

# anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

*"Political thought in France is either nostalgic or utopian."*

**Raymond Aaron**  
in his book *The Opium of the Intellectual* (1957)

## **IS FRANCE BECOMING UNGOVERNABLE AGAIN?**

In England only 1066 rings a bell in our collective consciousness as a date of historical consequence. The French have umpteen dates to recall - 1789, 1848, 1870 and 1968 - historical earthquakes all of which impacted upon Europe as a whole. Is 1995 about to join them?

To date the industrial unrest is impressive: railwaymen, electricity and gas workers and postal workers are already out on strike. Soon airline staff and teachers will join the stoppage which has disabled France for two weeks. The major unions, Force Ouvriere and the CGT, are calling for a continuation of the conflict and the strikes have wide public support.

Government proposals to cut pensions, welfare benefits, branch lines in the rail network, to sacrifice jobs and meet the demands required by

Maastricht have united diverse elements of French public opinion in outright opposition. Now there is serious social discontent. The misery inflicted by the government's austerity programme to fit the Maastricht design and get France on board in time for the single European currency launch by 1999 looks like being a costly exercise.

### **Terrible revenge to come ...**

As we write, French miners are fighting with the police, who are using tear-gas, and vast crowds not seen since 1968 are demonstrating in Paris and several dozen other French cities. France seems to have got itself a gung-ho government together with the blustering President Chirac. Ever since he was elected, Chirac seems to have performed like a demented Asterix the Gaul, and it must have

taken a special skill to unite the French against the government.

One obvious tactical mistake was to force through such a wide range of major measures all in one go. Most governments adopt a more piecemeal approach when attempting to bring in sweeping changes, but the French government is arrogant and remains remote from the people. It employed a parliamentary 'edict' to get the measures through in a rush rather than go through the cosmetic of a slow series of parliamentary debates.

Reports suggest that the trade unions and the Socialist Party (who tabled a belated motion of censure last week) have been forced to act by the people in the streets. A wide spectrum of French society, from the unemployed to workers and students, are now being mobilised.

This kind of semi-detached government by what one journalist has called "a smug political elite" is not unique to France, but this right-wing regime seems to have got seriously out of touch with public feeling this time. It is not the first time this has happened in France. As George Orwell remarked in his review of Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*: "We are constantly being reminded that while 'my lord' is lolling in bed, with four liveried footmen serving his chocolate and peasants starving outside, somewhere in the forest a tree is growing which will presently be sawn into planks for the platform of the guillotine ..."

People can take a terrible revenge against government insensitivity.

### **... or business as usual**

Some people like to credit the Latins with a certain 'revolutionary vitamin' not available to Anglo-Saxons. A few would see France as the home of 'revolutionary syndicalism', but we must not get carried away! Union density in France is the lowest of all the 25 countries in the OECD, at around 10% or lower. Private sector membership of unions in France is almost non-existent. Union membership in the public sector is higher, but concentrated in areas like transport and the postal sector.

The private sector has been slower to get involved in the present dispute.

## **CASHING IN ON COMPASSION**

As the season of goodwill approaches we are bombarded from all sides by messages that attempt to trigger our concern and compassion. Top of the hit parade this week is Michael Jackson's new record. The accompanying video shows him writhing in simulated agony on a blasted heath (or is it Calvary?) against a backdrop film of real life despair and misery in Bosnia, Rwanda and Kenya. This is a recent example of the continuing market in tragedy as fashion accessory and marketing ploy made controversial by Benetton advertisements. Benetton hoardings showed shocking, realistic and poignant photographs with the Benetton logo in each corner. Their justification for using scenes of private grief as ads was that a company can have a social conscience as well as wishing to be successful financially. The social conscience claim would carry more weight if the company announced that it was donating half its advertising budget to charities, war zones, maternity units, etc.

Meanwhile Princess Di continues to capture the headlines with her own unique brand of compassion - visiting the sick and dying, probably unannounced and certainly uninvited.

This quote from a letter in the *London Evening Standard* just about sums it up: "How the myth has arisen that very ill or infirm people need to be treated as dim-witted puppies to be soothed and patted by Sloaney women with emotional problems amazes me."

In line with the government's ongoing philosophy of the self, the Christmas drinking and driving message focuses this year on the risks of drunken driving to drivers themselves rather than on the devastation that could be caused to others. The television advertisement shows a man in his early twenties with severe brain damage being spoon-fed by his mother. The scene is filmed with a sound-track of the same man with his friends on the evening leading up to the accident. It tells how he was persuaded to have just one more drink. Opinion seems divided as to the possible effectiveness of this advertisement on its young target audience. Some think that very few will identify with someone so easily persuaded by others, someone so weak.

The anti-drugs drive is something else altogether. Why do they never learn that lying about the consequences of drug taking is counter-productive.

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## IS FRANCE BECOMING UNGOVERNABLE AGAIN?

(continued from page 1)

French strikes often run out of steam and dissolve as quickly as they arise. Their disputes often don't have the staying power which has been characteristic of strikes in England. French strikers often lack the discipline displayed by industrial workers in this country, something which some of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists used to admire.

Even in the so-called 'golden age' of revolutionary syndicalism in France at the start of the twentieth century, there is some doubt about its grip on the average French worker. The syndicalist historian Bob Holton suggests: "The CGT [revolutionary syndicalist] only covered a half of organised labour, while the vast majority of French workers (about 90%) remained completely unorganised." He points out that the low rate of union membership in France "indicates the limited hold of trade unionism, let alone revolutionary syndicalism, on French workers".

It might be better to see the French crisis as part of their recurring habit of insurrection. As Peter Kropotkin argued in *The Great French Revolution*: "Without the peasant insurrection, which began in winter [1789] and went on, ever growing, until 1793, the overthrow of royal despotism would never have been effected so completely, nor would it have been accompanied by so enormous a change, political, economic and social."

By the time you read this we may know if significant changes will follow the current social unrest. During the French troubles in 1968, General de Gaulle went to Germany to seek military support from the French army stationed there. Last week, President Chirac went to Baden-Baden to consult with Chancellor Kohl. The suspicion is that he went there to get German backing. In the City it is believed the Germans are involved in a sweetheart deal to protect the French franc and help Monsieur Chirac keep his bottle and crush the French revolt.

## CASHING IN ON COMPASSION

(continued from page 1)

Just as one injection of heroin rarely makes you dependent, so one tablet of ecstasy rarely gets you killed. In an attempt to gain the credibility of the young, the anti-drugs campaign organisers have been too clever by half. They show a poster with a photograph of Leah Betts, the young woman who died last month after taking an ecstasy tablet and drinking copious amount of water. The photo is positioned on a plain black background with the 'street' word SORTED! in large white letters. A sentence in small print at the bottom says "One ecstasy tablet took her away". Young people don't like older people invading their territory and poaching their phraseology. They also recognise a lie when they hear one. Many young people take very many ecstasy tablets and/or know many other people who have done so. Ecstasy is not a killer drug and if the government really cared it would learn more about the realities of the drug culture before adopting its language.

Alongside the growing numbers of young ravers are a growing number of young vegetarians and this week vegetarian food manufacturer Linda McCartney could be suspected of boosting her meatless products just in time for Christmas with a bit of cheap advertising. She paid £3,000 for a live turkey to save it, and, we suppose, any of its future progeny from the butcher's throttle. She urges us all to do something similar in the true spirit of Christmas. Supposing we might not all have £3,000 to spare, we could always kidnap a turkey and invite it to sit around our table this Christmas instead of on it

perhaps. And what would be on our tables? Why Linda McCartney's meatless turkey escalopes of course.

If you loathe Christmas remember you are not alone. Judging from the numerous support groups and therapists that are setting up day and weekend courses in how to cope with negative issues around Christmas past and present, there's an awful lot of compassion changing hands out there.

However we choose to mark the Winter Solstice and the turning of the year, rest assured that if we are a turkey dying, homeless or penniless then someone out there is making a song and dance about it.

### FREEDOM IN 1996

Our next issue will appear in the week ending 13th January

Last date for copy is first post Friday 5th January 1996

### Don't fudge the issue!

A picket was set up opposite Downing Street on 8-9th December for 24 hours by the Arrow peace group urging the government to continue the 'peace talks' for Northern Ireland. About two thousand leaflets were handed out and the action concluded with speeches.

A quantity of home-made fudge was distributed to remind the public of John Major's attitude to the issue of peace.

## FRANCE 1995 IS NOT A REPEAT OF PARIS 1968

As we go to press, nearly a million French public service workers are on strike – half a million since 24th November – and the number of strikers is growing. There are no buses, trains or air traffic, no postal deliveries in the big cities, no schools except private ones, no customs checks and no weather forecasts. Police are refusing to hand out traffic fines. Hospital workers and prison warders have not stopped work, but are joining in the massive street demonstrations. Student unrest, with nightly demonstrations in some places, has been going on since September.

Inevitably, comparisons are being made with the French workers' and students' strike of 1968, but 1995 and 1968 have different causes and will have different results.

In 1968 there was a revolutionary tension throughout the West, largely the result of disgust at America's brutal struggle to save Vietnam from the Vietnamese, which had already led to massacres by the police of student demonstrators at two American colleges.

The 'A-in-a-circle' symbol, designed by a Parisian anarchist group in 1964, was resurrected in 1968 and spread throughout the world so rapidly that as early as 1970 it was shown in leaflets as the 'traditional' anarchist symbol. The basement of the Sorbonne university building in Paris was a no-go area for police for a few weeks (until it was taken over by villains who instituted a regime as coercive as anything the state could provide). An industry of silk-screen poster production flourished, whose products have been collected into books, and some of whose creators came from Paris to London and set up a studio in Camden Town.

As a direct result of student agitation on the French model, the articles of government of British colleges were altered, bringing students on to governing bodies and boards of management. Many anarchists, now in their forties, made their first contact with anarchism as students in 1968.

### De Gaulle and the Gaullists

The President of France in 1968 was Charles de Gaulle, a brilliant politician famous for referring to himself in the third person as 'La France'. He let the revolutionary situation continue for a month, then when the first flush of enthusiasm was wearing off, neatly moved to frustrate it.

In 1940, de Gaulle was a general in the French army. Most of the French establishment then agreed that France should become an ally of Germany. De Gaulle dissented and moved to London, where he spent the war as chairman of the 'French government in exile' and nominal General of the Free French army (which was in fact under British command). There he cultivated the

friendship of Churchill and other powerful people. Installed as interim President of France in 1945, he performed an amazing feat of double-talk persuading the world that France had somehow not lost the war (twice, once to each side), but had been one of the victorious allies.

In 1958, during the Algerian war of independence, de Gaulle came out of retirement with a proposal for a new constitution, the Fifth Republic, which would give more power to the President. He was supported by right-wing imperialists who wanted Algeria to remain French, who tooted their car horns to the rhythm of 'Algerie Francaise', which his opponents said was the rhythm of 'La Giraffe au Zoo' (de Gaulle was very tall). As President he gradually got rid of his right-wing allies, and in 1962 was able to institute the referendum which made Algeria independent.

