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FIGHTING BACK – AND WINNING

As anarchists, we believe that solidarity is strength. We think if we stick together and take direct action we can collectively better our lot. Richard Griffin takes a look at people across the UK improving their lives using direct action.

Our members are serious about fighting back this year to win realistic and meaningful improvements in wages and conditions" a T&G national officer commented following a three-to-one ballot of dock workers in favour of industrial action. Workers have rejected management's 2.9% offer. There is now a real prospect of a national dockers' strike, the first for fourteen years.

Across industry workers are showing renewed confidence. The summer has seen industrial action taking place with BA ground staff, Eurostar workers, bus workers, ambulance workers, traffic wardens in Bromley, civil servants working for the Department of Works and Pensions, workers at a distiller in Glasgow, Swansea council IT staff, social workers in Liverpool to mention just a few.

Industrial action is delivering the goods. Faced with the threat of a national fire fighters' strike this month employers quickly backed down and agreed to pay 3.5% backdated to November last year. This marks the end of the dispute which started nearly two years ago. Mike Fordham, FBU Assistant General Secretary told members "a negotiated end to this long-running dispute would not have been possible without members of the union showing their determination in the face of a determined attempt to wreck the agreement."

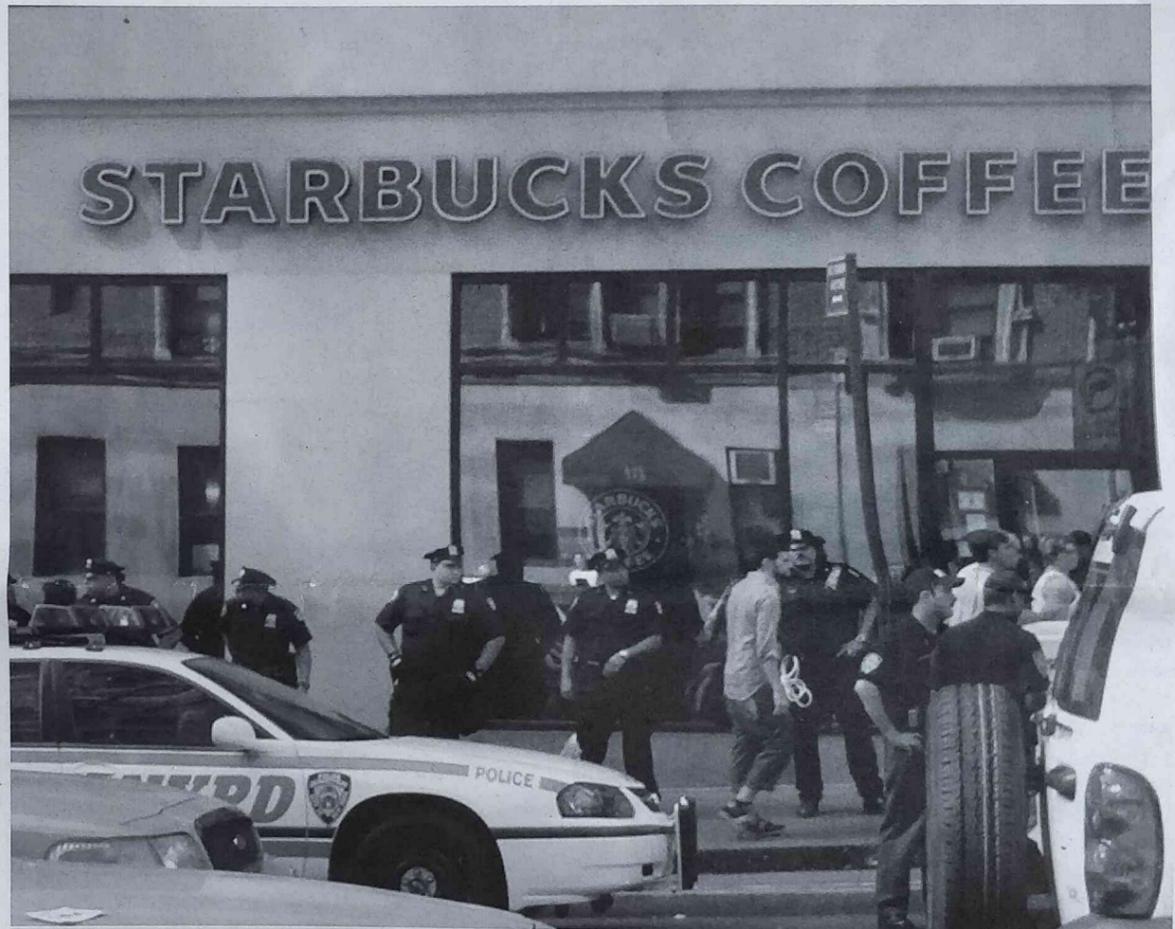
FBU members weren't alone in seeing success. The threatened strike by BA check-in staff and ground crews led to their employer caving in and making an improved pay offer. Ambulance staff in the north east in dispute over payments for meal breaks (ambulance workers can be called out when at lunch or tea) received the backing of an independent arbitrator who ruled that they should

be paid. South Yorkshire bus drivers returned to work after a 21-day strike after their employer agreed to improve pay and conditions as reported in the last issue of Freedom.

Workers are also defying the law. At the end of last month 200 steel workers involved in the construction of the new Wembley stadium took unofficial action. The workers were protesting at losing their jobs following their refusal to accept changes to their hours of work and long weekends when their contracts were transferred to a new employer. One explained that "all we wanted was to be able to home every weekend and see our families. We weren't being unreasonable." Despite this their employer Hoollandia/Fast Track decided to sack them rather than talk to their union, the GMB. Their decision might back fire however. One striker reported that within two hours of being sacked he was offered his old job back by an agency! Protests continue.

In a week's time Britain's unions gather in Brighton for the 2004 TUC Congress. Predictably there is little in the programme drawn together by union bosses that reflects the rising militancy of workers. If you get down to the sunny south coast you'll be able to listen to Seb Coe talk about Britain's Olympic bid (presumably he won't be mentioning the Greek construction workers who died building the Athens' stadiums) or a panel discussion on pensions with the Secretary of State for Works and Pensions (shouldn't that be 'lots of work and no pensions?'). You could also visit the exhibition centre which includes HBOS, HFC Bank, the Institute of Conflict Management and Nestle. Looking through the motions being debated you won't find a single one that congratulates those growing number workers who have taken industrial action this year.

Many workers are showing that they are in no mood to sit back and let the bosses walk all over them. Sadly that mood won't be reflected in Brighton.



New York police protect Starbucks from a rally supporting the new Starbucks union, as part of the week of events opposing the Republican National Convention. Two people were arrested after the demonstration, who just happen to be Starbucks baristas and key active organisers in the Industrial Workers of the World.

IMAGINE IF ...

Mark Thatcher stretched out on a tiger skin rug, polishing his elephant gun as the wail of police cars grew loud outside.

He jovially chatted to his lame old bitch Maggie (a viciously ugly Rottweiler/Bulldog mongrel) as he waited.

"Mum's going to be so disappointed in me Maggie, I've really let down the family name." His toothless old hound whined at him supportively. "I mean she's managed to get control of a major economy, throw it wholesale to her business cronies and break the labour movement. What have I done?" There was no reply beyond a sound of running feet just outside the door.

Mark cocked his gun and aimed vaguely. "I'll tell you what I've done, I've failed my exams, got lost in the desert, set up and then ruined a series of dodgy companies, sold arms to the Saudis without making any money out of it and got caught ripping off South

African police.

"I mean okay I've got sixty million in the bank from sponging off mum's number ten connections, but I really wanted to put something back into my community this time, get my name known. I'm a peer of the realm now after all, backbone of Britain and worthy of the highest honours."

"THIS IS THE POLICE" a loudhailer proclaimed.

Mark winced in anticipation. "How could I have known that allegedly giving \$271,000 towards the overthrow of a small West African country, backing some of Africa's nastiest people to incite a horrific civil war for the profit of me and my business chums would be considered 'unethical' by South Africa?"

"COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP" the loudhailer continued.

Mark ignored the noise. "It's not like it's never been done before, hell it's basically a business out here YOU'LL

NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE YOU FILTHY NATIVES, KING AND COUNTRY!" Suddenly there was a sound outside his door. Mark clicked back the safety. "Who is it?"

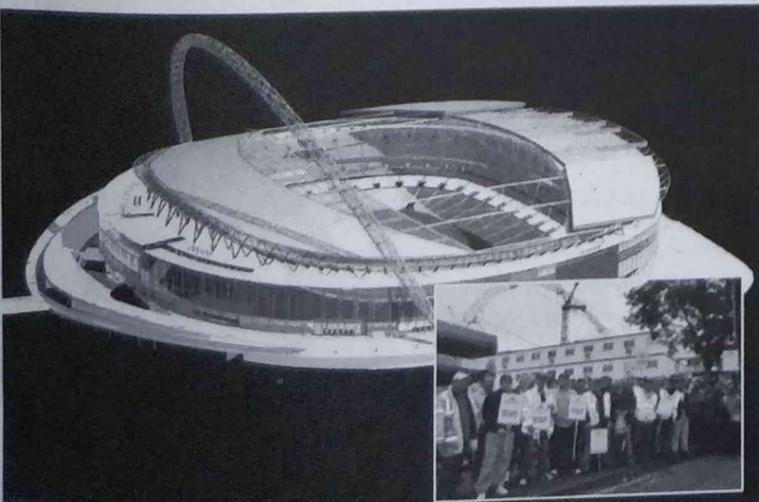
There was a startled scuffling noise, followed by whispers: "No trust me, this'll work, he's a moron"

One voice piped up. "Uh ... it's only me *what's his title* again SIR Thatcher, the cleaner."

