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BLAIR: POODLE OF THE RICH

Anyone with half a brain can see that Blair lied in order to scare the British (and world) population to support his position on invading Iraq. Yet no matter what he said, we knew he was talking rubbish. Iraq was not involved in September 11th, it did not have links with al-Qaida, and it had no WMD. The anti-war movement has been vindicated.

Rather than give the UN weapons inspectors time to complete their task, Blair followed the Bush government into a war to occupy Iraq, liberate it from its oil and secure a US military presence in the heart of the Middle East. Faced with the costs of war and the continued opposition to his decision, Blair decided to address his critics. He was his usual humble self. In spite of his critics being proved totally correct by subsequent events, Blair insists he was right.

Blair asserts "a large part of the public want to move on." How he discovered this fact is left unspoken. Equally unspoken is that he also knew a large part of the public did not want war. He ignored them. Just as he is ignoring the public over GM crops, the privatisation of the railways and a host of other issues. All of which is hardly an inspiring record for a self-proclaimed 'listening' government.

But, apparently, Blair wants us to forget about the lies and destruction. He wants us to 'move on'. Just as the Bush administration wanted us to forget the cosy relations the Reagan Whitehouse had with Saddam in the 1980s. Just as, undoubtedly, Saddam would want us to forget his crimes against humanity and 'move on'. As Blair reminds us, Saddam's Iraq produced "300,000 remains in mass graves." He failed to

note that these deaths occurred when Saddam was being supported by the west and in 1991 when the US preferred him to a popular revolt. And, least we forget, Saddam had over two decades to clock up that number. Blair managed over 10,000 in less than a year. So if we cannot 'move on' for Saddam, we cannot 'move on' for Blair.

Understandably, given all this, many people want Blair to go and go now. Who can blame them? He is a shit. But is getting rid of him enough?

Far from it. Blair did not and could not go to war by himself. He was the head of the state and its war machine. Only the naive would think the decision to invade was simply the product of his or Bush's insanity. The fact is that a substantial portion of the ruling elite, particularly around the oil corporations, wanted to invade Iraq. It fitted in with their interests, their desire to secure and extend their powers and profits. Interests of state and imperialist pressures caused the war, not individuals.

So personalising this war is wrong and results in drawing the wrong conclusions. No matter how smug and obnoxious he may be, Blair, like Bush, is simply a figurehead of a system which promotes war by its very nature. Replacing Blair without changing the system or, at least, building a social movement which can effectively resist war, will not change much. It will simply mean demanding that some other politician find a real job and stop destroying our lives in the interests of big business.

So is there an alternative? Of course, but we need to rely on our own strength and build it ourselves. Marches



"Is that a weapon of mass destruction in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see me?"

are not enough. If they were, the invasion and occupation of Iraq would not have happened. The only genuine alternative is an anti-war movement which combines marches with direct action. It must have real roots in the workplace and community. It must fight the causes of war, not just the symptoms. It must fight the system, not merely demonise its figureheads.

That means shifting power in society away from the top and into the grassroots. It means reclaiming control over our own lives. Instead of limiting ourselves to changing who (mis)rules us every few years, we need to realise that we have the power to change things for the better. Real peace and justice do not come from above, from the politicians. They come from below, by the action of the people.

We need to build organisations in our communities and workplaces by which we can resist the powerful until such time as we can get rid of them once and for all. It means using direct action and solidarity to make real change possible. It means rejecting the dead end of electioneering in favour of constructive activity where our power really lies – in our streets and workplaces.

NURSERIES ALL OUT

The low-pay dispute of Scotland's nursery nurses escalated this month as up to 5,000 have launched an all-out strike. As Freedom has been reporting for the past few months, a series of two-day actions have had no effect on the employers, COSLA – the Labour-dominated Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities.

The workers are demanding higher pay, which at the moment starts at £10,500 per year and rises to around £13,800 after fifteen years' service. The employers have tried to claim that the nurses have been offered £21,000. However, seeing as they were aiming for a payscale between £14,000 and

£18,000, if this were the case they would definitely not be taking industrial action, which will see them receiving a mere £15 per day in strike pay.

The lies spread by management are part of a larger dirty tricks campaign, which has also seen COSLA argue first that any pay claim must be negotiated locally, then move the goalposts and tell councils that any deals must be made nationally, and now refuse to negotiate on a Scotland-wide basis. Childminders in Tayside have accused one local authority of asking them to scab on the nurses.

The strike page on the union website is full of supportive comments from parents, and in areas where the strike

was solid all parents have refused to cross picket lines. Parents' strike support groups have also been set up and in general public support behind the nursery nurses is strong. After all, looking after a nation's children is a serious business, and the workers struggling for a decent wage need our help.

You can send solidarity messages to the strikers at www.unison-scotland.org.uk, and collections and donations for strike funds are also much needed. This is the biggest all-out strike in Britain in many years – let's make sure the bosses get beaten!

Alex Allison

MADRID

The horrific bomb attacks in Spain are inexcusable. Targeting ordinary people is the work of evil people and no cause can justify it.

However, the rank hypocrisy of the politicians and governments who supported the war in Iraq condemning the attacks should be noted. For example, the Europe minister, Denis MacShane, stated that "no progress in human affairs will ever be built on the blood of innocent people." Someone should tell his leader Blair that. Blair obviously considers the ten thousand plus innocent Iraqis killed by his and Bush's invasion and occupation of their country as a price worth paying to make 'progress'.

MacShane correctly argued that "those who find ways of justifying terrorism, who can talk of understanding the motives of terrorist actions need to think hard and think differently." The defenders and practitioners of state terrorism (and war is terrorism) should ponder those words as well. Blair, after all, did exactly that the week before, justifying his actions and asking us to 'understand' why he did it.

Thus the morality of the state comes into play. Legal violence is good, non-state approved violence is wrong. So when the state sheds the blood of innocent people to further its ends then it is

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Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 06

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

New projects

The Ipswich Anarchists have been formed to help facilitate libertarian activity in the area. Email ipswich_anarchists@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

Hereford Anarchist Federation have launched a new bulletin, the Hereford Insurgent. For a copy write to AF (Hereford), PO Box 7, Ponty Pool, Gwent NP4 8YB, or you can email hereford@afed.cjb.net

Donations

Unfortunately, this week some little wankstain nicked £150 from us, and also stole a Ward Churchill book. So any donations this issue will be especially welcome. If you appreciate the work we do, send cheques and postal orders payable to 'Freedom Press' to us at the address below.

Circulation

We would like to increase the readership of Freedom, and an important part of this is getting better distribution. If you would like to help by selling Freedom or asking bookshops, libraries or newsagents to stock it please contact our circulation team, below.

Contact details

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distro@freedompress.org.uk

Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 3rd April 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 25th March. See contact details above for where to send your letters/articles.

If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

News from inside

Message madness

The following is a letter campaign appeal on behalf of John Bowden, a long time prison resister.

The Governor of HMP Glenochil recently put a taped message on the front of prisoners phone calls warning whoever they called that the person making the call is an inmate in a maximum security prison. Her alleged reason for this is that she claims she has a duty to 'protect the public'. Their calls are already closely monitored and recorded, and all phone numbers are vetted and checked by the security department.

The imposition of the phone message would have a seriously detrimental effect on prisoners contact with their family and friends because they would now be reluctant to phone their wives and girlfriends, etc., at work or their children if they were in foster homes.

The governor, who recently imposed a 'no physical contact' rule on visits, has tried to argue that she is legally obliged to impose the phone message, which is not true as prisoners in the English system successfully challenged through the courts an attempt by the English Prison authorities to impose a similar phone message.

Please send your letters of complaint to: Governor Kate Donegan, HMP Glenochil, Tullibody, Clackmannanshire, FK10 3AD

Transfer needed

Robert Seth Hayes, a former Black Panther, has collapsed in prison ten times over the past few months due to lack of treatment for diabetes. He fears that unless he receives a transfer to another prison where they take his illness seriously, he may die.

