of a clear human rights outrage – talk, but no walk.

Harsh words have been spoken, ambassadors have been 'summoned' but genuine pressure has been minimal and media coverage has focussed on the 'PR coup' of hardline islamists, rather than on the extraordinary violence of some of the best trained troops in the world – and on the fact that several of the kill were from head shots.

Andy Meinke: Page 3

Rob Ray: Page 7

LENS CAP BP PROTEST



The fears that BP cannot contain the gigantic oil spill that has engulfed most of southern USA coastline in the Gulf of Mexico has had an impact on the value of the multi-national company, with \$23 billion being wiped of its share prices. On the morning of 20th May a number of protestors scaled the front of BP's corporate headquarters in London in protest at the oil spill and to brand them with a logo that better suits their dirty business.

Photo: greenpeace.org.uk

DSEi PROTESTORS ACQUITTED

Protestors arrested outside the dinner held for delegates of the DSEi (Defence Systems & Equipment International) arms fair were all found not guilty in court of breaching police orders. The seven protestors, who were part of a 30-strong demonstration outside the London Hilton hotel on 10th September 2009 against the world's largest arms fair, were charged with breaching the conditions imposed on the demonstration by police under section 14 of the Public Order Act.

The conditions included forcing protestors into metal pens away from the hotel and refusing to let them leave. During the peaceful but noisy protest people held up banners saying 'No Bombs No Borders' and 'Destroy the Arms Trade' and chanted at the arms dealers entering the hotel. The delegate's dinner

is the only real opportunity for people to voice their opposition to the arms fair, held every two years in London Docklands, where arms dealers openly sell the latest weaponry and military hardware to state suppliers.

The judge found that the placing of the mobile CCTV van right next to the designated pen interfered with Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act (the freedom of expression and assembly) and that it was impossible to objectively decide whether the grounds for making the Section 14 order were proportionate and reasonable because they were based on intelligence which was not disclosed to the court, despite the defendants asking for it on several occasions.

The judge also commended the protest for being "well planned and organised".

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

OIL SPILL: BP has failed in its attempt to end the Gulf of Mexico leak by a 'top kill'. The next plan, involving a 'containment cap', may take until August and initially increase the flow rather than reduce it.

Meanwhile, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) warned that winds forecast later this week could move the spill towards the Mississippi and Alabama coasts, which have been less badly affected than Louisiana's shores.

HURRICANES: In the same area the hurricane season has begun and, to be honest, not much has happened yet. However the National Hurricane Centre has issued a statement on the possible interactions between a hurricane and the oil spill.

Those expecting an apocalyptic whirlwind of fiery petroleum will be disappointed. Apparently tropical storms will help disperse surface oil slicks and speed up its biodegrading. The oil has little effect on hurricane formation, although it could have a slight preventative effect in stopping water evaporating from the surface, but this would require a far greater leak than at present. But with BP on the case...

ID CARDS: Not often we praise the government, but getting rid of ID cards is a good thing.

Even better, there's a humorous sting for the fools who went along with it. The 15,000 people who voluntarily paid £30 for a card since the 2009 roll-out in Manchester will not get a refund. Home Secretary Theresa May said ID card holders would at least have a 'souvenir' of the scheme.

AFGHANISTAN: Despite being largely ignored in the recent election, the fighting in Afghanistan continues.

This has been the worst May for the 'coalition' with 49 dead to the 30th May, compared to 27 in 2009.

British deaths have now reached 288, of which 42 have been this year.

Summer, as has been noted before, brings intensified fighting and we can see no end to the slaughter in sight.

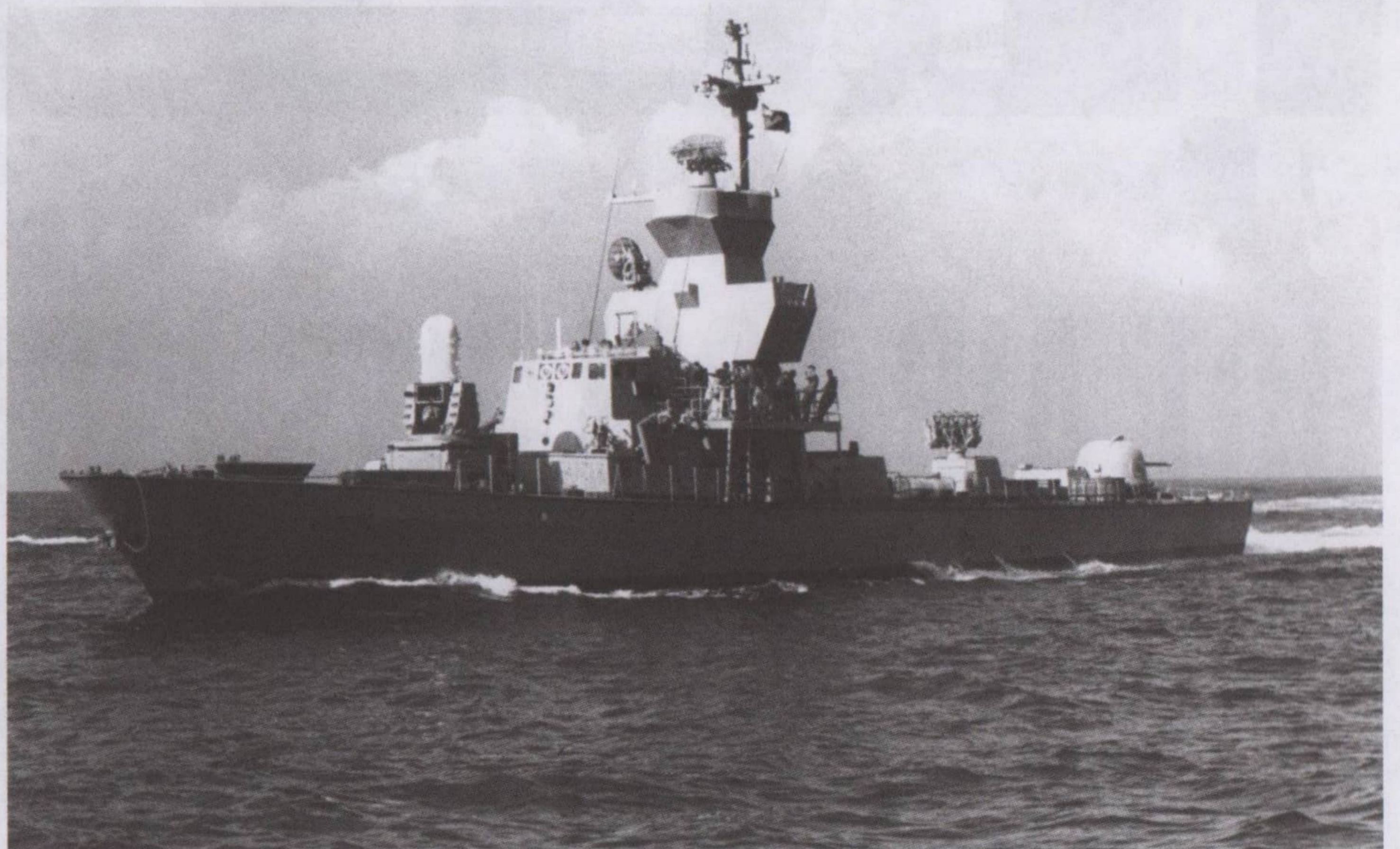
ARCTIC SEA ICE: According to the Cryosphere Today website, Arctic sea ice is now 967,000 square kilometres below the long-term average for this time of year.

Avid readers of this column will spot that this is 46.5 times the size of Wales and that the anomaly has grown by two and a half Wales's since the last issue.

To be fair the nature of the shrinking Arctic is such that ice area is being more effected in the summer than in winter, so we can confidently predict the anomaly will increase until the minimum is reached in September.

However the ice area is now lower than this time in 2007, which led to a record low, so we may very well see a new record this year.

LENS CAP WHOSE NAVY?



This issue we thought we'd add a picture round to our quiz, so we chose a ship at random (and certainly not because of any connection with the slaughter of unarmed human rights activists) and we invite you to guess who it belongs to. As an extra clue, the motto of this Navy is 'Open Sea, Safe Land'.

Cabin crew resist BA bullying

Airline workers at the centre of strike action against British Airways (BA) are standing firm against management bullying tactics and the massive negative PR campaign designed to discredit their legitimate grievances. The latest five day strike by the airline crew went ahead on 28th May after talks by union officials and BA management failed to resolve outstanding issues over cabin crew conditions BA are attempting to impose across their entire service. And other five day stoppages are set to go ahead as planned.

The increasingly bitter dispute originally centred on the pay and working conditions of BA cabin crew, but has since escalated after the airline withdrew the necessary travel entitlements of striking staff.

Unite union recently offered to end its action if BA chief executive Willie Walsh reinstated the travel entitlements, with a view to then negotiating a full settlement. However BA has refused to reinstate the perks outside of a wider deal. Many of the 12,000 BA workers see it as a direct provocation and punishment for not accepting previous management deals.

