

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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9 SEPTEMBER 2006

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INDONESIA PREPARING FOR WAR?

EXCLUSIVE

An investigation funded by donations from Australian supporters of the Free West Papua campaign claims it has inadvertently found evidence that Indonesia is planning an invasion of the troubled area of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

A report compiled on the fact finding mission by investigator Nick Chesterfield says it has uncovered a huge buildup of military forces on the borders between Indonesian controlled West Papua and PNG.

The report, which was completed last month, said: "Evidence was uncovered that a massive ground offensive is in the final stages of planning, and there are questions that need to be answered publicly."

Chesterfield originally went into the border areas to check on 600 Papuan students who are claiming refugee status there.

The students, who fear reprisals following a violent pro-independence demonstration in March, claim that they have been subjected to beatings, torture, retaliatory action and reprisal killings by Indonesian authorities.

But the investigation found there was far more to the region than met the eye. The Indonesian military-industrial complex is thought to have significant holdings in the north of PNG, extracting useful minerals and timber from the region.

The highly profitable arrangement is dependent on stability in the country, with

contracts currently upheld through state authority and massive corruption.

Smuggling in the north has been observed by the team, who took photos of ships allegedly taking weapons into the country, and timber back out again. Chesterfield noted that these runs, although crossing the borders, were being systematically overlooked by customs officials. He said: "The initial barges identified were the Romnas 10 and the Boongaya. We now also have the WM Benefit Plus II (although some of us believe that the Benefit is actually a repainted Romnas 10)."

In a short period at one dock, observing the locally infamous 'Kopassus run' and related ship movements, photographs were taken of the WM Benefit Plus II.

However such blatant practices, which allegedly happen at nearly every level, have caused major internal upheavals, and recent reports have suggested that state control is slipping.

Logging operations by Indonesian front companies have prompted shows of public anger in the north of PNG, such as at Vanimo, a coastal port just 20 miles from the border. Chesterfield said: "Vanimo was seething when we arrived, having just had a demonstration of over 3,000 people against Rimbunan and the TNI [Indonesian army] involvement in logging. All the landowners in the forest concession areas have got together and put in a rival bid for community timber management.

"Vanimo's economy is completely controlled by the TNI, and people are



IT'S BEEN ICE: A protest camp designed to stop the progress of heavy industry encroaching on rural wilderness in Iceland has disbanded. People from 18 different countries made up the gathering of environmental activists, and in a closing statement they said: "we hope that we have inspired and encouraged others to take action against the destruction of nature in whatever way they are able. People have to realise the importance and fragility of the wilderness before it is (soon) too late. There is not infinite wilderness to be exploited, nor is there infinite time to wait around for a miracle to help us. We have enjoyed an immense level of support and co-operation from a wide range of people in Iceland. Thank you to all of the amazing people who have helped so far in the struggle against this horrific destruction of nature."

finally starting to wake up in their strong opposition to this and organise. The agents walk around as if they own

the place and they really do intimidate local people." The population have subsequently ousted the TNI from the

region, but a seeming withdrawal by PNG's government from the border

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PRIVATELY EDUCATED

The UCU education union have attacked moves to introduce commercially-based vocational training across the country, ten months after a government white paper first set it as a preferred policy.

The West Midlands is the venue for the sixth attempt this year to privatise vocational training for 16-19 year olds.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the Black Country has begun advertising for a vocational provision scheme in West Walsall to be provided by a commercial company. Although the contract will also be tendered internally, the high likelihood that it will be taken on by a company with little or no previous experience has raised fears that

control of public education is being gradually passed to private ownership.

The move has angered local unionists, who have said that the process is likely to bring in companies with little knowledge or understanding of the educational requirements of the local populace, at a greater cost.

They also believe LSC, which is following the government's latest guidance from their education white paper, will create division amongst nearby colleges.

Freedom was one of the few media groups to thoroughly analyse the paper, which came out in early November and suggested that all failing schools could have their functions taken over by corporate groups paid by the state to provide educational services.

Companies such as Tarmac (a construction company) and Mercers (human resources) have already involved themselves in schools in places like Telford, but the LSC appears to be taking the trend a step further by involving vocational courses.

At the time, anarchist teachers commented: "The less the government intervenes the better, but if they are handing control to other groups or companies which are even less accountable that's even worse."

The Black Country LSC says the competition will 'provide a better balance of provision to improve choice and to improve participation', but UCU says investment in existing colleges and schools, co-operation and strategic planning would be better than local rivalry. The union also fears that private companies may fail to extend the horizons of young people who are too frequently directed towards limited training and employment choices.

Chris May, UCU West Midlands regional official, said: "What students want most is a well motivated and skilled lecturer, providing quality education and training in a well resourced, clean institution. I am not convinced that extra competition brings anything but disorder and division to a sector that needs stability

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CAMP DRAX-RAY

A correspondent for Freedom at the summer's largest climate action in Yorkshire has reported that the event proved to be of mixed success.

The camp hit national headlines earlier this month when campaigners attempted to briefly shut down Drax power station with a series of direct actions including lock ons to heavy machinery and blockades of major routes.

Rebecca told Freedom: "It was organised in a non-hierarchical way, and was organised in a neighbourhood system. Delegates from each neighbourhood were sent to a general meeting. There were workshops every day and action planning meetings. There were facilities for media, legal and facilitation problems.

"There wasn't the number of people organisers would have looked for - about 2,000 - and maybe 600 to 700 people were actually there. People had a lot of different ideas but there were three main systems showing alternative living methods, education on climate

change and actions.

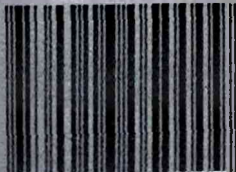
"Around 500 people went out on actions the camp wasn't raided but some of the police were horrible, and there was a Section 6 (anti-terrorism order) over the whole of West Yorkshire. One affinity group I talked to said some nasty stuff happened like beatings with truncheons and CS gas being sprayed in peoples' faces. There were 38 arrests, and even the kids' bloc was heavily penned in by cops.

"Some of the actions were very effective and they got a lot of public discussion and analysis in the media, and it brought up a different side of the debate.

"There are smaller offshoots coming out of it. There will be a Northern Eco Action Gathering, with workshops and discussions on action planning, skill sharing and strategising. That will be on Saturday 11th-12th November at the Common Place in Leeds."

The low turnout is the second in recent weeks, after Earth First! Saw far fewer people than expected.

ISSN 0016-0504



Vol 67
No 17

9 770016 050009

Home and away

Every little helps

Tesco has been blamed after one of its suppliers, Northern Foods, revealed it will close its Trafford Park Bakery in Manchester, with the loss of 690 jobs.

The site produces a range of chilled pastry products, but made a loss of £3m in 2005/06 after continued pressure from sole buyer Tesco to slash prices or face a total loss of business.

Northern will also cut 210 jobs from its Palethorpes plant in Shropshire.

The move by Northern is part of a shake-up announced in May after poor sales triggered two profit warnings. The GMB said "This is another example of Tesco throwing their buying power weight about by depressing prices and moving production at will to other plants."

The GMB will be asking the OFT, which is currently looking at the power of the supermarkets, to examine this specific case as an abuse of power. No other action looks likely.

Contents unknown

A squatted social centre could have its eviction stayed, as a question over ownership of the land, mostly by Birmingham city council, has arisen.

On the 24th August 2006, members of the Cottage of Content collective were summoned to Birmingham Priority Courts to defend their occupation of the disused Sparkbrook community centre, at risk from developers.

The discrepancy lies with Birmingham council's title to the land: the claimants do indeed own the land and property in question, but not in its entirety. According to the Land Registry submitted by the defence, the council own only a part of the building, a small portion of the rear hall and part of the garden. It is thought that after Birmingham council expanded the hall they failed to acquire or register the rest of the land as theirs.

The court case resumed on 7th September.

BNP case thrown out

An employment tribunal has thrown out the case of an BNP ex-councillor who claimed that his sacking was racially motivated. Arthur Redfean was fired on health and safety grounds after his politics were uncovered, on the grounds that his presence at work could provoke reprisal attacks.

Redfean, who was dismissed in 2004, was a driver on a bus for the disabled in Bradford. A large proportion of the company's staff and customers are of Asian origin and the company took the view that, under Health and Safety Law, in order to avoid any risks to customers and staff, it would be within their rights to dismiss someone who held Mr Redfean's views.

In the words of Lord Justice Mummery, Redfean was "no more dismissed on racial grounds than an employee who is dismissed for racially abusing his employer."

Asylum protests

On 18th August, asylum seekers and anti-racist campaigners gathered outside Dallas Court Reporting Centre in Salford Quays, to protest against the treatment of asylum seekers and the continued practice of detaining people at Dallas Court.

Many asylum seekers are forced to 'report' to Dallas Court every day, week or month. Many have no cash to pay for travel, as they are not allowed to work and the only support they have are ASDA electronic vouchers. They are subject to arrest and detention, and removal of food and accommodation if they refuse.

