

FREEDOM

80p ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

www.freedompress.org.uk

27 JANUARY 2007

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ASBO YOUR NEIGHBOURS!

A prominent member of one of London's most successful community action groups has hit out against a new measure to give ASBO powers to Tenant Management Organisations.

A member of Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG), speaking to *Freedom*, has condemned the government initiative as a cheap attempt to head off a growing community movement resentful of relentless losses of and cuts to services. He said: "From the community angle this is a real issue with anti-social behaviour and it's true it can have a disproportionately large effect."

"People get demoralised if they feel it can't be overcome. But the solution to that kind of behaviour is to build strong residents associations, build a positive community spirit and improve conditions for everybody."

"The government are continuously looking for way to increase their control over people's everyday lives. Crime and fear of crime has always been a great opportunity for them to justify their intervention in our communities."

"There's no doubt that the government are very unpopular, they are looking for something which says 'we are doing something', which doesn't cost anything but will improve their control."

"It's a recognition of the growing power of residents associations and groups, and they want to mould this growing movement into a state-led agenda, rather than have a movement

which questions the behaviour and existence of these authorities themselves."

The powers will only apply to Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), a form of organisation which in itself only has formal powers in council-owned housing. Groups applying for TMO status have to go through a rigorous training process and abide by agreements laid down with management at the start of the tenancy. Landlords retain control over any major outlays, along with rent collection.

HSG are suspicious of the motive of the ASBO plan, which seems designed to push TMOs, which have had only limited success in establishing themselves around the country, to resident groups. "TMOs are being pushed because they see it as a step to fragmentation which may get support from the estates. We have one example in Haringey on Broadwater Meadows, from the residents association the plan is for the whole estate to be managed by the government and the TMO together. People want to remain council tenants but take a much greater role."

"From one angle it can be seen as positive. But it suits the council and government because they will use that to accelerate a break-up. There's a danger of activists being co-opted into formal structures rather than independent groups and campaigns. The focus should always be on independent self organisation."

"In theory TMOs are in the control



CLEVER INTELLIGENCE: Following an attack on the US Embassy in Greece this month, when a small rocket was fired, intelligence analysts released this photograph, saying it was being examined by counter-terrorist units. On further examination however, the embarrassed sleuths were forced to admit not only that it wasn't in fact connected to the incident, but that the ultimate source was actually a publicly-available Wikipedia photo - taken by a US army officer.

of the residents but in reality you have to constitute yourself in such a way that you are co-opted into the state. The danger is you start to perform a different

role, you become an administrator." Alongside the measure, Tony Blair and Communities Minister Ruth Kelly announced a £485m investment to

"update run down council housing as part of a programme to update all social housing".

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WIKILEAKS LAUNCH

The concept of 'wiki', online documentation which can be edited by anyone, such as the huge and growing Wikipedia website, will take a new step this month with the launch of an online document 'leaking' service.

Wikileaks is run by a group of largely anonymous posters who say they range from Chinese dissidents, mathematicians and startup company technologists, from the US, Taiwan, Europe, Australia and South Africa.

But an online security specialist contacted by *Freedom* has raised questions over the usefulness of a system based online. Matthew said: "So far, no concrete information regarding the security technology used by Wikileaks

has been released. Until such information is available, one must assume that Wikileaks in no more secure than current 'anonymous' publication systems."

"Wikileaks claims to use technologies such as Tor (known to be flawed) PGP (assumed to be flawed) and Freenet (built on the 'web of trust', a weak, if not flawed concept)."

"Wikileaks was itself leaked, on the website *Cryptome.org*, when the site's owner, John Young, felt that Wikileaks was, in fact, a scam. Young's opinion was that the \$5m funding target set by the project was evidence enough that something fishy was going on."

"I trust Young's judgment beyond that of groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation, members of which are involved in Wikileaks. A lot of this is about young American hackers wanting to feel good. Hence a lot of it is rubbish."

"Wikileaks claims to be aimed primarily at China. As such, it will receive CIA funding, whether the people involved know it or not. Perhaps though, all this is missing the point. A leak is of

little value unless it is credible. Even then, leaks can only act as a catalyst for change. In any case, leaks don't 'break open the world'."

The group claim to have 1.2 million documents already for the site, and an operating group of 22, some of whom will form the advisory board for the site. • Author's note: This is one of the few areas I feel I can personally comment on, having had to deal with leaked material before and with some grounding in general as a young radical journalist.

Leaking is based solely on trust. If my sources can't trust me personally to take their names to prison rather than give them up, they won't, shouldn't, tell me anything. And there is no way of really trusting the people involved in this site.

Even if they haven't been infiltrated by secret services - and if this service is successful it will be - their claim that the Wikileaks community can 'prove' sources' veracity is all but useless. If something important leaks, it is a simple matter to swamp the entire system with spam so verification becomes impossible.

APPO CLASH

Just days after admitting the use of 'excessive force' in clearing the streets of protesters in Oaxaca, Mexico, a second demonstration calling for the ousting of governor Ulises Ruiz has been attacked and eight people arrested.

The demonstration on 17th January by Supporters and members of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) saw Federal Police, which are still patrolling the city, wade in to disrupt a march which also demanded existing prisoners be set free.

Efforts to stamp out the remnants of last year's insurrection, which saw the entire state erupt into rebellion for several months and the establishment of a union and popular movement-led alternative assembly, which declared the unpopular government unnecessary, have been ongoing in the New Year.

Reports have been coming through of heavy-handed police intervention over anything which smacks of support for APPO since the crushing of overt resistance late last year.

International finance have reputedly backed the painting-over of anti-capitalist artwork which sprang up around the city, in a huge whitewashing campaign led by governor Ulises Ruiz.

The governor, whose repressive social policies were a major factor in the uprising, has been retained as governor despite being humiliated by the uprising, which forced the calling in of state troops to quell the rebellion.

However APPO seems to be faring better outside the main city, with rural areas continuing to overtly support the assembly. In early January, a new municipality largely inhabited by an indigenous group, the Triqui, largely declared itself autonomous from the Mexican state, and have set up strategic road blocks to ward off paramilitaries from disrupting the area.

Representatives of up to 20 communities, representing 20,000 people, threw their weight behind the APPO, pledging to run their own affairs independent of the government.

ISSN 0016-0504



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Vol 68 No 02

Home and away

Poor man of Europe

A new report has found that Britain has the least generous pension system in Europe. When comparing state pension entitlement to average wages, Britain came bottom of the list, according to the study by Aon Consulting. The report, compiled for business study groups, praised the lack of pension provision, claiming that it gives British companies a competitive advantage and they placed the current system third for 'affordability and sustainability'.

The report concluded that better provision and stronger life expectancy gives many countries the edge in pension provision, with Brits only taking on average 16.6 years of retirement, to France's 20.9 years.

Aon emphasised that the UK state pension is set to increase by 12% in the next 45 years, though the number of years in retirement will drop by 3-5.

Pipe up and be heard

In Trebanos, near Swansea, local activists and climate action groups have been stopping work on the huge LNG pipeline currently being constructed, which is planned to stretch from Pembrokeshire to Gloucester. A camp has been established occupying part of a public footpath and blocking access to one of the work sites. A disused pub near the route of the pipe has been squatted, and renamed the Pipe and Slippers, the owner has now given permission for activists to stay there as support for the camp.

Campaigners said: "Local resistance to the pipe is enormous. More people are needed all the time. There is plenty of scope for all kinds of action. Food and places to stay are plentiful. Come and get involved."

For more information on this campaign, call 07733 190958

Dundee job cuts

Production of cash points is to stop in Dundee after a shift to cheaper plants overseas saw National Cash Register (NCR) announce the closure of the Scottish factory. The company plans to shift production from Dundee and move it to plants in Hungary, India and China. The Amicus union says the announcement will result in job losses for many more who provide catering and cleaning services for NCR in Dundee.

