

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 58 No. 9

10th May 1997

50p

THE CIRCUS IS OVER ... BACK TO NORMAL? ANARCHISTS HOPE NOT!

Our professional colleagues on the *New Statesman* announced that they were cancelling their issue of 2nd May "because it would mean going to press before polling day and going on sale after the results are known".

In fact this article is written before polling day and will be with you more than a week after. But we don't mind because, as anarchists have been pointing out for more than a century, it doesn't really make much difference as to which bunch of politicians presumes to run our lives for us. So whoever wins, the old adage that *Plus ça change ...* it comes to the same thing in the end.

As we pointed out in the last issue ('Workers of the World Unite for it's Now or Never') global capitalism is unconcerned as to the 'colour' of the government in office for they have no control on the movement of capital and what's more have no intention of challenging the global capitalists. If they dared, one can imagine that the big guns would come into play and could crush them overnight with 'currency problems' and City share collapses, because after all they control the lot, the pension funds, the banks, property and, just to keep everybody that matters sweet, the politicians world-wide.

But governments obviously do have some power over our lives, although that too is relative for though governments do change (rarely here) the people who actually decide policy are not the ministers but the permanent civil servants who run their respective departments. One of the few television programmes this writer enjoyed was *Yes Minister* which made it quite clear that ministers or prime ministers suddenly thrust into the ministerial chair had neither a clue nor a hope of contradicting the 'permanent government' (a.k.a. permanent civil servants).

The dear old Fabian Society have published a report warning their Labour colleagues from becoming

"prisoners of the Whitehall machine" and giving them all kinds of advice on how to cope with the Whitehall Mandarins, if and when they become the government. Good luck to them, but they won't get an inch from the permanent government: the civil servants.



'Why don't you shake them off?'

Taken from *The March to Death*, a book of anti-war drawings by John Olday (Freedom Press, £3)

So whether we now have a Labour government or the old Tory gang, nothing changes so long as there is no pressure from below: that is from organised and unorganised workers (we mean all of us who depend for the means of our survival to live on a boss). Expect nothing from a Labour government. After all, has it not been made clear that it won't tax the rich? Has it even suggested that the £20 billion wasted on so-called defence will be slashed? Not at all.

And has it also suggested that a Labour government will explain *a priori* how the money it raises from direct and indirect taxation is allocated. At present all the government receives from ostensibly different initiatives – national insurance, car tax, VAT, etc. – is pooled and the allocation of these billions of pounds is determined by the whims of the government (or by the permanent civil servants) and so the hospitals are short of money and the pensioners are being squeezed, but curiously the so-called defence programme (where's the enemy? the anarchists ask) never seems to be short of cash, while hospitals are. And we would ask do we, the wage-earning suckers, contribute to the defence programme in our national insurance?

Come on you wage-earning suckers. The election circus is over. The Labour lot will see the balance sheet and we assume it will eventually be more taxation (not of the rich because they won't notice 10% or 20% on their millions, but of the poor and the pensioners) and once the Labour lot have balanced the capitalist books they will be out of office thanks to an electorate which, alas, does not dream of love and leisure to enjoy this short and amazing existence called life, but dote on capitalist values that the more money you have the more happiness will come your way. Don't believe it. The richest are the most miserable bastards. They even hate their families (who are after their money). Forget about them. *What are we the dispossessed doing to destroy power and privilege?* For the Blair government is part of the privileged. All people or groups who use the mechanism of government to wish to, or in fact do, run our lives are our oppressors.

We are anarchists because we neither want to oppress others nor do we wish to dominate other lives. We want to live *our* lives to the full in joyous, fruitful union with our fellows.

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Freedom

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ALBANIA OR SHQIPERIA – LAND OF THE EAGLES

'WELCOME TO SARANDA'



Saranda: women in the street

LOUSY ARCHITECTURE, SMASHING VIEWS

As we approached Saranda, leaving the Drinos Valley and travelling through the Muzina Pass, I scanned the scene for some cheerful signs of life. The vines up there in early April stood out like skeletons across the mountain landscape. I began to wish the Greek police at the frontier had turned me back on some pretext or other, thus barring my entry to this 'Land of the Eagles' or Shqipëria as the Albanians call it.

I did my best to amuse myself by thinking of Yves Montand in the film *Wages of Fear*, and I repeated to myself the Spanish saying 'Nothing was written about a coward'. It was one of those grim, grey overcast days we get so many of in Lancashire. On days like this positive thinking doesn't come easy.

We followed what looked like a canal before hitting the road-block. After being checked out we dropped down past the 'Welcome to Saranda' sign and the electricity station, and an abandoned army tank, into town. Saranda, with a population of 29,000, is a port and, in better days, a seaside resort.

The town has a long history dating back to ancient Greek times. The modern town behind the harbour is a depressing set of blocks of flats, though the island of Corfu when viewed across the bay at sunset appears to float on the Adriatic

EXTERMINATING ANGELS

The old name for Saranda was Agia Saranda, or 'Forty Saints'. The way it looked when I visited at the beginning of April was as if forty Exterminating Angels had been let loose.

As I made my way through the rubble my driver introduced me to Lucy, a teacher, and I showed them my Freedom Press Card. There was some talk about costs for accommodation, and an accompanying guide. I went to pull out

my dosh, but Lucy said "No, no, don't take the money out here in the street, people are watching us. Come inside the house".

Inside the house (a flat) had a lower middle-class Mediterranean style to it. Tidy, clean, minimalist decor, but with a living room wall full of books – new books and paperback books, the kind you might get from a book club perhaps.

She introduced me to her husband and her mother, and there were some young children running about, all clean and smartly turned out. Lucy's husband, a cardiologist, gave us all, including my driver, a glass of wine

– sweetish, of a sherry type.

Lucy complained of the disruption and said she needed money to cover her family in these difficult times. She wanted \$100 a day to act as my guide in Saranda and introduce me to members of the citizen's committee. Accommodation costs, with the taxi driver, would be another \$100 a day including food.

Lucy stressed the risks. They would all be risking their lives, she could be shot in the street or they may become targets of robbers by having me on the premises. She told me my driver was a good man, and I had been lucky to have him. She said with another driver I would certainly have lost my bag.

I was blunt telling them that I didn't know what to expect when I came to Albania, and I had left most of my money in an hotel in Greece. Then, as I didn't work for the BBC or CNN, I didn't have a big expenses allowance. I told her that I was just a tin-pot freelance journalist. I said it wasn't a bundle of fun on the dole in Britain.

She responded that it was better to be in England on the dole than in a situation where one was fearing a bullet in the head at any moment.

She told me she hadn't got a visa and couldn't leave the country. Nor would she take a boat, owing to the actions of the Italian navy in sinking the refugee ships. Her husband turned on the television and we got Television Tirana transmitting Swan Lake at almost 3 o'clock, then the news came on with a view of the Italian parliament in session standing for one minutes silence on behalf of the refugees from Albania drowned off the Italian coast the weekend before.

I asked why the refugees didn't cross into Greece over the land frontier? She said some did, but risked being shot by the Greek soldiers.

Lucy was less than sympathetic towards the European Union. They all claimed Europe had

not been much help. Her husband chimed in: "I didn't know Albania was part of Africa".

I remarked that I didn't know how committed Europe will be to solving the Albania problem, not after Bosnia and the experiences in Africa.

PYRAMID INVESTMENT AND THE CRISIS

Lucy: Europe is to blame for our situation. It didn't do anything to help us originally. Then when the USA became interested in Albania, Europe got jealous and told Berisha [the president] that the pyramid investment schemes must be stopped – producing the present crisis.

B: Yes, but I don't think pyramid investment was a good idea in the first place.

Lucy: Yes, but it was the Italian Mafia who introduced the schemes to trick simple people and rob them, taking their money out of the country to Italy.

B: Doesn't the Albanian government of Berisha have some responsibility here? Surely he should have warned the people.

Lucy: Of course! He used the pyramid schemes to win the general election. But John Major and the British government backed Berisha and applauded his 'achievements'. The British government financed Berisha. There has been a problem with the pyramid schemes, but now it has all gone too far. Now I am just trying to make a living for my family. Every day I am afraid a bullet will go through my brain as I sit here. Every day prices are going up, and we can't work normally.

Lucy's husband: Last week a Dutch journalist was shot through the stomach.

B: But in the centre of town I have seen people in the street: old men out for a stroll, women cleaning, young men standing around, people sitting in bars. And the background music of automatic fire, nobody seems to take any notice of it.

Lucy: Surely you didn't see any women out there. They only go out to do some shopping in the morning. This is bad, but I think you will find Gjitoklastra worse – higher prices, more inflation and more danger of getting shot.

B: What of the citizen committees?

Lucy: They can do nothing to protect us, they are just puppets.

B: If you can't take me to the committee, perhaps you could point me in the right direction.

Lucy: The committee

See also page 2 for feature on Albania with photographs – 'Freedom, Power and the Barrel of a Gun'

members will ask for money to do interviews with you. And the committee meets early, at 8am. At this time in the afternoon most people are going home to be with their families.

B: Where are the other journalists? Can you show me where they are?

Lucy: [spitting out the words] They have gone away – they are probably sitting in Tirana.

BB: The Albanian crisis is beginning to disappear from the headlines – perhaps because in England we are in the midst of a general election campaign. Er, if you can't put me up perhaps I can sleep in the streets.

Lucy: You should go back to Ioannina. You will be killed at night and all your things stolen. They will even take the clothes off your back. If you stay you will put us all at risk, because people will think you have money and will come for you here.

As I left I asked Lucy how she got on with her neighbours, and she said nobody trusts each other. I wished her all the best.

Lucy: Have a nice day.

B: We don't like that expression – it's American.

Then I thought, but did not say, I have other plans.

What followed was a whirlwind tour of the 'revolutionary ruins' of Saranda. Then the haggling broke out with my taxi driver over the fare from Saranda to the Kakavian frontier. The price of the return journey proved more expensive. **B**



My taxi driver

FREEDOM, POWER AND THE BARREL OF A GUN



Liberated tank on the road to Saranda

To try to interpret the events in Albania is a daunting task. The media is putting out mixed messages. There is a right-wing view that President Berisha was an architect of 'heroic materialism' who had the rug pulled out from under him by the European Union and communist malcontents in Albania.

