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THE POPE'S EYEING KIDS

Ratzinger drooling over changes to education

In amongst the glam frocks and gold stage props of his visit and a little bit away from the drama of 'terrorist' arrests, Pope Joe Ratzinger has laid the wink to Catholicism's big plan for reclaiming British souls, in front of the cameras, with barely anyone noticing.

As so often with the Catholic Church, it all comes down to kids. In this case, who should be in charge of their education and why.

Ratso was straightforward on the matter. During a Mass at St Mary's University College in Twickenham, he talked on the subject of religion in schools, remarking that: "The presence of Catholic schools is a powerful reminder of the much-discussed Catholic ethos that needs to inform every aspect of school life. This extends far beyond the self-evident requirement that the content of the teaching should always be in conformity with Church doctrine."

His comments are timely for the government. With Tory plans to instantaneously convert the entire state school system into Academies by flirting embarrassingly with schools' head teachers crashing and burning, and companies proving reluctant to take on anything which can't make them oodles of cash, education

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LENS CAP HEALTH OF THE NATION



The government's white paper on health is being savaged on all sides by attempting to finish the job of New Labour and privatise the health service wholesale. Hiding behind the need for cuts the millionaire Tory club are seeking to find ways to put the NHS into commercial hands.

PERSISTENTLY PROTESTING

Some 500 flag-waving demonstrators gathered outside opening of the TUC conference in Manchester in what Dave Chapple, President of the National Shop Stewards Network, described as the "first national demonstration against the Coalition Government's cuts." Well, that should scare the Coalition! The following day TUC declared it's planning a 'campaign' against the cuts, with Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary, calling for co-ordinated strikes and civil disobedience and Les Bayliss of Unite saying this will be suicide.

All the usual suspects were on parade – the Socialist Party, the SWP with its Right to Work campaign, the re-fashioned communists, Trade Union and Trades Council banners from up and down the country, even a handful of folk from the Manchester Solidarity Federation.

Young syndicalists addressed the crowd and the old anarcho-syndicalist former miner, Dave Douglass, from Northumbria told us that great industries like coal mining did not die, "they were slaughtered" by Thatcher and Major.

The National Shop Stewards Network is backed by public sector unions such as RMT, PCS, CWU, the National NUM and the POA, so this demo was about preserving jobs in the public sector, not about a new world order. Calling on the TUC to call a national demonstration against the public sector cuts must be one of the most timid demands imaginable and this conservatism of the British left is typical. Bob Crow sounds militant and even harks back to the poll tax riots, but expectations of radical social change still seem remote at the moment.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

COKE: The real thing had a slightly less real taste to it, as workers at the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Edmonton, North London, turned off the taps in a dispute over a derisory 2% pay offer. The angry workers, who feel betrayed by Coca-Cola's lack of commitment to its workforce, are planning more strikes throughout September, arguing that 2% would amount to a pay cut against inflation. It's estimated a million fewer bottles of Coke will be on the market this month because of the workers actions.

Coke's pre-tax profits last year were up by 12% to £617.9m.

POLICE: The boys in blue, it seems, are not immune from the Tories spending cuts after all. Unlike Thatcher, who diverted massive funds into bolstering the wage packets of her police (and was ably rewarded with their unflinching enthusiasm to the job during the miners' strike), Cameron is happy cut the bobbies' budget, forcing them to cut their numbers.

We wonder is this the end of the privatised surveillance culture of the FIT teams (who have cost the Met millions in compensation claims over faulty 'intelligence' gathering)? We also recommend a cut-back in guns, bullets and batons as a show of good faith.

PROTEST: Bus drivers, office cleaners and fish market porters joined forces for an energetic demonstration outside London's City Hall, home of Tory millionaire mayor Boris Johnson, who is proposing cuts to save his party money. Bus drivers, who were supported by city cleaners and porters from Billingsgate fish market, will be badly hit if Johnson's policies of cutting public transport is agreed. It also means those on lower income, who rely on the service, will be denied the ability to travel safely round the capital.

THIEVES: Birmingham City Council has sent its 26,000 employees legal notices informing them that they all must accept a pay cut or face instant dismissal.

Council chiefs sent the threatening letters to all non-schools staff – covering everyone from street sweepers to clerks, carers and cleaners – warning them that they will receive new contracts imposing cuts in pay and conditions, or face the sack.

TUC: Bob Crow, the robust powerhouse of the RMT union, seems to be endorsing a more autonomous approach to confronting the cuts with his rabble-rousing speech at a Trades Union Conference meeting in Manchester. Resurrecting the tactics of eco-activists Reclaim The Streets, he called on pensioners and benefits claimants to bring Britain's motorways to a halt by occupying the M25. And, echoing the anarchist call-to-arms, he urged that "We should have civil disorder on the streets" before finally throwing down the gauntlet, "You can crawl away into a shell or go out on the streets and fight." Anarchists, we hope, were taking notes.

LENS CAP FANNING THE FLAMES



Thursday 16th September saw thousands of London fire-fighters march, in dress uniform, through the streets of capital in protest at London Fire Brigade's decision to begin the process of sacking all London fire-fighters. Each fire-fighter would be forced to re-apply for their position under new contracts and new shift patterns, otherwise face dismissal.

Not just a bookfair

The Bristol Anarchist Bookfair ended in triumph as people packed into the after-party (organised with fearless energy by Kebele Sound, who form part of the Kebele Social Centre collective, a key part of the Bristol radical community) for an evening of radical entertainment featuring the wonderfully named Cop on Fire, rolling ska wizards from Belgium. It was a fitting end to a truly impressive day.

On Saturday 11th September a converted office block (pictured below) – which had been taken over and run as a community interest company for the last two years in the heart of the Stokes Croft cultural quarter, where, according to the organisers, occasional battles rage between regenerators, developers and corporate takeover swindlers, and some of the local population – played host to a varied collection of political organisations, campaign

groups and radical distributors eager to inform, entertain and encourage people towards a more radical way of thinking.

The figures are impressive. According to the organisers, there were 47 groups, campaigns, authors, publishers and distros spread over two floors of the building, with over 800 people coming through the doors throughout the day. Meetings and workshops provided an environment for discussion and debate which covered the basics – from the Anarchist Federation with 'what is anarchism?' and Bristol Resistance with 'which way for anti-fascism?', to practical workshops on community organising against the cuts, direct action anti-poverty work, free movement and social movements, to single issue topics such as animal rights, GM crops and the impressive radical history zone who had discussions throughout the day.

In terms of anarchist groups in attendance, the federations put in a healthy show, with Solfed and AF having stalls and hosting meetings and Class War making their presence felt by draping their banner across the front of the building. But, as with all these types of self-organised events, it's the energy and commitment of those people working tirelessly behind the scenes that makes the day a real success. The organisers especially wanted to thank the Kebele Cafe collective, some of whom appeared to not stop working for a moment all day, feeding the never-ending queue of hungry bookworms

If bookfairs are an indicator of the state of the anarchist movement in the UK, then Bristol has developed a healthy and robust political culture that has the confidence and skills to put on such an event. Long may they continue to do so.





Left, 195 Mare Street as it looked in June of this year; right, the eviction of Gore and Skipworth Roads on Wednesday 11th August.

Social centre evictions

Setback for squatting movement at the sharp end of the housing crisis

In July and August of this year, Crown Estates and Dunbar Bank were, in separate cases, granted possession orders for several of their squatted properties in south Hackney in London.

In the case of Dunbar Bank, the order was in respect of 195 Mare Street, an extremely active squatted social centre and resource for the radical community. The property is listed and still in great need of repair, in spite of work carried out by the squatters since first occupying the building in October 2009. However, the bank has no proposals for the property and, following its repossession in August 2010, began plans to install live-in guardians from the anti-squat security company Camelot, having first disconnected the water supply set up by the squatters.

In the case of Crown Estates, the possession order was made for six of their squatted properties on Gore Road and Skipworth Road. Crown Estates function ostensibly as a provider of 'key worker housing' in several London boroughs. However, they are currently engaged in a sell-off of their social housing across the capital, a proposal which is strongly opposed by residents of the estates' properties.

Following the repossession of the houses on Gore and Skipworth Roads on 11th August, Crown Estates too installed live-in security from the company Gallowglass; in some cases the people who carried out the evictions were the same ones to move in. The business practice of installing guardians (crucially exempt from basic tenants' rights) enables such 'protection by occupation' companies to make a profit from the institutionalisation of bad housing, receiving payments simultaneously from guardians and landowners.

The symbolic eviction resistance that took place at both the Crown Estates squats on Gore Road and the Mare Street social centre had the clear and relevant political purpose

of forcing the owners in question into an open and costly dispute with the local community. The people in the street at Gore Road and Skipworth Road and neighbours who refused the police access to the premises through their gardens succeeded in exposing the efforts of irresponsible landlords (assisted by bailiff companies and police) to profiteer from the eviction and sale of social housing.

The eviction attempt, having started at roughly 7am with no prior notice given, dragged on until past 4pm. Local residents, both squatters and tenants, watched as police and bailiffs forced entry to six houses in order to secure vacant possession; a prerequisite from Crown estates' proposed sell off of its estates.

As the police in attendance were unable to appreciate this fact, they may well find themselves evicting members of their own forces from similar key worker accommodation as the housing crisis worsens; a prospect they would no doubt find far more morally challenging than that of ejecting squatters and tenants in arrears.

The Pope's eyeing kids

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secretary Michael Gove is thrashing around for a way to get it privatised.

But who would have the vast amounts of capital required, the know-how and the motivation to take on large numbers of under-funded institutions dealing with mostly cash-poor children?

Enter Mr Red Shoes, stage right, cackling manically. And he has good reason for doing so.

The Academies Act 2010, which provides a legal framework for schools to move from local authority control into the hands of local 'stakeholders', potentially including companies and groups of parents but realistically aimed at religious institutions, has left out controls

on discriminatory admissions policies, effectively allowing schools which do not discriminate to start doing so once they're 'converted'.

As a result for many parents, school conversion may equal personal conversion as they are forced to take the wafer just to get their child a place.

The Act also allows a more restrictive curriculum to be brought in, with the British Humanist Association asking whether "a new, state-funded, Catholic academy would be allowed not to teach sexual reproduction in biology lessons."

Talking to *Freedom*, a spokesperson for the organisation said that up to now the Catholic

Church has not been interested in the state sector and had held back from fully embracing the Act on the same grounds as many local authorities – it could potentially weaken their hold on their own schools' activities if they converted from faith to Academy status.

