

FREEDOM

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AN OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

2012 the year of state repression

Between 27th July and 12th August, the Olympic Games will be held in the UK. Predominantly based in and around London, but also including Coventry, Manchester, Cardiff, Newcastle and Glasgow, the organisers boast it will be “the biggest global event of the year” and are already declaring it a cultural and economic success.

It is a major investment for both the government and their financial backers. The games will produce an enormous amount of private revenue yet the burden of paying for the infrastructure rests on the public purse. The cost of the opening ceremony alone has topped the £80m mark, with the total spending budget of public money officially exceeding £9.3 billion, with rumours of it reaching £20bn by the end of the summer.

What the Olympics Games is set to reveal is the lengths the state will go to ensure it maintains social peace in the run up to, and for the duration of, the games. This will come at a heavy price for those who value civil liberties.

The government is under contract to the International Olympic Committee, a private [page 3](#) ▶▶

LENS CAP PRISONER SOLIDARITY



This is a reminder that there are still five anarchist anti-fascists in prison for their political activities against fascists. January is a particularly grim time to be locked up, so we urge all anarchists and radicals to send letters, messages of support, or just a few lines to let them know that they are not forgotten during this time. A list of their full addresses can be found on the Freedom website.

TOTAL POLICING: RAVE ON

A new technology is being developed that will allow police the opportunity to disperse crowds with an electronic sound system fitted to riot shields.

A US company is in the process of testing the new patented device that emits a low-frequency sound which resonates with the respiratory tract, making it hard to breathe. According to the patent, the intensity could be increased from causing discomfort to the point where targets become “temporarily incapacitated”.

In the rather formal language of the testing company, the riot shield uses a folded acoustic horn which is incorporated into the physical shell of the shield that can be directed at certain targets inducing both pain and physical impairment. In real terms it looks like a normal riot shield with a

massive speaker tied to the front with wires.

A research expert in police ethics warned that the biggest danger is that the technology would be used for political control. “If authorities in Egypt or Syria had this, would they use it for dispersal or to shove crowds into potentially lethal harm’s way?” he asked from Leeds.

Given the new police commissioner’s penchant for expensive novelty devices – it was Bernard ‘Hulk’ Hogan Howe, the Oxbridge graduate now in charge of the police, who introduced the enormous ‘Berlin wall’ style crowd barriers on to the streets during the last student demonstration and he’s also noted for his dedication to kettling – it won’t be long before we see the British police using the new riot shields for political purposes.

INSIDE ▶▶

The electricians’ dispute [page 3](#)

Nottingham’s ‘Atos Two’ [page 6](#)

International news [pages 8 and 9](#)

Lucien van der Walt [page 14](#)

Svartfrosk [page 16](#)

Reviews [pages 20 and 21](#)

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NEWS

COMMUNITY ACTION

• Parents in Sheffield have joined together and formed a protest group to campaign against their local secondary school becoming an academy. The group KES PLEAS (King Egbert School Parents for Local Education Authority Status) is angry at the school Governors going behind parents' backs in ensuring the school is changed to academy status.

The group discovered that as far back as June 2011 Governors had registered an interest with the Department for Education in converting to an academy, some five months before the consultation process.

The Governors are set to formally make a decision and vote on the proposals on 17th January, depending on the results of the consultation.

Headteacher Lesley Bowes said the financial advantages brought by academy status are essential as the school is facing a 25% cut to its sixth form funding.

• Campaigners who demanded a public consultation involving "ordinary people" in the face of sweeping cuts to small hospitals in the region have won a three-month extension to threatened services at Bridport Community Hospital, Dorset.

Plans to remove outpatient appointments, day case surgery and radiography from Bridport hospital have been pushed back from March to July after a concerted effort by local people to stop the move.

Community Health Campaign (CHC) was formed to challenge decision after a consultation process had been set up that excluded those who would be directly affected by the change.

Eileen Harding, a member of Community Health Campaign (CHC), said: "To discover that a group, which I did not know existed, is being consulted on my behalf, is unacceptable. Any group dealing with Bridport should be local and represent *all* aspects, including, pensioners, families, low paid workers and the disabled."

• The Court of Appeal approved a case brought by King's Cliffe residents against the Secretary of State over the dumping of low level nuclear waste (LLW) at the King's Cliffe landfill site in Northamptonshire. Despite this, Augean plc, who are set to deposit up to 250,000 tonnes per year of radioactive waste, ignored requests to stop until a legal decision has been made.

Residents of King's Cliffe and the surrounding villages responded by mounting a blockade of the site in December. Around 25 residents arrived at the site early one morning, and set themselves up in the entrance. In order to delay the passage of lorries bringing LLW, four residents clipped themselves into steel tubes inserted in barrels of concrete, leaving a small group to continue the protest by the roadside. Six people who had ignored police instructions to move were arrested, and later released.

LENS CAP NOT CITIZENS, ENEMIES



Photograph © Max Reeves

The recently published report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) into the August riots recommends using more 'robust' measures in dealing with social unrest on a large scale. It advocates the use of repressive measures in order to maintain control with the necessity of plastic bullets and water cannons as part of a recommended 'radical shift' in police tactics. Surprising?

Organising against workfare

Liverpool Solfed is putting its energy behind supporting benefit claimants and the unemployed in the area against the imposition of the new workfare policy instituted by the coalition government.

Workfare is a means where benefits claimants must work a set amount of hours for companies in order to receive their benefits; in return these government approved companies get a never-ending supply of free labour. It is a compulsory requirement so claimants are forced to accept any work or lose benefits. It is understood both Tesco and Primark are using unpaid workfare labour, along with some well known charity organisations.

At a meeting just before the end of the year Liverpool Solfed agreed to pursue a three-pronged approach in dealing with the issue – to organise claimants, build solidarity and take direct action against workfare providers.

The first step for the group is to establish an unemployed workers union in Liverpool. The idea is to build support for the initiative from the workers within trade unions, which will ultimately lead them to initiate a campaign of direct action – from pickets to blockades and occupations which will they hope "cause significant economic damage" to those who benefit from free workfare labour.

Liverpool Solfed has been very active in recent months supporting the Ryanair Don't Care campaign which highlights Ryanair's systematic exploitation of young cabin crew recruits.

A graduate is taking legal action against the government over the workfare scheme. Cait Reilly is seeking a judicial review over the regulations as she had to work for free at a Poundland store for two weeks or risk losing her benefits.





Sparks protesting in London, at the BBC Scotland headquarters on 17th December and a Hartlepool picket on 7th December.

The return of rank and fileism

Can the electricians' dispute reinvigorate grassroots militancy

Just before Christmas over 50 mechanical and electrical workers occupied the headquarters of BBC Scotland in Glasgow as part of a campaign of co-ordinated protests by electricians, and other skilled workers, over the decision by the big eight construction companies to withdraw from the 40 year old Joint Industry Board (JIB) national agreements and impose their own non-negotiated contracts that would see workers force to accept lower rates of pay, and the downgrading and de-skilling of their entire industry. The BBC was targeted because of its media blackout of the electricians' dispute, which began in August.

The previous day some 40 electricians and supporters, which included anarchists from the AF and Solfed, occupied the head office of Network Rail in London to highlight the

impact these new conditions would have on railway safety. Both these actions followed a week of protests and pickets outside major construction sites throughout the UK, including Manchester, Cardiff, Liverpool and Newcastle. What is interesting about these activities, beyond adopting a very proactive direct action approach, is they were organised and led by militant workers who came together in the summer as part of a construction rank and file network, against the wishes of the union leadership. It was Unite's national construction officer Bernard McAulay that called them "this cancerous group".

Known informally as the sparks, and made up of largely Unite union members, this rank and file initiative was highly combative in the way it approached the dispute effectively mobilising both workers and supporters against industry employers. Originally formulated to put pressure on Unite, the union most electricians are members of, to call strike action, it became a mobilising force in itself and weekly demonstrations flourished into escalating direct action against the main construction companies.

What does this mean for workplace militancy and where do anarchists fit in? As has been mentioned in *Freedom* previously, there are a disproportionate amount of anarchists working in the public sector, but given that they are smothered by the demands of the big bureaucratic unions there is little scope and there has been little evidence of anarchists being involved in independent grassroots action, even on the big set piece strike days. Of the 400-plus organised strike initiatives on 30th November only two were organised by anarchists.

In the private sector, however, electricians have led the way in adopting a strategy most anarchists would applaud and could actively engage with. It is a surprise therefore to see little organised action by anarchists in relation to the sparks dispute. Certainly many anarchists have attended the pickets and protests, but largely as individuals. If this dispute, which is still ongoing despite the deadline for the 'sign or be sacked' ultimatum having passed, is to hint at a future of workplace militancy anarchists can only benefit from a more organised and active approach.

An Olympic challenge

◀ page 1

corporation, with the Prime Minister signing a guarantee to deliver on the 'the safety and security' of the Games. From now until July the police will be testing the legalities of their powers with a substantial intrusion into our lives to justify preserving the 'security' of the event. This is the internal shock doctrine of a neo-liberal state. The excessive and repressive measures used against groups, dissenting voices, radicals and activists will become normalised to be used again in a time of social crisis. For the security services and police the Olympics is an exercise in maintaining control when burdened with massive social ruptures.

Over the past two years a slurry of official documents have been published by the

coalition government, signed by both Cameron and Clegg, that reinforce the policy of state intrusion to monitor risks to 'our national security' and perhaps more chillingly 'our values'.

To understand the nature of these documents is to understand the political agenda the coalition government is pursuing and how that fits in with the Olympic strategy as a testing ground for a domestic shock doctrine. In a document presented to Parliament in October 2010 called 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy', the tone is extraordinarily concise:

"Globalisation has opened up possibilities which previous generations could not have

dreamed of and is lifting billions out of poverty. More open markets mean more open societies, and more open societies mean more people living in freedom. These developments are unambiguously in Britain's national interest."

And further down: "we need to build a much closer relationship between government, the private sector and the public when it comes to national security."

It is clear that national security is inextricably tied to economic interests and the real legacy of Olympics is an opportunity to introduce all manner of laws and police tactics that would not be allowed to pass under normal circumstances, but 2012 may be the year the state hits back.

A year of living dangerously

A round up of Freedom in 2011

It is perhaps an appropriate time to take a breath and consider the last twelve months, and reflect upon *Freedom's* contribution to the discourse. If, as is so often stated, history only emerges in retrospect, we'd like to think *Freedom* was there when that history was being made.

January

We fanfared the beginning of the year with a headline that turned out to be entirely prescient of things to come. Boldly asking the question '2011 – year of rebellion?', we were perhaps the only radical news outlet to predict that the next twelve months would produce something special. And discounting the most ardent cynic, it turned out to an incredibly potent year of resistance. As we wrote at the time about a new generation who were "prepared to take on the institutions of power without any formal consent or approval, where traditional political organisations were not required to give form to the anger being expressed. For many this is just the beginning." Little did we know just what that beginning would eventually lead to.

February

A traditionally slow period in the political calendar, we first documented the start of the Arab Spring with "Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi poured inflammable liquid over his body outside the local municipal office in an act of public protest", an incident that would trigger a seismic wave of unrest throughout the Middle East – Syria, Yemen, Egypt, with the masses openly confronting previously impervious authoritarian regimes.

March

The first signs of things not going according to the script. The big TUC demo on 26th March saw the arrival of an active and militant black bloc that planted itself on the political map and drew disparaging headlines, and even more dazzling images, from the media. It was neither expected nor predicted, although *Freedom* did more than suggest a black bloc would be present on the day on our popular 'Meet the anarchists' action map.

April

The police came under attack at the inquest into Ian Tomlinson's death. The jury returned



its verdict the following month of unlawful killing. We were present most days at the inquest, which was a chilling and incredibly emotional experience. As a result of the inquest the CPS issued a summons for manslaughter against PC Simon Harwood, who struck Ian Tomlinson to the ground shortly before he died. Harwood entered a plea of not guilty in October 2011 and his trial is set to open at the Old Bailey in June 2012.

May

We added our voice against the repression of the student movement by suggesting a strategy of state intervention was "to criminalise student dissent and punish peoples' participation with the intention of sending out a message to the rest of the student movement and quelling future unrest". This became all too clear on the next big student protest of 9th November when we were afforded the first glimpse of the new policy of 'total policing'.

June

After the Arab spring came the Spanish summer, and what was a precursor to the occupy movement when the 'indignados' of Madrid occupied the main square in May and kick-started the next stage of a global



phenomenon. We interviewed a spokesperson for the movement dubbed 'Real Democracy now' which were to lay the foundations for the occupy movement.

