

FREEDOM

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2011 – YEAR OF REBELLION?

With capitalism in crisis, it's time to get angry

As the new year rattles into view, ushering in the second decade of the millennium, we are faced with a global economic situation that is unstable and unsustainable.

Capitalism has been functioning for the past two decades under the stewardship of the US defined neo-liberal strategy of deregulating markets globally, often forced through at the behest of the IMF and World Bank – where developing countries are bribed and bullied into accepting strident economic constraints or lose access to massive loans.

Equally, first world countries have had to borrow massively to remain at the forefront of the neo-liberal agenda increasing their national debt to the point where repayment far exceeds the original borrowing target.

It is this cycle of loans and debt, unchecked and increasingly unquantifiable, that has caused borrowers (be they individuals, multinational corporations or nation-states) to default, the markets to crash and a global recession to take hold. The collapse of major financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers and the government bailouts of high street banks are merely the symptoms

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LENS CAP THE COLD HAND OF COMMERCE



The recent severe weather means the winter death toll is expected to rise by 11,600 to 37,000 this year, according to Office of National Statistics – the highest winter death rate of any northern European country, with a staggering 86% of the extra deaths amongst the over-75s, largely due to the escalation in fuel poverty that has left 3.5 million pensioners without adequate heating during the cold period.

Photo: Max Reeves

HACKNEY ACTIVISTS HELP OUT

Anarchists and local activists sprung into action after they found out a property company planned to evict elderly residents from their homes without proper notification or prior consultation to make way for a profitable redevelopment. The 40 or so elderly residents at The Lawns retirement complex in Hackney, North London, were kept in the dark about the plans by Hanover Properties to re-house them without their approval or consent.

Hanover have run the Lawns since 2002, taking direct control from Hackney Council, with the promise of extensive improvements to the property. Residents report that none of these promises were honoured and that the running of the property has actually declined significantly. Despite this, the Lawns remains a strong, supportive community which none

of its residents wish to leave. Many are house-bound and rely greatly on their neighbours. Residents are elderly, confused and frightened by the prospect of being forced to leave this community and face re-housing into a new, isolating area.

Activists are angry that Hanover, as a limited company, are putting profits before pensioners and are deliberately exploiting the vulnerability and poverty of the elderly residents, bullying them via misleading and emotive letters and meetings, in order to prevent any realistic opposition. One resident said: "This is not good for my health. I just don't understand why Hanover is behaving like this. This is our home. Why are they lying to us, that people don't need this building. We are here. Don't we count?"

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

POLICE: More news of police attempting to circumvent the legal process by insisting Google hand over private data from their websites. Police wanted to trace a vehicle snapped by Google's Street View cameras next to a caravan that was stolen. Instead of applying to the courts for permission to access the images, the police have roped in local Tory MP Heather Wheeler to put pressure on the search giant to bend its rules. She said "It would be sensible for them to enter into a protocol with British police forces to receive and acquiesce to police requests. Of course, the police can get a court order but what a waste of public money in order to do that." Google however remained unimpressed.

HOUSING: It looks like the New Labour social experiment of arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) could be coming to an end as Basildon Council is taking steps to regain control of its entire housing stock. A report to the Tory-controlled local authority recommends that St George's Community Housing, which manages all of Basildon's council housing, becomes an 'in-house' service in order to save money.

The transfer of stock back into the hands of the council could be the beginning of a wave of local authorities claiming back ownership social housing.

BANKING: The mantra of 'we're all in this together' has yet to reach to financial sector as bankers continue to pay themselves hefty bonuses, despite demands from the government to rein in excessive payouts. City bankers are expected to share a bonus pot worth a staggering £7bn in the first two months of the year. Aware of the bad publicity, the state-owned Royal Bank of Scotland has limited bonuses to £1bn, down from £1.3bn the previous year. It perhaps comes as no surprise that RBS cut 2,600 jobs last year and sold off 316 branches as a reward for their frugality.

FARMING: One victim of the Tories 'bonfire of the quangos' is the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) which will adversely affect over 8,000 farm workers.

The board, set up in 1948, previously determined the minimum wage for agricultural workers – traditionally marked by low pay, dangerous work and seasonal employment – and had the power to decide terms and conditions of employment in the sector, such as holidays and sick pay. The abolition which now comes into force will see thousands of low paid workers slip further into poverty.

STUDENTS: As the adage goes, politicians can't abide a leadership vacuum. And so for the fifth London Student Assembly a proposal was passed round on a scrap of paper to create a 'steering committee' in order to 'give a direction' to the assemblies. So far no left group is claiming responsibility.

LENS CAP HMP FORD



Looks as if one of the better parties this New Year was at HMP Ford – lashings of booze and a monster bonfire to round off the festivities. See Prison News on page 12 for full report.

Anarchist trial begins

By the time this issue of *Freedom* goes to press, Simon Chapman and three other defendants will have begun their appeal trial in Greece against their convictions for rioting during the EU Summit in Thessaloniki in 2003. The trial process itself is expected to last two weeks, starting on 14th January, after which the London anarchist will find out whether the charges against him will be upheld, where he could face several years imprisonment, or overturned in what he has always insisted was a police set up and political conviction. He has already served several months in a Greek prison when he was originally arrested in 2003 and only released after the original seven convicted of the riots went on hunger strike.

The London Thessaloniki Solidarity Group have been active in arranging solicitors, organising witnesses and raising funds to help cover the cost of the travel and trial expenses. The four defendants, found guilty in January 2008, were amongst 29 protesters arrested during the demonstrations against the European Union summit in Greece's second city, and later sentenced to between five and eight and a half years each.

The entire basis of the arrests was, and still remains, an arbitrary attack on the demonstrators, as the Greek authorities had already pre-determined the guilt of everyone participating in the demonstration. From the beginning it was clear that any verdict would not be based upon legal facts or actual evidence but on political association. In

Thessaloniki during those days everyone was guilty, and for the Greek authorities, it was merely a case of charging those detained by police regardless of their actions.

The current four defendants were part of the original seven, known as the Thessaloniki 7, who were remanded straight after their initial arrests in June 2003. In response to their continued incarceration, five of the seven undertook a hunger strike early September 2003 lasting up to 64 days. Massive demonstrations and actions took place throughout Greece, Europe and the World in support of the hunger strikers after which a government order was made to release the seven on 'humanitarian grounds'. It still stands as one of the most important solidarity campaigns undertaken by anarchists in recent years.

Already three of the seven, who were charged with lesser offences, have had their convictions upheld but with reduced sentences of heavy fines. The Thessaloniki 4 Solidarity Group was set up to support the remaining defendants, Souleiman 'Kastro' Dakduk, Fernando Perez Gorraiz, Michalis Traikapis and Simon Chapman and are committed to their freedom from prosecution. Though only Traikapis is currently in prison, the campaign still needs both financial and political support whatever the outcome of the appeal.

Check our website at freedompress.org.uk from the 14th January onwards for daily updates on the trial.



Grass is not always greener

The strange case of the climate activists and undercover cop

The trial against six people charged with conspiracy to shut down Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station in 2009 collapsed on its first day at Nottingham Crown Court as activists exposed that undercover police officer, Mark Kennedy, had been spying on them for seven years, and had actually helped organise the proposed power-station shut-down. Barristers submitted that the defendants could not have a fair trial if the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) did not disclose details of the officer's involvement.

After 20 months of investigation the CPS found 'previously unavailable evidence' on 5th January 2011, just five days before the start of the trial, and informed the defence that they will no longer be pressing charges.

The six defendants were among the 114 climate campaigners arrested at Nottingham's

Iona School over the Easter weekend in April 2009, the largest pre-emptive arrest of environmental activists in UK history and was widely criticised as a serious erosion of the right to protest.

Mike Schwarz, a solicitor at the law firm who represented the activists said, "I have no doubt that our attempts to get disclosure about Kennedy's role has led to the collapse of the trial. It is no coincidence that just 48 hours after we told the CPS our clients could not receive a fair trial unless they disclosed material about Kennedy, they halted the prosecution. Given that Kennedy was, until recently, willing to assist the defence, one has to ask if the police were facing up to the possibility their undercover agent had turned native."

In December last year a further 20 of the 114 stood trial accused of the same offence. They pleaded not guilty on largely political grounds, and 18 of the 20 were subsequently found guilty of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass. The defendants were given

a range of sentences, the majority receiving conditional discharges, with five receiving the severest punishment of community service.

It has come to light that PC Kennedy was far from a passive observer of the plans to shut down Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station. Evidence put before the court reveals that he hired and paid for a 7.5-tonne truck, due to transport the bulk of equipment to the action. He was also lined up for a role as one of three key climbers.

Kennedy, who went by the alias Mark Stone, had been actively involved in the environmental scene for almost ten years. As an undercover Met police officer, he was employed by the National Public Order Intelligence Unit, the secretive and unaccountable agency based at Scotland Yard, to collect intelligence on 'extremist' political groups, embedding himself in Nottingham activist scene to monitor the activities of environmental groups and political activists including anti-capitalist and anarchist groups.

2011 – year of rebellion?

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of a deeper, more endemic crisis – crisis of capitalism itself.

