

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 54 No. 20

16 OCTOBER 1993

FIFTY PENCE

*"Order springs  
from the free  
activity of all"*

**P-J Proudhon**

## THE PARTY CONFERENCES POLITICS AND CHAOS

**C**haos, in the mathematical sense, means that tiny differences in initial conditions can make an enormous difference to the outcome. It happens all the time in politics.

A recent example was the by-election for Tower Hamlets council, at which a British National Party candidate was elected. Five thousand-odd votes were cast by 44% of those registered to vote. One third of the votes went to the BNP, one third to Labour, and one third to others mostly Liberal Democrats. The BNP candidate won by getting only seven more votes than the Labour candidate. If eight of them had voted Conservative, or four had voted Labour, then Labour would have won.

It became clear in broadcast interviews with BNP voters, the following day, that at least seven of them had seen no BNP propaganda and had a wrong idea of BNP policies.

Those seven accidental votes have resulted in fights between BNP members and anti-fascists in Shoreditch, a public rebuke to Tower Hamlets Liberal Democrats from the platform at the Liberal Democrat Party conference, jubilation in the BNP, and changes in public attitudes which would not have taken place if the seven votes had gone elsewhere.

Another example of mathematical chaos occurred at the Labour Party conference. The OMOV (one man one vote) resolution, changing the Labour Party constitution to stop trade union block votes having a say in the choice of parliamentary candidates, depended for its passage on a majority of the trade union block vote at conference. It was passed, and the media hailed the result as a great triumph for John Smith, which it was. But it resulted from a change of mind by just one delegate.

A delegate conference of the MSF union had mandated its delegates to the Labour conference, to use the million or so MSF block vote against the OMOV motion. The day before the vote, 18 of the 36 members of the MSF delegation were for carrying out the mandate, and 18 for abstaining on the vote. If the delegation had remained evenly split they would have voted against and the OMOV motion would have been defeated. On the morning of the vote, one delegate changed her mind, making the delegation 19 to 17 in favour of abstention, so the MSF votes were not cast either way, and John Smith had his way.

It is said that the delegate who changed her mind would willingly have voted against OMOV, but the proposal was part of a composite motion which also included a proposal forcing some constituency parties to put up women as parliamentary candidates, and she did not want to vote against that.

Votes at Labour Party conference are not in fact binding on elected Labour Party politicians. There were majority votes in favour of getting rid of nuclear weapons and cutting the military budget to the same level as other European countries, but the platform announced that they will ignore these votes, because they were less than the two-thirds majority required by the constitution. But in the 1950s there was a two-thirds majority against nuclear weapons, and the platform announced that they would ignore it anyway.

There are no votes at the Conservative party conference. The sense of the meeting is taken from the length, loudness and position (sitting or standing) of applause from the various bigwigs and speeches from the floor. And one can tell from the applause why the bigwigs dare not allow conference to influence political decisions.

The people who get chosen as delegates to Conservative Party conferences are characterised by vindictiveness. They like to describe themselves as in favour of 'law and  
(continued on page 2)

## ANARCHY IN RUSSIA

**T**he day after Russian President Boris Yeltsin dissolved his parliament by ordering a tank assault on it, with the deaths of some 200 people including 'extremists and hardliners', office workers and policemen, together with a few bystanders and western pressmen, the 'world leaders' including John Major and President Clinton were quick to show their support.

The press was quick to headline the more dramatic events of the past week as a 'second October revolution' and to try to depict Yeltsin as a sort of Kerensky-in-reverse, overturning a new attempt at a coup by the Bolsheviks.

The experts were called on to comment. Mr Geoffrey Stern, a lecturer at the London School of Economics, said:

"Russia as a country is in danger of splitting up - and that would be extremely dangerous. You would have anarchy and disintegration in a country with nuclear weapons."

While the *Evening Standard* in its leader of 5th October commented:

"Our concern for the fate of Russia is very real: there is the future of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal to consider; there is the fate of the billions of pounds that Western banks and businesses have invested in the Russian economy, and besides, if the largest state in Europe collapses in anarchy, we cannot hope to avoid the ripples that will spread outward from Moscow."

**T**he word 'anarchy' has two meanings. Presumably the commentators are thinking of 'anarchy' in the sense of social chaos, but the quotations could also be interpreted as meaning anarchy in the sense which anarchists use: ordinary working people taking matters into their own hands, without deferring to Yeltsin, the Bolsheviks, Western banks and businesses or any other would-be rulers.

If anarchy in the anarchist sense is beginning to happen in Moscow, we welcome the ripples spreading outwards.

Anarchist groups are emerging all over Russia - see map on page 2.

# THE PARTY CONFERENCES POLITICS AND CHAOS

(continued from page 1)

order', but are against any attempt to make the law more orderly.

In the face of all the recent proof that the police lie to secure convictions, they applauded Home Secretary Michael Howard's announcement of 27 new ways to make it difficult to challenge police evidence, including the right of police to withhold relevant information from the defence (which they do already, but illegally).

Suggestions for measures to dissuade people from crime are booed by the majority of Conservative delegates, while suggestions for ill-treating criminals (and the falsely convicted) are cheered. Hang 'em. Beat 'em. Cut their goolies off. They declared themselves against public expenditure, but cheered the announcement that six new prisons are to be built.

This year they bayed against teenage single mothers, whom they would like denied access to accommodation, on the spurious grounds that they prevent

others from being housed (in fact they are fewer than 2% of those in council accommodation, and never in the most desirable places).

The speech they liked best, to judge by the applause, was the speech by Peter Lilley which proposed nothing specific but expressed a hatred of foreigners, who according to Tory superstition come to Britain to avail themselves of income support, which, again according to Tory superstition, is generous by comparison with other countries. Mr Lilley scored a great hit with his skit on a French phrasebook: "Ou se trouve le somssing for nossing?"

"Somehow," commented the London *Evening Standard*, "the delegates trust Mr Lilley".

Chaos theory will be seen at work at next year's council elections, wherever the votes are very close, and the memories of trust or disgust at Mr Lilley's sleazy performance will move just a few voters for or against.

# Three-cornered conflict

A *Times* report from James Bone in New York (4th September) informs us that Britain and its European partners blocked the United Nations secretary general's choice of prosecutor for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia "for fear he might disrupt the peace process by quickly bringing charges against Serb leaders". One official said: "He might try to indict high-level people immediately, and then we are in trouble". The Serb leaders Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic, and the Croat Tudjman appear to be the main targets.

This will come as no surprise to anarchists. Hitler and Mussolini were great statesmen and gentlemen until they were seen as a threat to Britain's interests. Caeceseau was a Knight of the Garter, feted by the British government, and only hurriedly disowned just before he was executed by his own countrymen (to save their own skins?). Governments do not deal with poor, powerless people for the simple reason that it would give those people a sense of power - and they might want more of it. Governments deal only with powerful people - people who know the rules.

Milosevic, Karadzic, Mladic and Tudjman need have little fear of going before a war crimes tribunal, especially now that the Muslims have been doing their bit of 'ethnic cleansing' of their own; they have more to fear from the wrath of their own people should they come to their senses and see how they have been sacrificed in the name of national sovereignty.

The people of Sarajevo and elsewhere also need to understand the sinister hand of religious leaders in this dreadful carnage, where neighbour has been turned against neighbour. Governments everywhere employ

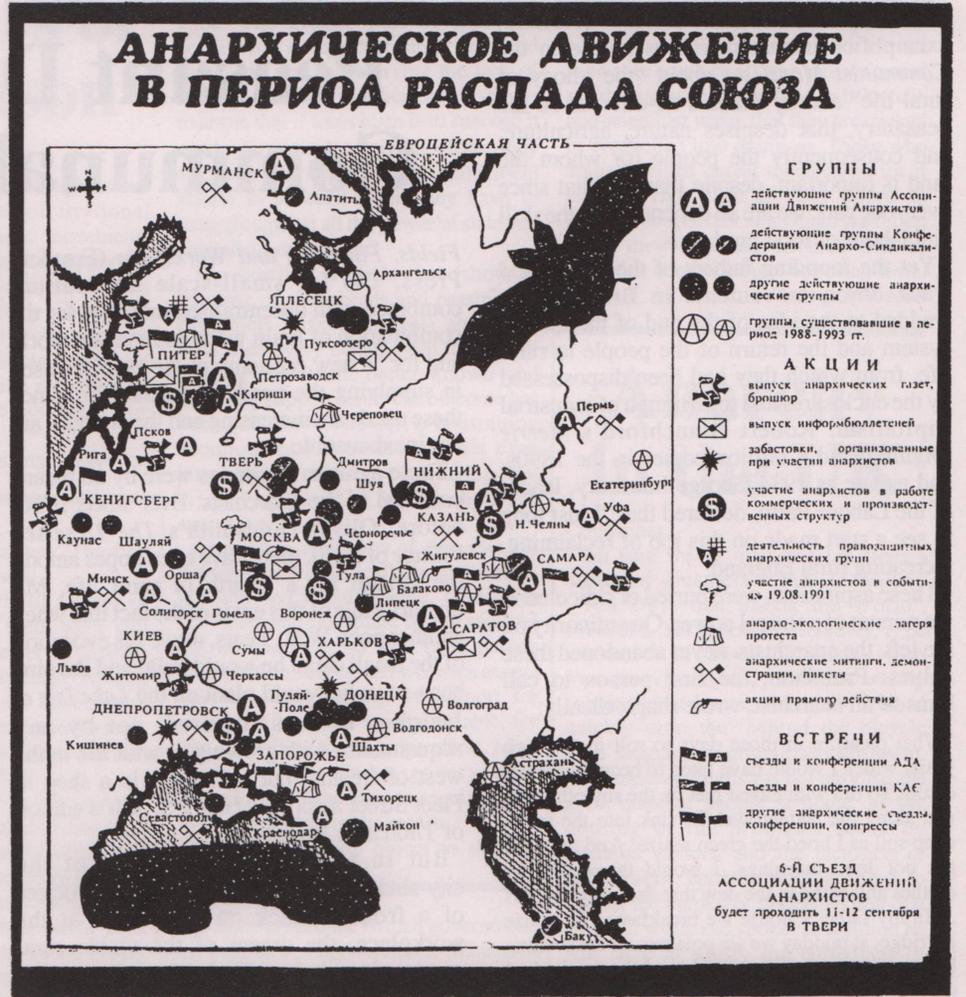
compliant religious leaders to take care of the moral side of their immoral policies, confident in the knowledge that their populations, having been indoctrinated from childhood in the need to obey the laws that happen to be in force, will look to their religious leaders for direction - which inevitably leads them up the garden path to destruction.

Not that war crimes tribunals can solve anything anyway. The only 'crime' in war is to be on the losing side. War itself is the crime, and any attempts to sanitise war, such as Geneva Conventions, are merely an excuse to carry on committing crime on a vast scale. It may be a forlorn hope that the suffering Sarajevans will survive to learn the lesson and tell the world who the real enemies are, but the three-cornered Bosnia tragedy contains so much farce that it must be counted as a possibility.

Serb Orthodoxy, Croat Catholicism and Bosnian Islamicism are of such a nominal character only, in places like Sarajevo, that those citizens might come to see through the whole nationalist/religious conspiracy.

Throughout the war, the three religious hierarchies have virtually disappeared from the scene. Apart from burying the dead, they have said next to nothing and done even less, because they are scared of offending any of the political and military leaders upon whom they might have to rely for special privileges when hostilities cease. And so it will go on in the Balkans, in Northern Ireland, and all over the world, as long as old men are allowed to indoctrinate children in subservience and romantic ideas that set them at each others' throats. Only the anarchist message can stop it.

