

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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## THE SPOOKS OF ST PETERSBURG

Private intelligence companies are gathering in Florida to plan their global operations with neocon officials in close attendance, as more interventions are planned.

It's a new age of the privateer. A gathering of today's buccaneers and freelance adventurers will be taking place this week on the Florida coast. This week, a (self-declared) important section of the 'intelligence community' will be meeting in St Petersburg, Florida for its second International Intelligence Summit, where they will be discussing how best to fight their Global War on Terror. Among them will be a motley crew of Iranian exiles, Israeli intelligence officials, repentant Islamists, neocon warriors and scions of the British secret service.

It's certainly a crowd of buccaneers which repays further investigation.

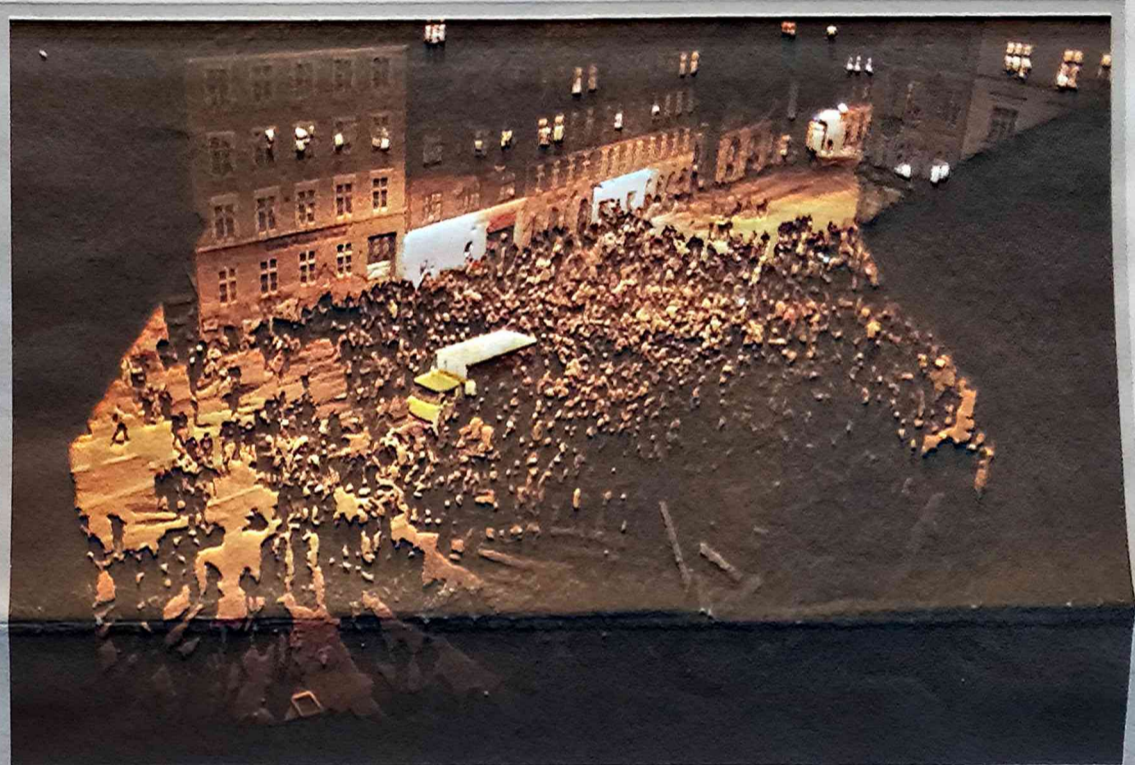
More and more operations traditionally carried out by arms of the US government are now being outsourced to private companies. From peace-keeping to intelligence gathering, security details to country studies – there has been a trend since the mid 1990s to shift work away from public employees to better paid, less heavily scrutinised private contractors. Officials routinely slip from highly paid positions at government contractors, to positions within government itself. The lines are becoming ever more blurred.

But outside of that process, private military and intelligence companies are thriving in the shadow of the Global

War on Terror. In fact, they are not just thriving in its shadow, they have been constantly lobbying to make that war bigger, more bloody, more high-tech and most crucially of all, more expensive. It is hard to separate neocon officials from neocon private military contractors, or from radical think-tanks which provide them with an intellectual veneer.

Much of the intelligence that led us all to war with Iraq came from a tiny nucleus of emigres, think tank hacks and well placed officials. They in turn can be traced back to public relations agents that they hold in common. Benador Associates, for example, handles the public schedules of Michael Ledeen (a US Iran hawk), Richard Perle (another US Iraq hawk), Kenneth Timmerman (Mr 'it'll be a cakewalk'), Charles Krauthammer, Iraqi emigre Kanan Makiya, Israeli neocon-Natan Sharansky and ex-CIA chief turned über-hawk James Woolsey.

Benador Associates is part of a wider cluster of institutions that has expanded since 2001 and exerts a key influence in pushing the US media and political system towards war. The Orwellian-named Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, for example which was founded in 2002 under the wing of those who around the same time resurrected the Cold War-era Committee on the Present Danger, which then gathered together extremist hawks to confront Soviet Russia. The FDD has found no trouble attracting funds to



IT'S WAR: One of Denmark's oldest squatted socia centres was forcibly evicted at the beginning of March, sparking massive riots and demonstrations across Denmark and Germany. The eviction, which saw an anti-terror unit descend from a helicopter onto the roof of the building and tear gas fired into the enclosed space to get out the occupants, was instigated by a local church who had bought the building and refused all attempts at negotiation. Hundreds of people had been arrested as *Freedom* went to press.

wage war against today's 'terror' – attracting \$250,000 from healthcare magnate Leonard Abramson and a staggering \$1.5 million from Amerquest

capital, a firm widely reviled as a predatory mortgage lender. With that small fortune, the FDD has thrust itself into the media spotlight (averaging

seven media appearances by its staff per day in the international media in 2007) and onto American university

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## US BASE IN CZECH REPUBLIC LOSSES AT DALE FARM

Right-wing extremists and anarchists clashed on Saturday 2nd March at a demonstration in Beroun against a proposed US military base. The heated debate over the Czech government's intention to host a US missile-defence radar is sparking smaller fires at its edges. Police responded to violent demonstrations outside Prague, while inside the capital opposing political figures positioned themselves for new attacks.

On Friday Miroslav Kostelka, the Czech Republic's ambassador to Russia, said the construction of a US radar system in the Czech Republic and a US missile defence base in

Poland was not likely to harm Czech-Russian relations.

He said it was unacceptable for the Czech Republic and Poland that Russian rockets could be aimed at US military bases in Central Europe, as Russian missile defence chief Nikolai Solovtsov recently suggested.

Kostelka said that Solovtsov's words were "too sharp." However, he added it was possible that Solovtsov's statement was elicited by questions from journalists.

Also on Friday a new group calling itself Soldiers Against War announced its opposition to the planned radar base. The group's leader, Jiří Bureš, told a press conference at the Chamber of Deputies that the government was carrying out a one-sided campaign promoting the base. Bureš said his group demanded the government disclose how much money it has spent on the campaign so far.

Bureš spoke at a seminar on the radar base organized by Zuzka Rujbrová (KSCM), who chairs the committee

behind a petition expressing opposition to the base. Rujbrová said that her committee had collected the signatures of 60,000 people.

### Protests turn violent

Also on Saturday, police detained nine protestors at a demonstration in Beroun against the proposed US radar base. Four of those were later charged, two with attacking a public official and two with disturbing the peace.

Right-wing extremists and anarchists clashed at the demonstration. Police did not say whether those charged came from among the right-wing or anarchist group.

The demonstration against the radar base was staged by the Autonomous Nationalists Central Bohemia right-wing group. Police say about 100 people took part in the demonstration.

They were opposed by about 130 anarchists who attempted to prevent them from entering the square and threw stones at them. Ondřej Slačálek,

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Rejection by the UK Government of final appeals from residents at Dale Farm has set the scene for a showdown in this five-year siege of Britain's biggest Travellers' community.

Throughout the past winter around a hundred families waited anxiously for the results from Communities Minister Ruth Kelly – while anti-Gypsy protests led by MP John Baron continued unabated. These demonstrations, in which supporters of the British National Party have taken a leading part, have resulted in increased racist attacks on Travellers, including children.