July

Another shift: the popular reactionary tabloid institution *News of the World* folded amid evidence of illegal activities surrounding phone hacking and payments to police. The implications went as far up the chain to Rupert Murdoch and his family who own News International, the global media empire. It was also a time to reassess our solidarity priorities as the first trial of anti-fascists ended with six convictions. As we speak five remain imprisoned for their activities against neo-Nazis.

August

Widespread riots across England. Four days and nights of unmediated rage. Cities burned in the biggest outbreak of social unrest since the 1980s. The *Freedom* headline simply echoed the feeling of those participating: 'We've had enough!' *Freedom* editors were out on the streets during that time, which perhaps



was reflected in the tone of the front page article: "When you take away more of our basic needs, offer us nothing but penalties we can never pay off, when you threaten us with greater poverty, and punish us if we resist, when you bully us into believing we are not worth the profit we make on your behalf something has to give. In the gloom of a poor north London suburb, something eventually gave."

September

What began as an invitation to Occupy Wall Street in New York City organised by activist media group Adbusters and promoted by computer hacker network Anonymous has developed into a massive global project. By October, Occupy protests had taken place or were ongoing in over 95 cities across 82 countries, and over 600 areas in the United States. We have documented the movement since the beginning, often critically, although *Freedom* has always been stocked and available to read at both Occupy London sites.

October

Officially the start of the Freedom Press 125th anniversary year and when we relaunched as a monthly paper. There has been a massive upsurge in interest about radical, and particularly anarchist, ideas given the period we are in. The anti-cuts movement had stalled slightly, although we have attempted to write about as much radical activity around the anti-cuts movement as possible.

November

Two big mass marches bookended the month. The student demo on the 9th saw an overwhelming police operation smother the demonstration by sheer weight of numbers. Described as a moving kettle, students were ushered through the streets of the capital then ushered out again. At the other end of the month was the second massive public sector strike. *Freedom* had a stall at the march in London, perhaps the only anarchist group to do so, giving out as much radical literature to the strikers as possible.

December

We ended the year as we began exposing political policing and looking forward to a brighter anarchist involvement in the current climate of social dissent.

ANALYSIS

Cracking the whip

The case against the 'Atos Two'

Two Nottingham residents, a wheelchair user and a retired paediatric nurse, dubbed the 'Atos Two', have been charged with aggravated trespass following a protest at the local offices of Atos 'Healthcare'. They will stand trial at Nottingham Magistrates Court on 27th and 28th February.

Atos plays a crucial role in the government's attack on people with disabilities as the company administers the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), a contract worth £100m a year. The WCA is specifically designed to force people onto Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) regardless of the claimants' physical and/or psychological abilities.

These tests are part of the latest attempt to distinguish between a mass of 'idle' and a few 'deserving' poor. Whereas the former are demonised, the provision of alms for the latter is used to maintain the guise that capitalist regimes can be 'progressive' (a term that really needs to be reclaimed from Clegg) and caring systems of social relations.

Atos's implementation of the WCAs resulted in the company also becoming a target of widespread criticism from beyond the radical community. Campaigners have, for example, repeatedly referred to the substantial success rate of appeals against Atos's decisions. A report by the BBC *Inside Out* "found that of the 146,200 appeals that have been heard to date, 56,500 (more than a third), have been upheld in favour of the claimant".¹

Furthermore the professionalism of those conducting the assessments has been repeatedly questioned. The *Guardian* reported in August that twelve doctors employed by Atos were "under investigation by the General Medical Council over allegations of improper conduct".²



Photograph © Alan Lodge (Tash)



Photograph © Alan Lodge (Tash)

Supporters of the 'Atos Two' show their solidarity outside Nottingham Magistrates Court; below left, a protester outside Nottingham's Atos offices.

With Atos being such a particularly disgusting part of the modern British 'welfare' system, there have been a number of protests against the companies' offices all over the country. The protest in Nottingham was not unusual in having been not only entirely peaceful, but also extremely (one might say far too) polite.

The rather ham-fisted reaction by the local police, until now better known for their frequent blunders and blatant incompetence rather than a particular urge to repress peaceful protests, as well as the CPS's decision to charge the Atos Two have been received with astonishment. The prosecution is widely seen as politically motivated, a perspective only underlined by one of the arresting copper's admission that 'there's been too much of this sort of thing going on and we've been told to crack down on it.'

The case of the Atos Two is indeed not an isolated one. The offence of aggravated trespass was introduced in the 1990s in response to the successes of hunt saboteurs and road protesters. It is frequently used against activists to deter people from engaging in acts of protest and civil disobedience. Recent examples include the cases against activists who went into Fortnum & Mason or Panton House.

All of these protests were using forms of direct action that are usually accepted within western representative democracies unless a certain line of annoyance is crossed. After the wave of direct action by UK Uncut and others in Nottingham and across the country over the last year this is apparently now the case.

'Total policing' does not only entail total surveillance and the increasing armament of

the repressive apparatus, be it with Tasers, water cannons or rubber (and live) bullets. It also entails the repression of anything perceived to be putting a spanner in the efforts to maximise the accumulation of capital, however small that act of direct or indirect sabotage may be.

The 'Atos Two' have been supported by an impressive solidarity campaign. At their first court hearing there was a solidarity demo of around 40 people outside, despite it being early morning on a workday. A further protest is planned for the first day of the trial, as well as a demonstration on 3rd February with a number of other activities in the pipeline.

Their case shows that fluffy protesting is as liable to repression as more radical forms of direct action. As one of the solidarity messages sent to the 'Atos Two' noted, it is an example of 'the ruling classes cracking the whip'. But the solidarity shown towards the defendants from within and outside the radical community as well as the wave of demonstrations and direct action against the imposition of 'austerity' in the UK show that the attacks by the ruling classes can be – and are being – resisted. If anything, an increase in repression can often be a sign that resistance is beginning to work. We just need to keep pushing.

Footnotes

1 <http://bbc.in/uIXxMG>

2 <http://gu.com/p/3x7jd>

For updates on the 'Atos Two' please follow <http://twitter.com/nottsdefence> or contact by email at nottsdefence@riseup.net.

FREEDOM STOCKISTS

You can now purchase *Freedom* at the new radical bookshop in Bristol, Hydra Books. The store, which has free wi-fi and excellent coffee, is a welcome addition to the political scene in Bristol. We also have another new outlet, the Birmingham Bike Foundry, where you can pick up your copy of *Freedom* – see below for details.

LONDON

- **Freedom Bookshop**, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, tel 020 7247 9249
email shop@freedompress.org.uk
<http://www.freedompress.org.uk/>
- **Housmans Bookshop**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, tel 020 7837 4473
email shop@housmans.com
<http://www.housmans.com/>
- **London Action Resource Centre (LARC)**, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES
tel 020 7377 9088, <http://www.londonarc.org/>
- **56A Infoshop**, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, email info@56a.org.uk
<http://www.56a.org.uk/>

BRIGHTON

- **Cowley Club Social Centre**, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, tel 01273 696104
email cowleyclub@riseup.net
<http://cowleyclub.org.uk/>

BIRMINGHAM

- **Birmingham Bike Foundry**, 1539 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham B30 2JH, tel: 0121 459 7276, email: info@birminghambikefoundry.org
<http://birminghambikefoundry.org>

BRISTOL

- **Hydra Books**, 34 Old Market, Bristol BS2 0EZ
tel: 0117 3297401 email info@hydrabooks.org
<http://www.hydrabooks.org/>
- **Kebele Social Centre**, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5 6JY, tel 0117 9513086,
email kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net
<http://www.kebelecoop.org>

NOTTINGHAM

- **Sumac Centre**, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX, tel 0115 960 8254,
email sumac@veggies.org.uk
<http://www.veggies.org.uk/sumac>

LIVERPOOL

- **News from Nowhere Bookshop**, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY, tel 0151 708 7270
email nfn@newsfromnowhere.org.uk
<http://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/>

EDINBURGH

- **Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)**
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA
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<http://www.autonomous.org.uk/>
- **Word Power Books**, 43-45 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB, tel 0131 662 9112
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- **AK Press online**, AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9YE
email ak@akedin.demon.co.uk
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SOUTHAMPTON

- **October Books**, 243 Portswood Road, Southampton SO17 2NG, tel 023 8058 1030
email info@octoberbooks.org

Go out and get 'em

Are we going to make predictions about 2012? Certainly a degree of bravado and bluster is always necessary for someone to step up to the soapbox and preach the bleeding obvious about what is ahead of us, and the anarchist movement is littered with discarded soapboxes. Do we even dare to imagine what responses the deepening crisis will bring?

We continue to live through an intense period of social transformation, one that is at times chaotic and unpredictable, but one that is also unique and open to all kinds of influences and new expectations. Where does capitalism go now, and what do we do to aid its downfall? Two questions we couldn't have imagined posing five years ago and here they are, as we take hold of 2012, presenting themselves as real challenges.

Another question, as always, is what is the role of the anarchists in all of this? Can we remain simply a voice of disapproval amongst a growing wave of social discontent? Should we simply be a place of ideological sanctuary for those with a radical temperament? Are we just presenting an alternative viewpoint?

No, our job, indeed the job of any serious anarchist is to be involved. Wearing anarchism like a badge, or splashing anarchism across the internet as an argument desperate to be won – these activities are becoming less and less relevant the more we are confronted with

the reality of our social crisis. Now is the time to be part of a movement. If anarchism to you is a personal belief system maintained through theoretical discourse, all well and good, but it is still a method of organising society and it is still an engagement with the practicalities of social change. Anarchism in 2012 can no longer rely on simply having the right opinion.

And *Freedom's* job in all this is to ask questions of the movement, to try and understand why UK anarchists have been so slow to respond to the incredible transitions we are living through at the moment. Our main question is: what is the role of anarchists in the age of austerity? Where are we, who are we, and what are we doing? The feedback page of this issue of *Freedom* is filled with new radical groups, all committed to practically engaging with real people about our material needs. This can only be a good thing, and it is certainly impressive so many new initiatives emerging at such a crucial time. And 2012 will be crucial in a global context – this is a period of expectation and preparation.

Perhaps if we were to make one prediction it is that the anarchist social scene dies a death to be replaced by a committed and organised group of people intent on getting their hands dirty, as anarchists, in all aspects of political organising and social change. We can but hope.



INTERNATIONAL

SYRIAN UPRISING

As the nine-month long popular uprising escalates in Syria, it looks increasingly likely that ordinary Syrians, who have taken to the streets unrelentingly at the cost of their own lives, will not be the ones to determine the outcome of the battle. Rather, it is international geopolitical interests that hold the cards in this game.

According to the latest UN figures, over 5,000 people have died in the Syrian unrest, including 300 children. Tens of thousands of people have been detained, and many tortured. The killings continue unabated. Government forces are raiding villages and reportedly killing civilians randomly, in reply to attacks from the Free Syrian Army, an ad hoc army of mostly rank-and-file conscripts who defected from the Syrian Army. They are operating in most of the hotbeds of opposition, such as Damascus, Homs, Idlib, Daraa, etc.

Meanwhile, the local opposition group, Local Coordination Committees of Syria (LCCS) is moving away from mere demonstrations and street vigils. In a bid to put pressure on the economy, the LCCS and other activists called for a general and indefinite strike on 11th December across many cities. Despite threats of reprisals and arson from government forces, most shops and schools have been kept closed, except those trading essential goods.

However, as indicated earlier, the more strategic pressures on the Assad government are coming from outside, with the EU, the US, Turkey and the Arab League imposing economic sanctions on Syria. However, Russia, China, Iran, the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine are backing Assad because of their own geostrategic interests. The US at the moment seems to be involved in a two-pronged assault to consolidate its position in the middle-east, aggravating conflict with Iran on the one hand and cornering Syria on the other. Many Muslim and Arabic groups in and around Syria see the Syria-Iran partnership as the last bulwark against an expanding US hegemony.

Another problem that is causing some anxiety is sectarian strife. Opposition says that President Bashar al-Assad of the ruling minority Alawite sect is deliberately fanning divisions with the majority Sunni Syrians in an attempt to undermine the uprising. Many regional elites, including Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, are concerned that these conflicts will spill over into their borders, and are therefore opposing punitive measures against the regime.

Meanwhile, business communities within Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are anxious to see the conflict resolved because Syria is the main trading route between themselves, Turkey and the Gulf region. Transportation costs have risen lately and oil companies, including Shell, are moving out due to the sanctions.

LENS CAP DIVIDED RUSSIA



Following the December Russian parliamentary elections in which the ruling party, United Russia, won a narrow victory, tens of thousands of people have been protesting on the streets, in Moscow and elsewhere, against what they believe are rigged results.

