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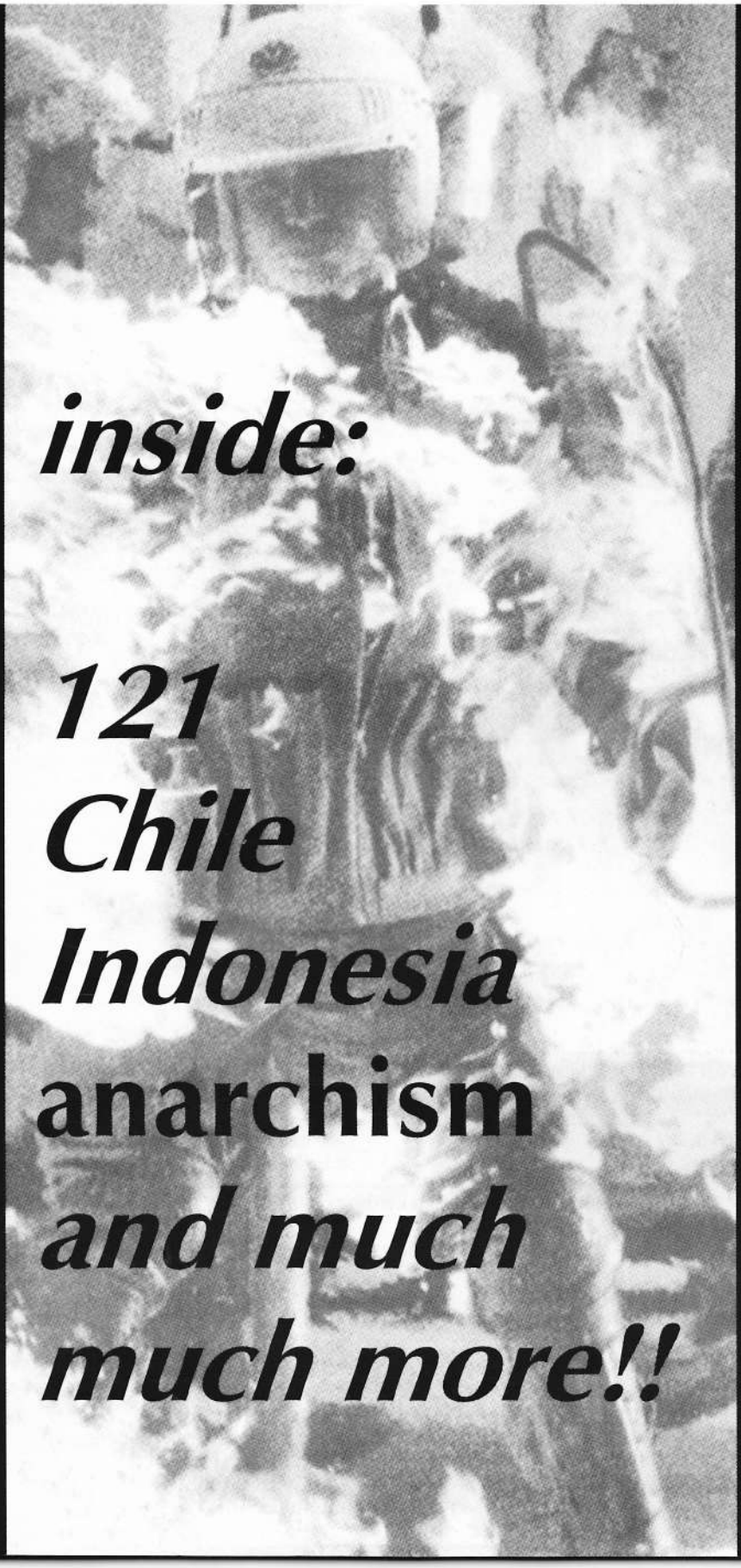
BLACK FLAG

FOR ANARCHIST RESISTANCE



inside:

121
Chile
Indonesia
anarchism
and much
much more!!

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editorial

As the twentieth century draws to a close, things are looking shaky for the New World Order and its supporters. The economic crisis in South East Asia indicates a deeper problem with the rule of finance capital, as well as the hypocrisy of capitalism's rent-a-quote army of "experts." Before the crisis, investors rushed to the region and all proclaimed its commitment to "free market" principles. After it began, the "statism" which made these regimes the (economic) envy of the world was suddenly discovered by the right and their old positions placed in the Memory Hole.

With the collapse of SE Asia, the supporters of capitalism have redoubled their claims that America is the model for the rest of the world, ignoring the fact that its current economic upturn is the weakest since the Second World War. In Britain, the lowering of interest rates indicates that the Thatcherite/Blairite economic order is less secure than they used to claim. Across the world, the effects of the rule of finance capital are being felt more strongly. Reality is over-coming the hype but it seems unlikely that the world's ruling elites will do anything about it until it's too late. The religion of the market still has its hold over many, removing possible solutions from the hands of capital in case they strengthen working class power (still capital's bogey, even after all these years).

What has this to do with anarchism? Simply, if we are facing an economic crisis, anarchists may just as well make use of it and redouble their activities in presenting real, practical alternatives to both state and capitalism. The publishing of Daniel Guerin's No Gods, No Masters by AK presents the constructive nature of anarchist ideas and theory, showing us all that we have a rich and powerful body of ideas and experiences to build upon. They just need to be put into practice. This issue of Black Flag contains many articles on people doing just that. Hopefully they will inspire more resistance and activity elsewhere. Guerin's book also indicates the importance of theory and reading the works of past theorists of anarchism, which also is the theme of Gary Hayter's article on Kropotkin's classic The Conquest of Bread. We need to combine theory and practice, ensuring they inform each other.

This may seem like we are stating the obvious to fill up space, but it is not. We have been facing difficult times for the past 20 years and it's easy to forget that anarchism is a practical and powerful set of ideas. Given that the left is either stuck in the quagmire of Bolshevism or embracing the discredited neo-liberalism of our rulers, there is a golden opportunity for anarchist ideas. We may fail, but if we do nothing we definitely will!

contents

Home News pages 3-7
What peace process?, New Deal, 121, "terrorism", anti-fascism
Pinochet and Chile pages 8 & 9
Jakarta Diary page 10
International News pages 13-17
Monsanto in India, Iraq, Africa, Argentina, A Visit to the Paris CNT
Features pages 18-24
Libertarian Ideas in Colombia, Conquest of Bread, the Revolutionary Supermarket
Prison News pages 25-27
Reviews pages 28-31
Letters pages 32-34

Irish peace process -

death squads as usual?

The connection between the British state, official Unionism and the Loyalist paramilitaries has been consistently documented, not least the involvement of British agent Brian Nelson in procuring weapons for Loyalist death squads in their targeting of the nationalist community.

Those who think that, following the April "peace agreement", such tactics have been abandoned in favour of cosy chats at No.10, will need to maintain a wilful ignorance to uphold their views.

Nobel Peace Prize winner David Trimble has refused to sit with Sinn Fein members in an executive of ministers or facilitate the creation of cross-border bodies, until the IRA begins to decommission its arms. The April Agreement explicitly separates the political and decommissioning processes, and Trimble's argument is therefore not supported by the terms of the Agreement. The decommissioning process is not intended to conclude until May 2000. Decommissioning, as far as Trimble and Blair are concerned, will take place at the point of a gun. In early December the Loyalist Volunteer Force staged a token handover of weapons, thus increasing the political pressure on the IRA to join the handover. The LVF have been implicated in the worst sectarian killings. Their links to the RUC and British intelligence are well documented. It is fair then to assume their sudden commitment to peace may be British intelligence-inspired. It can surely be no coincidence that their new-found embrace of the Agreement came alongside the emergence of a "new" force, the Red Hand Defenders, who, on 31st October, killed a north Belfast catholic, Brian Service. The same evening they attacked a Catholic-owned bar, and later abducted and threatened a nationalist youth. Throughout November, Loyalist gangs have been involved in attacks on homes in nationalist areas. Homes in New Lodge and Glengoland were attacked. North Belfast Assembly member Gerry Kelly noted "It is clear there is a degree of organisation involved which suggests loyalist paramilitaries are behind these sectarian attacks. Since the murder of Brian Service there has been a steady rise in the number of sectarian attacks. They are not isolated and appear to be planned."

On 13th December loyalists poured petrol through the door of a young woman in the Graymount are of North Belfast, in an attack reminiscent of that which killed the three Quinn children in Ballymoney earlier in the year. In recent months 12 catholic families have been intimidated into moving out of the area following orchestrated loyalist attacks.

RUC harassment of the nationalist community has been stepped up. In November a 60 strong RUC squad smashed into the Ballymurphy home of the McManus family, screaming "Lie down, or you're dead." Republican activists have been consistently harrased in Lurgan. Four nationalists who attended the Patten Commission (on reorganising the RUC) public hearings in North Belfast have been told by the RUC they are now on a Loyalist death list. At an inquest into the killing of Terry Enwright and Edmond Treanor by loyalists in January, an RUC inspector was forced to admit that the gun used in the killing belonged to a member of the RUC. He claimed the weapon was stolen.

Under New Labour's peace process, the old rules still apply. The nationalist community are told the game has been changed again. Regardless of what the Agreement says, you can now only play if you disarm. The Red Hand Defenders are then rolled out to hint at worse to come if the nationalists don't "lie down". Meanwhile the LVF's strings are pulled to reclaim the moral high ground as an attempt to delegitimise the Republican movement's retention of its arms in its own defence.

Sinn Fein's Jim Gibney has said that there must be no glass ceiling for nationalists in a new Ireland. On the evidence, the new looks little different from the old, and there's for sure, no glass ceiling, just an RUC boot.

gandalf

The last two of the Gandalf Defendants, Paul Rogers, now called Paul Free Speech, and Robin Webb won their case when the Can't Prosecute Service finally gave up on Hampshire cops attempts to stitch up anarchists and eco-activists for reporting direct action.

roger sylvester

On Jan 11th, 8 coppers went to Roger Sylvester's house after being told that a naked man was "acting very strangely". He was detained under the Mental Health Act and taken to St.Ann's hospital. He was seen by a doctor who left the room - during the doctor's absence "Mr.Sylvester went all limp and it was obvious that he had collapsed." He was then taken to Middlesex Hospital where he died 7 days later.

Sylvester, aged 30, was the 42nd black person to die at the hands of the police in the last decade. The Met are responsible for 27 of those deaths. This will be an opportunity to see if they have learned anything from the Stephen Lawrence case. We won't be holding our breath.

red south west

Red South West (RSW) is a new magazine for the region. It follows in the tradition of the Somerset Clarion in being open to all socialist persuasions, including, alas, the Labour Party. A friend of mine, now in his seventies, recalls his father cycling round the villages of Somerset, trying to sell the original Clarion and frequently being stoned for his efforts to bring enlightenment to the agricultural masses. Hopefully no-one will receive similar treatment on behalf of RSW.

Issue 1 was a dozen A4 pages and contained articles on EMU, Liverpool Dockers, workfare etc. A review of a biography of Victor Serge contained the tiresome assertion that the Kronstadters were "...sound but desperate and confused" and "vulnerable to being hijacked by counter revolutionaries." Serge's support for the Leninist counter-revolution in his book Year One is embarrassing for anyone reading it objectively. In his Memoirs of a Revolutionary he goes some way to redress the balance by recognising that the reason for the situation in 1921was that, "emergent totalitarianism had already gone half-way to crushing us."

Perhaps a little more relevant to our times was an article on the successful RMT action for a 37-hour week, agreed in 1996 but subsequently linked to "restructuring", in which 80% voted for strike action. The management sought a High Court injunction but this was thrown out with costs of ú40,000. So the company, Wales and West, decided to victimise Alex Gordon, Bristol RMT branch secretary, for speaking to the press while on the picket line. The bosses then faced an ultimatum from the workers and conceded defeat.

Issue 2 has 16 pages with a wider range of articles. For footie fans there's the "Alternative World Cup", organised by Bristol Sunday football club "The Easton Cowboys". This brought together 11-a-side teams from Germany, Poland, Norway, Ireland, France, Belgium and South Africa. It was held at the village of Thorncombe in Dorset. The event arose from, "a fusion of the thrash/punk music scene, anti-fascism, the love of the great game and a healthy attitude to drinking (i.e. as much as possible)." The tournament was won by the team from South Africa, the Deipkloof Eleven Experience.

Centrepiece of issue 2 (Autumn) is an interview, by Dave Chapple, with Graham Short of Plymouth whose name will be familiar to many readers of Black Flag as Graham has been around the anarchist movement since the early seventies. From school rebel to union rebel and on to anarchism and the setting up of the Plymouth Community Workshops as a centre for "an explosion" of alternative movements: womens' lib, drugs, schooldkids, antiracism, gays, anti-psychiatry, anarchists, strike support, claimants, greens, squats and Trots. And you thought nothing ever happened in the West country.

There is much more in this interview than this brief review of RSW can give; on Graham's involvement with the Fine Tubes Strike, the subtle changes to Graham's ideas, the Left in Plymouth, the 1972 Building Workers' Strike and anti-fascist work taking us up to the 1980's. The interview ends with the intriguing, "but Graham Short and Plymouth after 1980 is another tale". We look forward to part two.

There are pieces on the Liverpool Dockers' establishment of their own labour supply agency, GM crops, the BNP and paedophiles in Somerset, successful local wildcat actions by postal workers, CLR James, Gandalf, the economic situation and the Communist Manifesto. Red South West is a good read and may well succeed in bringing together yet more readers and activists from across the region in "opposing all that Hague, Ashdown and Blair stand for." The successful conference on 14th-15th November '98 at Bridgwater was a start. You can obtain copies of Red South West from 1 Blake Place Bridgwater TA6 5AU or Exeter Left Group c/o The Flying Picket PO Box 185 Exeter EX4 4EW, subs @ £5 per four issues.

angry youth

fighting work experience

The Angry Youth Group in Edinburgh are fighting against what they call "boredom, skivvying and harassment" in the form of work experience that kids today are expected to do. They state "the only training you will receive is how to be an obedient worker, how to do as your told... and if you're unfortunate you can work for them for the next 45 years of your life!"

Angry Youth are keen to link up with others doing similar things, they can be contacted at:

Angry Youth, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5LA

e-mail: angry@punk.org.uk

"workfare international"

e-mail List

There is a new e-mail discussion list for those around the world resisting the spread of what is loosely known as "workfare".

Workfare, for the purposes of this forum, refers to the practice of attaching coercive and punitive conditions to welfare, income support, charitable, etc. benefits, and is not simply work-for welfare. It includes all practices which make the receipt of income support conditional on undertaking some service, activity, training, medical or psychiatric treatment or the like.

Send your request to: WORKFARE-owner@onelist.com and you will be subscribed manually.

wrafton union

update

In BF 215 we reported on an IWW organising effort in Devon. Unfortunately, things have't turned out as well as hoped. The victimisation of the organiser and boss intimidation has stalled the drive. An attempt by the boss to bring in the reformist T&G under a deal was, however, rejected by the workers.

What the IWW's success does show, however, is that winning workers to a revolutionary union isn't as impossible as the left would have us believe, even though the task itself is huge.

Grrr-eedy Bastards!

In October 98 claimants groups launched a campaign against Reed Employment UK Ltd, which is administering the New Deal in the Hackney and City area of London. The campaign aims to draw attention to this systematic exploitation of the unemployed for corporate profit and to deter other greedy private agencies from sticking their noses in.

Between 30 and 50 of Reed's High Street offices were flyposted. The posters were aimed at:

- Reed managers and staff, who seem to need reminding that their actions in processing claimants for crap low paid jobs are not without consequences.
- Other agencies, who can look forward to similar treatment.
- Ordinary members of the public, unaware of what Reed are up to.

In April last year, the Daily Telegraph reported that Reed had made £14m profits the previous year. The Reed Family has a fortune of £50m, but they don't feel they're rich enough yet. They tried to pay the poor sods who administer the New Deal £3000 less a year than the Employment Service. They are also scamming two fees for each claimant placed - one from the government and one from the employer.

Haringey Solidarity Group and Hackney Claimants are calling this nation-wide campaign against Reed. Claimants and workers in Brighton are also about to launch a campaign there and dole workers in the CPSA are trying to fight against the privatisation represented by Reed. The campaign needs the support of groups throughout the country in distributing leaflets outside Reed's offices, to try and hit Reed where it hurts - in the pocket - and get them to pull out of the New Deal.
Contact: HSG, PO Box 2474, London N8
Reed's Head Office, 6th Floor, Tolworth Tower, Tolworth, Surbiton; Tel 0181-399 5221, fax 0181-390 8860

Media and fascists hound asylum seekers

Since our last report on the situation of asylum seekers in Dover, the attacks on them in that town have become more physical. Fortunately, the hate-mongers have not had things all their own way.

Firstly, the fascist National Front planned a third march in the town on 5th December. They had been getting steadily smaller, and this one didn't happen at all. The coach company which brings them from the West Midlands came under pressure from anti-fascists and cancelled the booking. A well-attended anti-fascist march was left alone by the police and leafleted the town centre.

Instead, 29 NF turned up in Dartford, to try to capitalise on hostility to Romanian asylum seekers who had arrived in the town earlier. The men had all been detained, but the women and children were held in a disused ward at Joyce Green hospital. After hounding from the local press and racists, they were moved, first to a supposed "luxury" hotel in Gravesend (first time I've ever heard Gravesend and luxury in the same sentence), then to Sittingbourne and then on to a secret location, all the while being chased by the NF and the press. Unsurprisingly, some of them decided this was exactly the sort of treatment they were trying to escape and opted to return to Romania.

National papers like The Sun and the Mail have stirred the pot of bigotry, but most prominent among the local hate-rags has been the Dover Express. Its incitement to racial hatred has got so bad the editor, Nick Hudson, has been interviewed by the police. He has also complained that he was set up by the BBC after he was the only racist on a Radio 4 programme and that there "were a lot of black people in the audience."

Undeterred, the NF tried again to march in Dover in January. About 30 nazis came down from London, and despite there being only three days notice, local anti-fascists mobilised a bigger contingent and hampered the NF march all the way. Unfortunately, three of them were nicked (one on an outstanding charge) as Kent police stopped doing anything else in the rest of the county for the day.

Send messages of support to Dover Residents Against Racism, c/o Refugee Link, PO Box 417 Folkestone, Kent CT19 4GT

Lockdown- re-writing the

Pleasing as it was to see Mandelson and Robinson go from the government, their resignations have deflected attention from a much more significant aspect of Blair's agenda. Many on the Labour left believe Mandelson's resignation will allow the re-emergence of "Old Labour" and that there is a contest going on at Cabinet level between advocates of Keynesian social democracy and proponents of "19th century liberalism". None of us who believe in working class self organisation can afford to buy into such notions. What Blair and the government actually represent was made explicit in December 98 with the presentation to Parliament of a Home Office consultation paper, "Legislation Against Terrorism". The paper sets out the government's proposals for replacing the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1996 (the EPA). It is, in effect, a review of the existing - temporary - anti-terrorist legislation, in light of the purported peace dividend of the Belfast Agreement. We are told by the likes of Hugo Young and Will Hutton that Blair's government could be one of the great reforming governments, a champion of civil liberties and constitutional reform.

It is significant that the "great reformers'" response to the cessation of violence in the Six Counties is "to repeal the PTA and the EPA and to replace them both with one piece of permanent legislation which will apply throughout the United Kingdom and to all forms of terrorism, including new forms of terrorism which may apply in the future." We are told the government's agenda includes the "normalisation" of politics in Northern Ireland, and the transformation of the "security environment". But what the consultation paper proposes is the "normalisation" of the previous temporary provisions, and the extension of the "security environment" of the Six Counties to the entire UK.

The paper argues that there is no peace dividend to be had, that "regardless of the threat of terrorism related to Northern Ireland ... the time has come to put the legislation onto a permanent footing." Far from embracing the notion that political normalisation should lead to an extension of civil liberties, the breathing space in the Six Counties has led the government to conclude that "there now exists a clear and present terrorist threat to the UK from a number of fronts" and that "new counter-terrorist legislation should be permanent." Clearly, for all the report's inflammatory references to "religious cults" and Islamic extremists, there is no real terrorist threat operating in Britain such as would fall into the existing definition of "terrorism" as set out in the PTA. Moreover, the report's references to "800 incidents recorded by the Animal Rights National Index .. in 1997 .. and total damage at .. £1.8 million" is hardly evidence of economic chaos such as resulted from the Bishopsgate and Canary Wharf bombings.

