

# FREEDOM

19 SEPTEMBER 2004

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

INSIDE ►►

Beyond the ESF page 3

Class struggle in Haiti page 4

The free software movement page 5

Readers' letters page 6

## REPUBLICAN SHAMBLES

**W**ith no beating about the bush, Iain McKay examines the mess the Republican government has made of America.

If party politics is the art of lying (and it is), then for the ordinary person political conventions are to be avoided at all costs. If these were judged by the standards of that other massager of the truth, advertising, then every one would be sued for being misleading.

None more so that right-wing conventions. The reason is simple. It is hard to honestly portray policies and politics to the 'ordinary person' which are designed to make the rich richer (and more powerful) and make them poorer and less free. This is problem is doubly the case for the Republicans. At their recent convention they broke the record in hypocrisy and lying.

As they cannot run on their actual record, the Bush administration was left with fear and slander. Hence the references to 9/11 (but not, understandably enough, to Osama Bin Laden whom Bush has significantly failed to catch). Hence the lie that the Iraq war had something to do with 9/11 or 'the war on terror'. Hence the attacks on John Kerry as a 'flip-flop'. Facts do not matter and never get in the way of a good sound bite. Nor is it explained why being 'decisive' is so good if, like Bush, your decisions are so extremely, awfully, bad (at least for the general public, corporations are doing extremely well out of the war thank you very much!).

Sadly for the Republican spin doctors, a few days before Bush did a little flip-flopping of his own. On 30th August, Bush admitted that that the US would not win the 'war on terror'. Which is true. You cannot win a war on a noun or a tactic, particularly if you use state terrorism to try to. Bush, correctly (for once) argued that "you can create conditions so that the - those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world." Sadly he has utterly undermined that strategy by his wars, particularly in Iraq. His policies have increased the number of terrorist attacks as well as the pool of potential recruits.

The next day, his press secretary clarified Bush by saying "Not only are we winning it, but we will win it." Bush, apparently, meant that the war on terror won't be won "in the conventional sense" with formal surrenders. Ironically, this defence of Bush's 'flip-flop' seems to be the 'nuance' defence, the one Kerry uses and which has been summarily dismissed by the Republicans! Meanwhile, Bush is back to being 'a war president', only a few weeks after claiming to be 'the peace president'.

Yet even on waging the war, Bush is hardly a success. In response to Kerry's criticism of his handling of Iraq, he said

that "I know what I'm doing when it comes to winning this war." Sure, there is a lot of evidence for that! But wait a minute, this is another 'flip-flop'! War? What war? Bush declared on 1st May last year that "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed." Since then then of course the number of US casualties has rocketed (see page 8). And he says he knows what he is doing! Perhaps he just does not know the facts, after all he has never attended a funeral or memorial service for any of the people he sent to their deaths for oil. And best not to mention Iraqi deaths as Iraqis seem to be of no account to their 'liberators', both literally and figuratively as the occupiers refuse to count the numbers they have killed.

This explains the blueprint for the Republican convention. Speak in platitudes, ignore anything inconvenient (like the facts), take credit for anything good, even if you opposed it, and spout forth about how wonderful America is (while keeping quiet on how you plan to change that). And present a friendly face to the general public by highlighting individuals alien to the entire Bush social agenda while, at the same time, approve a radical conservative platform against stem-cell research, abortion and gay rights without a murmur of dissent.

### The class war at home

But who cares? Bush is cutting taxes. Unmentioned is the fact the majority of the tax cuts have gone to the very few, very rich and that they have come after income inequality has dramatically increased over the past two decades. While most workers have seen wage stagnation, the average CEO has seen their pay rise from 41 times that of the average worker in 1982 to 301 times in 2003. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the gap between the bottom 20% and the top 1% in 2000 was the largest it has been since the Hoover years.

While the right scare the worker with tales of their wages being stolen by the taxman, the fact is that the workers' money is ending up in the pockets of the boss man. From 1947 to 1979, family income grew at a roughly even pace in all income categories (116% for the bottom 20% and 99% for the top 20%). This changed in the 1980s, from 1979 to 2001, it became heavily skewed toward top with a 3% growth for the bottom 20%, 11% growth for the next 20% and a whopping 81% growth for the top 5%. Bush's tax cuts helped make this worse, with 36.7% going to the top 1% of income earners and only 1.1% going to the bottom



A street-filling dragon goes up in flames as 400,000 people marched against the Republican National Convention in New York City. Fights immediately broke out between the radical 'Don't Just Vote' contingent and police who used the fire as an excuse to attack the crowd with batons and pepper-spray and make indiscriminate arrests. See [nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org) for a full run-down of the week's events.

## CLASS OF MURDER

**F**ollowing the horrific massacre at the Beslan school in Northern Ossetia in which hundreds were killed - most of them, of course, children - Vladimir Putin's government shifted into overdrive to divert blame from themselves.

All over the country State-backed demonstrations were called for the people to rally together against terror, with pro-government slogans sneaked in. The Moscow procession attracted up to 100,000 people under the banner 'Against Terrorism, For President', with spin doctors anxiously trying to dispel hostility to the actions and repeated lies

of officials during the siege.

Anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists from the Rainbow Keepers and the Moscow Union of Radical Artists attended with leaflets declaring:

We all are hostages of inhumane power! Let us free ourselves! Yesterday - Nordost, today Beslan, tomorrow what? And every time, what follows the nightmare is the same: fear, hysteria, apathy, powerlessness - in the society, growth of ethnic hatred and calls to strengthen police executive powers, censorship and control of the state over people.

We are in a vicious circle, which must be destroyed! It is about the time to understand, that we all are hostages of the state, hostages of the politicians, generals and oligarchs, who fulfil their selfish and imperial goals, who spit on the blood and suffering of people in Chechnya and Russia ... Terrorist attacks in Moscow and Beslan are echo of the war in Caucasus; they follow from daily war crimes, mop-up operations,

destruction of peaceful inhabitants. State terror gives birth to answering terror - and neither of them may be justified. Tragedy which happened is a payment of the society for blind belief to the government, a payment for passivity and ignorance. We all are paying for crimes of politicians and army officers!

Limiting our already narrow civil liberties will not be a solution. A solution will be abolishing our role as statists and marionettes of the state, abandoning shameful passivity, and throwing away the hypnosis of lies and propaganda.

We must begin resistance and put society on control of the situation in the country, we must immediately stop the war in Caucasus! Let Putin wage alone war in Chechnya, not sending others there! Let Basayev occupy the Kremlin and Duma instead of taking innocent children to hostages! It is their quarrel, not ours! Let us stop them!

See also A Sideways Look on page 8

THE ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR 2004



SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2004, 10AM-7PM  
111, MALET STREET, LONDON WC1E  
[www.anarchistbookfair.org](http://www.anarchistbookfair.org)

# Home and away

## FREEDOM

Volume 65 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. 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.

### Angel Alley

First of all apologies for the late arrival of this issue. This was due to health problems of one of the team. If you appreciate the work Freedom does, we could really do with some more people to help out with the paper: if you are in London and can commit to coming down every once in a while to help with editing (we can show you what to do), writing or getting the paper out we'd love to hear from you. Please contact the Copy address below or write to the editors.

On a more positive note, the Hacklab is almost up and running. It'll be open every Saturday from about noon so if you fancy coming down and checking it out, or help with the finishing touches please do. Also if anyone has any spare >200MHz Pentiums, RAM or a PCMCIA Ethernet card please get in touch with us. See [www.hacklab.org.uk](http://www.hacklab.org.uk) for more info.

### Donations

- TD, £1; JD, £16; RG, £6; RS, £1; TB, £20; BB, £36.
- Standing orders (regular monthly donations, amount indicates per year) JP, £60.

### Contact details

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249  
[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)  
Enquiries: [info@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:info@freedompress.org.uk)  
Copy/Letters: [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk)  
Subscriptions: [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk)  
Circulation: [circ@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:circ@freedompress.org.uk)  
Freedom Press Distribution:  
[distro@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:distro@freedompress.org.uk)

### Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 2nd October 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 23rd September (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

# News from the inside

### Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they so desire. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!

### It's not just Wilkinsons...

When it comes to making money, private prison companies are in an ideal position; they own the prisons, they own the workshops, and they own the company store at which inmates must buy goods. Prisoners not only spend their pitiful wages at the company store, but their own money, or money sent to them by friends and family (which is rationed so as to encourage

greater work productivity and overall compliance).