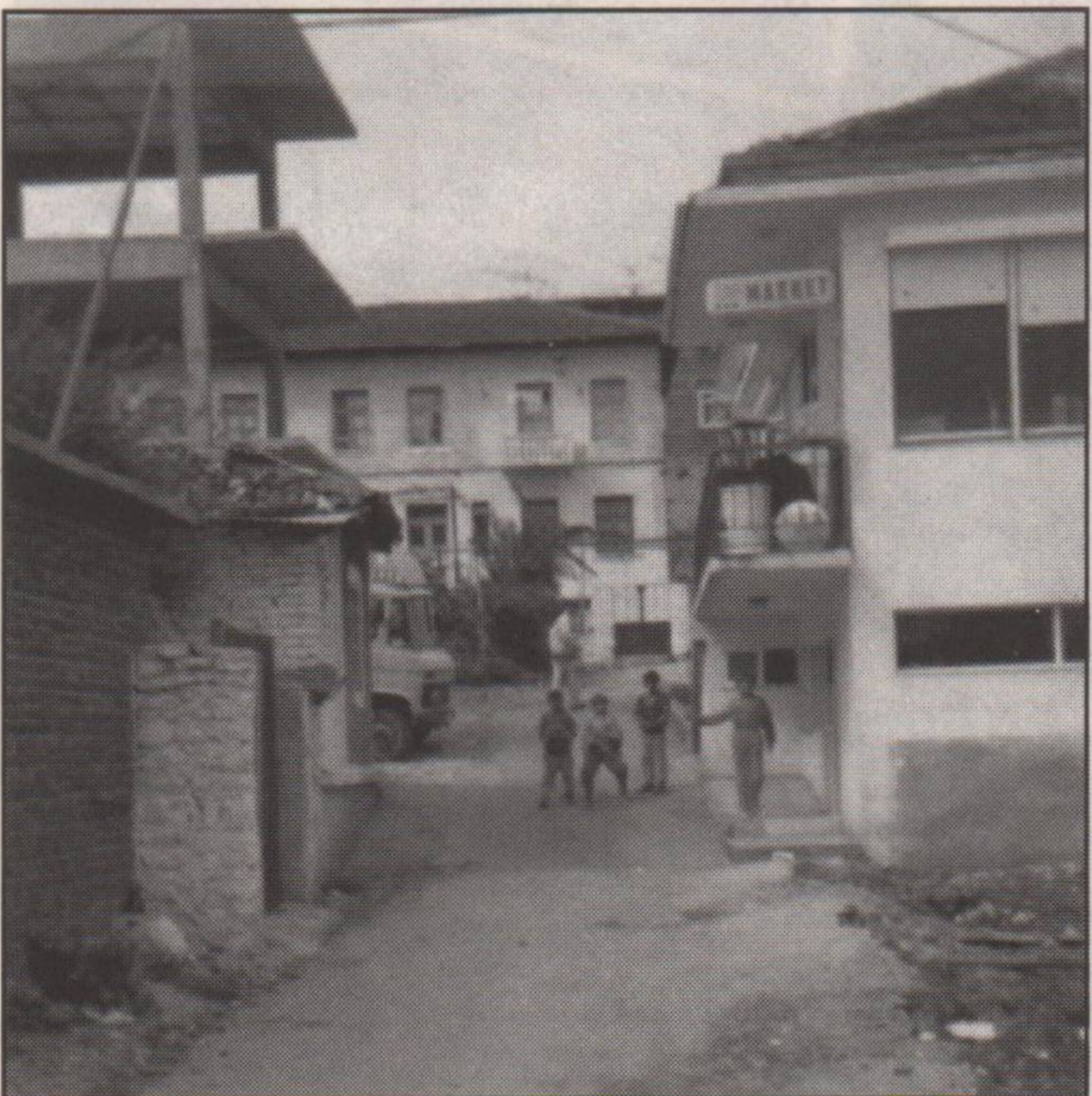
Some on the left have portrayed him as a pyramid salesman and mate of the Mafia. Even *The Times* in mid-March declared: "the original cause of this crisis, fraudulent pyramid schemes and their aftermath, must be revisited. To outsiders it might seem odd that the Albanian government should suffer for commercial malpractice. Matters are rather more complex. The Democratic Party headed by Mr Berisha was lavishly funded by the directors of these dubious enterprises. It also benefited from the artificial 'feelgood' factor they encouraged."

This situation helped Berisha's Democratic Party win an election last year. In exchange the pyramid companies appear to have operated in a freely unregulated market. Then the bubble burst, and even *The Times* felt obliged to say that "street violence may be destructive, but it is based on more than unfocused anger".

This year's riots are part of a pattern which has been going on throughout the 1990s. Following the first democratic election in March 1991, at which the partly re-formed Labour Party hung on to power, there was a general strike in May 1991 which forced the resignation of the new government. In August 1991, there was a mass emigration when over 25,000 seized ships moored in Durres harbour and forced them to sail to Italy. In early 1992 serious rioting occurred in the southern town of Pogradec. Then, following calls for fresh elections, a general election was held leading to the success of the Democratic Party of Dr Sali Berisha. Dr Berisha, former doctor to Enver Hoxha the Communist Party boss until he died in 1985, piloted the new government into the 'free market' economy with a bout of privatisations.

SOUTHERN ALBANIA

One fascinating account promoted in the US press is that the Albanian government released



Children at play in Saranda

the arms in a desperate attempt to keep power. Last month *The Washington Post* argued: "The Berisha government, to save itself from popular outrage over the pyramid scheme disaster, in effect gave away the order keeping powers of the state to local officials and bandits. Hence Albania faces, not only a north-south split, but the dispersal of arms and authority to local warlords."

So there we have it, first the Berisha government is undermined by the forces of the unbridled free market it had itself promoted, then it dishes out arms to save itself. If this is true it has backfired in the south of the country because there at least the liberal distribution of weapons among the people led to the ejection of the police and army. Consequently Dr Berisha has no authority there, in March the Albanian army seemed to refuse to march on the southern rebels. Why they did this is conjecture: indifference, fear or humanitarian reasons. But anarchists would probably point to the existence of a people armed to the teeth as being something of a deterrent.

The indication that the south is free and independent came last week when President Berisha condemned the southern salvation committees. Berisha called upon the socialists to put an end to the committees. He declared "We are waiting for the Socialists: it is one thing not recognising them [the committees], but they are not dissolving them".



Saranda - a police petrol garage attacked

The socialists are members of the provisional coalition government in Tirana, appointed by Berisha during the height of the crisis. Baskin Fino, the prime minister, is from Gjirokastra, and was there on the day I was in Saranda. Mr Fino is a socialist, as is Fatos Nano, also from Gjirokastra.

I doubt that the socialists can enforce disarmament in the south, or close down the committees. Berisha has talked of using force to overthrow the committees, but nobody who has been in the south can believe that the central government in Tirana has the bottle or capacity to take on the committees.

My suspicion is, after talking to the Albanian consul, that the authorities in Tirana were hoping that the presence of the international protection force might help the regime. The relief agencies can't understand why the six thousand foreign troops are necessary. According to the Red Cross and the World Food Program, there are few hungry people and no one is starving.

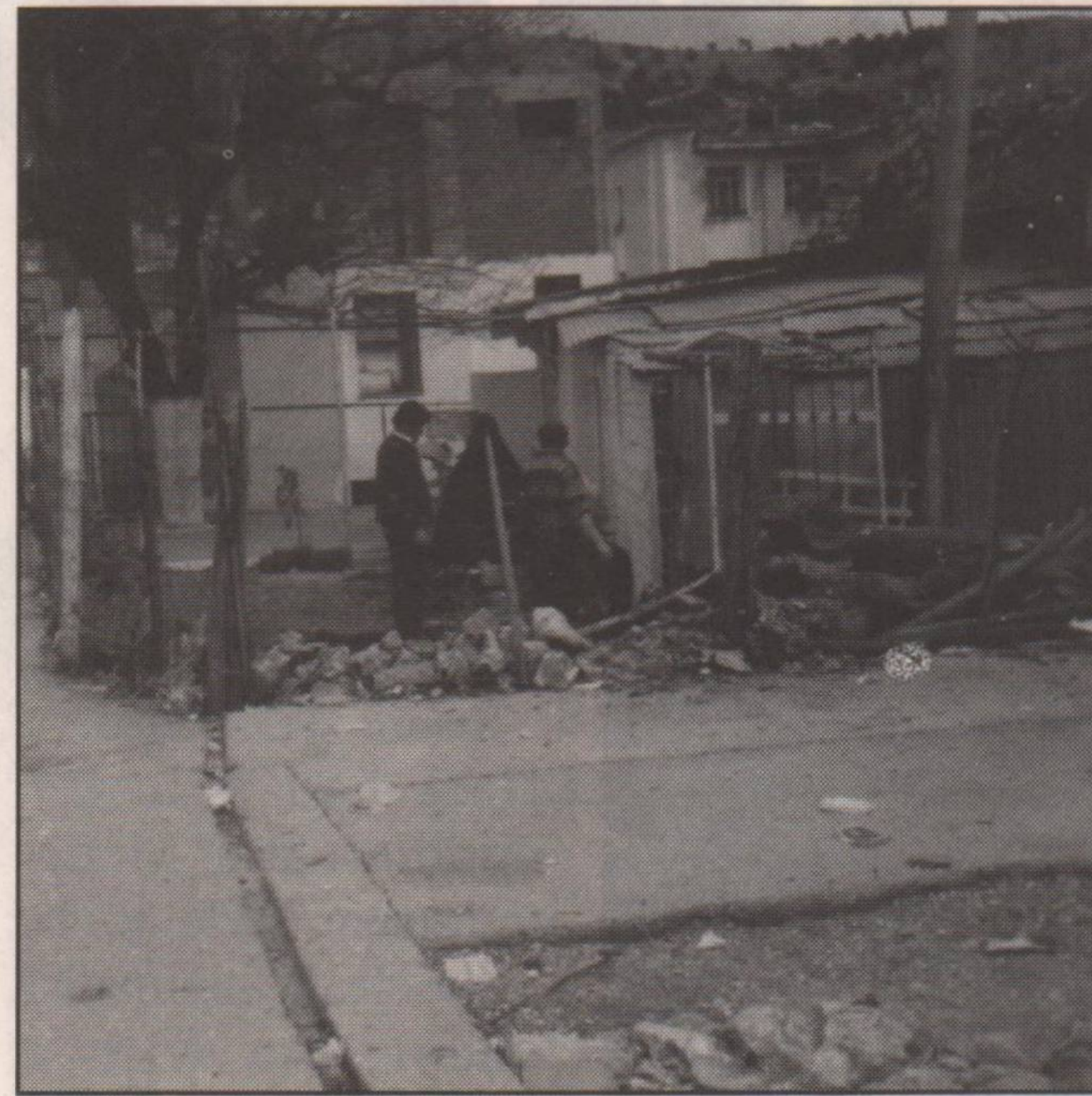
Mr Boucher, the World Food Program manager for the Balkans, said last week: "Despite the chaos in the government, the market are open, food is being imported through regular commercial channels. We have a real problem for some people who were very poor before the chaos and who now need some help in the short term."

