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FIFTY PENCE

*"Freedom, like love,
must be conquered
for ourselves afresh
every day"*

H.W. Nevison

An Anarchist Approach to the NEW YEAR'S RE...FERENDUMS!

Surely the politicians' buzz-word for 1995 is the referendum, so long as they think it will do them some good! Some Tories hope it will be a NO to Europe while the government would hope for a YES if only to silence the Euro-sceptics in their ranks. Apart from a few outstanding 'antis' such as Tony Benn, the Labour Party has over the years been converted to the European Union if only as a lesser evil to British isolationism. And even the Labour leadership is wavering. Deputy leader John Prescott on Radio 4's *Today* programme "definitely" promised to let the voters decide in the event of major constitutional proposals, but apparently, according to the *Guardian* (13th December), after consultation with Tony Blair he said a referendum was only "one of the options if fundamental changes are made". Which means nothing! Just as the Foreign Office went out of their way to underline the growing commitment of the Foreign Secretary to a referendum and predicting that cabinet opposition would not last "further than Christmas". But their line was later modified to "stress that Mr Hurd has been coming round to acquiescence for some weeks and is

not seeking to box in cabinet colleagues". To add to the confusion the *Guardian* reports points out that Heseltine and Clarke, who are strong pro-Europeans, "appear to be the big cabinet players holding out *against* a referendum, though Heseltine is under pressure from allies to drop his opposition". And when one also learns that at the recent CBI conference British business was in favour of the single currency, one realises why referendums which by definition are "a device of direct democracy" are in fact like our parliamentary elections: voting for one's own interests, voting for the lesser evil as it affects one or not voting at all out of indifference or desperation.

For anarchists the referendum is as useless in a capitalist society as is the quinquennial vote to choose which bunch of ambitious politicians shall run our lives. Most anarchists take no part either in the referendums or parliamentary elections. Just recently one of our fraternity did point out in an interesting interview in the *Independent* that "if someone like Robin Cooke was the leader [of the Labour Party] and the party was committed to Clause IV I might vote for them", which goes to show that anarchists are not tied down by any 'party line'! And in any case the interviewee did say only that he *might* vote!

(continued on page 2)

FACTS OF TORY ECONOMY ... THIRTY YEARS LATE

One of the reasons why some of us would never vote for the Labour Party, however tempting their programme might be, is that in sorting out the disasters they would inherit from the Tories they have to introduce austerity measures on the weakest to balance the books and inevitably would be defeated at the next elections. No Labour government (apart from the one in 1964 followed by a victorious 1966 election) has been in office for more than one term. Today there are Tories who hope that at the next elections Labour will win because they will have to impose an austerity budget to cope with the problems they inherited from the Tories, and then they would out in the opposition once more!

In *Freedom* we have been pointing this out over the decades to no avail. But confirmation now comes with the release, under the thirty year rule, of official documents by the Public Records Office. According to the *Observer* (1st January 1995):

"The full extent of the economic mess left behind by the Tories in 1964 is revealed in highly classified government papers published for the first time today. Two months before Labour's election victory, Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home's private Secretary told him: 'We need solid

economic strength, not the affair of fits and starts which is all we rise to now, soggy and incompetitive as we are'.

Documents released by the Public Records Office ... show the Governor of the Bank of England, the Cabinet Secretary and even a Treasury mandarin logging grave reservations about the direction of economic management after thirteen years of Tory rule."

What is especially significant and at the same time amusing is that, again according to the *Observer*:

"It was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* last week that Tory chairman Jeremy Hanley was planning to use the papers to remind the electorate of the 'chaos of Labour government'.

But Sir Alec's Downing Street papers prove that Labour was left to sort out a hopeless legacy."

Which of course explains the boast of Tory politicians that they are the party of economy on public spending and of tax cutting ... but what they don't add is that all the savings and the tax cuts are for the benefit of the rich minority. After all, haven't they reduced the top level tax from 80% to 40%? And all the rest.

We apologise for having to repeat ourselves, but facts are facts and until enough people recognise them we must go on repeating them until they are accepted and acted upon.

'Are you there?'

Mercury telephones have been most successful in convincing no less than 750,000 people to invest in their instrument, partly by promising them that at Christmas they could make all the calls they wished to make *free of charge*. The result was chaos and, like the refurbished QE2 transatlantic cruiser which booked more people than it could accommodate while work was still in progress, thousands of disappointed punters couldn't get through because all the lines were occupied.

Serves them right we say, having no sympathy for the suckers who fall for the con-men (and women!). What we do think is interesting in all this business is that Mercury *actually spent £80 million on advertising*. They hooked 750,000 suckers, that is at a cost of £106 per victim! And make no mistake, the victims also pay in the long run for the advertising.

NEW YEAR'S RE...FERENDUMS!

(continued from page 1)

In an anarchist or even a libertarian socialist society the referendum would need to be widely used to take decisions at local and regional levels on all kinds of issues affecting *everybody*. This is the whole point. In a non-capitalist society decisions would be taken for the common good. Nobody would have a *vested* interest which could harm the rest of the community.

Today capitalist society is divided between those who have and those who have nothing; between those who have the power to hire-and-fire and those who depend on an employer to survive. In addition, today public opinion is manoeuvred by a millionaire press geared to maintaining this division. Any referendum today will be a reflection of that disgusting millionaire press and its financial backers, the mass advertising industry. Rest assured that if the government 'appeals to the people' via a referendum it will mobilise the media and the advertising industry at our expense to make sure that the result is in their favour. Wilson's Labour government in the '60s held their referendum and won, but on a miserable 60% turnout!

Abstaining at parliamentary elections or when governments have a referendum is essential but not enough. We must learn to make our presence felt, and the least the victims of capitalism at the end of the twentieth century can do is to 'vote' with their feet: that is by massive demonstrations not only in London but in every city and town and village. The young and the old, in a curious way, are now allies against a government and system which seeks its own survival and that of the privileged minority which depends on it as the government depends on their financial support, by targeting the young and old in its financial economies. Thus it will be able to announce as election time approaches that it can reward the nation for its 'growing productivity' (that is making two people do the same work as three were required to do before) by reducing the basic income tax rate, and perhaps even the top rate. Even the liberal press has seen through this trick. But the press will not go onto the streets to protest. Either *we* the victims do or we deserve to be clobbered by the Portillos, Howards, Bottomleys *et alia*. We can defeat them not by *referendums* but by a 1995 *resolution* that they will be faced by an opposition *in the streets* of the Disunited Kingdom!

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IN THE CAPITALIST MADHOUSE

**300 years' coal supplies abandoned underground
 Set-aside arable land to grow wood to feed power stations!**

Considerable publicity was given by the media to the sale of Tower Colliery in South Wales to some 239 miners who had been employed there until British Coal decided eight months ago to close it down, in spite of the fact that it had made profits of £28 million in its last three years. They each contributed £8,000 of their redundancy money to buy the pit and they maintain that they have already secured markets for the high quality anthracite for at least the next five years. We wish them well.

Meanwhile, most of the remaining coal mines were sold off to RJB Mining, said to be the government's 'preferred buyer'. Not surprisingly, according to the *Independent* ('City & Business', 5th December 1994), "as many as seventy managers up to director level are likely to be recruited from British Coal"! The government will get almost £1,000 million from the sell-out to add to the capital being accumulated from the 'sale of the family silver' so that taxes can be reduced next year for the better-off to ensure they vote Tory.

But it is incredible that an industry which at one time produced as much as 200 million tons of coal a year and employed as many as 700,000 is now reduced to some thirty pits employing less than 10,000. And it's not because the coal seams are being worked out. There is an estimated three hundred years' supply of coal under this island.

Obviously as anarchists we welcome any alternative forms of energy production which will free men from such dangerous health-threatening work, but 'progress' in the capitalist world is that you buy where it is cheapest and we now import huge quantities of coal from Australia and Colombia (where children are employed in the mining industry). We are also enjoying oil and gas bonanzas (and the government collected billions of pounds from oil royalties in the '80s, but even that source of revenue will run out in due course). And nuclear power is proving to be not only dangerous but expensive. As we write, two of Britain's largest nuclear power stations "have been closed down because of cracks in pipework resulting in a £1 million a day loss to the state owned company". The *Guardian* (4th January 1995) in its report also points out that the shutdown "is an embarrassment to Nuclear Electricity because it has high hopes of being privatised and of new nuclear stations being sanctioned" (our italics). We have been warned!

Coal mining is a dangerous occupation affecting principally the miners. Nuclear power stations not only affect those who operate them but when things go wrong - as they do - we are all potential victims. Furthermore, nuclear power stations have a

limited life and it costs almost more to safely dismantle them (assuming one can safely dispose of the toxic waste) than to build them.

Obviously the virtual destruction of the coal mining industry in this country will be recognised as political as opposed to economic. As the years go by all kinds of facts are emerging to indicate that not only Thatcher but the now 'liberal' Ted Heath (in the '70s the then Prime Minister who challenged the miners and lost) considered the miners as the greatest danger to the capitalist system (which in fact they were not) and Arthur Scargill the *bête noir* (and to his credit, he was!) had to be blackened at any price. And the price was the destruction of the mining industry *at any price!*

Can any *sane* person suggest that with some three hundred years' supply of coal underground one should think of using a billion acres of good arable land to produce wood to power stations, or oil seeds for industry? More so when one is told daily by the media that half the world is starving? But the reality is that we are living in a capitalist madhouse and anything is possible.

The *East Anglian Daily Times* (10th December 1994) reports that:

"A specialist seed company in North Essex is looking to increase substantially plantings of the new spring high erucic acid rapeseed, which produces oil for industry in set-aside land."

There is no point in quoting all the technical information for *Freedom* readers. What matters is that farmers are told that they can make as much or more growing the industrial rape on their set-aside land than they get for doing nothing on it. Farmers aren't all that simple where money is concerned?

However, the latest alternative to digging up coal is to use that set-aside land to grow trees to provide fuel for wood-burning power stations. No joke - it's in a recent issue of the *Guardian*. It is government sponsored, and we quote:

"Charles Wardle, junior minister for industry and energy, said the government was anxious to foster technologies of the future as part of the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO), which is designed to ensure diversity of power."

They are prepared to finance farmers on three projects requiring a total of 20,000 acres (which is about 25 square miles) of tree plantings consisting of "genetically engineered poplars and willows" which can be harvested within a couple of years and produce (they hope) 90,000 dry tonnes of wood each year thereafter.

