

MESSAGE TO BLAIR: TROOPS OUT

Tony Blair lied to get our support for the US invasion of Iraq. Of the pre-war justifications for an attack, not a single one has been proved true. There were no Weapons of Mass Destruction (Blair now talks of 'programmes' rather than of the weapons themselves). Instead of a Hitlerian war machine, Anglo-American forces were faced with a clapped out state, using decades-old technology to resist the world's most technologically advanced war force.

We shouldn't be surprised. Iraq was, after all, picked precisely because it was weak. It presented no threat. The disputed dossier, picked over in minute detail by the Hutton Enquiry, is a side issue. There's no difference between 'sexing up' a dossier and selectively picking and exaggerating 'intelligence'. The real issue is that the government lied to justify an illegal, immoral and imperialist war and that (most of) the mainstream media went along with the lies.

Since September 11th, the US has killed at least three times the number of civilians murdered that day in 2001. In Iraq alone, at least two times that number (over 6,000) have died. If Iraqi sources are to be believed, over 30,000 civilians were killed. But only Western victims seem to count, both literally and figuratively (the US military machine has made it clear it doesn't count civilian deaths).

The hypocrisy of the United States knows no bounds. Dead civilians are only important when they further American interests, apparently. The people Saddam killed in the 1980s and in 1991 only became important when they were dead, when his regime had become a hindrance to the USA. No doubt the same will be true, years from now, for the victims of tyrants the American state supports today.

All these things are, or should be, truisms. But the ability of the mainstream media, even at its most critical,

to kow-tow to power is incredible. Rather than report the truth and put it in context, the journalists and editors twist and turn to obscure reality and repeat the party line.

What now?
Anarchists oppose the occupation of Iraq. Bush's request for \$87 billion to supplement the billions already wasted on war is a sick joke. These resources should be used to improve the living standards of the world's population, not to feed the corrupt US corporate system. Claims that Bush is acting to benefit the Iraqi people are nonsense. The American request for United Nations intervention is for America's benefit only; The president wants to relieve the military of its burdens in Iraq only so it can be used to threaten states elsewhere.

To those who say the Americans shouldn't leave until they've fixed what they broke, we reply that no constructive work can occur as long as the occupiers remain. Until they go, resources will inevitably be directed to the defence and interest of the occupying power rather than of the Iraqi people. The truth is that Iraq can only be rebuilt in the interests of the Iraqi people when they do the rebuilding for themselves. An Iraq rebuilt under occupation will be rebuilt in the interests of the occupiers - which is what the US has already begun to do.

More than this, Iraq will only be free when its people control their fate directly. This can only be done through a federation of community and workplace assemblies, which is how an anarchist society would run. While Iraq retains government and capitalism, it can only be rebuilt in the interests of the powerful minority, whether they're Iraqi bosses or American ones. In other words, the struggle against imperial



occupation must be a struggle against home-grown as well as foreign capitalism.

What about Britain?
The Stop the War Coalition (STWC) failed to stop the war, which isn't surprising. Marching from A to B, though sometimes necessary, doesn't stop the state. The massive march on 15th February is proof of that. But incredibly this didn't stop the STWC from billing today's march as "a huge protest which Tony Blair can't ignore".

While an STWC march allows the Socialist Workers Party to sell more papers (the Coalition is an SWP front, after all), it won't bring peace to Iraq. It just shows up the weakness of liberal pacifism and the reformist, opportunistic

and directionless politics of the SWP.

Only direct action, based on a movement which links war to the system which creates it and fights both, can stop the war machine. Marches are only a launching pad for more effective action - blockades, occupations, strikes, walk-outs. While the STWC and SWP pay lip-service to actions of this sort, they clearly can't organise them. We live in a society where people don't usually fight even for their own interests, never mind in solidarity with fellow workers in other countries. We have a long way to go.

Only a strong anti-parliamentarian movement, which fights capitalism and the state in workplaces and communities, can be the basis for an effective anti-war campaign. Building this movement is

our task. To stop the next war we need to show the link between militarism and capitalism. We need to show that the resources wasted in killing people are the product of our unpaid labour and can and should be used to improve our lives, both here and abroad.

War is the health of the state and it can only be stopped by mass resistance. This will be a lot harder than marching from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square. It means long, sometimes boring, activity in the places where we live and work. It means building the spirit of revolt and solidarity, so that people feel they have the power to change things by their own efforts. It will take time and it will be difficult. But it's the only way. See Iraq report on page 4, editorial in page 6

PROPER HARDCORE

Although the title of the new CD from US punk band Pennywise echoes Springsteen's recent recording, *The Rising*, it's a million miles away from liberal moralising and politically correct gestures, finds Terry Flute. The band just doesn't buy into the American dream.

From the Ashes has fewer directly political songs than the band's last offering, but the message is still the same: don't trust governments, don't believe the media lies, take control of your own life, break free.

Punk has always preached self-reliance and freedom from the alienation of McLife (remember The Clash's Career

Opportunities?). "I need something to change, something to break, some way to get away," sings lead singer Jim on *Something to Change*. Things get bleaker on *Look Who You Are*: "so pretend it's okay, look who you are, just a member of society, in a tragic comedy, pretending it will be okay, look who you are, just a particle in history."

Sung by many bands these sentiments would be crass. What sets Pennywise apart is that they mean it. They're also serious about music having a political purpose. Like fellow musicians from Rancid, *The Hope Conspiracy* or Sick of It All, punk isn't a passing fashion for them. As they promised on their *Straight Ahead* album, they're "hardcore

until the day we die."

Politics matter to them too. Jim again: "my politics were influenced by the bands I listened to, like Black Flag and Circle Jerks. I try to put my politics into my songs and hope people will go off and read stuff." There aren't many bands who would release a single called *Fuck Authority*, but Pennywise did. There are plenty of songs on *From the Ashes*, like *God Save America*, *Holiday in the Sun* (not a Pistols cover) and *This is Only A Test*, which pull no punches as to what they think of the American government. Pictures of cluster bombs and dead Iraqis on the CD's case ram the message home.

From the Ashes, is released by Epitaph

HAVANA APPEAL

A move from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy looks likely in Cuba, at least in the long term. For the time being, however, Fidel Castro's secret police have stepped up their war on dissent, reports Octavio Alberola.

There is every indication that the transition to democracy won't occur until after the dictator's death. Before then the prospects for liberalisation of the regime are virtually nil, so the opposition faces enormous difficulties.

The situation of anarchists in particular won't be helped by the European Community and the USA, who are doing all they can to bring about a regime that offers guarantees for their own economic

interests. They want to integrate Cuba fully into the worldwide capitalist order. Their pursuit of this end is increasingly brazen, which is why only dissident groups that share their ideology get any support from them.

Libertarian dissidents, because they oppose these and all states and political parties that take part in the representative farce known as democracy, are faced with highly unfavourable circumstances if they're to make their voices heard.

Various activists in Europe and the United States are currently setting up a support group for Cuban anarchists and independent trade unionists. For more information, email oalberola@noos.fr

Britain

FREEDOM

Volume 64 Number 18

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.

Social centre

There's a new social centre in Camberwell, South London. Set up by anarchists and others, it's already home to a freeshop, a street-drinking project and radical film nights. The address is 67 Crawford Road, off Coldharbour Lane, SE5, fone 07909-991 778.

New websites

Enrager.net is a new anti-authoritarian and community-building resource on the web. It aims to facilitate better communication within the British anarchist movement and to act as a point of entry to libertarian anti-capitalist ideas. It's based round web discussion boards, which many groups and individuals are using already (check them out at www.enrager.net/forums).

A newswire is coming soon, with news and analysis from many anarchist sources, including Freedom. There'll also be space for comment and debate, listings for all British-based libertarian groups, plus theory and history sections.

More input is needed to make the project work really well, so drop the webmasters a line. Visit www.enrager.net

Meanwhile, our comrades from South West Solidarity, local of the Solidarity Federation, also have a new site. Visit it at www.solwest.org.uk for an impressive collection of documents with a syndicalist flava.

Other contacts

The Anarchists in Britain website contains an index of resources and web details, with links to the Solidarity Federation, Anarchist Federation and Class War. It can be found at www.anarchism.ws/britain.html

Work on the mighty Freedom website continues ...

Next issue

The next issue will be dated 11th October and the last day for copy will be Thursday 2nd October. You can send articles to us by snail mail or at FreedomCopy@aol.com

A waste of time in Brent

The Liberal Democrats' success in the Brent East by-election was hailed in the mainstream media as "Downing Street's nightmare". This was true enough, on one level. Labour's majority in 2001 was 13,047. By 18th September 2003, the day of the poll, this became a Lib Dem majority of 1,118 on a 29% swing. Not bad, considering that Lib Dem candidate Sarah Teather was a complete nonentity, says Paul Maguire.

The Tories surpassed themselves by canvassing at times in the wrong constituency, leafletting Harlesden (where the sitting MP is Paul Boateng) instead of Willesden. Labour struggled at times to canvass at all and the party was reduced to wheeling in Ken Livingstone to call for people to vote for the party that had expelled him!

