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NEVER MIND THE BALLOTS

Bears shit in the woods; the pope is indeed Catholic; Genghis Khan was more than a little right-wing and a tosser is in the Whitehouse, writes Iain McKay.

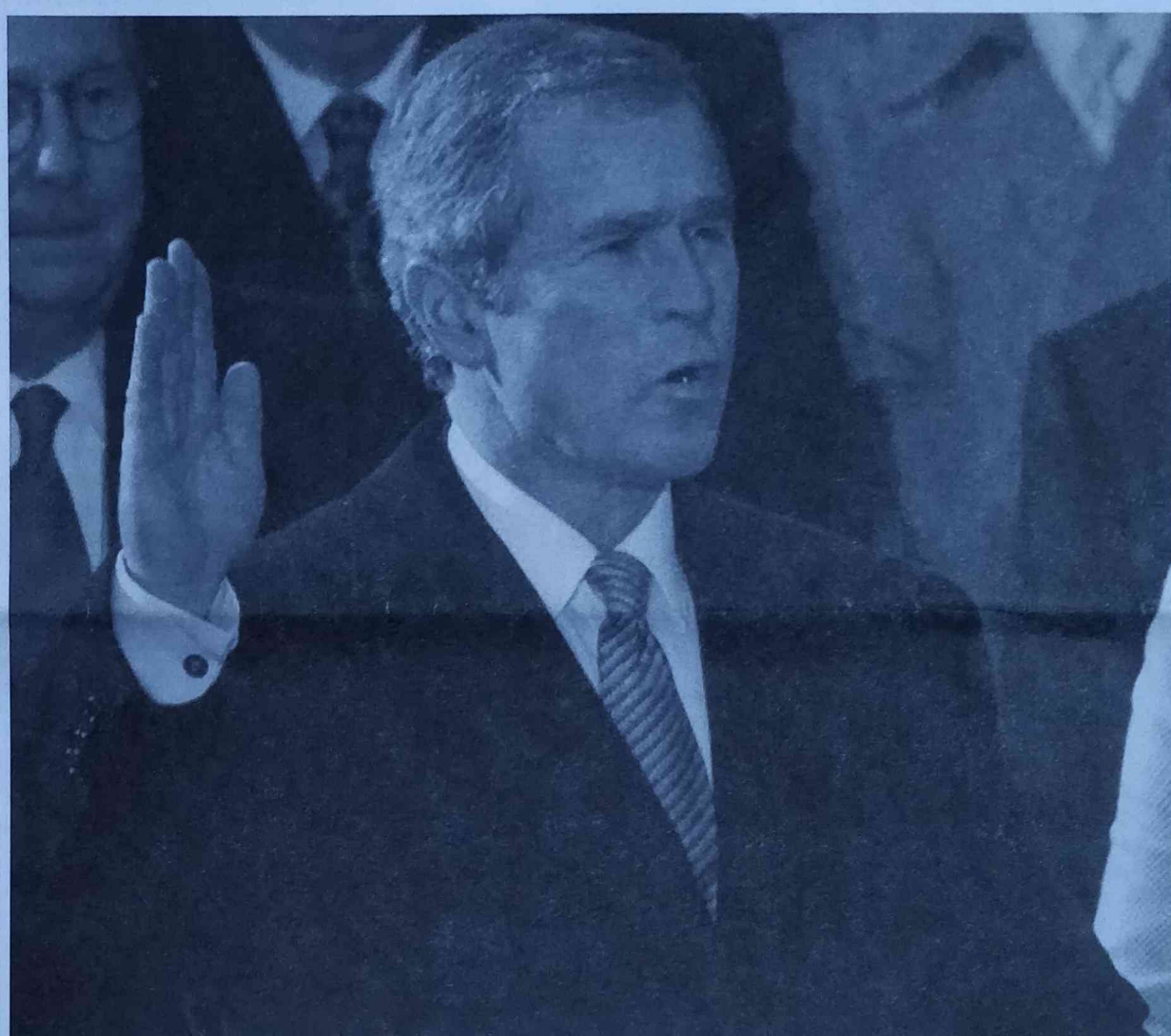
You can lose more jobs than any President since the Great Depression. You can preside over millions of families losing their health care. You can take away working people's overtime payments. You can impose a tax cut which benefits the already ultra-rich elite ('my base' as he famously admitted). You can lose all three Presidential debate. You can smear someone who fought in the war your dad's contacts got you out of. You can start an unnecessary war based on lies that killed 1,100, mostly working class, troops as well as countless Iraqis while *wasting \$200 billion and increasing the risk of terrorism*. You can fail to live up to your promise to 'smoke out' Osama Bin Laden (and get your cronies to proclaim his latest video as a "gift"). You can poison the environment by undermining or not enforcing environmental regulations. You can turn a substantial budget surplus into a gigantic deficit. You can let 9/11 happen and then fight the creation of the 9/11 Commission, resist speaking to them and then do not act on their recommendations. You can value faith over science. You can refuse to speak with the press or the public and can only let supporters into your election rallies ... and you win the popular vote by several million votes.

Welcome to George Bush's America, where the majority of voters have just announced to the entire planet that they are fine with all this. It's an important announcement, particularly for Islamic terrorists whose propaganda has just been confirmed. But this is unfair. Only 51% of American voters (representing around 30% of possible voters) chose

an ultra-rightwing big-business theocracy as its preferred ruler. Yet it is clear that the other 49% are considered irrelevant. Not only are 'liberals' demonised by the right, which expresses utter hatred and contempt for them, the Bush Junta quickly talked of its new 'mandate' given by having a staggering 1% more voters than the losers. Given the radical right-wing agenda they imposed after stealing the election in 2000 (and without a popular majority) we can only expect one thing – even more of the same but supersized.

Perhaps it will be argued that the economic and military messes will now have to be cleared up by those who caused them. But that is doubtful. Bush's wealthy supporters are not affected by the war or unemployment. It will be ordinary Bush voters who will face the draft and poverty – along with those who rejected him at the ballot box. The only people to really benefit, other than the elite and the Christian fundamentalists, are the satirists. They will have lots of material to work with.

Civil liberties will be further eroded. Abortion rights will disappear in most, if not all, states and women's reproductive rights will become property of the state. The chasm between the ultra-wealthy and the rest (which has been growing since the 1980s) will increase, cementing plutocracy as the proper name for the American system. The merging of church and state will continue, as will military spending. Social security will be privatised and the tax system 'reformed' to place the burden on the working class even more, with workers facing (yet again) stagnating wages, longer hours and job insecurity. And, who knows, perhaps the draft will be introduced to secure the colonisation of Iraq and, depending, to invade Iran.



Perhaps we can draw some comfort that Bush supporters are pretty much ignorant of the facts. Indeed, they hold opinions about Bush and the world significantly at odds with reality and while faith is a powerful thing, it cannot hold back reality indefinitely. Particularly when they have elected a leader whose policies make that reality

as bad as possible for the non-elite.

According to exit polls, 22% of voters stated that 'moral issues' was the key issue. In other words, most Bush votes considered this their key issue. Morals which, for example, apparently tolerate unnecessary wars which kill over 100,000 and are justified by lies and spin. Yet even as Kerry was demonised

because he had 'Massachusetts values', the Christian right states had higher divorce rates than Massachusetts (which has the lowest divorce rate in America). What explains the contradiction? Simply, by 'moral issues' or 'family values' it is meant 'know your place in the social hierarchy'. It also means

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OUR HOMES OUR WAY

The Labour government is continuing its campaign to privatise council housing. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott is now proposing that council housing ownership should be handed over to Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Rents and tenancy agreements would no longer be set by the council. This complete privatisation is what campaigners have been arguing that ALMOs were always about.

For the majority of people living in council housing, their need for a decent home and community continues to be overlooked by the government. Social

housing only directly benefits working class people and so is not a political priority. Yet a very high percentage of council residents of working age contribute to the economy through their labour and still they continuously see their rights for decent homes disregarded.

It is obvious that the last twenty years of under investment has led to a backlog of repairs and renovations. Failure to build new social housing has created homelessness and forced people into the private sector where rents are much higher. In addition, in the past few years £13 billion from council tenants' rent

has been siphoned off to finance housing benefits. This is the poor paying for the poorest.

As anarchists, we believe decent housing for all is a basic human right and we should not have to be going cap in hand for what is due to us. Under the current system we will have to be creative and struggle in solidarity to find new ways in order to improve our living standards.

Direct action is one way that can bring about change for those affected by substandard housing and sociable communities. It means getting directly involved: organising or joining tenants and residents meetings. As tenants, we

need to collectively push forward our own demands.

Meeting disrupted

Haringey (North London) tenants and other local residents recently disrupted a Council meeting when the Labour council wouldn't listen to their delegation. They were angry because the council would not hold a full ballot on the future ownership and management of council homes. Protesters inside the Wood Green Civic Centre held up council's procedures for 40 minutes by demanding they be given the right to have their voice heard. The protesters left peacefully when

the police arrived, called by the Council.