Readers of recent issues of *Freedom* will not be surprised to know that the Albanians think the foreign troops are these because the Italian and Greek governments want to stop the overflow of refugees into their countries.

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Let's try to consider the developments from what might be an anarchist perspective. Food is available, if the relief agencies are to be believed. It may be, as Lucy claimed in my interview in Saranda, that prices are rising. Despite the difficulties, the economy in the south is functioning without a central government.

There is banditry, there is crime, just as crime exists in societies with a standing police force and army. I can't say there is more crime



Back-street poverty

in the south than there is in the north where they are supposed to have abolished the secret police force (the Shik) last month.

In the realm of hospital treatment and medicine there is a bad problem. For several days last month I had to watch ambulances ferrying the wounded and sick to hospitals in Greece over the Kakavia bridge. An ambulanceman told me that problems crop up when a family has five kalashnikovs in the same house. A gun is like any other tool: people who are not experienced are like apprentices learning a trade and they have mishaps until they get used to handling the tackle.

There are some bad things going on in the south: the corrosive pursuit of dollars; the reckless use of arms; the fear engendered among older people and women, as indicated in the Lucy interview; the accidental injuries, some of which I witnessed at the Kakavia crossing point, are a depressing scar, but



Revenge of the poor

proportionally I wonder if it would amount to more than the 35 people killed and 373 injured in traffic accidents during the Greek Orthodox Easter holiday this year. But one thing is abundantly clear, people didn't fly at each other's throats with the disappearance of the forces of law and order. Indeed, my observations inside the country were of a triumph of the human spirit.

LIONS AND FOXES

Anarchists are not by law, or any other rule, card-carrying paid-up pacifists. Our squeamishness about automatic weapons ought not to blind us to what may be their historic significance.



A looted bank

Let me quote from George Orwell:

"It is commonplace that the history of civilisation is largely the history of weapons. In particular, the connection between the discovery of gunpowder and the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie has been pointed out over and over again. And though I have no doubt exceptions can be brought forward, I think the following rule would be found generally to be true: that ages in which the dominant weapon is expensive or difficult to make will tend to be ages of despotism, whereas when the dominant weapon is cheap and simple, the common people have a chance. Thus, for example, tanks, battleships and bombing planes are inherently tyrannical weapons, while rifles, muskets, long-bows and hand-grenades are inherently democratic weapons. A complex weapon makes the strong stronger, while a simple weapon - so long as there is no answer to it - gives claws to the weak."

It is significant that the Italian command of the international protection force Operation Alba has already, to the annoyance of President Berisha, been negotiating with the Vlore salvation committee. An incentive for the Italians to deal with the citizen committee will have been their knowledge of the widespread possession of automatic weapons and hand-grenades among the public at large. And the awareness that only the salvation committees have any influence over that public.

In this context I think the 'Lucy' interview can be instructive. We must not dismiss her as a whining, wonky woman. Her view represents an attitude of mind during social disruption: it is a feminine perspective and a largely middle-class position.

The southern Albanian situation has skewed power relationships in the country. Many members of the middle class have lost their dominant position and have yielded power to the young men with guns. These men are peasants and workers. If you like, the lions have taken over from the foxes, at least temporarily.

Nor should we be surprised at the anger of the lions: the destruction of police stations, customs posts, army barracks, pyramid company offices, the looting of banks. Albania was a dramatic example of what Lord Clark called "heroic materialism". It was a form of what Max Weber described as "booty capitalism", like the slave trade or piracy, in which the stakes are huge and the risks enormous. It was Thatcherism taken to a lunatic conclusion. It was a regime run by foxes.

B

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DOLE QUEUE DAYS

BOLTON DOLE: SYSTEMATIC SLEAZE

In April there were signs of serious spreading corruption inside the Employment Service. Recently we have had the fiddling of job figures in North London Job Centres and the shafting of individual claimants like Reg Hall in Burnley, but last month one of the Bolton Job Centres tried to railroad a woman off the register with a form of constructive harassment.

On 3rd April P.A. Eckersley, manager (on behalf of the Secretary of State) at Bolton dole, wrote to Mrs Jean Johnson demanding an interview about her search for work. At the interview on 17th April Mrs Johnson was taken off Job Seeker's Allowance. It was claimed that the 42-year-old woman may not "have taken sufficient or appropriate steps to find work".

According to Miss B. Hunt, another manager, Mrs Johnson had failed to apply for four jobs on the Job Centre display boards in early April. Our investigations showed that of these four jobs, two had been filled last November 1996 and the other two required women under 25 years of age.

Last week the North West Against the JSA demonstrated outside and inside the Job Centre demanding to know if the dole staff were on drugs. Photographs were taken of management. And the North West regional co-ordinator, Josh Walsh, demanded an investigation and wanted to know what measures would be introduced to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Mr Eckersley, for the Job Centre, was unable to comment on possible revision of Job Centre procedures. He merely said that as we were in an "election period, it would not be politic".

The dole conjured up Mrs Johnson's giro with unseemly haste when they knew the *Bolton Evening News* was getting involved in the case.

It seems that the corruption of the incentive schemes, and the pressure of government targets, is producing stress whereby staff are cutting corners and stopping giros on false pretences. The worrying thing is that people like Mr Eckersley seem more anxious to cover up these transgressions than to ensure that they do not happen again. What we are seeing here is sleaze not only at the top among the politicians and the executive, but institutional sleaze inherent in the administration of the Employment Service.

This is so ingrained now that it is going to be difficult to root it out.

Arturo Ui

JOB-SEEKING AT THE DOUBLE

Last month a lad making a new claim at Burnley dole was told that he had to apply for five jobs by telephone a week, five jobs on foot and to visit the Job Centre at least three times a week.

LOCKED-OUT OF THE DOLE

Visiting the dole is not always easy in Burnley. In April a lad stopped to chat to Burnley Benefit Action pickets, and later was denied entry to the dole by the security guard. The case was reported in the *Burnley Express*.
Unemployed Worker

LEE ROCK'S DEFIANT REPLY TO UNION BARONS

As reported in *Freedom* (22nd March) the National Executive of the Civil Service Union, CPSA, led by Barry Reamsbottom, attempted to victimise London organiser Lee Rock, who had called on Employment Service staff to oppose the Job Seeker's Act.

To: Mr B. Reamsbottom, General Secretary CPSA

Re: ES Worker - ES bulletin of the Socialist Caucus, December 1996

I am in receipt of your letter to me of 17th February 1997, which appears to have crossed in the post with my own letter to you regarding comments directed at me in the February meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

In your letter you suggest that by the fact that I have written, in a personal capacity, an article criticising the role played by the National Disputes Committee in the campaign against the JSA, and specifically stressed the need for worker/claimant unity in that "we must continue to campaign, alongside unemployed groups such as Groundswell, against the JSA" that I must therefore support every policy decision and every tactic adopted by the various unemployed and claimant groups involved in Groundswell. Let me state for the record that this is not the case. I am in general support of the excellent work that Groundswell has done in supporting the campaign against the JSA, this of course does not mean that I have supported every tactic that every group in the Groundswell network has adopted.

You also state in your letter that "it is well documented that the tactics employed by Groundswell include harassment and intimidation of ES [Employment Service] and BA [Benefits Agency] workers (the majority of whom are CPSA members) employed to work on JSA. The most notorious example is their 'three strikes' policy." I would appreciate you sending me copies of the documentation you are referring to. As there are approximately sixty independent groups involved in Groundswell, I await with interest your documented proof to substantiate the allegation that "harassment and intimidation of ES and BA workers" is the policy of Groundswell, as you so confidently assert.

As regards the NEC being "absolutely astounded to see the name of a prominent activist such as [myself] wishing to be closely identified with, and giving support to

Groundswell" I am proud to be associated with these activists who have demonstrated a commitment to the anti-JSA campaign that has so far put the CPSA NEC to shame.

It is my view that the actions of Groundswell are not "manifestly against the interest of those members who work on JSA" and that I have not broken any rules of the Association. In fact the sentence in the article preceding the one you chose to quote states: "While all CPSA members are aware of current problems, the real increase in attacks on the unemployed and the associated dangers to front-line workers will occur from next April when new targets are set by ES management". As someone who works in a Job Centre and deals with the public virtually every day, maybe you could inform me, and the thousands of other CPSA members in the same position, what you are doing to protect us and the unemployed and how refusing to even ballot us for strike action alongside our colleagues in the BA helped the campaign? This was indeed the thrust of the article, which you may have picked up via the heading "National union refuses to back ES fight" and the points you choose to ignore.

I must stress that as the CPSA ES London Regional Organiser, I am a delegate to London Against JSA and as such I will continue to fulfil my duties as an elected official in the campaigning work against the JSA, which includes working alongside a variety of groups some of which we will on occasion disagree with.

And finally, as I understand the attempted attack upon me is part of the Moderate election campaign, i.e. the usual anti-Red propaganda, I hope that the incoming NEC will be prepared to campaign against the JSA and other issues that are so manifestly against the interests of the members and the unemployed.

Lee Rock
Regional Organiser, ES London

Since our report in *Freedom* on 22nd March 1997, 'Mr Reamsbottom's Rant', and Groundswell response, Mr Reamsbottom has complained about attempts to interfere in the CPSA union's internal affairs.

FREEDOM'S ANTI-ELECTION ADVERTISING

General elections bring out all the political activists, including the anti-political. Last week some people met anarchist ideas for the first time. Anti-election publications ranged from the cheap and solemn to the expensively (and anonymously) produced *Evading Standards*, imitating the design of the *London Evening Standard* and distributed to London commuters at railway stations. Our leaflet *Why I Won't Vote* was sold out.