No attempt at eviction is likely pending the hearing of a judicial review of Basildon council's decision to spend five million euros bulldozing Dale Farm. This is not expected until July. But after the review, the way will be clear for Basildon to call in Constant & Co, the private bailiff company which specialises in the eviction of Gypsies. In recent months, it has been used to

destroy a number of small, private yards, some belonging to Romanians, in the Basildon district. These activities, together with legal and planning hearing expenses, have so far cost the council some one million euros out of their total budget.

In rejecting the right of Travellers to reside on their own land, Kelly at the same time draws attention to the fact that if evicted they will be forced to live on the roadside.

Dale Farm support groups have requested volunteers to be human rights monitors in the event of an eviction. They are needed to witness and record the activities of bailiffs and police – with a view to legal action – when eviction of Dale Farm and the bulldozing of the homes there is attempted.

The site has been called the 'last stand' for Irish Travellers.

To volunteer, email dale.farm@btinternet.com with you name and phone number if you are able to act as a monitor.

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## Climate change delay attacked by Greens

The Government's green credentials were called into question yet again after it emerged that its Climate Change Bill will not become law in the current parliamentary session. The Bill will set a long-term goal of a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.

Ministers trumpeted the decision to include the Bill in the Queen's Speech last November as demonstrating Labour's commitment to the environment, but confirmed last week that when it is published next month, it will appear only in draft form. Therefore there will not be time for it to complete its passage in the current parliament, meaning it is unlikely to be passed until next year. However, Commons Leader, Jack Straw's website included it as a full-scale Bill in its section on the current legislative programme.

Green campaigners attacked the delay, which critics claimed disagreements between Defra and the DTI were partly responsible for. The Government denied it had watered down its plans, saying it had never promised a full Bill and had always been committed to a consultation process on the measure, insisting that the draft Bill would be the focus of a major nationwide public campaign. Could they mean the current ongoing campaign, launched long ago now, by environmental groups and green activists and recently popularised by the media (even the *Sun*)?

Blair thinking ahead as usual. Nice to know he considers the environment to be so important: on the pulse as always – and how it shows.

## 'Green' Olympics plan to bulldoze Manor Garden Allotments

Manor Gardens, bequeathed to be allotments 'in perpetuity' by their original owner the 'Right Hon' Major Villiers, sit in the North central section of the Olympic Park. The LDA plan to remove them to make a footpath to the stadia, destroying in the process a century of devoted cultivation and a close-knit community rooted in this irreplaceable site.



Old timers, Tom and Albert, have been growing veg and keeping fit here for 54 and 58 years respectively, taking over from their fathers. Ten year old Boris, whose parents are members, nags them to come to the plot and wants to hand his plot down to his son. Members trust in the permanence of the site led one plot holder to scatter his brother's ashes on his plot.

However this diverse community of Turks Cypriots, Greeks, Jamaicans, Africans and Brits welcome the potential for regeneration brought by the Olympic development. Rather than being moved out of the way they want to offer their contribution which seems to them to be entirely consistent with the Olympic and Government ambitions. They believe to remove the allotment gardens would be to rip out the 'healthy heart' of the

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# Around the world

## UN agency obstinacy in fight against HIV

A United Nations agency has been accused of hampering the fight against HIV/Aids by opposing measures that would reduce the soaring number of infections among injecting drug users.

The UN special envoy for HIV/Aids to Africa, Stephen Lewis, last week revealed that he had been accused by the International Narcotics Control Board of "advocating opium dens" after he praised the success of a safe injection centre in Vancouver for reducing HIV transmission. "I was completely taken aback," he said. "They effectively threatened to silence me by saying if I didn't recant they would write to the secretary general of the UN. They said it was completely impossible for someone from the UN like me to advocate for safe injection centres. It seems to be the only agent of the UN system which is under no scrutiny whatsoever. It is this shadowy group financed by the UN and accountable to no one."

The secretary of the board, Koli Kouame, admitted he had phoned Mr Lewis and compared injection rooms to the opium dens in China of the past. "Mr Lewis made a public statement in support of something which is in breach of the convention, which is an injection room," he said. "We should see these people get the treatment they deserve." Providing injection rooms was like saying "you can do whatever you want. You can kill yourself because you are worth nothing." If the right hand only knew what the left were doing ... or perhaps it is cogent and pertinent to ask where, if

anywhere, the US Food and Drug Administration and DEA stand in relation to all this?

## IMF told to keep off World Bank's turf

In a hard-hitting report on the lack of collaboration between the two international financial institutions, a six-strong independent committee concludes that the International Monetary Fund has been providing too much assistance to poor countries! The report said the IMF's work overlapped with the World Bank and that it should stop offering long-term finance to developing countries and refocus its efforts on macroeconomic areas where it had greater expertise, leaving the World Bank to be the global development agency.

Commissioned by the bank and the IMF last March, the report, whose authors include current and former senior finance ministers of Germany, Brazil, Nigeria and Indonesia, states that, "There is currently no robust dialogue between the bank and the fund as they consider their future strategies and the implications this may have for how they work together"

There is to some extent conflict in the mandates of the two institutions (good cop, bad cop). The Bank funds large infrastructure development projects (and recently more overtly political areas like judicial reform and 'good governance' – read economic management), while the IMF's central concern is 'macroeconomic stability' (liberalisation of economies and maintaining low rates of inflation – central to maintaining crippling levels

of debt for poor countries).

The report blames the IMF for trampling on World Bank turf, adding that, "The fund's financing activities in low-income countries is an area where it has moved beyond its core responsibilities and into activities that increase its overlap with the world of the bank."

The IMF will not be disappointed by the conclusions. It has, in any case, been reducing its lending to poor countries in recent years under its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility programme. In 2005-06, payments under these programmes were only about half the level they had been between 1990 and 2004. Rodrigo de Rato, IMF managing director, said the fund had no desire to be involved in long term development finance. The shepherd in future will be more energetic in sending his flock to the slaughterhouse.

## Rich countries renege on aid promises

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's annual development report, published last month, said that donors were falling further behind pledges made at the G8 summit, in Gleneagles in 2005, to increase aid by \$50bn (£26bn) in real terms by 2010. It also said there were controversies about whether debt relief should be counted as aid, an issue that has sharply divided its member countries.

A partial survey of the development committee's 23 member states last year "showed that, for the members able to respond to questions about their plans

to 2008, spending plans appeared to fall well short of a steady increase in levels agreed to". German aid would have to increase by more than half and Italian aid almost to double in real terms between 2005 and 2010 to hit agreed targets. "Leaving delivery to sudden and colossal increases in the last year or two would not be a sensible policy," the OECD report said.

Reported aid levels for 2005 received a huge one-off boost from the cancellation of debts owed by Iraq and Nigeria. But some academics and development campaigners say it is highly misleading to count as aid the writing-off of almost worthless defaulted commercial debt from a middle-income country such as Iraq. "We are not going to allow governments to continue hiding behind figures inflated by debt relief granted to countries like Iraq," said Max Lawson, senior policy adviser at Oxfam. Even where debts have been cancelled, the move is more quid pro quo than kindly largesse – acceptance is dependent on heavily indebted countries signing up to the usual package of harmful neo-liberal measures designed to open up their economies to international capital. Once again the gap between rhetoric and reality is hard to disguise.

Any ideological system that ceases to abide by its own rules ultimately fails to conform to its own ideology: taken together with the WTO/IMF globalisation programme in general, the G8 nations' finagling and continual back-peddling over aid has nothing whatsoever to do with the politics of capitalist commerce and everything to do with those of simple gluttony.

# Prison news

## Jeff 'Free' Luers wins appeal

Great news for Jeff 'Free' Luers, serving 22 years for an eco-action against a US car dealership in which three 'sports utility vehicles' had their tyres burned. The US Court of Appeal has ruled that his case be 'reversed' and remanded back to the Circuit Court for re-sentencing. It is thought that this could mean up to 15 years being knocked off the original 266 month sentence. Congratulations to Jeff, who has remained staunch and true to his beliefs throughout. More information at [freefreenow.org](http://freefreenow.org)

## Russian antifascist prisoner

Thanks to everyone who has so far contributed to the support fund for Vahtang Devitlidze, an imprisoned Russian antifascist (see last issue). So far a total of £260 has been sent to his supporters in Kraznadzor, who are having to buy Vahtang's food. Donations were made by the Anarchist Federation, Leeds ABC, London Antifa, The 635 Group, Norwich Anarchists, and by a number of individuals. If you are able to make a donation please contact [leedsabc@riseup.net](mailto:leedsabc@riseup.net).

