

# anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

Vol. 52 No. 5

9 MARCH 1991

FIFTY PENCE

*"When enough people respond to the invitation to die, not with a salute but a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war empties the factories and fills the streets, we may be able to talk about freedom."*  
Alex Comfort

## The American led coalition can certainly wage war **Can They Wage Peace?**

On the eve of the launching of the ground war, Bush called on all Americans to join him on their knees to pray for victory. Saddam Hussein did likewise and Queen Elizabeth sent forth a signal to our Desert Rats expressing the whole nation's appreciation for what they were about to do for freedom and democracy. Both sides apparently worship the same God. They only differ about Jesus Christ. The Bush worshippers say that he and Jesus Christ are the sons of God and the others that Jesus Christ and Saddam Hussein are only prophets.

Anyway, God opted for Bush and the latest in war technology, not to mention quantity, for before the ground war was launched the Americans and their satellites had flown more than 94,000 sorties and dropped 55 million kg of explosives on Iraq and Kuwait. For those of our

readers who recollect the bombings on London, the ferocity of the American air strike can be appreciated when one also learns that more bombs have been released in a few weeks on these targets than during the whole six years war of 1939-45 on both sides. And as we write these lines the American government's slogan is 'attack, attack, attack!' as Iraq's miserable conscripts desperately seek refuge in Iraq territory. But the Americans led by Rambo General Black Head (encouraged by our gutter press and the all-party chorus at Westminster) are hell-bent on pursuing and killing their victims all the way to Baghdad.\*

\* As we go to press the American President has announced a temporary ceasefire in the Gulf following the 'allied' occupation of Kuwait and the virtual encirclement of the bulk of the Iraqi army.

Prisoners have been taken in thousands, tens of thousands. What are they going to do with them? As we pointed out in *Freedom* the Americans were notorious for their vengeful ill-treatment of German prisoners of war in 1945. What will be their treatment in the desert dealing with Arabs whom they look upon as third class citizens? We were told that the Iraqis would not allow the International Red Cross to see half a dozen American prisoners — which was quite wrong of them. But how soon will we be having reports from the Red Cross on the Americans' treatment of their tens of thousands of prisoners being held in the desert with no facilities whatsoever?

For domestic political reasons if the Americans and the British can crush Iraq and Saddam Hussein with minor casualties on the 'allies' side, it would not surprise us if the war were pursued into the heart of Iraq. It is true that already the 'strategists' on the coalition's side are emphasising that Iraq's military potential must not be completely destroyed, otherwise it might give Iraq's neighbours 'ideas'. And the whole point is that America can't have any country in the Middle East — or anywhere else, come to that, apart from Israel perhaps — with big ideas for expansion.

After all, ten years ago the 'expansionist' was Iran. Then America, Britain — and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia — sided with Iraq! A completely destroyed — that is disarmed — Iraq would certainly invite one or more of its five neighbours to extend their frontiers for all kinds of 'historic' and other crazy reasons. After all, how much more crazy can you get than to maintain, as do the fundamentalist Zionist Israelis, that this was their homeland 2000 years ago? By the same argument the Turks have more rights to the whole of the Middle East than either the French, the British or the Americans.

It is quite obvious that the 'peace' in  
*(continued on page 2)*

## **When does Recession become Depression?**

Economists and opposition politicians have recently been asking themselves when does a recession become a depression, and is Great Britain heading for the latter in 1991. All predictions are that 1991 will lead to economic conditions more severe and widespread than those of the early 1980s. The south east was cushioned in the '80s by the speculative housing and building boom which has now definitely gone flat.

In south Wales, one of the areas worst hit by the early '80s recession, the partial recovery has reversed in the past year. Heavy industry, in the form of coal, steel and manufacturing, had not recovered from the 1980s (the mining workforce has declined from around 10,000 to 4,000) but now the new, high tech industries are going to the wall.

In the past week Nantgarw (about six miles from Cardiff towards the

Rhondda) has suffered two large scale knocks to its workforce. British Airways announced seventy job losses (as part of its 6,500 shedding) at its Nantgarw plant, while on the same day a Treforest electrical company announced ninety job losses. On top of losing its pit just after the miners' strike, the Nantgarw area has suffered heavily.

Nantgarw has been cushioned somewhat by its proximity to Cardiff and good communications to the capital. Not so Maerdy, at the top of the Rhondda, which lost its pit two months ago (the last in the Rhondda) or Bedlinog, at the top of a small valley between Maerthyr Vale and the Rhymney Valley, which is to lose its pit employing over 400. It's rumoured that the Penallta colliery further down the Rhymney Valley is next on the hit list — some ex-Nantgarw

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# Can they wage peace?

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the Middle East will be worse than the war. Right from the beginning *Freedom* has maintained that the Arabs should be left to sort out their political, economic and social problems and differences among themselves — just as, incidentally, the Irish should be left to sort out their problems without British military and economic interference. In suggesting this we don't expect that suddenly sweet reason will prevail. There will be clashes, violence and losers.

The capitalist nations of the Western world were forever fighting each other in wars that cost the lives of tens of millions of young conscripts, right up to 1946. They appear to have found a *modus vivendi*. Perhaps the multinationals have solved all their problems!

We thought that the oil multinationals would prevent this costly Middle East military adventure. In the long run we expect they will dictate the 'peace'. As things are at present, the result of 'liberating' Kuwait may well mean that the billionaire ruling clique can return to sit on their thrones, but the other fact is that nearly half of the 1,000 Kuwaiti oil wells are at present on fire and belching their toxic smoke over a large part of the Gulf. We forecast such an eventuality in *Freedom* (22nd September 1990) when we wrote (with the hindsight of Britain's disastrous Suez campaign in 1956):

"The Americans set out to assassinate Saddam Hussein and to ensure that the oil remained in

Western control. They must watch out that they don't consolidate Saddam Hussein and close down the oil."

Bush declared some time ago that he would not instruct the CIA or the Israeli Mossad to organise the assassination of Saddam Hussein. How could he, if he valued his own life, openly declare that the American administration, of which he was head man, was going to hire a killer to get rid of the Iraqi dictator? Apart from concern for his own skin, how would one be able to accuse the Arabs (or in the British context, the Irish) of being terrorists if governments are openly engaged in the same activity? But of course they are. To say, as Bush does, that the removal of Saddam is a matter for the Iraqis and not the Americans is sheer hypocrisy. The American administration (via the CIA) not only imposes dictators on small nations (obviously to protect the 'democratic rights' of the citizens) they also remove them when they have served their purpose or have become too big for their boots, so far as their imperial masters are concerned.

The most recent example is that of Noriega in Panama. When he no longer served Yankee interests the Americans simply invaded the country and seized Noriega, killing a lot more citizens than have the Russians during their trials and tribulations with their rebellious Republics. And there are still 10,000 American troops in the dozens of US

bases in Panama. And what's more, Noriega has been replaced by an American choice. The *New Statesman & Society* (22nd February) published an informative article on the impact of the new administration of "millionaire lawyer and now President Guillermo Endara" on the lives of the Panamanians. After one year in control he has a 25% popularity rating, and

"the nepotism, cronyism and corruptions that characterise the Noriega period are flourishing with new vigour in the no-holds-barred *laissez faire* business and political atmosphere ushered in by the new conservative government. The small white commercial elite, in a country that is 90% black and mestizo, now

directly holds the reins of power and business is back to usual just as it was in the days before 1968."

The massive advances by the American-led ground forces would indicate that the battering of Baghdad, Basra and Kuwait from the air must have been even more devastating than was reported by the Americans.

The ceasefire will now allow both sides to count the dead in this fratricidal struggle. That too will reveal, we think, that the so-called precision bombing of military targets was mere propaganda. Both sides sought by terror to gain victory: the Iraqis in Kuwait and the Americans over Baghdad and Basra.

## Another San Francisco anti-war demonstration

Once again, on Saturday 25th January, over 100,000 individuals in San Francisco took to the streets to voice their opposition to the Middle East war. Once again, the throng consisted of individuals from all walks of life and diverse political opinions. The unifying factor was their demand for an immediate cessation of the fighting. Religious groups taking the moral high ground, called for peace and an end to the killing. Marxist groups, representing old Stalinists, Trotskyists and Maoists bearing jazzy new names, recycled tired old slogans calling for the conversion of the war to a revolutionary war on capitalism.

(Included, among others, was the Revolutionary Workers Party calling for military support for Saddam Hussein.) Anarchists carried signs urging people to 'Dump the State' and urged resistance to the war by the implementation of a general strike. Pacifist groups called for Gandhian non-violence to stop the war. Gay activist groups pointed to the government's callous disregard of the AIDS plague and called for the conversion of the money being used to kill people to the saving of lives. A group representing Greenpeace highlighted the environmental danger to all mankind created by war. A contingent of World Federalists called for a strengthened UN and a return to political negotiations to end the crisis. One of the largest contingents was the Vietnam War Veterans calling for immediate and unequivocal cessation of the conflict. Perhaps the most numerous of the demonstrators, bearing home-made signs and banners, were politically unaligned young families with children, young high school and college-age students who feel most threatened by the war, and large numbers of blacks, Asians, Arab and Hispanic people calling attention to the racist nature of the war. It was stirring and energising to participate in so large and active a demonstration this early in the conflict.

David Kovan



## War Against War

The Gulf War took a long time to begin but a short time to finish. The crisis began when Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2nd August 1990, gradually intensified as the United States and its Allies got a series of resolutions through the United National Security Council and built up their forces in the Middle East, and culminated when Iraq ignored the withdrawal deadline on 15th January 1991. The war began when the American Alliance began the air offensive on 17th January, rapidly intensified as Iraq offered and the Alliance rejected various terms, and culminated when the Alliance began the land offensive on 24th February, ending with total victory within a week.

The war against the war also took a long time to begin, each stage echoing the various stages in the war itself and the divisions in the

anti-war alliance resembling those in the war alliance, but it has finished in confusion rather than success. The war has indeed ended, in spite of rather than because of the campaign to end it. The troubles of the movement, which were described in the last two issues of *Freedom*, have continued, but have been suppressed as the tasks of the movement became more desperate in every sense, and have now become irrelevant.

The question of the policy of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, the main umbrella organisation, was more or less solved. It had been faced with a demand by CND, its largest member, to adopt a complex fifteen-point statement; but at its meeting on 18th February this was replaced by a much simpler four-point statement — immediate ceasefire, mutual withdrawal, international conference, no victory — which was generally acceptable. The point was not to subordinate the anti-war movement to CND or any other organisation, but rather to decide that the movement was indeed against the war and not about some other issue or issues. However, the equally difficult question of the structure of the CSWG was postponed, so the central direction of the anti-war campaign was left in disarray. Meanwhile all sorts of organisations to campaign against the war sprang up in all sorts of groups and professions, but before they could be brought together the war came to an end.

However, it would be wrong to ignore the serious lesson which the Gulf War has or should have taught us. This is that the struggle against war cannot be entrusted to the traditional peace movement or to the traditional revolutionary left, but that there should be a clear and distinct libertarian presence on the political scene — in conversations, in the media, in meetings, on the streets, at demonstrations — in order to ensure that the campaign against any particular war or against war in general doesn't fall into the hands of tired bureaucrats or busy infiltrators but are sustained by sincere people who are properly aware of the true nature of the issues. This is now our task.

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## What about the Royal Family financing famine relief in Africa?

The gutter press is having a field-day attacking the Belgians, the Germans and other reluctant 'allies' who neither supply cannon fodder for the Gulf adventure nor seem generous in contributing to Britain's 'war effort' which is going to cost more than was expected in the first heady days when '2,000 sorties a day will soon drive the Iraqis away'. So from an estimated £1 million it's now more than £2 million a day, and all the indications once the land war is launched not only will there be victims but costs will also escalate.

Naturally the government is already exploiting the 'war' to explain away cuts in all kinds of services. One in particular, since it is so small and so mean. The *Guardian's* Westminster correspondent reports:

"The treasury has postponed the payment of £11 million of emergency food aid to relieve the famine affecting 27 million people in Africa because of the rising costs of the Gulf war and unemployment on the government's contingency fund."

