

London Anarchist Forum

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19th January 1990: Speaker booked; details later.

26th January 1990: 'The Timeless Way' — the ideas of Christopher Alexander, architect and planner (speaker Brian Richardson).

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So, although it was popular unrest in Panama itself which finally made the US unseat Noriega, the invasion has involved an aerial bombardment with civilian casualties in the poor areas, 1400 people had their homes destroyed in the attack on Noriega's headquarters; it is reported that more than 300 non-combatants have been killed and humiliated.

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END OF STALINISM
Anarchist Challenge

The phenomenal transformations going on in Eastern Europe at the moment have been said to put the Western powers in the age-old challenging position of people whose dreams are fulfilled unexpectedly. This is questionable, since for decades the two blocs have propped each other up and presumably there have been people in power in both, with enough intelligence to disbelieve their own propaganda and know that the collapse of the other side is about the worst thing that could happen for their own power base.

But for us anarchists! For us, we have suddenly been faced with the realisation of one of our dreams. For years we have been faced with the phoney conflict between Stalinist and Western versions of class society. Unfortunately it is not now a simple matter of rejoicing: 'one down, one more to go', however much that may be the underlying ground of any future programme.

Certainly there is a very real sense in which it does simplify matters in just that way. For years what is broadly called the Left has been bedevilled by two main harmful influences — Stalinism and Reformism. The one evil as the agency of a new ruling class, the other totally unable to break with the old ruling class, although occasionally providing it with an ideological exercise for remodelling itself more efficiently on the lines of the new ruling class.

Now, though there is still a Stalinist remnant and though there are a plethora of other Leninist groups, most of which have in fundamentals long ago sold out to Stalinism, there is no convincing argument that Stalinists can put as to why one of their organisations should be seen as the organisation of the working class. Their age-old argument that all other groupings are splitters — that even if there are some slight ills in the 'workers paradise', the demands of unity insist that these be ignored, and those who mention them are objectively agents of the Right — is now nonsense. Nor will it be easy to put together a viable party, with a vision of a socialist world consisting of Cuba, Albania, Vietnam, Angola (betrayed equally by China and the Soviet Union).

One probably can't write off Reformism as a way of misleading radicals so easily. Though — with Kinnock's new programme — the Labour Party has effectively abandoned any aim of improving society and though the Labour Left (sccepting the imminent possibility of a winnable election) is keeping its head

1 Though, from outside Stalinist ranks, the majority of the largest Fourth International would probably endorse such nonsense, the hostility between Trots and Stalinists would make the emergence of such a party very difficult

(continued from page 1)

There is only one way of defeating the government on this and other issues which are against the *real* public interest — not by waiting another two years for permission by Thatcher to put one's miserable cross on a ballot paper and hope for the best but by voting with our feet! Not just on a sunny Sunday at Easter, but every day until the government takes notice. Surely the lesson of East Europe needs to be learned by the people of the capitalistic Western countries, smug and satisfied with their plastic cards and plastic-presented-processed-pap.

Do we want the ambulance people, and on their terms? Then let us invade Whitehall and knock down the Downing Street wall in our hundreds and thousands!

down. This is probably only a temporary demise.²

But by and large anarchists have in the past three quarters of a century been faced with the worry that whenever we protest against whatever injustice, whenever we try to build unions or any other organisation for workers to defend their conditions, to construct co-ops and co-operative ventures, communes, free school, etc., we may be aiding the agents

2 Though it is interesting to note that since Kinnock can only envisage politics in terms of electoral prospects, Labour only wants to see the current in-fighting in the Tory Party slightly damage Mrs Thatcher. It can see far enough to see she is likely to be an electoral liability as leader and so want to leave her in power. It cannot see that she wouldn't accept defeat and that rather than be beaten (as she beat Heath) she would destroy her party. She knows enough dirt about her and ministers to do it, and if she were going down she'd take them down with her, regardless of any dirt they had to throw at her.

PEACE BREAKS OUT

Events in Eastern Europe have been moving so rapidly that it has been difficult to step back from the excitement of the changes and take stock of the new situation. Now that I have had the chance to do so I must confess to mixed emotions. There is nothing more liberatory than the experience of collective strength overthrowing institutional power and it has been a real pleasure to watch the pompous party officials of the Eastern bloc swept away by street demonstrations. Nevertheless, every time I watch the pictures of the demonstrations I also have an underlying sense of unease. The apparently united people of Eastern Europe have only one clear aim which is a completely understandable desire to see the removal of one party rule. As soon as it comes to creating an alternative, confusion emerges and there is a danger that they will settle for an imitation of a Western economy and Western political institutions.

Looking out from East Germany at the sophisticated advertising and subtle misrepresentations of reality that come from West German television, it must be easy to be carried away by the contrast between the two societies. The West has packaged and marketed itself as the culture which can deliver an endless supply of consumer goods. The media presentation is one of confident, strong and secure people blessed by good looks and very high standards of living. The basic insecurities of life in a consumer economy have been glossed over. The Eastern Europeans get most of their ideas about what goes on in the West from radio, TV, video and popular music and have projected onto this framework a series of hopes and aspirations that make the West seem far more attractive that it actually is.

I doubt whether many people in Eastern Europe are fully aware of the extent of homelessness in a country like Britain, or of how you are treated in a Social Security Office or, more fundamentally, the numbers of people suffering from stress related illnesses and living on a regular diet of tranquillisers (currently around 1 in 10). The assumption which has been propagated is that people in the West have easy access to consumer goods which have been denied people in the East by the inefficiencies of party rule. These are real enough but once party rule is removed an adoption of Western economic methods will not automatically supply the expected goodies. When they do not arrive, or rather when they are obtained by a few and still unobtainable by the majority, dissatisfaction is likely to return with a vengeance without any clear perspective as to what to do about it. But another way my fundamental sense of unease lies in the fact that people who have been made to suffer so much by the cruelties of bureaucratic rule deserve better than to deliver themselves over to the cruelties of a free market economy.

There is, however, another possibility open to the people of Eastern Europe. State socialism and all it stands for may have been rejected but there are many dissidents who still want to create a libertarian form of socialism. There are, naturally, many conflicting ideas of how to go about creating this and what a libertarian socialist society would look like but it is the possibility of serious attempts to pursue this objective which most excites me because of its

of a differing section of the ruling class to ride to power. We could not distinguish our activity sufficiently from that of power seekers without damaging valuable libertarian rank and file initiatives. It wouldn't be true to say that this is no longer a danger, but it isn't the same overwhelming threat.

When Stalinist bureaucrats denounced the mass demos in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland or Bulgaria as anarchist they paid unconscious tribute to the fact that as Stalinism cedes the field and gives up claiming to be the largest force for revolutionary social change in the world, anarchism — as a perspective for immediate social change rather than as a lifestyle or a critique of other political forces — regains a place on the political agenda that it has not had since the aftermath of the First World War.

We are challenged by the precipitate fulfillment of our desires. Will we rise to the challenge? **LO**

contrast with the sterility of the old forms of state socialism.

What the reformists in the party leadership want is to limit change to little more than a nationwide productivity and efficiency drive under the guidance of a revived party apparatus. They are willing to accept any idea which will get the economies moving and are struggling to cling onto the principle of 'the guiding hand of the party'. This form of socialism is fortunately running to the end of its time and its room for manoeuvre. The failure of the cruder forms of state socialism has been so total that there are few honest people left who are willing to offer their support to a reformed version of the model. The only honest socialists left are the libertarian socialists.

The collapse of state socialism has given rise to a complicated mélange of alternative political philosophies which are temporarily allied in the reform movement but which will soon come into conflict with each other. The opposition movement contained everything from simple nationalists, through religious campaigners, liberals and reformists to those who had been fooled into believing that the West was a workers' paradise. It also contained a significant number of people who had good reason to be suspicious of the promises of governments of all complexions and who have had a long hard training at the hands of the secret police in the importance of humane values. As the opposition movement has gained in strength a massive fund of creative energy has been mobilised on the street demonstrations. Despite their fine words, the vast majority of politicians in the West would like to see those dangerous energies put back into the box as rapidly as possible and for everyone to get back to work in an orderly fashion at the earliest opportunity. The possibility of people making full use of their creative energies to control and guide their own lives will, however, be firmly on the agenda for a significant number of the leading dissidents and, to my mind, it represents the most exciting political opportunity to have emerged since the end of the war. To my mind the leading issues to be thrown up by the events in Eastern Europe are those of what kind of socialism we are seeking to create and what kind of democracy is acceptable.

Whatever kinds of societies emerge in the old Eastern bloc one thing is clear. The West no longer has an easily identifiable enemy that it can use to scare us into line. Much of the acceptance of the setup in the West by the people who live there has been based on the belief that 'it may be bad here but it's worse elsewhere'. Heavy arms spending and a shortage of basic housing could be made to seem a necessary evil when the 'enemy' could be made to appear poised at the gates and life in the 'enemy' bloc genuinely was more miserable and more limiting than life in the West.