Currently, however, the vast majority of British prisons are still in the hands of the State, with private companies being increasingly reluctant to take on crumbling Victorian jails rather than build their own (which offers far greater long-term profits). But even here, the company store monopoly is an attractive proposition for a greedy company, and over the past few years one outfit has become ubiquitous, running prison canteens up and down the country – a company called Aramark.

Aramark are yet another US import grown fat on the misery of incarceration. In the States they are contracted to do prison catering and cleaning, just as they are here in addition to running prison canteens (Aramark also operates in detention centres.) Exploiting prison labour directly and indirectly, Aramark has an annual turnover of \$7.3 billion, making a profit of \$1.6 billion, over the past 6

years. The company boasts that it treats its customers as 'long-term partners' and claims to be a 'company where the best people want to work'.

Unfortunately the prisoners who are forced to pack prison ration packs for Aramark have little choice in the matter, and by the look of their canteen workers they don't have a great deal of choice either.

Aramark has been assured of a total monopoly over their captive clientele, and consequently insist that individual prisons enforce the strictest possible rules so that they profit from absolutely everything a prisoner purchases. Aramark has been handed (or rather sold) a captive hold over prison policy.

When Aramark takes control of a prison canteen, prices go up (sometimes doubling) and the quality and range of goods comes down. The high mark-up Happy Shopper brand (and to a lesser extent their own house brand) is Aramark's stock-in-trade, but in some cases they are even selling prison-issue items.

Prisoners' spending is predictable, particularly as it is being limited to a smaller and smaller range of products, and orders have to be placed anything up to a week in advance. Goods are brought in to the prisons pre-bagged for distribution, reducing costs to an absolute minimum. No need for advertising, no need to have stock sitting around for months, no need for friendly sales staff. Prisoners are offered a stark choice – buy here at these prices or you go without. We're not even allowed to choose birthday cards ourselves. Consumer legislation is routinely ignored by Aramark, and prisoners are prevented from complaining directly to the company about the poor service and blatant exploitation they are forced to contend with.

Like the other parasites who exploit the slave labour of prisoners, Aramark

represents capitalism in its crudest form. Such companies have us where they'd like everybody – forbidden trade unions, denied all employment rights, punished for not working hard enough, locked in a cell at night, ready to work again the next day, with profit sucked out of us in every possible way.

Following their re-election, New Labour quickly made bold claims to take a tougher line on the abuse of monopolies, yet they have encouraged one to be created within the prison system, just as they have encouraged the exploitation of prisoners in every other sense. What a coincidence that Aramark's head office is situated in the Millbank Tower (the site of New Labour HQ).

For those of us behind bars, nothing's changed since the earliest days of capitalism, but that's not to say that we can't fight back. The exploitation of prison labour for profit has only become viable because of the compliance of prisoners. Work strikes, go-slows, and sabotage are some of the best weapons we have, and solidarity action against our exploiters by supporters outside could make a massive difference, as with the occupation of Hepworth Plumbing. When combined, these things and others make a captive work force look less attractive to greedy companies. While prisoners have previously tried to organise petitions and boycotts against Aramark canteens, the company is considerably less vulnerable to action by prisoners than they are to activists outside prison. We need to be able to attack every aspect of the Prison Industrial Complex, and challenge all those who seek to profit from the misery of imprisonment. Contrary to the song, we don't owe our souls to the company store.

Mark Barnsley

First written in September 2001 from the Segregation Unit, Armlay Prison, Leeds.



## LISTINGS

### Brighton

**23rd September** Tony Allen talks about his new book *A Summer in the Park*: a journal of Speakers' Corner at The Cowley Club, 12 London Road, from 6pm to 8pm (admission free).

### Bristol and Bath

**28th September** Monthly planning and discussion meeting of Bristol Dissent G8 at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, from 7.30pm. For info email [dissentbristol@subsection.org.uk](mailto:dissentbristol@subsection.org.uk)  
**Every Sunday** the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

### London

**23rd September** Public meeting on ID Cards, organised by Haringey Solidarity Group, at 7.30pm, Tottenham Green Leisure Centre, corner Philip Lane and Town Hall Approach Road, N15. See [www.haringey.org.uk](http://www.haringey.org.uk)

**6th October** Early Globalisation: transnational anarchism as practice and mediated imagery in the late nineteenth century, Brunel Gallery Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies,

10 Thornhaugh Street, WC1, 6pm. See [www.britac.ac.uk/events](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events)

**10th October** Tony Allen talks about Speakers' Corner, organised by SPES, 3pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn  
**27th November** Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See [www.anarchistbookfair.org](http://www.anarchistbookfair.org)  
**Every Wednesday** the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

### Manchester

**25th September** Northern Anarchist Network conference from 10am to 5pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. Enquiries to Harry at 01422 842558

### Nationwide groups

**Anarchist Federation**  
*Network of anarchist-communists*  
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
[www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
**Antifa**  
*Militant anti-fascist organisation*  
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
[www.antifa.org.uk](http://www.antifa.org.uk)

### Class War Federation

*Class struggle anarchist group*  
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX  
[www.classwaruk.org](http://www.classwaruk.org)

### Earth First!

*Ecological direct action network*  
[www.earthfirst.org.uk](http://www.earthfirst.org.uk)

**Industrial Workers of the World**  
*Revolutionary DIY union*  
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ  
[www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)

### Solidarity Federation

*Anarcho-syndicalist organisation*  
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX  
[www.solfed.org.uk](http://www.solfed.org.uk)  
For details of smaller and local groups see [www.enrager.net/britain](http://www.enrager.net/britain)

### Social Centres

**Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)**  
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh  
[www.autonomous.org.uk](http://www.autonomous.org.uk)  
**The Cowley Club**  
12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA  
[www.cowleyclub.org.uk](http://www.cowleyclub.org.uk)  
**Freedom**  
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

**Kebele**  
14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6JY  
[www.kebele.org](http://www.kebele.org)  
**Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)**  
The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster  
[www.eco-action.org/lancaster](http://www.eco-action.org/lancaster)  
**London Action Resource Centre (LARC)**  
62 Fieldgate Street, London E1  
[www.londonlarc.org](http://www.londonlarc.org)  
**Printworks Social Centre**  
58 Albion Street, Glasgow  
[www.glasgow-autonomy.org](http://www.glasgow-autonomy.org)  
**The Rampart**  
7a Rampart Street, London E1  
**SUMAC Centre**  
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX  
[www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/](http://www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/)  
**1in12 Club**  
21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY  
[www.1in12.com](http://www.1in12.com)  
**56a Infoshop**  
56 Crampton Street, London SE17  
[www.safetycat.org/56a](http://www.safetycat.org/56a)

## Beyond the ESF

A series of anarchist and anti-authoritarian events are being organised to coincide with the largely GLA-stitched-up European Social Forum in London next month. We reproduce below key info, and you can keep up with the latest by checking out [www.enrager.net/esf](http://www.enrager.net/esf)

### Autonomous spaces

We want to create open spaces during the ESF in London from 13th to 17th October, for networking, exchanges, celebration, thinking, and action. We believe our ways of organising and acting should reflect our political visions, unlike the UK ESF organising process which has not reflected the values and charters to which it aspires.

Some of us believe that it is possible to rebuild the ESF to make it closer to the ideals it claims, others wish to go further and say that it only represents a space for the co-option of struggles, and as such, should be opposed. However we are all united in our diversity, and in our desire to act together in ways that respect these differences.

There are now several self-organised and autonomous spaces – they range from legally hired venues to squatted social centres. We invite you to participate in these spaces, to help shape them, to organise workshops, discussions, creative interventions, and practical alternatives.

### Beyond ESF

We want to continue the radicalisation that we have seen during the recent mobilisations against the WTO, G8, IMF and World Bank summits through Beyond ESF – a self-organised, radically different space, and invite participation in direct action and discussion around specific themes: surveillance and control; social centres; precarious work; no borders; zapatismo; G8 Scotland 2005.