EFC



A *Freedom* reader writes: Here is a photocopy of an anarchist publication I bought in St Petersburg only a few days ago. I thought you might be heartened to see the map of anarchist groups peppered across the old 'USSR'. I was heartened by today's news which suggests that the majority of Russian people are treating with total disdain the power-mongering of Yeltsin and his rival. It would be fine if this attitude was sustained and included a boycott of the proposed presidential elections, but I fear this is unrealistic. There is so much that could be said and written from an anarchist perspective on contemporary Russia ... Unfortunately I don't know enough Russian to get beyond surface observations.

The map is headed 'The Anarchist Movement during the collapse of the Union' and appears on the front page of *Novy Svet* (New World) subtitled 'The Peter Anarchist Paper' and carrying the motto: 'Anarchy is the Mother of Order'.

With the aid of a Russian-speaking comrade in London, we have translated the key to the symbols on the right of the map (starting with the 'A' in the circle, and numbering downwards):

- Anarchist Groups**
1. Active groups of the Association of Movements of Anarchists (ADA).
  2. Active groups of the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS).
  3. Other active anarchist groups.
  4. Anarchists groups active during the period 1988-93.

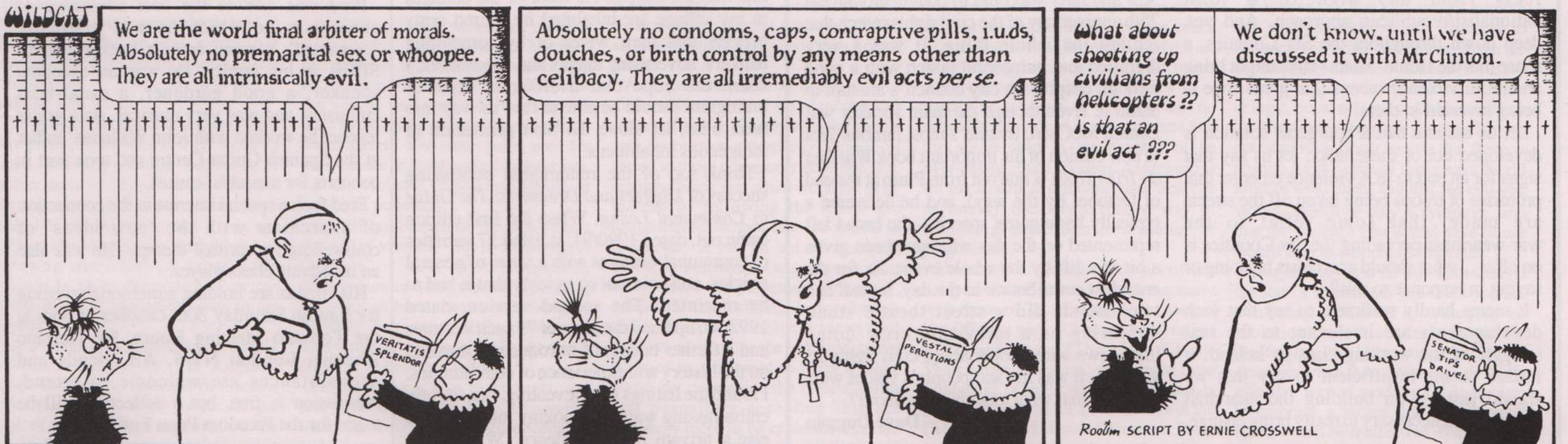
- Actions**
1. Printing presses; issue of anarchist papers and pamphlets.
  2. Information bulletins.

3. Strikes gained with the participation of anarchists.
4. Participation of anarchists in commercial or industrial structures.
5. Activity in defence of the rights of anarchists.
6. The part of anarchists in the events of August 1991 [the Gorbachev coup].
7. Anarcho-ecological protest camps.
8. Actions of 'direct action'.

- Meetings**
1. Conferences of the ADA.
  2. Conferences of the KAS.
  3. Other anarchist conferences.

Only the European part of the former USSR is shown, but the Baltic Republics are included. The text is set in a pre-Revolutionary script and there are some pre-1918 place names.

Of particular interest is the concentration of symbols in the region of Gulyai-Pole in the Ukraine, home of Nestor Makhno whose revolutionary insurgent army was one of the most significant episodes of the Russian Revolution and of the anarchist movement.



## — ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Peasant Dreams and Communal Yearnings

Thanks to the baleful influence of marxism, there is a mainstream in socialism, exemplified in that notorious phrase in the *Communist Manifesto* about "the idiocy of rural life" and by Stalin's all-out war on the peasantry, that despises nature, agriculture, and consequently the people for whom the land is important, despite that fact that since everyone eats, we are all dependent on the skill and labour of food producers.

Yet the founding fathers of the labour and trade union movements in Britain were wedded to the idea of the end of the factory system and the return of the people to rural life, from which they had been dispossessed by the enclosures and the triumph of industrial capitalism. Robert Blanchford's *Merrie England* sold a million copies in the 1890s, and as late as 1934 George Lansbury, leader of the Labour Party, declared that "I just long to see a start made on this job of reclaiming, recreating rural England".

These aspirations were buried or ridiculed in the pursuit of political power. One minority on the left, the anarchists, never abandoned these values. Proudhon, the first person to call himself an anarchist, wrote rhapsodically:

"What pleasure in those days to roll in the high grass, which I would have liked to browse like my cattle! To run with naked feet on the smooth paths and along the hedgerows! To sink into the fresh, deep soil as I hoed the green maize! And often, in the hot June mornings, I would throw off my clothes and bathe in the dew that drenched the turf ... In my father's house we breakfasted on maize porridge; at midday we ate potatoes; in the evening bacon soup, and that every day of the week. And despite the economists who praise the English diet, we, with our vegetarian feeding, were fat and strong. Do you know why? Because we breathed the air of our own fields and lived from the produce of our own civilisation."

And Kropotkin, the most influential of anarchist propagandists, argued in 1899 in his

*Fields, Factories and Workshops* (Freedom Press, £4) for small-scale horticulture combined with decentralised industry, for the combination of brain work and manual work, and for "a new economy in the energies used in supplying the needs of human life, since these needs are increasing and the energies are not inexhaustible."

These agrarian yearnings were by no means confined to the anarchists. Ever since, if not before, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village of 1770*, there have been hopes among the British for a rebirth of rural life. My favourite tale of this era is of the fact that when another poet, W.B. Yeats, wrote his evocation of the small cabin he would build and the nine bean-rows he would plant on the *Lake Isle of Innisfree*, he was inspired, not by any acquaintance with growing or with life in the west of Ireland, but by buying in a shop in Fleet Street a copy of Henry S. Salt's edition of Thoreau's *Walden*.

But in spite of the derision of the city-slickers and the hostility of the advocates of a frontal attack on capitalism at the workplace, the dream of the viable rural community persists. Books about living on a smallholding or in a country commune must be like the flood of cookery or gardening manuals. There are so many of them that they must have a huge surrogate audience of bedtime readers who aren't really going to make that delicious dish, grow those lovely beans or make a living in that idyllic village,

but really love reading about other people's experience.

How else can we explain the remarkable success of handbooks on rural and communal lifestyles, including those which have a very strong anarchist tinge? Compare it with the publishing history of the mainstream equivalents. Let me give you a case history. In 1937 the publisher Frederic Warburg approached the editor of *Spain and the World* for a short book on anarchism. He passed the request to Emma Goldman, who passed it on to Rudolf Rocker, who wrote *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (Secker & Warburg, 1938). Just two years later, in 1940, the same anarchist editor bought the remaindered, unsold, copies for Freedom Bookshop who, being specialists, sold it for years. Now in 1989 Rocker's book was reprinted by the current owners of Pluto Press in its Libertarian Critique series (£7.95). An abridged version, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* with an introduction by Nicolas Walter, was published by Freedom Press in 1988 (£1.95).

There is some kind of lesson in this, both about the awesome anarchist longevity, and about the commercial miscalculations of publishers. Could it be that as long ago as 1938, at the very moment when the hopes of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists were being defeated by international fascism, Rocker was addressing a general audience which no longer existed outside our specialist field of the converted, and that if he wanted a new readership for anarchist propaganda he needed to appeal to the potential readers who had a secret agenda of their own?

Rocker explained that "for the anarcho-syndicalists the trade union is by no means a mere transitory phenomenon bound up with the duration of capitalist society, it is the germ of the socialist economy of the future, the elementary school of socialism in general." But imagine that his readers, while not disputing his argument, were really cherishing quite different personal dreams. The underground literature of communal living has never been short of a readership, from *Community in Britain*, which, like Rocker's book, came out in 1938, down to *Rural Resettlement Handbook*, produced by the Rural Resettlement Group in 1977. It sold out at once, and they were obliged to bring out a large, revised version in 1979. That too sold out and the copy in front of me is the three times fatter third edition (Prism Alpha, £4.95, 1985). I've probably missed a fourth edition with even more accounts of individual experiences of trying to make a living in the countryside. Just a few are involved in communal ventures, but a great many of those who aspire to a different way of life link it with the aspiration of doing it in common with like-minded people. As most of the cottages in my village are inhabited by retired army officers and their wives or by commuting bankers, advertising agents and speculators, I share the hope that a different style of immigrant should be able to find its way into rural bliss, let alone the next generation of indigenous inhabitants.

Think too of the remarkable publishing success of *Diggers and Dreamers: The Guide to Communal Living*. When the first edition came out, dated 1990/91, it listed 57 varieties of communal ventures with a series of general articles, and sold out so quickly that it had to be reprinted. The second version, dated 1992/93, updated the news of 79 such ventures and a further budget of introductory material on the history and experience of communities. I found the listings very revealing, in a slightly embarrassing way, like looking into someone else's private correspondence. We learned

that the vast majority of communal groups prefer to remain anonymous and not to be listed. Why should they have the additional burden of a stream of visitors wanting to change their hard-won equilibrium, whether anarchist, green, Christian, Theosophist, Buddhist or New Age, to their own dream of what other people ought to believe?

A third edition has just appeared, *Diggers and Dreamers 94/95* (Communes Network, Redfield Community, Winslow, Bucks, MK18 3BR, £8.50). It lists 88 ventures, rural and urban, and a battery of general or historical articles by a range of authors which even includes me. So naturally I feel the general flavour gets more and more anarchistic. One of the editors, Andy Wood, argues that: "Whilst alternative communities have lost their revolutionary zeal (if they ever had any), new kinds of intentional communities, of a non-utopian kind, may still be what the Green movement needs". Another contributor is David Pepper, a geographer who, in another book of his own, *Communes and the Green Vision: Counterculture, Lifestyle and New Age* (Green Print, 1991, £8.99), examines the impact of green ideology on society. Are the various communal ventures scattered around Britain the forerunners of the "socially just and environmentally sustainable society of the future", or are they simply a self-indulgent by-way? He and Nicky Hallam conducted long interviews with over eighty commune members and undertook the daunting task of sorting out their answers. If there is a consensus to be found, it is around a libertarian green anarchism. Pepper keeps his conclusions for a final chapter where he finds that:

"The notion that the ecological future will be secured by proselytising with New Age ideas is a weak one. Nor is it likely that many of the public will want to follow the practical example set by the people considered in this book, and live in communes. This much is clear from the responses of the communards themselves. While it has its rewards, commune life is too difficult for most of us ... The communes movement could be part of such a move, but our survey has suggested that at present the drift is in the opposite direction, towards becoming part of the society they were originally set up to oppose. This is a problem for those inside and outside the communes who see them as potentially a leading edge of the radical green movement."