## Anarchists 'detained' in Greece

On 12th February around 60 people were detained in Athens after a petrol-

bomb attack on a bank. Police responded by raiding cafes frequented by suspected anarchists in the city centre, detaining around 60 people. Nobody was arrested or formally accused of involvement in the fire-bombing, which was the latest of a string of similar attacks. A number of Anarchist groups have claimed responsibility for the attacks, in which petrol bombs and homemade gas-canister bombs were used against banks and government buildings and vehicles in Athens and Thessaloniki.

## New leaflet

Leeds ABC have produced a new *Writing To Prisoners* leaflet, which answers many of the questions most frequently asked by those wanting to write to a prisoner for the first time. It contains lots of sound practical advice, as well as a list of useful contacts. To obtain a copy send a SAE to Leeds ABC, PO Box 53, Leeds, LS8 4WP. The text of the leaflet can also be read at [myspace.com/leedsabc](http://myspace.com/leedsabc) and it can be obtained in PDF form by e-mailing Leeds ABC at [leedsabc@riseup.net](mailto:leedsabc@riseup.net)

## Czech antifascist prisoner needs support

Augustin Kraus is an antifascist from the Czech city of Most, who was

recently sentenced to 14 months for participating in attacks against local neo-nazis. His charge was 'body harm'. He speaks Czech, and can understand Sloval and Polish. You can also write him short postcards in English. Augustin Kraus, Vazebni veznice, PP-1, Litomerice, 41 201, Czech Republic.

## RAF prisoner released

A German court has ordered the release of a member of the Red Army Faction after 24 years in prison. Brigitte Mohnhaupt, now aged 57, was serving five life sentences plus 15 years for her alleged role in several prominent RAF attacks, including an attempt on the life of US General Frederick Kroesen, the commander of American forces in Europe, and the killing of Hanns Martin Schleyer, a former Nazi and head of the German employers' federation. Three more RAF members remain in prison.

## Joe Harris moved

Dr Joe Harris has been moved to HMP Bullingdon, Patrick Haugh Road, Amcott, Nr Bicester, Oxon OX25 1WD.

## Successful Leeds ABC benefit

Thanks to everyone who helped with the very successful benefit de-tagging

party for Mick Beadle. The event was held in Doncaster on 17th February, when Mick, who'd previously been locked-up in Lindholme, came off his tag. Several bands played, and Leeds ABC did a stall. Over £200 was raised for prisoner support, and a similar figure went to support Sheffield Hunt Sabs.

## Potential for 700 new 'miscarriages of justice'

In a highly unusual case a forensic expert has been exposed as a liar and a conman: nothing that unusual there then, but in this case he was sent to prison for five years. Gene Morrison, 48, of Hyde, Cheshire, bluffed and lied his way through hundreds of trials, for almost three decades, fooling judges, barristers, solicitors and their clients into believing he was qualified. He left school with no qualifications but gave evidence in cases involving armed robbery, rape, death by dangerous driving, unexplained death, drugs offences and questioned paternity. He had told one grieving couple that the unexplained death of their son was suicide and charged them £16,500 for work they had never commissioned. Seven hundred cases, in which Morrison gave evidence, are now being reinvestigated by the police.

compiled by Mark Bamsley

# Privatisation drops the act

An extraordinary plan being implemented in Ipswich is dispensing with the 'softly-softly' approach characterising privatisation today

A new report recommending wholesale privatisation of county council services has been brought out which, if implemented, could provide a blueprint for similar measures nationwide.

Suffolk County Council has voted through powers for the cabinet to implement the 'Organisational Strategy Review Phase 1 report' by consultancy KPMG, which has a stated aim of "Moving over to a business model only" with "access and assessment and service delivery activities undertaken by Arm's Length third parties (e.g. trusts) or where the market is available, on a commercial basis."

If the report is implemented in full it would see all Suffolk's public services placed into private hands within three years.

In an analysis of the document carried out by *Freedom*, we found that the stated preference is to outsource all but 700-odd of the 11,000 council jobs currently in existence. Significant job cuts are expected throughout the services, with over 700 mentioned so far and more seem likely.

Jobs included in the public sector cull are library services, fire services and adult care. The only sector of public service currently dealt with by the county council which is not part of the planned mass-privatisation will be schooling, which already has a privatisation attached to it independently.

Those roles remaining in public service will be in management focusing on 'strategic activities'. These will administrate the tendering of all other roles to outside companies.

The report, which was leaked in mid-

February by a Liberal Democrat MP, was not made available to the general public, or even many councillors, before a vote which gave cabinet members the power to implement it on 22nd February.

One Unison member in the council, contacted by *Freedom*, believes the move is a political one tethered to central government, and will inevitably damage service provision. They said: "We believe that the proposals would enable less to be bought for the same so that overall cuts would be made. I believe the logic is ever-contracting service. The consequent loss of credibility in the Council will at best make elections very poorly patronised and at worst begin moves to kill off Suffolk as an irrelevance."

"With all plebiscites demonstrating no enthusiasm for regional government, it is still the Blairite intention. Therefore they are trying to kill off or discredit the rival structures."

"To be fair there is plenty of dead wood could be cut out. Regrettably they can never identify the parasites however. My metaphor is to say that efficient parasites (the obligates) either do not get sensed by the host or actually make the host feel good about parasitism. In this case the slogan creator is worth much more than a service organiser!"

What's happening in main sections:

- *Children and Young people*  
Current budget: £110m, employees: 2,240  
Existing plan: Various changes are taking place under the Every Child Matters initiative, and already under



NHS DAY: Despite the shutting down of attempts to build a national demonstration in London against NHS privatisation by Unison officials, people across the country used 3rd March to demonstrate their support for a nationalised NHS and demanded the cessation of privatisation in the sector. This protest in Preston attracted over 250 people, according to the photographer.

- a schools review. This service does not include teachers.  
KPMG Plan for 2009: All but 336 employees to be outsourced into new agencies, service provider companies or Customer Service Direct.
- *Adult community services*  
Current budget: £164m, employees: 4,950

- Existing Plan: There are already plans to outsource much of the existing service regardless of the KPMG report.  
KPMG Plan for 2009: All but 130 people to be outsourced.
- *Environment and transport*  
Current budget: £74m, employees: 800  
Existing Plan: Notes say they're looking at an 'alliance' model of service.

- KPMG Plan for 2009: Less cuts here, 200 to stay.
- *Public Protection*  
Current budget: £24m, employees: 910 (mostly fire service personnel who make up 750)  
Existing Plan: Regionalising the fire service  
KPMG Plan for 2009: Outsourcing

## Brand new security

What does the HP printer on my desk have in common with the war on terror, your neighbourhood watch scheme and ID cards? The answer is, the 'Security-Industrial Complex', an all-new version of the Cold War's military-industrial complex.

Instead of western economies and jobs being dependent on huge government contracts to produce nuclear missiles, tanks, military uniforms and port-a-loos for soldiers, western economies and jobs are becoming largely dependent on the obsession with 'security'.

The examples are all around us: for example, the CCTV that just about every neighbourhood watch scheme is trying to get hold of, the little bits of plastic whose embedded computers will keep our biometric data safe in our pockets, not to mention prisoner tags, RFID shirt collars, number-plate recognition systems, security guards outside supermarkets and metal detectors at public buildings.

At a recent Netevents European Press Summit, held in Evian, France, many of the big names in networking and computing were talking about the changing nature of IT and communication, and the demands that the police state are putting on it. A police state requires that data about everything is held until the end of time, the public, however, expect to be able to surf the Web and check their email while out and about, buy stuff by credit card on eBay and generally take advantage of wireless networking coupled with cheap broadband. The problem is that secure computing and mass surveillance don't exactly go hand-in-hand.

For computer systems to be secure, they must hold the minimum amount of data possible, and the data they do hold should be hard to access. For computer systems to be useful in the context of fighting imaginary enemies in the war on terror, they must hold records of every transaction they carry out, and must be able to provide those records to the very select group of

government agencies and tens of thousands of companies across the globe who may have 'legitimate' needs to access it.

