

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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FIFTY PENCE

"We anarchists do not want to emancipate the people. We want the people to emancipate themselves."  
Errico Malatesta

## The political jugglers, magicians and clowns have come and gone WHY TRUST THE POLITICIANS?

Television allows the idle rich, the unemployed, mothers and their infants, as well as the retired citizens of this country, to observe the antics of the politicians as they hold their annual circuses; where the trapeze artists, the magicians, the jugglers and the clowns perform to the delight of the applauding 'delegates' (the Tories have no delegates, only representatives and they don't count).

This writer has observed and listened to them with varying degrees of disgust. Obviously by definition anarchists haven't all that much time for politicians. But what makes the whole spectacle more disgusting is that *neither have the politicians!* Liberal, Labour, Tory shadow ministers and real ministers devoted

part of their speeches to denouncing their opposite numbers as *liars*, as *power seekers*, as *incompetents*, as *inefficient*, as *second rate*. There was no limit to the insults that they hurled at each other. It should be stressed, however, that the Tory Ministers, especially the Employment Secretary Michael Howard and the Chancellor Norman Lamont, went far beyond anything hurled at them by way of insults by the opposition parties. And the grinning John Major clapped and led the standing ovation for both.

Perhaps in an anarchist paper there is no need to point out that these politicians are all actors repeating their lines prepared for them by the speech writers for the occasion. But there is no question

that both the quality of speeches from the platform of the two major parties, as well as the interviews in the lobbies, do reveal the Tories as being the biggest liars without a doubt. Michael Howard, interviewed after his speech, lied with gusto and his interviewer either hadn't the arguments or the courage to call this smarmy, wealthy lawyer-turned-politician a liar of the first order.

What anarchists cannot understand is that something like 70% of adults entitled to vote actually do so for people who denounce each other as liars and as being quite incapable of running the country's affairs!

Why don't we all start to think about how to run our own lives without the politicians?

## MORE FOR THE RICH

In his recent address to the Institute of Directors, the Tories' God-fearing chairman Chris Patten referred to the Government's intention to introduce a radical cut in the inheritance tax. At present a 40% tax is charged on estates above £140,000. A Tory Central Office spokesman said that Mr Patten's speech was "a highly speculative think-piece for Tory philosophy for the nineties", while a Labour spokesman dismissed it as "insignificant, saying that the proportion of people affected was minimal".

Mr Patten's theme was that the Tories wanted to encourage people "to build up wealth of their own which they can pass on to their children". A continuation of Mrs Thatcher's "property owning democracy" with a vengeance. It is obvious that the majority of the people in this country will never have property to leave to their children and that any legislation is once more intended to favour the better off — not just the rich minority as the Labour spokesman implied. It

is a fact that there is already a growing *rentier* class: people who already own their own house and who have inherited or will inherit their parents' house. Some will sell, others will keep it and enjoy the income from renting. And presumably as each Tory government comes into office the tax ceiling will go up and up accordingly. A new property class?

One of the reasons why the inheritance tax is "insignificant" (£1,250 million last year) is, as *The Independent* editorial of 1st October points out, because "in practice it is easily evaded, particularly by the rich, so it is neither fair nor effective".

The Labour Party in dismissing the Patten proposal to raise the tax free level on property as being "insignificant", is running away from the real problem: **that the property laws are full of loopholes for the rich to get richer.**

Last year £8,100 million was passed from one generation to another (Mintel) and the inheritance tax

brought in £1,250 million. For the year 2000 that transfer of capital will have risen to £13,000 million. Surely a Labour government intent on a "more equal society" should oppose not only Patten's proposals but also block the loopholes.

As to John Major's "classless society", it's not worth discussing surely?

And any new reader who thinks *Freedom* is going soft on the Labour Party can have another think. All we are saying is that if the Labour Party proposes to bring about the "more equal society" it has only one weapon within capitalism: taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor and to get rid of poverty in our society.

As anarchists we still believe that no government will be able to get rid of a privileged class through legislation without creating a new privileged class. For this reason we still believe in the social revolution, however remote it may appear to be at this moment.

## Destroying the Coal Industry

We drew attention in *Freedom* (21st September, 'The price of privatisation is paid by the taxpayer') to the effect on the coal industry as a result of the privatisation of the electricity power stations. In 1993 when contracts with British coal expire, National Power will be importing as much coal as it can from wherever it is cheapest. It was estimated that every one million tons of imported coal would put 800-1,000 miners out of work. And the target was fourteen million tons. Hence some 14,000 miners on the dole.

But in the meantime an investigation into the privatisation of the coal industry carried out by the Government's merchant bankers N.M. Rothschild for the Energy Secretary John Wakeham, if adopted would virtually destroy the mining industry in this country. The report suggests privatising fourteen pits with a workforce of 11,000 miners. This would mean closing the other 46 pits and sacking 40,000 miners — four-fifths of the remaining workforce. But also, according to knowledgeable people within the industry, half the remaining fourteen pits have relatively short term reserves and could be closed down within ten years.

A number of proposed closures are in Nottinghamshire where the breakaway miners' union, the UDM, are in control, and having gone on working during the miners' strike of 1984-85 as well as working closely with the government and British Coal, they are going to feel perhaps that you cannot trust the bosses after all. Under the Rothschild plan

they will be cut down to four pits and 4,000 miners.

We wonder how the miners in this 'freedom loving', 'democratic' Britain — which has the arrogance to want to teach the rebellious Eastern Europeans how to run their lives — will react to the Rothschild report.

The Russian and the Romanian miners, in spite of not living in the British utopia as described by Messrs Howard and Lamont last week, seem to have more guts and as a result have not been ignored.

Perhaps the British should start learning a few lessons from the East!

## Conspiracy, cock-up or coincidence?

Anarchists, of course, don't believe in the conspiracy theory of history, even historians mainly prefer the cock-up. So it must be just coincidence that Sir Allan Green, Director of Public Prosecutions, was stopped by police on Wednesday evening, 2nd October, in the Kings Cross area of London and accused of kerb crawling. Just coincidence that this was the day after he had announced that he was going to prosecute four former West Midlands detectives involved in the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings enquiry, including the man who led the investigations, for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and perjury.

It is not uncommon for male members of the

establishment to avail themselves of the services of a prostitute, perhaps through a desire for the more unusual forms of sexual gratification that their wives are not willing to provide. Some psychologists link this to the effects of the single sex public school education enjoyed by those from a privileged background. Indeed, if we are to believe Linda St Claire, a.k.a. Miss Whiplash, founder and leader of the Corrective Party, interviewed by *The Guardian* (4th October), her own customers include a cabinet minister and a television newsreader.

We do not know whether Allan Green was a regular visitor to this favourite red light district of the media, and in any case have no views on his behaviour one way or another, but would not be surprised to find that he had upset many establishment figures, not to say most of the police from chief constables to constables. No doubt reports of increased police activity on the night in question, and that the police appeared to be looking for a particular person, are greatly exaggerated.

The four years that he has been on the job, working for the state that is, has seen the very belated collapse of the cases against the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six and the withdrawal, on appeal, of the DPP case against the Maguire Seven. A man "widely liked and respected", to quote a *Guardian* leader, and now widely praised for his integrity, had perhaps just a little too much of it for the establishment. But surely the manner of his going was just a coincidence?

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## What they will do for money!

By the time this issue of *Freedom* appears, one or two more pugilists will have died as a result of a battering received mainly to the head in the name of a 'sport' called boxing.

Were it not for television coverage, no so-called 'sport' would be big business today. Instead it is, and all the hangers-on from promoters, managers, trainers, coaches, sports writers, television commentators, have a vested interest in keeping it going — and boxing is the most disgusting. Society condemns the pimp who exploits a woman's body for money. What difference with the boxing entrepreneurs who exploit the giving and receiving of punishment for their income?

Should we advocate the abolition of boxing by law? We don't because it cannot be made to work so long as there are enough people willing to pay money to watch two people batter themselves into unconsciousness. It was reported that in the recent battering the frenzied voyeurs rushed to the ring when the referee stopped the fight before the end of the round to see more battering until they realised that the poor chap was flat out and unconscious.

## Corruption only in the East?

Our stiff-lipped Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in his wide-ranging address to the Tory faithful referred to the demise of the communist and socialist regimes which he explained was due to their "inefficiency and corruption". That the Russians are "inefficient" by capitalist standards is probably true. That they are more corrupt than the capitalist countries is just not true. There are black markets and one can imagine that collective farm and industrial bosses are involved in corrupt practices, but compared with the capitalist world they must be innocents!

If corruption has been the downfall of "communism and socialism" in the East, how explain that capitalism is flourishing in spite of the collapse of banks such as the BCCI — dozens of their top men are awaiting trial — or of Polly Peck for hundreds of millions of pounds, and the boss is under arrest, financial and sex scandals in Japan at

government level; in the USA most of Reagan's administration had to be sacked because of financial scandals, and the Guinness scandal in this country. Every day turn to the financial pages and you will find yet another financial scandal to start the day. And capitalism and the banks and the Stock Exchange go on as if nothing had happened.

The collapse of the Russian system is not money corruption as Douglas Hurd implied. It is the collapse of a system which attempted to introduce communism by force on a people who only needed to be liberated from Tsarist tyranny, but not then to be bludgeoned into another tyranny.

Alas, the "liberation" the Tories were greeting with the Lithuanian Prime Minister among their special guests, is surely a repetition of the old story. It's a case of these people jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. Or vice versa perhaps?