Just fourteen months prior to the decision, the company opened the Hungary plant with CEO Bill Nuti saying there would be absolutely no impact on jobs in Dundee.

NCR will retain a presence in Dundee to develop prototype machines but all the machines will be manufactured abroad. The company has also said it will be closing sites in Waterloo, Canada, Dallas in the US and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Nuts to court

As *Freedom* goes to press, the trial of Josh Richards, an anti-war protester arrested in 2003 as part of the 'Fairford Five', has begun with charges of aggravated arson being dropped on the first day.

Richards was apprehended before he managed to enter Fairford base with a plan to damage the tyres of jets intended for operation in Iraq, was remanded in custody for possessing a dangerous substance. He was accused of possessing an explosive substance with intent to endanger life and remanded in custody. MoD intelligence believed Josh was in possession of a 'slow fuse', which later turned out to be a jar of peanut butter. This was later dropped to the arson charge before the case went to court.

Around the world

BOLIVIA: The streets of Cochabamba were once again the scene of clashes between social movements and supporters of the unpopular mayor. Peasants, natives, *cocaleros* (coca leaf growers) and independent groups have been protesting since the beginning of the week demanding the renunciation of mayor Manfred Reyes Vila. After violent repression during a march on Monday, the movements remained in the central square (14th September) for a vigil. Vigils are also being held in other squares in the central area.

On Thursday 11th January, a march of the mayor's supporters penetrated the police blockade in the centre of the city and struck tens of demonstrators of the social movements with baseball bats, sticks, firearms and knives in an attempt to resume control of the square where city hall is located. The police advanced using tear gas, which provoked violent clashes. The number of injured



people grows. So far there are around 115 injured and two dead: *cocalero* Nicomedes Gutiérrez of the Chimore Central was killed by a gunshot and Cristian Urresty, of the group Youths for Democracy, was killed by strangulation.

Manfred, the mayor, abandoned Cochabamba the same morning the clash was announced, and took refuge in a hotel in La Paz. That afternoon, during the confrontations, a meeting was carried out with the mayor's allies in the cities Benji, Tarija, Santa Cruz, La Paz and Cochabamba. They agreed they would not establish a dialogue with the federal government and they would carry out actions in solidarity with the Cochabamba mayor. That night, the federal government announced that during the clash three people were detained with firearm, all connected to the Civic Committee of Cochabamba

and that the "intolerance and lack of negotiations" on the part of Manfred resulted in the serious social conflict.

FRANCE: France's next government will have to persuade workers to stay at work much longer if the country's generous pension system is to survive into the 21st century, a top advisory body warned on Thursday.

Raising the retirement age is an explosive issue in France, and one that neither of the main candidates in April's presidential election, the right's Nicolas Sarkozy or the Socialist Segolene Royal, has tackled head-on.

Employment rates among France's 55-64 year olds stand at 37.8%, among the lowest in the European Union, where the average is 42.5%, due to a relatively low legal age of retirement, at 60, and high unemployment.

The French Orientation Council on Pensions (COR) has delivered a report to Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin on the urgent need for reform, warning that the shortfall in the system had "worsened more than expected".

This year the pensions deficit is expected to reach 3.5 billion euros, compared to 2.4 billion euros last year, as the system is stretched by an ageing workforce and unemployment of 8.7%.

By 2050, the system will need an injection of between 2% and 5% of gross domestic product (GDP), or between 30 and 80 billion euros, as the active population falls relative to the inactive population, it predicted.

From 2008, the report warned it would be a 'strategic' imperative to improve French employment rates among senior workers, as well as tackling unfair privileges on a case-by-case basis.

Though the age of retirement in the private sector is 60, those in the public sector leave far earlier, from age 45 in the armed forces and civil service, and from age 50 in the state-owned rail and energy sectors.

In addition, private sector workers receive a pension based on their 25 best years, following a reform introduced by the current centre-right government, whereas in the public sector it is calculated on their end-of-career salary.

Sarkozy has promised to address the

inequalities between public and private sector if he is elected, but neither he nor Royal has made clear commitments to raise the age of retirement beyond 60.

The head of the CNAV national pension fund, Daniele Karniewicz, warned that French people would have to make "an extra effort" and that reform of the so-called special regimes, though it would have relatively little financial impact, was an important symbol.

But the unemployment agency UNEDIC warned that, although the government says it wants to keep more seniors in work, thousands are being struck off unemployment lists from the age of 55 and 57 on the grounds that it is too difficult for them to find a job. Some 415,000 people now fall into that category, out of work but not appearing in official unemployment statistics.

INDIA: On 5th January nearly 250,000 jute workers from more than 50 mills in the Indian state of West Bengal went on indefinite strike over pay and bonuses. Their demands include the clearance of outstanding gratuity payments and the payment of bonuses and a dearness allowance. Bonuses have not been paid for four years. Strikers demonstrated outside the one of closed mills which produces hessian, burlap, wine bottle bags, bags and geo-textiles. The last jute industry strike occurred in 2004 and continued for nine days. Unions agreed to productivity-linked wages to end the industrial action.

Village council (*panchayat*) workers in the Tiruchi area in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu protested on 8th January to demand a wage rise for overhead tank operators and sanitary workers who have not had a pay increase since 2000. They also want the prompt payment of salaries in the first week of the month. The demonstration was called by the Tiruchi District Rural Development Local Administration Department Employees' Union.

Food Corporation of India (FCI) employees held a sit-down protest (*dharna*) in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu on 6th January against the outsourcing of work, such as procurement, accounts and security, which is normally performed in-house.

Workers condemned management for victimising field staff, who are blamed for lapses in quality control during rail transit. They also want FCI to stop allocating storage space to private companies. Other demands include promotion for all workers who have completed 12 years of service in the same post, payment of an overtime allowance, new classifications for clerks and watchmen and the establishment of FCI accommodation adjacent to corporation offices in major towns.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE: This week in Bil'in, after almost two solid years of at least one demonstration a week, over a hundred people, Palestinians, internationals, and Israelis from the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative, took part in the weekly demonstration. In addition to protesting the wall and the occupation, this week's demonstration was also held in solidarity with Maan News Agency photographer, Fadi Al-Arouri, who was shot with live ammunition in the stomach and groin during a Special Forces invasion to Ramallah recently. Fadi is hospitalised in Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, and is still unconscious.

Marching towards the wall, demonstrators noticed border policemen taking positions inside the village for no apparent reason other than provoking stone throwers. A few cameramen who tried to film them where attacked with teargas and concussion grenades, but the demonstration managed to continue towards the gate in the wall.

After a short argument at the gate and the habitual declaration of the area as a closed military zone, a group of demonstrators tried dismantling the razor wire fortifications of the wall, as other kept arguing with the soldiers and chanting slogans.



Prison news

Uprising at HMP Featherstone

At the end of December, there was an uprising by prisoners at HMP Featherstone, a category 'C' prison near Birmingham. One prisoner managed to get onto the roof of the jail but, after additional staff were brought in, the uprising was put down after three hours. The following day 18 prisoners were moved out of the jail.

Roy John Burke released

After ten years in jail fighting his conviction, Roy John Burke, originally of Wigan, was released from Frankland prison on the 19th January.

Even among miscarriages of justice, Roy's case stands out as bizarre. At his trial, the sole prosecution witness, the man Roy was supposed to have robbed,

turned to the judge and said, "I think there has been a mistake your honour, this isn't the man who robbed me, he was well over six-foot tall and very stocky." Roy Burke stands about 5ft 6in and weighed around 8 stone at the time of his arrest. Additionally, he had ginger hair, whereas the heavily-built robber had dark hair. Despite these inconsistencies, Roy was convicted of robbery.