Write to the Correctional Services Commissioner to demand his transfer: Glenn S. Goord, Commissioner, NYS Department of Correctional Services, Building 2, 1220 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY, 12226-2050, USA. Letters of support to: Robert Seth Hayes, #74A-2280, Clinton Correctional Facility, PO Box 2001, Dannemora, NY, 12929, USA. www.montrealabcf.org/hayes/

Picket of Gravesend Wilko's

On Saturday the 5th of March, the Gravesend branch of Wilkos was picketed by six activists. Seven hundred leaflets were given out inside an hour with many being placed inside the store (where they will be popping up for months to come). A few of the demonstrators wore criminal masks that may have made us look a bit scary! The security were there within minutes and asked us to leave as it was an indoor shopping centre. After taking our own sweet time to leave, we continued to distribute the remainder of our leaflets outside the shopping centre entrance.

The response from the public ranged from several people saying they would no longer be using Wilkos, to one elderly gent telling us 'that all prisoners should be shot!' One worker from another branch of Wilkos told us that she knew all about the prison labour used by her employers, so perhaps word is getting around. We retired to the pub in time to see Ireland beat England in the rugby!

Campaign Against Prison Slavery
www.againstprisonslavery.org

Anti-capitalist extradition

This is a call to anyone who went to the EU-summit in Gothenburg, or knows people who went. For the court case of a 22 year old boy from Amsterdam, who is charged with hitting a policeman on the head and will be extradited to Sweden, we need more evidence and witnesses. He is being falsely accused by the Swedish police and he is not the only one. In earlier cases the police usually won, but we hope to present our case so strongly this time that the court will be unable to ignore the fact that the police are lying. We already have some evidence in this case, videotapes and witnesses that prove that the police is wrongly accusing this young man. But we need more witnesses, preferably from press

etc., to force the court to take the defence in this case seriously. We need as much media-attention as possible to make sure that this court case will be a fair one. Do you know of any video-material from Gothenburg, were you there and are you willing to testify, or do you know anyone that might be? Please take a few minutes to look at the video-material on our website to see if you recognise the situation. If you do and have any information for us, please contact us as soon as possible.

See: <http://www.steunmaarten.org/film.htm>
Here you can find all the background information on the court case and the campaign: www.supportmaarten.org

Stammheim prisoner on hunger strike

Since February 26th Ronald Haug has been on hunger strike in Stammheim Prison, Germany, against a decision by the German Supreme Court to impose 'closed conditions' on his visits. This means that a plastic screen prevents all physical contact with his wife, child, or other visitors during visiting periods. Ronny has said that he will stay on hunger strike until there is an end to the closed visiting conditions. Letters of support: Ronald Haug, JVA Stammheim, Aspergerstr.: 60, 70439 Stuttgart-Stammheim

LISTINGS

Buckinghamshire

19th to 21st March Self-build Geodesic Domes. For info see www.lowimpact.org or contact lili@lowimpact.org or call 01296 714184

Bristol

20th March Day of action against war, part of Bristol's weekend of action called in solidarity with the call for a global day of action. Meet at 12 noon in the city centre, opposite the Hippodrome.

20th March Benefit gig with Robb Johnson/Rita Lynch plus support in aid of Bristol Stop The War and Columbian solidarity, from 8.30pm to 1am at Bristol County Sports & Social Club, Colston Street, £4/2 on door.

Edinburgh

17th March Edinburgh Chiapas Solidarity Group Fiesta to raise funds for our twinned Zapatista autonomous municipality '16 De Febrero', with Latin and indigenous music, food and stalls from 7.30pm til midnight at the CWU Club, 15 Brunswick Street, free entry, raffle, donations welcome. www.edinchiapas.org.uk

Glasgow

24th April End the council tax! national demonstration, called by the SSP.
20th March They Lied ... Thousands Died, twelve months after Bush and Blair launched their attack on Iraq, join the Glasgow anarchist contingent Nae Mair War, Nae Mair Pish! Contact council_for_liberation@hotmail.com

Leeds

20th March End the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Assemble outside

the art gallery at noon to head through city centre. Call 07742 078836 for more info

28th March Solidarity South Pacific film showing of Hell in the Pacific, The Coconut Revolution and Freedom for West Papua from 4.30pm onwards at Wrangthorne Community Hall, St Augustine's Church, Hyde Park corner. Kids welcome.

London

20th March First anniversary of the US bombing and invasion of Iraq, march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square. For info see www.stopwar.org.uk

24th March Anarchist Youth Network meeting, 7pm at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1
25th March Discussion meeting on religion hosted by Freedom and London AF, 7pm at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1
3rd April Freethinkers' Book Fayre from 11am to 4.45pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 (nearest tube Holborn), stallholders include Freedom Press, South Place Ethical Society, Chronos, and others. For info or bookings contact Black Cat Press, c/o 12 Lambs Conduit Passage, London WC1R 4RH, call 0778 8945143 or email black_cat_pub@yahoo.co.uk

9th to 12th April London to Aldermaston march against the new generation of nuclear weapons. Register to take part at www.aldermaston.net
Every Monday Libertarian parent and kid drop in from 4.30 to 6.30pm at the Autonomy Club, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, for info email libertarianparents@yahoo.co.uk
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

Every Saturday Vigil for the release of Mordechai Vanunu from 12 noon to 2pm at Kensington High Street near the Israeli Embassy. For more info see www.vanunu.freeserve.co.uk or call 020 7378 9324

Sheffield

27th March Launch of Sheffield Social Forum at 10am at the Royal Institute for the Blind, Mappin Street, with Hilary Wainwright. For more information call 07816 754071

Animal rights

All across the country hunt saboteurs are working directly in the field to protect wildlife from the huntsmen contact: Hunt Saboteurs Association, PO Box 5254, Northampton NN1 3ZA www.huntsabs.org.uk

World

19-22th March Dragon Festival at Los Tablones, near Orgiva, Granada, Andalucia, Spain, given permission for the first time, for info email groundzerosoundsystem@yahoo.com

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Class War Federation
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org
Earth First!
www.earthfirst.org.uk
Industrial Workers of the World
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk
Solidarity Federation
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX

www.solfed.org.uk

For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk
The Cowley Club
12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk
Freedom
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1
Kebele
14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol
BS5 6JY
www.kebele.org
Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)
The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster
www.eco-action.org/lancaster
London Action Resource Centre (LARC)
62 Fieldgate Street, London E1
www.londonlarc.org
Occupied Social Centre
159 Fortress Road, London NW5
www.wombles.org.uk
SUMAC Centre
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham
NG7 6HX
www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/
Use Your Loaf
227 Deptford High Street, London SE8
www.squat.freeserve.co.uk/useyourloaf.html
1in12 Club
21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY
www.1in12.com
56a Infoshop
56 Crampton Street, London SE17
www.safetycat.org/56a

Britain

Strikewatch February-March 2003

- Wildcat strikes hit the Post Office again as hundreds of staff at Liverpool and Peterborough sorting offices walk out. Staff at the West Derby office in Merseyside were protesting against the behaviour of a manager, while the Peterborough workers were fighting for changes in working practices, and were joined in solidarity by postal delivery staff in downing tools.

- Higher education employers claimed that a 'straw poll' they had carried out last month indicated that the impact of the AUT strike had been 'minimal', with 56% of targeted campuses reporting no noticeable impact. Freedom received reports from Unison-organised support workers in universities that they were requested by striking AUT members to do their work for them! Some Unison members refused, but many capitulated - hardly surprising then that the strike would have little effect.

- The tube strike set for the 12th March, during which unofficial solidarity action was also being planned, was called off by union leaders last week, who decided to oppose the sacking of seven maintenance staff for 'working while sober' through an Industrial Tribunal instead of direct action.

- Brighton and Hove's bin rounds were in chaos in February as some 300 dustmen downed tools in support of a senior union rep who was marched off-site. Rounds were delayed across the city as members of the workforce took part in a wildcat strike after shop steward Richard Warren was suddenly suspended yesterday. Some staff have also been unhappy with the introduction of new methods of rubbish collection including wheelie and communal bins.

- Industrial action continues in the Driving Standards Agency as staff continue working-to-rule, and carrying out sporadic strike actions as pay still remains as low as £10,250 despite record surpluses.