The campaign is starting to have an effect. Recently, at the Labour Party Conference, government housing policy was overwhelmingly rejected by delegates in favour of stock retention and direct investment in council housing. But we can't sit back and wait for politicians, we need to organise ourselves. One option that we need to pursue is the 'rent strike', but this will take strong determination, solidarity, good organisation and a lot of hard, grassroots work.

Taken from *Solidarity*, newsletter of North and East London Solidarity Federation.

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 22

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

Come to the Anarchist Bookfair on Saturday 27th November at ULU on Malet Street, London. Freedom will be there all day, from 10am to 7pm with stalls for the bookshop and newspaper – please email us if you can lend a hand. We're also co-hosting a meeting with Black Flag called *Anarchist Media: Use it or lose it* from 4pm to 5pm in room 3C, so why not come to that too?

The Freedom Hacklab has finally been opened by the London Hacklabs Collective. Free computer and internet access is available every Saturday during the bookshop's regular opening hours, with donations welcome! Some weeks it will be open on weekdays too. See www.hacklab.org.uk

Donations

GG, £10; JS, £10; FS, £50; DR, £10. Our total one-off donations since August amount to £555 and, with standing orders at £550pa, that makes a grand total of £1,105 – well on the way to our aim of £5,000 by next August – so please keep sending in those donations and bankers' orders so we can keep going, expand and eventually challenge the corporate media!

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 27th November 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 18th November (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 wish. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!

Begoña Pombo da Silva released

Begoña Pombo da Silva, one of the Aachen Four, and sister of Gabriel Pombo da Silva, has been provisionally released by the German authorities. She is still accused of taking part in several robberies, but a lack of evidence led to her release on bail. A trial is expected to take place in February 2005. In the meantime Gabriel, Jose, and Bart need support. For more information see www.brightonabc.org.uk

Solidarity with Esteban Sierra

Esteban Sierra is an anarcho-punk activist, originally from Columbia, involved in the Insurgente Records label, often doing 'peoples kitchens' providing

vegetarian food, and solidarity activities in the Latin American libertarian movements. Recently Esteban was arrested in Hof, Germany, for being 'illegal'. Now he is in Hof deportation prison, where the German State wants to keep him locked up for two months before deporting him. Currently his comrades are doing everything possible to gain his freedom, or at least shorten the time he spends in prison before his deportation. They are calling for solidarity actions in support of him, and for people to write letters of support: Esteban Sierra, JVA Hof, Stelzenhofstr. 30, 95032 Hof, Germany.

Polish solidarity night in Bradford

On Saturday 20th November there will be a Polish solidarity night at the 1 in 12 Club in Bradford. The event is to raise much-needed funds for Bialystok ABC and Anti-Fa. There will be Polish food, music, and of course vodka, as well as a speaker from Bialystok ABC and Anti-Fa, Poland's second finest export, Soja. Tickets cost £3 and the event starts at 7.30pm.

Another judge, another pervert

A Judge who happily sent May Day protesters to prison, confirming his reputation as the Hanging Judge of

Horseferry, has quit – after being accused of paying for sex with rent boys.

Judge Roger Davies resigned after spending the last year on leave, which must have been a chore on his £90,000 a year wage. Due to his early retirement, not only has the investigation which would have brought out the sordid details been conveniently stopped, but he's also still in line for an index-linked pension worth £45,000 a year. Add to that a lump sum award of just over £100,000 and he's got himself a nice little pension deal worth around a million quid.

Davies was due to try more protesters nicked in May 2003. One of those he bailed, a young Brighton man, said "I was expecting him to come down hard on me but he just smiled at me over his glasses; in hindsight I find that quite worrying."

It seems Davies has done very well, relying on the old boy network to clean up after his indiscretions with the young boy network.

This comes only four months after another judge, David Selwood, was allowed to keep his pension after being convicted of downloading child porn. In 1997 Selwood sent three editors of Green Anarchist magazine to prison, after they were found guilty of publishing

information liable to 'incite' others to commit 'criminal damage'. Selwood described the magazine as "The most contemptuous document I have ever seen in my entire career." What about the kiddy porn he'd been looking at?!! (source: SchNEWS)

Campaign Against Prison Slavery pickets

Pickets of the stores of high-street retailer Wilkinson, who use forced prison labour to pack their goods, continue. Recently, Brighton ABC held two more pickets of the company's Worthing store, and plan to do more soon. There have also been recent pickets of Wilko branches in Wales, Yorkshire, and the North East. For more information see www.againstprisonslavery.com



LISTINGS

Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

London

27th November Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See www.anarchistbookfair.org
28th November 'Robert E. Grant, the man who told Darwin the theory of evolution', a lecture by Donald Roomm at the Ethical Society Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, at 11am.

Newcastle

11th December Projectile preview at the Side Cinema (see also below)
11th to 13th February 2005 Projectile: anarchist festival of film and ideas, exploring the past, present, and future of anarchism, and featuring rare and radical films, music, entertainment, talks and discussions. Projectile also at anarchist bookfair in London on 27th November. See www.projectile.org.uk

Somerset

23rd November Open meeting with

talks, video and discussion, 7.30 pm Minster Rooms, Ilminster (behind the Dolphin Pub) £2. For info call 01460 53165 or see www.southsomersetpeace.infoaction.org.uk

International

26th December International Pizza Punk Day, so mark this day in your calendar to practise the ancient arts of mutual aid, voluntary association and, of course, vegan pizza making workshops. See www.eroding.org.uk/pizzapunx.htm
6th July 2005 Global Day of Action at the opening day of the G8 Summit www.agp.org or www.dissent.org.uk

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Network of anarchist-communists
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Antifa
Militant anti-fascist organisation
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk

Class War Federation

Class struggle anarchist group
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org

Dissent

A network of resistance against the G8
www.dissent.org.uk

Earth First!

Ecological direct action network
www.earthfirst.org.uk

Industrial Workers of the World

Revolutionary DIY union
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk

Solidarity Federation

Anarcho-syndicalist organisation
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
www.solfed.org.uk

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

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk
The Cowley Club
12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.freedompress.org.uk

Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6JY
www.kebele.org

Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)

The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster
www.eco-action.org/lancaster
London Action Resource Centre (LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1
www.londonlarc.org

The Rampart

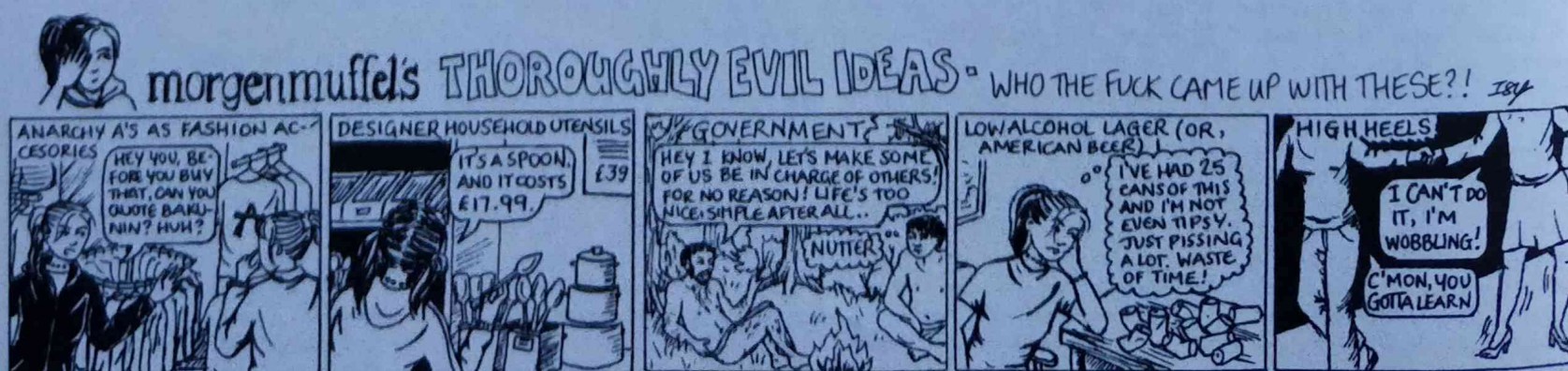
7a Rampart Street, London E1
SUMAC Centre
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX
www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/

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



You can get Isy's 'zine from Freedom for £1 (plus 60p p&p inland, £1.20 elsewhere). 'Morgenmuffel reminiscing' continues in our next issue.

News

STRIKEWATCH

Laing workers fight con-trick

On the morning of Friday 5th November, workers for construction giant, Laing O'Rourke at the Channel Tunnel Rail Link held a sit-in strike in protest of their trade unions reps being barred from the site.

One hundred and fifty workers refused to return to work until GMB Union reps were allowed onto the site. Management backed down and gave in to the workers' demand to allow union reps on site.