What the vote suggests is that, following the Iraq war and the continued decline in (and covert privatisation of) public services, Labour has lost its core 'progressive' middle class constituency. But of more significance is the fact that 63% of those eligible didn't vote at all.

The ministrations of the various left fronts who stood against each other in the byelection persuaded no-one. Both the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Alliance (SA) stood. So did the Greens, an Independent Labour candidate and Khidori Fawzi Ibrahim for Public Services Not War. All no doubt hoped to gain from anti-war sentiment, particularly among the constituency's Muslim population and its middle class professionals and liberals.

The Socialist Workers Party claims to have over a hundred members in Brent, who campaigned for SA candidate Brian Butterworth. He issued election literature saying that he stood "for peace and against war ... for public services and against privatisation ... for low cost council housing ... [and] for fair taxes to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor," but it didn't manage to explain anywhere in its literature how a vote for Butterworth would bring any of these 'nice ideas' about.

Voting for the SA was, apparently, a way of telling Blair 'enough was enough'. Logically, voting Lib Dem, Tory or Monster Raving Loony Party would be too. All the activities of the Socialist Alliance in Brent East proved was how

completely they're enslaved to the fraud of parliamentary democracy.

The future, as the advert says, lies elsewhere. Over 60% of the constituents of Brent East appear to agree with Ken Livingstone's previous claim that (the title of a book he once wrote) "if voting changed anything they'd abolish it." Parliamentary politics amounts to, as French philosopher-activist Alain Badiou suggests, "a 'democratic' submission to the world as it is."

Parliamentary politics acts as a legitimisation of the state and of the tripartisan party political machinery which administers the interests of capital. The low turnout in Brent East suggests that the majority of constituents don't buy the con any more.

Politics as the organisation of people in pursuit of substantial change can only exist effectively apart from and against the politics of the state - in all its guises. To subvert the old Leninist dictum, the issue is state or revolution, not state and revolution.

The danger is that disgust with the open venality of contemporary politics could turn into apathetic retreat from the possibility of political practice in its entirety. Our job, as anarchist militants,

Build a movement for self emancipation ...



WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE

is to demonstrate that the poverty, inequality and barbarism, which are the norm under the rule of capital, can only be challenged by action on the streets and in the workplace. We have to build a politics of opposition within the ranks of the disenfranchised and turn the apathy which is the hallmark of 'democratic politics' into a mobilised anger against the logic of the market and the status quo of 'all for the rich, fuck all for the poor'.

LISTINGS

Bedford

28th September Chained procession to Yarl's Wood detention centre. Meet at 12 noon, John Howard memorial statue, St Paul's Square. Contact 07786 517379 or sady_campaign@yahoo.co.uk

Bournemouth

30th September Demonstrate at the Labour Party Conference. Fun starts from 8.45am outside the Bournemouth International Centre and goes on all day. Call 01300 345109 or see www.dorsetstopwar.org.uk

Bristol

27th September Peace vigil in the city centre from 3pm to 4pm, for those who can't make it to London for the national demo on that day.

10th October Hip-hop for Palestine, benefit at the Malcolm X Centre, City Road from 10pm to 4am, £6/£5.

Exeter

10th-16th October Festival of Comedy at Phoenix Arts Centre. See <http://www.offthewallcomedyfestival.co.uk>

Leicester

7th October Leicester Anarchist Federation meet at 8pm, upstairs at the Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street.

London

27th September End the occupation of Iraq, assemble 12 noon in central London. See www.stopwar.org.uk

27th September Anarchist Workers Network organising meeting at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 (Aldgate East tube) at 7pm.

28th September Street stalls/meeting in Camden from 11am to 2pm to promote the National demonstration against deaths in custody on 25th October. Call Terry Stewart on 07931 844969.

30th September Performance Club

North, downstairs at the King's Head, Crouch End Broadway, N8. Doors open 8.15pm, show 9pm, bar until midnight. Featuring Den and the Ligger, Nick Revell, Ivor Dembina, and Tony Allen. Adm £6/£5.

1st October Anarchist Reading Club, reading *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 (Aldgate East tube), 7pm.

4th October First London Social Forum from 10.30am to 6pm at the LSE, Houghton Street, WC2.

4th October Inaugural meeting of the Freethought History Group, 2pm at SPES, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Tel 020 7242 8034/7.

5th October Persecutions in the USA, Then and Now: Salem and Back Again? lecture by Prof Bernard Rosenthal at 11am, SPES, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Tel 020 7242 8034/7.

7th October How do we stop the next war? discussion meeting at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 (Aldgate East tube), 7pm.

7th October Performance Club North, downstairs at the King's Head, Crouch End Broadway, N8. Doors open 8.15pm, show 9pm, bar until midnight. Featuring bob 'Diamond Geezer' Boyton, Den and the Ligger, Nick Revell, and Tony Allen. Adm £6/£5.

11th October Oil War and Climate Change 'Gatherance', one-day event by Rising Tide with talks, workshops, inspiration, from 10.30am to 6pm. See www.risingtide.org.uk or call 01865 241097.

14th October Causes of War: role of the media, discussion meeting with Robert Fox. Contact Pugwash Office, 63a Great Russell Street, WC1B 3BJ, 0207 405 6661 or pugwash@mac.com

18th October London Anarchist Forum talk on William Morris: socialism and

anarchism, by Terry Liddle, followed by open discussion. From 2.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

25th October Anarchist Bookfair 2003 from 10am to 7pm, ULU, Malet Street, WC1. See www.anarchistbookfair.org

25th October National demo against deaths in police custody. Assemble Trafalgar Square at 1pm for march to Downing Street. Please wear black.

5th November - 24th December Leo Baxendale exhibition at The Cartoon Art Trust Museum, 7-13 The Brunswick Centre, Bernard Street WC1, and on 11th November at 6.30pm Leo Baxendale with give a talk. For details call 020 7278 7172.

Every Wednesday the LARC Library will be open from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1

Manchester

1st October Manchester Discussion Group meeting at the Hare and Hounds, Shude Hill (near the Arndale Centre) at 7pm.

4th October Second Manchester People's Assembly from 10.30am to 5.30pm at the Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, city centre. Contact manpeoplesassembly@riseup.net

Newcastle

8th October Rare showing of Culloden, 7.30pm at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside). See www.sidecinema.com

20th October Defend Asylum! public meeting at 7pm, St Johns Church Hall (corner of Grainger Street and Westgate Road).

22nd - 26th October Jeremy Hardy versus the Israeli Army showing at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside). See www.sidecinema.com

28th October Mad Film Night at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside). Films on mental health from 7.30pm. See www.sidecinema.com

North Yorkshire

11th October Don't Take the Peace out of Space! demo at Menwith Hill, come dressed as a 'celestial body' (star, comet, planet, galaxy, etc.), 12 noon to 4pm. See www.takeethepeace.com

Oxford

27th September Close Campsfield refugee detention centre demo at main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington, 12 noon. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk

Plymouth

1st-6th October Six days of disarmament activity at Devonport Camp. For more info contact Claire on 08454 588363, Matt on 01823 601346, email tp2000@gn.apc.org or visit www.tridentploughshares.org.

Suffolk

5th-6th October Lakenheath demo and trespass day from 12 noon to 4pm on 5th, 6am to midnight on 6th. Contact dwhiggin@dhiggin.fsnet.co.uk

Worthing

7th October Eco-action meeting at Downview pub (opposite West Worthing station) at 7.45pm. See <http://worthinganarchists.cjb.net>

25th October Animal Aid Autumn Fair, from 10am to 12.30pm at Heene Community Centre, 122 Heene Road.

Sabs please note

1st November The fox hunting season begins. Contact Hunt Sab Association on 01273 622827 for more information.

Britain

Hotting up

Summer's over but temperatures in Britain's workplaces just keep on rising, reports Richard Griffin

Unions at Britain's biggest nuclear plant, Sellafield, are planning industrial action against changes to shift patterns. "Our members have made it clear that they're willing and prepared to take action," union pronouncements say.

Over three thousand BA engineers have turned down a 3% pay offer that's tied to work changes. These would include the introduction of the same swipe card that led to counter staff walking out last month in a wildcat strike. At the animal welfare charity RSPCA, two hundred inspectors have voted for action to fight proposed job cuts. Even jockeys are now withdrawing their labour, refusing to race in response to a Jockey Club ruling that they can't use mobiles in the weighing-in rooms.

It seems that the upswing in industrial action recently reported in this newspaper isn't a flash in the pan. Workers are angry and for good reason. A report by the TUC published at the start of their annual Congress this month revealed that 58% of major companies have closed their pension schemes to workers but kept them open for directors. While workers at GlaxoSmithKline have found their pension scheme closed, for example, the company's directors still enjoy pensions worth £929,000 each a year.

This mood of anger was reflected at the TUC Congress. Public sector unions united round a motion calling for a campaign against the government's proposal to push up public servants' retirement age. Workers in both the private and public sectors are fed up with bosses, including the state, stealing their pensions. "Enough is enough" one TUC delegate told Freedom. "It's one rule for them and another for us.

Unions have got to stop talking and start taking action," she said.

