

# THATCHER DIES

## Iron Lady finally pops clogs aged 87

Baroness Thatcher slipped away peacefully on Monday 8th April, in a bed at the Ritz, while her malevolent legacy raged on in the country she helped to cripple.

Yep, the British PM who sowed the seeds of today's recession, began the privatisation of British industry, caused massive unemployment, created the housing crisis, sent 255 British soldiers to die in the Falklands, closed the mines, destroyed the unions, introduced Poll Tax, brought in Section 28, publicly cosied up to murderous dictators and a great many other crimes with which we are all more than familiar, has kicked the bucket at last.

Her legacy looms larger than life, of course, but the death of a tyrant is always symbolic. Upon hearing of her demise, delighted revellers across the country immediately took to the streets.

Unsurprisingly, the most lively celebrations took place in poorer and particularly Thatcher-bashed areas including Brixton, Liverpool and Belfast. And of course the famous party in Trafalgar Square, nine years in the planning, kicked off at 5pm on Saturday 13th [see page 5]. It was well-

page 3 ►►

## LENS CAP LOSING HIS FLAG



There was a massive police presence around the Brighton seafront for the sixth annual 'March for England' St George's Day Parade on 21st April. A far larger presence of counter-demonstrators loudly greeted the EDL marchers on the seafront and got their message over loud and clear.

## WELFARE REFORMS HIT

The government's dreaded new Welfare Reform Bill passed into law this month, affecting everything from housing benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance to child support and Disability Living Allowance.

Promoted as an attempt to 'simplify the welfare system and make sure work pays', this package of measures is at best a clear bid to punish the most vulnerable members of society, and at worst a chilling attempt to 'disappear' those who cannot pay their way.

Of course, farcical ATOS disability assessments have already been a very worrying and prominent precursor, with people dying days after being deemed 'fit for work' – and even cases of coma victims being told to look for a job.

Tenants preparing for the 'bedroom tax' have been told that minuscule box rooms

count as an extra bedroom under the new laws and, in many cases, informed that there are no suitable alternative properties in their local area.

Those who, for whatever reason (be it getting to work, a reluctance to interrupt their children's schooling, part-time custody of their children, staying near sick family members, etc...), need or want to stay where they are must pay between 14 and 25% of their weekly rent out of their benefits for the privilege of having 'extra' bedrooms in their home.

Meanwhile, millionaires are taking an average tax cut of over £100,000, thank you very much.

Political satirists are hanging up their keyboards with a sigh all over the UK.

Luther Blissett

## INSIDE ►►

**Fact to fiction** page 3

**Hong Kong docks dispute** page 9

**Svartfrosk** page 16

**Getting active** page 18

**Reviews** pages 20 and 21

**Arts** pages 22 and 23

ISSN 0016-0504



9 770016 050009

## NEWS

## FREEDOM STOCKISTS

You can now pick up your monthly copy of *Freedom* at the following venues.

## LONDON

- **Freedom Bookshop**, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, tel 020 7247 9249 email [shop@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:shop@freedompress.org.uk) <http://www.freedompress.org.uk/>
- **56A Infoshop**, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, email [info@56a.org.uk](mailto:info@56a.org.uk) <http://www.56a.org.uk/>
- **Housmans Bookshop**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, tel 020 7837 4473 email [shop@housmans.com](mailto: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/>
- **Newham Bookshop**, 745-747 Barking Road, London E13 9ER, tel 020 8552 9993 email [info@newhambooks.co.uk](mailto:info@newhambooks.co.uk) <http://www.newhambooks.co.uk/>

## BRIGHTON

- **Cowley Club Social Centre**, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, tel 01273 696104 email [cowleyclub@riseup.net](mailto: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](mailto:info@birminghambikefoundry.org) <http://birminghambikefoundry.org>

## BRISTOL

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

## EDINBURGH

- **AK Press online**, AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9YE email [ak@akedin.demon.co.uk](mailto:ak@akedin.demon.co.uk) <http://www.akuk.com/>
- **Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)** 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA tel 0131 557 6242 email [ace@autonomous.org.uk](mailto:ace@autonomous.org.uk) <http://www.autonomous.org.uk/>
- **Word Power Books**, 43-45 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB, tel 0131 662 9112 email [books@word-power.co.uk](mailto:books@word-power.co.uk) <http://www.word-power.co.uk/>

## SOUTHAMPTON

- **October Books**, 243 Portswood Road, Southampton SO17 2NG, tel 023 8058 1030 email [info@octoberbooks.org](mailto:info@octoberbooks.org)

## LENS CAP LIVERPOOL



The Labour Party in Liverpool attempted to usurp the already up and running grassroots anti-bedroom tax campaign by organising their own rally. Many local activists went along to challenge the Labour MP's and councillors on their naked opportunism. Unbeknown to the Labour goons on the stage, their stage backdrop was replaced early on in the day.

## Thatcher dies

## ◀ page 1

attended despite the rain, with special guests including a giant Thatcher effigy that was later hung and the National Union of Mine-workers were there bearing an enormous embroidered banner.

Police presence at all these parties was of course pretty considerable and the cops were gleefully throwing their weight, with a number of arrests for street drinking and being drunk and disorderly. The soundtrack to most of this merrymaking? Need you ask? *Ding Dong The Witch Is Dead* made it to number two in the charts the week she died, such was the hatred Maggie inspired.

Thatcher's funeral took place on Wednesday 17th April. She was the first Prime Minister since Churchill to be afforded a state funeral with full military honours, which the Home Office claimed took place at an estimated cost of £3.6m to the taxpayer. Of course a very large group of anti-Thatcherites turned out to say a final goodbye – most of whom made the symbolic gesture of turning away as the coffin passed.

Tributes came from 'left', right and centrist politicians alike... At best they were chillingly

effusive and at worst they were lily-livered and evasive:

"She didn't just lead our country, she saved it" (Cameron).

"She changed our country forever and all of us owe so much to her. A legacy few will ever equal" (Hague).

"Margaret Thatcher's belief in freedom and optimism about the future overcame all. Her determination is our generation's inspiration" (Osborne).

"She will be sadly missed" (Blair).

"We can disagree and also greatly respect her political achievements and her personal strength" (Miliband).

"Everyone will be united today in acknowledging the strength of her personality and the radicalism of her politics" (Clegg).

"A great figure who made a great impression on her country's history" (Hollande).

"The world has lost one of the great champions of freedom and liberty" (Obama).

The worms may have got her body but now it's up to us to eradicate all traces of her soul in the framework of British politics. Rust in peace, Maggie.





# Fact to fiction



## How selective fact reporting made Thatcher a heroine and the Steubenville rapists just lads having a laugh

Some narratives are too ridiculous to allow suspension of disbelief; others go on far too long. Both of these are true of The Narrative of Margaret Thatcher. The story is this, that a woman in a man's world, studying hard instead of submitting to traditional domestication, supported by a shopkeeper not a landed gentleman, became powerful, wealthy and famous in spite of the cloying of socialism, miasma of mediocrity, and British spiritual decline.

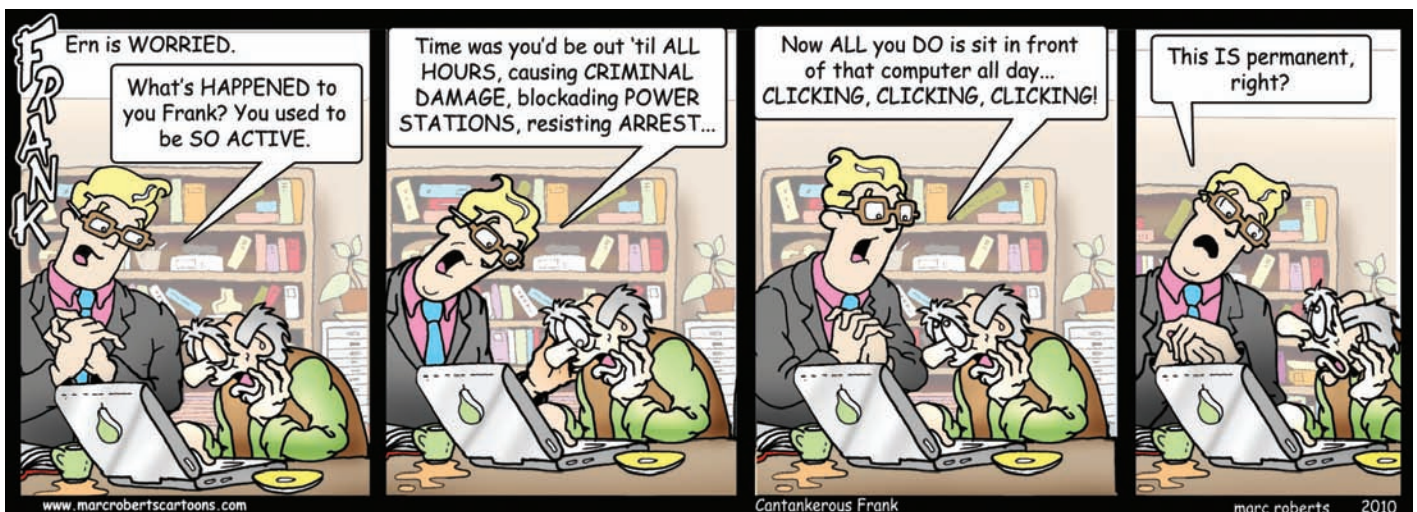
How did the news report this? It is, after all, the news, is it not? The BBC treated us to sentences like "Thatcher, the daughter of a lowly shopkeeper, was very divisive". This is true. But there are many facts that could be inserted into that sentence. 'Thatcher, who liked apples, was very divisive'. The juxtaposition is a cunning one, and each of these little dixits is another stone in the Potemkin Thatcher that is being erected, for history, in place of the real one.

The same sort of subtle bias was displayed by CNN and others in reporting the Steubenville rape trial these past weeks. Two teenage boys dragged a teenage girl, who was unconscious from drink, from party to party, using and offering her as a sex toy and videoing the event for future amusement. They were found guilty. Candy Crowley reported that "two star high school football players"

had been found guilty; Poppy Harlow opined that "two young men that had such promising futures, star football players, very good students... literally watched as they believe their life fell apart".

Listening to this report, it's easy to forget that rape involves a victim. It sounds a little like idolatry, a victimless crime. And yet the reporting was, in a strict sense, objective – every one of those claims is correct. Were we to ask the reporters 'does the type of sport a person plays, or how good they are at it, change a rape to consensual sex?' they would surely reply no. The problem is narrative. The problem is angle. The BBC, CNN, every news outlet, has to entertain its audience with small segments that fit our inbuilt need for concision. These segments need a narrative, because we can't be trusted to digest to facts and figures ourselves lest we become confused or overwhelmed, and there just isn't space for multiple narratives. The easiest, the natural thing to do with deadlines minutes away is to regurgitate the same sloppy meal of consensus and nepenthe. Thatcher got there by herself, and did great things whose value we can debate. High school boys are rascals, drunk girls are asking for it. Don't think. Just watch.

Richard Challinor





## THE BIG PICTURE



Hundreds gathered in Liverpool to mark the funeral of Margaret Thatcher, chanting "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, dead, dead, dead" and "Justice for the 96". News from Nowhere bookshop swiftly sold out of party packs containing black balloons and party poppers bearing the politician's face and the logo "Still hate Thatcher".

# Too much too young?

## Why have those under a certain age been so widely criticised for commenting on Thatcher's death?

"Hitler – I couldn't possibly discuss him. I was only a child when the war ended."

"Don't speak ill of the dead. You didn't know Attila the Hun, you weren't born then." ... said no one ever. So why were those of us only old enough to dimly recall the disappearance of our milk – or who were not even born when Thatcher left power – so widely derided for 'celebrating' the death of a prime minister who didn't rule over us in our adult lifetimes?