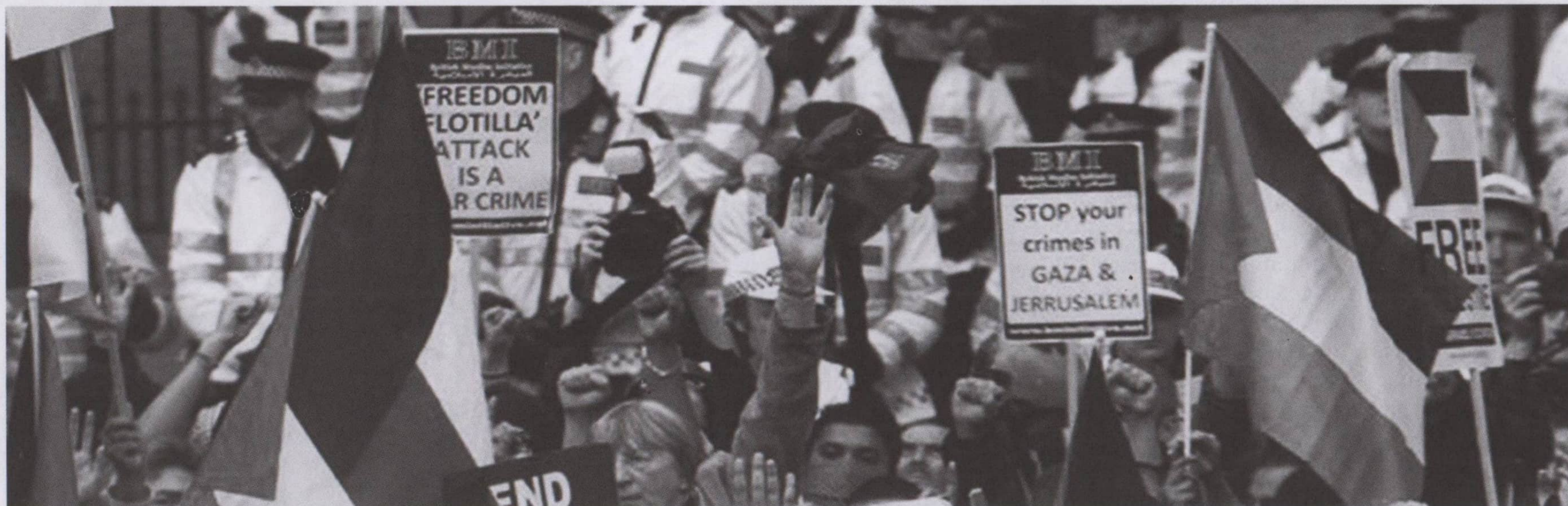


In a speech to members in Manchester, union officials attacked BA for imposing 'radical changes on our members without agreement, that has seen other BA employees incited against cabin crew with, to their lasting shame, the collusion of scab pilots, that has meant more than 50 crew are suspended or sacked for the crime of sending a text or posting a remark on Facebook, that forbids them from talking about their own dispute in public and that victimises trade unionists by branding them second-class employees for life'.

The dispute has become increasingly acrimonious after BA attempted to prevent the industrial action going ahead by applying to the courts for an injunction on a technicality claiming a legal breach of the stringent trade unions laws. A high court judge initially ruled the planned strike action unlawful, leading to an appeal by the union at Royal Courts of Justice. In a dramatic turn of events, the appeal court overturned the decision allowing the strike to go ahead.

The subtext to this dispute is the desire by BA management to purge the airline of its more militant employees and restrict the influence of the British Airlines Stewards and Stewardesses Association (BASSA) the branch of the Transport & General Worker's Union (T&GWU) exclusively for British Airways cabin crew. There have been countless examples of BASSA shop stewards being harassed and intimidated at work, with threats of dismissal if they failed to comply with imposed company directives.

The BA dispute continues to set the tone of future industrial action and one that will have wider implications on the rest of workplace militancy if the striking workers fail in their action.



Police keep an eye on protesters gathered near the road leading to the Israeli embassy in London on Monday 31st May 2010

Gaza march mellow

Imagine your correspondent's shock and surprise when his planned Bank Holiday lie-in, followed by lazy snooze before putting the finishing touches to this august rag, was interrupted by the buzzing bleeps of incoming texts on the mobile. Oh my atheism, the Israelis' have gone and done it again! What's more, not content with attacking their neighbours on land, the IDF had taken to the seas to murder people bringing aid to the poor folk suffering from the blockade of Gaza. Successive shocks diminish one's ability to react appropriately to outrageous behaviour and perhaps the Israeli government is counting on this and we will see even worse to come. First, we must judge what can be done to stop it.

Obviously only America has the power to make Israel do anything major. The American political establishment is so firmly pro-Israeli that we are unlikely to see President Obama tell Netanyahu to give half the country to the Palestinians in the near future. However, pressure from other sources can have an effect and, if world reaction to this event is strong

enough, we may see the end of the blockade.

But to turn back to Blighty. If William Hague was a Foreign Secretary of the calibre of Lord Palmerston, the Navy would already be sailing for the Med and all the billions wasted on Trident might just come in handy. As it is, to get the LibCon's to do more than the standard 'oh, no, Hans Blix!' response from *Team America, World Police*, there has to be serious discontent on the streets. So, condemning our subscribers to getting the paper a day late, it's off to Downing Street I go.

Various call-out's gave differing times from 11am onwards, with 2pm the most popular. Arriving at 1.30pm I find around 150 people gathered in front of the gates that impede free passage of the highway outside the First Lord of the Treasury's London pad.

The good news is there are but three vans of TSG plus a sprinkling of British Transport and Ministry of Defence plod looking bemused.

The crowd rapidly grows, eventually reaching around 2,000 while the police, doubtless not expecting anything, had given everyone the afternoon off so that a total of two serials

were all that Chief Inspector Barham could rely on. It looked like London was our oyster!

Galloping to his rescue come Stop The War and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. They had brought a public address system and now embarked on a series of morale-sapping speeches before a planned march to the Israeli embassy, which gave the cops an extra two hours to prepare.

When we did finally move at 3.30pm it was a boring route via Victoria and not the exciting rush through the West End that might have given the signal that we thought the issue serious enough to interrupt the business of the capital.

After the long trudge across town the crowd rapidly faded away and the whole event was feeble compared to last year's Gaza invasion demonstrations. It's hard to say how cowed are the communities and particular youths after the wave of raids and harsh sentences from those events, but it's a worrying sign that we were not able to do more with a glorious opportunity of police impotence.

Liberals show their true colours

Surprise, surprise, the Con-Lib regime has already broken its promise over civil liberties, as protesters in Parliament Square found out, and are about to find out to an even greater extent. A sharp reminder that civil liberties are taken by the people not granted by the state.

The Liberals now have no problem with the detention of children by the Borders Agency, which they opposed in opposition (when they thought they were the permanent opposition), and deporting asylum seekers to regimes like Iraq and Iran where they face torture, imprisonment and, in some cases, death.

Well, lest we forget, the last time the British Liberals won an election (1911) they sent in soldiers against the coal miners and dragged

the country into the horrors of the First World War.

The Liberals have always been a party of the ruling class, and that is true of every party that tags itself Liberal – Liberal Democrat, Social Liberal or whatever. Remember that the ideas of liberalism included keeping child labour, paying compensation to slaveholders for the abolition of the 'right' to own slaves and support for union busting.

You can trust politicians to let you down, as so many people found out with Labour in 1997 and the Liberals in 2010 (but the latter clearly did not understand the history of liberalism).

But of course there will be those who will get what they wanted – cuts, cuts and cuts –

with perhaps a nice little war thrown in for good measure, and lots more PFI. They seem to be the people who get what they want no matter who wins.

Across Europe people have woken up and general strikes are planned everywhere. It's just possible that this new regime, anxious to please their city masters, will go too far and there will finally be the beginning of the fight back and the dream of libertarian socialism may at last seem like more than a dream.

The libertarian-left must seize this moment, otherwise the demagogues of the BNP will return or the demagogues of religion will step in. Nationalism and/or religion (in the case of the BNP the two ideas are combined) could only bring us to even greater disaster.

NEWS

Oil about Scotland

Anarchists and the left in general are used to saying that the war is bad. So, the slogan goes, which ever party one votes for the government always gets in. It is common to ignore real differences to make the general point about capitalism being a system of class exploitation, and the key concern of workers should be to win the world.

However, at odds with this is the obvious point (generally accepted) that things can be worse. Labour's draconian laws were bad, but Franco's were worse. The treatment of asylum seekers is inhumane and often murderous, but less so than the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge. This is generally accepted truth, by even the most radical of the radical left.

So too the concept of mass unemployment versus skilled employment (for all that it is wage slavery) is something where we can justifiably say one is better than the other. The health stats and sociological evidence bear this out. Having a good job beats making ends meet on the dole.

The question of energy security was catapulted back up the agenda when Chris Huhne, the new energy minister, made the announcement that energy security was going to be at the heart of the UK's defence strategy.

It came after the announcement that Alex Salmond's government had won a core demand of the new UK government: £185 million – a portion of the annual oil and gas levy the British government derives from the North Sea fields – was to be given to the Scottish government. This money will go to a Scottish oil fund to be invested in creating new jobs in the renewables sector. The money is small, but it is politically significant money.

In order to nip off support for independence in Scotland, the Calman Commission was formed. The Queen's speech carried notice that many of its recommendations (some more



Scottish sea power has the potential to contribute 25% of Europe's tidal power.

limited powers for Holyrood, in essence) would be part of a Scotland Act, in the life of this parliament. The Calman Commission accepted that a portion of the oil revenues should remain in Scotland.

Oil and the rise of modern Scottish nationalism have been inextricably linked. The SNP made its first political breakthroughs following the discovery of oil in the North Sea. Today however the SNP government finds itself considerably to the left of the New Labour regime which preceded the Con-Dem one, implementing free school meals and lowering prescription charges. It is a neo-liberal party. Same as the rest of them. However, and it's a big however, the Lib-Lab McConnell regime in Holyrood before it singularly failed to grasp the energy challenge. Jack McConnell refused bailout funding for the world leading research company (Scottish owned) which was investigating making tidal energy

generation a reality. This resulted in the firm being bought up by a Norwegian energy firm and the jobs moving to Norway. For a country that is unique in having an archipelago and the gulf stream to not own its own tidal energy generation R&D (research and development), when the pound signs can be seen flashing up on even the most half-witted assessment, is nothing short of cravenly blind. And that is on capitalist terms.

If as anarchists we say 'do not make cuts', then we had better suggest what the government does with its money instead, and have a programme for how the economy is to recover. £185 million is not a lot of money but in an age of hyper-powered, Goldman Sachs, finance driven austerity it is the political equivalent of a golden unicorn. We should be pushing for more such investment.

Nic

BNP festival finished

The British National Party's annual flagship Red White and Blue festival is being cancelled this year and is unlikely to continue. The festival, held on private farmland in Denby village, Nottinghamshire, for the past three years, is not taking place this year according to the BNP's regional organiser because of "Labour-sponsored rent-a-mob diverting scare Police resources away from vital counter-terrorism operations to supervise protest". There are no plans to continue the event.

In reality it has been the concerted and committed militant anti-fascists of Nottingham who have organised against the far right party locally. Over the past three years anti-fascists have taken direct action against the site of the festival where nationalists all over the country gather despite increasing opposition.

In 2008 over 80 anti-fascists, mostly anarchists, got within 500 yards of the

festival undetected, blocking roads before they were eventually forced back by riot police.

The cancellation comes as a massive blow to the morale of the party after it failed to win a single seat in the recent local council elections. The party also failed to win the much sought after seat in Barking and Dagenham, where the leader Nick Griffin stood as a candidate in the general election.