TUC Congress also saw support for a push to reverse legislation against secondary action and united opposition to New Labour's public service reforms. These include the establishment of Foundation Hospitals, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Diagnostic Treatment Centres. "This government is hell bent on privatising the public sector," a health worker told Freedom. "The next time you go to get NHS treatment, the clinic you go to could well be run by an American company out to make a profit," he said.

But at a private dinner with union bosses in Brighton, Tony Blair gave the unions an uncompromising message. "The idea of a left-wing Labour government is the abiding delusion of a hundred years of our party. We aren't going to fall for it again," Blair lectured them. It was just like Thatcher telling the Tories that 'there's no turning back'. The growing bad blood between unions and Blair is likely to rumble on during the Labour Party conference.

While the tabloids may be full of talk of wildcat strikes and the return of flying pickets, however, Britain's labour movement remains weak and disorganised. Only 18% of workers in private sector companies belong to unions. Twenty-five years ago, 40% of them did. Almost half of the workforce has never belonged to a trade union. Even where unions are present in the workplace, three quarters of companies bypass them, according to bosses' union the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).

A few years ago the CBI, TUC and government got into bed together and claimed that the way ahead was through so-called 'partnership deals'.



Anarchists saw these for what they were – surrender to the bosses. It looks like no one else has been taken in either. Only eighty partnership deals have been signed, and employment academic Robert Taylor says "few firms or unions believe in the partnership approach." But unions have suffered as a result. They've been seriously weakened.

Anarchists recognise the importance of industrial organisation. There are encouraging signs that there might be

some life returning to the British labour movement. We know that union bosses can't be trusted. For all the talk going on, very little tangible action is being taken by unions against the government. Unions have also been notable for their absence from campaigns like the one against the DSEi arms fair earlier this month. A while ago there was talk of social movement unionism, the idea that unions could reach out from narrow economic concerns to wider social issues. Like partnership

little seems to have come of it. Things are getting hot. Now let's make them hotter still.

The Anarchist Bookfair on 25th October will see the launch of a new federation, the Anarchist Workers Network (AWN). This will work alongside the national anarchist groups to coordinate activity and support workers in struggle. There'll be a preliminary organising meeting in Freedom's Autonomy Club at 7pm on 27th September. A website is now live at www.awn.org.uk

Wrong delivery

Postal workers, members of the Communication Workers Union, voted on 17th September against a national strike over a Royal Mail plan to slash 30,000 jobs in the next nine months. The result, which came with the narrowest of majorities, took everyone by surprise. Union activists and bureaucrats alike had been confident of a substantial yes vote, but it didn't materialise.

An embarrassed Billy Hayes, CWU general secretary, slipped out of the union's Wimbledon headquarters by the back door rather than face the media when the result was announced. Reporters quickly had to rewrite their stories. This result represents a setback for the left. Anarchists have welcomed the recent upsurge in industrial militancy, and postal workers have a good record in carrying it out. It's worth considering

what went wrong.

The CWU underestimated how hard the company would fight to scupper the ballot. Royal Mail boss Allan Leighton wrote a stream of letters to the company's workers. One union activist joked that he got more letters from Leighton than his family. Leighton's letters were full of dire warnings about a strike precipitating a process of 'commercial suicide'. Royal Mail propaganda claimed the company was making annual losses of £611 million, which gave the impression it was on the verge of collapse.

Maybe this did scare some workers to vote against a strike. Unfortunately for them, it was a lie. Bosses' daily the Financial Times pointed out last week that "Royal Mail expects to make an operating profit of £100 million this year and £320 million next." Royal Mail managers claimed the job cuts were

needed to make the company profitable, yet they're scheduled to make £320 million next year. It looks like workers will be paying with their jobs for even higher profits.

There's no doubt workers were left fearful that jobs would be at risk if they went out. They were also fearful that, if they did so, the government would speed up the planned privatisation of postal services. CWU members knew the government would back the employers to the hilt, just as it did in the firefighters' dispute. Threats of deregulation showed which side the government was on, right from the start. The state isn't neutral in industrial disputes. The laws it passes, the money it spends, its police force – all of them stack the odds against workers.

Low pay also played a part in last week's decision. Postal workers earn a

basic £260 a week. "It's very difficult" one postal worker said. "You're constantly watching what you spend." Strike action would have cost workers at least £50 a day, money they could ill afford. It's a scandal that, while the CWU hands over thousands of pounds to the Labour Party every year, they don't have funds to support their members when they want to go on strike.

This shows the importance of anarchist call for rank and file union members to get their unions to stop handing members' money to Labour. Tony Blair has shown, yet again, that he's the friend of business rather than of the workers. The trade unions must break the Labour Party link.

The ballot result was also a setback for the union's leftwing deputy general secretary, Dave Ward, who earlier this year ousted moderate John Keggie.

There's disillusionment within the union about its leaders. Members have suffered years of low pay. The last national dispute seven years ago made no difference to their lot. "It's gone round in a circle," one CWU member said. "Different people at the top but the same rubbish."

Although Allan Leighton cooed that the result was "a victory for the company," he might not get things all his own way. Despite the threats the vote ballot was close: 46,391 for to 48,038 against. There's talk of wildcat action in various places.

In the capital, 11,417 workers voted for action over Royal Mail's offer for London Weighting compared to 4,316 against. A London wide dispute is now likely. And in Oxford, posties staged a wildcat on 19th September which was expected to last at least into the beginning of this week.

International

Hail the new dictators

Ewa Jasiewicz finds that, in politics at least, little in Baghdad has changed beyond some different bosses and a new insecurity

The Iraqi Assistance Centre (IAC), formerly the Ba'ath Conferences Palace, gleams cool in the heart of Baghdad, 500 yards from its sister site of political map-drawing, and back-breaking, the Republican Palace. It's a vast complex that was once home to the Ba'ath rulers, the Special Republican Guard and the highest echelons of the Mohabarat (secret national police), over 1,500 of whom are being beckoned back into influence by their new paymasters of the US Occupation Administration. It's now home to Occupation HQ.

Four enormous concrete Saddam heads, Caesar-like, dwarf the bullet-scarred landscape, faces of an empire internalised by millions, which divided and ruled, disciplined and punished and denied all human potential in epic proportions. The 35-year era of Saddam's reign stays carved into the consciousness of every Iraqi, like a scar in the flesh.

This is where Ambassador Bremer, head of counter-terrorist operations in Central America during the 1980s Contra wars and sometime personal secretary to Nixon has his office. Black Hawks and Apaches land and take off, Humvees and Bradleys – the Chevy of tanks – big, chunky, cartoon-like and gas guzzling, stream in and park. And the cells still hold unruly locals.

To get into the Iraqi Assistance Centre, a sleek, cold-aided set of chambers, is like passing into another country. Four borders must be crossed and ID shown at each of the four stages of entry. The preferred form for this is a passport, which rules out most of the Iraqi population as theirs are now invalid and all contain the mandatory picture of the previous smiling dictator. All pictures of Saddam are illegal under de-Ba'athification regulations.

Most Iraqis are stopped, abruptly, at the first checkpoint and barked at to retreat; they need a special letter, special permission, a press pass, or a white face with a Western passport to smile them through. Metal detectors beep at belt buckles and bags are turned through twice. The Centre is ringed by concentric circles of barbed wire. Sandbag columns and sandbag walls build up the barriers, and soldiers languish at the checkpoints drinking tea-temperature water from their backpacks.

Old regime, new regime

Under the old regime, the Conference Palace was home to elite discussions, pan-Arab assemblies, skewed and changeless voting, sonorous speeches from Party demagogues, paper-shuffling, account-tallying and life-steering decision-making which reached high over the heads of the Iraqi public. In other words, nothing has changed.

The IAC, though its name suggests a

Drop-In Centre, is in fact the nerve centre of the Occupation's civil society co-ordination and media briefings.

These are off-limits to 99.9% of Iraqis. NGO workers converge here, picking up their free mobiles. Soldiers tap away emails to their loved ones, co-ordination between NGOs (both new Iraqi ones and foreign, numbering together over 200) and the army is arranged here.

Administrator Bremer, re-fangled as Ambassador Bremer by the Governing Council, and General Sanchez, Grand Commander for the Coalition Forces, give regular press briefings. Evenings promise Iraqi poetry nights and the odd traditional dancing show, in an effort to acquaint occupation forces with Iraqi culture – something inconceivable, given the dominant image of Iraq as a desert, Iraqis as nothing but hostile, uniform-wearing authoritarians, beggars and frail-boned children fading in hospitals, Iraq as backward, Iraq as a squalid dump full of 'Ali Babas' (soldier slang for 99% of all Iraqis they come into contact with).

Few know the country as the home of the Garden of Eden in Babylon, the most sacred shrine for Shias; Imam Ali's tomb in Kerbala; the birthplace of one of the first civilisations in the world; and the birthplace of the Arabic alphabet. Before the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq was on its way to being defined as a First World country. It had one of the highest literacy rates in the Middle East.

