

# anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

*"There is no instance on record of any class possessing power without abusing it"*

H.T. Buckle

## COME BACK CAP'N BOB ... ALL IS FORGIVEN! GOVERNMENT TO PLUNDER PENSION FUNDS?

Since the government has not denied press reports of its intentions to transfer to the Treasury large sums from the pension funds of British Rail and eventually from the equally prosperous ones of the Post Office and other publicly-owned services, one assumes that this has not been excluded as a 'solution' to the £50,000 million deficit which is anticipated in this year's budget.

What the government says it would do is to honour the pensions of all concerned. we can't imagine that Captain Bob (Maxwell) ever dreamt of 'doing' his employees out of their pensions as he transferred millions of pounds from the pension funds to the hundreds of companies he spawned

### CALLING ALL SOCIALISTS!

So John Smith (and presumably the right Swing whiz-kids of the Labour Party shadow cabinet) has hoist his vote-catching flag to the mast. No more excuses for the Tony Benns and the Denis Skinnners. If they really are socialists and not perennial dissidents who nevertheless enjoy the media attention they get because they are members of the best club in London, they ought to get out in the streets and forget about the media.

It is surely obvious that the Labour Party and the TUC are spent forces and one would not be surprised if before the next elections there was a massive departure of disillusioned socialists from the Party and a fusion of the Labour and Liberal Parties. So much for the infamous Gang of Four who, some readers may not recall, left the Labour Party to 'break the mould' and founded the Social Democratic Party. The SDP collapsed and the Gang of Four have since been elevated to the ermine armchairs of the Lords!

The Labour Party is the creature of the trade unions. With four million unemployed the union membership is cowed as well as depleted. Yet nobody is concerned about the unemployed and with a need to have an organised, active movement of the unemployed.

There's a task for the anarchists!

over the years to keep them going. But we have even less confidence in the government's promises to honour the pensioners' entitlements. After all, as we point out elsewhere in this issue, a National Insurance scheme was instituted in 1948, to which millions of employers, employees and the self-employed have been contributing ever since, *yet no government has ever administered this fund as such.* It has been swallowed up in government revenue as a whole. No accountability to those who have, over a working lifetime, contributed part of their wages or income to a *National Insurance scheme.* When one is told that the various pension schemes of the public services dominate the investment world, the mind boggles at the thought of what influence the National Insurance scheme would have had if it had been properly administered even as a capitalist enterprise.

But whereas we poorer private citizens are expected to live within our means, the 'prosperous' nations

of the world have no such problems. The USA is the biggest debtor nation in the world. It also has the greatest number of millionaires as well as thirty million people living below the poverty line (the soup kitchen candidates - you can't let them starve, can you?) No capitalist government can risk having an 'underclass' (as they call it) of many millions just allowed to starve. They know that in fact they wouldn't, and the ever increasing 'crime' rate indicates they are supplementing 'social security' as best they can. And so as unemployment increases, and especially among the young, all the government talk about training, etc., to deal with it is just an excuse. The latest figures show that 10% of the 120,000 successful graduates who emerged last year are still without a job. Are they not qualified?

Until and unless the government is prepared to reduce the working week, and to increase taxation for those  
*(continued on page 2)*

## Neither Nationalisation Nor Privatisation!

It would seem that as the Tory majority in Parliament gets less and less so the extremists of the right - the Lillies, Portillos and Howards, aided and abetted by the Adam Smith ideologues - become ever more strident in their determination to privatise not only the railways but the post office, prisons, health, education, pensions, in a word to demolish what is left of our much-vaunted welfare state.

Anarchists will not, as a result, fight to the death to defend either nationalisation nor the welfare state. To start with the latter. William Beveridge's project was well-meaning for somebody who believed in the

'capitalist system and its future and to this end sought the reduce the blatant social and economic injustices which might threaten it.

The fact that this country was emerging from six years of war and austerity (from which only Yankee capitalism benefited), with a Labour government overwhelmingly elected in 1945, the introduction of the National Health Service, and a National Insurance Scheme followed on 5th July 1948 without much opposition, apart from the doctors. The obvious and important advantages of the NHS were that for

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## Neither Nationalisation Nor Privatisation!

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the first time a free medical service was available to the families of employed persons.

Freedom's editorial comment<sup>1</sup> (12th June 1948) by John Hewetson, himself a GP at the time in poverty-stricken Southwark, was on the one hand to criticise a system which was "yet another step ... along the road that ties the population to the state by making it dependent on a state operated scheme for an essential social service", and he also referred to the way the individual's dependence on the state as provider of all services was crucial to the stability of totalitarian regimes. But, on the other hand, he added:

"The fact that the alternative, under capitalism, is destitution and the sharper anomalies of poverty, does not make the Liberal-Socialistic alternative a sound proposition.

The only rational insurance against the evils of poverty and industrialism and old age under the wages system is the abolition of poverty and the wages system, and the transformation of industrialism to serve human ends instead of grinding up human beings. Once again the evils of the old system and the evils of the reformist adjustments of it is seen to lie in an anarchist solution."

As to nationalisation, the anarchist position was abundantly clear right from the start and we are on record in opposing both nationalisation and privatisation.<sup>2</sup>

We opposed nationalisation because far from it being a joint enterprise between the community and the railway workers, for instance, the Attlee Labour government made it clear that the railways were expected to pay their way and far from giving the initiative for the effective operation of the network to those on the spot they brought in people from outside - accountants, businessmen, anything but railwaymen! Just a few trade union geriatrics were included on the board (an alternative to sending them to the House of Lords!)

Since we are also utterly opposed to all the Tory governments privatisations and to its threatened assault on every aspect of the welfare state, the foregoing statement of the anarchists' fundamental opposition to the state - government power - is essential to avoid misunderstandings with what follows.

Capitalism, as we never tire of repeating, is condemned to bankruptcy by the greed and blindness of its exponents. Every businessman will tell you that one must expand - 'to stand still is to be overwhelmed by the competition'. No wonder they have landed themselves with productive capacity (and massive debts to the money lenders) far exceeding demand. Their only solution, then, is cut-throat competition followed either by takeover bids or bankruptcy for the weakest. In the process more wage slaves are thrown out of work, out of the

consumerist market, and on to the dole queue.

Capitalist blindness is so obvious in its pathological concern to replace humans by machines in the hope that it will increase their profits. The banks have suffered as a result, with borrowers unable to repay interest on mortgages or loans, let alone on capital. And now the banks are also sacking staff in their thousands (National Westminster, 4,000 to go this year) as they too replace the consumerist salary-slaves with more 'efficient' obedient machines, and more customers are lost for the consumerist economy!

In the past the general solution to the vicious circle of capitalist slumps was broken by wars, but in fact never solved. Today, full-scale wars are, in our opinion, out of the question. In the first place they are too costly, not so much in lives (no shortage of labour in the world!) as in the damage to property. And secondly, the world today is in the hands of the multinationals and they seem to flourish irrespective of crises of 'confidence', though they are obviously interested in a flourishing consumerist society.

Therein lies the dilemma of capitalism.

1. 'The New Health Service Examined' by JH, reprinted in *World War - Cold War: selections from War Commentary and Freedom 1939-1950*, 422 pages, ISBN 0 900384 48 4, £6.95 (post free inland)

2. *Neither Nationalisation nor Privatisation: selections from Freedom 1945-1950*, 81 pages, ISBN 0 900384 49 2, £1.95 (post free inland).

## Government to Plunder Pension Funds?

(continued from page 1)

earning more than £20,000 a year and upping the taxation for the millionaires from 40% to 80% as it was before 1979, as well as applying to themselves the rule they demand from the poor of 'living within their means' (which in government terms means importing no more than one exports), they will only try to balance the books by cutting down on all essentials: health, education, pensions, public transport and other services which will not hit their rich friends but will, as usual, clobber the poor.

The kinds of solutions which the government is exploring would seem to be directed to adding to the unemployment problems. According to the media they are toying with the idea of actually increasing the retirement age for women from 60 to 67 and for men from 65 to 67. These financial idiots talk of saving £500 million a year, but have they taken into account the number of potential workers who will be prevented from getting a job as a result, and who will be on the dole?

The leisure society anarchists Tadumbrate is not that of the tourist brochure advertisements of beautiful bodies roasting under an ever-blue sky on the beaches of Florida or the Bahamas, but of a society where we all contribute to producing the basic necessities of life as quickly and as pleasantly as technology can help us to do so. Thereafter our time is ours to do, or not to do, with it as we wish.

But the government is proposing to

oblige the unemployed to spend a number of hours a week on work unpaid - sweeping streets, running errands for housebound folk and the like - to justify their drawing a derisory payment, in spite of the fact that technology, plus the capitalist philosophy of production for profit only and the fact that the land of this island is in the hands of a tiny minority, has deprived them of making a living to actually keep alive.

As we write, thousands of jobs are about to be scrapped, and even the optimists who say the 'economy' is recovering nevertheless admit that it will be at the expense of jobs. So where are these unpaid jobs Major is talking about to give the unemployed a sense of achievement and 'dignity' as they draw the dole?

Major, far from being the new *ami du peuple*, is as sinister a figure as his equally 'humble' predecessor. What he is doing is quite clear to us. He is using a tactic which the British have used for centuries in Europe: that of *divide and rule*. But he is using it for domestic consumption: of setting the employed against the dole-social-security-'scrounging' unemployed.

To resist this vicious campaign is as important in the long term as the demonstrations against pit closures. It is time that we had massive demonstrations by the unemployed in all the major cities of Britain. But demonstrations of the employed and the unemployed. We are all in the same boat so far as the capitalist system is concerned.

### 'Back to the workhouse ... and they'll double the numbers of the unemployed'

The government's attempts to return Britain to the Victorian age have reached their culmination with Major's call to bring in 'workfare' (the modern equivalent of the workhouse) where (as there) the 'indigent' are forced to work for a pittance for the inadequate poor relief they receive.

Once more by creating a new labour force on starvation wages it will be possible to economise yet further on the properly paid jobs that need to be done at public expense. (Though it is unlikely that the unemployed so forced to work will be given the office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, however certain it is that they could all do the work better than the present incumbent.)

This is designed to force wages yet further down and - if workfare goes through - it will undoubtedly be successful. It will mean that at a time when there is a slump because there is too little money paid to workers and that this means too little in circulation there will be yet less money in circulation. So the slump will get sharply worse.