Beyond ESF will be based at a large legal venue, with provision for cheap food, meeting space, imc and alt media facilities, and evening entertainment. See [www.wombles.org.uk/auto](http://www.wombles.org.uk/auto)

### Forum on communication rights

The Camden Centre in central London will house an ongoing Indymedia Centre, with bar and cheap food. Thursday will see the Communication Rights Forum with a range of communications and media networks participating, with events on the other days dealing with themes such as surveillance and the security state; biometric ID cards; migrants and noborders; gender; intellectual property; copyright; creative commons; corporate media and alternative media, etc. Saturday will see a one-day event from [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk) See [www.efor2004.net](http://www.efor2004.net)

### Life despite capitalism

A one day event on 16th October outside the ESF on 'Commons and Communities', to be held at the LSE with two strands: 1. *Roots*, discussion of visions, understanding, struggles, success/difficulties around experiences of commons and of reclaiming our powers and communities (commons at work, traditional/indigenous commons, creative commons, alternative spaces, public services, and migrant and precarious workers). 2. *Swarm* will see people working on 'single issues' in previous workshops mixed up randomly to cross-pollinate and contaminate each other. See <http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-index.php?page=LifeDespiteCapitalism>

# Show me the money

## As capital shifts to the outer reaches of the EU and economic growth stagnates, the future looks grim

**G**loomy forecasts of a UK economic collapse seemed to move a step closer last week as figures from the OECD suggested Britain is more likely to crash – and soon – than any other western economy.

Continuing outsourcing and a renewed slide from the manufacturing industry are contributing to a generally sluggish projected economic performance.

OECD's forward indicators have suggested the UK and US will be the only western economies to experience a drop in their economy next year, while European and Japanese fortunes are expected to rise.

House prices, the traditional indicator of Britain's economic health, have begun to stall, falling from 2.1% growth in July to a 0.1% drop in August – worse in the South.

Utility prices have been hiked across the board (Freedom, 4th Sept), including up to 40% on energy prices, 13% for water and 12% for gas. Along with interest rate rises affecting Britain's £1 trillion of mortgage and personal debt, this is helping to falsely boost Gordon Brown's 'consumer confidence' figures without delivering any real benefit to the economy.

As predicted in Freedom (15th May) corporate tax revenues have been hit heavily over the past year, as multinationals use EU law to transfer their tax arrangements to Eastern Europe for free.

A March ruling by the European court of Justice that companies changing their tax jurisdiction can't be charged for doing so has ensured the government has no way of stopping this flight of capital from their coffers.

This will hit the UK far harder than other western nations, as corporation taxes represent a higher proportion of government income (10.5%) than in countries such as the US (8.5%) or France (6%).

The pensions crisis is continuing to gain momentum, with steel workers' union Community planning to sue



ministers for £2.5 billion in lost pensions from bankrupt employers, and the government's Pension Protection Fund facing cuts before it even leaves the planning stages last week.

Finally hangover debts from Britain's recent overseas jaunts are biting into treasury funds, as is the continuing trade deficit and a quiet mass exodus of those who can afford it to 'sunnier climes'.

Governmental debt may not on the face of it seem a direct threat to the UK economy. Increased pressure on govern-

ment funding however, even to help UK business, will be a major factor in any future crash.

The UK government, despite privatisation, still exercises a huge influence over our economy. The more they have to give out in debt repayments, or taking on more loans, the more austere their actions will be at home.

State pensions and benefits would have to be cut, as would funding for the NHS and education. In the event that this pressure accompanies a decline

in the world economy – as is being predicted by many economic analysts over the next few years – the results will be catastrophic.

Gordon Brown has not helped matters by attempting to buy our way out of the previous recession. Although his actions guaranteed we did not suffer as much as the rest of Europe in 2001's economic downturn, it has left us with twice as many problems if it happens again before we've paid off his accumulated debts, which seems likely.

## Under siege in Essex

**A** special on-the-spot report by Rob Ray from inside Colchester's new Anarchist Social Centre as it lies under siege.

An audacious attempt to squat Collwyn House in the heart of Colchester looks likely to end tonight (10th September). The burgeoning social centre – a three floor site covering an estimated 30,000 sq foot of space – has been surrounded in a rarely used tactic – the lock in.

Martin, who has helped organise the centre for the past four days, said: "It was going really well up till now. We've had lots of people round and young people took a real interest in it. People came in from the local colleges and did

their own artwork ... We haven't had a plan really, we've been winging it as we go along. We've had threats from the security guards so we don't want people to leave alone."

The building's owner has drafted in twelve security men in to guard the doors and windows so no-one can get in. One guard said to Martin: "This is personal, I'm coming for you."

An hour into the stand-off, two of the five occupants have begun putting up notices pointing out the astronomical cost of hiring so many guards, prompting them to boast "you're way off, the figure's much higher."

Copies of Freedom have been thrown down from the third floor for several

bored guards. As I sit on the third floor writing this, surrounded by work inspired by topics from Anime to Class War, the fire brigade have pulled up outside, much to Martin's chagrin:

"I've been squatting for around eight years and I've only seen lock-in tactics used once before at a squat in Nottingham. We lasted three days then but by that time we ran out of food and had to leave."

"This time were less optimistic because we have less people here. If we can wait it out today for as long as possible they might work out that they have lost enough money and go."

"We tried to negotiate with them yesterday to stay for a week but he

refused and said that wasn't an option. Then he said he had three hundred in his pocket and would give it to us if we left immediately. We decided we wouldn't be known as the squat that sold out."

To the best of Freedom's knowledge, Collwyn is the largest building to have been squatted this year. Do you know of a bigger building to have felt the touch of squat? Write to Freedom and tell us about it!

• Collwyn was invaded by police later that day, and looks likely to have cost its landlord thousands in paid security – substantially more than if he'd simply allowed everyone to leave after a week.

# The same torn trousers

In this final installment of his investigation, Jack Ray examines the class struggle in Haiti, beyond Aristide and the coup d'etat

Over my last two articles I have worked to explain simply the current crisis in Haiti. The story has been of democratic constitutional governance attacked and overthrown by a coalition of rich nations and the Haitian ruling class. It should though be noted that the exchange of one capitalist government for another, no matter how violent the transition, represents nothing more than a re-alignment of bourgeois priorities and the emergence of a new boss. The repression of the new authority should not lead us absent-mindedly into praise for the old one.

The hypocrisy of the western 'humanitarian intervention' agenda has been best shown in the light of their own promises – of democracy, of respect for human rights and the rule of law. However, the crisis in Haiti should not merely be judged against the promises of UN liberalism; the restitution of pre-coup norms and the return of Aristide would not end the endemic poverty endured by the workers of Haiti, nor would it end the exploitation of the sweatshops.

In the years following Aristide's rise to power in 1990, Batay Ouvriye (a militant Haitian workers' union) informs us that "the Lavalas leadership, by contributing to destroy all the popular components of the large 1984-1990 mass movement, had become a totally anti-popular power," although it is the Haitian business class that has driven this coup d'etat, the Aristide administration had always worked to secure their position and protect their profits. In Batay Ouvriye's words "Lavalas and the bourgeois opposition

are two rotten ass cheeks in the same torn trousers."<sup>1</sup>

"Aristide's decade revealed the very serious limits of populism, the extreme severity of continued workers' oppression in Haiti, as well as the reality of international capitalism's and the local bourgeoisie's stronghold here."<sup>2</sup>

The people of Haiti are now facing the prospect of fighting both international forces and rebel death squads with the possibility of 'victory' resulting only in the return to Lavalas neoliberalism (albeit well-dressed in populist demagoguery).

It is not a question of demanding that capitalism abide by its own inadequate rules. Democratic nation states that are subject to the constant interference of international capital in the management of their affairs can never significantly expect to alleviate the suffering of their citizens, where that suffering is necessary for the likes of Levis and Cointreau to continue making vast profits from their exploitation. Aristide's clear mandate to act forcefully on behalf of the poor could never be fulfilled – the nation's finances were and are dependent on the rules of the only game in town, the whims of the World Bank, the IMF and the multinational investors.

Liberation from the excesses of capitalism cannot be bestowed from above by a benevolent reformer like Aristide, even his petty challenges to the system were unacceptable to the rich and the powerful both inside and outside of Haiti, and untenable given the lack of popular participation either in the reforms themselves or in their defence.

Haitian workers can only depend on their own direct action in the face of



Unrestrained: Haiti's security forces

repression, rights can only be taken, not passively received and they can only be defended in the streets, never by bourgeois parliamentarians.

The struggle in Haiti does not end with the formation of the interim administration and the degeneration into violent repression. Those such as Batay Ouvriye, betrayed by Aristide after his return to power, understand the struggle ahead of them, "Only by our autonomous struggles, with our organisations solely based on our own interests as exploited people, the

majority, workers, will we be able to deal with these two problems which confront us today, namely: the rulers' offensive characterised by the terror and the repression which always go with it; and their attempt to rebuild the same rotten State as always. Today, it is certainly time to make the boundaries clear: No bourgeois-technocratic government must be allowed to fool us or make us deviate!"<sup>3</sup>

It is for the purposes of suppressing this kind of social mobilisation as much as the removal of their old enemy that

the rebels and their backers have now chosen to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the Haitian state. The intensification of their attack on the workers and peasants seems unlikely to occur unchallenged.