"The Margaret Thatcher protestors too young to remember her" tutted the *Telegraph*. "The age span of those arrested [at the Trafalgar Square party] was 18 to 44" sneered the *Daily Fail*. "As far as this lot were concerned, the 'witch' can be blamed for pretty much anything unpleasant over the past 30 years or so." Putting it slightly more subtly, but nevertheless making its meaning fairly clear, even the *Graun* observed that "The party was a surreal coming together of everyone from the Durham miners to young protestors who weren't even born when Thatcher came to power". Of course, nowhere in their gushing tributes to this political giant did the right-wing press ever suggest that the young were similarly ill-equipped to praise her memory. They simply tried to have it both ways.

Us enlightened folk all know very well why it is perfectly legit for a 29-year-old upstart like myself to comment on Thatcher's death. My generation is suffering intensely from her cruel legacy. Unemployed, under-employed and threatened by benefit cuts because of the recession brought about by the dear Baroness's deregulation of the banks... Unable to find affordable housing



due to the changes she made in housing law... Two very essential rights – those of a secure income and a roof over our heads – scuppered right there. And if, even if, her legacy didn't affect me at all, surely it would still be my right to feel compassion for the miners, the union leaders, the fallen Falklands soldiers, the victims of Pinochet...?

Just before the party in Trafalgar Square kicked off, I went for a quick drink with a friend. A man approached me in a rage, having spotted my anti-Thatcher t-shirt, and demanded to know what right I had to comment on the death of a PM I hadn't lived under. I calmly corrected his assertion that I wasn't born during her reign (have you ever noticed how damned well us anarchists age?) and listed a few of the negative aspects of her legacy. The argument escalated, eventually culminating in me being liberally doused in crap lager. Great.

Later on, I was collared by a man who said he was a history graduate. Wading



through the crowds with a face like thunder, he spotted me and immediately made a bee-line. I continued the conversation until he informed me that Pinochet didn't exist – the idea that Thatcher was friends with a murderous dictator was nuts and must be a figment of my warped raving lefty soapboxer imagination. Of course.

Shortly afterwards, a man who turned out to be a *Sun* photographer (when I challenged him he said he was taking photos for personal use!) took a photo of me which ended up on the *Sun* website with the caption "hateful" beneath it. A commenter referring to me as a "thing" (ironic, as I would look very out of place on Page Three) suggested that my parents should discipline me for attending the party.

During the party, I chatted with some of the other young people around me. Emily, 29, grew up as a bisexual teenager under Section 28 – and her memories of the



bullying from teachers and pupils alike sounded very reminiscent of my own. "When Maggie died, I had a couple of people tell me that I was too young to celebrate" she sighed. "But it's her Section 28 that made my teen years hellish. Not only was I queer, I also had gay parents. There was no mention of families like mine at school, ever.

"By the time I was 15 the school was full of rumours about my sexuality," she revealed. "I was a leper to teachers and students alike. I've never been more miserable. A broken cheekbone, a broken rib and a broken wrist later... and the school still did nothing. So yeah, I'll celebrate as much as I damn well want to. She tried to split my generation into grammar kids and killing-time-before-we're-old-enough-to-sign-on kids, she took away my milk and she invalidated my family. Dancing on her grave doesn't begin to cover it."

Chris is 32 and grew up in a mining town. "Many of my earliest memories were of constant job losses and destruction of already struggling communities" he told me. "This hit people in my family and many other children in my school, just as it hit children born 10 years and 20 years on, and still affects children being born now."

"Communities have not recovered," he continued, "and may never properly do so. Her death was only a symbol of the lifting of her shadow, but I personally was happy to openly express a deep and genuine emotion."

Telling the young they cannot comment on Thatcher is an irrational, knee-jerk assault on the left launched by people who clearly have not considered the enormous flaws in their argument. Let us not forget, however, that many of these same people were also guilty of trying to get an anti-Thatcher punk song into the charts because they didn't pick up on its ironic tone. That says it all, really, doesn't it?

Charlotte Dingle



## ANALYSIS

# When freedom isn't free



## Why is an anarchist not like a tea partier?

“A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” So runs the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in December 1791. Those words are adored by the conservative right, cuddled like a warm blanket, and trumpeted as a call to action. But to an anarchist, how odd this situation looks!

On the face of it, the obsession the Tea Party has with the Second Amendment might well be anarchistic; they want to protect themselves from a tyrannical government, or so the story goes. “Our founding fathers wrote the second amendment so Americans would never have to live in tyranny” said Wayne LaPierre, Vice President of the NRA, at the UN Arms Trade Treaty in July 2012.



Just recently, for *Panorama* on 11th March 2012, Scottie Hughes of The Tea Party News Network said “Our economy is teetering on collapse... what happens if we're left to a national martial law? We're going to fight the bad guys, whether it's the government turned corrupt or the criminals themselves”.

But while it might look at first sight to be an alignment of views between the far right and left, the mask quickly slips. How committed are the US right wing to decentralised power, participatory democracy, equality, freedom from coercion? Those same groups which demand guns on the grounds of protection against tyranny are the same groups that welcome with open arms the expanding private sector, which deride other modes of dissent such as unions, and which celebrate actual tyranny whenever their government perpetrates it (as long as it isn't about taxes or guns).

Like the March Hare and the Hatter, the Tea Party tirelessly champions business, which is to say the least democratic institutions left standing in this Age of Enlightenment. What other institutions of the 21st century pass orders from top to bottom, without consultation or worry, knowing that the ever near spectre of hunger will quell any individuality or debate from below. This was marvellously described by Simon Linquet in 1767: “it is the impossibility of living by any other means that compels our farm labourers to till the soil, whose fruits they will not eat, and our masons to construct buildings in which they will not live. It is want that drags them to those markets where they await masters, who will do them the kindness of buying them. It is want that compels them to go down on their knees to the rich man in order to get from him permission to enrich him. What effective

gain has the suppression of slavery brought him? ‘He is free,’ you say. That is his misfortune. These men, it is said, have no master. They have one, and the most terrible, the most imperious of masters: that is, need. It is this that that reduces them to the most cruel dependence.”

Will their guns assuage this? If they could, would their owners choose to? This comparison is the first absurd dichotomy in the right wing support for gun ownership. The second, no less nauseating, is the unbroken hatred the right has for labour rights, worker organisation and popular democracy. In a system that was actually democratic, rather than having pretensions of formal democracy it currently does, the right to unionise and strike might not be important. But in all current systems these rights, though sparse and given begrudgingly, are one of the few means by which the majority can resist the tyranny of the ruling minority. Does the US right wing support these rights?

Their last ignorance is no less glaring: they often support real tyranny perpetrated by their government. What person looks at the US, with its incredible and ever-increasing wealth inequality, military bases in 63 countries, billions of lobbying dollars (the website [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) does an excellent job of tracking these), dash for climate Armageddon, and sees a nation empty of tyranny? The security apparatus that the Tea Party so craves is the same apparatus that carried out such public goods as MKULTRA, COINTELPRO, illegal drone strikes and domestic surveillance, and the war on whistleblowers. They are so eager to use their guns, so ever ready, but only it seems against the poor, against blacks, Hispanics, immigrants, against all the vulnerable and the different.

I think it safe to say that we, the anarchists, who see nations as arbitrary and nationalism as abominable, who come from all corners of the earth, are more honouring of the Second Amendment than any Tea Partier or Libertarian.

Richard Challinor



## A SAD FAREWELL TO THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY

On 8th March, International Women's Day, over 70 feminists occupied the Women's Library in London. Organised by Reclaim\_It, an independent coalition of feminist and anti-cuts activists, the occupation sought to protest the closure of the Women's Library and cuts to women's services and highlight the gendered impact of austerity. During the two-day occupation people of all ages flocked to the library and took part in discussion, workshops and music.

A High Court injunction was served on the occupation at 2am on morning of the 9th March and an immediate possession order was granted to London Metropolitan University, who own the building, citing concerns for the safety of the historic collection. At 3.30pm on 9th March the occupiers were forcibly removed by High Court bailiffs and police from the building, while a 100-strong crowd of supporters protested outside.

The Save The Women's Library Campaign had been protesting the sell-off of the Women's Library since early 2012, when London Metropolitan University claimed financial difficulties which necessitated off-loading the collection. On 1st January London Metropolitan University divested custodianship of the world-renowned UNESCO awarded archive collection, which passed to London School of Economics. The collection will now be moved out of its purpose built, heritage lottery funded building in London's East End, to the fourth floor of LSE's academic library, which is likely to severely reduce its accessibility.

Despite a strong fight by the Save the Women's Library Campaign and the well-supported action by Reclaim\_It, on 22nd March 2013 the Women's Library closed.

[reclaimit2013.wordpress.com](http://reclaimit2013.wordpress.com)  
[savethewomenslibrary.blogspot.co.uk](http://savethewomenslibrary.blogspot.co.uk)



# Keith Hodgson

Keith Hodgson, long-time activist in the Liverpool anarchist scene, died on Saturday 23rd February 2013, aged 50. Keith, like many of his generation, was radicalised by the revitalised Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and by the Thatcher onslaught against working class rights and freedoms in the 1980s. As a young anarchist and CND activist, Keith rapidly moved to the direct action wing of the anti-militarist movement and also worked voluntarily in the CND Merseyside offices. This combination of organisational work and street activism was typical of Keith over the years.

Keith was part of the Liverpool Anarchist Groups of the 1980s and early 1990s. As such, Keith was heavily involved in the Mutual Aid Centre in central Liverpool (1987-1995), the militant anti-fascism organised around Anti-Fascist Action, and was active in support of workers' disputes over the years – the larger ones including the 1984-85 miners' strike and the 1986 Wapping dispute. Keith's interest in the struggle in Northern Ireland led to his involvement in the Troops Out Movement and the Phoenix Support Group for Irish Republican prisoners. Keith was one of the main editors, producers and writers of the nationally distributed *Merseyside Anarchist Newsletter*, and Keith took an active part in the anti-Poll Tax movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s. By the time the second Liverpool Anarchist Group dissolved Keith was already a long-standing member of the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement, and took part in the subsequent launch of the Solidarity Federation in 1994.

During the 1990s Keith became a mature

student. Over time he worked as a lecturer in History, gained a PhD, and wrote a book on anti-fascism.

In more recent years, Keith threw himself back into political activism. He rejoined the Solidarity Federation, helped re-launch the Liverpool branch and became active at national level, including in the Education Workers Network. In 2009 he was a founder member of Liverpool Anti-Fascists, and was a key activist in the group's initial work.

In May 2010 Keith had a major stroke. However, in the last year and a half Keith had started to go to meetings again – including meetings against the Tory bedroom tax – and had rejoined CND. Keith's book, *Fighting Fascism: The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-39*, came out in hardback edition in late 2010<sup>1</sup> and there are moves to bring this out in paperback. His most recent writings, in late 2012, included an article for *Peace News*<sup>2</sup> and a review of *Beating the Fascists: The Untold Story of Anti-Fascist Action*<sup>3</sup> (by Sean Birchall, published by Freedom Press).

Keith will be much missed by his partner, his family, and by many friends and comrades. A get-together to remember Keith is being planned for the near future.

1. <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?product=97807...>
2. <http://peacenews.info/blog/6897/remembering-hiroshima-liverpool>
3. Review written by Keith Hodgson of *Beating the Fascists: The Untold Story of Anti-Fascist Action*, appeared in *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2012.

## HISTORY OF THE MAKHNOVIST MOVEMENT

by  
**PETER ARSHINOV**

The Russian Revolution was the time when the old order was totally swept away. Nestor Makhno stood for freedom, and his struggle to destroy both the old and the new oppressors is as powerful today as it was then. It was in prison in 1911 that Peter Arshinov established a close personal and political friendship with Makhno, which continued after their release, and Arshinov's history of the Makhnovists is undoubtedly the most important source work available.

