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Changing our way of life

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On Blair's new "anti-terrorist" policies and how, if we believe  
his rhetoric, he is doing the terrorists work for them by  
changing our way of life.

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Even as the last echoes of the bombs faded on July 7<sup>th</sup>, it was clear that the authoritarians of New Labour would use it to increase the powers of the state as well as their hold over society. As Blair uttered the words that the bombs would not change our way of life, it was certain that he would do so — egged on by the right-wing media, of course.

Come August, and Blair did not disappoint. Before jet-setting off on his holidays, he held a press conference to announce his capitulation to the bombers — and the likes of the Sun and Daily Mail. He outlined a raft of plans to combat the terrorist threat his own policies has helped to increase. After urging us that the terrorists would not succeed in changing our way of life, Blair did their job for them and announced that "the rules of the game are changing." By that he meant the balance between civil liberties and the state was shifting.

Mark one up for the terrorists. If they really do hate our way of life and seek to end it, as Blair claims, then he has just

appeased them. What are a few hard won liberties compared to having to admit to being wrong on Iraq?

These new ground rules will, apparently, include “deportation and exclusion” for “advocating violence to further a person’s beliefs or justifying or validating such violence.” It is doubtful that this means that George Bush will be refused entry to our shores or that he himself will be departed. Advocating violence or justifying it seems to be perfectly acceptable if it is the state which doing the killing.

And what of the new offence “of condoning or glorifying terrorism”? Will this be applied to state terrorism? Say, for example, “Shock and Awe” style policies? Or the levelling of whole towns, like Fallujah? And what of Blair’s “justifying or glorifying terrorism anywhere, not just in the UK”? Will this be applied to those seeking to explain such acts? And will it apply to state approved terrorists? For example, would it have applied to those who supported (and armed) the Contras in Nicaragua or the Afghan forces fighting the Soviets? If, for example, a right-winger praises the former for defeating “Marxist tyranny” will they be hauled into court?

He happily notes that the state “already powers to strip citizenship from those individuals with British or dual nationality who act in a way that is contrary to the interests of this country.” Sadly, it seems unlikely it will be applied any time soon to him or his cronies. After all, his poodle like following of Bush has made this country less safe and his home policies have hardly promoted the interests of anyone, bar the wealthy and corporations.

Blair opines that our “duty is to share and support the values that sustain the British way of life.” Yet Britain is a diverse country, riddled with cultural, class and social divisions even in the white population. Most Scottish people, for example, do not consider themselves as British for a start. And are the “values” of the “British way of life” the same for a striking worker as for their boss? Of course not.

The concept of one way of life in inherently totalitarian, fostered by those who seek conformity to power. The diversity of life ensures that there can only be ways of life, not a way of life. Ultimately, by “British” Blair means whatever the state defines it as — in other words, middle class English who vote Tory (or Tony). Rest assured that any new laws allegedly passed to combat Islamic extremists will be used against the general public — i.e. anyone who does not fit into the “values” of those who rule this country and their kept politicians. We know this because it has already happened to anti-capitalist protestors.

That is why we must fight now to defend what civil liberties we have and anarchists should be at the forefront of any such campaigns.