

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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We say it's all water on the brain, but ... **There's water on the Moon** **say US scientists**

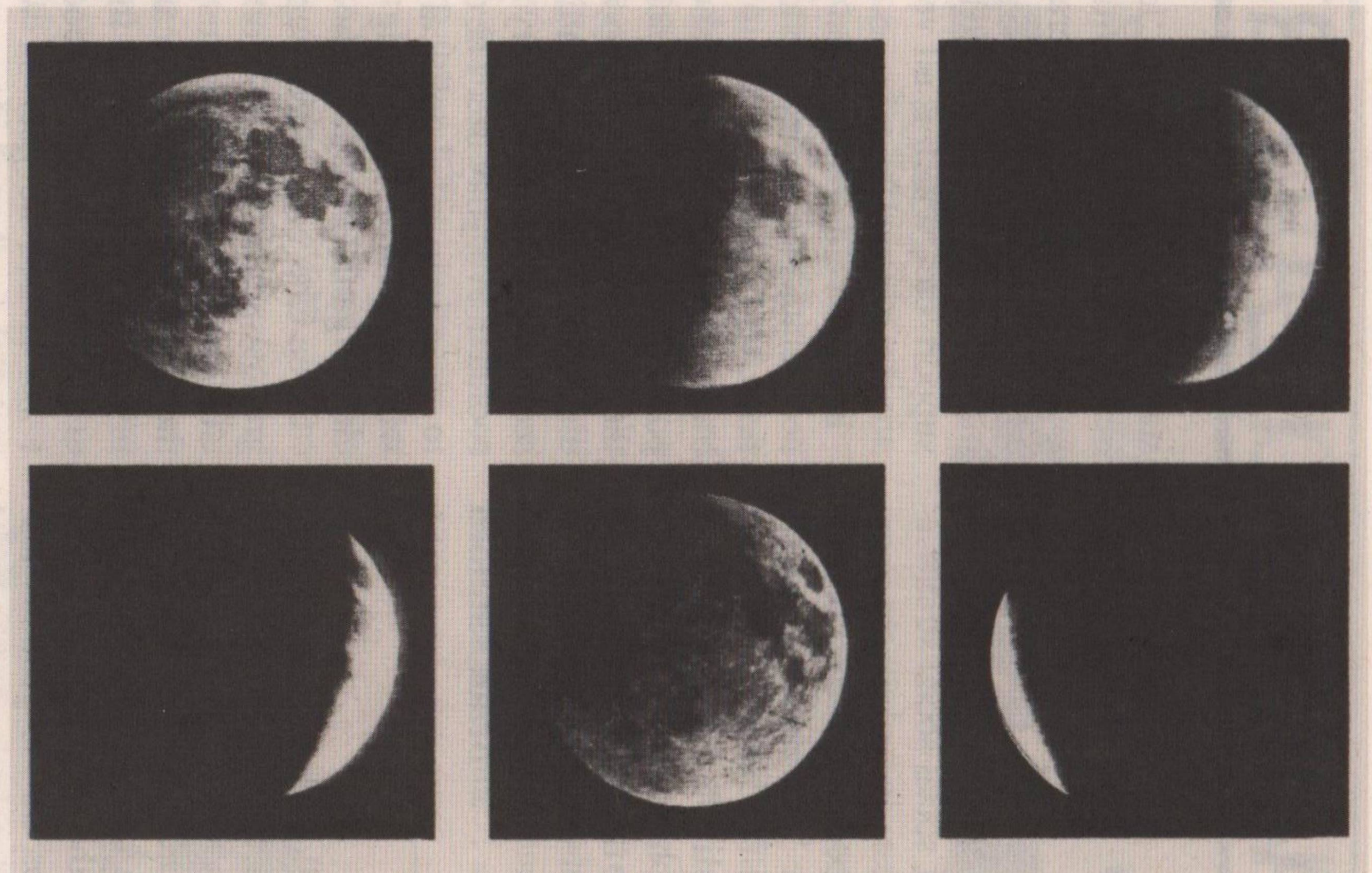
Far from any critic being able to accuse anarchists of being opposed to science, to scientific investigation and discoveries, we have always welcomed the contribution to our better understanding of our planet and ourselves which, like the discoveries of a Galileo or Newton, have helped to rid us of the superstitions imposed on simple people by the various churches over the ages. They still do, but very much less than God.

Our opposition to scientists today is that, with notable exceptions, they are part and parcel of the capitalist system and are prepared to sell their skills irrespective of the end results. Politicians didn't create the atom bomb that blasted Hiroshima and Nagasaki with hundreds of thousands of death, nor the hydrogen bomb which so far the politicians haven't dared to launch (and won't) but our *scientists produced it* – and yes, workers, management and financiers were all involved in producing it.

And who made it possible for Saddam Hussein to have the chemical bonanza of ghastly weapons which torture rather than kill? Yes, the scientists, and the western industry and governments who employ them – the industry that has no morality about what they produce so long as it makes a profit.

Just as the union bosses and the workers employed in the armaments factories are always pointing out, if this country stopped exporting arms and presumably chemical weapons, twenty thousand workers would be out of work. We go on repeating that it would be 'more profitable' to pay those workers to stay at home (with a nice garden) than for the government to go on maintaining a so-called defence budget of £23 billion. Where's the enemy? Saddam Hussein? Nonsense!

But to return to our scientists. The Americans are determined to colonise outer space. The multi-billion dollar campaign NASA is only possible with



enough scientists prepared to go along with it profitably. Clinton has very little influence on outer space. In a sense, as a man of the boudoir, he is more human than scientists who are determined to colonise the moon. And to what ends? On 6th March *The Guardian* had half of the front page about water on the moon: our passport to the planets, and all we can answer is: what for? On the same day *The Independent* was much more sober. Its main headline was "NASA spacecraft detects water on the moon", but its more interesting single-column heading "Dream on: lunar pioneers reach for the stars" and the first paragraph is worth reproducing because, once again, it exposes the whole scientific industry as a business and not industry (meaning activity).

"A branch of science that has been languishing for a decade will be revived. In the 1970s the Moon was declared dry (by the Apollo missions, which landed on the equivalent of the equator) and Mars declared dead (by the Viking landers).

People who wanted us to set up permanent bases on both bodies were turned back from their plans as others asked: why spend billions of public money to go to places which are so hostile and useless?"

Scientists *are* part of humanity. As people with certain exceptional gifts they should also be *more* responsible members of society than those of us who have no special intellectual qualities or pretensions. Today we have no hesitation in saying that most scientists have sold their souls to the highest bidder in the capitalist world and we should beware of their dirty tricks in the name of science and progress. Watch out for *human clones* (not just the sheep) and from the USA (soon available here) genetically produced vegetables and fruit (you can already buy genetically produced vegetable seeds in Europe).

We repeat that we believe in science and not in religious mumbo-jumbo, but beware when science and scientists are taken over by capitalism.

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ETHNIC EAT ETHNIC: ANOTHER BALKAN NIGHTMARE?



Until recently peace in Kosovo has been preserved owing to the lack of arms in the hands of its ethnic Albanian majority. These Albanians of Kosovo amount to over 85% of the total population. The two million ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have elements already pressing for independence from the Serbian Republic, which it was forced to re-join in March 1989.

The troubles in Albania last year with the looting of Albanian army arsenals and the bringing in of light weapons from Italy turned southern Albania into a political powder keg. But it also allowed weapons to be exported eastwards into neighbouring Kosovo. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a small group of ethnic Albanian activists, became disillusioned with the colonial attitudes of the Serb authorities in 1995. They began a campaign of killings and bombings – mostly aimed at Serb policemen. But the KLA got into better shape after the arrival of arms from Albania last year.

ROOTS OF KOSOVO CRISIS

How did we get here? In September 1987 at the Serbian League of Communists' Central Committee, Slobodan Milosevic – now president of Serbia – began his rise to power. At that conference Mr Milosevic denounced the then Serbian communist leadership's policy on Kosovo. By backing Milosevic at that meeting, the Serb communists threw Yugoslavia into the snake-pit of ethnic nationalism.

The weapon Milosevic used at the communist plenum was the position of the Serb and Montenegrin minority in the province of Kosovo. The tactic of Milosevic in calling for 'justice' for the Kosovo Serbs threatened by implication the other members of the Yugoslav Federation. 'Justice' for the Serbs of Kosovo really meant maintaining the privileges of the mainly middle class Serbs in that province.

What followed was the break-up of former Yugoslavia, starting with Slovenia. The writer Misha Glenny claims that with "violent,

intolerant nationalism" already reviving in former Yugoslavia, "it was Milosevic who had wilfully allowed the genie out of the bottle, knowing that the consequences might be dramatic and even bloody".

In Kosovo, in February 1989, many ethnic Albanians feared the Serb demands for the Serbian re-colonisation of Kosovo. Milosevic, in fanning the flames of Serbia's old fixation with Kosovo, where in 1389 the Serb Prince Lazar was defeated and killed, had increased his power base of support and got rid of the old communist leadership. According to Misha Glenny, the new Serb leader encouraged nationalist hysteria through a 'demo network' of jobless young men who were paid to travel round Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina to hold rallies.

Troops were sent to Kosovo in early 1989 after a general strike of ethnic Albanians had been sparked off by Serb political pressures put on the Albanian leaders and the resignation of Azem Vllasi, an ethnic Albanian, from the Kosovo politburo. Clashes followed between Albanian demonstrators and troops in which at least 24 were killed. Later two thousand Albanian workers were jailed or fined, sacked or disciplined for taking strike action, and two hundred others had their passports withdrawn. Journalists, Communist Party members and teachers were purged, and umpteen school students were expelled for taking part in demonstrations.