Around the world

PALESTINE: The Israeli state forces have refused to let protesters demonstrate against the occupation and the separation fence. One demonstrator described the scene. "We started as usual from the village centre at noon. About hundred people – Palestinians from Bil'in and from out of it, including high level persons of the national leadership, Internationals, and Israelis of the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative and 'guests', and about five teams of local and international media.

"When we approached the route of the separation fence, the state forces advanced towards us, declared the area closed military zone, and the demonstration as illegal.

"Disregarding that, we continued marching and when we met half way on the way up the hill, they started to shower us with shock grenades ... and started pushing us back to the village. As we put up some passive resistance, some of the state force personnel used batons, hitting people's legs mainly and injured some of the demonstrators."

LEBANON: Seven Lebanese youth working with the RASH, the antifascist Red & Anarchist Skinheads collective in Europe, decided to return to Lebanon to help with relief work as the death toll in their country mounted.

Within a few days they were risking their lives walking through southern Lebanon with 80lbs of food and water on their backs to arrive at villages near the Israeli border that humanitarian organisations had deemed unreachable.

With Israeli missiles falling all around them, they supplied food to starving people unable to evacuate their villages. 21 year-old Hassam is a part of the group who on their own in spontaneous acts of mutual aid continued to provide aid in the most dangerous regions of Lebanon."

He said "There were people who weren't able to leave [the southern villages] and those were the people with the most need... We choose to do this on a volunteer basis to show the people who we were helping that we are not expecting from them anything, were doing this really to help."

MEXICO: The Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) on 27th August warned the Mexican government that peaceful protests can easily become an armed uprising. The Mexican guerilla group, based in Guerrero and Michoacán, called early last month for 'armed defence' and 'political action' against president-elect Felipe Calderón. The EPR asserts that current president Vicente Fox, of Calderón's party, is 'shuffling' the situation to allow the 'imposition of the extreme right' through Calderón, and it says that Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is the victim of a 'fraud'.

"Military action is the last resort when the forms of peaceful protest fail, and in politico-military action we acknowledge that it will be the people's organisations that determine the cause and development of the fight to achieve complete freedom," the EPR said in a communique.

NIGERIA: International union groups have condemned the killing of a kidnapped Nigerian trade unionist in the Niger Delta.

Nelson Ujeya, a member of the Pengassan oil workers' union, was killed when a military force ambushed the kidnappers, who had been transporting him to be released. Ten other people were killed in the raid.

Ujeya was abducted on a visit to inspect a Letugbene community project, accompanied by state officials.

Pengassan and the blue-collar Nigerian oil workers' union, Nupeng, held a joint National Executive Council meeting in Benin City, Nigeria, on 30th August to take up the matter of security for oil workers employed in the Niger Delta.

SOUTH KOREA: A strike at Ssangyong's troubled motor company (pictured below) called on 23rd August shows no signs of stopping as *Freedom* goes to press.

Union members crushed a deal proposed by bosses and union chiefs in a prolonged strike at the car manufacturer, just as elections began for the union leadership.



Prison news

Stamps for prisoners

Postage stamps are important to prisoners, helping them to contact friends and family, to pursue appeals, and to maintain ties with the movement. Yet, because of the meagre funds that prisoners are allowed to spend (even if funds are available, which for many prisoners they are not) these lowly priced items can sometimes be beyond their reach. While most prisoners are allowed to receive stamps, sending them in can be a problem for prisoner support groups who support prisoners internationally (obviously British stamps are of no use to a German prisoner for example).

International Reply Coupons (available from the Post Office) can be used by some prisoners, but these are expensive and not all prisoners can use them. In these days of greater travel though, there is a more simple solution: if you are travelling to Spain this year, for example, why not buy a few postage stamps with your spare Euros, you can either send them directly to needy Spanish prisoners (addresses from brightonabc.org.uk) or pass them onto your local ABC group. While all our prisoners can use this kind of help, at this moment in time, if you are visiting Germany this year, or if you live there, please consider sending some stamps to the following anarchist prisoners (a letter or just a short note including your name and address should be included):

- Thomas Meyer-Falk, JVA Bruschal, Z-3117, Schonbornstr 32, Bruschal, Germany
- Gabriel Pombo Da Silva, AZ401JS284/04, Landgericht, Postfach 52034, Germany
- Bart De Geeter, AZ401JS284/04, Landgericht, Postfach 52034, Germany
- Jose Fernandez Delgado, AZ401JS284/04, Landgericht, Postfach 52034, Germany

Contact Leeds ABC, PO Box 53, Leeds, LS8 4WP, or Brighton ABC, PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ

Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike

As *Freedom* goes to press, some 2,400 Palestinian political prisoners are on hunger strike in Israel's Al Naqab prison in the Negev Desert. The hunger strike was initiated in protest at the routine use of strip-searching by the Israeli authorities against the prisoners and their visitors. This latest act of non-violent resistance began with 20 prisoners and quickly became 2,400, the entire population of the jail.

In recent weeks there has been an escalation in aggressive Israeli practices against Palestinian prisoners. Female visitors from Qalqilia and Salfit in the West Bank received the most horrific treatment during their visiting day, and on the day allotted for Bethlehem families, Israeli guards began ordering them to

strip naked, despite an agreement to stop strip-searching family members. One of the girls involved came from Qalqilia in the north-western West Bank to visit her brother. She refused to strip naked in front of Israeli prison guards, so the police did not allow her to see her brother. The same thing happened with William Jalal from Salfit and Khalid Assakrah from Bethlehem, who had also travelled a particularly long way. Of the 2,400 prisoners on hunger strike, 500 are being held without even being charged.

Corrupt screws suspended

Within weeks of the Prison Service trying to play down claims made in an official report that at least 1,000 prison guards in England and Wales were 'bent', 14 screws at London's Pentonville prison were suspended on allegations of smuggling in drugs and mobile phones. All 14 male and female guards are also alleged to have had 'inappropriate relations' with prisoners. The Victorian jail is currently so overcrowded that the suspension of the 14 screws meant they had to 'lock out', accepting no more prisoners, due to the resultant 'staff shortage'.

Crap arrest of the week

An Italian Earth Liberation Front activist has been jailed for breaching the terms of her house arrest. Chiara Sacchetti was arrested for allegedly planning to blow

In a separate incident at Kia motors in the same country, Kia noted that it had lost 570 billion won (£313m) of sales due to a partial strike that has continued for over three weeks.

The labour union intensified its strike by holding a partial strike six hours day and night on 25th August, up from the previous four hours.

USA: The genetically modified food giant Monsanto continued their buy up of the seed industry with the announcement of their takeover of the world's leading cotton seed company Delta & Pine Land Company (D&PL). Once the merger is complete Monsanto will control over 57% of the US cotton seed market and will hold power over millions of cotton producers over the world.

Delta & Pine Land (deltaandpine.com for the corporate website) is notorious for its early development, with the US Department of Agriculture, of terminator technology – plants that are genetically modified to produce sterile seeds at harvest.

With 75% of the world's farmers saving their seed, there's some serious cash to be made. With the risk of cross contamination so high, a farmer whose crop becomes contaminated by a neighbour's GM variety will find their own harvest infertile, and despite having sewn seed saved from previous year's crops for generations will be forced to buy 'new improved' seed, from their chisel-jawed Monsanto sales rep, who says, "I'll be back" every year for ever more.

up electricity pylons carrying nuclear energy. She was released on bail on the condition that she didn't meet with any of the other suspects in the case. However the other suspects were also on house arrest and this is where it starts getting tricky. Chiara actually lives with the other suspects in the case, and so a chance encounter over Sunday lunch was probably on the cards at some point... For more see spiritoffreedom.org.uk

(from SchNews)

Arson trial put off

A district judge has delayed the trial of four environmentalists accused of arson to allow more time to defence lawyers studying evidence.

The trial may not start until March after Judge Aitken after a hearing over whether to allow the activists access to their six co-defendants' statements.

The four have a legal entitlement to the material to help with their defence.

Lawyers for the six people who pleaded guilty had argued that the safety of their clients would be in danger if the material was released, and that they might repudiate their statements if they are made public, but this was rejected by Aitken.

'Operation Backfire' saw a dozen environmental activists arrested and indicted for acts of 'ecosabotage' between 1996 and 2001.

News

Unions won't dip toes

Thames Water are cutting jobs, but despite huge potential public support for action, unions are sitting on the side

The two main unions involved in proposed cuts at Thames Water have both said they will work with the company to 'keep redundancies to a minimum'.

The GMB and Unison, who both have significant numbers in the company, have not at the time of going to press made any threat of action over the move, which will see a full quarter of the workforce potentially cut.

Kelly Rogers, GMB Organiser for members working for Thames Water said: "The GMB will seek to ensure that no front line jobs are cut and that investment continues to improve the service to customers. GMB will also seek an assurance that there will be no compulsory redundancies."