## Not written by anarchists ...

"Those who propose a fundamentally different society can no longer be condemned in the name of realism. On the contrary, realism now consists in acknowledging that 'industrialism' has reached a stage where it can go no further, blocked by obstacles of its own making. If nothing can go on as before, it is because of all that *has* gone on before. There can be no piecemeal solutions; the obstacles will only be overcome by overall restructuring, total transformation." - Andre Gorz

"[The abolition of nuclear weapons] requires a different imagination, a different outlook, and a different way of viewing all the affairs of men from any that has been in the world before." - Bertrand Russell

The above quotations are not from anarchists, but anarchists agree with them. Anarchists add that a total transformation cannot be brought about by keeping the power structure and putting another lot at the top, and that to

imagine a different set of bosses is not to have a different imagination.

Nuclear weapons are dangerous to the state, not just to the subjects whom the state sends to war. They are too dangerous ever to be used, and horribly dangerous when they are just kept in store. Yet every state wants to keep or acquire nuclear weapons, to establish its credentials as a state.

The social relationship of domination, nasty as it was for the dominated, may have been useful for some in the past. Now, it has become too dangerous for the species and the planet. Now, for our own safety, we need a society where the domination of one person by another is impossible. We cannot establish such a free society overnight, but we can take the first step, which is to *want* a free society.

## Anarchists and the NHS — a paradox?

It is clear from the anarchist press that anarchists in general approve of the National Health Service and call for defence of the NHS against creeping privatisation.

"Anarchists supporting compulsion by the state", cries someone.\* "What is going on here? Had these views come from neophytes it would have been easy to think that they did not understand what anarchism stands for, but the ACF ... and the editors of *Freedom* ... are they saying that we ought to be deprived of a

freedom enjoyed until quite recent times, the freedom not to pay for medical services?"

This sounds like a good point, but only to those who think anarchism is simple opposition to the state. Yes, anarchists oppose the state, but there is more to anarchism than a negative.

The positive basis of anarchism was defined by Charlotte Wilson, the founder and first editor of *Freedom*, in the 1890s: "Anarchists believe that the purpose of society is the increase of individual opportunities."

The NHS increases individual opportunities by providing every individual with access to medical services. Anarchist support for the NHS is not paradoxical at all. Neither is anarchist support for free access to water, free education, free libraries, free public transport, or any good made available to individuals by their living and working together.

This by no means contradicts opposition to the state. The state decreases individual opportunities, as do the money system and other institutions of dominance and subjection. Its contribution to the NHS is to return part of the wealth it has looted in taxes. The actual service is provided by nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers, cleaners, clerks, and whoever else works in the NHS. They would not cease to exist if the boss-and-subject type of social relationship was eliminated.

Donald Room

\*George Walford, contribution to *Freedom*, reprinted in *Angles on Anarchism*, Calabria Press, £2, post free inland from Freedom Press Bookshop. NB: the exclamation is tongue-in-cheek. George is not an ignoramus.

## Freedom and Eastern Europe

No one reading the article 'Yeltsin Rises' (*Freedom* 21st September) could suppose that we 'approve' of Yeltsin. The article says that the aim of all rulers, whatever the jargon they may use, is the seizure of power, that their power is limited by what ordinary people will tolerate, and that anarchists believe that all rulers are unnecessary. In the same issue, another reader calls for comment on "how anarchist writers of the past have proved to be so thoroughly right".

Firstly, Marxist-Leninists and anarchists do not share the same 'ultimate aim'. Anarchists believe in the abolition of government; Marxist-Leninists believe in the imposition of one-party rule (a dictatorship) and successfully put their theories into practice in Russia in 1917, destroying a popular social revolution.

The fundamental difference between Marxist-Leninism and capitalism is not that one has 'noble theoretical aims' while the other does not. The difference is that capitalism advocates a type of freedom at the expense of equality, Marxist-Leninism a type of equality at the expense of freedom.

We might well agree that Marxist-Leninism *in practice* shares many of the worst features of capitalism, but would deny absolutely the 'noble aspirations' our correspondent claims for it.

Lenin was under no such illusion. When Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, of Russian origin, returned from United States they were starry-eyed with the 'noble' ideals of a social revolution and were willing to work with the Bolsheviks. Lenin, who believed

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among other things that duplicity against one's political opponents was "not only not reprehensible but commendable and necessary", for a while tried to win the anarchists over by pretending they shared the same 'ultimate aim'. He used some phrases about "the withering away of the State", though at the same time admitting that this would not come about for generations in Russia. But the disillusionment of the anarchists was rapid.

We prefer to look at the record of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, for Marxist-Leninism is nothing if not that, for its sole claim to fame is that Lenin was successful in imposing complete state control in one country in 1917. Lenin's aim was to industrialise a backward country and to move its largely peasant population away from the land and into factories and construction work. Kropotkin predicted that the methods of the Bolsheviks would lead to the hatred of the peasantry. The Bolshevik weapon was the threat of mass starvation as twenty million peasants were driven from the land, dragooned by a conscript army which itself was terrorised and held together by ruthless reprisals against deserters and their families. It was this that put the land out of cultivation, and not the drought or the Western blockades.

The incompetent and corrupt bureaucracy could not organise the collection and distribution of foodstuffs and in 1920 millions of tons of foodstuffs perished while thousands of people died of hunger and disease, but it was much more important to Lenin to maintain the bureaucracy than to allow free distribution to continue.

Marxist-Leninists always do claim that their system has never really been given an honest trial; and without the slightest justification. We have never denied that the Western powers have tried to destroy the Soviet economy, or the nature of the arms race; on the contrary, we have been at pains to point this out, but Lenin instituted his policies at a time when he believed that his Red Army was sweeping all before it. Lenin imprisoned, tortured and murdered our comrades. By 1921 he was denouncing "petit-bourgeois anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies" (when they were executed it was on the grounds that 'anarchist' meant 'bandit') and counter-revolutionaries (including Makhno, who had fought Denikin and the White Guards), and Berkman and Goldman were exposing all this by 1922 in the pages of *Freedom*, in the face of a campaign of lies and duplicity by the Moscow-backed western Communist press.

But of course all this was only *in practice*, and our correspondent's interest is in "noble theoretical aims".

Lenin put his theories fully into practice, and so disastrous was the result that by 1921 he

had to introduce his 'New Economic Policy' — that is, a partial return to capitalism. Which makes it scarcely surprising that his latest successor Boris Yeltsin has "the characteristics of a successful capitalist". Our correspondent's remarks about him are precisely what we said.

We don't claim as the Marxists do to predict the future, but our correspondent's statement that "very few

ordinary Soviet citizens who have backed Yeltsin can imagine what life is like under Western capitalism" is nonsense; it is precisely because they have the capacity to imagine something better that they back him. And the short answer to his final question is: No, it won't.

Anarchists were the first victims of the Marxist-Leninists because, as we pointed out and still point out, socialism cannot be imposed from above nor production

controlled from the centre. Today we are among the first to point out the price that the Soviet peoples will have to pay under capitalism. But we also believe that when people gain their freedom they will be able to manage their affairs better than under any government. They will 'make mistakes' — like Lenin did — but under freedom — unlike Lenin and his followers — learn from experience.

We hope the foregoing will help to clarify our position, and enable our correspondent to come down off the fence on one side or the other.

Charles Crute

## A Structured Anarchism: a second opinion

What label would you attach to a society whose features included monetary exchange of goods via the market, competition between separate enterprises, income differentials, and a social security/taxation system administered by a bureaucracy?

I guess that many anarchists would have little hesitation in describing this as capitalism. So it may come as a surprise to find all of these elements present in the 'collectivist-anarchist' society which John Griffin, in *A Structured Anarchism*, suggests could be established after capitalism has supposedly been abolished.

It is true that John envisages none of these features surviving in precisely the same form in which they exist at present. The market would be a "genuinely free" one, rid of manipulation by capitalists and the state. Competition would be "far more moderate". There would be no "gross inequality in pay" (my emphasis). The benefits/taxation system would be "much simplified and more generous", and the bureaucracy which ran it would be "slimmed down".

I can see the appeal of such measures to someone seeking to smooth over some of the rough edges of present-day society, but does this really amount to the type of *fundamental* social change sought by anarchists?

*A Structured Anarchism* gave me very little feeling for what exactly it is about capitalism that the author objects to, and what he thinks might motivate the mass movement needed to overthrow capitalism and build a new society.

The opening sentence refers to "wars, poverty and growing ecological problems". However, I suspect that such aspects of capitalism do not (thankfully) dominate the day-to-day lives of most of the pamphlet's readers. Speaking for myself, the way capitalism confronts me on an immediate level is through wage-labour and the money system. My anti-capitalist feeling is fuelled daily by a gut reaction against the toll of human time and energy wasted in carrying out tasks only in order to earn money to purchase the means of existence.

I know that this feeling is not peculiar to me, as my workmates are constantly telling me that the solution to all their problems would be less work and more money. In fact they've got it the wrong way round! What is needed is less *useless toil*, true, but more *useful work* (to use William Morris's distinction), coupled not with greater quantities of

money but *no money at all* — that is, *free* access to the material necessities of life.

In my view a revulsion against wage-slavery and the money system will form one of the strongest motivations of any future anti-capitalist movement. In contrast to John Griffin's view, therefore, I find it hard to believe that having revolted against capitalism in order to get rid of money and wages, people will then want to re-introduce these things in any shape or form in the new post-revolutionary society.

Considered from the angle of the wage-slave, then, John Griffin's collectivist-anarchist society, where "remuneration" is "directly related to output", holds little attraction. It is true that this might be a *fairer* set-up, in the sense that the hardest workers would presumably receive the highest rewards, yet surely the basic point is that any system where you have to work in order to eat would still in effect be *experienced* as a wages system, regardless of whether or not that's what you choose to call it.

Throughout *A Structured Anarchism*, and in our recent exchange of views on the letters page of *Freedom*, John raised what are in his opinion a number of problems standing in the way of establishing a totally money-less, or 'communist-anarchist', society. I would like to deal with three of these.