Yet Another Climate Summit

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that took place in Durban, South Africa in December and seems to have changed little in terms of tackling human-generated climate issues, despite being touted as 'historical'.

The parties, 194 sovereign nations, have signed an accord to draft a legally-binding treaty in 2015 and effective from 2020, which would require both developed and developing nations to cut carbon emissions by 5% per year until 2050.

The irony is that the Kyoto Protocol was very similar to this, whose legally-binding term comes to an end in 2012, a treaty US and China refused to ratify. Now, as then, India and China are bickering with developed nations over the right to develop their economy. Why should we believe that this

new treaty will be abided by any more than the one before?

Case in point is Canada, which has withdrawn from the Kyoto accord citing its refusal to pay penalties amounting to over £8bn for its transgressions. Not only has Canada not reduced its emissions by 6% by 2012 as it promised, but carbon emissions have actually increased, thanks to its mining and oil-sands operations.

Canada reportedly has the world's second largest oil sands reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia, and big oil empires, such as the British Shell and BP, have lucrative businesses up there. And Canada's right-wing government – which reversed its environmental commitments when it came to power in 2006 under Stephen Harper – has no intentions of giving up its economic foothold.

Notes from the US

Occupy

The Occupy movement continues to gain momentum; though its focus and – perhaps – its lack of the kinds of analysis which anarchists favour, are similar in the United States to those shortcomings in the UK. Evictions and violence by the state against the Occupiers also continue. Indeed, by the end of November more than 5,000 people had been arrested in Occupy retaliations across the United States.

Protesters in Washington DC took over a

meeting at the Chamber of Commerce in mid-November; they disrupted a speech by healthcare giant, BlueCross BlueShield's, CEO Scott Serota: "We are the 99 percent. And we are here because Scott Serota, CEO of Blue Cross, who makes more than \$2.5 million per year, is an example of the one percent in the healthcare industry, who testified in Congress and influenced the health bill to create more profit for health insurers at the expense of human suffering

Industrial Unrest in China

A round up of recent workers struggles

The latter months of 2011 saw a spate of strikes across different industries mostly in eastern and southern China. In the south-eastern province of Zhejiang hundreds of workers at a bamboo and wood furniture factory that went bankrupt staged a public rally in early December demanding unpaid wages. They were met with severe police repression.

In the same month more than 200 workers, employed by a Shanghai plant of the Singapore-owned electronics manufacturer Hi-P International, struck for over seven days protesting planned layoffs without compensation. Police arrested 12 strikers when they tried to block off the factory gates. Hi-P, whose clients include Apple, Research in Motion (BlackBerry), Motorola and Hewlett-Packard, had seen industrial disputes before, when workers struck for ten days in the summer. They too were attacked by riot police called by the company authorities.

Following the recent scandal of worker suicides at Foxconn plants, some companies have tried to stifle bad press by instituting token changes. However, a casual disregard of already existing labour laws is a pervasive pattern in China, especially in the coastal regions saturated with big industries and foreign multinationals. The political regime of the country is as implicated in this as the company bosses, freely resorting to violence to stem the tide of workers' demands.

For instance, around 1,200 workers at the Taiwan-owned electronics manufacturer, Lisheng factory, in Kunshan city, Jiangsu, struck against severe overtime work at low wages without compensation or benefits of any kind. Police used violence to break the strike.

On the same day, 1,000 workers struck at the Taiwan-based Jingmo Electronics Corpora-



tion in Shenzhen, Guangdong. The corporation, which is "one of the world's largest keyboard manufacturers", supplies hardware to Apple, IBM and LG among others. China Labour Watch (CLW), a workers' rights organisation documenting labour conditions in the Far East, reports that these workers are forced to work overtime for up to 120 hours every week, into the night, and are subjected to constant verbal abuse.

In November of last year, an undergarments and lingerie factory owned by the Hong Kong-based Top Form International, faced strikes by its mostly female employees over wages and overtime work. In Dongguan city, Guangdong, around 7,000 workers employed by the Taiwan-based shoemakers, Yue Yuen Industrial Ltd also went on strike against wage cuts and indiscriminate sacking of 18 managerial staff. There have been countless other strikes over the last two years.

Meanwhile, income and regional inequalities are heightening. According to a CLW report, while the 130,000 workers employed by BYD, an electronic car manufacturer partly

owned by the American billionaire Warren Buffet, are critically underpaid and work up to 144 hours of overtime a week, its chairman was in 2009 the richest man in China. Guangdong, where many of these strikes are occurring, is reportedly China's richest province.

Although there are unique concerns in each of these cases, the general grievances are slave-labour-like conditions: less than minimum wages, verbal abuse, occupational hazards, lack of any benefits, sackings without compensation, forced overtime and general overwork. To stave off this trouble industries are packing bags and moving further inland into China, causing even more woes. In Dongguan city alone hundreds of small and medium-sized factories have closed down in recent months.

Industries are using the excuse of the global slowdown and the resultant dip in exports as the reason for such actions, but while that is partially true, workers and radicals assert that it is a new-found class confidence that has created these pressures.

Notes from the US

◀ page 8

and preventable death." As soon as one protester was removed from the event, another stood up and began speaking.

At the end of November New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg boasted to an audience at MIT that the NYPD (New York City Police Department) infamous for its attempted removal of the original OWS camp was his 'own personal army'... "I have my own army in the NYPD, which is the seventh biggest army in the world."

At the end of the month, Occupy Wall Street protesters joined with a group of South Korean activists outside the South Korean

mission in New York to rally against the so-called free trade deal between the two countries. South Korean organiser Kim Dong-Kyun said: "The FTA is a trade agreement that benefits the one percent of Korea and the US, therefore it will bring pain to the 99 percent of America and the 99 percent of Korea. That is why we are doing this with the Occupy Wall Street people from both countries."

Students at the University of California, Davis, and other campuses called a general strike in December to protest tuition rises and the brutal misuse of pepper spray in a peaceful protest last month.

Economy

In November Jefferson County (Alabama) filed the biggest municipal bankruptcy in US history. After failing to refinance its debt of nearly US\$4 (£2.6) billion, it becomes the most recent of a trail of other communities unable to continue to operate financially. Ironically, Jefferson County reached its present critical financial position after scheming with Wall Street investors to finance the rebuilding of a broken sewer system using interest rate swaps with JPMorgan.

Louis Further

ECONOMICS

Desperate measures to save the EU



European political elites met in Brussels, Belgium on 8th December to draft measures to secure the failing Euro and its single market, where the financial crisis is getting worse. The result is a treaty for a new 'fiscal compact', which is a tightening of financial rules and regulations between all the 27 countries forming the European Union.

This treaty is being pitched as one aimed at ending 'structural deficit', that is when the amount a country raises through its taxes is less than the amount it borrows. Thus, any country being found with a deficit of more than 3% of its total income will be subject to 'automatic sanctions' – sanctions effected without vote. The 3% clause is not new to the Eurozone; however, it has never been enforced before.

The Brussels treaty also includes the imposition of a Tobin tax on all financial transactions. It also makes national budgetary and monetary policies subject to a

strict central regulation by the EU, with the implication that Germany and France will get to pull their political weight. The Eurozone countries have also agreed to pump €200bn (£172bn) into the IMF via the central banks of the Eurozone countries. The stated purpose of this measure is 'providing financial stability' but its timing is suspect – just when countries are going broke one after another.

The treaty affirms that the so-called European Stability Mechanism (ESM), a permanent institution, essentially aimed at bailing out sinking countries within the zone, will be rolled out in July 2012. It will be injected with €500bn (£426bn) for the time being. ESM is a progeny of the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) which was set up last year to bail out Greece, Portugal and Ireland.

Apart from the issue of citizens' earnings being spent on bailouts through a permanently

entrenched ESM based in Luxembourg, the institution has more dangerous aspects to it, not least of which is being headed by a cabal of unelected governors appointed by ruling elites.

The Brussels summit of December 2011 comes on the heel of one held in October 2011 which made the decision to raise the EFSF cache to €1 trillion (£854bn) from €750bn. The October summit also dictated that Greece should reduce its debt from what will be 186% of its GDP at the end of 2012 to 120% by 2020.

The December Brussels treaty will not currently empower the European Central Bank, based in Frankfurt, Germany, to lend directly to countries, as many experts are saying it should. However, serious disagreements and infighting going on in the Eurozone gives the lie to the unity suggested by 'Merkozy'. Angela Merkel (pictured left), the chancellor of Germany, wants to prosecute 'deficit offender' countries at the European Court of Justice, but Nikolas Sarkozy, the French President is opposed to it. Similarly, Merkel is opposed to the idea of a unified bond to raise debt, favoured by Sarkozy.

David Cameron, though, has suddenly become a controversial figure by being the only leader in the EU to veto the treaty



because of its financial regulations, and its explicit transfer of power to Brussels, citing 'national interests' and the interests of the 'City of London'. There is wide speculation on whether UK will be politically and financially isolated in Europe as a result, while others suggest that UK's dominance in finance economy will prevent such consequences. But it certainly seems to be costing his relationship with his liberal, pro-EU coalition partners.

Meanwhile, three of France's biggest banks – Société Générale, BNP Paribas, and Crédit Agricole – have been downgraded by Moody's (the global credit rating company) since they have great exposure to Greek and Italian debt and are in a precarious position. The other big rating agency, Standard and Poor's, has also put France's national debt under scrutiny along with 14 other European countries. France could face a possible downgrade, sending another shock wave through the financial system.

Debt increase in the UK

As Europe stands on the brink of disintegration, the economic horizon here does not look much better. A report by the insurance company Aviva indicates that low interest rates on deposits will affect the over 55's the most. On average savings have been reduced by around £4,000 from last year. Inflation is eating into the money people desperately need.

According to a survey undertaken by MoneySupermarket.com, since this Christmas, up to 10 million people will be pushed into debt. Around 40% of adults are

already in debt, excluding mortgages and student loans. Most of this debt will be borne on credit cards and through overdrafts and personal loans.

Official statistics reveal an expectation of recession this year in the UK and a worse one on the continent. Although the 'service industry' here is supposed to have shown a 'slight improvement', it is neutralised by the fact that manufacturing industry is still performing badly. Unemployment, especially youth and long-term unemployment are on the rise.

A short history of Freedom Press

PART THREE

A four part series to celebrate 125 years of *Freedom*, Donald Room traces the turbulent history of the UK's longest running anarchist paper

Takeover bids, feuds, tragedy and the Sixties

Anti-war as it was, the Freedom group during the war had been quite friendly with a pro-war group, publishers of *Solidaridad Obrera*, a Spanish-language anarcho-syndicalist paper, which was produced on a stencil machine in the Freedom Press office. The editors of *Solidaridad Obrera* would telephone whenever their stencils were ready, saying “can we come round and run off *Solidaridad Churchilliana?*”.

As is the custom in anarchist groups, decisions in the Anarchist Federation were made by consensus. Among the most frequent writers for *War Commentary* were two anarcho-syndicalists, one of them a professional journalist. These two proposed, and got it agreed, that if the members of the Anarchist Federation could not reach a consensus, a majority decision would be accepted. It was also agreed that as the war was ending, differences about whether to support the war had become less important, and Spanish comrades were invited to join. In December 1944, the editors of *War Commentary* left a Federation meeting before it ended, and after they had gone it was proposed under “any other business” that they should be replaced as editors by the two anarcho-syndicalists. The motion was carried by a majority.

The plot failed. Earlier in 1944, some detectives had called at the Freedom Press office about a different case entirely, and warned that they could get Freedom Press closed down immediately, because it had no proprietors registered under the Business Names Act. That same day, Vero Richards and John Hewetson had visited the office of the Registrar of Business Names, and registered themselves as proprietors. When they were sacked as editors, they just refused to go. The plotters were furious. Lilian told me about attempted reconciliation meeting which broke up when somebody said “Well take that for a start”, and hit John Hewetson on the head with a milk bottle.

Four men visited Richards and Berneri at their flat, pointed a pistol and refused to leave until Richards gave them a cheque for £25 (about six weeks' average wages) to start a new anarcho-syndicalist paper, *Direct Action*. Some comrades photographed the four leaving the flat. The four and two others, six in all, went to Express Printers with a sledge-hammer, evidently expecting to find a halftone block of the photograph ready for printing in the next *War Commentary*. There wasn't one because Freedom Press never published anything



about the split, but they smashed the printing forme anyway, then met Richards in Angel Alley and tore his mackintosh.