He has done everything possible while behind bars to fight his conviction, but now joins the growing ranks of miscarriage of justice victims who serve their whole sentences, and often more, while still having their appeals unresolved. Shortly before his release Roy issued the following message: "This is just a short note of thanks to all the people who have written to me

over the years. I am still fighting the conviction and will continue to do so on my release, am hoping to hand over the paper work to the CCRC very shortly."

Bart De Geeter released

On the 9th January, Bart De Geeter, one of the 'Aachen Four' was suddenly and unexpectedly released from Remscheid prison in Germany. Bart had been due for release last October, but the German authorities had used various excuses to keep him behind bars before finally turning him out onto the street. His release was so sudden that he was unable to inform anyone until after he got out, and had to wait outside the jail while comrades arranged to go and pick him up.

After his period of incarceration, Bart, who previously worked with the highly respected Gent Anarchist Black Cross group, is sure to need a little extra help. If you would like to make a financial donation to assist Bart in finding his feet again please contact Leeds ABC at leedsabc@riseup.net.

Gabriel Pombo da Silva and Jose Fernandez Delgado, the two remaining 'Aachen prisoners' are also in need of our support.

Prison suicides

In 2006 there were 67 suicides in prisons in England and Wales, most of which were by hanging. After 17 separate requests from the Prisons Ombudsman the Prison Service are to issue staff with 'cut-down tools'.

News

What are you going to do?

Usdaw have said they're shocked at finance jobs moving overseas from Tesco – despite their 'special relationship'

In its most militant attack on Tesco for years, retail union Usdaw has said its members are "shocked and disappointed" that the company is outsourcing jobs from Cardiff.

The union, which has been criticised heavily over the last few years for its closeness with Tesco management, has hit back, promising to "Work very closely with Tesco to make sure our members are offered the best re-training possible and to make sure they are offered every available support to find new opportunities in Tesco and South Wales."

Up to 190 staff are feeling the benefit from being in the union, as it tries its hardest to maintain its partnership status with the company by refusing to call any action or condemn outright Tesco's actions, although they look likely to be repeated.

The company, which would have 180 staff remaining in their financial services department after the cuts, have stated that they already have a centre in India targeted to deal with that section of the business.

The news that Usdaw have backed off, that moves to outsource will not be attacked on any level, and that its top officials are not shocked and disappointed, adds fuel to the fire as criticisms continue that the union is effectively yellow.

Usdaw's activity has come in for more flak than almost any other major union, following its partnership deal with Tesco signed in 2002.

The deal guaranteed representation for the company and help, both financial and practical, in recruiting for the union in Tesco stores in what is

effectively the largest such deal ever signed in the private sector.

Tesco pays Usdaw reps to recruit for the union, and pays both junior and senior reps to attend union workshops, conferences and "the right kind of training", a move which is frowned on for effectively embedding the financial wellbeing of the union into company pockets and giving Tesco influence both at the heart of union matters and on raw recruits.

What's more, negotiations are not done on pay, and reps are barred from speaking to management except through staff committees, thus effectively slowing the process of any desired changes. There are also allegations that more militant staff reps are removed with Usdaw's blessing.

The union now has 110,000 people in Tesco, amounting to 30% of its total membership, but has actively supported management against the workforce on several occasions since the deal was signed, including in this most recent case.

In one of the most proudly displayed parts of the Tesco/Usdaw agreement, explained in detail in the union's first issue of its *Network* magazine, 80 reps were to be brought together to negotiate with the company over decision-making. The number was actually 70, and when some of the reps began asking for changes, the union, rather than back the militants, helped Tesco to split them off the following year, until only five 'reliable' reps were left.

When Tesco launched an attack on sick pay in 2004, using an experimental



system which would hold pay for the first three days of sickness and pay in full on the fourth day (which requires a doctor's note), Usdaw responded: "are supporting this trial because we want to have an input and have a say in shaping and influencing the outcomes.

"Staff are being asked to co-operate and support the trials by volunteering temporary change of contracts for a 12-month period."

Pensions too have been a major bone of contention for workers at Tesco, but despite enormous anger

over the way retired Tesco workers are treated, nothing has been done.

Pensions, along with other payments, are not put through until a full three months after retirement regardless of notification. Discount cards however are cancelled within days.

Why fix what's broken?

A senior director at the NSPCC has denied claims from an insider that a major new database set up to monitor children and young people is not fit for purpose.

In December an insider at the NGO detailed extensive problems staff have registered complaints over, regarding the Children's Recording Information System (CRIS).

A range of initial complaints in the system's first two months on the company intranet regarding CRIS was run in *Freedom* (3rd December) including worries regarding slow service, lost recordings, higher workloads, an erratic search engine and a need for paper backups.

Two new releases, in late December and most recently in early January, have failed to improve matters, according to our source. They said: "In some cases the system won't take two people working on it at the same time in the same office and it crashes. There's new special measures in place and people have gone back to using paper records. It won't be back until

February, and that's official policy.

"People are saying they have spent half a day to do one entry. In terms of the day-to-day system it seems to be worse since the new release [January]. And it's still not properly searchable, people are looking for things they have put in themselves and it's not showing up. The most recent talk is of a boycott of the system."

Wes Cuell, director of services for children and young people, said: "There were concerns in the first few weeks about CRIS that data wasn't being found but that's not the case now. We are very confident that the data is reliable.

"We are not in special measures and we only use paper records when doing things like inputting high volume work which we update when admin has time.

"CRIS was a completely new database. All our staff were going to be more hands-on. There were some issues around the system itself and some around staff understanding. We have a lot of people saying it works really well now and some saying its still got problems.

"We are increasingly looking at people rather than the software and some people have got themselves into a bit of a mindset that CRIS won't work properly. But we do have a lot of people saying it's a big improvement."

One message to the internal list from 18th January, handed over by our insider, disagrees that it is inputter problems however, pointing out that one search which brought up three pages of names could not be put into alphabetical order because of a glitch in the system, a problem confirmed by a support officer who noted it was 'not currently working'.



Fr Gresham Kirkby 1916-2006

It can't be often, unfortunately, that the bishop of a major country's capital city having visited an elderly priest, feared to be dying, and then phones a past archbishop's former chaplain, a sometime mentor of the present archbishop, to say "he spoke of the kingdom of God and proclaimed his undying belief in anarchy".

In the '60s Gresham Kirkby was chair of the London Christian Anarchists, and before that, in the 1950s, of the Socialist Christian League, was on the governing body of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and, behind the scenes, was the inspiration when Ken Leech founded Jubilee (an anarchist Anglican socialist grouping to which the present bishop then belonged), in the early 1970s.

Hailing from the West of Cornwall, except for curacies in Manchester, Middlesbrough and Kensington, Gresham spent most of his working

life in Mile End. There he was a well-known priest and in frequent trouble with his bishop, both for his politics and his liturgical innovations. He was using the present Roman Catholic rite for 25 years before Roman Catholics were licensed to use it, Anglicans are still not, though nowadays a blind eye is generally turned.

He found it difficult to put his ideas down on paper, so his direct influence was more or less confined to those who met him or corresponded with his friends. Indirectly, however, his influence was extensive, inspiring much of what came to be known as Liberation Theology.*

Laurens Otter

*Liberation Theology is an amalgamation of church teachings and socialist political activism, which was largely struck down by the current Pope Benedict and his allies after gaining some prominence for its view that the teachings of Christ are best seen through the eyes of the poor, and that 'His' teachings are those of a liberator of the oppressed.

News

Old church, old games

Centuries after it arrived in a gunboat to help subjugate Angola, the Catholic church is back, and the guns are out again

A new report has condemned the Catholic Church for reacting to regaining lands taken by the Angolan government after independence by forcibly evicting thousands of people living there – so they can build a sanctuary.

