

GANG WARFARE

Welcome to a new era of political policing

When Oxbridge graduate Bernard Hogan-Howe began his new job as Metropolitan police commissioner in September, he brought with him the quaint PR phrase ‘total policing’ (that he himself coined when chief of Merseyside police) as a way of introducing himself into the new role as top cop. As a soundbite it ticked all the right boxes for an insouciant media – enticing, unspecific and unavoidably non-committal. But what in reality does a change at the top of the police pile mean for anarchists and activists especially during this period of economic disintegration and increasingly fractious social unrest, what can we expect in this new era of total policing?

Already this year we have seen several examples of pro-active policing taking on a more sinister role – the kind of policing that goes beyond public order and preservation of the peace but designed to undermine political expression.

When education activists did a banner drop at the Lib Dem party conference in September they were remanded for three days by West Midlands police as their “membership of an organisation showed

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LENS CAP SING WHEN WE'RE WINNING



Anarcho-punk veterans Chumbawamba bring a bit of style and substance to the steps of St Paul's as they serenade the Occupy masses with songs about the better times. The mini gig, on the day of the student demo, also featured Billy Bragg and Tom Morello from Rage Against the Machine and folk legend Peggy Seeger. The Chumbas are doing a short tour in December – check the Freedom website for details.

Photograph © Max Reeves

MILITARY £600m CONSULTANTS

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) were forced to admit that spending on consultants is out of control, as a freedom of information request revealed that the government military department has paid out almost £600m in the last two years on consultants alone. The document revealed the MoD spent £564m on “technical support”, in comparison to spending just £6m on consultants in 2006. In total 380 private firms are now being paid to give the MoD technical support and consultancy.

The reason for the obscene escalation in spending was the introduction by the last Labour Government of The Framework Agreement for Technical Support (FATs), a policy that allowed senior defence officials to hire private companies without the required authorisation from government ministers. Added to this was a complete lack

of accountability within the government department itself, a leftover from Tony Blair, the war prime minister, and his tenure in office. Even the MoD's internal report on FATs revealed a catalogue of abuse including “significant weaknesses” in the cases submitted for money, “weaknesses in the robustness of scrutiny” by those in charge of the budget and contracts being awarded without any kind of competition, meaning that the “ability to demonstrate value for money was compromised”. It most cases there was no assurance that any of the guidelines were actually being followed.

In addition to these figures the MoD spent £24.87bn on its suppliers during 2009-10 with £4bn of that going to Bae Systems despite the company sacking 9,000 employees this year due to ‘government spending cuts’.

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ISSN 0016-0504



NEWS

NEWS IN BRIEF

December has been designated as a month of protest against Atos, the private healthcare provider contracted to assess the suitability of benefit claimants for social welfare. Since taking over the evaluation process, which earns the company millions from government funding, they have been criticised almost universally for their record and conduct towards the unemployed.

Atos Healthcare is part of IT giant Atos Origin selected by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to administer the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), testing sick and disabled people who apply for benefit. In November 2010, a government select committee report heavily criticised the WCA for being too “mechanistic”. In addition, twelve doctors working for Atos face being struck off for improper conduct, and other members of Atos’ staff are under investigation over allegations of obscene criticism of claimants. The DWP is reported in 2011 to have by far the highest number of decisions overturned at appeal of any government department.

Over time sick and disabled people and their supporters have grown more militant and more vocal in their condemnations of Atos. In return Atos threatened legal action against the Internet hosting companies of three websites – Carerwatch, After Atos and Atos Register of Shame, attempting to silence claimants and their small organisations who have had the courage to speak up.

The December campaign, dubbed ‘A Month of Festive Action Against Atos and the Benefit Cuts’, brings together grassroots claimants groups and disability rights activists to stage protests, direct action, demonstrations and other events to highlight the way in which the disabled and sickness claimants are being increasingly treated as second class citizens. They list all Atos corporate offices across the UK country which will be targeted throughout the month of action.

The coalition government is continuing and extending the welfare reform policies brought in by the previous Labour government of penalising the unemployed by slashing billions from the benefits system in a series of moves which will cause increased poverty and destitution for millions of people.

Disabled people, parents, pensioners, the unemployed and the low waged will all be drastically affected by the reforms.

As the call out says: “millions of disabled, low paid, unemployed or sick people are facing a future of poverty, worsening health and homelessness. For the last year disabled people, claimant activists and supporters have been protesting against the inhumane treatment being inflicted on already vulnerable people. We need more than ever to increase the pressure and fight these attacks on our most basic needs and very survival.”

Check the Benefit Claimants Fightback website for events: benefitclaimantsfightback.wordpress.com/

LENS CAP PORTRAIT OF A RADICAL



Noam Chomsky visited the UK for the Rebellious Media Conference where he gave a key note address to a packed audience on the future of radical media, but focused on the Occupy movement. He also met up with radicals from London for a private meeting. Although *Freedom* were not invited to attend – the organisers were very select in their choices – we are told he was in inspired form.

Social Centres breakout

With government moves to outlaw squatting in residential buildings and the organisation of activists into a movement of positive action against the criminalising of squatters, once again radical social spaces is back on the agenda and the forefront of people’s political activity.

Groups such as Squatters Action for Secure Homes (SQUASH) and Squatters Network in Brighton (SNOB), along with the long established Advisory Service for Squatters, are all playing their part to ensure individuals retain the right to a safe home in empty buildings. We will be looking at the implications of the new laws against squatters in future editions of the paper, but for now we ask what is the future for autonomous social spaces?

Social centres, simply defined are ‘radical independent social and community centres’ and they have had something of a resurgence in recent times. This may be due to the upsurge in political activism in general and recognising the need for a

radical community hub and active political base. As the people involved in the Birmingham Social Centre say “The spaces by their nature attract local residents, local activists and often create exchanges and meeting points that result in strong communities actively pursuing their civil power and asserting control over their own lives”.

Groups in Birmingham, Sheffield and Manchester are all committed to establishing permanent social centres in their respective cities. This is an incredibly positive move and hopefully in the new year we will see emerging new places for radical ideas and activities.

If anarchists wish to get involved in any of these projects then get in contact:

- **Sheffield** <http://sheffieldsocialcentre.org.uk/>
- **Manchester** <http://www.manchestersocialcentre.org/>
- **Birmingham** <http://birminghamsocialcentre.wordpress.com/>





Winter blues

How energy companies are making a killing

Despite an uncharacteristic mild autumn, winter brings with it the necessity of to increase gas and electricity consumption to keep warm during periods of lower temperatures. Characteristically many people cannot afford to do so. The number of those in fuel poverty, those dying unnecessarily because of the cold, especially the elderly, and those suffering from seasonal disorders escalates each year, highlighting the lack of concern and provision by government and the energy business towards people, particularly those on low incomes, to ensure their survival during this period.

Fuel poverty in this country is defined by households who spend more than 10% of their household income on fuel to keep their home in 'satisfactory' condition. According to the most recent figures, four million homes in England were classified as being in fuel poverty.

Along with those alarming statistics is a recent report that estimates almost 3,000 will die this winter as a direct result of fuel poverty – more than the number killed in traffic accidents each year. The Hills Fuel Poverty Review, commissioned by the government, base their findings on figures from the Office for National Statistics that states there are 27,000 extra deaths on average in the UK each winter compared to other times of year, most due to the cold weather. A death rate that is one of the highest in Europe, worse than Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Norway and France.

The Hills Review concluded that living in cold homes has a series of effects on illness and mental health, but the most serious is its contribution to Britain's unusually high rates of "excess winter deaths".

In contrast the big six energy companies British Gas, EDF, E.on, Npower, Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern, who have a monopoly on supplying domestic properties, continue to make massive profits from ordinary customers.

According to the energy regulators Ofgem, profits per customer rose an astonishing 733% over the past six months, rising from £15 in June to £125 in October. On top of this the average electricity tariff is set to increase by £300 a year to £800, with gas prices rising from £845 to more than £1,300.

To put that into some perspective, it is estimated that for every one per cent rise in energy prices, an extra 40,000 people will be thrown into fuel poverty.

Adding to this catalogue of economic greed is the coalition government's plan to exclude social landlords from the fuel poverty element of the energy company obligation (ECO) subsidy. Social tenants, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, are at risk of not benefiting from this badly needed funding and falling further into fuel poverty – despite paying for the subsidy through their energy bills. Another stark example of big business colluding with wealthy government ministers to stitch-up ordinary people.

Gang warfare

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that they could not be trusted not to cause danger to the public". In Bristol there was a raid on *The Autonomist* radical magazine where police seized phones, computers and paperwork looking for a connection to the August riots, and it was during the August riots that several people received long jail sentences for simply posting messages on Facebook encouraging participation in the unrest. There were also the pre-emptive arrests and raids on squats in the run up to the Royal wedding and of course the arrest of 145 people for the Fortnum & Mason peaceful occupation on 26th March.

But perhaps the most pronounced indication that we are entering a new era of political policing was the excessive and overt role of

plain-clothes police during the November student demonstration in central London. Despite the tightly regulated route of the march – each side street blocked by a small army of well defended barriers – gangs of plain-clothes police, acting independently of uniformed police, embedded themselves in the demonstration and sought to impose themselves upon the crowd, only revealing their identities when people grew hostile towards them. Whether this was to provoke a reaction or simply target individuals they wanted to arrest, the gang strategy highlighted a new and potentially dangerous example of things to come.

This new approach to the management of political dissent and public protest will

impose itself more and more as the crisis deepens, where the legitimacy of government is constantly questioned and the role of the state relentlessly challenged, where ordinary people, angry and disillusioned with the current state of things, become active political subjects.

For the state to maintain its authority and control over an increasingly embittered population they must ensure not only a compliant protest culture but the continued separation between political activists and the rest of society.

Policing now has taken on the form of dissuading us from expressing a common purpose. This is the political policing of the future.

THE BIG PICTURE

Photograph © Florine Touzard

Demonstration in France in support of illegal immigrants and those without papers.



Aftermath of the riots in Tottenham on 12th August 2011 after police shot and killed Mark Duggan. The killing was to trigger riots in a number of cities around England for several days afterwards.

“Bring the fire here!”

No Borders activists work in solidarity with migrants who struggle against the border regime. We want to strengthen links between this resistance and the wider discontent seen on Britain's streets against commodification and police harassment.

Here, we make the argument that repression of migrants is at the sharp end of the same knife that is being wielded against all vulnerable and poor people. To do this, our article discusses three themes: stop and search, deaths in custody, and State corporatism.

Stop and search – racial profiling

In the three months before the August Riots, the Met Police stopped and searched black people almost five times more often than white people. Despite this, the arrest rates following a search were almost identical.¹

Racial profiling by Police is also a major problem facing migrant communities living in Calais. Many refugees try to cross covertly from this French harbour to England. Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS), part of the No Borders network, has spent over two years monitoring police behaviour there. Riot and border police are stationed in the town to harass migrants continuously. They raid camps and squats, often at night or early in the morning, and patrol the streets to stop and search migrants found there. Both raids and patrols may lead to arrest. There were 17,000 arrests of migrants in Pas-de-Calais in 2007 (with many of the same people being arrested repeatedly); yet only 41 of these were deported back to their countries of origin.²

The effect of this standard practice has been to create a climate of fear for refugees in Calais. Nowhere is safe: a migrant can be picked up at any moment, whether sleeping, eating, going to or from meals at the charity distribution, at the medical clinic, just walking in the street or sitting in the park.

Deaths in Custody

The stabbing of reggae-star Smiley Culture in March and the shooting of Mark Duggan in August have forced more people to recognise that police brutality is alive and kicking. Local communities kept these events in the news by taking to the streets for sizeable demonstrations and/or spontaneous rioting.



As a movement, we can stress how similar this is to the deaths of migrants held in Immigration Prisons, during deportations, or at the border. Only two days before Mr Duggan was shot dead by the Met, a detainee at Campsfield immigration prison died, driven to commit suicide hours before a deportation attempt. Indeed, this was just one out of three deaths in immigration detention in the month leading up to the August Riots. These deaths followed that of the Angolan asylum-seeker, Jimmy Mubenga, who died in October 2010 from asphyxiation while being forcibly deported by G4S guards. CMS have also documented deaths of many migrants at the French/UK border.