However the Act offers the church an unparalleled opportunity to get its crucifix into a host of schools which had previously been off-limits. With billions at their disposal and their main Church of England rival already eyeing the situation up, this month's Papal visit may just be the first salvo of a major religious incursion into education.

Rob Ray

ANALYSIS

Kashmir's war against India continues

Background to the conflict for control of a region that threatens to become the new Palestine

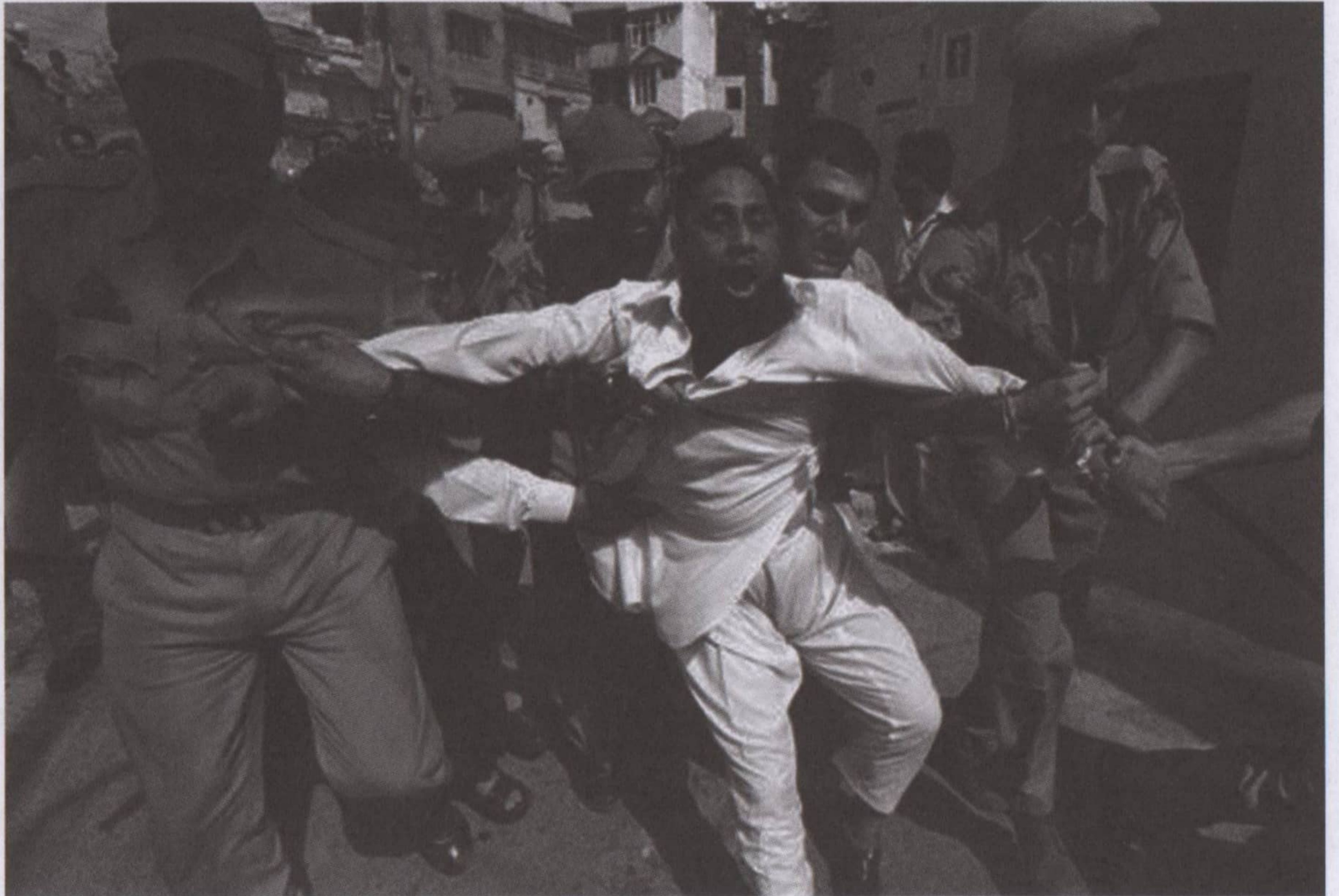
On the 15th September, Kashmir Valley observes more than three months of almost unbroken violence that started on 11th June. Since the last report in *Freedom* of the ongoing protests in that state, 23 more civilians have died (by police firing), bringing the death toll alone to 89, not counting those who have been severely injured and those who are languishing in police custody.

Courts, post offices and police stations have been set on fire, police vehicles and railway stations have been torched. Curfews and harsh restrictions are still in place in several regions of the Valley, including its turbulent capital, Srinagar.

Still, the entire population is on the streets, demanding freedom. Kashmir is on the boil yet again, but could this be the decisive one for the harried people?

It takes a lot for an entire people to take to the streets in their thousands, and take on bullets and tear gas shells with nothing but stones. It takes more than courage – it takes desperation. How are we to understand this? Where do we begin? Perhaps a bit of historical analysis is in order here. We must go back to 1947, to the formation of the Indian state – and of Pakistan.

Following a Pakistani insurgency attack on Kashmir to occupy the area because it was majority Muslim, the monarch of Kashmir, Hari Singh, acceded to the Indian State (under



the gentle 'persuasions' of Mountbatten, the governor general). The Indian state then sent its forces to cleanse the region of insurgents. But this just ended in some bits of Jammu and Kashmir being occupied by India, and other bits by Pakistan.

India then appealed to the UNO to intervene, which promptly asked a plebiscite to be held and set up a temporary Line of Control (LoC) as a border between the two states. For reasons unknown (but well understood), this plebiscite was never held and so the two countries continued to go for each other's throats for this precious piece of land, including the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1999.

So at present the region is divided like this: Jammu with a Hindu majority (Indian part), the Kashmir Valley with a Muslim majority (Indian-occupied), the northern region and Azad-Free-Kashmir (Pak-occupied) and Ladakh with a Muslim and Buddhist population (Indian). Talks between politicians about how to carve up the meat nicely have always hit a *cul de sac*. It appears that the majority of Kashmir people want autonomy or some sort of self-rule, while there are some who want accession with Pakistan. And no wonder. Constant military occupation of Kashmir Valley by the Indian state under the pretext of fighting insurgents (which is a real problem by the way) hasn't really help win hearts and minds. It is estimated that 68,000 people have died in separatist protests since 1989.

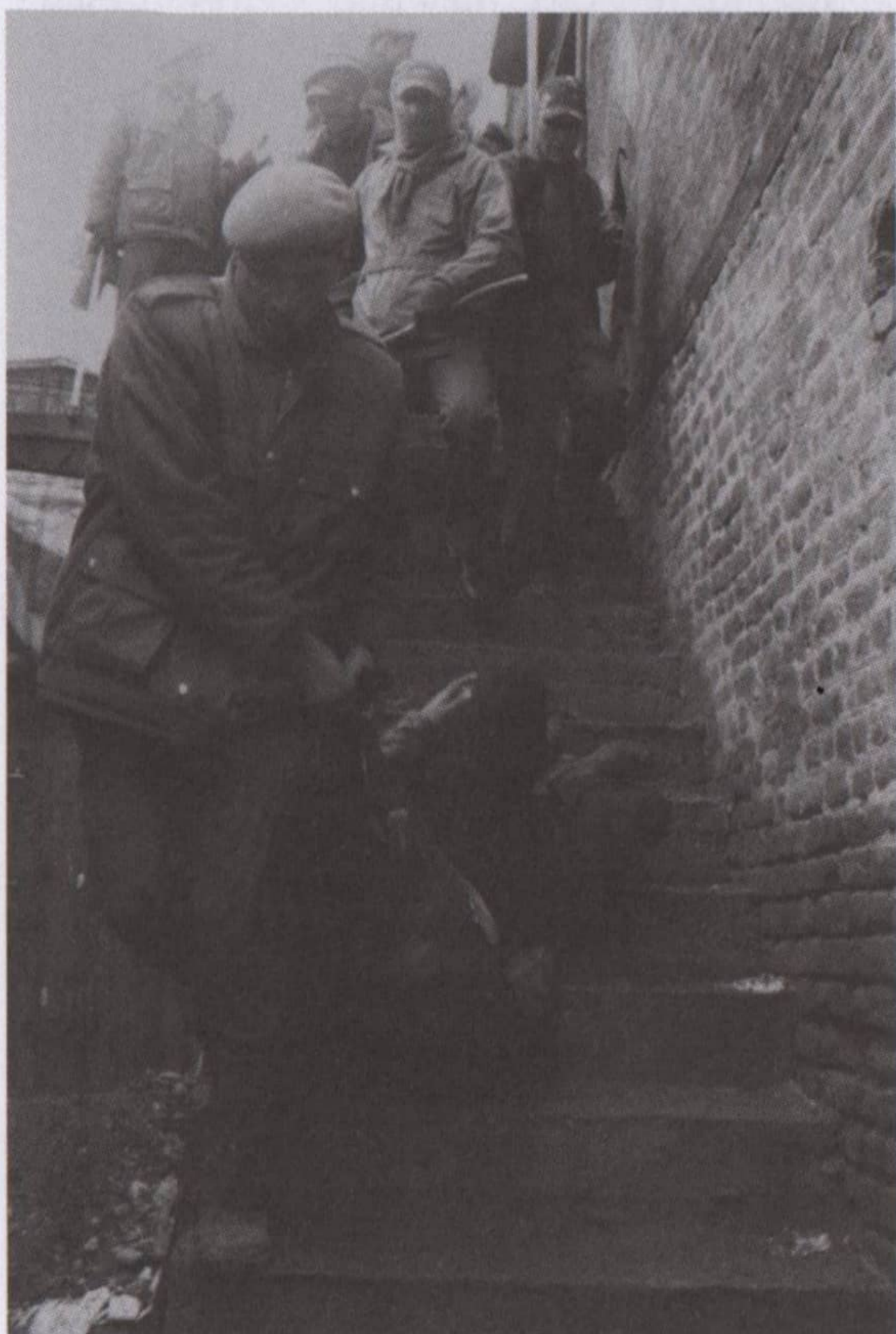
Then there is the case of staged killings. Unsuspecting villagers are lured or kidnapped, taken to the borders and shot in 'encounters'. It's quite a business with victims being traded for money between the special police and the military forces. Despite exposés of such heinous affairs, no action was hitherto taken, except in the recent case of three young men

being killed in April this year which sparked off the present wave of protests. Unusually, two high level officers have been sacked, but that has done little to appease the masses, considering the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is still in force in the state.