There follows the important part (or the crazy part of the project). Those 90,000 tonnes

of wood are then "turned into gas in special furnaces before being piped into power stations".

Needless to say, the latter "will be built in the middle of the new coppices to cut transport costs". And having in the end produced your electricity in the middle of this wood jungle presumably it will have to be taken via pylons and cables back to 'civilisation' for distribution!

And after all that those power stations will produce electricity at 8.45 pence a unit which is, and we quote, "more than three times the cost of coal".

To defeat Arthur Scargill and the miners is really going to cost an awful lot of money. But what about using that million acres (1,275 square miles) of good arable land, *set-aside* only to try and solve the capitalist nightmare of keeping up prices by holding down production of food while millions of victims not only of 'God' (Nature!) but of capitalism are starving!

And don't forget, under this island we have three hundred years' supply of coal!

General Strike

We write in the middle of the three-week general strike. Today, December 23rd, is the most effective day so far with about two-thirds of the workforce at home, those at work are leaving employment early and it is estimated only 10% of the workforce will be at work by 4pm.

Next week will see a total shut-down for two days and only a partial return to work during the week. Following that, in the first week of 1995, the year will see a near total stoppage on the first Monday and only a slow drift back increasing during the week.

Unlike most strikes the workers will not lose any income, in fact extra wages are being given. In some places workers have taken over and bosses have been serving meals during 'working hours'.

This strike is hardly fifteen days to shake the world, but the three-week partial-to-total shut-down from 19th December to 6th January is probably the biggest extension of labour power since 1926.

Oddly enough this bulletin will be the only description of this industrial action. No one else has noticed!

Max Stirner Union of Egoists



Justice and Peace in Ireland

What we are seeing in Ireland is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for peace. The Prime Minister talked of clocks ticking for talks with Sinn Fein. There is another clock ticking, which is the length of the IRA ceasefire. There is only what a leading republican recently described as a 'fragile consensus' within the IRA over the ceasefire question. The confusion over the shooting of a postman in Newry, where the IRA leadership belatedly accepted responsibility for an operation they apparently did not authorise, highlights the possibility of a split within the organisation.

According to reports on the eve of the ceasefire, IRA volunteers believed that they were only going to be asked to suspend operations for a set period of time – perhaps one to three months. The decision to announce a 'complete' cessation of violence rather than a time-limited suspension of operations was reportedly agreed by the IRA leadership only hours before the announcement was made. (This, I think, explains the fact that *Republican News* described the ceasefire as a 'suspension' in one of its articles on the day of the ceasefire announcement 'it hadn't been re-written after the change in policy the night before.')

Some IRA leaders are said to have pledged after the ceasefire announcement that they would resume violence if there wasn't substantial progress towards Irish unity within three months. This does not seem likely, but there is definitely a limit to the trust that the IRA grassroots will place in the Sinn Fein leadership. Journalist Suzanne Breen wrote in late September, "most IRA members are still more disorientated than dissatisfied" by the permanent ceasefire. As heads clear, dissent may grow.

The critical issue is the attitude of the British government. Sinn Fein has presented a fairly modest package of proposals to the Government for immediate action. The ending of repressive legislation, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, has also been called for by Liberty (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties). According to the monitoring organisation Statewatch, of the approximately 7,000 people detained under the PTA since 1974, only 3% were charged with an offence under the PTA, and of those, only 75% were found guilty. 86% of people detained were released without charge of any kind. The PTA never had very much to do with preventing terrorist attacks, it was a tool of repression and intimidation and information-gathering. Its repeal is long overdue.

Sinn Fein are also calling for quick and decisive action on employment discrimination. The Fair Employment legislation in the North of Ireland has been singularly ineffective in redressing inequality. Catholic men remain over twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestant men. The

republicans also want 'parity of esteem' for nationalism and unionism within the Six Counties of Northern Ireland – within local government and so on. This does not presume the permanent existence of 'Northern Ireland' as a state. The republicans are committed to the abolition of the border and the reunification of Ireland. However, they are willing to enter some transitional arrangements on the way to their preferred outcome, for a period of some years perhaps. Sinn Fein also want the language and cultural rights of the Irish population to be respected. On all these issues, there can little room for disagreement among decent people. Reform is long overdue.

The republican movement is also calling for a reciprocal process of demilitarisation, whereby the British security forces cease their military operations and withdraw militarised units from nationalist areas, and cut off their links with loyalist paramilitaries. 'Collusion' between the security forces and loyalists, as it is known, has been widespread and murderous. The only question is at what level it has been authorised in particular cases. Amnesty International issued a report on political killings in Northern Ireland earlier in the year in which it concluded that:

"... collusion has existed at the level of the security forces and services, made possible by apparent complacency, and complicity in this, of government officials. This element of apparent complicity has been seen, for example, in the failure of the authorities to take effective measures to stop collusion, to bring appropriate sanctions against people who colluded, or to deploy resources with equal vigour against both Republican and Loyalist armed groups that pursue campaigns of political murder."

Without serious movement on demilitarisation, the ceasefire will be threatened. What has been happening since the ceasefire, with the use of plastic bullets against civilians, house raids, arrests and harassment all taking place under the cover of

media self-censorship, is a process of kicking the dog to make sure it is asleep, as one outraged SDLP figure put it recently. There have been some welcome, more highly-publicised, relaxations of military operations, but doubt remains on the critical question of whether Britain is really seriously engaged in making peace.

The litmus test of the whole process is the question of negotiations. The great idiocy of the Downing Street Declaration was that it required the republican movement to surrender many of its goals and principles, by accepting the framework set out in the Declaration, and furthermore to renounce violence, without any assurances as to the future progress of the peace process or even a guarantee that Sinn Fein would be admitted to negotiations. Earlier in the year, at the Sinn Fein Peace Commission hearings in Derry, I heard several nationalists urging the leadership of the republican movement to reject the Downing Street Declaration but still to declare a ceasefire, a strategy which has now been adopted.

The main problem is that the exploratory talks which Sinn Fein is entering into are essentially about determining the pre-conditions to be set on Sinn Fein entry into the real negotiations with the other parties. To put it crudely, the talks will be about how much weaponry the IRA has to hand over before Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams are invited to sit down with Molyneux and the other mainstream politicians. This is why some Unionists are keen for the Sinn Fein-British talks to begin. The sooner the IRA is forced to disarm, the better, they think. And they have made no commitment to sit down with the republicans once the arms have been handed in, so they cannot lose.

'Negotiate Now', a peace group set up in February of this year, has been arguing consistently that the Government should enter into negotiations with all other parties to the conflict, without preconditions and without a

predetermined outcome. It is only on such a basis that everyone can be brought to the table. Practically speaking, the precondition that the IRA hands over substantial quantities of perhaps irreplaceable Semtex – before the talks even begin – delays the peace process and endangers the ceasefire (recall the 'fragile consensus' within the IRA). From a moral point of view, a government which is the main arms supplier to the Indonesian dictatorship, aiding and abetting one of today's true genocides in East Timor, is in no position to lecture anyone in the North of Ireland about violence, leaving aside other recent episodes.

In what direction should the constitutional question go? Reasonable people may differ. There is a clash of irreconcilables at the heart of the conflict, and it is difficult at the moment to see major figures on the Unionist side willing to make the compromises necessary for peace, justice and reconciliation. It remains to be seen whether the republican leadership is capable of such changes, but the record of the past few years gives some ground for hope.

In any event, it is up to people here in Britain to force our government to show a real commitment to the peace process, and to create the conditions for a resolution to the conflict. Swift action on demilitarisation, collusion, repressive legislation, discrimination, and 'parity of esteem' could help to consolidate the IRA ceasefire, and is desirable on its own terms. Without such action, we may well see a breakdown of the consensus within the republican movement, and a drift back to war. If so, the primary responsibility will lie on the British government, and on the British people for permitting this extraordinary opportunity to slip away. The question for people here in Britain is whether we are willing to engage in the peace process ourselves, and move our Government towards equality, freedom and the long process of national reconciliation.

Milan Rai

This article is adapted from an essay in a recent pamphlet edited by Milan Rai, Gill Allmond and Andrea Needham – *Making War, Making Peace: Personal Experiences of the Conflict in Ireland; with IRA ceasefire supplement* – available from Freedom bookshop at £1.80 (please include 10% inland, 20% overseas for postage and packing).

East Midlands Anarchists

East Midlands Anarchists are a loose network of anarchists in the Midlands area who came together during 1994. We now produce a regular monthly newsletter to keep in touch with each other. The bulletin now includes news, articles and adverts for events, meetings, etc., in the region. The bulletin is distributed at the beginning of each calendar month and the copy deadline is the 25th of the preceding month. If you have news of events, meetings, demos in the Midlands which you wish to publicise to anarchists in the area, we can be contacted at: **Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby.**

We publish occasional pamphlets: *Political Duty: a confession of scepticism* is available at £1.20 including postage and packing.

We are always interested in hearing from anarchists in the region.

McLibel

For twelve years or more, young people in Copenhagen have celebrated every new year's day by rioting and trashing shops. This year, for the first time, the centre of the riot was a McDonalds restaurant. All its furniture was carried out into the street, where it was piled up and set on fire. Windows, computers, desks and office equipment were smashed in the neighbouring shops and two banks. Some 400 people participated. At Freedom Press, as victims of such violence on a much smaller scale, we sympathise with the shopkeepers.

Meanwhile, our comrades Helen Steel and Dave Morris are being sued for libel by McDonalds, and conducting their own defence at the High Court in London. Obviously they are not in any way responsible for riots in Copenhagen. Neither they nor their supporters have ever advocated violence anywhere, but the site of this year's Copenhagen riot may have been influenced by their case.

McDonalds issued writs against members of the London Greenpeace anarchist group years ago. Most defendants withdrew from the action by promising not to repeat the 'libel'. Proceedings against the remaining two began last February, as *Freedom* reported at the time, with a plea by McDonald's lawyers that the case should be heard by a judge alone, as the scientific evidence would be too complicated for a jury to follow. The defendants objected, but the plaintiff was eventually successful.

The chief point on which a jury was deemed incompetent was alleged to be the most damaging libel, that the type of food served by

McDonalds is associated with various types of cancer. Astonishingly, this point was conceded by McDonalds' lawyers following the evidence of a cancer specialist called by themselves.