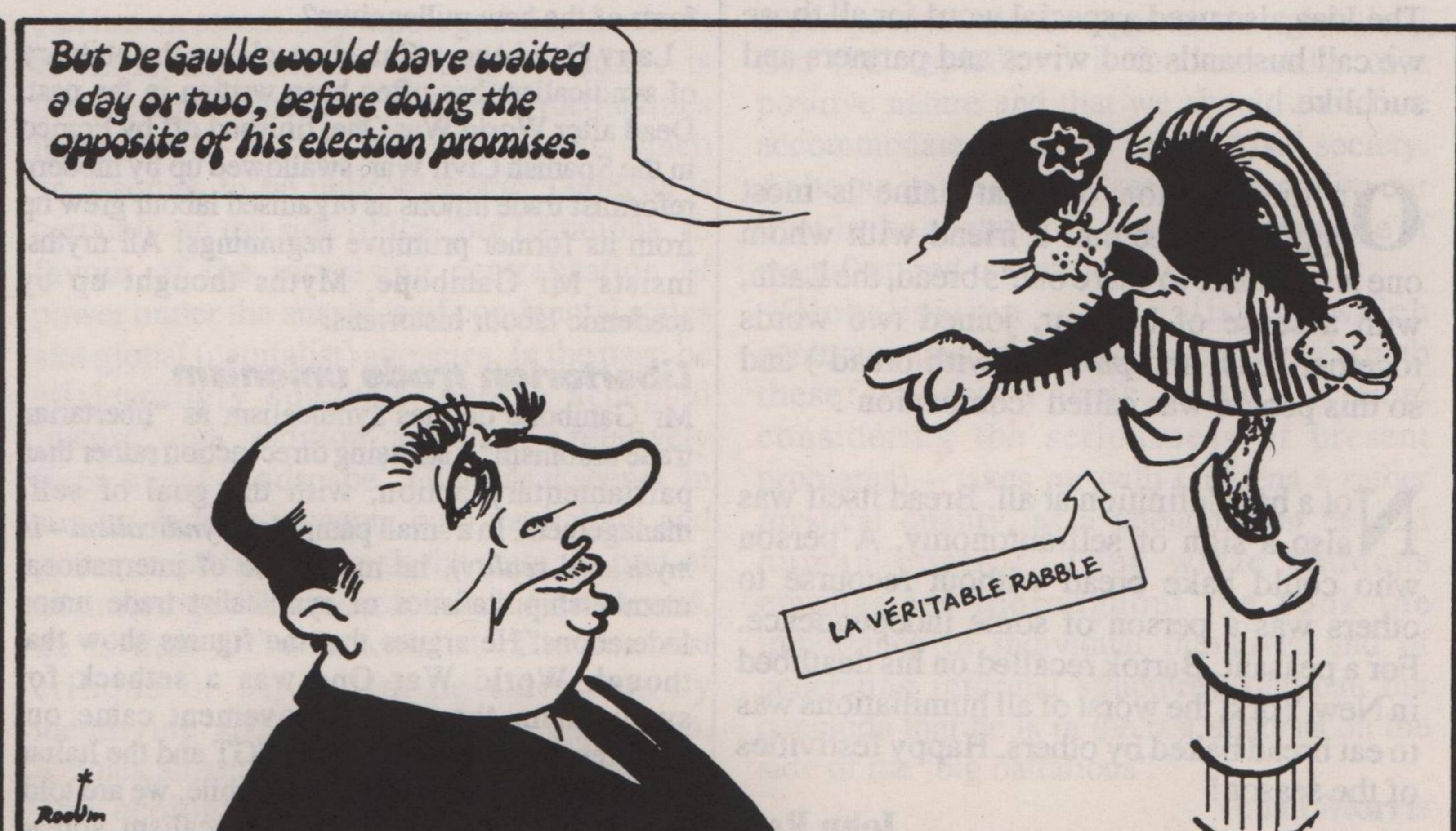
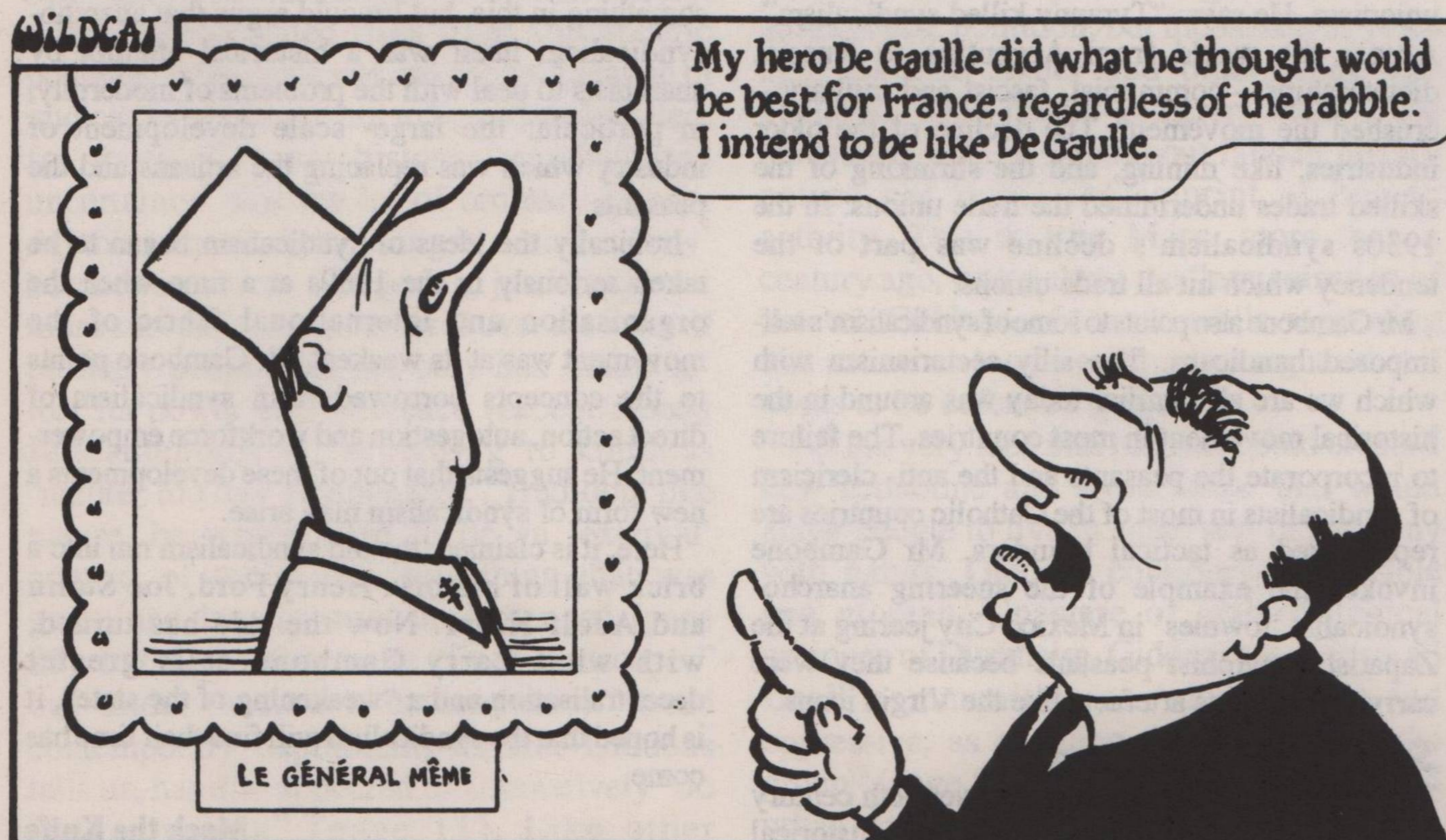
In 1968, de Gaulle regained the initiative by promising to provide yet another constitution. This was defeated in 1969 and he had to resign, but he had averted a revolution.

President Chirac describes himself as a Gaullist, and evidently sees himself as a cunning political operator in the style of de Gaulle. Unlike de Gaulle, however, he is utterly inept.

As a candidate in the presidential election earlier this year, he said that unemployment was 'the priority of priorities', that worry about the budget deficit was 'exaggeration' and that spending on social welfare must increase to stop the 'widening social fracture for which the entire nation will soon pay the price'. The Paris correspondent of *The Guardian* wrote that he had "dropped conservatism ... and spread a social message which undercuts the Socialist Party".

Once in power, his 'priority of priorities' turned out to be the resumption of nuclear weapons testing, and now he proposes to cut social welfare, and increase unemployment by sacking government employees, in order to bring down the budget deficit to which his weapons tests have made a notable contribution. De Gaulle would have given the electorate time to forget his election promises, and even perhaps made some gesture towards honouring them, before doing precisely the opposite of what he promised.

The events of 1995 are different from the events of 1968, because this time the mood is not revolutionary. The strikers are not calling for an end to the state, or even for an end to military conscription. The mood is simply one of electoral anger against a politician who reverses his electoral promises, not subtly as is customary, but openly and contemptuously. If Chirac were a less dignified man, he would be doing the French equivalent of raising two fingers.



## Through the Anarchist Press

**C**ross of the matter has become an important phrase in the English language. Yet its original meaning is composed of Latin words, which translated mean cross and thing. How things cross. The practical meaning is getting to the heart, the point of the thing which explains the thing itself. Words are poor things and the same words are used in different meanings. Cross is where two lines meet in one point (or any amount of lines in recent mathematics). The explanation is contained in that one point (let's hope it exists).

**O**xham has a junk shop where I buy my second-hand books. Recently I bought a book on the flyleaf of which somebody had scribbled in a delightful variation of the old saying: *Quod licet Bovi, non licet Jovi!*, an anarchist statement if ever there was one. Books which ought to be kept are disposed of by libraries, yet the Rainbow people in Kentish Town now have a spacious reading room and there is even a log fire.

**M**ost European languages have adapted Latin words at different times and speed. This accounts for the surprising emergence of languages such as Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and French which are so different from each other and to Latin. These languages have now spread all over the world so that everybody is now obliged to speak a modified form of Latin – except for Tibetan, which is singularly free from dialects, from which it is concluded that it spread rapidly in recent times (*Chambers Writer*, 1888).

**P**anchem Lamas abound. They are both six year old boys who are put forward by Chinese and Tibetan rivals for the second in command post in Tibetan government of priests. It is difficult to choose between boys of that age, for both are no doubt excellent in some things if not in others. So the arguments will rage until both of them become old men having lost most of their excellence.

**A**mazing how quickly electronic communications are altering the political structures. The military-industrial complex, a phrase coined by Paul Goodman, has played a card, a kind of *finesse* in the game of bridge, which will either make or break the capitalist system. Rate of change is so fast that we shall know the answer in a few years.

**N**obody lives on their own. We all have families. I push the baby in her pram. One day grown up she will push me in my wheelchair. In many cases there is a very special person you share your bread with.

**I**t is interesting to remember that our Spanish anarchist comrades who called anarchism *The Idea* also used a special word for all those we call husbands and wives and partners and suchlike.