- The Co-op bank is to face industrial action after opting to exclude some staff from its pension scheme. Members of the finance union Unifi voted overwhelmingly for action following the decision. The bank opted to remove some staff from its final salary pension scheme after deciding to transfer the staff to its outsourced computer specialist SCC. From 12th May an overtime ban will begin, which may escalate if the Co-op Bank maintains its stance, Unifi warned.

- Telegraph journalists have won better working conditions and pay after their work-to-rule and strike threat reported in previous Freedoms. Staff won a three per cent pay rise for all, including casual employees who will also be included in every annual pay review. It is great to see solidarity between permanent and casual workers!

- Miners at Kellingley Colliery voted to take strike action to fight changes in working hours on the 20th anniversary of the great Miners's Strike 1984-85. The changes would force employees to work up to 12-hour shifts during weekends.

- Strikes continue on the Tyne and Wear Metro system as RMT and Amicus members in their long-running dispute over pay and conditions.

Scottish bulletin

A quick round-up of news, projects and anarchism north of the border

Scotland is a large country. Large in not merely in terms of size, or in how widely people are distributed in sometimes remote areas, but also large in the range of cultural norms and linguistic territory covered. This is a country with a million and a half Scots speakers, most of whom remain blissfully unaware that they speak something other than mere slang, it is a country with a Highland and Island diaspora who often have great difficulties in accessing services and have less opportunities than those elsewhere. As such, Scottish politics tend to be very different from 'British' (often approximated to mean English) politics.

Scotland can also lay claim to some of the poorest areas in Europe with seven schemes forming some of the poorest endroits in the EU.

The politics particularly of the West of Scotland will also come across as radically different from elsewhere in the UK: sectarianism and anti-Catholic bias still very much a palpable thing here. On Glasgow's Argyle Street shops pay protection to the UVF and working class areas are divided between Catholic and protestant.

Law in Scotland can be very different from elsewhere in the UK - squatting is completely illegal for example - and religion plays a much greater role in public life. The 'political focus' since the inception of the Scottish parliament is also very much more focussed on Holyrood than on Westminster and Scotland has its own national media and intellectual discourse.

It is also salient to mention that while in Scotland there is not so strong an anarchist current within the left there are now six socialist MSPs and seven greens. There is also the simple fact that the SNP remains the official opposition: this is patently a very different scenario to that in the rest of the UK. It may also come as a surprise to the anarchist movement in England and further afield in the UK but to be a nationalist in Scotland is seen more as progressive than as chauvinistic as Scotland emerges from hundreds of years

of colonialism. This is a bulwark of the policies of the Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens, and many of those who see themselves as anarchists would be less than averse to the notion of secession, at least for cultural reasons.

Project reports

Faslane Peace Camp: Activists from the Camp have entered the Faslane naval base, which houses submarines with nuclear weapons, on several occasions this year. The intruders remained undetected on one occasion for a period of two hours and subsequently escaped arrest for a further three. There have also been two accountable actions at Coulport naval base (where warheads are stored) when two peace campers reached the boom by Vanguard subs before being arrested. Faslane is always looking for more visitors and residents. Contact the camp on 01436 820 901 or faslanepeacecamp@hotmail, or by post at Faslane Peace camp, Shandon, Helensburgh, G84 8NT

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh:

ACE is always looking for more members or people to help out or get involved. If you're interested, contact them at ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA (tel: 0131 557 6242). Ace is open Tuesdays 1pm to 4pm and Sundays 2pm to 5pm.

Glasgow Autonomous Project:

The GAP group has been working for some time, and has arranged various events in the past few months including the successful anarchist dayschool and various benefits. Members hope to have the centre open by mid April and running throughout May to coincide with the month of action called by progressive groups across the UK. The centre will provide a locus of attention and organising for various events, seminars, talks, organising, a film festival and will also operate as a drop-in centre. To date events have been arranged in aspects of technical empowerment, refugee issues, militarism, permaculture, self-defence, healthcare,



Anti-war demonstrators in Edinburgh, November 2003

Gaelic language, Scots language and much more. To find out more or to get involved in the project contact GAP on 07762261379, or via email on autonomy@nocog.org. Members are keen to stress that what can be achieved is dependent on how much money they can raise, and at present the focus of their activity is involved in benefits and awareness raising. Stay tuned for more details on the GAP website: <http://www.nocog.org/~autonomy/>

Asylum seekers in Glasgow on death fast: Three Kurdish men, refused asylum in the UK, have been without food for eighteen days.

Supporters say they are close to death. Faroq Haidari, Farnboz Gravindi and Mokhtar Haidari are getting weaker by the hour

Around two hundred people attended a hastily organised solidarity demonstration on Tuesday evening, outside the city chambers (council offices). In a

statement read out to protestors, the men say they would rather die than return to Iraq.

More details on Indymedia Scotland (<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/scotland/2004/03/286396.html>).

To get involved in anarchist solidarity with the deathfasters stay up to date on the latest news and contact council_for_liberation@hotmail.com

Frock on: The Cailleach Collective have again organised a successful Frock On feminist art and cultural event and are keen for more new involvement in the continuing project. For more info see their website at www.frockon.org

Nick D.
Glasgow Autonomous Project

See our Listings section on page 2 for upcoming events in Scotland. For information on collectives active north of the border, check out www.enrager.net/britain/scotland

PCS strikes back

After weeks of prevarication union leaders at PCS have finally agreed that negotiation with the government is useless.

Strike action has belatedly been called for the 13th of April, three months after a proposal to strike in January was aborted.

Freedom reported last month that the original plan, which would have seen workers from the Department of Work and Pensions joining strikers from across the civil service, left thousands feeling betrayed when it was dropped.

Thanks to stringent rules on strike co-ordination, it takes a month to clear governmental regulations and a further week 'prior notice' before any official strikes can begin.

86,000 people are expected to strike over pay issues. Union members have expressed anger that their wage rises have been below inflation. Senior civil servants have received a whopping 9%, in some cases bringing wages above the £300,000 mark.

The strike could close job centres across the country for a week.

Flexi-hours

Europe's working-time directive will set the scene for a court battle between the UK and European Commission, after a Cabinet refusal to honour the spirit of the accord. The European Commission will sue the British Government for failing to curb businesses abusing loopholes in UK legislation.

As reported last issue, the working-time directive imposes a maximum 48 hours working week to improve quality of life and working practices across the eurozone. Britain obtained the 'right' for workers to opt-out of this legislation in

1993. In the last decade this has allowed companies to pressure workers to do unpaid overtime, and new employees to sign away their rights in return for a job.

Following a complaint by the union Amicus however, last month the EU rejected Britain's policy, calling on the Commission to bring Britain into line with the continent.

A consultation with interested parties will run until the 31st March. Email your comments to empl-labour-law@cec.eu.int or contact your union to have your say.

The forgotten war

Rob Ray looks into Russia's very own War against Terror, and asks why the terror hasn't stopped

Attention has again turned to the war in Iraq, but another war and its disastrous effects has gone largely unreported by the mainstream press. Long before the name of Iraq's dictator became such a pressing concern for the USA, Russia conducted its own horrific war against a small Muslim state in the heart of Eastern Europe – Chechnya.

The invasion and occupation of Chechnya in the 1990s led to the deaths of over 100,000 Chechens, making it the most brutal European conflict since 1945. Coverage tailed off in 1996, as the first Chechen war ended, and a second war in 2000 was less interesting to the international papers, though its success made Putin's name in Russia.

Since then both an interim government and an appointed Chechen ally have ruled the rebellious state, while thousands of soldiers and civilians have died in a prolonged series of skirmishes between rebels and the Russian army. Bombings and kidnappings both in Chechnya and Russia itself have continued, while criminal gangs roam the streets of the Chechen capital Grozny.

It should have all been so different. When Grozny fell to the Russian army in February 2000, it was hailed as the end of the war. Thousands of rebels lay dead or captured, including almost all of the Chechen leadership. Guerrillas had retreated into the mountains, unable to slow the advance of Putin's tanks, and an interim government was installed.