Now, when Thatcher starts to talk about the need to maintain defence spending it sounds distinctly thin even to her own supporters. Even if Gorbachev was overthrown tomorrow and tanks repressed dissent in the Russian empire it would require a full scale deployment of whatever troops could be relied upon to keep down the national independence movements, the industrial strikes and the intelligentsia inside the borders of the USSR. There is

Is It Unqualified Good News?

In the space of hardly more than a year totalitarian Marxist regimes have been toppled in Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria seems to be doing the same way. The initiative has come largely from peoples and indirectly from the arch-reformer, Gorbachev. But is it unqualified good news?

One good thing is that it is the obvious end of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that a vanguard Party can create a 'new socialist man' and eventually lead to a stateless brave new world. The idea is nonsense, as anarchists have always pointed out, and nonsense is best out of the way.

There are three bad things. The first springs from Gorbachev's motive in permitting change. Quite simply he realised that the 'Eastern Bloc' was falling behind in economic and technological matters. State socialism only works in the economic sphere when it is based either on agriculture as in Inca Peru or is based on iron and steel and technical change comes slowly. In the modern electronic world technical change comes with lightning speed and the unwieldy bureaucracies of Marxist states are unable to cope. There is the added fact that most scientists and technologists live in the West. Gorbachev saw that the Soviet Union is too big to enter a time-warp like, say, Albania which permits no tourists and jams all foreign broadcasts. So he allowed change. The fact that the changes that have occurred so far are more than he intended is beside the point. The main beneficiary of what has so far occurred in Eastern Europe is capitalism. And capitalism leads to either war or eco-disaster. It is true that Marxist regimes with their polluting factories and botched-up agriculture also lead to eco-disaster but they do so more slowly because they are less dynamic.

The second bad thing stems from the fact that Marxism did at least have a vision of a better world. In its time it inspired millions. The impoverished masses in the Third World no longer have a secular vision of betterment. So they are falling back on the religions of their ancestors — militant Islam, militant Hinduism, militant Sikhism etc. This bodes ill. There is no worse fanatic than a religious fanatic.

The third danger is that Gorbachev may fall and be replaced by hard-liners who see no other option than Marx's 'final ruin of the contending parties' which in today's context would mean war.

The break up of the Eastern Bloc is *not* an unqualified good thing.

H. I. Jones

no prospect of the regime being able to mobilise troops for an attack and from now on there is no realistic possibility of the Warsaw Pact ever operating as a united military force. In fact there is far more prospect of the USSR contracting as a result of national independence movements than there is of it expanding and becoming a threat.

Since the Warsaw Pact and the Russian menace no longer effectively exist NATO becomes redundant as do most of the Western military bases. Sooner or later the other pressures on government spending will tend to push out military expenditure as they did in the 20s and 30s. What impact the absence of an easily identifiable enemy coupled with a partial demilitarisation will have on the British national psychology is in itself a fascinating question but if such a change was coupled by the emergence of more attractive socialist legislation than we have here then we are entering into a new world of optimistic possibilities.

The reaction of many Western politicians to events in Eastern Europe has varied. The short sighted ones have been content to proclaim a victory for Western values and have become unbearably smug and self-righteous. Those who see a little further have been thinking hard. There was something very convenient and secure in having a stable enemy who could be relied upon to make even the worst Western government look good by comparison. Without an enemy how will the ruling class keep us in line? The people of Eastern Europe have been in the streets asking for more than their regimes can deliver. If they start to create even a semblance of genuine socialism then we may yet see the people of Western Europe asking some of the same awkward questions and not being too impressed by the answers.

A. K. Brown

THE AMBULANCE DISPUTE

The industrial action taken by NHS Ambulance crews against the Government's refusal to take to arbitration the ambulance workers' claim to pay parity with the Fire Service and a similar pay formula, is now in its 14th week. Currently the dispute is deadlocked with the Government, who were recently attempting to force arbitration on striking railway-workers, now apparently treating the suggested arbitration with mock-horror and ordering the army and the police in as scabs in an effort to break the ambulance industrial action. The ambulance crews on the other hand are determined to win this dispute which is national, embracing all ranks of the service and for which they have the overwhelming support of the general public for the simple justice of their claim.

The Workers' Case

Ambulance staff are known to work under tremendous stress in extremely hazardous conditions, alongside of the other emergency services. Health Service cuts and under-manning force the crews to work excessive overtime — not just to get a decent wage but simply to keep the ambulance service going.

Over a year ago (December 88) their present claim for parity with the Fire Service and a pay formula in line with the police and fire-crews was submitted to the employers. After considerable government instigated procrastination, ambulance workers have seen the police (lowest basic £14,000 per annum) being offered a 9.25% increase, the fire service (5th year fire fighter £12,000 per annum) given 8.6% while the 'final' offer made to the ambulance service is pegged at 6.5%. Additionally, whereas the other two emergency services (primarily concerned with the protection of property rather than health and life) have a much lower retirement age, ambulance crews are expected to cope with the stress and hazards

of the job until they are 65, sadly many never reach 65.

As public service workers the decision to take industrial action in support of their claim against the so called caring Government, was not taken lightly. No less than three successive ballots to step up the pressure were taken, banning rest day working, overtime and non-emergency calls but always ready to attend to emergencies subsequently without pay on being suspended from duty before being locked out.

The Government, intent only on breaking down the action of the ambulance crews have resorted to pressing into a to-

tally inadequate service, army and police 'scabs' (which would explain the preferential treatment given to such elements) and as always, instigating a dirty tricks campaign. Health Minister Kenneth Clarke, while giving the impression that butter wouldn't melt in his mouth asserts that these skilled and dedicated ambulance crews, who scrambled through the debris of the Brighton Bomb blast putting their own lives at risk (much praised by the Tories at the time) are now a pack of callous brutes because they failed in a number of instances to respond to emergency calls which were not put through to them, they were stopped by the police from pro-

cessing and otherwise denied by management, the use of ambulances standing idle. Truly has it been said that 'those who care about others are despised and denounced, while those who amass wealth at the expense of others are admired and hailed as idols and heroes'.

This is a dispute which the ambulance men and women deserve and must win if we are to succeed in the struggle against the ill-health and the life-threatening forces endemic in our current 'sick' society.

A struggle which must continue until 'need' comes before 'profit', 'free co-operation' before 'economic necessity' and 'a state of voluntary caring' before 'State compulsion'.

Tom Carlie

Britain: A Sham Based on Complacency

Strikes seem to be more prolonged. Shops are full of slow-selling stock. There is continuous social unrest. Industrial output is down. Violent crime increases. The government grows more imperious towards internal affairs while fending off any deep degree of European involvement. Thatcher is always self-satisfied. The police become more ruthless and corrupt. Parliament, a philistine organisation, carries on as though everything is normal.

As Britain prepares to sweep into the next century even the middle classes, traditional mainstay of the system, are markedly discontented. After being so flush with money from 1981 to 1988, they are pained by high interest rates, the Poll Tax and the realisation that they cannot, after all, sell their second home at a fat profit. So many changes have occurred that they have had no time to digest and absorb them. They are the fat child stuffed with suet pudding, and more to come.

They know that with inflation just below 8% and no tax cuts in prospect, there may be higher earnings in the next twelve months, but the gains will be absorbed by growing inflation and mild recession. The trouble with the middle classes is that they do not know where the lifeboats are kept.

There no longer seems to be any real possibility of stable economic progress. Employment cannot be reconciled with prices. Technology has reshaped industry. The new picture is one of economic and social unrest in a Britain disrupted by multiple forces. In a worn-out government the familiar political themes no longer have any true relevance. So many lies and half truths have been uttered, so many scandals uncovered, that the parliamentary word torrent means little or nothing. Even worse, we have slipped into a form of nursery dictatorship without realising it, and yet we know how to live with it.

But all this must be short-lived once NATO is done away with and Britain's reticence about joining the EEC monetary system has been overcome. If NATO goes — and it is overdue — then the country will be isolated in the midst of a Eurodollar denominated democracy and

virtually bankrupt. By that time parliamentary government will certainly have lost what is left of its credibility.

The economy may suffer even more and in an unexpected way after 1992. With the enhanced freedom of movement, there will be a much greater temptation for workers to leave Britain in order to take up better jobs in other EEC countries. Something of the same happened before. After World War Two no less than 720,260 people emigrated between 1946 and 1950, most of them to the colonies, where the prospects looked much better than anything Britain could offer. If this happens again, then the skills shortage will be even more acute.

Updating what Arnold Toynbee said in the 1970s: 'We cannot be sure that even in Britain parliamentary democracy is going to survive...' Granted the admittedly remote possibility of proportional representation and a more honest and true voice in the running of the country, there is still no guarantee that the present out-moded procedures and a constantly shaky economic structure can continue into the next century.

(continued on page 4)

Union 'Right Wing' Backlash

Following upon the much disputed election of Ron Todd as General Secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union; the re-run election and the surprise defeat of the 'right wing' candidates for the Union's General Executive Council, the incoming GEC authorised an internal inquiry into the 'right wing' activities in opposition to the declared official policies of the union, by a number of top full-time officials of the T&GWU.