Fortunately, help is at hand from the security industry. According to companies such as HP, trust is at the heart of the problem. By buying hardware that is 'trustworthy', and buying computers and software which will only work with such hardware, we can sleep safely in our beds. For readers unfamiliar with this use of the term 'trustworthy', here's a possible definition: "US-made, certified by Microsoft and Intel. Certainly not cheap hardware from Asia."

As for printers, many will reject refilled ink cartridges, or ink cartridges made by third-party companies. Such cartridges, we are told, are interpreted as counterfeit by the printer. Counterfeit goods, from ink cartridges and pirated DVDs to perfumes and fake Gucci handbags fund terrorism, or rather the security-industrial complex.

## Carbon neutral?

Three activists from London Rising Tide barricaded themselves inside the London headquarters of the Carbon Neutral Company (CNC) on 21st February. The protest took place to highlight the damage that offset companies are doing in promoting climate complacency in the general public.

London Rising Tide (LRT) had been invited by the CNC to take part in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change, which is chaired by the CNC. But Rising Tide instead chose to occupy the offices of the CNC as a statement against the CNC chairing a committee which they see as a clear conflict of interest given that they are profiting from climate change.

Speaking from the blockade, LRT activist Sam Chase said that, "The Carbon Neutral Company is today occupying the Houses Of Parliament, so we have decided to occupy the Carbon Neutral Company. They have no business chairing a committee like this. Their livelihoods and profit margins depend on exploiting people's anxiety about climate change, and as such it's a travesty

that they are chairing a governmental panel on climate change."

Tony Gordon, who also took part in the occupation said that, "Offset companies are selling consumers a peace of mind about climate change that just shouldn't exist. The whole idea of offsetting is a throw back to the sale of indulgences to guilty sinners in the middle ages – both patently ridiculous and ineffective."

The occupation came the day after a report was published, *The Carbon Neutral Myth – Offset Indulgences for your Climate Sins*, that was highly critical of the offsets industry, arguing that not only were supposed climate benefits impossible to quantify, that projects are also being imposed on communities in the global South with little consultation.

Earlier, people from LRT outside the office had unfurled a banner reading 'carbon offset = climate upset', and symbolically swept coal under a piece of carpet, to symbolise the 'effectiveness' of carbon offsets. The indoor activists left the office voluntarily, having occupied the offices for the entire day.

# News

## Letter from America

### US plans for Iran, television torture and the updating of the Insurrection Act – Louis Further finds out more

Do as I say not as I do

At the very end of last month investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who was one of the first to warn of the US's advanced plans to bomb Iran – and indeed who continues to report on the increasing (illegal and covert) insurgency by US forces inside that country, broke a story to the effect that Bush, Cheney and the gang are actually secretly funding Sunni Muslim groups, including those with ties to Al Qaeda. Called 'The Redirection' by some inside the White House and Pentagon, apparently, and without any kind of oversight by congress, the new strategy sanctions secret operations between the US and the government in Sunni Saudi Arabia to undermine Shi'ite Hezbollah – perhaps because it's supported by Iran. But it seems the US has also been involved in direct, undercover acts against both Iran and Syria.

Hersh claims that one side-effect of this has been that some Islamist Sunni groups have benefited. This ought to run and run and be only a few notches down from revelations of government complicity in 9/11!

Torture as I say and as I do

There's a series being shown in the United States on Rupert-Murdoch-owned Fox TV called 24. With a weekly viewing audience of 15 million, it tells the story of counter-terrorism agent Jack Bauer, who has just 24

hours to stop a terrorism plot which threatens the country. In the face of the famed 'ticking time-bomb' cliché, the show's hero chooses torture to get terrorist suspects to divulge critical information, make him look good and save the day, the same day in which thousands die from preventable disease, poverty and hunger in the country.

Torture techniques featured so far on 24 have included mock executions, drugging, water-boarding, electrocution and power-drilling into a suspect's shoulder. The Parents Television Council has logged 67 torture scenes in five seasons of the show, which airs at 'prime' time in the evening.

Late last year a team of militarists (the Dean of West Point, Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, interrogators and FBI staff) as well as representatives of Human Rights First tried to persuade the show's producers to stop using torture as entertainment because – as is well known – it doesn't work: those tortured will either give the information which they think their torturers want to hear; or mislead.

David Danzig from Human Rights First comments, "...what's particularly disturbing for us about this is that when you look at who's doing the torturing, the people who are involved in it have changed. It used to be the bad guys were the ones who tortured, the Nazis or aliens ... and torture never worked. But now it's people like



A scene from the television series 24, which has featured many torture techniques

Jack Bauer. It's the heroes of these shows ... and it always works for these people. So the message that 18-, 19-, 20-year-old soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan get is that good guys use this stuff and it works." Other shows picking up on this trend include *Alias*, *Lost* (ABC) and *Law and Order* (NBC).

Also in late February a federal appeals court sided with the Bush administration's policy that Guantanamo prisoners cannot

challenge their indefinite detention in US courts. The 2:1 decision upholds the Military Commission Act passed in 2006. Lawyers for Guantanamo prisoners say they will nevertheless take the case before the Supreme Court which has twice now ruled in their favour – and so is being effectively flouted by the government.

Dictator

Little wonder: it has emerged that late last year congress approved a barely-

reported provision making it easier for Bush to declare martial law and to send US soldiers into American cities. Without holding a public hearing, lawmakers approved changes to the Insurrection Act: the president now has the power to use both active-duty armed forces and the National Guard within the country – not just in a rebellion but also during a natural disaster, 'attack', or other chaotic situation. All 50 state governors have opposed this.

## Egypt's wildcat strikes continue

As reported previously on libcom, tens of thousands of workers in Egypt continue to defy their unions and the government in the nation's state-owned industries to strike and occupy their workplaces.

The often-successful struggles are over wages, jobs and privatisation at a time when prices are rising, government-owned industries are being sold off and jobs are being slashed.

Dan Morrison on sfgate.com reported: Ali Ghalab sat on a dusty office couch in a pinstriped suit, explaining why his 11,700 employees joined a wave of wildcat strikes that have shocked the government and paralyzed Egypt's textile industry.

"It's the Muslim Brotherhood," the factory chairman yelled, referring to the officially banned Islamist movement, "and the communists. The Muslim Brotherhood stands behind every trouble in every single factory."

A mile away, more than a thousand strikers had barricaded themselves inside the textile plant in Kafr el-Dawwar, a gritty town on the Nile Delta about

100 miles north of Cairo. They were demanding more money and greater opportunity for promotion. A shipment of cotton fabric destined for Turkey was locked inside with the disgruntled employees.

"Ali is a shoe," they chanted. "He is useless."

Rattled by rising prices, falling benefits and looming privatisation, tens of thousands of Egyptian workers at state-owned industries have been in rebellion. In recent weeks, more than 35,000 workers at nearly a dozen textile, cement and poultry plants have gone on strike in a nation where any strike is illegal and even the smallest public protest can be squelched with police truncheons. Train engineers, miners and even riot police also have walked off the job or held demonstrations in the past 2½ months.

"It's very unusual. There's been nothing like this in at least five years," said Gamal Eid, a lawyer at the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights. "It's not just the number of strikes, it's the number of people involved."

The strikers are bucking the government and their own unions to secure better wages and benefits at a time when inefficient state-owned companies are being sold off or scaled down. State-owned companies employ 10% of Egypt's workforce of more than 22 million.

Late last month, Investment Minister Mahmoud Mohieldin set off a minor panic when he announced that 100 state-owned companies would be sold to private owners this year. New foreign investors and cash-strapped state corporations are trying to cut back on expenses at most factories, which are in heavy debt due to mismanagement and an excess of employees, labour experts say.

For more than a generation, Egyptian factories have existed primarily to provide employment, a policy the government of President Hosni Mubarak has been pulling away from since the 1980s. In 1993, the Kafr el-Dawwar plant, for example, had 28,000 workers; today it has 11,700.

## Male-Mart

The largest sex discrimination lawsuit in United States history has made good progress: three federal judges ruled in February that a case brought by six women in 2001 for sex discrimination can proceed as a 'class-action' suit, which is the provision for a case by multiple plaintiffs against a defendant to be pursued as a single lawsuit.