Laurens Otter

## South Place Ethical Society

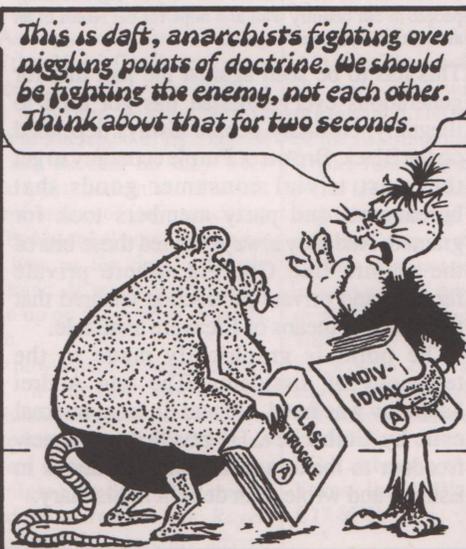
The South Place Ethical Society, which is the oldest freethought organisation in Britain (and indeed the world), celebrates its bicentenary in 1993.

The Society began in February 1793, as a Christian congregation in a chapel in Parliament Court, East London. As first it followed Universalism (the doctrine that everyone shall be saved and no one shall stay in Hell for ever) and then Unitarianism (the doctrine that God is one and that Jesus was not divine), but it later moved through Theism towards Humanism. Its third minister, W.J. Fox, was a leading speaker and writer who became a Liberal MP.

In 1824 the Society moved to a new chapel in South Place, Moorgate, where it stayed for more than a century. In 1835 it became an independent society. Its next great minister,

Moncure Conway, was also a prominent speaker and writer. In 1888 it became an Ethical Society, which it has remained ever since. After 1897, it had no more ministers, but relied instead on a panel of appointed lecturers, as well as expert speakers from outside. Meanwhile South Place became well known as a meeting place for all sorts of radical organisations. There have been Sunday evening concerts since 1887, and a regular magazine since 1895. The Society moved in 1929 to Conway Hall, Holborn, where it has been ever since. Conway Hall is the physical centre of the British Humanist movement, and is also a well known meeting place in central London.

A programme of special events has been arranged to mark the bicentenary. There are frequent lectures on Thursday evenings throughout the year at which distinguished speakers from all walks of life will discuss various aspects of ethics and liberty today, and there are other day and weekend events. Further information from Nina Khare (Secretary) or Nicolas Walter (Honorary Representative), Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL.



## COMMUNIQUE FROM THE FRENCH ANARCHIST FEDERATION

## You don't make peace by going to war

The French Anarchist Federation (FAF) calls on the French people to oppose military intervention in the former state of Yugoslavia and to implement immediately proposals which would improve, far more than military action, the dramatic situation now faced by the Yugoslav peoples who have suffered the horrors of war for too long.

### Why?

The FAF is opposed to militarism in all its shades and all armies, be they Serbian, Croatian, French, United Nations or humanitarian, for, at the end of the day, it is always the people who end up in the firing range.

Since the beginning of the conflict the FAF has consistently denounced the war, the rapes, the camps and the ethnic cleansing policies, irrespective of which side is responsible. However, there is no case for international intervention which would be incapable of stopping these horrors (which are part and parcel of all wars). On the contrary, it would, without doubt, provoke an escalation of the conflict throughout the Balkans.

The real objective of such an intervention is, in fact, to stabilise the status quo, to put in place the frontiers of the new states within the framework of the 'New' World Order, on the backs of the people in the region. Once the carving up of the former Yugoslavia has been achieved by the Western governments and the new local dictators, the people will once again find themselves forgotten. The new states will be able, once again, to put into effect their policies of enforced resettlement and ethnic cleansing advocated by the fascists.

Let us not forget that it is those who started the conflict (reconstructed communists, Western governments of all shades) and who organised or allowed the arms trafficking who are now proposing humanitarian intervention.

Those who would have us believe that an air attack will liberate the camps, that the infantry will stop the raping, that the UN will halt the ethnic cleansing are those who would have us believe that the Gulf War would liberate the Kurds, Kuwaitis and the Iraqis from the 'New Hitler' Saddam Hussein!

### Proposals to reverse the war process

There is no magic solution to the immediate problems faced by the Yugoslav people, although some would have us believe the contrary.

You don't make peace by going to war. There exists in the former Yugoslavia a considerable number of people who reject the Serbian or Croatian ultra-nationalist logic – these men and women are organising passive resistance to the red and brown fascists. They must be given the means to develop a movement which will impose peace from the inside.

The FAF calls on all those men who are opposed to the war (whatever their uniform) to desert.

### The FAF demands:

- that the Western governments welcome without any restriction those who are fleeing the area as political refugees;
- the setting up of medical centres specifically for women who have been the victims of rape;
- material aid for the pacifist and feminist organisations to be provided for by current military expenditure;
- the immediate stoppage of the international arms trade.

The FAF denounces the French 'Imperialist' Party which unites the left and the right. We demand the immediate return to barracks of the 10,000 French soldiers in action throughout the world.

FAF

## BALKAN WARS

## Powerless Politicians and the Peasants

Ethnic used to seem like a nice cosy word conjuring up images of folk dances, colourful clothes and lively music. That was before the sociologists, the trendy lefties and other worthies in the caring professions got hold of the word and took to using it to display a special knowledge and describe minority cultures in society. The use of the term 'ethnic cleansing' in former Yugoslavia seems to have dealt a death blow to any charm the word might have had.

The central snag in the Yugoslav state was the dominance of the Serbs over the Croats. The flaw in the idea of an independent Croatia is the dominance of Croats over Serbs. During the forty years of 'peace' between the ethnic groups under communist rule, Tito did a juggling act within the administration giving Serbs dominant charge of the Croat state and party bureaucracy, but limiting the central power of the Serbian authorities in Belgrade. Thus under Tito the regional centres of government in Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia enjoyed a lot of independence from Serbia's Belgrade.

Misha Glenny has described the delicate system of balance between nationalities under Tito as "a highly sophisticated game of divide and rule".

### Krajinan trouble spot

The crisis now unfolding in the Balkans stems in part from President Tudman's decision, after Croatia became independent, to start sacking the Serbs, who had got their jobs under Tito, in the administration of the

Croatian state. Large numbers of Serbs were made redundant in Croatia; these naturally thought they had gained their posts on merit and not nationality. This policy encouraged the fear of persecution among Serbs throughout Croatia, especially when they found out that their jobs were being taken by Croats.

The urban Serbs who lost their jobs were naturally upset, but when the Croat government started getting rid of rural Serbs in the Serb-dominated Croat police force the spark of Serb nationalism caught light in Krajina (the Serb-dominated region of Croatia where clashes are now again taking place). This led to Croatia losing a third of its land to the now self-styled Serbian republic of Krajina in the war which followed from the policy pursued by the Tudman government in the summer of 1990.

This would perhaps not be so serious if it were not for the fact that Krajina virtually cuts Croatia in two – dividing the Croatian capital of Zagreb from the former tourist traps of the Dalmatian coast – a situation which is strangling the Croat economy. This explains the current attacks by Croatian forces on Krajina and in the region of the Maslenica bridge.

This dispute, more even than the Bosnian war, has been called "the most powerful engine of fratricidal strife" by Mr Glenny in his book *The Fall of Yugoslavia*. The difference between the Serbs and Croats is not so much one of language as of religion –

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## AN ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK

## IRONIES OF THE COLLAPSE OF SOVIET 'SOCIALISM'

Sooner or later in the analysis of the end of 'socialism' in the Soviet empire, someone is going to compile a book showing how the anarchists were right all along, even though the official left in the West did its best to ensure that the testimony of Berkman and Goldman, or books like *Letters from Russian Prisons* in the '20s, down to Maximoff's *The Guillotine at Work* in the 1940s, could only appear from minority publishers. It was considered 'objectively reactionary' to tell the truth about the Soviet experience, best left to the right-wing exiles. Marie Louise Berneri's *Workers in Stalin's Russia*, published by Freedom Press in 1944, was a pioneering compilation of radical internal criticism of the Russian tragedy and the observations of those Western observers who weren't dazzled by the police state and the myths of a planned economy.

By the 1950s even I, no Soviet specialist, wrote half a dozen articles in this journal about the facts and opinions that emerged as a result of the Berlin Rising, the events in Poland, the gulag revolts and the Hungarian Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Re-reading the evidence available to any of us in the West in those days, I'm amazed that we were surprised by the final collapse of the Soviet empire. And this applies especially to those attempts from within the communist hierarchy to make the system work by introducing market elements. Long before Gorbachev's efforts there were the demands of the so-called *malenkovtsy* to introduce a kind of 'socialist market economy'. Khrushchev in his 'Decentralisation Decree' complained in 1957 that Soviet economic statistics were falsified and meaningless and that the facade of central

planning resulted in a jungle of self-sufficient and competing ministries, duplicating each other, transporting commodities thousands of unnecessary miles, producing obsolete and unwanted products.<sup>2</sup> Even in the Kardar regime that followed the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, the wily economists tried to introduce an economic model of a market economy as the best guide to industrial production.

I tried to explain the dilemma 20 years ago in my book *Anarchy in Action*, seeking to be honest about the paradox that:

"You might even say that the only thing that makes life liveable in the capitalist world is the unacknowledged non-capitalist element within it, and the only thing that makes survival possible in the communist world is the unacknowledged capitalist element in it. This is why a controlled market is a left-wing demand in capitalist society – along with state control, while a free market is a left wing demand in a communist society – along with workers' control."<sup>3</sup>

I think I was right. This explains why anarchists who never had a good word to say for the post-war Labour government's nationalisation of everything, now feel obliged to defend these industries against the privateers, or why some American anarchists believed that the Clinton regime might rescue federal intervention against the Reagan-Bush belief in the magic of the market.

The really tragic situation is that of the dissidents in the former Soviet Union and its European colonies. They criticised heroically, while trying to earn a living. The political police in Russia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany had well-paid secret informers watching their movements night and day. In the new regimes of today, the dissidents are an embarrassment while their

oppressors, who got all the goodies, the dachas, cars, apartments and tradeable wealth, are making good in the new entrepreneurial society.<sup>4</sup> yesterday's *apparatchik* is today's market success.