**O**n the question of what name is most appropriate to call a friend with whom one is fortunate to share one's bread, the Latin, with a sense of humour, joined two words together (*cum* and *panis* – 'with bread') and so this person was called 'companion'.

**N**ot a bad definition at all. Bread itself was also a sign of self-autonomy. A person who could bake bread without recourse to others was a person of some independence. For a peasant, Bartok recalled on his deathbed in New York, the worst of all humiliations was to eat bread baked by others. Happy festivities of the season!

John Rety

## RADICALISM, REFORMISM OR PSYCHO-POLITICS?

**I**n the past the terms 'radical' or 'left' had a fairly clear meaning. They indicated a position that was anti-capitalist (i.e. socialist), in contrast to a conservative, or someone on the 'right', who supported the status quo (i.e. capitalism). Anarchists, of course, always pressed home the idea that the crucial distinction was between libertarian and authoritarian politics – but nevertheless these old dichotomies made some sense. During the last few decades, Anthony Giddens contends in *Beyond Left and Right*,\* socialists have ceased to be radical – in their conservative defence of the welfare state – and the conservatives, with their neo-liberal doctrines under Thatcher, have appropriated 'future-oriented radicalism' and thus become 'radical'. (If attacking socialism, and actively promoting capitalism or a 'new order' constitutes 'radicalism', then, of course, Hitler too must have been a radical?) Thus Giddens concludes that "the conservative has become radical and the radical conservative" (page 73).

Given this scenario, and the collapse of socialism as a political project (so he reckons), Giddens is in a real quandary. He is critically aware of the destructive aspects of the present economic system – the "ever expanding capitalist world economy" as he describes it (page 248). Yet he clearly wants to retain capitalism – its market and its commodity system. But unlike Will Hutton and other social democratic reformists, Giddens is very much against the idea of re-structuring the market by Keynesian methods, that is, through state intervention, and is generally unhappy about the welfare state. Like many Tories, he sees the state provision of welfare as highly problematic. It leads to 'welfare dependency'. It curtails the development of an 'autotelic' self. That is, it undermines self-reliance, independence and reflexivity. Wage-slavery is okay – as long as you don't make it the whole of your life: accepting welfare and security provision from the state, however, is to be deprecated.

So what's the answer? Simple: "the generative encouragement of life-style change" (page 248). All the "big battalions" (as Giddens describes them) – the nation-state, multinational corporations and international organisations (the World Bank and the IMF) seemingly carry on as before,

\* *Beyond Left and Right: the Future of Radical Politics* by Anthony Giddens, published by Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994.

though they ought, he feels, be sensitive to local needs and interests (page 162). They haven't been in the past, but Giddens is confident that they will do so in the future – due, it seems, to the inexorable effects of 'globalisation'.

Like many contemporary sociologists, Giddens is a 'globalisation' theorist. He thus gives the impression that with the expansion of capitalism (subsumed under the concept of globalisation) we have entered a new era. His discussion therefore revolves around those vague and rather inflated concepts, 'tradition', 'modernity' and 'globalisation'. But he eschews the idea of a complete break, as implied by the term 'post-modern'. Instead he uses such concepts as 'late modernity' or 'reflexive modernisation'. In fact, radical rhetoric aside, Giddens presents an updated version of Parsonian sociology, equally ahistoric, although Giddens is troubled by the violence, poverty and inequalities of the present world. Yet Giddens feels that 'globalisation' – the latest form of 'modernisation' – is not simply a continuation of capitalist expansion, but includes such phenomena as global electronic communications, satellite transmissions and what he calls "cultural diaspora" – the commodification and transmission worldwide of cultural traits. But clearly, as he recognises in his more lucid moments, the crucial dynamic of globalisation is in fact capitalism. This in its very essence is expansionist and barbaric. For it is essentially based on exploitative relations, on the organisation of production for profit rather than according to social need. From its inception capitalism was both dynamic and global, an international system, as Marx insisted. It undermined local traditions, uprooted people, millions being transported around the world either as slaves or indentured labourers, generating what Giddens calls "manufactured risk", that is, social problems created by humans. These include environmental degradation and species destruction, pollution, armed violence, colonial oppression, social inequalities and widespread poverty.

Giddens, like other sociologists, exaggerates the distinctiveness of the post-war years, usually described in epochal terms as post-modern, post-Fordism, post-industrial or, as Giddens describes it, post-traditional. In doing so he underplays the persistent and intrinsic features of capitalism – which have long been with us – exploitation (both social and ecological), domination and oppression. Giddens has the quaint idea that until he was

born people everywhere were unreflective about their social conditions, simply following traditions, that nature was pristine and that capitalism was not expansionary (i.e. global) or destructive of local contexts. Of course there have been fundamental changes in the nature of capitalism and of social life in recent decades. We have seen important improvements in transportation, the establishment of worldwide communication networks, 'flexible' working systems and the casualisation of labour, the development of information processing through computers, the growth of international (capitalist) agencies and trade blocs, and the decline of industrial production in Europe. These, however, must be seen within the context of an expanding capitalism, rather than as implying some 'paradigm-shift'. All the many coal mines and iron foundries I knew as a boy (in the West Midlands) have closed down and are no more. But industrial production, and the kind of sweat-shops that were common in the nineteenth century, are still an intrinsic and important part of capitalism, and there are many more industrial workers (proletarians) in the world today than at any other period of history.

Capitalism from its inception implied what Giddens calls "de-traditionalisation". As Marx and Engels graphically described it in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), capitalism, of its very nature, revolutionises production creating disruptions and dislocations in all areas of social life, "everlasting uncertainty", sweeping away ancient traditions. Capitalism has a "cosmopolitan character" and the result of its impact is that, in the now famous phrase, "all that is solid melts into air". The so-called "post-modern condition" – with its alienation, fragmentation, cultural pastiche, relativistic theory and 'decentred subjectivity' – does not describe a new epoch. It is rather one of the effects of capitalism. It has now apparently reached intellectuals at elite universities like Oxbridge, Yale and Harvard. While Marx – and Nietzsche – saw this social condition as lamentable, as involving alienation and nihilism, as something that needed to be overcome by a socialist transformation (Marx) or by the formation of a cultural elite – 'ubermensch' (superman) (Nietzsche), surprise, surprise, post modernist intellectuals seem to applaud or wallow in this detached and disoriented condition. All the time, of course, continuing to enjoy a secure and easy life ensconced in one of these elite academies!

(continued on page 8)

## Post-Modernist Syndicalism

**L**ast summer the Anarchist Discussion Forum held a debate in Hebden Bridge on the relevance of syndicalism and trade unionism today. Has syndicalism reached a dead-end? Or is it just undergoing a transformation to meet the issues and form of the new millennium?

Larry Gambone, a Canadian, claims the obituary of syndicalism has often been written in the past. Dead after World War One, finished off by Franco in the Spanish Civil War, swallowed up by modern reformist trade unions as organised labour grew up from its former primitive beginnings! All myths, insists Mr Gambone. Myths thought up by academic labour historians.

### Libertarian trade unionism

Mr Gambone defines syndicalism as "libertarian trade unionism" – stressing direct action rather than parliamentary action, with the goal of self-management. In a small pamphlet, *Syndicalism – in myth and reality*, he makes use of international membership statistics of syndicalist trade union federations. He argues that the figures show that though World War One was a setback for syndicalism the global movement came out stronger than ever, the French CGT and the Italian USI federations reached a peak while, we are told, "unions mushroomed and syndicalism spread

throughout Latin America and Eastern Europe".

In much of the world, Mr Gambone insists, "the early 1920s marks syndicalism's zenith". Why then did it decline? Not through the evolution of trade unions from 'primitivism' to 'sensible' business unionism. He says: "Tyranny killed syndicalism". Across the world from Argentina to Russia, dictatorships – communist, fascist and military – crushed the movement. The decline of the older industries, like mining, and the shrinking of the skilled trades undermined the trade unions. In the 1930s syndicalism's decline was part of the tendency which hit all trade unions.

Mr Gambone also points to some of syndicalism's self-imposed handicaps. The silly sectarianism with which we are all familiar today was around in the historical movement in most countries. The failure to incorporate the peasants and the anti-clericalism of syndicalists in most of the Catholic countries are represented as tactical blunders. Mr Gambone invokes the example of the sneering anarcho-syndicalist 'townies' in Mexico City jeering at the Zapatista anarchist peasants because they were carrying religious artefacts like the Virgin icons.

### Syndicalism's future

The pamphlet argues that in the twentieth century anarcho-syndicalism was out of step with historical

trends. The centralisation of political and economic power left anarcho-syndicalism on the sidelines. The new brutalism, communism and fascism, were more relevant to the big factories and mass production of the age. There was something in this, but I would argue that anarcho-syndicalism itself was a historical attempt by anarchists to deal with the problems of modernity, in particular the large-scale development of industry which was replacing the artisans and the peasants.

Ironically the ideas of syndicalism began to be taken seriously in the 1960s at a time when the organisation and international fabric of the movement was at its weakest. Mr Gambone points to the concepts borrowed from syndicalism of direct action, autogestion and workforce empowerment. He suggests that out of these developments a new form of syndicalism may arise.

Here, it is claimed, the old syndicalism ran into a brick wall of history: Henry Ford, Joe Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Now the tide has turned, with what Larry Gambone calls greater decentralisation and a "weakening of the state", it is hoped that the syndicalists will find their time has come.

Mack the Knife

## THE CRISIS IN RADICAL JOURNALISM

On the 16th of November the *New Statesman*, *Tribune* and *Red Pepper* sponsored a widely publicised meeting at the Friends House, Euston. Few of the many who attended could have departed reassured of the health of and prospects for radical journalism. In both format and content this event marginalised 'the radical'. After the big build-up nothing much was reported in any of the above journals. Maybe journalism and radicalism have become incompatible concepts?

With the avuncular and past-it Bernie Grant MP in the chair, 'Mike', Steve Platt, Hilary Wainwright and Chris Hitchens from the platform offered a string of good anecdotes in support of investigative journalism. There was plenty of insider comment on the subject, the sort of guff to soothe the nerves of a guilt-ridden News International hack. Perhaps it pacified the ghosts of all our more adventurous and hopeful pasts.

There was something pretty ghost-like about the audience too – a meeting of early twentieth century Fabians? We were male, middle-class salary slaves and prospective slaves (students of journalism) hoping to uphold their dreams

of a job in radical journalism. However, to be fair, most of the interesting and worthy comments came from the floor.

For a meeting devoted to the radical cause too much time and energy was given over to GOD in the guise of the big ego, absent heroes and villains, institutional capitalism and money. Now the technical fix dominates all problem-solving activity, the predatory and immune have to keep telling us nothing is possible without money.

The start of the show was delayed while the hero of the hour, Chris Hitchens, talked to the media – not a good omen. When the big boys are around who gives a shit about kindred spirits who've paid their entrance money? In the event, Hitchens turned out to be as good a story-teller as he is a writer. He

did most of the talking from the platform, that is when he could wrest the spittoon from Bernie Grant. Each speaker felt obliged to pass comment on an article rubbishing radical journalism written by Suzanne Moore in *The Guardian* ('Hello! and Goodbye Radicals' on 16th November). She got more credits than Chomsky, Pilger and Said put together.

