

US FORCES ARREST SANTA

As Freedom goes to press, news has emerged that US troops have captured fallen dictator Santa Claus, famous for his red bobbed hat and liking for mince pies. Following new intelligence soldiers discovered the former Iraqi leader working the Grotto at the Friary Shopping Centre in Guildford. A sizeable arms cache and hundreds of thousands of dollars were also uncovered, and claims that the weapons were for children's gifts were swiftly rebutted by 'coalition' forces.

"Santa Claus does not really deliver presents each year" announced Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority. "That is merely Iraqi State propaganda, disseminated by the BBC" (see 'the return of mini-me', below).

US government-run media projects such as the Iraqi Media Network, reported in Freedom 22nd November, aim to counter the effects of this State brainwashing.

Background

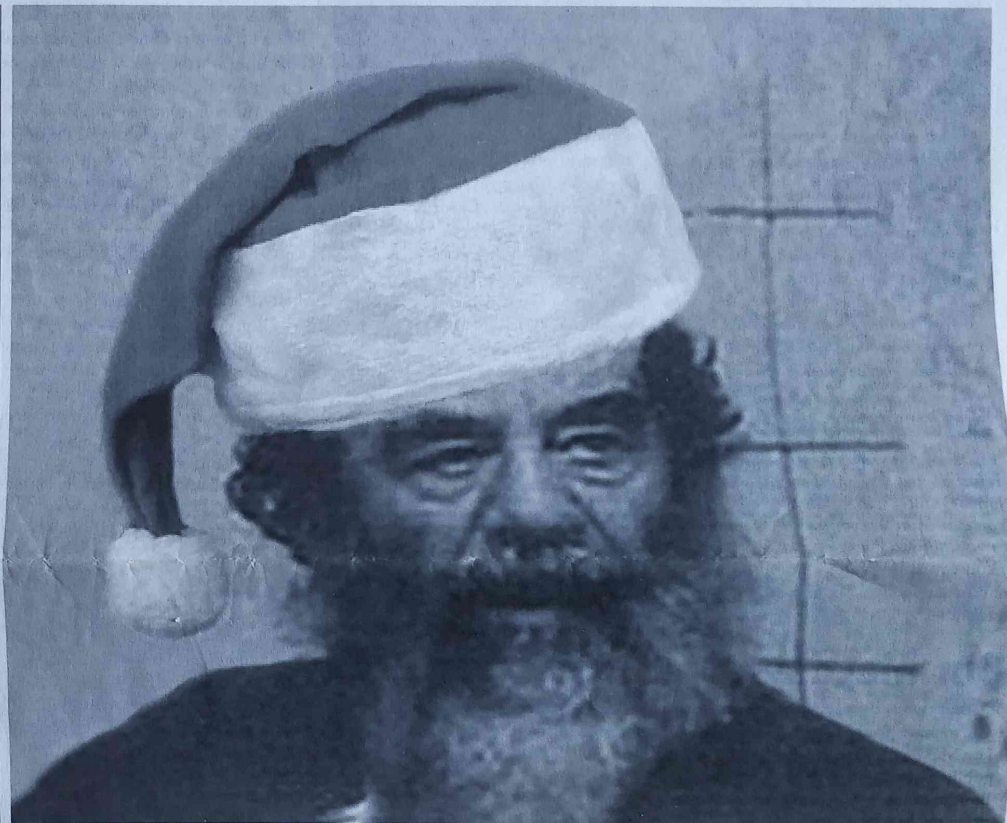
Santa Claus was born in Tikrit in 1937, and his road to power in Iraq began early when he joined the underground Ba'ath Party. For many years he was quietly supported by Western governments, who backed his failed assassination attempt on Iraq's failed ruler, General Kassan.

Having fled the country, Santa spent four years in Cairo, and re-emerged on the political scene in 1968 when the

Ba'ath party seized power, as General Ahmad al-Bakri's right hand man.

He graduated to president in 1979 and soon invaded Iran to stop the Islamic revolution there – heavily backed with US aid as well as biological and chemical weapons and other related technology. After eight years and over a million dead, Iran and Iraq struck a ceasefire and Santa continued to develop Iraq's military capabilities, all with the aid of the UK and US governments. With the Iraqi economy in ruins after the war he invaded the small monarchy of Kuwait in 1991 to gain control of its oil supplies.

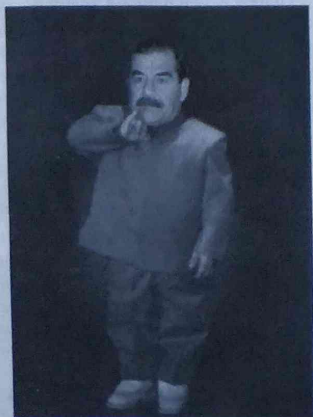
This act turned his former friends in Whitehall and Washington against him. President George Bush the first led a US/UK invasion which succeeded in taking back Kuwait, but left tens of thousands of Iraqi conscripts and civilians dead. Also when the Shia uprising and soldiers mutiny encouraged by the Allies went too far and became too radical for Western imperialist interests, they sat back as they were crushed with bloody ruthlessness. Since then the Iraqi people have been subject to sanctions which have killed more than one million – more than half of whom were children. Bombing of the country by British and US forces also continued up to the recent war.



Alex Allison Dictator – Santa Claus

THE RETURN OF MINI-ME

As illustrated above the invasion of Iraq has little to do with 'democracy' and freedom for Iraqis and a lot more to do with US imperialist interests. Essentially, as before, the invasion was an attempt to deter genuine democracy by removing the demonised leadership of a weakened formed US client regime in favour of a



Dictator – Paul Bremer

superficial 'democracy' that protected US geopolitical and economic interests.

In opposition to the claim by a few left-wingers who supported the invasion because Saddam was so evil, libertarians argued that if you genuinely wanted real freedom and democracy in Iraq then a popular revolt was the only way to achieve it. Supporting the US invasion would see Iraq shaped in US interests, not Iraqi ones.

Yes, Saddam has been deposed but there is another despot in Iraq. Like Saddam he is an unelected leader, ruling with an iron hammer. From the comfort of Saddam's luxury palaces, his military force is killing uncounted Iraqi civilians, censoring the press and asserting those who speak out against his rule. Saddam's palaces are not the only legacy of the past being used by the new boss, his network of domestic 'intelligence' uses many of the same thugs that terrorised Iraqis for decades. Welcome to 'free' Iraq and its master, Paul Bremer.

Remember back to before the war. As the British and American governments geared up to bomb Baghdad, we were subjected to exposes of Saddam's lush

lifestyle and his palaces. The irony of the pro-monarchy tabloids denouncing Saddam living in luxury while ordinary Iraqis suffered was lost on them. Just as the irony of the US occupiers seizing these very same palaces across Iraq was also unmentioned. Out went the old elite from their marbled palaces, in came the military commanders. Out went Saddam's Republican Guard; in came the marines.

Bremer not only shares the lifestyle of Saddam, but also the ruling techniques. Saddam and his deputies used Iraqi television to inform their subjects of what they had planned for them. Now they get the ramblings of Bush, Bremer, Rice, Rumsfeld and US military commanders. According to one American soldier, Iraqi journalists call the US commanders working with them 'Little Saddams'.

As predicted before the war by anarchists, the US has kept dozens of

Saddam's thugs, many in the same positions. They now have a new boss, who, like Saddam, is not too keen on having democratic elections. With Iraq's leading Shi'ite clerics becoming increasingly vocal in their demand for direct elections of an interim government, the US occupiers are ignoring them. The clerics want one person, one vote, with elections overseen by the UN. They want an end to US-appointments. Fair demands as this is what bourgeois democracy is all about and, more importantly, what the Bush Administration (sometimes) said it was waging war for.

Followers of one cleric have said that there may be direct action if the US prevents elections. We can only hope that the masses in Iraq will see the futility of swapping one set of bosses for another, organise themselves and use direct action to create a genuinely free society, one based on self-

management. Unfortunately, independent class organisations are far weaker than religious ones at the moment and an Islamic republic seems to be the dominant demand, something the occupiers will be loath to tolerate even if the majority want it.

The problem is the US elite rejects elections if the 'wrong' candidates are going to win. Unsurprisingly, the people most opposed to direct elections in Iraq are the Bush Junta and their imported 'opposition'. They argue that the country is too unstable for fair elections, favouring local caucuses of mostly appointed representatives to select a national assembly, which would then 'elect' a government. But, then again, the Bush Junta did say it was going to create a 'US style' democracy in Iraq. Perhaps the Supreme Court appointed cronies should have been honest and said a 'Florida style' democracy?

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FREEDOM

Volume 64 Number 24

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.

Shop closing

Freedom Bookshop is now closed for refurbishment until Saturday 3rd January 2004. All volunteers welcome! You can email FreedomCopy@aol.com if you'd like to help out.

You can still purchase books by our mail order service. Write to us for a free catalogue.

Our Mayday

It's that time of year again - the time of year to start planning for Mayday 2004. The Mayday Collective have called a public meeting to start the ball rolling. Building on the experience gained from previous Maydays, it's clear that organisation is the key to ensuring an enjoyable event.