Despite the BNP fielding their largest number of candidates and receiving the same percentage of the vote in the Essex constituency, the party failed to retain a single councillor, losing out to New Labour. Much criticism was levelled at Griffin by his own party for diverting all its resources into 'winning Barking'.

Local anarchists are seeing this as a major victory for anti-fascism in the area.

John Holloway in Yorkshire

The international renowned expert on autonomist Marxist theory, John Holloway, will be visiting the School of Geography, University of Leeds, for six months in 2011 (March to May and September to November).

Holloway lives and works in Mexico as a Professor at the University of Puebla and is the author, amongst others, of *Zapatista! Rethinking Revolution in Mexico* (1998) and *Change The World Without Taking Power* (2002), both of which have significantly influenced thinking around social movements, particularly in Latin America. *Change the World* in particular has become essential reading for anarchists, as it seeks to address the conflict between revolutionary social change and those who wish to control it.

During his visit to the UK will be involved in teaching the MA in Activism and Social Change at the School of Geography.

2010 LONDON ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

Our good comrades from the London Anarchist Bookfair have once again asked us to publicise the event, to which you should get a Bookfair flyer with this issue if you are a subscriber.

Last year around 3,000 people attended the Bookfair and we hope to see even more this year, and again there will be a social at Freedom afterwards with light refreshments. See you there.



Well it's that time of year again to start thinking of the 2010 London Anarchist Bookfair – well it is for us in the collective anyway.

We have now booked the venue. We will, for the fourth year running, be holding the event at Queen Mary's, University of London on the Mile End Road. The date for the 2010 bookfair will be **Saturday 23rd October** from 10am until 7pm.

For those of you that normally have stalls, we will be sending you a few leaflets in the next week or so asking you to start publicising the day. We will also send a hard copy of the booking forms for stalls, meetings and adverts in the bookfair programme. If you want a meeting(s) we need a title and text of your meeting – between 50 and 100 words max. As always, nothing is confirmed until we have the money, as funds are tight. If nothing arrives in the post, email us and we will send again. The booking form is also on the new website and you can again pay by paypal.

For those of you who have helped publicise the event in the past, can you help again? We have hundreds of posters and thousands of leaflets – so take as many as you can distribute.

For reasons too long-winded and boring to go into, we have lost the website 'anarchistbookfair.org'. This caused us problems and is why the leaflets are late coming out this year. But, we now have a new website address. Can we ask that you publicise this and change any links you have on your websites on in your publications. The new address is very similar to the old address. It's anarchistbookfair.org.uk – yep, all that is different is the 'uk' on the end.

We intend to again make the event more accessible for any comrades with access/disability issues. If you have any concerns or suggestions or anybody in your group could help on the day please contact us at access@anarchistbookfair.org.uk.

The Bookfair Collective

Squatters, sports and sexism

A squatters' football tournament was held on Hackney Marshes in London on Saturday 22nd May. We were disappointed to hear about what happened on the day.

It appears that one of the teams (who we'd quite like to name and shame although our sources aren't sure of the exact mis-spelling used: the 'Semi-Sicotix'?) couldn't handle the idea of women playing footie. Their first match was against 'Gore Core FC', a mixed team which included three female players, and they made it clear pretty early on that they didn't believe women could or should play. As the Gore Core team took the lead by scoring two goals against them, they then moved on to aiming disparaging, derogatory comments at the individual women who were daring to prove them wrong.

Despite a near-constant stream of sexist shit, and an offer by the referee to end the game (and declare it in their favour) at half-time, the Gore Core women decided they'd rather carry on playing, and beating the misogynists. However, the macho posturing escalated into actual violence during the second half. After one of the Gore Core players was hit in the back of the head, the ref acted decisively and ended the match.

Why should anyone else have to put up with their behaviour? It's bad enough that most women we know suffer this sort of sexual harassment when they walk down the street, without it happening at an event that's organised and attended by people who are supposed to be politically aware. What we're left wondering is why they didn't just kick the offenders out there and then?

Those who had suffered, or just witnessed, the violence and ridiculous levels of sexism were understandably horrified. More so when no real support was forthcoming from the organisers of the event. Most of the other teams were made aware of what had happened and were asked not to play against the 'Sicotix'. However, only one other team decided that they too would leave the scene. It seems as though far too many of the assembled squatters were happy to ignore the situation, look the other way and keep on drinking. We expect better from our 'comrades'. We know that not all squatters/punks would describe themselves as 'anarchists' or 'anti-fascist', but that a fair few of those who were

at the football tournament do.

One excuse given for inaction was that the trouble-making team were not entirely unknown. They've already made a name for themselves by attacking other squatted parties and events, and ripping people off. They've used violence in the past to get their way, their kicks, or just to make money.

We wish that our 'community' was better at defending itself against this kind of behaviour. Concepts like 'solidarity' and 'anti-oppression' start sounding a little hollow when this kind of situation goes unchallenged.

In the mainstream world, women's sports are often sidelined. Despite all the media attention given to games like football, we often don't hear much about women's achievements. For example, the women's England football team made it into last September's UEFA Euro Final (coming second overall in the competition) and is on course to do extremely well in the FIFA Women's World Cup next year (having won all their qualifying matches so far).

When women do well, and prove themselves to be strong and fast and powerful, male-dominated organisations – like the International Olympic Committee – start casting aspersions on their gender. The case of South African athlete Caster Semenya is an example of this.

There's an excellent article on the subject in the latest issue of *Slingshot* (an anarchist paper from the Bay Area that isn't afraid to cover subjects we don't talk about enough over here, personal relationships, mental health, etc.) – you can find it at: <http://slingshot.tao.ca/displaybi.php?0103010>

Another new publication that we're finding interesting right now is *Dysophia*. The latest issue is about anarchism and polyamory, and can be downloaded from <http://dysophia.wordpress.com/> – more themes to follow in the future include 'poverty, privilege and immigration' and 'climate justice'.

Anyway, we have started putting these articles on our website too (<http://lafk.wordpress.com/>) and would love to hear your feedback, so please do visit if you'd like to leave a comment, or suggest topics we should cover in future; we're hoping this will continue as a regular column in *Freedom*.

london anarcha feminist kolektiv



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: Labour unrest continues in the country's rock mining and garment industries, with fierce clashes taking place on 25th May between textile workers and police and miners locking 100 bosses into the Maddhapara Granite mine's residential complex for four days over work casualisation and pay arrears.

CHINA: Employment disputes are escalating with all four of car manufacturer Honda's mainland plants being shut down due to strike action on 24th May. The mass walkout was sparked by workers at a facility in Guangdong Province who are demanding a 33–66% pay rise to £200–250 a week.

FRANCE: The 67th Congress of the Federation Anarchiste took place in Rennes, France on 22nd to 24th May and has resolved to priorities the fight against rising xenophobia and racism in the country. A governmental 'grand debate' on immigration launched by immigration minister Luc Besson has helped polarise the issue in recent months.

HIGH SEAS: A United Nations report has suggested that the world's stock of fish is on its way to total collapse with 30% of stocks depleted and only 25% of all fisheries remaining in a 'healthy' state.

IRAQ: It's been revealed that the CIA considered faking information that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were gay to try and discredit them in the eyes of their followers. The US spy service even went so far as to produce a video in which actors pretended to be bin Laden bragging of homosexual and paedophilic conquests.

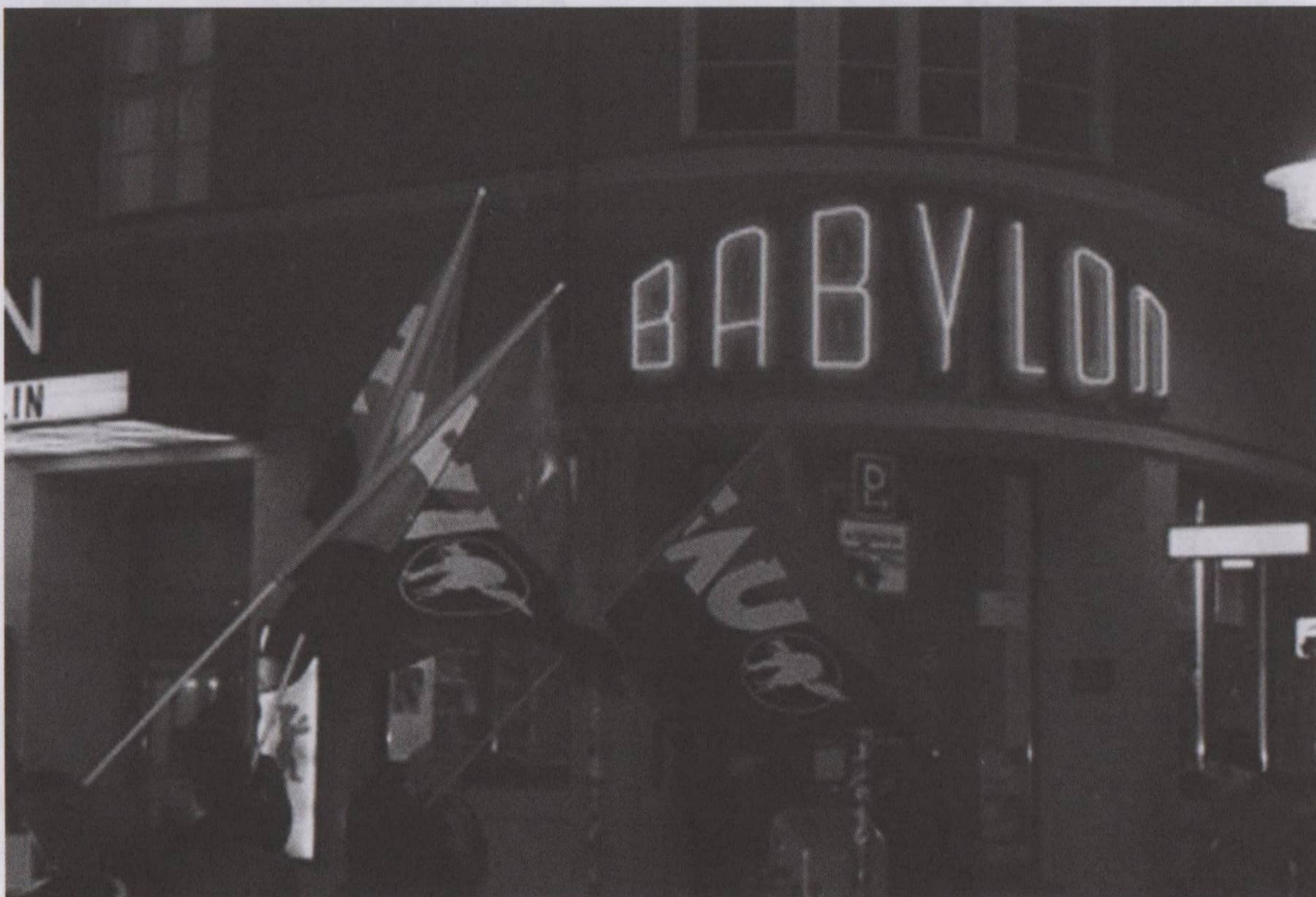
MEXICO: Defiant organisers have said that another solidarity caravan is to be organised in June for the Triqui people despite the murders last month of the three people on a previous run by far-right paramilitaries.