The good old days, when everybody read a left-wing rag, received their ritual notice on the way to the customary British whinge about the lack of investment, lousy wages, no jobs in radical journalism – a sure sign of the lack of energy for the cause. It took a young North American to counter all the self-pity with a reminder that I.F. Stone established his weekly journal of that name through his own efforts, but that was yesterday and in a different place.

landed property taboos. He went on to thank the *New Statesman* for giving them publicity in their struggle with authority. Steve Platt didn't respond, but I wonder if he got the message. Endless comment on the goings-on in institutions, critical or otherwise, serves to write these abstractions large in our imaginations. It renders the reader impotent too. Radical journalism surely has to be about what people are doing for themselves and against institutions. We all need to live more as though these abstract edifices don't exist.

One publication seemingly pointed in the right direction is *Squall*. Well, thanks to this meeting that's the impression I formed on first acquaintances. Country hicks are always a year behind the times. I liked its front-page slogan too – 'necessity breeds ingenuity'. I'd better stop this praise before I go over the top. Some wag will tell us it's funded by Murdoch!

Meanwhile outside the Friends House THE MEDIA were on to yet another of their favourite stirs – drug taking among youth. One such female raver commented on why she and her mates took Ecstasy: "It smashes the ego and makes everybody sociable". To paraphrase a good dead Digger: 'drugs make you feel the way you ought to be without them'. Who knows, in the quest for organisation based on mutual aid, this kind of technical fix may be more helpful to tired turned-off industrial folk than more printed matter of the kind the sponsors want us to read.

Denis Pym

\* From PO Box 8959, London N19 5HW, and also available from Freedom Press Bookshop at £1.50 plus 25p postage.

## McLibel breaks another record

The McDonalds libel case, already the longest libel trial in British history, has now been going on for more than two hundred court days, which makes it the longest civil case of any sort. The new record is celebrated in *The Guardian* of 9th December, written by Maggie O'Kane who thinks Dave Morris's name is Dave Willis, but is otherwise fairly accurate. The previous record, of 198 days, was set by *Graham v Rechem International*, as recently as summer 1995. Evidently trials are getting longer, but McLibel is likely to go on for another fifty days and so seems likely to retain the record for some time.

McDonalds, the American fast food chain, is pursuing an action for libel against our comrades Helen Steel and Dave Morris. McDonalds are represented by Richard Rampton QC and his junior Timothy Atkinson. Helen and Dave are conducting their own defence – legal aid is not available in libel cases.

Mr Rampton told Maggie O'Kane "It's just another job, isn't it? The workload hasn't been bad, since we've had to give them lots of free time to prepare the case."

Since October, the defendants have been concentrating on McDonalds' employment conditions. It emerges from the evidence that, as in most of the catering industry, pay is low and conditions poor, and trade unions are not encouraged.

One witness, Iain Whittle who had worked for McDonalds in Sutton in the 1980s, had his evidence reported in the London *Evening Standard*. He told the court how a group of fifteen workers joined a trade union, after which fourteen of them were sacked for various trivial reasons. Mr Whittle was the only one retained until he left of his own accord. He testified that if someone was off sick the rota would be altered to avoid paying sick pay.

McDonalds have a rule that burgers, once prepared, are not to be held on the hotplate for more than ten minutes, but Mr Whittle said that in Sutton they were often kept for longer than this to avoid wasting food. Egg muffins were sometimes held for more than an hour, which is why McDonalds stopped serving them except in the breakfast period. Strict adherence to company rules was impossible because of poor staffing levels.

Various witnesses have testified to McDonalds anti-trade union attitude, among them a former industrial editor of the *Daily Mirror* who said Sid Nicholson, then head of McDonalds personnel, had told him in an interview: "We will never negotiate wages and conditions with a union and we discourage our staff from joining."

Sid Nicholson is now UK Vice President. He testified earlier in the trial that in most of the country, crew are paid exactly the same as laid down by the Catering Wages Council or a few pence an hour more. He agreed that it would

be illegal to pay less. About 80% of crew are part-time, working twenty hours a week or less. Their scheduled hours may be cut or extended at the discretion of managers.

A crew member and trade union representative from Lyon related how five McDonalds managers were prosecuted in July 1994 for attempting to rig a union election, and falsely accused him of making bomb threats. The union branch, now established, has won twenty court orders telling McDonalds to stop harassment. Two former crew members from Dublin told of a seven-month strike in 1979 which forced McDonalds to recognise a union. A former crew member from Ontario told how she had signed up a majority of her fellow crew to a union when she was 16, and the management had got the other workers to show their opposition to the union by lying down in the snow in a pattern forming the word 'No'.

In the days before the Christmas recess, evidence was due from three former workers at Colchester McDonalds (McDonalds Store of the Year 1987), including the manager from 1987-1991 and the assistant manager from 1986-1991, about watering down products, working amid sewage on the floor, long hours including 20-hour shifts, illegal hours worked by minors and continual pressure.

As we have remarked many times in *Freedom*, it seems clear that McDonalds issued the write against members of the anarchist-environmentalist group London Greenpeace on the assumption that they would all agree to stop distributing anti-McDonalds leaflets rather than suffer the risk and expense of going to court. Whoever is the technical winner of the case (and McDonalds' victory is by no means certain even in law), McDonalds has lost. The offending leaflet, which might well have remained a little local difficulty, has achieved a world circulation of several millions. There is an anti-McDonalds newsletter on the Internet, where all the world can learn, for instance, of the Australian village which expelled its McDonalds shop earlier this year. And by the time the case ends, McDonalds will have spent more than £3 million in lawyers' fees and court costs.

The legal journal *The Law* has called upon McDonalds not to take out any more libel writs. It is quite likely than McDonalds will accede.

**Contact: McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX.**

*McDonalds' competitor Burger King has paid a former kitchen porter Elmiuz Dinar £6,500 for racial discrimination. He was paid £2.99 an hour. Despite the Catering Wages Council (shortly to be abolished), Burger King have paid some under-18 staff only £1.00 an hour. Unlike McDonalds, however, Burger King sells a vegetarian concoction.*

Perceptions of the big battalions also seemed to be dated – too much about power and corruption, not enough about decay and impotence. I suppose wage slaves have to preserve the illusion of corporations as authoritative, efficient creators of wealth and purveyors of security for members. Again one chap in the audience offered a clue for refocusing radical reporting in his actions if not in his praise. Evidently he and his mates had put to use some derelict buildings and waste-ground and consequently invoked the

## ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

### EVEN THE RETIRED RICH GET RICHER

According to research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the gap between rich and poor pensioners rose in the 1980s as the wealthy ones had incomes boosted by returns on investments. The richest 10% of pensioner households now have five-and-a-half times as much income as the lowest income group. Mark you, they still had four times as much in 1981!

An interesting comment by the authors of the report is that "part of the reason is the declining real value of the state pension". As if we oldies didn't know!

### THE TAKEOVERS RACKET AT RECORD LEVELS

It has always seemed to me that takeovers not only confirmed my view that capitalism is basically monopolistic – that you can only compete if you have to but ultimately the intention is to get rid of your competitors – but were also indicators of business and industrial recessions.

Apparently 1995 has been a record year for takeovers. In a revealing piece in *The Guardian* (6th December) with the equally significant title 'No Job to Halt the Takeover Virus', Will Hutton points out that "takeovers are reaching a new all-time high of £69 billion. In other words, approaching 10% of the value of the shares quoted on the Stock Exchange will have been swallowed up by predators."

Needless to say there are the winners and the losers. One recent example was the takeover of Swalec (South Wales electricity distributor) by Welsh Water. More than 1,600 staff at Swalec will share a £35 million bonanza on their share save scheme. A cool £21,000 a head on share options! The chief executive of Swalec quits with a golden handshake expected to be worth £700,000 in pay and options. But 900 jobs out of 5,000 in the joint water and electricity business are expected to go.

In the takeover racket, however, one group of predators is always on the winning side. According to the specialist magazine *Acquisitions Monthly* this year's bids and deals will have benefited the 'investment banks and their elite staffs' about £1 billion in fees. To quote Will Hutton: "The bankers get rich

and the egos of the chief executives running the predator companies get ever larger – but, strangely, the performance of the merged companies never meets the extravagant promises made in the thick of the battle. Indeed, the one iron law of takeover, revealed in academic survey after survey, is that it is not good for business in the sense of innovation, output and growth."

Conclusion: "takeover personifies the business culture in which extracting wealth is more important than creating it." I would put it more crudely!

**WHO EATS OUT?** A survey for the Economic and Social Research Council carried out by researchers from Lancaster University came to the conclusion, as a result of studying the eating patterns of a thousand households in Preston, Bristol and London, that in 1990 families spent a fifth of their total food expenditure on eating out, double the figure for 1960. I can't judge between home catering and eating out since the only time I have eaten 'out' was in hospital recently – no complaints, but not what I serve up!

**MORE BRITISH THAN THE BRITISH** Is it not disgusting that the two main protagonists for keeping out 'asylum seekers', Michael Howard and Michael Portillo, are the sons of Romanian and Spanish fathers respectively who successfully sought asylum in this country more than fifty years ago, the former a Jew escaping from the anti-semitic iron-guard, the latter a Spanish republican fighter escaping from the victorious Francoist gangs. Would one not have expected their sons to show some understanding about the problems of 'asylum seekers'? The argument is that they are not 'political' but looking for jobs. So what! There was a time not so long ago when the 'prosperous' countries of the North were depending on cheap foreign labour. How else explain that there are no less than a million moslems especially concentrated in the industrial areas of Britain? But let the Portillos and Howards not forget that there are more Brits in jobs throughout the world putting 'natives' out of work!

Libertarian

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

## RECOLLECTIONS OF NORMAN POTTER

We all have friends we meet every ten years and continue the conversation that was broken off a decade earlier, because the grapevine or the printed word has kept us in touch with what they are thinking or doing. This thought describes my relationship, and that of many others, with the furniture-maker and designer Norman Potter, who died on 22nd November, aged 72. I was very touched by the tributes to him in *The Guardian* (29th November 1995) by his fellow-designer Robin Kinross and by his daughter Sally Potter.

Kinross explains that it was gradually and informally that Norman became a designer, applying to his vocation the ideas absorbed through his anarchism:

"It was within the British anarchist movement that he found a set of ideas and beliefs that would last his life. This was the cultured, internationalist anarchism of figures such as John Hewetson, Marie Louise Berneri, Vernon Richards and George Woodcock."

To this I should add that fact that the man who introduced Norman to anarchism was the Irish wanderer Matt Kavanagh at Southend-on-Sea at the beginning of the Second World War. My own recollections of Matt are two aphorisms, well-polished in open-air oratory. The first was his reflection on the psychology of pacifism: "My trouble with pacifists is that the first thing they want to do is to punch you on the nose", and the second was his comment that "there might very well be sermons in stones, but it depends on how well you throw them".