Mark relaxed and lowered his weapon. "Oh jolly good come in, the door's on the latch. Is there anyone with you?"

More whispers. *I can't believe that worked, what a moron.* "No sir just me, no police or snipers or anything."

Mark took a big gulp of his whisky. For a minute there he'd been worried. "Capital, but don't steal anything, I know what you blacks are like." Moments later the door burst open and a dozen heavily armed policemen ran into the room, wielding billy clubs ...



Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 17

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

It's been an eventful fortnight at Freedom, as our building is slowly beginning to enter the twentieth (sic) century – we have internet access! The Hacklab and Freedom offices are now online, which makes producing the paper much easier, and the Lab will be operation and open to the public very shortly. Details to follow in the paper, or you can check out their website at www.hacklab.org.uk

To stabilise our accounts we've finally brought in our first price rise in almost twenty years, and a few more people have started standing order donations and one-off gifts as well (listed below) so many thanks for those.

Of course, we can always do with some help with writing content for the paper – since it is written by its readers, not the editors – and helping get better distribution. Email the copy and circulation addresses for more info.

Donation from SRS, £100; ZK, £40; DM, £9; LO, £9; SF, £10, MH, £6; JA, £50; HM, £10.

Standing orders (regular monthly donations, amounts indicate per year) from JP, £60; JS, £12; MK, £120; HSW, £24; NJM, £60

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 18th September 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 9th September (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

News from the inside

Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they so desire. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!

Ewa Jasiewicz

Ewa has been detained in Israel since attempting to enter the country on 11th August. She is not being allowed interviews with journalists and her appeal has been set for the first of September, this is a statement written from her cell.

"The Israeli Ministry of the Interior has decided that I may not speak to the media. This attempt to silence me is not new; deportation and imprisonment for political reasons are the highest form of censorship. In this particular case the

attempt to cut off my voice is part of a long term Israeli state attack on three vital narratives.

The first narrative is composed of the international activists – the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and others who act against the Occupation. We come to use non-violent action and to increase the possibility for peace, justice and participatory democracy. The International activists have risked, suffered and sometimes died while taking this action for peace. When the Israeli government finds it hard to show such unarmed international activists as terrorists, it tries to show us as pawns in someone else's game of terror. This line does not stand up to scrutiny, and hence the story of the direct international solidarity is suppressed.

The second narrative is that of the Israeli peace movement and the refuseniks – those who take the most direct action against the Occupation by refusing to serve in it. Israeli activists in groups like Tay'Ush dare to risk the aggression of the Israeli military state and strive to create real co-operation with Palestinians through joint Arab-

Jewish actions against the Occupation, and several have been injured: beaten and shot undertaking this action. The drive for constant war against the Palestinians depends on the mirage of defending a 'united Jewish state'. This story of resistance inside Israel demonstrates that war to be fought in the interests of a small ruling class, not the entire Jewish people, and so the Israeli peace movements are demonised as traitors to their race.

The third narrative is that of the Palestinian people, and the daily terror that they face. The two other stories are based on this fact. Thousands of Palestinians are in prison, many arrested under the same 'secret evidence' that is being used against me; evidence that the accused can never see, and thus can never challenge. This 'evidence' is short-hand for politically directed aggression aimed at suppressing social movements. The Palestinians have known this for generations; some of us in Europe are now waking up to this fact. The Palestinian refugees live daily with the threat of overwhelming Israeli force being directed against them; their crops are destroyed, their roads blocked, and their houses and businesses demolished. Every day they suffer this and try to rebuild their lives. The international community only seems to wake up to the fact of the occupation when the latest Palestinian suicide attack destroys the lives of Israeli civilians – but does not locate it in the context of the systematic destruction of Palestinian life which had created this monstrosity.

Right now thousands of Palestinians prisoners are taking part in hunger strikes in jail, because they refuse to be silenced. Most of these are political prisoners, and most of them are young men. If participation in the army is a rite of Israeli passage, then internment in an Israeli jail is one for young Palestinians. I have been in refugee

camps where all the men aged between fifteen and thirty were rounded up; many other arrests occur because a boy is related to or friends with the 'wrong' people. The people suffering this mass punishment share their experiences of imprisonment with the rest of Palestinian society; the feelings of imprisonment and powerlessness are common to Palestinians inside and outside jail. So the hunger strikes are not just a fight for better conditions, they are also a fight to be recognized as participants in a liberation struggle – and a struggle of an occupied people that is thus justified under international law. Through striking, the Palestinian prisoners link up with their friends and family outside the jail, who are demonstrating, acting and shouting; together they have a voice and cannot be silenced. Imprisonment, after murder, is the highest form of censorship, silencing and alienation. I know what it is to be imprisoned, when your life's routine depends on the guards who have the keys. I can feel how it numbs the brain, how lack of contact with loved ones and lack of active choice begins to take away your life; without a voice you begin to forget how to speak – and this detention centre is a five star hotel compared to the Israeli jails where the Palestinians are suffering.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is not simply a story about Jews fighting Arabs; it is an example of the dynamics of despair and hate, fostered in this tiny scrap of East Mediterranean land by governments the world over. Because of this, the solution can only be found in the context of the full participation of internationals – as observers, as commentators and as movements putting pressure on their own government and corporations."

Ewa Jasiewicz

Ben Gurion Detention Centre



Roving reporter Ewa Jasiewicz previously being detained in Iraq

LISTINGS

Bristol and Bath

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

London

4th September Benefit gig, Gertrude Rock at The Ramparts, E1, £5. Contact 07050 618445, rampart@mutualaid.org www.rampart.co.nr

11th September No Borders, an evening of political discussion, films, food, live music and djs from 7pm-late. Venue tbc. Contact wombles@hushmail.com or see www.wombles.org.uk

17th September London Anarchist Forum meeting with talk and bookstall from 8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn

6th October Early Globalisation: transnational anarchism as practice and mediated imagery in the late nineteenth century, Brunel Gallery Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies, 10 Thornhaugh Street, WC1, 6pm. See www.britac.ac.uk/events

10th October Tony Allen talks about Speakers' Corner, organised by SPES, 3pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn

27th November Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See www.anarchistbookfair.org
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.
Every Friday vegan café at Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8
Every Saturday Anarchist chess club at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 from 2pm.

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation

Network of anarchist-communists
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk

Antifa

Militant anti-fascist organisation
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk

Class War Federation

Class struggle anarchist group
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org

Earth First!

Ecological direct action network
www.earthfirst.org.uk

Industrial Workers of the World

Revolutionary DIY union

PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk

Solidarity Federation

Anarcho-syndicalist organisation

PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
www.solfed.org.uk

For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh

(ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk

The Cowley Club

12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.freedompress.org.uk

Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BSS 6JY
www.kebele.org

Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)

The Basement, 78a Penny Street,

Lancaster

www.eco-action.org/lancaster

London Action Resource Centre (LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1

www.londonlarc.org

Occupied Social Centre

159 Fortress Road, London NW5

www.wombles.org.uk

Printworks Social Centre

58 Albion Street, Glasgow

www.glasgow-autonomy.org

The Rampart

7a Rampart Street, London E1

SUMAC Centre

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham

NG7 6HX

www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/

Use Your Loaf

227 Deptford High Street, London SE8

www.squat.freeserve.co.uk/

useyourloaf.html

1in12 Club

21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West

Yorkshire, BD1 2LY

www.1in12.com

56a Infoshop

56 Crampton Street, London SE17

www.safetycat.org/56a

Home news

Social Centres

Birmingham

Bournebrook Nursery

Bournebrook nursery Social Centre in Birmingham opened recently and "is a place where a dynamic group of people are working to create a space for the local community and a resource centre for activists". The building being occupied is a "beautiful abandoned nursery which is being transformed into a useable space for the whole family".

They say their immediate aim is getting the cafe and kids play area up and running. If anybody would like to help out please go along to No 1 Bournebrook Road, Bournebrook Day Nursery, Birmingham, B29 7BC or email scbrum@mail.com.

London

Grand Banks – evicted

On Wednesday 25th September the Grand Banks social centre was evicted in a dawn operation. Bailiffs backed by a 25-strong police team broke down the doors of the former bar in Tufnell Park.

Bailiffs had attempted to evict the 'Occupied Social Centre' in May but couldn't when local school students joined up with activists to defend the centre. This eviction attempt was more successful, the building was quickly emptied and builders boarded up the windows and sealed the front door with a heavy padlock.