Although the inquiry fully confirmed the worst suspicions of the militant sections of the union, the official report has not been published, either inside or outside of the T&GWU, on the grounds that it would be damaging to the union's image, particularly in the areas where top union officials were involved and to trades unionism generally.

Considerations of 'not rocking the boat' have never cut much ice with those 'right wing' officials opposed to even a show of working class solidarity or union militancy.

Why then should those loyal to the real interests and decisions of the membership be inhibited about exposing the disloyalty of the 'right wing', simply because of 'media image'?

Unfortunately the likes of the Regional Secretaries such as George Wright (Wales) Joe Mills (Northern) Ashman and Joynton (Southern and South West respectively) are taking full advantage of the failure to expose their past 'disloyalty'. There is now a well orchestrated systematic 'right wing' back lash against not only the recent retention of a nuclear unilateral policy, but also the non-'right wing' majority of the present GEC.

Johnny Miner

BRADFORD

(from our Correspondent)

Feelings in Bradford are just as fiery as the concoctions which are dished up in the city's 500 curry restaurants. The day Lawson told Maggie that he was fed up and wanted to get out practically everybody in the eating place where I was nibbling a chapatti roared their enthusiasm as soon as the news flooded the 24-inch TV screen. What they were cheering was the downfall of a national figure rather than the resignation of the operator of the national cash till. We guffawed at the banana skin as it did its ridiculous work.

Bradford is almost a national thermometer. Anxious to discover the truth of the feeling behind the row over a certain book and its author, I asked the administrator of an arts centre what would happen if I chose to stroll through the city with a copy tucked under my arm.

'I'd wrap it in brown paper if I were you'. From the expression on his face I gathered that I might as well end up as a victim of GBH if I were to carry out this silly experiment. His own copy of 'that book', as they call it, was kept in his flat, virtually under

lock and key. As for actually understanding what it was all about, he said that it was a slow read but 'quite amusing'.

Bradford is at one and the same time a depressing and exciting city. It tells you that racial harmony is tissue-thin amidst the tangle of shabby video shops and Asian grocery stores. It becomes more exciting once you have penetrated the strung-out suburbs and travelled 3½ miles to find Saltaire, Titus Salt's Victorian industrial empire. The architecture of Saltaire echoes Italy and the Cotswolds, and the almshouses are the sort of forethought in which teetotal industrialists like Salt specialised. The silent mill, a 'palace of industry', whispers the clatter of clogs as the ghosts of Victorian spinners and weavers clogged in. If you listen more intently you might even hear the hacking coughs as fibre-infected lungs once reacted to the damp atmosphere.

Bradford was doing quite well for itself until the book burning. It invested huge sums of money in the unlikely area of tourism, invented the

Curry Trail, encouraged Nicholas Treadwell to transfer his staggering sculpture collection from Canterbury. Warehouses were refurbished as tourist hotels. The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television opened. Then smoke from the burning pages of 'that book' curled across the scene, and a lot of goodwill was obscured. A foreign tourist might well believe that visiting Bradford could be as risky as going to Belfast.

Bradford can be sold as an object lesson in lost causes. It does bear out the fact that a city almost always develops a blight. Both Lewis Mumford (born 1895) in *The Culture of Cities* and the earlier Jean Jacques Rousseau (born 1712) in *Emile* pointed out that man is not meant to be crammed together like experimental rats in a cage. It leads only to corruption. Rousseau, more than Mumford, pointed out that cities always perish and have been perishing since time began. It falls to the countryside to replenish the city resources. As soon as man is packed closely together he has to be organised, regimented. This is done through the stomach. To feed himself he must work. Some work for themselves and employ others, the rest work for others. The vital aspect of the importance of human relationships tends to dissolve like sugar in hot coffee.

In Bradford the replenishing of resources in a city which showed signs of galloping cancer was done by attracting a wholly foreign population from India, now numbering 70,000. Many of them were business entrepreneurs, there were a few political refugees, but the mass reflected an earlier Bradford and they simply plied for hire. Together they have now become a strong political voice to be reckoned with. If the Labour Party refuses to back demands for the complete withdrawal of 'that book', then the Asian community will quickly form its own political party and put up its own candidates in time for the general election. They might well

take the city. In their eyes it is an expression of religious necessity. The 10,000 Afro-Caribbeans are not politically active.

In many respects Bradford is very much a mirror of the rest of Britain. It has seen greatness reduced to smallness, because it was formerly the textile capital of the world. At Titus Salt's now silent Italianate mill there is just one small shop selling furnishing fabrics and lavender bags, to Belfast.

Where the city of Bradford was ruled by the energetic monarchy of Victorians headed by Titus as Lord Mayor, it has recently seen massive street demonstrations of book burnings. The monarchy has gone, it is now a city of administrators engaged in trying to hold it together.

In the university the students get their heads down to absorb subjects which are laid out in books, the harvest of earlier thought. They are not learning anything new, simply using their minds like supermarket shelves on which learning packets are stacked. Like their predecessors, the country people who came to replenish

Bradford's resources, they will need jobs. Rousseau would be surprised to know that the most bizarre combinations are now studied. One student mentioned psychology and computer technology as the brace of subjects in which she had graduated. She could not find a job. A pity she did not consider Rousseau's advice when he dismissed all book learning as a waste of time. His choice of a book as a tool for future life was *Robinson Crusoe*.

In a strange sense this sums up Bradford and many other heritage-conscious British cities. Eschew the practical and live only on dreams. This is not a bad idea. The fallow field of Britain may yet show that it is possible for the worker to survive outside industry. If there is a need to organise production, then the work can be done in an atmosphere of justice and equality. That, at least, is what James Guillaume proposed in his *Idees sur l'organisation sociale* in 1876. Since that time we have learned enough lessons to realise that the worker should, by rights, remain in his own premises, shunning industrial government.

But keep an eye on Bradford. We might yet learn something.

Buster

A Pensioner's Bleat

Maggie had a little lamb who fleeced us left and right And everywhere that Maggie went, her Nigel kept in sight. He followed her, poor fool, until the day their shares decreased: Then he became a scapegoat and Maggie had him fleeced.

Now Maggie is in trouble with the poor and with the rich: There's little doubt she knows it, for she's got the ten year itch. She's lost her credibility, as all the poll charts show: Her lambs have changed to billy goats and Maggie's sure to go.

Neil Kinnock's groomed for office, pro-nuclear and well primed To run the market forces that the Tories leave behind. He'll make cosmetic changes as a gesture to the poor, But the rich will still be rolling with hysterics on the floor.

So, enjoy your Christmas parties and prepare to cast your votes For hungry wolves, disguised as sheep, that soon will turn to goats. It's all a grand conspiracy to keep the status quo: Which means that they stay on the top and we stay down below. 'Jon Bitumen'

BRITAIN: A Sham Based on Complacency

(continued from page 3)

The state and condition of Britain in the last ten years has been more or less mirrored in other countries, some of which shifted into totalitarian methods of government. It does not take much imagination to see Britain slipping into a similar situation. It is already used to a form of Thatcherite dictatorship which habitually fails to mirror the public will.

Behind the scenes the present government is nothing more than a fire fighting unit which trundles from one self-induced crisis to another while trying to persuade us that what we have is an intelligent government devoted to maintaining Britain at an incredibly high level. The reverse is true. Although Thatcher certainly qualifies as Europe's most senior statesman, this is her only qualification: sheer length of service. But her dogmatism and shrill stubbornness arouse no admiration among her European political contemporaries.

This leaky government wants to avoid becoming part of a supranational European state. It is taking this stance in the guise of not wishing to lose sovereignty. Yet there is now clearly a strong need to lose sovereignty. Medieval Germany and Italy federated in order to create a feasible political body. The lesson is ignored.

The alternative is a pauperised, isolated Britain. The symptoms already exist if

we insist on viewing wealth in the most material terms. The country is leaner, but it is no healthier. At the root of everything, personal values are not changing, although it has finally been admitted that nature be abused without bringing about some sort of retribution. Yet the ethics of materialism are showing signs of decay under the stranglehold of high interest rates. It is slow progress at a time when the two-car family has had to turn its attention to more modest goals, like replacing the microwave or building a bigger home extension. People remain vastly over-stimulated and over-choiced. And, unfortunately, only too willing to be led by the nose.

George Ritchie

BOOK BARGAINS

Two titles have been remastered by the publishers and are available at vastly reduced prices from Freedom Press.

HERMIA OLIVER: *The International Anarchist Movement in Mid-Victorian London* (Croom Helm 1983) 176 pages hardback, was £19.95 now £4.95.

This book traces the history of the London anarchists from the 1870s to the end of the nineteenth century.

MARK PHILP: *Godwin's Political Justice* (Duckworth 1986) 278 pages paperback, was £12.95 now £2.95.

A series of essays on Godwin's *Political Justice* and other writings.

Please add 10% postage and packing.