Bob Levi, branch secretary for Unison's Thames Water branch said: "We cannot guarantee that there won't be job losses here. We have five hundred Unison members in Swindon and we will be doing our best to make sure that no one faces compulsory redundancy."

"The local stewards in the company were briefed on this matter before the news was released, and will continue to work with the company to minimise the impact on members and to ensure that redundancies wherever possible are voluntary."

The weak response has drawn criticism, as the unions are seemingly in an extremely favourable position to resist cuts through action.

The company has repeatedly been in the public eye for ripping off its customers, with price hike being transferred directly to stockholders rather than reinvested in the aging pipe networks, which have subsequently leaked and contributed to a drought in the south east this year.

The company was also largely let off with a warning by regulatory body OfWat, who merely forced them to reinvest more of their money into maintenance rather than give it to stockholders.

The timing of the cuts, which would help offset the costs of the enforced maintenance programme, would seem to be a case of cutting another area of the company to maintain profits while the work is carried out.

The company increased its profits by 30% last year to £346.5 million, and is looking into a sale of the company, which requires that it both be seen to be efficient and that it keeps its headline profits up regardless of OfWat decisions.

As a monopoly, Thames Water can afford to cut services in one section of the company and remain likely to retain its customer base.

Late last month a memo to staff on cuts, which the company have been planning for some time according to senior figures, was leaked suggesting that up to 1,500 staff could go as part of the cull.

In the email to staff, Thames Water chief executive Jeremy Pelczer said: "If we are to secure the required level of investment we would like to put into our infrastructure in the 2010 Price Review we must demonstrate that we are providing an efficient service."

"Any business has to be more efficient than its competitors in order to secure a long-term future."

"I have to guard against any complacency, towards customer service or efficiency, that may arise because we are a monopoly."

"This may lead to a head count reduction of up to 25% by early 2010. To put that in context, it would mean



A burst water main in Kensington Church Street, London

an average of around 300 people per year."

Thames stock dipped slightly following the announcement, but held

steady and is still looking likely to rise back up to the point where it was before it was fined.

RWE, which also has interests in gas,

electricity and recycling, bought Thames Water for £4.8bn in 2000, but analysts reckon it could now fetch a far higher price.

Rave new world?

Uninvited guests in the shape of the riot squad crashed a free party in Chesterford, Essex, over the bank holiday weekend. All was going well for the thousand or so twinkle-eyed party-goers until the Saturday, when hundreds of cops from five different forces surrounded a sound system and waded into the crowd with truncheons swinging.

Some indignant punters defended themselves with sticks and, showing their commitment to preventing climate change, burnt out a cop car.

The police claim that revellers acted 'disgracefully', going so far as to 'attack police dogs'. Anyone who's been faced with a police dog will doubt the likelihood of anyone being daft enough to attack one, no matter how many drugs they've taken (not that the pills are any good any more).

Contrary to reports in the tabloid rags, it was heavy-handed police that kicked off all the violence and eye-

witnesses report seeing police beating and injuring dangerous threats such as young girls and people chilling on the floor. Out came the CS gas and many revellers' Saturday night out ended with bruises after a battering, and a few severe bites from police dogs.

A number of police and ravers were hospitalised and 34 arrests were made, but this was just the most brutal in a series of busts over the weekend. In Gloucester, cops used batons and CS gas to attack and shut down another small party in a business park.

Shortly after the smiley-faced Acid House craze, 'rave' mutated and eventually splintered in to many sub-genres, all with their own dress codes, drug choices and attitudes. The truly large scale parties of the early '90s might not have been repeated.

However, large numbers of people who like a bit of uncomplicated partying to their preferred choice of

repetitive beats have helped build up a regular rota of successful events all over the country, all year round. What has changed is the numbers of people these 'raves' now attract - smaller groups of mates with their own sound systems, sometimes teaming up with others here and there. As usual, it's just taken a while for the media big boys to catch on.

Recent events would seem to suggest that the police may now be turning their attention back to the dangerous subversives who see dancing in a field as having a good time, rather than the dangerous, illegal and possibly terrorist activity it really is. And in keeping with their general 'crackdown' remit the cops are prepared to use whatever force they fancy to remain the country's top party poopers. For one forum site supporting DIY partying, see squatjuice.com

(taken from schnews.org.uk)

Postal strikes up

A wildcat strike has seen 300 workers at Exeter Mail Centre walk out and stay out after bosses and unions failed to end the dispute. Bosses at the company originally disciplined a union official for his sickness record in an incident which other workers said was unfair and violated normal procedures.

Although the official has since had his pay reinstated, management actions during the strike have angered workers.

Management scabbed on the strike and have attempted to smear the name of the workforce in local press. They also tried to impose new conditions on duty rotation within the company.

Another development is the use of a secondary picket at Exeter Airport which is reportedly causing delays. Phil Chadwick, spokesman for the Communication Workers Union (CWU) said "we now need to negotiate to try to get an agreement to return normal work". However the fact that any return to work would be under the contentious new

conditions is hampering management efforts to end the strike.

Elsewhere in the Post Office, 93 workers from seven offices across south west Wales were due to stage a two-hour official walkout on Monday 4th September in protest at the closure of offices in Swansea and Llanelli. In Swansea there was a picket of the Kingsway Post Office and a protest outside WH Smith. The strike follows wildcats in Oxford in July, Wolverhampton in May, and Belfast and Plymouth in March. Postal workers in Oxfordshire have been out again this month, starting a three-day strike on 31st August. A hundred strikers are coming out in reaction to bosses breaking national and local agreements. In addition there are upcoming official strikes over closures and job losses related to a franchise agreement with WHSmith, with a 70% vote in favour of strike action in Greater Manchester.

The Exeter centre processes 1.2 million letters and parcels a day.

News

Sending a message

As we go to press, the violence is dying down in Oaxaca and the state has lost control, reports Rob Ray

Revolutionary forces supporting the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO) seem to have all but taken control of the city, and violence has subsided while negotiations take place.

Freedom spoke with George Salzman, an American physicist and anarchist on the ground in Oaxaca. He said:

"The situation on the ground has been somewhat improved. The last death happened on 22nd August by police shooting. There have been some injuries since.

"The federal government has been troubled by the international publicity and especially by the call of Amnesty International for respect for human rights.

"The negotiations between APPO and the federal government are going nowhere. There is really nothing that can be negotiated. The state represents the interests of the grand capitalists. APPO is seeking not only removal of the current tyrannical governor but, much more significantly, doing away with the party's mode of governing.

"The popular assembly of the people of Oaxaca (APPO) is organised non-hierarchically. I see that as a very important change.

"The state government in Oaxaca is essentially defunct, without the power to suppress the rebellion and with dwindling support from the bulk of the population. The federal government can hardly attack APPO while it is supposedly negotiating with it."

Shootings in the last month had been commonplace from the state

authorities, along with beatings and attacks on perceived leaders of the uprising.

Along with terrorising of the populace, the extraordinary decision was also taken by the military to render Channel 9, the government-controlled television station recently occupied by APPO, unusable.

A night-time attack on control equipment on 21st August near the station's powerful transmission tower saw electronics smashed and sprayed with machine-gun fire.

The decision to effectively burn their bridges rather than attempt a re-taking of the station has been seen as a tacit admission that the state government itself, under massively unpopular Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, does not feel capable of re-taking the facility.

Following the attack several commercial radio stations were seized and are now broadcasting.

A day later, heavily armed police drive through the streets of Oaxaca, shooting at will. A teacher was shot, and as radio stations sounded an alert, hundreds of people filled the streets to offer back-up and to try to detain the aggressors. The five hundred barricades that protect the teachers' encampments around the city were reinforced.

Oaxaca, one of the poorest areas of Mexico and bounded by the rebellious Chiapas region to its east, erupted into full-scale rebellion in July.

The teachers had been attempting to negotiate fairer state-wide terms for the population, including a rise in the minimum wage for the region. When



Teachers and their supporters sit next to closed businesses in Oaxaca on 29th August 2006

negotiations broke down, they stayed out on strike, with 40,000 people occupying the centre of the city.

The prolonged strike drew a large amount of support from poorer quarters of the state, and over time support grew, with several huge marches through the city reaching over 100,000 people at times.

Then, on 14th June, Ulises ordered an attack on the camp under cover of darkness. Bullets and tear gas were fired at unarmed civilians, which troopers broke down tents and terrorised children at the camp.

The response was an explosion, with the police forced first out of the plaza where the teachers were staying, then a

march saw 400,000 people out against the state. Tough barriers were thrown up to defend the teachers' enclave, and within three days a coalition of human rights groups, trade unions, and community action groups had called a general forum, forming APPO and subsequently declaring the state government illegitimate.

The spigots are turning

In the wake of an international fight between senior TUC members and the Iraq oil union, a strong strike has won increases to pay and profit sharing. Oil lines to the capitol of Baghdad have been re-opened after workers received guarantees from the ministry in charge.

About 350 oil workers from the Iraq Pipes and Lines Company in the southern city of Basra and 200 gas workers in Nasiriyah, about 200 miles south-east of Baghdad, walked off the job, which had been paying just \$130 to \$280 a month.