The centre was the second in the area a couple of hundred metres down the road, and was a resounding success as it had hosted meetings, workshops, film screenings, a cafe, and an art gallery, and will be returning to another empty building near-by soon. For more details and info see www.wombles.org.uk

Autonomous Lab – saved

The Autonomous Lab on Chalk Farm Road in North London successfully resisted eviction at the beginning of this month. In further defiance of the authorities they have now also expanded into a second vacant shop front.

Use Your Loaf! – saved

Two High Court bailiffs turned up at 7.35am on Friday 27th September, but were turned away by the 30-odd local residents and anarchists defending the place. One got stuck in the door and was then subjected to a full and frank discussion of the pros and cons of his choice of employment. Police soon turned up and asked to be let in. After being rejected they threatened to kick the door down but this turned out to be an idle threat with the police instead opting for their highly developed tactic of "milling around aimlessly" for a good half an hour and leaving. The bailiffs left though they did return later with builders to secure the premises but failing to even get inside, the builders retired to a nearby café before leaving.



So Use Your Loaf! has survived but in all likelihood will have to move in the near future. However, they will be moving to another location in the coming months with the intent to facilitate local libertarian projects ...

MPissing away our money

Would you pay an MP fifty grand? Well you're not, you're paying 200, as Richard Griffin discovers

£56,000 is a lot of money to earn in a year. It is a lot more than fire fighters get for example. It is over twice what a nurse earns and almost three times the salary of airline check in staff. What sort of job commands such a lofty sum? A job that involves risking your life maybe or a job that involves caring for others? Not quite. Members of Parliament have a basic salary of, to be exact, £56,358 a year. That though is only the tip of what they actually earn. On top they get a further £13,526 towards their pension. Most workers if they are lucky enough to still have a pension have to pay for it out of their wages. On top of that MPs can also claim expenses for things like getting the train to London (first class travel of course).

For the first time full details of the expenses claimed by our elected representatives are being made available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act. MPs get a staggering average of £119,000 a year in expenses. That's right on top of their salary and pensions they claim in addition well over one hundred thousand pounds extra in expenses. I know train fares are expensive but really an annual bill of million is pushing it a bit. Many MPs cost us over £200,000 a year.

Even industry fat cat bosses would blush at the perks MPs get. They can employ their relatives without any proof of the work they are doing. One MP employs their 17-year old son; another their 77 year old grandmother! Peter Hain paid his mother £5,000 a year to be his secretary. The state not only pays for MPs it also provides an income for their families. Oh and they don't have to advertise the jobs they give their partners, children, siblings, pets or what-



ever. Never mind equal opportunities, nepotism rules in the Mother of Parliament.

There's more though. MPs can use their accommodation allowance (£20,902 a year) to buy property. If they sale their London flats and make a profit on them, guess what? They pay no taxes on the gains they make! Many MPs club together to buy property at the tax payers' expense and then pocket the profits.

But even this isn't the end of it; MPs can claim up to £200 a month in travel expenses without even having to submit receipts: If they drive to work they get costs of 57.7p a mile. The Inland Revenue for tax reasons put a limit of 40p a mile, but not for MPs. For some reason they get a lot more than anyone else. When Boris Johnson cycles to the House of Commons he gets 20 pence mile.

Micheal Pinto-Duschinsky is an expert on parliamentary expenses at Brunel

University. Commenting on the money MPs get he points out that "costs have gone up while the range of duties has been reduced". Accountancy Age noted that MPs are not surprisingly starting to panic. "They fear 'league tables' of expenses appearing in newspapers" the magazine notes.

Anarchists could easily suggest a way of cutting the cost of MPs. Get rid of the lot of them. Unlike fire fighters or nurses we doubt MPs would be missed much!

Tesco takeover

Hammersmith and Fulham Council is doing a deal with Tesco to build a supermarket next to Hammersmith town hall. This will result in the demolition of eighty homes, making the occupants homeless. Some of the flats are council, others are occupied by long term tenants at low rents. It is a close knit community, with at least one person living there for over fifty years. Also earmarked for demolition is the well used local cinema and shops.

Hammersmith already has two small Tescos, a medium sized Sainsburys, a large Safeway and Iceland. There is also a large Tesco within walking distance.

The site is next to the A4, one of the busiest roads in Europe, so the development will increase traffic and pollution. It will also destroy a row of mature trees.

In return for running roughshod over local objections, the council will get new offices built for free. This is the modern form of municipal corruption. So confident are the developers, St James

Investments plc, that they have already bought the cinema. The council have tried to create a sense of inevitability by closing the shop front premises it owns on the site.

As the reaction of local residents changed from shock to anger, a campaign of opposition has been organised. Letters have been written, politicians contacted, leaflets issued and the town hall has been picketed. Much more direct tactics will however be needed to win. No one is any doubt that it will be a long hard fight. As one local resident put it: "Even after we see off Tesco, other developers will come sniffing round."

If you'd like to get more info, email cromwellcampaign@hotmail.com

Ricky

West London Anarchists & Radicals disbanded at the start of June 2003. For a copy of our final newsletter containing our final statement please send a sae to West London Anarchists & Radicals, BM Makhno, London WC1N 3XX

Utility hikes

Big business, small business and consumer groups were united this month in condemning yet another wave of price hikes across the utility sector. Last week, the Energy intensive Users group (EIUG), who represent some of Britain's biggest energy users, called an emergency meeting to discuss new hikes in their contracts of up to 40%. Calling on the government to take action or face possible shutdowns of plants at peak times this winter, a more ominous spectre was also raised, of more companies shutting up shop to move elsewhere.

Government body Ofgem has recently praised the energy sector for its prudence. The Federation of Small businesses (FSB) meanwhile has been arguing for water regulator Ofwat to come down more heavily on water companies asking for huge rate rises.

As previously reported in Freedom, proposals for an average 26% rise in rates over the next five years were made

earlier this year by water companies.

Their complaint regarded rising investment costs and decreasing profit margins. In 2002-03 these amounted to a little under two billion, and while straight profits went down, dividends went up.

John Harlow, chairman of the FSB's environment committee, said "an increase of over ten per cent a year is well above inflation and will be difficult for some (small) business to accommodate."

The allowed hike will on average be 13% this year. Along with both of these Gas has been worrying the consumer sector, as British Gas put up customer bills by 12.4%. Interestingly, these hikes are extremely good for government figures, as they are classed as part of the continuing consumer boom. Research for the Times newspaper has estimated that as much as half of the 'buoyant' figures can be put down to a combination of hikes in utility prices and increased mortgage interest payments.

International

The UN bolsters Haitian dictatorship

Far from 'peacekeeping', the Multinational Interim Force is working in support of government repression in Haiti, reports Jack Ray

Whilst concerned onlookers query the legitimacy of the increasingly brutal interim administration in Haiti, it is becoming clear that the 'peacekeeping' forces dispatched by the UN in February this year are co-operating heavily with the new government to persecute enemies of the regime. Dispatched supposedly to calm the tensions aroused by the rebellion against Aristide, recent reports outline the complicity of the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) in illegal arrests, the suppression of legal demonstrations and even of extrajudicial murders.

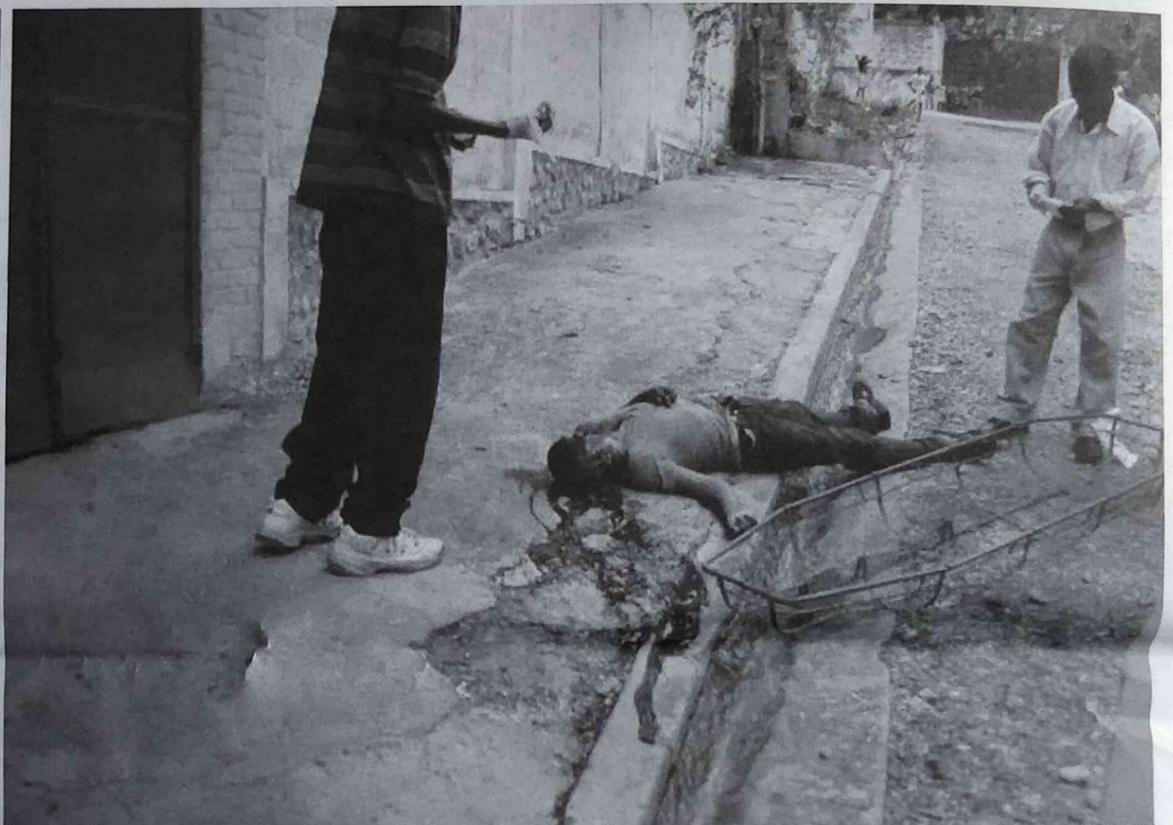
The most significant allegation is levelled in a recent account by the IJDH (Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti) of the 12th March 'Belair massacre'. Initially reported in the commercial media as the deaths of two people during a demonstration, locals from all sides of the political spectrum assert that in fact a significant night-time operation led by international forces equipped with APCs, night-vision goggles and automatic weapons hauled away as many as 65 bodies in trucks and ambulances. The evidence compiled by interviewers for the report has not been requested by human rights organisations in Haiti, nor has the incident been significantly investigated by foreign journalists.