We shouldn't be surprised that the re-emerging anarchist movement in Russia is divided into a whole range of tendencies, described in the 'Letter from Russia' recently in this journal. The author, Arcadi Rysakov, makes an observation supported by many other observers. He says that:

"Russia is chewing again the western model of statism, on which it choked in 1917. This model imitates the western political system and completely ignores the country's own traditions ... The new Russian government has saddled our people with all the encumbrances of economic reform. Simple people have been rapidly impoverished in the past few months. This is rousing the people's ire in relation to the present government and strengthening the anti-state spirits of Russians now. However, the social dependence of our people, cultivated over the last seventy years, is still very strong, and many people in our country wait and hope for the return of an authoritarian regime."<sup>5</sup>

This has to be seen against the fact that for generations every Russian has got used to illegality. Ordinary people always depended on the Black, Brown or Purple economy to get the most trivial consumer goods that bureaucrats and party members took for granted. And they always envied those bits of the empire like Georgia, where private farming and private production ensured that the ordinary means of life were available.

The point is graphically made in the testimony of dissidents. The late Andrei Sakharov was freed, old and ill, from internal exile by Gorbachev. He revelled in his new freedom to make a last visit to relations in Estonia and wrote with delight in his diary:

"We saw neat, well-spaced farmhouses, peasants preparing fodder with their mowers for their cows and working the fields with their tractors. Vats of fresh milk were left under awnings by the side of the road to be picked up by special trucks and taken to the dairy. We often heard people in Estonia say that they work harder and better, and therefore they live better. That, of course, is only a small part of the truth, the superficial explanation. The deeper reason is that the steamroller of socialism passed over their land later in a watered-down, rather slipshod fashion: it had far less time to do its destructive work. In the 'old' republics that have been part of the USSR from the very beginning, peasants have been debased to a far greater degree – in some instances they were physically eliminated – and society is more conspicuously divided into separate castes, including a party bureaucracy, essentially parasitic in nature. It's no accident that leasehold, cooperative and, especially, private forms of economic activity are developing slowly in those regions, hindered almost openly by local party and state organs."<sup>6</sup>

Sakharov thought that the Baltic republics set an example for the whole Soviet Union with their popular movements "for a genuine, not a fictitious, *perestroika* and a radical resolution of nationality problems through economic autonomy". This veteran dissident was one of those who saw new hope in the breakdown of the empire and, let's face it, in the economy of the local market.

Colin Ward

1. See, for example, 'What kind of revolution in the Russian Empire?' in *Freedom*, 16th January 1957, and 'Communist economics and workers' control' in *Freedom*, 15th August 1959.

2. N.S. Khrushchev, *Improvement of Industrial Management in the USSR* (Soviet News Booklet No. 10, 1957).

3. Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (Allen & Unwin 1973, Freedom Press 1988).

4. John Klier, 'Russian Dissidents Now' on BBC Radio 3, 30th November 1992.

5. Arcadi Rysakov, 'Letter from Russia' in *Freedom*, 3rd October 1992.

6. Andrei Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond 1986-1989* (Hutchinson 1991).

## Powerless Politicians and the Peasants

(continued from page 3)

Serbian Greek Orthodox and Croatian Roman Catholic. Thus religion seems to give the ethnic communities, or 'ethnie', their distinct identities in former Yugoslavia, so much so that the 'Muslims' of Bosnia have chosen to adopt the name 'Muslim', preferring this identity to the name of their province, even though many of them no longer adhere to the beliefs or practices of Islam.

### Failure of nationalism

In a way the Balkan wars show both a failure of nationalism and an inability of the urban political bosses to understand the outlook of the peasants. The theory of nationalism – that the nation can command the loyalty of all its citizens over and above their religious, class or ethnic identities – is being put to the test there. In Zagreb, the Tudman government thought they could mould and placate the Serb peasants of Krajina as easily as they had the urban Serbs. Yet today these countryside Serbs control vast areas around Krajina, as well as other regions such as Kordun, Banija and Slavonija. Mr Glenn says: "The economic horizons of the rural Serbs are limited, but the early post-feudal concepts of land and home are central to their thinking and sense of security."

Every broken peace agreement, every order from the top which falls on deaf ears when it

# GAS, GAS, GAS!

After 25 years of negotiations, the Chemical Warfare Convention was signed in Paris last month (*Nature*, 14th January 1993). But if you think you can sleep a little easier, think again. The convention does not enter into force until 1995, and its various organs, including the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the technical secretariat, do not yet exist. With an eye to their own self-interest, the various governments have devised a flawed inspection systems that means that true 'any time, any where' inspection is out; i.e. they only reveal what they want to, when they want to. The US successfully argued for inspectors to have to wait up to five days before entering a

reaches the front line, all the uncontrollable elements on the ground merely show us the fraudulent and impotent nature of political power quite as much as, say, Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*.

How I wish the anarchists were wrong! If only the gentlemen sitting in Geneva could solve the Balkan conflicts! Yet daily events demonstrate that Lord Owen, Mr Vance, Mr Milosevic, President Tudman, Radovan Karadzic, and the Muslim leaders, are all but powerless to halt the course of the war, even if they wanted to.

BB

suspicious site. Does this ring any bells? The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which supposedly enforces the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968, has had access to challenge inspection for twenty years, but, like a faithful pooh of the powers that be, has only bared its teeth at Iraq when egged on by the Western allies. The final sick irony is that those same countries were quite happy to sit back and count the money coming in from exports of nuclear technology in the '80s.

Of course, the Iraqi elite know a thing or two about chemical weapons. They wiped out Kurdish villages in 1988 with mustard gas (and possibly the nerve gases Tabun and Sarin). From a recent report (*New Scientist*, 23rd January 1993) no traces of the gas remain in the soil of Halabja from those horrific attacks. For the farmers this is good news; no more worry about poisoned crops. However, had the chemical remained detectable, it might have been some small deterrent against another despot gassing forgotten dissenting minorities, if he knew the proof would sit there forever in the soil.

It seems that even those wholesome Americans can't keep their fingers out of the mustard gas pot. In the Second World War they exposed 10,000 US soldiers to mustard gas and lewisite, both of which blister human tissue (*British Medical Journal*, 30th January 1993).

Some of the American experiments, called 'man-break tests', were intended to bring the person to a state of collapse. All this was revealed by a committee of the US Institute of Health, which noted that the experiments were conducted before the Nuremberg Code of 1947 established formal principals to govern the proper treatment of human subjects, as if this justified such experiments. But they also admitted that "although the human subjects were called 'volunteers', it was clear from the official reports that the recruitment of the World War Two human subjects, as well as many of those used in later experiments, was accomplished through lies". And the results of

a mountain bike the shops have trouble selling it. There'll be a new type along soon to take their place, he warned me as he handed over a wheel in the correct size from a dusty shelf. Better take some wheel nuts too. Why? Well they change threads on wheel spindles too, the ones on my old wheel probably wouldn't fit.

Then he made what sounded like a good idea: "Course," he said, "if anyone really wanted to screw the bastards up they'd start stockpiling loads of spares to fit old bikes, then people wouldn't need to keep changing ... That'd really fuck the big bugger's schemes. There's a gap in the market, some anarchist ought to get in there."

It sounded like a good idea at first, but after considering I didn't think so. Bikes sound like a good idea too, but our adversaries are clever enough to turn our best intentions to their advantage. Many ordinary people like the sound of a greener world, so there's a gap in the market for some entrepreneur to use wood-pulp and sell you books on how to be a green consumer. Fighting capitalism by becoming a capitalist, like destroying government to become an MP, or fighting a trained army on its own terms and ground of its own choosing won't work. You'll become a small part of it by doing so, and small parts either get more efficient at their task or get crushed. It increased my awareness that any choice we seem to be offered is an illusion. The clever bastards have got consumerism all tied up, and on their own terms too. I still ride my bike, but without the superior expression. Oh, and he was right about the wheel nuts.

JB

all this: damaged eyes and airways, skin cancer, leukaemia, sexual problems and psychological disorders. As JFK said: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what can you do for your country".

A Russian company, Chetek, is planning to destroy some of the Soviets' vast stockpile of chemical weapons using redundant nuclear weapons at the Novaya Zemlya nuclear test site in the Russian Arctic (*New Scientist*, 16th January 1993). Sounds like a good move? Basically, no. It is known that radioactivity has leaked out from previous underground tests there, and Norwegian research has revealed rockslides and large surface depressions. It is claimed that underground explosions are safe because the surrounding rock is melted, cooling to form a glassy sphere that seals in the radioactive debris. However, the Norwegian researchers point out that the rock cracks as it cools and the caverns collapse. The heat from the bomb can melt the permafrost, releasing water that flushes the radioactive elements straight into the ground water. Lovely!

With the coming of a chemical weapons treaty, the chemical companies are starting to get uppity. These companies are worried by such vital issues as having to make new record keeping arrangements, or the possibility of their competitors learning their secrets. Profits before people again. In 1925 the American Chemical Society passed a resolution opposing ratifications of the Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons, and endorsing the use of chemicals in war. This was not reversed until 1970! What changes there have been in the chemical industry's attitudes have largely come about through the desire to present a better image to the public, rather than any sense of moral responsibility. The nightmare visions of napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam that appeared on America's television sets brought home some of the reality behind a seemingly innocuous industry. And then there was Bhopal. How long must we endure greed-driven death-centred industry that lays waste to us and our environment? Return the factories to the communities, and let the people speak with their hands.

Patrick Nicholson

## Appropriate Technology Business Opportunity for Anarchists, or How I Lost My Economic Innocence

Until recently I travelled wearing the smug expression of one who feels he is not adding to pollution, one who puts very little into the hands of capitalists, one who pays no road tax, in fact one who feels he genuinely contributes to the health, well-being and sustainability of human life on this planet. That's right, I cycled.

Bicycles can be made in Kropotkinesque workshops rather than dark satanic factories. The pollution caused by their manufacture is the only threat they pose to the planet. Once built they'll go on for a long time without demanding vast input of spares. They are simple enough to maintain and repair without having recourse to members of a specialist élite. The only fuel requirement is for the rider – a bit less per mile than you need for walking – and you can produce some of that for yourself. The rider is responsible for the journey and in touch with the environment. In all ways an anarchist vehicle. No wonder I felt virtuous! Slipping past the snarled-up, resource-demanding, pollution-spewing, taxed traffic, I wore a superior grin.