It is alleged by Amnesty International that senior clerics in the country requested the evictions, which continue to be violent and have long been criticised for not providing anywhere else for those evicted to go.

The organisation said that nearly all of the forced evictions were accompanied by excessive use of force, which sometimes involved police beatings of children and women – including one pregnant woman – and indiscriminate shooting at residents attempting to protect their homes.

According to the report, *Lives in Ruins*, forced evictions continue, thousands of families have been forcibly evicted since 2001 – nearly always without notification to the families affected. Tens of thousands have been left without shelter, with hundreds of families still living their lives in ruins.

Forced evictions in the Wenji Maka neighbourhood appear to have started in June 2004. Since then, there have been repeated attempts to expel the 2,000-plus families who have lived in the area for several years, some for decades, and to demolish their homes and destroy their vegetable gardens.

Their occupation of the land apparently did not stop the government from

granting it to the Catholic Church, which intends to build the sanctuary upon it. Forced evictions have been carried out apparently at the request of the Catholic Church by members of the National Police from the Fifth Division who regularly arrested, beat and used firearms against the residents, seriously injuring some.

In the Palanca neighbourhood, a total of about 59 finished and unfinished houses belonging to teachers of the '11 de Novembro' boarding school were reportedly demolished by the police in August 2003. In September and December 2003, over 100 houses were demolished in Sapu, allegedly on the orders of the Luanda Provincial Governor. Approximately 90 police officers armed with guns and other heavy weapons were involved and reportedly opened fire on the residents.

The accusations have come as the church attempts to rebuild its reputation in Angola, marking its return from effective exile following Angolan independence in 1975.

The church was ousted largely because of its strong connections with Portugal, which had been the colonial power from the early nineteenth century and used to be heavily tied in with the notorious slave trade in the region.

The church was among the first western institutions to help lever Portugal into power. Beginning with a failed attempt by Father Barroso, aided by a Portuguese gunboat, to set up the first modern Catholic mission there, the



ROSSPORT GOES ON: A Shell truck rumbles past as Gardai hold the way open. 8th January saw hostilities re-open between people opposing the building of the Ballinaboy Terminal site and its notorious pipeline, which led last year to the imprisonment of five local men for refusing to let the line be built through their land.

church was a stalwart supporter of the Portuguese imperialism which followed, helping to maintain order both before and during the war for independence

on behalf of the government.

Over the colonial period missionary groups repeatedly demanded that believers should not fight their colonial

masters, gave intelligence to colonial commanders and even gifted supplies to the Portuguese armed forces.

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Greek students protest

Efforts to stop a reappraisal of statutes protecting the public nature of Greek education have been stepped up as students, teachers and militants have held marches, squatted university faculties and clashed with police.

The government is voting on whether to change Article 16 of the Greek constitution, which guarantees that education is publicly owned and free for all. A treaty signed in 1999 agreeing to a European regulation has given the ruling New Democracy (conservative) party an opportunity to introduce privately-owned universities for the first time, in a move that students and teachers believe is a major step towards privatisation.

Thousands of protesters came out to condemn the move at the parliament in Athens, and marches and demonstrations took place at 40 other cities around the country. It is thought that tens of thousands took part nationally.

Three votes are required in parliament to allow a reappraisal, with the first having taken place on 10th

January, another due in February and the third and final vote due in March.

Amendment supporters argue that placing education in private hands would 'upgrade' it, 'make it more competitive' and stop the brain drain of Greek youth to other countries. Critics argue that the move would push universities into a commercial environment and kill off equality in education, establishing a two-tier system which would not improve the quality of students remaining in Greece after graduation.

Despite calls for dialogue from the government, confrontations between police and demonstrators have become a familiar sight around Greece, particularly in Athens where a high degree of militant action by radicals has seen regular use of tear gas.

The campaign against article 16 has been continuing for months in the run up to the vote, with groups from around the country speaking out against any changes to the constitution.

Simultaneous to the student protests,

Athens Polytechnic has been squatted by anarchists in solidarity with prisoners taken in the riots of 6th May last year.

Demanding their comrades release from prison, the students have, at the time of writing, seized 16 separate faculties in the Polytechnic.

A solidarity motorbike demonstration was also held on 13th January which was attacked by special motorbike forces and anti-riot police squads.

In a statement, the General Assembly of the Squatted Polytechnic of Athens said: "It is about an attack in which the State, using all the repressive mechanisms of propaganda and control in its power, is attempting to isolate and eliminate anarchists and anti-authoritarians, who are the most radical part of social resistance, with the surrender of the whole of society as its final objective."

"Under these conditions of intensifying State terror, every action of solidarity to the imprisoned fighters has been under attack."

Open Gates

Bill Gates is best known as the head of Microsoft – and the person ultimately responsible for inelegant, bug-ridden, unreliable, crash- and virus-prone, imitative and user-unfriendly operating systems and software; for bullying competitors; for ignoring and flouting internet standards and for consistent anti-labour practices.

The parallel Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is the world's largest private 'philanthropic' organisation – founded six years ago and with an endowment of \$31bn. What those who have sought to praise it may not know is that the Foundation itself also invests money and – until an article in the *Los Angeles Times* in mid January – they almost certainly did not know that companies in which it invests cause harm and damage to the health of people ironically relying on its work.

For example the Foundation has invested over \$400 million dollars in such companies as Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil and Chevron, which

operate in the Niger Delta and are responsible not only for destruction in the region and large-scale displacement and injury to local people but also for massive pollution causing respiratory disease amongst the same local population.

Indeed the Gates Foundation invests in 69 of the worst polluting companies in the US and Canada, including Dow Chemical. It also has stakes in drug companies, the inflated prices of whose products put them far out of the reach of the very patients which the Foundations claims to be helping.

Other firms indirectly funded by Gates are known to have forced thousands of people to lose their homes; supported child labour; and defrauded and neglected patients in need of medical care. It has now emerged that up to a quarter of the Foundation's – which later announced a review of its investments – funds are tied up in companies known to be harmful or at best involved in 'questionable' activities.

Feature

Surveillance as a way of life

In the second part of his analytical piece, James Horrox looks at the integration of the 'surveillance society' with everyday life

As the world hunkers down to face a new century locked into perpetual war, the British government continues to exploit the shock of 9/11 to carry out the most sustained assault on personal freedom ever seen in this country.

With individual liberty and autonomy under increasing threat from an avalanche of laws designed to broaden the scope to which the state may 'legitimately' interfere in its citizens' lives, recent reports from Privacy International and the Surveillance Studies Network detail the extent to which surveillance technologies have become a key weapon for use alongside proto-totalitarian legislation in this government's obsession with complete state-control. These reports warn that Britain has become, in the words of Information Commissioner Richard Thomas, a "surveillance society", a conclusion endorsed by 79% of the UK citizens interviewed in a YouGov poll published in December.

The Surveillance Studies Network's report emphasises that surveillance technologies are "extensively and routinely used to track and record our activities and movements", and details how systematic tracking and recording of travel and use of public services, automated use of CCTV and its combination with biometrics, analysis of buying habits and financial transactions and workplace monitoring of telephone calls, email and internet use have become staples of daily life in Britain.

But the problem identified here is not just the ubiquity of CCTV, or that shop check-out clerks continually demand to see our loyalty cards; it is not the forthcoming ID cards or increased use of biometric recognition, the plethora of databases holding information about us, or security agencies listening in to our phone calls and intercepting our emails. Rather, it is that these systems taken together represent an extensive and complex infrastructure that assumes that the gathering and processing of intimate personal data is a vital and necessary part of contemporary living.