The AFSPA was initially enacted in 1958 for the troubled north-eastern states of India, and extended to Jammu and Kashmir in 1990. This Act gives the occupying forces the extra-constitutional power to search homes and make arrests without warrants, shoot anyone suspected of being a terrorist, and arson any building even suspected to harbour insurgent activities. Besides this, an estimated 6000,000 people are unemployed, and according to the CIA (forgive me!) some 135,000 people in India-occupied-Kashmir are internally displaced. The place was always a ticking time-bomb.

No wonder, then, that they have a Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, which actively rally for the independence of the area and were previously militant. There is also the moderate Hurriyat Conference whose leaders, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, have been arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir Police as "threats to law and order", because they are popular and were leading non-violent protest marches.

Kashmir is so volatile now that the Quran-burning incident has added communal fuel to the fire. A Christian school was attacked and effigies of Obama were burnt. Anti-US slogans have joined anti-India slogans. This sort of communal degeneration was bound to occur, given India's methods of handling people's genuine indignation. But the government does not seem to learn its lessons; it would rather let Kashmir burn down to the ground than cede a little of its power.



ANTI-CUTS GROUPS

Here are just a few of the groups already up and running and organised into an anti-cuts campaign.

BRIGHTON STOP THE CUTS COALITION:

A broad coalition of unions, local campaigns and sympathetic political groups brought together to protect public services, jobs and communities from the huge funding cuts that will affect so many in our city.

COALITION OF RESISTANCE:

A Tony Benn vehicle (with assorted political hangers-on), which means it will be vying in the none too distant future for the role of mouthpiece for the anti-cuts movement, seems at the moment to be an umbrella network for pre-existing campaign groups which will have to go through a brand makeover some time in the future.

HACKNEY ALLIANCE TO DEFEND PUBLIC SERVICES:

Workers' and the community taking action together for better jobs and services – no cuts. Right now, Hackney Council is planning cuts. We can fight for a community to be proud of, but we do need to get organised. We need people who are prepared to give just a small amount of time to spread the word.

HARINGEY ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC SERVICES:

HAPS is a network open to all those living, working or based in Haringey. We support opposition to the running down, closure or privatisation of any local public services, and support campaigning for improvements. We promote communication and co-ordination, mutual aid and solidarity among all those affected, and a wide range of tactics and initiatives towards achieving the aims.

NORFOLK COALITION AGAINST CUTS:

Trade union activists from across Norfolk met in Norwich and pledged to fight public sector spending cuts. More than 60 people attended the meeting at City Hall, aimed at establishing a 'coalition against the cuts' of trade unionists and members of the public.

NORTHERN PUBLIC SERVICES ALLIANCE:

In the Northern region of England, local PSA coalitions have been launched in North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Durham, Teesside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Northumberland, and Cumbria. It is critical to challenge these attacks and to promote a positive alternative agenda.

PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS (WIGAN):

"We are inviting everyone opposed to the new Coalition Government's cuts agenda to join us in publicly opposing them. It doesn't matter what political party they are currently in, as ours is a non-partisan campaign representative of a range of community activists, political organisations and trades unionists across the Wigan Borough united solely on the cuts issue."

Light trim, sir?

The radical left has always clung mercilessly to the coat-tails of official forms of power. The anti-war movement could only be legitimised when the likes of Tony Benn (government cabinet minister during the industrial unrest of the 1970s) had scribbled their names on the STWC membership list and took their place at the top table. Equally with trade unions; the bigger the bureaucrat endorsing the event/activity, the bigger the left can trumpet their claim to be the official voice of dissent. This relationship was always going to be strained throughout the New Labour years where anti-government rhetoric had to be balanced with keeping seemingly sympathetic, yet silent, MPs on board – leading to the oddity of focusing on Blair as figurehead and flawed personality rather than policy decisions aimed directly against the working class. Forgetting it was the Labour Party itself who got rid of its own Clause 4 (ditching the last vestige of 'socialist' principles to become more electable), it was the Labour Party itself that swept away its own internal democracy, it was the Labour Party itself who endorsed the government's (illegal) decision to go to war, not once but twice. And conveniently forgetting that the Labour Party itself had its own list of influential millionaire donors.

But with the Tories back in power the left can once again return to the pantomime villainy of opposing sides – booing with self-righteous

indignation at the evils of Tory cuts. And it is this simplified message that is likely to form the backbone of the national campaign against the cuts (still in its infancy but already developing a formal structure) focusing on bad people doing bad things, rather than a political system that provides the platform for such measures. And with it comes the inevitable bullying tactics and backroom deals of the self-appointed leaders telling the rest of us what is to be done.

The campaign against the cuts, which is already taking root regionally, should be a form of working class resistance, of genuine empowerment, the ability for us to organise by and for ourselves, to fight for our own needs, where we make decisions and implement them as part of an ongoing strategy, where we develop our own critique of government and power in the defence of public services, where we build structures from the bottom up. It should not be used as a tool by ambitious party builders and politicians in-the-making for flattering their egos and fuelling their Lenin fantasies.

Any anarchist involvement in the campaign should be transparent and unequivocal, organised and unapologetic, it is whether we have the means, the heart, the desire or indeed the organisational skills to effectively engage.

Not only do we need to fight the cuts, we need to fight like hell to ensure we don't get another anti-war movement. The months ahead will be crucial.



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: Predictably, Muslims outraged at the stunt by a Christian American preacher who was to burn the Koran on 11th September, took to the streets in Kabul and burned American flags in retaliation. Religion certainly does wonders for the sale of lighter fuel and media spectacles.

ISRAEL: Airport workers went on wildcat strike, effectively shutting down Tel Aviv's main international airport for over a day.

All take-offs were cancelled, and all Israel Aviation Authority (IAA) workers' refused to carry out security checks or transfer baggage to and from flights, Israel.

The IAA wants management to guarantee that their pension funds will be secure, according to an official spokesman, a dispute that has been going on for two years

MOZAMBIQUE: Authorities blamed text messaging for the fuelling the recent food riots that erupted across the state after government ministers announced an increase in food prices. The rioting left at least 13 people dead, hundreds wounded and 400 arrested during the three-day protests that led to a government u-turn and promise to subsidise the price of wheat, electricity and water. It has emerged that ministers demanded mobile phone operators block text messages to prevent the riots from spreading.

NETHERLANDS: Squatting in Holland has been made illegal from 1st October. The response from the highly politicised squatting movement in Amsterdam was to organise a week of activities and actions highlighting the repressive nature of the new law which is intent to criminalise a movement (just being in a squatted building could land you a two year prison sentence) and protect the profits of the property owners. Effectively, squatted social centres will be outlawed throughout the city. There was also a mass demonstration against the new law.

RUSSIA: Perhaps betraying the ghosts of their socialist past, riot police in Moscow attacked managers and company bosses to break up a mass brawl that broke out between corporate directors of the massive supermarket chain Lenta. Conflicting Lenta shareholders were literally fighting, including using smoke grenades, for executive control of the company when police intervened, arresting the CEO and 30 others business suits at the St Petersburg headquarters.

SWITZERLAND: Four anarchists, arrested for allegedly carrying explosive material, are still on hunger strike after refusing food as a protest against their continued detention.

They started their hunger strike on 10th September as a political statement, declaring: "This strike is a continuation of our struggles together with all those who have never wanted to passively endure this war and the brutal social, economic, political and environmental crisis of the system."

LENS CAP RIOTS AND REPRESSION IN CHILE



The 11th September marked the anniversary of the right-wing coup led by General Pinochet in the early 1970s. This year anarchists took to the streets in Santiago, with thousands of others, but to target government buildings in response to the heavy state repression suffered over the last few months.

Wall to stop immigrants

After Rio Grande in the United States, it's Rio Bravo in Mexico. In an attempt to clamp down on 'illegal' immigrants from Guatemala, the southern state of Chiapas in Mexico is building a wall along the river Suchiate. According to Mexico's National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), around 500,000 people cross the borders of Mexico without authorisation every year looking to enter the US for jobs and a better life. Along with discriminatory laws, which are nothing but a thin screen for racism, this wall is supposed to stem the illegal immigrant flow.

However, there is strong opposition to this measure both among civilians and the Guatemalan official circles. They say that erecting this wall will not stop the immigration, but will just lead to people taking difficult

and dangerous alternative routes and putting their lives in danger.

The existence of drug lords who use routes such as the Suchiate river to conduct their operations makes it doubly dangerous for the migrants. Less than a month ago, the bodies of about 72 migrants were found by the Mexican army at a ranch in Mexico's Tamaulipas state, close to the Mexico-US border. They are suspected to have been killed by Los Zetas, a drug cartel. The incident has been labelled the Tamaulipas massacre causing the head of the National Institute of Migration, Cecilia Romero, to resign.

Migrants here also face regular kidnappings and exploitation. According to the CNDH between September 2008 and February 2009 9,758 migrants were kidnapped.

Notes from the US

Standing up to the state

Nicholas Merrill, the head of an internet service provider (ISP) Calyx, was gagged for six years from revealing that the FBI had ordered him to hand over personal information about his customers. He filed the first court challenge to the FBI's 'national security letters' (NSL) in 2004. NSLs are a device used to obtain sensitive information without a court order. Between 2003 and 2006 192,000 national security letters were used for that purpose in the United States.

Although recipients of NSLs are forbidden even to divulge the fact to anyone – neither

lawyers nor anyone else who could help them appeal, or even understand the process – Merrill did go to the ACLU this summer, which then itself filed the first lawsuit challenging the National Security Letter statute in August.

George Christian is executive director of Library Connection, a consortium of libraries in Connecticut. When he received an NSL, he too challenged the FBI's request for information. He says, "[Neither I nor our attorney] had ever heard the words before. But thankfully, one of her assistants was

Racism in Slovak schools

Condemned Roma gypsies continue to suffer discrimination in Slovakia and elsewhere in Europe

It might be the 21st century, but prejudice and cruelty are timeless. Roma or Romani children attend segregated schools in Slovakia, where they learn virtually nothing. Several mainstream schools have a limit on how many Roma students they will admit (25% for example). They are usually kept locked in separate classrooms or corridors, so that they do not mix with the 'white' kids. They are not given textbooks and notebooks to carry home, nor are they given homework or other learning activities. A high proportion of them – from 60% to more than 80% – languish in special schools for the mentally disabled.

