



# Around Europe

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## Freedom and Democracy Coming Under Siege in Washington, DC

As President Bush was proclaiming his "mandate" to spread freedom and democracy around the world, in the crowd below on the Capitol grounds, police whisked away a demonstrator who had dared to unfurl a protest banner. Banners and signs were banned at the inauguration ceremony on the Capitol grounds. Caught on the CNN cameras, the irony of the moment was profound.

It reflected how much has changed in the U.S. with respect to cherished political freedoms since President Bush's first inauguration in 2001.

Dissenters beware. The new tone was set by the Bush administration and Congressional leaders in the political aftermath of the 2001 attacks: "Either you are with us, or you are against us," they said, as they mobilized the nation for a global war without end against unknown enemies in unknown places.

Who would dare object to the "war on terror" to avenge the attacks on the U.S.? Who would dare question the expanded, intrusive domestic police powers to snoop on private citizens and round up suspected sympathizers? Who would dare object to a war against Iraq, whose alleged weapons of mass destruction posed an imminent threat to peace and security? Who would dare oppose spending hundreds of billions to

prosecute these wars and "support our troops" who are in harm's way in defence of liberty?

The patriotism of the few members of Congress who did dissent in the first months of the "war on terror" was called into question, just as it was for those who questioned the President's war in Iraq. They were punished for their dissent by their opponents in the election campaigns of 2002 and 2004, with political attacks questioning their loyalty and patriotism. This became a central theme in the presidential contest as well.

But the chill on public dissent has been extended much further than this. Peace and justice groups such as the American Friends Service Committee have been investigated by the FBI. City police departments across the country have used aggressive new tactics to break up and deter peaceful public demonstrations, indiscriminately arresting hundreds of demonstrators and bystanders. American Muslims fear to contribute to their charities or to speak freely of their concerns about what their government is doing in their name. Mosques have been asked to turn over membership lists to the FBI. Even members of Congress have been detained at airports when they were identified erroneously by the "terrorist watch lists" as persons of concern.

**Dissenters beware...in the political aftermath of the 2001 attacks:**  
**"Either you are with us, or you are against us,"**

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## Freedom and Democracy Coming Under Siege

*(Continued from page 1)*

Back in Washington, D.C., at the White House, religious leaders, who were once routinely welcomed by both Republican and Democratic administrations, are denied audiences with White House officials: "If you are not here to support us, we are not interested in talking with you," is the message. Rational and moral persuasion have no currency there, unless it supports the prevailing view.

Capitol Hill has become an armed encampment. Machine-gun toting guards now patrol the Capitol steps where tourists once roamed freely. Streets are routinely closed to traffic during heightened security alerts. Dozens of permanent new police check points have been set up. Concrete barriers have been erected around government buildings and monuments. All visitors are thoroughly searched before entry into congressional buildings, and access to the Capitol Building is tightly controlled.

Since the anthrax attacks, postal mail from constituents to their members of Congress is delayed for weeks as it is irradiated, opened, and screened off site before being delivered. Guards bar advocacy groups like FCNL (Friends Committee on National Legislation) from bringing written materials in to distribute to members of Congress and their staffs. Many members' offices refuse to accept hand-delivered brochures and statements out of fear that they may be laced with lethal pathogens.

The recent inauguration epitomized the extremes to which the new security state will go in the name of protecting "freedom and democracy". One hundred square blocks were closed off to vehicle traffic for the day. Over 6,000 police and 7,000 military troops were deployed for security (roughly 13 armed guards for every 100 spectators). All access to the speech and parade route was through a dozen check points where everyone was searched. All signs and posters were banned from the Capitol grounds. Snipers were on roofs. Was this Bagdad or Washington, D.C.?

The changes described here may not sound out of the ordinary for many in countries with a longer experience of extremist violence and heightened security measures. And, anyone who has attempted to stroll past the heavily armed and fortified U.S. embassy in Brussels would not be surprised. (It's the one with the armoured car in front, where pedestrians must show identity papers before passing on a public sidewalk). But in the U.S., these trends are nonetheless alarming.

What do these trends portend - for political and religious freedom - for rational, civil, political discourse - for citizens and groups being able to communicate their concerns to their representatives - for the U.S. Congress as a deliberative body and as a check on the power of the President?

Our country's light, as a beacon of freedom and liberty, seems to be dimming.

*Ned Stowe, Senior Legislative Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation*

## Memories of Rudi Schwarz

Rudi Schwarz was one of the Friends who, in 1974, took part in and made a significant contribution to the Wuppertal Consultation, called to consider putting in place a Quaker Representative in Brussels. The report of the Consultation says "... we were particularly happy to have with us Rudi Schwarz of Bonn, whose job includes the briefing of German Diplomats assigned to Brussels,...".

Some Friends pointed out that the term European Community must logically involve all Europeans, whereas others felt it would be better to concentrate during the discussions on Western Europe, and especially on the European Economic Community. Rudi Schwarz said that while it would be desirable in principle to have all European countries involved in the EEC, it would be another generation before Eastern Europe could be involved. 31 years on, his prediction was not far wrong.

Highly knowledgeable and quiet, he would sit and listen, considering what was being said, looking at it critically. I remember a Friend asking his advice on the use of diplomatic lobbying - would QCEA's letters and statements reach the right person at the right level, or would it get stuck in bureaucratic draws? Rudi carefully explained to us the inner workings of the diplomatic representations in Brussels and in doing so, made no small contribution to building confidence that Friends would be able to make a real contribution to peace and justice.