'Radical' Approach to R & D

As part of his limbering up exercises for the expected Tory leadership fight, Michael Heseltine has criticised the Thatcher Government's attitude to Research and Development (R&D) in science and technology. In a speech to the 'Save British Science' organisation at the end of November, Heseltine called for the privatised R&D sector to work in a partnership with the Government ('the most important customer'). While he still accepts the validity of the Government's privatisation strategy, the former Minister of Defence now feels that it may be necessary for government to intervene in the marketplace. Clearly, a combination of tact and ambition nurtures a liking for paradox!

Heseltine's 'new' approach is inspired by his concern that Britain will not be able to compete industrially with countries like the US and Japan, where 'governments are deeply involved in making judgements every day about the use of public funds' in R&D. This call for partnership between government ('in an enabling and sponsoring role') and the private sector has been acclaimed by David Dickson in the *New Scientist* as a 'radical new technology policy'. This is strange, since my first reaction was to ask 'where have I read this before?'. The Labour Party's Policy Review Report shares Heseltine's unease about the free market approach to R&D, and calls for a 'national programme' coordinated by a Minister for Science and Technology.

Other similarities between the Labour and Heseltine policies include a demand for state investment to stop the exodus of British scientists to lucrative posts and better equipped laboratories overseas;

and calls for collaborative research ventures involving British firms and institutions and their counterparts in Europe. The motivation for the latter development does not reflect a new spirit of internationalism: *partnership across state boundaries will be vital if the European countries are to be able to compete for technology markets with the US and Japan.* The 'radical' strategy of a greater governmental role in R&D has nothing to do with the enabling of developments in science and technology which might benefit humanity — it is a policy calculated to ensure that Britain becomes a supplier of technology and not merely a customer.

Whatever the outcome of the inevitable power struggle within the Tory party, and whichever group of power seekers forms the next government, it is highly likely that the present market-led R&D strategy will be abandoned in favour of greater financial and managerial intervention by the state. This will give anarchists no cause for celebration. Scientists working in fashionable domains will be delighted with their anti-brain-drain salary increases and better facilities to enhance their reputations internationally; the private sector will welcome the opportunity to use public money instead of their profits; but the rest of us will not be so well served. An element of governmental management and funding of R&D will not alter its ultimate aim — to produce technology for the capitalist market. R&D will still be determined by profitability (at best a less short-term view will be taken) and the prospect of liberatory, humane and environmentally safe technology remains as distant as ever.

I.T. & THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Within the next few weeks Education Secretary John MacGregor will introduce statutory orders relating to the implementation of the National Curriculum in the new school year. Information Technology (IT) features heavily throughout the proposed scheme: not only is the acquisition of computer skills to form a major aspect of 'Technology' (one of 10 foundation subjects) but pupils will also be required to learn to use computers in subjects as diverse as English, history, geography, mathematics and science. Neither rejection of the whole ethos of prescribing necessary and sufficient knowledge nor opposition to the Government's obsessive concern with testing and assessment should prevent anarchists from carrying out a critique of specific aspects of the curriculum. The proposals for the teaching of IT reveal a great deal about the Government's attitude to the role technology ought to play in our lives.

If we are to resist further erosion of our autonomy by those who own and control the technology which has already had a tremendous impact upon our lives, then we must develop a critical appreciation of the power and limitations of IT. This requires a thorough understanding of the way computers work and an awareness of the essential differences between their rule-based calculations and human judgement. The IT component of the National Curriculum does not aim to provide any such understanding. The proposal concentrate upon the provision of training in specific work-related skills on commercially available database, spreadsheet and word processing packages. Contrary to the claim that the curriculum aims to avoid

'narrow vocationalism' it is clear from the 'attainment targets' that the real aim is to train children to be future consumers and producers of IT products. For example, a suggested attainment exercise for children over age eleven is that they be able to 'model the performance of certain companies' shares over a period'. Further evidence that the curriculum is designed to drill children in techniques which they will later use to serve the aims of capitalism is provided by an attainment target for fourteen to sixteen year olds:

'identify a situation in local business or industry where development of an information system would bring benefits and develop a proposal or a suitable solution'.

As a sweetener for those parents and teachers who are alarmed by the indoctrination of children into computer idolatry, the proposals suggest that 'IT capability' should include the ability to make judgements about the effects of using computers. Since the curriculum demands a massive investment — in terms of time — in training children to use IT techniques and tools, any question relating to the value of IT to society will be somewhat loaded. Evidence in support of this assertion is provided in the first paragraph of the National Curriculum Council's report on IT: we are informed that it is 'essential that as pupils leave school they are equipped to take advantage of the opportunities which IT provides' (my emphasis). In any case judgements as to the appropriate use of IT are not to include social or ethical considerations: for example, children aged eleven to fourteen are to assess the appropriate circumstances for the application of a variety of computer software

packages using the criteria of cost, time, effort and expertise involved.

The recommendations for the use of computers in humanities subjects are particularly alarming. In the English curriculum it is suggested that pupils should learn to present their work using a variety of devices including computer graphics, computer print-out and desk-top publishing programs. It is also proposed (for those aged fourteen and over) that English should incorporate knowledge about information retrieval techniques. The National Curriculum Council do not treat the computer as a tool which may facilitate children's learning — training them to become efficient computer users has become an end in itself. Humanities subjects, which should be valued for the insights they can offer into people and society, are legitimised as worthy of study on the grounds that they provide further opportunities for training in the use of IT. In

RAVEN 8

With people power expressing itself in Eastern Europe, issue number 8 of *The Raven* is of special interest. It deals with the general subject of revolution both from a theoretical standpoint with a debate between Herbert Read and a Bulgarian comrade way back in 1938, and the reality of revolution as described by Ernst Schneider in his account of the Wilhelmshaven Revolt of 1918, and by Spanish participants in the Spanish struggle of 1936-39.

And a lot more in this bumper issue (112 pages) of *The Raven*. £2.50 post paid inland, £3.00 overseas.

Andrew Hedgecock

the new City Technology Colleges (CTCs) these trends are more pronounced. Sir Cyril Taylor, the chairman of the CTC Trust, pointed out the special emphasis placed upon the use of IT in *New Scientist* (2nd December 1989) and reported that the CTCs' longer working days and longer terms would enable extension of the curriculum '... obviously in mathematics, science and technology, the key subjects' (my emphasis). Educators seeking to maintain the capitalist system are in the process of defining legitimate areas of study as being those which provide for the development of a commercially exploitable skill. This development may turn out to be one of Thatcherism's most pernicious legacies.

The education in IT insisted upon by the state aims to teach pupils to use computer systems efficiently, and without questioning the implications of their application to human affairs. The notion of compulsory state training for the role of computer operator is appalling. Even more disturbing is the prospect that this training may condition children to view society as a system where problems can be solved with the effective application of an appropriate technique. This impoverished view would produce a generation of adults who are unable to question how we ought to live, but are deeply concerned with developing ever more sophisticated tools to maintain the present structure of society.

Source: *National Curriculum: Design and Technology for ages 5 to 16* (Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Wales) — Based on the report of the National Curriculum Design and Technology Working Group and published by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office.

Anarchist Commentary

For most of us town and country planning is a branch of local government determined that whatever you want to do with a building or a piece of land you have to have planning permission (and pay a hefty fee for your application).

It is governed by 21 Acts of Parliament, 223 Statutory Instruments and over 1,000 pages of policy indications which must be taken into account when any application is considered.

Central government indicates its policy by allowing or refusing appeals against local government decisions. Only the persistent and the rich appeal, so the present government is proposing to impose a charge on appeals too. The whole system makes fortunes for lawyers and all the other professionals (who are mostly former employees of the planning machine who have taken early retirement to make a better income by steering their clients through the loopholes they have learned about). The whole system is corrupt, not through bribery but because it favours rich developers and penalises the poor, who are invariably the victims of planning.

The tragedy of the corruption of planning is that it is sensible for human communities, urban or rural, to plan their future use of land. And its origins, believe it or not, lie within the anarchist movement. Our best-known urban geographer and author of at least 20 books on town and country planning, is Peter Hall, until this year professor of geography at Reading University and now Director of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at Berkeley, California.

For several years now Hall has been nosing out the anarchist implications of popular intervention in housing and planning. In June 1988 he addressed an international conference on housing policy and innovation held in Amsterdam (printed in Italian in *Volanti*, nos 1-2, 1989), taking his starting point as the 'singular scholarly service' provided by Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward in their book *Arcadia for All* (Mansell 1984) in excavating a buried 'popular tradition of working-class autonomous construction'

which links British experience with that of the *louisements* of outer Paris, and current experience in the Third World.

'Something went wrong', argued Hall, both under capitalism in post-war Britain and in 'the dreary regimented housing projects that look the same in every city of the German Democratic Republic'. What went wrong was precisely 'the takeover and emasculation by the central state of a very subversive philosophy of self help'. He goes on to suggest that 'the curious historical irony is that just as this was happening in the First World in the 1950s, the reverse was happening in the Third. John Turner, working in the *barriadas* of Lima, was just beginning to develop his philosophy of self help that was to sweep most of the developing world. And when we seek the origin of this philosophy, then — on Turner's own acknowledgement — it came directly from Geddes and the anarchist tradition, first through Turner's reading of Geddes' interpreter Lewis Mumford, then through the influence of Colin Ward and the Italian anarchist architect Giancarlo De Carlo ... during Turner's own student days shortly after World War Two.'