Norman absorbed a certain militancy that profoundly affected his attitude to architecture and industrial design. As Sally Potter put it: "The vulgar excesses of wealth and the violence of poverty never ceased to enrage him. He was a brave anarchist also in his distaste for authority, loathing of political hypocrisy and championing of the forgotten."

One thing I learned from our continuing conversation was that, orphaned in childhood, he and his brother, the poet Louis Adeane, were sent on a charitable basis to a posh boarding school in Surrey and were expected to be grateful for this immense opportunity. He found it a prison, and could never

understand his mother's gratitude to their sponsors, but because she was grateful, could not reveal his misery. In the 1980s as a celebrated 'old boy' he was invited back, and found the place transformed, friendly and co-educational, and felt fraught by the dilemma of whether to tell today's students about the place as a prison or to expound his philosophy of socially-conscious, non-exploitative design of products and buildings.

For in the post-war years, to make a living, he became a kind of conscience in the art and architecture schools, cherished simply because of his advocacy of an alternative approach in the stream of thought that began with the awkward Ruskin, was focused by the still more awkward William Morris, and had been sharpened by the various design theories elaborated by Lethaby and the debate on hand tools or machine tools.

Kinross recalled his wartime activities with alternative designers like Geoffrey Bocking and Anthony Froshaug in ventures like the development of an anti-frostbite machine, and remarks that:

"Of this group of dissidents, only Potter saw the inside of a prison cell: first a brief detention at Brixton under suspicion of 'hostility to the state', then a month at Chelmsford for refusing an ID card. Then, in 1948, he spent six months in Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs as, in his own words, an 'on-the-run hitherto-undetected conchie'. This experience must have opened his eyes finally to the realities of the English class system. And prison became one of his great themes ..."

My ten-yearly contacts with him began in the late 1940s when I would meet Norman and Caroline at the hospitable Hewetson household in Southwark. In the early 1950s I spent an exciting weekend at Corsham in Wiltshire, when, together with John Turner, he was making furniture and fittings hoping,

as Kinross put it, "to work, like a garage, for the local community, though much of the work came through London connections". Turner moved off to Peru to spend seven years giving technical aid to illegal squatters, and subsequently changing the official world's mind about informal settlements. Norman was lured back to London by Hugh Casson to teach at the Royal College of Art, where our conversation continued.

In the early 1960s he inveigled me to talk at that centre of, in Kinross's words, "the whole foolish magazine-culture of design" the "publicity-conscious, star-obsessed Royal College". We picked up the threads of an anarchist dialogue which went on when he and others moved off to start the construction school at the West of England College of Art in Bristol.

His hopes of penetrating the educational establishment with a different style of approaching design were uplifted by the student revolt of 1968. (The episode was recorded in *Anarchy* 90, August 1968.) Norman's wholehearted support for the events at Hornsey and Guildford guaranteed that he would be on an invisible blacklist of teachers. But in the aftermath of 1968, as Kinross records, he produced his little book and testament *What is a Designer?* (reprinted by Hyphen Press in the 1980s) which is a British equivalent of Victor Papanek's *Design for the Real World*. My namesake, the designer Harry Ward, sees it as "the most important and comprehensive present-day source book".

And it was in the 1970s that Norman drew me to the Bristol college to explore with his students the implications of dweller control of housing and to pick up the threads of our interrupted conversation. The last instalment of this discussion was, I find, in November

1986 at the architecture department of Plymouth Polytechnic.

His students had been persuaded to spend a term exploring the concept of prison. They visited one, interviewed inmates and staff, examined the twentieth century history of concentration and extermination camps, and studied the implications of nineteenth century penal reform from Jeremy Bentham onward. They build in the basement of the school a full-size replica of a regulation Victorian prison cell, and were addressed by defenders and opponents of the penal system. My task was to discuss 'Penal Reform: the Great British Failure' (printed much later in *The Raven* No. 22 on Crime). That evening we withdrew to his own private cell, "a cell of good living" in Eric Gill's terminology, in some shed or garage which he had turned into a living space for what his daughter called "a minimal non-wasteful way of life". And there, as it turns out, we had our final discussions in a continuing debate about anarchism and architecture.

Just because of his passion and dedication, Norman Potter was an inspiration for some students and a pain-in-the-neck for some colleagues, with his indifference to the role of design in marketing and property development. I have been thinking recently about the anarchist undercurrent in the architectural world which is rather more evident there than in other spheres of life. There is a stream, continually bubbling up, that began with William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, was extended by W.R. Lethaby early in this century, and re-emerged after the war with a succession of advocates who, if they lived long enough, were honoured and esteemed. I am thinking of the Egyptian Hassan Fathy, the Italian Giancarlo De Carlo, or of Walter Segal and John Turner.

But plenty of them dig their own furrow in what has become known as community architecture, or local technical aid, and the outside world never hears of their unique contribution until after their death. This is certainly true of that "awkward, indispensable man" Norman Potter.

Colin Ward

# POWER AND OLIGARCHY

The information revolution is here; transforming the globe; we witness the information age. This is the second industrial revolution; a change in the means of production; accompanied by volatile frontier capitalism. Vast amounts of wealth are being created and centralised as large information based corporations explore and expand the electronic frontier. The proliferation of information technology has and will continue to have profound effects upon society, changing the industrialised world into a fully integrated information economy. The information revolution creates global information institutions that harness all the effects and benefits of globalization, and create the global corporate state. The individuals in control of these institutions form a political elite, whose strength grows as its numbers diminish. The iron law of oligarchy continues as global organisation yields global rule, and a global elite. Among the ranks of this elite are the owners of the technology, supported by subservient classes of a corporate and technical elite. This essay examines these issues, then begins to present options for resistance towards this global power move. Marshall McLuhan in *The Global Village* illustrates the transformative and oligarchic natures of the emerging media. It is in this work that McLuhan identifies the trend in communications that he terms "Global Robotism". This term describes a method of social organisation that accompanies the proliferation of electronic media such as computers, satellites, global networks, and multi-way video communication. Humanity extends itself into the electronic environment, lending itself to electronic organisation. We witness the emergence of a global machine, a global computer that is alive with a developing global consciousness, derived from the collective efforts of millions of human participants. GAIA rises from the industrialised world.

"As man succeeds in translating his central nervous system into electronic circuitry, he stands on the threshold of uttering his consciousness into the computer."<sup>2</sup>

This essay also takes into consideration the work of C. Wright Mills, and Robert Michels in order to understand the

potential role of the new power structure that emerges in the wake of the information revolution. Their works are concerned with the roles of elites in mass organisation, they illustrate the present and potential roles of an elite within the burgeoning information age.

"As the institutional means of power and the means of communications that tie them together have become steadily more efficient, those now in command of them have come into command of instruments of rule quite unsurpassed in the history of mankind."<sup>3</sup>

The information revolution creates a new institution that enhances existing ones, while creating a new and unique global entity. The proliferation of computers and advanced communication technology throughout society provide the medium that is revolutionising the means of production. Converging media create the potential for a unified electronic

*"The extensions of human consciousness are projecting themselves into the total world environment via electronics, forcing humankind into a robotic future."<sup>1</sup>*

environment in which mass media are homogenised into a standardised mosaic of human communication. Decentralisation on the micro level yields massive centralisation on the macro scale. Multimedia and interactive technologies become the central modes of communication, and a new environment is created in which everything is considered data; the user merges with the data base as the system becomes so total that exclusion is a technical impossibility. The earth reduces itself to binary code to form an institution of global power.

"More and more people will enter the market of information exchange, lose their private identities in the process, but emerge with the ability to interact with any person on the face of the globe. Mass, spontaneous electronic referendums will sweep across continents. The concept of nationalism will fade and regional governments will fall as the political implications of spaceship earth create a world government."<sup>4</sup>

The people in control of this emerging global governance, wield power unsurpassed by previous regimes or empires; the hegemony of information power. The information media penetrates into our lives, transforming us: the media is the message.

"There are no more passengers, only crew. Such a grasp of totality suggests the possibility of control not only of the planet but of change itself."<sup>5</sup>

The information revolution is a bourgeois corporate revolution, of the highest magnitude. Enacted by large conglomerates, it is fuelled by their continued investment and research and development. The corporate world benefits the most from the success of the information revolution. This is true for the simple reason that they own, operate, and create the revolution. Through its enactment the corporate sector is experiencing its greatest empowerment ever, gross profits at the highest levels and the expansion of the corporate state. This empowerment is accompanied by the emergence of a corporate elite. An elite that integrates itself into the foundation, or backbone of the information society. Their infiltration if not creation of the emerging environment of human communication places them at centre-ground; everywhere and yet seemingly nowhere at all times.

"The multi-carrier media corporation has the peculiar ability to be a media orchestrator, to link all video-related technologies, whether satellite, earth station, microwave, data base, or computer into a resonating whole."<sup>6</sup>

The two corporate giants, American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) and International Business Machines (IBM), are built upon information technology, and through the

# I MUST DECLARE AN INTEREST

Through the Anarchist Press

by John Rety with drawings by Emily Johns  
Freedom Press, 96 pages, £3.60

About forty years ago, when the world was young and my generation was inventing sex 'n' drugs 'n' rock 'n' roll, a young bright and slightly batty Hungarian made a decision that was to have a considerable impact on the English literary scene. He felt that the intellectual community based on The Coffee House in Northumberland Avenue and extending across Soho to Oxford Street and west to the Old Brompton Road was big enough to support its own newspaper. Printing technology being less than democratically accessible in those days it was a totally mad idea. Being young and enthusiastic John Rety didn't realise the difficulties and went ahead. The paper, the unenthralling title was *Intimate Review*, came out with writers like Colin Wilson, Bill Hopkins of the *New York Times*, Harry Jackson of *The Guardian*, poet Jon Silkin, novelist Laura del Rivo, among the writers, while John Glasham and Diz Disley were among the soon to be famous illustrators. It also contained some work of unbelievable tediousness and banality which unkind rumour has attributed to me. Not true of course but people do delight in malicious gossip.