Workers at sites across Britain have been harassed by bosses to sign a new contract (rebranded 'con-trick' by workers) which will see the basic rate of pay halved, cuts of £20 per day for holiday pay, bonuses paid at the discretion of management and a period of 40 days notice given for days off. People were told they'll be sacked if they don't sign the new contract. Construction union UCAAT has told them to sign it. Unsurprisingly, most staff are refusing representation by UCAAT.

Steve Cross, from the joint sites committee, said that in forcing management to back down, the workers had won the first victory in what could be a long dispute.

Civil servants strike over jobs

Over 200,000 civil servants went on strike on Friday 5th November over government plans to cut as many as 100,000 jobs. The strike closed museums and disrupted jobcentres, driving tests, benefit offices and Customs.

It is estimated some 90% of Inland Revenue staff in Northern Ireland were out on strike, while only eight out of 140 of staff in the Department for Work and Pensions call centre in Liverpool turned up for work. Around 1,200 workers attended a protest march in London, which ended in a rally at Westminster Cathedral Hall. Elsewhere, driving examiners and staff for the Royal Parks also joined in on the strike.

Mark Serworcka, general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) and part of the so-called 'Awkward Squad' of trade union leaders said: "The strike has demonstrated the strength of feeling among civil servants who are prepared to stand up in defence of public services ... We hope that the government will take note and begin to listen." Gordon Brown said the protest would not affect the government's decision.

Social workers march

Liverpool city centre saw a march of 400 people in support of striking social workers (see Freedom, 30th October). The strike, which has been going on for eleven weeks but has received very little press attention from local media, is not a dispute about pay.

The workers are fighting cuts in staff and reorganisation and the culture of bullying from senior management, which is thought to go right to the heart of Liverpool city council.

Spanish railworkers strike

Railworkers for the Spanish company Renfe-AVE have gone on strike, against poor working conditions. The strike is predicted to be a very long, bitter and hard fought one and the striking railworkers are requesting protest emails, solidarity emails and financial contributions.

Emails should be sent to press office at press@renfe.es

Prescott's regions stink

As residents of the North East emphatically reject an Assembly, what next for devolution, asks Rob Ray

Proposals to introduce a series of new regional assemblies have been all but scrapped after a referendum in the North East saw a 78% No vote.

An attempt to wrest powers away from both central government and local councils, regional assemblies are the brainchild of John Prescott.

Under half of the North Eastern electorate turned out to vote, suggesting that public disdain for the idea may be even more overwhelming than figures suggest. Yes campaigners for the new political bodies tried to convince voters that it would 'transform' the North East, but were drowned out by the No camp, who argued it would waste money and make no meaningful headway.

According to the government's public policy document, Regional Assemblies would have taken control of housing, land usage, transport policy, health and culture. Their funding – £500million in the case of the North East – would have been entirely reliant on Prescott's consent. He would, as Secretary of State, have had further powers to offer extra grants in to encourage the new political body's co-operation.

Effectively, this would have given Prescott near-direct control over several areas of policy where local councils are currently defying him.

Regional Assemblies would have little

direct connection to their constituent parts, and less incentive than local councils to fight measures such as large-scale building projects and changes to the health service.

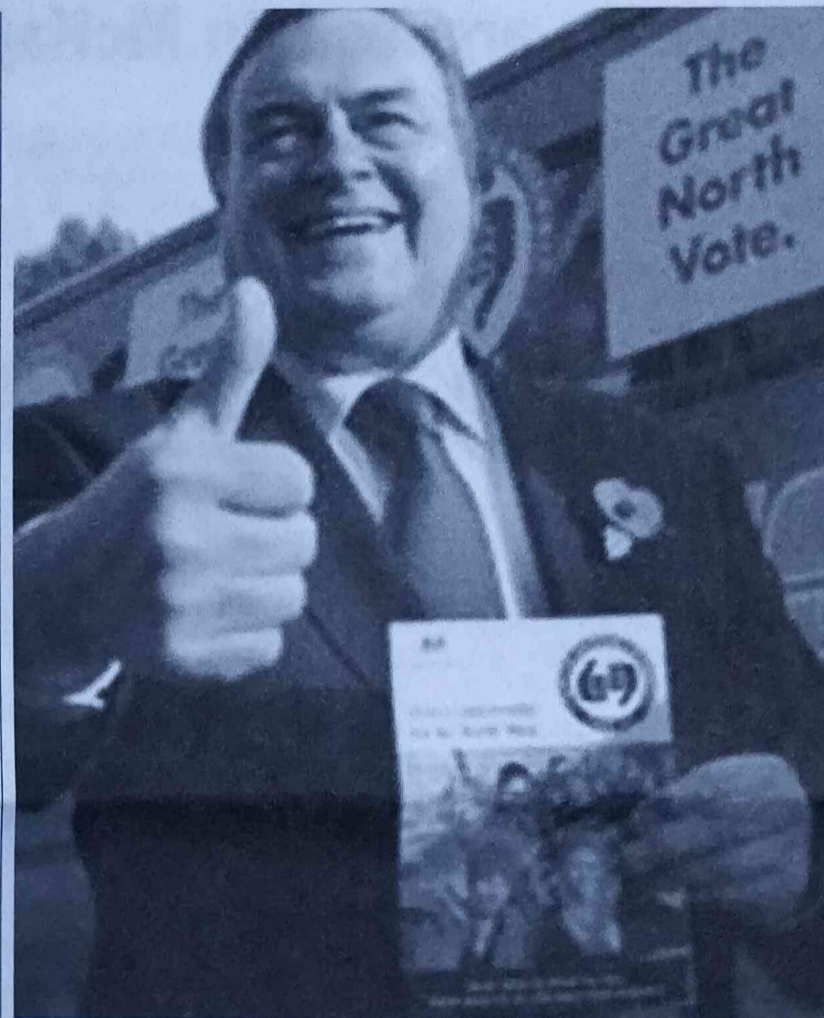
Theoretically, the subject is still open, as the Bill passing Regional Assemblies only requires one Yes vote in one of the eight regions listed to go to the Commons. But the scale of the defeat has largely dissuaded central government from trying again.

The eight regions would be East Midlands, East, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.

Referendums are still currently planned for the North West and Yorkshire, but it is thought these will now be dropped. The incident has severely damaged Prescott, whose failure to get his department more influence has severely weakened him.

No votes were strongest on the outskirts of the region, seemingly reflecting a distrust of centralised authority rather than the politician's explanation that people don't think a regional assembly would have enough influence.

It is expected that Prescott and Blair will return to the drawing board, with commentators predicting a return to Unitary Authorities.



In brief

Journalism doesn't pay

Regional reporters are being urged to protest over wages this month, as their pay is among the worst in Britain for professional work.

New research from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has shown that barely a quarter of journalists earn the same or more than the average professional wage of £35,766, and nearly half earn less than the national average salary of £26,151.

The increasingly militant attitude of NUJ unionists comes as the regional press struggles to maintain its profit margins in the face of declining sales – prompting industry-wide attacks on working conditions.

Staff at Manchester Evening News (MEN) caved in to demands from employers that they increase their hours at the last moment last week, having initially struck for two days.

MEN, part of the Left-wing Guardian group, have brought out a series of different editions, forcing existing staff to work evenings and weekends with threats over jobs and pay.

The scrapping of union agreements in the '90s has led to journalists losing pay faster than any other professional group.

How ironic.

Press freedom

Cuba has been listed as the second worst place for press freedom in the world, according to a world index compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

Ahead of only North Korea, Cuba falls behind China, Laos, Iran and Syria. The UK came 28th, with RWB citing Northern Irish paramilitaries as the major contributing factor to our poor score.

Although interesting in that it shows graphically the inability of State Socialism in Cuba to allow autonomy of thought, the index fails to equally represent corporate influence.

Whereas State Socialism has a very easily measured effect on press freedom – censorship is directly imposed – the impact of corporate news media owners and advertisers on press output is much more difficult to quantify.

In conventional indexing it would be difficult to catch every instance where Rupert Murdoch (for example) sends an internal memo to his editors telling them to run with a certain angle on any given story. Equally it would be almost impossible to pick out every example of a regional newspaper self-censoring material about an important advertising client.

Never mind the ballots

→ page 1

curtail (or ban) any lifestyle they disagree with or consider evil. In other words, the 'values' rooted in obedience, conformity and a fear of the different and a family based on patriarchy rather than the love between equals.

Ironically it is the logic of the capitalism which undermines loyalty and permanence and promotes a set of values that is destructive of family life. By voting for 'moral issues' or 'family values' over the last few decades, the Christian right have done most to destroy them. Ultimately, though, this was not about 'morals' (in whatever sense) but rather power and the fear that oppressed classes, sexes, races and sexualities are freeing themselves from the social hierarchy which places (rich) white men at the top. Bush urges 'unity'. When someone in power says that, it translates as 'do as we tell you'.