Previously capitalism operated by balancing the exploitation of those who created the material wealth with the profit from goods being created – the boom and bust recessions of yesteryear were tied to concrete production and consumption. In 21st century capitalism the 'wealth' we thought we were creating didn't really exist, the profits that fuelled the financial institutions were simply figures traded on stock markets or sold as promises on bits of paper. Simply put, today capitalism – having pushed itself to the limit – has nowhere left to go.

And this is the point: when governments

and business fail it is the ordinary people who must suffer for their actions. It is this now that we are experiencing with massive job losses, cuts to all public services, the rise in tuition fees and the ever increasing tax leverages, not just the UK, but in Ireland, Greece, Spain. It's not simply companies going bust, it's entire countries.

Yet beneath the crashing economic forces voices of resistance are beginning to emerge. The students were electric in how they responded to the attacks on their right to a free education. The sheer size, level of militancy and political awareness of the movement caught us all napping. Here was a generation who were prepared to take on

the institutions of power without any formal consent or approval, where traditional political organisations were not required to give form to the anger being expressed. For many this is just the beginning.

Obvious first signs are street confrontations and social unrest, of which anarchists never hesitate to be a part of, but there must also be a collective understanding and acknowledgement of just what we, as anarchists, are prepared to contribute and how. The national Network X gathering in Manchester (full report in the next issue of *Freedom*) is one concrete example of anarchists coming together to effectively organise our participation in the turbulent year ahead.

ANALYSIS

Starvation on a global scale

Malnutrition remains an unresolved catastrophic world issue

The United Nations says there are now over 900 million chronically undernourished people in the world. When the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations) released 2010's report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World, they estimated that 925 million people are chronically undernourished – representing almost 16% of the population of 'developing' countries. While this is a drop from the high water mark of just over a billion in 2009, when food prices were shockingly high, it is higher than every other year since records started in 1969.

In 1990 both the World Food Summit Goals and the Millennium Development Goals were adopted. The World Food Summit Goal was to half the number of undernourished people by 2015. The first Millennium Development Goal was to half the proportion of undernourished people in the world by 2015.

With less than five years left on both of these goals, we are unlikely to achieve either of them. The number of undernourished people has actually increased by approximately 100 million people since 1990 and the proportion of undernourished people has only decreased by about a fifth.

The effects of hunger are truly horrible. When a person doesn't consume enough nutrients to keep their body's vital systems working their stomach acid begins to break down their muscle and tissue in order to provide nutrients to the body. This pain is so unbearable that it is commonly described in Haiti, where 57% of the population is undernourished, as feeling like one is drinking battery acid. All movements become incredibly painful, due to decreased muscle mass, diseases



One of the 925 million undernourished people tries to keep farming.

become more common and the malnourished person succumbs to chronic fatigue as the body and mind both waste away.

The horrible effects that malnutrition has on people can be seen from the fate of people in the Nordeste of Brazil. Here, according to Brazilian medical experts, generations of hunger "is producing a population of Brazilian Pygmies" whose "height at adulthood is far less than the average height recording by the World Health Organisation and their brain capacity is 40% less than average." In the poorest states of the Northeast, such as Alagoas and Piaui, these pygmies "comprise about 30% of the population".

The minimum daily energy requirement needed to avoid hunger "varies by country and from year to year" and is often a huge underestimation of the energy that people require to avoid undernourishment, as countries try to give lower figures for hunger in order to look good. As a result, the actual level of undernourishment is in most cases significantly higher than the figure given. For example, the FAO figures say that

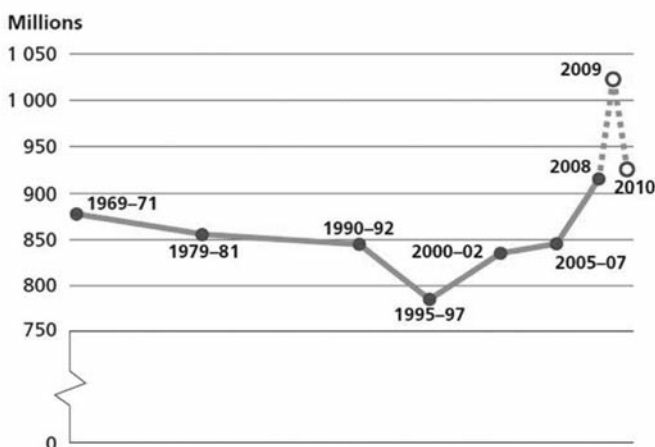
34% of the population of Tanzania is undernourished. However, a recent study by Policy Forum, a Tanzanian NGO, found that about half of all Tanzanians "cannot perform their [daily] responsibilities well because they are undernourished". In other words more than six million Tanzanians, 16% of the population, who are so hungry they cannot perform their daily activities are not considered undernourished.

That the figures are underestimated is also suggested by the fact that approximately 1.4 billion people live on less than \$1.25 PPP a day and that about 3.14 billion people live on less than \$2.50 PPP a day. PPP stands for adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity, which means that the amount of purchasing power their income has is equivalent to the purchasing power of having the income given at US prices. So \$1.25 PPP means that the person has enough purchasing power to buy \$1.25 worth of stuff in the United States. \$1.25 is about 78p and \$2.50 is about £1.57, and if you try to imagine living on either 78p or £1.57 a day then you can see how much of an underestimation the FAO figures of hunger must be.

We are currently producing enough food to adequately feed everyone in the world. Yet, according to UN statistics approximately 36 million people die of starvation every year. That means that starvation accounts for 57% of all global deaths. It's like having a Nazi Holocaust every two months. It means 100,000 people dying every day, which is equivalent to 4,000 every hour or one person dying from starvation every second.

Robert Miller

Number of undernourished people in the world, 1969–71 to 2010



NEWS IN BRIEF

FOOTBALL: The plight of the football mascot – those who dress up in costume to cheer on the team and entertain the crowds at half time – has come into sharp focus as Captain Blade (Sheffield United's pirate mascot) displayed a banner in solidarity with his rival the Deepdale Duck (Preston) who was dismissed from the ground after supposedly putting off the rival team's keeper in an earlier game. Declaring 'Free the Preston One', Captain Blade defiantly supported his comrade in what many are calling a first in workers solidarity and a sign of growing autonomous workplace militancy.

PROTEST: Taking their inspiration from the current wave of student unrest, youngsters in Rotherham occupied their youth centres in protest at the impending government cuts to youth services in the area. Both the Dalton and Bill Chafer centres were taken over by youngsters aged between 11 and 15, angry at the proposal to cut one in three staff workers forcing some services to close. Around 40 people from seven youth centres throughout the area were involved in the demonstration.

POLITICS: The deputy prime minister and all round political hypocrite Nick Clegg failed to get an easy ride when he visited Sheffield for a meeting with local councillors behind closed doors. People turned up after discovering the appointment at the last minute to give the turncoat Lib-dem leader a hard time hurling abuse and chanting about his lack of backbone and political integrity. Rumours that his car had to do an unsatisfactory u-turn to avoid angry students outside are entirely true.

BUSINESS: As with all areas of capitalism, there are those who continue to benefit at the expense of other people's misery. The insolvency industry is cashing in on the upsurge of companies going bust as a result of the recession. More than 16,554 firms went into liquidation last year owing an average of £584,000 each. The Christmas hamper firm Farepak went bust owing £37m to more than 119,000 savers, yet administrators are set to make a profit of up to £3m from the collapse. "The insolvency industry appears to be raking in a fortune" commented one insider. "Farepak victims have been left with pennies while the administrators have walked away with millions."

HEALTH: You know you're in trouble when consultancy firms take charge of government policy. In true Orwellian style privatising the health service, laid out by the Tories in their new white paper, titled *Liberating the NHS*, and a number of 'pathfinder leaders' have been employed to sell the idea to the rest of the health profession. HS communications chief Mike Ramsden stated "Already, 25% of the population is covered by pathfinder commissioning consortia, and another tranche of pathfinders will be announced very shortly." Oh, okay then.

Art and politics

This is the first in a series looking at the Freedom Press building, the organisations who use it, and how we are building an active political hub for anarchists and radicals to base their activity. First is the newly created art exhibition space on the second floor.

Twenty-odd years ago when I arrived in London I naturally made a bee-line to the internationally renowned anarchist bookshop at Freedom Press. The resultant introduction was, quite frankly, underwhelming. After finding the place down the obscure Angel Alley, in the then untrendy Whitechapel, other than the radical books I found little to entice me, it being stuffy, somehow foreboding.

I was looking for inspiration and perhaps some camaraderie but Freedom seemed to have isolated itself from the movement becoming less and less significant to a lesser and lesser populous.

Then a couple of years ago I was surprised to be asked to an event there. To my happy surprise I found the Alley alive with people, from all sorts of anarcho-flavours. The bookshop had moved downstairs from the dark claustrophobic room upstairs. Now light and spacious and vibrant. And more books! More exciting in-house print titles ... Freedom Press books on Blake, Speakers Corner and Anti-Fascist Action. No longer the vanity titles of old and the dull-as-fuck tomes.

Freedom now functioned as an all-embracing and accessible hub for the movement, so when, a little later, I was asked to volunteer at Freedom I was happy to become involved.

