

Black Flag

FOR ANARCHIST RESISTANCE

THE TWO authoritarians, vanguards SOULS OF and anti-capitalist movements DEMOCRACY



Black Flag



For a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation; against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

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editorial

Our last issue centred on Seattle and the emergence of an international militant anti-capitalism and the anarchist content of this supposed 'new social movement'. It came out around Mayday 2000 which saw a brilliant conference in London bringing together diverse strands of anarchist and anti-capitalist groups and individuals. And the cops were there too. Almost a year on Prague stands out as another milestone for the anti-capitalist movement in more ways than one. This time the SWP were on the bandwagon, they've been taking almost as much interest in the anarchist movement as the old bill have. Their clowning aside, we still have to face up to the fact that anti-capitalist riot tourism means almost as little to most working class people as the paper sales and posturing of the left. Whatever we think about third world debt, we are all facing massive debt repayments – to banks and loan sharks, through bankrupt councils and bankrupt governments. Globalisation begins at home.

On the subject of debt, *Black Flag* owe our printers well over £2,000 now. This is not because we stuck it all up our collective nose but because we have failed to put the price up for years and increased the quality of the magazine to try and reach more people than before. Subs and sales are up but not enough to make a difference: we can't build up debts indefinitely. If you think this magazine is worth supporting we need anything from one off donations – and thank you to all of you who have sent us money over the past year, standing orders, benefits and so on are all vital if we are not to go under.

Money was not the only problem we had putting this issue out. We do need more people to get involved in production and distribution, taking on responsibility as well as being supportive, as well as writing. We want to get back to a useful regularity but we all want to maintain political and personal commitments, the reasons why we want this magazine and the wider revolutionary movement to succeed.

contents

NATIONAL NEWS

- 03 **Rough in Hackney**
East London borough goes bankrupt
Mark Barnsley
CPS offices occupied
- 04 **Cock Up or Conspiracy?**
Fascists target pub
Mayday 2001
Monopoly Mayhem
- 05 **Whistleblowers Get Red Card**
Shop Stewards sacked by privatised Benefit firm

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- 06 **Toxic Shock**
French factory occupation
Korean Revival
Anarchist network returns
Brand News
Swedish anarchist mag charged with incitement
- 07 **Nice in Nice**
EU summit protests
Crackdown on Prison Solidarity
Spanish anarchists targeted and arrested

08 A New Intifada

Palestine – where now?

10 Postcard from Prague

First hand account of the S26 demos in Prague

FEATURES

- 14 **Reforming Zeal**
Football – the new testing ground for surveillance & anti-terrorist measures?
- 16 **We're All Staying**
Gentrification and local resistance in Berlin
- 21 **Secrets and Lies**
David Shayler – Once a spook always a spook
- 23 **Authoritarians, Vanguardists and Anti-capitalist movements**
Libertarians v. Leninists – Lessons from the past
- 26 **Curing the English Disease**
Working class resistance past, present and future
- 30 **Forever in Debt**
Strategies for action against debt profiteers

PRISONERS

- 32 **Satpal Ram**
Chattanooga Three
Irish Republican Prisoners
- 33 **Zolo Azania**
George Bulsara
Nikos Maziotis
- 34 **Philadelphia**
Mayday Prisoners
Hunger Strikes in Turkey

REVIEWS

- 35 **Free Mumia Abu Jamal**
Benefit CD
Beaten up, Fitted up, Locked up
Barnsley case pamphlet
- 36 **Up Against the Odds & The Couriers are Revolting**
Workplace organisation
- 37 **Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left**
The latest from Bookchin
- 38 **Wrong Steps – Errors in the Spanish Revolution**
Garcia Oliver
- 39 **The Anarchists of Casas Vieja**
Jerome Minz



Nursery Occupation in Hackney

ROUGH IN HACKNEY

Workers and residents in Hackney, North London, are fighting a corrupt and incompetent council which has lost £26... £46... £76... who knows how many... millions of pounds. Strikes, occupations and demonstrations have been the response to cuts and closures. There's more to come.

In October 2000 auditors discovered a hole in the accounts so large they did not know how big it was. An order was made forbidding any new expenditure. One of the immediate effects was the closure of two nurseries, Atherden and Fernbank. Parents at both immediately occupied them to keep them open. When the council met in November the order was lifted and the nurseries were reopened.

There were walkouts by some council staff and angry if damp demonstrations. A noisy demonstration on November 6 blocked the road at a council meeting heavily protected by riot police. On December 18 a one-day strike across the council attracted wide support. At the end of January council workers walked out for three days.

The council, including their top paid executives like Max Caller, don't seem to have a clue what is going on. In Oct-

ober it was only a rumour that £40+million had gone missing. The council said it was around £25m. By December it was £76 million. Hackney have sold a plot of land on the edge of The City for £86m but supposedly this will not make any difference. So where has the money gone? The 'debt' is caused by money withheld by central government, ITnet's disastrous performance (a particularly incompetent privatised Housing Benefit service), and other large sums pissed away on prestige projects like a leisure centre in the richest part of the borough, not to mention a few bob on glossy free newspapers telling us how the council have got it all under control. Despite their inability to balance the books the council still maintain they have the means to get the borough out of the mess they have made. These include closure of services, massive wage cuts for manual workers,

and more privatisation.

At present most of the initiative is with the council workers themselves, however if the cuts are to be resisted successfully it is up to local residents as well to take on the council. The parents, children and their friends who occupied the nurseries at the beginning of the crisis were successful in defending a service they needed. However, one of the nurseries, Atherden, has since been closed down. It has now been squatted.

The most obvious opposition to the cuts, apart from the council workers themselves, is 'Hackney Fightback' dominated by the SWP. Despite being supposedly community based their strategy relies on strikes by council workers and indoor rallies. Behind this is the daft hope of a victory for the London Socialist Alliance in the next council elections. Hackney is supposedly a hotbed of anarchist activity and some local anarchists, council workers and residents, are trying to push an alternative to this, reviving the "Hackney Heckler" paper and printing stickers as well as staying involved in Hackney Fightback, which is probably less marginalised than any anarchist grouping, and the union action.

Council services have been run down for years in Hackney, making it difficult for council workers to mobilise support. Privatised services make borough wide strikes weaker, council estate sell offs make unity amongst tenants harder to organise. By shutting services and making council tenants subsidise other residents through their rents the council are continuing a deliberate policy of driving poorer residents out of parts of the borough and making the area ripe for gentrification and property speculation. This is neo-liberalism at a local level, Hackney is clearly an experiment, to see how far you can go. If it works it is coming to a council near you soon.

..... For more info contact: hackneyheckler@yahoo.com.au; Hackney Fightback 079 4442 2318.

MARK BARNESLEY - the campaign goes on...

On 8 December 2000, Mark Barnesley was invited to apply for parole. He rejected the 'offer', responding:

"I am an innocent man and freedom is my right. I am not prepared to compromise myself by submitting to any form of conditional release. If that means spending extra years incarcerated in top security prisons then it is a price I am prepared to pay, albeit regrettably. My life has been completely destroyed by the terrible injustice that I have suffered, and all that I have left are my principles and integrity, and I am not prepared to compromise them by bending my knee to the parole board."

On 19 December 2000, about 20 people entered the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) offices in Sheffield in protest at Mark's continued imprisonment and CPS non-disclosure of evidence which might assist Mark's case. Protesters leafleted staff, stating, "The CPS have framed Mark Barnesley... they would like to think that he doesn't exist, but we won't forget... if they won't release the evidence, we'll find it ourselves." 16 were arrested, and charged with "conspiracy to burgle, with intent." The case will give Mark a chance to air all the dirty laundry about the CPS frame-up.

A London Mark Barnesley Supporters' Group has been established, which plans to carry out one action per month to make sure those who've colluded in framing Mark aren't allowed to forget.

..... For details contact: PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX.

COCK UP OR CONSPIRACY?

Seven anti-fascists were arrested on 28 November 2000 as the NF failed in their attempt to close down a pub in North London.

The Cock Tavern in Euston, North London is a friendly pub with a pool table. For the past few years its function room has seen a range of left/libertarian meetings and socials, some of which have attracted the usual undercover coppers and low-life journos in search of an exclusive. In November 2000 there was a social organised by the 32 Counties Sovereignty Committee, advertised as having speakers from, amongst others, a Kurdish left-nationalist group. It promised to be a thrilling way to spend a Saturday night. 32 Counties is supposedly the Sinn Fein to the 'Real IRA', who put their hands up for the Omagh bombing in 1999. Relatives of the victims of the bombing turned up at the pub along with TV crews and journalists. The *Sunday Times* had already written their story and presumably paid for the families' travel. It wasn't a secret meeting but had not been that widely advertised. *Red Pepper* magazine reports that RTS had received emails asking for the meeting to be advertised through their email list. The pub, the social and, to an extent, the relatives of the victims, had been set up.

The press 'revealed' that other groups including Reclaim the Streets had meetings at the Cock Tavern. RTS' regular, open, Tuesday night meeting was clearly identified –

the RTS/Real IRA mad bomber link was there for all to see.

The National Front, that's Terry Blackham's rump, announced on their website that they would be marching on the pub; the following Tuesday night.

On Tuesday 28 November around 50 anti-fascists turned out to defend the pub from a dozen fascists who were supported by around 80 coppers. Despite being protected by the police the fascists lost the day. Seven anti-fascists were arrested. The police arrested two fascists but changed their minds and released them immediately. Despite the NF's fanciful claims on their web site, not one anti-fascist was injured by the fascists. In fact, the fascists seemed absolutely startled that their usual practice of hiding behind the coppers had failed. They had no stewards and were not prepared to support one another.

The NF have vowed to march on the Cock Tavern every Tuesday, subject to adequate police protection, until it is closed down. Anti-fascists have vowed to defend the pub and prevent the fascists from securing its closure through intimidation and violence.

Blackham's NF are not the sharpest tools in the master race's box. They are always up for some abuse and flag-waving at Republicans and singing Rule Britannia. However even they must know the difference between RTS and the IRA. So who chose the Tuesday night? Was it simply that it was the first day the NF could mobilise for? Was it the cops, who turned out in strength to protect the NF? A bit of pre-christmas overtime? Was it the NF themselves hoping to use anti-IRA sentiment to have a go at an increasingly coherent RTS? Well, they lost it there. A journalist hoping for yet another exclusive? Unlikely, as it didn't have the same 'hold the presses' importance as the original manipulation. So what is left? The same people who set up the original 'story'. And they are... ?

-----> Contact No Platform, BM Box 5827 BC1N 3XX; or log onto www.antifa.net/noplatform

Mayday 2001

The 'official workers' movement' have traditionally used Mayday to pay lip service to workers' struggles, but over the last two years the process of reclaiming Mayday as a day of celebration for all those struggling against capitalism and globalisation has begun. In 1999 a tube party was held in London and last year's four day festival of anti-capitalist ideas and action included a conference and guerrilla gardening.

Monopoly

This year there are plans to celebrate Mayday by playing a game of Monopoly on the streets of London on the 1st May. This will hopefully take the form of lots of autonomous actions, separate yet interconnected, which express opposition to the monopoly that capitalism has over our lives. Here are some ways in which you can get involved:

Organise an autonomous action

Look at a monopoly board and consider the possibilities: housing, debt, railways, privatised utilities, prisons and the streets and areas in which the daily business of capitalism continues unhindered. Get your group or campaign to begin discussing what action they want to do. Let the dis-organisers know what you are planning and they'll publicise it.

Contribute to the pamphlet

A booklet is being produced in February to encourage autonomous actions. It will be a kind of Squaring Up to the Square Mile, with a page dedicated to each square on the monopoly board, explaining what goes on there, a bit of history, the companies and corporations that do business etc. If you know about a particular area, street or issue, then email the (brief) details to the address below, stating PAMPHLET in the subject line.

Co-ordination

To get involved with the overall co-ordination of Mayday Monopoly, go to the co-ordinating meetings, which are being held monthly and get onto the mailing list. Check the website or phone for details.

Fundraising

Funds are, of course, needed. Last year many groups contributed an initial sum of £100 to get things off the ground, others organised benefits. It would be great if this could happen again. Donations are also welcome, no matter how small, from individuals. Send cheques made payable to 'MAYDAY 2000'.

Contacts:

Post – BM Mayday, London, WC1N 3XX, Phone – 079 8945 1096

Email – mayday2001@hushmail.com

Website – www.freespeech.org/mayday2k

(Whilst people from outside the capital are welcome to join in, it is hoped that similar events will take place in other areas. There are Monopoly games based on many other cities in the UK and around the world!)

In September 2000, four elected staff representatives were suspended from their jobs at CSL, the private company now running Newham Council's Housing Benefit service in East London.

Two months later, after a disciplinary hearing, three of the four were sacked, ostensibly for breach of contract, but an internal memo (mistakenly disclosed to the sacked workers) reveals the real reasons for their sacking:

"...These staff have become increasingly troublesome at the site and are working hard to undermine all that CSL is striving to achieve... Their behaviour is subversive and they are the 'blockers' who will attempt to prevent the Company moving forward..."

The memo shows the firm weighing up the cost of losing an employment tribunal. Dismissal is chosen as the most cost effective option:

"If we were to lose at a Tribunal then the likely sanction could be £15,000 per person which I can fund from within my redundancy provision... The amount of time which I and my team are increasingly spending on these issues with these staff is enormous and it will be cost effective in the long term to remove this unnecessary distraction from the real business at the site." Which is, of course, making profits.

What had they done to gain such a reputation? They had simply raised staff's concerns about the manner in which staff and claimants were being treated by the company in an internal memo to management. It included concerns about low staff morale, cost cutting measures, victimisation of staff, benefit claims that hadn't been dealt with and lack of both resources and a coherent strategy to run an effective service. No response was forthcoming and a copy of the unanswered memo was then sent to Inside Housing, a weekly news magazine for the social housing sector. Although Inside Housing never printed the communication, but they did start investigating the

story – alerting management to the fact that the media were interested in their (mal)practices.

CSL have done little to rebut the allegations, instead complaining that the three had sought to cause CSL "grave embarrassment". Indeed CSL failed to successfully challenge a single item of disclosure during the disciplinary hearing. They even admitted that complaints over performance and sickness monitoring, were 'in the main correct'.

CSL

CSL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu – the privatised housing benefits company. Newham Council contracted out its Housing Benefit (HB) service to CSL in June 1999. The privatisation has seen punishing performance targets, cost-cutting, a massive backlog of work and 'private sector management methods' that have had an adverse impact on service delivery. In a recent radio interview about the problems the company was having in its numerous HB contracts, a CSL spokesperson

"CSL have sacked three people and in so doing, put their families through misery, just for voicing the workers' concerns. Ignored by UNISON, CSL workers, friends and relatives of the victimised people, have decided to set up a support group. Together with members of the Solidarity Federation, they are carrying out leafleting and picketing of the company. We feel also that this is a national issue, and joint action is needed for change. CSL are not interested in providing a good service for benefit claimants and now they're victimising and bullying the workers who dare to speak out against this situation. Who will be next?"

admitted, "we were naive in estimating the work involved (in administering housing benefits)".

Unison

The sacked workers – Dave Radford, Jane Cowan and Steve Stone – sought help from their union, Unison. Despite the fact that they had clearly been sacked for carrying out mandated trade union activities, support has been luke-warm at best. Representation at tribunal was offered, but from a branch official and not the Unison legal team. The case raises some very complicated matters of law including the definition



WHISTLEBLOWERS GET RED CARD

of trade union activity and the recent and largely untested whistleblowing legislation. Given the complexity of the case, the 3 preferred to find their own legal team. What they wanted was publicity, support and solidarity from the union. They are still waiting...

Their decision to reject union representation was vindicated when they applied to the employment tribunal for interim relief (a hearing where workers complaining of dis-

Public services across the board are being privatised with disastrous results. Whilst shareholders take our cash, we face evictions from our homes because these privatised companies take even longer to process HB claims than the councils used to (it takes some doing to be more inefficient than Hackney Council but ITnet is living proof that it is possible!). The last thing these companies want is public scrutiny (as can be seen from CSL's paranoid

missal for trade union activities can apply to have their dismissal converted into a suspension on full pay pending the full tribunal hearing). The certificate which the Unison rep had completed for the hearing, was totally botched. It stated that the three had been suspended rather than dismissed and failed to specify that the union believed they had been dismissed for TU activity. The result was that the hearing could not be heard! The next tribunal hearing will be in the summer.

Where now?

The implications of what has happened are wide ranging.

behaviour). This is precisely why this case should be publicised widely and support and solidarity given to Dave, Jane and Steve. Workers and tenants must be made aware of what will inevitably follow privatisation and work together to stop it happening to them.

.....✚ For info and list of Deloitte & Touche offices, contact: CSL3 Support Group, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Email housingbenefit@hotmail.com The CSL3 need money for their campaign – send donations (cheques payable to 'CSL3').

1. This memo was sent before any disciplinary action had been started or even hinted at.

TOXIC SHOCK

Collective bargaining in France

Givet is a town of 8,000 on the Belgian border in northern France. The area was dominated by steel and textiles until plant closures and restructuring in the 70's, rendered it an ex-industrial wasteland. 22% of the local population is unemployed. The Cellatex plant, where the following struggle took place, opened in 1903, producing synthetic fibres. In the early 1950's it had 700 employees; by July 2000, this number had dwindled to 153, one-third of them women. Since 1991 it has passed through a series of new owners, the last of which, an Austrian firm, acquired it to loot its assets.

From 1991 onwards, threats of closure were used to justify wage freezes, cuts in overtime pay and imposition of early retirement and work on Saturdays and holidays. By spring 2000, there had been months of fruitless negotiations to avoid closure. Having accepted so many cuts to preserve a factory inseparable from the life of the town, the workers exploded in rage when closure was finally announced.

Talks to save the plant continued until late June, 2000, but on 5 July a local court declared Cellatex bankrupt. "We were thrown out like so much garbage", said one worker. Upon hearing of the bankruptcy, a 41-year old woman worker said "I didn't hesitate for a second. I'm so angry I'll blow up the plant..." The workers knew exactly where their weapons were, having worked with them for years. The EU had classified Cellatex as an environmentally high risk plant, having 50,000 litres of

sulphuric acid and other highly toxic and flammable materials.

By 8:30pm on 5 July, the workers had occupied the plant. They signed a statement saying they would blow up the plant unless production was resumed or they received guarantees of far better severance packages and retraining than required by law. The action was outside the control of the union bureaucracies. The offices were stripped, all computers disappeared, and the plant gate was soldered shut. A leaflet signed "the hard core of Cellatex" threatened to dump sulphuric acid into the Meuse river. A court bankruptcy officer, a local official from the labour department and a local member of Parliament were forcibly held overnight in the plant.

At a local crisis meeting of government officials, union bureaucrats and various city councils, workers poured gasoline on the floor and brandished their cigarette lighters, setting off total panic. Local authorities evacuated the entire area within a 500-meter radius of the factory but those evacuated showed no hostility toward the workers.

There was apparently a split in the workforce between the "hards" and the "moderates". But the unions met a solid front of hostility. "The union leaders are politicians completely dominated by their parties" said one former delegate. "We can't trust them... There is a total divide between workers struggling for survival and the future of their children, and the union leaders who still "negotiate" by themselves." The authorities adopted a waiting

strategy to wear the workers down, for months if necessary, a strategy that had worked many times in the past. But they had miscalculated. When they proposed moving the most dangerous chemicals for "security" reasons, one worker replied: "If these chemicals are moved, the negotiations will end minutes later". Cellatex workers demonstrated outside with banners reading, "We'll go all the way... boom boom".

On 12 July, 5,000 litres of sulphuric acid, symbolically dyed red, were dumped into a creek leading to the Meuse. Firemen stopped it from reaching the river, but the workers threatened to continue releasing 10,000 litres every two hours, a threat never carried out. (The factory had a solid reputation as a polluter). The action did, however, result in renewed negotiations in Paris. It also broke the media blackout on the Cellatex struggle.

The workers kept up the pressure inside and outside the factory, tossing chemicals into large fires in front of the factory gates and setting off small explosions for the media.

On 19 July, new terms were proposed to the workers, and were accepted unanimously. Each worker received a special indemnity of 80,000 francs (they had initially demanded 150,000, and been offered 36,000), a monthly supplement to unemployment insurance so that all workers with more than 6 months service would receive their full salary for two years and special advantages for retraining. The agreement also established a body to oversee the execution of the agreement.

The message of Cellatex to workers throughout France was: "Struggle Pays". *The full article in French can be obtained from: Echanges, BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18, France.*

Korean Revival

The Korean Anarchist Network has resurfaced and conducted the first in a series of subway actions. They wore costumes that highlighted the impoverished nature of wage slavery, work, consumer culture, beauty myths and commuter hell in the busy Seoul Subway network.

Activists were repeatedly told to leave by the authorities and threatened with fines for refusal. They responded by boarding the subway, spreading the protests throughout the carriages and on to a new station... the action lasted from 7 till 9am – when the subway is at its busiest.

Leaflets read: "don't stare at your mobile phone like a jerk, share a beer with someone you don't know on the train instead. We are like blind moles. As long as we remain blind, the fuckers with power will keep us in chains".

The modern Korean Anarchist movement is 'at the starting line' after decades of brutal state oppression but is growing every minute.

.....✦ Korean Anarchist Network: <http://anarclan.net>

BRAND NEWS

Brand, the Swedish anarchist magazine, has been charged with incitement to insurrection. The March 2000 Women's Day issue was a parody of women's magazines and included a feature on "How to Make Your Riot a Success" [High Heels – In, Zebra Skin Jackets – Out.] *Brand* was charged at the end of August – presumably it took the Swedish cops longer to get the joke than it takes the BF team to get an issue out.

.....✦ Email: brand@motkraft.net
Web: www.motkraft.net/brand

The EU summit in Nice attracted protests from the French anarchist movement and hard left with support from militant trades unionists, anarchists, Basque radicals and leftists from across Europe. On 6 December 2000 about 70,000 demonstrated against the conference, with a block of about 10,000 revolutionaries.

Not present were Ya Basta and a trainload of around 2000 Italian militants who the French cops had stopped at the border. They tried to fight their way through at Ventimiglia on the Italian French border resulting in injuries on both sides. 3000 comrades protested at the station in Nice in solidarity and fought with the police there.

The next day up to 5000 revolutionaries, leftists, anarchists and Basques attempted to blockade the summit building. There had been plans for free trains from all over France but hundreds of riot police confronted demonstrators at Paris, Nantes, Bordeaux and other towns making widespread arrests.

The demonstrators in Nice were charged and gassed by riot cops but dispersed to attack banks, businesses and temp agencies. Dozens of cops were injured and tear gas got into the air conditioning at the conference centre. The police attacked a gymnasium, used as a base by the demonstrators, trapping 2000 people inside. 5 militants of the French anarchist federation have been arrested for stopping an Italian delegate's car.

Once again a major international summit has been heavily disrupted by militant direct action and a clear message against the leaders of nation states and superstates given. However the

Nice in Nice



security services are clearly getting their act together. Despite "free movement" in Europe the cops had no qualms about preventing Ya Basta's trainload. The free trains in France were also stopped. But this was no surprise. What was good was that riot cops were mobilised away from the town where the demonstration was to take place and the convergence centre was targeted easily. Learn the lessons for Barcelona and Gothenburg in June 2001!

Crackdown on Prison Solidarity

Two Spanish anarchists have been arrested in connection with letter bombs

On 8 November 2000, Eduardo García Macías and Estefanía Maurette Díaz were arrested in connection with letterbombs sent to the Spanish newspapers: *ABC*, *La Razon* and *El Mundo* and to The Movement Against Intolerance (a state-backed organisation against 'terrorism') under the name of "Los Anarquistas". The bombs were allegedly sent in support of a prisoners campaign against isolation cells. Macías was released on parole, but re-arrested and sent back to prison on 17 November following complaints by ministers, prosecutors, the police etc. Now he is in Soto del Real prison facing charges of terrorism, attempted terrorism and belonging to an armed group. Díaz has been released without charge.

Despite the fact that the two hardly know each other they are accused of belonging to the same Anarchist "cell". Many believe Díaz was arrested simply for being the partner of Santiago Cobos, who is in one of the toughest Spanish prisons, Jaen. He has bravely resisted numerous beatings and recently took part in a prison mutiny. Díaz's arrest is a way of targeting him emotionally.