Thanks to all those who contributed to our advertising fund. We were able to put classified ads in *Private Eye* and eight successive issues of *Tribune*, and a display advert in *The Guardian*, all beginning 'Don't vote, it only encourages them' and ending with an invitation to write for a copy of *Freedom* and a book list. Our comrades of the *East Midlands Anarchist Bulletin* put a display ad headed 'Advertising Anarchism' in the *Big Issue*, and respondents to this were sent a copy of *Freedom* and the book list in addition to *EMAB* literature.

As we go to press on 4th May, responses received number as follows: *Private Eye* 33, *Tribune* 9, *The Guardian* 81, *Big Issue* 40. Of these the best value, in terms of enquiries received relative to money spent, is *Private Eye*. Our advert appeared in February, and we were still getting replies five *Private Eye* issues later on 24th April. Evidently it is kept and read for some time, perhaps in dentists' waiting rooms.

Better value than any advertising is the action of readers, in sending us the names and addresses (preferably on large envelopes) of people likely to be interested in *Freedom* and a book list. Stamps cost less than advert.

One of the first responses to our *Private Eye* advert was from *Tribune's* advertising department, offering to run the *Private Eye* advert at a cheap rate. First response to our *Guardian* advert came by telephone on the morning of its appearance (24th April) from a producer with RTE, the Dublin television station. We sent the literature, and of course we advised our Dublin comrades WSM of the approach.

We do not know how many people were

impressed by our adverts but did not get around to writing (a rule of thumb in advertising agencies, for what it is worth, is to multiply the number of responses by twenty). We do not hope to recover the costs of our advertising, but hope it is worthwhile in propaganda terms.



PEASANT TOLSTOYANS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia is a book which to my knowledge has not been mentioned in *Freedom*, but is one which deserves the attention of *Freedom* readers. This is a collection of essays written by five former members of Tolstoyan communes which existed in the Soviet Union between 1921 and 1940. These essays describe life in the communes and portray their struggle with the Soviet powers.

One extended essay, 'My Life' by Dmitry Morgachëv, provides interesting ethnographic details of his life in a village in nineteenth century Russia and documents a life undaunted by years of persecution and torture by Soviet authorities. Morgachëv was a peasant with three years of formal education and his writing is often quite moving and approaches profundity.

The longest contribution is Boris Mazurin's 'The Life and Labour Commune: a history and some reflections'. Mazurin is the chief figure in the Life and Labour Commune which originally was established outside Moscow in 1921 and later moved to western Siberia. By 1937 Stalinist policies had become so oppressive that many of the members were imprisoned and the commune finally gobbled up by a nearby collective farm.

Members of the commune attempted to follow the teachings of Leo Tolstoy: vegetarianism, non-resistance and no government. Some, called hand farmers, even attempted to carry on a farm life without the use of livestock in a time before tractors. One picture shows at least a dozen individuals pulling a plough. The Tolstoyans found themselves in confrontation with the Soviet state not only because they chose to operate their community as a truly communist enterprise, but also because they refused to serve in the military and refused to participate in the Soviet government.

This book is certainly an interesting contribution to the general history of twentieth century Russia not only because of the material on the little-known Tolstoyan communes, but even more importantly because it offers a part of Russian history as seen by peasants.

One other interesting point which I think is little known and which is brought out in these essays as well is that in pre-revolutionary Russia, especially under Stolypin (1906-1911), there appears to have been widespread encouragement of cooperative organisations, credit unions and farmer education and an attempt to improve agriculture techniques and the quality of farm produce. No doubt this was in response to the 1905 revolution.

Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans should make us begin to appreciate how much Russia was a major innovative centre of anarcho-pacifism. It produced not only a vigorous Tolstoyan movement, but also the Dukhobors, Molokans and other lesser-known like-minded sectarians.

Harold Barclay

Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia by William Edgerton (translator and editor), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1993. This book is not yet available in the UK.

New from Freedom Press

CULTURE AND ANARCHISM

by

Harold Barclay

In some cultures, people are aware of few alternatives, but those alternatives are open to all. In others there is a wide range of choices, but the range is not available to everybody. The question, which type of culture gives more freedom to its inhabitants, causes thought about what we mean by freedom. This book provokes thought throughout, citing actual examples from the author's encyclopaedic knowledge of different cultures.

ISBN 0 900384 84 0 168 pages £6.95*

DEFINING HUMANISM

Humanism: What's in the Word

by Nicolas Walter

Rationalist Press Association, £6

In the meeting at which this book was ceremonially launched, the chairman told us that Nicolas had written a letter to the *New Humanist* answering someone who asserted that 'humanism' has only one meaning with quotations to show that it has several. The letter was too long for publication as a letter, so Nicolas did some more research and came back with an article. This was too long for publication as an article, so he did yet more research and came back with his book, a concisely-written overview of ways in which the word 'humanism' is used, running to 90 pages. Most of the 217 names in the index are cited only once.

Nicolas himself, at the same meeting, remarked on what a poor job the *Oxford English Dictionary* does on the words 'humanism' and 'humanist'. If Nicolas's work has a failing, it is that it tends, of necessity, to concentrate on such usages of the word as may be found by looking up 'humanism' in indexes and overlooks everyday usages which the *OED* would also wish to record.

Nicolas traces the history of the word from its origin in the fifteenth century when it meant

the study of Greek and Roman literature (as it still does in Renaissance studies), to its use by various self-styled humanists of our time. All the meanings are illustrated with well-chosen quotations.

'Humanism' was used to mean disbelief in the supernatural in the nineteenth century, but was not in ubiquitous use with that meaning until the late 1940s. What forced the unbelieving community to adopt it was a 1945 Church of England report on falling congregations. First item on a list of underlying causes was 'Humanism the Age-Long Lie'. A rationalist responded in a pamphlet "Whatever in the world is good, whatever is creative, whatever is hopeful, has its roots in humanism" and unbelievers in general had to accept the term.

E. Royston Pike complained that 'humanism' was "increasingly favoured for the omnibus in which Rationalists, Ethicists, Secularists, Atheists, Agnostics, Freethinkers, and indeed the whole tribe of unbelievers are being taken for a ride", and Barbara Smoker, who would rather call herself a militant atheist, wrote that "the label Humanist has stuck, whether we like it or not".

Chief objectors are opponents of religion, who find themselves lumped together with those for whom humanism is a religion in itself: "an organised system of ideas and emotions

which relate man to his destiny" (Julian Huxley); "a way of life, aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living" (Hector Hawton); "believes in the complete social implementation of reason and scientific method, and thereby in democratic procedures and parliamentary government" (Corliss Lamont).

Nicolas writes that "Humanism has been an essential element of collectivist or communist anarchism ... though not always of individualist anarchism" (following Max Stirner). Had there been space, he might have quoted Stirner's contention: "The human religion is only the last metamorphosis of the Christian religion ... nothing in fact has taken place but a metamorphosis in the Supreme Being".

It has been said that 'humanism' is a euphemism for unbelief, but all the manifestos of Ethical Humanism, Secular Humanism, and Nicolas's own short appendix 'A Manifesto of Modern Humanism', include references to "the highest good" or some such. The very word 'humanism' seems to prevent people from being straightforward atheists.

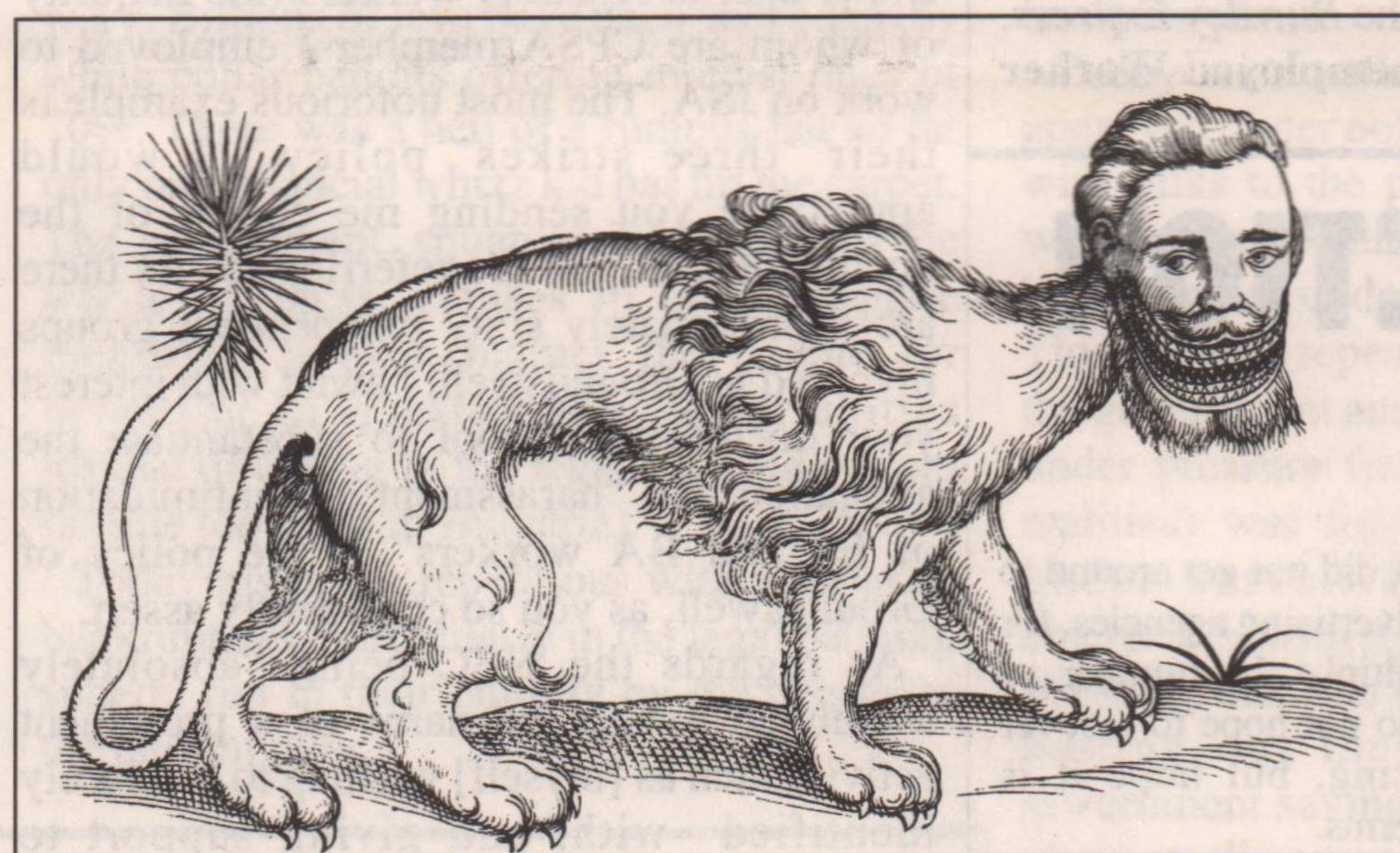
It is an interesting word, and its history makes an interesting book. Some of the humanist manifestos quoted (I do not see how they could have been omitted) are windy, solemn and tedious, but Nicolas's own style is concise and lively. A work of painstaking scholarship which can be enjoyed as a bit of light reading.