This clearly goes way beyond the governmental persecution of dissenting voices that libertarian movements have come to expect – although surveillance technologies obviously facilitate the persecution of anyone proliferating opinions deemed undesirable by the government, institutionalised snooping of the kind seen today extends into the fabric of British society in a manner which potentially hampers the efforts of the anarchists in a much more profound and damaging way. The more overtly sinister manifestations (ID Cards, the NIR, security agencies intercepting

our communications, etc.) are certainly a major cause for concern, as are the many other dangers inherent in such extensive surveillance which have been widely discussed in the mainstream media over recent weeks. But the real problem – particularly for the anarchist movement – is a more insidious one.

All-pervasive surveillance on the scale seen in Britain today fosters a climate of suspicion, breeding a lack of trust in society from the most fundamental levels which damages the ever-weakening bonds of community upon which the health of a society depends. When parents start using webcams and GPS systems to check on their teenagers' activities, they are saying they do not trust them; when welfare benefits administrators demand evidence of double-dipping or solicit tip-offs on a possible 'spouse-in-the-house' is saying they do not trust their clients. When an employer uses key-stroke information to gauge work rates and GPS systems to track company vehicles, he is saying that he does not trust his employees.

This latter instance in particular illustrates how the manner in which such technology has become enmeshed with the capitalist system further depersonalises and dehumanises the already inherently antagonistic relationship between capitalist and worker, with surveillance technologies catalysing a rapid acceleration in the breakdown of social relationships inevitable under capitalism. The basic, interpersonal relationships from which society is built depend on trust, and it is not difficult to see how surveillance practices of the kind described above drive a wedge between individuals, creating an atmosphere of distrust not just in the workplace, but in virtually every sphere of human interaction.

Anarchism's aim is to bring people together, to strengthen bonds of community and mutual help; with snooping, duplicity and outright backstabbing actively encouraged in such a way, it seems clear that we're up against a gargantuan force pulling in the opposite direction. But if we look at this assertion from a slightly different angle we see that it conceals an even more serious problem.

Certain schools of anarchism concede that the state itself is a 'necessary evil' as long as human beings exist in a certain kind of relationship which makes it necessary. If this is the case, then the implications of living in a surveillance society run far deeper than it might first appear; by fostering suspicion and distrust among the country's citizens, the surveillance infrastructure in effect strengthens the position of the state by providing evidence to the public of the validity of its self-professed *raison d'être* and making its inherently authoritarian behaviour even more 'necessary'.



Thus we see how the twin conflicts of 'us against the state' and 'us against each other', a solution to the latter being an essential precondition for successfully resolving the former, are affected by the institutionalisation of surveillance. By ripping apart the social fabric of society and replacing healthy, living social relationships with those of distrust and suspicion the state not only makes the attainment of this precondition more difficult, exacerbating the cause of the social ills whose alleged job it is to remedy, but in doing so makes the argument of those calling for its elimination even more of an uphill struggle than ever.

So what is the solution to this self-perpetuating cycle? Those who seek to redress the balance between state authority and individual liberty by working within parliamentary structures insist that we have a right to know what data is being held on us, and in making the information held on the individual available to the individual they see a means of rectifying the asymmetry of power inherent in increased surveillance. Similarly, legally-enforceable limits and controls on how government is able to use surveillance technologies have also been suggested.

Such half-measures are quite clearly not enough, particularly in a unitary, constitutionless system like Britain's in which effective checks and balances on government power are non-existent and the rights of the individual remain

unprotected by basic law.

But in no state under the yoke of government will any amount of 'regulation' ever suffice to prevent its own progenitors consolidating their position; we are as likely to find a solution to this problem by appealing to the antagonist to rectify it for us as we are by rioting about it in the streets (which essentially amounts to the same thing). On the contrary, just as we destroy the state through complete and wholesale disengagement with it, by refusing to play a part in it, we destroy the potency of the surveillance infrastructure initially by making concerted efforts at a grass-roots level towards circumventing it.

We in this country still ostensibly have a right to free choice, a right which we have an obligation to exercise to the full while it lasts. We have a choice as to whether we want to use a mobile telephone, a loyalty card, an Oyster Card or a credit card, all of which can be used to profile us and track our movements. CCTV with biometric iris/facial recognition capabilities can be foiled using nothing more sophisticated than a large pair of Aviator sunglasses; for those who continue to use the banking system it is worth remembering that offshore bank accounts are not just for multi-millionaires and international drugs barons, and that many other countries do not have such a cavalier attitude to governmental snooping into private financial records as ours. In

short, with a bit of lateral thinking and a little research there are plenty of ways in which we can make it more difficult for the state to keep tabs on us.

But this is clearly only damage limitation – it can only be a first step, particularly as those who are most at risk, the vulnerable and the marginalised, are those least in a position to exploit 'legitimate' channels to their advantage. No lasting solution to this problem will ever be achieved through playing by the rules.

For this we need to look to the hundreds of thousands of people across the industrialised world existing off-grid, below the radar of the state and out of reach of its mechanisms of control and suppression. Aside from the many international networks of 'intentional communities' recognised to whatever degree by their host states, there are plenty of *de facto* organisations dedicated to preserving a way of life completely separate from the state which enable huge numbers of people to become 'invisible', to cease to officially exist and yet lead perfectly fulfilling lives through worldwide networks of mutual aid.

Proposing this as a potential solution will no doubt sound to many like an 'all or nothing' approach, but if it is through the gradual evolution of such communities alongside the state that we find an alternative to state control, then this is the most promising beginning open to us.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 02

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

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

Well, more interesting times for the press seem to be ahead, as we're back to looking for editorial help, along with the usual list of:

- Mailout volunteers;
- A Hacklab regular so the bookshop can be covered at the same time;
- People who can do a bit of marketing;
- Fundraising gig person to get on gigs and such.

Sadly, doing Freedom the way it is done, incorporating news on the first four pages is a fairly hefty sort of task, and as such we are looking for people who can help Matt or myself out as editors, possibly for specific pages or topics, commissioning or if necessary writing stories.

For people (such as myself) who work outside London, being able to email in copy is fairly essential I'm afraid, as getting large volumes of work into computers at short notice is hugely time-consuming and we don't have the resources to do so ourselves.

Contact copy@freedompress.org.uk or use the snail mail address below, and training can be given if you're not terribly confident.

RR

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 10th February 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 1st February. Send articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Thoughts on Freedom

I am in sympathy and support for Rob Ray (*Freedom*, 7th October), he is doing a great job under difficult conditions and, without going into details here, I think that a monthly publication is a good idea.

Freedom used to attract a number of talented and reasonable people, contributors on a variety of subjects, maybe a new generation can be inspired again, given a new format and aim.

Maybe 'in desperation' the pages of Freedom will be open to propaganda views from people who have failed to grasp the fundamentals of anarchism, if they are really interested at all.

Rita Milton

Zionism and the Kibbutz

In his article 'New Thinking in the Kibbutz' (*Freedom*, 4th November) James Horrox goes some way towards addressing my criticisms. Certainly it is the case that pre-1948 the kibbutz movement contained elements close to anarchism, and displayed a desire to live alongside the Palestinians, but the foundation of the state of Israel surely changed everything.

When James says that "the Jewish colonisation of the country occurred with little regard for the land's native population" he understates what actually took place – a process of ethnic cleansing and massacre during which around a million people were displaced and hundreds of Palestinian villages deliberately destroyed.

It is not true either that the kibbutz movement was not party to the 'fuck the Arab' sentiment expressed by the founders of the state. The village of Dalhamiyya was destroyed so that the kibbutz Ashdor Yaacov could expand its arable land. Kibbutz Hazorea took over land from two evicted villages. Hashomer Ha-Tza'ir's Kibbutz Ramat Menashe stands on the ruins of the village of Daliyar al-Rawha. After the February 1948 massacre at Sa'sa, members of Kibbutz Sasa took over the houses of the dead. The kibbutzim made no efforts to resist the Stern Gang or the Irgun, but rather expanded into the spaces cleansed by them – they were part of the process of colonisation.