The abuse of migrants in these situations rarely makes headline news, even though detainees may react with protests inside the detention centres. A quick look back on resistance by immigration detainees suggests a microcosm of what was seen more openly in the August uprising. Rioting erupted at Yarl's Wood in 2002 and Harmondsworth in



2004, 2005, 2006 (twice), 2007 and 2008. A detainee commented recently, after watching rioting in London on the television news and having spent almost two years in detention: “Bring the fire here!”

Commodification... and corporatism

The purpose of government spending cuts is to turn public services into commodities – things that can be bought or sold to make profit. The vibrant anti-cuts movement shows how unpopular their program is.

This is a process of ‘commodification’ – and migrants detained in the UK have seen the consequences of this already. Instead of Removal Centres being run by HM Prisons, the operating contracts are awarded to major multi-national corporations, like Serco and G4S. This gives big businesses a financial interest in more detention centres being built and more people detained, so they can profit from it. Now government policies are handing these same companies more involvement in our hospitals, schools and for the Olympics. Resistance towards austerity and action against companies that profit from detention should be linked more closely.

Commodification blurs the line between



big business and the State, suggesting they need each other to survive. Talking about a clear divide between ‘the state’ and ‘capitalism’ is unhelpful because their power is not arranged like two distinct pillars. Mussolini said that: “Fascism should more properly be called corporatism because it is the merger of state and corporate power”. Perhaps this is not far from what we are seeing now. It is especially visible when you look at how immigration controls are managed.

Charities have also merged into this corporate-state power concentration. Barnardo's, the UK's biggest children's charity, has collaborated with the UK Border Agency and G4S to provide services at a new detention centre for families with children. This secured jobs for 29 Barnardo's staff in difficult financial times.³ But Barnardo's role is funded by the UKBA, so we doubt their willingness to speak out against the government when it inevitably sees people harmed by the border regime. The first mother to be detained at the new centre was dawn-raided from her home and then assaulted on the way to the airport – and Barnardo's have so far said nothing.⁴

With these elite groups supporting each other through uncertain times, it's more important than ever for migrants and citizens to question the borders that keep us apart... and struggle together for more accountable power structures and a fairer share of the world's wealth.

Footnotes

- 1 Statistics taken from page 12 of Metropolitan Police Authority document ‘Stop and Searches Monitoring Mechanism July 2011 Harringey’, http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/priorities_and_how_we_are_doing/borough/haringey_stop_and_search_monitoring_report_july_2011.pdf
- 2 Quoted on page 35 of Calais Migrant Solidarity dossier ‘This Border Kills’, <http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/this-border-kills-our-dossier-of-violence/>
- 3 The Guardian 23rd August 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/aug/23/pre-departure-accommodation-centre-barnardos>
- 4 The Guardian 3rd November 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/03/police-investigate-nigerian-mother-deportation>

ANALYSIS

99% of what?

The Occupy movement under the spotlight

The wave of occupations that has rolled around the world from Madison, Wisconsin to Tahrir Square in Cairo, from the Spanish M15 movement and onward via Occupy Wall Street has been deeply inspiring to us, and deeply challenging to the system we live under. While it is reaction to a global, though particularly western, economic crisis we must give credit to all those camping out for their commitment, for instigating the debate as to where we can and want to go, and for breaking the deadening political stagnation of recent years.

So to make a critique of the Occupy movement at this moment, seems at first absurd. To think five years ago that city centres across the globe would be occupied by hundreds of thousands of people, would have been laughed off. Yet they are. And it is a fantastic. It has created a space where capitalism, democracy and revolution are being openly discussed like never before. But that debate also needs to look at the Occupy movement itself and the fundamental problem with the concept of the 1% versus the 99%.

Anti-capitalist vs anti-banker

As someone who has been politically active on the libertarian left since the late 1970s, there is something in the rhetoric of this 99% movement that I and many of my generation find disturbing. We were, and are, anti-capitalists and revolutionaries but this new movement is neither anti-capitalist or even just reformist, but explicitly concerned with elites. Exemplifying this, the banner at Occupy London stating 'Capitalism is Crisis' was removed after much debate and replaced with 'What would Jesus do?'

While the Spanish M15 movement concentrated around the slogan 'Real Democracy now', encompassing reformist demands but going far beyond the criticisms of finance capital, the Occupy movement is based on: 'We are the 99% and that we oppose, criticise and demand action against the 1%'. It is the idea that somehow if only this 1% were made to behave properly, then the system would work for everybody.

But the crisis in finance capitalism is not some aberration but related to the long term crisis of capitalism itself. We need to look at what that is, how to make that accessible to people and reformulate the discussion away



from conspiracy elites to a more general critique of capitalism and its problems.

Voices of dissent

There is an excellent statement that has recently come out of one of the US occupations where many people are equally concerned about this issue.

"Banks and 'bankers' are an easy target because they stand as the visible monetary centers, but this analysis completely ignores the primary functions of capitalism: the production of commodities, the exploitation of human labor, and the extraction of surplus value. Capitalism is not a conspiracy."¹

And that is what needs restating; the 1% are out of control not because they are a conspiracy but because that is how capitalism works! And people only notice when the trickle-down stops trickling! There is no pure capitalism without finance capitalism, but finance capital does not control capitalism. It is still production that is the key, because that is where 'surplus value' (profits) are extracted by paying people less than they produce. And in the West that mode of production is in crisis.



Enter the conspiracy

But the other very dangerous problem that comes for the 1% idea is how it leads very easily and smoothly into the idea that we are dealing with an out of control elite which operates through conspiracies. And indeed we see this all over the camps, and online, where the crazies of Zeitgeist, David Icke, and other random conspiracy theorists, often go unchallenged.²

And from the idea of conspiratorial elites it is a stones throw to anti-Semitism, i.e. anti-Jewish. It is suggested that Jews have historically controlled all the world's finances/banks and that therefore it is their actions that are behind the crisis. This anti-Jewish bullshit is never usually overt though, the right-wing scum who push this have words and phrases they couch their lies in, but it is there.³

Another classic device these racists/fascists use is the deliberate confusion of a very real Zionism, the brutal nationalist and expansionist project of the Israeli ruling class, aided by the US, with a mythical Zionism that runs the world.⁴ And sooner rather than later this bullshit manifests itself in reality. At the beginning of November a young Jewish woman was told to fuck off at Occupy Finsbury Square (London) as she, it was suggested, was part of the problem.



Exclusive and exclusion

There are also a number of other problems which may or may not be from the 99% issue, but is probably more to do with class!

Firstly the idea that the camps represent the 99%. In many ways it is a useful initial concept to grasp, and 99% of people in the camps are clearly *not* part of the 1%. But the camps are very exclusive, both practically, where they exclude most people who have to work, who do not live locally, who have family responsibilities, etc., and culturally, appealing pretty well only to young activist types. This is not on one level a problem but they must be very careful when claiming to speak for the rest of us.

In the US there has also been a lot written on how exclusive the camps are not just in terms of class but race, which is more politically an issue there. African American and Native American activists have noted the irony of white middle class Americans 'occupying' land they themselves have been historically ethnically cleansed or segregated from.

Women have also felt the issues of gender are similarly belittled, though I am not convinced that the camps are unique in this aspect.⁵ There have been a number of rapes at Occupy camps and, while the issue is being taken seriously by most, many women think their safety is disregarded to a significant extent as it is subsidiary to what the camps are about.

All in all the Occupy camps have been a massive boost for the movement for change but they like any part of the movement is not immune to debate and I hope this has been useful contribution.

Richard Price

1. 99 Problems by some anarchist occupiers, Bloomington, Indiana. Original here: <http://rififibloomington.wordpress.com/2011/11/05/99-problems/>
2. For background into the Zeitgeist movement see: <http://thethirdestate.net/2010/03/zeitgeist-exposed/>
3. <http://norfolknonaligned.wordpress.com/2011/11/07/occupied-with-conspiracies-the-occupy-movement-populist-anti-elitism-and-the-conspiracy-theorists/>
4. See Third Estate's guide to Zionism. <http://thethirdestate.net/2011/10/when-are-comments-about-zionists-not-really-comments-about-zionists-a-few-tips-on-working-it-out/>
5. <http://globalcomment.com/2011/how-occupy-non-power-structure-enables-sexism/>

FREEDOM STOCKISTS

You can pick up your copy of *Freedom* at any of the outlets listed below. All are either social centres or political bookshops and as such should be supported as part of our radical culture. If you can't see your town or city mentioned, or you know of places that should be stocking the paper, then get in touch and tell us which shop, social centre, venue, political space or social environment should be selling the UK's only general anarchist newspaper.

LONDON

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

BRIGHTON

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

BRISTOL

- **Kebele Social Centre**, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5 6JY, tel 0117 9513086, email kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net <http://www.kebelecoop.org>

NOTTINGHAM

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

LIVERPOOL

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

EDINBURGH

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

SOUTHAMPTON

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

Times are a changin'

As the turbulence of 2011 subsides just enough for us to catch our breath and look back over the last 12 months of a truly eventful year, it seems amongst the chaos and cacophony there were moments we can take as inspiration, some we can take comfort from and others that act as warnings of things to come.

As we have said countless times in the paper, these are remarkable times we are living through and it is an incredible time to be an anarchist, to be a part of all this, active in the very moments of defining social change.

With uncanny prescience the first *Freedom* headline of the year stated '2011 – year of rebellion?' and went on to suggest in no uncertain terms "with capitalism in crisis it's time to get angry". Little did we know what form that would take, or how people would respond with such enthusiasm to the call.

The TUC demonstration on 26th March against the cuts was for many a surprise and a delight. A massive turnout of 500,000 people, itself impressive, was overshadowed by a nascent black bloc, rarely seen in the UK, that tore through the streets and shopping district of central London stealing the limelight away from a Labour leader desperate to get his soundbite on the six o'clock news.

This was followed by the unprecedented social riots of August. Like the 26th March black bloc, high street stores were targeted, although for very different reasons, as the anger and desperation of an austerity generation was unleashed with devastating

effect across several major cities in England.

There was also the two massive public sector strikes, 30th June and 30th November, and although anarchists played little visible role in either day, it bodes well for the future that workers are gaining confidence in their ability to take collective action.

The Occupy movement, seemingly coming out of nowhere, caught the imagination with public spaces being occupied across the world and transformed permanent protest sites. This global commonality, (although politically unassured – see page 6 of this issue) suggests a universal recognition that things at the very least can't continue the same way.

We also saw the once invincible Murdoch empire begin to crumble with the closure of the institutional tabloid *News of the World* and expose the real relationship between police and media.

What was troubling was the very public outing of several undercover cops working within the protest and activist scenes. The fact that they were able to work unhindered for such a long time suggests radicals have yet to come to terms with real issues of state infiltration. There were many other examples of political policing this year (see front cover article) that we should be prepared. It may be obvious but it's worth repeating – the greater the state feels threatened, the greater the repression it will attempt to impose.

Overall though 2011 has given us glimpses of our potential. To all *Freedom* readers, enjoy the remainder of the year and we will see you recharged and ready for 2012.



The newly opened 'Bank of Ideas' in Sun Street, London, after the public repossession of an abandoned office block owned by bankers UBS. See <http://www.bankofideas.org.uk/>

INTERNATIONAL

GERMAN NEO-NAZI SCANDAL

In November, Beate Zschape, the third and last known member of the neo-Nazi extremist group, National Socialist Underground (NSU), turned herself in to the German police. Two others, Uwe Bohnhardt and Uwe Mundlos, were found dead, shot in the head. The authorities claim that they had committed suicides. A fourth suspect, Holger G, has been recently arrested. The state, meanwhile, is feigning 'shock' over the 'seriousness' of the 'right-wing terror network'.