Since those heady days however, it is thought that 13,000 or more Russian troops have been killed by Chechen separatists, while most of the 300,000 civilians displaced during the fighting have been too scared to return to their now 'safe' homeland. The total population of Chechnya before the war was one million.

Amnesty international have reported increasingly desperate measures being used by nearby states to get the Chechens to go home, including the turning off of water and heating supplies to refugee camps in neighbouring Ingushetia. This is despite the quick turnover of power by Russia in 2001 to a native son of Chechnya, an ex-Mufti called Akhmad Kadyrov.

Kadyrov was not popular. In the year he took control he survived several attempts on his life, including one by a suicide bomber. Kadyrov was an unusual choice, although his hard line tactics have since proven very useful to Putin. During the 1994-6 campaign, he called a jihad against the Russians, bringing a great deal of support to the rebel cause.

Since joining forces with Putin in 2001 however he has been a model friend to Russia, and in August last year was rewarded with their support during his victorious campaign in the country's first post-war elections. The elections themselves were a formality. At the outset fifteen candidates came forward, but these were systematically removed or dropped out.

The highly popular candidate Malik Saidullaev withdrew from the race after a campaign of harassment against his supporters, the kidnapping of his



The price of victory – but nothing's changed

daughter and attacks on his home. Kadyrov remarked Saidullaev was 'too weak' to run the country.

Today the war is over, the President has been installed and Russia looks elsewhere for its entertainment. Yet the terror remains. Terrorist incidents have quadrupled in the last year, with a train

bombing in February killing 39 people.

The US ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow admitted in an interview with Pravda that the remaining Chechen separatists are thought to have joined forces with Al Qaeda.

Russia's intervention in Chechnya could then be seen as a failure on all

counts. It has not stopped the killings, it has brought the Chechen rebels closer to international terrorism and it has killed or driven away half of Chechnya's population – almost guaranteeing popular support for the separatists. No wonder they're keeping quiet about it.

Local Businesses complete coup in Haiti

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of Haiti and long term enemy of western politicians and Haitian business élites for his opposition to globalisation, has been deposed.

A rebellion by the FRLN, former members of death squads loyal to the junta that overthrew Aristide in 1991, finally forced the president to resign at the end of last month. The international community has moved quickly to install a first world friendly new president, Boniface Alexandre. He will rule with the assistance of a seven-man ruling council led by new Prime Minister and former foreign minister Gerald Latortue.

Haiti had been bracing itself for civil war ever since the landslide victory of Aristide's Famile Lavalas (FL) party over the Convergence Democratique (CD) in the 2000 parliamentary elections. The CD are based on an anti-

Aristide coalition established in 1998 at a conference organised by the International Republican Institute, an American organisation used to fund Washington friendly political parties. Ever since their defeat the US State Department has attempted to obstruct Haitian development, discouraging financial help from the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the Organisation of American States. The IMF has also forced a series of 'austerity measures', including wage flexibility (a reversal of Aristide's minimum wage legislation) and a petrol price hike causing massive inflation.

Twice in 2001, opposition groups attempted to depose Aristide, only for hundreds of rebels to flee across the border to the Dominican Republic, where they are rumoured to have received M16 rifles missing from a US

shipment to the Dominican armed forces. Opposition resurfaced in September when the G-184 group of 'civil societies' (businessmen), yellow trade unions and students organised a series of protests heavily suppressed by the Aristide administration.

Since being flown from the country on 29th February, Aristide has alleged that he was in fact kidnapped by US marines, his lawyer Brian Concannon claiming that "the ambassadors of France and the United States told him that he would be killed, his family would be killed and his supporters would be killed if he did not leave right away".

The US State Department has denied the accusations and claims to have merely humanitarian interests in the region. However, Jamaican Prime Minister, P.J. Paterson voiced severe concerns over the motives of international

forces engaged in Haiti. He alleges that the UN Security Council informed him intervention was impossible on the 26th February (before Aristide resigned). This was in sharp contrast to their rapid mobilisation just three days later.

Since US marines entered the country, conflict between Aristide loyalists and rebels has been muted but ongoing. US forces report hostility from locals, who accuse them of "stealing their president". Fighting continues with five gunmen killed by US forces and pro-Aristide militants attacking a FRLN 'victory march' on 7th March. Since the rebellion began 430 people have been killed – 130 in fighting and 300 in revenge killings by the rebels.

Local labour militants for the SOKOWA union report a step up in anti-union activity, with the management at the Grupo M factory in Ounaminthe

arbitrarily sacking 34 workers and using local paramilitary forces to attack them. They've issued an appeal for solidarity through the website www.labourstart.org.

Jack Ray

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Feature

Gullible Morons?

As the government authorises the commercial production of GM maize it's time to be getting militant, argues Iain McKay

Well, Blair did say he had no reverse gear (unless Bush says otherwise, of course). And who can deny that Tony was right when he said that he wanted to 'listen'? If you are big business or tell him what he wants to hear then he is all ears. If you are merely the population whom he claims to represent then that is a different matter. Then 'listening Tony' becomes 'Tone deaf' and democracy is best served by, well, ignoring the majority. "The public was unlikely to be receptive," the minutes note. They also noted that a ban on GM crops would be "the easy way out." So following the wishes of the majority is undesirable for a so-called democratic government? While anarchists are not surprised at such nonsense, hopefully it will make supporters of the state question whether or not it exists to represent the people or not.

Yet the problem remains. The people do not want GM. Rest assured, there is an answer – blind them with science. "Opposition might," it says, "eventually be worn down by solid, authoritative scientific argument." This is similar to the approach used to bolster the government's case for invading Iraq. And as weak for 'scientific argument' does support GM, for obvious reasons.

Genetic modification is new, with unknown consequences. Until we know more about it, it seems incredible to give it the opportunity to do who knows what kind of damage. Given this, it is the government which is avoiding the scientific argument in favour of a 'suck it and see' approach. While such short-termism may make perfect sense in the market, it makes little sense if you place human and environmental needs at the core of sensible decision making. If GM goes ahead, it will spread. Non-GM farming will become impossible as nature does not stop for human made property lines. As well as being unknown, the long term impact on nature of GM is, in all likelihood, non-reversible. But why worry about that when there are profits to be made?

The arguments most commonly raised in favour of GM are hardly scientific. A common assertion is that humans have been genetically modifying plants via crossbreeding for centuries. Very true, but irrelevant. When was the last time a farmer crossbred a flower with a lobster? It is nothing like evolution or selective breeding. It is the mixing of genes from different species.

So the environment secretary, Margaret Beckett, was simply showing her ignorance when she said there was no scientific case for an outright ban on the cultivation of GM crops. She also indicated the second prong of the attack, stating that people did acknowledge

there could be benefits from GM technology in the future for developing countries. She did not explain why growing GM crops in the UK will benefit people in developing countries, but the propaganda aim is clear.

That the government aims to place the debate in a context of helping people is a clear sign of a dodgy policy. The maxim seems to be if you cannot convince them by rational argument, make them feel guilty over the oppressed and exploited in other countries. Blair used this on Iraq when WMD line was convincing no one. As part of this approach, the government wants supportive MPs to speak out: "There was a merit in preparing the ground with key MPs, particularly those with an interest in science or food security in developing countries." How, exactly, does patenting seed help 'food security' in any country? How will terminator genes ensure anything beyond dependency on big business? How will growing GM food in the UK help peasants in the developing world? Surely it will harm them, if GM is as productive as its supporters say it is? Would it not result in a dumping of cheap products onto these countries, driving peasant farmers from the land and into the labour market? The same would result if such farmers had to buy their seeds and related products from GM transnationals.

This is not to glorify the peasant lifestyle. Far from it. The use of technology to lighten their load would be a good development but only if that technology was under their full control. In other words, appropriate, human scale and human understandable technology which is not dependant on suppliers for its continuing use. After all, we have had the means to feed, clothe, and shelter the world for several decades for some time now. Instead, the world's governments prefer to build war machines and invest in 'profitable' research for the benefit of corporations. The \$200 billion plus wasted in occupying Iraq could have been used to help people build a better life.