The walkout represented a huge majority of the 700-strong syndicate, and halted the pumping of oil from all Iraqi ports.

Union leader Hassan al-Asadi said: "We received a document from the ministry of oil. It is a document to increase our salaries and to pay us [a] share in seasonal profits."

However, Housan Mahmoud, a womens' and labour rights activist and chair of Iraq Freedom Congress Abroad, said the union had only given the

government a stay of execution. She said: "If the government doesn't deliver on the rest of the demands, the strikes will resume."

Pay was part of a four-part set of demands from the union, which said:

1. wages must be paid in due time;
2. overtime work must be paid;
3. increase workers' allowances;
4. provide ambulances at working places to transfer sick workers to hospital when needed.

Iraq's three main oil refineries – Dora, Beiji and Shuaiba – are currently working at half capacity, processing around 350,000 barrels per day compared to 700,000 barrels a day before the war three years ago.

Iraq currently imports refined oil due to the shortages, while Basra accounts for most of Iraq's crude exports, a similar situation to that currently being experienced by fellow oil giant Nigeria.

Underlying the struggles is the US government plan to transform the Iraqi economy from publicly-owned to

privately held free market holdings. This holds true for the publicly-owned oil industry that represents 70% of the Iraqi economy.

The government is however clashing with the major oil companies, who it is alleged are deliberately avoiding the exploitation of Iraq resources to keep oil prices up. Either way, Iraqis get nothing.

While the Saddam Hussein government crushed the Iraq trade union movement in the 1970s, labour leaders say workers have not fared any better since, under the US occupation.

Unemployment is about 70% nationally and attacks against union leaders have continued under the US occupation.

Hadi Saleh, a leader of the Iraq Federation of Trade Unionists (IFTU), was assassinated in January of this year, and Ali Hassan Abd, a member of the General Union of Oil and Gas Workers (GUOW) was assassinated in February.

Decades of shame

A homosexual and a transsexual are to be excluded from an agreement to give state pensions to victims of Franco's dictatorship.

Maria Trinidad Martí, who now lives in the Balearics, spent seventeen years in jail when she was arrested by Franco's police, after she was accused of 'creating a public scandal' by dressing up as a woman (a law which remained effective until 1995).

Maria says that, from a very young age, she and their twin, now dead, knew the bodies they had did not fit with how they felt. One day in 1970, in the midst of a celebration of comunión in Armilla (Granada), six agents of the Civil Guard stopped them and they were sent to jail at Huelva (along with Badajoz, this was where gays and transsexuals were taken).

Maria believes they had 'luck' to be 'so young' and 'very feminine'. Even so, she said that the violations, beatings, insults and even electrical shocks that many prisoners received are not easy to

forget. "We had to look for a protector so that they did not do anything to us", she added.

When leaving the jail, the law established an exile of a further year. They were transferred to live to Palm, where they could find a job and settle down. "Since then", they assured, "it was to us far better. But it is hard to live with that shame in the memory".

The central government originally said life pensions would be offered of around 750 euros a month, in addition to an initial payment of about 12,000 euros. A promise that, according to lawyers, the government "have failed to fulfil because the fear the pressure of the (centre-right Christian political party) PP".

libcom.org



Feature

New thinking in the kibbutz?

James Horrox investigates a seeming resurgence of anarchist influence in the Israeli kibbutz movement

If there is, or has ever been, a successful practical implementation of anarchist communism, it is to be found in the form of Israel's kibbutz movement. In this network of self-sufficient, federally connected settlements, the absence of private property, negation of the wage system, integration of manual and white-collar work, and absolute equality in production and consumption successfully came together for the best part of a century to create a society devoid of the social stratification and institutionalised alienation which define the capitalist socio-economic model.

For many years the kibbutzim came closer to the anarchist ideal than any other such experiment, their longevity alone prompting Jewish ideologue Martin Buber to declare the kibbutz a 'signal non-failure'.

Since Buber's famous declaration of success however, many would argue that the kibbutz has failed. Over recent years the main body of the movement has taken on a distinctly capitalist complexion, with many of the settlements having abandoned their original principles and developed into heavily structured, hierarchically organised businesses, discarding their characteristic form of direct democracy in favour of ballot-voting and introducing differential pay scales.

But with this perceived decline in the fortunes of the kibbutzim, the final years of the twentieth century witnessed the beginning of a new phase in the movement's history, a phase which has at its core a clear and apparently deliberate reconnection with anarchist thought.

Rising up alongside the traditional kibbutzim there currently exist a growing number of new settlements and quasi-anarchic, kibbutz-style organisations across Israel that have come into being as a response to the crises and privatisation that have all but destroyed the mainstream kibbutz movement.

These groups spent the 1990s gaining in strength and number and tentatively forming a rudimentary network between themselves, until in 2000 what began as a disparate miscellany of communal projects came together under the umbrella of the Ma'agal Hakvutzot, – the Circle of Groups, perhaps the most significant of all the recent developments in the history of the kibbutz idea.

The stated aims of the organisation are "to support the expansion of the communal idea in Israel, to nurture solidarity between groups, to promote important educational projects and to work towards an Israeli society, both on an economic and political level, based on social democratic values".

In achieving these aims, Ma'agal Hakvutzot incorporates a number of differing models of organisation based

on the original anarchist communitarian ethos of the kibbutz idea, of which two are of particular interest in terms of their practical realisation of anarchistic principles.

The first of these, and in many ways the backbone of Ma'agal Hakvutzot, are the Tnuat Bogrim or 'graduate movement' groups of the youth movement Noar Oved ve'Lomed (Working and Student Youth Movement, otherwise known as NOAL).

Historically involved with the building of traditional kibbutzim, these groups responded to the crises of the 1980s was to abandon their traditional role within the kibbutz movement proper, and instead evolve into a distinct new stream of "small, intimate, consensus-driven, anarcho-socialist groups".

As Habonim Dror's James Grant-Rosenhead describes: "The new NOAL graduates of the 1990s decided to cut out the kibbutz intermediary from their traditional symbiosis. They retained their small, intimate group life as separate new adult communities after they had graduated from the youth movement and the army.

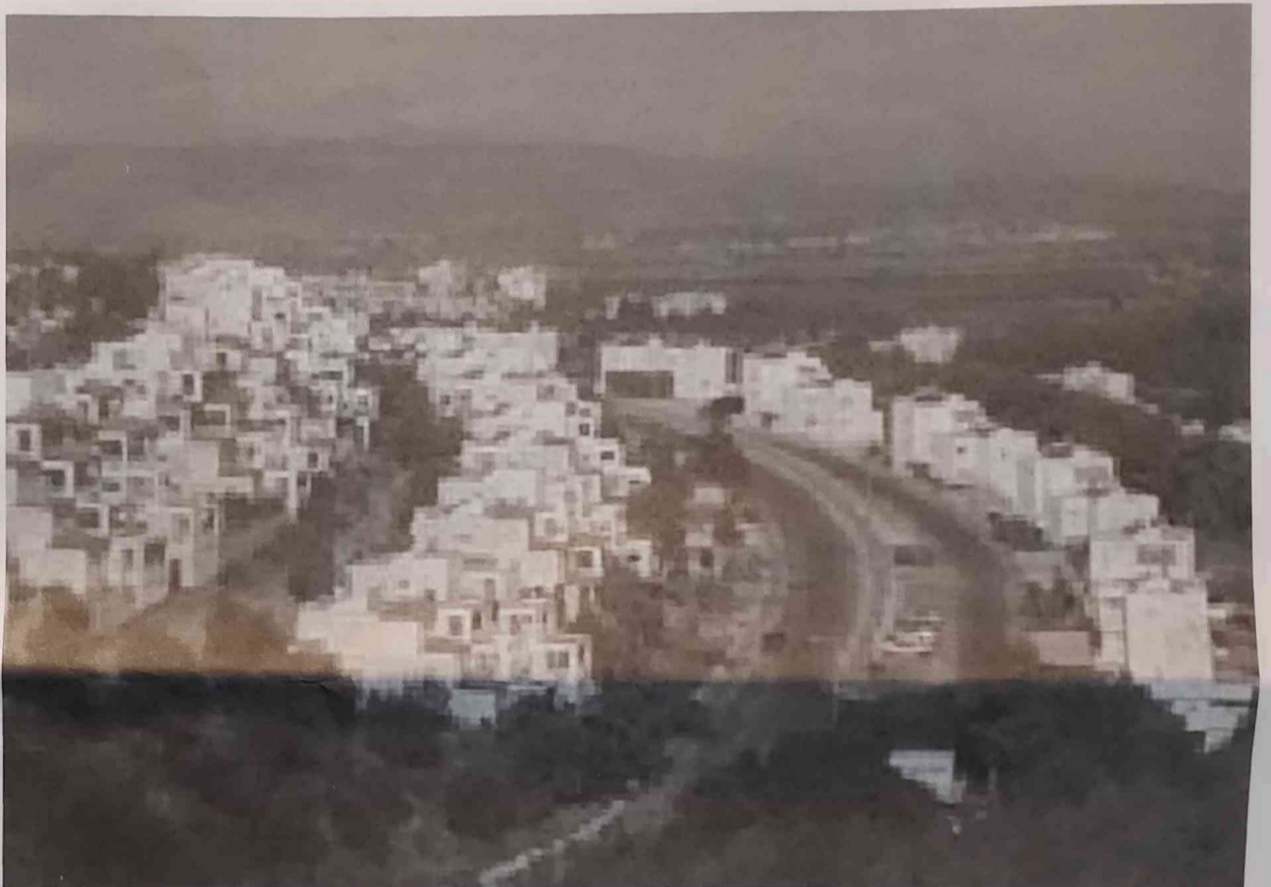
"Instead of integrating into a traditional kibbutz, they took on responsibilities within the youth movement which were formerly undertaken by the kibbutz emissaries."