The NSU have been active since the mid-1990s in Jena in the state of Thuringia, and apparently went 'underground' in 1998, carrying out 10 murders of mostly Turkish and Greek immigrants working in cafés and fast food shops, two nail bomb attacks and 14 bank robberies. The killings were unsightly named 'kebab murders' or 'donor killings'. The NSU have been branded the Brown Army Faction – the colour in reference to Nazi uniforms, and the title in reference to the Red Army Faction.

The scandal, widely picked up by the media (and coming as no surprise to antifascists), is that authorities knew about this group both when it was above-ground as well as underground. When incendiary material was found in their garage in 1997 warrants had been issued, but they somehow continued to operate in Thuringia. Some of them had even been arrested before and let go.

And yet, the authorities made up absurd stories of the murders of the immigrants being committed by 'Turkish mafia', until of course it surfaced that an undercover agent of the state intelligence agency (LFV) may have been involved in one of the murders. The agent has been arrested.

The NSU is also suspected of having ties with the far-right, 'legitimate', National Democratic party (NPD). The fascists in question had initially started a group called the 'Jena Camaraderie' with six members. One of them, Andre Kapka, later joined the Jena National Resistance (also a fascist extremist group) and later still the NPD. Zschape, Bohnhardt, and Mundlos had also called themselves 'Thuringian Homeland Defence'.

The open secret is none of this could exist without tacit state approval, and the history of Germany's state apparatus, including the intelligence services, is riddled with infiltration by fascist elements. For example, a prominent neo-Nazi organiser, Tino Brandt, who has been a part of the NPD revealed that he had previously worked for the state intelligence agency.

As this ugly case unravels, the German parliamentary parties are renewing demands for the NPD to be banned. An earlier attempt to do so, some ten years ago, had failed.

LENS CAP ORANGE AID



Hundreds of the endangered Orangutans, one of the great apes, are killed each year in Borneo. They are killed for food, as well as when they stray into human habitation, sometimes damaging crops. Orangutans are almost exclusively found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra and share around 97% of human DNA.

Occupy movement in Toronto

"While our resources are meagre, our conviction is unshakable. There are times when a principle alone has more material force than the crude matter of police batons and jails. We remember G20: we were there and we are here too. Mr Ford [Mayor of Toronto], one day the sun will set on your mayoralty. As you recede into the recesses of history, we who fight for a better Toronto will keep the name 'Rob Ford' alive as the penultimate expression of reactionary buffoonery. Occupy St James Park. Occupy workplaces. Occupy government offices. OCCUPY EVERYTHING."

This is the trenchant message of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly, calling for the defence of Occupy Toronto, which took root in St James Park on 15th October. The protest camp was inspired by Occupy Wall Street and ran on the same model.

However, on 15th November the authorities dished out the eviction notices and asked them to leave the following day. The protesters refused, and their counsel succeeded in obtaining a reprieve, leaving the camps legal status undefined.

On 15th October, as the tidal wave of Occupy Together spread across the world, twenty cities along the length and breadth of Canada were occupied. Many have been crushed, but Toronto, along with Halifax, London (Ontario), Windsor, Victoria, Ottawa and Montreal have kept going.

Occupy Toronto protested vigorously, through a statement, against the violent raids on the Wall Street occupation, citing all the articles of the US Constitution and the Declaration of Human Rights that the state had violated.

Notes from the US

Some repression and some fightback in October and November across the United States

Occupy

Arrests and violence against the Occupy camps continue in cities from San Diego (California) to Raleigh (North Carolina), from Richmond (Virginia) to Phoenix and Tucson (Arizona), from Chicago to Washington DC. For all the repression, there are bright signs: according to a poll by Quinnipiac University, a majority of voters in New York wants the city to allow the Occupy Wall Street protesters to stay in their encampment in the Financial

District. No fewer than 72% of those asked expressed support for them. Occupy Cincinnati protesters sued police and city officials in October for violating their free speech rights. And in Tennessee, a federal judge ordered the state at the same time to stop enforcing new rules which curtail demonstrators' ability to protest.

In Oakland earlier this month, thousands of protesters successfully struck to shut down the nation's fifth-largest port as part of a general strike called by the Occupy Oakland movement during which many businesses shut down and almost 20% of the city's teachers did not report to work.

New movement in Palestine

The 15th November saw the birth of a new civil disobedience movement in the West Bank part of Palestine. Palestinian protesters, called Freedom Riders, boarded segregated Israeli buses and headed towards Jerusalem and other occupied territories. These buses are segregated unofficially, in the sense that they operate in the Settlements – which are militarily prohibited to Palestinians – are partially subsidised by Israel, and usually ignore Palestinians who want to get on board. Without special ‘permits’ Palestinians cannot enter their own land, can be arrested and even killed.

The term Freedom Riders is borrowed from a well-known historical movement – the civil rights movement in the US that started when Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a segregated bus, leading others to collectively emulate her example. The Palestinian Freedom Riders have done the same, boarding buses with printed messages such as ‘End Colonisation’, ‘Boycott Apartheid’, ‘We shall Overcome’, etc., and displaying Palestinian flags. They have done this with dozens of journalists present, live-streaming and otherwise recording the protest (which can prevent more severe repression from the state).

Unlike the earlier Freedom Riders, however, the Palestinians’ objective is far more radical. They say: “In undertaking this action we do not seek the desegregation of settler buses, as the presence of these colonisers and the infrastructure that serves them is illegal and must be dismantled. As part of our struggle for freedom, justice and dignity, we demand the ability to be able to travel freely on our own roads, on our own land, including the right to travel to Jerusalem” (Press Release,



16th November). But like their historical counterparts they are protesting ‘non-violently’, refusing to carry permits or to get off the buses.

Although they were allowed to board a bus, they were stopped – as expected – before reaching Jerusalem and roughly dragged off the bus by Israeli soldiers, even as the protesters tried holding on to whatever they could. Jewish journalists on board received no better treatment. Six of the protesters have been arrested and held in jail as of the night of 15th November. But the Palestinians have no intention of giving up. The press release says further: “We know that in

undertaking this action we risk arrest, vicious attacks by Israeli settlers, abuse by Israeli soldiers, and even death. We take this risk upon ourselves as a step towards ensuring Freedom, Justice, and Dignity for future generations of Palestinians and all people in the region.”

Meanwhile, American protesters held their own demonstration in New York in solidarity with the Free Riders, displaying messages such as ‘Occupy Wall Street Not Palestine’. Around 42% of the West Bank is colonised, with the Israeli state still bussing in settlers and accelerating construction despite the tut-tutting of the ‘international community’.

Notes from the US

◀ page 8
Money

Inequality reigns: a new study finds that the distribution of wealth in the United States is among the most unequal in all industrialised nations. The US ranks in the bottom half dozen by a combination of metrics including the prevention of poverty, health and access to education – ahead only of Greece, Chile, Mexico and Turkey. New census data shows that nearly one in 15 Americans (more than twenty million people) are now so poor that they live at least 50% below the official poverty level, the highest ever recorded.

Some entire cities can no longer make it either. Pennsylvania’s capital city, Harrisburg, filed for bankruptcy amidst a chronic debt crisis. Even Obama’s apparent move to help lower monthly mortgage payments for homeowners in difficulties is estimated actually to put more money in the hands of the banks. “In most cases people would probably be

better off walking,” said economist Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic Policy and Research.

Racism

New figures show that deportations of undocumented immigrants are at a record high. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency boasted recently that it had deported nearly 400,000 people in fiscal year 2011, or one every minute and a quarter round the clock – the highest total in the agency’s eight years.

ICE specifically mentioned the Bush era Secure Communities measure, on which *Freedom* has reported more than once – it obliges local police to forward fingerprints of every person they arrest to the US Department of Homeland Security regardless of the alleged offence.

Louis Further

Student struggles

The Chilean student rebellion appears to be going downhill from radical to moderate, as the student ‘leadership’ is working with parliamentary opposition to draft reforms, which cannot be implemented without the ruling government’s approval.

Meanwhile, at the grassroots, both high-school and university students continue to go on strikes and occupy educational premises leading to arrests and clashes with police. In early November around 50 high school students occupied the City Hall in Santiago displaying a huge banner saying: ‘Education is a right and we shall continue the fight’.

However, many other students are being threatened with punitive action and/or loss of grants and scholarships if they continued with street protests and direct action. Despite this co-ordinated student protests took to take in place in Chile, Argentina, Columbia, Peru and Brazil.

ECONOMICS

Dire lessons from the Eurozone



Tracing the politics of the crisis

I remember my Political Economy lectures at university when the European Union was held up as a successful model of a political and economic ‘superstate’ which other continents in the world could follow. I remember shuddering at the very idea of such mega-scale integration and central control, only one step behind Bertrand Russell’s insane idea of a ‘world government’, even as we struggle to contain the growing power and aggression of the nation-state itself.

The political collapse of Greece and Italy unfolding before our very eyes, should put such fantasies to rest. I say ‘political’ rather than ‘economic’ because although the initial crisis occurred in the financial arena, all the subsequent decisions made were political in nature, though dictated by capitalist imperatives. Since the mainstream media are no help, we need to unmask the full picture of this ‘crisis’ by tracing things back to the beginning and understand what is actually happening in the Eurozone and what implications it has for all of us.

When the profiteering bubble in the housing/mortgage industry in the US collapsed, mainly by extending deceptive and complicated loans, the consequent mass defaults struck at the heart of the banking and investment industry which had amassed all the risks, wiping out trillions of dollars of asset value (ie property, businesses, housing) off the books. Investors withdrew their money that caused a shortage of money supply, leading to the jamming up of the gigantic conveyor belt of financial markets that move money back and forth within the

system, keeping it greased, allowing wages to be paid, loans to be lent, debts to be serviced etc. This is why the ‘real economy’ (commodities and services) takes a hit whenever there is a ‘financial’ crisis.

Since the financial system is globally integrated the crisis spread like wildfire, extending the liquidity problem to all connected countries, but some more than others. As money became scarce governments, and allied institutions, had to raise it themselves through Quantitative Easing, by slashing interest rates for banks and big businesses, and by selling public assets to private companies.

But this still does not explain why the focus within mainstream circles suddenly shifted to the ‘debt problem’ in the last two years.

What the media won’t tell us is the fact that there is an inherent contradiction within the current system: constant economic expansion and the accumulation of ‘wealth’ is impossible without borrowing; and the constant cycle of borrowing and repayment is what keeps the money flowing through the system; meanwhile, constant repayment is not possible without further economic growth and for that more borrowing is necessary, leading to more debt, and so on.

In a debt-accumulating economy the sudden shortage of money supply caused by the financial crash has brought the thorny problem of debt back in focus, but not in the way it should have been. Rather than arguing against the long-term consequences of debt money, reliance on private investors for the supply of it and of never-ending economic expansion which has to be unsustainable by any rule of logic, mainstream media and their cartel of ‘experts’ have focused on the need to raise capital through ‘Austerity’. Austerity is only

‘necessary’ to the extent that they aim to save the system at any cost, and that is entirely a political decision.

At the moment, we are being given the impression that Greece is the ‘bad guy’ dragging down the economies of the whole of EU through its huge debt and its lack of diligence in repaying it. The truth is Greece, being a smaller and weaker economy, has borne the brunt of the crisis and is hence one of the biggest victims of the crisis. We are not informed of the obvious capitalist contradiction that without credit and a consuming and spending population Greece cannot expand its economy and hence service its debt. Such knowledge would lead to the obvious conclusion that Greece cannot save the system without causing its people unprecedented misery, and therefore they are better off choosing a different alternative. If the governments don’t then the people will. For well-known reasons such a solution is not acceptable because investors cannot make profits off of it, and it will probably lead to the end of the EU.

So what we see is a shamelessly Machiavellian Greece-baiting, painting a vivid picture of inept and lax politicians who are not man enough to implement ‘tough’ measures to please investors, which, incidentally, is not true. Greek politicians are risking coups and a veritable revolution in falling over each other to do the bidding of Big Brothers, Germany and France. The scrapping of the popular referendum on austerity is the most blatant example.