Hall pursues this theme in his latest book *Cities of Tomorrow* (Basil Blackwell, 1988), which has the subtitle *An intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century*, in which he examines a series of visions of the future of the urban environment and their impact on what actually happened. On page 3 of his book, under the heading 'The Anarchist Roots of the Planning Movement', Hall explains: 'Specifically, the book will argue that in this process of belatedly translating ideal into reality, there occurred a rather monstrous perversion of history. The really striking point is that many, though by no means all, of the singular visions of the planning movement stemmed from the anarchist movement which flourished in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. That is true of

Howard, of Geddes and of the Regional Planning Association of America, as well as of many derivatives on the mainland of Europe. (To be sure, it was very definitely untrue of Le Corbusier, who was an authoritarian centralist, and of most members of the City Beautiful movement, who were faithful servants of finance capitalism or totalitarian dictators.) The vision of these anarchist pioneers was not merely an alternative built form, but of an alternative society, neither capitalist nor bureaucratic-socialist: a society based on voluntary co-operation among men and women, working and living in small self-governing commonwealths.'

Elsewhere in his book (pages 142-145) he traces the regionalist views of Patrick Geddes back through Kropotkin and Réclus to Proudhon and Bakunin, citing the significance not only of *Fields, Factories and Workshops* but of Kropotkin's theory of *The State: Its Historic Role* and his views on *Anarchist Morality*. And on pages 248-256 he sets out the anarchist

findings that John Turner brought back from Latin America. There has seldom been a more eloquent tribute from the academic world for the whole tradition of anarchist propaganda.

Peter Hall returned to the same notion more recently when addressing the 75th anniversary conference of the Royal Town Planning Institute in London (at the Park Lane Hotel!) on 6 November 1989. He chose to stress that 'there has been a very general groundswell in the last five years in favour of what could be called the neo-anarchist tradition of planning: the tradition that goes directly back to Patrick Geddes and Ebenezer Howard, and behind them to their spiritual fathers, Peter Kropotkin and Michael Bakunin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon'.

He said a lot more significant things too, like his assertion (discussed by Colin Ward in *New Statesman & Society* for 1 December 1989) that London 'has become the sink, the cesspit, of the urban world'.

Ward's conclusion was 'if you put your hands into what actually happens in the planning and housing scene, they are bound to get dirty with every kind of compromise. But it's useful that people like Hall should remind not us but the outside world that there always has been an anarchist approach waiting for someone to pick it up.'

of socialist-bureaucratic-capitalist housing opinion. Turner, for example, influenced United Nations bodies and the World Bank, but has big reservations about their Third World Housing policies. De Carlo has the continual frustration of seeing half his message absorbed and the important half ignored. I proposed, in the anarchist press, a solution to the deadly malaise of local authority landlordism, only to witness the application of the least important half of the formula. On the other hand, all three of us have seen a dozen little local triumphs of tenant co-operatives.'

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THE WEALTH CONSUMERS

The Minister of Transport no less, the unctuous, reformed Don Juan, Cecil Parkinson, had himself photographed by the press holding a couple of car number plates which, with another 75, were later auctioned at Christie's. The passion for acquiring 'personalised' number plates in this country is such that the Ministry of Transport were hoping to benefit from regular sales to the tune of £15million per annum.

Christie's auction took place on 14 December. A woman doctor from Stockport paid £370,400 for JUL IE as a Christmas present for her 27 year old daughter. A man parted with £61,600 for IT. But the 'most desirable number in the country', IA went for a mere £176,000. One man who paid £71,500 for a plate reading MUS IC put it on the market again three days later for £250,000.

These are Thatcher's 'wealth creators' with a vengeance. To accusations by the president of the Methodist Conference that the government was adding to the wealth of the rich and increasing the poverty of the poor, Mrs Thatcher replied: 'You equate wealth with selfishness, but it is only through the creation of wealth that poverty can be assisted'. What wealth is being created by the buying and selling of car number plates? Or shares? Or speculation on the money markets?

And what about this item from Olga Maitland's *Sunday Express* diary (17 December) headed 'The Baron is Having a Ball'. The 27 year old millionaire Baron McDillan of Finavon is sponsoring the Tories Winter Ball, their major fund raising event, to the tune of providing round the world air trips for the raffle, the cost of the main course for 1,000 diners and a cocktail party for advertisers.

This is small beer compared with the party American publisher Malcolm Forbes threw for his 70th birthday. It took place in Morocco and involved laying on air transport for hundreds of guests, and in all cost a mere \$2million. His comments to critics: 'They point to the glitterful excesses and the greed but, God, they miss the point. This was the decade that saw the triumph of US-led free enterprise'.

There is no doubt that lots of people prospered during the past decade. As *Time* magazine points out: 'This was the age of financial wizards making fortunes in their twenties, and roughly 100,000 Americans became millionaires every year. Michael Milken, the junk bond king, set the record by earning \$550million in 1987.'

But who pays for the 'prosperity' (US gross national product rose during the decade from \$2.7trillion to \$5.3trillion), and the 'wizards' fortunes? *Time* recognises that much of this growth 'was done by borrowing'. The US national debt tripled, from \$909billion to almost \$2.9trillion. And apart from having some time or other to repay some of the debt, the interest alone now amounts to

\$165billion. And again the poor have paid for the rich. The top 20% of American families (earnings rose in real terms by \$9,000 to an average of \$85,000, whereas the income of the bottom 20% dropped by \$576 to what *Time* calls a 'hungry' \$8,880).

Thatcher is always denying that the poor are getting poorer. The American government is less hypocritical and estimates that 32 million Americans — 12.8% of the population — live in poverty compared with 11.4% a decade ago.

The Thatcher-Reagan philosophy is well summed up by Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street*: 'Greed ... is good. Greed is right. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit ... Greed — mark my words — will save the USA.'

PS Michael Milken the 'record breaking junk bond king' has been indicted on '98 counts of fraud and other misdeeds'. Capitalists in the end are consumed by their greed.



GUARDIAN PHOTO BY PERMISSION

Thatcher's 'Wealth Creators' hard at work

Making Money Fast

When it came to criticising capitalism in the sceptical Thirties the cartoons of the Left depicted an evil spectre in a top hat and morning suit engaged in squeezing money out of the working classes. With his dripping fangs and cash bags dangling from claws, he left no doubt that making money was a filthy, blood-sucking activity.

The Thatcher government has now made it all respectable. They persuade people that borrowing and making money is good for you. It gives you independence, you should own your house, start a business, and eventually you, too, can wear a top hat and smoke a cigar. The nature of the business does not matter very much. Indeed, at the top of the tree is money lending itself in many guises. Finance is seen as exciting, necessary and the panacea of all ills.

The share-owning democracy is shown as a cohesive factor in national life, holding together people of like mind. In the most provincial public library you can see people consulting *Financial Times* market prices. The personal finance pages of national papers are now required reading. Savings are said to be at a high level, while building society investment levels increase month by month.

This preoccupation with money has successfully melted the social consciousness which developed out of the Welfare State. Underneath it all is a growing sense of guilt, because we know for a fact that people can die of sheer neglect within the community. The result of the subsequent official enquiries usually show that social services departments are understaffed. Most of the social disparities which were once watch-dogged by government departments now fall into the laps of the charitable organisations. There are now over 160,000 charities.

Thatcher's government has seized on these charities as a means of shrugging off its own responsibilities. The Department of Social Security pushes many of its clients towards them. The fact is that many charities are rich. The Chief Executive of the Spastics Society is paid £50,000 a year. There is even some talk of establishing a kind of National Economic

Development Council type of organisation with divisions to look after the various social welfare areas.

When the unlamented Stalin wrote a commentary on the equally unlamented Lenin's edicts, he said that one form of government replaces another in a cyclical form, and each government duly installs its own forms of devious manipulation. This is obvious enough. In the case of Thatcher's government there has been a repeated declaration that power is being placed in the hands of the people. The people must choose. We know it is not true. Yet it sounds surprisingly like the philosophy to which anarchists subscribe as far as personal freedom is concerned. Less government means more freedom.

The fault in the Thatcher declaration is found in the fact that the national pot has been boiled to such an extent that two entirely separate components of society have been created in the last ten years. The fat has come to the top. In the Tory belief that money is the key to simply everything, the financial markets have been permitted to prosper at great cost to a huge number of socially underprivileged citizens. More people are sleeping in cardboard boxes in London than at any other time, including the Victorian period. More people are making more money. More people are poor. More people are taking drugs than in the Victorian age, when morphine and other substances were common. In a word, there is more of everything, both good and bad.