Pride comes before a fall. A one-ton, thirty-mile-an-hour weapon, operated by a tax-paying, resource-consuming, non-anarchist, shot out of a side road and inflicted severe distortion upon my treasured cause for smug expressions by driving over it, and me, one evening.

Once my bruises had gone down I surveyed the twisted metal in the shed and decided that it could be made to resemble a means of transport again. Return of the superior look! Repair makes sense! It doesn't require the construction of a whole new item with the accompanying resource consumption, pollution, profits to capitalists and VAT to government (not to mention cheap). I could straighten the frame and the rear wheel was the only piece that would need replacing. I judged it a small compromise to spend money on a new one when I could be cycling once more. Direct action against the devastation caused by traffic! Propaganda by the deed as I swept through the polluting clouds that had

made their contributions to profits, taxes and Customs Duty!

This was the end of my economic innocence. The bicycle I had ridden for years had been misleadingly labelled 'Sports'; an ordinary frame, with drop handlebars, cheap deraileur and wheels slightly narrower than other bikes. Recession is one of the means by which capitalism encourages monopoly and had closed the small shop I had bought my bike from. Our town was left with two shops which sold bikes, and that only as a sideline. I went to the first, a supermarket of ruff-tuff mountain bikes and sleek racers. All the staff were teenagers employed for weekends only so the management wouldn't have to pay overtime to regular workers. (Give a kid a Saturday job and you can pay slave rates.) I asked for a 26 x 1 1/4 wheel. They only had 27 x 1/4. No, 27 wouldn't fit the frame, what else did they have that was 26? The boy went off to look. 26 x 1.75 was the nearest he could offer. The tyre I had on the old wheel wouldn't fit that. The other place was a clone of the first and saw a repetition of the previous scene.

Eventually I found a place that was a bus ride away and tried them. The shop and small workshop behind was a one-man show and it was here that I learned what I should have known already. I'd be lucky to get a wheel of the size I wanted. Why? They don't make that many any more. Why? because once built a bike will go on for a long time without a vast input of spares. The bicycle-making capitalists had realised this and were pissed off because they sold few spares and people were able to keep using their old bikes, so designs, sizes and specifications were changed at regular intervals. Then they stopped making spares in the old sizes so mugs like me would be forced to buy whole new bikes. A lot of the new components are made in plastic that will go brittle after a while as well. The next trick is to change the model and use the parasites in the ad agencies to create a fashion demand for it, just like the Yank car giants in the '50s. A few years ago BMX bikes were all the rage, now, if it's not

## Update on the Gosh! case

(See *Freedom* 14th November 1992)

Customs and Excise have returned most of the comics they took from the Gosh! shop, and informed the proprietors' solicitor that they are dropping the proposed prosecution. The stuff they have retained is subject to seizure, not prosecution, and Gosh! is not contesting it since the defence is powerless in a seizure case.

Interestingly, two of the titled now returned to Gosh! were seized and destroyed on a previous occasion. It seems that not even Customs themselves have a clear idea of what constitutes indecent material.

One of the titles seized is *Peter Pank*, legally published in this country but held, under the peculiar provisions of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876, to have been contaminated by being put in the same crate as some American comics.

*Peter Pank*, a delightfully drawn comic variant of the Peter Pan story, replaces lost boys by punks, Indians by hippies, mermaids by nymphomaniacs and pirates by "pirate teddy-boys", but leaves the Darling family and Fairy Tinkerbell more or less as the original. It is sold at Freedom Press Bookshop, price £4.95 (when ordering by post please add 50p inland, 99p overseas).

## Beyond Sexuality

**Beyond Sexuality: feminism, men's liberation, gender and power, sexuality, class, economics**

by ANSLIM

Phoenix Press, 115 pages, paperback, £4.50 (post free inland)

This is one of the most thought-provoking books I have seen for some time, but unfortunately it is as challenging to review as it was to read.

Like the curate's egg, *Beyond Sexuality* is good in parts. Indeed some parts, like the all-too-brief comparative anthropology of pages 86-87, are downright excellent. Elsewhere the book is less well written, although still interesting. It also suffers, as would be expected with eight authors sharing a similar political outlook, from occasional repetitiveness.

ANSLIM, I learned from another publication's pamphlet catalogue, is the ANarchist Sexual Liberation Movement. *Beyond Sexuality* was written and put together by eight anonymous men and women. They also include material – authors identified by gender and region of domicile – from Internet, an international e-mail computer network based in North America, accessible through universities and large corporations (in the US a few collectives provide access to PC owners).

Although collectively produced, *Beyond Sexuality* is a jumble of short pieces by individual writers. Lack of author identification, even by initials, is a serious shortcoming. The sharing of personal experiences and opinions alongside passages of researched text encourages interest in trying to identify the authors by style and outlook rather than in content. Unlike a series of papers each from a single pen, *Beyond Sexuality* also tends to be bitty and lacks progressive development, hindering the flow of reading. However, were it indexed or the chapter divisions more rigorous it could function as a reference handbook of ideas and statistics.

Another technical problem is the referencing style. Despite pseudo-academic pretensions, notes give only bibliography listings and omit

precise location of sources. I also found the occasional use of obscure phraseology frustrating. What the hell do terms such as "valorization", "xenophobia", "cottaging" or "the A10 and F16" (a road and a fighter jet?) mean anyway?

That said, *Beyond Sexuality* is valuable reading, perhaps especially for straight men. Several essays deal sensitively and very perceptively with the often ignored problems of male sexuality and machismo. I felt the authors leaned a little too heavily toward the view that any deviance in sexual orientation or practice from European/American societal norms is itself political. I also thought the criticism of Robert Bly's *Iron John* (pages 68-69) unfairly harsh, but agree with the reviewer's comment that "Freedom cannot be gained by living out an ideology, no matter how 'correct'. Freedom can only be gained by a deep understanding of your own needs and how one should act to fulfil these". *Beyond Sexuality* does much to enable people to clarify issues and put this into practice.

I was a little perturbed by frequent references to a gender 'war'. It can certainly be argued that women swap their bodies' greater value on the sexual market for men's bodies' greater value on the wage-slave market. But although gender differences are undeniably used to oppress on the personal level, it seems odd to equate seeking to share love, respect, friendship, understanding, affection and sensual pleasure with 'war'. Indeed, arguments about political/economic oppression – including at the level of gender difference – occasionally threaten to swamp the basic subject matter of the book. Despite the 'economics' of the sub-title, *Beyond Sexuality* is rightly mostly concerned with interpersonal relationships rather than their wider context, and here the book is at its strongest.

All in all, despite many shortcomings in presentation, this is an interesting and unusual collection of thoughtful analyses of masculinity, femininity, romance and sexual politics, and certainly provides plenty of material for further discussion and development.

Katy Andrews

In *Mother Jones* (December 1980) there is a strident attack on European culture by the American Indian Russell Means. A culture lauding individualism and the technical fix inevitably props up a social fabric based on counterfeit relations, a society in which people don't relate too well to each other, to their glittering artefacts or to the natural world. Means took the attack even closer to home. He bundled together all the isms as different verses of the same old European tune. He implicated anarchism.

He went on:

"the great men of science and philosophy picked up where Christianity left off, took a piece of the spirituality of human existence and converted it to a code, an abstraction. They made it easier for Europe to act as an expansionist culture, to remove the wonderful complexity and spirituality from the universe and replaced it with a logical sequence – one, two, three. Answer!"

There's a view of our literary culture from a man who champions the oral world.

Can anarchism be any more than a by-product of the excesses of European culture? I hope so, but the portends are not great.

To get at the emotional associations with the word 'anarchism' I suggest you try the old word association game with a few friends and enemies. We know already, those who are hostile typically associate the word with anarchy as chaos – the absence of organisation. You'll probably find too that sympathisers most frequently associate it with 'freedom'. However, unlike the self-employed who usually announce their condition in terms of being unemployable, further explorations of the meaning of freedom too often take us down discouraging paths. Among refugees from and sufferers of the state's institutions, 'freedom from' out-performs 'freedom to be'. The simple fact is that people who think they are anarchist sympathisers are much less likely to associate the word with 'organisation' than those who use the word anarchy to denote its absence.

Unless we make anarchism synonymous with practice, the ways we do things together without government and as a

## Anarchism – Organisation

doctrine ordering human exchange, then Russell Means' demeaning treatment sticks.

Of course, we are weak on organisation because in our thinking both the word and the act are equated with organisations, technologies of the social like government, the social 'sciences' and bureaucracy with their emphases on hierarchies, pyramids, external and central control, systems of information, rigid divisions of labour and fixed ways of thinking.

We are weak on organisation too because in spite of our protests we are still on the breast of the abstract parent and depend overly on relationships with other people that are imposed by the system. Our employment, for example, provides us with a ready-made framework, a set of contracts – colleagues, bosses, subordinates, customers, suppliers and even extra-employment 'friends' that encourages us to take the relational for granted. Such a disposition is not found among those who survive self-employment. In Mrs Thatcher's enterprise culture financial debt euphemistically described as credit was the way to salvation. Those who didn't end up in hell preferred to build on social debt and the credits run up by giving others a helping hand.

We are weak on organisation too because we won't acknowledge our difficulties with the unknown and the unknowable and so refuse to explore the part that myths and rituals can play in helping us handle the mysteries of life.

The Raven anarchist quarterly no. 20

## Peter Kropotkin:

### 150th Anniversary

Freedom Press, 96 pages, £3.00 post free anywhere

Peter Kropotkin is the best known anarchist to the reading public through his books such as *Fields, Factories and Workshops* and *Mutual Aid* and his moving autobiography *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*; within the anarchist movement he is known not only as one of the founders of *Freedom* and the Freedom Press, but as the most important party to a serious split in the anarchist movement internationally when, in 1914, he forgot his anarchism and his internationalism so far as to advocate support for the allies in the Great War.

Opposition to Kropotkin at that time was articulated by the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. In recent years the view of Malatesta as the essentially modern anarchist has been championed by his English translator Vernon Richards. Bakunin and Kropotkin, for all that they were motivated by a passionate sense of the injustices of capitalist society and prepared to forego the privileges of their class, "remained aristocrats to the end". It is to this characteristic that Richards attributed Kropotkin's tendency to oversimplify problems, and to what Colin Ward here calls his "unjustifiable optimism".