Donald Room

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

More goodies from the Freedom Press Bookshop

*What Rough Beast? and What is a Doctor?** by Alex Comfort, Pendejo Press. The first of these two pieces, from lectures delivered in



Drawing from Alex Comfort's 'What Rough Beast?' and 'What is a Doctor?'

1971, is an astute and carefully argued attempt to analyse and evaluate the radical social changes begun in the 1960s, while they were still going on, and their implications for the future. In it he conducts a surgical strike on law and government and makes a solid, rational case for anarchism drawing on his knowledge of science, history, anthropology and philosophy, among other disciplines. In 'What is a Doctor?' he traces many of the current problems in the profession to the loss of the shamanistic practice of treating the whole person - whether by medicine or psychiatry - but he does not see higher reliance on technology as a problem *per se*, arguing strongly that it should dovetail with a greater awareness by physicians of the emotional and spiritual needs of patients, and he even predicts increased use, where appropriate, of computers to by-pass over-worked doctors completely to obtain diagnosis and treatment direct, something which is only now starting to happen. Those familiar with Comfort's work (see, for example, *Writings Against Power and Death*,* Freedom Press, £5) will not be surprised by the high quality of the arguments presented here, and for a pacifist he often comes across as a robust and militant individual. 46 pages, £1.50.

Where There's Brass There's Muck: ecology and anarchism, ACE. This pamphlet aims to situate the ecological crisis within a wider class analysis. It starts by laying out the ruling class response to the ecological crisis, which has been largely to sell environmentalism back

to us as yet another commodity. The Rio 'Earth Summit' is dismissed as a farce whose agenda was rigged by the multinationals, and governments are shown to be no longer in a position to control international capitalism. A statistical mini-bombardment follows, demonstrating that the rape of resources, pollution, hunger in a world of plenty and the dreadful conditions of women in the third world are the results of unequal distribution of land and wealth at the hands of the ruling class, not of over-population. The next section attacks "the myth of the neutrality of science and technology", where old Darwin gets a bit of a slapping for his theories on competition in the natural world, but the author fails to mention that it was Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* which showed that co-operation was at least as important and which was largely responsible for debunking the Social Darwinists' nonsense. A large, detailed chunk of this section concerns transport and traffic and its ramifications; a short piece goes into intellectual property and 'life patents'. The 'Green Politics' section is a critique of US green groups, 'Bookchinism' rather superficially, primitivists like Earth First! in a bit more detail. There is oddly no mention of British green anarchists, but the criticism of 'lifestylism' (sic) may be seen as an implied put-down. The final section, 'Ecology and Class', bizarrely repeats almost verbatim the opening paragraph of the introduction, then outlines at some length the problems of global agricultural policies, and modern technology and its control, embracing *en passant* the eighteenth century machine wreckers. A worthwhile contribution to the debate and

very cheap (worth the price for the piece on transport alone). Get it before they realise their mistake. 66 pages, £1.

Bookshop Notes: Our current booklist is already out of print. Even though we did a larger print-run than ever before it has run out in record time, which is very encouraging news but it has caught us slightly on the hop. It is in line with the upsurge of interest in anarchism and is reflected in the higher sales of literature both in the bookshop to personal customers and by mail order, and in the continuing increase in *Freedom* and *Raven* subscribers. Trade sales to other shops and groups both at home and abroad are also increasing. All this means that we've been running around rather like headless chickens for the last few months, but the new booklist is already in the final stages of preparation and should be with you in a few weeks, packed with choice temptations. Meanwhile, there are a few amendments to the current list.

Back in stock: *From Riot to Insurrection** (Bonanno) £1; *Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle** (Bonanno) £1; *The Struggle Against Fascism begins with the Struggle Against Bolshevism** (Ruhle) £1, limited stock; *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Reich) £9.99.

Price increases: *Industrial Worker* now 75p; *Communitas* (Goodman) now £14; *Free Women of Spain* (Acklesberg) now £13.99; *Kronstadt 1921* (Avrich) now £11.25; *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn* (Holt) now £8.99 each; *Homage to Catalonia* (Orwell) now £6.99; *Fra Contadini** (Malatesta) now £1.50.

Out of print: *Anarchism* (Guérin); *Cities of Illusion* (Law); *Collectives* (Leval); *The Relevance of Anarchism* (Dolgoff).

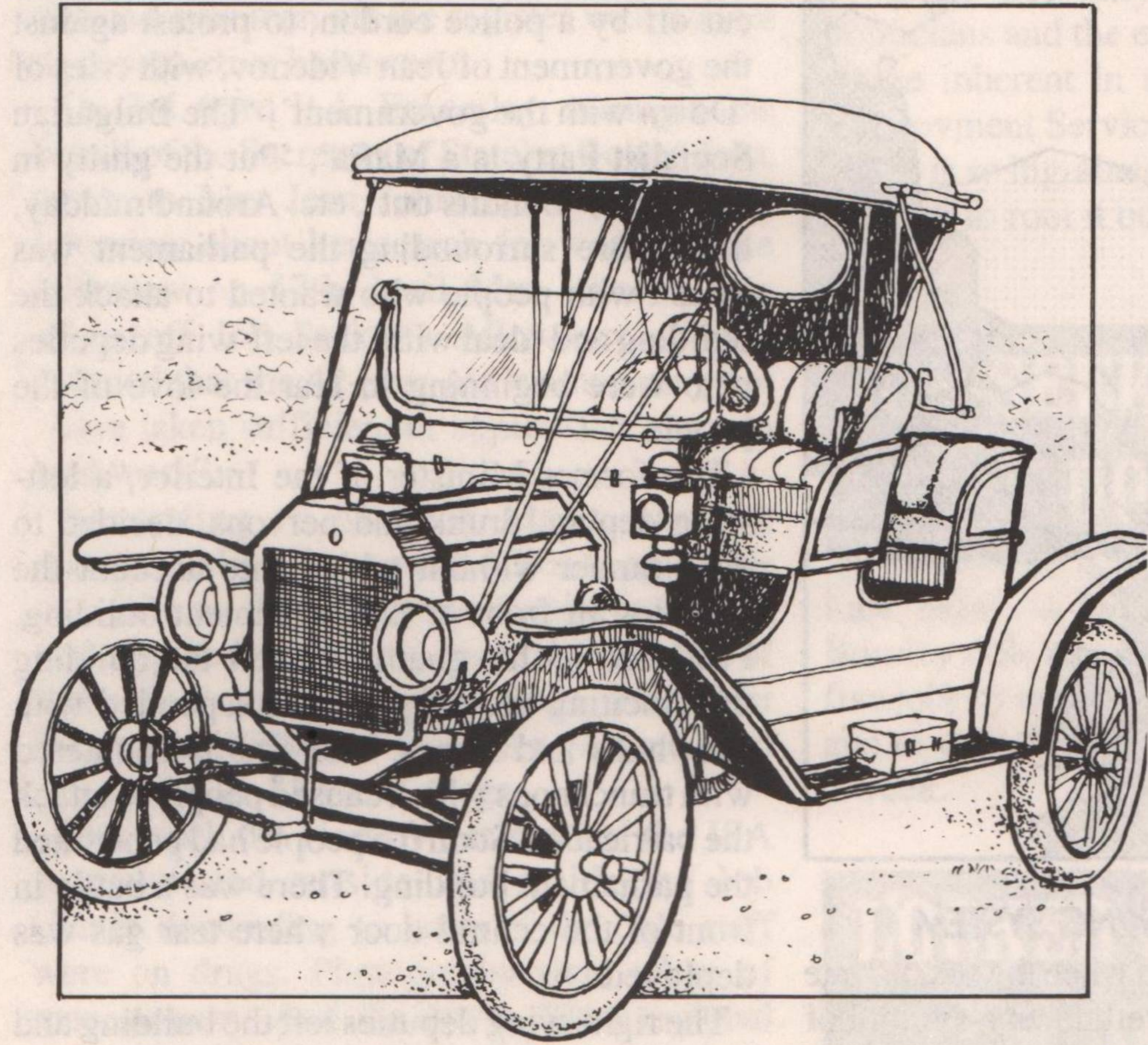
Section change: *Life of an Anarchist* (Berkman) is now in Section 2 not Section 1, and incurs postage at relevant rates.

KM

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Parents feel relieved when their boys or girls catch German measles or mumps, as it means that they are spared nasty side-effects in adult life. It was in this spirit that the great Scottish biologist Patrick Geddes urged us to encourage children to collect 'pretty things' so as to free them in adult life from the mania for accumulating possessions.

I have similar thoughts when looking back on the twentieth century's fixation with the internal combustion engine. Watching my neighbour's pre-teen grandsons circling his garden on a rebuilt motor-scooter, I hope they will have subsumed this obsession before reaching those lethal late-teen motoring years.



Students of the international differences in accident rates know that they are partly determined by a whole culture's familiarity with driving. The United States (contrary to the movie image) is a nation of safe drivers because generations of children have learned driving behaviour as juvenile observers in the passenger seat, waiting for the day when they too could be in control.

What is going to happen when the rich world's century-long love affair with the individual motor vehicle extends in the next century over the whole of Asia, Africa and South America? Chinese citizens today are as eager for the democratisation of motoring as were American's for Ford's Model T, which, he claimed, was simple and durable enough to be kept running with a spanner by any hick up a dirt road. Since then every country has sought its 'people's car', invariably despised by the real enthusiasts.