Eurozone is proof of the fact that politicians will go to any extent to save the



system. If Greece defaults it will intensify the liquidity crisis, and we might see much harsher austerity measures undertaken here in the UK. If Italy defaults, which is more doubtful, it will be even worse because Italy’s debt is so large (over £1 trillion) that bailout appears unthinkable. The only easy pickings for politicians is us – the masses. So, if Greece is in any indication, we in the UK must prepare to be far more militant, on a regular basis, and much more organised, if we aim to truly stop the juggernaut of the Austerity Programme.

A short history of Freedom Press

PART TWO

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

1914-1945: War, Kropotkin, splits, Spain and prison

The first major split within the Freedom group itself occurred at the outbreak of the First World War, in a dispute about the lesser of two evils. Tom Keell, the editor, was for opposing both sides in the war of rival imperialisms. Kropotkin wanted *Freedom* to support the side of Britain and Russia. Tom Keell later wrote "One doubted the judgement of those who supported the War, but one never doubted their sincerity". Those who supported the War (with the honourable exception of Kropotkin himself) were less tolerant. At the national anarchist conference in April 1915, George Cores, a member of the Freedom group, denounced Keell as a dictator who had seized the group's assets. The conference came out overwhelmingly in Keell's favour.

After conscription was introduced by the Military Service Act of 1916, *Voice of Labour* published an article which was also issued as a leaflet, "Defying the Act, by one hiding out in the Scottish Hills". Keell and his companion Lilian Wolfe were charged under the Defence of the Realm Act, and found guilty. Keell was sentenced to a fine of £100 or three months imprisonment, declined to pay the fine and served the prison term. Wolfe was sentenced to £25 or two months. She went to prison, but there discovered she was pregnant (at the age of 40), so paid the fine and was released.

After 1918, the British anarchist movement declined under the influence of the Russian revolution. The aim of anarchism is a society in which, to quote Malatesta, "the domination of persons by persons is impossible". The aim of Marxist-Leninism is the same. The difference is not in the desired end, but in the proposed means of transforming society. Anarchism constantly opposes all the coercive institutions the state, hoping to weaken the state and so make society freer than it would have been. Marxist-Leninism proposes is to seize control of the state and strengthen it, then stay in control until people become so habituated to mutual aid that the state withers away. Bakunin predicted, in the 1870s, that the persons elected to control the state, on behalf of the workers, would become a new ruling class. And so it proved, but in 1918 it was not so obvious.

Freedom kept going as a monthly, with the aid of donations, until 1928 when the Ossulston Street building was demolished in a slum clearance scheme. Tom Keell retired to Whiteway Colony to live on his pension from the compositors trade union. For the next seven years, Freedom Press produced

only an infrequent and irregular *Freedom Bulletin*. A newspaper headed *Freedom New Series* was produced by George Cores, and others who had supported the war, but Freedom Press ignored its existence.

When the Spanish civil war broke out in 1936, Vernon Richards, known as Vero, the twenty-two-year-old son of an Italian anarchist in Soho, started a newspaper called *Spain and the World*, in support of the Spanish anarchists.

After the first issue, *Spain and the World* was taken on by Freedom Press, with Tom Keell as publisher, Lilian Wolfe as administrator and Vero as editor. Lilian often stayed in London with Vero and his companion Marie-Louise Berneri, and from 1945 to 1960 in the back room of Freedom Bookshop in Red Lion Street. She remained as administrator until 1971, when she was 95.

When the Spanish civil war ended, the paper changed its name to *Revolt!* and, as World War Two started, to *War Commentary for anarchism*. (It reverted to the original name *Freedom* in 1947). Having been an established publisher before the war, Freedom Press had a licence to buy paper. In 1943 it published *The March to Death*, a book of cartoons by John Olday with anonymous commentary by Marie-Louise Berneri, which presents Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt as engaged in a common conspiracy against all their subjects. It sold 5,500 copies, to people delighted by relief from the relentless war propaganda.

In 1942 the Freedom Press acquired a printing firm, Express Printers in Whitechapel. A rival printer lent some money, on condition that he could take over the Hebrew type (effectively acquiring a monopoly of Hebrew type in a Jewish area), and the rest of the purchase price was lent by various supporters. The supporters' group, calling itself the Anarchist Federation, became the nominal owner of Freedom Press and publisher of *War Commentary*.

Albert Meltzer was a prolific contributor of articles to *War Commentary*. He, Vero, and later Philip Sansom, were refused registration as conscientious objectors. Vero and Philip served prison sentences, and Albert was called up into the Royal Pioneer Corps, but this did not deter him from writing. The cartoonist John Olday, a deserter from the Royal Pioneer Corps, was captured and sent to a military prison. Freedom Press as such,



Marie-Louise Berneri, left, and Lilian Wolfe, right, street selling in 1945.

however, was not prosecuted until almost the end of the War.

I took out a subscription to *War Commentary* in September 1944. When my copy did not arrive in December 1944, I wrote to ask what had happened and learned, in a letter from Lilian Wolfe, that the police had seized the files.

In April 1945 Vernon Richards, Marie-Louise Berneri, John Hewetson and Philip Sansom were charged with conspiracy to contravene Defence Regulation 39A (i.e. to cause disaffection among members of His Majesty's forces). The National Council for Civil Liberties did nothing about this attack on freedom of speech, because it was temporarily in the hands of the belligerently patriotic Communist Party. The anarchist art pundit Herbert Read, later to be knighted, assembled a group of the "Great and Good" called the Freedom Press Defence Committee. Richards, Hewetson and Sansom were each sentenced to nine months in prison. Berneri was found not guilty on a technical point; she was married to Richards (to get a British passport), and the old law still stood that a wife conspiring with her husband committed no offence. Meltzer, at the time, had been caught by the army and posted to Egypt.

As the prosecution was being prepared, Freedom Press was subjected to a takeover attempt. There was no mention of this in *War Commentary*, and it was months before we learned of it in the West Yorkshire anarchist group. In 1949 I visited London and spoke to comrades on both sides of the split. Lilian Wolfe let me read a copy of a document, privately circulated in 1945, on condition that I promised to keep it confidential. After 66 years, I hope I have kept my promise for long enough.

Donald Room

In the January issue of *Freedom*: part 3 – takeover attempt at *Freedom*, feuds, tragedy and the sixties

FEATURE

THE EMPRESS HAS

North east anarchists address to the nation

This is a collective article, several of us took part in directly writing it, and the group as a whole took part in the discussion of the politics. It comes out of our political practice and participation in the Manchester TUC in October 2011, and our observations and reflections on what was really happening.

Comrades,

Over the past year we have seen a major upswing in political action, with spontaneous outbreaks of direct democracy and direct

UP NORTH! NE ACTIVITIES

- North East Anarchists have been promoting and participating in the sparks actions across the North East, and it fills us with considerable pride to say that the sparks asked us to design and print their leaflets for them, and not the old leftist parties who often are not seriously concerned with winning disputes. More sparks material can be found at <http://neanarchists.com/sparksoct.html>
- Class Struggle Anarchism Today was held in a completely packed room (literally – people were having to sit on the floor) with about 50 to 60 people, for our contribution to the Newcastle Philosophical Society's Philosophy Festival. Two of our comrades gave a presentation on Class Struggle Anarchism Today, with Trevor Bark opening the session with a discussion about the broad anarchist tradition, i.e. the historical significance of anarchism and syndicalism, and Ben Franks following it with a talk on the ethics of Direct Action and its relevance for anarchism.
- The Working Class Bookfair is organised across the North East at different venues, and it was recently held in Newcastle on 5th November. The Bookfair is a place where different booksellers, unions and political groups can get together to sell their materials and talk politically to different people. The ethos of the bookfair is that it sees anarchism as part of the left, and so the attempt is made to encourage dialogue across boundaries and hopefully create a stronger movement as a result. This way anarchism is not fetishising itself, and it is forced to prove itself in debate and practice. Effectively it is left unity in practice with many different Left and anarchist groups, several booksellers from different traditions, it has been happening for several years now and the latest was the 10th event. This time the Bookfair joined with the Northern Anarchist Network conference to have events spread over a weekend, it was a friendly and useful encounter. <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com/>

action all over the country and the world. However, while this is to be welcomed as a vindication of anarchist principles in action, it must also be admitted that this has largely been unconnected with the activities of conscious anarchists.

People have adopted these strategies because they are practical and effective, not because they have an ideological commitment to them, and consequently the lack of conscious principle has meant the various movements have often lacked focus and direction and have been vulnerable to hijacking by Lefty paper-sellers and other conspiracy-fixated cranks. Political circumstances keep throwing opportunities right into our laps, but are we really making ourselves heard?

We think not. Given the virtual collapse of the Labour Party and the utter contempt most people have for the parliamentary system. Given the continued inability of revolutionary Marxist's to make themselves relevant to the working class. Given the disorder on the far-Right, as the BNP collapses and the EDL splinters into factions, and given the sheer naked privilege, hypocrisy and callousness of the Tory government. The situation could hardly have been scripted more to our advantage, but where are the anarchists in all this?

Conference call

The Manchester TUC event in October provided evidence that we have to consider if we are to be effective as anarchists. The different groups organised isolated actions, which were politically ineffective because they were small and easily containable. Anarchists need to do far better than they are doing to be politically relevant. The temporary Occupation event was interesting, but completely separate from the tens of thousands of demonstrators and the hundreds of thousands of Mancunians.

It may have been the best Manchester comrades could organise (and in a similar situation we'd likely have done no better), and progress of a sort, but there is we believe a wider responsibility beyond our local groups, and comfort zones. The event was a national one, and the anarchists should have and should be able to participate and respond nationally. The Manchester TUC event was a chance for the Northern anarchists to manifest publicly, to have an impact politically and show our credentials given the widely acknowledged political growth and show progress anarchists are meant to be making. Instead, more or less the opposite happened amidst a lot of well-meaning but ineffectual politics, in practice letting the left be the dominant ideological and visible alternative.

This is the reality of the situation; it is no longer good enough (if it ever was), for people to carry on in denial and delusion,

as do the so called Marxist organisations. The tragedy of Russia could well repeat itself (anarchists were/are split, small and ineffectual), and even the 'organised anarchists' do not try to organise a larger movement beyond themselves. The Marxists have a point, and it pains us to say it, but when they say there is an anarchist inability to present a realistic organised revolutionary alternative, it is an argument that contains some truth (despite the disastrous consequences of the 'realism' of the likes of the SWP, etc.).

We are well aware that these patterns are reflected generally in the national political situation, but we are content with starting from where we are at, and our ability is more localised than national.

Radical confidence

Therefore we aim to start in the North East in particular and the North more generally to tackle the systemic anarchist movement failure to organise itself, the chronic London centric focus of the anarchist movement and we anticipate that this initiative may resonate widely.

We believe that anarchists could soon be the single largest radical tendency in the North-East and wider North, yet we remain largely invisible, rarely initiating action ourselves and instead just tagging along in ones and twos with events organised by the left and liberals. We have repeatedly found anarchists who have joined Trotskyist parties simply because they couldn't find an organised anarchist presence here, older comrades coming out of retirement spend six months looking for political anarchists and cannot find any during that time. It's not good enough. If we are serious about change, we have to step up and make ourselves visible.

Invitation to participate

To this end, North-East Anarchists are making this call-out to all comrades, Red, Green and Black, to meet up and discuss how we can improve communication and co-ordination between anarchists in the North-East. We need to start realising our collective potential and we do that by working together practically to encourage the class struggle. What actions can we take together to push the struggle onwards and develop a real anarchist presence in the region? How can we ensure that the best traditions of the anarchist movement become embedded in the social struggles?

We are also aware that many anarchists are not part of any organisation, and if they are active at all, they are active in isolation. Bringing all these people together could enable genuinely effective mass action, providing we can demonstrate that we are not just running some sectarian recruiting racket, and we do that by focusing on

S NO CLOTHES



North East Anarchists marching through Newcastle on Mayday 2011.

enabling effective protest, class struggles, genuine cooperation and progress. Not by flogging people dead ideologies and worthy but limited and ineffectual sectarian politics. We all need to get to know each other and maybe we can surprise ourselves at just how many of us there are when we're gathered in one room.