#### Footnotes

1. From Batay Ouvriye statement in December 2003.
2. From Ricky Baldwin's interview with a representative of Batay Ouvriye, 2004.
3. From Batay Ouvriye statement in May 2004.

## Republican shambles

page 1 →

20%, 5.9% to the next 20% and 9.2% to the middle 20%.

The average real wage fell over the past year while the economy grew by 4.7%. From 2000 through 2003 the median household income fell by 3.4%. During the same period there was a 12% increase in productivity. This means that most of the people who make the economy grow are not getting anything out of it. This is in line with the last thirty years (bar a brief interruption in the late '90s) when the median real wage has grown by about 8%. The majority of American workers have failed to share in the gains from economic growth and the benefits of faster productivity growth went overwhelmingly to capital.

So we have imperialism abroad to distract people from the class war at home.

### Looking Forward

So for three days the Republicans spouted hatred and fear, lies and smears rather than talk about, say, jobs and the economy. The reason is simple. They cannot talk about the real issues facing Americans because their record is one of failure.

Bush simply spoke about what he would do if he becomes president. Yet he is already President. In 2000 he promised great things and they have not appeared. So he asks us to have faith. And the sign of faith is to ignore reality and believe. So ignore the recession, the fact that Bush is the first President to preside over a net loss in jobs since Herbert Hoover (1.2 million people have lost their jobs, bringing the total to 8.2 million). Ignore that his promise of 'four million new jobs' is five million jobs behind. Ignore that the federal government has a new record

deficit. Ignore corporate fraud and a war based on lies which has cost \$200 billion, nearly a thousand American lives and over ten thousand Iraqis. Ignore that it was he who brought forth the quagmire of post-war Iraq. Ignore that four years of his government saw a 4.3 million rise in the ranks of America's poor and a 5.8 million increase (1.4 million in 2003 alone) in Americans without health insurance (the totals now stand at 35.9 million and 45 million). Ignore falling wages and the elimination of overtime payments. Ignore the attacks on civil liberties and workers' rights. Ignore the multi-billion dollar gift to drug companies that was Bush's Medicare reform. Ignore the pulling out of the Kyoto agreement. Ignore the gutting of the Clean Air Act. Ignore the rollback of hundreds of environmental regulations. Just have faith.

But then Bush did say "our enemies ... never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." So it's a good job that the companies that make the electronic voting machines are all Republican contributors.

The mass protests against the Republican National Congress are a positive sign. But as long as those who love freedom think that it is just enough to vote (or, for that matter, not vote) then the Bush government will not loose much sleep. The vested interests it represents can pressurise and shape any Kerry administration but they cannot pressurise and shape a whole people who know their own strength. The task for anarchists is to help create such a movement of direct action and solidarity.

Only by creating such a mass movement to defend freedom will things get better.

This will ensure that it does not matter who wins the election for a significant part of the population will refuse to cooperate with it when it tries to push the interests of corporate America (and the conservative and religious right, in the case of the Republicans) onto them. For, ultimately, it is not Bush or Kerry who matters but rather the system which produces imperialism, war, inequality and oppression which needs to be combated and, finally, replaced. Voting has (and will) never achieve such a social revolution, only direct action has (and will).

A strong people do not need leaders. That is why governments seek to undermine individuality by treating us like children. The cynically stage-managed Republican National Convention was just a symbol the contempt for the people which is at the heart of the state.

# International

## The same torn trousers

In this final installment of his investigation, Jack Ray examines the class struggle in Haiti, beyond Aristide and the coup d'etat

Over my last two articles I have worked to explain simply the current crisis in Haiti. The story has been of democratic constitutional governance attacked and overthrown by a coalition of rich nations and the Haitian ruling class. It should though be noted that the exchange of one capitalist government for another, no matter how violent the transition, represents nothing more than a re-alignment of bourgeois priorities and the emergence of a new boss. The repression of the new authority should not lead us absent-mindedly into praise for the old one.

The hypocrisy of the western 'humanitarian intervention' agenda has been best shown in the light of their own promises – of democracy, of respect for human rights and the rule of law. However, the crisis in Haiti should not merely be judged against the promises of UN liberalism; the restitution of pre-coup norms and the return of Aristide would not end the endemic poverty endured by the workers of Haiti, nor would it end the exploitation of the sweatshops.

In the years following Aristide's rise to power in 1990, Batay Ouvriye (a militant Haitian workers' union) informs us that "the Lavalas leadership, by contributing to destroy all the popular components of the large 1984-1990 mass movement, had become a totally anti-popular power," although it is the Haitian business class that has driven this coup d'etat, the Aristide administration had always worked to secure their position and protect their profits. In Batay Ouvriye's words "Lavalas and the bourgeois opposition

are two rotten ass cheeks in the same torn trousers."<sup>1</sup>

"Aristide's decade revealed the very serious limits of populism, the extreme severity of continued workers' oppression in Haiti, as well as the reality of international capitalism's and the local bourgeoisie's stronghold here."<sup>2</sup>

The people of Haiti are now facing the prospect of fighting both international forces and rebel death squads with the possibility of 'victory' resulting only in the return to Lavalas neoliberalism (albeit well-dressed in populist demagoguery).

It is not a question of demanding that capitalism abide by its own inadequate rules. Democratic nation states that are subject to the constant interference of international capital in the management of their affairs can never significantly expect to alleviate the suffering of their citizens, where that suffering is necessary for the likes of Levis and Cointreau to continue making vast profits from their exploitation. Aristide's clear mandate to act forcefully on behalf of the poor could never be fulfilled – the nation's finances were and are dependent on the rules of the only game in town, the whims of the World Bank, the IMF and the multinational investors.

Liberation from the excesses of capitalism cannot be bestowed from above by a benevolent reformer like Aristide, even his petty challenges to the rich and the powerful both inside and outside of Haiti, and untenable given the lack of popular participation either in the reforms themselves or in their defence.

Haitian workers can only depend on their own direct action in the face of



Unrestrained: Haiti's security forces

repression, rights can only be taken, not passively received and they can only be defended in the streets, never by bourgeois parliamentarians.

The struggle in Haiti does not end with the formation of the interim administration and the degeneration into violent repression. Those such as Batay Ouvriye, betrayed by Aristide after his return to power, understand the struggle ahead of them, "Only by our autonomous struggles, with our organisations solely based on our own interests as exploited people, the

majority, workers, will we be able to deal with these two problems which confront us today, namely: the rulers' offensive characterised by the terror and the repression which always go with it; and their attempt to rebuild the same rotten State as always. Today, it is certainly time to make the boundaries clear: No bourgeois-technocratic government must be allowed to fool us or make us deviate!"<sup>3</sup>

It is for the purposes of suppressing this kind of social mobilisation as much as the removal of their old enemy that

the rebels and their backers have now chosen to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the Haitian state. The intensification of their attack on the workers and peasants seems unlikely to occur unchallenged.

### Footnotes

1. From Batay Ouvriye statement in December 2003.
2. From Ricky Baldwin's interview with a representative of Batay Ouvriye, 2004.
3. From Batay Ouvriye statement in May 2004.

## Republican shambles

page 1 ➔

20%, 5.9% to the next 20% and 9.2% to the middle 20%.

The average real wage fell over the past year while the economy grew by 4.7%. From 2000 through 2003 the median household income fell by 3.4%. During the same period there was a 12% increase in productivity. This means that most of the people who make the economy grow are not getting anything out of it. This is in line with the last thirty years (bar a brief interruption in the late '90s) when the median real wage has grown by about 8%. The majority of American workers have failed to share in the gains from economic growth and the benefits of faster productivity growth went overwhelmingly to capital.

So we have imperialism abroad to distract people from the class war at home.

### Looking Forward

So for three days the Republicans spouted hatred and fear, lies and smears rather than talk about, say, jobs and the economy. The reason is simple. They cannot talk about the real issues facing Americans because their record is one of failure.