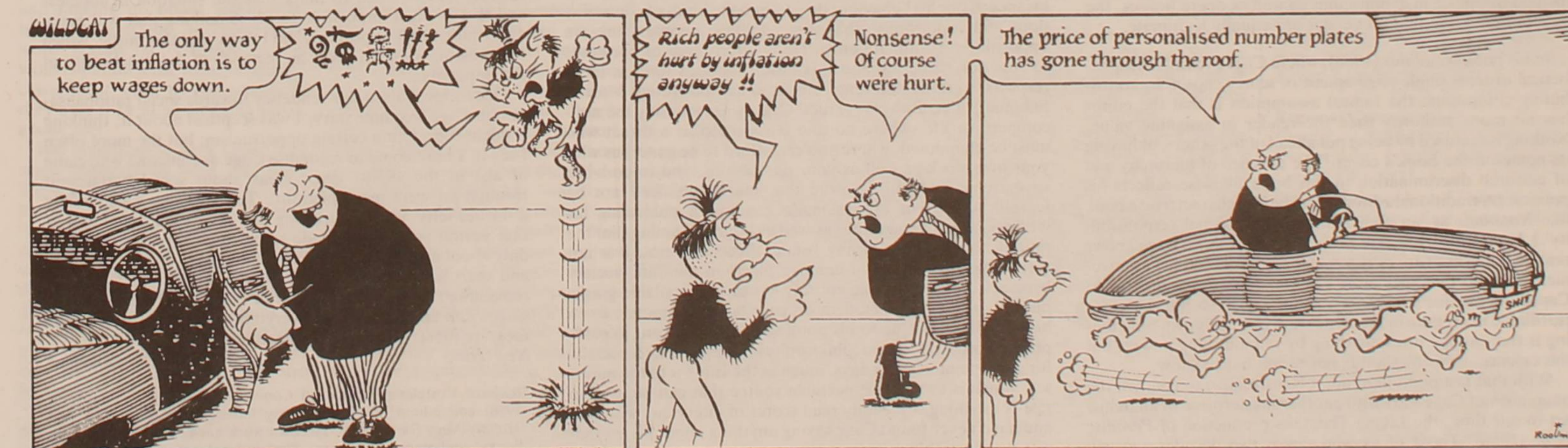
Paradoxically, there is now lack of minority effort. As Malatesta rightly pointed out long ago, every new idea, institution and even insurance, has been started by minorities. In a society organised without authority, this would apply even more strongly, because there would be no financial inhibitions. Every apparently revolutionary move is now based entirely on money. Management buy-outs are common. In Scotland alone the Scottish Co-operatives Development Committee has now helped to finance over 100 co-operatives, including wholefood stores, bakeries, garment manufacture, printing and publishing, soft furnishings and

entertainment companies. Their venture capital funding programme for 1989/90 stands at £500k, based on investments. Practically none of these enterprises are directed towards what is most needed, cheap housing for rent. Most of them focus on totally unnecessary projects.

So what is there to criticise about all this prosperity? People are helping themselves with the direct assistance of investment money. Many of the investors are local authorities who know that this will keep the lid on the pot and minimise the risk of social unrest. But the financial San Andreas fault will become obvious to anybody gifted with half an accountant's eye. Loans advanced for starting them all up must be repaid within a fixed term. Failing that, repayments can be re-scheduled, usually at a higher rate of compounded interest. At least part of the national bankruptcy rate has been caused by venture capital loans which have been written off. What has not been openly disclosed is that the majority of these loans are insured. When a venture fails, the insurance company has to pay up to the venture capital organisation. Insurance itself is composed of small groups of Lloyds-controlled investors, who have to meet the risk insurance if it falls due. This means that venture capital represents a new form of money lending. The time of reckoning will not become apparent for five to ten years by which time the underwriting syndicate may well have sold out at a fat profit. Money remains exploitive.

Initiative should be controlled at a time when there is a super-abundance of goods. As things now stand, it is like the unhealthy fat man sitting down to a banquet. Many of the new co-operatives labour under the delusion that they are creating goods and services which are needed only to find that the great dream has been directed towards the cash till and the need to meet the next repayment on that mounting venture capital loan. When H. G. Wells wrote about the possibility of Utopia, he said that 'Money, did you but use it right, is a good thing in life'. The question is, when is it used 'right'? Whichever way you look at it, the stuff remains grossly exploitive while giving rise to feelings of false security.

Alex Peterson



THATCHER'S Green Rinse

Over the past year there has been an outbreak of 'greener than thou' posturing in all sorts of unlikely places. When customers in Sainsbury's supermarkets are offered a free leaflet advertising 'environmentally friendly' goods for sale in the store, it is clear that 'green' products have become highly profitable.

The Prime Minister has also discovered this trend. In her Autumn 1989 speech to the Royal Society, Thatcher's response to environmental calamities such as seabird breeding failures in the Shetlands, the seal virus in the North sea and drought in the American mid-West was to suggest that 'it is possible... that we have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself'. Like all successful politicians, Thatcher is something of a political chameleon: in order to blend in with the background of public opinion she has taken on a faint tinge of green — as a short-term expedient. The key word 'unwittingly' reveals her belief that our present mode of production is in no way to blame for the state of the environment.

For over a century industrialists have refused to accept responsibility for their exploitation of natural resources and have encouraged waste as part of the process of production for profit. Only now, when an ecologically sound posture is good for consumer relations and/or vote catching, is it acknowledged that our quality of life may have been damaged in a fundamental way. Capitalists have responded to the 'environment issue' by making spurious claims to have produced environmentally safe products such as 'ozone friendly' plastic shampoo bottles and 'environmentally friendly' batteries.

This is the age of the instant disposable, an age with contempt for the past and no hope in the future. All things are for the moment be they the wine, the watch, the hero of the hour, religion, philosophy, plastic shoes, art and yesterday's moral protest.

We count our dead by the millions and await the next armageddon with casual indifference as we pay, but literally man, our homage to Colonel Saunders by chewing his chicken leg. Yet in that 'ol' final analysis it is of small importance for despite the reference book academic historians the past has little to offer us. Yet if we live in an era of mass trivia why should it not be used and disposed when it has served its function. These are the harsh realities of capitalism, realpolitik, tinted loo paper and the dark doorway knee trembler, so too with the world of art for the elite and for us the great unwashed. There was a time when every financial board room had its huge Victorian painting highlighting the criminal elements around the board room table and it was crap and they were crap but it was the fashion of the hour, three years in the painting and £10,000 tax deductible cost. But now every board room has its overpainted, overpriced instant abstract garbage to calm the financiers' souls as they rob me and the widows and orphans. Without social or philosophical content the colours are pretty so who's complaining.

The National Gallery, over the years, has given us a number of civilised small exhibitions and for that and the wine one is truly thankful. The National gave, gives, us a series of The Artist Eye when some unfortunate breathing artist was cal-

led upon to show us, your actual elite, the work of dead and decomposed artists that have influenced their own work and that meant a lunatic dash along the walls of the National collecting names from Botticelli to Durer with Bramantino thrown in for good measure. But with all those historical influences, our present day poor bastards could not explain why they still can't paint themselves. And the answer is the art market's demand for instant saleable genius: so the wide brush, thick black outlines, acrylic paint and a sheet of hardboard and a knocking on the door by Channel 4, and National Gallery here I come.



Detail from Altarpiece with Three Saints by Nardo de Cione

'Art in the Making: Italian Painting Before 1400' in the small back room within the National Gallery is for me a matter of universal rejoicing. Not only for the white red and the rose but for the first time for many a long year the tools of the artist craftsman is displayed and explained. These men were craftsmen and they learned their craft the hard way and in their factory style workshops they painted to the order of the buyer and the master craftsman. The Church aesthetic dictated size, shape and subject matter and the teams of craftsmen produced it.

In the mass figures of saints and angels much of it becomes cliché Egyptian fashion and legs would be delineated in no more than a single broad brush stroke with no regard for tonal values but if it was saints that the cardinal paid for then he got bleedin' saints. But what is exciting for any working artist at this small exhibition is the display. In the exhibition poster one can glimpse a slightly greenish tint caused by the use of green earth that was used in the underpainting of the flesh tones while scraped insects were used in making the dyes. The bones that were carbonised to make black, the Afghanistan mined lapis lazuli for the blue ultramarine for the Virgin's robe and the different burned and powdered woods all ending up on the palettes of the working craftsmen and those basic tools are here on display within this jewel of an exhibition. We are the metropolitan people who only see the finished product from the milk in the carton to The Speech From The Throne but never the brute creation. The National Gallery to their credit honour the craftsmen in this exhibition so for the Town and his frau green wellies and tailored overalls and a union card at the ready: to the National, to the National!

Arthur Moyse

Age & Farewell

ANARCHIST ART: The Example of John Cage

In surveying his work in music and theatre, in poetry and visual art, I have noticed that the American John Cage favours a structure that is non-focused, non-hierarchical and non-linear, which is to say that his works in various media consist of collections of elements presented without climax and without definite beginnings and ends. This is less a negative structure, even though I am describing it negatively, than a visionary aesthetic and political alternative. In creating modes of diffusion and freedom, Cage is an anarchist libertarian.