Far from being centres of opposition to Zionism, the kibbutz have been amongst its most fervent supporters – in 1967 kibbutzniks were only 4% of the population, but 25% of the military casualties in the 1967 war.

According to the historian Amos Elon, by 1969 roughly 15% of the top political positions in the country were held by kibbutzniks. Between 1949 and 1967 one third of cabinet ministers were kibbutzniks. Whatever commitment to "ideological collectivism" kibbutzniks may hold, it clearly doesn't manifest itself in any commitment to oppose the Zionist project.

The reality is that socialist or anarchist Zionism shares all the faults of the wider Zionist project. Like David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Zionist movement and a founding father of the state of Israel, it may well seek to make Israel "a model for the redemption of the human race" – it just doesn't see any contradiction in posturing and experimenting as such a model while being party to dispossession

and oppression and slaughter.

Over two articles Horrox failed to demonstrate any way in which the kibbutz movement made any effort to oppose the interests of the Israeli state as imperialism's armed and funded cop in the middle East.

In his response to that criticism he now tells us that some kibbutzniks are committed to local level integration and help teach Arab kids English. Anyone who thinks this constitutes oppositional activism at a time when the Israeli state continues its post-1967 occupations and has invaded Lebanon is so deluded it's impossible to know how to engage with them.

John Shute

Apologetics

Brian Morris (*Freedom*, 18th November) advocated that anarchists should not become apologists for religion. Would he also advocate that religious should not become apologists for anarchism? My reason for asking this question is that, in the current issue of *Church Times* (8th December), Kenneth Leech described the subtitle of a book he reviewed, *Faith and Politics after Christendom: The Church as a movement for anarchy* (Jonathan Bartley, Paternoster Press), as "hopeful" and expressed his regret that the only references to anarchism in it occur at the beginning and not in its last four chapters, which are about the state.

John Desmond

Take stock

Popular opinion here – according to the polls – has finally turned decisively against the Iraq and Afghan wars, even more so in America, where the Republicans have been massively defeated in the congressional elections and for his last two years will be unable to get his policies endorsed; very possibly Blair will then be the major backer of the unpopular wars, and British troops will be left to carry on with little US involvement.

It should provoke massive resistance – obviously Respect and the Coalition are so bloody stupid and opportunist that they alienate most of those who are disgusted by what is going on, and the real peace groups are as yet too small to be an obvious alternative; but sooner or later a genuine anti-war movement must come into existence.

Peace demos; Green, No Borders, Food not Bombs, actions, (besides industrial and other economic activities) are plentiful and on many most of the fellow demonstrators seem to be anarchists. Yet there is not an upsurge of new local anarchist groups forming, the Bookfairs though exciting do not seem to be growing to the extent that one might expect.

The booklet *The Campaign for Real Anarchism (Class War)* said that anarchism had never been in a worse state in the country. Given that I can remember a time – two years, '56 to '58, when I was the only person in the country selling *Freedom* in the streets, at demos or at meetings, and that for three years before that, only Lillian Wolfe and Leah Feldman so did, there were then no other anarchist papers published, I think this is an exaggeration, but that qualification made, there is still a need to wonder (and worry) why we are not doing better than we are.

In the last century people came to anarchism all getting disillusioned with someone else.

They might have been inspired by the vision of socialism, been active in trade unions, taken a look at the Labour or Communist Party, probably gave the Trots at least a passing glance on their way to us. Alternatively they may have been in peace, anti-racist, green, feminist, anti-imperialist movements where again experience brought them up against Labour or Stalinist bureaucrats, so that they revolted and looked to direct action.

No doubt the SWP's various front-organisations manage to deputise for both reformism and Stalinism, but people only get to see through a Trot grouping after they have been forced to engage in a mass of meaningless activism. So only gluttons for punishment are ready when disillusioned, to turn to us. Other sources are too small to count.

I am not sufficiently computerate to judge the extent that the internet brings people to us; no doubt it gets people interested in ideas, but how often does it interest them in activism?

That may be something that it is too early to judge, it's arguable that The Stop the War Coalition's ability to mobilise in March 2003 was largely the product of email discussion groups and so forth, that the interest had lain dormant for a few years and then burst forth in fury at the lies we were being told; if so, it could happen again, would people – in the meantime – have learnt to distrust those who rallied them last time only to dissuade them from doing anything might actually impede the running of the war? Or would they, having never been involved in groups with face-to-face discussions, once again rally to an opportunist coalition?

The fact that by and large there is no campaign out there to attract the initial interest of honest people first taking concern about how their lives are run in a way makes it easier for anarchists to appeal directly to others, anyone who wants to do something to make the world a better place, has hardly got anywhere else to look; but obviously our publications are too limited to meet the demand that would arise.

Two false routes have to be avoided: There are those who would advocate that we somehow make ourselves respectable, claiming that then we would be able to get our ideas into the mass media. We wouldn't – the mass media is controlled by the ruling class, and though individual members of that class might, at times (in order to pull a fast one over their rivals), allow revolutionary ideas to get something of an hearing, they all know that at base their power depends on ensuring that such hearings are few and far between.

Worse however, is vanguardist posing. No doubt it would be wonderful for a march of several million (indeed even several hundred thousand), to arrive in Whitehall mobilised on the slogan of 'No War, but Class War'.

But when the chanters are at most several dozen, it makes a self-defeating mockery of the whole concept of class. It is well to remember that the ruling class is the ruling class, because individually its members are better at fighting the class war than are those of any other class; the only efficient weapons of the working class are its solidarity and spontaneity; keep those and we might win. Break them, and you hand the victory to the bosses.

Perhaps that spontaneity is the all-important word, perhaps it doesn't

matter that no logically predetermined strategy appears adequate.

Laurens Otter

Tenant ASBOs

➔ page 1

However, in footnotes to the main body of the announcement, it is admitted that the money will be restricted to just a few areas, all of which have taken on Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) status.

ALMOs, where Registered Social Landlords take control of council housing from local government, have come under sustained criticism as a 'backdoor' means of privatisation for the last of the UK's remaining social housing stock. In recent battles over stock transfer, central government has repeatedly been accused of making excessive funds available to bribe or threaten residents into voting for transfer.

Rob Ray

Old church

➔ page 4

The socialist-inspired revolution and declaration of independence saw church lands seized by the victorious rebels, and between 1975 and 1998 settlers squatted and took over much of the former church landholdings.

However the state subsequently reneged on its seizure of the land in the face of huge pressure from the church, which claims a 30% representation in the country's believing population. Following a request from late Pope John Paul, the government reinstated the church's control over the lands.

The church's own privately run Radio Ecclesia has also been used to announce upcoming forcible evictions by housing company Nova Vida, and the government.



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Quiz answers

1. Death from overwork. It was coined in 1980s Japan when the authorities there started keeping statistics on apparently healthy men, some in their twenties, dropping dead from heart attacks and strokes brought on by overwork.
2. Two million. The report stresses this is probably an underestimate.
3. A new US union federation comprising the Teamsters, SEIU, Unite-HERE, Carpenters and others, that split from the AFL-CIO in September 2006. They aim to focus on organising and do something about the 12% of US workers in unions. It is a top-down initiative at the moment.
4. Aussie rules clubs and fans suggested that if they had to forego their entertainment, the rich should miss out on horse racing! The compromise was that some working class clubs carried on playing but that army recruiting officers could address the crowds at half time. This was stopped after the officers were repeatedly driven from the grounds under a hail of missiles.