Bush simply spoke about what he would do if he becomes president. Yet he is already President. In 2000 he promised great things and they have not appeared. So he asks us to have faith. And the sign of faith is to ignore reality and believe. So ignore the recession, the fact that Bush is the first President to preside over a net loss in jobs since Herbert Hoover (1.2 million people have lost their jobs, bringing the total to 8.2 million). Ignore that his promise of 'four million new jobs' is five million jobs behind. Ignore that the federal government has a new record

deficit. Ignore corporate fraud and a war based on lies which has cost \$200 billion, nearly a thousand American lives and over ten thousand Iraqis. Ignore that it was he who brought forth the quagmire of post-war Iraq. Ignore that four years of his government saw a 4.3 million rise in the ranks of America's poor and a 5.8 million increase (1.4 million in 2003 alone) in Americans without health insurance (the totals now stand at 35.9 million and 45 million). Ignore falling wages and the elimination of overtime payments. Ignore the attacks on civil liberties and workers' rights. Ignore the multi-billion dollar gift to drug companies that was Bush's Medicare reform. Ignore the pulling out of the Kyoto agreement. Ignore the gutting of the Clean Air Act. Ignore the rollback of hundreds of environmental regulations. Just have faith.

But then Bush did say "our enemies ... never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." So it's a good job that the companies that make the electronic voting machines are all Republican contributors.

The mass protests against the Republican National Congress are a positive sign. But as long as those who love freedom think that it is just enough to vote (or, for that matter, not vote) then the Bush government will not lose much sleep. The vested interests it represents can pressurise and shape any Kerry administration but they cannot pressurise and shape a whole people who know their own strength. The task for anarchists is to help create such a movement of direct action and solidarity.

Only by creating such a mass movement to defend freedom will things get better.

This will ensure that it does not matter who wins the election for a significant part of the population will refuse to cooperate with it when it tries to push the interests of corporate America (and the conservative and religious right, in the case of the Republicans) onto them. For, ultimately, it is not Bush or Kerry who matters but rather the system which produces imperialism, war, inequality and oppression which needs to be combated and, finally, replaced. Voting has (and will) never achieve such a social revolution, only direct action has (and will).

A strong people do not need leaders. That is why governments seek to undermine individuality by treating us like children. The cynically stage-managed Republican National Convention was just a symbol of the contempt for the people which is at the heart of the state.

## Feature

# Free the code!

For a living example of anarchism in action, look no further than the burgeoning free software movement, suggests Asa Winstanley

**T**he free software movement has been around in at least since 1984, but there is little interest in anarchist or general activist circles, beyond a vague awareness of 'Linux'. Yet this is a movement which is starting a revolution in the way individuals, groups and companies use computer systems. There is currently little debate about the subject, something which this introduction aims to address.

## The origins of free software

Free software refers to 'freedom' not price. It is defined by the Free Software Foundation as software that everyone has the right to examine, use and modify for any purpose, either gratis or for a fee. GNU/Linux (the operating system, like Windows or Mac OS) is an example of such software.

To be free to examine or modify software requires free access to the 'source code' of the software. Most software is made by 'compiling' the source code that programmers write and understand into 'executables' – the language computer processors understand.

Non-free commercial software companies like Microsoft or Apple keep their source code a tightly guarded trade secret. This secrecy has negative implications for the quality and security<sup>1</sup> of the software as well as freedom of use.

Free software is all about increasing freedom, thus the free software concept is fundamentally libertarian. Crucially, the right to charge an initial fee for your work does not then give you the right to stop others giving it away.

In practical terms free software means not only can you give your friends free CD copies of GNU/Linux, which you can download from the Internet without breaking the law, you can also modify, (for example) one of the Indymedia code bases to add extra features, or to make it more suitable for your group's website.

Non-programming users often contribute to the community by submitting bug-reports and writing documentation.

## Copyleft

Freedom, however, is not guaranteed – it needs protecting. The most revolutionary idea in free software is 'copyleft'. Copyleft is a subversion of the copyright system, using its own laws. Under copyleft free software licenses such as the GNU General Public License (or GPL), all copies and modifications of the software must be relicensed under the same terms. This guarantees the same freedoms for all.

So the people you gave the free CDs of GNU/Linux to would be obliged to pass on the same rights to anyone they choose to copy CDs for; and your modifications to the Indymedia code base would have to be released under the same license.

This creates a virtuous cycle, a software commons that everyone can contribute to, but no one can take away from. Unlike non-free software, copyleft code ensures an increasing knowledge base from which individuals can draw from and contribute to.

In this way everyone benefits as code can be improved by everyone.

Microsoft has referred to the GPL as a 'cancer' and 'un-American'.<sup>2</sup>

Non-copylefted free software has all the benefits of free software, but is unfortunately prone to being poached by selfish parties. Apple's usage of the BSD internals for OS X is one case of this, which we will look at in more depth later.

## Some confusing terms: 'freeware', 'shareware' and 'open source'

There are several terms to avoid if you are interested in promoting freedom in software. The terms 'freeware' and 'shareware' do not refer to free software.

Freeware has no set definition, but usually means just a free download, with no right to modify or examine. Shareware is 'try before you buy' software which gives no right to full use (it is often crippled with enforced trial periods or incomplete features) let alone examination or modification.

The 'open source' movement has a large amount of cross-over with the free software movement, but has ultimately different aims. In practice the vast majority of so-called open source projects are also free software projects, and most are copyleft. Thankfully, the GPL is by far the most popular free software license, covering many projects including the mighty GNU/Linux (popularly shortened to 'Linux') operating system itself.

However, while the aims of the FSF in particular and the free software movement in general revolve around promoting freedom in software use and creation, the aim of the open source movement (including the Open Source Initiative – OSI) is to improve efficiency of production.

This newer movement has led to something of a schism in the free software community. In practice, the difference is often just a matter of emphasis. However, OSI focus on asking business leaders to behave better in terms of how they produce their software has in the past led to unhealthy compromise.

## 'Software should not have owners'

Uber-hacker Richard Stallman is a sort of hippie, programming world equivalent of Noam Chomsky. He is the head of the FSF, the GNU project founder and the originator of the GPL. He is seen as the main founder and spiritual guardian of the concepts of free software and copyleft.

Although his primary work nowadays is as an international voice for the free

software cause, he was once a prolific programmer (something you could not say about Bill Gates).

He programmed the original versions of the Emacs text editor, the GCC software compiler and worked on other vital parts of the GNU operating system. In fact he worked so hard on them, it is rumoured that one of the reasons he rarely programs now is he developed repetitive strain injury in his wrists from typing.

He once described himself as: "a sort of combination between a liberal and a leftist anarchist ... I like to see people working together, voluntarily, to solve the world's problems. But, if we can't do that, I think we should get the government involved to solve them."

## What is GNU/Linux?

GNU/Linux is a free operating system that is considered the successor to all commercial IT operating systems. It has an estimated base of some 18 million users.<sup>3</sup> Dating back to January 1984 when Richard Stallman started the GNU project. It was partially a reaction to the closing-up of the software culture in the AI labs at MIT where Stallman worked.<sup>4</sup> His aim was to create an operating system – from scratch – which was completely free and unpolluted by inclusion of code from any existing proprietary system.

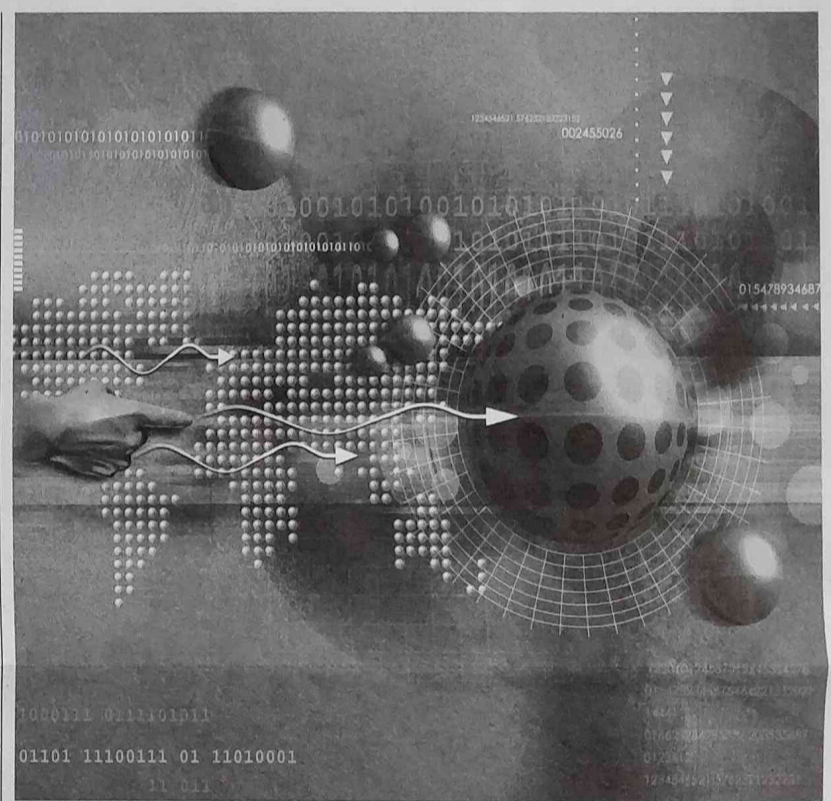
By the early nineties, this goal was largely achieved. Only one vital component was missing – the kernel. A kernel is the central hub of any operating system; it communicates between programs, and between the software and the hardware. In short, an operating system with no kernel will not run.

