

## Drugs and Guns

There have been 26 shooting incidents in Harlesden in the last year. Six recent killings connected to 'yardie' in-fighting have had a connection to London NW10, including, most recently, the killing of Henry 'Junjo' Lawes. In the late '70s and early '80s, Junjo was the biggest name in reggae, the man whose productions for Volcano pretty much created the dancehall sound. All of that forgotten now – just a middle-aged black man running to stay alive, the gunman much younger, so the chase short and the end predictable. Blood in St Mary's Road and Junjo a statistic.

Harlesden has more than its fair share of crack, and more than its fair share of young men desperate enough to be ghetto stars that they'll sell rocks to other young men who just want not to be who they really are, if only for fifteen minutes. Most people here, though, just want to live their lives, second and third generation Irish and Afro-Caribbean couples just carrying on. Roundwood Park on a Sunday is a carnival of kids, dogs, big family picnics, Kosovo refugees playing football. The drugs and guns are there, though, and the fear.

On Saturday 19th June the Nation of Islam held a rally in Harlesden town centre. Well over a hundred turned out for it, demanding, simply, 'Stop the Killing', 'Gunmen Get Out', 'To Shoot Your Brother is Suicide'. The Black United Front, a community-based coalition, intends to organise a bigger rally in July. The Nation of Islam has begun to organise Black Watch patrols in Harlesden.

I never had much time for the Nation of Islam – anti-white racists with a particularly cranky take on what Islam is about and up to their necks in the shit that surrounds the assassination of Malcolm

X, so I thought. None of that mattered on 19th June. The demonstrators were 95% black, with a small group of supportive whites in attendance. Junjo Lawes was killed on the 14th. Five people had been shot in the preceding weeks. People had been afraid. For an hour or so, grouped together by the clocktower, that fear was gone, replaced by a new sense of community and a sense that the lives lost, and the lives wasted mattered; that the families mourning mattered; that people in NW10 mattered, if only to ourselves. A sense also that something could be done.

In his forceful new book *Redemption Song* (Verso), Mike Marqusee points to the basis for the Nation of Islam's continued presence within poor black communities. "The Nation grew within and against the culture of the ghetto. It set itself up as a counter-attraction to all the temptations of ghetto life: drugs, gambling, prostitution, prize-fighting". In the most fragmented working class communities "its promise of redemption linked the individual to the collective,

self-discovery to nationhood". The left in NW10 doesn't exist, except in the fantasies of its few remaining members. The SWP tell us on a Saturday that all our ills will be cured by the abolition of capitalism, but in much the same way that temperance societies used to tell us that all our problems were due to drink. As to what we do about the problems caused by capitalism in the here and now, they have nothing to say. New Labour has declared its war on the poor and a vacuum now exists as the local labour movement decays. In Harlesden that vacuum has been, at least temporarily, filled by the Nation of Islam. If we want to contest that space, if we want to build a movement committed to the self-determination of working class communities, we have first to understand why so many local people looked at the Nation of Islam demo and said 'at least someone's trying to do something'.

Crime is endemic to capitalism, a fair-ground mirror distortion of the social relations engendered by capital. For

(continued on page 4)



Police with a body bag after a recent shooting

# The Spanish Anarchists



**The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868-1936**

by Murray Bookchin

published by AK Press, 316 pages, £13.95\*

AK Press provides an admirable service reprinting this book first published in 1977 by Free Life Editions and in 1978 by Harper Colophon Books in paperback and long out of print.

The new edition is in a larger format and better bound; 31 of the original 32 illustrations are reproduced here with the unfortunate exception of the most useful one, the map of Spain. A new 'Preface' replaces the original 'Introduction', another sad loss since a comparison is useful. In that original 'Introduction', written in 1976, Bookchin is buoyant, self-confident about the importance of his history of Spanish Anarchism and even somewhat optimistic that it might not yet be too late for this book to provide a firm grounding in history for modern Anarchism before it degenerates into non-revolutionary, often trivial fragments. Some parts of a couple of paragraphs of the 1977 'Introduction' are incorporated in the new 'Preface', but his view in 1993 (the date of the 'Preface' for this 1998 edition) is less optimistic. "But today as in the sixties" he writes, "I still find it necessary to evoke a lived anarchic tradition whose expressed goals and practices were revolutionary, in contrast to ... today's 'postmodern' - and apparently 'post-revolutionary - era' (page 4). Recent comments on both sides of the Atlantic indicate that this book was not carefully read or well remembered, even among anarchists. It is to be hoped that making this book generally available again will eliminate those silly mistakes.

In the new 'Preface' Bookchin is still confident that his book is historically sound,

having discovered nothing in the many books since his to bring him to revise his work. Most of those books are concerned with shorter periods or more narrowly focused on specific places or issues than his is. However, he is less optimistic about modern Anarchism. "The often-unswerving commitment of militant rank-and-file Anarchists ... to a rational conception of what should be as the true fulfilment of human potentialities is more necessary today than ever in a time that is marked by compromises with the prevailing, irrational what is" (page 8). In 1995 he expanded this criticism into a long essay in *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*.

In *The Spanish Anarchists* Bookchin energetically disputes the idea that Spanish Anarchists are the "amorphous mass" of primitive rebels "described by Brenan and Hobsbawm" (page 159). He begins his history with Giuseppe Fanelli's visit to Spain in October/November 1868 bringing Bakunin's collectivist ideas to the already organised workers and peasants. They fell on fertile ground, the "intense localism of Spanish social life: the *patria chica* ... an almost untranslatable term that denotes the village and its immediate region - in short, the living arena of the rural Spaniard's world ... not merely a geographical or political unit, but the unit of society in every context"



drawing by Clifford Harper

(page 34-35). "Spanish Anarchism tried to sift the more positive features of the *pueblo* from its reactionary social characteristics and rear its concept of the future on the mutualism of village life" (page 36).