If next Mayday is to be the event people desire, then those with ideas must not allow the grass to grow under their feet. The next five months will pass very quickly, and the sooner plans are laid the easier it will be to translate them into reality.

All interested individuals and groups are warmly invited to attend the meeting on 18th January at 3pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1. For more info see www.ourmayday.org.uk

Circulation

We would like to increase the readership of Freedom, and an important part of this is getting better circulation. If you would like to help by selling Freedom or asking bookshops, libraries or newsagents to stock it please write to us or email circ@freedompress.org.uk

Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 10th January 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 1st January. You can send articles/letters to us at FreedomCopy@aol.com or by snail mail to 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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

News from inside

Tabloid criminals

It's round this time of year; the media whips up a frenzy of a 'luxury' Christmas dinner and other perks. Which is usually some screw who wants an extra few quid and tells his favourite paper how it's a disgrace that such scumbags, thieves, villains (shouldn't that be villains?) receive these. Last year it was Full Sutton. It's never really as good as it sounds. A few years ago, a tabloid reported the 'scandal' that prisoners at HMP Walton, Liverpool, were receiving an extra £10 on their canteen to spend for Christmas. And with your usual spokesman from victims of crime trust (aren't we all victims of crime?) The reality is, every year, most prisons give you two week's pay before Christmas, as there will be no canteen over the Christmas holiday week. As prisoners are limited to a max £10 per week of their own money, they were given this scandalous extra £10 of their own money, which was because it was a holiday the following week! Which just goes to show the usual ignorant reactionary bullshit what the tabloids like us to believe.

R. Stewart DH4408
HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes, MK4 4DA



Christmas Cards for Hostages

Once again MOJUK are asking you to send a message/card of solidarity to those who will still be behind bars for the festive season.

Not all hostages wish to receive

messages at Christmas, they find it too depressing to be reminded that once again they are inside and cards/letters only reinforce the fact. MOJUK have drawn up a list of seventy prisoners who would like to receive a card. Many of the prisoners on this list have no contact at all with the outside world. They have been so long inside, that their families and friend have become estranged.

The lists are in blocks of ten; so if you wish to send some cards, just email indicating whether you want one list or a couple or the whole lot.

For many prisoners getting mail makes their day and it can be the only thing that breaks the constant monotony of their prison life. Even a postcard does the trick, so hands in pockets and pens to paper.

Contact mojomuk@mojomuk.org.uk for more info

Institutionalised brutality

The Prison Service has paid tens of thousands of pounds to a former inmate who alleged he was raped and beaten by a prison officer at Wormwood Scrubs. The officer accused of the rape is still working at the west London prison. He denies the allegations.

A second inmate is also suing, alleging that he was beaten and sexually assaulted by a different officer, who pushed a baton into his anus in June 1996. That officer also denies the allegations.

The latest revelations added to growing demands for a public inquiry into brutality at Wormwood Scrubs. The Prison Service has admitted that fourteen prisoners received sustained beatings, mock executions, choking, death threats and torrents of racial abuse, in the jail between 1995 and 1999. This admission amounts to the biggest abuse scandal in a British jail in modern times. It has admitted that the prisoners suffered at least 122 separate instances of assault between 1995 and 1999, according to court documents.

At least 45 former inmates of Wormwood Scrubs have already sued the prison service after assaults by prison officers. The prison service settled more than thirty of these cases out of court, paying out over £31m compensation.

Some inmates were told "We will kill you. We will get away with it ... we've done it before" during hanging threats by officers brandishing nooses made out of prisoners' bedsheets.

Conditions in Britain's crumbling and overcrowded prisons are appalling. But just saying so won't make things any better. We must support prisoners who struggle for better conditions inside, and it'd be wise for all to keep in mind the substantial benefits won by the prison rebellions and riots, like Strangeways, in the early 1990s.

Negligence

An inquest into the case of a man who died while he was in police custody in Devon has ruled it was death by misadventure. Paul Dyer, 29, was stopped by police in Torquay on suspicion of drink-driving, but suffered a fit while he was being held at Torquay police station in December 2001. He was taken to hospital, where he later died as a result of a drugs overdose. Members of Mr Dyer's family have said they are angry the police were not ruled to be to blame for his death.

The family's lawyer, Leslie Thomas, said several questions were not answered by the inquest. "Why was he left alone, fitting, in a cell with obvious injuries he had sustained to his head? And why weren't these injuries brought to the attention of the police doctor?"

Stop the suicides

The governor of a jail where a fourth inmate in six months has apparently taken their own life, says vulnerable remand prisoners should not be sent to his establishment.

An inquiry has started after 30 year



old Maurice Cowan from Northumberland was found hanged in his cell at Durham Jail on Monday. In 2002, the Prison Reform Trust said more inmates committed suicide at Durham, than at any other jail in the country - six suicide deaths were recorded at Durham last year. Now, the governor there, Mike Newell, has called for vulnerable remand prisoners to be housed in bail hostels, rather than high security prison establishments. He said: "We really need to be careful in ensuring that we only use prison for those where we definitely need to protect the public."

In addition George Coates from the Midlands became the fifth suicide case at HMP Blakenhurst this year.

Pensioner dies in police cell

A woman has died in a police cell on Teesside. The 61 year old long-stay patient had been arrested at St Luke's Hospital, Middlesbrough, on 10th December. The unnamed pensioner, from North Yorkshire, was taken into custody at Middlesbrough police station where she was put in a cell designated for women. Less than two hours after her arrest she was found collapsed. A post mortem revealed she had died of asphyxiation. The woman's identity is not being released until relatives have been informed.

Fourteen other women have also died in custody this year.

LISTINGS

Glasgow

9th to 11th January Street medic training, learn to provide essential first aid at mass demonstrations and direct actions. See <http://tramping.org.uk/stretnedatraining> or contact flcabite@riseup.net

London

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

10th November to 24th December Billy Childish exhibition We Are All Phobias at The Aquarium, 10 Woburn Walk, WC1. See www.aquariumgallery.co.uk or call 020 2387 8417 for more info
20th December Freedom party at 84b Whitechapel High Street, from 2pm til late. Have it large with the Freedom massive, and bring a bottle if you can
20th December Campaign Against Prison Slavery picket at Wilkinson's

Stratford branch from 12 noon to 2pm (tube/DLR Stratford)

31st December Movement Against the Monarchy New Year Benefit Party at Eton Mission Club, 91 East Way, Hackney Wick, E9, with sound system, bands, bar and food from 8pm to 6am. entry £3.

4th January Class War London meeting, for info email classwaruk@hotmail.com for details

17th January Class War South East Conference, email classwaruk@hotmail.com for details

18th January Mayday 2004 planning meeting from 2pm to 5pm at London Activist Resource Centre (LARC), 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

27th January Indie Spin present The High Priests of Hell plus guests at The Rhythm Factory, 16-18 Whitechapel Road, E1, from 8pm til late
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

Manchester

24th January Northern Anarchist

Network Conference at Bridge 5 Mill from 10am to 5pm. Contact 01422 842558 for more info

Newcastle

22nd December Dance for Peace and Solidarity benefit at Rutherford Hall, University of Northumbria from 8pm. Entry £7/£4/£3

Southampton

22nd December Benefit punk gig at the Joiner's Artus, St Mary's Street, entry £3. Benefit for Leonard Peltier Defence Committee (for info in his case see www.freelonardpeltier.org)

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE) 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh www.autonomous.org.uk

The Cowley Club 12 London Road, Brighton www.cowleyclub.org.uk

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol www.kebele.org

Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC) The Basement, 78a Penny St, Lancaster www.eco-action.org/lancaster

London Action Resource Centre (LARC) 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 www.londonarc.org

SUMAC Centre 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/

Use Your Loaf 227 Deptford High Street, London SE8 www.squat.freeserve.co.uk/uscyourloaf.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

Power mad

Some things never change – the desire of parasitical ‘socialists’ for power is one of them, writes John Noakes

On the evening of 29th October in central London George Galloway, Salma Yaqoob, George Monbiot, the SWP's John Rees and others spoke at a 'British Politics at the Crossroads' meeting, attended by more than a thousand people. The meeting marked the first launch of the Unity (RESPECT) Coalition, an idea itself allegedly hatched between the main protagonists over cocktails at Galloway's luxury London residence. The Coalition will be formally launched at a national conference on 25th January. A linked Convention of the Trade Union Left conference is being organised (by the SWP) for Saturday 7th February in central London.

The October meeting marked the latest – and likely final – denouement in the disintegration of the Socialist Alliance (SA). This began with the SWP's decision to seek alliances with Islamic groups to try to repeat their lonely victory in this year's council elections, but also to build on their success with Stop the War. The SWP effectively destroyed the SA, beginning with their 'Night of the Long Knives' – the purging of Brum SA.

The Unity Coalition are like footballing glory hunters. Once their team starts doing badly they switch to another on its way up. There is no loyalty and no commitment. Winning is all! Issues of principle – or socialism itself – can be diluted or dumped if they hinder accomplishing the objective – power. Galloway, for example, is careful to describe the Coalition as 'progressive' rather than 'socialist', also observing "I think it important that we don't define

ourselves in such a way that we rule out winning people we can win". In other words, the Unity Coalition will try to be all things to all people and true to none.