We set about trying to make Freedom Press more 'culturally relevant' and have now

made an art space in the Autonomy Club – a room on the second floor overlooking the Whitechapel Art Gallery, where groups from all aspects our movement plot, scheme and ... argue. Invigorated with a clean, a new sense of purpose and a now 'trendy' post code.

Our new space was inaugurated with a photographic exhibition by Max Reeves and the launch of the zine *Papakura Post Office*, while downstairs anti-folk legends Erin K and Tash played to an enchanted audience.

This was followed by a study of occupied Palestine entitled Tadamon ('solidarity' in Arabic) by Penny Quigly and an open group show with over 30 artists featured Rob and Roberta Smith, Donald Rooum and veteran surrealist Richard Nyman. And Tony Brennan whose fluoro spiked potatoes you may have seen atop London's bus shelters. These curious punctums-cum-suspect devices began life as nailed bricks in response to childhood events in the artists' native Belfast and began appearing in London with the Iraq war.

We commemorated the Siege of Sidney Street with Rob Conway's inspired interactive film and a procession to the site on the 100th anniversary.

Future show include GOMI, 'Utopia Ohio' by Lois Olmstead, a retrospective of Donald Rooum's anarcho-icon 'Wildcat' and a Micallef/Byers-Brown epic cartoon inspired by our favourite visionary anarchist William Blake.

Opening nights are on the first Thursday of each month from 6pm until 9pm, all are welcome to come, have a drink with us. We are accepting submissions – offering month-long shows to individuals and groups.

M



Anti-folk legends Erin K and Tash play to an enchanted audience

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

ETHIOPIA: A federal court has ordered the Sheraton Addis Hotel to pay nineteen of its permatemp waiters 615,712 birr (approx £23,828) in service charges, bonuses, tips, annual paid leave, overtime and 24-hour life insurance. The workers sued the hotel after being paid far less than the permanent workers at the rate as they were considered temporary despite working six days a week for two to six years.

GHANA: More than a thousand junior gold miners at the Bogoso mine have gone on an indefinite strike since 10th January over last year's unpaid bonuses. They are also calling for the removal of the mine's General Manager. They are employed by an African private sector gold mining company called Golden Star Resources Ltd. Ironically, the person asking the miners to continue working is Abraham Yalley, the chairman of the senior staff union, who is worried that gold production has been suspended entirely as a result of the strike.

ISRAEL: Striking port workers achieved a victory in just three days when they successfully wrung a 6% pay raise for senior workers and a 5% raise for workers hired after 2005 – in total an 11% raise to be implemented over two years. The union called Histadrut had initially wanted a raise of 9%. Their employers initially tried to stop the strike through court orders. But the workers' persistence has also won them a raise in the number of vacation days and sick leave.

MAURITANIA: Three of the six male anti-slavery agitators of an officially unrecognised group arrested on 13th December 2010 were sentenced to one year in prison. They were arrested for demonstrating outside a police station for not allowing the group members to attend the questioning of two girls suspected of being used as slaves. The police beat up the protesters both in and out of jail. Slavery, which was criminalised in Mauritania only in 2007, is still practiced widely, and both the police and the government are accused of covering up the problem.

SOUTH KOREA: As of 1st January, about 170 irregular subcontracted janitors have been holding a sit-in protest for a week in front of the office of the president of Hongkik University, Seoul. These cleaners, mostly female, in their 50s and 60s, lost their jobs in December last year when the university management terminated its contract with the subcontracting company. The termination came only a few days after the janitors had unionised to get better working conditions. Though they have much support from labour organisations and student solidarity groups, some students have been unhelpful and trying to disrupt the protest saying it was noisy.

LENS CAP OREGON, USA



Around thirty anarchists marched in Portland, Oregon, on 3rd January 2011 to protest indiscriminate shootings and killings by police. Cop victims included a homeless man, a schizophrenic, a 12-year old girl and a black man who had surrendered before he was shot dead.

A new voice from Palestine

In a new development in Palestinian politics, a new youth group has issued a 'manifesto for change' on Facebook, under the name Gaza Youth Breaks Out (GYBO). The manifesto, which apparently has been published in 21 languages, begins dramatically and passionately: "Fuck Israel. Fuck Hamas. Fuck Fatah. Fuck UN. Fuck UNWRA. Fuck USA!" It is, admittedly, an effort to distance themselves from all kinds of politics and from all vested interests, saying that they are "frustrated" and "fed up".

The writers of the manifesto point specifically to "the indifference of the international community". By 'international community' they mean institutions like the UNO and national governments with clout and decision-making powers who are, not surprisingly, cashing in on the conflict.

But the most striking aspect of the statement is their condemnation of Hamas. This is a much-needed affirmation from the ordinary

people of Palestine that there is another side to the story – theirs. It is a rejection of all self-appointed leaders claiming to speak in the interest of the people. The statement also mentions the specific incident that drove them up the wall – Hamas targeting the cultural Sharek Youth Forum on 30th November last year.

Not much is known about GYBO. According to the *Guardian* reporter who interviewed the group, they are eight university students – five men and three women characterised as 'cyber-activists'. The reporter goes on to say, "They are normal students, from the more secular elements of Gazan society. All declare themselves to be non-political and disgusted with the tensions and rivalries that divide Palestinians between Hamas, the rulers of Gaza, and Fatah..."

According to the La Bataille Socialiste website, the supporters of the group include The Palestinian Rapper.

Notes from the US

Resistance

In the weeks before the holidays, Obama released a 'review' of 'progress' in his war on Afghanistan. To coincide, numerous peace rallies were held. At the largest, an estimated 135 people were arrested outside the White House. They were detained having chained themselves to the White House fence. Iraq War 'veteran' Mike Prysner advocated continued civil disobedience to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: "They're not going to end the wars. And they're not going to do it, because it's not our government. It's *their* government. It's the government of the rich. It's the government of Wall Street, of the oil

giants, of the defence contractors. It's their government. And the only language that they understand is shutting down business as usual. And that's what we're doing here today, and we're going to continue to do until these wars are over."

Commerce

As Obama cut taxes for the wealthy at the end of last year, Wall Street's biggest firms completed their most profitable two-year period on record! Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley generated US\$93.7 (£60.6)

Riots in Algeria and Tunisia

Tunisians and Algerians greeted the new year by taking to the streets to vent their anger against the economic policies of their repressive governments. The protests, mainly against rocketing food prices but also against other pro-free trade measures, have left dozens dead and hundreds injured in the two countries.

Protesters, most of them young, targeted police stations, banks and government offices, threw petrol bombs and stones at the police and in one instance set fire to a police vehicle. Riot police responded brutally, erecting road blocks and shooting tear gas. One protester's death was actually caused by choking on tear gas.

The initial trigger for the unrest occurred in Tunisia when a young unemployed graduate who hawked vegetables on the street to make a living set fire to himself in front of a government office to protest the confiscation of his stock. The crowd at his funeral apparently swore vengeance. The protests in Tunisia at least included a conscious opposition to the regime. This is the first major political riot in Tunisia.

No wonder people are furious. Both Tunisia and Algeria have been subject to the IMF's 'structural reforms', i.e., economic shock therapy imposed by their west-supported, undemocratic governments in the past few months.

Tunisia's President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali has ruled the country since 1987, and Algeria's president Abdelaziz Bouteflika of the National Liberation Front is propped up by the army.

As a predictable result of free-market policies, state subsidies are being speedily slashed, the informal trade sectors heavily taxed; in Algeria prices of staple and state-



subsidised food items like flour, cooking oil and sugar went up by 30%. It has a 30% youth unemployment rate, which is now matched by Tunisia. The country is also being steadily looted. Algeria supplies 20% of Europe's natural gas. It is the world's sixth largest producer of gas after Russia, the US, Canada, Iran and Norway.

Emad Mekay of the Inter Press Service says that "the demonstrations can be dangerous for other Arab nations."

They are dangerous too, for Europe, because of its considerable population of North African immigrants.

Reportedly, there has already been a demonstration in Marseille, France, on the 9th January in support of the protests, but there has hardly been any reporting on these events in the major international media channels, except in some French ones. Despite

the geopolitical and economic significance of these protests one flimsy, lukewarm BBC article sees no link between the protests in Algeria and Tunisia, puts the cause of unemployment in Tunisia to "high birth rate" and to the fact that "economies of both countries ... have not grown fast enough."

However, the protests have unsettled the neo-liberally inexperienced regimes. The Algerian ministry has pledged to reduce food inflation by 14%. However, this could prove to be a temporary appeasement measure since food prices, and inflation generally, are going through the roof everywhere in the world. According to the UN FAO food price index, prices are at all-time high.

If the riots in Tunisia and Algeria are anything to go by, we might see 2008-style food-related riots in most parts of the 'third world'.

Notes from the US

◀ page 6

billion in the first nine months of 2010. It's not surprising, then, that the next chair of the House Financial Services Committee, Spencer Bachus of Alabama was quoted at the end of last year as saying that lawmakers and regulators should 'serve' Wall Street: "In Washington, the view is that the banks are to be regulated, and my view is that Washington and the regulators are there to serve the banks."