More generally the MIF has been acting on behalf of the Justice Ministry in carrying out arrests without warrant. It was French troops who attempted to arrest Moise Jean-Charles, the Mayor

of Milot on 14th June and who in turn (illegally) arrested his wife and her uncle in place of their suspect, whilst American troops were involved in the capture of folk singer Anne Auguste along with ten of her family members. Although officially international forces are not supposed to be involved with arrests, when interviewed one marine confirmed that US forces were instructed to arrest 'chimers' (Chimeres being FL activists). In addition US marines have been allocated a section of Port-au-Prince prison to themselves, which inspectors are unable to visit.

American, French and Canadian marines (and later Chileans and Brazilians) were also responsible for enforcing the 10pm to 6am curfews chiefly in the poorest neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince (Cite Soleil, Belair, La Saline) with the National Lawyers Guild remarking that "there is a general tension in the people of the city due to the intermittent presence and patrolling of marines. They typically spend hours standing around in small groups in targeted neighbourhoods in full battle uniform, holding automatic rifles."

Meanwhile non-military personnel are working hard to perfect the public image of the interim government. USAID is pouring money into both the Comite des Avocats pour le Respect de Libertes Individuelles (CARLI) and the National Coalition on Haitian Rights (NCHR), both of which are acting on behalf of the rebel government. CARLI is responsible for publishing a monthly list derived from calls made on its human rights abuse victims hotline. These lists



Convicted human rights abusers have resumed the repression of 1991-94

are then distributed to police and public, yet no thorough investigation of allegations is undertaken, their lists contain only opponents of the new regime and often contain simply the allegation that the suspect was a supporter of 'the dictator Aristide'. It is these organisations that anti-Aristide US groups such as the Haitian Democracy Project (HDP) rely

upon for their information about Haiti, before informing the US press. The governments of the interim forces have also worked hard to prevent investigation by either the UN or the OAS (Organisation of American States) into the new government. Up until now the 3,600 strong international forces contain just one human rights officer.

Quick to register its priorities the interim government has announced a three year tax break for large businesses that made a loss between December 2003 and March 2004. This will be a great relief to Levi-Strauss, Marnier-Lapostolle (who make Grand Marnier), Remy Cointreau and Walt Disney, all of whom manufacture in the country.

Saddam-lite

Such are the ironies of life. While Saddam was demonised before the invasion of Iraq for suppressing the popular uprisings of 1991, the Americans and their puppet regime have been busy repeating their old tricks. Even Saddam's tired old rhetoric has been recycled, denouncing opponents as 'criminals', 'terrorists' and 'anti-Iraqi'.

With the Shia revolt, yet another of the rationales for the invasion of Iraq falls. First it was the non-existent WMD, then it was the ending of human rights abuses. Now, post Abu-Ghraib, the idea that the invasion was to 'liberate' the Iraqi people is now on its last legs.

It is claimed that the occupiers seek democracy. Yet they have vetoed elections and instead created an Iraq governed by an unelected Prime Minister, head of an exile organization comprised largely of ex-Baathists and himself a CIA asset. So

despite the constant repetition that 'Iraq is now run by Iraqis', not one of the people currently in office is elected.

The new Iraqi regime has moved quickly to restore the death penalty; for murder, drug dealing and 'endangering national security'. This is a tyrant's law, for any unwelcome political activity is always labelled a danger to national security.

Then there was the banning of al-Jazeera from operating in Iraq for at least one month, perhaps longer unless government monitors decide its coverage has 'improved'.

Significantly, reporters in Najaf have been threatened by the police; Najaf is now a free-fire zone with all civilians ordered out of the area. Al-Jazeera has often been harassed by autocratic regimes in the Middle East, but since the 2001 Afghan war it has suffered more harassment from US officials than from their Arab counterparts, accused by Donald Rumsfeld of "consistently

lying" and "working in concert with terrorists".

Allawi and his unelected ministers are puppets. They are well aware where the real power lies, in the 160,000 foreign troops on their soil. Does it oppose the killing of its citizens by that army? No, quite the reverse. The official line is that the 'sovereign' government 'invited' the US troops to crush al-Sadr; the language of every Soviet satellite state when they 'invited' Moscow in to crush its own people.

This major offensive was driven by the fear that the US is losing control over most of the major cities in Iraq. In the Sunni parts of the country, city after city has adopted the 'Falluja model' - refusing to allow the Americans in its streets and establishing its own local government. The attack in Najaf is an attempt to stop this being consolidated in Shia areas.

A solution has been achieved by mass,

non-violent, direct action. The leading Shia cleric Ayatollah Sistani urged his supporters to gather on the edge of the holy city and march with him to the shrine. Unsurprisingly, when thousands of his followers tried to reach Najaf, the local chief of police gave orders to block all roads leading to the city and instructed officers to shoot demonstrators if they failed to turn back. Two mortars hit the mosque in Kufa, a Mahdi army stronghold, killing at least two. Later, at least two more people were killed when police in Kufa opened fire on a mixed demonstration of Sistani and Sadr supporters with a similar number killed in Hilla. Protesters from Diwaniyyah who arrived at Najaf also received fire from the Iraqi police, with an unknown number of casualties.

It is clear that the biggest losers from the second assault at Najaf are the occupiers and their puppets. The Americans are perceived as culturally

insensitive for their actions in the holy city. Moreover, they did not end the conflict, Sistani and his followers did. The Allawi government, instead of looking decisive, looked like authoritarian American puppets. Sistani is a national hero for saving Najaf while Muqtada will survive as his base in the slums remains, even if his militia has been weakened. Ultimately, though, it is the Iraqi people who have tamed a superpower by their mass action.

The current wave of state repression belies the claim that America is simply building democracy in Iraq. If this were so, it would have organised elections as soon as possible and left. But this war is an imperialist war, fought only to secure US interests in the region. That is why the US is building up to fourteen permanent bases in Iraq with the Bush Junta happy to invade without an exit strategy, unnecessary when they never plan to leave.

Feature

Killer Cola

For global repression of workers and destruction of the environment, then Coke is it, finds Andy Williams

On 5th December 1996 paramilitary gunmen entered a Coca-Cola bottling plant in North West Colombia looking for Isidro Gil, a union leader who was trying to win a contract for the workers there. When they found him, they shot him seven times and killed him.

A month later they turned up at his house and murdered his wife because of her part in a campaign to bring her husband's killers to justice.

Paramilitaries acting with the (at least tacit) approval of Colombian Coca-Cola bosses have murdered eight more Coca-Cola unionists since then. They have kidnapped and tortured many more.

In one horrific recent case, on 20th April this year, armed paramilitaries entered the home of a relative of union leader and Coke worker Efrain Guerrero, and fired machine guns indiscriminately at the family, killing his wife Fanny, his brother-in-law Gabriel Remolina, his nephew Robinson Remolina, and wounding two more of their children.

As well as this campaign of extreme violence and intimidation, there's been a concerted effort on Coke's part to break the unions by using more conventional methods such as widespread illegal sackings. Sinaltrainal, the Colombian Coca-Cola union, says more than 500 workers have been forced into retirement since last September by union-busting measures, and when 91 workers refused a lump-sum payoff, they were immediately fired.

One month before the machine-gun incident, and thousands of miles away in Atlanta, Coca-Cola's chief executive Douglas Daft (no, honestly, that's his name), and his six fellow top execs, awarded themselves an obscene \$8.4 million bonus.

Coke paid Daft a \$4 million bonus last year, \$1.5 million to president Steve Heyer, \$874,531 to executive vice president Alexander Allan, \$650,000 to chief financial officer Gary Fayard, \$589,875 to executive vice president Mary Minnick and \$787,000 to former vice chairman Brian Dyson. Daft announced last month that he would retire at the end of 2004, and is set to live out the rest of his grotesque over-privileged life on the \$86.3 million shares he owns in Coke.