Because of this emphasis on localism and the treatment of the working poor by various governments - monarchy, dictatorships, and elected rulers - as well as the absentee landlord situations, even the gradually growing industrialisation and the migration of peasants to cities as workers, potential workers, and unemployed workers, didn't eliminate the growth of anarchism as independent affinity groups. When the various groups joined together as a network in October 1910, as the CNT (National Confederation of Labour), they retained their independent nature (page 144). In the cities the unions were sometimes groups of the same or similar crafts, but the stronger emphasis was on locality and diversity, and in small cities and in the rural areas the affinity groups were formed on the basis of locality rather than crafts. (e.g. see the discussion of the 'congress of Sans', Barcelona, 1918, page 154, and the diagram of CNT organisation, page 187).

This is all important to the long and complex history of Spanish anarchism because throughout its development until 1936-7 and through the various struggles between moderates and centralists on the one hand and active revolutionists and

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## OBITUARY

# Jim Allen



Jim Allen always considered himself a socialist. He always resisted the Labour and Communist implications of the label. He thought for and fought for the grass roots struggles of ordinary people. It has been commented that if he had been living in Spain in 1936, he might have been an anarcho-syndicalist.

Jim Allen became known for his writing for television. After becoming established for his commercial work, he was increasingly in a position to place more radical work. Perhaps the best known was *Days of Hope*, an examination of the betrayal of working class struggle by its own representatives ('leaders'). If this was a problem then, now

Labour supporters anguish in the Letters column of *The Guardian*. Other important works include *Hidden Agenda*, a suggestion that the established governing groups and security forces may be manipulating presentation and events in Northern Ireland. Dear oh dear, how shocking.

Jim Allen was also known for his collaboration with the film director Ken Loach. From an anarchist point of view, this produced *Land and Freedom*, based on the Spanish revolution and Civil War. An attempted military coup, with fascist backup, was resisted by working class and peasant organisation. With support and weapons channelled to the republican government and

Stalinist forces, including mistaken cooperation by some prominent anarchists, social transformation was suppressed. The storyline of the film draws to some extent on the experience of George Orwell with the POUM militia. *The Raven* no. 33 on 'Anarchism and the Arts' has extensive discussion of this film, including interviews with Jim Allen and Ken Loach. The film is available on video and has been broadcast on television. Go out, find the film, read the book (*Homage to Catalonia*), read *The Raven* no. 33 and make up your own mind.

**Jim Allen, writer and scriptwriter, died on 24th June aged 72.**

David Peers

### Recommended books for an understanding of Spanish anarchism:

#### Lessons of the Spanish Revolution (1936-1939)

by Vernon Richards

published by Freedom Press

260 pages £4.00

#### Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution

by José Peirats

published by Freedom Press

388 pages £11.95

#### The Anarchists of Casas Viejas

by Jerome R. Mintz

published by Indiana University Press

336 pages

special offer - was £13.99, but now available only from Freedom Press at £6.99

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independents on the other, the focus was always on a revolution which would lead beyond the work place to a whole new life of free development in education, in relations between the sexes and between generations, in social organisation, and in individual development and choices. Such was the case even among Anarcho-syndicalists who, Bookchin asserts, were usually more anarchists than they were syndicalists (pages 119-126).

Murray Bookchin writes engagingly with clarity and in great detail on the development of Spanish Anarchism in its social context from early membership in the International through the years to the gathering of the independent groups into the CNT in 1910, to the creation of the separate but connected Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) in 1927, up to 1936. Even the details of the, at least, semi-defection of Andres Nin and Joaquin Maurin to form their own groups and to merge in 1936 as the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) are provided.

Bookchin fills in the details of the development of the well known groups as well as their often fluctuating positions, including the struggles between them and within them. The betrayals, attacks, and cannibalising attempts of the usually moderate and reformist UGT, General Union of Workers (e.g. pages 212-213, 221, 241-246, 250); the regular suppression and re-emergence of the anarchist groups, the arrests and executions – nine thousand arrests in 1933 (pages 231-232); 1,725 indictments by military courts after the week-long insurrection in 1909 with about 450 tried and sentenced, seventeen to death with five executions including Francisco Ferrer, founder of the *Escuela Moderna*, who was not even in Barcelona during the insurrection (pages 137-138) as well as many other murders; the *atentados* where the *pistoleros* hired by various groups and the anarchists' indigenous revengers between 1918 and 1923 accounted for "about nine hundred lives in Barcelona alone and about 1,500 throughout Spain" (page 174); the many general strikes and full scale insurrections, all finally suppressed by the military; the growth and eventual solidarity of the bourgeoisie are all fully developed. He also chronicles the struggles within the CNT between moderates and syndicalists who tended toward reform and centralisation and the anarchist collectivists and later the affinity groups of the FAI who stood for revolution and a new way of life beyond the work place. He ends his history on 18th July 1936: "The generals' uprising had begun – but so too had the libertarian social revolution" (page 276).