Growing disquiet with New Labour, and the massive opposition to the invasion of Iraq has led the likes of the SWP (parasites), Monbiot (sponger) and Galloway (indefatigable) scenting the possibility of power (for themselves of course). SWP bureaucrat Chris Bambery in an internal bulletin to party members says "for the first time since the Labour Party was founded there is a real possibility of creating a successful left challenge to Labour". Continuing in the same vein, Bambery babbles "in January we will hold Marxist Forums in every area on 'Can the Left Unite to Challenge Blair?'" You may recall that a year ago the SWP was promoting the SA as the opposition to Blair in England. Bambery is happy to dump the SA as soon as a better vehicle for power comes along. Bambery, Galloway and their grubby cohorts are only interested in power and will enter any alliance, no matter how reactionary the ally, to achieve it.

According to Bambery anyone who does not join the Coalition which will include "the peace movement and Muslim community" are "on the sidelines attacking the movement every step of the way". In Bush's words, and Bambery's mind, you're either with us or against us.

Needless to say no one elected Galloway, Monbiot or Rees to lead the Coalition. No one elected them to draw up the group's statement (still to be

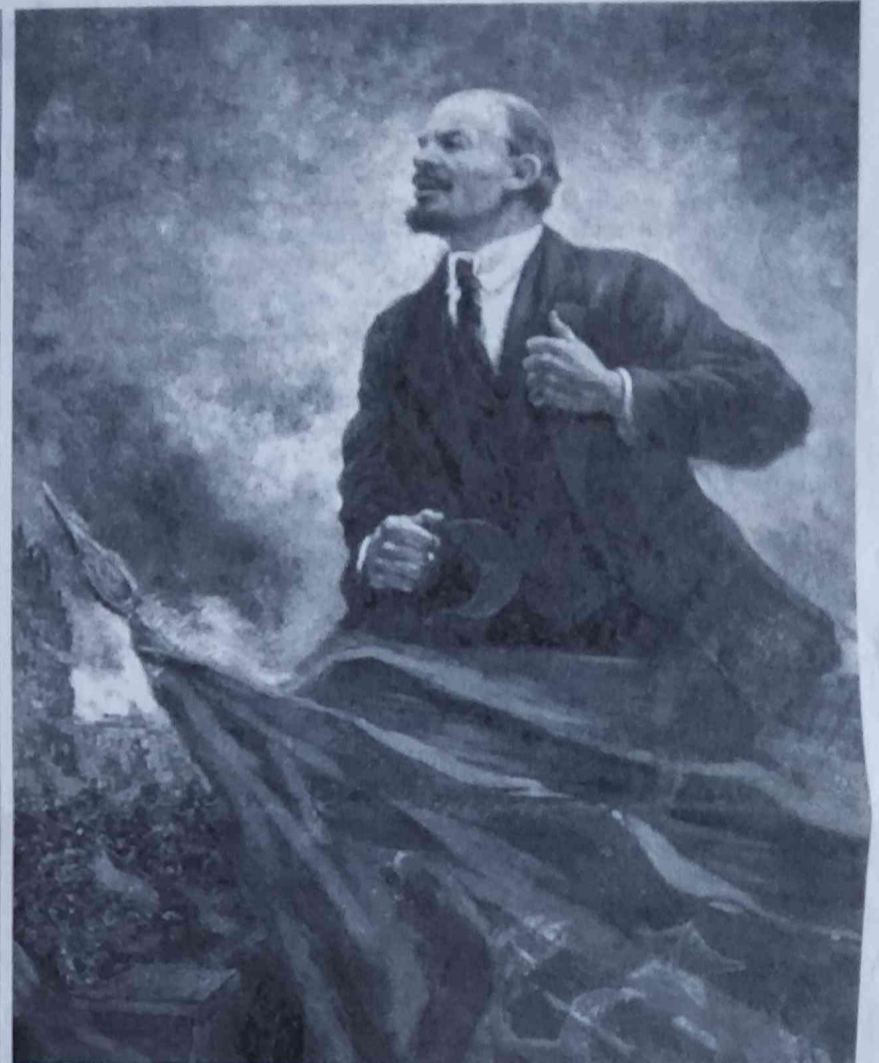
published as Freedom went to press). Democracy is not the point however, power is.

A vote for Galloway's childish coalition is a vote against Blair. Galloway expects "there will be a substantial number of people who will see the European elections as an opportunity to register a protest vote against Blair." The opportunist Coalition wants to take advantage of this. And should Blair depart? According to Galloway the Coalition will then not become a new party. He sees the future of the left spent in trying to reclaim the Labour Party, a stupid position he shares with a whole bunch of idiots who refuse to learn from history.

One argument put forward for a Unity Coalition is there needs to be an effective force to counter the rise of the BNP. Voters in June though will see numerous alternatives, like the Unity Coalition, the SA, The Socialist Party, the Independent Working Class Association, the Greens, Scargill's Socialist Labour Party and Natural Law. The only people to benefit from this division of the left vote are the BNP and Labour!

As anarchists we must not stand on the sidelines watching what happens. Anarchists must put forward an alternative vision for a radical politics. We need to actively promote our politics and deride the programme finally developed by the Coalition. The anarchist movement in Britain's great strength is that it is not riven by sectarianism.

The anarchist movement needs to take developments like the Unity



Dictator – Vladimir Ilych Lenin

Coalition seriously. It needs to start planning its response, a response of contempt for the power-crazed politics of (allegedly) despot-loving Galloway and the rest of his (truly) hideous cabal.

We must not leave the way clear for the likes of the red yuppies. The Anarchist Workers Network are considering an alternative gathering to the Convention of the Trade Union Left.

The state of the movement

1. Numbers

Awareness of anarchism in Britain is probably as high now as it ever has been, though the number of active anarchists is small. No national group can boast significant numbers. Although the Bookfair grows each year, we struggle to get a hundred people to form a block on demos or people to sell Freedom on marches. Many anarchists outside London, Glasgow, Bristol, Birmingham and Norwich are isolated. And Manchester.

2. Organisation

Anarchists organise lots of things. For example, the Bookfair, Freedom Bookshop, magazines, papers, publishing projects, squats, and Mayday. Anarchist organisation is not a contradiction in terms. What we are not so good at is coordinating and connecting with wider political events.

3. Sectarianism

Unlike the authoritarian left the anarchist movement is not riddled with sectarian-

ism. There is general respect for different positions and when anarchists get together like at the Bookfair they generally get on. There are differences, some like the primitivism versus class struggle are very deep, as can views on trade unions and the Six Counties but these are not major barriers to progress within the movement.

4. Activism

Anarchists and anarchist politics are at the heart of the anti-capitalist movement, which begs the question – why aren't there more anarchists? Anarchists are respected because we practice what we preach. Anarchists also connect with their working class communities. Working class people can see through the claptrap peddled by the SWP, BNP and their sordid ilk. Building from the bottom up is an effective means of developing the movement.

Anarchists often focus on immediate aims rather than long term strategy. Theory has taken a bit of a back seat. Some anarchists are happy to be armchair

observers: reading papers, posting on bulletin boards but not getting out and promoting the cause. Some activists have commented on the consumerist fetish attitude of many anarchists, happy to flog and be flogged ephemera at the Bookfair. For others anarchism is a trendy fashion accessory. Anarchists also take on too many campaigns in contrast to trots who focus their energies on the latest recruiting scam.

5. Anarchism and the Left

There is a bunker mentality amongst some anarchists. Some years ago at the Bookfair an acquaintance commented to me on the large numbers "look at this lot, we're not a cult anymore!" At the end of the nineteenth century anarchists engaged with the wider working class, discussing issues with socialists, organising monster meetings and so forth. Today anarchism has almost closed itself off from the reformist labour movement. This is partly compensated for by the high profile anarchism has

on the direct action scene. While criticising authoritarian groups, anarchists forget that there are many leftists who are potentially interested in anarchism. The SWP is only successful at recruiting (but not retaining) members because they're rumoured to be revolutionary and students fall for this. Anarchists, on the other hand, simply need to raise their street presence. We need to be active in our union branches. Good progress has been made in recent years, for example the CW and AF stalls at the SWP's Marxism and solidarity shown to firemen and postal workers.

6. Image

Go down to your local pub and talk to the regulars. Talk to people when you go to watch a football match. Have a chat when you go shopping or over a coffee after work. Ask people what they think about anarchists and anarchism. Do we deserve the drunken thuggish image? Is it the sort of image that will attract ordinary people to anarchism?

7. Prospects

An increasing number of people, particularly the young, have recognised the futility of voting. The authoritarian left is currently in disarray. The gap between rich and poor grows. More and more people are fearful about the effect capitalism is having on the environment. Industrial militancy is on the rise. Anarchism has shaken off the shadow of Marxism.

As anarchists we want to create a world based on mutual aid and cooperation. We want a world rid of the state and capitalism. Anarchists in Britain have been dreaming of a world without governments from Godwin onwards. To make our dream a reality we need to build our movement. We need to draw people in and convince them that anarchism is a feasible realistic alternative. To do this we need to assess where we are and our strengths and weaknesses. Anarchism has come a long way in the last two decades. There is a lot of good stuff going on – onwards and upwards!