Potentially up to a million women, past and present employees of the world's biggest retailer, Wal-Mart, can seek compensation ultimately totalling billions of dollars.

In 2004 a lower case ruling had also allowed 'class action' status to apply to the case; but Wal-Mart fought, threatening to take its opposition to such a strategy to the Supreme Court in Washington DC. Nevertheless three judges in San Francisco upheld the women's rights by two to one – effectively favouring the plaintiffs without pronouncing directly on the merits of their case.

Betty Dukes is the lead plaintiff in the case. Describing herself as "absolutely

overjoyed", she has been a Wal-Mart employee for nearly thirteen years and – in common with her female colleagues – has been systematically ignored whenever job openings were advertised inside her store: some male staff obtained the same job she once held (customer service representative) before they had completed their probation.

The company is trying to have it that the circumstances of the case can't apply to the two million women workers employed since 1998, which is the date of the lawsuit. Legal experts, however, think it unlikely that a superior court would overturn a ruling upheld twice in lower courts: Brad Seligman, lead lawyer for the six plaintiffs, believes the evidence is very strong. "It is time for Wal-Mart to face the music".

Wal-Mart's net sales in the United States alone for 2005 were more than \$310bn (£150bn). If every woman who worked at Wal-Mart from 1998 were to join in the suit, it could be forced to pay out billions of dollars.

## Feature

# Fights, cameras, action medics!

Since the G8 in Stirling, Action Medics have been training people to handle activism-related injuries. Rob Ray takes the course

The street is dark as me and my trainee medic buddy burst through the door into a torrent of noise. The scene is one of total chaos, with a nearby woman nearly covering me in projectile vomit as I survey the scene.

A little way down the street is a man lying on the floor, his head covered in blood. A second person, clearly disorientated, is staggering around. In the distance, the police are closing in and I've not got enough supplies to deal with this.

"D for danger, take time to look around..." I mutter to myself, trying not to panic. After a few seconds pause which seem like a lifetime to see if there's anything around which might get us hurt, I and my buddy decide to go for the person bleeding on the floor...

It's a good thing that these involved and intensive scenarios are an integral part of the three-day Action Medics training course, where you play both patients and medics as part of the education process.

Having confidently cruised through the first round of talking, and thinking 'yeah I can handle an injured person', my first patient 'died' while I was dealing (badly) with some otherwise harmless drunks. It wasn't until my third attempt that I really started to get things right, by which time if I'd been in the field it would have been a disaster zone. My trainer, 'M', noted with a smile that it wouldn't be a lesson we'd forget in real life.

The Action Medics were set up in April of 2005, shortly before the G8 in Stirling, to provide aid in what a lot of people thought were going to be extremely violent situations. As it turned out, their contribution was to be one of the biggest success stories of the entire affair, spawning a new support system at demonstrations and protests which has already proved its worth several times over.

At the G8 itself, medics spotted a major potential problem at the camps, which teemed with people and had little

or no hygiene, when cases of vomiting sickness began to soar. The group sorted out everything from public health to patching up spikes in peoples' feet, and even in one case the fallout from someone riding a shopping trolley off the roof of a building.

Following G8 the medics, who include several healthcare professionals, shifted gear, and have now trained up hundreds of people in a constantly evolving process. Once you have done their course, and learned CPR, you are counted as a member of the collective and you can go out on actions. They provide a kit list and training in a huge range of scenarios, and they do bulk ordering for equipment so you can get set up more cheaply.

There have been up to 20 trainings so far in Britain, Holland, the Ukraine and Russia. Born out of the experiences of long-term activists who have been involved with a variety of major convergences and campaigns, the training has some major differences from more traditional medic courses.

Thought is put into how to react in circumstances such as CS Gas attacks, mass arrests while police lines move forward, injuries taken while falling from fences, or from water cannon, right up to keeping watch for fascist attacks.

This last came to the fore during this year's mobilisation for the Russian G8, when UK medics went out to train Ukrainians and Russians.

The Ukraine was chosen because it has easier access than Russia, and many of the medics they trained there were already well aware of some of the things being trained for, like the need to watch out for threats.

"M" said: "They are amazing, the girl who translated for us had recently had two people killed, one at a food not bombs and the other at a punk gig, and they needed medics. At the end of the training they made us promise to go to the G8 itself in Russia. We did 70 people in Russia and it was utterly different because of the police and fascists and it was entirely possible we would see stabbings. We ended up in a



square just waiting for people to treat" (go to [medicstastebetter.blogspot.com](http://medicstastebetter.blogspot.com) for their diary of the events).

Training session requests in the UK have tended to come under less spectacular circumstances since the G8 circus rolled on, but have kept the collective stretched - 'M' had done three weekends in a month by the time she finished with us. Despite the high workload however, she feels the effort has been worth it, building up the people who go to them and sometimes providing extra medical support at the vital moment.

"Other than in the run up to G8 protests, training requests tend to come out of gatherings like Earth First!. The more we do the more we're asked. I think we're multipurpose. People end up getting riot training and it builds confidence. People start off and they are really shy but by the end they are much more assertive.

"At Sack Parliament [a recent demonstration in London], there were people who had trained the day before! I went and for 120-150 people in the square there were about eight medics on the scene, which was great because the trainers don't want to medic at every event."

The medics' role has however been more fluid than expected, with 'M' repeatedly warning the group I was training with that "you end up being everyone's mum - have they had some water, have they eaten recently, did they get pissed the night before..." At events like the G8 summit, climate camps and Earth First!, medics ended up performing secondary duties of making sure the sometimes recalcitrant activists who showed up had some

means of washing their hands after going to the loo, among other general health-keeping duties.

"We seem to have ended up doing a lot of first aid stuff at gatherings and that is something we will do if we are particularly committed to it but it has to be specifically political," 'M' added.

Organisation and legal issues have been a problem for the group. Because of the nature of their work, there are potential legal problems in gaining consent for what you do, and potentially if you get things wrong.

'M' explained: "Not every one [of the trainers] is necessarily a doctor or a nurse and we don't certify our medics, particularly because there's no framework for it. The State Department don't give our advice on chemical weapons for example. So we aren't registered with anyone. To go out and be an action medic you have to have been through the training but we are a loose affinity group.

"Legally there could be problems but it's a massively grey area. On the continent they have Good Samaritan laws where you have to help people on the floor but we don't have that here, but it hasn't been a problem so far. It's not likely that someone will bring charges if you save their life.

"We are explicitly non-hierarchical, which is a problem because for the health care professionals there is a huge clash between the professional culture of telling people what to do and a more consultative approach. In a medical emergency it's all about experience though. But it's very difficult not to end up with 'leading' figures.

"But how do we act as medics without centralising and how do we avoid

imposing hierarchy? Very few people started the action medics group and now that more people have gotten involved we want to maintain openness and it's really difficult to let people get on with it. If people fuck up it's bad in a medical situation and arguably we are responsible for what people do under our training."

These potential pitfalls have not stopped the medics from expanding extremely quickly, bolstered by a growing respect for the high level of training which is being provided. In my own case, I found a setup which is of a quality many professional courses would struggle to equal.

'M' thinks that the medic training is hugely worthwhile venture, and has been thrilled by the enthusiasm she has seen around the country. She said: "It's very exciting. I'm constantly inspired by the people we train - we learn something new from each training.

"We decided that our main purpose is training people - as many as possible. We want all the activists in Britain to have that. It should be like getting the legal briefing. Not everyone is going to be wholly trained and there are people who will want to go on to do things like wilderness training and everything else but everyone should know the basics."

The Action Medics are currently considering the next G8 summit in Germany, which they believe will be a much more difficult event than was seen in the UK, where there isn't an organised fascist force on the streets. Training is also planned for South America.

For more information or to organise a training meeting near you, go to [actionmedics.org.uk](http://actionmedics.org.uk)



# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 05

### Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

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

Many apologies to subscribers who were wondering what had happened to their copies of *Freedom*. Unfortunately the mailout crew jumped ship, so two issues were left to linger in a darkened room before help arrived. If you can help with the mailout, or any other of the many and varied tasks around Angel Alley (do we need to list them again?), please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Regular visitors to the bookshop may have been surprised at how the dank and dingy Angel Alley has changed – it's been spruced up by the Whitechapel Art Gallery, and even has moody lighting when darkness falls. And then there's the lush foliage of the bamboo that's sprouted up near our doorway... If you've not visited for a while, it's certainly worth a look. If you're making a special trip to the bookshop it's always a good idea to call first (020 7247 9249) to make sure someone is there and your journey isn't wasted.