In his final chapter, 'Concluding Remarks', Bookchin summarises his argument for the continuing importance of Spanish anarchism, especially in his final long paragraph beginning, "Yet the Spanish anarchists left behind a tangible reality that has considerable relevance for social radicalism today". The years from "1868 to 1936, were marked by a fascinating process of experimentation in organisational forms, decision-making techniques, personal values, educational goals, and methods of struggle". Anarchists "of all varieties – collectivist, syndicalist, and communist – had evolved an astonishingly well-organised subculture within Spanish society that fostered enormous freedom of action by local syndicates and affinity groups". Bookchin believes that the most important lesson of the Spanish anarchist movement for modern anarchism is its ability "to patiently knit together highly independent groups (united by 'social conviviality' as well as by social views) into sizable, coherent organisations, to coordinate them into effective social forces when crises emerged, and to develop an informed mode of spontaneity that fused the most valuable traits of group discipline with personal initiative. Out of this process emerged an organic community and a sense of mutual aid unequalled by any workers' movement of that era" (page 288).

This is the one essential history of Spanish anarchism and should be read by anyone interested in the subject. Bookchin didn't write his projected second volume on the revolution and civil war for reasons which he announces in his 'Preface', but he has written essays on the subject: in *Our Generation* (vol. 17, no. 2, Spring/Summer 1986) and in *Anarchist Studies* (vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1993) are two. In another sense, he didn't have to write a second volume. Bookchin agrees with Noam Chomsky's extended criticism and dismissal of Gabriel Jackson's *The Spanish Republic and Civil War, 1931-1939* (Princeton, 1965) in 'Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship' in *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York, 1969), and he dismisses Hugh Thomas's *The Spanish Civil War* (New York, 1961), agreeing with Vernon Richards' extended criticism in 'July 19, 1936: Republic or Revolution?' in *Anarchy* (no. 5, London, 1961).

John R. Doheny

## Banner Theatre of the Absurd



There is a whiff of the living museum about most left-wing meetings in England today. This was captured in the cabaret Banner Theatre play *Free For All* which showed at both Stalybridge Labour Club last month and in a shortened version at Manchester's Mechanics Institute this month.

*Free For All* is a bit of a Brechtian style critique of New Labour's attempt to transform the health service by bringing in private investment. The blurb of publicity put out by the company runs as follows: "Join Banner as they course through the arteries and veins of our public health care system. Listen to the heartbeat of an NHS in crisis as pompous politicians pronounce 'It's safe in our hands'."

Not only Banner Theatre and the English left will be worried about what's going on in the NHS and elsewhere in the welfare state. When they chant "Feel the adrenaline rush as hospitals are run by rat exterminators and building contractors!" Or "Hold on to your sanity as we visit a nightmare future where tobacco companies sponsor cancer wards". A

lot of folk are going to be troubled by these kinds of developments.

Anarchists are obviously anxious about New Labour, privatisation and sell-offs. The Banner cabaret plays on these anxieties. The villains of the show are clearly contemptible – Roy Oldham, Tessa Jowell, Lady Thatcher.

But what about the play's heroes? Tony Benn MP! Aneurin Bevan, architect of the National Health Service, fully adorned with a halo! Faced with these kind of folk, most anarchists will feel like George Orwell who, when once in a Greek restaurant in Soho, had to ask Malcolm Muggeridge to change places so that he wouldn't have to eat his lunch looking at the 'corrupt face' of Kingsley Martin, the then editor of *New Statesman*.

When the grey features of Tony Benn MP appeared on the screen behind the play, Derek Pattison, President of Tameside Trades Council, whispered to me: "He's never had a proper job, has he?" The play only came alive for me when it got onto the local issues and real people like the Tameside careworkers and Kidderminster's hospital employees.

The problem for the 'old left' is that, as a kind of ancient regime, it has to constantly hark back to 1945-48 and the post-war Attlee government and nationalisation. It is a defensive, conservative and hopeless strategy. And it shows! If it is to survive, the old authoritarian left is going to need a good spring clean.

Mack the Knife

### UNISON and The Arts

While the Banner Theatre play *Free For All* was being performed there was an attempt by officers of the UNISON union to interfere with the play's content. It was suggested that the show should have in it something nice about the Labour Party. Pressure was, it is believed, put on the producers to say something good about Rodney Bickerstaff, the leader of UNISON.



#### — COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 7th August, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 29th July.

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If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

# Beauty is more than 'in the eye of the beholder'

Vernon Richards' title suggests that there is a beauty in a photographic portrait, which transcends the individual perception of the photographer. Certainly, many of his images of his personal lovers, women friends and children testify to this, as their appeal as strong, creative, human beings can be felt by any outsider who turns the page.

Richards' role as the photographer, though, should not be underestimated.

It is through his recognition of a moment's truth, and his appreciation of light on form, which gives us these delightful portraits. In particular it is his focus on women, which sings out and celebrates the vivacity and strength of women 'in their prime'.

Though few words accompany her image, it is easy to understand how Maria Luisa Berneri captivated his heart, and it's good to see her range of moods which give a more complex portrait of her character. It is her image, which sits on the front cover, and one feels she is still central to Richards' universe.

There is altogether a different feel about Peta, seen as

a mother with her daughters in her maturity as a fulfilled woman. He has immortalised her warmth and generous nature; it is though interesting that we do not see images of her ageing as his companion for 35 years.

Other portraits are memorable. He gives a tableau of faces – Simone, Elizabeth, Nina – celebrating women in their middle years, showing their intelligence and vibrant personalities. Borne out of an affectionate nature and out of personal friendship Richards gives us a record of a

particular time and a particular age. His record shows women as equal companions to men in their contribution to life's energy and motion. His accompanying text is factual and personal too, often noting their premature death.