The *Direct Action* pair withdrew the loans they had made for the purchase of Express Printers, and Vero obtained an emergency loan from his mother, which he found quite embarrassing because his mother was not an anarchist.

War Commentary, later *Freedom*, never mentioned *Direct Action*, but *Direct Action* was always full of damaging references to *Freedom*, and their campaign was quite effective. An eighteen-year-old anarchist refused either to be conscripted or to apply for registration as a conscientious objector, the judge who sent him to prison remarking “when boys of eighteen set themselves up against the will of Parliament, it is a very fine thing”. *Freedom* commented “It is indeed”, but the young man did not contact *Freedom*, because the *Direct Action* people told him Freedom was the enemy.

In private letters to me, Lilian Wolfe referred to *Direct Action* as “D.I.”, which I presume stood for “Direct Inaction”. The *Direct Action* people called themselves the Anarchist Federation of Britain. The Freedom Press Group declared itself autonomous, but joined with others to form the Union of Anarchist Groups. At international conferences in the late 1940s there were two separate British delegations, representing the AFB and the UAG. The international conference of 1952 was in London, and some foreign comrades were surprised by the absence of the AFB. We explained to them that the AFB spokesman, the editor of *Direct Action*, was a professional journalist and busy covering the coronation.

In 1949 Marie-Louise Berneri died (aged 31) and George Woodcock, a prolific writer for *Freedom*, renounced anarchism and migrated to Canada. In the second edition of his Penguin book *Anarchism*, Woodcock wrote that British anarchism collapsed in the 1950s, following Berneri's death and his own departure. He was mistaken.

Anarchism in Britain has always been a minority movement, but the 1950s was one of its most successful periods. In 1961, while the weekly *Freedom* continued, Freedom Press began the monthly magazine *Anarchy*, edited by Colin Ward, which went on for 106 issues.

Albert Meltzer had always disagreed with Vero about the general approach of *Freedom*, which he thought should be less theoretical and more agitational. He and Vero enjoyed frequent bantering arguments, such that Colin Ward called them after the comedy act, “Mr Murgatroyd and Mr Winterbottom”. In 1965, the advent of small offset printing made it possible to produce papers with little capital, and Albert Meltzer went off to start a paper closer to his own vision, called *Wooden Shoe*, and a publishing group called Wooden Shoe Press.

In 1968, following the death of John Hewetson, Vero was the sole registered proprietor of Freedom Press. In 1973 he sold the Express Printers building, at 84a Whitechapel High Street. In his own name, he borrowed the money to buy the freehold of 84b Whitechapel High Street, an empty building on the other side of Angel Alley, which is now the Freedom Press building.

Albert wrote to Vero with the proposal that Wooden Shoe Press should contribute to the mortgage repayments for 84b, by renting a room upstairs. The Wooden Shoe premises, unlike 84b, had a shop window. Jack Robinson, who was managing Freedom Bookshop and earning his living as a second-hand book dealer, visited the landlord of the vacated Wooden Shoe shop with a view to taking over the tenancy, and learned that Wooden Shoe were being evicted, having paid no rent for the whole three years they had been there. Vero wrote a woffly letter, turning down Albert's offer without mentioning Wooden Shoe's history as a tenant. Albert began a feud which lasted until both he and Vero were dead, and for some years after.

In the February issue of *Freedom*: Part 4 – Christie, Meltzer, McLibel 2 and more.

FEATURE

NATO, Libya, anarchists and

Dave Douglass offers a critical look at anarchist support for NATO intervention in Libya followed by a response from North Anarchist Network members

Sunday 6th November 2011: I am confronted out of the blue, by a political development in anarchism which has knocked me off my feet. Surrounded by comrades in a fairly well attended meeting of the Northern Anarchist Network (NAN), and the North East Anarchists at The Bridge Hotel, Newcastle, I listened with my jaw dropping to the item on the agenda marked Libyan Solidarity Campaign.

‘The Support NATO bombing tendency’ is how I would roughly designate it. Subsequently discovering where this disturbing development came from, I have been referred to Ian Bone’s blog. Ian, a long standing comrade of mine, founder of Class War and many great initiatives, surely could not be the origin of this absurd and reactionary viewpoint?

‘The Left, anarchists, *myself* and all of us are against western military intervention and a no-fly zone... But political positions have real consequences... without such intervention we shall watch thousands die in Benghazi and the triumph of a nutter which will setback uprisings in other Arab dictatorships.’¹

Here we have Ian, deliberating with himself basically on not wanting to see the anti-Gaddafi rebels go down in blood but realising the consequences of western military intervention. This is fair enough as thinking out loud, but how many thoughts did Ian have as to nature of what was being proposed as against the Gaddafi regime? The rebels were not just living their lives or minding their own business, but posing a military and political challenge. What were they offering? This is crucial in any discussion, not whether my enemy’s enemy is my friend, but is my enemy’s enemy worse than my enemy or the same? The Benghazi based rebellion is rooted in Islamist and monarchist opposition to Gaddafi. Does this effort further the struggle of the working class to gain power for itself? Can we take a side in a war which always ultimately may be against us and people of our political stance, and the working class as a class acting its own interests? Can NATO ever spearhead a progressive revolution? Really?

‘Libyan rebels appeal for no fly zone – we should be arming them. We should at the very least provide weapons to the rebels and I would be quite happy to see western planes

bombing the fuck out of Saif Gaddafi and his cronies. How can revolutionaries in the UK gainsay what rebels fighting and dying are crying out for? Quite easily is the answer – far better to keep your revolutionary credentials than soil your hands with reality – the reality that the rebels will die unless we support them. Contrast with the Left’s calls for support for republican Spain during the Spanish Civil War.’²

‘Our police’ I don’t do it and it isn’t hard because *it’s not* ‘my government, my soldiers, my police’. They all belong to the ruling class, the class me and the rest of the working class is at war with. The ruling class is not in class terms, in cultural terms, in physical terms anything to do with me. So when did Ian become part of it? If he talks about “we” should arm the rebels and impose a no fly zone, it is clear he isn’t talking about anarchists, he is talking about the armed bodies of men, the *State’s* bodies of armed men, RAF and NATO, and he calls them “we” as if “We” have one interest.

It is also utterly obscene and offensive to relate the socialist/communist and sometimes anarchist government of Spain who were trying to live in a progressive pro working class, communistic society in Spain, with Libyan rebels many of whom are trying to impose some form of fundamentalist theocratic Islamic state, or at the very best and this isn’t even a strong minority view, a bourgeois democracy in which Sharia law is a great part of the countries jurisprudence and the rights and liberties of women and non Muslims probably made worse than it was.

Bourgeois blood is thicker than democratic water

So why would NATO, why *did* NATO go into Libya? Because they were concerned that people were going to be massacred? Well it’s odd isn’t it? They didn’t have any no fly zones when Israel was bombing Lebanon back to the stone age, Israel was massacring the helpless people of Gaza, when the Palestinians rise up to stop the illegal land grabs and Zionist genocide in the West Bank, did anyone see any SAS or NATO planes? Did anyone see them in Bahrain, or Dubai? No, now why would that be? Ian, if he stops and thinks, knows damn well why. Because blood isn’t the question here, bodies aren’t the question here. Imperialism doesn’t give a monkeys about that. Gaddafi was another peg in the board game against formally anti imperialist leaders in the Middle East who proved a threat to Israel and US and Western oil interests. Had Ian been talking of drumming up an international brigade of leftist and progressive volunteers to overthrow Gaddafi and help create a more socialistic and progressive social system, we could support at least the good intentions.

So we come to the conference at The Bridge Hotel, Newcastle Upon Tyne. This is when

I, for one, first come across this pro-NATO Libyan Anarchist Interventionist tendency. I am told by the people who support this line that I am doing them an injustice by saying they ‘support NATO’. In fact they only support NATO bombing and NATO prosecution of the war against Gaddafi. Sorry, I don’t see the distinction. You clearly can’t be against NATO while calling for it to act.

It is clear that the people supporting this line had been largely inspired by Ian’s blog. That’s not too much of a leap of presumption since the main speaker used exactly the same quotes and word for word justifications as Ian had as did the other two main NAN supporters.

I must make point. I am reminded that all of NAN’s supporters were not at that meeting and this line is offered by only some of them and is not the policy or perspective of the whole group. Only three supporters of NAN were at this meeting, so that’s a fair point that I acknowledge. Out of maybe fifteen North East Anarchists at that meeting, only of one spoke against this line and a number have spoken then and since in support of it.

I’m getting on a bit now, and I’ve been in this movement as long as Ian, but I have never ever seen self-declared Anarchists end up so wrong-footed and totally confused on an issue in my entire life. It’s a slippery slope comrades, or, as someone else said a long, long time ago, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, but at least I now at last can answer how it was old Kropotkin ended up supporting the first world war.

David Douglass

This is an edited version of the critique, the full version can be found on Freedom website at <http://www.freedompress.org.uk/news/2011/11/27/the-northern-anarchist-network-nato-libya-and-utter-confusion/>

RESPONSE BY NAN

The Northern Anarchist Network (NAN) is not a membership organisation; it just provides a forum for northern anarchists: individuals, affinity groups and members of affiliated bodies like AF; the IWW and Solfed participate in its proceedings and meetings. The NAN has no policies or political programmes, although it has acted as a facilitator for actions like the anti-JSA campaigns in the 1990s. It is a place where the anarchists of the North may freely come together.

Having read Dave Douglass’s autobiography, I believe he firmly belongs to the era of the last half of the twentieth century. It was an era that for us had a formative period in the 1960s of anti-Americanism at the time of the Vietnam War and a crisis of confidence for the British trade union left at the time of the triumph of Thatcherism in the 1980s, yet it has left some of us with a taste for simplistic and optimistic expectations in our politics and a romantic nostalgia in our life

Utter confusion



styles. In the case of Dave Douglass it has led him to adopt a cookbook approach to politics with simple slogans like ‘No War, but the Class War’ and an exotic taste in bathroom design resembling an oriental shrine complete with joss sticks, jacuzzi and ornamental Buddha from Vietnam. He may well have coal dust under his finger nails but there will always be jasmine in his nostrils.

With this political background and in such perfumed surroundings, we must imagine Dave meditating about Libya, the contents of Ian Bone’s blog and a similar case put by Barry Woodling in favour of a ‘No Fly Zone’ in Libya at the last NAN conference in Newcastle, in November. Barry Woodling tells me that not only has he not read Ian Bone’s Blog but that he wasn’t even aware of its existence. Hence, Dave is wrong to claim that Woodling’s arguments at the NAN were “largely inspired by Ian’s Blog”. The case put by Barry at the NAN were the result of his links to the Libya’s exiles in Manchester; in this country Manchester has the largest concentration of exiles from Libya. Two years ago the NAN had a meeting in Shropshire addressed by a member of the Libyan community from Manchester, and by NAN veteran, John Lawrence, who has recently worked in Benghazi and Sirte in Libya: the

root of the case of the NAN critics of Gaddafi is based on the evidence of eye-witness, and the reports from Libya exiles.

In his account Dave accuses three of the six North West NAN supporters at Newcastle – Barry, Martin and myself – of being objectively ‘pro-NATO’ because we favoured a ‘No Fly Zone’ in Libya. We could just as well accuse Dave of being objectively pro-Gaddafi in Libya; objectively pro-Slobodan Milošević in Serbia; objectively pro-Saddam Hussein in Iraq. To be fair Dave does grant us ‘good intentions’ over our concern last February for the welfare of the citizens of Benghazi; when Libyan troops there were in the suburbs and the Gaddafi clan were openly broadcasting threats to go from ‘house to house’ in retribution for their rebellion. Saadi Gaddafi used terms like those of General Queipo de Llano in the early weeks of the Spanish Civil War, who described the military uprising of the Generals as ‘the purging of the Spanish people’ and defined the enemy as anyone sympathised ‘with advanced social currents or simply movements of democratic and liberal opinion’. In contrast Dave claims most of the anti-Gaddafi rebels want ‘some form of fundamentalist theocratic Islamic state’, while some would argue that many of the Arabs just want what we’ve got:

some kind of liberal-democracy.

David Douglass is a vegetarian who doesn’t want blood on his plate. I’m happy to tuck into a Bury Black Pudding but, unlike Dave, don’t like blood in my politics. Dave was willing to see bloodshed in Benghazi, comparing it to ‘poor little Belgium’ in World War One and, despite his love for the Orient, his arguments display elements of ‘Orientalism’ in his lack of trust in the Libyans or even the Arabs. Martin and I vainly argued at the NAN that Dave’s cookbook political analysis was too simplistic. I feel that this all stems from prejudices and anti-American attitudes that incubated in us all during the Cold War and at the time of Vietnam, because according to Dave, in his autobiography³: “we all wanted to die for Vietnam”.