The paper proposes, therefore, a new definition of "terrorism", as "the use of serious violence against persons or property, or the threat to use such violence, to intimidate or coerce a government, the public or any section of the public, for political, religious or ideological ends." With the redefinition comes an extension of police powers operative under the PTA and EPA to the mainland, as follows:-

1. Making it an offence to raise or launder funds for "terrorist purposes", and extending the powers of the police and courts to seize cash and property.

2. The power for the police to arrest without warrant anyone whom they "reasonably" suspect of being involved in the preparation, commission or instigation of such acts of terrorism.

3. Powers of the police, Army and "others" to stop and search pedestrians, vehicles and their occupants should be made applicable throughout the UK, as also the powers of entry, search and seizure".

4. The extension of current proscription powers - the power to ban political organisations and make membership of them a criminal offence, to all the UK.

The redefinition of "terrorism" is, we are told, designed to encompass "extreme elements of the animal rights movement". The redefinition includes both use and threat of violence, against both persons and property and is drafted deliberately to allow the proscription and repression of such actions as anti-road protests and militant anti-fascism. It is clear that the proposals, if enacted, could have been used against exiled ANC activists in the UK in the 60s and 70s and against groups like AFA today. Moreover, on the basis that the threat of violence is sufficient it is arguable that any group which supports, publicises or condones effective, direct action (anti-bailiff, anti-JSA etc) is likely to fall under the ambit of the proposed extension of powers. Blair's agenda is clear; the formation of a "coalition", whereby "centre" politicians such as Ashdown and left Tories are drawn into Cabinet in support of a political status quo based on a low-wage, "flexible" economy with coercive measures such as workfare/JSA to ensure the unemployed act as an effective anchor on pay; a legal opposition in the form of the Labour left in Parliament and the dissenting "good" like the Observer and Guardian, and the criminalisation of any and all effective extra-parliamentary opposition. Let no one allow themselves the illusion that this is scare mongering. The consultation paper is explicit in its intent to transplant the "security environment" of the Six Counties to the UK as a whole.

> "there now exists a clear and present terrorist threat to the UK from a number of fronts ....new counter-terrorist legislation should be permanent."

We should remember that the "security environment" in the Six Counties did not prevent the nationalist community fighting the British state to a standstill or securing its place at the negotiating table. For those of us who care to look, there are

PTA

lessons aplenty in how working class republicans coped with and overcame the repressive mechanisms of the British state. As the state develops new means of repression, we have to develop new techniques of resistance as our response.

In his book "The Longest War", the US journalist Kevin Kelley noted "What is clear .. is that the war in Northern Ireland had caused the oldest of Parliamentary democracies to discard many of its supposedly sacrosanct protections against abuses of the state and police authority. Laws such as the PTA, institutions such as the Diplock Courts and the Gulag-like detention centre at Castlereagh all showed plainly that statutory safeguards and legal precedents count for little when the state, even one that has produced "the mother of parliaments" feels itself seriously challenged." If Blair has his way, the mother of parliaments will seek to discard our civil liberties yet again.

Self Defence *is no offence*

"In this .. incident I was receiving racist comments from a white girl... soon after 2 white males approached me and said "We don't like what you said to that girl, you smelly black Bastard." They were both drunk and attacked me. Self- defence was the next option." - Taj Ahmed

Taj Ahmed and Roberto Brollini were recently given a 12 month sentence after being found guilty of "actual bodily harm" on 1997 BNP General Election candidate Andrew Wearden in Lancashire. The judge refused to listen to evidence about the fascist activities of the supposed "victims" but instead talked of the need to set an example. The Rossendale police involved claimed that they didn't know that Wearden was a fascist - despite the fact that they raided him some months before, after which no action was taken despite finding racist materials. Write to:

Taj Ahmed BT9173 & Roberto Brollini CC5829, HMP Kirkham, Freckleton Rd, Kirkham, Preston, PR4 2RN or to "Justice for Taj & Roberto" c/o Cllr Jean Hayler, Rossendale Town Hall, Lord St, Rawtenstall, Lancs, BB4 7LZ

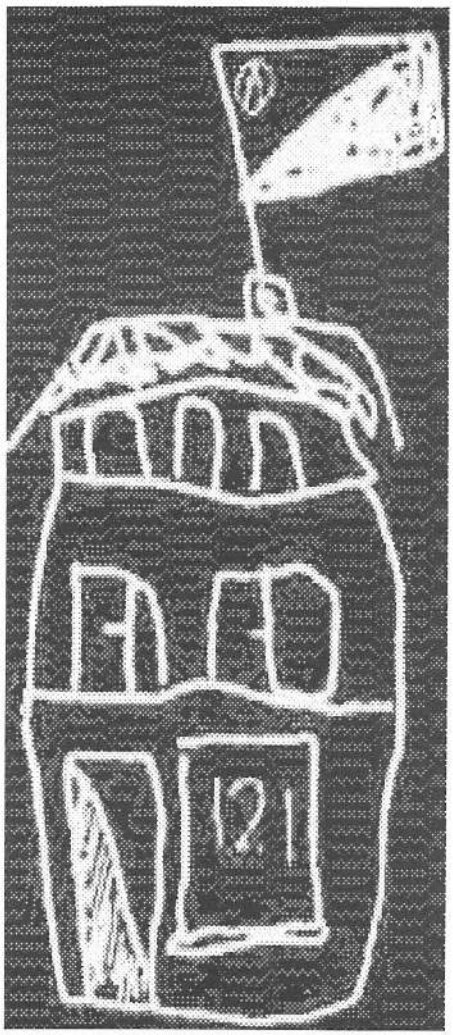
121 eviction

As we go to press, the 18 year old squatted 121 Centre in Railton Road, Brixton, is under threat of eviction. The 121 collective had sought to argue in court that the owners - Lambeth Council - had lost the right to claim possession of the building under a law that restricts the right of owners to reclaim land that has been squatted for more than 12 years. The Collective lost the case on a technicality and on Friday 5th February were told that bailiffs would evict them the following Monday. Over the weekend the 121 Collective spread the word by flyposting the local area, distributing newsheets and contacting friends and allies.

The publicity drew links between the eviction of 121 and the general clearance of squatters from the area, the gradual gentrification of Brixton and the slow destruction of its street culture and communitites. Local response has been excellent! Mysteriously, local billboards have been revised and now carry jokes such as- 'How many developers does it take to screw in a lightbulb?' 'None, they prefer to screw up the neighbourhood instead'.

Meanwhile e-mails were being sent from supporters all over the country and the world to Lambeth Council. They replied, saying that the council needed the money from selling 121 to help do up Brixton for the locals... Fat chance, when previous money from City Challenge, earmarked for such worthy intentions, has been spent on over-inflated salaries for professional community wreckers and allowed yuppies to colonise Brixton's Town Centre, pushing the locals out of their homes, their pubs and even the local market (there are plans to knock parts of this down).

On the morning of the threatened eviction, the squatters were out in force. They barricaded the building against bailiffs and erected further barricades in the street. 70 protesters held the street for about 2 hours. The cops called off the eviction due to 'public order issues' and the barricades



were temporarily dismantled as 45 squatters made their way to Lambeth Town Hall to show the council their determination to defend 121. They stormed the building and went straight for the council leader's office. Eventually the security guards and police back-up removed the squatters but they had proved that the council's building was easeier to get into than 121!

Another eviction date was set for February 12th and then quickly withdrawn as the council realised they will need a massive operation to get the121 Collective and their friends out of the building.

In its 18 year history the centre has played host to all sorts of groups, ranging from Brixton Squatters to the Direct Action Movement and is known all over the world. It was also the home at various times of Black Flag, the Anarchist Black Cross, the Kate Sharpley Library, Bad Attitude (radical women's mag) and a host of other groups. There was a cafe, bookshop and regular benefit gigs ranging from punk to queercore.

For up the the minute info check out the 121 website at http://i.am.121centre. emails of support can be sent to carolyn121@hotmail.com

Pinochet - a view from Chile

Pinochet is at last under arrest where he cannot harm anyone. Guilty of genocide, torture, repression, introducing neoliberalism to Chile and creating a generation who have known nothing except State terror. Since his seizure of power through the coup, 30,000 people have died – executed, tortured or shot in the streets (in any protest in working class districts the average death toll was 10). And before he left government, he approved an amnesty for all the crimes committed during his dictatorship. That's why he can't be judged here! And the government has the nerve to ask "to forgive and forget".

In 1983, while Pinochet was still in power, massive protests and strikes began. It was a time of the protests of banging empty pans, of bombing police trucks and central stations, of barricades, of the motto "cop seen, cop dead". It was also a time of the CNI (secret police) decapitating teachers, of shootings in the streets and executions at home. It climaxed in 1986, when the failed assassination of Pinochet also took place. In this context, the "democratic" parties appeared, to head off the revolution. In 1990 there was a change of government. Many of us thought it would be a real change, but the school of life taught us otherwise. There was an "agreed transition to democracy" as they funnily called it; for us it means nothing at all to keep things the same. Because of this Agreement, first Aylwin and now Frei (the two presidents of Chile since Pinochet) have to protect Pinochet's immunity and preserve their privileged economic model and the repressive system. All the time they spoke of justice and freedom, but instead we got unemployment, hunger, poverty wages, etc. But many still believed there was a difference between them and those behind Pinochet. This myth was smashed when Pinochet was arrested and both sides called, through subterfuges such as "national unity, national sovereignty", for the defence of the dictator. And I wonder what about this national unity when THEY killed our people? Or what about national sovereignty when they called for the CIA to help save them from "leftists and commies"? What unity can there be between someone who earns U$130 and someone who earns millions? Or where our hospitals have two doctors for 17,000 people and a clinic for the wealthy has 220 doctors for 147 beds. This type of unity means only slavery and the preservation of their privileges and power.

The Rightists argue that "revolutionary" (meaning totalitarian) regimes killed 60 million people this century. We refuse to discuss this, as the Communist Party's states were the counter-revolution and murdered people just as fascists did. But it is wrong to assume that a genuine revolution would result in the same bloodshed. As Bakunin said, "we don't want to massacre people, but institutions", and if someone has to be shot they wouldn't be innocents, but butchers of capitalism. It is also wrong to say that dictatorship saved us from a "red" tyranny, because it led to a real tyranny. The Rightists argue that violence began in the 60s, not so, ***their*** violence began much earlier and has endured for the history of Chile. Valparaiso 1903, Sta.Maria de Iquique 1907, La Semana Roja – this violence cost the lives of thousands of workers, some of whom wanted revolution, others merely better wages. The armed groups were a last, desperate attempt to make our demands clear.

We, as anarchists, cannot be naive and think that the British government is "liberal", "democratic" or even interested much in human rights. It still supports capitalism, which is the source of the problem. They also have to show their "citizens" how lucky they are to live in a developed country and not in a country full of dictators, drugs, AIDS and death (most of all, death).

The other important point is that although we think scum like Pinochet should be judged, we don't agree with bourgeois laws and their prisons. We've got to show these contradictions, because Pinochet won't be tortured and if he is imprisoned his cell would be more like a palace. And that's the difficult point, people in Chile think it is good that he is under arrest. We must show them that he isn't the real problem, but that the system judging him is. To have Pinochet behind bars would not be a triumph, nor the end of the struggle. As long as there are states, wages and jails there will be struggle.

For revolution not reformism!

A comrade from Chile

Anatomy of an Economic Miracle?

With Pinochet's arrest, the usual slime of the right pronounced that his dictatorship created an economic "miracle." Here we concentrate on the facts of the "miracle" imposed on the Chilean people.

The actual results of the free market policies introduced by the dictatorship were far less than the "miracle" claimed. The initial effects of introducing free market policies in 1975 was a shock-induced depression which caused national output to fall by 15%, wages to slide to one-third below their 1970 level and unemployment to rise to 20%. This meant that, in per capita terms, Chile's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) only increased by 1.5% per year between 1974-80. This was considerably less than the 2.3% achieved in the 1960's.

Supporters of the "miracle" pointed to the period 1978 to 1981, when the economy grew at 6.6% a year. However, this is a case of "lies, damn lies, and statistics" as it does not take into account the catching up an economy goes through as it leaves a recession. If we look at the business cycle as a whole, rather than just the upturn, we find that Chile had the second worse growth in Latin America between 1975 and 1980. The average rate of growth in GDP was 1.5% per year between 1974 and 1982, lower than the Latin American average of 4.3% and lower than 1960's Chile's 4.5%. Between 1970 and 1980, per capita GDP grew by only 8%, while for Latin America as a whole, it increased by 40% and for the years 1980 and 1982 per capita GDP fell by 12.9%, compared to 4.3% for Latin America as a whole. In 1982, after 7 years of free market capitalism, Chile faced yet another economic crisis which, in terms of unemployment and falling GDP was even greater than the shock treatment of 1975. Real wages dropped sharply, and bankruptcies skyrocketed, as did foreign debt. By the end of 1986 GDP per capita barely equalled that of 1970. Between 1970 and 1989, Chile grew by a lacklustre 1.8 to 2.0% a year, slower than most Latin American countries. The high growth, in other words, was a product of the deep recessions that the regime created.

The working class

The working class was by far the hardest hit by the Pinochet "reforms", particularly in urban areas. By 1976, the third year of Junta rule, real wages had fallen to 35% below their 1970 level. Only in 1981 did they come close to the 1970 level, only to fall again to 86.7% by 1983. Unemployment was 14.8% in 1976, falling to 11.8% by 1980 (this is still double the average 1960's level) only to rise to 20.3% by 1982. By 1986, per capita consumption was actually 11% lower than the 1970 level. Between 1980 and 1988, the real value of wages grew only 1.2% while the real value of the minimum wage declined by 28.5%. During this period, urban unemployment averaged 15.3% per year. In other words, after nearly 15 years of free market capitalism, real wages had still not exceeded their 1970 levels. Moreover, labour's share of national income fell from 52.3% to 30.7% between 1970 and 1989. In 1995, real wages were still 10% lower than in 1986 and 18% lower than during the Allende period!

The real "Miracle"

However, the other main effect of the Pinochet years was increased wealth for the elite, and this is what has been claimed as a "miracle." Between 1970, the richest 10% of the population saw their share in the national income rise from 36.5% in 1980 to 46.8% by 1989. In the words of one of the best known opposition economists, "the Chilean system is easy to understand. Over the past twenty years $60 billion has been transferred from salaries to profits."

Thus the wealth created by the economic growth Chile experienced did not "trickle down" to the working class (as predicted by "free market" capitalist dogma) but instead accumulated in the hands of the rich. Just as in the UK and the USA.

The proportion of the population below the poverty line (the minimum income required for basic food and housing) increased from 20% to 44.4%. On the other hand, while consumption for 80% of Chilean households dropped between 1970 and 1989, it rose from 44.5% to 54.6% for the richest 20%.

State Aid

The Pinochet regime's support for "free market" capitalism did not prevent it organising a massive bail-out of the economy during the 1982 recession - yet another example of market discipline for the working class, welfare for the rich. As was the case in the USA and the UK.

The ready police repression (and "unofficial" death squads) made strikes and other forms of protest both impractical and dangerous. The law was changed to reflect the power property owners have over their wage slaves. The total overhaul of labour law between 1979 and 1981 aimed at creating a perfect labour market, eliminating collective bargaining, allowing massive dismissal of workers, increasing the working day up to twelve hours and eliminating the labour courts. Little wonder, then, that this favourable climate for business operations resulted in generous lending by international financial institutions.

Of course, supporters of the Chilean "Miracle" and its "economic liberty" did not bother to ask how the suppression of political liberty affected the economy or how people acted within it. They maintained that the repression of labour, the death squads, the fear installed in rebel workers would be ignored when looking at the economy. But in the real world, people will put up with a lot more if they face the barrel of a gun than if they do not. And this fact explains much of the Chilean "miracle." According to Sergio de Castro, the architect of the economic programme Pinochet imposed, dictatorship was needed to introduce "economic liberty" because:

"it provided a lasting regime; it gave the authorities a degree of efficiency that it was not possible to obtain in a democratic regime; and it made possible the application of a model developed by experts and that did not depend upon the social reactions produced by its implementation."

In other words, "economic liberty" required rule by technocrats and the military. The regime's pet "experts" used the Chilean people like laboratory rats in an experiment to make the rich richer. This is the system held up by the right as a "miracle" and an example of "economic liberty." Like Thatcher's "economic miracle", we discover a sharp difference between facts and rhetoric. And like Thatcher, it made the rich richer and the poor poorer, a true "miracle."

So, for all but the tiny elite at the top, the Pinochet regime of "economic liberty" was a nightmare. Economic "liberty" only benefitted one group in society, an obvious "miracle." For the vast majority, this "miracle" resulted, as it usually does, in increased poverty, unemployment, pollution, crime and social alienation. The irony is that many on the right point to it as a model of the benefits of the free market.

Jakarta Diary

During late November and December the situation in Indonesia once again reached boiling point, with huge riots against President Habibie, who is trying to hold onto power. A Finnish anarchist witnessed these momentous events, first hand, in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, and spoke to many of the participents.

I have just arrived in Jakarta after 40 hours on a boat in "ekonomi kelas." I haven't met any local activists yet, but here's a few first impressions of this place.

By the look of things, popular support for Habibie's government is at a minimum. Flags are at half-mast on practically all non-government buildings to commemorate the killed demonstrators. Occasionally you can also see the symbols of Megawati and her PDI-party. A few discussions with the locals have confirmed that people are thoroughly fed up with the current government.

The people are fully aware of what has happened, as last Friday's incidents were shown practically live on nation-wide TV and the press is independent enough to give the facts. The government is trying to blame "a conspiracy of agents provocateurs" and has taken opposition leaders into custody to question them about their "revolutionary activities."

The unrest has spread to other parts of the country. Walking around town this morning I could see soldiers lounging about, carrying rifles, submachine guns and metre-long wooden sticks. I spotted a few armoured cars as well.

I've now spent a day hanging around with the local radical activists, mainly from the PRD. The PRD (Partia Rakyat Demokratik - the People's Democratic Party) is the only left-wing (as in anti-capitalist) party in Indonesia; the Communist Party has been banned for decades. The PRD is officially a social-democratic party, but clearly they have spent some time reading Castro, Lenin and Guevara (for tips on revolutionary strategy, as they say). They appear more radical than your average social democratic party, and were opposed to Troskyism, for example, as they're against a one-party dictatorship. Their ideal is some kind of "democratic socialism," more of the direct, participatory kind than the western parliamentary democracy. Anarchism was not an unknown concept to them, and they've translated some texts from the internet and circulated them amongst their members. Their party-fixation was quite strong, perhaps because of the circumstances. Their ideology seemed to be a general left-wing mixture. In their opinion, Indonesia's main problems are capitalism, militarism (i.e. the military junta) and the existing remnants of feudalism.

The revolution which is in progress here is a democratic one, and the PRD doesn't assume that it could lead to socialism or communism. The PRD members are about the same age as Finnish activists, i.e. between 18 and 26 yrs. The oldest in the party leadership was 30. The whole leadership has had its share of imprisonment and torture.

Despite their situation, these people are not po-faced like some European revolutionaries. "Sure we're trying to make a revolution, but we'll throw a party at the office tonight." Every now and then someone mentions that someone or another has been kidnapped by the soldiers, has been tortured, or someone's boyfriend has "disappeared," ...

Currently, the Indonesian opposition is divided into radicals and moderates. The main moderate groups are Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI, Amin Rais' PAN (moderate islamic) and Gus Pur (also moderate islamic). The moderate parties have about a million members, but their leadership would rather wait for next year's general elections than organise demos. They're happy to make compromises with the military. The radicals say that there's no point in talking about free elections as long as the current government is in power, the military holds on to its "dual role" in society or as long as there are political prisoners. The radicals consist of the PRD and its affiliates (political groups consisting of the slum-dwellers, workers, students, etc.), the various student groups, the radical social islamists (they have a view of Islam similar to that of Latin America's liberation theologists), and of course the resistance movements in East Timor, Papua and Aceh.