Some of the portraits of children capture the exuberance of youth which we all recognise in our lost childhood, and his pictures of Giliana's daughter are timeless. But it is the radiance of the women and of Maria Luisa in particular which steals the show.



Frances Sokolov

Beauty is indeed more than 'in the eye of the beholder'; it can also be observed in the relationship between the photographer and his friends which result in such candid and affectionate

Maria Luisa addresses a group of Glasgow factory workers



The children of Herbert and Ludo Read



portraits. Thank you, for printing them. It's good to share them.

Liz Ashton Hill

(This 88-page book is available from Freedom Press at £6.95, post-free inland, 15% overseas)

Maria Luisa Berneri



Peta



Simone Gangnet

(continued from page 8)

every belly there's an underbelly, as the crime writer Ian Rankin puts it. One of the myths being spun by both police and politicians about the shootings in Harlesden is that they're somehow particular, entirely about 'yardie' gangs battling for turf, as if crime is something imported from Jamaica. All of this of course allows New Labour's local representatives a chance to play the race card, and the police an opportunity to step up their presence again, this time with community consent. There are two big holes in the 'yardie' argument, though. One, it pretends that crime, that battles for drug turf, the use of force to gain that turf and the market for hard drugs, are all peculiar to the 'yardie' gangs and the community around them. Two, it denies the role of the police in perpetuating the idea of 'yardie' crime. The trial recently of 'yardie' informer Eaton Green revealed that officers of the Drug Related

Violence and Intelligence Unit ran Green and protected him while he carried out a spate of armed robberies in the UK, even allowing him to bring two accomplices, Cecil Thomas and Rohan Thomas, into the UK. From 1994 they also ran Delroy Denton, who raped and stabbed to death Marcia Lawes in Brixton, and was shielded from both crime squad and immigration attention by his handlers, PC Steve Barker and an immigration officer, Brian Fotheringham. Roy Ramm, former head of the Met's Yardie Squad, has stated that "I'm absolutely convinced that there is no such thing as a black mafia or black Godfather operating in this country" and describes the yardie gangs as, unlike the Mafia or Colombian cartels, opting for a 'little and often' method of importation rather than any large-scale drug smuggling operation. In truth, we have a government in office which is set on the task of redistributing the resources currently spent on welfare to the pockets of

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Healthy Autonomy

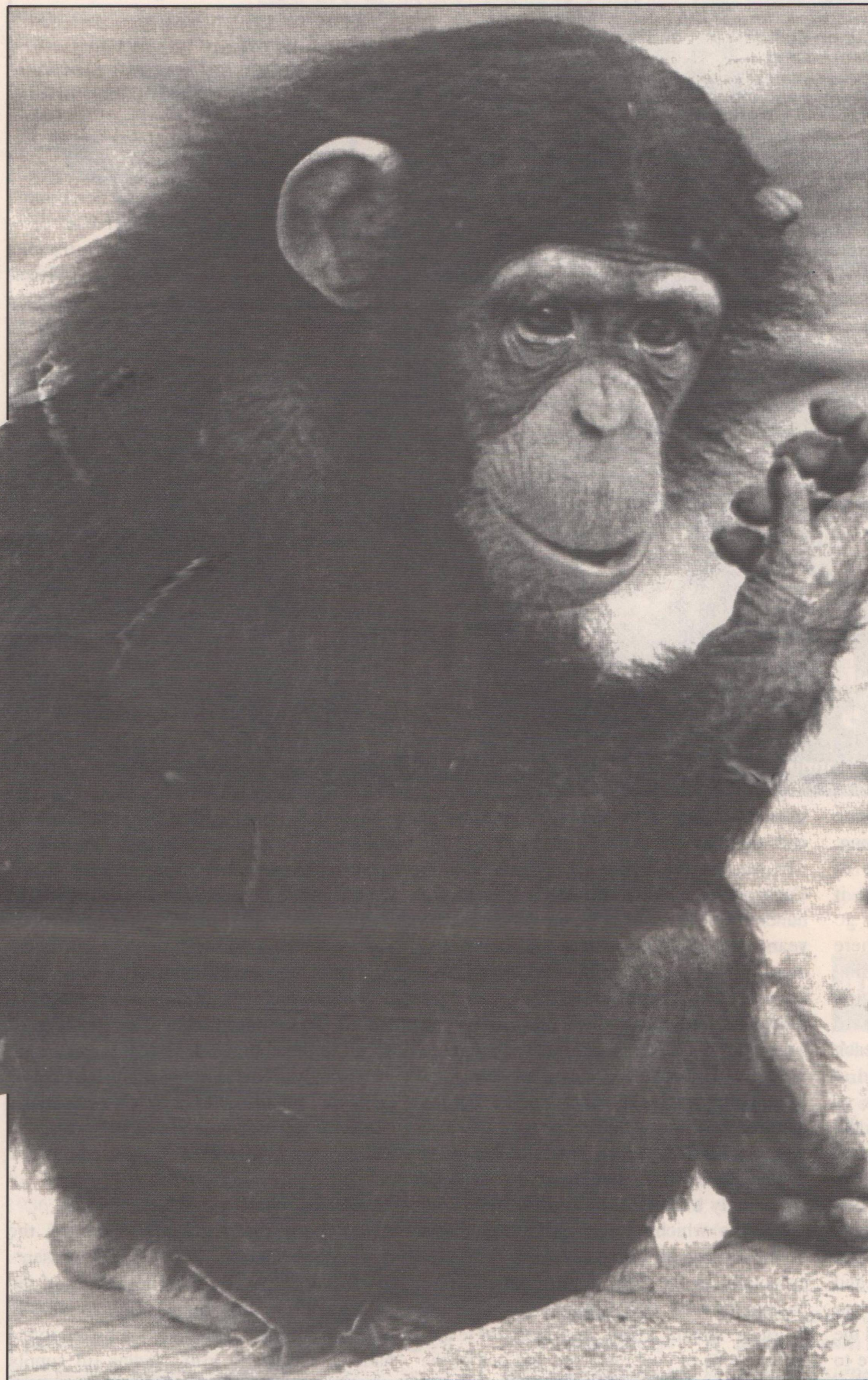
I have a strong bias in favour of research findings so long as they support my ideological preconceptions. This is why in October 1996 I keenly reported in this column a Channel 4 *Equinox* feature that told me how dominant baboons and top civil servants have fewer heart problems and live longer than subordinate baboons and bottom civil servants. ('Affairs of the Heart', *Freedom*, 5th October 1996).