What makes Cage's art special, and to my senses politically original, is that his radical politics are expressed in decisions not of content but of form. For instance, one quality of most works of his for large ensembles is that they do not need a conductor. By extension, cage is implying that outside of music, as well as in, it is possible to create social mechanisms that likewise can function without conductors, without chiefs. In other words, in the form of his art, in the form of performance, is a representation of an ideal policy.

It is precisely in relinquishing traditional opportunities for authority that Cage is making essentially political decisions. His scores are designed to encourage a greater variety of interpretations than usual. There is no 'right way' to do them, though there are wrong ways, especially if a performer violates the instructions that are not left to chance. A second reflection of Cage's politics is writing music for an ensemble of equals, even when he is one of the performers, thereby resisting such conventional hierarchical forms as a soloist with a backup group. (The fact that this last feature was always true indicates to me that Cage subscribed to his egalitarian politics long before he was conscious of them.) Thirdly, the principle of equality extends to the materials of his art. Not only are all notes equal, but all instruments are equal, regardless of their rank in the musical tradition. In *Credo in Us* (1942), for instance, the piano has no more presence than the home radio; all are equidistant from the audience. Fourth, he has performed his music in gymnasiums as well as opera houses, the assumption being that all venues are equally legitimate.

In his book *Notations* (1968), where Cage presents in alphabetical order a single page apiece of scores chosen by contributing composers, the radical assumption is that the editor has no more authority than the reader in assigning value. Nothing is featured by being put ahead of the others, or having its name on the book's cover. The absence of hierarchy and of editorial discrimination in this book likewise reflects his politics. (A traditional editor would huffily characterise a book like *Notations* as 'an abdication of professional responsibility'.) Anyone who has ever worked in theatre with Cage knows that he believes every performance venue should have convenient exits so that spectators can leave whenever they wish. Capturing anyone's attention, as we say, is to him no more justifiable in art than in life. One truth of Cage's own functioning is that no one loses anything by relinquishing power, but the essence of his method is not to tell but to show.

With that last point in mind, it is instructive to contrast the anarchism of Cage's art with another masterpiece of anarchist art in our time, the Living Theater's production of *Paradise Now* (1968). Those of us who saw it two decades ago will

remember that *Paradise Now* was structured as a series of sketches designed to elicit audience participation. Thus, it opened with the performers reciting testimony of their own imprisonment: 'I can't travel without a passport', they repeatedly proclaimed, confronting and challenging the audience to respond with argument or shocked acceptance. 'I am not allowed to take off my clothes', 'I don't know how to stop the war', they kept on repeating. From this purgatory the performers progress to sketches of liberation, which is paradise, culminating with members of the audience being invited onstage to leap into the locked arms of male company members. Structurally, this play is dialectical, moving from antithesis to synthesis; and in this respect, it differs from Cage who hasn't presented any antitheses, as far as I can tell, in at least forty years.

Another difference is that *Paradise Now* is preachy, Julian Beck even telling us that we've been offered glimpses of the post-revolutionary age. Cage, by contrast, shows instead of tells, for his assumption is that, in the world represented by his art, the Promises Land has come. When asked about his response to such programmatic political music as Frederic Rzewski's, he has said, 'I have difficulty with it, because it's so pushy. It has precisely in it what government has in it: the desire to control, and it leaves no freedom for me. It pushes me towards its conclusion, and I'd rather be a sheep, which I'm not, than be pushed along by a piece of music. I'm just as angry, or refusing to go along with the 'Hallelujah Chorus' as I am with Attica one [by Rzewski]. The moment I hear that kind of music I go in the opposite direction. And they use the technique of repetition, and of sequence, incessantly [as did the Living Theater, I should add]. And I can do without that.'

One thing that fascinates me about Cage is the purity of his anarchism. His perceptions are true to his politics; in neither his speech nor his behaviour do you find the kinds of contradictions and compromise that some political people think are opportune for ultimate ends. He is utterly free of pretences to superior humanity and this false snobism (and in these respects so utterly different from his sometime protege Morton Feldman). I've always regarded Cage as epitomising the non-competitive life, where no one is regarded as a threat who must be eliminated, where you can afford to be generous with your own work as well as your possessions, and to do work so extreme and idiosyncratic that plagiarism need not be feared. As he has always made a point of publishing his writings in small magazines as well as large, assuming that the putative 'reputation' of any venue affects him not, it is not surprising that his recent creative piece on the Satie society bypasses book publishing entirely to become available gratis, but only through the modem on your home computer. Even his philosophy is true to his politics, at a time when, to paraphrase Barnett Newman, philosophy is for the artist, especially for some painters nowadays, much as the Bible is to the minister, which is to say a respectable source that can be used to justify anything. I recently read scores of interviews with him and have never found Cage saying anything about his art that was demonstrably false.

It is scarcely surprising that in his own professional life he has resisted not only titles and accompanying power but servility, being neither a boss nor an employee but, instead both, or more precisely a small businessman with a peripheral relation to another small business that didn't give him much power (or until recently made much money) — I'm thinking of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. In other words, even in his own life there has been an absence of antitheses. For next year Harvard has offered him a professorship, which gives him one of those titles purportedly raising its bearer above the non-professors; but this is false to our politics, comrade. Especially if, John, you are to be talking about anarchy, as I've heard, you must insist upon being called the Charles Eliot Norton Person of Poetry. (Remember, John, that England's anarchist movement went through a divisory crisis in 1953, when Herbert Read accepted a knighthood.)

Another quality I admire about Cage is that, especially in contrast to many post-socialists of his generation, he has never doubled back. He has never said that an earlier position of his was now unacceptably radical. As a result, he's never been an ex-anthist in either aesthetics or politics. His art, as I noted before, has always displayed the anarchist characteristics I'm defining here. I would judge that one reason for his confidence now, in politics as well as aesthetics, is that he knew from the beginning that he was never wrong, which I hasten to add is not the same thing as being always right, especially in politics.

One Cagean tactic that always puzzled me in reading interviews with him is how he will often rationalise an aesthetic move in terms not of ideology but simply social benefit. Let me quote an example from my new Cage book, *Conversing with Cage*, where he says of his *Freeman Etudes* for violin: 'They are intentionally as difficult as I can make them, because I think we're now surrounded by very serious problems in the society, and we tend to think that the situation is hopeless and that it's just impossible to do something that will make everything turn out properly. So I think that this music, which is almost impossible, gives an instance of the practicality of the impossible.'

Once I recognised this tendency towards social rationalisation in Cage's commentary, I was sceptical about it, thinking it might represent a certain opportunism; but the more often I see it, I have come to recognise Cage as someone who came of age in the 1930s, when ideas about social betterment through art were more plentiful. To me, Cage is essentially a thirties lefty, more interesting that others who came out of that period because he made some original perceptions not only about art but especially about the place of politics in art, and then the possible role of art for politics, all the while remaining true to the sentiment of that time. In my sense of Cage, Zen and chance and everything else came afterwards; they are merely icing on this anarchist cake.

Richard Kostelanetz*

*Richard Kostelanetz produced *Conversing with Cage* (Limelight, 1988) and edited the documentary monographs *John Cage and Moholy-Nagy* (both 1970). His own work has been for language in books, audiotape, videotape, film and holography. The present article is based on a lecture he gave at Wesleyan University.

1990s: Anarchy or Chaos?

The Berlin Wall is breached and State Communism is collapsing in Eastern Europe. RIP. Leaders in the West naturally applaud this. They can hardly do anything else. But they smile through gritted teeth. While they stand impotently by, helpless before people power, they fear the consequences. Mrs Thatcher has even been driven so far as to support the Warsaw Pact in the interests of stability!

The consequences are likely to be good for libertarians. It seems to me that we are back somewhere at the time of the first International before the fateful split between the Anarchists and the State Socialists. With this benefit of hindsight, State Socialism has clearly shown itself to be a path not to human liberation but to slavery.

However, the dominant problem, the economic order, remains. Indeed if anything the personal, social and ecological destruction produced by world capitalism has intensified, in degree if not in kind. It would seem that the only hope of stemming chaos and offering something better is through anarchy.

Where Does Power Lie?

Where does power lie? The article 'Should Anarchists Vote Labour?' (*Freedom*, December) declares that it lies 'with big business finance capital, the upper civil service, judges, police, military'. It then goes on to speak of workers throwing out the rotten and crumbling capitalist system.

If the article is justified in what it says, then the power these people or institutions possess is only provisional, held by favour of the workers and liable to be withdrawn. Final power, power to decide whether capitalism with its finance capital and the rest should continue, lies with the workers.

George Wallford
London N5

Compromise with what?

Dear Comrades, Congratulations on your decision to go to a fortnightly format. Please find enclosed a donation towards your efforts.