As well as the NOAL organisations, a number of other Socialist Zionist youth movements have formed their own graduate groups, Habonim Dror's group Yovel in Migdal ha'Emeq for example, to which James belongs, as well as Kvutzot Hahelira, Hashomer Hatzair's Pelech, and Machanot Ha'Olim's Na'aran.

"These new groups" according to James, "are each trying to work towards social justice and equality in Israeli society, through a wide variety of educational and social initiatives on both local and national levels. The number and variety of these groups is growing each year, and the rate of growth is increasing too."

Nearly all of those involved with these groups are Israeli-born, but one group of immigrants from English-speaking countries is living communally under the banner of Ma'agal Hakvutzot at Kvutzat Yovel in Migdal ha'Emeq, a small town nestling in the hills of some thirty kilometres south-east of Haifa.

In June, I met with Anton Marks at Yovel. Originally from Manchester, Anton grew up as a member of the Habonim Dror youth group in England, and made Aliya to Israel in early 1999; he has been involved in Ma'agal Hakvutzot since its inception in 2000, and as well as working on Yovel's manifold educational projects in Migdal ha'Emeq. He currently edits the *Communes At Large* newsletter produced by the International Communes Desk at Yad Tabenkin.



Migdal ha'Emeq

Anton describes the ideological inspiration behind Ma'agal Hakvutzot, an association which he and many others see as "the seeds of a new kibbutz movement", as the intellectual progeny of much the same combination of Judaism and socialism that motivated the early kibbutz pioneers.

The primacy of the relationships between individuals is something on which a great deal of emphasis is placed in these communal projects, being as it is the *sine qua non* of these groups' viability; the influence of Buber's 'I-thou' philosophy can thus be seen to permeate the ideology and praxis of the kvutzot in every sphere of their day to day existence.

"One of the things that is very clear to us" says Anton, "is that we're trying to build on something that's come before us, to try and learn those lessons and not make those same mistakes again, but also trying to take the beautiful things that are there." Like the early settlers, generally speaking each individual group aims to keep its membership to 40 or 45 people so as to avoid compromising the form of direct democracy by which the groups' decision-making structures function.

Having said that, a number of NOAL kvutzot have recently come together to form bigger communities, each seeing itself as a 'kibbutz of kvutzot', whilst maintaining each small intimate kvutzot within – Eshkol in Beer-Sheva being an example of such a group.

The normal kibbutz model is a *gemeinschaft* society, a 'full-cooperative' as Buber put it, built around industry

and/or agriculture which provides its income. With no factory or farm, no date plantation or olive groves, in short no ostensible means of production on which the settlement's economy rests, on paper the urban/social/educational communities existing under the banner of Ma'agal Hakvutzot appear to fulfil few of the criteria to meet the definition of kvutzot, let alone kibbutz.

Anton emphasises however, even in these new communes "there is a means of production. All of the different movements have officially established non-profit organisations in the form of seminar centres... in terms of what we do day-to-day, we're involved in various educational and social projects in society and we raise money based on those projects – we carry out outside fundraising in all sorts of places to help us to run those projects.

"The money that's raised comes into the movement, so in terms of our financial arrangements we're all getting according to our needs, as opposed to what the outside market tells us that we're worth.

"In the old days of the movement the bottom line was about creating a country, and creating a new human being, building an economy based on agriculture, settling the land, defending the borders. Those needs are not the same – the needs today are more the social needs of the country, narrowing those gaps, and recognising that these are the needs of the country in the twenty-first century. We see the ways of dealing with those needs as being based on the same values – it's just the methods that are slightly different."

Unlike the traditional kibbutz model of self-contained, mainly rural, settlements, the Ma'agal Hakvutzot communes, now numbering 1,500 people, are embedded in towns and urban settings nationwide. The idea of extended neighbourhood communities has long been a concept central to anarchistic thinking, and the character of these groups in particular is, I think, especially reminiscent of the early social philosophy of German anarchist Gustav Landauer. Landauer saw the transition to post-capitalist society as necessarily occurring in a gradual, evolutionary manner as communal, anarchistic groups and communities grew up alongside the state and eventually replaced it.

Do the Ma'agal Hakvutzot organisations have any such aspirations? "It's a long process" says Anton. "I see what we're doing as becoming more and more meaningful in terms of dealing with the needs of this country. I'd like to think that we're not just trying to paper over the symptoms of a pretty rotten society, but rather that we're building an alternative society at the same time as being involved in the existing one."

"I'd like to think that yes, at some point in the future, we'll reach that critical mass, the point where the alternative society is no longer the alternative society, that the existing society is the alternative society. That's the vision."

In our next issue, Part 2 of this article will examine the anarchistic inclinations and potential of the Urban Kibbutz model.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 17

Anarchism

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

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

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

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

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

With the changes in Royal Mail postage prices now implemented across the UK, various people in the Alley are scratching their heads and trying to work out how on earth small papers are supposed to survive. The changes in postage seem to be designed specifically to bring up the price of our mailout, as we fall into the 20% of people whose mail is too big.

We think however that we've sorted it, albeit in a slightly awkward way. To that end this issue should be arriving in a very slightly smaller format (not much, we've just shaved off a little at the edges) and will be folded one more time for a smaller envelope. This lets us come in at 'small' and keeps the price down. The folding costs have gone up a little, but not as much as the extra postage, and hopefully prices shouldn't have to change very much either (we'll have to work them out over a yearly run to see).

We're quite fortunate in that the paper is slim and light enough for us to do this. Some of our contemporaries are not, particularly the monthlies and quarterlies, and to them we send our condolences – it's going to be a hard year for much of the radical press.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 23rd September 2006 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 14th September. You can send articles to us at copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Ancient enlightenment?

One of the refrains to the capitalists who say anarchism is impossible and that's why such a society has never existed in history, etc., is 'We know nothing of the never was'. However, maybe one has!

I recall seeing a Channel 4 historical series a few years back which consisted of a look at four ancient societies. There were the usuals such as Egypt, Greece, Persia, but the last one was about the Indus Valley Civilisation. According to the programme and some of the archaeologists who have worked on the sites, this society existed for about 2000 years (2500-1400 BCE) and apparently built the first ever 'planned cities'.

It appears that such sites as Harappa, Mahenjo-daro and the recently discovered D'Olivera consisted of large central citadels, which had an open-plan courtyard with water channels, then outside of these were the usual homes and markets, etc. Surrounding even these were large rectangular water conservation pools.

Yet, going through the remains of the buildings, no-one seems (according to one of the archaeologists on the C4 programme) to have found anything that appears to be a palace or similar for kings and bureaucrats, nor Temples for religion and a priestly ruling class.

Religion seems to have been on a purely 'individual basis' – perhaps like the Hindu before it became a hierarchy. Further, they appear to have had no weapons as such, just the usual utensils for daily life and work, though they did have a great many 'toys' and games. Meanwhile they traded with the ancient near east states such as Persia who were busy hierarchically vying and warring with Egypt and Greece.

The whole system looks to have developed on 'socialistic' lines at least, if not an actual form of early anarchism, as it looks like they were 'divided' on heterarchic (horizontal?) lines by family and/or trade rather than the usual top down system. Again, perhaps like the Hindu caste system before it was upended by later invaders.

One of the last things that remains to be 'discovered' though is their writing or script. To date no one has been successfully able to transcribe it. It may well either confirm their social arrangements and why it was done, or of course it may at least in part reveal that there was more of an 'authority' structure etc going on than we currently seem to be aware of.

If this society really was as 'horizontalist' as some claim, then it may offer some pointers and ideas for our own age, so it may be worth someone, who has the time, delving further into it, so here are some links that may help others get started. (The Channel 4 book of the television series may still be available in the Library system.)

Web: harappa.com/har/har0.html or en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization
Pirate Ray

Eric memories

Nice to see a mention of Eric Frank Russell (Quiz, 29th July 2006).

The last time he appeared in Freedom was when I stumbled across a reissue of Wasp, more than 15 years ago. As mentioned, he had an individualistic viewpoint.