Building upon a very successful public meeting, and the 5th November Bookfair, North East Anarchists have energy and ambition. This event aims to discuss events, identify our targets, seek cooperation and potentially increase our collective capability.

Finally, we do not view this event as an end in itself, despite the need we do not think there is a 'road to Damascus' conversion possible for the anarchist movement in the North (or beyond), and we will be organising hopefully bigger and better encounters like this until the movement starts to improve capabilities and achieve the mature debate and participatory democracy we all want.

We are also open to the idea that anarchists in the wider North, e.g. York/Leeds, etc., may wish to organise similar events, which we all can participate in, until we get the types of organisation we all need. These

issues are not going to go away, and we will continue to emphasise these systemic anarchist movement problems until there are some more effective anarchist politics taking place.

The Empress has no clothes, she has been called out, and will she seek her clothing in Newcastle on Saturday 3rd December 2011 [see proposed programme below]. We eagerly anticipate responses and participation.

Comrades, the present capitalist crisis is a once in a lifetime opportunity to make the social revolution a reality – let's not disappoint posterity!

Anarchy in the North East

On Saturday 3rd December at The Star And Shadow Cinema, Stepney Bank, Battlefield, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 2NP.

Here's the proposed programme for the event:

- 4pm Event presentation and introductions – who we all are, where we're from, and which organisation, if any, we're representing.
 - 5pm Guest speaker Ian Bone, and summary of current political situation.
- Open or group discussions on how we can

improve our collective effectiveness, and what possible actions we can undertake in the coming year (2012).

- 6.15pm Break for food and chat while the PA is set up
- 7pm Film showing highlighting some of the spontaneous emergence of anarchist principles in the various movements of the last year or so.
- 8.30pm Retire to the bar for drinks and music provided by a DJ and a couple of MCs

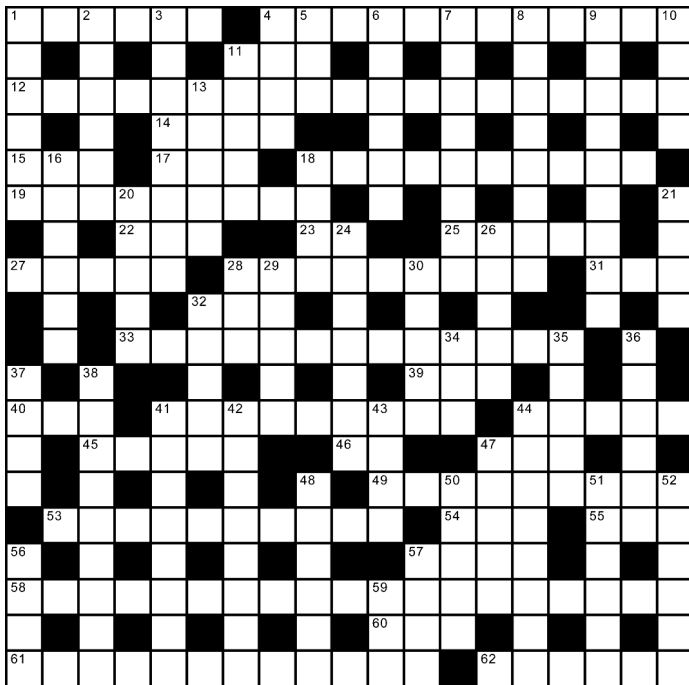
North East Anarchists
<http://neanarchists.com/>

We hope to make this a regular feature where we give space over to regional groups to explain their ideas and promote their activities. Also in the future we will be implementing a series of articles on centres of radical activity around the country, to give an indication of where anarchists are most concentrated, and where we can find the most active of political of movements, to both draw inspiration and add our support. People interested in contributing to either of these projects can get in touch with us at copy@freedompress.org.uk or write to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

CROSSWORD

The prize crossword

compiled by BJARNI HALFNELSON



ACROSS

- 1 Land one on Wildcat, for instance? (6)
- 4 Ready-made fag is disaster for field-trip, pet! (6-6)
- 11 Leaders of Anarchist League getting behind Clegg's first film set in Northern Ireland (3)
- 12 Cars halted, perplexed, after Biblical tent-maker had lots of tents put up round here! (5,5,9)
- 14 Little seabird deserves a good one back, we hear (4)
- 15 Stretch resources in the kettle? (3)
- 17 River flowing through Olympics Park where ale is drunk (3)
- 18 Oxen averted riot, not a strain unduly (10)
- 19 I'm back with new dirt to be spread abroad – we'll soon be deep in this! (3-6)
- 22 Outs? Not at all – it's a new sort of 47 across! (3)
- 23 Old US squaddie with something of guts, medically speaking? (1,1)
- 25 Felix has little hesitation to provide food as needed (5)
- 27 Employing us before mixing gin? (5)
- 28 Slyly shit out of the way, in accordance with current fashion (9)
- 31 Bunch of racist thugs led astray! (1,1,1)
- 32/29 Rude fart blown out – particular hatred of WAG! (3,5)
- 33 Freemason joins army turning out these sturdy peasants (6,7)
- 39 Propelling piece of wood in middle of no-go area (3)
- 40 Time passed away, makes an endeavour (3)
- 41 CS Lewis's writer of Satanic letters to his nephew swept care completely away (9)
- 44 Skate clumsily with English Romantic poet inspired by Twyford Down (5)
- 45 Pure rubbish, East Asian money (5)
- 46 Influential journalist summarily held in 'preventive detention' (2)
- 47 Action beyond the pale forming part of autonomous insurrection (3)
- 49 In mare's nest of vice surrounding curious net bonus for fat-cat banker, supposedly (9)
- 53 Least dirty clients floundering in 17 across (10)
- 54 Yes in Scotland you can see with this, reportedly (3)
- 55 Vicar not long to get going (3)
- 57 Mined minerals in endless forest (4)
- 58 Heredity thus tampered with ended illegitimacy of variety (11,8)

- 60/61 Lubricate pressmen and edit out emergency measure taken after tanker goes aground (3,12)
- 62 Pole appears after five sing discordantly, making dismissive manual gesticulations (1-5)

DOWN

- 1 Bossy, stemming centrally from inner workings of the State (6)
- 2 I dread being interfered with, home broken into and searched without warning by the fuzz (6)
- 3 Beaten-up git knelt, result of over-used anti-demonstration tactic (8)
- 4 Horned satyr lying in lovers' sofa, undisturbed (4)
- 5 Sick in middle of snail-like progress (3)
- 6 Entitlement to ride, but could be given to driver in the wrong place (6)
- 7 Cut back caused by hard right coming up with realignment of centre holding the middle ground (8)
- 8 Individual personality – what a card! – now scrapped, apparently! (8)
- 9 Entrap upwardly mobile Commie associated with another working towards common goal (9)
- 10/37 There was a fight to keep pitches here, but got evicted and am led far away (4,4)
- 11 Stone weight used with a stick – like 49 across, so we're told! (5)
- 13 Shape ensuring connection of parts of tools opposite business end of hammer (5)
- 16 Face displaced skiers? (6)
- 18 Unrestrained merrymaking involved in cementing bond between next-door Gypsies (4)
- 20 Throw in dynamic content so typical of politicians' speeches (5)
- 21 Occupied Street in New York, what a libertarian life at the start! (4)
- 24 Tell if a falling out causes bad luck (3,4)
- 26 Change revolutionary later (5)
- 28 Add up at start of hottest season (3)
- 29 See 32 across
- 30 Rising harbours leather blade-sharpeners (5)
- 32 See 35
- 34 Inflatable life-jacket gone West, saucy American actress (3)
- 35/32 Cameron's first in the front line after being paid – sounds like the fuzz are done for! (5,5)
- 36 I've buggered up cat over moving dynamically (6)
- 37 See 10
- 38 Girl on LSD turns out for these jumped-up wannabe 'Peers of the Realm' (9)
- 41 It's a rough scramble, having lost the point in Seattle, being supplanted by corporate spin-doctors' department (8)
- 42 Topless teachers' pets left in – it just shows! (8)
- 43 Little commercial sex gives a passage into mine! (4)
- 44 Awful nice kiss gives rise to study of non-verbal communication (useful for playing charades!) (8)
- 47 Unknown quantity in kernel characterised by gender (5)
- 48 Old lunatic asylum wrongly blamed (6)
- 50 Seasonal song and dance, look! – rise up! Machine destroying air quality is over the top (5)
- 51 Iridium covering famous Civil Rights leader is very annoying! (6)
- 52 Circumvents dance-drug, saved somewhat oddly (6)
- 56 Matured in garbage dump? (4)
- 57 Fail to be included in *Freedom* itself! (4)
- 59 Central part of bayonet in Scotland, that one over there (3)

You can email your answers to crossword@freedompress.org.uk or send them to Crossword, Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. The final date for entries will be 12th December 2011 and there's a prize for the first correct entry drawn out of the hat. The answers will appear in our January issue.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- A guard at the newly privatised prison HMP Birmingham manages to lose a set of keys, including a master key for all the prison's locks, within the first three weeks of G4S taking over its running. Prisoners ended up being locked in their cells for more than 24 hours whilst a search was made. The keys were not found and G4S had to begin the laborious and rather expensive task – upwards of £250,000 – of replacing every lock. Could it be the POA seeking a bit of revenge over the privatisation of their favourite nick?

- Scotland's biggest jail, HMP Barlinnie, has massive overcrowding problems according to an inspector's report. The Glasgow prison, which has a capacity of 1,018, housed 1,477 prisoners at the inspection in May, with the number up to 1565 today. And reception area and education centre were branded "dreadful" by Chief Inspector of Prisons. Barlinnie, which is over 100 years old, holds nearly a fifth of all Scotland's inmates.

- Four prison guards were attacked by inmates who taunted them with chants about a triple murderer cleared of trying to kill other officers. They chanted 'PTSD' – a reference to lifer Kevan Thakrar, who was cleared of attempted murder after saying a bottle attack on the guards was due to post traumatic stress disorder. Three of the guards in the latest incident at Durham Prison needed hospital treatment. A jail insider said: "Staff morale could not be lower."

- Former Clash bassist Paul Simonon has revealed that he recently spent some time in prison in Greenland after being caught during a raid on an oil rig with a group of Greenpeace campaigners. Joining the crew of the group's ship *Esperanza*, Simonon became assistant cook for the duration of the mission. He volunteered to climb on board the Leiv Eriksson oil rig with 17 other activists as part of an ongoing campaign demanding that companies stop Arctic oil drilling.

- Thomas Blak, one of the six anti-fascists jailed after being convicted of conspiracy to commit violent disorder in June, has been released from Wormwood Scrubs on the condition of accepting voluntary deportation back to Denmark, his country of birth. Being an EU citizen it is unclear if he will be allowed to return to the UK despite living and working here for the past 15 years. Thomas is a committed anarchist who took on the role of producing the *Class War* newspaper during its final days.

Check the Freedom website for the addresses of the other anti-fascists prisoners still inside. Letters to them would be greatly appreciated.

Rehabilitation revolution?

Well, it appears that the tail has finally been pinned on the 'Rehabilitation Revolution' donkey with the publishing of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill and all the in-fighting surrounding what would and would not be included in its final draft. And lo, it has come to pass that many of us have been right all along and the so-called revolution has been nothing less than the reordering of deckchairs on the penological Titanic.

So, far from being radical in any of the myriad senses of the word, some that even a conservative can apparently lay claim to, it turned out to be largely slanted towards increasing the lengths of sentences rather than as Clarke had previously stated, cutting the numbers of prisoners. Having initially pledged that he would slow the increase in prison numbers and cut the population by 3,000 by the end of this parliament, subsequently upped to 6,000 when he came up with the wheeze of giving a 50% sentence discount on an early guilty plea (all in the name of trimming the Ministry of Justice budget by 23% or £2bn by 2014-15), he quickly changed his tune, reining back to the 3,000 figure (leaving a £100m hole in his cuts plan) and now having to resort to claiming that his aim is merely to slow any potential increase.