Self-management works

Iraqi oil workers throw out the bosses to reconstruct their own workplaces, reports Ewa Jasiewicz from occupied Basra

Southern Oil Company (SOC) Trade Unionists have declared their workplaces a no-go zone for Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), subsidiary of Halliburton, formerly headed by US Vice President Dick Cheney. KBR was given a no-bid contract by USAID to reconstruct bomb-shattered oil refineries and installations in Iraq. Included in the contract was authorisation to export and market Iraqi Oil. However the SOC Union, representing over 10,000 workers, has banned all KBR representatives and foreign experts from entering their sites. SOC Union Head Hassan Jum'a announced that: "Until this moment we haven't needed any foreigners to come in. We can do everything ourselves."

Occupation Watch (OW) visited SOC workers in the North Rumeilla crude oil pumping station, drilling and gas company and discovered that workers had been carrying out reconstruction work independently, using their own worn tools, cannibalised spare parts from old equipment and parts purchased from the local market. Ali Mohammad Jowad, an engineer working in the water injection section of the station told OW, "We haven't seen any KBR employee do any repair work whatsoever. They are not involved in any reconstruction in any way. KBR came and checked our equipment and promised to repair looted equipment but until this moment, nothing is repaired."

Workers started independently reconstructing in June with cleaning and repairing what they could. This included preparing water pumps and oil well safety gauges. "During this preparing" recalls Ali Mohammad, "we also considered that we need a place to rest and sleep so we built a place for ourselves to stay in too." According to workers, reconstruction is 40% of what it needs to be with regards to buildings and workers have rebuilt 50% of their equipment autonomously. "KBR hasn't even seen our work, they've said nothing about our repairs. All our work has been our own," says Ali Mohammad. Many of the same workers who rebuilt North Rumeilla following the devastation of the first gulf war thirteen years ago also participated in reconstruction again this time round.

Hassan Jum'a, head of the SOC Union, father of six, lives in a decrepit, crumbling house in the 1999 missile-blasted neighbourhood of Jhoomouria where piles of garbage rot in the street. He is well respected throughout Basra, not only for his hard-line position on workers rights and refusal of any 'foreign interference' including Occupation administration orders and rulings, but also for bringing together both communists and religious party members as location representatives in the Union.

Uncompromising, direct and possessing a totally unreadable face, he presides over seven union councils in seven different locations.

He told OW that Bremer's June Public notice (being implemented gleefully by bosses throughout Iraq like an Order) has had no effect on them. Bremer's notice declares that the CPA 'respects Iraqi law' including anti-worker Baath dictatorship law, chiefly 1987's order 151 which turned all Iraqi workers into civil servants – state employees, forbade independent trade unions and absorbed all workers into state-run Unions functioning as organs of surveillance and repression. "Nothing has changed since Bremer's dictates" he states flatly.

The SOC union does however have full management backing. "The GD meets all our demands," says Jum'a, "sometimes he signs our orders without even looking at them." Further to this the Union has members within all levels of the company from buying committee members to reward and bonuses committees, plus its own minibuses and building and has been holding regular ceremonies marking the latest autonomous worker reconstruction effort. The most recent was in Majnoon, two weeks ago which saw workers rebuild the damaged refinery independently, using KBR materials but refusing any KBR personnel involvement. KBR were furious at the barring.

The Head of the SOC Union states: "At first they refused to supply us with the materials but in the same time we were insisting in our demands – we insisted that Iraqi people made the repairs." Expanding on this Jum'a says "then they tried to negotiate 50% KBR, 50% Iraqis, we said no, they then bargained for 5% foreign workers, then 1% but we still refused. Drivers are the only foreigners allowed anywhere near. Several times KBR engineers told us 'We are amused by the way you are working' and they were surprised at the fast results."

Indeed, the mirage of the mystified 'West Knows Best' multibillion dollar reconstruction industry falls apart when undermined by the truth of ordinary Iraqi workers rebuilding their own country using the inventiveness, ingenuity and experimentally. Their skills learned throughout the thirteen years of collectively punishing UN-US-UK enforced sanctions and refusing all moves to privatise their workplaces. However, despite these skills and talents borne under duress, further training and new technologies – with no strings attached – are deeply desired by workers at all levels of industry, in order to explore, diversify and build upon skills already acquired and foster greater autonomy and non-reliance on foreign experts and corporations.



General News Round-Up

- British soldiers are coming under attack more now that they did during the war according to an anonymous soldier source based in Basra. Conversation at an undisclosed military location revealed that a British convoy came under fire yesterday on the highway to Basra Airport, home to British Forces Divisional HQ and corporate war profiteers Bechtel. A vehicle was hit but there were no injuries.

Probed further, he said, 'Our lads are coming under attack more now than they were during the war. We're getting shot at every day. There's much more danger now than during the war'. He went on to say that the situation was beginning to mirror that of the occupa-

tion in Northern Ireland where 'soldiers are going to start getting killed every day and it'll barely make the papers'. He stressed that 'It seems like everyone's forgotten about us back home'.

- Former soldiers demanding survival-payment from the CPA have rioted outside CP South HQ twice in the past four days, hurling rocks and abuse at the tank-flanked gates. The ex-soldiers were given anti-rebellion payments of \$120 twice in July and August, but since then have received a fraction if anything at all.

The military arm of the state was the biggest employer in Iraq; and wars – both those against Iran and Kuwait, as well as domestic enemies – the Kurds,

Shia and workers' organisations, created a military occupation of Iraqi workers' organisations long before the multinational forces invaded.

- The offices of the BBC lie next to the palace perfectly positioned to digest the freshly fed news and regurgitate it on to the British public. Straight from the Chief's mouth, and into the inboxes of UK content and news controllers, monitoring with military precision what is allowed to be known, where the Occupation and any dying Iraqi civilians or soldiers, dropped off the news agenda along with the last shot-off limb.

Ewa is an anarchist working with Occupation Watch. Email her at globalintifadas@yahoo.co.uk

Germany update

The Federal Republic of Germany has been ruled since 1998 by a coalition led by the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD). That was when Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats and others defeated the slightly more conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Helmut Kohl, who had served as Chancellor for sixteen years.

Schröder's victory brought great hopes that a new and fresh wind would blow through German politics. But in which direction it would blow quickly became clear, when Schröder and Blair met to put together a manifesto for the European Social Democratic/Labour 'movement'.

The resulting paper was full of terms like 'the needs of economies and the markets', while Schröder and Blair

frankly admitted to being neoliberal, in order (they said) to prevent laissez-faire liberalism, which would be even worse.

From this point on, Schröder's administration unveiled one reform after another. Taxes were lowered, which mainly affected the rich. Generously, the big multinationals were more or less freed of any duty to pay tax – a step which Kohl himself would hardly have been brave enough to take.

At the same time, new taxes were introduced which affected everyone, poor and rich alike. Because the SPD rules in coalition with the Green Party, energy taxes rose. And of course the need to save money in education and social welfare budgets has grown steadily.

So now Germany has to face a massive

programme of reductions to social benefits. The trade unions aren't protesting, which is hardly surprising – some of them, particularly the larger ones, still think of the SPD as their parliamentary arm. Everyone seems to have swallowed the fairytale about the necessity of protecting wealth by reducing social benefits. Well, not quite everyone. A brave few still resist ...

Mark

- The refusal of the German government to back the invasion of Iraq wasn't so much down to political conviction as to the fact that an election was looming. In fact, Schröder's administration was the first since 1945 to send troops to participate in the attack on another country – in this case, Serbia.

Biotech battlefield

The Wildfire Collective on the struggle against biotechnology and advancing industrial capitalism

By slowing technologies of enclosure we are "defending the ability of majority world peasant communities to rebel. More suffer as a result of these enclosures than ever do in overt global policing operations / imperialist wars. Effective action against GM and other elite technologies are direct attacks on empires power of expansion" (Do or Die #10, 2003, page 97)

From the Americas to Australia, Brazil to Britain, Canada to Croatia, India to Italy ... resistance to genetic engineering has been massive and militant. The tactics used are the tactics of the rebellious throughout history – the sabotaging of the technology itself e.g. crop trashing, machinery destruction, arson, blockading transportation, street demonstrations, and the harassment of those that control the technology, be it through home visits, phone calls, emails, or disruption and occupation of corporate offices.

The first ever outdoor genetic crop test was in California in 1987. The very next night, all two thousand plants were destroyed by Earth First! Activists. Sixteen years on, in September 2003 the last company involved in crop trials in the UK finally pulled out due to "the activities of a criminal minority" (Bayer spokesperson in the Independent). But the global struggle still continues as fierce and vibrant as ever with no signs of abating.

Governments and corporations have poured millions into trying to appease the resistant population. They will no

doubt offer some rewards to co-opt and bribe the populace. They may offer clear labels and conservation grants as token gestures. This will, indeed pacify the many who oppose GM because of conservatism. But we have not risen up to risk our liberty because we think genetically modified food does not taste nice, or from a god fearing notion of 'Frankenstein's Food' affecting our health. This is not a matter of consumer choice for the privileged First World. The biotech industry, the state and the resisting new luddites know that the reality is far more sinister than consumer concerns.