In March 1989 Azem Vllasi and fourteen other leading ethnic Albanians were arrested and charged with 'counter-revolutionary activities endangering the social order' – a charge which could carry the death penalty. When the trial opened in October 1989, sixty miners at the Stari Trg mine nearby started an underground sit-in strike in protest at the trial. The mine was sealed off by security forces and police entered to arrest the organisers. Other demos – in Podujevo, Pristina and Urosevac – were put down by tear-gas and armoured cars.

No wonder, last week's newspaper headlines declared "Albanians await war with Serbs".

Misha Glenny, in his book *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, tends to portray Milosevic, and his wife Mirjana Markovic, and their personal ambitions to be largely responsible for the situation in the Balkans. His manipulation of the Kosovo Serb issues to get power, his keenness to "mark his territory as the undisputed master of post-Titoist Yugoslavia" made him, in Glenny's view, the dynamo of the events that followed.

But Mr Glenny describes this political household thus: "If Milosevic and Markovic were to profess any genuine ideology, it would not be Serbian nationalism, it would be Balkan Stalinism. He is a product of the communist bureaucracy whose authoritarian traditions fitted snugly with his own behaviour patterns."

RAM TO THE SLAUGHTER

Misha Glenny presents Milosevic as a dazzling political performer: "As a politician there is nobody who can compete with Milosevic in the Balkans. As the events ... would show, when on his home territory Milosevic could dance in circles around some of the world's most senior diplomats and statesmen. His success lay in the shameless exploitation of the most effective tools of Balkan politics: deception, corruption, blackmail, demagoguery and violence. As president for Serbia ... Milosevic was always careful not to bear apparent responsibility for any particular policy. When he devised and executed complicated political manoeuvres (for example, the arming of Serbs outside Serbia) he did not reveal his plan in its entirety

to any other individual ... He formulated all major policies himself. When accused by domestic and foreign politicians of having instigated a particular policy, he would simply point out that as president he enjoyed few, if any, executive powers, so he could not accept responsibility."

Yet for all this the *Independent* journalist Rupert Cornwell declared of Milosevic this month: "The puppet-master of the Balkans is running out of strings to pull". This may be true, but in fact Milosevic, for all his great skills, has failed to win any of his stated aims this decade, like his claim for a Greater Serbia, etc. Long-term political survival has been his main success story, and the price of this has been piles of corpses and the political and social devastation of much of former Yugoslavia.

The problem which lies at the heart of this great man approach to history is revealed in an essay by Isaiah Berlin about Tolstoy: "The harshest judgement is accordingly reserved for the master theorist himself, the great Napoleon, who acts upon, and has hypnotised others into believing, the assumption that he controls events by his superior intellect, or by flashes of intuition, or by otherwise succeeding in answering the problems posed by history. The greater the claim, the greater the lie: Napoleon is consequently the most pitiable, the most contemptible of all the actors in the great tragedy."

Milosevic, to use the Tolstoy simile, is like a ram who thinks he leads the flock, but who the shepherd is fattening for slaughter.

Mack the Knife

The Lawyers are Always the Winners

An interesting libel case involving two giants – television's *World in Action* programme and Marks & Spencer – was ended before it started as a result of the intervention by the judge who thereby halted a case that was meant to go on for six weeks.

Apart from some interesting admissions by M&S, they did accept that they were selling materials produced in Morocco by girls of thirteen to fifteen years of age who worked 49 hours a week for as little as ten pence an hour in temperatures of 95 degrees, that didn't matter. What did matter was that *World in Action* said that these garments had labels saying that they were produced in Great Britain.

All the legal boys and girls when it came to the crunch decided that M&S hadn't put the wrong labels on, except for a few which didn't matter. Nobody denied that these kids were making these products, etc., and this obviously was a minor consideration.

However, if you decide to go to law you have to pay the market price, especially if you are M&S and *World in Action*. When the judge cut short the libel trial he was doing them a favour. Imagine what six weeks bashing each other

would have added to the already astronomical costs? As it is *World in Action* was prepared to pay M&S a total of £700,000 in costs and damages, but only £50,000 was in damages. And on top of that *World in Action* presumably had a bill of at least £500,000 from their legal advisers.

The government and the media talk about corruption, of single mothers cheating, of the unemployed moonlighting and claiming, etc., but here we have an example of two supposedly honourable enterprises employing two supposedly honourable lawyers who should surely realise that not both the litigants have the law on their side but take on their clients (thereby confirming that one, at least, is taking their client for a ride).

The lawyers are no more saints than the clients who employ them. When many years ago the anarchists of Freedom Press were arrested for sedition their adviser, Ernest Silverman, who was an intelligent jailbird and happened to be outside, pointed out to them that "you will get as much law as you can afford". An honest man who nevertheless spent too many years inside.

Libertarian

One of Black Rose's victims tells us of **Dirty Work in Montréal**

In August last year a correspondent in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, asked me in part of a letter dealing with various topics "are you the Peter Newell who wrote the book *Zapata of Mexico*? If so, I will probably buy a copy."

I replied within a few days that, yes, I had written *Zapata of Mexico*, but that it had been published in 1979 and had been out of print for years and he would be lucky if he could buy a copy in 1997. I was, therefore, extremely surprised when he sent me by return of post a photocopy of part of a winter/fall catalogue by a publisher called Black Rose Books (C.P. 1258, Succ. Place du Parc, Montréal, Quebec, H2W 2R3, Canada) advertising my book *Zapata of Mexico* to be published by Black Rose Books in October 1997, both in hardcover and in paperback. It was news – and not particularly welcome news – to me.

Don't get me wrong. I had always wanted the book to be published again. Much has happened in Mexico over the last twenty years or so, and the events in the state of Chiapas, with the emergence of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) on New Year's Day 1994, would have provided me with additional material for either an introduction or a second appendix to a new edition of *Zapata of Mexico*, the first appendix having traced the developments of the *ejidos* and the Land Question up to 1977.

On 26th September last year I wrote what I consider to be a friendly letter to Black Rose Books reiterating much of the above and pointing out – what they obviously knew – that the book had originally been published by Stuart Christie of Cienfuegos Press. I assumed that they had been in contact with him and had asked permission to re-publish the book. I would add, however, that at no time have Black Rose Books written to me asking whether I object to them re-publishing *Zapata of Mexico*. I accept that they probably did not know my address. Nevertheless, I am not entirely unknown in libertarian or socialist circles. My present address, as well as my previous address (which will always find me), is known to quite a lot of people in Britain and also in Canada, including Freedom Press. Even Joan Lestor, when she was still a Member of Parliament, managed to locate me without any trouble. Nevertheless, I did not pursue this with Black Rose Books.

I did, however, hope that they had at least noticed a number of errors in the book – particularly the fact that there had been a mix-up on pages 10 and 11 – and that they had corrected them. I concluded my letter by asking Black Rose Books to write to me. I also added that I would be pleased if they would send me a complimentary copy of *Zapata of Mexico*. I did not receive a reply. In November I wrote another short letter to them enclosing a photocopy of my original 26th September letter. On 5th December I noted that their catalogue listed Central Books (99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN) as their European distributors, so I wrote to Central Books asking them if they had, or were likely to have, both hardcover and paperback copies of *Zapata of Mexico*. I may add that I was a little surprised that Central Books were listed as distributors as I remembered them to be distributors of

Soviet and Community Party publications. Central Books, however, advised me that they had received a few copies of the hardcover edition but were not expecting any more copies and had sold out. To be quite honest I was surprised that anyone would purchase hardcover copies as the Black Rose Books catalogue had quoted such copies as \$44 (Canadian). Obviously some people must have more money than sense, paying such an astronomical price for an 180-page book.

Anyway, Central Books advised me that Black Rose Books had informed them that the paperback copies were due in 1998. At the beginning of February I wrote to Central Books again, who informed me that they had now received "an availability date" of June 1998 for receipt of the paperback edition, but added, not surprisingly, that accuracy was not guaranteed. On 7th February this year I wrote yet again another – still friendly – letter to Black Rose Books. At the time of writing this (9th March) I have received no reply.

I find this quite inexplicable considering that during this period, from September last year, Central Books have been in contact with them. Why do they not respond to my letters? Why have they, at least in my view, 'pirated' *Zapata of Mexico*? Have they something to hide? Who indeed are Black Rose Books?

I must admit in my ignorance that I know very little about them. I have noted that they have published works by, for example, such writers as Murray Bookchin. Have they asked such writers for permission to publish? And do they ignore any letters that such writers may send to Black Rose Books? I find that I have only one publication by them, *The Kronstadt Uprising* by Ida Mett, published in 1971, first published in Britain in 1967, and copyrighted by Black Rose Books. In a blurb titled "The Legend of the Black Rose" they comment: "Mankind [sic] has yet to find

freedom, and when we do we will have found the beautiful Black Rose. And when the Black Rose is found we shall all have found freedom". What beautiful sentiments! Surely the people who now run Black Rose Books are not the same as those who in 1971 wrote those words. I hope I am wrong.

Maybe the people who now run Black Rose Books are merely money-making crooks who have much to hide. I await their response, if any.

Peter E. Newell

Editorial Postscript to Peter Newell's article

We at Freedom Press are not surprised at the crooked and shabby treatment he has experienced at the hands of Black Rose Books, aka Dimitrios Roussopoulos, Jean Nataf and Rebecca Laurier. We were informed some time ago that Nataf and Laurier don't exist. The evil genius is the academic and phoney anarchist Dimitrios Roussopoulos.

Peter Newell's account of his polite attempts to contact Black Rose Books without success surely justifies one to accuse them of being crooks. After all, have they not 'pirated' Peter Newell's book?

But readers of *Freedom* and *The Raven* will know what we think of Black Rose Books. We were their distributors and there were no problems – in fact at one stage they wrote to us that we were selling four times more of their books than our predecessors. Yet out of the blue Roussopoulos informed us that as from 1st January 1992 we would no longer have "exclusive distribution rights in Britain and Europe". We could not accept these



Emiliano Zapata
drawing by Clifford Harper

conditions since the whole point of our being exclusive distributors was that we carried a large selection of Black Rose Books titles, not just the 'best-sellers'.