Earlier, McDonalds called a vet who had inspected the slaughterhouses of their suppliers. Vets in general take the view that when an animal is killed, it should be stunned while its attention is distracted. McDonalds' expert testified that the killing line for cattle was moving too fast for accuracy, and one cow in every 27 was incompletely stunned. The chickens for Chicken McNuggets were frequently injured on the way from the rearing cages to the slaughter shed, and all hung upside down before stunning.

If either of these points had been made much of in the news media, no doubt there would have been an adverse effect on McDonalds' custom. But there have been few mentions of the case. McDonalds has announced an intention to open fifty new restaurants and employ 3,000 more people in Britain during 1995. The announcement was widely reported, but no report mentioned the libel case as an aside. Nor was the libel case mentioned in reports of the Copenhagen riot.

The latest report of the trial to reach *Freedom* is from November. The defendants claimed that the Advertising Standards Authority had ordered McDonalds to withdraw some advertisements as misleading, and McDonalds simply agreed. Both sides also agree that much of McDonalds advertising is aimed at children. The defendants appear to take the view that this is improper, but McDonalds marketing people are quite proud of it.

This is a difference of opinion, not a dispute about the actual facts, and it is difficult to see what it has to do with libel. Neither side, however, seems anxious to shorten proceedings. Dave and Helen seem to be enjoying themselves, and everybody else in court is handsomely paid by the hour.

Juliet Gellatley, formerly an officer of the Vegetarian Society, agreed that she had apologised on behalf of the Vegetarian Society about an item in a magazine linking McDonalds with rainforest destruction, but said "we published an apology because there was not the money to fight the case".

Helen Steel and Dave Morris are fighting their case without money, and McDonalds are not asking for money by way of libel damages. Their lawyers stated at the beginning that what they want is a declaration that the statements complained of are libellous, and an injunction to stop Dave and/or Helen repeating the libel, on pain of prosecution for contempt of court. For the hope of this, they are paying a million and a half pounds or more.

If the declaration and injunction are granted, there will be a huge publicity campaign. But it now appears quite possible that the judge will find in general against McDonalds, in which case the publicity people will be paid a lot to keep the story quiet. Either way, it looks as if McDonalds are going to spend a lot of money with very little effect on their business one way or the other.

The libel writs were issued not to gain redress for damage but as a means of censorship. Somebody in the McDonalds organisation must be regretting that they underestimated the tenacity and intelligence of Helen and Dave.

When we last focused on the Ex-USSR at the turn of the year the press in this country was full of stories of emergent fascism, Russian military involvement in the former Yugoslavia and indeed nuclear war was being touted as back on the cards. We said this was a smokescreen to cover up for the non-democratic activities of 'our man in Moscow' Mr Yeltsin and we said that the truth of the matter would out in the investment strategies of the west. So what has been happening in the aftermath of the election so decried over here?

Richard Layard writing earlier this year in the *Financial Times*¹ demonstrates that it is now safe to talk down the panic started by the west when he says that Russian politics, "is probably more stable now than at any time since the reform began. The government is a broad national coalition in which most of the key industries are headed by reformers. Few westerners seem to realise this". Not surprising given the over the top hype given to Mr Zhirinovskiy's mediocre election performance. What has happened to those Liberal Democrats who were going to blow the reform programme off course as papers like the *Financial Times* were proclaiming last December?

Indeed it is very much business as usual in the Ex-USSR. Mr Yeltsin continues with his high handed approach dismissive of all except his new found G7 friends and the IMF. The latter now have virtual control over the budget with Yeltsin the man up front laying down the orders. In May he announced the scrapping of quotas and licences for oil and gas exports and a three year tax holiday to foreign investors in the manufacturing sector. At the same time he 'instructed' the government to submit to parliament by mid September legislation lowering companies taxes by between 10% and 20%. Finally he decreed a three year exemption from profit tax for all manufacturing ventures with more than 30% foreign ownership.

The rationale for all this rush of economic activity is of course justified in the name of 'development' or 'convergence' - the need to stake out one's place in the Old American Disorder. Who pays the bill for this rejection of the notion of a self sustaining economy for one of the world's areas the richest in resources? Is all this foreign capital paying dividends? According to the *Financial Times*² the former Soviet block is suffering from a crisis "more serious and crushing than any developed country has had to withstand since the second world war". They continue to talk of 'reeling' and 'plunging' economies. Our man Boris solemny concurred in May saying that the economy was on the brink of collapse. But we don't have to listen to Boris. The figures speak for themselves. All the major indicators are currently in a pretty doleful state. There have been record slumps in industrial production (down 25% on last year). GNP has gone down to about a third of the level it was at when the wall came down back in historic times. Unemployment is set to hit 7% (having started from a 0% base rate). Over the same period inflation has nearly doubled (rising by some 400%)³. Such figures of course are just the shorthand for the human tragedy taking place. Staple foods such as bread and 'luxuries' like meat are well beyond the pockets of those who are unimportant to the new world order. Reports of pensioners pawing their teeth in order to eat, people

1. *Financial Times*, 3rd June 1994

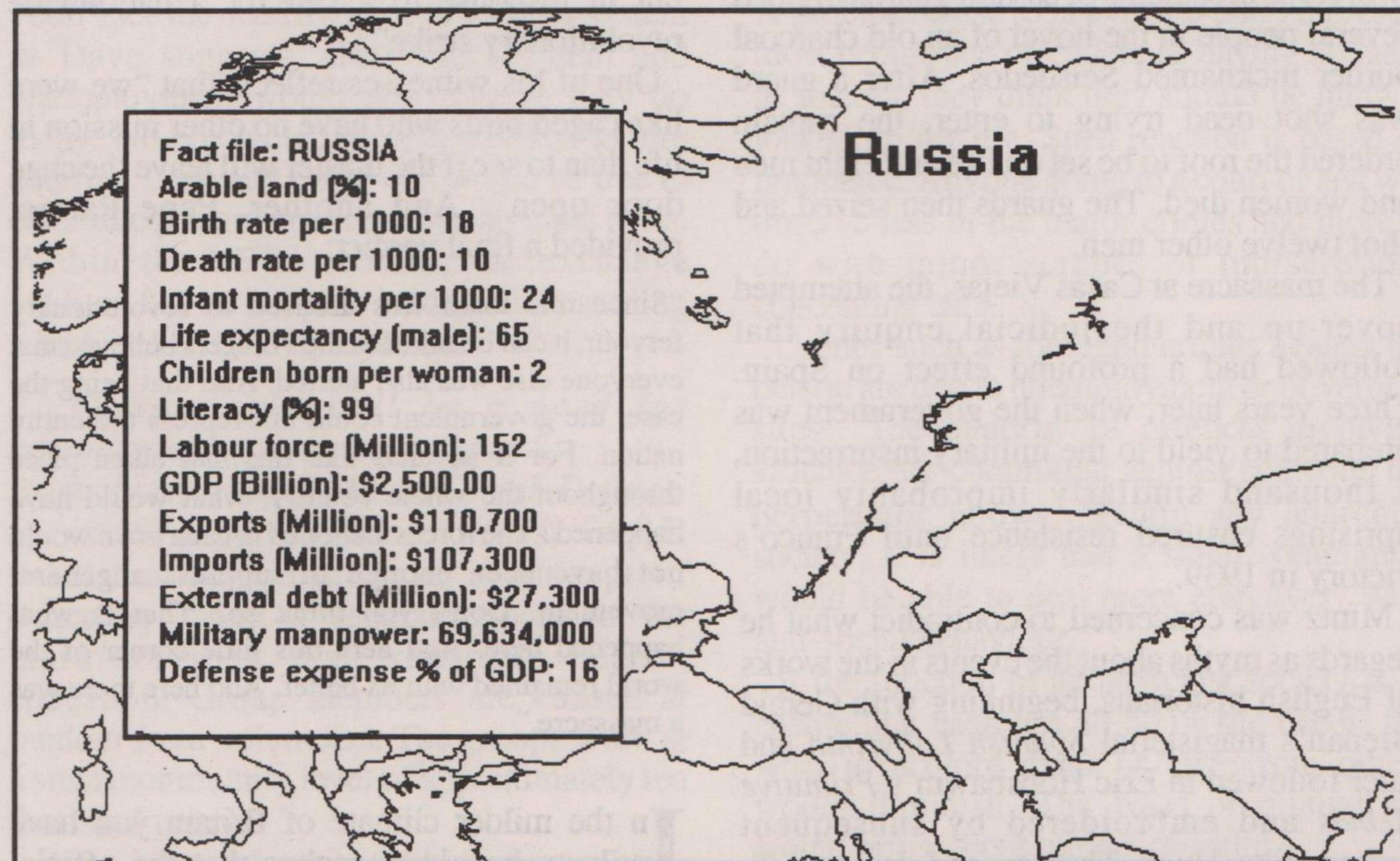
2. *Financial Times*, 30th September 1994

3. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1994

— PART ONE —

Focus on ... the former Soviet Empire Back in the Ex-USSR

Last year we looked at the former USSR arguing that it was being set up as an investment opportunity for the west with 'stability' being engineered by oppressive regimes led by ex-communists. Eight months on has the west turned its back on this region as the press seemed to be saying it might after the election 'triumph' of the Liberal Democrats?...



selling their clothes (or themselves) on the street. It was all too predictable. Five years ago there was nothing in the shops but you had the money - now the shops are full and you can't afford it. In one anecdotal tale on BBC Radio 4 (11th November '94) a Russian spoke of how under the Soviets he knew he would have to save for twenty years in order to get a car - now he knows he will have to wait a lifetime.

A European Periphery

The former USSR is fast on the way to becoming a new cheap manufacturing hinterland for western capital in the form of multinationals and the western banking system. Soon they will own the commanding heights of the economy. Indeed the process is well under way.

To take a couple of examples. The UK's biggest multinational (after the Anglo-Dutch

TNC Unilever) BAT industries announced, also in May, that it is to invest 133 million in Uzbekistan's tobacco industry. This, according to Ulrich Hertz, BAT's tobacco managing director, will improve BAT's export prospects to republics in Central Asia and elsewhere in the Ex-USSR. The investment makes it a monopoly supplier - so much for competition - and will be added to lucrative deals already secured in the Ukraine and Hungary with Moscow and Southern Russia next in line. Uzbekistan is a favourite for investment with the stability brought by its president, Islam 'we are prepared to set straight the brains of hundreds' Karimov, who is widely suspected of having arranged the car bombing of his main political opponent a few years ago. No political parties here - but you'll look far to find a businessman put off by such minor details.