REVIEW

Richard Alexander highly recommends this informative reprint of Paul Avrich's oral interviews of anarchists

This is a most welcome, unabridged, reprint of a volume first issued in 1995, issued as part of AK Press's reprinting of the works of the well-known historian of anarchism, Paul Avrich, who died in 2006. *Anarchist Voices* is based on the oral testimonies of participants in, or who had first hand knowledge of, the anarchist movements in north America during the period 1880-1970, the interviews being conducted during the period 1963-1991. It is arranged thematically covering, in turn, Pioneers, Emma Goldman, Sacco and Vanzetti, Schools and Colonies, Ethnic Anarchists, 1920s and after. Each selection is prefaced by an introduction in which the author summarises the salient background to the topic and illustrates the theme with some choice extracts from the interviews. Each of the 180 interviewees only appears in one of the sections, although it readily becomes apparent that many could be placed in several of them. Length of interview chosen for use varies from half a page to as many of five or six, but simple maths shows an average of just under three pages each. The interviews are supplemented by copious notes which provide much valuable additional information on topics and personalities not otherwise covered, with some corrections of information provided in the interviews (something all oral historians have found – first hand testimony whilst valuable, most always be cross-checked for errors.)

The range of interviewees is very impressive, from those who are probably known to most contemporary anarchists such as Sam Dolgoff, Fred Woodworth, Fermin Rocker, Daniel Guerin, and Nellie Dick; those related to people many will have heard of, e.g. Alexandra Kropotkin, Laurence Labadie, John J. Most jnr, and Spencer Sacco; to a wide range of militants and activists known only to their own circles, such as the Russian Maximalist Clara Halpern, the Spanish CNT activist Federico Arcos, Chinese anarchist Dr H.L. Wei, Polish Jewish anarchist Branka Greenberg,

Cuban anarchist and refugee from Castro's regime, Gustavo Lopez and many others.

Although, for reviewing purposes, I read this straight through, I suspect its main use in future will be as a work of reference, giving important insights into how participants viewed those around them in the anarchist movement. It is quite revealing, for example, to see just how many viewed Emma Goldman as a dumpy sex-obsessed woman, devoted to 'the cause', said cause mainly being 'Emma Goldman' – but equally she was also seen as a fine public speaker and one who could be relied on to help out those who needed help. Alexander Berkman also divided his contemporaries – some regarded him as an irresponsible terrorist, whilst others emphasised his positive personal qualities. Opinions too, are divided on Sacco and Vanzetti (two Italian anarchists almost certainly framed for murders they did not commit and subsequently judicially murdered) with most agreeing that they could not possibly have committed the acts they were accused of, but others hinting that maybe they weren't so innocent after all.

What this volume emphasises is that, although many anarchists were immigrants and tended to organise amongst their own people (hence the chapter on ethnic anarchists), one also gets the feeling that the movements were bound together in other ways. Whilst many anarchists co-operated on the main campaigns of the time (although both world wars produced significant splits) two other factors were important in the creation of a movement, those being the schools and colonies. These help bring people together on a daily basis and helped to educate the next generation of activists (or so it was hoped). Whilst some of the colonists were what would today be described as 'lifestylers' with vegetarianism and naturism much practiced, many of the colonists were also employed in the cities doing manual work where they'd be active in unions such as the ILGWU, whilst

others were in the IWW.

The sense of an anarchist network may, however, also be a product of the methodology, as Paul Avrich followed up leads from people he had interviewed to those he may of heard off, but had no way of contacting.

Equally though it can also show just how long-lasting the relationships were that were formed so many years earlier, the prime examples being the children who went to the free or modern schools and/or lived in the colonies, keeping in touch for sixty years or more.

Another aspect needs to be mentioned, these are the survivors, the ones who stayed (or ended up in) North America, the ones who didn't return to Russia or die in Spain, the ones who didn't get drafted and died in the world wars, the ones who didn't die in prison or through substance abuse. If you like they are the ones who managed to survive in the heartland of capitalism. And what many will find heartening is the fact that many people 'kept the faith' even into their twilight years, whilst others regard anarchism as a youthful folly, at best a dream that never came true and others see it as a way of looking at the world, an orientation, which guided them through life without ever being realised.

Most now see education as the way forward. (Although ironically, the children who were raised in the anarchist colonies or taught in the schools, often dropped the overt anarchism, but became rounded, intelligent and industrious people, often artistically talented or academically gifted. Of course one might see that as a vindication of the anarchist methodology, if not the politics.)

Inevitably given the number of participants and the fractious nature of anarchism, not to mention the inclusion of some who never were anarchist, there are still various grudges carried over, ill-feelings expressed, political differences as pronounced now as ever. What seems particularly alarming is the number of unreconstructed Stalinists interviewed. Also there's an overwhelming sense of a movement that has passed into history, or at least one that had lost touch



Paul Avrich

between the generations, a disconnect as much cultural as political.

Another important aspect of the book is that although it's mainly about anarchism in north America, as many of the participants lived elsewhere for significant periods of their lives, one also gets a glimpse into anarchism in other countries as well. There's considerable information buried in here on the movement in places such as Russia, Poland, Italy, Spain, France, Britain, China, and Germany, amongst others. Also there's much information of interest bibliographically, with details of otherwise obscure publications, pseudonyms, printers and so forth (the list of periodicals is very impressive). The book is finished off with a list of further reading (sadly not updated) and a comprehensive index, which is

particularly useful when following up all the (q.v.'s) in the text.

Overall, this is pretty much an essential purchase for anyone who is interested in the lives of the not-quite-so-famous anarchists, the ones who did most of the donkey-work, who arranged the meetings, who wrote the magazines, who taught in the schools or lived in the colonies, the union and anti-war activists and so forth. It prompts the question as to who, if anyone, is out and about interviewing participants from the generation of the 1930-1960s – many have already passed on, both in America and elsewhere.

Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America by Paul Avrich, published by AK Press, £16.00 (reprint of 1995 edition published by Princeton UP).

FILM

Pan's Labyrinth

written and directed by Guillermo del Toro (in Spanish with subtitles)

This unusual film follows twelve year-old Ofelia to Galicia, North-West Spain, when her mother marries a vicious Civil Guard captain mopping up anti-fascist resistance in 1944. Servants and villagers variously bow and scrape or surreptitiously support the freedom fighters, and as the skirmishes become more threatening Ofelia withdraws into her love of classic children's literature, imagining herself as fairy princess returning to paradise. The resolutions to both real-life and mythical quests nearly hinge on mature ethical choices of bravery, altruism and solidarity, with appropriate

ambivalence. So the princess returns to her *faerie* dreamworld only in death, just as rites of passage formalise childhood's end. Conversely, we know that the guerillas' final triumph is, sadly, very local and temporary. Unfortunately, to convince, such ambitious magical realism would require unconscious and external dynamics to fully intermingle in Ofelia's awareness and behaviour – growing up being a long gradual process rather than a short set of arbitrary rituals. In neglecting her depths, attention is lavished instead on those of the labyrinth.

The Mexican writer-director's supreme reputation among horror-fantasy cognoscenti is certainly justified by the beautifully realised fauns, fairies and monsters. The latter nicely encapsulate

the Francoist ideology of National Catholicism, trumpeted as 'cleansing' Spain but instead dirtying it for decades. Del Toro interprets the appalling Pale Man, with disembodied eyes in stigmata'd hands, as symbolising the Catholic church. Surely, though, it embodies the military as rulers-by-divine-right, mechanically activated into cruel brutality when insubordinates act to satisfy their desires. In that case, the revolting gigantic toad under the fig tree, smothering the roots (and hence fruits) of the land and its people with rapacious parasitic greed, better represents the church – which, nevertheless, conceals the instrument of liberation within its guts; the spiritual key to defeating the Pale Man and collectivising his private banquet.