The demands of the radicals are:

1. The military should give up its "dual role" in society, politics and the economy. According to the Indonesian constitution, the army has a dual role as a guarantor of external and internal stability.
2. An end to the official Pancasila-ideology.
3. All political prisoners to be freed (Habibie freed about 100 last summer, officially 200 are left, unofficially a lot more).
4. Suharto to be tried in court.
5. A referendum on East Timor's independence (the moderates are keeping quiet on this matter).
6. The formation of a temporary government based on a people's assembly or local councils. This seems to be some sort of grass roots democracy/workers' councils-type idea.

This grass roots democracy has already sprung up in some places. Support for the radicals has been growing steadily, and the rank-and-file members of the moderate groups have shown support for their ideas.

The situation is getting increasingly tense at the moment. There was a small demo here in Jakarta today with about 1000 people, "just to keep the flame burning." There were some bigger demonstrations in other parts of the country, with students occupying airports and other military buildings. The taking over of military facilities is perhaps the most significant thing happening at the moment, there have been similar occupations in dozens of towns and there are more on the way. These actions are also the most risky, as the military could resort to the use of their weapons. So far, however, the military has been on the defensive and has retreated from the demonstrators. The aim of the take-overs is to drive the army back into its barracks and to end the military's grip on power in Indonesia. Currently, the six-step military administration system reaches into every town and village.

This brings us to what *we* can do back in Europe to support the radicals. As can be expected, the radicals are chronically in need of money for basics such as printing leaflets. The PRD, which is the largest radical opposition group in the country, only has one computer and one printer here in

Jakarta, which have been removed from the office as they can't afford to lose them. So, if anyone is interested in helping overthrow the government in Indonesia, your money will go a long way. For a million rupiahs (about US$100), you can print 100 000 leaflets here.

JAKARTA NIGHTS

The situation has recently calmed down a bit. All sorts of activities are going on, but people don't think it's quite yet time for the "strategic offensive" or the "big bang." Occupations of military buildings have all but ended for the moment.

Yesterday I took part in a student demonstration with about 5000 participants. We tried to march down to Suharto's palace, but the military blocked the way, so the march ended about a kilometre away from the house. There was a carnival atmosphere on the demo, though there was anger and frustration as well. The students try to stage demos every day in different parts of the city as well as in other parts of the country. They've set up a system whereby demonstration "shifts" are divided between the different universities. Students from one uni demonstrate on Monday, those from the next uni on Tuesday and so on. The aim is to prevent "demo fatigue". The demos are long, yesterday's for example went from noon till dusk, some 7 hours in the hot sun.

One of the locals was comparing the situation to the Paris Spring of '68 - there definitely is something in the air. There are about a dozen different student organisations. KOMRAD is the most outspokenly anti-capitalist; FAMRED is liberation theology-oriented (both christian and islamic); FMSJ is the most moderate (an official organisation, but one which has definitely radicalised itself); FORKOT is the largest and ideologically they're sort of neutral, militant-democrats and Front Jakarta is small but vociferous (yesterday they were carrying a Che-banner with the slogan "Revolution or Death").

According to Kontras, a radical human rights group, the amount of fatalities over the past week has risen to 18, but many student activists have been reported "missing," i.e. kidnapped by the army. According to eye-witness reports, soldiers took wounded demonstrators to a military hospital after last Friday's bloodbath, but the military hospital has refused to comment.

Yesterday I met a guy from the West-Papuan resistance, but we didn't have time for a long discussion. The PRD is working in solidarity with the resistance movements in West-Papua, Aceh and East Timor.

Today I met a bloke who's been publishing an underground newspaper since 1995 which has a weekly distribution of 30 000. The paper was of quite a high quality, which is partly due to the fact that a number of professional journalists publish "hot" articles in an underground paper while simultaneously working for mainstream papers. At the moment, this paper could be published legally, but they prefer to keep it underground in case the situation gets worse. For the same reason, the PRD has both a legal and an underground organisation structure.

DIRTY TRICKS

I thought that I was in for a quiet weekend, but then the "riots" started. There had been a fight in a disco between some Ambonese and some locals (Ambonese are from the eastern Indonesian island of Ambon and are mostly christian, the local Javanese are mostly muslims) the previous night and the Ambonese had torched a mosque. According to rumours, "someone" had paid the Ambonense 40 000 rupiahs to burn down the mosque. In response, a group of "defenders of Islam" began hunting down Ambonese, killing three, and burned down the local church. By the time we arrived, the far-right "Islamic Defence Front" were there as well, and had begun inciting the crowd. Their slogans included "God is great! Slit the throats of those dirty Ambonese animals for the sake of Islam ! Long live Islam ! Long live the army!"

The Defence Front people had arrived at the site in 3 army trucks next to which they held their meeting, with the fascists standing on the trucks. So it is obvious who was behind these riots, especially since there were some 500 soldiers present, who did nothing about the few hundred strong mob, armed with sticks to "defend Islam."

We managed to take some pictures of the smouldering church before the army sealed off the area. Leaving the scene we could see some smoke rising in the distance - apparently a christian school had been set on fire as well. This did not seem to bother the soldiers either. A bit later we saw a catholic girls' school that had been

attacked a few hours earlier. The school had been trashed and set on fire. The pogrom against the Ambonense had apparently turned into a violent campaign against christians in general. The Islamic Defence Front is naturally also anti-Chinese, but they've chosen christians as their prime target for the moment. This "riot" smelled fishier than a barrel of rotten herrings. The city has been full of soldiers for the whole week and there were several tanks stationed near the burnt-out school. It is impossible that the rioters could have attacked without the consent of the army. And as the military has been openly aiding the Islamic Defence Front, it's quite obvious who's behind this "rioting."

The intention of these pogroms is to deflect attention from political questions and to substitute ethnic tensions - allowing the army to regain some legitimacy. If the ethnic conflicts flare up, the army can pose as the sole power able to keep the country from descending into bloody chaos.

Wiranto, the head of the military, just made a speech on the radio in which he blamed "radicals" for the unrest. How damn convenient for the army if they could push the blame on groups such as the PRD and subsequently arrest them. I got some good photos of the Defence Front goons and the army trucks while the man with the megaphone called for all christian throats to be slit. I guess it wouldn't have helped me much if I'd told them I'm an atheist.

Yesterday some 3000 students occupied the office of the state prosecutor demanding that Suharto be put on trial within a month. Apparently there were a few other larger student demos in town. The army has concentrated the majority of its 600 000 soldiers in the Jakarta area, and there are apparently no troops to be seen out in the provinces where demos continue to be held.

I spent most of yesterday talking to people at a local anti-racist organisation, who are currently concentrating on exposing the role of the military and the government in the "riots." There's been talk of the army closing off areas where the "rioters" have been wreaking havoc so that locals can't step in to stop the mob. So far, 14 bodies have been found at the scene of Sunday's riot, 8 in one of the torched buildings. The rise of these different fascist organisations is a new phenomenon here and is closely linked to the current situation. When these fascists tried, with the consent and support of the army, to attack demonstrators on the 12 & 13th November, the urban proletariat killed four of them.

The PRD and some of the islamic opposition groups held a joint press-conference yesterday and presented evidence of the military's role in the "riots." Most of the islamic groups here are of the pro-democracy sort. There aren't any real fundamentalist groups here, as the fascist groups are not really all that interested in religion. The liberation movements in Aceh and South Sumatra are labelled by the government as fundamentalists, but according to the PRD they are more left-wing.

The ethnic Chinese here are discriminated against more or less openly. They are the only ones whose ethnic origin is marked on their passports, something they share with former political prisoners. The use of Chinese in schools, publications or in public life is prohibited. Confucianism has not been recognised as a religion and an ethnic chinese may not be elected president. Chinese have been living in Indonesia for some 2000 years, and many of the important figures in Indonesian history have been of Chinese origin. Often it is not possible to tell an ethnic Chinese from one of the "locals" on looks alone. The differentiation between Chinese and other ethnic groups is actually a remnant of Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch divided the population into three categories: A-class being (surprise, surprise) Europeans, Class B "Asians," meaning mostly Chinese, and Class C being the various Indonesian ethnic groups. Nowadays people of Japanese or Korean origin are also classified as being Chinese.

I had a talk on Monday with an activist from an East Timor solidarity group. The human rights situation there apparently has not changed, but the atmosphere in Dili is supposed to be freer since May. The most important development has been the mushrooming of grass-roots activism over the past six months, especially the new women's groups and the "Students' and Youth East Timor Solidarity Group". Apparently, the Timorese are quite optimistic about achieving independence in the near future, and now the debate is about what this independence actually means. So far, the resistance movement has concentrated on demanding national independence, but others want a more profound kind of freedom.

A few weeks later, on December 19th, we got this message.

The situation in Jakarta is hotting up again. The military killed a student demonstrator yesterday, so today all the student groups had a joint demonstration and tried to get to parliament house. I got there when mostly KOMRAD people were clashing with riot police. Riot police fled and people started to run towards parliament building, but then troops started to shoot and panic spread. Officially they shot just rubber bullets, but here you can never be sure, and rubber bullets can kill anyway. After the initial panic there were 3 hours of fighting. Demonstrators used sticks and stones, soldiers shot teargas and 'rubber' bullets. I heard that 4 demonstrators were killed, I don't know how many were injured. Tomorrow thereare demonstrations again, nobody knows what will happen.

Finally, Habibie offered to release Dita Sari, union activist and PRD member. No doubt this is because of wide international pressure for her release. However, once Dita Sari saw the conditions attached to her release - no participation in political activity for2 years - she refused the offer.

For all those interested in the PRD, their manifesto can be found on the web under the address www.peg.apc.org/~prdint1

Anarchists in Australia have also made contact with Indonesian anarchists and are sending them literature. Contact Barricade Books, 115 Sydney Rd, Brunswick, Melbourne or email zd@xchange.anarki.net

Polish Farmers Blockade the Borders

About three thousand farmers from the Self-Defence Committee, together with two other farmer's organisations began a blockade of one of the main Polish/German border crossings (near Frankfurt am Oder) in January.

They were demanding lower food imports from the EU. They came armed with scythes and other farm tools. The government threatened the use of force, but the blockade was lifted after a day or two.

One of the leaders of the farmer's organisations said that the goal of the protests is "overthrowing of the government".

The farmers' problems come from the Russian crisis curtailing the export of food, and making prices fall at home. They also face competition in processed foods imported from the EU.

A couple of days later the blockades were back on with about 900 different roads hit throughout Poland, involving about 4000 farmers. The government insinuated that post-communists sponsored their leaders, and the media also tried to create splits, but unsuccessfully. After police were sent against several of the blockades, with armoured cars and water cannon, the farmers responded with Molotov cocktails, clubs, and threw dung at the police. In most cases the police were unable to break the blockades.

The radio quoted one farmer saying: "If we can't achieve what we want peacefully, we'll make a bloody revolution!"

The Polish Anarchist Federation (FA) is working with the farmers' organisations, particularly the Self-Defence Committee, which is regarded as more radical. While the issue of vegetarianism is dear to many of the anarchists' hearts, they also recognise the dangers posed by both the EU and by the far-right trying to win the farmers to their cause. The farmers are self-employed and own their own land, and are resisting capitalist expropriation in exactly the same way they resisted the communist state. The FA are trying to link the farmers' struggles in with the "caravan 99" international tour of Indian farmers when it comes to Poland.

On 2nd December, 3 fields of genetically engineered cotton were burned down by Indian farmers in the state of Karnataka. People are organising nationwide, with the intention of destroying all genetically engineered crops currently being tested by the Multinational company Monsanto, and say to its investors " You had rather take your money out before we reduce it to ashes."

Biotec multinationals have been developing wheat, rice and other staples which do not produce seeds, forcing farmers to buy a new batch of seeds each year. Pollen from the modified crops can spread to nearby fields and contaminate them, making them sterile. The multinationals have also been patenting plant varieties developed by people in the South and then forcing them to pay royalties for using their own seeds.

MONSANTO

- Indian crops destroyed

Activists on the subcontinent are calling for direct action against Monsanto to be stepped up worldwide, saying "We know that stopping Monsanto in India will not be of much help to us if it continues in other countries as the threats that it poses do not stop at the borders." The call to ploughshares has been taken up, with genetically engineered potatoes dug up and used for a game of cricket, and test sites have been destroyed all over Europe. **For more information, contact**: email swamy.krrs@axcess.net.in for more information or for genetics action in the UK contact: Genetix Snowball, One World Centre, 6 Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS. Genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk

Anarcho Quiz Questions

1. Who said "The present day motor-car has developed from the horse drawn carriage; there is every evidence of this development in its form and size and it is probably the most wasteful and uneconomic contrivance which has yet appeared among our personal possessions. The average passenger load of motor-cars in our streets is certainly less than two persons ... The economic implications of this situation is ridiculous and I cannot believe it to be permanent". What is he most remembered for?

2. Keyhinge Toys, a Hong Kong-owned company, has been condemned by unions in China and Vietnam for its appalling working conditions. Workers are forced to work 14-15 hours a day and frequently suffer acetone poisoning, from which 3 Chinese workers died in 1992. What vital product is worth such sacrifices?

3. What was the Parliament of Bats?

4. In Julius Caesar, Shakespear writes "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war". What does havoc mean in this context?

(answers on page 32)

Iraq- *the impeachment war*

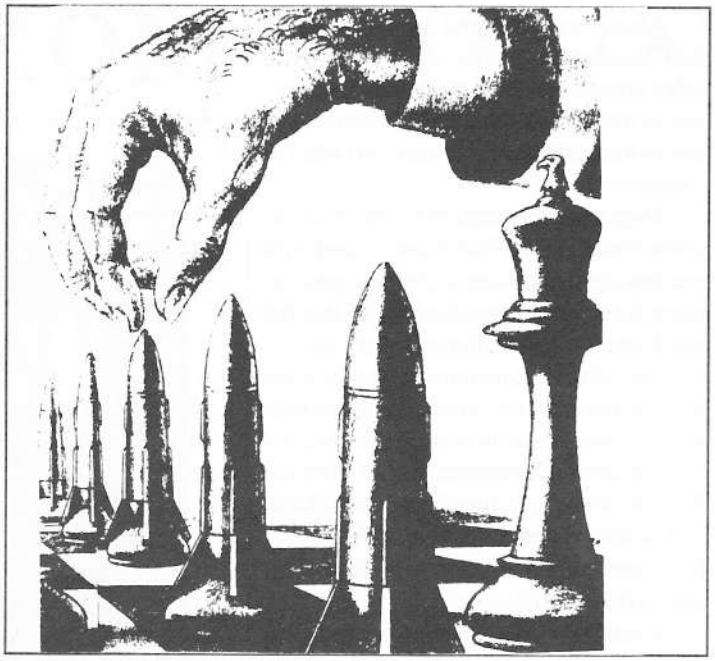
Disraeli once remarked that you could tell a weak government by its eagerness to resort to strong measures. The slaughter of Iraqis in the bombing raids of Operation Desert Fox, launched to delay Clinton's impeachment, is bloody confirmation of his prescience in this regard.

We are expected to believe that this latest round of mass murder is an attempt at containment of the "threat" posed by the Ba'athist regime to its neighbours. In 1991, the US-led forces declared their intention to bomb Iraq "back into the stone age". Some 200,000 Iraqis were slaughtered in pursuit of this goal. Over a million children in Iraq have died since through a combination of food sanctions and depleted uranium poisoning.

A 1991 UN mission reported that "nothing that we had read or seen quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country. The recent conflict has brought near-apocalyptic results .. the flow of food through the private sector has been reduced to a trickle... Many food prices are already beyond the purchasing reach of most Iraqi families."

A 1993 UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report observed ".. it is a country whose economy has been devastated.. above all by the continued sanctions.. which have virtually paralysed the whole economy and generated persistent deprivation, chronic hunger, endemic undernutrition, massive unemployment and widespread human suffering ... a vast majority of the Iraqi population is living under most deplorable conditions and is simply engaged in a struggle for survival .. a grave humanitarian tragedy is unfolding.. the nutritional status of the population continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate.. large numbers of Iraqis now have food intakes lower than those of the populations in the disaster stricken African countries." Since 1993 conditions have only deteriorated. Given that the US and Britain have consistently engaged in a "war by other means" - the starvation of the Iraqi people - to maintain their grip on the Gulf by genocide, one can be forgiven for wondering what threat a country where "the social fabric of the nation is disintegrating" (UN World Food Programme News Update 26/9/95) might pose.

We are told that Saddam's "threat" is manifest in Iraq's non-co-operation with UNSCOM inspectors. Yet even the last report by US stooge Richard Butler (which was cited as justification for the bombing raids) concedes Iraq's compliance in the majority of cases, and on examination, the instances of non-compliance (5 out of 300) result only from abuse of Iraqi sovereignty or sensibility (an unannounced inspection of the Foreign Ministry; an attempt to carry out inspections during Friday prayers). Further US and British concern over access to weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East does not extend to concern or action over Israel's 250 nuclear warheads, nor the military hardware supplied to Saudi Arabia, nor do its concern for territorial integrity and compliance with UN resolutions extend to Israel's occupation of the south of Lebanon.



Perhaps the justification for mass slaughter lies with a concern for the anti-democratic nature of the Ba'athist regime. If so, then it remains somewhat strange that such concerns did not manifest themselves when Iraq became the US's player of choice in the Iran-Iraq war, nor when the Ba'athists used chemical weapons to suppress Kurdish resistance in Halabja in 1988.

Following the "liberation" of Kuwait in 1991, the Kuwaiti ambassador in Jordan, Suleiman Alfassam, warned "Don't blame us if there are a few reprisals" against the 400,000 strong Palestinian minority in Kuwait. In March 1991, the Independent's Paul Taylor reported that dozens of Palestinians were "disappearing into a secret web of interrogation, torture, detention, deportation and in a few cases, death." Kuwaiti officials talked openly of "cleaning out" the Palestinian suburbs. Over 360,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes in post-liberation Kuwait. The al-Sabah regime is acknowledged as amongst the most brutal and undemocratic in the region. Clinton and Blair's concerns for democracy appear not to extend this far.

In August 1998 Clinton ordered the destruction of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, claiming it was a chemical weapons plant. (Thousands of lives are now at risk because Sudan is no longer able to produce anti-malarials). The bombing coincided with Monica Lewinsky's grand jury testimony. There can be little surprise then in noting that Operation Desert Fox was launched on the eve of the congressional vote on impeachment, nor, as the Independent on Sunday cynically observed "in a United States bitterly divided over the Clinton case, the one thing which seems to unite the American people is an enthusiasm for incinerating Iraqis."

Speaking after the suspension of Operation Desert Fox, Blair stated that "if those who abuse force to wage war are not confronted by those willing to use force to maintain peace, war becomes more likely." It is our task now to build a movement capable of opposing imperialism and militarism which learns Blair's lessons in such a way as to make him regret his words.

zero tolerance in argentina

A member of the Centro Kultural Independiente (Independent Cultural Center) has been a victim of a Zero Tolerance operation, implemented by the foundation "Liberty" (!) and the provincial government. Saturation policing results in locking up young people merely for looking suspicious.

In the early morning of Sunday 6th December a CKI member was arrested and taken to precinct II of Rosario. There, he was beaten, tied up and violated, forced to drink urine and brutalitised.

A march and protest were called for 11th December. Please send your solidarity to:
redchiar@tau.wamani.apc.org
and protests to
www@jus.gov.ar (Argentina Justice Dept)
spyd@presidencia.gov.ar (Secretary of press and difusion)
indice@sfp.gov.ar (official Agencies)
http://www.rosario.gov.ar/sugt10e/sugt10
(you could leave suggestions and opinions on the web-site of the municipality of Rosario)

international day against police brutality, March 15th

This day of protest first began in 1997, at the initiative of the Drapeau Noir collective in Switzerland. For the last two years, the International Day Against Police Brutality (IDAPB) has been a success. Groups that have participated are critical of more than just police brutality, and most are anti-authoritarian and/or anarchist.

To date various types of events have taken place: street theatre, mural painting, demonstrations, conferences, workshops, photo and text exhibitions, radio shows, and cultural events. Some groups have done more than one event for the day. In some cities, coalitions have been formed to organise for IDAPB. Any group or individual can do something. Our imagination is the key.

In Britain, it is being publicised by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, c/o 101 Villa Road, Birmingham B21 1NH, England

Tel: 0121-554-6947; Fax: 0870-055-4570

E-mail: ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk

Web: http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/

So, work out what you want to do in your locality and go for it.