The Roma comprise around 10% of the Slovakian population, the second largest ethnic minority in that country after the Hungarians. Across Europe they number an estimated four to fourteen million. Everywhere they are a marginalised people, both socially and physically. The apparent reasons for their segregation are that they are filthy and thieving. But how can they not be? Most Roma live on the fringes in Slovakia, in appalling conditions, with no running water, electricity and very little state support.

The latest welfare 'reforms' slashing benefits has affected the Roma most adversely. Says Ivan Cervenak from a village called Svinia, 49 and unemployed with 11 young mouths to feed, that without jobs his only options



are either to "move away or steal" though "we don't want this." In Slovakia the unemployment rate among the gypsies is worse than that of the general population – over 80%.

It is no wonder then that in such socio-political circumstances children have difficulty learning. They have a very high fail rate. The Slovakian solution is to dump them *en masse* into special schools without addressing the root causes. One member of a school staff says that the learning problems are caused by "genetic degeneration due to interbreeding"! The general perception of the Romani is that they are filthy, full of lice and criminally inclined. Many 'white' parents have removed their children from schools when they found that Roma and non-Roma children were

allowed to mix. Even those educationists specially appointed to 'help' the Romani kids carry their ethnic prejudices into the classrooms, which does not really solve the problem.

Although the problem has been acknowledged by the Slovakian Prime Minister, Mikulas Dzurinda, nothing has been done so far to end this segregation. In Budapest, Hungary, Roma 'integration' has taken the form of inducing Romani young men to join the police force (you can't be a criminal if you are a cop!). Nevertheless, gypsy-related crimes are leading to racist and potentially violent right-wing developments like the formation of a so-called Hungarian guard. It has become an unending vicious circle of discrimination, crime and retaliation.

Notes from the US

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able to ... find Nick's case and find that a judge had declared that the statute was unconstitutional, because it violated the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendments..."

Similarly, the Obama gang wants to make it easier for the FBI to obtain internet users' records without a court order. If approved by Congress, the FBI would soon be able covertly to issue that same National Security Letter to an ISP and obtain details on those users to whom its customers send email, the times and dates of emails sent and received, and possibly a log of every website they visit.

At the end of August a new FBI domestic surveillance programme was announced. It collects racial and ethnic data inviting unconstitutional racial profiling by law enforcement. Farhana Khera, Executive Director of Muslim Advocates, says: "there's a section that deals with what's called geomapping, or the gathering of racial and ethnic data about racial

and ethnic communities across the country, that's really just deeply disturbing and would really be an unprecedented abuse of FBI resources to basically gather all sorts of information about racial and ethnic communities that goes beyond just what you might think of as demographic information"

In the Californian school District (equivalent of the LEA) of Richmond, RFID (Radio-frequency identification) chips are being 'installed' (actually attached to the pullovers) of pre-school (nursery age) children to track their whereabouts.

And let's end with Californian education. A new organisation has been recruited to the state-appointed team responsible for designing and writing the 'guiding principles' of the state's new environmental curriculum to be taught to over six million school pupils in some 1,000 districts – it's BP.

Louis Further

Oil disaster

Nigerian lives and land have been ravaged by massive oil spill over the past five decades, which puts the BP oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico to shame.

An estimated 1.5 million tons of oil has leaked into the Niger delta in the past fifty years. The culprits? Exxon Mobil and Shell.

On 1st May a ruptured Exxon pipeline gushed out a million gallons.

The companies blame theft and vandalism, while locals and activists point to the outdated and rickety equipment that is being used.

The result is massive water pollution that has caused the loss of livelihoods and a dramatic drop in life expectancy to a little over 40 years of age.

One writer has described Nigeria as the "world capital of oil pollution." Yet, the mainstream media has been mostly mum about this so far.

The story of the London Anarchist Bookfair: 1983 onwards

The monster event in the anarchist calendar, we look how we got there

The London Anarchist Bookfair has become something of an institution from its humble origins in the East End docks to an acknowledged diary date for the whole of the UK anarchist movement and beyond. Thousands converge annually under the often provocative and always controversial banner of anarchism to exchange ideas, become inspired and get involved. Not only does it act as a lightning rod for new ideas, initiatives and groups, it has become an essential indicator of the health of the movement in general. With this year's bookfair fast approaching (Saturday 23rd October), we speak to one of the organisers about what's involved and take a look back at how a small inspired idea became the backbone of the UK anarchism.

Tony from the Bookfair Collective, a bluff no-nonsense working class lad and himself an institution on the London anarchist scene, explains the importance and purpose of the event.

Tony: We have contacted all the normal groups, distros, bookshops, centres and individuals in the 'movement' and they know about it and have booked their stalls and meetings. But, an event for us in the 'movement' is only half the reason we put on the bookfair. The other, equally important, reason is to get anarchist ideas, thoughts and groups out to the 99.9% of the population in London who have never heard of us or our ideas. The bookfair is one highly visible way for non anarchists to come along and find out, in a relaxed venue, about us and our ideas. They can stroll around stalls, go to meetings or films or just indulge themselves in anarcho-cabaret".

But it's not just an event to be consumed, we all have a part to play.

Tony: It's difficult publicising the event to even a small percentage of the majority of working class people in London. Yes, we can

leave leaflets in a few venues, pubs and clubs we know. But, we need help to get out the message wider. So, we are hoping people would be up for helping. We still have a few thousand leaflets left and a number of posters that can be put up to advertise the event.

What is it you're asking people to do?

Tony: Can you leaflet your local street corner, or maybe leave leaflets or posters in a squat, club, pub, cafe, launderette, or anywhere else? Or even just give leaflets to friends and family? If you are a student or work in a college it would be bloody excellent if you, or you and a couple of mates, could get a stall at your Fresher's Fair or at least leaflet those going in?

There are loads of leaflets and posters at Freedom bookshop and some at Housman's bookshop. We can also put them in the post to you – just email me back saying how many you want and where to send them.

History

The first London Anarchist Bookfair was held in 1983 at the Wapping Autonomy Centre. The 'anarchist centre' was a social centre in a rented former warehouse in Wapping, London Docklands. The venue was host to punk benefit gigs and was partly funded by the gigs by bands like Crass and the Poison Girls. In 1983, the bookfair consisted of only a handful of stalls, but was enjoyed by many and it was decided to continue organising more.

The bookfair was the anarchist response to the SWP's (Socialist Worker's Party, then the International Socialists) socialist bookfair. Anarchists used to attend the socialist bookfair, but it was expensive with lots of mainstream publishers and with a lot of the proceeds going to Bookmarks [the SWP bookshop], so anarchists decided to do it themselves on their own terms. The socialist bookfair has now died out, but the anarchist bookfair continues to grow in various ways.

By the end of 1985, the bookfair was held at Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, which continued until 2000. But by then interest in the bookfair has significantly grown, requiring a larger venue.

The main aim of the event was to sell books in the way anarchists wanted, but



Photo: Ludwig van standard lamp



Below right, the Bookfair at the Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, later marred by the police, pictured above centre on Holloway Road, and above right outside The Coronet pub next to the Bookfair venue in October 2005; above left, the Bookfair was held at Queen Mary and Westfield College in 2007; below left, John Pilger at the Bookfair in October 2008.

people felt the bookfair had the potential to be far more than just buying and selling. Within seven years, it had developed to include meetings, film screenings and socials. The aim was to broaden the bookfair out and, together with the food and drink provided, newcomers were made to feel more welcome.

The number of people attending continued to grow and the existing anarchist movement as a whole slowly realised that the bookfair was a great opportunity to counteract media distortions and to show mutual aid in practice.

The bookfair collective has always been intentionally small and the people in it have continued to change, which means most anarchists can get on with other valuable activities and that the bookfair continues to be dynamic with no one getting bored of organising it year on year.

Since 1999, there was an attempt to make the meetings even more prominent and expand the events happening on the days either side to make it more like a three-day event, with socials and other meetings and organising happening on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Organising for trouble

Organising the bookfair over the years has often been a challenge. Since the Camden Centre bookfairs in 2001 and 2002, the organisers have not been allowed to run their own bar in the venues, thus missing out on valuable income.

ULU (University of London Union) refused to allow them to use their own computer or video equipment as it was not tested for health and safety (forcing them to hire the university's equipment at ridiculous prices) and people weren't allowed to hang banners up as they weren't 'registered' to use a ladder.

At the Voluntary Sector Resource Centre on Holloway Road, north London, the venue was concerned at having the bookfair on the same day as a Arsenal home match due potential clashes between police, anarchists and Arsenal fans. This was before the infamous Battle of the Coronet in 2006, where the police closed down and evicted everyone from the giant Wetherspoons pub next to the venue, which was filled with anarchists having a post-bookfair drink. Having a few hundred lubricated anarchists out on the street, it soon kicked off with a couple of over-excited coppers wading in with their batons. Anarchists stood their ground in suitably belligerent fashion and seven people were eventually arrested. Needless to say they, were all found not guilty at the trial.

Now that the bookfair's at Queen Mary and Westfield College in Stepney, back in London's East End, things seem to be improving. There's even more space for meetings, film screenings, performances and some comrades have taken on running an 'older kid's space'. Ideas are always welcome for how to improve the event, especially for the kids.

Considerable effort has been made to increase the size and variety of meetings, workshops and discussions, with some controversy. For example, inviting well-known speakers even when they are not themselves anarchists. This tactic has worked quite well as it has attracted people to come along who would otherwise probably not have done so. There were an estimated 3,000 people there in 2009.

In the last few years there have been bookfairs in lots of other cities, some of which are now quite established – Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol, Bradford, Norwich, Oxford,

Durham and Dublin to mention only few. This September there'll be a Kendal anarchist fair. It seems like the anarchist bookfair keeps on spreading.

The London bookfair remains one of the largest and most important regular gatherings of anarchists in the world, and this year's one will be the 28th such gathering of misfits and agitators. Get down there for vegan cake, books, t-shirts, cabaret, arguments and much more.