I read Joe Kelly's article entitled 'Compromise' (*Freedom*, November) with interest. I fully agree that most of the philosophical hairsplitting that is a chronic disease among left wing sects is absolutely useless. I also agree that the inevitable backbiting about the personal purity of this or that individual (also an inevitable chronic disease) is entirely beside the point besides being damned unpleasant. Finally, being a gradualist and making no bones about it by trying, as some do, to redefine the word 'revolution', I realise the obvious common sense reality that anarchists must learn to compromise if they ever wish to be anything but an exotic sect.

But compromise with what? This really depends on what you want. Some of us would like to see an effective political movement capable of influencing the world outside our ranks. Most of us have various motivations, some good, some reprehensible. Some people calling themselves anarchists, however, are almost entirely motivated by working out their personal failings or by finding a nice cosy in-group from which they can feel superior to others.

Personally I see no need to compromise with those, such as *Class War* in your country, who are foolishly

So what are the prospects? The '60s was another decade with a strong anarchistic undertow. It introduced anarchistic ideas and ways of thinking to a lot of young people, many of whom were very unclear what they were about. As we go into the '90s, there are many more people about who have learned the power of personal responsibility and direct action. Firstly, those young people from the '60s are now entering middle life. Then there has been the Women's Liberation movement, followed by the Green movement, and then the Peace movement. They are all movements which spread worldwide while being organised locally and autonomously.

The social chaos produced by ten years of strong government is self-evident to most people, not only in Britain but globally. Authority is falling into low esteem. The opportunity seems to be there to make the 1990s a great libertarian decade. And in this seems the only hope of beginning to solve the problems which face humanity.

Gerald Hatton

My Country

Dear Editors, 'Except as an idea in confused minds, does 'my country' exist?', asks Francis Ellingham (December). Well, yes, Francis, it does, or had you not noticed that there exist countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Finland *et al*, which do not, in any sense, 'create antagonism, conflict and war'? Nor would 'my country', Scotland, if we had our independence.

A sense of national identity, culture and tradition is a good and precious thing, provided it does not lead to despising those of other countries. Nationalism may result in the imperialism of the Nazis, but there is no causal connection between the two.

However, as a pacifist as well as a nationalist, I agree wholeheartedly with the first part of Francis's eloquent letter.

John L. Broom
Stromness
Orkney

FREEDOM FORTNIGHTLY some reader reactions

I think the fortnightly *FREEDOM* is excellent and enjoyed reading the dummy edition.

SR
London SE7

Delighted to see the fortnightly *FREEDOM*. I was sorry to see it reduced to a monthly some years ago, though I have to admit the quality has been consistently good for the last couple of years, so you have a lot to live up to. I will certainly send you information on events in Norfolk, when there is anything interesting going on. I offered to have my address on your list of contacts some years ago. That offer stands...

John Myhill
Church Farm, Hethel,
Norwich NR14 8HD

I think it is a very good idea to go fortnightly and am looking forward very much to receiving *FREEDOM* more often.

RS
Heidelberg

Bully for your going fortnightly. I'm looking forward to next year's reading. Also I'm interested in distributing in 1990. I work in Bookworm Community Bookshop and can sell it there and elsewhere. And I am interested in contributing on issues/topics from this part of Northern Ireland. I am also available as a regional correspondent (North West of Northern Ireland). Feel free to use my address in that way if you wish.

Dave Duggan
27 Northland Avenue, Derry,
Northern Ireland BT48 7JW

I was just about to write to you to ask if there was any hope that *FREEDOM* could be published more often. So you can imagine my pleasure when I opened the envelope containing the November issue. I strongly support your objectives and will be glad to be a supporter and contributor. I enclose £100 to the *FREEDOM* Fortnightly Fund.

GH
Newton Abbot

Megastate of Europe

Dear *Freedom* folks, Like Colin Johnson ('Megastate of Europe' *Freedom* December), I too feel there are some positive things to say about European unity and I don't altogether share the usual leftist handwringing about 1992. One thing for certain, economic and political unity will definitely end any possibility of war in Europe — if it did nothing else but this, what a great boon for humanity. (As anarchists know so well, war is no friend of liberty.) European Workers' struggles have always suffered from isolation, of which petty nationalism has played a contributing factor. Economic unification will force working people to continentalise their activities and the First International's dreams of workers' unity may finally come true. America will be greatly weakened (which is why they don't like the EEC) and while exchanging US hegemony for Euro-social democracy sure ain't the world revolution, it will definitely save the lives of some 'Third World' people. One final thought — if Greens, anarchists and libertarian socialists are successful in encouraging decentralisation, the EEC will begin to become something like Proudhon's concept of a European Federation!

In Solidarity,
for *Freedom*
Larry Gambone
St Laurent, Quebec

On World War II

Dear Friends, John Broom (*Freedom*, November) is right to point out the political history behind World War Two, which Arthur Moyse chose to overlook. Moreover, the war clearly did not save the little girl he so poignantly but retrospectively remembers. Instead, it took the lives of millions of other little girls and little boys as well as women and men. If Arthur thinks it is pacifists who wantonly 'sacrifice the lives of the innocent', then will he explain what happened at Hamburg and Dresden, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Whose 'scabby salvation' was involved there?

D. R. Fredson also goes a little astray. It was John Middleton Murry, not Gilbert Murray, who was wartime editor of *Peace News*, and although he was shaken by the evidence of the extermination camps he did not resign until over a year after the end of the war. By that time he was not regretting his pacifism in the past war so much as displaying his eagerness for fighting the next one against the Soviet Union.

All your contributors on this topic show some confusion between the Nazi concentration camps, which were established soon after Adolf Hitler's accession to power in 1933 and were well-known from that time, and the extermination camps which were started in 1942, and knowledge of which had started to filter through to the Allied governments by the end of 1944.

Yours sincerely,
William Hetherington
PPU
London WC1

LETTERS

We have had to hold over a number of letters for space reasons. Please keep them short. Instead of a long letter, make your contributions into an article.

Chink in the Wall

I was very glad to have an opportunity to write to you. A friend of mine who is in correspondence with American anarchists gave me *The Bad Days Will End* No 12 and a booklet about the Kronstadt uprising. I was greatly impressed by the books for there I found answers on many questions which were shadowed by the state power. I and my friends were reading, rereading and again rereading these books. From other booklets the friend gave me we learned about Raoul Vaneigem and Guy Debord. We have already about them from our friends from Moscow and Leningrad who say they are anarchists. But we would like to have more information.

There are three of us — friends from school-days — and we not only think that state power is something abnormal, our hearts do feel that it is dangerous for people and therefore we do not like it at all, and, surely, the power does not like us. Still we hope that 'bad days will end' and finally the sun of liberty will be shining brightly for all the people.

There is *perestroika* in this country going on now and it has already brought some good changes in the life of the people, but nevertheless there is a good deal of difficulty and problems and a great deal of information still cannot reach us. Will you be so kind as to send us something. Actually, we would be glad to receive any kind of literature — on theory of anarchism, news, poetry, prose or music if any.

Yours truly
on behalf of everybody
(name and address supplied)
Lvov,
Ukraine, USSR

NEWS FROM Angel Alley

Though we have lost count of the number of issues of *FREEDOM* that have been published in the last fifty years, for those of us involved in producing the tabloid-size fortnightly instead of a monthly magazine, it has meant a completely different approach to content and presentation. So we feel justified in looking upon this issue of *FREEDOM* as a first number, which is another way of asking readers to make allowances for any shortcomings in presentation as well as the omission of certain features/book reviews for instance. We also apologise to our sectional editors for not having succeeded in establishing the 'territory' which is theirs to fill. These are minor teething problems. Meanwhile we want to congratulate all who have contributed to this 'first' issue of *FREEDOM* fortnightly — that is to seven of the eight pages. This is readership power indeed! Keep it up!

The Raven is on course to come out quarterly this year. Number 9 (see advertisement elsewhere in this issue) should have reached subscribers by the time they read these lines. It is the last 'unplanned' number. Number 10 (due out in March) on education, is the first of the 'planned' *Raven* in which some two-thirds of each issue will be on a specific topic. This still leaves some 30 pages 'unplanned'. *The Raven* needs many more subscribers if it is to be financially viable at its present price.

Contacts: We are in the process of compiling a new contacts list. As we hinted in the *FREEDOM* dummy edition (October) we shall be more selective, giving preference to contacts who are actually in contact with *FREEDOM* and *Freedom Press*. We hope this is not an unreasonable suggestion. The present contact list included people and groups who don't even subscribe to *FREEDOM*! And some readers report that they don't even reply when written to! So we start afresh with those who want to be on our contact list getting in touch with us.

Our warm thanks to all those subscribers who have renewed their subs in December and a special thank you to those listed below for their generous contributions to our two funds. There are still many readers who have not yet renewed their subscriptions. Please do so this month to save us the additional labour of sending out further renewal notices. In *Angel Alley* we give our time for *FREEDOM*. Sending out second reminders is literally wasting our time which we would prefer to use in making *FREEDOM* always a better anarchist propaganda journal.

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Answer to question on page 1:
ADAM SMITH: *Wealth of Nations*