Now available at £9.90 (post free inland) from Freedom Press



## INTERNATIONAL

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**GREECE:** Over 3,000 anarchists marched through Athens in solidarity with Indymedia and 98FM – both of which have been censored by the Greek state since early April. The march was one of scores of similar actions across Greece, and Europe. A huge banner was dropped from the roof of a University building in Athens, which led to 72 anarchists being arrested, and charged with ‘offending the Greek flag’ – as they had replaced it with a red and black flag.

Over thirty migrant workers, mainly from Bangladesh, have been shot and injured by their bosses during a dispute over unpaid wages. Workers at a strawberry farm in Manolada, Greece, had not been paid for close to six months. Around 200 workers gathered to confront farm supervisors – who responded to their demands by opening fire with shotguns. The bosses, identities unknown, have since gone on the run from the authorities. The attack is not a surprise; there have been many documented incidents of abuse and assault against farm labourers, both at the farm in question and throughout Greece. The frequency of these attacks has spiked since the rise of the fascist Golden Dawn Party.

**ITALY:** Scores of healthcare workers at the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan have received redundancy notices. Following a general assembly, the workers occupied several departments of the hospital and mounted a roof-top protest. The police arrived in full riot-gear, and appeared very keen on confrontation. Vicious clashes ensued, which led to several nurses receiving head injuries following a police baton charge. It took the police many hours to finally regain control of the hospital.

**RUSSIA:** The popular anti-fascist, Alexey Gaskarov, has been arrested in Moscow, charged with orchestrating ‘riots’ and ‘violence’ during a protest against Putin in early 2012. The protest of tens of thousands of people was initially peaceful, but quickly escalated due to heavy-handed tactics by security forces – close to 1,000 people were subsequently arrested. Following a complaint of brutality, made by Gaskarov, he has become a target for the police. Gaskarov first came to prominence on 2010, when he organised direct action involving 400 people against the destruction of a Moscow forest.

**UKRAINE:** Anarchist and anti-fascist activist, V.N., was the victim of a brutal attack in a district of Kiev, by five neo-Nazis. He was stabbed three times, which severed an artery in his leg, lost several teeth, and was concussed. He lost a significant amount of blood and required an emergency operation. V.N. needs money urgently to cover his significant medical costs, which Moscow Anarchist Black Cross is raising. Should you wish to contribute, payments can be made via PayPal at abc-msk@riseup.net.

## LENS CAP USA



As many as 500 workers from 60 fast food restaurants have walked off the job across Detroit, in what is being described as the biggest fast food strike in US history. Strikers are demanding the right to unionise and minimum hourly rate of \$15. Similar actions have spread to St Louis and other smaller towns.

## Melbourne taxi driver blockade

Following a dispute over working practices, hundreds of taxi drivers are boycotting Melbourne airport and have blockaded roads that lead in and out of the complex.

Drivers believe that the airport authorities are exploiting underpaid drivers by its decision to stop short-fare queues. A spokesperson for the drivers said that “We work for two hours and get an \$8 fare, it’s not fair. They treat us like slaves, like dogs”.

Several meetings have been organised over the last few days to encourage more drivers to participate in the dispute.

Around 300 drivers occupied the pick-up/drop-off terminal, distributing literature to drivers still working, and to airport customers. Airport bosses have drafted in a large number of thugs from a private security firm to try and intimidate the driver’s and to enable the

scab cabs to continue working.

Following brief scuffles between the drivers, scabs, and security goons – airport bosses called the police – who sent the heavily armed ‘incident response team’. Further clashes ensued as the police tried to remove drivers from the road and entrances. Further protests and blockades are being planned for the coming days.

Taxi drivers in Melbourne have a history since 1939 of proactive action against issues such as low pay, health and safety and racist abuse, employing tactics that include strikes, blockades, and sit down protests.

Prior to the current situation the most recent dispute was in 2008 following the near fatal stabbing of a driver, which led to a series of sit down protests.

**Matt Black**

## Notes from the US

A report published towards the end of last month – around the ten year anniversary of the start of the US war on Iraq – strongly suggested that the human and financial cost of the American aggression is much higher than most propaganda outlets try to convince those who partake of them; and higher than most American thus believe.

According to the Costs of War project at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, at least 134,000 innocent

Iraqis have died; but this number could well ‘double’ before final figures are arrived at... not least because of under-reporting by the killers themselves (the US army). It’s still thought that at least a third of a million people have died due to direct war violence.

Financially the cost so far is in the region of US\$6 trillion (or over £750 million a minute!). Much of this has come from borrowing – with inevitably astronomical

page 9 ►►



# Docks dispute successful

## Strike success for the self-organised Hong Kong dockers

A strike of around 500 dockworkers at the port of Hong Kong that lasted for over a month has finally come to an end.

Over 90% of workers voted to accept the deal offered by the bosses – which included a 9.8% wage increase, a non-retaliation against strikers agreement, and food and toilet breaks for workers on shift for between 12 to 24 hours.

All of the gains won in the strike had been viciously resisted by the four contractors at the port.

The initial dispute started in March of 2012 when workers' wages had been driven to levels that equated to HK\$120 a day less than they were in 1995.

The workers are all members of the (UHKDW) Union of Hong Kong Dock Workers, who throughout the dispute had self-organised from the bottom up – across multiple sub-contractors – which forced contractors to negotiate.

Key to the success of the strike was the colossal amount of public support that had been generated. Via a student organised solidarity campaign, over £700,000 had been raised for a strike support fund. As well as public support throughout Hong Kong, large sums had been donated by trade unions from the US, Japan, Australia, and the Netherlands.

The (UHKDW) is one of two trade unions operating within the docks. The other union is much more boss friendly, and had been campaigning for a modest rise in wages. When asked about the key differences between the unions, a (UHKDW) spokesperson had this to say: "I think the biggest difference is that we organise from bottom up. As many of their cadres have been



promoted to management level, they have considerable power to get dockworkers to join the FTU. A worker might feel they have little choice in the matter. But such union cadre can't really represent the interests of dockworkers. Our union works from below persuading worker by worker to join and get organised, with the effect of enabling rank-and-file workers to make their voices heard."

For many years the dock bosses refused to negotiate with trade unions, choosing to

speak to workers on an individual basis. It is no surprise that the workers have either received a derisory rise, or have actually been given a pay cut. Hopefully the strike victory will signal a new dawn across Hong Kong, and other docks in the region.

Following the victory a new campaign has begun to force one of the contractors to re-hire a hundred crane operators who had been dismissed during the strike due to a lack of work.

Matthew Black

## Notes from the US

### ◀ page 8

interest charges. The interest paid on spending by the Pentagon alone so far is about US\$259 billion (or £20,000 an hour) in current dollars. The knock-on effects of this, human and financial, are impossible to calculate... unemployment, economic downturn, wrecked lives of survivors, environmental damage, land-mines, polluted food sources, destroyed families, loss of hope, likelihood of spreading wish for revenge and so on.

Attempts continue to greenwash the potentially devastating Keystone XL oil pipeline, on which *Freedom* has reported previously. Perhaps most remarkably, a report by the State Department itself was based on 'research'

provided by two companies which themselves have ties to big oil companies with a major stake in the project. ICF International and EnSys Energy, whose clients include Exxon-Mobil and Koch Industries.

But liberal Obama is moving ahead with clean energy in other ways, isn't he? Well, no! Although The Environmental Protection Agency published a plan in 2012 which would oblige new power plants to restrict emissions to under 1,000 lbs. of CO2 for every megawatt/hour of electricity, the White House is now apparently trying to revise this; after all the energy industry must be allowed to turn an honest profit.

The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA, 2006) targets environmentalists by criminalising any action that is deemed 'damaging or interfering with the operations of an animal enterprise'. In March a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit which challenged the constitutionality of the Act; under the first amendment, freedom of speech (about environmental issues) is theoretically protected. According to Judge Joseph Tauro, men and women suing the government (in this case the Centre for Constitutional Rights) "did not have standing to bring the case and therefore the case could not go forward".

Louis Further

## ECONOMICS

# The Pryamukhino Readings



On 30th May 2014 we will be celebrating 200 years of Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), a famous activist of the Russian and international revolutionary movement, a social thinker and one of the founders of the international anarchist movement.

From his arrival to the Moscow philosophical circle of Stankevich in the 1830s and then to the European revolutionary circles in the 1840s, Bakunin attracted attention of his contemporaries. He has influenced the history of the Russian and international revolutionary, social liberation and anarchist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in some decisive ways. Bakunin's libertarian socialist ideas also featured a visionary critique of the 'state socialism' well before this political model was implemented in the Soviet Union and the countries of the 'Eastern bloc'. His critique of religion, patriotism, liberalism, the principles of authority and hierarchy remains modern even a century and a half later, in the twenty-first century.

In Russia Bakunin's name and ideas were subject to censorship and slander first during the Tsarist regime and later during the 'Communist' power. His works were almost completely banned and remained unpublished for half a century. His activities were either silenced or presented in a caricatured manner.

Unfortunately, this tradition continues to exist in our times as well. The number of honest, objective studies of Bakunin's life and ideas in Russia remains very limited, while foreign studies are still not always accessible or known to Russian researchers. (Likewise, Russian studies of Bakunin are not always known to foreign researchers due to language and informational barriers.)

It is no coincidence that the controversial figure of Mikhail Bakunin is often subject to rushed and subjective judgements, he is still a victim of misinformation and ideological aberrations, which are the legacy of the hegemony of liberal, conservative and Marxist traditions.

In the village of Pryamukhino, where Bakunin was born, for more than ten years now (since 2001) annual summer conferences, the Pryamukhino Readings, are held. This is an independent space for discussing anarchist philosophy, its actual ideas and practices, the history of the Russian and international anarchist and liberatory movements, history of the Bakunin family and the life and ideas of its most famous member, Mikhail. (Minutes of these annual conferences are available in Russian at <http://bakunin-fund.hut2.ru> and are also published in a book form.)

Ahead of the bicentennial of Mikhail Bakunin, the organising committee of the

Pryamukhino Readings, invites you to participate in an international conference, which will be devoted to discussions about his life and ideas. We aim to get together the researchers of Bakunin and all those inspired by his ideas. We hope that such a conference in Russia will be just one in a series of events marking Bakunin's 200th birthday. We invite historians, social scientists, other researchers, Bakunin enthusiasts and anybody who is interested in Bakunin and anarchism, past and present, to participate. We hope that the conference in Pryamukhino will be a platform for mutually beneficial exchange of information and ideas between Russian and foreign researchers and anarchists and will serve to improve the links between them. We look forward to have an active discussion about the relevance of the ideas and activities of this great rebel to the modern world.

Our conference will be held on 12th and 13th July 2014 (exact dates may change a little, but not radically – we plan to hold the conference in mid-July). We invite organisers of similar events marking Bakunin's bicentennial to coordinate the time of their events so that potential participants have a chance to take part in all of them without the dates clashing.

The working languages of the Pryamukhino conference will be English and Russian. You can communicate with the organisers by email ([bakunin.conference.2014@gmail.com](mailto:bakunin.conference.2014@gmail.com)). We ask you to send the proposed topics and theses of reports to us no later than 1st December 2013. Complete texts of reports should be provided not later than 31st January 2014, so that we have enough time to translate them into Russian.

We will be in touch with all those who inform us about their wish to take part in the conference, and will send updates on the details or possible changes of schedule.

We would be very interested to learn about any other events marking Bakunin's 200th jubilee and exchange information with their organisers.

We would be grateful if you spread, publish, translate this text into any other languages so that as many people as possible learn about this conference. (We are sending out this text in English, French and Russian.)

If you specialise in studies related to Mikhail Bakunin, we also invite you to participate in a newly created English-language electronic mailing list 'Bakunin Studies', which will be used for exchange of information between researchers (please write a letter to [bakunin.conference.2014@gmail.com](mailto:bakunin.conference.2014@gmail.com) in order to be included).