"The campaign against genetic engineering in Europe is the greatest block to global economic liberalisation in existence" (US treasury to Senate 1999)

Whilst mass demonstrations against globalisation or the meetings of world leaders are worthwhile things to do, they do not attack the system at its core. It is biotechnology that is the single most significant factor in the next stage of advancement of industrial capitalism.

On this planet – in the Third World as well as in Britain – industrial agriculture is responsible for more eco-destruction than any other factor. Genetic industrial agriculture is the new weapon of the elite. It is absolutely fundamental for the growth of this technological and industrial society, for the control of land and food and, inevitably, people. The fight against genetic engineering is a frontline battle between The Machine

and Its Masters and the Land and its Allies. Whoever loses this battle suffers a huge defeat in the war with civilisation.

The company Bayer is a General at the forefront. It is a company that owns nine out of eleven of the seeds to be commercialised in the UK. Bayer CropScience was the last of the GM companies to cease crop trials in Britain. This year at the Earth First! gathering in the UK Bayer won itself the attention of a national campaign against it. Since then there have been covert and open actions, night and daytime visits, glued locks and spraypainted messages, electronic blockades and home visits. Its central offices, its subsidiaries and its directors are all targets.

Economic sabotage and intimidation will make the commercialisation of GM an unviable option for Bayer. Bayer has other more profitable interests to protect. All the conditions that suggest a victory against Bayer are in place – a hostile population alongside an angry minority with no regard for the law. If Bayer backs out of the commercialisation it will be a brazen and foolhardy successor that steps into its shoes. The campaign against Bayer is a firm warning to all other sectors of the GM industry.

The threat of genetic engineering will never cease. This 16-year old war will continue for as long as we can keep it at bay. They cannot afford to give up but neither can we. We have no choice but to battle on.

Winning the battle against Bayer, the battle against biotech is a necessary



victory to keep the last scraps of our freedom, the last pieces of wildness left on this planet. This is a call to action for all those against Governments and Corporations, Globalisation, Patriarchy, Capitalism, Ecocide, Domesticity or Civilisation.

For busy days and sleepless nights – take action against Bayer.
For downloads, updates and reporting actions www.stopbayergm.org
contact@stopbayergm.org
For allies and action contact your local Earth First! group.

• 28th November 2003: Martyn Hargreaves, company secretary of Bayer CropScience was visited by Anti-

GM activists. A tin of paintstripper was poured over his two cars.

23rd November 2003: At about 9pm a group of fifteen people paid a visit to Michael O'Brian (Director of Bayer CropScience) at his Essex home. After leafleting and talking to his neighbours about his role in pushing GM crops in this country, the activists knocked on his door. O'Brian rudely slammed the door in their faces, so a large banner was held across his living room window saying 'No GM'.
20th November: Bayer CropScience HQ was invaded by over forty people opposed to genetic engineering. Ten people were arrested on suspicion of theft but released without charge.

Why we need a London Earth First!

The following is a very brief consideration of some of the problems that I feel exist within the London anarchist movement and a look at the areas that I believe we should be focussing on. The issues that I touch on here are the result of many years of involvement in anarchist politics and direct action and also explains why I felt it necessary to be involved in setting up London Earth First!

It should be clear that this is a personal opinion and not representative of anyone else involved in London EF! It should also be noted that London EF! is not a primitivist group, but envelops a range of anarchist perspectives united in the need to take ecological direct action.

We need to reclaim 'direct action' in London and disassociate it from the domination of the spectacle. We need to be honest about what we call direct action. Direct action should be distinct from other forms of protest, including civil disobedience. Particularly in London,

we have developed a tendency to label any protest called by anarchists as 'direct action'. Standing outside a building is a picket no matter how many vans of riot cops it attracts. Organising a bloc on a march is not direct action even if the number of black flags and masks reaches double figures.

For the last few years London politics has been obsessed with mass action, with spectacle and hype. Too many times we have gathered on the streets of Central London on the promise of some pseudo-Situationist bollocks only to be filmed by cops and beaten into a pen. We need to realise that we are most effective when we employ guerrilla tactics. We have to accept that there will always be more cops with better weapons and we need to think round them rather than walking straight into their lines. DSEi 2003 restarted this process, with people realising that it is still possible to take affinity group action in London. For me, the most empowering experiences

of true direct action have been when working within a small group with a clear achievable objective. Actively stopping something is far more empowering and effective than reclaiming dead space in Central London.

Affinity group action always runs up against the criticism that it is exclusive; that it is fine for experienced activists who are known and trusted but does not encourage or involve those who are new to the scene. However, I believe that this does not necessarily have to be the case. Obstructing something, for example, need not be an exclusive act. However this doesn't exclude us from also working closely with those we trust on specific tasks, which call for much tighter security. Where I feel that small groups can become dangerous is when they break down into 'logistics groups' with the express purpose of using the general public as 'cannon fodder' to achieve their aims; a tactic of the London scene for much too long.

Another problem is that we spend too much time and energy jumping from one issue to another; reacting to events, rather than setting our own agenda.

There is a need for focussed campaigns combined with a broader political analysis. We need to be constantly building our political identity, educating ourselves and developing our critiques. It is important that we are constantly questioning ourselves so that we do not become dogmatic and rigid in our beliefs. We need to be creating groups built on political ideology and praxis and recognise that developing one without the other is ultimately fruitless.

There is also a need to build sustainable self-sufficient community initiatives from gardening projects to educational alternatives for our children. We need to be serious and show that our politics are not just about fighting cops and getting wasted on drugs; that we can build long-lasting projects that require work and commitment. We need to

create communities that are built on compassion and militancy and we need to realise that one does not eliminate the other.

London Earth First! holds open meetings on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 7pm at the Autonomy Club in Freedom Bookshop. During the first meeting it was decided to concentrate on the following: Bayer CropScience (see article above) and runway expansion at Heathrow/Stanstead. London EF! agreed that it was important to focus on issues of both national and local importance. Once a month we will hold talks/presentations to both educate ourselves on various issues and as a way to get more people involved. The next talk will be on January 5th and will be about Heathrow expansion.

We are also planning on setting up a community garden on reclaimed land. We are currently looking at sites and this is a project we hope to start in earnest this spring. To get involved with London Earth First! come along to one of our meetings or email us on eflondon@ziplip.com

Editorial

Since the introduction of the Terrorism Act in 2000, 499 arrests have been made. Of those arrested, 80 have been charged with an offence and two (yes, two) convicted.

Considering that we're allegedly on 'high alert' against a terrorist attack, and that the arrests are invariably accompanied by media coverage of cops in protective clothing and ramblings about shoebombers and ricin, the statistics should give us some cause for concern.

The majority of charges which have followed arrests under the Terrorism Act actually relate to fraud (forged passports, for example) and immigration offences. The facts speak for themselves. The Terrorism Act is being used to pursue criminal and immigration investigations, with the special powers of the Act being used to deny suspects their rights on arrest.

None of this should surprise us. The old Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was used in a similar manner against the Irish community in the UK. Those who bomb schools and hospitals in the name of 'democracy' are themselves shameless in showing up their 'democracy' for what it is: one that preaches the rule of law but means by this simply the security of the state. Abstract notions of 'justice' don't get a look in.

In London's HMP Belmarsh, at least eleven men are held under indefinite detention on the basis of evidence which wouldn't withstand the scrutiny of courts in a criminal trial. Freedom correspondent Amar Makhuluf, for example, has been held on remand for three years in Belmarsh awaiting deportation to the US on charges relating to a supposed plot to bomb Los Angeles airport.

The 'evidence' against him consists of statements made by Ahmed Ressay, a supergrass. He's no chance of a fair trial in America and, after a show trial, is likely to be jailed for life without parole. Amar and others arrested under the Terrorism Act are hostages to Britain's interests in the Middle East.

In the days of the PTA, trade unionists, republicans and socialists organised a campaign to repeal it and argued for solidarity with those criminalised in pursuit of Britain's war in Ireland. But what's the left doing now to show solidarity with the interned at Belmarsh?

It looks like the SWP are content to see the Muslim community as fodder for demonstrations but aren't prepared to act to defend it when it's criminalised for daring to express political interests in opposition to those of the (Versace-clad) imperialists of Downing Street. The anarchist movement mustn't fail them as well. If we don't act soon, how long will it be before the British state progresses through its tactical armoury? Now it's internment. Next it's shoot-to-kill.

Quiz answers

1. A friend gave Albert a copy of the Dalai Lama's autobiography, with the admonition that he could do better. Two years later I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels came out.
2. Make no laws whatever concerning speech, and speech will be free. As soon as you make a declaration on paper that speech shall be free, you'll have a hundred lawyers proving that "freedom does not mean abuse, nor liberty license" and they'll define freedom out of existence.
3. Charles Harper, chairman of RJR Tobacco Company.
4. The Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) with 500,000 adherents and the Federation Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA) with 200,000. The bigger Spanish CNT was under dictatorship and couldn't send delegates.

Commentary

Black and blue

Congratulations to John Shute for taking a good swipe at the primitivism of the Green and Black Bulletin (Commentary, 22nd November). If the several billion urban people worldwide were all removed from the towns and cities and suddenly moved into rural areas to engage in small local farming, this would cause an ecological disaster greater than any ecological disaster that already exists.