First, a moneyless society would have "no means of ensuring work done"; secondly, "nor does it relate that work directly to levels of consumption" (*A Structured Anarchism*, page 17). As far as the first of these problems is concerned, I would argue that people can be motivated to work by means other than the stick/carrot of monetary reward. As John himself acknowledges, "people enjoy working *together*, not for a boss, but towards an end which they can see is socially useful" (*Freedom*, 21st September). It is precisely this sort of useful and enjoyable collective effort which in a communist-anarchist society would replace the skimmed and shirked wage-slavery of capitalism.

As for the second problem, I have already argued that making consumption dependent on work perpetuates the wages system under a new guise. All I demand of the post-revolutionary society is the opportunity to join in whatever activity is required to produce the necessary common wealth, and the freedom to enjoy a level of material consumption summed up in Kropotkin's slogan,

'Well-Being For All'.

If, on the other hand, my neighbours want to work only half as hard and yet consume twice as much — or even if they want to do no work at all and hoard material possessions in their house until they have no room to move — then by all means let them. Even if they did not quickly tire of such an existence, in a genuinely free society all levels of production would be sufficiently abundant to accommodate such eccentrics.

Thirdly, John argues that a moneyless society would lack the "accounting mechanism" needed to integrate complex activities. I would argue, however, that monetary accounting does not provide the sort of information about supply and demand needed by a society in which production is for use rather than for profit.

In capitalism 'book-keeping' is conducted both in monetary terms and in physical quantities. The shoe factory owner, for example, knows that he has 5,000 pairs of shoes in his warehouse, and that this has a wholesale value of £75,000. A moneyless society simply dispenses with the monetary side, and reckons only in physical quantities. Its 'accounting mechanism' is best described as simple 'stocktaking'.

With production carried on solely for the direct satisfaction of human needs, the only information required is not how much money people might have to spend on footwear, but simply how many people need a pair of shoes. This is exactly the type of information which a market system — "genuinely free" or otherwise — *cannot provide*, since I may be barefooted but if I have no money in my pocket my need for shoes does not register 'demand' in an economy based on buying and selling.

To end with, in the 21st September issue of *Freedom*, John poses the question: "What's wrong with using the tried and trusted workers' co-op as the basic building block of libertarian economic organisation?" The answer to this question teases out some of the capitalist dynamics inherent in the collectivist-anarchist economy described in *A Structured Anarchism*.

Imagine that there are two workers' co-ops manufacturing the same product and both trying to sell in the same market. Say that one of the co-ops is able to sell its line more cheaply and thus in greater quantities. Consequently the other co-op "suffer[s] a reduced demand for the goods it

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# The Ignoble Art

I have a very ambivalent attitude towards boxing. It was very much a part of my life as a kid. I remember listening on the radio to the Randolph Turpin versus Sugar Ray Robinson middleweight bout in 1951, and joined my family in the excitement and delight with the result. The whole country in fact, as I dimly remember the event, registered an emotional outburst of patriotic pride. It seems quite odd in retrospect. At school almost every PT lesson concluded with a boxing session, 'putting on the gloves', and encouraged by my peers I once exchanged blows with a classmate. My Uncle Jack had a friend who ran Charlemont Boxing Club in West Bromwich, and keen that my cousin and close friend Terry should learn "how to stand up for himself", he was made to join the club. And I went along, but Terry hated it, so he and I used to 'spar' together most of the time without really coming to blows — or just skip with a rope. Ever since skipping has seemed to me to be intrinsically linked with boxing. Terry was a Christian and had become a pacifist; he said he was against war and boxing. To me, then, working in a local foundry and hardly literate, the idea seemed quite incredulous. My mother said Terry was just 'silly'. However, I had long discussions with him about boxing, and eventually came round to thinking that there was not much to commend it as a sport.

But the real jolt in my thoughts about boxing came when I read Edith Summerskill's little book *The Ignoble Art*, published in 1956. Summerskill, bless her memory, was a Labour MP who in the late 1950s gained notoriety, as well as much ill-deserved abuse and ridicule, by suggesting that boxing was a brutal sport that resulted in brain damage to the participants and fostered unhealthy aggressive impulses among onlookers, and should therefore be proscribed. In fact in 1960 she tried to introduce a Bill prohibiting boxing, but it was defeated — though it generated a good deal of discussion and emotion, and gave sports writers like Peter Wilson a good deal to think about. Summerskill's arguments were ignored or derided by her contemporaries, and she found little support from the BMA who are now, thirty years later, campaigning against the sport. But I took her arguments very much to heart. I did not agree with legally proscribing it as a sport (any more than I would proscribe smoking or suicide), but I did agree with the sentiments she expressed: boxing was brutal, sadistic and degrading, it was deleterious to the long term health of the boxers, and it was best discouraged as a sport. It seemed to be a

lingering remnant of the kind of violent spectacles one associates with ancient Rome.

Yet looking back over the past three decades, I am surprised by two things. Firstly, though I long ago concluded that boxing was an ignoble sport, I continually feel drawn towards it. Should it appear on television I have consciously and deliberately to stop myself watching it — even though repulsed by it. And I find this strange. It says something about one's early conditioning. Secondly, I had the feeling that boxing as a sporting activity would go into decline and eventually cease to have currency in the contemporary world, but this has not happened. Prize fights, as they are called, still fill our television screens and newspaper headlines, and men like Henry Cooper and Frank Bruno — both kind of folk heroes — continue to give boxing a respectable uplift. Around a decade ago, with the tragic death of a young Welsh boxer, Johnny Owen, questions were raised about the validity of boxing as cultural activity. But the general response then, as now, was re-affirmation of its value. As one reporter put it: Owen "lived for his sport — and died for it", implying that boxing was something worth dying for. The general tenet of the obituaries of that 'shy hero' were therefore an oblique defence of the so-called noble art of self-defence. And now the same scenario repeats itself. While Michael Watson lies critically ill from severe head injuries — literally fighting for his life — a Tory minister has the gall to commend boxing as a sport for young boys. It gives them the opportunity to make good in the world, teachers them 'manliness', and, he remarks, is not really dangerous. Such thoughts are worth commenting upon.

First, there is the continued affirmation of specific cultural attributes — the values that make boxing into a 'manly' sport — the same 'male' virtues that Summerskill argued were to be deplored rather than encouraged. Thus obituaries to Johnny Owen stressed his dedication to boxing, that he lived for 'competition', and that he "smiled at the prospect of getting hurt". He was used as an apt symbol for an aggressive, individualistic culture, the hero of a sport that makes a virtue of violence. When Summerskill stressed that boxing, unlike other sports, had the primary

aim of hurting an opponent and rendering him insensible, she was ridiculed by boxing commentators who stressed it was the skill of scoring points. They tended to down-play the fact that if a person got knocked out scoring would cease and the fight terminated.

Then secondly, there is the continuous emphasis that boxing is not a dangerous sport. Although discussions are now broached regarding headguards, shorter fights, and more medical supervision, it is often stressed that boxing has "a very low rate of serious or fatal accidents" and is much less dangerous than football, cricket and motor racing. Summerskill's book met with the same response: boxing, given medical supervision, did not lead to serious harm, apart from the accidental injuries that may happen in any sport. Importantly, these statements tend to come from either boxing officials or medical

officers associated with various boxing organisations — rather than the boxers themselves — although at long last the BMA has eventually come round to accepting what Summerskill was saying without medical back-up thirty years ago. Deaths from championship bouts — which are the ones that get publicity — seem to occur at regular intervals. Some three decades ago the world welterweight champion Benny Paret, an illiterate Cuban emigre, died after losing the title to Emil Griffith. A year later Davey Moore was fatally injured after being knocked down by Sugar Ramos — prompting Pete Seeger to write the song 'Who Killed Davey Moore'. A decade ago Angelo Jacopucci died from brain injuries after losing the European middleweight title to another British folk hero, Alan Minter. Minter was so disturbed by this that he seriously thought of giving up boxing — but didn't. After this fight *The Guardian* published a perceptive leader (25th July 1978) suggesting that the manly art of self-defence was often the grubby art of

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## News from Northern Ireland

Larry Murchan was the 2,000th civilian to be killed in the current war in Ireland. And since his death a number of other people have been killed, highlighting the fact that not only have we passed another major milestone in death and destruction but that they seem set to go on. That politicians and politics have failed us was never more obvious, especially in this weird time before an election, the consequences of which will be felt rather more indirectly here than elsewhere. "Rustlings in the undergrowth" is the coy phrase Secretary of State Peter Brooke uses for possible conversations between politicians here. Yet even he is aware that his own political stake in Northern Ireland will be up for grabs in election time and, more pertinently, that the two Unionist parties will soon start squabbling over the Unionist vote. Out of this situation some real stirrings in the undergrowth are emerging, looking to import notions of people power from Eastern Europe. Steps are in hand for the setting up of an independent commission to take submissions and make recommendations about the situation here. The basic idea comes from the editor and associates of *Fortnight*, the leading independent political journal in Ireland. Anarchists will be watching this with interest. How will such a commission be funded? Who will be on it? How will they be selected? What authority will the report have? Who will receive it? And who will be able to address the commission? In the lead article of the October issue of *Fortnight* the origins of this idea are clearly linked with the emergence of groups like the Peace Train, Families Against Intimidation and others that have arisen in response to paramilitary violence. However, the next paragraph of the article has the tantalising words: "Now is the time to see whether people power can confront the deeper causes of violence and injustice — from whatever quarter that stems". And yet further thoughts are expressed on what these "deeper causes" might be. And therein lies the sticky patch in front of all journeys into people power — the frightening truth that the state may not give up without a fight.