As for foreign investment coming in from the west's banking institutions, stage two of the privatisation programme began on July 1st when westerners were invited in to buy up some of the pickings.

The world's biggest gas company GASPROM is to offer 10% of its shares to foreign investors. Likewise LUKOIL the largest oil company in the country is to offer 25%. NORILSK NIKEL the world's biggest nickel producer is seeking an undisclosed level of investment from abroad as is UNITED ENERGY SYSTEMS again the world's biggest.

This turmoil and the fact that industrial production is down 25% on last year and unemployment - as we have seen, is set to hit 7% leads Andrei Illarionov - the deputy head of the Economic Reform Centre in Moscow, to claim that Russia may be on route to becoming 'normal' in the sense of a developing country, dependant on the west for investment: "Russia is now likely entering the so called Romanian or Latin American way - with periods of high inflation and attempts at financial stabilisation following each other". Clearly a Pinochet or a Chiauchescu will be required to keep the lid on the kettle.

Oppression to continue

But of course we've already got one. Indeed in a short article in June the *Guardian*⁴ informs us that the speakers of both Russian parliaments have backed a proposal to suspend the parliamentary and presidential elections that were due to take place in 1996. This will allow Mr Yeltsin to stay at the helm until the turn of the century. "The almost casual way in which the issue was mentioned belies the desperate efforts of all concerned to batten down the hatches against a wave of social unrest capable of unseating them", the report continues, pointing out also that the date passed with no comment in the media the first sign of "a growing consensus between parliament and president that it was in neither's interests to stick to the terms of the new constitution".

In our last 'Focus on ...' we said that as anarchists we were alarmed by the rise of the right but asked: "How will Boris and the west react, not just in the immediate aftermath, but in the medium and long term?" Now we have our answer: they're all in bed together.

4. *Guardian*, 22nd June 94

— CANADA —

Chopping the State in Alberta

Unlike Thatcher, Reagan and Mulroney, who talked demagogically about 'getting the state off people's backs' and then actually increased the size of the state, the Alberta provincial government has chopped the state sector by twenty percent. Anarchists will find little to cheer, since necessary social services such as hospitals and schools are severely curtailed without alternatives having been organised. In spite of the damage, opinion is overwhelmingly favourable, indicative of popular hostility to everything governmental.

The public sector unions are beaten and are largely to blame for the situation. Adopting Canadian business unionism's policy of 'militant rhetoric, conservative action', they blustered and spouted and then finding a lack of support, did nothing. One positive note is that people are worried about health care and the nurses are in good stead with the public. Here lies the possibility for future resistance.

The situation in Alberta is a portent of the future. Popular hatred of government is resulting in the downsizing of the state. The problem is, this is being done by conservative forces and therefore in a most bloody-minded and compassionless manner. Nature abhors a vacuum. Anti-statist sentiment runs strong and with the lack of a viable libertarian movement, rightist forces have the field all to themselves.

5th November: The new Quebec government has rewarded the Fédération des Travailleurs du Québec for their support in the last election by

abolishing the \$100 million ceiling on the Fonds de Solidarité. The previous government had imposed this annual limit on investment to increase its tax base and curb the trade union investment fund. Other trade union centres will also be allowed to create their own funds. The Fonds de Solidarité, at \$1000 million in assets, is one of the largest venture capital funds in Canada and has created over 30,000 jobs. It also allows the trade unions to own a significant and growing portion of the economy and is an example of the sense of solidarity which exists among Quebecois.

6th November: The hated technocrats have been resoundingly defeated in the Montreal civic election. Unfortunately, they have been replaced by a centre-right party called Vision Montreal (VM). The libertarian municipalist-oriented Democratic Coalition Ecology Montreal (DCEM) did not do as well as hoped due to the VM sweep, but did manage to maintain their two previous councillors and their mayoral candidate got 7,000 votes. They will remain an effective opposition. At a time when any group even vaguely leftist is trounced by the North American electorate, the DCEM's ability to hold its own is indicative of the wisdom of pursuing a left-decentralist position.

16th November: Thirteen thousand university students from Ontario and Quebec gathered in Ottawa for a militant demonstration against the Liberal government's budget cuts which will sharply increase tuition fees. The Minister of

Human Resources was showered with curses, eggs and tomatoes as he attempted to rationalise his actions. This was the largest student demonstration in Canadian history, greater than any of the 'student power' revolts of the late '60s. Angry demonstrators also confronted government members in Vancouver over this issue.

17th November: The regionalist revolt continues in Quebec. The government has given in on the 'illegal school' which arose when parents in the town of Lefebvre set up their own school after the commissioners closed the 'litle red schoolhouse'. They will be allowed to keep their school and will be aided by the commission.

Hundreds of angry citizens of St Adolphe de Howard stormed the village council meeting and forced the mayor to back down on implementing his plans. These plans consisted of a building project and subdivision on two islands in their natural and unspoiled state and say 'to hell with urbanism'.

18th November: In a surprise move the Quebec government has put the James Bay Hydro Electric Project on a long term hold. Jacques Parizeau, the Quebec prime minister, stated that no need existed for the project. Thus, in one blow he calms native opposition to his government, placates environmentalists (many of whom are sympathetic to Quebec independence), gets rid of a huge drain on government coffers and makes himself look decisive. But one must count this as more of a victory for the Native American and green movements without whom this environmental and economic disaster would have gone full steam ahead. As it stands, this imbecility has cost us over \$300 million.

Larry Gambone

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

History from the underside

One of the most enjoyable trends of the last few decades has been the spread of interest in 'oral history', where the advent of the tape recorder has enabled everyone to be a historian whether they are primary school children questioning grandparents or people interested in the history of a place, a movement or a social institution.

We don't need reminding that memory itself gets revised and expanded to fit a changed perception of the 'truth', but so do the documentary sources relied on by historians. We always need to ponder the remark of W.R. Lethaby: "History is written by those who survive. Those who go under have the experience."

The television camera too has changed the dimensions of modern history. Many of us remember Channel 4's series of ten years ago about the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. It was inspired by Ronald Fraser's *Blood of Spain* (Allen Lane, 1979), a 600-page oral history of the period compiled from one-tenth of the material gathered in three hundred interviews in the twilight of Franco's dictatorship.

Even more striking, from a strictly anarchist point of view, was another oral history from a minor event in an obscure, poverty-stricken Spanish town several years before the revolution and civil war. This was Jerome Mintz's *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas* (Chicago University Press, 1983). Mintz interviewed old inhabitants over a three year period in the 1960s. They must by now have died and their voices, as he remarks, "can be heard now only in the pages that follow". Julian Pitt-Rivers, the author of another remarkable book on Andalusia, *The People of the Sierra*, calls the book "a triumphant validation of oral history". This is because Mintz overturns not only the accounts of

previous historians but the generalisations derived from them.

In 1933, following a call from the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT, there were uprisings, instantly suppressed, in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid. Three days later in Casas Viejas, landless peasants proclaimed that *comunismo libertario* had arrived and engaged the civil guards with shotguns, killing two. Reinforcements of assault guards trapped several people in the hovel of an old charcoal burner nicknamed Seisdedos. After a guard was shot dead trying to enter, the captain ordered the roof to be set on fire and eight men and women died. The guards then seized and shot twelve other men.

The massacre at Casas Viejas, the attempted cover-up and the judicial enquiry that followed had a profound effect on Spain. Three years later, when the government was prepared to yield to the military insurrection, a thousand similarly improbably local uprisings ensured resistance until Franco's victory in 1939.

Mintz was concerned to contradict what he regards as myths about the events in the works of English historians, beginning with Gerald Brenan's magisterial *Spanish Labyrinth* and later followed in Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* and embroidered by subsequent writers like Hugh Thomas and James Joll. Brenan sees Seisdedos as a kind of religious revivalist acting "in one of those bursts of millenarian fervour that are so typical of Andalusia". Hobsbawm, drawing on every historical account of the previous half century, sees him as a charismatic leader of the kind

that fits a Marxist image of pre-political primitive rebellion, which was "utopian, millenarian, apocalyptic". Mintz replied that the facts, both in contemporary evidence and in oral recollection, prove otherwise. There was no leader. Seisdedos was a poor old man who had nothing to do with the events of which he was a victim, while Casas Viejas "rose, not in a frenzy of blind millenarianism but in response to a call for a nationwide revolutionary strike".

One of his witnesses reflects that "we were like caged birds who have no other mission in life than to see if the master will leave the cage door open". And another, Pepe Pareja, provided a final verdict:

"Since this town was aroused to revolutionary fervour, it can be said that the villagers believed that everyone else was also alerted. And that being the case, the government could not repress the entire nation. For if an alert like this had taken place throughout the whole country, what would have happened? The forces stationed in each town would not have been enough to suppress a general movement. Don't you think so? That is what happened here. And here this little corner of the world remained with its belief. And here there was a massacre."

In the milder climate of Britain you have only to be old to realise that the official version of twentieth century history is rather different from actual experience. Steve Humphries is a historian who was the author of a remarkable book *Hooligans or Rebels? an oral history of working class childhood and youth 1889-1939* (Blackwell, 1981) and of

how-to-do-it manuals for local historians. He realised that rather than be a provider of raw material for television, it was better to widen the audience by himself becoming a producer and director of television films.

Unlike many in this overcrowded field, he succeeded. And not only that, he has managed to ensure that the fleeting image is perpetuated by books. This was true of his series with Gavin Weightman and Joanna Mack, *The Making of Modern London* for LWT, and for his important later histories like *A Secret World of Sex* and *A Century of Childhood* from Channel 4. The question which we viewers ask is: what is his secret? One answer must be in sheer expertise and integrity in making the message more important than the medium and avoiding those ever-so-clever visual tricks that so irritate viewers. The second must be a remarkable ability to develop a team of researchers to find just the right witnesses from the past, and to watch a mountain of old feature films, newsreels and propaganda material to find appropriate visual images. Their labour, and that of the testifiers, is always fully acknowledged.