Release Blandine Kaniki

Blandine Kaniki is a 20 year old Congolese refugee currently imprisoned in the detention centre 127bis in Steenokkerzeel, with her 5-year old son. She was also pregnant.

On October 31st last year, she was among the victims of a violent intervention by the federal police, to intimidate the detainees who wanted to protect Frank Kapulu, a Nigerian threatened with expulsion. Blandine, with her son Christian tied to her, was beaten and dragged over the ground by the hair. On Friday 6 November the Office of Foreigners tried to deport her to Kinshasa. After the violence, Blandine was incapable to eat and complained about stomach pains. She was bleeding for several days and finally she had a miscarriage on the 24th of November.

Several times she had warned the doctor at the detention centre, but it was never taken seriously. After other detainees intervened, she was taken to hospital, but it was too late to save the child.

As soon as she was treated, Blandine was sent back to the 127bis centre, where she got no further treatment at all. She risks deportation at any moment.

Everyday, the Belgian authorities try to carry out mass expulsions, and this violent and cold behaviour is exactly what caused the death of Semira Adamu (see BF 215). There will be more tragedies like Blandine's and Semira's as long as these policies endure.

Demand that the Belgian authorities release Blandine Kaniki immediately, grant her asylum and give her the treatment she needs!

They should also establish an independent inquiry and immediately close the detention centres.

You can fax the Belgian Office of Foreigners: 02/205 55 10 or 02/205 55

news from africa

Kenyan Literature Project

US anarchist prisoner Chris Plummer and the Claustrophobia Collective have set up a project to send anarchist and revolutionary literature to Kenya.

A comrade of Chris (who once lived in East Africa) works for a project called the Kipkoriony School and Library which serves over 2500 students in the Rift Valley area. The folks involved are not anarchists but are interested in providing all types of literature.

East Africa has a long history of resistance and autonomy, and from the cultural diversity of the area Chris came to believe we are "born anarchist" and the rest is learned.

Send easy to read books and pamphlets (as well as videos, cameras, typewriters if you have them spare) to:
Claustrophobia Collective
ATTN: Kenyan Literature Project
PO Box 1721, Baltimore MD 21203 USA.

European readers can send them to: PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX (Please no parcels - if there is something bigger contact Africa Solidarity at this address).
For more info contact either of these or Christopher Lee Plummer, PP# 677345 Hughes Unit, Rt 2 Box 4400, Gatesville, TX 76597 USA

IMF intervenes in kenya teacher's strike

Teachers in Kenya found out they were fighting a bigger force than the government after a 15 day strike last October. The Financial Times (13/10/98) revealed that the IMF would not approve an urgently needed new loan facility if the government acceded to the teachers demands.

Teachers in Kenya currently receive an average basic salary of US $150 per month. The Kenyan National Union of Teachers argued that for most teachers this is not enough to live on. Last July they negotiated an agreement with the government for a 200% increase over a five-year period. The strikes, supported by 70% of the population, were in response to the government defaulting on that agreement.

Kenya is heavily indebted, and 25% of government revenue goes to service this debt, compared to 2.7% of GNP on health and 6.8% on education. Over half of the debt is owed to multilateral institutions, including the World Bank and IMF, and last year Kenya paid US $208 million in debt service to these institutions. A reduction in Kenya's debt burden would release funds that could be used for social spending including teacher's salaries. However the International Financial Institutions do not consider Kenya eligible for debt relief.

A Visit to the Paris CNT

Between May and August 1998 I travelled from Melbourne, Australia to England, France and Spain. During my holiday in Europe I visited a number of revolutionary unions, including the "Vignoles CNT" in Paris and Lyon, who were expelled from the International Workers' Association at its last congress in Madrid.

I arrived at the CNT offices at 33 rue des Vignoles in the middle of a festival to commemorate the events of May '68. There were a lot of people hanging around, red and black flags were draped all over the place, people were standing around drinking and talking. I tried my eight-months-at-university-French on the person minding the front table, and as soon as she asked me to speak in English we got along OK.

During the afternoon a few films were shown. The one I sat down to watch briefly showed people packed like sardines walking down a Parisian boulevard, holding hands and singing "L'Internationalé", people tearing branches off trees to make barricades, people clashing with the police at nighttime, and so on. There were a lot of young people, people in their mid-twenties, and a lot of women watching the film.

After the film I went and had a look at the literature tables that had been set up. There were a lot of good books there, histories of the First International, Bakunin's Collected Works, and so on. The Parisian CNT had also been very busy publishing their own - "La Confédération Générale du Travail" and "Action Directe" by Emile Pouget, "Communisme Libertaire", a French translation of the resolution on Libertarian Communism adopted by the Saragossa Congress of the Spanish CNT in May 1936, "La Colonne de Fer", a very thick book by Abel Paz, a history of an agrarian collective established during the Spanish Revolution that refused to go along with the collaborationist policy of the majority of the CNT-E in 1937, "La Collectivité de Calanda", another history of revolutionary Spain, as well as many others. The Paris CNT had also produced the second edition of "Les Temps Maudits", a theoretical review which it had started the previous year. Of course, there were copies of Le Combat Syndicaliste all over the place, as well as publications from the various industrial branches of the Paris CNT: "Le Travailleur du Batiment", from the Syndicat Unifie du Batiment (building workers), "Classes en lutte" (Classes in Struggle, mind the pun), from the Federation des Travailleurs de l'Education, "Le Combat Syndicaliste dans le PTT," from the postal workers, and so on.

In keeping with the May 68 theme, the Paris CNT had produced large posters with slogans such as, "May 68 was libertarian, us also!", the well-known May 68 image of the worker with a machine putting money into a bosses pocket, and then into a bucket with the words, "the boss needs you, you don't need him", "they profit always, nothing changed", "the next time, we'll be organised", and others with similar themes.

Besides their publishing and journalistic efforts, the Paris CNT was also involved in a whole bunch of social actions. There was an action almost every day I was in Paris; if I wanted to, I could go to the CNT offices in the evening and find out what was planned for the next day. Similarly, there were a number of actions in Lyon, including an anti-Front Nationale demonstration which the CNT and the Fédération Anarchiste participated in. While in Paris I went to an action outside an arms exposition in the suburbs, where people from a wide range of groups had gathered outside to bang on the metal gates with metal rods, to make as much noise as humanly possible so as to remind the criminals inside that there were people outside who knew what they were up to; another day I went to a demonstration outside the Sorbonne against education cuts, where President Jospin was attending some sort of function. There were also others that I heard about, an action against the deportation of sans-papiers (immigrants without papers) where CNT members took direct action to try to stop trains containing them from leaving. I was given a package by a CNT comrade containing about 50 different leaflets, which I took to mean that they weren't exactly sitting around on their backsides talking about the historical inevitability of the workers' revolution, or wasting time slagging other people off for not being as anarchist as themselves, or whatever.

The activity and agitation of the collectives and commissions such as the Anti-Expulsions Committee, the Women's Commission of the Paris CNT, No Parasan! (an anti-fascist federation), SHARP, the Free Transport Collective in Lyon, and others organised around particular economic and social issues which members of the Paris CNT were involved in, appeared to have something to do with its size and momentum. I didn't ask enough questions to find out what relationship each of these groups had to the CNT, but it seemed that they had a particularly important role within the movement, as a kind of revolving door between social issues on the one hand, and economic issues on the other.

The revolving door appeared to operate in the following way: commissions and collectives organised around particular social issues by members of a revolutionary union got newcomers or outsiders involved in active resistance to the racist deportation of blacks, or to the patriarchal oppression of women, for instance.

At any rate, there were members of the Paris CNT who were also very active in these other groups as well, and there is no doubt in my mind that the amount of visibility and respect they gained from participating in these particular struggles attracted people to the revolutionary union.

The participation of members of the CNT in those groups, and the amount of effort put into them, appeared to have a positive effect in two ways: firstly, for the CNT by being able to act as a positive force in what were essentially groups organised for negative purposes by being able to bridge the gap between being critical of the current social order and wanting to do

something to change it. Secondly, it also appeared to have a positive effect on the members of the Paris CNT: not once did I come across what one comrade here in Australia describes as "narky-syndicalism"; the mental affliction whereby a revolutionary syndicalist is driven to excessive hostility of everything not specifically orientated towards the point of production, an extreme hatred of so-called "lifestylism" and everything else that distracts one from the issue of work (I'm not sure if the word is used anywhere else, but in Australia "narky" means to be irritable, or argumentative). The members of the Paris CNT clearly understood that, if it is to have any relevance to present-day realities, the revolutionary unionist movement can only grow by means of a practical process, by the application of the principles to everyday life (as opposed to the spouting of abstract theory), and that that process required a little time and patience. Equally importantly, they also showed, for all the ideologues out there, that there are other things in life to be concerned about besides straight economics and the nature of work. Some of them were amongst the most rounded individuals I met the whole time I was in Europe.

If it wasn't absolutely perfect in every single way, the Paris CNT didn't seem so bad that it needed to be kicked out of the IWA. On the contrary, it seemed to be most definitely worth having as an affiliate. As corny as it might sound, when I went to Europe I had hoped to find a something which had resembled the histories I had read about the Spanish Revolution, and, generally speaking, that's how the Paris CNT was. The people I met were very warm, intelligent and open-minded, and were less concerned with mudslinging and proving themselves the holders of the correct ideological position or the high moral ground, than getting on with the job of building their revolutionary union movement.

perhaps there are some ... who find the application of the principles of revolutionary unionism to everyday life threatening to some niche they've carved for themselves

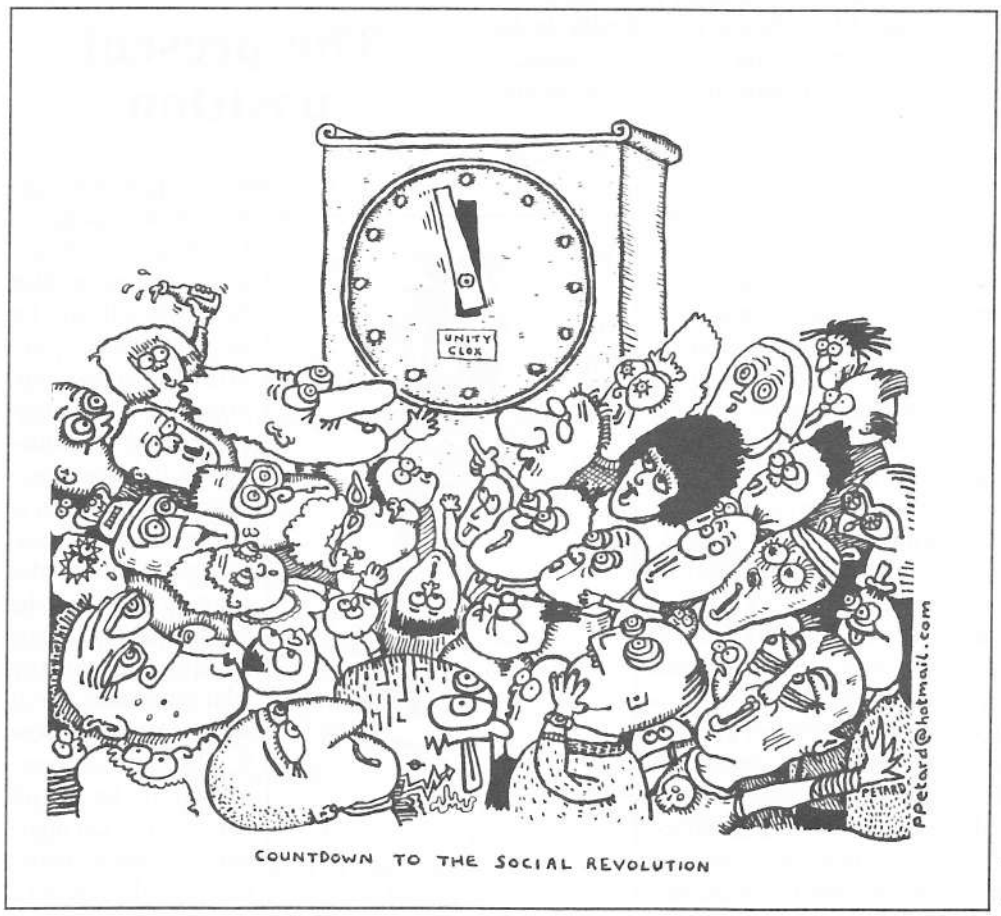
Given the level of organisation and the culture of tolerance, open-mindedess and inclusiveness that I experienced, the explusion of the Paris CNT seems to me to be a tragedy.

If the Paris CNT is one of the few revolutionary unions to have made any headway in recent years, and if, parallel to their physical development, has been theoretical and practical development, then perhaps there are some within the IWA who find the application of the principles of revolutionary unionism to everyday life threatening to some niche they've carved for themselves on the margins of society, or perhaps to their own lack of success. Perhaps the reason is simply that, because an organisation is growing, and if founded by anarchists is not longer purely anarchist, it becomes a threat to the ideological purists who want to keep things nice and secure, if a little uneventful. Maybe the reasons are simpler still, a possible clue being found on the front of a Paris CNT circular which reads, "il est plus facile de critiquer que de construire"(it is easier to criticise than construct). There would appear to be no shortage of cases in the IWA's recent history where ideological witchhunting was used as cheap substitute for constructive criticism.

Whatever the reason for the explusion of the Paris CNT, the purpose of revolutionary unionism is to educate people in the ways and means of libertarian, revolutionary organisation as part of a process of practical action, as part of a process of organisation and struggle on the basis of common economic and social interests. Part of that process involves admitting people into the organisation who don't have a good grip on libertarian principles. Another part of the process involves allowing them the time to make mistakes and to have those mistakes corrected, and thus to learn the practise of revolutionary unionism. "Impurity", therefore, the presence of newcomers with little knowledge or experience of revolutionary unionism (much less anarchist philosophy), would seem to be the indicator of movement, as opposed to stagnation. It would appear to be the indicator of a revolutionary organisation with an established process of physical growth and intellectual development through practical education.

Ben Debney

Black Flag note: The French Confederation National du Travail split several years ago - the two factions being known as Paris or Bordeaux, after where their confederal bureaux were sited. At the XXth IWA Congress, the Paris CNT (also known as the Vignoles CNT) was expelled by two votes to one.



COUNTDOWN TO THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

The Course of Libertarian ideas in Colombia

Colombia - the very mention of the name conjures up images of violence and narco-trafficking, but the country is rather more than this, in spite of her turbulent recent history and the absence of any indications of change therein. For instance there are, at present, five armies active there: on the guerrilla side, there are the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the ELN (National Liberation Army) and the EPI (People's Liberation Army) which, altogether may number as many as 20,000 members according to the official estimates and these allegedly draw the bulk of their funding from kidnappings, trafficking in drugs and extortion of the big oil companies with holdings in the area. On the other, the government side, there are the Colombian National Army and the increasingly active paramilitary groups which, having declared their independence from their sponsor (the Colombian government) operate as an independent force, carrying out numerous massacres among the civilian population whom they suspect are co-operating with the guerrillas.

For its part, the government suits itself economically; no matter whether it is the liberals or (as in the current case following the recent victory of Spanish prime minister Aznar's corrupt buddy Andres Pastrana) the conservatives who are in power, the upshot is always the same; a neo-liberal policy strictly obedient to the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF, eagerly pursuing that annual endorsement from the USA in drugs affairs that will guarantee their access to the plentiful American funding that goes with it. The result is that Indian lands are brazenly confiscated and the common people plunged into a crisis of long standing from which there seems to be no imminent escape.

At one time there was a solid libertarian presence here. Decades later, an effort is being made to revive and spread it.

Anarchism in Colombia

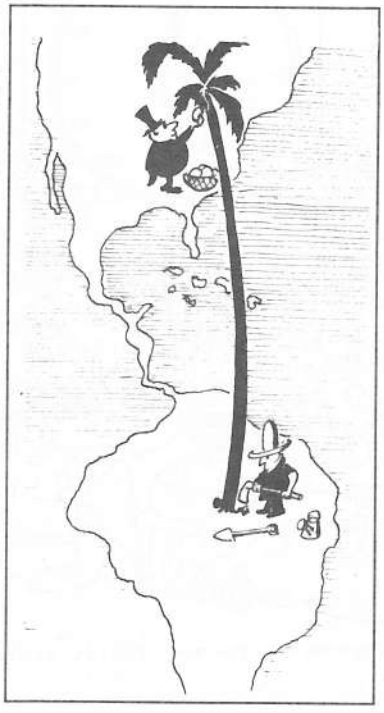
The earliest properly libertarian signs were detected in the mid-19th century with the arrival on the coast of Proudhon's writings. this was just about the time that the young Elisee Reclus arrived with the intention of setting up a colony there, a scheme that came to nothing in the end. By the end of the 19th century important strikes by artisans had a distinguished libertarian involvement and for a time there was a self-managing commune set up by J. Albarracin. 1910 saw publication of the first edition of *Ravachol*, a newspaper that was to become influential among the artisans and workers. Other publications of that time with some libertarian involvement included *Trofeos* (1908), *Crepuscolo* (1910-1911), *El Obrero* (1912-1916), and *Paz y Amor* (1913). In 1918, the Atlantic coastal area was to be the arena for a number of strikes displaying unmistakable anarchist practice: direct action, sabotage, delegates effectively under the control of the rank and file, solidarity strikes, etc. In the 1920's this burgeoning activity was multiplied by the influx of lots of anarchist immigrants from Europe and three significant labour congresses with a telling libertarian presence were held and new groups emerged: groups like the Antorcha Libertaria in Bogota, Via Libre in Barranquilla, Grupo Libertario in Santa Marta and the important FOLA (Atlantic Coast Labour Federation) which came to embrace sixteen trade unions from that area. Among others, the leading publication of this time included *La Voz Popular, La Antorcha, El Sindicalista, Pensamiento y Voluntad,* etc.

In an age of great activism, there were strikes and protests galore. We ought to single out Raul Eduardo Mahecha here, a committed libertarian fighter who was to be the driving force behind quite a few such protests and whom we might regard as the leading Colombian labour personality of his day. Other figures of note would be Vargas Vila, Juan de Dios Romero and the "anarchist and adventurer" (as he described himself) Biofilo Panclasta.

The great retreat that libertarian ideas suffered in the 1930's throughout the continent was also evident in Colombia which slid into several decades of libertarian "sluggishness" from which she has not recovered until quite recently.

The present position

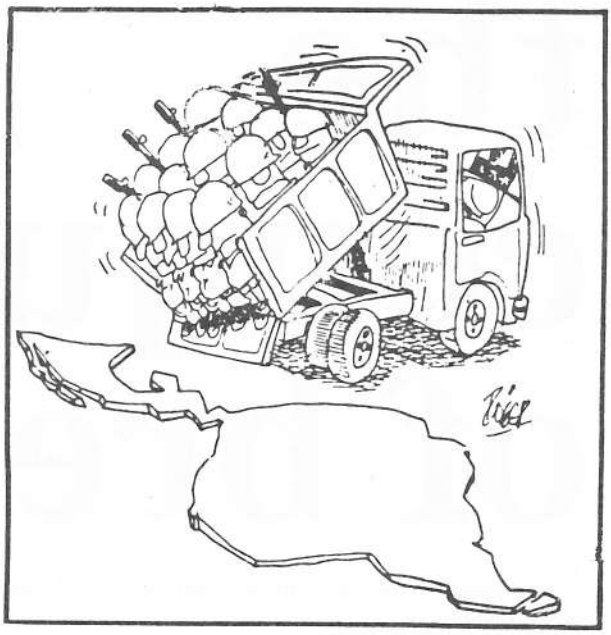
It is no easy undertaking to spread anarchism in the polarised Colombia of the present day (where one is either for the guerrillas or for the government). Non-aligned opposition groups are not welcomed and the situation facing local libertarians is reminiscent of that of our comrades in Euskadi. The decades of war endured by the country has also left its mark on the anarchists who sometimes find it hard to stand aloof from it. The most "mature" option to be found among the local anarchists is represented by the Alas de Xué-AIT



grouping, a collective that strives to marry a libertarian discourse and libertarian practices with the cultural traditions of the original inhabitants of the country. The work done by several of its members in conjunction with Indian communities afforded them a familiarity with native organisational preferences and prompted them to salvage (like the Flores Magon brothers did in Mexico before them) quite a number of native traditional forms that come very close to anarchism (community living, their concept of authority, mutual aid and reciprocity etc.) which they have complemented with (let us say, classical) libertarian ideas imported from Europe. The very name of the collective mirrors this synthesis: Alas (wings) symbolising freedom in western anarchism, and Xué, a Muisca term for the sun, one of the deities of the Andean peoples of Colombia.