POLAND: Thirty-two people were arrested during riots following the police killing of a 36-year-old Nigerian man, Max, in Warsaw earlier this month. Max was attempting to stop the police beating another man.

RUSSIA: Neo-nazis murdered 27-year-old Dmitry Kashitsyn on 24th May during an attack on 15 volunteers who had stayed to clean up after their friend's birthday party. Around 40 fascists attacked the group, apparently believing them to be antifascists because of their punk clothing.

USA: Oil giant Chevron barred its shareholders from the company's AGM on 26th May. The company effectively had to break its own rules to stop 30 indigenous people from countries such as Burma, Australia, Ecuador and Nigeria from posing embarrassing questions about the company's mining operations.

LENS CAP GERMANY



The anarcho-syndicalist union FAU, a member of the International Workers Association, demonstrates outside the Babylon cinema in Berlin against the group's banning by the state. It was due to learn whether the ban had been overturned on 10th June.

Shackdwellers facing repression

Solidarity groups have warned that large elements of the South African shackdwellers' movement nationwide are being driven underground by violent recriminations from far right and state-linked forces.

Supporters of the local ward councillor in eTwatwa are thought to have been behind the burning of two shacks in the area belonging to leading members of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) late last month, just days after an attack on its supporters killed one and injured another.

David Mathontsi was away visiting the injured when the attack occurred, during which his children were threatened with a gun.

Meanwhile in Protea South, Soweto LPM chair Maureen Mnisi's shack was also attacked on May 23rd while she was still

inside. She only survived because her son stumbled across the attackers and chased them off.

On the same evening five men armed with guns and machetes beat the wife of another LPM member in an attack at their home which is thought to be linked to bond house dwellers in the area.

Following the beating, the five men allegedly roamed the informal settlement attacking more people.

Attacks against shack dweller representatives and activists have been on the rise since a string of assaults and murders were launched against the AbM group in Durban late last year.

The movements have been attempting to organise across the huge country as state forces attempt to move them out into the suburbs of major cities.

Notes from the US

So BP will pay for the damage they're causing at Deepwater Horizon, the burst oil pipe which wrecking that part of the world's ocean and coast at 128 gallons a second? Not necessarily. At a recent White House press conference, Robert Gibbs (press secretary) repeated that the administration is committed to making BP pay all those costs that are associated to the spill.

Yet a law from 1990 may cap the company's liability at \$75 million (£50m) in economic

dangers – although a bill was immediately introduced to raise this to \$10 billion (£6.7bn).

Even that sum is small when compared with the \$2 billion (£1.35bn) profit which the company makes every month. Experts and industry-watchers estimate that only half a million dollars (£336,000) or about ten hours of profit would have been all that was needed to have built a safety valve that could well have prevented the spill.

Overview of Israel's flotilla attack

International community fails to rally against fatal piracy by IDF

Following the Israeli government's fatal attack on the aid flotilla to Gaza only Turkey and Egypt have taken substantive measures to show their disapproval, in part due to widespread discontent expressed by the local population.

While Turkey has cancelled war games, recalled its ambassador and gone from tacit support of Israel to outright belligerence, Egypt has opened the border to Gaza, allowing hundreds of Palestinians to enter the country and bringing in aid and expertise.

However with Turkey's attitude reflecting its own internal and international concerns rather than humanitarian interests, and Egypt largely responding to significant pressure from neighbouring Arab nations, the strong words of countries around the world have failed to amount to concrete measures to help collapse the blockade.

The main potential means of pressuring Israel, sanctions and boycotts which have been advocated by activists in the region, have failed to get off the ground despite UN demands for the Gaza blockade to be lifted.

The lacklustre approach follows the storming of a largely unarmed ship, the Mavi Marmara, by Israeli Defence Force (IDF) commandos in a fatal raid which killed and maimed scores of people.

Conflicting reports have been offered about what happened, with activists on board the ship saying IDF forces fired before they rappelled down from helicopters,



An Israeli army helicopter approaches the Gaza aid convoy in the early hours of the morning.

sparking a panicked response which gave troops the excuse to gun down civilians.

Israel meanwhile says its troops, who boarded the ship after telling it to turn away from its course to deliver vital supplies to Gaza, were attacked by a "lynch mob" armed with sticks and knives.

Initially putting the blame on "jihadists connected to Hamas and al Qaeda," official spokespeople later blamed Turkish jihadis, saying they had been brought on board specifically to provoke conflict.

However critics have pointed out that not only could the ships have been stopped simply by damaging its rotors and then towed to port, but the commandos which boarded were the

elite of a country with long experience of riot control procedures. That they would have been unable to deal with a group of people armed with cutlery and shipboard tools without firing indiscriminately into the crowd has been met with scepticism.

There has been widespread anger at early reporting of the events, which saw the BBC and Sky News in particular run the IDF version of events as fact, rather than opinion.

At the time of going to press, survivors of the boardings, which captured all but one of the flotilla of ships which set out with thousands of tonnes of aid, were starting to arrive home – but up to four people had been detained.

Notes from the US

◀ page 6

Have lessons been learnt? You might have hoped they have. But the Center for Biological Diversity reported a fortnight into the disaster that Obama's administration continues its policy of exempting new offshore drilling operations from environmental review.

Indeed, even since the explosion on April 20th at the BP rig, the Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service has approved 27 new offshore drilling permits, that's nearly two each day.

All but one of these were granted the self-same exemption from environmental review as that used in approving the BP drilling site.

So BP is taking appropriate steps not to make things worse? No: almost three weeks after the spill, BP again began to stream dispersants directly into the Gulf of Mexico. Their chemical makeup is being kept secret despite the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency admits that the effects of the chemicals are still largely unpredictable.

Indeed, tests which have been carried out

by the Louisiana Environmental Action Network show that the levels of airborne chemicals there exceed state limits.

Hydrogen sulphide, for example, has been detected at concentrations more than 100 times greater than a level which is known to cause physical reactions in humans.

So, at least everyone is sorry? Not at all: Transocean has so far made a \$270 million (£180m) profit from its insurance claim.

The last word should go to an activist in the area, George Barisich, president of the Louisiana Commercial Fishermen's Association: "if they don't stop it... Mother Nature is going to stick it to you. You got three months, you're in hurricane season. You get a depression, you don't need a hurricane. You get a depression, give me four-foot storm tides, that stuff is going over, the oil is going further in. It's going to kill trees and everything else. Oil kills everything."

Louis Further

General strike wave hitting Europe

Following a general strike in Greece on 20th May, unions in both Spain and Italy are threatening their own in response to massive austerity measures being imposed across their public sectors.

Spain's largest union Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) could call a general strike to protest against planned austerity measures, its head said last week, while Italy's main leftwing union federation on 26th May threatened to call a one-day general strike next month in protest of its government's austerity package.

CCOO head Ignacio Fernandez Toxo said he would "probably" invoke a general strike over the Socialist government's "right-wing economic policy, financial speculation and the markets".

Spain has the highest levels of unemployment in the euro zone at 20%, up from a 2007 low of 8%, after a burst property bubble and consumer spending slump left millions from the construction and service sector without work.

The English Defence League

Who are the EDL, what motivates them and why are we unable to connect with the very people they are attracting: the disenfranchised working class – this article offers some insights

Once again working class kids are out on the streets, kicking back at authority, attacking conservatives and the cosy status quo, standing up for freedom, ridiculing religion and battling with the police. Anarchists? No. Socialists? No. So who? The EDL! Well that is clearly only half the story. The EDL (English Defence League) first appeared in summer 2009 at a demonstration in Birmingham against Sharia Law. Their placards read clichés like ‘Black and White Unite’, ‘Support Gay Rights against Islam’, etc. The group claimed they were simply against Islamic fundamentalism, something no anarchist could disagree with. But it was also immediately clear many on the group were from not only the right wing but the far right. While the facts are disputed, it is clear some far right activists are involved, though the BNP condemns them as ‘provocateurs’. Immediately Unite Against Fascism (UAF/SWP) and Hope Not Hate/Searchlight (CPB) attacked them as nazis and racists and have demonstrated against them every since. The EDL conversely have held swastika burning press conferences and attack fascism as being anti-British and nazism as traitorous.¹



But who and what exactly are they then? It is hard to say. Possibly a good analogy is the Labour Party. Clearly the objectives of those who run Labour are currently neo-liberal and anti-working class. But it retains a core of progressive beliefs and the trade unions like to think they still have power in it. And while there is many a parasite at the top of the party still millions of working class people support it as they think it is their party and thousands of Leftists still support it as they can not see any other option for the future.

The EDL is equally contrary. It claims to be simply opposed to Islamic fundamentalism but increasing seems to be against ‘Islamification’, the idiotic and baseless idea that all Muslims wish, let alone could, take over the UK and make it a caliphate. And increasingly it appears to be against the Left on the basis that the UAF are ‘fascists’ for opposing them. It contains libertarians (right wing) opposed to the conservatism of Islamism and particularly the extreme brands marketed on our street corners, it contains many ex-soldiers angry at seeing, as they see it, their efforts and their dead colleagues sacrificed ‘for their country’ belittled. Its following is predominantly young frustrated white working class kids who would probably have been happy going to football on a Saturday years ago, but this is now the best cheap thrills on offer: lots of drinking, having a go at the police and the possibility of a row with Muslim kids. And of course it contains a lot of far right activists, using, as the Left uses front groups (ANL, STW, RTW, YFFJs, etc.) the EDL as a way to recruit.