And how riveting this testimony was! BBC2's autumn 1994 series on *Forbidden Britain* explored the way in which current

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"When we say a society is corrupt we haven't begun to describe that society". So said James Pinkerton in 1960, then secretary of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, later known as the Direct Action Movement and now called the Solidarity Federation. His point being that all societies are by their nature corrupt.

'Jim Pink' thought that a society is corrupt in so far as it fails to live up to the standards and values which it sets for itself. In this sense evidence of anarchist corruption can be found in the entry of anarchist members of the CNT and FAI into the Spanish government and agencies of state in 1936. More recently, since 1976, there have been rumours that the CNT was receiving funds from the CIA, and claims within the CNT at the Congress in 1979 that a then national secretary was using CNT funds to treat himself to trips junketing around the country.

But before returning to anarchist corruption let's consider the general problem of corruption as it presents itself in modern society. Several writers recently have detected that modern society is tottering on the edge of a kind of social abyss. Neil Ascherson in an article 'The Rise of the Kleptocracy' argues that: "Sleaze is a symptom of a wider malaise that heralds the end of party politics". While Eugenio Scalfari, editor of *La Repubblica* the Italian newspaper, claims: "We are witnessing a real social revolution; instead of two well-defined and opposing classes, we have the formation of a 'middle class' which has lost its identity".

The idea of being middle class is the epitome of modernity. As Señor Scalfari suggests: "In the 'middle class' everyone looks the same, everything is horribly anonymous, everyone aspires to be successful; lifestyles, fashions, holidays, leisure activities, all tend to be uniform; pragmatism is the rule of behaviour unanimously cried out for and pursued". But pragmatism is a poor glue with which to cement standards and moral fibre into public life. Modern public life seems to be committed to a philosophy of 'make do', while in private the public figures are on the make.

Smelling Maxwell's corpse

Neil Ascherson insists a fundamental change has taken place in the "whole global environment of politics" brought on by the world slump and the end of the Cold War. Other writers have gone on about the rise of the 'cultura del pelotazo' or get-rich-quick philosophy. The French socialist Alain Minc has studied its development in his book *The New Middle Ages*, defining the chief ingredients as:

1. The liberalisation of the markets and the explosion of financiers, which has made money, much more than before, the centre of social activities.
2. The individualism, which has put personal self-interest

above everything.

3. The collapse of esteem of the big traditional institutions: the state, the church, the political parties and the trade unions, that has destabilised morality.
4. The influence of the North American cultural tradition, through which we have copied the adoration of money without a restraining counter morality or the religious propriety of Anglo-Saxon protestantism.
5. The disappearance of the class struggle.
6. The appearance of personalities symbolising dishonesty and the fiddle.
7. The decline of the ethos of the public good, and the elevation of the aim of personal enrichment.
8. The sentiment of opportunism and the expectation of getting off scot-free in the social climate.

This is a typical of sociological cobble-up! Sociologists are dab-hands at producing lists like this which look like impressive analytical tracts. It would amount to little more than meaningless mumbo jumbo if we couldn't still smell Maxwell's corpse, if we couldn't still remember Thatcher and Thatcherism, if we weren't awash with Pax-Americana every time we go to the pictures or turn on the television.

There is a hint of French chauvinism and anti-Americanism here, but faced with the model of the 'fast buck' it is hard to avoid. Joaquin Estefania in *El Pais* asks "is the get-rich-quick culture capitalism's equivalent of Stalinism?" Has capitalism an acceptable face? J.K. Galbraith thinks 'get-rich-quick' is at the heart of the capitalist system; George Soros is normal and not abnormal under capitalism.

But if playing the market, speculating and the temptation of a fiddle on the side is natural to capitalism, what has now changed to bring about so many cases of corruption to the surface? The world slump, the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the loss of class identity? Neil Ascherson says that it's no accident that so many of the international scandals date from 1989:

"It was in 1989 that Jim Wright, the Speaker of Congress in the United States, was nailed for accepting illegitimate gifts, followed by an apparently endless run of other exposures. The 'Recruit' affair in Japan, which destroyed a prime minister and set off a landslide that has transformed Japanese party politics, began about the same time. The attack on the Italian targetopolis began a little later ... like the onslaught of French politicians ... In Britain, the stench has been gathering around the government since the last years of Mrs Thatcher's administration."

MODERNISM IN THE

The slump in world trade has led to businessmen expecting more value for money, and the younger business generation has become much less discreet about political funding and 'sponsorship'. Today, rather than cough up for party funds, Mr Ascherson says the 'client' prefers to pay for one job at a time, to buy an MP or bribe a minister. He asks: "Why buy a cow when you can pay the milkman for a pint".

But the loss of identity, the move away from class politics and mass based parties, seems to be leaving us with more style than substance. A kind of politics of image and make-believe in which no one believes, and all that remains is to cream off what we can. The political tribes have come to represent little more than themselves. They are self-serving and self-obsessed, and according to Hans Magnus Enzensberger we ought to feel sorry for them as we might for any other group on the social fringe, like drug abusers, etc. In this kind of fragmented and pointless atmosphere is it surprising that they are on the take?

Spanish socialist sleaze

A couple of years ago while on holiday in Burgundy I met a Spaniard, a functionary in the Brussels bureaucracy, who was complaining bitterly of the widespread corruption in the public life of the Latin countries - Spain, Italy and France. Recently Jorge Semprum, a former Minister of Culture in the Spanish government, said: "Corruption is something intrinsic in the history of Spain". He added that "this is a country that has had no protestant reformation, where the work culture remains scorned".

Spanish sleaze under socialism is spouting a fountain of corruption. Last month, when multi-millionaire Catalan financier Javier de la Rosa was held for fraud and embezzlement, he vowed to "tirar la manta" (chuck off the blanket or compromise his cronies). 'JR' as he is known, is believed to have taped his telephone calls. Luis Roldan, the former chief of the Spanish Civil Guard appointed by the socialist government, who fled the country has been telling tales about the prime minister Felipe Gonzalez and others ever since. Mr Gonzalez denies it all, saying Mr Roldan is a proven crook.

Mr de la Rosa made hundreds of millions of dollars while running companies into debt and he is accused of helping himself to £15 million of funds guaranteed by Catalonia's regional government for developing a Disneyland type theme

social issues have in fact been with us all through the century, with evidence provided by survivors and from old film. Whether we are concerned with lawless youth and juvenile crime, the drug culture, sexual abuse of children, racial riots, sex and pregnancy outside marriage, homelessness or the horrors of mass unemployment, they have been around for a long time, even though some of them were swept out of public scrutiny in a tacitly forbidden Britain. There is now a book of the series, *Forbidden Britain: our secret past 1900-1960* by Steve Humphries and Pamela Gordon (BBC Publications, £12.99) in which a rich collection of photographs accompanies extended versions of the evidence of over thirty of the witnesses.

Those who went under had the experience, but in this book a few of the survivors tell their tales. But they recall plenty of their less lucky contemporaries who were, literally, killed by the experience of poverty, disease, persecution and despair in the first half of the twentieth century.

Some people have a larger ration of the great human characteristics of resourcefulness and resilience than others. Compare, for example, the tale in this book of borstal life on the windy east coast with the glowing description from the same period by a convicted juvenile IRA bomber, Brendan Behan, in his book *Borstal Boy* (Hutchinson, 1958). I wonder what the message of oral history is for a different generation now that the concept of an urban underclass has been re-invented? Maybe the most important impact of the stories told by the restrained and dignified old people is simply 'Look, we have come through!' It is quite possible that the focus of oral history will shift from that of sociology to that of individual psychology.

Colin Ward

Dreams of the Impossible?

Dave Dane's 'Problems for Anarchists' (*Freedom*, 20th August 1994) suggests that we are unlikely to achieve a pure anarchist society, but may achieve a society based more on anarchist principles. Here are Dave's list of problems, and my comments:

1. Money is a useful means of exchange ...

I would envisage a modified version of the LETS schemes already being operated. There will probably be a need for a common currency, for use in trading between schemes. I don't see the need for a social security system as Dave suggests, since employment and unemployment would not exist as they do today. No one would be in a position to hire and fire. Each and every one would be free to enter into an agreement on an individual basis. Within the LETS scheme, the exchange medium has no intrinsic value, unlike sterling which can be held or invested.

2. There would still be a need for administration / decision making ...

Brian Martin in his book *Social Defence, Social Change* (Freedom Press, £4.95) describes John Burnheim's concept of demarchy, based on separate groups for the main services, e.g. transport, health, education. Group members are chosen at random from volunteers. The groups work at a small community level of approximately ten thousand people.

Brian Martin describes the system as being similar to that of jury selection. Furthermore, the groups are there to ensure the smooth co-ordination of the services they are responsible for. The main decisions could be taken by the workforce, based on their knowledge of the job in hand. At the moment

management imposes decisions and ideas that have little experience of the actual work.

An anarchic society is based on decentralisation. We are looking at much smaller communities. The functional groups would co-ordinate the more complex systems at a local level, being linked to other communities; the whole structure being a spider's web but without the spider.

3. The problem of crime / anti-social behaviour ...

A problem close to my own work. At present most people see offenders as having no stake in society; they think they should be hung or locked up for life. Such reaction is based on ignorance. Anyone going to a court of law will observe less of the major crimes and more to do with minor scrapes or indiscretions concerning cars.

Crimes such as theft and crimes against the person are due to unemployment or poverty or stress. The majority of offences involving violence are committed against someone the perpetrator knows. Within any anarchist society, it is likely that a small community would be able to deal more effectively with anti-social behaviour.

If the function of an anarchist society is to ensure that each has all he or she needs, the wish to acquire extra or take from others would diminish. The basis of mutual aid would bring about mutual restraint.

Currently, the most effective way of dealing with offenders is the probation service, giving people a chance to work through the difficulties they may have.

In an anarchist society I would envisage this being done by the community, or a volunteer

from the community simply discussing with the offender the reasons for his or her act. Such a system would require a stable community of well educated and sensitive persons who enjoyed a degree of happiness and security.

There are always a number of people who find it difficult to cope and need extra support: the mentally handicapped and mentally ill, or just individuals who find that it has all become too much. I envisage a place where such people could go to obtain sanctuary and support, run on libertarian lines.

4. How would such a society relate to other parts of the world which had not undergone such changes?

I would hope that an anarchist society would develop universally, and not just in one country. Should that not happen, a small nation may be necessary, but not as at present. I would be keen on seeing a similar approach to defence as that of Switzerland, with each citizen contributing equally to the defence.