The inaugural performance of Iraq's Governing Council (GC) on 14th July was, like the regular press conferences, run like a military operation. The council is a US-picked mixture of former Ba'athist, Assyrian Christian, Sunni, Shia, Turkmen, Kurdish and communist representatives, including Jalal Talabani (of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), Massoud Barzani, (Kurdistan Democratic Party), Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim (Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution), Ezzedine Salim (Daawa Islamic Party) and would-be Saddams ('Our Guys' in the Middle East) Adnan Pachichi (former Foreign Minister) and Ahmad Chalabi.

They all took the stage, their backdrop a massive Iraqi flag divided into three zones, rumoured to be potential zones of partition for future federalised government. Mohammad Bahr al-Ulloum, a Shia scholar and GC member, opened the performance by congratulating the GC and declaring it the 'manifestation of the free will of Iraqi peoples' and an 'expression of the Iraqi national will'. That's the kind of democratic process Iraqi people can expect from it – no elections were held and no ordinary Iraqis were consulted about its formation.

Over half its members lived in exile throughout the toughest years of Saddam's dictatorship. Al-Ulloum also introduced Iraqis to 'Iraqi National Liberation Day', to be held henceforth



on 11th April, the anniversary of total occupation. The council members, amid standing ovations and applause from plants in the audience, sat down to respond to whichever questions were levelled at them, from whichever direction, with formulaic, evenly prepared no-conflict answers. Chalabi, preened by the Pentagon for this very day, hailed and repeatedly thanked the efforts of 'the brave coalition force heroes' who had liberated the country, to the cheers and yelps of a female plant in the audience who screamed, 'aieesh aieesh Bush!' 'Long live Bush!'.

Brand new heavies

Armed men flew back and forth from one door to another, tracking invisible assassins, radios crackling in their pockets, maybe veterans from the Contra wars, certainly veterans of killing, some in their forties, gnarled faces, rugged frames, their movements charged with a history of death as a business. Security flanked every door, from paramilitary professionals to Italian Special Ops, a steely surveillance in shades, chewing gum and motionlessly checking out every person who walked by.

The meeting was rehearsed and ceremonial, running smoothly under the gaze of Bremer and his cronies, suited schoolboys in the front row, nodding and languishing in the perfect complicity of it all. But they began shirking down in their seats and chuckling in shock or embarrassment when Caoimhe Butterly uttered the only truth a guarded theatre of lies such as the GC may ever hear.

Why, she asked, after thirteen years of genocidal sanctions and an American foreign policy which had steadily

cheapened Iraqi blood was there any belief that the sanctity of Iraqi lives, human rights or efforts towards genuine self determination and sovereignty would be respected now. A female council member, one of three and the only GC woman to speak at the conference, responded flatly, saying she'd been involved in Iraqi human rights work for years and had every confidence rights would be respected in the New Iraq, now more than ever.

The question was a blip in an otherwise entirely ready-made historical event, performed for journalists and consumed by everybody in Iraq in total alienation, via television screens, understood in technicolour, radiating out of The Iraqi Media Network, the new and only television source for the majority of the population which doesn't have satellite.

With the channel's offices located inside the Presidential Palace (Occupation HQ) and its content routinely monitored for any hint of incitement or critique of the occupation forces, their behaviour or presence, the channel reproduces the state television fake reality, fake representations and fake communications people were subject to under the old regime.

The inauguration of the General Council was a defining moment in history and America created it. American artist Barbara Kruger has a picture, black and white, showing just the legs and feet of a group of men, businessmen, men of money in shiny black shoes, stood in collaboration, in the process of deal-making. The caption underneath their feet says, 'you make history when you do business'.

Doing business, big business, perpetuating the profit machine on a global scale, means imposing the free market,

expressing the free will of the world's elite money-makers to incur and exploit, by any means necessary, by war or occupation. You're either with it or against it, whether it's in Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia or West Papua.

Built on skulls

The inauguration of the new Iraqi Governing Council was the culmination of years of incredible violence. It followed 35 years and five million murdered under Saddam; 23 coups and insurrections in under four decades; over 3,500 villages and hundreds of individual homes razed; three wars, eight years of fighting Iran (and three million heaped body bags); 88,000 tons of bombs dropped and 200,000 slaughtered in the six-week Gulf War of 1991; thirteen years of devastating sanctions which left over a million dead from preventable causes and Iraq ready for total economic and territorial take-over. The war this time saw at least 7,000 civilians killed and now, finally, the domination of Iraq by over 350,000 occupation troops, military bases, checkpoints, new prisons, laws and graves, the skies patrolled by Apaches.

The silent, perfectly sculpted ceremony of 14th July glossed over everything that brought it about. It was delivered with smug satisfaction and it hid the same trail of mass, casual violence and unrelenting bloodshed as a smile from Saddam Hussein.

Ewa Jasiewicz and Caoimhe Butterly are living in Baghdad and working with Voices in the Wilderness and Occupation Watch.

Visit www.occupationwatch.org
www.vitw.org
www.electroniciraq.net

Kingdom of Micomicon

Icy wind on the Sierra

A contemporary account of how the Spanish Revolution was betrayed, by a member of the Iron Column

The Revolution of 1936 was a high point of anarchist history. When a fascist rising was defeated that July, workers set about organising libertarian communism.

Hastily organised militia columns like the Iron Column took the fight to the enemy, spreading the revolution as they went.

But Republican bosses started a propaganda campaign against these 'uncontrollables'. Denied support and supplies, the anarchists on the front lines knew that enthusiasm alone wouldn't win the war. The 'solution' imposed on them was the destruction of the militias and their subjection to state control.

An anonymous member of the Iron Column, comprised of prisoners freed during the Revolution, left this record of his feelings about militarisation, newly republished by our comrades of the Kate Sharpley Library.

I am an escaped convict from San Miguel de los Reyes, that sinister prison which the monarchy set up in order to bury alive those who, because they weren't cowards, would never submit to the infamous laws dictated by the powerful against the oppressed. I was taken there, like so many others, to wipe out an offence, namely for revolting against the humiliations to which an entire village had been subjected. In short, for killing a political boss.

I entered the prison when I was 23 and was released, thanks to the anarchist comrades who opened the gates [during the Spanish Revolution], when I was 34. For eleven years I was subjected to the torment of not being a man, of being merely a thing, a number. Many prisoners were released with me. Some went their own way; others, like myself, joined our liberators. With them we gradually formed the Iron Column, with them we stormed barracks and disarmed ferocious Civil Guards. We rudely drove the fascists to the peaks of the Sierra, where they are now held.

Hardly a soul has ever bothered about us. The stupefaction of the bourgeoisie when we left the prison is still being shared by everyone. Instead of our being attended to, instead of our being aided and supported, we have been treated like outlaws and accused of being 'uncontrollable' because we did not subordinate the rhythm of our lives, which we desired and still desire to be free, to the stupid whims of those who, occupying a seat in some ministry or on some committee, arrogantly regarded themselves as the masters of men. Also, after expropriating the fascists, we changed the mode of life in the villages through which we passed, annihilating the brutal political bosses who had robbed and tormented the peasants and placing their wealth in the hands of the

only ones who knew how to create it: the workers.

Nobody could have behaved more properly towards the helpless and needy, towards those who had been robbed and persecuted all their lives, than us, the uncontrollables, the outlaws and escaped convicts. Nobody has been more affectionate and obliging with children, women and old people. Nobody can reproach this column – which has been in the front lines from the very beginning – with a lack of solidarity, for being arbitrary, for cowardliness or laxness in battle, for hostility towards the peasants or for not being revolutionary enough.

Why the senseless eagerness to discredit us? There is a pronounced spreading of bourgeois values on all sides. The bourgeois individual of body and soul, the personification of mediocrity and servility, trembles at the idea of losing peace and quiet, coffee and cigars, bull-fights, theatre-going and frequenting of prostitutes; and when he first got wind of the Column, the Iron Column, pillar of the Revolution in the Levante, he quaked and trembled at the thought of seeing his pampered and miserable life taken away. And the bourgeoisie wove ceaselessly with the threads of calumny the evil slanders with which we have been regaled because they and they alone have been injured and are capable of being injured by our activities.

Night on the Sierra

On some nights, on those dark nights when armed and alert I would try to penetrate the obscurity of the fields and the mystery of things, I rose from behind my parapet as if in a dream, not to awaken my numbed limbs, which

“This revolution could be tangible reality”

have been tempered in pain like steel, but to grip more furiously my rifle, feeling a desire to fire not merely at the enemy sheltered barely a hundred yards away, but at the other concealed at my side, the one calling me comrade, all the while selling my interests in most sordid a manner, for no sale is more cowardly than one nourished by treason. And I would feel a desire to laugh and to weep, and to run through the fields, shouting and tearing throats open with my iron fingers, just as I had torn open the throat of that filthy political boss and to smash this wretched world into smithereens, a world in which it is hard

to find a loving hand to wipe away one's sweat and to stop the blood from flowing from one's wounds.

At night, conveying my sorrow and pain to the men, my anarchist comrades there in the harsh Sierra, how often would a friendly voice and loving arms restore my love for life! And dreaming, time would fly by and my body would stand weariness at bay and I would redouble my enthusiasm and become bold, and go out on reconnaissance at dawn to find out the enemy's position, and ... all of this in order to change life, to stamp a different rhythm on to this life of ours; all of this because men could be brothers, because the Revolution, this Revolution that has been the guiding light and watchword of the Iron Column, could soon be tangible reality.