Once again, apologies for the glitches in the mailout, and hopefully things will soon be fully functional once more.

### 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)  
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Freedom Press Distribution:  
[distro@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:distro@freedompress.org.uk)

### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 24th February 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 15th February. Send articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

### Guns on the streets

The Home-Office orchestrated hysteria which followed a spate of teenage gun crimes in South London culminated in a 'peace march' in Brixton which was addressed by Cressida Dick, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

To cheers from the crowd, Dick – who ordered the shooting of Jean Charles De Menezes at Stockwell tube station – stated that "the police are standing alongside you".

To compound the absurdity, Lee Jasper, equalities adviser to Ken Livingstone, and a man whose career has been built on the principle 'no bandwagon is too small to ever be missed', told the crowd that the march had "restored black people's pride".

Now that Tony Blair and David Cameron have finished crying crocodile tears over kids they'd normally want to lock up, there are some hard truths we should take on board if we want to think seriously about why gun crime appears more prevalent, and the victims ever younger.

1. For a growing minority, drug dealing and petty crime have become an entirely rational response to an economy which is predicated on acquisition and rampant consumerism. Part of New Labour's agenda was to complete the transformation of the UK into a low wage, low skill economy, with an educational system re-fitted to crush working class aspiration for any life beyond a series of short-term McJobs – a life without ambition or security.

To look to the drug economy as a means to the primitive accumulation of capital – a way of getting cash together to seek to avoid the prospect of such a life – is entirely logical and, moreover, a choice facilitated by the criminalisation of drug use which all mainstream parties are so keen to see continue. If you seek to maintain a society on the basis of an ideology of material success and an economy which undercuts the prospect of any such material success for the majority, the shit will hit the fan before too long.

2. In the vacuum created by the collapse of the traditional forms of organised solidarity within working class communities, gang culture has become the 'heart in a heartless world' for many kids – both a means of identifying with a life outside the self, and a form of collective defence against the effects of the predatory, low-level drugs economy. In a dog-eat-dog world, it makes sense to form a pack.

3. There is no solution to the social, ethical and physical degradations of everyday life which are the human costs of capitalism other than through the overthrow of capitalism. Capitalism is a social relationship founded on exploitation, and exploitation pervades every aspect of social life under capitalism. However much we mourn the wasted lives of kids like Billy Cox, no tears, no injunctions to 'end the violence' will make a shred of difference. Guns and drugs on our estates are the collateral damage of 21st century capitalism. No appeal to the state, no prayer in Church, no call for more police, more youth clubs, longer sentences for gun possession, will change a thing – there is no band-aid to heal this wound.

The consequences of the defeat and decay of political and social organisation within working class communities in the last quarter-century can only be offset by the re-politicisation and re-organisation of our communities. Faced with poverty, and a drugs/guns-based economy far more entrenched than that in the UK, the Black Panther Party in the 1960s in the US was founded on the basis of the recruitment and organisation of the 'brothers on the block' – the most violent, most alienated of the black working class. The likes of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale went to the dealers and teenage gunmen and turned them into revolutionaries. Our task remains the same today.

4. In looking to address that task, we face the added obstacle that the revolutionary left in the UK has never been smaller, more white, more middle-class, more passive and less rooted in working class communities. There is also a sense in which the social constitution of the revolutionary movement as is becomes an alibi against it ever becoming anything better – 'How can we talk to kids in these communities, we're white/middle-class, etc.' Perhaps the first task the white, middle-class 'revolutionary' left should set itself is to bring about consciously its own demise, to be replaced by a rooted working class revolutionary movement than can begin to deal with the real tasks that we face.

Revolution cannot just be an idea – it has to be an act. The maintenance of the 'revolutionary' left as a white middle-class clique is a guarantee that ideas will never be turned into acts. Addressing the hard questions is at least a start on the road to putting things right.

We can leave the sanctimony and 'get the guns-off-the street' pacifism to the likes of Lee Jasper. The problem with gun crime isn't that we have guns in our communities, it's that we point them at each other. Any other argument surrenders the monopoly of violence to the likes of Cressida Dick. Stating all this won't make us popular with bleeding heart *Guardian*-readers but it might begin to win our ideas an audience where it counts.

John Shute

### Spooks

page 1  
campuses "at a time when college campuses are under the sway of apologists for terrorism" according to its non-profit tax return.

A number of workhorses have emerged from this stable, not least of them is the Intelligence Summit – a meeting point for likeminded hawks, gadflies and corporate representatives with a common passion for war.

### Czech republic

page 1  
a spokesman for the anarchists, told CTK that they sought to prevent the nationalists from marching through the town.

"The pretext of their rally, a demonstration against the construction of a radar station, is tantamount to abuse of a good idea by a movement that tramples on the rights of minorities," Slačálek said.

The US wants to build the radar system in the Brdy military grounds,

70 kilometres southwest of Prague, as part of the plan to protect the United States and its allies against possible missile attacks by Iran and North Korea.

### Allotments

page 2  
Olympic Park area as well as to fragment the community.

Even if the Manor Gardening community could be protected by relocation the LDA cannot guarantee the relocation site. Come June '07 we could find ourselves leaving behind all our carefully tended stock, our sheds and tools because we have nowhere to take them to. If planning permission is granted it would only be for seven years after which the Society may be moved again. Yet it would take at least twenty years, plus the right conditions, to re-establish our current food production levels and to create a similarly viable community.

As plot holder Armagan and her friend Cavide said, "We could make the London Olympics different from all other Olympics.

"Having the allotments in the Olympic Park and preserving them for the Legacy Park would send out the message world wide that the UK really does care after all."

But do the LDA and the Mayor care about local grown initiatives even though they might be successful examples, like Manor Garden Allotments, of the Governments own strategies such as the London Food and the Biodiversity Strategies?

Can we allow the LDA to squander the opportunity to showcase to the world a truly British institution, which could provide a real legacy of historical continuity, real community, a human scale and a sense of soul to the Olympic and Legacy Parks? Will we find ourselves with the ghost town legacy of past Olympics and the Millennium Dome come 2013?

As writer and supporter of the campaign to incorporate the allotments, Iain Sinclair says, "We don't want it [the Olympic Park] imagining for us. We don't want it over-imagined. We want to imagine it for ourselves." Manor Gardening Society Support website: [www.lifeisland.org](http://www.lifeisland.org)

### Aufheben

page 7  
not only in Oxford Street but all over the World.

*Aufheben* fail to understand that value is the social reality that keeps the System going. Even the capitalist feels the weight of capital! The Queen even had to open Buckingham Palace as a kind of Disneyland in order to pay for the upkeep of the place, and to pay for the ongoing costs of the Windsor Window Display. The Treasury could not be seen to dish out money for the Windsor fire, because the public would not have bought the idea. The Queen, by opening Buck Palace to the people made amends by not demanding public funds from the tax-payers. And like everyone else she joined the value-for-money syndrome. Royalty as shop-keepers. The end is nigh! (Don't despair Tony Benn!)

To return to the *Aufheben* mess, we have to point out to them that Postone did not "sneak in the assumption that we act as automatons of capital" as

they assert. Postone is only guilty of observing what is taking place. It is somewhat nasty of the *Aufhebener*s to put forward this 'sneaking' business. In fact it is the stupidity of the editors of that mag who can't get out of their hard-line class struggle suit of armour.

It keeps them in a state of stupor. As Nietzsche once said: "Those you can't teach to fly, help them to fall faster"! *Aufheben* are accomplishing the second phase themselves without our help. Ideology is heavy. You can't take off with surplus baggage – especially in these days of terror. We ourselves had to abandon the Situationist battlefield and leave the rusty weaponry in situ. Strangely enough many picked up the worn-out stuff left behind. Many were eager to flog the morsels left to rot. The leading left publisher, *erso/New Left ReView* were keen to 'update' their booksales but only after combating the Situationist International for more than 30 years! It is tragic-comic to hear Tariq Ali praising the SI and Guy Debord.