The fact that Kerry lost in Ohio, which had seen 232,000 jobs evaporate and 114,000 people lose their health insurance during the Bush years, is incredible.

But it is Bush who has been elected to the Presidency (for the first time), apparently fairly (although the role of the company providing voting machines cannot be dismissed given that it contributes to the Republicans and its head said in 2003 that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president next

year"). This highlights the problem with statist democracy. Democracy is undemocratic, little more than an elected dictatorship. Only a system based on self-management can ensure that people have a meaningful say in the decisions that affect them.

Economically, this means replacing the semi-feudalism of capitalism with workers' control. Politically, it means replacing the centralised, top-down state with a decentralised, bottom-up federation of communes. Similarly, Bush shows that the majority is not always right. Why should 51% of the populace dictate to the other 49%, particularly when the former want to impose an authoritarian regime. In an anarchist system, those communes which wanted to live free would simply secede. Those who wanted to impose their way of life ('family values') would be able to impose it on themselves and no one else.

There is a pressing need to build an anti-parliamentary movement that can stop them – as well as any other would-be rulers, whether right, left or centre – and build the new world in the process. That means opposing the false values of the right by showing the possibility of a movement inspired by the values of liberty, equality and solidarity. It means going beyond party allegiances and building a social movement based on a shared social position, love of liberty and visions of a decent society.

Mission accomplished?

The death toll in Iraq passes the 100,000 mark, but it's all good for business, argues Iain McKay

Let's recap. It has been proven conclusively that Saddam not only did not have Weapons of Mass Destruction, he did not have WMD programmes. It has been proven conclusively that he had no links with 9/11 or al-Qaeda. So much for the initial lies and excuses for the war. What of the last one, the one tacked on when the public simply refused to believe the others: the so-called 'moral' case for war.

Given its hypocrisy, it was easy to dismiss. The long practice of US-UK support for dictators like Saddam suggested that it was nonsense and subsequent events have proven this to be the case. Now the real human costs of the war are becoming known. According to *The Lancet*, the respected British medical journal, the invasion forces (mainly the US air force) killed at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians (most reportedly killed being women and children). This is significantly higher than previous estimates, based on media reports, of up to 16,000. Little wonder the US forces announced that it would not bother counting the numbers it killed – during and after the invasion.

So where does that leave the 'moral' case for the war? Given that it is often alleged that Saddam's regime killed 300,000 civilians, this means that the US-UK have killed a third as many Iraqi civilians in a year and a half as Saddam did in nearly a quarter of a century. Even the 300,000 figure is unconfirmed as, so far, only 5,000 or so persons have been found in the mass graves Blair used to justify his war (graves, incidentally, which date back to when Saddam was an ally to the US and UK or to after the first Gulf War when the US preferred him to a popular uprising). All of which is hardly very moral, no matter how you look at it or try to spin it.

The *Lancet* report is based on extensive household survey research in Iraq in September of 2004 and, significantly, excludes data from Fallujah (this was because it might have skewed the nationwide averages as it has been subject to so much US violence – it is being bombed now to soften it up for a future attack). While the methodology of the study is strong and is the standard used in such circumstances (and was used in Bosnia and Kosovo), it does involve extrapolating from a small number and so could be incorrect. However, there can be little doubt that the numbers killed are in the tens of thousands rather than around the ten thousand formally believed.

So, in summary, the war has confirmed the arguments of the anti-war movement. It was not about WMD or 9/11. It had nothing to do with democracy or freedom (after all, 18 months in and the Iraqi people are still occupied and have a puppet regime appointed by the ruling

colonial powers). It has caused immense suffering and death. It has not made Iraq, never mind the world, safer. The Bush Junta and its poodle have been al-Qaeda's best recruiting agent for ages (foreign fighters in Iraq have been reported as joining Iran, one of two the remaining 'axis of evil' states, in preferring Bush). Nearly 400 tons of explosives have been looted in Iraq after US troops failed to secure them in their push for Baghdad. Given that this site, Al Qaqaa, had been listed by the CIA as a WMD site, this lack of concern shows how worried the Bush Junta was about the truth of their own pre-invasion propaganda. And let's not forget that many of the nuclear facilities were stripped bare too.

So, thanks to Bush, the most powerful high explosives in the world are now in hands of unknowns along nuclear related material. And the Bush Junta's defence? Well, it is to ignore all the evidence and blame either the Iraqis (or the Russians!) who spirited it away before (or during!) the war or the troops on the ground (an interesting take on 'support our troops'). Bush's ineptitude and lying really does know few bounds.

So what was the real reason for this war? An insight can be gleaned from a recent report ('Adventure Capitalism', www.gregpalast.com) by investigative reporter Greg Palast (author of the excellent book 'The Best Democracy Money Can Buy').

Palast acquired a 101-page US State Department document, entitled *Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Growth*, which was part of a larger under-wraps program called *The Iraq Strategy*. This plan for 'liberated' Iraq was to completely rewrite its "policies, laws and regulations." The plan, which had obviously been begun years before the war, aimed to impose a new regime of low taxes on big business, and quick sales of "all state enterprises" to foreign operators. It also included a program for toughening the target nation's copyright laws while removing tariffs and slashing taxes. In other words, it wanted to reshape Iraq as a neo-liberal's and corporate lobbyist's wet-dream.

Blair, of course, insisted that the war had nothing to do with Iraq's oil (which explains why US troops managed to secure the Oil Ministry and not weapons sites like Al Qaqaa). The plan belies this as it, to quote Palast, "leaves nothing to chance – or to the Iraqis" and states that Iraq would have to "privatise" its "oil and supporting industries." Now given that Iraq was meant to become a democracy, how was the Bush Junta going to get this plan through when few, if any, Iraqis would have voted for it? Simple – do not allow them to vote until it is a done deal.

Hence the delay in elections and the occupation. Few remember now that



the Bush Junta's first appointed ruler, General Jay Garner, promised elections in 90 days. But 90 days is not enough time to privatise a nation's oil industry nor redraft its trade and tax laws. Annex D of the Plan Garner was handed three months before the invasion stated lays out a strict 360-day schedule for the free-market makeover of Iraq and so elections would have to wait. Palast quotes corporate lobbyist Grover Norquist explaining that "the right to trade, property rights, these things are not to be determined by

some democratic election."

Garner was quickly replaced. His successor, Paul Bremer, installed himself in Saddam's old palace and cancelled the scheduled meeting of Iraq's tribal leaders called to plan national elections and appointed the entire government himself. National elections would have to wait until 2005. More than enough time to lock in the laws, regulations and irreversible sales of assets required by the Economy Plan to make Iraq a free market paradise. Bremer issued exactly 100 orders to remade Iraq in its image

and left behind nearly 200 American 'experts' to make sure its stays that way. Corporate America (particularly Bush's supporters) was laughing all the way to the bank. Mission Accomplished.

Eighteen months later, US and UK troops are still killing and being killed to ensure that taxes, property rights and regulations are determined by US capitalists, not the Iraqi people. Over 100,000 dead Iraqis? Over 1,000 dead, mostly poor, US and UK soldiers? Merely collateral damage in the pursuit of imperialist interest.

Maldives: a silent rebellion

When you mention the Maldives to someone, it is usually followed by wishes to go on holiday there. On the surface the small archipelago state looks like paradise, but away from the travel brochures, there is a despotic dictator with an autocratic government where government oppression has caused many to rise up against the state with calls for democracy and more liberty.

First off some background on the Maldives: it is a small country with a population of 318,000, its capital is Malé. The Islamic nation is a post-colonial outpost of the British Empire. The current head of state, and longest-reigning leader in Asia, is President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom who has been in power since 1978. Maldivian presidents are chosen in a yes-no referendum after voters are presented with a single candidate chosen by the Majlis (Parliament). The president appoints the entire judiciary and the cabinet, leaving a State virtually under the control of one person. The main opposition is the liberal-capitalist

Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) which as of late has become more militant with aspirations of overthrowing the government, with some elements of the party considering armed.

Since 1988 Gayoom's regime has been under threat – initially from Sri Lankan mercenaries, which Indian commandos put an end to, and later from its own people. Government repression was stepped up, and in January 2000 it was found that political opponents who stood in the previous election in November 1999 were illegally detained and had been tortured. While this attracted token condemnation from the 'international community' no action was taken.

In 2003 Amnesty International accused the Maldives government of political oppression, torture, arbitrary arrests and unfair trials. Later that year in September riots broke out across Malé which were sparked by the deaths of four prisoners. Many prominent opponents of the government were arrested. Gayoom claimed the protesters were arrested "to

safeguard public property." Pro-democracy activists disagreed. "The entire reformist movement is in jail. They have not violated any law", asserts Latheef, a dissident activist based in Colombo.

Curiously Gayoom was still re-elected in a referendum by a margin of 90%, although his opponents claim this was due to the fear of the repression which always results from a strong anti-government vote.