So did many science fiction writers of the '40s and '50s, but most of them were simplistic, macho thugs. Russell's characters had a sense of humour.

His typical plot had a lone joker succeeding by using this to undermine the humourless goons of a repressive, 'alien' regime. (They remind me of cheery British POW's with their particular goons.)

In Wasp, the central character is dropped onto an alien planet to undermine the system with dadaist urban guerilla tactics. In Space Willies (aka Next of Kin), he is a POW, convincing his jailers that he is in contact with his Willie, a potentially vengeful ghost.

There are many other titles, and these were written in the 1950s. Part of Russell's individualism came from his long interest in Charles Forte, itself long before anybody else knew of him.

David Peers

Mercadona call

As you already are aware, workers and members of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union CNT-AIT are on strike at the logistic centre of the supermarket 'Mercadona' in Barcelona. We have been on strike for more than 150 days. It is one of the longest strikes in Catalonia in the recent decades.

Currently the CNT is involved in struggles with Mercadona all over Spain. However, the most important and difficult struggle is our strike at the logistic centre in Barcelona.

The workers and our comrades in Mercadona need your solidarity.

Mercadona is big and powerful. They have 20 police officers of the Guardia Civil – a state paramilitary security force – guarding the logistic centre. Mercadona is able to make the local government prohibit worker demonstrations and actions. The company is also able to suppress or to manipulate notices in the public press, etc.

However, with our struggle and never-ending actions (see cnt.es/mercacosa or barcelona.cnt.es and you can translate pages using Altavista's Babelfish) we nearly achieved in negotiations with responsible company representatives an acceptable solution to end the strike.

Nevertheless, Mercadona wanted to dismiss all the strikers by offering a 300,000 euros buyout. The striker's general assembly rejected this offer and proclaimed: "They can't buy us off."

With this turn of events, we have resumed our efforts in putting more pressure on the company. Our actions will not be limited to Spain. We are also trying to make public this struggle and inform and engage workers all over the world. We have set up a propaganda commission who are translating notices in several languages like Esperanto, English, French and German. Even though Mercadona only exists in Spain, we think that this struggle should be known worldwide as an example of how it is possible to organise to defend our interests and dignity as workers.

The CNT – Mercadona Union Section asks comrades and their organisations to help us win this strike. You can do so as follows:

- Send solidarity mails to the workers at cnt@badalona.cnt.es and cnt@barcelona.cnt.es
- Send protest letters to the company: Mercadona, S.A. CIF:A-46-103834 C/ Valencia, no 5 Tavernes Blanques Valencia – CP46016, Spain
- Send letters to the Spanish embassy asking about the conflict
- Make some kind of peaceful protest action at Spanish embassies and consulates (or at the Instituto Cervante)
- By donating money to the strikers and their families (they're running short):

BIC (Swift): CAIXESBXXXX 2100
1183 3501 0050 5773

- Publicising our struggle in the press and amongst worker and community organisations in your your country. We are at an important stage of this struggle. We have to put more pressure on Mercadona in order to win. The strike is going on for more than 150 days. The CNT-Mercadona strikers need as much moral and economic support as we can get from workers around the world. We will win this struggle!

Anarcho-syndicalist greetings,
MS
(militant of the Local Federation of Badalona and member of the news crew of the support commission of the strike in Mercadona)

Travel request

Christmas Christians, Yom Kipper Jews and Bookfair anarchists.

The above refers to those who only go to a faith-based event once a year. Christians or Jews who only 'turn-out' for those major festivals.

Similarly, many sympathetic to anarchist ideals only com to our London bookfair and for the rest of the year are more or less innocent in our direction. But the three groups of people referred to above are still welcomed by the organisers of such events.

Inspiration should be derived from our bookfair to replenish emotional energy, so that we can re-engage with our kinds of political action. Instead, this event is becoming a commodity where the money that changes hands is more important than the messages in our literature.

But I still want to make the 300-mile journey from my home in Cumbria, to shake a collecting bucket, or whatever task the organisers suggest. My problem is that London is one of the world's most expensive cities, and the people I used to stay with on trips south are now to inform to have guests or have died.

I wonder if any readers would consider offering hospitality to me or any other comrades, hoping to come down for the Bookfair, who live a long way from London.

Martin Gilbert.

Editors: If you can offer Martin a place to stay, please email Freedom, or phone the shop.

Phoenix Press rides again

After a break of six years or so, Phoenix Press is back raising money to publish anarchist books. It works like this: lend Phoenix Press £50 and when the book is published you'll get a copy. Eventually you'll be offered your £50 back, or you can continue the loan for the next title. The current book is *Anti-Fascist* by Martin Lux, an account of the street fighting that took place in the late 1970s to beat the National Front. If you want to lend £50 to see this book published, then send £50 plus your name and address to Phoenix Press at PO Box 824, London N1 9DL. If you want to lend more then please do so. In fact, if you lend £100 then you'll get a copy of every Phoenix title, not just the one you lend cash for.

Mo Moseley (Phoenix Press)



Indonesia

➡ page 1

territories has left the region largely undefended by conventional forces.

Maintaining their stake, wiping out nationalist opposition operating on the borders and taking advantage of the weak PNG government are all considered strong motives for an Indonesian invasion.

Reports of at least ten Indonesian incursions, seemingly abetted by local authorities, were picked up by the research group in their month-long period of research. Nationalist West Papuan resistance groups operating on the border have also reported clashes between them and the TNI military.

The full report estimated in July there were up to 16,500 Indonesian troops operating in a relatively small border area, along with tank and helicopter support.

In the absence of PNG forces, civilian defence units had been formed by local fighters, it was reported.

Education

➡ page 1

and co-operation."

Only one of the six competitions for courses have been completed as yet, but similar government schemes have not been huge successes. Private sector sponsorship of Labour's new City Academies has proven an unmitigated disaster, with the much hyped institutions crashing down the rankings on almost every scale.

Book reviews

➡ page 7

that women can find in the arms of other women.

The most harrowing scenes I found not in the unconvincing air raids, but in an illegal abortion which goes horribly wrong – altogether much safer territory for a radical woman writer.

Sarah has made clear her regret that the Sapphic novel does not figure much in literary history. The 1940s being about seventy years on from the mid-Victorian period, makes me wonder if her next step will take her books forward another lifetime to the present.

In this way she could be quite literally writing herself into history. Keep going Sarah, keep going!

John Griffin

Quiz answers

1. No. He was clear that "the organisational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy" was to "proceed from the top downward". It was "opportunistic Social-Democracy" which strove "to proceed from the bottom upward" (the "overzealous" carried this "to the point of anarchism").
2. He redefined "workers' democracy" to mean "democracy within the party" while supporting party dictatorship. 1923 saw him argue that the "dictatorship of the Party" did "not require revision." In 1927, it was a case of "the Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realised only through the dictatorship of the party."
3. The workers anthem was written by Eugene Pottier, a Communist follower of Proudhon, i.e. a "petit bourgeois"
4. Adolf Hitler. He had been made one in 1933 when the city was part of the German Reich and it had never been rescinded.

REVIEW

Dan Berger gets altogether too close to his subject as he looks into the underground of US politics, finds Richard Alexander

A few words of introduction for those who missed out on the 1960s and '70s. In the early 1960s there was widespread civil rights and anti-Vietnam war activity in the USA. Among black activists the Student Non-Violent Coordinating committee was engaged in basic rights work – voter registration, de-segregation and community organising. Amongst white students the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) took the lead in organising and educating around civil rights and anti-war activity. As the 1960s progressed so the struggle intensified and the repression against community and student activists increased and the clamour against American involvement in Vietnam also increased.

In 1969 in Chicago, the SDS split with a New Left coalition calling itself the 'Revolutionary Youth Movement' expelling the old left Progressive Labour faction. Very soon afterwards the RYM itself split, with one faction calling itself RYM II, and the other 'Weatherman' after a line in a Bob Dylan song.

In the second half of 1969 Weatherman got itself involved in militant street actions and the group started a campaign of bombing symbolic targets immediately prior to a public 'Days of Rage' protest in Chicago with violent street action.

Weatherman had announced itself on the public stage as a white militant anti-war/anti-capitalist group in support of the NDF in Vietnam and the most militant sections of the Black Power movement in the USA, and at the end of the year it held its last public conference and went prepared to go underground.

Very soon into its underground existence the group suffered a grievous blow when a collective in New York accidentally blew up the house they were living in and three of them died. This traumatic event, which occurred when they were planning an attack which would have resulted in the deaths of many other people, led to a reappraisal of the group's tactics.

Thereafter any explosive actions would be done in a way that ensured there were no fatalities, in short they adopted the principle of 'armed propaganda' rather than armed resistance. The group, which numbered in the low hundreds in

terms of activists, but with many more above ground sympathisers, was organised in collectives based in the then flourishing youth counter-culture where they managed to blend in without too much.

During the six or so years the group was underground it not only carried out sporadic actions but also put out its own newspaper and a book, *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism*, whilst also engaging in intense internal political discussions and the occasional party or two.