Colin Ward's lecture on 'Kropotkin's Federalism' given at the University of Durham last year, led this reviewer to turn again to Ward's articles on 'The Anarchist Sociology of Federalism' buried away in two

issues of *Freedom* last year (27th June and 11th July 1992) where he writes of the "handful of dissenting voices urging a different style of Federalism" in the context of nineteenth century nationalism, and their relevance today – I hope that Ward will now go on to give us a detailed study on this urgent topic.

To convey an impression of Kropotkin's life in 96 pages is no easy task but has been accomplished well, so that the result will interest those who know next to nothing of Kropotkin as well as those who have long been acquainted with his work. There is an eloquent biographical introduction by Herbert Read which has been out of print for fifty years. There is a review of the first English translation of *Words of a Rebel (Paroles d'un Révolté)* published last year. Laszlo Sekelj compares Kropotkin's and Bakunin's theories of revolution, and philosopher George Crowder\* demonstrates that the basic premises of Kropotkin and his contemporaries would "receive little support from most modern social and political theorists".

Max Nettlau, the great anarchist historian, provides one of the earliest critical assessments of Kropotkin from one who knew him, never reprinted since it appeared as an obituary in *Freedom* in 1921 – and the magazine concludes with three of the most critical articles written by Errico Malatesta at the time of Kropotkin's defection. Nettlau claimed that Malatesta had been reluctant to join issue with Kropotkin because of "the position Kropotkin had established in the public mind". Today we are happy to subject our ideas to the most rigorous criticism – the difference between Kropotkin's generation and ours.

Charles Crute

\* See the letter 'The state of anarchy' on page 8.

THE RAVEN – 20

ON

KROPOTKIN

96 pages £3.00 (post free)  
from FREEDOM PRESS

How does this more practical anarchism work out in my part of the world? Not too well because most of us are loners too. The best prospects rest with people who wouldn't know what anarchism meant and don't trust institutions either. Sure we can claim a fair bit of spontaneous organisation at the margins – a modest and increasing amount of mutual aid and among the self-employed; social events that seem to get practically everybody in the village involved; musical evenings in local pubs. But, except in exceptional circumstances, we don't challenge the power of the district council, water board, supermarket or school, land ownership or even the phoney authority of those who just sleep or come to die in the village.

I do know there is plenty of latent energy about, of people wanting to self-help and contribute to communal well being. In fact such is the availability of energy that even now the poor old parish council still upholding central authority and allocating pennies to half-cocked projects, is being increasingly by-passed. Energies are there now to enlarge the scope for living and working, extending recreational facilities, setting up alternatives to schooling, establishing communal gardens and orchards, whatever people want.

I suspect we don't get on with it because the need is not yet recognised to be great enough and being products ourselves of that abstract parent, the system, we prefer to let the old thing die quietly. It's all very English. The trouble is deteriorating organisations, unlike rotting vegetation and flesh, don't do much good in the passing. However, I do notice that this recession has alerted many previously self-satisfied people of their dependencies and vulnerabilities as consumers and employees. As the fable goes ... when the lion becomes old and decrepit enough and all the other animals are strengthened by his weaknesses, even the donkey will kick him. The space and time freed by shirking authority will not remain vacuous for long. There is a chance that the organisation associated with people taking responsibility for their own lives will fight off a new set of authorities to replace the old.

Denis Pym

# Looking at the Land – a further view

I loved the vision glimpsed by J. Simcock (*Freedom*, 23rd January 1993) of the British countryside re-populated by people with their understanding of it enhanced by the insights of John Seymour (*The Countryside Explained*), W.G. Hoskins (*The Making of the English Landscape*) and R.W. Brunskill (*Traditional Buildings of Britain*).

I endorse his choice wholeheartedly and would like to develop his theme further. I recommend two or three more books that go beyond understanding the landscape, its history and its buildings, to helping us devise the right way to reshape our environment now.

It so happens that they are by Scotsmen teaching and practising mainly in North America.

One is the former Glaswegian Ian McHarg who has distilled his immense experience into a book of less than 200 pages entitled *Design with Nature* (Doubleday & Co Inc., New York). The publisher observes in the jacket note "McHarg, an outspoken critic of the traditional notion that urban development must be imposed on the landscape regardless of the consequences, in *Design with Nature* proves that necessary man-made structures can be accommodated within the existing natural order".

Inside the book he undertakes an exposition of the entire and detailed process by which we can do this. It is a magnificent enterprise, and I am surprised it is so little known here.

To introduce the values illuminating his work, McHarg uses the device of inventing an utopian people he calls the Naturalists into whose mouths he puts his own ideas, rather like William Morris does in *News from Nowhere*. I give you an example:

"The Naturalists have turned to the world at large in order to find laws and forms of government that might work satisfactorily. They have observed that the world is an ordered place and infer that the creatures respond to physical and biological laws that are intrinsic and self-enforcing. Survival is contingent upon operation of 'the way of things'. This is the basis for the laws: does this or that correspond to 'the way of things'? This way has no central authority, although it does have overweening laws; it has relative hierarchies but no absolute scales; the individual is the basic unit of law and of government, the overwhelming presumption is 'in favour of the natural'. But then, there is no unnatural; there are the unknowns and those actions which, while natural, do not correspond with 'the way of things'.

When one attempts to create people in whom repose such as wisdom and rationality, there is a real danger that there is engendered, not admiration, but annoyance. How sanctimonious they appear to be. Yet that is simply because we have not looked closely enough to see their warts and squints, to see that many of them are ill-formed, bald and fat, that they reveal pettiness, bitterness and jealousy, superciliousness, and even stupidity for, of course, they are thoroughly human."

The Naturalists look very like anarchists to me!

McHarg uses these self-enforcing laws to help him answer the question: 'Can we not create, from a beautiful natural landscape, an environment inhabited by man in which natural beauty is retained, man housed in community?' His approach is to draw up physiographic principles for both the conservation and the development of a region. These are based on an assessment of its development needs, its historic character and its natural features – i.e. topography and subsurface geology, surface and groundwater patterns, flood plains, soils (with particular reference to their degree of permeability), steep slopes, forests and woodlands.

For instance, in a beautiful area of North America not unlike the English countryside – the Valleys of Baltimore – which is under pressure to accommodate much population growth, he had made plans which the local community has adopted in order to prevent

despoilation. He proposes that the rich soils forming the flood plains of the valley floor should remain undeveloped apart from agriculture, and that where the valley walls are bare they too should be unbuilt on until they have been planted to forest cover.

The slopes already wooded, where they are not so steep as to be subject to erosion, can be developed at a density of about one house per three acres without losing their character, and the level forested plateau at the top can take housing at about one per acre. On the open plateau behind the wooded escarpment much more development at higher densities (with sewerage provided instead of septic tanks) could be concentrated in hamlets, villages and country towns.

He concludes that there is abundant land to accommodate the proposed regional growth without fouling the water supplies, losing agriculture or woodland, and still preserving the beauty of the landscape. He further holds that such a plan enhances land values over those resulting from haphazard growth.

This is 'looking at the land' to some purpose. As Lewis Mumford says in his introduction:

"There are the foundations for a civilisation that will replace the polluted, bulldozed, machine-dominated, dehumanised, explosion-threatened world that is even now disintegrating and disappearing before our eyes. In presenting us with a vision of organic exuberance and human delight, which ecology and ecological design promise to open up for us, McHarg revives the hope for a better world."

Another imaginative thinker who would have us create an anarchistic built environment is Christopher Alexander. His works are available here. One carries the magical title *The Timeless Way of Building*, which immediately stirs the feelings of anyone who has longed to build with the sureness of taste, judgement and good sense that seemed to come naturally to our ancestors. The other carries the title *A Pattern Language* that deserves a little explanation for its significance to become clear but flows on directly from the first book. In the first Alexander reminds us that there is one timeless way of building. It is thousands of years old, and the same today as it always has been. He surely touches a chord in all of us when he remarks: "Whoever you are, you may have the dream of one day building a most beautiful house for your family, a garden, a fountain, a fish pond, a big room with soft light, flowers outside and the smell of new grass".

He is not referring to an idle dream but to the deep longing that gives birth to our will to build, and he shows us all a way, the 'timeless way', that is accessible to anyone to fulfil it. "It is so powerful and fundamental that with its help you can make any building in the world as beautiful as any place you have ever seen". he makes explicit a definable sequence of activities which will generate a building that is alive. "The power to make buildings beautiful lies in each of us already".

The difficulty for many of us is that, although 'we know what we like', we have not much exercised our minds as to why we like it. We may respond with pleasure to an old Cotswold village street or a great timber-framed barn or a tile-hung cottage sheltering beside a copse, but we cannot put our finger on what quality it is that moves us so. Alexander says: "It is easy to understand why people believe so firmly that there is no single, solid basis for the difference between good building and bad. It happens because the single central quality that makes the difference cannot be named." He devotes himself in *The Timeless Way of Building* to identifying that nameless quality, and at the end we realise that we knew all along what it

was but were afraid to say so in case we seemed foolish in the eyes of the experts.

Having grasped the nature of the quality without a name, it is another thing to devise buildings that encompass it. Alexander and his team spent years researching and tabulating the universally recognised features that are common to the buildings we love. They uncovered a language of patterns from which all these places were assembled. For instance, of one pattern, 'Light on Two Sides of Every Room', which he claims "perhaps more than any single pattern determines the success or failure of a room", he says: "Almost everyone has some experience of a room filled with light, sun streaming in, perhaps yellow curtains, white wood, patches of sunlight on the floor which the cat searches for – soft cushions where the light is, a garden full of flowers to look out onto."

The next book, *A Pattern Language*, identifies and lovingly describes 253 such patterns (to be going on with, as it were, because the language grows as you use it and more patterns suggest themselves – it is an open way of thinking, not a closed system). Every time Alexander identifies a place that lives and takes us to the patterns that went into

it, we recognise it. "If you search your own experiences", he says, "you can certainly remember a place like this – so beautiful it takes your breath away to think of it".

Alexander invites us to employ a patterns language whenever we aspire to build in the timeless way. "You can use it to work with your neighbours, to improve your town and neighbourhood. You can use it to design a house, for yourself, with your family ..."

If you find these two books together a mite expensive (they cost as much as a meal for four in a decent restaurant, but many of us can't afford to eat out often either), they too should be demanded from your local library.