The police released to the public a "diagram" of how the bombings had been planned from prison by some FIES prisoners (prisoners in solitary confinement), and then carried out by Díaz and Macías. This was coupled with a media propaganda campaign spreading all kinds of lies, including links with the Basque movement, with ETA and with the persecuted magazine, *Ardi Beltza*. The government is taking advantage of the current panic generated by the ETA offensive, targeting not just Basque groups but social movements and political initiatives throughout the rest of Spain. On 1 December 2000 around 50 prisoners in different

prisons started an indefinite hunger strike. Another 150 prisoners are taking part with solidarity actions.

There are many reasons to combat the reality of the life behind the walls, but the prisoners are making three demands:

- 1 An end to FIES and isolation. FIES (Fichero de Internos de Especial Seguimiento) was sold to the public as a means of classifying the most dangerous prisoners. In reality FIES is a lot more. Prisoners falling under the FIES regime are isolated for 23 hours in their cell with only one hour daily outside in the courtyard. Communication with the outside world, family and friends and supplies of paper and books is severely restricted. The only physical contact they have is the beatings they get from the guards.
- 2 An end to dispersal. This is not a measure which only affects political prisoners. More than 52% Spanish prisoners are serving their sentence outside their home province.
- 3 The release of prisoners with terminal illness so they can die with dignity and not be condemned to die inside a cold cell or a prison hospital ward. 1,700 prisoners in Catalan prisons in the past ten years have died inside.

To support their struggle you can organise actions at your local Spanish embassy.

.....✚ For info contact: *Presoen Aldeko Talde*. Apdo. 365 – 20100 Orereta – Guipuzkoa – Spain. For info about FIES isolation units, there are two dossiers in English language available from *BM Haven*, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3XX. The support group for Eduardo García is at: *CNA*. Paseo Alberto Palacios, 2 – 28021 Madrid – Spain.

On 28 September Ariel Sharon, a man described by Noam Chomsky as “the very symbol of Israeli state terror and aggression, with a rich record of atrocities going back to 1953” visited the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem’s Old City, with a 1000 strong police escort. Sharon, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, and the man responsible for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the siege of Beirut and overseer of the 1982 Phalangist massacre of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, had come to visit Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem as a deliberate provocation to Palestinian claims to sovereignty.



A New Intifada

On 29 September Israeli Border Police killed 7 Palestinians protesting Sharon’s visit. On 30 September Israeli armed forces, in full view of the world media, killed 12 year old Mohammed Al-Dorra, as he and his father attempted to shelter from the gunfire. Mohammed was deliberately targeted by the Israelis, who also killed an ambulance man who tried to come to his aid. Anger at yet further proof of Israeli contempt for the Palestinian people led in part to the uprising which has come to be called the “Al-Aqsa intifada.” The root cause though is Palestinian disgust at the betrayals engineered by Yaser Arafat in pursuit of the “peace process” charade.

“Peace” with Israel has meant the further expansion of Israeli settlement on Palestinian land. There are 13,000 settlement units currently under construction and 42 hilltop settlements have been established in the West Bank since 1998. The September 1993 Oslo Accords were

designed to do no more than establish a Palestinian Authority to police bantustans on the West Bank, while allowing Israel continued control of security, border controls and water. At Oslo, Arafat sold out Palestinian claims to statehood for the fiction of “independence” and the chance to get rich at the expense of his own people.

As Edward Said has observed, “Far from ending, the Israeli occupation was simply repackaged, and what emerged in the West Bank was about seven discontinuous Palestinian islands amounting to 3 per cent of the land, surrounded and punctuated by Israeli-controlled territory.” (The End of the Peace Process-Granta 2000) For the majority of Palestinians, the betrayal called “peace” has seen the conditions of daily life worsen, with GDP halved and unemployment rising. Arafat refuses to implement any form of constitution for the territories now overseen by the Palestinian Authority. As Said notes, Arafat

has “led his people astray with phoney promises and maintained a battery of corrupt officials holding down commercial monopolies even as they negotiate incompetently and weakly on his behalf. Sixty percent of the public budget is disbursed by Arafat to bureaucracy and security, only two percent to the infrastructure. Three years ago, his own accountants admitted to an annual \$400 million in disappeared funds. His international patrons accept this in the name of the “peace process”, certainly the most hated phrase in the Palestinian lexicon today.” (The End Of Oslo-Al-Ahram 12-18 October 2000) If the new Intifada is a determined revolt against continued Zionist oppression, it is also a rebellion against Arafat’s continued betrayals.

It is increasingly clear that the revolt was anticipated by Israeli President Ehud Barak when he sanctioned Sharon’s visit to Jerusalem. Barak requires a “national

emergency" to stay in office, and as the continued pressure on Arafat by the US makes clear, intends to bomb the Palestinian leadership into acceptance of the proposals first advanced by Israel at the July Camp David Summit, which saw the refusal of Arafat's demand for Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem. As Marwan Barghouti, one of the leaders of the new Intifada, makes clear "The Israeli offer at Camp David did not mean more than the redeployment of the Israeli occupation forces in our occupied territories."

Israel intends to resort to the "iron fist" to secure what was no longer available to it through negotiations alone. Barak, of course, knows all about the use of lethal force to secure a political objective. It was Barak who was Chief-of-Staff of the Israeli Defence Force in 1993 when the Palestinians were bludgeoned into accepting the terms and conditions of the Oslo accords. Nothing goes more to show the supinuity of the Israeli left than their continued support for Barak's Labour Party as a "lesser evil" while Barak presides over "a genocide in slow motion", turning a blind eye to his courting of Likud and the ultra-orthodox Shas movement as he manoeuvres to stay in office. Since September 28 over 200 Palestinians have been killed, with 7500 seriously injured. Almost all of the victims died from gunshot wounds to the upper half of the body, inflicted by Israeli sharpshooters operating a shoot-to-kill policy against unarmed Palestinians. In the week to 8th November, 25 children were killed by the IDF. A visiting British doctor, David Leighton, condemned IDF actions as a "malicious genocide against children." It is clear also that Barak has given the go-ahead for operations by Shin Bet (Israeli internal security) death squads, with Barak warning of "new tactics" and the use of "guerrilla warfare units". IDF helicopters have fired missiles at Fatah offices in Ramallah and Nablus. On 9 November the leading Fatah militant Hussein Abayat was murdered in a helicopter attack in Bethlehem.

Predictably, the Western media has concerned itself primarily with condemnation of "Palestinian violence", following the line dished out by the US, which moved in the House of Representatives to pass a resolution condemning the Palestinian leadership for "encouraging the use of violence against Israel", while selling the Israeli air force 35 Blackhawk helicopters worth \$525 million, along with an undisclosed number of Apache attack helicopters. (*Ha'aretz*, 3 October 2000). The media has given more coverage to the killing of the two Israeli soldiers by Palestinians at a police station in Ramallah on October 12 than to any of the Palestinian victims of violence. Needless to say it failed to

acknowledge that the soldiers "who had lost their way" belonged to a group of undercover soldiers all dressed as Arabs, travelling in a car and a hijacked Red Crescent ambulance, and carrying large quantities of guns and explosives, in close proximity to a Palestinian funeral procession, and more than likely members of the Musta'arbin (Shin Bet death squad members who operate disguised as Palestinians.) Nor did the media bother to report that when eight intifada militants claimed to be responsible for the soldiers' deaths were handed over to the Israelis in an operation carried out with the collusion of the Palestinian security forces, one of them was killed almost immediately he was detained by the Israelis.

In its refusal of the post-Oslo charade and its opposition to the Arafat leadership, the Al-Aqsa intifada represents the best hope of the Palestinian people. There have been challenges before to Arafat's corrupt machinations (for example in November 1999, 20 prominent West Bank and Gaza Palestinians signed a petition condemning the PA's corruption, leading to a crackdown by Arafat and thousands demonstrating on the streets in support) but the intifada is the first time a new generation of militants has revealed its hand. One of the most remarkable developments has been the operational unity between Fatah

The threat of unrest across the Middle East led to the Arab summit on 21 and 22 October, with the Arab leaders attempting to shore up Arafat with the promise of \$1 billion to support his leadership in its attempts to use the intifada as a means of upping the ante in negotiations with Barak. As the militant Islamic newspaper Crescent International made clear "The one action the Arab rulers could have taken which might have produced results was to announce a cut in oil production, perhaps one million barrels a day for every Palestinian killed, until the Zionists stop their murderous attacks. But Arab oil producers, led by Saudi Arabia had already ruled this out, as they cannot afford to antagonise Uncle Sam, by whose pleasure they remain in power." (*Crescent International*, 1-15 November 2000).

The Fatah militant Marwan Barghouti has stated that "the intifada has proved to Israel that we are not slaves to the negotiating table." If the intifada is to succeed in realising its aims it needs to be clear about both its goals and how they are to be achieved. Edward Said has stated, rightly, that an alternative peace plan must be based around the demands "No return to the Oslo framework; no compromise on the original UN resolutions (242, 338 and 194); mandating the Madrid Conference in 1991; removal of all settlements and mili-

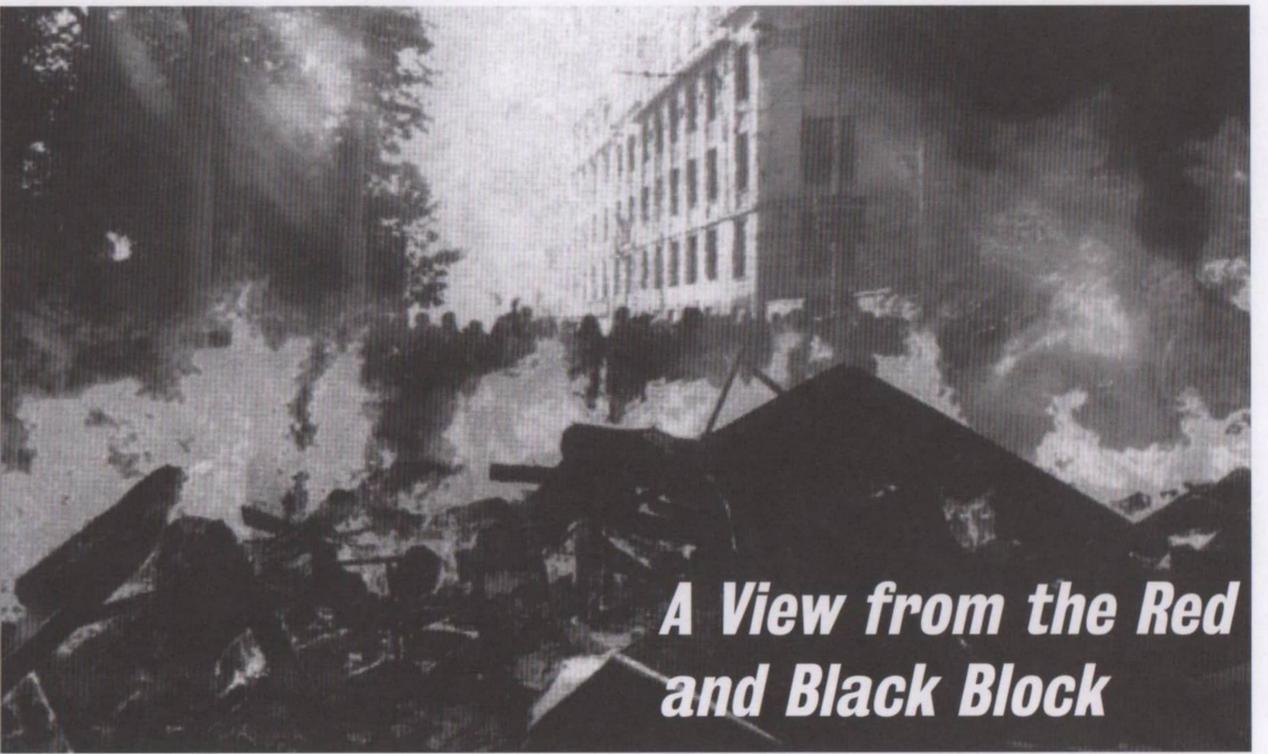
Nothing goes more to show the supinuity of the Israeli left than their continued support for Barak's Labour Party as a 'lesser evil' while Barak presides over a 'genocide in slow motion'...

militants and their counterparts in Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a marked difference from the earlier uprising, when the Islamic groups fought separately to the PLO, and were manoeuvred into sectarian attacks on PLO militants. Moreover, Fatah militants have moved to establish a militia outside PA control. In the first wave of helicopter attacks following the 29 September protests, Arafat was prepared to abandon Hamas and Jihad militants in PA jails which he knew in advance would come under Israeli fire. It was Fatah militants on the ground who set them free. The sudden manifestation of Palestinian defiance has been mirrored by solidarity demonstrations across the region, with mass protests in Amman, Damascus and Lebanon, and a wave of militant student protests in Egypt.

tary roads; evacuation of all territories annexed or occupied in 1967; boycott of Israeli goods and services. A new sense may be dawning that only a mass movement against Israeli apartheid must work." (*Al-Ahram*, October 2000) Such a mass movement must be forged under the real control of the people of the West Bank and Gaza, not ceded to the Fatah leadership as a means to strengthen its hand at the negotiating table. The self-determination of the Palestinian people will only be secured through the defeat not just of Barak, but Arafat and the Arab ruling class across the region.

The intifada can only win if it becomes a revolt against both Israel and the Arab rulers who have failed to challenge its supremacy for so long. ■

POSTCARD FROM PRAGUE



A View from the Red and Black Block

Responding to the call from INPEG (the Initiative Against Economic Globalisation) for affinity groups to go to Prague for the S26 protests against the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) and the World Bank's 55th annual meeting, a small group of us travelled from London. Picking up a cheap flight meant we were spared a lengthy coach ride. The Czech authorities apparently expected everyone to travel by land – coaches and trains spent many hours at the border – so we had no problems. Indeed one of our number who travelled in a suit for the purpose of easy entry to hotels etc. was welcomed as a potential delegate! We had rented a flat to share and the objective was to live and work collectively together, make some trouble and have fun.

Our first port of call was the INPEG info shop, shared with Indymedia. Unfortunately, the “welcoming message” consisted of a warning that INPEG would not support violence against property, animals or people. This could of course be explained by the need to formally distance itself from violence given the difficult circumstances in which INPEG was. The extent of the police operation also became apparent. There were uniformed cops on every street, yet the level of harassment was relatively low – the cops seemed wary of anyone in a group, so only those walking alone were challenged to produce ID etc.

Saturday and Sunday

The following day saw the first demonstration, a counter-demonstration to the fascists. We turned up at Peace Square to find about 1,000 people masked up – a foretaste of the red and black block. The demo was, like all the protests taking place in Prague, banned, so we were keen to find out what this actually meant in practice. The banning turned out to be a

mere formality so despite the large police presence no attempt was made to stop the march. After many speeches and much posturing for photographers, the march moved off in the warm sunshine to wind its way round central Prague. The fascists were marching on the other side of the river, so there seemed little chance of confronting them, until part of our march split off and ran to the station where a group of boneheads were waiting for a train. Needless to say they got a good kicking and, despite later rumours, nothing was heard of them for the rest of the week.

The Sunday papers' images of the demo focused entirely on the Leninists, who had been there in very small numbers. Delighting in photos of those decked out in hammer and sickles the message to locals was clear – these people who have come to Prague want to turn the clock back. This followed months of propaganda, including government pamphlets, warning locals of the danger and advising them to leave the capital. Schools and offices were closed to facilitate the exodus.

Throughout the weekend a counter-summit was being held, which I found difficult to engage with. The sessions were lengthy, overly academic and as there were three different venues it was difficult to drop in and out, a necessity given the need to do other things. The main venue for organising was the Convergence Centre, a former shipbuilding yard, at which a nightly spokescouncil meeting was held. The basic idea was a good one. Each affinity group nominated a spokesperson, who joined a circle with the other spokespersons. The rest of the affinity group sat behind their spokesperson (like spokes of a wheel) allowing discussions to take place within the affinity group as well as the spokescouncil. In practice things were more difficult. By the Saturday evening,

the spokescouncil meeting already consisted of about 300 affinity groups, some of which were too large to sit behind their spokesperson. The acoustics in the Convergence Centre were appalling and there was no PA system. The need to conduct meetings in four languages made proceedings very drawn out and predictably enough few decisions were actually made.

Much more useful were the informal discussions, the chance to meet activists from all over the world, and the practical facilities for banner making etc. Good vegan food (not an easy thing to find in Prague) was provided by the Dutch group Rampenplan everyday. Noticeable by their absence from the Convergence Centre were Czech people. Clearly they did not need this space in the same way as those of us from abroad and were wary of police surveillance. This was unfortunate, as it meant we were only able to get any local perspective on events from contacts we had in a local anarchist group and from people we met in bars.

The Masses Gather

Each day saw more and more people arriving in Prague and more stories of people stuck at the border, leading to pickets of embassies and the Interior Ministry. Prague was a constant hive of activity and it was impossible to attend everything. Sunday saw what was billed as a parade with puppets to round off the arts and resistance festival. We went expecting a fluffy event, to find the same masked up protesters at the front of the march, followed by various Leninists!

INPEG's plan for the 26th was, rather than trying to prevent delegates from getting into the conference as in Seattle, to blockade them in until they disbanded the IMF and World Bank! The protest would start at 11am and follow three

routes, designated blue, yellow and pink, blocking all the roads in and out of the conference. We pondered the political significance of the three colours, but it appears that these were the only colour highlighter pens to hand! If the delegates got out then the plan was to blockade the opera house and banqueting centre – the delegates' evening entertainment. These plans were made prior to most of us arriving. There was supposed to be a meeting of the red and black block, at which we hoped an alternative plan might emerge, but this meeting never occurred. Most of the responsibility for this must fall on the Czech anarchists, the main group of which had denounced INPEG as being too liberal but failed to offer any alternatives, and their international grouping, who had circulated a leaflet calling the meeting. The failure of the main Czech anarchist group to engage in the S26 process was a major weakness.

Monday saw us making preparations for the 26th. As well as buying energy food and drink (the local equivalent of Redbull is called Semtex – a must for all rioters), other necessities (spray paint, gas masks etc), we took a reccy of the conference centre. Located away from the city centre,

one side of the valley, and UK Earth First! and the Leninists the pink route down the opposite side of the valley. We opted for the red and black block, partly because we had most in common with them, but also because this was the one block not based around any national grouping. In the evening a final spokescouncil of each colour stream was held. This broke up in disarray due to the rumour, which inevitably turned out to be false, that the fascists had attacked the info centre. People rushed off to defend it, seemingly oblivious to the fact that it was 20 minutes away by metro and the likelihood that the state was playing games. The Convergence Centre descended into a general atmosphere of paranoia which will be familiar to anyone involved in organising mass illegal actions. We headed to our flat to finalise our own plans.

S26

When we arrived, thousands of people were already gathering in Peace Square in the sunshine. Balloons, banners and flags flew in the breeze, many people were in costume and imaginative props were much in evidence. The international character of the event was immediately apparent, with

we tried to second-guess where the cops would try to stop us. The obvious point was the railway line, which ran along an embankment and had infrequent tunnels under it, but strangely we were allowed to pass under it. As we proceeded up the road leading to the conference centre we came across the cops blockade. The head of the march, including the giant world, continued straight at the police lines and then all hell broke loose.

The cops began by firing tear gas into the crowd. Those up for it responded with cobble stones, molotovs and other missiles, whilst those who weren't moved into the park on one side. At first it seemed the police were going to lose it. Their lines were split, shields and helmets were grabbed and held triumphantly for the crowd and the cops seemed unable to deal with the molotovs. Then they used the water cannon, which turned out to be the weapon that saved them, and stun grenades. For us the tear gas was difficult to cope with at first, even with gas masks. The Greek and Spanish comrades were seemingly oblivious, fighting without any masks at all. The difficulties of fighting up-hill against two water cannons cannot be overstated, but this did not stop people trying for the next



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across a valley and perched high on a hill, this was a formidable obstacle. There were three access routes – a direct approach across a bridge via the dual carriageway (nicknamed suicide bridge); the metro line; and down the valley, across a canal and a railway line and up small steep roads the other side. Later we made a flag to try and make it harder to get separated from each other. This consisted of a circled A and a red star – representative of the group's make up, bringing some of our simmering differences to the fore.

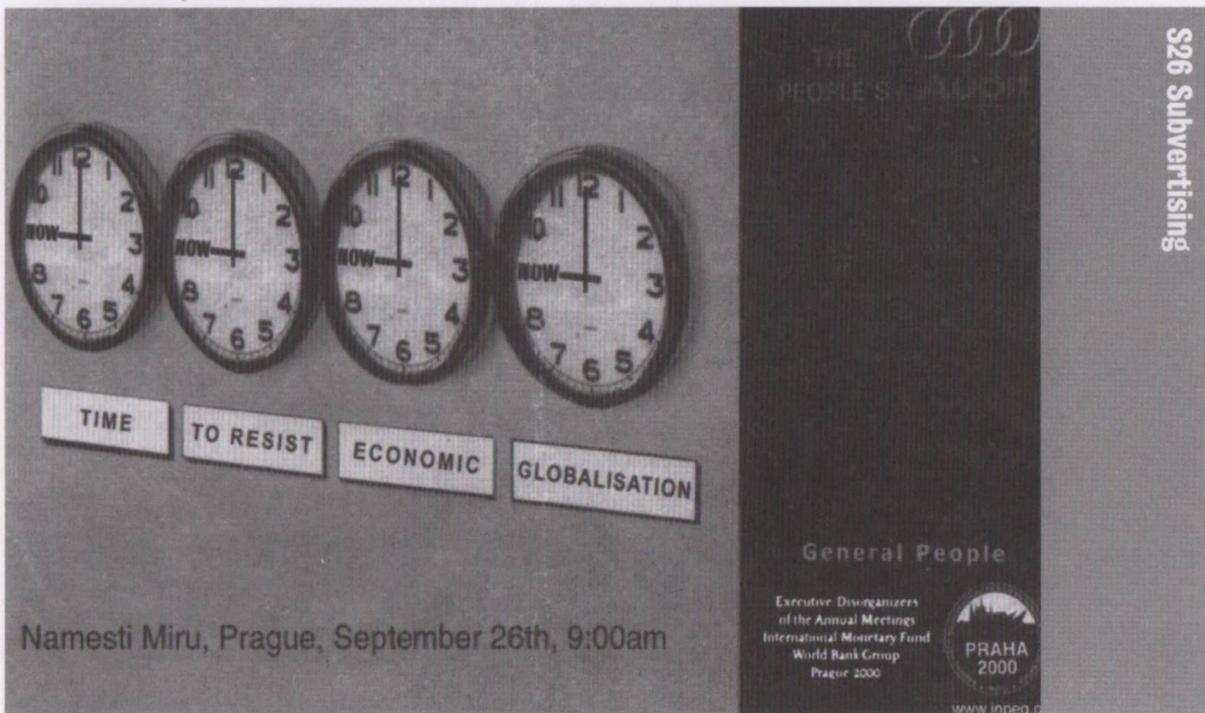
During the day the affinity groups were asked to sign up to one of the routes. It emerged that Ya Basta! were going to take the yellow route across suicide bridge, the red and black block the blue route, down

seemingly endless slogans and leaflets in numerous languages. The media presence was huge and both Ya Basta and Earth First! (with the samba band) played up to this with set piece entrances to the square.

Over in one corner the red and black (blue) block assembled. Well over a thousand figures dressed all in black and masked up is at once a heartening and intimidating sight. After an age of sweltering in the sun we moved off as a single march, before splitting into the three colour blocks. Our blue stream was led by a giant globe, which contained a person and was pushed by others. As we marched through the town many people leant out of windows to admire the spectacle. In between spray painting slogans on walls,

hour and a half. The cops used all their weapons and eventually we were forced back down the hill to where the flats were. This was a working class area and elderly locals passed bottles of water out of windows to those needing to wash their eyes. One bloke was even passing rocks, presumably from his garden!

The fight continued and barricades were built. At one point a group of pacifists removed a barricade and decided to sit down in front of a line of police in an adjacent street, but moved when the barricade was rebuilt behind them. Word came that, on the other side of the valley the pink group had got to the conference centre and needed us to continue to draw the police's fire. Despite the odd idiots the



atmosphere was comradely, with people co-operating – building barricades out of street furniture, filling bins with rocks from the railway, tending to the injured. One area in which INPEG excelled themselves was providing first aid equipment – anyone needing help always had a choice of half-a-dozen people! Respect was also shown for the nature of the area so local shops and blocks of flats were left alone.