Down south in the Republic of Ireland, it's scandal a-go-go with the political career of Charles Haughey in deep shit. His

Fianna Fail Party have cultivated a society where the ability of business tycoons to mount spectacular 'strokes' combining business inside information with political contacts is seen as the right thing to do. Various associates of Haughey, including his son, have been implicated in a string of financial scandals that make the Marcos regime look like a church jumble sale, but the 'boss' himself hasn't yet been directly implicated. Even so, questions fly about in the public mind about his own immense personal wealth and members of the squeaky-clean Progressive Democrats who prop up the coalition government led by Haughey are getting embarrassed by being associated with Haughey and Co. We may see an election in the south before we see one in our neighbouring island.

Compare if you will the killing of a man in Cookstown recently who, with three others was challenged by the police and when an object was thrown, was shot dead by the police. Compare this with the response to the rioting in Newcastle, Cardiff and Oxford. Not even a plastic bullet fired! And the policeman concerned is still on duty, while an internal enquiry which will satisfy neither side of the political divide is underway. And down south a member of the Garda Síochána has been arrested on charges relating to IRA membership and passing information prejudicial to the safety of the state. Bring back Dixon of Dock Green!

Together with some friends I have been putting on street theatre stunts over recent Saturdays to excite discussion and promote opposition to Du Pont's plans to build a major toxic waste incinerator in Derry. Never before has the company and its senior figures been so much in the papers for winning industrial awards and for making donations and engaging in collaborations with the universities and schools. This reality of Derry as a 'company town' is driven home in the discussions that run on around the street theatre stunts, where the tension between people's detestation of the company and their activities is tempered by the fear that Du Pont will pull out of Derry. This is the very stuff of *wage slavery*. Any thoughts on how to respond to it?

Dave Duggan

## A Structured Anarchism

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produces" (*A Structured Anarchism*, page 22). How does it respond?

One way of recapturing its share of the market would be through reducing its production costs. Perhaps its workers would have to work more intensely, or cut their own wages. Or perhaps they could use cheaper and less durable raw materials, or cut corners in their methods of production. Either way, the effect is that the factors governing production begin to slip out of conscious human control and instead become dictated by the impersonal forces of the market. The exchange value of the product would replace its use value as the key priority of production.

John appears not to notice the irony of juxtaposing the statement that "Marx maintained that state capitalism ... would evolve into communism, as the state 'withered away' ..." with Malatesta's (and his own) belief that "a free collectivist society might evolve into a communist one" (*A Structured Anarchism*, page 19). As we know, one result of past state capitalist revolutions has in fact been an immense strengthening of the state. The same is likely to be true of a 'collectivist-anarchist' revolution with regard to money, wages and the market. These things will not wither away. The revolution must eliminate them entirely and immediately.

Mark Shipway

## Poll Tax News from the North West

Burnley is one of the worst places for committals, with over twenty poll tax jailings. Protests are being held outside councillor's houses. One was held on 10th September outside Labour Councillor Ken Butterworth's house. Militants stood about holding red banners while some anarchists hurled abuse. A report about the protest appeared in *The Evening Telegraph*, and an interview was aired on Radio Lancashire. A representative of Class War told the lady reporter: "The poll tax was made for anarchism!"

Anarchists from the North West disrupted the Green Party conference, holding up a huge banner against the sell-out of Green 2000.

In Lancaster, 41 committal cases were heard on 7th October. Fourteen appeared, and 25 stayed away. Those who turned up were given suspended sentences and ordered to pay. None of them seemed to be politically motivated. The system grinds on with 5,500 of this year's liability orders granted in three sittings, with plenty more to come ...

North West Forum, the independent APT (anti poll tax) group is hosting a national conference at Manchester Town Hall on 26th-27th October. Contact 061 707 1584.

Kevin Klubman

At a time when the reorganisation of the National Health Service coincides with election campaigning in Britain, this issue of *The Raven* is particularly opportune.

The last time that the anarchists published any substantial statement on health, to the best of my knowledge, was just after the Second World War when a Labour Government was setting up the National Health Service as part of its Fabian-inspired idea of socialism. The extract from that publication, John Hewetson's 'Ill-health, Poverty and the State', reproduced here (itself prefaced by a quotation from Kropotkin sixty years earlier), was designed to show that in general conditions in the 1940s were not so very different from when Kropotkin wrote; that the mortality from particular diseases might have fallen, but the main burden of ill-health fell most heavily on the poor. But in the 45 years since Hewetson wrote, science and technology have gone much further than people could ever have imagined in those days. So much so that health provision is on the one hand an essential part of the capitalist economy in terms of research and development (for example, the pharmaceutical industry) so that there can be no going back to the time when the doctor was only called out to the most serious cases; and on the other hand, has come to be perceived by all sections of the community, however they may vote, as a necessity, so that a measure of socialism of a kind has come to be taken for granted, and any attempt to do away with it would be a certain vote loser at election time.

The Tories are not 'privatising' the National Health Service. What they are doing, as Katy Andrews who is herself employed in secretarial work in a London hospital shows,

## THE RAVEN - 15 ON HEALTH

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in the most overtly political of the articles here, is to introduce the management techniques of private business rather than civil service style bureaucracy in order to cut expenditure on that most expensive item of cost — human labour. *The London Evening Standard* (8th October 1991) reported:

"When Peter Burroughs picked up his £207,000 pay-off cheque and drove out of Guy's Hospital in his company BMW 525i, he left behind a sense of amazement — that a supposedly under-funded health service was splashing out salaries that would make City dealers sit up and take notice.

Burroughs was until July the £70,000-a-year finance director of the Guy's Hospital Trust, one of more than a dozen in London chosen to spearhead the Government's transformation of ageing NHS hospitals into efficient businesses.

The former finance chief and his replacement, Malcolm Dennett of City accountants Price Waterhouse, were brought in by Guy's chief executive Peter Griffiths.

Griffiths is paid £90,000 a year, plus a Rover 820E — and a Ford Fiesta for his wife.

He was tempted from the Department of Health and now earns £5,000 a year more than his former boss, NHS chief executive Duncan Nichol, and indeed £40,000 more than the Secretary of State for Health, William Waldegrave.

Griffiths and the other financial experts chosen to make the trusts a success represent the new breed of executive in the health service. Along with

redundancy counsellors and receivers, they are seemingly immune to the white-collar recession that has decimated the middle classes. At Guy's, Griffiths and Dennett mirror the explosion of salaries that accompanied the Big Bang.

Six-figure packages, fast foreign cars and a decisive, self-confident manner best suited to City dealing rooms sit uneasily with the dingy corridors and committee rooms where talk of bed closures and nurse shortages dominate decision-making.

For the price of the pay-off of just one of these new 'players', a dozen nurses could be hired."

These people will have to work very hard at their highly skilled jobs of sacking other workers such as Katy Andrews, and if they can each sack a few dozen workers they will be worth every penny that we, the taxpayers, pay them. And we all know that the government wants to reduce tax, especially on the rich, to give them that incentive that they need to get higher productivity out of the rest of us. Our press forever publishes those stories about how 'when I was in hospital I saw two men changing a light bulb and the doctor said he didn't dare do it himself in case they all went on strike'. Katy gives a different perspective here, as well as an anarchist alternative to either Tory or Labour solutions:

"Labour's solution to problems in the NHS has always been — at least in their manifestoes — to throw money and resources at it. The Tory solution

is to throw managers and Friedmanism to improve cost-effectiveness, and in the absence of a serious free-market challenge to state-provided health provision to make medical care competitive by essentially setting the NHS in competition against itself (ludicrous!).

For anarchists the question is not simply one of whether the NHS should (or can be) reformed or simply thrown away — and we're talking about a vast and expensive infrastructure which is already in place and with many advantages in maintaining and improving, rather the challenge is to find a way to provide the high standard of necessary medical care expected in a civilised society in such a way as to meet the needs of individual people and of local communities.

Instead of money or managers, what should be thrown at the problem of how to provide decent health services is people — working people to do all the different jobs needed — doctors, ambulance drivers, district nurses, laboratory technicians, dieticians, physiotherapists or whatever."

The contributors to *The Raven* are a remarkably varied crowd: a general practitioner, a paediatrician, a psychologist, a psychiatrist and a child psychiatrist, nurses, a community health worker, and two patients (or should I write 'consumers'?).

Mick Kidd had gallstones, and tried treatment by olive oil rather than surgery — it worked, but as he says, every case is different. Psychologist Tony Gibson warns of the very real dangers of alternative therapy, and of those practitioners who gull neurotics.

The other patient is Arthur Moyses, who obviously has little time for the doctors he has come across. He is perhaps looking back to army days when health checks involved being sent from room to room, where first one's eyes would be examined, and specs or perhaps nothing prescribed, then the nose and throat and so on down to the flatness of the feet, and

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# Marxism and Anarchism

In reply to S. Coleman (*Freedom* 24th August), I would like to ask how long should Marxist-communism be tried before it is seen as a failure? Bakunin's specific prediction and criticism of Marxism was that it would lead to dictatorship and slavery. The fact that this prediction has been validated cannot be ignored, and blaming Stalin is too simplistic.

Anarchists such as Kropotkin saw the October Revolution as the end and defeat of the social revolution. Why was this? Kropotkin believed:

"The immense constructive work that is required from a social revolution cannot be accompanied by a central government ... to trust the genius of party dictators is to destroy all the independent nuclei, such as trade unions and the local distributive co-operative organisations, turning them into the bureaucratic organs of the party, as is being done now. But this is the way *not* to accomplish the revolution; the way to render its realisation impossible."

(Kropotkin died in 1921 and so reduces Coleman's "seven year period" to at least four years. But many argue the rot was setting in long before that.)