Militarisation

One day – a day that was mournful and overcast – the news that we must be militarised descended on the crests of the Sierra like an icy wind that penetrates the flesh. It pierced my body like a dagger and I suffered, in advance, the anguish of the present moment. At night, behind the parapet, the news was repeated: 'militarisation is coming'.

At my side, keeping vigil while I rested without sleeping, was the delegate of my group, a would-be lieutenant; and two steps further over, lying on the ground, head propped on a pile of bombs, slept the delegate of my century, a would-be captain or colonel. I would continue being myself, a son of the countryside, a rebel unto death. I neither desired nor desire crosses, stripes or command positions.

I am who I am, a peasant who learned to read in prison, who has seen pain and death at close quarters, who was an anarchist without being aware of it, and who knowing it is still more an anarchist than yesterday, when I had to kill in order to be free. I will never forget that day, that day far away when the woeful news came down from the crests of the Sierra, piercing my soul like a freezing wind, as I will never forget so many days of my life of suffering. That day far away ... Bah! Militarisation is coming.

In the barracks [during the author's compulsory service several years before] I was on the verge of losing my personality, so severe was the treatment and stupid discipline they tried to impose on me. In prison, after a great struggle, I recovered that personality, for every punishment made me more rebellious. There I learned to hate every kind of hierarchy from top to bottom; and in the midst of the most agonising suffering, to love my unfortunate brothers, though keeping my barracks-suckled hatred for hierarchy pure and untarnished. Prisons and barracks mean the same thing: tyranny and free rein



for the evil instincts of a few, and suffering for everyone else. Barracks no more teach what is not injurious to bodily and mental health than prisons correct their inmates.

As a result of this experience, honestly gotten because I have bathed my life in pain, when in the distance I heard murmurs of the militarisation order, I felt my body become limp, for I could see clearly that the guerrilla fearlessness I had derived from the Revolution would perish, that the being shorn of all personal attributes by prison and barrack life would continue in its stead, and that I would fall once again into the abyss of obedience, into the animal-like stupor to which both barrack and prison discipline lead. Barracks ... prisons ... what a contemptible and miserable life.

Let the future decide

History, which records the good and evil that men do, will one day speak. And History will say that the Iron Column was perhaps the only column in Spain that had a clear vision of what our Revolution ought to be. It will also say that of all columns, ours offered the greatest resistance to militarisation, and that there were times when because of that resistance, it was completely abandoned to its fate, at the front awaiting battle, as if six thousand men, hardened by war and ready for victory or death, should be abandoned to the enemy to be devoured.

History will say so many, many things, and so many, many figures who think themselves glorious will find themselves execrated and damned! Our past opposition to militarisation was founded on what we knew about officers then. Our

present opposition is founded on what we know about them now. Professional officers form, now and for all time, here and in Russia, a caste. They are the ones giving orders, while the rest of us are left with nothing but an obligation to obey. They hate with all their might anything connected with civilian life, which they consider inferior.

I have seen an officer tremble with rage or disgust when I spoke to him familiarly, and I know of cases today of battalions which call themselves proletarian, whose officers, having forgotten their humble origin, do not permit the militiamen on pain of terrible punishment to address them as 'thou'.

The 'proletarian' army is not calling for the kind of discipline that would mean respecting war orders; it is calling for submission, blind obedience and the obliteration of men's personalities. I don't know whether we shall be able to accustom ourselves to abuse from corporals, from sergeants and from lieutenants.

The Column, that Iron Column which caused the bourgeoisie and the fascists to tremble from Valencia to Teruel, must not be dissolved. It must continue to the end. So long as one century of the Column remains, forward in struggle; so long as we have a single survivor, forward to victory.

This is an edited extract from *A Day Mournful and Overcast* by an 'uncontrollable' from the Iron Column, published this month by the Kate Sharpley Library. To get a copy from Freedom, send £2 (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere, cheques/postal orders payable to Freedom Press) to 84b, Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

For more KSL news, see the back page.

Editorial

While many anarchists reject violence and proclaim pacifism, the anarchist movement isn't pacifist, at least in the sense of opposing all violence at all times. We're anti-militarist, because we're against the organised violence of the state, but we recognise that there are important differences between the violence of the oppressor and the violence the oppressed give back in return.

This is why anarchists have always opposed capitalist wars while, at the same time, supporting and organising resistance against oppression. The Makhnovist army, for example, resisted both Red and White dictatorships during the Russian Revolution, while anarchist militias fought the fascists in 1930s Spain (and after).

Violence is inherent in the capitalist system, and any attempt to make capitalism peaceful is doomed to fail. For this reason, we agree with Dutch anarcho-syndicalist and militant pacifist Bart de Ligt, who criticised "the absurdity of bourgeois pacifism." War is often just economic competition carried out by other means.

There's another reason for being anti-militarist. In de Ligt's words, "violence is indispensable in modern society ... without it the ruling class would be completely unable to maintain its privileged position with regard to the exploited masses in each country. The army is used first and foremost to hold down the workers."

We raise the slogan, 'no war but the class war', because it sums up the anarchist position: Capitalist warfare is an evil consequence of a class system in which the oppressed of different countries kill each other for the power and profits of their rulers. Rather than take part in this organised slaughter, anarchists urge working people to fight for their own interests, not those of their masters.

This applies just as much to the latest wave of imperialist wars, even when they're justified as 'humanitarian' by the powerful. States aren't moral agents; they are, as Noam Chomsky puts it, "vehicles of power, which operate in the interests of the particular internal power structures of their societies."

Instead of taking part in the slaughter we raise the ideal of international working class solidarity. We refuse to add our voices to those who claim that 'leaders' will get us out of wars. Like other problems created by capitalism, they can only be ended by direct action. This implies a complete transformation in present attitudes. It means understanding a few fundamental truths.

The working class and capitalists don't have common interests. Capitalism, imperialist by nature, is the prime cause of war and must be eradicated to establish real peace. Governments are always instruments of oppression. War, like capitalism, can only be resisted by direct action and the refusal to be slaves of the state. To achieve real change we must act for ourselves.

Quiz answers

1. It's built on land reclaimed from the Harlemmeer lake, and is sited on an area of the lake known as the Ship's Hole, or graveyard, because so many sank there.
2. 1829, by E. Irving in *The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of these Our Times*.
3. They're meant to be deported, unless they have at least one Jewish grandparent.
4. Michael Moorcock.

Commentary

Quarrelled out

I've read it several times but I can't find any mention of the need to reconcile anarchism and Marxism, as promised in the subheading to the interview with Dave Osler ('Beyond the watershed', 13th September). Yet I feel there's a good case for such a reconciliation and hope to be making it at a debate being organised by the London Anarchist Forum in the near future.

Marxism has suffered badly at the hands of the Leninist sects. They have transformed it from a philosophy of liberation into a set of rancid dogmas guarded by the high priests of their central committees. From seeking abolition of the state they've come to be advocates of a totalitarian 'workers' state' in which the bureaucracy substitutes itself for the class. The rank and file are treated with contempt and denied any democratic rights. The results are splits, expulsions and the proliferation of tiny fratricidal sects. The tragedy is that many decent, sincere, hard-working people end up as apolitical cynics.

Unlike Dave, although I call myself a communist (in the William Morris, not the Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin sense), I've found most anarchists to be a friendly lot and I've been happy to work with them on campaigns ranging from solidarity with dissidents in Eastern Europe to opposition to the transformation of a local cinema into a fundamentalist church. The main problem has been that anarchists, having rejected rigid centralist organisation, tend to fall into the trap of being somewhat disorganised.

It's been well over a century since Marx quarrelled with Bakunin in the First International, and anarchists were excluded from the Second. Perhaps it's now time to explore common ground, the bottom line being that the emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class itself.

Terry Liddle

Common sense

AR suggests that my approach to addressing the hold of the far right over a section of the white working class is based on an unwillingness to challenge "the prejudices and illusions of working class 'common sense'" (Commentary, 13th September). AR further asserts that members of the white working class gain from their position with regard to ethnic minorities, and that any strategy which challenges racism must be based on "unlearning privilege".

I accept that any proper attempt to win a working class audience for revolutionary politics has to involve a challenge to the prejudices and received ideas of that audience. But I don't accept that AR's suggestions hold water in relation to the tasks at hand. One of the dichotomies behind the recent success of the British National Party has been that it's often occurred in areas where there are relatively low numbers of immigrants. The broadsheet press has hinted that the party's audience is therefore either stupid or wilfully racist.

My guess is that it's a little more complicated. Couldn't BNP votes be based on a fear from the poorest sections of the white working class that, if things (poverty, disrepair, class sizes, environmental decay, health) are already as bad as they are now, then how much worse will they be if we have to share what little is allocated by way of resources with X number of incomers?

It's easy enough for the BNP to convert this fear into active racism, but dismissing it as the reflex response of 'privilege'

will get us nowhere. Poverty in the UK is indeed relative, but the fact that half the world lives on a dollar or less a day is the fault of the IMF, World Bank and so on, not of poor whites in Bradford and Stoke. Telling people who are struggling to survive on income support that they're not as badly off as the poor in Bangladesh isn't any kind of basis to build anti-racist politics on.