Alas de Xué emerged towards the end of the 1980's out of the protests mounted against the commemoration of the 500th anniversary. These protests came together into what became known as the "Self-Discovery Campaign of Our Americas. 500 Years of Native, Black and Popular Resistance", a movement upon which they managed to stamp a libertarian seal. Later they were behind the organisation of two important nation-wide students' encounters - again from an anarchist angle. Another of its tasks has been to rescue the history of the Colombian libertarian movement from oblivion (especially as it relates to the first two decades of this century), something previously approached only from a marxist angle. This historical research resulted in publication of the book "Biofilo Panclasta, the Eternal Captive". They joined the IWA, later mounting joint campaigns like that in defence of the lands of the Uwe people against oil company trespasses. The motley political make-up of the collective (albeit for the most part libertarians) has led to a situation where, in recent years, several of it members have decided to pursue a different line and this has curtailed the collective's activities somewhat. With an eye to recovery and in order to establish effective co-ordination of the different groups in Colombia, they decided to organise a festival last May under the name of "May 68-69, the relevance of libertarian thinking". It drew anarchists from Bogota, Cali and Medellin, plus a presence from elsewhere in South America and from Europe.

The festival was mounted on some university campuses with a high degree of politicisation, where political meetings and demands are common currency and where some of the students openly support the guerrillas which is why campuses are the targets for paramilitary attacks. The young anarchist Humberto Peña Taylor and numerous human rights activists were among the victims of paramilitary groups which also threatened to attack the National University while the libertarian festival was in progress. There are libertarian sympathisers among the Law Library of the National University (who helped organise the festival) and among many individuals who participate from time to time in violent acts. There are improvised collectives such as the Anarquistas al Combate group.



Another of the collectives who shared the organisation of the festival in May was the Mujeres Libres group which operates in the anarcha-feminist area. There are also anarchists among the membership of the superb La Libelula Dorada theatre troupe, some of the members of which helped with the stunning and now resurrected libertarian publication Biofilos. In Medellin city there is the Vargas Vila Libertarian Collective whose activities focus on the music scene, trade unions and discussion, whereas in Cali there are various individuals who mount sporadic campaigns, such as fielding a dog called Walter as a candidate in the elections in order to bring them into disrepute.

Other areas in which libertarians are to be found are conscientious objection (with groups in Bogota and Medellin) and the music scene related to the punk and hardcore genres through which some groups peddle a libertarian discourse that occasionally lacks definition.

The Indian question

The demands frequently put by upwards of 50 native peoples through the ONIC (National Indian Organisation of Colombia) have received support from local anarchists in recent years. Instances of native lands being seized by international companies which - as in the case of the Spanish-based Repsol corporation - enjoy the blessing of the Colombian government, are commonplace. Only a few years ago it was announced that there would be a mass suicide by the Uwe people (around five thousand of them) should Occidental Petroleum carry out exploratory drilling on their land. To the Uwe petroleum represents the life blood of Mother Earth and its removal signifies the death of Mother Earth and of her people. This campaign which, with backing from the IWA which mobilised in support of the Uwe, managed to bring the plan to a standstill, although there has not been a final resolution as yet. The Uwe are but one case among many where Colombian Indian tribes are faced by multiple threats and the contempt shown their traditional forms of organisation by government and guerrillas like - both of these being concerned with exploiting the earth's resources and harnessing them for the benefit of their own causes.

In the "Locombia", where, as we approach the end of the century, five kids are murdered each day, where election candidates in several areas must sue the guerrillas for leave to campaign, where politics and drugs trafficking go hand in glove, we can only hope that libertarian ideas can make some headway and prosper.

Contact Colombian libertarians at:
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From CNT September 1998

the conquest of bread

The Russian anarcho-syndicalist activist and theoretician, G.P. Maximov (1893 - 1950) used to bemoan the fact that so few militants bothered to read the classics of anarchism, and as a result often found themselves out-manoeuvred by their political opponents. Today we have little excuse for not studying the works of the founders of the libertarian tradition. Those of Peter Kropotkin, for example, are readily available in affordable translations, including "Mutual Aid", "Fields, Factories and Workshops", "The Great French Revolution" and "The Conquest of Bread". It is this work I want to take a closer look at now.

"The Conquest Of Bread" first appeared in Paris in 1892, although Kropotkin had expounded his theories a decade earlier in the pages of the anarchist journal "La Revolt". 1906 saw its first appearance in English when it was published in London. The book is similar to "Fields, Factories and Workshops" (1912), which was also a compilation of articles written between 1888 and 1890. Both books are supplemented by a large number of contemporary statistics which are used to bolster the arguments Kropotkin is presenting. These may be skipped over by the modern reader who will be more concerned with the ideas being put forward.

With "The Conquest Of Bread" Kropotkin intends to prove that humankind is moving inevitably towards anarchist communism, and that this is a scientifically based development. Throughout the 17 chapters Kropotkin hammers home the following basic points:

1. That the present political and economic situation is unjust and serves only to enrich the few at the expense of the many.
2. That humankind is moving in the direction of anarchist communism.
3. That in order to change the system a root and branch revolution is necessary on an anarchist communist basis with the ministrative unit.
4. That working class people have enormous untapped moral and organisational abilities.
5. That communism is the only just economic system as any retention of the wage system is based on an arbitrary evaluation of labour, and is necessarily unjust.
6. That for the revolution to survive, the free anarchist communes must strive to achieve the highest possible degree of self sufficiency.

Kropotkin draws upon historical examples to illustrate occasions when workers have failed to push revolutionary situations through to their logical conclusion and have subsequently paid for it with their lives, such as in France in 1789, 1848 and 1871. The book contains some examples of real insight into the mechanics of revolutions, many of which were borne out by the Russian revolution of 1917 just 11 years after the first English edition of the book. For example, in the chapter entitled, "Food" he describes the dangers of a "Collectivist" (read State Socialist or Marxist) revolution which retains the wages system. Seeing starvation and unemployment as a possible result of the re-organisation of the economy Kropotkin writes;

"The people will be patient no longer, and if food is not forthcoming they will plunder the bakeries. Then if people are not strong enough to carry all before them, they will be shot down, to give Collectivism a fair field for experiment. To this end 'order' *must be maintained at any price - ORDER, DISCIPLINE, OBEDIENCE!"*

Then;

"Not content with shooting down the 'marauders', the faction of 'order' will search out the 'ringleaders of the mob.' They will set up again the law courts and reinstate the hangman. The most ardent revolutionists will be sent to the scaffold. It will be 1793 over again."

Finally;

"If 'order is restored', we say, the social democrats (read Bolsheviks) *will hang the anarchists, the Fabians* (read the Labour Party) *will hang the social democrats... and the Revolution will come to an end."*

It is clear that although Kropotkin is drawing upon his knowledge of the various upheavals in France since 1789, these scenarios can also be applied to the revolutions in Russia 1917, Germany 1918 and Spain 1936-1937.

Elsewhere in the same chapter Kropotkin talks of practical issues raised by revolutionary upheavals, which are often overlooked by the more idealistic elements in the libertarian movement.

"Bread, it is bread that the Revolution needs."

The ensured supply of basic commodities is essential to any successful revolution. Perhaps now in Britain the problem of food isn't as vital as it once was, but notice how quickly supplies run out once shortages of certain foodstuffs are rumoured. Indeed, here once again Kropotkin anticipated a central issue in the Russian revolution, with its slogan of "Peace, Bread and Land." Kropotkin also suggests that;

"... whether the Revolution would everywhere exhibit the same characteristics is highly doubtful."

And;

"... the Revolution will take a different character in each of the different European nations; the point attained in the socialisation of wealth will not be everywhere the same."

And finally;

"Side by side with the revolutionised communes such places (agricultural areas) would remain in an expectant attitude, and would go on living in the Individualist system." (Which is exactly what happened in Spain in 1936!).

On the role of the anarchists per se, Kropotkin writes very little. He is more interested in pointing out the libertarian attributes which already exist in the average worker, when circumstances are such that they may come to the fore, which is the very theme he concentrated on in "Mutual Aid". Neither does he dwell on any par-

ticular form of organisation which revolutionaries should employ prior to, or indeed after the revolutionary period. He maintains merely that;

"... remaining people among the people, the earnest revolutionist will work side by side with the masses..."

On this issue Kropotkin is very vague, the very antithesis of Bakunin who laid great emphasis on the organisational forms revolutionaries should adopt. However, it must be realised that the articles which make up "The Conquest of Bread" where written in the 1880's, a period when anarchists in France, where Kropotkin was living at the time, were going through a period of reorganisation and reappraisal of tactics following the repression of the Paris Commune of 1871 when tens of thousands of revolutionaries, the cream of the class, were massacred. Anarchists now operated in small groups of like minded individuals dedicated to the overthrowing of Capital and the State. They were to resist organisational forms, like political parties, which could threaten to destroy the revolutionary momentum of the people when the time came. The role of the anarchists was to be restricted to inspiring people and;

"... accentuating their revolutionary idea."

In a speech given at the 1881 International Anarchist Congress in London, there is little doubt that Kropotkin's attitude to anarchist organisation was influenced by his historical studies into the French Revolution, where the self activity of the French workers and peasants was seen to be sufficient. This concept of spontaneity combined with that of the inevitability of anarchist communism, weakened the organisational effectiveness of libertarian ideas in France until the 1890's when they returned to the labour movement.

No, "The Conquest of Bread" is no text book on revolutionary organisation, rather it is a work on anarcho-communist economics and history, the great constructivist work of the libertarian tradition. Kropotkin had by 1880 broken with the Bakuninist idea of remuneration for labour in the post-revolutionary society. While Bakunin and the Federalist wing of the First International suggested a period of economic transition between Capitalism and Libertarian Communism, Kropotkin believed it necessary to leap from one to the other, from day one of the revolution. Any retention of the wages system in whatever form, such as labour cheques or time coupons, would only result in further exploitation and injustice. He points out;

"After the Collectivist Revolution, instead of saying, 'twopence' worth of soap we shall say, 'five minutes' worth of soap."

If the revolution is to be based on the belief that all things are the common inheritance of humanity and should be held in common, why continue to operate, what logically can only be an arbitrary system of remuneration, which suggests that perhaps all things are not to be held in common after all? Collectivists are tinkering with the wages system, rather than destroying it.

The argument is a powerful one, but it presupposes much. It presupposes that the working people, the instigators and victors of the revolution, are of an extremely high moral nature. Without doubt many are and many of those who are not would change once the revolution took place. Revolutions change individuals. Cowards become heroes, the lazy become diligent, the disorganised become organisers. But for how long? Disruptions in production and the effects of civil strife would lead to the rationing of certain products for periods of time, which would lead to hoarding and further shortages. Solidarity and self-sacrifice are indeed one side of the human character, but egoism and selfishness are the other. Kropotkin's scenario presupposes an unrealistic degree of surplus in every commodity to make a transition to anarchist communism overnight a feasible proposition.

Kropotkin's ambivalent attitude towards pre-Revolutionary forms of organisation, and in particular his sceptical attitude towards anarcho-syndicalism was, I believe, a great weakness in his theory. Revolutionary unions are schools within which the membership are already practising mutual aid and co-operation, developing and educating themselves for the post revolutionary society. Revolutionary ethics and morality have to be relearned and constantly practised and reinforced while still under capitalism. The Spanish C.N.T. members, for example, had after years of struggle been schooled in what was required after the revolution and it was their moral and ethical integrity which kept the agricultural and industrial collectives going so long in extremely adverse circumstances. Kropotkin did, toward the end of his life become more supportive of the anarcho-syndicalist position, but he was always on guard against what he perceived as reformist or bureaucratic tendencies.

This brings us to the conception that Kropotkin had of anarchism as reflected in "The Conquest of Bread" and his other works. He doesn't seem to see anarchism as a political ideology on a par with, say Marxism, but rather he sees it as a constantly present tendency within human groups. Anarchism, then, is more of an anthropological category than a political one for Kropotkin. In his "Mutual Aid" he looks at the ancient European tribes, the medieval city states, the guilds, and even the animal world, for examples of solidarity, self-sacrifice and mutual aid - all aspects of the anarchist idea. In "The Conquest of Bread" he does the same. He highlights events from the French revolution where associations of labourers sprang up to till the soil together. He looks at aspects of Russian and Swiss peasant communal land use as well as the English lifeboat crews who voluntarily aid seamen in distress. This is where Kropotkin's real worth is - in the field of history and ethics. Of course some of his historical conclusions can be criticised: medieval cities were not as democratic and peaceful as he would have us believe. But he did illuminate an aspect of human history which had been completely neglected. Academics of the nineteenth century were heavily under the influence of neo-Darwinist ideas which sought to justify both capitalism and imperialism. Kropotkin was one of the very first to attempt to refute the 'survival of the fittest' idea. The basic point that humanity has made most progress under conditions of co-operation runs through the length and breadth of "The Conquest of Bread".

The book contains much of interest for present day libertarians. Kropotkin touches on "integral education", agricultural production in cities, international trade, the decentralisation of industry and much else of importance currently. It is, to reiterate, one of the great constructivist anarchist works and one of the few readily available in English. It should be read and studied by every serious anarcho-syndicalist. Kropotkin had his weaknesses - he failed to link the anarchist communist goal to the organisational strength of the revolutionary unions, as the Spanish libertarians had always done and as the French were in the process of doing by the 1890's. Had he done so, perhaps Maximov and his Russian comrades would have been in a better position to influence events in the revolutions of 1917.

Gary Hayter

Revolutionary Super Market

A Five Year History of Self-Management in Sweden

What a long, strange trip it's been...

The following is my personal reflections over the first six years of the Stockholm Anarchists' space - the Revolutionary SuperMarket - more fondly known as RSM. In order to write the following article I have made use of, besides my somewhat hazy memory, material from Brand's archive, protocols from RSMs all-meetings and giro statements from RSMs account. This description is not complete and if I have forgotten something or someone it was not on purpose, only human...

staking out a claim...

On a sunny day in the early autumn of 1992 about twenty individuals met on the back patio of Kapsylen (a libertarian activity space) in Stockholm. This meeting was held to discuss the Stockholm anarcho-movement's need of a collective space. The movement had not been able to squat and hold, in the European fashion of the time, a building and the continual wandering from space to space was not, in the long run, a viable alternative. The anarchist magazine Brand's editorial collective was exiled to a windowless basement in the upper-class neighbourhood of Östermalm and the anarcha-feminist women's café was forced to continually confront the stupidity of male café patrons at, first Kafé 44 (the anarcho-punk café at Kapsylen) and then Kafé Kapten Haddock (a café with roots in the environmental movement). Assorted action groups, amongst them Anti-Fascist Action, had to put up with totally unsuitable accommodation and AFIS, the Anarchist Federation in Stockholm, shared a communist-owned space with the anti-racist group SOS Racism.

The first ideas concerning collective space were extremely extravagant and it was here that the name, Revolutionary SuperMarket, RSM, first surfaced. The space was to be an anarcho-department store with everything from a café and shops with bio-dynamic food and recycled art and clothing to action group meetings and banner painting... However, it soon became apparent that it was the latter type of activity that interested those present who were prepared to commit themselves to a long-term project.

The project entailed many long and boring meetings, wandering up and down the streets of the traditional working class quarter of Södermalm looking for empty spaces for hire, the building of a collective economy through collections, membership dues and benefits and finally everything else that was necessary in order to enable the eventual opening of RSM.

It was during the summer of 1993 that we found the right space on a back street named Lundagatan. Before we moved in, the space had been used as a mosque and artist studios. With that in mind, it was no easy job to renovate the space to suit its new purpose and a die-hard group of twenty-five individuals worked their fingers to the bone in order to get the place together for the coming autumns activities - and the planned opening party. The opening party was a big success and approximately 350 people crowded into the sweaty and smoke filled rooms in order to take a look. RSM was now a reality.

do it yourself...

Since the autumn of 1993 many individuals have passed through the steel doors to RSM - and of those who were active when the space opened only 15% are still around today. Activity at the space has sometimes been extremely busy and sometimes extremely quiet. In the beginning, the activity at RSM was based upon the following groups; A-INFOS (S), Anti-Fascist Action-Stockholm, Brand and the Brand archive, a group of computer hackers, the newsletter INFOrm, the peoples kitchen, the lecture café Krutdurken (powder keg), the anarcha-feminist women's café group, a group of environmental activists and the Revolutionary Study Group. The array of groups has changed during the course of the years and the following have been, or still are, active; Anti-Sexist Action, The Asphalt Indians, the Chiapas solidarity group, animal rights activists, council-communists Folkmakt, Food Not Bombs-Stockholm, the anarcho-environmental café Monkey Wrench, the anti-fascist café MustAFA, the Stop Pornography Now! campaign, the anarcha-feminist women's café Antippa, different men's and women's affinity groups, Reclaim the Streets-Stockholm, Social-Ecological Action, the Syndicalist Youth Federation in Stockholm, Youth for Youths Liberation (first known as Kid Power) and the Zapata BBS.

Because RSM is unlike similar spaces in the rest of Europe - in that it's not squatted - we have had a quite stable structure from the very beginning. This was neces-

sary so that we could pay our - relatively - high monthly rent. Regular meetings encompassing all the groups using the space have been held ten times a year and we have made use of the principles of consensus when at all possible. Groups with an anarchistic ideological base have been able to join RSM after presenting themselves to one of these meeting. The groups pay rent according to their size, use of the space and economic situation. It is thought that groups, not individuals, should be the basis of RSMs activities and it has actually worked for the most part, even if certain individuals have shown themselves to be indispensable. As to RSMs financial situation, we have up until now always broke even, even if we have had our heads just above water on a number of occasions!

walk this way...

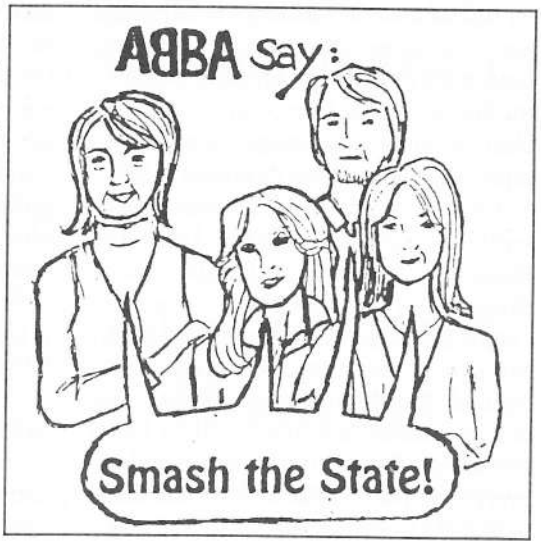
At a space of RSMs size, with it's anarchistic basis as well as with so many strong willed individuals, RSMs meetings have not always been without friction. The spaces' biggest crisis occurred in the autumn of 1995. The number of activists at RSM had increased dramatically without a complimentary increase in income from group rents and because of this our economic stability began to wobble. Right in the middle of all of this it was time to extend our lease. The discussions right before, during and after this crisis were in the most part concerned with the internal, informal hierarchies which existed within RSM and how these were to be viewed in the context of other ongoing ideological discussions of Triple Oppression, unity of oppression and the right to define oppression theories. It was not unusual for these theories to be applied upon individual experiences of how RSM operated. For a moment it seemed as if the space was to collapse, but in the last minute people pulled themselves together in order to keep the space going. These theories and social experiences have been the topics of discussion at a number of specially arranged RSM meetings.

Most of our discussions at RSM have resulted in an increased political insight as well as in political and personal practice. An example of this is that an increased consciousness of animal rights and the horrors of the meat industry have influenced RSM. Even if dairy products are still used and consumed at RSM it was a long time ago that macaroni and sausage was served at the peoples kitchen! We have even taken a stand against the horrors of tobacco and drugs as well as alcohol's negative affect upon a political movement. Smokers are at the present exiled to a crowded stairwell, drugs are explicitly forbidden and for a long while nothing stronger than low-alcohol beer was served at RSMs social activities. We have had a minor problem with thefts; some collective funds were pilfered and some unreplaceable items have disappeared from the Brand archive. Today these things are, unfortunately, under lock and key.

we've laughed...