Investment in appropriate and green technology would seem a better use of resources than GM. Blair's government argues that to ban GM would be "an irrational way for the government to proceed" in the light of its desire to back and encourage UK science. Yet encouraging UK science is not the aim of GM research, encouraging the profitability of UK transnational corporations is. Surely it is no coincidence that the government's decision comes as the WTO is considering a legal case brought by the US, Canada and Argentina, which maintain that the EU's effective ban on GM crops until they are proven safe is illegal and merely a smokescreen for a trade barrier?



Rest assured, pro-GM scientists will be recruited to further forward the government's (and the corporations') message. But raising the profile of GM may backfire. Last year's national GM debate showed that the more people knew about GM the more worried they became. That debate concluded that more than 80% of people were against GM crops and that just 2% would eat GM foods. So why grow it? Perhaps it could be argued that we should let the people (or the market) decide. But GM crops contaminate non-GM crops so allowing the former will result in no choice (the government admits that it does not know how to avoid this). This would mean the small minority who favour it would dictate to everyone else the nature of their food. As for 'letting the market decide', this simply fails to acknowledge the inequalities of power within the capitalist economy. And it also assumes that the price of a product provides the consumer with all the information they need to make an informed decision, a blatant piece of nonsense. Simply put, if big business uses its economic clout to subsidise the price of GM products then 'the market' may decide on a result which benefits the corporations, not the customer (never mind the planet).

For all their concern about the public being unaware of the facts, it is clear that it is the government that is swallowing the PR of the GM lobby. For Blair and co., it appears only pro-GMers have unbiased and relevant science. Thus they ignore the science of ecology, which stresses the unknown effects of contamination, the pushing of

large volumes of GM corporation's expensive pesticides and herbicides, river and sea pollution and so forth. What of sustainable agriculture? What of biodiversity? Trying to fix the problem after the damage is done is the worse kind of science you could practice.

However, while there are "solid, authoritative scientific" reasons for opposing the commercial growing of GM crops it does not get to the heart of the matter. Opposition to GM is not only on scientific grounds. It includes the key issue of whether we want our food to be copyrighted products of corporations. That, when you get to the bottom of it, is what this is all about. GM will benefit no one apart from the corporations that already have the patents on nature. It will not help feed the world. It will just line the pockets of big business (and the coffers of the Labour Party).

GM is a technical fix for social problems. For all the claims that its owners seek to end world hunger, the fact is that food production is not the issue. Food distribution is. Land reform is. Women's liberation is. Workers' control is. And these are rooted in inequalities of power, inequalities GM crops will increase due to the copyrighted nature of such products. At the heart of GM is the commodification of nature, the turning of our shared heritage into private property. It is seeking to enclose more of the commons, to privatise more of our common heritage.

Yet again 'Progress' (with a capital P) is at work, providing a mask behind which power and property is seeking to extend its reach. This is to be expected.

Technology in a hierarchical society will be used as a weapon in the class war. It is rarely neutral, being more often than not a means of maximising the profits and/or power of the bosses and their state. GM is part of this struggle of capital against labour, a means of enhancing corporate profitability directly and indirectly and weakening our ability to exist outside the corporate power nexus. It is doubtful a free society would experiment with such technology, seeking social solutions to social problems.

And that is what we must do now. We must place the people back into progress by refusing the irrational demands of capitalist progress. This does not mean we simplistically reject technology. This would be a different side of the same coin. Rather we should take a Luddite approach. The Luddites were not the 'anti-technology' mob the ruling class and their history has portrayed them. A mass working class movement, the Luddites were not opposed to technology as such. They directed their angry at technology which harmed people. A perfectly sensible position.

We must spread the Luddite message. We must make GM stand for 'Get Militant' and ensure that the biotech companies know that they and their modern enclosures are not welcome.

The Wildfire Collective have told us that they're unable to continue producing the Green and Black Bulletin. This issue of Freedom was supposed to contain the final edition. However, as we went to press we'd received nothing from them. Apologies to readers expecting to find the Bulletin on this page.

Editorial

Camp X-Ray has dominated headlines for the past two years, and with the release of five British prisoners it's back on the agenda again. Jamal Al-Harith, who sensationally exposed the dreadful treatment handed out to prisoners at the camp in an interview with the *Mirror*, is the most famous of those released. He wasn't a criminal, he wasn't fighting when he was captured, yet he was taken away from his three children and dumped in Cuba to witness firsthand the barbarity of American 'justice'.

But it is important to remember that all five of the British men released have effectively been found innocent by both the British and US governments. This means they have all lost two years of their lives, been put through beatings, psychological torture and worse, for nothing. They are now free to try and scrape the remnants of their dignity back together again.

There were nine British prisoners and, although this is by no means a representative number of the 640 prisoners in camp X-ray, effectively over 50% of the Brits incarcerated were definitely innocent.

There are people who say the war on terror must be won by any means necessary, innocents sometimes get in the way and that's just too bad. But apart from the ridiculous notion purveyed in that sentence that 'I'm alright Jack', the numbers don't add up. With a failure rate that high, every time we lose another of our civil liberties or find ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, more and more people will be thrown in jail like the camp X-ray prisoners.

They, their families and their reputations were put through hell without a thought for the consequences – as a result dozens of people now have a cause to hate us which they didn't have before.

The nine Brits thrown in jail, regardless of whether they were fundamentalist before, have just spent two years in the company of some of the most hardened religious zealots in the world. Let's hope they aren't fundamentalist now.

Madrid

from page 1

considered normal, even praiseworthy. When others do so then they are evil beyond belief. In reality, it matters little to the victim whether they were murdered by the state or the terrorist. And in terms of common humanity, we should condemn both state and non-state terrorism in all their forms. We must condemn this atrocity as well as the atrocity of war.

Ultimately, the only way to combat terrorism (both state and non-state) is to tackle its roots in an unjust system based on power and profit. While doing that, while opposing terrorism in all its forms, we must also not allow politicians and the state to use the deaths to destroy yet more of our liberties and rights and wage even more wars.

Quiz answers

1. They had been convicted on evidence gathered by undercover British police who'd entered Norway on false passports.
2. Giant cast-iron silhouettes of bulls, painted black, which originally advertised brandy. When roadside ads were banned, there was an outcry and the signs were preserved with the name of the brandy painted out.
3. "I see the broken eggs, now where's this omelette of yours?"
4. They seized the museum (which had been founded by the anarchist Ernst Friedrich), burned the books and turned it into a stormtroopers' barracks.

Commentary

Bristol calling

Thanks for announcing the formation of a Bristol Anarchists Network (page 2, 6th March). But you said it would "attempt to co-ordinate activity in the area". This statement was snipped from a longer piece (published on enrager.net), and unfortunately was therefore taken out of context. BAN is very much in its formative stages and isn't at present in a position to co-ordinate anything. At the moment we're discussing why a network is worthwhile and what it might do. Any readers in the Bristol area are welcome to make contact and join in this discussion.

Bristol Anarchists Network

Contact bristolanarchistnetwork@subsection.org.uk

Bash the fash?

So beating up BNP supporters is the way to fight fascism? Think again Jim M. ('Looking at the right', 6th March). We have three BNP councillors here in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, and we know and abhor their long-term objectives. But they're there because, for now, they support local communities which have been failed by successive Labour, Lib Dem and Conservative councils.

Here's a recent example. Conservative councillors (the controlling group) want to close a primary school in a run-down post-industrial neighbourhood with high unemployment. Although the school is said to be failing academically, it's popular with the local community, many of whom are single parents. It's close by, easily and safely reached by the children and it's a real community school. The alternative is some distance away.

On the night the decision was to be taken I joined the hundred or so local parents outside the council chamber in a noisy but good-humoured crowd protesting against the proposed closure.

A local community leader pointed out to those of us who were there that, if all the opposition parties (Labour, Lib Dem and, yes, BNP) voted against the Conservatives, the proposal would be defeated. They didn't, and the school will be closed. There were only four votes against – those of the Labour Party councillor of the local area and the three BNP councillors.

The British National Party has had some electoral successes in the north of England because other parties, especially Labour, have failed many communities. Attack them, join local social forums, mock or ignore them – that's the way to deal with the BNP.