In 1991 in Finland a computer student called Linus Torvalds started a new hobby. He started writing his own kernel (licensing it under the GPL) and added the GNU tools to make up a UNIX-like operating system. At first he jokingly named it after himself: 'Linux', but by the time many other programmers started to get involved the name had stuck.

When the system matured and started seriously taking off in the late nineties, Richard Stallman and the FSF were unhappy about the name of the system as it was popularly called: Linux. He argued that the GNU project should be credited in the name, seeing as they had done the majority of the work – hence the preferred term: GNU/Linux.

Given these beginnings, GNU/Linux has no single provider – instead, vendors create 'distributions' (distros). These range from professionally polished distros by 'Linux companies' like Red Hat and Mandrake; smaller scale projects for custom uses, like SmoothWall (a Firewall distro); and then there is Debian.

Debian is possibly unique in the world of operating systems. It is created by a



voluntary community of programmers and users. It has a constitution which (unlike the 'Linux companies') guarantees that only 100% free software will be used.

Although Debian has a huge community and many high demand users, it runs via direct democracy with no managers or bosses. Design decisions are made through mailing lists and in committees. Debian reflects the most pure form of the free software ideal. Arguably, it is also technically the best GNU/Linux distro, and is widely regarded as the second most popular after Red Hat.<sup>5</sup>

## Not just operating systems

There is now a free software equivalent to almost any Windows or Mac software you can name.

In terms of Internet and network oriented software, free software far outstrips the number of Windows and Mac offerings (the open nature of free software, however, means that Windows or Mac versions – called 'ports' – of the software are often available too).

For example, the Apache web server is by far and away the most popular web server software in existence.<sup>6</sup> Large corporations including HP, Apple and the BBC use it for high-demand web sites.

Free software effectively runs the Internet. Several software packages used for the fundamental infrastructure of the Internet are free software: BIND makes domain names (like www.enrager.net or www.bbc.co.uk) work and sendmail is responsible for delivering a much of the world's email traffic.

Traditionally GNU/Linux has been mainly used on Internet servers of various kinds. It gave Microsoft free reign on desktops, where it was weakest.

Since the late nineties however, this has no longer been the case. GNU/Linux is rapidly maturing into a user-friendly desktop environment with a whole host of free software applications for normal users.

Email clients, web browsers, CD burning software, office suites, graphics and audio software: it's all there. There are even powerful free database packages, such as MySQL. The only major applications currently lacking are mature desktop publishing and video editing software.

Many IT pundits are predicting an imminent conquest of GNU/Linux on the desktop. This being Microsoft's main revenue source, it's no wonder they are whining. The only serious factor holding up GNU/Linux on the desktop is Microsoft's monopoly practices. Most normal computer users just use what they find already installed on their computer, and at the moment, Microsoft has ways of making sure that isn't GNU/Linux.

But free software has already gone way beyond a computer geek's play thing. It is a force to be reckoned with.

## Footnotes

1. Software whose source code can not be openly peer reviewed is more liable to compromise – either by third party attackers (so called 'crackers') or by the bosses of the institution that controls the software itself.
2. [www.theregister.co.uk/content/4/19836.html](http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/4/19836.html)
3. [www.gnu.org/philosophy/categories.html](http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/categories.html)
4. [www.gnu.org/gnu/thegnuproject.html](http://www.gnu.org/gnu/thegnuproject.html)

Make sure you don't miss the second installment of this article next issue. See back page for more details of how to subscribe.

# Editorial

The Republican front 'Swift Boat Veterans for Truth' has been proven to be liars, in trying to smear Bush's main opponent to the Whitehouse, although you would not know that from the 'liberal' dominated media in the States. Ironically, now that Bush has grudgingly said that Kerry military record was honourable, the SBVt are now, by implication, also calling Bush a liar too. Strangely the Republican talking heads have not mentioned that!

Equally strangely, given that SBVt say they are non-partisan and say they are only concerned that any presidential candidate may be lying about their military record, they have remained steadfastly quiet about Bush's extremely dodgy record. Thus Kerry's record, well documented and verified by all the people who served with him, is under attack while Bush's, the exact opposite, remains off the agenda. Thank God for coincidence!

The SBVt's silence is even stranger given that yet more of Bush's National Guards records are missing. He is just unlucky, what with all the evidence which could show he served just not being there. Even a \$10,000 reward offered this year did not produce a credible eyewitness to support Bush's contention that he showed up to defend Alabama against the Viet Cong in 1972. Yet John F. Kerry, who without doubt shed his own blood in the vicinity of the Mekong, not the Mississippi, is now the indecisive wimp.

This is particularly ironic, given that Bush is scared to speak in public unscripted, particularly about his policies and his record. He's scared to do press conferences, scared to allow anyone who hasn't signed a loyalty agreement into his campaign events and scared to debate Kerry.

The Nazi technique of a turning a lie into a truth by simply repeating it has worked again. Yet this is not the only similarity to Hitler shown by the Republican right.

In the opinion of White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, "this president sees America as we think about a ten-year-old child." Talk about proto-fascism. The notion that the people are children to be protected by their fatherly leader is associated with authoritarian regimes. Arnold Schwarzenegger, at the RNC, repeated Card's imagery, asserting that "America is back ... back because of the perseverance, character and leadership of ... Bush." So, America's recovery is entirely due to one man, the leader. The rest of the population are nonentities. If this sounds familiar then it should, it is the 'leader principle' (*Führerprinzip*) of Hitler's Germany. A principle Arnie's father was an early and willing subscriber to.

The Republican right is proto-fascist. It does not need to crush a militant labour force, as fascism did in Italy or Germany. It is not building on the ruins of a defeated nation but on the world's remaining superpower. The fusion of the state and corporations which was a key aspect of fascist social policy has not been achieved in quite the same way as in classical fascism. The worship of the patriarchal family is similar. It doubtful that it will openly advocate ending democracy or the total elimination of civil liberties, just undermine both behind the scenes.

There are differences, yet the basic principle is similar. As is the way to defeat it. As Hitler and Mussolini showed, fighting fascism by means of the ballot box is unlikely to succeed.

# Commentary

## No gods ...

If 'we' as anarchists are to "encourage initiatives which involve people co-operating independently of coercive institutions," why are you as an editorial then stating it's okay for anarchists to be religious, i.e. be subservient to God and the Church? I thought all anarchists by definition were 'materialists' as opposed to 'idealists'? If anarchism is about 'human equality' how come it's okay for the ruling class to use religion to justify inequality re the class system? You can't be an anarchist and believe in 'God' (sic)! Nor religion!

Terry

P.S. 'If God existed it would be necessary to shoot the fucker.'

*Editors Note: First of all Terry, may I be the first to assure that you that should the good Lord indeed again manifest himself in human (or other mortal/fleshy) form that I would rapidly attempt to ensure His second coming was rather more short-lived than His first. In fact in my basement I keep a bat with a nail in the end specifically for that purpose.*

*And second, while I do believe it to be contradictory for an anarchist to be part of most hierarchical, organised religions I do not believe there is anything inherently un-libertarian about believing in a sentient creator (a reasonable belief after all) or possessing some kind of spirituality. So stop being so sectarian - or you too could feel the wrath of the bat!*

P.S. Only joking about the bat

There is a chapter in Antony Seldon's new biography of Tony Blair simply entitled 'God'. Seldon notes that few British prime ministers have been so influenced by their faith as Blair is. This is the prime minister who prayed most of the night before deciding whether to back 'born again' Bush's invasion of Iraq. According to Graham Dale of the Christian Socialist Movement Blair's "policies are totally influenced by his beliefs. It affects his thinking more than anything."