The country continues to be in a state of civil unrest and an official state of emergency remains in place following anti-government riots in August of this year. The regime was still reeling from this blow when many pro-government activists switched sides and now it appears Gayoom could come toppling down. But what would come next? No one can be sure, but if the MDP manage to assume leadership of the resistance movement it will be another liberal state with a mixed economy unless the people can find their own way to freedom.

Chris Strafford

Feature

British anarchism

We conclude our two-part interview on the impact of the great miners' strike on the anarchist movement

Ben Franks is a lecturer in Social and Political Philosophy at the Crichton Campus of the University of Glasgow in Dumfries. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary anarchism* (Dark Star and AK Press).

From the 1960s until the strike you argue that British anarchism was dominated by 'liberal' anarchists rather than class based anarchism. What is 'liberal' anarchism and how did it come to dominate the movement? What was the impact of its domination?

By liberal anarchism I mean the anarchism that develops from individualism. This division between 'liberal' and 'class struggle' anarchisms, dates back to the nineteenth century. For instance in 1885 Peter Kropotkin was asked by Henry Seymour to work on Seymour's individualist anarchist paper, but the partnership only lasted one issue as the area of disagreement between anarchist communism and individualism was so great. A year later Kropotkin set up his own paper – Freedom.

There is no single factor responsible for the decline of class struggle anarchism from its high points in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to its nadir by the early 1980s: although the role of Leninism does seem to be important in the fluctuating fortunes of class struggle anarchism.

Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution the revolutionary movement in Britain was diverse and fluid, with socialists of all stripes often working together co-operatively, for instance in strike support, in assisting refugees or in acts of solidarity (the Malatesta Release Committee for instance). Class struggle anarchism was an important feature of this revolutionary milieu. It was the victory of the Bolshevik forces that gave Lenin and his particular version of Marxist strategy incredible power within revolutionary circles. He used this success as validation of his methods. Lenin also had access to Russia's financial reserve (the infamous 'Moscow Gold') to encourage other revolutionaries to conform to his approved model. Revolutionary socialist groups were amassed into a Second International with Lenin's plan providing the political blueprint. Those groupings that remained outside were harshly criticised by Lenin, as his political formula required only one Communist Party for each country. As John Quail puts it in *The Slow Burning Fuse*, those outside of the Communist Party, such as the anarchists, in Lenin's terms, "were not just wrong but counter-revolutionary."

Leninism became increasingly synonymous with the revolutionary left as a whole at the expense of more heterodox socialist movements. Class struggle anarchism, which was antagonistic to this centralised form of organisation, gradually lost its influence in the wider workers' movement. For decades the surviving class struggle anarchist tradition, with severely reduced numbers, resources and confidence, was reduced to tail-ending Leninist actions, criticising from the sidelines.

Even the language of class struggle became identified with authoritarian socialism and the apologists for totalitarian regimes. As Glen Rhys so memorably put it at the time: "The more talk of class struggle the more Stalinist." So it is understandable, though I believe mistaken, for anarchists to have completely abandoned class analysis and taken up the terminology of individualism, which at least presented itself as anti-authoritarian.

You suggest that there is a direct link between forms of action undertaken by the miners and the growth of what has become known as the anti-globalisation movement. You also believe that this helped put anarchism centre stage in protests like the anti-roads campaigns of the early 1990s. Can you explain?

There is a link, but it is quite a circuitous one, rather than one which is directly linear, that is to say it is not a matter of mechanistic cause-and-effect. I am not, for instance suggesting that we can jump from a fairly localised (that is to say mostly British-based) industrial dispute straight to the more geographically dispersed anti-globalisation movements. But there are ways in which the dispute, certainly in the British context, affected libertarian movements, which in turn helped shape the anti-globalisation movements.

If we think of some of the main features of the Miners' Strike we can see echoes that were later resonant in anti-globalisation and environment battles a decade or two later. First, the Miners' Strike was a fight against the imposition of neo-liberal economic governance onto whole communities enforced by new laws that permitted vicious application of state force against settled communities. Second, the success of Thatcher's government in breaking the strike was down in part to the greatly developed international trading relations, such that coal from Chile and Poland (and now China) was able to replace lost domestic coal stocks. The cheapness of fuel was to be measured solely in terms of capital costs, not the more important consideration of human life. Around six thousand miners a year die a year, in China, according to the Communist



Orgreave, 18th June 1984

government's 'official' figures. The switch of production from relatively safe British mines (an increase in safety standards that had come about through previous miners' struggles) to the more lethal operations in Eastern Europe and the Far East can be considered a form of mass slaughter sponsored by the Conservative Party. It is this struggle against ever-worsening labour conditions through global trade that has been one of the rallying points of the anti-globalisation movement.

Third the strike was co-ordinated by the strikers and their families, not by Arthur Scargill, despite the news coverage of the dispute at the time. It was the pickets and their families and friends that created networks of support between them, and the groups of supporters from outside the pit towns. These were often international too, with support coming from across the globe and involving many different identities, including the Black Trade Unions in South Africa, to gay and lesbian groups in South London. These links of solidarity cannot be predicted in advance, just as the anti-globalisation movement was made up of shifting alliances and networks of diverse groups, who on certain issues can find common ground and thus create new forms of struggle, which have been previously unpredictable.

A fourth feature, which was to have resonance into the 1990s was the way

that the battle against capitalism extended beyond the location of the workplace. The miners and the state both identified the control of the roads as a site of conflict between commodity transfer and resistance. The pickets' movements were increasingly subject to state control, whilst the miners attempted to obstruct coal movements by blocking roads. The battle over the roads, the function they serve and who controls them became a feature of the major environmental and Reclaim the Streets protests of the 1990s.

Finally, despite the defeat of the miners' campaign, the determination of their struggle and the large allegiances that were built up in support still provide inspiring images of resistance. These are still recycled in radical magazines today, see for instance *Earth First!*'s *Do or Die!* and *Class War*'s 2004 calendar.

A number of people including you have believed that links would be formed between industrial disputes and other issues. While the Liverpool Dockers dispute showed that such links are possible there seems to have been no sustained growth in broad based social campaigns. Do you agree?

Again these broad generalisations are problematic, but I tend to agree with you. Although there have been a number of examples like the Liverpool Dockers involvement with radical

environmentalists, anarchists and revelry-raisers, the links between RTS and London Underground workers and even *Earth First!* and the NUM co-operating together in anti-open cast mines campaigns, this is an area which is underdeveloped, and might provide exciting opportunities.

There have been insufficient links between workplace struggles and other areas in which those which dominating power exercise control. If one of the problems of syndicalist anarchism has been the pre-eminence given to the workplace as the primary site for revolutionary activity, then one of the weaknesses of non-syndicalist class struggle anarchism has been the low priority given to issues arising from the workplace, where, regrettably we tend to spend so much of our life whilst awake (or in my case semi-conscious). Although I acknowledge the present efforts of the Anarchist Workers Network, and in the past groups like the Trade Union Network of Anarchists and the various occupational sections in *Class War* (*Class War* CW postalworkers, healthworkers, etc.), and also the syndicalists like *Solidarity Federation* (and the *IWW*) to rectify the situation – but none, to my knowledge, so far has made significant impact. I guess I'm as guilty as many in this regard [*the AWN has in fact recently folded* – editors].

Editorial

Commentary

Anarchists were amongst the first to recognise the benefits of the web as a means of communication, propaganda, organisation and information. Well before authoritarian left groups had a presence in cyber space anarchists were there arranging and promoting demonstrations like Mayday through the web. Type 'anarchist' into Google and you'll get 283,000 results, compared to 188,000 for 'Marxist'. Given how prevalent the internet is in the life of many people today it has probably played a significant role in raising the profile of anarchism and attracting people to our ideas in recent times.

The internet is in fact particularly suited to anarchism. Open, democratic, participatory, non hierarchical and generally out of the control of the state (although as the recent seizure of Indymedia's server and the attack on the US based Raise the Fist site shows not completely immune from the state's attention).

So far so good but is the web becoming a problem for us? I think it might be. For some anarchists though posting on the web is becoming a substitute for engaging with real politics. Go on any anarchist discussion board and you will read post after post after post. You will notice that some people seem to spend most of their day posting – it's almost like an addiction. Some of the stuff that's posted is rubbish, egotistic or self indulgent (sometimes all three), a fair amount though is decent and some very good. Whatever the quality though it is clear that there are plenty of anarchists spending a fair amount of their time on the web. Why is it that some people spend hours posting but won't bother writing for the main anarchist newspaper? Couldn't some of those frenetic posters give up a little of their time and help out? It seems odd that in less than a year 14,500 articles by 800 odd people have been posted on enragenet but the movements main publications are struggling.

This wouldn't matter so much if the web had replaced paper based sources of information and propaganda but it has not. Despite early predictions people still like to read books, papers and magazines, but as a movement we are struggling to produce and support these.