Eventually the cops decided to baton charge. This was the type of policing we were used to and it was interesting that comrades from other countries were not. Eventually we were forced to scramble across the railway line, on which a goods train had been left to block our way. On the other line a train was coming and, coupled with the hail of badly aimed missiles from the other side, things got a bit hairy for a moment. Once safely on the other side we regrouped and new barricades were built. Fighting continued but the cops were slowing advancing and we were defending pointless positions. More cops were lining up behind us, leaving only two escape routes. One led through a park into town, the other across the river which meant getting stuck there. Unfortunately few people seemed to have checked out the area and they were forced towards the river. We made our escape into town.

The Leninist Rally

As we wandered up the hill we came across the surreal sight of the SWP leading Workers' Power and other Leninist groups round town to the chant of "one solution, revolution". Never mind that we had just spent three hours fighting the cops. After a while they stopped for the inevitable rally and, whilst they speechified, we took a breather.

Later on it turned out that having signed up for the pink block, the Leninists actually went with the yellow block. This had two results. Firstly the pink block was

smaller than the others. The cops naturally concentrated their firepower on the blue and yellow blocks, because of their composition. Whilst Earth First! succeeded in getting up to the conference centre this was at the price of injuries and arrests and was nearly jeopardised by the lack of a pink march. The SWP meanwhile attempted to push forward on the bridge, despite the requests of Ya Basta! who were at the front for a disciplined assault, and then tried to get to the front to get on the telly! They had to be physically repelled by others.

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The march moved off to the opera hall and we tried to get information on what was happening elsewhere. Yet another rally was held on the steps of the opera, at which Julie Waterson (SWP apparatchik) and others of her ilk told their followers what a success it had all been. At this point one person using a loud hailer was trying to get people to go to the bridge, where there was still a stand off. Not surprisingly the Trotskyists ignored this call. Another group from the UK had made a great banner with the slogan "The revolution will not be Bolshevised". Together we held it on the platform behind the speakers. Initial laughter was joined by boos as the dimmer section of the crowd caught on and, having made our point, we

headed towards the bridge only to be met by the samba band coming the other way. It seemed that the delegates had been got out by metro and were at the banquet.

A Banquet for us All!

About 250 of us set out on the three mile walk to the banquetting centre, along a dual carriageway blocking both sides. Our small group made common purpose with some libertarians from France and together we marched arm in arm. Unfortunately during the journey many people dropped out, especially once the samba band had, and by the time we arrived we were only about 100 strong. The cops weren't to know this and mistook us for the advance guard! The banquetting centre had a large courtyard and this was entirely filled with riot cops. A little while later three busloads of delegates came out, to be met by a hail of stones. As it was by now 10pm we decided to head off and call it a day. When we got to the nearest metro station we found that the three busloads of delegates had been dumped there and, as the metro had been shut down, they were desperately trying to find a bus or tram home. Our arrival caused a bit of a stir, despite the protection of cops, and for some reason when we got on a bus none of them would get on.

Later on we found out that in addition to the opera being cancelled, the banquet was brought to an end by our arrival! Meanwhile in town the protesters had been joined by local youth and together they hit the usual targets, McDonalds etc.

The Morning After the Night Before

Later that night and during the following day the cops engaged in a mass round up of anyone they thought may have been involved. Bars were raided, leading in one instance to a stand off between the CNT and the police. People were grabbed off the street. In total about 800 people were arrested, about half of whom were foreigners. Large numbers of people were assaulted in custody – beatings, strip searches, medication refused, broken limbs.

After a few days most of the foreigners were deported but some, including one UK activist, remain in prison. For our Czech comrades things are much harder. Many face trumped up charges but will be held on remand in prison for a long time before even getting to challenge the evidence. Lawyers need to be hired and funds are urgently required.

The conference the next day was poorly attended, as apparently delegates were too afraid to leave their hotels. The final day was cancelled, although the organisers were keen to stress to all who would listen

that it had nothing to do with the protests (obviously not). INPEG, who had published a daily paper throughout the protests, issued the following statement and carried it on the front page:

“In its public announcements INPEG has stated that it does not endorse any form of violence against people, animals or property. Violence is not part of INPEG’s political activities. For these reasons, it is impossible to accept the pointless and brutal excesses of groups who acted independently of INPEG during S26. A radical, consistent critique of IMF and WB policy as a long term goal, and current attempts to distract [sic] the two institutions’ 55th annual meeting as a short term goal, are aims which are vastly different from mindless destruction of property in Prague. Last night’s violent activities are fruitless expressions of powerlessness and political immaturity. Civil disobedience and nonviolence require real individualism and people who have the courage to be in the right place at the right time and who are not afraid to publicly express their opinions.”

In the ensuing post-Prague debates some activists have sought to justify this statement on the grounds of the oppression of the movement in the Czech Republic. Leaving aside for a moment the question of violence as a legitimate and necessary tactic – and anyone who thinks that without violence we would have achieved our aims in Prague are kidding themselves – what is most telling is the lack of condemnation of police violence. No mention of the water cannons, armoured trucks, tear gas, stun grenades and baton charges which we faced. Quite how this helps those inside or in defending the movement generally is a mystery to me. Fortunately the prison support itself has been unconditional.

Conclusion

Within the two years since J18, the anti-capitalist movement has shown its ability to mobilise large numbers of people across the globe. The institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank, G7 etc which set the international conditions for capitalist expansion are unable to meet unless guarded by thousands of riot police. Prague must therefore be seen as a success in continuing this process. Whilst it did not lead to the IMF and World Bank being disbanded, the bureaucrats and bankers were forced to abandon their conference and are once again on the defensive having to justify the very existence of capitalism.

On another level Prague was a wonderful example of solidarity and comradeship, one that I am proud to have been a part of. Activists from all over Europe and indeed the world worked together and struggled together, despite our differing political histories, traditions and perspectives and the language barriers. There were numerous examples of this co-operation from the planning of the event, the attempts to make the spokescouncil meetings work, the building of barricades and sharing of missiles, tending to the injured and the support for those arrested. I believe that many of us learned important lessons from each other. An action such as this demonstrates our collective potential and gives us a rare glimpse of what a real human community could be like.

At the same time the anti-capitalist movement is paradoxical, for it is a protest movement not protesting against a thing, as protest movements have in the past, but against the particular form of social relations which is capitalism. We live in a world where we can only relate to each other via the mediation of the commodity form, the key commodity being our labour power. Whilst days such as these can partially overcome the alienation of class society for an all too brief moment, the supersession of capitalism requires a social movement, which is able to connect to peoples’ (particularly workers’) daily struggles. Whether our protest movement can become such a social movement remains an open question. ■

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In a recent interview with the Sunday Times, Jack Straw pondered whether he would be celebrated in history as as great a 'reforming' Home Secretary as Roy Jenkins.

Good question, given Jenkins' masterminding of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 ("a draconian Act unprecedented in peacetime" as he described it to Parliament at the time) and the purchase in 1976 of Heckler and Koch HK 33 carbines to arm the police, behind the back of the Cabinet, Parliament and the Prime minister.

'Dirty' Jack, though, is more than holding his own, with an Immigration and Asylum Act more draconian than anything Howard dared attempt; a Freedom of Information Act which increases official secrecy; prison numbers (and suicides) at a record high; the privatisation of prisons and the development of a US style prison-industrial 'gulag'.

To ensure the likes of the Corrections Corporation of America and Wackenhut are sated, the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) Act, which restricts access to trial by jury, is moving through Parliament. Access to robust defence from a team of expert solicitors is to be reduced through Legal Aid 'contracting' and, ultimately, the formation of a Public Defenders Office.

Restrictions on the right to protest embodied in Public Order legislation pushed through by the Tories are to culminate in the criminalisation of effective protest in the new Terrorism Act. The Act extends the definition of terrorism to include "...interference with or serious disruption of an electronic system" (ie. hacking) and the "use or threat of Action involving serious violence to person or property" will automatically be classified as "terrorism" if it involves "firearms or explosives" regardless of whether the "use or threat is designed to influence the government or intimidate the public or a section of the public." A prosecution under the PTA will only arise if the "use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause", but, logically, this means that for every incident involving anything from CS gas to semtex, the police can arrest under the Terrorism Act to investigate the "ideological" aspect and dispense with the limited post-arrest safeguards of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Not a word from the left, though, because unlike the provisions related to direct action, this isn't likely to affect them.

Not content with this, Straw has decided to go the whole hog and use the Football (Disorder) Act to criminalise working class males per se. The premise for the introduction of the Act, "the disorder perpetrated by England supporters in Charleroi and Brussels" doesn't stand up to examination. As Straw concedes, 965 British nationals were arrested, 464 were deported and a "very small number of those originally arrested now face trial." So, on the basis of a linked series of events resulting in negligible criminal charges, New Labour seeks to bring in a Act to curtail the freedom of movement of a whole swathe of UK citizens.

An objective examination of the footage of Euro 2000 reveals groups of fans drinking, chanting and throwing the occasional plastic glass or plastic chair. The only sustained violence resulting in serious injury was carried out by rival fans against English supporters, or by police baton charging and using CS gas and water cannons. The position of the left in relation to these sustained assaults by the police on groups of young working class lads is, at best, one of indifference.

Football "hooliganism", a process of, in sociological terms, identity-formation and contestation of territory between groups of rival fans, in which few participants suffer serious injury, with the risk to non-participants minimal, has for years, been

a testing ground for policing strategies. What horrifies the *Guardian* reading middle classes is the "vulgar chanting" and occasional outbursts of nationalism (although the "new Britain" rhetoric and anti-refugee witchhunts don't seem to have put them off New Labour). What concerns the state is much simpler, and concerns precisely the formation of a collective working class identity. In his book *Barca* (Bloomsbury 1999), a collection of interviews with Barcelona fans, Jimmy Burns notes one fan's comment that what the state fears about football is precisely the sense of "collective fiesta" which accompanies it. The threat to disorder comes not from the actions of individual fans, but the potential for large mobs of working class people in one place to become aware of their sheer power as a mob. As Mark Neocleous makes clear, in his work *The Fabrication of Social Order* (Pluto 2000), the "Police protect the imaginary universality of particular interests within this order. The demand for order in civil society is thus a demand for class order."

The last 20 years have seen – on the back of the Thatcher government's victories over the organised working class – a mass of legislation passed to entrench the notion of working class life as "policed" life, a life bounded and hemmed in by the state. From the increased use of CCTV to

Reforming Zeal



FOOTBALL (DISORDER) ACT – Main Provisions

Gives magistrates the power to make banning orders for both domestic and international games:

- Where magistrates fail to make a banning order, and otherwise where police believe they have “reasonable grounds”, a “chief officer of police” may make an application for a banning order to a magistrates court, where s/he believes the respondent has “caused or contributed to any violence or disorder in the UK or elsewhere.” Note that the violence or disorder need not have led to a conviction, nor need it relate to football. The Home Office have made it explicit that “violence” and “disorder” are not limited to football or “conduct which constitutes a crime.” (Membership of, for instance, an anti-fascist group or any group with links to “disorder” might suffice.)
- Any banning order will ordinarily lead to surrender of passport and any reporting conditions the court thinks appropriate.
- The bill allows for the creation of control periods during which any “constable in uniform”

can, if he “reasonably” suspects an individual before him of involvement in “violence and disorder” (as previously defined):

- 1) issue that person a notice in writing requiring him to appear before a magistrates at a stated time;
- 2) order that person to not leave the UK before that time;
- 3) if the control period relates to an international match – surrender his/her passport;
- 4) if he believes the person before him may fail to comply with a notice, the constable may arrest without warrant, detain that person and hold for a period of up to four hours (six with authorisation from an inspector or above) before producing before a magistrate.

These provisions allow for the police to restrict freedom of movement even where grounds for a banning order cannot be made out, simply on the basis of reasonable suspicion, to “enable enquiries to be made.”

deny space for the possibility of collective relations, and to engender an almost instinctive awareness of social life as policed life, through the extension of powers of stop and search, entry, arrest and detention via the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to the criminalisation of protest which began with the 1986 Public Order Act and culminates in the Terrorism Act, we have arrived at a position where “no human problem exists, or is imaginable, about which it would be said that this certainly could not become the proper business of the state.” (Neocleous)

One of the arenas for this “pacification through policing” of working class life has been football. From the late 1970s, football became a testing ground for techniques that would later be deployed against the trade union movement and the left. The dispersal and crowd control techniques employed by the Tactical Support Groups were originally developed against football crowds. The use of CCTV and mobile video cameras, now commonplace at demonstrations, first appeared outside football grounds. The use of restrictive bail conditions and Community Service Orders, deployed throughout the miners strike, were a regular feature of the policing of “hooligans”, as was the use of affray as a catch all charge in relation to crowd activities. The intelligence and surveillance techniques devised by the National Football Intelligence Unit were later set against militant anti-fascists and incorporated into the workings of the National Criminal Intelligence Service more generally.

The provision in the 1986 Public Order

Act for “Exclusion Orders” to bar those convicted of hooligan-related offences from football grounds for specified periods, and the subsequent extended provisions of the 1991 Football Offences Act, were predicated, as Straw makes explicit, on the

“From the late 1970s, football became a testing ground for techniques that would later be deployed against the trade union movement and the left.”

notion that “football hooliganism... is perpetrated by a relatively small minority of known football troublemakers.” However, “The blunt truth... which has become very clear from events last month is this: football hooliganism abroad is no longer confined to a small minority of known troublemakers.” In other words the “organised conspiracies” used to ram through the 1991 Act don’t exist. Rather than give up this particular ghost though, Straw intends to extend the powers of the 1991 Act to cover the “spectre” of the white working class male per se. Faced with an absence of conspiratorial intent (and a reality that consists of a few drunks throwing chairs)

Straw determines that everyone who seeks to attend a football match will be part of the conspiracy.

Does anyone really believe that the Act is a response to the fear engendered in Her Majesty’s government by a few misbehaving lads with Union Jack face paint? This is, literally, policing for the sake of it, an opportunity to police the freedom of movement of a large minority of working class youth (which, once on the statute books, could be extended by the use of police “discretion” to cover groups beyond the remit of the Act) and to reintroduce the freedom of movement restrictions, embodied in the old PTA in the form of exclusion orders, (and dropped in the Terrorism Act) in a new guise.

The Act provides for the making of a “banning order” on the complaint of a police officer (whether or not there are criminal proceedings). Moreover a “constable in uniform” during a “control period” can ask any British citizen to surrender his passport and appear before a magistrates court on the basis of “reasonable suspicion” about that individual’s behaviour and intent. If the possibility of a generalised removal of the right to freedom of movement on the basis of “reasonable suspicion”, doesn’t trouble the liberal mind; consider section 2, which allows the Secretary of State to make any supplementary, incidental or consequential provision, and any transitory, transitional or saving provision, which he considers necessary or expedient for the purposes of, in consequence of or for giving full effect to the Act. Still, it’s only for the jobs, so why worry? ■

Gentrification is a very real threat to the survival of working class communities both in the inner cities and in those rural areas where the rich like to 'escape' to enjoy long weekends and holidays.

Those of us threatened by gentrification (or 'regeneration' – which amounts to the same thing) have no choice but to fight, the question is how?

After re-unification, communities in East Berlin faced gentrification on a massive scale. Their attempts to fight back are described below, together with the problems they faced. Although the original article was written three years ago, we think it contains important and sobering lessons for anyone attempting to put anti-gentrification politics into practice.

From an article by M Bernt and A Holm

In April 1998 Prenzlauer Berg, like the rest of east Berlin, saw another set of rent rises¹. The key political goal of "Equalisation of Living Conditions" had culminated in rents now costing at least a third of income. The cheaper 'old build' market sector in east Berlin had disappeared and in some areas rents were higher than in the west. This latest rent increase was a milestone [negatively speaking] in the history of the east Berlin 'Neighbourhood Movements' who had fought the forcing out of low-income residents. The introduction of the west German 'like for like' rent system meant that rents and struggles over affordability in east Berlin now were determined in the same individualised fashion as in the west.

In 1992 it had been otherwise. The first (state ordered) 200% rent rises caused a wave of protests especially in Prenzlauer Berg. Meetings of local people led to the formation of the "Wir Bleiben Alle" (WBA) action alliance and demonstrations of up to 20,000 participants. The rent increases couldn't be stopped in the end, but WBA had been the start of a new self confidence in the area.

6 years later there was nothing left of this fighting spirit. The attempt by local activists to organise a rent freeze (refusal to pay rent increases) to stop further rent rises failed after a short period of time. The poorly attended meetings, independent advice sessions and a faked 'Retraction of the rent increases' from the Local

We're all Staying?



"Stop Leaving Buildings Empty – Flats for All – Affordable Rents"

Housing Company² failed to make any impact. Affordable accommodation was no longer a political issue that people would fight for. What happened then between 1992 and 1998?

This article seeks to determine why despite worsening conditions, the potential for protest and resistance in Prenzlauer Berg dwindled. To do this we outline some of the key features of developments in the area - Restitution, Gentrification, Media Hype and 'Regeneration'. In closing we look at the effects of gentrification and of people being forced from the area – to shed some light on the 'Neighbourhood Opposition' and dispel some common political conclusions.

Getting the Borough Ready – from Prenzlauer Berg to "Prenzelberg"

Everyone's heard of Prenzlauer Berg – it's "in". Hardly a guidebook is produced without a chapter on the legendary borough. Every month sees the opening of a new restaurant, bar or other amusement facility for the cultural, culinary and economic ruling class and on weekends swarms of tourists come to Kollwitz Platz to discover 'Prenzelberg'.

Between 1991 and 1996 about 70,000 people from a stable population of 145,000 moved. The new residents were generally younger than the previous inhabitants, had a higher level of education and to a large extent came from west Berlin or

western Germany. In 'regeneration' areas a third of the tenants were replaced. There were hardly any manual workers amongst the new residents and their income was on average 50% above the average for the area and, significantly, was even above the average for west Berlin as a whole.

This process was, of course, gentrification - the movement of wealthier residents into an area which formerly had a poorer population - market mechanisms encouraging an exchange of population from workers and the poor to the better off.

The media hype accompanying this process found its manifestation in the conditions of the property market which was shaped by the specificities of the former DDR. The "return of goods to previous owners" (or restitution) affected almost every block in Prenzlauer Berg and sent the property market into a state of ferment. Through 'restitution', many 'former owners' found themselves in possession, overnight as it were, of real estate which they hadn't expected and couldn't manage. Most sold their property on to developers.

The high proportion of reselling, as well as price inflation, had severe consequences for the renovation costs which exploded along with sale prices.³ The current rents for tenants on old secure leases (about 4 – 5 DM / sq M) only covered the purchase costs. There was a financial gap – the old residents couldn't afford huge rent increases whilst new

residents were happy to pay three times as much for a renovated flat. The buyers can thank the myth of 'Prenzelberg' and the fan club it attracted for the fact that they weren't stuck in a speculation trap – and instead came out with profits. What this meant for old residents in Prenzlauer Berg in everyday terms was:

- running down the condition of the blocks,
- a climate of uncertainty and psychological pressure to move,
- 'premiums' to convince residents to leave⁴,
- hired thugs demolishing flats around the tenant,
- physical attacks, firebombing and sabotaging of services.

In the face of this harassment, the old residents fled, leaving the field open to the new residents – and the population of Prenzlauer Berg was transformed.

Resistance Against Expulsions and Gentrification – “Wir Bleiben Alle” (We're All Staying)

The danger of gentrification was spotted early on. After fires in squatted blocks in Dunckerstraße, the first large neighbourhood meeting was called and the first group against expulsions and speculation formed. A local post office was saved, small businesses were organised and there was a successful action against speculators in Raumerstraße. These served to create and boost the self-confidence of a new activist milieu. It was a very mixed group – New Forum⁵, Christian groups⁶, small shopkeepers and squatters – and laid the basis for a collective response to the expected expulsions from the area. It led finally to the founding in early 1992 of the alliance “Wir Bleiben Alle.”

The name had a double meaning – one was historical: WBAs, WohnBezirkAusschüsse (Neighbourhood committees), served in the former DDR as an extension of the state bureaucracy within a neighbourhood. In Prenzlauer Berg however, in the 1980's, 2 WBAs had been infiltrated by the opposition and were the core of the movement against the demolition of both Oderberger and Rykestraße. Through the use of the (ambivalent) history of the WBAs, resistance from DDR times could be used to legitimise struggle against the new rulers as well. Secondly, “we” and “all” indicated an egalitarian attitude. “Staying” wasn't just for those who fitted in, or those who had the money – nor should Prenzlauer Berg become an 'alternative zoo' – rather everyone who wanted to stay should be able to. Wanting to “stay” was the point where common interests and common problems came

from – that was who “We” were.

WBA was mainly known for two actions. One was the widely supported occupation of a block in Kollwitzstraße – which prevented it from being turned into a hotel (although not into yuppie flats). Secondly, WBA was the only noticeable opposition to the 200% rent rises in 1992 – that took to the streets. Despite massive mobilisation (20,000 demonstrators) and widespread support in the neighbourhoods, neither action ultimately succeeded, yet they did mean that the WBA alliance was widely known and had an extraordinary degree of legitimacy and acceptance in inner city east Berlin.

West Berlin liberal ‘public opinion’ – essentially made up of west German ‘post 68ers’ – only noticed WBA afterwards as part of the construction of Prenzlauer Berg as an ‘in’ district. Resistance against expulsion was incorporated as evidence of the ‘liveliness’ and ‘attractiveness’ of the area – photos of the bigger demos are used today in the brochures of the regeneration firm STERN – which was previously active in Kreuzberg and now co-ordinates regeneration in Prenzlauer Berg⁷

Winter 1992 saw a decline in WBA. In the following years, despite a series of block occupations, local meetings, and a range of actions against speculators and attempts to drive local people out of the area – a widely supported movement did not exist anymore. We believe the decline was principally caused by:

- the perception of Prenzlauer Berg as a ‘scene borough’ – in which resident

- groups ‘outside the scene’ were sidelined,
- the formalising and official recognition of local initiatives / groups in “regeneration areas” and
- the widespread ignorance and arrogance of the Berlin left.

The Battle of the Bars on Kollwitzplatz

In no area of Prenzlauer Berg are the effects of gentrification so clear as in Kollwitzplatz. By 1994 – 95 the transformation of the area into a tourist zone had become intolerable for residents. Deafening noise from the pub goers of the 100 or so bars in the area (population 12,000), cars parked on pavements, and above all the shopping monoculture lead to, for the first time since the decline of WBA, significant tenant protest. Whilst yuppie shops opened, the shops used by old residents were forced to shut as rents rose. The Pensioner's rooms, Post Office, bakers, fruit and veg shop and the local children's library were all replaced with posh restaurants, cafes and health food / delicatessens. Apart from the direct effects of traffic and noise, the commercialisation of the Kollwitzplatz quarter had two apparent effects on the social conditions of the area:

The destruction of the established range of small businesses also meant the destruction of living conditions in a neighbourhood which relied on mutual support. The traditional shops, which often allowed credit or payment on account, were also places where people could meet – the ‘hardware’ of the local ‘network’.

The new ‘offerings’ are aimed at a better-off circle of customers - reflecting the shift in population. These new shops also function as an advertising vehicle for speculators in the area - for private flat seekers, the existing yuppie infrastructure of the area helps make Prenzlauer Berg attractive.

The resident protest against gentrification was aimed primarily against the most advanced structures of gentrification – the new cafes. With a mixture of anger about everyday disturbances and an unarticulated class consciousness – a large proportion of the local population, in a series of meetings with the Borough, demanded an end to the serving of booze in the open air after 10 pm⁸ and for a halt to further restaurant and cafe developments.

However, this meant that the initiative was taken out of the hands of residents and sent into the distant horizon of what was possible through official negotiations. The discussions dwelt increasingly on questions of noise emissions and boundaries and ended up bogged down in the





Citizen's Protest – The Posters say, "There is empty living space here"

never-never land of bureaucracy. Police reports of the time also show an increase in individual attacks against yuppie targets – ranging from damaging car paintwork, abusing yuppies, and slashing tyres to repeated smashing of yuppie restaurant windows. Neither tactic worked - today the old residents of Kollwitzplatz are a minority. They've given up and moved one by one to quieter areas.