One of the virtues of the collection of articles in the latest *Diggers and Dreamers* is that Pepper, Don Pitzer and Andy Wood attempt to take the discussion a stage further on from that point.

Colin Ward

## News from Northern Ireland

Tony Doherty received two life sentences today (6th October 1993) for the killing of Gary Lynch and Cecil McKnight. Tony is a member of the IRA and comes from a working class housing estate in Derry called Carnhill. Cecil McKnight was a personal friend of mine involved in Loyalist paramilitary and political activities all his adult life. In the time I came to know him he was energetic in voicing working class loyalist fears and ideas in discussions with socialists and republicans. He was killed soon after loyalists, probably in collusion with the security forces, killed Eddie Fullerton, a Sinn Féin councillor in Donegal.

Tony Doherty is going down for two life sentences at an ironic time in the unfolding of the war in Ireland. Moves are underway to politicise the activity of the republican movement into realms that will enable them to have access to power; hence the Hume-Adams talks. The fury of the response from the unionist/loyalist side gives an indication of the threat that the community feels from any sign of a joint nationalist/republican approach. And yet, deep down throughout the Six Counties, a sense that the Hume-Adams talks might bring an end to violence means that great hope is being invested in them.

Let us assume that a bourgeois solution is developed out of these talks; let us say that signs for an end to IRA violence emerge; that promises of troops being taken off the streets are made, that some relief to the war-weariness pervading the Six Counties is on offer ... what should anarchists be doing or saying in response to this?

It seems hardly sufficient to say that such developments are irrelevant to the real struggle of the working class in Ireland. It further seems insufficient to say that we should just go on building the anarchist organisation necessary to really bring change.

But is there really anything for anarchists to do and say in such circumstances.

I applaud the letter writers who have finally brought the question of Ireland into focus for readers of *Freedom*. Is there a 'fanatical wing' to the IRA as suggested by Peter Cadogan? And if so, how will real demilitarisation occur? When Máirtín Ó Catháin talks about the 'Irish people as a whole' deciding their future, how do anarchists with a class-based analysis respond to that?

And what process of reconciliation and resolution must go on to enable the families of Cecil McKnight and Tony Doherty to live out their working class lives in this city in the future? Will they join the struggle for freedom when the partial peace on offer proves to be unsatisfactory? And what might anarchists do, in the here and now, to hasten moves towards such a re-alignment of working classes here?

On the first Saturday of October a march and rally was held to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the civil rights march that ignited the whole thing. It was a very dignified and purposeful march with a good turnout, despite the city council's attempt to damn it. Even though the main speaker was Eamon McCann, Ireland's most famous Trot (a new edition of his important book *War and an Irish Town* is due out from Pluto at the end of October by the way), and he delivered a typically haranguing speech - the broad left represented on the day will have been given a bit of a lift by the whole event. As for the anarchist contribution to the day, myself and two friends did a street theatre stunt, appearing as a television crew doing interviews with people about civil rights 25 years on. It was fun and people's voices were heard. Is that what anarchism is about?

Dave Duggan

## Memorial Evening for Fred James

Friends and comrades will remember Fred James, who was one of the originators of the London Anarchist Forum and who died on 29th August 1993 in London of cancer at the age of 67.

Fred was one of the best advocates of anarchism, to which he was gradually 'converted', coming from a background of SPGB in his family. He was an excellent speaker, a good gardener, a canal-boat enthusiast and was very musical. As a guitar teacher he worked with John Williams' father at the Spanish Guitar Centre and took part in concerts for anarchist causes.

Fred took a special interest in the connection of anarchism with the 'new ideas' of counselling and primal therapy. He was also an inveterate chess player.

His friends are holding a memorial evening for him on Saturday 30th October at 6pm at the Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5. All friends and acquaintances are welcome to attend. Admission is free, but a collection will be made for the Freedom Press Fund.

John Rety

## — TURKEY —

## Growth of the Libertarian Movement

The anarchist movement is growing in Turkey. We receive many letters from there and also anarchist publications like *Amargi* from Izmir<sup>1</sup> and *Ates Hirsizi* from Istanbul.<sup>2</sup>

*Amargi* has now published its sixth edition. A4 format and about 15 pages, its layout is continually improving. The latest edition includes amongst others articles on Islam, Durruti, pacifism and anarcho-feminism.

*Ates Hirsizi* (The Fire Stealer) started up in December 1992, and has published its fourth issue. In B5 format and very well printed, it is more than 50 pages in length. It is free to prisoners. Articles are in Turkish and Kurdish and page 2 carries a résumé in a European language.

In its first edition *Ates Hirsizi* set out its position: "We number among those who wish to see take root in the Middle East the 200 year tradition of anarchist struggle, and to achieve this in a multi-dimensional way. Of course, this entails a high degree of cultural richness as well as ideological, philosophical, moral and political combat. Evidently we have our work cut out for the moment ..."

The latest edition brings us up to date: "The 1st May '93 was very important to us as we took part in the celebrations under the black flag, for the first time in Turkey (with the exception of a few individual actions by the Izmir group). The Turk and Kurdish masses saw for the first time the black flag and heard anarchist slogans in Turkish and Kurdish. Some were interested and surprised, others (marxist-leninist groups) weren't so pleased to see us! ... One of the subjects tackled in this issue concerns the nationalist question, in particular the

national Kurdish Liberation Movement. The question of the formation of nations is deeply discussed, and from this discussion we conclude that national self-determination is unachievable. We have also started a debate from an anarchist point of view about the Kurdish struggle. All the progressive leftist groups call for the creation of a Kurdish state as the next stage and final victory of a continuing armed struggle. They are of course not in agreement with the anarchists and prefer to avoid calling for the construction of an anarchist society. We have fundamental differences with those who call for an Independent Socialist Kurdistan. We are preparing (in English) a full document on the Kurdish revolution (not the Kurdish question!) which will be widely distributed." In the tract they distributed on 1st May (in English), the *Ates Hirsizi* group sketched a brief history of the significance of the date, presented the anarchist position whilst criticising the marxist and bolshevik positions. They then speak of the fetishisms of the 1st May which is also a work, machine and production fetishism.

In addition there was, from 10th to 17th July, in Oren, an international meeting on the theme of anti-militarism and solidarity with conscientious objectors in Eastern Europe and the third world.

Foreign Affairs Secretariat of the FAF

1. *Amargi*, 1693 Sokak no. 11 Karsiyaka, Izmir.

2. *Ates Hirsizi*, Klodfarer Cd., Dr Sevki Bey Sokak no. 4/2 Sultanahmet - Istanbul.

*Freedom's* international section would be very pleased to hear from anyone who may be learning Turkish to help in establishing links with this part of the world.

## — THAILAND —

## Death in the Factory

At least 240 workers died in fire in a toy factory in Thailand on 10th May this year. The International press has shown little interest in this catastrophe.

It happened in the Kader-Thailand factory, situated in the metropolitan area of Bangkok, capital of former Siam. Despite the lack of information, one can put together some of the facts in order to get some idea of the exploitation which reigns in this country.

At the moment when the fire broke out, the 200 employees (mainly women) were hand modelling teddy bears inside some large sheds, which were locked so that the workers would not leave before the end of the working day.

Some women had their young children with them. One of the buildings, made of pre-fabricated steel

tubing, was burnt down within ten minutes, imprisoning its occupants.

The Bangkok correspondent of the *Journal de Genève* points out that the fire was the latest of a long list of less important accidents. Standing out from amongst these was an accident which recently devastated part of the warehouse section of the river port of Klong Toei, full of containers of illegal chemical products and already hit by a series of toxic explosions in 1991.

At a time when the rage is to relocate businesses and sub-contractors to countries where there is even cheaper labour, the Bangkok catastrophe must make us see, once and for all, that without effective international solidarity, the struggles of workers — and for that matter ecologists, exportation of toxic waste, etc. — will be lost before they have begun.

source: *L'Affranchi* no. 6

## Strike in Nepal

The workers at the Nepal Battery Company in Katmandu have been on strike since 21st January 1993 in order to protest against bad sanitary conditions, lack of health and safety at the workplace and the breaching of the Collective Convention. At the same time they are fighting the pressures they have to endure due to the conspiracy between the company and the Nepalese state.

The factory is part of the 'Union Carbide' set-up, the multinational responsible for the Bhopal disaster in India. Since the factory was opened in Katmandu in 1984, 8% of the workforce have been sacked for being involved in union activities.

The workers are demanding full pay for wages lost due to work related illness and also life insurance. These workers are handling highly toxic products in the manufacture of batteries. A significant number already suffer from serious illnesses. They are also demanding a permanent contract on completion of 240 days work, given that so many are on temporary contracts.

The employers have responded violently, threatening to get rid of the 'activists' and, first and foremost, rejecting out of hand the workers' demands and declaring the strike illegal. The

Nepalese government has also supported this position. The members of the union NBWU-NIWU/GEFONT believe there is collusion between the factories management and the civil servants at the Department of Industry, given that the strike has fulfilled all legal requirements.

The union GEFONT have called for international solidarity — "your 'little' letters will be of great help to the workers ... your letters of protest will create, to some degree, pressure on the government and at the same time your messages of solidarity will enrich the consciousness of the workers."

Letters of protest can be sent to: Mr T.K. Sudharsan, General Manager, Nepal Battery Company Ltd, Balaju Industrial District, Ring Road, Post Box 3194, Katmandu, Nepal. Mail Room, M/S Union Carbide India Ltd, B.P.D.O., 2 Rainey Park, Calcutta - 700019, India.

and copies sent to: General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, Post Box #160, District Post Office, Paitan Gate, Lalitpur, Nepal.

source: *L'Affranchi* no. 6

## — CZECH REPUBLIC —

## Anarchy in Diversity

The anarchist movement is enjoying a certain amount of growth in the Czech Republic, despite organisational problems which such growth produces. We can note two main currents in the capital, Prague, organised around two journals, *A-Kontra*<sup>1</sup> and *Autonomie*<sup>2</sup>.

*A-Kontra* is a monthly publication produced by the Czech Anarchist Union (KAS). It has evolved a lot since its beginnings during the changes in '89. It is the distant relative of the journal *Volkoviny*, founded by dissidents some twelve years ago, which became *Kontra* in '89 and *A-Kontra* in '92.

*Autonomie* is now in its eleventh edition and has been published since '92. In more recent numbers it refers to the Anarchist Federation (*Anarckstická Federace*)<sup>3</sup> founded in March '91. According to one of its promoters, "Autonomie publishes nineteenth century anarchist classics and is primarily theoretical" (letter of 12th March 1993). In fact, the content seems very varied: in issue no. 11 there are also articles on police repression, Buddhism, Tolstoy, culture and the punk scene.

For the Federation, "there are those who refuse to co-operate with the communists, past and present, like the Anarchist Federation, to which *Autonomie* subscribes. On the other side there is a group based around the magazine *A-Kontra* who promote such collaboration".

*A-Kontra* sees things differently: "It was then [1992] that there were internal divisions which we think were caused by police provocation. Our premises were occupied by the breakaway groups who accused us of 'co-operating with the communist party'. These scissions which saw the creation of the anarchist federation were certainly manipulated by the state police ... In 1992, the (new) premises that we were secretly using to produce our journal were attacked by skinheads and police. Curiously, the same day, one of our editors was accused of having attacked the president of the communist party. The plot against the anarchist movement was obvious: 24 people were arrested, but thanks to strong mobilisation, the main arrestee was freed after two weeks in prison. However, the trials continue." (Information published in *CNT* no. 151, July 1993).