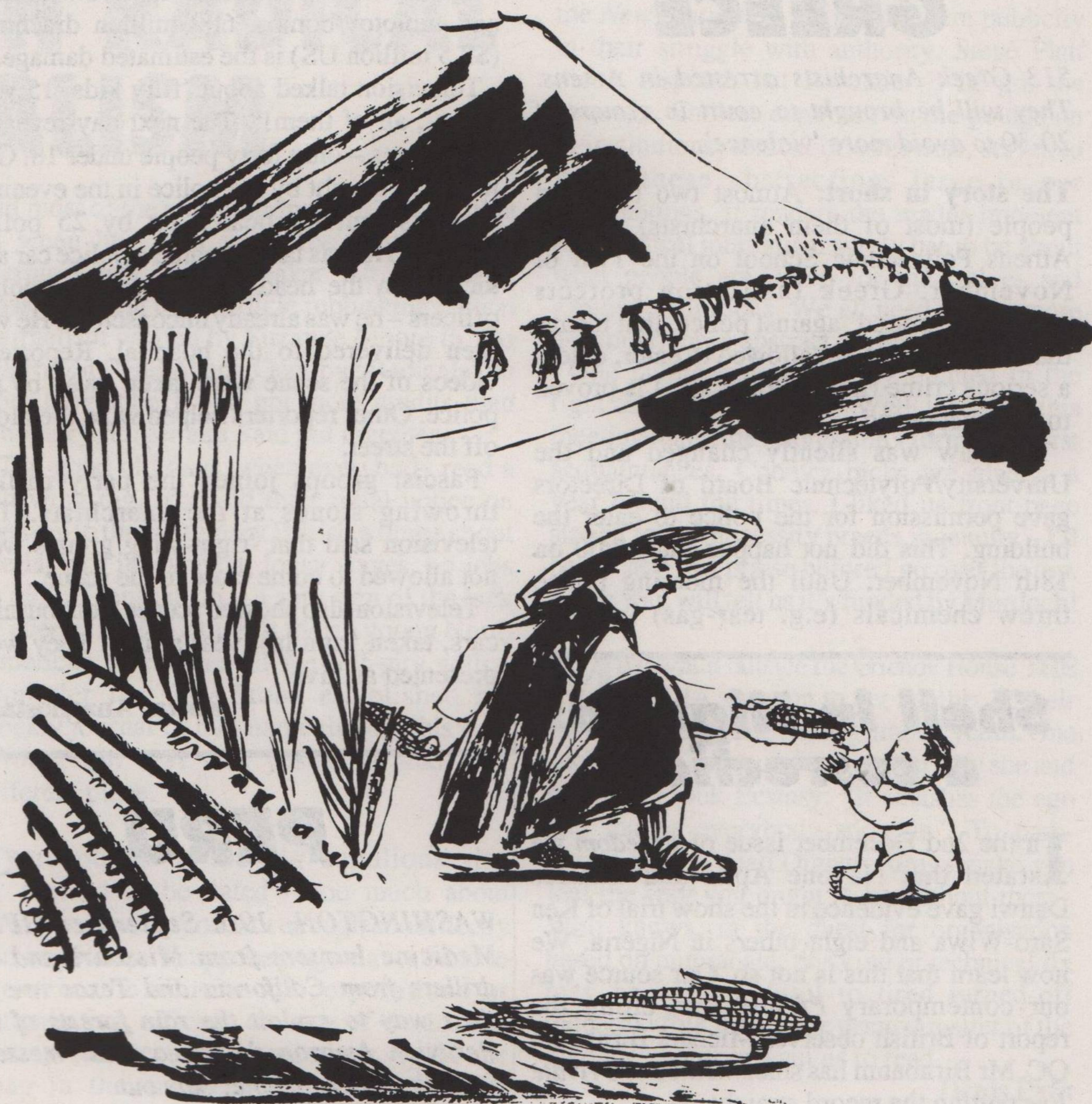
On one occasion he asked me to review a book of his, *Supersozzled Nights*. He did not like what I wrote but published it just the same. "The worst review I've received anywhere in the whole of my life", he told me recently, in the amiable but still puzzled tones of a man who never understood how I could have been so unkind to him.

He got his own back by asking me to go to a place up Tottenham Court Road, the Malatesta Club, where it was rumoured that anarchists met. I went and wrote another bad piece which now only Philip Sansom is unkind enough to remember. But there were giants in the anarchist movement of those days. I was hooked and my life was never the same. So was John Rety and neither was his.

The point of all this is that John Rety conceived and published the very first post war underground paper and set a pattern for the others. One day his phone went and a man said he was thinking of starting a London magazine based loosely on the model of Rety's *Intimate Review*. Could Rety offer any advice? Rety could and did. The resulting magazine was the first and best incarnation of *Time Out*. John Rety has never got the credit he deserves for any of this. History has treated him as unkindly as it has skiffle and other '50s pioneering work, buried by the more financially successful and better hyped snow jobs of the sixties. It would not be a bad idea if those who were spotted and published by the young Rety, and they include, in addition to those mentioned above, Alun Owen, Bernard Kops, Frank Norman and Doris Lessing, were to club together, those who are still alive, to buy him a pension. He is one of the great intellectual talent spotters of the post 1945 world – few can equal his record although many were to emulate him.

The particular volume that occasions this burst of reminiscence is a collection of pieces and squibs from Rety's fortnightly column in *Freedom*. One day, exiled to a Scottish island (By whom? Michael Portillo?) he followed Lars Porsena and swore a mighty oath, only in this case to read only anarchist papers. In practice this meant primarily *Freedom* and is not, perhaps, as self denying as it appears. Many of *Freedom's* writers necessarily need the more reliable heavies as a source of information.

The text itself is that wonderful mixture of perception and dottiness that is so characteristic of John Rety's conversation (he has frequently mentioned the excellence of the table talk at Arthur's Court while being too modest to mention how often his own conversation sparks the exchanges). The flavour of the mixture is probably best realised when the chilling story about the asbestos risk on London Underground is used to create a conspiracy theory.



"The Asbestos Train travels very slowly – less than a mile an hour – through the tunnels sucking up rubbish ... for some years yet the systematic vacuuming of the tunnels ... must go on, preferably at night when as few people as possible know about it." (Rety's italics)

There are some lovely squibs. I liked "My kingdom for a horse" is anarchist economics at its best" – but readers of this column will have their own favourites.

Like all such collections, from *The Bedside Guardian* to *Gems from the Morning Star*, it has the strengths and weaknesses of its origins. One cannot read it without finding important nuggets of information that had previously

been missed, or a surrealist perspective on something taken for granted. From time to time I astonished my fellow travellers with a bark of delight at some felicitous phrase or insight.

The collection is given impact by Emily Johns's illustrations, which I am not qualified to judge, but some of which appear quite delightful to my untutored vision. It is not a book for the uninitiated. For the cognoscenti though it is a minor goldmine. And at £3.60 it's an excellent stocking filler for those of you with anarchist friends who need stockings filled.

John Pilgrim

information revolution are increasing their global dominance. Through centralised government-military-industrial spending and their own monopolistic practices they are among the largest corporations in the world. Together they hold the copyrights and patents on most of the technology of the past, present, and future.<sup>7</sup> Now through deregulation these American centred organisations are able to wield and develop their power on a global scale. Their presence within the global arena places them as competitors for global power.

Some of their current financial figures illustrate just how large these companies are. AT&T in 1993 had a total revenue of \$67.2 billion with a profit of \$3.97 billion.<sup>8</sup> Similarly IBM's revenue for 1994 was \$64.1 billion with profits reaching \$3.02 billion.<sup>9</sup> Their economic performance rates better than most nations. IBM has a practical monopoly in the large computer mainframe<sup>10</sup> industry, supplying 72% of the mainframes in the world, primarily to corporate and government clients.<sup>11</sup> AT&T has generated huge revenue through virtual telephone monopolies, and these are likely to grow as they begin marketing multi-way television technology.<sup>12</sup> Both of these companies compete with other smaller information technology companies acting as the vanguard of the information revolution. The fate of countless other companies, not to mention nation-states rests upon the implementation and further development of information technology by these two competing communication conglomerates. To understand the oligarchic potential consider the impact that their information technology will have on financial institutions. McLuhan states:

"There is no technical reason why the 40,000-odd financial institutions in North America devoted to banking, securities, and insurance could not be merged into a single institution through electronic means."<sup>13</sup>

McLuhan continues to describe this process: Using EFT: electronic fund transfers, "banks are able to transfer money electronically between customers' bank accounts" which in effect enables "the creation of a super bank through the electric linking of literally hundreds of local and regional data sources to provide the entire Western world a view of your social and economic standing."<sup>14</sup> The information revolution is accompanied by the liberation of capital, generating the gross amounts it needs to continue developing and profiting.

As the implementation of this new media continues the intensity of future development increases. The rate of change, and the rate of growth operates on an exponential scale, requiring increasing amounts of capital to fuel the industrial expansion. Free Trade allows the globalisation of capital that enables the creation of the global banking institution, and at the same time enhancing global centralisation through the protection of American intellectual property. It is in this context that AT&T and IBM offer the best contemporary example of oligarchic rule.

"The commercial corporate organisation is, after all, a broad extension of the human mind; it develops controlling structures to organise human behaviour to produce an economic benefit."<sup>15</sup>

The control of such an organisation is purposefully hierarchical, centralising control into the hands of the few members on the board of directors, and indirectly the minority of society who are share holders. Therefore if a few large corporations control society, through their control of the increasingly dominant information industry, the traditional pattern of rule by the few continues. Accompanying this rule of the few, will be a similar oligarchic pattern on the micro level. The information regime requires a class of technical administrators to act as enforcers who are able to wield the power centralised by means of information technology. The process of decentralisation that occurs on the micro level is accompanied by centralisation within these diverging centres.

"In short, the entire operation has been miniaturised, speeded up, and placed under the direction of one mind instead of several."<sup>16</sup>

System administrators with the aid of computer technology single-handedly control information networks. They bear the responsibilities of access, security, maintenance, and general network structure. Through control of the technology they are also in control of the users. This one person can make the decision whether a user may operate on the system; what, when, and how they operate on it; as well as having access to all personal records and actions made by that individual user. This pattern of technological control is explicitly oligarchic. This oligarchic pattern resembles similar trends described by Robert Michels who stated: "Who says organisation, says oligarchy."<sup>17</sup> As information is organised on a global scale, control of such information is in the hands of technical

administrators, forming a new bureaucratic class. This class will act as support for the new political elite that accompanies the proliferation of information technology.

"The bad news is that all persons, whether or not they understand the processes of computerised high-speed data transmission, will lose their old private identities. What knowledge there is will be available to all. So, in that sense, everybody will be nobody. Everyone will be involved in robotic role-playing including those few elitists who interpret or manage large-scale data patterns and thus control the functions of a speed-of-light society. The more quickly the rate of information exchange speeds up, the more likely we will all merge into a new robotic corporate entity, devoid of true specialism which has been the hallmark of our old private identities. The more information one has to evaluate, the less one knows. Specialism cannot exist at the speed of light."<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, the information revolution is the latest attempt by a small elite to consolidate its control on society and reinforce the oligarchy that has traditionally existed. It threatens to support the iron law of oligarchy which states that as society continues to grow and further organise it simultaneously centralises power and control into the hands of the few. At present the media is swamped with information-hypeway and all the positive aspects of information technology. This purposeful misinformation, and to some extent indoctrination, serves to cloud the minds of the public into thinking they are aware of the changes, and furthermore approve of them. Yet throughout this second industrial revolution very few are critically addressing the transformations that are occurring. The information revolution can be expressed in the metaphor of Noah's Ark. Great rains are falling, determined to flood the world. For most the choice will come down to sink or swim. However those who can be quick on the mark, recognise early what's going on, might still have enough time to build their own boat, and find their own piece of land in the new frontier. Perhaps the opportunity to participate in the development of the future. As the ruling class continues its consolidation of power, and the strengthening of the oligarchy, opposition to its tyranny grows. A resistance emerges to counter this flow of power, as awareness of this change increases. Perhaps the most successful resistance movement, or more accurately described counterculture, are the so-called 'hackers'. The

(continued on page 7)

## GREECE

513 Greek Anarchists arrested in Athens. They will be brought to court in groups of 20-30 to avoid more 'violence'.

**The story in short:** Almost two thousand people (most of them anarchists) entered Athens Polytechnic School on the 17th of November. Greek Institution protects 'academic ground' against police, that means that the police are *not* allowed to enter, unless a serious crime (murder/rape, etc.) is proved to have happened.