At the same time a leading financial analyst has warned that a combined debt of US\$2 (£1.3) trillion threatens to bring down 100 cities. Elena Moya predicts that over-drawn municipal economies face financial collapse in 2011; their defaulting on hundreds of billions of dollars of borrowings would severely affect the US economy with secondary disaster for those European cities (Florence, Barcelona, Madrid and Venice are in the greatest trouble) as well.

Lies

The slightly more respectable *Washington Post* revealed new details last month of the vast domestic intelligence apparatus which collects information about Americans, using the FBI, local police, state homeland security offices and military criminal investigators.

As part of the system, the FBI now operates a massive database known as 'Guardian' with the names and personal information of thousands of citizens and residents who have never committed a crime but were reported to have acted suspiciously by a local police officer or a fellow citizen.

The database contains over 160,000 suspicious activity files.

Good catch? Not really. Even the FBI admits that all this has resulted in only five arrests and no convictions.

Plus ça change...

Louis Further

Rapes in Haiti

In any land ravaged by political, economic or natural disasters, the first victims are always women and children.

Since the earthquake in early 2010, there have been increasing incidences of predatory sexual attacks in Haiti, according to Amnesty. The victims include children as young as fourteen, and even younger.

Haiti has still to recover from the disaster that killed 230,000 and a million people are still living in makeshift camps, where the rapists frequently prowl, often armed.

Most women do not go to hospitals as they have no money, nor do they report to the police as they receive little help and no protection.

Volunteer organisations have been set up to help the rape victims, but until women are safely housed and until there is a well-functioning system of justice it is likely that women will continue to be attacked.

FEATURE

Georgia prisoners, standing up

USA prison system in a state of collapse as inmates get organised

As we went to press with the previous issue, news was breaking of a historic strike by US prisoners in at least ten Georgia prisons, including Baldwin, Hancock, Hays, Macon, Smith and Telfair State Prisons.

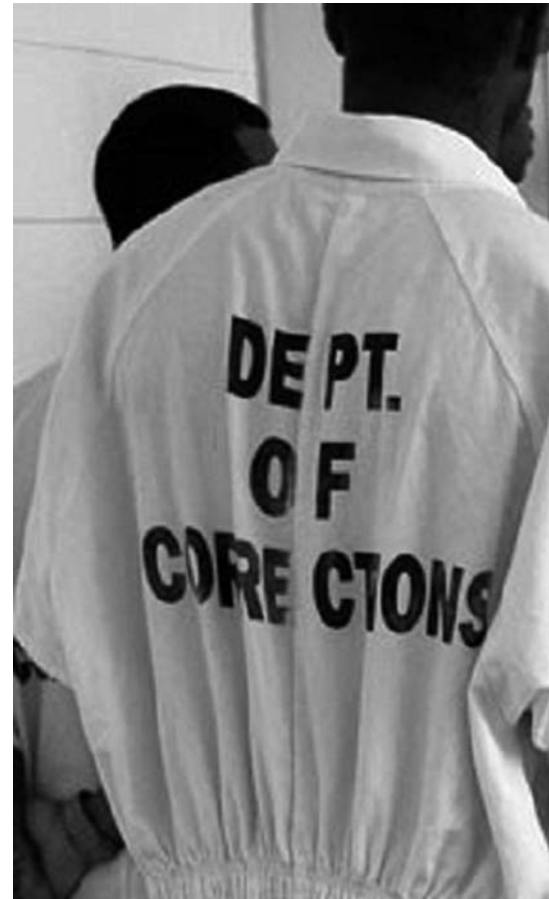
The strike, which was initially meant to be a one-day downing-of-tools, lasted for eight days and marked the largest strike by serving prisoners in US history, one that took place across racial lines and factional (i.e. gang) lines in what remains a strictly segregated prisons regime and where the guards and prison authorities regularly pit factional groups against each other in a cynical and systematic policy of divide and rule. The co-ordinated strike, which began on Thursday 9th December with prisoners refusing to leave their cells and carry out prison work, was organised via clandestine cell phones (mostly bought from prison guards) and involved a significant number of the 52,000 prisoners currently held in the State's jails. Georgia's Department of Corrections (DOC) responded to the strike by claiming that they had in fact imposed a state-wide lockdown and that there was no strike by prisoners.

Georgia has the highest rate of correctional control in the country (1 in 13 adults is either in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole), and its prisoners, unlike in many other States, currently receive no pay for the work that they are compelled to carry out, either keeping the prison system running or working in prison industries workshops or on community labour details, including the

prison fire stations which cover local areas. Part of the prisoners' grievances includes getting pay for carrying out this work (currently banned under Georgia law). Other strike demands included:

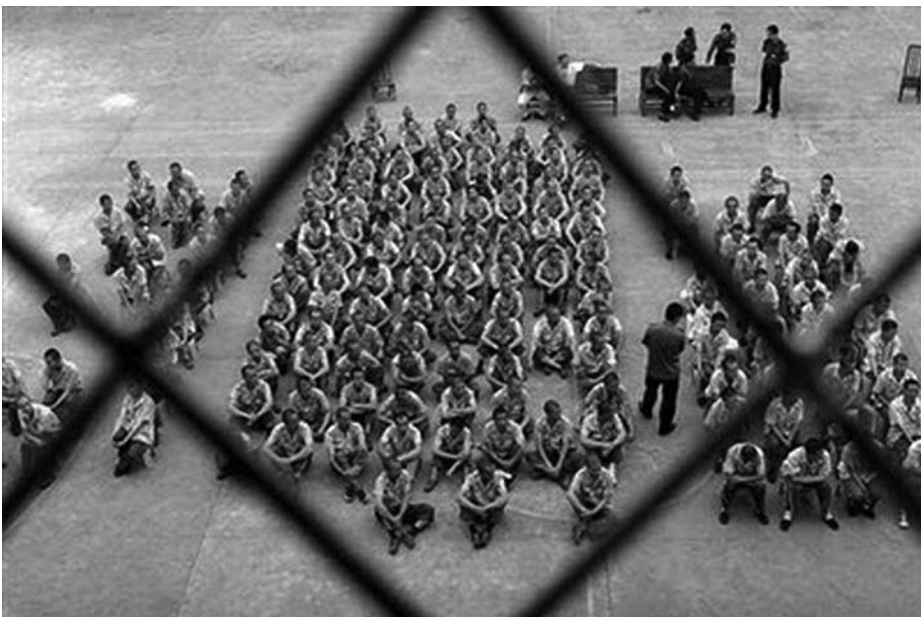
- Educational opportunities beyond High School diploma level;
- Decent health care – prisoners have access to only minimal levels of care and even that they have to pay exorbitant fees for;
- An end to cruel and unusual punishments – even the most minor infraction carries a \$4 fine, a lot of money for unpaid prisoners;
- Decent living conditions – prisoners are confined in over-crowded (often triple-bunked), substandard conditions, with little heat in winter and oppressive heat in summer;
- Nutritional meals – poor quality food and a lack of fruit and vegetables;
- Vocational and self-improvement opportunities – there is currently no provision of skills training, self-improvement and proper exercise;
- Access to families – there are excessive telephone charges (prisoners' families are charged \$55 a month for four 15-minute phone calls) and innumerable barriers to visitation;
- Just parole decisions – parole is regularly denied to the majority of prisoners despite evidence of eligibility.

According to some of the organisers, the protest had been in planning since September when tobacco was banned across the prison system and early December was chosen to allow time to spread the word across the prison system and so that temperatures in the cellblocks would be cooler by then, which is important when otherwise violent men are trying to keep their tempers in check.



Interestingly, the DOC had already gotten wind of the impending strike and had initiated a pre-emptive lockdown across the prison system and removed all privileges before the event but the prisoners said this played into their hands by initially restricting prisoners who might have broken the strike to their cells anyway. One amusing sideline to this was that in preparation for the strike prisoners had disconnected their televisions and placed them at the end of landings, anticipating the revoking of privileges.

Initially, despite the pre-emptive lockdown, prison guards tried opening some cell doors, hoping some prisoners would leave their cells, even if they didn't go to work, but prisoners responded by manually relocking the electronically operated cell doors. The carrot having failed, warders resorted to using the stick instead. Suspected 'ringleaders' were pulled out of their cells by CERT (Correctional Emergency Response Team) teams, beaten and put in 'the hole'; prisoners' personal property was destroyed; hot water and heat to cells, when daytime temperatures were near zero Celsius, were turned off. Another ploy used was the removal of doors from prisoners' personal lockers, thereby trying to encourage cellmates to steal from each other. Despite of these tactics, prisoners refused to be intimidated and responded by screening their cells with blankets, keeping



by sitting down!



the guards from performing an accurate count, a crucial aspect of prison operations, and vowing to continue their strike as long as necessary.

In the face of all this intimidation, the strike remained solid for the first six days. Even when a number of prisoners returned to work on 15th December, mainly on internal prison jobs in the kitchens and laundries, a large number of prisoners left their cells only in order to take showers, get clean clothes and, most importantly of all, gain access to the library in order to make formal grievance applications and consult legal advice books. Given that the protest had been planned to last only one day, it was inevitable that there should be some confusion as to how to end the strike. Some wanted to end it completely so the DOC could lift the lockdown and negotiations take place, whilst others wanted to continue withholding their labour. However, the key factor that brought about a safe and orderly end to their action was the DOC agreeing to a first meeting on 17th December with the prisoners' representative group, the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights (CCRPR).