It is hard to get a clear picture from a distance as

to what is happening in Prague. However, three provisional conclusions can be drawn:

— in all the countries of Eastern Europe the question of former links with the communist party and its satellite organisations is a live issue; collaboration was at times hard to avoid (although not always!) for questions of survival. The current situation, however, is different.

— the accusation of police manipulation is a constant refrain in these countries; it is hard to distinguish truth from falsity.

— one can estimate in a reasonably optimistic way that the problems in Prague are due to an upsurge of interest in the anarchist movement and not due to a decline in support.

Foreign Affairs Secretariat of the FAF

## Notes

1. *A-Kontra*, PO Box 552, 170 01 Praha, Czech Republic.

2. *Autonomie*, PO Box 223, 111 21 Praha 1, Czech Republic.

3. *Anarckstická Federace*, PO Box 60, 199 00 Praha 9, Czech Republic.

Anyone in a position to help develop contacts with the Czech Republic and would like to do so may use these addresses or contact *Freedom's* international section for further information.

Now Available  
(at last!)

Violence and Anarchism  
various authors

A supplement to the Freedom Centenary Series. An attempted assassination of Hendrick Verwoerd, prime minister of South Africa, was greeted by a *Freedom* editorial headed 'Too bad he missed'. The controversy this provoked is reprinted in full.

79 pages ISBN 0 900384 70 0 £2.50

from FREEDOM PRESS

## Inside India

Despite the existence of a number of left parties in the mainstream of Indian politics and numerous campaigning non-governmental organisations, it is the ever-increasing popular movements that are the main focus of opposition to the current Indian government. Readers of *Freedom* will probably be familiar with one of the most well-known, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (the Save Narmada Campaign), which has been resisting the construction of a gigantic multi-purpose dam and irrigation project, the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) on the River Narmada in Gujarat.

The campaign has become a powerful environmental movement harnessing the anger of thousands of local people who face displacement from their homes and livelihoods. It seemed in April this year that a really significant victory had been won when, with the dam only one-third built, the World Bank announced that it would not be putting up the \$187 million further money that it had promised the project as it was no longer convinced of the project's viability, either in economic or human terms. None, though, in the villages threatened with submergence during this year's monsoon as a result of the construction that had already taken place, started celebrating. It was unlikely that the Indian government would simply abandon the project. On the contrary, what was likely to happen was for the Indian government to find the extra money itself and come down hard on any opposition.

As expected, the government has committed extra money to the SSP supported by none other than the British Overseas

Development Agency, and the opposition has intensified. As the monsoon approached Medha Patkar, spokesperson for the people's movement, committed herself and thousands of others to a programme of jal samarpan, i.e. they would occupy the villages most under threat from submergence during the monsoon and drown with them. The government remained unmoved, but then at the eleventh hour it announced the setting up of a committee to review the whole SSP. Patkar duly called off the jal samarpan and the movement has now shifted its not inconsiderable forces to lobbying the committee. A whole new struggle is set to begin, but of course in the meantime the monsoon has been and gone, the Narmada has risen and the Manibeli valley immediately behind the dam is now flooded and several villages with it. Thousands of people have lost their traditional homelands.

Patkar remains philosophical but determined and optimistic. "I cannot imagine", she said recently, "that this project will ever be completed. Already now in Gujerat even the politicians are beginning to doubt the costs and benefits of the dam construction. The question for us is not now whether the project will be completed, but how much damage will be done before it grinds to a halt. In the end, though, one thing is clear for us all and that is that the will of the people will rule."

Powerful rhetoric. The point is though that in the context of India today and its strong popular movements, it means something more than just words.

John Shotton

'Crime and Punishment in 1930's Barcelona' by Chris Ealham in *History Today*, October 1993.

The sedate reputation of the always interesting *History Today* is dented a bit by the October issue. There is Stuart Hall's approving review of *The Roydon Riots*, a play celebrating successful resistance to the last attempted enclosure of common land in Britain. There is John Black's review of the situation leading to the 1877 Prisons Act which ended private jails, *Victorian Origins of a 'Group 4' Prisons Service*. Above all there is Chris Ealham's sympathetic six-page analysis of the context of Andres Aranda Ortiz's execution. Aranda was 20 and was killed for his part in a bungled robbery that had left a fellow worker dead. He undoubtedly took part in the attempted robbery, but Ealham considered that the prosecution's case (and the death sentence) owed more to the "deafening clamour of politicians, businessmen and military, legal and religious personalities" than to any conclusive evidence.

There was a real moral panic in Catalonia at this time with anarchism and socialism being blamed for all the usual things, the 'breakup of the family' (now that has a familiar ring), runaway children 'perverted by anarchism', homeless young robbers, youth generally in fact, leading dissolute and licentious lives with the 'swarms of parasites' (another bell rings) who so upset the Catalan upper classes.

Aranda was from Valencia and in the parochial culture of '30s Spain a foreigner. Then as now, crime was associated with immigrant groups - "Barcelona is open to undesirables from the world over ..." - repatriation and immigration controls were peddled as remedies, and selective use of the death penalty was advocated. Aranda fitted the stereotype - he already had a conviction for a small robbery - the police 'found plans' for a payroll snatch, and he was wanted for questioning in connection with two bank raids and the shooting of a security guard. So by the time he got to trial there was a deafening clamour for the death penalty - the very

## Spain Then - Britain Now?

survival of society was held to be at stake. The religious authorities were predictably in favour of the death penalty (always a surprising posture, seeing as they made a very large mistake once). Ealham notes they were in any case unaccustomed to criticising authority and Aranda's atheism was well promulgated. Indeed his refusal to meet a priest was interpreted as absence of remorse. To top it all he was living in sin. All these factors, and others, fused with extant moral panics about "the breakdown of a traditional value system on religion, family and order". All good familiar stuff today. *Plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose*.

The local business community seized on the case as demonstrating the need for a dictatorship. The usual non-existent Golden Age "when an obedient citizenry respected both church and state" was invoked (shades of John Major at the Carlton Club) while the "supporters of monarchical dictatorship", writes Chris Ealham, "relied more on sentimental romanticism than on hard facts drawn from the past". The attack was on an alternative culture:

"which segmented many workers from the established morality. While the right used incidents like Aranda's armed raid to criminalise the local anarchist movement, legal activities were also condemned, e.g. 'excursionism' - a form of mass hiking - was widely condemned as deviant by the right ... Official Barcelona feared [its] contribution to the formation of a distinctly working class culture ... claimed that youth were forced to listen to anarchist speeches and participate in acts of 'free love' ..."

The issue here is the fear of any group of ordinary people organising for themselves, or acting and behaving without supervision. All historians see the past through the preoccupations of the present, of course. Nevertheless, it is striking how uneasy those in authority become at any manifestation of communication or organisation among economically subject groups. When Citizen

Band Radio was in vogue one member of the House of Lords solemnly objected to "ordinary people being able to talk to each other without proper supervision". This restates the Duke of Wellington's opposition to railways on the grounds that they "enabled the lower orders to move around". In the last twenty years the moves against pop festivals, the persecution of travellers, 'New Age' or otherwise, the demonisation of the unions, all demonstrate the uneasiness of ruling groups faced with any sort of mass action which they do not control.

In '30s Spain of course the conflicts were particularly stark. It is not unreasonable to regard Aranda as "having committed the double crime of being unemployed and politically conscious ..." "The anarchist counter culture", Ealham argues, "confirmed the broad social experience of Barcelona's predominantly unskilled workers ... where dreadful social conditions spread diseases long banished from the rest of Europe." Ealham cites tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid and bubonic plague. One looks at the growing tuberculosis figures for Britain then at the alarming rate of water cut-offs, and wonders when the rest of his list will appear in our run-down areas. The middle class Tory voter certainly seems as insulated from the reality of contemporary Britain as Barcelona's bourgeoisie in the '30s. There, Ealham notes, "highly brutalising social conditions made stable family life for the working classes near impossible" and Aranda both embodied bourgeois fears and was also representative of wider trends within the working class at this time.

Like many worker militants Aranda was blacklisted. Crippled by an industrial accident, compensation refused, without money for medicine, it was Hobson's choice between robbery and starvation. Caught, he opened fire in an attempt to escape, was tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death, as he had expected and predicted. Ironically

the man he was supposed to have killed was the son of a local anarchist activist who felt that Aranda was not really an anarchist at all, being "ignorant of its moral and spiritual values". From this account at least there was a strong current of anarchist opinion which favoured collective action rather than what they termed 'anarcho-banditry' of the sort Durruti is supposed to have advocated, and which Aranda undoubtedly practised.

It is impossible to read Chris Ealham's account of this case and its social causes without putting it in the context of Britain today. As I write the radio is carrying a more than usually vociferous Conservative Party conference baying ferociously for the return of flogging, birching and hanging. This same conference is calling for even more restriction of such welfare provisions as have survived the last fifteen years. In spite of having been personally assured by John Gummer (this event will be the subject of a future article) that "the poor in Britain are better off than they have ever been", there is increasing polarisation now of the type that characterised '30s Barcelona. The removal of the economic cushion provided by progressive taxation and welfare measures is increasingly causing the sort of immiseration Marx predicted. Two-thirds of the population, 35 million people, now live on an income that is below the average. As taxation becomes ever more regressive, the water cut-offs mount, the diseases of poverty return, the inherent instability of capitalism is likely to mean more and more people turning to some form of crime as a solution. In many cases there will be little real alternative - yet paradoxically the poor will suffer most from this. The answer must lie in the sort of collective action that Aranda's critics among the 'social prisoners' in Barcelona prison envisaged. Colin Ward once noted that we have to re-invent the co-op movement every generation or so. I suspect we will need to re-invent solidarity and social justice too.

Chris Ealham's article is a sympathetic analysis both of Aranda's trial and of the appalling conflicts and conditions of Barcelona in the 1930s. It avoids the romanticism that so often surrounds accounts of Spain at this time. *History Today* is usually worth reading. This issue is particularly good.

John Pilgrim

## Food for Thought ... and Action

More mental nutrition from Freedom Press Bookshop.

**Anarchy: a journal of desire armed**, summer '93. The current issue of this US quarterly maintains its high standard, reprinting in full Fredy Perlman's *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism* (also available separately from us at 99p\*) with spot-on timing. John Zerzan writes on rank and file radicalism in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, and a short chapter from *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (currently out of print) by Raoul Vaneigem is reprinted. There is a very informative piece on Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, and an interesting critique of the concept of 'race', plus reviews, letters and much else. A4 magazine, 84 pages, £2.50.

**Alternative Press Review: your guide beyond the mainstream**, quarterly. This is the first issue of the review section of *Anarchy* (see above) to be published as a separate journal, a move forced by the sheer number of publications covered, and which will in future allow the parent magazine to devote more space to news and features. Both the range and number of reviews - both books and journals - is impressive, and in addition they reprint lengthy extracts of selected works - even entire works. In this issue, for example, we find Chomsky's *Media Control* in full, and a critique of detective novels extracted from the British ACF magazine *Organise*. The same format, quality and length as *Anarchy*. A bit pricey but worth it. £3.50.