An epidermiologist, Richard Wilkinson, from University College London, studying health files covering a long period found that "high rank carries with it the privilege of control, freedom from censure and powers of delegation, whereas the stress that features in the live of society's subordinates siphons off energy vital to powering the body's natural functions".

He then learned of Californian long-term studies of baboons and another study of monkeys which noted that the low-status monkeys that suffered most were lonely isolates. Those who, despite their inferior position in the pecking order, engaged to the full in social activities like mutual grooming, non-mating intercourse with the other sex and playing with infants, had far better life chances.

I, of course, extrapolated to the concept of workers' control by way of the findings of industrial psychologists about satisfaction depending on the 'span of autonomy' and the finding that the self-employed, though poor and insecure but continually making decisions for themselves, are happier and live longer. Sadly, that television programme of 15th September 1996 brought little public discussion, but I hope that the resulting book will. It is *The Social Determinants of Health* by Michael Marmot and Richard Wilkinson, to be published in August at £26.50.

Describing its findings in *The Guardian* for 6th July 1999, Jane Feinmann describes how their work on the health records of 17,000 civil servants was followed by a further study which "delved further and found that you don't have to be hugely rich and important to enjoy optimum health, although it helps. It's the power to control all aspects of your life – work particularly – that wealth and status tend to confer that is the key determinant of health. Men who have low job control face a 50% higher risk of new illness: heart attacks, stroke, diabetes or merely ordinary infections. Women are at slightly lower risk but low job control was still a factor in whether they fell ill or not."



This phenomenon has already been given a label: 'the biology of social inequality', and Professor Wilkinson adds that, "as humans

we are exquisitely sensitive to our position in the hierarchy, to put-downs, being excluded, or not being valued. Simply being at the

bottom of the heap causes an acute state of anxiety – which explains why the adrenal glands of paupers are larger than those of the middle classes".

In the same article Jane Feinmann also reports that the Health Education Authority (HEA) is to launch a People at Work campaign at the end of this month. I don't know who funds the HEA, but its new leaflet *People at Work* identifies lack of control over work as a major stressor. It also encourages people to stand up against bullying, form alliances with colleagues, join trade unions and get involved in schemes that promote staff participation.

However, these are not the trends observable in working environments today. Trade union membership has dropped by a huge proportion in the past twenty years, and worker participation is not a phrase you hear nowadays. Alliances with colleagues are not likely to be found in the casualisation of work that is seen in every aspect of life. Jane Feinmann also cites the view of Professor Pamela Gillies, HEA director of research, that "poverty doesn't necessarily mean bad health".

In that television interview of 1996, Professor Wilkinson made the same point slightly differently. He said: "Wealth does not determine health. What *does* is the gap between the rich and the poor. The larger the gap, the sicker the society". Now we know how that gap grew wider all through the 1980s and is now on the rise again. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion: Labour's Inheritance* found at the end of last year that the number of people in Britain living on low incomes relative to the average is far higher than it was twenty years ago, with the number in households with below half average income rising from four millions in 1982 to eleven million in 1992. Although the number fell in the mid-1990s, 1996-97 showed a significant increase of over 9% to 10.5 million individuals. Just one of them is me, and I expect that another is you.

Colin Ward

the upper echelons of the middle class. The social consequences of this, so far as New Labour is concerned, will be confined to working class areas. Policing becomes containment, making sure the poor prey only on the poor. The notion of 'yardie' crime as a distinct phenomena allows us the illusion that such policing is 'for our own protection'.

It is, though, precisely because crime thus becomes something that the poor do to each other, that those of us who profess to believe in working class self organisation cannot afford to ignore it. As the criminologists John Lea and Jock Young remark, "working class crime really is a problem for the working class". In their work *What is to be Done about Law and Order* (Pluto), Lea and Young put forward as a solution an unworkable reformist strategy based on increased police accountability. Nevertheless, they understand the core issues: "It is vital to realise the contradictory nature of working class crime.

Its cause is seeing through the deception and inequality of the world; its direction is towards that of selfishness. Its cause is righteous, its direction individualistic. The political energies that could have been harnessed for a transformation of society become channelled into ensuring its inertia".