H.S.

Critical theory

In the debate between A.R., Paul Maguire and others (Commentary, 6th March) about the merits of 'difference', the proponents of this idea appear to have forgotten something. The move towards a politics of pure difference originated within French left academia at a time when the French working class was subject to state attack and on the retreat.

The likes of Deleuze and Derrida developed the notion as a justification for retaining a foothold within single issue campaigns while ditching the notion of a wider politics rooted in a class analysis of social contradictions. Unless the context of defeat and retreat is taken into account, the conclusions reached can't be grasped in their totality.

And the conclusions reached are, I'd argue, of little use to class struggle

today. Gilles Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, argues that "difference in itself appears to exclude any relation between different and different which would allow it to be thought. It seems that it can become thinkable only when tamed – in other words, when subject to the four iron collars of representation: identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception."

In other words and in practice it's not, according to Deleuze, possible to argue for any interest in common between, say, black youth targeted under sus laws and striking miners, or republican hunger strikers and trade unionists, without crushing the essential difference of each within the iron collar of 'identity'.

As Paul Maguire has argued, it's not possible to build a progressive politics on this basis. If all we're left with is a difference, how can we develop alliances, common struggles? The logic of pure difference is the logic of the market, of each one for him or herself, of 'no such thing as society'.

Elsewhere in the same book, Deleuze describes Hegelian contradiction as a dead end, an "insipid monocentricity". In Hegel, contradictions are transcended through the motor of historical progress; in Marx contradictions are overcome through struggle. But in Deleuze they're always incapable of being anything other than contradictions.

We might want to ditch the Hegelian teleological conception of history. But if we move from that to embracing Deleuze's perspective, we lose any possibility of making links between real struggles and, at the same time, give up on any possibility of a critical theory able to comprehend the contradictions of capitalist society. Nothing can be comprehended and nothing can be overcome.

John Shute

Peter's limits

I didn't understand all that Paul-François Tremlett was saying (Commentary, 6th March), but this was doubtless my limitation. For me, his argument was complex. In contrast, what my detractors and I have been saying is banally simple. It is worth repeating especially since the arguments have yet to be resolved. I feel we need to look at sophisticated, arguments such as Paul-François's, once we've come to grips with the basic ones. The problem of the nature-nurture controversy stands in the way of everything else. The discussions of politics, wars, social unrest and so on mean nothing if one can't decide how human behaviour operates. Without knowing this, anarchism is a non-starter.

To move towards anarchism one has to dispose of the opposition. This must always be the status quo: currently accepted views. This approach is built into anarchism. Were one's own views accepted then they too would have to be disposed of. By this procedure philosophies and theories are honed into something effective. It's a painful but necessary process. So, as I see it, what anarchists need is to free themselves of the views of sociologists. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists present the face of nurture. This obstructs change and an advance towards anarchy.

Society, the state and capitalists believe that sociology, an expression of our intellect, offers choice. Choice oils the wheels of the state and commerce. For example, advertising on television is an expression of how we should choose to spend our money. Commerce,

in turn, opens the way to exploitation. Choice has led to the capitalist state. No choice, no capitalism. This is simplistic but I'm sure many anarchists nevertheless miss the point. I find it odd that they avidly embrace the idea that free will leads to choice and all that follows. Voting, for example, depends on choice. The electorate exercise their choice (free will) by putting an X against a candidate's name. Members of parliament exercise free will when making decisions that the electorate believe will benefit them. Most anarchists don't believe in the effectiveness of voting but believe in free will.

For me, none of this makes sense. By accepting free will one logically accepts a parliamentary system and all that goes with it. Capitalism is simply an expression of choice. It's nonsense for anarchists to choose 'not to have capitalism' or whatever. I've never chosen 'not to vote' in an election – to vote is pointless so I've never bothered. I'm not exercising my free will.

As I see it, the sociologists are responsible for promoting the embodiment of what anarchists are attempting to overthrow. Sociologists are the guardians of free will. It's the foundation upon which society is built. There's no need to defend the obvious. All that's required is to fight off competing philosophies. I admit I was slow to appreciate this position, for I thought that sociology was open to debate. But sociologists are supremacists: there's no question about the correctness of their explanations, for society itself is proof.

This is its Achilles' heel. Paul-François takes up the point – we may be discussing an illusion. We can't function except in the belief that we exercise choice. But if we have real choice, rather than a belief in it, the success of capitalism is the proof. I claim the belief in choice is a trick. If you believe you have a choice, as sociologists want you to believe, then you're exploitable. Determinism and fundamentalism frighten capitalists and sociologists because, in theory at least, they don't offer choice or reason. Reason depends on making choices between possibilities.

I'm forced by sociologists to the conclusion that, if we didn't believe in choice or free will (as in nature), this would inevitably lead to anarchism. That is, we need to accept that our behaviour is dependent on our natures.

Peter Gibson

Jesus Christ

In his article about god, Johnny M. is setting out terms that anarchists must conform to ('Words we use', 6th March). He doesn't recognise the Sermon on the Mount as the best possible anarchist propaganda of its age. What does he consider traditional Christian teaching? There are lots of 'anarchists' who define other 'anarchists' as being outside anarchy. To do so for someone who calls Jesus 'brother' would define oneself as outside anarchy to some people.

Ilyan

Elite mediation

The 'primitivists' like to draw attention to the fact that some societies living in a hunter-gatherer stage of development have cultures that are far less hierarchical than our own. But the really important thing is to analyse exactly what's different about these societies and so to find out what it is that makes them relatively free from power.

It might be a matter of population density. Hunter-gatherer societies have

population densities that are just a tiny fraction of those commonly found in industrial or agricultural societies. In a densely packed environment, individuals are faced with the problem of co-ordinating with far larger numbers of people and it seems that the only way we've found to do this so far is to mediate our economic and social relationships through a small elite. This gives the elite power over us all.

If I'm right then the main requirement for bringing about a working anarchist society is to evolve social institutions and conventions that enable large numbers of people to co-ordinate economic and social relations in a non-hierarchical way.

John Andrews

Canada can

Larry Gamboné, a long-time contributor to Freedom, is now setting up a reference site for anarchist projects, sites, addresses and contacts in Canada. Additions and corrections are gratefully received.

Pat Murtagh

See www.geocities.com/vcmtalk/anarchismcanada1.html?1070221751930

Inclusive plea

One of the things that makes us look ridiculous to the outside world is our tendency to factionalism. Anarchists may not have quite the plethora of groups that Trotskyites have, but we do have individuals ready to denounce others for their heterodoxy. This is unfortunate for many reasons.

A proud claim of anarchism is that it is non-dogmatic. This is belied by the readiness of some well-known figures to denounce the views of others; not just to say they disagree, but to beat the other into the ground. I don't want to drag names into this, but I'm sure we can all think of anarchist writers who behave in this way.

One of my favourite passages is one of Rudolph Rocker's. "Anarchism is no patent solution for all human problems, no Utopia of a perfect social order, as it has so often been called, since on principle it rejects all absolute schemes and concepts," he says.

"It does not believe in any absolute truth, or in definite final goals for human development, but in an unlimited perfectibility of social arrangements and human living conditions, which are always straining after higher forms of expression, and to which for this reason one cannot assign any definite terminus nor set any fixed goal. The worst crime of every type of state is just that it always tries to force the rich diversity of social life into definite forms and adjust it to one particular form, which allows for no wider outlook and regards the previously existing status as finished."

I find this an inspirational piece of writing. It contains within it the essence of anarchist non-dogmatism, and gives the reasons why this is essential. Do we want a system preserved in aspic, inflexible, unchanging? Or do we want to see communities find their own solutions, ones which are acknowledged as imperfect but honest attempts, which can be adapted to changing circumstances, new ideas, and evolve as we learn?

And if that's the type of society we want to see, then why should we behave differently here and now? In what sense can I call myself an anarchist if what I believe doesn't affect the way I act? I regard myself as an anarchist communist of the Kropotkin variety.