Roussopoulos would not accept that, and then started a campaign against Freedom Press Distributors saying that we didn't pay our bills and that they had received complaints from booksellers that their titles were "difficult or impossible to get" from us. Both lies, as we demonstrated in a twelve-page feature 'Ourselves and Black Rose Books, Montréal' in *The Raven* No. 28* (winter 1994).

Peter Newell has sent us his updated manuscript and Freedom Press will be publishing it in the very near future.

Meanwhile, may we suggest to readers, especially those in the USA and Canada, to communicate their disgust to Roussopoulos at Black Rose Books (address above).

* Copies of *The Raven* 28 are still available, with other interesting articles by Chomsky, Bookchin, Tony Gibson and many more (£3 post free from Freedom Press).

Strikes in the public mines in Asturias ...

Asturias is Burning!

Asturias is burning this month of January like we had not seen for a long time. Barricades, sabotage, street fights with the civil guard and the police, arrests, beatings and one death: Lorenzo Gallardo, face-worker at Santiago mine, 38 years old and a resident of Ujo, was run over as he was taking part in erecting a barricade. However, the mobilisations have come to an end (temporarily) and it hasn't been possible to stop the process that has put Asturias at the head of the unemployment in the Spanish state (85,000 out of work), and turned the mining valleys into living cemeteries, with no possibilities of finding work in a world built around it, with years upon years of environmental and human destruction from the exploitation of our valleys.

Much money has been extracted from Asturias. Only the misery of temporary, low paid work or the road to emigration is left to us. Those who have taken the miners out into the streets are responsible for Lorenzo's death and the ruin of Asturias. The political parties: PP (Partido Popular – Popular Party, right wing TN) that doesn't honour the agreements it signs, the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español – Spanish Socialist Workers Party, 'socialist' TN) that demobilised the working class, turning it to unemployment and didn't hesitate to beat us when they felt it necessary, IU (Izquierda Unida – United Left, 'left wing') with its accomplice attitude (we don't forget their performance with regard to those fired from Duro Felguera, or its condemnation of the assault of El Tallerón, or simply its support of the miners because they are many votes) renouncing any possibility of social transforma-

tion, when Asturias has already been condemned within capitalism, etc; the unions UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores – General Workers Union, socialist TN) and CCOO (Comisiones Obreras – Workers Commissions, communist TN) who have taken the miners out on the street to end up shafted again with the loss of jobs, because in reality the only thing they defend is their self interest as liberated organisations. They have long forgotten what it is to feel exploited. Their main worry is elements 'foreign' to Asturian mining that intervene in the conflict (and who for the first time attacked their headquarters): though it looks like they are referring to those union leaders who never in their life have been in Asturias and now make deals with our future in Madrid (Toxo, Urrutia ...) they refer to the thousands out of work in Asturias, thousands of people in misery and uncertainty who obviously don't even have the right to complain. Too much coincidence with the fascist Marques, president of the principality who calls us 'sub-products'. Capital had never spoken so clearly in Asturias. We the unemployed are 'sub-products' because we don't produce and barely consume and on top we burn things; obviously the ideal category is to be a 'product', that is, to have the 'luck' to be exploited at work, to consume without end and not complain. That's what we are to capital: products, things, goods to be exploited and then discarded without further complications.

The agreement that ends the mobilisations seeks the relocation of 736 workers in Hunosa during the next four years, and 325 in diversified companies. Hunosa had 20,000 workers a few years ago. Thanks to the 'exemplary manage-

ment' by UGT and CCOO now there are 10,000, and thanks to the 'magnificent' future plan there will be 7,000 soon. With respect to the agreed relocations, they will not give jobs to unemployed youth from the mining regions (only to miners who are casually affiliated with UGT and CCOO), and not only that, we also doubt that Hunosa will relocate anybody, a more than reasonable doubt since in the previous plan for the future 800 relocations were planned and not one has taken place, without UGT and CCOO taking this into account and even less making this their war horse, since these unions only care about their clients and affiliates.

Everything remains the same, the process that has put Asturias and the mining regions at the head of unemployment in Europe continues its triumphant road, for that Lorenzo has died, for that there have been beatings, somebody has lost an eye, people have been arrested, beaten up. Unless we the 85,000 'sub-products' 'foreign to mining' (and the thousands of 'products' tired of being miners) remember October 1934 (and the struggle of the unemployed French, for example) and tear from their hands the minimum conditions to live.

What we have done these weeks in the region is threatening the whole of Asturias, and will soon threaten the liberated union leaders, the wretched politicians, the 'benevolent' businessmen, the priests, the dog media, the police, the civil guard ... all those parasite that live off our misery and our frustration. Just like we have made the mining regions dance, soon we'll make ourselves heard again and then all of Asturias will have to dance to our beat.

Luis

Forthcoming Raven on 1968

Have you an opinion or reminiscence worth writing about on the year of 1968, the year of revolutionary incidents in Paris, Berkeley and elsewhere? If so the editors of *The Raven* might be interested. We are planning to publish an issue on 1968 during 1998. Please let us know as soon as possible.

Sanctions are a Crime

Two years ago, a small group of very brave and determined US peace activists came together for the express purpose of breaking UN sanctions against Iraq. They publicly announced their intention to transport medicines to Iraq without seeking authorisation from either the US authorities or the UN Sanctions Committee. The Treasury Department responded by informing 'Voices in the Wilderness', as the new organisation was called, that anyone breaching sanctions faced a maximum twelve years in prison, \$1 million fine – and a \$250,000 administrative fine that could be levied without court proceedings. Despite these threats, Voices in the Wilderness (ViW) proceeded with its plans, openly breaking sanctions, refusing to seek the State's permission to help sick children, and successfully transporting tens of thousands of dollars' worth of medicines and medical supplies to Iraqi hospitals.

On 10th February this year, I and another British peace activist, Martin Thomas, flew out from London to Jordan to join the eleventh ViW delegation before it entered Iraq. It was the first time that a British group had openly broken sanctions. Britain is, of course, the only other major power supporting the continuation of economic sanctions apart from the US. The significance of our joint US/UK delegation was heightened by the fact that at the time of our departure it seemed almost inevitable that a joint US/UK military attack would be launched during our time in Iraq (Martin and I were due to return by 23rd February, and it was reported shortly before our departure that airstrikes were to begin on 17th February). Martin had been under US/UK bombardment in Baghdad before, when the Gulf Peace Team were there for three days during their evacuation during the 1991 Gulf war.

Children's antibiotics that Martin and I tried to take with us to Iraq were seized by British Customs. The day before we left, we had delivered a letter to the government office in charge of licensing exports to Iraq, explaining our intention to export medicines without a license. We explained that we were not prepared to accept a moral veto on helping sick children; nor were we prepared to accept bureaucratic delays of weeks and perhaps months. (As I write, the antibiotics remain 'detained' by Customs.) The seizure of the medicines symbolised both the real scope of sanctions (which officially do not affect food and medicines) and the fact that sanctions bear down hardest on children.

Proof that sanctions are hurting children more than other sections of the population came late last year when the UN children's agency UNICEF reported that 960,000 Iraqi children under five were chronically malnourished. Philippe Heffinck, UNICEF representative in Baghdad, stated: "It is clear that children are bearing the brunt of the current economic hardship. They must be protected from the impact of sanctions. Otherwise they will continue to suffer, and that we cannot accept".

I saw for myself the impact of sanctions on children in Iraq when I visited the Al-Mansour Teaching Hospital and the Saddam Paediatric Hospital, both in Baghdad, and Fallujah General Hospital, forty miles west of the capital. Everywhere we went, we heard the same story – malnutrition, waterborne disease (sanctions prevent the repair of water purification, sewage and sanitation systems damaged in 1991), and drastic shortages of medicines and vital medical supplies. The first time I entered a children's ward (in the Al-Mansour Teaching Hospital), I was stopped in my tracks by the sight of a severely malnourished child with marasmus. In marasmus, tissue-wasting leaves children, even babies, with deeply wrinkled 'old man's' faces. We saw many cases of marasmus. Doctors pulled apart clothing to show us how the first tissues to dissolve are those of the thighs and buttocks.

It's one thing to know that nearly a million children are chronically malnourished in Iraq. It's another to hold a wasted, shrunken baby in your arms and to look into its old man's face.

It's one thing to know that medicines are desperately needed in Iraq. It's another to be faced by doctors almost in tears as they describe their inability to treat the simplest conditions.

It's one thing to know in an abstract way that over 567,000 children have died as a result of sanctions (a UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimate from December 1995). It's another to offer meaningless words of comfort to a sobbing woman as her two-and-a-half-month-old baby gasps its last on a hospital bed.

It's one thing to know the truth about sanctions.

It's another to be faced with the human reality. The work of Voices in the Wilderness in bringing ordinary Westerners face to face with these human realities is, I believe, of tremendous importance. Such immediate encounters help us to come to a proper understanding of our responsibilities to those whose suffering we have created.

Milan Rai

Welfare to where?

Cool Britannia versus Cruel Britannia

Last week's *New Musical Express* declared that Danbert Nobacon of the anarchist band Chumbawamba "isn't the only one to have poured cold water on the New Labour / Cool Britannia love affair in the past couple of weeks". Indeed not. Leeds anarchists drowned Derek Fatchet, a Foreign Office Minister, the other day (see also 'Fatchet Chuma'd', page 3 in last issue of *Freedom*).

Blur's Damon Albarr savaged New Labour's further education policy. The Lightning Seeds had a go at Jack Straw for his refusal to have a new inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster.

But in the *NME* under the title "Betrayed – Labour's Love Lost" a string of stars condemn the party that tried to play at being Cool Britannia when really it was Cruel Britannia. Derek Pattison recently said that Blair's "done more to mobilise people against government projects than Groundswell ever did".