Brian Bamford and Barry Woodling
(Greater Manchester NAN)

Footnotes

- 1 Ian Bone’s blog: <http://ianbone.wordpress.com/2011/03/10/libyan-rebels-facing-military-defeat-do-we-have-a-problem/>
- 2 Ian Bone’s blog: <http://ianbone.wordpress.com/2011/03/12/libyan-rebels-appeal-for-no-fly-zone-we-should-be-arming-them/>
- 3 *Ghost Dancers: The Miners’ Last Generation*, Vol. 3 of Dave Douglass’s autobiography.

INTERVIEW

Lucien van der Walt interview

The first thing that strikes you about Lucien van der Walt, co-author of *Black Flame the Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*, is that he is serious about his subject. Not only does he know what he's talking about, he invests his conversation with a warmth and enthusiasm for anarchism and syndicalism, and anarchists, that is refreshing to say the least. The antithesis of the cynical snarling ranter, van der Walt comes across as someone keen to communicate the powerful global history and impact, the benefits and indeed the contemporary relevance of the anarchist tradition.

Perhaps that's why the book, which started as a small collaborative effort, turned into a monster 500-page heavyweight.

"It was originally a sort of pamphlet, we wrote a pamphlet on 'what is anarchism?' it had Spain and we mentioned Makhno and we thought let's add a bit, and we kicked this thing around and about 2005 we had a book, in various forms."

He is telling me this as we stand freezing in the cold December weather in the alley of Whitechapel's notorious White Hart pub. Van der Walt has just given a talk at Freedom Bookshop, where he covered aspects of anarchism not often given an airing. For those of us brought up on Emma Goldman and Prince Kropotkin, it was a pleasure to listen to someone speak with equal passion about Korean anarchist history and the popularity of South American anarchism – indeed the more obscure the anarchist the more he seemed to relish providing us with information about them. He clearly loves his subject.

So who is the man behind one of the most significant anarchist texts published in recent years?

"I grew up in a declining mining town in apartheid South Africa, at the end of it. My father had been a miner and then he moved up to become a teacher, and I got really politicised when I went to university and was involved the anti-apartheid student movement.

"In the late 1990s there were a lot of big campaigns around privatisation partly at universities around outsourcing, and partly in the black communities around electricity cut-offs, cost recovery, prepaid meters, things like that. And these things came together to form the Anti-Privatisation Forum in 2000, I was a founder member of that and the media officer. But I probably identified myself with the anarchist movement by 1994. I was involved in some of the early anarchist groups like the Workers Solidarity Federation."

South Africa in 1990s was politically in a massive state of flux, and to be an anarchist within that environment, without the equivalent social scene and lifestyle attributes of European or North American anarchism, must have been challenging.

"It was also an opportunity. There was no baggage, but hard challenges. Anyone who was a militant had to face the question of how



A mass strike in the South African state sector during August and September 2010 demonstrated remarkable working class unity across racial and ideological lines.

does your movement relate to the existing mass movements? You're talking about a period of massive class struggle, you're talking about a very complicated transition from apartheid, but in many ways a partial, yet painfully incomplete, victory for the national liberation struggle of oppressed African coloured and Indian union people – how do you relate to that movement? If you are going to go anywhere you've got to relate to that, you've got to relate specifically to the black working class majority, the heartlands of union and community work. South Africa is capitalist, has massive inequalities, deeply shaped by colonial roots and national oppression. So through hard debates, the emergent anarchist movement was defined by first the black working class orientation, anarchism has to be a movement of the black working class, in the trade unions, in the townships. The idea was to build clear anarchist militants in the trade unions and in the social movements."

Although he comes with an impressive intellectual pedigree (professor of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg) it is telling van der Walt was an active political militant which informed his developing relationship to anarchism, especially in the 90s.

"There was no real anarchist movement, a number of reading groups and discussion groups popped up and there were a number of debates. There had been some sort of loose anarchist groups before in Johannesburg, but myself I came out of the student movement which means I came, to some extent, out of the mainstream struggle tradition in South Africa which is the Communist Party and the ANC. The ANC was this huge thing in the early 90s – Mandela got released, but it was also a very turbulent time, it was a time when you could go on a march with 200,000 people and see the working class

fucking moving, and that was very formative for me, and that's how I got politicised and moved eventually to anarchism."

The authors of *Black Flame* have been described as doing 'a remarkable job in drawing together a vast international body of literature. They show convincingly that anarchism and syndicalism were far more significant political forces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century world than historians have generally given them credit for'. It is the sheer scope and attention to detail that gives the book its authority, but van der Walt admits it came out of an attempt to orientate their own limited anarchist traditions historically.

"We had no reference points, there were no older comrades to explain things to us but there was also no baggage, we had to rediscover anarchism for ourselves. And *Black Flame* is partly coming out of that. It's our own engagement with anarchism and understanding it, and the things we had to learn like strategy and tactical debates and the history of anarchism, especially the history of anarchism outside of Europe, and especially the history of anarchism how it dealt with issues like class race and gender.

"Class is obvious but how do you deal with race in a colonial context? Where does the third world fit in? So it was partly around that, and that's partly where it comes from. Before anarchism can engage in other intellectual tradition it must know its own tradition."

Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism (Counter Power Vol.1) by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, published by AK Press, £18.00.

We will be publishing the talk Lucien gave at the Freedom Bookshop in a future issue of the paper – in the meantime you can read more of his work at his blog at <http://lucienvanderwalt.blogspot.com/>

INSIDE NEWS

• Recent sentencing summary by Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG) for the student and anti-cuts demonstrations. Some 180 people (that we know of) have been arrested since Millbank – excluding the Fortnum & Mason 145. There are at least 20-plus who have not yet pleaded or are currently preparing for trial after pleading not guilty to violent disorder – many are facing trial in the new year. There are dozens and dozens of others who have either had their charges dropped, accepted cautions or bind-overs. So far 17 custodial sentences have been imposed, all for violent disorder and one criminal damage, ranging from six months to two years eight months (the person who dropped the fire extinguisher off Millbank).

While this may look depressing at first glance, remember that it's the people who pleaded guilty who are first to go through the court process.

Information correct as of December 2011 so keep checking the LDMG website for updates: <http://ldmg.org.uk/>

• Below are some words from Omar Ibrahim, from Glasgow, who is currently serving an 18 month sentence from November 2011 for violent disorder following his arrest outside Topshop in Oxford Street London during the anti-cuts demonstrations on March 26th:

“Writing from Wannoo [Wandsworth] it seems to me there could be an easy solution to the European capital crisis. The Pakistani Cricket fixers have been locked up here for a couple of weeks. At the same time there's been a few international cricket matches. I don't know if my economics is right, but I'm sure they could at least share the contacts to put on a sure fire bet with our great economic leaders. It seems the Governor here could have an eye on that ball already from the rumours going round.

“The lads were in the induction wing last week. For most prisoners this means one hour exercise, one hour association, meals and the rest of your time banged up in a smelly cell you can't clean with a sink that only provides short spurts of water on a twenty minute timer. Our Guv decided he would spend a few days with the celebrities. No doubt he was designing how professional sportsmen could exercise their full potential here in Wannoo. One senior prisoner informed me they played cricket and tennis all day over the weekend, and were never present at meal times on the wing, over the weekend when several international test matches were played. Doubtless, information is a key component of prison life.”

For more updates from Omar check out his 26th March Anti-Cuts Prisoner Blog at <http://bangedupforprotesting.wordpress.com/>

Closing the door on 2011

Our final 2011 dispatch of news from the Prison Planet inevitably resembles those of the previous eleven months, with tales of resistance in the face of overwhelming penal perfidy: hunger strikes and riots, escapes, hostage taking and prison sieges; whilst multinational Prison Industrial Complex conglomerates dig their craven claws ever deeper into the pockets of the State as the financial crisis digs ever deeper into what individual countries are willing to spend on keeping their citizens banged up, and state-sponsored murder and the widespread routine use of cruel and inhumane treatment, i.e. torture continue unabated; and all with scant public censure.

Many of the stories covered in previous columns continue to crop up. For example, the rather quiet denouement to the second Pelican Bay SHU hunger strike in November, with the acceptance of a second and more substantive offer from the California Dept. of Correction, has not only seen a spate of ex-hunger strikers' suicides, alongside the inevitable retaliation by prison guards (two of the three suicides saw guards deliberately ignored desperate calls from the prisoners and their fellow SHU inmates, leaving them to die), but there have been a spate of riots in Californian state prisons including Pelican Bay, Telfair, Calipatria and New Folsom, all active in the SHU-related hunger strikes. Additionally, Hancock State Prison in Sparta, Georgia erupted into full-scale riot with large parts of the prison in flames at the end of November. Hancock, along with nine other Georgia prisons, had been the venue for a major strike campaign in December 2010.

Mexican prisons, needless to say, have continued to resemble rather leaky sieves but, as I write, news is surfacing of a rather less routine escape attempt at the notorious Korydallos Prison in Athens by five

members of the Conspiracy Nuclei of Fire and Greek celebrity criminal and serial escapee Panagiotis Vlastos. Armed with a .45 pistol and kitchen knives, and their escape attempt during visiting hours thwarted, the four took hostages but were forced to surrender after a five hour standoff.

On the 'Financial Crisis' front, having taken over HMP Birmingham (and quickly lost the keys – see November's *Freedom*), Serco have been busy pimping for trade, trying to cash in on the 'Rehabilitation Revolution' by offering the prison's workshops to perspective employers feeling the economic squeeze and wanting to shift production somewhere cheaper, i.e. offshore and bragging about how effective Serco-run HMP Doncaster is at keeping cons on the straight and narrow. Whilst in Canada, a country that has just pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol because it can't afford to cut its CO2 emissions, open warfare has broken out between the State and Federal authorities over the massive financial costs that the states will have to bear if the government's C-10 crime bill is passed and the country's prison population inevitably rockets.

Meanwhile, in California, one enterprising local authority, Riverside County, is planning to charge its prisoners \$142.42 a night for a metal bunk bed berth and far from gourmet meals served on a scratched plastic tray (N.B. no monogrammed bathrobes or complementary soap will be available).

On a final note, the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco has officially declared that the only purposes of imprisonment (in US prisons at least) are “retribution, deterrence and incapacitation, not rehabilitation.” Maybe somebody should tell Ken Clarke?



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Freedom Bookshop on tour: We decamped to the wind and rain of the north for the Manchester and Salford Anarchist Bookfair early in December. It was an incredibly well organised and well attended event in a beautiful old building – the magnificently restored historic Edwardian pump house of the People's History Museum, which apparently houses the biggest collection of trade union banners in the world. We'd like to thank the organisers of the bookfair for all their hard work in making it such a successful day and let's hope they do the same next year. Cheers to the Manchester comrades, good work. Plus Manchester's premier arts centre, the Cornerhouse, were interested in stocking copies of the paper – helping our stated aim of getting a *Freedom* newspaper stockist in every major city.

The Christmas social at the bookshop was entertaining as ever, with the pagans fighting the pacifists for control of the mistletoe, as was the anti-fascist prisoner support benefit the following night which saw the worst aspects of the London anarchist scene in all its glory – anarchists dancing!

Despite the economic downturn, Freedom Bookshop is set for another amazing year of providing the necessary literary tools for a growing political movement. Can't say fairer than that!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

It's now even easier to work out when your subscription is up for renewal. The number above your name on the address label now tells you the year and month when your subscription runs out. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue if you need it, or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe. It's that time of year when many subscriptions are due – and don't forget that donations are always extremely welcome.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated February 2012 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Sunday 15th January. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Much of the right wing response to the pensions strike on 30th November was on a level that would have disgraced a school playground. 'They're getting more than us. It's not fair!' Not all workers in the private sector said this, it is true, but it was a regular feature of news reporting and comment. It's also a-historical, but then with our ignorance of any history in this country beyond the Tudors and World War II that's perhaps not surprising.

A better way of putting it would perhaps be: 'We didn't fight when our pensions were stolen from us, it's not fair that someone else does.' The destruction of most private sector final salary pension schemes has a variety of causes. There were the rules demanding that not too much capital was held in them, which caused employers to take payment holidays in the 1980s and 90s when their schemes had a surplus. This happened to both private and public schemes – I remember seeing budgets in local government around then and the scheme was healthy enough that the employers' contribution was virtually nil one year. One of the other effects over time has been the impact of inflation and the short term business cycle most companies operate under in the West. Pension schemes are effectively making money by holding large swathes of shares and reaping the dividends, or trading the shares. This activity just doesn't register big shifts anymore, so predictions made based on previous performance are no guide to how they will do now.