Certain discussions have occurred over and over again at RSM during the course of the years, some of which have now taken on an almost comical character. One example is that after we had been at RSM for only a few weeks a former member of Brand's editorial collective moved a large printing press into the space, right in the middle of the entry hall to be exact. And it has stood there ever since without being of any use to anyone. How many times has itbeen said, "the printing press will be moved"? The fact of the matter is that it weighs several tons and no sensible person wants the monstrosity. Thanks Kåks. There hasn't only been anarcho-activists at RSM. We've had a rat that lived there for several months. The rat's arrival caused a conflict between animal rights activists who wanted to save the rat by "catching it" in some clever and humane way and those who believed in rat-traps. During this time the rat occupied itself by eating up material in Brands archive and all the walls from there through to the women's toilet and into the kitchen. It finally ate up a bunch of rat poison and the problem then disappeared!

Another reoccurring theme at RSMs meetings has been that of cleaning. It frequently proposed that "We divide the space into different cleaning areas - and divide them between the different groups at RSM - and the problem is solved!" We've done this seven times in five years and the space is hardly clinically sterile! In conjunction with cleaning we have also had numerous discussions about graffiti, most of which appears on toilet walls. Groups which hold open public cafés have not been overly impressed with graffiti of which "one country, one state, one proletariat" (which rhymes in Swedish) is an example. I tend to agree. The toilets have been repainted and re-graffitied over and over again. The war is now ebbing to an end. However, there are rumours that the women's toilet is still covered with both slogans and dirty words! One of the more "artistic" graffiti masterpieces was a pair of ears on the wall besides the spaces' collective telephone. A picture of it made its way into the pages of a Sunday edition of the tabloid "*Expressen*". Since then we have decided that no journalists are allowed at RSM!



we've demonstrated...

RSM has been a vital part of the ideological schooling of Stockholm's, and even Sweden's, activists. Besides the production of Brand and INFOrm, a continual schedule of study circles have been held at RSM. Courses in basic anarchism, a lecture series on imperialism, a course in Revolutionary Societal Change, weekend courses in environmental questions and anti-fascism as well as different lecture cafés have all helped spread the message of libertarian socialism during the course of the years. Organisations such as SUF and groups such as AFA have held countrywide meetings at RSM and the Scandinavian Chiapas Solidarity Groups have meet here. Legendary Swedish activists such as Britta Gröndahl and Per "Frisco" Eriksson have held lectures. International guests from the Basque country, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Germany and the USA have all visited RSM. We hosted the final party of the Swedish Syndicalist union, SAC's, International Women's Conference in 1997 and we've given financial donations to the Danish magazine Direkte Aktion, the anarchist archive in Switzerland, C.I.R.A. and solidar-

ity funds for the International Workers Aid to Bosnia and Liverpool's Women on the Waterfront. We've even collected money and clothing for our comrades who lived in the collective "Serieparaden" in Gothenburg after a crazy nazi burned down their apartment.

Action groups at RSM have been the spearhead for several countrywide and local campaigns. "Dennispaket" motorway resistance, resistance to the EU referendum, campaigns against the Swedish clothier H&Ms sexist advertising, the campaign for a nazi-free Stockholm, campaigns against the fur industry, campaigns against the fascist Sweden Democrats in the 1994 elections and the campaign Stop Pornography Now! have all had their roots at RSM. In 1994 we organised the successful demonstration "Black and White Unite and Fight" which blazed a path right through the exclusive indoor shopping centre "Sture Gallerian" in central Stockholm! Since the Association of Comrades of the Spanish Revolution stopped organising demonstrations in memory of their fallen comrades at the foot of the statue La Mano every May Day, Stockholm's Anarchists, with RSM as a base, have made it a tradition to gather there early on the first of May. Partly because it's a lot of fun to demonstrate together to the SAC-syndicalist gathering in central Stockholm and partly to remind the current social democratic organisers of the demonstration what anti-fascism means in practice! Individuals from RSM have also taken on much of the work behind the large demonstrations in Stockholm against police brutality, rape and the dictatorship of the free market. We've even been on road trips to demonstrations all over Sweden as well as to Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Madrid and Oslo.

RSM has contributed to the Stockholm anarcho-movements social activities by organising parties on the Mayday and New Years Eve and we've even had a series of activist pubs, The Spider Web, for a short while. Not all of our parties have been as successful as the opening party and the police have used some of these occasions (as well as others)to harass us. However, activities such as the peoples kitchen have really helped build bridges between, for example, anarcho-punks and activists as well as our entire heterogeneous movement.

threats from afar...

During the course of the years, as the number of activists and groups at RSM have increased and as we've developed and initiated increasingly more successful political campaigns, so too has our need for safety consciousness increased. This has been the subject of several meetings and articles in both Brand and INFOrm. This widespread consciousness is apparent in amongst other things, the small number of activists from RSM who have been arrested because of their political activities. This safety consciousness is also seen in a more comical fashion - the statements from RSMs giro account. Where in the beginning activists spelled out their entire names and addresses on these payment slips it has now evolved to almost unintelligible cryptic messages of which group is paying their rent! It is also no surprise that the police search RSMs mail, but that they are so clumsy that some letters have arrived opened and unreasonably late is laughable! We receive our important information in other ways!

The powers of law and order have entered into RSMs space on three separate occasions (twice in conjunction with wild parties and once in connection with the barricades that went up against a fascist demonstration on a central Stockholm street). However, it's my pleasure to be able to tell you that they have not yet seen all of RSMs nooks and crannies (such as those which are not indicated on the Department of Buildings blueprints - chew on that Special Branch!) Neither has the much vaunted police observation apartment on the street above RSM been able to photograph all of RSMs activists who have used the side door to our building!

Another potential threat has been nazis. But it is RSM who have caused considerable damage to their various spaces in the Stockholm area. They have never attacked *us*. Quite simply, the original White Aryan Resistance (VAM) group was chased away from AFIS' space by 150 baton waving anarchists in 1992 and the swine have never dared to come near one of our spaces since (except once - and that was only to put up a miserable little sticker on the drain pipe besides the entrance to RSM!). Not even when a confused young punk tried to sell "the keys to AFAs headquarters" on the Internet have the nazis done anything! We quite simply changed locks.

what the future holds...

It will soon be time to extend RSMs lease again. When SUF-Stockholm left RSM in the spring of 1998 in order to knit closer ties with the Local Federation of the SAC, RSMs future was widely discussed. Do we have enough enthusiasm to keep the space running for a few more years? Can we meet an eventual rent increase? Does our landlord want to keep us? All of these questions are important, but I feel that the discussion has begun at the wrong end. Can we really afford *not* to keep RSM? To return to the movement of the early 1990's, without a collective space, would be devastating for everything that we've built during the last five years. The continuity that we have in Stockholm, because of RSM, is striking when you compare Stockholm's anarcho-movement with those of other Swedish cities such as Gothenburg and Malmö. In addition, the simple fact that we must struggle to pay rent every month for the space which we have has differentiated us from movements in Copenhagen and Oslo where spaces are "free". We have not taken anything for granted and have fought for that which we have.

RSM has now turned five years old and we should be proud of that fact, not over the space itself, but for everything that we have accomplished with RSM as an indispensable part of our struggle.

Three cheers for RSM!

Kurt Svensson

Michigan Prisoners Lost Property

Introduction: To some of our readers, lost property may not sound like a big thing, but to someone in prison, where the few possessions you have can symbolise your humanity against the dehumanisation of the prison system, the loss of these items can be a major blow. How important such things are to the authorities is perhaps illustrated by the author of this piece, who was moved five times in one year. We believe these moves were punitive because Ali is a party to the Cain case mentioned. Please show your solidarity to our comrades inside in Michigan (and everywhere else... see also Ali's letter, page 32).

Michigan prisoners have been fighting a lawsuit under the case title Cain v. MDOC (Michigan Department of Corrections) for the past 12 or so years. The case, presided over by judge James Raymond Cain, was later turned into a class action case involving all of Michigan's prisoners.

The prisoners action against the MDOC was about the restricting and taking of property from them that the MDOC had initially allowed them to have. In the past the case has won some victories but recently the court has ruled against the prisoners in many respects and prisoners have been further restricted in what they can have in their possession.

Several prisons have already begun massive shakedowns by ordering prisoners to pack all their belongings (including state-issued clothing) into one duffel bag and /or personal foot locker. Radios, tape players, personal clothing, books, shoes etc., and anything else that does not fit has to be either donated, destroyed or sent home at the MDOC's expense. These items are considered contraband.

Prisoners in Michigan who have gone through this procedure have been stripped of hooded sweatshirts and sweaters, all clothing that is black or grey, and they have been limited to one coat and jacket (with the pack-up officers determining what was the jacket or coat), 3 pairs of shoes, non-black or grey baseball caps and knit caps, one pair of fingernail clippers, and so on. Items such as sewing machines or clothing that was sewed up or patched were not allowed. Appliances that weren't numbered with the prisoner's number correctly on them were destroyed, donated or sent out at the prisoner's expense. Wallets, coffee cups (once sold by the MDOC) were considered contraband. Finished hobbycraft items were no longer allowed to remain in prison...and the story goes on and on.

On September 24, 1998, at the Carson City Correctional Facility aka O.T.F. (where I was recently housed), prisonkkkrats began to shakedown one housing unit per day. First, second and third shift officers volunteered for this undertaking which was to last until October 5th when the entire process at that facility was to be finished. Reports have come in from other prisoners across the state that the wardens of various prisons had completely locked down entire prisons for this massive shakedown. Some wardens (because each warden has his own autonomy to a degree regarding what he will allow in his facility) have been running ram-shod over prisoners' personal items, taking away a lot of possessions. Just as at Carson City, while one pack-up team allows prisoners to have certain things, another pack-up team will deny other prisoners the same items. There is no consistency in the process. I see these manoeuvres as a tool the prisons are using to create hardships and bad feelings among the prisoner-class, as the prisonkkkrats are good at the "divide and conquer" tactics among the unconscious and unpoliticised prisoners.

We welcome all comrades out there sharing their opinions on this matter and letting us know what you think. You can contact us at: Raze The Walls! 2351 College Station Road, Box 532, Athens, GA 30605; or write to R. Na'il Partee # 162558, P.O. Box 480999, New Haven, MI 48048; or you can write directly to Ali Khalid Abdullah, Saginaw Correctional Facility, 9625 Pierce Road, Freeland, MI 48623, USA.

In the trenches...
Ali Khalid Abdullah, Political Prisoners of War Coalition
October 1998.

Christopher Plummer Defence Committee

A Committee has been set up to support Chris Plummer, an anarchist in jail in Texas. It can be contacted at CPDC, c/o Josh Keene, 3144 Fairfield Rd, Gettysburg, PA 17325, USA

If you do write and can spare a US stamp, it would be appreciated.

Prisoner Wants Correspondence

Steven Gallagher AN7971
HMP Haverigg
Millom
Cumbria LA18 4NA

Che: Gerald Hoskins

Brotha Che-Askari (Gerald L.Hoskins) is a prisoner in Michigan, though he is held in a private prisoner in Virginia. He is doing 35-70 years for a robbery where no one was injured.

He writes "I have been active and out front in all revolutionary prison movements...I have been put in the hole no less than 35 times because of my stance against oppression and brutality against fellow convicts. I refuse to conform or bow down to their state oppression so they transferred me to another state away from comrades (family/loved ones).

When transferred to Virginia, I had ALL my personal property taken away ... because I wouldn't discontinue my work.. My mail is presently being tampered with and I am STILL denied my constitutional rights as a prisoner."

Che has spent many years inside studying and it has helped him understand his "obligation not only to New Afrikan people, but also my obligation and responsibility to ALL the world's struggling and oppressed people no matter what race.. My aims and goals as a New Afrikan are simple: to fight against oppression and the evil monsters who push it."

He would appreciate letters.
Che: Gerald Hoskins #258360
Greenville Correctional Way,
901 Corrections Way,
Jarrett VA23807-9614 USA

Another Czech anarchist framed!

FSA-IWA militant Michal Patera faces 25 years sentence

On Friday, November 27th, five or more Czech neo-nazis physically attacked two FSA-IWA members in a Prague club. Most of them belonged to the hard core of neo-nazis in Prague and were highly skilled in Asian martial arts. Our comrades were taken by surprise as the neo-nazis arrived after they had been informed by one of their sympathizers, that Michal was present there.

Comrade S.V. was knocked out after a short fight and Michal Patera had to face the concerted attack of five neo-nazis alone. After he received several hard blows, it became clear that this time the neo-nazis wanted to take him out permanently. Cornered and desperate, he used his legally owned automatic pistol. The most aggressive fascist was shot three times and the others withdrew for a moment. Michal managed to escape, but was arrested shortly afterwards.

After a short police investigation and consultation with the special Anti-extremist Political Police Department, Michal was charged with "attempted murder motivated by ideological conviction" (§8 to §219 of Penal law). Next morning he was sentenced by the district judge to "preliminary custody", awaiting trial. The average time spent in this "custody" before trial is one year. Police interpreted the whole incident as "ideologically motivated" attempted murder, committed by well known "leftist extremists" against group of innocent ordinary "young men". Michal, therefore, faces a potential sentence of 25 years in the hardest type of prison. None of the attacking nazis face even minor charges.

To demonstrate the strength of the Czech neo-nazi movement, they had organized a meeting combined with a festival of "white music" the same day. More than 10 neo-nazi bands and 300 fascists attended the gig near Pilsen. Assault Police troops did not intervene, although anti-Semitic and fascist slogans were publicly shouted and the nazi salute given, both serious offences under Czech law. The month before, for the first time since 1930s, fascist candidates stood in municipal elections.

According to the police, there are at least 30,000 organized neo-nazis and active supporters in the Czech republic, 3000 in Prague alone. The Prague group of FSA-IWA has 10 members. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, more than one third of policemen are members or active sympathizers of neo-fascist, racist and extreme nationalist organizations. Sympathy, cooperation and often direct complicity of police personnel with neo-nazis are well-known facts.

Michal Patera is one of the most active and dedicated Czech class struggle anarchists and an active revolutionary antifascist. He has risked physical retaliation many times in direct action against neo-nazis and in the defense of anarchist movement. He is the editor of the FSA paper "The Voice of Direct Action" and very active in the field of international cooperation, especially with the Eastern countries. Solidarity and support is urgently needed!

The financial resources of the Czechoslovak anarchist movement are exhausted after the campaign to support Vaclav Jez, anarchist militant, jailed after the same type of incident in July 1997, which raised more than 70.000,- CZK (equiv. to US$2300). The total costs of Vaclav's defense are estimated to be higher than 130.000,- CZK (US$4300), almost 20 average monthly worker's wages, which are ridiculously low compared to living costs and not enough to provide a decent standard of living. We are not able to collect this sum again in such a short time.

It is absolutely vital for Michal Patera to have good defence lawyer, because the police and capitalist (In) Justice are biased. Costs will be approximately the same as in the case of Vaclav Jez. The pattern of both cases is absolutely the same. A neo-nazi combat group attacks a well-known anarchist and antifascist in order to physically eliminate him. Our comrades manage to save their lives only by the use of firearms and are subsequently jailed and framed.

We ask all revolutionary antifascists and anarchists all over the world to support our imprisoned comrade. We, Czechoslovak class struggle anarchists and revolutionary antifascists, are under constant and terrible pressure from a growing and very aggressive neo-nazi movement.

We are in desperate situation and we cannot manage without international solidarity. FSA-IWA Prague group coordinates Michal's defense campaign.

Please:

- write letters of solidarity to Michal
- send letters of protest to your local Czech embassy (Demand the release of Michal Patera (born 1976), arrested 27/11/98 in Prague and accused of §8/1 to § 219 from preliminary custody and subsequent dropping of charges, because he was brutally attacked for his antifascist and anarchist beliefs and used his gun in legitimate self-defence)
- organize protest pickets
- organise benefit gigs and collections for Michal's defence fund

prison address:
Michal Patera (1976), PO BOX 5, 14057
Praha 4, Czech republic
FSA-IWA Prague, PO BOX 5, 15006
Praha 56, Czech republic
Tel *42040)2-90006917 (FSA-IWA International secretary private number)
Tel *42040)602-224747 (hotline) - Tel: *42040)602-828361 (alternative hotline)
e-mail address for Michal's defense campaign: sam20uj@axpsu.fp.slu.cz

IMPORTANT: Czech police often check and confiscate the FSA's mail, so please, use also the e-mail and phone contacts listed above. In Britain, the Solidarity Federation is collecting for Michal. Send dosh to SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE

Barcelona ABC Communiqué

Basically, we are writing to thank you for publishing the article about the okupas in BF 214. Many thanks! Also, you gave only one reference as a contact here, but there are three and we feel its necessary to give the others and explain why they're important, as well as giving an update.

For those arrested on the Cornellà demo, some of whom are CNT members, the best contact is the CNT office in Joaquim Costa, to whom they are affiliated. For the rest of those arrested, okupas, then people should get in touch with l@s okupas through the Ateneo de Gràcia, c/Perill 52, 08012 Barcelona (fax 93 213 7208, tel: 93 284 8667, email: usurpas@iname.com, web page: http://www.tande.com/usurpa). Or with the ABC (Barna) at Apartado de Correos 38084, 08080 Barcelona. (Don't put any names or comments, just the address).

It's important to distinguish between CNT members, or any other organisation or collective, and the okupas because, firstly, the okupas don't present themselves as members of any of these organisations; and secondly to avoid giving the impression that everyone is a CNT member, which just isn't true. To avoid misunderstandings, it's important to state this clearly.

In the article, we gave figures of those arrested. There are now a lot more. Since the introduction of the Nuevo Codigo Penal (New Civil Code) in April-May 1996 there have been 51 known evictions of casas okupadas and 430 arrests. These are evictions of "spaces reinvindicados" with banners and murals, and not of other squatted places which are not in contact with the okupas, or have to be more discreet and don't figure in this list so the real number is obviously more.

There are other charges against those arrested at evictions including 177 cases outstanding for misuse of property (usurpación) and another 167 additional charges brought by the cops. The state has demanded total sentences of 400 years.

Luis Gil y Vicente, arrested during the demo after the La Princesa eviction, has declared himself a prisoner of the ABC and faces a sentence of 3 years. However, after a demo last June of 5000 people and an official request of an 'indulto' (pardon) signed by all the parties except the Partido Popular, the judge has not signed the arrest warrant pending the outcome of the pardon. This has to be granted by the central government - led by blue-shirted Falangist Aznar and his Partido Popular cohorts - and be signed by the King.

Until now not one okupa has gone to prison, due to the slow legal system, so Luis' case is important as it sets a bad precedent.

Another alarming development is the sentence against the14 okupas who occupied property owned by the Barcelona Ayuntamiento (City Council) in November 97. This became known as the Regomir case.

The judge dismissed the case because the Ayuntamiento didn't turn up in court and the attorney general in Catalonia, José María Mena, said that his legal department would not take action against the okupas if the following conditions were met:

1. The owner didn't go to court

2.The eviction was "peaceful"eg.no fighting the cops

3. The occupied building was used as a social centre (Centro Social Okupado) and not as a living space

This declaration, made at a press conference alongside the Socialist Mayor of Barcelona, was in response to the hoo-haa caused by the cops brutally attacking the okupas, their families, friends and supporters, the offensive against the okupas in February and Luis' case.

Despite all this, a couple of weeks ago the 14 were notified that they would each have to pay a fine of 1000 pesetas a day, for 45 days or spend 3 months in prison. This has happened because "someone" in Mena's department asked another judge to give a different sentence in the Regomir case. The only thing the okupas demand now is that Mena asks another judge to overthrow the second judge's sentence, thus re-acquitting them.