There has been little real work done by the 'left' to tackle issues around crime in working class communities. The obvious reason for this is – tellingly – that most 'left' activists don't live in communities affected by crime. Republicans and socialists have come together on estates in Dublin and in the Six Counties to organise campaigns against dealers. It is good to see also the Independent Working Class Association set itself the task of addressing issues around drugs and crime (see *Red Action*, vol 4, issue 1, June/July 1999). The IWCA statement 'Cracking Up' is rare in having the courage to deal with the issues head on. As they say: "Drug use

clearly has a major impact on working class communities which cannot be avoided by those who are committed to championing working class agendas". But what can be done? In his book *Anarchism Revolution*, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin takes up the issues around drugs and crime. As he puts it: "Only the community can stop drug trafficking, and it is our responsibility, however you look at it". The strategy advanced is based on establishing a combination of street counselling and street clinics with community action against dealers:

1. Set up drug education classes in the community ... to expose the nature of the drug trade, who it hurts, and how the government, banks and pharmaceutical companies are behind it all.
2. Expose the death merchants and their police protectors ...
3. Harrassment of the dealer i.e. threatening phone calls ... having citizens marching outside

their place of business and other tactics.

4. Set up drug rehabilitation clinics so that junkies can be treated ...
5. Physical elimination of the dealer; intimidation, driving the person out of a neighbourhood or out of town ..."

The only way ultimately to tackle crime in working class communities is by replacing it with politics – by rebuilding community solidarity and self-organisation such that crime is no longer seen as the only survival option. In doing so, we have one clear lesson to learn from the Nation of Islam. If we are not concerned with giving communities a sense of self worth, of pride and respect, if we are not able to operate, as Mike Marqusee puts it, "within and against the culture of the ghetto", then our politics will be irrelevant to the communities we purport to address, and the chance to rebuild working class solidarity will be lost.

Nick S.

# China



Tiananmen Square during the 49th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

Shenzhen, China's Special Economic Zone on the border with Hong Kong, enjoys a reputation of being one of China's economic boom towns. As such it attracts many of China's rural poor who go there seeking work in a country where unemployment is growing at a frightening rate. In February of this year four young girls set off on the journey from Beijing to Shenzhen to look for work. They didn't reach their destination. When the train stopped at Shangqiu in Henan province hundreds of people tried to clamber aboard through the doors and windows. The girls were crushed to death in this stampede for jobs.

The term 'Greater Hong Kong' was first used in 1992 by the Japanese Nomura Research Institute to refer to the coming together of Hong Kong's industrial management and China's cheap labour force. In 1996 GDP per capita in Hong Kong was US\$24,000 and the labour force was becoming too expensive to exploit fruitfully. Over the border into China the same figure was in the region of US\$700 and so clearly a ratio of some 35 to 1 was worthy of attention. This process has been ongoing for some time and did not wait for Hong Kong to return to the motherland. Overall in China from 1979 to 1995 some US\$150 billion of foreign money has been invested in the country making it the world's largest recipient of foreign investment after the US itself. Two-thirds of this investment comes from Hong Kong and Taiwan and a

substantial part of the Hong Kong donation ends up in Shenzhen.

It was in Shenzhen that the original Cabbage Patch Dolls were manufactured and hundreds of thousands of teenagers have, for years, been flooding in from the poor inland areas to work 10-15 hours a day, seven days a week, sleeping thirty to a room with poor food. They are only allowed one toilet break a day and sick leave, breaks and vacations are virtually unknown. To complain results in instant dismissal and for each one fired a hundred destitutes wait to take their place.

Those who are sacked are not the most unlucky ones. The unluckiest are dead. Indeed it was only a series of horrendous industrial 'accidents' which brought people's attention to the reality of China's industrial record, especially in the Special Economic Zones, back in the early 1990s. Figures for 1991 saw fourteen miners killed in China for every million tons of coal extracted and one of the worst single 'accidents' was in 1993 when 81 were killed and 51 injured in a fire in a doll making factory in Shenzhen. We use inverted commas because the doors had been locked by the owners to prevent stealing.

But it should not surprise that the destitute from China's hinterland still come looking for jobs in what amounts to near concentration camp conditions. News of industrial accidents doesn't travel far in The People's Republic of China and when the Beijing-Shenzhen line was opened to celebrate Hong Kong's return to the motherland many including the girls we mentioned were excited at the chance of a 60-hour week under dim fluorescent lighting for a pittance to send home to their families who would have no other income. Their deaths are of no concern to the regime who speak instead of trying to limit the flow of workers and maintain 'social order in the countryside'. The Chinese regime wants to continue its policy of what sociologists have called 'internal colonisation' with the poor in the west of the country supplying raw materials to the affluent east who send back low quality goods and export the rest. In China the gap between the richest and the poorest has been calculated at 80:1

Yet at the recent National People's Congress (NPC) even the Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, spoke repeatedly of the 'danger of instability'. It is from the poorer provinces like Sichuan that the floating workers are on the move making it hard for Beijing to control the population. Indeed, the Chinese administration is going through one of its nervous phases as reports grow from a trickle to a steady drip of unrest in the hinterland, violent protests and, increasingly, of mysterious bombings. China's economic boom (if there ever was one) has certainly come to an end and nobody, even Zhu Rongji, knows what the future holds.

### The Asian crisis

Away from the NPC and back to the countryside China's 800,000,000 peasants live in another world. On the plateau of the Middle Yellow River there is little in the way of urban comfort. Although it is linked to the national electricity grid candles till supply most light and few have televisions in their homes built of mud. Since the system of forced communism collapsed so have the schools and the hospitals. There is a yawning gap between Shenzhen's shopping malls and places like Sichuan where dreams end up being crushed on the train in the scramble for crumbs. No wonder Beijing fears *luan* (disorder). So do Western regimes. Only the people, it would seem, have nothing to lose but their chains.