On top of that, LASPO contained (alongside plans for the economic cleansing of the court system via the almost total abolition of Legal Aid, something brought in by the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act to try and correct the all-pervasive culture of police fit-ups) clauses widening mandatory life sentencing – the so-called 'two strikes' for serious sexual and violent offences; extending determinant sentences, with longer added post-release licence periods; together

with mandatory sentences for 16-17 year olds for knife possession, which will send an already massively overcrowded juvenile prison population to ever more dangerous levels.

All of this to the chagrin of Clarke, who had both been involved in a public fight over knife sentencing with the Home Secretary Teresa May and was slugging-off mandatory sentencing and previous 'three-strikes' legislation till just hours before the Bill was published. As someone said, "You don't stay around in politics as long as Kenneth Clarke has by sticking to principles."

Having said that, it's his own fault for trying to reform a judicial system that imprisons more people per head of the population than anywhere else in Europe; one that has nearly tripled the number of life sentence prisoners in the past decade to nearly 12,000, more than France, German, Poland and Russia all put together. It hasn't helped that there has been a massive influx of remand and sentenced prisoners from the summer's riots, which have continued to set new weekly prison population records and will have pushed it through the 88,000 barrier by the time you read this. No wonder the latest projection show that there could be 94,800 prisoners banged up by 2017.

Little comfort for Clarke then that, despite retaining his prison labour and 'victims tax' provisions, his idiotic notion of making all prisoners work a 40-hour week appears to also be in trouble, as he has been forced to cut back the projected full-time prison industry jobs he will be able to create by the end of the decade, to just 20,000, i.e. barely double the present number. Plus the promised revision of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 was conspicuous in its absence from LASPO. Wither the 'Rehabilitation Revolution' now?



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

The Freedom sandwich board sign is going through a bit of a change. It's in the process of being painted black, in keeping with the age of austerity east end fashionista outlook. It will still have the familiar red and black star so it shouldn't be too hard to miss, although we may be losing it altogether if the council have their way. It seems some bureaucrat is getting a bit over excited at the prospect of the Olympics coming to town and wants to clear Whitechapel High street of unnecessary clutter, i.e. all the shop signs. We'll keep you informed of the battle of the Freedom sandwich board. Expect a call from the solidarity campaign to save the Freedom One!

We are proud to offer our support to Bristol's newest radical bookshop, Hydra books – a community bookshop, coffee shop and meeting place run by local people as a workers' co-operative. The shop grew out of Bristol Radical History group and similar networks across the city.

We also offer our support to News from No-where, Liverpool's premier radical bookstore. It seems they been having problems again with the undesirables of the politically reactionary kind. Good to know Liverpool Anti-fascists are on the case and I'm sure Merseyside radicals will rally around one of the city's most important political establishments.

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

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated January 2012 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Tuesday 13th December. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

As I write this, it seems likely that there will be a big one-day strike across much of the public sector on 30th November. The strike is over proposed changes to the various pension schemes, but there is also an implied protest against the government's austerity policy.

In many of the sectors it has members, the public sector union Unison will be taking action. This isn't universal, however. For example, Unison full-timers have been telling workers in some universities that they will not support people who refuse to cross picket lines. Sadly, this is far from an unusual stance for Unison, them supporting any action is the exception.

Unison was formed in 1993 from a merger of three unions: Nalگو, NUPE and COHSE. Nalگو was the National Association of Local Government Officers, a former staff association radicalised through the sixties, that covered utilities and emergency services admin staff as well. The Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) covered most grades in the health service. NUPE, the National Union of Public Employees, was mainly for manual staff in local government and the NHS, with a small section for white collar workers. This white collar section, called Nupe Officers, was often a source of friction. If you spoke to members of it, there were two stated motivations for being in it rather than Nalگو. Firstly, they were often Labour Party members who wanted to be involved in the party through their union – which wasn't possible under Nalگو's rules as it was unaffiliated to the Labour Party for historical reasons. Secondly, the subs for Nupe were lower, as its base was generally lower-paid manual workers. The unstated reason for people joining Nupe was that they hardly ever went on strike and in many authorities, though not all, were known as a scab union. (In some places this was reversed and Nalگو was the scab outfit, though I think this was much rarer).

The three unions decided to merge in the

late eighties and worked towards it from about 1990. The big argument for merger was that a single voice would be heard much better in negotiations with employers.

Underlying it was an appeal to an industrial unionist argument, that all workers in the same industry should be in the same union. While not true in this case, it was a big step towards it. For example, local government had GMB and T&G for certain grades, but the proposed merger put a very large proportion of council staff in the same union. In the NHS, there are still separate nurses', doctors' and specialists' unions, but the vast majority of workers in a union are in Unison.

I supported the merger and argued for it, writing articles arguing for an industrial union. If it was to happen now, I'd argue against. Unison is a centrally-controlled behemoth unresponsive to members' anger. It has taken the least attractive parts of its constituent unions and fashioned something worse, such as Nalگو's high subs and NUPE's lack of democracy. Nalگو had a tradition of lay activists having more control of their activities than is the norm for TUC affiliates, which accounted for its militancy. If you hit a problem, you could use the union to fight it. It was far from ideal, but you'd get backed up a fair bit and had the ability to go to meetings and argue your case. Unison never seems to meet and any action has to be approved by the Regional Officers – pretty much as far removed from the workers as you can get.

That capacity for local initiative and lay control was a good thing. Structures that allow people to act are more important than structures that look good in theory. A militant minority that is prepared to act and defend itself can achieve far more than a much bigger organisation that is passive and centrally controlled; something to remember when Unison pull the plug on any future resistance to changes in pensions, or cuts, or anything short of rolling over and begging.



FEEDBACK

Economical response

Brian Leslie, you are absolutely right (*Freedom*, letters, November 2011). The goal of 'Economics' should not be to reinforce wage labour, employment, rapid, destructive economic expansion, etc., and we should find alternative methods of conducting sustainable trade and commerce that is need-based and aim at self-reliance and full distribution.

But my point is that we, as antagonists to the existing system, should not only deal with what ought to be, but also with what is, that is, the current economic system by which we are all inextricably bound – and it is based on mainstream economic policies drafted by politicians and mainstream economists. Since *Freedom* is a news-based publication, it makes sense to report on what is going on, including worsening structural employment, the political machinations behind seemingly practical 'financial' decisions, etc., which, whether we like it or not, do have tremendous but insidious impact on all our lives. To report on it is not to endorse it.

However I do admit that my emphasis was on how these aspects of current economic imperatives have been worsened by austerity, rather than on how they have been steadily getting worse over the last few decades, austerity or no austerity, although I have made the point briefly. This is something I intend to build on in the coming months. I also admit that we must move on to discussing alternative ideas quite soon, since they might well become a practical necessity in the coming months and years.

That said there is widespread acknowledgement within radical circles that our understanding of contemporary capitalism and its processes is highly inadequate and our critiques of it very dated. If we are to reach out to the larger public who depend on capitalist structures for their daily survival, we should develop powerful arguments against it as well as indicate alternatives. At the moment the former is my emphasis, and it was a need I had personally felt, and I'm

hoping to reach out to other radicals who have felt a similar need, but do this as ordinary, self-educating people, rather than as 'economists' or 'experts' or 'academics' of any kind.

As such, 'Economics' page in *Freedom* is intended to be a space for the development of such thoughts, analyses and alternative ideas. It is not by any means a finished product, and we hope to attract many anti-authoritarian thinkers who can contribute the above-mentioned in a comprehensible language and help us understand the system better. So you, or any other interested parties, are most welcome to write for the Economics page and present your contrarian arguments.

Freedom economics editor

Bookish appeal

Radical bookselling in Britain has a long history. The secondhand labour history book dealer Left on the Shelf (leftontheshelfbooks.co.uk) has an incomplete listing of radical bookshops on its website, together with a listing of mentions of such shops in fiction and in non-fiction. Dave Cope – who runs Left on the Shelf – and I are trying now to make the listing as complete as possible. We would be grateful for any corrections and omissions. Today, for example, someone sent us a survey of Marxist-Leninist shops, which will be added soon. In addition, I'm currently working on a booklet about radical bookshops that is less list based. Many of the shops covered in the listing, and a significant section of the booklet, will be about anarchist/libertarian bookshops. I'd be pleased to hear from anybody who has worked in radical bookselling, or customers who have interesting stories to tell. I can be contacted at info@fiveleaves.co.uk or at Five Leaves Publications, PO Box 8786, Nottingham NG1 9AW.

Ross Bradshaw

Heckling online

There are big changes to the *Hereford Heckler*, undoubtedly one of the most consistently

excellent political freesheets in the country. Sad to say, at least from our perspective, the *Heckler* is changing to a mainly web-based format, with a new website and online shop coming very soon. They are broadening their content, with more regular updates and more contributions from others, which is all positive, but many of us are going to miss the acid bright colours and easy to read beautifully finished design and layout of the paper. As long as the content remains its usual high standard they should do alright. If you have anything you would like us to consider for inclusion, email it over to kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk.

Hereford Heckler

<http://herefordheckler.wordpress.com/>

AF anniversary issue

It feels like the next few years will be dominated by the economic climate. As surprised as the state has appeared to be about the riots and attacks on police in our major and not so major cities and towns, it has perhaps also been a surprise to see how quickly the gloves have come off, with threats of water cannon, denial of Facebook and the rest as well as the extremely heavy sentencing. The state has, in its rhetoric, moved on from the war on terror and its polarising suspicion of 'other' cultures, and now sees a much larger part of the population as a threat to stability and business as usual. It is hard for them to maintain the lie that we are all in this together without completely writing off people as feral or scum, egged on by the populist press. The present government continues erosion of the right to a 'social wage' by changing legislation to make benefits or council housing even more conditional and short term, whilst threatening removal of access to these as a punishment for unrest.

AF

Organise magazine #77, Winter 2011. Special anniversary issue, 25 years of the Anarchist Federation.

DONATE YOUR OLD BOOKS

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

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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

NOVEMBER

■ **30th National Strike action:** N30, following on from the J30 public sector strikes over 20 unions are preparing for a day of co-ordinated strike action against cuts, for details of what's going on in your area, see <http://www.n30strike.org> or <http://union-news.co.uk/tag/30th-november-strike/>

DECEMBER

■ **1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd** London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk

■ **3rd Anarchy in the North East**, a gathering of anarchists to try and improve our political effectiveness, featuring Ian Bone as guest speaker, food, drink, music, plus a film showing, all from 4pm until midnight at the Star & Shadow Cinema, Stepney Bank, Newcastle, NE1 2NP, see <http://www.neanarchists.com/> or <http://www.starandshadow.org.uk/on/event/584> for details.

■ **10th Glasgow Anarchist Fair** from 11am until 11pm at Kinning Park Complex, 43 Cornwall Street, Glasgow G41 1BA, with workshops and stalls to browse during the day and a social with films in the evening, this will be a stimulating day for everyone interested in what anarchism means in 21st century Glasgow, for details contact glasgow@afed.org.uk or see <http://glasgowanarchists.wordpress.com/fair/>

■ **8th and 22nd** Autonomous Nottingham meeting and social from 7.30pm at The Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Forest Fields, Nottingham NG7 6HX, see <https://network23.org/autonomousnottingham/>

■ **10th** News from Nowhere Club presents William Morris and Errico Malatesta: a fraught relationship, a talk by Dr Carl Levy at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/>

■ **11th** SPES Sunday lecture 'What is Religious Belief? An Atheist's Perspective', Tim Crane (<http://www.timcrane.com/>) contests the generally accepted atheist understanding of belief at 11am, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see <http://www.conwayhall.org.uk>

■ **16th** The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ **17th** Freedom Winter Social, from 3pm at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



● Anarchists in Glasgow have had an incredibly busy year. Not only being involved in the inspirational Free Hetherington initiative (pictured above) and other occupations of Scottish education establishments, in between their regular activities, they also have the energy to put on an end of year bookfair in the city. **Glasgow Anarchist Fair** on 10th December brings together discussions, workshops and stalls to browse during the day, and a social with films in the evening, definitely a stimulating day for everyone interested in what anarchism means in 21st century Glasgow.