My father bought his first Jowett in 1929 when I was five. It had a horizontally-opposed two-cylinder engine, and, in those days when car tax was based on engine size, was rated at seven horsepower and was a far bigger car

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK — TOYS FOR THE BOYS

than the Austin Seven which was actually an eight-horsepower car. The Jowett brothers had started making cars at Idle, outside Bradford, in 1904 and they called it "the little engine with the big pull". Its sound was as unmistakable as that of the chain-driven Trojan.

By 1936, when my father traded his Singer Junior for another Jowett, I had been won over by the racing scene, by my 'three shillings and sixpence' Schuco model of the Grand Prix Mercedes-Benz. This beautiful toy had a real differential on the back axle and a real steering gear, and really removable wheels and tyres. It was a masterpiece of toy-making, and like the real DKW car with its fabric coachwork or the real BMW sold here as the Frazer-Nash-BMW, was an underpriced import to win foreign currency for Nazi Germany.

At that time the Grand Prix racing scene had been taken out of the hands of amateurs by huge government subsidies to Mercedes and Auto-Union who combed the world for drivers like Richard Seaman from England or Louis Chiron from France. German investment had been too successful and had begun the process by which motor-racing has become a bore since all the cars look alike.

My own passion for cars had somehow evaporated by 1939 when I was fifteen and, apart from reckless adventures with dumper-trucks in the army, I have been a passenger ever since. If asked why I don't drive I reply with absolute truth that I lack the capacity for instant co-ordination that safe driving demands. Nobody else ever mentions it, but compare the complexity of decision-making needed from a train driver with that endlessly expected from a car driver.

But before my absorbing concern with the motor business had subsided into a merely sociological interest in its impact on human life, I had picked up a tediously detailed folklore that has stayed with me while more useful facts have been forgotten. I knew an alphabet of towns in Britain where, in the

heroic days, some blacksmith, foundryman or cycle-builder was assembling lost makes of cars like, let's say, the Albion, the Bean or the Clyno.

Long ago I learned from car-workers that the pleasure had gone out of car-making, and from car owners of the costs they conceal from themselves involved in running a car. And like everyone else I know of the cumulative death-rate from human error on the roads and the place of car ownership in the crisis of global warming, and in destroying the economic viability of shared transport systems.

Piers Brendon's 432-page centenary history of the RAC (*The Motoring Century: the story of the Royal Automobile Club* by Piers Brendon, Bloomsbury, £25) does nothing to support my belief that males can grow out of the childhood syndrome that he calls the "automotive bug". He tells us that the RAC's current royal chairman "drove a jeep at the age of seven and had driven over a hundred vehicles by the time he was ten" and that at the same age the current chief executive "had learned to drive a huge break-down truck".

But his book is no tedious album of self-congratulation for the RAC. He is remarkably frank about the rich playboys who started it, and about the bossy, snobbish old men who lived off the club for years, treated employees (including those poor patrolmen who were its only contact with associate members) like dirt, and nearly bankrupted the organisation.

He has valuable insights for students of pressure group politics on the way influential

members influenced government policy, and on the rivalry between the RAC and its offspring the AA. Both developed their network of uniformed 'scouts' or 'guides' to alert members to police speed traps. For, as he notes, "motoring brought the police into regular conflict with their social superiors for the first time".

When the oil crisis hit us in 1973 the RAC "fought the oil and nail" those who, as part of the "anti-motoring lobby", favoured the conservation of resources. Its chairman dismissed the notion that motorists were polluting the atmosphere as "poppycock", but by 1990 a survey of members revealed that drivers themselves favoured "environmentally friendly" motoring. The public affairs director began to campaign for unleaded petrol, carbon monoxide testing, catalytic converters, park-and-ride schemes and car sharing.

This was a recognition that plenty of motorists would rather not be drivers. The fun had long ago evaporated. But by 1994 the RAC was finding that the report from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution suffered from "breathtaking naivety" and by 1996 that the government's Green Paper on transport "failed to recognise the central role of the car".

There is quite evidently a battle within the organisation between those people who haven't outgrown their childhood passion for cars and those who recognise that many car drivers (including all the ones I know) are reluctant car owners who could be won over to community transport if only it existed.

Colin Ward

Colin Ward's *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* was published by Freedom Press in 1991 and has since been issued in Italian, French and Spanish translations.

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

MORE OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR THE NARKS

Freedom had an editorial last year (17th August) arguing that "better a few petty fraudsters than a nation of narks". Alas the good advice has not been taken. Why should officialdom take anarchists' advice? They are part of the corrupt capitalist society and therefore trust no one, but I wonder who trusts them? The result is quite frightening when one lives in a society where a majority of people trust no one.

Two items from the *Independent*. Firstly "Informers to get own national pay scale" (4th April): "Payment will be based on a points system linked to the quality of information, the risk taken by the informant, and the result of the tip-off. More than 150 officers gathered at a conference yesterday to try to improve procedures for dealing with the growing army of informants. With intelligence-led policing now accepted as an effective strategy in tackling crime, chiefs are anxious to achieve uniformity in policy."

The second headline "Travel firms' staff paid to tip-off customs on 'suspicious customers'" (24th April) obviously refers to chaps wanting to make an awful lot of money and I'm far from wanting to defend them. What I am concerned about is to point to the fact that government descends to the level of *rewarding the nark*. Anarchists are prepared to expose the corruption of government and the capitalist system and are prepared to name names, narks included, for they are the lowest of the low-paid to expose their fellow workers without disclosing their identity. In accepting payment to report on "suspicious customers" they are at the same level.

I am convinced that where there is a possible racket the biggest racketeers are those who are supposed to be preventing it. Can you imagine whether the customs officials are above all 'corruption'? I can tell you, having been a travel courier many years ago, one of my

colleagues representing one of the most eminent travel agencies was up to his eyebrows with the Customs on both sides of the Channel!

EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE RICH

Theoretically I have no objection to parents seeking to give their children the best education they can afford, but the rich can afford it without affecting their living standards. Whether shifting off your kids to the independent/boarding schools is the right answer for their education or for your convenience are matters which the rich decide. A lot of publicity was given to Tony Blair's decision to put his boy in a Catholic school. So be it. It was non-paying, just as in my case 61 years ago when I got a scholarship at '10-plus' from my elementary school to a public day school where we were all just day pupils. The only problems for me were that there was a lovely chapel where half the school attended every other day, and an OTC (Officers Training Corps) where they paraded every Tuesday afternoon. With my background I was soon able not to attend chapel nor join the OTC, and at the same time start my anti-both propaganda. And I have to recognise that I was not opposed in my 'propaganda' by the authorities. Indeed, I loved my teachers, in the main.

Of course public day schools were not what they have become. Most of the students in my school were, like myself, scholarship kids from elementary schools. Not so today. Even 'my' public school is now entirely a private fee-paying one.

In that connection the *Independent* has a photo-feature of the eleven John Major cabinet ministers who have provided 'the best education money can buy' for their children. And the average price of such an education is not far short of £100 a week.

Libertarian

THE REVOLUTION IS NOT A MASONIC AFFAIR

The Revolution is not a Masonic Affair
by Boris Nicolaevsky
Unpopular Books, 32 pages, £2

It seems that in the reign of Napoleon III of France, the Freemasons were controlled by the government and their high officers were government placemen. There was also, however, an underground masonic movement called La Grande Loge des Philadelphes. This held to a lot of pseudo-historical and ritual nonsense which the official masons had discarded, but its members, many of them French emigres resident in England, were leftist in political outlook.

We are told that G.J. Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh were members of the Philadelphes Lodge, and that the *Reasoner* and the *Freethinker* were Lodge publications. Holyoake and Bradlaugh were militant atheists, and *Reasoner* and *Freethinker* their journals. It is difficult to imagine them in an organisation which claimed the Magi, who brought gifts to the infant Christ, as past members. They were, however, associated with an English secularist group founded in 1793, now

called the South Place Ethical Society but then called the Philadelphians. Nicolaevsky may have confused the Philadelphians with the Philadelphes.

Among other controversial contentions is the last sentence of the essay: "And it was, after all, the Blanquists who dealt the death blow to the First International when they forced Marx to move the General Council to the United States". Most commentators, including Marxists, put this the other way round: Marx moved the General Council to the United States as a ploy to turn the International from an alliance of Blanquists, Bakuninists and Marxists into a strictly Marxist organisation.

The blurb on the back of the pamphlet purports to take the essay seriously, but Richard Essex contributes a foreword which is dismissive of conspiracy theory as a genre of historical narrative, and a potted biography of Nicolaevsky goes on about his work for the British political warfare unit, propagating their first 'Big Lie' of World War Two. A good read, for all of us who are entertained by dodgy conspiracy theories.

DR

INSIDE BULGARIA

Bulgaria, 27th April 1997: The anti-communist United Democratic Forces – a pro-western coalition – takes 52% of the vote in the Bulgarian elections. The Socialists get 22%. UDF leader Ivan Kostov looks set to be next premier and calls for support for a 'national coalition' around a programme for financial stabilisation and membership of the EU and NATO. What is the background to all this? Here we reproduce an article which recently appeared in *Le Monde Liberaire*.



for September 1996). However, average salaries were at 25,000 leva. Over these last few months bread consumption has fallen 12.9%, meat 40%, cheese 32%, whilst inflation went past the 300% mark for 1996.

For two years the population has lived in fear of losing their savings. The bitter experience of playing with phantom financial institutions of a pyramid nature have left the population wary. Billions of leva have been sucked up by white collar bandits offering interest rates of 70%. There was a hell of a rumpus but so far only one financial whizz kid has hit the carpet. The government, squarely implicated in the whole business, refuses to take adequate measures: it even blames the people for investing in questionable opportunities instead of saving in the legal banking system (a little too legal in Bulgaria).

Today history is repetitious with a series of bankruptcies, particularly in the legal banking sphere, run in their entirety by the chums of the current elite.

COLLAPSE OF THE BANKING SYSTEM

The whole business began when the first private bank was put under surveillance: a symbol of initiative after the fall of the old boss. This bank succeeded in amassing huge funds as a result of publicity campaigns which took over the media. At the same time the bank granted some unrecoverable loans to creditors who submitted false credentials or unbelievable business-plans.