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REVIEW

Anton Pawluk hails a new edition of *Killing Hope*, a sharp critique of US foreign policy by American commentator William Blum

This massive tome is essential reading, as well as being excellent value for money. Originally published in 1986 as *The CIA: a Forgotten History*, it's undergone a number of revisions and updates since then to incorporate subsequent revelations and discoveries of CIA chicanery. Now bearing the subtitle 'US Military & CIA Interventions since World War II', these days it runs to nearly 500 densely-packed pages. The last major reworking was in 1995, but this 2003 version includes a new introduction and a new chapter on 'The American Empire: 1992 to the present'.

As the subtitle suggests, Blum starts in 1945 and works his way round the world, charting painstakingly and methodically each and every (known) US foreign intervention up to the present day. The research is compendious and the level of detail exhaustive. In fact, given that the chronology is broken down country by country (starting with China 1945-1960s and ending with Haiti 1986-1994), the book need not be read from cover to cover, but can equally well function as a reference book – a sort of encyclopaedia of US international intrigue, political cynicism and outright criminality.

It's not easy reading, however. This isn't because Blum is a bad writer: he writes lucidly, and skillfully organises what could easily have become an overwhelming amount of material. He even manages to inject an occasional note of wry indignant humour, which only once or twice spills over into a self-indulgent outburst. Given the nature of his subject this is rare restraint indeed, and it's this – what he writes about – that makes *Killing Hope* so hard to read.

To pick just a couple of examples at random: we learn of the CIA manual,

Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare, that offered advice to Nicaraguan contras on "political assassination, blackmailing ordinary citizens, mob violence, kidnapping, and blowing up public buildings" and on how to "neutralise carefully selected and planned targets" – all with a view to overthrowing a democratically elected government. As Blum observes, "the manual reads like what the Western world has always been taught is the way communists scheme and indoctrinate."

And we learn of Dan Mitrione, the head of the Office of Public Safety (OPS) mission in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the late 1960s, whose ministrations to the safety of the public included building a soundproofed room in the cellar of his house where he trained Uruguayan police officers in the 'art' of torture. He would pick up beggars from the street and torture them to death with electric shocks, often to the genitals.

When Mitrione was murdered by the Tupamaros, an urban guerrilla group many of whose numbers had been tortured and killed by the Uruguayan authorities, White House spokesman Ron Ziegler gave this eulogy: "Mr Mitrione's devoted service to the cause of peaceful progress in an orderly world will remain as an example for free men everywhere." Time will tell if today's 'free men' have put Mitrione's example to good use in Guantanamo Bay.

We're presented with a remorseless and maddening panoply of governments toppled, death squads armed and funded, guerrillas trained in torture techniques and bomb-making, vicious right-wing dictatorships installed or propped up, elections rigged, terrorists backed and harboured on American soil ... did it. In short, what this book illustrates, with relentless and depressing clarity, is that there's literally nothing those with



power and privilege won't stoop to in order to protect their cherished pre-eminence.

In case it needs spelling out, the book's title alludes to an argument Blum advances throughout: that US foreign policy, while cloaked in rhetoric about protecting freedom and democracy against an aggressively expansionist Soviet Union, was always in truth motivated by a paranoid reflex to crush any grassroots popular movement that dared rear its head. The

US used the Red Menace – as it's now using the 'War on Terror' – as a stalking horse in order to put down any political platform, no matter how pale its shade of radicalism, that held out the possibility of a viable alternative to free-market capitalism and which might have improved the lot of the world's poor.

This is hardly news, of course, but the book offers a colossal body of evidence – mysteriously eschewed by mainstream reporting – sufficient to

satisfy even the most exacting burden of proof. As such, it's an invaluable tool for practising what Chomsky calls "intellectual self-defence". Heard a few superficial reports about unrest in Haiti recently? Looking for a context you can rest assured the corporate press won't give you? This book would be an ideal place to start.

Killing Hope by William Blum, published by Zed Books, is available from Freedom for £12.99 (add £1.30 postage in the UK, £2.60 elsewhere).

BOOKS

A Permanent State of Terror?

Campaign Against Criminalising Communities in association with Index on Censorship
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In some ways the current 'war against terror' is nothing new. The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the history of repression in Ireland, Kenya, Cyprus, and Aden overseas and against working class demands for change at home. The advocacy of republicanism remains a treasonable felony punishable by transportation for life.

Whole communities were criminalised. Republicans and nationalists in the north of Ireland were subjected to internment without trial, the torture of suspects and a shoot to kill policy. During the strike of 1984-1985, mining communities were

dubbed 'the enemy within' and subjected to paramilitary policing. The Thatcher government made no secret of the fact that it was waging a civil war.

Today's war on terror is a war against dissent, solidarity and democracy. With the aid of the gutter press, fear is generated and manipulated to serve the government's political ends. Within the British ruling class there's a strong faction which has never liked democracy and has as its agenda the destruction of same. The 'lower orders' are expected to know their place, tug their forelocks, keep quiet and stay there obediently creating wealth for their masters. For those who rule by the grace of god, dissent is blasphemy.

The distinction between organised violence against civilians and anti-governmental actions has been deliberately blurred in order to silence opposition. Even animal rights activists

and environmentalists who have used direct action to further their cause are subjected to the attentions of M15, the political police. Like David Kelly and Diana Spencer those who upset the ruling class could end up dead.

In this very interesting pamphlet, one of the most interesting essays is by Mark Thomas, director of the Ilisu Dam Campaign. He points out that New Labour, deliberately forgetting the history of the Labour movement (he cites Gandhi and the Poll Tax protests, but one could add the Chartists and the Tolpuddle Martyrs), would like to see direct action airbrushed from history. The definition of 'terrorist' in the Terrorism Act is so vague that, under its terms, Jesus could have been defined as a terrorist. Is New Labour reinventing the Roman Empire?

He goes on to discuss the case of the banned Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). To wear a t-shirt with images or

symbols supporting the PKK is an offence punishable by six months imprisonment. He asks how the PKK can be considered terrorist but the Turkish State, guilty of gross violations of human rights, not. As he says, the answer's simple: the British government wants to do business with Turkey. Capitalism is the biggest terrorist of them all.

There's much, much more interesting and, at times frightening, material in *A Permanent State of Terror?* It includes an article reprinted from the US journal *Revolutionary Worker*, on the terrible conditions, tantamount to torture, suffered by internees in Camp X-ray. Similar dreadful conditions are being suffered by internees in Belmarsh prison, held without trial.

When people defend themselves against government it's called subversion and terrorism. When government attacks the people it's

called peacekeeping and defending democracy. The difference is obvious.

Terry Liddle

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Commentary

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But I don't agree with all Kropotkin said or did, which would be absurd. Neither do I expect all who call themselves anarchist communist to have identical hopes, desires, ideas and beliefs to me.

But I don't despair at the variety; I rejoice in it. It's through discussion, debate and disagreement that I learn. It's in having my ideas challenged that I can evaluate and give shape to them. And it's in this environment that anarchism will thrive as a living, vital, relevant movement. Or would we rather have our beliefs handed to us by the Central Committee? Because that's exactly how Trotskyism makes itself irrelevant to the working class.

Those of us who live outside the biggest metropolitan areas will have day-to-day contact with fewer anarchists. We are, after all, not numerous. And we have to choose how to use our energies. I've spent most of my time as an activist in the last few years campaigning in the field of immigration, giving support and solidarity to refugees. Necessarily I work alongside non-anarchists. Many of those I work with I would broadly call libertarian socialists. I share with them goals and values.

Imagine the political spectrum as a graph with two axes: one (the horizontal x axis) is the continuum from left to right, the other (the vertical y axis) is the continuum from authoritarian to libertarian, with the most authoritarian at the top of the graph and the most libertarian at the bottom. Anarchism is located at the bottom left of this graph. But I feel a kinship with those who inhabit a radius at the bottom left of the graph. With them I can exchange ideas and amongst them I can propagandise.

Among these people my anarchist ideas about migration at first seemed absurd; I'd tell them how I believed in total freedom of movement for all individuals. Even among these activists working on behalf of 'asylum-seekers', this seemed not only unachievable and unworkable but also undesirable. Imagine how much more alien it seems to a wider audience.