Here's another thing – the internet isn't real life. It is not a substitute for meeting people, organising activities in local communities or whatever. For some people though I suspect posting on discussion lists has become their idea of being active when in fact it can be a distraction. The movement will only grow and develop through human contact with real people not someone who glories under a clever assumed web name.

The web's a great tool and anarchists are great at using it. The sheer volume of stuff that is posted on sites like enragenet though makes it hard though to see the wood for the trees: yeah their may be something important buried away there about international solidarity but I can't be bothered to plough through a plethora of posts about some ones favourite books and what they'd do if they won the lottery to find it.

I'm not suggesting we throw the baby out with the bath water. It's about balance. Sure use the web but decide whether the time you are spending on it is really worth it. What else could you be doing? Writing an article for Freedom perhaps?

Miners

A couple of comments on the first part of the interview with Ben Franks about the miners' strike of 1984/5 and its relationship with anarchism (30th October).

Of course Freedom supported the strike editorially, and Freedom Press also gave practical help to the strikers. A group of miners from Blythe, Northumberland, came to London seeking funds to support their families, and set up a stall on the street outside Whitechapel Art Gallery. They were not anarchists, but Freedom Press took the opportunity to support the strike in a practical way by supplying them with accommodation. Freedom Press had three rooms (the building was then shared with Aldgate Press). We cleared one of the rooms for use of the miners, who used it throughout the strike period to store the jumble they collected for sale, and to sleep in. They had free use of our telephone, which increased our telephone bill fourfold. After the strike was defeated they went home and we never heard from them again, not even a thank-you postcard, but that was never the point.

At the time there was a regrettable split in the British anarchist movement, between the supporters of Freedom Press and associates of the late Albert Meltzer [*this dispute is now long over – editors*]. A historian, who relied on Meltzer and company as sources, would find no mention of our practical aid to the striking miners. I trust Ben Franks will take the opportunity to set the record straight in his forthcoming book.

The distinction between 'individualist anarchism' and 'class-struggle anarchism' is largely a matter of words. All anarchists agree that the purpose of society is to increase individual opportunities, that the chief beneficiaries of increased opportunities would be those who have fewest opportunities in this society, and that it is good for slaves and wage-slaves to rebel.

Mistrust arises from the use of 'individualism' and 'class struggle' in other contexts. Self-styled individualist anarchists are suspected of embracing the creeds of Thatcherism and 'anarcho-capitalism'. Self-styled class struggle anarchists used to be suspected of believing that Stalin was infallible, and are now suspected of embracing more recent variants of Marxist-Leninism. It might save energy if anarchists were to drop the secondary labels.

Donald Room

'Direct' action

Your editorial on the Duelfer Report (16th October) ends with these words: "Ultimately, to end imperialism we need to end the system which generates it: capitalism ... Only by direct action and solidarity in our workplaces and communities can we do that."

Surely it isn't only capitalism that generates imperialism? There were empires long before the modern capitalist system emerged after the break up of feudalism. Even if we end capitalism, then, there's no guarantee that imperialism will end with it.

Don't you think that both imperialism and capitalism may have the same root cause – the ambition to be top dog? The urge to be or to identify oneself with something great? 'Great Britain' for example?

As long as people are conditioned to regard this ambition as a great virtue, how can there be universal solidarity? Surely there can only be the limited solidarity of one class, one nation, or

one empire battling against another for ever, or until the human race destroys itself.

If we continue to ignore the psychological causes of the present disastrous state of the world I fear that any action, 'direct' or otherwise, can only add to the mess.

Francis Ellingham

On religion

With Hindu fascism and religious fundamentalism on the rampage in India, supporting the creation of a nuclear state and free market capitalism; with the Christian evangelist George Bush on the rampage in his 'war on terrorism', affirming that he has God on his side in his defence of 'freedom and democracy' (i.e. global capitalism and US hegemony); with another well known Christian, the sanctimonious Tony Blair giving support to such corporate interests home and abroad; and, finally, with Islamic fundamentalists thinking they have divine authority to oppress women and to murder homosexuals and unbelievers, do we really need the pious Alfred Todd preaching to us atheists about 'tolerance' and on the virtues of religion? Religious beliefs and rituals may offer 'consolation' and spiritual 'redemption' to some people, but since time immemorial religion has always given divine sanction to political elites and tyrants, to all systems of inequality, and to all forms of oppression and exploitation – and still does.

Brian Morris

Having followed some of the correspondence on anarchists' attitudes to religion (Richard Griffin, Terry, et al), I wish some of the antipathy had been better thought through.

I consider that the main function of religion was originally – and for many still is – to help people manage their distress at the most difficult aspects of the human condition, from which none of us are exempt.

Even the most fortunate of us will suffer pain and infirmity, and the death of people close to us. Our own death is also certain. In this, we are in no more favoured a condition than our earliest ancestors.

There is very early evidence of the dead being systematically buried facing the direction of the rising sun. It is convincing evidence of a people reaching towards an idea of the continuity, or rebirth, of that which they could not bear to lose for all time. So, some sort of ritual symbolism has been with us for aeons.

Any critic who expects to be taken seriously on a significant aspect of human behaviour or belief needs to show some understanding of its function in the lives of those humans involved. It is difficult to take seriously anyone – professed anarchist or otherwise – who does not have a proper regard for the universal human condition, and the ways in which people have sought to cope with it, professing anarchism being, perhaps, one of them.

If the idea of an egalitarian, non-hierarchical society is to spread wide enough to mean anything in the world, professed anarchists are going to have to make common cause with a wider circle of humanity than their own hole-in-corner coterie. In order to do so they will need to acquire sufficient philosophical depth to allow them to relate to the common humanity of other human beings as they find them.

If they cannot manage that, anarchists may increasingly be regarded (if they

are considered at all) as the unthinking, unengaged bunch of misfits that their detractors are all too ready to dub them.

Alfred Todd

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Rilindje Fara e Mirë Bibliotek Projekt (RLP) is a radical non-profit free reference library in Tirana, Albania. If readers would like to donate any radical printed matter, videos, CDs, etc., this would greatly help our project. We have no PC or internet access so we feel very isolated.

Contact RLP(A)2, Postfach 256, CH-4142 Muenchenstein, Switzerland.

Roman A. Dogan for RLP-Albania

I've been in communication with Manchester AF about starting a Federation here in Sheffield. We are hoping to set up a meeting to discuss how to build here in Sheffield. Contact sheffield_anarchists@yahoo.com for more info.

Anarchist media

➔ page 8

However, looking at the other journals we could have, we are sorely lacking. We have three magazines (Direct Action, Organise! and Black Flag) all of which do roughly the same thing. That is a needless duplication. Why have three magazines with three editorial teams when one magazine could be used to complement Freedom with more in depth articles and analysis? By combining into one journal, we could increase its size, print run, regularity and pool of available articles and people willing to read and sell it. While I would prefer the title of any such journal to be Black Flag, I've aware that Direct Action is the most regular of the existing magazines and it would be more sensible to build on that success.

As well as a single quarterly (or even monthly!) magazine, we could also do with a yearly (or more frequent) journal along the lines of the old 'Cienfuegos Anarchist Press Review'. As well as reprinting the best of anarchist writing (both from home and abroad) in the previous year, it could be the home of longer pieces on theory and history (whether classic reprints or new material). This could be called Black Flag (no surprises there!).

Then there is the pressing need for a free sheet for handing out at demos and elsewhere. Free sheets are essential means of getting our ideas across to people who then may be interested in getting involved in the movement. A free sheet which is regularly produced and distributed widely would raise interest in our ideas immensely. Something along the lines of the AF's Resistance would be the obvious choice, particularly as none of the other federation's free sheets are

as regular or well-known.

Now I know that there may be a lot of resistance to such a proposal. It would involve some organisations working more closely together and dropping some of the minor differences between them. For example, the SolFed and AF would have to stop being divided over whether a (non-existent) syndicalist union would be better than a (non-existent) workplace resistance group and concentrate on what unites them (i.e. revolutionary anarchism). It would mean an outward looking attitude rather than the (often self-destructive) inward looking mentality we, as a movement, sometimes express. It would mean, basically, creating a media for the movement we could have (and should have). And it would mean objectively looking at the movement as it is now and seeing where it is wasting energy and resources in needless duplication.

Of course, this could be part of a wider gathering of forces. The creation of a single anarchist federation to support this unified media would make sense. This would involve creating a more inclusive AF which drops some of its controversial positions and language (for example, who cares if it's called a union or a workplace assembly if it is for direct action and self-management?). The opening of the SolFed's Industrial Networks to all rebel workers rather than just SolFed members would also make sense (and this would be the IWA affiliate in the UK). That would complete a united media.

In a nutshell, I think we should be practicing more mutual aid then we have been. If we do, I think we would reap the benefits in terms of both a healthy and respected anarchist media and a more dynamic and growing movement. Needless to say, those who think this is a good idea should plough on and start the ball rolling.

There will be a meeting at the bookfair on this subject so please come along and discuss the points I have raised. Or perhaps we can discuss it in the pages of Freedom. What happens next is in your hands.