PORN PIC POLITICS

Yet the signs that New Labour was not 'cool' were there well before the general election. Tony Blair made some shitty statements in the run-up to the election, like suggesting that lone mothers were feckless and that the young unemployed should be forced off their backsides.

Come the election, of course, many on the British left always start behaving like male actors in some hardcore pornographic film. Trotskyists, to coin a phrase, have to 'get the wood up' – which means making love to someone you don't fancy. Suddenly, come the elections, every election, the left has to go through the motions of falling in love with a Labour Party panting for power.

As an exercise in insincerity on all sides it is a most revolting spectacle. Old men, like Mr Paul Foot and Mr Tony Cliff, trying to get it up for Labour, even New Labour. Disgusting. But *NME* admits to doing the same.

At least the *New Musical Express*, unlike *Socialist Worker*, is not trying to fake its disappointment and surprise. No headlines like "What's Labour up to?", but rather "The Labour Government's War on You" or "The Stars Kick Blair's Arse".

The *New Musical Express* states:

"WHAT WE'RE PROTESTING AGAINST ...

WORKFARE: Or the proposed abolition of your basic right to claim supplementary benefit (or Jobseeker's Allowance as it's now known). Under-25s who have been out of work for more than six months will have to go into full-time education 'on an approved course', or take up jobs selected for them and be paid benefit rates. If you refuse, you can wave goodbye to your dole ...

CURFEWS: Proposals to give the police the power to stop and search anyone under the age of 18 caught out of doors 'after dark', the precise times to be arbitrarily decided by local councils. The scheme, based on a similar American model, is being piloted in Scotland at the moment.

REFUSAL TO OPEN THE DEBATE ON DRUGS: The Blair administration has convinced itself that Britain's drug laws do not need changing. The rest of the country ... is screaming for a radical overhaul of the ludicrously outdated legislation. Labour won't let its MPs even mention the subject.

TUITION FEES: The end of free further education as we know it. Tuition fees of £1,000 a year are due to be imposed for the first time on full-time undergraduates this year, when maintenance grants will also be phased out."

DISILLUSIONMENT

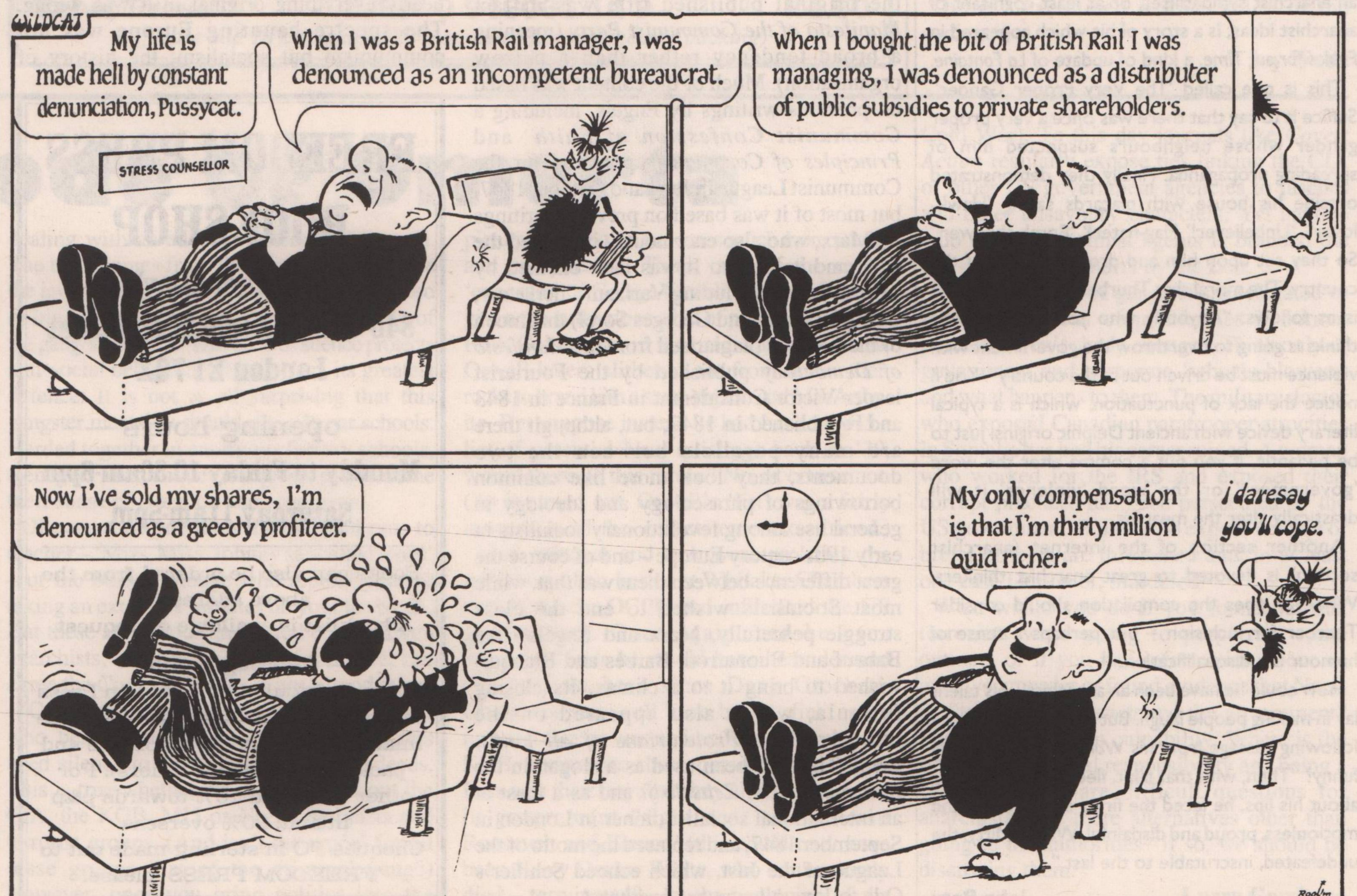
NME ponders when 'disillusionment' will come for the likes of Noel Gallagher of Oasis. It says: "Those pictures of McGee and Gallagher at Number 10 are an uncanny echo of the classic 1960s photos of The Beatles 'sharing a joke' with Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson". The Beatles turned in their OBEs after Wilson backed the US in Vietnam. The *NME* claims that "Noel Gallagher's not thick". Then it adds that because the bombs didn't fall on Iraq "thanks to Kofi Annan, Noel can probably postpone his disillusionment a little while longer".

Yet *NME* predicts that "the rest of us – particularly those of us who are students, single parents, unemployed or disabled – will probably get there before him". For these editors "Tony Blair has already made his 'hard choices' and he has chosen Uncool Britannia – the rich, the powerful, the established, the privileged and the reactionary – every single time".

THE ANARCHIST ANSWER?

But the anarchist Danbert Nobacon was not taken in by John Prescott "digging the vibes, tapping his toes, nodding his head, relaxing". Chumba's Danbert claimed he watered John on behalf of "single mothers, pensioners, sacked dock workers, people being forced into 'workfare', people being denied legal aid, students who will be denied the free university education that the whole front bench benefited from, the homeless and all the underclasses who are suffering at the hands of the Labour government".

Punk City Kid



Rich and Poor



Once upon a time there was a man named Thurber. He was a humorist and he drew cartoons. I just bought a book of his at the local Oxfam shop and on re-reading him I find that he had a distinct anarchist style and method of reasoning. He needs reviving as he is definitely out of fashion. Perhaps his sense of humour is now out of date. My favourite caption of his is to one of his droll drawings which says "Well, I'm disenchanted too. We're all disenchanted." If you don't know the drawing perhaps you could draw something to fit the caption and then rush to your nearest library to compare yours with his.

But don't bother if you live in Camden, for the local bookshops haven't heard of Thurber and the local libraries have been shut by the ever-loving New Labour council. Life goes on regardless. In this part of the world people no longer create a fuss about anything. Now try this caption of Thurber's: "What have you done with Dr Millmoss?" Here, however, you could substitute the name Tony Blair or Head of Camden Libraries barricaded in his office where he himself alone can read all the books rifled from the people. Just a hint: Thurber was very economical in his drawings and the cartoon was made up of the following: an angry woman, a satiated mammoth and, lying on the ground, a hat and a shoe and a pipe.

Now that there is a tremendous row on the internet's anarchist section as to whether anarchism is compatible with religion, there is a Thurber cartoon for that too. Here there are only two characters, a woman on the grass looking at a priest, and the caption is "There is no use you trying to save me, my good man".

In the final item in the cartoon competition, surely you would have most fun with the caption "All right, have it your way - you heard a seal bark".

It has been said, and I read it in *Freedom*, that cartoons filched from *Dandy* have become very popular with anarchist toddlers. But Thurber's darts hurt more.

As to why I think that Thurber must have been an anarchist sympathiser, or at least cognisant of anarchist ideas, is a story of his which appeared in *Fables for our Time*, a kind of update of *La Fontaine*.

This is one called 'The Very Proper Gander'. Suffice it to say that there was once a very proper gander whose neighbours suspected him of spreading propaganda. Finally they demonstrated outside his house with placards saying 'Hawk-lover!' 'Unbeliever!' 'Flag-hater!' 'Bomb-thrower!' So they set upon him and drove him out of the country. The moral that Thurber gives to this fable is as follows: "Anybody who you or your wife thinks is going to overthrow the government with violence must be driven out of the country". You'll notice the lack of punctuation, which is a typical literary device with ancient Delphic origins. Just to be pedantic, if you put a comma after the word 'government' or the word 'violence' it will drastically alter the meaning.

Another section of the internet (anarchist section) is devoted to great anarchist thinkers. Whoever does the compilation should consider Thurber for inclusion - but perhaps a sense of humour is a disqualification.

How could he have been an anarchist - his talent lay in making people laugh. But then if you read the following passage from his *Walter Mitty* is it really funny? "Then, with that faint, fleeting smile playing about his lips, he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty, the undefeated, inscrutable to the last."