Discussion highlights include Anarchist Strategy in the Community and Workplace, Ben Franks, author of *Rebel Alliances*, and Scottish author D.D. Johnston reading from his anti-capitalist novel *Peace, Love and Petrol Bombs*.

Glasgow Anarchists is an umbrella that encompasses the wide and varied anarchist milieu in Glasgow who are involved in a number of political projects, active in their communities, workplaces and places of education.

For details contact glasgow@afed.org.uk or visit <http://glasgowanarchists.wordpress.com/fair/>

● After a long wait, Swindon now has a new anarchist group called, without any unnecessary extravagance, **Swindon Anarchists**. The group has already been active in the anti cuts struggle – helping build the march 26th demo and a successful local demo to coincide with the 30th June strike, organising local anti cuts demos, including a decent sized anarchist contingent and organising a UKuncut action.

Anybody in the Wiltshire area who wants to get involved Swindon Anarchists will continue to be involved in the fight against

cuts, as well as anti-fascist, environmental and loads of other issues.

If you'd like to get in touch, drop them an email at swindonanarchists@riseup.net

● Anarchists in Staffordshire are working on forming a new anarchist group based in this area under the provisional heading of **Staffordshire Anarchists**. Their first meeting took place on the 5th November in Stoke-On-Trent and are looking to expand their activities.

The Potteries has always had a history of radical intervention not least from the Chartists who instigated a wave of industrial unrest throughout the nineteenth century to the infamous Walsall anarchists and their bomb making exploits (although technically Walsall is no longer part of Staffordshire). If you have an interest in contributing and getting involved then please get in contact.

For more information, email staffordshireanarchists@hotmail.co.uk

● **LaDIYfest** Sheffield, the first feminist festival in the city, was an incredible success raising over £1,200 for Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service (SRASACS) during a lively weekend of music, films, discussion, poetry and art. **LaDIYfest** billed itself as an inclusive, DIY, anti-capitalist, community-based feminist festival to create a celebration of women with an emphasis on the artistic, the creative and the political. They oppose the part that capitalism plays in the oppression of women, and want to raise awareness of women's issues and engage local women with local women's organisations to create a more equal society for everyone. Let's hope they continue to grow

See <http://ladiyfestsheffield.wordpress.com/>

When Saturday goes

Another nail was rammed into football's coffin with the approval by the Football League of the highly controversial Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP). The plan, endorsed by the sports' governing body the Football Association (FA), will see the big business Premiership clubs benefit massively from the radical overhaul of the youth academies system at the expense of the struggling lower divisions.

At the end of October, 46 of the 72 Football League clubs voted in favour of the EPPP at a highly charged meeting under threats by the Premiership to withdraw its funding to the Football League if the scheme wasn't approved. It highlights once again the disregard the FA has for lower league clubs and how football is being increasingly managed for the purposes of generating cash for its investors rather than maintaining a mass spectator sport for the benefit of the paying fans.

With the introduction of the tier system, the highest ranking, i.e. biggest financial, clubs will get the pick of any youth players in the country and priority choice of the new talent emerging, all at a fraction of the current cost. For example, Chelsea paid £1.5m to MK Dons for 14-year-old Oluwaseyi Ojo, under the new system they would be able to buy him for less than £150,000. At the other end the tier 4 academies will only be allowed

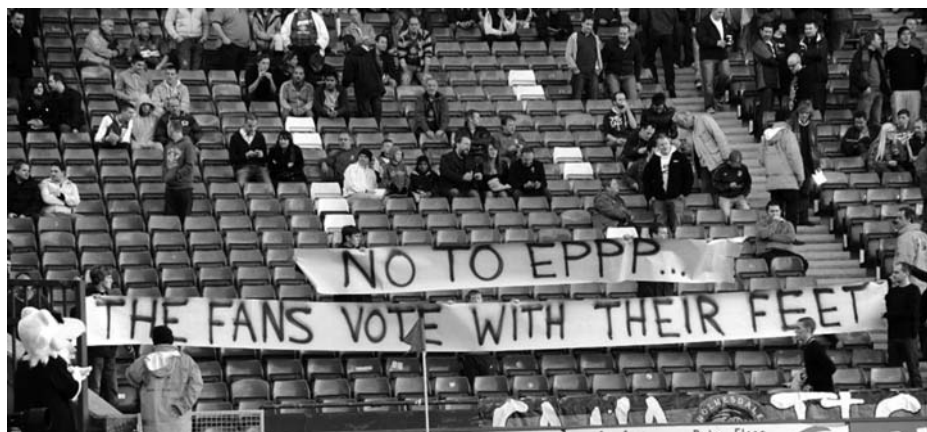
to pick up previously failed youth players – the leftovers the Premiership doesn't want. As Peterborough United director Barry Fry succinctly put it "The Premier League wants everything and they want it for nothing". It is estimated that between 30 to 40 youth systems in the Football League will now be scrapped because of the change, leaving many clubs without any youth training facilities.

Fans angry at the move have set up 72 Unite, a broad-based campaign group dedicated to getting the decision of the FA reversed. As they declare: "In the current financial climate with the divide between

rich and poor widening on a daily basis, Modern Football continues to be an exaggerated version of the overall global picture. The rich continue to get richer, while the poor suffer."

They have already organised a mass five-minute boycott of every Football League game, adding their voice of dissent and motivating fans of all the current 72 football league clubs to campaign and take direct action against the legislation. They intend to escalate their action in the coming months.

For updates and other actions check <http://the72unite.co.uk/>



From Dublin to Palestine

◀ page 24

There was no information and no free association. We were held apart."

Hogan explained the reasoning behind the continued detention. "It was part of a pattern. They wanted lessons to be learnt and that's why they made life as difficult as they could for us. We didn't sign anything

saying we were criminals, [even though] there were threats made that we would be kept [in prison] indefinitely."

Before leaving for Gaza Hogan gave his reason for going. "It's something I have a huge interest in because I believe Irish people have a lot in common with the Palestinians

in terms of colonial history and there is not much awareness of what is going on over there. There have been seven Palestinians killed by the Israelis since the new year and it gets no attention."

Full interview can be found on David Cronin's website at <http://www.dvcronin.blogspot.com/>



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FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504

REVIEWS

JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS

Connie saw the others waiting by the Clock Tower. She greeted Caz, Iona and Alfie as Steve and Pete came out of the Hurstbourne Arms, laughing.

"I thought we agreed, no alcohol," she said.

"Ah, it was just a swift one," replied Pete.

"You're not even meant to be drinking," she snapped back. Pete grinned. Steve opened the van and the Hurstbourne Anarchist Group climbed in.

The action had been planned for weeks. Connie and Dave had met Stour Valley Eco-Action at the Climate Camp. Only Dominic, their resident geek, had opted out, muttering about "primmos".

The target was Kingsnorth power station. They would break in and cause havoc while a couple of climbers did a banner drop from the chimneys, ready for the morning news.

"This takes me back to my days in Anti-Fascist Action," Pete reminisced. Dave rolled his eyes, but Alfie and Iona were interested in Pete's action hero tales.

"Oh, yeah, I was there, Waterloo, Bury, Thamesmead, all over. It was a laugh, but we had to be careful, watch out for the fash or the rozzers."

Steve put a tape on, and it was perhaps fitting that 'Police and Thieves' was playing when there was a flash of blue light behind them. He wound down the window.

"Did you know your left tail-light is not working, sir?" asked the policeman.

"Er, no," replied Steve.

"Well, you need to get it fixed. Now, where are you all off to?" The copper's tone was business-like.

"None of your business, copper!" blurted Pete. The cop turned and looked at him.

"I suspect some of you have been drinking." He looked at Steve. "I am going to have to breathalyse you. Step out of the vehicle, please." As Steve walked over to the police car, the others glared at Pete.

Connie watched Steve talking to the copper. Just our luck with a routine stop, she thought.

Steve returned. "Well, the good news is I'm not drunk. The bad news is he's not letting us drive anywhere until the light's fixed. I'll call the AA."

The jokes about wasting police time were stale by the time the AA man arrived four hours later. Connie felt bad, an action months in planning scuppered by a few badly-chosen words and a faulty rear light. She let SVEA know. Demoralised, they headed home.

"It's just one of those things," Pete said. Connie bit her tongue; this wasn't the time to discuss what went wrong.

Martin H.

To be continued...

TELEVISION

Top Boy

by Ronan Bennett, Channel 4.

Saul Dibb's *Bullet Boy* (see *Freedom*, 28th May 2005) impressively blended realism and crime melodrama, daring to expose prevailing commonplaces of urban youth deviance as simplistically prejudicial. Subsequent UK cinema objectifying the streetwise inner city and appealing to cultural tourists – from *Kidulthood* and *Adulthood* to *Cherry Tree Lane*, *1 Day*, *Attack the Block* and *Sket* – sadly panders hysterically to the reactionary assumptions surrounding such themes without additional illumination.* Now, novelist and screenwriter Ronan Bennett's *Top Boy* (shown on four consecutive weeknights from 31st October) resuscitates close documentary attention to contextual authenticity and developing personality arcs – the Hackney storyline, superb street-cast and skilful direction comparable to Dibb's and, reinforcing *déjà vu*, Ashley Walters playing another bad boy with a heart of tarnished gold.

The socio-economic climate over intervening years has exacerbated desperation; already unravelling kinship networks further impoverished. Parental psychological or relationship breakdown – or mere overworked drudgery – leaves kids fending for themselves amidst local drugs posses menaced by neighbouring predators. Lacking alternative prospects, brutality arises more from the vicious logic of the gangsters' business than psychopathy – providing narrative dynamism while paralleling emotional suffering among the children, their elders, and intermediate cohorts. Highlighting the striving of Ra'nell, aged 13, to navigate through everyone's stormy waters, its sophisticated weaving of trauma, love, pain and hope distributed among overlapping biographies takes *Top Boy* significantly beyond precursors. Despite an unfeasibly minimal cast and numerous consequent plot and character implausibilities, manifold constituents of crumbling community are convincingly sketched.

Hackney(ed) Crossroads Reloaded

Even with escalating anti-sociality over-hyped by media and politicians, the anachronistically threadbare gangs and policing presence here suggestively indicate general institutional



neglect – in dramatic terms allowing the collective texture of autonomous interaction to breathe. Notwithstanding current populist dehumanisations of the underclass crescendoing well after completion, the series then subtly undermines discourses of inadequate parenthood, positive role models, and the 'Victorian values' which may be toxic in any strata but have more tragic repercussions here.

Correspondingly, Reality TV's tough-love prescriptions presage soft-cop invasions cost-effectively transforming fucked-up estates into nuclear utopias. But professional socio-cultural imperialism is also refused – social workers only useful if disavowing officialdom, following class-conscious noses instead of turning the latter up in punitive disgust at respectability's failure to thrive.

The older characters seem similarly mired in individualistic tactics just as dysfunctional these days as the moral clichés which blatantly failed them. Acutely so aware, the youngsters are on their own in most senses – yet still combine feral intelligence and fierce interpersonal commitment in fashioning coherent possibilities from the limited material, elective and blood relations and ethics discernible in social democracy's wreckage. Their tentative ambivalent strategies may have only modest chances of pragmatic success, but the ultimate 'top boy' is clearly Ra'nell – rejecting the false promises of Dushane's reluctant embrace of addictive barbarity feeding fatal fantasies of fulfilment. Perhaps *Top Boy's* writer retains radical sensibilities from an outspoken revolutionary libertarian-Leftist youth, even if in his dotage also accepting the limited political and artistic horizons of temporary redemption for isolated conflicted souls.

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

* Honourable exceptions being Greg Hall's *The Plague* (2006) and *Same Shit Different Day* (2010).

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The word freedom. Either Reagan's speechwriters hated him, or he made Bush the second look smart. The Russian word for freedom is *svoboda*.
2. While showing off the weapons systems, a simulated torpedo firing was ordered from the destroyer *William D. Porter*, but the torpedo man forgot to disarm the torpedo, leading to the *Iowa* taking evasive manoeuvres and the crew of the *Porter* being arrested at gunpoint on their return to port.
3. It was part of an anti-slum campaign, the homes were hovels infested with TB. By the morning after, the authorities in Geneva had given in. Tronchet was fined and jailed for a month.
4. Anarchist Simon Radowitzky did the deed, in revenge for Falcón massacring workers at a May Day demonstration and repressing a rent strike. Radowitzky became known as the Martyr of Ushuaia after the Tierra del Fuego city where he was jailed.