The right to opt out of a company scheme brought in by Thatcher also undermined many schemes. One of the perceived threats to the existing schemes which include a lot of low paid workers is that many will leave – making the scheme itself unaffordable as it doesn't have enough members to keep running.

Changes to tax relief on private pensions brought in by Gordon Brown are also regularly cited. Brown basically made it more expensive for companies to put money into pension schemes. So a lot of them stopped doing it except for their managers and directors.

And of course, many private sector companies closed final salary schemes simply because they could. Obviously there were the straightforward thieves like Robert Maxwell, but most directors will always look to cut costs, and if the mood is against pensions, and more importantly, workers are unable to enforce them, then they will take that money and pay it to themselves and to shareholders (ironically of course many shareholders will be pension schemes).

The changes proposed to the various public sector pension schemes are not because the schemes themselves are unaffordable. They are simply a way of cutting the deficit. Workers are quite right to defend them and you have to say that when such unions as the National Association of Head Teachers ballots and strikes, the government are clearly not negotiating in good faith.

One thing that bothers me about the unions' campaign is the way that public sector workers are said to deserve good pensions. I think we all deserve good pensions, public or private. Capitalism is ruthless, if it can pay us less, or, as in one case reported in early December, pay us negatively, it will. More state pensions, funded by taxpayers, will be needed as fewer people get a work pension. The government are already worried enough about this to bring forward a scheme whereby everyone has to contribute to a pension. Unlike the public sector schemes, they will be run by, and effectively for, private insurance companies in the City. It's not like that's ever gone wrong before, is it?



Memory lane

Your news about our old friend the sandwich board (Angel Alley, December issue) triggers a nostalgic memory. While I was an editor we had continual problems with the local council about its use in the street. This is in the early 1980s. A member of the group was delegated to negotiate. It emerged that there was no named contact. As an anarchist he would not write 'dear sir'. It turned out that in the end he had addressed 'dear bureaucrat'. The request was rejected.

David Peers

ABC on the Mersey

Merseyside & Lancashire Anarchist Black Cross group is a new group that will aim to support people who have been imprisoned whilst struggling for freedom and liberty. We are very interested in hearing from anyone who wants to get involved, directly or indirectly, or who can provide advice or expertise, and from anyone who feels that they can contribute anything however big or small. The group will be an opportunity to network with similar groups (local & national), to get involved in local, national, and international campaigns, demonstrations, to provide support for anarchist prisoners, and other class struggle prisoners, to distribute propaganda, and other relevant literature. Hopefully at some point the group will be able to provide legal observer, and other relevant training, legal support and advice.

Contact: matthewm@riseup.net Website: <http://merseyside-lancashire-abc.blogspot.com/>

Latest from Leicester

In November, a number of Anarchist Federation members met up in Leicester to plan activities and set up a fully functioning AF group. So now it's official... the Leicester AF group has now been re-established.

For several years, there have been no active anarchist grouping in Leicester, but with the current capitalist crisis and the ongoing attacks on our class, the new Leicester AF believe it is even more vital that a strong anarchist presence is built in every town and city. In the East Midlands, there already exists an active AF group in Notts and our comrades from SolFed are also active in Northampton. Now it's Leicester's turn to get step up and get active.

So, readers who live in Leicester or the surrounding area, get in touch and get involved. It's time to build the anarchist resistance in Leicester!

Contact us at leicester@afed.org.uk or visit our website at <http://leicesteraf.blogspot.com/>

Leicestershire Solidarity Group (LSG) is a group of people living in both the city and wider county who see a real need for genuine working class organisation in the area. By this, we're talking about the kind of organisation

that means ordinary people stick together to get things done and defend ourselves from the powers that be – that is, from employers, national or local government, or anyone else who tries to divide working class people according to our race, sex, age, disability, employment status, sexuality or cultural background.

We are an active group and want active members who will muck in and share the load with other LSG members. So if this sounds like you, what are you waiting for? Get in touch.

If you want to be involved in the activities of Leicestershire Solidarity Group, then send an email to leicestersolidarity@gmail.com or visit the website: <http://leicestershiresg.blogspot.com/>

Cardiff news

Cardiff has a new radical/anarchist newsletter. *Faultlines* aims to publish on social justice issues such as housing and migration from a radical perspective, and in particular focusing on Cardiff and South Wales. *Faultlines* is a local South Wales newsletter written by the Cardiff based Bad Apple Collective.

The newsletter aims to publish articles on topics such as housing, migration, education, health, welfare, justice and community. We believe that corporate media are incapable of delivering relevant news about our communities and the situations of those who don't have a voice.

We hold radical/anarchist/anti-authority opinions about the current social crisis and war on the poor. Writing about these topics from those suffering from the cuts, reforms and general austerity empowers people who are otherwise powerless to speak out.

If you would like to see any particular topics or issues discussed, email us at faultlines@riseup.net, website <http://faultlinescardiff.wordpress.com/>

We are the Red and Black Umbrella Collective and intend on turning the abandoned pub into a social centre. We believe people should come before profit. We are sick of government cuts that affect us while MPs and bankers get richer. David Cameron wanted a big society and we're going to give him one. We are currently renovating the pub and want to provide a cultural hub for the local community.

The social centre is for everybody to be a part of. We hope you will join us. If you have any concerns, questions or suggestions please call or text us on 07748 385375, email us at:

theredandblackumbrella@hotmail.co.uk or come and say hello and knock on the door!

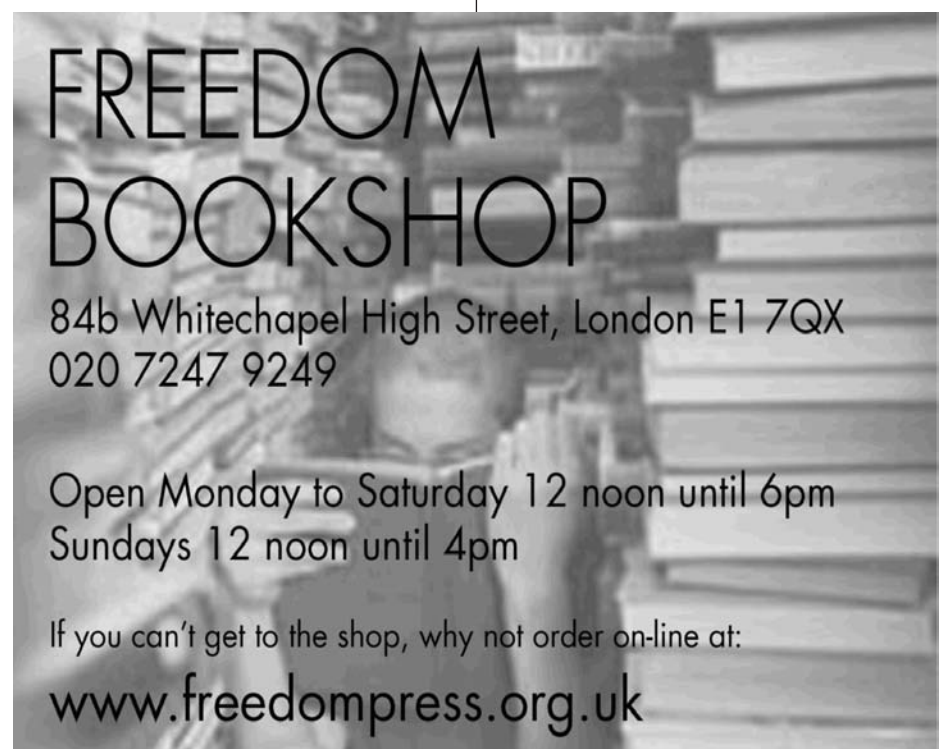
Red and Black Umbrella, The Tredegar Hotel, 57-58 Clifton Street, Cardiff

Anarchism on the Tyne

Tyneside Solidarity (TSol) is a new initiative in the North East made up of members of SolFed, AFed, IWW and other non-aligned class-struggle anarchists. We aim to focus on local community and workplace issues that are both relevant to people's lives and winnable. Given this we have launched Tyneside Solidarity, which aims to make anarchism local and relevant to people's lives.

To do this we feel that it is necessary to run campaigns of support and direct action that are local, targeted and winnable. We draw our inspiration from the successes of community and workplace groups like London Coalition Against Poverty and the Seattle Solidarity Network, which, through organising locally using direct action tactics, have time and time again got results. We welcome all who want to get involved with TSol.

You can contact the group via their website at <http://www.tynesidesolidarity.org.uk/>



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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

■ **3rd and 17th Practical Squatting** Evening at Offmarket, 68 Dalston Lanes, London E8 3AH from 7pm to 8pm, contact offmarket@riseup.net or call 07583870733 for details.

■ **5th, 12th, 19th and 26th** London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk beforehand.

■ **7th Anarchist Conference**, organised by ALARM, from 10am-5pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see <http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/>

■ **7th Shut Guantánamo rally** from 2pm to 4pm, meet at Trafalgar Square, top of steps, outside National Gallery (tbc), see <http://londonguantanamocampaign.blogspot.com/> for details.

■ **8th News from Nowhere Club** presents A History of the Last 30 years in Song with speaker/performer Stanley Accrington at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/>

■ **13th Kebele Sound** benefit for the autonomous spaces of Bristol at The Black Swan, 438 Stapleton Road, Bristol BS5 6NR from 9pm until 4am, £5/6, see <http://kebelesound.wordpress.com/> for more info.

■ **14th A Radical London** meeting, from 4pm to 6pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 6ES, for details contact info@radicallondon.net

■ **14th Anti-fascist** benefit gig at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HS, with food from 7pm, drinks from 7.30pm and music from 8pm, see <http://nottingham.indymedia.org/events/2257> for details.

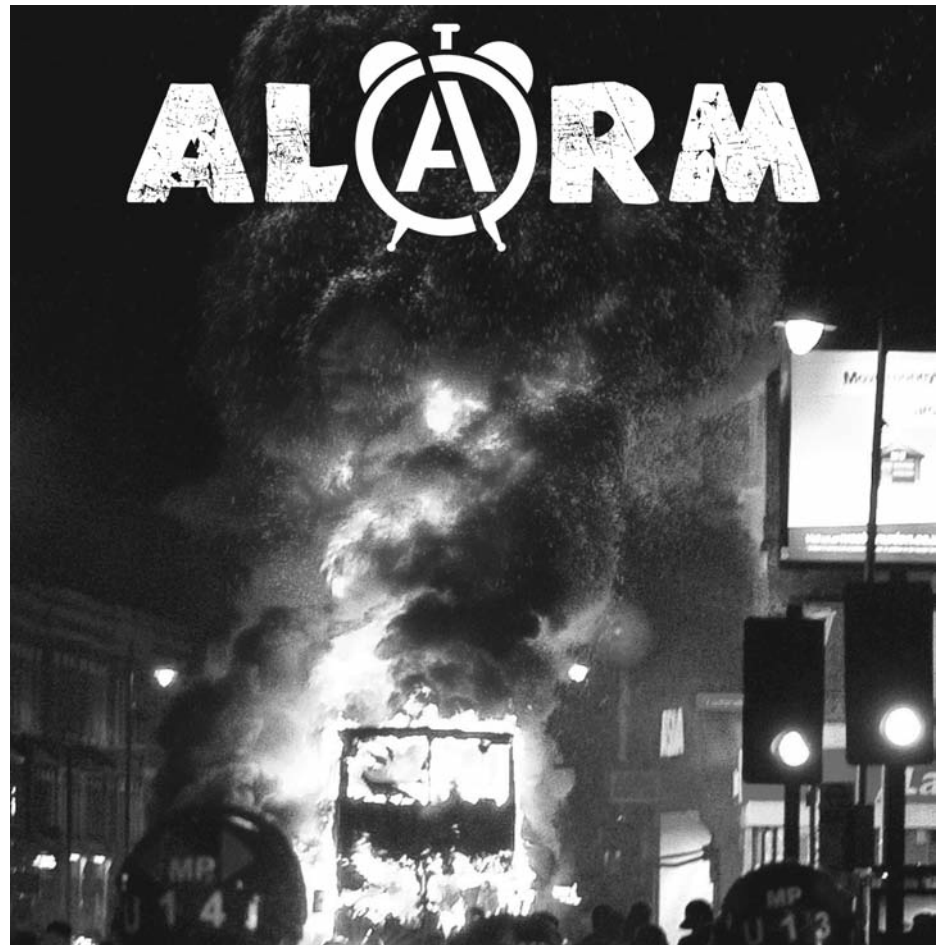
■ **20th The Red & Black Club** at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ **25th Art Not Oil**, Liberate Tate and Platform present *Not if, but when – Culture Beyond Oil*, 7pm, at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, London, N1 9DX, tel 020 7837 4473, www.housmans.com/events.php for details on the event or see <http://issuu.com/mellv/docs/cbo> to read the book.