When you evaluate your landscape in the way J. Simcock describes his, you will want to create a built environment for yourself in it that enhances, not harms it. These books will help you know how to do it.

Brian Richardson

Christopher Alexander's two books *The Timeless Way of Building* (£32) and *A Pattern Language* (£40) published by Oxford University Press, can be ordered via Freedom Press Bookshop, payment in advance.

Publishers Doubleday tell us that McHarg's *Design with Nature* is out of print.

## Food for Thought ... and Action

Recent additions to the bookshop stock.

*Architecture* edited by Hraztan Zeitlian, Semiotext(e). Those who can remember the '70s underground press such as *IT* and *Oz* will instantly recognise the style of this latest offering from the Semiotext(e) series. Experimental/theoretical architects and designers, and writers, were asked to submit work for it. In themselves the designs are fine, but even if the text were more accessible, the problem lies in the way the two have been combined to produce a result which is, at times, simply unreadable. The introduction – itself almost illegible – includes this: "A new relationship between design and design theory is suggested here ... not to hypostasize [?] their separate condition, but to agence together [?] and cross over writing and design. The architecture doesn't simply render the reading of theoretical writing difficult. The writing doesn't simply get in front of the architecture as a screen/frontispiece. Instead, the architecture decompensates the writing. The writing diffracts and semiotises the architecture. ... [The book] doesn't relocate architecture elsewhere than in the action of construction but respects architecture's contaminating auto-virulence. It is not a book, a fatal object. But in fact a frostal and aleatory dispersion and proliferation of theory in architecture and the architecture of this theory." Etc., etc. It gets worse, but I won't tire you. My theory is that three types of people might be interested in a book like this: very dedicated students of art/design, masochists and posers. Opinion at Freedom Press is divided but, given the book's coffee-table size (16½ inches x 11 inches), glossy cover and price, my money's on the latter two. 160 pages, £12.00.

*Alternative Green* no. 5. This issue contains articles on the economy, the re-emergence of tribal power in Africa, the possibility of the decentralisation of England, the failure of the activist left, should men protect women?, and more. 20 pages, 90p.

*The Conquest of Bread* by Peter Kropotkin, Elephant Editions. A long-awaited reprint of this edition has now appeared, although the publishing details suggest that it was planned in 1990. Never mind, it's good to have a cheap, but still good quality, version of this classic back in print. 213 pages, £4.95.

*Contributions to the Revolutionary Struggle Intended to be Discussed, Corrected and Principally Put into Practice Without Delay* by Rategb, Elephant Editions. Another welcome reprint (the same discrepancy over dates applies as above) of this anarchist/situationist/

syndicalist pamphlet. The cumbersome title is in fact much better expressed in the original French title *From the Wildcat Strike to Overall Self-Management*. 47 pages, £2.00.

*Lobster 24*. Amid the upsurge of fascism across Europe, *Lobster* quietly continues to keep tabs on British fascism. This issue contains lots more information on the 1974-1992 period (continued from previous issue) and an interesting recap on the reasons for the left not to have any dealings with *Searchlight*, the 'anti-fascist' magazine published by Gerry Gable (enquirers in the bookshop for *Searchlight* please note). Gable is said to have connections with both Special Branch and MI5, and the magazine is thought to be run by, or at least in co-operation with, MI5. The notorious 'Gable Memo' of the 1977 smears against a political activist is reprinted, along with further information. Also here is a long and very good article on the cult of PC ('Political Correctness') in the USA and the absurd implications for one person trying to keep tabs on the CIA's covert operations. Plus more on the JFK assassination. A good-value magazine, now published biannually. 30 pages, £2.00.

*The Arab Review* vol. 1, no. 3, a quarterly journal of political and cultural affairs in the Arab world, Kufaan Publishing. The publishers say: "it represents a new and independent perspective that sets out to address the bias against the Arabs in the West". It can also be seen as the Arab equivalent of *Jewish Socialist* in that it tries to put across the unheard Arab voices, and receives no funding from Arab governments or political parties. This issue carries a strong editorial condemning Presidents Bush and Clinton, and predicts that Clinton will turn out to be worse for the Middle East than Bush. There is also a long and excellent article on the plight of Palestinian children born, brought up and regularly terrorised in an occupied land; a discussion of the current agenda on the Arab Debate, focusing especially on Edward Sa'id, one of the foremost libertarian writers in the Middle East; strategic moves by Turkey to use the control of water resources to threaten Iraq and Syria, and by Israel to transfer water from Lebanon to its own strategic reservoirs in the face of the acute water shortage in the region expected by 1995; the plight of Iraq's Marsh Arabs, and much more. A4 format, 50 pages, £1.90

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There are now a number of small groups in Brighton with an interest in opposing the domination of the motor vehicle in the area. Just before Christmas, they came together in a coalition to organise a specific action against road traffic. Fly-posters advertising the event suggested that Sydney Street, in the North Laine area (some of which is already pedestrianised) would be blocked off and Christmas shoppers would be entertained with fire-eaters and jugglers and could go about their shopping without worrying about motor vehicles.

Needless to say none of this had been planned in cooperation with the local shopkeepers, let alone the police. However, the anti-car protest group were well prepared. They produced a large number of road cones, diversion signs and a large banner which they had got ready earlier and stored in a nearby squat. So, at midday, we all assembled at one end of the road (which was one-way) and blocked it off. The response was immediate. Firstly a local shopkeeper repeatedly removed one of the diversion signs and the protesters repeatedly returned it. Secondly, and perhaps surprisingly, several motorists who were intending to use the street were supportive of the action once they understood what it was all about. In fact most people in Brighton seem to be agreed that there is far too much traffic in the town (too many jams, too much pollution, too many accidents, etc.) but there is no consensus on what to do about it. The anti-car coalition had very definite ideas (which I shall return to below).

This innovative and well-supported direct action

## — BOOK REVIEW —

### A true account

**The Bitter Fruit of a Broken Tree – a family in Franco's Spain**

by Carmela Gonzalez with Heather Seddon  
Chapter & Verse, £12.95

Carmelita was four years old in 1936 in Andalucia. She remembers four "soldiers", very rude "they go into the house without asking", she is present and remembers with the child's vivid eye how the falangistas seized the two breadwinners in the house, her father and her uncle, locked their wrists together and dragged them from the house. The ensuing events are even more dreadful. She never sees her father again. Nobody explains to her what happened to him, but she does recall how the family fortunes collapse, how her mother cannot cope without help, the three children are hugged and shouted at alternately, the immediate family becomes callous in this time of hardship, here is enough evidence of human brutality. The mother, the brave Spanish mother, went out to work while the children were left locked in. The little ones had hardly anything to eat and their mother cooked them stews late at night and became increasingly vindictive and mad. Carmela remembers her mother saying to the little children: "If only you were dead and all three of you in one coffin, that would be the best thing for you", she would say, but then overcome with remorse would hug them to her breast. The story is told in the style of half autobiography, half novel.

Carmela's story is told bravely, relying entirely on her fitful memory. She was too young to understand the historical forces behind her own tragic events. This story, in all its incoherence, thus becomes universal and throws a light on the suffering of small children when the attack is indirectly on them. She is trying to piece together the evidence, and she is well into her teens when she is told for the first time the possible reason for her father's arrest. She is told that her father was a member of the anarcho-syndicalists who were all rounded up on the arrival of Franco's troops, taken to the cemetery and shot. The town was Piente-Genil and she names Berrinches and his blue-shirted squad which killed men in their thousands.

This is a unique book, giving some of the missing background to the Spanish Revolution, from the bewildered child's point of view by a faithful eye-witness.

John Rety

## Carmageddon in Brighton

was scheduled to last all day but fizzled out after only half an hour due to direct action by local shopkeepers and the intervention of the police. The shopkeepers nearly came to blows with protesters in what was becoming a farcical situation. They were attempting to drag away diversion signs with protesters still clinging to them, they harangued protesters and tore down the banner. And they called the police, who warned protesters that it was an offence to obstruct the highway. The anti-car coalition was reduced to handing out rather poor leaflets at the side of the road.

The shopkeepers' argument was that the protest was ruining their trade (on the last Saturday before Christmas as well!) because it was preventing their delivery vehicles coming through. On the face of it this doesn't seem to be much of a problem; delivery vehicles were not likely to be as numerous as those other vehicles passing through who were the real targets of the protest. And it makes you wonder how other shops cope that exist in (official) pedestrian precincts.

The anti-car coalition would be the first to acknowledge that what is ultimately needed is a decent system of public transport. A single action like blocking off Sydney Street cannot in itself bring this about, of course, but at least it may make people aware of their own potential power in

determining what kind of environment they live in; the compromises made by the local council to appease both the road and shop lobby and those who oppose cars seem ultimately to have pleased no one.

However, in evaluating 'Carmageddon' I think it is important to separate the action taken by the anti-car coalition on this occasion from the actual policies being advocated in the leaflets they were handing out. A typical demand, for example, was for a massive increase in road tax and for road tolls to discourage private drivers. Clearly a problem with this is that direct action is being used to demand that the government act to make such direct action unnecessary. And doesn't increasing road taxes punish the poorer drivers (who may have no access to decent public transport) more than the rich? And isn't the idea of road tolls something like a scheme one of the right-wing think tanks have recently dreamed up? In summary, how can the state and money be part of the solution if they are inherently part of the problem?

How is it that the anti-car coalition, for all their good ideas about direct action, should be so confused? We might look no further for an answer to this question than to the identity of the groups making up the coalition. Perhaps the prime mover in the coalition was the local Earth First! group.

This group contains a fair number of anarchists and is, quite understandably, attractive to eco-militants who feel that Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and others are basically elitist organisations who want to conduct specialised protests rather than mass actions – all very laudable. But Earth First! has uncritically adopted all sorts of ideas from its American counterpart that embody a failure to understand the context of ecological issues. Think about the name of Earth First!, for example; it echoes the malign influence of deep ecology by implying that human beings are the basic problem to nature (rather than a certain form of social organisation being a problem to most human beings and nature). If we are to overcome the dominance of the car in our lives, we need to understand why it is dominant. What role does it play? Why is it that the car lobby is so powerful, so powerful that it can impose motorways wherever it pleases (Twyford Down for example)? Answers to these questions are not provided by looking simply at the relationship between human beings (in the abstract) and nature; we need to look instead at how certain concrete categories of human beings relate to others (i.e. capitalists, the state and the rest of us). In other words, in order for our direct action in the ecological sphere to be ultimately effective – to win the eco-war rather than just the occasional eco-battle as Friends of the Earth do, for example – we need to place ecological issues in the context of the money society.