This is surely where our Royal family must step into the breach and confound those tabloid journalists who are attacking them for not being more patriotic in the present crisis.

In a recent *Harpers & Queen* magazine survey of the top twenty richest women, our gracious Queen is by far the richest woman in the world in her own right. Let us be clear about this: Crown assets were left out of the calculations because they are not the monarch's to sell. So according to the survey the bulk of her fortune is made up of 'blue chip stocks'. What a vulgar business with which to associate our Queen. What will the children think if they are told

that "astute investment advice" and the income from "private houses and private possessions" not only maintains the regal image but must also occupy a great deal of our Queen's spare time — the corgis too, but the race horses (and the bookmakers) not to mention the rising prices for "top-of-the line jewellery" account for another profitable sideline. Last but not least, and for some curious reason for which no explanation is given, Her Majesty's income is exempt from taxes, which the magazine considers to be "most helpful" in boosting the Royal income.

Let's get down to the nitty gritty. Elizabeth R I is worth £6,600 million in her own right. All the palaces and castles and the repairs and the hangers-on and the gardens and the Royal Yacht and the rest, Royal trains, Prince Philip, etc., are an additional charge to the taxpayers. Her "astute" business advisers *et al* ensure that she has an investment income of £1.8 million a day. And it's net since she pays no taxes, being the Queen. She can hob-nob with bookmakers, but perish the thought that she should be expected to deal with Her Majesty's Inspector of Taxes!

*Freedom* is offering the Queen an opportunity to demonstrate to the world at large that underneath the privilege beats a heart of gold, and that the Queen puts her government to shame by offering a couple of weeks income to those 27 million starving Africans. If only £22 million is required we could even give her the change so that when Princess Di next goes to comfort the homeless she could distribute the surplus £3 million.

## THE FACTORY AND BEYOND: On their best behaviour

### Breaking wind

Blowing the smell of peppermint into workers' faces makes them work better, says William Dember, Professor of Psychology at the University of Ohio. Other studies show that air fresheners improve people's moods, and in negotiations people were more likely to make concessions and reach friendly deals when nice fragrances filled the air. But, says Raja Parasuraman of the Catholic University of America, the person must perceive the smell as pleasant.

### Disciplining workers

Not everyone is up to such new fangled methods of control. The Plysu company in Littleborough, Lancashire, drills its workers on lines developed in the dark ages.

Last August, this company threatened its workers with the sack if they refused to take saliva tests, after a lump of chewing gum was found in one of the company's products. At the time the National Council for Civil Liberties (Liberty) complained. Later workers were threatened by the company with disciplinary action if they failed to attend unpaid training sessions in their own time.

Now Bert Pealing, the district officer of the Transport & General Workers' Union (T&GWU), claims two people have been fined by the firm for failing to work during their holidays at Christmas and the New Year. He says: "Plysu is running its Littleborough factory along prison camp lines" and has been imposing "factory fines" on its employees.

Fines were common in Lancashire's nineteenth century cotton mills; in keeping with this spirit Plysu is refusing to recognise the T&GWU, which represents a third of the workforce.

### Crime squad overtime kings

The West Midlands Serious Crime Squad were known as the 'overtime kings' of the police service. Concern has been expressed by

Clive Roche, head of the West Midlands Police Complaints and Discipline Department, about the "status and privileged position they enjoyed", despite the squad's "disregard of rules and procedures". Mr Roche, who claimed he had been warned to be "careful" in his investigations into the Serious Crime Squad, has said: "many of the original records into the working of overtime by the squad, in particular officers' individual overtime records, were never found despite a specific request for them".

What's that unlimited overtime, crime must be paying for some.

### Commercial crime

With the recession now officially in full fling business fraud is on the up and up. Current cases under investigation involve £2 billion (£2,000,000,000). Yet this can only be the tip of the iceberg. Mrs Barbara Mills of the Serious Fraud Office told a meeting on commercial law in Dublin: "No one knows the extent of commercial fraud. We cannot measure it because it depends upon how many frauds are reported".

### Conspiracy to defraud

Last month the Blue Arrow trial began in which the defendants are accused of Conspiracy to Defraud at Common Law. It represents the biggest business fraud trial since the Guinness swindle came to court last year. The cream of corporate society are in the dock — merchant bankers, corporate financiers, top executives one and all. And they will all plead that they were gormless to the fact of any conspiracy, and childishly unaware they were doing anything wrong.

The corporate defendants include County Nat West, Nat West Investment Bank, UBS Phillips and Drew Securities. The prosecution claims: "They took secret decisions which created a false price for the shares [in Blue Arrow] which meant other persons who were

trading in those shares did so ... in ignorance of the true position".

Interestingly the matter may never have been discovered but for the stock market crash on 19th October 1987.

### Business as usual

Meanwhile Gerald Ronson, convicted for his dishonest involvement in the Guinness affair, was last week reported to be relaxing on his £10 million yacht, somewhere in the Mediterranean, after his release from prison. He has served under half of his one year sentence in the Guinness share fraud.

Mr Ronson, who usually spends the winter cruising in the Mediterranean, has had it cut short this year. He will soon be back at Heron House, London, to carry on his job as boss of Britain's second largest privately owned business empire.

### Poll tax sentences cut

Fred Trull, 66, of Lerryn, Cornwall, also had his six month sentence halved. Mr Trull was

convicted for his 'beat the poll tax' shares scheme in which he urged people to avoid the tax by buying a £1 share in one of his two tin mining companies, to gain a tax exemption granted to the Cornish Stannery miners' parliament.

Mack the Knife

*When it comes to war the weaponry gets more deadly but the 'patriotic' slogans and the political hypocrisy remain the same: Freedom readers who did not experience the 1939 war and all its 'war aims' and 'high ideals' could do worse than consult two important Freedom Press titles in our Centenary Series:*

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## A Gentleman's War

Talk these days is of 'war crimes' trials. Pictures of battered and bruised airmen incensed the West. Little mention was made that bruising may well have been caused by ejecting from their aircraft. Let's face it, the Iraqi secret police have had enough practice at beating people to conceal their work a little better than that! Nevertheless some coercion seems likely to have produced their anti-Western statements. We are told Saddam will be brought to account under the Geneva Convention because he's not playing by the rules!

The Western leaders treat war like a game of cricket. You play by the rules and it's just good, clean sport. It is, of course, just part of the machinery to convince the public that they are the good guys. It is a precise art, conjuring up images of those Napoleonic war films where soldiers form up into lines and squares, advance on each other, kill each other and then go home. The truth, however, is the wounded on the field were usually bayoneted and often tortured. The routed army would be hunted down and slaughtered and the locals would be robbed, raped, burned out and killed.

America's 'just' war in Vietnam tells a similar tale. Villages burned, people raped and killed, their crops napalmed or sprayed with chemicals, prisoners tortured, shot and pushed out of helicopters. My Lai stands as the ultimate testament to US war ethics. A village virtually wiped out, an attempted cover up and a shrug of 'so what?'

Today the US government talks of precision bombing, targeting military installations and minimising civilian casualties. As the bombs rain down destroying Iraqi towns and cities, killing people — be they civilian or soldier — obliterating their resources and destroying the environment, we are told that the Western forces are actually doing them a favour! 'There is a high price to be paid for freedom', and boy are they going to get the whole bill!

The concept of 'doing them a favour' is much the same as the colonial tradition of the British Empire. While the ladies took afternoon tea in the garden and the gentlemen strutted around India, their minds were eased to know that robbing and murdering the natives was all really in the interest

of educating them. Likewise the Iraqis should be grateful to know that they are being bombed so that the West can look after their oil for them.

And this loyal and fanatical population will of course dig in and fight? Like hell it will! The flow of refugees will inevitably grow to thousands, maybe millions, as their lives are destroyed and they attempt to flee the war zone. For those left in the war zone the apprehension and fear can only be guessed at by us, except maybe those who lived through the blitz. For these people Bush's claims of minimising casualties is meaningless. Both sides of course are keen to sustain civilian casualties as it makes 'bloody' good propaganda on television. It's not much fun being put into bat when you don't even want to play!

And what of the prisoners of war? Will they be protected by the Geneva Convention? It seems unlikely. Placing prisoners at strategic sites has always been common practice, as has using them for cover, or for clearing minefields. Like all international law, the Geneva Convention looks good on paper, makes all the signatories feel good and is totally ignored!

Today the Western paranoia is of terrorism — the ultimate bad sportsmen! People are rightly scared when the violence exported abroad by their rulers is brought back home. But what really is the difference? Whether the means of delivery is in a £20 suitcase or a £20 million aircraft, it is innocent people who invariably suffer by it. There was a huge outcry following the Lockerbie bomb — and rightly so, but on more than one occasion during the 1980s an airliner was shot down and destroyed by a nation's armed forces, including America who in 1988 shot down an Iranian airbus over the Gulf killing all 290 people aboard. These passed by with little more than an 'it was an accident'. What is the difference? The terrorist is no more than a soldier without a uniform and far less military hardware.

People must realise that war is not about ethics. It is brutal, the innocent always suffer, the powerful rarely do. You cannot improve it, amend it or play it to a set of rules. It must be stopped, as must those who profit by it, and that can only be done by us.

Andrew McGingle

## Bush = Saddam

The sight of the two Front Benches of the British Parliament making love to each other over the Gulf war is a sickening sight by any standards. Normally the two parties cannot find a good word to say about each other. But at last they have found common ground — fighting a war. Do we need any further proof that Parliament is not about making the good life in the good society but maintaining power and control through violence?

And yet people support them against their own best interests. The desire to 'liberate' Kuwait seems the most bizarre reason. Kuwait is a state produced by quite arbitrarily drawing lines in the sand. This 'country' is ruled by a feudal monarchy. Hardly a cause to die for.

Then there is the racism evidenced by the attacks on mosques in this country. The racism is being kept largely out of the news but talking to people it seems a fairly strong reason for them giving support to the war. Although it cannot be expressed directly, indirectly it is made respectable by calling

President Saddam a madman, and by implication all other Arabs who are not pro-West.