FEBRUARY

■ **15th McLibel: Human Rights Victory Anniversary**, see <http://www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=225> for more.

■ **12th News from Nowhere Club** presents The Story of the Leytonstone Arts Trail with Frances Bowman at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> for details.



The radical conference season starts early in 2012, especially in London where two major events are taking place within a week of each other. What better way to kickstart the new year than with anarchists getting together to plan, plot, conspire and organise their future strategies collectively in the wake of the continuing crisis of capital.

● **London Anarchist Conference**, organised by ALARM, on Saturday 7th January 2012 from 10am to 5pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

The past twelve months have seen the political situation of the UK and London develop rapidly. This is only the beginning of a turbulent economic and social situation. We hope that this conference can give us a space as anarchists to reflect back on as well as look forward to fighting the class war that is currently being waged. We are hosting this conference in a comradely and constructive fashion and invite all those from the many-headed hydra of anarchism and libertarianism to come together under the banners of mutual aid and solidarity. The conference will be made up of three main meetings, the aim of these constructive discussions is to highlight clear strategies and goals:

1. Community and Workplace Organising: discussing strengthening the two key fundamental bases of organising.
2. The Riots and New Movements: reflecting on key developments in 2011.
3. Total Policing and the Future: looking forward to the future we aim to discuss clear strategies to pursue over 2012.

Plus the day will be rounded off by an evening's entertainment with the Red & Black Club from 8pm at LARC (London Action Resource Centre), 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES.

See <http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/>

● **A Radical London**, Saturday 14th January from 4pm to 6pm at London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 6ES. Radical London is a network of community-based anarchist, solidarity and pro-working class resistance groups. We want to collectively take back control over our lives, and the resources and decision-making where we live and work. If you live in London and agree, sign up now! There are a number of active groups we can refer you to. If there's no group in your area and you'd like to set one up, please tell us! We want to see an active local group in every local area throughout London.

The groups that are linked into the Radical London network believe that setting up local radical/anarchist/solidarity groups and networks, with the aim of engaging in local community actions as well as supporting local workplace struggles, is a key way of spreading ideas, solidarity and resistance amongst the wider working class. In addition, we are strengthened by our connection to others and we are in a better situation to actually participate in and win struggles. To get involved and/or help set up groups, come to the open meeting on 14th January. Contact: info@radicallondon.net Website: www.radicallondon.net

Football Against the Wall

A documentary film called *Football Against the Wall* has just been released, and premiered at the Bristol Palestine film festival in December, exploring how football can build connections between communities across the world. It follows the endeavours of Bristol-based radical sports team Easton Cowboys on their return to the West Bank in 2010 for a second time. The film provides an insight into the realities of the occupation as seen by Palestinian and Israeli people. Will from the Easton Cowboys gives us his feedback about the tour itself:

“Yes, it happened. At the beginning of May a group of fifteen Cowboys and Cowgirls ventured out again to the West Bank for another ten days of football (and volleyball), fun and falafel. There were a few differences to our last visit in April 2007. This time we mostly played in small villages, as opposed to the large centres of population like Bethlehem; we played in Israel itself, against the Anarchists Against the Wall group from Tel Aviv and we also had a more disparate group, made up of some old faces, a few new faces and a couple of our comrades from Republica.

“It was as gruelling as last time – nine games in eight days – and everyone will have their own personal highlights. Who can forget our whistle stop VIP tour of Palestine’s leading fun fair, Megaland? Or our driver

Shaher (aka ‘The General’) and his habit of inflicting the Backstreet Boys’ classic ‘Show Me The Reason For Being Lonely’ on us at regular intervals?

“Then there was our final game in Traffur. As the tour bus wended its way down to the foot of the village where a floodlit stadium was carved out of a disused quarry, we were besieged by scores of kids. As we went in at half time all we could hear were hundreds of young voices, all chanting in unison ‘EASTON COW-BOYS’ None of us will ever forget it.

“Along the way we learned a hell of a lot about the realities of the occupation. We also donated over £1,000 to the building of a school in the community of Khallet Zakariya that is surrounded on all sides by illegal Israeli settlements. And we confirmed the Cowboys twinning arrangement with Tulkarem Sports Club. There is already talk of maybe getting a Palestinian side over here next year.”

Anybody who wants to show a public screening of the film contact the Cowboys via their website at <http://eastoncowboys.org.uk/>



Ultras in Egypt

◀ page 24

Since November the battle lines between militant fans and the country’s rulers have hardened. When the football’s governing body EFA, under instruction from the interior ministry, tried to ban supporters and their ‘ultra’ activity from the terraces the UA07 responded with an overtly political statement:

“The issue is bigger than football. We want to settle the score with remnants of the former regime and their oppression of Egyptian youth.”

UWK issued an equally provocative statement: “We suffered a lot from injustice and repression in the past, but we stood up

to that with pride. We thought justice and freedom would come after our revolution. We will continue in our defence of freedom even with our blood.”

Only time will tell what impact the Ultras continued politicisation will have on the future of Egypt.



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REVIEWS

FICTION

The Inquest

Dominic rolled his eyes.

"Typical," he said. He was feeling (and acting) smug after not taking part in the Kingsnorth débâcle.

"That's not fair," said Connie, defensive of their links with the eco-activist group.

"I'm not getting at the greenies," said Dominic, "I'm just not surprised Steve's van was the problem. Just like a Renault."

Dave piped up. "I wonder if it was all as innocent as it first appeared. We got stopped, okay that's random, but then Pete had a go at the copper and he dropped us in it." Steve shifted in his seat.

"Yeah, I should've sorted out the van. It needs a full service, I only just paid out £300 for a new clutch," he said.

"No one's blaming you, Steve," interjected Connie.

"Yeah, but..." he trailed off, as Pete got to his feet.

"You lot are dreaming if you think that copper would've let us carry on, regardless of me having a go at him. Call yourselves anarchists? Our position towards the police should be, must be, one of total opposition and hostility at all times," he declared.

"Yes, but you yourself have worked with them when you've stewarded marches. Did you shout at them all the time then? You're confusing strategy and tactics. We don't know what the copper would've done, what he did anyway," replied Connie.

"But you left it in no doubt," she added. Pete looked around the faces of the other members of the group.

"I did nothing wrong," he restated. "We hate the police, we should show that at every opportunity. If you want some liberal reformist green group, fine, but I don't. I'm off down the pub – who's joining me?"

"You mean you're not prepared to stay and argue your case?" asked Dave.

"Your mind's already made up," snapped Pete. He turned to the younger members. "So, you coming?" Iona and Alfie looked at each other and round the room. They turned to Connie.

"Sorry Connie," said Iona. "This doesn't feel right." Pete smiled as they trooped out, leaving just Connie, Pete, Steve and Dominic.

"No point in me hanging around," said Dominic.

"You're not joining Pete?" asked Dave.

"No. But there are better things to do with my time," he replied as he left.

Connie sighed. "That didn't go well. Steve, you're mates with Pete. What's going on?" she asked.

"He's like that sometimes, over-dramatic and very defensive," he replied.

"Can you talk to him and try and patch it up?" asked Dave.

"I can try," said Steve.

Martin H.

To be continued...

THE PROUDHON

Brian Morris warmly welcomes a long overdue anthology in English of Proudhon's writings that should help gain him the recognition he deserves

Much publicised and a long time coming, Iain McKay's anthology of the political writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon really is a welcome addition to the literature. Comprehensive, with a well-researched and substantial introduction by McKay, nothing of its kind has been produced since Stewart Edward's rather slender anthology of Proudhon's writings appeared some forty years ago.

Although the subject of some important academic studies, Proudhon has always been something of a marginal figure, even though he was a key participant in the development of socialism in the early nineteenth century. This is reflected by the fact that very little of Proudhon's published writings – estimated to comprise over twenty thousand pages – have been translated into English, apart from, for example, *What is Property?* (1840), *The General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851), and *The Principle of Federation* (1863). Proudhon thus contrasts

markedly with Marx, Bakunin and Kropotkin, whose writings have long been available through various translations and anthologies.

Given that Proudhon was, to say the least, a rather unsystematic political theorist – idiosyncratic, always exuberant, undisciplined and contradictory – his writings have long been regarded as a "perplexing welter of disorder". Indeed his friend Bakunin described Proudhon as a "perpetual contradiction".

It is therefore hardly surprising that Proudhon has been interpreted, or claimed, as a precursor for a variety of political traditions. Revived by Charles Maurras and the Cercle Proudhon in the early years of the twentieth century, Proudhon has been embraced as an ardent French nationalist and arch-reactionary, given his anti-semitic outbursts and his defence of the patriarchal family. He has even been interpreted as a "harbinger" of fascism.


Marxists, of course, have always dismissed Proudhon's politics as reactionary and petit-bourgeois, and Marx himself always poured scorn on Proudhon's intellectual strivings and reflections. One Marxist, the well-known historian George Lichtheim, suggested that Proudhon was not only a confused petit-bourgeois, but represented a fusion of "backwoods barbarism" and the "mental chaos typical of the autodidact." For Proudhon came from the working class peasantry and was largely self-taught.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. In Russia, the term *chyorny*, meaning black, is used pejoratively for people from the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya) or central Asia.
2. The drug has devastated India's vulture population, which has fallen by 99.9% in the last 20 years. Their decline has coincided with a rise in numbers of feral dogs who eat the carrion instead, and frequently carry rabies.
3. It discussed the Iraq War and found both George W. Bush and Tony Blair guilty of

crimes against peace. The KIWCC has no standing internationally and its verdicts are unlikely to be enforced.

4. Putin claimed the booing was because Monson, who lost to Russian Fedor Emelianenko, is American. Angry fight fans were outraged that he suggested they had disrespected Monson, who showed honour in defeat, and went on the internet and Monson's own website to point out that it was Putin they hated. It was the first time Putin had been booed by the public.

ON LEGACY

But even within contemporary anarchism Proudhon tends to be a rather neglected figure, and there is a general feeling that it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that anarchism became fully established as a coherent political tradition and radical movement. The key figures in this regard are Bakunin, Kropotkin, Goldman, Landauer and Malatesta. Proudhon is thus viewed as a kind of proto-anarchist or a ‘forebear’ of anarchism. Murray Bookchin, for example, questioned whether Proudhon could be described as a socialist, given that he advanced an economy structured around small-scale peasant landowners. As Proudhon also opposed strikes and the class struggle, Bookchin implied that Proudhon was better understood as a mutualist rather than as an anarchist.

Yet it is important to recall, as McKay reminds us, that many of the later generation of anarchists paid warm tributes to Proudhon, acknowledging explicitly his important influence on their thinking. Bakunin, for example, considered Proudhon to be a “revolutionary by instinct,” someone who had a passion for liberty that contrasted markedly with the authoritarian tendencies of state socialists like Marx and Engels. Proudhon, Bakunin declared, was the “master of us all”. Kropotkin, too, as I emphasised in my study of the Russian anarchist, considered Proudhon to be both great and inspiring, and as having laid the foundations of modern anarchism. Equally, both Emma Goldman and Rudolf Rocker acknowledged the importance of the “great Proudhon,” and McKay quotes Rocker’s appraisal of Proudhon as “one of the most intellectually gifted and certainly the most many-sided writer whom modern socialism can boast.”

What is therefore important and significant about Iain McKay’s anthology is that it is a sustained attempt to re-situate Proudhon firmly *within* the anarchist tradition, thus reaffirming the French socialist as the ‘father’ of anarchism (libertarian socialism) – as an anarchist par-excellence, as Benjamin Tucker described Proudhon.

Given the absolute wealth of published material that Proudhon produced during his lifetime, the anthology can only be a selection of Proudhon’s intellectual oeuvre. There is little in the text about Proudhon’s rather complicated and idealist metaphysics, or on his social theory and ethics – justice being a key principle for Proudhon – or on the socialist attitude to religion. The anthology is focussed essentially on Proudhon’s politics, specifically as this relates to anarchism. But nevertheless, within these parameters, McKay offers a really comprehensive collection, including not only the most important of Proudhon’s political writings, but many of his manifestos and letters to his contemporaries.