I confess I don't understand what AR means by suggesting that "a prerequisite for effective transformative politics is the development of forms of mobility and nomadism - figurative and literal." I'm all for the right of people to re-locate out of economic necessity, but I don't see how 'mobility' in this sense can be a virtue, even if we accept it as a right. Does AR think the majority of economic migrants relish separation from their families? Is the answer to white working class poverty that they should get on their bikes and go ... where?

My eyes glaze over when I'm referred to Deleuze, Guattari and Spivak as political thinkers we can learn from. The various prophets of 'difference' have led a section of the left down their particular blind alley for over two decades now. I don't see how a simple celebration of 'difference' can be the basis for revolutionary politics. At best it can act as intellectual underpinning for liberal multiculturalism; at worst it plays into the hands of the BNP's 'rights for whites' rhetoric.

Instead of celebrating 'difference' we should be looking for what we have in common as the basis for our anti-fascist politics: a shared experience of poverty, poor housing, poor health and exploitation that overrides 'cultural differences'. You can't combat the racial essentialism of the far right with a racial essentialism of the left. We have to win all sections of working class communities, whether white, black, refugee or whatever, to recognising their common experience as a class and thence their potential common strength as a class.

AR aside, all this poses another problem. The campus orientation of the left for the last thirty years has meant that there's little organised revolutionary presence within working class communities to combat the growth of the BNP, either physically or ideologically. Too often the left, whether anarchist or Trotskyist, has come to working class communities from the outside.

The re-orientation of political activities necessary to address this - the rethinking of where we conduct our politics, who we're talking to, the language we use - is something most class struggle anarchists are prepared to pay lip service to but ignore in practice. With the new design of this newspaper, it might be time to ask: is Freedom a means for anarchists to talk to each other, or for anarchists to talk to the rest of our class?

Paul Maguire

Energy source

Recent electricity failures, both in this country and the United States, highlight a challenge to our political strategy, namely how to withdraw from the corporate dependency we live under. They also illustrate that being far from home without the means (electricity) to return affects all the travelling public, regardless of class origins. Being miserable in the dark isn't lessened by the amount of cash in your pocket.

Our settlements are subjected to increasing domination by global corporations, from the food we buy to the shoes we wear. Electricity is one of the biggest industries there is. Most

electric power in London is provided by EDF, a French company - but it could as easily have been from California. Since 'deregulation', international pirates have captured the means to rob every citizen through the control of energy sources.

Power failures could be seen as corporations applying pressure on governments in order to extract larger public subsidies. These would allow them to carry out the massive infrastructural upgrades that are vital if energy is still to be generated and distributed in the old, inefficient, way.

Energy heats our homes, lights our offices, powers our industries and fuels our vehicles. Today, the energy sector of the economy is undergoing a profound transformation. Governments at every level are changing the rules. Meanwhile, technological innovations make it increasingly possible to think about a more decentralised and environmentally benign energy system.

This would be a democratic system, where consumers could become producers, where power plants would be located near to where energy was consumed and where decisions about the structure of the energy system could be made, in large part, by those who will feel the impact of the decisions. Independent and democratic energy forms would be part of the material basis for autonomous neighbourhoods.

Can a neighbourhood of, say, 30,000 people generate its own energy, grow its own food and manufacture its basic necessities? What are the limits of self-sufficiency? The most dramatic example of what's possible is the direct conversion of sunlight into electricity. Solar cells (photovoltaics) are tile-like generators that fit directly on to your roof but, and it's a big but, the current cost of fitting them prohibits most people from installing them.

There are several government grants available to help, however. The Clear Skies Project tries to stimulate local authorities and housing associations to fit the cells, for example. The Queens Cross Housing Association in Glasgow is working with the project to build energy-efficient houses in one of the poorest estates in Europe. Additional funding is also available from the Countryside Agency's Community Renewables Initiative.

These projects provide further benefits to local neighbourhoods by teaching relevant skills and providing incomes. The obvious outcome of the many attempts to promote self-governing communities would be the combining of energy co-operatives with housing co-ops. In America, several larger cities now have housing co-ops linked to rural energy co-ops which give jobs and incomes to small family farms who'd otherwise go under because of their refusal to give up their ways of life in favour of selling out to multinational corporations.

I know that many readers will be outraged by the mere suggestion that anarchists take money off the government, but the way I see it, it's money that was stolen off us in the first place and which normally goes straight into the pockets of private corporations. So let's use our money to construct truly self-governed communities with the best green technologies available. We have to put our own backyards in order, just to demonstrate that we can.

Mike Hamilton

Anti-American

I think that some of the anti-war movement, including some anarchists, are in

danger of confusing anti-Americanism with what ought to be the proper concerns of anti-imperialism and opposition to states in general. There's far too much anti-Americanism, instead of opposition to the American state and its doings. This can lead to hints of sympathy with states like Iraq, just because they're in conflict with the USA.

Anarchism is about the liberation of the individual, all individuals, and it's got no time for the notion that individuals are the property of the group of which they happen to be part, whether it's a group based on ethnicity, gender, religion or national boundaries. The subsuming of the individual into the group is the basis of most political thinking, from state communist and fascist to high conservatives and liberal democrats.

Another example is the IRA, who are accepted by many on the left as being 'progressive' because of their opposition to the British state. What would happen if they actually took control of the levers of state power?

Collectivism is rampant and it seems to me that an important role for Freedom is to expose it in all its forms and to critique those on the left who embrace it and who then end up supporting people like Saddam Hussein. There's a massive difference between the anarchist-libertarian vision and a vague anti-war or anti-capitalist sentiment that can often end up supporting statism in one form or another.

Martin Moore

Sovereignty bid

It's the sovereignty issue we should be getting worked up about. According to the Eurosceptics, a loss of sovereignty will occur if Britain adopts the Euro currency and signs up to a European constitution. What they really mean, of course, is that they'll lose their power to rule and exploit us from Westminster as they see fit, in favour of the bosses in Brussels and Frankfurt doing the job. They'll be relegated to bit-players.

They could cut their losses and do a Leon Brittan or Neil Kinnock, get in on the action and cut the bull about sovereignty. As Proudhon said, "my conscience is mine, my justice is mine and my freedom is a sovereign freedom." If these Eurosceptics are so concerned about the loss of one's freedom and the right of people to control their own destiny, they'd join the resistance to oppression in this country now - the real resistance, the anarchists and radical libertarians and freethinkers, who have always understood that the best form of government is no government, that the best form of governance is self-governance.

The Brussels power bloc didn't come into being on a whim. It's not some abstract aberration, some special case study where we can turn around and say, 'I wonder how that got there'. It got there because government was allowed to exist in the first place. When the first bullet was fired in its defence, only freethinking people heard the alarm bells ringing, loud and clear.

It's a manifestation of decades of belief in the nation state as being somehow benign and benevolent towards its citizens (give or take a massacre or three); a belief fostered by the very people who go by the name of the Eurosceptics. What do they have to offer by way of resistance? More talk about national sovereignty and nationhood, that's what. It looks like they're just not sceptical enough.

Darren McCrudden

REVIEW

Was it a split or a defection? Events among French syndicalists ninety years ago still provide scope for disagreement

Larry Gambone's pamphlet, *Revolution & Reformism*, is subtitled *The Split Between 'Moderates' and 'Revolutionaries' in French Anarcho-Syndicalism*. The inverted commas give away his position on both. He argues that, under the leadership of Leon Jouhaux, the majority section of the Confederation General du Travail (CGT), originally founded by anarchists and based on revolutionary positions, somehow remained loyal to libertarian syndicalism after the split which resulted from conflicting positions over the First World War. This is in line with Larry's exhortations elsewhere that we should jettison the revolutionary past of anarchism and return to the ideas of Proudhon.

Let's examine the facts first. In 1914 Jouhaux rallied to the Allied powers even though CGT leaders had previously threatened to call a General Strike if the ruling classes decided to go to war. As he said himself, he wanted to serve his class and his country(!). He did differentiate between the need to confront German imperialism and an irrational hatred of the German people, but his decision nevertheless represented an abandonment of his earlier internationalist position.

Larry fails to mention that, during the war, Jouhaux developed very close working relations with Albert Thomas, the French minister in charge of industrial mobilisation. This was achieved by using the Comité du Secours National, of which Jouhaux became a member. These close relations with members of the government were to continue and to prove very important in the later development of the CGT.

Other members levelled harsh criticisms at Jouhaux because of this behaviour.

He refused a ministerial post in 1917 because the CGT leadership was now adopting a line of appeasement with the Germans. But he was present at all the inter-Allied conferences at the end of the war, and he was made a 'technical adviser' at the peace conference of 1919 for the study of international 'legislation' of labour.

The post-war strife of May 1919 was followed by repressive measures from the French government. These were to have included the forced dissolution of the CGT, but Jouhaux was able to block the move. This points to his very great influence on the government, an influence which continued unabated in the inter-war years.