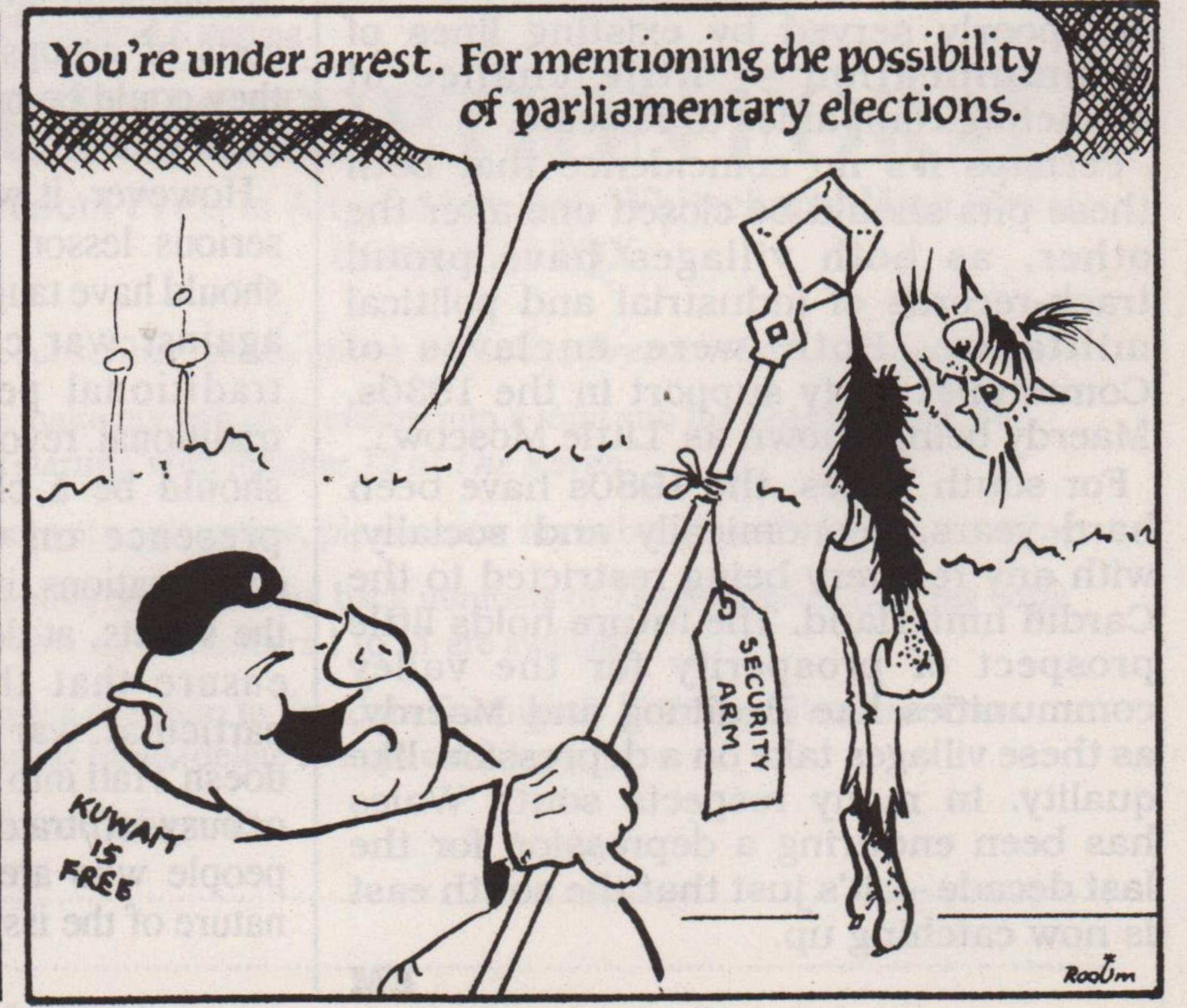
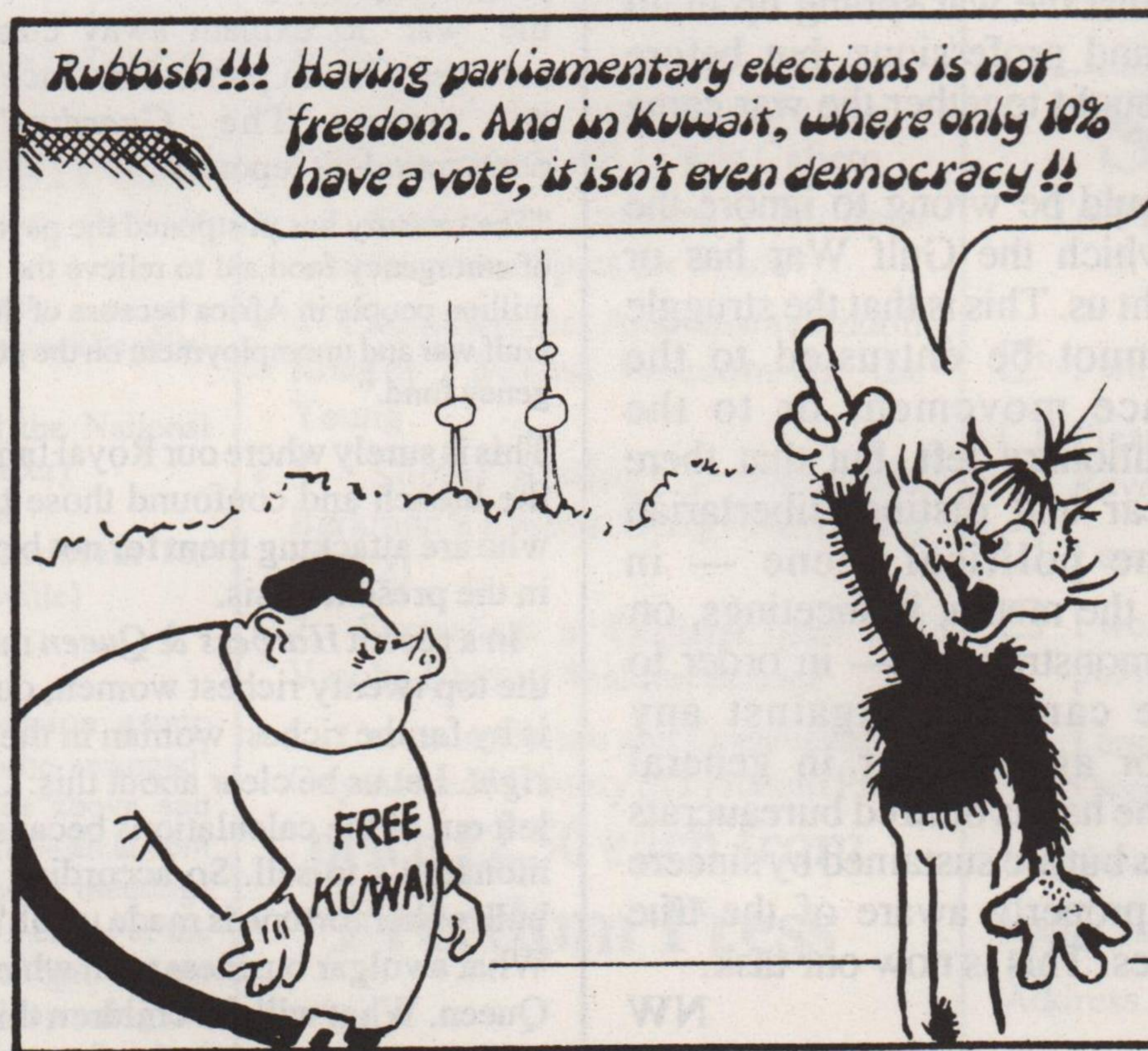
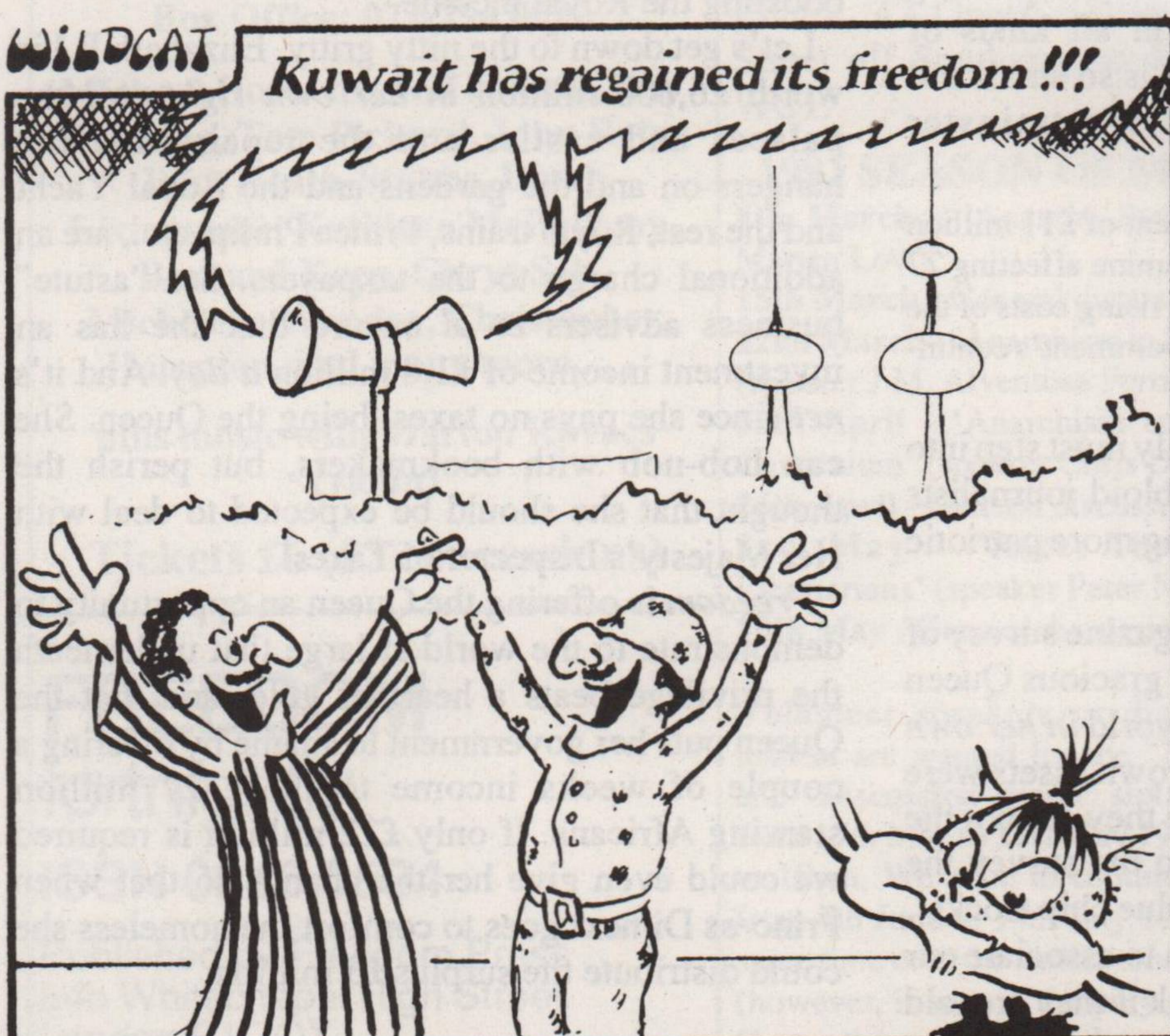
The most widely recognised reason is oil. But this is morally highly problematic. President Saddam is fighting for oil in the Gulf to make Iraq number one state in the Middle East. President Bush is fighting for oil to keep the US number one state in the world.

Saddam attacks Kuwait and makes a little war that is soon over and sheds a little blood. Bush makes a regional war and is shedding a great deal of blood as befits a superpower. But they both march to the same drum and sing the same song: 'blood for oil / blood for oil / blood for oil'.

Who then is the madman? Neither of course. They both follow the same immoral logic of power politics. Despite the Archbishop of Canterbury declaring this to be a just war it is clearly no such thing.

The peace movement is mobilising and it is obvious that we cannot count on people in authority to stop this war. As Marjorie Thompson, Chair of CND, suggests: this war will only be stopped, if it can be stopped, "on the streets".

Gerald Hatton



# The Anti-Rates Movement

At the time of writing, the latest piece of speculation in the media about the poll tax is that it is to be abolished after the next general election. This may be 'the end of an era' as the cliché has it; will there really be no more town hall occupations; meetings, demos, riots, bailiff busters, etc., etc? Surely not.

And in fact there is no reason why these things shouldn't continue much as before. A comrade in London recently persuaded his local anti poll tax union to mount a picket outside his house to prevent council bailiffs from seizing goods because he hadn't paid his rates. Surely this makes sense. After all, although poll tax is undoubtedly iniquitous, the rates system was also grossly unfair — small households such as pensioners and single women home-owners were certainly penalised. If the poll tax is abolished, one lesson that the general public may have learned is that the system can be successfully resisted quite easily; or, to put it another way, people may have got into the 'habit' of non-payment, and this will transfer from the poll tax to whatever system replaces it.

Even if the poll tax had not been successfully resisted, there will be reasons for resisting its successor. The word is that the new rating system will in effect be *two* taxes — one on floor space and the other on individuals.

'Opposition' smoothie Brian Gould reckons this will be *even worse* than the poll tax! He points out, for example, that a tax on floor space would function to gloss over such factors as the location and state of repair of a property. Two iniquities instead of one!

On top of this, the debts of those who didn't pay the old poll tax will remain outstanding, as will the prison sentences, fines and charges against those who fought the poll tax in the streets and outside the town halls. Even now, rates defaulters are still being persecuted through the courts. The abolition of the poll tax will be a great victory for the people over the state; but it will only be universally meaningful if we stick by those who resisted it in the past, so that debts and charges are either written off or become ineffective in the face of popular opposition.

The welcome demise of the poll tax could mark the *beginning* rather than the end of a massive wave of organised resistance. As the state and its deputies the local councils deprive us of more services they may come to be perceived as serving no useful function. Then 'necessity will be the mother of invention' as local initiatives based on mutual aid spring up to serve the community. A utopian dream or a plausible prospect? The

popular response to the new system will be an indicator. Let's hope it's 'pay no rates'!