There will be a meeting at the bookfair on this subject so please come along and discuss the points I have raised. Or perhaps we can discuss it in the pages of Freedom. What happens next is in your hands.

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Quiz answers

1. New Hampshire. It was originally said by American revolutionary war general John Stark.
2. He replied that if she didn't shut up, someone else would be appointed as Lenin's widow.
3. Ken Livingstone, currently elected Mayor of London. Formerly an elected MP and elected leader of the GLC. No change there, then.
4. He was sent, along with Stuart Christie, as a delegate from Britain, after a nationwide anarchist conference in Liverpool.

REVIEW

BBC 2's fascinating *The Power of Nightmares* documentaries offer nothing new, argues Tom Jennings

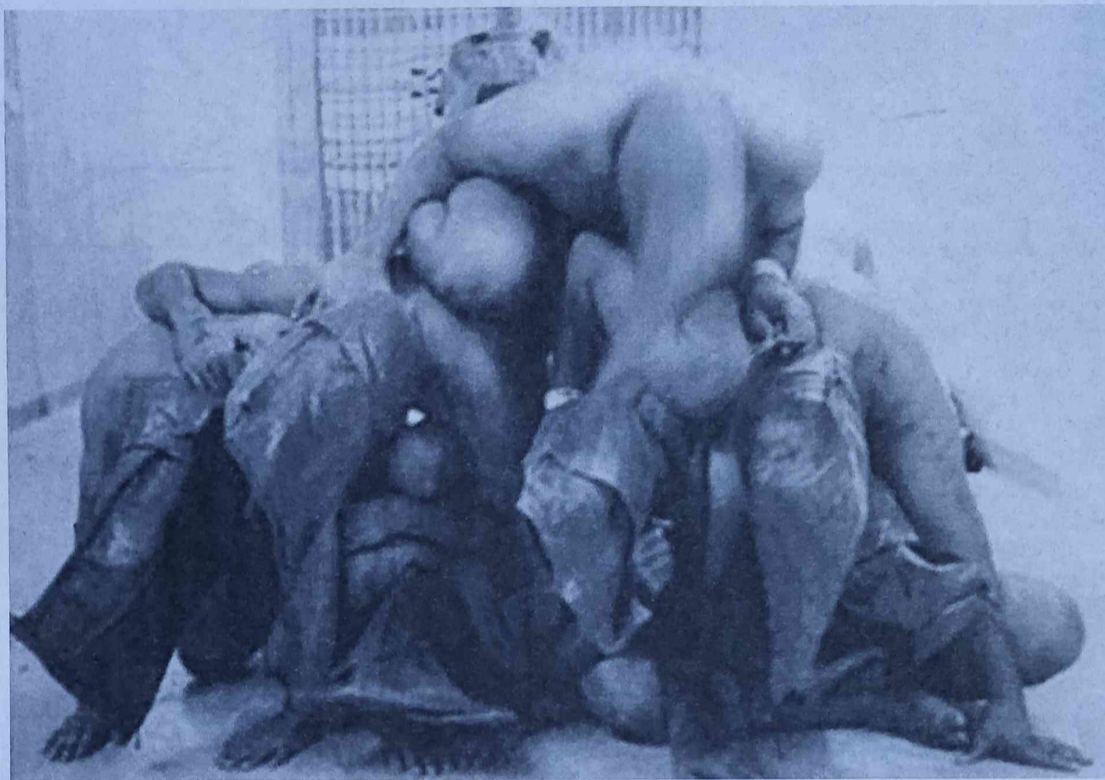
Adam Curtis's basic insight in *The Power of Nightmares* is that similar moral philosophies – decrying the moral degeneracy of consumerism and the godless absolutism of State communism – underpin the politics of both neoconservatism (Bush, Reagan, Thatcher, etc.) and radical Islam. Collaborating to repel the USSR from Afghanistan, each interpreted success – including the collapse of the Soviet bloc – as down to them. Their divergent fortunes since have turned them into protagonists in the 'War on Terror'. Now that their promises of better lives are no longer believed, the political elites can only offer protection against evil, with society uniting in fear and sanctioning whatever measures are fantasised to ameliorate it. Not only the elusive WMDs, but also Al-Qaeda, don't actually exist. Hot stuff for mainstream television (if that's any recommendation).

The main strength of the series was its visual style and structure. Profoundly enriching a rather dry narrative by weaving together archive news footage with excerpts from popular culture, this editing technique parallels the form in which information is encountered and assimilated by ordinary people in the

media age. Further, given that the 'politics of fear' require the routine exaggeration of threat, it was refreshing to hear it stressed that the propaganda must not be swallowed by the elites – and that it's the leader's job to persuade us of 'great myths' in order for society to survive (and, coincidentally, for the elites to flourish). So much for the 'integrity' of Bush, Blair and power politics in general.

In most respects, however, *The Power of Nightmares* was fatally selective, over simplistic and tendentious. Clues were liberally (and literally) scattered throughout in assertions about what 'we' do, 'they' think and 'everyone' believes – constantly generalising its narrow focus and universalising the positions of its comfortable Western middle class primary audience. This is bourgeois liberalism's history as a 'battle of big ideas' at its cleverest and most interesting. But its ideology – like the forms of governance it inspires – is constitutionally unable (in all senses) to acknowledge that the control and disposition of resources are central to political change. Thus neo-conservatism is best seen as the political wing of neoliberalism, which demands that corporate market imperatives operate unhindered whether this be in North America and Europe, the Latin dictatorships, the thin veneer of secular Islamic democracies or the modernised barbarisms in Saudi, Iran, China and Eastern Europe. A hell on earth of increasing poverty, misery and suffering for billions of human bodies is all that neoliberalism can deliver, along with lives wasted on trivial consumption in a shrinking proportion of 'First World' populations. The series merely reproduces an alternative nightmare of cynical reactionary pessimism.

Even in terms of ideas and idealism, *The Power of Nightmares* was dishonest. Many influential twentieth century critiques of Western popular culture were ignored, from Freudianism to the Frankfurt School to Christopher Lasch (*The Culture of Narcissism*), as was the overwhelming tradition of tasteful class-



bound contempt for 'the mass' – felt by liberal elitists as much as Marxist intellectuals and their Leninist dictatorships, along with adherents of other regressive fundamentalist religions. Its main claim to originality (in the title) requires amnesia towards thousands of years-worth of the political mobilisations of nightmares: the Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, witchhunts; Stalinism and McCarthyism; Nazism and racial essentialism; nationalism, myths of foreign contamination and cultural racism (or even primitivist ecology, political correctness and identity fundamentalism).

The emphasis on fantasy, lies and mystification was at least thought-provoking in terms of how they get away with it – not only in sidestepping popular resistance, but in engineering the appearance of collusion via voting and consumerism. Unfortunately, in cutting off the entire spectrum of

critique, *The Power of Nightmares* spontaneously reproduces the commonplace institutional process of presenting an extremely narrow range of 'loyal opposition' as the only conceivable alternatives. Curtis' previous BBC2 series, *The Century of the Self* (2003), was very enlightening on the history of PR and advertising campaigns, and could hardly avoid some of the analysis of capitalism missing-in-action in *The Power of Nightmares*. Better still, the forthcoming feature-length film *The Corporation** understands its subject as exhibiting all the traits characteristic of psychopathy if observed in individuals. Of course, even the best of liberal psychology is just as partial and compromised an interpretive tool as its philosophy – shown here in a voiceover musing that corporations 'seek their narcissistic reflection' in fascism. More pertinent is their commitment to it in

practice – both in internal functioning and as by far the most conducive political environment. *The Power of Nightmares* could not make even this simple observation without exposing its bankrupt idealist premises.

Curtis insists that 'ideas shape history'. Why then did he have to, so artfully and artificially, hermetically seal off these particular ideas from all their material, as well as ideological, context? On the surface, because he wants to present himself as so much more clever, liberal and knowledgeable than us poor mugs – and the BBC wouldn't have gone for the more accurate title: 'A pair of Right scares'.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* (Canada 2004, directed by Jennifer Abbott and Mark Achbar – the latter responsible for the Chomsky documentary *Manufacturing Consent*).

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British anarchism

➔ page 5

How do you assess the current state of British anarchism?

I hope you won't think I'm being disingenuous if I dodge this question. It's just that I don't think there is an overarching position in which any single person (or grouping) can judge anything as diverse and ever-changing as anarchism in Britain. I'd be a bit dubious of anyone who claims to be in such a position of judgement. In addition, the days of sustained mass mobilisations in single uniform parties, rather than coalitions over particular issues, are (in Western capitalist countries) probably gone. The technological changes in the nature of work, such as the dispersal of production have made mass manufacturing centres rare in the UK, USA, etc., so although it is harder to spot when localised resistance is

breaking out, especially for those unconnected to the region, the advantage is that as a result, it is also much harder for repressive powers to monitor and control.