In his excellent introduction Iain McKay gives a succinct and informative overview of



Proudhon’s main political ideas. These include the following: the critique of property as a form of appropriation that essentially constitutes ‘theft’; an emphasis that exploitation – the extraction of surplus value – is inherent in wage-labour; forms of associations that stressed the workers’ self-management of production; the advocacy of a People’s Bank and provision of credit; a critique of the state which emphasises the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and state power; a repudiation of the state socialism particularly associated with Louis Blanc; an emphasis on reform as a political strategy and a disinclination to become involved in class struggle via strikes and insurrections; and, finally, the advocacy of a mutual society which implied a decentralised federation of self-managed associations. Such in outline are the main features of Proudhon’s libertarian politics, which McKay identifies as a form of market socialism.

McKay also briefly outlines Proudhon’s legacy, emphasising that it was the followers of Proudhon who were centrally involved in both the International Workingmen’s Association and the Paris Commune, rather than the Marxist socialists. In concluding the introduction, McKay also emphasises the profound influence that Proudhon’s legacy had on the historical development of anarchism, with regard to both individualist

anarchism or mutualism and the revolutionary socialism associated with Bakunin and Kropotkin. He noted that the latter anarchists rejected Proudhon’s support for the patriarchal family, and the reformism and anti-communism that was intrinsic in Proudhon’s mutualism. But he equally emphasises that revolutionary anarchism was essentially a development of Proudhon’s pioneering ideas.

The anthology also includes a short biographical sketch of Proudhon’s life and work, an insightful discussion of the relationship between Marx and Proudhon, notes on further reading, and a useful glossary of terms, people and events. Altogether a very satisfactory anthology, although it is of interest that McKay makes no mention of contemporary devotees of mutualism or reformist anarchism, even though they too tend to marginalise or even completely ignore Proudhon.

Two final points are worth noting, both highlighted by McKay. The first is that Proudhon has invariably, and sometimes quite wilfully, been misinterpreted not only by Marx and Engels, but by scores of their disciples, who even suggest that Proudhon was an advocate of free-market capitalism. McKay insightfully, and in a balanced way, indicates that Marx simply appropriated many of Proudhon’s ideas, and then declared

THE ARTS

McCLINCH OIL



1. The Champagne bubbly was really flowing... Lord Viscount Von Barren McClinch celebrating the Orgasmic Gusher at Babo Kirkuk, Iraq.

Laird Samuel Samson Ahab McClinch! The world has become enmeshed in your Deceits, this deathly web that we must break. Deep within this Labyrinthine City, in this dark Chamber of Horrors... Your Sacred Edifices, These Titans Threaten Angel Alley... Lord McClinch You Stalk the Streets of this Babylon... We See your Schizoid nature for what it is! Contorted by The Curse of Greed! Your curse and the curse of your Corporation has been planted in soil; Fertilised by Oil, Money, Blood and Tears... Poisoned Laird McClinch! Where there is Oil There is Turmoil... The World Contaminated to Feed your Corporate Cursed Greed... Since the Beginning of Industrialization, The Satanic Mills, You Industrialists treated this Planet like some... some Pox Ridden Rabid Beast... The world has festered with this interminable Disease... the Albatross squawks the tale, its wings blackened in Polluted Smog Filled Skies...

Laird McClinch Look at The Screen! Your Pestilence and Plague ridden Monsters crawl through this Earth like Cancer... Your Corporate Talons, the claws of Vultures, your pipelines the intestines of Monsters... Blood will feed on Blood... Corporate Cannibalism on Corporate Cannibalism... Plastic Islands twice the size of Texas Contaminate the Seas... Your Pollutants stain the Oceans Poisoned Purple, the Forests Burnt Desert Brown, raped by Tar Sands, Western Superman... You

Laird Tarzan swing... the earth suffocates in your Noxious Gases, whichever way we turn Your Fires Burn... You sacrificed the Earth to Mammon... and You the Cockroaches shall inherit the Nucleated Earth... You have manufactured Misery in your Refineries of Degradation; Farting deathly gases from your gastronomical guts...

Now you cannot hide from the Horror of your making... the Smell of Death is rising from swelling carcasses in decimated jungles and arenas of War... On The Congo, The Amazon, The Nile, The Euphrates, You shot



2. "Look At The Screen!"

"All the misery, destruction, and despair you have caused!"
 "The Base Sub-Beastiality of Absolute Greed!"
 "Look at The Screen!"

the Boogie Man... in Pakistan... in Libya... in Iraq... Afghanistan... Iran... I... Ran Tehran... Yemen, AMEN! Tunisia, Egypt, Syria... All Their Dead... Gone... Nameless... but their ghosts speak on... and the Bald Headed Eagle turns to Vulture and still Hovers... Laird McClinch, You Fat Cats Gloat! Will you Wade through the Misery you have caused? Will you get drunk on the Gore? Is it not what CEOs and Bankers do? Squeeze the last painful drops from these demented souls?... Sate yourself with your ill begotten gains! Bathe yourself in Toxins... Bury ancient forests in concrete, tarmac and slime... Erect Towering Phallic Edifices as Shrines! Announce your Victory over the Earth with Gigantic, Neon Flashing, Corporate

Logos! Will you give this Smell of Putrefaction to your children in their private schools? They say the High and Mighty too will Fall and the Ghosts of the poverty stricken will in Time stagger through your crumbling structures through the rubble, through the dust... Believe the words, the words written by The Tormented on your City walls... Look into the Future! Now you only see the Profits of your Doom...

Your Media attempts to imprison the Imagination with *X Factor*, Reality TV, Jeremy Clarkson, *Celebrity Come Dancing*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*... But the people will free their Minds from your scarring shackles; one night We felt a team of elephants move obstacles beneath our brows... We saw your fingers reach out of the fire, your infernal flames scorching us... Laird McClinch! We saw your Futile Greed and Idle Worship of False God, In Mammon You did Trust... Hallelujah We saw Falluja... Oil Wars... The heartless destruction of Hospitals, poisoning of fields, Depleted Uranium shells and white Phosphorous; babies born with three heads, babies born with six toes and six fingers, babies paralysed... Look at The Screen!



3. Lord Viscount Von Barren McClinch, suffering from Megalomaniacal Praxalysis, confined to a wheelchair... changing from genial genius to a snorting, occasionally raving, ultra-authoritarian anti communist... raging at his own futility... quite losing his head... going into the Lord of The Universe mode...

Review

◀ page 21

them to be his own. It was a typical case of filching someone's clothes and then berating them for being naked. McKay's anthology provides us with an opportunity of deciding for ourselves what Proudhon's politics really entailed – certainly not fascism, nor the support of any form of nationalism, nor the advocacy of capitalism, whether petty or free-market.

The second is that Proudhon outlined, in spite of the disjointed and erratic nature of his writings, the basic tenets of anarchism as

a political philosophy. These, as McKay writes, entail:

"Proudhon's critique of property, state and capitalism, his analysis of exploitation being rooted in wage labour, his advocacy of a decentralised and federal system of communes and workers' associations, his support for workers' self-management of production, his call for working-class autonomy and self-activity as a means of transforming society from below" (47).

McKay, of course, does not suggest that

we should slavishly copy Proudhon's ideas but rather use these ideas as a conceptual resource and develop them in order to inspire social and political change in the 21st century.

Iain McKay and AK Press are therefore to be warmly congratulated on this very satisfying and much needed anthology of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's political writings.

Iain McKay, *Property Is Theft: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, published by AK Press, £25.

THE ARTS



4. A statue of Lord Viscount Von Barren McClinch of The Sky in Parliament Square... sculpted by the esteemed sculptor Raphael – DaDa – Vici... The statue honours the glorious part that this great man played in making this city a world centre of excellence in Finance and Culture...

The Dark Shadow of McClinch and the sadder Shadow of nine men swinging at the end of a hangman's rope.

And In Libya, Lord McClinch, you signed a \$1 Billion dollar gas exploration contract with the Libyan Oil Corporation.. with a ground breaking visit to Libya of Antonio 'Hot Air' Flare with what became known as the?... The?... The? 'One Billion Dollar Handshake !!!'

As though in darkest Breughelian Triumph of Death Crusader Night-Mare, in Apocalyptic Winter we witnessed unwashed widows,

homeless orphans, refugees, the maimed, the Slain, the Butchered, Bloodied, Burnt and Banished while Blinded by Greed you rode the Dark Steed of Progress!... The Horror! Your Propagation of Fear, Terror, Torture and Mass Executions... Laird McClinch of The Sky! Your Demonic Lust for Power... Your Desperate Bloody Thirst to Fill Your Bottomless Pit... Virgil and Dante are pointing straight down at you as you dance in This Inferno of your Creation... Your Suffocating Progress bleeds gentle egg shell earth of her



6. Global Circotic Psychosis, Humanity Driven Insane!

life's blood... poisons her seas, her trees, her animals, and her Life...

All has become barren, raped and pillaged, decimated.

The Blood red, orange and black McClinch flag flies in tatters in the distance in the desolate, devastated landscape.



5. You sit here and vainly protest your innocence and that? and That it was done in The Name Of? In The Name Of? In The Name Of?

You sit here and vainly protest your innocence and that? and That it was done in The Name Of? Progress! Progress!

The Misery You Caused... Fear! Terror! Horror!

The Carn-Age! Look out the Window! Not a Bird left Laird McClinch of The sky, not One Solitary Bird!!

No McClinch, nor a fish in the sea!! Nor a wild animal left in the forest, nor a tree!! Desert Laird McClinch, All Desert!!

Beautiful thick sulphurous polychromatic Clouds of Toxic Emissions over Refineries... How do you feel Laird McClinch?

You What, McClinch? You What? Your language is becoming Very Fragmented!!!

I... I... I...

You're Finished McClinch!

We've been watching You Lord Samuel Samsun Marcus McClinch and THE GREAT McCLINCH OIL DYNASTY!

Who ate all the Pie?

Who ate all the Pie?

You Fat Bastards!

You Fat Bastards!

You ate all the Pie!

Who ate all the Pie?

Who ate all the Pie?

You Fat Bastards!

You Fat Bastards!

You ate all the Pie!



7. All has become barren, raped and pillaged, decimated. The Blood red, orange and black McClinch flag flies in tatters in the distance in the desolate, devastated landscape.

Images: Mark Rathmell

(<http://www.saatchionline.com/profile/67958>)

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Words: Grassy Noel



8. Who ate all the Pie? Who ate all the Pie? You Fat bastards! You Fat bastards! You ate all the Pie!

SPORT

Ultras in Egypt

From stadium culture to social movement

The 'ultras' of football clubs in Cairo were at the forefront of the mobilisations late last year to prevent Tahrir Square once again being overrun by police during anti-government demonstrations. When people re-occupied the Square in November in renewed protests against the military rulers, football fans responded to the attacks by security forces by forming human barricades and often fought pitched battles with police to preserve the autonomy of the occupation that saw 33 people killed by the authorities during the unrest.



As one sports writer noted at the time: "The involvement of organised soccer fans in Egypt's anti-government protests constitutes every Arab government's worst nightmare. Soccer, alongside Islam, offers a rare platform in the Middle East, a region populated by authoritarian regimes that control all public spaces, for the venting of pent-up anger and frustration."

Abu Ala, one of the founding members of the Ultras Ahlawy (UA07), the supporters of Al Ahly, explained their actions: "We don't usually get involved in politics – we had never done so before last January. Our clashes with police were limited to inside the stadium. But the revolution was an exceptional moment, and we couldn't just stand aside and watch."

And it was this response that saw the city's football fans unite against the police in Tahrir Square. "We organised ourselves over the phone and by email. When we got to the square, we didn't have a specific strategy. We just faced off with the police like we're used to doing in stadiums." They also changed their familiar chant of 'Government, beware! We're angry tonight! Ahly supporters will set the house on fire!' to 'Egyptian people will set the house on fire' which acted as both a rallying cry and catalyst for those occupying the square.

UA07 and rivals Ultras White Knights (UWK), who support Zamalek, were both formed in 2007 with the express intention of bringing the largely European 'ultras' phenomenon to Egypt. It should be noted ultras are not necessarily hooligans but are a committed part of the terrace culture, fanatical in their support of the club which includes displaying massive banners and flags, continuous chanting usually with drums and setting off flares during games.

page 19 ►►

THE QUIZ

1. Where are Caucasians called 'blacks'?
2. The drug diclofenac started to be used to treat cattle in India in the late 1990s. What disease has spread indirectly because of it?
3. What interesting decision did the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission come to in November?
4. What happened after Vladimir Putin was booed at a Mixed Martial Arts fight in Moscow, on 21st November, featuring American anarchist fighter Jeff Monson?

Answers on page 20