The media and many leftists (including former squatters) portrayed workers and their families, who had to get up early and needed to sleep, as philistines who wanted their quiet boring neighbourhood back. 'Cultural life is a part of every metropolis, and if it was too loud for them here', they should, 'move to Köpenick', an outer suburb of Berlin often characterised as a village.

The fact that the residents of Prenzlauer Berg had in the past been positive in their reception of 'culture' meant that this belittling of their needs, and the preference given to those of the yuppies, was even harder to combat. The interests of 'pioneers' and 'gentrifiers' so dominated the public discourse over 'Prenzlauer Berg' that the problems of the rest of the population were ignored. The voices of the

'foreign' sections of the population were excluded and the lessons of the Kreuzberg experience had been learned.

According to the Berliner Zeitung, for example, the disturbing aspects (Turkish people, autonomes, junkies) had been conveniently left in the west. "The big difference: Delis, fashion and lifestyle in this neighbourhood are no longer seen as manifestations of the class enemy... In Prenzlauer Berg no one is emptying buckets of shit on posh restaurant floors as once happened in Kreuzberg's Oranien-Straße. No anonymous groups calling themselves 'Class Against Class' are firebombing delicatessens. And autonome polit-groups are nowhere to be seen."⁹

Increasingly, initiatives which didn't fit into this picture failed to attract publicity for the problems of residents, as the myth of "Prenzlauer Berg" became dominant. Protests were incorporated, as evidence of the colour and rebelliousness of the borough. Social conflicts were depoliticised and instead turned into cultural artefacts. The media didn't even mention the 1998 rent rises as they were only a problem for the diminishing number of older tenants.

Co-operation not Conflict – being crapped on consultatively

As WBA broke up at the end of 1992, the remaining activists joined consultative committees¹⁰ in the regeneration areas. Invitations to participate in the changes offered a glimmer of hope that the developments in your local area could be influenced. But after 5 years these efforts must also be seen to have failed. The effects of the formalising and legalese-ing through the 'Betroffenenvetretungen' have been at least as devastating for the movement against expulsions as the dissolution of co-ordinated resistance through the media discourse of gentrification.

The rights set out in the regulations for regeneration projects show clearly how limited the scope for action was. The consultation committees could "be consulted on the appointment of experts and consultants, ... should orally or in writing assist in providing information to the public,... can make comments and suggestions on the preparations and carrying out of the regeneration works."

A real say in terms of a veto on regeneration and building decisions never existed – and fundamental criticism of regeneration work was next to impossible.

“Delis, fashion and lifestyle in this neighbourhood are no longer seen as manifestations of the class enemy... In Prenzlauer Berg no-one is emptying buckets of shit on posh restaurant floors as once happened in Kreuzberg”

This model of ‘consultative regeneration’, imported from Kreuzberg, had been critiqued in the 1980’s by the Berlin academic, Karl Homuth, “... it incorporates the potential for protest into its structures via active co-option. It brings groups previously not participating into the consensus model for urban restructuring. It transforms heterogeneous demands, interests and needs of ‘interest groups’ into manageable problems and actions.”¹¹

The results were casework, limiting to the ‘do-able’ and localisation of protests. Instead of guaranteeing “everyone staying” we were limited to the individual ‘project’ – the regeneration of a square, pressurising regeneration authorities to act against specific speculators, saving old chestnut trees from demolition squads etc.

This had happened in Kreuzberg – but what made things different in Prenzlauer Berg was that the state was now relying heavily on private finance for regeneration. In west Berlin, many conflicts had been settled with state cash – but in Prenzlauer Berg, the state’s responsibility for problem resolution was very limited. The privately funded ‘regeneration state’ set the agenda. Attempts to discuss the general thrust of regeneration were not

tolerated – instead activists were limited to ‘one problem at a time’ work on administratively defined problems and solutions. Under these conditions many former activists retreated, disappointed and overworked. In some areas citizen participation now means only one person representing an area.

As they co-ordinate the process of ‘upgrading’ a given area, the regeneration authorities still spout the old aims of “socially responsible and consultative city development” in publicity material. The pretence of protecting residents from expulsion - limited by time and amount in a non statutory rent guarantee after modernisation¹² – is a pacification measure to ensure the easy restructuring of the area. For example, the regeneration company responsible for Prenzlauer Berg – STERN – spares neither money nor effort to declare on billboards and glossy brochures the rare successes of “consultative regeneration.” The traditional protest potential of citizens movements from alternative milieus have been rendered complicit through the Green Members of City Council and the occasional rebellious gestures from regeneration apparatniks. Without an obvious and above all realistic alternative, many residents accept the half baked regeneration praxis as the lesser evil. Likewise ‘consultative regeneration’ depoliticises conflict over the future of the borough – success in negotiations become a matter of whether on a personal level relationships with bureaucrats are good or not.

Although it was almost impossible to break through the toothless ‘representation model’ - the KiezLaden (community centre) in Dunckerstraße, which originated from an anti state (and non funded) position - was able to maintain some momentum, organising street protests and occupations. Through the perspective of ‘neighbours helping neighbours’ the ability to mobilise tenants also existed – particularly around empty buildings... which wasn’t possible in the semi-professional consultative structures. But against a background of resistance to particularly crass speculators, there was a tendency for activists to be pushed into being anti-speculator fire fighters, running from action to action. The possibility of a generalised critique of the praxis of regeneration was not possible from this position.

‘Radical’ Critics and Radical Ignorance - the neighbourhood movement without the left

Another reason for the weakness of the movement against expulsions was the strength of the ‘Radical left’ in Berlin – which drew in many WBA activists,

locked them into in endless navel gazing and finally diverted them from all political involvement. The movement against expulsions was, at best, ignored and at worst demonised by the left. The critics had two main points: first that the initiatives in the neighbourhoods were ‘reformist’ (“we want more than low rents don’t we?”). Secondly that ‘false neighbourhood identities were being established’ – defending an imaginary homogeneous neighbourhood would lead to attacks on marginalised members.

Already in 1992 – the WBA peak – useful energy had been wasted by meaningless discussions on a leaflet from the autonomen¹³ scene reading “Against a Left Nationalist position of the ‘poor german tenants’ – for an anti-fascist barracks from Bendzko to Breitscheidplatz.” Instead of discussing how to radicalise protests, resolve urgent organisational issues or prepare for the possible rent strike, WBA spent valuable weeks discussing how to repair its image in the Berlin left.

Mayday 1997 saw an escalation of the controversy. The organising group for the “Revolutionary First of May” wanted to export Kreuzberg’s traditional May Day riot to Prenzlauer Berg. But local groups resented and criticised the Mayday group’s Stalinist approach and crass understanding of local social conflicts and conditions. In the Interim¹⁴ some ‘militants’ responded, describing the melange of tenant / neighbourhood initiatives as ‘pro state’ and Prenzlauer Berg as infested “by left liberals and DDR era alternative movement fetishists who make radical left politics impossible in the area.” The controversy ended in public mud slinging - the demo organising group saying that the groups working in Prenzlauer Berg had a “german garden gnome style mentality”.

Now, discussion between the revolutionary mainstream and local groups hardly exists. The bogeyman which had been built, is still stubbornly represented as the reality of neighbourhood politics. WBA is still caricatured as a closed white community, which opposes immigrants, as Nimbys, and as territorialist against ... every sort of cultural, social and political ‘other.’ The fact that this bears little relation to reality doesn’t seem to matter.

A residents’ group from an area where the main population are east German, will probably concern itself with the rights of east German tenants and not the rights of migrants, junkies and homeless people living in other areas. But to conclude from this that the group seeks to defend ‘its area’ from migrants, junkies or the homeless is an allegation which cannot be sustained. In fact the neighbourhood groups:

- took joint action with the homeless eg. the squatting of Kollwitzstraße 89,
- co-operated and worked with travellers,
- protested against the police raids against junkies
- on the 'legendary' demo against rent rises in September 1992 one of the 3 speakers was a refugee who spoke about the situation of migrants here in this country.

Why do the critics on the left so stubbornly insist on labelling the neighbourhood movements as nationalist, despite ample evidence to the contrary? In our opinion, they can't deal with the reality because this may force them to question their own identity ghettos (white, middle class, student, west German). The key concerns of the scene can be seen from the shifts in critiques offered. At the start of the 90's the demarcation line for the Kreuzberg left was that of opposition to the Greens – the old rejection of reformism. Nowadays 'construction of identity' is the clear leader. The shift came around 1993, as the west German middle class left in Berlin found itself in a minority position. Even in Kreuzberg the effects of neo-liberalism were being felt. Multi-culturalism was becoming uncomfortable – classes where 70% of students from non German speaking backgrounds were not 'OK' for the children of the old left. A discourse about law and order developed in the heart of the autonomous scene – for example against the 'Turkish pitbull fraction' who had taken the autonomist wall murals about building self defence bands too seriously.

A mass exodus set in – the ageing alternative milieu from Kreuzberg, Schöneberg and Charlottenburg moved to east Berlin to the Spandauer Vorstadt or to Prenzlauer Berg – where the world was

still German but alternative. But the existing east German residents were less than overjoyed by the arrival of these west German 'brothers and sisters'. East – west conflict brewed – some west German students (living in Prenzlauer Berg) have said they feel like "Jews in the Third Reich" - 'identity' becomes a problem if it's not your own.

A consequence of these denunciations is the almost total abstention of the (radical) left in rank and file tenant's groups in the suburb. If leftists had mucked in with the rank and file initiatives in Prenzlauer Berg they would have been outside of their traditional networks and risked losing these altogether. The dogmatic 'left critics' therefore caused further segmentation of the potential for resistance, which still remained in their milieu.

Perspectives for Resistance in the City – what's left?

What can be drawn out these experiences? An opposition movement against gentrification in Prenzlauer Berg and other areas, can in our opinion only be built if:

- a real rank and file mobilisation takes place, which doesn't rely on spectacular actions or symbolic politics to achieve media coverage – but which does directly intervene in the material conditions of the borough
- a confrontational politics of regeneration can be carried through which can develop the conditions for concrete and hopefully successful negotiation options for the residents and include a generalised critique of previous regeneration practices
- organisation which ignores the disastrous fragments of the left occurs and social struggle around real social conditions can be developed, without

exclusivity and self imposed limitations Taking on "social problems" in a neighbourhood doesn't directly challenge social relationships, but it does put them under scrutiny. Rather than engaging in moralistic arguments we want to look at all options for concrete social projects and mobilisations. This approach does not directly challenge the question of ownership – it 'only' interferes with the right of owners to do what they want with their properties. Yet we think it is less important to always stand on the correct side of the barricades with the correct political position than it is to develop coalitions with other social groups. Urban politics must be based on the content of social conflicts and organisationally consist of the widest possible mobilisation.

The changes in Prenzlauer Berg affect the people you'd expect. They're an attack from above on residents who can't pay their rent; on old people who find their everyday existence made harder by the closing of local small shops and post offices; and on young people who find the ex squatted alternative venues dumb, and can't afford the prices in the new bars. Concentrating on the politics of everyday life does not necessarily mean welfare work, because the failures of individual solutions also contain the possibility of generalising and radicalising them. Taking 'small problems' seriously is the essential basis for credibility. To establish a movement from below can only be done on the basis of continuous local work, an empirical analysis of the specific conditions and the skills to make strategic as well as short term demands to resolve concrete problems and conflicts.

The authors have worked for many years in various neighbourhood initiatives in Prenzlauer Berg. ■

Notes

1 German rent laws allow rent increases of 10-30% every 3 years to ensure that the 'like for like' rent of flats are similar in a particular area. Berlin is defined as one area and the policy has the effect of raising low rents in east Berlin to meet the market rents in west Berlin.

2 Local Housing companies are based in each east Berlin borough and were 100% state owned but independently managed. Now the LHC for Prenzlauer berg owns 20% of the housing stock

3 The usual price for an un-renovated home in Prenzlauer Berg is 800 – 1000 DM / sq M. This price can be included in the renovation costs (and therefore can be passed on to the tenants). The renovation costs for most blocks in east Berlin are very high due to the decades of neglect.

4 While these are declining, sums of DM 5,000 are still quite common in the private sector – previously up to and over DM 10,000 could be offered as 'fuck off quick' money to tenants. The remaining public sector tenants receive no home loss payments but can recharge the Local Housing

Company for costs.

5 The main DDR Opposition group on the left in the 1980s.

6 significant in the unofficial peace movement in the 1980s & influenced by liberation theology

7 STERN was a major renovation firm and the vanguard of 'consultative neighborhood regeneration'. After the end of the DDR, STERN greatly expanded its activities and today has its base of operations in Prenzlauer Berg. Now STERN is broadening its base to include regeneration of Prefab style tower blocks in Brandenburg and the 3 km holiday home project of "Strength through Joy" (Nazi Social Club) in Rügen (Baltic Coast of eastern Germany).

8 there is no effective closing time for cafes in Berlin

9 'the picture book punks have disappeared' Berliner Zeitung 7/12/95

10 State recognised 'Betroffenenvetretungen' comprising 50% tenants, along with representation from shop

keepers, owners and building workers.

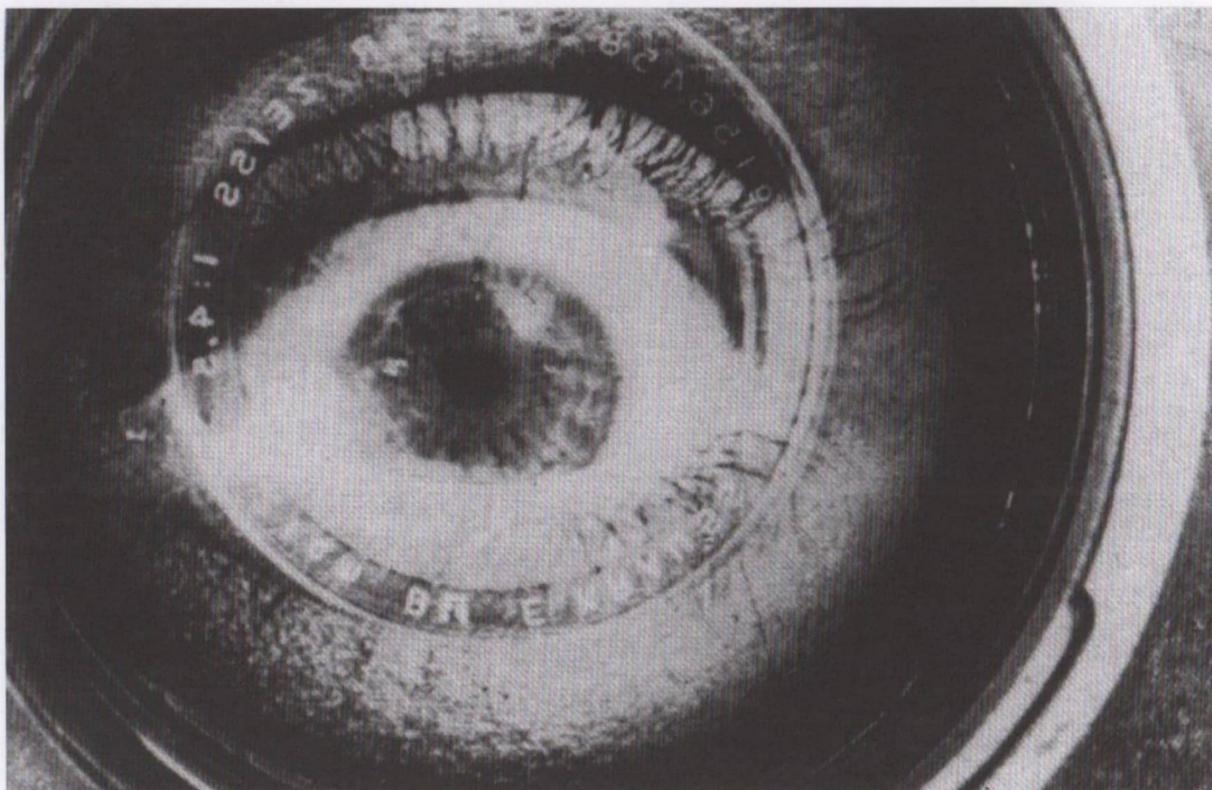
11 Homuth, K: Statik potemkinscher Dörfer. Behutsame Stadterneuerung und gesellschaftliche Macht in Berlin – Kreuzberg, Berlin 1984

12 After modernisation the owner can add 11 % of the costs of renovation onto the rent but then must wait 5 years before the next 'comparative' rent rise (to bring the rent levels up to the Berlin average). This 5 year limit has been challenged by the Berlin Senate as being too long and inhibiting private investment. In other words, the 'guarantee' is probably not worth the paper it is written on...

13 Autonomous left - a heterogeneous movement set somewhere politically between Maoism, Italian Leftism circa 1967-77 and anarchism - with strong radical feminist and third worldist influences.

14 The fortnightly underground Berlin autonomist magazine – not illegal to hold a single copy but can be to have more than one or to help prepare it (due to laws about supporting / publicising criminal or armed political activities).

Secrets and Lies



The more we hear about David Shayler, the less it is clear quite what problem he actually poses for the British state. In both his interviews and his work with Mark Hollingsworth and David Fielding (Defence of the Realm, Andre Deutsch 2000) Shayler has never hidden his reactionary agenda. Shayler - an ex-MI5 operative who has yet to express substantive disillusion with the aims and objectives of the organisation he once so loyally served - has become a cause celebre for the soft left and liberal intelligentsia. Reading between the lines, you can't help but wonder whether that wasn't the point all along. By flocking to his cause, the left has become caught up in designs it would otherwise have balked at embracing.

Shayler expected his career with MI5 to be a "career for life". He resigned only when his advice about how to make MI5 more effective as a "counter-terrorism" force was rejected. Shayler's critique, in essence, is that "MI5 was unsuited and unable to act as an anti-terrorist agency. Its obsession with bureaucracy and procedure combined with inertia and lack of initiative by senior officers prevented vital decision-making that might have saved lives and millions of pounds of public money" (Defence of the Realm p5). As Hollingsworth and Fielding observe, "Unlike past MI5 whistleblowers and 'defectors', Shayler is not motivated by political, ideological or even moral factors. His primary concern is what he witnessed as the lack of accountability, excessive secrecy and the bungling incompetence of Security Service operatives." Shayler's solution to the management problems of MI5 is straightforward. "There is not one European Community country that has succeeded in defeating terrorism without first establishing a proper, national central agency." (ibid p140) That this agenda is one which should be problematic for the left

Shayler - an ex-MI5 operative who has yet to express substantive disillusion with the aims and objectives of the organisation he once so loyally served - has become a cause celebre for the soft left and liberal intelligentsia.

ought to go without saying.

There are, though, a number of agencies whom we would expect to be singularly untroubled by such loose talk, not least because Shayler's designs are theirs also. Most notably, the Metropolitan Police Special Branch who lost out to MI5 in the bidding war for control over anti-terrorist activities (and budgets) at the end of the Cold War. Similarly, Jack Straw at the Home Office whose agenda for retooling the state has incorporated both the development and extension of the National Criminal Intelligence Service and its links with EUROPOL, the parallel expansion of the definition of terrorism (the Terrorism Act) and the implementation of the expansion of pan-European and EU-USA security co-operation as per the 1998 Birmingham G8 summit agreement on high-tech crime: "The main obstacle facing a G8 achievement of any goals set out in Birmingham appears to be the barrier of red tape obstructing law enforcement agencies from co-operating across national jurisdictions. The G8 will need to address the inconsistencies between justice systems from one member country to another if the problem of international crime is to be dealt with effectively." (UK Presidency address to G8 summit 1999).

Shayler's case isn't the only time the liberal left have been hoodwinked into following a pro-state agenda since New Labour came to office. The link between the Terrorism Act, the Human Rights Act

and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act appears to have escaped organisations such as Justice and Liberty entirely. Yet it is simple enough. Incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law is no more than a necessary part of the process of the creation of a European wide security state. It is in effect a rationalisation of UK procedures in line with European norms. The HRA merely introduces the fictions of "transparency" and "accountability" into previously unregulated areas of surveillance and repression. The point of the expansion of the anti-terrorism agenda through the Terrorism Act is in part to allow more room for opting out of Convention rights under Article 15 ("in time of war or other such emergency threatening the life of the nation.") The more acts that are defined as "terrorism", the greater the scope for opting out.

The nature and extent of state surveillance has been highlighted by recent use of surveillance evidence in major trials. The European Convention leaves the UK badly exposed in such matters. Privacy under the Convention can only be lawfully interfered with if 'necessary', and if surveillance is carried out in accordance with the law. In effect, surveillance has to be regulated by statute if it is to comply with the Convention.

Straw's answer is the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which covers the interception of communications (including mobile phones and e-mails), the power to

demand communications data and decryption of unintelligible material and the use of covert operations and surveillance. Such activities will be authorised by a warrant issued by the Secretary of State or other authorised officer (judges will play no role in the issue or scrutiny of warrant applications).

The "complaints" mechanism established under the Act mirrors that set up under the Interception of Communications Act 1985, following a European Court ruling where a violation of the Convention was found to have occurred because the UK's system of telephone taps was not regulated by law. The tribunal system set up fifteen years ago has not upheld a single complaint. The RIP tribunal will meet in secret, will not give reasons for its decisions and won't consider complaints about activities that occurred more than 12 months ago. Applicants will not be allowed to attend or have access to documents upon which the tribunal might rely in making its decisions. Tribunal decisions are not subject to any form of appeal.

It could be argued that the rulings of the European court afford less protection in regard to matters such as torture, illegal obtaining of evidence, and invasion of privacy than UK domestic law. The point is that the liberal left flew into a fit of joy at the first sight of the Human Rights Act, without noting its context in relation to New Labour's wider security agenda. In rushing to embrace Shayler so quickly they may be making a similar error.

There are, after all, aspects of Shayler's tale which don't add up. Not least his claim that he joined M15 in the autumn of 1991. By October 1992 he had become one of the founding members of the T Branch team which had won the battle with Special Branch to investigate IRA activities on the mainland. Given the political sensitivity of the M15 take-over and the resentment it caused, would a raw recruit, fresh from the Sunday Times, have been pushed forward so soon? Might it not be worth at least speculating as to an involvement with the security services predating 1991?

Shayler has admitted that work during this period involved studying intelligence reports on IRA activities in the north east, including more widespread surveillance of the pro-Republican left. If Shayler had any progressive intent, it would be reasonable to expect him to disclose such activity (after all, he was happy to disclose M15's files on members of the New Labour cabinet) and M15 surveillance techniques more generally. There are considerable precedents for this - Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace most obviously, but Philip Agee in relation to the CIA also, all comes

"the liberal left flew into a fit of joy at the first sight of the Human Rights Act, without noting its context in relation to New Labour's wider security agenda. In rushing to embrace Shayler so quickly they may be making a similar error"

to mind. Shayler has made no such attempts at disclosure. Instead, most recently in *The Guardian* on 20/9/00, he attempted take the glory and credit for the arrest of IRA members Sean McNulty, Hugh Jack and Rob Fryer and the highlighting of the deficiencies of his superiors at this time. On that basis, it's only fair that we reflect on some of the facts omitted from his account.

Sean McNulty was jailed in 1994 for explosions in April and June 1993 at oil and gas depots in Tyne and Wear. Shayler claims that the breakthrough in McNulty's arrest came after the June explosion, when he saw a surveillance photograph of Sean McNulty entering Hugh Jack's home. Yet McNulty had been under surveillance for over a year (as admitted by both Shayler and the security service prosecution witness Mr A, at his trial.) Evidence against McNulty was almost entirely circumstantial, based upon surveillance operations, and evidence of his political convictions from his ex-girlfriend, and mother of his child, Amanda Johnson. Here comes the bit our hero misses out.

Arrested alongside Sean McNulty were his father and mother, Bernard and Dorothy McNulty, sister Annette Walker and uncle Niall Cornelius McNulty. All three of the McNultys were held on remand from June to October 1993, and Annette Walker was held until December 1993. All were eventually told that the Crown did not intend to proceed against

them - but not until November 1994, three months after Sean McNulty was jailed. We might speculate that the fate of the McNultys could have intimidated Amanda Johnson into giving evidence against Sean. But there's more. By the time the prosecution moved to put the family out of their misery, Bernard McNulty was dead, having suffered a heart attack which the family believe was a direct result of his arrest. If Shayler is so quick to claim the glory for his surveillance work, he appears equally keen to refuse moral responsibility for Bernard McNulty's death, having not as yet mentioned the details of the McNulty case given here.