Johnny Yen

## Pit Closure in Rugeley, Staffordshire

British Coal has recently cast its final stinging blow to the workers at Lea Hall Colliery in Rugeley, Staffordshire, with the announcement of its closure. Nobody was really surprised, but the timing, just two weeks before Christmas, was particularly hard to swallow. Many miners had been waiting for it for years and were looking forward to being paid off and getting out of the industry (an attitude which became more prevalent after the 1984-85 strike). Nevertheless, the final blow wasn't softened by the expectancy of it.

The miners have been promised no job losses, but many of them are already at their fourth or fifth pits following other closures. Some commute from Derbyshire and South Yorkshire, unable to move because of the ridiculous house price rises in the area in recent years. For other miners there will be pay-offs, early retirements, with a nice lump sum cheque and little prospect of more work. For young

workers, the prospect of travelling long distances to a new pit or the dole queue. For school leavers it is fast becoming a case of leave home or join the dole queue too.

So what are they going to do with the land? If other parts of Staffordshire are anything to go by, probably nothing. Or maybe they'll level it and leave us a nice wasteland. Perhaps we can look forward to being Garden Festival 2030. It certainly seems redevelopment is unlikely.

We apparently have a housing crisis round here and a battle has been raging for some time to keep a housing development off a green field site. Strangely enough, I always assumed housing crises affected those who couldn't afford property, which didn't explain why these houses were to retail at £85,000 to £90,000. Call me short-sighted, but I've never actually seen a bank manager sleeping in a cardboard box! Anyway, here is a prime site nothing more than concrete, which could be used for houses, tastefully built, state of the art insulation, community infra-structure — shop, pub, leisure centre, residents planning and control. Ah! But I dream, alas. All we've actually heard is various politicians bemoaning the end of an era.

In March comes the next blow as one of the two power stations shuts down. It is beginning to look like we have the option of becoming a ghost town or a suburb of the middle classes commuting into Birmingham (already a growing trend).

Time for the community to take control! Happy new year British Coal!

Andrew McGingle

## Spare a dime, comrades, for those poor rich!

A report by the ultra right-wing Institute of Economic Affairs, just published, has the effrontery to suggest that rich families deserve more state aid towards child costs than poor families! After all, sending your child to a private school — even a day school — costs a lot more than a pensioner is expected to live on. Imagine what it must cost those devoted parents who get rid of their children by sending them to boarding school. The Institute justifies its demands on the grounds that higher rate taxpayers are already being discriminated against for being rich and suggests that while retaining child benefit for the non-tax payers (that is, for the poor), for the rich there should be a child tax allowance. Of course it's all just a big tax fiddle.

What this all involves is revealed in another report, by the London School of Economics, which points out that replacing child benefit with child tax allowances means the poorest 10% of families would *lose* £5 per week, while the richest 10% would *gain* an average of £4.

The *Daily Telegraph* (14th February) devotes three-quarters of a page ('How the City's fizz went flat') describing the plight of yuppies caught up in the financial freeze. To be honest, far from shedding a tear for their predicament we could not help raising a hearty cheer for all those citizens young and old who have been financing the over-paid City producers of paper — *profitable* paper for them at the expense of the poor real producers of wealth.

The *Telegraph's* reporter describes a French restaurant in the City where two years ago "young men in Armani suits and Thomas Pink shirts impressed their business clients with lunches at £30 a head" (any *Freedom* readers acquainted with these suits and shirts?). The restaurant is now a pizzeria, and the manager says: "You've got to be fast on your feet to survive ... we are going for the £6 lunch — coffee and glass of wine included". They will still not get the old age pensioners in at £6 for a lunch!

To appreciate the 'crisis' in the City square mile listen to manager Tim Parfitt of Balls Brothers wine bar in Moorgate:

"Champagne sales have gone flat. He remembers when forty young City types downed fifty bottles at £28 each." Construction workers who bussed to London in their thousands, according to Ted Ablett, northern secretary of the construction workers' union UCATT, "and who were earning £100 a day during the office building boom, are now looking for work back home", and having difficulty finding any.

Then one has the yuppies on earnings from anything between £50,000 and £150,000 who still

cannot live on their incomes! The obvious reason: they buy flats in the Barbican for £120,000 as an investment (and presumably to have a roof over their heads while the property 'improves' in value). But *bad luck* — they backed the wrong horse and property is losing value. Serves them right! At Annie's Bar, according to the *Daily Telegraph* feature:

"...the busiest nights in the weeks since Christmas have been the redundancy parties and barman Robert MacManus says the good news, if you can call it that, is that there seem to be more of them all the time."

The *Telegraph* goes on with more tear-jerking cases of the well-to-do City employees who are having to draw in their belts. We hope they will cope with their new situations as millions of *productive* workers have had to put up with wage cuts, and productivity deals, not to mention redundancies and unemployment as a normal part of their working lives. A little bit of what they have had to suffer over the years is now being experienced by the white collar employees, management, reps, consultants *et al* for a change. Perhaps they will start thinking whether the capitalist system is all they thought it was.

Sooner or later they will come to realise that boom or recession, the top 5% have no problems. Think of all the Tory ministers who either resigned or were chucked out of the Thatcher government. Not one is on social security. Directorships pour in fast and furious. They seem to get so rich that they even retire after a couple of years. The latest, and most successful, recruit to the City gravy train is Peter Walker, allegedly a Tory 'wet' — but how do you describe someone who managed to be a millionaire by asset stripping at the age of 30? He resigned from the Thatcher cabinet as Welsh Secretary last year and has collected no less than nine directorships as well as, incidentally, accepting his salary as a Member of Parliament.

Lord Gowrie resigned as Minister for the Arts on £35,000 a year salary, on the grounds that a public figure cannot maintain his family on such a salary. Now Walker (a millionaire at the age of 30 having successfully 'asset stripped' a whole number of companies which invariably involved putting a whole lot of people out of work) cannot manage with a millionaire's income, and an MP's salary. He needs on top of that *nine* directorships.

And when *productive* workers (that is, workers who actually produce the things we need — which Walker has never produced) demand at least increases based on inflation they are accused of taking advantage.

It's a funny old world, isn't it?

## Waiting for the Bus

I shan't listen to you any more, Bert ... What's up now, Daisy? ... "There's not going to be any war", "It's all bluff", "Bush doesn't want a war". Got it all wrong, didn't you ... Maybe it was Bush got it all wrong when Saddam called his bluff and said "Come and get me", but maybe I was wrong ... Isn't China one of the Big Five US members? ... Yes, why? ... You don't hear much about China ... Perhaps they are hoping we'll forget about China because it didn't support the war against Saddam ... I thought the Security Council vote had to be unanimous ... Better ask Bush about that little quibble. The thing that really gets me is the way Bush and Major keep on about the danger of Iraq getting nuclear weapons, when Israel has had them for yonks, with accredited terrorists at the head of its government ... Hey, Bert, remember that David Alton bloke — anti-abortion, sanctity of life, and all that? Don't hear much from him now the British are helping to bomb the life out of Baghdad ... Perhaps the poor chap's gone into a clinical depression since his Bill was put in the shredder, or might be he's not interested in little Arabs ... That documentary 'The Mind of Saddam' showed what an evil man that Saddam has been. If only they had shown the film years ago when it happened, we wouldn't have helped to arm him, surely ... I expect the film was banned so that we could do just that. Perhaps the government got such a scare when they let 'Death of a Princess' through the censor, they kept a tight rein on anti-Saddam stuff. Bet the princess affair cost them a few orders ... Why do we sell arms to dictators? ... They've been asked that question many times, and the answer has always been "If we don't, some other government will" ... Where's the moral high ground they talk about then, Bert? ... In Whitehall, Daisy. They call it the National Exchequer ... Fancy Saln. an Rushdie converting to Islam after all he's said about it. He's upset some of his supporters ... It's all right for them. They haven't got a *fatwah* hanging over them. At least he's got the best of reasons for doing it, not like Malcolm Muggeridge who's probably cheesed off with the company he's got at the moment ... I thought Muggeridge was dead ... Exactly. But there's no TV audiences up there ... Nor many Roman Catholics ... Who do you

reckon is in charge up there? ... God, I suppose ... Which one, Allah or Jehovah? ... Dunno. Perhaps they've got a sort of Holy United Nations set-up ... I bet Jehovah's always using his veto ... What about Jesus? ... Got thrown out a long time ago, I shouldn't wonder. Or resigned in disgust, like Mike Scott and Bruce Kent ... Who's Mike Scott? ... You may well ask. I read something about a Michael Scott doing a protest walk a couple of weeks ago, but as far as the telly is concerned he might as well be dead ... It says in the paper that one in four women have been raped ... I bet that includes the ones who did it to keep the peace and get some sleep ... No it does not. Only the ones who were physically forced or threatened. Don't you believe it then? ... Well, it doesn't surprise me ... Mrs Potts's husband says it's nonsense ... Now I do believe it ... Tell me, Bert, what would you do if you wanted to rule the world? ... I'd sell arms to all the other countries, get the Secret Service to stir things up a bit, and move in when they had knocked the hell out of each other ... Where did you get that idea from, Bert? ... From Bush and Gorbachev, of course ... I see Lech Walesa's coming over. He's going to stay at Windsor ... After being abused by two thousand Polish miners who said he was the same bastard as Jaruzelski, I expect he's coming to do some house-hunting. Anything else bothering you, Daisy? ... Yes, there is. How is it that an airman can drop tons of bombs on people, and then when he's shot down and captured, claim humane treatment under international law? ... The law's an ass, and international law is an asshole. All 'our boys in the Gulf' are mercenaries. They admit as much when they say "We've got a job to do. That's what we're paid for" ... All the people we've met today, and nobody said anything about the war. You wouldn't think there was any war ... Well, it's understandable. People weren't consulted. Not even their MPs were consulted. I suppose they just shrug their shoulders and hope it doesn't affect them personally ... Here, what's stranger than a vicar on a bus? ... I give up ... A vicar on a bus getting passengers to sign a petition against the war in the Gulf ... No vicars on this one. Jump on ...

EFC

**Government is Violence: essays on anarchism and pacifism** by Tolstoy  
edited by David Stephens  
Phoenix Press £5.00 (post free)

After the war most kids of my generation at 'juniors' (primary school) were brought up on a sort of silly history. History was fed to us as a series of charming colourful incidents from the Wars of the Roses to how King Alfred burnt the cakes, to how King Harold got an arrow in his eye, to how Henry the VIII had umpteen wives, how Robert the Bruce learned to 'try and try again' by watching a spider.

The later Tolstoy — all the essays under review here were written around 1900 — frowned on this history of exotic events and historical personages. Tolstoy thought most historians asked the wrong questions. He was not interested in the name of the snake which bit Prince Eugene. What fascinated Tolstoy was what is the nature of power?

What force was it which drove thousands of men in the Napoleonic wars to move eastwards, and later roused thousands more to combine to troop westwards?

David Stephens, editor of this series of essays by the later Tolstoy, in his introduction claims "Tolstoy's political writings express an uncompromising rejection of authority and all its trappings, a scathing criticism of Church and State, capitalism and Marxism, militarism and patriotism".

#### The nature of power?

Tolstoy's attitude to power seems to be profoundly Russian. In his 1905 essay 'The End of the Age' he says: "The Russian people have always regarded power, not as a good thing towards which it is natural for every man

to strive, as the majority of European nations regard power (and as unfortunately some corrupt people of the Russian nation are already regarding it), but it has always looked upon power as an evil which man should avoid".

In rural societies, such as turn of the century Russia, it is easy to believe that peasants living in villages may live in idyllic isolation from even the most despotic government in Moscow or some capital city. That was a plausible idea before Stalin and the growth of the late twentieth century industrial states.