But as we discuss the evidence, more and more people come to see the merit of the argument. Had I denounced them as non-anarchists, as ideologically unsound, there would have been no chance of this pollination of anarchist notions into their belief-systems. They'd most probably have closed their minds to what they would have seen as my 'utopian' zealotry.

This is fine if we only want to talk to other anarchists, in an ever-decreasing spiral of the ideologically pure. But we don't; we want more and more people to become enthused about participatory community politics, about challenging instances of authority, about the power and rectitude and workability of bottom-up approaches. If, however, we as anarchists can't even cooperate with each other, then we consign anarchism to being a footnote in history of heroic

achievements that have long since lost relevance.

I remember having an exchange on an internet bulletin board. I'd quoted an individualist anarchist and another anarchist had picked me up on it, not on the merits of the quotation itself, but on its originator. I replied that I believed there was plenty we could learn from individualist anarchists. He replied (roughly) that this set me on a very different course from him. I don't actually believe it does, but even supposing it did, what of it? Does it make either course less valid? Does it put back again the date of the revolution? No, not unless we let it.

"In our private lives," wrote Nicolas Walter in *About Anarchism*, "we are individualists, doing our own things and choosing our companions and friends for personal reasons; in our social lives we are mutualists, making free agreements with each other, and giving what we have and getting what we need by equal exchanges with each other; in our working lives we would mostly be collectivists, joining our colleagues in producing for the common good – and in the management of work we would mostly be syndicalists, joining our colleagues in deciding how the job should be done; in our political lives we would mostly be communists, joining our neighbours in deciding how the community should be run."

Walter himself said that this was a simplification, but it's an admirable attempt to give each strand of anarchism its due. And it illustrates an attitude towards his fellow anarchists that I hope to emulate. So this is my plea. By all means discuss and disagree – that's healthy. But if we bicker and backstab, then we make ourselves ridiculous and arcane. Our movement will become an anachronism, just as the Marxist-Leninists have made themselves.

Steve McKee

About Anarchism by Nicolas Walter is published by Freedom Press, publishers of this newspaper.

Fight fibs!

It's well known that Leninists can't talk or write about anarchism without the most outrageous lies or distortions spewing forth. While the SWP is probably the best known for this, other Leninist sects aren't to be discounted when the awards for smearing anarchism are given out.

Over the years I've written many words refuting Leninist lies about anarchism and anarchist history. Of particular note are the stream of lies associated with the Kronstadt revolt and the Makhnovist movement. In summary, they simply repeat the old Bolshevik (and Stalinist) slanders. When they do provide non-Leninist references for their accusations it's soon discovered that said books rarely say what the Leninists claim they do. Often they say the exact opposite. The levels of intellectual dishonesty are truly amazing.

I had the misfortune recently to come across such lying for Leninism. The

WILDCAT

CHILDREN TO STUDY ATHEISM AT SCHOOL - NEWS ITEM

Does this mean atheist pupils will be taken seriously in RE lessons ???



* Quote from Tony Blair, 2001.



Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) asserted in their paper that the Makhnovists "joined with counter-revolutionary White and imperialist armies against socialist Russia. This band of brigands also carried out pogroms against Jewish communities in the Ukraine" (*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, no. 174). This was part of an extremely inaccurate diatribe against anarchism masked as a review of the excellent pamphlet *No War But The Class War! Libertarian Anti-Militarism Then and Now*, produced by the Kate Sharpley Library.

No evidence for such a serious claim was presented. When another anarchist pointed out that their assertion was "falling back on a long tradition of Stalinist lies" and asked for "any historical references" to support it, the paper replied by saying that while there were "several" references, it would give two: "E.H. Carr refers to it in his history of the civil war. Also the anarchist historian Paul Avrich mentions it in his work *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*" (no. 175).

In reality, neither work says any such thing. Looking at the first (unnamed) book and assuming it's Carr's *The Bolshevik Revolution*, there's no reference to pogroms carried out by the Makhnovists (looking in the index for 'Makhno'). Which, perhaps, explains why the paper refused to provide a book title and page number. As far as the second reference goes, Avrich made no such claim in *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*. He did address the issue in his *Anarchist Portraits*, concluding that such charges were false.

Sadly, issue 176 failed to publish my letter pointing this out. And the name of the original article? "The anarchist school of falsification!"

Iain McKay

For more info visit the Nestor Makhno Archive at www.nestormakhno.info

A sideways look

The Poll Tax was one of the defining elements of my involvement in anarchism. We organised, we didn't pay and, in the end, we won. The victory was sweetened by the departure of Thatcher, but tempered by its replacement with the council tax. While the defeat of the poll tax was great, we only defeated two of the three principles behind it; that everyone should pay the same and that those eligible for benefit should still have to pay. The last aim of the poll tax was to shift the burden of local taxes on to what can loosely be called the working and lower middle classes.

The council tax is relatively popular with local councils because it's a lot harder for people to avoid paying. Most of the sort of people who were very good at avoiding the Poll Tax tend not to be liable for it. Recent protests by pensioners in south west England are the first large-scale protests against this regressive property tax.

There's a lot wrong with the council tax. It takes only tangential account of ability to pay – making the broad assumption that the richer you are the more valuable your property. It accounts for a relatively small proportion of local councils' budgets (another legacy of Thatcher), which means that any increase in those budgets attracts a disproportionate rise in council tax. And, like most taxation, it lets the rich off the hook (until recently second homes weren't even taxed, though councils now have the power to levy up to 90% – but this is only discretionary).

There are eight council tax bands in England and Wales, based on valuations done in 1991. The highest in England is over £320,000. I've no idea what that sort of money bought in 1991, but I'm willing to bet it was quite a lot. The lowest is below £40,000. Band D, the one quoted on all the news reports about excessive council tax rises, is between £68,000 and £88,000. What gets charged is related back to band D. The highest payers, in properties worth at least four times as much, pay exactly twice as much in council tax.

A revaluation of all properties is due in 2005, which could see some broom cupboards in Chelsea leap into the highest band. Most London boroughs will find there's nothing left in the five lowest bands. The fig-leaf of 'ability to pay' is also soon to be stripped away, when people in modest terraced houses find themselves paying only a few pounds less than millionaires in mansions. Given that the Tories have been politically extinct in Scotland since the Poll Tax was introduced, I'd have thought that no other party would go down a similar road with an unfair tax

(even if, admittedly, it's one that's harder to avoid paying).

The protests against recent council tax rises have brought condemnation from sections of the left. Geoff Martin of Unison complained about Wandsworth making cuts in order to save money for the middle classes. He has a point – anyone unfortunate enough to need council services in that particular borough is stuffed, but until unions (including his) start winning their workers rises that match those in council tax, the tax rise will hit us hard. This is one reason why I think we'll see more of the ideas being developed around local income taxes or top-slicing national income tax for councils. Neither of these are very good but, as an anarchist, I'm hardly going to say how I prefer to be taxed (other than not at all), am I?

Svartfrosk

Words we use

RESPONSIBILITY

Empty rhetoric inevitably swallows space in any anarchist journal. This is worthwhile insofar as it lets writers feel they're doing something meaningful without leaving the house. But ultimately, since no society without coercion could exist without responsibility, it's responsibility that anarchism must be about.

In other words rhetoric is fine and candy but, to see an individual's politics for what they really are, ask how much responsibility they show for themselves and their community. Someone who can't manage a little, it's said, isn't to be trusted with a lot. Comrades who can't manage to wash up their own cups in a social centre kitchen probably can't be relied on for anything else.

This sounds, and properly is, petty. But this smallness is the level at which anarchist politics must start. Otherwise we're a movement of students, poseurs and wasters. Go get those t-shirts, kids!

Johnny M.

The quiz

- Three of the four people convicted of stealing Munch's 'The Scream' from the Norwegian National Gallery were released on a technicality. What was it?
- Which form of advertising is legally preserved alongside Spanish roadsides?
- How did the anarchist Voline reply to Trotsky's assertion, "one can't make an omelette without breaking eggs"?
- What happened to the Peace Museum in Berlin when the nazis came to power?

Answers on page 6

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