John Rety

In capitalist societies wealth appears as an immense collection of commodities, to quote Karl Marx. This is especially the case with his own works, which have become fetish objects rather than living texts, even more so now that the Marxist project has collapsed. Take his best-known single writing, the *Communist Manifesto*, the 150th anniversary of whose publication fell in February and was marked by articles in several papers. It is doubtful whether its message is taken seriously by anyone anywhere any more, yet at least a dozen English-language editions are currently in print (not counting the many versions available on the Internet), at prices varying from less than £1 to £15, appearing not only from leading left-wing publishers on both sides of the Atlantic but also in leading paperback series. If you actually take the trouble to read it and to read about it, you learn - to misquote Marx - that his interpreters have only tried to change it in various ways; the point is to understand it.

Everyone knows that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, which was published before revolution broke out in France in 1848, that it ends by saying *Workers of the world, unite!*, that it was immediately very influential, and that it is right in general if not in particular details. Everyone is wrong.

Marx and Engels, German political exiles in Belgium, joined the international socialist League of the Just, which became the Communist League in 1847, and at its London conference in November-December 1847 they persuaded it to commission a manifesto from them. Engels did provide material for it, but he was hardly ever in Brussels while Marx did the actual work of writing it during December and January. It was then printed in London as an anonymous 23-page German-language pamphlet for the Bildungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter (Educational Society for Workers), though with a false imprint, and issued at the end of February 1848; about a thousand copies were produced, at a cost of £5. But by then the revolution had already started in Paris, the last French king had escaped into exile, and a provisional government had been appointed. Although the manifesto must have been read by many people, since it was quickly reprinted several times in German and also translated into several other languages, there is no evidence that it had any influence on any event at the time.

The title of *Communist Manifesto* was suggested by Engels in November 1847, possibly echoing a *Manifesto of Communists* issued by French exiles in London in 1841; but the original published title was in fact *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (meaning a broad tendency rather than a narrow organisation). Much of the content was based on previous writings by Engels, including a *Communist Confession of Faith* and *Principles of Communism* prepared for the Communist League in June and October 1847, but most of it was based on previous writings by Marx, who also enormously improved the style and argument. It was later claimed by several critics (including Varlaam Cherkov, Georg Brandes, and Georges Sorel) that much of the text was plagiarised from the *Manifesto of Democracy* published by the Fourierist leader Victor Considérant in France in 1843 and republished in 1847; but, although there are many parallels between the two documents, they look more like common borrowings of phraseology and ideology in general use among revolutionary socialists in early 19th-century Europe - and of course the great difference between them was that, while most Socialists wished to end the class struggle peacefully, Marx and Engels (like Babeuf and Buonarroti, Barbès and Blanqui) wished to bring it to a climax. Its closing formula, which also appeared on the title-page, was *Proletarians of all lands, unite!* This had been used as a slogan in the *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* and as a toast at an international socialist dinner in London in September 1847, and replaced the motto of the League of the Just, which echoed Schiller's Ode to Joy: *All men are brothers!*

Poor Marx



Picture taken from *An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto** by Joseph Lane, with an introduction by Nicolas Walter, which is available from Freedom Press Bookshop at 80p.

Engels began an English translation in 1848 but never finished it. The first English translation, by Helen Macfarlane, appeared in George Julian Harney's socialist paper *The Red Republican* in November 1850, and this was also the first time that the authors were publicly named, as 'Citizens Charles Marx and Frederic Engels'. The first known Russian translation, published in Geneva in 1869, has generally been attributed to Bakunin, later the main opponent of Marx and Engels in the First International and the main figure in the anarchist movement, but some scholars have doubted this because of its inaccuracy and a few have even attributed it to Nechayev, the evil genius of the Russian populist movement, who was more of a Marxist than a Bakuninist and was in Switzerland at that time.

One thing seldom realised about the *Communist Manifesto* is that nearly everything right in it was not original and that nearly everything original in it was wrong. The spectre haunting Europe was not communism but socialism; the history of

preceding societies was not the history only of class struggles; industrial society did not increasingly split into two opposed classes; the modern state is not just the executive committee of the bourgeoisie; the cash nexus was not the only relationship between man and man; the bourgeoisie did not corrupt the family; wages did not fall but rose; the petty bourgeoisie did not sink into the proletariat; the proletariat was not a genuinely revolutionary class; the coming bourgeois revolution did not lead to proletarian revolution, and the bourgeoisie was not destroyed by the proletariat; the communists did form a separate party opposed to other left-wing parties, with its own interests and principles, and they did not abolish private property or the family; their revolution did not lead to free association, let alone the dissolution of political power; they were just as utopian as the other socialists; proletarians did not lose national character; and proletarians had much to lose apart from their chains, and did not unite.

A less rhetorical but more convincing manifesto appeared in England nearly forty years later. The socialist, Joseph Lane, prepared a policy document for the Socialist League, and when it was rejected he published it himself in June 1887 as *An Anti-Statist, Communist Manifesto*. He rejected parliamentary or authoritarian socialism in favour of revolutionary libertarian socialism:

"The object of Socialism is to construct a Society founded on labour and science, on liberty, equality and solidarity of all human beings ... We are Atheists, Anti-Statists and Free Communists or International Revolutionary Socialists."

And so on. It could be said that no subsequent manifesto has ever matched the influence of the one written by Karl Marx 150 years ago, but it could also be said that none has had such a bad influence.

NW

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Recent English-language editions of the *Communist Manifesto* have been published by Lawrence & Wishart, Pluto Press and Verso, Pathfinder Press and Monthly Review Press, World's Classics and Penguin Books, and so on. Detailed accounts of it appear in two publications - *Le manifeste communiste de Marx et Engels*, by Bert Andréas (published in Italy in 1963), and *Das Kommunistische Manifest von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, by Thomas Kuczynski (published in Germany in 1995). *An Anti-Statist, Communist Manifesto* appeared in a new edition by Cienfuegos Press (published in Orkney in 1978).

Clifford Harper twisted my arm and made me write something about 'Anarchy and the Post' for his little book of anarchist postage stamps, and it was also printed in this column for 9th March 1996. We are all (including anarchists) in the habit of taking for granted that the postal system works. Some of us have also experienced big let-downs with mail to other countries, where our expensive parcels never arrived. We mostly realise that to get something delivered in Italy you either pay a lot extra for some kind of recorded delivery or use a high-price private carrier.

I don't want to be an alarmist, and members of my family see me fussing around like an old hen over their scruffy correspondence, just because I know how roughly it is handled and how their addresses are now read by a machine. But I know of several non-deliveries, and I'm worried by the ones I haven't heard about.

I learn that an item for this newspaper, posted in the week after the Christmas break, failed to arrive. I learn that a Post Office jiffy-bag addressed to Nicolas Walter and containing an audio tape, failed to arrive in January, and that a book review posted to the editor of *Red Pepper* at her request failed to arrive in February. These are bits of my lost mail that I know about. What about all the rest?

Can I avoid a nasty nagging feeling that everybody important now communicates by fax and by e-mail and only poor proles like you and me expect letters to arrive?

I recently had a nasty bit of evidence for this view. David Crouch, who was my fellow-author of the book *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* ten years ago, carried out further research last year for the Department of the Environment, known as the National Allotments Survey. It was published by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners in December, cheaply at £5, and the Environment Sub-Committee of the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee resolved to inquire into 'The Future for Allotments', a matter of pressing concern for those people up and down the country who have been trying to save allotment sites from redevelopment for a more profitable use.

That Parliamentary Committee issued a press notice on 13th January requiring interested parties to submit evidence by 31st January and explained that: "Written evidence will be accepted in either disk format (WordPerfect 5.1 / ASCII) or typescript: submissions on disk should be accompanied by a single hard copy. Witnesses without access to a typewriter are respectfully requested to take particular care that submissions are concise and legible."

Anyone like David Crouch and I, who have interviewed a great many allotment gardeners, will realise how intimidating this kind of

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —
Me and my Post

request can be. But there was more to come.

Ken Worpole, a much respected researcher on the public realm in the contemporary city (whose work I discussed in this column for 7th February this year) sought further information from the Parliamentary Committee. Unlike me he has a fax number and an e-mail address, but he reported that: "I have to say the press office that finally faxed me this appeal for evidence was very reluctant to send it to me — quite rude in fact — and said if I wanted to know more I should read their website. It seems as if a page on the internet now counts the same as a small notice in the local newspaper as the most developed form of public consultation".

It is useful to let the implications of his accidental discovery sink in. There were once two kinds of citizens: the literate and the illiterate. Now there are still two kinds of citizens: those who have access to the new

forms of technology and those who do not.

One of the consequences of this is that everyone automatically downgrades the old-fashioned labour-intensive forms of mail like the postal service. If your letter gets lost amongst all the junk mail it is now your fault. You should have sent it by e-mail or fax. It's just your bad luck if you are poor or rural or both.

Colin Ward

PS: Intense bullying of the staff of the Parliamentary Select Committee has led to the extension of the delivery date of evidence about allotments until 6th March, now past. Readers should be alerted that the 'brownfield' sites in urban areas, to be used for the new housing expected in the next fifteen years, as opposed to the 'greenfield' sites where farmers are subsidised for growing nothing, include allotment gardens.