The cosy belief of the rural villagers that they can cut themselves off by indifference to the central powers that be, as Tolstoy says, neither offering "strife with it or participation in it", must have received a knock in England after the Enclosure Acts. But what happened after Stalin's fiftieth birthday in December 1929, must have shaken the idea of mutual toleration between the Russian peasantry and the State to the core! Tolstoy's ideal of a Russian nation which has "always preferred to bear all kinds of physical misery proceeding from violence rather than accept the spiritual responsibility of participating in it", was tested to the full in the months that followed by the Georgian-Stalin.

Tolstoy says offer passive submission to those in power, as the Russian people have done even to "the most cruel and insane autocrats, often not even Russian, from Ivan IV down to Nicholas II". He couldn't have reckoned with Stalin who destroyed the Soviet peasantry, which formed three-quarters of the population. How could one passively submit to Stalin, when as former Marxist Leszek Koakowski says: "The object of destroying the peasants' independence and herding them into collective farms was to create a

## The Later Tolstoy —

population of slaves, the benefit of whose labour would accrue to industry".

Tolstoy quotes favourably the legend of the call to the Varangians (Swedish Vikings) by the Slavonic tribes of Russia in 862: "We ourselves do not wish to participate in the sins of power. If you do not regard it as a sin, come and govern us". He says it "fully expresses the relation of the Russian people towards power even before Christianity".

It might also explain how they finished up with a Georgian tyrant like Stalin. The Greeks believed it wasn't the tyrant who created slaves, but the slaves who created the tyrant.

The pacifist invites the bully and the servile people make the tyrant. It is tempting to believe the Russians got the government they deserved.

#### How rulers rule

George Orwell said "England is a family with the wrong people at the top". But Tolstoy is at pains to show that under any system of government the wrong people always end up at the top.

In his essay 'An Appeal to Social Reformers' (1903) Tolstoy declares: "Be the power in the hands of Louis XVI, or the Committee of National Defence, or the Directory, or the Consulate of Napoleon, or Louis XVIII, or the Sultan, the President, the chief Mandarin or the Prime Minister — whosoever it be, there will exist the power of certain men over others, and there will not be freedom, but the oppression of one portion of mankind by another". And his definition of

power here is simply that it is "the result of coarse violence of some men over others".

Yet how do rulers rule? How is history made?

President Gorbachev sends his paratroopers in to seize power in Vilnius, and when the troops open fire some over-enthusiastic local commander is to blame. When Eduard Shevardnadze warned of 'impending dictatorship' in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev said they must learn to distinguish between strong centralised power and dictatorship.

In 1869, in the Epilogue of his book *War and Peace*, Tolstoy gave power a more subtle definition: "It is ... relations between commander and commanded which constitutes the essence of the concept called power".

But how can a commander give effective orders when, for example, as Tolstoy shows, Napoleon at the battle of Borodino couldn't see the field of battle from where he was standing. True orderlies from the battlefield were continually galloping up to Napoleon with reports. "But", says Tolstoy, "all these reports were deceptive both because in the heat of the fray it was impossible to say what was happening at any given moment, and because many of the adjutants did not go to the actual place of conflict but simply repeated what they had heard from others; and also because while an adjutant was riding the couple of miles to Napoleon circumstances changed and the news he brought was already ceasing to be accurate".

Tolstoy knew in this situation, and many others, the exercise of power was 'hit and

# Anarchism and Education

The following comments relating to anarchism and education originate from my attending a recent meeting of the London Anarchist Forum. The discussion centred around the theme 'Anarchism: the moral concern of the Left' and I was surprised to find that a sizeable proportion of the comrades were talking as if anarchism was something that *might* be achieved in the very distant future rather than as something that should be seen as evolving *here and now*.

One contributor to the discussion reported that he was employed as a teacher and that this meant he had no opportunity to practice or develop anarchist ideas *at work* because he was limited to the terms of reference of the syllabus or to which topics he could discuss in class. He added that he nevertheless enjoyed his work tremendously, to the extent that he 'dreaded' holidays and that when they came he could never wait to get back to work. In just a few sentences, this speaker succeeded in encompassing just about everything that, to me, represents the anti-libertarian approach to learning.

Probably the anarchist approach to 'education' was most clearly developed, in the first instance, by William Godwin in his *Essay Concerning Political Justice* (1796). Godwin's key points are well summarised — as indeed is the libertarian critique of traditional education since 1870 — by John Shotton in the excellent *Raven* no. 10 and all are encouraged to read this for more details.

Godwin's starting point is that the only true education is self-education — and that self-fulfilment is only possible when individuals realise that there is no obstacle that *they themselves* cannot overcome. He was arguing against the popularly held views of his contemporary Malthus and insisting that the foundation of education is *not* to 'instruct' but to encourage the individual to 'unfold his stores'.

Since humanity must discover its own potentialities, it *must* be a step backwards to make government responsible (government was corrupt anyway — indeed it was essentially a channel for those holding a monopoly of 'truth' to enforce *their* views through the agency of the state).

Godwin was arguing that each individual knows his own interests best. In opposition to the utilitarians who believed the social function of education was to enlighten people to recognise legal 'rules' to be heralded to the world and in this way to eliminate 'crime', he insisted that 'laws' were meaningless if they were not equally discoverable by *all* people. The three general criticisms he advanced vis a vis government power in the sphere of instruction are worth the

re-stating, so relevant are they to understanding what must be the *practice* of anarchists now:

1. Because the authorities believe they are already in possession of ultimate 'truth', they 'forget that more remains to be known' and consequently 'actively restrain the flights of mind' and discourage the pupil to critically test new theories.
2. By reducing the pupil to a *passive* imbiber of handed-down 'knowledge', the learning process is halted, *for human progress depends upon man's doing things for himself*.
3. Government exists in order to 'perpetuate its institutions' — and hence 'a national education has the most direct tendency to perpetuate those errors and to form all minds upon one model'.

The implications that flow from Godwin's critique not to the *content* of educational curricula but to the *method* of teaching, are self-evident and this will be considered in more detail later. First it is useful to look briefly at the ideas of the most famous 'utilitarian' — John Stuart Mill

Mill, educated entirely by his father, appears *on the surface* to share Godwin's ardour for instruction based upon private initiative:

"A general state education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government ... it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body".

Although acclaimed the champion of the liberal point of view, J.S. Mill proves to be the harbinger of left authoritarianism. He claims that liberty is important because it is the *only* method of self-development and that 'each is the best judge of his own interests' and that coercion is necessarily bad — yet he goes on to argue that it (coercion) is sometimes the lesser of two evils.

Mill begins by arguing that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others", but for Mill the 'protection' of all individuals is the *duty of the State*. The logic of his argument leads not only to a justification of the State but to some ominous implications for education.

Mill insists that education should be made compulsory by law and that this be enforced by the State, *not* by the provision of state schools but by the introduction of a system of

examinations. As well as minimal subjects that *must* be studied, he proposed "voluntary examinations on all subjects, of which all who came up to a certain standard of proficiency might claim a certificate". The parents of 'unsuccessful' students should be 'taxed', the proceeds to be devoted to the pupil's continued studies.

While Mill demanded that all should have the right to propagate 'false' opinions (because they might eventually be found to be correct), when he writes about education he reveals a predilection for over-ruling parental opinion by state decree in order that the views of 'cultivated superiors' should predominate: *i.e. he discards his argument for liberty that 'each is best to judge his own interests' — his main anxiety is not that kids aren't competent to judge for themselves but that most adults aren't either!!* As he was to explain in his *Principles of Political Economy*:

"The uncultivated cannot be competent judges of cultivation. Those who most need to be made wiser and better, usually desire it least, and, if they desired it, would be incapable of finding the way to it by their own light ... education, therefore, is one of those things which it is admissible in principle that a government should provide for the people".

The informed reader cannot but be reminded of similar arguments declaring that "class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without* ..." suggested by Lenin in 1902 as he provided the rationale for the 'leadership' principle adopted by communists worldwide from that point in time — and, like the earlier Mill, all in the name of 'liberty'!

This is the logic behind the present 'structure' of education everywhere. Behind the 'progressive' verbiage, the big 'left' speeches and slogans, *authority* rests with the state and/or the bureaucracies approved by those *in authority* whose *raison d'être* is the perpetuation of class rule. *It is they who decide what is to be learned — and how it is to be taught*.

In a nutshell, the anarchist approach to education differs from the 'official' view in that it is the *process* rather than the *content* that is primary. Learning only takes place as *activity*. In a very real sense, 'knowledge' is something that has to be 'created' by each individual for him/herself. (One cannot 'learn' maths without 'doing' maths any more than one can learn to swim without getting in the water and 'swimming'.)

The function of the libertarian teacher is that of facilitator — to see that the necessary artefacts/books are available *and* to perhaps help point the student in the appropriate direction *as a fellow pilgrim* on the path to understanding more about

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# Enemy of the State

miss', and success had more to do with 'pot luck'. In the end, as Tolstoy shows: "At the battle of Borodino, Napoleon did not fire a shot nor kill anyone. All this was done by the soldiers".

In this Tolstoyan sense, as I understand it, the exercise of power and the course of history is, as C. Wright Mills argued in his book *The Causes of World War Three* (1959): "The innumerable actions of innumerable men" result in social changes which in "the course of history — go on behind men's backs. History is adrift, although in total 'men make it'."

I don't think Tolstoy resolved the problem of the nature of power satisfactorily, any more than the twentieth century sociologists, but his interest in it makes him relevant today, not just to anarchists and pacifists.

## Moral or political revolution

Tolstoy, like Dickens, makes a moral critique of society.

In these essays he is arguing that to alter the political set-up, the 'forms of life' as he calls them, "hoping thereby to alter the character of men, is like altering in various ways the position of wet wood in a stove, believing there can be a position of wet fuel as will cause it to catch fire independently of the position in which it is placed".

Tolstoy's point, stressed in the editorial introduction by David Stephens, is that "the State could only survive with the consent of the governed; a revolution to overthrow it had to take a personal rather than political form".

Can a moral critique of society be revolutionary?

The Marxist writer and literary critic György

Lukacs claimed Tolstoy was reactionary in his political views, but created great work owing to his skill in painting a realistic picture of the world he lived in. For Lukacs there was a 'contradiction' in Tolstoy between his literary portrayal of society and his political ideas. Whatever one thinks of Tolstoy's pacifism, his belief in rural life and his attack on the Church, the City and the State seems consistent enough.

What Tolstoy's world view conflicted with was doctrinaire Marxism. But what of value came out of the political 'revolution' of the Russian Marxists, other than a superb prison literature by some of the Siberian detainees? At least the French Revolution gave us a thriving restaurant trade.

As the Left in Europe emerges from three-quarters of a century spent in a Bolshevik blind alley, it may be the best time to re-examine our attitudes to the political-economic critique of society, and to

look afresh at Tolstoy's notions of moral renewal.

Of course it is easier to live the moral life, as Thackeray says, on £1,000 a year than it is to live the moral life on £100 a year.

And yet, despite these misgivings, Tolstoy's essays like 'The Slavery of Our Times' (1900) though dated, has more life and relevance than much syndicalist literature. His 'Patriotism and Government' (1900) I will be reading in conjunction with the current books on Nationalism such as Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism*.

According to the editor of these essays, David Stephens, some of the essays such as 'On Anarchy' and 'On Socialism, State and Capitalism' may not have been republished since Tolstoy died in 1910. I remember being stunned by the freshness of Tolstoy's ideas in his *War and Peace*, which I now learn from Mr Stephens was heavily influenced by the

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## Anarchism & Education

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the world in which we live. An appreciation that every individual is unique, travels at his or her own pace, must also lead to the eroding of traditional curricula, teaching styles, time tables, etc., etc., which have become integral components of modern 'education'.

John Shotton identifies the three areas of the libertarian critique of national state education — the 'free standing alternatives', e.g. Louise Michel; the 'private adventurers', e.g. Neill and Lane; and finally the area that 'awaits discovery' inside the state system. It is in this latter area that I feel anarchists involved in education should be constructively researching and experimenting.

The points highlighted by Godwin are, I believe, more relevant today than ever before. The only true education is self-education — but that is a process that must develop within the society in which we live. The falsity of state 'education' becomes more apparent daily: every day the 'marketing' of 'learning' equates with all other sales of commodities — institutions of further and higher education are permanently 'manufacturing' courses for sale; traditional examinations are trivialised and the examination skills required for a 'pass' are systematically lowered to the extent that many of the 'qualifications' currently obtainable are academically meaningless.