Double, double toil and trouble

Donald Room heartily approves of a recent reprint from *Past Tense*

Burning Women is a useful historical pamphlet about witch persecutions in England. Among general remarks about witch persecutions elsewhere in Europe are quotations from *Maleus maleficorum*, the European *Hammer of the Witches* of 1476, and a letter said to be written by Geiss, the notorious witch-burning Bailiff of Lindheim near Frankfurt. There is also a quotation, “Loath are they to confess without torture, which witnesseth their guilt”, from James I, the only English monarch ever to issue a warrant for the torture of witches (torture in England was a royal prerogative); but that was not in England but in Scotland, where he was James VI before he inherited the English throne. The only actual cases discussed in *Burning Women* occurred in England.

As the pamphlet says, the era of witch persecutions was not in the Middle Ages, but in the age of Enlightenment. However, Christianity was still ubiquitous, and most people believed in the existence of demons, and their human allies the witches, not as religious duty but as a simple matter of fact. *Burning Women* tells us that believers included the Enlightenment scientists Isaac Newton and Thomas Boyle.

In English law, witchcraft was punishable by death from 1542 until 1736. There were no special witchcraft courts. All accusations of capital crime – murder, witchcraft, theft of goods to the value of more than two shillings – followed the same procedure. If a local magistrate or constable thought there was a case to answer, the accused was remanded in custody until brought before a judge. Outside of London, this meant until the next Assizes, which may be as long as a year. Remand prisons were unhealthy places, and many died awaiting trial.

Most prisoners denied the charge, in which case the question of guilt was decided by a jury of male householders. There were rare acquittals, but most accused were found guilty and executed by public hanging. Evidence was recorded, and it is mostly from court records, that historians decide what was considered good evidence of witchcraft.

Unconventional sex was one indicator. Two seventeenth-century cases are cited, one of a probable lesbian relationship, and one of a woman “not living with her husband”.

Healing was another practice deemed diabolical. Renaissance physicians, who read Latin and Greek, found themselves up against women who knew medicinal and herbal lore, accumulated by trial and error over many generations. Such ‘wise women’ or ‘witches’



were more adept at healing than the classically trained doctors. Paracelsus, sometimes called “the father of modern medicine”, collected their knowledge and wrote “All that I know, I have learned from the sorceress”. But “one witch-finding manual” is cited against “Witches which do no hurt but good, which do not spoil and destroy, but save and deliver. It were a thousand times better for the land if all witches, but especially the blessing Witch, might suffer death”.

Midwives were generally accepted as women of the artisan class respected for their skill, but might be denounced as witches if they recited charms as they worked, especially, but not only, if they assisted at the birth of a dead baby.

But the most common evidence of witchcraft was that a beggar woman had been refused alms, and taken revenge by producing illness, deaths, animal diseases, crop failure, or causing milk to go sour, etc. The main reason for the rise in witchcraft trials in England was the fall in living standards, as poor women were reduced from poverty to beggary. It is not accidental coincidence that most witch trials occurred

where most peasants were forced off common land by the enclosure acts, in Essex. It was in this category that some of the accused pleaded ‘guilty’ and gave evidence against others.

One case cited may explain such ‘guilty’ pleas. An old woman “looked earnestly upon” Mary Glover, who was eating a new wheaten loaf. Mary did not give the beggar woman a share, and fell backwards “into a grievous fit”. It is not uncommon for beggars to curse those who refuse them alms. The confrontation was silent, but we may imagine the body language: ‘Please give me some bread’, ‘No, I’m eating it all’, ‘Then I hope it makes you ill’ – and Mary suddenly falls ill. Both women believe, as everybody does, in the reality of witchcraft, and both are shocked. But the beggar woman is also proud that her curse has actually worked. Evidently, she is not just a starving nobody, but a powerful witch.

There were professional witch finders, who toured the country taking fees for identifying witches and producing evidence in the form of “witch marks” on their bodies. They also

THE ARTS

TO A DNA ANARCH

TO A DNA ANARCHIST (in jail for dancing)

Dear Charlie,

Don't worry, this isn't hate-mail (hate-Daily Mail and hate-Mail on Sunday more like) written from the front seat of the upper deck, craved by children, of the great red bus of freedom that this country really is in its Green Man soul, its fish belly, its ales and Mab dispensations.

The statues, limousines, wigs and truncheons who've trussed you up have no human souls, no animism, are but ghoulish things, doomed to flaw-haunt their bleak houses of law, their Dickensian Chancery morgues bullied to heart-disease and death by their own mockingly logical tones.

What? You insulted a war economy and its P.R. front the monarchy?

Did you hurt anyone? Did you damage anything?

A dustbin? Hope you didn't damage any rubbish?

It seems you asked a long-deceased statue for the last waltz, maypoling about a war memorial without due solemnity or sobriety, displaying, rather, all the body language of a circus chimpanzee, later hopping onto the bonnet of the royal dodgem-car as it was trying to enjoy an impromptu black-bloc safari.

(Sorry if I've got it all wrong. I have only militant media reports to rely on.)

Ah drunkenness, ah dancing in the puckish and syrupy streets

is what the youth should be striving to excel at. Ah leopards!

Ah Mrs. Windsor, goddess of the slot-machines, dumpier in the jowl.

Today l'Anglaise – as Verlaine called Victoria – has changed the law to allow little cot-queenies aspire to the throne, 'a female vote-catcher'

said a demobbed soldier to me, chez Wetherspoon,

and speaking of wendy palaces, today they also talked of changing the law to allow 'tent cities' to be blasted by water cannons; it's weird.

The English establishment seems to have turned into *Carry On Screaming*.

2

Another law they changed – not today – was that of hanging the young at Tyburn, 'fatal brook' of Blake:

18th century hoodies good for nothing but breeding

19th century hoodies good for nothing but breeding

20th century hoodies good for nothing but breeding etc.



Review

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took bribes for not accusing people.

Scholarly works on the history of witchcraft are based on examination of original court records and other contemporary documents. *Burning Women* does not pretend to be a scholarly work. It is compiled from secondary sources, all carefully cited but not all guaranteed reliable, with cases selected to maintain the thesis that women were impoverished and persecuted as 'witches', to consolidate the power of the new, male, ruling classes.

It tends to confuse the geography of persecutions. In Germany there were specialist witch prisons with en suite torture facilities, and laws for confiscating the property of convicted witches and 'witchmasters', which made it profitable for town bailiffs and bürgermeisters to accuse wealthy citizens. In England, the laws, practises, and victims were different, but English witch persecutions had a horrible history of their own, which makes this cheap little book worth reading.

The author's pseudonym, Lady Stardust,

may seem to indicate a connection with the Wicca religion, but Wicca writers tend to see European witchcraft as a pre-Christian religion which survived as an underground movement, and this is not rue of *Burning Women*. 'Lady Stardust' is also the name of a song by the musician David Bowie, but no apparent connection there either.

Burning Witches: The European Witch Hunts, enclosure and the rise of capitalism by Lady Stardust, published by Past Tense, £2.50.

HIST

all the usual chavs and chav-nots crap
 Tory druidry Tory grotesqueries
 where a cabal of brandy-drinkers has the right to dispense with the lives
 of people they know nothing about and like even less
 and of course the football crowds were encouraged to laugh along
 and – it was a bit like *Big Brother* or *X Factor* – you could be next!
 After they changed that law, they also changed the place-name
 from Tyburn to Marble Arch, from Tyburn Road to Oxford Street,
 airbrushing 700 years of human sacrifice under the historical carpet
 and sluiced the Tyburn river of blood underground,
 symbolically, for they are fish-hooked on symbols.
 (Sorry if I've got it all wrong. I have only militant history books to rely on.)

3
 This year what they've done to the student rioters, the London rioters
 and the English rioters, is an echo of Tyburn – as is the word Taliban –
 not fatal
 not yet
 (though the pro-capitalist punishment lobby are working on it)
 but still an all-too-public punishment, all-too-out of proportion,
 a fundamentalism of window-dressing, a paganism of scapegoating,
 a Puritanism of dirty linen Daz-washing, an oxymoronic
 hanging the young out to spin-dry,
 a feeding frenzy in the shark-infested waters
 of politics, journalism and law.

4
 What you did was symbolic too, and too symbolic,
 so they have made you into a symbol, without realising the danger
 that the Great Mind will think on their hypocrisies long
 and the Great Memory will remember their hypocrisies longer.
 The Great Mind, the Great Memory is this red bus I ride on
 and I can see the moon tonight from my front seat window
 but you probably cannot from your unpoetic, unjust cell.
 The Friday evening streets are predictably pissy and vomity
 soaked up by free carpets of Evening Substandard
 and Londoners are clobbering, head-butting, ball-kicking each other
 en masse, doing physically what on weekdays they do psychologically
 – too drunk to tut or hiss –
 but the dragons in the underbelly don't mind them
 for the gods of the hop are the goldest in this hemisphere
 and the youth will grow his clipped wings back whiter
 to swan-beat the drums of Thames-consciousness.

Yours anarchically/alcoholically/anti-authoritarianly/anti-anachronistically/anti-anally etc.,
 Niall

(Note: this poem was sent to Charlie Gilmour in Wayland Prison, Norfolk, a fortnight before his release,
 as an antidote to the hate-mail he was receiving. He is currently tagged. As the newspapers revealed,
 he is actually the son of Heathcote Williams.)

SPORT

From Dublin to Palestine

Interview with Irish rugby's radical son

Trevor Hogan, the Irish international rugby player, tells of his harrowing ordeal at the hands of the Israeli military, along with 26 other press and peace activists from Ireland, Canada, the United States, Australia and Palestine who were all arrested at sea in the latest attempt to break the illegal blockade of Palestine.

Two vessels, one from Canada and one from Ireland left Turkey on 2nd November as part of the Freedom Waves initiative to take medical supplies, essential materials and basic necessities to the people of Gaza. Hogan (pictured below), who played rugby



union for Leinster until a knee injury forced him to retire, was aboard the Irish boat *MV Saoirse* (named after the Gaelic word for freedom) and spoke of the moment they were intercepted by the Israeli navy.

"They were circling us for ages, with their rifles trained on us," he told Irish activist journalist David Cronin after his release. "It was surreal looking out our window at these guns."

The two boats, still in international waters, were surrounded by 15 or 16 vessels, including full-sized warships. Eventually, the *MV Saoirse* was attacked with water cannons.

"The water cannons destroyed the electricity," said Hogan. "They flooded the engine room. We had to use emergency power. The boat could have sunk if it went on much longer."

Balaclava-clad Israeli commandos then boarded the *Saoirse*. "We just stayed sitting down peacefully," he added. "They wanted to search us on deck but we refused. We all acquitted ourselves well. One sudden move and they were sure to fire. My heart was pumping looking at this."

Hogan said that the Israelis kept everyone awake on their first night in Givon Prison, and separated the women.

"There was solidarity among us [the men]," he said. "We were all together. We managed

to meet them [the two women] for 20 minutes each time the consular was there. You could see that the girls were stressed and traumatised. They were under serious pressure."

They were expected to be deported from Ben Gurion but instead forced into cells at the airport.

"Givon was tough enough," Hogan said. "Ben Gurion was a lot worse. We thought we were going home and then we were banged up in cells. It was more decrepit."

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THE QUIZ

1. According to former US President Ronald Reagan, what word doesn't exist in the Russian language?
2. What happened when President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a lot of US top brass were inspecting the US battleship Iowa in 1943?
3. In December 1934, a building workers' group led by anarcho-syndicalist Lucien Tronchet began to smash the roofs and windows of homes in Geneva. Why?
4. Who killed Colonel Ramon Falcón in Buenos Aires and why?

Answers on page 20