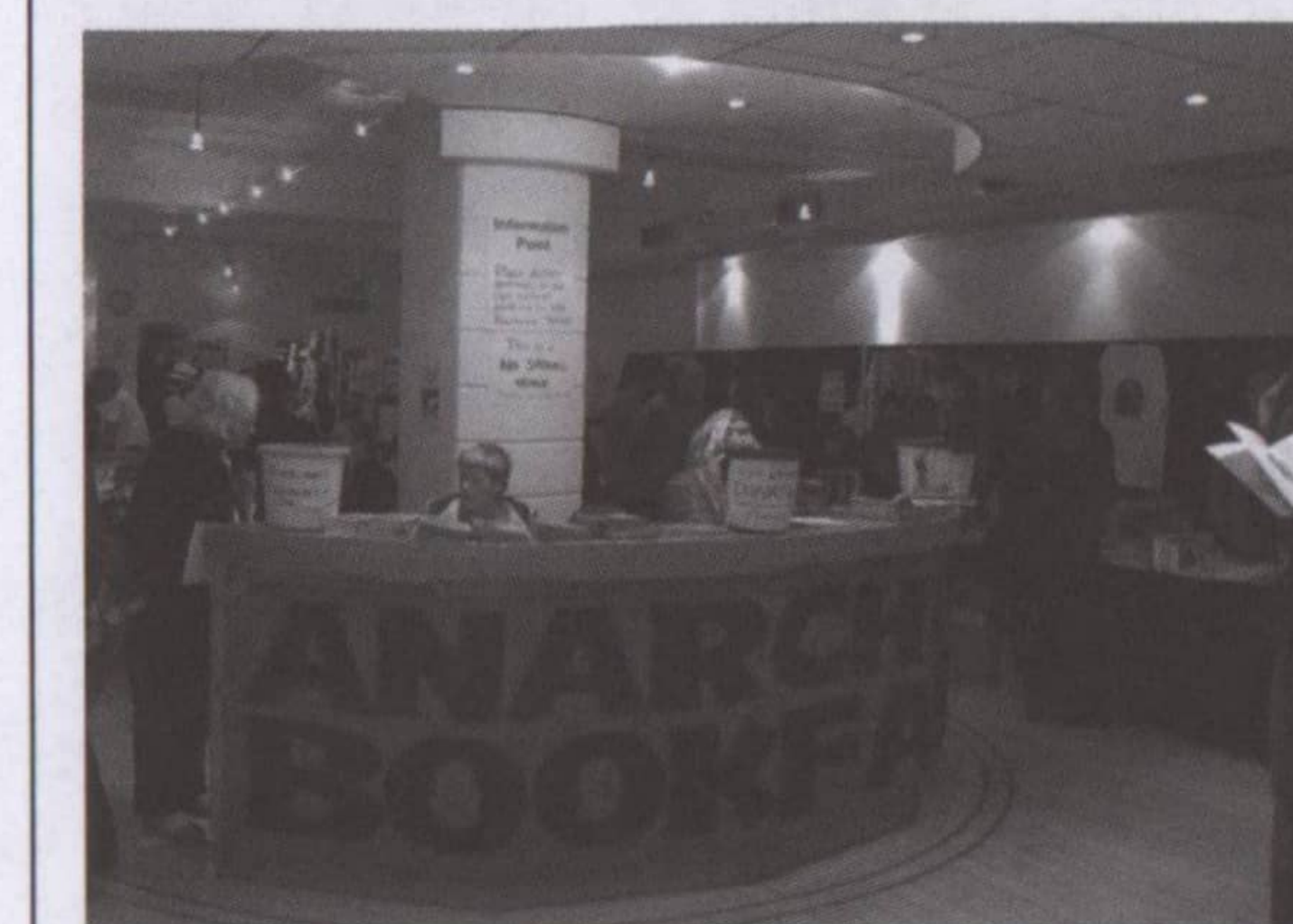
2010 – the 28th Bookfair

This year the bookfair offers many interesting stalls, talks and workshops. There are the usual meetings by or about famous anarchists/anarchist-leaning people, which in October 2010 will be John Pilger, Chomsky and Michael Albert. There will be meetings on international movements, including Croatia, Sweden, India and the Zapatistas. Also campaign planning on a large variety of issues, including the Corporate Complicity in Israeli Apartheid and Occupation (with Corporate Watch), technology politics (with Corporate Watch and others), student politics (with the Autonomous Students' Network), ecological politics (with Earth First!) and many more. There will also be practical tips for action, such as how to set up a Co-op (with Radical Routes) and how to write a Data Protection Act request. And there will be meetings on how theory and history are useful to movements today, such as Platformism and specific historical struggles.

Sessions on hot topics of our times, such as how the anarcho-feminist movement is developing, how to resist the police's organised repression of activists and how to build the black cross prisoner support movement, will be key elements. There will be quite a few

meetings on the current economic situation: the cuts, the banking and finance system and workplace struggle. With various organisations, such as the IWW and the National Shop Stewards Network, Corporate Watch will hold two sessions on related topics: the unemployment business and the banking and finance system. The unemployment business is the industry that has grown up over the last decade to 'manage' rising levels of unemployment, making a tidy profit whilst dismantling what remains of the welfare state. What the 'economic crisis' means for anarchist organising still needs more exploration to be able to effective in local struggles against austerity, so Corporate Watch will be holding a discussion on this. Paul Mason, Hillel Ticktin and someone from Endnotes will debate whether the cuts will lead to working class defeat or to a new anti capitalist movement.

London Anarchist Bookfair, Saturday 23rd October, from 10am until 7pm at Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS.
<http://www.anarchistbookfair.org.uk>
 email: mail@anarchistbookfair.org.uk
 Thanks to Black Flag for the background info.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Another two weeks of adventure and excitement in the Alley. First off, huzzah for Tony, who has fixed the London Coalition Against Poverty office window. Fear not that he won't be handsomely remunerated for his valiant efforts. Also we are pleased to welcome Nick Heath and Kevin Crom to the ranks of shop volunteers.

Last issue we mentioned that Clive Bloom was doing a tour of events around the Sydney Street seige. This went very well with over twenty people on the two-hour walk around the East End. However we were too ambitious in getting copies of Clive's book, *Violent London*, and have a dozen left over. So, rather than send 'em straight back, they're on special offer for the next month in the shop at just £10 for all 560 pages. Sadly we can't do it that cheaply on the website as the postage on such a big book is prohibitive. However all 43 *Ravens* are now available and we have a few issues of *Anarchy* from the 1960s and 70s.

On a more serious note, the Advisory Service for Squatters had to ask someone to leave last week because of bad behaviour. Fortunately things like this are rare and it was all sorted out very sensibly. But just in case anyone else out there is considering being naughty in the building, we have empowered a 'Safer Spaces Squad', or SS squad as they are known, to see that everyone can live together in peace and harmony.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 71 no 16, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7116 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can now subscribe online at 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.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 9th October 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 30th September. 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

I'm an atheist humanist anarchist so, as you might imagine, I'm not that hot on the Pope and the Catholic church. The Roman Catholics are a bit of an easy target at the moment, what with the ongoing sex abuse scandals, and the hierarchy's involvement in their cover-up.

Before he'd even arrived, Cardinal Kaspar Walter, the Vatican's expert on the Church of England, described Britain as a third world country and attacked a "new, aggressive, atheism". It took a while for it to dawn that he meant skin colour, rather than the quality of the arrivals experience at Heathrow.

The Pope, who lest we forget is both a head of state and the head of an organisation that cuts across national boundaries, used his subsidised visit to Britain to attack "atheist extremism" and "aggressive secularism", as well as to trot out the old canard about the Nazis being atheists. Yes, of course, good job those Nazis were there to restrain the Catholic Ustashe of Croatia, who were so barbarous they even upset the SS. And it's a shame about the Catholic fascists of Spain, Italy, Portugal and Vichy France.

He painted a picture of Britain that I, for one, don't recognise. It's such a secular country that we have an increase in faith schools, supported by politicians of all stripes, with some of them even allowed to teach creationism. The Head of State is also head of the state religion and bishops sit in the House of Lords merely because of their religious position, a situation shared only with that well-known secular democracy Iran.

Still, after much wrangling, religious adoption agencies were told that they cannot refuse to deal with gay people. That must be the aggressive secularism the Papacy complains

about. Still, if I was Pope, a situation even less likely than being England manager, I'd be doing my best to distract from all the sex abuse stuff. And who better to attack than those nasty secularists?

I think the Pope well understands the danger from secularism. It is not, as its attackers will claim, about removing religion from society, but about making it a private matter and giving everyone a level playing field. A secular society doesn't discriminate on grounds of religious belief, or lack of it. It is what people do that matters, not what they think their deity's view would be. Token Tory Muslim Baroness Warsi said that the new government "does do God" and would be more open to working with religious charities, presumably than non-religious charities. Religion is clearly privileged within the State.

What all of them miss is that their followers are, by and large, ignoring the bits of their religion that they don't like. Catholic Italy has the lowest birth rate in Europe; either no one there is having sex or they are ignoring papal teaching on the sins of birth control. Most ordinary Catholics seem to have few problems with children born out of wedlock or gays.

The government are buttering up the godly because they see them as an opportunity to get public services on the cheap, staffed by volunteers who won't need paying. Of course, religious children's homes have a fine record.

Looking on the bright side, the Catholic hierarchy might be a bunch of misfits, authoritarians and racists, but they are not wrong on everything. The Pope has also condemned celebrity culture, the death penalty and the lack of ethics of finance capitalism... it's not really enough, though, is it?



A schoolgirl holds a decorated crucifix and a Papal flag as she watches Pope Benedict XVI during his recent visit to the UK.

Police complaints

You report in *Freedom* (11th September, page 2) that the Met Police had the most complaints against it of any Force in England. This is hardly surprising when they have around four times as many officers (30,000) as the next biggest English Forces, West Midlands and Greater Manchester (8,000 each).

P. Edant

An anarchist response to sexual violence

A recent article on sexual violence, written by the London Anarcha Feminist Kolectiv (*Freedom*, 28th August, page 5), advocates that the anarchist scene provide a process of “transformative support” for both the victim and the rapist. They seem to be suggesting such a process as an alternative to the police or courts.

I have extreme scepticism on this point. I do not think that such “support” as can be provided by the anarchist scene will cause any rapist to “transform.” There are projects in mainstream society that aim to rehabilitate rapists. They are run by trained psychologists. They also tend to be underfunded and few in number. In my view, calling for better availability of these services would be a legitimate feminist demand. Calling on the anarchist scene to attempt to replicate is just unrealistic and dangerous.

To me, it seems like a variation on a fairly common anarchist mistake of assuming that because we are politically developed and right on, we must be capable of providing a better solution within the confines of our scene than mainstream society would be able to manage. I would go one further and argue that it is a function of lifestyleism to think this way. As if our responsibility is to create a self sufficient scene in which we can handle everything right (even effecting psychological change in perpetrators of rape) rather than working to improve society at large.