In America Bush and his cabinet are almost to a man and woman Christians. The third best selling book in the States at the moment claims in all seriousness that Bush's invasion of Iraq and his support for Israel partly fulfils Biblical prophecy. The Republican Party at its convention last week adopted policies aimed at wooing the Christian right like opposing gay marriages. Fundamentalism, east and west, is on the rise and over a hundred years after Bakunin wrote God and the State religion remains part and parcel of government the world over.

I think those who believe in god are wrong. I cannot see any evidence that god exists. A belief in a god (or gods) is not necessary to live a moral or ethical life. Quite the opposite in fact when you consider how many people have and are dying in the name of religion. God is a human invention. Evolutionary psychologists argue that people through out time have invented religion because it is a neat way to keep people in line and maintain order - behave in this world or you'll go to hell for eternity, basically. If someone wants to believe god - and worldwide billions do - that's their business. I have some respect for people who are motivated to do good deeds by their religious beliefs like the Salvation Army handing out food to the homeless or Quakers taking direct action against military bases or Buddhists helping the poor.

Most anarchists, of course, have

traditionally opposed religion, hence Bakunin's famous and neat slogan: 'No gods! No masters'. On a (non-anarchist) left email discussion group I belong to a poster was accused of being racist because he criticised Islam. In the Guardian recently Polly Toynbee received a lot of flack for pointing out some of the less palatable aspects of Islam. In the left's desire to free the world of discrimination, prejudice and racism it should not shy away from criticising Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism or any other of the 12,000 religions that compete for people's attention.

Some of the left's, particularly the RESPECT's (which saw candidate Yvonne Ridley wearing a t-shirt telling people 'Don't panic, I'm Islamic!'), courting of Islam is about getting votes and power. It is though an abandonment of the left's commitment to progress and emancipation for example not support women's right to chose in order to obtain the support of the religious. In Republican communities in the Six Counties Sinn Fein in the past also dodged difficult issues like abortion to gain votes from Roman Catholics. Religion and radical politics do not go together.

Anarchists on the whole have not fallen into the trap than many of the left have of assuming their enemy's (American imperialism) enemy (Islam) is their friend. This isn't always true however. In calling for an end to the occupation of Iraq for example some anarchists have given little thought to what will replace the current regime. Get the Americans out sure but then what? Hand the people over to the religious clerics or warlords? Are those fighting America resistance fighters or religious fundamentalists fighting for power.

In the month when the home of British humanism the Conway Hall is celebrating its 75th anniversary membership of the Secular Society is at an all time low. There is a view that religion does not matter. This is a mistake. Despite falling attendance at churches in Britain religion is still a major and growing force in society. From the prime minister to faith schools god is on the rise. The growing power of religion is something we need to take seriously.

Richard Griffin

## IWCA

With regards to the IWCA, in addition to basic anarchist objections that they want to spend half their time being councillors and mayors, there are quite a few specific criticisms that can be made.

During the mayoral election in London their blurb included a paragraph entitled "Refugees, spreading the cost" which was particularly dodgy. Their slogan "working class rule for working class areas" is in my opinion also dodgy. It's not just that we want the whole bakery, it is also that such a slogan suggests a localist territorialist exclusivism and self-imposed ghettoisation with possible subtle racial overtones. It runs the risk of falling back on narrow conservative social stereotypes of who and what the 'working class' is and where are they supposed to live. In the are of London where I live the majority of the population are clearly oppressed and dispossessed and exploited but they don't necessarily fit into what would normally be regarded as the 'traditional working class' community. They are diverse and pluralistic and don't really form a visibly coherent self-conscious 'class' any more.

Obviously one of the problems with a 'working class' exclusivist politics,

whether the IWCA or class struggle anarchism, is the on-going question of what exactly do you mean by 'classes' and how do you define 'working class' and where do you draw the line? And is it necessary for the several million dispossessed and exploited people who might nonetheless be culturally identified as 'lower middle class' rather than 'working class', and all the self-employed, small traders and small farmers, etc., to be excluded from the struggle? Also in those parts of the world where they are still a significant part of the population, how do peasants fit into the struggle?

I'm not sure it helps much to talk in terms of the 'proletariat' either, as this tends to be a very vague abstract marxist philosophical generality and refers to long-term general tendencies which never fully form. maybe 'class' is breaking up, maybe on the one hand there are just competing elites and gangs of oppressors and exploiters, and on the other hand diverse dispersed masses and multitudes of oppressed and exploited?

Paul

## Anti-fascism

Once again, I'm afraid, a Freedom editor misrepresents me (4th September). I have not said that the best way of fighting fascism is by increasing the class struggle. But that is another issue, not under debate here at the moment. [Editor's Note: we did not claim this, another reader called 'Anti-fascist Ed' did.]

Once again an advocate of anarchist violence fails to provide practical detail. What exactly is the course to be of this violence against fascists that he (I find it unlikely that it is a 'she') envisages? What are the weapons to be? Bare fists? And if the fascists resort in self-defence to knuckle-dusters, knives, bottles, iron bars or even guns, are the anarchists to respond in kind? Are we to assume that the anarchists, whatever means are used, are always going to come off best? That seems unlikely, even if we ignore the probable relative lack of discipline of the gung-ho gangs of anarchists as they wrangle among themselves. The only way anarchists, or anybody else, are going to come out on top against fascists on the streets is by being even nastier than they are. I would not want any part of my life to be under the influence of such successful warriors.

Bob Potter is right. The only way we can hope to overcome oppression and injustice is through ideas and organisation. I do not believe there is a single example in history of the weak succeeding against their oppressors by resorting to violence, and that for obvious reasons. Passive resistance has not often succeeded either. But it has from time to time, sometimes very impressively. Anarchism, though, will certainly never become a powerful idea so long as its reputation is tarnished by its association with violence.

As for David Irving, the treatment meted out to him was surely a terrible denial of one of the first principles of anarchism, a form of that coercion that the Editorial on the same page as Anti-Fascist's comment speaks out against. It is sad that some anarchists still want to reject that principle, enunciated by Voltaire some two hundred and fifty years ago: I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it.

Amorey Gethin

## Drugs

At last I have been shown the error of my ways! Thank God we have intellectuals of the calibre of Alex Allison to show

us right from wrong, to point out that no one has ever been harmed by drugs, legal or illegal. There I was assuming that hard drugs were dangerous, when in actual fact its just the legislation causing the damage. I am now feeling much more confident knowing that one can smoke crack with no potential physical damage to lungs, risk of paranoia, psychosis or schizophrenia, that one can inject heroin without fear of overdose, HIV or physical withdrawal symptoms. As soon as we start giving addicts as much as they want, problem solved! Perhaps we could also legalise murder too, then the crime rate on that would go down to zero. I was entirely wrong in believing that this was oversimplifying matters!

Okay, so maybe there is a small connection between the war on drugs and the war on terrorism. Both have been made bogeymen by press and Politicians and, indeed, drugs have been used as reasons for recent US Military involvement in Columbia and Afghanistan. However, this link is some-where between tenuous and incidental. It does not further the drugs debate one scintilla. Therefore, I state again, I have no interest in commenting.

This shall be my last letter on the subject, because, lets face it, it's getting boring!

I would like to congratulate Freedom on an excellent 7th August Issue. Richard Griffin's reflection on the nature of choice in the modern day was excellent and insightful. The review of F-9/11 was also enjoyable. The editors assertion that anarchists should take advice from Adolf Hitler on how to deal with your enemies was maybe a little questionable, but Hey-ho.

RIP Ian G - 'Rebel Without Effect'  
Stevey\_R

## Want ads

Hey punx, do you want to part with your old records/tapes/zines or shirts? I'll pay you good prices for good condition items. Contact Clint on 07780 634884, shortfuserecords@hotmail.com or visit Aldgate Press.

We're looking for short (preferably under two thousand words) histories of radical events, strikes, revolutions, wars, etc., from a libertarian/working class point of view for a people's history web site. Contact admin@enrager.net or write to us at enrager.net c/o Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## Quiz answers

- Germany, enacted after the Nazis used them to manipulate popular opinion. Current German chancellor Schroeder wants to bring them back, though.
- Numble pie was made of deer offal and was a poor person's dish. Gradually the word changed to umble, which was conflated with humble and chimed with that word's meaning.
- Gerrymander, meaning to change electoral boundaries for political advantage. The word comes from one of the electoral districts Gerry agreed apparently looking like a salamander.
- In 1793, when US Supreme Court Justice Wilson, talking about states rather than the people in them, said "The United States", instead of the 'People of the United States', is the toast given. This is not politically correct."