This law was silently changed and the University/Polytechnic Board of Directors gave permission for the police to enter the building. This did not happen until 7:00 on 18th November. Until the morning police threw chemicals (e.g. tear-gas) into the

## Shell in Nigeria: a correction

In the 2nd December issue of *Freedom* we stated that Nayone Apka and Charles Danwi gave evidence in the show trial of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others in Nigeria. We now learn that this is not so. Our source was our contemporary *Private Eye*, citing the report of British observer Michael Birnbaum QC. Mr Birnbaum has since written to *Private Eye* putting the record straight.

Mr Birnbaum was shown what appeared to be letters from the Gokana local government offering jobs to Mr Apka and Mr Danwi, consistent with their having been bribed. He points out, however, that the only evidence of Shell's involvement in the bribery is in the affidavits of Mr Apka and Mr Danwi, i.e. the statements under oath of men who say they were prepared to make false statements under oath. This evidence is clearly not reliable.

Our apologies to readers, and of course to the Shell corporation, for whatever we have got wrong. We stand by our allegation that Shell is responsible for leaving Rivers State in a polluted mess.

Polytechnic, and anarchists replied with fires and molotov-bombs. 600 million drachmas (\$2.5 million US) is the estimated damage.

Television talked about 'fifty kids, 15 year olds ... all of them!'. The next day revealed 513 arrests - only forty people under 18. One man was caught by the police in the evening. He was brutally beaten up by 25 police officers. He was taken behind a police car and kicked on the head by high-ranking police officers - he was already unconscious. He was then delivered to the hospital. Reporters' videos of the scene were taken away by the police. Other reporters helped wipe the blood off the street.

Fascist groups joined the party earlier, throwing stones at the anarchists. The television said that 'right-wing groups were not allowed to come close to the scene'.

Television also showed scenes from burning cars, taken from last year's riots. They were presented as 'live'.

Kostas Anagnostakis

## PERU

WASHINGTON, 19th September (IPS): *Medicine hunters from Missouri and oil drillers from California and Texas are on their way to exploit the rain forests of the Peruvian Amazon despite a clear message from the native people: Stay out.*

Walter Lewis, a scientist from Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, will be flying to Lima later this month to talk to the Peruvian government and local groups about searching the Amazon for new medicinal plants that may hold the cure for diseases like cancer.

California-based Occidental Petroleum, a US multinational with 1994 sales of \$9 billion, set off huge explosions in the same region this summer in a vain effort to find underground oil reserves. The company says it is now pulling out, but other companies are on their way.

Pratap Chatterjee

## MALAYSIA

Malaysia, the world's largest exporter of tropical wood (50% of the world market in 1990), essentially has a good forestry law which should guarantee it a sustainable use of its forests. It is not the same in practice. Based on the exhaustion of its own forest resources, West Malaysia has already become an importer of wood from the two east Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah. Sarawak has too few forestry officials to enforce the law in this respect.

Maximum felling quantities as recommended by the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) have been exceeded. And stipulations concerning the minimum diameter for felleable trees, time spans before a second cutting, protected species (such as abang) and the incline of the land are often disregarded. An aerial view exposes the tremendous erosion damage. Even half of the Magoh Biosphere Reservation has already been developed and exploited.

The most tragic fact, however, is the disregard for the traditional land rights of the indigenous peoples. Over seven hundred members of various Dayak groups have been arrested in the past years for their determined resistance.

'Eco' labels for wood and 'sustainable forestry' which are conferred by individuals are not credible. At the present time, hevea is the only timber on the market from Malaysia which can be verified as sustainable. Hevea is a caoutchouc-producing tree whose wood has acquired a useful purpose when the tree has been 'milked out'.

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## The IWA Centre in Paris threatened by demolition

The news came through by the beginning of November: the Confédération Nationale du Travail (IWA) is about to be evicted from ins centre located at 33 rue des Vignoles in Paris.

Number 33 is a piece of libertarian and anarcho-syndicalist history. First of all number 33 was the centre of the exiled Spanish CNT for many years. It is also the offices and meeting rooms of the French CNT, founded in 1946, with increasing activities recently for direct action and defence of the working class.

In the Paris region the CNT has participated in struggles, the underground cleaning workers strike in COMATEC, the free entrance strike of the employees of the Cité des Sciences Museum, job requisition by the employees in FNAC stores, opposition to the expulsion of foreign students in Nanterre University, the struggle for housing, etc.

Today we need your support and solidarity. Behind our eviction from number 33 is the policy of destruction developed by the mayor of Paris, Tiberi, heir to president Hirochirac, on Paris popular districts. He plans to offer Paris to property developers, transform the capital into a managing centre where offices replace housing and where only the well-off could live.

Number 33 is not only the CNT centre, it's also a living space. It houses artists' workshops, an active and renowned flamenco dance school, a boxing school, theatre workshops, fêtes, Mayday banquets, etc. Number 33 disturbs. The social friendliness that one can find here is highly subversive for the apostles of a disembodied city.

We fight for this place to remain a centre for cultural, associative and anarcho-syndicalist activities. In the coming days and months public actions will be organised in and around number 33: meetings and demonstrations, film, music and song festivals. We will keep in touch! Please send us your solidarity and support messages. Let's struggle together to keep number 33 the IWA home in Paris.

Contact: CNT-AIT, 33 rue des Vignoles, 75020, Paris, France (tel: 33 1 43 72 09 54, fax: 33 1 43 72 87 02)

## POWER & OLIGARCHY

(continued from page 6)

average computer hacker epitomises McLuhan's concept of ground within an electronic environment. Under the threat of severe retaliation and persecution, hackers are forced to maintain a myriad of identities, inhabiting a widely distributed area, blending into and becoming ground. A hacker will have hundreds if not thousands of 'accounts' or access points to an information system. Like the power elite themselves they have integrated themselves into the framework of the electronic environment. Through exploration of 'backdoors' and security holes hackers have familiarised themselves with the inner workings of the system so as to dissolve into its structure. They have been able to obtain unlimited access, to the extent that they themselves actively participate in the development of the emerging media. They constitute an opposition to corporate centralisation that increases with the success of those same corporate interests. Their belief in the freedom of information, places them as the most serious and severe threat to the emerging new order. Yet at the same time relatively little is known about this counterculture, an indication of their success at embodying the concept of ground. Another form of resistance that is emerging in the changing information environment are community groups demanding their own empowerment in the ongoing information revolution. These public interest groups are commendable in the sense that they oppose corporate centralisation and greed, however their actions at present seem only to re-enforce the corporate process of empowerment. Tragically the large majority of these groups are still convinced that the 'content' is the message, and are directing actions accordingly. In effect these organisations are dealing with the information revolution on a shallow and superficial level. As long as they ignore the role of the medium itself within the electronic environment, they will remain subservient to the corporate order. This raises the role of awareness within the possibility of resistance. Clearly awareness is essential in determining possible courses of action. However awareness alone cannot achieve change, it

obviously must be accompanied by action. One would hope that awareness would increase revolutionary fervour and the desires for social justice rather than simply unite apathy with corporate obedience. The military-industrial complex has successfully integrated itself into the innermost workings of our society. Military technology can now be found within every home, and every workplace. The institution itself has effectively dissolved into the essence of our society. We are now all members of this powerful entity, and we must turn to the ground to not only ensure our survival as socially just human beings, but also fight for the survival of our species. The option of running away to the hills no longer seems to be available. We are surrounded on all sides; our only option is to confront the changes taking place and hope to have some effect on their outcome.

Time to get our shit together ...

Jesse Hirsh

### Footnotes

1. Marshall McLuhan and Bruce Powers, *The Global Village* Oxford University Press, New York 1989, page viii.
2. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 94.
3. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, page 23.
4. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 118.
5. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 98.
6. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 119.
7. <http://www.att.com> <http://www.ibm.com>
8. [att.com/finance.html](http://att.com/finance.html)
9. IBM Corporate Report 1994
10. Mainframes are supercomputers, often the size of several rooms.
11. <http://www.ibm.com>
12. <http://www.att.com>
13. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 91.
14. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 111.
15. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 121.
16. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 106.
17. Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, Free Press, New York, 1962, page 365.
18. McLuhan and Powers, *The Global Village*, page 129.

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## Are all dentists anarchists?

Dear Freedom,

Regardless of religious or political convictions, people tend to want to heal each others' pain. This may give anarchists grounds for optimism, but it would be nonsense to equate it with anarchism. It would be nonsense to say, for instance, that a dentist and a dental patient may both be regarded as anarchists because one is healing the pain in the other's mouth. Yet precisely this nonsense appears in John Rety's 'Through the Anarchist Press' column of 2nd December.

John Rety is a well-informed anarchist and it is not easy to understand why he puts about what he knows to be nonsense. Perhaps it is poetic nonsense, or perhaps it is attractive because it is unexpected; John Cage, to whom it is attributed, was famous for saying and doing the unexpected.

Most Freedom readers know what anarchism means, but a few read the paper to find out what it means. Since Freedom intends to be a propaganda paper, it might reasonably be said that the uninformed minority are the readers at whom the paper is chiefly aimed, and the uninformed should not be misinformed.

Anarchism is a body of opinion: opposition to all kinds of coercive institutions, and hope for and/or striving towards a state of affairs where all human relationships are voluntary. This is what distinguishes anarchists from people who are not anarchists.

Daft conceits, like people being anarchists because they heal each others' pain, should be confined to poetry collections where they can do no harm. They have no place in an anarchist propaganda sheet.

Donald Room

## How do we get there?

Dear Editors,

'How do we get there?' (Letters, 4th and 18th November). Well, here is a suggestion. What we need is just one thing: clarity.

We are not what we have been conditioned to think we are, namely persons with minds and wills of our own, and it is just because we have that false image of ourselves that we tend to bully and dominate others (and ourselves, by striving to live up to some ideal). Thus we create a coercive and ever disintegrating society and a mad brutal world.

Our false image of ourselves dissolved when there is clarity; which is a perception that the persons we think we are do not exist, and that our strong, vivid sense of having minds and wills of our own under our own control is merely an illusion. Then the bullying and dominating stops and there is no need to ask 'How do we get there?' We are going.

Clarity, then, is the one factor that might bring about the anarchistic

paradise. As to the chances of that, there is no call for either optimism nor pessimism. Clarity may come to us or may not. It is not for us to go after it, and when we understand that then it has come.