It may not be good for humans or the planet, but for the short to medium-term future the majority of humans are going to be urban-based. This is a difficult reality that we all have to compromise with in one way or another. Within the context of the majority of human beings, urban-based for the time being, we need practical, useful alternatives in the struggle against the prevailing system.

Paul

The latest Green & Black Bulletin ('Mass society', 22nd November) again peddles the idea that class struggle anarchists fetishise Progress, Technology and Civilisation and propose only minor reform of the industrial and economic basis of society. More annoyingly, it mixes up the views of 'fellow anarchists and radicals', 'cultural hegemonists', 'left radicals' and so on, and accuses them all, no matter what their views, of "hegemonic cultural aspirations" based on unfettered industrialisation and unsustainable technological progress.

But class struggle anarchists have moved far beyond the politics of yesterday. "Industrialisation is inherently destructive", says the writer of the article. Anarchist communists agree, saying "the Revolution will fundamentally transform the nature of work. We will re-organise industry so that we only produce what is socially useful. We will introduce the ecological management of production and consumption."

"The advancement of industrial progression" is a given, the Wildfire writer claims, but anarchist communists have already rejected this shibboleth, saying "post-revolutionary society will therefore need to establish a way of life in a similar equilibrium with the rest of nature, rather than the present relationship of domination and destruction which has resulted from industrial capitalism and class society. Practically, this would mean an end to the industrial methods of agribusiness."

The author of 'Mass society' asks, "how do you distribute resources fairly? How do you co-operate?" We reply, "our relationships within our communities and with other communities the world over will be based on the sharing of ideas and commodities as needed and desired." We're accused of wanting simply to iron out the inequalities of capitalism, yet we fervently believe that "the concept of Progress is itself a social construct of capitalism and would need to be rigorously re-evaluated. If production and consumption are to be brought into harmony on the basis of human need and ecological sustainability, then all things involved in satisfying human need (knowledge, science, technology, production, distribution and propagation, exchange, communication and so on) will need to be deconstructed and changed in truly revolutionary ways."

Put simply, the writer of 'Mass society' accepts that modern class struggle anarchists have "refreshing theories" and have freed themselves from the panacea of seizing the means of production but he still can't resist bashing those same anarchists as 'reactionary' industrial fetishists.

In fact, we in the Anarchist Federation have taken on board the critique of civilisation, mass society and progress, but we've also gone some way towards answering the writer's questions about sharing resources, co-operation and the place of the individual in a future social ecology. Dogma continually needs to be refreshed with the blood of defeated ideological foes but are the pages of Freedom the place for vampires to roam?

Odessa Steps
Anarchist Federation

The quotations are from the AF pamphlet, Beyond Resistance, and writings on ecology and humanity in previous issues of Organise!

A slight error crept in towards the end of my critique of the Green and Black Bulletin (Commentary, 6th December). According to the version printed in Freedom, I wrote "ultimately, WF exposes the core problem with primitivism. For them, technology, 'mass society' and 'civilisation' aren't neutral". In fact, I'd written "ultimately, WF exposes the core problem with primitivism. For them, technology, 'mass society' and 'civilisation' are neutral". Unfortunately, Freedom's typo makes the rest of the paragraph seem somewhat confused. I hope this will make my argument clear.

Iain McKay

Before I start I'd like to say that 'Mass society' was written with the best of intentions. It wasn't designed to foster some split (real or imaginary) between 'green' and 'red' anarchists or to push some correct ideological position. It merely sought to open debate in Freedom that we felt was lacking. It was never intended as a blueprint for the future, more as a subjective tool to open discussion.

I'll attempt (time and space permitting) to deal with as many as possible of the reactionary 'criticisms' levelled at the piece by Iain McKay (Commentary, 6th December). Iain opens his letter by attacking the Wildfire writer for maintaining his anonymity. But we're opposed to the personality culture. For us it's an attribute of the bourgeois world that all commodities bear their author's name (not that individuals in Wildfire are in any danger of being peddled or reified). For us nobody should own ideas, though reading Iain's letter clearly some ideas own people. We're just principled, I guess.

Our article, 'Mass society', does assert that anarchism isn't possible in a mass society. But nowhere does it say, as Iain asserts, that "organisation equates government" or that "nobody will work". To assert these two positions to us, in inverted commas (as if lifted from the text) is dishonest and misrepresentative to say the least.

I stand by my assertion that mass society is coercive and that mass industrialised society breeds bureaucracy. Iain seems completely unaware of the intricate web of industrialisation, beyond an overtly simplistic analysis of capitalism. This is why I call for an immediate return to small, land-based culture as a tool for establishing autonomy from the state.

For example, why should we have a 'chicken' dinner at our local community restaurant if we're not prepared to keep chickens in our local collective gardens? (For the sake of argument I'll ignore the dubious decision to treat animals as commodities for our consumption). Before the chicken has arrived at our plate it's passed through and involved the labour of thousands of individuals and fuelled ecological destruction.

The journey for our chicken starts at

the barn in which it's housed. This needs to be sourced from raw materials and then built. 'Our' chicken then needs to be fed by workers; the grain it eats needs to be grown, harvested and transported to the barn. The chicken needs to be transported around the country for consumption. The trucks or trains needed to achieve this end need to be sourced from raw materials and built. The fuel, on which the transport runs, needs to be sourced, refined and transported.

Workers need to be found who are willing to perform all these specialised, divided tasks before individuals are found willing to drive the distances between various delivery points. The chicken needs to be delivered to the restaurant. It needs to be prepared by a specialised individual or group and brought forwards for our consumption.

Now extend that process out for every vegetable or consumable on the table or, for that matter, any commodity Iain believes we may need. Without the coercion of capitalism I doubt that individuals separated by large geographical area would feel inclined to engage in this web (with the notable exception of relieving the victims of a natural disaster), characterised by divided labour, hyper-specialisation, habitat destruction and unsatisfied mundane labour. For myself, I believe one of the most revolutionary acts we in the global north can engage in (in the immediate) is to reconnect to the land in our local communities. By relearning these skills we can help to undermine our reliance on the state.

Iain doubts that "many people in the west will embrace this return to peasant life". Oh well, better cancel the revolution then, those poor privileged whites in the global north need to keep all their commodity goods! For Iain, it seems, everybody should stay in the industrialised web, with all its devastating personal, social and ecological consequences.

If we're to continue to treat chickens as a resource, it goes without saying that they can be raised practically anywhere, while other resources (such as oil) can only be sourced at certain geographical locations. For Iain, people's labour and identity should be forced upon them simply for living near these 'resources'. This crude environmental determinism mirrors the demands of capitalism by maintaining an artificial demand for the resource by a market place, rather than encouraging the autonomy of localised communities to devise and create their own technologies and responses to a given need. For Iain, it doesn't matter that industrialisation occurs. It's only who owns the means of production that matters.

Iain goes on to say that, in fact, "a successful anarchist revolution in the west would be imperialist, export[ing] civilisation] to those denied its 'wonders'." He goes on, "does this expose an awareness that people in the 'majority world' don't particularly like many aspects of their lives and would like to see improvements (clean water and basic medicines) in their living conditions?"

This uncritical view of economic inequality simply reinforces the lies propagated by the bourgeoisie. That those in the global south are 'undeveloped' and without 'our superior' technology destined to a life of impoverishment suggests a racism within the ideology. The reason why people don't have access to clean water or basic medicine, Iain, is because they've been removed from their land and traditional ways of life by the actions of successive sets of bosses (both 'domestic' and 'imperialist'), who

have taken the land and poisoned the water for the industrial needs of the global work machine.

What's Iain's response to economic inequality and inadequate access to resources – the destruction of capitalism and industrialisation? No, instead he suggests an 'imperialist' proletarian revolution on the majority world! What are we going to do, Iain, murder Zapatistas who don't want dams built in their communities or organise strikes against those who refuse the 'progress of the west'? Take our medicine or we'll kill you? This is the same old shit propagated by capitalists, fascists, trots and the like. Authoritarian and not very anarchist. Hasn't Iain heard of community autonomy?

Iain continues his 'criticisms', assuming that by the 'beast' I refer to London's eight million people. No, not the people Iain, the social relationships between them, the city itself. At no point do I propose 'mass starvation' as a solution – to imply this is completely disingenuous. Why does Iain feel so threatened by a critique of city culture, or mediated forms of representation?

Iain offers up the French and Spanish revolutions and the recent Argentinean uprising as examples of the revolutionary potential of recallable delegations. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, Iain, but none of these revolutions was successful for the working class, due in part to internal faults (such as communication) as much as external pressures. Surely we can look at alternative forms of disorganisation/organisation in a paper with the subtitle 'anarchist news and views'? Or is everything pre-ordained and mapped out for us? A correct mathematical formula waiting to be applied?

Iain goes on to encourage ecological destruction, saying that "non-primitivist anarchists know that production 'will continue to need raw resources to be built'. Yes this will be ecologically destructive. But so will the ecological destruction caused by the breakdown of civilisation: nuclear meltdown, toxic waste and oil slicks caused by abandoned industry." So for Iain the future is an either/or scenario. Either embrace ecological destruction or face ecological destruction. Good options. Personally I think these can be mutually exclusive. We can safely deactivate and secure 'toxic' processes during a revolutionary situation, without having to continue their production after the revolution.