# REVIEW

## It might be pricey, but Berry's history of French anarchism has many lessons for today, argues Larry Gambone

**Y**ears ago, I came across something that Jean Maitron wrote which aroused my curiosity. Maitron said that France had as many anarchists in the mid-1930s as the 'classical' period of anarchism (1890-1910) I would have loved to research this further and discover what lessons, if any, our 1930s comrades might have for us, but this entailed spending a lot of time in Switzerland at the CIRA (International Centre for Anarchist Research) in Lausanne and I couldn't afford to do this.

Imagine my surprise and pleasure upon discovering David Berry's book, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement 1917-1945*, published in 2002. Imagine my displeasure that publishers Greenwood Press would charge \$65 for it. But I had to have the book and so shelled out. Expensive but worth it, for Berry did all that research, in a most exhausting manner too, going through hundreds of papers, pamphlets, letters and so forth. He showed that Maitron was right, French anarchism took a nose-dive in the '20s and revived to pre-war levels or even greater in the mid-1930s. At this time there were literally 'tens of thousands' of anarchist activists and supporters. Perhaps as many as 200,000 people in France had some level of sympathy for anarchism. This non-party, was in fact the third largest 'party' of the Left.

The largest and most influential organisation, the Union Anarchiste (UA), formed in 1920, had three thousand members and their paper *Le Libertaire*, had press runs of 20,000, on one occasion 100,000. Nor was anarchism just Parisian. Even Nice had a UA group of three hundred members. It should be pointed out that most anarchists did not belong to the two main organisations, the UA and the Federation Anarchiste Francaise (FAF),<sup>1</sup> so their numbers were even greater than formal memberships would indicate.

Berry also explores the social make up of the anarchist movement. The common Marxist put-down has always been that anarchism attracted only artisans – a 'dying breed' and therefore anarchism was a primitive form of socialism. What he finds is that most 1930s anarchists were blue and white collar workers. In fact there was no difference in social composition between the anarchists and Communist Party (CP) members.

Anarchists were active in the strikes of 1936 and CP members were deserting the party for the UA. Anarchists led the support for the labour movement in Spain, in one year sending a hundred truck-loads of supplies to the anarchist CNT-FAI and holding meetings of up to 15,000 people in the red banlieus of Paris. According to veteran anarchist Sebastien Faure, there had never been as many anarchists in France as in 1936-38.

The UA organised an anti-stalinist, anti-fascist, Revolutionary Front composed of left-wing members of the Socialist Party, Trotskyists, the Socialist

Workers and Peasants' Party, the Groupe Revolutionnaire, 'moderate' syndicalists of the CGT, revolutionary syndicalists like Monatte, co-operators, and radical pacifists. Many anarchists, it turns out, were already active in the CGT, the cooperative movement, and yes, even the Socialist Party. The anarchist movement had begun to re-established itself as *the* revolutionary movement, just like in the period 1890-1910. The Stalinists counter-attacked, excluding anarchists from trade union work, slandering and harassing them wherever possible.

The momentary success of the CNT-FAI was a real shot in the arm. Spain provided a living example and the Spanish comrades (especially Buenaventura Durruti and the FAI) exerted strong pressure to overcome sectarian splits within the anarchist and syndicalist movements and to work towards the Revolutionary Front. The UA outreach to non-anarchists in its 'common ground' approach also paid off, as Socialists and non-aligned trade union members became attracted to anarchism.

However by 1939, all this positive energy was gone, and so too most of the organisational efforts. What happened? The defeat of the Spanish Revolution by Franco and Stalin took a heavy toll on morale. Sectarian infighting drove away scores of new members. The problem here was that the FAF considered the UA to be 'revisionist' because it cooperated with non-anarchists and 'traitors' like the Jouhaux's 'reformist' CGT, in the Revolutionary Front and Spanish support work. To add to the misery, Leon Blum's Popular Front government was defeated and the right-wing Daladier regime installed. The new government wasted no time attacking the anarchists and persecuting the Spanish exiles. The 1938 General Strike called by the CGT to protest Daladier's reactionary policies failed, due in large measure to the aforementioned demoralisation. Overall, the long-term tendency did not favour libertarianism. Everywhere, centralisation, big government and corporatism were advancing at a gallop. The last chance to turn this around was 1936.

Berry concludes that French anarchism attracted people during periods of 'revisionism', that is, when worn-out dogmas were being challenged and new ideas were coming to the fore. One such period was the late 1890s, when the self-defeating dogmas of 'propaganda of the deed' and insurrectionism were confronted by the new concept – syndicalism. The 1930s saw the UA challenge the sectarian isolationism and hostility to organisation that plagued the 1920s movement with a 'common ground' approach. Indeed, the '20s were a sectarian hell-broth. Anarchists were split into a dozen broad factions; pro and anti-Bolshevik, a minority (Jean Grave and Emile Pouget) who had supported the War and the majority who didn't, individualist and non-individualist, Platformist and anti-platformist, militants and 'moderates'



Madrid in 1935: the Spanish revolution gave the French movement a great boost

and two different, and mutually hostile, revolutionary syndicalist factions.<sup>2</sup> Note that few of these disputes had much to do with the essential content of anarchism such as anti-authoritarianism, federalism, and direct action.

One of the problems never fully resolved (even by the UA) was that most anarchists were not part of any specific anarchist group and thus tended to get lost to the movement within the various co-ops, unions, women's, or rationalist groups they belonged to. Many preferred to join the Socialist Party. This made the anarchist movement seem a lot weaker than it actually was, and tended to discourage militants from becoming anarchists. A strong federation would have been a pole of attraction to many people who became communists or socialists instead.

The UA 'common ground' concept had its origins in the pre-war writings of Sebastien Faure who saw the 'revolutionary forces' consisting of not just the anarchists but also syndicalists, left-socialists, the coop movement and the rationalists. In 1917, the anarchist known as 'Mauricius' wrote that anarchists themselves needed to unite around a few clear principles, "the greatest number of people possible." That same year the anarcho-syndicalist Raymond Pericat proposed an international composed of left-socialists, syndicalists and anarchists.

UA theory was further advanced in the late 1930s. Up until then revolutionary anarchists had a naive view of the revolution; that it would be quick and total. The events in Spain showed this would not be the case and

that some sort of transition period was required, the state would have to be dismantled, rather than abolished in one glorious stroke. The state would have to be replaced by decentralised federal and direct democratic structures, a procedure the speed of which would depend upon the consciousness of the population. Unfortunately the collapse of the movement and World War Two prevented any further development along this line. And as one might expect, the idea of a transition period was considered treasonous by the sectarians.

What lessons do I draw from the French experience? For one, there is nothing automatic to history, nor was the decline of our movement a result of some social evolution.<sup>3</sup> Had the CNT-FAI alliance with the Marxist POUM alliance even partially succeeded, say by only keeping the Stalinists and Fascists at bay, the French movement would have continued growing and the pressure for anarchist unity and the Revolutionary Front would have been ever stronger. (Stalin knew exactly what he was doing in Spain, he had to destroy the anarchists and their left-socialist allies, (POUM) otherwise these tendencies would eventually threaten the Communist Party.) Secondly, the correctness of the 'common ground' approach and the utter futility of sectarianism. Thirdly, organisation. We need a federation that great numbers of anarchists and sympathisers can belong to. Such a federation ought to be based upon a few common principles and not the usual programmatic diarrhoea – an

organisation to pull people together, make them realise they are part of something greater than their own local coop, union or whatever project they are involved in. Fourthly, the international perspective. One group pushing ahead helps all the rest. If this was true in 1936, imagine today.

### Notes

1. Not to be confused with the contemporary francophone Anarchist Federation. The Second World War broke any organisational continuity.
2. The Monatte group which had members in all the trade unions federations and the Besnard group which formed a small separate union federation (CGT-SR) in opposition to all the others. The FAF was aligned with the CGT-SR while the UA worked with the other anarcho-syndicalists.

**FREEDOM**  
ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP

84b Whitechapel High Street

London E1 7QX

tel/fax 020 7247 9249

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Saturday

from 12 noon to 6pm

You can also use our mail order service

or order books online via our website.

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)