One of the main justifications for the Bolsheviks seizing power in October 1917 was to hold on to power until the revolutions occurred on a worldwide scale. The building of socialism would not be Russia's task alone. The result has been a one-party state and a highly centralised and regimented economic and political system (the logic of Marxism?). The USSR in 1917 was not yet socialist but a "dictatorship of the proletariat". Some communists, such as Bukharin, believed the achievement of socialism, the lower stages of communism, would take an entire historical phase. Lenin, in 1918, had this to say:

"With this machine, or rather this weapon [the State], we shall crush every form of exploitation, and when there are no longer any possibilities of exploitation left on earth, no more people owning land or factories, no more people gorging themselves under the eyes of others who are starving, when such things have become impossible, then and only then shall we cast this machine aside. Then, there will be neither State nor exploitation. Therefore as long as there exists on earth, and no longer in a specific society, one single oppressed person and one proprietor, the State will continue to exist. It also will be obliged to increase in strength during this period, so as to vanquish one by one the injustices, the obstinately bourgeois nations, and the people who are blind to their own interests. And when, on an earth which has finally been subdued and purged of enemies, the final iniquity shall have been drowned in the blood of

the just and the unjust, then the State, which has reached the limit of all power, a monstrous idol covering the entire earth, will be discreetly absorbed in silent city of justice." (quoted in A. Camus, *The Rebel*)

The goal, of course, was communism which Marx vaguely described as a society with no coercive state and no need for money or prices. In effect one would work according to ability and receive according to needs. Robert Michels believed, however:

"social wealth cannot be satisfactorily administered in any other manner than by the creation of an extensive bureaucracy. In this way we are led by an inevitable logic to the flat denial of the possibility of a state without classes. The administration of an immeasurably large capital, above all when this capital is collective property, confers upon the administrator influence at least equal to that possessed by the private owner of capital." (*Political Parties*)

Lenin's organisational theory was basically the view that the working class needed ideas 'brought' to it by the intelligentsia; that the Party was required to lead the revolution, and its organisation would be based on the doctrine of 'democratic centralism' (i.e. firm leadership, strict discipline and limited membership, but with 'democratic' participation).

The question arises, does this contradict Marx's ideas on the emancipation of the working class. Lenin is open to criticism even if he had honest intentions. The fact remains that centralisation of party decision-making and the absence of democratic controls over the leadership left effective power with the Central Committee and the leader. The road from Leninism to Stalinism is not a broken one.

So the Bolsheviks in power would prevent counter-revolution until the day world capitalism was destroyed. From October 1917 to mid-1918 the Bolsheviks thus consolidated their power. A one-party state was set up, opposition parties were banned, a secret police was formed, the press was censored, and 'enemies of the state' such as anarchists, Mensheviks and socialist revolutionaries were harassed, imprisoned or shot — all before the civil war started. Their main objective at this time was to control the economy via nationalisation. I would ask S. Coleman are these ways of achieving communism or simply of staying in power?

From mid-1918 to 1921 was the period of civil war and

foreign intervention, and also 'war communism'. The Bolsheviks continued to centralise. During this period Trotsky's ideas on the 'militarisation of labour' emerged after he reorganised the Red Army and railways. The Bolsheviks also not trusting the workers to handle production themselves brought back one-man management and saw the bureaucracy increase in size and power.

When the civil war ended in 1921, and after the crushing of Kronstadt and the betrayal of Makhno in the Ukraine, Lenin introduced the 'New Economic Policy' — a temporary return to private enterprise to get the economy back on its feet. The Bolsheviks were now established in power.

The question of the 1920s was industrialisation and need to survive as the only socialist state in the world. Revolutions were not succeeding elsewhere. Meanwhile the communists strengthened their grip internally.

The Workers Opposition emerged within the Party in 1921, highlighting among other things the increasing bureaucratisation of life. Lenin's overall response was to ban factions and deviations from party policy. Party purges occurred at the time but were merely reprimands or expulsion — this would be developed further by Stalin.

Lenin's power declined and he spoke of retiring in March 1923. He died in January 1924, so couldn't stem anything. His last testament did show concern about Stalin and the bureaucracy that was growing. However, much of this was attributable to Lenin himself and Marxist theory (see Michels). Moreover, regarding Lenin's 'testament', Guy Debord in his *Society of the Spectacle* says:

"It is known that in order to conceal Lenin's famous 'testament' he [Trotsky] went so far as to slanderously disavow his supporter Max Eastman, who had made it public."

Stalin, however, didn't assume full power in 1924. He still required a political base and so allied with Zinoviev against Trotsky. When Stalin has virtually destroyed Trotsky's political base, he would later turn against his allies and adopt some of Trotsky's policies. (This is a fact whether S. Coleman believes it or not.)

Trotsky's works, such as *Terrorism and Communism* or *Their Morals and Ours*, plus his actions between 1918 and 1921, his views on the militarisation of labour, his ideas on organisation and his policies for industrialisation by hitting

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the suitability for military service. Why can't this system be instituted in civil life? I have often wondered, and perhaps some medical practitioners could enlighten us lesser mortals.

What Moyses is in effect advocating is the deprofessionalisation of medicine, and its replacement by a system of medical technicians, a somewhat revolutionary proposal but one which is being adopted in parts of the third world. Professionalisation in all walks of life was essentially a creation of nineteenth century liberalism and was designed to raise standards and do away with the quack, but if some people have, as Tony Gibson puts it, "a strong wish to believe in the non-scientific, the irrational" in spite of all our scientific education, could not part of the reason be the failure of orthodox practitioners to gain their faith? After all, doctors are still generally known as 'quacks'.

The Raven number 15, unlike previous issues, has a large number of relatively short articles (twenty). The points of view vary, but

all are thoughtful and of a generally excellent standard. As well as contributions already mentioned, there is Jenny Corbett's interview with her father Richard Pugh who worked as a paediatrician from the 1940s to the 1980s, Tony Smythe's account of his career in mental health, Clio Bellenis on the status of children in society, H.B. Gibson on sex and the elderly, Johnny Yen and F.A. Jenner on mental health, Dr D.M. Greet on the role of the general practitioner, and an intriguing piece by M. Boustred comparing the communal life of adolescents in Western squats and in Indian villages, while arch-sceptic Donald Room reveals the truth behind the extraordinary 'Satanic Child Abuse Epidemic 1990-91'.

Guest editor Silvia Edwards has produced an issue of *The Raven* which deserves a readership far beyond the anarchist movement. The contributors have met, as it were, for the first time in these pages. Of one thing I am sure, if they all got together round a table in a society free from the wage system and the politicians, they would have no difficulty in providing us with the health service we need.

CC

ON THE MARGIN

Readers will just about remember that in response to Mrs Thatcher's resignation, I visited a tramp in the Strand to ask his opinion of that momentous event.

Now that there is going to be a general election I thought I would try to find him again. These he was in his cardboard box home, late in the evening.

Me: Do you remember our last interview?

Him: Vividly.

Me: How has it been with you, since?

Him: Is there going to be a fee?

Me: Certainly.

Him: You know I don't usually give interviews, but you treated me fair last time, so I'm prepared to talk. What do you wish me to say?

Me: That's for you to decide. My first question is, in your opinion, taking everything into consideration, is everything to your satisfaction. Do you think the government is doing its job well, to start with?

Him: That's what I'm asking myself.

Me: And have you come to any conclusions?

Him: What do you want me to say?

Me: Just say the truth.

Him: (the old gent ponders a while) You want to hear the truth?

Me: Nothing less.

Him: (with great deliberation) I tell you the truth, mind you, this may sound a bit strange at first hearing. Initially I must ask myself the question, what do you mean by government.

Me: The people who are entrusted by the electorate to run the country for them.

Him: That was well answered. Anything else you want to know?

Me: Do you think Mr Major is doing his job well?

Him: (looking around) I don't think I have ever met Mr Major, although you might say we are near neighbours. (with pride) I was thinking of calling on him the other day, but I forgot.

Me: So will you be voting for him or for Mr Kinnock?

Him: I told you, mate, last time. I'm too old to vote. I'm retired, see. From almost everything. I used to have a bed once. That's where I learnt retirement.

Me: So what do you do nowadays?

Him: I just solve the problems of the world, one by one. I bring peace to the world that way. (He rummaged in his bag and brought out a tattered copy of an old newspaper) You

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Food for Thought ... and Action

Perhaps this column should carry the instruction 'cut out and keep', so that the books, pamphlets and periodicals mentioned here over the last few months get automatically filed with your Freedom Press Bookshop books and pamphlet lists — but I'm sure most regular readers are ahead of me already. Future editions of the booklist will include some of these titles, depending on space and suitability. Meanwhile, when ordering books, etc., from Angel Alley please include alternatives if at all possible — titles can go out of stock quickly and this could save both you and us time and money. Thanks.

Recent additions to Freedom Press Bookshop stock.

*Angles on Anarchism*\* by George Walford, hot off the press, with an introduction by Peter Cadogan, Calabria Press. In the foreword the author writes: "Anarchists pride themselves on disagreeing with each other but most of them hold some ideas in common, e.g. that anarchism stands for freedom, has a special connection with the poor, and became a large movement in Spain; that it stands apart from all other movements; that it advocates a natural condition. And of course anarchists don't vote or form a party. The following pages challenge every one of these beliefs." Most of the pieces originally appeared in various periodicals, including *Freedom*, with chapters such as 'The Anarchist Police Force', 'Competitive Co-operators' and 'Class Politics — an Exhausted Myth'. Food for thought indeed. 66 pages, £2.00.

*Kick It Over*\* number 26, quarterly, summer 1991. A welcome return for the Toronto anarchist journal that has not appeared since December 1989. Now run by a new collective. Interesting articles include 'From Neo-Colonialism to New World Order', 'Paths to Social Change', 'Journeys Through Central America', plus poetry, letters, reviews, etc. 48 pages, £1.50.