The chance of a pure anarchist society is remote, however a gradual shift towards a libertarian way of life may well occur. The mood of people is one of frustration. The imposition of laws like the Criminal Justice Act is likely to push people further apart, something people are likely to grow tired of, especially where it directly affects them. Furthermore, as people grow tired of the left/right swing, so they will search for something else.

What I have illustrated may seem utopian, but I recognise that the human race is not perfect, thus to achieve the system I have described will take a long time and it won't be easy either. Let's hope the shift away from authoritarian quick-fix answers comes sooner rather than later.

Chris Platts

NEW MIDDLE AGES

park near Barcelona. Meanwhile Mariano Rubio, a former socialist Central Bank governor, has been accused of insider trading and could face jail. A government appointed head of the Spanish Red Cross, Carmen Mestre, had to resign this year when the charity ran up multi-million dollar losses while she spent vast sums on entertainment - £50,000 a year in one restaurant alone using a Red Cross credit card. A judge investigating slush money from banks and big business to Mr Gonzalez's Socialist Workers' Party has now implicated a socialist senator and is still questioning the then party head of finance, Guillermo Galeote.

Spanish corruption is bad, but perhaps Italian political corruption is worse and French is at least comparable. As I write, the Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi stands accused of bribery. In Britain the situation seems less acute, but Alain Minc writes: "The gris [grey areas] advance all over ... for example, in the world of finance the distinctions between what is permitted and what is prohibited, what is moral and what is immoral, what is legal authority and what is illegal power, have become confused". Mr Minc is claiming that as financial speculation develops at an international level, so what he calls the 'grey areas' will expand and economic corruption will grow into political corruption.

Ultimately for Minc, political history will end up as a history of mafia economies run by robber barons in a return to something like the Middle Ages.

While there is still an element of shock in Britain about political corruption, in Spain it is taken for granted that their politicians will try it on. José Fernandez-Dols, a social psychologist at Madrid University, has been studying the prevalence in Spain of 'amiguismo' (cronyism or 'jobs for the boys'). Señor Fernandez-Dols has come to see corruption as one of Spain's perverse norms, seen as okay at all levels of society.

What most Spaniards may find objectionable is the revelation that their prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez, had had a bunker built for himself out of public funds. Moreover, it is claimed in an example of favouritism that he gave the job for the work to his brother-in-law's company. The idea of Gonzalez having a secret bunker built to dig himself into will be repugnant to Spaniards. It shows how removed he has become from the life of the Spanish people.

When the Gonzalez government in 1986 forced the Andalusian peasants to dig up their olive groves, the peasants and their trade union, SOC, said 'Gonzalez no es andaluz!'

Gonzalez was born at Dos Hermanos near Seville. Now that the man secretes himself like a mole in the ground, many Spaniards may ask '¿Es Gonzalez un Español?'

Evidence that the Spanish socialist government may be reaching the end of its tether was shown recently when a senior socialist MEP wrote in *El Pais* launching a campaign to regain Spanish sovereignty over Gibraltar. General Franco approaching the end of his life in 1969 put Gibraltar under siege to try to force the Gibraltarians to accept Spanish rule. It is the standard tactic employed by governments to distract their own people from miseries at home and into some international diversion like Gibraltar. The socialists now echo Franco by saying British Gibraltar offends national prestige and dignity.

How modernism corrupts anarchism!

We seem to have reached the stage where modern life is focused totally on economics and accountability. Some hint of this situation was alluded to at the end of Lord Clark's book *Civilisation* in 1969:

"It's godless, it's brutal, it's violent - but one can't laugh it off because in the energy, strength of will and mental grasp that have gone to make New York, materialism has translated itself ... But New York, after all, was made by men. It took almost the same time to reach its present condition as it did to complete the Gothic cathedrals. At which point a very obvious reflection crosses one's mind: that the cathedrals were built to the glory of God, New York was built to the glory of mammon - money, gain, the new god of the nineteenth century. So many of the same ingredients have gone into its construction that at a distance it does look like a celestial city. At a distance. Come closer and it's not so good. Lots of squalor, and, in the luxury, something parasitical."

So is this to be the latest stage of modernism - a world stuck in the groove of market economics? One consequence of this seems to be less identification with the state. As Neil Ascherson says, people "are ceasing to respect a centralised state which delivers less and less, or to identify with a form of democracy which offers one vote for a representative every five years".

Mr Ascherson concludes: "The limit has been reached, and the whole system - not just its weak points - must be changed".

But changed by whom? Surely not the clapped-out Marxist parties! Still less the updated Labour Party or the European social democrats.

Spanish anarchism, always an outsider with its puritanical moral code, was swept aside during Franco's civil war. It has not recovered during the last decade of degenerating social democracy, though I see the anarcho-syndicalist trade unions are now joined together in an organisation of minority trade unions - 'La Co-ordinadora Sindical de Iberia' - including USO, CTA, CSIF-SITA, CNT and CGT.

In a way I suppose syndicalism could be seen as the corrupting force in anarchism. Certainly Julian A. Pitt-Rivers the anthropologist suggests that the organisation of the CNT as a national trade union federation led to a body with a "predominance within it of syndicalist ideas" which contrasted with the anarchist ideas of the Andalusian pueblo. Of course, Gerald Brenan says that the continuous influx of Andalusian peasants into the shanty towns around Barcelona reinforced the anarchist element inside the CNT. In the end, though, anarchism was still sacrificed to the nation state when members of the CNT/FAI joined the government.

In Britain the syndicalist movement showed a total lack of vision. It never got much beyond a kind of corporatism, and a trade union sponsored Labour Party. People in the Solidarity Federation (formerly DAM) and the Syndicalist Bulletin Group will disagree that the trade unions here are not syndicalist or not 'revolutionary anarchist'. But the TUC is an institutional part of the syndicalist tradition, and even now the Solidarity Federation and the Syndicalist Bulletin Group would have to admit it represents as much a threat to the status quo as a headless chicken.

Syndicalism, or rather anarcho-syndicalism, has represented anarchism's concession to modernism. In Spain this led to the absurdity of the entry of CNT/FAI members into the Spanish government in 1936, in Britain it has brought us the Labour Party and the TUC. Anarchism, as one of its Spanish critics has said, is primordial. A. Ramos Oliveira says of anarchism: "It was a social phenomenon which pre-dated the philosophy of anarchism. Anarchists existed among the proletariat, in Spain and in other countries, in modern times and in antiquity, before the existence of a theory especially formulated for them. Anarchism was the primordial and elementary manifestation of the discontent of the exploited".

He goes on to say that Marxism delivered the working class from this as they became more sophisticated and more modern. Marxism, Señor Oliveira seems to be saying, civilised the workers and turned them from 'idealistic subjectivists' into 'cheerful rationalists' through its interpretation of class warfare. Anarchists would say, with the benefit of hindsight, that Marxism merely domesticated the workers and some would say syndicalism made a contribution here.

Brian Bamford

Through the Anarchist Press

Last year in January I made two resolutions. One was not to read anything else other than the anarchist press. The second, that after a year of abstention I would make a review of the mass circulated newspapers.

I am pleased to say that I have kept to the first resolution throughout the year and benefited enormously having lived on this, so to speak, healthy diet. The time, which otherwise would have been spent on reading the unreadable press, I could now spend on reading the works of authors I have long neglected.

But the second resolution I'm unable to keep. I have no intention, and I am certainly not in the mood, to wade through a year's production of the world's newspapers in order to assimilate all the garbage accomplished last year. This resolution anyway was meant for 1994 and only now do I notice a contradiction in terms. How could I review in the same year of 1994 the newspapers I haven't read, for if I did that would have broken my first resolution. A lucky escape and a poor defence, but I'm glad of it.

As it happens I'm seriously thinking of giving up even listening to what is derisively called the news on radio. Radio Three, which is just about obtainable on my set, in its news summary last night gave seven short items not including the weather (a good standby). As to be expected, none of the news was worth hearing, three of the items were fed in by the police, two by the army via the Foreign Office, one incomprehensible item from the US about something that either happened or will happen in Washington and to acknowledge some home listeners agog for the news there was an item about the Lottery which is now acknowledged to be the most successful tax increase through the back door in years. Why should anyone listen to such rubbish?

Never have there been tighter controls on what constitutes news. During the three-day evictions of the M11 protesters the news from Leytonstone was a conveniently produced police atrocity story, the only concession to audibility were short mentions on transport news where motorists were advised to avoid the area.

Even London Transport – management, Union and workers – have cooperated in the evictions with the police and the bailiffs by closing down local underground stations in order to restrict the number of supporters arriving to support the protesters.

Readers may also remember that when Joy Gardner died the anti-establishment sentiment which swept the country was only broken by the 'news' of a refugee child arriving here from Bosnia, at the personal instigation of the Prime Minister, which broke the news headlines.

Here is a quote from some of the books I bagged: "Some writing is the repetition of the pleasure of seeing a thought unfurl as letters follow each other, filling the empty page, how each thought is penned, so that years later self might meet self and cry or laugh about the content ... Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation ..."

The [full] explanation is to be found in a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest pleasure not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it ... (Aristotle, translation by Ingram Bywater, 1920).

"When each gladness has gone, gathering sorrow may cloud the brain: and in his breast a man can not then see how his sorrows shall end. *thea ofereode, thisses swa maeg*"

Yet (that passed over; this may too)" (translation by Michael Alexander, the Lament of Deor from early English writing).