ANARCHIST POSTAGE STAMPS
postage stamps for after the revolution

with sixteen portraits by Clifford Harper
and foreword by Colin Ward

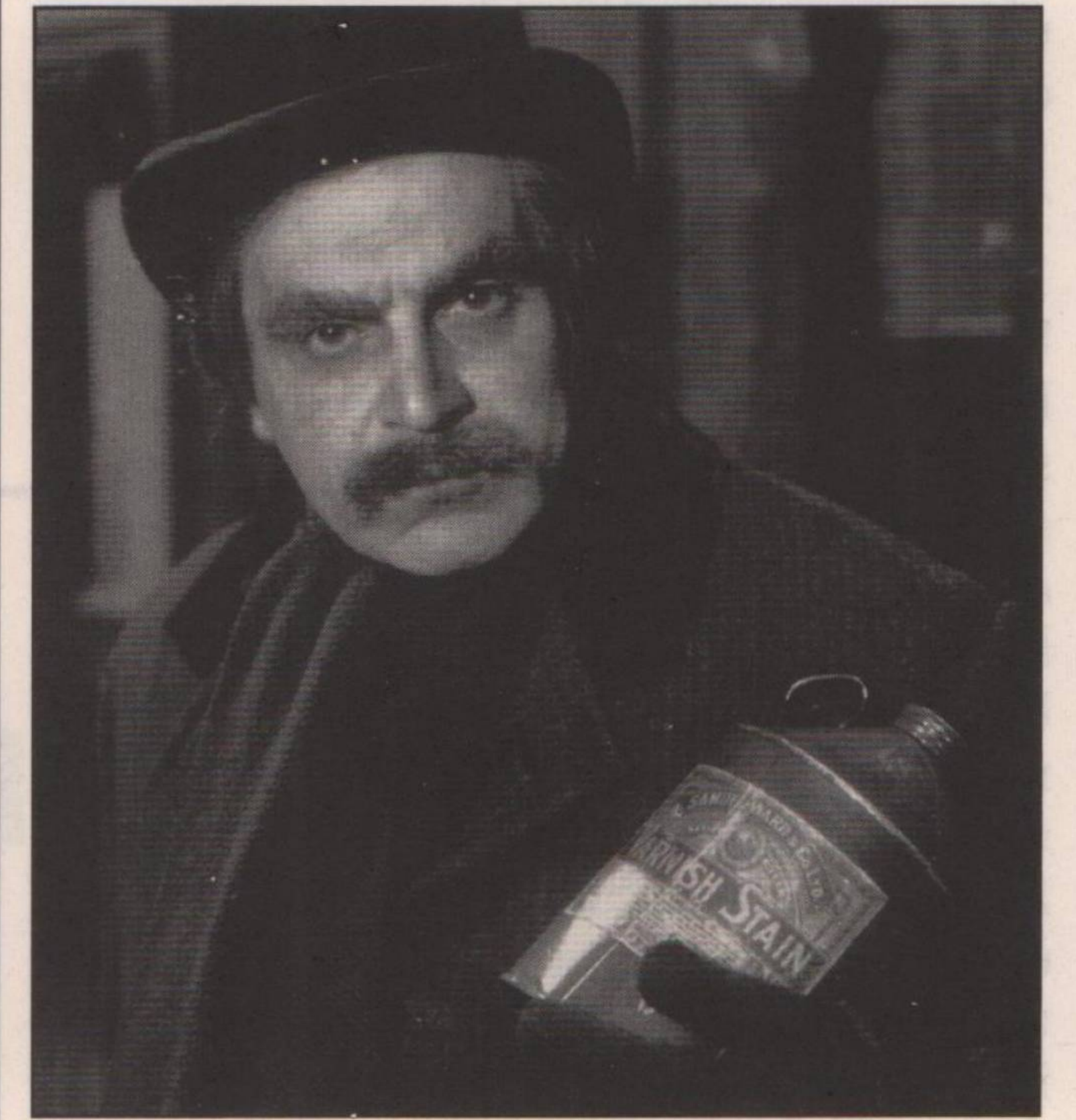


What can anarchism possibly have in common with postal services? Francis Sedlak was a pioneer of the Tolstoyan anarchist community at Whiteway in Gloucestershire in 1899. After working his passage from Bohemia via the French Foreign Legion in Algeria, he escaped from prison into the Sahara desert, only to be jailed in Spain. At Whiteway he built his house where he lived with Nellie Shaw. Wanting to post an article he'd written, 'My Military Experience', he realised that he could not bring himself to lick the back of a stamp bearing a portrait of Queen Victoria and support the government-run postal service, so he set out to walk to London and deliver his article by hand, but "the weather was very cold with heavy snow and he was clad only in thin clothes with no shoes. Not surprisingly he was forced to turn

back." If only poor Francis Sedlak had a copy of Clifford Harper's *Anarchist Postage Stamps*, his letter may have got there sooner. We're sure there are enough anarchists working in the Post Office today to ensure its safe delivery ... if not on time.

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The Secret Agent



Bob Hoskins is described in the film as "rather corpulent for an anarchist", but I deduce he *must* be one because in his Soho shop (which sells "rather what you would expect to find in *that area*") a customer picks up a journal and holds it for some moments to the eye of the camera so that its title can clearly be seen. The title of the journal is *Freedom*.

Go and see the film of Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*. It's a film which is well made and gripping, the acting is of a uniformly high standard and, at almost two hours in length, you'll get your money's worth. Also starring are Patricia Arquette, Gerard Depardieu, Eddie Izzard and Robin Williams. The last of these two who, to my mind even in such tragedies as *The Dead Poets Society* and *Good Morning Vietnam*, has only ever appeared as one character — Mork out of *Mork and Mindy*, minus the silly costume — amazed me in his convincing performance as the 'mad' supplier of explosives.

One scene from the film which sticks in my mind is where Arquette tries to explain the world to her 'simple' brother:

"What can be done for the poor?" he asked her. "There's no one to help them", she answered. "Well what about the police?" he eagerly suggested. "They're not there for that" she replied. "Well what *are* they there for?" he, naturally, asks. "They're there to stop them's who have *not* from taking anything from them's who *have*" she explains.

"Quite!" exclaimed a lone voice in the audience.

Joy Wood

The Code of Omerta

In British Columbia, Canada, last November seven Victoria teenagers, six of whom were girls, murdered a schoolmate and threw her body into the sea. Two weeks later the corpse was found. In the meantime rumours of the crime had been circulating throughout their school, but no student said a word to anyone about the crime. Several years before, in Surrey BC, a teenager bludgeoned a student to death with a rock and left the body in a secluded patch of trees. He took his friends to view the corpse. The body lay there for about two years and many high school kids knew of its existence. Once again nothing was said.

In many suburban and inner city schools students suffer from a form of armed robbery rather aptly called 'taxing'. A delinquent minority violently extorts money and articles of clothing from other students. Some teenagers have been driven to suicide by the practice, yet very little can be done to stop this gangsterism since few students are willing to come forward and denounce the thugs.

It seems that the worst thing a student can do is to 'squeal', worse than armed robbery, worse than rape, worse than murder. We are

dealing with an adolescent Code of Omerta. The term comes from the Mafia and signifies the law of silence by which neither the Mafioso or his victims are allowed to speak openly of the gang's activities. This code of silence protects anti-social behaviour. It is, in fact, its greatest defence. It is not at all surprising that this gangster mentality should pervade our schools. Herded together in enormous factory schools, teenagers form cliques and gangs to overcome their sense of isolation and alienation.

Of course no one likes the kid who runs to teacher — 'Miss, Miss, Johnny said a bad word' — or the bosses' stooge who reports you for taking an extra five minutes on your tea break. But these are serious and brutal crimes. Even anarchists, avowed enemies of the state, can agree the Code of Omerta is not a good thing.

'Common criminals' are not the only ones who believe in Omerta. Political gangsters need silence to cover their anti-social deeds. This is true whether we are talking about the CIA, the KGB, MI5 or Nazis, Stalinists and terrorist groups. (And isn't the model for all these groups that of the criminal gang?) However, once you bring politics into the

picture the question becomes much more murky and complicated. Think only of the recent 'exposure' of George Orwell. He had allegedly given the authorities a list of potential Stalinist Fifth Columnists in the media and academia. Orwell-haters slithered out from under their rocks to brand him a stool-pigeon and MacArthyite. But suppose instead he had handed MI5 a list of potential Nazi quislings back in '39, would there be this furore? No, of course not. (As it turned out, Orwell's 'list' was a fairly innocuous off-the-cuff statement to a friend.)

Liar, turncoat and fink were probably the mildest epithets hurled at Whitaker Chambers for saying the OGPU had infiltrated the US government. Once again, had he been exposing Nazis he would have been deemed the greatest hero since Davy Crockett. Chambers may well have been a fink and a turncoat, but he was no liar. Recently released KGB documents show not only that Alger Hiss was their boy, but they also had an agent in government "right next to President Roosevelt and Eleanor" (this could only have been Harry Dexter White, who conveniently died — terminated? — at the beginning of the

Cold War). To this day journals like *Covert Action* regularly expose ties linking the CIA or other US government agencies to fascists and other unsavoury characters. Yet anyone who exposed Stalinist agents is branded the worst sort of scoundrel by the Left.

Nor is this sort of gangsterism relegated to the shadier areas of politics (as if normal politics weren't shady enough). Think only of government and corporate 'whistle-blowers' and what happens to them. The military doctor who exposed Canadian paratrooper atrocities in Somalia has had his career ruined. A woman who worked for the IRS and exposed their corrupt practices has been persecuted by the US government. Police who expose corrupt or brutal officers are threatened and, in at least one case I know of, murdered.

What would you do if you found out that terrorists were going to perpetrate some outrage, or if you had information about an unsolved murder or found evidence that Nazis or Stalinists had penetrated the government? Silence could mean culpability. Where is the line between social responsibility and being a stoolie? These are difficult questions for anarchists. Are there alternatives other than going to the authorities? If so, we should be discussing them.

Larry Gambone

CHINA FOCUS

In September 1997, two months before the meltdown of the East Asian banking system, the XV Congress of the Chinese Communist Party took place. For on this occasion, and with regard to the reform of the industrial state, the different tendencies within the bureaucracy came together on a circumstantial compromise. Once again this compromise takes into account both the power-relationships which exist in its core and the dangers of social revolt.

of the old Maoist ways ('movements', mass organisations, demonstrations, self-criticism, etc.) which had disappeared more forcefully with the dismantling of collectivised agriculture.