*Lies of Our Times* — a magazine to correct the record, monthly, Sheridan Square Press. An excellent debunker of the capitalist press and media's 'coverage' of news and current events which aims not just to correct the lies, distortion and bias, but also to cover unreported stories. The May issue includes Ellen Ray on Kuwait and martial law (past and present), Noam

Chomsky on the US betrayal of the Kurds and the Arab-Israeli peace process, or lack of it, Israel Shahak on Israeli apartheid, Beth Sims on the US and Eastern Europe, and much more. The June issue contains stories on politics, the media and the Los Angeles police; strikes, scabs and workers; press and media censorship of dead bodies in the Gulf War reports; Edward Herman on 'Gladio', the international state terrorist organisation; plus regular features. An excellent publication. 24 pages, £2.50.

*Open Road*\* number 25. The final issue of the Vancouver anarchist news journal which is ceasing publication. Amongst the articles are 'Squatting', 'The Greening of a Neighbourhood', 'Feminism and Humanism' and 'White Law versus Indigenous Rights'. 16 pages, £1.00.

*Alcoholics Anonymous — Cult or Cure?*\* by Charles Bufo. The introduction to this book is written by Dr Albert Ellis of *The Case Against Religiosity*\* fame (which is included as an appendix, and also available as a pamphlet from the bookshop at 35p), who says: "Books on AA are usually quite biased — written by either AA's fervent supporters or its ardent detractors. Of all that I've read, the present one is the most objective, sensible and readable ... Readers are likely to be exceptionally well-informed, as well as often fascinated by his incisive treatment of the religious origins of AA, of its cultish aspects, of its effectiveness and non-effectiveness, and of its likely future ... A valuable addition to the alcoholism literature." Well, I'll drink to that! It also contains a good bibliography. 158 pages, £6.95.

*The Good Times* — London's Free Weekly Entertainment Guide. As the title suggests, this is a listings guide for London's cinemas, theatres, nightclubs and music venues, which also carries details of art exhibitions and museums. Most of what *City Limits* and *Time Out* carry, in fact, but free. Because of this, *The Good Times* is only available to callers in the shop. Newspaper format, A3, 20 pages.

KM

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the peasantry — all these things are known by those who care to find them out.

Brinton's *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control 1917-21* says:

"... that in relation to industrial policy there is a clear-cut and incontrovertible link between what happened under Lenin and Trotsky and the later practices of Stalinism. We know that many on the revolutionary left will find this hard to swallow, we are convinced however that any honest reading of the facts cannot but lead to this conclusion."

I would say to S. Coleman the facts are simply there to be read. True, there are many unanswered questions such as what if Lenin had lived or if Stalin been deposed? The most likely answer, unfortunately, is that nothing different would have happened. The policies taken were probably inevitable and the only ones that would preserve the system.

In 1924 Stalin agreed with Trotsky that "socialism in one country" was not possible; that capitalism was international and so socialism must be. However, between then and 1926 Stalin disagreed saying victory was possible.

Stalin's view became official doctrine — a belief system that harnessed traditional patriotic and national values and directed them to economic tasks. It also had great appeal and support.

It can be argued that Stalinism simply adapted Marxism to the conditions of the USSR in the 1920s. As to whether it was a distortion of Marxism, that is debatable. Admittedly it was a simplified and dogmatic version, whether it was right or wrong is a matter of opinion. Marx himself said:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy in order to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all the means

of production into the hands of the state and, as rapidly as possible, to increase the total mass of productive forces.

In the first instance, of course, this can only be effected by despotic inroads upon the rights of property and by despotic interference with bourgeois methods of production ... These measures will naturally differ from country to country."

Stalinism thus provided a spiritual and political framework for industrialisation in the 1920s. It also appeared to be the only way the USSR would survive.

Even in 1927 Stalin was still not in full control. He still needed alliances and the Politburo could still over-rule him. Trotsky's view that industrialisation could be achieved by squeezing a surplus out of the peasantry was rejected by the Party due to the need for political stability between the peasant and proletariat. "Trotsky", as Debord comments, "remained basically in solidarity with the high bureaucracy until 1927, seeking to capture it so as to make it resume genuinely Bolshevik action externally".

Stalin had risen to power by allying with the right wing faction under Bukharin who supported the NEP (New Economic Policy). Party policy in 1927-28 was a compromise between the NEP and full collectivisation. However, Stalin was able to manipulate the party machine to defeat Trotsky and the Left Opposition. He then clashed with Bukharin over his policies by adopting the policies of the discredited Trotsky, i.e. to squeeze the peasantry.

In the winter of 1927-28 it was apparent that the peasants were not going to sell their grain at official prices. They hoarded grain or fed it to livestock instead — this in a period of rapid industrialisation would have disastrous consequences. So defying party rules, ignoring the Politburo and going straight through the party machine, Stalin used violence to get grain from the peasants.

Stalin admitted his excesses to the Politburo but kept his hands on power. He then repeated the policy of forced requisitions and began a campaign to isolate and discredit "right wing deviationists". 1928 saw the removal of moderate economic advisors and was the last year open discussion was allowed in the party on controversial issues. The first 'five year plan' was launched in October 1928 to achieve a very high growth rate by 'squeezing' the peasants. Stalin was consolidating his control in 1929 and opened his offensive against the 'kulaks'. Industrialisation was only possible with a guaranteed supply of agricultural produce — thus farms were collectivised by force.

Stalin ensured the communists stayed in power, the towns were fed, disruption in the countryside was contained. A modern industrial society was created through repression and terrorism (all elements favoured by Trotsky in 1918!). But was this the road to socialism? Brinton comments:

"Bolshevism's emphasis on the incapacity of the masses to achieve a socialist consciousness through their own experience of life under capitalism, its prescription of a hierarchically structured 'vanguard party' and of 'centralisation to fight the centralised state power of the bourgeoisie', its proclamation of the historical birthright of those who have accepted a particular vision of society (and of its future) and the decreed right to dictate this vision to others — if necessary at the point of a gun — all these will be recognised for what they are: the last attempt of bourgeois society to reassert its ordained division into leaders and led, and to maintain authoritarian social relations in all aspects of human life."

It appears, however, that S. Coleman believes if the intentions were alright then we should forgive and make up past differences. History will show that it was justified!

(to be concluded)

## The Ignoble Art

(continued from page 4)

self-destruction, and that perhaps the time had come when it should be proscribed. Two years later Johnny Owen died. And Muhammad Ali's Parkinson's disease — the symptoms of which are frequently found in the punch-drunk syndrome — is of course directly related to the brain damage that he suffered in many of his gruelling bouts. Of course fatal injuries occur in other sports, but as Edith Summerskill tried to stress with boxing, these fatalities are different because boxing intrinsically inflicts pain and injury. Boxing is the only sport, she wrote, "in which a participant seeks to knock his opponent out ... [and] in which wounds inflicted and blood drawn give colour, zest and a sadistic thrill to the whole performance" (page 29).

But Summerskill lay stress — and tried to provide impartial evidence — not on boxing fatalities, but on the severe damage to the brain that blows to the head would entail. As she wrote: "this sensitive organ cannot possibly fail to be damaged following the impact of a succession of blows over years" (page 17). She noted the contrasting performances of boxers like Randolph Turpin who, after a brilliant early career, had received a severe beating about the head. Thereafter his co-ordination and timing went completely amiss, and he lost to mediocre fighters. How Turpin himself described these events, as well as his tragic life — he committed suicide at the age of 36 — is a terrible indictment of boxing. So is the life of the 'Brown Bomber', as he was called, the popular heavyweight Joe Lewis. For suggesting that boxers might be

mentally impaired through head injuries, Summerskill was criticised and derided by doctors and by the boxing fraternity. In an age of brain scans and the like we now know that Summerskill's arguments are compellingly valid, yet what is most interesting is that one finds confirmation of Summerskill's assumptions in the memoirs of one of her foremost critics, the broadcaster Barrington Dalby. When I was a lad he was famous for his 'between rounds' commentary, and his autobiography was entitled *Come in Barry* (1961).

For example, in recounting the famous and 'epic' lightweight championship fight between Boon and Danahar in 1939, which he refereed, Dalby recalls and pays tribute to the skill, the tenacity, the courage and the stamina that each of these men exhibited — and the suffering both endured. Danahar in particular, in the latter part of the contest, took a severe beating, taking "three counts of nine" in the 13th round. In the next round Dalby stopped the fight to save Danahar, who was in an extremely distressed condition, from taking further punishment. What prompted him to do this, Dalby tells us in his memoirs, was the vision of another boxer, one Curly Watson, who some years before had died of brain haemorrhage after being knocked down in a bout. But the most significant sentence in this account read as follows: "Following the contest, Eric Boon gave Danahar a silver cigarette box as a token of his esteem — a perfect ending to a perfect fight — but, alas, *neither boxer was ever quite the same again*" (page 74).

Paul Goodman somewhere wrote that the

ideas of radical thinkers are often criticised as being utopian or unrealistic, in that they are thought to have a rather benign view of human nature. Let's face it, the counter-argument goes: humans are by nature violent, aggressive and 'bestial' — and so human institutions should recognise this fact. But Goodman suggested that the real issue is not whether people are by nature either good (as Rousseau believed) or infused with 'original sin' (and a kind of 'killer ape', as ethologists and socio-biologists have described us), nor is it a question of whether people are 'good enough' for a particular kind of society, but rather the real moral issue is whether social institutions are conducive to the development of the kind of values that people think worthwhile and wholesome — like peace, fraternity, physical and mental well-being, autonomy and freedom. Clearly boxing is not conducive to these aims — on the contrary. And this is why it should be actively discouraged. This indeed was Edith Summerskill's main charge against boxing: namely, that if we wanted to lay the foundations of peace and of a co-operative society, it just did not help to glorify boxing, and she felt that we should do nothing to encourage our destructive and sadistic impulses. A correspondent to *The Green Anarchist* has recently advocated boxing as an appropriate pastime for "anarchists and hippies" — to build up our strength and self-confidence, and to provide us with 'fun'.