As regards Rob Fryer and Hugh Jack; during their trial it was claimed that the skilled surveillance operatives following Hugh Jack lost track of him for a period of 8 minutes, during which time he purportedly concealed in woodland the bomb-making equipment later attributed to him. All records of the search which unearthed this equipment were destroyed. Senior army officers involved in the search were not called to give evidence at the trial. Surely this is the kind of "inefficiency" and "incompetence" that Shayler would normally be all too keen to shoot his mouth off about? At the trial, thirteen M15 agents gave evidence against the two - shielded from the defendants, the media and the public. Public Interest Immunity Certificates were placed on original notes and logs drawn up by M15. The defence was given only copies of edited notes, on which ESDA tests were impossible. During the trial it emerged that M15 witness notes served were incomplete and often not contemporaneous. The McNulty, Jack and Fryer cases marked the commencement of a process of "securitisation" of IRA trials which made a fair hearing almost impossible. As John Wadham of Liberty (now Shayler's solicitor) said at the time "The use of M15 for the investigation and prosecution of offences means that defendants subsequently prosecuted lose their right to a fair trial." It should be noted at this point that Shayler's critique suggests that in his view the security services weren't being hard enough.

The Shayler case ought to pose a dilemma for his supporters on the liberal left. Given Shayler's declared agenda of making more efficient the investigatory and repressive capacities of the secret state and critique of the deficiencies of the security services - given his consistent silence over his activities against the pro-Republican left, and given the coincidence of his critique with the Home Office/Europol agenda, the likes of Liberty and the rest have a decision to make - with or against the state. You can't have it both ways. ■



Authoritarians, Vanguards and Anti-Capitalist Movements

The Socialist Workers Party are targeting "anti-capitalist" demonstrators as the next 'big thing' and ideal recruiting fodder.

Chris Bamberry, a leading member, puts it clearly enough: "The test for the SWP will be how it shapes and directs the anti-capitalist movement. " Another, Julie Waterson, knows precisely what they want out of it: "A cadre of Bolsheviks."

Again the SWP sees working class and radical movements purely as a means of increasing the size and influence of their party. Rather than their politics being informed by the class struggle they see the class struggle as a means of gaining members. Potential new members of the Party are urged to ignore their own experiences within their own movements and to follow instead a set of politics based on the "lessons" of experiences gained in a near pre-capitalist, absolutist state at the start of the last century.

It is not surprising, then, that Leninists have played no part in the organisation of the anti-capitalist demonstrations. They expect working class people to relate to their predetermined political positions, whereas revolutionaries apply politics to the conditions we face as members of the working class. The important issues facing the working class - and how to fight - are to be determined not by ourselves, but by the leadership of the party, who are the "vanguard of the working class".

Unfortunately, as the recent anti-capitalist demonstrations show, the vanguard is busy trying to catch up with those in struggle. Not that this is an isolated case - the Russian Revolution is full of examples of the backward nature of the "vanguard party." Throughout 1917, it was the workers themselves, not the Bolshevik Party, who raised the issue of workers' self-management and control. As

historian SA Smith summarises, the "factory committees launched the slogan of workers' control of production quite independently of the Bolshevik party. It was not until May that the party began to take it up." [Red Petrograd, p154].

Authoritarian or democratic?

The SWP are aware that the libertarian aspects of such groups as Reclaim the Streets (RTS) will make it hard for the vanguard to "direct" the anti-capitalist movement. A leading cadre, Alex Callinicos, tried to combat the libertarian influence in that movement in Socialist Worker (May 13, p4) stating:

"Reclaim the Streets proclaims its hostility to organised structures and denounces the Socialist Workers Party as 'authoritarian'."

"Our crime is to believe that effective action depends on democratically-taken majority decisions binding on all involved. In the absence of this minimal level of democratic organisation and discipline you get what has been called 'the tyranny of structurelessness.'"

"Small groups are free to do their own

For anarchists, it is not a question of organisation versus non-organisation but rather authoritarian versus libertarian organisation and hierarchy versus self-management.

thing without being held accountable to everyone else. Now that's real 'authoritarianism'."

Callinicos does not mention that the term "the tyranny of structurelessness" was invented by anarcha-feminist Jo Freeman. Nor does he mention the fact that RTS *has* an organised structure (a weekly open meeting and various functional working groups springing from it). What RTS, anarchists and libertarians object to is not "organised structures" but

rather hierarchical structures. Callinicos is peddling the usual Leninist nonsense that anarchists reject organisation. For anarchists, it is not a question of organisation versus non-organisation but rather authoritarian versus libertarian organisation and hierarchy versus self-management.

The SWP's crime is not a belief "that effective action depends on democratically taken majority decisions binding on all involved". Anarchists are firm believers in direct democracy. Self-managed, federal organisation from the bottom up is a key aspect of anarchist ideas. We see such organisation as reflecting the importance of individual liberty. The SWP's crime is to envision a form of "democracy" which is little more than top-down party rule.

Democracy and "effective action"

During a struggle or revolution unexpected events occur, new developments arise and new information appears, requiring decisions to be made and as quickly as possible. So who makes those decisions? Either it is those directly involved (ie. the "small groups" Callinicos mentions) or it

is some one else. Callinicos says these decisions must be made by "the majority." Which "majority"? The majority of those involved with the event? The majority of all in a given organisation or demonstration? The majority of the working class? On these questions, he remains silent (for good reason, as we shall see).

In some cases, it is practical and possible for the majority of all involved in a movement to make a decision on policy. For example, the congresses of the

In a riot or revolution, small groups have to act without being bound by “democratically-taken majority decisions” which are, in practice, impossible to organise in the heat of a confrontation with the forces of the state



anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT were based on mandated delegates co-ordinating the policy decisions of all the membership. However, often it is impossible to do this. Workers on strike cannot continually submit every decision to the whole union membership. Striking workers in each area must make decisions appropriate to their needs and co-ordinate their activities later. In a riot or revolution, small groups have to act without being bound by “democratically-taken majority decisions” which are, in practice, impossible to organise in the heat of a confrontation with the forces of the state. Workers act spontaneously to show solidarity, occupy their workplaces, create new forms of organisation and so on. Any struggle or revolution is dependent on people making decisions spontaneously, at the appropriate time and level otherwise it will fail. Co-ordination of struggle, wide-scale collectively agreed action and organisation is essential but to complement local actions and decisions and not to replace or subordinate them.

The logical conclusion of Callinicos' argument is to condemn society to bureaucratic inertia. In a strike, the workers involved could not, say, organise a picket line without first balloting the rest of their union. In a socialist society, workers in a factory could not decide to reorganise production in more libertarian ways without getting a majority of the workers across the globe to agree to the change.

Of course, in practice, Trotskyists recognise that to involve the majority in every decision would be impossible. So they argue for “democratic centralism” where the party membership elect a leadership who make the day to day decisions which the party has to implement. Rather than “effective action” being the result of “democratically-taken majority decisions binding on all involved” they in fact mean “decisions made by a few leaders at the top of the party, binding on all involved”. In other words, a representative government whose decisions are binding on all subject to it - a radically different concept.

It was this vision of centralised, top-down “democratic” decision making which provided the Bolsheviks with the justification to eliminate the functional democracy associated with the factory committees and soldiers committees. In place of workers' and soldiers' self-management, the Bolsheviks appointed managers and officers and justified this on the grounds that a workers' party was in power. The “democratically-taken majority decisions binding on all involved” which elected the Bolsheviks into power became the means by which democracy was eliminated in area after area of Russian working class life.

Bolshevism in power

In fact, the Bolshevik tradition has always been happy to let individuals ignore and revoke the democratic decisions of collective groups – as long as the individuals in question were the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. The leading lights of the Leninist tradition happily placed the rights of the party before the rights of working people to decide their own fate. Thus Callinicos' attack on RTS can be applied to his own politics, with far more justification.

For example, in response to the “great Bolshevik losses in the soviet elections” during the spring and summer of 1918 “Bolshevik armed force usually overthrew the results of these provincial elections.” In May, in the city of Izhevsk for example “the Mensheviks and SRs won a majority... In June, these two parties also won a majority of the executive committee of the soviet. At this point, the local Bolshevik leadership refused to give up power ... [and by use of the military] abrogated the results of the May and June elections and arrested the SR and Menshevik members of the soviet and its executive committee.” In addition, “the government continually postponed the new general elections to the Petrograd Soviet, the term of which had

ended in March 1918. Apparently, the government feared that the opposition parties would show gains" [Samuel Farber, *Before Stalinism*, pp22-24].

In the workplace, the Bolsheviks replaced workers' economic democracy with "one-man management" selected by the state ("The elective principle must now be replaced by the principle of selection" Lenin). Trotsky admits that had "the civil war... not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully". [M. Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, pp63-71] He pushed the ideas of "militarisation of labour" as well as abolishing democratic forms of organisation in the military – "elective basis is politically pointless and technically inexpedient and has already been set aside by decree" [quoted by Brinton, *OpCit* pp37-38].

Moreover, in spite of Callinicos' claim that it is the Leninist tradition which is democratic we find Lenin arguing in April 1918 that the "irrefutable experience of history has shown that ... the dictatorship of individual persons was often the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes". [OpCit p40]

The elimination of democracy continued after the end of the Civil War. In May 1921, the All-Russian Congress of the Metalworkers' Union met. The "Central Committee of the [Communist] Party handed down to the Party faction in the union a list of recommended candidates for union leadership. The metalworkers' delegates voted down the list, as did the Party faction in the union... The Central Committee of the Party disregarded every one of the votes and appointed a Metalworkers' Committee of its own. So much for 'elected and revocable delegates'. Elected by the union rank and file and revocable by the Party leadership!" [OpCit p83]

These are just a few examples of Trotsky's argument that you cannot place "the workers' right to elect representatives above the party. As if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy!" He continued by stating the "Party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship... regardless of temporary vacillations even in the working class... The dictatorship does not base itself at every moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy" [OpCit p78].

RTS is correct. The Bolshevik tradition is deeply authoritarian - it is based on

centralised party power riding rough-shod over the functional democracy of the working class. To quote Trotsky:

"the proletariat can take power only through its vanguard. In itself the necessity for state power arises from an insufficient cultural level of the masses and their heterogeneity. In the revolutionary vanguard, organised in a party, is crystallised the aspirations of the masses to obtain their freedom. Without the confidence of the class in the vanguard, without support of the vanguard by the class, there can be no talk of the conquest of power. In this sense the proletarian revolution and dictatorship are the work of the whole class, but only under the

Further, would he conclude that those members of the German (and other) Social Democratic Party who opposed their party's role in supporting the First World War were acting inappropriately? Rather than express their opposition to the war and act to stop it, according to his "logic" they should have remained in their party, accepted the "democratically-taken majority decision" and supported Imperialist slaughter in the name of democracy (indeed, many of the anti-war minority went along with the majority of the party in the name of "discipline" and "democratic" principles).

Of course, he would reject such positions – in these cases the rights of

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leadership of the vanguard." ["Stalinism and Bolshevism", *Socialist Review* 146, p16].

Yet "a revolutionary party, even after seizing power ... is still by no means the sovereign ruler of society". [Ibid.] This is, of course, true - there are still organs of working class self-management (such as factory committees, workers councils, trade unions, soldier committees) through which working people can still exercise their sovereignty. Little wonder Trotsky abolished independent unions, decreed the end of soldier committees and urged one-man management and the militarisation of labour when in power. Callinicos' arguments lose all credibility when considered in the light of the history of Marxist parties in power.

Democracy and Freedom

Callinicos' argument, taken to its logical conclusion, also implies the end of the free expression of individuality. Would he seriously defend a society that "democratically" decided that, say, homosexuals should not be allowed to associate freely? Or that inter-racial marriage was against "Natural Law"? Or that socialists were dangerous subversives and should be banned? He would, we hope, recognise the rights of individuals to rebel against the majority when that majority violate the spirit of association, freedom and equality which should give democracy its rationale.

minorities take precedence. This is because the majority is not always right and it is only through the dissent of individuals and minorities that the opinion of the majority can be moved towards the right one.

The Two Souls of Democracy

The real problem is that Callinicos fails to understand the rationale for democratic decision making, i.e. the idea that the majority is always right but that individual freedom requires democracy to express and defend itself. By placing a vaguely defined collective above the individual, Callinicos undermines democracy and replaces it with little more than tyranny by the majority (or, more likely, those who claim to represent the majority).

Simply put, Marxism (as Callinicos presents it here) flies in the face of how societies change and develop. New ideas start with individuals and minorities and spread by argument and by force of example. Progress is determined by those who dissent and rebel against the status quo and the decisions of the majority. That is why anarchists support the right of dissent in self-managed groups - in fact, dissent, refusal, revolt by individuals and minorities is a key aspect of self-management (and of the class struggle and of revolution).

In other words, for anarchists, self-

management finds its rationale in the fact that individuals are capable of independent judgement, rational deliberation and of evaluating and changing their actions and relationships. Collective decisions may sometimes justifiably be broken. To promise to obey is to deny or limit individuals' freedom and equality and their ability to exercise these capacities. Liberalism and Leninism are based on this "promising to obey" vision of democracy - in which the minority must alienate their judgement and follow the decisions of the (representatives of) the majority regardless of the nature of those decisions and regardless whether they violate the equality and individual freedom which are the rationale of democracy.

Anarchism favours freedom and that implies two things - individual liberty and self-management (direct democracy) in free associations. Any form of "democracy" not based on individual freedom would be so contradictory as to be useless as a means to human freedom (and vice versa, any form of "individual freedom" - such a liberalism - which denies self-management would be little more than a justification for minority rule and a denial of human freedom).

So anarchism does not reject democratic decision making, organised structures or collective action. It is obvious that individuals must work together in order to lead a fully human life and struggle against capitalism, the state and hierarchy. And so, "to join with other humans ... [the individual has three options] he [or she] must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity" [Errico Malatesta, *The Anarchist Revolution*, p85].

Anarchists obviously pick the last option, association, as the only means by which we can work together as free and equal human beings, respecting the uniqueness and liberty of one another. Only within direct democracy can individuals express themselves, practice critical thought and self-government, so developing their intellectual and ethical capacities to the full. It is far better to sometimes be in a minority than be subject to the will of a boss all the time.

Anarchism rather than Trotskyism bases itself on the "effective action" that results from "democratically-taken majority decisions." This is because only anarchism recognises the relationships between individual liberty and self-managed groups, local action and co-ordination and the necessity of working from the bottom-up in federations rather than from the top-down in centralised bodies.

Leninism represents the formal, Lockean, elitist side of democracy, based on the notion that electing a government equals "democracy." Anarchists represent the other, the functional, directly democratic side, that is expressed when oppressed people take management of their own affairs directly in associations created in the class struggle. The side that expressed itself in sections of the French Revolution, the soldier and factory committees of the Russian revolution, the self-managed unions and collectives of Spanish anarchism, strikers assemblies and so on through history. Precisely those kinds of functional democracy that the Bolsheviks eliminated in the name of formal democracy.

Epilogue

Of course Trotskyists like Callinicos try to blame the destruction of democracy in Russia on the Civil War. However, as indicated, the undermining of democracy started before the civil war started and continued after it had finished. The claim that the "working class" had been destroyed by the war cannot justify the fact that attempts by working class people to express themselves were systematically undermined by the Bolshevik party. Nor does the notion of an "exhausted" or "disappeared" working class make much sense when "in the early part of 1921, a spontaneous strike movement... took place in the industrial centres of European Russia" and strikes involving around 43 000 per year took place between 1921 and 1925. [Samuel Farber, *OpCit* p18 & p88] While the working class was reduced in numbers by the civil war, it cannot be said to have been totally "exhausted". The working class survived the war and were more than capable of collective action and decision making. So rather than there being objective reasons for the lack of democracy under Lenin we can suggest political reasons - the awareness that, given the choice, the Russian working class would have preferred someone else in power!

Finally there is a certain irony in the usual Trotskyist argument that Stalinism can be explained purely by the terrible civil war Russia experienced. After all, Lenin himself stated that every "revolution... in its development, would give rise to exceptionally complicated circumstances" and "revolution is the sharpest, most furious, desperate class war and civil war. Not a single great revolution in history has escaped civil war. No-one who does not live in a shell could imagine that civil war is conceivable without exceptionally complicated circumstances" [*Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?*, p80 & p81] If the Bolshevik political and organisational form cannot survive during a period of disruption and complicated circumstances, then it is surely a theory to be avoided at all costs. ■

CURING

In 1976, the Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan declared that the "English disease" of indiscipline and labour militancy was undermining the profitability of UK capital. Curing the "English disease" became the raison d'être of the ruling class.

The "English disease" now takes an apparently different form - Euro 2000 allowing the redefinition of the plague - no longer the threat of working class militancy, now simply the "obnoxious taint of hooliganism". The forces of capital scored a strategic victory over the working class in the period following Callaghan's speech. We're all, we're told, middle class now. The war is won; we'd best bury our dead, and those of us with work keep our heads down and bring our sacrifices of less pay and longer hours to lay before the new God, Flexibility.

In an article in the Guardian on 3/7/00, David Sanders, a professor of politics at Essex University, declares that we are "in a process of class 'de-alignment' ". He notes that "A distinctive feature of Labour's victory in 1997 was that it successfully appealed to all social classes. The party not only obtained a clear majority of working class votes. It also secured a proportionately higher share of middle class votes than it ever had before." He contends that "Labour has lost working class support since 1997... [but] does not have very much to lose by failing to make a specific appeal to its traditional supporters in the north, on the estates and so on. To do well in the next election, Labour needs to convince enough voters across all social classes that it is meeting their concerns about the things that matter most to them."

So Labour is losing the allegiance of those working class voters who brought it to power in 1997 - but a) large numbers of the working classes don't vote and b) the working class as a "political reality" doesn't exist as a force to be appeased in

THE ENGLISH DISEASE



the way that the middle and upper classes do. Working class needs and interests can, therefore, be safely ignored. For those of us who believe that the presence of Labour as a social-democratic cul de sac for working class anger has saved the skin of capital far too often, such working class disaffection ought to represent an opportunity. The point, though, of examining Sanders' premise, is to show the extent to which the working class has moved from centre stage, for the likes of Callaghan, to the margins of the concerns of New Labour today.

With this marginalisation has come a deterioration in quality of life. A report by Francis Green, professor of economics at Kent University, demonstrates that the average British household with two adults works seven hours a week more now than in the early 1980s. On average the British working week has remained stable at around 37 hours for the last two decades, but within that average are hidden disparities. In 1981, one person in six worked over 48 hours per week. By the end of the 1990s, this number rose to one in five. Green attributes this directly to a decline in trade union power and to new technology, to organisational changes by management to speed up work tempo, and the development of a "call centre culture", where, for instance, time spent on refreshment breaks is deducted from pay, and where the introduction of emails and mobile phones has both intensified use of working time and extended out of hours work.

At the end of the 1960s, Ralph Milliband observed a "culture of desubordination" forming within the working class. "Young workers did not remember the Depression or have any affinity with Cold War trade unionism. They had been raised in an acquisitive, affluent society in which, they were repeatedly assured, class barriers were being swept away. But the image of the "high mass consumption society" held up to them by television contrasted painfully with the reality of life on housing estates and the shop floor. To hope to live like the middle class, they had to act like militant workers: to go in for more militant collective bargaining the one sphere in which they had some real power." (L Panitch and C Leys-The End Of Socialism-verso 1997.) Here, then, was Callaghan's English Disease.

The election of the Wilson government in 1964 in many ways mirrors that of Blair some 33 years on. Wilson, like Blair, committed himself to embrace the "white heat of technology" and railed against those working class "forces of conservatism" who felt job security and higher pay were worth preserving against the "white heat" of ruling class prosperity. "We shall be frank in condemning all those who shirk from their duty as a nation" Wilson railed, targeting particularly the "professional formentors of unofficial strikes."

The baton of anti working class politics seized so eagerly by Wilson was picked up by both Heath and Callaghan in the governments which followed. As Jeremy

Seabrook and Trevor Blackwell put it, "The public admission by a Labour government that the only thing wrong with Britain was its irresponsible working class set the tone for the 1970s and indeed furnished them with their leitmotif." (*A World Still To Win*, Gollancz 1985). As significant, though was the response of working class voters. In the 1970s a substantial section of the working class vote deserted Labour, with manual workers' support falling from 69% in 1966 to 50% in 1979, after a second experience of Labour government. Eric Hobsbawn argues that workers "lost faith and hope in the mass party of the working people." (*The Forward March of Labour Halted* -Verso 1981). That "loss of faith and Hope" took two forms; a loss of belief in class identity as having any bearing on politics at all (manifest in the size of the working class vote for Thatcher in 1979) and a rise in extra parliamentary militancy which led to an upsurge in community based politics which directly challenged the values and priorities of the status quo (squatters groups, the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign, prisoners rights, through to the extra parliamentary orientation of a large section of the labour movement, shown in the violence of the clashes with the state and destruction of property which characterised the 1972 building workers strike, the mass picket of Saltley coke depot in February 1972 and the mass picket of Pentonville prison in support of the docks stewards jailed under

the Industrial Relations Act.)

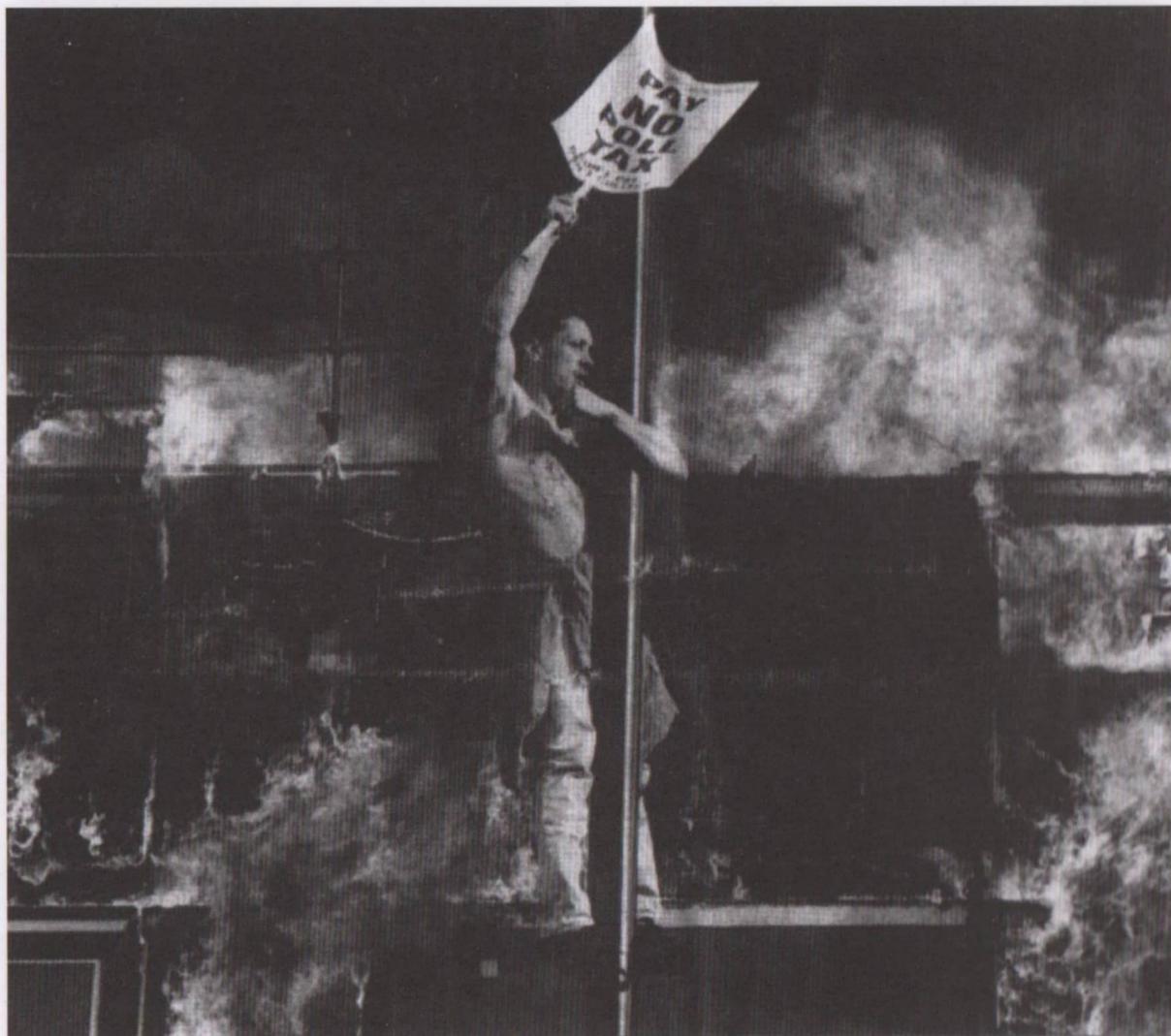
Further, "throughout the late 1960s it was common to see reports of branches voting to disaffiliate from the Party because of the actions of the Labour government" (Panitch and Leys Op Cit). The most significant examples took place among the railway, miners, textile and sheet metal workers unions. Increasing numbers of individuals also opted out of the political levy portion of their union dues.