Iain says that "WF exposes the core problem with primitivism". But as far as I'm aware there isn't a cohesive primitivist ideology – it's just a critical current inside modern anarchist thought. I agree that many people associated with 'primitivism' share similar concerns regarding mass society and civilisation, but all technology? The debates still going on that one.

Personally I (notice I've used 'I', not the collective 'we') do believe that some technologies are 'positive' and some 'negative'. So for me it doesn't matter who wields the tools of industrialisation, merely that they're being used. Industrialisation fuelled by ideological zealotry is pushing our planet to the point of collapse. You'll be hard pushed to find a single ecologist (not in the pocket of big business) who doesn't recognise that we're at a critical juncture.

All the indications point towards the beginning stages of an extinction-level event, comparable in scale to the five great extinctions of earth's past. These are the ruins we ought to be afraid of, the ruins Durruti couldn't foresee. Yes,

REVIEW

Brian McCarvill finds some uncomfortable similarities between his homeland and the GDR described in a masterly new book

Anna Funder is an Australian author intrigued by life in the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), and in particular with the GDR's secret police, the STASI. In Stasiland, she's developed a picture of what life was like in the GDR before the fall of the Berlin Wall, for STASI victims as well as for STASI members themselves. Funder researched, and now relays, her tales through a series of interviews and reflections. Her methodology proves to be quite entertaining, as well as revealing. Stasiland stands as both a reminder of what was and a portent of what could be. There's also an infusion of what is.

Those of us old enough to remember will be intrigued by the frankness and real-life aspect of this book. Those of us too young to remember the Cold War and Eastern Bloc communism will find that this work throws a lot of real perspective on what the GDR actually was and how people lived behind the Iron Curtain. It's important that young people learn, and older people remember, exactly what it is that we're against when we say we're against communist states.

As a teenager in the United States during the 1960s, coming of age involved regular police harassment for me as a long-haired anti-authoritarian. This harassment occurred in the form of constant traffic (including pedestrian) stops nationwide, often resulting in a generous serving up of physical beatings, almost always a hail of verbal abuse and taunting and, more often than not, manufactured criminal charges of some kind, usually (but not always) misdemeanours.

With the US then deeply ensconced in the Cold War, and the STASI regarded (along with the KGB) as notoriously brutal anti-humanitarians, I thought Stasiland might provide me with a good comparison/contrast of GDR-STASI realities and my experiences with the American version of the 'to protect and serve' bunch. It did.

Funder provides us with a look at the GDR's criminal justice system. The STASI weren't simply political crimes police, though they did serve that function. Our

boys in blue here in the USA serve the same function when they seek to control 'social deviants' afflicted with an 'abnormal psychology' – the long-hairs and hippies of my day, the punks and anarchists of today. Of course we were anarchists in my day too but anarchists gained little press in the era of the New Left Communist Menace.

To show you what it is the book reveals, I'll quote a passage together with my comments underneath:

"The German Democratic Republic paid lip service to the institutions of democracy. There were District Attorneys, whose job it was to administer justice, and lawyers, whose job it was to represent clients, and judges, whose job it was to pass judgement [1]. There were, at least on paper, political parties other than the Socialist Unity Party [2]. But really there was just the Party and its instrument, the STASI [3]. Judges often got their instructions from the STASI which, in turn, passed them on from the Party – right down to the outcome of the judgement and the length of the sentence [4]. The connection of the Party, the STASI, and the law, went from the ground up: the STASI, in consultation with school principals, recruited obedient students with an appropriately loyal attitude for the study of law [5]. There was no room for a person to defend themselves against the State because all the defence lawyers and all the judges were part of it [6]."

1. A picture perfect scenario of today's US criminal justice system.
2. Here in our American democracy there are, of course, other parties besides the Democratic-Republican dictatorship but, like in the GDR, they never achieve any parity.
3. In the USA the federal government instrument was traditionally the FBI, though now the CIA and Department of Homeland Security have become 'instrumental'. State governments here in the US employ state police, State Bureaus of Investigation and, at local levels, metro and municipal police, replete with plainclothes detectives and undercover agents. The ubiquitous 'war on



drugs' is used to provide the necessity for all these covert watchers and now, of course, there's the terrorist bogeyman to add as well.

4. Here in the US we differ slightly in that two possible sentences are pre-determined for the defendant – the plea bargain lesser sentence, entered into by 95% of those charged, and the 'sentencing guidelines' for those fool enough to go to trial. I write this from prison, where I'm serving a 38½ year sentence that was imposed when I refused to accept the five-year plea bargain, foolishly thinking I'd get some Due Process of Law and a fair trial.

5. In the United States, the FBI and CIA actively recruit directly from colleges and universities. The working class masses are never represented in these totalitarian bureaus and agencies. Lawyers and judges here must be approved members of the Bar in order to practise law. The American Bar is an extra-governmental body that determines how and within what parameters US laws will be

'applied'. The Bar also determines who will be subject to different levels of imposition of the laws.

6. Anyone who doesn't think the above is a true description of the US criminal justice system has never been caught up in it. The untouched have been mesmerised by a constant barrage of cop and judge television shows, foaming over with good-guy cops and judges, protecting the rest of us working or no-class individuals from a steady onslaught of vicious, depraved criminals.

Stasiland did exactly what I expected it would. It showed the uncanny resemblance between GDR police practices and US police practices. What I didn't expect to find was that the penalties we face here in America, particularly if we exercise our right to go to trial, which is construed as not toeing the party line, are monstrously excessive in comparison to those formerly meted out in the former GDR.

The lesson to be learned? Disarm all authority, all states. Community-based

means of support and interaction would eliminate the need for much of our criminal justice efforts. But as anarchists we don't have a clear vision of how to handle necessary criminal justice matters where community intervention fails adequately to control aggressive criminal behaviour or even criminally insane behaviour. Should we ever be able to realise an anarchistic society or societies these questions will have to be addressed. They're ugly.

This is a profound and interesting book. It's one of those books you can't put down. Young people of today and tomorrow need to have a clear vision of what life was like before their own experiences. We preach that Eastern Bloc communism was vile and ugly. Life isn't that simple. Questions can't be answered by rote or by catechism. This is the kind of book that will reveal truths to the reader. I highly recommend this book. Stasiland by Anna Funder, published by Granta, is available from Freedom for £12.99 (add £1.30 postage in the UK, £2.60 elsewhere)

BOOKS

Talking Anarchy

by Colin Ward and David Goodway
Five Leaves Publications, £6.99

The idea is simple enough. Take one of the world's most respected living anarchists in Colin Ward, get a hugely knowledgeable interviewer to grill him about his views and past, then write it up into a short paperback.

Part biography, part history, and with a liberal smattering of ideology, it's hugely difficult to put Talking Anarchy into any single category. It's touted as a discussion piece on twentieth century anarchism, but this description doesn't nearly cover the gamut of topics covered in Goodway's romp through Colin's mind. Perhaps it's because Goodway is so

indulgent, allowing and even encouraging tangents in the conversation, that this is the case. Talk of Colin's ideological differences with his fellow anarchists at Freedom Press, for example runs into a discussion on an article he'd written in the 1950s, then suddenly switches to the production techniques and experiences of his time editing the radical 1960s monthly Anarchy.

Such a lack of any discernible continuity is both a blessing and a curse. For the casual reader, Talking Anarchy would be hard and possibly unrewarding work, giving only infrequent glimpses into anarchist thought and methodology over the last century. It's overly pacy, never settling on one topic for long enough and covering subjects that link

poorly into each other.

For the myriad thousands of Colin Ward fans however, both at home and abroad, the sometimes rambling nature of the book is incidental to the content, which provides a fascinating insight into the events, people and ideas that have surrounded Colin over the past half-century. Far more personal than historical in many ways, Talking Anarchy is perhaps the closest thing to be found to a biography of Colin Ward. It's fragmentary, staccato and not easy reading, but it's a welcome insight into the life of one of the great anarchist propagandists.

Rob Ray

Available from Freedom for £6.99 (add 70p postage in the UK, £1.40 elsewhere)

2004 Miners Strike Anniversary Calendar

Class War, £7.00

This is the third calendar Class War have produced in the last four years. This one commemorates the great strike of 1984-85. In contrast to any calendar the National Union of Mineworkers may bring out, the Class War one celebrates the miners' solidarity and resistance to the police repression of their bitter struggle. The calendar is well produced and laid out, and the only fault this reviewer could find was the misspelling of 'anniversary' on the front.

Arch Stanton

Available from Freedom for £7 (add £1 postage in the UK, £2 elsewhere)

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Commentary

page 6

we the workers can build other buildings to replace those destroyed by the bourgeoisie as they exit the stage of history, but we can't build new ecological systems.

Iain McKay's longstanding battle with 'primitivism' has been well documented. I've no interest in 'taking' sides. Personally I feel that he's continuing his campaign here in Freedom now. I've no problem with critics (the Bulletin was intended to encourage debate), but I believe Iain has exposed his potential to misrepresent in order to win some obscure 'ideological' battle that it appears he's the only person interested in winning. So I wait with baited breath for another letter full of quotes taken out of context, married with assertions nobody made. Imperialist and ecologically unsustainable? Not my revolution Iain, and not a very anarchist one either.