Who actually runs it is not clear. Various names crop up: Trevor Kelway (who we are told is a racist but I personally saw warmly shaking the hands of a young black supporter on an EDL demo), Chris Renton (said to be a BNP activist but it is unclear if this is true), Jeff Marsh (or Seaside, a self confessed and infamous Cardiff City Soulcrew hooligan who hates fascists he claims and also Antifa and Class War²) and the main spokesman ‘Tommy Robinson’ from Luton (not incidentally the real Tommy Robinson, the Luton Town/MIG [Men In Gear] hooligan), who while being accused of stirring up fascism wrote on 5th April this year that “the EDL will not tolerate fascism in any form... How can anyone in their right mind support an ideology that caused the deaths of millions upon millions of white, black, and Asian peoples?”³ The final key element is Alan Lake a Highgate based ‘businessman’ and possible bankroller of the EDL and who again while avowing anti-fascism is part of a European anti-Islam grouping.

The EDL on paper are clearly not fascist and even anti-fascist. Even Nick Lowles, *Searchlight*, the liberal anti-fascist magazine states that while many of the EDL were nationalists and racists, only a handful



Above, EDL members intimidate a young muslim woman on the way to their protest march in Manchester in January 2010; below left, EDL marchers in Nottingham, December 2009; below right, EDL demonstration in Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens, October 2009.

would associate themselves with fascist, far-right policies. “While it is not a fascist organisation, there are a handful of organised fascists in key positions. We are concerned that as the EDL grows it will attract more extremists and fascists.” And even Lancaster Unity says they have “decent people” amongst others, as members.

But one key definition of fascism is that fascism, to the benefit of the state, the status quo, the rich, divides the working class and attacks a scapegoat community as part of that division. There are similarities with the attacks on Jews in pre and Nazi Germany where, while only some Jews were part of the state/capitalism, all Jews were attacked regardless of their class or power. Similarly, here and now, while only some Muslims espouse reactionary ideas, let alone actually enact them, the EDL crowd ends up verbally attacking Islam, and Muslims as a whole. (although there has not been one reported racial attack associated with an EDL demo). And while the EDL is again clearly not racist or racialist in the sense it believes one race is better than another (it states clearly it is multi-racial, with some evidence), however ‘racism’ is also defined by opposition to one group of people, regardless of ‘race’ (which is of course a nonsense term).

EDL demonstrations are getting bigger and more confrontational and increasingly

general, it is at the roots we will succeed. Attacking symptoms rarely works. Calling for state bans falls into a trap of their making as they project a radical anti-establishment stance. Attempts to physically confront or stop them have ended in failure and to be honest the presence of the police has surely saved the skin of many an ‘anti-fascist’ at the EDL demos. We need to argue politically at the EDL to divide the good from the bad. And we need to have community defence leagues to, if needs be, defend whoever – Muslims or trade unionists, the unemployed, etc. – against the EDL, the BNP, the police, whoever. And we need to be based in and creating alternatives to their loyalist crap in the communities they work in.

And finally the EDL tell us a lot about what has happened to us as a movement. Where once we mobilised and attracted working class youth, now the Left and anarchists are utterly marginal in the working class and increasingly disliked in the ‘underclass’, the unorganised, where paid work let alone unions are a distant memory. The EDL is what it shows us; that we, the anarchists, the socialists, the communists, the radical have almost entirely lost contact with the vast majority of ordinary people. If we genuinely want to change society instead of just parroting a mantra, instead of just wearing the T-shirt, we need to be winning over the kids who are joining the EDL.

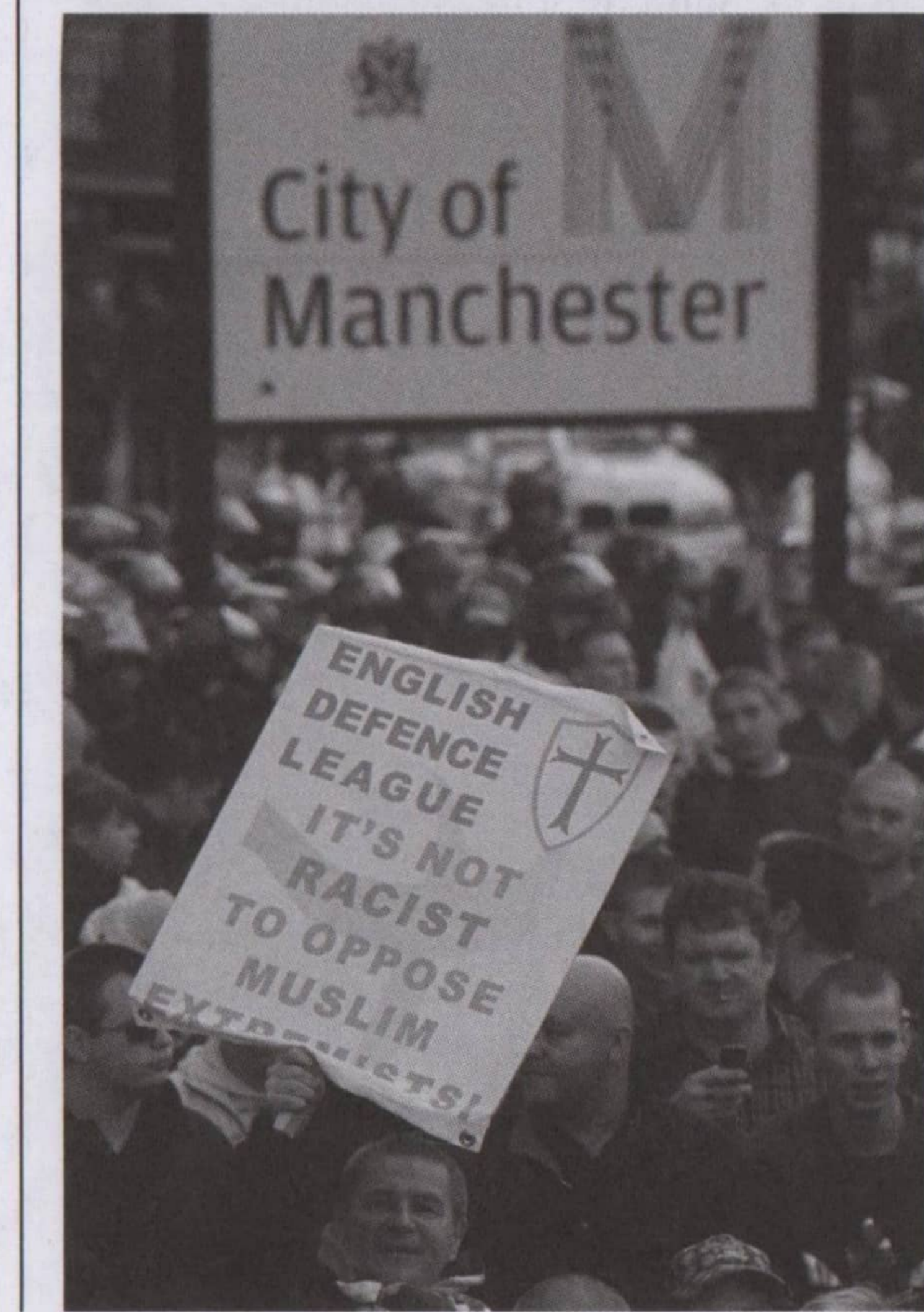
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Notes

- 1 <http://www.libertiesalliance.org/2010/04/05/edl-leader-tommy-robinson-issues-anti-nazi-statement/>
- 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2SZMjcS0Gs>
- 3 bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00sh6xp/Young_British_and_Angry/

quo, defends the rich, defends those who attack us. And we clearly see the threat the EDL can be used at some point as an out-and-out fascist organisation against, e.g. strikes or demonstrations. The Left sees the EDL as simply, and wrongly, as fascist and racist and even nazi. They attempt to push everything into boxes of the 1930s and simply the EDL do not fit. The Left simply fail to understand the depth of frustration and resentment in the working class as to how neo-liberalism has turned the world upside down, creating a mass of unemployed and breaking up communities. A major problem for the Left/anarchists’ understanding of the EDL is their middle class aversion to young working class men mobbed up. As any parent knows teenage boys/young men can be pretty unpleasant, often without them knowing. The chants of ‘Who the fuck is Allah’ really are not the issue at all, and most of those chanting that would be just as happy chanting ‘Who’s the bastard in the black’ at some myopic referee, and with just as little intent to take anything further. Today’s society offers young men little outlet to burn off their testosterone and the right have always been far better at helping them do this than the left. Compulsory viewing is the BBC3 documentary *Young, British and Angry*.³

And of course the big question is how do we deal with it. As with defeating fascism in



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Following the astonishing revelation in the last issue that 84b will continue to stand up for some years, we've been sitting and contemplating the huge pile of boxes we had to move to allow the surveyor access to the walls.

There has been an upside to this that we have uncovered two titles we thought we had sold out of – namely Donald Rooum's *Introduction to Anarchism* and Peter Marshall's *Political Writings of William Godwin*. These will be going up on the website as soon as we've fixed the latest internet spat that stopped us using the wireless connection in the shop (but not the office strangely) last week.

As we now have room to move in the office, but have temporarily clogged up the shop, we are going to do a proper stock-take to see what quantities of titles we have left.

Some comrades will have noticed the controversy on the internetweb about a book on the history of Anti Fascist Action we've been considering publishing. There is a special Freedom Collective meeting on 1st June to consider what to be done, too late for this issue to report on. We will put out a statement on the website and a full explanation will be in the next issue.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, look at the number above your name on the address label. This issue is vol 71, no 11, so if the number is 7111 or less, it's now due for renewal. See page 16 for a renewal form or freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, just ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 19th June 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 10th June.

You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

It's not unusual for states to invade their own territory, but the recent operation by the Jamaican government against Christopher Coke, a drug lord known as Dudus, throws their motives into sharp relief.

The district of Tivoli Gardens in West Kingston is, by all accounts, not a very nice place. It is poor and run by gangsters. Paradoxically, the dons, or gang leaders, are quite popular with a lot of residents, at least compared to the government and the politicians. Jamaicans even have a term for politicians' deceit and games – politricks.

Governments everywhere don't really care about poor places, unless they pose a threat to public order. The gang in Tivoli Gardens, known as the Shower Posse, act as a mini-state. Within the district, they hold the monopoly on violence and use their patronage to sort out issues residents have. The gang's origins come from the seventies and many have ties to one or other of the main political parties.