In reality, the anarchist scene does not provide a better solution. I know this because I was a victim of sexual assault in an “anarchist space” and the response was completely dire (the general attitude being denial, disbelief, minimisation and blaming the victim. The chatter around that incident is the only example I’ve ever seen of a rumour getting *downplayed* with repeated telling!). I bring this up, not to have a retrospective winge but to demonstrate where we actually stand. Which is to say as bad as, or slightly worse than the rest of society. Just so you know, there was no detectable difference in response between people who considered themselves feminists and those that did not.

To talk about the anarchist scene being capable of “transformative support” is just a bad joke in the circumstances. We’d do better learning some basics and challenging

some common myths (although to be fair the article does suggest this as well). The fact that the author of the *Freedom* article can’t think of a better term for a rapist than “the other person” does not fill me with confidence!

Ellenor Hutson

Where have all the animals gone?

I am writing in concern at the lack of pictures of animals in recent issues of *Freedom*. Given the paucity of genuinely interesting articles in the paper of late, I would suggest the next issue carries a picture of a porcupine.

The porcupine is an animal known as the most wilful and Stirnerite of the family Erethizontidae. With their unruly mop of spiky quills and unyielding hatred of the Fisher (their main predator), represented in their ‘Fishwatch’ activities, I believe they are a role model that all anarchists can aspire to.

If not a porcupine, then perhaps the editors would consider a giant cane toad or a teacup pig?

J.H.

Snake victim’s name

My witness of a giant anaconda devouring a human boy was in my own childhood. At that time Oscar Peterson was a famous black spokesperson or hero. I have always believed that the name of the snake victim was a very similar sounding Oscar Pederson.

C.A.

Selling Freedom

I wonder if your readers know that they can sell copies of *Freedom*? This popularises anarchist and libertarian ideas as well as making yourself a few bob.

Please change the bit on subscription rates at the back where it says “get in touch with us for details of bundle rates” to “sell *Freedom* and keep half the money you make – 5 or 12 copies posted to you free, no need to return the unsolds.”

I’ve been doing this for some weeks and have become so well off that I’m considering abandoning anarchism and becoming a bloated plutocrat.

J. Most

P.S. Why not have something about selling *Freedom* Press books on sale or return as well.

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Jock Palfreeman

Jock is a 23-year old Australian anarchist who, on a night out with friends in Sofia, stood up to 16 drunken nazis who were attacking two young Roma boys. In trying to help the Roma boys, Jock got involved in a fight with the fascists as he tried to defend the boys and himself which left one of the nazis dead and another injured. The two Roma boys escaped uninjured.

Jock was tried for murder and attempted murder and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and fined £220,000 in a highly biased trial that ignored the fact that it was a racially motivated attack, and also that Jock was heavily outnumbered by a drunken mob wielding concrete tiles as weapons. Forensic evidence also showed that the fatal wound was caused by the victim, Andrei Monov, falling on Jock's knife, and that the other wounds were caused by defensive slashes.

No crime scene was established, no gang members were searched for weapons or tested for blood alcohol levels, CCTV footage was either lost or destroyed and key witnesses were not interviewed.

Jock was railroaded and the Bulgarian state is now seeking to severely limit Jock's ability to fight his conviction. On 21st October, Jock will go to appeal in Sofia, but the appeal is being limited to solely examining the trial judge's summing up and comments. The appeal court has rejected applications to re-examine the CCTV footage, Monov's extreme level of intoxication and other key forensic evidence.

An International Week of Action from 15th to 20th October has been called in advance of his appeal and actions will be taking place across Europe and North America. A picket will be held outside the Bulgarian Embassy in London at Queen's Gate from 12pm on Tuesday 19th October. For more information see: www.freejock.net

Scott DeMuth and the Grand Jury

Following the use of domestic terrorism charges against Earth and Animal Liberation activists, the use of Grand Jury subpoenas is also becoming more and more a weapon of choice by authorities trying to get around their inability to infiltrate activist circles or get activists to grass on their comrades. Failure to testify before a Grand Jury about First Amendment political activities can result in long stretches of imprisonment for contempt, circumventing the Fifth Amendment right to remain silent.

Recent victims of this tactic have been Scott DeMuth and Carrie Feldman, who were jailed for refusing to testify about a 2004 ALF action. Carrie served four months and Scott has now decided to plead guilty to one count of misdemeanour conspiracy to commit 'animal enterprise terrorism', with an agreement that he will not be forced to testify against anyone else, rather than have Carrie and another activist serve time for refusing to testify against him at his trial.



● The organisers of this year's **Manchester Anarchist Bookfair** (Saturday 2nd October) are confident it will be the biggest and most successful yet.

In a venue situated opposite the BBC building and close to the university, it will no doubt attract the city's committed radicals and activists, student population and politically curious enticed by the huge range of material on offer. Bookfair's are still the premier means by which anarchists can promote and communicate their ideas to ordinary people out in the real world. It's also an excellent opportunity for comrades to come together, socialise and get involved in groups, activities and events.

The Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation and Class War will be representing the national federations, along with numerous local groups, e.g. Manchester Anti-fascist Alliance, Manchester Social Centres, Manchester Climate Action, as well as radical distributors (AK Press, Active) and campaign and single-issue groups such as Corporate Watch and Education Workers Network. A packed day then, with something for everyone.

Details of all the stalls, meetings and social activities can be found at <http://bookfair.org.uk/>

● Anarchists are making final preparations for the spectacular showdown at the Tory Party Conference on Sunday 3rd October.

Under the banner **Toffs Out!**, organisers have put a national call-out for militants, radicals and the angry to converge at the International Conference Centre in the centre of Birmingham at midday on the 3rd to form a direct action bloc to "smash the

Tory Party Conference". They also plan to disrupt conference meeting and corporate jamborees throughout the week. The propaganda is unapologetic and defiant given the local authorities and police chief have already tried to ban demonstrations against the first Tory conference as a party in power.

Coaches from London, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham are already booked to bring anarchists together from across the UK in what is expected to be the biggest mass demonstration since the party of millionaire bankers formed the government. As the organisers say "No permission, no stewards, no meetings with the filth, just us, working class action!"

<http://toffsout.wordpress.com/>

● Noise demos continue on a weekly basis outside the arms manufacturers in Brighton by **Smash EDO** in the build up to the proposed mass siege of the factory on 13th October.

EDO is part of a weapons producers who supply weapons systems for the illegal warfare predominantly in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, and a campaign has been underway since 2004 by local Brighton residents to have the factory closed using varying tactics and methods of direct action.

During Israel's 2009 massacre in Gaza, 'decommissioners' broke into EDO, causing hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage, and shut down the production line. As reported previously in *Freedom*, they were all found not guilty by a unanimous jury verdict.

For further details on the forthcoming siege of EDO visit <http://www.smashedo.org.uk/>

To receive updates email: smashed@riseup.net

Women, war and conscription

While the media last month celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, an act of heroism rather than an act of war, we reproduce a critical examination written during the Second World War of the role women were forced to play in aiding 'the war effort'

The last war ended just in time to save women from conscription; this time it has overtaken them [300,000 women registered for war work in April 1941], and it is going to be interesting to see how it operates and to watch feminine reaction to it. We are assured there is to be no class distinction; women of all classes, married and single, will register and will be set to work where they are likely to be most useful. We have already seen the hosiery factory and mill workers transferred to munitions' factories; one may perhaps be forgiven a little scepticism as to whether we shall see a similarly wholesale transference of middle-class girls and women – many of whom have never earned their livings in their lives, having been supported by their fathers until they married and then by the husbands they secured in the marriage market – to such work. As the majority of middle class women workers are employed in offices, and office work is apparently a reserved occupation, the burden of the industrial conscription of women falls where it might have been expected to fall – on the working class.

According to a Ministry of Labour statement, the question of any conscientious objection on the part of women conscripts "does not arise" as women may be drafted to other occupation than munitions making. That a woman might object to being conscripted for any war work at all does not seem to have occurred to the Ministry. Such a phenomenon as an out-and-out female objector to any kind of participation in what is popularly called "our war effort" is



Above, a woman working on the land; below left, a Second World War munitions factory.

apparently unthinkable to the official mind. The Appeal Board would not doubt take into consideration any pacifist objection to the manufacture of munitions, though such an objection would *not be a specific ground for exemption*.

The industrial conscript, in short, both male and female, is in the same position precisely as the military conscript, except that the industrial conscript is not allowed to "make known conscientious scruples" at the time of registering – in case these should "turn out to be quite irrelevant". But "it is not the Minister's *intention so far as it can be avoided* to direct persons to perform services against which they have genuine conscientious objections." The emphasis is mine. It is all very vague, as will be seen, and somewhat contradictory and the Minister seemed to overlook the fact that you can send a mare to the water...

Crèches are to be provided for the children under school age of conscripted mothers, and children, we are assured, are to be properly cared for. It seems odd to recollect the outcry there was in this country a score of years ago over the alleged wicked Bolshevik break-up of home life by sending the mothers to work in factories and leaving their children to be cared for by the State in nursery-schools and crèches. Where now is all the fine sentiment about the sacredness of motherhood? Mothers now are asked – nay more compelled – to do their bit in co-operating in the murder of other mothers and their children in German and Italian towns.

In spite of all the talk of sex equality – and the bland general assumption that it is a

fact – the fact still remains that woman labour is cheap labour. It is up to women to see that they are not exploited in their forced labour – but more importantly it is up to women to begin to *think*, instead of merely acquiescing into everything the capitalist press tells them in its role of mouthpiece of 'democracy's' dictators. War is a man-made affair, but the conscription of women brings it into the very heart of the home; women are no longer to be allowed merely to acquiesce, or to volunteer their services; they no longer have any choice but to become part of the war-machine along with the men – or go to prison for resistance. Forced out of their homes and out of jobs of their own choosing – or idleness and parasitism according to class – resentment may smoulder into a spark of revolt which might well express itself in a stubborn, sullen incompetence Mr Bevin had not bargained for.

So long as women acquiesce and co-operate in wars they sanction wars and have no right to complain either over the horror and stupidity of it, or the inconvenience and disruptiveness of it where ordinary living is concerned. If instead of acquiescing and co-operating on the side of war they gave their support to the opposition to it, to the exposure of it as a capitalist-imperialist racket from which the common people may expect to gain precisely nothing – despite the hot-air of the press and the glib assurances of politicians – what immense potentialities for peace would the vast 'regiment of women' represent.