A recent fact-finding delegation of New York City Councillors, students, and US union activists were damning in their final report on Coke's conduct in Colombia.

It states: "Coca-Cola's employment practices in Colombia, both those within the letter of the law and those in contravention of the law, have had the effect of driving wages, work standards and job security for Coca-Cola workers sharply downward, and simultaneously, of decimating the workers' union,

Sinaltrainal. Both trends are reinforced by the appalling human rights violations that workers have suffered at the hands of paramilitary forces."

In addition to the nine murders, the report claims that, "to date, there have been a total of 179 major human rights violations of Coca-Cola's workers" in Colombian factories. As well as these "family members of union activists have been abducted and tortured, union members have been fired for attending union meetings, and the company has pressured workers to resign their union membership and contractual rights, and fired workers who refused to do so."

Coca Cola did attend a meeting with the delegation, but refused them access to the bottling plants where the human rights abuses have been occurring, and have so far refused to show the delegation any of the internal documents that they claim can prove the company's innocence.

The report concludes: "The delegation found both the quantity and the nature of Coca-Cola workers' allegations shocking and compelling. It seems indisputable that Coke workers have been systematically persecuted for their union activity. It seems equally evident that the company has allowed if not itself orchestrated the human rights violations of its workers, and it has benefited economically from those violations, which have severely weakened the workers' union and their bargaining power."

Coke has also been under fire for decades because of the terrible records of its subsidiaries and bottling plants in Brazil, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe. Many reports exist of Coke acting in Guatemala in the '70s and '80s as it is now in Colombia, with union leaders being executed and anti-union policies being commonplace.

The company has also been criticised for its lack of healthcare provision in Africa. Coke is the biggest private-sector employer in the African continent, and has come under heavy pressure to provide access to medicine and access to treatment to attend to (or combat the spread of) AIDS amongst its workers.

But the issue that has received the most recent coverage, alongside the Colombian outrages, has been Coca Cola's exploitation of water sources and its pollution of farmland in India. Factories in Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh have been severely draining public groundwater and turning farming areas into useless wastelands. In addition to sucking the land dry and forcing locals to either use contaminated wells or travel long distances to collect drinkable water, Coke have also been offloading their toxic by-products onto local farmers in the guise of fertiliser. Tests funded by the BBC found dangerously high levels of cadmium and lead in this sludge, proving that as well as the land being damaged by lack of irrigation, it is also

being poisoned by the noxious brown gunk that Coke has the gall to pass on to desperate local farmers.

The company, of course, denies that any of this is happening. They have not engaged with the communities they are destroying in any meaningful way, preferring instead to invest in corporate propaganda (sorry, 'public relations') firms to spin their way out of the truth by labelling any dissenting voices as 'dangerous extremists'.

Despite the cash poured into Coke's global PR machine, and its repeated denials of any wrongdoing, resistance to the company's many unjust practices has been diverse, and sometimes very effective. Campaigning tools have included legal battles, direct action, boycotts, workplace agitation, theatrical stunts, mass marches, and even hunger strikes.

One of the cornerstones of Sinaltrainal's struggle has been a court case brought by some of its members against Coke in the US courts. On 31st March 2003 a US District Court Judge ruled that the union members had a case to argue that human rights violations had been committed by paramilitaries on behalf of Coca-Cola bottlers Panamerican Beverages Inc and Bebidas y Alimentos in Colombia.

After wriggling out of the court case on the grounds that the bottling plants were run by subsidiary companies, Coke had its arse hauled right back into court when it was found out that one of these very companies is almost half owned by them anyway.

Despite facing seriously depleted numbers since the campaign against them started, Sinaltrainal have also kept struggling at home. When faced with the unlawful sacking of 91 of its members (three quarters of whom were union activists) the Union resorted to a hunger strike. As reported previously in Freedom, thirty people outside eight coke bottling plants refused to take food for twelve days. The fast ended with negotiations allowing the sacked workers to be reinstated in different factories.

Meanwhile, in India, opposition to the global soft-drinks giant has been just as strong. Months of struggle culminated in a big march and rally against Coke at the World Social Forum in Mumbai last January. "Coca-Cola's actions are symbolic of the vulgar arrogance and criminal power of corporations that are looting people of their basic needs, water in this case," said Medha Patkar, co-ordinator of the National Alliance of People's Movements. "Our right to water, land and forests is at stake," she added.

As well as large events like this, there has also been a succession of smaller-scale actions. For instance, a group of Kerala residents have set up a vigil outside the largest Coke bottling plant in India. Also in Kerala, activists of the



Democratic Youth Federation of India and others involved in the anti-Coca Cola agitation blocked two tanker lorries transporting water to the Coca-Cola plant and redistributed the water to local people.

There have been some successes in the campaign. The regional government in Kerala has banned Coke from drawing any more ground water from the area, and ordered tests to be done on the waste products produced by the factory.

Outside of India and Colombia, the anti-coke campaigns have also gained significant international support from groups ranging from trades unions and human rights groups, to small-scale direct action groups and student organisations.

International union support has been quite strong, especially in the US and Canada (although big union support in Britain has been slow coming - many local branches have pledged support, but the TUC has been shamefully unwilling to show any solidarity).

The international Boycott called by Sinaltrainal has been a rallying point for different groups to agitate against Coke locally. The boycott campaign in the UK was kicked off last July with a launch in Piccadilly Circus by the Colombia Solidarity Campaign. The same day members of the Cardiff Anarchist Network blockaded and

disrupted work at the Coca-Cola Enterprises bottling plant in Edmonton, North London, causing £30,000 worth of lost revenue. Direct action against Coke has continued in the US with disruption of the company's shareholder meetings, and colourful demonstrations against Douglas Daft whenever he makes a public appearance.

The success of the boycott has been patchy, but it is continuing to grow. Many shops worldwide have joined the boycott and stopped selling the brown stuff, and student groups in a number of Irish universities have succeeded in getting Coke products banned from shops on their campuses. After one successful boycott vote, in University College Dublin, Coca Cola were so enraged that they sent a marketing team to the University to try and persuade the University to abandon its position. They failed.

Just over one year on from the start of the boycott, the global resistance continues ...

More info and campaign materials can be found at:

www.corporatecampaign.org/killer-coke/

042004.htm

www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk

www.indiaresource.org

www.cokewatch.org

www.killercoke.org

Editorial

We're not kidding ourselves, we know that as socio-economic theories go anarchism is not the most popular. Okay most people would agree with the fundamental tenets of anarchism – but not when it is so named – but that's another matter. The fact is, in modern Britain few people would consider themselves anarchists. This is obviously a situation which you would think most anarchists would want to change – we think our ideas are the best ones which history have shown to be the most effective at improving people's lives, and so we would like more people to take them on board.

Sounds simple enough, yet some anarchists seem intent on making our unpopular ideas less attractive still to the majority of the population. At its base, anarchism is the idea that humans have better, happier lives when free of coercive authority. As such we encourage initiatives which involve people co-operating independently of coercive institutions in order to improve their/lives. That's it.

Some anarchists however, seem to conflate all of their personal lifestyle preferences with this social theory, and claim that to be 'anarchist' one must also have the same lifestyle preferences as them. Popular lifestyle choices masquerading as 'anarchism' include such areas as musical taste (punk), dress sense (again, punk), eating habits (vegan/vegetarianism), religious beliefs (atheism) and housing (squattening).

Of course everyone should be free to live however they want – providing they respect others – but this doesn't mean that certain people should claim 'anarchism' to be the exclusive domain of their soon-to-be-recuperated subculture.

I personally am an atheist, a rationalist and have absolutely no time for religious/spiritual mysticism. I think it's all bollocks. However while I could make some argument about how my beliefs relate to anarchism I realise that religious/spiritual beliefs are not mutually exclusive from anarchism, and so don't claim that anyone who is, say, Pagan cannot be an anarchist.

For many people who believe in animal rights, for example, this just does not apply. Some seem so keen to keep anarchism an isolated ghetto that they will mock, insult or just be plain rude to fellow anarchists who happen to like tuna. This is especially off-putting for new people to movement, who understandably will not want to have anything to do with people who will be rude to them for something as petty as their dietary choices. Similarly I have heard many anarchists say that someone who believes in God cannot be an anarchist. When asked to explain the reasoning behind this you usually get some mumble about divine authority, but the fact is – as with animal rights – anarchism is about *human* equality.

Some people seem more keen for the anarchist movement to be a bizarre homogenous cult of weirdoes just like them, rather than a diverse, living idea in practice, eventually capable of assisting the revolutionary overthrowing capital and the state. The first lot should not be given the opportunity to spoil it for everyone else. And while it may be comforting to surround ourselves with people who think like us, let's try to focus on what is important – namely that we are all fighting for a free, co-operative and joyful world.

Take care of yourselves, and of each other.

Commentary

IWCA

Thanks to Tim Oxton and John Shute for their replies to my IWCA article. Tim considers me biased and sectarian against the IWCA, despite the fact that a quarter of my article was devoted to laying out the IWCA's stall, mostly in their own words. If I didn't go in to enough detail for him, there's a four-page article in the latest edition of Black Flag about the IWCA's grassroots work.