The immediate post-war period led to the fragmenting of the CGT. The revolutionary minority was expelled and set up the CGT-U (U standing for Unified!). This itself fragmented into two parts when the Leninists seized control from the anarchists and the latter were forced to set up the CGT-SR (Syndicaliste-Revolutionnaire). This small union grouped together many anarchists, though others remained in the Jouhaux-led CGT for tactical reasons (there were more workers there).

Larry tries to argue that Jouhaux's CGT remained true to libertarian syndicalism, even though he quotes from the leadership's approval of parliamentary democracy! He believes Proudhon's ideas of workers' cooperatives were brought up to date by Jouhaux, that they offered a Proudhonist anarchism adapted to the modern industrial world. He argues that this wasn't in any way a turn



towards corporatism by the CGT.

The facts point to the contrary. When the Popular Front government came to power in 1936, Jouhaux was surprised by the strength of the social movement that erupted with the factory occupations and mass assemblies. He attempted to channel this movement and reached a deal with the government known as the Matignon Accords. The anarchists of the CGT-SR rightly criticised certain clauses of these accords, for example the ones which guaranteed inviolability of the right to property and collective contracts.

These contracts imposed a strict framework on wage demands, establishing a close collaboration between the CGT and the bosses. Against calls for moderation from the CGT, the CGT-SR criticised the idea, advanced by Jouhaux, of a general strike agreed to and supported by Daladier, a socialist

politician. To the CGT-SR this meant a false unity along the lines of "Defence of the Republic", a complete abandonment of class struggle and a clear move to class collaboration. Against this tame general strike, they counterposed the expropriating general strike.

Jouhaux continued on his path of collaborating with the government, serving on the new Economic and Social Council at the end of the Second World War, supporting the Marshall Plan and, in 1953, proposing himself to the authorities as a pacifier of strikes in the public sector.

What Jouhaux and his associates proposed in the CGT was a mixed economy where some industries would be in the hands of workers, consumer cooperatives and mutual aid societies while private capital, business and the market remained in the rest of society. Jouhaux and his associates

distinguished this variant of nationalisation from the 'statist' sort and said it should be seen as "socialised" nationalisation. Both forms of nationalisation are equally spurious and have nothing to offer the working class.

Neither are they in any way a form of libertarian socialism, as French anarchists, whether anarchist communist or anarcho-syndicalist, correctly saw at the time. The record of Jouhaux and his CGT is one of class collaboration, reformism and praise of productivism and rationalisation. Bakunin and Kropotkin transcended Proudhon and his inadequacies. Larry Gambone wishes to return to them.

Nick Heath

Revolution & Reformism: The Split between 'Moderates' and 'Revolutionaries' in French Anarcho-Syndicalism by L. Gambone, Red Lion Press, £1.10. Available from Freedom (postage free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere).

BOOKS

My Granny Made Me an Anarchist: the Christie File part 1, 1946-1964

by Stuart Christie
Christie Books, £35
www.christiebooks.com

I'm not a big fan of autobiographies. I only bought Emma Goldman's *Living my Life* this year, and that was simply for her account of Bolshevik Russia. Having said that, Stuart Christie's book may have persuaded me to change my mind. The first volume of his autobiography is an extremely interesting read, well written and absorbing. For those who don't know, Stuart is Scotland's (and Britain's) most famous anarchist. Born in Glasgow in 1946, his book recounts his life in post-war Glasgow (and round about) and his political awakening. It was this which brought him, via the Labour Party, through anti-nuclear protesting and trade union activism to anarchism.

Being Glaswegian and an anarchist myself I was enthralled by his account of growing up in a Glasgow in many ways similar to my own but which was, at the same time, slowly disappearing.

He gives the reader a glimpse into working class life and culture in the 1950s and 1960s, even down to the comics he read and the films and books which influenced him and his ideas.

Unsurprisingly, many of his memories, influences and experiences I can relate to. Stuart says he became an anarchist outside the Mitchell library, I discovered I was one inside. He talks about meeting anarchists like Bobby Lynn, a comrade I came to know decades later. He gives a good overview of the ideas of anarchism, its history and the state of the movement in the 1960s, both in Glasgow and in Britain as a whole. He discusses the anarchist resistance to General Franco and provides some background for his own decision, at the age of 18, to go to Spain to assassinate him. This is the point at which *My Granny Made me an Anarchist* ends. All I can say is, I can't wait for volume two of *The Christie File*.

Compared to the original version of *The Christie File*, published in 1980 by Cienfuegos Press (and found by me in a Glasgow Oxfam shop), the new edition is substantially larger. What was covered in one chapter in the original is now a

book in itself. As such, owners of the 1980 version will find this book worth buying for the new material it contains. Moreover, Stuart has supplemented his story with pictures of people he knew, places he lived, his schools, protests and much more. He also provides material on a wide range of related subjects (such as the Spanish and Cuban revolutions) as well as discussing left-wing, anarchist and anti-nuclear politics in the 1960s (including the Glasgow Committee of 100, Spies for Peace and Scots Against War).

His account of anarchism in Britain in the 1960s shows a divided movement, in which he was drawn to those around the Syndicalist Workers Federation. He has serious criticisms, both of this newspaper as it was at the time, and of its then editors. "The role of Freedom under the control of Vernon Richards and his close associates proved seriously divisive within the British anarchist movement."

I shared this opinion until recently. Thankfully the split between Freedom and the class struggle anarchist movement (which dates from 1946 and which Stuart recounts) is being healed

and we now have in Freedom a publication which plays the role it did in the 1940s, namely providing a voice for a militant working class anarchist movement. Stuart's definition of anarchism shows the way forward:

"Anarchism is a movement for human liberation. It is concrete, democratic and egalitarian ... Anarchism began – and remains – a direct challenge by the underprivileged to their oppression and exploitation. It opposes both the insidious growth of state power and the pernicious ethos of possessive individualism, which ... ultimately serve only the interests of the few at the expense of the rest.

"Anarchism is both a theory and practice of life. Ultimately, only struggle determines outcome and progress towards a more meaningful community must begin with the will to resist every form of injustice ...

"If anarchists have an article of unshakeable faith, it is that, once the habit of deferring to politicians or ideologues is lost and that of resistance is acquired, then ordinary people have a capacity to organise every aspect of their lives in their own interests."

Stuart's autobiography is a testament to this perspective, to an anarchism that inspires people to fight for freedom, equality and solidarity. It shows that anarchism is more than a vision of a better tomorrow. It's also a guide to bringing this better tomorrow about. As such, *My Granny Made Me an Anarchist* should inspire those who

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Reviews

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have the good fortune to read it.

The book is a limited edition, which means it's expensive. The hope is that takings this time round will fund a bigger, cheaper reprint. On this account, I urge all comrades who can afford it to buy a copy. The rest of you, ask your local library to get it. Either way, you won't be disappointed.

Iain McKay

Available from Freedom Press for £35 (add £3.50 postage in the UK, £7 elsewhere).

The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871

By Martin Phillip Johnson
University of Michigan Press, £35

This is an academic study of the revolutionary clubs that formed the backbone of the 1871 Commune, the largest urban uprising of the nineteenth century (members were known as 'clubistes'). Throughout, Martin Phillip Johnson argues that the Commune resulted from revolutionary action by popular organisations and was shaped by the unique political culture fostered within them.

It's clearly split into two main sections. The first part covers the origins of the Commune, with special attention paid to the organisation and politics of the clubs, the formation of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (whose aims can be summed up as "no more bosses, no more proletariat, no more class" – a worthy aim, readers must agree) and the role of these and the clubistes in moulding the uprising. The second part, entitled 'The New World', concentrates on 'club culture'. It outlines the ways the clubs were organised and the cultures contained within them.

The book undoubtedly has many strong points. Johnson himself writes that the book has "evoked the language of clubistes, their modes of thought, the symbolism of revolvers and red consigns, as well as presenting a social analysis of militants". This represents a move away from the boring questions commonly asked by historians, such as whether the Commune was really a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Instead it gives a much more 'humanistic' view of events and in places really brings history alive.

The chapter concentrating on gender culture in the clubs is very well done. It opens with a quotation from Citoyenne Destrée. "The social revolution will not be operative until women are equal to men. Until then, you have only the appearance of the revolution." Johnson effectively shows the empowerment women achieved, and the equality in the revolutionary clubs that would put most of today's organisations to shame. It's also interesting to note that, as Johnson says, "the ideal of direct popular sovereignty evident in 1871

was also present in the soviets of 1905 and 1917." Argentina could now be added to the list.

If you're new to the events of the Commune, I suggest you read something more general first. If you're already familiar with what happened, The Paradise of Association will provide excellent further reading.

C.S.

Available from Freedom Press at the reduced price of £10 (post free in UK, add £6 elsewhere)

Anarchism & American Traditions

by Voltairine de Cleyre
See Sharp Press, £1.20

"There is not upon the face of the earth today a government so utterly and shamelessly corrupt as that of the United States of America. There are others more cruel, more tyrannical, more devastating; there is none so utterly venal."

This could have been written this year, but it actually dates from some time before 1913 – the author of these words, Voltairine de Cleyre, died in 1912. Her essay, *Anarchism & American Traditions*, compares the original stated aims of the American Revolution with both the stated aims of anarchism and the actual outcome of the Revolution. She outlines the traditions in which the American Revolution developed and points out that these were in many ways compatible with anarchism.