The Weather Underground Organisation, as it had become, also went through changes – directed by the Central Committee in time-honoured Marxist-Leninist fashion – which saw the group move to a position of attempting to take on the mantle as the leadership of the US working class in a new Communist Party, a line which saw the downplaying of their original positions of supporting other people's struggles and instead wanting to lead the US working class (predominantly white) in a struggle against capitalism.

The group attempted to go overground on that basis but was blown apart, not by the FBI, but by its own internal political contradictions, being accused of both racism and sexism at their final conference.

Thereafter many members surfaced and faced the music whilst a minority continued the struggle in more 'armed struggle' modes, usually ending up in prison for extremely long periods (several are still locked up and some may never be released).

Dan Berger's book is not only a history of the group, drawing on previously published work, access to archives of group material and, most interestingly, his own interviews with former members of the Weather Underground, but also a look at the relevance of their political perspectives to today's anti-capitalist struggles.

That capitalism, racism, sexism and imperialism are still with us goes without saying, as is the struggle against them.

However their support for national liberation struggles looks less important as most colonised countries have now managed some form of formal 'independence' (although the ties that bind, in the form of neo-colonialism and global capitalism, are as strong,



Taken from the film *Weather Underground*

David Fenton

even if the state form is in the hands of a locally recruited boss class).

Equally their adherence to a dogmatic form of Marxism-Leninism (itself pretty noxious in the '60s and '70s) would render them a laughing stock these days amongst revolutionaries. Many former Weather people agree that the lack of democratic control within the organisation itself was one of their main mistakes and the notion that a bunch of white ex-students could attempt to proclaim themselves the leaders of the working class in the USA suggests that going underground does little for one's sanity.

In a way I suspect that Dan Berger may have got too close to his subject matter as he really pulls his punches in his summary of the 'relevance' of the group.

His accounts of the interviews, especially with David Gilbert, who is banged up for life for driving a vehicle that was used by members of an armed group which botched a bank heist, resulting in several fatalities, even though he was himself unarmed and had not taken any part in the raid itself, are based on a personal sympathy (no bad thing in itself) but this does tend to make any objective criticism difficult.

That the Weather Underground was able to survive underground in 1970s USA says a lot for their security measures and for the care they took in their actions.

It also says a lot about the milieu they were able to merge into. It is a truism that revolutionaries cannot survive for long unless they have a supportive environment, both internally – in the group – and externally – in a wider (sub-) culture.

One wonders whether such a struggle could be successfully waged in today's climate, with no recognisable oppositional culture. The fact that many (but not all) members of the Weather Underground came from fairly affluent and supportive backgrounds meant that they were less pressured to undertake actions to raise money illegally either through bank robberies, embezzlement or drug dealing, which helped enormously with their security.

The lack of the many surveillance technologies now available to the State would also have made things easier than today.

Returning to the text, AK Press have done another excellent production job on this one. The book is fully furnished

with notes, a comprehensive bibliography, index, short biographies of main protagonists and a timeline (together accounting for 25% of the pages).

The book is timely both politically and biographically – i.e. the main players are still around and as a reminder of a part of recent history that tends to be overlooked.

One of the problems interested readers may have in accessing the wide range of written materials that the author draws upon – especially for those on the 'other' side of the Atlantic. Unless you were around at the time you're unlikely to come across a copy of *Prairie Fire* (although copies were imported into the UK) let alone their newspaper *Oswatomie* or many of the more obscure items.

Overall, though, it is a valuable work that reminds people of a forgotten chapter in the USA history in the 1960s and 1970s, fascinating and thought-provoking, even if the politics leaves you less than impressed!

Outlaws of America: the Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity, by Dan Berger, published by AK Press. £15 (plus £1.50 towards postage and packing).

BOOKS

The Nightwatch
by Sarah Waters
Virago. £16.99

Sarah Waters has built an impressive reputation as a writer of historical novels with a particular interest in lesbian romance.

Tipping the Velvet in 1998, *Affinity* in 1999 and *Fingersmith* in 2002, are set in Victorian times. The latter is a tour-de-force of complex plotting, sympathetic characterisation, and attention to matters of historical detail.

Having read all three with growing enthusiasm, I looked forward eagerly to what she would do next.

Prior to the publication of *The Night Watch*, Sarah let it be known that the new novel would move forward in time to the Second World War and post-war periods, but admitted having some difficulty 'finding her voice'.

It was probably too much to expect her to match *Fingersmith*; the book does have its faults but it still makes a good read which will be welcomed by her growing readership.

The action unfolds in three parts entitled 1947, 1944 and 1941. I found the adoption of a reverse chronology of dubious value, presumably, she wants to emphasise the origins of the sequence of events.

So we read on to find out if Duncan is really gay and how he came to be imprisoned, why Kay becomes so depressed, and why Vivien hangs on to a battered wedding ring she does not wear.

Kay, a London ambulance driver, is the central figure through whom the

others are linked. She has two lovers, Julia and Helen, and the book carries a considerable erotic charge. Strangely perhaps, Sarah does not describe how liberating it must have been to be seen 'legitimately' in overtly mannish forms of dress.

With an eye for detail, I found it annoying to read of so many air raids in the 1944 section, since by then the Luftwaffe's bombing activities were declining; there were the V1 flying bombs, but they are not mentioned.

Read as an anti-war novel, the book

loses credibility because it fails to mention the very important fact that by 1944, German civilians were being bombed with horrific intensity, by the USAF by day and the RAF at night.

The Night Watch is at its most atmospheric when it describes a lovers' walk round bombed-out London churches through the Blackout.

It successfully gets across the shabbiness of those times, the shortages, the oppressive male-oriented culture and of course, the satisfactions

page 6, column 5

A Sideways Look

We live in a society where giving offence is commonplace. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's not so long ago that Mary Whitehouse would object to plays, films and television merely for containing swearing, sex, or blasphemy.

Comedy is perhaps pushing the boundaries most at the moment. The trend for television comedies in the last few years has been for them to become more offensive. *Little Britain* mocks the old, the weak, the disabled, the poor. The writers are often very funny, but never seem to turn their talents to mocking the rich or powerful. And I'm sure it's not just because they're a pair of public schoolboys. It is of course lauded by the press.

Ricky Gervais takes 'edgy' material to try out in an 'ironic' way, so that the joke works on two levels, a straight racist joke if you're thick, or a joke on racists and how thick they are if you get the irony. Bernard Manning must be gutted he didn't think of it.

It's useful to compare today's comedies with *Spitting Image*, which was considered shocking in its day. The big difference was that *Spitting Image* did attack the rich and powerful. All politicians, of all stripes, were legitimate targets. It even lampooned Mary Whitehouse. It was talked-about satire. Today, its equivalents languish with small viewing figures as the absurdity of politics satirises itself.

I wanted to link this trend towards being offensive for its own sake with something a bit more personal. The idea for this column came from conversations with my partner, who sometimes feels uncomfortable breast-feeding our baby in public. She doesn't want to offend anyone and even knows women who have breast-fed their own babies who are upset if they see someone else doing it. But there are good reasons she feels uncomfortable with some of the hostile reactions she gets - from both men and women.

Thankfully we are well past the days when babies were fed at strict intervals as if they were on a production line and plenty of town centres now have rooms to feed or change babies, though admittedly a lot of them are next to the toilets. Their location is no accident. The price of women's admission to the public sphere appears to be that of hiding some elements of what makes them women.

The attitude of hiding away certain aspects of reproduction is not confined to the Anglo-Saxon world either, but can be found all over the world. Given that it is so ingrained, it is easy to see how many women internalise it so that they feel uncomfortable feeding their babies. And while I'm sure there are elements of capitalism that would be happy if we all switched to formula milk - for example the board of Nestlé - breast milk is better.

It's not my call on one level, but I really don't care if people get offended seeing a breast-fed baby. I know some people find it upsetting, but then some people find the idea of mixed-race marriages upsetting but then they deserve to be

offended. I find the squandering of human talents on endless wars and alienated wage labour offensive, but sadly no one seems to take any notice of me on that one.

Perhaps more unsettling is that so many can happily revel in such unkind humour yet feel unease or even disgust at a natural process that benefits all parties involved.

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 13th September 2003, entitled Thumbs up for People Power: Fewer people than ever voted in 2001. The Hutton Enquiry is laying their lies bare for all to see. This could be our opportunity, says Richard Griffin. States manufacture consent for their policies. Before the start of the invasion of Iraq, for example, Tony Blair stood in the House of Commons and said that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that could be used in 45 minutes. The original intelligence report actually said that intelligence "suggested that the Iraqi military would be able to use their chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of being ordered to do so."