Given this, and the fact that for three years I've been in a local anarchist group that involves itself in some of the sort of work that local IWCA groups do, I didn't feel the need to go overboard in patting them on the back over their approach. Also, I myself am surprised that my choosing to take a critical line on the IWCA is so surprising to Tim, given that I'm an anarchist and they are a political party attempting to get members elected to State institutions. What else did he expect?

Regarding the issue of vanguardism, the brevity of my remarks here may have led to John misunderstanding me. I'll try to make up for that now. I don't believe that any organisation with a set of ideas, structure and program is automatically vanguardist, nor do I believe that any form of political intervention is vanguardist. The IWCA though, are going further than just this. They have laid down an entire transitional program for the whole class to adopt. Even if we give them the full benefit of the doubt and assume that the content of this program is 100% negotiable, they still want to lay down some program or another for the entire class. Additionally, they have decided that the best way for the class to organise is through a mass political party. Isn't it up to sections of the class to create their own organisations and make their own demands as and when they see fit, and in what form they see fit? The demands made, and the organisational forms created will fit the conditions that have impelled the class to act. As these conditions are constantly changing we can't fossilise our idea of the form that the next wave of struggle and organisation will take. So forms of organisation should not be pre-empted in any way by a minority of political activists, as the IWCA are doing.

Again, I agree with John when he says that anarchism should "seek to become a current of ideas within the class". As anarchism was born from the class struggle there is no other place for it to be. However, we should operate as an organised group with the main aim of acting as a catalyst for working class self-organisation. We should not try to become the mass organisation, but encourage and inspire others to get together and form these organisations themselves, with us as equals in this process. They will be born though, of specific community and workplace struggles and hopefully link up with others from there. This contrasts with the IWCA approach of having a single organisation in waiting, ready for the class to join it.

I'm not convinced by John's attempts to counter my assertion that the IWCA behave duplicitously and display a vanguardist mentality through their electoral policy. I clearly showed that the IWCA have created a lightweight initial program in order to rally the class behind the Party and shepherd it on to the next stage of militancy in the hope of instigating a crisis in the current political system that will herald "total social change". The latter is kept hidden away. John's assertion that "some of

the main players in the IWCA have determined that revolutionary socialist politics are irrelevant to the working class as things stand" only adds to my argument. The revolutionary socialist politics are there, but almost entirely hidden for now. The unwritten policy would seem to be one of information on a need to know basis, with need to know decided by some of the IWCA's main players. That this is a manifestation of a vanguardist mentality is beyond doubt. It also calls in to question the picture of the IWCA's program as 'evolving', as this is based on it being open to criticism and alterable by both the entire membership of the organisation and the wider working class.

Additionally, there is the matter if the IWCA's behaviour in the London Mayoral elections that John didn't deal with at all.

Finally, yes, the IWCA are asking the right questions, and yes, their stated intention of placing working class experience at the centre of their activities is correct. But there seems to be an anarchist at every turn ready to point this out and few willing to balance this view with a look at the IWCA's significant shortcomings. I'm just addressing this imbalance.

Pepe Corman

Anti-fascism

Although I agree with Amorey Gethin's argument that the best way of fighting fascism is by increasing class struggle (though whether the Trade Unions are the best force for that is another debate), some of your points were so poor that I was moved for the first time ever to respond to a letter in Freedom.

Your worries that our 'thuggery' won't 'enlighten' workers inclined to the far-right misses the point. We aren't trying to enlighten Irving or any of his fascist mates, we're trying to keep them disorganised. We all know that fascism is an ideology based on violence and terrorising the organised working class. This is a fact. So what are we supposed to do? Let them meet freely until they get strong enough to attack us first? Considering fascists will always resort to violence when they get the chance, when is the right time to respond to their violence? When they're having 2,000 strong marches through multi-ethnic areas? When they're in government? Never? Or now, when they're weak and vulnerable and (more importantly) before they've done any major damage to our class?

Which brings me to my next point. Let's say we do wait until they start attacking us before we fight back, this doesn't mean we'll get any favourable press coverage. No 'Brave Anarchists Smash Nasty Fash Off Streets' headlines. So maybe we should just get our heads kicked in, make martyrs of ourselves, and get good publicity. You first, mate, is what I'm saying to that. Not to mention that I think 'thuggery' would attract more people than a hospital wing full of martyrs would! Ooh, just to add, we probably still wouldn't get any favourable press. Remember, we're trying to organise the working class to overthrow the state and capitalism, the press aren't generally in favour of that whether we're using violent means or not.

Fascism is a dangerous ideology for our class, black and white. We're lucky that in Britain, Fascism has been crushed more successfully than anywhere else in the world. We're lucky that, on the whole, we can organise without fear of attack from these sick

ruling class errand boys. We should remember that. And we should remember why.

Anti-Fascist Ed

Hopefully most anarchists support Amorey Gethin (Freedom, 7th and 21st August) when he implicitly objects to Freedom editors' equally implicit endorsement of 'beating up' Holocaust denier David Irving and his ilk. Freedom's 'hard evidence' in support is a quotation from Hitler, where the Fuhrer claims his movement could only have been 'stopped' by being 'brutally smashed' in its early days.

Hitler's remark fits well with the mythology of the Third Reich, where political 'conquests of power' were explained in terms of the 'triumph of the will'. However, I would not have expected this simplistic view of recent history to have the support of our editors. While it is true that Nazism/fascism were movements, at street level, of political lunatics, rallying societies' dregs under banners of nationalism and/or racism, that was only part of the story – the *real* power behind the movement lay much deeper than the organised street thugs and uniformed 'leaders' raising their arms to the cheering, mesmerised, dispossessed mobs.

Real power in the fascist states lay, as in all capitalist states, with financiers and industrialists, sitting at the peak of society. They provided the funds to create and bolster the fascist state, keeping the personified symbol of the new order, the dictator, in power – a structure in which the bankers and industrialists had invested to ensure the state escaped serious threat from within. The members of this elite, the real 'backers' of fascism, were not, themselves, sucked into the garbage-ideology they had funded; they themselves stood united with their fellow capitalists in other countries, much as, today, the family Bush unites with the family Saud – Michael Moore provides a good 'introduction' to an exposure of this topic in his Fahrenheit 9/11.

The tragedy of superficial remedies for 'fighting fascism', like the one apparently shared by Adolf Hitler and the editors of Freedom, is they lead to the real culprit, the capitalist system *per se*, being ignored. So long as rank and file activists feel they are pursuing the real enemies of a democratic society, by attacking David Irving and his like in the manner that has provoked this discussion, there is no perceived need to set about preparing for an *effective* destruction and replacement of capitalism. Shouting the odds on a street corner, or having a 'punch up' in a pub, can mean the participant returns home satisfied it's been 'a good days work' – he or she has helped ensure socialism/anarchism is one step nearer. Needless to say, neither the financiers manipulating the system, nor their Tweedledum/Tweedledee spokespeople, the Blairs, Browns, Howards, Kennedys or Bushes, are *never* found on street corners, you'll not meet *them* in the pub!

The irony of the situation is that what Blair and his fellow European 'mirror images' are busy building on the continent, the New Europe, is an international structure sharing many of the essential features of the corporate state, envisaged by the theoreticians of Mussolini's Fascists. Yes, fascism has been modernised. What Hitler and his cronies only envisaged is becoming a reality – not introduced by gangs of street thugs, brownshirts and/or blackshirts, but by the parties of 'big

capital' (i.e. New Labour) and, to a lesser extent, 'small capital' (i.e. Tories and Lib Dems). I expect to find the relics of the so-called 'old revolutionaries' (Communist Party of Britain, Socialist Workers Party) clinging to the idea that meaningful political activity means marching through empty streets shouting "Fascism – Out! Out! Out!" – but hoped for something rather better from anarchists!

Somehow we have got to achieve what seems the impossible. We have got to stimulate meaningful ideas in the masses of people, now totally disillusioned with 'parliamentary politics', who form a majority realising the pointlessness of electoral politics, every four years. Individuals who have stopped participating in this farce, but haven't yet sorted out an alternative activity. At every level, but especially in the work place, we have to encourage people to take over their own lives, to build organisations that will help them take the real decisions for managing their everyday lives. So often in recent times, millions of people have rejected traditional politics (the anti-Iraq war movement is the obvious recent example), but little concrete has developed from these movements. It has been left to the various Trotskyist groupings to infiltrate (and neuter!) movements that could become benchmarks for more radical traditions of 'do it yourself' politics. This is *not* to denigrate the impressive anti-war, anti-capitalist movements that *have* arisen on a number of occasions.

Yes, we have a long way to go before we have a movement with the power to stop the existing system in its tracks. One basic human right integrally connected to this struggle remains the right of free speech. Free speech to anarchists should mean the right of every individual to freely express his or her views, no matter how obnoxious those views might be regarded by the majority of informed people. Only an individual who doubts his or her capability of effectively answering David Irving would feel the need to deny him the opportunity to state his case. I can understand the stance of the 'traditional left' on this question, for in the recent past these are people who supported Stalinism in its many forms – ideologies responsible for rather more mass graves than Hitler and his cronies ever managed. We anarchists, on the other hand, seek to build a free society – a task that will never be achieved by 'unfree' practice.