The correspondent, Samson by name, has a point, but as should be clear from what has been written above, I do not think there is much 'fun' in boxing, that it engenders 'macho' values that we should not encourage, and that there are surely other ways of developing such 'virtues' as courage, physical fitness and self-confidence. My cousin Terry, with whom I began these reflections, hated boxing and was one of the most gentle people I have ever come across. He was also one of the most courageous and self-confident. Sad it was that he got killed down Hampstead pit aged just 21.

Brian Morris

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## Waiting for the Bus

The new Archbigot has upset the government over the city riots, Bert ... I wonder how much money he gets per hour for saying that poverty has got something to do with it ... That Chief Constable reckons it's caused by a lack of respect for authority ... He's not allowed to say anything else. I bet he was all for the rioters in East Europe ... Did you read about that new educational sex video? 120 people bought one in W.H. Smith's in the space of three hours. The manager said most of them were between 30 and 50 years old. Were they getting them for the kids, then? ... Doubt that very much. That would be like teaching grandma to suck eggs, these days, Daisy ... From what I read about the video, it's not eggs they're sucking ... Beats me, the world population is getting out of control, and they think it's necessary to teach people how to do it! Our old cat never had any bother, and I'm sure he's never seen the video ... Bert, how is it that Kinnoek can scrap all the socialist ideas and then kick Nellist out for being unconstitutional? ... I've got a better one that that, Daisy: How can you change a constitution by constitutional methods? ... Yes, very good. Why don't you put that to Lord Scarman or Privy Councillor Tony Benn. Here's another: If the law's an ass, what's a lawyer? ... Lester Piggott on a donkey, I suppose. I see Maggie Thatcher accepted £1½ million off that Polly Peck merchant for Tory funds ... No wonder they're privatising everything in sight ... At least nationalised industries can't make donations to political parties ... I see in the shops they are selling cards for Grandparents' Day. Wonder how long it will be before they have a Great Great Grandmas' Cat's Day. Why do they do it? ... For the same reason as they sell those videos ... Money again. We've been half an

hour kicking our heels waiting for this bus, Bert ... Perhaps we'd better get that video after all. Could do with some bright ideas to help while away the time ... Shut up, Bert. In the paper it says Bush wants the United Nations to repeal its 1975 resolution that equated Zionism with racism. If they repeal it, will Israel give the Palestinians their land back? ... Don't know about that, but there must be something on offer ... Did you know that there are 28 men to every woman in our prisons, but only five men to every woman in our maximum security hospitals? ... What do you make of that then, Daisy? ... Either there's a lot of sex discrimination going on, or men are driving women mad — you can take your choice ... Hobson's choice, as far as I'm concerned, Daisy. It amounts to the same thing ... What do you think of the Liberal Democrats, Bert? ... They're full of bright ideas, just like Labour were when they were light years away from getting power. As soon as they scent the sweet smell of success in the polls, they will do a few u-turns ... Why do they do that? ... Like I said, the press and media barons will smear them off the charts if they don't drop their radical nonsense, and if that doesn't work the intelligence people will get to work on them ... You're kidding ... Was Harold Wilson kidding? ... Aren't you going to vote, then? ... Not for anybody who's daft enough or corrupt enough to take a seat in Westminster ... I think it's a shame if there's a lot of people like you not voting. How's anybody to know how you all feel? Why don't you vote for somebody who will refuse to take a seat in Parliament ... Good idea, Daisy. Let's ask this bus driver if he will stand for us. He's much too important and busy to want to sit in Parliament, anyway ...

EFC

## Anarchy in Peru

Peru is in the midst of a bloody civil war waged against the state and the people by Maoist and Marxist guerrillas. On top of this a disastrous economic crisis which is the product of corrupt governments and multinational exploitation places a huge burden on the people everybody claims to be acting for, the poor. However, many peasant communities are tackling these and other problems themselves, having realised that they cannot rely on or trust anybody. The 'Rondas Campesinas' or peasant rounds first emerged in the north Peruvian Andes in the mid-70s as a reaction against cattle thieves. Voluntary rotas of peasants armed only with sticks and stones patrolled the villages by night and confronted thieves, when necessary blowing whistles to alert the whole community which would come out, men, women and children, to attack, capture and later pass sentence on the delinquents. Such self-organised rounds have sprung up all over the country, not only eradicating

cattle theft, but standing up to the guerrillas and on occasions even to the police and army. Many communities have created no-go areas for groups of armed people regardless of who they are.

The organisation of the self-defence groups is not hierarchical. They consist of a group of volunteers which is responsible to the community as a whole and is changed daily. I once heard about how ronderos tried to gate-crash a party while on duty and how they were literally kicked out — abuse of power is not tolerated.

The forces of law and order have mostly ceased to condemn them outright — they hardly had any control over many of the remote villages where the 'movement' started in the first place and the occasions on which villagers have punished police or soldiers have been proven to be justified, although this is not officially admitted (police officers were involved in cattle theft rings, often in collaboration with soldiers).

The government's attitude towards the Rondas must be seen against a background of a civil war which it is losing. It is supporting the peasants to avoid them joining ranks with the guerrillas, even distributing weapons when they are afraid of having their soldiers slaughtered. The rounds, on the other hand, look to the government when they think they can get help from them, but always conscious that any aid is unlikely and prepared to make do unaided.

All Rondas Campesinas are independent, have different strategies and are of varying importance to their community. Some refuse to use firearms, hoping this will avoid an escalation of the violence. They are emerging as a third force in Peruvian politics, independent of both the state (and its allies) and of the guerrillas, refusing to be drawn into the system, highly autonomous, non-centralised and filling the power vacuum created by the civil war. Federations are unfortunately only very slowly starting to emerge, but the potential they have is immense. If the emerging 'Rondas Urbanas' or urban self-defence rounds, catch on all over the country in the same way as has been the case with the others, the foundations for a bloodless social revolution will be there.

The minuscule Peruvian anarchist movement is intrinsically 'workerist' and has not seen it as its task to act as a catalyst in order to federate these groups into a cohesive movement.

When will we anarchists realise that anarchy often develops naturally and not only comes through agitation through books and pamphlets? Are we too deeply stuck in our ghetto to realise that people who have not even heard the word 'anarchist' might be just that without knowing (or caring) about it? When and if we realise this we shall see how the task before us no longer seems so immense.

Alex

## ON THE MARGIN

(continued from page 6)

see what it says there. You have to read it to me, mind you, I can't see very well. But that does not matter. (He proceeded to tear the paper up) You see what I'm doing?

*Me: You are tearing up an old newspaper.*

*Him: Thereby bringing peace to the world. I'm not an ambitious man. Three meals a day would suit me. And a set of new clothes. I leave it to others to go to the university.*

*Me: Do you advocate social justice? Do you feel society has let you down just a teeny bit?*

*Him: You are a clever man, how did you guess that?*

*Me: You don't look so well. I think you could do with some food in your stomach. And a key to your own front door. A loving wife and charming children. All you have to do is to change places with Mr Major.*

*Him: This is the Strand, young man, what better address could I have?*

*Me: 10 Downing Street, SW1.*

*Him: Would you visit me there?*

*Me: Perhaps not.*

*Him: Then I'll stay here. And I cordially extend an invitation to Mr Major and Mr Kinnoek to come and see me here. Then I shall decide which one I should vote for. No promises, mind you.*

John Rety

# Natural Anarchism

Dear Comrades,  
George Walford's comments on 'Natural Anarchism' (*Freedom* 21st September) are relevant criticisms of two simplistic "natural law" arguments for anarchism. The 'Golden Age' idea that human beings were, at one time, living in some universal paradise from which they were tempted by the secular equivalent of the Biblical serpent is, of course, nonsense. It has exactly the same mythological, imaginary relation to the facts as the feminist myth of the Golden Age of the Matriarchy. The real social structure of many (most?) tribal peoples hardly correlates with the sort of freedom and equality that most modern anarchists see as their goal. Anarchism, as an ethical philosophy, is not merely a critique of statism. It is a wider critique of all rigid hierarchies. The Golden Age argument is merely one more survival, just like the apocalyptic imagery of 'The Revolution', of the primitive Christian view of the world that unfortunately still lives in radical politics.

The "human beings are natural anarchists" argument from human nature is a variation of the human beings are naturally good argument. This viewpoint is one that opponents of anarchism pretend that anarchists hold in order to argue against anarchism. It seems strange to see people picking this one up as an argument 'for' anarchism. Anarchism, of course, depends not at all on whether one holds that human beings are naturally good. As a matter of fact I can, and do in my less generous moods, form arguments for anarchism starting from the premise that people are naturally bastards. The whole anarchist case against benevolent government rests on just such an assumption, that human beings exposed to a certain temptation will almost certainly behave in a certain ethically undesirable manner.

I agree with Walford that anarchism is

## Romanticism

Dear Editors,  
Eileen ('Romanticism-2' in *Freedom*, 5th October) quite rightly hauled me over the coals for saying that a woman's purpose in life is procreation. Apologies, I should have said 'primary purpose'. Of course, I am speaking generally, since some women cannot conceive, and some conceive more than they would wish to. Some do not even like children. And, of course, there is more to life than having children.

I am sorry Eileen should feel that I have insulted women; I intended the opposite. At this moment in time, I believe the second purpose of women should be to wrest the power away from men and show us how to live peacefully.