**Organising committee of Pryamukhino Readings 2014**

International conference for bicentennial of Mikhail Bakunin, Pryamukhino (Tver' region), Russia, on 12th and 13th July 2014  
<http://bakunin2014.wordpress.com>



# Serbia's Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative

Last October saw the tenth anniversary of Serbia's Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI). During this time, the country has lived through right-wing governments, more isolation and poverty. The Serbian state continues its brutal privatisation and efforts to force capitalism as the new social contract. ASI has faced constant repression, but after almost 90 years, it has managed to rekindle class struggle anarchism in Serbia.

It is little known that the first Serbian socialist organisation, started in 1872 by Serbian students in Switzerland, was formed under the direct influence of Bakunin. He co-wrote the statutes and attended its founding congress. Their programme clearly outlined a struggle against the state, capitalism, the family, marriage and all forms of authority. It saw hope in the federation of Balkan communes.

In 1905, Krsta Cicvarić started the first Serbian anarcho-syndicalist paper *Bread and Freedom*. His activities fostered the anarchist movement in Serbia, and the Young Bosnians, who went on to assassinate the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. In 1910, a new anarchist paper, *The Commune* (later renamed *Anarchy*) appeared. Nedeljko Cabrinović, one of the assassins, worked there as a typesetter. In the still little known transcript from his trial he is asked by the prosecutor: "What are your views? They are anarchist. Have you ever been a nationalist? Yes, that was before... all that remains are these anarchist ideas." At the time of their arrest, they had worked out plans to assassinate some of the more notable Serbian bosses, as well as the Bosnian Orthodox bishop. Several of them published Kropotkin, Pierre Ramus and others in Sarajevo. This shows that the Young Bosnians were not mere executioners in a nationalist conspiracy. They were anarchist revolutionaries, some of whose aims coincided with those of the nationalists.

Between the two World Wars, the bulk of Serbian anarchist activism took place outside of the country's borders. A number of working class militants fought side by side with anarchists during the Spanish Civil War and it is known that certain partisan fighters in the Second World War were anarchists. However, on the whole, the anarchist movement was eclipsed in the decades that followed.

In the 21st century, Serbian anarchism has had to forge a libertarian politics afresh. It has done so in an atmosphere where state socialism is rightly discredited, and the Left is limited to NGOs and so-called left-of-centre parties. As a truly anti-capitalist initiative, ASI has been spreading direct action methods. It has fought against wage theft and job losses, coordinated strike support, and participated in struggles against privatisation. A number of local groups have sprung up across the country and organise along federalist lines. ASI's internationalism is reflected in its membership of the International Workers



Association – IWA (of which SolFed is the UK counterpart). Notably, they held the duties of the IWA's international secretariat from 2006 until the worst wave of state repression in 2009. ASI are also involved in a number of Balkan-wide initiatives such as The Balkan Anarchist Bookfair and Balkan Student Network. Their Centre for Libertarian Studies (CLS) has produced affordable issues of Kropotkin, Rudolf Rocker, Émile Pouget, Daniel Guérin, Francisco Ferrer and Alexander Berkman. For the past year, they have been publishing *Direct Action*, a weekly paper which is now distributed for free in 10 towns and cities.

ASI has been at the heart of the struggle against the marketisation of university education. During the mass student protests of 2006-7 and 2011, ASI advocated the most radical strategies and demands. A key demand during the occupations of the Philosophical and Philological Faculties in 2011 was for free (public) education, to be achieved through direct action (occupations, protests) and mass assemblies. Due to the legal protection of the 'autonomy of the university' (from police and state interference), student occupations in Serbia mean a physical takeover of the premises by students and a complete stoppage of all work (lectures, grading, etc.) for weeks or months on end. Rather than overt policing, the students were faced with fascists armed with crowbars and rocks, as well as private security goons. The occupations were large and sustained, with hundreds gathering for open mass assemblies. The strategy advocated by ASI is for a syndicalist organisation which would group together militant students, as well as lecturers and non-teaching staff. This would ensure continuity of struggle and solidarity across these groups, with the aim of ever greater joint student/labour struggles. Central to this has been the forming of a student union based on direct democracy, to undermine the existing student representatives and the student parliament, both structures of university management. Over the past two years the Education Union of ASI has helped establish a Balkan Student network (<http://balkan-student.site90.net/>). It brings together libertarian organisations across the

region to coordinate and amplify the struggle for free education.

In whatever they do, ASI has faced constant police repression. Several militant students are facing charges for instigating and organising student occupations, in an effort to criminalise student protest and deter another wave of occupations. In their anti-militarist activities, ASI called a convergence against the NATO summit in 2011. The organisers were intimidated by the police in an attempt to limit the efficacy of the protest. It took place nevertheless, but was broken up, and some ASI members are still facing charges.

The worst example of legal violence is the ongoing case against the Belgrade Six. A group of six anarchists, four of whom were ASI members, were arrested in September 2009, and held without charges for six months. They were then put on trial for international terrorism. ASI faced a media onslaught with police-authored articles attacking both the organisation and the idea of anarchism. Simultaneously, the prosecution attempted to establish that the 'terrorist attack' was a direct outcome of ASI's activities, in an attempt to label ASI as a 'terrorist' organisation. Other ASI members were questioned by the police and arrested for obstruction of justice during the 'Free the Belgrade Six' campaign. Due, in part, to the strength of international solidarity and the coordination of the IWA, the court case collapsed in 2010 and the comrades were fully acquitted. A year and a half later, in a blatant show of Anything Goes, the case was re-booted. The charges are now less serious, but the combined repression has taken a toll on the defendants. One of them suffers from a serious medical condition which has deteriorated dramatically after being ignored and improperly treated during six months in custody. He is no longer fit to stand trial. As the court case rolls on in 2013, expect more calls for international solidarity and actions, like SolFed's crashing of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce's cocktail party in London, last February. Expect news of more inspiring struggles by Serbian students, workers and the unemployed. Here's to another decade of ASI!

## FEATURE

# PRISON OFFICERS

## Are they workers in uniform or hired thugs?

A thought experiment for you to try: imagine you have been sentenced to death. You are led out to where the execution is to take place, halting in front of the post you are to be tied to before being shot by the firing squad (the exact method of one's execution does not really matter in this instance, and could involve the gas chamber, electric chair, hanging or lethal injection). You turn round to confront your executioners. Is it of any comfort to you that those in the firing squad are fully paid-up members of a trades union? A bit fanciful, but bear with me.

Historically speaking, execution in Britain was carried out by 'professional' hangmen, recruited from the general population, and prison officers, then largely ex-armed forces and members of what amounted to a Prison Officers Association (POA) closed shop, merely smoothed the passage of the condemned to the gallows. However, in a world where the firing squad had been the execution method of choice, it could potentially have been 'specialist' screws, on a par with the firearms units within the police service, just as prison officers in the US fulfil the executioner's role.<sup>1</sup>

So, to return to our experiment: does it matter whether the firing squad are members, for the sake of argument, of the POA? To the person being shot, and who is odds-on to be a fellow member of the working class, the chance of a spontaneous display of working class solidarity, with the downing of tools by said firing squad, is nil – it didn't happen in the trenches of the First World War where members of a conscript army were called upon to execute their fellow soldiers, comrades-in-arms that they often even know personally – and it certainly wouldn't happen where money rather than the fear of one's own court-martial was the driving force.



Therefore, one's only hope is that they are 'good at their jobs', that they are experienced and skilful enough to be sufficiently accurate with their aim to be able to kill you instantly – one wouldn't want to end up with an excruciating stomach wound and have to wait to be dispatched by *coup de grâce*.

Such an argument could be extended to one preferring that the execution take place in a state sector prison over a privately operated one, one historically where the staff turnover is such that the screws carrying out the execution would be much less likely to have had the relevant on-the-job experience than their state sector counterparts. That, together with the dubious benefits of having fully absorbed the ingrained 'us versus them' state sector-style prison officer canteen culture 'camaraderie' that would help inure them to the job in hand, makes it a safe bet that state sector screws would be less likely to bodge the job in hand.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the POA would claim that state run prisons would always provide the more professional 'service' and that no private company should be making a profit out of any function of the prison system – to paraphrase Steve Gillan, their current general secretary, it is a duty of the state to deprive people of their (life and) liberty.

However, the private versus public prisons dispute, which has always muddled the debate about the place of prison officers' unions in the wider class struggle, and which the POA always seems to rely on to help cover up the paucity of their own position, is largely irrelevant in this situation as the State would never privatise a privileged 'flagship' role such as state-administered execution, just as, for example, it would never privatise the running of its maximum security prisons.

And even if that were not the case in our hypothetical situation, there's always the chance that POA members would be looking down the gun barrels at you as the union is no longer denied recruitment access to the private sector,<sup>3</sup> which has become increasingly unionised mainly due to the growing number of previously public sector prisons, such as the POA-stronghold HMP Birmingham, now being under private sector management.

So is the professionalism of one's guards and, in the case of our thought experiment, one's executioners the only argument in favour of the need for, or even the desirability of, a unionised prison workforce?

'Workers in uniform!'

Obviously, if one is a POA apparatchik, the answer to the question is a resounding yes; self-interest counts: the more members, the more dues and the more union bureaucrats that can be employed. And union dues can bring real power. One only has to look to the power and influence wielded by the California Correctional Peace Officers



Association, who have regularly been able to finance the election of State Governors sympathetic to their cause, staving off prison privatisation and even massively increasing the state prison population via their financial backing of 'three strikes' legislation.

The same self-interest motivates those sections of the Left that have chosen to portray prison officers as 'workers in uniform'. In fact, this later phenomenon appears to have become so pronounced in recent years that many of them would have us believe that the POA are now the only future for the class struggle in Britain, as was witnessed with the publication of *The Everlasting Staircase* by David Evans and Sheila Cohen (Pluto Press, 2009), a virtual hagiography of the POA (it "stands proud today as a union which has given true leadership to the whole working class movement"), clearly aimed at recouping them in the 'leadership' position for Leftist trades unionism, and mirrored by the publicity surrounding the 2009 defection of the then POA general secretary, Brian Caton, from Nu Labour to the Socialist Party.

The major factor driving the orthodox Left's self-interest, and more especially the wider British trades union movement, as represented by the TUC, is the fact that they all have been haemorrhaging members in recent decades and have long been in desperate need of a knight in shining armour to ride to



# ASSOCIATION



their rescue, ever since the Thatcher government did for the National Union of Miners.

Step forward the Prison Officers Association: saviours of working class. Except that it is all a little too late in the case of the POA to cast them in this role. The main reason being that their credentials had long since been dented and tarnished, starting with the Tories' 1987 Fresh Start agreement, which end lucrative overtime arrangements and enforced a 39-hour working week, and

**I have to say that I do actually believe in punishment... Many people come into the prison system and go out the other end, not experiencing any form of punishment because out in society their lives are worse than in prison. If we have to punish people they need to be able to say: 'I don't like this'.**

Brian Caton (General Secretary 2000-10) in *The Socialist*, November 2006

followed up by the removal of a prison officer's right to strike in 1993. Jack Straw further defanged the beast with his 2009 Workforce Modernisation (WfM) scheme, which fundamentally restructured decades

old pay and working conditions, moving them closer to those existing in the dreaded private sector prisons. Even the POA's 'Prisons are not for Profit' campaign, which they launched on the back of the TUC's own anti-privatisation/anti-cuts one, has proved to be a damp squib, failing to slow the Coalition's increased rate of 'marketisation' in the public prison sector, or halt a single prison closure or job loss.

The reality is that the POA's militancy currently stretches only as far as the odd lunchtime walkout and the union only just managed to get a quarter of their membership to actually bother to vote on the government's latest pension offer.