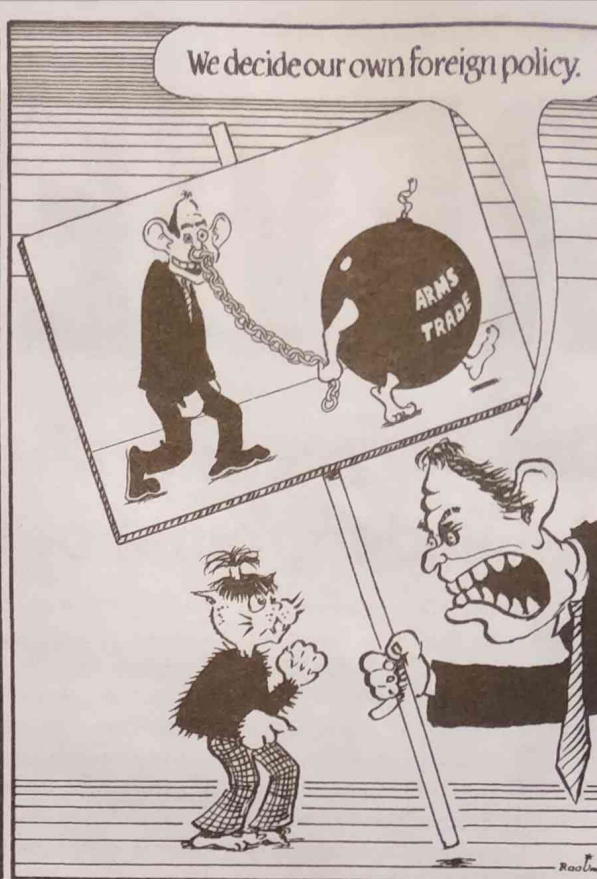
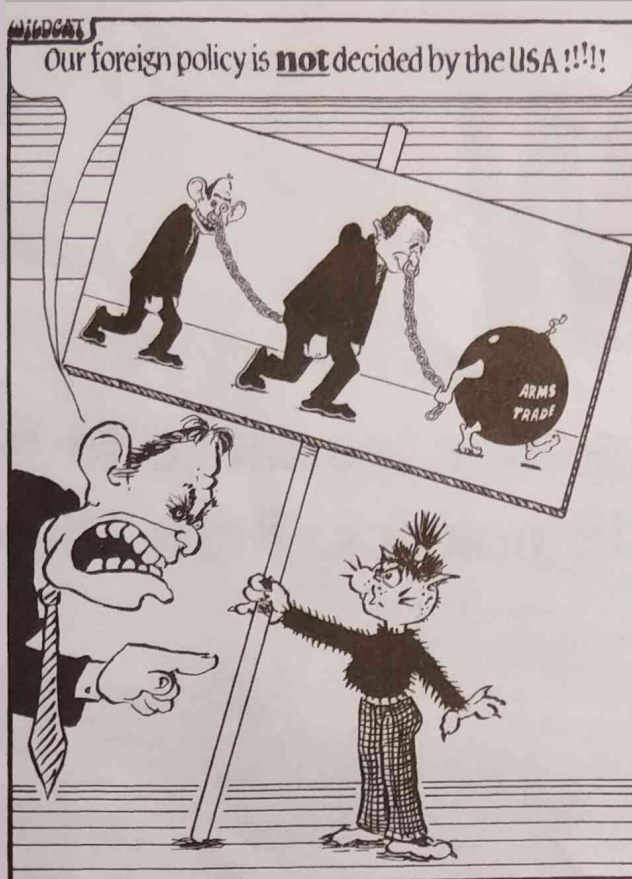
Just over a week later this passage had become "[Iraq's] military planning allows for some WMD to be ready within 45 minutes." Note the new use of the term 'WMD', unspecific about the actual weapons or their capacity but suggesting and implying global doom. Scary. Note too the dropping of the word 'suggested'. Uncertainty has been replaced with certainty.

The way Blair used this 'sexed up' report gave the impression that Iraq was on the verge on using WMD against us. This allowed the invasion to be presented as a pre-emptive strike and therefore justified. This in turn helped swing public opinion from opposition to grudging support.

But almost as soon as the war was over the fallacy of this claim was exposed. There were no WMD. The reasons given to justify the invasion were lies. Lies that were rapidly exposed by the BBC and brought into sharp focus by the death of Dr Kelly, the government's expert. The circumstances around his death, exposed in minute detail by the Hutton Enquiry, further highlight the lengths the state will go to in order to hide its lies.

In 1983, 54% of people had 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of trust in parliament. In 1996 this had fallen to 10%. Trust in government as a whole has fallen from 47% in 1987 to 28% in 2001. As Michael Jacobs, general secretary of the Fabian society, has noted, "the automatic reflex of trust in institutions and people in authority has gone. We're more sceptical."

People no longer trust politicians (just 18%), political parties (16%), government ministers (20%) and business (28%). The *Financial Times* recently went so



far as to claim that Britain, like several other countries, was "in the grip of what many claim is a deepening crisis of trust directed at its most familiar institutions and office-holders."

Imagine if...

Stephen Byers was finding it difficult to talk to these people in the retirement home in the heart of a safe Labour constituency.

"Er, Mr Byers?" An elderly, tremulous voice asked.

"Mpfh?"

"It might help if you took your foot out of your mouth when you spoke." Byers glared. Didn't they know who he was? He was the Martin Bormann of his day, the last great defender of Tony Blair as the aging premier's tail-chasing, drooling stupidity got the better of him. Nevertheless, perhaps the pensioner had a point. He removed the patent leather from between his teeth, though he retained an almost uncontrollable desire to suck on it more. His foot began to jiggle.

"Look" he blurted out. "You must agree with me that inheritance tax is wrong?"

The elderly folk looked confused, until one piped up: "Well, no. First off, we'll be dead so it really doesn't matter to us. Secondly, we like the majority of the population don't have much in the way of assets to actually leave. Thirdly, we've seen the mess it's made in the US, shoving wealth back up to the top of the tree."

Byers wanted to persuade them, but couldn't say the real reason out loud. The Labour party didn't have any wealthy individual backers any more, and trade union money was declining. The only real option was to woo the wealthy back with shiny right-wing baubles.

He could feel his foot rising...

Listings

13th September South London SolFed film night at Café Crema, 306 New Cross Road, London SE14, showing Ken Loach's *Bread and Roses* about janitors organising in LA, opens at 7.30pm, film at 8pm, entry £4 includes a veggie meal.

15th September International day of action against the Icelandic state, see savingiceland.org for details

16th September Race Against Climate Doom, put on your jogging gear and join the race, gather 12.30pm outside ExxonMobil Offices, St Katherine's House on the corner of Kingsway and Aldwych, London, to finish at the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, for a party... see climatecc.org

22nd September Bicycle Ballet for Car Free Day in Brighton, choreographed bike spectacular from 1pm to 6pm, Madeira Drive, Brighton, to get involved contact Karen on 01273 502965, email info@bicycleballet.co.uk or see bicycleballet.co.uk

23rd September Fundraiser for the people of Palestine and Lebanon at the Basement Cafe, Lever Street, Manchester, with food, music, talks, films and a quiz from 7pm, email ursula.rothe@gmx.net

30th September Tenth European Hazards Conference in Jurmula, Latvia, over this weekend, for details see hazardscampaign.org.uk/docs/riga.htm

7th October Keep Space For Peace, action at NSA Menwith Hill from 12 noon to 4pm, see caab.org.uk

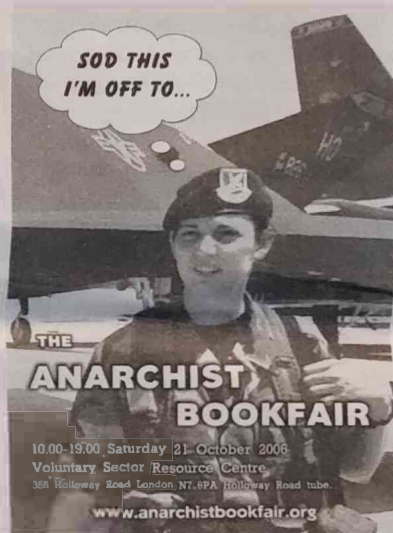
8th October Lakenheath Airbase demo at main gate, for details call 01508 550446 or see lakenheathaction.org

9th and 10th October Blockade Faslane nuclear submarine base as part of 'Faslane 365', a year of continual peaceful protest at the gates of this nuclear submarine base in western Scotland, see faslane365.org for info

9th October Sack Parliament demo,

1pm at the Houses of Parliament, London, see sackparliament.org.uk

21st October The 25th Anarchist Bookfair, from 10am to 7pm at the Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7, see anarchistbookfair.org for more details.



The quiz

1. The SWP like to include Lenin in the tradition they call "socialism from below". Would he have agreed?
2. The SWP portray Trotsky as supporting "workers' democracy" against Stalinism. What was unusual about his position?
3. Why is it ironic that Lenin praised "the Internationale" as the "worldwide song of the proletariat"?
4. With the recent fuss over Günter Grass's membership of the Waffen-SS, he wrote to the city of Gdansk, of which he had honorary citizenship, to explain himself. Who was found to be an 'honorary citizen' of the Polish city of Legnica?

Answers on page 6

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