Regarding Eileen's views on romanticism, I think she is confusing it with emotions. The emotional appreciation of art forms has nothing necessarily to do with romanticism (dictionary definition: falsehood). Of course, art and beauty can co-exist, but falsehood is quite another matter.

I am no less appreciative of art, and no less emotional, in my 70s than I was as a young man, when romantic ideas justified my dropping bombs on people. In rejecting romanticism, I have lost nothing more than a yoke around my neck.

Regarding Mrs Thatcher, she was not powerful in her own right. She was a tool of men, who discarded her when she had done a job for them. The real power is held by men, and unelected ones at that. Women are never "allowed to be in positions of power".

Finally, I do believe that women are biologically more inclined to co-operation than to conflict. I hope so anyway, otherwise there is no future at all for us.

Ernie Crosswell

a reasoned and effortful approach to life whose difficulties imply that there will be few anarchists at any given time, all other things being equal. Yet, yet, yet... if one were to express the number of anarchists existing at a given time as a function of various independent variables then it is obvious that the inherent difficulty of the ideology is only one of many variables on which the number of anarchists depends. One of these other variables is the effectiveness of the existing anarchists in propagating their ideas. One of the variables on which this effectiveness, in turn, depends is the accuracy with which anarchists view other human beings, i.e. a realistic view of 'human nature'.

The behaviourist, "environmental determinist", theory that human nature is merely socially determined is just as wrong as the idea that people are "naturally anarchists". Walford is indeed correct when he opines that human motivation is a mixture of tendencies. When Kropotkin discussed what was really socio-biology in such works as *Mutual Aid* and *Ethics*, long before the term socio-biology was invented, he stated quite explicitly that he knew that what he considered antisocial drives existed alongside those he considered ethical. For polemical reasons he emphasised the altruistic drives in his studies.

The point is that, given this mixture of

'angel and devil' in every human being, what sort of conditions do we hope for and strive to create so as to maximise those behavioural traits that we consider praiseworthy? What are useful methods in pursuit of this goal? What trade-offs are we willing to make — despite the absolutist nature of much anarchist thought such compromises are inevitable? What are the presumed limits of our efforts — what must forever remain an ideal rather than a reality? The answers are not obvious. Perhaps yelling at the top of one's lungs about the evils of hierarchy and instilling guilt in small groups about such hierarchy (or the fashionable hierarchy of this or that oppressed minority versus the great ISM) does nothing to reduce, let alone abolish, hierarchy.

It has been my conclusion from about 25 years of watching various leftist groups perform their rituals that the type of behaviour mentioned in the above paragraph never reduces the internal hierarchy of a group. The form of the hierarchy changes and individuals evolve 'cheating behaviours' to circumvent the formal rules of the group. This is counter-intuitive from a behaviourist point of view. If mere socialisation determines human actions then enough dogmatic lecturing and rituals should eliminate the undesirable behaviour. It doesn't! A realistic, pragmatic anarchism needs a theory of human nature that admits the dark side of all of us as well as seeing the brighter aspects.

Pat Murtagh

## A Structured Anarchism

Dear Editors,

I feel I must reply to the review by Brian Bamford of my pamphlet *A Structured Anarchism* in the 5th October issue of *Freedom*.

Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction, I made no attempt to handle issues in depth, but to concentrate on the relationships between them. To a sociologist like Mr Bamford, it was perhaps inevitable that my work would appear "shallow". I tried to angle the pamphlet towards people who wanted a brief exposition of anarchist ideas and their implications, from a modern perspective.

I am not familiar with the works of Garfinkle and Nozick, which I am chastised for not using, but if they are as important as Mr Bamford maintains, I would expect the Freedom Press bookshop to stock them — they do not. I used Durkheim as a starting point in discussion, building up a libertarian sociology which focused on the concepts of anarchy, freedom, equality and community, in conflict with centralised power; a view which is hardly Durkheimian, yet Mr

Bamford insists on aligning my work with that of Durkheim's. I referred to the right wing economists Friedman and Hayek in passing; their ideas do not compare with my own, as is obvious to any reader, yet Mr Bamford implies that they do. I mentioned therapy as a possible means of overcoming authoritarian personal attitudes, but self-help and mutual aid were stressed far more heavily; Mr Bamford chooses to ignore this, just as he ignores the thrust of my ideas in sociology and economics.

Mr Bamford criticises what he sees as my "lack of rigour", but in this grossly distorted view of my work, only displays his own.

John Griffin

## Midlands Anarchist Forum

We met, as advertised, at Belper on Friday 6th September. Individuals from Derby, Ripley, Alfreton and Belper attended and heard a discussion paper on violence and non-violence presented by Mark Lowe. This was followed by a discussion on the paper and on the idea of a Midlands Anarchist Forum. Those attending felt that the idea of a Midlands Forum was a good one, but that the next meeting should be held in Derby to enable more people to attend. A venue is being sought and it is now intended that future meetings will be held on a monthly basis. Further details of future meetings will follow. Enquiries from comrades in the Midlands area can be made to John on 0773-827513.

## Yeltsin & the USSR

Dear Editors,  
I am responding to Steve's 'What's Happening in the USSR?' article in *Freedom* (5th October). As you yourselves indicated, the Western world's image of August's events were predominantly coloured by media coverage, a coverage concerned particularly with the leaders.

In the 'Yeltsin Rises' article (21st September) the readiness of the people to take to the streets and employees of the army to defy orders was praised. Additionally, the pacific nature of the crowds must also be approved.

As Steve suggests, the West did play a role in these events. This can be adequately portrayed by the recognition of independent states that leaders and foreign ministers expressed just, seemingly, minutes after insisting: "We don't want to get involved. Let the Soviet people decide..." Furthermore, the presence of Soviet dissent has had, from an early stage, close connections with the Western world. Finally, it was indicated that a US agency possessed knowledge that Gorbachev's telephone line had been severed before the coup was announced. However, this agency apparently did not

regard such news as important. This, to me, suggests one of two things: incompetence or inside information.

However, as we possess such limited first hand knowledge of these events all we can do is interpret the provided knowledge, looking for something 'new'. It was the language of the two principal characters that struck me. Yeltsin's rhetoric changed suddenly and dramatically from dubbing the perpetrators of the coup as 'evil' at its outbreak, to declaring them as 'state criminals' just before its failure. Was he really on top of events? The 'Yeltsin Rises' article focused on the bravery and courage of this man; however, it is now known that Yeltsin had formed his own KGB-style protection racket prior to these events, no doubt in anticipation of such a coup. So why not focus on the bravery of the crowd. But like it or not, Yeltsin is there for the moment.

On the other hand, poor old Gorbachev was locked up in captivity while these events occurred. His 'returning home' speech was particularly revealing. This speech was conducted in an environment in which he felt comfortable: amongst foreign journalists, who failed to even ask Gorbachev a question. The speech contained a savage assault on his captors, but no reference to the activity on the streets during his isolation. Gone was the familiar Soviet jargon — defence of the Motherland, proletarian state — and in its place was an account of the 60 hours captivity as it affected Gorbachev as an individual and his family as a unit. Furthermore, the horror expressed by Gorbachev of the experience of captivity will presumably fail to provoke him to terminate such an experience for his subjects.

I would now like to turn to Steve's analysis of Marxist-Leninism. The term to me suggests Lenin's adaptation of Marxism. Lenin was born in 1870, so I fail to see how anarchists of "the First International and before" (the First International existed in the years 1864-72) could oppose Marxist-Leninism. Furthermore, I fail to believe that Marxist-Leninism ever possessed any "noble theoretical aims". True, the final stage of Marx's "historical plan" envisaged a communist society where

the distinction between rulers and the ruled was eradicated. Anarchists have been particularly opposed to Marx's intervening stage, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, arguing that such an entity could never produce true freedom. However, Marx's own image of a communist society involves him "hunting, fishing, shooting and discussing". Sounds like primitive patriarchal crap to me. Also, I am curious why Marx neglected to insert "writing a book" as part of his perfect day.

Lenin's political stance changed dramatically before the Bolshevik coup. For instance, compare the elitism of *What is to be Done?* (1902) to the 'libertarian' Lenin of early 1917 and *The State and Revolution*. Once Lenin had assumed power at the apex of the first socialist state, his desires seemed to be confined to the consolidation of this aberration. Presumably this was the same time that Marxist-Leninism arose as a movement. Thus, its practical aim was the consolidation of power, which surely pales whatever noble theoretical aims it possessed (many, I believe) into insignificance.

Steve seems to prefer Marxist-Leninism to capitalism. Well, at the social-theoretical level, capitalism possesses noble theoretical aims. In J.S. Mills *On Liberty* he insists "the less government the better", which ultimately suggests no government is best. Noble, surely? However, the practical nature of capitalism, similar to Marxist-Leninism, is harsh and brutal. I have no doubt that unbridled capitalism in the Soviet Union will bring with it social and ecological catastrophe, but is that not a disease currently afflicting the Soviet populace? Why on earth did the streets swell with demonstrators when the abortive coup occurred? As for ecological catastrophe have you never heard of Chernobyl?

AK  
Surrey

## Welsh Anarchist Federation

The aim of the Federation is to propagandise the ideas of anarchism in Wales. For more information please contact Paul Pritchard, 5 Bloom Street, Canton, Cardiff.

## Party Political Circus

Dear Editors,  
The writer of 'The Party Political Circus' (*Freedom*, 21st September) says I keep reminding anarchists that they are in the political wilderness. The remark is friendly, and in one sense justified, but it can also be read to mean almost the opposite of what I am trying to say. It is rather the anarchists claiming that this movement stands separate from all others who set it in the political wilderness. Those who think as I do see it as an advanced stage in political and ideological development, no isolated freak but a living part of the human community, and one with most of its life still to come.

George Walford

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(London)

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29th November - To be announced (speaker Julay Arici)

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