Johnny Yen

Perhaps Hitler was not such a bad bastard after all! Could it be that, unlike Jesus Christ and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, he just picked the wrong historical moment to die? Certainly his policy for a unified Europe is closer to being fulfilled with every passing day.

This month, in a biography of Winston Churchill, the historian John Charmley has argued that a deal could have been done by Britain with Hitler in the spring of 1941, and Germany could have been left to wage war against Russia. Thus the two dictators, Hitler and Stalin, could have been left to cut each other's throats as John Moore-Brabazon, Minister for Aircraft Production, said at the time.

Mr Charmley insists that Churchill was not a national hero but a tyrannical "living god" obsessed by war who surrounded himself with yes-men. Another historian, Norman Stone, seems to say that Britain's role in the war was less than relevant, and "in the end, it was really American dollars, buying Soviet manpower to be shot at, that won the war".

### Evolutionary Fascism

In a sense Hitler was a man of his time! In another biography published this month on H.G. Wells, the distinguished socialist novelist and idol of the Fabians, it was revealed that Wells asked: "And for the rest – those swarms of black and brown and yellow people who do not come into the needs of efficiency?" To which he responded: "Well, the world is not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go".

Alternatively, these inferior beings – the lascivious and the lazy, the dark-skinned and the dreamers, the rebels and the religious, the unstable and the unhappy and all those who do not fit into Wells's utopia – may be allowed to live "only on sufferance, out of pity and patience, and on the understanding that they do not propagate; and I do not foresee any reason to suppose that they [the New Republic's rulers] will hesitate to kill when that sufferance is abused".

That was H.G. Wells's idea of utopia in 1902, when he wrote his book *Anticipations*. Call it 'social Darwinism' or 'evolutionary fascism' if you like, but it is not so remote from Hitler's National Socialism.

These Fabian socialists before the second World War seemed to enjoy a cosy armchair relationship with some of the central tenets of fascism and national socialism. One of their fanciful debates, described by Malcolm Muggeridge, was that if their great playwright Bernard Shaw was shipwrecked with some down-and-out beggar, then in order that the great man would stand a better chance of survival, the beggar should be chucked overboard so that humanity might benefit from more of Shaw's plays. Muggeridge thought humanity would have benefited more if Shaw had dived in.

I have gone on about this because I cannot help but feel that the recent craze of socio-biology, advocated by Mr Rooum in *Freedom* and Peter Gibson in *The Raven*, is in this tradition of evolutionary fascism.

### Sexy Leaders

George Orwell found Adolf Hitler what we would now call 'sexy'. In his review of *Mein Kampf* in

## THE FACTORY AND BEYOND

### Balls to 'War Crimes', etc.

1940 he said: "The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him".

In our anglo-saxon society, viewed before the television from an easy chair, it is often easy to forget the attraction of the personality of the demagogues to their own people. It is too simple to pass off the recent crop of nationalist chieftains in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere as Chaplinesque figures.

This is how Misha Glenny describes some of them:

*Radovan Karadzic (Bosnian Serb President)* – "Karadzic had been the resident psychiatrist with Sarajevo's football team. His scruffy hairstyle casts a scrappy shadow over his unmemorable features, but these were compensated for by the histrionics he engineered whenever talking about the Moslem threat to Serbs."

*Milan Babic (leader of the Krajina Serbs in Croatia)* – "Babic is a dentist, a first-generation professional who joined the Croatian Communist Party. He looks like a man in his thirties who is, none the less, still recovering from adolescence. His boyish face is plump and unappealing behind some square spectacles."

*Slobodan Milosevic (President of Serbia)* – "I was immediately struck by how short he was, before my eyes were drawn to his extraordinary ears."

*Franjo Tudman (President of Croatia)* – "The Croatian President is capricious and self-willed."

The comical nature of their character or defects in their personalities ought not to blind us to the influence and power of these individuals. After all, in the 1920s Hitler came close to being expelled from Germany as an undesirable alien, and even Tito, according to Svetozar Tempo, at Drvar in the Second World War was so terrified by the approaching Germans that he was not only unable to move but he literally shit himself. Thus, paralysed with fear, the great Yugoslav leader had to be carried to safety by his cronies.

For as long as I can remember we have pictured a view of the world which was framed by the Cold War, capitalism, communism, and more or less stable international relations between superpowers. Because this has changed some say it is the end of history. Intellectuals who say this are shit scared and are lulling themselves into a sense of false security.

The rather cushy Cold War world (at least for us in the West) with all its predictabilities is over. We are it seems into another historical cycle. As Orwell said in his essay *The Rediscovery of Europe*: "We have got out of a backwater and back into history" (1942). We are back into the rough and tumble world of nationalism, revenge, ethnic cleansing, race hatred, religious mania, exile and political persecution.

In the current political landscape of barefaced lies, bluff and back-stabbing, Machiavelli seems a better guide than Marx.

### Spell 'testicle'!

A subversive line injected into 'Colonel Bogey claims "Hitler has only got one ball".'

Testicles has been an issue which has excited great interest on the shopfloor at Smith Klein Beecham in Little Hulton, Salford, recently. Before Christmas male workers were invited into the personnel office and asked to spell 'testicle'. Apparently some graffiti artist in the men's toilet had written that: "The production manager is a testicle" and had somehow mis-spelt the last word. The personnel officer at Smith Klein Beecham, which produces that sparkling placebo Lucozade, is a stickler for good English – hence the investigation.

Would that they were that good when it comes to paying the wages! In 1991 at Little Hulton they were so slap-dash at paying their workers that there were at least two stoppages of work. In January 1992 a temporary worker who waited months to be paid for less than two weeks work with Smith Klein Beecham successfully took the company to the Manchester Industrial Tribunal under the Wages Act for unlawfully withholding wages. When *Freedom* contacted the company last year it was denied that there had been much trouble over wages, no stoppages of work, and only one moan from some workers over a slight upset in the wage payments caused by a blip on the computer.

We all tend to run away with the idea that the companies which appear in the FT 100 index are systems of excellence and efficiency when their own workers often know the company management is in a worse state than Russia. As I write more trouble is brewing at Smith Klein Beecham over redundancy payments – I hope they handle it more satisfactorily than the wage system.

### Rape in Wartime

It is being said that the rape of women in Bosnia has been out of all proportion to that expected in wartime. Are the fighters in Bosnia just following their 'animal instinct' or is it 'systematic rape' which may break the 'rules of war'?

If there is anything more revolting than rape itself it is the idea of 'rules of war'. The idea that war can be fought like a game of cricket merely makes it all the more palatable and acceptable.

In the French army during the Second World War, African troops had an express right to rape the enemy.

The danger of the Gulf War is that it has made war seem clean and tidy, the beauty of the Bosnian War is that it is sickening and that it makes men recoil from war itself.

For almost half a century the Hitler war and nuclear weapons helped make war less agreeable, and in Europe there has been relative peace and prosperity. Those particular luxuries may not be with us much longer.

Mack the Knife

## The state of anarchy

Dear Editors,  
Raven 20 presents a thoughtful paper by George Crowder, 'Freedom and Order in Nineteenth Century Anarchism'. Accepting his argument and taking it a stage further, an intriguing prospect opens up.

Crowder distinguishes between two freedoms. On the one hand negative freedom, the irresponsible activity of the empirical subject. On the other, the positive freedom that comes with internationalisation of the moral law. He denies that anarchists hold abolition of the state to be sufficient in itself; they realise that an absence of external control can bring the results they seek only if complemented by individual self-control and the positive form of freedom.

Noting that the anarchists' optimism about a stateless order rests on the belief that people naturally tend to behave in an ethical way (ethical naturalism), Crowder himself accepts moral self-direction as natural only in an Aristotelian sense, as an attribute less of actual than of ideal humanity. (This goes a long way towards making sense of observation; without it, restriction of a natural feature to a tiny minority remains inexplicable.) Bringing ideal humanity into the discussion he omits its counterpart, the ideal state. This seems hardly fair to the state, and it leaves some ragged ends.

The distinctive feature of the ideal state (which has never existed, any more than the ideal human being) lies in its correspondence with the subject; in Hegelian language, it reconciles the universal with the particular. Where the aims of the state, in every realised version, diverge from those of individual subjects, the end sought by the ideal state is identical with the end sought by the ideal individual; both set out to realise the

moral law. This being so, it makes no difference whether we speak of the ideal anarchy as having eliminated the state or perfected it; the two conditions are one and the same.

Anarchism, however, does not come forward as a purely ideal movement envisaging a purely ideal humanity. It contemplates the persistence within anarchy of behaviour falling short of the ethical ideal, and assumes that the community will be able to control it; although without distinct coercive institutions, the anarchist community would yet have powers of coercion sufficient to maintain itself. It would enjoy an effective monopoly of force, and that is one mark of the state, the others being unity and legitimacy, which the anarchist community would also possess. An actual anarchy, in short, would display less a stateless condition than one with the state perfected to the last point before it disappeared into complete identification with a totality of ideal subjects.

George Crowder has cast his paper in terms of cases and grounds and arguments, of teleology and naturalism, of logic and reason, and extension of his theme has led to the unorthodox conclusion that anarchism seeks the perfect state. The logic leads to this point but the actual anarchist movement operates in a world which is far from being purely logical; we have to expect its future, like its past and its present, to be governed by influences other than the logic of its case. But that's another story.

George Walford

## No Workerist 'Maniac'

Dear Freedom,

I'm sorry if Jake (Readers' Letters, 9th January) thinks that I'm some kind of workerist, class war, 'kill the rich' maniac after reading my article 'Lower Class Bile', because I'm not. My article was obviously an attempt at a largely rhetorical piece of writing, but, even so, Jake seems to have read into it much that wasn't actually there.

Firstly, I didn't say that I loved the working classes, I don't see how you can love a class; I love individuals, not amorphous groups. Secondly, I don't know how Jake found out my attitude to working people, but I certainly do not "treat all working people with apparent contempt", as to do so would cut me off from my parents, those whom I work with, myself, and many of my friends. Finally, I did not say in my article that "it's all the fault of the middle classes".