Today we now know that these loans were approved under political pressure from people with links to the powerful. The bank deficit was kept secret thanks to help from the central bank, again under governmental pressure. This scenario repeated itself until a point when the government and the central bank (this time under pressure from the IMF and economic realities) was forced to put fourteen banks under surveillance along with other enterprises with agreed deficits. It is worth stressing that one of the institutions that was bailing out these companies was the government savings bank. That is to say that those small savers were being robbed by the State and its executive. When the scandal broke, rather than attempt to overthrow the government, people hurried to withdraw their savings and get them converted into dollars or German marks at the exchange bureaux (this time losing out on the exchange gambling mechanism). Realising the impossibility of finding security for their savings, threatened by bad credit, inflation and financial mismanagement people simply stuffed their cash under the mattress at the mercy of thieves who didn't hesitate to seize the opportunity.

At a time when the State was unable to even pay off its internal and external debts a ridiculous publicity campaign was launched inviting people to invest in state bonds: 'The State never closes'. At the end of last year, deposits in Bulgarian banks amounted to 360 billion leva (just over two billion US dollars) of which 80% was held by ordinary people. The coffers were empty with the people's savings blocked by unrecoverable debts of 90%.

Data taken from Interpol and the foreign press confirmed that former heads of Bulgarian banks were swanning it in Miami, California, Johannesburg, Cyprus and elsewhere. Cases were revealed where these bankers had given credit to private and public companies controlled by the old nomenclature, fully aware of their financial unworthiness. The banking system in the 'post-communist transitory period' turned out simply to be the most powerful tool in the armoury of the new Mafia to seize funds and pillage the people.

THE REVOLT OF THE HUNGRY

Since the beginning of this year, protest demonstrations have taken place every day on the streets of the capital Sofia.

On the 10th January 1997, in the Bulgarian parliament, a bitter feud broke out between the right-wing opposition and the 'left'-wing majority. Ministers didn't want to sign an opposition declaration officially recognising that the country was in a catastrophic state and that the responsibility for this situation lay with the party in power – the Socialist government. The debates were broadcast on private and national radio.

At about 10am, citizens from all over the capital gathered around the parliament building, cut off by a police cordon, to protest against the government of Jean Videnov, with cries of 'Down with the government', 'The Bulgarian Socialist Party is a Mafia', 'Put the guilty in the dock', 'Bandits out', etc. Around midday, the square surrounding the parliament was awash with people who wanted to attack the building and 'deal with' the left-wing deputies who were beginning to fear the love of the people.

The former Minister of the Interior, a left-wing deputy, drunk and nervous, decided to do a runner without taking into account the situation in front of the parliament building. Protected by his guards, he left the building thus inciting the people who responded with snowballs and stones. The guards countered with truncheons which caused people to attack the barricades. Soon the people had penetrated the parliament building. There was a battle in front of the central door where tear gas was deployed.

The right-wing deputies left the building and mixed with the demonstrators in an attempt to control their activities whilst the left-wing deputies, blockaded into the building, started to say their prayers.

The parliament remained under siege until the evening when many of the protesters began to drift home. It was at that moment that the forces of oppression tried to get the left-wing deputies out. Those protesters who remained counter attacked. The police responded cruelly with truncheons for some two hours. More than three hundred were treated by the emergency services.

After these events there were daily demonstrations throughout the country and barricades went up in the streets. Students, beyond the control of the political parties, protested in a decisive and original way performing satirical shows aimed at government policies.

After thirty days of protest, the Socialist Party abdicated and called fresh elections.

WHERE ARE WE TODAY

People could have been forgiven for believing that a revolution was in the making. Unfortunately not. On the 10th January events were beyond the control of the opposition which also feared for the consequences. This was why the opposition leaders put themselves at the head of the protest and started to control it by acting as intermediaries with the party in power. It was clear that the IMF would not approve stabilisation funds to the 'reds' who were only bothered with their own interests. This is because the IMF needs to get 'its' money back and to make Bulgaria into a cheap factory and a stop off point for trade with Central Asia. To begin with it leant on the puppets in the Socialist Party, today it has thrown in its hand with the opposition.

The problem is that the Bulgarian people can see no other social perspective than that drawn up for a western style market economy. Any 'leftist' ideas are fundamentally rejected by those who remember the years of authoritarian socialism or think of those mafiaesque Socialists of today.

They will need to taste IMF medicine and right-wing politics before a new illusion free consciousness truly takes root. The most important thing is that the people should not be frightened to protest and continue to proclaim their social rights. They will have their chance again.

Secretariat of the Bulgarian Anarchist Federation

Same as at the end of every month, Bulgaria's capital Sofia wakes up to her post offices besieged by crowds of older people. With their heads bowed and their shopping bags empty, pensioners wait patiently for their 4,000 to 6,000 leva (two US dollars) which is to see to their survival over the next thirty days. On that day many leave it to others to pick through the city's rubbish bins knowing that there is not much to be found there.

"It's shameful to be given this pittance at our age", says Maria who has worked as a nurse all her life. "We never believed we would finish our days in such misery". And she is right because her pension barely allows her to cover the heating costs of her one bedroom flat in the suburbs of Mladost. Still there remains the problem of feeding oneself. She has forgotten the taste of meat but, worse still, she still can't procure the most elementary staples of a Bulgarian traditional diet such as cheese and milk. Not having the ability to pay, many elderly people have chosen to cut the heating (at administrative invitation) and to suffer cold rather than hunger.

The 600,000 unemployed (7% of the total population and some 14% of the active one) are faced with a similar dilemma. Poverty and misery have pushed many to seek food from the rubbish bins on the street.

A Bulgarian saying has it that one should count chickens in autumn. Faithful to their reputation for black humour the Bulgars come up with today's paraphrase: 'Count your Bulgars in the spring' and another joke would have it that those who are still alive in the spring will be called to court to explain how they managed to survive. All because it is well known that many older folk won't survive the winter. They are among those who have been most severely affected since the collapse of totalitarian communism. There is no other country from the former Warsaw Pact where the nomenclature bleeds its people so much by destroying enterprise and taking away social funding.

HYPERFLATION

Over the last two months prices of the most basic foodstuffs have gone up 40%, fuel 60% and the only national currency has fallen fivefold against the US dollar. In addition Bulgarian incomes, even since the beginning of 1997, have not stopped falling for Mr and Mrs Average.

Latest statistics show that 61,000 (20 US dollars) leva was the basic income necessary for someone to exist last November (20,656

ANARCHIST AUTUMN 1997 25 YEARS OF GRASWURZELREVOLUTION NON-VIOLENT ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

From 10th to 12th October 1997 *Graswurzelrevolution*, the German non-violent anarchist magazine, is organising a gathering in Cologne to celebrate its 25th anniversary. At present the programme is planned as follows:

Friday, October 10th: Introducing speech on 'Challenges for non-violent anarchism at the end of the twentieth century'

Saturday, October 11th: Probably theme groups and workshops on the following issues:

- Anarchism and the social issue (globalisation, destruction of state welfare, increasing violence in the society, loss of perspectives and resignation, criticism of industrialisation and the role of anarchist syndicalism today, which perspectives offers resistance?)
- Global power Germany (new nationalism, militarisation and new jobs for the German army, out-of-area, etc.)
- Feminism and the state (patriarchal backlash, feminism's blindness regarding the state, gender-debate, etc.)
- Anarchism and the arts (how important are arts in anarchism?, relations between arts and anarchism, etc.)
- Anarchism and Pop-culture (popular culture as a form of fleeing reality, mainstream of minorities,

sub cultures, etc.)

- Communalism and transnationalism as libertarian answer to Agenda 21 (Critic of Sustainable Development and ecological policy, subsistence economy, communalism and transnationalism)
- Power of the Media (Chomsky's media criticism, etc.)
- Anarchism and responsibility of the individual (the anarchist image of the human being, mutual aid, contrast state-society still valid nowadays?, individual responsibility in the work of Goldhagen, Bauman, Camus)
- Challenge new technologies and police state (nuclear energy and genetic engineering, the 'nuclear state', etc.)
- Anarchism and traffic (Concretisation of cities and re-conquering of the street)
This are only ideas for theme groups, they are not fixed yet.

Sunday, October 12th: Plenary discussion: 'Challenges and answers of non-violent and anarchist movements in other parts of the world'

For further informations or application (only by letter) contact the office of *Graswurzelrevolution*, Kaiserstrasse 24, D-26122 Oldenburg, Germany. The conference language will be German.

Rich and Poor

Beyond doubt the first phrase of the General Ejection has been a great success for the anarchist movement. No need to study the exact details, but all the fringe candidates and the spoilt votes and the stay-aways have created a political section which no government in power will be able to stifle.

Anarchism as a political idea had, of course, a huge following at many times in history. My readings encourage me to say that primitive anarchism of the prehistoric ages must have been a most potent culture, for it has survived to the present day despite all the persecutions which started with the imposition of the Roman Calendar.

Civilisation as we know it has been a constant enemy of all the things it professes to defend. The cost of conduct imposed on all subject races has meant the scotching of any attempts at individual lifestyle. The draconian methods have resulted in the effective romanisation of all surviving languages on the continent of Europe.

Knowledge does not grow on trees. What we know, because of our life-span, has to be re-learned by the new generations. It has never been so important as today to reiterate patiently the ideas of anarchism.

There have been in recent times examples of anarchist political action with very great following. But we cannot have an *anarchist society* without a *society of anarchists*.

Out goes the old rubbish, that's one thing. But at what cost? What deals have been made behind the scenes? Watch the signs as they emerge. As forecast here in this column, the General Ejection did take place and May Day as workers' day took place as planned. We spent the day on the allotment and observed with pleasure the artichokes peeping through the ground.

Memories are made of this. Just watch comrades who will be appointed to the post of Ambassador Splifton's Court in Washington and what rewards the Southern Lord of the Sky will collect from dear old Labour. Once that is known the anarchist movement will have to be on its guard as never before.

Obviously it is not the only sign that comrades should watch. Will there be a Stonehenge Free Festival at this year's solstice? More than three people is now a procession. Will repression continue? Will the practice of chaining pregnant women to their beds continue? If the Liverpool Dockers and Reclaim the Streets held their demonstration in Trafalgar Square next Sunday would they have to face the men behind the plastic shields?