In Coke's case, it is to the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP). The JLP, despite its name, is actually a right-wing conservative party and the current Jamaican Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, is the local MP for West Kingston. Given that one of the functions of the posses is to deliver votes to political parties, it is unthinkable that the two don't know each other.

Since independence in August 1962, Jamaica has see-sawed between the right-wing JLP and its leftist opponent the People's National Party (PNP). In the 1970s, the PNP proposed a levy on bauxite, which was mined mainly by American companies. The bauxite companies started to scale back their production in Jamaica and laid off local workers. The violence between the parties and their associated gangs grew at every election and

the 1980 one in particular saw guns brought into the island, with the blessing if not active involvement of the CIA.

Some of Coke's power comes from the continued 'War on Drugs', an excuse for the US to spend the peace dividend from the end of the Cold War on a new enemy. The prohibition and criminalisation of drug use means there is big money to be made. Aside from native marijuana production, Jamaica is an ideal transit point for cocaine from South America to the US, Canada and Europe.

In 2009, the US asked to extradite Coke on drugs and arms trafficking charges. The Jamaican government prevaricated and tried to lobby the US through a law firm, Manatt, Phelps and Philips. When this became known, the opposition called on Golding to resign. Golding finally authorised Coke's extradition in May 2010 and armed forces started to move into the Tivoli Gardens area on 23rd May.

As I write, there have been over 70 official casualties in the fighting, most of them civilians. Coke is rumoured to be willing to surrender, but few there believe he'll be taken alive as he knows too much. Jamaican state forces have a reputation for extra-judicial killings and there are already reports of soldiers shooting unarmed men in Tivoli Gardens.

The dons are no Robin Hood characters – they are a mini-state filling the vacuum left by the withdrawal of any sort of positive state intervention. Coke has been the indirect beneficiary of US state power and likely direct Jamaican state power. However, the powerful actor in this drama has turned against him and the junior player has fallen into line. Neither the state nor the dons have anything to offer the people of Jamaica, whose true liberation is in their own hands.



Soldiers in the Tivoli Gardens area of Jamaica.

LETTERS AND COMMENT

When the earthquake struck Haiti on 12th January, more than 4,000 prisoners, along with their guards, escaped from the grossly overcrowded National Penitentiary in Port au Prince. The jail, which was originally built for only 800, held 4,300 at the time of the earthquake, and was almost completely destroyed. So crowded was the prison that every available space had been turned over to housing prisoners, even the tennis court-sized chapel was used to hold nearly 400 prisoners, crammed in so tight that they had to take turns sleeping on the floor or in the numerous hammocks slung from the ceiling.

This was the everyday reality of Haitian prisons, amongst the world's worst, prior to the January earthquake – grossly overcrowded conditions with totally adequate sanitation provision, appalling food and little or no access to any form of health care.

Fungicidal infections and scabies were rife, the risk of tuberculosis and HIV infection were high. Prisoners often die of malnutrition and as the result of injuries often sustained during their initial arrest and detention or as a result of prisoner-on-prisoner violence or beating from the guards.

Food was often only one meal a day, providing much less than the minimum 1,300 calories recommended by Haiti's Justice department. Much of this was down to the chaotic nature of the post-Aristide Haitian society, heavily dependant on international aid. But even the miniscule amounts of that limited aid that used to make its way to the prisoners could threaten their health, as the late 2006 spate of deaths from beriberi amongst young male prisoner proved. The cause was eventually traced to the traditional rice cooking methods used for aid-donated US processed rice, removing what little Vitamin B1 was left in the large communal rice pot that the poorest prisoners (those who did not have food sent in daily by relatives) ate from twice a day. As a consequence already malnourished prisoners suffered fatal health collapses and many died.

Many of these young prisoners, like the rest of the prison population, were detainees – people who had never been before a judge, let alone convicted of any crime. According to a 2008 US State Department report, 88% of the country's 316 incarcerated juveniles had been held for three years or more without charges or trial. This pattern was repeated amongst adult prisoners, a survey of 1,000 prisoners at the main penitentiary conducted before the quake found only about 2% should have actually been in prison, not only never having been tried but many also having served their sentences and not having been released.

When the quake did hit however, eight of the country's 17 prisons were destroyed or damaged, and 60% of the 9,000 prisoners fled – most to see if their families were safe, though none were going to stay because of the horrendous conditions on the inside. One of the cities where the local prison remained intact was Les Cayes, Haiti's third largest city. The nineteenth century prison there held 467 detainees in 14 cells at the time, more than four times its intended capacity and 72% of whom were untried detainees.

During the earthquake the prisoners started to panic and complain, screaming: 'Help! We're going to die in here'. When the prisoners didn't quieten down, the guards took the noisemakers out and beat them with staves, throwing them all together in an already overcrowded cell. As an additional punishment their twice-a-day bathroom privileges were removed. The prisoners responded by plotting an escape – after all, they wanted to know how their families were.

Amongst their number was an ex-policeman who informed the prison governor, but he did nothing even though he had lost many of his guards who had left to find their own families. On 19th January, the prisoners tried to escape, seizing a set of keys. The guards fled and the prisoners started to smash up the jail. At the same time nearby armed Senegalese police working for the UN surrounded the prison preventing any escape. The local Haitian officials asked the UN police to go into the prison and fire on the cons.

They refused, and it wasn't until a company of Haitian riot police turned up hours later that anyone entered the jail. They lobbed tear-gas into the main compound and went in shooting. Prisoners were ordered to lie on the ground face-down with hands over their head. A number were then executed where they lay, others shot through the bars of cells they were still locked in. At least 12 people, but up to 19, died there or from their wounds later. Up to 40 others were wounded – no one knows exactly how many as the authorities have tried to cover their tracks. Bodies were

buried in an unmarked grave and prisoners' clothes were collected and burnt. Journalists were refused entry to the prison.

Officially, it is claimed that the police entered because they feared for the safety of prison kitchen staff and that prisoners had found a shotgun in an office. The kitchen staff and prisoners claim that prisoners fired no shots, that the shotgun didn't work and there were no cartridges for it anyway. The prison department then blamed all the killings on a prisoner they named as Ti Mousson (real name Luguens Cazeau) claiming he shot all 10 (the official death toll) because they refused to support his escape attempt and then escaped over the wall!

Since then, the *New York Times* has broken the story and the UN, whose Agency for International Development, along with the US State Dept. have requested \$141.3 million for rebuilding the Haitian justice infrastructure and are anxious to maintain good relations with potential donors, have been forced to say that they will investigate the claims. Of the 5,000-plus prisoners who escaped back in January, around 200 have been recaptured and many are in what is left of the National Penitentiary, where conditions remain as grim as ever – at least two prisoners died in fights in a two-week period last month. And the governor there now just happens to have been the governor of Les Cayes prison on 19th January.

Bra
Brighton ABC

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Former Chief Inspector of Prisons, David Ramsbotham, has laid into the last three Labour governments in the introduction to the latest edition of dodgy prison entrepreneur Mark Leech's *Prisons Handbook* (only £80). He accused Nu Labour of bringing in a "torrent of hastily and ill thought through legislation", bringing about the demonisation of young people and of virtually destroying the national probation service.

He also apparently accuses Labour of lacking any form of clear strategy on how to run the Prison Service resulting in "government on the back of a fag packet, waste of resources and unnecessary crises in services that were crying out for leadership and direction". And he labelled their much-vaunted National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the body meant to bring prisons and probation under one roof, as a "monster bureaucracy". Certainly not damning them with false praise there then.

So what of the new government's struggles to bring the behemoth of the criminal justice system under control (and budget)? Well, the first tranche of financial savings have been announced with the Ministry of Justice (the courts and prisons system) having to find £325 million or 3.4% 'savings' from its budget (not all from the prison budget as GB currently appear to think).

The Prison Service had already been asked to identify £400 million worth of savings and would be hard pushed to find additional cuts. Already education budgets are feeling the pinch and prisoners' time out of cell is suffering, so attempts will be made to deliver the prison building programme more efficiently. Yet, at a time when the prison population in England and Wales has hit a new high of 85,076, they appear to be missing the obvious fact that the major costs of holding so many prisoners are the staff costs themselves, which are an order of magnitude higher than the cost of housing, clothing and feed the prisoners. No doubt the Prison Officers Association, self-styled defenders of working class trade unionism, are girding their collective loins for a fight to the death to increase prisoner numbers and therefore protect their members' jobs.

Maybe they could make a start by tackling the much criticised prison psychiatric services and rated by prisoners as a dangerous waste of resources. Probably the worst of which is the £200 million DSPD programme introduced by Nu Labour to cover a new psychiatric illness of their own invention, dangerous and severe personality disorder. 240 prisoners, 85% of whom a paper in the journal *Medicine, Science and Law* claims should have already been released from prison, are currently locked up in four secure units under this scheme, costing about a million quid per head.



Protesters form lengthy queues to gain entry to Bristol's 32nd Tesco store, reports the latest *Earth First! Action Update*.

● **Liverpool Solidarity Federation** has produced its first news-sheet called, appropriately enough, *Wildcat*. It features a report on the recent Merseyside postal workers wildcat strike, a celebration of 100 years of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain, Liverpool's rejection of the BNP and an interview with radical folk singer Alun Parry, one of the organisers of the Working Class Music Festival in the city. As with the national organisation, Liverpool Solfed's activity is aimed at promoting, assisting and developing of working class struggles. If you are interested in finding out more about what they do, or joining Solfed, then please get in touch at liverpoolsf@solfed.org.uk

● The radical ecological direct action movement **Earth First!** have just published their new summer edition *Action Update*. Quoting Durruti, it takes us through reports on coal trains blockaded, peat bogs defended, and gas terminals shut down. There are also features on the dangers of nanotech, current state of nuclear GM trials, protest camps and the recent Titnore victory. Globally it looks at whaling ship sabotage, coal port pirates, riots in Zagreb, mining firm occupations in Bolivia, dam resistance in Brazil and much more. As climate change remains at the forefront of the political agenda **Earth First!** retains both its radical edge and political integrity proudly proclaiming – if you believe action speaks louder than words then **Earth First!** is for you!

A list of local groups, protest camps and support networks can be found at earthfirst.org.uk

● Sharp on the heels of a successful bookfair in Sheffield activists in the south west are preparing for the **Bristol Anarchist Bookfair**. Bristol has one of the most active political

scenes in the country and their bookfairs always draws a large and enthusiastic crowd. This year it will be held on Saturday 11th September and is now taking bookings for stalls and meetings. Last year they estimated well over 600 people came through the doors and this year's event will be on one of Bristol's busiest streets in the city's alternative hub. Groups, campaigns and distros are now being asked to book their place. They are also looking for people from the area to get involved and make the event happen. If you are interested, get in touch.