The CCRPR had been intimately involved in helping organise the strike itself, forming links between different prisons and prison groupings via ex-prisoners and prisoners'

family members. Much of the public campaigning and information was channel via the group and, since the end of the strike, they have been in contact with the DOC on the prisoners' behalf; holding a number of meetings with them where they put forward a series of demands issued by the prisoners. They also help raise concerns about the spate of beatings and tear-gassings that had taken place since the end of the main strike, many

of which have resulted in the hospitalisation of inmates.* Additionally, as a direct result of the strike, CCRPR delegations have begun touring some of the prisons involved in the strike, interviewing prisoners about conditions, in what is just the beginning of a planned wider campaign started by the Georgia strikers, which will also include organised boycotts of companies contracting prison services, public demonstrations and educational outreach.

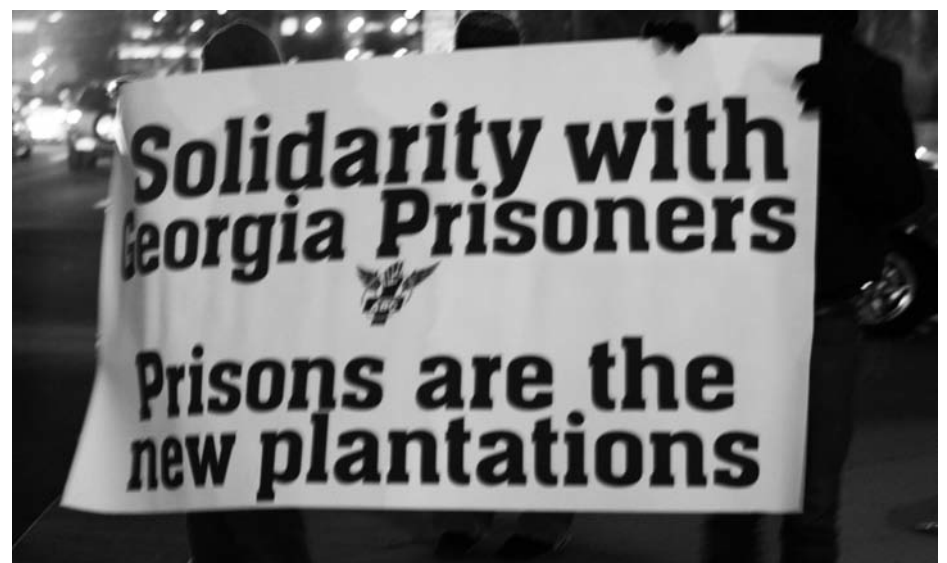
One, not unsurprising, feature of the strike was the almost total news blackout in the mainstream media, and it was mainly via on-line news and prisoner support websites, and blogs that news of the unfolding events got out. The DOC itself steadfastly refused to talk to the media, other than issuing bland press statements declaring that they had in fact initiated the lockdown and that they were in control of the situation. In contrast, the DOC was inundated with phone calls and faxes from the public declaring their support for the prisoners' actions, and the CCRPR also organised pickets of the prisons involved, even picketing some of the news media such as CNN that had ignored the strike.

As important as December's events in Georgia are in the annals of prisoner struggle, they are also a useful reminder to us all of the importance of solidarity; not just amongst prisoners standing together in the face of one of the most brutal and repressive of Western prison regimes, but how essential it is across prison walls everywhere.

Bra

Brighton ABC

* Many prisoners have also been 'ghosted' (moved at night and without prior notification to other prisons) in retaliation, with most of 37 'missing' prisoners reportedly ending up in strip cells in an abandoned building at Georgia State Prison in Reidsville.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

A jolly new year comrades. First of all, our apologies to subscribers who are getting the last issue of last year with this one. For once this was not the result of our own incompetence – it's the snow that slowed everything down in December and thus the inability of the paper to make the short trek to the folders and back. While the capitalists are trying to blame this on the weather, we all know don't we, comrades, that it's the inefficiency inherent in the system based on profits not people.

On the unpleasant side, we have been forced to ban Neil Wilson from the building for continued bad behaviour. This is very sad and we hope that he can get the help he clearly needs to deal with his problems, but we have a duty to building users and the movement in general to take a stand against harassment of comrades.

Looking forward to the new year, we hope to bring out a short book by Harold Barclay on religion and also a reprint of the 'Tintin' classic *Breaking Free*. In the shop we have a shiny new desk built over the holidays and, for those unable to visit, we will be working hard expanding the number and information about books on the website.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is issue is vol 72 no 01, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7201 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our sub rates will be soon be increasing, so renew at the old rate now if you want to avoid this.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 29th January 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 20th January. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Since their defeat at the election last May, the Labour Party have been undergoing something of a revival. Something like 60,000 people have joined them, though I suspect in most cases that means re-joined. Their electoral fortunes in London at least have also been on the up – with them increasing their hold on many councils and even taking control of a couple. Where I live they won a hotly contested by-election, against a strong challenge from their left. What was more surprising for me was the blind-spot quite a few people I know had about the by-election. They thought they were working to get one over on the Tories and Lib Dems, not that they were supporting the pro-cuts candidate.

Another friend who used to be in Class War, and was a paper candidate for the anti-cuts alliance in May, has now joined Labour. I am sure this is not an isolated incident. Plenty of lefty activists are just so grateful that the New Labour era is over that they will sign up to anything. Some of it is a reflex – the Tories are in power so Labour must be the great hope for the working class. It helps that the government are so naked in their intentions – their cuts are targeted at the poorest but hit almost everyone on an average income, allowing Labour to claim to speak for the 'squeezed middle'.

The union wing of the Labour Party is also making noises. Unite union leader Len McCluskey has said that the unions must be preparing for industrial action. In part this is a necessary recognition of where we are – the government will not back down on anything by mere argument, if unions don't

strike to defend jobs and services they will not prevent any cuts. But McCluskey goes on to say that any "attempt to blame Labour local authorities for the problem is a short cut to splitting our movement and letting the government off the hook."

The message from the social democrats is clear – resist a bit, but only within the law, and vote for us in 2015 or maybe sooner. It's a message that is a lot easier than the much starker vision spelled out by anarchists – resist lots and carry on resisting until we can overthrow the whole rotten capitalist system. But will the Labour/TUC vision achieve anything?

From past experience we know that Labour governments are quite good at redistributing resources from the poor to the rich. The choices between one government and another only ever amount to counting the crumbs which fall from the table. Labour say they won't cut as fast or as deep, but why should we leave it up to them? Labour exist, and retain a lot of their better activists, on the basis of being better than the Tories. For much of the last thirteen years that alone has been a stretch. Thankfully for Ed Miliband, the real Tories have come along to remind us all why we hate them so much.

Things are going to get a lot worse for the young, the old, women, men, the poor and the not quite poor. If we can fight off some of the coalition's vindictive plans, why should we stop there? Does Miliband really think that if we manage to do any of that, it will be business as usual if he wins in 2015? We don't want the crumbs off the table, we want the whole bakery!



Mobile phones catch the scene around Parliament at December's student demo.

Festival fun

Whilst ironing a stack of uniforms for the dreaded early morning shift, I watched BBC4's history of British festivals.

Amongst great footage of the Isle of Wight Festival, early Stonehenge and Windsor Festivals was a quick shot of Glastonbury 1979. It showed a Freedom bookstall with naked people walking past. Were these the staff running the stall?

Happy new year to you all, just off to renew my subs.

Michael

Some timely advice

Comrades Dear,
Unfortunate it is that heeded my advice many have not! In the Pokey someone already is, 189 more for student demo on bail they are. To my wise words all should listen.

Through the Force many things you

may see, horses, batons shields, old friends beaten to a pulp.

Photographs, on Facebook put them you should not. Pictures lead to identification, identification leads to arrests, arrest leads to imprisonment.

Your face too ugly it is, mush you must cover, mask you should wear.

Throw from the back you should not, on back of the bonce people you will hit. To the dark side they will turn, your snoot they will flatten.

From tall buildings be careful what you drop, in trouble you may land.

Booze leads to the drunk side. Once you have started down the drunk path forever will it dominate your criminal record.

Bust card you should carry, read it you should, its wise words you remember.

If arrested you are, silent you should be, for lawyer you must wait, patience you must learn.

If Provisions of CJPOA 1994 you have learned and Lord Bingham's judgment in case of Argent you can recite, implications

LETTERS AND COMMENT

of adverse inference with lawyer you may discuss. If not big mouth you should shut before fat foot you put in it.

Harry Roberts, our friend he is, but sing about him in cop shop you should not. PC Blakelock, on the beat no more he ain't, but reminding the pigs of this also unwise may be.

Remember, Strong are the Pigs, mind what you learn, save you it can.

Yoda

Prize Crossword

Due to the late arrival of the last issue of *Freedom*, the closing date for entries to the Prize Crossword in that issue has been extended to Thursday 20th January.