**The English Hermite and Dagon's-Downfall** by Roger Crab, Aporia Press, edited by Andrew Hopton. Vegetarian eccentric, mystic, pacifist and political agitator, Crab is remembered for his hermetic lifestyle - which including renouncing his worldly goods and giving away his wealth. These seventeenth century texts, his most important articulate his "strange reserved and unparalleled kind of life". In a similar vein and language to

*Tyrannopocrit Discovered*, this pamphlet will appeal most to students of the English Revolution, eccentric spelling and punctuation, and fundamentalist Christians who use the words 'God' or 'Christ' on every other line. A5, 46 pages, £3.00.

**Olive and Stepniak: the Bloomsbury diary of Olive Garnett 1893-1895** edited by Barry Johnson, Bartlett's Press. This second volume of Olive Garnett's diary is dominated by her equivocal relationship with Stepniak, the Russian revolutionary exile. (The first volume, *Tea and Anarchy*, 1890-1893, was reviewed in *Freedom*, 17th April 1993.) Also appearing in this volume are the Rossetti sisters, Ford Maddox Ford and a host of other well-known and lesser-known names from that milieu. The book appears thoroughly researched and with a wealth of footnotes. An added bonus is the appendix on the anarchist journal *The Torch* founded in 1891, and the Rossetti sisters' involvement in it. This volume is a third longer than the first, £2 cheaper and will be reviewed at greater length later. 288 pages, £9.95.

**The Match! summer '93\***. It's a shame that Fred Woodworth, the editor and publisher of this occasional magazine from Tucson, Arizona, has decided on the extreme policy of never reviewing books which have an ISBN number printed on them on the grounds that using one represents "acquiescence to coercion". In the current issue he states: "We regret that four recent books from Freedom Press ... are the first casualties of our no-review policy for ISBN-defaced works" (my emphasis). As far as we know the International Standard Book Number system is not being used to limit or prevent the distribution and sale of radical books in Britain; and even if, as he claims, this is now happening in the US, surely there are other ways of tackling the problem? An otherwise attractive, interesting and lovingly-produced magazine. 76 pages, £3.00.

KM

**Letters from Lexington: reflections on propaganda** by Noam Chomsky, AK Press. This book is a reprint of a series of letters written by Chomsky to the American magazine of media criticism *Lies of Our Times* over the past three years. Written in the post-Cold War world, from Panama to the Gulf War and beyond, these letters cover all the usual Chomsky-an themes: American foreign policy, the Middle east, the obfuscations of the ideological professions. A very good introduction to Chomsky's thinking, although anyone who had read much of his recent work may find this book a bit repetitive. 167 pages, £7.95.

**Friendly Fire** by Bob Black, Autonomedia. Nihilist, prankster, 'type-3 anarchist' - love him or loathe him, there is no keeping this man down. This latest collection of rants, essays, posters and other assortments is difficult to sum up: variable, sometimes strange and very often excellent. Included are very well argued essays on anti-work, an attack on the Art Strike, a transcript of a deposition given by Bob in a bizarre court case, more on Bob's long-running dispute with the magazine *Processed World* (for more on this see Black's polemic in his *Abolition of Work and other essays* and for the counter-view see *Listen, Anarchist!* by Chaz Bufe), and a whole heap more. 282 pages, £6.00.

**City-Death** by Stephen Booth, Green Anarchist Books. Apocalyptic novel for all those who have dreamed of destroying the metropolis. Plenty of violence and destruction - in fact not much else! The blurb says "bleak, yet ultimately hopeful", but the emphasis is on bleak. A bit like Stuart Home without the sex or humour. 207 pages, £4.95.

Jez

Titles distributed by Freedom Press Distributors (marked\*) are post-free inland (add 15% for overseas orders). For other titles please add 10% towards postage and packing inland, 20% overseas. Cheques payable to FREEDOM PRESS please.

This particular issue, price £2.65, may be obtained from Colin James, *History Today*, 20 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PE. Full time students over 18, Open University students and students at the University of the Third Age (proof of status) may obtain a year's subscription for £16.95 (normal subscription £27.50).

Free subscription to *History Today*

*History Today* invites *Freedom* readers to send for details, and the first letter to be picked out of the hat on 30th November will win a free one year subscription.

## ANARCHIST BOOK FAIR

SATURDAY 16th OCTOBER '93

10am - 8pm

AT

CONWAY HALL

RED LION SQUARE • LONDON WCI  
NEAREST TUBE STATION: HOLBORN

ANARCHIST BOOKS • PAMPHLETS  
POSTERS • BADGES • T-SHIRTS  
MEETINGS • VIDEOS • CRECHE  
VEGETARIAN FOOD

**The Great Russian Utopia**

various contributors

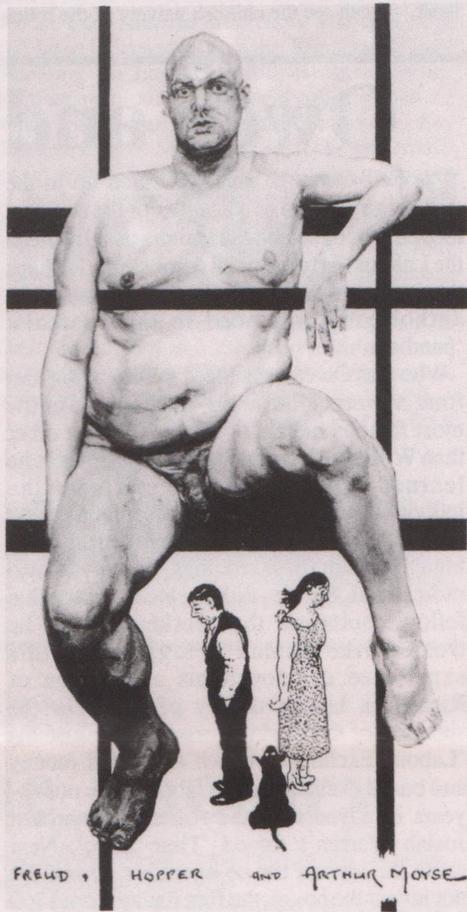
Art &amp; Design, 42 Leinster Gardens, London W2 3AN, price £12.95

"As for the degenerate artists, I forbid them to force their so-called experiences upon the public. If they do see fields blue, they are deranged, and should go to an asylum. If they only pretend to see them blue, they are criminals, and should go to prison." — Adolf Hitler

And the answer to Adolf is of course, you tell me what colour the bloody field is and I'll agree, for it is a situation that I am involved in every Saturday within the White Hart pub with finer minds forcing their flawed opinion onto me for the future will always prove me right even though, for the sake of Doc Owen and World Peace, I have at this moment in time to recant. With more pavement foot soldiers queuing to buy tickets to storm the doors of the Royal Academy than the window-smashing thugs in the Whitechapel High Street can muster, one can but congratulate them on their choice of the Royal Academy winter warmer show of 'American Art in the Twentieth Century' for it has all the nostalgic and emotive pleasure of that brief moment in time and youth when young girls slipped flowers into the barrels of pointed rifles, peace was requested, coffee drunk and the world was hymned to the sounds of guitars and the strumming of a length of cord tied to a broom handle fixed to an empty tea chest. 'Ah youth, youth' as I said to the Queen Mother as we waited for our Guinneses to settle. For those weaned up against the walls of the Tate Gallery it must come as something of an anti-climax, but for those who desire to see the original visual documents of our age this Royal Academy exhibition is truly exciting. It is all there from a Warhol to a Pollock but the sad truth is that they are but the masters of a mini-culture as with Noel Coward or Ken Livingstone, there but to amuse. Bright colours and bright lights or the pink flag and the newts, we reward it with our gentle laughter. If you fault me on this I can but say that of the works displayed within the Royal Academy it is Edward Hopper who

**Fly the old red duster**

wins attention. Third-rate painting maybe, but he caught the weltschmerz of the Reagan-Thatcher age. Here is the world of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, that hopeless world of mean streets, midnight cheap cafés and suicidal rented rooms, and one must surely demand to know why in the visual history of these paintings Hopper the third-rater holds his ground. It is because it is the Reagan-Thatcher tory philosophy stripped bare, yet within this exhibition, and like the Tate's German exhibition, one questions who or why was not invited to the party. And it is



Rockwell who is missing for he is the obverse of Hopper's world without hope. The American Reagan dream manifesto that fronted the magazine of a dream world of faith, hope and economic well-being issue after issue so well painted, and if they say that Rockwell was only a mass circulation magazine cover illustrator then so might Hopper be classed, and he is exhibited. Rockwell illustrated the false political promises of every charlatan who offers to sell you dreams made manifest or a Timeshare flat for the price of a vote or a cheque. Hopper painted the day before the suicide DOA c/o Reagan or Thatcher. Though the Royal Academy show of American Art kicks off with the Armory Show in 1913 until rigor mortis set in by 1970, the truth is that drained of its shock and excitement values we are left with no more than the garish paint of the clowns. Victor Arwas, whose wit and whose learning hides behind the sophisticated charm that we wish and desire to believe was that of pre-war Vienna, is a master of his craft as an accepted authority on the empty world of the art nouveau. If one's nurse took you to Liberty's store in London's Regent Street in the '30s, comrade, then you bought an art nouveau present for 'Dearest' all pastel shades and erotic curves, and Victor Arwas is its authority on a movement that ran from 1880 until the paint and bucket school took over. But Arwas is a well researched authority on the avant garde art that flourished and died during the Russian Revolution. In this issue of the plush *Art and Design* Arwas, as guest editor, has a long and brilliant article that is an interweaving of the arts and the revolutionary politics of the time. Within any revolutionary period the fool is free to play out his role for there is no centralised authority to chain the mind of men and women to amuse the foot soldiers by the genius or clownishness. And men and women believe that they are free. But when war and its centralised authority become the order of the day then the politicians with the rifles dictate the subject matter and in a

choice of lesser evils the artist, the intellectual and the lesser breeds within the law come to heel like curs. Arwas's article is so well researched in the obscure byways of that Russian revolutionary period and so extraordinarily well illustrated of the arts that one finds that the American avant garde was no more than the echo of the Russian scene. One reads of Matisse being shocked when Shchukin asked him to paint over the little willy of Matisse's 'Music' flute player, but Shchukin had it done and though Matisse howled to the moon at the castration of his painting and the refusal of the Stalinist art establishment to do a transplant job, it was not until 1988 that the red paint was removed. When the Lucian Freud exhibition within the Whitechapel Art Gallery moves on to the New York Metropolitan Art Gallery this autumn his painting 'Fragments of Leigh Bowery' will not be making the trip for, to the approval of Ma Whitehouse, the New York Met considers that Bowery's little willy is, like good wine, too sensitive to travel and will shock the puritanical cash customers of New York, Matisse thou should be living ... etc. It was in 1915 that Malevich painted his all 'Red Square' and in 1929 his, literally, all 'Black Square' and in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s the boys are still painting it.

For me it is all embodied in the failed attempt over the years to build Vladimir Yevgrafovich Tatlin's 'Monument to the Third International', whose model was first placed on display in 1920 in Moscow. It was to be twice as tall as the New York Empire State Building. Erected within the City of London as the supreme living block rising above the whited sepulchres of the City of London money changers! But only 'dem ol' all black paintings will continue to be rehashed for, to quote Lunacharsky via Victor Arwas, "If the revolution can give art its soul, then art can endow the revolution with speech" and in 1938 the works of Vladimir Yevgrafovich Tatlin's were destroyed as politically dangerous, and Freud's 'Fragments of Leigh Bowery' will not be going to the New York Met declaim those in authority, for the sake of the souls of the American viewing public.