An essential aspect of this 'problem' is that lecturers employed in the education 'factories' are denied the time for lesson preparation — instead they are kept busy recording the data more relevant to the marketing objectives of the college. The common complaint made by teachers is that increasingly they just do not have the time to tutor their students. It is against this background that it is difficult to understand how any teacher could 'dread' holidays when, in the majority of cases, the sole opportunity most lecturers have to keep themselves up-to-date with on-going research is during vacations.

However we define anarchism, it must surely be in terms of the freedom of the individual to organise his/her own life for him/herself — and for his/her own development as a human being.

It is almost tautological to say that freedom is to do with the attainment of self-mastery — or to use the current (and frequently abused!) terms, self-realisation and self-actualisation. Each individual is responsible for his/her own actualisation: it is this process we are referring to when we speak of 'education'. It is this daily (every day) development which is central to the building now of the free (= anarchist) society.

Contrary to the anarchist comrade to whom I refer in the second paragraph, I feel that anarchists working in education have tremendous opportunities for publicising and demonstrating the validity of Godwin's approach. That the learning process ceases to be a boring, meaningless grind as soon as it is tackled as a joint exploration, teacher and pupil; that progress is directly related to 'doing' and that 'knowledge' is to be understood in terms of progressing 'hypotheses' to be constantly 'tested' and 'modified' by active involvement in the world and society.

These ideas receive verbal endorsement from bourgeois educationalists — but, like their mentor J.S. Mill, their approval is only skin deep. It is at the 'point of production' that the final battle is yet to be fought — and that point is the 'classroom' of the educational institution.

Bob Potter

# The Relevance of Nietzsche

Hywel Jones was quite wrong to characterise Nietzsche as an "arch windbag" in his otherwise enjoyable review 'Is Orwell Still Relevant' (*Freedom*, 1st December 1990). Not only did Nietzsche make a significant contribution to modern philosophy, in particular, for existentialism and phenomenology, but also had a major influence, through Freud, in the development of psychology. Unlike Mr Jones, Nietzsche also found favour with contemporary anarchists and socialists, such as Emma Goldman and Jack London. The Socialist Party of Canada (anti-statist socialists similar to the SPGB) ran quotations from his works in their newspaper. Nietzsche was, of course, highly critical of the left (as he also was of the bourgeoisie) but these criticisms contain much that is of value. Here is a sampling of his views taken from *The Will to Power*:

"Modern socialism wants to create the secular counterpart to Jesuitism: everyone a perfect instrument...the 'blessing of work' is the self-glorification of slaves..."

"A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is, that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be, that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence...has no meaning: the pathos of 'in vain' is the nihilist's pathos..."

"The development of pessimism into nihilism — the repudiated world versus an artificially built 'true valuable' one — finally one discovers what materials one has built the 'true world' and now all one has left is the repudiated world... At this point nihilism is reached — all that one has left are the values that pass judgement — nothing else."

"...the pessimism of indignation. Here the claim is made to judge history, to divest of its fatality, to discover responsibility behind it, guilty men in it. For this is the rub: one needs guilty men. The underprivileged, decadents of all kinds, are in revolt on account of themselves and need victims to quench their thirst for destruction... To this end they need an appearance of justice, i.e. a theory that can shift the responsibility for their existence...on to some sort of scapegoat...the social order, education, or the Jews, or the nobility... How can I help it that I am wretched! But somebody must be responsible, otherwise it would be unbearable!"

In short, the pessimism of indignation invents responsibility to create a pleasant feeling for itself — revenge... That such a theory (that of responsibility, ed.) is no longer despised, is a consequence of the bit of Christianity we still have in our blood... The socialists appeal to the Christian instincts...it was Christianity that first invited the individual to play the judge of everything and everyone: megalomania almost became a duty... The originators of this psychology...the priests...wanted to create for themselves a right to take revenge...a right for God to take revenge. To this end, man was conceived of as 'free'...every action conceived of as willed...as conscious. Today, when Europe seems to have entered upon the opposite course ... when our most serious endeavour is to purify psychology, morality, history, nature, social institutions, and even God of this filth — whom must we recognise as our most natural antagonists? Precisely those apostles of revenge and resentment... We others, who desire to restore innocence to becoming, would like to be missionaries of a cleaner idea...that no one is to blame..."

"Everything done in weakness fails. Moral: do nothing. Only there is a hitch that precisely the strength to suspend activity not to react, is the sickest of all under the influence of

weakness: one never reacts more quickly and blindly than when one should not react at all. A strong nature manifests itself by waiting and postponing any reaction, it is as much characterised by a certain indifference as weakness is by the...suddenness and inevitability of 'action' The will is weak — and the prescription to avoid stupidities would have to be a strong will and do nothing. Contradiction — a kind of self-destruction: the instinct of preservation is compromised — the weak harm themselves. This is a type of decadence."

"Extreme positions are not succeeded by moderate ones, but by extreme positions of the opposite kind... Nihilism appears at this point... One interpretation has collapsed, but because it was considered the interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning to existence... Who will prove the strongest in the course of this? The most moderate: those who do not require any extreme articles of faith: those who not only concede but love a fair amount of accidents and nonsense ... everything simple is merely imaginary, is not 'true'. But whatever is real...is neither one, nor even reducible to one... The easier mode of thought conquers the harder mode as dogma...to suppose that clarity proves anything is perfect childishness. The doctrine of being, of things, of all sorts of fixed unities — is a hundred times easier than the doctrine of becoming — of development."

How relevant Nietzsche seems! The idea that present society can be 'abolished' in some great conflagration still haunts the left extremist who pines for the 'revolution' which will never come. This idea is rooted in the Christian conception of the 'Second Coming'. Are there any people more judgmental than leftists with their puritanical desire for 'political correctness'? And they all have their favourite devil — society would be perfect if it weren't for (choose one) capitalists, Zionists, men, technology, the State, etc. Regrettably many people find it necessary to have someone or something to blame, the Christian archetype of the Fall of Man still lingers. Problems, such as the existence of the state, are not seen as part of the process of human development, a stage of history to be overcome, but something wicked. And how much terrorism is based upon a sado-masochistic desire for revenge?

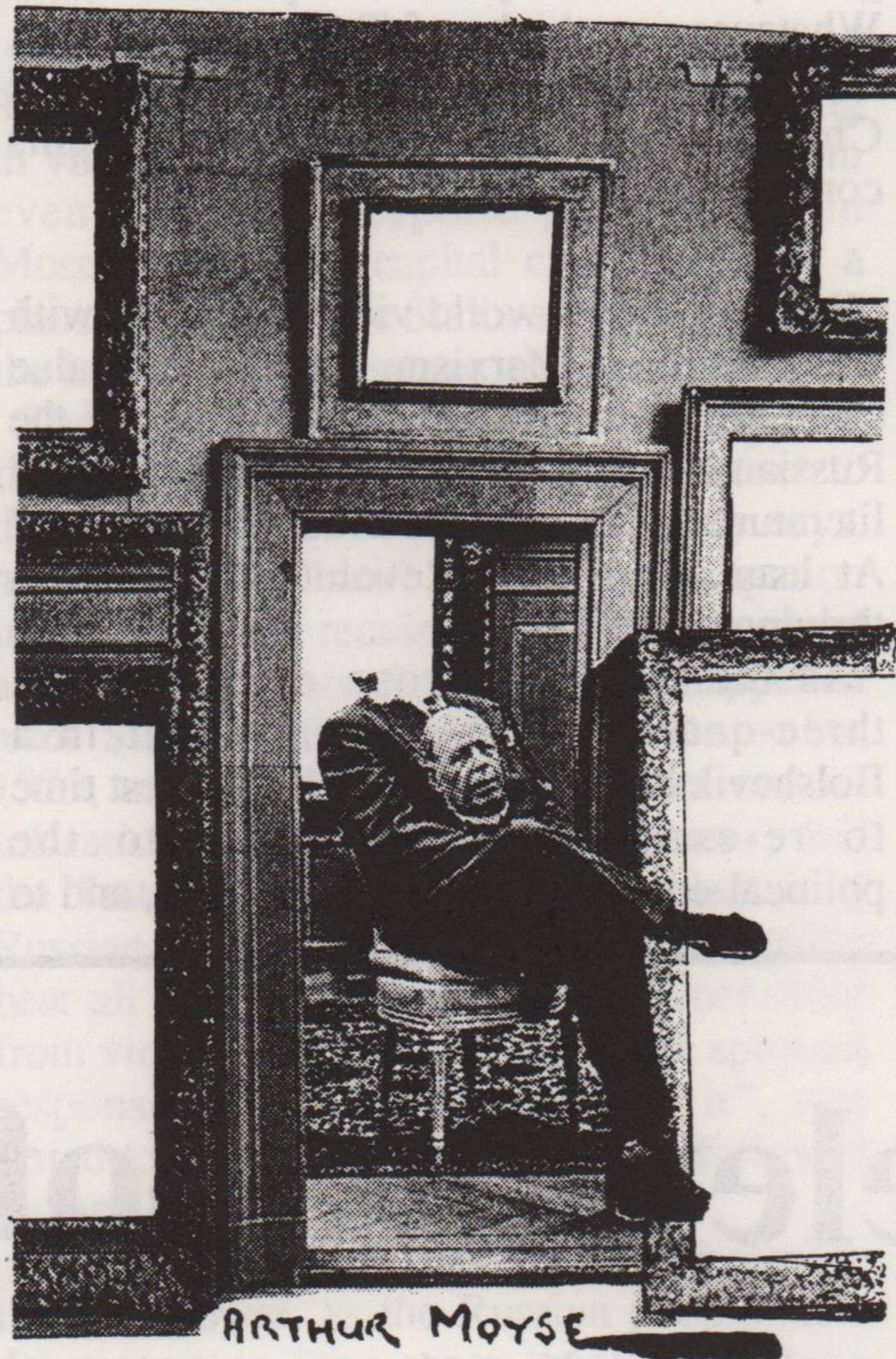
Nietzsche cuts a swathe through the militantism, mindless activism, action for action's sake, that leads to that ultimate of guilt-ridden masochism — the armed struggle group. It's not that one shouldn't act, but rather the action must involve knowledge and forethought — as well as a healthy self respect. Every leftist should struggle to overcome the sick attitude of self-sacrifice. 'Revolutionaries!' You too, have a right to a decent life.

Unfortunately, the view that holding extreme opinions is the mark of a revolutionary is still as strong as ever on the left, and especially among anarchists. Absolutism, a root cause of nihilism, reigns supreme among our would-be revolutionaries, even though such superficiality was totally rejected by the founder of anarchism, P.J. Proudhon. They cannot see that absolutist thinking is in complete contradiction to anarchism. A fundamentally religious view prevails, exemplified by the unscientific glorification of 'clarity' and 'intransigence' in a world which at long last, in line with Nietzsche's thinking, stresses probability and relativism.

L. Gambone  
St Laurent, Quebec

When the German state in the interest of good government decided that the physical slaughter of millions of men, women and children was a social and economic necessity, common sense dictated that the murdered remains should not be wasted and jumping the environmental bandwagon and on good sound economic and industrial advice the German state used the hair, bones and various other parts of the slaughtered human bodies as an aid towards the particular war effort of the hour. The German medical establishment in the cause of Fatherland and pure science took a willing role in the Nazi social experiment and, in the interest of pure science and to comfort the German army lads freezing in the Russian front, worked long hours and without using anaesthetics physically performing surgical experiments on the trapped inmates of the state's prison camps. Too many crippled victims of that legalised state still walk the world's bare stage mocking those comfortable liberal thinkers who pipe between meals that we must forgive and forget. One faded photograph haunts the mind and it is of a concentration camp inmate chained within a glass cage who was repeatedly frozen and thawed and frozen and thawed to the point of death, until sweet death gave him final and everlasting relief. The object of that deep freeze experiment was to find out what degree of cold the German troops on the Russian front could endure. In the unimportant past I became involved with some highly paid 'brilliant' London hospital consultants when the question was shyly bruited as to whether the boys with the white coats, the knife and the pill prescriptions would be justified in using the medical information obtained from those concentration camp victims for it was now a moral problem and subject for the college debating class. I do not doubt for one moment that the worthless information resulting from these clinical torture chambers was used as with that of armaments, technology, rocket fuel and skills, but the medical boys in their soap opera white coats remained curiously mute. Beyond a major conference in New York the morality of the problem now belongs to the forgettable past only the victims still, literally, hobble among us. The pragmatist moral guardians of our consciences could argue, nay do, that there are more important

## Pragmatic moralities



**Emil Buhrlé**  
arms seller : art buyer

things to occupy the whitened sepulchres that displace their minds, such as the struggle to find the shop that is selling the latest and fashionable 'end the war in the Gulf' lapel badges.