You can send your entries to 'Crossword', *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or email your answers to crossword@freedompress.org.uk.

The winners and solution will be printed in our next issue.

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Many of you will have enjoyed watching television footage of one of the livelier New Year's parties this year.

I am of course referring to events at HMP Ford, a Category D open prison in West Sussex, on 1st January where around forty balaclava-clad booze-fuelled fun seekers decided to torch the prison's communal facilities, including the post room, the gym and the snooker room with its ten newly installed pool tables. Six accommodation blocks (if one can call converted World War Two wooden RAF huts that) also went up in smoke.

Many of you will also have read the endless stream of inaccuracies which were being peddled by a media only too eager to print wild flights of fancy, hyperbole and lurid tales from ex-coppers and disgraced members of the Lords who had previously spent time in HMP Ford courtesy of Her Mage's Pleasure.

First up, let's establish a few facts. The riot occurred in one half of the two 'wings' at Ford. That section contained 290 prisoners under the supervision of two prison officers and four support staff (the official minimum staffing level for that number of prisoners in Category D on the night shift – it should have been five support staff but one had called in sick at the beginning of the shift). So it was not the entire 496 prisoners who were then housed at HMP Ford being supervised by the six staff, as the Prisons Minister Crispin Blunt and almost all the news media claimed.

It also appears that most of the fires were started at 12 noon, an hour and a half after prison officers had taken back control of one of the two accommodation blocks which were occupied by the rioting prisoners.

Interestingly, the majority of the 140 Tornado riot officers did not go in to the prison, together with the two fire engines in attendance, until after the secondary fires had been lit and almost all of the 85% of non-participating prisoners had already bagged up their possessions and were waiting to be escorted off site.

Nobody was taken hostage, injured, beaten up or even threatened as far as anyone can tell. Yes, prisoners refused to be breathalysed – what idiot thought that midnight on New Year's Eve was a good time to crackdown on alcohol consumption anyway, when prison staff had turned a blind eye to it for years?

Yes, prisoners had set off fire alarms, broken windows and started a number of fires, but why did 140 heavily armoured (and armed) screws wait until almost all of the B-wing was already in flames before they decided it was 'safe' to move in? Surely it couldn't have had anything to do with the fact that the Prison Officers Association are slated to lose thousands of paying members through cuts-related compulsory redundancies?



The start of the protest march and rally organised by HOOF on 3rd January.

● Well over 3,000 people braved the freezing January weather to take part in mass protest organised by **Hands Off Our Forest (HOOF)** to prevent the government's intended privatisation of the Forest of Dean.

The Con-Dem coalition is set to sell off the entire 650,000-acre forestry commission estate in England to developers, charities and power companies, which includes the country's largest oak forest and one of the last surviving ancient woodlands at the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. An assortment of community activists, countryside campaigners, rambblers, conservationists, radical ecologists and local people joined together on the 3rd January under the banner 'people and trees, not profit and greed' with the aim of defending the local area against massive sell-off by demanding the Forest remains publicly owned and publicly run by the Forestry Commission.

If the Public Bodies Bill, to be debated in the House of Lords in the next three weeks, becomes law it will initiate a corporate takeover of public land. Selling off state-owned assets for commercial purposes in order to raise cash has always been a favourite Tory tactic – but one that is now being met with mass resistance, sparking comparisons with the anti-roads movement of the 1990s.

The Forest of Dean has a long history of struggle between ordinary people and Crown, government and private landowners. As far back as 1808, large areas of the Forest were enclosed, depriving the local population of hunting and timber as well as their grazing and mining rights, and led directly to the Dean Forest riots of 1831. Then in 1981 a

fierce community campaign was fought to ensure the Forest of Dean was exempt in the government sale of forest land. It is this exemption which is now being repealed.

● On the same day that Ratcliffe climate protestors were convicted (see elsewhere in this issue of *Freedom*) anti-nuclear protestors walked free from court as the charges against them were dropped at the last minute by the Crown Prosecution Service, who went on to offer no evidence against the defendants.

Andreas Speck (46), a member of Kick Nuclear, the London group of the **Stop Nuclear Power Network**, and Ian Mills (45) from Chippenham, appeared at Lowestoft Magistrates Court accused of "failing to leave land" when they blockaded Sizewell nuclear power station in Suffolk in February 2010 in protest against the flawed government consultation on nuclear new build. The men were originally arrested for trespass after they locked themselves together with two other people as they took part in an eight-hour blockade at an access road.

After almost a year, and seven case management hearings, the prosecution applied for an amendment to the charge from S69 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (failing to leave land after an order had been given by a senior police officer) to S68 (aggravated trespass), because the "wrong charge" was apparently a "computer error". However, the district judge rejected this as "not in the interest of justice" so the case collapsed, allowing the two to walk free.

Siege of Sidney Street

Anarchists came out on 3rd January to commemorate the centenary of the infamous siege of Sidney Street where hundreds of police were held at bay by a pair of armed Latvian revolutionaries suspected of being part of a gang who, some weeks earlier, had attempted to rob a jewellery shop killing three policemen in a shootout in the process (later to become known as the Houndsditch murders).

On a clear and crisp cold winter afternoon, members of the Whitechapel Anarchist Group, London Class War and various other anarchists and radicals held aloft red and black flags and banners and formed a solemn procession from Freedom bookshop through the streets of the East End to lay a wreath at the site of the siege to celebrate the memory of those anarchists killed during the bloody gun battle that took place on 3rd January 1911 in the slums of Stepney.

Ian Bone, the veteran anarchist rabble-rouser, led a minute's silence to remember the two men, William Sokoloff and Fritz Svaars, whose charred remains were found in the burnt-out building at the end of the siege. Bone acknowledged the significance of the occasion commenting: "The events leading from Houndsditch to Sidney Street are well told and represent one of the few occasions anarchism has intruded into the story of twentieth century English politics," adding, with reference to the media exposé of East Europeans being instrumental in the recent student riots, that "it is perhaps the real tribute to our Latvian comrades that their countrymen are still fighting on the streets of London with their anarchist comrades. *All hail the heroes of Sidney Street.*"

Phil Ruff, the anarchist historian who did so much to uncover the identities of the fugitives (especially the semi-legendary figure of Peter the Painter who evaded capture at the time and has today two buildings in the area named after him) also spoke, evoking the turbulent times that led to one of the most notorious chapters in the political history of London's East End.

There's always been some controversy whether those involved in the gang were actually anarchists, or indeed from Latvia, but what is clear from the documented evidence is that both events allowed the government of the day opportunity to intensify its persecution and repression of 'aliens', minorities and political refugees fleeing the unrest in Europe, as well attacking the poor Jewish working class community as undesirable and "aliens of the worst type – violent, cruel and dirty".

In the early hours of 3rd January 1911, police received information that the men responsible for the Houndsditch murders were holed up in a terraced house at 100 Sidney Street. The whole area was surrounded by 750 police backed up by the Scots Guards armed with battlefield rifles, sent for by the



Home Secretary Winston Churchill (circled) at Sidney Street on 3rd January 1911.

media hungry Winston Churchill eager to make a name for himself as home secretary. After a seven hour stand-off in which countless gun fire was exchanged – with the anarchists being better armed and better aimed – a fire caught hold inside the house. The fire brigade, responding to the blaze, rushed to the police barricades and demanded to be allowed through, whereupon Churchill intervened refusing them permission to extinguish the flames. The fire soon engulfed the whole of the building killing the occupants. Eventually the firemen had to move in to stop the damage spreading to other buildings as the roof caved in and a wall collapsed. He was later criticised by the prime minister for this actions.

Churchill was widely ridiculed, both by the jeering public and his rivals in the political establishment, for his role at Sidney Street – for instigating a media spectacle, for suggesting dragging up heavy artillery batteries to bombard the building; or storming the house from several directions simultaneously; or advancing up the staircase behind a steel shield for which several constables were despatched to search for suitable material in nearby foundries. Tory opposition leader Arthur Balfour noted in Parliament that, "We are concerned to observe photographs in the illustrated newspapers of the home secretary in the danger zone. I understand what the photographer was doing, but why the home secretary?" Although according to Martin Gilbert's biography, on his return from the siege Churchill was heard telling

his secretary in excited tones that "It was such fun!"

Inside the gutted house the bodies of Sokoloff and Svaars were recovered but there was no sign of the supposed ringleader, Peter the Painter, who remained elusive and at large only to pop up later in various guises abroad. Five men and two women were put on trial for their role in the Houndsditch murders, but all either had the charges dropped, were acquitted or had their convictions quashed.

Perhaps it was Churchill himself who paid no greater tribute when he wrote in his memoirs, "We were clearly in the presence of a class of crime and a type of criminal which for generations had no counterpart in England. The ruthless ferocity of the criminals, their intelligence, their unerring marksmanship, their modern weapons and equipment, all disclosed the characteristic of the Russian Anarchist."