Arthur Moyses

**— AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ORGANIC MOVEMENT —****Why we will no longer be approved organic producers**

Like most organic producers, we farm on a small scale. Twenty eight marginal acres, four of woodland, the rest pasture supporting sixty ewes and two cows with suckler calves. Not enough to make a living, but we never expected that; for us farming is part of a comprehensive lifestyle. Although we are *nouveau* farmers of six years' standing, we have believed in organics for two decades. So why are we giving up the right to sell our produce as organic?

There is no one single reason, rather a raft of contributory factors. Although this may appear vague, the effects are not; in combination we believe they are having the effect of sinking the British organic movement.

Organic farmers are now the most highly regulated primary food producers. Each has to be registered with UKROFS (United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Suppliers), a QUANGO (Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation) composed of appointees of the MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries) via the Minister, who in turn is subject to the Regulations of the EU (European Union).

Jealous of its reputation and resentful of dishonest opportunism, the organic movement welcomed regulation. It actively encouraged legal status for the output of registered producers. This, it was felt, in a rather short-sighted way and without consideration of options such as bonded trading, would exclude cheats and opportunists.

The move towards legal regulation was encouraged by the underlying attitudes of the movement, a blend of obsequy and naiveté. The organic movement wants desperately to be a part of the established order, and believes that, if its case is

rationally demonstrated, it will be accepted. The world and its ways are seen as being as simple as that.

Those involved in organic food production fall into two broad types: traditional landed gentry and/or farmers, and those who are organic as part of a general rejection of conventional worldly matters. This dichotomy inevitably causes problems for the movement. The former are very conservative, indeed in many cases organics may be seen as an expression of a deep conservatism, whereas the latter tend to be reclusive and ineffective. The result is that whatever worldly traps may be set beyond the farm gate, the organic movement is ready to fall into them.

There is a present example which illustrates this point. It concerns the question of support under the EU agri-environment provisions. Pre-election, John Gummer offered acreage payments for organic producers similar to those available in most other EU countries. Post-election Gillian Shephard is, by progressive degrees, withdrawing the offer. The effect is predictable. Without support in the UK, organic produce will increasingly be imported because home producers cannot 'compete'.

The movement, apparently never having heard of politicians breaking promises, is deeply offended. It is pledging to fight this decision, and do whatever it can, etc., etc. The futility of devoting so much energy to the political arena, where it can never hope to cover all the ground, is not questioned.

Because of its pro-establishment bias, the organic movement seems incapable of accepting that the British government is unlikely ever to be inclined to encourage

organic agriculture. It goes against too many interlocked vested interests. Ministers will of course go through the motions, but after the charade organics will be left behind. Unfortunately, the charade is one in which those at the top of the movement have become willing and well-versed participants.

The larger question of regulation is more important to the present decline of the movement. Had the organic movement, and principally the Soil Association, not been so parochially petty-minded, it could have regulated itself. The Commission of the EU does not demand that a government body operate the regulatory framework, and in other EU countries suitable non-governmental bodies produce and monitor regulations. These have the force of law without involving antipathic government departments and their placemen. When UKROFS came into being it had literally nothing, and its first concern was to design a suitable logo ... the Soil Association Regulations, the intellectual inheritance and property of the movement, were meekly handed over *gratis*, to allow it to function.

Now we sink under regulations over which we have little control. Our representatives cannot report honestly to us because to sit on UKROFS and 'influence' its decisions they have signed an the Official Secrets Act. Ultimate establishment respectability maybe, but a long way from what we believed the organic movement was trying to achieve.

What the movement is about is another fundamental unquestioned assumption. Personally, we became organic as part of a life philosophy; we believed in healthy soil and non-poisoned food as part of a wider green concern which had its base in consideration of questions of human health and environmental balance. Perhaps because of this we have always known that we are *de facto* up against the Establishment and established beliefs. The organic movement, on the other hand, appears to see itself as part of the *status quo*, but with a different agricultural method. This view was accepted outside; it was only very recently that, on

(continued on page 7)

## Rule Ridiculed

Anarchists have been nowhere near venomous enough in their attack on the ideology of the state. How is it possible that people still believe in it? The great mystery of the twentieth century will be why it was that otherwise intelligent people were allowed to continue to believe in the state unchallenged. People will find it strange that the bankrupt ideology of the state was not met with ridicule at every juncture. People will ask why the idea of leadership was not satirised, scorned, deflated, derided and denigrated by those opposed to it. People will have difficulty in understanding why the idea of the state was not pushed back into the limbo of dead ideas sooner. For the future, the state will hold as much attraction as belief in alchemy or the flat earth.

A problem which we from our point of view have to overcome is the terror of being free. We are all aware of the power motive in the ruler, but an anarchist thought seems to neglect the fear of freedom of the ruled. People lack confidence in their ability to think for themselves and determine the direction of their own lives. In the future, we will know and realise our own wishes. Part of this present fear may be due to laziness, but most of it is due to the fact that we have all been intellectually crippled by the culture of deference and obedience which is the first line of attack made against us by the state. We have all been indoctrinated into this position. Where some break free of it, others will soon follow.

As anarchists, we set ourselves against the idea of being ruled. Part of this is that we are finding ways of overturning the mythological framework which the statist offers to support and justify the idea of the state. The plain fact is that the state is grounded in deception. The arguments to support it are not so important as the fact that the state exists, and the statist *demand* that we join ourselves to it without discussion or question. Here is the state. Obey our laws. Pay our taxes. Do as we tell you, think as we say. This is the real founding myth of the state, the rest is camouflage, the rest is deception. There is no social contract.

Straight away the state sets itself against us in coercive terms. At the bottom its arguments are soldiers, police, secrecy, lies, courts and prisons, not to mention the ideological prisons we have allowed it to set up inside our own heads. It may be possible to argue from this that we do not require a rational framework to oppose this, but this is not my present concern. It is very clear, however, that the political game is anti-rational, because it is set up in such a way as to exclude attempts to attack and knock down its foundational assumptions. It follows from this that the science of politics is not scientific, the philosophy of politics is not philosophical, in so far as the radical questioning of its assumptions is specifically excluded by the rules of the game. The state exists, and that is all, the rest merely a game which people play inside that framework.

Yet there is something about the idea of rule itself which is self-evidently flawed, and this needs to be stated over and over and over again until the message strikes home and the fragile platform of

the statist collapses. The idea of rule is self-evidently flawed. *Wherever one person puts him or herself on a pedestal of authority, that power will inevitably be used against those being ruled.* This flaw is implicit in the idea of rule itself.

Who could possibly be happy about the rule of the state? We are told to subordinate our autonomy to the popular will, and always allow the state to act on our behalf, but this is no more than the manipulation of the mood of the mob by opinion polls, the subordination of life to the artificial choices offered in the supermarket of death.

- The state claims unity, but this is to disguise the fact that it cannot accept, it cannot accommodate the fragmentation of interest, but boosts the interest of the controlling minority at the expense of the rest.
- The state is a denial of the ability of individuals to defend themselves against the depredation of others.
- The state is a plundering predator, issuing commands, demanding taxes.
- The state regulates virtually all aspects of human activity through its bureaucracy, we need official permission for virtually everything.
- The state indoctrinates people through its control of the media and education.
- The state is a continual act of concealment and denial of the truth.

All that the state is flows from the fact of corruption, the axiom that wherever one person puts him or herself on a pedestal of authority, that power will inevitably be used against those being ruled. This observation follows from looking at the concept of leadership. One commands and the other obeys, one issues orders and the rest follow.

When we examine the coercion which follows this fact, when we call upon the statist to justify this coercion, his or her argument will depend upon such things as the idea of democracy and the social contract myth. These constitute a claim that there is an identity of interest between ruler and ruled. Paradoxically, we are invited to drown ourselves, to submerge ourselves in the slavery of the state, so that we can breathe, so that we can be free. The statist claims that our wills are supposed to become one, and yet there still is a necessity that one commands and the other obeys.

If it really were true that their interests were the same, the ruler would not need the special status of being a ruler. Provided people see their interests clearly, they will act accordingly, without needing a leader's command or permission to do so.

This is the flaw implicit in the fact of rule. The necessity of rule indicates a separation of interest, yet its justification claims to join interests together.

Rule implies an identity of interest, but the necessity of the exercising of rule denies that

identity of interest. We do not need to be ordered to act in accordance with our own interests.

This divorce of interest between ruler and ruled undermines the whole structure of the political facade, yet the statist can never admit to this fundamental flaw within the foundational doctrine of the state. Most of what passes for serious political thought in *The Spectator* or the *New Statesman* amounts to an elaborate charade to conceal this flaw. The whole of this trick is based on the 'no true Scotsman' move. Leaders are admitted to be corrupt, acting in their own interests. These 'rotten apples' are always aberrations, never the norm. 'Proper' leaders do not indulge in corruption. They can never concede that the barrel itself is rotten. When we examine the idea of rule itself, we can see the childish naivety of the rotten

apple thesis. It is not worthy of serious consideration, so much so that whenever it is deployed it is fit only to be met with hoots of derisive laughter.

There is no identity of interest between ruler and ruled. Take a current example. If the soldiers who fought for the new world order in the Gulf cannot expect the truth, or even the *fact* of their poisoning by enriched uranium shells to be acknowledged by the state; if soldiers, its own loyal supporters, people who serve the state, cannot expect proper treatment from their masters then nobody is safe. The web of concealment, denial and lies are its normal ways of working. This is the negation at the heart of the statist's doctrine. Even the slimy politicians, spiritless bureaucrats, scabby little Hitlers and their cohorts, all the people who have been bought off by a place in The Machine – all of these are expendable. There is no identity of interest. So how can they go on believing in rulers?

Stephen Booth

## Owen and Anarchism

Robert Owen is usually written up in the history books as a founder of the socialist movement, by which the authors usually mean the Labour Party or social democracy. Perhaps this is the reason he is not included in anarchist anthologies or placed in the anarchist 'pantheon'.

Who was Owen influenced by, changing him from a precocious young industrialist to the most famous radical of his time? None other than William Godwin. It was from Godwin he learned how environment affects the individual and the dangers of authority and statism. His New Lanark experiment follows logically from these readings. Owen was also radicalised by his failure to convince his fellow capitalists that workers should be treated like human beings. From this experience developed his application of Ricardo's labour theory of value to the situation of the working class. Thus arose his 'Labour Exchange' which abolished money and based exchange upon labour-time notes – years in advance of the American anarchist Josiah Warren's famed 'Time Store'. Next came the idea of the co-operative. Owen did not invent the co-op, the first dating from 1760 – a flour mill organised by Chatham dockers – but what he did was turn this idea into a *social movement*.

The emphasis on co-operation gave rise to a following among the workers and Owen became interested in their trade unions and friendly societies. In 1818 John Doherty, an Owenite, attempted to unite all Manchester

trades into one union and a number of years later formed the 'National Association' – the first attempt at one big union. In 1834 Owen formed his own 'one big union', the 'Grand National Consolidated', and began to prepare for the general strike to usher in the co-operative commonwealth. Thus, six years before Proudhon wrote *What is Property?*, we have almost the entire anarchist programme laid out by Owen and his friends – abolition of money, co-operative production, mutual aid, syndicalism and the general strike.

Marxists dismiss Owen as a utopian socialist, but most of his proposals, like those of the much-maligned Proudhon, are very practical – witness the present day co-op movement. True, Owen's claim that socialism could be introduced within five months of the general strike was utopian in the extreme, but then that great anti-utopian Karl Marx thought capitalism was on its last legs in 1848, which is like confusing a week old foetus with a man of 90.