In fact I quite clearly put the blame on the system under which we all live ("... the same damn system" ... "this system is not just the enemy of sanity, it's the enemy of beauty, it's the enemy of life" ... "a fraction of the anger we need to end this appalling system and give us all peace, space and a better world"). And nowhere did I suggest that the way to that goal of a better world was by shooting people or blowing anything up. I'll give Jake the benefit of the doubt and assume that he hasn't read earlier issues of *Freedom* in 1992, but if he'd like to look at some back issues he'll see that I spent some time arguing against violent revolution; not to mention praising certain "bourgeois values" in the 19th September issue of

*Freedom*. In fact, a number of articles and letters I argued exactly the same point as Jake made, that "the state exists in the minds of every person on this planet ..."

However, having said all that, I'm happy to repeat all the anecdotal points that I made in my article. That's what my experience of life and my parents' experience of life has been like - and I come from a family that sees itself as being 'respectable' (though 'unskilled') working class, i.e. we haven't had it too bad. The point behind writing about it, talking about the anger, was that I hoped that everyone (including people from other classes) would get angry too. Finally, there is a 'boss class', even Jake should be able to see that. We are all compromised by the structures of society that we find ourselves in, but we are still, to one degree or another, responsible for our own actions. No one asked Lord King to forget all about his class roots and become a prime mover in this system, neither did anyone ask Virginia Bottomley to do the same, or Mrs Thatcher for that matter. To say that you are against a system without expecting certain individuals to be to blame for continuing to run, enforce and manage that system reminds me of the daft idiots here in Scotland who think they can get away with the formula 'I'm not against Roman Catholics, it's the Roman Church I'm against'. A system's made out of people, and as I've said before Jake, and as you said in your letter, our job is to convince people that this system is rotten and in humanity's name it shouldn't be kept going any longer. And that's what I was attempting to do in my little article.

Steve Cullen

## Gibson talking 'rubbish'?

Dear Editors,

Tony Gibson (letters, 23rd January 1993) is talking a load of rubbish. I'm sorry to say that his letter reads as just one more piece of misogynist rubbish of which we have heard too much already. If he cannot see the need for a women's page (even a column would be a start) then he is obviously also blind to the fact that we are still living in a profoundly patriarchal society. A women's page is not about "knitting patterns and horoscopes" as he puts it, but about providing a space for women and men to read and express ideas which relate to women's unequal treatment in our society. Women are subject to pornography and the objectification of their bodies, rape, employment discrimination, inferior status and many, many more injustices - if men ever experience these then yes, perhaps we could have a men's page as well. For now a women's page is a very good idea, if not a necessity.

Mr Gibson also attacks those feminists who value intuition and the spiritual, but surely it is these facets that lie at the very heart of anarchism. For myself, and I'm sure for many others, anarchism is a moral rather than scientific discipline based on feelings and convictions rather than a set of sociological rules. The opposite of intuition and spirituality, as Mr Gibson points out, are the rational and the practical - we've had that in the form of modernity for the past two hundred years and its achievements are hardly acceptable to many anarchists are they?

Finally, and distastefully, Mr Gibson appears to be ignorant of the fact that a bitch is a female dog and never anything else.

Mark Stevens

## Marx's theory of value

Dear comrades,  
I feel I must rise to the challenge set by Ann Sinclair in the last issue of *Freedom* (23rd January).

The statement "no anarchist seems competent to refute Marx's theory of value" is incorrect. I know of several refutations of the theory of value - *Marxism versus Reality* by Brian Moseley is a good example, Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* contains a similar critique. Any critical examination of the labour theory of value reveals it to be wrong.

If it takes three hours to make a motor car but only a few seconds to administer a life-saving drug, which is more valuable? If labour decides value as the labour theory of value states then the car is worth more than a human life. No one refutes Marx better than Marx himself (provided you can understand him!)

I believe Kropotkin's 'wages system' contains further indictments of the theory of value. All the above books are available from Freedom Bookshop at reasonable prices as well!

Value should be defined by need, which it seems to me is the only way to decide 'value'.

Does this letter make me one of 'Freedom's literary contributors'?

Jake

## Down with sloppy anarchist thinking!

Dear Editors,  
Eric Bridgewood's Mary Whitehouse / *Empire of the Senses* analogy (*Freedom*, 23rd January 1993) seems false. An equivalent of that would have been for *Freedom* to ask Le Pen to review *The Raven* 18.

Amorey Gethin

## More on Sociology

Dear Editors,

Ernie Crosswell (*Freedom*, 23rd January 1993) and a number of *Freedom's* correspondents, in the debate on sociology, are consistently missing the point. Sociology is a highly technical subject just like any other academic subject, physics for example. Consequently it uses technical language, words with special meaning within the discipline. Laypersons should not expect to immediately understand these terms. For instance, if someone started to talk about quasars or even the theory of relativity, I would be hard put to understand what they meant because I am not a physicist.

I agree that if *Freedom* is intended to be a propaganda paper for anarchism then it should use lucid and intelligible language but a language for the thinking person, the intelligent lay reader, not necessarily the *Sun* reader. However, if we are embarking on a more detailed discussion, and there is clearly room for this, then it is fair for serious writing to use the language appropriate to the subject.

Now I am a sociologist, or at least a sociology teacher. Until about eighteen months ago I had not heard of post-modernism either. It came about like this. As I was interested in doing research (the Holy Grail so far as sociology teachers go) I was asking a colleague whether anyone at his university was interested in figurational sociology and he said no they were mainly into post-modernism. I asked around and none of my teaching colleagues had heard of post-modernism because it was, at the time, a largely university topic. It was not something which came up on the A level syllabus. Fair enough.

We know now what it means and there are half a dozen books on post-modernism on my bookshelves. It is important to keep up to date. I bet Ernie had not heard of figurational sociology either. He might have done if my review article had appeared in *The Raven* sociology edition. It apparently arrived

too late for inclusion. Perhaps a later *Raven*?

If intelligent laypersons wish to understand some of sociology's terminology it is accessible. I am sure Freedom Bookshop will order David and Julia Jary's *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (Collins, and we may then have a more informed discussion.

We could water down some of these terms but if we did our articles might be rather long and consequently not get printed, at least in *Freedom* or *The Raven*. Understanding the meaning of post-modernism might not help Ernie stop the war in Bosnia, but sociology is about understanding what's going on and long-term solutions not a magical instant reality. However, a sociological understanding might prevent other Bosnians elsewhere. Who's afraid of the big bad wolf then, eh?

Peter Neville

## Help needed!

Dear Comrades,

An American researcher, who will be coming to England later this year, would be interested to receive information on the International Women's Suffrage Alliance. The specific area of research is the role of Jewish women in this organisation, and in particular the history of the Palestine Jewish Women's Equal Rights Association (Hitachdut Nashim Ivriot L'shivui Z'chuyot). Does anyone know anything about this? Many anarchist women were involved.

There does not seem to be very much written on this subject - any pamphlets or paraphernalia which could be viewed would be very welcome. Personal knowledge or oral history would be equally of great value.

If anyone has any information which could help in this research please contact Ms R. Abrams, c/o Ms K. Andrews, 79 Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 6HF.

Katy Andrews

## Feminism a Dogma?

Dear Editors,

Your letter writer, called Peter, promotes Emma Goldman as an example of fairness in the feminist debate (*Freedom*, 6th February 1993). Emma, in *The Traffic in Women and other essays*, has much to say about the subjugation of women (i.e. "a mere appendix of man") but strangely concludes, in another essay, that "the greatest supporter and worshipper of war is woman". It would seem that she was an example of muddled thinking rather than fairness!

Peter himself writes: "Feminism's fault lies with its one-sided blame on men per se - it denies that men are also oppressed (on different levels than women) and can be oppressed by women as well". But he misses the point that on the higher levels it is almost exclusively men who oppress both men and women. It is most unfair to blame ideologies for our ills (cf. George Walford) when those ideologies are invented and enforced by men.

If I may turn to John Pilgrim's letter in the same issue. My letter in the January 23rd issue did not decry the study of human societies, I merely questioned the usefulness of the institutional, academic, disciplinary approach. As a sociologist myself, I would hardly do such a thing.

Ernie Crosswell

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Fridays at about 8.00pm at the Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square (via Cosmo Street off Southampton Row), London WC1.

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19th February - Open discussion

26th February - 'Extremism and Moderation in Anarchist Thought' (speaker Andrew Lainton)

5th March - Open discussion

12th March - 'Sexual Harassment and Feminism' (speaker Adrian Williams)

19th March - Open discussion

26th March - 'Anarchism and the Labour Party' (speaker Peter Neville)

23rd April - 'Anarchism and the Collapse of the Cold War and the New World Order' (speaker Dave Dane)

30th April - Open discussion

Monday 3rd May at 2pm - May Day Picnic in Osterley Park, Hounslow. Details later.

There are vacancies for speakers from 7th May to 2nd July

If anyone would like to give a talk or lead a discussion please make contact giving names, proposed subjects and a few alternative dates. These can be either speaker-led meetings or general discussions. Overseas or out-of-town speakers are particularly welcome. Friday is the only night available for the meetings as the centre is booked up for classes on other nights. Anyone interested should contact Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (Tel: 081-847 0203). Not too early in the morning please.

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**Sunday 4th April - Belper/Blackbrook,** meet approx 1pm at the junction of Long Walls Lane with A517 at Blackbrook. Circular walk 3 miles approx.

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## 'SOCIALISM AND ANARCHISM'

a talk by Laurens Otter  
(as guest speaker at SPGB)

at

**The Unicorn, Church Street,  
Manchester**

on

**Monday 8th March at 8pm**

## Libertarian Left Co-operation Conference

**last weekend in February**

Anarchists / Libertarian Socialists / Syndicalists, who are active within (or oriented to) broad campaigns such as Trades' Councils, Miners' Support Groups, Women's Groups or Claimants' Unions, are invited to a conference for the last weekend in February. The Stapleton Commune (the oldest Anarcho-pacifist community in the country) has offered the use of its premises. People reaching Doncaster by rail can be ferried to Stapleton, which is near Pontefract.

*More information from:*

Sue Samuel and Guy Cheverton of Hull  
Syndicalists (0482-492388)

or

Hilda and Len Gibson, Stapleton,  
(0977-620381).

## FREEDOM fortnightly

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