## Class war warriors

However, there is a much more germane reason why the POA could never be seen to the saviours of working class: their members fulfil an essential role in maintaining the continued existence of the State, namely the repression of large sections of the working class. And POA members are at the forefront of attacking and abusing the prisoners that they help lock up, and the union unashamedly defends those who are caught doing so.<sup>4</sup>

The POA's main concerns, other than defending their existing membership, are for increased and better funded incarceration, in order to make their members' jobs more

numerous and easier, together with a collateral campaign for the greater repression of prisoners, again solely to ease their members' lot and free up more time for solving their sudoku and crossword puzzles.

The welfare of prisoners rarely enters the picture. When the abolition of the death penalty was proposed in 1965 the POA opposed it on the basis that convicted murderers serving life sentences would be difficult to manage and it would lead to an increase in the murder of prison officers, which conspicuously failed to materialise. And even the union's complaints about things like prison overcrowding fail to feature concerns about its effects on prisoners and their human rights. Instead, the focus is on how everything is fated to make their jobs that more difficult and readily perpetuating the myth that all prisoners are murderers, rapist and paedophiles, despite constituting only 3-4% of annual imprisonments.

Even their much vaunted working class solidarity, something that is supposedly a cornerstone of trades unionism, doesn't even stretch as far as their fellow trades unionist as witnessed by the disgraceful conduct towards the Shrewsbury Two, and especially Des Warren in HMP Leicester, when they refused to work and went on hunger strike in 1973. Repeated attempts to rewrite history have singularly failed to remove this stain from the annals of UK trades unionism.

In the end, prison officers and their union representatives are nothing better than agents of state repression, hired lackeys in a service industry whose only customers are the ruling class, the paid equivalent of the Third Reich's kapos, helping maintain the smooth operation of the lager in return for a few crumbs from the big table.

"The concentration camp system owed its stability in no small way to a cadre of kapos, who took over the daily operations of the camp, relieving the SS personnel... Without the delegation of power, the system of discipline and supervision would have promptly disintegrated" (Eugen Kogon, concentration camp survivor, in *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, 1980).

Bra

- 1 In China, elite police units have traditionally been assigned this role, though the firing squad has now been largely superseded by US-style lethal injection.
- 2 NB Differences in pay and motivation in the state and private sectors probably largely cancel each other out – better-paid, more job-secure and usually less motivated/more complacent vs. poorer-paid, less job-secure and therefore less complacent.
- 3 They are certainly able to do so in G4S-run prisons.
- 4 The fact that these assaults are routinely written up as prisoner-on-staff just adds insult to injury, and extra days onto one's sentence as well.

## INTERVIEW

# Civil Rank and File Network conference



On Saturday 2nd February, the Civil Service Rank and File (CSRF) Network held its inaugural national conference in Coventry. This is a brief report of the event and analysis of where the group is and should be heading.

The fact that the CSRF was having a conference at all was in itself an exciting development. Less than a year ago, as the PCS union used its Annual Delegate Conference to sell its membership a reductive strategy on the pension dispute, I was lamenting that “there is no effective rank-and-file movement in this dispute” and that building one from scratch “will be painstakingly slow”. Now, of course, that movement is the CSRF.

The catalyst for the CSRF was a visit to Coventry tax office by Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude. Days after news of widespread attacks on civil service terms and conditions was leaked, this sparked a wildcat walkout and the call for workers to take action without waiting for “the politics at the top of the union”.

It was fitting, then, that the conference took place in the town where the network was born. Here the aim was to establish a structure for what had until now been an ad hoc grouping and hopefully give it the direction to grow and continue punching above its weight.

On which note, it’s worth saying that the turnout at the conference was far lower than expected. There were reasons for this, including a number of comrades being either busy or unable to travel on the day. Thus business didn’t take place in a meeting crammed with militants and the attendance did not reflect the full compliment of the network’s support. Nonetheless, government workers from Coventry, Bootle, London, Blackpool and elsewhere took part on the day, and support for the initiative comes from further afield including Dundee, Glasgow, Sheffield and Nottingham.

Debate and discussion throughout was constructive, and in virtually all decisions the conference was able to establish a consensus rather than having to go to a vote. Though this led to some pedantry about wording, which quickly became a running joke amongst those present, on the whole it was positive and I think all present left pleased with the outcomes.

As it is still in its infancy, one focus of this conference was giving the CSRF a structure. A set of aims and principles were agreed which distinguished the CSRF as a new way of organising in opposition to union hierarchies and the factions that operate within them, focusing on direct action, solidarity and workers controlling their own struggles as well as an overall anti-capitalist outlook. The network structure will be based upon workplace committees coordinated by a national delegate council whose participants are strictly mandated and recallable. National officers, too, are mandated and recallable, with no decision making power beyond that of ordinary members.

What was positive in establishing all of the above is that the discussion focused on tightening up accountability and recall mechanisms, rather than scrapping them. Attendees represented a fairly broad range of socialist and left tendencies yet all present were committed to keeping CSRF as horizontal as possible and hopefully we’ve done that.

In terms of decisions going forward, the network agreed the following strategy in relation to the PCS national strike ballot which begins on 8th February:

- Mobilise for a YES/YES vote in the coming national PCS ballot;
- Argue for a continuous campaign of disruptive action rather than periodic one-day strikes;
- Argue that the first strike should coincide

with the ETUC day of action, expected on the 13th or 14th March;

- Call a rank and file day of action for this date if PCS fails to call strike action;
- Make contact with other rank-and-file groups – such as the Sparks and NUTLAN – to urge coordination of rank-and-file activity across industries;
- Punctuate official industrial action with rank and file activity in all workplaces where this is possible to increase pressure on the government;
- Call further national days of action to put pressure on PCS if it is seen to be delaying action.

All of which offers a positive strategy for maintaining the pressure on the PCS union in the coming campaign. More than that it addresses the principle of generalising struggles in a more concrete way than simply ‘calling on’ union bureaucracies to do so.

A commitment to call national action in conjunction with a localised strike at the Home Office in Merseyside, where a young rep was sacked for highlighting bullying by management, is also a positive lesson in practical solidarity. Discussion over this issue also highlighted the potential of other cases, including workers who have been identified as ‘surplus’ and face redundancy rejected for jobs even where they were the only applicant on the grounds of their workplace organising activity. Clearly, blacklisting is not limited to construction and this represents a potential new front for the CSRF to campaign on.

Aside from attendance, the other hiccup in this conference was timing. Though most of the business was done, there was no time to discuss or formally adopt the strategy of establishing workplace committees as independent platforms for direct action. Nor could motions to PCS conference be officially endorsed by the network. But rather than being guillotined and forgotten, these questions will be brought forward and decided through the national delegate council structure.

In all, there were probably always going to be hiccups. There hasn’t been a rank and file grouping in the civil service (or the public sector as a whole) for a long while. Even now, there will be a lot of trial and error in how it works and how it develops in practice from militants pushing ideas through existing union structures towards independent rank and file committees bypassing those structures.

Nonetheless, on the whole I feel particularly positive about the endeavour. Even if just for the fact that when fellow workers express their widely held scepticism about whether we can win what we’re demanding in this strike ballot – rather than having a couple of one day protest strikes over the matter before forgetting about it, as with every other dispute of the recent past – there’s now a fighting chance that yes, we can.

Phil Dickens



● Representatives of the Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit Short Corridor prisoners have issued notice that they have made a collective decision to resume their hunger strike campaign on 8th July because of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCr) failure to substantively address any of their original 2001 Core demands: 1. End group punishment and administrative abuse; 2. Abolish the debriefing policy and gang status criteria; 3. Comply with a 2006 Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons recommendation to end to long-term solitary confinement; 4. Provide adequate and nutritious food; and, 5. Improve the conditions for indefinite SHU status inmates.

The original indefinite hunger strike by prisoners in the Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit (SHU) against the conditions in SHU, and the Kafkaesque gang validation policy that condemns them to it cells, began on 1st July 2011. At its height, the hunger strike included more than 6,600 prisoners across 13 of California's 30 prisons. Initially the prison authorities refused to negotiate, putting up a constant PR smokescreen. But the adverse publicity began to mount, with prisoners suffering kidney damage and some refusing water, meaning that they were unable to take prescription drugs. When the CDCr began briefing lawyers about seeking a court order to allow officials to force-feed inmates to prevent any deaths, prisoners reacted by signing Do Not Resuscitate orders.

The hunger strike ended after three weeks with the CDCr granting minor concessions but with an agreement to negotiate on prisoners' grievances. No substantive changes to the regime or additional concessions materialised, and a second round of protests began on 26th September that year. By 1st October nearly 12,000 prisoners involved, including prisoners shipped out of California to prisons in Arizona, Mississippi and Oklahoma following a 2011 US Supreme Court decision to cut the state's prison population by 30,000. That hunger strike ended after 18 days.

● Supporters of the anarchist and anti-fascist prisoner Jock Palfreeman, who has regularly featured in the pages of this paper, have called a week of action between 22nd and 28th April in support of his demands that the Bulgarian prison authorities cease their punishment of him for his work with the Bulgarian Prisoners' Association, which he helped set up, punishment that means he is no longer allowed to pursue his university studies; and that he be allowed to return to an Australia prison to serve the rest of his sentence.

On Jock's part, he carried out a hunger strike protest which he ended after 30 days, having lost 20kg, following an 'official' decision denying him access to further education.

# Making a monkey out of Sean

Sean Swain is a long term anarchist prisoner held as "a hostage", as his defence website puts it, "by a lawless rogue-state calling itself 'The State of Ohio' ... without legal conviction or sentence since 1991 for the self-defence killing of a court official's relative who broke into Sean's home and threatened his life. In 2011, the Ohio Adult Parole Authority gave Sean a continuance of five years without notifying his counsel of a full-board hearing as required by statute." A newspaper columnist and union organiser prior to his arrest, he has become a vociferous campaigner through his prison writings, which the federal courts claim "promote anarchy and rebellion against authority". He also ran for Ohio Governor from his prison cell in 2006 and 2010 on a Zapatista platform, all of which actions have less than enamoured him with the prison authorities.

So, when in September 2012, copies of a "resistance manual" and flyers that called for "a joyous class war" and sabotage within the prison, both produced by a group calling themselves the Army of the Twelve Monkeys, appeared within Mansfield Correctional Institution, the authorities began looking for the perpetrators and, failing that, a convenient scapegoat. They apparently found two of the former when they searched the cells of Leslie Dillion and James Dzelajilija, allegedly uncovered original documents used to make copies and drafts of Twelve Monkeys material. The prison authorities also took a copy of *Errico Malatesta: Life and Ideas*.

Sean's cell was also searched but they found nothing Twelve Monkeys-related. Instead, they decided to scapegoat him using an article he had written and sent out to be posted on his website. It was certainly critical of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) but contained no references to prison sabotage or the Army of the Twelve Monkeys. Instead, its "wording

and ideologies" were held to be a match and, out of pure coincidence, a tattoo that Sean had also happened to be inspired by the same science fiction film that the Twelve Monkeys group referenced. As an anarchist and a "neolithic indiginist", Sean of course denies membership of the group, which he characterises "a Maoist organisation, [that] never use the word 'anarchy'".

Held in administrative segregation, his mail tampered with and even withheld, as well as being denied basic privileges, such as reading and writing materials, that all on segregation have a right to, the Rules Infraction Board found him guilty on two counts. Whilst admitting there was no direct evidence of his involvement on any level with the Twelve Monkeys, he was guilty by association, i.e. the perceived "ideological affinity" on the behalf of a wilfully politically ignorant administration. Bizarrely, Sean was also found guilty being a neolithic indiginist, a religious belief system that the ODRC had already granted him a religious practice exemption for.

His punishment: transfer to the Ohio State Penitentiary supermax prison, where he will live in a segregation cell for 23 hours a day, with an hour's exercise in the 'dog kennel' and no contact visits (in fact no human physical contact apart to odd prison 'rub down' or gratuitous beating), possibly for the rest of his life given what has gone before. Yet Twelve Monkeys material continues to be distributed throughout the Ohio prison system; its members even precipitated a riot at the CCA-run Lake Erie Correctional Institution, the only private prison in the state.