*Aufheben* complain that Postone does not say What Is To Be Done against capital. This is not true.

Pastone, in a negative way, criticises what this society is all about. Those who defend the old fetishist class struggle positions cannot see the wood for the trees – that is the truth of that organic theory. You have to move out of the simplistic worship of the working class and proletariat to be able to understand modern capital and to be able to tackle the capitalist node of production in 2006. Unless you do that you remain in the cold, muddy trenches alongside *Aufheben* and *Historical Materialism*. A sort of self-congratulatory society where everything remains static and boring.

A final word on *Aufheben*: The attack in No.15 against Postone masked a split. It had to do with the support for a French swamp called *Theorie Communiste*. Ironically, these two groups are very much akin on many points. It seems to us that the *Aufhebener*s are a bit more flexible to at least they acknowledge some critical points in Moishe Postone. TC, on the other hand, mix a rigid class analysis and a critique of value. Meanwhile, down in Oxford Street the lonely crowds shop until they drop. The S 'n' F blues all over. Where is the loving in all of this? Where is the critique? Only a brutal mince machine that mangles the buyer and the seller in a vast orgy of non-communication.

The Reception Committee for the critical re-appraisal of Karl Marx and the practical support of Moishe Postone

### Quiz answers

1. An organism adapted to live in extreme or harsh environments compared to the rest of terrestrial life, such as bacteria that live under Antarctic ice or around super-hot oceanic vents.
2. UFC is a mixture of jujitsu, Muay Thai kickboxing and wrestling. UFC fighter Jeff Monson has anarchist symbols as tattoos and doesn't shy away from using his position to promote his politics.
3. They were made two weeks before the Wall Street Crash of 1929.
4. His theory that stock markets are rational underlies the current economic theory, the "efficient markets hypothesis," which was used to justify the 1990s dot.com bubble.

# REVIEW

## Brian Morris explores the history and the politics of the British Empire

**T**he British Empire, we are told, was the largest empire the world has ever seen, far greater than that of ancient Rome or Genghis Khan. At its zenith it covered around a quarter of the earth's land surface. It was an empire over which the sun never set. At the end of the nineteenth century the British Empire governed around 450 million people, then about a quarter of the world's population.

In the recent decade, particularly since the illegal occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, it has become fashionable among historians, on television and in books, to portray the British Empire as a rather benign institution. Thus in his widely acclaimed book *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (Penguin, 2003), Niall Ferguson informs us that what was important and distinctive about the British Empire was that it did so much to promote democracy – representative government – and “the spread of liberty”. Actually what especially appeals to Ferguson is the fact that the British Empire did so much to spread free-market capitalism – the very antithesis of equality, liberty and fraternity, as well as of any form of real democracy. Although it is worth noting, of course, that democracy is now defined by the Bush intelligentsia, as any political system that supports free market capitalism.

Ferguson's book *Empire* is a good read. Full of entertaining anecdotes relating to those ‘heroes’ of the British Empire – Cecil Rhodes, Baden-Powell, Lord Curzon, and, of course, that racist ideologue of Empire, Winston Churchill, who more than anyone exemplified the imperialist hubris and the “arrogance of power”. Yet besides the heroics and

splendours of the Empire, which so appeals to Ferguson, and which he describes so graphically, there is the reality of oppression and exploitation. For what is so striking about the legacy of the British Empire and the “imperial achievement” was that it also involved a radical intolerance of other cultures (hence the promotion of Christianity and ‘civilisation’), racism and the denigration of non-Europeans, and the exploitation of people throughout the Empire through slavery, share-cropping, indentured labour and wage labour. Such exploitation was maintained through colonial states that were anything but democratic, and which quickly suppressed any form of resistance to colonial rule with force and brutality. As Ferguson himself describes it: native peoples of the Empire were plundered, dispossessed of their land, robbed, taxed, even wiped out, and any resistance “mown down by the Maxim gun”. No wonder Adolf Hitler was a fervent admirer of the British Empire. All this tends to be downplayed by Ferguson and his focus is not on the peoples of the Empire but on its rulers. What he likes about the British Empire was that not only did it promote and encourage, indeed impose, free market capitalism throughout the world, but it proved that “Empire” is a form of “international government” that can “work”. Thus Ferguson has become the ‘drummer boy’ of the American Empire, urging the United States to take up the “White Man's Burden”. The United States under Bush, in the name of ‘liberty’ and ‘democracy’, is thus being encouraged (as if it needs any encouragement) to take up the ‘global burden’ and govern the world in the interests of everyone. Ferguson overlooks, of course, the exploitation and oppression of people



Captured Mau Mau rebels

throughout the world that such ‘governance’ entails.

If you would like an ‘antidote’ to Ferguson's thesis that the British Empire was a force on the side of goodness, truth and liberty, you can do no better than read John Newsinger's recent book *The Blood Never Dried* (Bookmarks, 2006). The book takes its title from the words of the Chartist and socialist Ernest Jones, who when told that the sun never set on the British Empire, replied “and the blood never dried”. For like William Morris – and, of course, anarchists like Kropotkin – Jones was a harsh critic of the British Empire.

Although subtitled *A People's History of the British Empire*, Newsinger's book is not so much a history of this Empire as a celebration of people's resistance to it. It thus focuses on people's struggles and on the rebellions against the imposition of imperial rule. It is well researched, lucidly written, and written from a Marxist perspective. It essentially, chapter by chapter, goes through a series of historical episodes from the Jamaican rebellion of 1831 and the struggle against slavery, through to the current opposition against American imperialism, exemplified in the invasion and occupa-

tion of Iraq. It thus has interesting and informative chapters on, for example, the Irish famine, the opium wars in China, the Indian ‘mutiny’ of 1857-58, the invasions of Egypt and the Sudan in the late nineteenth century, through to the crushing of the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya in the 1950s. What Newsinger's study certainly highlights is the oppressive and brutal nature of the British Empire and its form of ‘governance’, and the importance of modern rifles and machine guns, especially the Maxim gun, in stamping out any form of resistance to the Empire. The well-known battle of Omdurman in the Sudan, portrayed in the film *The Four Feathers*, and in which Churchill famously took part, was thus completely one-sided. Some 16,000 Sudanese ‘dervishers’ were killed in the battle, while only 48 British soldiers lost their lives. Not only did the ‘heroes’ of Empire have overwhelming firepower, but flogging, torture, imprisonment without trial, and the summary execution or hanging of rebels or dissidents were seemingly commonplace in attempts to crush rebellions against imperial rule – the Empire. During the Mau Mau revolt of the 1950s, for

example, which was a revolutionary movement among (mainly) the Kikuyu, which aimed to overthrow colonial rule, torture and beatings were frequently used to extract confessions, over 70,000 people were interned without trial, including many women and children, and over a thousand hanged as ‘rebels’ against the British Empire.

The book ends with some interesting reflections on British foreign policy and its relation to the American Empire – supported, of course, with enthusiasm by Niall Ferguson. Newsinger indicates that since the Second World War the British Labour Party has always allied itself with the American Empire – as it had earlier supported the British Empire. Thus, Blair's willingness to subordinate himself to one of the most right-wing, reactionary and openly imperialist administrations in US history, simply expresses a continuity with the policies of past Labour governments. What is new though is Blair's enthusiastic support for the neo-conservative agenda, namely, his open embrace of the interests of big business and the rich. Small wonder that Rupert Murdoch is now described as the patron saint of New Labour.



The battle of Omdurman

## MAGAZINES

The only good thing about this lengthy 20 pages of A4 in *Aufheben* number 15 is the title: ‘Capital Beyond Class Struggle?’ They should have dropped the question mark though. In the rest of the article the Aufhebners do not attempt to come, to terms with the new conditions of the capitalist mode of production/distribution in 2006.

They are quite happy to churn out

their fetishistic ultimate belief in the working class and proletariat as if nothing had changed in the world, and starting here in Britain. Some people are incredibly blinded by ideology for sometimes you have to face the facts soberly, and not get drunk on class struggle antiquated scenarios.

But to be fair *Aufheben* are not alone on that route to nowhere. The

entire left, including the anarchists, all subscribe to this old critique straight out of *The Communist Manifesto*. Ortho-Marxism is a real barrier to change.