BUREAUCRACY SHARES OUT THE PROFIT

Today the bureaucracy pretends, at last, to be in a position to launch a frontal attack on the dismantling of the Industrial state. In fact, this process has been in progress for many years. With all the prudence a situation of social instability calls for the local authorities have gone for mergers, liquidations and bankruptcies. Those state enterprises that were made self-managing had to face up to market competition. The ruling class is simply trying to adapt the juridical framework to the new situation by, for example, voting through a law relating to bankruptcies. These modifications are carried out, however, without the concept of state property being really damaged. In particular, the bureaucracy is still refusing the idea of the privatisation of state enterprises in big industry and prefers to lay the emphasis on the transformations of these businesses into companies based on shares and by setting up companies to manage public assets. This allows for capital to be shared out among the different cliques in the bureaucracy. Workers also find themselves obliged to buy shares in these companies – the only way they can preserve their status as a government employee! This, in effect, is another cut by the state in the meagre workers' salary and represents forced savings. Despite these

'patriotic efforts' in 1997 the reform of the industrial state saw 2,000,000 workers made unemployed and 10,000,000 are expected to join them over the next three years. Those workers who in the past had a secure job thus discover the laws of insecurity. Apart from unemployment there are a whole range of intermediary possibilities going from keeping the status of a state worker but without a wage (in order to save on social contributions), to the mutation of affiliated enterprises set up by the state and functioning in a market framework. From one end of the process to the other, it is the bureaucrats who are calling the shots along with all the abuses imaginable.

THE WORKERS

The ruling class, fearing the chaos that would be provoked by a social explosion, is not out of the woods yet. During the debates at the XV Congress, Zhu Rongji, third in ranking in the state apparatus, declared with non customary frankness: "I fear that full-scale reform of state enterprises might unleash social convulsions we can only have difficulty in imagining". In actual fact these last few months have seen more and more workers' revolts in more and more regions and towns against the consequences of the reforms. The demonstrators often focus their anger on the communist party buildings – deemed responsible for the situation. For the moment these revolts have been localised, which allows the central powers to use either the carrot or the stick as appropriate – oblige the banks to release the necessary funds to clear up back payment of salaries or send in the police. The randomness of the revolts is so great that people have looked back nostalgically to the 'socialist good times' – a situation which brings to mind what happened in the ex-USSR. Moreover, such sentiments find an echo among the conservative faction in the hierarchy or those who have not known how to make some profit from the dismantling of industry and the advantages of the market. These are then revolts which have little of a spirit of hope and have no direct links with the strikes in the SEZs which are being used against a more ferocious form of exploitation and bosses' authoritarianism. This also explains the different attitudes of the former mass organisers: the unions, women's organisations, the youth, pensioners. In the SEZs they play a role of providing the work force which has been added to their traditional role as police auxiliaries (informers, strike breakers, etc). In those regions where the dismantlement of industry is taking place they have set up social welfare bureaux to find work for the unemployed, that is to say charity organisations whose responsibility is to keep the poor compliant. Behind the facade of reform we can also see the transformation of the bureaucracy and its economic role. In those regions where reform is most advanced we can note the creation on a massive scale of businesses affiliated to state industry but functioning in the private sector of the economy. Most of these companies are dedicated to trade. They have appeared from 1985 but have really taken off since 1992, that is to say after the crushing of the revolt at Tianan'men square and the repression which followed it. Often they limit themselves to playing on the difference in prices between the Plan and those of the market for produce which comes from the state industries. In most cases, these companies empty the state enterprises of their most modern assets – material and human. It is in this way that the members of the

bureaucracy who control them are carrying out a transfer of productive activities which belong to the 'state's property' to those companies in the market sector. Generally it is only after this has been done that bankruptcy is declared.

THE GREAT LEAP OF SPECULATION

In conclusion, if the legal status of property remains that of the state we are witnessing an appropriation of capital and the profits of the old state enterprises. This appropriation rarely is put into new productive investment, a re-launch of production on firmer capitalist bases. The bureaucrats who seize these riches invest them in speculative sectors, within the country (real estate, prostitution or drugs) or overseas (Asian stock exchanges or even the international money markets). A small proportion is reinvested in the SEZs by handing over the funds to the Hong Kong diaspora or elsewhere. As in Russia we are witnessing a systematic pillaging of assets from the former state sector to the profit of those sectors of the economy best adapted to the market and most integrated in the international capitalist system. All these observations lead to serious doubts of this becoming a classical transformation from a bureaucracy to a bourgeois class.

When we take into account that the Korean banking system was a model for the current regime in China we can see why incompetence and disquiet are the order of the day. The current financial crisis in Asia will have consequences on the Chinese situation. But above all this crisis is perhaps the first stage in a more terrible process. The region which yesterday was hailed as the most dynamic of the global economy is today faced with bankruptcy. We might ask: does the success of the Chinese economy not hide a speculative development founded on this pillage by the bureaucrat-businessmen of those riches produced during the period of 'real socialism'? The totalitarian form of political power, associated to the interests of global capitalism, might help to cover up the situation and the immense social and economic disaster.

Once again the comparison with the ex-USSR comes to mind. The essential difference remains the political unity maintained by the bureaucratic state. But for how long? In the short term the loss of competitiveness of exports will stifle the economy whilst at the same time the fall in foreign investment (from neighbouring countries) in the SEZs will grow. On the other hand the financial role of Hong Kong as a point which attracts speculative capital seems weaker. The anti-reformist tendencies will however be reinforced and the internal struggles within the ruling class threaten to intensify. In addition once the state sector has been deconstructed and relieved of its most dynamic forces one can envisage a confrontation at the heart of the new ruling class of business/ bureaucracy, between those nationalist currents and those who look outward to the interests of speculative capital.

Unless the revolt of the workers, up until now sporadic, takes on a new form and opens up a perspective on social emancipation.

Charles Reeve
(translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*,
February 1998)

UN Human Rights hearings on Dineh people

At Big Mountain in North Eastern Arizona, a UN Human Rights delegation held hearings on 2nd and 3rd of February on the forced relocation and religious persecution of the Dineh people. At the home of Glenna Begay, a traditional Dineh elder, hearings were held by Mr Abdelfattah Amor of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and several UN affiliated NGOs, investigating charges of the forced relocation of traditional Dineh people from their homes, religious persecution against those who practice traditional Dineh beliefs, and environmental degradation of traditional Dineh lands by Peabody Coal Company.

The hearings were the result of a complaint filed by the Dineh in 1997 charging the US Federal Government with human rights violations. The hearings are an attempt to pressure the US Federal Government to repeal Public Laws 93-531 and 104-301 which have legalised the denial of access to water, livestock confiscation, the denial of the right to gather firewood for the Dineh to heat their homes in winter – even in cases of life threatening illness – and the denial of the right of the Dineh to make improvements in their housing. The Dineh filed the complaint because the US Federal Government has consistently blocked any attempt by the Dineh to address their grievances in a US court.

The British-owned Peabody Coal Company (henceforth, PCC), the world's largest privately-held coal company, operates the Black Mesa/Kayenta strip mine in the heart of the Black Mesa region of the Dineh reservation. Over four thousand burial and sacred sites have been destroyed as a result of strip mining. There is no protection given to Dineh burial grounds and sacred sites. Their religion, which is land based and site specific, is the foundation of their way of life. The Dineh state that Public Laws 93-531 and 104-301 were written specifically to promote

PCC's interests in the region.

Mr Amor and the visiting NGOs heard the testimony of Dineh elders from all over the Black Mesa region of the Dineh reservation. They gave their accounts of their forced eviction and the eviction of their neighbours from their land, the demolition of theirs and their neighbours homes, as well as accounts of harassment by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs. The hearings for both days lasted well into the night.

Elders from the neighbouring Hopi reservation also gave their testimony. They verified many of the statements of the Dineh elders, especially the accounts of the increasing scarcity of water in the region.

The Dineh and Hopi reservations sit on top of one of the largest aquifers in the South West. PCC has been using massive amounts of water from the aquifer to operate coal slurry pipelines that transport coal to Las Vegas and Southern California without replacing the water they use, which is a requirement of US mining regulation. The result of these mining violations has meant that wells are rapidly running dry all across the Dineh and Hopi reservations.

The Hopi elders also came to publicly dispel the myth of a Dineh/Hopi land dispute, which the traditional Dineh and Hopi say has been manufactured by the Hopi and Dineh tribal councils in an effort to prevent solidarity among the Hopi and Dineh in this struggle. The traditional Dineh and Hopi regard their tribal councils as nothing more than puppets of the US Federal Government who merely rubber-stamp any proposal made by the Federal Government and its corporate backers.

For more information on the plight of the Dineh: <http://www.solcommunications.com>

Shawn Ewald and Lyn Gerry
for A-Infos News Service

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The Raven

No. 37

on

Anarchism in the Americas and China



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Indexes & anarchism for infants

Dear *Freedom*,

I really must reply to Peter Neville's ruminations on my criticisms of his methodological analysis of 'class struggle anarchism' used in *The Raven* No. 36. Mr Neville claims (see letter in *Freedom*, 7th March) that he was more thorough than I suggested.

I am not convinced!

The basic theme of the Neville essay in *The Raven* is that the lack of references in indexes of his "fairly extensive library of books on anarchism" suggests there is "no justification for the acceptance of a class struggle linkage with anarchism".

At random I applied Mr Neville's method to another subject. I picked up Pierre Lavendan's *French Architecture* from my limited library of books on architecture and followed Peter's recommendation to scrutinise the index. Naively I fancied French architecture may have something to do with building, but I found no mention whatsoever of either 'building', 'buildings' or 'built' in the index. Then I frantically sought 'design' and therein I found 'Descartes' but no hint of a word resembling 'design'. Assuming 'style' to have some relevance I looked it up – nowt down again.