The economic crisis that began in Thailand and then spread from there throughout the region and then the world has begun to expose the flaws of the inefficient and corrupt Chinese regime. The NPC ended having seen more 'opinions' (a euphemism for criticism) voiced than normal for such occasions. Many delegates complained, for instance, about the environment as their Mercedes waited for them with engines idling. Meanwhile inside the hall, Li Peng – the butcher himself – spoke in almost taoist terms of the nation's power which belonged to the people whilst outside the police made a grab for any passer-by who might conceivably produce a placard. Tiananmen Square – the scene of the massacre ten years ago – is still fenced off. Officially this is so it can be re-paved ready

for celebrating in October the 50th anniversary of the founding of the 'People's Republic'. Nothing to do, of course, with the possibility that some wayward souls might have wished to use it to remember another date: 4th June.

### Two thousand riot police attack peaceful demonstration in Anhui

Since 28th June, Huainan city in Anhui Province has been the site of a sit-in demonstration by over two thousand workers from the Anhui Paper Manufacturing Factory. The workers gathered on Huainan's main Route 206 to protest against the factory's closure and demand that the government return to them the money they had previously been forced to invest in the company via a compulsory share-purchase scheme. They are also demanding livelihood guarantees from the local authorities.

During 1998, the factory underwent a restructuring that included 'shareholderisation' – a CCP euphemism for privatisation. Each employee was required to buy shares worth a minimum of Rmb 3,000 or faced being laid off and losing all statutory employment rights and benefits. Faced with this impossible situation, workers had no choice but to use personal savings to buy shares.

Huainan's current mayor and one of the city's deputy mayors were both former directors of the Anhui Paper Manufacturing Factory. Many employees believe their current predicament is directly related to these two officials. They are insisting that the two come forward and negotiate with the workforce. However throughout the five-day protest, the local government has refused to talk to the workers and failed to respond to their demands.

On 1st July five hundred workers from the Huainan Electronics Factory responded to a call for support from workers at the Anhui Paper Manufacturing Factory and joined the sit-in on Route 206. From the gates of the paper factory, the sit-in stretched back over 500 metres along Route 206. Banners were hung saying 'Protect Livelihood Rights', 'Return the Share-purchase Funds', 'Restore Production', etc.

Since the start of the sit-in, the protesters have surrounded the factory director and factory party secretary who came out to talk to the workers. On the evening of 29th June, the mayor of Huainan dispatched over two hundred riot police to try to force the release of the two factory bosses but they were outnumbered by the workers. At 4am on 2nd July over two thousand armed riot police returned to the scene of the sit-in and violently attacked the peaceful protest. Many employees were injured in the process of forcing the workers to disperse and release the factory directors.

Later that morning, outraged workers marched through the streets to voice their anger at the police violence. According to eye-witnesses at the scene, at least five thousand workers have now joined the march which is continuously expanding as workers from nearby factories express their solidarity. The demonstrators slogans include: 'Down with Corruption', 'Give Us Back Our Factory', 'We want to Eat', 'We Demand a Livelihood'. Passers-by are also agreeing with the anti-corruption denunciations and expressing support for the marchers.

For the past week, workers at the Anhui Paper Manufacturing Factory have peacefully tried to uphold their right to a livelihood and protect the future of their factory. The response of the local government has been to first ignore them, then refuse to meet with them and finally to send in armed riot police, causing many needless injuries and provoking widespread outrage among the city's workers.

China Labour Bulletin

## OBITUARY Karl Kreuger

In March 1999 our dear friend and anarchist Karl Max Kreuger passed away, he was only 52 years old. He was found dead in his house of natural causes. Karl had many contacts all over the world, he ran a-infos and more. Two hundred people attended his funeral, which turned out to be a fine farewell. Some friends are trying to find out all the contacts Karl had. We know he had a subscription on *Freedom*.

Peetje Lanser

# Dead centre!

Dear Editors,

In his letter to *Freedom*, (26th June, 'What does anarchism mean?'), Donald Rooum has hit the nail on the head, scored a bullseye, got it point blank, held the head up, hit dead centre, and any other cliché you care to use meaning was absolutely correct – on two counts.

First, aiming for perfection is logically the only thing to aim for, whatever you are trying to achieve (providing the perfect does not become the enemy of the good or the best). Not only, as Donald says, does it give the best chance of hitting/achieving your objective, it also tells you things about yourself: how competent you may be, what sort of person you are, and so on.

Second, and most important, is his profound statement that "the aim of anarchism is perfect freedom from coercive institutions". I would run this under *Freedom* as part of the paper's logo!

There is just one little quibble, but I will come to that later. Anarchists have always been against government because of its coercive authoritarian nature. Governments, or States, are the only entities which are allowed to kill people. And providing this is done according to acceptable published rules the majority think this is more or less fair. The degree to which such rules may be challenged is the degree to which a State, or its government, is usually considered to be 'civilised'. Anarchists reject this, and most

other activities of the State, because the power of decision and action is taken away from them (those affected) by institutions. (Whether or not a group of anarchists would kill a child-eating cannibal is another debate.)

The 'other institutions' mentioned above are not only those of government *per se*. The coercive process of government is one which relies on many institutions acting in concert. Government, religion, armed forces, the various arms of the enforcement of law and justice, the tax-gathering machinery, the various and many bodies which implement regulations and controls, even the means by which people are educated in a society relies, finally, upon coercion. All of these (and many others I have overlooked) affect our freedom to act, to choose, and to decide for our selves as free individuals. So they are all coercive, if only in that they have, to some degree, the power to enforce their purpose upon us.

So to the above mentioned quibble. Donald, and other readers, if you look under the crossed wires sighting your perfect shot, you will see that the only logical conclusion anarchists can come to is that all institutions are coercive. I would claim that it is an inherent part of their very nature to be coercive. They do not have to be part of the government machine to be so; simply being an institutional form is enough.