Anarchists inclined to dismiss this letter as apathetic or impractical or having nothing to do with true anarchism might reflect that the seminal anarchist thinker William Godwin, in his major work *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, argued strongly against free will. "The assassin" he wrote, "cannot help the murder he commits, any more than the dagger".

Godwin also wrote, apropos of revolution and resistance to authority: "We have seen ... that nothing is more to be deprecated than violence and a headlong zeal that everything may be trusted to the tranquil and wholesome progress of knowledge."

I should say, self-knowledge, which is clarity.

Francis Ellingham

## News from Angel Alley

With this issue of Freedom we will have been publishing our journal 24 times a year as promised in the pilot issue accompanying the monthly in November 1989. 144 issues virtually fortnightly in six consecutive years. In late 1989 we took over publication of *The Raven* which as a quarterly had only published seven issues, the last of which took more than nine months to take flight. From Number 8, dated October 1989, we have published 23 issues in six years. We do realise that Numbers 31 and 32 should be well advanced, but we confess that at the time of writing they are not. But ... subscribers don't despair!

**FREEDOM PRESS PUBLISHING** This year has been even more active than in past years. Not only have we brought out new titles such as Colin Ward's *Talking Schools*, John Rety's *Through the Anarchist Press*, Malatesta's *Anarchist Revolution* and Michael Duane's *The Terrace*, but we are also glad to report that we are in the process of reprinting Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*, Colin Ward's *Anarchy in Action*, Vernon Richards' *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* and have already reprinted *What is Anarchism?* (edited by Donald Room) as well as his first *Wildcat* book. And last but not least, a new edition of John Olday's *The March to Death*, a volume of anti-war cartoons and press quotations which Freedom Press first published in 1943 and which sold more than 10,000 copies in a country at war! The message is as valid today in a world either at war or with economies that could well end in war. All wars are economic whatever the politicians may say.

**FREEDOM PRESS DISTRIBUTORS** Our readers have surely been bowled over by the latest 'attacks' of our 'Pugwash'

deep sea fisherman and his 'huge catches'. They are to our readers' advantages and at the same time to Freedom Press's funds. It is a sign of the times that hardly any time after books have been published by the commercial publishers they can be remaindered and our 'fisherman' in Freedom Press's bookshop has cast his net far and wide.

Unlike the commercial publishers, Freedom Press's prices are based on costs but not on profit margins. Since none of our writers or editors are paid and Freedom Press doesn't add a margin of profit, we price our titles at the lowest possible level, which has to include the ever-growing postage charges which are not added to inland 'customers'.

**FREEDOM PRESS FINANCES** How is it all done, some of you may ask. We don't break into banks. Indeed, we are the victims of break-ins - another last week - but this writer cannot recall Freedom Press ever having benefited from legacies such as has been the case in the last three years. As we write, books left to us in the last couple of years have been purchased for £600, but the same benefactor in his estate gave a considerable amount of money to Freedom Press as did an anonymous donor from somewhere up north who was not only moved by the vicious raids on Freedom Press but also by the propaganda we are issuing week after week. And we must not forget to include the name of George Walford whose legacy, thanks to his family, paid for the printing of our latest title: *Malatesta's The Anarchist Revolution*.

A number of Freedom readers have recently asked us how they can include us in their wills. We have a brochure which we produced when The Friends of Freedom Press Ltd was launched to take over the freehold of the premises at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London

E1 7QX, which is the home of Freedom Press. We did this because it was necessary to have a legal ownership of the premises. If you send for the brochure you will see that nobody is involved in a racket, and the asset - the building - is secure for so long as Freedom Press needs it and wants it.

The publishing side of Freedom Press (apart from *Freedom* and *The Raven*) this year: typesetting, printing and binding has cost more than £20,000 and there are more charges to come before the end of the year. Since we are revolutionary publishers who also pay their printers (which explains why Freedom Press continue and so many who are proposing to change the face of the world and don't pay the printers disappear, and not because they are the real anarchists and we are the 'liberals') we are always looking for more money, more legacies (though we don't want any comrades to die before they have enjoyed a full life).

**FURTHERING ANARCHISM** Money is not only the lifeblood of the capitalist society but of financing anarchist propaganda. But Freedom Press's role, the bookshop, the journals and our publications, is *propaganda* for anarchism - that is for the destruction of the capitalist society and its privileges and injustices - and this can only be brought about by the actions of all those who are conscious of being the victims of capitalism and are prepared to do something about changing society. *Freedom* is a voice which can become a roar of protest and direct action to be used by the victims of capitalism, only when the victims say they will no longer accept their servile role in society.

It is said that the word is mightier than the sword, but direct action is mightier than the word.

Anarchists go on believing in the revolution - but by a majority of the victims of the capitalist society. Not by an elite.

## RADICALISM, REFORMISM OR PSYCHO-POLITICS?

(continued from page 3)

Cultural traditions, of course, are an intrinsic part of social life, and show no signs of disappearing. The market economy, science and even sociology are all social institutions which have their corresponding cultural traditions. This suggests that the crude dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' is vague and misleading, as well as ahistoric and Eurocentric. As for the suggestion that we are now in an era of 'manufactured uncertainty', this too is misleading. It implies that until the present decade all our problems and misfortunes were caused by nature. Didn't Schopenhauer in the early nineteenth century write that most human problems were not derived from natural catastrophes but were of human origin? Throughout the centuries peasants and working people have recognised that many of life's risks and problems were due to their social conditions. This is the reason why rebellions and revolutions have been such a ubiquitous part of human history. Although the added risks from atmospheric pollution, large-scale war and the proliferation of nuclear weapons are not to be underestimated, for most of recent history 'manufactured uncertainty' was the lot of ordinary people. All this palaver about living in a 'risk society' borders on scare-mongering, justifying ever more surveillance and control over the lives of ordinary people. But not only has 'tradition' lost its power and influence (except among fundamentalists), according to Giddens 'nature' too has 'disappeared'. Tradition, like nature, he writes, used to be an 'external' context of social life, something that was given and largely went unchallenged (page 85). In the past they were "fixed landscapes" but under "reflexive modernisation" (read contemporary capitalism) nature, Giddens tells us, has disappeared or alternatively "no longer exists" (page 11). Like other

globalisation theorists Giddens not only misleadingly speaks of the "end of tradition" but also of the "end of nature" (page 86). He quotes with approval Ulrich Beck, who wrote: "Nature is not nature, but rather a concept, norm, memory ... it no longer exists" (page 206). It reminds me of many post-modernist anthropologists who write of 'no nature, no culture', or that nature is a human creation. Now either one means by nature the existential world in which we find ourselves - the trees, the clouds, the sky, the animals, the rocks, and all those natural processes which are independent of human cognition, and on which human life depends. To suggest that this is a human creation, or does not exist, or has been 'dissolved', is plainly absurd. Or by nature one means the *concept* of nature. To then suggest that this is a human creation or a social construct is to feign as a profundity what is plainly a rather banal statement. What Giddens means by 'nature', of course, is pristine nature, a world untouched by humans. Had he read any anthropology Giddens would have realised that in this sense 'nature' did not disappear recently with the advent of power stations and the petrol engine and with atmospheric pollution, but thousands of years ago. As Carl Sauer and others long ago explored, even hunter-gatherers modify the landscape, and so throughout human history nature has borne the imprint of human activity. This is why Marx, more than a century ago, wrote about the 'humanisation of nature'. Giddens, of course, while suggesting that nature no longer exists, also argues that it needs to be defended (page 11).

Yet the very idea that humans could create a new economic and social order that would allow people to live in some sort of harmony with nature, Giddens considers implausible and utopian. Unaware of anthropological critiques of Durkheim, Giddens also views all small communities as 'mechanical' and oppressive, as entailing the "tyranny of the group" (page 210). With his Eurocentric and urban bias, Giddens seems totally oblivious to

the fact that many clan-based societies put a focal emphasis both on reciprocity and sharing, and on individual autonomy, and concretely express productivity, reflexivity and agency. The notion that contemporary capitalism gives a heightened emphasis to reflexivity is a function of changing social institutions - in relation to the family, sexuality and consumerism - rather than to the fact that people are more reflexive than in earlier decades. In relation to the state and the workplace 'reflexivity' has minimal scope, and in crucial areas of people's lives authoritarian tendencies are still rampant. Again, it is of interest that while Giddens has a whole chapter on democracy, he has no discussion at all of the complete lack of democracy - reflexivity - in the workplace. He actually sees the "decentralised and more flexible systems of authority" under what is described as 'post-Fordism' as involving 'democratising processes' - whereas, in fact, profit-making motives and authoritarian control mechanisms still remain intact in these multinational corporations.

Although Giddens' book is hailed as a radical text, in fact it is deeply conservative and has an essentially 'apologetic' stance both towards capitalism - though Giddens is troubled by the poverty and social inequalities it generates - and towards state power, which he assumes to be unproblematic. Giddens is certainly on the side of the 'big battalions' in favour of the increasing centralisation of power under the auspices of continental states and global (capitalist) agencies. In the past, he misleadingly suggests, people accepted 'nature' and 'tradition' as part of a relatively fixed social 'landscape'. Giddens it seems, in similar fashion, accepts both capitalism and power organised through the state, as part of an unchangeable landscape. In his own terms, he is thus a fundamentalist. The socialist critique of capitalism he side-steps by identifying socialism with state capitalism, Keynesianism and the Promethean outlook. The ecological critique of capitalism he

dismisses as a romantic delusion, as implying a retreat to a pristine nature, ignoring completely the visions of people like Kropotkin and Bookchin. The anarchist critique of capitalism (and the state) he never takes seriously, as he is under the illusion that social life in all local or small-scale communities implies the suppression of individual autonomy and of independent - reflexive - thought. And his essential response to the 'risks' that we now face - ecological degradation, poverty, social inequality, political oppression, authoritarian political structures, exploitative and demeaning work conditions - is to advocate 'lifestyle changes', 'dialogic communication' and the development of an 'autotelic' self. These are not in themselves necessarily bad things. It is good to have a positive appreciation of difference and to engage in dialogue: it is good to have a sense of self-respect and ontological security: it is good to work for the satisfaction that work brings in relation to one's life-goals rather than to engage in 'productivism'. One could hardly quibble with such a moral vision. But with Giddens this vision runs in tandem with a perspective which suggests that globalisation (i.e. capitalism) is fundamentally of a positive nature and that we should therefore accommodate ourselves to this 'risk' society. As he put it: we should "seek to remoralise our lives in the context of a positive acceptance of manufactured uncertainty" (page 227).

Globalisation - capitalism - which generates this 'risk' and 'uncertainty' (both these concepts I think distract us from considering the seriousness of present problems) - takes on with Giddens a rather mystical quality, as a phenomenon beyond human control. Thus while Giddens emphasises throughout the book the importance of individual initiatives and of generating informal structures, one can but conclude that he is in the last analysis on the side of the "big battalions".

Brian Morris



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19th January Some Further Comments on Chomsky (speaker Peter Lumsden)  
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9th February General Discussion  
16th February Anarchism and Social Class (speaker Peter Neville)  
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8th March General Discussion  
15th March vacant slot  
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