The question of deriving pleasure or information arrived at by human torture or by state legalised thuggery edges briefly from out of the shadow of history with the exhibition of the collected paintings of Emil Georg Buhrlé. Emil was a Swiss arms manufacturer, born in southern Germany, and he needed two large sacks to collect the profits as they rolled his way and having run out of banks to store it all in he did what so many a wealthy 'person' does — he became a patron of the arts and with an open cheque book accumulated a rag-bag collection of major and minor paintings. It was

in 1946 and the following ten years that Emil bought his collection and there must be many an art dealer who wakes up in the small hours of the morning screaming with joy as they count the tax deducted profits they made.

Any fool with an open cheque book, and one would never say this of Emil, can walk into Bond Street and find a credited art dealer and the offence is not to buy 'famous' paintings but to go back to square one and buy and buy unknown works. One can end up with a fistful of junk but you bought and bought for the pleasure it gives you and if you have a masterpiece among them then good luck comrade. The question that the Town and his junk-chasing frau are called upon to exercise their minds is the question of loading painted rhubarb into the great state galleries thereby giving worthless work among the top ten the seal of approval, but that is not the true question concerning the late Emil 'bang bang' Buhrlé.

When Emil's travelling pictorial circus hit the National Gallery in Washington the *New York Times* art critic Micky Kimmelman wrote that Emil 'bang bang' Buhrlé was an arms manufacturer who bought his coloured 'masterpieces' from the sale of armaments to the Nazis and that some of the pretty pictures were Nazi war booty. Kimmelman also argued that the Renoir 'Portrait of Mademoiselle Irene Cathen d'Anvers' was at one time in the collection of Herman Goering.

Emil is now in heaven beyond the pointing fingers and one knows that when the celestial barber shop quartets are harmonising 'give me my bow of burning gold, give me my arrows of desire', Emil will be on hand to sell them the flaming bows and the horny arrows. Hortense Anda-Buhrlé has leapt over the garden wall to clear Emil's and the family's good name that the Renoir painting was stolen by the German and after the war returned to its correct owners in 1945 and that when Emil went into the art buying business in 1949 he bought it with clean hands. What one must question is did any owners from 1939, or before, have to sell the painting under duress. Emil was your happy time arms salesman. Until the fall of France Emil hawked his arms to France, the Swiss, the Netherlands and

Yugoslavia, but, claims Emil, when the Swiss government dug out their rubber stamps to allow any arms exports Emil arranged for 21 boxes containing the blueprints of the Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun, thereby making 'a considerable contribution to the war effort of the allies', to be secretly smuggled to Britain for the construction of the Oerlikon gun. Britain manufactured 35,000 of these guns for which they paid Emil royalties after the war. America manufactured 300,000 of Emil's gun at a cost of over 2.8 billion dollars and when Emil and his arms firm demanded other royalties the American government refused to pay. When the German military controlled the whole of Europe Emil's production line flogged 7,000 guns to the German army but, claims Emil's family, if they had not sold these guns to the German army then the German state would not have allowed Switzerland to import coal, food and raw materials. To me that seems odd reasoning for one assumes that all the German technical arm had to do was to strip a gun down, and Europe was littered with them, and to build the guns to their heart's content. The German state did not have to threaten for Switzerland was a small state surrounded by a major army and the German state could manufacture any goods or blueprints it 'requested'. Nay nay, Emil backed every horse in the race and no matter who won the krieg Emil 'bang bang' Buhrlé would have come out smelling of roses to the music of mass bands of cuckoo clocks. And for the Town and his frostbitten frau here are the pretty pictures on the wall of the Royal Academy with their dubious past and dubious future. Of the paintings themselves what can one type except that they are the usual collection of cheque book paintings of the school of 'you name it, I bought it'. It was an enjoyable visit and worthy of trudging through the London slush, for I stood before a Canaletto of his Venetian scene and isolated two flaws by the master in that the shade of the figure on the right does not correspond to that of the standing figures in that the figures wear huge cloaks with only pencil-thin shadows and the gondolas moored to the harbour wall on the right of the painting fail to cast shadows. But both Emil and Canaletto both laughed all the way to the bank and are both kaput, so does it matter. Yes, comrade, to the aged tortured and crippled innocence who suffered for the greater glory.

Arthur Moyses

## What use is high technology?

Persons who smashed machinery that would replace their skills are generally depicted as vain protesters trying to stem the tide of progress. But there are many examples, such as the lawyers who successfully resist progress because they do very well without it.

This problem was discussed in the nineteenth century by Samuel Butler, an author fully aware of the latest knowledge (at that time) of the life sciences. His book *Erewhon* is still relevant and could have been entitled 'Where To?'.

In the twentieth century, the use of technology and its results are increasingly questioned. With great foresight, Butler also discussed whether limits to the exploitation of animals are desirable. Modern factory farming has now made it potentially lethal to eat chicken, pigs or beef, thus contributing to a large increase in vegetarianism, once regarded with scorn as being practised only by starry-eyed idealists.

The introduction of labour-saving machinery has led to the creation of underprivileged classes in all 'advanced' countries, despite the invention of more and more useless jobs. Cars which were supposed to confer freedom of movement continue to creep ever more slowly in all major cities whilst they poison the air and atmosphere. Wars are even needed to maintain their fuel supplies.

This brings us to the most dangerous aspect of the misuse of technology — its application to war and to the control of populations by government and business. A redeeming feature is that complex technology is often less effective, as evident from the Korean war. Because secrecy is endemic in the war and government businesses, corruption is everywhere and vast resources are squandered. Complex systems are not reliable and the use of sub-standard components in their manufacture gives big profits.

Anarchism is about the best ways to solve these problems whilst avoiding the unbridled exploitation of people and resources.

Brian Bamford

Norman

## Tolstoy

(continued from page 6)

French anarchist Proudhon and contains much of his philosophy.

Some anarchists would jibe at Mr Stephens' claim that Tolstoy is an anarchist. Others would object to his style — his essays bear a faint resemblance to sermons, and there is something of the Creeping Jesus about the later Tolstoy. My worry is with his urging people to submit to evil and power. Tolstoy almost invites violence and physical misery!

I don't believe the honest man is forced to submit to history. While the fascists and the Marxists seem to seek a kind of cheerful slavery under their chosen leader, the pacifists seem to endure a disgruntled slavery under whosoever chooses to 'conquer' them.

## Food for Thought...and Action

Recent additions to Freedom Press Bookshop stock

*Anarchist Society (and its practical realisation)\** by Graham Purchase, See Sharp Press, A5 pamphlet, 16 pages, £1.00.

*The Incoherence of the Intellectual* by Fredy Perlman, Black & Red, A5 pamphlet, 117 pages including colour illustrations, £4.50. On the problems of unifying thought and action.

*Kilquhanity's Jubilee: reflections and creations 1940-1990* edited by Claire Cameron, 77 pages with photographs, £5.95. The 50-year history of the famous Scottish free school inspired by A.S. Neill's Summerhill.

*The Cobas, Italy 1986-88: a new rank and file movement\** by David Brown, Echanges et Mouvement, A5 pamphlet, 53 pages, £1.50.

*Closing the Iron Cage: the scientific management of work and leisure\** by Ed Andrew, Black Rose Books, 205 pages, £7.95.

*Shake It and Break It: class and politics in Britain 1979-89\** Echanges et Mouvement, A5 pamphlet, 38 pages, 90p.

*The Life and Work of Karl Polanyi\** by Kari Polanyi-Levitt, Black Rose Books, 264 pages, £11.50.

*Harlem Glory: a fragment of Aframerican life\** by Claude McKay, Charles H. Kerr, 112 pages, £5.95. "Black life during the Great Depression ... a fast-paced narrative of love, work, play and revolt in black America ... drawing on its author's experiences in the IWW and the extreme Left of the socialist movement."

*Misinformation and Manipulation: an anarchist critique of the politics of AIDS\** by Joe Peacock, BAD Press, A5 pamphlet, 27 pages, £1.50.

*The Refusal of Work: facts and discussions\** Echanges et Mouvement, A5 pamphlet, 64 pages, £1.50.

*People Without Government: an anthropology of anarchy\** by Harold Barclay with preface by Alex Comfort, Kahn & Averill, 162 pages, £6.95.

*Apparitions of Things to Come: tales of mystery and imagination\** by Edward Bellamy, edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr, 175 pages including illustrations, £6.50. By the author of *Looking Backward*.

*Asylum: a magazine for democratic psychiatry*, winter 1990-91 issue, 35 pages, £1.00.

NB The title *Letters of Insurgents* listed in the 9th and 23rd February issues was marked post-free by mistake. Since it is not distributed by us we must charge postage for it at the normal rates (see below).

*The Destruction of Toytown UK\** (also listed previously) by The Toytown Revolutionaries, is "a random collection of thought instigated by the great poll tax riot of 31st March 1990". Correct price is 60p.

Many of these titles will be reviewed in Freedom in due course.

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

## Opposition in Opposition

Dear Editors,  
Nicolas Walter's article 'Opposition in Opposition' (*Freedom* 23rd February 1991) is less than clear in its implications. He writes: "We have a double task. We must try to overlook the many trivial differences among ourselves and between us and other groups and at the same time explain our particular position politely but clearly" (my emphasis). I think it would be helpful if he specified precisely what groups he refers to, or a grave misunderstanding may arise.

Let me quote an historical precedent. During the 1939-45 war there were a number of groups in Britain broadly opposed to the war as it was being fought for pacifist, political and/or religious reasons. These included the anarchist movement (with its excellent journal *War Commentary* which expressed a coherent stand-point), the PPU, the SPGB, the FOR, the Jehovah's Witnesses, several tiny Trotskyist groups, and a few others of a politico/pacifist nature. As all these groups had in common an utter hostility to the Nazis and Italian Fascists, mutual tolerance and limited co-operation was possible. To state my own position, I am a life-long pacifist and having

sufficient sympathy with *War Commentary*, I contributed to it and helped distribute it on the streets.

There was also one anti-war group with whom the above groups had absolutely no truck at all — the Blackshirts of Oswald Mosley who admired Hitler and Mussolini, and it is indeed unthinkable that any of us should have given them the least sympathy or support. Now I understand from Laurens Otter's article in an earlier issue of *Freedom*, that among the groups opposing the war against Iraq there are so-called Trotskyists (poor Trotsky that it should have come to this!) who are admirers and supporters of that dis-

gusting, genocidal, enemy of his own people, Saddam Hussein. Is Nicolas Walter seriously suggesting that anyone calling himself an anarchist should contemplate for one moment co-operating, even to the tiniest degree, with such people? If so, he has a lot of explaining to do.

Although I am a pacifist and have never (yet) killed anyone, I rejoiced exceedingly, as did all my friends and comrades, when we heard that Mussolini's dead body was hanging upside down outside a petrol station at the village of Dongo in northern Italy. Let us hope that before this letter goes to press, Saddam Hussein will have met with a similar fate at the hands of the Iraqi people whom he has abused for so long.

Tony Gibson

## Stop the Slaughter Stop the Capitalist War

The Gulf war is not unique. In it (as in other such contests) the state, through the media, tells us that Saddam Hussein the current enemy is the devil incarnate. No matter that a few years ago when he was a useful counter to Khomeini, that he was praised and Kurdish refugees assured that they were in no danger and sent back.