Any forms of protest should be directed to Joan Clos, Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Plaça de St Jaume, 08003 Barcelona. Tel: 93 402 70 00

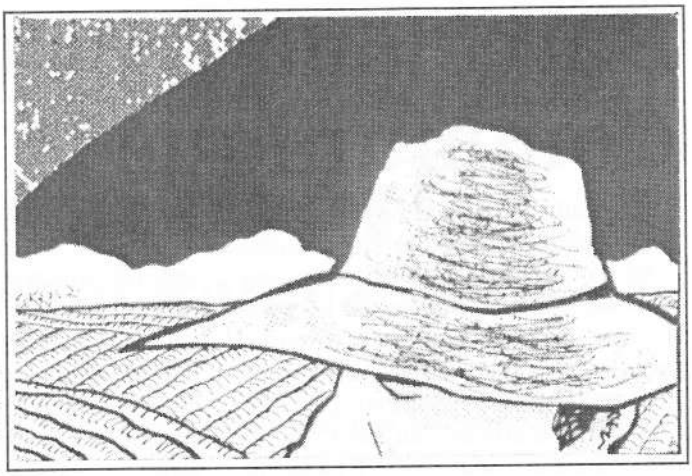
To the Fiscalia General, Josep Maria Mena, c/Pau Claris 180, 08010 Barcelona Fax: 93 482 3359

To the President of Catalunya, Jordi Pujol, Generalitat de Catalunya, Plaça de St Jaume, 08003 Barcelona Tel: 93 482 05 00.

Any actions undertaken against "Spanish" economic and social interests, Catalan interests (e.g. Welsh and Scottish nationalist connections, language courses etc.) or other Socialist Parties who are also in contact with the Socialist Party of Spain would not go amiss!

In a later communiqué we'll inform you in more detail of the gravity of the situation here in Barcelona-Catalonia concerning "human rights", and of the consequences for other cities around the world. Barcelona is being peddled as a model of "multi-cultural diversity" and is already receiving large sums of international money. It has planned the Forum 2004, a re-run of the Olympics to bring in money from tourism for a city which is already in debt until the year 2015 from the last event. Despite massive corruption it is being cast as the model for all other cities to emulate. For example Glenda Jackson, Labour's preferred candidate for Mayor of London, was "inspired by Barcelona". Perhaps the Belgian anarchist Noel Godin could put a flan in her face like he did to Bill Gates earlier this year. If not for afters perhaps for starters. ¡La Lucha sigue!

Ecology & Anarchism: Essays and Reviews on Contemporary Thought



This book is not a unified thesis upon anarchism and ecology or their relationship to one another. Although contemporary thought is assessed, a fair percentage of the book is given over to looking at the life and ideas of a variety of historical figures, some of whom have little association with anarchism or ecology at all. A less engaging title, but which more accurately describes its contents, might have been Collected Essays of Brian Morris.

Anarchism and ecology, are however, very much major themes/threads, both of which are explored intelligently and engagingly. Morris explores, with great lucidity, various perspectives which, Bookchin, myself, Morris and others, have for quite some time been involved in criticising: lifestylism, deep-ecology, neo-malthusianism, eco/anarcho-mysticism, vegetarianism, eco-feminism, anti-industrialism/rationalism, wilderness worship involving romanticism, anti-humanism and escapism, and a lot more neoisms besides. Morris' analysis of radical ecology in relation to anarchism, published over a number of years in a variety of journals are now collected in a single volume and rendered more accessible. He is deeply worried by the voluminous amount of horseshit that is being published upon green thought, which threatens the integrity and credibility of social and ecological philosophy. At one point he talks of a virtual conspiracy by publishers against non-religious or genuinely radical works examining libertarian or anarchist ecology. At the risk of sounding paranoid, I couldn't agree more.

Morris is a big fan of Bookchin and has a tendency to judge other thinkers in relation to his ideas. Morris's use/exegesis of Bookchin is not however unjustifiable. It is also adept succinct and intelligent; bringing out or summarising what is most worthwhile in Bookchin's works.

By way of criticism, I found it a little disquieting that Morris when not referring to Bookchin explores the history of anarchism and ecology largely through discussion of a variety of mystics and non-anarchists: Lao Tzu, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Erich Fromm (whom are all given a whole essay). Although he acknowledges Kropotkin positively in places, his ideas are not explored in detail. Elisee Reclus is not mentioned at all, despite the fact that he was writing profound works upon nature in the 1860's, long before Kipling, Seton, or any of the other non-anarchist precursors of modern ecology who Morris chooses to examine. Fourier also would have been worthy of some attention. Geographers and pioneering (non-anarchist) scientists, such as Humboldt and Ritter, who inspired Reclus' early works might also have been worthy of mention.

Although Morris endorses the practicality of the green and self-governing city in, for example, his discussion of Kirkpatrick Sale's bioregionalism and the organisation of the Paris sections in the French Revolution, the lack of an industrial perspective and the focus upon such figures as Tolstoy or Aurobindo may lead the reader to assume that anarchism is primarily about small-scale communal experimentalism. Another deficiency is that it is a book by an anarchist for anarchists. It assumes prior knowledge of anarchist theory through containing no introduction to what the basic principles of anarchism are. By restricting its audience the book looses a great deal of propaganda value. It is a mistake to assume that the majority of people have any real knowledge concerning anarchism.

As noted at the beginning, this book is a diverse collection of essays concerning a wide variety of personalities, movements and issues. The essay on Lao Tsu I thought was rather weak, though Morris is right to highlight the important insights contained in studies of Lao Tsu's works. Lao Tsu was a profound thinker with affinities to modern ecological thought and anarchism. Lao Tsu however, was not the founder of anarchism or scientific-naturalism as Morris claims. A similar sort of viewpoint can be found in earlier pre-Socratic thinkers, Heraclitus (who was from Persia) is particularly noteworthy in this respect. I really think (and Morris in his essay on the French revolution suggests this) that anarchism, although having ancient roots, begins during the great European revolutions and developed further in response to the developmentof industrial-capitalism. I do not believe that the retrospective inclusionof pre-modern and ancient thinkers into the anarchist tradition is veryuseful or particularly valid. Morris is sympathetic to Chomsky, but criticises him for his lack of attention to environmental issues. An essay upon the displacement and deterritorialization of the 30million tribals (aborigines) of India and the terrible effect upon their environment from deforestation is entirely consistent with my own assessment of the situation when I visited tribal areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Kanartaka. The book also contains essays upon Bolshevism, Flores Magon and Thomas Spence. Theessay on Spence I thought was a particularly interesting piece of scholarship concerning a much neglected early British revolutionary, about,whom I was previously quite ignorant. Upon the basis of Morris' scholarship it would be fair to say that Spence who began writing in 1775 had a notion of a decentralised society consisting of complex federations of self-governing communities and independent local industries interacting with one another upon the bases of need and equality in the absence of centralised national government. This vision has close affinities with that suggested by Proudhon and Kropotkin.

There is something to interest everyone in this fine collection of essays that is currently available for a very reasonable price.

Graham Purchase

Small Communal Experiments and Why They Fail

Peter Kropotkin

Published by Jura Media, Sydney (available for £1 from Black Flag)

This pamphlet consists of three pieces: a speech on Communism and Anarchy, a letter declining an invitation from a group of comrades to become treasurer of their communal venture in the north of England and pointing out some of the difficulties their venture might expect to encounter, and a reply to a group of Australian comrades who sought his view on the advisability of their emigrating to South America, to set up a communist community. None of these deal mainly with the reasons why small communal experiments fail, though they all touch on the problems of such communities.

Kropotkin takes the view that isolation from the indigenous economy will create problems. A community of 2,000 people would be a pretty large one as these experiments go. Even at that size it would not be possible for it to provide all the cultural and leisure attractions that are available in any town in the capitalist system. Kropotkin concludes that for a community to cut itself off from the surrounding population is a mistake because members thereby deprive themselves of a range of cultural opportunities.

All such experiments start with a more severe handicap, imposed by the capitalist system. All those who join it have spent part of their earlier lives working. But this work has accumulated them no credit. The wages they have earned have been spent on survival and the profits they produced have been taken by the employer. Any newly formed community will have to obtain land and equipment. The acquisition of these items will immediately put the fledgling community into debt. So such communities struggle from the start and often fail to survive because of material factors.

But Kropotkin's most interesting insight into the dynamics of such communities relates to their size. This determines the way they make decisions. Groups of up to 200 people will be more subject to internal dissension than groups with 2,000 members. In smaller groups people are thrown more closely together and are less easily able to avoid contact with those to whom they are antagonistic. This will lead to personal tensions. The method of decision making will also tend to be more difficult in smaller groups. In communities of this sort unanimity is required in all decision making. But smaller groups will tend to seek decisions on more detailed matters than large ones, and the more detail you get into the greater is the likelihood of people disagreeing. The need for unanimity means that members must accept certain broad objectives when they join. From then on, if there are 2,000 members, unanimous agreement will only be feasible on very broad terms.

These are parts of the pamphlet the publisher wishes to emphasise, judging by the title he has given to the collection. But I found the cogent re-statement, in the speech "Communism and Anarchy" of the diffferences between authoritarian state communism and anarchist communism much more interesting and valuable. Of particular interest is the analysis of the notion that we need to take the political road and take over the state. Kropotkin's rejection of this folly is forthright.

Black Flag On-line!

Black Flag is now on the Information Superhighway. Articles from previous issues and links to other anarchist webpages can be found at:

http://members.xoom.com/blackflag/

Thanks to Ben for all his hard work in making it happen. If you want to send us articles, reports or just want to get in touch, our e-mail address is:

blakflag@dircon.co.uk

For other anarchist resources on the Internet and an in-depth discussion of anarchist ideas, ideals, theory and history, visit the Anarchist FAQ at:

http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/

This site has links to over 400 anarchist and related webpages, organisations, papers, books, printers and mailing lists. Best place to discover the on-line anarchist community as well as what anarchism is about.

Strike support group

Activists from the Steve Hedley campaign (see BF 215) have set up a permanent strike support group, to provide solidarity and assistance whenever workers are drawn into struggle. The Group intend to be activity based and activist led. Its goals are:

1. To give financial aid to workers in struggle.

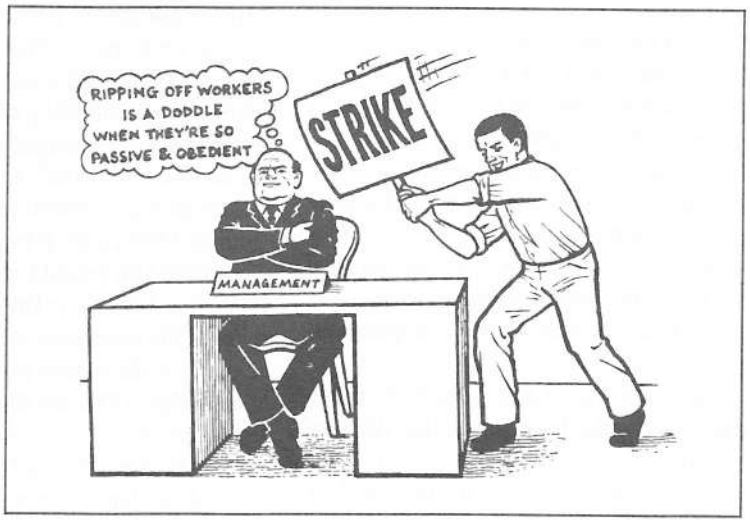
2. To give striking workers resources to print and publish their own leaflets.

3. To physically support pickets & other demonstrations of workers in struggle.

4. To support all strikers - except when they are reactionary (e.g. dockers in support of Enoch Powell).

Everyone who is serious about intervening in the class struggle in a way that will make a difference is urged to get involved.

The group meet weekly on Mondays at the Cock Tavern, London NW1 at 7.30pm



The Contract Of Mutual Indifference

NORMAN GERAS (VERSO)

Norman Geras, in this latest collection of essays, forces us to confront arguments too long avoided by all of us who seek a better world. Questions of whether, beyond the limitless exploitation of man by man under capitalism, indifference to suffering is the norm of humankind. Whether - given evidence of (particularly from the present century) atrocious human cruelty, murderous division and conflict and our species' aptitude for large scale organised bloodletting - human beings are capable of creating a democratic, egalitarian society.

It is Geras' contention that socialists have ducked the challenge of the Holocaust; that (and here he quotes the historian Ian Kershaw), "The road to Aushwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference" - and that the existence of this "mutual indifference" has to have consequences for the anti-capitalist project.

Geras examines a range of survivor testimonies from the Holocaust - the writings of, amongst others, Primo Levi, Terrence Des Pres and Elie Wiesel, to chart that combination of barbarity and collusion which makes the fact of the Shoah weigh so heavily upon the revolutionary hopes of the generation who followed on. The essence of what is at issue can be conveyed through two examples drawn from the range of Geras's readings. The first, the more familiar, is the observation of Martin Niemoller-

First they came for the Jews
I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew
Then they came for the Communist
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the trade unionist
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for me
and there was no-one left to speak out for me.

Secondly, from Adina Swajger, from her writings on the burning of the Warsaw ghetto:-

And the people?...For me they all had one face, an empty one. Because it was all far away. Behind the wall. It just did not concern them. In the same way we are not really concerned about children dying of hunger in Biafra, Ethiopia, or in India.

The conclusions Geras draws from the knowledge of the Holocaust, from the grim recognition of man's capacity for inhumanity is, simply, that "maximalist dreams of socialist utopias" and the perfectibility of man have to be put aside, that History can only support a "limited notion of progress and of socialist utopia." In this, in light of the extent and content of the evidence, he is, I would contend, correct. Geras proposes that the "hope of socialism has to be sustained on the basis of (the) assumption (that) the goal of a much better and a more just society is to be fought for not because human beings are by nature overwhelmingly or essentially good, but because and in spite of the combination in their nature of bad impulses with good ones. Because of the bad impulses this struggle is necessary. In spite of them, it is to be hoped, a socialist society may yet be possible." This has to be the conclusion ultimately drawn for all that we can recognise the injuries of "class, race, gender, and religion" in preparing the ground for the commission of atrocities, it is nevertheless beyond argument that such atrocities are within the capacity of "human nature."

Geras warns against accepting that "Aushwitz gives us the truth about human nature - not merely a truth, but the truth", against ignoring the "historicity and conditions" of the Holocaust, such that "humanity's accumulating crimes live on...in the shape of the thought that such is what we are and have to be". Reluctantly (and it is with genuine reluctance given the moral courage Geras's book both embodies and pays tribute to) I would argue that it is precisely that historicity that Geras avoids in some of his more general conclusions

One of the essays provides a critique of the Belgian Marxist Ernest Mandel's attempts to identify the causes of the Holocaust. Mandel's starting point is that it is "capitalism that is responsible for their (the Jews') tragic fate and for the impasse in which the whole of humanity finds itself." He contextualises the Holocaust by reference to "the deportation of ethnic Germans from parts of east and central Europe at the end of the war, the callousness of the British towards mass suffering in India, or of the Americans in connection with the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima".

Geras retorts that, "The Holocaust is here turned into a more or less regular type of occurrence of our epoch, terrible as it may have been, it only anticipates much worse..." He finds this position crudely reductionist, that it takes away from the uniqueness of the Holocaust. He refers us to the example of the bloodlust demonstrated by German reserve policemen in Poland, their "elation and lust for killing". He refers us to the historian Saul Friedlander's notion of the "noncongruence between intellectual probing and the blocking of intuitive comprehension", to Isaac Deutscher's sense of the "huge and ominous mystery of the degeneration of the human character that will forever baffle and terrify mankind", and to Primo Levi's preference for "the humility of those historians who 'confess to not understanding'". It is almost as if Geras accepts that to propose that the Holocaust is rationally explicable is to betray the memory of those who perished. Any attempt at context is condemned. Yet without an understanding of the socio-historic circumstances surrounding the Holocaust we are left with nothing more than "elation and the lust for killing" as cause.

Between 1914 and 1990, 187 million have been killed in the course of war. The First World War marked a move away from any notion of "combatants and non-combatants". Barbarism became the norm. Inhumanity was underpinned by racial contempt, rooted in the ideology of imperialism. As Eric Hobsbawn has observed, "Would General Dyer in 1919 have ordered his men to fire into a crowd killing 379 people, if the crowd had been English...and not Indian, or the place Glasgow not Amritsar? Almost certainly not. The barbarism of Nazi

Germany was far greater against Russians, Poles, Jews and other people considered sub-human than against West Europeans..." (On History p258). The European ruling class that pretended abhorrence at the extermination of the Jews cheered the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, suppressed the Greek Resistance by force and contemplated nuclear holocaust as a rational response to any threat to its grand designs. It is not to reduce the specific horror of the Holocaust to suggest its roots lie in the sheer barbarism of capitalism itself. As Rudolf Hess asserted, "The Third Reich was founded on an idea that came from the trenches."

Elsewhere Geras argues that, "in the light of what humans can do and have done to one another, we have every reason to want to continue setting limits around the more harmful and menacing types of human potentiality. All the paraphernalia of the rule of law...follow. The realm of freedom is restricted". The collusion of substantial numbers of the German people in the Nazi project was predicated upon the smashing of the organised working class and, as Goebbels put it, the establishment of propaganda as "an essential function of the modern state. No one else has brought to such a degree of virtuosity the art of dominating the masses". Fascism exploited the habit of obedience fostered by the rule of law under capital, under conditions where all meaningful opposition to the capitalist norm had been suppressed. To suggest that the lesson to be drawn from this is to maintain the repressive machinery of the state under socialism, not even as a means of securing the state against a resurgent bourgeoisie, but against the risk of our own bad conscience is to effectively abandon the liberatory project in its entirety. If socialism is our best hope against the barbarism inherent in capitalism, we would do well to remember Rudolph Rocker's warning that "Socialism will be free or it will not be at all."

"The Contract of Mutual Indifference" is troubling and provocative, as befits the import of its subject. If we wish to continue to believe in and fight for "the continued hope in the better possibilities of human nature" we cannot ignore the arguments Geras puts forward. No project for social transformation can seek to ignore the history of atrocity and resistance of the Shoah.

From Occupation to Independence

Richard Hart

Richard Hart, Caribbean labour movement activist and historian, has produced a useful short history of the region. The book encompasses the English-speaking region and examines the development of the slave trade and the role of labour rebellions in the fight for political independence.

Hart roots his study in an unflinching examination of the barbarism of the colonial exploitation there. "The European states that colonised the Caribbean region were acquisitive and aggressive. They inflicted great suffering on the aboriginal Amerindian people, in several islands to the point of extinction. They were also often at war with each other with the result that, until the first decade of the 19th century, there were frequent changes of possession. To the few Amerindians on the Caribbean islands who survived , this incessant fighting over the lands stolen from them must have appeared to be a case of thieves falling out!" The extent to which the French revolutionary government's 1791 declaration that all free men in the empire, whatever colour, were equal, inspired uprisings in Saint Dominique and Grenada is briefly examined, with British loathing of republican France manifested in bloody interventions throughout the Caribbean.

Hart details the extent to which plantation slave labour produced sufficient wealth to transform ports like Liverpool and Bristol into major cities, and, quoting the slave trader John Newton, establishes the brutal nature of the techniques of exploitation involved: "By rigorously straining their strength to the utmost, with little relaxation, hard fare, and hard usage, to wear them out before they became useless and unable to do service, and then to buy new ones, to fill up their places..."

Hart's exploration of the forms of resistance slaves adopted to fight against their exploitation is both moving and inspirational, the brutality of slavery being met head on by the dignity of those who refused to abandon their right to freedom: "resistance was offered in many ways. Minor resistance included inducement of abortions by some women to ensure that they did not bear children enslaved from birth... Individual escapes were attempted... Higher forms of resistance took the form of mass escapes, rebellion, or conspiracy to rebel, and guerrilla warfare." Slave uprisings were, inevitably, brutally suppressed, with mass executions of rebel leaders often resorted to as a public deterrent. As Hart states, "The numerous .. conspiracies and rebellions that took place.. all ended in defeat. But (they) were nevertheless significant in that they kept the torch of liberty burning in the hearts of oppressed men and women and demonstrated their determination to be free. Had so many ... not fought for their freedom, the voices of those who condemned the slave trade would have been heard to less effect."

Hart's work on the development of an organised labour movement across the Caribbean is particularly detailed, focusing on the battles to sustain working class organisation which culminated in a wave of unrest across the Caribbean in the 1930s. In 1937, oil field workers, sugar workers and wharf workers took part in a wave of strikes which revealed both the extent of popular frustration, and the lack of direction of the spontaneous organisations thrown up, with the rebellions being capped partly by moves to channel militancy in the direction of the building of a reformist trade union movement. The formation of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union in Jamaica in 1938 betrays a similar tale; the subordination of independent working class interests to a cross-class nationalism, reducing organised labour to the footsoldiers of the national independence movement - enfranchisement and self-determination extending only as far as the freedom from direct rule, not freedom from exploitation.