The rise of social centres (despite their potential for recuperation) seems an invigorating development. In the multiform versions I've visited and used, from the more stable, semi-legitimate enterprises like the excellent 1 in 12 (Bradford) to the transitory squatted properties like the Okasional cafes (Manchester), they bring together a range of community activists, environmentalists, cultural provocateurs and provide amenities and points of access to those who do not identify as anarchists.

Anarchism is more than just about those who have identified themselves as 'anarchists'. It is about people taking on hierarchical authority, whether in

the workplace, at the football ground or in the arts, shopping or detention centres. It is about attempting to creatively redistribute power, generate exciting and exhilarating ways of living, which in turn lead to further acts of liberation. This is not to dismiss formal anarchist groups, indeed one of their main functions is to encourage the transmission of the organisational and tactical methods. The spread of these formal groups into geographical regions or parts of civil society where anarchism has largely been absent would indicate a form of progress. So the relatively new groups set up in areas not traditionally associated with anarchism, such as Hereford* and Bishop Auckland, could be considered an advance.

* See <http://flag.blackened.net/af/hereford/> for details of Hereford AF.

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The Top Ten

Continuing our new series of reader-written lists, this issue we can divulge the our Top Ten favourite Anarchist and Socialist 'Lightbulb' Jokes.

1. *How many anarchists does it take to change a lightbulb?*
None. The lightbulb must change itself. All anarchists can do is help the process of self-change.

2. *How many anarcho-primitivists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

Thirteen: One to write a piece about how telephones oppress us. One to do a dance to the light god. Three to sacrifice a hill goat to the light god. One to critique the ladder. One to smash the ladder. Two to build a fire underneath so they can see what they're doing. And three to engage in ritual warfare with the authoritarian vanguardist bastard who was delegated to call the electrician.

3. *How many Bakuninists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

One, but he must be Slavic – the inability to form a strong government in Slavic history is proof that the Slavs are innately free people, whereas the Germanic people are inherently autocratic.

4. *How many Trotskyists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

Only one, but they'll swear the light glows brighter than if a Stalinist had changed it.

5. *How many middle-class dogmatic Marxist-Leninists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

That's a contradiction in terms – middle-class workers can't be proletarians, therefore can't be Marxist-Leninists. That's clearly a sign of petty bourgeois revisionism!

6. *How many anarchist-individualists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

One.
Just one but at the risk of sounding ridiculous, I have to say that true light bulb changers are guided by intense feelings of love.

8. *How many Pacifists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

None. Pacifists couldn't change anything even if they tried.

9. *How many members of Chumbawamba does it take to change a lightbulb?*

Only one, but it doesn't really matter since the music press will give them a bad review anyway.

10. *How many Proudhonists does it take to change a lightbulb?*

Three: One to change the lightbulb, one to declare that all lightbulb changers must be equal and another to say that there are 'inferior races of lightbulb changers' and that female light bulb changers do not deserve the same equality as male light bulb changers.

For future lists, please send in your ideas and contributions to our Copy address on page 2, or contribute on www.enrager.net/forums

Anarchist media

The next issue of Black Flag may be the last one. This is not due to lack of interest in the magazine. It is due to the fact that the existing editorial collective, for pressing personal reasons, cannot give it the time and energy required to maintain it. This should come as no surprise. It has gone from being quarterly to being annual in the last few years. Editorials have stressed the need for people to get involved on some level, with little success. Here I repeat that call.

This lack of participation is, I fear, a common problem with anarchist journals and papers. While many people are happy to consume a product (in the shape of a paper or journal) and complain about what it does or does not carry, fewer seem to be willing to get involved in actually producing them. Which is a shame, as without people willing to contribute in some way (such as writing, distributing, selling, etc.) then the work is simply handed to a few people who, sooner or later, either get burnt out or find they cannot continue to do it.

This should not be the case as this consumerist mentality is totally against what anarchism stands for. Anarchism stands for mutual aid, participation, 'doing it yourself'. That should mean that anarchists should get involved in their media, whether it is selling it on demos or getting it into shops, writing reports on what they are doing or contributing articles on current events or anarchist theory and history. Yet this is not done as often as it should. I know that at times over the last year, Freedom editors have noted a lack of copy (this situation has improved) and a lack of help in doing the 'boring' administrative tasks necessary to distribute the paper or maintain the bookshop. As far as Black Flag goes, we get better responses from comrades in other countries for articles than in the UK.

Yes, I know that the movement is not made up of 'professional revolutionaries' and does not have full-timers. And it's a good job that is the case – we are (usually) normal people trying to make the world better and long may it remain so. But correlated with this is the necessity of an increased sense of personal responsibility. The simple fact is that without active participation our media will die.

So the question is, if you like Black Flag and want to see it keep going consider getting involved in it. You don't need to be a writer, we just need people willing to do the many tasks required to produce and distribute any journal.

The Future

Of course, keeping Black Flag going does not address the wider subject of what the anarchist media should be doing. I think it could do a lot better. One good sign is that Freedom has become, at long last, a proper anarchist paper. Having a regular, good quality, newspaper is a boon to the movement and it's a resource we should ensure continues and grows.

➔ page 6, column 4



A sideways look

It looked for a while the other week as if a major menace was going to be taken off the streets of London. Coppers from the SO19 armed unit began a strike in protest at a couple of their members being held to account for shooting a man carrying a table leg. A jury had returned a verdict of unlawful killing on the coppers, leaving their bosses in the Met little option but to suspend them. This provoked outrage amongst their comrades who were disappointed that their right to shoot had been curtailed. Though I imagine many of this paper's readers will be sleeping sounder in our beds knowing that they're armed only with truncheons, CS gas and their charming personalities.

The gullible media was full of shock stories about how dangerous it would be if we didn't have armed police on the capital's streets. What would happen if a terrorist flew a plane into Canary Wharf or blew up a train? Hmmm, armed cops weren't exactly a deterrent in Madrid or New York, were they? Nor do they stop gun crime. So what are they for?

Harry Stanley, a 51-year old grandfather, had been having treatment for colon cancer. He was unable to bend because his stomach was tender. On 22nd September 1999 he met his brothers to get a table leg repaired. He stopped in a pub, from which someone called the police saying that an armed Irishman had just left. Shortly afterwards, as he was approaching his home, he was killed by two armed police because they mistook a table leg in a plastic bag for a gun.

At the inquest in 2002, the notoriously police-friendly coroner Stephan Chan didn't allow the jury to consider a verdict of unlawful killing. The jury returned an open verdict. Here began his family's fight for justice. Last month it finally came, when a coroners court

decided that the two policemen, one since promoted, had unlawfully killed Harry Stanley. The Crown Prosecution Service will look at whether to charge them (for the third time, don't hold your breath) and the officers were suspended.

The reaction of the police was outrageous. At least 20 officers from the Metropolitan Police specialist weapons unit, SO19, have refused to carry their weapons in solidarity with their suspended colleagues and a hundred others have asked to 'voluntarily withdraw' from firearms duty.

Now it's fair to say that I support nearly all industrial disputes, but this one is a piss-take. These coppers are effectively demanding the right to kill with impunity. Considering that the police have killed with impunity (Blair Peach, the miners strike, Cynthia Jarrett and so many more) they are clearly used to getting away with it. Having lost in the court, they are trying to intimidate victims' families from demanding the truth.

Now, in a normal industrial dispute management are hostile, to put it mildly. In this one, the next Met commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, wrote that he would "stand by" the officers and that it should be forces, not individual police, who take the blame for these incidents. He said that tackling gun crime meant "fighting fire with fire". But this wasn't tackling gun crime, it was confronting an infirm 51 year old.

Now, a 'strike' where your management agree with you and put pressure on a government in thrall to the right wing press, is likely to be won. Even as I write this some deal is being stitched up which will see armed police, no matter how reckless of lives, get immunity from prosecution. Now why is it that workers who deserve to win never get the same response?

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 26th November 1955, on the Pope's earlier illness:

It has now been confirmed by the Vatican Press Office that the Pope saw a vision of Christ during his illness last December. It appears, however, that the visit of Jesus was premature, because although the Pope recited "In the hour of my death call me," Jesus had not really come to "take him away, but rather to comfort him, and, we think, to give him the certainty that his hour had not come."

For this who might think that His Holiness was delirious in the crisis of his illness, the Vatican press statement says that "The Holy Father is absolutely positive he saw Jesus. It was not a dream: he was fully awake and lucid in that moment."

58,941,293

Americans who voted for Bush

234,086,278

Americans who didn't vote for Bush
(source: CIA fact book population figures)

The quiz

- Which US state has the motto 'Live Free or Die'?
- What was Stalin's response when Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, criticised his actions?
- Who wrote a book called 'If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It'?
- How did Paris '68 leader Dany Cohn-Bendit get to the International Anarchist Congress in Carrara in 1968, when the 'official' movement wanted to exclude him?

Answers on page 6

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