It must have been very satisfying for Rudi to see the cold war come to an end and the European Union welcome the new Member States. He died in early 2005.

*Anita Wuyts*



## Getting Together on a Personal Basis

Much is said and written about globalisation. And more often than not, this has a negative slant. But there are good things about a world that has become smaller through communications and through the personal knowledge of a wider range of people.

In Europe, shortly after WWII, the concept of Town Twinning was introduced. The idea was to bring citizens from different parts of Europe together on a people to people level to get to know and understand each other better. There are now many towns and cities across Europe that have regular and effective contact with their 'Twin Towns' not only in Europe but also across the globe.

This is not about funding people or communities in poorer countries. This is about cultural exchange, visits, school exchanges, pen-friendships and cooperation at a municipal level.

At a time when the world is getting smaller and when divisions between peoples, religions, ethnic groups and cultures are being magnified by media and government responses to the so-called 'threat of terrorism' it is even more important to make sure that people get to know each other on a more personal level. That is the kind of understanding which builds bridges and changes hearts and minds.

There is also an increasing tension between European citizens and 'the US'. To the extent to which this is a reaction to the general foreign policy approach of the US administration, this is understandable. To the extent to which it puts barriers in the way of US and European citizens communicating, understanding each other and recognising their diversities and similarities, this is, at the very least, regrettable.

Quaker Meetings on both sides of the Atlantic can do something practical to further such mutual understanding. As a start, Meetings on both sides of the Atlantic can find out whether their town or city is already twinned with another town or city with a Quaker Meeting. The two Meetings could then set up contacts between their members to support each other in their work for peace and understanding.

There is also the initiative of Mayors for Peace which can be found on the internet at: <http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/mayors/english/index.html> and where Meetings can find out

whether their Mayor has signed up to the initiative and whether their twin town or city has also signed up. This could form the basis for mutual support and contacts. If your city or town has not signed up for this initiative, then you could encourage your Mayor to do so.

If your town or city is not twinned with another town or city then you could try to establish contact with suitable partners through your local Quaker Meeting and try to get something off the ground. You can start by looking on the internet for potential partner Meetings bearing in mind that you might want to look for some characteristics that you have in common.

In short, there are lots of ways in which Friends can contribute to getting people in their and other communities to know and understand each other better. We would love to hear from any Meeting that is involved in such initiatives so that we can publicise your achievements.

*Martina Weitsch*

## Asylum Seekers and Refugees

### – It's Time to Act –

Recently QCEA asked Friends to tell us about their help for asylum seekers and refugees.

The replies on action in this field which QCEA has received show the importance of local groups as contact points for new arrivals. The following forms of assistance seem to have been particularly useful:

- help in legal matters (volunteering of lawyers; preparing lists of lawyers with special relevant experience) and simply being with immigrants during crucial stages of the application process
- psychotherapeutical care
- finding accommodation of acceptable standards, particularly if the uncertainty of status extends over long periods
- help in the fight for survival by finding a minimum of income-yielding work (this could lead into "gray" areas because of work permit restrictions)
- finding tools for work (e.g. a sewing machine, a piano for a music teacher)
- lobbying with appropriate political authorities for more open and flexible rules
- and if the result of the application process is negative, demanding that deportations are done in a humane and responsible way.

Please e-mail, fax or mail us more about your activities on this issue. *Dieter Hartwich*



## **Vacancy at QCEA:**

### **PROGRAMME ASSISTANT**

#### **2005 -2006**

QCEA is looking for one young person (age 21–30) to work as Programme Assistant from September 2005. This new post within QCEA has been made possible through the generous support of German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

You need to have an understanding of and interest in European institutions; commitment to the advancement of Quaker concerns at the European level; sympathy with the Quaker approach; willingness to undertake routine and domestic tasks; good working knowledge of English. A reasonable knowledge of French or Dutch will be helpful though not essential. Knowledge of other European languages would be very welcome.

Accommodation and living allowance provided.

For more details and an application form please contact Martina Weitsch, QCEA, Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels. E-mail: [mweitsch@qcea.org](mailto:mweitsch@qcea.org).

Deadline for applications: 29 April 2005. We would hope to be able to invite candidates for interview in the week of 9 May 2005. If a second round of interviews is necessary, these are planned for the week of 30 May 2005. The successful candidate will have the opportunity of participating in the QCEA Study Tour from 2 to 10 July 2005.

## **News in Brief**

### **Friends Quarterly Special Edition**

Friends Quarterly April 2005 will be a themed edition on economic justice reflecting the range of themes which were addressed during 2 days of intense discussion and dialogue at the QCEA/QPSW Conference in November 2004.

### **Bombspotting XL**

On 16 April 2005, just before the NPT Review Conference (May 2005), Bombspotting are planning a massive, international Bombspotting XL-action at the different places in Belgium connected with nuclear weapons: NATO headquarters in Brussels, SHAPE (NATO military HQ) in Mons, and the military base at Kleine Brogel. They will try, in an open and nonviolent way, to inspect these places for nuclear weapons or evidence about their involvement in nuclear weapons policy and to stop this preparation of war crimes.

For more information please visit :

**[www.bomspotting.be](http://www.bomspotting.be)**

### **Study Tour 2005 Reminder**

Places are still available on the QCEA Study Tour (2-10 July 2005).

The QCEA Study Tour provides the perfect opportunity to learn, discuss and reflect on what Europe means to you.

Application forms are available from:

**[www.quaker.org/qcea/studytours.htm](http://www.quaker.org/qcea/studytours.htm)**



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