As usual we are supposed to be fighting a battle of good against evil. Saddam

Hussein is certainly just another Third World authoritarian butcher, a tyrant who has ruthlessly killed and exploited Iraqis for many years. In the name of principle, freedom and democracy the West ignored this and backed him up. he was 'our bastard' so that was okay. Kuwait, the while, remained an oil-rich feudal monarchy.

The cause of all the current hypocrisy is oil. This is a war for power and resources between the governments of the USA, Britain, the Gulf monarchies and Iraq. None of the people directly involved — the civilian men, women and children, the ordinary soldiers, you and me — have been asked if the war is necessary, let alone just. This is no surprise. We are pawns in the state's power games. The people have been ordered to kill and maim their brothers and sisters, fellow workers on both sides. This is a war of the powerful for more power. It is the powerful who control the war. It is the poor and the workers on both sides who pay the price, who suffer and die.

Capitalism has always done this — divided and ruled. War is never about freedom and democracy — just the opposite, states only want these for themselves: the liberty to rule.

Those we vote for represent us in words only. They decide on their own terms what is best for us. They don't ask their subjects what we think. So we are daily misled into accepting the state's lies. All the benefits are for the elite — the rich and the powerful, the bosses and the financiers. They eat and live well, they have their private hospitals and schools, they are free of the daily grind and humiliations. In return they supply blood and circuses, MacDonalds and Neighbours, Coke and war. Our wages are low, our hospitals and schools are shabby and under-funded. Profits count. We are expendable. Thrown on the dole or thrown into the front line.

The answer? Troops should train their weapons on the real enemy, their oppressors: the Ba'athist murderers in Iraq, the capitalist plutocrats and bureaucrats elsewhere. Those who work making the bombs for war, the workers, have the power collectively to stop work and stop the war. We must say *stop* and *no more*. When we organise across borders and take what rightfully belongs to all, wars will end.

Don't wage war, fight for peace. Fight the state, the same enemy here as there.

A.R. Blow  
(Wrekin Syndicalists)

## Thanks for the letters Keep sending them in!

## The war and anarchists

Whilst in general agreement with the 'Survey of the British Opposition' in your edition of 9th February, it seems to convey a gloomy prospect. It is not easy to stop a war and even more difficult to stop future wars.

A series of well organised demonstrations and direct action is likely to be more effective than a few large marches and we need persistence as well as numbers. The 1914 war ended when large numbers of soldiers deserted or went home, and the Italians and the French applied the same method in 1940. The present Gulf war is a convincing demonstration that all governments

are evil or incapable. The United States has wasted its resources in high technology (perhaps they don't trust the soldiers any more). This produces the opposite reaction in the Arab and Muslim world so that the victors will prove to be the vanquished just as in 1939-45.

So far I have not seen much anarchist anti-war activity but the support is from many new people so that the opportunity exists to warn them against leaders. We should remember that change is now more rapid with easier contacts between peoples and that the Arabs occupy a strategic position between Asia, Europe and Africa whilst England is now at the margin of world influence.

Norman

## Mutual Aid in the Snow

The recent snow storms provided me with a prime example of anarchy over state control.

A group of us found ourselves with our car stuck in a snow drift and had to retreat to a pub.

During the entirety of the storm the council were nowhere to be seen. Inferior snow ploughs were very quickly engulfed and buried due to a policy of 'never mind the quality, look at the price'. Most other people would probably choose a snow plough which had been designed with snow in mind — a few more of them wouldn't go amiss, either.

Following us into the pub was a squad of about a dozen Territorial Army volunteers and two police officers, one of whom was head of Staffordshire Transport Police.

One TA sergeant decided that regular recess would be beneficial! they not surprisingly achieved nothing apart from playing soldiers. When it came to clearing the road they dug out their Land Rover and left, mainly it seemed, because of an irate officer back at their barracks. In their defence they did get stuck in the first place because they were pushing people's cars out of drifts.

The police contribution was to make lots of telephone calls to HQ and get somewhat drunk in the evening. They left when the road was clear.

In contrast to this the pub's tenants provided a warm open fire which was much appreciated by people as they escaped the cold outside. Despite no electricity they provided meals and kept the drinks flowing. Blankets and accommodation were provided for the night, with local people also rallying round to provide food and shelter. Between them they put up around fifty people and this was repeated at another pub and hamlet a mile further down the road.

That night a farmer began clearing the road with his digger and recommenced at the crack of dawn the next day, with another farmer starting from the other end of the road.

Many of the people who had been trapped the previous day helped dig each other's cars out. The road was cleared by midday.

This was a prime example of mutual aid operating in a practical situation as government and industrial bureaucracy collapsed in a very short time.

Andrew McGingle

## US War Aims

The United States government is still talking about its war of liberation in its attempt to maintain public support. But what are the real reasons for going to war?

It is well known that the US government has for a long time wanted a permanent base in the Gulf. The current situation was too good an opportunity to miss, with the Soviet Union safely out of the way.

As for Bush's claims of bringing peace and stability to the Middle East, they seem further away than ever. This for the US government is no bad thing. When the war ends, whether Saddam Hussein stays or goes, the US will definitely be staying. Having worsened tensions in the Middle East they will surely demand that they maintain a presence to protect the flow of oil. This will mean a permanent base in either Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, who will hardly be in a position to say no, having just benefited from the multi-billion dollar war and the fact that all that military hardware will still be there. It could quite easily be turned on them.

The Middle East will be even more

volatile than it already is, so US allies will need their protection even if they don't really want it. The US is currently pouring massive arms consignments into such bastions of freedom and democracy as Syria, Turkey and Egypt. Along with the stirring up of ancient rivalries and national tensions this makes for a permanent state of insecurity.

Add to this Muslim hatred towards Israel which is increasingly being stirred up by fundamentalist Mullahs and which Israel is hardly helping by its continued brutal treatment of Palestinians. Then there is anti-American feeling which will leave Saudi Arabia and other US allies vulnerable to Muslim resentment.

The result of all this is that the US government will get its permanent base in the Gulf in exchange for offering them protection. This will guarantee a permanent flow of oil to US industry at a price they want to pay. The Saudis, Kuwaitis, etc., will not dare put up their oil prices without US consent, in case they withdraw their protection.

So much for a 'just' war!

AG

## Romantic View of the World?

Dear Comrades,

I was intrigued with the many points raised by Ken Atkinson in his letter ('A Romantic View of the World') in the 9th February edition of *Freedom*. The points he raises are too many to be dealt with exhaustively. One that I would like to comment on, however, is his mention of the "reality" of urbanisation. It is unfortunately true that many anarchists operate under a semi-religious ideology of primitive naturalism. The most consistent advocates of this ideology (see *The Fifth Estate*) operate on what is little more than an emotional gut-hatred of civilisation. Practical proposals earn their scorn, and their emotionalism all too frequently degenerates into a privatistic retreat into fantasy worlds either mystical or philosophical.

The point is that cities do not necessarily *have* to be the way they are now, and the way they are now is not necessarily an unalloyed *bad thing*. Last year I took my first plane trip in over a decade, back to the city where my parents have been resident for some time. This city, Regina, is situated in the middle of the Canadian prairies. Dry hardly expresses the natural climate of this region. This semi-desert condition is *not* the result of human agriculture. It is a given fact of the location. I challenge *all* and *every* advocate of anarchistic Luddism to simply survive in this environment, let alone lead the full uninhibited life that their imaginations concoct. We will not even mention the winters, for the sake of making their task easier, winters when temperatures can reach forty below.

Anyway, here I am watching out of the window. Brown, red, brown, yellow (a

few crops have actually grown this year), red, brown, muddy grey (prairie sloughs are not exactly a tourist attraction), red, brown, brown. Suddenly there's a forest, green, honest to God green. This is not a wilderness preserve. This is the city of Regina, an oasis of biological diversity that would be completely non-existent were it not for the generations of effort of those oh-so-nasty urbanites. Before settlement Regina was a swamp for three weeks in the spring and a dustbowl for the rest of the six months that it is not deep frozen. The water that supports this anomalous explosion of diversity comes from generations of water conservation efforts. The reservoirs that supply part of the water supply of prairie cities, while not exactly appealing to those who imagine Walt Disney scenes in every undeveloped area (there's nothing like dead cows floating in a body of water to make you wonder about its potability — I've seen such), are an invaluable habitat for wildlife that would otherwise lead a very precarious existence. In at least this case human activity has increased rather than reduced the diversity and resilience of the ecosystem.

Other examples could be found. All this is being done within the present restricted vision of urban life that we have inherited from the capitalist age and its successor the managerial age. Given the choice between living in the small isolated rural community that I grew up in (few of your readers know what it is like to live without running water, indoor toilets — remember forty below — reliable heating that doesn't depend on hauling and pulling, a reliable source of electricity and an ever-present ability to simply move further than the neighbours during a blizzard) and the potential libertarian city of the future, I would unhesitatingly choose the latter. Murray Bookchin has written many pages on libertarian municipalism, and I would suggest that interested readers refer to his *oeuvre*. I admit its deficiencies. Bookchin is excessively oriented towards philosophy and politics rather than practicality. Yet it is a beginning.

In sum I would tend to agree with Atkinson concerning his disparagement of the 'neo-romantic' trends all too prevalent in contemporary anarchism. I would add to what he says by noting that it is not simply a matter of recognising brute reality. It is also a matter of forming practical proposals that aim to improve and make people happier rather than merely carping at the sidelines. Hopefully there will be more of this in future anarchist publications.

Pat Murtagh  
Canada

## Census

The British government has recently congratulated the South African government on its plan to stop classifying South African citizens according to their 'race'.

So it is ironic that the British government plans a census in April which will attempt to compulsorily register everyone's 'race'.

For this and other reasons I shall (yet again) be refusing all co-operation with the census this year. I urge others to do likewise — I have discovered that it is extremely easy to evade the census.

Albert Beale



## Bristol Anarchist Book Fair

16th-17th March 1991  
10am to 6pm

at

St Werburgh's Community Centre,  
Horley Road, Baptist Mills, Bristol

stalls - videos - creche - food - bar  
free admission

## Poetry Reading

6th - 9th March 1991  
at 7.30pm

New End Theatre

New End, Hampstead, London NW3  
Box Office: 071-794 0022

Michael Horovitz, Jeff Nuttall, Bob  
Cobbing, Tom Pickard, John Rety,  
John Heath-Stubbs, Dinah  
Livingstone, Kathleen McPhilemy,  
Bernard Kops, Chrys Salt,  
Micheline Wandor, Christopher  
Hampton, and many more . . .

plus music with Marton Kovacs  
(violin)

Tickets £6 (£3 concessions)

## FREEDOM fortnightly

ISSN 0016 0504

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

Printed by Aldgate Press, London E1

## MEETINGS

### Kronstadt 1921 Revolt against red bureaucrats

Wednesday 13th March  
7.30pm

at

Conway Hall

Red Lion Square, London WC1

with ACF speakers

organised by the Anarchist  
Communist Federation

### Anarchist Forum

Fridays at about 8pm at the Mary Ward  
Centre, 42 Queen Square (via Cosmo  
Street off Southampton Row), London  
WC1.

#### 1991 SEASON OF MEETINGS

8th March - 'Anarcho-Pacifism' (speaker  
Marten Low)

15th March - General discussion

22nd March - 'Anarchism in Spain: The '90s'  
(speaker J.M. Alventosa Ferri)

19th April - 'Anarchism and the National  
Curriculum' (speaker Chris Draper)

26th April - General discussion

3rd May - 'Race: The Problem for  
Libertarians' (speaker Peter Neville)

10th May - General discussion

Volunteer speakers or discussion group  
leaders are wanted for the 'To be arranged'  
and 'Discussion group' slots as above and  
from 17th May to 31st May 1991 — all at 8pm  
to 10pm. We hope to continue the meetings  
from 7th June to 14th July 1991 either at the  
same time or at the earlier time of 6pm to 8pm  
(however, if we are the only group using the  
Centre the staff may wish to close at 8pm).

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