Somehow I just can't see Robert Owen getting along with the likes of Sidney and Beatrice Webb or Ramsay MacDonald. If he must be lumped in with British socialists, surely his spiritual heirs are such heterodox and libertarian thinkers as William Morris, G.D.H. Cole and George Orwell. We shouldn't let the authoritarian left have Owen – it is an insult to his memory. Move over Godwin and Proudhon, make room for Robert Owen.

Larry Gambone

## Open Letter to the Organic Movement

(continued from page 6)

behalf of Friends of the Earth, Jonathan Porritt accepted organics into the green fold.

In stark contrast, what the movement is not about is getting our produce to consumers. The emphasis on charitable functions and their required educative role was chosen instead of vulgar commerce as the movement's backbone. Consequently, we still have not addressed the fundamental question of marketing out produce – if indeed we know what those questions are – and it may now be too late to do so.

Are we predicting the end of the organic movement? Certainly, as we know it. The future for official organics would seem to lie with one of two extremes; ever larger (and grant aided) producers and a shift of standards to suit their convenience, or disappearance through lack of financial incentives necessary to cover organic integrity and the mounting bureaucracy. The typical organic producer of a few years ago seems to be disappearing fast. We once had four organic farms within ten miles; now the nearest is 23 miles away. As they go mutual support and inter-trading of necessary organic inputs goes. We suspect our area is not unusual.

How has an ideal which has wide public support come to this? In the end it is a matter of philosophy, or more correctly, of a lack of it. The factors noted above, of petty mindedness, a lack of independent vision, and unworldliness, are themselves symptoms of inherent contradictions which

would be enough eventually to strangle a movement with less universal aspirations, but without a coherent philosophical base the end was perhaps sown with the seed.

After all, Lady Eve Balfour, the founding luminary of British organic agriculture, was an aberration as far as agriculture was concerned, although socially acceptable under the aegis of English eccentricity. Because her agricultural views were not part of a comprehensive philosophy, the effect was to cause organics to be seen as an aberration. Unfortunately her followers tended to reinforce this judgement, thus magnifying the aberration at the expense of the development of the ideal.

This process was illustrated for me some years ago by the extreme example of one of those older ladies who attend Soil Association AGMs. She had known Lady Eve Balfour, and from concern for some of the radical sentiments expressed during a minor exchange on the role of co-operatives, she explained patiently and at great length throughout lunch her reason for supporting organics. It was based upon the fact that Lady Eve had, according to her, invented organics, and apparently this was of itself an irrefutable justification for the retention of the entire British aristocracy and the hereditary principle in all areas of life, whatever arguments may be advanced to the contrary.

In the philosophical vacuum the practical results have been far from satisfactory. People held positions, rather than fulfilling functions. The typical Britishness of it all emerged in the preponderance of inert exclusive groups, in the concern with inward detail rather than outward matters, and the

rejection of innovation. The result has been structures unsuited to purpose, and an inability to act, as opposed to reacting, in response to events or opportunities.

On the ground the situation at the centre results in inherent contradictions and the proliferations of unmanageable rules. The meticulous form filling does not reveal key areas of animal welfare such as relative stocking rates and mortality, while inspection may reveal that we do not use unsustainable plastic products to cover our compost. Ultimately no amount of regulation will make up for a lack of fundamental belief, indeed management consultants know that the greater the amount of regulation, the greater the scope for evasion.

However, the most important point is this: without a suitable philosophy the organic movement has been unable to extend the logic of its own creed. While being able to see that healthy plants require healthy soil to produce healthy people, it has failed to understand that healthy ideas require a healthy culture to produce a healthy society. It is in this respect that the organic movement had crippled itself; recovery, if it is possible, will require drastic measures.

For our part we will continue to live and farm as we always have, because for us organics is not a method but part of our life philosophy. If there is to be a distinct market for our products it will be with others who share our philosophy, such as those attempting to form direct consumer groups. This may cut out the middle men, those entrepreneurs who 'control the means of supply'. It will also reduce the role of UKROFS and other QUANGOs and the MAFF and EU. It would confirm the direction the Soil Association has set for itself as largely irrelevant. We are sad about this, but if the baby will insist on being one with the bathwater, its fate is inevitable.

Colin Johnson and Arabella Melville

## Racism in East London

Dear Readers,  
Messrs Pilgrim and Ward say sensible things about the BNP's little victory in Millwall (*Freedom*, 2nd October 1993). However, there are two further points:

1. John Pilgrim writes "The victims of our disintegrating society don't care whether [reversing the effects of Toryism] is done by anarchist mutual aid groups, the National Front [John perhaps means the BNP] or Screaming Lord Sutch."

This is insulting to the poor and unemployed. Many of them have standards and common sense. In the 1930s the East End was a harsher, bleaker place than now. Mosley's fascists were quite strong. Pollitt's communists slightly stronger and the Labour Party of Clement Attlee (a mayor and a local MP) was strongest of all. Many people did care about the means used to better their lot.

2. Does not much communal ill-feeling (both in the East End and worldwide) stem from the fact that some communities practise birth control and some don't? An extreme example of where this can lead was the ghastly communal strife in Fiji a few years ago. A century ago the ruling British brought into Fiji a few thousand Hindu workers. Since then these few thousand and their descendants have had larger families than the indigenous Fijians and they have tended to value education more highly and get better jobs. Can you put your hands on your hearts and only blame the indigenous Fijians for the resulting resentment and violence?

Do East End Bengalis tend to have larger families than other in the area? As your shop and office are situated there, please tell us.

One place I know very well is Harrow. People of Asian stock are about 20% in

some parts of the borough, yet a glance into the playground of my old primary school showed that kids of Asian appearance are more than one in five. Some local folk I know, who welcomed the first Asians as they brought some life and vitality into a boring suburb, are now having second thoughts. But being middle class they won't vandalise or riot or vote for the BNP. Instead they'll move five miles up the road to Ruislip.

Large areas of the world are grossly over-populated. Some communities practise birth control, some don't. So long as this goes on, trouble is sure.

Mike Montrose

## Dangers of Unreason

Dear Editors,

Dave Dane (7th August 1993) gives one instance after another of irrational behaviour, listing groups, movements and cults with members and supporters who far outnumber anarchists. This disproportion persists after a century and more of anarchist activity (two centuries if we go back to Godwin) and shows no sign of diminishing. Dave recommends small-scale efforts as the most likely way forward.

This might be a promising suggestion

if it had not already been thoroughly tried. The greater part of anarchist activity has always been small scale and local, and people observing the lack of success it meets find themselves driven to argue that if anarchism is to succeed it needs large-scale activity. How, they ask, can we expect these little local efforts to succeed when they have to struggle against all the power of state and capitalist propaganda?

The horrible truth is that (short of standing on their heads and passing out pamphlets with their feet) anarchists have tried every means open to them of making anarchism better known and attracting support for it. The outcome has been, as Dave shows, a continuing enormous majority who are not even interested in the sort of thinking that might eventually bring them to anarchism.

Anarchism, as readers of *Freedom* use the word, differs radically from disorder, self-will and impulsiveness. It requires that order and discipline be not rejected but internalised, so that each person controls themselves, and when we accept this the small amount of support for anarchism becomes understandable, for few are willing to make the effort. Most prefer to live under government, allowing the authorities to regulate their lives and accepting the results.

Should anarchists object to this? If

anti-fascists sued the British government for wrongful imprisonment. Whatever the outcome, it would help to expose the Labour Party. It would show that even the Attlee administration, regarded by many people as Labour at its best, thought nothing was wrong with backing a ruthless dictator while imprisoning anti-fascists.

Raymond Challinor

132 Claremont Road, Whitley Bay, Tyne-and-Wear, NE26 3TX

people want the freedom to behave in non-anarchist ways, how can supporters of freedom disapprove? And let me answer in advance all who will write and say that people are not 'free' to behave in non-anarchist ways, that they are tricked or compelled into doing so. Those who argue like this defeat themselves, for if they are right then all their efforts to increase support for anarchism are futile; those they seek to convince will be tricked or compelled into opposing them.

George Walford

## Anarchy in the UK

Colleagues,

I am sure we all trust that Ian Bone's dream of greatness comes to fruition ('Ten Days that Shook the World', *Freedom*, 2nd October). However, if he wishes to broaden the debate with overseas visitors and those not wholly committed at home, there is a need to quickly drop the 'behind the bicycle shed' language he gratuitously throws in. Command of English is not easy for the great mass of people at home, to say nothing of the problems faced by overseas visitors, and the inclusion of sexist/racist epithets does nothing to lighten the burden of understanding that which is wrote and spoke! In addition he will have to satisfy the custodians of possible venues that their little treasure-houses are in safe hands, and not those who have scant regard for, or awareness of, the reality of the world we all share.

If Ian puts the same energy into this project that a namesake put into Swansea Second Post some years ago, then success is assured. Good wishes to him,  
Garry Bradford

## Spain under Franco

Dear Comrades,

I wonder whether any of your readers can help me with my research.

Since the Spanish archives have been opened it has become clear that successive British governments, first, helped Franco to win the civil war; second, helped Franco to stabilise his dictatorship and reconstruct the economy; and, third, sought to sabotage attempts to overthrow his regime. It is with the last of these that I thought I might gain assistance from *Freedom* readers.

I have come across a two-page leaflet issued by the Freedom Defence Committee. It asks "Do you support Franco? If not, demand the release of Spanish Republicans imprisoned in England!" It goes on to state a protest meeting will be held at the Holborn Hall on 26th March 1946. Proceedings will be

chaired by Fenner Brockway. The first speaker was George Orwell.

According to the *Socialist Leader* of 18th September 1948, there were still 800 Spanish anti-fascists in British prisons and lunatic asylums. Among those protesting against the treatment of the Spaniards were Benjamin Britten, E.M. Forster, Augustus John, Herbert Read and Osbert Sitwell.

I would welcome more information. Who were the Spanish anti-fascists? Were they anarchists and revolutionary socialists, whose desire to return to Spain was much less than Franco's desire to provide not only the hospitality of a prison cell but perhaps the added luxury of torture and a firing squad? And what ultimately happened to these unfortunate men?

At present British soldiers who were imprisoned by the Japanese during the Second World War are seeking legal redress. They are wanting to sue Nissan, Toyota and other companies where they were used as forced labour. It would be good if, in a similar fashion, Spanish

## Replies to the Pacifists

Dear *Freedom*,

I dislike the state so much that I want to be completely free of it now, today, this minute. The problem is that though I take my freedom for myself, in many ways I am still locked into this government, this system. It still imposes itself over me. I grab whatever chances of freedom I can, and hope for more. I wish I could live autonomously on my own land as Derrick Pike (7th August) demands.

It seems to me that we break free from it piecemeal, but also that any inroad into that slavery people make is worth defending, and if possible to be emulated. Though they are not perfect, I think that the travellers represent one such rebellion, and I want to learn from their successes and mistakes. The travellers are not perfect, but they are real. Derrick disagrees with me here, and thinks of them as parasites.

From observation of the state I have noticed that it attacks rebellion. Some small aspects of revolt go unnoticed, but sooner or later the clubs come out. If we aren't attacked, the question of violence does not arise - it is unresolved, held in abeyance. My moral principle accommodates this question because it is conditional - "When attacks by a madman with an axe..."

The poll tax protesters in my own town were peaceful, but they still got baseball batted. The anti-traveller legislation is another aspect of this. Revolt is illegal.

In my reply to Laurens Otter (19th June) I made the point that I was not writing about attaining anarchism, or imposing our view on others. My question is about the anarchist, or the person in revolt against the state in the present.