Wildfire I

I'd like to start by saying I find it utterly contemptible of RE to accuse the Wildfire Collective of being state apparatchiks (Commentary, 6th December). Are you so threatened, RE? Is your political identity so fragile that you're reduced to acts of mud-slinging? At least Iain McKay attempts to engage in a debate, though one full of vitriol, lies and half-truths. It's on his letter that I'll now focus.

First, the jibe about authorship. I find it strange for an anarchist to attack someone for not claiming ownership of prose, especially considering the fact that Iain's anarcho-syndicalist friends at Direct Action have a similar editorial policy regarding publishing author's names. There's a long tradition in political writing of 'anti-copyrighting' material, group publishing and anonymity.

There have only been two Green and Black Bulletins in Freedom, and layout issues have plagued them both. When I left the Freedom office after working on 'Mass society', the byline actually read, 'an article from the Wildfire Collective' and not 'an article from a member of the Wildfire Collective'. The particular article in question was initiated by one person but, as with most writing, it evolved as other people, particularly others within the WF collective, offered input. It would therefore be disingenuous to credit one person. I personally don't think that pieces need to be authored to gain some authoritative voice. The writing should stand or fall on its own, irrespective of the personality or personalities behind it.

Now the article itself. While it does in fact argue that anarchism isn't possible in 'complex societies' it doesn't, as Iain suggests, argue that organisation equals government or that society equals the state. Society in the sense of community is different to mass society. The article does however argue that mass society can't operate without a high degree of mediation which would, it's suggested, lead to governance and a state.

This is a point that Iain argues himself when he begins the usual anarcho-communist line on recallable delegates. Personally, I see this as another form of governance. I don't want to be represented. Once I've fought for and won my right to a voice I won't willingly hand it over to someone else. Where do I stand if I'm a lone voice in my factory? Is my opinion to be crushed under the weight of 'workers democracy'?

Next, there's the 'contradiction' that Iain sees in the comment on resources. There's no dispute that people are inevitably beholden to their environment. But that's completely different to having a social role forced on you by the 'community' as a result of the fact that you live near a mine. This is a long argument that's probably not best considered here. The other 'contradictions' Iain points to are mostly facile or misrepresentative and it would be equally petty to attempt to counter them.

Nowhere in our original article is it suggested that models of social interaction be imposed on anyone. We aren't proposing to force anyone in any way to do anything. The article is about questioning assumptions regarding mass society. It isn't a blueprint for the future. As has been reiterated time and again by many anarcho-primitivists, we aren't proposing to go back in time, we're merely looking at the past to see how it can influence our ideas on the future. Blind acceptance of any rationale is dangerous, whether it's the acceptance of capitalism, 'rulers' or progress. I for one am interested in putting everything under the microscope of critical thought.

I don't say that I have all the answers and I think it would be a sign of pig-headed pomposity for anyone to suggest they do. Iain McKay's anarcho-syndicalist vision (apparently) does. We'd have 'delegates' sent off to negotiate about everything. What happens if one group of workers doesn't want to play?

Well, according to Iain, in this work-based anarchist utopia we'd send delegates to threaten and cajole them and, if this didn't work, we'd use 'direct action' such as boycotts, strikes and marches to force people to do as the majority wanted. I'm sure the peoples of West Papua and other resource-rich areas will be much happier to know that their way of life has been decimated for 'anarchists' instead of capitalists. It sounds very much like government to me.

I'm glad that the editors of Freedom have had the courage to put some ideas in the paper that challenge their readership. The Green and Black Bulletin isn't about 'converting' people to anarcho-primitivism. It's opened up an interesting debate on the enragers website (see the address below) and hopefully will do the same here. We aren't asking people to be so open-minded their brains fall out, but perhaps to re-evaluate their ideas of technology, mass-society and the environment.

Wildfire II

See page 5 for the latest instalment of The Green and Black Bulletin.
enrager is at www.enrager.net



Line upheld

Presumably Iain McKay thinks it more important for Freedom to take the 'right line' politically than to consider ways of limiting the damage to the lives of people living in Iraq (Commentary, 22nd November). This is consistent with a position which says 'those who aren't for us are against us'. My original letter (Commentary, 25th October) suggested that we should think about how our actions are interpreted. To attack every target, without considering how protests such as the anti-occupation demo on 27th September might be presented, is dogmatic.

Missing my plea for self-criticism, Iain accuses me of supporting the occupation and not appreciating Freedom's warnings about the SWP, and he attacks my suggestion of 'anti-Americanism' in the Freedom coverage of the Iraq invasion. But he can't criticise contributors for using shorthand terms like this – the alternative is to bore the readers with pedantry and more dogma. Also, hinting that people of my perspective are non-anarchist racists does nothing to clarify complex issues, bring people to our causes or improve our basic organisation – all of which we need to do.

Meanwhile, we can take heart from the rapid acceleration of anti-war activity in the USA. Similar struggles, in both countries, from the 1950s to the 1970s, led to a sharing of radical ideas across the Atlantic. Sadly, the need for such action and the lessons to be learned from it, are quickly forgotten. But at the time, energy bursts of communication inspired different forms of activity. This should encourage us now to make more direct links with our American friends. We need to share our thoughts on how best to present our ideas and how we can go about our task of marginalising the warmongers.

Martin S. Gilbert

A sideways look

It's the run-up to Christmas, the mid-winter feast appropriated by the Christians. Most of us stick to the old pagan traditions of eating too much, drinking too much and doing a lot of partying to excess. Some of us also take the more modern method of celebrating mid-winter, by spending too much and running up debts. It's little wonder that big landlords choose now to send letters to their tenants reminding them to pay their rent.

Where I work Christmas has been cancelled. Management claims that this is because of lack of interest. They've rescheduled it for late January instead. In its place, they've offered to meet up in the pub and buy everyone a drink. They seem to be doing a lot of this lately, even scheduling some meetings for the pub, in the evening, while dropping heavy hints about non-attendance (no mention was made of childcare, or payment for arranging extra. I took the view that there's no such thing as a free pint and didn't go, so I missed exactly how they got a physically disabled colleague upstairs to the function room. And thank heaven there's only a couple of Muslims).

When I raised some of the glaring issues that this sort of thing generates, I was fobbed off. There's a sort of polarisation on this particular matter. Those who are either young and free of responsibility, or have women at home to do that sort of thing for them, participate. They're in the loop, actually getting told what's going on over pub lunches or after work. Those who aren't are out of the loop, but then they tend to be older, or women with kids, or even occasionally men who don't leave it all to long-suffering partners.

I'll readily admit that the latter camp just don't look as sexy as the former. We, because obviously I'm one of them, are grumpier about work than the others. We haven't managed to go beyond general grumpiness yet though – even the cancellation of Christmas left us unfazed, as well as unsurprised. (And for the council communists out there, we're not even at the union form, let alone beyond it. What I wouldn't give for a bit of reformism ...).

Going to the pub should be a relatively simple pleasure. The problem is when it becomes necessary in order to achieve something else, whether that's to find out what's going on at work, or even to organise against it. It's not just management who are guilty of this, though they do have highly paid personnel advisers who ought to point out that it's not entirely in the spirit of anti-discrimination law. Plenty of anarchist groups, trade unions and campaigns run like this, often without

even having addressed it.

In the past, when I was younger, I'd happily go along to meetings in the pub because it made them more of a social event. I now know just how impossible this is for people who are strapped for time, that most precious commodity in modern Britain. If I want a meeting at all (some are necessary), I want it somewhere accessible to all those likely to take part. I want it to start on time. I want a firm enough chair for it to finish on time, or at least to ensure that all the important business is done by then. Afterwards I might want to go down the pub and socialise, though to be honest, I might not. It's nothing personal.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

LEFTWING: you're afraid that someone like Hitler may rise to power again in the future.

RIGHT-WING: you're afraid that someone like Stalin may rise to power again in the future.

NAZI: you're afraid you'll never get to run your own concentration camp if the bloody jews, pakis, niggers and faggot reds keep kicking the fuck out of you. It's them fuckin' reds* you hate most though. Proper white folk wouldn't behave like that unless they were the willing slaves of some global anti-white conspiracy. Which just goes to prove that ZOG really exists ... that's proper Whiteman's logic, that is. Not like that pony rubbish them reds talk ... too many books y'see coz they're all middle-class wankers – even the ones that say they aren't – can't fool me! I reckon them lot that broke my leg last week must've been jewish. Probably Mossad or summat' ... Got to be, normal birds don't fight like that ... Anyway there was hundreds of 'em ... You calling my pint a poof? You won't be saying that when I get this pot off and out of this fuckin' wheelchair!

P.B.

* Translator's note: this includes anarchists, marxists, trade unionists and generally any non-racist or anti-fascist white person regardless of their actual politics ...

The quiz

1. What connects the Dalai Lama to the late English anarchist Albert Meltzer?
2. According to Voltairine de Cleyre, how do you make speech free?
3. Who said "secondhand smoke isn't a problem. If children don't like to be in a smoky room, they'll leave"?
4. What were the two biggest founding affiliates of the International Workers Association when it was reconstituted in 1922 in Berlin?

Answers on page 6

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