A free exhibition entitled 'London under siege: Churchill and the Anarchists' is currently being held at the Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, Canary Wharf, London E14 4AL. (Tel: 020 7001 9844) until April. The show has been organised jointly with the Jewish East End Celebration Society. There is also an excellent interactive art project by Rob Conway, previously exhibited at Freedom, exploring how the siege is remembered today. The documentary weaves together interviews with working class East Enders, historians, anarchists and academics to tell its own unique story. It can be accessed at <http://www.siegememory.net/>

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

■ **15th** Musical protest to cancel the arms fair at the Excel Exhibition Centre – protest during the Boat Show at ExCel to get the arms fair at that location cancelled, musical and non-musical supporters needed, meet outside the western entrance to Excel Exhibition Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16 1XL from 2pm until 5pm (from Custom House DLR station just follow the signs to the ExCel Centre).

■ **22nd** GM: Gathering Momentum, anti-GM update, networking and strategy session for grassroots and NGO campaigners. The GM threat is gaining momentum and it's time to act, and this gathering is to build links and networks to counter the coming threat: briefings from farmers and researchers, opportunities to meet and strategise with everyone from Reclaim the Fields activists to NGO representatives, community food growers to radical beekeepers – if you've ever been involved, or ever considered getting involved in GM crop campaigning, we'd love you to be there, Central London (email us for more info) from 10am until 6pm, email info@stopgm.org.uk or see www.stopgm.org.uk

■ **29th** Cut Cameron Festival punk all-day, a benefit for Anarchists Against The Cuts and to defend the Millbank protesters, free and tasty food provided by Taunton Vegans plus over 20 bands on two stages, stalls, from 12 noon at The Winchester Arms, Castle Lodge, Castle Green, Taunton TA1 4AD, tickets £5/£6 on the door, for full details see <http://www.myspace.com/anonpromo> or email anonpromo@myspace.com.

FEBRUARY

■ **6th** Seedy Sunday with seed swap, stalls, demonstrations, talks and more, find out how to save seeds, make compost, keep bees, use surplus crops, make seed bombs, join the community food project, feed your family... Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove BN3 4AH, from 10am until 4.30pm, for details call 01273 235580 or see seedsunday.org

MAY

■ **7th** Bristol anarchist bookfair 2011 – in the tradition of May Day, resistance and alternatives to cuts, an anarchist antidote to a week of royal weddings, local elections and dodgy referendums, and more cuts, offering all things anarchist with stalls, meetings, films, vegan café, kids space and more, plus an after party nearby as well, at Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY from 10.30am to 6.30pm, see <http://www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org> for details.

FILM

Reasons to be cheerful:
a round-up of the best of 2010

One would be justified in reeling with despair when faced with the output of modern cinema, particularly of Hollywood; the crassness, the lies, the gutless complicity. But if you can brave your way through the unrelenting drudgery, there are still films of great courage, art and love to be found.

The Social Network, dir. David Fincher
Fincher artfully examines the swirling black-hole of the American male in the age of modern capitalism (in this respect it is a tremendous extension of, and companion piece to, *Fight Club*); the misogyny, the desperation, the dead-eyed ambition and the avarice that boil uncontrollably beneath western culture. Superficially, at least, it is a rather tired Faustian tragedy about the origins of the Facebook phenomenon, but don't be fooled. Fincher's really on to something with this one.

Inception, dir. Christopher Nolan
Thankful hope for the Hollywood Blockbuster! The simpering grandiosity that affects most of Nolan's work is still here and as a corollary there is a lot less going on than Nolan thinks there is in his tale of dream espionage. However so much credit is due to the director for rendering such elegant and pacy set pieces and for so earnestly believing in making 'movies' with depth and meaning. There is infinitely more at work here than in an *Iron Man 2* or *Tron*.

A Prophet, dir. Jacques Audiard
Tahar Rahim's hauntingly performed 'Malik

El Djebena' suffers a blistering baptism in the fire of a brutal, racially divided French prison. *A Prophet* is wrought, at once, with scorching cinema verite, reveries of magic-realism and sublime surrealism.

The White Ribbon, dir. Michael Haneke
Characteristic of Haneke's work, beneath the Teutonic calm there is a disquieting delirium that speaks in muted shrieks and thrashes with an icy grip. *The White Ribbon* explores the increasingly bizarre and violent acts that pervade a Northern German community just prior to World War One. Haneke fixes his lens, resolutely and imperceptibly, on the abusive authority figures; the Doctors, the Pastors, the Barons who percolate through the provincial society, heaving with bloated steps; a portent of things to come. A deeply engrossing piece which languorously unfolds with incantatory rhythm.

Scott Pilgrim vs The World, dir. Edgar Wright

Somehow, out of the misogynistic repugnance of *Kick Ass* (another postmodern comic-book adaptation), *Scott Pilgrim* elicited within me waves of relief and gratitude. Whilst Wright fails to drag it over the finishing line, amidst the ultimately superficial clash and clang of unending pop-culture nods and winks, it is a film of great wit, verve and affection, which is gratefully received in the current paradigm.

Honourable Mention:

The War You Don't See, dir. John Pilger;
Toy Story 3, dir. Lee Unkrich; *A Single Man*, dir. Tom Ford; *The Secret In Their Eyes*, dir. Juan Jose Campanella.

Keir Brisbane-Langsdon

ABOUT
ANARCHISM

Nicolas Walter with an introduction by Natasha Walter

The case for anarchism as a pragmatic political philosophy is explained in this new edition of the classic work by Nicolas Walter, who was a writer, journalist and active protester against the power of the state. It has often been reprinted and translated into many languages, including French, Spanish, Japanese, Serbo-Croat, Chinese, Polish and Russian.

available at £4.20 (post free) from
Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. While they are sometimes enslaved, the temnothorax ants 'rebel' by killing newborn queens and workers from the slave-maker species.
2. It stemmed from a speech made by the Kaiser when German troops were sent to the Boxer rebellion in China in 1900, where he called on his soldiers to be as ruthless and merciless as the Huns under Attila.
3. He was sent to spy on the tiny German

- Workers Party while still an army corporal. He impressed the leader and was invited to join and within a year had transformed it into the National Socialist German Workers Party, aka the Nazi Party.
4. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republic, was ultimately commanded by African-American Communist Oliver Law.

A new feminism?

Feminism is back, and a new book sets out to help prevent it falling victim to the mistakes of the past, according to Tom Jennings

The politics of feminism seemed by the 1990s to have lost momentum. Legal recognitions of theoretical ‘equal rights’ meant younger generations assumed that their lives would be less heavily constrained than their mothers’ – yet despite accelerations in female employment rates in all sectors and the growing sophistication of consumerist wish-fulfilment, individual and institutional violence against and marginalisation of women stay stubbornly prevalent, with today’s rapidly deteriorating prospects globally impacting disproportionately on them. Meanwhile feminism’s central debates remained vexingly unresolved – such as the disputed significance of pornography and media representation, with Andrea Dworkin’s interpretation of virtually all heterosexual practice as tantamount to rape, leading to support for right-wing censorship, counterposed to the *laissez-faire* embrace of diversity encouraging the practical exploration of possibilities for personal empowerment. Such impasses were reinforced by accusations that feminism had failed ‘women in general’ in favour of white, middle-class women pursuing and jealously guarding their own privileges – inevitably downplaying the significance of class and race in domination.

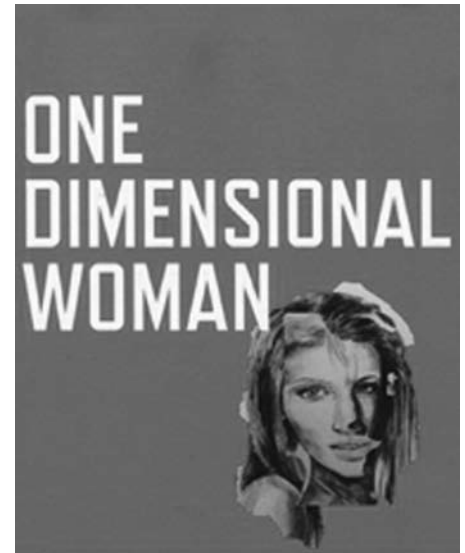
Nevertheless liberal democracy’s irrevocably broken promises precipitate systemic gender-skewed consequences at home and abroad – raped as military tactic, sexual slavery, migrant hyperexploitation – magnifying many issues that the supposedly uncool, outdated Women’s Libbers campaigned around. Mainstream political currents appear unwilling or unable to respond to such phenomena, prompting a plethora of organisational and publishing efforts by new feminist networks combining old hacks and young blood. Nina Power’s *One Dimensional Woman* (Zero Books, 2009) is a welcome contribution to this recent resurgence – a short, cleverly structured, well-argued, and often extremely witty tract aiming to serve as a provocative corrective to some of its more simplistic and superficial variants as well as insisting on the necessity of historical and materialist analysis if worthwhile progress is to be made. Starting from Herbert Marcuse’s insights into post-war developments in consumer capitalism – where the marketisation of desire claims to satisfy human needs but actually imprisons ‘one-dimensional’ citizens more effectively in alienated relations – Power critically examines various popular (mis)conceptions of feminism

to suggest “alternative ways of thinking about transformations in work, sexuality and culture” (back cover).