Written by Ethel Mannin and published in *War Commentary* in April 1941.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

SEPTEMBER

Until 5th October Tadamon, images of solidarity and strength in Palestine, photo exhibition by British activist Penny Quinton at Freedom Gallery, above the bookshop in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, see <http://penniequinton.org> or freedompress.org.uk for details and opening times.

25th Demonstration at the site of proposed new palm-oil burning, agrofuel power station at Portland in Dorset (coach from London, and maybe from other places, contact stopagrofuels@campaigncc.org to book a place) for more information email info@campaigncc.org or see campaigncc.org
27th until 3rd October No Border Camp in Brussels, a free space for sharing info, experience or expertise for actions aimed at smashing the borders that divide us all. There will be a big demonstration on Saturday 2nd October, for more details email nobordercamp@vluchteling.be or see <http://nobordersbxl.noblogs.org>

OCTOBER

2nd Manchester Anarchist Bookfair from 11am until 5pm at The Dancehouse Theatre, 10a Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5QA, see bookfair.org.uk for details.

2nd As part of a week of international protest, the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) is organising something at the American base at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire, more details nearer the time, contact 01423 884076, mail@caab.corner.org.uk or see caab.org.uk
3rd Protest against the Tories cuts at the International Convention Centre, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2EA, from 12 noon until 5pm, see <http://iww.org.uk> or <http://righttowork.org.uk>

13th A mass siege of EDO MBM/ITT – despite the victory of the Decommissioners, EDO still produces weapons parts at Home Farm Road, Brighton, and protests continue (please arrive on the 12th as there will be convergence space available), siege starts at 10am at a venue to be announced, call 07538093930, email smashedo@riseup.net or see smashedo.org.uk/hammertime.htm

16th No Borders South Wales benefit gig at Stow Hill, Newport NP20 1JB from 7.30pm, £5, email noborderswales@riseup.net or see <http://noborderswales.org.uk/2010/07/22/benefit-gig-on-16th-october/>

16th The Crude Awakening, a day of mass action in central London against the oil industry, brought to you by Space Hijackers, Plane Stupid, Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, Climate Camp, Rising Tide, Liberate Tate – now oil's time is up, let's give the oil industry a really Crude Awakening, see crudeawakening.org.uk for details.

23rd London Anarchist Bookfair, for all your radical requirements including books, talks, t-shirts, food and so much more... from 10am until 7pm at Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, see anarchistbookfair.org.uk for details.

FILM

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo

directed by Niels Arden Oplev

Contrasting with *The Killer Inside Me* (see last issue), Stieg Larsson's bestselling Millennium novels ignore organic social networks – and 'ordinary' people in every sense. Dystopic domination here originates in elite predators exploiting blindspots in society, transforming from the very top down civilised liberal heaven into murderous misogynist hell. Parlaying a global publishing phenomenon into blockbuster cinema, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo's* crusading magazine editor Mikael Blomkvist (played by Michael Nyqvist) can't singlehandedly stem the corrupt tide without hacker genius Lisbeth Salander (Noomi Rapace) motivated to avenge her entire biography of familial and institutional violent sexual abuse. Unlike in Winterbottom's film, this battered woman fights back – with extreme prejudice – but again the passage to cinema privileges female flesh over external complexity. Nevertheless an otherwise classic whodunnit – industrialist clan harbours incorrigible depravity amid decadence recalling aristocratic Swedish Nazi collaboration – is refreshed by a postmodern dynamic dualism of cosmopolitan benevolence and nubile cyberpunk antisociality, whose unlikely resourcefulness doubtless appeals to sundry self-pitying emo sensitivities seeking conservative wish-fulfilment.

However, the sequels sadly surrender residual credibility, depicting a worldwide web of depraved brutality targeting the 'weaker sex' at every turn, requiring super-human escalation to overcome. So *The Girl Who Played With Fire's* action movie posits sex-trafficking for government officials and businessmen, with social-democracy poisoned by Cold War realpolitik infecting police and justice systems, before *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest's* conspiracy thriller culminates with state welfare comprehensively suborned, scapegoating victims via secret service parapolitics, media mystification and show-trials. A charitable view detects Larsson's journalistic campaigns against the malignancies of far-right malice and masculinist supremacy in the trilogy's populist pulp trappings, with *Da Vinci Code* banality tempered by extended sociological exposition. But the film entertain-



ments ditch such turgid context, pushing purportedly pro-feminist romance further towards sordid prurient fantasy. Worse, the author's protagonists were comparably sexually and emotionally crippled – whereas Blomkvist's promiscuous irresistibility to all womankind now disappears, while Salander's vicissitudes are amplified in technicolour.

Crimes and Misses' Demeanour

Despite the superficial allure of *The Girl's* apparent resistance to oppression, an ultimately alien (rather than alienated) provenance removes her decisively from recognisable reality – with conduct denoting nihilistic egomania rather than righteous womanist vigilantism; his avuncular humanism now resembling self-satisfied patronisation. Strangely appropriate, then, that Blomkvist and Salander are leftfield avatars of Swedish national icons, the 1940s children's book characters Kalle Blomkvist and Pippi Longstocking – the latter twisted by male kin cruelty, creating patterns of victimisation that wider societal forces reinforce and reproduce. And if their creator Astrid Lindgren's youthful superheroism flirted disquietly with triumphal Aryan innocence and mastery, more explicit sadomasochism accompanies these cinematic revisions, starting from Larsson's original title *Men Who Hate Women*. In the final instalment Blomkvist stresses that "this story is not primarily about spies and secret government agencies; it's about violence against women and the men who enable it". Nevertheless, even if the monsters could be so readily identified, their existence neither absolves everyone else nor will their removal make capitalism cuddly again.

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<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo is available on DVD. *The Girl Who Played With Fire* is on general release, followed in November by *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Raimundo Arturo Fernández Vial (1858–1931) served with distinction in the Chilean navy and was something of a national hero. In 1903 he was appointed Inspector of Railways during a rail strike but gave the workers a fair hearing, supporting most of their demands and granting them. In return the railway workers renamed their sports club the Fernández Vial Sports Club and the football team still exists with that name. He fell from favour with those in

government, eventually retiring and devoting himself to educational and recreational ventures among the workers, earning himself the nickname The People's Rear Admiral.

2. Anarchist farmhand Diego R. Barbosa, who had written four of these novellas, was beaten to death by Falangists.
3. £6 billion. As they say, "we're all in this together".
4. Over £60,000 a year. Nice work if you can get it.

Voices from below

Dave Douglass runs a favourable eye over a recent commemorative pamphlet of the Spanish Civil War

This is the third edition of *70th Anniversary of the Spanish Civil War: The Aftermath 1939–2009*, a brilliant rank-and-file trade union tribute and memorial to the war and the international working class defenders who went to the aid of the progressive republic. The pamphlet, by Northern Anarchist Network activist Brian Bamford, highlights the volunteers of his native North West. Funded and produced by trade unionists and trades council activists across the area, it aims, through interviews with those volunteers, to tell the truth as they saw it, without sectarian exclusion.

Despite this, it has faced some objections, largely along traditional divisions in perception of that epochal struggle. Bamford writes: “A shadow hangs over this Spanish war and it is not helped by the attitude of communists who are often anxious to cover up the truth and even tried to prevent the publication of this commemorative pamphlet.”

The pamphlet makes the remarkable, but sadly believable, estimate that a tenth of all internationalists killed in Spain were executed under the orders of the Comintern, i.e. shot by ‘our own’ side. “Part of the mythology of the war is that the left was united against fascism. Another part of the mythology is that all of the so-called democratic countries were against fascism. Both of these things weren’t true. As we now know,” says Richard Porton.

It is prefaced with the words of Brigadista Ralph Cantor writing to his relatives about unfolding events as he saw them in 1937, and by anti-Franco activist and Civil War expert Bamford. Thus it opens with a jump into the deep-end of the Spanish Civil War controversy, with a quote from Professor Paul Preston (of the LSE and International Brigade Trust) which compares Orwell’s *Homage To Catalonia* with Spike Milligan’s *Adolf Hitler: My Part In His Downfall*. Nothing of the refracted and contradictory interpretations of events has got any clearer with the passing of the 70 years. However, with the decline of the Stalinist parties and end of the USSR, more leftist views of events are becoming visible, as well they might.

This edition includes additional interviews from *Land and Freedom*, the book’s author and Ken Loach, the director who transformed it into a film, together with new local material and insights from the Basque perspective. Bamford explains, “We are vastly extending this third edition ... to include the campaigns for blue plaques for local volunteers such as



December 1938, men of the International Brigade returning from the Spanish war front arrive at Victoria Station to a warm welcome by large cheering crowds.

James Keogh and Joe Fillingham, as well as items on the Basque children in Greater Manchester and the aftermath of the war as represented in the film *Land and Freedom* and by the Spanish movement for *la recuperacion de la memoria historica*.” It also benefits from Stuart Christie’s introduction: Stuart, of course, perhaps Britain’s most famous contemporary anarchist, was the hero of my generation’s anti-Franco struggle.

Chomsky has called the civil war “one of the most intensively studied and critical events of modern history.” Bamford again: “To counter the high-blown tradition of these liberal and communist academics, our brief pamphlet ... emphasises the human, social and anthropological aspects by drawing on the valuable first-hand memoirs of people like Ralph Cantor (International Brigadier) ... George Orwell and Pedro Cuadrado (former Catalan Republican Guard) ... or even the letters of apprentice James Keogh and trade unionist Joe Fillingham.” A challenge is thus thrown down proclaiming that it is the hands-on, personal diaries and recollections of actual actors in such historic events that are the real conveyors of events, rather than the “musty texts of our professional historians”.

Bamford reflects, “Yet, we still ponder why the Spaniards and Catalans were the first to seriously fight fascism? As Pedro Cuadrado told the *Bolton Evening News*: ‘Barcelona was the first city to defeat the Fascists.’ The Italian novelist, Ignazio Silone, in *School for Dictators* argued that the ragged-arsed Spaniards put up a stronger fight than the highly educated Germans with their powerful socialist, communist parties and trade unions. This is the Spanish puzzle.”