All this is so easily and glibly said, but there is no alternative if we are to halt the steady slide into barbarism so evident throughout the globe. It sounds much easier to belong to a group rallying people to have a punch up with the BNP, or throw rubbish at David Irving. Libertarians must not mistake such opportunities to 'release some energy' against our bosses and their state with the real struggle for which we work.

Bob Potter

Quiz answers

1. Air.
2. To apologise.
3. As it's an offence under Indian law, the whole of Windows 95 was banned in the country. Still, a sense of geography and history is not high on the US agenda.
4. He was a Red Army soldier and refused to obey orders when the Bolsheviks used them to police and disarm workers. Solidarity from the steel workers saved him.

REVIEW

Is Tony Allen's new book a comic autobiography or political manifesto, asks William Briggs

Tony Allen may well be the man to bring about the revolution. Not necessarily the one he preaches every Sunday at Speakers' Corner, the anarchist one involving the end of private property and the eradication of the work ethic. No, Tony may bring about a revolution in your friendly local libraries and bookshops. As with his previous opus *Attitude: Wanna Make Something of It?*, his latest offering will give the Dewey Decimal people a hell of a time trying to classify it and could do away with the whole '001-099 Reference, 100-199 Religion' thing altogether.

Should it be filed under autobiography? Comic autobiography? As a guide to the potential public orator? Maybe as a piece of local history for all those of us who are compelled to spend every Sabbath by the Marble Arch roundabout putting the world to rights? Perhaps it's a radical political manifesto for those who want to follow him in getting rid of London's Starbucks, MacDonald's, exorbitant rents, and bendy busses and turn everything 'charmingly rural'? Certainly it should be a must-read for the thousands of regulars and semi-regulars at the 'Home of Free Speech' (©) who want to see their hobby/outlet chronicled by one of its shrewdest observers.

It will also be fascinating to anyone who wants to read texts of mind-blowing confrontations between the highly enlightened and the irritatingly banal.

Speakers' Corner being the ultimate public forum with a unique 'revolving crowd' structure; thus, another classification for this book might be 'Literature specifically devoted to dealing with comic geniuses forced to talk to those who are their intellectual and social inferiors: 729.430123'.

The highlight of Tony's meeting always comes about thirty minutes in when he is confronted by a day-tripper trying to make a name for himself

through some obvious, and usually second-hand heckle, and is given a reply along the lines of "Do you not realise - Property is Liberty. Property is Theft. Property is Impossible. Now, any questions? Not you! Not You! And definitely Not You!"

I'm sure Tony is aware that he is performing a wonderful social service by giving the various 'characters' (think of the word 'character' in the slyly pejorative sense that we use in this country, as in 'Albert, he's a real character') that he catharts at, their moment of posterity. Hecklers, winos, academics, god-botherers, bores, geniuses, and straightforward regulars, all cross his path and are dealt with fairly but are never allowed to get above themselves.

Equally when he is allowed to be in a positive mood Tony will happily explain: why currency is unnecessary; the role of the clown in comic history; the difference between male and female modes of gaining personal attention; all aspects of the performance dynamic; the difference between swearing as punctuation, emphasis and gratuitousness; and the social and economic phenomena that have forced you to ask of him a particular question. He is, in short, almost unique in being a very considerable brain for hire between the hours of three and seven on a Sunday afternoon.

Tony here writes about a more innocent time. A few summers ago when for most Britons 9/11 still meant 'November 9th' and Saddam Hussein was our enemy from years ago, the evil dictator who upset the US President before last.

Speakers' Corner is nothing if not six months ahead of the curve in terms of knowing what is going on in the world. Today you cannot walk from the 'religious' end of the Corner near the Bayswater road to the 'political' end nearer Park Lane without hearing heated arguments about the last war and whether Venezuela or Iran will get



it next. As one cynical but well-informed regular put it to me this week, "The difference between Bush and Kerry will be one letter: cross out the Q and turn it into an N" - depressing but probably true. Speakers' Corner is currently a rather angry and scary place because we are currently in a rather

scary and depressing world.

Much of this book, after the excellent and lengthy introduction giving the historical context for the Corner from the '60s until today, is given over to Tony fighting and arguing with friends, strangers and casual acquaintances, for a better, less selfish, more chilled-out

world. Long may he continue to 'disturb the comfortable, and comfort the disturbed'.

A Summer in the Park by Tony Allen is available from Freedom Press at £8.50 (post free in the UK, add £1.50 towards postage and packing elsewhere).

BOOKS

Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy
by Israel Getzler
Cambridge University Press

While most Kronstadt accounts tend to concentrate on the 1921 revolt against Bolshevik dictatorship, Getzler's book spans the whole period of 'red' Kronstadt from February 1917 to March 1921.

Getzler's analysis of the continuity in terms of politics, institutions and personnel effectively demolishes the Bolshevik myths about Kronstadt. It confirms anarchist accounts of the uprising, showing that the sailor's revolt was not a counter-revolutionary move by newly arrived peasant conscripts (the standard Leninist view). Rather, it was in solidarity with a general strike in Petrograd and quickly became an attempt to restore the Soviet democracy which had been practiced in

the city in 1917. He argues convincingly (using 'hard statistical data') that the sailors of 1921 had been there since at least 1917. In fact, less than 7% of the sailors on the two battleships (the *Petrovlovsk* and the *Sevastopol*) who initiated the revolt had arrived there around 1918.

Equally importantly, Getzler shows that rather than being a bastion of Bolshevism in 1917 and early 1918, Kronstadt regularly returned a Soviet with a populist majority: A "radical populist coalition of Maximalists and Left SRs (Socialist Revolutionaries) held sway, albeit precariously, within Kronstadt and its Soviet."

The Bolsheviks, while often the largest single party, did not dominate Kronstadt. During the October revolution, for example, the soviet majority was made up of Left SRs and Maximalists. It was only in the January elections in 1918 that the Bolsheviks improved their

position, gaining their highest ever vote during the era of multi-party soviets. This accounted for only 46% of seats in the soviet. The soviet elected a Left SR as its chairman. By the April 1918 elections, as in most of Russia, the Bolsheviks found their support had decreased. The Bolshevik share of the vote dropped to 29% as compared to 22% for the SR-Maximalists and 21% for the Left SRs.

Indeed, Bolshevik influence at Kronstadt was so weak that on 18th April, the Kronstadt soviet denounced the Bolshevik attack against the anarchists in Moscow six days previously by a vote of 81 to 57. As the author notes, the 'Bolshevisation' of Kronstadt "and the destruction of its multi-party democracy was not due to internal developments and local Bolshevik strength, but decreed from outside and imposed by force." Politically Kronstadt in 1917, as in 1921, can best be summed

up by the SR-Maximalists, a split from the Left SRs who were close to anarchism. The aim was 'sovietism', best expressed by the slogan raised in the 1921 uprising: "All power to the soviets and not to parties."

Getzler's book is essential reading for all those interested in the Russian Revolution and Kronstadt. He invokes a feel of the events of the time, presenting an engaging picture of the new, vibrant, social and political system constructed by the Kronstadters after the February revolution and the hope it provoked. As Yarchuk, an influential anarchist activist in Kronstadt, put it in 1917, "all one has to do is take what is here in Kronstadt on a small scale in our Soviet ... and built it on a large scale, and it will work there too." This was not to be. The hope of a genuine soviet system was strangled by the Bolsheviks

in 1918 before being briefly resurrected, by many of the same people, in the 1921 revolt. This book is a fitting testimony to that system and the hopes it inspired.

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The Top Ten 1 2 3

Inspired by the Olympics, Freedom is beginning a series of competitive Top Ten lists. For starters, we list your top ten best Trotskyist pick-up lines to use on the cute Marxist-Leninist at your local paper-sale.

1. Hey sweet thang, wanna dictate my proletariat?
2. My revolutionary Party has a huge, militant membership - wanna lesson in Entryism?
3. Is your father a commisar of production and distribution? Because he surely expropriated some bourgeois diamonds for your eyes.
4. Do you believe in love at first sight? Or do you need to be broken of your false consciousness by the vanguard since without us you're only capable of trade union consciousness?
5. Hey baby, If I said you had a peasantry capable of being led by a tiny working class would you hold it against me?
6. Wanna see my bra? It's a size (Provisional)CC.
7. Trotsky was all for women's lib, you know ... have you heard of Nadezhda Krupskaya?
8. Is that an icepick in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?
9. Like my hairstyle? I've done it up like a pimp ...
10. Are you a girl? Please will you talk to me. I promise not to mention Trotsky.

Extra-special Bonus Posadist* pick-up line: "Did it hurt? When you fell from your sexy spaceship come to liberate the proletariat?"

Next week we list the top ten best things about punks! Send your suggestions, and ideas for future top ten lists to copy@freedompress.org.uk or see page 2 for our postal address. Special thanks to the posters of urban75.com, who contributed to this week's list.

Footnote

* The Posadists are a Marxist cult who believe that UFOs can only have been built by advanced civilisations which have undergone a Trotskyist revolution, and that they are coming here to help the class struggle, hence the government 'cover-ups'.