Observing wryly that, for some, “the height of supposed female emancipation coincides [...] perfectly with consumerism” (p1), the book’s first section problematises the ‘right to choose’ given the degraded language of official political discourse. A discussion of Sarah Palin harks back to Thatcherism and support for women in power, emphasising the inherent unreliability of ‘representation’ when ‘feminism’ is mobilised to support imperialist aggressions like the Iraq/Afghanistan wars. Racist bombast against the Islamic hijab then expresses outrage that women ‘choose’ to conceal their bodies and reject demands for compulsive display as precondition for acceptable public presence. Subsequent chapters represent the core of Power’s arguments about the feminisation of labour, where flexible, part-time, low-paid, precarious work uncannily echoes both the suffocating history of women’s domestic enclosure and the bright new future of informational and affective labour. Meanwhile personal identity shifts towards infinitely measurable visibility, classification and disciplining of characteristics and skills complementing fragmented remnants of subjectivity and desire matched to consumer products and lifestyle positioning.

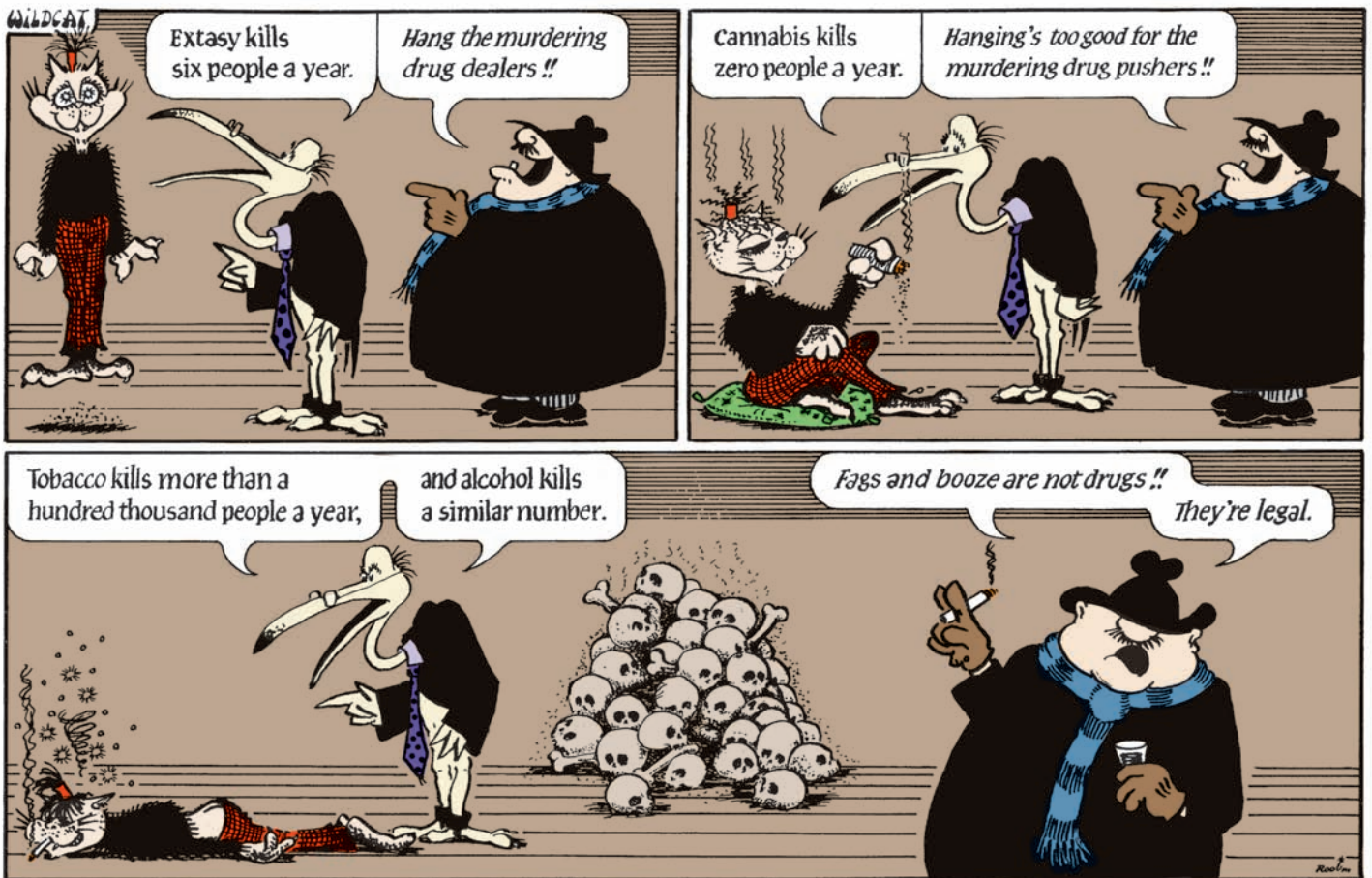
With simulated appearance experienced as essence of self in this new cultural context, personal biography merely aggregates tastes and shopping habits coinciding with labour market career value as the active commitment to be and do whoever and whatever you’re told. Sexual subjectification supplants old-fashioned objectification, providing extra ammunition to demolish modern versions of upbeat feminist boosterism where feelgood individualism replaces struggle for substantive collective improvement. The argument is then extended to depictions of women in popular entertainment genres, which also largely boil down to the hard work of superficial self-presentation combined with rather ancient fantasies of romantic completion as the illusory pay-off. Discussion thus effortlessly proceeds to a consideration of contemporary pornography, understood as an epitome of the relentlessly boring drudgery of industrialised labour posing as final fulfilment. Here, even more nakedly than in other realms of neoliberal misery, sexualised, feminised workers – irrespective of on-screen dominance or subservience – ‘freely choose’ to perform perfunctory service to the pointless extraction of surplus value.

Throwing the babe out with the bathwater Surprisingly, given its author’s historical enthusiasm, her only case-study comparison counterpoints modern hardcore’s grim pneumatics to the “anarchic charm” (p52) of early twentieth-century French vintage –



with cheerfully imperfect casts, physical and behavioural heterogeneity and, above all, a preponderance of compassionate humour. However, she doesn’t interrogate its sex workers’ terms and conditions, upmarket screening sites or narrative relationships with contemporaneous genres like working-class burlesque (the latter excoriated elsewhere for its latter-day middle-class pole-dancing manifestation) – let alone older French traditions such as porn’s intrinsic role in revolutionary propaganda against clergy and aristocracy. Still, as in the other comparably truncated shorthand expositions, the conclusions reliably nail crucial points – in this case, that the political significance of pornographies can only be assessed in terms of the social relations accompanying their sexual contortions. Otherwise alternative moral absolutisms favour reactionary repression or the predatory free market (or both), either way inexorably leading to judgemental discrimination against those with least power to effect change – at the lowest levels of production and consumption not only in the sex industry but all other sectors reproducing capitalist society.

Sadly, *One Dimensional Woman* largely fails to explore the prejudicial class-based criteria underlying such moral evaluations – in new and old feminisms and most everywhere else in the bourgeois ideological firmament – also prominent in present legitimisations of austerity.¹ This should have informed the book’s final chapters investigating earlier incarnations of sexual and lifestyle radicalism which tackled the connections between family, community and political change, but instead only an extended final quotation from Toni Morrison decisively makes “the link between sex and politics ... that capitalism needs to obfuscate in order to hide its true dependency on the ordering and regulation of reproduction” (p58). Nevertheless this



Review

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excellent book does succeed overall in making the case that, while a revitalised feminism stands a chance of re-establishing “the link between household labor, reproductive labor and paid labor, capitalism [along, we might add, with most purportedly anticapitalist ideologies] ... pretend[s] that the world of politics has nothing to do with the home” (p59).

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

1. This cripples two influential ‘new wave’ feminist books – Ariel Levy’s *Female Chauvinist Pigs* (Simon & Schuster, 2005) and Natasha Walter’s *Living Dolls* (Virago, 2010; reviewed in *Freedom*, 17th July, 2010). The former misses the proletarianisation of the professions and its corollary

‘vulgarisation’ of middle class conduct – with ‘raunch culture’ a defence against alienation rather than crass consumerist response, yet still viewed with superior distaste. Similarly, among its massed ranks of dispiriting statistics on ‘the new sexism’ and ‘the new gender determinism’, Walter claims to appreciate the pitfalls of moralisation but consistently interprets from exactly that perspective. So although many young women ‘might consider’ sex industry work or believe it to be ‘acceptable’, this might merely indicate realism about dire job prospects and a principled refusal to morally shame those acting accordingly. For the implications of such class blindness see, for example, the work of Beverley Skeggs: ‘Respectability and Resistance’ [interview] (*Redemption Blues*, 2006; www.redemptionblues.com); ‘On the Economy of Moralism and Working-Class Propriety’ [interview] (*Fronesis*, 2008; www.eurozine.com); *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (Sage, 1997), and *Class, Self, Culture* (Routledge, 2004).

THE QUIZ

1. Slave-making in ants is well-known and studied. What is special about the temnothorax ant?
2. Why did the British call the Germans ‘Huns’ during the First World War?
3. How did Hitler join the predecessor of the Nazi Party?
4. In which American military formation did a black man first command white troops?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available for £5 (post free) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or from our website at freedompress.org.uk.

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