Or as the early Spanish used to say, *Non pasan.*

John Rety

AUTHOR OF 'SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE' HAS KILLED HIMSELF Last Curtain Call for Guy Debord



We don't know how he died, and still less why. We only know that Guy Debord, around evening time on Wednesday 30th November, took his life; the life that in the last few years he himself – perhaps the last of the situationists still partly faithful to his own image of the resolute enemy of the society of the spectacle – helped to make more mysterious, more evanescent, more elsewhere. Paradoxically one could say that in reality death has brought him back to life, in the sense that it has re-established the human reality (death being our common destiny) of a character whose notoriety and uncompromising stance of refusal would make of existence a long theatrical piece in which he would improvise up until the end. But who was Guy Debord? There are several answers, but at the same time such answers would preclude the understanding of his identity as indefinable. Writer? Film director? Situationist? "Doctor in nothing ..." as he liked to define himself in one of his latest books? Of course all those things, but simply because they are 'things' – which come down to things he did – they certainly do not reveal the whole man. It isn't for nothing that the numerous French dailies which reported the news of his suicide, not only didn't say how or why he died, neither did they say anything about him, limiting themselves to an inventory of the things he did, the things he said, how he did them, how he said them, but forgetting to say who Guy Debord was. In reality it was the self-imposed mystery which created the impenetrable and adventurist aura, barely available to the media and prone to violent argument; Guy Debord liked to hide his true self behind a blanket of gossip, speculation and even spite in his dealings with others, and to never let it see daylight. For the rest, for someone who wrote a book *The Society of the Spectacle*, where the world is seen as a spectacle – which is to say a false image which the economic system produces of itself in order to dominate society – visibility was to be totally denied. Thus the rare photos which he consciously planned so that they should be published in his lifetime, were the most hazy in the world and to a fair degree made him look younger

than his real age. Certainly invisibility was imperative!

It was not by chance that his first public work was a film, *Hurlément en faveur de Sade* (1952), in which there is no picture and the spectator – truly stupefied by this purely surrealist provocation – watched an alternated sequence of white and then black screens, whilst listening to a mixture of atonal dialogues involving numerous people leading up to a silent black screen for 24 minutes. This was the first gauntlet against the spectacle thrown down by Guy Debord who fought this battle throughout his life; a death sentence for the cinema, at the time considered as the essence of the artistic product of bourgeois society and for that reason the extreme synthesis of its values in full decomposition, since it expressed not the construction of a situation which aimed to shed light on everyday life but rather a system of falsification of reality in order to suppress it and supplant it by means of a series of images aimed at cutting the individual off from his daily existence and making of him an illusory participant in the spectacle of consumer society in his role as good/product of the spectacle.

The setting up in 1957 of the Situationist International was partly the logical consequence of these artistic suppositions. Coming out of the European cultural milieu as the convergence of several artistic experiences (COBRA, the Lettrist International, the Movement for Bauhaus Cinema, the London Psychogeographical Society) the Situationist International from day one aimed to represent – above all via Debord, who was the editor of its statement of principles – a critique of art brought into being by the necessity of superseding it by creating liberated situations in which life can effectively experience its own possibilities and not become enclosed in the repetitive role models that the society of the spectacle constructs in order to dominate and exploit. But already in those early years the different heads of the Situationist International quarrelled amongst themselves and Debord – who alone amongst them represented the most coherent position with his objective of achieving a total critique of art and a whole culture skewered towards the production of values separated from everyday life (and for that reason incapable of achieving its own radical transformation) – came out better from confrontations with those who presupposed the replacement of art as simply a repeat of the architectural and urban argument which aimed to make works of art no longer on canvas but in the physical space of a city.

But the first years of the '60s saw a u-turn in the politics of the Situationist International, and coincided with Debord's political phase, which saw an achievement of sorts in making the organisation – now nearly purged of any artistic content – the rallying point between the experience of the European cultural avant garde and the experience of politico-revolutionary groupings, in France represented by some journals (*Arguments* and *Socialisme et Barbarie*) of a revisionary Marxist leaning. These were the years when Debord participated in the seminars of Lefebvre at Nanterre and during which he developed his critique of daily life which had already been expounded by this philosopher and sociologist from Nanterre in the

late '50s. The critique of everyday life – the baby sister of theories of alienation/separation produced by the spectacular society – became the theoretical underpinnings of the Situationist International and the theme of his most famous book, already mentioned, in which the theoretical and organisational experience of the workers council represented the political and revolutionary *dénoûement* of the situationist theory. The Strasbourg scandal and Paris '68 showed not so much that Debord and the Situationist International were gaining influence (as has always been claimed by the historical hagiographer of the movement) but rather the fortuitous meeting – and in many ways propitious – between the combative and revolutionary practice of the movement of '68 and the necessity to find an outlet for situationist theory. If there had been no May '68 in France, would the Situationist International have become what it seemed to be after the event (that is, the high point of modern revolution)? And would the work of Debord have come to seem clairvoyant and prophetic, as was claimed by numerous commentators who proclaim his books on the social spectacle to be the only texts able to give a sense – sorry, a vision – to what happened in the East as well as the West? All these considerations lead back to the unanswered question of who Guy Debord was; a man who, at the age of 62, decided to put an end to his life and to foreclose his real life story asking forgiveness for his own mistakes. But the truth of his story will still have to be reconstructed by reference to his work which he has left to posterity with the intention of becoming the first invisible personality of the society of the spectacle. Will we ever know the truth?

Gianfranco Marelli, FAI Milan
translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*,
21st December 1994

League Tables

Nicolas Walter gave the Comment on the Radio 4 Sunday programme on 27th November

League tables are in the news. What are they for? To count who has won and who has lost. That's all right for competitive sport, where league tables began; but it's all wrong for education and health, which depend on cooperation rather than competition. You can't judge schools by counting the number of pupils who come out with qualifications, or hospitals by counting the number of patients who come out alive. I passed a lot of examinations when I was young, and survived a lot of operations when I was older, but I couldn't judge my schools and hospitals only by such criteria.

The trouble with concentrating on exams is that students work not to learn, but to pass; they pass, but don't necessarily learn. There's the same trouble with concentrating on discharging rather than curing patients; they are discharged, but not necessarily cured. This all belongs to the current fashion for calculation and compulsion. School league tables come from the national curriculum; and the national curriculum comes from the curriculum vitae, the CV, that passport through our careers which turns life into a race to be run rather than an experience to be enjoyed or endured. And hospital league tables have less to do with national health than national wealth. We know the price of everything and the value of nothing. We're so busy getting a living and staying alive that we forget to live.

People should be chosen for their personal qualities, not their paper qualifications. Institutions should be evaluated not by their places in tables, but by their places in our hearts. Good people, good schools and good hospitals work with one another, not against each other. We must get away from counting and get back to what counts. As Protagoras said more than two thousand years ago, man is the measure of all things. We need less examination and more education, less treatment and more care. To go back to league tables, I don't want to belong to a league or appear on a table. Like the Prisoner in the television series: I am not a number, I am a free man.

MAX STIRNER (Johann Caspar Schmidt), 1806-1856, remained unemployed for most of his life and died in extreme poverty. As a member of the so-called 'Free Ones', a circle of radical leftwing Hegelians, he wrote his most important work, *The Ego and His Own* (1844), the most radical critique of modern ideology yet written, for which he has been called a pre-cursor of Nietzsche as well as of Existentialism. "If men reach the point of losing respect for property, every one will have property, as all slaves become free men as soon as they no longer respect the master as master."

The portrait, right, is a black and white copy of one of 36 portraits of anarchists drawn in three-colour line by Clifford Harper, included in a set of picture cards each with a potted biography on the reverse and published by Freedom Press.

Other portraits include such varied anarchist figures as Kropotkin, Bakunin, Lucy Parsons, Tolstoy, Louise Michel, Emiliano Zapata, the author B. Traven, the artist Camille Pissarro, our own Colin Ward and many more.

The 36 picture cards (known to collectors as trading cards) come in a neat box, price £5 (post free in the UK, or at £5.45 including p&p abroad) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



MAX STIRNER

Information Superhighway

Dear Freedom,
Greetings from the hard-shoulder of the information superhighway.

Just a few words to say 'keep it up'. Freedom is an excellent publication with a number of thought-provoking articles and news.

In response to John Rety's request (10th December 1994) for info on the news coverage (or lack) of the Leytonstone mass eviction, my wife says that Sky News broadcast a report on the Monday morning stating that the police were due to start moving in soon. Subsequent to this Sky managed to avoid the issue altogether for the rest of the week in much the same way as the rest of the media. Besides that one report we here on the south coast heard nothing. BBC Ceefax had an item on the Tuesday stating that 750 riot cops were engaged in clearing 350 demonstrators. On the Thursday, BBC Ceefax ran virtually the same item with the number changed (850 and 400).

I for one was awaiting Freedom to be published so that we could find out what was going on. Of course down here road protests are not popular with the establishment (Twyford Down is only just up the road) but I even tried to find out what was happening from our local branch of the Freedom Network who actually produce Road Alert and guess what, they were all, every single one of them, out, probably at the site itself. Let's face it, if the bloody anti-roads groups can't even get one person to man a phone or act as a conduit for information when

such an action is ongoing, then why should we expect Murdoch or Black or any other pro-road dickhead to provide such a service? Has society really fallen for all the bullshit about instant communication? We seem to be falling for the same trap as the media itself, the belief that transmission equals delivery. Oh well, I cannot really say that anything about the whole episode surprised me, which, now that I think about it, is a very scary admission. Has the system beaten me down to the level that I no longer expect anything but the worst? I don't know, but this isn't going to stop me from resisting the bastards.

Contrary to the beliefs of many a conspiracy theorist, Mercury Communications phone network is not routinely monitored by the state and, except for some microwave traffic that passes close enough, definitely not by the USA. Is this why Mercury are shutting down a service (payphones) that was turning over £8,000-£10,000 a day in credit card sales alone? While I am on the subject, which figures have you heard for redundancy within Mercury? 1,100? 2,500? The latest figure quoted on Mercury's internal mail is 3,400, but then this is a company that forced 99% of its staff through an almost evangelical intensely disturbing indoctrination process called 'Imagine 97' where employees were asked to consider where they believed they would be in 1997. I wonder how many imagined that they would be on the dole!

K

Capitalism and Monopoly

Dear Friend,
In your article 'Capitalism Equals Monopoly' (10th December 1994) you refer to building societies and in particular the Halifax which is about to take over the Leeds Building Society.

It is worth reflecting that originally building societies were essentially vehicles for mutual aid, beginning in the late eighteenth century. A group of people would get together to build houses for themselves by raising funds and then actually building them. When the last dwelling was completed the building society was 'terminated'. Subsequent developments led to the idea of 'permanent' building societies which attracted investors and borrowers with the building society becoming a permanent, continuous organisation. Until recent years some of the names still contained the phrase 'permanent', for example Leeds Permanent, Cooperative Permanent (became the Nationwide).