The purpose of the neo-liberal policies pursued by those governments which followed on from Wilson and culminating in the Thatcher government's decisive clash with the miners in 1984-85, was precisely to re-discipline the working class, to ensure that the terrors of Saltley and Pentonville were never repeated. It is to the shame therefore of the left that their response for the most part to the extra parliamentary militancy which characterised the "English disease" of the late 60s and early 70s was to seek to direct it towards a campaign to transform the Labour Party.

The re-habitation of the working class has been facilitated in part through a increase in surveillance of the working class (and the awareness of surveillance as a conditioning effect in and of itself.) To access benefits, individuals are required to provide far more information than back in 1979. Visits by DSS staff as part of the benefit review process are now routine. In June 1999 the Home Office announced a three year £153 million CCTV programme - a significant increase on the expenditure of previous governments. Responses from the left ranged from concern about the "mis-use of CCTV data" to the "prejudices" of those employed in "target surveillance." But it is not the nature of, but the *fact* of surveillance, which embodies the repressive potential of CCTV. We change the way we live our lives because we are being watched; CCTV denies space to the possibility of collective, community-based relations. CCTV is symbolic violence at its most effective.

"Curing the English disease" required a re-tooling of the state to ensure the potential power of working class self-organisation could always be outgunned. A massive rise in police numbers in England and Wales was combined with increased militarisation of policing. The introduction of the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act significantly increased the coercive capacities of the police through the extension of powers of stop, search, entry, arrest and detention. The 1986 Public Order Act added to the armoury of police powers and created a battery of new offences.

This increase in policing of daily life



has continued under New Labour. At first glance, this continued "re-tooling" makes no sense; there is little in the way of organised working class resistance, and certainly nothing on the scale that would justify the extension of the Prevention of Terrorism provisions in the terms proposed. It is the lack of organised resistance, though, that is the point. The speculative turn taken by finance capital post 79, in response to the crisis of profitability engendered by working class resistance post 68, represented a gamble against future profitability. Capital may wish to present itself as "globalised" and "flexible" but the uncashed cheques of financial speculation mean it is more vulnerable and over stretched than it initially appears. The future acquiescence of the working class has to be ensured through its enclosure in a network of real and symbolic violence. The point of the PTA is to head off any future threat now and should therefore be considered alongside the legislation proposed to curb the freedom of movement of football supporters, close pubs where "drunken or rowdy" behaviour takes place etc. The Blairite vision of social control is one where the potential for the working class to recover its identity as political subject is choked by the presence of the state, by policing every aspect of life - from having a drink to considering strike action. The "English disease" the new proposals aim to combat, remains as it was in 1976. The point, for Jack Straw and Tony Blair, is to prevent the possibility of any such outbreak in the future.

The fears of capital, for Blair, Richard Branson and the like are timeless - for Thomas Hobbes, when he wrote *Leviathan* in 1651 it was "a dissolute condition of masterless men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coercive Power to tye their hands." The spectre of working class revolt has led capital to a permanent state of emergency such that the extension of the PTA is set in place now as a safeguard not against a real, contemporary threat, but a virtual threat - the future resistance of the working class.

The working class hasn't gone away. While the slumming middle classes might have succumbed to the temptations of the anti-Utopic pragmatism of the various post modernist thinkers, or the specious pseudo-Utopias of primitivism or Buddhism, the fastest growing section of the labour market, belongs to those who clean, shop, child mind or garden for the professional classes who lack the time or inclination to do such tasks themselves. Further, despite the constant assertion that the knowledge based economy has brought the concept of a career to an end, and "most people must expect more jobs in a lifetime or have to switch vocation", permanent employees represented 81.7% of the workforce in 1999. The proportion of people who have held the same job for more than 10 years remains around 30% of the workforce. The imposition of "flexibility across the board remains, propaganda to the contrary, a battle yet to be won. The majority of us are still employed in "routine occupations" -working class

“Community-based organisations could be formed along the same lines as the anti-poll tax unions, but around a wider set of self-defined interests (ie. against debt enforcement) and employ direct action methods such as were developed in the anti-poll tax struggle and against, say, Hillgrove.”

blue or white collar jobs. Moreover, both trade union membership and trade union militancy are on the rise. TUC figures show that unions carried out 983 ballots for industrial action in the year from June 1999, compared with 464 the previous year, 95% producing votes for strike action. 155 led to actual strike action and the remainder led to improved deals as a result of the ballot alone. The Communications Workers Union (CWU) conference at Bournemouth voted to refuse to increase funding to the Labour Party on the basis that such an increase “would effectively endorse the 75p a week rise in pensions and £1000 tuition fees. “ I think we’ve been here before.

For those of us who remain committed to a project of working class autonomy and self-realisation, the question remains; how to resurrect the “English disease.”* What follows are provisional suggestions as to the way forward, in the hope of raising a debate that leads to useful action.

The starting point has to be the recognition that it is not possible to build an anti-capitalist movement apart from the daily needs and interests of everyday working class life. A movement against capital that is not made up of those exploited by capital is both meaningless and useless. “The first step always remains the regaining of an irreducible workers’ partiality against the entire social system of capital. Nothing will take place without class hatred; neither the elaboration of theory, nor practical organisation... Any attempt to assume the general interest, every temptation to stop at the level of social science, will only serve to better inscribe the working class within the development of capital. “ (Mario Tronti, *Social Capital*, in Telos 17. 1973) The rebuilding of autonomous working class organisation ought, therefore, to cohere around identifiable areas of struggle, proposed as follows:

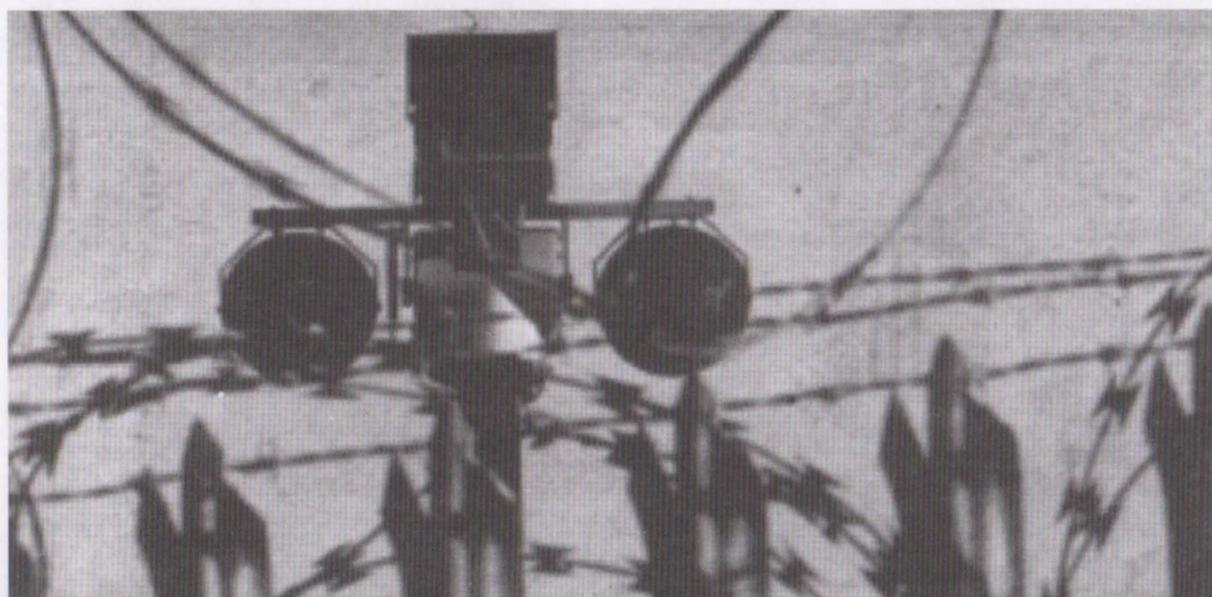
The defence of working class communities:

The distinction between class in-itself and for-itself is often abandoned by the left, in favour of a a sociological conception of class. The problem with this is that the working class exists under such circumstances not as a class defined through recognition of common interests against another class, but only as a class defined by that other class, for the purpose of exploitation. To organise around the defence of working class communities means, then, to organise within those communities for them to define themselves and their interests against the class which opposes them – ie. as council tenants against the state. It means identifying how our interests are threatened and how we might organise as a counterpower in our own defence. There must be commitment to physical action against an enemy as part of the process of regaining our awareness of our strength as a class. Community-based organisations could be

formed along the same lines as the anti-poll tax unions, but around a wider set of self-defined interests (ie. against debt enforcement) and employ direct action methods such as were developed in the anti-poll tax struggle and against, say, Hillgrove. These groups could challenge bailiff firms, solicitors firms which undertake possession proceedings, county courts which enforce possession proceedings etc - through direct action to prevent their operation in and against working class communities.

Building a Rank and File Movement:

While trade union numbers are rising, more and more of the most exploited members of our class are in those sections of industry least accessible to organisation by the labour movement. The leadership of the labour movement is also more supine now than ever; consigning itself to begging for increases in the minimum wage which do nothing more than raise the ceiling of poverty for those in work. Whilst we should not, and cannot ignore workplace organisation, we should put aside fantasies of building an alternative “perfect” labour movement.apart from that which already exists,as a way of avoiding the political battles necessary within the movement that exists in fact. The workplace is the primary site of exploitation for the majority of us under capital. Our organisation there is a question not of choice but necessity. A reforged rank and file movement should seek to link up workplaces with the wider working class community to organise the unorganised, to build links across workplaces and across industries, and rebuild basic workplace organisation. A reforged rank and file movement would be loyal to working class democracy and working class self interests, not to the particular sectional interests of the trade union bureaucracy. Such a movement’s purpose would be practical - not ideological, in that



CCTV Cameras Outside News International Headquarters – Site of the 1987 Wapping Dispute

“We change the way we live our lives because we are being watched; CCTV denies space to the possibility of collective, community-based relations.”

while it would, of necessity in the course of workplace struggles, contest and expose this bureaucracy, its purpose would be to defend working class living standards, health and safety. The basis for a new rank and file movement would be, simply, to fight against closures and cuts, for more pay and less workload, shorter hours and more jobs - and to seek to organise in support of struggles within the workplace and within the working class community.

Organising the Unemployed:

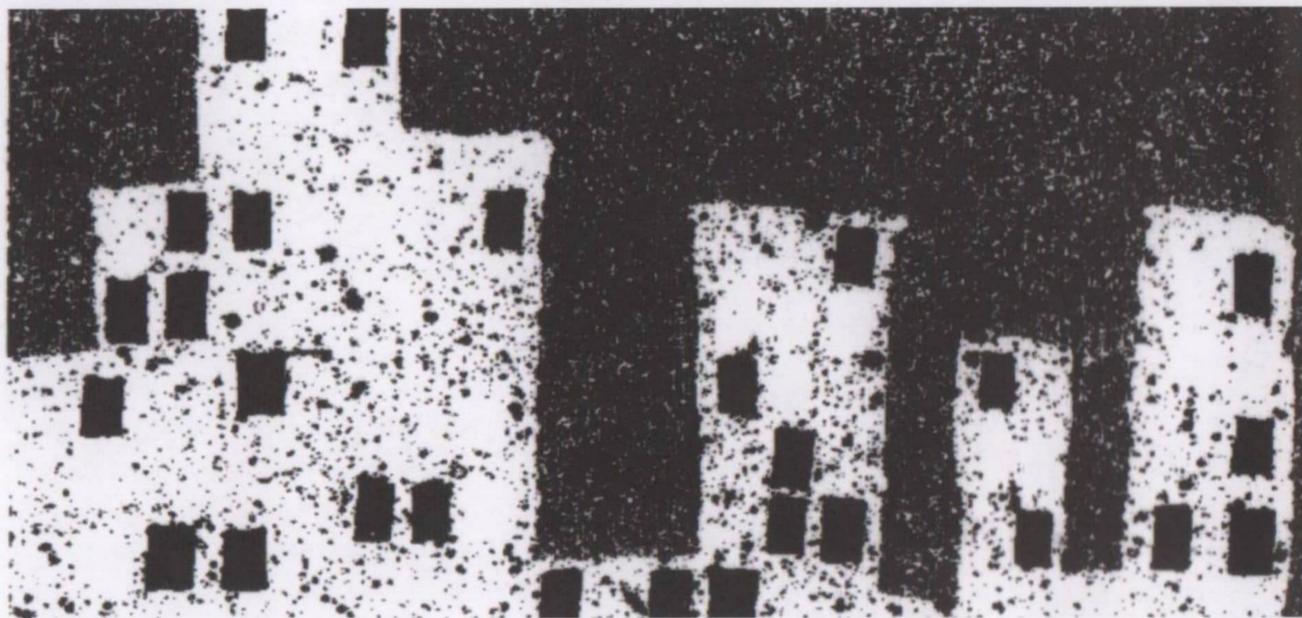
The Workfare schemes of New Labour are designed to conscript the unemployed into the battle to force down wages. The only response capable of meeting both the interests of the unemployed and those in work is organisation of the unemployed through Claimants Unions fighting for a social wage (equivalent to the average working wage), to defend working class living standards across the board, and subvert New Labour's attempts to employ the minimum wage as a drag anchor on wages in general.

Against Racism:

Racism remains a key ideological weapon for the ruling class. When the Tories came into office in 1979 they introduced new immigration controls to move towards the creation of a "guestworker" system. New Labour have deployed the race card with a voracity that appears almost desperate. Working class anti-racism though, has two obligations; while it must move to defend minority communities from racist attack, its primary purpose has to be ideological. Rather than falling prey to the politics of difference, the multiculturalism which sets white against black in pursuit not of cultural difference, but funds for each groups' sectional interests, a multicultural logic employed as easily by the BNP as by liberal anti-racists, we have to set loyalty to class against loyalty to race.

Against the post-modern tyranny that says there are no longer any bottom lines, the bottom line of all the above is that the key to resurrecting the "English disease" has to be, not abstract speculation and theoretical jousting, but the rebuilding of organisations committed to working class autonomy within the communities of the class. As Murray Bookchin (*Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left*) has it "It is the height of self-deception to suppose we can substitute personal "militancy" for organisation, or personal "insurrection" for a consistent revolutionary practice." ■

r. Although Callaghan refers to the 'English' Disease, he means the combativity of the working class throughout Britain. In this article although we use his quote / words we do not seek to differentiate between workers along national lines.



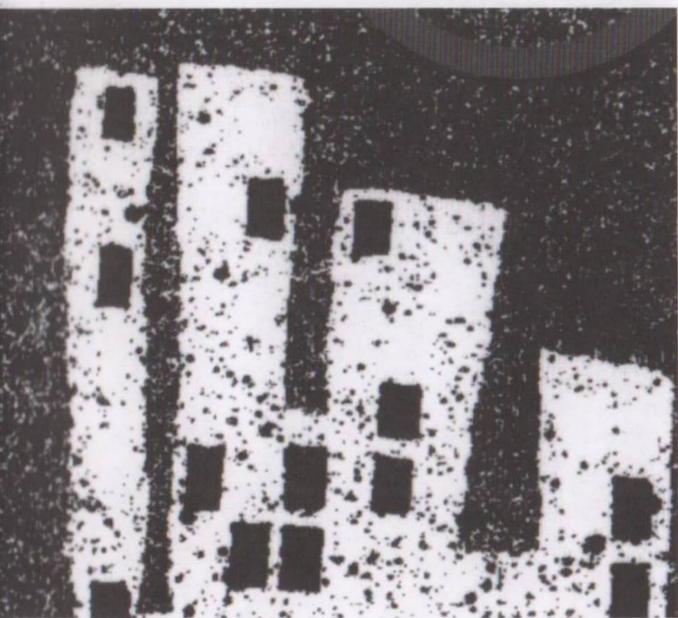
Forever in

The boom of the 1980s which allowed the Thatcher government to claim to have delivered on its promise of prosperity was financed in part through deregulation of the City and financial services industry and by an increase in the availability of personal credit. Deregulation allowed the City to take advantage of developments in information technology and facilitated Capital's plans to roam the world in search of new markets by allowing it to write cheques against future exploitation.

The expansion of personal credit served a different purpose. Until 1982, terms for consumer credit lending were controlled by the state. The lifting of these controls was followed by relaxation of controls over building societies to allow them to market a wider range of financial products and to increase the proportion of funds raised from sources other than investors. As a result, more people than ever before had access to credit and to an increased range of consumer goods. As Elaine Kempson, a researcher for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation describes it "Credit provided a means of smoothing the peaks and troughs of daily living expenses for those who lived on incomes that were both low and liable to fluctuations, depending on the availability of overtime or shift working. People also used credit to tide them over between jobs... Credit also provided a lifeline for people who were unable to pay their bills - especially if they were being threatened with court action or disconnection from their fuel or water supply." (Life on a Low Income Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1996)

For those without access to licensed or regulated sources of credit, loan sharks and unlicensed lenders filled the gap. Fuel and water utility privatisation and the introduction of first the poll tax and subsequently the council tax conspired to increase the debt burden on low-income households. As availability of social housing diminished with the drastic reduction in council building programmes, the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme and Rents to Mortgages, combined with the hyping of low cost mortgage options led to an increasing privatisation of low income housing. The onset of recession in the 1990s led to a massive increase in personal debt and a rapid rise in mortgage arrears and repossessions. Since 1990, approximately 300,000 households have lost their homes through repossession proceedings. Debt - whether mortgage or rent arrears, fuel debt, credit card debt or unpaid council tax - has become a constant destabilising factor in working class life. We hide from bailiffs, stuff unopened letters from creditors in drawers and hope our non-attendance on county court summonses will make the dread of repossession go away.

As the economists Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway note "The boom of the 1980s acted as a neutralising agent as it helped to co-opt parts of the working class to the project of prosperity... Poverty, unemployment and marginalisation of superfluous labour power coincided with prosperity. The boom vindicated the monetarist imposition of market equality. The decomposition of resistance to



Debt

austerity was based on poverty, a poverty which was the mirror image of a credit driven prosperity. In the face of poverty, prosperity broke the homogeneity of resistance against austerity ... The threat of unemployment was reinforced by the threat of a forcible collection of unpaid debt, eviction and thus homelessness and poverty. The disciplining power of debt and precarious work cannot be overestimated." (Bonefeld and Holloway ed. *Global Capital, National State and the Politics of Money*. Macmillan 1995) That "disciplining power of debt" overshadows all our attempts to forge a new politics of working class resistance. The fear it engenders disrupts solidarity and community. Working class life has become increasingly privatised, and the burden of debt is a deliberately engineered cause.

It follows, then, that if we want to rebuild working class solidarity, we have to start with where we are, and the problems we face, rather than attempt to build a politics based on an idealised notion of working class life - we have to reforge class identity and politicisation around the question that holds us back - the question of debt. In the struggle against the poll tax real steps were taken to build active community groups capable of tackling real issues thrown up by the non payment campaign as it came to root itself in daily life. Anti poll tax unions were able to provide legal advice in support of non-payment, both as leaflets and through immediate representation and support. Direct action was taken against enforcement procedures, through physical

disruption of court proceedings, to monitoring and physical harassment of bailiffs.

When the Tories caved in, the anti poll tax unions faded away. The practices of that period though should give us some insight into how we can re-establish a notion of active community resistance today.

Enforcement procedures for all forms of personal debt are broadly similar. A first step to resistance would be to distribute to all households in a given area, advice and information about rights with regard to enforcement. More importantly, the provision of such information ought to allow a point of contact for anyone willing to get involved in a campaign against working class debt in a particular area and the establishment of telephone trees etc. Local groups could be set up along similar lines to the original anti-poll tax unions, to co-ordinate information, hold advice surgeries etc. and to monitor the various enforcement strategies pursued. Anti-debt groups could seek to offer advice and help at county and magistrates courts and look to whether direct action could effectively prevent enforcement proceedings going ahead. Local groups could compile details of bailiffs firms active in the area, and monitor their movements with a view to preventing them recovering against any household within that area. Bailiffs offices and cars could be targeted for direct action. Bailiffs who live in working class communities could be doorstepped by "anti-bailiffs" and be made aware of the consequences of continued anti-working class activity and parasitism.

In the longer term, groups organised around anti-debt activities could co-ordinate political pressure and harassment such as to push for debt amnesties for particular households, estates etc. Those

who profit from our poverty - whether they be banks, pawnbrokers, fuel companies etc. need public outlets to operate effectively and they need therefore public "co-operation" to be able to carry out their work effectively. If that "co-operation" were withdrawn, life might cease to be so easy. The expansion of credit access, and hence, the increase in working class debt, has made insecurity a permanent pervasive threat to our confidence as a class. Whenever we think of going on strike, or quitting a job we can't stand any longer, the dread of debt, of repossession, disconnection, looms over us and we lower our heads once more. Collective resistance ought to start then with what holds us back. Jubilee 2000 has organised a campaign of the great and the good against Third World debt. All power to them. What we need in order to overcome the privatisation of life which is the legacy of the Thatcher/Major years and from which New Labour intend to profit, is a militant direct action campaign against those who leach and profit from us every day. More and more of us wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat over mortgage arrears, unpaid rent, fuel bills, court summonses etc. If our politics is to have any meaning it has to show how we can resist the miseries and fears of everyday life. A campaign against working class debt, based on the lessons and tactics of the anti poll tax movement, would provide a way of rebuilding practical solidarity within our communities by tackling head on that which usually acts as an atomising obstacle to the forging of such solidarity. This article is intended to at least raise the issue and to suggest that with imagination and information we can build such a campaign. In the box below is a list of a few of the many companies who profit from our debts. Give them hell. ■

**Thomas Eggar Church
Adams Solicitors
(Repossession Specialists)
75-76 Shoe Lane, EC1
Tel: 020 7242 0841
Fax: 020 7831 9609
Web: www.teca.co.uk**

**PR Baker Co (Bailiffs)
PO Box 391
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 0TZ
Tel: 01189 597444
Fax: 01189 598500**

**Credit Consultants
International (Thames
Water's Collection Agency)
St Andrews House
West Street
Woking
Surrey GU21 1EB
Tel: 01483 778800
Fax: 01483 778811**

**Moorcroft Debt
Recovery Ltd
PO Box 17
2 Spring Gardens
Stockport SK1 4AJ
Tel: 0161 480 4966
Fax: 0161 477 3864**

P|R|I|S|O|N|E|R|S

SATPAL RAM

Satpal Ram is 35 years old this year - this will be his 16th birthday in prison. Regular readers will be familiar with Satpal's case. In 1986 he was attacked in a restaurant in Birmingham by a gang of six racists thugs. During the attack Satpal was stabbed twice. He defended himself using a small knife and one of his attackers later died in hospital. The trial was a farce - and the all white jury convicted after 20 minutes of deliberation. He was convicted of murder and given a tariff of 10 years. His appeal in 1995 failed when the appeal judges simply revisited the flawed evidence of the original trial. Sixteen years later, he remains in prison as a category B prisoner, with no idea of when he will be released. His crime was to be black and to have the audacity to defend his life.

During Satpal's time in prison, he has spend an excessive amount of time in segregation, often following an attack by prison officers in his cell. Further, he has never been allowed to settle in a prison, form relationships and set up visiting routines as he has been constantly moved from one prison to another. So far he has been in 60 prisons.