Contact bristolanarchistbookfair@riseup.net or see bristolanarchistbookfair.org

● **Indymedia UK** celebrated 10 years of informing the activist community by throwing a massive party in South London. The global network of websites and media outlets has been offering alternative media coverage of all manner of political events from the G8/IMF/World Bank summits to local radical activities.

The first Indymedia was set up November 1999 to report on protests against the WTO meeting in Seattle, on 30th November 1999, and to act as an alternative media source. This followed a successful experiment at J18, the infamous demonstration in London against the G8 summit. Less than two years later there were 89 Indymedia websites covering 31 countries growing to over 150 by January 2006.

Indymedia is best known for their open publishing newswires, sites where anyone with internet access can publish news from their own perspective. Despite being prone to abuse, Indymedia still maintains a very pro-active anti-capitalist stance and is often first with breaking protest news. See their website at indymedia.org.uk

Inquilab Zindabad!

“Revolution necessarily implies the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on a new and better adopted basis, often necessitating complete destruction of the existing state of affairs. It was one of the illusions of each generation that the social institutions in which it lived were natural and permanent. Yet for countless years social institutions had been superceded by others adapted to temporary needs.” (Bhagat Singh)

Memories tend to fade with the passing of time, and myths take over. There is a side of the story of the Indian freedom struggle that is not told in the international media, eclipsed as it has been by the mythical shadows of Gandhi, so much so that Gandhi has come to stand for India. But the Indian resistance against British imperialism was not a unified movement by any stretch of the imagination, and there were many groups and prominent personalities that were expressly unhappy with the methods and beliefs of the Indian National Congress dominated by Gandhi; they believed (the untouchables, for example, or many Muslims) that they were not represented by those who had taken over the national leadership. Bhagat Singh and his comrades were some of those who had a different way, a different vision.

On the 23rd March 1931, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were hanged at Lahore Central Jail. They were found guilty in a remarkable trial named officially as the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The specific charges against them were the murder of a British police officer J.P. Saunders and the exploding of a bomb in the Parliament assembly (British India), while the general indictment was that of conspiring against the British Crown. Their trial was remarkable because the defendants chose to represent themselves – they would march into the courtroom singing revolutionary songs and shouting slogans like ‘*inquilab zindabad!*’, and when they saw that the British were already decided on the verdict, they refused to attend the proceedings and the verdict of death sentence was read out to them in prison.

Bhagat Singh came from a Sikh family of freedom fighters in Punjab. Punjab in the 1900s was rife with fierce nationalist sentiments, and as such Bhagat was initiated into the political atmosphere very early in life. The infamous Jalianwallah Bagh Massacre of 1919 in which hundreds of unarmed and peaceful protestors, including women, children and the elderly, were trapped and shot (none survived), left a lasting and burning memory in this young revolutionary-to-be who was then twelve years old.

After experimenting with Gandhi’s non-violent non-cooperation, Bhagat became convinced that India could be saved only through an armed revolution. This was the time when he started studying Marx and Lenin and the Russian revolution seriously.



Indian freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, who was executed in 1931.

He was the first (and the only) Indian freedom fighter to organise the Indian freedom struggle along explicitly socialist lines. Although young (he was 23 years old when he was executed), he was far-sighted enough to realise that driving out the foreign occupiers was only the first step on the way to nation-building; that the political vacuum left would soon be filled by local power-mongers, the national bourgeoisie; and that the real, long-term concern should be social and economic equality. He was also a champion of communal harmony. In fact, he foresaw the enormity of the Hindu-Muslim divide long before Gandhi did. He warned that Congress’s tactics of table-talk with the British would force them to make disastrous compromises which would ultimately alienate the Muslims in India, which was precisely what happened. What’s more, he even foresaw the horrors of partition, a nightmare which haunts the Indian and Pakistani people to this day. Bhagat was also brave enough, not only to reject God, but also to proclaim his atheism in a personal essay titled *Why I am an Atheist* that he wrote during his last days in prison.

By the late 1920s so famous had he become, especially among the youth of India, that he rivaled Gandhi in popularity and iconic status. More dangerously, he represented a genuine alternative to Gandhi. The British knew that they could manipulate Gandhi but not Bhagat.

He had already made his intentions clear when he executed J.P. Saunders in retaliation for the killing of a moderate Indian leader Lala Lajpat Rai in a non-violent demonstration. So when Bhagat decided to bomb the Parliament assembly and surrender himself, the British saw their opportunity. Even his execution was conducted hastily and before time.

As mentioned earlier, the trial was a choreographed affair. But Bhagat used the courtroom to propagate socialist ideas to the youth of India, which was the reason why he had chosen to surrender himself. The bomb itself was designed not to kill or maim but as a rather alarming firecracker to alert the British. Many of his comrades thought that his decision to sacrifice himself was foolish as he was more valuable to the movement alive. But his trial and execution turned him into a great hero and martyr and contributed to the fuel of popular outrage against the British.

The pity though is that he was turned into just another poster boy for Indian heroism, paraded around and sung paeans to, but the socialist society that he envisaged for India within its unique context had been abandoned long ago. What he had feared has occurred as surely as he had predicted: India did not lose her masters, she has merely exchanged them.

Chetna

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JUNE

5th No Strawberry Fayre? Cambridgeshire police may think they have shut down one of the last free festivals in England, but let's show them otherwise – bring instruments, sound systems, friends, and assemble on Midsummer Common, Cambridge, email classwarcambridgeshire@worker.com or see cambridgeanarchists.wordpress.com

5th Song and Dance at Faslane Naval Base, Helensburgh, Scotland from 12.30pm until 2.30pm, for details see <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2010/05/12/song-and-dance>

7th The trial of six anti-arms trade activists who broke into EDO/ITT bomb factory and caused extensive damage begins at Hove Crown Court, protest outside from 9am, see smashedo.org.uk or <http://decommissioners.co.uk> for details.

10th SPES Book Club, Victor Serge's *Memoirs of A Revolutionary 1901-1941* translated by Peter Sedgwick, discussion facilitated by Terry Liddle in the Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL at 7pm, email spesevents@yahoo.co.uk for further details.

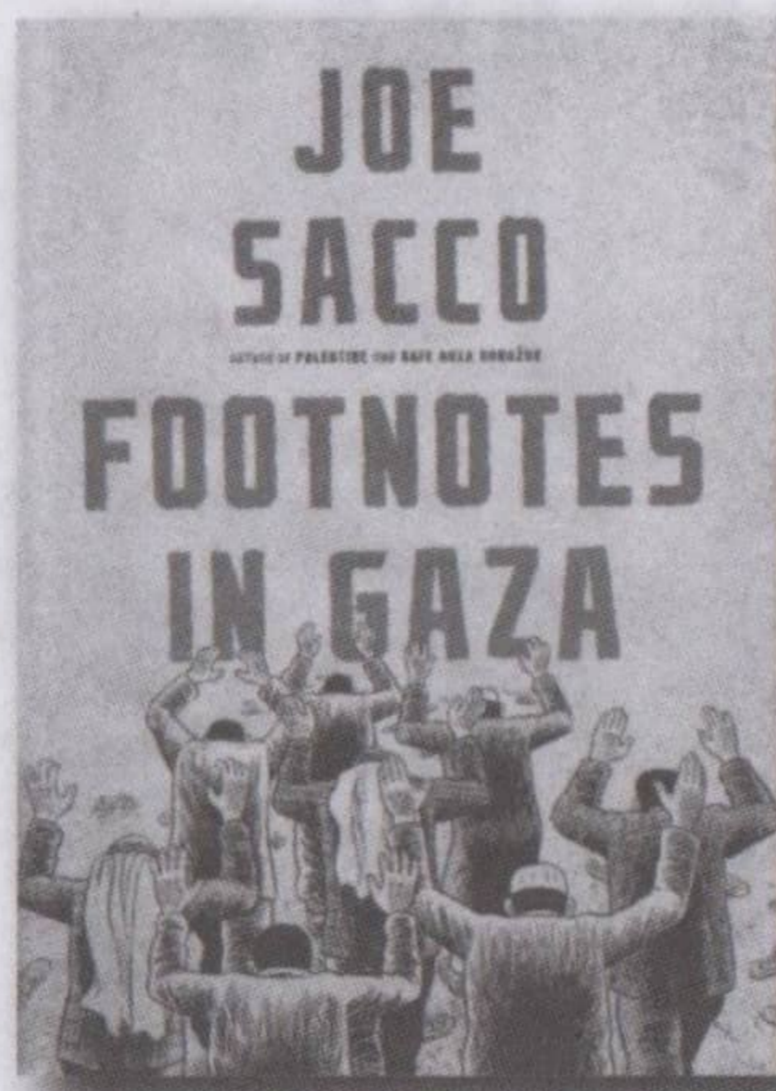
11th to 13th HacktionLab 2010: BarnCamp, two days of workshops ranging from renewable energy, foraging for food, citizen journalism, using free software for activism, camping, open space sessions, entertainment, great food at Highbury Farm, Redbrook, Wye Valley, Monmouthshire, £25 adv, £35 on door (includes food, accommodation, entertainment, workshops) email barncamp@hacktivist.net or see <http://hacktivist.net/barncamp> for info.

18th to 21st Outdoor Skillshare, weekend of workshops and skillsharing in rural Scotland – learn many of the basics of direct action protest camps, including climbing and rope access, building tree houses, cooking, knots, fire-lighting, wild foods and more, email to find out more or if you have skills you want to share, location tbc, email outdoorskillshare@riseup.net or see <http://outdoorskillshare.noflag.org.uk>

21st Showing of *The Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* (Paul Avrich, 1980, 58 mins), 7.30pm at The Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA, blending participant's interviews with stills, newsreel footage and selections from old motion pictures, this documentary gives a fascinating and penetrating insight into the lives and struggles of Jewish anarchists in the USA, see cowleyclub.org.uk for details.

26th to 1st July Afghanistan Peace Walk from London to the military prison in Colchester where soldier Joe Glenton is being held for refusing to fight in Afghanistan, meet 10.30am on Saturday 26th at Ministry of Defence, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2EU for a day of counter-recruitment activity, then on Sunday 27th it's Unarmed Forces Day, meeting again at 10.30am at the Ministry of Defence for the start of the walk to Colchester, call 0845 458 2564, email afghanpeacewalk@googlemail.com or see www.j-n-v.org for details.