The building societies were based on 'mutuality' rather like the friendly societies and cooperatives. Sadly, developments in financial services and the motivations of building society directors moved the building societies towards the explicit commercialism and profit motive of the banking sector. They have now diversified their services into insurance, travellers cheques, personal

loans, cheque accounts, etc. The idea of mutuality has long been forgotten by the major societies.

However, a notable exception to this trend has been the Ecology Building Society of Keighley, West Yorkshire, founded in 1981. It is committed to a small scale, concerned and mutually beneficial approach with a sense of personal involvement recapturing something of the spirit of the original building societies.

They have lent on small scale workshops, craft workshops, organic horticulture, paper recycling, derelict but sound properties which would otherwise have been abandoned, organic smallholdings and farms and properties which will help promote the life of small communities.

It is a pity more organisations do not follow this approach.

Graham Hall

The Limits of Rationality

Dear Freedom,
Denis Pym (26th November) dislikes the printed word because it involves no face-to-face contact. Any medium has its pros and cons but the impersonality of print at least enables us to judge the content without being prejudiced by the personal qualities of the writer. To listen to the song, not the singer. If Denis wanted to point out the deficiencies of print, filling up nearly two full pages of Freedom was perhaps not the best way to do it.

It was presumptuous of me to speak for all unemployed people, but I happen to be one and I don't feel like joining Denis's guilt-trip. Whether the 'educated and privileged' majority of Freedom readers need it I don't know, but if so I don't think they will do themselves or anybody else any good.

My privileges? I have a roof over my head and a full belly, which is more than many people do. HM Government from time to time sends me not too bad a week's money - trouble is it has to last a fortnight. If any wage slaves out there are jealous, the dole is not an exclusive club - anyone can join (if you're over 18

A few responses from our readers

Calling all anarchists: contacts wanted

Dear Freedom,
Often, after reading Freedom's various articles and sections, I turn to the column 'News from Angel Alley' and especially the donations list. I don't do this to pry into the financial contributions of comrades, but to see listed the cities, towns and villages where comrades live. For those of us out in the provinces, as some Londoners used to disparagingly call us, it is a reminder that as anarchists we are not totally lone, mad, sad eccentrics but are part of a wider movement.

A few of us may belong to national groups and federations, but most do not. Some of us in the Midlands, and other groups and individuals elsewhere I am sure, have been trying to break down the barriers to bring people together on a regular basis at events and meetings, in short to become a movement. Last year the East Midlands Anarchists held meetings in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, but we are conscious that we do not reach, or inspire, all those that we could. I wonder if more of Freedom's readership, especially those who are geographically isolated or feel themselves isolated, would like to be more in touch with fellow anarchists on a face-to-face basis?

As someone who organises events it is frustrating to find out that numerous of the addresses of groups and publications that are contacted are no longer functional, it is in any case hard to find any great number of reliable contact addresses for publications, groups and organisations because many such listings publications as do exist, e.g. *The Anarchist Yearbook*, only appear on an annual or irregular basis. For an individual, physically visiting all the radical/alternative projects and bookshops around the country to regularly update them is out of the question.

Are any anarchists interested in either directly helping or providing information to a project aimed at providing regular, perhaps quarterly, contact listings covering anarchist groups, publications, worker co-ops, housing co-ops, communes, events, even individuals (c/o a box numbered address), if so please write to me at Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby.

J. Simcock

Dear Freedom,

Like Bill Brewer (*Freedom*, 26th November 1994) I agree that your letters page can sometimes be a bit trivial and even (shock! horror!) dull. So at the risk of raining on someone's parade, I would love to hear any views, comments, rants and rages on a ... 'Peace' in Northern Ireland? A new improved South Africa? A new world order (in East Timor, Turkey, Rwanda, Cambodia)? Any comments on Yeltsin's tanks in Chechen? Is the US developing 'strategic interests' in Bosnia? Anyone heard much about the incoming Jobseekers' Allowance? Still remember the Criminal (in)Justice Act? Any comments on anarchist economics? What about this Anarchist Federation of Britain, then? Can we have some more on fundamentalism (Islamic or Christian)?

Well, that should be enough to get your teeth into for the time being. If you can make any sense of this letter, and even manage to print some of it, I'll be well chuffed.

Oh by the way, have a good Yuletide and keep up the good work. *Freedom* adds a little sanity and decent analysis to all anarchists' 'angry' (for want of a better word) outlooks.

Pat

Dear Friends,

Another year has passed and, as usual, or even more than usual, you have had many fronts to fight on! The Thatcher years continue their dreadful deeds under another name and the 'Back to Basics' policy is bringing back 'living' conditions which we thought were gone for good.

My husband and I have always been supporters of the Labour Party - for want of a better feasible vision - but, even in the last few years, we have found that the pages which reflect our opinions most faithfully are to be found in *Freedom*. We are regular readers of the *Observer* and the *New Statesman & Society* and some of your contributors are present in the other papers, but your views are closest to ours and it is a comfort to know we are not simple oddities! Your latest *Raven* on 'Fundamentalism' is very timely and we are grateful to you for maintaining some sanity in this crazy world.

We send our warmest wishes - and a small donation, limited only by our modest pension - to all your team.

Once again, all the best to all of you and continue the good work. This country needs you!

Raymonde and Leslie

Dear Comrades,

I am saddened by Tim Thompson's letter (10th December 1994).

It would be totally unstimulating to read only such matters as you agreed with. If you did one of your famous surveys on political affiliations of readers, I would anticipate a minority are anarchists. Most of us enjoy a literate left wing paper written for an IQ above 50!

Although a Roman Catholic (Emma Goldman admired Cardinal Manning) and a member of the Labour Party, I enjoy *Freedom* enormously. My only criticism is that in the last twenty years it has lost its sense of humour (no 'Song for Sectarians' by Jim Burns in *Visions of Poesy*).

Simon Digby

Dear Sirs,

I enclose a cheque for £30 to cover the annual subscriptions to *Freedom* and *The Raven*, plus a small donation.

I find your publications very absorbing and interesting, dealing as they do with issues you won't see raised in the press with regard to reasons and answers. If only more people would stop and think about the situation in which they find themselves instead of blithely accepting the way of life carved out for them by the capitalist system which, as you keep reiterating, benefits 'the rich minority'.

P.J. Banfield

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1st-21st December 1994

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London, 'Charmaine', £1,000.

We thank all our readers who have renewed their subscriptions for another year, and for the comments, favourable or otherwise, which some of you sent us, a selection of which we print above (several items received in the holiday mail have had to be held over until our next issue).

We are grateful for your generous donations, which will be ploughed back to make more propaganda for anarchism.

We wish a happy new year to you all.
Freedom Press

anyway) so there's no need for the politics of envy.

I'll ignore Denis's use of the usual irrationalist tactics of labelling and name-calling as a substitute for reasoned argument and try to clarify my attitude to science in relation to anarchism.

Science, whether conceived as a body of knowledge or a method, will not by itself lead us to the promised land. Especially not controlled, as it is now, by state and corporate elites. But from a practical point of view I don't see how anyone expects a halfway decent society to get by without it. *Green Anarchist*, for instance, seems to think that medieval farming technologies will somehow support five or six, going on ten, billion people.

Science is *not* a religion and scientists are not saints. As a group they are no better or worse than other middle class professionals. Politically this means that they support the status quo as long as it provides them with material privileges, though the more thoughtful of them have their doubts over ecology and warfare and are perhaps uneasy over the ruling class attitude to servants it no longer needs. (Like 'middle class' anarchists maybe?)

Apart from this there is the more abstract question of the relevance of a genuinely scientific attitude to anarchism.

Carl Sagan expressed this attitude in *Cosmos*: "[science] has two rules. First, there are no sacred truths; all assumptions must be critically examined; arguments from authority are worthless. Second, whatever is inconsistent with the facts must be discarded or revised. We must understand the cosmos as it is and not confuse how it is with how we wish it to be."

This is an ideal. Like any ideal it is not always carried out in practice. But it is not an attitude rulers are very comfortable with and not something they would like to see applied to the political and economic sphere. As Lynn Olson has written, they would prefer to make a sacred cow of their system to protect it from the scrutiny of science. There is no need for us to oblige them. Of all political philosophies anarchism has the least to fear and the most to gain from such a scrutiny. I see nothing authoritarian about these 'rules'.

As to kicking heads in, I admit this is not the most rational or effective style of debate. But who wrote this? "My advice to men and women of action is to threaten to hit on the nose any thug who uses the word" (efficiency). Is this how we find common cause and get closer to our neighbours, Denis?

John Wood

MEETINGS

London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

- 1995 PROGRAMME -

- 13th January General discussion
- 21st January Cities and Libertarian Social Movements (discussion led by Dave Dane)
- 27th January General discussion
- 3rd February Employment, Unemployment, Further Education and the State (speaker Peter Neville)
- 10th February General discussion
- 17th February Anarcho-Terrorism - a debate between Peter Cadogan and Nicolas Walter
- 24th February General discussion

All slots are vacant to the end of July, although a number of invitations have gone out. If anyone would like to give a talk or lead a discussion, overseas or out-of-town speakers especially, please contact either Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (telephone number 081-847 0203, not too early in the day please) giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. These could be instead of a general discussion but the latter are not merely unfilled slots but popular occasions in their own right so we are unwilling to relinquish too many.

Peter Neville / Dave Dane
London Anarchist Forum

FREEDOM fortnightly

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East Midlands Anarchists - MEETING -

Saturday
28th January 1995
10.30am - 4.30pm

Castle Community Rooms
2 Tower Street, Leicester

Agenda

- Introductory Session
- Workshop on Environment
- Networking and Communications

ALL WELCOME

PUBLIC DEBATE ON ANARCHO-TERRORISM

A debate arising from recent correspondence in the *New Statesman & Society* will be held between

Peter Cadogan and Nicolas Walter in the Small Hall at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 on Friday 17th February 1995 beginning at 8pm under the auspices of the London Anarchist Forum.

For further information contact:
Peter Neville (LAF) on 081-847 0203
Peter Cadogan on 071-328 3709
Nicolas Walter on 071-226 7251

RALLY AND MEETING to re-establish the Northern Anarchist Network

Committee Room 4
Manchester Town Hall

Saturday 18th February 1995
10am-4pm

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number 27

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- 1995 -

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Sunday 12th February: The Roaches and Ludd's Church, Staffordshire. Meet 11.00am for 11.15 start at roadside near to 'Windygates Farm'. Length 5 miles.

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