In 1937, faced with labour rebellion across the Trinidadian oil fields, the Acting Colonial Secretary, Howard Nankivell, was forced to concede, "In the past we have had to salve our consciences with humbug and we have had to satisfy labour with platitudes. Those days have gone by...An industry has no right to pay dividends at all until it pays a fair wage to labour and gives the labourer decent conditions."

Sadly, despite their profound history of militancy in pursuit of self organisation and independence, the right even to a "fair wage... and decent conditions" continues to be denied to most working people across the Caribbean. Richard Hart's detailed and inspiring book can at least play some part in re-establishing within the Caribbean labour movement the spirit of rebellions like Morant Bay to set against the reformism with which it is at present beset.

Letter from an American Prison

Dear BF,

I was reading BF 214 and noticed several well written letters from prisoners on page 29 and 30. However the focus of this letter is the letter that Mark Barnsley wrote regarding the conditions he and other prisoners are undergoing. I was amazed to read that prisons in Britain have become more like and have adopted the American prison system, i.e. the three strikes law, the reopening of "control units" etc. This is important information because most of us in the united states are not aware and had not been aware of the conditions prisoners face there. British prison officials, like those in the American Prison system, have begun to punish prisoners for proclaiming their innocence and for working to prove their innocence. Like America, the British prison system have begun to lock up those whom they feel are "subversive" and the only reason why ones are labelled this is because the prison authorities want to silence the voice of the prisoner. They want to make sure that the injustices done to the prisoner are not known and that the prisoner receives no outside support.

We find this to be the case in America with their maddening prison build up. America leads the world in incarceration of its people. Why ? Because the government have found a way to make huge profits off the backs of prisoners. They have found out how to incarcerate and how to make those they incarcerate work and generate millions of dollars for them under the conditions of slave labour. They have discovered that it is profitable to have prisoners making products for pennies a day and resell those products for dollars.

Mark was right to say that the "so-called 3 strikes law is going to lead to an increase in both the murder rate and the number of miscarriages of justice". This is evident by what is happening here in the American prison system. More and more people are being denied anything close to adequate representation in the judicial system and the courts. The quality of adequate and impartial representation from lawyers has gone down. Mainly this is so because it is a vast conspiracy [in my opinion] to ensure an overload of prisoners to fill the high priced prisons America has. With the influx of more people being incarcerated we also find the quality of life for many people on the streets has gone down. The working class I am speaking of. The police and the legal system have the working class hostage and in fear of taking proactive measures to demand an end to state-terrorism by law enforcement who run wild over the rights of the people. It doesn't change much for anyone to be trumped-up on a charge and held for years in prison before the truth of their innocence is discovered.

However, there's still hope and there is still time to stop this madness. What we need to do is make our voices known in such a way that the authorities understand , without a doubt that we are not going to stand for their abuses any more. However this will take a strong networking commitment of prisoners in the UK and here in the US. It will also take a lot of networking between the anti-racist and anti-prison groups in the UK and in the US.

I believe that we can make sure that the prisons aren't filled and that those in the prisons are [not] tortured, denied human rights and dignity if we all stand together and fight this evil.

This is not merely a war being declared, by the governments, on so-called crime. It is a war on the working class and the masses of unemployed, Blacks, the poor, the homeless, and those who are economically disadvantaged.

In the trenches...

Ali Khalid Abdullah #14830

S.C.F.,9625 Pierce Rd.

Freeland, MI 48623, USA

(You might also like to write to:
Mark Barnsley,WA2897,E Wing HMP Full Sutton, York, YO4 1PS)

June 18th 1999

The G8 club of rich nations will meet on June 18th-20th. Groups are organising for actions to happen on the 18th in financial districts, markets and institutions. The City of London is one of the key hubs of the global economy and will be the main target of UK actions.

Lots of groups are involved in calling this, including Reclaim the Streets (*rts@gn.apc.org* or tel: 0171-281 4621)

quiz answers

1.Sir Herbert Manzoni, city engineer of Birmingham, responsible for Spaghetti Junction and the redevelopment of the city centre into the soul-less, car dominated Bull Ring.

2. Keyhinge is a subcontractor of M-B of America, who supply the toys given away at McDonalds. Need I say more?

3. In 1426, a quarrel between the Duke of Gloucester and Cardinal Beaufort was settled at Northampton. They were forbidden to bear arms, so all came along with clubs or bats. One wonders if the idea ought not to be revived.

4. It is a command to massacre without quarter.

an open letter about the anarchist bookfair

This years anarchist bookfair was probably one of the best so far. For the first time there was not enough space for all those groups who wanted a stall, meetings were packed out, and those attending were not just the normal anarcho & punk types we all know, and are part of. This year there were people who were not anarchists, who heard about the event and came along to see what our ideas were about. Perhaps all the stickers, posters and leaflets actually had an effect?

The bookfair has always been well organised, and a chance for those of us "in the movement" to meet up, swap information and generally make (or re-establish) contacts with others. For most of us the bookfair seems to just happen. It's good it "just happens" as it means a lot of us can carry on doing the stuff we are doing and we do not have to make time to organise another event. Congratulations to those behind the scene who make it happen every year.

However, looking at the 1998 bookfair there seems a few questions that need to be asked and maybe a few problems that need solving.

Firstly, has the bookfair outgrown Conway Hall? Groups are being packed tighter & tighter into the building because space is so limited, meetings are crammed to bursting point because we don't have any larger rooms. The creche this year was put in a very small room because of limited space - although congratulations to the organisers, as again there was a properly staffed creche, which meant those of us with kids felt better about leaving our kids. Hopefully the creche will now be a regular, well publicised, feature of future bookfairs. I have heard people say we should not change a formula that works and it should be kept at Conway Hall. But should our ideas and propaganda not be seen by 1000's more if we can do it. How much longer can we cram into Conway Hall ?

Secondly, the bookfair is organised every year by a dedicated, but small, group of people - although others do get involved from time to time. This is good for the rest of us because we can "leave it to them". But should this be the way ? Should more of us not get involved in making the event a much bigger and better expression of our ideas and beliefs? Should we not take more of an interest in one of our only "annual" events to promote our ideas? However, this must be done tactfully as those who have been organising it for the last 17 years need to still be involved in the decision making. It could be easy for enthusiastic newcomers to feel they have all the answers and sideline those of us who have put on this event over the years.

Thirdly, the running of the bookfair on the day. There were a number of events at this years bookfair which caused problems, which as anarchists we should be better at dealing with.

The first was the tactics of dealing with the alleged fascist who turned up. I guess the person involved did have fascist links. However there was quite a lot of disruption for only one fascist. People with kids were a bit worried, as I am sure were people who had turned up to see what anarchist ideas were about. If we intend to increase publicity about the bookfair we must assume there is a chance individual fascists or groups of them may turn up - if just to sniff around. We need to plan better for these situations.Maybe people agreeing to be stewards, who would quickly and quietly deal with the situation.

Secondly, at the end of the bookfair. This year, like last year, there was a benefit event in the evening. I was not involved in organising the evening event, but did agree to help clear up and get money off people for the benefit. Yet again it seemed to be the same faces helping out. Even more annoying was the attitude of some people in the hall at this time. Those of us who helped out did so because things needed to be done: firstly to get the hall ready for the evening event, and secondly to leave the building clean so we can use it again. As anarchists we have to take control of our own lives and environment. It's a shame these views are felt by so few of us. A number of "anarchists" sat by and watched as we rushed around clearing away tables, cleaning the floors and removing all the posters/ leaflets from the walls. Maybe I am living in cloud cookoo land, but it would have been nice to have other "comrades" offering with a few minutes help. The attitude of a few of those there ranged from not even moving out of the way while we were clearing up, to down right abuse at being asked to move. This from people who would probably call themselves anarchists

This leads onto the next "problem. The evening event was a benefit for the Anarchist bookfair and the Zapatistas. A number of us went round people in the hall explaining what the money was to be used for. We expected the normal round of excuses about why people couldn't pay £3 - and generally we gave in and took less from those who pleaded poverty. What we didn't expect is the level of abuse we got. This ranged from being called a "fascist" and "being worse than fucking coppers", to claiming we were ripping people off, or pocketing the proceeds. I know that anybody who has put on benefit gigs has gone through this, but why the fuck should we - especially from other "so called" anarchists.

Although I left before the bands came on, I understand the night got even worse. Apparently, some lovely chaps decided it would be really anarchic to piss over the balcony onto fellow anarchists in the hall below. Others let off fire extinguishers (over other people) & threw bottles at council flats nearby; stickers were plastered all over Conway Hall. All in all Conway Hall charged the organisers £200 to clean up all the mess. Why should Conway Hall staff (who are also working class) have to clean up piss and the rest after us lot. There are a lot better targets than Conway Hall or fellow gig goers - but then again that might take a bit to much effort. Some anarcho types have been a bit holier-than-thou and said the organisers should have expected this if they are having punk bands at a benefit. This is not the answer either. I for one like punk gigs, but I don't feel I have to fuck over other punters or like minded organisers. It would be good to hear replies from those who were involved in the anti-social behaviour justifying their actions - or would that not be an anarchist enough thing to do?

I don't have all the answers, nor am I that brilliant at putting my views across in writing. I would guess there will be loads of opportunities in this open letter for those more articulate than me to criticise individual words or sentences. Hopefully not many of you will feel the need to do this. The idea of this letter is though to get discussion going about improving the bookfair, pushing our ideas onto a much wider and diverse audience and how we treat each other and anti-social elements of our "movement" who turn up regularly at such events.

Tony

whither the IWA?

Dear Black Flag,

It took a great deal of courage for Black Flag to print Kieran Casey's open letter to the IWA in your last issue. At last we are beginning to see admissions by folks with connections to the IWA, that something is wrong. The false portrayal of SAC as an organization trying to promote a reformist agenda on the international syndicalist movement has kept the IWA from working together with the SAC during a critical time in our history. Just when the world marxist movement has disintegrated, and left a political opening for alternatives, the anarchists and syndicalists are fragmented and more interested in fighting each other than in building a mass revolutionary movement. Now when a strong IWA is needed, its sectarianism has made it unable to carry out the functions it was created for.

Why is the IWA so sectarian? Basically it is because of two reasons: the domination of the Spanish section, and the IWA's haphazard affiliation process. In the first case, the rebirth of the CNT in the 1970s revitalized the IWA by recalling the past glories of the Spanish Revolution. Unfortunately the CNT of today is not the the CNT of the 1930s. After a brief explosion of activity, the CNT begin to split apart as it faced the problems of all revolutionary unions working within liberal democracies, and it did not have enough members with either the experience or commitment to adapt to these conditions. As a consequence of the internal schism, the CNT began to look for scapegoats, and saw enemies everywhere. The non-Spanish sections of the IWA, naturally followed the CNT's leadership. Every internal problem in the revolutionary syndicalist movement in every country became part of a grand conspiracy. If the sections of the IWA, however, had been a little less influenced by CNT paranoia, they might have seen CNT fears as being specific to what the CNT was going through domestically, and taken these fears less seriously.

The paranoia of the CNT was made worse by the affiliation policies of the IWA. After the CNT reorganized there was a rush of syndicalist groups wanting to become part of the IWA. In some countries these syndicalist groups were representative of the revolutionary unionists living in that country and had some roots in the workplace. In other countries these groups were small sectarian outfits wanting to promote themselves by becoming the "official voice" of the IWA (ie. CNT) and did not represent the majority of syndicalists in that country. The IWA did not make a serious effort to distinguish the one candidate from another, but awarded section status on a "first come, first served" basis. So in the countries where sectarian outfits became the IWA affiliate, the majorty of syndicalists suddenly found themselves "beyond the Pale", outside of the IWA, and with no way to communicate to the IWA except through the offices of their sectarian rivals. The sectarian affiliates of the IWA, in turn, fed the paranoia of the CNT by implying that anyone who criticized any IWA affiliate must be part of the "counter-revolutionary" conspiracy.

Can the situation be salvaged? This will depend on the non-Spanish sections of the IWA. There is probably nothing that anyone outside of Spain can do about the internal problems of the CNT. The CNT will have to get its own act together. However there is no reason why the rest of the IWA should let the Spanish situation dictate what goes on in the rest of the world. This may mean "biting the bullet" and voting down CNT proposals that promote sectarianism, and voting for re-establishing communications with the SAC. If the CNT doesn't like it, then make them decide what is more important: always getting their way, or co-operating with the rest of the movement? Also the IWA needs to re-examine its affiliation process, and make sure that its affiliates in every country actually represent the revolutionary unionists there. This might mean establishing direct communications with organizations like the IWW, which are presently having to work around small IWA affilates, one tenth their size, in a ludicrous diplomatic protocol.

The IWA should be a forum for the majority of the revolutionary labor movement, not an umbrella group for a collection of small anarchist or syndicalist sects.

In Solidarity, Jeff Stein

Green Anarchist Again

Hi,

I'm writing to you after reading BF215 which I picked up at the 1 in 12 Club in Bradford as normal. I was impressed by this issue which had a lot of useful and inspirational stuff in it. However, I was less impressed when I read on.. The reports in BF214 and the booklet from the Mayday conference about the lack of backbiting, and the feeling of moving forward were good and uplifting. Upon getting to the latter half of the magazine I was dismayed to read the letters page and some of the articles, which hearkened back to the bad old days of constant sniping at each other through the pages of different magazines. The amount of space spent having a go at Green Anarchist appeared to me to be a waste which could be put to better use having a go at our real enemies - those who have authority over us, our lives and our futures. Much of it was irrelevant unless you are heavily involved in the scene and already knew what was going on - in Bradford we have real problems to deal with, which means that you either get along or find something else to do - but you don't waste precious time and resources having a got at each other.

I realise that GA has been of great importance to us recently with the GANDALF trial, but this doesn't mean we have to reopen old arguments that are never going to be resolved. This appears to be what is wrong with us all, constantly rehashing the same old lines at one another, particularly London groups who seem to maintain feuds with one another, instead of getting together and working round problems. Too much time thinking and theorising and not enough doing has led to the usual result of a lot of pissed off and separated people,

Cheers
Jon

We have had letters from three of the Gandalf defendants, (Noel Molland, Paul Rogers, Steve Booth) which we are not going to publish. (We're sure GA will publish their own, Noel's side of the story is in Arvnews (£1 from POBox 339, Wolverhampton, WV10 7BZ). If anyone wants to see them, write to us for a copy. We stand by our decision to publish the article in BF215, and in the event of Steve Booth ever coming up with a considered reply instead of the usual rants, lies and insults, we'll publish that. People who can say that they'd rather see mass starvation than mass society are a serious barrier to building any anarchist movement worthy of the name.

contacts

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Solidarity Federation (anarcho syndicalists) PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester, M15 5HW tel: 0161 231 8177

Anarchist-Communist Federation, c/o 84B Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX

Class War,
PO Box 467, London, E8 3QX

INDUSTRIAL

Education Workers Network - SF Communications Workers Network - SF
Both PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

Public Service Workers Network - SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE

Industrial Workers of the World - British Isles, F. Lee, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 1WB

LOCAL GROUPS SCOTLAND

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA

Glasgow Anarchists, Box A, Fahrenheit 451 Bookshop, Virginia Galleries, Virginia St, Glasgow

WALES

Aberystwyth, PO Box 17, Aberystwyth, Dyfed tel: 01970 524 590

NORTH ENGLAND

Bradford 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion St, Bradford BD1 2LI
Tel: 01274 734 160

Lancaster Anarchist Group
c/o The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster, Lancs

Leeds Anarchist Group,
145-149 Cardigan Rd, Burley, Leeds LS6 1UN

Liverpool Anarchists PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP

Sheffield Anarchist Group,
PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

Tyneside Anarchist Group, PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA

MIDLANDS

Birmingham Solidarity Group
PO Box 3241, Saltley, Birmingham B8 3DP

Worcester Anarchists, c/o PO Box 3241, Birmingham, B8 3DP

Wolves ABC, PO Box 339, Wolverhampton WV1

SOUTH EAST

East Kent Anarchists, c/o Canterbury Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury

Haringey Solidarity Group,
PO Box 2474 London N8 0HW

Hounslow Anarchists c/o PO Box 87, Hampton, Middlesex TW13 3TF

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WestLondon Anarchists & Radicals (WAR)
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e-mail: War21@hotmail.com

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South Herts SolFed
PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW

Gravesend Resistance
PO Box 1, Gravesend, DA11 7NE

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Cambridge Anarchists,
Box A, Arjuna, 12 Mill Rd,
Cambridge

Norwich & Norfolk Solidarity Centre,
Unit 13, Muspole Workshops, Muspole St, Norwich NR3 1DJ

East Anglia Anarchist Network
PO Box 87, Ipswich IP4 4JQ

SOUTH WEST

Bristle, Box 25, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB

South Bristol Anarchists, PO Box 1076, Bristol BS99 1WF

West Country Activist, PO Box 478, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 7YR

Write c/o Black Flag for contacts in Plymouth and Cornwall

IRELAND

Organise!, PO BOX 505, Belfast BT11 9EE

Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8
email:*wsm_ireland@geocities.com*

OTHER CONTACTS

Advisory Service for Squatters
2 St Pauls Rd LONDON N1 (tel: 0171-359 8814)

Anarchist Black Cross (prisoner support) and "Taking Liberties"
PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

Legal Defence & Monitoring Group, 27 Old Gloucester St, London WC1N 3XX

Kate Sharpley Library,
BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX (archive)

Anarchist Graphics, Box 5,
167 Fawcett Rd, Southsea, Hants PO4 0DH (graphics collective)

Smash Hits -'A Discussion Bulletin For Revolutionary Ideas' BM 5538, London WC1N 3XX

love and rage info project

After a few years squatting to open cafes and info shops the Anarchist Teapot of Brighton are looking for a more permanent base. This means going straightish and finding somewhere to rent. This will be the Love and Rage Info Project. Its not the end of the Anarchist Teapot, but will be a secure base to go out and take whatever space is available. Good luck to them. Contact c/o Box B, 21 Little Preston Street, Brighton BN1 2HQ.

A WEEKEND IN GLASGOW

Saturday 3rd to Monday 5th of April.

Main theme: Global Capitalism and Effective Opposition.
Social events on Saturday and Sunday.
Contacts:
e-mail: radfest *a* yahoo.com
ace *a* punk.org.uk
write: c/o Counter Information,
28 King Street, Glasgow G1 5QP

Mumia Must Live!

Mumia Abu- Jamal, a black revolutionary who has been on Death Row in Philadelphia for sixteen years, is again facing execution.

Mumia has been fighting against oppression since he joined the Black Panthers in Philly at the age of fourteen. The murder charge is clearly designed to silence him, as he is a dedicated fighter for all our freedom. The authorities in Philadelphia particularly dislike him for his defence of MOVE - a black revolutionary ecological group who were bombed and murdered by the police in 1985 (see BF 209 for a history of MOVE).

Mumia's arrest occurred when, working as a cab driver, he saw his brother being beaten by the police and went to his aid. Mumia was shot in the stomach and the policeman was shot and killed by a passerby who escaped. One hundred and fifty witnesses came forward, but the police case rests on three witnesses - all up on other charges and willing to do deals, and in one case being supplied with drugs by the cops.

After a lengthy legal process, the Supreme Court ruled against his appeal. Within days, demonstrations took place all over the world.

Mumia faced a rigged trial back in 1982 - he was denied the lawyer of his choice and the jury was unrepresentative. The trial judge was the notorious bigot Albert Sabo, who has sent more black men to death row than any other judge.

Mumia has fought against the racist legal system in America, and witnesses have since come forward who state that they were intimidated by the police. Philadelphia cops and district attorneys have since been shown to have faked loads of evidence.

In 1995 Mumia came close to being executed - INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE helped save his life. Governor Tom Ridge is preparing to sign his death warrant. By standing up for Mumia we can stand up against all the injustices in all the legal systems of the world.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Write to Governor Tom Ridge, State Capitol Blg, Rm 225, Harrisburg PA 17120 USA, expressing your concern - or fax him on 001-717 783 4429

Write to demand a retrial for Mumia: Chief Justice Flaherty, Supreme Court of PA, Six Gateway Centre, Suite 6161, 11 Stanwix St, Pittsburg PA 15222 USA

Let Mumia know you support him: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg PA 15370 USA

Contact ***Let Mumia Live*** at BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX for details of activities in Britain.