At the time of writing, we still do not know if Sean's last appeal was successful and he avoided transfer to the supermax.

Bra

Find out more about Sean Swain at <http://seanswain.org/>



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

Angel Alley is being resurfaced. After nearly two years of faffing, work has begun to do up our little alleyway – fortunately not paid for by us. Thanks to the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Toynbee Hall we get a new surface to the Alley, proper lighting and the back of the shop gated off. Apologies to all customers who had difficulty finding their way in, and also to folk trying to get to offices on the two days we had to be closed at short notice.

In our own building progress is, as always, slower than expected. Doing the shop floor had to wait until ambient temperatures reached 10°C. However now spring has sprung we can gallop on and are still on target for having the shop back downstairs in May and a proper re-opening party in June. Thanks to all who have contributed, and also to all those who've donated secondhand books – most appreciated.

Comrades have been busy as usual with a multitude of projects. Special thanks to Tony who did a stall at the Bristol Anarchist Bookfair (and a reminder that Freedom Press titles are available on sale-or-return at 50% terms). Meantime many of us had a beano to Brighton to oppose the March for England, well done to all those who came and commiserations to any who fell foul of the constabulary or otherwise ended up with a sore head.

## 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 19 of this issue if you need it, or you can subscribe online at [freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe). Don't forget that donations are always extremely welcome, or you may like to take out one of our special supporter subscriptions.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
 Tell/fax: 020 7247 9249  
[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)  
 Enquiries: [info@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:info@freedompress.org.uk)  
 Copy/Letters: [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk)  
 Subscriptions: [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk)  
 Bookshop: [shop@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:shop@freedompress.org.uk)  
 Freedom Press Distribution (for trade book orders): [distro@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:distro@freedompress.org.uk)

## NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated May 2013 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Friday 12th April. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The recent council elections in mainly rural areas saw a big surge in support for the UK Independence Party. Much of the media commentary was either fawning to UKIP leader Nigel Farage, or dismissive towards them as racists, fruitcakes and general loons. Some on the left and amongst anarchists have characterised UKIP as fascists.

To be honest, I don't think much of this is useful. UKIP are a right wing populist party defined by the interlinked issues of Europe and immigration, appealing in particular to older English people. While there is a clear racist undercurrent to what they say, and a lot of their support understand it as such, it is a different expression of racism from that of the recent past, and most importantly, from that of fascists.

Opposition to the EU is actually something most anarchists should agree on – a bureaucratic superstate set up to help big business, it's really only in Britain that most opposition to it comes from the right. And we shouldn't think that just because the political right oppose something it is okay, the EU clearly is not – and where the RMT join with the Socialist Party to contest elections they are explicitly anti-EU because of the EU's privatisation agenda.

UKIP's opposition to immigration is somewhere that they are much more in touch with how the majority feel, even if that is uncomfortable to admit. Anarchists believe in free movement of people and reject borders as artificial lines drawn on maps by ruling elites. It is fair to say we are in a very small minority on this one. More to the point, there are benefits from immigration, they just don't seem obvious if you are competing for jobs and housing with immigrants forced to accept less. Overall, I have no trouble accepting that immigration benefits the economy, but it is only certain sectors where that is clear.

Unfortunately, try having this discussion with people who don't live in inner London and aren't graduates, and you quickly find a lot of anger. This is exacerbated when people who are concerned about immigration are labelled as racist. The experience of the last forty years has seen a lot of successes by anti-racism campaigners, such that anti-racism is now formally accepted by most parts of the state. A corollary of this acceptance is that the only times many people encounter any sort of anti-racist message it is coming from someone in authority – teachers, council, police, government. I'm not going to go into the separate argument that this commitment is only for show and that the authorities regularly fail to address racism, as I think it doesn't change the underlying issue that working class people are regularly told they are racist by people who think they are better.

There was a working class response to racism that has been eclipsed by the state. Self-organisation by black communities, struggles within unions and against councils and the police, all played their part. But it is still a problem that anti-racism is not something argued for in whole communities and workforces.

A lot has been made in the media of UKIP's support being a snub to the metropolitan elite. Again, the irony of a party led by a public schoolboy who used to work in the City being "anti-establishment" seems lost on most commentators, but Nigel Farage, like Boris, seems to transcend his origins. But when a metropolitan elite tells people how to behave, it's not at all surprising that people react against it, particularly when they automatically assume everyone working class is racist. Of course, some are, but the danger is that by associating anti-racism with the government and their allies, we end up with an open goal for the right.





## FEEDBACK

## Food for thought

On Thursday 25th April 2013, squatters occupied an disused office space in Lewes with the intention of creating a squatted vegetable shop, and undermining capitalism by 'selling' locally sourced organic produce for donation. Alongside this the project aims to create a specifically anti-capitalist space in which anybody can put on workshops or share skills that might be of interest to members of the radical community, but more importantly encouraging the general public to consider the negative impact that capitalism has upon their lives. The occupation is planned to continue over a relatively short period of time in a 'pop-up' style.

Squatters are attempting to negotiate an agreement with the property owner via the property's letting agent, Clifford Dann, in order to legitimise the project and prevent hassle from the police and court appointed bailiffs. We hope that Lewes community will support the project by coming and checking out the space – and of course the vegetables. For more info contact us on [thegoodfoodproject@riseup.net](mailto:thegoodfoodproject@riseup.net)

## The day that Margaret Thatcher died

I'll tell you true, I'll tell you why  
So many are happy to see Thatcher die.  
She made it her most important role  
To condemn millions to waste on the dole.  
So tight was the woman called Maggie  
Thatcher  
That for decades we knew her as 'Milk  
Snatcher'.

The nickname was apt for she was the cream  
Of proponents of Milton Friedman's dream.  
For over ten years she reigned supreme  
At the head of our most divisive regime.  
Her favoured title was the 'Iron Lady'  
And her favoured practices were quite  
shady.

Her response to the trouble on Stormont  
Hill?

A sinister order to "Shoot to kill!"  
An order that punished those whose only  
crime  
Was to be in the wrong place at the wrong  
time.  
When the miners went out on strike  
She sent up the Met, with a big pay hike.

The people of Brixton were left in the lurch  
Her solution to this? Stop and search!  
Construction workers trying to organise  
Were threatening her drive to privatise.  
The solution she hid in bureaucratic mist  
Was to agree to the bosses' cruel black lists.

Still I'll say this she was kind to her friends  
That chosen few who enjoyed dividends.  
Who stood to profit from the decline of the  
State

A good time indeed to be in real estate!  
A friend of Thatcher's was there to stay  
Just ask Chilean butcher Pinochet.

Still now that is all in the past  
The shrill speaking one is dead at last.  
But we know the lie of Thatcherism  
Will end like every other despotism

When the long-suffering working class  
Shatters her evil legacy like glass.

Rhys Harrison

## Blood sports

Many have warned that social misery will cause riots again. 2012 gave the distractions of the Olympics and the royal jamboree (although many could not afford jam). But what better idea in 2013 than for potential disaster to be turned into a triumph for the state? Riots 2013 will therefore be organised by the government as sporting events.

## Rules:

- There will be no political content like in 2011, when police property was destroyed in places while private stuff was left alone.
- Aiding the government's efforts to end social housing and cheap rents, poorer areas will continue to be destroyed.
- Developers must hold 'periods of consultation' informing such tenants of what they and the authorities have decided.
- Developers must then ramp up their plans twofold after such riots.
- While fox hunting is difficult in some areas, open season on such tenants and squatters is encouraged.
- Advanced tickets can be bought from local police headquarters. Corporate block bookings are available.
- As part of the Olympics Heritage Agency, team training for Riots 2013 will begin ASAP.

Martin S. Gilbert

## DONATE YOUR OLD BOOKS

The ravening wolves of capitalist depredation are constantly howling around Angel Alley seeking the destruction of our noble bookshop.

You can help keep these fey hounds at bay by donating books that you no longer want so that we may sell them on to knowledge-hungry proletarians for a pound a piece (more to rich arty types who only came in 'cos they got lost on the way to the Whitechapel Art Gallery).

# FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX  
020 7247 9249

Open Monday to Saturday  
from 12 noon until 6pm

If you can't get to the shop, why not use our mail order service or order books via our website at

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

## GETTING ACTIVE

## WHAT'S ON

## APRIL

■ **2nd and 16th** Practical Squatting Evening at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7pm to 8pm, for more see <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>

■ **4th, 11th, 18th and 25th** 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](mailto:london@afed.org.uk) beforehand.

■ **5th to 7th** The ninth Zagreb anarchist bookfair at galerija Nova, Teslina 7, Zagreb, Croatia, see <http://www.ask-zagreb.org/> for more details.

■ **9th and 23rd** Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.

■ **13th** News from Nowhere Club presents *The National Jazz Archive* with speaker Fiona Cormack, archivist, at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, for details see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248.

■ **19th** 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.

## MAY

■ **2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th** 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](mailto:london@afed.org.uk) beforehand.

■ **7th and 21st** Practical Squatting Evening at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7pm to 8pm, for more see <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>

■ **11th** News from Nowhere Club presents *'A Club Collection': The Work of a Local Artist* with speaker Lucy Harrison at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248 for further details.

■ **11th** London Radical Bookfair presented by the Alliance of Radical Booksellers, from 10am until 6pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see <http://londonradicalbookfair.wordpress.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/pages/London-Radical-Bookfair/497414930304046> or on Twitter @ARBRadBookfair.

■ **11th and 12th** Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair from 10am until 6pm at Showroom Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S1 2BX, for details see <http://www.sheffieldbookfair.org> or <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sheffield-Anarchist-Book-Fair/16091677367840>

■ **14th and 28th** Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.



● On Saturday 11th May, the Association of Radical Booksellers (ARB) will be hosting a bookfair at London's Conway Hall. The idea behind the fair is to create an event which showcases the depth and breadth of radical publishing and bookselling in the UK. The ARB is composed of booksellers with a range of subject interests and we intend the **London Radical Bookfair** to represent the full spectrum of radical publishing.

The event will culminate with the winner of the ARB's book prize for the best political non-fiction being announced, The Bread and Roses Award for Radical Publishing. In addition there will also be a new prize, The Little Rebels Award, to be given for the best piece of fiction for readers aged 0-12 years.

As well as the bookfair in the main hall, we will be hosting talks throughout the day. Entrance will be free for all and food and drink will be available.

London Radical Bookfair, 11th May from 10am until 6pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

- <http://londonradicalbookfair.wordpress.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/pages/London-Radical-Bookfair/497414930304046>
- Twitter @ARBRadBookfair



● A Carnival Against Capitalism has been called for London on 11th June in the build-up to the G8 summit being hosted by the UK government.

Stop G8 has announced the #J11 date as part of a week of anti-capitalist and anti-militarist action in the British capital, saying that "London is right at the heart of global capitalism. And the West End of London, including elite areas like Piccadilly, Mayfair and Knightsbridge, is where power and greed are most concentrated."

Explaining the carnival theme, Stop G8 says: "Traditionally, carnival is the time where the people take over the streets, the bosses run and hide, and the world gets turned upside down. It is a time to celebrate our resistance and our dreams, to bring music and colour to the streets. And also to show our strength and our anger... On #J11 we will party in the streets, point out the hiding places of power, and take back the heart of our city for a day. Our streets. Our world... Like any good carnival, everyone's invited: this will be an open, inclusive, and lively event. There will be a main route with sound systems and public meeting points." Independent actions are also being encouraged.

- <https://network23.org/stopg8/j11-carnival-against-capitalism/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/stopg8uk>



# Going nowhere

## Failed vanity project that ruined Coventry City FC

One of the great names in English football, Coventry City FC, is in administration and on the verge of going out of business. Their sad decline and potential extinction is a disgrace, and one that other clubs will experience over the coming years.