Late last year, in Full Sutton Prison, Satpal was subjected to more harassment from the prison authorities. Having agreed to go into the segregation unit for adjudication on a previous incident, he began to gather up his toiletries and legal papers to take with him. He was told he could not take anything despite the fact that he needed his legal papers for a visit from his solicitor the following Monday. As the duty officer would not let him take his things, Satpal refused to leave the cell. On the Saturday afternoon the 'Mufti Squad', (POs in padded uniforms and carrying riot shields) stormed into Satpal's cell and dragged him down to segregation and put him into a strip cell. He was forcibly stripped in front of a female PO - his shirt was torn of his back and he was thrown to the ground whilst the rest of his clothes were dragged off. The violence was such that Satpal was left prostrate on the ground for 10 minutes. When Satpal's solicitor turned up for the legal visit, Satpal was brought into the interview room totally dishevelled, still wearing the torn shirt and

the deep lacerations caused by ratchet handcuffs clearly visible. The solicitor was then kept waiting for an hour and a half before Satpal's legal documents were produced, leaving only 30 minutes before the interview was ended.

These incidents took place against the background of an imminent parole board meeting on his case and widespread demonstrations in solidarity with Satpal marking the 14th anniversary of the attack.

Decisions on Satpal's parole and future appeal routes are still pending. However Paul Boateng has finally agreed to move him to a category C prison at the end of January, after a meeting with the Free Satpal Ram campaign. Satpal is presently in HMP Blakenhurst. He needs all the support he can get.

Write to Satpal at: HMP Blakenhurst, Hewell Lane, Redditch, Worcs, B97 6QS but check the website first to make sure he is still there. Or email letters to:

SatpalRam@ncadc.demon.co.uk. E-mails will be sent by post to Satpal the same day. This way you can ensure that he gets the letter if he has moved prison. For up to date news on his case visit the website at www.appleonline.net/satpal/

CHATTANOOGA 3

The trial of Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, Damon McGee and Mikail Musa Mohammed, for "disrupting" a council meeting at City Hall, Chattanooga, Tennessee, to protest the killing of two black men by City police, has been put back yet again. The trial, which could result in the defendants facing six months in jail, has been repeatedly put off by the state on the basis that the District Attorney was "not ready". Finally scheduled for September 12, 2000, the trial was put off again on the DA's application, and is now set down for 11 January 2001. Defence attorneys are filing motions to dismiss for failure to prosecute.

Please write to the district attorney demanding the charges against the Chattanooga 3 be dismissed. Write to: Bill Cox, Hamilton County District Attorney General, City-County Courts Bldg, 3rd Floor, 601 Market Street, Chattanooga, TN.37402.

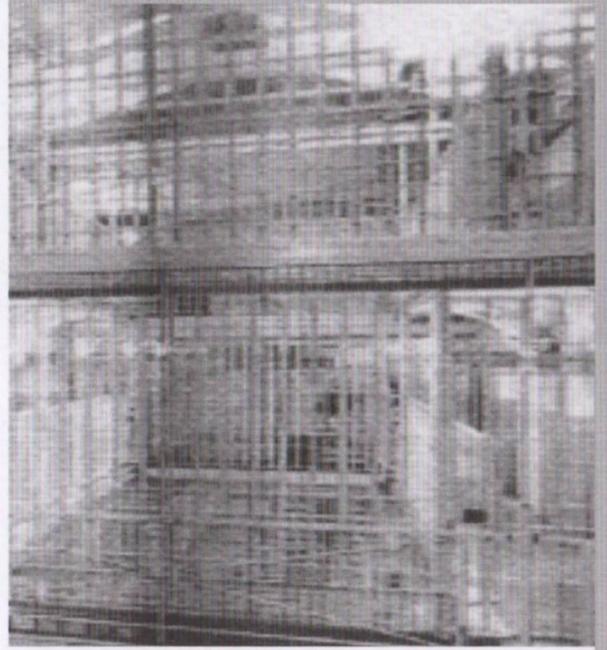
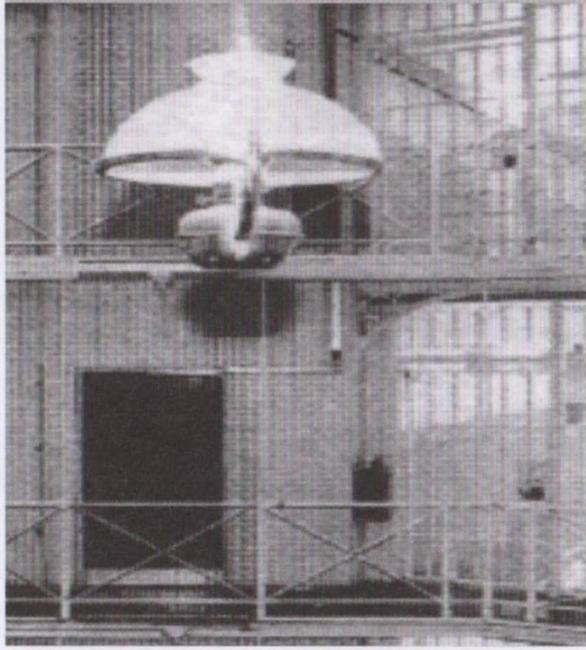
REPUBLICAN PRISONERS ON HUNGER STRIKE

Despite the release of most IRA and INLA prisoners as a result of the political process of the Good Friday agreement, political status to dissident Republicans in Maghaberry is still denied. Refused segregation, Republican prisoners are surrounded in the jail by about a hundred loyalist prisoners, who, as well as attacking the prisoners, use the non-segregated visits to gain intelligence on family and friends of prisoners, noting down car number plates etc. Carl Reilly, linked to the Real IRA, is at present on 23 hour a day lock up. Tommy Crossan, linked to Republican Sinn Fein, has been on 23 hour lock up since June 29th. The prisoners have issued 4 demands as part of their battle for political status: segregation; recognition as a group; the right to have their own spokespersons and a prison wing of their own.

Danny McAlister, a Republican prisoner in Portlaoise, commenced a hunger strike on 1 January 2001 in protest at the 26 county authorities' refusal to allow him compassionate parole to visit his brother, who has leukaemia, and his mother who has a respiratory illness. Twenty years on from the hunger strikes which led Bobby Sands and his comrades to sacrifice their lives in the fight for political status, Republicans are having to battle for the same demands again. All of us, whether anarchists, socialists, pro-or-anti-peace process Republicans, should support the prisoners demands against the British and Irish states in relation to conditions at Maghaberry and Portlaoise.

Contact with the prisoners at Portlaoise can be made via:

O/C Republican Prisoners, E3 Landing, Portlaoise Prison, Portlaoise, Co Laois and those at Maghaberry through either Republican Sinn Feinn 223 Parnell Street Dublin 1, or 32 County Sovereignty Movement PO Box 6328 Rutland Street Dublin 1.



A PLEA FOR HELP FROM DEATH ROW

On 11 August 81, in Gary Indiana, Zolo Azania was arrested without explanation near his home, pistol whipped and charged with bank robberies and a cop killing. On 25 May 82 he was convicted and sentenced to death. His appeal was rejected in October 84, but the death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court of Indiana in May 93 only to be reinstated in March 96.

Zolo's case has been hampered by appalling representation throughout. There was no pre-trial identification in his case and forensic tests showed he'd fired no gun. First time round he was shackled in the presence of the all-white jury, second time before a jury of 11 whites and 1 Mexican. A court bailiff spoke to the jurors during the trial and asked them to be ready to deliver individual "death penalty" verdicts.

Prosecutors relied on testimony they knew to be false. On 6 June 2000, the Indiana Supreme Court turned down Zolo's latest appeal. Zolo was a grassroots political activist before he was jailed, and continues to be active in jail. He urgently needs our help. As he says "The use of the death penalty to repress liberation movements is State sanctioned terrorism. Revolutionaries are criminalized as enemies, a threat to the opulent security of the ruling elite, and must be treated accordingly. U.S. capital punishment is an instrument of class warfare. The U.S. criminal system is anchored in procedural issues rather than guilt or innocence. The law court judges hold that mere factual innocence is no reason not to carry out a death sentence properly reached..."

Contact Zolo's Campaign

c/o CROSSROAD Support Network, 3420 W. 63rd Street, Chicago, Illinois 60629, USA
Voice/Fax: 773-737-8679, e-mail: crsn@aol.com, <http://www.afrikan.net/crossroad>

GEORGE BULSARA ANOTHER MISCARRIAGE OF 'JUSTICE'?

On 26th April Jill Dando was shot dead on the doorstep of her £400,000 Fulham home, in broad daylight as she was returning home from work at the BBC. Dando was killed by a single shot to the back of the head. No one heard the shot. Immediately Detective Chief Inspector Hamish Campbell of the Yard solemnly informed us that it was a professional job carried out by a hitman. All that was lacking was a suspect killer and their employer.

Dando was famously the pretty face of *Crimewatch*, the true-life crime programme. She thus straddled the all-important overlap between crime fighting and the media, which has almost replaced all other forms of documentary making. *Crimewatch* is important, not so much for catching criminals, but as a central plank in the (failing) police PR strategy and for fuelling the concerns of middle England over rising crime rates, played on so effectively by Jack Straw.

Eighteen months later, running out of excuses, the Met appeared to have resolved the matter in time honoured fashion. They arrested Barry George aka Barry Bulsara, a vulnerable man who had been housed locally by the council. Getting from professional hitman to sad neighbour was obviously going to take some explaining, but our fearless boys in blue had a new theory – George hero worshiped Freddie Mercury (whose real name was Bulsara), so he must have been star struck by Dando as well! Here then we had all the key ingredients for a sensational story – pretty journalist and TV presenter, linked to the law and order agenda and a stalker of the rich and famous – all that seems to be missing is any actual evidence. The cops and their allies, with unintentional irony, celebrated this major act of detection by

naming a crime fighting institute at University College London in memory of Dando!

George goes on trial in March. Fortunately for him we are not the only ones to smell a rat. Possibly, just possibly, this may be one wrong conviction which is prevented. If however George is convicted the bourgeoisie will sleep soundly once again, the media campaign to turn Dando into an icon of these troubled times will continue unabated and the rest of us will look over our shoulders with even more nervousness than usual

NIKOS MAZIOTIS

On 9 January 2000, the second day of his trial, Nikos Maziotis, jumped from the dock, dodged the police and managed to reach the bench and attack the judge before the riot police intervened and violently removed him.

The court wanted a summary proceeding, in the spirit of the anti-terrorist law which is to be passed in Greece following US pressure. On the first day of the trial two of Maziotis witnesses were forcibly removed from the court. Nikos is on trial for a bomb placed in support of the resistance against the TVX Gold multinational mining company. [See BF 219]. When Nikos started saying that he was not a criminal and that criminals are the multinationals who destroy the environment and the cops who murder immigrants, the judge refused to let him continue and declared that the pleading was over. On the second day of the trial Nikos stated that he would not be tried under these conditions. The judge, ordered the lawyers to continue the trial, and that's when he tried to attack the judge.

However, on the basis of these submissions, his fifteen year sentence was reduced to five years.

PHILADELPHIA - 450 ARRESTED AT REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

During 3 days of protests at the Republican convention last summer, over 450 people were arrested, and the level of police brutality (and police numbers - over 7,000) deployed reached a new peak. Philadelphia Chief of Police Timoney justified the criminalisation of the protests by denouncing all those involved as "out-of-towners" and "professional protesters."

Three protesters appear to have been picked at random from hundreds arrested on 1st August and charged with riot, conspiracy and "assault on an officer." They were held on a bail of \$450,000. The three, Camilo Viveiros, Darby Landy, and Eric Steinberg, face long jail terms simply because the state has decided to flex its muscle against the anti-capitalist movement and frighten off any wider public support. Viveiros in particular is in desperate need of legal funds.

Donations to: Sabate Collective, PO Box 230685, Boston MA 02123.

Letters of protest to Philadelphia Mayor John Street, City Hall Rm 215, Philadelphia PA 19107, fax 215-686-2180.

MAYDAY PRISONERS

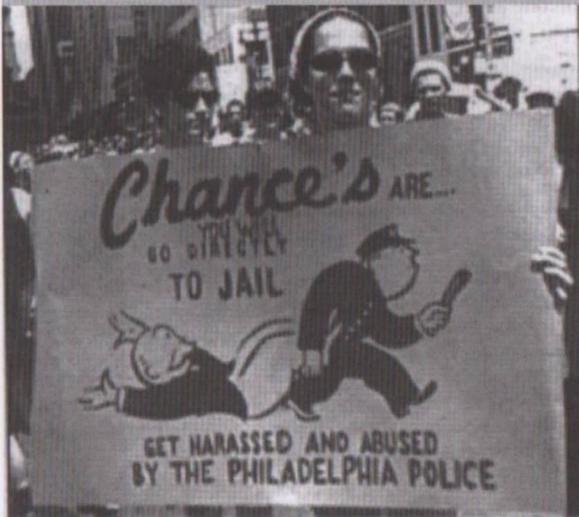
There are still a number of people inside following last years May Day events. Please send cards, letters of support etc. to:

Paul Revell FR5599
HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757
Heathfield Road' Wandsworth
London SW18 3HS (note - Paul is due to be released on "tagging" fairly soon)

Michael Collins FR6303
HMP Elmley, Eastchurch
Sheerness
Kent ME12 4AY

Remember all letters are read so do not write anything that may jeopardise someone's freedom. There are several people whose cases are still outstanding. Their trials will be held over the next couple of months.

*For further information contact:
Legal Defence & Monitoring Group
c/o BM Haven
London WC1N 3XX (enclose SAE)*



HUNGER STRIKES IN TURKEY

816 left wing political prisoners are on hunger strike in Turkish jails; 137 have started "death-fasting". Turkish Justice Minister Hikmet Sami Türk is rejecting the prisoners' demands and threatening "medical intervention", however the Turkish Doctors Union have declared that to intervene with a hunger striking prisoner is unethical. In 1996, twelve leftist prisoners died from death-fasting.

The hunger strike comes after weeks of confrontation in Turkish prisons. Security forces have stormed prison dormitories to break up protests against the use of isolation cells and to tighten their control within the prisons. Over 40 prisoners are reported dead - most died in fires that the security forces set alight or allowed to take hold. The Turkish authorities are justifying their actions, saying that the prisons were controlled by left wing groups such as Dev Sol, despite the obvious fact that they are prisons, controlled by guards and soldiers.

Up till now the prisoners have been in dormitories rather than cells. Whilst these are embarrassing for the government when confronted by human rights monitoring groups they do provide the opportunity for solidarity in the face of brutality from prison guards. Moving prisoners to cells will break this and make prisoners more vulnerable to torture and isolation in lockdowns.

The protests have sparked solidarity action inside and outside Turkey. Three anarchist prisoners at the Korydallos prison in Athens, Greece - Nikos Maziotis, Avraam Lesperoglou and Simeon Seisidis - are on hunger strike expressing their solidarity with the prisoners' struggle and hunger strike in Turkey. Two other anarchist comrades - who on 14 December took part in a demonstration supporting prisoners in Turkey and demanding the immediate closedown of isolation prisons - were found "guilty of attacking a fascist" (who had been provoking the protesters with fascist

salutes) and sentenced to 20 months by an Athens court on 18 December.

In London, Turkish militants held a demonstration on the London Eye (the millennium wheel), hanging banners and singing in two of the pods before being arrested.

Demonstrations in solidarity with the prisoners have been repeatedly attacked by the Turkish police, with at least one demonstrator killed in Ankara, and 68 arrested. The state-backed Grey Wolves fascist group has also been involved in attacks on demonstrators, including an attack on a Socialist Party centre which was full of demonstrators (who were later arrested). In Istanbul, clashes between anti fascists and Grey Wolves left 4 anti fascists injured. To top it all, the Turkish cops have staged armed demonstrations calling for amnesties for those implicated in the prison massacres!

ANARCHIST PRISONERS IN TURKEY

Anarchist prisoners in the Turkish prison system are doubly oppressed. As well as brutality from the prison officers, it is clear that anarchist prisoners are being victimised by the Leninist and Stalinist prisoners who have a very large degree of control in the political wings.

The 5th May Group (London anarchists in exile) state that the new (non dormitory) system "has been put on the agenda by the Turkish government for pacification of individuals in prison by way of atomisation, elimination of the possibility of forming social relationships... and the possibility of fighting back through rioting... For this reason we participate in struggle against F-type cells" but "without collaboration with the Leninist-Stalinist Left. They are doing the same things to our comrades just because they are anarchist."

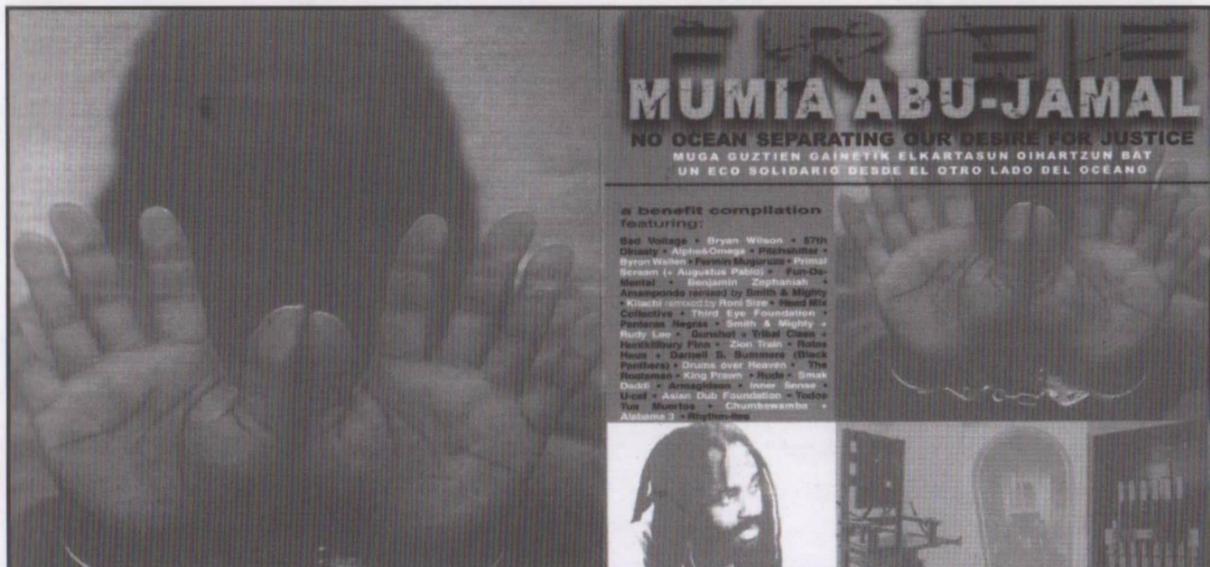
The 5th May Group are publicising the case of one Kurdish anarchist prisoner who has been isolated for his political ideas, warned not to speak to anyone about anarchism, denied access to political wings and had access to medical treatment restricted.

This prisoner, whose name is being withheld for safety reasons, has kidney disease and needs urgent funds to pay for treatment.

Donations should be sent to 5th May Group, P.O.Box 2474, London (cheques made payable to Emine Ozkaya). For further information email:

cemilebahar@hotmail.com

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal



No Ocean Separating Our Desire For Justice

A Benefit CD

A lot of benefit albums are either tracks by worthy activist bands that you might not listen to or offcuts from big bands trying to get some street credibility. This album is far better. What's more, many of the tracks are directly or indirectly relevant to Mumia's case and the politics around it.

There are 31 tracks from all sorts of bands. If you don't like digi dub you may

find that over represented, but there is everything from Pitchshifter's hardcore metal to U-cef's North African drum and bass and Bryan Wilson's Gil Scott Heron-like jazz funk poetry. There are some big names - Primal Scream's Star, with Augustus Pablo, makes a lot of sense on this album. Other bands have mixed in Mumia's statements or messages of support for him.

Many of the bands are well known from Mumia benefits or other political campaigns but others are barely known here. The project received a lot of help from Fermin Muguruza, formerly of militant Basque punkers Negu Gorriak. Many of the contributors are from Europe, South America and Africa. A lot of the songs are not in English, and none the worse for it. Even when Fermin raps in Basque alongside Chicano rappers Aztlan Underground you get an idea what he is talking about.

If you don't know about Mumia the double cd comes with a booklet, in English, Spanish and Basque, about his case, the background to Move and prison struggles in the US and the disgraceful history of the judicial murder of political activists. Most importantly it includes a call for emergency action in support of Mumia.

The variety on this album reflects the breadth of support the Mumia campaign has without any dilution of the politics which he stands for. The quality of the music is a great tribute to someone who has inspired and continues to inspire many activists around the world. Available for £12 from AK distribution, and more or less from some shops. W-AA 2CD EO162 on Gora Herriak [www.esan-ozenki.com].

The facts of Mark Barnsley's case ought to be familiar to Black Flag readers by now. On 8 June 1994, Mark Barnsley, a 33 year old writer from Sheffield went for a walk with his baby daughter and a friend, Jane Leathborough. They stopped for a drink at the Pomona, a pub near his home. While waiting for Mark to collect their drinks from the bar, Jane was verbally abused by a group of drunken students. The abuse continued when Mark and Jane got up to leave, and when Mark went over to question the students about their behaviour he was hit over the head with a bottle or heavy glass and beaten up by several of the group. In the early stages of the attack one of the students produced a knife which Mark managed to get hold of. Mark was chased and brought to the ground three times, over a distance of 150 yards, sustaining broken ribs, a broken nose and several head wounds. In the ferocity of their attack, some of the students received minor accidental knife wounds. All independent witness evidence confirmed that it was Mark who was being attacked, but it was Mark who was arrested, and subsequently charged with five counts of GBH.

At his trial, the student witnesses admitted assaulting Mark, one conceding that he went "apeshit" and had been "affected" by the amount of alcohol he'd

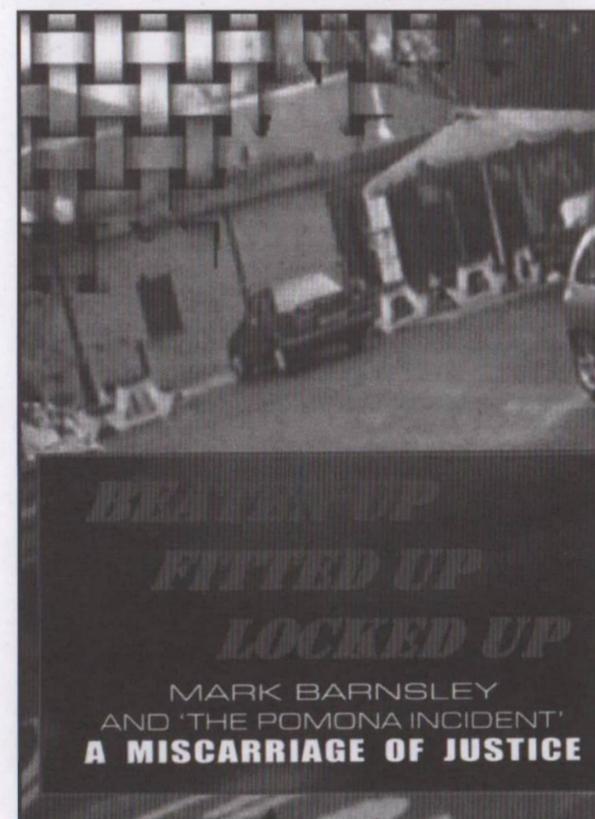
BEATEN UP, FITTED UP, LOCKED UP

Pamphlet produced by the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign £2

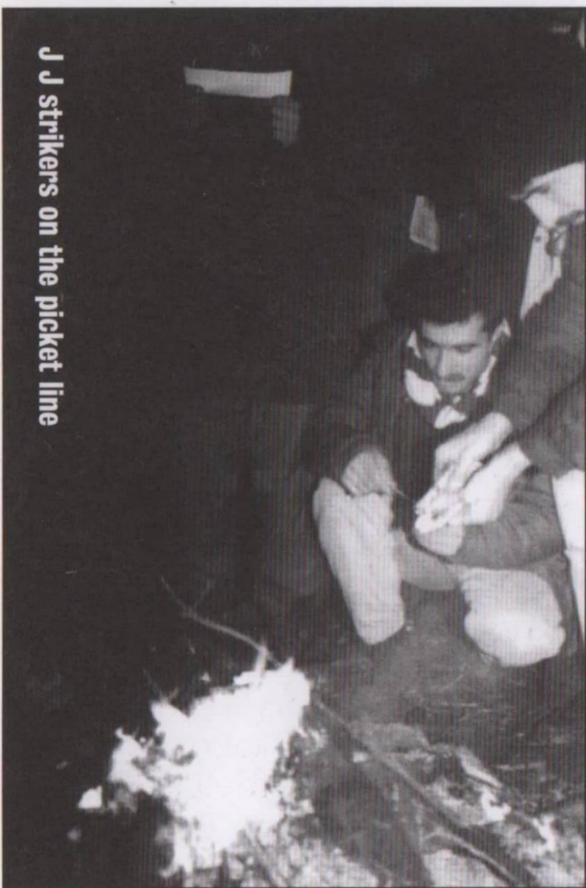
drunk. The students lied about having also smoked cannabis, but the trial judge refused to admit forensic evidence to the contrary because it would affect the jury's "opinion of the students credibility". (Which amounts to saying that no effective defence was to be allowed on the basis that the students' credibility was worth more than that of a working class local man.) Despite the best efforts of Judge Baker; the local CPS who withheld evidence as to criminal convictions of the student witnesses, copies of interview notes, a copy of the Search Register and the original hand written statements and the Star newspaper which acted as a mouth piece for South Yorkshire police throughout - the jury convicted on only two of the original five charges, indicating they did not accept Mark had instigated the violence.