Many people think they have updated their theory by adding a Situationist ideological input. But it is all to no avail. Because the Situationist International and Debord in particular were, to the

end, into the class struggle framework. Debord never attempted to tackle new developments – it would take Anselm Jappe to get to grips with this rusty class/proletariat hulk.

The *Aufheben* business is both quite simple and complicated at the same time. The Aufhebners do not accept that today the subject is capital and not the working class or the proletariat. If

only it weren't so! But we have to confront this harsh reality in order to do something about it. The *Aufheben* crew ought to walk down Oxford Street at Christmas, they might see the reification avenue all lit up; the results of commodity fetishism and the automaton subject at work, i.e., value constantly valorising itself. And this is

## A Sideways Look

One of the central tenets of individualist anarchism, that all should be free to bear arms, is something that is shared with the libertarian right, who generally express it loudly and vociferously. While social anarchists would defend their right to armed self defence, it has never been such a central issue for us as individuals. Although the early Industrial Syndicalist did feature adverts from an air rifle company, exhorting 'Syndicalists! Learn how to shoot! What they were expected to be shooting at presumably didn't need spelling out.

One of the reasons it has not been so central for us is that we know we're outgunned – the state has far more resources when it comes to weaponry than it would ever be possible for any revolutionary movement to acquire, short of subverting the armed forces. There is also an ethical dimension – statist are happy that the ends justify the means, but that is something no anarchist could ever accept.

The libertarian right have been quiet since the recent shootings involving young people in South London. This is hardly surprising – their rhetoric is all about responsible individuals defending themselves from the state, foreign aggressors and trade unionists. Perhaps they've missed a trick – most of these shootings are related, though possibly not directly, to the trade in illegal drugs. And while decriminalising drugs would help, so would cutting back on the supply of weapons, something no free market capitalist would ever call for.

I think it would be fair to call the world view of the youths involved nihilistic. They've got very little, in terms of either material goods or prospects, and the only way they can access the riches on offer in the affluent consumer society is by joining a gang. Increasing penalties on older gang members has meant younger people 'running errands'. Couple this with a culture that is so wrapped up in show, such that perceived disrespect is something to kill for, and these pointless deaths begin to have a context.

Every commentator has someone to blame for the rise in gun crime among the young. I think it's a complex issue, including family breakdown, rampant individualism, poverty, class, race and opportunities. Conservatives and family values campaigners want to use it to suit their agenda; the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade see it as proof that teenagers should all be locked up. And with Britain's ever-expanding prison population it's only a matter of time before some advisor proposes converting failing schools into new Academy Prisons.

What I don't feel comfortable with is the idea that weapons should be freely available. If someone loses it and wants to take revenge on another, having a gun or a knife means it is far more likely that someone will be seriously injured or die. I can remember being 15 and I think my judgement was pretty poor at the time – though

possibly better than some of my peers. A man with a gun is scary enough, a fearless adolescent with a gun is so much worse.

Svartfrosk

## Bookworm notes

The history of the working class movement has the ability to both inspire and enrage. Inspire, because of the struggles of ordinary people to improve and take control over their lives. Enrage, because these struggles have been thwarted or wrecked by our self-appointed leaders, time after time. Books about the Russian revolution are particularly bad for my blood pressure.

Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921* (Freedom Press, £9.90) manages to work both as a history book, and to capture some of the drama of a key period for the anarchist movement. It's history written on the hoof, by an eyewitness to many of the events described, and a friend and comrade of Nestor Makhno.

The Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (or 'Makhnovists') spent a lot of their time fighting for the freedom and self-determination of the poorest layers of Ukrainian society. However, Arshinov is also keen to stress that they were a social movement, setting up free communes of the poorest peasants, and getting the anarchist message across by direct action, political discussion and propaganda.

This book is also an indictment of the Bolsheviks' ruthless treatment of ordinary people when they dare to organise themselves instead of allowing themselves to be led. For Arshinov, the Bolsheviks did not 'degenerate' or take a wrong turn – they were self-serving gangsters and parasites from day one. To fight them required a highly organised, highly motivated force like the Makhnovists. Although some might disagree with all of Arshinov's conclusions, one thing this period of history teaches us is that 'anarchy' does not and cannot equal disorganisation.



Available post free from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



## Imagine if...

Ruth Kelly was on the phone to Gordon Brown. A few changes had taken place since the last conversation she'd had with the Chancellor.

"The wise owl hoots at the leafy oak," she began.

"Trident is a good idea," Gordon countered.

The nonsense words had been made up after Brown had been impersonated by comedian Rory Bremner, who fortunately had failed to ask any of the more difficult questions.

"What am I going to do Gordon? I've been made to look a complete tit."

Gordon's jaw took a second to locate itself in the vicinity of the phone. "I think this is the excuse we've been looking for to clamp down on dangerous dissenters like Bremner. Peter Hain has already begun by saying Bremner is just embittering the public, and as long as you continue pretending you can't remember a phone call which you clearly took fairly recently and was even recorded, we may even profit out of this."

Ruth agreed and rang off. The Chancellor was clearly worried, whatever he might say. The entire cabinet had been shaken up by the revelation that they could be tricked unmercifully into telling the public what they actually thought about policy.

She shuddered. How can anyone run an open, democratic government if such things are possible?

This is why the CCTV is all outside parliament, she thought. As Tony might say, only those with nothing to hide need worry about scrutiny.

## Listings

**10th March** The Sixth International @Iternative Bookfair in Gent at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, Gent, Belgium, from 10am-8pm – as well as books, etc., there will be a programme of conferences, workshops, video showings and performances, for info see [www.aboekenbeurs.be](http://www.aboekenbeurs.be) or contact [aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com](mailto:aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com)

**17th and 18th March** The Twelfth Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair at SF County Fair Building, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Boulevard, San Francisco, USA, from 10am until 6pm (on 17th) and 11am to 5pm (on 18th) – this year back at the old location with all the space needed to walk around, to talk with other visitors, to look, to enjoy the programmes and the cafe, and over two days. Contact The Bookfair Committee, c/o Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight Street, San Francisco, CA 94117

**19th March** Global Day of Action against the 'War On Terror', on the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, to find out what's happening see <http://m19wiki.pbwiki.com>

**19th March** London Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is to highlight the fact that the arms trade is corrupt, indiscriminate and part of the UK establishment by protesting outside three central London arms dealers. 11am, BAE Systems, 6 Carlton Gardens; 12 noon, LRLIH, 80 Haymarket; 1pm, MBDA, 11 Strand, for more info call 07939 159283, email [londoncaat@riseup.net](mailto:londoncaat@riseup.net) or see [platial.com/caatlondon/map/16017](http://platial.com/caatlondon/map/16017)

**24th March** Northern Anarchist Network meeting at the Hare and Hounds Public House, Shudehill, Manchester from 11am to 5pm. An American anarchist visiting the UK will be speaking, along with Dave Douglass and Graham Moss.

**25th March** What is the Importance of Hegel Today? by Joseph Tandler. 11am at South Place Ethical Society (SPES), Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, for more see [www.ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm](http://www.ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm)

**26th March** ID-Day national day of action against ID cards and the database state, to coincide with the opening of the passport centres where people will have to go to be interviewed, fingerprinted and iris scanned for the ID card system, for more info see [no2id.net](http://no2id.net)

**28th March** The Future of Black Flag magazine, meeting at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, from 7pm

**31st March** Reclaim the Future 4, an all-day event in a self-organised space in London with practical workshops, cafe, political cinema, stalls, infoshop and art, and party till late with live stages, dance rooms, urban cabaret and visuals (money raised for anti-war and anti-capitalist action) for more info see [rts.gn.apc.org/diary.htm](http://rts.gn.apc.org/diary.htm)

**5th and 6th April** Expose Exxon Day, 24 hours of protest at Exxon (Esso) headquarters, details of events to be announced, for more info see [campaigncc.org/stopexxon.html](http://campaigncc.org/stopexxon.html)

## The quiz

1. What is an extremophile?
2. What is the Ultimate Fighting Championship and who is the anarchist fighting in it?
3. What was unfortunate about economist Irving Fisher's comment that "stock prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau"?
4. What happened to Fisher's economic analysis which inspired this comment?

Answers on page 6

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