Between a Roc and a Hard Place
Del Toro's cult genre experiments always yield outstanding narrative invention, visual imagination and cinematic flair. The two Spanish civil war dramas, however, reference older conventions – of the fairytale (here) and ghost story



(*The Devil's Backbone*, 2001). Ironically, his work which avoids explicit politics tends to contain more sophisticated social and philosophical critique. Perhaps concern to depict the fascist plague accurately – which florid embellishment might spoil – constrained the liberties taken in the fantasy register. Also, given the scarcity of mainstream fictional treatments covering this period in Spain, it seems churlish to complain. But after the oversimplifications of *Ay Carmela* (Carlos Saura, 1990) and *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995), I'd hoped for more than a routine feudal fable – of infantile patriarchal utopia as regressive palliative, merely paralleling the monstrous reality of moral dictatorship.

A Sideways Look

A few months ago I had reason to visit Manchester. One difference from London (aside from the rain) is that the buses aren't regulated there. In fact, London is the only place in the whole country where the buses are regulated and the experience of Manchester shows how the market cannot deliver many of the things that its apologists claim.

Passenger transport outside London, in the old metropolitan counties based around the major conurbations, was regulated until 1986. This meant that the regional authority, the Passenger Transport Executive, controlled fares and routes. The buses and metropolitan rail lines were integrated and were cheap. In South Yorkshire, any trip on any route used to cost 5p! As part of her struggle against allegedly left-wing Labour authorities, Thatcher abolished the PTEs along with the Greater London Council and its regional equivalents. Fares rocketed and the bus companies were sold off, with most of them ending up, after management buy-outs, in the hands of three big companies. The old controls over the routes and fares were abolished – with popular profitable routes having loads of buses and routes previously run as a public service cut back hard.

In London, the buses were privatised, but London Transport kept control of the routes and fares. In Manchester (and everywhere else) bus companies can run any route they feel like. Fares vary massively and the same route can have several different companies competing. This has led to the often-dangerous situations where drivers race to the next stop to pick up the passengers. There are virtually no passes, though single fares can be as little as 50p. The competition has had other strange consequences – drivers with very little English have been recruited from Eastern Europe, for example.

It is astonishing that this situation has gone on for more than twenty years, with little action, though a fair amount of complaint from the long-suffering passengers. In the last year or so in Manchester, however, it has come to a head. One of the companies launched a bus war which saw frequencies of every five minutes on one popular route, already served by one of their competitors. This led to so many buses on the same few routes that the city centre was jammed, preventing trams from running and prompting traffic wardens to issue parking tickets to some buses in Piccadilly Gardens.

The city council, along with the businesses in the city centre, are now putting pressure on the government to re-regulate the buses. A spokeswoman for Manchester Chamber of Commerce said city centre businesses "were bearing the cost" of the extra congestion. Regulation isn't some fantastic panacea, however. London bus fares have risen by a third this year, with a

cash single fare now £2. Outside of the city centre routes, the buses are often dirty and unpleasant, and hardly anyone has a good word to say for Ken Livingstone's bendy buses.

So, an unregulated market offers congestion and chaos. State control offers high prices and overcrowding. We need a third option.

Svartfrosk

Bookworm notes

One of the marks of a good book is it makes you want to read bits of it out to people. Or at least pass it to the person next to you, saying, 'Read that bit'. Travellers between Lewisham and central London have come very close to hearing selections from Tom Brown's *Syndicalism* (Phoenix Press, £3.95) for some time now.

At the heart of this pamphlet is the Principles of syndicalism, originally published in *War Commentary*, which had Brown as a member of the editorial board. Tom Brown starts this classic statement of principle in the same place that union organising should – in the workplace.

He takes the everyday experience of workers – e.g. the kind of union bureaucrat that my dad used to call 'Houdini' ('Sorry, lads, my hands are tied') and asks the obvious question "Who is this person to say I must go back to work?" Or, in a more modern form, who is this person to say I must accept attacks on my pension, wages, and working conditions?

As a solution to the problems of this top-down way of proceeding, Brown draws out a syndicalist approach, based on "the mass meeting of workers, assembled at their place of work". It is then possible for workers to directly elect and mandate their delegates (and get rid of them pretty directly too), removing the shadowy figure of the sell-out prone union full-timer from the scene for good.

Also included in this pamphlet are some of Tom Brown's shorter works, dealing with the practicalities of workplace troublemaking and union organising. Not least among these is his short history of the General Strike of 1926, which contrasts the initiative and courage of the strikers with their so-called leaders on the TUC.

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Imagine if...

Paddy Roy Bates looked sceptically at the potential buyers for 'Sealand', his fiefdom situated seven miles off the coast of Suffolk. He thought the eye patches and parrots were a bit much, frankly.

Roy was no stranger to the word eccentric. He himself had a bit of a reputation, having bought a 150m defence platform in the sea, called it Sealand and declared it independent of the UK.

But these Swedes from 'The Pirate Bay', an online peer-to-peer file sharing network, made him uncomfortable.

"So what's your final offer then?" he asked.

"Arr me hearty, we are still raising the money but we shall pay in full. Yarr."

Looking at his notes, Roy raised an eyebrow. "I understand you are at war with Ladonia, a micro-nation in Sweden. What guarantees can you give me they wouldn't invade?"

"Arr, Ladonia are no threat. They are already at war with Sweden and San Marino, and have no standing army. We'll send them down to Davy Jones."

Roy sighed with relief. "Ah that's okay then. So what would you use Sealand for?"

"Well we want to set up a major file-sharing server which would be immune from all copyright law and allow people all over the world to download movies and games for free. It'll be so cool!" The pirate paused a second and looked sheepish "I mean... Yarr"

Roy nodded wisely. "Ah, you are pirates indeed."

Note: This is all absolutely true. Sealand a 'micro-nation' in the Channel and Roy is its self-declared 'king'. He is looking to sell tenancy of his fief, and the pirates want to buy. The monarchy of Ladonia declared independence from Sweden a few years ago and are technically at war with some of the pirates. You couldn't make it up.

Listings

28th January Social Centres Gathering for discussion, practical workshops, sharing ideas, skills and experience followed by cabaret and cocktails at the Tin12 Club, Albion Street, off Fulton Street, Bradford, call 01274 734160, see Tin12.com (accommodation available, contact 01274 745002 or hive@riseup.net)

29th January Phone In Sick Day, apparently this date is calculated as the most depressing day of the year, so aim to bring the country to a standstill by phoning in sick, for more info call 07737020496 or see thesicknote.com

7th February Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, put pressure on the government to abandon this indiscriminate, inhumane and illegal weapon, lobby from 2pm to 4pm, public meeting 7pm to 9pm, Parliament, London SW1, for more details see cadu.org.uk/action or call 0161 273 8293

10th March The Sixth International @lternative Bookfair in Gent at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, Gent, Belgium, from 10am-8pm – as well as books, etc., there will be a programme of conferences, workshops, video showings and performances, for info see www.aboekenbeurs.be or contact aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com

17th and 18th March The Twelfth Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair at SF County Fair Building, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Boulevard, San Francisco, USA, from 10am until 6pm (on 17th) and 11am to 5pm (on 18th) – this year back at the old location with all the space needed to walk around, to talk with other visitors, to look, to enjoy the programmes and the cafe, and over two days. Contact The Bookfair Committee, c/o Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight Street, San Francisco, CA 94117

5th and 6th April Express Express Day, 24 hours of protest in Exeter (Mass) headquarters, details of events to be announced, for more info see campaigns.org/expresscan.html
6th to 8th June GB Summer of Heiligenschein on the north coast of Germany near Rostock, for more see wombles.org.uk/article200609109.php

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The quiz

1. What is Karoshi?
2. According to the International Labour Organisation, how many people die at work every year worldwide?
3. Who or what are 'Change to Win'?
4. During the First World War, Australian authorities suggested that football (Aussie rules) should be discontinued while there was a war on. How did the footballers reply? And what happened to the compromise that was reached?

Answers on page 6

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