BOOK

**Footnotes in Gaza**

by Joe Sacco,
published by
Jonathan Cape,
£20

Writer and illustrator Joe Sacco has been hailed as the creator of 'war reportage comics'. He has received awards for his previous works *Palestine* and *Safe Area Gorazde*. In his latest offering, *Footnotes in Gaza*, he returns to Palestine in 2003. This time he seeks the recollections of the inhabitants of the Palestinian enclave of Rafah, trying to uncover accounts of an Israeli army massacre on 12th November 1956. As an inhabitant of Gaza told him "events are continuous," leaving Palestinians unable to digest one tragedy before another is upon them. The author simply couldn't stomach how this 50 year old massacre had become a mere footnote in history with virtually no official record of the killing of 111 Palestinians.

He bases himself in the Gaza Strip as the US is pumping itself up to invade Iraq. Alternating between Khan Younnis and Rafah, he weaves together current events with the recollections of Palestinian elders, providing an insight into the daily harshness of life in the Palestinian territories. He graphically shows the chronic overcrowding, the watchtowers, unemployment, nightly gunfire and funerals of the martyrs. At the same time he shows the warmth and endearing humour of the Palestinian people.

He gathers over fifty eye witness accounts of the massacre. Israeli troops took over the Palestinian settlement in Rafah supposedly hunting out the militant 'Fedayeen'. They ordered all the men to report to the school and imposed an immediate curfew on the town. Those attempting to comply were randomly shot by the Israeli army as they made their way to the school. As they

entered the school gates they were all beaten, some to death. Held in the school playground, collaborators picked out supposed militants for the Israelis who were promptly executed. Most were later released, some were interned, families had to wait hours to collect their dead.

Sacco is at pains to verify the authenticity of the recollections, pointing out the inconsistencies in many accounts but picking up the common threads. In the introduction he invites Israeli army personnel to give their accounts to Israeli historians. To date I do not believe this has happened.

The book has tough subject matter, pages of brutal images showing a frame by frame account of beatings and executions. The illustrations capture the terror felt by those sharing their memories. But the author also keeps the reader up to date with contemporary Palestinian life. He focuses on the demolition of Palestinian houses by Israeli bulldozers, meeting people who are continually made homeless. He witnesses the body of 23 year old American activist Rachel Corrie being brought into Rafah hospital. Rachel was crushed beneath an Israeli bulldozer as she sought to defend a Palestinian home from illegal demolition. At the same time a young Gazan is bought in shot dead by the Israeli army. But all eyes and grief focus on the young American; the killing of Gaza's residents is too routine.

Overall a very good read, it gives a brief background to the Palestinian struggle and its history. Also worth reading by the same author are *Palestine* and *Safe Area Gorazde*. Don't bother with *Notes From A Defeatist*, unless you like sharing someone else's guilt-ridden angst.

Michael Gribben



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Asked in the *Evening Standard*, he replied "As an economist, Keynes or Adam Smith. As a man of action and achievement, Deng Xiaoping, the former leader of the Communist party of China, who led China towards a market economy." He forgot to add "... and ordered the massacre at Tiananmen Square".
2. The involuntary implantation of microchips into people.
3. One of the main arguments for the ban,

in the words of Virginia State delegate Mark Cole, is that the chips are "the mark of the Beast" as outlined in the Book of Revelation.

4. An anarcho-syndicalist guerilla from Galicia, Spain, described in a book by Carlos Parrado as "the Guerrilla Franco Couldn't Hunt Down". His real name was Ramón Rodríguez Varela, he took to the hills in July 36 and died of natural causes in 1967.

Discipline and punish

Two documentaries illustrating old and new forms of biopolitical power are too blinkered to transcend liberal agendas, concludes Tom Jennings

Unexpectedly appearing on 24th April on otherwise forgettable cable channel Yesterday, *In the Land of the Free* chronicles the case of the Angola 3 (pictured below), locked down in Louisiana's State Penitentiary – named after the African origin of those working the site in its previous, more explicit, role as slave plantation. Robert King (released in 2001 after reluctantly pleading to a lesser charge)¹, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace (still inside) are among America's longest-serving political prisoners of the many framed and railroaded into solitary confinement during the 1960s/70s heyday of the FBI's COINTELPRO persecution of home-grown revolutionaries – here members of the Black Panthers. Also surprisingly, the film's British director is Vadim Jean, previously known for tiresome quirky comedies – with little to amuse here – inspired into agitprop by the late Bodyshop founder Anita Roddick's crusading campaign. His effort outlines the historical details of these former repeat petty offenders radicalised inside brutal jail regimes by the organisational nous and principled determination of the Panthers – only to be stitched up by the blatant falsification of witness evidence for conspiring to murder young guard Brent Miller in 1972, during a riot which interrupted agitation against Angola's infamously inhuman institutional corruption.

Even the original murder victim's widow has long been convinced of the 3's complete innocence – the weight of incrimination conclusively proving the vindictive dishonesty of US criminal 'justice' as well as the "cruel and unusual punishment" of decades in solitary for its targets. That Woodfox and Wallace still languish in incarceration speaks volumes about the State's evaporating legitimacy, if its supposed divine right to



sovereign domination can be so thoroughly exposed as transparently arbitrary irrespective of any relationship to truth. Sadly Jean bumbles the handling of the wider issues which inevitably arise, despite featuring esteemed talking heads like Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky and rappers Snoop Dogg and Mos Def². Instead the soundtrack's swelling crescendos and narrative narrowing – to highlight King, Woodfox and Wallace's courage, intelligence and dignity as well as innocence counterposed to their harrowing experience – derails attention to the congenital faultlines of democracy's 'land of the free'. The upshot confusingly conflates this specific travesty as, on the one hand, evoking social upheavals of the past and, on the other, an exception rather than the rule of law. Thus comparable ongoing examples, like Leonard Peltier of the American Indian Movement and Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE organisation³, make sense mainly as further aberrations in a presumably still-perfectible system – rather than the tip of the iceberg we, and they, recognise. And even if recent attempted legal lynchings (like the Jena 6 – also, incidentally, in Louisiana) face greater obstacles from seasoned and savvy concerned citizens, the underlying rotten logic can still escape focus – in exactly the manner that liberal radicalism always stops short, to maintain its privileged status, of envisaging the deeper transformations required to avoid such abuse.

If you thought individual privacy and liberty (such as they are) were a little safer with the New Labour control freaks relegated to opposition – think again! Okay, the ID card is on the back-burner but – irrespective of citizen-friendly rhetoric – the Tories are just as keen on exploiting the national databases that ill-fated scheme depended on. So a new

documentary testing the surveillance panopticon of the information superhighway tracking down innocent folk who'd rather not be found seemed like a neat idea to David Bond – especially after receiving a letter informing him that his daughter's personal details had gone AWOL, along with those of millions more, courtesy of civil servant carelessness. So *Erasing David* (pictured above), directed by David Bond and Melinda McDougall, shown on 3rd May on Channel 4's 'True Stories' strand, rehearses the paranoid's delight of info-reality that anyone vaguely interested already knows – virtually every area of our modern life involves vast domains of information gathered. If that wasn't ominous enough, much of it is speculative, distorted or downright false – which when treated as gospel or interpreted creatively, malevolently or stupidly may have dire consequences, as we're shown in various sketched examples... So far, so routine; if worth reiterating.

A potentially more innovative thrust couples perspectives of hunter and quarry, following the (not very) intrepid filmmaker striving for a month to stay off the radar of the private investigators from a small operation he hired to nail him. They demonstrate how the panoply of corporate, credit card, internet, email, mobile and remote camera data can be effortlessly accessed by anyone wanting to finger you. Bond wriggles and squirms across Europe, affecting a growing persecution complex as his vulnerability becomes apparent. Meanwhile a heavily-pregnant wife waits at home as he eventually beats a Luddite retreat to a hermit's haunt in the Welsh wilds. But it's too late; they get him after a couple of weeks – helped particularly by evidence garnered from dustbins, stakeouts, fraudulent phone calls and impersonations in addition to hi-tech



WILDCAT

If you're in favour of (tick all that apply)

- meat-eating
- veganism
- technology
- biotechnology
- allopathy
- quackery
- violence
- pacifism
- religion
- selfishness
- Stirnerism
- Marxism
- individualism
- workerism
- other (write in)

you're **WRONG** !!

What makes you think I'm wrong?

It's a gut feeling

Please don't think with your gut.

Diverting your gut from its proper function might be a cause of indigestion.

Your basic mindset is **morally** wrong.

I won't demean myself by talking to you !!

A demonstration of Argument by Intimidation

Review

◀ page 15

stuff. Ironically, all this works much more convincingly, and entertainingly, in Hollywood (e.g. *The Game*, *Enemy of the State*, *Bourne*, etc). Its heroes don't wreck suspension of disbelief with the naff blunders regularly perpetuated by this Bond, leaving us neither shaken nor stirred – documentary and fiction may mix promiscuously these days, but story and characterisation always need consistency. And as the state-corporate confluence of bio-political differentiation and control matures, with younger generations accommodating via reality TV and social networking, rather more is required to tackle it than the essentially conservative collision of 'isn't it awful' against 'it couldn't/could happen to me' – plaintive

morals also evident in sundry privacy campaigns as well as previous shock-horror docu *Taking Liberties* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 19th January 2008).

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

Notes

- 1 See *From the Bottom of the Heap: The Autobiography of Robert Hillary King*, PM Press, 2009.
- 2 Previous docu *The Angola 3: Black Panthers and the Last Slave Plantation* (dir. Jimmy O'Halligan, 2006) fares better in this regard.
- 3 Subjects of *In Prison My Whole Life* (dir. Marc Evans, 2008; itself based largely on *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?* dir. John Edginton, 1997); and *MOVE* (dirs. Ben Garry and Ryan McKenna, 2004; see *Freedom*, 28th July 2007).

THE QUIZ

1. Who did Lib Dem Business Secretary Vince Cable name as his heroes in a recent interview?
2. What is being proposed for a ban in the US states of Georgia, Virginia, Missouri and California?
3. What unusual arguments have been made for the ban?
4. Who was Curuxas?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available at £5 (post free) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque payable to Freedom Press) or from freedompress.org.uk.

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