Variously this writer repeats the favourite phrases, such as 'You'll never find a human being inside a uniform'. And as for armaments sales and the latest gadgets of destruction.

Every new technology destroys the one before. The two millenniums since the New Roman Calendar can be compared to the two faces of the Moon. One side we see, the other we don't. By the year one thousand, the iron curtain of civilisation has effectively separated the races. Very few of the original tribes have survived.

Many languages have been lost. More will perish by the time the next millennium is over, unless the anarchist movement puts a stop to all this wanton destruction. It is not possible to ignore what is going to happen. Many people have said recently that the new technology is now capable of reducing the number of languages to about one per continent.

Each of these languages have been chosen for one continent. Spanish and English are tipped to survive, but the language of the poor old Villon will never be heard again.

Note these words of Ret Marut in a language which still existed in Bavaria in 1919: *Jede Revolution, jede Tat für die Befreiung des Menschen verfehlt ihren Zweck, die nicht zuerst die entzetzlichste Seuche der Menschheit, die Presse beseitigt.*

That is: All revolution, every act for the liberation of the human being will fail in its task if at first it does not abolish the press, this dreadful disease of mankind. **John Rety**

Anarchism and the City Tradition

Dear Editors,
I would like to add a few comments to Jonathan Simcock's thought-provoking 'Anarchism and the City Tradition' (*Freedom*, 22nd March 1997).

Anti-civilisation types are elitists and elitism, as an authoritarian character trait, is incompatible with anarchism. At least 99% of the population would be aghast at their desire to destroy civilisation and level the cities. For an idea not to be elitist, it has to have at least some roots in reality and the needs of the average person. True, every last one of us, libertarian or not, hates some aspect of city life or civilisation, but we have sense enough not to toss the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

Contrary to what one might think, the majority of the population does not live in large cities. Even the notion of what is considered 'urban' gives a distorted view. Ask anyone what comes to mind on hearing the word and they will tell you 'city'. However, census-takers and demographers regard any concentration of population over a thousand inhabitants as being urban. As someone who grew up in a town four times that size, I can tell you the fields and woods were only a stone's-throw away and we certainly didn't feel urban the way Londoners or Torontonians feel.

Most Canadians, and I can safely assume most people elsewhere, live in villages, towns and small cities. Only 36% of the population live in cities of over one hundred thousand (1986 census). The problem is, the media and most of the writers and intellectuals are based on Megalopolis. This tends to give a big-city bias, as the attitudes and problems generated by this environment tend to be projected upon the society as a whole. There is far more of a social sense or feeling of community and much less alienation in the general population than we have been led to believe. This had been my experience in visiting or living in smaller centres.

In my opinion, the ideal size for a city is about 50,000 inhabitants (I have a fuzzy recollection of reading somewhere this was the population of Athens during Aristotle's time). Big enough to have a decent library, bookshops, ethnic restaurants, an orchestra and a theatre. Small enough to walk or cycle everywhere and even the countryside is only a bike ride away. Every time you go down-

town you meet someone you know, complete strangers talk to you and shopkeepers remember your name. Housing is much cheaper, as are taxes, and there is little crime and, unless it has a pulp and paper mill, there is much less pollution than in the bigger centres.

One of the major demographic changes during the past fifteen years has been the migration of Big City folk to the smaller towns and villages. Within an hour's drive of Montreal are at least a score of villages revitalised over the past decade by newcomers. The percentage of growth in this population shift is actually greater than the better-known flight to the suburbs. People are leaving the large centres for the small, to have a less alienating existence and re-connect with the sense of community.

Not to say community isn't threatened everywhere. Cities originally grew out of villages and villages were based around a public focal point such as a square or green. The city also has a focus, which is the downtown area with its public buildings, shops and cultural activities. Focus means purpose, and the purpose of a city, aside from its commercial aspects, is cultural in the broad sense of that word. All this is under attack, even in the small towns, by market forces, new class social engineering and the state which strips the downtown area of its vitality, shunting everything to the suburbs where a focusless agglomeration of shopping malls and concrete proliferates. Populism is the expression of the small town's attempt to preserve communitarian values in the face of this offensive.

I think it is important for anarchists to become aware of the radical potential of the smaller centres and to recognise how their views of the world may have been coloured by big city concerns. Fortunate we are to have anarchists like Colin Ward, Murray Bookchin and Jonathan Simcock actively applying libertarian principles to city life, but surely this is an area that needs serious attention from all anarchists?

Larry Gambone

*please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...*

Why the secrecy?

Dear Editors,
In reply to Goldman/Johns (letters, *Freedom*, 26th April 1997) I would like to say some of us do have a reason for anonymity.

Very simply, we would not wish our names to be known to the security services and the Economic League has started up under a new name. Those of us who are working-class cannot afford to be blacklisted.

Sam Fielden

Film censorship

Dear Editors,
Roger Mortimore (12th April) does not seem to be aware that commercial film companies make products in order to gross a profit. To be sure of this they constantly push against the limit of what the public regards as scandalous (but is titillated by). Posters for such films try to scandalise even more than the film. The artistic and/or educational value of such a poster as you published is nil. Its purpose, as suggestive soft porn, is entirely capitalist (ironically very appropriate for a film about Larry Flynt).

Mr Mortimore says about Crash that it "challenges ideas of sexuality". Well, a film showing from beginning to end torture of various kinds could also be said to 'challenge ideas of sexuality' as could a reconstruction of the Moors murders. Rent-a-phrase vagueness is always useful for blurring the ethically dubious. It is possible to argue for total freedom of expression, but the case for vast sums of money being used to push 'challenging' forms of 'expression' - which exploit Joe Soap's hang-ups in our sick society - when not a penny is available for less cynical artefacts, becomes an apologia for the mass production of any kind of porn that will sell.

Jonn Roe

Anarchist Forum

Dear Editors,
There is a rumour going around the movement that the London Anarchist Forum is connected with the Freedom Press Group who run Freedom Bookshop and publish *Freedom* and *The Raven*. I do not know the original source of the rumour, but it is totally untrue.

The London Anarchist Forum was started about fifteen years ago (I do not have the correct date as I was not involved from its inception) as a kind of 'old boys' group from those who had attended the introductory talks on anarchism given by Nicolas Walter and later continued by John Griffin at the Mary Ward Centre in Bloomsbury.

Several people did the donkey work from time to time, eventually the late George Walford. When he gave up the work was taken over by David Dane and myself. When Dave moved out of London Carol Saunders stepped into the breach as co-facilitator (my own, not an 'official' definition).

It is true that *Freedom* has been very supportive in publishing our programme, but copies of our programme are routinely sent to *Time Out* (another very fruitful source of new supporters to the anarchist movement), *Peace News*, the *East Midlands Bulletin*, the *Yorkshire Federation Bulletin*, *Green Anarchist*, the *Lancaster Anarchist Bomber*, *Green Line*, the *Anarchist Research Group* and *Counter Information*. Reciprocal responses are either read out or circulated at LAF meetings.

Attempts have been made to develop reciprocal contacts with other groups and publications in the movement with little success. We would be happy to make contact and circulate these or others on a reciprocal basis and are surprised at their diffidence.

The Forum is a discussion group, not an action group (action is elsewhere) and, apart from the programme, regrettably has no publication. Although we have no specific party line or policy, there is a detectable relatedness to non-aligned anarchism rather than sectarian dogmatism which is probably why we have never bothered to circulate specifically aligned movements such as the Anarchist Communist Federation or Class War, although these are clearly aware of our existence and the LAF has no antipathy towards them and they would be welcome at LAF meetings.

Is it not time to be more open with each other and let others know what is happening throughout the land? At least it might stop the rumour-mongers.

Peter Neville

'Millennium Bug'

Dear Editors,
Libertarian should be a bit more sceptical of the *Guardian* ('Anarchist Comments in Brief', *Freedom*, 26th April). It seems that when writing about information technology or the 'mention it one more time and I'll scream' Internet, any old thing goes. We are led to believe there will be some disaster come New Year's Day 2000 because some computers and software only handle the year in two digits and will fall over and cease working on midnight on that day. However, no one seems to be prepared to give a few concrete examples of the type of computers or software that will be affected.

The computers likely to be affected may be old 8086/8088 PCs that were produced in the early '80s (like the Amstrad 1512 and 1640) and possibly some software of the same era. While there is still a lot of old stuff steadily clunking away out there (many people still use the old 'green screen' PCW wordprocessor), most of it should be well out of service by then and because of its slowness and lack of disc capacity is unlikely to be connected to the Net anyway. Unless someone comes up with some definite info you can regard the so-called 'Millennium Bug' as tosh.

Martin Spellman

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ISSN 0016 0504

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

Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate Press, London E1 7RQ

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Manchester

Solidarity Federation

public meetings first Tuesday of the month at 8pm

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(off Wilmslow Road, opposite Owens Park)

Tuesday 3rd June: Direct Action readers' meeting

For further details contact:

PO Box 29 SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

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A programme of free guided walks in Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire for Socialists, Libertarians, Greens and Anarchists. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. All walkers are reminded to wear boots and suitable clothing and to bring food and drink. Walks are 5 to 8 miles in length.

June 1st: Walk leader Jonathan. The Roaches, Staffordshire. Meet 11am at roadside entrance to Windygates Farm. Take A53 from Leek to Upper Hulme, turn off at Upper Hulme and follow signs to Roaches. Mountainous walk through gritstone edges and heather moorland.

Telephone for further details
01773-827513

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A series of guided circular walks in the Yorkshire Dales and surrounding area for Socialists, Libertarians, Greens and Anarchists. Walks are between 5 and 8 miles long. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated.

18th May – Lower Airedale: Walk around Cowling. Meet Cowling village centre at 10.45am.

22nd June – Upper Wharfedale: Buckden to Yockenthwaite. Meet in main car park at Buckden at 11am.

On all walks bring walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

Telephone for further details
01756-799002

London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Admission is free but a collection is made to cover the cost of the room.

– 1997 PROGRAMME –

9th May General discussion

16th May Anarchism: Theory, Methodology and Lifestyle (speaker Peter Neville)

23rd May Symposium on Sex

30th May Theory: What For? (a debate between John Griffin and Carol Saunders)

6th June Language and Power in Education (speaker Mike Long)

13th June Children and 'the Law' (speaker John Rety)

20th June General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW, giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate.

Peter Neville / Carol Saunders
London Anarchist Forum

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