Supporting evidence? Look at the way transnational corporations behave (commercial institutions, some of which

coerce governments). Is Monsanto acting coercively in its attempts to spread genetically modified life forms into the environment or not? If you consider the range of problems individual humans confront, some institution or another is usually the source of that problem.

You may think there can be such a thing as a benign institution, one that actually does, or is, good. I can't think of one which falls unambiguously into this category. Usually, any good resulting from institutional involvement occurs either in spite of, or as an unavoidable by-product of, the institution's true agenda. And if you can think of a benign institution, does it not demand from participants acknowledgement of its history, conformity to its culture, acceptance of its (hierarchical) power structure? – and if so are these demands compatible with anarchy?

Institutions formed the chains which Rousseau railed against. In his day they were fairly simple, the church and the State. Today institutions are more subtle to their potential critics. The web which encloses those in more privileged parts of the world is softened by the material privileges institutions provide, but in poorer, institutionally weak societies the chains are harsher than they have ever been. Dutch institutions farm five acres in poorer countries, to feed the Dutch, for every acre farmed in Holland. All rich nations do the same, it is what banana republics (and the Monroe doctrine) are all about.

So, if you accept the quibble, the proposed addition to the *Freedom* logo should read, 'The aim of anarchism is perfect freedom

from institutions'. Put it out on the net, paint it everywhere (incitement to inform), send it to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and all the others. A perfect statement about perfection which would lead to the chosen imperfections of anarchy is a rare oxymoron, deserves as many good homes as we can give it. Humans will only be free when we learn to live without institutions.

Colin Johnson

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# What anarchism means

Dear Editors,

In his response to my article (*Freedom*, 29th May) Paul Tremlett showed that not only did he miss the point I was making but that he is also badly misinformed of the history and meaning of anarchism.

He claims that "Bakunin and those other intellectuals of the nineteenth century, recognised as anarchists [by whom he doesn't say], directed their activities against an historically and cultural specific apparatus: the nation state ... [which also] implies the desirable abolition of capitalism". Well spot on, Paul, but you miss the other side of the equation. Anarchism is not analysable from the name we use, it is analysable as a human response within an historical development. Bakunin (and most of those around him) also demanded the maximum possible amount of individual freedom. Here is a selection of quotes for those who don't believe this:

"Public and private morality falls or rises to the extent that individual liberty is restricted or enlarged."

"Henceforth, order in society must result from the greatest possible realisation of individual liberty, as well as of liberty on all levels of social organisation".

"The internal reorganisation of each country on the basis of the absolute freedom

of individuals."

"Freedom is the absolute right of every adult man and woman to seek no other sanction for their acts than their own conscience and their own reason, being responsible first to themselves and then to the society which they have voluntarily accepted".

"Do you want to make it impossible for anyone to oppress his fellow-man? Then make sure that no one shall possess power."

Bakunin took this position from his origins within the nihilist movement. Nihilism being based first and foremost on the absolute freedom of the individual. The whole 'use value' of freedom (to hijack the Marxian phrase) is in the free expression and development of the individual.

I would argue that anarchism only makes historical sense as a continuation of the nihilist movement revitalised (after its degeneration under Nechaev) by the socialist and humanist ideas brought to it by Bakunin. The current of anarchism that flows from this can be seen in great anarchists such as Albert Joseph (Libertad), the early Victor Serge, Octave Garnier, Severino Di Giovanni and arguably in various libertarian communists around the early situationist milieu (and today includes those of us who call ourselves anarchist nihilists).

Why is Paul Tremlett ignorant of this basic fact? I think he is an honest anarchist and so I can only assume he has obtained his views from the censored writings of Bakunin circulated by various libertarian Marxists. Read the original *Catechism of a Revolutionary*, Paul.

However even classic anarchist communists like Kropotkin state, "[the free man] would thus reach full individualisation".


Anarchism encompasses both individual freedom and social equality within its dialectic (as did Marx, something forgotten by Marxists, including some of those who

drifted into anarchism after the '50s, or so it often seems). The only legitimate authority it recognises is our own authority over ourselves.

As for my desire for perfection in a future anarchy, I stand by it absolutely (and I'm not interested in definitions from bourgeois dictionaries, Paul), but this doesn't imply I think it will be obtained. As Kropotkin said, anarchism is an ideal. But the dialectic is an on-going open process. Paul is right, anything else would be deadly.

However I don't think that we should take the opinions of dead men with beards at face value. I'm an anarchist not a christian. Bakunin also argued for the coercion of those who harm others (without just cause). While I would totally agree with the spirit of that remark – as I believe not in the "freedom of the individual to do as they please", as Paul Tremlett puts it, but in the maximum freedom of individuals who do not harm others (without just cause) – it was the dangers of this stance (manifest in the LAF meeting) that that I was attacking. My point was, making universal statements about what types of people are going to be coerced is a very dangerous thing (as are all non-particular generalisations). If we want to preserve the freedom of the inoffensive individual, we cannot attack the generalisation of the offensive individual (as my argument effectively demonstrated). Particular instances need to be taken as just that, free of any abstract generalisations about types of people or actions. Sometimes certain individuals will no doubt require coercion. But to protect our own freedoms we must be very wary of doing this, create a society where antisocial action is rare, and only perform the odious task of coercion when we have no other choice. And perhaps when it does happen we should look a little closer at the society that partly created that individual.

Steve Ash

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Published by Freedom Press  
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Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate Press,  
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