Judge Baker allowed the CPS to substitute lesser charges when the trial was almost over, for which Mark was then convicted. Following adjournment for reports, which recommended probation, Baker handed down a sentence of 12 years

imprisonment! The pamphlet notes "The police fit up working class people everyday, but in Mark's case his political history gave Mark Barnsley cont. them an extra incentive to really pull out all the stops. Mark had a high Special



J J strikers on the picket line



Branch profile for many years and suffered police harassment, violence and attempts to fit him up in the past. The "Pomona incident" provided them with an opportunity to rid themselves of someone who had previously been a long standing thorn in their sides".

Mark is a working class political activist fitted up by the police and the CPS. The new Prevention of Terrorism Act will make the criminalisation of political activists that much easier. The measures introduced in the last decade, from the curtailment of the right to silence and the end of the duty of full disclosure of prosecution evidence as direct responses to the exposure of miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four cases, to the proposals for restrictions re mode of trial under New Labour, are designed to make the fitting up of working class people a matter of routine again. In joining the fight for justice for Mark Barnsley therefore we are also beginning to defend ourselves.

The pamphlet focuses on the contrast between Mark's sentence and that of three middle class students Groom, Vodden and Willey, who while drunk, attacked Eric Cobourne, a frail 56 year old ex-docker who died 2 weeks after the attack. The students were convicted of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, criminal damage and violent disorder. Willey was sentenced to 18 months, Vodden and Groom to 2 years. One law for them, as we've always known. JUSTICE FOR MARK BARNSELY CAMPAIGN - 145-9 CARDIGAN ROAD, LEEDS LS6 1LJ

A spate of recent pamphlets on workplace organising, within, outside and inspite of the official unions have come out over the past year. Not fashionable politics, maybe, but at least as anti-capitalist as a trip to Seattle. Here we review:

UP AGAINST THE ODDS

-The J.J. Fast Food Workers Strike by John MacArthur

THE COURIERS ARE REVOLTING

-The despatch Industry Workers Union 1989-92 by Des Patchrider

On 31 October 1995, 45 workers at J.J. Fast Food Distribution in Tottenham refused to work, contesting the sacking of their shop steward.

They were immediately locked out and attacked by Turkish nationalist friends of their boss Mustafa Kamil, and then again by the paramilitary Tactical Support Group of the Metropolitan Police. These attacks left 4 of the mainly Turkish and Kurdish strikers hospitalised, more were injured.

This pamphlet describes how the strikers, with help from the J.J. Fast Food Locked Out Workers Support Group (a variety of groups and individual supporters), built an effective boycott of J.J.'s products by kebab/burger shops, local schools etc. and how they maintained a continuous picket and lent their support to other struggles of the day.

'Up against the odds' clearly demonstrates how the T&GWU officials obstructed workers and connived with the boss to isolate the Kurdish workers but secure the return of some Turks and Cypriots. MacArthur describes how the strikers maintained their demands for full reinstatement and better conditions. All the while the union officials urged any possible resolution, encouraging workers down the blind alley of an industrial tribunal - taking their fate out of their own hands and placing it in that of employment law designed specifically to protect employers from their own stupidity.

By the new year the strikers were winning. J.J. was on the brink of going bust, but at this point a Tribunal date was set, and the union officials put every effort into discouraging direct negotiation and encouraging workers to prepare for the tribunal. The timing was crucial - by now the scab workforce was near to becoming a viable replacement to the strikers and so with every day their hand weakened. Until this point the dispute had been characterised primarily by direct and collective action, boycotts, pickets, fund raising, propaganda and independent meetings. This shift of emphasis from

collective action to legal action weakened everything the struggle had achieved.

By the time the tribunal sat, the organised force which had compelled the boss to negotiate had been dissipated. Those workers who got their jobs back returned to new repressive contracts which enshrined the very abuses documented at the tribunal. MacArthur describes all this, along with the participation, for good and ill, of the various English, Turkish, & Kurdish left sects. Though this struggle ultimately failed in its aims, the pamphlet describes many of the achievements along the way and highlights the pitfalls in which it became entangled.

It is a particular strength that the pamphlet provides many examples of the strikers declarations in their own words, even when it is doubtful that the author shares their opinion.

Here we see workers with particular affiliations and ideologies struggling by contradictory means against specific circumstances in all the confusion and untidiness of the real world, and this alone makes a bloody good change. One purpose of such pamphlets is to allow those who didn't participate themselves to benefit from the learning experience of real struggles, and this is only achieved when the events and actors are portrayed as close as can be to how they really were, not prettified and smoothed at the edges to fit some abstract theory severed from reality.

That said 'Up against the odds' doesn't neglect to examine the strike and consider its implications, to criticise its failings and particularly those of the various left interventions. As such it will not prove happy reading for many. The authoritarian and bureaucratic tendencies of participants, supporters and commentators are not let off the hook. It also explicitly challenges anarchists to examine their own contribution and to make of themselves a force capable of victory in such struggles.

Published by RPM.

Around ten years ago a group of motorbike couriers in London, mostly from what was then the Direct Action Movement (DAM) set up a union for despatch riders. This is the saddles sores and all account of the Despatch Industry Workers Union.

The DIWU was the most successful attempt by anyone in the UK to organise in the despatch industry. As the DIWU started, the TGWU gave thousands of pounds to a cycling trotskyst to set up a spoiling organisation amongst cyclists. It got nowhere despite the funding. Des pulls no punches when describing the T&G's antics. T&G were supposedly organising at TNT - who readers may remember were an integral part of the Suns scab distribution during the Wapping dispute in the mid eighties. DIWU riders didn't cross picket lines, and organised solidarity action for strikers such as the ambulance workers. But the DIWU was wider than an anarcho-syndicalist organisation for like-minded couriers. It was simple workplace organisation. There were disputes, some more successful than others, and various bosses and their lackeys will be happy to know these are recorded in full here. DIWU also had a bulletin and published other information about organising and day to day issues such as tax.

DIWU had an impact - there were members in many firms and at least one workplace branch but, as the pamphlet describes, the organisation failed in the end due to apathy and a lack of

involvement at more than a joining level. The analysis of the failure is quite bitter. Anarcho types who did not join the union are described as "traitors". If this seems a bit strong then look around at all the anarcho poseurs who carp about how reactionary the unions are and how workers should control their own organisations or how we should have workers councils. Then count the number of workers councils these radicals have set up themselves.

DIWU was heavily supported by the DAM, especially from east and south London. But it was no front. Our workplace branch had at least one SWP member, one Workers Power person and one ex RCG member as well as anarchos, squatters and people who were not overtly political. But none of us were as active in the union, or had as hard a time, as riders from some of the other companies. By the end many of the core of DIWU activists were not DAM members or anarchists.

Organising in the despatch industry meant confronting bosses who had the power to fire riders, most of them "self employed", at will. There was the problem of organising amongst a workforce with a fast turnover and workers who saw "organising" as unnatural. Amongst some there was a so-called "individualist" streak - keeping your head down and keeping in with the controllers, competing with other riders, as well as a good few cyclists who weren't doing the job as much as making a

fashion statement. Ultimately there was never enough of a breakthrough into workplace branches and too often the prospect of a long meeting in a pub was no match for a nice cash job to take you home.

The despatch industry in some ways was a fertile ground for anarcho-syndicalist methods - anti bureaucratic, non-hierarchical, with a casual attitude to the law of the land. Perhaps this is why it is, to my mind, one of the best examples, in recent years, of workers organising without official unions other than in one off disputes. A structure that gave riders support and a base to work from was created but ultimately there were not enough people willing to be involved in keeping it going. Some may say it was not worth it then but it showed what can be done and what can go wrong. That is what makes this pamphlet so useful. Anyone who sees a need for workplace organisation, anyone who wants to organise without official unions, anyone who thinks you can only do it with the official unions, anyone who is in the despatch industry should get hold of this pamphlet.

Published by The Kate Sharpley Library.

THE IWW ARE CURRENTLY TRYING TO ORGANISE AMONGST COURIERS. CONTACT IWW AT : PO Box 4414, POOLE, DORSET, BH15 3YL



Anarchism, Marxism and the future of the left - Murray Bookchin

This collection of essays contains much that anyone familiar with Bookchin's writing would expect. There are forceful and tightly argued criticisms of a wide range of eco-mystics, post-modern blatherers and primitivists who mistakenly believe themselves to be anarchists. There is also an interesting examination of the current wider social tendency towards mysticism and personal escapism instead of rational and collective action, which he argues results from the collapse of the

revolutionary workers movement.

He argues that the only cure is to rebuild a revolutionary movement based on real needs, and to rigorously challenge the prevailing stupidity of capitalism in thought and action.

Bookchin explored these themes in 'Re-enchanting Humanity...' and 'Social and Lifestyle Anarchism'. But new ground is broken in the interviews with the author, where he takes a broader view of his own ideas and takes the opportunity to clear

up some misconceptions and correct what have often been confusing expressions in his work. For example, he makes clear that his concept of hierarchy in no way denies the central importance of class. If only he had always expressed this as clearly.

These interviews help place his other works into the context of contemporary arguments. Given Bookchin's fondness for rhetorical exaggeration, this is quite handy for those of us who weren't there at the time. Mistaken readings of Bookchin have encouraged weird and wacky ideas in many, as for example the Green Anarchist group, in their earlier only-just-beginning-to-lose-it days.

This book also recounts Bookchin's experiences as a young Stalinist worker in 30's New York, as a libertarian in the 60s new left. His account of the enthusiasm, strengths and failings of these movements sheds new light on both the past and the present.

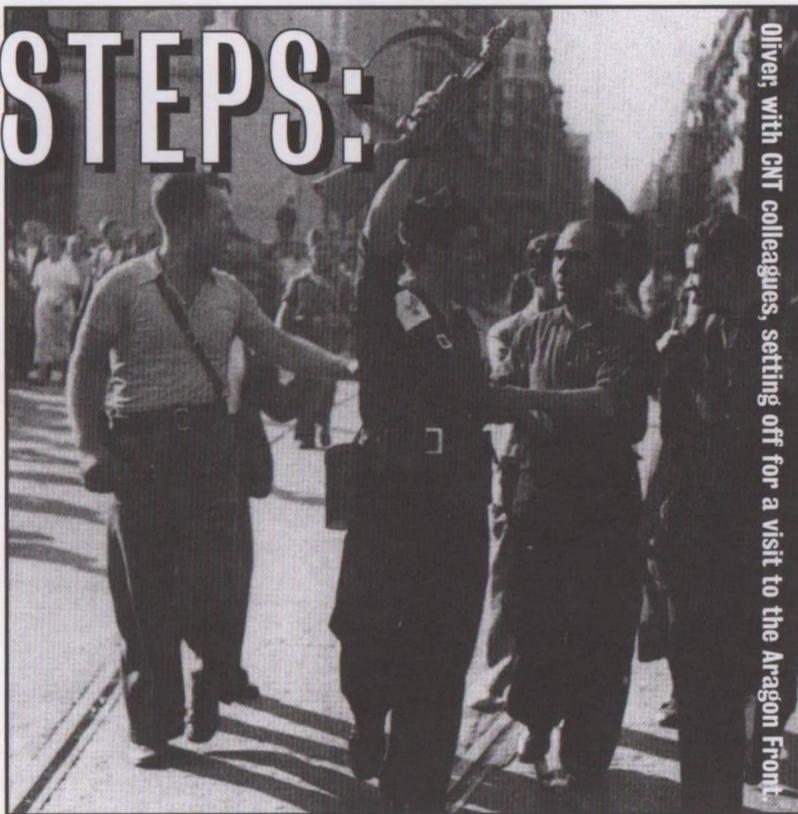
The collection ends with an assessment of the current state of the revolutionary movement, the problems it faces and the

WRONG STEPS:

Errors in the Spanish Revolution

Juan Garcia Oliver

Kate Sharpley Library



Oliver, with CNT colleagues, setting off for a visit to the Aragon Front

Juan Garcia Oliver, a leading militant of the Spanish CNT during the 1930s, is most famous for becoming the first ever (and hopefully the last) anarchist Minister of Justice during the Civil War and Revolution of 1936. The bulk of this pamphlet is a section from his 1978 autobiography on the events of July 1936, particularly the decision to reject anarchism and collaborate with other anti-fascist groupings, parties and unions in the name of "anti-fascist unity."

Whilst he is remembered as an "anarchist" Minister, Garcia Oliver's position in July of 1936 had been entirely different. He had been one of the militants to argue in favour of overthrowing the

government in Catalonia in the crucial meetings of July 20-21. Unfortunately, the majority decided to reject the implementation of the resolutions passed in May that year at the Sarragosa conference of the CNT. The idea that implementing libertarian communism would be an "anarchist dictatorship" sprang from Federica Montseny, a middle-class intellectual, while Diego de Santillan argued that the revolution would be isolated and perhaps subject to international intervention.

If Montseny's argument was valid, then it logically meant that anarchism itself would be impossible, for there will always be sectors of society - bosses, politicians,

etc. - who will oppose social re-organisation on a libertarian basis. As Malatesta once argued, some people "seem almost to believe that after having brought down government and private property we would allow both to be quietly built up again, because of a respect for the freedom of those who might feel the need to be rulers and property owners. A truly curious way of interpreting our ideas!" It is doubtful he would have predicted that certain anarchists would be included in such company!

It appears that fear of isolation was the decisive factor. The CNT was a majority organisation in Catalonia and certain other parts of Spain, but a minority in Castille and Asturias. Also, the fear of fascism played an important role in the decision - implementing libertarian communism may have resulted in the CNT fighting both the Republican state and the fascists, so ensuring victory for Franco. However, while isolation may explain the decision, it does not justify it. After all, as Bakunin and Kropotkin continually stressed, revolutions break out in specific areas and then spread outward - isolation is a feature of revolution which can only be overcome by action, providing a practical example which others can follow.

One thing is true, by abandoning the politics and previous practice of the CNT and anarchism in those days, the CNT only weakened the revolution, ensured the victory of fascism and helped discredit libertarian socialism.

This pamphlet gives a taste of the events of that time and the thoughts going through people's minds. For this it is recommended. It has its flaws, of course. One thing that strikes the reader is the pure arrogance of Oliver, who appears to have been always right and acknowledged as such by everyone he argues with. He is particularly critical of Durruti, claiming that he always did and said what the masses wanted. He was obviously a bit annoyed that while Durruti is remembered as a revolutionary hero, he is remembered as one of the anarchists who joined the government.

The pamphlet is worth reading to get a feel of what actually happened during those days and some of the arguments presented in favour of ignoring 70 years of anarchist theory and practice. In addition, it provides useful summaries of the relationship between the FAI and CNT as well as the anarchists' role in the revolution of October 1934.

For more on the history of CNT during the 1930s and a detailed refutation of Marxist attacks on Spanish Anarchism, visit: www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931lappend32.html

BOOKCHIN REVIEW CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

tasks it must set itself. This continues for the most part in a well reasoned, coherent and practical manner, making the sudden appearance of libertarian municipalism all the more irritating. After criticising the foolish attempts of social democracy to transform capitalist society by electing 'socialist' representatives and functionaries to state institutions, Bookchin advocates that a popular movement should seek to gain official control of local government, its funding and control of services. That revolutionary organisation must deal with organising and extending the scope of community self-control is obvious, but this will always be opposed by the state. Any attempt to integrate into the niceties of official status as opposed to self-government as a fait-accomplis all too easily leads to the farce of municipal socialism.

Bookchin rightly stresses the need for a revolutionary movement to go beyond the workplace and the potential narrowness of job-particularism, which he sees as the flaw of anarcho syndicalism. But he suggests no credible alternatives.

The organisation of workers in their local communities is as important in syndicalist organisation as industrial unions. Anarcho-syndicalism's task is to deal with all the problems of working in factories etc., i.e. to abolish them in favour of work more consistent with being alive, not to simply 'take possession'. In this it doesn't differ from any other strand of revolutionary anarchism and these same problems remain to be dealt with by Municipal Libertarians (not to mention the pitfalls of integration and creeping reformism).

All in all it's worth pestering your library to get a copy, because although Bookchin's solutions are fatally flawed, he spells out many of the questions we have yet to answer with a rare clarity, commitment and concern for the truth. This is the best in a long time from a man who, though he must be opposed in detail, can have neither his integrity nor his intelligence questioned.

Casas Viejas was an Andalusian village whose CNT branch rose in revolt in January 1933. Two Civil Guards were killed during the uprising and Assault Guards eventually retook the village. They held a siege at the house of a family implicated in the uprising, during which 1 assault guard and 8 villagers died (2 were gunned down trying to escape the house after Assault Guards had set it on fire). Most of those involved in the uprising had to flee the village including, eventually, those who were in the chumbas (cactii) firing on the troops conducting the siege. Once the siege was over the troops rounded up 12 campesinos who had not taken part in the uprising (and so remained in the village) and murdered them to teach the rest "a lesson". These events eventually became known and helped bring down the liberal-left government.

Jerome Mintz is an American anthropologist who spent years with the campesinos of Casas Viejas, getting to know them, gathering their testimony and experiences. His book is a masterpiece of oral history, allowing those involved in the uprising to express themselves in their own words - exposing the works of the "experts" - historians, middle class academics, and so on - as total nonsense.

Demonstrators will be familiar with the antics of the local press who arrived in Casas Viejas after the uprising was put down. One journalist sought out the deputy mayor, a civil guard, the priest, the mailman, the telegraph and telephone personnel. In other words, everyone bar those involved. Like today's media, he ignored those involved and went to established authority figures for information - "his attitude and moral

posture made him inaccessible... He had made himself impervious to the truth."

Mintz demolishes (amongst others) the works of the Marxist Eric Hobsbawm and his "primitive rebel" view of anarchism. Hobsbawm's "account is based primarily on a preconceived evolutionary model of political development rather than on data gathered in field research ... In short, he explains how anarcho-syndicalists were presumed to act rather than what actually took place, and the uprising at Casas Viejas was used to prove an already established point of view. Unfortunately, his revolutionary model misled him on virtually every point." Rather than being a "utopian, millenarian, apocalyptic" uprising, Casas Viejas rose in response to a call for a nationwide revolutionary strike. The rural uprisings were organised by the CNT defence committees to keep the civil guard from shifting reinforcements and were determined by strategic rather than economic considerations (as Hobsbawm asserted).

Mintz's book is a classic, giving a wonderful insight into the lives and experiences of CNT and FAI members in rural Andalusia. It is clear from his book that the success of the CNT and anarchism in general was that it met the needs of those who joined it. He paints a vivid picture of campesino life, where even the act of not marrying your partner was an extremely political act (the anarchist press reported when comrades formed "free unions" to show their solidarity and to encourage others). Rather than being "primitive rebels" or irrational extremists, the anarchists Mintz presents come across as sensible, intelligent human beings who believe in a better life and were willing to apply their ideas in their everyday life.

THE CNT IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION Volume One

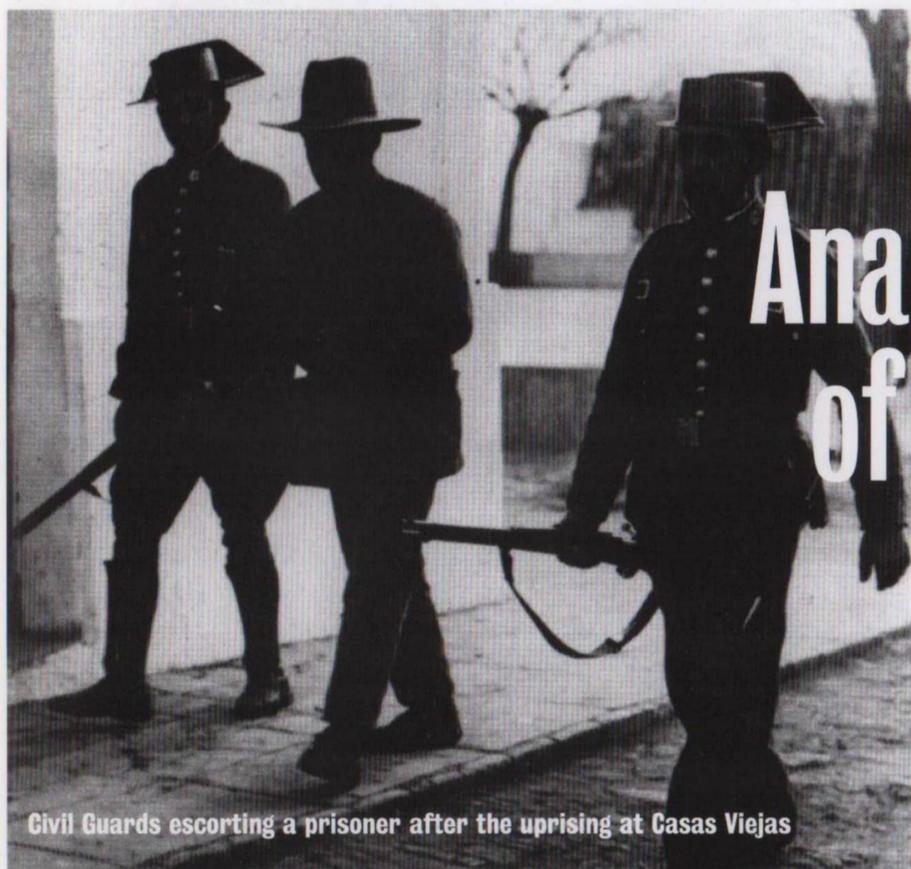
by Jose Peirats, The Meltzer Press, £27

The Meltzer Press should be congratulated on producing this classic history of the CNT. It is a wonderful book and a vital resource on the history and politics of the CNT. While the cost may put people off, it is well worth the money. It is a goldmine of useful information and facts, presenting an honest and comprehensive account of the CNT from its founding in 1911 to the end of 1937.

You will find in full the CNT's concept of libertarian communism as agreed at its congress in May 1936. It is useful to finally have the resolution available in English - so we are no longer dependent on historians selectively quoting from it.

Also of interest is the discussion of the CNT's role in the October revolt of 1934. Peirats' account easily destroys Trotskyist claims that anarchists abstained from the revolt in Catalonia (in fact the first shots of the revolt were directed by the Catalan rebels towards CNT members trying to take part in the revolt in an organised fashion by opening their union locals). He also presents extensive information on the collectivisations, the Council of Aragon and the July 1936 decision to postpone creating libertarian communism and to collaborate with the state in the name of "anti-fascist unity." He also discusses the crisis of the CNT's functional self-management and the assumption of more and more power by the higher committees. Being a leading opponent of the policy of collaboration during the revolution, his work is critical, but fair. He does not fail to point out the errors and mistakes made, the violations of libertarian principles and their disastrous effects along with the positive experiences of the revolution and those areas where the CNT did apply its politics rather than postpone doing so.

Peirats quotes extensively from original sources which is a great strength as it gives the reader a vivid picture of what people thought and did at the time, rather than being 'interpreted' by historians. This is an essential resource for anyone interested in the CNT and the Spanish revolution's history. *The Meltzer Press are trying to get Peirats' work published as a proper book (currently available in spiral bound format). Send donations to: The Meltzer Press, PO Box 35, Hastings, Sussex TN34 2UX.*



Civil Guards escorting a prisoner after the uprising at Casas Viejas

The Anarchists of Casas Viejas

Jerome R. Mintz

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**Industrial Workers
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