Rich White Men

Their faces stare out of The Guardian's pages. Every one of them is white, middle-aged and male. They all are wearing smart suits and smug smiles, and no wonder. They earn a basic salary of just under £600,000 a year - 12.8% more than they earned last year. They are Britain's best paid company bosses and they are enjoying a pay bonanza. This year's whopping rise follows an even more massive 23% increase the year before and a 17% hike the year before that. A hundred and ninety CEOs now earn

more than £1 million a year.

In contrast the average annual pay of workers is just £24,600. The CEO of Rentokill earns 247 times more than his average employee. One wonders whether he works 247 times harder. Does he clear drains? Or exterminate rats? I doubt it somehow.

Tesco's made a profit of £1.9 billion last year. They have a board comprising of eight men. It is pretty safe to say that these people do not spend their time stacking baked beans, collecting shopping trolleys in the pouring rain or swiping shopping through the till. Whatever it is they actually do they get paid a fuck of a lot for it. Between £1.9 and £8.6 million each in fact, a grand total £26 million.

And what about those people who do actually stack shelves, collect trolleys and sit on tills? The ones who make the profits. They happen to be the ninth worst paid in Britain, earning an average of under £13,000. That's 0.15% of what Tesco's top paid board member gets.

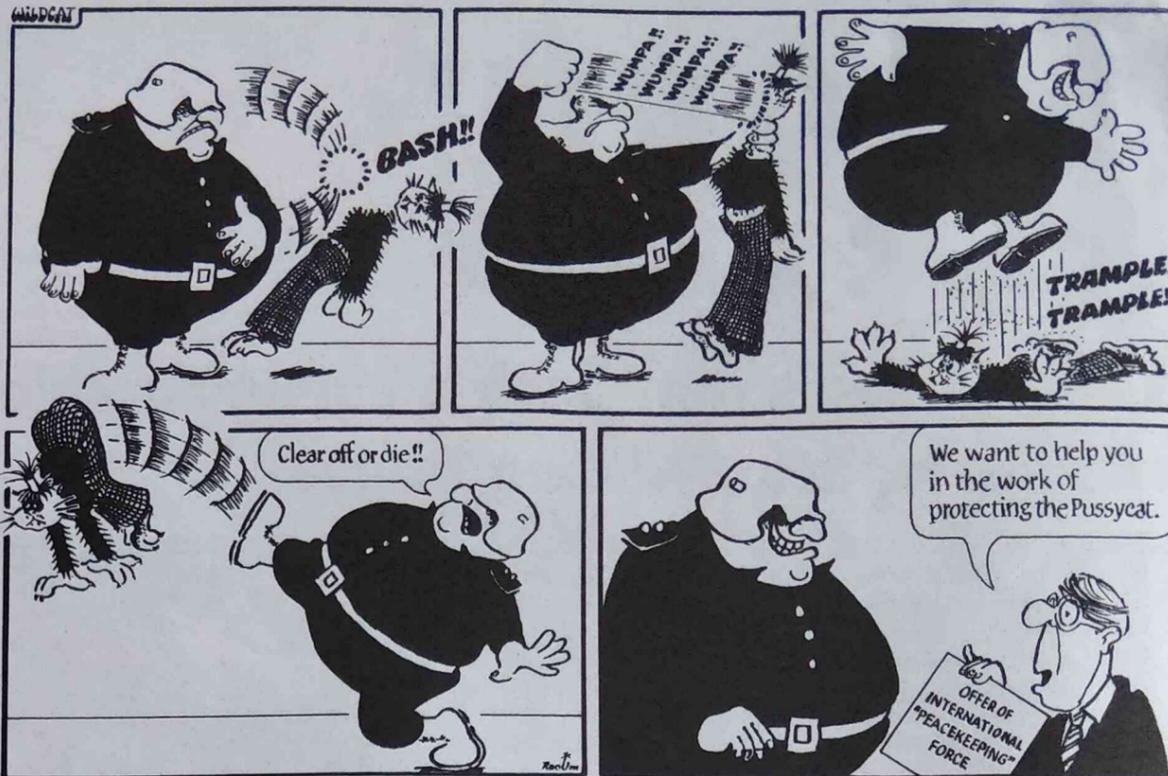
Tesco's really tells you all you need to know about capitalism. Workers are exploited, working long hours for shit pay. Bosses and shareholders, who are overwhelmingly male and white, reap in the profits. Kropotkin in his Anarchist Communism wrote "owing to our wage system the increase in wealth has resulted only in an unprecedented accumulation of wealth into the hands of owners of capital." Things have not changed much since 1887.

'Fat cat bosses' is not a new story. In fact there is a pretty regular flow of stories showing that company directors are getting pay increases three or four times as much as the rest of us and that the gap between rich and poor is growing. Even those bosses who fail get big pay offs. Tap 'fat cat bosses' into Google and you'll get 21,600 hits with titles like 'fat cat bosses still lapping up bonuses' or 'fat cat bosses lap up all the cream'.

What has been the government's response to the outrage these stories create? They 'tut' and then say it is up to shareholders to deal with the problem. Which somewhat misses the point as share holders are actually part of the problem. The government has consistently refused to legislate against board room excess. While the state is happy to legislate a poverty pay of £4.50 an hour (£3.80 if you are under the age of 21) for the minimum wage, they refuse even to go as far as to compel companies to show the difference between what they pay their people at the top and the rest of their workforce.

No one is even talking about a national maximum wage to curb the greed of bosses.

While capitalism remains the fact cats will continue to get all of the cream. Until there is workers' control and self management exploitation will continue.



A sideways look

There used to be some derelict garages on the way from our house to the town centre. About eighteen months ago they were demolished and a house began to be built on the site. It's an unusual place, as it is sandwiched at the end of a row of imposing Victorian semi-detached houses, with a terrace at right angles and backing onto some inter-war semis. It also has an electricity sub-station on the corner.

That the garages should be demolished and a house built is not surprising. It's one of the ways that housing has been squeezed into the area in the last decade, since all the plots created by the Luftwaffe or County Hall were used up. What was unusual is that the dwelling was to be an eco-house. Personally I thought this was a bit far-fetched given the limitations of the site (overlooked on three sides and not a lot of space.) Of course, it turned out that what was meant by this was a few token nods in the direction of environmental sustainability, but nothing more. The house has a condensing boiler, solar heating and a turfed roof. I'm sure the insulation standards will be quite high and all the government building regs will be exceeded. But it's not an eco-house. It has a video entry system, a drive and too much pvc. And its initial asking price was £400,000 when it was finished. A ridiculous amount of money even in this part of London. It hasn't sold - there are new estate agents' boards up there every other week, all pushing a product that's missed its niche. Ecologically speaking, it's not likely to appeal to anyone but the shallowest ecologist. And if anyone thinks that green building means excluding the poor (and in this case anyone without an inheritance or a job they ought to feel guilty about) they're

missing the point. We need to live sustainably, because of the chaos threatened when we don't. And we all need to do it, for the same reasons.

Until the asking price is dropped significantly more than it already has, I can't see this house selling. There didn't appear to be any major problems for its developers with the planning process, though. This is in stark contrast to people who really do build eco-houses. Partly, that's because the planning system just won't let them and they have to do it by taking direct action. But it's also because planning and land use in Britain is tied up with class and feudalism. There is a real rural homelessness crisis drowned out by a chorus of builders who only want to build executive homes, the rich commuters who live in them and the rural conservatives who want to see everything untouched, especially where it affects the price of their country pile. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is still trying to get the famous roundhouse at Brithdir Mawr demolished, while happily giving permission for an intrusive development of three hundred leisure homes. As climate change becomes more of a reality we need the expertise of these pioneers far more than we need grass roofs on empty houses.

Svartfrosk

2,000

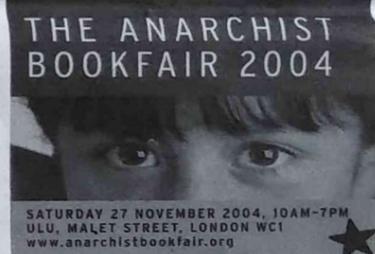
Number of people who fought police in the streets in Athens demonstrating against the proposed visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell

0

Number of Colin Powell's who then visited the Greek capital

Blast from the Past

For the first in our new series reprinting extracts from old issues of Freedom made in the same week, we publish a short from the issue from 9th September 1973 - just two days before the US-backed coup which overthrew the left-wing President Allende: "Santiago, Chile - Army Chief of Staff, General Carlos Prats, went on a shooting spree in response to a woman who had stuck her tongue out at him as their cars passed on the road. After forcing the woman's car to a halt, the General held a gun to her head and demanded an apology. President Allende placed the entire province under martial law as a result of the incident."



The quiz

1. According to humourist Ambrose Bierce in The Devil's Dictionary, what is a nutritious substance supplied by a bountiful providence for the fattening of the poor?
2. And what did Bierce define as "to lay the foundation for a future offence"?
3. What happened when Microsoft programmers put the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir outside India on a map of world time-zones?
4. For what was the anarchist Gregori Maximoff sentenced to death by the Bolsheviks?

Answers on page 6

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