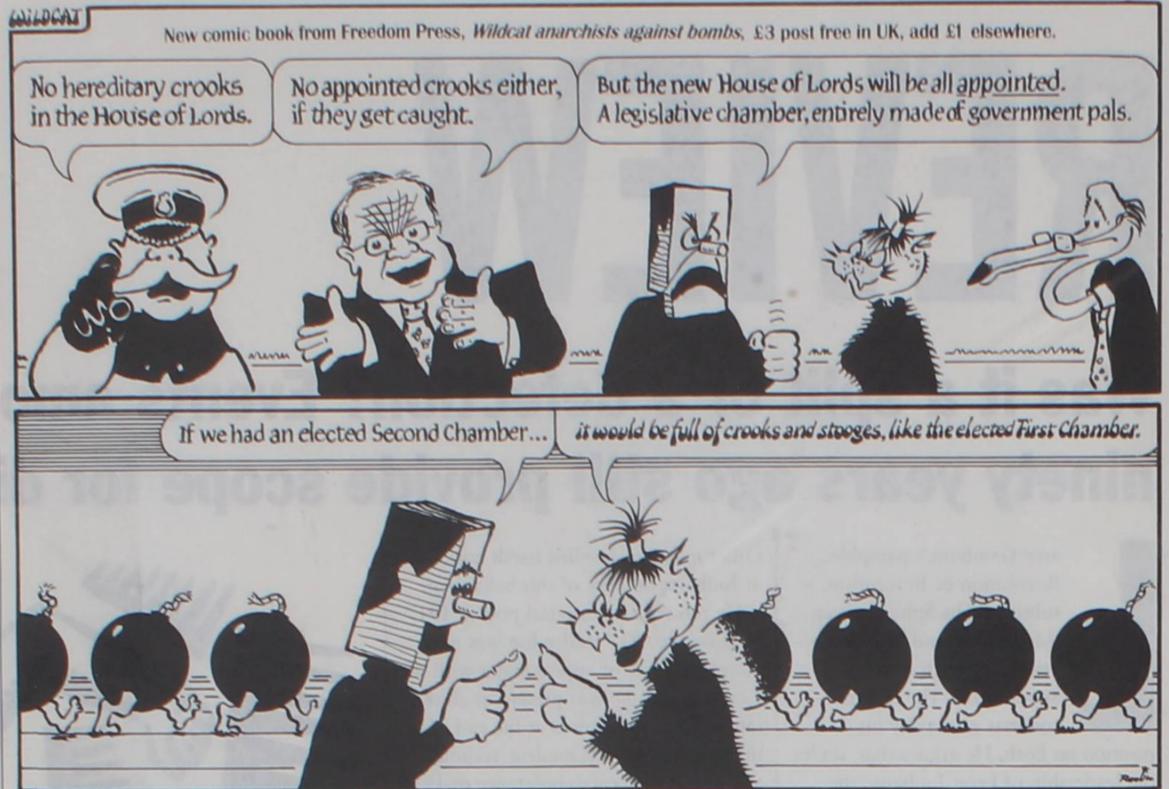
The American Revolution was largely a revolt of people fighting for freedom and, to secure it, they were willing to "wear coarse homespun cloth, to drink the brew of their own growths, to fit their appetites to the home supply rather than submit to the taxation of the imperial ministry." De Cleyre points out that although it's called the 'American Revolution' (rather than the 'English War'), and the phrase 'American Revolution' is sacred, the word revolution on its own is despised.

In fact, she says, none of its original aims were ever realised. These included, but weren't limited to, overthrowing the despotism of remote government, throwing off taxes, setting up the smallest possible, fully accountable local authorities and – most of all – introducing education for all in order to inculcate in individuals the "proud spirit of the supremacy of the people over their governors."

At the moment when British rule over America ended, the potential for freedom existed. But the US government dropped the aim of freedom shortly thereafter whilst ostensibly holding to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. De Cleyre shows how, although there were fundamental similarities between the aims of the revolutionary republicans and the anarchists, the outcome of the 'revolution' was disastrous.

Joy Wood

Available from Freedom for £1.20 (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere)



KSL News

The Kate Sharpley Library (KSL) has a new website, containing back issues of the KSL Bulletin, a growing collection of online documents and details of new publications. The address is www.katesharpleylibrary.net

The physical archive of the KSL is steadily growing and includes near-complete sets of most post-war British anarchist papers and magazines, as well as substantial collections of other English language papers and a smaller number of foreign language ones. There's also a large collection of books by and about anarchists.

One of the most useful things it contains are the personal papers of anarchist militants. These illuminate day-to-day struggles in a way that academic tomes usually miss.

Comrades can now leave donations for the KSL at Freedom Bookshop in London. Papers, books, leaflets, pamphlets and correspondence are all welcome. Don't worry if you think what you've got won't be of interest. Archaeologists recently got very excited about some 3,000 year-old tax records, and everyday things are as much part of our history as weighty documents. Donations of money are also welcome, but should be sent to the KSL direct.

Any books or pamphlets which are in the collection already will be exchanged for material from other archives or sold to help the publishing programme. If you want to talk to someone from KSL, leave a message with Freedom or drop them a line.

Material for donation can be left at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1. Money donations can be sent direct to the Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. For more information, visit www.katesharpleylibrary.net

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A sideways look

Listening to the radio on the morning of September 11th, there were two deaths reported. One was of a South Korean farmers' leader who had committed suicide at the world trade talks in Cancun. The other was the Swedish foreign minister and pro-Euro campaigner, Anna Lindh.

Both events were timely; Sweden was having its referendum on the Euro the following weekend, while the wrangling in Cancun between rich countries and poor over agricultural subsidies provided a depressing backdrop to the suicide of Lee Kyung-hae (who still hadn't been named by the time I switched the radio off). The push for globalisation of capital was behind both deaths.

Lindh was the public face of the pro-Euro campaign, more so than Prime Minister Göran Persson, and particularly because her own Social Democratic Party was split on the issue. A yes vote was backed by all the mainstream parties and big business. The Swedish model of high productivity, high taxation and generous welfare has been battered since before the country joined the European Union by the usual suspects of the International Capitalist Gang.

Things have accelerated in recent years, with failed transport operator Connex running the Stockholm metro, a privatised post office (sending letters is probably more expensive in Sweden than anywhere else in the world) and soaring unemployment. A disgruntled population blames the EU for this, though in truth which capitalist club pulls the trigger counts for little. The no campaign won the referendum, but the disaffection in an otherwise consensual society created the space for Lindh's murder.

South Korea is the world's eleventh largest economy. You'll almost certainly have something made in South Korea in your home, as they do still actually make things there. Unless you're a Volvo driver or big on Ikea, you probably won't have anything Swedish in your home.

In the last few decades the Korean economy has grown by the simple expedient of ignoring all the orthodoxy of the International Capitalist Gang and protecting its economy. However, the Gang fights back, and it does so by demanding that tariffs and other protectionist measures are dropped. Faced with the choice of lucrative contracts for manufacturing or protecting agriculture, the South Korean government has backed its big businesses.

Mr Lee had gone to university to study agriculture and returned to his family's farm in Jangsu in 1974 brimming with ideas on how he could improve yields and graze cattle on lands previously thought too steep. And he succeeded, his farm becoming a teaching

college and his herd expanding to 300 cattle. Then the government opened the market to imports of Australian cattle, the price plummeted and Mr Lee saw first his cattle auctioned, then his land.

He threw himself into politics, helping form what's now the largest Korean farmers' union. He protested against unjust trade at home and abroad, camping outside the WTO office in Geneva earlier this year. No one listened.

The talks at Cancun failed, though not because of Mr Lee's death. His daughter, Lee Ji-hye, said "he didn't die to be a hero or to draw attention to himself, he died to show the plight of Korean farmers." The rich world is likely to use the failure of Cancun to extract even harsher terms of trade from the rest, driving more farmers to acts of desperation like Mr Lee's.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

SYNDICALISM

This is the French word for trade unionism but as used by anarchists it always stands for revolutionary unionism. The workplace is where the most direct class struggle between workers and bosses takes place. It's also where workers, by their ability to stop working (so removing the source of profit), have their best chance of changing society.

Syndicalists therefore advocate workers' uniting in syndicates. These have the dual purpose of overthrowing capitalism by co-ordinated workplace action and of replacing the institutions of capital and state by workers' control. In a non-revolutionary period, syndicalists often work through non-revolutionary trade unions.

Johnny M.

The quiz

1. Where does Schiphol airport, Amsterdam, get its name?
2. In what year was the following written: "From this relaxation of parental discipline ... Children who have been brought up in within these thirty years have nothing like the same reverence and submission to their parents; This is a chief cause of the increase in crime."
3. What is supposed to happen to people born in Israel, who are neither Jews nor Palestinians, on their 18th birthday?
4. Which anarchist-inclined science fiction writer invented an alternative universe where Trotsky became head of Russia and Lenin and Stalin were kicked out?

Answers on page 6

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