I don't think I can make much of a reply to Francis Ellingham (7th August), except to deny this equation of reaction with violence. To some extent all the ideas of anarchism are reactive - if the state did not exist we would not have to

deny it by asserting our freedom. In other articles and in other places I have often asserted the need to develop our own positive agenda. My question is reactive in the sense that if the state were not attacking us, we would not be discussing our response to this. I am sorry Francis is so dismissive of ethics as an intellectual game leading nowhere, because for me ethical questions are important. Francis's characterisation of my moral principle 'shoot the madman' as reactive would also seem to be based on an ethical judgement.

Stephen Booth

Dear Editors,

Stephen Booth's 'Letter to a Pacifist' (*Freedom*, 19th May) seemed to me a straightforward statement of the horrible necessity, in some circumstances, to resort to violence in political struggles. What I am more concerned with here is the strange views elicited from Francis Ellingham (*Freedom*, 19th June and 7th August).

According to him, the root of violence is 'reaction'. Well, if you are horrified and angered by a world in which such situations as the Bosnian war occur, how can you, to begin with, do anything but react to the initial actions of nationalistic warmongers? The same point goes for such crimes as Stephen Booth describes, e.g. the violence of poll tax bailiffs or industrial polluters.

But oh no, Ellingham informs us that the root of violence "lies in the depths of oneself", not power-seeking demagogues or ruling classes organising the world in such a way that most of us actually have very little power, as individuals, against their array of physical and mental weapons.

Of course anarchists movements, and anarchist (reactions against such a world, which has to be reorganised if we are ever to be free to act in a society of equals

rather than responding to injustice), face the danger of falling into authoritarianism and unjustifiable aggression, born out of self-righteousness. But it is surely the acute anarchist awareness of the corruption that stems from power over others that is the best safeguard possible against these tendencies. (Whereas a Marxist organisation would regard the so-called 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a necessary stage before freedom could be achieved.)

This last point involves anarchist principles or morality, which brings up other assertions of Ellingham's. He states that "moral imperatives ... are a form of violence" and "idealists are hypocrites". Surely it is because of the gross mis-match between our ideals of a world of mutual aid, freedom and peace and the current reality of exploitation, oppression and war that we seek to change. If Ellingham feels no such mis-match, in other words, if he accepts the world as it is, then he has no grounds for complaint about "our demonic Disneyland". But since he too is clearly disturbed by the world as it is, he must be measuring it by a standard that transcends the present situation; that is, an ideal. If that's hypocrisy, then I plead guilty.

As for morality, I think it can only be violence if we try to compel another to a course of action. Simply to make known and encourage alternative choices of action to those commonly accepted (e.g. realising black and white workers' unity instead of following the racist and nationalist ideologies that are spread to divide us) is not an act of violence: indeed, it's an attempt to surmount ideas that promote and perpetuate violence.

What I find baffling and annoying above all about Ellingham's views (and those of pacifists) is the implication that those of us who want to build a better world but cannot see the present rulers just peacefully accepting this are somehow more to be criticised than the capitalists, politicians and military. I

refer once more to the ideals and morality of anarchism: I know that I as an individual can be violent, treat others unequally, etc. It's knowing how far short I thus fall of being an anarchist which yet, by reference to those ideals, inspires me to keep striving to transcend myself. But those ideals relate equally to the broader struggle in which I need to join with others for the transcendence of this violent world and the creation of a free and peaceful one.

Adrian Janes

### Open Letter to Stephen Booth

Dear Comrade,

Anyone with any experience of swimming (whether or not this has ever involved saving a drowning person) knows that it is standard practise in life-saving to knock-out the struggling person as the only way of saving him/her. Whatever one's reservations about euthanasia, and the awesome responsibilities it would involve, there can be no doubt that the intention of its advocates is a merciful one.

In both cases it is not the ethics of the act that should be judged, but the ethics of the intention and the efficacy of the act in achieving that intention. To say one is not concerned with the ethics of a particular act isn't to say one has no ethical code, indeed it pre-supposes that the act is seen in the context of an over-riding ethical system. Anarchism is for me an ethical principle, non-violence as merely the *only* effective way of achieving anarchism is a matter of pragmatism.

You have a mental block about my comparison of your original argument with those of Trotskyists. So let me put it a different way. All sorts of reformists will say to you: 'The evil of post-Thatcherite Toryism, of laissez-faire capitalism, of environmental pollution, is plain and obvious for all to see. We in the Green/Labour/Liberal Democrat Party (or Charter 88) are doing something

concrete about that evil. You, because of your anarchist inhibitions, are outside the main current of that struggle. Put aside your prejudices and come and join us.'

The more subtle such will add something to the effect of: 'When we've got rid of X, then there will be time for you to go back to your anarchist dreams.' (I suggest to you that the Trotskyist analogy I gave you was just a variant of the reformist position, it seldom appears in the sophisticated variant, but even that is not entirely unknown.)

Now your call to pacifist anarchists (and by implication to those non-pacifists who share their belief that anarchist revolution can only be achieved by non-violent means) was that these should abandon their pacifism/non-violence for the sake of combating immediate evils. Like the reformists (and like the Trots) this amounts to us to abandon (or perhaps it would take the subtle form and amount only to 'postpone and distort') our efforts to achieve anarchism by the only methods we believe to be effective to gain some supposedly desirable short-term ends.

You now say that you are not arguing that this violence we are expected to embrace will bring anarchism; so we are expected to abandon actions we have adopted on grounds whether of principle or logic, not to achieve anarchism but just for short-term temporary gains. It does not obviously occur to you that there is no cure for the evils of the present world short of anarchism; and that the evil you would combat is only a symptom, and that the violence you would have us use would help to perpetuate the evils.

You also say you do not want to rival the state's violence; if you don't you are confining yourself to a degree of violence that you admit would be ineffective. So you expect others to abandon what they believe is the only effective way of working for anarchism to embrace a means that you yourself agree would be ineffective. Why?

Laurens

# HISTORY WORKSHOP 27

This year's History Workshop is to be held at **Leeds Metropolitan University** (Beckett Park site, Headingley) on **19th to 21st November**. The general theme is 'Nationalism and Regionalism' and this will be addressed by all the contributors in the now obligatory anarchism strand:

- Carl Levy - 'Anarchism and Nationalism in Europe, 1870-1939'
- Roy Pateman - 'Wagner, Anarchism and National Socialism'
- Peter Marshall - 'The Scourge of Africa'
- Sharif Gemie - 'Fanon, Algerian Nationalism and the Politics of the State'
- Paul Faux - 'Nationalism: Tolstoy's Diagnosis and Antidote'
- Alistair Dickson - 'Regionalism: Safe Haven for Political Authenticity?'

### Registration fees:

- waged (with institutional support) £25;
- waged £10;
- unwaged/low-waged/student £4.

**All registrations and enquiries to:**  
**History Workshop 27**  
**Department of Adult Continuing Education**  
**University of Leeds**  
**Leeds LS2 9JT**

## FREEDOM fortnightly

ISSN 0016 0504

Published by Freedom Press  
 84b Whitechapel High Street  
 London E1 7QX  
 Printed by Aldgate Press, London E1

## London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8.00pm at the Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square (via Cosmo Street off Southamptr Row), London WC1N 3AQ

### AUTUMN TERM

- 15th October** - Discussion on Anarchism in the Community
- 22nd October** - Anarchist Individualism (speaker: Donald Rooum)
- 29th October** - Discussion on Anarchism and Responsibility
- 5th November** - Anarcho-Syndicalism (speaker: Pete Turner)
- 12th November** - General discussion on Anarchist Economics
- 19th November** - Pacifism and/or Violence Today (speaker: Tony Smythe)
- 26th November** - Discussion on Progressive Social Change
- 3rd December** - Anarchism and Feminism (speaker: Lisa Bendall)
- 10th December** - Discussion on Equal Opportunity
- 17th December** - Social Anarchism: Music, Poetry, Stories, Humour

## ART & REVOLUTION

A talk about the artists who from Courbert have linked their work to revolutionary anarchism, the way in which anarchist ideas have influenced the artistic avant garde, and an examination of revolutionary artists who have incorporated anarchist theories in their art. The martyrs, activists and thinkers of anarchism as portrayed by artists.

\* \* \*

— TALK WITH SLIDES —  
**Thursday 21st October at 8pm**

at

**Marchmont Community Centre**  
 Marchmont Street, London WC1  
 (Russell Square / Euston tubes)

\* \* \*

presented by the Anarchist Communist Federation (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

## London Greenpeace Fayre '93

**Saturday 30th October**  
 11am to 7pm fayre  
 8pm to 11pm gig

at

### Conway Hall

**Red Lion Square, London WC1**  
 (nearest tube: Holborn)

For the sixth great year London Greenpeace presents a day for a world without industrial exploitation or pollution, without money, borders, governments or armies. Without oppression of people or animals, without the destruction of nature. For freedom and sharing.

Stalls ♦ Videos ♦ Music ♦ Workshop ♦ Vegan Food ♦ Crêche ♦ Discussions  
**Free admission**

♦ ♦ ♦

McDonalds are suing two London Greenpeace supporters over a factsheet. The McLibel two are fighting back, details from the address below, and the trial should go to court this year, so don't forget . . .

### World Anti-McDonalds' Day Saturday 16th October

Get details of McLibel and the national demonstration on World Anti-McDonalds Day at our postal address:  
**5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1**

## Red Rambles in Derbyshire

A programme of free guided walks in the White Peak for Greens, Socialists, Libertarians and Anarchists.

**Sunday 17th October:** Disabled Access Walk. Markeaton Park, Derby. Meet at 1pm at the Ponds/Workshop area (near café) for two mile circuit of the park.

Telephone for further details  
**0773-827513**

## The Raven 22 on CRIME

— OUT NOW —  
**£3 (post-free anywhere)**

**Freedom Press Bookshop**  
**84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX**

Open  
**Monday to Friday 10am-6pm**  
**Saturday 10.30am-5pm**

## FREEDOM AND THE RAVEN SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	abroad surface	outside Europe airmail	Europe airmail
<b>Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues</b>				
Claimants	10.00	-	-	-
Regular	14.00	18.00	27.00	23.00
Institutions	22.00	25.00	33.00	33.00

### The Raven (4 issues)

Claimants	10.00	-	-	-
Regular	11.00	12.00	16.00	14.00
Institutions	16.00	20.00	25.00	25.00

### Joint sub (24 x Freedom & 4 x The Raven)

Claimants	18.00	-	-	-
Regular	23.00	28.00	40.00	37.00

### Bundle subs for Freedom (12 issues)

	inland	abroad surface	abroad airmail
2 copies x 12	12.00	13.00	20.00
5 copies x 12	25.00	27.00	42.00
10 copies x 12	48.00	54.00	82.00

Other bundle sizes on application

Giro account number 58 294 6905  
 All prices in £ sterling

## SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To Freedom Press in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

- I am a subscriber, please renew my sub to *Freedom* for ..... issues
- Please renew my joint subscription to *Freedom* and *The Raven*
- Make my sub to *Freedom* into a joint sub starting with number 22 of *The Raven*
- I am not yet a subscriber, please enter my sub to *Freedom* for ..... issues and *The Raven* for ..... issues starting with number 22
- I would like the following back numbers of *The Raven* at £3 per copy post free ..... (numbers 1 to 21 are available)
- I enclose a donation to Freedom Fortnightly Fighting / Freedom Press Overheads / Raven Deficit Fund (delete as applicable)

I enclose £..... payment

Name.....

Address.....

..... Postcode.....