Whilst they may not be a club with a bulging trophy cabinet, Coventry City is 130 years old, spent an impressive 34 years in the top flight of English football, won the legendary 1987 FA cup final, and were founding members of the Premier League.

For 106 years the home of Coventry City FC was Highfield Road, which in 1981 became the first all-seater stadium in Britain – with a capacity of around 22,000.

In 2005 they moved to a new stadium, the Ricoh Arena – with a 33,000 capacity. The new stadium, like new builds at other clubs, would have a hotel, shops and a casino, but would not be owned by the club itself. These extra attractions, and the 30% increase in capacity, was supposed to be a money-spinner for Coventry which would see the club expand and be fit for 21st century football.

Unfortunately it was not to be. The view that a club could, against a backdrop of attendances in terminal decline, increase gates by 30% overnight was crazy. Clubs as established as Coventry City have a fanbase that may fluctuate over the years, but is generally set – as football fans are tribal, and do not tend to change their allegiances.

Since the 2005 re-location, Coventry has been relegated again – and now in the third

tier of English football, and have been through eight different managers.

The money spinning potential of the switch to the Ricoh Arena was never going to be realised. Monies generated by the hotels, casino, shops, and food and drink sales on match day, goes directly to the owners of the stadium, not to the club. The only money that the club generates is through ticket sales.

The club now has an average gate of around 10,000, and no longer owns its own stadium. Within the last month the stadium owner have issued the club notice to leave the premises – due to £1.2 million rent arrears.

Greedy bosses and their failed vanity project means that Coventry City FC may not exist in any meaningful form beyond the end of next year.

**Matt Black**

## Sunderland's big mistake

◀ page 24

Canio] now, as some have done, of being a racist, or having fascist sympathies, is insulting both to him and to the integrity of this football club”.

Such a lack of knowledge by his new employers is astonishing. They need only type his name into an internet search engine to see him giving many fascist salutes, to see his Mussolini tattoo, or to see him being interviewed in which he admits to being a fascist.

Pictures have emerged of a tearful Di Canio at the funeral of Paulo Signorelli, a member of various terror groups in Italy, who spent 10 years in jail (on remand) for his alleged involvement in the 1980 bombing of Bologna station, in which 85 people died, and for the murder of two

magistrates. Di Canio had been a regular house guest of Signorelli's in the last years of his life.

The mainstream media, whilst initially expressing some concern about Di Canio's politics, have now adopted a more moderate, yet ridiculous position of claiming that he may be a 'fascist', but he is not a 'racist'. Their 'in-depth' analysis consists of nothing more than asking black players who are former teammates of Di Canio, as to whether he was ever racist towards them.

They clearly miss the point that the majority of individuals on the far-right do not go into the workplace openly racially abusing their colleagues. If they did, they would lose their livelihoods. Di Canio, being paid, and risking, tens of thousands a week, is no different.

Immediately following the appointment the Durham Miners' Association has written to the club, demanding the return of a trade union banner that was on permanent display at the stadium. In a statement they said that “The appointment of Di Canio is a disgrace and a betrayal of all who fought and died in the fight against fascism”.

Football fans are predictably split on their analysis of Di Canio's appointment. There are many who are disgusted that Sunderland has appointed a self-confessed fascist, whilst others – based on a lack of understanding of fascism – have adopted the position that his political views are nobody else's business, and that as long as he does a good job, who cares?

**Matt Black**

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
<b>Freedom (annual subscription, 12 issues)</b>				
Claimants	£18.00	–	–	–
Regular	£22.00	£30.00	£30.00	£50.00
Institutions	£26.00	£44.00	£44.00	£64.00
Supporter	£48.00	£60.00	£60.00	£72.00

Note that we have a special 'supporter' sub rate for those who wish to ensure the future of the paper.

If you want to make a regular donation to *Freedom* get in touch and we can send you a Standing Order form – email [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk) for details, or to find out how to donate online.

For more information on subscriptions/bundles, email [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk)

**FREEDOM** monthly ISSN 0016 0504



Please return completed form to: Freedom Subscriptions, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Please start a NEW subscription / RENEW my subscription to *Freedom* (to avoid errors, please circle required subscription rate, see right)

I enclose a donation

I'd like to pay by Standing Order, please send me details

I enclose £ ..... payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

## REVIEWS

## FICTION

## The March on the Boss

Dougal MacKenzie shuffled his papers and cursed the lousy connection from his laptop back to LobCo headquarters. This was the third site he'd been brought in to manage the transition to the LobCo way. At first, it had looked easy: defined functions, relatively small number of staff, no organised opposition. But things weren't turning out that way.

The security staff were sullen and just blanked him. He called them in for meetings but they just didn't turn up. The receptionists kept asking him when they were getting their pay rise, and LobCo had lost all their paperwork. Human resources had also transferred, but they seemed never to be able to find any and had told him if he looked through it would be illegal and a breach of confidence. Which was what he was trying to get advice on from head office when the IT team had approached him.

In the past, facing this sort of dissent, he'd isolated ringleaders and got them paid off. But he couldn't tell who was the ringleader. They all seemed to be working together, boosting each other's confidence.

Dom, the tall one who always dressed in black, had spoken first.

"We've come to talk to you," he'd said. "We're not happy with the way you are running things."

"We have some demands," chimed in Vik. "Initial demands," added Sarah.

"Here they are," said Lucy, handing him a sheet of paper.

"We'll be back tomorrow for an answer," said Ged. MacKenzie couldn't think of anything else to do but acknowledge them.

He read through their demands. There was no detail. It was a simple list: consultation; training; flexi time; protection of pensions. The last line read simply 'We reserve the right to make more demands'.

The first was easy enough as it was meaningless. LobCo had been brought in to reduce costs. Consultation might slow things down but any new starter would be on LobCo's significantly worse terms and conditions. Training could be tackled by some on-line courses, though he already knew the team's view of the hopeless in-house courses that didn't even work properly over Citrix. Flexitime and pensions were issues for head office. LobCo's handbook featured lots on the benefits of flexible working, but neglected to mention they were mainly benefits for the company, which paid lip-service to it while benefiting from unpaid overtime. Protection of pensions was also a corporate affair, and highly unlikely to be conceded. Cutting pensions was a large part of the justification for privatisation in the first place.

MacKenzie sat back. His laptop connection had dropped out again. For the first time since he'd come here, he didn't feel in control.

Martin H.

To be continued...

## FILM

## Django Unchained

directed by Quentin Tarantino

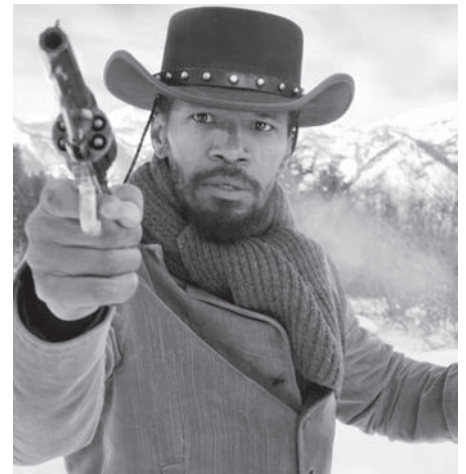
Tarantino continues pandering to overblown celebrity with cartoon super-heroes and -villains in overlong overreach, here mashing up Spaghetti Westerns, cult exploitation cinema and Blaxploitation in a blistering saga of brutal degradation, action and reaction combining verbose and vicious banter, free-wheeling comic overkill and a romantic happy ending. Jamie Foxx's eponymous recaptured escaped slave is freed by German dandy Dr King Schultz (Christoph Waltz) on pain of assisting his murderous bounty-hunting – demonstrating proficiency meriting apprenticeship and then partnering. Their ethnic dualism mirrors the monstrous Stephen (Samuel Jackson) Uncle Tomming for corrupt Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio), whose Candyland plantation houses Mandingo death-duels as well as Django's estranged wife Broomhilda (Kerry Washington). Having already dispatched the many despicable white morons they've encountered, our premier grifters blag their way into the big house. Schultz succumbs despite killing Candie, but Django completes the carnage and the reunited spouses fade into the sunset.

## Mutiny for the Bounty

Hollywood sporadically sanctions superficial riffs on race relations, from chain-gangs (*The Defiant Ones*, 1958) through conmen (*The Skin Game*, 1971) to contemporary disposable Black action-buddies still playing second fiddle – which *Django Unchained* flirts with before overturning. Yet elevating a European aristocrat to heroic Svengali erases Black autonomy and resistance, narcissistically subsuming history into Tarantino's abject omnipotent vision and travesty of real stories of slavery with childish racial segregations of wit, prowess, good and evil. Monumental failures of pastiche and philosophy already litter postmodern appropriations of subaltern tricksterism and transgression, where specific social strata substitute theirs for common interests. Indeed, Spaghetti's original 1960s gut marxism itself collapsed into toothless parody – echoing now in the overcoming of oppression's personal tragedies to yield, rather than being co-produced by, comedic display – heralding modern class-blind avant-garde consumerism pimped by disappointed New Leftists and sundry vacuous descendants.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Coffee, alcohol and tobacco. The punishments included execution. It was reported that Murad himself died of cirrhosis of the liver.
2. International Worker's Day (aka May Day), Karl Marx, labour unions and strikes. The entry for International Worker's Day makes no mention of the recurring holiday, only its 1899 genesis.
3. People who waited outside the Old Bailey court in London and displayed straw in their buckles, indicating that they were prepared to perjure themselves for money.
4. Incest. The film turned husband and wife Donald and Linda Nordley into brother and sister, thus resulting in scenes where they kissed and shared a bed.



History's return as tragedy and subsequently farce plainly applies to middle-class artistic as well as political delusions of grandeur.

However, audiences untroubled by intellectual pretension refract cinematic imaginaries through prisms of lived experience, seeking cathartic relief. So Candyland allegorically represents contemporary neo-liberal geography, with rival factions of capital intrinsic to the decadence of 'civilised' zones mobilising class traitors to collude in chattel debasement. This interpretation apparently occurred to neither this film's makers nor defenders or detractors among the guardians of either establishment or Afrocentrist scripture and taste, despite dynamics comparable to the more openly oppositional 1970s Blaxploitation – whose macho bluster was similarly temporarily forgiven in thrall to fantasies of transcendence unconsciously acknowledged to require violent upheaval for decisive realisation. But, naturally, elitists of right, left or centre cannot stomach the visceral rebellion of proletarian carnivalesque, except in domesticated pale simulations inspiring blind conformism irrespective of ideology. Thus, in recent films about slavery, Spielberg's *Lincoln* perpetuates myths of progress thanks to enlightened guilty privilege, whereas von Trier's *Manderlay* (2005; reviewed in *Freedom*, 29th July 2006) righteously savages such complacency. *Django Unchained's* conceit also ignores the self-organised intelligence and agency of victims; nevertheless hinting at the potency of collaboration among equals fighting domination.

<http://libcom.org/blog/tom-jennings>



# A childhood in Ceausescu's Romania

Romania has had a deeply troubled past and no one knows this better than Carmen Bugar, who fled the country with her family in 1989 to seek political asylum in the US.

Bugar was born in Vrancea during the inception of Nicolae Ceausescu's rule, which burgeoned as quickly as his tyranny. During this particularly troubled time in the country's history, life for Romanian people was defined by oppression, fear and the Securitate (State Secret Police), known for its perniciousness and cruelty. It was this that prompted Bugar's father, Nelu, to take to the streets in protest against the communist regime, which eventually saw him arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison. But his political dissidence began much earlier, when he was just twenty six. Bugar's first realisation about the "world of secrets and danger" surrounding her father's life came when he purchased a second-hand typewriter, which he used to write a series of anti-communist pamphlets. It was the same typewriter that Bugar saw her father bury in the back garden one day. She was 11 and yet to fully understand the difference between "the world in Romania and the world in the West". Bugar's memoir, *Burying the Typewriter*, is a heart-wrenching paean to childhood, courage, loss and forgiveness, told poetically by a writer whose voice echoes long after the closing page.