Now might I conclude from these 'findings' that 'building', 'design' and 'style' has little to do with French architecture, in the same way that Peter Neville concludes that 'class struggle anarchism' has little to do with classical anarchism? Of course not. People who write indexes, often unwisely, assume that people who read them have a modicum of common sense and background knowledge about the subject in the literature.

Mr Neville claims that the methods of modern "sociological studies of social social stratification ('class' if you like) have now become quite sophisticated", especially when compared to the "naivety" of the "anarchist audience". Only sociologists, like Mr Neville, can offer "descriptions of reality". Much modern sociology has the sophistication of a Peter Rackman – it is a house not worth living in and one charges money for old rope, judging by Mr Neville's methods.

Brian Bamford

Dear *Freedom*,

Could you please follow basic democratic principles by allowing me to respond to the constant attacks on the Solidarity Federation that appear so consistently in your paper.

In an early sectarian offering in *Freedom*, Cheverton argued for the setting up of a new syndicalist organisation on the grounds that the Solidarity Federation was outdated and backward-looking. In his latest article Cheverton argues for a new organisation because the Solidarity Federation has failed to learn the lesson of history that "small political groups do not form new unions" (24th February 1998). As a member of the Solidarity Federation I am confused. Surely even we cannot be accused of both living in the past and failing to learn the lessons of the past at one and the same time!


For all the bile from Cheverton and co. in recent years, we are no nearer to knowing why syndicalists will be meeting in Bradford to set up a small political group. No doubt they will

start by proclaiming the 'lesson of history' before uniting around a ritual attack on the evils of the Solidarity Federation. But what on earth do they hope to achieve? Cheverton always makes repeated reference to the need for strike support, etc., which is all very good but does not alone make for anarcho-syndicalism.

In his last article Cheverton does argue for the need to 'inject' ideas into working class organisation. All I can say to this is that, as an active trade unionist, I have just about had my fill of political groups arriving at picket lines to 'inject' their ideas. This is an important point. What distinguishes anarcho-syndicalism is that it seeks to build a revolutionary mass organisation rooted in everyday life. The only alternative is to organise in small political groups or parties with the aim of influencing existing working class organisations from the outside.

Given Cheverton's long support for reformist groups such as the SAC from Sweden and the CGT of Spain, I strongly suspect that he seeks the setting up of a political group aimed at injecting 'militancy' into the decaying trade union movement. Well, good luck to him. All I ask is that he gets on with it and stops claiming it to be anarcho-syndicalism. I would also hope that *Freedom* set aside the links they have with Cheverton and co., stop their disgraceful censorship of past replies and print this letter.

Tony Crowther

please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ... 

Can only anarchists be ethical?

Dear *Freedom*,

I am writing to comment on Colin Johnson's letter ('Can Only Anarchists be Ethical?') in the 7th March issue. If I may begin with a quote: "Ethics are ... based upon reason, and ... to reason objectively you must be as free as possible of the dogma and assumptions which trammel behaviour and individual choices in any culture. In addition to being reasonable, you must also be logical and rational. Of all the socio-cultural political systems, anarchy provides the only irrefutable foundation for such freedom". What do we learn from this? Principally that 'reason', 'logic' and 'rationality' are not historically or culturally constituted concepts but ones that can be appealed to as examples of the transcendence of the thinking subject over his or her environment. Secondly, and perhaps even more perversely, that, unlike other political projects (Johnson cites Marxism, liberalism, socialism and conservatism), anarchism is the only social environment which permits this subject the unfettered exercise of his or her reason/logic/rationality. Johnson's argument is, of course, garbage.

The first thing to do when engaging in any sort of discussion of the thinking subject is to *situate* that subject. Human beings are born into a preconceived world; language and the way it structures our thoughts and actions is not something that comes from within us; rather *we are taught both how to speak and how to think*. Further, the words we use have historically constituted meanings, such that the words reason and rationality gain a great deal of their power from the part they played in the 'Enlightenment' project, which used them to constitute a specific method for arriving at truth. This 'scientific' truth was contrasted with religious truth, which was conversely understood in terms of 'superstition' and 'error'. In other words, the meanings of these words arose in a power struggle between two groups whose *rules* for constructing truth were diametrically opposed.

thus far, I have argued that thinking has rules. The constitution of those rules is culturally and/or historically specific, and

therefore one cannot speak of forms of thought that transcend time or place. This has implications for how we think about anarchist society. Johnson produces a logical inconsistency by arguing that all political theories actualised as social formations restrict free thinking. All that is, except anarchism. My contention is that there can be no such thing as free thought. Thinking is never free, and an anarchist society, like any other society, will exercise a grip on thought as powerful as any other. This should not make anarchism any less attractive to us. Capitalism as a world-system must be taken apart. The how is a crucial question, and as the recent debate on class struggle demonstrates, there are no easy answers. However, the end of capitalism will not produce instant freedom. Rather, it will produce a world in which people will be born and inscribed with language along with all the values and meanings that language concretises. (Note that I am arguing that a language is not a neutral tool which facilitates communication, but articulates the coding or encryption of particular modes of thought.)

Capitalism has produced one form of being-in-the-world, and an anarchist society would produce another. In the meantime, the sooner notions like objectivity, reason, logic and rationality are expunged the better. The sciences that gave them to us were all part of the nation-building project that brought us surveillance and the police. The fact that the sciences emerged when they did is not a coincidence, and certainly has nothing whatsoever to do with any naive notion of evolution.

Paul Tremlett

Dear *Freedom*,

Colin Johnson (letters, 7th March) maintains that to chop off your head in order to lose weight is logical, reasonable, but not rational. The point of this gruesome example, apparently, is to show that rationality may be distinguished from reason and logic by defining it as the sensible or sane *use* of reason and logic. Well, Johnson is entitled to define

rationality as he pleases; but if he wishes to make rationality in this sense part of the basis of his ethics, then, for him, the question 'what is ethical behaviour?' involves the question 'what is sensible or sane?' Now that question will elicit different answers from different people according to their conditioning – capitalist, socialist, fascist or whatever – and thus Johnson's claim that only anarchists can be ethical collapses. On his showing practically any way of life could be called ethical.

Kant tried to find an objective, universally recognisable basis for ethics in rationality itself – meaning by rationality not sensible or sane but *consistent* behaviour. He argued that it is *inconsistent* to act in such a way that you cannot simultaneously wish the principles on which you are acting to be made into universal laws; and that a rational, i.e. consistent, person is bound to respect the dictates of rationality, i.e. consistency. "With this compass in hand" he wrote, "men are well able to distinguish, in every case that occurs, what is good, what bad ..." Well, are they? Many a man comes to wish, for quite understandable reasons, to commit suicide; and such a man, considering that human beings experience in their lifetime far more sorrow than happiness, might also wish – reasonably and even humanely from this perspective – to destroy the human race. Given the means to fulfil his wish, he might go ahead. How would he thereby fail Kant's test? He *could* simultaneously will that it should become a universal law that any member of a hopelessly miserable race, given the opportunity, ought to put the whole race out of its misery. There's no inconsistency there – only, I should say, an utter blindness.

Talking of inconsistency, Johnson says he shares my hunch that we are not autonomous, but then says anarchists struggle to be so. To struggle to be something that by nature you are not and never can be is a rather futile exercise, and if ethics is part of that struggle (as Johnson maintains) it must be equally futile. Ethics is futile, not for that reason but because it is an attempt to provide human beings with a compass when no such thing can be made and all they need in order to find their way is to use their eyes.

Francis Ellingham

Sanctions against Iraq

Dear *Freedom*,

It is very disappointing to find an anarchist magazine 'analysing' the Middle East situation without distinguishing between the government of a country and the people who live in it. "Lift economic sanctions" you say. Lifting sanctions will benefit the government of Iraq (which is Saddam) and only benefit the people – to some extent – if that government so wishes. Evidently you believe that Saddam has no money to stock his hospitals. Strangely enough he has finance enough to have started building the largest mosque *in the world*, and to be carrying out – according to Professor Paul Rogers at Bradford – a chemical and biological warfare programme involving weapons which, as the Kurds already know, he has no scruples about using. If you want sanctions lifted what would you suggest in their place to control a megalomaniac dictator of the Hitler type? In six years such a man can get ready for any war. "Iraq" you say "is no threat to world peace". Oh really? Of course it depends on what you mean by 'world peace'. Perhaps you mean wars that don't reach Britain. Suppose Saddam fires rockets at Israel (to the delight of all Arab countries)? Suppose he decides to deliver a coup against the royals in Jordan?

Any fool knows that the US – which armed Saddam in the first place, and betrayed the Kurdish resistance – is not in this game for the good of the world, or, even less, of Iraqis (who in any case have been brainwashed by a government in total control of communications and which uses torture to keep up 'popular support'). It is obvious that Israel flouts the UN far more than Iraq does, and has more dangerous weapons, but you neglect to explain exactly how leaving Saddam alone will help this situation. Milan Rai's action in going directly to Iraqi people with medical aid is far more anarchistic than your appeal for the government to be let off the hook.

As I write Saddam *appears* to have given way to the threat of force: would he have done this in response to the mewing of the French and the Russians, who are in fact only interested in selling goods and arms to him as soon as possible? The cruel reality of children starving is not invented by UN sanctions: they starve in Indonesia, in Mexico, in Africa, even here in Brazil. The mad 'leaders' of nations play games with 'their' people everywhere; but each case has to be analysed thinking of result, and not which 'leader' has the worst motives. If Saddam's war stockpiles can now be destroyed, sanctions will of course be lifted – they could have been lifted years ago if Saddam had allowed inspection to be carried out. The world then has a breathing space to reflect on what can be done to contain this lunatic. At the moment his propaganda campaign seems to be doing fine; thanks, in the west, to those who allow the Iraqi government to pose as the guardian of 'its' people.

Jonn Roe

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