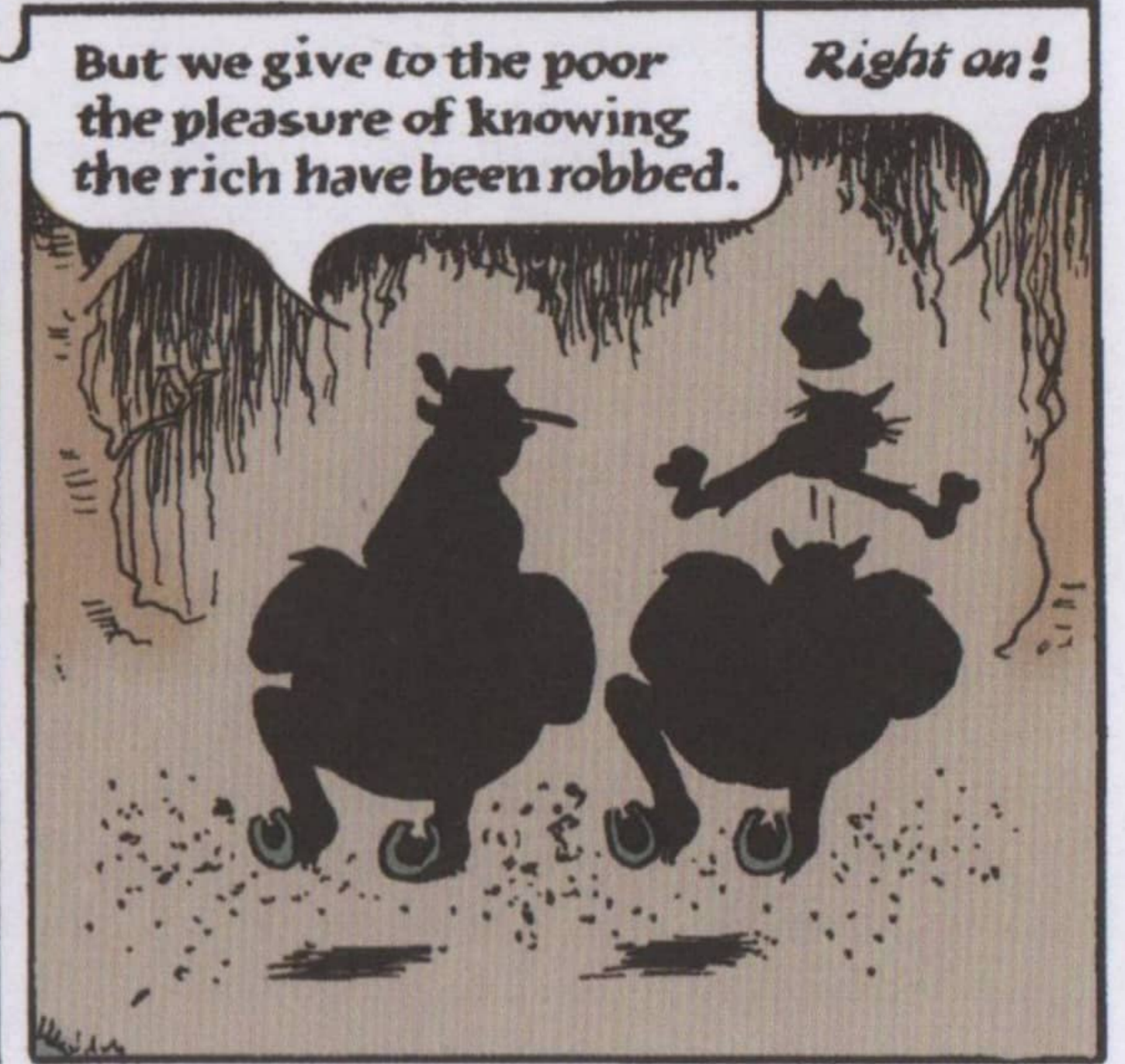
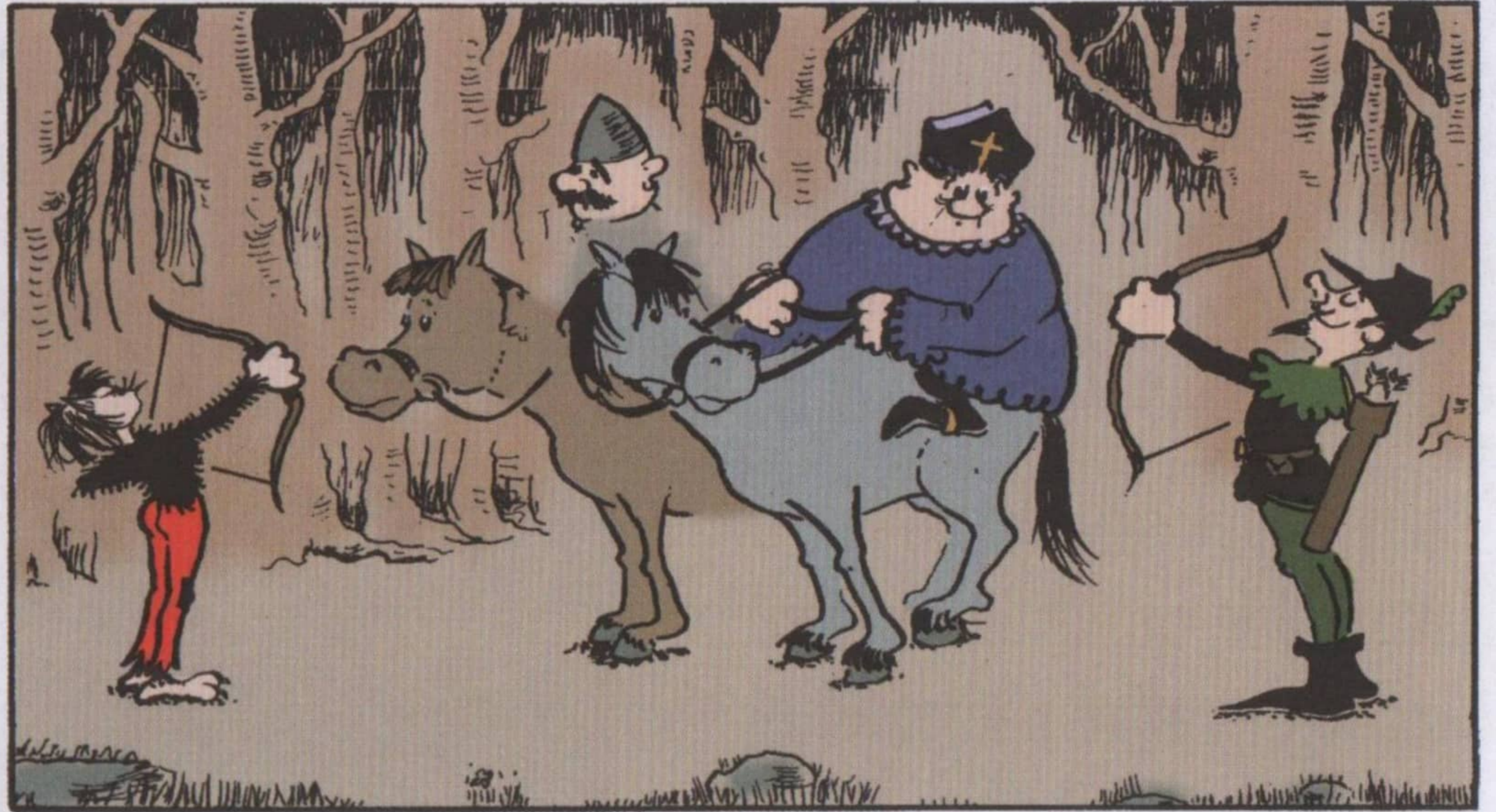
For some in our movement, Spain is the unmatched revolutionary struggle; all other movements and moments of history are dwarfed by it. Everything is judged by the yardstick of the CNT, or the influence of

Spanish anarchism and the anarchist masses, nothing before or since will ever compare.

In this, perhaps, the lenses of our anarcho comrades are more rose-coloured than red and black. In part it is an attempt to find some anarcho-syndicalist panacea, some contribution equal to the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution, some movement which will demonstrate the worth of anarchism as a practical political doctrine and popular movement. But such a search is based on an actual ignorance of the hearty contribution anarchism and anarchists have made worldwide, including the Russian revolution and its immediate aftermath, and in the American labour and trade union movement. That perhaps is another story. Certainly anarchism and Spain are synonymous in the modern history of that country and any analysis of the European labour movement.

The pamphlet stands as a highly informative pocket history of the Spanish revolution and the background events leading to the Civil War. The section on the Manchester volunteers tells us some 5,000 volunteers from across the world served *outside* of the formal International Brigades working with the CNT and the POUM, which is a little known aspect of the conflict. Some 35,000 volunteers from 53 countries joined the republican forces overall; of these, 2,300 came from Britain.

Richard Baxell estimates volunteers from the North-West of England “numbered approximately 370”. Most of these came from Manchester, Oldham and Liverpool. Hugh Thomas, in his book *The Spanish Civil War*, says “over 80% were working class, many were unemployed and over 60% were communists.” Baxell claims “the level of trade union membership supports Bill Alexander’s remark that a ‘high rate of trade union membership was not untypical’. Many of their jobs were manual working class:



Review

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bricklayers, metal and engineering workers, miners, electricians, labourers and painters.”

With a list of all the Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, Bury, Bolton, and Stockport Spanish Civil War volunteers and brief cameos of each individual's involvement, history and fate, included here is a priceless insight into the nature of that selfless endeavour.

Brian and his fellow trade unionists who put this book together and financed it are to be congratulated. It is timely and vital to modern debates on the direction of any emerging international working class movement and what lessons we need to learn from the past about control and working class democracy.

Published by Greater Manchester 70th Anniversary Spanish Civil War Remembrance Group, available for £4.60 post-free, cheques payable to Tameside Trade Union Council, c/o 46 Kingsland Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 3HQ.

The Tyne and Wear Branch of the IWW, in conjunction with UNITE and the NUM, hope to stage an anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War in June next year in the radical former mining village of Chopwell, from which a number of the volunteers for the International Brigades came. Brian Bamford and Newcastle anarchist and historian Lewis Mates, an expert on the role of unions in the North during the Spanish war, have been invited. Additionally it is hoped Stuart Christie will be speaking about his own dedicated intervention into Spain in the 1960s. A folk and poetry social is planned for the evening.

THE QUIZ

1. Who was the “People’s rear admiral” and how did he come to have a football team named after him?
2. *Love, Sacrifice and Revenge* was a novella published cheaply in a series by the Montseny family in 1930s Spain to spread an appreciation of a libertarian society and be accessible. What happened to its author?
3. The government cannot afford to write off £2 billion of under-charged PAYE income tax. How much tax did they write off for Vodafone?
4. Education Secretary Michael Gove used to write a column for *The Times* which he boasted took him an hour or so a week. How much was he paid for his thoughts by Rupert Murdoch’s News International?

Answers on page 14

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