Shortly after Bugar finished the book she was granted access to an 18 volume dossier on her father, compiled by the Securitate, spanning from 1961 until the family fled to the US. The documents chronicle her father's political activities and his three imprisonments, the last of which ended in his release in the general amnesty of 1988. "I do not appear in my father's dossiers," Bugar tells us, "or in the photo showing the buried typewriter on which my parents typed anti-communist propaganda, or in the log of interrogations. But my heart beats between the lines of the reports." It is precisely this that gives *Burying the Typewriter* its startling resonance, its verve and lyrical force. Bugar writes beguilingly in



Above, the Bugar family; below, Carmen Bugar.

present-tense of her childhood in Draganesti, summer holidays by the Black Sea, her maternal grandparents, her sister Loredana, her brother Catalin and the family dog, Bambonica. But amid the seemingly happy and innocent childhood realities of scuttling about in play, melting ice creams and her grandmother's flowery dresses, lurks a sinister undercurrent. "We have to wear little blue uniforms, learn songs and poems, draw and paint," Bugar says of her nursery school years, "We learn about the father of all children, Ceausescu, and his wife, Elena, the mother of all children and a famous scientist. Their portraits are in our classroom: they are always smiling."

Ceausescu quickly becomes omnipresent within the book, his insidious rule defined by food shortages, ethnic divisions, proliferating terror of the Romania Communist Party and the secret police. This transition in the country's social landscape precipitates a change in Bugar's home life, her parents' mounting secrecy and subsequent domestic

instability. Bugar father's final imprisonment puts an immense strain on the whole family, not least because they spend the next five years under constant surveillance, being interrogated and held captive in their own home. Bugar writes both as a conflicted adolescent and a grown woman about her feelings toward her father, which shift from anger to respect to awe and back again. As a child she resents him for abandoning the family, but as an adult she grows to understand his choices as she learns of his unwavering determination and his quest for a fair and democratic state. "My father spent a total of twelve years in the worst Romanian prisons and forced-labour camps," she writes after seeing the dossier, "because he praised the democratic values of the West while openly criticising the structure and the philosophy of communism. I ask myself: was he really that dangerous? In one file they say he represented a threat to communism because he talked with admiration of how Americans went to the moon." *Burying the Typewriter* is more than just a memoir; it is a superbly lucid and humane insight into a villainous political system and its effect on ordinary people.

Fortunately, the Bugars managed to escape the unceasing torment, when they were granted political asylum in the US. After receiving numerous death threats the family resolved to risk it all in a bid to reclaim their lives. It was Carmen – a sixteen year old girl then – that made the secret trip in the middle of the night to the American embassy to plead their case. She was there for over five hours, making a statement about the persecution and injustice her family had suffered at the hands of Ceausescu's henchmen. Bugar evokes the final scene in the family's homeland with a definitive sense of

page 22 ►►



## THE ARTS

# DO IT YOURSELF!

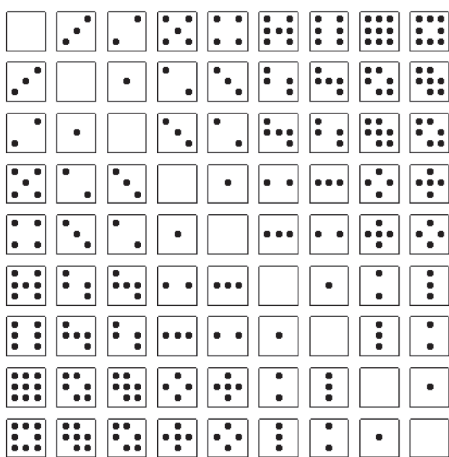
## by Anabela Bravo

Rodrigo Silva wrote that *common* is what unites all mans without making comparisons or trying to unify the differences. In other words, *common* does not mean a common identity. *Common* includes those who have nothing in common but have at least that in common.

*Common* is primarily a space of freedom – it is the empty space between us, that allows the search of an identity, the possibility of a community. We should not speak about “the men” or “the people” but “the mans” and “the peoples” – the human plurality that Arendt writes about in *Qu’est-ce que la politique?*

The co-existence always presupposes some separation and distance. It is necessary a gesture of appeal, something that is announced without being imposed. An organisation encouraging exchanges and opening the way to the responsibilities of the *common*. Maybe we should invent new forms of association and forgot the past ones, already known and easier. The past does not have the answers for the present!

According to Marie-José Mondzain (*Nada tudo qualquer coisa ou a arte das imagens como poder de transformação*) the third



state – the people – has to remind the other two classes that they are nothing, and can do nothing without this third part. But the people also must confront their own disappearance, so that the present struggle is not reduced to the desire of taking the place of domination.

“Obviously there is no need of fighting to overcome this single tyrant, for he is automatically defeated if the country refuses consent to its own enslavement: it is not necessary to deprive him of anything, but simply to give him nothing; there is no need that the country make an effort to do anything for itself provided it does nothing against itself.” La Boetie, in *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*

The contemporary combat should be the will to change this authoritarian society divided into social classes. Once one becomes aware of this, we then must adjust our struggle to the possibilities of intervention in the real context. No false hopes or illusions but realism. The current method should not remain.

“But to arrive at the realisation of its

strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics. It must return to its natural instincts, it must proclaim the Rights of Laziness, a thousand times more noble and more sacred than the anaemic Rights of Man concocted by the metaphysical lawyers of the bourgeois revolution. It must accustom itself to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting.” Paul Lafargue, in *The Right to be Lazy*

This essay, written by Anabela Bravo, was published in the first edition of ANANQUE’s fanzine, in September 2012.

## Book review

◀ page 21

an ending, saying: “Wherever we are going, I don’t expect it will be a place from which return will be possible.” And in many ways Bugar is right because when she does eventually go back to her birthplace, 25 years later, she finds a country that bears no resemblance to that of her childhood. Looking at it with the clear-sighted detachment of an exile, she sees a country devastated by years of misrule, its people and places desolate and defeated by their past. *Burying the*

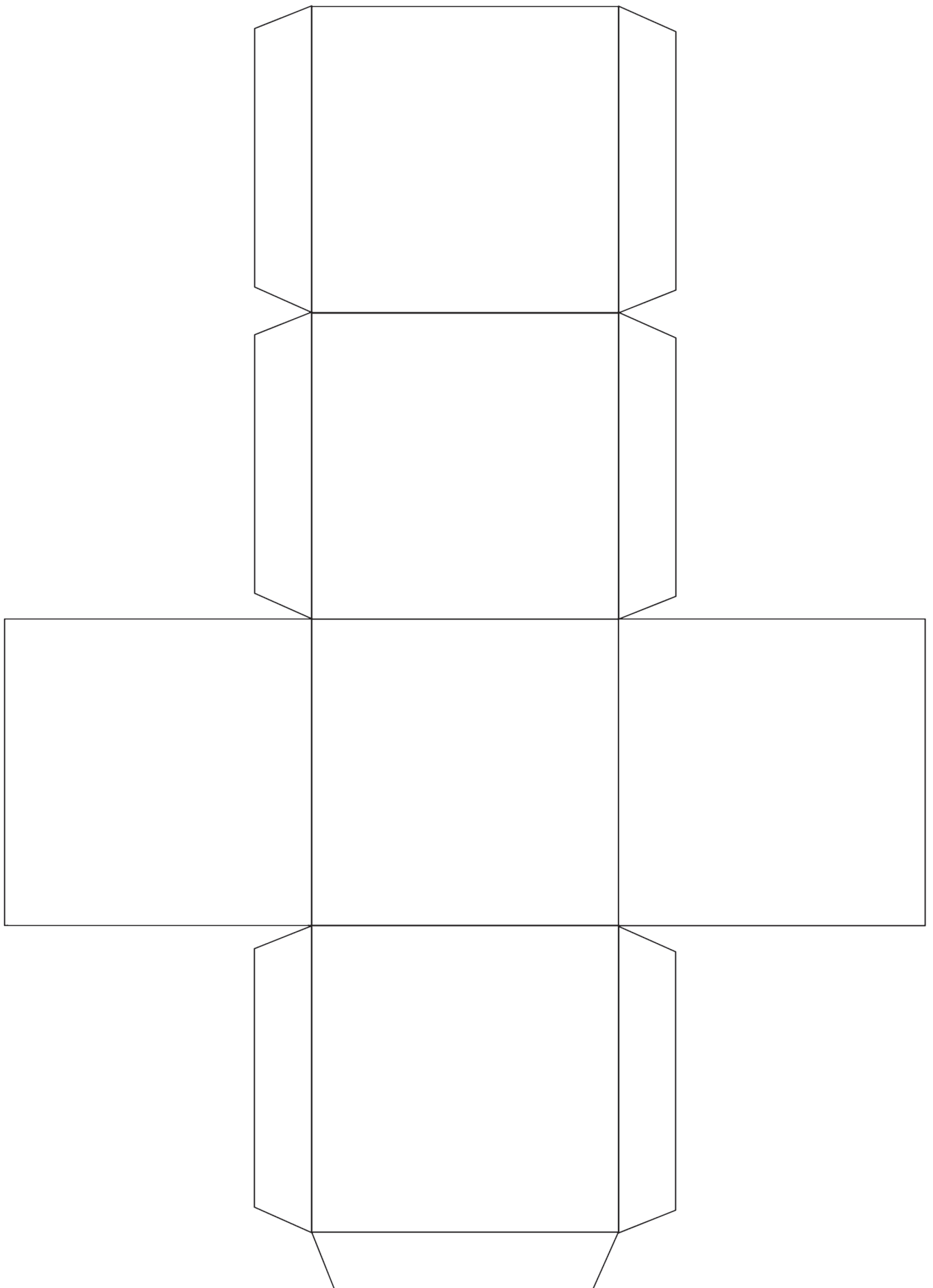
*Typewriter* is a work of both innocence and experience, documenting a childhood hastened into premature adulthood by dire circumstances. It is a book about humanity and hope, but above all it is a book about courage. And there is certainly plenty of courage among the Bugans, who left their homeland on a ‘Big Unknown Voyage’ in pursuit of a new life, in a new country, with nothing but each other. Now, over two decades later, Carmen Bugar relays their

story with uncompromising candour, dignity and grace, a story about “a childhood in which a typewriter was buried, unearthed, buried, and unearthed again by two people who had children for whom they wanted a better future”.

Justina Jase

*Burying the Typewriter: Childhood Under the Eye of the Secret Police* by Carmen Bugar, £9.99, published by Pan Macmillan.





SPORT

# Sunderland's big mistake



## Sunderland AFC appoint a fascist manager

Following the recent dismissal of Martin O'Neil, Sunderland Football Club has appointed Paulo Di Canio as their new manager.

Di Canio – whose most recent managerial position was at Swindon – was a player of reasonable repute, enjoying a 23-year playing career that took him to many of Europe's greatest teams. However, he is probably best known to many fans for pushing over a premier league referee in 1998, and for giving a fascist salute to the crowd whilst playing for Lazio.

Di Canio is a self-confessed fascist who openly claims Mussolini as his idol. This must have passed the bosses at Sunderland by, as the club's Chief Executive, Margaret Byrne, gave a statement following the furore surrounding Di Canio's appointment, in which she said that "To accuse him [Di

page 19 ►►

## THE QUIZ

1. What did Sultan Murad IV ban in Constantinople.
2. What did China's largest social networking site Baidu ban discussion of at the end of April this year?
3. Who were the straw men of the Old Bailey?
4. Francoist censors made changes to the plot of the 1953 film *Mogambo* to avoid mention of infidelity. What did they end up portraying instead?

Answers on page 20

*The Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard, illustrated by Paul Petard, is available for £5 post free from [www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk) or from our bookshop at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

